Concept Paper

AI-Based Rural Skill Matching Platform for Jobs

2025-2026

Department of Computer Science and Engineering

School of Engineering

Babu Banarasi Das University, Lucknow

Submitted by:

Anshika Singh (1230432151)

Anushka Singh (1230432174)

Anjali Singh (1230432138)

Anushka Dixit (1230432173)

Submitted to:

Ms. Divya Agrahari

(Assistant Professor)

Introduction

The rural economy in many developing nations is a vital but often underserved sector. Despite a significant population and a wealth of traditional skills, there exists a profound mismatch between the skills available and the job opportunities that exist, both locally and in urban areas. This is largely due to a lack of formal skill inventories, limited access to job markets, and the informal nature of many traditional occupations. Recent advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) and digital platforms offer a unique opportunity to bridge this gap. AI can analyze unstructured data, such as descriptions of traditional skills, and connect them with modern job requirements. This paper outlines a research project to develop an AI-based platform designed to address this critical challenge.

Problem Statement :

The central problem this project addresses is the significant skill-to-job mismatch in rural communities. A key issue is the invisibility of skills: many rural skills, like traditional crafts, farming techniques, or informal services, are not formally recognized or categorized, making them difficult to match with available jobs. According to a 2023 World Bank report, informal workers make up over 60% of the total labor force in some developing regions, yet they often lack access to formal job-matching services. This leads to underemployment, low wages, and a significant drain on economic potential. This project aims to create a system that can effectively identify, categorize, and match these underutilized rural skills with relevant job opportunities, thereby enhancing economic inclusion and reducing unemployment.

Research Objectives :

General Objective:

To design and prototype an AI-based platform that efficiently matches the skills of rural job seekers with suitable employment opportunities.

Specific Objectives:

Develop a comprehensive rural skill ontology: Create a structured classification system for traditional and non-traditional rural skills.

Build an AI-driven skill-matching algorithm: Utilize machine learning to match skills from the developed ontology with job descriptions.

Prototype a user-friendly platform: Design and build a web-based or mobile application interface for rural users to input skills and for employers to post jobs.

Evaluate the platform's effectiveness: Conduct a pilot study with a small sample group to assess the platform's usability and the accuracy of its matching algorithm.

Research Questions :

1. How can traditional and informal rural skills be effectively categorized and represented in a digital system?
2. What machine learning models are most suitable for accurately matching informal skills with formal job requirements?
3. How can the platform's user interface be designed to be accessible and intuitive for users with limited digital literacy?
4. To what extent can an AI-based platform improve the job-to-skill match rate for rural populations compared to traditional methods?

Hypothesis :

Study 1 (AI in Job Matching): A 2024 study by Li et al. demonstrated the use of natural language processing (NLP) to parse résumés and job descriptions for urban professional roles. This research highlights the feasibility of using NLP for skill extraction but focuses on formal, well-documented skills [1].

Study 2 (Informal Economy): The informal sector accounted for a vast majority of jobs in 2024, with recent government surveys and reports suggesting figures ranging from 86% to over 90% of the workforce. This significant informal employment consists primarily of self-employed and casual labor, often lacking formal contracts, social security, and protection under labor laws. Despite this, a trend of formalization is emerging, with government initiatives like the e-Shram Portal and the EPFO aiming to bring more workers under formal social protection systems, although the pace of formalization is debated.[2].

Study 3 (Rural Development Technology): A 2024 paper by Singh & Kumar explored the use of mobile technology for information dissemination in rural areas. They found that platforms must be culturally sensitive and simple to use, which is a critical design consideration for our project [3].

Our research will build upon these findings by specifically addressing the gap of applying AI to the unique context of rural, often informal, skills, a topic largely unexplored in existing literature.

Methodology :

Research Design : This is a prototyping and developmental research project, which involves designing, building, and testing a new system. The process will be iterative, with each phase informing the next.

Qualitative Data: Interviews with rural community members and local business owners to understand the nuances of skills and job requirements.

Quantitative Data: A small dataset of job descriptions and skill profiles will be curated from online sources and the qualitative interviews.

Data Analysis Methods:

Natural Language Processing (NLP): We will use NLP techniques to extract skills from user input and job descriptions.

Machine Learning Algorithms:

We will experiment with algorithms like cosine similarity and clustering to find the best match between skills and jobs.

Tools and Technologies:

Backend: Python (with frameworks like Flask or Django) for the application logic.

AI Libraries: Libraries such as Scikit-learn and NLTK for data processing and machine learning.

Frontend: HTML, CSS, and JavaScript for the user interface.

Database: A relational database like PostgreSQL to store user and job data.

Population: The study will focus on a small sample population from one or two rural villages to ensure a manageable pilot study.

Expected Outcomes :

We expect the project to result in a working prototype of a platform that can:

1. Effectively categorize a variety of traditional and informal rural skills.

2. Accurately match job seekers with at least a 70% success rate during the pilot phase.

3. Increase the visibility of rural skills to potential employers.

4. Provide insights into the specific challenges of digitizing rural labor markets.

These outcomes will directly contribute to solving the problem by creating a viable tool for economic empowerment and serving as a proof of concept for a larger, scalable platform.

Significance of the Study :

This research is highly significant as it offers a novel, technology-driven solution to a persistent socio-economic problem. The platform's innovation lies in its specific focus on informal and undocumented skills, which are often overlooked by mainstream platforms. The potential impact is substantial:

Academic: It will contribute to the field of human-computer interaction, specifically in designing technology for low-literacy users, and to the application of AI in social good.

Societal: The platform could serve as a model for similar initiatives, helping to reduce rural unemployment, bridge the rural-urban economic divide, and empower marginalized communities.

Timeline :

MONTHS	ACTIVITY
Month 1	Project planning, requirement analysis, stakeholder identification.
Month 2	Data collection (surveys, govt. sources), dataset cleaning & preparation
Month 3	Mobile/web app prototype, AI recommendation engine development
Month 4	Backend setup (cloud database, security), IVR/SMS integration
Month 5	Pilot testing in selected rural area, feedback collection, system refinement
Month 6	Full deployment, monitoring of job matches & adoption, scaling plan

Conclusion :

This study is significant as it addresses the employment gap in rural areas by leveraging AI to connect skilled workers with suitable job opportunities. By integrating multilingual, voice, and SMS-based access, it ensures inclusivity for digitally marginalized communities. The platform not only enhances job accessibility and employer trust through verified profiles but also promotes upskilling, reduces unemployment, and contributes to rural economic development, thereby supporting national initiatives like Skill India and Digital India

References :

[1] URL: https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural_language_processing

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[3]URL:https://www.researchgate.net/publication/378897745_A_Study_on_Addressing_Rural_Development_Challenges_through_Technology-driven_Agricultural_Initiatives_in_India

[4] Olivier Theobald- Machine Learning for Absolute Beginners - Pacific Holding Pvt. Ltd. (Third Edition) - Page 168.