

Literature Review on the Integration Model of Rural Inclusive Finance and Digital Service Platforms under the Background of the Gig Economy

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Abstract: Against the backdrop of the joint promotion of rural revitalization and digital inclusive finance policies, the rural gig economy has become an important form of absorbing rural surplus labor and helping farmers increase their income. However, the structural characteristics of this group—mostly lacking credit records, unstable income, and insufficient collateral—have led them to generally face problems such as "difficulty in borrowing money, slow fund disbursement, and lack of protection." Traditional rural financial services can hardly effectively meet their needs. From the perspective of the integration of inclusive finance and digital technology, this paper summarizes the main characteristics and financial needs of the rural gig economy by sorting out existing research, and points out the deficiencies in current inclusive financial services. Combining international experience and theoretical analysis, it refines three innovative mechanisms: "behavioral data creditization", "data-driven risk control", and "scenario-embedded services", and analyzes how these mechanisms alleviate the lack of financial services faced by the gig workforce. In addition, this paper selects three typical cases to compare the specific practices of implementing these three mechanisms in different regions. The results show that these mechanisms can alleviate the mismatch between financial services and the needs of gig workers, but appropriate methods based on local resource conditions are required in specific implementation. Based on this, suggestions are put forward from three levels—financial institutions, regulatory authorities, and local governments—to provide financial support for the development of the gig economy and reference for the

in-depth application of digital inclusive finance in rural areas.

Keywords: Gig Economy; Rural Inclusive Finance; Digital Service Platform; Employment Anxiety; Emotional Management; Financial Innovation

1. Characteristics and Financial Demands of the Rural Gig Economy

Most scholars believe that the gig economy is a new type of economy formed by digital platforms, with core characteristics including flexible work arrangements, loose employment relationships, and piece-rate labor remuneration¹. In the rural context, it encompasses both new types of gig jobs created by e-commerce platforms and live-streaming sales, as well as traditional gig jobs in suburban labor markets. Essentially, it represents a form of digital flexible employment without a fixed employer [1].

In terms of actual operational characteristics, the rural gig economy has three distinct features: First, income is unstable and risky. This long-term volatility leads to severe employment anxiety, making practitioners psychologically eager for financial support that offers both 'immediacy' and 'security' [2]. Research shows that more than 80% of rural migrant workers who do gig work do not participate in urban employee endowment insurance, and their income fluctuates significantly due to changes in task volume and market demand. Consequently, over 80% of gig workers exhibit significant employment anxiety. Second, the operation process is highly dependent on digital technology. The entire process of gig ordering, attendance, and salary settlement is completed through the platform, and the resulting rich data records provide a key foundation for financial service innovation [3]. Third, application

scenarios are diverse, ranging from temporary service positions driven by 'village supermarkets' [4] to flexible employment in outsourcing factories involving left-behind women in western Guangdong [5], permeating multiple fields such as cultural services and manufacturing.

Furthermore, effective financial intervention,

such as microcredit or flexible insurance, not only addresses immediate capital needs but also serves as a crucial tool for emotional management and alleviating survival pressures for this group [6]. The specific correspondence between these characteristics, their performance, and the resulting financial needs is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of the Rural Gig Economy and Corresponding Financial Needs

Characteristic Type	Specific Performance	Corresponding Financial Needs
Individual Psychological Status	Rural elderly and young gig workers face high employment pressure and strong anxiety, necessitating emotional management support.	Desire for low-threshold, protective financial products that provide a sense of 'psychological security.'
Income Instability	Over 80% do not participate in urban employee endowment insurance; income fluctuates with task volume.	Endowment insurance products, emergency micro-loans.
High Dependence on Digital Technology	Platform-based whole-process management of order receiving, attendance, and settlement, generating rich behavioral data.	Credit products based on behavioral data, timely settlement services.
Diverse Application Scenarios	E-commerce live streaming, suburban gig work, temporary services at 'village supermarkets,' etc.	Customized financial products for specific scenarios.

In terms of international research, the International Labour Organization (ILO) pointed out that rural gig workers in developing countries generally face difficulty accessing financial services, with the core reason being a mismatch between traditional credit evaluation systems and the characteristics of gig income [7]. Banerjee & Duflo found in their study of rural

India that behavioral data based on digital platforms can effectively replace traditional collateral, making it easier for gig workers to obtain financing [8].

2. Development and Challenges of Inclusive Finance in Rural Areas

Table 2. Comparison of Existing Contradictions in Rural Inclusive Finance and Digital Platform Solutions

Existing Contradictions	Specific Performance	Digital Platform Solutions	International Reference Cases
Inclusiveness vs. High Cost	Rural gig workers are scattered; financial service coverage is wide, leading to high transaction costs.	Aggregate supply and demand to create scale effects, reducing service marginal costs.	Evans & Schmalensee (2021) on Southeast Asian platforms.
Risk Control vs. Information Asymmetry	Gig workers lack qualified collateral; credit data is insufficient.	Build credit profiles based on order volume, income stability, and other data.	Rochet & Tirole (2022) Platform Financial Risk Control Model
Diverse Demands vs. Single Supply	Traditional 'fixed repayment' model does not match flexible income.	Launch customized products such as 'order loans' and 'flexible repayments.'	Morduch & Ogden (2020) Embedded Service Model [4].

As a key supporting force for serving agriculture, rural areas, and farmers, and for promoting rural revitalization, the core objective of rural inclusive finance is to achieve a balance between inclusiveness and sustainability [9]. However, the traditional model fails to meet the demands of the gig economy. Three prominent contradictions exist: First, the contradiction

between inclusiveness and high costs. Rural gig workers are scattered, leading to an expansion of financial institutions' service scope and an increase in transaction costs [10]. Second, there is a contradiction between risk control and information asymmetry. Most rural gig workers lack qualified collateral and have relatively little credit data [11]. Third, a contradiction exists

between the diversity of demand and the singularity of supply. The flexible and fluctuating income of gig workers is clearly incompatible with the traditional credit model of 'fixed-period repayment.' For the specific performance of these three contradictions, the solutions provided by digital platforms, and corresponding international reference cases, please refer to Table 2.

In international research, the Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP) pointed out in its practice of inclusive finance in rural Africa that scenario-based financial services can increase the proportion of rural gig workers using financial services by more than 35% [12]. Morduch & Ogden proposed the concept of 'embedded inclusive finance,' emphasizing that financial services should be embedded in the employment process and capital turnover of gig workers [13].

3. Application of Digital Technology in Financial Services

Digital platforms are an important way to address the aforementioned contradictions and connect the gig economy with rural inclusive finance. On the one hand, platforms can bring together the labor supply of gig workers and the service demands of financial institutions, reduce information asymmetry, and create economies of scale [14]. On the other hand, platforms can build a credit profile based on data such as the number of jobs, income stability, and service evaluations of gig workers, providing a reliable decision-making basis for inclusive credit [15]. By tracking order frequency and completion quality, digital platforms can not only assess repayment ability but also identify individuals' emotional management capacity and occupational stability. This provides a precise financial intervention to alleviate the employment anxiety of rural gig workers. The entire process of how rural gig workers, digital service platforms, financial institutions, regulatory frameworks, and social forces collaborate to achieve precise financial services is visually displayed in Figure 1.

Empirical studies also show that for every unit increase in the Digital Finance Index, rural gig wages increase by 2.3%. In terms of international research, Rochet & Tirole constructed a pricing model for multilateral financial platforms, providing theoretical support for the design of the platform's profit model.

Evans & Schmalensee found in their study of rural financial platforms in Southeast Asia that collaboration among the government, financial institutions, and gig platforms could increase operational efficiency by 40%. Vera M. Schweitzer et al find seeking social support on informal online platforms helps gig workers cope with the emotionally challenging and cognitively demanding nature of their work.

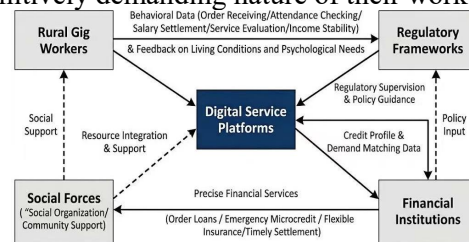


Figure 1. Rural Gig Workers Financial Service Ecosystem Integrated with Digital Service Platforms

4. Review of the Study

Although the academic community has recognized the necessity of integrating the gig economy with rural inclusive finance, two key issues remain. First, a core divergence persists regarding the role of the platform. Scholars such as Zhang Xinhua recognize its inclusive value in promoting the downward flow of financial resources, while others such as Wu Jing warn that it controls the risk of 'total absorption' of labor through algorithms. Second, there are obvious deficiencies in existing research. Empirical research on synergy mechanisms is relatively weak, financial product innovation suitable for gig characteristics is insufficient, and there is no systematic research on issues such as 'order loans' and 'flexible repayments'.

Furthermore, existing research predominantly focuses on the 'economic accessibility' of finance, lacking attention to the mental health and emotional management of gig workers. Future research should deeply explore how digital finance can alleviate financial pressure and thereby improve the employment anxiety of rural elderly and young workers. The specific differences between domestic and international research in terms of platform role positioning, product innovation, and empirical research, as well as the existing research gaps, are compared in Table 3.

Based on the current research, it is necessary to build a rural gig financial service platform centered on 'inclusiveness and win-win' and jointly governed by the government, the market,

and social forces. This paper will further analyze such a platform. the construction model and innovation path of

Table 3. Comparison of Research Focus at Home and Abroad

Research Dimension	Domestic Research Status	International Research Status	Research Gaps
Platform Role Positioning	Core divergences exist; no unified conclusion has been formed.	Focus on platform competition and synergy mechanism research.	Lack of empirical verification of platform roles.
Product Innovation	Scattered research on 'order loans' and 'flexible repayments.'	Embedded financial service product systems are relatively mature.	No systematic product innovation framework has been formed.
Psychological & Behavioral Focus	Largely overlooked.	Emerging interest in behavioral economics applications in finance.	Lack of research on financial interventions targeting employment anxiety and emotional management.
Empirical Research	Weak empirical analysis of synergy mechanisms.	Rich empirical cases in Southeast Asia and Africa.	Lack of large-sample, data-supported empirical research.

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