Health Tracker AI-Powered Nutritional Analysis and Diet Optimization Platform for Indian Dietary Patterns

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DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2026.130200189

Received: 03 March 2026; Accepted: 06 March 2026; Published: 20 March 2026

ABSTRACT

Nutritional deficiency and lifestyle diseases such as diabetes and obesity are major public health challenges in India, compounded by the absence of dietary tools tailored to Indian food culture. Existing nutritional tracking platforms predominantly focus on Western dietary patterns and fail to interpret traditional Indian meals characterized by ambiguous portion sizes, regional preparation variations, and culturally specific food items. This paper presents the design, development, and evaluation of a web-based Nutritional Analysis and Diet Optimization Platform specifically tailored for Indian dietary patterns. The proposed system accepts natural language food descriptions, processes them through an Indian cuisine-specific nutritional estimation engine backed by NIN/ICMR food composition data, and generates comprehensive dietary sufficiency reports with personalized, goal-oriented recommendations. Validation on a dataset of 150 Indian meal descriptions yields a mean absolute error (MAE) of 4.2% for caloric estimation and 5.8% for protein estimation. A diet scoring mechanism (0–100) and weekly progress tracking support sustained behavioral change. Comparative analysis against HealthifyMe and MyFitnessPal demonstrates an 18.4% improvement in portion estimation accuracy for Indian meals. The platform is built using React, Spring Boot, Node.js, and MongoDB.

Keywords—nutritional analysis; Indian diet; diet optimization; health tracker; natural language processing; web application; dietary assessment; NIN; ICMR

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between diet and health is extensively established in medical literature, yet a significant gap persists between awareness and practice, especially in developing nations like India. India faces a dual nutritional burden: urban populations increasingly suffer from caloric overconsumption and lifestyle diseases, while rural and semi-urban populations experience protein insufficiency, iron deficiency anemia, and vitamin D deficiency [1]. The World Health Organization estimates that diet-related non-communicable diseases account for over 5.87 million deaths annually in India [8].

Nutritional tracking applications have proliferated globally; however, their utility in the Indian context remains limited. Applications such as MyFitnessPal and HealthifyMe predominantly rely on Western nutritional databases and portion conventions incompatible with Indian culinary practices. A typical Indian meal — comprising rotis of unspecified diameter, katoris of dal or sabzi, and informally measured snacks — cannot be accurately assessed by tools designed for standardized Western portions [2].

This paper proposes a web-based Health Tracker platform specifically designed to bridge this gap. The system accepts natural language dietary descriptions, interprets culturally specific portion conventions, compares intake against demographic-adjusted Recommended Daily Allowances (RDAs), and generates culturally appropriate recommendations. A diet scoring mechanism and weekly comparative assessments transform one-time nutritional snapshots into sustained behavioral interventions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Prior research in computational dietary assessment spans multiple dimensions: food image recognition, NLP for food logging, nutritional database construction, and personalized recommendation systems.

Bossard et al. [3] demonstrated deep learning models achieving 77.4% top-5 accuracy on the Food-101 dataset. While promising, image-based approaches require visual clarity uncommon in Indian home cooking contexts. Chatterjee et al. [4] highlighted the inadequacy of standard nutritional databases for South Asian populations and proposed supplementary construction from local food composition studies.

Nag et al. [5] revealed that over 70% of urban Indian youth consume below the recommended 0.8g protein/kg body weight. Singh et al. [9] reported that 68% of Indian adults are unaware of their daily caloric needs. Elsweiler et al. [6] demonstrated that goal-aware dietary recommendation significantly improves user compliance compared to generic advice.

Existing Indian applications such as HealthifyMe require precise food weight inputs in grams, lack natural language portion parsing, and provide limited regional cuisine coverage beyond major metropolitan food items. The proposed platform addresses all three limitations through a dedicated NLP-based food parser and comprehensive regional food database drawn from NIN data covering 18 Indian states.

Problem Statement

The current ecosystem of dietary assessment tools exhibits the following critical limitations for Indian users:

- Existing platforms require precise measurements in grams/ml, incompatible with traditional Indian descriptions such as '2 rotis', '1 katori dal', or '1 glass milk'.
- International nutritional databases cover fewer than 12% of Indian regional food items, causing estimation errors exceeding 30% for regional dishes [2].
- Over 68% of Indian adults are unaware of whether their dietary intake meets RDAs for their demographic profile [9].
- Protein insufficiency is prevalent among young Indian adults yet remains largely undetected due to absence of accessible, culturally appropriate assessment tools.
- Generic dietary advice fails to account for individual goals such as weight management, muscle gain, or maintenance.
- One-time assessment models fail to facilitate long-term behavioral change through sustained progress tracking.

Objectives

The primary objectives of this project are:

- To develop a web-based platform capable of processing natural language dietary input specific to Indian food consumption patterns and portion descriptions.
- To implement a nutritional estimation engine accounting for regional variations, preparation methods, and ambiguous portion sizes common in Indian households.
- To generate comprehensive dietary sufficiency reports comparing user intake against demographic adjusted RDAs (WHO/ICMR formulae).
- To provide goal-specific dietary analysis tailored to weight maintenance, gain, loss, or muscle building.
- To deliver actionable, meal-specific recommendations using commonly available and affordable Indian food items.
- To implement a quantitative diet scoring mechanism (0–100) enabling week-over-week nutritional progress tracking.

SYSTEM DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

System Architecture

The platform employs a three-tier architecture as follows. The Presentation Layer implements a responsive React web interface with Tailwind CSS styling and Recharts data visualizations, accessible on both desktop and mobile browsers. The Business Logic Layer contains four core modules: (i) the NLP-based Food Parser, (ii) the Nutritional Estimation Engine, (iii) the Recommendation Generator, and (iv) the Analytics and Scoring Module — all implemented in Spring Boot (Java) with a Node.js/Express API gateway. The Data Layer comprises MongoDB collections for the NIN/ICMR nutritional database, user profiles, and historical dietary records, managed through Mongoose ODM for schema validation.

RESTful API design enforces clean separation of concerns. All API endpoints are stateless and documented via Swagger, facilitating future integration with mobile applications and fitness tracking devices such as Fitbit and Mi Band.

Data Sources and Preprocessing

The nutritional database is constructed from three primary sources: (i) the NIN Indian Food Composition Tables (2017) covering 528 food items across macronutrients and 23 micronutrients; (ii) ICMR RDA guidelines (2020) for demographic-specific nutrient requirements; and (iii) a supplementary regional dataset manually curated from state-level food surveys covering 6 major Indian regions — North, South, East, West, Northeast, and Central India. In total, the database contains 742 unique food entries with region-specific preparation variants.

Preprocessing involved standardizing portion size references (e.g., mapping 'medium roti' to 30g, 'katori' to 150ml, 'glass' to 200ml based on ICMR portion guidelines), normalizing nutrient values per 100g, and tagging each item with regional and preparation method metadata.

NLP-Based Food Parser

The food parser module processes natural language meal descriptions using a rule-based NLP pipeline. Input strings such as '2 medium rotis with ghee', '1 katori rajma', or 'handful of roasted chana' are tokenized and matched against a domain-specific lexicon of 310 Indian food terms, 48 portion descriptors, and 22 preparation modifiers.

Portion ambiguity is resolved through a confidence-scoring mechanism: high-confidence matches (score ≥ 0.85) are processed directly; medium-confidence matches (0.60–0.84) trigger a clarification prompt to the user; low-confidence matches (< 0.60) default to the median portion size from the database. On a validation set of 150 annotated Indian meal descriptions, the parser achieves a token-level accuracy of 91.3% and a portion estimation MAE of 4.2% for calories and 5.8% for protein.

Nutritional Estimation and Scoring

Once portions are resolved, the estimation engine aggregates macronutrient (protein, carbohydrates, fats, fibre) and micronutrient (iron, calcium, vitamin C, vitamin B12, folate) totals across all meal entries for the day. These totals are compared against user-specific RDAs computed from age, gender, height, weight, and activity level using ICMR 2020 formulae.

The diet score S is computed as a weighted average of per-nutrient sufficiency ratios clamped to [0, 1], with weights assigned based on clinical importance and goal relevance. For a muscle-building goal, protein and energy weights are elevated; for weight loss, fibre and fat ratios receive higher weighting. Formally: $S = 100 \times \Sigma(w_i \times \min(\text{actual}_i/\text{RDA}_i, 1))$, where w_i are goal-specific weights summing to 1.

Recommendation Generation

The recommendation engine identifies nutrients with sufficiency ratio below 0.80 as deficient and above 1.20 as excessive. For each deficiency, the engine queries the nutritional database for the top-3 Indian food items highest

in that nutrient, filtered by regional availability and affordability tier. Recommendations are expressed as specific, actionable additions: e.g., 'Add 2 boiled eggs to breakfast (+25g protein)', 'Include 1 glass of milk at dinner (+300mg calcium)'.

Recommendations are fully differentiated by goal. A muscle-building user with protein deficiency receives high-protein additions (paneer, eggs, dal); a weight-loss user receives low-calorie, high-fiber alternatives (sprouts, cucumber, buttermilk).

Progress Tracking

Weekly check-ins store dietary snapshots in MongoDB time-series collections. The analytics module computes 7-day rolling averages for each tracked nutrient and compares diet scores across weeks. Recharts line charts and radar charts visualize macronutrient trends, diet score progression, and goal attainment percentage, enabling users to identify persistent deficiencies and celebrate improvements.

Tools And Technologies

Category	Technology	Purpose
Frontend	React + Tailwind	Responsive UI
Charts	Recharts	Data visualization
Backend	Spring Boot	Business logic, APIs
API Layer	Node.js/Express	Routing, middleware
Database	MongoDB+Mongoose	User data & records
Nutritional DB	NIN/ICMR (742 items)	Food composition
NLP Parser	Rule-based pipeline	Portion interpretation
Version Control	Git / GitHub	Collaboration

TABLE I. Technology Stack

RESULTS AND EVALUATION

Parser and Estimation Accuracy

The food parser and nutritional estimation engine were evaluated on a dataset of 150 manually annotated Indian meal descriptions collected from 30 volunteer users across 5 Indian cities (Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Ahmedabad). Each meal description was independently annotated by a registered dietitian to establish ground-truth nutritional values.

Metric	Value	Benchmark
Parser Token Accuracy	91.3%	—
Caloric Estimation MAE	4.2%	< 10% target
Protein Estimation MAE	5.8%	< 10% target
Carbohydrate MAE	4.9%	< 10% target
Fat Estimation MAE	6.1%	< 10% target
Regional Dish Coverage	742 items / 6 regions	528 (NIN baseline)

TABLE II. Parser and Estimation Performance

Comparison with Existing Platforms

Table III presents a comparative analysis of the proposed platform against two widely used nutritional tracking applications — HealthifyMe (Indian-focused) and MyFitnessPal (global) — evaluated on the same 150 Indian meal descriptions.

Feature	Proposed	HealthifyMe	MyFitnessPal
Natural Language Input	Yes	No	No

Indian Portion Parsing	Yes	Partial	No
Regional Food Coverage	742 items	~400 items	~120 items
Caloric MAE (Indian meals)	4.2%	22.6%	38.1%
Goal-specific Reco.	Yes	Partial	Yes
Weekly Progress Tracking	Yes	Yes	Yes
Culturally relevant Reco.	Yes	Partial	No

TABLE III. Comparison with Existing Systems

The proposed system achieves an 18.4% improvement in caloric estimation accuracy over HealthifyMe and a 33.9% improvement over MyFitnessPal for Indian meal descriptions, primarily attributable to the NLP-based portion parser and expanded regional food database.

Case Study: Sample User Input and Output

To illustrate system functionality, consider the following sample user input for a single day (25-year-old male, 70kg, moderately active, goal: muscle building):

- Breakfast: 3 medium rotis, 1 katori aloo sabzi, 1 glass milk
- Lunch: 1 plate rice (2 katori), 1 katori rajma, 1 katori curd
- Dinner: 2 rotis, 1 katori dal tadka, 1 katori mixed vegetables
- Snacks: 1 banana, handful of roasted chana

System output: Estimated intake — 2,340 kcal, 68g protein, 342g carbohydrates, 54g fat, 28g fiber. User RDA: 2,800 kcal, 112g protein. Diet Score: 61/100. Key deficiency: Protein (61% of RDA). Top recommendation: 'Add 200g paneer to lunch (+34g protein)' and 'Include 2 boiled eggs at breakfast (+13g protein, +10g fat)'. Score projection with recommendations: 79/100.

CONCLUSION

This paper presented an AI-powered web-based Nutritional Analysis and Diet Optimization Platform specifically designed to address the critical gap in dietary assessment tools for the Indian population. The system's NLP-based food parser achieves 91.3% token accuracy and a caloric MAE of 4.2% on Indian meal descriptions — an 18.4% improvement over the best existing Indian platform. The goal-specific recommendation engine and weekly comparative tracking transform one-time assessment into sustained behavioral intervention.

The expanded NIN/ICMR-backed database of 742 food items covering 6 Indian regions directly addresses the reviewer-identified gap in regional food handling. Quantitative comparison with HealthifyMe and MyFitnessPal confirms the platform's advantage in the Indian dietary context. The case study demonstrates end-to-end system functionality from natural language input to actionable output.

Future work will explore transformer-based NLP models for improved portion parsing, integration with fitness tracking APIs, food image recognition for mobile users, and expansion of the nutritional database to cover additional regional cuisines and tribal food practices.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors gratefully acknowledge the guidance of Ms. Anshika Negi, Department of CSE, ADGIPS, New Delhi, whose mentorship was instrumental in shaping this research. The authors also acknowledge NIN, ICMR, for making Indian food composition data publicly available.

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