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The Impact of FinTech Applications on Personal Financial Management: A Critical Review of Recent Evidence (2021-2026)

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Abstract: ***Financial technology (FinTech) applications have moved the everyday management of money out of the bank branch and onto the smartphone, placing payment, budgeting, investing and borrowing tools directly in the hands of individuals. This review critically synthesises recent evidence (2021–2026) on how these applications affect personal financial management (PFM). Drawing on systematic reviews and primary studies indexed in Scopus, Web of Science and major publishers, it maps seven application classes- digital payments, mobile banking, personal-finance apps, robo-advisors, investment platforms, buy-now-pay-later (BNPL) services, and cryptocurrency- and traces the behavioural channels through which they shape budgeting, saving, investing, financial literacy, credit management and inclusion. The evidence is genuinely double-edged. The same features that improve visibility, lower cost and widen access can also encourage over-spending, over-confidence and over-reliance, with effects that depend heavily on a user's financial literacy and on the surrounding regulatory environment. Real-time payment infrastructures such as India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) demonstrate FinTech's inclusive potential at population scale, while BNPL and speculative crypto trading illustrate its capacity to amplify financial harm among the most vulnerable. A comparative analysis of eighteen major studies reveals consistent agreement on adoption drivers but sharp contradictions on welfare outcomes. The review identifies nine research gaps—most notably the scarcity of long-run causal evidence, the neglect of adolescents and students, and the imbalance toward developed-economy data—and sets out a future agenda relevant to students, working professionals and developing economies such as India. The central conclusion is that FinTech is not inherently beneficial or harmful; its net effect on personal financial management is a design and literacy problem rather than a purely technological one.***

Keywords: FinTech applications; personal financial management; financial literacy; digital payments; robo-advisors; buy-now-pay-later; financial inclusion; UPI

1. Introduction

1.1 The evolution of FinTech

The term "FinTech" denotes the use of technology to deliver financial services, but the phenomenon it describes is best understood as a sequence of overlapping waves rather than a single event. An early wave digitised the back office of incumbent institutions; a second, gathering pace after the 2008 financial crisis, saw specialist start-ups unbundle individual services- payments, lending, advice- and deliver them directly to consumers through mobile interfaces; and a third, ongoing wave is characterised by re-bundling, in which artificial intelligence, open-banking data sharing and embedded finance recombine these services into integrated platforms. Philippon (2016) argued that this disruption could lower the historically stubborn cost of financial intermediation, a cost that had barely fallen in a century despite enormous advances in information technology. Subsequent scholarship has confirmed both the scale and the unevenness of the shift: systematic reviews document explosive growth in FinTech research and adoption while repeatedly noting that the field remains empirically young, with theory and macro-level description outpacing rigorous, firm- and household-level evidence (Sharma, Sharma, & Dhingra, 2024; Ha et al., 2025).

1.2 The importance of personal financial management

Personal financial management (PFM) refers to the decisions and behaviours through which individuals plan, monitor and control their financial resources- earning, spending, saving, borrowing, investing and protecting against risk. A long literature establishes that these behaviours are consequential and frequently suboptimal: many households under-save, mismanage debt and lack the basic financial literacy required for sound decisions (Lusardi & Mitchell, 2014). Goyal, Kumar, and Xiao (2021), in a systematic review of PFM behaviour, show how financial knowledge, socialisation and psychological traits jointly shape outcomes, and how interventions that ignore these foundations tend to disappoint. Because FinTech applications now mediate a large and growing share of everyday financial activity, they have become an important- yet still under-theorised- influence on precisely these behaviours. Evaluating that influence is therefore a matter of both academic and practical urgency, particularly for young people who are forming financial habits in an environment saturated with persuasive financial technology.

1.3 Purpose, objectives and review questions

This paper provides a critical review of recent evidence on the impact of FinTech applications on personal financial management. Its objectives are fourfold: (i) to map the principal classes of FinTech application relevant to

individuals and synthesise what recent research reports about each; (ii) to analyse the specific channels through which these applications affect financial behaviour and outcomes; (iii) to compare and critically evaluate major empirical studies, foregrounding agreements and, more importantly, contradictions; and (iv) to identify research gaps and set out a future agenda, with particular attention to students, working professionals and developing economies such as India. The review is guided by three questions:

1) How do FinTech applications change the way individuals manage their personal finances?
2) Under what conditions do these applications improve, and under what conditions do they harm, financial wellbeing?
3) Where does the current evidence remain weak, contradictory or geographically unbalanced?

1.4 Scope and approach

This is a narrative-critical review rather than a meta-analysis. The studies discussed are drawn mainly from peer-reviewed sources indexed in Scopus, Web of Science and major publishers (Springer, Elsevier, Wiley, Taylor & Francis and the IEEE), supplemented by authoritative central-bank and regulator data for fast-moving categories, with priority given to work published between 2021 and 2026. The emphasis throughout is critical rather than descriptive: evidence is grouped around mechanisms and outcomes, and disagreement between studies is treated as a finding in its own right.

Figure 1 sets out the conceptual framework that organises the review. It links the major classes of FinTech application (inputs) to a set of behavioural mechanisms- visibility, automation, lower cost and personalised guidance- through which they act on personal-finance outcomes, while recognising moderators and risks such as financial literacy, cybersecurity and the digital divide. A feedback loop captures the reality that financial behaviour, once changed, reshapes how individuals subsequently use these tools.

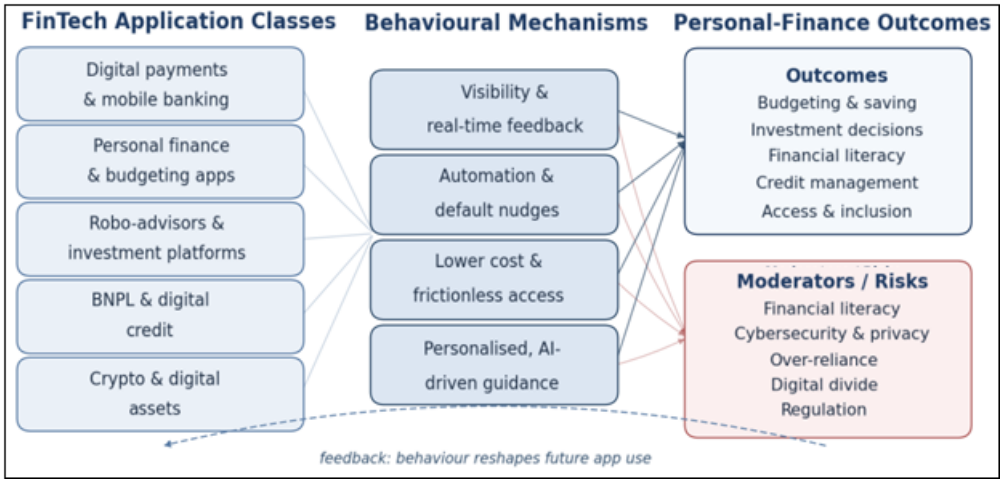

Figure 1: A conceptual framework linking FinTech application classes to behavioural mechanisms and personal-finance outcomes, moderated by literacy, security and access

2. Literature Review

The literature relevant to this review spans several application classes. Rather than treating each in isolation, the discussion below foregrounds points of consensus and, where they exist, the contradictions that a critical synthesis must confront.

2.1 Digital payments

Digital payment systems are the most widely adopted FinTech category and the gateway through which most users first encounter the field. The clearest evidence of their transformative potential comes from national real-time payment infrastructures. India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) processed roughly 172 billion transactions in 2024 and around 228 billion in 2025, and in 2025 the International Monetary Fund recognised it as the world's largest retail fast-payment system, accounting for close to half of global real-time payment volume (Frost et al., 2024; IMF, 2025). Crucially, the literature attributes UPI's success not to any single app but to its design as interoperable public infrastructure with zero end-user fees, layered on top of broad bank-account ownership and digital identity (Carstens & Nilekani, 2024). The Global Findex data document the parallel expansion of account ownership that made such adoption possible (Demirgüç-Kunt et al., 2022). Yet a critical reading notes that transaction convenience is not the same as financial health: the ease of tapping a phone may weaken the psychological friction that cash once imposed on spending, an effect examined further below.

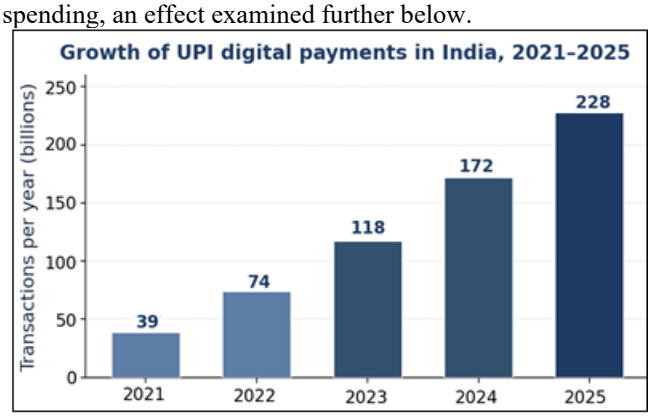

Figure 2: Growth of UPI digital payments in India, 2021–2025 (NPCI annual transaction volumes)

2.2 Mobile banking

Mobile banking extends the branch into the pocket, and the evidence consistently links it to greater financial inclusion and more frequent monitoring of balances. Foundational work on mobile money in Kenya showed measurable welfare gains through improved risk-sharing and the ability to receive remittances quickly (Jack & Suri, 2014), and later studies confirm that mobile money promotes saving among micro-enterprises, with stronger effects when paired with a formal bank account (Koomson et al., 2023; Adbi & Natarajan, 2023). Adoption research, however, repeatedly emphasises that trust and perceived security are the binding constraints rather than functionality: Jafri et al. (2023), reviewing the field through a trust–security lens, find that earlier work over-emphasised technological benefits and under-studied the cognitive resistance that arises after FinTech controversies and data breaches.

2.3 Personal-finance and budgeting apps

Personal-finance management apps aggregate accounts, categorise transactions and visualise spending against budgets. The optimistic hypothesis is that visibility plus timely nudges improves discipline. Evidence is mixed and conditional. Studies of online budget planners report higher financial satisfaction, but with heterogeneous effects that depend on income and financial literacy, suggesting the tools complement rather than substitute for underlying capability. An influential field experiment delivering a mobile budgeting tool to out-of-school youth found improvements in financial literacy and some behaviours, but- strikingly- no increase in the probability of saving and an increase in the use of credit, with effects concentrated among those without prior exposure (the financial-diaries study summarised in Kaiser et al., 2022). This is an early signal of a recurring theme: the same app can raise knowledge while encouraging borrowing.

2.4 Robo-advisors

Robo-advisors automate portfolio construction and rebalancing, promising low-cost, emotion-free investing. Adoption studies converge on a small set of drivers- perceived usefulness, ease of use, cost savings and, above all, trust- while disagreeing on their relative weight. Isaia and Oggero (2022) find that financially literate, highly educated Italians are more likely to adopt; Tan et al. (2023) report similar literacy and trust effects among millennials; and Hildebrand and Bergner (2021) show that conversational interfaces can themselves manufacture trust. The contradictions are instructive: whereas several studies treat trust as decisive, Oehler et al. (2022) find that trust does not significantly affect the decision to invest via a robo-advisor, and critical reviews warn of algorithmic bias, naive risk-profiling and a lack of individualisation (Nourallah, 2023; Darškuvienė & Lisauskiene, 2021). The technology lowers the cost of advice but does not remove the need for the investor to understand basic financial concepts.

2.5 Investment platforms

Commission-free trading apps have democratised market access but reshaped investor behaviour in ways that are not uniformly benign. The literature documents heightened engagement among younger, first-time investors alongside concerns that gamified interfaces, push notifications and social feeds encourage frequent trading, attention-driven purchases and herding. The behavioural-finance reading is that these platforms reduce the friction that once restrained impulsive trading, so that lower cost and easier access can translate into worse outcomes for inexperienced users- a tension between access and self-control that recurs across the more aggressive FinTech categories.

2.6 Buy-now-pay-later (BNPL) services

BNPL splits a purchase into interest-free instalments at the point of sale and has grown rapidly, especially among younger and financially vulnerable consumers. Here the evidence of harm is comparatively strong. The U.S. Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (2022) warned that the model can encourage over-extension through loan stacking and sustained usage, and that providers seldom report to credit bureaus, obscuring true indebtedness. Survey and transaction-level work finds that a large share of users- around 30% in one nationally representative survey and far higher in others—report spending more than they otherwise would, and matched-sample analysis links adoption to increased overdraft charges and credit-card interest (Di Maggio et al., 2022; Hayashi & Routh, 2024). Studies from emerging markets echo the pattern, associating BNPL with impulsive buying among young consumers (Raj, Jasrotia, & Rai, 2023). The contradiction in this literature is not about direction but about framing: industry-aligned work emphasises inclusion and interest-free flexibility, while consumer-protection research emphasises debt accumulation and the perception that purchases are “more affordable than they really are.”

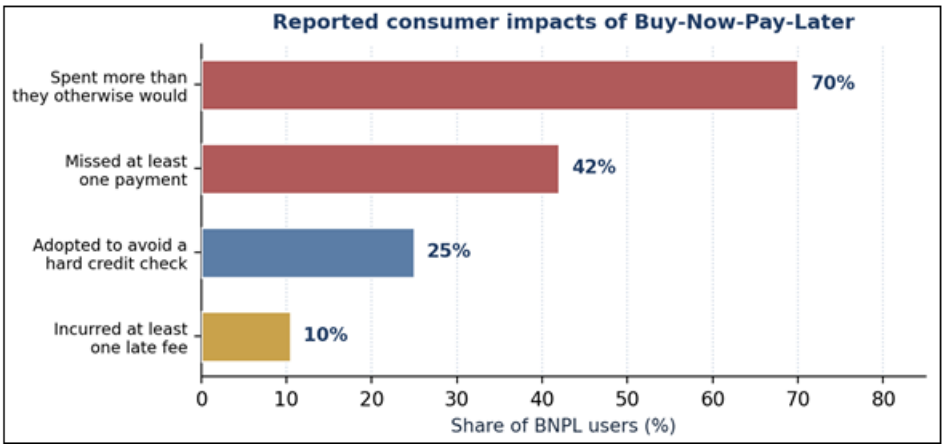

Figure 3: Reported consumer impacts of buy-now-pay-later use (compiled from 2021–2023 surveys; CFPB, 2022)

2.7 Cryptocurrency and digital assets

Cryptocurrency occupies the most contested corner of the FinTech landscape. Adoption studies in India and elsewhere find that performance expectancy, technology awareness and subjective financial literacy drive the intention to use crypto (the UTAUT-2 study by the authors indexed as a 2023 Journal of Theoretical and Applied Electronic Commerce Research article). The critical finding, however, concerns the gap between perceived and actual literacy: Carbó-Valverde et al. (2025) show that individuals who believe they are financially literate but score poorly on objective tests hold more cryptocurrency and trade more riskily. U.S. evidence links crypto exposure to financial vulnerability rather than to inclusion, complicating the narrative that digital assets bank the unbanked. The literature thus treats crypto less as a personal-finance tool and more as a high-risk arena in which over-confidence and thin regulation interact dangerously.

3. Impact of FinTech on Personal Financial Management

Moving from application classes to mechanisms, this section analyses how FinTech reshapes the core tasks of personal financial management. The organising claim is that a common set of design features- visibility, automation, lower cost and personalised guidance- acts on each task, but that the sign of the effect depends on user literacy and product incentives.

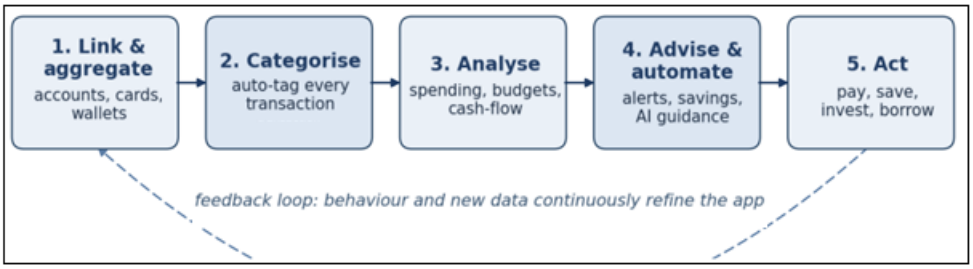

Figure 4: How a typical FinTech personal-finance application works, from account linking to action and feedback

3.1 Budgeting and expense tracking

By aggregating accounts and categorising transactions automatically, FinTech apps replace fragmented, retrospective record-keeping with a single real-time view. The behavioural value lies in salience: spending that is visible and summarised is easier to control. The evidence suggests genuine gains in awareness and satisfaction, but it also cautions that visibility without commitment devices rarely changes entrenched habits, and that automated categorisation can lull users into passive monitoring. The most reliable improvements occur when tracking is paired with alerts, goals and friction at the point of spending.

3.2 Savings behaviour

Automation is FinTech's most powerful lever for saving. Round-up features, scheduled transfers and goal-based "pots" recruit the well-documented power of defaults and mental accounting, helping users save without repeated acts of willpower. Yet the experimental record is sobering: simply giving people a budgeting tool does not reliably raise saving, and some interventions raise borrowing instead. The lesson is that savings gains come from choice architecture—pre-commitment and defaults- rather than from information alone, consistent with the broader behavioural-economics literature on savings devices.

3.3 Investment decision-making

FinTech has compressed the cost and complexity of investing, opening markets to first-time and small-balance investors through robo-advisors and commission-free platforms. For disciplined, long-horizon investors this is unambiguously positive. For others, the same accessibility, combined with gamified design and social signals, can encourage over-trading and speculation. The decisive moderator is financial literacy: tools that automate execution still require the user to set sensible goals, risk tolerances and

time horizons, and those who lack this understanding may simply automate poor decisions.

3.4 Financial literacy

FinTech's relationship with financial literacy runs in both directions. On one hand, apps can teach through doing-contextual nudges, in-app explanations and simulations build knowledge, and meta-analytic evidence confirms that well-designed financial education improves both knowledge and downstream behaviour (Kaiser et al., 2022). On the other hand, frictionless products can substitute for understanding, and dangerous gaps open when subjective literacy outruns objective literacy, as in the crypto evidence. For schools and educators this is the central implication: FinTech is most beneficial when it accompanies, rather than replaces, deliberate financial education.

3.5 Credit management

Digital lending, BNPL and credit-line features have made borrowing faster and more frictionless than at any point in history. Used deliberately, instant credit smooths consumption and can build credit history; used impulsively, it accelerates debt accumulation, particularly where products sit outside conventional credit-reporting and regulatory perimeters. The evidence on BNPL is the clearest cautionary case, showing that interest-free framing can mask real increases in indebtedness and downstream fees.

3.6 Accessibility and financial inclusion

The strongest welfare case for FinTech rests on inclusion. By lowering cost and removing the need for physical branches, applications extend formal financial services to populations previously excluded. India's combination of universal bank accounts, digital identity and UPI is the leading example of inclusion at national scale (Carstens & Nilekani, 2024; IMF, 2025). A systematic review of 96 studies confirms that FinTech is broadly a driving force of financial inclusion worldwide, though its effects are strongest when combined with traditional banking and complementary policy (Ha et al., 2025). The critical qualification is the digital divide: the same technologies can deepen exclusion for those without devices, connectivity or skills, and reviews focusing on vulnerable groups find the elderly and people with disabilities persistently under-served (the 2025 PRISMA review of 185 studies on FinTech and vulnerable groups).

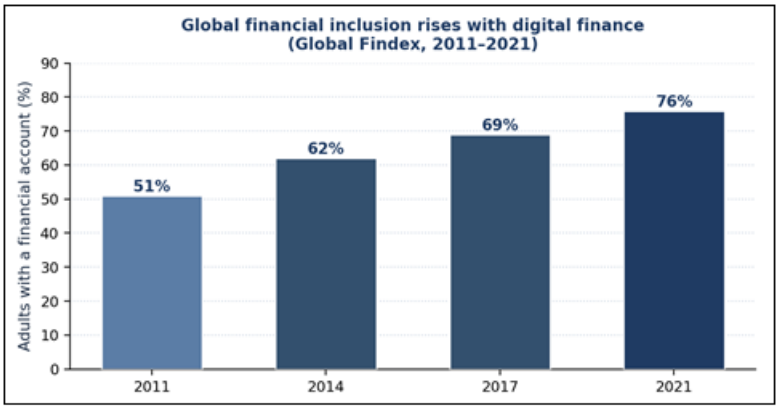

Figure 5: Global financial inclusion has risen alongside digital finance (Global Findex, 2011–2021).

4. Comparative Analysis of Existing Studies

Table 1 compares eighteen representative studies spanning the application classes above, summarising focus, method, principal findings and limitations. The synthesis that follows draws out where the literature agrees and where it openly contradicts itself.

Table 1: Comparative analysis of eighteen representative studies on FinTech and personal financial management (2014–2025)

Study (Author, Year)	Focus / Method	Key Findings	Limitations
Philippon (2016)	Theory; FinTech & cost of intermediation	FinTech can lower the persistently high unit cost of finance and disrupt incumbents.	Conceptual; pre-dates mobile-app era and recent data.
Lusardi & Mitchell (2014)	Review; financial literacy	Low literacy is widespread and causally linked to poor saving, debt and planning.	Pre-FinTech; literacy measures debated.
Goyal, Kumar & Xiao (2021)	Systematic review of PFM behaviour	Knowledge, socialisation and psychology jointly drive PFM; interventions often under-perform.	Synthesis only; heterogeneous primary studies.
Jack & Suri (2014)	Field study; M-PESA, Kenya	Mobile money improved risk-sharing and household welfare via cheaper transfers.	Single country; early mobile-money context.
Hildebrand & Bergner (2021)	Experiments; conversational robo-advice	Conversational design raises trust and willingness to follow advice.	Lab setting; short horizon; trust may not persist.
Isaia & Oggero (2022)	Survey; robo-advisor use, Italy	Literacy and education increase young adults' propensity to adopt robo-advice.	Cross-sectional; intention ≠ sustained use.
Oehler et al. (2022)	Study; personality & robo-advice	Trust does NOT significantly affect the decision to invest via robo-advisor.	Contradicts trust-centric models; sample-specific.

Tan et al. (2023)	Survey; millennials & robo-advisory	Financial knowledge, usability and trust raise willingness to adopt.	Self-report; one country; positive framing.
CFPB (2022)	Market report; BNPL, U.S.	BNPL encourages over-extension via loan stacking; weak credit reporting.	Regulator perspective; pre-recent-regulation.
Di Maggio et al. (2022)	Transaction data; BNPL	Unsecured BNPL access raises spending, especially for some segments.	Identification challenges; provider coverage gaps.
Hayashi & Routh (2024)	2023 SHED data; BNPL	BNPL use concentrated among financially constrained; raises overdrafts.	Cross-sectional; no financial-literacy items.
Raj, Jasrotia & Rai (2023)	Survey; BNPL, young consumers (India)	BNPL is convenient but linked to impulsive buying and overspending.	Self-report; young e-commerce users only.
Carbó-Valverde et al. (2025)	Study; crypto & financial literacy	Over-confident (high subjective, low objective literacy) users hold more crypto, trade riskier.	Behavioural-finance focus; measurement of literacy.
Jafri et al. (2023)	SLR; trust & security in FinTech	Trust and perceived security are decisive; prior work over-stressed tech benefits.	Review; framework-bound (TCCM).
Kaiser et al. (2022)	Meta-analysis; financial education	Education improves knowledge AND downstream behaviour, including saving.	Effect sizes modest; design quality varies.
Koomson et al. (2023)	Study; mobile money & saving	Mobile money promotes saving, more so with a bank account.	Context-specific; endogeneity concerns.
Ha et al. (2025)	SLR (96 studies); fintech & inclusion	FinTech broadly drives inclusion; strongest alongside traditional banking.	Aggregates heterogeneous studies; publication bias.
IMF (2025) / Frost et al. (2024)	Policy analysis; UPI & fast payments	Interoperable, low-cost public rails (UPI) scale inclusion massively.	Macro/system level; limited household-welfare data.

4.1 Points of agreement

Three findings recur with notable consistency. First, adoption is driven less by raw functionality than by trust, perceived ease of use and cost savings- a pattern stable across payments, mobile banking and robo-advice. Second, financial literacy is a pervasive moderator: it predicts adoption, shapes whether tools help or harm, and conditions every welfare outcome. Third, at the infrastructural level, low-cost interoperable systems such as UPI deliver inclusion at a scale and speed that older models could not, validating the public-infrastructure approach to digital payments.

4.2 Contradictions and tensions

The contradictions are at least as revealing as the agreements. The clearest concerns trust in robo-advice, treated as decisive by most adoption studies yet found insignificant by Oehler et al. (2022). A second tension concerns welfare: inclusion-focused research frames BNPL and crypto as widening access, while consumer-protection and behavioural-finance research frames the same products as engines of over-spending and over-confidence. A third tension concerns budgeting and savings apps, which reliably raise awareness and literacy yet, in the strongest experimental evidence, fail to raise saving and may raise borrowing. These are not mere noise; they reflect a genuine duality in which identical features cut both ways depending on user and context.

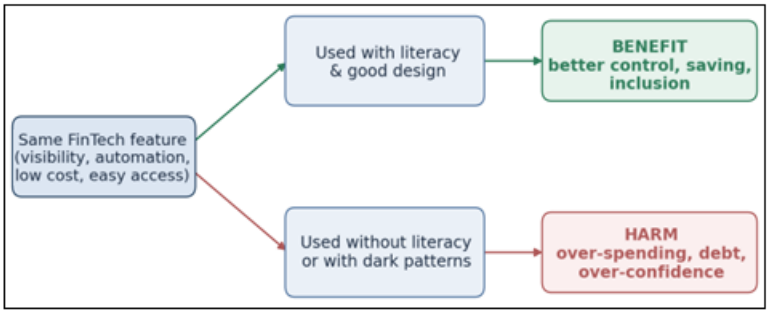

Figure 6: The double-edged nature of FinTech: the same feature can help or harm depending on literacy and design

5. Benefits of FinTech Applications

Drawing the analysis together, the benefits of FinTech for personal financial management can be summarised under four headings.

- **Convenience and complete visibility:** All of a user's accounts, balances and spending appear in one real-time view, replacing scattered and retrospective records and making everyday financial tasks faster and less effortful.
- **Real-time monitoring:** Instant notifications, balance alerts and spending summaries raise the salience of financial activity, supporting earlier and better-informed decisions and faster detection of errors or fraud.
- **Cost reduction:** By automating service delivery and removing physical branches and intermediaries, FinTech lowers fees for payments, advice and investing- most dramatically in zero-fee public payment rails—expanding the range of users for whom formal services are economical.
- **Personalised, AI-driven guidance:** Aggregated data and machine learning enable forecasting of bills, detection of unusual transactions and tailored, plain-language advice,

moving applications from reporting what has happened toward advising what to do next.

6. Challenges and Risks

The same features that generate benefits create risks that a balanced review must weigh equally.

- **Cybersecurity threats.** Concentrating financial activity in connected apps enlarges the attack surface; fraud, account takeover and social-engineering scams scale alongside adoption, and reviews identify security as a primary brake on trust (Jafri et al., 2023).
- **Data privacy.** Account aggregation depends on extensive data sharing. Consent-based open-banking frameworks improve control, but users frequently do not understand the permissions they grant, and data harvesting is itself a documented risk (CFPB, 2022).
- **Over-dependence on technology.** Automation can erode the financial skills it was meant to support, producing passive users who delegate judgement to algorithms they neither understand nor scrutinise.
- **The digital divide.** Benefits accrue to those with devices, connectivity and skills; the elderly, low-income and rural populations and people with disabilities risk deeper exclusion, so that inclusive technology can paradoxically widen gaps.
- **Regulatory challenges.** Fast-moving products such as BNPL and crypto have repeatedly outpaced regulation, leaving consumers exposed to inadequate disclosure, weak credit reporting and limited recourse until rules catch up.

7. Emerging Trends (2024–2026)

Five trends are reshaping the field and will define the next phase of research.

- **AI-powered financial assistants.** Generative and conversational AI is being embedded as proactive advisers that forecast cash flow and answer natural-language questions, raising fresh issues of accuracy, accountability and manufactured trust.
- **Open banking and account aggregation.** Consent-based data-sharing frameworks are becoming the substrate for richer cross-account advice, shifting the locus of competition from products to data and interfaces.
- **Embedded finance.** Payment, credit and insurance functions are increasingly woven directly into non-financial apps, making finance invisible and frictionless—with both convenience and over-spending implications.
- **Blockchain-based services.** Tokenisation and programmable settlement are moving from speculation toward infrastructure, including central-bank and cross-border payment experiments connected to systems such as UPI.
- **Predictive financial analytics.** Machine-learning models increasingly anticipate user needs, default risk and fraud, promising personalisation but raising concerns about bias, opacity and surveillance.

8. Research Gaps

The critical synthesis exposes nine significant gaps that warrant future investigation.

1) **Scarcity of long-run causal evidence.** Most studies are cross-sectional and measure intention or short-term behaviour; the long-term effects of FinTech use on saving, debt and wealth remain largely unknown.
2) **Neglect of adolescents and students.** Despite forming financial habits early, school and college students are under-studied as FinTech users, a gap with direct relevance to financial education.
3) **Geographic imbalance.** Evidence is concentrated in developed economies; rigorous household-level research in developing economies, including much of India beyond payments, is comparatively thin.
4) **Contradictory welfare findings.** The opposing inclusion-versus-harm framings of BNPL and crypto are rarely reconciled within a single rigorous design.
5) **The subjective–objective literacy gap.** Over-confidence as a driver of risky FinTech behaviour is documented but under-theorised and seldom measured directly.
6) **Vulnerable and excluded groups.** The elderly, people with disabilities and the digitally excluded are persistently under-represented in adoption and impact research.
7) **Behavioural mechanisms behind savings failure.** It is unclear why budgeting apps raise awareness yet often fail to raise saving, and which design elements would close that gap.
8) **Security, privacy and trust dynamics.** How breaches and scams reshape long-term trust and usage, and how to rebuild it, is poorly understood.
9) **Effects of AI and embedded finance.** The newest categories are essentially un-evaluated for their consequences on real financial decisions.

9. Future Research Directions

Addressing these gaps calls for a shift in method and focus. Longitudinal and quasi-experimental designs- panel data, randomised feature roll-outs and difference-in-differences around product launches- are needed to move from association to causation. Research should deliberately recruit under-studied populations, especially students, the elderly and users in developing economies, and should measure objective alongside subjective financial literacy to test over-confidence directly. Mixed-methods work combining transaction data with interviews can illuminate the behavioural mechanisms behind the savings paradox. Finally, the field should evaluate the newest categories- AI assistants, embedded finance and blockchain rails- before, not after, they reach mass adoption, and should treat product design as a manipulable variable rather than a fixed feature, asking which choice architectures convert FinTech's capabilities into genuine improvements in financial wellbeing.

9.1 Implications for students, professionals and developing economies

For students, the priority is pairing FinTech access with explicit financial education, so that frictionless tools build

rather than bypass capability- an argument for integrating practical money-management and FinTech literacy into school curricula. For working professionals, the gains lie in automation and consolidated visibility, provided they retain enough understanding to supervise automated advice and resist over-spending prompts. For developing economies such as India, the evidence endorses the public-infrastructure model- interoperable, low-cost, identity-linked payment rails—as a powerful inclusion engine, while cautioning that inclusion in payments must be matched by consumer protection in credit and investing if FinTech is to raise welfare rather than merely activity.

10. Conclusion

FinTech applications have unquestionably transformed personal financial management, making payments instant, monitoring continuous, advice cheap and markets accessible. This review has argued, however, that transformation is not the same as improvement. The recent evidence describes a genuinely double-edged technology: the very features that empower disciplined users- visibility, automation, low cost and personalisation—can equally lead the unprepared toward over-spending, over-confidence and over-reliance. The decisive variables are not technological but human and institutional: financial literacy, product design and regulation. Where these align, as in India's public payment infrastructure paired with financial-inclusion policy, FinTech delivers inclusion at remarkable scale; where they do not, as in lightly regulated BNPL and speculative crypto trading, it can amplify harm among the most vulnerable. The message for educators, policymakers and users is therefore constructive rather than alarmist: FinTech's impact on personal financial management is a design and literacy problem that can be solved, and the research agenda set out here offers a path to ensuring the next wave of financial technology serves financial wellbeing, not merely financial activity.

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