Why Do Millions Wait? Experimental Evidence on Government Job Queues in India*

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Abstract

Why do millions of young Indians stay out of work to queue for scarce government jobs? We conducted a randomized controlled trial with unemployed, college educated youth in Kanpur, assigning neighborhoods to three nested treatment arms that target, one at a time, the frictions that could sustain the queue: labor market information and guidance, psychological issues, and social preferences. We measure job preferences, intended waiting times, labor market activity, mental health, and signup intentions for opportunities shortly after treatment. The information sessions, at about $6 per participant, deliver most of the movement on the central behavioral margin: intended waiting for a government job falls by ten months and stated preferences shift toward private work. Adding the psychological protocol delivers the only robust mental health gains. Engaging parents delivers the distinctive gains in young women's stated mobility and in family formation timing. The three frictions largely bind on separate margins rather than reinforcing one another. Our results suggest that inexpensive information interventions are sufficient to change job aspirations and intended waiting, while more intensive psychological and family interventions improve wellbeing and female mobility without further reducing wait unemployment.

Keywords: Youth unemployment, Wait Unemployment, India, Randomized controlled trial, Aspirations, Mental health, Parental counseling

JEL Codes: J22, J24, J64, I24, I25

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1 Introduction

Every year hundreds of millions of applications are submitted for government jobs in India despite success rates often below one percent. Why do so many young people continue to wait?[1] To compete in this queue, many college educated youth decline locally available private employment and entrepreneurship and instead prepare for and repeatedly retake public sector entrance examinations (Mahambare et al., 2026). We call this *wait unemployment*: voluntary joblessness sustained by the pursuit of a scarce formal public position rather than by an inability to search or to work. The pattern is widespread across South Asia (Jeffrey, 2010; Abdullah, Abraham, and Jain, 2024), and its private costs are large: forgone earnings during preparation exceed a year of skilled wages, work habits depreciate, family formation is postponed, and prolonged joblessness erodes mental health (Thern et al., 2017).

Under any reasonable parameterization of the wage distribution (McCall, 1970; Mortensen, 1994), the long odds of selection imply that the expected return to public sector preparation is dominated by the private alternatives youth forgo. Something beyond a comparison of reservation wages must therefore keep the queue intact. We organize the candidate explanations into three frictions that a wage based search model omits. The first is cognitive: youth hold optimistic beliefs about their own chances that are difficult to square with aggregate selection rates. The second is psychological: prolonged unemployment generates anxiety and depression that narrow the set of jobs a young person will consider (Schilbach, Schofield, and Mullainathan, 2016; Mani et al., 2013). The third is social: parents share the optimism and condition material and emotional support on continued preparation (Akerlof and Kranton, 2000; Bernard et al., 2019). Whether these frictions reinforce one another or each bind on a distinct margin is an empirical question. Existing active labor market policy in India has emphasized skills training and search assistance, with mixed effects often eroded by high attrition (Chakravorty et al., 2024; Maitra and Mani, 2017), and none of these instruments speaks directly to the three frictions.

We provide first causal evidence on how the queue responds to interventions aimed at information, beliefs, psychological capacity, and the family environment. We conducted a randomized controlled trial with 2,097 unemployed youth aged 20 to 29 in Kanpur, a tier two industrial city in Uttar Pradesh, randomizing 150 neighborhoods (regions) and stratifying by urban and rural status. The control group (60 regions, 914 individuals) received no intervention. The first arm, T1 (30 regions, 471 individuals), delivered three group sessions on the ratio of applications to vacancies, on preparation strategies, and on private and entrepreneurial alternatives; because it bundles aggregate statistics with practical guidance, we use information as shorthand and return in Section 4 to what the bundling does and does not permit us to identify. The second arm, T2 (30 regions, 467 individuals), added five individual sessions of the World Health Organization's Problem Management Plus (PM+) protocol, a structured psychological intervention designed for

[1] Between 2014 and 2022 roughly 220 million applications were filed for federal government positions in India, and 722,000 were selected, a success rate of 0.003 percent, with most applicants attempting several cycles (Chawdhary and Dugal, 2024).

delivery by trained nonspecialists (Dawson et al., 2015; World Health Organization, 2018). The third arm, T3 (30 regions, 456 individuals), added two counseling sessions with parents. The experiment deliberately avoids financial transfers, wage subsidies, and guaranteed placement, so any estimated effect operates through beliefs, coping capacity, and family communication rather than through a change in available jobs. Because each arm adds a single component to the one before, differences between adjacent arms read off the marginal contribution of each friction.

Our outcomes are stated preferences (hypothetical choices between job types); intended waiting time (self reported maximum number of years a respondent will remain in the queue exclusively for a government job), signups (stated intentions to enroll in job training); and self reported recent activity (government examinations sat, private interviews attended, and jobs obtained). All of these, together with self reported psychological symptoms, are measured shortly after the intervention.[2] We interpret the estimates as short run changes in beliefs and aspirations, and take no strong welfare position: a reduction in intended waiting raises welfare only if the alternatives youth turn toward are in fact superior in expectation, which our data cannot establish. We treat the signup outcomes as behavioral corroboration of the stated shifts rather than as a measure of labor market transitions.

The headline result is that the cheapest arm (T1/Information) captures most of the available movement on the primary behavioral margin. At \$6.07 per participant, T1 reduces the maximum time a respondent is willing to wait exclusively for a government job by 10.3 months on average (control mean 3.79 years), shifts stated preference from public to private employment by 31 percentage points (control mean 83 percent), raises a knowledge index scored from 0 to 15 by 1.94 points, and raises signups for private sector job camps and paid internships by 12 to 14 percentage points. On these margins the pairwise Wald tests cannot separate T2 or T3 from T1 at conventional levels. On the average behavioral margin, information is nearly sufficient on its own.

The two layered modules earn their additional cost, but on different margins, and this is where the design speaks most directly to the structure of the queue. T2, at \$37.76 per participant, raises the probability of reporting no PHQ-4 depression or anxiety symptoms by 23.9 percentage points (SE 5.7, $p < 0.01$), an effect 64 percent larger than T1's and the only mental health gain to survive Westfall–Young correction within its family; the gains concentrate on the lower arousal depressive symptoms, consistent with PM+ targeting behavioral activation and problem solving rather than worry. T3, at \$47.25 per participant, produces the distinctive gains on outcomes that require moving the household: an 8.6 percentage point increase in stated willingness to relocate (the T1 effect here is indistinguishable from zero), increases of about half a year in expected ages at marriage and first birth, and the largest signup effects on private sector opportunities. Its effects on parent and youth communication point in the predicted direction but are small and do not survive multiple testing correction, so we rest the parental arm's case on the female mobility

[2]The recall window for self reported recent activity opens before delivery ends, they describe search and employment during and just after the intervention rather than durable transitions, and we read them accordingly.

and family formation results.

These patterns of treatment effects are closest to a story of separable frictions, in which each component is most informative on the constraint it is built to relax, rather than complementary frictions that reinforce one another. The reduction in intended waiting is largest under the information arm. This pattern is consistent either with information absorbing most of the available adjustment or with psychological support partially offsetting the exit pressure created by corrected beliefs. We return to these competing interpretations in Section 6.10. The substantive conclusion is that the three frictions are largely separable: information carries the expectations driven behavioral margin, the psychological module carries the wellbeing margin, and the social margin that governs female mobility moves only when parents are engaged.

Heterogeneity sharpens this conclusion and bounds it. The psychological and parental gains concentrate among women and urban youth. Among women, the full bundle raises stated willingness to relocate by 19.1 percentage points against a female control mean of 44 percent, while the implied total effect for men is statistically zero against a male control mean already near 89 percent. Male wait unemployment responds to the informational module but not to the layered components, a pattern we read as evidence that the binding constraint on young men lies in kinship obligations centered on sons that this design does not reach. Households below the poverty line show a related limit: the layered intervention does not reduce, and may sharpen, stated reliance on marriage as a fallback, suggesting that economic precarity binds beyond what counseling can relax. Both findings circumscribe the reach of the design rather than extend it.

The per participant costs are an order of magnitude below those of mainstream Indian skills programs. India's flagship DDU-GKY costs $300 to $500 per trainee (Chakravorty et al., 2024), and randomized evaluations of vocational training in Colombia and Uganda report costs in the hundreds of dollars per participant (Attanasio, Kugler, and Meghir, 2011; Alfonsi et al., 2020). Our modules are delivered by paracounselors and map onto existing infrastructure, requiring no capital investment or guaranteed placement. These figures characterize the population we study, namely unemployed college educated youth in neighborhoods of a single tier two city selected for high concentrations of joblessness. They are not a representative sample of Indian, or even of Kanpur, youth, and the responses we document could differ in settings with stronger private demand, weaker coaching cultures, or different examination systems. We therefore present the results as evidence about a specific and policy relevant population rather than as national estimates. The experiment is not primarily an evaluation of counseling. Rather, it uses experimentally varied interventions to identify which frictions causally sustain one of the largest labor market queues in the world.

The paper contributes to four literatures. To work on active labor market policy (Card, Kluve, and Weber, 2018; McKenzie, 2017; Blattman and Ralston, 2015), we offer a layered experimental design that identifies which behavioral and psychosocial mechanisms drive results in a setting where conventional training and search assistance have performed unevenly. To the aspirations literature (Appadurai, 2007; Ray, 2006; Genicot and Ray, 2017; Dalton, Ghosal, and Mani, 2016),

we contribute not the conceptual distinction between beliefs and aspirations, which is well established, but a quantification of how far each can be moved and at what cost. To work on mental health and economic choice (Schilbach, Schofield, and Mullainathan, 2016; Patel et al., 2017; Baranov et al., 2020; Bhat et al., 2022), we provide the first integration of the WHO PM+ protocol into an employment program and show that its wellbeing gains coexist with stated behavioral change. To work on household bargaining (Manser and Brown, 1980; Lundberg and Pollak, 1993; Jayachandran, 2015), we provide experimental evidence that engaging parents shifts the stated mobility and family formation choices of young women on margins that individual level treatment does not reach.

The remainder proceeds as follows. Section 2 describes the institutional setting and situates the study within the relevant literatures. Section 3 sets out the multiple barrier framework and the predictions each arm is built to test. Section 4 describes the sample, the randomization, and the intervention, and Section 5 specifies the estimating equations and the inference procedure. Section 6 reports the main results by outcome family and decomposes the layered design into the marginal contribution of each component. Section 7 examines heterogeneity by gender, caste, religion, residence, and household income. Section 8 reports cost effectiveness and scalability, and Section 9 concludes.

2 Institutional Background and Related Literature

2.1 The Public Sector Queue in North India

The object of study is not conventional unemployment generated by an absence of search effort. It is a queue: young people remain outside work while preparing for a narrow set of public sector examinations, declining jobs they could take in the meantime. Such queues are often modeled as a feature of dual economies, in which a high value formal sector is rationed and the alternative is informal or agricultural work (Harris and Todaro, 1970; Fields, 1975). The setting we study differs in a way that matters for both diagnosis and policy: the binding margin runs within the formal sector. The scarce and highly valued segment is public employment; the alternatives a young person weighs while preparing are private formal jobs and entrepreneurship; informal or own account work is an outcome some reach rather than the option they deliberate over. While preparing, a young person can study full time for public examinations, take a private formal job, or start a small business, and can in principle combine paid work with preparation. Some private opportunities additionally require moving away from home, so geographic mobility is an attribute of certain alternatives rather than a separate axis of choice; we measure willingness to relocate as an outcome below.

In North India the queue is woven into everyday life, visible in the density of coaching centers, in household savings decisions, in the way peer groups form around shared examination goals, and in marriage negotiations (Jeffrey, 2010; Dubochet, 2024), and documented in recent surveys

of youth aspirations (Mishra et al., 2018; Abdullah, Abraham, and Jain, 2024; Kapoor, 2022). College educated youth are old enough to work and have completed enough schooling to enter clerical, sales, logistics, manufacturing, teaching, and local service employment. Yet a public position is widely treated as the destination and other work as a fallback rather than a step on an occupational ladder.

Public jobs are attractive on several margins: formal contracts, regular wages, social insurance, pensions, predictable hours, protection from arbitrary dismissal, and social status. The public sector wage premium has been documented across developing country settings (Finan, Olken, and Pande, 2017; Mazumdar and Sarkar, 2020) and in India is amplified by the scarcity of formal private contracts (Kapoor, 2022). The contrast with private employment, where a large share of jobs are informal or offer thin contracts and high turnover and where young workers lack credible signals of productivity (Abebe et al., 2021), makes the public job at once an insurance product, a status good, and a household asset (Akerlof and Kranton, 2000).

An obvious objection is that queuing is only puzzling if a real alternative exists. If the private jobs available to these graduates pay poorly, offer thin contracts, or impose costs that fall disproportionately on particular groups, then waiting on a long odds lottery can be a reasonable investment rather than a behavioral anomaly. Our baseline data give this objection its due and then bound it. A majority of respondents, 56 percent, name the general lack of jobs as their main obstacle (Table A2), so perceived rationing is real. Yet the queue is not sustained by the absence of a fallback in respondents' own minds: 60 percent say they would take any job if a government position does not materialize, and only 3 percent are unwilling to leave home for work. Within the experiment, control group signup for private sector job camps and paid internships already exceeds 60 percent, and the information arm shifts both stated preferences and these signups, indicating that alternatives are perceived as feasible once made salient. We therefore read the queue as sustained in part by frictions rather than by the outright absence of alternatives, while acknowledging that we cannot compute an individual optimal stopping rule, a point Section 3 develops.

The queue has an intergenerational and a psychological structure. Parents often treat a public position as a durable guarantee that justifies years of preparation, so an intervention directed only at the youth may leave the household production of aspirations unchanged (Bernard et al., 2019; Genicot and Ray, 2017). Repeated examinations, meanwhile, create intermittent reinforcement: each notification, admit card, coaching batch, or near miss keeps the option alive, the sunk cost of preparation is large, and the social penalty for abandonment is immediate (Spinnewijn, 2015; DellaVigna et al., 2017). The decision is therefore not a simple comparison of expected wages (McCall, 1970; Mortensen, 1994) but a choice between a socially validated lottery and an occupational path that begins with visible compromise (Bryan, Chowdhury, and Mobarak, 2014).

2.2 Aspirations, Mismatch, and Job Search

Standard search models center on a reservation wage (McCall, 1970; Mortensen, 1994; Rogerson, Shimer, and Wright, 2005). In this setting the reservation object is broader: youth hold reservation thresholds over status, contract type, and location. A private job may be declined not because its wage is below subsistence but because accepting it signals the end of a socially recognized public sector track. This is aspiration mismatch: the desired occupational identity is inconsistent with the distribution of jobs actually available (Abdullah, Abraham, and Jain, 2024; OECD Development Centre, 2017). Aspirations can be productive when they motivate human capital investment but counterproductive when they anchor choices to infeasible outcomes (Appadurai, 2007; Ray, 2006; Genicot and Ray, 2017; Dalton, Ghosal, and Mani, 2016). Information helps only when mistaken beliefs are an important part of the distortion; where aspirations are sustained by anxiety, shame, family pressure, or status concerns, information alone may update beliefs without changing behavior (Beaman et al., 2012; Bernard et al., 2019). The design treats aspiration mismatch as having several sources: the information module targets mistaken beliefs about vacancies and alternatives; the PM+ module targets stress, avoidance, and low perceived agency (Dawson et al., 2015; Rahman et al., 2016); and the parental module targets the household environment that rewards waiting.

2.3 Active Labor Market Policies

Active labor market policies, spanning training, search assistance, transport subsidies, wage subsidies, and matching programs, produce heterogeneous impacts across countries (Card, Kluve, and Weber, 2018; McKenzie, 2017; Blattman and Ralston, 2015; Buchmann, Meyer, and Sullivan, 2024). The recurring lesson is that programs perform better when they address the actual constraint: if youth lack skills, training is relevant (Attanasio, Kugler, and Meghir, 2011; Alfonsi et al., 2020); if firms cannot observe ability, certification and matching are relevant (Abebe et al., 2021; Bassi and Nansamba, 2022); if youth do not know where jobs are, information and search assistance are relevant (Jensen, 2012; Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), 2022; Franklin, 2015); and if youth avoid feasible jobs because acceptance threatens identity, status, or family expectations, a purely skills based intervention misses the binding constraint (Akerlof and Kranton, 2000; Bernard et al., 2019). Indian evidence illustrates the point: DDU-GKY faces nearly 30 percent trainee attrition, and information about placements modestly improves retention but not overall employment (Chakravorty et al., 2024), while a randomized evaluation of training for women in West Bengal raises employment by five to six percentage points and roughly doubles earnings, though completion is hampered by credit and childcare constraints (Maitra and Mani, 2017). International evidence is similarly mixed: Attanasio, Kugler, and Meghir (2011) find sizeable gains in Colombia, Hirshleifer et al. (2016) report small and insignificant average effects in Turkey, and Alfonsi et al. (2020) show in Uganda that vocational training generates sustained gains when paired with certification and complementary inputs. The present experiment

deliberately avoids transfers, subsidies, and placement, isolating a set of low cost behavioral and psychosocial margins typically absent from employment policy.

2.4 Mental Health and Economic Choice

Unemployment generates anxiety, depression, low self efficacy, and avoidance (Thern et al., 2017; Paul and Moser, 2009). These symptoms are not only welfare outcomes; they constrain search. A distressed job seeker may postpone applications, avoid interviews, decline migration, or read setbacks as evidence that only the safest path is acceptable (Schilbach, Schofield, and Mullainathan, 2016; Mani et al., 2013; Haushofer and Fehr, 2014). The PM+ protocol is attractive because it is structured, brief, and deliverable by trained nonspecialists (Dawson et al., 2015; World Health Organization, 2018), and related psychological interventions have shown durable effects on mental health and economic behavior in low and middle income countries (Patel et al., 2017; Baranov et al., 2020; Bhat et al., 2022). The economic hypothesis is not that counseling creates jobs but that it changes the probability that a young person can act on information (McKelway, 2020): a participant may know that public jobs are scarce yet still be unable to discuss alternatives with parents, travel for an interview, tolerate a low status first job, or recover from examination failure. The psychological component should therefore matter most where distress and avoidance mediate the relationship between beliefs and behavior.

2.5 Family Bargaining and Youth Employment

Employment decisions in this setting are rarely made by youth alone (Manser and Brown, 1980; Lundberg and Pollak, 1993, 1996). Parents finance examination preparation, judge which jobs are acceptable, influence the timing of marriage, and shape the reputational meaning of employment (Jeffrey, 2010; Jayachandran, 2015). A young woman willing to work away from home may face mobility restrictions (Jayachandran, 2020; Field et al., 2021; Anukriti et al., 2020); a young man may be expected to remain available for household obligations (Donald et al., 2017); and a lower income household may view marriage as a fallback if public employment does not materialize (Munshi and Rosenzweig, 2009). The parental module tests whether engaging the household directly relaxes these constraints. It does not instruct parents to abandon public sector aspirations; it presents probabilities, encourages contingency planning, and structures conversations about alternative paths, building on evidence that aspirations respond to feasibility and framing (Beaman et al., 2012; Bernard et al., 2019). Whether engaging parents changes outcomes beyond the individual level modules is not obvious in advance: parents may already know that public jobs are scarce, may resist the message, or may update only once the youth also receives psychological support (Genicot and Ray, 2017; Akerlof and Kranton, 2000).

3 Conceptual Framework

This section sets out the framework that organizes the analysis. It is an organizing device rather than a structural model: we use it to state why the public sector queue is a puzzle, to classify the frictions that could sustain it, to map each treatment arm to a friction, and to generate predictions that let the data adjudicate a single question, namely whether the frictions reinforce one another or each bind on its own margin. We do not estimate the parameters that appear below; the empirical content lies entirely in the reduced form contrasts across the nested arms. Figure 1 summarizes the structure.

3.1 Why the Queue Is a Puzzle

Standard search theory has agents optimize over a reservation wage and search intensity (McCall, 1970; Mortensen, 1994). Preparing for a public examination need not be a departure from that logic: preparation builds human capital, and under sufficiently favorable beliefs about selection it can be a sensible use of a young person's time. The puzzle is therefore not that preparation has any positive return but that full time preparation persists, and available alternatives are declined, well past the point at which a wage based calculation would counsel exit. Writing V_g for the expected lifetime value of a public position and V_a for the value of the best available alternative, continued full time preparation is hard to rationalize once the perceived chance of selection, applied to V_g and net of forgone earnings and the option value of working while preparing, falls below V_a, yet many youth do not exit. The aggregate odds make this gap large for the typical applicant.[3] Three frictions could keep youth in the queue beyond that point.

3.2 Three Candidate Frictions

Cognitive: Youth may hold optimistic beliefs about their own chance of selection, $\hat{p}_g$. We are careful about the comparison. The relevant forward looking probability for a given youth is not the published aggregate rate, which pools the entire stock of applicants across repeated attempts and is not conditioned on age, education, target examination, or category. What we can say is that the stated beliefs in our sample are difficult to reconcile with aggregate rates, and that two mechanisms plausibly sustain such optimism: comprehensive data on applications and vacancies are not readily available, and salient success stories invite motivated reasoning.

[3] We do not observe the individual specific inputs, ability, category, target examination, and outside wage, needed to compute an optimal stopping point for any given youth, so we do not assert that any particular respondent waits too long. A deliberately generous calculation nonetheless fixes magnitudes. Take the most favorable per cycle selection chance among the examinations in our curriculum, roughly 1.3 percent (11.84 lakh applicants for 15,198 teaching posts; the ratios for central services, railways, and banking imply chances between 0.1 and 0.7 percent), and value a government position at double the median skilled private wage, a premium at or above published estimates (Finan, Olken, and Pande, 2017), for thirty years of service discounted at five percent, an annuity factor near fifteen. Even attributing the entire selection chance to a year of full time preparation, the expected gain is roughly two fifths of the year of skilled wages the youth forgoes. Equivalently, full time preparation would need to raise the per cycle selection chance by roughly two percentage points over preparing while working to break even, itself modestly above the aggregate selection rate.

Supplying aggregate data should move beliefs toward aggregate realism. We interpret how beliefs and stated choices respond to that information; we do not claim to have corrected any individual belief to its true value. We also use cognitive and psychological as labels for the margins each module targets, not as a claim that the underlying objects are independent: beliefs about one's own prospects are bound up with self efficacy, and revising a belief that has organized years of effort is itself an emotional event. The information module is therefore best read as a predominantly cognitive shock with psychological content.

Psychological: Prolonged joblessness generates stress, anxiety, and depression that compound over time. Let unemployment impose a nonmonetary cost $c(t)$ increasing in duration t (Spinnewijn, 2015). Distress also narrows attention and the set of jobs a youth actively considers (Schilbach, Schofield, and Mullainathan, 2016; Mani et al., 2013), so that a young person whose beliefs have been corrected may still be unable to act on them. The interaction of duration and distress can hold a youth in the queue independently of what they believe about the odds.

Social: Employment decisions here are made within households rather than by youth alone (Akerlof and Kranton, 2000; Bernard et al., 2019). Letting $\theta \in [0, 1]$ index the weight a youth places on their own preferences relative to their parents', effective utility can be written

$$U_i(j) = \theta\, U_i^{\text{own}}(j) + (1 - \theta)\, U_p(j),$$

where j indexes occupation. Parents may share the optimism or attach status value to a public position, so the household keeps a youth in the queue even where the youth alone would pivot. We display θ, $\hat{p}_g$, and $c(t)$ to organize the discussion and do not estimate them; the parental arm contrast, not the parameter, carries empirical weight.

3.3 Complementary or Separable?

The three frictions admit two sharply different readings, and distinguishing them is the central purpose of the design. Under complementarity, the frictions reinforce one another: corrected beliefs do little while distress narrows attention or while parents withhold support, so relaxing several barriers at once accomplishes more than the sum of relaxing each. Under separability, each friction binds on its own margin: information moves the margin governed by beliefs, the psychological component moves wellbeing, and engaging parents moves the household margin, so that adding components mainly extends reach to new outcomes rather than amplifying outcomes already moved.

A third possibility sits between these and follows directly from the theory. The psychological component lowers the nonmonetary cost of joblessness $c(t)$, and a lower $c(t)$ makes remaining in the queue more bearable. The psychological module can therefore offset part of the exit pressure that corrected beliefs create, either by reducing the distress that pushes youth out of

the queue or by alleviating the anxiety the unfavorable information itself induces. We call this a compensatory interaction: the components neither reinforce one another nor operate on fully independent margins, but pull the waiting margin in opposite directions. Its observable signature, a smaller reduction in intended waiting under the layered arms than under information alone, is distinct from complementarity but not from separability with exhausted adjustment, and we flag below where the data cannot tell the two apart.

The nested arms identify the marginal contribution of each component from differences between adjacent arms. Complementarity implies that the marginal effect of T2 over T1, and of T3 over T2, is positive on margins the earlier arms already move; separability implies that those marginal effects appear on new margins and are near zero on margins already absorbed by the cheaper arm. The pairwise Wald tests across arms provide the direct test, and Section 6 reports which reading the data support.

3.4 Mapping Arms to Frictions, and Predictions

T1 supplies aggregate data on applications and vacancies, moving beliefs toward aggregate realism (M_1), and conveys effective search strategies and information on alternatives (M_2). T2 adds the PM+ protocol, which targets the psychological friction by lowering $c(t)$ and restoring attention and the consideration set of acceptable jobs (M_3). T3 delivers the same information to parents and teaches communication strategies, lowering parental pressure by raising the effective weight θ on the youth's own preferences (M_4, M_5).

The framework yields four predictions, all for the short run and for the stated, intended, and self reported outcomes the design measures. First, all three arms raise knowledge of the labor market and move stated beliefs about selection. Second, all three arms reduce intended waiting and shift stated preferences toward private employment; if the cognitive friction carries this margin, information alone is close to sufficient and the layered arms add little here, and by lowering $c(t)$ the psychological component could even produce weaker reductions in intended waiting than information alone. Third, the largest and most robust gains in psychological wellbeing come from the arm that adds PM+. Fourth, gains in family communication and in stated mobility and family formation are concentrated in the arm that engages parents. Taken together, these predictions distinguish the two readings: complementarity would show the later arms amplifying margins the cheaper arm already moves, whereas separability would show specialization, with each arm doing its distinctive work on its own outcome family.

4 Data and Experimental Design

4.1 Study Setting and Sample

We conducted the RCT with unemployed youths aged 20 to 29 in Kanpur, a tier two industrial city in Uttar Pradesh whose economy spans manufacturing, services, and informal sectors and

whose administrative jurisdiction includes substantial rural hinterland (Figure A2). This allowed us to sample both urban and rural youth within a single district. The analytical sample comprises 2,097 individuals drawn from 150 neighborhoods, hereafter regions. We first consulted local administrative offices and community leaders to identify neighborhoods with high concentrations of unemployed youth, yielding 180 candidate regions, stratified by urban and rural status, from which we selected 150. Within each region we conducted a systematic listing to enumerate households with at least one eligible youth, defined as aged 20 to 29, currently unemployed, willing to participate in the labor force, and interested in public sector employment. From each eligible household we randomly selected one youth. The enumeration identified 2,308 eligible individuals who completed the baseline survey; of these, 2,097 completed both baseline and endline, an attrition rate of approximately nine percent.

Table A1 reports summary statistics for the analysis variables, and Table A2 characterizes the queue at baseline. The queue is effortful and specific. In the year before the survey, 82 percent of respondents searched for a job, three quarters sat at least one government recruitment examination and nearly a third sat two or more, the median respondent devoted 14 hours per week to preparation, and 78 percent name government job training as their main preparation activity. Targets concentrate on the examinations whose application to vacancy ratios the information module presents: among respondents preferring a government job, 34 percent target the Staff Selection Commission, 25 percent the Uttar Pradesh Police, and 24 percent the Indian Railways. Respondents perceive the competition, with 56 percent naming the lack of jobs as their main obstacle, yet the median respondent still places their confidence of landing a government position at 5 on a scale of 0 to 10.

4.2 Experimental Design and Randomization

We randomly assigned the 150 regions to four arms using a computerized random number generator, stratified by urban and rural status. The control group comprises 60 regions (914 individuals). Treatment 1 comprises 30 regions (471 individuals) receiving three group based labor market information sessions. Treatment 2 comprises 30 regions (467 individuals) receiving the Treatment 1 sessions plus five individual sessions of the WHO Problem Management Plus (PM+) protocol. Treatment 3 comprises 30 regions (456 individuals) receiving the Treatment 2 components plus two counseling sessions with parents or guardians. Region level randomization minimizes spillovers within neighborhoods and facilitates group based delivery, and stratification balances allocation across settlement types. Balance tests across baseline characteristics confirm successful randomization (Table 1), and village level characteristics are similarly balanced across arms (Table A3).

The study timeline (Figure 2) runs from the listing and baseline survey in May and June 2024, with baseline ending in August 2024, through an intervention phase from October 2024 to May 2025, to an endline survey in May and June 2025 collected immediately after the final intervention activities.

4.3 Intervention Components

4.3.1 Information Treatment

The information intervention, delivered to all three treatment arms, consists of three 90 minute group sessions over consecutive weeks in community centers, with 15 to 20 participants per session. Sessions were delivered in Hindi by graduate students in economics and social sciences after intensive training on a standardized curriculum, with weekly supervision. The curriculum addresses three knowledge gaps identified in pilot work: inaccurate beliefs about government employment probabilities, limited information about effective preparation strategies, and limited knowledge about alternative career pathways.

The first module presents application to vacancy ratios after acknowledging the benefits of government positions. For central government positions, the Union Public Service Commission received over two million applications for roughly 2,000 posts in 2021 and 2022, a ratio above 1,000 to 1. Railway recruitment received 2.37 crore applications for 1.39 lakh positions, roughly six successful candidates per thousand applicants. The Institute of Banking Personnel Selection received 5.74 lakh applications for 4,135 Probationary Officer positions and 6.59 lakh applications for 6,653 clerical positions. State level competition was comparable: Uttar Pradesh Police Constable recruitment received approximately 50 lakh applications for 60,244 positions; the Uttar Pradesh Public Service Commission received over 15 lakh applications in 2022 and 2023 for approximately 12,500 positions; and 11.84 lakh candidates applied for 15,198 teaching positions in state schools. These statistics, drawn from official recruitment notifications and major newspapers (Times of India, 2019; Hindustan Times, 2022; SSC Adda, 2025; Competitive Exam Portal, 2024; Dainik Jagran, 2023), were presented on large format posters with bar charts and infographics.

The second module addresses effective preparation strategies for those committed to government employment: regular college attendance, strategic selection of target examinations, review of syllabi and previous papers, skill acquisition beyond core subjects, and the role of coaching. It emphasized that pursuing government jobs is a legitimate choice for those with comparative advantage in examination based selection, but that even strong preparation cannot guarantee success. The third module presents alternative career pathways using Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) wage distribution data, showing that skilled private sector positions often offer starting salaries comparable to or exceeding mid level government positions; it covered the MSME Loan Scheme and the Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana, demonstrated job search websites, and provided resume guidance.[4] Participants received printed handouts and completed short knowledge assessments after each session.

Two features bear on interpretation. First, the module deliberately bundles aggregate statistics with practical guidance on preparation, search, and self employment, and this bundling is a

[4]In our sample the median respondent places the personal chance of selection at fifteen to twenty percent, far above published rates. Because aggregate rates pool the entire stock of applicants across repeated attempts and do not condition on a youth's characteristics, we frame the cognitive treatment as moving beliefs toward aggregate realism rather than as delivering each youth a correct individualized probability.

design choice rather than an artifact of delivery. The study was preregistered around a single information dissemination component focused on expectations correction and effective learning (AEA RCT Registry 0013326), and a deployable information intervention never presents discouraging odds without a constructive path: pairing the two is what a careers cell, employment exchange, or nonprofit would actually field, and labor market information moves behavior mainly when recipients also know how to act on it (Bassi and Nansamba, 2022; Carranza et al., 2022; Abebe et al., 2021). The estimand is therefore the effect of the information package, by design, rather than of a pure belief shock in isolation; the information treatment and the cognitive module refer throughout to this inexpensive package rather than to statistics alone. Second, the knowledge index decomposition shows that the package transmitted each of its components: T1 raises the vacancies and competitiveness sub index (the expectations correction content), the preparation strategies sub index (the effective learning content), and the alternative career options sub index (the alternatives content), all reported in Section 6. This establishes that each content type was absorbed; it does not by itself identify which content type drives the reduction in intended waiting, a decomposition we return to in Section 9.

4.3.2 Mental Health Counseling

Participants in Treatments 2 and 3 received the WHO PM+ intervention in addition to the information sessions. PM+ is a brief, transdiagnostic psychological intervention for delivery by non specialist providers in low resource settings; it addresses depression, anxiety, and stress through practical coping strategies and has been validated in Pakistan, Nepal, and Kenya (World Health Organization, 2018; Dawson et al., 2015; Rahman et al., 2016). The intervention consisted of five individual sessions of 30 to 40 minutes in private settings, delivered by recent graduates in psychology and social work trained under weekly supervision. Figure A1 summarizes the five module protocol and its weekly schedule. The techniques are delivered sequentially: psychoeducation (framing hopelessness, anxiety, and low mood as common reactions to prolonged unemployment rather than personal failings), stress management (slow diaphragmatic breathing with daily practice), problem solving (a seven step process distinguishing solvable from unsolvable problems), behavioral activation (weekly schedules of pleasant and meaningful activities to reverse withdrawal), and social support (reaching out to trusted others, peer support, and clearer communication of needs). Counselors maintained an empathic, non judgmental stance throughout.

4.3.3 Parental Counseling

Treatment 3 added two 90 minute counseling sessions with parents or primary guardians, conducted separately from youth sessions, with both parents jointly when possible, by the para counselors who delivered PM+ after additional training. The framing was supportive rather than critical of parental values. The first session covered information sharing and expectation alignment: facilitators acknowledged the reasons parents prefer government employment, then

presented the application to vacancy ratios used in the youth sessions, introduced PLFS wage distributions and data on entrepreneurship, and presented case studies of local entrepreneurs and subsidized credit programs. The second session moved from information to behavior change, encouraging parents to reflect on the individual child's strengths and addressing parent and child communication through active listening, expressing support before expectations, finding compromises, and celebrating effort, with role playing exercises. Parents received printed handouts summarizing statistics, counseling contacts, and communication strategies.

4.4 Data Collection and Outcomes

4.4.1 Baseline Survey

The baseline was administered to all 2,308 participants between June and August 2024, prior to random assignment, in 60 to 90 minute in person interviews by Hindi speaking enumerators. The instrument comprised seven modules. The *demographic and socioeconomic* module collected age, gender, education, field of study, religion, caste, marital status, residence, and household economic status. The *employment and job search* module recorded labor force status, unemployment duration, search intensity, application history, examination participation and results, and preparatory activities including coaching. The *aspirations and expectations* module elicited preferred sector, expected time to placement, maximum years willing to wait exclusively for government employment, acceptable job types, geographic mobility, and earnings expectations. The *parental relations* module captured communication frequency, hours in career discussions, perceived expectations, family pressure, and relationship quality. The *mental health* module used the PHQ-4 (anxiety and depression over the past two weeks) and the PSS-4 (perceived stress over the past month). The *knowledge* module used multiple choice and true or false items on job availability, application to vacancy ratios, selection probabilities, preparation strategies, and alternatives, with median participants answering fewer than 40 percent correctly at baseline. The *social norms and attitudes* module included 12 statements on gender equality in education and employment on four point Likert scales.

4.4.2 Endline Survey

The endline was administered between May and June 2025, after the final intervention activities, mirroring the baseline with additional modules for treatment specific outcomes. The *knowledge* assessment used identical items, aggregated into three standardized indices, vacancies and competitiveness (0 to 6), preparation strategies (0 to 5), and alternative career options (0 to 5), and an overall score from 0 to 15. *Mental health* was reassessed using identical PHQ-4 and PSS-4 instruments, with individual items recoded as binary indicators equal to one when the symptom is absent, plus a single item global happiness measure on a 0 to 10 scale. The *parental relations* module assessed communication frequency and hours plus endline only items on communication quality, parental understanding, perceived pressure, and support. The *expectations and waiting*

periods module assessed confidence in securing government versus private jobs (0 to 10), perceived preparedness (0 to 5), and the maximum years willing to wait exclusively for government employment, our primary behavioral outcome. The *job preferences and search behavior* module measured binary indicators of preferring government over private employment at equivalent compensation, willingness to accept lower level government positions, willingness to relocate anywhere, and having applied to private jobs or entrepreneurship programs. The *backup plans and life course* module coded fallback options and recorded expected ages at marriage and first childbirth. Finally, after the survey concluded, respondents were asked whether they would sign up, at no cost, if the research team organized four opportunities: additional information sessions, coaching classes, a job fair with private employers, and paid part time internships; Section 5.2 discusses what these intentions do and do not measure.

4.4.3 Attrition and Balance

Of 2,308 baseline respondents, 2,097 completed the endline, an attrition rate of 9.1 percent. Attrition from the control group was 10.2 percent, slightly higher than the 8.3 to 8.6 percent in the treatment arms, but pairwise differences are not statistically significant ($p > 0.15$) (Table A13). Regressions predicting attrition on treatment indicators and baseline covariates yield no significant treatment coefficients (Table A14), so attrition is uncorrelated with assignment conditional on baseline characteristics. Balanced rates can still mask compositional change if the type of respondent who leaves differs across arms; Table A15 tests this by interacting a pooled treatment indicator with each baseline characteristic in an attrition regression on the full baseline sample. Attrition is higher among non Hindu, other caste, and rural respondents, but these associations are common to treated and control groups, and none of the treatment interactions is individually significant. The composition of endline completers therefore does not differ detectably between treated and control respondents, and the main estimates control for these characteristics throughout.

Table 1 reports baseline characteristics by arm. Mean age ranges from 21.95 to 22.08 years, education from 15.21 to 15.28 years, and the proportion male from 0.42 to 0.46, with minimal variation in caste, religion, and socioeconomic indicators. Of the ninety pairwise tests, three fall below the five percent level, close to the number chance alone would generate; all estimating equations control for caste and poverty status, and the results are unchanged when these covariates are excluded. Intervention take up was high: Table A16 reports module level attendance, with the large majority of T2 and T3 participants completing the full PM+ sequence.

4.5 Outcome Variables

For multiple hypothesis testing we organize outcomes into seven families: (1) knowledge and information; (2) mental health and wellbeing; (3) parental relations and communication; (4) gender norms and attitudes; (5) expectations and waiting periods; (6) job preferences and search

behavior; (7) backup plans and life course. Family level item composition follows the endline modules above.

5 Empirical Strategy

We estimate intent to treat effects using ordinary least squares:

$$Y_{ir} = \alpha + \beta_1 T1_r + \beta_2 T2_r + \beta_3 T3_r + \mathbf{X}'_{ir}\gamma + \epsilon_{ir}, \tag{1}$$

where Y_{ir} is the endline outcome for individual i in region r, $T1_r$, $T2_r$, and $T3_r$ are binary treatment indicators, and $\mathbf{X}_{ir}$ includes baseline covariates: age, education, gender, religion, caste, rural status (the stratification variable), and below poverty line status. Standard errors are clustered at the region level. Because treatment is assigned at the region level, the specification includes no region fixed effects, which would be collinear with the treatment indicators; the urban and rural stratification enters through the rural covariate. The coefficients β_1, β_2, and β_3 capture average treatment effects relative to control, and we report pairwise Wald tests for the incremental effects of mental health and parental counseling. Given successful randomization, baseline covariates serve to improve precision rather than correct imbalance. We estimate linear probability models for binary outcomes; average marginal effects from logit and probit, reported in Appendix A.1, are quantitatively indistinguishable.

We adjust for multiple comparisons using the Westfall–Young stepdown resampling procedure, reporting adjusted p values within the outcome families above. Appendix A reports minimum detectable effects for the principal null findings. Heterogeneous effects are explored by interacting treatment indicators with gender, caste, religion, residence, BPL status, and social desirability. We estimate treatment effects on four placebo outcomes, Left Handed, Twin Child, First Born is Female, and Has Asthma; Table 10 reports no significant effect on any placebo under clustered or randomization inference. An epilepsy indicator originally included is excluded because it is nearly constant, which makes both randomization inference and maximum likelihood degenerate. We probe mechanisms in Section 6.10 by differencing adjacent arms to isolate the marginal effect of each component.

5.1 Preregistered and Exploratory Analyses

The trial was registered with the AEA RCT Registry (trial 0013326) on October 8, 2024, after the baseline and before intervention delivery and endline collection. The registration listed the arms and the primary and secondary outcome domains but did not include a formal analysis plan. A single update on May 27, 2025 corrected administrative fields, the trial start and intervention end dates, and the ethics approval details, and narrowed the outcome list slightly; no outcome was added after the initial registration. The seven outcome families of Section 4.5 correspond to registered domains. Several registered domains are not analyzed here: time use,

income and economic activities, happiness and life satisfaction, empowerment and autonomy, satisfaction measures, risk and time preferences, and trust and reciprocity. Because the registration contained no analysis plan, the pairwise comparisons, the heterogeneity analyses, the mechanism decomposition of Section 6.10, the placebo battery, and the cost effectiveness calculations should be read as exploratory. The Westfall–Young corrections within registered families provide the principal guard against selective reporting.

5.2 Threats to Interpretation

Experimenter demand and social desirability: Several outcomes, including stated preferences, knowledge scores, and intended waiting, are self reported and therefore potentially vulnerable to demand or social desirability bias. Three pieces of evidence bound this concern. First, the heterogeneity analysis by measured proneness to social desirability (Table A10) shows the information arm's effect on the composite index is inflated among respondents scoring high on the Marlowe Crowne scale, while the effects of the two intensive arms are not. Second, the placebo tests (Table 10) show null effects on outcomes no intervention should move, ruling out indiscriminate acquiescence, though not targeted demand on outcomes respondents correctly guess to be the study's focus. Third, several estimates run in directions a respondent eager to please would not choose, such as the higher stated confidence in landing a government job under T3 and the weaker reductions in intended waiting under the layered arms, and the effects are heterogeneous in theoretically predicted directions, most visibly the large female mobility response alongside a precisely estimated male null.

What signup measures: The signup module records answers to four concrete offers read out after the survey concluded, whether the respondent would sign up if the research team organized, at no cost, additional information sessions, coaching classes, a private sector job camp, and paid part time internships. Because subsequent funding did not materialize the events were not held, so no attendance data exist; the signups are stated intentions elicited under a concrete and actionable framing rather than behavioral commitments, and we label them accordingly, treating them as corroboration of the stated preference results under a different elicitation frame. The questions were administered after the survey concluded and respondents understood that no compensation was contingent on their answers, which weakens transactional demand stories but not reciprocity based ones in which gratitude scales with treatment intensity.

Delivery mode: The arms differ not only in content but in delivery: the information sessions are group based, while PM+ and the parental sessions are individual. Content and delivery mode are therefore collinear by construction, and part of the wellbeing gain attributed to PM+ could reflect the value of sustained individual attention rather than the protocol itself. The design cannot separate the two; the policy relevant object is the delivered package, protocol plus its prescribed individual format, which is how PM+ is specified by the WHO (Dawson et al., 2015).

Timing of the endline: The endline was fielded immediately after the final intervention activities, so all primary outcomes are measured at a lag of two weeks to one month. This timing was deliberate: the estimands of interest are the mechanism level objects the arms target, beliefs, symptoms, intentions, and household communication, and measuring them before the next cycle of examination notifications, results, and seasonal migration allows the treatment contrasts to be read without contamination from those common shocks. The cost is that we cannot distinguish durable change from a transient movement in optimism or mood. The signup module is the closest the design comes to evidence that the stated shifts are not purely transient, though it remains an intention rather than a commitment, and we return to persistence in Section 9.

6 Results

Three findings organize the section. First, all three arms update beliefs about the labor market and shift stated preferences toward private work by 23 to 26 percentage points. Second, the information module alone reduces intended waiting for government employment by 10.3 months on average, and the layered arms produce smaller reductions on this margin, a pattern consistent both with information alone absorbing most of the available adjustment and with the compensatory interaction of Sections 3 and 6.10. Third, the additional cost of PM+ buys psychological wellbeing gains that information alone does not deliver, and the additional cost of parental counseling buys gains on mobility, family communication, family formation timing, and signups for private sector opportunities that PM+ alone does not deliver. Each module is most informative on the constraint it is designed to relax.

We discuss results in seven families. Tables 2–10 report point estimates, standard errors clustered at the region level, randomization inference p values, and Westfall–Young q values that adjust for multiple comparisons within each family, with pairwise Wald tests of equality across arms reported throughout. Before turning to treatment effects, the descriptive shape of the queue fixes what is at stake. At baseline (Table A2), three quarters of respondents had sat at least one government examination in the preceding year, median confidence of selection stood at 5 on a scale of 0 to 10 against aggregate odds below one percent, and only a quarter of young women were willing to move anywhere for a job, against two thirds of young men, foreshadowing the mobility margin that responds only to the layered arms. Two control group patterns motivate the design. Figure 3 reports why a government job is so widely sought: job security and the package of benefits dominate, together roughly three quarters of responses, with pensions, social status, and marriage market returns making up the remainder, so the valuation is anchored in insurance and status rather than wage levels. Figure 4 reports why applications accumulate even for low level posts: the leading answers are the general scarcity of work and an undifferentiated preference for public employment, with smaller shares citing limited information and social pressure. The control group thus already perceives the competition yet continues to queue.

6.1 Knowledge and Information

Table 2 reports treatment effects on the knowledge index. The overall score (0 to 15) rises by 1.94 points under T1 (SE 0.20), 2.74 points under T2 (SE 0.19), and 2.57 points under T3 (SE 0.22), against a control mean of 8.87. All three effects are significant at 1% under clustered and randomization inference and survive Westfall–Young correction at $q < 0.001$. The decomposition is informative. On vacancies and competitiveness (0 to 6, control mean 2.24), T1 produces 0.83 points (SE 0.08), T2 1.29 points (SE 0.09), and T3 1.08 points (SE 0.12), and the Wald test rejects $T1 = T2$ at $p < 0.001$, so PM+ enhances absorption of the labor market statistics. On preparation strategies (0 to 5, control mean 2.97), the three arms produce effectively identical gains of 0.53, 0.64, and 0.61 and are indistinguishable ($T1 = T3$, $p = 0.337$). On alternative career options (0 to 5, control mean 3.66), T3 produces the largest gain at 0.88 points (SE 0.07), separable from T1 at $p = 0.003$, consistent with the parental module emphasizing alternative pathways. All arms update beliefs, and the prediction that PM+ amplifies belief updating is supported on the vacancy sub index but not on every component.

6.2 Expectations and Waiting Periods

Table 3 reports the primary behavioral outcome. The maximum years a respondent is willing to wait exclusively for a government job falls by 0.86 years under T1 (SE 0.25, $p < 0.01$), 0.53 years under T2 (SE 0.24, $p < 0.05$), and 0.34 years under T3 (SE 0.21, $p > 0.10$), against a control mean of 3.79 years; the cheapest arm shortens intended wait unemployment by 10.3 months on average. The Wald test rejects $T1 = T3$ at $p = 0.055$: the layered arms produce smaller effects on this margin, and Section 6.10 discusses the two readings of this attenuation the design cannot separate. Randomization inference confirms the T1 effect at $p = 0.002$ and the T2 effect at $p = 0.037$, with a Westfall–Young q of 0.005. Confidence in securing a government job is lower under T1 (coefficient −0.16, SE 0.18) and higher under T3 (0.10, SE 0.15), though the Wald test does not separate them ($p = 0.168$), consistent with T1 puncturing the optimistic prior without supplying an alternative belief while T3 reframes the choice set. Perceived preparedness for government jobs falls in all three arms (−0.26, −0.17, −0.18 on a 0 to 5 scale, all $p < 0.10$ or better): the realism the curriculum induces survives the addition of PM+ and parental counseling.

6.3 Job Preferences and Search Behavior

Table 4 reports effects on stated preferences and mobility. All three arms shift preferences out of the public sector by economically large amounts. The probability of preferring a government job at equivalent compensation falls by 31 pp under T1 (SE 4.1 pp), 27 pp under T2 (SE 4.6 pp), and 32 pp under T3 (SE 4.4 pp), against a control mean of 83 percent, and the probability of preferring a private job rises by 23 to 26 pp (control mean 13 percent). Wald tests fail to separate the arms on either margin ($T1 = T3$ on government preference, $p = 0.859$): for the binary preference shift, information alone is essentially sufficient.

Geographic mobility tells a different story. The probability of being willing to relocate anywhere rises by 1.8 pp under T1 (SE 3.2 pp, indistinguishable from zero), 7.2 pp under T2 (SE 3.0 pp, $p < 0.05$), and 8.6 pp under T3 (SE 3.7 pp, $p < 0.05$), against a control mean of 64 percent. The Wald tests for $T1 = T2$ ($p = 0.128$) and $T1 = T3$ ($p = 0.108$) do not reject equality at conventional levels, but the T1 coefficient is indistinguishable from zero under randomization inference ($p = 0.575$) while T2 and T3 are robustly positive ($p = 0.015$ and $p = 0.027$). Mobility is the first margin on which the layered arms separate from information alone, consistent with the second prediction. Within stated government job preferences, the share preferring higher level positions falls by 17 pp under T1, 21 pp under T2, and 11 pp under T3 (control mean 52 percent), consistent with respondents reorganizing their aspirations toward more attainable positions once shown the application to vacancy ratios.

Panel B turns from stated preferences to reported activity, and three features govern how we read it: the measures are self reported over a six month recall window that opens in late 2024 and so overlaps the delivery period, and they are not verified against administrative records. Because treated and control respondents are asked over the same window, the arm versus control differences remain valid intent to treat contrasts, but they describe activity during and shortly after delivery rather than durable post treatment placement; we read Panel B as corroborating that the reorientation toward private work is accompanied by more private sector activity over the same period, not as a lasting employment effect (Section 5.2 discusses the timing). Government examinations sat are essentially unchanged across arms, at 0.03, 0.03, and 0.07 additional sittings against a control mean of 1.42, none significant under randomization inference, so in the short run treated youth do not exit the queue by sitting fewer examinations. What moves is private sector activity. Reported private interviews rise by 0.220 under T1 (SE 0.054, $p < 0.01$), 0.162 under T2 (SE 0.047, $p < 0.01$), and 0.096 under T3 (SE 0.042, $p < 0.05$), against a control mean of 0.308, and the Wald test rejects $T1 = T3$ at $p = 0.045$, the same ordering seen on intended waiting. The probability of reporting any employment obtained rises by 19.5, 17.0, and 15.5 pp against a control mean of 14.6 percent, and reporting a private job specifically rises by 17.4, 16.1, and 16.1 pp against a control mean of 12.2 percent, all $p < 0.01$ and surviving Westfall–Young correction at $q \leq 0.001$. Read with the unchanged examination sittings, the picture is one of added private search and employment alongside, rather than in place of, continued public sector preparation.

6.4 Mental Health and Wellbeing

Table 5 reports effects on mental health, using PHQ-4 and PSS-4 items recoded as binary indicators equal to one when the symptom is absent. The probability of reporting no PHQ-4 depression or anxiety symptoms rises by 14.6 pp under T1 (SE 6.9 pp, $p < 0.05$), 23.9 pp under T2 (SE 5.7 pp, $p < 0.01$), and 9.8 pp under T3 (SE 6.6 pp, not significant), against a control mean of 49 percent. The T2 estimate is the largest in the family and the only one to survive Westfall–

Young correction at $q < 0.01$. The Wald test for $T2 = T3$ returns $p = 0.058$: adding parental counseling does not amplify the mental health gain, and on the composite PHQ-4 measure the T3 effect collapses to a magnitude indistinguishable from zero.[5] The PSS-4 no stress indicator is flat across arms, so the gains operate through symptom reduction rather than altered self perceived stress.

The individual items provide a finer reading. The probability of reporting no down or depressed mood rises by 11.2 pp, 13.4 pp, and 9.7 pp (all $p < 0.05$); no low interest by 8.2 pp under T1 (ns), 21.0 pp under T2 ($p < 0.01$), and 12.6 pp under T3 ($p < 0.05$); and no worry by 5.1, 10.3 ($p < 0.05$), and 8.7 pp ($p < 0.05$). The largest single item effects fall on the lower arousal symptoms rather than nervousness, consistent with PM+ targeting behavioral activation and problem solving. The external locus of control measure rises by 1.69 points under T1 ($p < 0.10$), 2.94 points under T2 ($p < 0.01$), and 3.01 points under T3 ($p < 0.01$), the direction the PM+ psychoeducation module is designed to push, while the internal locus measure falls under T1 (-0.69, $p < 0.10$) and is flat under the layered arms, consistent with reattributing joblessness away from personal failing; among PSS-4 items the sense of coping strengthens under the two intensive arms (0.05 under T2 and 0.06 under T3, $p < 0.10$ or better under randomization inference) even as the composite PSS-4 indicator remains flat.

The third prediction is partially confirmed and partially refined. T2 dominates on the composite PHQ-4 measure. T1 produces a smaller but nontrivial gain the information module was not specifically designed to deliver, consistent with the point that belief revision is not a purely cognitive event: learning that the structure of the queue, rather than personal inadequacy, explains prolonged joblessness relieves self blame, and the parallel movement in external locus of control across all three arms points the same way. T3 does not amplify the T2 gain, a pattern we read in conjunction with the parental relations and family formation results below.

Panel B of Table 5 collects a global happiness measure, affective items, social connectedness, and survey based economic preferences. The mental health gains do not extend to global affect: happiness, uncertainty, and hopelessness show no movement that survives correction, and the single item happiness measure is flat (-0.16, 0.06, and -0.29, none significant), so the Panel A improvements are specific to PHQ-4 symptoms. The one robust result is social connectedness, which rises by 0.863 under T3 (SE 0.287, $p < 0.01$) against a control mean of 3.62, survives Westfall–Young at $q = 0.013$, and is absent under T1 and T2, fitting the parental arm operating on the social margin. The economic preferences are, with one exception, unmoved, which is reassuring; the exception is a T3 increase in stated risk tolerance (0.495, SE 0.237, $p < 0.05$ under randomization inference) that does not survive the family wise correction and that we treat as suggestive.

[5] This null is not precisely estimated; see Appendix A for minimum detectable effects.

6.5 Parental Relations and Communication

Table 6 reports effects on five measures of parent and youth communication, the cleanest verification of the fourth prediction. T1 produces no significant change on any margin. T2 produces small positive movements on sharing feelings (0.05), discussing ambitions (0.02), and discussing alternative job opportunities (0.17), none conventionally significant. T3 produces the largest effects: a 0.18 point increase in discussing government job difficulty ($p < 0.10$), a 0.17 point increase in discussing alternatives (ns), and a 0.11 point increase in sharing feelings (ns), against control means around 1.9, and the Wald test for $T1 = T3$ on sharing feelings is rejected at $p = 0.015$. The structure, zero from T1, weakly positive from T2, largest from T3, is what the framework predicts, though within the family wise correction no individual outcome survives at conventional levels, so we read the results as suggestive of small but directionally consistent improvements, with power constrained by baseline dispersion.

6.6 Backup Plans and Family Formation

Table 7 reports effects on fallback plans and on expected ages at marriage and first birth. All three arms reduce the probability of naming marriage as a fallback by 6.0, 4.1, and 5.6 pp, all $p < 0.05$ or better against a control mean of 9.6 percent. T1 produces the largest increase in naming self employment as a fallback (9.4 pp, $p < 0.01$), with T2 and T3 smaller (4.5 and 5.3 pp, $p < 0.10$); reliance on further education is unchanged. Family formation timing shifts only under the layered treatments: expected age at marriage rises by 0.04 years under T1 (ns), 0.40 years under T2 ($p < 0.10$), and 0.45 years under T3 ($p < 0.05$), against a control mean of 26.6, and expected age at first birth by 0.28 years under T1 (ns), 0.31 years under T2 (ns), and 0.56 years under T3 ($p < 0.05$), against a control mean of 28.7. Both family formation outcomes survive Westfall–Young correction, consistent with PM+ and especially parental counseling expanding the perceived feasibility of waiting before family formation, which is distinct from the unconditional reduction in marriage as fallback that all three arms generate.

6.7 Gender Norms and Attitudes

Table 8 reports effects on twelve gender equality statements, each coded so that lower values indicate more progressive attitudes. T1 produces no detectable shift on any of the twelve. T2 and T3 each move attitudes in the progressive direction on eight to ten items, with effects between 0.10 and 0.26 scale units and most significant at 5 or 1 percent. The largest movements connect government job preparation to family obligations: endorsement that household work should be shared equally strengthens by 0.23 units under T2 and 0.21 under T3 (control mean 1.54, $p < 0.01$); that support for preparation should be equal across sons and daughters by 0.15 to 0.21 units; that parents would understand a non government outcome by 0.19 units under T2 and 0.26 under T3 ($p < 0.01$); and that the inability to secure a government job would not be the end of the world by 0.18 units (T2) and 0.15 units (T3). The pattern is consistent with PM+ and the parental

module reducing the perceived conditioning of family approval on public sector employment, corroborated by the gender heterogeneity analysis in Section 7.

6.8 Sign-up Intentions

Table 9 reports stated signup rates for four opportunities, the corroboration of the stated preference results under a concrete elicitation frame (Section 5.2 discusses what signup does and does not measure). For free additional information sessions, 71 percent of the control group state they would sign up; T1 raises this by 14.0 pp ($p < 0.10$), T2 by 9.1 pp (ns), and T3 by 14.7 pp ($p < 0.01$). For free coaching (control mean 73 percent) the effects are 12.1 pp ($p < 0.10$), 7.3 pp (ns), and 14.0 pp ($p < 0.05$). The two most informative about preference shifts are the private sector job camp and the paid internship. Signup at the camp rises by 13.2 pp under T1 ($p < 0.05$), 11.0 pp under T2 ($p < 0.05$), and 20.6 pp under T3 ($p < 0.01$), against a control mean of 63 percent; signup at internships by 12.3 pp ($p < 0.10$), 9.8 pp ($p < 0.10$), and 17.5 pp ($p < 0.01$), against a control mean of 64 percent. All four survive Westfall–Young correction at $q \leq 0.02$. The Wald tests do not reject $T1 = T3$ on the private sector outcomes, but T3 produces the largest point estimate on all four margins, a fact consistent both with the parental channel operating and with reciprocity toward the most intensive treatment; because the signups were elicited after the survey and after respondents understood no compensation was contingent on them, transactional demand is weakened but reciprocity is not, and we cannot fully separate the two.

6.9 Placebo Outcomes

Table 10 reports treatment effects on four outcomes that should not respond to the intervention: Left Handed, Twin Child, First Born is Female, and Has Asthma. None of the twelve coefficients is significant at conventional levels under clustered or randomization inference, and the joint test of zero treatment effect returns p values between 0.317 and 0.821 across the family.

6.10 Mechanisms

The pattern of average treatment effects has three components. On the informational and primary behavioral margins, knowledge, stated public versus private preference, and intended waiting, the information module alone is essentially sufficient: T1 produces effects between 60 and 110 percent of those produced by the layered arms, and the retrospective private sector interview and employment measures in Table 4 Panel B pattern the same way, subject to the recall window caveat. On the psychological margin, PHQ-4 symptoms, depressed mood, and anhedonia, the PM+ module produces gains information alone does not. On the social margins, geographic mobility, parent and youth communication, gender norms, family formation timing, and signups for private sector opportunities, the parental module produces the largest gains.

The nested structure lets the total effect of the most intensive arm be decomposed into the marginal contribution of each successive component. Because Treatment 1 delivers information only, Treatment 2 adds mental health counseling, and Treatment 3 adds parental counseling, the arm versus control effects satisfy the identity $\widehat{\tau}_3 \equiv \widehat{\tau}_1 + (\widehat{\tau}_2 - \widehat{\tau}_1) + (\widehat{\tau}_3 - \widehat{\tau}_2)$, where $(\widehat{\tau}_2 - \widehat{\tau}_1)$ measures the marginal contribution of the mental health component and $(\widehat{\tau}_3 - \widehat{\tau}_2)$ that of the parental component. This is an exact accounting identity, not an estimated model. Reading each difference as the *causal* contribution of the corresponding component additionally requires that the components do not interact; we adopt this additivity assumption, consistent with the nested randomization but not testable without re estimation, and present the decomposition as descriptive. We make no inferential claim from the adjacent arm differences: the statistical significance that supports the mechanism reading is the arm versus control inference reported in Table 2 and following.

The decomposition exhibits a clear separation across margins. On mental health, the share reporting no depression or anxiety rises by 14.6 points under information alone and by 23.9 points under information plus mental health counseling, so the implied marginal contribution of the mental health component is +9.3 points. On intended waiting, information alone produces the largest reduction, 0.86 years, while the more intensive arms produce smaller reductions (0.53 and 0.34 years), so the implied marginal contribution of the mental health component is +0.33 years (about four months), an *attenuation* of the information induced reduction rather than an addition to it. Two readings of that attenuation are observationally equivalent here. Under the first, information alone has already absorbed most of the available adjustment, and the smaller layered effects reflect a shrinking residual. Under the second, the compensatory interaction operates: PM+ lowers the distress cost of joblessness or relieves the anxiety the statistics induce, offsetting part of the information driven exit pressure. The positive sign and nontrivial magnitude of the implied marginal contribution is what the compensatory reading predicts, but a factorial design would be needed to separate the two. Either way the substantive conclusion is unchanged, information is the binding instrument, though the compensatory reading implies the frictions are separable in their target outcomes while interacting on the waiting margin.

The parental component's implied marginal contribution is small and of mixed sign on the pooled outcomes (−14.1 points on the no depression indicator, +1.4 points on willingness to relocate), and we draw no conclusion from these pooled differences in isolation. Its role emerges in the heterogeneity analysis: the Treatment 3 effect on willingness to relocate is 19.1 points among women against a precisely estimated null among men (Section 7). We attribute the female mobility result to the layered design as informed by this heterogeneity pattern, not to an isolated within female adjacent arm contrast. The decomposition reorganizes the main results into a single statement that the three barriers bind for distinct outcomes rather than reinforcing one another on a common margin, with the possible compensatory interaction on the waiting margin as the one qualified exception. We do not report formal causal mediation decompositions, because the mediators are not randomly assigned; the nested randomization places the identification burden

on randomization alone, which we regard as the more credible basis for the mechanism reading.

7 Heterogeneity and Robustness

We estimate interacted specifications across six dimensions: gender, caste, religion, residence, household income, and social desirability (Tables A5 through A10). Two regularities organize the findings. Informational effects are uniform across identity groups and respond to T1 alone. Psychological and parental effects are concentrated among women and urban youth.

7.1 Gender

Gender produces the largest interactions in the analysis (Table A5). Among women, T2 raises stated willingness to relocate by 0.148 ($p < 0.01$) and T3 by 0.191 ($p < 0.01$), against a female control mean of 0.440. The (T3) $\times$ Male interaction is -0.233 ($p < 0.01$), so the implied total male effect is -0.042 and statistically zero. The male control mean of 0.886 is near the ceiling, but male Wald tests cannot separate any arm from any other ($T1 = T3$, $p = 0.989$), so attenuation alone does not account for the asymmetry. For women, Wald tests reject $T1 = T3$ on the Overall index ($p = 0.004$), Willingness to Move ($p = 0.027$), and Maximum Wait Time ($p = 0.044$). The same pattern holds on adjacent margins: on stated probability of a government job, women revise downward by 0.334 and 0.386 under T2 and T3 ($p < 0.01$), with male interactions of 0.138 and 0.151 ($p < 0.05$) implying male revisions roughly 40 percent smaller; on Maximum Wait Time the female T1 effect is -0.798 years ($p < 0.01$), with imprecise T2 and T3 increments because women absorb most of the informational adjustment under T1. On marriage as a fallback, women reduce reliance by 0.066 to 0.092 across all arms ($p < 0.05$), while (T1) $\times$ Male and (T3) $\times$ Male interactions of 0.072 ($p < 0.05$) and 0.080 ($p < 0.01$) imply zero net male effect. T3 raises women's expected age at marriage by 0.553 years and at first birth by 0.801 years ($p < 0.05$), both negligible for men once interactions are added. Treatment moves women on every behavioral margin measured; treatment moves men only through the informational arm, and only modestly.

7.2 Caste

Caste does not moderate the information channel (Table A6). All (Info. Only) $\times$ General Category interactions are statistically zero, including on stated probability of a government job (-0.006, SE 0.062) and Maximum Wait Time (-0.015, SE 0.320). The layered treatments are nonetheless separable from information alone in both caste groups: for other castes the Wald tests on the Overall index return $p = 0.005$ for $T1 = T2$ and $p = 0.020$ for $T1 = T3$; for General Category respondents $p < 0.001$ and $p = 0.039$. Two interactions modulate the response: the (Info. + MH) $\times$ GC coefficient on aspirations for higher level government jobs is 0.184 ($p < 0.10$), and the (Info. + MH + PC) $\times$ GC interaction on the broader government job belief is 0.110 ($p < 0.10$), so General Category youth absorb information at the same rate but revise

their aspirational ceiling less; the (Info. + MH) × GC interaction on expected age at first birth is −0.516 ($p < 0.10$), pointing the same way on the demographic timing margin.

7.3 Religion

The sample is 88 percent Hindu and the non Hindu estimates are imprecise (Table A7). The (Info. + MH + PC) × Hindu interaction on Willingness to Move is 0.291 ($p < 0.01$) and on Maximum Wait Time 0.914 ($p < 0.10$). The Hindu interactions on government job probability under T2 (0.212, $p < 0.05$) and T3 (0.154, $p < 0.10$) imply smaller belief revisions among Hindus, and the (Info. + MH + PC) × Hindu interaction on expected age at marriage is 0.916 ($p < 0.10$). Given the minority sample size we report these patterns without relying on them.

7.4 Rural and Urban Residence

Residence heterogeneity is reported in Table A8. The (Info. + MH) × Rural interaction on the Overall index is −0.928 ($p < 0.05$), the largest interaction in absolute value: information benefits both groups, but PM+ adds less for rural respondents. The within rural Wald tests still reject $T1 = T2$ at $p = 0.037$ and $T1 = T3$ at $p = 0.026$, but the gradient is flatter than in the urban sample. On Willingness to Move, T2 produces 0.101 among rural youth ($T1 = T2$ rejected at $p = 0.029$) and T3 produces 0.148 among urban youth ($p < 0.01$, $T2 = T3$ rejected at $p = 0.023$). The (Info. + MH) × Rural interaction on aspirations for higher level government jobs is −0.228 ($p < 0.10$), and rural interactions on Maximum Wait Time are negative across all arms (from −0.298 to −0.510) but imprecise.

7.5 Household Income

Heterogeneity by household poverty status is reported in Table A9. The non-BPL effects under T1 are uniformly large: the Overall index rises by 1.898 ($p < 0.01$), government job probability falls by 0.317 ($p < 0.01$), and Maximum Wait Time falls by 0.824 years ($p < 0.01$). The (Info. Only) × BPL interaction on aspirations for higher level government jobs is 0.319 ($p < 0.05$), and the interactions on expected age at marriage (−0.644) and first birth (−0.755) are significant at $p < 0.10$: BPL households revise less under information alone. The (Info. + MH) × BPL coefficient on reliance on marriage as a fallback is 0.097 ($p < 0.01$), reversing the sign of the base effect, with the within-BPL Wald test of $T1 = T2$ returning $p < 0.001$. For the BPL group the layered Wald tests on the Overall index are weaker than for the non-BPL group, so the marginal value of T2 and T3 over T1 is less reliably detected when economic constraints bind.

7.6 Social Desirability Bias

We split the sample by the Marlowe-Crowne Short Form C score (Table A10). The (Info. Only) × SDS High interaction on the Overall index is 0.794 ($p < 0.01$) and on Willingness to Move

0.135 ($p < 0.05$). The (Info. + MH) × SDS High and (Info. + MH + PC) × SDS High interactions are statistically zero across all ten outcomes. The T1 effect on the composite index is inflated by social desirability by roughly 0.4 to 0.8 standard deviations; the layered T2 and T3 effects are not. The treatment effect share that survives an SDS adjustment is concentrated in the psychological and parental modules.

7.7 Non-linear Effects

The linear probability estimates in the main text are reproduced as average marginal effects from logit and probit. Tables B1 to B5 report the logit estimates and Tables B6 to B10 the probit estimates, for every binary outcome in Tables 4, 5, 7, 9, and 10. Across all outcomes the sign, magnitude, and significance of each treatment arm match the linear probability coefficients, so none of the headline results depends on the linear functional form.

8 Cost-Effectiveness

Table A11 reports the implementation cost of each arm in USD, separated into fixed and variable components. Total program costs are $2,860 for Treatment 1, $17,632 for Treatment 2, and $21,548 for Treatment 3, corresponding to a cost per treated participant of $6.07, $37.76, and $47.25. The incremental cost of adding PM+ is roughly $31.69 per participant, driven almost entirely by the training, travel, and time of para counsellors delivering five individual sessions; adding two parental sessions costs a further $9.50 per participant. These per capita figures are an order of magnitude below mainstream Indian skills programs: per trainee costs in DDU-GKY typically exceed $300 to $500 (Chakravorty et al., 2024), and randomized vocational training evaluations in Colombia and Uganda report per participant costs in the hundreds of dollars (Attanasio, Kugler, and Meghir, 2011; Alfonsi et al., 2020).

8.1 Cost per Unit of Outcome

Table A12 translates the endline effects into cost-effectiveness ratios. Three patterns emerge. First, on belief updating outcomes, Treatment 1 is the most cost-effective arm: at $6.07 per participant it buys a 1.94 point gain on the 15 point knowledge index ($3.13 per point), a 25.6 percentage point shift toward private preference ($0.24 per point), and a 10.3 month reduction in intended waiting ($0.59 per month averted), and the Wald tests fail to separate T2 or T3 from T1 on the primary behavioral margins, so the cheapest arm captures the bulk of the adjustment there. Second, Treatment 2 is the only cost-effective option on mental health margins: at $1.58 per percentage point of no depression improvement it dominates both T1 and T3, where the mental health gain is statistically zero. Third, Treatment 3 is the cost-effective choice on outcomes that require shifting the household, female mobility, communication about alternatives, and delayed family formation: the full bundle costs $5.49 per percentage point of additional willingness to

relocate against $5.24 for T2 and a zero effect for T1, and among women the incremental T3 gain over T2 on Willingness to Move is 0.043, so the marginal $9.50 buys 4.3 percentage points of additional mobility in the subpopulation for which the parental channel binds. Each module is therefore most cost-effective on the margin it is designed to relax: for a planner targeting aggregate wait unemployment, T1 dominates; for one weighting psychological wellbeing or targeting women and urban youth, the marginal spending on PM+ and parental counseling buys gains information alone does not deliver.

8.2 Scalability

Three features support scalability. First, none of the arms requires specialist personnel: information sessions were delivered by graduate students with standardized training and PM+ by recent psychology and social work graduates under weekly supervision, the configuration for which the WHO protocol was designed (Dawson et al., 2015) and under which it has been validated in Pakistan, Nepal, and Kenya. In India the ASHA cadre, Anganwadi workers, and the Model Career Centres of the Ministry of Labour supply community based personnel who could deliver the information and PM+ modules after short training. Second, marginal costs are low: the marginal cost of additional T1 participants is dominated by pamphlets at $0.36 per household, since sessions are delivered in groups of 15 to 20, and fixed and semi fixed costs account for roughly 47 percent of T1 expenditure and amortize at scale; spreading fixed costs over 10,000 beneficiaries reduces the per capita cost of T1 below $3.50 and of T3 to roughly $35, approaching the cost of a single community health worker visit. Third, the modules map onto existing programs: the information module can enter Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana and DDU-GKY curricula, where Chakravorty et al. (2024) show information provision modestly improves retention, and the PM+ module is consistent with the National and District Mental Health Programmes, which already deploy lay counsellors. None of the modules requires capital investment, technology infrastructure, or guaranteed placement, the common bottlenecks in scaling active labor market policy in low and middle income settings (McKenzie, 2017; Card, Kluve, and Weber, 2018).

Two limits apply. The psychological and parental modules generate their largest gains for women and urban youth, so universal scale up would generate smaller per capita effects to the extent that marginal regions resemble the rural, male skewed, or low income subgroups. And the program operates on the supply side of beliefs and aspirations; it does not create private sector vacancies, so its effect on realized employment, as distinct from intended waiting and stated search, is bounded above by the absorptive capacity of the local private labor market. A natural complement is the introduction of demand side instruments, wage subsidies, vacancy information platforms, and formal matching, in locations where the modules have already shifted youth and household preferences.

9 Conclusion

This paper has reported a cluster randomized controlled trial that decomposes the cognitive, psychological, and social frictions sustaining wait unemployment in north India. The progressive layering of treatments identifies the marginal contribution of each module, and the estimates have the structure the multi barrier framework predicts: each module is most informative on the constraint it is designed to relax.

The substantive content is not which treatment works but what the magnitudes teach about wait unemployment as an economic object. The cognitive friction carries the bulk of the average behavioral adjustment: a three session information curriculum at $6.07 per participant reduces intended waiting by 10.3 months and shifts stated preferences and signup intentions from public to private employment by margins the layered arms do not significantly exceed. The implication is not that PM+ and parental counseling are unnecessary but that the standard assumption, that wait unemployment requires vocational training, wage subsidies, or placement guarantees to address, is incorrect on the primary behavioral margin. Where the binding constraint is misperception of the odds and of the available alternatives, an inexpensive package of statistics and practical guidance is the policy. The psychological and social frictions, in contrast, bind for distinct subpopulations and on distinct outcomes: PM+ moves wellbeing for the full sample but disproportionately for women and urban youth, and parental counseling moves female mobility, parent and youth communication, and family formation timing on margins information alone does not reach. Beliefs and aspirations are therefore not equivalent objects: information corrects beliefs, but moving aspirations, particularly for women whose mobility is constrained by family resistance, requires addressing both the emotional capacity to act and the household environment that conditions support on public sector preparation. Throughout, costlier refers to program cost per participant, not to a welfare judgment: whether a reduction in intended waiting raises welfare depends on the quality of the alternatives youth turn toward, which the design does not observe, and the queue can be a reasonable response to the choice set a young person faces (Section 2 presents the evidence on that choice set).

The design also identifies two structural rigidities it cannot relax. Male wait unemployment responds to information but not to the layered modules, consistent with patrilocal kinship and son centered household obligations operating outside the channels the experiment targets. Households below the poverty line show a related limit on family formation timing: the layered intervention does not reduce, and may sharpen, stated reliance on marriage as a fallback when government employment proves elusive, suggesting that economic precarity binds beyond what psychological counseling can relax. Both findings circumscribe the policy reach of psychologically informed labor market programs in this setting.

Several priorities for future work follow. First, the supply side margins identified here are natural complements to demand side instruments applied in locations where the design has already shifted preferences; the combination is testable. Second, and most important, the endline captures

immediate change, not persistence. The natural remedy is a survey roughly a year on, but returning to these households in mid 2026 is not straightforward or neutral: youth unemployment is a politically charged subject in India, and in Uttar Pradesh an approaching state election has sharpened it further, so a clean one year follow up in this window would be confounded by the electoral cycle. The same forces that make the follow up hard to run are among the forces that sustain the queue, and we therefore mark the persistence question as open, to be taken up when the setting permits, reading the present results as short run effects on the mechanisms the arms target rather than as evidence of durable transitions. Third, the patterns for male youth and low income households suggest that the next design should incorporate components addressing kinship obligation and household budget constraint directly, possibly through small conditional transfers or family level rather than youth level counseling. Finally, the information arm itself invites decomposition: because it bundles corrected beliefs about the odds, preparation guidance, and information on alternatives, a factorial design crossing these three elements would identify which is the active ingredient behind the behavioral response documented here. The present results establish a low cost behavioral platform on which such extensions can be built.

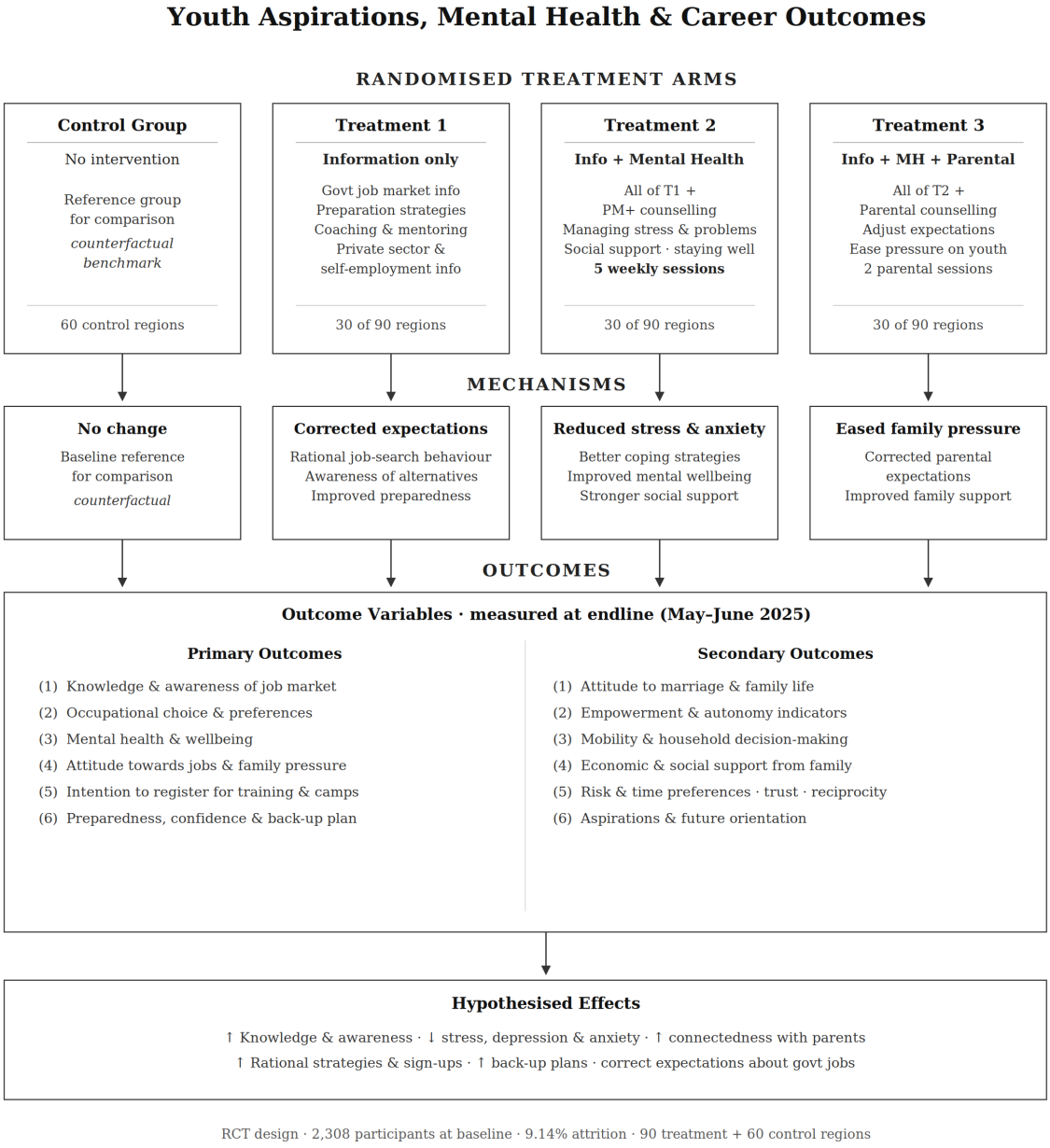


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework: Youth Aspirations, Mental Health & Career Outcomes

Notes: This figure presents the conceptual framework for the randomized controlled trial. The study randomized 90 treatment regions and 60 control regions across three treatment arms. *Treatment 1 (Info only)* provided information on the government job market, preparation strategies, coaching and mentoring, and private sector and self-employment alternatives. *Treatment 2 (Info + Mental Health)* comprised all elements of T1 plus PM+ counseling sessions (five individual weekly counseling sessions of 60 to 90 minutes) focusing on managing stress, social support, and staying well. *Treatment 3 (Info + MH + Parental counseling)* comprised all elements of T2 plus two parental counseling sessions aimed at adjusting parental expectations and easing pressure on youth. The hypothesized mechanisms are: corrected expectations and improved preparedness (T1); reduced stress and anxiety (T2); and eased family pressure via corrected parental expectations (T3). Primary outcomes measured at endline (May–June 2025) include knowledge and awareness of the job market, occupational choice and preferences, mental health and wellbeing, attitudes towards jobs and family pressure, intention to register for training and camps, and preparedness, confidence, and back-up plans. Secondary outcomes include attitudes to marriage and family life, empowerment and autonomy, mobility and household decision-making, economic and social support from family, and risk and time preferences. 2,308 enrolled at baseline; 2,097 analytic (9.14% attrition)

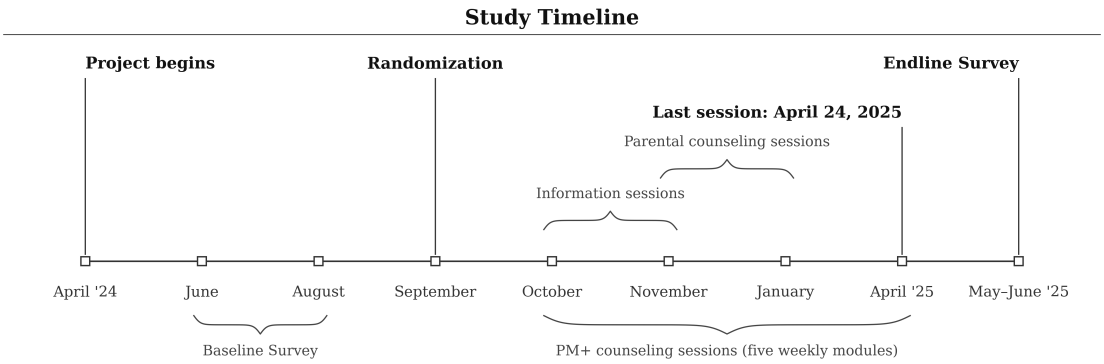


Figure 2: Timeline of the Study
The first session of the endline happened on 27th May, 2026.

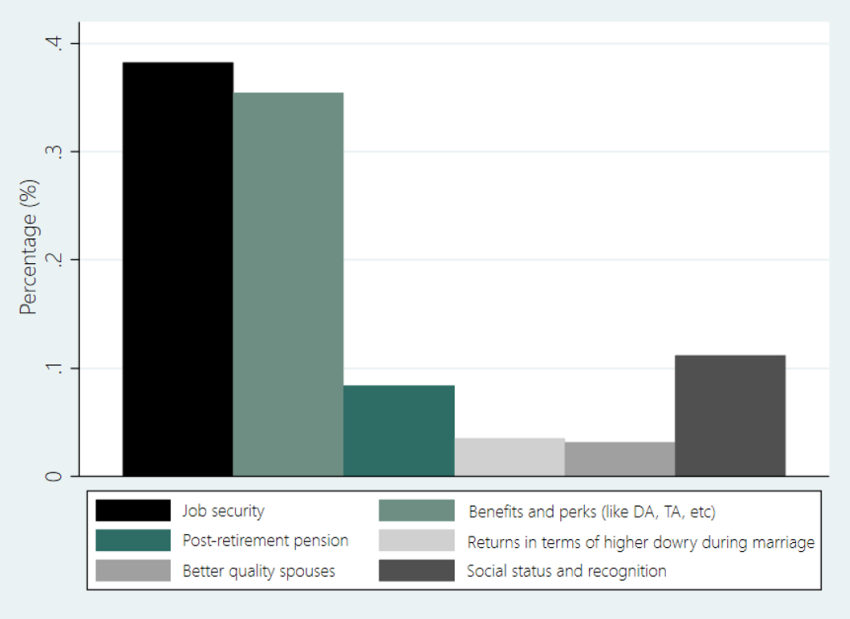


Figure 3: Responses of the participants to the question: "Why do you believe there is such a craze for government jobs in the society?". Sample is restricted to only the respondents of the control group.

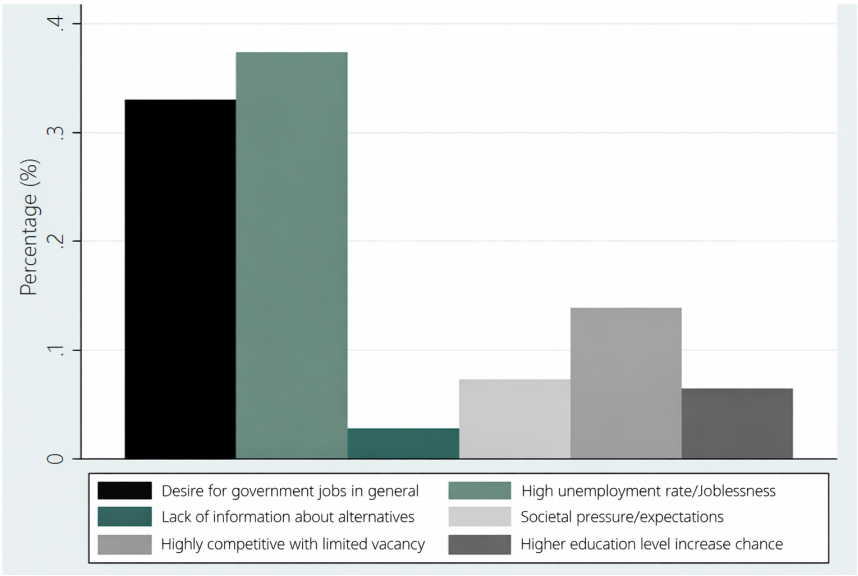


Figure 4: Responses of the participants to the question: "Why do you believe there are so many applications for government jobs, even at lower levels such as peon/clerk and often highly educated people apply for these?" Sample is restricted to only the respondents of the control group.

Table 1: Balance Table: Baseline Characteristics by Treatment Group

	Control		Info		Info+MH		Info+MH+PC	
Variable	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Age (years)	21.98	1.77	21.95	1.72	22.08	1.74	22.00	1.64
Education (years)	15.24	0.65	15.23	0.63	15.28	0.70	15.21	0.62
Male	0.45	0.50	0.42	0.49	0.46	0.50	0.44	0.50
Hindu	0.90	0.30	0.87	0.34	0.87	0.34	0.85	0.36
General caste	0.33	0.47	0.26	0.44	0.34	0.47	0.24	0.43
SC	0.18	0.38	0.23	0.42	0.18	0.39	0.24	0.43
ST	0.00	0.05	0.00	0.05	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.10
OBC	0.49	0.50	0.51	0.50	0.48	0.50	0.51	0.50
Rural	0.54	0.50	0.56	0.50	0.57	0.50	0.49	0.50
BPL	0.28	0.45	0.24	0.43	0.23	0.42	0.29	0.46
Highest education level (category)	4.94	1.28	4.94	1.21	4.99	1.16	4.97	1.31
Want government job	0.90	0.30	0.93	0.25	0.90	0.31	0.90	0.30
High-level government job	0.47	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.49	0.50	0.46	0.50
Low-level government job	0.43	0.50	0.43	0.50	0.40	0.49	0.44	0.50
Willing to travel anywhere for job	0.44	0.50	0.42	0.49	0.41	0.49	0.48	0.50

	p-values from pairwise t-tests					
Variable	T1 vs C	T2 vs C	T3 vs C	T1 vs T2	T1 vs T3	T2 vs T3
Age (years)	0.42	0.49	0.83	0.60	0.51	0.70
Education (years)	0.46	0.18	0.69	0.46	0.25	0.17
Male	0.18	0.53	0.62	0.19	0.42	0.75
Hindu	0.32	0.68	0.79	0.41	0.27	0.73
General caste	0.35	0.41	0.02	0.12	0.56	0.01
SC	0.73	0.93	0.11	0.71	0.43	0.26
ST	0.50	0.11	0.18	0.30	0.10	0.08
OBC	0.50	0.51	0.62	0.21	0.78	0.27
Rural	0.41	0.51	0.60	0.80	0.37	0.54
BPL	0.40	0.03	0.83	0.24	0.79	0.25
Highest education level (category)	0.87	0.28	0.84	0.47	0.77	0.40
Want government job	0.12	0.71	0.12	0.29	0.56	0.06
High-level government job	0.46	0.27	0.47	0.78	0.89	0.66
Low-level government job	0.76	0.16	0.85	0.30	0.83	0.05
Willing to travel anywhere for job	0.35	0.51	0.32	0.65	0.08	0.09

Notes: This table reports baseline summary statistics and balance tests across treatment arms. The upper panel shows means and standard deviations for each group. The lower panel reports p-values from pairwise t-tests of equality of means between groups. C = Control; T1 = Info; T2 = Info+MH; T3 = Info+MH+PC. BPL = Below Poverty Line; SC = Scheduled Caste; ST = Scheduled Tribe; OBC = Other Backward Class.

Table 2: Treatment Effects on Information at Endline

Variables of Interest	Information about			
	Vacancies	Improve chances	Other career options	Overall
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Info. Only	0.825***	0.527***	0.590***	1.942***
	(0.076)	(0.088)	(0.088)	(0.200)
Info. + MH	1.292***	0.636***	0.817***	2.744***
	(0.094)	(0.082)	(0.077)	(0.194)
Info. + MH + PC	1.083***	0.610***	0.878***	2.571***
	(0.124)	(0.083)	(0.073)	(0.222)
Observations	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097
Wald: T1 = T2	0.000	0.205	0.021	0.000
Wald: T1 = T3	0.024	0.337	0.003	0.009
Wald: T2 = T3	0.098	0.754	0.442	0.455
RI p-value T1	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.001
RI p-value T2	0.000	0.001	0.000	0.000
RI p-value T3	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.001
Control Variables	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ward Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Joint Test p-values	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.000
Westfall–Young adj. p-values	0.001	0.001	0.000	0.001
Control Mean	2.24	2.97	3.658	8.867

Notes: All specifications control for age (in years), education (in years), male dummy, Hindu dummy, caste dummies (SC, ST, OBC, and others), rural dummy, and below-poverty-line dummy. Standard errors clustered at the regional (ward) level are reported in parentheses. Vacancies captures information related to available jobs, applications, and success rates on a scale of 0–6. Improve chances captures information related to how to improve the chances of obtaining a government job on a scale of 0–5. Other career options captures information related to alternative career options to government jobs on a scale of 0–5. Overall is a composite knowledge score on a scale of 0–15, equal to the sum of the three sub-components. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. Wald tests report p-values for pairwise equality of treatment effects across arms (T1: Info Only, T2: Info + MH, T3: Info + MH + PC). Randomization inference (RI) p-values are computed using the experimental assignment distribution and provide exact finite-sample significance levels robust to small-sample concerns. Joint test p-values correspond to the null that all treatment effects are jointly zero. Westfall–Young adjusted p-values correct for multiple hypothesis testing across outcomes, controlling the family-wise error rate.

Table 3: Treatment Effects on Changed Expectations (Endline)

	(1) Confidence to land Job	(2) Confidence to land Govt. Job	(3) Job Prepare Preparedness	(4) Preparedness Govt. Jobs	(5) Maximum Wait Time
Info. only	-0.380	-0.159	-0.186	-0.261***	-0.858***
	(0.230)	(0.183)	(0.116)	(0.085)	(0.252)
Info. + MH	0.024	-0.021	-0.129	-0.170*	-0.529**
	(0.157)	(0.167)	(0.113)	(0.096)	(0.238)
Info. + MH + PC	0.167	0.101	-0.122	-0.179***	-0.342
	(0.158)	(0.148)	(0.096)	(0.069)	(0.214)
Observations	2097	2097	2097	2097	2097
Wald: T1=T2	0.066	0.512	0.651	0.401	0.258
Wald: T1=T3	0.014	0.168	0.564	0.326	0.055
Wald: T2=T3	0.313	0.496	0.946	0.922	0.453
RI p-values T1	0.098	0.380	0.116	0.003	0.002
RI p-values T2	0.883	0.886	0.250	0.065	0.037
RI p-values T3	0.301	0.485	0.222	0.008	0.124
Joint test p	0.108	0.588	0.412	0.009	0.006
Westfall-Young p	0.248	0.734	0.294	0.007	0.005
Control mean	6.831	6.580	3.909	4.224	3.787

Notes: Outcomes capture endline expectations: confidence in landing any job and a government job (0 to 10 scales), perceived preparedness for the job market and for government jobs (0 to 5 scales), and the maximum number of years the respondent is willing to wait exclusively for a government job. All regressions control for respondent age, education, gender, religion, caste fixed effects, rural residence, and below poverty line status. Standard errors clustered at the region level are reported in parentheses. Wald test rows report p values for pairwise equality of treatment coefficients; RI p values are from randomization inference; Westfall Young p values adjust for multiple hypothesis testing. $***p < 0.01, **p < 0.05, *p < 0.1$.

Table 4: Treatment Effects on Job Preferences and Realized Search and Employment (Endline)

Panel A. Stated job preferences and mobility

Variable	(1) Govt. job pref.	(2) Private job pref.	(3) Higher govt. post	(4) Lower govt. post	(5) Move anywhere
Info. Only	-0.310***	0.256***	-0.168***	0.090*	0.018
	(0.041)	(0.034)	(0.061)	(0.051)	(0.032)
Info. + MH	-0.272***	0.233***	-0.211***	0.100**	0.072**
	(0.046)	(0.036)	(0.063)	(0.044)	(0.030)
Info. + MH + PC	-0.319***	0.247***	-0.111*	0.096	0.086**
	(0.044)	(0.039)	(0.066)	(0.059)	(0.037)
Observations	2,097	2,097	1,352	1,352	2,097
Wald: T1=T2	0.484	0.626	0.604	0.864	0.128
Wald: T1=T3	0.859	0.840	0.489	0.933	0.108
Wald: T2=T3	0.400	0.781	0.227	0.948	0.717
RI p T1	0.000	0.000	0.006	0.076	0.575
RI p T2	0.000	0.001	0.000	0.014	0.015
RI p T3	0.000	0.000	0.095	0.103	0.027
Joint test p	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.039	0.051
Westfall–Young p	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.044	0.042
Control mean	0.832	0.132	0.523	0.414	0.641

Panel B. Examinations, interviews, and realized employment

Variable	(6) Govt. exams sat	(7) Private interviews	(8) Any job success (6 mo.)	(9) Private job success
Info. Only	0.033	0.220***	0.195***	0.174***
	(0.141)	(0.054)	(0.035)	(0.034)
Info. + MH	0.034	0.162***	0.170***	0.161***
	(0.140)	(0.047)	(0.025)	(0.026)
Info. + MH + PC	0.066	0.096**	0.155***	0.161***
	(0.129)	(0.042)	(0.027)	(0.027)
Observations	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097
Wald: T1=T2	0.993	0.396	0.545	0.752
Wald: T1=T3	0.831	0.045	0.334	0.753
Wald: T2=T3	0.833	0.223	0.630	0.995
RI p T1	0.820	0.001	0.001	0.000
RI p T2	0.773	0.003	0.001	0.001
RI p T3	0.592	0.026	0.001	0.000
Joint test p	0.970	0.001	0.001	0.001
Westfall–Young p	0.942	0.001	0.001	0.000
Control mean	1.415	0.308	0.146	0.122

Notes: Intent to treat OLS estimates. Panel A: (1) prefers a government job at equal pay; (2) prefers a private job; (3) prefers a higher level and (4) a lower level government post, both conditional on any government aspiration at baseline; (5) willing to relocate anywhere. Panel B: (6) government recruitment examinations sat; (7) private sector job interviews; (8) successful in any job and (9) in a private job, in the six months before the endline. Panel B outcomes are self reports over a recall window that overlaps the intervention and enter the job preferences, search, realized activity, and time use family for the Westfall–Young correction; the time use outcomes in the same family are reported in Table A4. All regressions control for age, education, gender, religion, caste indicators, rural residence, below poverty line status, and randomization strata fixed effects [CONFIRM strata level]. Standard errors clustered at the region (ward) level in parentheses. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Table 5: Treatment Effects on Mental Health, Wellbeing, and Survey Preference Measures (Endline)

Panel A. Mental health and perceived stress (symptom absent = 1)

Variable	(1) No PHQ-4	(2) No PSS-4	(3) Ext. LoC	(4) Int. LoC	(5) Not nervous	(6) No worry	(7) No low mood	(8) No low interest	(9) PSS: control	(10) PSS: coping	(11) PSS: on track	(12) PSS: not piling
Info. Only	0.146**	0.001	1.689*	-0.691*	0.012	0.051	0.112**	0.082	-0.020	-0.029	-0.017	-0.029
	(0.069)	(0.007)	(1.011)	(0.366)	(0.049)	(0.047)	(0.047)	(0.067)	(0.034)	(0.029)	(0.050)	(0.029)
Info. + MH	0.239***	0.003	2.941***	-0.078	0.022	0.103**	0.134***	0.210***	0.032	0.051*	-0.038	0.062*
	(0.057)	(0.006)	(1.068)	(0.351)	(0.046)	(0.040)	(0.042)	(0.055)	(0.041)	(0.028)	(0.042)	(0.037)
Info. + MH + PC	0.098	-0.002	3.006***	0.153	-0.015	0.087**	0.097**	0.126**	0.008	0.060**	-0.016	0.050
	(0.066)	(0.004)	(0.958)	(0.324)	(0.048)	(0.043)	(0.041)	(0.059)	(0.034)	(0.025)	(0.042)	(0.032)
Observations	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097
Wald: T1=T2	0.227	0.712	0.323	0.155	0.845	0.311	0.644	0.063	0.251	0.016	0.686	0.026
Wald: T1=T3	0.578	0.714	0.264	0.040	0.644	0.502	0.743	0.539	0.468	0.004	0.995	0.025
Wald: T2=T3	0.058	0.386	0.958	0.570	0.486	0.726	0.374	0.157	0.604	0.764	0.626	0.794
RI p T1	0.035	0.940	0.105	0.056	0.795	0.281	0.015	0.219	0.550	0.308	0.719	0.319
RI p T2	0.000	0.572	0.012	0.836	0.654	0.014	0.002	0.001	0.461	0.071	0.363	0.106
RI p T3	0.155	0.768	0.004	0.621	0.744	0.046	0.022	0.038	0.829	0.013	0.698	0.128
Joint test p	0.000	0.871	0.007	0.198	0.910	0.057	0.013	0.004	0.707	0.006	0.853	0.045
Westfall–Young p	0.000	0.880	0.011	0.149	0.955	0.038	0.004	0.000	0.835	0.035	0.730	0.271
Control mean	0.492	0.002	17.048	10.200	0.808	0.788	0.748	0.653	0.181	0.088	0.223	0.129

Panel B. Wellbeing, social connection, and preferences

Variable	(13) Happy	(14) Uncer-tain	(15) Hope-less	(16) Socially conn.	(17) Pos. recip.	(18) Trust	(19) Risk	(20) Altru-ism	(21) Pati-ence
Info. Only	-0.164	0.116	0.086	0.297	-0.291	0.493*	0.356	-0.084	-0.053
	(0.205)	(0.293)	(0.265)	(0.306)	(0.271)	(0.291)	(0.253)	(0.198)	(0.242)
Info. + MH	0.059	0.424*	0.142	0.266	-0.068	-0.010	0.127	-0.058	0.131
	(0.223)	(0.217)	(0.190)	(0.332)	(0.200)	(0.318)	(0.288)	(0.128)	(0.175)
Info. + MH + PC	-0.292	0.208	0.128	0.863***	-0.388*	0.125	0.495**	0.081	0.015
	(0.224)	(0.227)	(0.186)	(0.287)	(0.228)	(0.289)	(0.237)	(0.144)	(0.183)
Observations	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097
Wald: T1=T2	0.361	0.283	0.844	0.939	0.382	0.173	0.447	0.888	0.456
Wald: T1=T3	0.604	0.753	0.882	0.116	0.728	0.268	0.593	0.376	0.776
Wald: T2=T3	0.171	0.307	0.946	0.117	0.147	0.711	0.228	0.214	0.519
RI p T1	0.437	0.691	0.760	0.341	0.273	0.103	0.166	0.674	0.807
RI p T2	0.800	0.058	0.477	0.440	0.736	0.973	0.661	0.644	0.461
RI p T3	0.226	0.350	0.495	0.004	0.078	0.653	0.048	0.590	0.917
Joint test p	0.498	0.257	0.861	0.050	0.313	0.388	0.208	0.614	0.832
Westfall–Young p	0.521	0.154	0.839	0.013	0.213	0.255	0.125	0.928	0.836
Control mean	3.538	5.848	6.590	3.619	7.230	5.619	5.602	6.759	6.875

Notes: All Panel A outcomes are dummies equal to one when the symptom is absent. (1) no PHQ-4 depression or anxiety; (2) no PSS-4 stress; (3) external and (4) internal locus of control; (5) not nervous, (6) no uncontrollable worry, (7) no depressed mood, (8) no loss of interest (PHQ-4 items); (9)–(12) PSS-4 items (felt in control, able to cope, things going one's way, difficulties not piling up). Panel B: (13) happy, (14) uncertain about the future, (15) hopeless, (16) socially connected; (17) positive reciprocity, (18) trust, (19) risk, (20) altruism, (21) patience [CONFIRM scale ranges and the coding direction of "uncertain"]. Panel B enters the mental health, wellbeing, and survey preference family for the Westfall–Young correction jointly with Panel A. Controls, fixed effects, and clustering as in Table 4. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Table 6: Treatment Effects on Parental Relations at Endline

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Share About				
	Feelings	Ambitions	Govt. Job Difficulty	Alt. job opportunities	Time with parents (hours)
Info. Only	-0.114	-0.051	0.038	-0.088	-0.701
	(0.078)	(0.104)	(0.103)	(0.146)	(0.770)
Info. + MH	0.051	0.023	0.098	0.166	0.614
	(0.073)	(0.070)	(0.092)	(0.118)	(0.747)
Info. + MH + PC	0.107	0.014	0.184*	0.170	-0.952
	(0.070)	(0.083)	(0.098)	(0.119)	(0.850)
Observations	2097	2097	2097	2097	2097
Wald: T1 = T2	0.076	0.479	0.561	0.096	0.173
Wald: T1 = T3	0.015	0.560	0.172	0.090	0.814
Wald: T2 = T3	0.501	0.918	0.395	0.975	0.137
RI p-value T1	0.142	0.647	0.692	0.538	0.388
RI p-value T2	0.499	0.728	0.318	0.163	0.411
RI p-value T3	0.125	0.875	0.050	0.160	0.290
Joint test p-value	0.092	0.913	0.273	0.194	0.408
Westfall–Young p-values	0.312	0.953	0.134	0.385	0.626
Control mean	1.883	2.336	1.861	1.873	14.071

Notes: All regressions control for respondent age, years of education, gender, religion, caste fixed effects, rural residence, BPL status, and region fixed effects. Standard errors clustered at the region level are reported in parentheses. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Table 7: Treatment Effects on Back-up Plans and Family Formation Expectations (Endline)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Get married as back-up	Study further as back-up	Self-employment as back-up	Expected age at marriage	Expected age at first birth
Info	-0.060***	0.004	0.094***	0.042	0.280
	(0.018)	(0.054)	(0.025)	(0.231)	(0.232)
Info+MH	-0.041**	0.025	0.045*	0.396*	0.313
	(0.016)	(0.064)	(0.025)	(0.226)	(0.210)
Info+MH+PC	-0.056***	0.047	0.053*	0.454**	0.562**
	(0.015)	(0.064)	(0.029)	(0.190)	(0.216)
Control Mean	0.096	0.214	0.116	26.596	28.680
Observations	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097
Wald: T1=T2	0.328	0.785	0.069	0.182	0.904
Wald: T1=T3	0.813	0.559	0.204	0.081	0.283
Wald: T2=T3	0.366	0.790	0.804	0.803	0.299
RI p-value T1	0.001	0.952	0.000	0.832	0.232
RI p-value T2	0.014	0.702	0.069	0.072	0.125
RI p-value T3	0.001	0.491	0.075	0.025	0.013
Joint test p-value	0.002	0.890	0.007	0.067	0.078
Westfall-Young p-value	0.003	0.844	0.003	0.068	0.036

Notes: Columns (1)–(3) indicate respondents' stated back-up plans if they do not secure a government job. Columns (4)–(5) report expected ages at marriage and at first childbirth. All regressions control for respondent age (years), education (years), gender, religion, caste fixed effects (SC, ST, OBC, others), rural residence, and below-poverty-line status. Standard errors clustered at the region level are reported in parentheses. Wald test rows report p-values for pairwise equality of treatment coefficients. RI p-values are from randomization inference. Westfall-Young p-values adjust for multiple hypothesis testing. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Table 8: Treatment Effects on Gender Norms, Attitudes, and Household Autonomy (Endline)

Panel A. Gender norms and attitudes (lower = more progressive)

Variable	(1) Equal opp. s/d	(2) Encour. daugh-ters	(3) Share house-work	(4) Emot. support	(5) Fin. support	(6) Pressure govt job	(7) Parents under-stand	(8) Not end of world	(9) Happy w/o govt	(10) Extra educ. helps	(11) Better prep helps	(12) No peer compare
Info. Only	0.070	0.007	0.047	0.006	-0.017	-0.140	-0.060	-0.060	-0.056	0.028	0.029	0.136
	(0.073)	(0.045)	(0.072)	(0.057)	(0.056)	(0.130)	(0.067)	(0.053)	(0.057)	(0.064)	(0.071)	(0.142)
Info. + MH	-0.056	-0.158***	-0.226***	-0.214***	-0.173**	0.121	-0.193***	-0.183***	-0.159***	-0.167***	-0.116*	-0.018
	(0.069)	(0.041)	(0.062)	(0.065)	(0.068)	(0.103)	(0.065)	(0.035)	(0.040)	(0.057)	(0.061)	(0.137)
Info. + MH + PC	-0.083	-0.110**	-0.206***	-0.178**	-0.147***	0.051	-0.256***	-0.147***	-0.136***	-0.174***	-0.143***	0.066
	(0.072)	(0.044)	(0.064)	(0.069)	(0.051)	(0.106)	(0.067)	(0.042)	(0.050)	(0.053)	(0.053)	(0.129)
Observations	2,097	2,097	2,096	2,096	2,095	2,089	2,091	2,095	2,096	2,096	2,095	2,073
Wald: T1=T2	0.071	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.031	0.049	0.067	0.016	0.039	0.006	0.056	0.401
Wald: T1=T3	0.030	0.008	0.000	0.007	0.028	0.156	0.009	0.124	0.162	0.003	0.015	0.688
Wald: T2=T3	0.681	0.219	0.704	0.627	0.720	0.527	0.381	0.418	0.590	0.904	0.646	0.616
RI p T1	0.324	0.884	0.528	0.911	0.774	0.299	0.379	0.262	0.326	0.667	0.693	0.366
RI p T2	0.382	0.001	0.000	0.002	0.011	0.243	0.006	0.001	0.001	0.009	0.062	0.900
RI p T3	0.274	0.016	0.001	0.013	0.005	0.646	0.001	0.001	0.008	0.002	0.014	0.627
Joint test p	0.150	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.008	0.265	0.001	0.000	0.002	0.002	0.018	0.808
Westfall–Young p	0.597	0.002	0.001	0.008	0.014	0.558	0.003	0.001	0.001	0.003	0.041	0.735
Control mean	1.267	1.272	1.538	1.585	1.565	2.766	1.791	1.352	1.373	1.427	1.422	1.661

Panel B. Household autonomy and empowerment

Variable	(13) Allowed to go out	(14) No permis-sion	(15) Ghung-hat	(16) Eat together	(17) Cash in hand	(18) Decision index	(19) Bank acct. own
Info. Only	0.008	0.009	0.008	0.026	0.088	-0.123	0.020
	(0.009)	(0.057)	(0.027)	(0.046)	(0.078)	(0.295)	(0.019)
Info. + MH	-0.015	-0.059	0.008	0.044	0.010	0.362	0.054***
	(0.012)	(0.052)	(0.018)	(0.035)	(0.061)	(0.306)	(0.016)
Info. + MH + PC	-0.009	0.004	-0.004	0.055	0.005	0.186	0.054***
	(0.010)	(0.053)	(0.018)	(0.048)	(0.064)	(0.271)	(0.015)
Observations	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097
Wald: T1=T2	0.041	0.266	0.979	0.693	0.355	0.165	0.053
Wald: T1=T3	0.076	0.932	0.655	0.629	0.344	0.337	0.045
Wald: T2=T3	0.613	0.294	0.561	0.831	0.946	0.604	0.968
RI p T1	0.366	0.876	0.741	0.575	0.277	0.683	0.241
RI p T2	0.220	0.263	0.667	0.215	0.861	0.271	0.001
RI p T3	0.397	0.948	0.823	0.256	0.942	0.484	0.002
Joint test p	0.140	0.630	0.940	0.547	0.733	0.524	0.003
Westfall–Young p	0.495	0.580	0.965	0.493	0.585	0.592	0.002
Control mean	0.987	0.330	0.056	0.691	0.392	2.057	0.918

Notes: Panel A items (1)–(12) are the twelve gender norm statements coded 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree); lower values are more progressive. Short labels: (1) equal opportunities for sons and daughters, (2) encourage daughters to study and work, (3) share housework, (4) emotional and (5) financial support for government job preparation, (6) pressure to get a government job, (7) parents understand if no government job, (8) not the end of the world, (9) own happiness over society, (10) extra education helps, (11) better preparation helps, (12) parents do not compare with peers. Panel B: (13) allowed to go out; (14) no permission needed; (15) ghunghat practised; (16) eats with the household; (17) has cash in hand; (18) household decision index [CONFIRM range]; (19) holds a bank account in own name. Panel B enters the gender norms, attitudes, and household autonomy family for the Westfall–Young correction jointly with Panel A. Near ceiling control means on several Panel B items limit detectable movement. Controls, fixed effects, and clustering as in Table 4. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Table 9: Treatment Effects on Signup Intentions (Endline)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Free information sessions	Free coaching sessions	Free private job camp	Internship sessions
Info	0.140*	0.121*	0.132**	0.123*
	(0.073)	(0.071)	(0.063)	(0.063)
Info+MH	0.091	0.073	0.110**	0.098*
	(0.063)	(0.063)	(0.052)	(0.051)
Info+MH+PC	0.147***	0.140**	0.206***	0.175***
	(0.053)	(0.054)	(0.054)	(0.056)
Control Mean	0.713	0.726	0.627	0.639
Observations	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097
Wald: T1=T2	0.546	0.548	0.730	0.699
Wald: T1=T3	0.929	0.803	0.281	0.463
Wald: T2=T3	0.388	0.315	0.093	0.192
RI p-value T1	0.069	0.091	0.040	0.049
RI p-value T2	0.153	0.268	0.036	0.059
RI p-value T3	0.006	0.006	0.001	0.002
Joint test p-value	0.042	0.067	0.003	0.010
Westfall-Young p-value	0.018	0.019	0.001	0.006

Notes: Outcomes indicate whether respondents stated they would sign up for the respective opportunities if organized by the research team, elicited at the end of the endline survey. All regressions control for respondent age (years), education (years), gender, religion, caste fixed effects (SC, ST, OBC, others), rural residence, and below-poverty-line status. Standard errors clustered at the region level are reported in parentheses. Wald test rows report p-values for pairwise equality of treatment coefficients. RI p-values are from randomisation inference. Westfall-Young p-values adjust for multiple hypothesis testing. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Table 10: Placebo Results

	(1) Left Handed	(2) Twin Child	(3) First Born is F	(4) Has Asthma
Info. Only	0.012	0.010	−0.040	0.008
	(0.026)	(0.008)	(0.033)	(0.006)
Info. + MH	−0.010	0.002	−0.012	0.007
	(0.016)	(0.006)	(0.026)	(0.006)
Info. + MH + PC	−0.010	0.016	0.010	0.003
	(0.019)	(0.011)	(0.032)	(0.005)
Observations	2097	2097	2097	2097
Wald: T1=T2	0.415	0.259	0.421	0.942
Wald: T1=T3	0.435	0.635	0.205	0.434
Wald: T2=T3	0.982	0.214	0.506	0.522
RI p value T1	0.672	0.224	0.229	0.215
RI p value T2	0.526	0.796	0.646	0.248
RI p value T3	0.592	0.143	0.756	0.646
Joint test p	0.821	0.317	0.561	0.486
Control mean	0.065	0.006	0.403	0.006

Notes: This table reports placebo outcomes that should not plausibly be affected by the interventions. Outcomes are binary indicators for whether the respondent is left handed, has a twin sibling, is a firstborn female among siblings, or has asthma. All regressions control for respondent age (years), education (years), gender, religion, caste fixed effects (SC, ST, OBC, others), rural residence, and below poverty line status. Standard errors clustered at the region level are reported in parentheses. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

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10 Appendix Tables

Table A1: Summary Statistics

	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Age of respondent (in years)	22.00	1.73	20	29
Education (in years)	15.24	0.65	15	17
Male dummy	0.44	0.50	0	1
Hindu dummy	0.88	0.33	0	1
GC dummy	0.30	0.46	0	1
SC dummy	0.20	0.40	0	1
ST dummy	0.00	0.06	0	1
OBC dummy	0.49	0.50	0	1
Rural dummy	0.54	0.50	0	1
BPL dummy	0.27	0.44	0	1

Notes: This table reports summary statistics for the main variables used in the analysis. Dummy variables are indicator variables taking the value one if the condition is satisfied and zero otherwise. GC, SC, ST, and OBC denote General Category, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes, respectively. BPL indicates households below the poverty line.

Table A2: The Queue at Baseline: Search Effort, Targets, and Stated Aspirations

	Mean	SD	Median	P25	P75	Female	Male
Panel A: Search and preparation in the twelve months before baseline							
Searched for a job (share)	0.82					0.76	0.89
Government examinations attempted (number)	1.19	1.02	1.0	1.0	2.0	1.00	1.42
Attempted at least one examination (share)	0.75					0.64	0.89
Attempted two or more examinations (share)	0.32					0.25	0.40
Job interviews attended (number)	0.36	0.65	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.19	0.58
Weekly hours preparing for examinations	14.7	6.4	14.0	11.0	16.0	14.2	15.4
Daily hours on preparation (time use module)	3.2	1.1	3.0	2.0	4.0	3.1	3.3
Main preparation activity: government job training (share)	0.78					0.74	0.84
Panel B: The target of the queue							
Prefers a government job (share)	0.91					0.92	0.89
Aspires to a higher level government position (share)	0.49					0.62	0.32
Aspires to a lower level government position (share)	0.42					0.28	0.59
Target examinations, among those preferring a government job:							
Staff Selection Commission (share)	0.34					0.34	0.35
Uttar Pradesh Police (share)	0.25					0.21	0.30
Indian Railways (share)	0.24					0.18	0.31
Defense examinations (share)	0.13					0.06	0.22
Nationalized banks (share)	0.12					0.14	0.10
Central services (UPSC) (share)	0.10					0.13	0.06
Uttar Pradesh Teaching Eligibility Test (share)	0.08					0.13	0.02
Panel C: Beliefs, flexibility, and fallbacks							
Confidence of landing a government job (0 to 10)	4.8	1.5	5.0	4.0	6.0	4.8	4.8
Perceived difficulty of the government job market (0 to 10)	4.3	1.2	4.0	4.0	5.0	4.2	4.4
Main obstacle in the job market: lack of jobs (share)	0.56					0.52	0.60
Willing to move anywhere in India for a job (share)	0.44					0.25	0.67
Unwilling to leave home for work (share)	0.03					0.02	0.03
Backup plan if a government job is not secured:							
Take any job (share)	0.60					0.65	0.55
Study further (share)	0.26					0.23	0.30
Entrepreneurship (share)	0.06					0.04	0.10
Get married (share)	0.05					0.08	0.02
Observations			2,308			1,285	1,023

Notes: Statistics from the full baseline sample of 2,308 respondents, surveyed before random assignment; results are materially unchanged when restricted to the 2,097 respondents who also completed the endline. Panel A describes search and preparation activity in the twelve months preceding the interview. Examination attempts count sittings of government recruitment examinations; the main preparation activity is the respondent's principal reported form of preparation for the job market. Panel B reports the preferred job type, the aspired level of government position, and the examinations targeted; the target examination items are elicited as a multiple response question among the 2,095 respondents preferring a government job, so shares need not sum to one, and categories with shares below five percent are omitted. Panel C reports beliefs and fallbacks. Confidence and difficulty are elicited on scales of 0 to 10, with higher values indicating greater confidence and greater difficulty respectively. Willingness to move takes the value one when the respondent is open to relocating anywhere in India for a job, the definition used in the balance table. The baseline instrument did not elicit completed unemployment duration or the maximum years the respondent is willing to wait for a government position; the latter is measured at endline, where the control group mean is 3.79 years (Table 3), and serves as the untreated benchmark for waiting.

Table A3: Balance Table: Village-Level Characteristics by Treatment Group

	Control		Info		Info+MH		Info+MH+PC	
Variable	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Number of households in locality	872.67	1742.10	483.33	426.06	1122.67	2220.02	809.83	1466.09
Proportion of Hindus (%)	79.73	27.22	79.53	29.39	79.80	29.82	79.57	27.37
Households below poverty level (%)	18.67	14.20	17.27	11.33	18.43	13.14	18.60	8.97
Households with unemployed youth (%)	43.92	13.15	40.00	12.11	43.67	13.19	47.10	13.50
Distance to primary school (km)	1.17	0.62	1.03	0.18	1.30	0.79	1.33	1.03
Distance to middle school (km)	1.45	0.77	1.50	0.97	1.57	1.22	1.37	1.07
Distance to nearest town (km)	2.70	2.19	3.20	5.25	2.57	1.61	3.83	6.48
Distance to district headquarters (km)	19.42	9.33	20.60	9.55	20.53	9.04	18.23	9.12
Distance to nearest bus station (km)	6.02	6.74	6.03	8.22	5.87	6.65	4.03	3.37
Distance to nearest railway station (km)	4.17	2.68	3.53	1.83	4.43	2.03	4.13	2.85
Average wage rate per day (INR)	533.33	135.82	521.67	152.39	550.00	125.94	575.00	147.24
NREGA scheme present	0.40	0.49	0.33	0.48	0.37	0.49	0.40	0.50
Men in organised sector (%)	25.30	13.79	25.17	15.84	23.87	12.16	26.77	12.50
Women in organised sector (%)	18.40	17.87	16.83	16.00	15.87	17.98	16.73	17.02

	p-values from pairwise t-tests					
Variable	T1 vs C	T2 vs C	T3 vs C	T1 vs T2	T1 vs T3	T2 vs T3
Number of households in locality	0.95	0.57	0.98	0.55	0.72	0.60
Proportion of Hindus (%)	0.26	0.99	0.58	0.32	0.11	0.63
Households below poverty level (%)	0.70	1.00	0.99	0.82	0.90	0.69
Households with unemployed youth (%)	0.38	0.92	0.59	0.41	0.23	0.47
Distance to primary school (km)	0.34	0.23	0.54	0.14	0.19	0.81
Distance to middle school (km)	0.62	0.46	0.65	0.93	0.52	0.52
Distance to nearest town (km)	0.95	0.32	0.42	0.60	0.58	0.26
Distance to district headquarters (km)	0.87	0.81	0.98	0.15	0.54	0.52
Distance to nearest bus station (km)	0.90	0.95	0.43	0.68	0.32	0.55
Distance to nearest railway station (km)	0.10	0.79	0.82	0.08	0.16	0.88
Average wage rate per day (INR)	0.71	0.55	0.30	0.80	0.54	0.51
NREGA scheme present	0.22	0.79	0.59	0.64	0.24	0.46
Men in organised sector (%)	0.61	0.84	0.46	0.57	0.72	0.46
Women in organised sector (%)	0.32	0.60	0.76	0.11	0.23	0.75

Notes: This table reports village-level summary statistics and balance tests across treatment arms. The upper panel shows means and standard deviations for each group. The lower panel reports p-values from pairwise t-tests of equality of means between groups. C = Control; T1 = Info; T2 = Info+MH; T3 = Info+MH+PC. NREGA = National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. BPL = Below Poverty Line.

Table A4: Treatment Effects on Time Use (Endline)

Variable	(1) Paid work	(2) Prepa-ration	(3) House-hold chores	(4) Elderly/ child care	(5) Relax/ hobby	(6) Sleep	(7) Social-ize	(8) Exercise/ yoga
Info. Only	0.950***	-0.014	-0.002	-0.276***	-0.333***	-0.088	-0.079	-0.019
	(0.198)	(0.103)	(0.131)	(0.071)	(0.090)	(0.083)	(0.091)	(0.057)
Info. + MH	0.741***	0.037	-0.001	-0.192***	-0.413***	-0.398***	-0.128*	0.007
	(0.132)	(0.099)	(0.107)	(0.064)	(0.095)	(0.063)	(0.070)	(0.065)
Info. + MH + PC	0.559***	0.237*	-0.094	-0.290***	-0.262***	-0.245***	-0.080	-0.069
	(0.106)	(0.121)	(0.092)	(0.058)	(0.084)	(0.080)	(0.072)	(0.062)
Observations	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097
Wald: T1=T2	0.378	0.665	0.998	0.282	0.504	0.001	0.588	0.710
Wald: T1=T3	0.066	0.059	0.475	0.843	0.517	0.108	0.989	0.472
Wald: T2=T3	0.214	0.129	0.378	0.125	0.181	0.058	0.508	0.309
RI p T1	0.001	0.891	0.990	0.001	0.001	0.290	0.400	0.721
RI p T2	0.001	0.728	0.991	0.005	0.001	0.000	0.076	0.903
RI p T3	0.001	0.043	0.349	0.001	0.002	0.005	0.284	0.296
Joint test p	0.001	0.219	0.707	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.357	0.686
Westfall–Young p	0.000	0.120	0.687	0.001	0.001	0.002	0.192	0.611
Control mean	0.724	3.334	2.474	0.632	2.084	7.317	1.730	1.006

Notes: Outcomes are daily hours devoted to each activity on a usual day during the four weeks preceding the endline, from the time use module: (1) paid work, (2) examination preparation, (3) household chores, (4) elderly or child care, (5) relaxation or hobbies, (6) sleep, (7) socializing, (8) exercise or yoga. These outcomes belong to the job preferences, search, realized activity, and time use family for the Westfall–Young correction, jointly with the outcomes in Table 4. Controls, fixed effects, and clustering as in Table 4. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Table A5: Treatment Effects and Gender Heterogeneity — Interaction Model

	Overall Index (1)	Govt. Job (2)	Higher Level G (3)	Willing to Move (4)	Prep. Govt (5)	Max. Wait (6)	Marriage Backup (7)	Self-Emp. Backup (8)	Marriage Age (9)	Birth Age (10)
Info. Only	1.780***	−0.336***	−0.198***	0.067	−0.290**	−0.798***	−0.092***	0.074***	0.258	0.564*
	(0.317)	(0.044)	(0.070)	(0.050)	(0.127)	(0.261)	(0.028)	(0.026)	(0.324)	(0.330)
Info. + MH	2.911***	−0.334***	−0.262***	0.148***	−0.116	−0.411	−0.066**	0.043*	0.500	0.540*
	(0.255)	(0.045)	(0.069)	(0.047)	(0.156)	(0.282)	(0.028)	(0.024)	(0.309)	(0.316)
Info. + MH + PC	2.749***	−0.386***	−0.160**	0.191***	−0.270*	−0.242	−0.092***	0.044	0.553**	0.801**
	(0.270)	(0.048)	(0.076)	(0.045)	(0.141)	(0.240)	(0.026)	(0.030)	(0.246)	(0.316)
(Info. Only) × Male	0.416	0.057	0.070	−0.109	0.066	−0.133	0.072**	0.048	−0.513	−0.660*
	(0.494)	(0.056)	(0.090)	(0.070)	(0.218)	(0.180)	(0.028)	(0.050)	(0.340)	(0.391)
(Info. + MH) × Male	−0.371	0.138**	0.112	−0.170***	−0.119	−0.262	0.055*	0.005	−0.236	−0.512
	(0.372)	(0.058)	(0.069)	(0.065)	(0.213)	(0.210)	(0.030)	(0.047)	(0.326)	(0.389)
(Info. + MH + PC) × Male	−0.403	0.151**	0.107	−0.233***	0.202	−0.222	0.080***	0.020	−0.219	−0.531
	(0.366)	(0.063)	(0.089)	(0.058)	(0.229)	(0.178)	(0.030)	(0.053)	(0.301)	(0.362)
Male	0.070	−0.081**	−0.284***	0.447***	0.069	−0.076	−0.152***	0.106***	−0.557***	−0.583**
	(0.207)	(0.031)	(0.046)	(0.041)	(0.121)	(0.125)	(0.021)	(0.030)	(0.201)	(0.230)
Observations	2,097	2,097	1,352	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097
Control Mean (Female)	8.801	0.863	0.646	0.440	4.192	3.863	0.162	0.069	26.830	28.927
Control Mean (Male)	8.949	0.794	0.358	0.886	4.263	3.694	0.016	0.173	26.309	28.377
Wald p-values (Female):										
T1 = T2	0.000	0.959	0.483	0.152	0.282	0.220	0.398	0.260	0.508	0.950
T1 = T3	0.004	0.347	0.694	0.027	0.891	0.044	0.990	0.393	0.343	0.525
T2 = T3	0.547	0.345	0.277	0.402	0.373	0.559	0.348	0.968	0.860	0.470
Wald p-values (Male):										
T1 = T2	0.362	0.264	0.818	0.669	0.945	0.405	0.492	0.129	0.050	0.685
T1 = T3	0.705	0.543	0.474	0.989	0.368	0.118	0.598	0.283	0.028	0.192
T2 = T3	0.603	0.617	0.315	0.696	0.253	0.399	0.943	0.763	0.800	0.353

Notes: Each column reports OLS estimates from a fully interacted specification of an outcome on three treatment indicators, the subgroup indicator (Male), and their interactions, controlling for individual covariates and region fixed effects. T1 = Information only; T2 = Information + Mental Health (PM+); T3 = Information + Mental Health + Parental Counselling. Standard errors clustered at the region level are reported in parentheses. Column (3) is conditional on the respondent reporting any government job aspiration at baseline. $^{*}p < 0.10$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{***}p < 0.01$.

Table A6: Treatment Effects and Caste Heterogeneity — Interaction Model

	Overall Index (1)	Govt. Job (2)	Higher Level G (3)	Willing to Move (4)	Prep. Govt (5)	Max. Wait (6)	Marriage Backup (7)	Self-Emp. Backup (8)	Marriage Age (9)	Birth Age (10)
Info. Only	2.010^{***}	-0.308^{***}	-0.151^{**}	0.034	-0.244^{**}	-0.854^{***}	-0.064^{***}	0.086^{***}	0.131	0.336
	(0.211)	(0.044)	(0.064)	(0.038)	(0.094)	(0.255)	(0.020)	(0.026)	(0.232)	(0.230)
Info. + MH	2.675^{***}	-0.254^{***}	-0.266^{***}	0.088^{**}	-0.094	-0.458^{**}	-0.029	0.059^{*}	0.546^{**}	0.482^{**}
	(0.203)	(0.050)	(0.062)	(0.035)	(0.096)	(0.231)	(0.022)	(0.031)	(0.237)	(0.224)
Info. + MH + PC	2.629^{***}	-0.345^{***}	-0.135^{*}	0.083^{**}	-0.167^{**}	-0.332	-0.066^{***}	0.045	0.496^{**}	0.529^{**}
	(0.239)	(0.047)	(0.069)	(0.038)	(0.074)	(0.240)	(0.018)	(0.031)	(0.201)	(0.229)
(Info. Only) × GC	-0.243	-0.006	-0.075	-0.058	-0.061	-0.015	0.013	0.026	-0.319	-0.200
	(0.315)	(0.062)	(0.079)	(0.057)	(0.135)	(0.320)	(0.033)	(0.043)	(0.317)	(0.400)
(Info. + MH) × GC	0.201	-0.054	0.184^{*}	-0.051	-0.233	-0.216	-0.038	-0.041	-0.466	-0.516^{*}
	(0.284)	(0.069)	(0.095)	(0.060)	(0.177)	(0.304)	(0.030)	(0.048)	(0.299)	(0.288)
(Info. + MH + PC) × GC	-0.228	0.110^{*}	0.093	0.020	-0.031	-0.026	0.042	0.034	-0.117	0.182
	(0.309)	(0.059)	(0.093)	(0.060)	(0.139)	(0.261)	(0.033)	(0.052)	(0.343)	(0.345)
General Caste (GC)	-1.534	-0.243^{**}	0.147	0.009	0.277^{*}	0.350	0.102^{**}	0.185^{***}	1.000	0.178
	(1.516)	(0.119)	(0.292)	(0.227)	(0.144)	(1.073)	(0.048)	(0.054)	(1.126)	(1.531)
Observations	2,097	2,097	1,352	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097
Control Mean (Other Castes)	8.787	0.847	0.497	0.641	4.195	3.740	0.096	0.119	26.498	28.625
Control Mean (GC)	9.034	0.801	0.579	0.640	4.285	3.884	0.097	0.109	26.798	28.794
Wald p-values (Other Castes):										
T1 = T2	0.005	0.341	0.166	0.200	0.182	0.152	0.118	0.383	0.125	0.591
T1 = T3	0.020	0.495	0.856	0.273	0.408	0.062	0.913	0.202	0.128	0.470
T2 = T3	0.860	0.128	0.121	0.906	0.463	0.617	0.078	0.720	0.839	0.857
Wald p-values (GC):										
T1 = T2	0.000	0.933	0.238	0.291	0.909	0.655	0.600	0.035	0.477	0.708
T1 = T3	0.039	0.282	0.121	0.066	0.484	0.146	0.453	0.558	0.148	0.232
T2 = T3	0.081	0.350	0.756	0.357	0.504	0.366	0.103	0.271	0.405	0.042

Notes: GC denotes General Category. "Other Castes" aggregates Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC). T1 = Information only; T2 = Information + Mental Health (PM+); T3 = Information + Mental Health + Parental Counselling. Standard errors clustered at the region level in parentheses. Column (3) is conditional on the respondent reporting any government job aspiration at baseline. $^{*}p < 0.10$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{***}p < 0.01$.

Table A7: Treatment Effects and Religion Heterogeneity — Interaction Model

	Overall Index (1)	Govt. Job (2)	Higher Level G (3)	Willing to Move (4)	Prep. Govt (5)	Max. Wait (6)	Marriage Backup (7)	Self-Emp. Backup (8)	Marriage Age (9)	Birth Age (10)
Info. Only	1.733^{***}	-0.257^{***}	-0.250	-0.074	-0.258	-0.735^{*}	-0.100^{*}	0.115	0.458	0.753
	(0.519)	(0.083)	(0.181)	(0.087)	(0.289)	(0.433)	(0.053)	(0.077)	(0.645)	(0.668)
Info. + MH	3.263^{***}	-0.458^{***}	-0.343^{*}	-0.037	-0.125	-0.861^{**}	-0.033	0.150^{**}	0.540	0.537
	(0.392)	(0.074)	(0.196)	(0.064)	(0.177)	(0.351)	(0.063)	(0.068)	(0.608)	(0.679)
Info. + MH + PC	2.445^{***}	-0.458^{***}	-0.047	-0.182^{*}	-0.491^{**}	-1.185^{**}	-0.098^{**}	0.163	-0.400	-0.270
	(0.569)	(0.079)	(0.174)	(0.095)	(0.197)	(0.481)	(0.049)	(0.164)	(0.500)	(0.518)
(Info. Only) × Hindu	0.245	-0.064	0.094	0.101	-0.005	-0.151	0.046	-0.022	-0.478	-0.541
	(0.544)	(0.085)	(0.184)	(0.092)	(0.297)	(0.472)	(0.057)	(0.080)	(0.646)	(0.692)
(Info. + MH) × Hindu	-0.595	0.212^{**}	0.145	0.121	-0.054	0.373	-0.010	-0.118	-0.165	-0.255
	(0.431)	(0.088)	(0.209)	(0.076)	(0.211)	(0.439)	(0.066)	(0.073)	(0.644)	(0.701)
(Info. + MH + PC) × Hindu	0.127	0.154^{*}	-0.064	0.291^{***}	0.335	0.914^{*}	0.045	-0.120	0.916^{*}	0.892
	(0.566)	(0.088)	(0.179)	(0.105)	(0.222)	(0.490)	(0.054)	(0.166)	(0.519)	(0.543)
Hindu	-0.161	0.097	-0.201^{*}	0.035	0.146	0.380	-0.062	-0.058	0.475	0.559
	(0.385)	(0.061)	(0.108)	(0.071)	(0.171)	(0.259)	(0.046)	(0.055)	(0.428)	(0.416)
Observations	2,097	2,097	1,352	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097
Control Mean (Non-Hindu)	8.754	0.800	0.654	0.600	4.138	3.631	0.154	0.154	26.369	28.308
Control Mean (Hindu)	8.877	0.835	0.512	0.644	4.231	3.800	0.091	0.112	26.615	28.712
Wald p-values (Non-Hindu):										
T1 = T2	0.000	0.022	0.693	0.594	0.621	0.782	0.257	0.633	0.903	0.786
T1 = T3	0.217	0.023	0.353	0.254	0.382	0.443	0.955	0.767	0.155	0.133
T2 = T3	0.065	0.999	0.172	0.075	0.040	0.531	0.258	0.935	0.105	0.243
Wald p-values (Hindu):										
T1 = T2	0.003	0.184	0.627	0.146	0.466	0.214	0.569	0.031	0.147	0.799
T1 = T3	0.018	0.753	0.585	0.072	0.205	0.028	0.916	0.110	0.023	0.124
T2 = T3	0.694	0.317	0.310	0.554	0.826	0.411	0.570	0.731	0.556	0.160

Notes: The omitted category is non-Hindu (predominantly Muslim) respondents. The Kanpur sample is 88 percent Hindu, so estimates for the minority subsample are imprecise. T1 = Information only; T2 = Information + Mental Health (PM+); T3 = Information + Mental Health + Parental Counseling. Standard errors clustered at the region level in parentheses. Column (3) is conditional on the respondent reporting any government job aspiration at baseline. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table A8: Treatment Effects and Region of Residence Heterogeneity — Interaction Model

	Overall Index (1)	Govt. Job (2)	Higher Level G (3)	Willing to Move (4)	Prep. Govt (5)	Max. Wait (6)	Marriage Backup (7)	Self-Emp. Backup (8)	Marriage Age (9)	Birth Age (10)
Info. Only	2.134***	−0.252***	−0.109	0.052	−0.184	−0.543*	−0.073***	0.082*	0.246	0.403
	(0.265)	(0.063)	(0.085)	(0.039)	(0.141)	(0.294)	(0.024)	(0.044)	(0.334)	(0.301)
Info. + MH	3.291***	−0.352***	−0.072	0.019	−0.143	−0.371	−0.059**	0.070*	0.024	−0.021
	(0.297)	(0.057)	(0.090)	(0.050)	(0.151)	(0.359)	(0.023)	(0.039)	(0.302)	(0.313)
Info. + MH + PC	2.651***	−0.333***	−0.075	0.148***	−0.172*	−0.179	−0.061***	0.065	0.225	0.462
	(0.327)	(0.060)	(0.090)	(0.045)	(0.103)	(0.282)	(0.022)	(0.054)	(0.232)	(0.299)
(Info. Only) × Rural	−0.327	−0.086	−0.102	−0.056	−0.123	−0.510	0.020	0.017	−0.287	−0.171
	(0.375)	(0.080)	(0.119)	(0.055)	(0.174)	(0.455)	(0.034)	(0.054)	(0.443)	(0.414)
(Info. + MH) × Rural	−0.928**	0.128	−0.228*	0.082	−0.052	−0.298	0.031	−0.041	0.609	0.546
	(0.388)	(0.083)	(0.125)	(0.066)	(0.189)	(0.469)	(0.030)	(0.047)	(0.418)	(0.407)
(Info. + MH + PC) × Rural	−0.125	0.021	−0.059	−0.115	−0.013	−0.295	0.009	−0.020	0.399	0.166
	(0.430)	(0.090)	(0.122)	(0.075)	(0.153)	(0.395)	(0.031)	(0.064)	(0.373)	(0.421)
Rural	0.251	−0.051	0.131**	−0.053	−0.163	−0.036	−0.014	0.037	−0.346	−0.190
	(0.275)	(0.056)	(0.061)	(0.038)	(0.121)	(0.325)	(0.024)	(0.035)	(0.304)	(0.279)
Observations	2,097	2,097	1,352	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097
Control Mean (Non-Rural)	8.779	0.842	0.463	0.660	4.294	3.761	0.101	0.104	27.005	28.956
Control Mean (Rural)	8.945	0.823	0.577	0.624	4.163	3.810	0.092	0.126	26.234	28.436
Wald p-values (Non-Rural):										
T1 = T2	0.000	0.188	0.742	0.550	0.835	0.675	0.636	0.815	0.572	0.275
T1 = T3	0.086	0.324	0.763	0.058	0.941	0.307	0.645	0.784	0.952	0.876
T2 = T3	0.048	0.787	0.976	0.023	0.862	0.614	0.942	0.937	0.498	0.170
Wald p-values (Rural):										
T1 = T2	0.037	0.101	0.416	0.029	0.357	0.297	0.304	0.019	0.042	0.382
T1 = T3	0.026	0.700	0.495	0.555	0.206	0.102	0.995	0.105	0.032	0.259
T2 = T3	0.580	0.272	0.132	0.265	0.930	0.515	0.219	0.619	0.976	0.739

Notes: T1 = Information only; T2 = Information + Mental Health (PM+); T3 = Information + Mental Health + Parental Counselling. Standard errors clustered at the region level in parentheses. Column (3) is conditional on the respondent reporting any government job aspiration at baseline. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table A9: Treatment Effects and Income Heterogeneity (BPL Status) — Interaction Model

	Overall Index (1)	Govt. Job (2)	Higher Level G (3)	Willing to Move (4)	Prep. Govt (5)	Max. Wait (6)	Marriage Backup (7)	Self-Emp. Backup (8)	Marriage Age (9)	Birth Age (10)
Info. Only	1.898^{***}	-0.317^{***}	-0.235^{***}	0.023	-0.313^{***}	-0.824^{***}	-0.056^{**}	0.109^{***}	0.178	0.450^{*}
	(0.231)	(0.048)	(0.066)	(0.037)	(0.106)	(0.258)	(0.022)	(0.029)	(0.257)	(0.254)
Info. + MH	2.882^{***}	-0.313^{***}	-0.243^{***}	0.072^{**}	-0.209^{*}	-0.607^{**}	-0.065^{***}	0.050^{*}	0.369	0.332
	(0.226)	(0.049)	(0.073)	(0.036)	(0.122)	(0.292)	(0.019)	(0.026)	(0.261)	(0.244)
Info. + MH + PC	2.574^{***}	-0.348^{***}	-0.133	0.082^{**}	-0.174^{*}	-0.396	-0.062^{***}	0.072^{**}	0.548^{**}	0.722^{***}
	(0.277)	(0.059)	(0.084)	(0.041)	(0.094)	(0.276)	(0.018)	(0.035)	(0.226)	(0.263)
(Info. Only) × BPL	0.287	0.003	0.319^{**}	-0.027	0.236	-0.231	-0.035	-0.066	-0.644^{*}	-0.755^{*}
	(0.470)	(0.081)	(0.133)	(0.068)	(0.236)	(0.449)	(0.035)	(0.072)	(0.349)	(0.386)
(Info. + MH) × BPL	-0.588	0.164^{*}	0.113	-0.001	0.150	0.326	0.097^{***}	-0.013	0.164	-0.011
	(0.385)	(0.093)	(0.112)	(0.066)	(0.239)	(0.376)	(0.035)	(0.065)	(0.437)	(0.434)
(Info. + MH + PC) × BPL	-0.031	0.096	0.071	0.013	-0.008	0.181	0.021	-0.060	-0.288	-0.500
	(0.441)	(0.101)	(0.129)	(0.089)	(0.202)	(0.423)	(0.036)	(0.073)	(0.374)	(0.400)
BPL	0.169	0.002	-0.066	0.080^{*}	-0.009	-0.202	0.007	-0.021	0.095	0.258
	(0.258)	(0.046)	(0.062)	(0.041)	(0.136)	(0.283)	(0.023)	(0.035)	(0.227)	(0.220)
Observations	2,097	2,097	1,352	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097
Control Mean (Non-BPL)	8.810	0.834	0.561	0.605	4.210	3.847	0.100	0.117	26.524	28.598
Control Mean (BPL)	9.013	0.827	0.424	0.732	4.260	3.632	0.087	0.113	26.779	28.887
Wald p-values (Non-BPL):										
T1 = T2	0.000	0.946	0.930	0.220	0.442	0.489	0.690	0.052	0.509	0.690
T1 = T3	0.021	0.639	0.300	0.197	0.190	0.160	0.784	0.337	0.166	0.376
T2 = T3	0.287	0.609	0.292	0.821	0.779	0.524	0.861	0.548	0.516	0.193
Wald p-values (BPL):										
T1 = T2	0.798	0.090	0.128	0.299	0.937	0.071	0.000	0.933	0.024	0.179
T1 = T3	0.397	0.472	0.291	0.277	0.613	0.067	0.105	0.699	0.049	0.181
T2 = T3	0.500	0.311	0.546	0.780	0.549	0.798	0.041	0.747	0.487	0.794

Notes: BPL denotes Below Poverty Line household status, drawn from the household ration card. T1 = Information only; T2 = Information + Mental Health (PM+); T3 = Information + Mental Health + Parental Counselling. Standard errors clustered at the region level in parentheses. Column (3) is conditional on the respondent reporting any government job aspiration at baseline. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table A10: Treatment Effects and Social Desirability Bias Heterogeneity — Interaction Model

	Overall Index (1)	Govt. Job (2)	Higher Level G (3)	Willing to Move (4)	Prep. Govt (5)	Max. Wait (6)	Marriage Backup (7)	Self-Emp. Backup (8)	Marriage Age (9)	Birth Age (10)
Info. Only	1.602***	−0.286***	−0.186***	−0.041	−0.326***	−0.717***	−0.066***	0.103***	0.163	0.482*
	(0.237)	(0.049)	(0.067)	(0.036)	(0.118)	(0.261)	(0.024)	(0.034)	(0.268)	(0.275)
Info. + MH	2.690***	−0.286***	−0.176**	0.089**	−0.286**	−0.580**	−0.050**	0.033	0.381	0.288
	(0.240)	(0.053)	(0.069)	(0.040)	(0.136)	(0.261)	(0.022)	(0.032)	(0.278)	(0.278)
Info. + MH + PC	2.444***	−0.286***	−0.102	0.137***	−0.269**	−0.371	−0.060***	0.072*	0.407*	0.533*
	(0.280)	(0.061)	(0.071)	(0.043)	(0.123)	(0.250)	(0.022)	(0.040)	(0.217)	(0.276)
(Info. Only) × SDS_H	0.794***	−0.051	0.046	0.135**	0.164	−0.297	0.013	−0.023	−0.283	−0.479
	(0.291)	(0.056)	(0.077)	(0.065)	(0.187)	(0.289)	(0.032)	(0.046)	(0.294)	(0.290)
(Info. + MH) × SDS_H	0.102	0.030	−0.073	−0.042	0.255	0.117	0.019	0.026	0.042	0.071
	(0.287)	(0.067)	(0.092)	(0.063)	(0.191)	(0.319)	(0.032)	(0.040)	(0.307)	(0.336)
(Info. + MH + PC) × SDS_H	0.279	−0.069	−0.019	−0.101	0.191	0.037	0.009	−0.037	0.093	0.060
	(0.308)	(0.070)	(0.078)	(0.061)	(0.191)	(0.236)	(0.028)	(0.046)	(0.264)	(0.346)
SDS_H	−0.113	0.034	0.042	0.004	0.003	0.273*	−0.016	−0.019	−0.011	−0.081
	(0.181)	(0.034)	(0.049)	(0.042)	(0.105)	(0.154)	(0.020)	(0.026)	(0.173)	(0.184)
Observations	2,097	2,097	1,352	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097	2,097
Control Mean (SDS Low)	8.866	0.822	0.509	0.621	4.224	3.734	0.109	0.119	26.707	28.820
Control Mean (SDS High)	8.869	0.845	0.541	0.668	4.224	3.860	0.079	0.111	26.440	28.484
Wald p-values (SDS Low):										
T1 = T2	0.000	0.993	0.903	0.001	0.794	0.652	0.523	0.056	0.483	0.550
T1 = T3	0.009	0.996	0.321	0.000	0.691	0.237	0.787	0.499	0.350	0.867
T2 = T3	0.433	0.998	0.391	0.309	0.921	0.481	0.686	0.383	0.928	0.449
Wald p-values (SDS High):										
T1 = T2	0.094	0.223	0.323	0.404	0.402	0.152	0.397	0.560	0.092	0.256
T1 = T3	0.204	0.774	0.854	0.331	0.542	0.038	0.911	0.235	0.041	0.070
T2 = T3	0.793	0.146	0.232	0.854	0.715	0.667	0.365	0.523	0.789	0.447

Notes: SDS_H denotes a respondent scoring above the sample median on the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Short Form C). The omitted category (SDS Low) consists of respondents at or below the median. T1 = Information only; T2 = Information + Mental Health (PM+); T3 = Information + Mental Health + Parental Counselling. Standard errors clustered at the region level in parentheses. Column (3) is conditional on the respondent reporting any government job aspiration at baseline. $^{*}p < 0.10$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{***}p < 0.01$.

Table A11: Implementation Costs by Treatment Arm (USD)

Cost component	T1: Info	T2: Info+MH	T3: Info+MH+PC
A. Fixed costs			
Rent of office space	190	570	760
Development of session modules	129	386	450
Salary of field coordinators	714	2,142	2,856
Salary of external trainer	300	600	720
B. Variable costs			
Para-counsellor training: Info	571	571	571
Para-counsellor travel + salary: Info	714	714	714
Para-counsellor training: PM+	-	3,335	3,335
Para-counsellor travel + salary: PM+	-	8,930	8,930
Para-counsellor training: Parental	-	-	380
Para-counsellor travel + salary: Parental	-	-	2,380
Mobile top-up (para-counsellors)	72	216	288
Pamphlets, posters, handouts	170	168	164
C. Total cost	**2,860**	**17,632**	**21,548**
Treated participants	471	467	456
D. Cost per treated participant	**6.07**	**37.76**	**47.25**
Incremental cost vs. T1	-	31.69	41.18
Incremental cost vs. T2	-	-	9.50

Notes: All figures are in USD and reflect actual program expenditures over the implementation period (Oct 2024–Apr 2025). T1 sessions are spread over 2 months, T2 over 6 months, and T3 over 8 months, which explains differences in rent, coordinator salaries, and mobile top-up. Pamphlet costs are uniform at \$0.36 per household. The PM+ component reflects the WHO five-module protocol delivered by trained para-counsellors. Per treated participant costs use the number of individuals who actually attended at least one session in the respective arm.

Table A12: Cost-Effectiveness Ratios by Outcome and Treatment Arm

	T1: Info	**T2: Info+MH**	**T3: Info+MH+PC**
Cost per treated participant (USD)	\$6.07	\$37.76	\$47.25
Panel A: Treatment effects (from endline regressions)			
Knowledge index (0–15 scale)	1.942***	2.744***	2.571***
Max. wait time for govt. job (years)	−0.858***	−0.529**	−0.342
P(prefer private job)	0.256***	0.233***	0.247***
P(willing to relocate)	0.018	0.072**	0.086**
P(no PHQ-4 depression symptoms)	0.146**	0.239***	0.098
P(would sign-up: internship)	0.123*	0.098*	0.175***
Panel B: Cost-effectiveness (USD per unit of outcome)			
Per knowledge-index point	\$3.13	\$13.76	\$18.38
Per month of wait time averted	\$0.59	\$5.95	\$11.52
Per pp shift to private preference	\$0.24	\$1.62	\$1.91
Per pp increase in willingness to move	n.s.	\$5.24	\$5.49
Per pp PHQ-4 no-depression	\$0.42	\$1.58	n.s.
Per pp internship sign-up	\$0.49	\$3.85	\$2.70

Notes: Panel A reproduces point estimates from Tables 2–9. "pp" denotes percentage points. Panel B divides cost per participant (top row) by the absolute value of each estimated treatment effect. Cells marked "n.s." indicate that the underlying coefficient is statistically indistinguishable from zero at the 10 percent level and the ratio is therefore not informative. *, **, *** denote statistical significance at the 10, 5, and 1 percent levels.

Table A13: Attrition Between Baseline and Endline by Treatment Groups

	Attrited			
Treatment status	No = 0	Yes = 1	Total	Percentage (%)
Control	821	93	914	10.18
Info only (T1)	431	40	471	8.49
Info+MH (T2)	427	40	467	8.57
Info+MH+PC (T3)	418	38	456	8.33
Total	2,097	211	2,308	9.14

Notes: This table reports the attrition rates across the control and the three treatment groups between the baseline survey and the endline follow-up. The total baseline sample consisted of 2,308 participants in Kanpur. Attrition refers to individuals who completed the baseline survey but could not be reached or declined to participate in the endline survey. T1 (Info) includes the labor market information sessions; T2 (Info+MH) adds the mental health Problem Management Plus (PM+) modules; and T3 (Info+MH+PC) adds parental counseling. The attrition rate is relatively balanced across groups, ranging from 8.33% to 10.18%, with an overall attrition rate of 9.14%.

Table A14: Attrition Effects

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Attrition dummy (Yes = 1, No = 0)			
1.treat			-0.025	-0.029*
			(0.016)	(0.016)
2.treat			-0.007	-0.011
			(0.014)	(0.016)
3.treat			-0.013	-0.013
			(0.014)	(0.014)
1.treatment	-0.015	-0.017		
	(0.012)	(0.012)		
Constant	0.047	0.030	0.045	0.028
	(0.033)	(0.177)	(0.035)	(0.176)
Observations	2,308	2,308	2,308	2,308
R-squared	0.021	0.034	0.022	0.035

Notes: Columns (1) and (3) report specifications without controls, while columns (2) and (4) include controls (age, education, gender, religion, caste dummies, rural status, BPL status, and region fixed effects). Columns (1)–(2) estimate the average treatment effect (treatment vs. control), whereas columns (3)–(4) report treatment effects separately by treatment arm. Robust standard errors clustered at the region level are reported in parentheses. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Table A15: Attrition and Sample Composition: Characteristic by Treatment Interactions

	(1) Attrition	(2) Attrition
Any treatment	−0.017	0.176
	(0.012)	(0.387)
Age	0.000	−0.007
	(0.004)	(0.006)
Education	0.008	0.030
	(0.011)	(0.021)
Male	−0.006	0.008
	(0.014)	(0.026)
Hindu	−0.115**	−0.203**
	(0.047)	(0.102)
SC	−0.004	0.009
	(0.017)	(0.031)
ST	0.037	−0.105**
	(0.094)	(0.041)
OBC	−0.015	−0.023
	(0.014)	(0.026)
Other castes	−0.171***	−0.238***
	(0.044)	(0.090)
Rural	0.042**	0.068**
	(0.021)	(0.028)
BPL	0.012	0.018
	(0.019)	(0.035)
Treatment interactions		
Any treatment × Age		0.012
		(0.008)
Any treatment × Education		−0.035
		(0.024)
Any treatment × Male		−0.021
		(0.030)
Any treatment × Hindu		0.132
		(0.101)
Any treatment × SC		−0.026
		(0.037)
Any treatment × ST		0.184
		(0.130)
Any treatment × OBC		0.005
		(0.030)
Any treatment × Rural		−0.047
		(0.032)
Any treatment × BPL		−0.012
		(0.037)
Observations	2,308	2,308

Notes: The dependent variable is an indicator equal to one if a baseline respondent did not complete the endline. "Any treatment" pools the three treatment arms against control. Column (1) reports main effects, column (2) adds the interaction of the pooled treatment indicator with baseline characteristic. The interactions in column (2) test whether the composition of attritors differs between treated and control respondents; the joint test at the foot of the column reports the p value for the null that all nine interactions are zero. The omitted caste category is General Category.

Table A16: Intervention Exposure Across Treatment Groups

	Treatment status			
	C	T1	T2	T3
Information sessions				
No = 0	914	4	3	2
Yes = 1	0	467	464	454
Mental health counselling sessions				
(No of PM+ modules attended)				
0	914	471	6	2
1	0	0	4	1
2	0	0	3	20
3	0	0	8	14
4	0	0	24	37
5	0	0	422	382
Parental counselling sessions				
No = 0	914	471	467	24
Yes = 1	0	0	0	432
Sample size	914	471	467	456

Notes: This table reports the distribution of intervention dosage across the four experimental arms. **C** is the control group (no intervention). **T1** (Information) received three group sessions on labor market statistics and search strategies. **T2** (Info + MH) received the information sessions plus five individual weekly sessions of the WHO's Problem Management Plus (PM+) psychological intervention. **T3** (Info + MH + PC) received all T2 components plus two sessions of parental counseling designed to align family expectations with labor-market realities. Discrepancies between sample size and session attendance reflect minor non-compliance or partial completion of the modular sessions.

A Statistical Power and Minimum Detectable Effects

The trial was powered at enrollment to detect effects of economically meaningful size on the primary outcomes, given 150 regions and roughly 15 youth per region. We assess the informativeness of the principal null findings by computing ex-post minimum detectable effects (MDEs) at the 5 percent level with 80 percent power. For the Treatment 3 effect on mental health (no depression or anxiety), the MDE is approximately 17 percentage points against an estimated effect of 9.8 points; for the Treatment 3 effect on maximum waiting time, the MDE is approximately 0.78 years (about nine months) against an estimated effect of 0.34 years. In both cases the point estimate is in the predicted direction but smaller than the MDE, so these nulls are consistent either with a true effect too small to detect at this sample size or with no effect; they should not be read as precisely estimated zeros. By contrast, the design is well-powered for the large



Figure A2: Study Location: Kanpur District, Uttar Pradesh

Note: The highlighted district (red) is Kanpur, the study site for the randomized controlled trial. Kanpur is a tier two industrial city located in central Uttar Pradesh whose administrative jurisdiction includes both urban wards and rural hinterland. The 150 study regions were drawn from neighborhoods across Kanpur district, stratified by urban and rural status.

Table B2: Robustness: Logit Average Marginal Effects — Mental Health and Psychological Outcomes (Endline)

	PHQ4 No (1)	PSS4 No (2)	PHQ4 1 (3)	PHQ4 2 (4)	PHQ4 3 (5)	PHQ4 4 (6)	PSS 1 (7)	PSS 2 (8)	PSS 3 (9)	PSS 4 (10)
Info. Only	0.134**	0.012	0.012	0.048	0.102**	0.071	-0.014	-0.031	-0.017	-0.031
	(0.065)	(0.019)	(0.051)	(0.044)	(0.045)	(0.060)	(0.035)	(0.038)	(0.049)	(0.036)
Info. + MH	0.234***	0.014	0.021	0.103**	0.129***	0.221***	0.029	0.051*	-0.039	0.058*
	(0.057)	(0.012)	(0.046)	(0.043)	(0.043)	(0.063)	(0.038)	(0.027)	(0.043)	(0.032)
Info. + MH + PC	0.089	0.000	-0.014	0.090**	0.091**	0.113**	0.009	0.057**	-0.016	0.050*
	(0.060)	(0.018)	(0.047)	(0.046)	(0.038)	(0.057)	(0.036)	(0.023)	(0.041)	(0.029)
Observations	2,083	624	1,987	1,992	2,034	2,028	2,054	2,008	1,999	2,079
Wald: T1=T2	0.212	0.899	0.869	0.312	0.626	0.056	0.305	0.025	0.666	0.028
Wald: T1=T3	0.582	0.496	0.655	0.460	0.828	0.549	0.568	0.011	0.984	0.028
Wald: T2=T3	0.051	0.302	0.512	0.828	0.433	0.151	0.643	0.813	0.594	0.829
RI p value T1	0.045	0.492	0.809	0.298	0.030	0.252	0.682	0.395	0.718	0.407
RI p value T2	0.000	0.219	0.680	0.028	0.004	0.000	0.468	0.069	0.360	0.093
RI p value T3	0.168	0.987	0.753	0.069	0.019	0.054	0.810	0.019	0.717	0.103
Joint test p	0.003	0.455	0.929	0.063	0.008	0.007	0.779	0.017	0.851	0.055
Westfall–Young	0.001	0.452	0.962	0.078	0.011	0.002	0.833	0.053	0.724	0.235
Control mean	0.492	0.002	0.808	0.788	0.748	0.653	0.181	0.088	0.223	0.129

Notes: Average marginal effects from logit. Outcomes are binary indicators that equal one when the symptom is absent. PHQ4 No equals one when no depression or anxiety symptom is reported; PSS4 No when no perceived stress is reported; columns (3) to (6) are the four PHQ-4 item dummies and (7) to (10) the four PSS-4 item dummies. Controls and clustering as in Table B1. The small PSS4 No sample reflects near-absence of variation in that outcome (control mean 0.002), which drops invariant regions under maximum likelihood. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table B3: Robustness: Logit Average Marginal Effects — Backup Plans (Endline)

	Get married as backup (1)	Study further as backup (2)	Self employment as backup (3)
Info. Only	-0.059***	-0.005	0.099***
	(0.019)	(0.057)	(0.024)
Info. + MH	-0.039**	0.021	0.050*
	(0.015)	(0.066)	(0.026)
Info. + MH + PC	-0.059***	0.044	0.056*
	(0.018)	(0.057)	(0.030)
Observations	1,991	1,996	2,042
Wald: T1=T2	0.356	0.744	0.032
Wald: T1=T3	0.987	0.499	0.125
Wald: T2=T3	0.324	0.773	0.830
RI p value T1	0.003	0.938	0.000
RI p value T2	0.010	0.748	0.053
RI p value T3	0.001	0.479	0.069
Joint test p	0.003	0.886	0.003
Westfall–Young	0.005	0.838	0.001
Control mean	0.096	0.214	0.116

Notes: Average marginal effects from logit. Outcomes are binary indicators for the respondent's stated backup plan if a government job is not secured. The continuous family formation outcomes in main Table 7 (expected ages at marriage and first birth) remain ordinary least squares and are not reproduced here. Controls and clustering as in Table B1. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table B4: Robustness: Logit Average Marginal Effects — Sign-ups (Endline)

	Free information sessions (1)	Free coaching sessions (2)	Free private job camp (3)	Internship sessions (4)
Info. Only	0.135*	0.117*	0.121**	0.115*
	(0.074)	(0.071)	(0.060)	(0.061)
Info. + MH	0.087	0.071	0.100**	0.092*
	(0.060)	(0.059)	(0.049)	(0.049)
Info. + MH + PC	0.150***	0.146**	0.209***	0.177***
	(0.057)	(0.060)	(0.060)	(0.060)
Observations	1,982	1,982	2,053	2,054
Wald: T1=T2	0.574	0.573	0.753	0.723
Wald: T1=T3	0.864	0.738	0.258	0.433
Wald: T2=T3	0.379	0.308	0.104	0.202
RI p value T1	0.096	0.120	0.057	0.071
RI p value T2	0.165	0.272	0.044	0.072
RI p value T3	0.010	0.008	0.001	0.004
Joint test p	0.047	0.077	0.003	0.014
Westfall–Young	0.030	0.023	0.001	0.010
Control mean	0.713	0.726	0.627	0.639

Notes: Average marginal effects from logit. Outcomes indicate whether the respondent signed up for the opportunity offered at endline. Controls and clustering as in Table B1. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table B5: Robustness: Logit Average Marginal Effects — Placebo Outcomes (Endline)

	Left Handed (1)	Twin Child (2)	First Born is F (3)	Has Asthma (4)
Info. Only	0.011	0.013	-0.041	0.017
	(0.023)	(0.009)	(0.032)	(0.011)
Info. + MH	-0.010	0.001	-0.012	0.015
	(0.018)	(0.010)	(0.025)	(0.011)
Info. + MH + PC	-0.008	0.017	0.011	0.010
	(0.021)	(0.011)	(0.031)	(0.012)
Observations	1,963	1,624	2,095	1,188
Wald: T1=T2	0.377	0.218	0.400	0.858
Wald: T1=T3	0.440	0.613	0.175	0.525
Wald: T2=T3	0.922	0.195	0.475	0.581
RI p value T1	0.640	0.182	0.216	0.109
RI p value T2	0.583	0.880	0.651	0.140
RI p value T3	0.698	0.060	0.728	0.402
Joint test p	0.824	0.190	0.529	0.357
Westfall–Young	0.921	0.150	0.499	0.254
Control mean	0.065	0.006	0.403	0.006

Notes: Average marginal effects from logit. Controls and clustering as in Table B1. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table B6: Robustness: Probit Average Marginal Effects — Job Expectations (Endline)

	Govt. Job (1)	Private Job (2)	H. Level G (3)	L. Level G (4)	Willing to move (5)
Info. Only	-0.304***	0.263***	-0.166***	0.089*	0.018
	(0.038)	(0.031)	(0.058)	(0.049)	(0.030)
Info. + MH	-0.270***	0.241***	-0.202***	0.099**	0.069**
	(0.041)	(0.033)	(0.059)	(0.042)	(0.029)
Info. + MH + PC	-0.314***	0.256***	-0.104*	0.095*	0.083**
	(0.039)	(0.036)	(0.060)	(0.056)	(0.039)
Observations	2,069	2,062	1,338	1,338	2,084
Wald: T1=T2	0.459	0.583	0.647	0.859	0.126
Wald: T1=T3	0.819	0.854	0.433	0.924	0.123
Wald: T2=T3	0.351	0.720	0.212	0.954	0.721
RI p value T1	0.000	0.000	0.005	0.070	0.548
RI p value T2	0.000	0.001	0.000	0.011	0.020
RI p value T3	0.000	0.000	0.098	0.094	0.046
Joint test p	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.032	0.075
Westfall–Young	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.034	0.056
Control mean	0.832	0.132	0.523	0.414	0.641

Notes: Entries are average marginal effects from probit. Controls and clustering as in Table B1. Columns (3) and (4) are conditional on reporting any government job aspiration at baseline. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table B7: Robustness: Probit Average Marginal Effects — Mental Health and Psychological Outcomes (Endline)

	PHQ4 No (1)	PSS4 No (2)	PHQ4 1 (3)	PHQ4 2 (4)	PHQ4 3 (5)	PHQ4 4 (6)	PSS 1 (7)	PSS 2 (8)	PSS 3 (9)	PSS 4 (10)
Info. Only	0.136**	0.013	0.017	0.053	0.104**	0.073	-0.014	-0.032	-0.018	-0.032
	(0.065)	(0.017)	(0.049)	(0.043)	(0.044)	(0.060)	(0.034)	(0.035)	(0.049)	(0.033)
Info. + MH	0.235***	0.014	0.021	0.104**	0.130***	0.217***	0.027	0.050*	-0.036	0.054*
	(0.057)	(0.011)	(0.044)	(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.059)	(0.037)	(0.026)	(0.042)	(0.032)
Info. + MH + PC	0.092	0.000	-0.015	0.092**	0.092**	0.118**	0.007	0.056**	-0.014	0.048*
	(0.061)	(0.016)	(0.045)	(0.043)	(0.037)	(0.056)	(0.035)	(0.023)	(0.041)	(0.029)
Observations	2,083	624	1,987	1,992	2,034	2,028	2,054	2,008	1,999	2,079
Wald: T1=T2	0.207	0.925	0.943	0.338	0.619	0.052	0.316	0.017	0.731	0.026
Wald: T1=T3	0.590	0.437	0.581	0.484	0.800	0.520	0.584	0.006	0.930	0.023
Wald: T2=T3	0.052	0.257	0.498	0.826	0.403	0.157	0.629	0.787	0.613	0.849
RI p value T1	0.044	0.486	0.719	0.237	0.020	0.243	0.662	0.348	0.692	0.351
RI p value T2	0.000	0.254	0.664	0.022	0.004	0.000	0.489	0.067	0.403	0.113
RI p value T3	0.159	0.987	0.750	0.047	0.016	0.045	0.846	0.019	0.754	0.116
Joint test p	0.002	0.451	0.908	0.043	0.007	0.006	0.802	0.012	0.877	0.062
Westfall–Young	0.001	0.502	0.958	0.063	0.011	0.002	0.859	0.052	0.769	0.289
Control mean	0.492	0.002	0.808	0.788	0.748	0.653	0.181	0.088	0.223	0.129

Notes: Average marginal effects from probit. Outcome definitions, controls, and clustering as in Table B2. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table B8: Robustness: Probit Average Marginal Effects — Backup Plans (Endline)

	Get married as backup (1)	Study further as backup (2)	Self employment as backup (3)
Info. Only	-0.059***	-0.003	0.095***
	(0.018)	(0.056)	(0.024)
Info. + MH	-0.040***	0.025	0.047*
	(0.015)	(0.062)	(0.025)
Info. + MH + PC	-0.058***	0.043	0.054*
	(0.016)	(0.057)	(0.029)
Observations	1,991	1,996	2,042
Wald: T1=T2	0.371	0.708	0.039
Wald: T1=T3	0.985	0.512	0.133
Wald: T2=T3	0.320	0.807	0.833
RI p value T1	0.001	0.962	0.000
RI p value T2	0.007	0.697	0.064
RI p value T3	0.001	0.490	0.082
Joint test p	0.003	0.888	0.005
Westfall–Young	0.003	0.849	0.001
Control mean	0.096	0.214	0.116

Notes: Average marginal effects from probit. Continuous family formation outcomes remain ordinary least squares. Controls and clustering as in Table B1. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table B9: Robustness: Probit Average Marginal Effects — Sign-ups (Endline)

	Free information sessions (1)	Free coaching sessions (2)	Free private job camp (3)	Internship sessions (4)
Info. Only	0.133*	0.115*	0.121**	0.116*
	(0.071)	(0.068)	(0.060)	(0.061)
Info. + MH	0.084	0.067	0.099**	0.092*
	(0.058)	(0.058)	(0.048)	(0.048)
Info. + MH + PC	0.156***	0.153***	0.211***	0.180***
	(0.055)	(0.058)	(0.057)	(0.058)
Observations	1,982	1,982	2,053	2,054
Wald: T1=T2	0.541	0.534	0.732	0.717
Wald: T1=T3	0.773	0.647	0.224	0.391
Wald: T2=T3	0.289	0.226	0.075	0.166
RI p value T1	0.086	0.110	0.058	0.068
RI p value T2	0.173	0.297	0.044	0.069
RI p value T3	0.008	0.007	0.001	0.002
Joint test p	0.037	0.065	0.003	0.010
Westfall–Young	0.023	0.022	0.001	0.006
Control mean	0.713	0.726	0.627	0.639

Notes: Average marginal effects from probit. Controls and clustering as in Table B1. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table B10: Robustness: Probit Average Marginal Effects — Placebo Outcomes (Endline)

	Left Handed	Twin Child	First Born is F	Has Asthma
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Info. Only	0.010	0.012	-0.039	0.016*
	(0.023)	(0.008)	(0.033)	(0.010)
Info. + MH	-0.012	0.002	-0.010	0.013
	(0.017)	(0.008)	(0.026)	(0.009)
Info. + MH + PC	-0.010	0.016*	0.014	0.008
	(0.020)	(0.009)	(0.031)	(0.010)
Observations	1,963	1,624	2,095	1,188
Wald: T1=T2	0.374	0.232	0.400	0.693
Wald: T1=T3	0.435	0.652	0.168	0.423
Wald: T2=T3	0.919	0.192	0.461	0.610
RI p value T1	0.700	0.179	0.242	0.138
RI p value T2	0.494	0.816	0.707	0.222
RI p value T3	0.621	0.086	0.654	0.455
Joint test p	0.808	0.281	0.543	0.466
Westfall–Young	0.866	0.215	0.538	0.324
Control mean	0.065	0.006	0.403	0.006

Notes: Average marginal effects from probit. Controls and clustering as in Table B1. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.