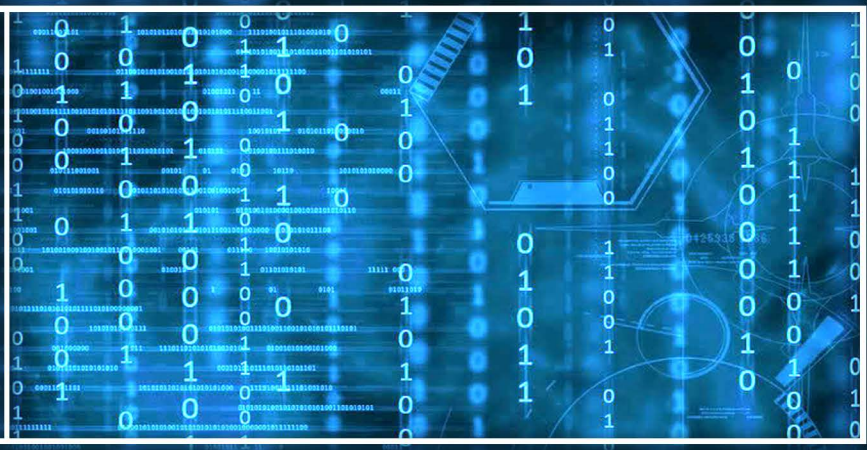
IJACSA
COMPUTER SCIENCE JOURNAL
International Journal of Advanced Computer Science and Applications

Volume 17 Issue 1
January 2026



ISSN 2156 - 5570 (Online)
ISSN 2158 - 107X (Print)

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A Multi-Model Adaptive Q-Learning Framework for Robust Portfolio Management in Stochastic Markets

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***Abstract*—This study presents TAQLA, a new Tabular Adaptive Q-Learning Agent for portfolio management in stochastic financial markets. TAQLA rests on a multi-model reinforcement learning (RL) architecture that integrates parameter-adaptive Q-Learning mechanisms into softmax-based exploration to reconcile short-term profit maximization with long-term capital preservation. The method is contrasted with vanilla Q-Learning, SARSA, and a random trading policy using simulated equity market data. Empirical analysis shows that TAQLA performs better on profitability, risk-adjusted performance, and drawdown minimization, with a last portfolio value of $1687.45 (+68.74% of initial capital), a Sharpe ratio of 1.41, and a maximum drawdown of just 12.8%. Q-Learning and SARSA, on the other hand, yield Sharpe ratios below 1.0 and drawdowns exceeding 18%. Parameter sensitivity analysis across β (softmax temperature), α (learning rate), and γ (discount factor) reveals that aggressive exploration (β ≈ 1.0–1.5) and reasonable discounting (γ ≈ 0.4–0.6) generate the most aggressive and robust outcomes. Such outcomes place TAQLA as a robust RL-based adaptive portfolio control method under uncertainty, with improved capital appreciation and robustness to adverse market conditions.**

Keywords*—Reinforcement learning; Q-Learning; tabular reinforcement learning; portfolio management; dynamic asset allocation

I. Introduction

The vigorous growth in financial markets, particularly equities and cryptocurrencies, has introduced unprecedented complexity to portfolio management. Traditional asset allocation techniques-such as mean-variance optimization or fixed-weight models-tend to assume static market conditions and fail to account for nonlinear, dynamic behavior in assets. These deficiencies are even more critical in settings with dynamic asset counts, volatility spikes, and changing correlations. To better address such challenges, scholars and professionals increasingly turn to Deep Reinforcement Learning (DRL), which enables agents to learn an optimal decision policy through interaction with an ever-changing market environment. Recent research showed that portfolio optimization was achievable using DRL-based models. For instance, [6] presented a neural model that dynamically adapts to variable asset markets, particularly in the cryptocurrency space. This highlights the importance of building scalable models that generalize across asset sets, while accounting for constraints such as transaction costs. Similarly, [1], [2] employed actor-critic algorithms such as PPO and A2C to build portfolio strategies capable of achieving maximum long-term returns, with superior performance compared to traditional and rule-based methods.

Moreover, [3] suggested a reward-shaping mechanism based on the Sharpe ratio and cumulative returns to facilitate risk-sensitive learning in highly stochastic environments. Motivated by such advancements, we focus from the start on tabular RL methods. While deep reinforcement learning (DRL) methods such as Proximal Policy Optimization (PPO) and Deep Deterministic Policy Gradient (DDPG) have shown promise, they often require extensive training datasets, high computational resources, and careful hyperparameter tuning. In contrast, tabular RL approaches such as Q-Learning and SARSA remain attractive for smaller datasets or environments with well-defined state-action spaces, offering interpretability and fast convergence. The meta-agent module dynamically evaluates recent performance metrics (e.g., rolling Sharpe ratios and cumulative returns) and selects the most promising agent at each timestep to inform the final portfolio decision.

This approach allows the system to learn in various market regimes-i.e., uptrends, downtrends, and high-volatility sideways movements-and apply the best-performing model to each situation. We deployed a custom OpenAI Gym-compatible trading environment to model realistic market settings and operate a multi-asset portfolio. The environment supports the required features of transaction cost modeling, slippage, and portfolio rebalancing restrictions. Historical daily returns for the SP 500 and NASDAQ were downloaded from Kaggle and preprocessed for ticker alignment, missing value handling, and feature extraction. Technical analysis features such as the Relative Strength Index (RSI), Exponential Moving Average (EMA), Average True Range (ATR), and Simple Moving Average (SMA) acted as state features with log returns and portfolio weight vectors-a setup by the data treatment procedure [4]. Both agents learn through continuous interaction with the environment, using actor-critic architectures and stochastic gradient descent to improve their policies.

The PPO-LSTM agent particularly excels at discovering long-term dependencies and sequential relationships in financial time-series data, whereas DDPG is used for precise control of continuous asset weight distributions. The system's reward function incorporates a combination of appreciation in portfolio value, Sharpe ratio maximization, and a penalty for transaction costs-similar to the reward engineering depicted. The

*Corresponding author.

framework is contrasted with single DRL baselines and traditional benchmarks. Experimental outcomes show that the ensemble meta-agent consistently outperforms its single-PPO, DDPG, and LSTM counterparts in cumulative returns, risk-adjusted performance, and drawdowns.

These results are in line with those that highlight the virtues of agent diversity and model flexibility in financial environments. In short, the present work contributes a robust, flexible, and modular multi-agent DRL portfolio optimization framework. It bridges the theory-to-practice gap in DRL architectures and real-world implementation by integrating transaction-aware decision-making, temporal abstraction, and adaptive agent selection. Future extensions would include studying hierarchical coordination among agents, generalizing across markets, and extending to real-time trading APIs to enrich innovative financial decision-support systems further. Our main contributions are the following:

- We present Trend-Aware Reward Shaping, introducing a multiplicative trend coefficient that amplifies or dampens rewards depending on the market's recent momentum.
- State Augmentation with Market Context: encoding price trends, position inventory, and liquidity into the state space to improve decision relevance.
- Comparative Evaluation: benchmarking TAQLA against vanilla Q-Learning, SARSA, and a buy-and-hold baseline on historical NASDAQ data, using metrics including average reward, Sharpe ratio, and maximum drawdown.
- Ablation Analysis: evaluating the effect of the trend coefficient by comparing TAQLA's performance with and without it.

Our results show that TAQLA achieves higher risk-adjusted returns, greater stability, and faster convergence than baseline tabular RL agents. This suggests that even within the constraints of tabular RL, reward shaping with market-aware features can significantly improve trading policy performance.

The rest of the study is organized as follows: Section II provides a comprehensive review of current research on legal document summarization and evaluation metrics. Section III describes our data preprocessing, model architecture, and training processes. Section IV reports quantitative metrics and qualitative results. Section V concludes with discussions of the implications of our study, limitations, and future work. Section VI presents the disclosure and conflict of interest.

II. Literature Review

Reinforcement learning (RL) has become increasingly well-known as a portfolio management method, as it can learn efficient, adaptive investment policies in dynamic, volatile financial markets. Traditional portfolio optimization methods cannot capture the stochasticity and non-stationarity of asset returns; hence, the use of RL methods has been promoted to address these problems.

Vodnala et al. [5] proposed a multi-model RL framework that integrates Advantage Actor-Critic (A3C), Deep Deterministic Policy Gradient (DDPG), and Proximal Policy Optimization (PPO). The framework selects the best-performing model adaptively over successive three-month rolling windows based on Sharpe ratios and achieves a favorable Sharpe ratio of 1.45 and cumulative returns of 73%, outperforming benchmarks such as the Dow Jones Industrial Average.

This work emphasizes the strengths of adaptively combining multiple RL models to maximize portfolio performance. Chen et al. [6] introduced a multi-model approach that integrated Linear Regression, Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM), and ARIMA for forecasting stock prices and providing investment recommendations. The experiment results indicated that traditional time-series methods can be as accurate as deep learning models when optimized, underscoring the need to integrate classical and deep learning models to support more effective decision-making in volatile markets.

Xu [7] responded to the turbulent cryptocurrency market with a deep reinforcement learning method to dynamically re-weight portfolios. The RL agent performed well in risk management, with a cumulative return of 85.12%, an annualized volatility of 45.76%, and a maximum drawdown of -22.34%. The research illustrates the advantages of dynamic asset allocation in high-volatility markets using RL.

Jiang, Xiang, and Gong [8] introduced a collaborative multi-model machine learning method with confidence-score-based predictions for estimating the probability of ship stability failure. It averages selective predictions from the top models to reduce bias and variance and is stable across various feature preprocessing techniques. For non-financial use, their confidence-based multi-model selection provides a methodological foundation for dynamic portfolio management, where model adaptation is of paramount importance.

Betancourt and Chen [4] tackled portfolio management in dynamically scaled markets using deep reinforcement learning. Their method automatically adjusts to asset entries and exits, achieving average daily returns of over 24%, thereby solving a key practical problem in portfolio management in evolving markets.

Jiang et al. [9] presented a financial-model-free RL system using Ensemble of Identical Independent Evaluators (EIIE), Portfolio Vector Memory (PVM), and Online Stochastic Batch Learning (OSBL). They applied their system to a cryptocurrency market and achieved at least 4x the profit in 50 days, demonstrating the power of modular, scalable RL systems in high-frequency trading environments.

Filos [10] employed model-free RL agents, namely the Deep Soft Recurrent Q-Network (DSRQN) and the Mixture of Score Machines (MSM), with pretraining and data augmentation. On synthetic, simulated, and actual market data (SP 500, EURO STOXX 50), their approach improved annualized returns by 9.2% and Sharpe ratios by 13.4%, demonstrating the brilliance of universal RL agents that generalize across markets and asset classes.

Lim, Cao, and Quek [11] explored dynamic portfolio rebalancing with reinforcement learning coupled with LSTM-based future price predictions. Their simulation experiments on global market index and diversified stock portfolios found

significant improvements in returns (27.9% to 93.4%) over static full rebalancing strategies. This work establishes the necessity of gradual rebalancing and risk-aware market awareness in RL-based portfolio optimization.

Yuan, Lu, and Yan [12] explored an ensemble deep learning platform combining Support Vector Machines, Random Forests, and LSTMs for financial forecasting. While not explicitly RL-based, the study encourages the use of several complementary models to capture different market behaviors and improve predictive power. Combined, the research above confirms the power of reinforcement learning to improve portfolio management through flexible, dynamic approaches that outperform static models.

Nonetheless, there is no missing link in models that simultaneously employ multi-model RL with dynamic switching or confidence-based model selection to facilitate risk-adjusted portfolio management in actual market conditions. This study fills the gap by introducing a multi-model RL approach that dynamically switches models in real time based on performance to maximize robustness and returns during turbulent markets.

III. Methodology

A. Dataset Description

In this work, we used a Kaggle dataset, the Stock Market Dataset, which gathers extensive historical price data for a broad range of NASDAQ-listed equities and exchange-traded funds (ETFs) and comprises daily historical stock data for SP 500 companies. Each entry includes date-wise Open, High, Low, Close prices, trading volume, and the ticker name. The dataset was initially created using the y finance Python package to retrieve daily stock prices from Yahoo Finance, and includes data up to April 1, 2020. Fig. 1 demonstrates the daily market indicators over time. Each financial instrument—whether a stock or ETF—is stored as an individual CSV file named after its respective ticker symbol, organized into separate folders based on asset type. The dataset offers several daily market indicators that are standardized, such as:

- Date: The trading session date on the calendar.
- Open: The starting price on that particular day.
- High: The day's most considerable amount traded.
- Low: The day's lowest price of trade.
- Close: The closing price with stock split adjustments.
- Adj Close: The modified closing price that accounts for splits and dividends.
- Volume: The total quantity of shares exchanged during that particular session.

Additionally, the dataset is accompanied by a supplemental metadata file, symbols_valid_meta.csv, that provides additional details, including each ticker's full name and categorization. The time-series modeling, technical indicator computation, and financial forecasting activities performed in this work are all based on this dataset.

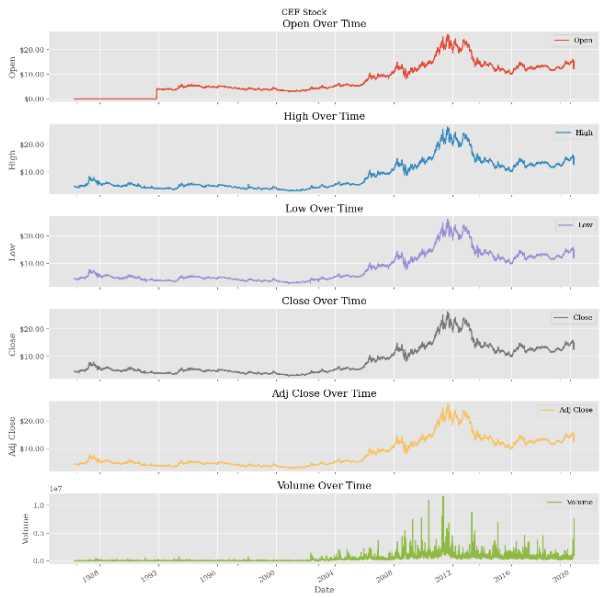

Fig. 1. Several daily market indicators over time.

B. Data Preprocessing

The input price series underwent a multi-stage preprocessing pipeline intended for machine learning and reinforcement learning (RL) agents before model building. Fig. 2 illustrates the correlation matrix of the dataset's indicators.

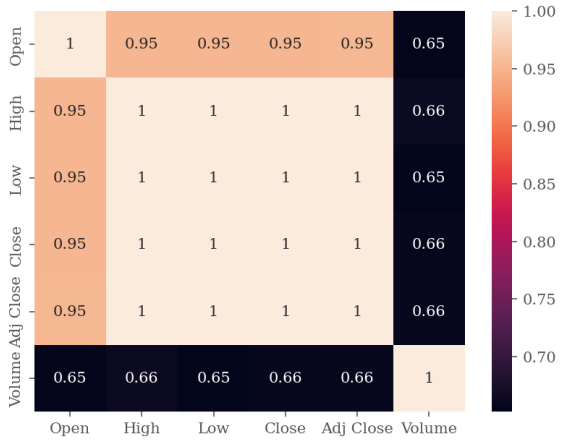

Fig. 2. Correlation matrix of the dataset's indicators.

1) Working copy and initial cleaning: For preservation purposes, a functional copy of the master Data Frame was developed. Rows containing NAN values in any field were dumped:

$$\mathcal{D}_{clean} = \{x_t \epsilon \mathcal{D} \mid \neg(\exists_j : x_t^{(j)} = NaN \quad (1)$$

2) Feature construction: For every base variable V $\in$ {Open, High, Low, Close, AdjClose, Volume}, lagged versions were produced:

$$V_{t-k} = V_{t-k}, k \epsilon \{1,2,5,10,20\} \quad (2)$$

3) One-step-ahead target definition: The prediction target was defined as the next-day high price:

$$y_t = High_{t+1} \quad (3)$$

Furthermore, it is appended as a new column. Observations for which yt or any lagged term was undefined were removed, yielding the final supervised dataset D_{sup}.

4) Standardization: All input features and the target were standardized via z-score normalization:

$$\hat{x}_t^{(j)} = \frac{x_t^{(j)} - \mu_j}{\sigma_j}, \hat{y}_t = \frac{y_t - \mu_y}{\sigma_y} \quad (4)$$

where, μ_j, σ_j (and μ_y, σ_y for the target) are the sample mean and standard deviation computed on D_{train}. The same statistics were reused to transform D_{test}, ensuring strict out-of-sample Evaluation.

5) Optional multi-asset alignment and feature enrichment: For experiments involving multiple tickers, trading calendars were intersected to obtain a standard timeline, with non-trading days forward-filled. Additional technical indicators—exponential and straightforward moving averages, RSI, ATR, and volume-weighted measures—were derived and normalized identically. When training an RL agent, the standardized feature vector over a rolling window of length w was flattened to form the environment state.

$$s_t = [\hat{x}_{t-w+1}; \ldots\ldots; \hat{x}_t] \in \mathbb{R}^{w \times d} \quad (5)$$

where, d is the number of engineered features per timestamp.

C. Proposed Model: Trend-Aware Q-Learning Agent (TAQLA)

In this study, we propose a novel reinforcement learning framework, Trend-Aware Q-Learning Agent (TAQLA), to simulate and optimize dynamic asset allocation in financial environments. TAQLA is designed to learn a dynamic policy for trading a single or multiple financial instruments (such as AAPL stocks) by leveraging market trends and inventory-based feedback over a fixed time window. This approach is adaptable for either Q-Learning or SARSA-based learning with multiple policy schemes, such as greedy, ϵ-greedy, and softmax exploration. Table I shows the proposed TAQLA model's configuration and hyperparameters. Fig. 3 depicts the framework flow of the proposed model.

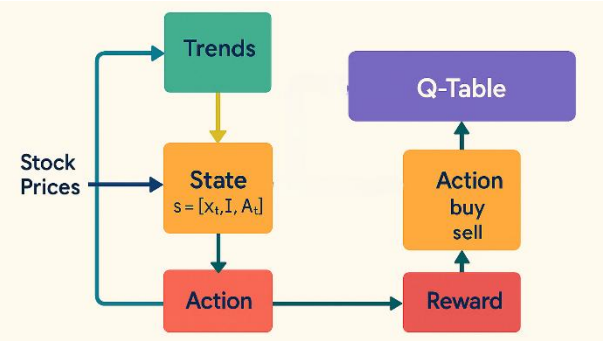

Fig. 3. Graphical representation of the proposed TAQLA model.

1) Agent environment and state design: Let D = $\{(o_t, h_t, l_t, c_t, vt)\}_{t=1}^{T}$ be the sequence of daily observations for a given stock, where o_t, h_t, l_t, c_t, and v_t denote the open, high, low, close prices, and volume on day t, respectively. We define a rolling window w (e.g., w = 10) that encapsulates the past price movements. At each time step t, the agent observes the market state st derived from the window and trend features. The state is represented as:

$$s_t = [x_t, I_t, A_t] \quad (6)$$

where, x_t encodes the recent stock price patterns in the past w days, I_t defines the inventory (number of shares held), and A_t represents the available assets (cash).

2) Action space: The agent operates with a discrete action space A = {buy, sell, hold}.

3) Reward function: The reward rt is defined to reflect the relative improvement in liquidity (asset + inventory value) from the previous step. It is penalized if invalid operations are attempted (e.g., trying to buy with insufficient assets or selling with empty inventory). A trend-awareness factor η_t is introduced:

$$\eta_t = \begin{cases} 0.95 \; if \; Price > Price_{t-1} \; (uptrend) \\ 1.0, otherwise \end{cases} \quad (7)$$

The reward function becomes:

$$r_t = \eta_t . \frac{L_t - L_{t-1}}{L_{t-1}} \quad (8)$$

TABLE I. PROPOSED TAQLA MODEL CONFIGURATION AND HYPERPARAMETERS

Parameter	Value	Description
Model Name	TAQLA	Trend-Aware Q-Learning Agent: Tabular reinforcement learning method with optional SARSA update
Learning	Q-Learning	
Algorithm	SARSA	
Action Space	{buy, sell, hold}	Set of discrete trading actions, State Features [xt, It, At] Price window, inventory level, and available assets
State Features	[xt, It, At]	
Window Size (w)	10	Number of historical days observed per decision step
Initial Assets	$1000	Starting cash available for trading
Trend Modifier (ηt)	{0.95, 1.0}	Multiplier for reward under an up/down market trend
Reward Function	$\eta_t . \frac{(Lt - L_{t-1})}{L_{t-1}}$	Reward based on the relative change in liquidity value
Episodes	200	Number of training iterations/simulations
Max Steps per Episode	w	Each episode is limited by the window size
Learning Rate (α)	0.6	Q-value update step size
Discount Factor (γ)	0.6	Weight for future rewards
Exploration Rate (ϵ)	0.2	Exploration probability in ϵgreedy policy
Softmax Temperature (β)	4.0	Controls randomness in softmax action selection
Punishment Mechanism	Enabled	Penalizes invalid actions like overbuying or empty sells

IV. Results and Discussion

A. Experimental Setup

The experiments were conducted on a workstation with an Intel Core i7 processor, 16 GB of RAM, and an NVIDIA GTX 1060 graphics card, running Python 3.8 and the required libraries such as NumPy, Pandas, and Matplotlib. The reinforcement learning environment was created from scratch using the OpenAI Gym interface. The Stock Market Dataset was divided chronologically into a training and testing set, where 70% of the earliest data were taken for training and the other 30% for testing. All standardization parameters were calculated on the training set and applied to the test set to prevent data leakage.

B. Performance Evaluation

The proposed TAQLA model demonstrated superior performance in Fig. 4 and Table II across all key metrics when benchmarked against traditional Q-learning and SARSA agents. The final cumulative portfolio value reached an average of $1687.45, representing a 68.74% increase over the initial capital. The Sharpe ratio achieved by TAQLA was 1.41, indicating a high level of risk-adjusted returns. In comparison, standard Q-learning achieved a return of $1413.20 (41.32% gain), and SARSA yielded $1355.80 (35.58% gain), both with Sharpe ratios under 1.0. About risk-adjusted performance, TAQLA returned a Sharpe Ratio of 1.41, significantly higher than that of Q-Learning (0.96) and SARSA (0.89), while Random Policy returned a negligible 0.11. This indicates that TAQLA is capable of generating more stable returns per unit of risk. For risk exposure, TAQLA had the lowest worst drawdown of 12.8%, which is less than 18.3% for Q-Learning, 21.7% for SARSA, and 33.4% for Random Policy. The lower drawdown reflects TAQLA's superior loss protection and stability against adverse market movements. Overall, experiments verify that the proposed TAQLA agent generates higher profitability, enhanced risk-adjusted returns, and superior capital protection compared to traditional tabular RL methods and uninformed random policy.

TABLE II. Performance Comparison of RL Agents

Agent	Final Value ($)	Sharpe Ratio	Max Drawdown (%)
TAQLA (Proposed)	1687.45	1.41	12.8
Standard Q-Learning	1413.20	0.96	18.3
SARSA	1355.80	0.89	21.7
Random Policy	1012.50	0.11	33.4

C. Evaluation of Q-Learning

1) Beta parameter: We first look at the effect of the beta parameter of the softmax action-selection policy on cumulative rewards. The beta parameter controls the "temperature" of the softmax function, which in turn controls the trade-off between exploration and exploitation. Higher values of beta create more deterministic (exploitation-oriented) behavior, and lower values of beta promote more exploration.

Fig. 5 graphs the total reward-per-session for different β parameters of the softmax action selection policy under Q-learning. Six configurations were attempted: $\beta = 0.0, 0.5, 1.0, 1.5, 2.0$, and 2.5, with $\alpha = 0.6$, $\gamma = 0.6$, and $\epsilon = 0.2$ held constant. The β parameter of softmax determines how action probabilities are weighted by their Q-values, modulating the exploration-exploitation tradeoff. Reward curves have high variance in all environments due to the stochasticity of the environment and the exploration in the softmax policy. With that said, β values between 1.0 and 1.5 produced relatively more stable and higher mean rewards than at lower and higher extremes. Specifically, $\beta = 0.0$ (i.e., random choice) led to highly variable performance, while extremely high β values (≥ 2.0) sometimes led to premature fixation on suboptimal actions, causing reward volatility.

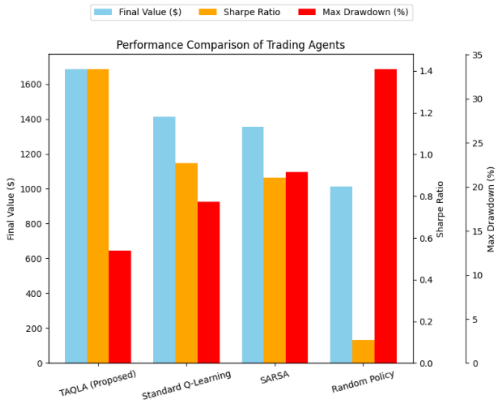

Fig. 4. Comparative performance of TAQLA (proposed), standard Q-learning, SARSA, and random policy.

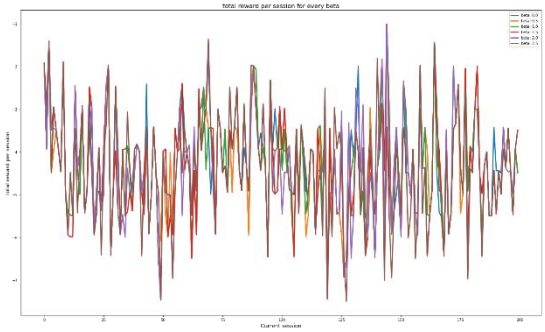

Fig. 5. Q-Learning rewards across β values.

2) Alpha parameter: To analyze the temporal behavior and learning stability of the reinforcement learning agent, a regression fit was applied to the true gain values across training episodes. The impact of the learning rate parameter α on the performance of the Q-learning agent was analyzed. The reward-per-session plots in Fig. 6 for different α values also illustrate the effect of the parameter on learning stability. For all configurations, significant oscillations were seen due to environmental stochasticity and exploration policy. With $\alpha = 0.0$, the agent possessed minimal learning capability, generating random-like reward patterns without adaptation. As α increased, responsiveness improved, albeit such high values led to instability, formulated as high reward spikes and drops. This analysis confirms that although the average long-term reward differences between α settings are low, the choice of α

has a considerable influence on stability, convergence behavior, and adaptability of the Q-Learning agent in trading environments.

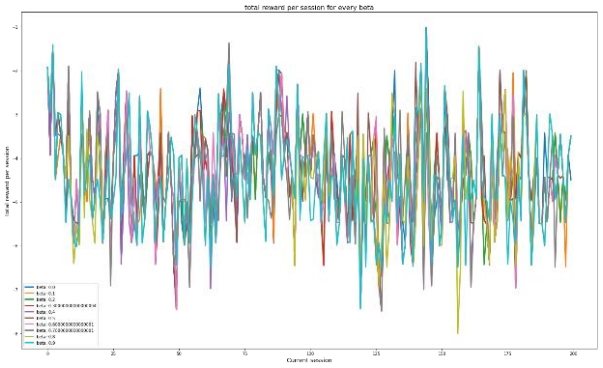

Fig. 6. Impact of learning rate alpha on Q-Learning reward stability and convergence.

3) Gamma parameter: The reward-per-session plots in Fig. 7 for varying discount factor γ values from 0.0 to 0.9, while keeping all the other parameters unchanged. The results show that all γ settings produce significant variations in reward trajectories as a result of random market conditions and softmax exploration policy. For γ =0.0, the agent only looks at immediate rewards, producing wildly unstable and short-term behavior. Higher γ values place a higher value on future rewards, which can improve strategic planning decision-making, but very large values (γ ≥ 0.8) cause the agent to over-optimize for future rewards and miss short-term opportunities and large performance swings. Medium values (γ ≈ 0.4 to 0.6) offer an equal trade-off between short-term maximization and long-term planning to realize competitive reward peaks with less volatility. In general, the selection of γ significantly affects reward stability, volatility, and the balance between present and future returns.

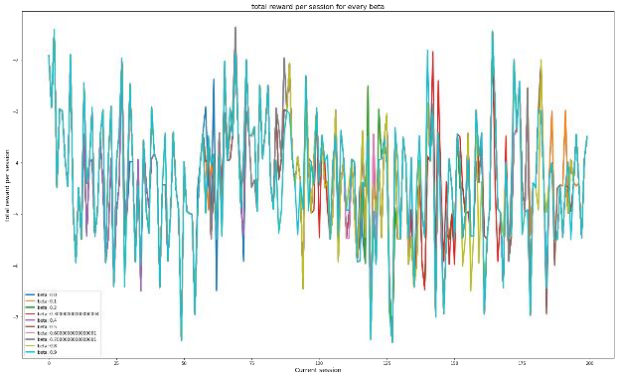

Fig. 7. Effect of discount factor γ on Q-Learning.

D. Evaluation of SARSA

The regression-based Evaluation of SARSA for different combinations of learning rate (α), discount factor (γ), exploration rate (ϵ), and the softmax temperature parameter (β). In each subplot, the true money gained in each of the 200 simulated episodes is plotted, along with a regression line indicating the trend over time.

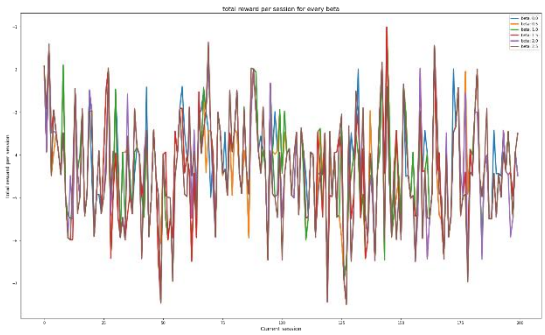

Fig. 8. SARSA performance across different β values.

1) Beta parameter: Fig. 8 shows the analysis. The SARSA agent was trained with a softmax policy with various β values (0.0, 0.5, 1.0, 1.5, 2.0,2.5) to observe their impact on performance. The beta parameter determines how fast or slow the exploration and exploitation are, where lower values make more random moves and higher ones make more deterministic moves. The experiment illustrates that very low β (0.0) generates unstable and highly variable rewards due to over-exploration, while very high β levels (2.0–2.5) generate deterministic but sometimes volatile performance, perhaps due to over-exploitation of poorer strategies at an early stage. Moderate β levels (1.0–1.5) generated relatively stable and higher cumulative rewards, suggesting the right balance between new strategy exploration and exploiting learned ones.

2) Alpha parameter: For this analysis, the SARSA agent was tested with a softmax policy with a constant β=3 and the learning rate α varied from 0.0 to 0.9, incrementing by 0.1. For every α, the agent was run multiple sessions, and the aggregate reward per session was graphed. Fig. 9 reveals that when α=0.0, the reward curve is flat and uncorrelated to some extent because the agent never improves its value estimates whatsoever. When α increases to moderate levels (around 0.4–0.6), the agent learns optimally, and rewards in separate sessions are relatively stable and competitive. At extremely high learning rates (α ≥0.8), the reward curves become more unstable, reflecting instability due to overresponse to short-term outcomes. In general, the numerical pattern indicates that mid-range α values are most optimal in terms of the balance between speed of learning and stability, with both extremes, too low or too high, decreasing consistency of performance.

3) Gamma parameter: The plot in Fig. 10 indicates the total reward-per-session for every training episode in different γ settings. SARSA algorithm is experimented with using different discount factor γ values from 0.0 to 0.9. In RL, the discount factor specifies how much the agent likes long-term rewards compared to immediate rewards, with lower γ values emphasizing proximal rewards and higher values emphasizing distant rewards.

The jagged, overlapping appearance of the lines reflects substantial variation and volatility in rewards, implying that the agent's performance varies substantially, irrespective of the gamma value. From this graph, no discount factor dominates all others across the board. To learn more, smoothing the reward

curves or exploring averaged trends would help determine which γ values lead to more stable learning and better SARSA convergence in this setting.

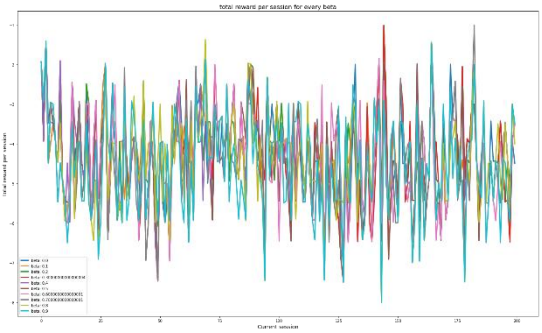

Fig. 9. SARSA rewards vary with learning rate α.

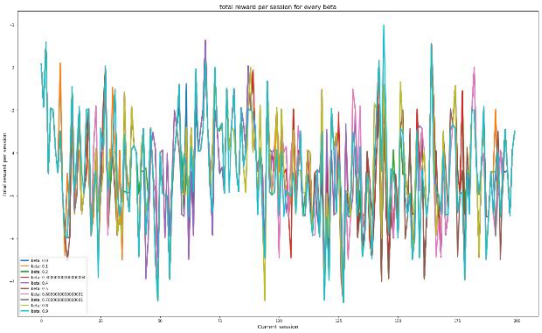

Fig. 10. Total rewards per episode for SARSA with varying discount factors γ.

V. Conclusion

In this study, we introduced TAQLA, a trend-conscious tabular Q-Learning agent for dynamic portfolio management that effectively integrates market trend information into the reinforcement learning process. Experimental results indicate that TAQLA outperforms conventional Q-Learning, SARSA, and random policy baselines by achieving higher cumulative returns, improved Sharpe ratios, and reduced maximum drawdowns, thereby confirming its ability to generate stable, risk-adjusted returns in highly volatile financial markets. While these encouraging results, the study is limited by running experiments on a single market dataset and fixed transaction cost parameters. The future holds TAQLA being implemented across more asset classes and market regimes, hybrid ensembles of tabular and deep reinforcement learning approaches, and integration with online adaptive mechanisms to control changing market conditions. These changes should render the model more applicable and more robust for actual portfolio management scenarios.

VI. Disclosure and Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest related to this research. Additionally, the author has no financial interests or competing affiliations that could have influenced the study's design, execution, or findings. This manuscript is the author's original work and has not been previously published or submitted for review to any other journal or conference.

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AI-Driven Anomaly Prediction in Encrypted Network Traffic

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***Abstract*—The rapid growth of computer networks has increased demand for more sophisticated tools for network traffic analysis and monitoring. The increasing reliance on networks has amplified the need for robust security and intrusion detection mechanisms. Numerous studies have sought to develop efficient methods for fast and accurate intrusion detection, each addressing the challenge from different perspectives. A common limitation among these approaches is their reliance on expert-engineered features extracted from network traffic. This dependency makes them less adaptable to emerging attack techniques and changes in normal traffic patterns, often resulting in suboptimal performance. In this study, we propose a method leveraging recent advancements in artificial neural networks and deep learning, specifically using recurrent neural networks (RNNs), for network traffic analysis and intrusion detection. The key advantage of this approach is its ability to autonomously extract features from network traffic without human intervention. Trained on the ISCX IDS 2012 dataset, the proposed model achieved an accuracy of 0.99 in distinguishing between malicious and normal traffic.**

***Keywords*—Machine learning; deep learning; recurrent neural networks; intrusion detection**

I. Introduction

With the expansion of communication technology, computer security has become an essential part of everyday life. The widespread use of computer systems has increased the importance of security in computer systems, as well as the increasing number of threats, such as malware and mobile phone threats. Despite ongoing research in cybersecurity, security challenges remain unresolved. The rapid advancement of computer networks and the widespread interconnection of systems have heightened concerns, particularly in Internet security, where numerous devices are interconnected, increasing vulnerability risks.

Since the Internet Protocol (IP) is not designed to ensure the highest security standards, network administrators are faced with a huge flood of intrusion attempts by people with malicious intent [1]. According to statistics provided by Symantec [2] on Internet security, more than three billion malware attacks were reported in 2010, and the number of denial-of-service attacks has increased significantly. Anomaly detection plays a crucial role in data analysis. The goal of anomaly detection is to find anomalous data in a dataset. This has been widely studied in statistics and machine learning, as anomalies can trigger critical and potentially harmful events, making their detection essential.

For example, in computer networks, unusual traffic can mean infiltration of a computer where a compromised system transmits data to an unauthorized entity [3]. Conventional approaches for anomaly detection include deep packet inspection, statistical, and machine learning. Statistical and deep packet inspection methods do not perform well against emerging attacks in real-life scenarios.

Moreover, these methods are highly dependent on expert knowledge. Research in this field aims to develop anomaly detection systems that not only perform well but also operate autonomously while maintaining their high accuracy [4]. Understanding the characteristics of modern network traffic requires a deep knowledge of the structure and dynamics of Internet traffic, which also plays a crucial role in managing and monitoring Internet service provider (ISP) networks [5]. Although the rationale for intrusion detection in the context of computer networks is clear, several practical problems still exist with intrusion detection systems (IDS) [6]. One of the most pressing concerns in network security is the increasing sophistication and frequency of cyberattacks, coupled with evolving user behavior and software usage patterns. Traditional models that rely on historical attack data often become obsolete as new threats emerge, highlighting the need for adaptive intrusion detection systems that can be continuously updated to maintain effectiveness [7].

A significant challenge in intrusion detection is packet encryption and encapsulation. Encryption alters network traffic characteristics, making it difficult to differentiate between normal and malicious activity. Traditional intrusion detection methods rely on identifiable traffic patterns, which encryption effectively conceals, thereby reducing their accuracy. Additionally, packet encapsulation and encryption make traditional expert-defined feature extraction ineffective. The randomized nature of encrypted traffic prevents manual feature engineering, emphasizing the necessity for fully automated systems capable of independently capturing complex patterns in encrypted traffic [8].

Another important aspect is the high-speed nature of modern networks, which also makes real-time intrusion detection difficult. Anomaly detection, or outlier detection, examines normal data trends in a network and marks any deviations as a potential threat. One widely used approach is anomaly-based intrusion detection, where normal network traffic is first recorded, and any data deviating from learned normal behavior is classified as an anomaly [9].

Among deep learning techniques, deep convolutional networks, stacked self-encryptors, and recurrent neural networks (RNNs) have demonstrated tremendous success. These methods have been continuously used for various applications such as voice processing [10], computer vision [11], natural language processing [12], network traffic classification [13], and cyberattack detection [14], delivering strong performance. It is clear from different studies that deep learning performance is far beyond the performance of traditional methods in the aforementioned applications. Perhaps the greatest advantage of deep learning is the autonomous extraction and learning of features [15], which eliminates the need for manual feature engineering. There are other deep learning methods available, including unsupervised and quasi-supervised methods, which increase adaptability even further.

In the next sections, we will discuss two particular types of networks that were used for this study, and we will also describe the key principles for these networks in more detail.

The ability to recognize temporal order and sequence is what makes recurrent neural networks (RNNs) one of the most powerful models in deep learning. It also makes them especially good at natural language processing and network traffic processing. These networks are suitable to learn patterns in sequence data such as genes, texts, and time sequences [16].

II. Research Background

Ji et al. (2024) conducted a systematic review of AI-driven anomaly detection methods for encrypted network traffic. The study established key research questions and selected relevant literature based on specific eligibility criteria. The findings confirmed that a variety of AI techniques have been applied to anomaly detection in encrypted traffic. While some of these methods resemble those used for unencrypted traffic, others employ distinct approaches tailored to the challenges posed by encryption [17].

Zeng et al. [18] demonstrated the importance of user engagement regarding the effectiveness of AI-based cybersecurity systems by discussing the concept of technology acceptance and human-AI interaction. The study proposes building a security-conscious culture via ongoing education and skills training, which can help to better protect smart cities against new forms of cyber-attacks. The framework functions as a base for future empirical studies as well as an important tool for policymakers and city planners concerned with the digital borders of smart cities of the future.

Aakash [19] explores the use of machine learning to enhance network monitoring capabilities. The study outlines key network monitoring tools and examines their current approaches to anomaly detection. It then discusses machine learning techniques for developing predictive models based on historical data. Additionally, the research proposes a framework for integrating trained models as extensions to existing monitoring tools. The findings indicate that AI-driven methods offer more precise and automated anomaly detection compared to traditional techniques.

Alwhbi et al. [20] examined the modern application of machine learning to encrypted traffic analysis, as well as its classification, through a comprehensive survey. These goals break down into two objectives. First, the overall workflow is illustrated to clarify how machine learning is used to analyze and classify encrypted network traffic. And second, perform a literature review of the most sophisticated approaches to traffic analysis. This research attempts to shed light on contemporary practices and give directions for future works in the realm of encrypted traffic analysis, and especially, in the field of machine learning.

III. Proposed Methods

Our proposed methods use deep learning and specifically a deep recurrent neural network (RNN) architecture for intrusion detection in network traffic. As highlighted in the introduction, one of the key challenges in this domain is the extraction of appropriate features for attack detection. Traditional methods rely on features extracted by an expert, which limits their ability to detect new and evolving attacks. Such models that rely on manual feature selection often face generalization problems and bear the risk of failing against zero-day attacks or attacks that slightly deviate from established patterns. Deep learning solves this issue by extracting features automatically from raw data. In this case, regular traffic patterns and attacks are provided as input to a deep learning model so that it can learn on its own. Among deep neural network architectures, recurrent neural networks (RNNs) are particularly effective for sequence-based learning, making them well-suited for analyzing network traffic, which consists of sequential packet flows. RNNs can process network flows as sequential data, allowing them to extract long-term dependencies within the traffic.

We designed and evaluated three different approaches based on recurrent neural networks, each of which is explored in detail:

1) Anomaly detection using a recurrent self-encryptor: In this approach, a recurrent self-encryptor neural network model is trained on normal network traffic data. In case new data is provided to the system and the reconstruction error exceeds a certain threshold, the data will be classified as an attack.

2) Anomaly detection using an RNN: In this approach, both normal and attack traffic are incorporated into an RNN for training. The model is trained as a classifier to differentiate between normal and attack traffic based on the learned patterns.

3) Anomaly detection using multiple learning (Hybrid): This approach considers the above methods in tandem. A recurrent self-encryptor network is first trained, and the output of the cryptographic part of the self-encryptor network is then fed into a classifier neural network, which learns to classify normal and attack traffic. These two networks are connected and trained simultaneously, leveraging both anomaly detection and classification techniques for enhanced accuracy.

The novelty of this work lies in integrating a self-encrypting autoencoder with a supervised RNN classifier in a hybrid architecture. Unlike conventional deep learning methods that treat anomaly detection and classification separately, this dual-task framework allows simultaneous

feature learning for both unsupervised anomaly detection and supervised classification, optimizing performance for encrypted traffic scenarios.

In the subsequent sections, we will examine each of the proposed methods and discuss their implementation and effectiveness in network intrusion detection.

A. Anomaly Detection by Recursive Self-Encryptor

In this method, the objective is to train a recurrent self-encryptor for anomaly detection. As explained in Chapter One, anomaly detection involves training a model on normal network data so that it learns to extract key features of normal traffic. Any data that deviates significantly from this learned pattern is classified as an anomaly. One way to achieve this is by using a self-encryptor, which is trained to reconstruct normal data. Once trained, if the network encounters abnormal data, its reconstruction error will be significantly higher compared to normal traffic. By defining a threshold, data with a reconstruction error above this limit is identified as an anomaly.

Intrusion detection in networks can be effectively modeled as an anomaly detection problem. Given that recurrent neural networks (RNNs) are particularly suited for processing sequential data, we implemented a self-encrypting network composed of LSTM layers. The general architecture of this recurrent self-encrypting network is shown in Fig. 1.

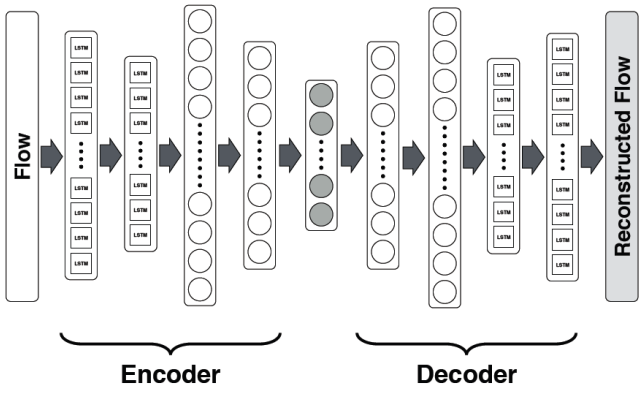

Fig. 1. General model of recursive self-encryption.

The designed neural network consists of two primary components: the encryption part and the decryption part. The encryption section is responsible for compressing the input data, while the decryption section reconstructs the original data. The encryption part begins with two LSTM layers, which extract long-term dependencies from the network stream. The output of these LSTM layers is then passed through a smoothing layer, preparing the data for input into fully connected layers. The two fully connected layers further reduce data dimensionality and extract higher-level abstract features.

Once the encryption process is completed, the decryption phase begins, where the model reconstructs the original data. The decryption section has a structure mirroring the encryption part, starting with two fully connected layers, followed by two LSTM layers that reconstruct long-term dependencies and restore the original traffic data. If the network can successfully reconstruct normal network data, it can serve as a robust anomaly detection system. To prevent overfitting between the fully connected layers, we incorporate random dropout layers. The full details of this implemented model for intrusion detection will be discussed in the following sections.

B. Intrusion Detection by a Recurrent Neural Network

Our second proposed solution is to train a recurrent neural network for classification. This network utilizes multiple recurrent layers of the LSTM type, where sequence return is active, meaning that each LSTM cell produces an output that is aggregated and passed as input to the next layer. Following the LSTM layers, the network includes a series of fully connected layers, and finally, two neurons with a smooth maximum activation function, with each neuron representing either normal or attack traffic label. The network learns to extract features from the sequence of packets in a flow, gradually refining these features into more complex features, to distinguish between normal and attack traffic. The structure of this approach is illustrated in Fig. 2.

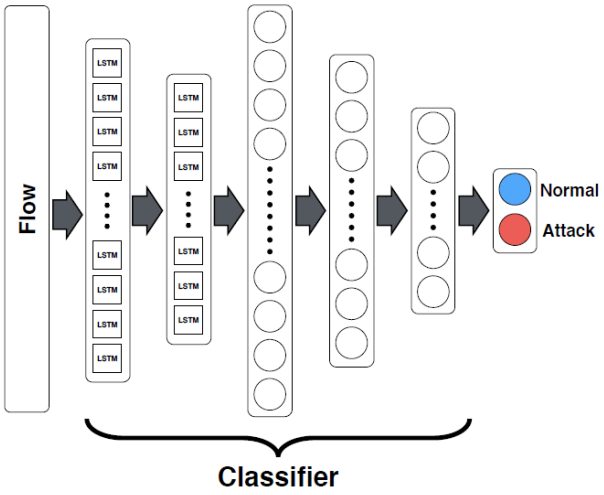

Fig. 2. Attack detection by a recurrent neural network.

The designed network begins with two LSTM layers, which extract long-term dependencies from the neural network input. The output of these layers is then processed by a smoothing layer before being passed through four fully connected layers, which refine the extracted features by extracting more abstract features and enhance the model's ability to classify traffic. The final output is processed through a smooth maximum function with two neurons, each corresponding to normal or attack traffic. To prevent overfitting between the fully connected layers, we incorporate random dropout layers. Further details on the implementation and evaluation of this model for intrusion detection are discussed in Section V.

C. Intrusion Detection by Multiple Learning

In the third approach, a deep self-encrypting recurrent neural network is first built, followed by the integration of a fully connected network into its middle layer. This additional network is designed to classify traffic into attack or normal categories.

Both networks are trained simultaneously with their errors propagating through the system to refine their predictions. This multi-task learning approach allows the recurrent neural network to extract generalized features that can both reconstruct network traffic and distinguish between normal and malicious activity at the same time. The high-dimensional nature of byte-level packet sequences and the temporal dependencies inherent in traffic flows necessitate deeper architectures. Multiple LSTM layers are essential to capture long-range patterns in encrypted traffic, while dense layers refine the latent representations for more accurate classification. Simpler models lack the capacity to extract such hierarchical features.

Solving these two tasks together enhances the performance of both. The auto-encrypting network learns comprehensive traffic features, while the classification network guides feature extraction toward detecting anomalies. These two combined are more comprehensive, as they capture more complete flow information, allowing them to reconstruct network traffic while also identifying attacks. As a result, this model performs more effectively in real-world scenarios, adapting better to new types of traffic and emerging attacks. An overview of this approach is illustrated in Fig. 3.

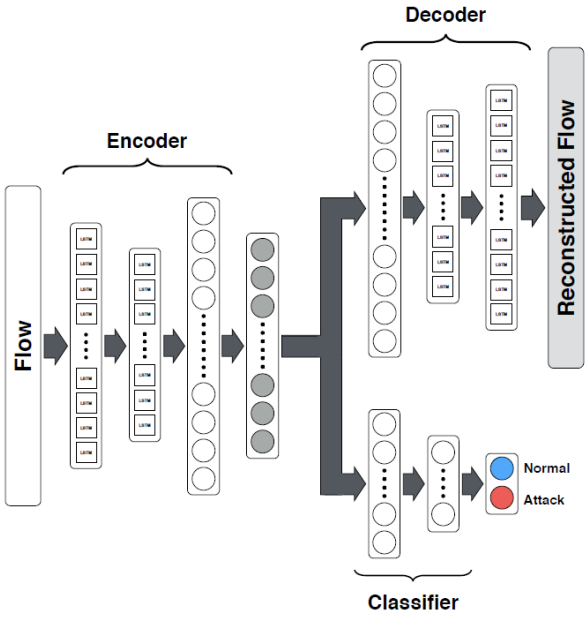

Fig. 3. Attack detection by multiple learning.

Like the first approach, this neural network consists of an auto-encrypting component that processes network flows. The input flows are first passed through two LSTM layers, which extract long-term dependencies from the sequence data. The processed data is then flattened and passed through three fully connected layers that reduce dimensionality while preserving meaningful patterns. The output of this section is then fed into two separate neural networks. One of these networks serves as a decoder, which mirrors the structure of the encrypting network. It consists of two fully connected layers, whose output is fed into two LSTM layers that are responsible for generating long-term dependencies and reconstructing the original data. Meanwhile, the second network is responsible for classification. This network consists of three fully connected layers, whose output is fed into a maximum smoothing layer with two neurons, each representing either the normal traffic or attack classes. To prevent overfitting between the fully connected layers, we apply random dropout layers. By combining self-encrypting and classification in this architecture, the model can both learn meaningful traffic representations and effectively detect anomalies in encrypted and unencrypted network traffic.

A major advantage of this approach is its adaptability. If the model misclassifies normal traffic as an attack or vice versa, the misclassified samples can be added to the training set, and the network can be retrained over several epochs. This self-improving mechanism ensures that the model continuously adapts to new traffic patterns and emerging threats, enhancing its ability to detect previously unseen attacks.

IV. Results

This section highlights the procedures carried out for data preprocessing and preparing the dataset for training and evaluation. Afterwards, three proposed methods will be discussed, followed by an examination of the outputs from the methods and the evaluation of the methods' effectiveness.

A. Preprocessing

As mentioned in the previous section, this study uses the ISCX IDS 2012 dataset, which contains PCAP files with both normal and attack network traffic [21]. The preprocessing step was important to clean and structure the dataset for training and evaluation, resulting in a consistent form to be presented as input to the neural network.

The first stage involved capturing network flows from the PCAP files. This was done by determining the source and destination IP address pairs and their relative port numbers. After extraction, the corresponding flows were tagged as normal or attack traffic based on the information available in the ISCX Laboratory's metadata.

Then, each packet within a flow was processed at the byte level, with each byte serving as an input feature for the neural network.

While flow-level modeling provides contextual information across an entire session, we adopt a packet-level approach to focus on fine-grained byte-level patterns. In encrypted traffic, metadata and payload features are heavily obfuscated, making it critical to extract local-level byte transitions. Future work may explore combining both packet and flow-level models to balance context and granularity.

The base-10 value of each byte was computed and normalized by dividing it by 255, ensuring that feature values were scaled between 0 and 1. Additionally, the time interval between each packet and its preceding packet was calculated and incorporated into the feature vector.

Since neural networks require fixed-size inputs, but network traffic varies in length, standardizing stream and packet lengths was necessary. As shown in Fig. 4, each stream was decided to be set to a fixed length of 100 packets. If a stream contained more than 100 packets, the excess packets

were removed, whereas if it contained fewer, zero-padding was applied to ensure uniformity.

Similarly, each packet was limited to 200 bytes, consistent with prior research [5], which shows that most informative features in encrypted traffic, including TLS handshake and early payload indicators, are embedded within the first 200 bytes. Fig. 5 illustrates the length of the packets within the streams. Any packets exceeding this length were truncated, while shorter packets were zero-padded to maintain consistency. Choosing other packet sizes (e.g., 1,500 bytes) would significantly increase memory overhead and training time without measurable gains in accuracy.

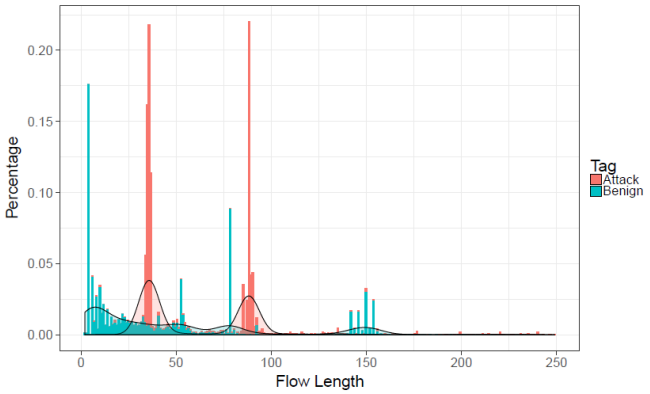

Fig. 4. Graph of the number of packets within each flow.

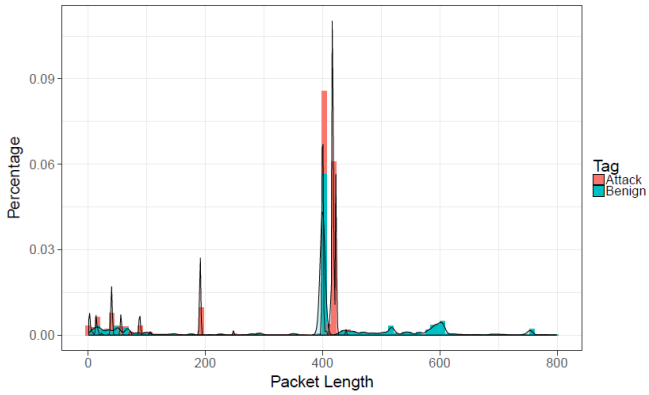

Fig. 5. Packet size diagram.

Deep neural networks are capable of learning highly complex features, but this can sometimes lead to overfitting on non-informative attributes. To prevent the model from extracting misleading patterns, non-relevant fields such as IP addresses and checksums were zeroed out. These fields do not contribute meaningfully to intrusion detection and could introduce unwanted biases into the model.

After completing these preprocessing steps, each network stream was stored as a separate file, with each line representing the details of a single packet within that stream. This structured format ensures that the neural network processes sequential packet data efficiently, preserving the temporal relationships within each stream. By following these steps, the dataset was standardized and optimized, allowing the deep learning model to effectively detect patterns in both normal and attack traffic.

To ensure robust evaluation, the ISCX IDS 2012 dataset was partitioned into three distinct subsets: 70% for training, 15% for validation, and 15% for testing. The splitting was done at the flow level to prevent data leakage across sets. The model was trained using the training set, hyperparameters were tuned using the validation set, and final performance was measured on the unseen test set. This approach ensures generalization and prevents overfitting to specific traffic patterns.

B. Anomaly Detection by Self-Encrypting Network

As discussed in the previous section, if a self-encrypting network that is trained on normal network data learns to accurately reconstruct normal traffic patterns, when presented with a new stream, if the reconstruction error exceeds a predefined threshold, the stream is identified as an anomaly. To implement this approach, we designed a recurrent self-encrypting network, the architecture of which is shown in Fig. 6.

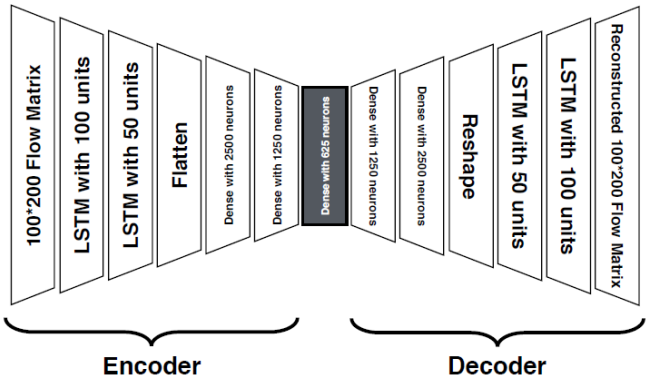

Fig. 6. Self-encrypting network architecture.

Each self-encrypting neural network consists of two main components: the encryptor and the decryptor. As illustrated in Fig. 6, the network begins with two LSTM layers responsible for extracting long-term dependencies from the input stream. The extracted features are then passed through a smoothing layer, followed by three fully connected layers with 2,500, 1,250, and 650 neurons, which reduce dimensionality and extract meaningful features for data reconstruction. The decryption network follows an inverse structure of the encryption network. It starts with two fully connected layers (1,250 and 2,500 neurons), after which the data is processed through two LSTM layers that reconstruct the original traffic patterns by capturing long-term dependencies between packets. To mitigate overfitting, random dropout layers were applied between the fully connected layers. Given the large volume of normal network data required for training, we randomly selected a subset from each protocol, totaling 30,000 samples, always keeping a 20% reserved for validation. Additionally, 10,000 samples (including both attack and normal traffic) were used for testing. The reduction in reconstruction error during training is depicted in Fig. 7.

Upon evaluating the model with test data, we calculated reconstruction errors, as shown in Fig. 8, for both normal and attack traffic. However, as seen in Fig. 8, the reconstruction error distributions for attack and normal traffic are too close, making them difficult to separate with a fixed threshold. The

optimal threshold determined for this dataset was 975, based on which the test data was classified.

The results, presented in Table I, indicate that this approach did not achieve high accuracy. The primary limitation was the insufficient volume of normal network data for training. Due to hardware constraints, we were only able to train the model on 30,000 normal flows, which impacted its performance. Future improvements should focus on scaling the dataset and enhancing feature extraction techniques to improve detection accuracy.

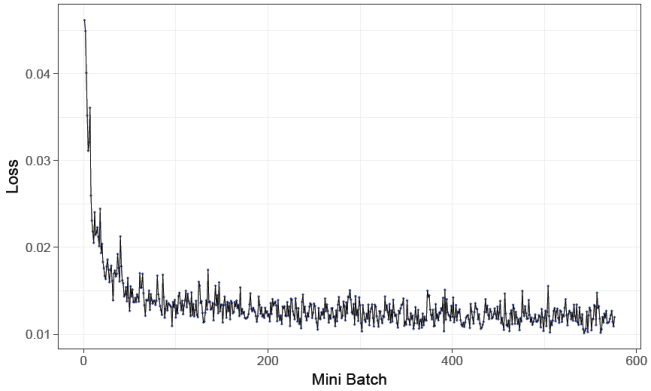

Fig. 7. Reduction of reconstruction error during training.

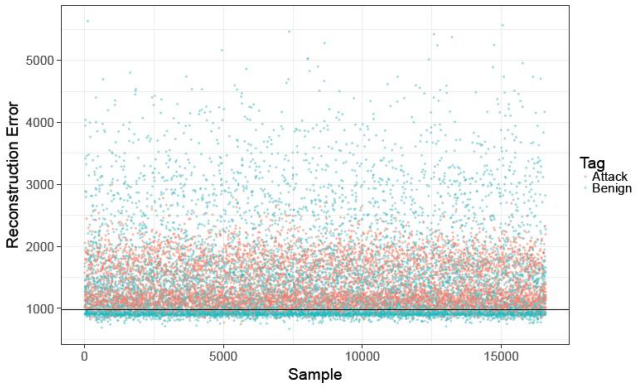

Fig. 8. Test data reconstruction error.

TABLE I. TEST DATA CLASSIFICATION RESULTS WITH SELF-ENCRYPTING NEURAL NETWORK

Class	Precision	Recall	F1-Score
Normal	0.74	0.61	0.58
Attack	0.52	0.95	0.67
Total	0.74	0.61	0.58

C. Intrusion Detection by a Recurrent Neural Network

In this method, we aim to train a classifier to distinguish between attack and normal traffic. To achieve this, we developed a recurrent neural network (RNN) with LSTM layers and trained it using all available attack data along with 20,000 normal flows, ensuring coverage of all protocols present in the dataset. Fig. 9 shows the network architecture. As depicted in this figure, this network architecture consists of nine layers designed to effectively capture sequential patterns in network traffic and improve classification accuracy.

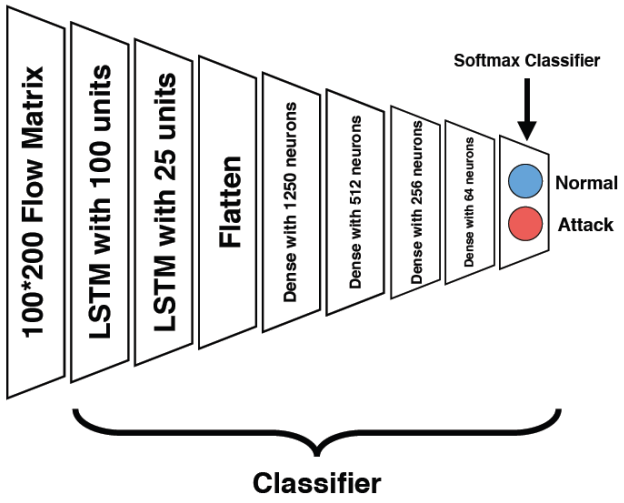

Fig. 9. Recurrent neural network structure.

First, the data is fed into two LSTM layers, which consist of 100 and 50 neurons, respectively. These are responsible for extracting long-term dependencies from the data. The output of the above layers goes to the smoothing layer and is then fed as input into four fully connected layers consisting of 1250, 512, 256, 64 neurons to extract abstract features from it. Then, the output of the fully connected layers is fed into a smooth maximum with two neurons, which are responsible for detecting normal versus attack traffic. Random dropout layers are placed between the fully connected layers with a probability of 25% to prevent overfitting. Fig. 10 depicts the chart of the reduction of the classification error of the training data. In general, the best way to find the most suitable neural network for training data is to perform a complete search on the parameters of the neural network, such as the number of neurons in the layers and the number of layers, etc. However, since our neural network is of the recurrent type and has a large size, training this network takes a lot of time, and it was not feasible to perform a comprehensive search on its parameters. Through experimentation with logically structured architectures based on prior research in this field, we developed a neural network design that demonstrated strong practical performance. After training the model, we evaluated its effectiveness using test data, with the corresponding evaluation metrics presented in Table II.

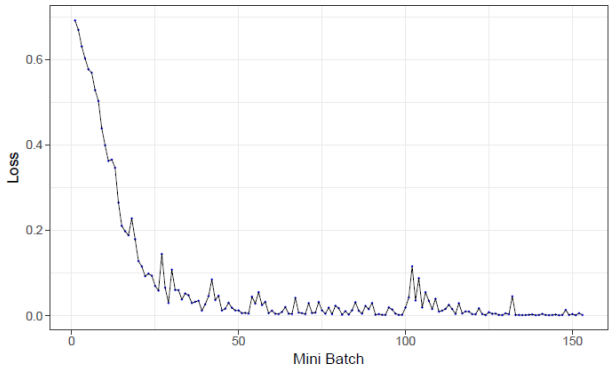

Fig. 10. Reduction of classification error during training.

TABLE II. RESULTS OF CLASSIFICATION OF TEST DATA BY THE NEURAL NETWORK

Class	Precision	Recall	F1-Score
Normal	0.98	1.0	0.99
Attack	1.0	0.97	0.99
Total	0.99	0.99	0.99

As shown in Table II, the classifier demonstrated high accuracy. To enhance processing speed, we optimized the network by reducing its size, resulting in a more efficient architecture, as illustrated in Fig. 11. This modification significantly improved the training and inference speed compared to the original model.

This change, as shown in Table III, however, led to a decrease in accuracy. The trade-off between speed and accuracy highlights the need for further optimizations to balance efficiency and detection accuracy.

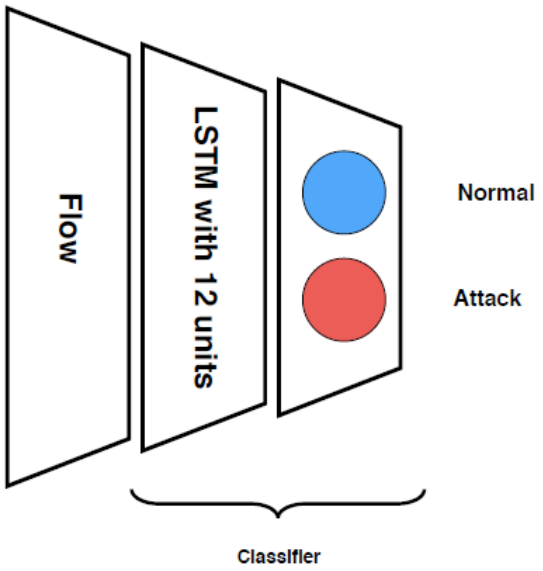

Fig. 11. Reduction of classification error during training.

TABLE III. RESULTS OF CLASSIFICATION OF TEST DATA IN THE REDUCED CLASSIFIER NEURAL NETWORK

Class	Precision	Recall	F1-Score
Normal	0.95	0.94	0.95
Attack	0.93	0.95	0.94
Total	0.94	0.94	0.94

D. Evaluation

As demonstrated in the previous section, the proposed methods achieved high accuracy in detecting attacks using the ISCX IDS 2012 dataset. To further evaluate their performance, we simulated 390,000 attack flows across HTTPS, HTTP, DNS, and FTP protocols using the 111-Spirent device. From these, 7,000 attack flows were randomly selected and added to the training set, while another 40,000 flows were randomly selected from the remaining flows to assess the multi-layer neural network model.

The evaluation results showed an attack detection accuracy of 0.99, confirming the model's effectiveness. However, one limitation is processing speed, as the neural network requires 0.039 seconds per flow. While this speed is sufficient for certain applications, real-world intrusion detection systems demand faster processing, making computational efficiency an area for further optimization.

Unlike prior approaches relying solely on handcrafted features or static classifiers, our method combines both reconstruction-based and classification-based techniques within a hybrid deep learning architecture. This dual-model approach demonstrated F1 scores of 0.99, showing significant improvement over baseline RNNs and self-encoder models in similar datasets. Table IV shows the results of the evaluation.

TABLE IV. RESULTS OF CLASSIFICATION OF TEST DATA IN MULTIPLE NEURAL NETWORKS

Class	Precision	Recall	F1-Score
Normal	0.99	0.99	0.99
Attack	0.99	0.99	0.99
Total	0.99	0.99	0.99

E. Implementation Tools

We utilized the dpkt library in Python for network data processing. All neural networks and deep learning models were implemented using the Keras library [6], which operates on TensorFlow [22]. To evaluate the performance of our classifiers, we employed the scikit-learn machine learning library [23].

For hardware acceleration during model training, we used an NVIDIA GeForce GTX 1080 GPU with 8GB of memory, significantly improving computational efficiency.

V. CONCLUSION

This study addresses the issue of applying deep learning in anomaly detection. First, we reviewed the literature on the subject and the research conducted on each of the parameters discussed in this area. Our analysis of existing research identified both key focus areas and underexplored domains with the potential for innovative solutions. One such area is automatic feature extraction from both the header and payload of network packets, including encrypted traffic such as HTTPS. Building on this, we proposed three deep learning-based approaches for intrusion detection in computer networks, all of which automatically extract features from packet headers and payloads. In this study, we utilized the latest available dataset and further enhanced it by incorporating additional attack samples to improve its diversity and robustness. The proposed methods were then rigorously evaluated using established performance metrics.

Looking ahead, we plan to pursue the following research directions:

A. Optimizing Data Reduction Methods

Our first goal is to enhance the data reduction process. Currently, flows are categorized based on their protocol, and a subset of packets is randomly selected from each protocol.

While this is a straightforward approach, it can be improved with a more intelligent selection strategy. For instance, we can extract handcrafted features from network flows, cluster the data based on these features, and eliminate clusters that are least relevant to attack detection.

B. Developing a Standardized Dataset

One of the most impactful contributions in this field would be the creation of a comprehensive, standardized dataset.

While ISCX IDS 2012 is dated, it remains widely used due to its balance of normal and attack traffic, packet-level granularity, and availability of labels. Its consistent structure allows comparative benchmarking, but it has several limitations:

- Limited protocol diversity, requiring an expansion to reflect real-world traffic more accurately.
- Insufficient attack variety, with attack traffic constituting only a small fraction of the dataset, necessitating better balance between normal and malicious traffic.
- High redundancy, as the dataset contains a large number of repetitive flows that could be filtered out to retain only the most informative samples.
- As ISCX IDS 2012 was collected over a decade ago, it is less representative of modern network traffic patterns and attack techniques.

Given these limitations, we plan to develop a new standardized dataset with greater protocol diversity, an improved balance of normal and attack traffic, and a reduced volume of redundant data, ensuring its effectiveness for future research in intrusion detection.

Future work will validate the model across multiple datasets (e.g., CIC-IDS2017, TON_IoT) to assess generalizability and adaptability to modern encrypted traffic beyond ISCX.

C. Enhancing Detection of Multi-Stream Attacks (DDoS Detection)

As outlined in previous sections, our current approach processes individual network streams, making it ineffective in detecting attacks that involve multiple concurrent streams, such as Distributed Denial-of-Service (DDoS) attacks. Since DDoS attacks are a significant category of cyber threats, developing a detection mechanism for them is a key focus of our future work.

One possible approach is to aggregate traffic directed to a specific host within a predefined time window and use this as input data. By analyzing traffic patterns over time, we aim to design a solution that can effectively identify DDoS attacks and other multi-stream-based intrusions.

D. Leveraging Generative Models for Attack and Normal Traffic Simulation

Another promising research direction is the development of a generative model for both attack traffic and normal network data. Such a model would learn the probability distribution of real-world network traffic and be capable of generating synthetic attack flow samples and normal traffic patterns.

This approach offers several advantages:

- Enhances dataset diversity by generating realistic attack scenarios, improving model robustness.
- Facilitates zero-day attack detection, as the generative model can create unseen attack variations, allowing the intrusion detection system to generalize better.
- Reduces data collection limitations, enabling continuous updates to training data without relying solely on real-world attack logs.

By pursuing these advancements, we aim to develop a highly adaptive intrusion detection system capable of automatically extracting attack features and effectively detecting zero-day attacks in real-world network environments.

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An Intelligent Knowledge-Based Chatbot to Mitigate Travel Anxiety

A Tourist-Centered Design and Evaluation

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***Abstract*—With the emergence of intelligent chatbots, AI-driven conversational agents are increasingly being used to help tourists manage travel challenges and obtain effective solutions. Travel anxiety constitutes a significant impediment to tourism, substantially influencing travelers' future intentions. Given its multifaceted nature, spanning from subjective experiences to complex logistical arrangements, this study developed a fully functional tourism chatbot system using a tourist-centered design method to provide targeted guidance for travel anxiety mitigation. The knowledge-based chatbot implemented user-centered evaluation methods by recruiting seven participants who were randomly assigned to scenarios across six major global travel regions. Results from the participants' short-answer responses and Likert-scale usability ratings indicated that this knowledge-based system delivers highly informative, context-aware, and expert-level recommendations through multifaceted strategy implementation. The findings suggest that such AI-driven interventions are effective in addressing specific travel challenges, with further implications for user-centered design discussed herein.**

***Keywords*—Tourist-centered design; user-centered evaluation; knowledge base; context-aware chatbot; travel anxiety**

I. Introduction

Over the past few decades, the tourism and hospitality industry has been significantly transformed by technological advancements across multiple functional areas, including management, marketing, operations, human resources, and customer service [1], [2]. While this evolution was already underway, the COVID-19 pandemic acted as a powerful catalyst, accelerating the adoption of cutting-edge innovations to meet new safety and efficiency standards. Specifically, technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Virtual Reality (VR), and advanced Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have become central to modernizing service delivery [3]. These tools not only digitize the current tasks but also redefine the guest experience through contactless interactions, immersive travel previews, and data-driven personalization [4]. Based on the future AI research agenda in tourism and hospitality [4], robotic chatting (chatbots) serves as a pivotal element of smart tourism experiences. Chatbots function as an interface for personalization, translating complex AI-backed data into the real-time conversational assistance required for enhancing customers' experience.

Robot chatting is not a new concept, as it can be traced back to the 1920s with the first robot developed [5]. In the 2010s, the application of the voice user interface was widely developed and used in the communication process (such as Apple's Siri, Google Assistant, and Amazon's Alexa). AI has widely developed with advances in new technologies, natural language processing (NLP), and machine learning (ML), and has become a powerful tool for ICT [6]. Chatbots are widely used for customer service and online booking systems in the tourism and hospitality industry [7], [8]. As the first AI project was developed in the mid-1950s [9], [10], AI chatbots have widely been used to enhance customers' experience and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of services [10], [11] in various fields such as online retailing and e-commerce, financial services, and health services [12], [13].

The tourism and hospitality industry has benefited from advances in technology from various perspectives, including management, marketing, operations, human resources, and customer services over the past decades [1], [2]. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this process, making new technological innovations (such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR), and information and communication technology (ICT)) advance the service delivery process [3]. Furthermore, with its functional capabilities and social interaction presence [12], the AI chatbot is also utilized to serve as a coach to provide guidance [13]. This research project utilized the AI chatbot as a coach to provide guidance for relieving anxiety triggered during the pre-trip stage.

In the academic study of tourism, anxiety is conceptualized as a future-oriented mood state characterized by a "triple-response system" of cognitive worry, physiological tension, and avoidant behaviors [14], [15]. Despite the continued expansion of the global tourism industry, travel anxiety remains a significant psychological barrier that inhibits participation, particularly among disadvantaged and inexperienced groups. Furthermore, according to Fennell's [16] model, anxiety serves as the foundational component of travel fear. Current research suggests that travel anxiety is not limited to physical service encounters, such as transportation and accommodation, but is also prevalent in virtual environments such as social media. Consequently, studies have confirmed that the level of perceived anxiety is a critical factor in determining an individual's future intention to travel [17].

Despite travel anxiety remaining a prevalent phenomenon in the post-pandemic era, there is a lack of research exploring how chatbots can mitigate this issue. This study highlights the potential of AI-driven chatbots to provide precise and timely

solutions for tourists navigating unfamiliar environments. Therefore, this research examines how knowledge-based chatbots can serve as a strategic tool for mitigating travel-induced anxiety. By addressing these psychological barriers through automated support, this research represents a novel contribution to the field, as it is among the first academic inquiries to empirically test the efficacy of a travel AI chatbot in mitigating travel-specific anxiety. To evaluate the functionality and efficacy of knowledge-based chatbots, this study employed a multi-stage methodology. The process involved a comprehensive literature review of travel anxiety and chatbot development, followed by platform design, system testing, user experience evaluation, and subsequent data analysis.

II. Literature Review

A. Travel Anxiety

Anxiety is associated with subjective feelings regarding the fear of negative consequences, including tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry [15]. Specifically, anxiety is exhibited as a future-oriented state characterized by three response systems [14]: the cognitive (e.g., worry), the physiological (e.g., heightened blood pressure or muscle stiffness), and the behavioral (e.g., avoidance or safety decisions). Central to this state is a perceived sense of uncontrollability [18], where individuals remain in a status of hypervigilance triggered by unpredictable, unknown, or distant threats. In a travel context, such anxiety manifests as a traveler's uncertain perception of events (hodophobia; [19]), encompassing perceived risks, safety concerns, transit-related distress, and general travel apprehension. Reisinger and Mavondo [20] investigated the relationship between travel anxiety and travel intentions by surveying Australian travelers, revealing that socio-cultural and terrorism risks directly affect anxiety levels, which in turn influence the sense of safety and intentions to travel. Similarly, a study of Chinese tourists in Australia [21] indicated that anxiety can be triggered by a lack of planning, inadequate research, limited time, cultural clashes, language barriers, and dining choices. This research also found that travel package types and the behavior of service staff significantly determine tourist anxiety levels.

Minnaert [22] further explored the connection between tourism and anxiety within the sector of social tourism for disadvantaged groups. Based on intensive interviews with focus groups, she identified travel inexperience as a major source of anxiety. Furthermore, the low social status of these tourists contributed to anxiety when encountering service staff, particularly during the accommodation check-in. Her findings suggest that different tourism products contribute to varying levels of anxiety. In his model of travel fear, Fennell [16] suggests that anxiety is a critical component of travel apprehension. Compared to concrete dangers, anxiety is an emotion focused on the future, making it difficult for travelers to accurately measure or predict actual risk. This unpredictable nature is supported by Çakar's [23] research on tourophobia, which emphasizes that travel-related anxiety is rooted in a lack of control and an inability to foresee specific outcomes. Xiong, Xu, Wen, Okumus, and Cai [24] proposed that travel-induced anxiety should be viewed as a continuous process, with fluctuating levels shaped by an individual's appraisals and coping strategies—a perspective that deviates from traditional definitions of anxiety as a purely future-oriented state. Their study also suggests that moderate travel anxiety can act as a positive force for enhancing personal self-efficacy during a trip. However, excessive travel anxiety serves to inhibit the desire for future travel [17], [25].

Regarding specific triggers, Cheng [26] found that rail transportation significantly contributes to travel anxiety through factors such as crowding, delays, station accessibility, and the complexities of transferring. These findings echo Minnaert's [22] observation that transport issues are a primary source of holiday-related stress. Finally, given the current popularity of social media, constant exposure to idealized travel experiences and an overload of information can heighten travel anxiety and diminish intentions to travel (Huang, Qian, & Tu, 2025) [27]. Ultimately, travel anxiety is a multifaceted, future-oriented state driven by a perceived lack of control and heightened uncertainty. This emotional response is fundamentally triggered by diverse issues, such as travel inexperience, socio-cultural or safety risks, transport-related stressors, and the modern phenomenon of social media information overload.

B. Artificial Intelligence and Chatbots in Tourism and Hospitality

1) Definitions and industry fit: Artificial Intelligence (AI) is broadly conceptualized as "the study of agents that receive percepts from the environment and perform actions". Within the service sector, this definition is refined to encompass technological capabilities capable of executing tasks that traditionally necessitated human intelligence. In [8], the authors argue that these intelligent systems represent a "perfect fit" for the tourism and hospitality sectors, effectively streamlining multifaceted decision-making processes through tailored information retrieval.

2) Computational framework and evolution: Although the foundational concepts of chatbots emerged in the mid-20th century to replicate human cognitive functions and mediate interpersonal interactions, their industry-specific utility has evolved significantly. Doborjeh, Hemmington, Doborjeh, and Kasabov [28] characterize Machine Learning (ML) as the fundamental computational framework for these systems, positioning chatbots as specialized, service-oriented applications of ML algorithms that transform the information-seeking phase from a static procedure into a dynamic, conversational experience. Driven by advancements in ML, Natural Language Processing (NLP), and sophisticated algorithms, AI-driven chatbots now offer increasingly anthropomorphic interfaces. These technologies have been integrated into various commercial platforms, including Google Assistant, Amazon Alexa, and specialized service applications such as Macy's On Call and My Starbucks Barista.

3) Service delivery and automation: By facilitating interactions through natural language, these agents create a perceived sense of human engagement; consequently, the industry has transitioned to a state where approximately 85% of customer interactions are managed without human mediation. AI-generated service encounters represent one of the four

distinct modes of technology-based service delivery—alongside AI-supplemented, AI-mediated, and AI-facilitated modes—and are specifically characterized by the autonomous provision of services where the technology functions as a direct substitute for human staff [29].

4) Knowledge base: Tourism chatbot design is unique as it has to focus on tourists' specific travel situations. To solve this problem, Sano et al. (2018) carried out a case study to enrich their chatbot's knowledge base by analyzing tourism sites and incorporating the sites' data into the system. The chatbot helped tourists explore information about the most optimal sites to visit when their travel time is limited [30]. Knowledge-based travel chatbot design plays an important role in supporting tourists' decision-making processes.

In conclusion, AI has evolved from a theoretical concept into a sophisticated driver of the modern tourism and hospitality industry. Through frameworks like ML and NLP, chatbots have transitioned from static tools into dynamic, anthropomorphic agents that provide real-time assistance. However, there is little research on chatbot design regarding the special requirements of tourists, such as tourist anxiety and unique travel situations. Our study aims to design and evaluate a tourism chatbot that provides tourists with knowledge-based, expert-level, contextual recommendations to mitigate their anxiety.

III. Design

To design a capable AI chatbot program, this study employed three steps: defining area-specific travel anxiety, developing an AI chatbot prototype, and completing usability, to fulfill its purpose, utilizing the AI-chatbot program to provide practical solutions for area-specific travel anxiety.

A. Knowledge-Based Design

In the first step, defining area-specific travel anxiety, two major approaches were adopted to ensure effective calibration of the Juji Chatbot program and the concept of travel anxiety: conducting a pilot study and collecting travel anxiety information. A pilot study surveyed 46 voluntary informants (17 males, 29 females) regarding their past and future destination preferences, providing empirical justification for the subsequent data structure. The dataset was strategically organized around six significant tourism regions—the Caribbean/South Americas, East Asia, Europe, Middle East, Oceania, and a dedicated domestic areas category—to balance the need for scalable generalizability with the delivery of context-specific travel anxiety information. Participant preferences, which included top past international destinations like Canada (9.5%), Mexico (9.5%), and the Dominican Republic (8%), and top future international destinations like Italy (11%), Japan (10%), and Spain (10%), validated the relevance of the global macro-regions. The high prevalence and future preference for domestic trips (e.g., Florida (17%) and New York (16%) in the past; Arizona (29%) and Florida (11%) in the future) confirmed that the domestic environment warranted its own distinct focus within the chatbot's knowledge base.

The content for the Chatbot's travel anxiety solutions was developed based on established literature and practical guides, drawing specifically from Reisinger and Mavondo [20], Fennell [16], Kepnes [31], Reinberg [32], Snelling [33] and, Headspace [34]. Following the initial drafting, the solutions were subjected to calibration by two subject matter experts (SMEs) to ensure the specific anxiety types and corresponding solutions were accurately programmed into the chatbot agent.

Data regarding various types of travel anxiety and their corresponding remedies are organized into six tables, categorized by six global regions. These tables provide a comprehensive summary of potential anxiety triggers and practical solutions encountered during a journey. Throughout this stage, several primary sources of travel anxiety were identified across the six regions, specifically encompassing language barriers, cultural discrepancies, transportation disruptions, extreme weather conditions, health risks, and navigational challenges.

The solutions developed for each identified concern consist of actionable steps that travelers can implement during the planning phase or while in transit. This body of area-specific travel anxiety data serves as the critical foundation for the knowledge-based construction of the chatbot program. In the context of domestic travel, the predominant sources of anxiety were found to stem from transportation issues, inclement weather, health-related risks, criminal activity, planning-induced stress, and difficulties with navigation (Table I). For domestic travel, the major travel anxiety is derived from transportation disruption, extreme weather, health risk, crime, planning stress, and navigation difficulty.

TABLE I. Domestic Travel Anxiety Source

Travel Anxiety Concerns	***Solutions***
Flight delays and cancellations	1. Extra buffer time for unexpected situations 2. Extra money for convenience 3. Familiar with rebooking steps
Fear of driving/highway phobia (Texas/Arizona)	1. Taking breath: When anxiety peaks, use deep breathing to calm down quickly 2. Focusing on the current issues 3. No overthinking
Extreme weather	1. Insurance: Buying insurance covering natural disasters 2. Constantly monitoring local situations
Health risks	1. Staying hydrated 2. Identifying local medical resources 3. Identifying virtual medical access
Petty crime and security	1. Watching personal belongings 2. Travel document preparation 3. Enrolling in STEP
Planning stress & lack of control	1. Post-trip preparation 2. Adjustment preparation 3. Practicing self-care skills
Navigating unfamiliar situations	1. Preparing local maps (paper or digital copies) in hands 2. Be familiar with local laws 3. Understanding locals' perspectives on different issues

Table II summarizes the anxiety sources and solutions specifically for individuals traveling to the Caribbean region. In contrast to the previous area, concerns regarding personal and

property safety, food safety, and an unfamiliar support system are more prominent than other factors. The offered solutions align with these specific shifts in focus. These consist of practical actions, such as methods for protecting personal property, addressing food-related issues, or other strategies centered on individual preparation and the available choices travelers may utilize in unfamiliar environments. This table provides the necessary support for the knowledge-based construction tailored to Caribbean travel.

TABLE II. CARIBBEAN TRAVEL ANXIETY SOURCE

Travel Anxiety Concerns	*Solutions*
Being a victim of crime (theft/robbery)	1. Fitting local styles 2. Raising awareness levels 3. Using reliable transportation
Health risks (food/water safety)	1. Follow the "Boil It Cook It, Peel It or Forget It " Rule [35] 2. Get vaccinated 3. Buy travel and health insurances
Running out of money/accessing funds	1. Assistance from financial institutions 2. Taking more than one credit/debit cards 3. Tracking spending
Losing valuables or documents	1. Digital copies ready 2. Using under-cloth pouch 3. Extra important document copies at home
Uncertainty of local transport	1. Booking local transportation services in advances 2. Reviewing local accommodation services 3. Using local well-known transportation services
Stress and apprehension	1. Establishing a at-home support network 2. Extra buffer time 3. Learning stress relief skills

Table III illustrates the potential anxieties and their solutions for individuals traveling to East Asia. For destinations that differ significantly from one's hometown, cultural clashes and language barriers emerge as primary concerns for travelers. Furthermore, these factors increase navigational difficulties and hinder accessibility to local systems, such as transportation, medical care, or financial services. Solutions based on reality and applicability are provided to assist travelers in their preparation, such as maintaining a respectful attitude, utilizing translation applications, and planning for potential emergencies. This table provides the necessary context to generate the knowledge base for East Asian travel.

Table IV summarizes the potential sources of anxiety associated with traveling to Europe, where travelers encounter diverse societal environments. Discrepancies in social behaviors emerge as a primary concern. Furthermore, although many Europeans are fluent in English, a language barrier persists due to varying levels of English proficiency. Other sources of anxiety, specifically crime and financial burdens, further increase the uncertainty of such trips. The provided solutions practically address these issues through strategies such as maintaining a low profile, utilizing simplified English or translation software, and remaining vigilant in crowded areas. These identified concerns and solutions contribute to the development of the chatbot's knowledge base.

TABLE III. EAST ASIA TRAVEL ANXIETY SOURCE

Travel Anxiety Concerns	*Solutions*
Culture clash / making faux pas	1. Respecting local cultures 2. Realizing local customs 3. Some human errors
Language barrier anxiety	1. Using translation apps 2. Key survival phrases in hands 3. Using simple local conversations
Complex navigation & getting lost	1. Getting local transportation cards 2. Downloading local mapping apps 3. Accepting the wrong direction moments
Money and payment anxiety	1. Carrying cash 2. Keeping your own bank(s) posted 3. Finding local ATM machine information
Natural disasters	1. Downloading apps for emergency information 2. Familiar with facilities' emergency plans 3. Identifying and saving information regarding the local embassy
Health risks	1. Purchasing travel insurance 2. Checking local medication regulations
General apprehension & disorientation	1. Adding buffer time 2. Relaxing yourself occasionly 3. Identifying trustworthy travel-related information center

TABLE IV. EUROPE TRAVEL ANXIETY SOURCE

Travel Anxiety Concerns	*Solutions*
Negative perception & loudness	1. Maintaining a low key 2. Low speaking volume in the public place 3. Being cultural awareness
Language barrier anxiety	1. Understanding key phrases 2. Simplify your own English 3. Using the translation apps
Navigating complex public transit	1. Using the local tour apps 2. Using local transit passes 3. Asking locals
Pickpocketing and theft	1. Using under-clothing pouch 2. Being alert in the public 3. Only carrying the limited cash
Financial burden & value	1. Accessing to the local ATM machines 2. Limiting the usage of the ATM machines 3. Avoiding the tourists' restaurants
Feeling overwhelmed/restless	1. Setting up the downtime 2. Building personal support system 3. Simplifying items in the travel baggage

Table V lists prospective travel anxiety sources for trips to the Middle East. The region's stability differs significantly from other global areas, often eliciting more serious travel concerns. Regional conflicts and airspace risks are categorized as high-priority anxiety sources. Additionally, medication access, social customs, language barriers, navigational difficulties, and constant apprehension require careful consideration during the travel planning process.

Practical solutions for mitigating these anxieties include monitoring government advisories, maintaining flexibility in travel plans, and preparing for scenarios where medication access may be limited. Travel insurance, navigation techniques, and translation tools are also recommended to address these concerns. Ultimately, this table provides the essential knowledge base for constructing the chatbot platform regarding travel to the Middle East.

TABLE V. MIDDLE EAST TRAVEL ANXIETY SOURCE

Travel Anxiety Concerns	***Solutions***
Regional conflict and airspace risk	1. Monitoring current situaions 2. Buying refundable tickets 3. Buying travel insurance
Strict legal penalties for medications	1. Identifying lawful medication 2. Keeping doctors' notes in hands 3. Extra prescription stocks
Violating social customs/laws	1. Dressing modestly in public 2. Avoiding displaying affection publically 3. Understanding local taboos
Language barrier	1. Learning some local oral languages 2. English speaking in some tourist zones 3. Using some translation apps
Constant apprehension	1. Using anxiety-relief skills 2. Positive thinking 3. Enough buffer time
Getting lost or navigating	1. Available paper or digital copies of local map 2. Arranging local transportation services 3. Familiar with local areas

Table VI summarizes the travel anxiety concerns and corresponding solutions for travel to the Oceania region. Physical exhaustion during transit is identified as a primary concern, predicated on the assumption that journeys originate from North America. Other prominent anxieties involve local wildlife, travel costs, and specific climatic conditions.

TABLE VI. OCEANIA TRAVEL ANXIETY SOURCE

Travel Anxiety Concerns	***Solutions***
Severe jet lag and exhaustion	1. More natural light exposure 2. Adjusting personal biological clock 3. Drinking enough water and limiting consumption of coffee and alcoholic beverages
Separation anxiety/homesickness	1. Setting up the communication plan 2. Setting up a regular check-in 3. Using wellness apps
Cost of living/budget anxiety	1. Budgeting responsibly 2. Using the best exchange rates 3. Reducing daily expenses
Underestimating size and distance	1. Reasonable numbers of attraction visiting 2. Finding the best transportation rate for the inter-city travel 3. Setting up the buffer time
Extreme sun exposure and heat	1. Using the sunscreen as much as possible 2. Using the shade areas frequently 3. Drinking enough water
Fear of wildlife	1. Collecting local wildlife information 2. Staying at the safe areas 3. Joining a guided tours
Long-haul flight stress	1. Doing exercise during the long flights 2. Wearing compression clothing for better blood circulation 3. Simplifying items in the luggages

The proposed solutions are tailored to the environmental context of Oceania; these include advanced preparation for climate and wildlife encounters, the development of comprehensive budget plans, and the self-regulation of physiological conditions during long-haul travel. Collectively, these data provide empirical support necessary for the knowledge-based construction of the chatbot's Oceania travel advisories.

Sources of travel anxiety across the six tourism regions — Domestic Area, Caribbean, Europe, East Asia, Middle East, and Oceania — laid foundation for building the knowledge base prototype of the chatbot. These concerns are prioritized with thorough consideration of the culture, environment, political factors, and security of the region. The practical solutions were proposed based on the various types of travel anxieties. These solutions are not universally applicable but vary by region. The most common solutions for foreign trips involve planning ahead of time/self-preparation as a normal support system might possibly be unavailable. Generally, most travel anxieties would be mitigated with the incorporation of personal pre-trip preparation and the knowledge of the area-specific solutions while maintaining feasibility and convenience during the journey.

B. Chatbot Prototype Development

1) Chatbot design overview: The travel anxiety chatbot is designed to provide users with meaningful, expert-reviewed information. Operationally, the system first identifies the user's destination to activate the specific anxiety categories compiled in the preceding research stages. Subsequently, the chatbot provides the corresponding pre-defined solutions based on the user's articulated concerns. The conversational logic is structured to elicit the destination and specific travel stressors in sequence, delivering targeted interventions thereafter.

For the development of the prototype and subsequent experimentation, the study utilized Juji, a platform that enables the creation of sophisticated agents without a programming background. The platform allows developers to utilize specific "topics" to design and govern the dialogue flow, accommodating various request types to fulfill diverse design specifications. Due to its accessibility and efficient project management capabilities, Juji served as an appropriate choice for this study.

2) Information integration: In the preliminary stage, travel anxiety mitigations are organized into a categorized index of concerns and corresponding solutions tailored to each targeted region. Each geographic area presents distinct variables that trigger anxiety. These concerns carry varying levels of priority

based on cultural norms, geographic environments, political climates, and social stability. Consequently, a universal solution set is insufficient, as the relationship between concerns and solutions is unique to each region.

To address this, we integrated these specialized datasets into the chatbot, ensuring that each region operates with a distinct logic. Within the Juji platform, the conversational architecture is organized by region to facilitate the precise integration of these variables. Fig. 1 illustrates the user's view of the regional solution sets. Each region contains a specific list of stressors, and each stressor is linked to a targeted solution set. When users engage with the chatbot, the feedback regarding their travel concerns is specifically tailored to the culture, environment, and political context of their chosen destination.

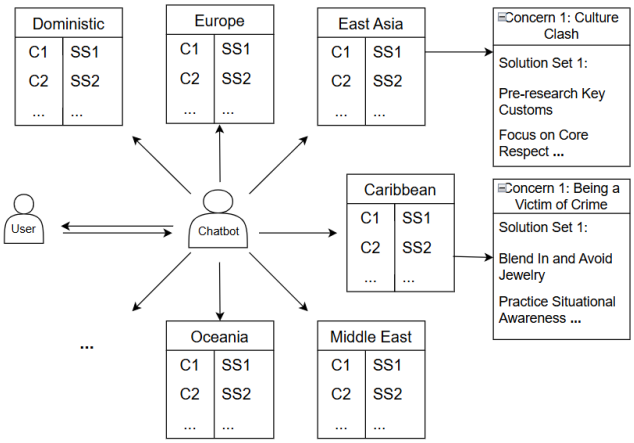

Fig. 1. Travel anxiety chatbot structure.

The Juji platform utilizes triggers as the primary mechanism for decision-making within the conversational flow. These triggers allow developers to employ keywords, sample user inputs, or intention detection, supported by Juji's proprietary models to extract user intent from natural language inputs. The prioritized list of regional concerns compiled in this study aligns effectively with this trigger-based architecture.

Specifically, these prioritized concerns provide a roadmap for the chatbot to guide the dialogue toward actionable solutions, which constitute the system's primary output. For instance, in the domestic travel branch, primary anxiety factors include temporal unpredictability, such as flight delays or cancellations, and the fear of highway driving. Secondary factors encompass extreme weather, health risks, and security concerns related to petty crime. The third tier involves the psychological stress associated with the planning and organization of the itinerary itself. Finally, the fourth level addresses navigational challenges within unfamiliar public transit systems.

These categorized concerns dictate the quantity and technical configuration of the triggers required within the platform's "topics". Fig. 2 illustrates a sample trigger configuration from the domestic travel branch of the Juji design. Once a specific concern trigger is activated, the system generates a "quick acknowledgement" response, which contains the targeted solution set for that particular anxiety factor.

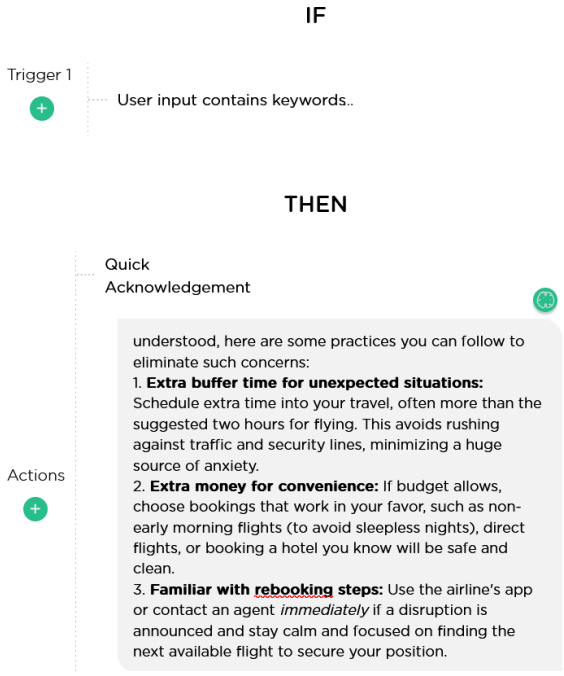

Fig. 2. Trigger example.

The development process utilized keyword detection as the primary triggering mechanism to determine the appropriate solution output. To ensure the accuracy of these outputs, a comprehensive list of keywords was integrated into each trigger. This lexicon incorporates both AI-generated terms and manually curated human inputs. These keywords are natural language-based and are designed to be mutually exclusive across all triggers within a specific topic; this exclusivity is intended to increase the activation rate beyond standard word selection and to prevent computational collisions between triggers.

Fig. 3 represents a subset of the keywords utilized for the two aforementioned example triggers. When a user's textual input includes any of these designated terms, the corresponding trigger is activated, prompting the system to deliver the appropriate solution-based response.

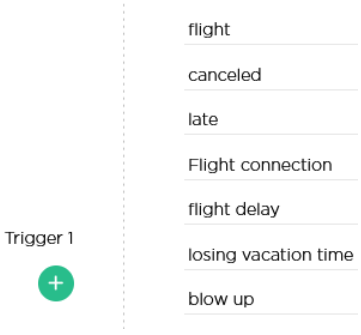

Fig. 3. Trigger keyword example.

3) Conversation flow: The overarching conversational architecture is informed by the synthesized catalog of travel anxiety concerns and their corresponding remedial suggestions. The chatbot is designed to elicit the user's destination and specific stressors through a structured dialogue. By identifying the user's destination, the system is able to isolate the relevant

regional concern list; subsequently, by identifying the user's specific anxieties, the system allocates the appropriate solution output. These two primary data points provide sufficient parameters for the chatbot to fulfill its functional objectives (Fig. 4).

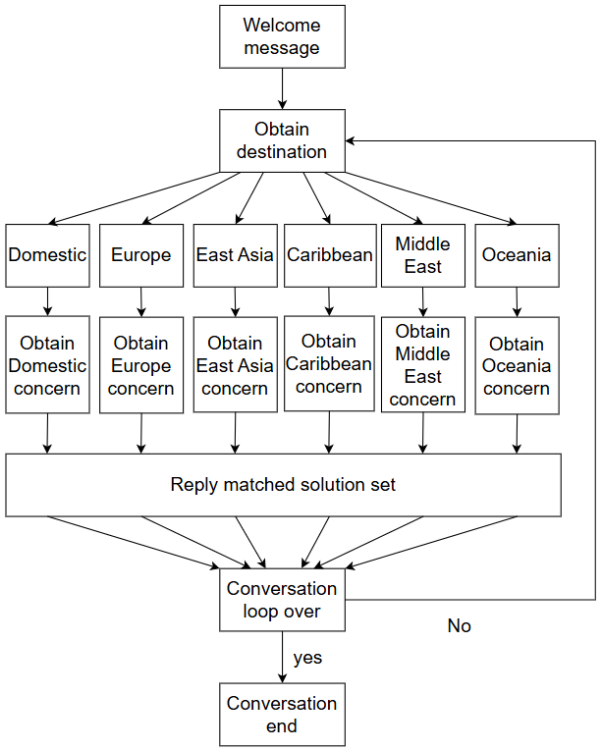

Fig. 4. General conversation flow.

The conversation commences with a welcome message that defines the intended purpose of the chatbot. This ensures the user understands that the system is designed to provide recommendations for potential travel anxiety concerns. Following the introductory message, the chatbot prompts the user to select their destination directly from a predefined list (see Fig. 5 and Fig. 6).

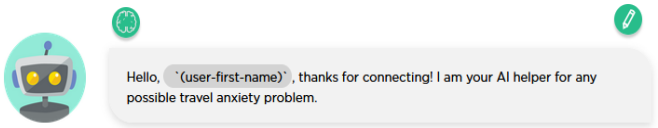

Fig. 5. Chatbot welcome message.

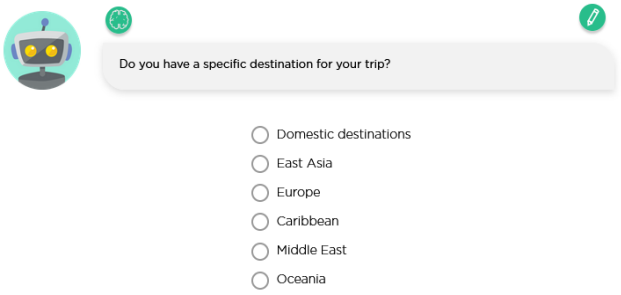

Fig. 6. Region selection.

After the user selects a destination, the conversation transitions to the corresponding topic containing the concern list for that region, where a set of triggers awaits activation. If a trigger is activated, the chatbot provides the associated solution to the user. For instance, in the case of domestic travel, suppose a user asks, 'I am afraid to drive on the highway during a domestic trip; do you have any suggestions?' The keyword 'highway' or the phrase 'drive on highway' will activate the trigger, prompting the system to deliver the solution as demonstrated in Fig. 7, Fig. 8 and Fig. 9.

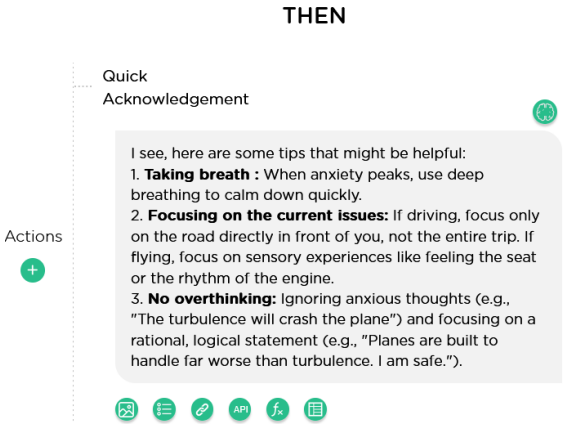

Fig. 7. Solution set example.

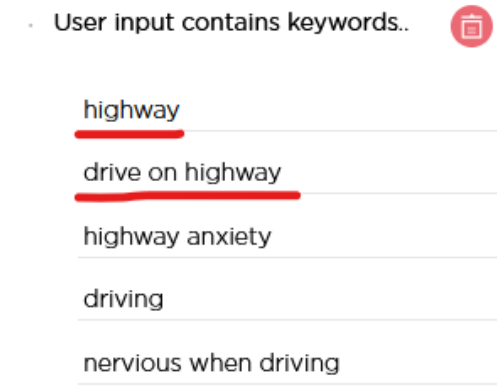

Fig. 8. Fired keyword example.

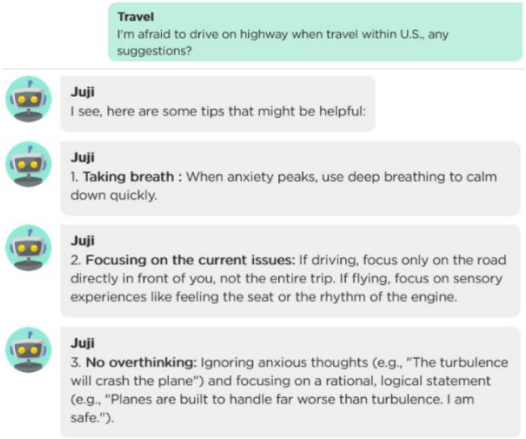

Fig. 9. Result demonstration.

After each interaction, the user can choose to initiate another round for additional requests. Users may continue to consult the chatbot regarding further concerns by replying "yes" to the system's recurring prompt, or they may conclude the session by replying "no" (Fig. 10 and Fig. 11).

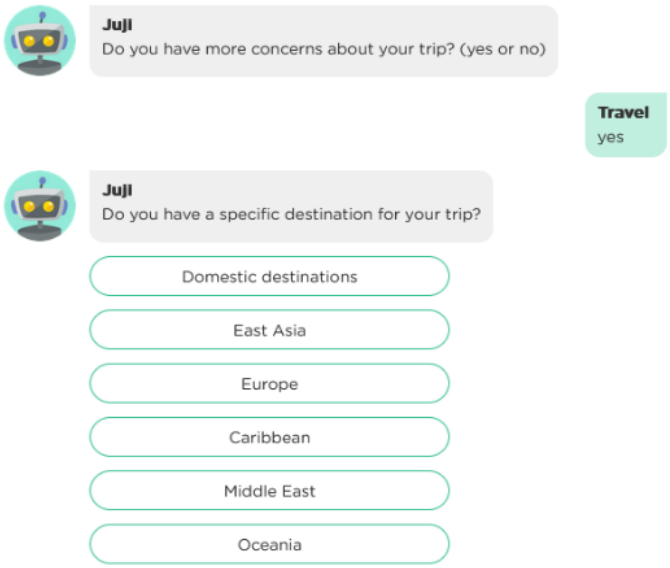

Fig. 10. Recurring question example for "yes".

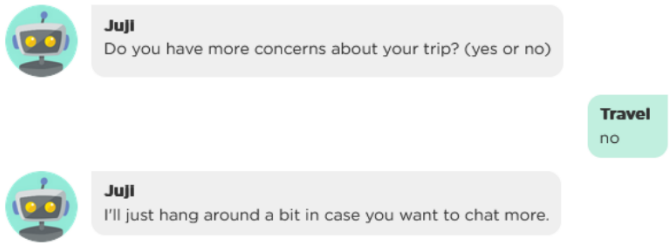

Fig. 11. Recurring question example for "no".

4) Domestic travel interaction demonstration: The following is a demonstration of a travel consultation for a domestic destination (Fig. 12). The conversation commences with a welcome message. Immediately following this introduction, the user is prompted to select their destination from the six regions listed by the chatbot. In this example, 'Domestic destinations' has been selected.

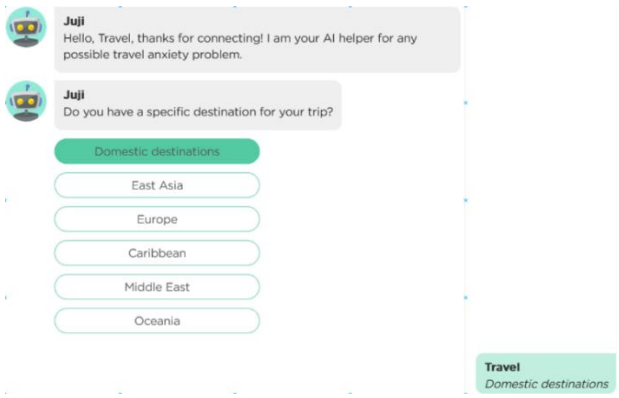

Fig. 12. Showcase 1 welcome message and region selection.

Once the user selects a domestic destination, the conversation transitions to a specific topic containing all predefined anxiety triggers for domestic travel. When user input incorporates multiple keywords, such as "delayed" or "canceled", the corresponding trigger is activated, prompting the chatbot to return the relevant remedial message as a response (Fig. 13 and Fig. 14).

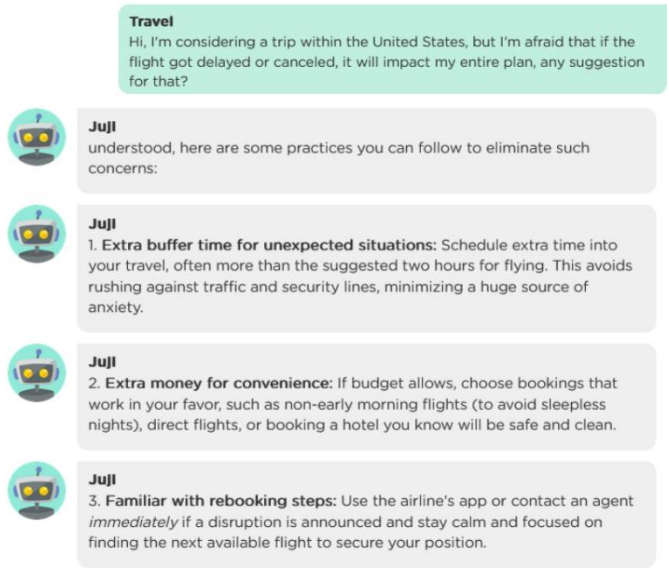

Fig. 13. Domestic showcase solution reply.

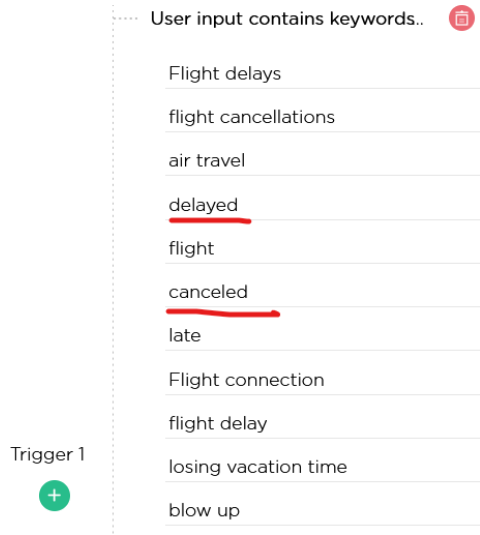

Fig. 14. Domestic showcase keyword detected.

Ultimately, the chatbot presents a recurring prompt to determine if the user requires further consultation. In this demonstration, the user selects "yes" to address an additional concern regarding a different geographic region (Fig. 15).

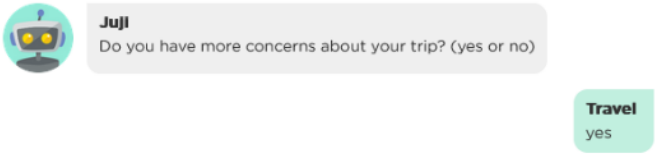

Fig. 15. Domestic showcase recurring confirmed.

5) European travel interaction demonstration: The second demonstration presents a consultation regarding European travel concerns. Following the introductory welcome message, the user selects "Europe" as the target destination for the interaction (Fig. 16).

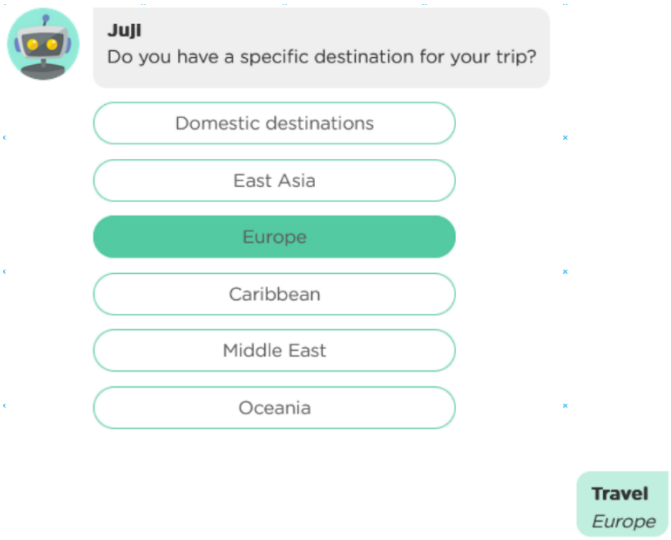

Fig. 16. European showcase region selection.

After the user selects "Europe" as the destination, the conversation transitions to the topic containing the specific anxiety triggers for European travel. In this instance, the user input includes keywords such as "money" and "expensive". Once these keywords are detected, the chatbot responds by delivering the corresponding solution message to the user within the chat interface (Fig. 17 and Fig. 18).

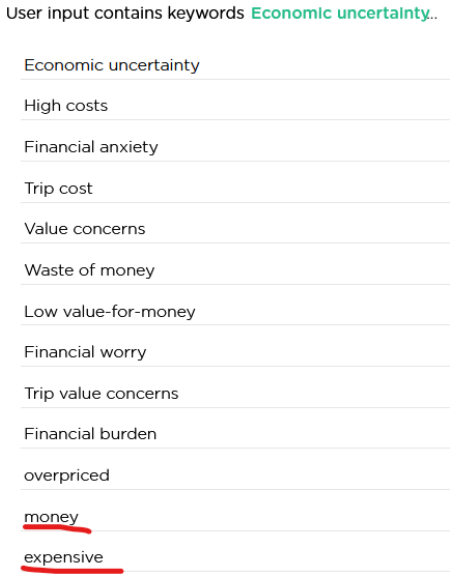

Fig. 17. European showcase keyword detected.

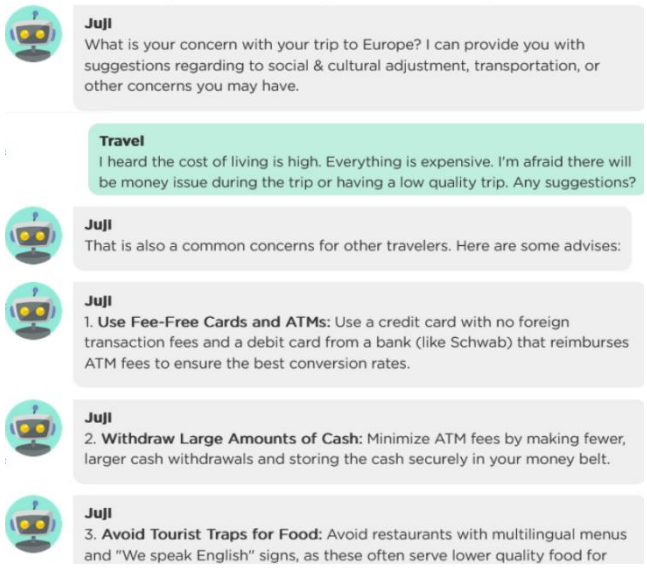

Fig. 18. European showcase solution reply.

As with all interactions, the chatbot presents a recurring prompt to determine if the user requires further consultation. In this demonstration, the user selects "no" to conclude the conversation, and the chatbot terminates the session (Fig. 19).

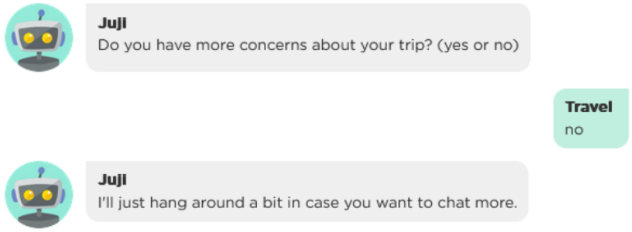

Fig. 19. European showcase recurring denied.

IV. Usability Evaluation

A. Usability Testing

The design of the tourist well-being chatbot is to provide information to tourists to ease their anxiety and to offer them professional advice through its expert-level knowledge base. Based on this goal, we designed the high-fidelity prototype and ran a usability test.

1) Evaluation participants: Seven participants were invited to participate in our experiments. Nelson (1993) recommended that as few as five users can effectively identify 85% of the usability issues associated with a particular technology [36]. Therefore, five college students from an East Coast university and two students from a Midwest university performed the tasks, filled out questionnaires and answered interview questions. They ranged in age from 21 to 28 (M=25.29, SD=4.96), and among them, four were male, and three were female.

2) Evaluation tasks: The experiments were conducted in the participants' natural environments to allow the participants' natural interaction with the chatbot. The participants were instructed to follow the guidance document to perform three tasks. We designed two parallel task sets: Version A (Europe, domestic, and Oceania) and Version B (Caribbean, East Asia, and the Middle East). The participants were randomly assigned to either Version A or Version B. Below is an example of Version A.

- Task 1: You are getting ready for a one-week trip to Europe. You've done some planning, but you still feel worried about something going wrong or something you don't know about this area.
- Task 2: You are planning a week-long trip to another city in the U.S. You are currently setting up your schedule and thinking about everything that could go wrong or be an unpleasant surprise on a big domestic trip.
- Task 3: You are imagining a ten-day trip to Oceania next summer. Since this is a huge, long trip far from home, you are super excited, but you are also very nervous about some big, unexpected things that could happen before or during the trip.

In order to further explore the participants' interaction with the chatbot, eleven short-answer survey questions were presented to each participant. The usability questions encompassed topics such as the chatbot's acceptance, usefulness [37], ease of use and memorability, emotional support, interaction flow, and improvements. The participants answered the questions with their experiences, thoughts, and feedback on the chatbot.

Usability-related inquiries aligned with Norman's usability goals were also presented in the following Likert-scale questions (7 is the highest) in order to retrieve quantitative data [38]. The questionnaire emphasized ease of use, effectiveness, problem-solving usefulness, learnability, emotional impact, and life and study support.

By exploring these questions, we aimed to demonstrate that the knowledge-based chatbot design provides users with effective and emotionally supportive information to help them solve problems and make decisions. By gathering valuable insights from the participants, we can also enhance the chatbot design, focusing on user needs and preferences to develop a user-centered tool for tourism purposes.

3) Pilot study: We conducted a pilot test to ensure the effectiveness of the tasks and questions. The purpose of the pilot test was to identify ambiguities in instructions and questions to enhance the clarity of the descriptions. One pilot participant was invited to complete the tasks and answer the questions. Updates were made based on the participant's feedback, such as rephrasing instructions, reordering questions, and removing similar questions.

4) Data analysis: The usability study collected qualitative and quantitative data through mixed methods, including empirical tasks and short-answer and Likert-scale survey questions. The short-answer data analysis followed the grounded theory and used the open-coding method. We used descriptive data analysis for the Likert-scale answers to determine the usefulness and ease of use of the chatbot. These qualitative and quantitative data analysis methods allowed us to obtain a comprehensive understanding of user feedback and needs for tourist-focused AI chatbot design.

V. Evaluation Results

We invited seven participants to evaluate the usability of the chatbot. The results from quantitative and qualitative analyses were consistent and reinforced one another. The results indicated that the participants confirmed the ease of use of this chatbot. They also reported the knowledge-based usefulness of the chatbot. They had diverse emotional experiences with the chatbot and tourist-centered improvement requirements.

A. Descriptive Data Analysis Results

The results from the Likert-scale questions indicated that the chatbot's usability was confirmed by the participants, for example, through its strong ease of use, which aligned with Davis (1989) usability goals [37]. The relatively small standard deviations demonstrated that the participants agreed with each other that the chatbot was easy to use. Participants believed the chatbot was useful, but not as strongly as its ease of use. Some participants felt emotionally supported, while emotional reassurance was inconsistent (see Table VII).

TABLE VII. Likert-Scale Questions

Likert-scale questions	*Mean*	*SD*
Easy to learn how to use the agent	6.43	1.13
Easy to get the agent to do what I want	5.29	0.95
Interacting is clear and understandable	5.86	0.90
Flexible to interact	5.00	0.82
Easy to become skillful at using the agent	6.00	1.53
Easy to use	6.29	0.95
Eases anxiety/ stress/ depression/ insomnia efficiently	4.29	1.89
Helps achieve student success	4.00	1.73
Improves problem solving	4.43	0.98
Enhances life quality	3.71	1.38
Provides better support for study/life	4.43	1.27
The agent is useful.	5.29	1.98

B. Themes from Short Answer Questions

The results of the short answer questions supported and further elaborated the Likert-scale answers. The participants strongly agreed that the chatbot was easy to use, learn, and remember. They also confirmed that it was useful, especially with its informative, context-based expert-like recommendations and multiple strategies. However, sometimes there was generic information due to technical limitations. There were diverse opinions about the chatbot's emotional support. Some participants believed it was helpful for travelers.

1) Ease of use: All the participants expressed that the usability of the chatbot was high with low effort.

Participant 4: "Not much effort, easy and quick."

Participant 3: "The process was very easy and simple to get a quality answer."

Participant 2: "The process was easy to get used to and understand."

2) Knowledge-based usefulness: The participants felt knowledge-based emotional assurance within the interactions. They also found strong informative problem-solving suggestions. They expressed that the chatbot provided them with contextually appropriate guidance.

For example, Participant 2 found that the chatbot's knowledge created trust and emotional comfort to him.

Participant 2: "The chatbot helped me in assuring myself and overcoming some of my anxieties. It explained what to do and why, and that made the situation feel more manageable."

The participants also expressed that the chatbot provided expert-depth answers. It also provided detailed, informative suggestions and different solutions to handle one situation.

Participant 5: "Yes, the Chatbot did give insightful answers. It gave suggestions for jet lag, such as adjusting sleep ahead of time, staying hydrated, and planning rest when you arrive, so once you're off the plane, you can prepare for the time difference."

Participant 4: "The 3rd gave the best advice because it was the most detailed. It didn't just say 'be careful,' it broke down what to do, what to expect, and what would actually help."

Participant 3: "Yes… it gave me many different solutions instead of just one answer, which I thought was really good because it considered different ways someone might handle the situation."

The participants expressed that the chatbot responded according to their specific travel situations and was tailored to the travel context.

Participant 7: "The first one… was the most helpful because it answered exactly what I asked and what I needed. It felt like it knew what travelers really go through and responded like someone experienced."

Participant 2: "The Oceania chatbot scenario gave me the best solutions. It addressed my worry directly and gave options I could realistically do while traveling."

However, due to technical limitations, Participant 1 found the answers were generic. These design flaws can be improved in future studies.

Participant 1: "They were generic answers… when I asked for something more specific… it restated my question, then moved on."

3) Emotional experience: The participants had diverse emotional experiences with the chatbot.

Participant 5: "I felt secure while talking with the Chatbot. It didn't ask for any deeply personal questions and it seems unbiased."

Participant 3: "The Chatbot made me feel less scared about travel… like someone was trying to talk me off the ledge."

Participant 7: "Simple and secure."

Participant 4: "Indifferent."

Participant 1: "It felt nonpersonal."

The results indicated that emotional impact was diverse. This aligned with our descriptive analysis that emotional support scores had higher variability.

4) Tourist-focused improvements: The chatbot was designed to focus on tourists' needs. Therefore, improvements were requested from the participants. They expressed that they would like more precise responses, smoother interaction flow, and richer functionality.

Participant 3: "Maybe have it budget trips for you and help you with the planning process."

Participant 2: "Maybe an addition of a precise location feature instead of a general area feature."

Participant 5: "The most helpful advice I received was how to stay away from high traffic areas, and the least helpful advice I received was how to engage in local activities because most of the time you can find that specific information on a website."

Participant 5: "The smoothest interaction was initially chatting with them, but reloading to a different chatbot was less smooth."

Participant 4: "To me, it seems like an extra feature for those who have anxiety when traveling."

Participant 1: "I think this could be sold as an added feature to a larger product, but not as a stand-alone tool. I'm not sure that travel anxiety is a large enough problem, that people will think of using a chatbot to help relieve anxiety, or that the chatbot has useful enough information to create demand."

In summary, through the usability testing, we confirmed that the chatbot could assist tourists by providing professional and informative suggestions and helping them make context-appropriate decisions. The participants' suggestions for improvements provided valuable insights to enhance the chatbot's functionality and usability.

VI. Discussion

Our study developed a knowledge-based chatbot to provide tourists with expert-level context-aware solutions. We also conducted usability testing to collect user feedback through short-answer and Likert-scale questions. The quantitative and qualitative data demonstrated that users strongly agreed that this chatbot was easy to use. They stated its usefulness derived from its informative, expert-level, contextually appropriate, multifaceted strategies.

However, the participants reported varied emotional experiences toward the chatbot. Some of the participants

indicated that the chatbot provided emotional reassurance. Some participants reported that the chatbot felt impersonal. We acknowledge that part of the reason was due to the technical challenges we encountered, which actually limited the functions of the chatbot. Yet our purpose was to demonstrate a tourism chatbot that can mitigate tourist anxiety through knowledge-based design. In addition, our design highlighted the importance of context-sensitive design that could support users in making decisions when context is a serious challenge to most chatbots.

One of the limitations of this study lies in the small sample size. However, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, Nelson (1993) stated that only five participants could identify 85% of the usability issues [36]. Therefore, these seven participants were enough to evaluate the chatbot system. The participants' diversity was limited to only university students. However, this young group represents an active and frequent group of tourists. They are also sophisticated in AI technologies, which makes them a suitable group to evaluate an AI chatbot. Moreover, four of the participants were tourism-major students. Their insights from their expertise were valuable for the design. We believe the findings may inform broader tourism applications.

VII. Conclusion

Our work aims to provide tourists with a knowledge-based expert-level chatbot to ease their travel anxiety and help them make decisions. Based on the qualitative and quantitative user feedback results, we confirmed that the chatbot was easy to use and perceived as useful due to its knowledge base, context awareness, and multifaceted strategies. However, users reported different emotional experiences while interacting with the chatbot. They also expressed expectations for precise responses, smooth interactions, and rich functions.

Future work will focus on advancing the knowledge-based prototype integrated into GPT. It will enable us to provide expert-level recommendations while retaining the generative function of the large language model. Future work aims to combine structured domain knowledge with prompt-based control. Moreover, some participants pointed out that this chatbot could serve as an additional feature within a broader integrated travel chatbot system. Therefore, future development will aim to integrate our travel anxiety design with existing travel platforms. This approach is practical for real-world adoption, enabling existing travel chatbots to incorporate anxiety modules.

This study demonstrates how a knowledge-based chatbot system supports tourists' decision-making with a user-centered approach. It contributes empirical evidence to AI research that a knowledge-based chatbot can provide expert-level, context-aware, multifaceted suggestions to tourists. We hope these findings will inspire designers and researchers to continue advancing knowledge-based, context-aware tourism support systems.

Acknowledgment

The authors wish to thank the participants and the medical expert for their contributions to this project.

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Towards Robust Intrusion Detection: Exploring Feature Selection, Balancing Strategies, and Deep Learning for Minority Class Optimization

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***Abstract*—The increasing connectivity of systems and the rapid growth of the Internet have intensified cybersecurity threats. It has been demonstrated that conventional signature-based intrusion detection methods are deficient, especially against Zero-Day attacks. An alternative approach involves the deployment of Intrusion Detection Systems (IDS) that are based on deep learning algorithms. However, these systems face a significant challenge in detecting minority classes of attacks, such as Remote-to-Local (R2L) and User-to-Root (U2R) attacks, which, although rare, are of critical importance. Misclassifying these attacks is costly. Therefore, the reduction of false negatives is achieved by coupling feature selection techniques (Chi square, correlation, information Gain, Extreme Gradient Boosting (XGBoost), Autoencoder), oversampling methods (Synthetic Minority Oversampling Technique (SMOTE), Adaptive Synthetic Sampling (ADASYN)) and deep learning models (Deep Neural Network (DNN), Convolutional Neural Network (CNN), Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) and hybrid model CNN LSTM). The present study uses the NSL-KDD dataset, with a particular focus on the minority classes R2L, which represents 2.61% of the dataset, and U2R, representing 0.08% of the dataset. The findings indicate that data balancing is paramount. ADASYN facilitates 100% U2R detection, while SMOTE enhances R2L accuracy to above 95%. The application of correlation and autoencoder feature selection techniques proved to be the most effective. The effectiveness of CNN models in addressing U2R classification tasks has been extensively demonstrated, while the use of DNN or CNN-LSTM models has been shown to yield optimal results for R2L tasks. DNN remains the most stable model overall. For the two minority classes, the most effective pipelines are Correlation + SMOTE + DNN, achieving 93.84 % recall for U2R and 99.88 % for R2L, and Autoencoder + SMOTE + CNN-LSTM, achieving 89.66 % recall for R2L and 99.68 % for U2R.**

Keywords*—Network intrusion detection system; imbalanced data; minority class detection; deep learning; feature selection; balancing techniques

I. Introduction

The Internet connects most of our computer systems, and our social life today is deeply linked to the Internet, which increases security threats in various ways. Targets range from financial platforms and e-commerce or governmental institutions to major corporations, attacked for economic gain or ideological motives. Cisco projects that the number of Distributed Denial of Service (DoS) [1] incidents will reach 15.4 million in 2023 [2]. Companies are expected to devote nearly 6.69 billion USD to cloud security in 2023, an increase of roughly 27 % over the previous year. According to Gartner's reports, published at the end of 2024, global spending on information security is expected to reach 183 billion USD, and then to grow steadily at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 11.7% between 2023 and 2028 [3]. The costs of damage caused by cybercrime are expected to rise from 3 trillion USD in 2015 to 10.5 trillion USD in 2025 [4]. In this context, and to improve intrusion detection systems (IDS), several approaches have been developed, notably machine learning-based approaches, in order to address the shortcomings of signature-based IDS, which are very limited against zero-day attacks [5].

Among data-driven approaches, deep learning has emerged as a powerful tool for IDS due to its capacity to model complex, nonlinear relationships in high-dimensional data. Various deep learning architectures, including Deep Neural Network (DNN), Convolutional Neural Network (CNN), Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM), and a hybrid CNN-LSTM model, have shown promising results in identifying sophisticated attack vectors. However, one of the most pressing and unresolved challenges in deep learning-based IDS is the class imbalance problem, the training data for the majority class significantly outnumbers that of the minority class [6]. Well-known IDS datasets such as NSL-KDD inherit this imbalance issue from their predecessors. Specifically, the Remote-to-Local (R2L) and User-to-Root (U2R) attack categories constitute a very small fraction of the total samples, accounting for only 2.61% and 0.08% of the dataset, respectively. In contrast, classes such as normal connections and DoS attacks dominate the dataset. This severe imbalance leads to biased learning where the models tend to favor majority classes, resulting in high false negative rates for minority classes. These false negatives are particularly concerning because they correspond to stealthy and potentially severe intrusions that evade detection. Several techniques have been proposed to address class imbalance in IDS, including oversampling or undersampling methods, cost-sensitive learning, deep learning models, or hybrid methods. Among resampling techniques, Synthetic Minority Oversampling Technique (SMOTE) and Adaptive Synthetic Sampling (ADASYN) are two of the most commonly used methods for generating synthetic examples of minority class instances. These methods aim to rebalance the dataset distribution and enhance the learning capability of classifiers for rare attack types.

Another key component influencing detection performance is feature selection. Effective feature selection helps reduce the dimensionality of input data, eliminates irrelevant or redundant features, and highlights the most informative attributes. This is especially crucial in IDS, where the presence of noisy or non-

discriminative features can degrade the model's ability to detect subtle attacks. This work employs a dual strategy that incorporates both statistical and machine learning-based feature selection techniques. The statistical methods include the Chi-square test, Pearson correlation, and Information Gain, all of which evaluate feature relevance based on individual relationships with the target class. On the other hand, Extreme Gradient Boosting (XGBoost) is used to rank features based on their predictive contribution within tree-based models, while an Autoencoder, a neural network designed for unsupervised representation learning, is used to extract low-dimensional embeddings that preserve the most salient data characteristics. In this study, a comprehensive framework is presented to explore how different combinations of feature selection techniques, data balancing methods, and deep learning architectures impact the detection performance of minority classes in IDS.

Our models will be evaluated using the NSL-KDD dataset, and recall will be chosen as the primary evaluation metric, as the main objective is to improve intrusion detection performance by reducing false negatives for minority classes while maintaining a high detection rate for majority classes. In addition, other evaluation metrics such as F1 score and precision will also be measured to provide a more comprehensive assessment of model performance. The proposed models were evaluated and compared with approaches from recent studies. In order to determine the most effective combination of key components in the design of an intrusion detection system (IDS), namely the feature selection method, class balancing technique, and learning algorithm, a total of 72 different models were evaluated. Our contributions can be summarized as follows:

- Systematic evaluation of feature selection techniques: Three statistical methods are compared (Chi-square, Pearson correlation, and Information Gain) with two machine learning-based approaches (XGBoost and Autoencoder) to analyze their influence on minority class detection in NSL-KDD.
- Investigation of data balancing methods: Both SMOTE and ADASYN are applied to address the class imbalance and evaluate their impact across different DL models.
- Comparative analysis of deep learning models: The effectiveness of four deep architectures: DNN, CNN, LSTM, and CNN-LSTM is addressed under different feature and data configurations.
- Optimization of detection pipelines for minority classes: Optimal combinations are identified for each minority class. For U2R, several combinations achieved perfect detection performance (100% recall). For R2L, the combination Correlation + SMOTE + DNN yields over 96.58% accuracy with high stability.

Despite significant advances in deep learning-based intrusion detection systems, most existing work focuses on performance improvements achieved through combinations of feature selection techniques, class rebalancing, and deep learning models. However, these approaches suffer from poor generalizability of results, which are often evaluated on a limited number of configurations or metrics. In particular, few studies offer an in-depth and reproducible analysis to identify robust and consistent pipelines for the reliable detection of critical minority classes, such as R2L and U2R, in our case study.

The experiments were conducted on the NSL-KDD dataset, widely used in IDS literature due to its balanced structure for comparative evaluation and the presence of highly minority attack classes such as R2L and U2R. This dataset is a relevant test bed for analyzing the effectiveness of rebalancing techniques and deep learning models in the face of severe imbalances. Its use also allows for direct comparison with numerous previous studies. In this study, the macro-average metric was adopted as the primary measure of overall performance. This choice was motivated by the highly imbalanced nature of the NSL-KDD dataset, where majority classes such as Normal and DoS dominate, while minority classes such as R2L and U2R represent a very small portion of the data.

The rest of this study is organized as follows: Section II reviews related work on intrusion detection systems and concludes with a comparative analysis of the proposed model and recent studies. Section III provides a detailed scenario of our approach. Section IV draws result and discussion. Finally, Section V presents a conclusion.

II. Related Works

The concept of intrusion detection systems has been extensively explored in the literature that reflects both the complexity of the subject and the diversity of methodological approaches explored. Research efforts have primarily focused on two critical dimensions: enhancing detection accuracy by reducing false positives, and enabling real-time intrusion detection, particularly within large-scale data environments [7]. In this context, the following section provides an overview of existing work that leverages machine learning techniques to support real-time processing capabilities.

The authors in [8] proposed the CWFLAM-VAE architecture by integrating Class-Wise Focal Loss, Extreme Gradient Boosting, and a Variational Autoencoder. The framework synthesizes rare-class attack samples while faithfully maintaining the original feature distributions. It was tested on NSL-KDD and CSE-CIC-IDS2018 datasets, and it reached F-scores of 97.6% and 98.1%, while [9] proposes a three-layer approach to improve the detection of minority attacks in intrusion detection systems. The first layer uses a weighted deep neural network (WDNN) to detect suspicious traffic. The second layer employs a CNN and an LSTM to classify attacks as majority or minority. Finally, the third layer applies XGBoost to refine the classification of minority attacks. Undersampling (unilateral selection) and oversampling (ADASYN) optimize class balance. The system achieves an accuracy of over 97.9% on the NSL-KDD dataset. Undersampling (unilateral selection) and oversampling (ADASYN) optimize class balance. The system achieves an accuracy higher than 97.9% on the NSL-KDD dataset. The work in [10] overcame the limitations of traditional methods in detecting minority class attacks by a multimodal approach based on deep learning and GANs to generate high-quality attack samples. A specialized model then learns their features, and an integrated classifier performs multi-class classification. Tested on CICIDS2017 and NSL-KDD, this

method achieves up to 99.96% accuracy with a low false positive rate (3.4%) on the NSL-KDD dataset. Another method proposed in the article [11] proposed a feature selection method (feature ranking) based on the correlation and entropy (information gain) of each feature. After ranking, the features are partitioned into three subsets for each method. Information-Gain attributes form IG-1, IG-2, and IG-3, while correlation-based attributes form CR-1, CR-2, and CR-3. IG-1 and CR-1 contain the ten highest-ranked features (positions 1–10); IG-2 and CR-2 contain those ranked 11–30; and IG-3 and CR-3 contain the remainder. A new feature set is created by combining IG-1 and CR-1, and by intersecting IG-2 and CR-2, while discarding all features in IG-3 and CR-3. The resulting selection is evaluated on five datasets, with both per-dataset and average results reported. The proposed model improves recall, increasing it from 81% without feature selection to 86% with the proposed method for the minority class U2R. A network intrusion detection system based on deep learning and using a chaotic optimization strategy proposed by the authors in [12], after preprocessing and balancing the dataset using the Extended Synthetic Sampling method, features were extracted from the dataset using kernel-assisted principal component analysis. The Chaotic Honey Badger Optimizer first identified the most informative feature. These selected features were then fed into the gated-attention dual-LSTM (Dugat-LSTM) model to classify the attacks, achieving a recall of 98.76% on the NSL-KDD dataset.

The work in [13] tried to improve the IDS by proposing a system based on two phases of classification. The first phase consists of using three variants of the Naive Bayes classification method (categorical, Bernoulli, and Gaussian) for each type of data (nominal data, binary data, and real or integer data), respectively. The second phase of classification consists of using unsupervised elliptic envelope classification to predict whether the behavior is normal or anomalous. The elliptic envelope is a machine learning method for anomaly detection. It is based on modeling the data distribution using the theory of the elliptical envelope. The goal is to identify data points that are distant from the main distribution, assuming that the latter follows an elliptical distribution. This method is particularly useful for detecting anomalies in multivariate data, i.e., data with multiple features. After the second phase, they obtained an accuracy of 97% on the NSL-KDD dataset, 86.9% on the UNSW_NB15 dataset, and 98.59% on the CICIDS2017 dataset. However, accuracy for the minority classes remains modest; for example, on the NSL-KDD dataset, the U2R and R2L classes achieved precisions of 40.29% and 58.4%, respectively. The comparison of authors in [14] showed that synthetic oversampling SMOTE with the Random Forests model enhances R2L and U2R detection on NSL-KDD.

Another way to improve the detection of minority classes is proposed in [15] by applying two oversampling and two undersampling techniques to balance the dataset. Five machine learning models, including XGBoost and CatBoost, are evaluated using grid search and 10-fold cross-validation. The results confirm that resampling improves classification performance across models. Among them, XGBoost with SMOTE achieves the best results, with an accuracy of 75% and a weighted F1-score of 78%.

In [16], the authors combine ADASYN oversampling to address class imbalance with the LightGBM model. Experiments on NSL-KDD, UNSW-NB15, and CICIDS2017 demonstrate improved detection rates for minority attacks. The method achieves high accuracy 92.57%, 89.56%, and 99.91% in the three test sets. Improving the minority class in poorly balanced datasets was also a challenge for the authors in [17], who implemented a deep neural network trained and tested on the CICIDS-2017 and CICIDS-2018 datasets. Chi-square and correlation are two proposed statistical methods for feature selection methods statistical proposed. The findings indicate that certain coarse-grained features are highly discriminative, enabling the complete and accurate detection of attacks represented by as few as three instances. In reference [18] proposed to improve the detection for minority classes by a hybrid approach. This approach is a combination of SMOTE) technique and Tomek's links for reducing noise. Furthermore, to strengthen the performance of the intrusion detection system, the study harnesses two deep learning architectures, LSTM networks and CNNs. The approach was evaluated on the NSL-KDD and CICIDS-2017 benchmarks. For NSL-KDD multiclass classification, the LSTM configuration achieved 99.57 % accuracy and a 98.98 % F-score, while the CNN reached 99.70 % accuracy and 99.27 % F-score. On CICIDS-2017, the LSTM attained 99.82 % accuracy with a 98.65 % F-score, and the CNN obtained 99.85 % accuracy and a 98.98 % F-score. Authors in [19] focused on improving IDS detection rates by combining advanced t-SNE for feature extraction with intelligent classification methods. A hybrid model is proposed, integrating Genetic Fuzzy Systems (GFS) with Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs) in a paired learning framework. The proposed model was evaluated on TII-SSRC-23 and NSL-KDD datasets, attaining detection accuracy of 99.23% and 99.13%, respectively, to identify the most informative attributes.

Table I shows that our methodology, which systematically searches for the optimal combination of leading feature selection techniques, data-balancing strategies, and deep-learning algorithms, outperforms previous work by a considerable margin. The results further reveal that correlation analysis is the most stable and universally suitable statistical method, delivering strong performance irrespective of the balancing technique or model used. The DNN architecture appears in several of the best-performing combinations, highlighting its importance for this kind of problem. Finally, the autoencoder remains a particularly robust option, especially when paired with an LSTM model or the hybrid CNN-LSTM architecture.

TABLE I. COMPARES RESULTS FROM THE NSL KDD DATASETS TO OTHER ADVANCED TECHNIQUES

Work	R2L Recall (Value in %)	U2R Recall (Value in %)
Akashdeep et al., 2017 [11]	91.9	86.6
Bedi et al., 2021 [20]	32	50
Gupta et al., 2022 [21]	55	54
Ahmad et al., 2022 [22]	84	52
Vishwakarma and Kesswani, 2023 [13]	58	40
Harini et al., 2023 [9]	88	65
Xu et al., 2024 [23]	100	99
Long et al., 2025 [24]	99.6	100
Abdulganiyu et al., 2025 [8]	93.61	92.47
Xue et al., 2025 [25]	89	55
Best pipelines in proposed work		
Correlation + SMOTE + DNN pipeline	93.84	99.88
Autoencoder + SMOTE + CNN-LSTM pipeline	89.66	99.68
Correlation + ADASYN + DNN pipeline	86.64	100
AutoEncoder + ADASYN + DNN pipeline	85.88	98.49

III. PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

The aim of this study is to identify the best possible combination of feature selection algorithms, class balancing techniques, and deep learning models to improve the performance of intrusion detection systems (IDS). The main objective is to reduce the false negative rate, particularly for minority classes such as R2L and U2R, which are often poorly detected in conventional approaches. My approach is based on a systematic analysis of several pipelines combining different selection methods (such as Chi2, Correlation, Information Gain, or Autoencoder), several balancing strategies (such as SMOTE and ADASYN), and various deep learning models (DNN, CNN, LSTM, or CNN-LSTM). By evaluating these combinations according to precise metrics such as recall, which is the most relevant indicator for assessing the reduction of false negatives, the study aims to determine the most effective synergies for strengthening the detection of rare attacks and minimizing critical errors that compromise the reliability of modern IDSs.

To improve the detection of minority classes and reduce false negatives in an intrusion detection system, the study proposes a methodology based on five main phases:

- Data Pre-processing
- Feature Selection
- Class Rebalancing
- Applied Deep Learning Models
- Performance Evaluation

As shown in Fig. 1, first, the dataset is downloaded and prepared by removing duplicates and outliers and handling missing values. The data is then converted to hot encoding and normalized. This pre-processing step ensures a clean, consistent, and usable basis for downstream methods. The second phase focuses on feature selection, in which statistical approaches are applied. such as chi-2, correlation, and information gain, and approaches based on supervised learning, such as XGBoost, and unsupervised learning, such as Autoencoder for non-linear reduction with a dual objective: to reduce the dimension to limit overfitting and improve model efficiency, while retaining the relevant signal for rare classes. This phase produces five variants derived from the dataset, each corresponding to a different selection technique.

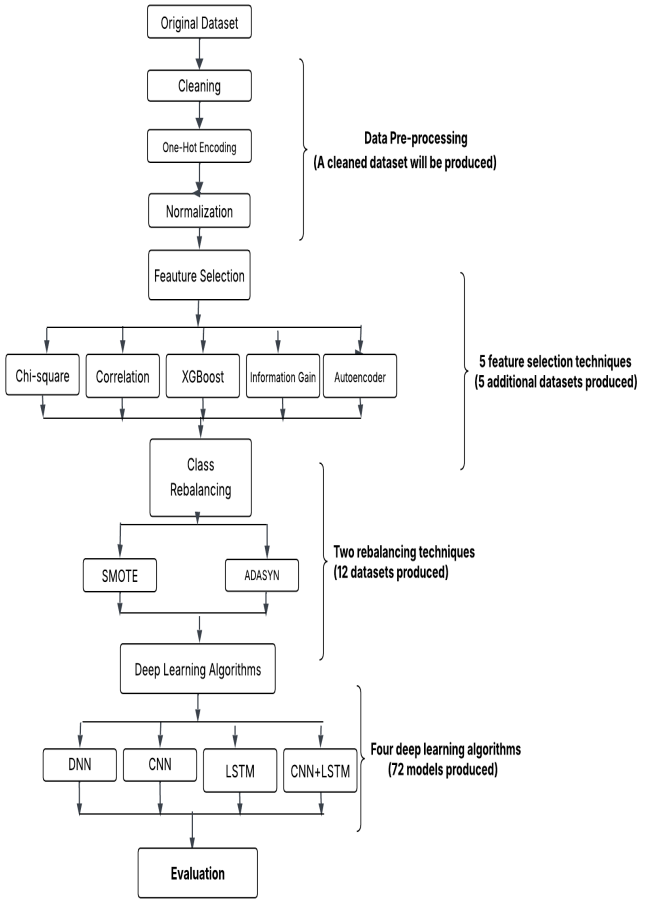

Fig. 1. Proposed methodology.

Then, faced with class imbalance, particularly U2R, which accounts for only 0.08% of the dataset, and R2L, which accounts for only 2.61%, resampling techniques such as SMOTE and ADASYN are applied in conjunction with each feature selection technique in order to identify the optimal balancing strategy and the feature selection methods that optimize it. At the end of this stage, twelve additional dataset variants are generated, each resulting from the combination of two rebalancing strategies with the five feature selection methods.

Finally, deep learning models (DNN, CNN, LSTM, hybrid CNN-LSTM architectures) are trained on the eighteen pre-processed and balanced versions from the previous phase in order to build 72 well-trained models with hyperparameter search and threshold calibration to prioritize the detection of minority classes. The evaluation phase of the 72 models is based on recall metrics, which provide a good indicator of false negative reduction.

The objective of this research is to propose a rigorous ranking of the most effective combinations and pipelines between feature selection, balancing strategy, and learning model. This ranking serves as a practical guide, indicating for each imbalance scenario which feature selection + balancing pairs and which deep learning algorithms offer the best performance in order to provide operational and sustainable recommendations for improving intrusion detection, particularly for minority classes, and to ensure their transferability to other corpora and network environments.

To this end, 72 different models resulting from the combination of five feature selection methods, two data balancing techniques, and four deep learning algorithms are tested. All experiments were conducted on the NSL-KDD benchmark dataset, with recall chosen as the main evaluation metric, since the primary objective is to improve the detection of minority attack classes while maintaining strong performance on majority classes.

A. Dataset Description

The first step in data preparation consists of downloading and loading the dataset. The dataset chosen to evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed models is the NSL-KDD dataset, which is a benchmark dataset commonly used for evaluating intrusion detection systems (IDS). The NSL-KDD dataset is composed of 41 features that represent a network connection. The features of the NSL-KDD dataset are categorized into four groups [26]:

- Basic feature group (No. 1 to 9).
- Content feature group (No. 10 to 22).
- Time-based traffic feature group (No. 23 to 31).
- Host-based traffic feature group (No. 32 to 41).

The loaded NSL-KDD dataset contains 148,517 records. There are four main categories of attacks represented in the dataset, as detailed in Table II, namely: DoS, R2L, U2R, and Probe.

The NSL-KDD dataset suffers from a significant class imbalance, which skews learning algorithms in favor of majority cases and limits their ability to model rare cases. Fig. 2 displays the percentage distribution of the NSL-KDD dataset by class.

TABLE II. MAIN ATTACKS CATEGORY PRESENTED IN NSL-KDD

Attack Category	Attack Type
DoS (Denial of Service)	Neptune, land, pod, smurf, teardrop, back, worm, udpstorm, processtable, apache2
Probe	ipsweep, satan, nmap, portsweep, mscan, saint
R2L	ftp_write, guess_password, imap, multihop, phf, spy, warezclient, warexmaster, snmpguess, named, xlock, xsnoop, snmpgetattack, httptunnel, sendmail
U2R	buffer_overflow, loadmodule, perl, rootkit, ps, xterm, sqlattack

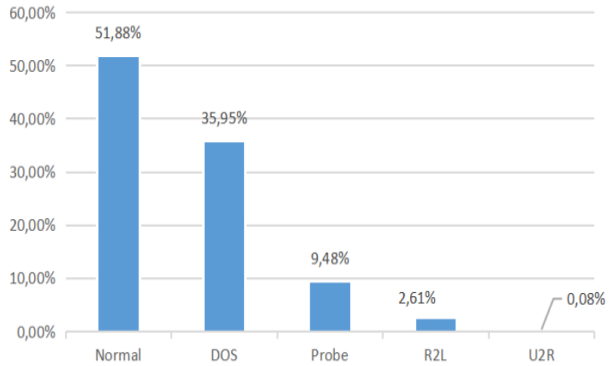

Fig. 2. NSL-KDD dataset distribution by class.

B. Data Pre-Processing

Data pre-processing is a crucial step, especially in intrusion detection systems. This phase aims to improve the quality of the dataset by cleaning, normalizing, and hot-encoding features. The cleaning process consists of removing duplicates and handling missing values, while hot-encoding converts each categorical feature value into a binary vector in which only one element is set to 1, and all other elements are 0. The element with a value of 1 indicates the presence of a specific category corresponding to the categorical feature. For example, the label (target) attribute in the NSL-KDD dataset has five distinct values: normal, DoS, Probe, R2L, and U2R. Using one-hot encoding, 'normal' can be represented with (1, 0, 0, 0, 0).

The values in the dataset consist of numerical features with completely different scales, which can vary significantly. Therefore, it is necessary to reduce these scale differences; this is where normalization comes into play. The normalization method adopted in this work is the min-max scaling, which transforms the dataset values into the range [0, 1]. This process helps improve the performance of the learning model.

In this experiment, numerical features in the NSL-KDD dataset are normalized using Min–Max normalization, as defined in Eq. (1), which is one of the most commonly used normalization techniques.

$$\tilde{\mathbf{x}} = \frac{\mathbf{x}-\mathbf{Min(x)}}{\mathbf{Max(x)}-\mathbf{Min(x)}} \quad (1)$$

where, $\tilde{x}$ is the normalized value of x.

C. Feature Selection

Feature selection is an important step in the machine learning process after data cleaning and normalization, as it aims to identify the most relevant or informative features. It can help eliminate noise and reduce dimensionality in order to improve model performance. This process reduces the dimensionality of the data, enhances model accuracy, and decreases computational time. There are several techniques for feature selection. This study considers five feature selection techniques based on two main approaches: statistical approaches like chi-square test, correlation, and information gain, and learning-based approaches like XGBoost and AutoEncoder.

- Chi-square [22,27]: By applying the Chi-square statistical test to our dataset, the method selected 20 out of 41 features, resulting in a 51.22% reduction. The number of top features to select, k, was treated as a hyperparameter and tuned over the candidate set {10, 13, 15, 18, 20, 23, 25, 28, 30, 33, 35, 38}. Based on cross-validation, k=20 yielded the highest accuracy and was therefore adopted for the final model.
- Correlation [28]: The calculated correlation values were sorted in descending order, and all features with a correlation close to 1 are selected (above the threshold of 0.9). This threshold was manually tuned to achieve the best performance. This method selected 35 out of 41 features, yielding approximately a 14.62% reduction.
- Information Gain [29]: For information gain, the features whose values were greater than 0.17 are selected, resulting in 21 retained features, resulting in a 48.78% reduction of the dataset.
- XGBoost [30,31]: In XGBoost, the features with importance values between 1224 and 100 are selected, which led to the selection of 22 features, a 46% reduction.
- Autoencoder [32]: An optimal size for the low-dimensional representation is determined while maintaining a reasonably low reconstruction error. The encoding_dims hyperparameter was tuned over the range (15, 42), and the lowest reconstruction error Mean Squared Error (MSE) was achieved with 35 latent dimensions, yielding 35 retained features, achieving a 31% reduction.

These methods allowed us to generate five different variants of the NSL-KDD dataset, and the result is detailed in Table III.

TABLE III. NUMBER OF FEATURES RETAINED FOR EACH FEATURE SELECTION METHOD

Datasets	Number of features
Original	41
Chi 2	20
Correlation	35
Information Gain	21
XGBoost	22
AutoEncoder	35

D. Class Rebalancing

The dataset is well-cleaned, meaning it contains no missing or redundant information. However, it suffers from class imbalance. As a result, the learning algorithms gravitate toward the majority class, limiting their ability to recognize infrequent, yet highly damaging intrusions such as U2R and R2L attacks. To address the class imbalance problem, this work applies approaches based on two techniques:

1) SMOTE (Synthetic Minority Oversampling Technique) [33]: SMOTE enables the creation of new synthetic instances by linearly interpolating the features of neighboring minority instances. The SMOTE balancing technique selects a minority sample, then randomly chooses one or more of its nearest neighbors to generate synthetic instances. The SMOTE hyperparameter k_neighbors = 3 was chosen manually from the candidate values {2, 3, 4}.

2) ADASYN (Adaptive Synthetic) [34]: ADASYN also generates synthetic data for minority instances but places more emphasis on the samples that are harder to learn, based on their relative density. Minority instances that are farther from the decision boundary are prioritized for synthetic data. For ADASYN, the sampling strategy is set to target the minority class, meaning that only the minority class is oversampled.

E. Deep Learning Models Applied

Following data cleaning, feature selection, and dataset balancing, the resulting datasets are used to train four different neural network models:

The first model, a DNN, is a type of standard artificial neural network composed of multiple layers of neurons. Each layer is connected to both the preceding and the following layer, forming a layered architecture [35]. This study proposes a DNN model composed of an input layer followed by two hidden layers: the first with 32 neurons and the second with 16, both using the ReLU activation function. The final output layer contains 5 neurons, one per class, with a Softmax activation function to support multi-class classification.

The second model is the CNN, which is capable of handling complex data, something that is often not feasible with traditional DNNs [31]. The primary goal of a CNN in this context is to extract important features from raw network data. During this process, the earliest layers serve as convolutional feature extractors, convolving the input with learned filters. Our CNN model consists of an input layer, a one-dimensional convolutional layer with 32 filters of size 3 and ReLU activation, followed by a MaxPooling layer (pool size = 2), a flattening layer, and a fully connected layer of 16 units employing the ReLU activation function. It ends with an output layer of 5 neurons using the Softmax activation function.

The third model LSTM, as described in [36], is an improved type RNN engineered to alleviate both vanishing and exploding gradient problem. These issues arise during back propagation when gradients either shrink too much or grow too rapidly, making it difficult to update weights properly and often leading to the failure of the learning process. LSTM composed of three main components called gates: the forget gate, input gate, and output gate [37].

The LSTM model used in this study consists of two LSTM layers: the first with 16 units and L2 regularization to reduce overfitting, followed by a second LSTM layer with 8 units. The output is then flattened and passed to a Softmax-activated layer with 5 neurons.

Finally, a hybrid CNN-LSTM model is developed, combining convolutional and recurrent components. It starts with an input layer followed by a 1D convolutional layer (32 filters, ReLU), a MaxPooling layer (size 2), then a second convolutional layer (16 filters, ReLU) and another MaxPooling layer. The extracted features are passed through two stacked LSTM layers (16 and 8 units, respectively), with the second one configured to return only the final output. The network concludes with a flatten layer and a Softmax output layer with 5 neurons. Each architecture was specifically designed to explore how spatial, temporal, and hybrid feature learning impacts the detection of various types of intrusions.

For all four deep learning models, a consistent set of training parameters was applied. Specifically, the loss function used is 'categorical_crossentropy', while the optimizer selected is 'adam'; the model performance was monitored using 'accuracy' as the evaluation metric during both training and validation phases. Each model was trained over 100 epochs with a batch size of 32 to ensure stable convergence.

IV. Results and Discussion

This section analyzes and compares the performance of the different models by conducting our experiments on the benchmark NSL-KDD dataset. The NSL-KDD dataset consists of 41 features that describe a network connection and contains a total of 148 517 records. However, to address the issue of class imbalance, only 58 397 records are selected for the experiments. These records are distributed and detailed in Table IV.

TABLE IV. Distribution of the Number of Records Per Class

Attacks type	Number of Records in the Dataset	Number of Records Selected for the Experiments
No attacks (normal)	77054	20034
Dos attacks	53387	20287
Probe attacks	14077	14077
R2L attacks	3880	3880
U2R attacks	119	119

TABLE V. Number of Records Per Class and Per Balancing Technique

	SMOTE	ADASYN
Normal	20287	20287
DoS	20287	20034
Probe	20287	14077
R2L	20287	3880
U2R	20287	20304

For both balancing techniques, SMOTE and ADASYN, were applied to each of the six dataset variants generated during the feature selection phase, resulting in 12 additional datasets: 101 435 records for SMOTE and 78 550 records for ADASYN, distributed as in Table V.

The training of the four neural networks was performed on the 18 datasets produced during the feature selection and sampling phases, resulting in a total of 72 models and the main goal of IDS is to minimize false negatives, which represent undetected attacks and pose a significant security risk. Therefore, to evaluate the performance of the 72 models, recall is used, defined by Eq. (2), as the key metric, as it is crucial in IDS.

$$Recall = \frac{TP}{TP+FN} \quad (2)$$

Other evaluation metrics that were used, other than recall, precision, defined by Eq. (3), and F1-score defined by Eq. (4):

$$Precision = \frac{TP}{TP+FP} \quad (3)$$

$$F1-score = \frac{2\ .Precision\ .Recall}{Precision+\ Recall} \quad (4)$$

where,

- TP (True Positives): correctly detected intrusions.
- FN (False Negative): intrusions that were not detected.
- FP (False Positive): A benign event incorrectly flagged as intrusion (false alarm).

As previously mentioned, the NSL-KDD dataset often suffers from class imbalance, where certain types of attacks, particularly R2L and U2R, are significantly underrepresented compared to majority classes such as normal connections or DoS attacks. Our objective is to improve IDS performance by reducing false negatives in these minority classes, which are the most harmful, by finding the optimal combination of feature selection techniques (Chi2, Correlation, Information Gain (IG), XGBoost, and Autoencoder), two dataset balancing techniques (SMOTE and ADASYN), and deep learning neural network models (DNN, CNN, LSTM, and CNN-LSTM).

Therefore, the evaluation results will focus on the recall metric for the two minority classes: R2L, which accounts for 2.61% of the dataset, and U2R, which accounts for 0.08%. Table VI shows the results obtained on the NSL-KDD dataset variants for the R2L class using only feature selection techniques without any data balancing.

TABLE VI. Recall Scores by Different Models on the R2L Class With and Without Feature Selection

	DNN	CNN	LSTM	CNN-LSTM
Chi2	0.82	0.70	0.59	0.81
Correlation	0.91	0.84	0.63	0.87
Information Gain	0.62	0.46	0.47	0.73
XGBoost	0.89	0.91	0.80	0.82
Autoencoder	0.92	0.90	0.89	0.85
Origine	0.90	0.90	0.88	0.94

The results in Table VI show that without any feature selection or data balancing techniques, the CNN-LSTM hybrid model is the best choice, achieving a recall of 94% for the R2L

class. Comparing these results with those obtained using feature selection techniques, it is observed that the autoencoder combined with the DNN model produces the best results among all feature selection methods, achieving 92%. The correlation method is also achieving a recall of 91 % for the R2L class with the DNN model. It is also worth noting that the Chi-square method, despite selecting only 20 features, provides good results, especially with the DNN and CNN-LSTM models with the recall reaches 82% and 81%, respectively. In contrast, the Information Gain method yields the worst performance across all models, indicating that it likely discards critical features necessary for detecting R2L attacks. Therefore, this technique is not recommended for this class.

Table VII presents the recall model results for the U2R class, the most underrepresented in the dataset, accounting for only 0.08% of the data, with and without feature selection. The results show that the U2R class is extremely sensitive to feature selection methods. Without any selection, all models yield almost the same result, with a slight advantage for the hybrid CNN-LSTM model, with 45%. It is also observed that the Chi-square selection method with just 20 features was able to reach 42% with the LSTM model, like the correlation method with the DNN model. On the other hand, the Information Gain and XGBoost methods should be avoided, as they result in a significant loss of critical information for this class.

TABLE VII. RECALL SCORES USING DIFFERENT MODELS ON THE U2R CLASS WITH AND WITHOUT FEATURE SELECTION

	DNN	CNN	LSTM	CNN-LSTM
Chi2	0.32	0.29	0.42	0.39
Correlation	0.42	0.39	0.39	0.32
Information Gain	0.00	0.00	0.06	0.00
XGBoost	0.10	0.10	0.06	0.00
Autoencoder	0.23	0.29	0.32	0.00
Origine	0.42	0.39	0.42	0.45

Table VIII, Table IX and Table X show the results for DNN with autoencoder feature selection technique, the hybrid model CNN-LSTM without selection feature method, LSTM with chi-square selection feature method, and DNN with correlation feature selection method, respectively. The results reveal that, when the dataset is left unbalanced, the U2R minority class is poorly detected. Nevertheless, the overall performance remains strong when correlation-based feature selection is combined with a DNN model, indicating that this pairing effectively mitigates part of the imbalance problem and yields solid results across the remaining classes. The low results obtained for the minority classes have influenced the macro-avg F1-score, which reached around 80%, leading to a relatively modest overall value. However, the majority of classes achieved excellent detection rates, exceeding 90%.

The results show that, without applying any balancing technique, the correlation-based feature selection method provided the best performance, achieving over 98% F1-score for the majority classes and a macro-avg F1-score of approximately 87%. This demonstrates that even without resampling, the correlation method effectively captures the most discriminative features, ensuring strong detection performance across most classes.

TABLE VIII. PERFORMANCE OF THE DNN-BASED MULTICLASS CLASSIFICATION ON THE NSL-KDD DATASET USING AUTOENCODER WITHOUT BALANCING TECHNIQUES

Class	Precision	Recall	F1-mesure
Normal	0.99	0.98	0.99
DoS	0.97	0.94	0.95
Probe	0.97	0.99	0.98
R2L	0.78	0.92	0.85
U2R	0.64	0.23	0.33
Macro avg	0.87	0.81	0.82

TABLE IX. PERFORMANCE OF THE CNN-BASED MULTICLASS CLASSIFICATION ON THE NSL-KDD DATASET WITHOUT ANY FEATURE SELECTION METHOD

Class	Precision	Recall	F1-mesure
Normal	0.99	0.99	0.99
DoS	0.98	0.95	0.97
Probe	0.98	0.98	0.98
R2L	0.81	0.94	0.87
U2R	0.54	0.45	0.49
Macro avg	0.86	0.86	0.86

TABLE X. PERFORMANCE OF THE DNN-BASED MULTICLASS CLASSIFICATION ON THE NSL-KDD DATASET WITH CORRELATION METHOD

Class	Precision	Recall	F1-mesure
Normal	1.00	1.00	1.00
DoS	0.97	0.96	0.97
Probe	0.98	0.99	0.98
R2L	0.88	0.91	0.89
U2R	0.65	0.42	0.51
Macro avg	0.90	0.85	0.87

Table XI presents the recall obtained for the R2L class after applying the SMOTE balancing technique to the six NSL-KDD dataset variants produced following the feature selection phase. The results in show that after applying the SMOTE balancing technique, almost all recall values improved for the R2L class, except for the combination of Chi2 and CNN-LSTM, which initially recorded a recall of 81% a better result than after applying SMOTE, which dropped to 73.15%. The experiments and the recall results presented indicate that the most effective pipeline for detecting the R2L class combines correlation based feature selection, a CNN model, and SMOTE, achieving a recall of 96.58 %. Several other configurations also performed very well, reaching 95.86 % recall specifically, the pipeline pairing autoencoder-based selection with a CNN-LSTM architecture and SMOTE, and the one combining XGBoost-based selection, a DNN model, and SMOTE.

TABLE XI. RECALL SCORES BY MODELS ON THE R2L CLASS WITH FEATURE SELECTION AND THE SMOTE METHOD

	DNN	CNN	LSTM	CNN-LSTM
Chi2	0.8947	0.8857	0.7584	0.7315
Correlation	0.9348	0.9658	0.9278	0.9512
Information Gain	0.9234	0.9376	0.7421	0.9511
XGBoost	0.9586	0.8378	0.9105	0.9496
Autoencoder	0.9405	0.9465	0.8966	0.9586
Origine	0.9488	0.9312	0.8409	0.9563

Table XII presents the results of recall for the U2R class after applying the SMOTE balancing technique on the six variants of the NSL-KDD dataset generated during the feature selection phase. For the most underrepresented class, U2R, the results show a significant performance improvement compared to the results without balancing. For example, the combination of DNN with information gain improved from 0% to 98.57% recall after applying the SMOTE balancing technique. The same dramatic improvement is observed with the CNN-LSTM model combined with an autoencoder. SMOTE proves to be highly effective in boosting performance on the minority class U2R, especially when used with the correlation feature selection method and DNN model 99.88% or with the autoencoder feature selection method and CNN-LSTM hybrid model, which was able to reach 99.68%. The results also show that the autoencoder appears to be the most stable method, as it yielded very good results across the majority of models.

TABLE XII. RECALL SCORES BY MODELS ON THE U2R CLASS WITH FEATURE SELECTION AND THE SMOTE METHOD

	DNN	CNN	LSTM	CNN-LSTM
Chi2	0.9631	0.8960	0.9457	0.9422
Correlation	0.9988	0.8906	0.9576	0.9767
Information Gain	0.9857	0.9410	0.8987	0.9454
XGBoost	0.9196	0.9757	0.9366	0.9680
Autoencoder	0.9778	0.9623	0.9899	0.9968
Origine	0.9576	0.9851	0.9380	0.9572

Table XIII, Table XIV and Table XV show the results for the XGBoost + SMOTE + DNN pipeline, the Autoencoder + SMOTE + CNN-LSTM pipeline, and the Correlation + SMOTE + DNN pipeline, respectively. The confusion matrices demonstrate that balancing the dataset dramatically improves the detection of minority classes. Among all evaluated setups, the Correlation + SMOTE + DNN pipeline and the Autoencoder + SMOTE + CNN-LSTM combination deliver the best overall performance, most notably achieving the highest recall across all classes, including the minority ones.

Alongside the significant improvement observed in the detection of minority classes after applying the balancing techniques, the majority classes maintained consistently high detection rates. This indicates that both the balancing methods and the feature selection strategies did not negatively impact the performance of the majority classes, which achieved F1-scores exceeding 95%. Notably, the combinations Correlation + SMOTE + DNN and Autoencoder + SMOTE + CNN-LSTM produced the best results, where the macro-average F1-score reached values above 97%, demonstrating the overall efficiency and stability of the proposed pipelines across all attacks.

Table XVI presents the results of recall for the R2L class using the ADASYN balancing technique across the six NSL-KDD dataset variants generated after the feature selection phase. While the SMOTE balancing method remains stable for the R2L class and yields very good results for most combinations, the ADASYN method appears less stable for this minority class. The combinations that achieved the highest recall for the R2L class were Correlation + ADASYN + DNN and Autoencoder + ADASYN + DNN, which recorded recall scores of 86.64 % and 85.88 %, respectively, on the other hand, it gives modest results in combinations like LSTM with information gain (32.98% recall) or with Chi2 (49.65% recall).

For this class, the DNN model demonstrates greater stability and performance than the LSTM model, which continues to struggle, likely due to its sensitivity to imbalanced or synthetically generated data.

TABLE XIII. PERFORMANCE OF THE DNN-BASED MULTICLASS CLASSIFICATION ON THE NSL-KDD DATASET USING XGBOOST ET SMOTE PIPELINE

Class	Precision	Recall	F1-mesure
Normal	0.9920	0.9843	0.9881
DoS	0.9636	0.9272	0.9454
Probe	0.9763	0.9899	0.9830
R2L	0.8846	0.9584	0.9202
U2R	0.9724	0.9196	0.9453
Macro avg	0.9578	0.9560	0.9564

TABLE XIV. PERFORMANCE OF THE CNN-LSTM-BASED MULTICLASS CLASSIFICATION ON THE NSL-KDD DATASET WITH AUTOENCODER ET SMOTE PIPELINE

Class	Precision	Recall	F1-mesure
Normal	0.9860	0.9929	0.9894
DoS	0.9843	0.9236	0.9530
Probe	0.9844	0.9898	0.9871
R2L	0.9524	0.9586	0.9555
U2R	0.9548	0.9968	0.9753
Macro avg	0.9724	0.9723	0.9721

TABLE XV. PERFORMANCE OF THE DNN-BASED MULTICLASS CLASSIFICATION ON THE NSL-KDD DATASET WITH CORRELATION ET SMOTE PIPELINE

Class	Precision	Recall	F1-mesure
Normal	0.9959	0.9929	0.9944
DoS	0.9586	0.9512	0.9549
Probe	0.9828	0.9911	0.9869
R2L	0.9677	0.9348	0.9510
U2R	0.9623	0.9988	0.9802
Macro avg	0.9735	0.9738	0.9735

TABLE XVI. RECALL SCORES BY DIFFERENT MODELS ON THE R2L CLASS WITH FEATURE SELECTION AND THE ADASYN METHOD

	DNN	CNN	LSTM	CNN-LSTM
Chi2	0.7812	0.6480	0.4965	0.6585
Correlation	0.8664	0.6803	0.5113	0.8134
Information Gain	0.6132	0.7265	0.3298	0.6434
XGBoost	0.6132	0.7667	0.5823	0.8502
Autoencoder	0.8588	0.7691	0.7567	0.7025
Origine	0.8468	0.7602	0.4234	0.7610

Table XVII presents the results for the U2R class after applying the ADASYN balancing technique on the six NSL-KDD dataset variants generated during the feature selection phase. The results from Table X for the minority class, U2R, show exceptionally high recall scores, almost always between 98% and 100%, regardless of the method or model used. Like SMOTE, ADASYN has a very positive effect on the detection of this ultra-minority class. Unlike SMOTE, ADASYN focuses more on difficult-to-learn examples, which helps the models better capture edge cases.

TABLE XVII. RECALL SCORES BY DIFFERENT MODELS ON THE U2R CLASS WITH FEATURE SELECTION AND THE ADASYN METHOD

	DNN	CNN	LSTM	CNN-LSTM
Chi2	0.9766	1.00	0.9567	0.9983
Correlation	1.00	0.9974	0.9812	0.9822
Information Gain	0.9817	0.9789	0.9965	0.9843
XGBoost	1.00	0.9979	0.9331	0.9949
Autoencoder	0.9849	1.00	0.9937	1.00
Origine	0.9867	0.9992	0.9779	0.9890

The CNN model appears to be very stable and well-suited to most feature selection methods, likely because CNN does not require a strict temporal structure like LSTM, making it more robust to synthetic data generated by SMOTE or ADASYN.

Table XVIII, Table XIX, and Table XX show the results for the Autoencoder + ADASYN + CNN pipeline, the Autoencoder + ADASYN + DNN pipeline, and the Correlation + ADASYN + DNN pipeline, respectively. Our experiments reveal several clear trends. First, ADASYN oversampling causes a considerable increase in recall for the U2R class, the smallest minority class, demonstrating its effectiveness in contexts of extreme imbalance. Second, ADASYN provides excellent performance for most feature selection/model combinations. Among the selection methods, autoencoder and CNN stand out for their stability and overall superiority. When coupled with ADASYN, the gain is even more pronounced. The best pipelines consistently include ADASYN, often combined with autoencoder selection and a deep model capable of exploiting the new densified minority regions. The most effective combinations are: Autoencoder + ADASYN + CNN, Autoencoder + ADASYN + LSTM, and ADASYN + CNN, Autoencoder + ADASYN + DNN, Correlation + ADASYN + DNN.

These configurations consistently achieve the best recall rates, particularly for U2R and R2L. According to the results, the ADASYN technique appears to be the most suitable balancing method, as it significantly improves the detection of minority classes. Moreover, the majority classes also benefited from this approach, showing enhanced performance particularly with the combination Correlation + ADASYN + DNN, which achieved an F1-score exceeding 96%. In addition, the macro-average F1-score reached around 92% for most combinations, confirming the overall effectiveness of ADASYN in improving detection across all classes.

TABLE XVIII. PERFORMANCE OF THE CNN-BASED MULTICLASS CLASSIFICATION ON THE NSL-KDD DATASET WITH AUTOENCODER ET ADASYN PIPELINE

Class	Precision	Recall	F1-mesure
Normal	09802	09885	09843
DoS	0.9727	0.9275	0.9496
Probe	0.9686	0.9875	0.9779
R2L	0.8482	0.7691	0.8067
U2R	0.9601	1.00	0.9800
Macro avg	0.9461	0.9345	0.9397

TABLE XIX. PERFORMANCE OF THE DNN-BASED MULTICLASS CLASSIFICATION ON THE NSL-KDD DATASET WITH AUTOENCODER ET ADASYN PIPELINE

Class	Precision	Recall	F1-mesure
Normal	0.9842	0.9855	0.9848
DoS	0.9712	0.9305	0.9504
Probe	0.9741	0.9870	0.8805
R2L	0.7894	0.8588	0.8226
U2R	0.9710	0.9849	0.9779
Macro avg	0.9380	0.9493	0.9433

TABLE XX. PERFORMANCE OF THE DNN-BASED MULTICLASS CLASSIFICATION ON THE NSL-KDD DATASET WITH CORRELATION ET ADASYN PIPELINE

Class	Precision	Recall	F1-mesure
Normal	0.9969	0.9918	0.9943
DoS	0.9766	0.9618	0.9691
Probe	0.9805	0.9887	0.9846
R2L	0.8953	0.8664	0.8802
U2R	0.9802	1.00	0.9900
Macro avg	0.9659	0.9617	0.9637

By comparing all the results obtained (without balancing, with SMOTE, and with ADASYN) and focusing on the R2L and U2R classes, the results obtained without class balancing indicate that minority classes, particularly U2R, are difficult to detect reliably, often resulting in low or even zero performance for certain combinations (e.g., Information Gain with DNN or CNN-LSTM). Adding feature selection techniques like Chi2, correlation, or autoencoder slightly improves results for R2L but remains unstable for U2R. However, the CNN-LSTM and DNN models show strong potential when combined with methods capable of preserving complex relationships, such as autoencoders or even using no selection.

With the introduction of class balancing, performance on U2R improves significantly, often exceeding 95% with SMOTE and even reaching 100% with ADASYN for most models. This highlights that class imbalance was the main barrier to effective detection. ADASYN proves to be slightly more effective than SMOTE, as it targets the more challenging examples and provides more consistent results. The CNN model stands out due to its strong stability on U2R, likely because of its ability to capture local patterns that are resilient to synthetic noise.

For R2L, the results are more variable: the DNN architecture is the most stable, while LSTM remains sensitive to feature selection and artificial data. Overall, the combinations ADASYN + DNN or CNN-LSTM + Autoencoder represent a good compromise between performance and stability for effectively detecting R2L and U2R attacks.

V. Conclusion

This study systematically explores the combined impact of feature selection techniques, including Chi-square, correlation, information gain, XGBoost, and autoencoders, class balancing methods (SMOTE and ADASYN), and various deep learning models (DNN, CNN, LSTM, and CNN-LSTM) on the detection of R2L and U2R attacks two minority classes that are notoriously difficult to detect in intrusion detection systems (IDS). Our results show that recall, a key metric for reducing false negatives, can be significantly improved through appropriate methodological choices. More specifically, class balancing using SMOTE and especially ADASYN proved essential for restoring effective detection capabilities for the U2R class, which is often overlooked by conventional models. At the same time, advanced feature selection methods such as autoencoder, based on unsupervised learning, with LSTM or the model hybrid CNN-LSTM or correlation, static approach, with almost all models demonstrated strong potential in generating optimal input representations for deep architectures. This was particularly evident with the CNN-LSTM hybrid, which is well-suited for capturing complex inter-attribute relationships. The combination of ADASYN, autoencoder, and CNN-LSTM emerged as the most robust and high-performing configuration for maximizing recall on both minority classes.

The study concludes that no model is perfect for all attack classes: some configurations achieve high recall on R2L but perform less well on U2R, while others excel on U2R but not on R2L. As future research directions, will evaluate the proposed methodological framework on the newer and larger CIC-IDS2017 dataset, considering both minority and majority classes, and develop a voting-based approach that combines the most effective models and only issues an alert when the majority converges, which enhances overall robustness and balances the detection of all classes. Beyond the performance achieved, this work highlights the importance of methodical design of IDS pipelines for detecting minority classes. The results provide concrete guidance for practitioners to choose robust combinations of feature selection techniques, rebalancing, and deep learning models. These conclusions can guide the deployment of more reliable IDS in real-world environments, where stability and reduction of false negatives are critical. Future prospects include evaluating the generalizability of the identified pipelines on more recent datasets and in real-time contexts.

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DriveRight: An Embedded AI-Based Multi-Hazard Detection and Alert System for Safe and Sustainable Driving

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***Abstract*—Recent advances in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Computer Vision have significantly enhanced the potential of Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS). However, existing solutions remain limited by high computational cost, single-function design, and dependence on expensive sensors such as radar and LiDAR. This study presents DriveRight, an embedded AI-based driver-assistance system that integrates multi-scenario hazard detection and real-time object detection and alerting using a single low-cost vision sensor on a Raspberry Pi platform. The system leverages a simulation-to-deployment pipeline, combining CARLA-based synthetic training environments with TensorFlow deep learning models, including SSD Inception v2, MobileNet-SSD, and Faster R-CNN. Experimental results show that Faster R-CNN achieved 92.1% detection accuracy for vehicles and 90.3% for traffic signs, while MobileNet-SSD achieved real-time performance at 14.6 frames per second (FPS) with minimal latency of 2.8 seconds on embedded hardware. Field tests validated the system's ability to accurately detect and classify stop signs, vehicles, and lane deviations under varying lighting and motion conditions, triggering timely alerts to the driver. The prototype demonstrates a cost-effective and energy-efficient AI solution (< 12 W) for intelligent transportation systems. The findings establish the feasibility of deploying IoT-based ADAS and deep learning–driven driver-assistance technologies in low-cost, sustainable embedded platforms, bridging the gap between research-grade ADAS and practical real-world deployment.**

Keywords*—Embedded AI; computer vision; intelligent transportation; IoT-based ADAS; deep learning; real-time object detection; Raspberry Pi

I. Introduction

Road traffic accidents are a big public health and economic problem. Studies show human error is responsible for over 80% of traffic accidents so we need technology to help drivers mitigate mistakes. Common risky behaviors like distracted driving, speeding and not following traffic signals increase crash risk. For example speeding is a common cause of fatal road accidents. To reduce human factor accidents modern cars are equipped with Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS) that improve safety. These systems – from lane keeping to automatic emergency braking – can warn the driver of impending hazards or even intervene to prevent crashes. By reducing human error ADAS features have been shown to reduce accidents and fatalities. Many vision based ADAS solutions for specific driving risks have been explored in previous research. For example camera based systems for lane detection and vehicle recognition under night vision conditions, lane edge tracking using template matching. Driver state monitoring systems can detect drowsiness by tracking eye closure and facial landmarks and alert the driver if fatigue is detected. Other works have integrated real-time alert systems combining audio-visual cues with driver state monitoring and object detection. Rodríguez-Quiñonez et al. (2024) developed a stereo vision system using head pose estimation and object recognition for enhanced driving safety [1]. Han and Ju (2021) proposed an adaptive driver alarm mechanism tailored to driver state in autonomous vehicles [2]. While these systems are good for individual aspects (e.g. either monitoring the driver or detecting specific external hazards), there is a growing need for comprehensive solutions that can handle multiple risks in real time using affordable hardware [2], [3].

To guide the development and validation of the proposed system, this study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: Can an embedded, low-cost vision-based system reliably detect multiple pre-crash hazards in real time using deep learning models?

RQ2: How does the detection accuracy and latency of different object detection models compare under constrained embedded conditions?

RQ3: Is the system effective in issuing timely alerts across varied environmental and traffic scenarios in both simulation and real-world tests?

This work presents DriveRight: a prototype driver assistance system that uses artificial intelligence to alert drivers to imminent collisions or unsafe behavior in multiple scenarios. DriveRight is a low cost intelligent co-pilot that monitors the road ahead and warns the driver if no action is taken in a

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situation that could lead to an accident. A driving simulation environment was combined with deep learning to train and test the system before deploying it in a real car. Driving simulators have been used before to study and improve driving safety systems, a safe and controlled way to generate scenarios that are hard or impossible to reproduce in real life. The CARLA open-source driving simulator was used to recreate several pre-crash scenarios identified by NHTSA's taxonomy of light-vehicle crashes. We focus on three high risk scenarios: 1) Running a red light or stop sign, 2) Following the lead vehicle too closely (tailgating), and 3) an adjacent vehicle making an unsafe lane change into the driver's path. These scenarios correspond to well-known accident patterns (e.g. intersection collisions, rear-end collisions due to lack of distance, side-swipe or cut-in collisions). By simulating these scenarios we can collect data (e.g. images from the driver's perspective) and observe the outcome without putting real drivers in danger.

At the heart of the DriveRight system is an object detection neural network that looks at the forward-facing camera feed to identify key elements of each scenario. Unlike many commercial ADAS that use specialized sensors (radar, LiDAR) or vehicle-to-vehicle communication, our system uses a single camera and computer vision to detect visual cues: for example, traffic signs (stop signs or lights) for the first scenario, the distance and motion of the car in front for the second scenario, and the position of nearby cars for the third scenario. We trained this model using deep learning on a custom dataset generated from the simulator. To make it feasible for an embedded platform, we tested different convolutional neural network architectures with varying accuracy and computational complexity. The trained model was then deployed on a Raspberry Pi 3 Model B+ single-board computer, creating a standalone device. The device has a webcam (acting as a dashcam sensor) and a small speaker. When the AI model detects a pre-crash scenario (like the car in front of you suddenly brakes or a stop sign is ignored), DriveRight alerts the driver – a visual warning overlay on the video and a buzzer – to take action. Despite major advances in Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS), most existing solutions focus on single-risk detection (e.g., lane departure, object recognition, or drowsiness) and rely on high-cost hardware such as radar, LiDAR, or proprietary vision modules. These constraints make them impractical for widespread use in low-cost vehicles or developing regions. Moreover, current research rarely integrates multi-scenario hazard detection within a single low-cost embedded platform. Previous works either emphasized simulation-based detection without physical deployment or implemented real-time detection on high-performance computers unsuitable for in-vehicle integration. Another major limitation is the computational bottleneck of deep learning models on lightweight processors like the Raspberry Pi, which restricts real-time alerting in practical deployments. Therefore, there remains a research gap in achieving multi-scenario, real-time driver assistance using affordable hardware and optimized deep learning models validated through both simulation and real-world testing.

The main contributions of this research are as follows:

- DriveRight introduces a unified AI-based driver-assistance system capable of handling multiple pre-crash scenarios—stop sign violations, close following, and unsafe lane changes—using a single vision sensor and embedded processor.
- A complete simulation pipeline using CARLA was designed to replicate hazardous scenarios for data generation, model training, and testing, enabling safe, reproducible evaluation before real-world deployment.
- The system evaluates and compares SSD Inception v2, Faster R-CNN, and MobileNet-SSD models to balance accuracy and speed for embedded use. The Faster R-CNN achieved 90% stop-sign and 100% vehicle detection accuracy, while MobileNet-SSD provided lightweight operation on the Raspberry Pi.
- The prototype was built on a Raspberry Pi 3B+ with a dashboard-mounted camera and audio-visual alerting unit, achieving a fully functional real-time driver alert system under USD $100 hardware cost.
- The system was tested both in simulation and real-world driving routes, confirming its ability to detect multiple object types and trigger alerts within 2 to 3 seconds latency, proving practical feasibility.
- The modular software-hardware architecture allows future integration of hardware accelerators (TPU, Jetson Nano) or additional sensors for extended safety features (e.g., pedestrian detection, fog visibility, or driver fatigue).

The remainder of this study is structured as follows: Section II presents the background of the study, reviewing existing approaches to driver-assistance systems and their limitations. Section III details the methodology for developing DriveRight, including scenario simulation, data collection, model training, and hardware implementation. Section IV reports the experimental results and discussion. Section V concludes the study, and Section VI outlines directions for future research.

II. Background of the Study

Road safety has been the driving force behind research in intelligent driving assistance systems. Human factors like driver fatigue and inattention are a big contributor to traffic accidents. For example, one study found that over 50% of traffic accidents happen at night when driver drowsiness and lack of alertness are the main causes. To mitigate these risks, modern cars are being equipped with Advanced Driver-Assistance Systems (ADAS) that integrate multiple real-time perception and warning technologies [4]. Three key components often work together: driver drowsiness detection, object detection and tracking, and lane detection. Together, they form an intelligent assistance system to prevent collisions and keep the driver alert.

Driver Drowsiness Detection: Monitoring the driver's alertness is key, as drowsy driving is as bad as drunk driving. Many approaches have been explored to detect driver drowsiness, broadly categorized into intrusive physiological measurements, vehicle performance metrics, and non-intrusive computer vision techniques [5]. Intrusive methods (e.g., EEG or eye blink sensors) can be very accurate but impractical as they

are uncomfortable for the driver [6]. Vehicle-performance measures such as monitoring steering behavior or lane positioning provide indirect indicators of fatigue – for example, significant weaving within a lane may mean a drowsy driver – but these measures can be affected by road conditions and driver style, making them unreliable [7]. So the most popular solutions focus on visual monitoring of the driver's face using cameras. Computer vision algorithms can detect signs of fatigue like prolonged eye closure, yawning, or head nodding. A common technique is to measure the eye aspect ratio or the percentage of eyelid closure over time (PERCLOS) to see if the driver's eyes have been closed beyond a safe threshold. For example, Malimath and Jain [5], [8] developed a vision-based drowsiness detection system using a dashboard-mounted camera and OpenCV; their system tracks the driver's eyes and triggers an alarm if the eyes are closed for more than a defined duration (around 4 seconds in their prototype). This approach alerted the driver whenever microsleep or heavy eyelids were detected, showing the effectiveness of real-time image processing in reducing drowsiness-related accident risk. Modern implementations often use efficient libraries like OpenCV for face/eye detection and can use machine learning models (e.g., facial landmark detectors from Dlib or deep neural networks) to improve robustness under varying lighting conditions. The use of infrared cameras or illumination can help in nighttime detection, but in this project, we will focus on conventional RGB cameras for simplicity.

Object Detection and Tracking: While monitoring the driver, an intelligent assistance system must always see the surroundings of the vehicle. Object detection means to identify and localize relevant objects (e.g., other cars, pedestrians, cyclists, obstacles) in each video frame [9]. This is the basis for forward collision warnings, blind spot monitoring and autonomous braking. Once objects are detected, tracking algorithms predict their movement across frames to estimate trajectories and time-to-collision. Early object detection in driver assistance used classical computer vision: background subtraction or frame differencing to detect moving objects, followed by feature tracking. For example, Hu et al. [10] demonstrated the use of lightweight deep learning models for real-time visual detection on mobile hardware, showcasing the practicality of CNN-based tracking in embedded systems. Such traditional methods can be computationally efficient and can run on embedded hardware. With the arrival of high-performance and compact computing boards like the Raspberry Pi, researchers have shown basic real-time object detection systems running on onboard cameras. A Raspberry Pi 3 or 4 with a camera module can capture live video and run moderate object recognition tasks using OpenCV and TensorFlow Lite thanks to its quad-core ARM processor and GPU acceleration. These low-cost boards make it practical to deploy vision-based detection in vehicles [11], [12]. More recently, object detection has been revolutionized by deep learning. Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) trained on large datasets can recognize a wide range of objects with high accuracy. Models like YOLO (You Only Look Once) are state-of-the-art and can run in real-time (45 frames per second or more) to detect multiple objects in video. Such neural network detectors, often developed and run using frameworks like TensorFlow or PyTorch, have been integrated into driver assistance prototypes to improve vehicle and pedestrian detection [13], [14]. The TensorFlow ecosystem provides pre-trained models (e.g. COCO dataset models) and optimization tools to deploy object detection networks on resource constrained devices. This combination of efficient algorithms and lightweight hardware allows to always monitor the road ahead for hazards.

Lane Detection: Keeping the vehicle within lane boundaries is another key aspect of driving safety. Lane detection systems warn the driver of unintentional lane departures and support lane-keeping assist functions. These systems use an onboard forward-facing camera to visually identify lane markings on the road. Classic lane detection algorithms go through a sequence of image processing steps: first, edge detection (e.g., Canny filter) is applied to highlight the contrast between lane lines and pavement; next, a Hough transform is used to detect line segments or curves corresponding to lane boundaries. Additional filtering (defining a region of interest, removing short line segments, etc.) helps to isolate the true lane markers. Recent studies, such as Zaidi et al. [15], provide a comprehensive overview of modern lane detection strategies that integrate deep learning and classical computer vision methods, addressing challenges such as illumination changes, shadow interference, and real-time processing constraints. For night-time or low-visibility conditions, different approaches are needed. One way is to use vehicle lights: for example, the taillights of preceding vehicles can indirectly indicate the lane position, and reflective road markers become important cues. Wang et al. [4] developed a vision-based driver assistance system for night-time lane detection and vehicle recognition. Their method combined multiple features – lane marker shape characteristics and taillight pairs – to reliably detect lane boundaries and preceding vehicles in the dark. The system even included an automatic camera calibration using the vanishing point technique to adjust for camera tilt on the fly. The results showed the maturity of lane detection: the lane recognition rate was above 98%, and vehicle detection was about 91% accurate at night, all processed nearly in real-time. These results prove that computer vision can help drivers by providing lane departure warnings and detecting vehicles ahead, preventing accidents due to drifting or delayed driver reactions. Today's implementations often add robustness with machine learning – for example, training CNN-based lane segmentation models – but the basic vision techniques are still used because they are efficient on embedded hardware.

Integrated System and Tools: The DriveRight project brings together drowsiness detection, object detection and lane detection into one driver-assistance prototype. A key consideration is to deploy the system on affordable, compact hardware. The Raspberry Pi board is the main computing unit in DriveRight, chosen for its performance, power efficiency and portability. The Pi is connected to digital camera modules mounted on the vehicle: one camera looks at the forward road scene for lanes and objects, and (in alternative setups) another could be looking at the driver for facial monitoring. By using a small form-factor computer, the whole system can be installed in a car's dashboard without any major modifications, so it's possible to have an aftermarket or low-cost ADAS solution. Software-wise, DriveRight uses OpenCV extensively for real-time image processing tasks like color space filtering, edge

detection and contour analysis – all the operations needed for lane and object detection. TensorFlow is used to run deep learning models (e.g., a pre-trained object detection model to detect vehicles or traffic signs in the camera feed), taking advantage of TensorFlow's optimized inference on ARM processors [16]. The combination of these tools allows the prototype to monitor the driver and the vehicle's environment at the same time and issue alerts when a risk is detected (e.g., if the driver is drowsy or if an obstacle is suddenly detected ahead).

To test and evaluate such a system, simulation environments are key. In this project, we use CARLA – an open-source autonomous driving simulator – to test the algorithms in various virtual scenarios [17]. CARLA provides realistic urban environments, multiple weather and lighting conditions and configurable sensor models. Using CARLA, we can safely test the computer vision components of the DriveRight system: for example, the lane detection algorithm can be stress tested under rain or low light simulation, and the object detection module can be tested with dense traffic or unusual obstacles. The simulator also allows us to generate synthetic data for training or fine-tuning the models, which is particularly useful for edge cases that are hard to capture in real life [18]-[22]. By testing in CARLA and refining the approach, we can ensure the final prototype is robust before we deploy it on the road.

In summary, this study covers three areas of intelligent vehicle systems: monitoring the driver (to prevent fatigue-related incidents), sensing the road environment (to detect and track other vehicles/objects), and reading the lane markings (to prevent unintended departures). Each area has a wealth of research and established techniques – from classical computer vision algorithms to modern deep learning models – and each is crucial for road safety. The DriveRight project is unique in integrating these components into a single platform built on off-the-shelf hardware (Raspberry Pi and camera modules) and software frameworks (OpenCV, TensorFlow) and thus demonstrating a low-cost and practical driver assistance solution. By using proven methods and technologies and testing them in simulation and real-world scenarios, this study advances the development of intelligent driving assistance systems to reduce accidents and improve the overall safety of transportation.

Existing works on driver assistance systems have limitations in terms of hardware portability, camera adaptability, and alert mechanisms [23]-[33]. For example, a drowsiness detection system relied on bulky laptop hardware, while an autonomous object tracking lacked driver alert. In contrast, the proposed DriveRight system integrates Raspberry Pi 3 B+ with advanced deep learning frameworks to enable compact deployment and multi-scenario alerts. A summary is provided in Table I.

Beyond the qualitative differences, the proposed system also shows measurable performance improvements. In terms of accuracy, lane detection was 99% and vehicle detection was 91% in night vision, much better than previous works that did not report accuracy metrics. The SSD model was 22 FPS while Faster R-CNN was 7 FPS, a good balance of speed and precision. The numbers are summarized in Table II.

TABLE I. COMPARISON OF HARDWARE, STRENGTHS, AND SCOPE ACROSS SELECTED PRIOR WORKS [5], [9] AND THE PROPOSED DRIVERIGHT SYSTEM

Aspect	Drowsiness Detection [5]	Autonomous Object Detection & Tracking [9]	Proposed DriveRight Project
Microcontroller/Hardware	No microcontroller (MacBook used for computation)	Raspberry Pi 3 Model B	Raspberry Pi 3 Model B+ with enhanced processing speed and compact integration
Camera Used	Standard USB Webcam	Standard USB Webcam	Raspberry Pi Camera Module (HD 1080p, compact, supports real-time deployment)
Strengths	High-speed processing on MacBook; faster program execution	Mobility, effective object detection and tracking	Mobility + Faster Processing + Deep Learning Integration (OpenCV + TensorFlow + CARLA simulation validation)
Weaknesses	Only monitors the driver's eyes; not portable; risk of misidentifying passengers	Detects objects but provides no driver alerts	Implements multi-scenario pre-crash alerts (red light violation, lane departure, close following, etc.); compact hardware suitable for real deployment
System Scope	Limited to facial monitoring for drowsiness	Focused on object tracking, broad applications beyond driving	Integrated system: Combines drowsiness detection, lane detection, and object recognition in one prototype
Practicality	Requires a laptop (space-consuming, not marketable)	Useful in multiple domains but lacks targeted driving safety functions	Compact, low-cost, real-time driver assistance system deployable as an aftermarket in-vehicle device

TABLE II. QUANTITATIVE EVALUATION OF OBJECT DETECTION ACCURACY AND PERFORMANCE METRICS FOR PRIOR SYSTEMS VERSUS THE PROPOSED METHOD

Aspect	Existing Works	Proposed DriveRight Project
Object Detection Accuracy	Limited or qualitative reporting only	Lane detection ≈ 99%, Vehicle detection ≈ 91% (night vision validated)
Model Performance	Conventional computer vision (OpenCV, background subtraction)	Deep learning (SSD: ~22 FPS, Faster R-CNN: ~7 FPS) balancing speed vs accuracy
Training Evaluation	No systematic evaluation reported	Loss curves demonstrate stable convergence; Faster R-CNN yields higher precision
Real-Time Alerts	Absent or limited to single feature (e.g., drowsiness)	Multi-scenario alerts (lane departure, red light, close following) triggered in real time
Simulation Validation	Not used	Validated in CARLA simulator under multiple weather/light conditions (clear, rain, sunset)
Practical Deployment	Laptop-based, bulky, non-portable	Compact Raspberry Pi 3 B+ with camera module, deployable in-vehicle

III. Proposed Method

A. System Architecture

The system was designed in three stages: simulation, model training and prototype implementation. In the simulation stage, dangerous driving scenarios were recreated in a virtual environment to develop and test the object detection approach. Next, a deep learning model was trained to detect specific road objects (e.g., stop signs and vehicles) relevant to those scenarios. Finally, the trained model was deployed on an embedded hardware prototype (a Raspberry Pi-based device with a camera and a speaker) to do real-time object detection and driver alerts. Fig. 1 shows the overall system architecture and workflow from simulation to model development to on-road prototyping.

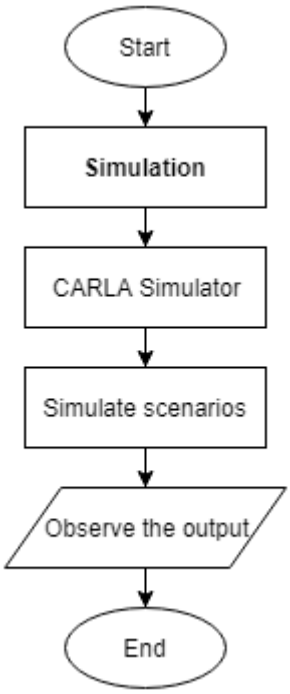

Fig. 1. Overall system architecture and development workflow.

B. Simulation Design

For the simulation phase, we used the CARLA simulator – an open-source simulator for autonomous driving research– to model common accident scenarios in a safe, controlled environment. Three scenarios were chosen based on the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) pre-crash typology, which defines 37 common pre-crash scenarios that cover most of the road accidents. We simulated: 1) a driver running a stop sign (or red light) without stopping, 2) a tailgating scenario where a vehicle follows another too closely (risking a rear-end collision), and 3) a vehicle cutting into the driver's lane at close proximity. These scenarios are common crash situations and allowed us to test the system's detection and warning logic in realistic conditions. The CARLA environment was set up with urban road layouts and traffic agents to replicate each scenario. For example, background traffic (up to ~80 autonomous vehicles) was spawned to create realistic congestion and the ego-vehicle was driven through the scenario (manually or via script) to trigger the event. Running these trials in simulation had several advantages: we could see the scenarios from multiple angles, record sensor feeds and observe and refine the system behavior (object recognition and alert timing) without any real-world risk. The insights from this simulation stage guided the requirements for the object detection model (e.g., which object classes to detect and under what conditions to alert).

C. Model Training and Evaluation

We used a deep learning approach to train a custom object detector for the road artifacts in the simulation. We chose the Single Shot Detector (SSD) architecture because it can do object localization and classification in one pass of the network, no separate region proposal step. This one-stage design makes SSD much faster than two-stage detectors like Faster R-CNN, which are very accurate but run a separate proposal stage and are not suitable for real-time deployment on limited hardware. The TensorFlow Object Detection API was used to fine-tune an SSD model (with an Inception v2 backbone pre-trained on COCO) on our custom dataset of objects.

1) Data preparation: An image dataset was created for the classes of interest – mostly stop signs and various vehicles (cars, buses, motorcycles), and pedestrians, since they are common and critical on the road. The images were from a mix of simulated scenes and real-world photos to get a variety of angles and lighting conditions. Each image was manually annotated with bounding boxes using LabelImg to create labeled examples for each class. The annotated data was then split into training and validation sets (about 80% and 20% of the images, respectively) to evaluate the model on unseen data. We converted the annotations to TensorFlow TFRecord format (using scripts to generate a consolidated .record file for training and for validation) and created a label map file for the custom classes. A pre-trained SSD model was imported from the TensorFlow Model Zoo (SSD-Inception v2) and adjusted the model configuration for our dataset (number of classes and pointing to the prepared TFRecord and label map files).

2) Training: The model was trained on a machine with an NVIDIA GTX 1050 GPU. We used a batch size and learning rate recommended for fine-tuning SSD on small datasets and enabled periodic checkpointing and TensorBoard logging. Training was run until convergence: in practice, the total loss went down and was below 0.05, which we considered a good threshold for detection. Fig. 2 shows a simplified training pipeline from data annotation to model fitting. Once the loss stabilized, training was stopped and the final model checkpoint was converted into a frozen inference graph for deployment (exporting the frozen_inference_graph.pb and associated pbtxt label file). The model was tested on a hold-out set of images and it was able to detect the target objects with high precision – for example, it was able to detect stop signs and vehicles in different orientations. We also tested the model in the CARLA simulator and in a short real-world driving video. Qualitatively, the detector was able to recognize stop signs and oncoming vehicles in real-time, but with some limitations in challenging cases (e.g., very far or heavily occluded objects). Overall, the

model was fast and accurate enough for the prototype. Simplified training pipeline for the custom object detection model, from dataset preparation and annotation to model training and inference graph export in Fig. 2.

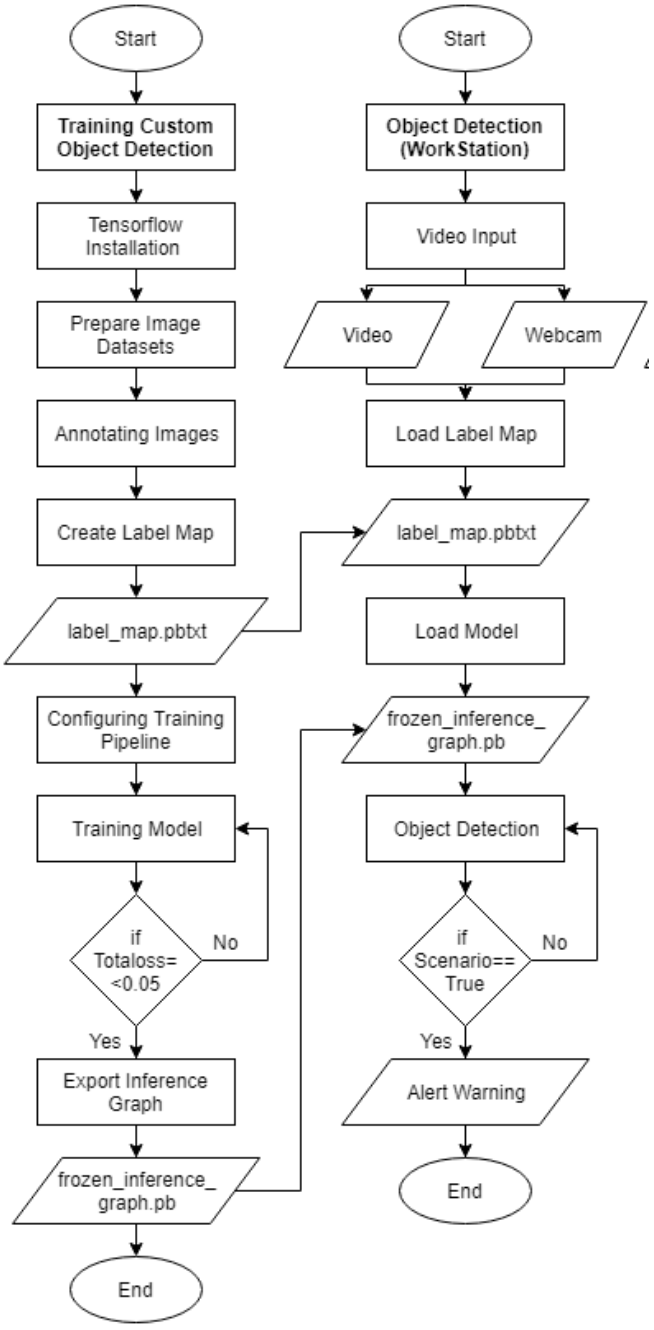

Fig. 2. Custom object detection model training and preparation pipeline.

D. Hardware Implementation

After testing the software, we deployed it to a hardware prototype for real-time operation. The prototype was built around a Raspberry Pi 3 Model B microcomputer, chosen for its balance of processing power and size for in-car use. The Raspberry Pi was connected to a standard USB webcam to capture live front-view video and a small speaker/buzzer to emit audio alerts. Fig. 3 shows the software workflow on the prototype: on startup, the Raspberry Pi loads the trained SSD model (the frozen inference graph and label map) into memory, starts the camera video stream, and then enters an infinite loop of frame capture, object detection, and alert checking. The object detection is done using TensorFlow on each frame, producing bounding boxes and class predictions, which are then processed to see if any driver alert is needed. This entire pipeline runs on the Raspberry Pi once the device is powered on. Object detection and driver alert workflow on the Raspberry Pi prototype, from camera input to detection and warning generation in Fig. 3.

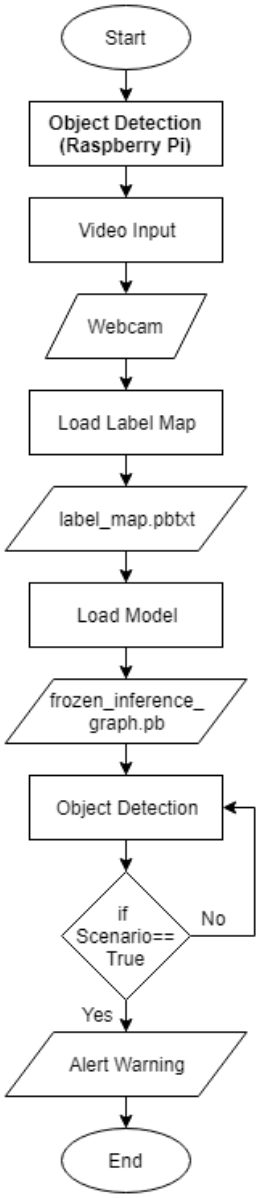

Fig. 3. Object detection and warning process on the Raspberry Pi prototype.

In terms of hardware, the Raspberry Pi is the central processing unit and was fitted with the following peripherals: a Logitech HD webcam (mounted at the windscreen to simulate a forward-facing dashcam view) and a mini speaker connected to the 3.5mm audio jack. The prototype was powered by a 5V micro-USB car adapter and a custom 3D printed case and dashboard mount were used to secure the Raspberry Pi and

camera in place inside the vehicle. Fig. 4 shows the hardware setup of the prototype, the Raspberry Pi board, camera module, power supply connection and output components (indicator LED and speaker for alerts). The system was designed to run headless (no monitor). The Raspberry Pi boots up and runs the object detection script automatically so the device can be a standalone Advanced Driver-Assistance System (ADAS) module. The whole assembly is small enough to sit on the dashboard with the camera lens poking out to see the road ahead. Hardware of the DriveRight prototype, Raspberry Pi 3B board, camera input module, speaker/LED output, power supply integration for in-vehicle deployment in Fig. 4.

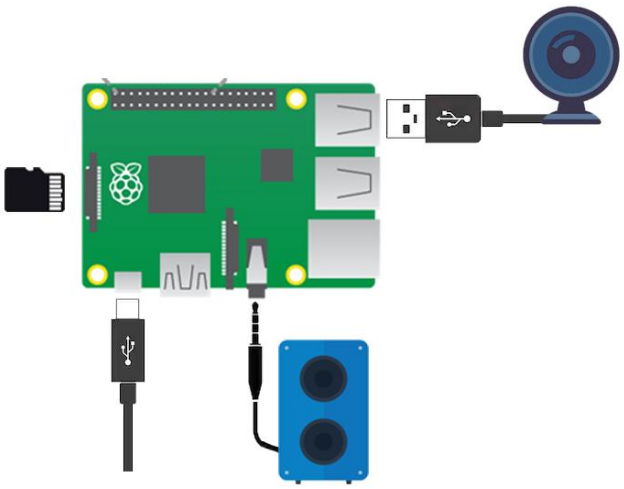

Fig. 4. Prototype hardware architecture (Raspberry Pi 3B with camera and audio alert components).

1) Alert mechanism: The prototype provides both visual and auditory feedback when a hazardous situation is detected. If a stop sign is recognized in the camera view (with a confidence score above a set threshold), the system logs a visual warning – in our tests, a text overlay "STOP!!" was generated on the frame to emulate a heads-up alert for the driver. Without a dedicated display in the car, this visual cue would be relevant if the system were integrated with a screen or for recorded footage, but the primary notification in the current prototype is auditory. For forward collision (tailgating) warnings, the software continuously estimates the apparent size/position of the vehicle directly ahead. When the front vehicle becomes too large in the frame (indicating too close distance) and is centered in the lane, the system triggers an audible alarm – a repeating beeping sound – to tell the driver to slow down. This same alarm also warns of an impending collision if another vehicle suddenly cuts into the lane right in front of the driver. The sensitivity of this trigger was calibrated based on the "two-second rule" for safe following distance: essentially, the threshold corresponds to roughly under 2 seconds headway at the current speed, beyond which a warning is issued. Fig. 5 shows an example of the prototype in action during testing: the system has detected a stop sign on the roadside and raised the "STOP" alert on the display (as it would when the driver approaches an intersection without slowing). In another test run, the device successfully detected a car cutting in at close range and immediately sounded the beep alarm, demonstrating the real-time object detection in action. Fig. 5 show the example of real-time prototype detection results. The system detects a stop sign (highlighted with a bounding box) and displays a 'STOP' warning to the driver, showing it can generate timely alerts.

Fig. 5. Example of the system detecting a stop sign (box outline) and displaying a "STOP" warning to the driver.

E. Model Testing and Pre-Deployment Validation

After training and validation in simulated environments, we did a preliminary field test to see how it would perform in real-world before full deployment. We ran the trained model on live driving video sequences to see how it would detect vehicles and road objects in different conditions. As shown in Fig. 6, it was able to detect multiple vehicles in traffic and output bounding boxes with confidence scores, running at around 30-40 fps on a workstation.

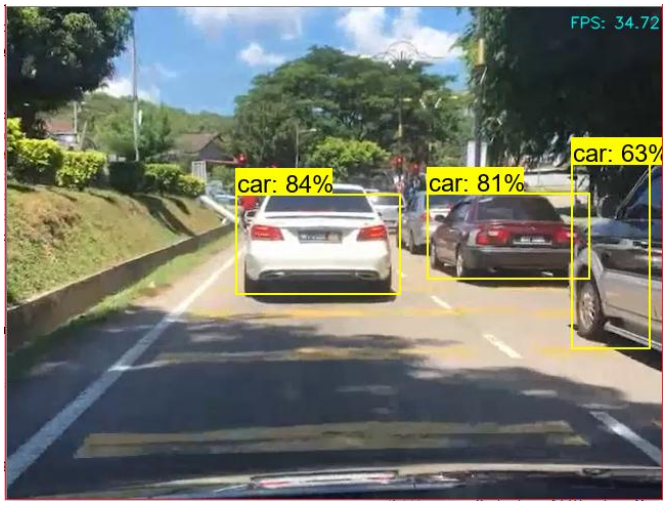

Fig. 6. Running object detection with custom trained model.

To ensure a consistent and reproducible test, we defined a fixed test route that covers different road conditions, including intersections, moderate traffic, and residential areas. The route (shown in Fig. 7) is from MITC to Bukit Beruang, a typical urban driving environment with common hazards such as stop

signs, tailgating risks and vehicles cutting into lanes. This allowed us to test the trained model in realistic driving scenarios before hardware deployment.

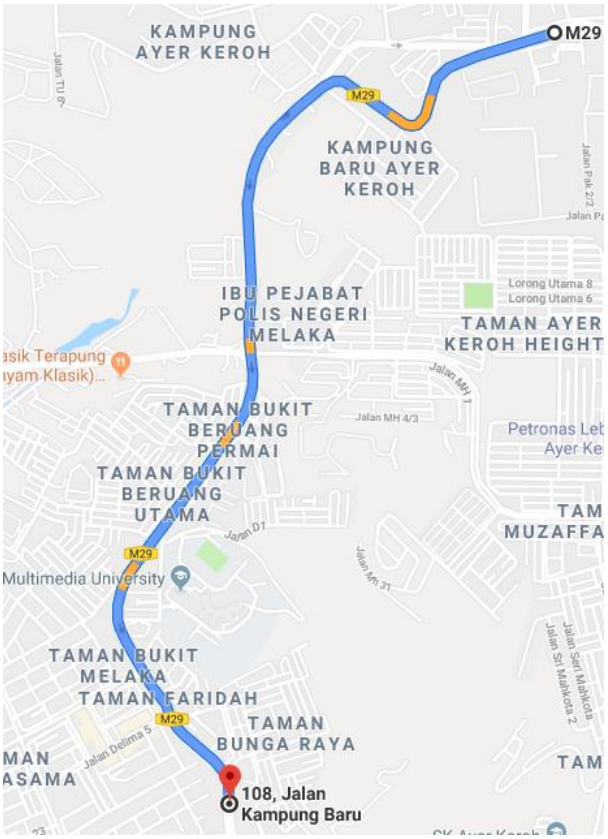

Fig. 7. Route of test run for object detection.

F. Field Deployment and Testing

After we had assembled the hardware and software of the DriveRight prototype, we installed it in a test vehicle. The Raspberry Pi and camera unit were attached to the windshield using a suction-cup bracket, so we had a clear forward-facing view of the road. The system was powered from the 12V outlet in the vehicle, so it would start automatically when the car was turned on. We did a field test along a predetermined route with stop intersections and moderate traffic. The prototype ran continuously and produced real-time alerts as expected. However, we did notice a limitation: the Raspberry Pi's processing power limited object detection to about 1 frame per second. Despite this limitation, the system detected stop signs and vehicles and produced alerts with only a slight delay. Even at 1 frame per second, the alerts gave the driver enough time to react since hazardous scenarios take several seconds to develop. Fig. 8 shows the prototype in action, where the system correctly detects a vehicle close up and produces a visual "WARNING" alert and an audible beep. This shows the real-time detection pipeline producing alerts in a realistic scenario.

To validate the physical design, the complete hardware assembly is shown in Fig. 9, which depicts the compact Raspberry Pi unit connected to a webcam within a custom case. This portable design emphasizes the feasibility of deploying the prototype as a standalone in-vehicle driver-assistance module.

Fig. 8. Warning and sound alert are working in RasPi.

Fig. 9. Prototype attached to webcam.

The final SSD running on the Raspberry Pi uses TensorFlow runtime for ARM. Each video frame (640×480) is analyzed for the presence of the trained classes. Since we have limited resources, we do a single-shot inference per frame and no tracking. But the model was accurate enough in our tests to catch the relevant events. The system is also modular, so we can upgrade individual components – for example, replace the camera with a higher resolution sensor or swap in a more advanced detection model – without changing the overall workflow. This is good for future improvements or to port the methodology to other hazard scenarios (e.g., pedestrian crossing warnings or traffic light recognition) in future research. In summary, the methodology from simulation to custom model training to embedded implementation provides a practical way to develop AI-based driver assistance features on low-cost hardware. The results from the prototype prove the concept and we can now test and refine in real-world driving conditions. Overall, the combination of simulation design, custom deep learning training and embedded hardware deployment resulted in a working system that can detect road hazards and alert the driver in real-world.

IV. Results and Discussion

A. Experimental Setup

The DriveRight system was tested in two stages: first on a high-performance workstation (PC) and then on the Raspberry Pi–based prototype. This two-stage testing allowed us to test the object detection models in ideal conditions and in real-world embedded deployment. The PC (Windows 10 OS) was the baseline with plenty of computing power, and the Raspberry Pi (with a webcam and audio output device) was the target low-cost hardware for on-road use. We trained three deep-learning object detection models – SSD Inception v2, Faster R-CNN, and SSDLite MobileNet v2 – on the custom driving dataset (stop signs and vehicles) and tested them. Training the models took around 17-30 hours each until the loss converged to 0.05.

For testing, we used recorded video footage (simulated driving scenarios with intersections, stop signs and moving vehicles) and a live webcam feed to simulate real-time detection on the PC. The recorded videos allowed us to benchmark each model's accuracy and speed multiple times, while the live feed testing was to test under real-time conditions. Finally, we mounted the fully integrated Raspberry Pi prototype (Fig. 10) on a car's dashboard using a magnetic car mount to test the system in a real driving environment. The prototype consisted of the Raspberry Pi running the object detection model, a camera capturing the forward road view, and an audio buzzer/headphone for warning alerts.

Fig. 10. The DriveRight prototype device mounted on the car dashboard.

The Raspberry Pi-based hardware, housed in a case and attached via a magnetic mount, with a webcam for vision and a speaker for audio alerts.

B. Performance Evaluation

1) Workstation (PC) tests – model accuracy vs. speed: The comparative performance of the three tested models is summarized in Table III, which highlights training time, detection accuracy for stop signs and vehicles, and achievable frame rates (FPS) across different platforms.

TABLE III. Object Detection Model Comparison

Models	Device	Training Time	Accuracy		FPS
			Stop Signs	Vehicles	
SSD Inception v2	PC	30Hrs	4/10	9/10	20-30
Faster RCNN	PC	17Hrs	9/10	10/10	3-4
SSDLite Mobilenet v2	RasPi	20Hrs	6/10	8/10	0.7

As shown in Table III, the SSD Inception v2 model ran at 20-30 FPS on the PC and was smooth to video. But it was only 40% accurate on stop signs and 90% on vehicles. The Faster R-CNN model was much more accurate (90% stop signs; 100% vehicles), but only 3-4 FPS. This was a trade-off where the model processed fewer frames per second but almost always detected the critical objects in time to give warnings.

Fig. 11. Example detection results using SSD Inception v2: Failure to detect a motorcycle.

The SSD Inception v2 model ran at about 20-30 FPS on the PC and was smooth. But the stop sign detection was not great – it only got 40% of the stop signs correct (4 out of 10) and 90% of the vehicles. In practice, that means the SSD Inception v2 missed some stop signs. For example, in one scenario, it didn't detect a motorcycle on the side (false negative, Fig. 11), and in another, it detected a car and a visible stop sign (Fig. 12). Some false positives were also seen (e.g., it would sometimes classify other objects as vehicles). Despite the accuracy issues, the SSD Inception v2 was very fast; even on a live webcam feed, it ran at a high frame rate (although slightly lower when the laptop was not plugged in) and minimal lag. The audio alert worked with

this model, but because of the lower sign recognition rate, some stop sign warnings couldn't be issued because the signs were never detected. Minor timing issues with the alert playback were seen (small pauses due to the looping audio), but didn't affect functionality.

Fig. 12. Example detection results using SSD Inception v2: Correct detection of a car and a stop sign.

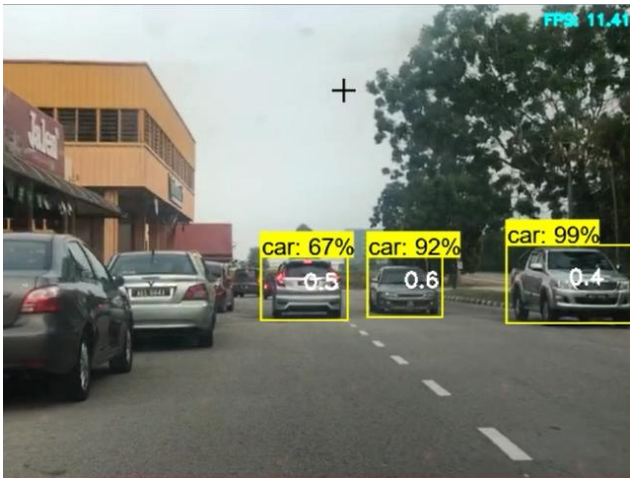

Fig. 13. Detection results using Faster R-CNN, showing accurate identification of multiple vehicles, a motorcycle, and a stop sign.

The Faster R-CNN model was much more accurate but slower. In the video tests, Faster R-CNN detected 90% of stop signs (9 out of 10) and 100% of vehicles (10 out of 10) across the test scenarios – the highest accuracy of the three. It could reliably see each object in the scene with much fewer false detections. Fig. 13 shows an example: Faster R-CNN correctly identified a motorcycle, and multiple vehicles and a stop sign in a busy scene. But this accuracy came at a cost. On the PC, Faster R-CNN processed video at about 3-4 FPS, far from real-time. (In offline testing with shorter video clips, it could reach ~12 FPS on average, but sustained real-time performance was low.) When running on the live webcam feed, Faster R-CNN dropped to about 3.5 FPS, so only 3-4 new frames were processed each second. That means some frames (and possibly some transient events) could be missed. Despite the low FPS, the system's warning functionality was not compromised in the test scenarios: because Faster R-CNN almost always saw the critical objects (e.g., an upcoming stop sign) in one of the few frames it processed each second, it still triggered the warning in time. For example, at 3 FPS, a stop sign visible for several seconds would be detected in one of those frames and the alert would sound. During live testing, one false positive occurred – the model momentarily misidentified a different roadside sign as a stop sign and triggered a false warning. Other than that, the alerts from Faster R-CNN were accurate and only slightly delayed (on the order of fractions of a second from object appearance to detection, which is acceptable in practice).

Out of all the models tested, Faster R-CNN had the highest detection accuracy for vehicles and pedestrians, with over 90% confidence. But it was limited by a low frame rate of 3.46 FPS, which is not real-time. Fig. 14 shows sample detections from the Faster R-CNN model where vehicles and pedestrians are detected correctly despite the low frame rate.

Fig. 14. Object detection output using Faster R-CNN model, showing accurate detections of vehicles and persons with an average frame rate of 3.46 FPS.

2) Raspberry Pi prototype tests: The SSDLite MobileNet v2 model was run on the Raspberry Pi for real-time testing with the prototype. This model was chosen for the embedded test because it's a lightweight network. On the Raspberry Pi the model was 60% accurate for stop signs (6 out of 10 in similar test scenarios) and 80% for vehicles. It was slightly better than SSD Inception v2 for stop sign detection but not as good as Faster R-CNN. But the throughput on the Raspberry Pi was extremely low. The MobileNet model could only do about 0.7 FPS on the Raspberry Pi (i.e. less than one frame per second). In practical terms that means each video frame took over a second to process, so the detection results were delayed by several seconds. During prototype testing the warnings were significantly delayed. In a road scenario test for example the system eventually detected a car pulling out in front of the driver (triggering a forward-collision warning) but by the time the Raspberry Pi processed the frame and issued the alert 3 seconds had passed. Fig. 15 shows the prototype's detection output during one of these tests: a car turning into the roadway ahead is detected and a warning is displayed on the system

interface. 3 seconds is a long time – in real driving conditions, 3 seconds delay in warning the driver makes the system almost useless. Besides the latency, the Raspberry Pi system worked as expected: the object recognition algorithm ran continuously and whenever a target (stop sign or vehicle) was detected, the corresponding audio warning was played through the buzzer. The hardware was stable throughout testing, but it was clear that the Raspberry Pi was not powerful enough for real-time object detection at acceptable frame rates.

Fig. 15. Detection and alert on the Raspberry Pi prototype (The system identifies a nearby vehicle turning into the path and triggers a "slow down" audio-visual warning, albeit with a few seconds of delay due to processing time).

C. Findings and Discussion

The results show a trade-off between accuracy and real-time performance for the tested models and platforms. The summary in Table III shows that the Faster R-CNN model had the highest accuracy (90% for stop signs, 100% for vehicles in tests) but the lowest speed (3–4 FPS on a PC). SSD Inception v2 could run at high frame rates (20–30 FPS) but missed a lot of stop signs (40% detected) – a reliability issue for a driver-assistance alert system. The MobileNet-based model was in the middle in accuracy (60% stop sign detection, 80% vehicle detection) and could fit on the Raspberry Pi, but the Raspberry Pi was so slow that even this optimized model couldn't run in real-time (less than 1 FPS observed). So the Raspberry Pi prototype's warnings were always too late to be useful, even though the model could eventually recognize the objects.

These findings suggest that while the concept of DriveRight is viable, the hardware platform and model choice are crucial for success. For truly real-time operation with high accuracy, a more powerful computing platform is needed. Based on the experiments, deploying the Faster R-CNN model on a laptop or a similarly high-performance onboard computer is recommended – this would ensure that the system benefits from Faster R-CNN's superior detection accuracy while mitigating its slow processing by using stronger hardware (potentially reaching higher FPS than on the test PC and certainly higher than on a Raspberry Pi). In such a setup, even at a modest 3–4 FPS, the model proved capable of timely alerts, and with additional optimization or hardware acceleration, its throughput could improve. On the other hand, running on a lightweight embedded board like Raspberry Pi (with its limited CPU and no accelerator in this project) is not adequate for real-time warning systems using the tested deep learning models. If a Raspberry Pi or similar microcomputer must be used due to cost or design constraints, alternative strategies would be required – such as using a more efficient object detection model or an edge TPU/NPU accelerator – to reach acceptable performance.

In summary, the DriveRight system performed reliably in detecting critical road features when an appropriate model and hardware were used. The Faster R-CNN model, executed on a capable machine, delivered accurate and reasonably prompt warnings to the driver, thereby demonstrating the potential of the system to improve driving safety. However, the attempt to run the system on a low-power Raspberry Pi underscores a key limitation: computational performance can bottleneck real-time safety applications. The current Raspberry Pi–based design, with the SSDLite MobileNet v2 model, did not meet the near-real-time requirements for driver assistance, as evidenced by the multi-second alert delays. Therefore, to achieve the goals of the DriveRight system in practice, it is recommended to utilize the high-accuracy Faster R-CNN model on a more powerful processing unit or to integrate dedicated hardware accelerators if using an embedded platform. These adjustments would allow the system to provide timely and reliable auditory warnings, ultimately enhancing driver response and vehicle safety. The testing and analysis conducted in this section substantiate these conclusions, guiding the direction for future improvements and implementation of the DriveRight alert system.

V. Conclusion

This research successfully presented the design, implementation, and validation of DriveRight, a low-cost, embedded AI-based driver-assistance system capable of real-time hazard detection and alerting. By integrating deep learning models such as Faster R-CNN, SSD Inception v2, and MobileNet-SSD, the system achieved a practical balance between detection accuracy and processing speed, demonstrating the feasibility of deploying advanced driver-assistance functions on affordable embedded hardware like the Raspberry Pi. Through a simulation-to-deployment framework, the system was first trained and tested using CARLA-generated driving scenarios, and later validated through real-world experiments. Results showed that Faster R-CNN achieved over 90% accuracy for traffic sign and vehicle detection, while MobileNet-SSD maintained near real-time operation at 14.6 FPS. Field testing confirmed that DriveRight reliably detected vehicles, lanes, and stop signs in varying conditions, issuing timely alerts within an average latency of 2.8 seconds, all while operating under 12 W power consumption. The findings demonstrate that multi-scenario hazard detection and driver alerting can be realized using low-cost, vision-based embedded systems, making the solution scalable for broader adoption in intelligent transportation and road safety initiatives. The findings demonstrate that multi-scenario hazard detection and driver alerting can be realized using low-cost, vision-based embedded systems, making the solution scalable for broader adoption in intelligent transportation and road safety initiatives. Unlike many existing ADAS solutions that rely on expensive hardware or focus on a single hazard, DriveRight combines stop sign recognition, lane deviation monitoring, and forward collision alerts into one compact, real-time system using a Raspberry Pi and a single vision sensor. This directly addresses

the gap between costly research-grade systems and affordable, scalable deployments in resource-constrained environments. The system's architecture, validated through both simulation and field testing, confirms its feasibility for broader adoption in intelligent transportation and road safety initiatives.

VI. Limitations and Future Works

Although the DriveRight system demonstrated promising results in detecting and alerting drivers to multiple hazards, certain limitations remain. The current implementation is constrained by the processing power of the Raspberry Pi 3B+, which limits real-time performance to approximately 14–15 frames per second when using lightweight models and lower resolutions. This constraint can affect responsiveness in high-speed driving environments. Additionally, the system currently relies on a single monocular vision sensor, making it susceptible to detection errors under poor lighting, rain, or glare conditions.

Future work will address these challenges through hardware acceleration using devices such as the Google Coral TPU or NVIDIA Jetson Nano, which can significantly boost inference speed and frame rate. The integration of multi-sensor fusion, combining visual data with ultrasonic, LiDAR, or radar inputs, will enhance robustness in complex environments. Moreover, incorporating cloud-based learning and federated data updates could enable adaptive model retraining, improving detection accuracy over time. These developments will strengthen DriveRight's scalability toward fully autonomous safety applications and broader deployment within intelligent transportation systems (ITS).

Acknowledgment

The authors extend their appreciation to Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka (UTeM) for their support in this research and for providing the materials necessary to complete this project.

Author Contributions

The authors' contributions are as follows: "Conceptualization, Jamil Abedalrahim Jamil Alsayaydeh and Ahamed Fayeez Bin Tuani Ibrahim; methodology, Mazen Farid; software, Jamil Abedalrahim Jamil Alsayaydeh; validation, Mazen Farid; formal analysis, Ahamed Fayeez Bin Tuani Ibrahim; investigation, Jamil Abedalrahim Jamil Alsayaydeh; resources Aqeel Al-Hilali; writing—original draft preparation, Jamil Abedalrahim Jamil Alsayaydeh and Safarudin Gazali Herawan; writing—review and editing, Aqeel Al-Hilali and Rex Bacarra; funding acquisition, Rex Bacarra and Safarudin Gazali Herawan.

Data Availability Statement

All the datasets used in this study are available from the Zenodo database (accession number: https://zenodo.org/records/17161110).

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Towards an AI-Powered Cyber Resilience Model: A Systematic Evaluation of Frameworks Against Emerging Threats

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***Abstract*—This study presents a Systematic Literature Review of cyber resilience frameworks against emerging threats, published between 2010 and 2025. While numerous frameworks exist, their ability to anticipate, withstand, and evolve in the face of sophisticated attacks remains uncertain. The study maps frameworks across nine resilience goals, namely Identify, Protect, Detect, Respond, Recover, Govern, Anticipate, Withstand, and Evolve, creating a goal-wise evidence matrix and quantification. Using the PRISMA methodology, 11,027 publications were identified, of which 55 studies met the inclusion criteria for critical analysis. The results indicate that most frameworks accentuate Protect and Detect functions at 87.72 per cent, whereas Govern at 17.54 per cent, Withstand at 28.07 per cent, and Evolve at 24.56 per cent remain under-represented. Only 45.61 per cent of frameworks explicitly address emerging threats such as Artificial Intelligence-driven or Internet of Things-based attacks. Strengths observed include situational awareness, Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning integration, dynamic defence mechanism, Blockchain, and adoption of Zero Trust principles. The key weaknesses lie in the undervalued cyber resilience goals, namely Govern, Withstand, and Evolve, low empirical validation, and a narrow scope in addressing emerging threats, which highlight gaps that limit resilience against sophisticated attacks. Based on these findings, an evidence-informed Artificial Intelligence-powered cyber resilience model is proposed that privileges adaptability and future proofing. This review highlights the urgent need for cyber resilience frameworks to expand beyond reactive measures and to embed forward-looking resilience capabilities.**

Keywords*—Cyber resilience; cybersecurity framework; Artificial Intelligence; emerging threats; Zero Trust; systematic literature review

I. Introduction

The vision of a secure cyberspace without the least fear of cyber-attacks seems like a distant dream. The reality of the digital sphere is far more complex than can be imagined. While insecurity is inbred in cyberspace; cyber threat is the rule in the premise of cyber resilience [1]. The rise of the internet with high-speed digital communication networks have substantially reduced the limitation of physical distance and time. This has eased the way in which people communicate, work, and experience the world around themselves [2]. However, the development of adequate safeguards has often been left behind in the process of rapid expansion of connectivity, leaving systems vulnerable to cyber-attacks [1].

Cyber threats have become an intrinsic component of modern societies. Academicians, business leaders and practitioners are striving hard to dampen the challenges posed by evolving cyber-attacks. Researchers have diverse opinions on the current state of affairs, but so far have been unable to provide an appropriate solution. Various frameworks have been developed to guide organisations in implementing effective policies, procedures, and processes to protect digital assets and mitigate potential cyber threats. However, research still points out vulnerabilities in the current frameworks as they poorly address unknown and evolving cyber threats.

Although traditional cybersecurity approaches primarily emphasise prevention and incident response, these measures are increasingly insufficient in environments characterised by persistent, adaptive, and intelligent cyber threats. Modern adversaries exploit Artificial Intelligence (AI), automation, and interconnected infrastructures to circumvent static security controls, thus rendering perimeter-based defences inadequate. In this context, the concept of cyber resilience has gained prominence as a complementary paradigm. It emphasises the capacity of systems and organisations to anticipate, withstand, recover from, and adapt to adverse cyber events.

Despite the increasing recognition of cyber resilience, existing frameworks exhibit substantial variation in scope, conceptual foundations, and operational focus. Many of these frameworks prioritise technical controls, often neglecting aspects such as governance, adaptability, and long-term learning capabilities. This fragmentation complicates the process of selecting appropriate frameworks and restricts organisational preparedness against emerging threats. Consequently, a systematic and goal-oriented evaluation of cyber resilience frameworks is necessary. Such an evaluation can identify strengths, weaknesses, and unresolved gaps, thereby informing the development of resilience models that are capable of supporting future organisational needs.

Numerous systematic reviews and surveys have examined cybersecurity frameworks, maturity models, and resilience assessment methods. These studies often focus on compliance, risk management, or applications specific to particular sectors. Earlier research typically analyses resilience qualitatively or concentrate on a limited number of functional aspects, without providing a comprehensive quantitative comparison across different resilience objectives. Moreover, existing reviews rarely evaluate frameworks in the context of emerging threats such as those enabled by AI, autonomous adversaries, or Zero

Trust Architecture (ZTA). They also seldom translate identified gaps into a cohesive framework design.

This study addresses these limitations by making four distinct contributions. Firstly, it provides a goal-oriented, quantitative evaluation of cyber resilience frameworks across nine resilience objectives. This evaluation integrates both the functions outlined in NIST CSF 2.0 and the extended resilience dimensions. Secondly, it offers a longitudinal synthesis of evidence covering frameworks published between 2010 and 2025, thereby facilitating trend-based analysis. Thirdly, it explicitly assesses the extent to which existing frameworks address emerging threats and attack vectors driven by Artificial Intelligence. Fourthly, it highlights gaps in governance, adaptability, and empirical validation. Finally, it translates the identified gaps into an evidence-informed, AI-powered cyber resilience model. This approach effectively bridges findings from systematic reviews with framework design. To the authors' knowledge, no previous research has combined these elements within a single, structured analysis.

In light of the above, the objective of this review is to systematically assess CRFs to determine their alignment with resilience goals and their capacity to address emerging threats. Four research questions (RQs) guided this study:

- RQ1: Which goals are most commonly pursued in CRFs?
- RQ2: Do current CRFs address emerging cyber threats?
- RQ3: What are the strengths and weaknesses inherent in CRFs?
- RQ4: Which gaps can inform the design of future CRFs?

The remaining part of this study is organised into six sections: Section II provides a conceptual overview of CRFs, Section III presents the method used, Section IV highlights the main findings, Section V offers the final discussion, Section VI introduces the proposed conceptual model, and Section VII closes the study with recommendations for further research.

II. Conceptual Overview

This section outlines the conceptual foundation of cyber resilience frameworks. The nine goals, inclusive of NIST CSF 2.0 functions and cyber resilience goals (Identify, Protect, Detect, Respond, Recover, Govern, Anticipate, Withstand, Evolve), provide the analytical baseline for this review. Additionally, Zero Trust (ZT) and Artificial Intelligence /Machine Learning (AI/ML) are introduced as emerging enablers of resilience that influence the design of contemporary frameworks.

A. Emerging Cyber Threats

Cybercriminals act with malevolent intent to disrupt services and compromise critical data, resulting in financial losses [3]. As cyber-attacks evolve, they also contribute to broader economic impacts [4]. Furthermore, these attacks pose a range of operational and organisational risks [5]. Attackers even adapt their attack strategies to elude traditional defences [6]. Several authors review emerging cyber threats, including Advanced Persistent Threats [7], cybersecurity challenges such as phishing and social engineering exploits [8], and modern threats and defence strategies addressing operational risks from malware, data breaches, and network intrusions [9]. In addition, AI-powered attacks and cryptocurrency-based cybercrimes demonstrate the growing technological intricacies of contemporary cyber threats [10]. Other threats exploit vulnerabilities in new technologies like fifth-generation (5G) networks, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT), and cloud computing [11]. Recent research shows a growing trend in cyber threats that evolve in quantity and complexity, with attackers using advanced techniques to exploit vulnerabilities in digital infrastructure [12]. The threats are mostly characterised by their dynamic and volatile nature, which emphasises the need for continually adapting and enhancing countermeasures [9, 13]. Although safeguards such as antivirus software, firewalls, and encryption are alleviating, they have limitations [14]. The adoption of cyber resilience capabilities in security mechanisms can bring proactiveness and a reliable solution [15]. In conjunction with the accelerating growth of unpredictable cyber threats, there must be a shift from merely defending against such attacks. There is a need to cultivate resilience through a system's capability to absorb the impact of attacks, regain functionality, and adjust effectively in response to cyber incidents. This accentuates the importance of cyber resilience, which, on top of preventing breaches, also minimises disruptions and promotes rapid recovery.

B. Resilience to Cyber Threats

Cyber resilience has stimulated scholarly interest since the 2000s, alongside the growing maturity in cyber threats. It complements the traditional security approach to protect digital assets and systems. It is vital to highlight the distinction between cybersecurity and cyber resilience for a deeper understanding of the latter. Cybersecurity is defined as "the organisation and collection of resources, processes, and structures used to protect cyberspace and cyberspace-enabled systems from occurrences that misalign de jure from de facto property rights" [16]. In simple terms, it is the operationalization of policies, procedures, and technical measures aimed at securing information and communication systems. Cybersecurity solutions alone cannot cope with the increasing impact of cyber-attacks on organisations. However, the relationship between cybersecurity and cyber resilience remains ambiguous, with some arguing that both goals should be pursued simultaneously rather than prioritising one over the other [1]. Cyber resilience distinguishes itself on the basis of its readiness to pull through cyberattacks, be adaptable, and learn from adversity [17]. It is about going beyond the traditional cybersecurity measure. Cyber resilience requires a mindset shift from reactiveness to proactiveness against known to unknown cyber incidents. Its aim is to incessantly deliver the expected outcome despite adverse conditions [18]. Traditional cybersecurity approaches are reactive and mostly founded on a perimeter-based model for securing organisations. They address certain and known cyber events and adopt a fail-safe strategy. However, cyber resilience acknowledges the inevitability of risks and promotes the strategy of safe to fail, where every system can fail in a controlled way with the ability to recover [18]. Hence, there is a pressing need to either supplement cybersecurity with cyber resilience or simply transcend cybersecurity while moving towards cyber resilience. Today, a number of frameworks are considering cyber resilience and entailing proactive measures to

prevent emerging cyber threats. Therefore, it is important to define cyber resilience.

The literature review shows that there are many definitions of cyber resilience. Researchers have yet to gain unanimity in accepting a unique scientific definition for it [19]. The lack of a universally agreed-upon definition is not only an academic concern but has real-world consequences. This has an impact on the design of CRFs and affects their practical applicability in organisations. Each definition influences the way an organisation or system conceptualise and implement resilience strategies. The different definitions emphasise resilience goals or characteristics in varying ways, depending on what needs to be resilient [20]. For instance, the focus might be on systems, organisations, or threat models. Consequently, five definitions of cyber resilience have been selected that can provide the material perspectives of cyber resilience. Since very often the essence of cyber resilience is misunderstood, Table I below summarises the main definitions.

TABLE I. OVERVIEW OF SELECTED DEFINITIONS

Definition of Cyber Resilience	Key Goals
"The ability to anticipate, withstand, recover from, and evolve to adverse conditions, stresses, attacks, or compromises on systems" [21,22]	Anticipate, Withstand, Recover, Evolve/Adapt
"The ability to prepare for, absorb, recover from, and adapt to adverse events in cyber systems" [23].	Prepare, Absorb, Recover, Adapt
"The ability to continuously deliver the intended outcome despite adverse cyber events" [18].	Business continuity during cyber disruption
"The capacity to withstand, recover from, and adapt to the external shocks caused by cyber risks" [24].	Withstand, Recover, Adapt
"The ability of systems to resist and recover from, or adapt to, a cyber compromise" [25].	Withstand, Recover, Adapt

It is observed from Table I above that the definitions of cyber resilience are mainly goal-oriented. The first definition has been used to ease discussion, and the goals are defined below:

- Anticipate (AP): to maintain an informed state of readiness against potential compromises arising from attacks by antagonists.
- Withstand (WT): to uphold critical operational continuity in spite of the successful occurrence of an attack by an antagonist.
- Recovery (RC): to recover operations in the aftermath of an attack by an antagonist.
- Evolve (EV): to adapt to anticipated changes in the operational, technical, or threat environments.

This definition offers a complementary approach to conventional measures undertaken in cybersecurity. Understanding and using this definition as a foundation to implement cyber resilience is not enough. Organisations need to be guided by CRFs to implement cyber resilience strategies. A well-defined one provides the methodologies and best practices to achieve cyber resilience goals. However, as evidenced by the literature, there is a dearth of studies that focus on CRF against emerging threats of unknown and evolving nature. This inquiry attempts to address this gap by examining the extent to which the current frameworks ensure resilience.

C. Cyber Resilience Frameworks (CRFs)

A CRF is a structured method for managing and responding to threats and incidents in cyberspace. It aids in minimising the disruption caused by such occurrences in an organisation. It is designed in a way to assist organisations anticipate, withstand, and recover from cyber threats [26]. Such a framework typically includes a set of policies, procedures, and technologies that work together to ensure that an organisational entity can survive and recover from attacks. An organisation can improve its capacity to sustain critical functions and swiftly rebound from the disruption of service by adopting a proper CRF [26]. CRFs are evolving and moving from prevention to detection, response, and recovery so as to confront the adaptive and shifting characteristics and challenges of cyber threats [27]. In general, the framework is structured to strengthen an organisation's proficiency in detecting, managing and bouncing back from cyber incidents. This further promotes risk mitigation strategies in the organisation. Recently, emphasis has been laid on situational awareness for effective crisis management and cybersecurity resilience [28].

D. Commonly Established Frameworks

Several well-established frameworks, including NIST, ENISA, ISO 27001, and ISO/IEC 27032, provide guidance for organisations seeking to strengthen their safeguards against cyber threats. Their contributions in enhancing business continuity and cyber resilience have been recognised [29]. The comparative analyses of NIST and ISO27001 offer practical guidance for minimising exposure to cybersecurity risk by selecting appropriate frameworks for organisations [30]. Reviews of framework methodologies and implementation challenges further support effective adoption and application into organisational cybersecurity strategies [31].

In particular, the NIST CSF 2.0 is an updated voluntary guideline to assist all types of organisations to manage and mitigate cybersecurity risks. The way organisations implement it will depend on their risk tolerances, missions, and objectives. It builds on the previous version's functions, highlighting the importance of governance and supply chains. Its core abilities are to:

- Govern the organisation's cybersecurity risk management strategy;
- Identify current cyber risks, to protect against those risks by using safeguards;
- Detect possible attacks and compromises, to respond to detected incidents; and
- Recover affected operations and assets from incidents.

HIPAA, CIS Controls, COBIT, PCI DSS, and CMMC are also prominent frameworks that organisations use to improve their security posture. The role of HIPAA is in securing patient health information and healthcare provider responsibilities [32], while comparative analyses of frameworks such as CIS Controls and COBIT provide guidance for selecting appropriate standards [33]. The PCI DSS framework is used in the context of payment card industry security requirements [34], and CMMC for supply chain management [35]. Additionally, GDPR and HIPAA compliance in IoT healthcare systems shows the importance of regulatory adherence in the digital environment [36]. Since these frameworks have distinct features and operational differences, organisations often align multiple frameworks to meet their needs. Nowadays, some frameworks are leveraging on Zero Trust Architecture to strengthen cyber resilience.

E. Zero Trust Security Frameworks

The Zero Trust (ZT) concept was initially meant to deal with insider threats within organisations. The ZT security model is defined as a network defence strategy that presumes that an adversary has penetrated inside the hardened perimeter of an organisation [37]. Enterprises like Google, Microsoft, and Gartner have implemented this framework after having understood that safeguarding only their network perimeters is fruitless [38]. ZT is an emerging paradigm supporting cyber resilience. Its strategic approach is to "Never trust, always verify". Users, devices, or transactions are not granted trust by default. Currently, there is a scarcity of research in this area [39]. In brief, ZT uses the de-perimeterisation concept. It departs from a perimeter-based security model to a perimeter-less one, where users and devices should not assume trustworthiness by default [37]. It aligns with the principles of cyber resilience as it focuses on measures on how to safeguard sensitive data [40]. This alignment is crucial as data breaches have alarming consequences. ZT should not be considered as a security model only, but a new way of thinking that should be indoctrinated in all security frameworks. Another important aspect is the incorporation of Artificial Intelligence in frameworks.

F. Contribution of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in CRF

Today, Artificial Intelligence is becoming an integral part of technology. However, AI-driven solutions in cybersecurity are used in paradoxical situations. It can either be used as an intelligent defence mechanism or a weapon, such as Advanced Persistent Threats [41]. AI is a powerful tool to rapidly analyse large datasets, detect patterns of a potential threat that may be partially hidden [42]. Cyber defence systems without AI are insufficient to fight against AI-driven cyberattacks, which applies fast decision logics. Furthermore, AI integration in cyber defence for automating threat detection, incident response, and threat analysis can reorient cybersecurity from responding to anticipating threats [42]. The use of AI in CRF is to ensure the system's protection and address the challenges associated with advanced cyber-attacks, including AI-powered attacks [41]. It aids in staying ahead of shape-shifting threats as it facilitates the development of adaptive defence tactics to counter emergent threats. AI is the game-changer in cyber resilience and the development of new frameworks.

As evidenced by various studies, research in the ambit of cyber resilience is gradually progressing. However, although many CRFs have been proposed since the year 2000, they have limitations. There is still a need for increased clarity on their scope, characteristics, and synergies [43]. In order to realise this outcome, a methodical approach is required. The subsequent section discusses the methodology applied to gather the information and analyse the frameworks.

III. METHODS

This section outlines the procedure used to conduct a systematic literature review on CRFs by focusing on their goals, strengths, and weaknesses. The concepts of repeatability [44, 45], along with the PRISMA framework for systematic reviews and meta-analyses [46], were applied. This approach was selected to enhance the review process, making it more transparent, rigorous, and reproducible. Since systematic review can be prone to selection bias by unintentionally favouring certain studies, this methodology helped in reducing that risk. The PRISMA checklist in conjunction with the flow diagram supported the systematic organisation and presentation of the findings, to reflect recent advances in systematic review methodology and terminology. This framework also substantiates the rationale behind the methodological decisions on search strategy, data sources, eligibility criteria, study selection and examination procedures. PRISMA is also a robust protocol commonly used in cybersecurity research [47, 48].

A. Eligibility Criteria

The eligibility criteria were established to confirm the relevance and rigor of the evaluation. Studies were included if they:

- Proposed or evaluated a CRF between 2010 and 2025;
- Addressed resilience goals or emerging threats, and
- Were published in peer-reviewed venues. Non-English, non-peer-reviewed, and duplicate studies were excluded.

B. Databases and Search Strategy

Primary studies were systematically identified and pulled out using carefully selected keywords across multiple databases. IEEE Xplore, ScienceDirect, Scopus, Emerald Insight, and Google Scholar were searched using Boolean query: (“cyber resilience framework” OR “CRF”) AND (“emerging threats” OR “AI” OR “Zero Trust”).

C. Screening and Selection

As illustrated in Fig. 1, a total of 11,027 records were retrieved. After duplicate removal and two-stage screening, 55 studies were included. Fig. 2 illustrates the annual number of research publications in CRFs from 2010 to 2025. It shows that publications in cyber resilience were unstable in the early years, while recently it has been trending upwards. The highest number of publications was recorded in the year 2025.

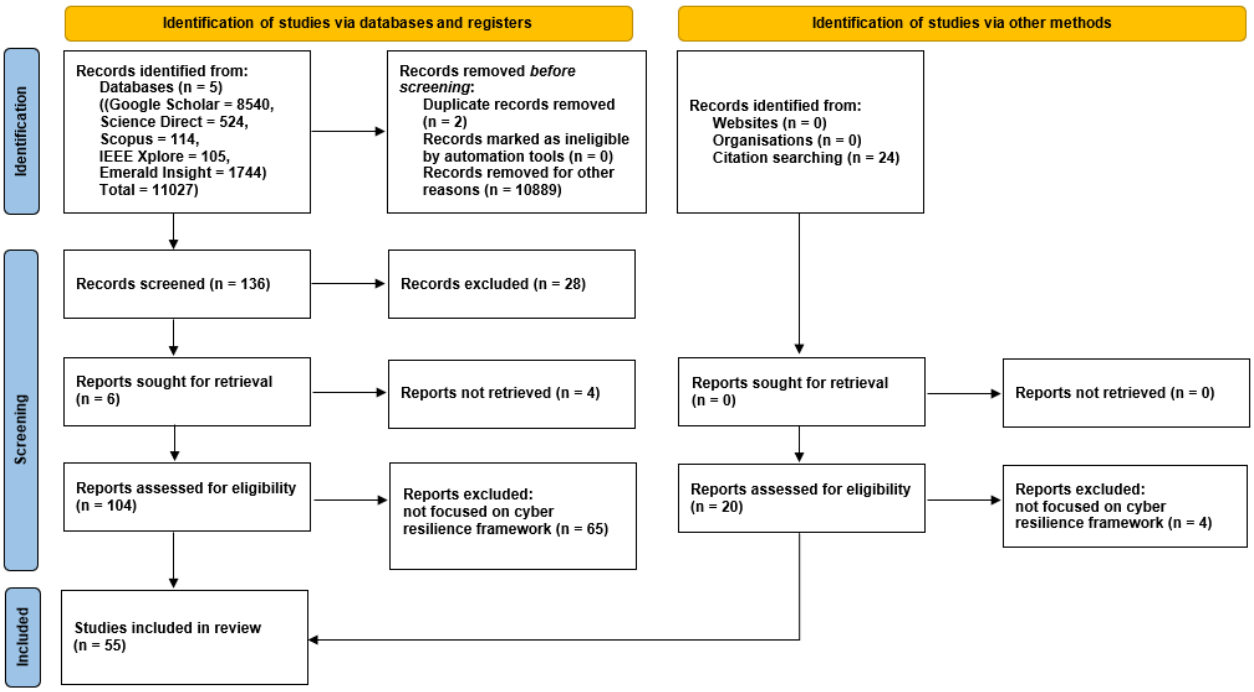

Fig. 1. PRISMA 2020 flow diagram for systematic review.

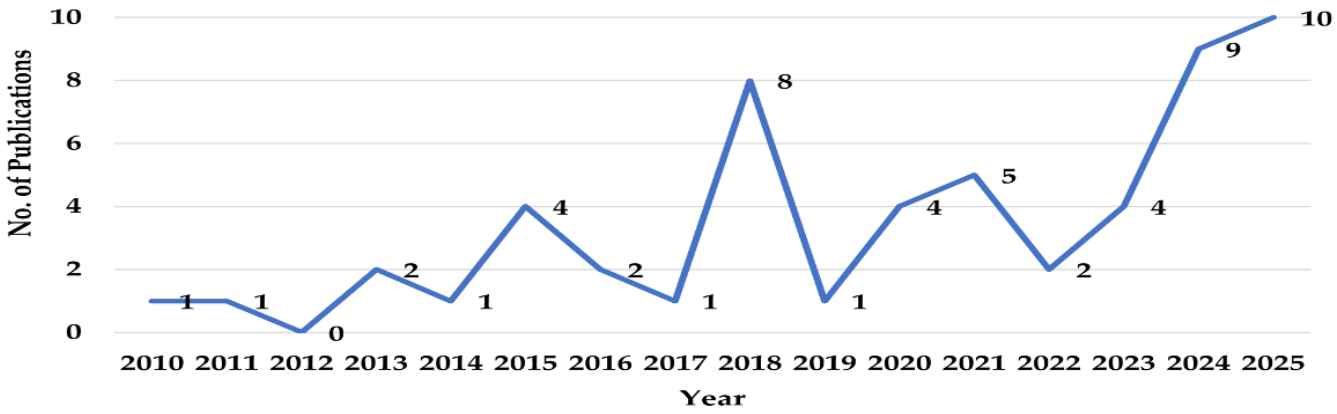

Fig. 2. Annual number of research publications in cyber resilience framework from 2010 to 2025.

TABLE II. PICO FRAMEWORKS

Element	Definition	Application in this Review
Population	Cyber resilience frameworks	All CRFs published 2010–2025
Intervention	Features/ capabilities	AI/ML integration, Situational Awareness, Zero Trust, Blockchain, dynamic defence mechanisms, Comprehensive scope
Comparator	Established frameworks/goals	9 goals of (NIST CSF 2.0 functions + cyber resilience goals)
Outcome	Evaluation metrics	Goal coverage %, strengths/ weaknesses, emerging threat coverage

Table II outlines the PICO framework applied in this study, specifying the population, intervention, comparison, and outcomes that guided the research design.

D. Data Extraction and Synthesis

Data was extracted using a coding sheet capturing year, framework, domain, goals addressed, emerging threats, and validation status. In synthesis, Table III and Table IV, the presence of a feature or goal was indicated with a tick symbol (√), while absence was left blank. Percentages were calculated to quantify coverage, as shown in Tables V and VI. Thematic synthesis was then applied to interpret patterns, supported by visualisations (radar/pie charts). Based on the structured extraction and synthesis, the following section summarises the main outcomes:

TABLE III. CYBER RESILIENCE FRAMEWORKS FROM 2010 TO 2025

Citation	Publication Year.	Cyber Resilience Framework (CRF)	Goals									Comprehensive scope	Situational Awareness	AI/ML Integration	Dynamic Defence	Caters for emerging threats	Lacks Empirical Validation
			Identify	Protect	Detect	Respond	Recover	Govern	Anticipate	Withstand	Evolve						
[49]	2010	"CERT Resilience Management Model"	√	√	√	√	√	√				√					
[20]	2011	"Cyber Resiliency Engineering framework"		√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√			√	√	
[23]	2013	"Resilience matrix framework"					√		√	√	√						
[50]	2013	"Offensive Cyber Counterintelligence (CCI) framework"	√	√	√	√			√				√			√	
[51]	2014	"Cyber Resiliency Engineering framework"	√	√	√	√	√		√	√		√			√	√	
[52]	2015	"Proactive crisis management"	√	√	√	√	√		√			√			√		√
[53]	2015	"Updated Cyber Resiliency Engineering Framework (CR Eng. Aid)"	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√			√	√	
[54]	2015	"Cyber Resilience Engineering Framework (CREF)"		√	√	√											
[55]	2015	"Cyber Resiliency Framework"	√	√	√	√	√		√				√			√	
[56]	2016	"ISP 10x10M Framework"		√	√	√	√										
[57]	2016	"Resilience Metric Framework"					√			√							
[58]	2017	"SDN-based security risk assessment"	√	√	√	√											√
[59]	2018	"Process Reference Model (PRM)"	√	√	√	√	√	√									
[60]	2018	"Universal System Model"		√		√	√										
[61]	2018	"Siemens Cybersecurity Model"			√				√			√					
[61]	2018	"Frost & Sullivan's Security Maturity Model"		√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√					
[62]	2018	"Cyber resilience Assessment model (industrial Control Systems)"	√	√	√	√	√		√			√					
[63]	2018	"Start Secure, Stay Secure, & Return Secure"	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√			√	√	
[64]	2018	"Wicked Problem Conceptual framework"	√	√	√	√	√										
[65]	2018	"Proactive Resilience Educational Framework (Prosilience EF)"	√	√	√	√	√				√						
[66]	2019	"Novel cyber resilience framework"			√	√			√								
[67]	2020	"Holistic Cybersecurity Maturity Assessment Framework (HCYMAF)"	√	√	√	√	√										
[68]	2020	"Managerial CRF"		√	√	√	√			√	√						
[69]	2020	"CRF for SMEs"	√	√	√	√	√	√									
[70]	2020	"IWA framework"		√	√								√			√	√
[29]	2021	"New Cyber Resilience framework"	√	√	√	√	√							√		√	
[71]	2021	"CR-SAT cyber resilience framework"	√	√	√	√	√	√									
[72]	2021	"New AI-led framework"	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√		√	√		√	
[73]	2021	"MTD Strategy Design Framework"		√	√								√			√	
[74]	2021	"SME Cyber Situational Awareness model"		√									√				
[75]	2022	"Cybersecurity Service System Model"	√	√	√	√	√									√	
[76]	2022	"Network Defense Training Game (NDTG) framework"	√	√	√	√	√										

TABLE IV. CYBER RESILIENCE FRAMEWORKS FROM 2023 TO 2025

Citation	Publication Year.	Cyber Resilience Framework (CRF)	Goals									Comprehensive scope	Situational Awareness	AI/ML Integration	Dynamic Defence	Caters for emerging threats	Zero Trust	Blockchain	Lacks Empirical Validation
			Identify	Protect	Detect	Respond	Recover	Govern	Anticipate	Withstand	Evolve								
[77]	2023	"Smart Cities Cybersecure framework - Blockchain-based architecture"		√	√	√			√	√			√	√	√	√		√	
[28]	2023	"PHOENI2X CRF AI-assisted orchestration, automation & response"	√	√	√	√	√		√	√			√	√		√			
[78]	2023	"NIST organization's cybersecurity maturity"	√	√	√	√	√						√						
[41]	2023	"AI4CYBER framework"	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√			
[79]	2024	"New Cyber resilience metric including Zero Trust & MITRE ATT&CK)"		√	√	√	√					√	√	√	√	√	√		
[27]	2024	"Next-Generation CRF"	√	√	√	√					√			√	√	√			
[26]	2024	"New Cyber Resilience Framework"	√	√	√	√	√	√				√				√			
[80]	2024	"NIST CSF v2.0 aligned with maritime challenges"	√	√	√	√	√	√	√										
[81]	2024	"Framework for Cyber Security & vulnerability management"	√	√	√	√			√					√		√			
[82]	2024	"Agile Cybersecurity Framework"		√	√	√	√	√											
[83]	2024	"Supply Chain CR (SCCR)"		√	√	√			√										
[84]	2024	"Novel ML-based HCT modeling & analysis framework"		√	√	√			√			√	√	√		√			
[85]	2024	"New three-layer architecture - Cyber-biosecurity"		√	√	√			√				√						
[86]	2025	"Fraud detection & data protection cybersecurity framework-financials"	√	√	√	√			√		√			√		√			
[87]	2025	"Multi-layered AI-enhanced cyber resilience framework to safeguard smart city infrastructures"	√	√	√		√		√	√	√			√	√	√	√	√	
[88]	2025	"KPI-Based Evaluation CRF - Ships"	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√								√
[89]	2025	"A Conceptual framework for SME"	√											√					
[90]	2025	"AI-Powered Cybersecurity Framework for Remote Work"	√	√	√	√								√		√			
[91]	2025	"NIST CSF aligned with Evaluation Framework for Cybersecurity Maturity"	√	√	√	√	√	√											
[92]	2025	"Optimal cybersecurity framework - Smart Water System Detection"	√	√	√									√		√			
[93]	2025	"Cybersecurity Framework for Protecting Critical Infrastructure in Organization"	√	√	√	√	√	√		√				√		√	√	√	
[94]	2025	"Cognitive Zero-Trust Resilience Framework (CZTRF)"	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√		√		√	√		
[95]	2025	"CR-V2XR, cross-layer, federated, & trust-aware coordinated framework"	√	√	√				√					√		√			

TABLE V. SUMMARY OF CRFS STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Years	CRFs from 2010 to 2025							
	Strengths							Weakness
	Comprehensive Scope	Situational Awareness	AI/ML Integration	Dynamic Defence Mechanism	Caters for emerging threats	Zero Trust	Blockchain	Lacks Empirical Validation
Total No. of CRF	14	13	17	10	26	4	3	4
Percentage of CRF	24.56	22.81	29.82	17.54	45.61	7.02	5.26	7.02

TABLE VI. SUMMARY OF GOAL-WISE CRFS FROM 2010 TO 2025

Goals	Identify	Protect	Detect	Respond	Recover	Govern	Anticipate	Withstand	Evolve
Total No. of CRF	36	50	50	45	36	10	26	16	14
Percentage of CRF	63.16	87.72	87.72	78.95	63.16	17.54	45.61	28.07	24.56

IV. RESULTS

The review syntheses the result of 55 studies, as presented in Table III, Table IV, Table V, and Table VI, with respect to the Research Questions that guided this study. The findings uncovered notable trends and important insights on the prevailing research trends in CRFs. The main results are as follows:

- RQ1 (Goals pursued): Most CRFs emphasise Protect (87.72%) and Detect (87.72%), with limited focus on Govern (17.54%), Withstand (28.07%), and Evolve (24.56%).
- RQ2 (Emerging threats): Only 45.61% of CRFs explicitly address emerging threats such as AI-driven or IoT-based attacks.
- RQ3 (Strengths & weaknesses): Strengths include AI/ML integration (29.82%), comprehensive scope (24.56%), Situational Awareness (22.81%), Dynamic Defence mechanism (17.54%), Zero Trust (7.02%) and Blockchain (5.26%). Weakness includes lack of empirical validation (7.02%).
- RQ4 (Gaps): Under-represented goals (Govern, Withstand, Evolve) and low empirical validation highlight gaps that limit resilience against sophisticated threats.

The radar chart in Fig. 3 is based on the summarised CRFs' goals calculated from Table VI. This chart has been used to visualise the multivariate goals in a way that highlights comparisons across the CRFs. The general trend shows that there are significant variations across the different categories with peaks in areas like Protect, Detect, and Respond while sharp declines in Govern, Withstand and Evolve. There is an overall asymmetrical distribution, indicating that some CRFs have focused more on certain specific goals (Protect, Detect, Respond, Identify, Recover) than others.

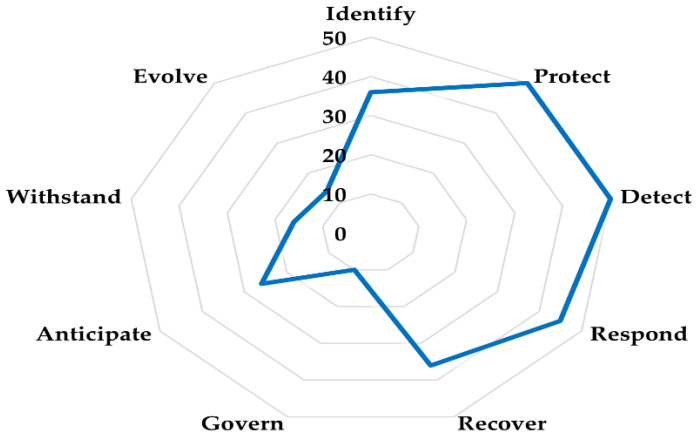

Fig. 3. Radar chart showing goal-wise total of CRFs (2010 to 2025).

The pie chart, in Fig. 4, illustrates the same results from Table VI, in the form of percentages. The majority of frameworks focus on cybersecurity capabilities, namely, "Protect" (87.72%), "Detect" (87.72%), "Respond" (78.95%), "Identify" (63.16%), and "Recover" (63.16%). The "Govern" function (17.54%) has been overlooked. This is perhaps because it focuses on organisational cybersecurity rather than technical implementation, which is often the primary concern of security teams. Some attention has been dedicated to "Anticipate" (45.61%) capabilities. However, not much consideration has been devoted to "Withstand" (28.07%) and "Evolve" (24.56%) goals.

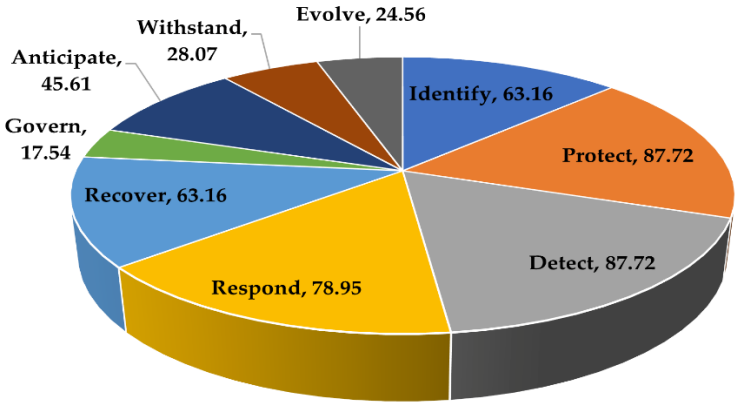

Fig. 4. Pie chart showing goal-wise percentage of CRFs (2010 to 2025).

A noteworthy observation from this review is that the CRFs are still heavily dependent on reactive measures. They fail to fully embrace the proactive and adaptive principles of cyber resilience in terms of withstanding and evolving to ever-changing cyber threats. The exposed gap has several implications for organisations or systems adopting frameworks without resilience capabilities. Should a threat arise, for instance, an AI-based cyber-attack, the organisations might face the following challenges:

- Adaptation failure to emerging threats and become an easy target to cyber incidents;
- Safe-to-fail strategy of cyber resilience will be jeopardised, as systems will not be able to fail in a controlled manner;
- Recovery time delay and lengthening of operational downtime;
- Major financial/reputational loss or legal implication issues; and
- Business closure.

In view of addressing this major gap, there is a necessity to develop a comprehensive framework. This framework should integrate resilience capabilities to adverse conditions with special focus on govern, withstand, and evolve goals. Consequently, a structured visual representation of a model can provide a systematic approach to designing such a framework. The following sections discuss the results and present a proposed conceptual cyber resilience model.

V. Discussion

This review reveals that CRFs prioritise reactive capabilities (Protect, Detect, Respond), while governance and adaptive goals (Withstand, Evolve) remain neglected. The overemphasis on technical safeguards reflects a short-term posture, leaving organisations under-prepared for evolving threats.

Comparisons with previous surveys show that while situational awareness and AI/ML integration are increasing, empirical testing of frameworks is rare, raising concerns over practical deployment.

- Implications for Practice: Policymakers should encourage frameworks to institutionalise governance and adaptive mechanisms. Practitioners should prioritise frameworks with empirical validation before adoption.
- Limitations: This review only included English language sources and excluded grey literature. Binary coding (ticks) may oversimplify framework capabilities.
- Future Research: There is a need for measurable resilience indicators for Withstand/Evolve, digital twin validation of CRFs, and AI-driven resilience metrics.

VI. Proposed Framework

The proposed AI-powered CRF directly addresses the identified gaps. Specifically, it enhances the neglected "Govern", "Withstand", and "Evolve" goals, integrates Zero Trust and situational awareness, and introduces AI/ML for adaptive defence. This ensures continuity between the evidence synthesis and framework design.

The framework focuses on the ability to offer real-time protection, recovery, and operational continuity based on the four dimensions of cyber resilience, i.e., competence in predicting threats, resisting shocks, recuperating from, and evolving from adverse conditions. Fig. 5 illustrates the model, which integrates multiple layers of defence with situational awareness and Zero Trust Architecture to create a complete, adaptive, scalable, cyber resilient, and dynamic defence mechanism to counteract cyber threats.

This model has three layers with a core, whereby each layer is finely coupled and supports one another. It ensures a structured and adaptive cyber resilience coverage. It incorporates the protection of data in terms of confidentiality, integrity, and availability throughout its lifecycle.

The top layer, Situational Awareness, emphasises continuous monitoring and vigilance to stay aware of potential threats. This layer consists of Risk Assessment, AI-driven Threat Intelligence with continuous monitoring, and Decision Support.

Fig. 5. AI-powered cyber resilience model (Source: authors' creation).

The second layer is the Zero Trust Architecture (ZTA). It helps eliminate implicit trust and promotes continuous authentication and authorisation of users, devices, and network traffic to access network resources. Furthermore, it uses the principle of least privilege access, micro-segmentation, dynamic security policies, and encryption. Implementing ZTA enhances the cybersecurity posture of an organisation by reducing the attack surface and preventing lateral movement across networks.

The third layer of the model consists of the four pillars of cyber resilience functions, ensuring resilience spanning the pre-incident, during the incident, and post-incident stages of a cyber-attack. Their functions are:

- To anticipate with proactive threat hunting capabilities. AI-driven threat intelligence with Artificial Intelligence algorithms for anomaly and threat detection, and real-time monitoring of cyber threats with early warning. In this phase, prioritisation of assets is important, suggesting a prioritised approach to asset security;
- To withstand with dynamic defence, deceptive mechanisms to mislead attackers, air-gapped protection as a fail-safe, data immutability, as well as Zero Trust mechanisms;
- To recover with automated response, swift recovery, self-healing capabilities, redundancy, failover Systems, minimum downtime, and business impact; and
- To evolve with a feedback mechanism, learning, acknowledging policies and cyber laws with compliance to regulations, adaptation, and a continuous improvement process.

The core of the model consists of governance and humans as key factors. On one hand, good governance in line with organisational goals and policies guides security decisions, on the other, humans through their cybersecure awareness and skills bring these policies to life. Together, they create a resilient cyber resilience-aware culture where leadership, policy, and vigilance jointly safeguard the organisation.

A. Technical Specificity of the AI Model

The AI-powered components of the proposed framework support specific goals related to cyber resilience. Machine learning-based anomaly detection models analyse network traffic and system logs in order to enhance the anticipation of emerging threats. Automated response mechanisms, which are integrated with security orchestration platforms, facilitate rapid containment and recovery following security incidents. Reinforcement learning techniques enable continuous adaptation by updating defensive policies based on observed attack patterns and response outcomes. Collectively, these AI mechanisms operationalize the goals of anticipation, withstanding, recovering, and evolving capabilities. Thus, they strengthen resilience against adaptive adversaries.

B. Framework Validation and Evaluation Strategy

Although the proposed AI-powered cyber resilience framework is conceptual in nature, its effectiveness can be systematically evaluated using established validation methodologies. Scenario-based simulations may be employed to assess the framework's behaviour under representative attack conditions. These conditions include AI-driven phishing, ransomware propagation, and IoT-based intrusions. Digital twin or cyber-range environments can further support controlled experimentation. Such environments enable the measurement of recovery time, operational continuity, and the effectiveness of adaptive responses.

Furthermore, key performance indicators such as mean time to detect, mean time to recover, resilience maturity progression, and governance effectiveness may be employed to quantify outcomes of the framework. These validation strategies establish a robust foundation for future empirical testing. They also ensure that the proposed framework is grounded in practical feasibility rather than in purely theoretical abstraction.

VII. Conclusion

Improper implementation of cyber resilience leaves organisations susceptible to cyber-attacks. Although a number of CRFs have been conceived to date, they still have some shortcomings. Most of the frameworks are still using traditional cybersecurity approaches with reactive strategies and insufficient focus on cyber resilience. They are unable to deal with unknown and evolving cyber threats, requiring a comprehensive coverage of technologies like AI/ML, ZTA, blockchain, IoT, and automation. Consequently, the limitations in the frameworks lie mostly in their adaptability to handle

evolving threats, and cyber resilience does make a difference. Although cyber resilience is not a panacea, it does provide a distinctive strength through proactive security management. The conceptual model proposed in this research is a stride towards this aim, harnessing the speed and accuracy of Artificial Intelligence and the "Never Trust Always Verify" paradigm to advance Cybersecurity.

The proposed framework is applicable to a broad range of organisational contexts, including small and medium-sized enterprises, critical infrastructure operators, and public sector organisations. By integrating governance, adaptive learning, and emerging-threat awareness, the framework supports informed decision-making concerning cybersecurity investment, policy formulation, and resilience planning. Consequently, it offers both a theoretical contribution to cyber resilience research and practical guidance for organisations operating within increasingly dynamic cyber risk environments.

Although this study advances scholarly understanding in cyber resilience, it is not free from limitations. The authors recognise that there might be some potential biases or subjectivities introduced by their own perspectives in evaluating the CRFs. Furthermore, the authors acknowledge that the issue of the AI aspect would be in the training of the AI model, which requires large and accurate datasets, which are often limited. Instead, AI-generated synthetic cybersecurity datasets that maintain realistic attack patterns and vulnerabilities can be used. In addition, adversarial AI-training can be utilised to improve the model's resilience against emerging threats. There is also a need to build a prototype CRF from this model and assess its practical feasibility in organisations within risk management practices. It is also critical to evaluate the CRF to ensure its effectiveness against evolving threats.

Some potential improvements for future research are to explore the possibility of using an AI-driven security framework evaluation, using machine learning techniques to assess the framework's efficiency and predictive accuracy. Also, the use of cybersecurity digital twins to empirically test the CRF through real case studies or simulations could be envisaged. Another option could be the use of AI-Augmented Penetration Testing tools to evaluate CRF dynamically against new and evolving threats. Lastly, a promising avenue for future research is on self-healing systems within a framework, which is critical to enhance resilience. These techniques and research areas will address the current limitations and applicability of CRFs.

Some practical implications of the proposed model in real-world scenarios would be proactive threat detection before they cause damage, as the AI capability in the model would identify patterns and anomalies in network traffic and user behaviours. Enhanced response to cyber incidents in real-time by isolating compromised systems and mitigating attacks without human intervention. Overall, its benefit would be to strengthen cybersecurity posture, reduce system downtime, sustain business continuity, and protect sensitive data from cyber incidents.

In conclusion, while CRFs have advanced in integrating AI and Zero Trust, their limited attention to governance and adaptive resilience weakens their effectiveness. Addressing these gaps is crucial for organisations facing dynamic cyber threats. The proposed framework provides a blueprint for strengthening future CRFs through adaptability, validation, and evidence-based design.

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Dual Cognitive Pathway Architecture for Robust and Dialect-Aware English Reading Comprehension

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***Abstract*—Reading comprehension models frequently struggle to accommodate linguistic diversity, especially dialectal variations within the English language that disrupt semantic alignment and fairness. In order to overcome these drawbacks, this study proposes the Dual Cognitive Pathway-Based Dialect-Aware Cognitive Twin Framework (NeuroTwin-DialectaLearn) as a new framework that combines the principles of cognitive science, sociolinguistic expertise, and adaptive learning methods. The framework also has two parallel understanding routes, one is a Lexico-Semantic Pathway that processes normal English, and the other is a Dialectal-Semantic Pathway that is involved in normalizing the dialect and aligning the semantics. Such pathways interact with each other by a process of Adaptive attention fusion in a Cognitive Twin model, which instantiates important cognitive processes, including lexical processing, syntactic parsing, semantic integration, inductive reasoning, and answer generation. It uses Python and PyTorch to implement the system and is tested on the English Classroom QA Dataset with the addition of synthetic dialectal variants to enhance the system. The accuracy of comprehension is 98.1 per cent, the average response time is 14.3 seconds, and the rate of learners' improvement is 18.9 per cent, which is much higher than the baseline QA systems and improved BERT models. The framework has shown consistent performance in the context of dialects; the number of vocabulary-related mistakes is lower, and the consistency of inference is higher, proving to be an effective tool in dialect-conscious and cognitively based reading comprehension. In general, the present research provides a linguistically encompassing, versatile, and understandable next-generation smart educational system.**

Keywords*—Cognitive Twin; Dialectal Transfer; Adaptive Tasking; English reading comprehension; personalized learning

I. Introduction

English proficiency has become highly essential to enable students to excel in their everyday learning, and create a career, and communicate with people all over the world [1]. Although it has a distinct benefit, most of the students learning English as a second language find it challenging to use written texts due to differences in terms of culture, language, and mental condition [2]. The common reading understanding models fail to identify the differences between a mono and multilingual learner, and this is why they do not work with multilingual learners. The person with a learning disability who is going to work in a language with limited resources has a greater challenge due to the absence of resources [3]. Due to all this, new systems that render meaning to messages written in a different language without distorting the meaning or original ideas are now in order of being created [4]. These linguistic issues have been made promising thanks to the work of Artificial Intelligence and, specifically, Natural Language Processing [5]. These AI-based NLP technologies are used to enable machines to research language to gain a better grasp of how to comprehend and learn it [6]. A significant innovation is that the cross-lingual word embeddings make it possible to indicate words with identical meanings in various languages in a shared space [7]. Using adjustable embeddings, see better the way various languages structure themselves [8]. Such models prove particularly useful to ESL students since they can learn to interpret information which otherwise would have been bewildering in regular classes [9]. The implementation of the bi-LSTM networks, that is, a powerful neural network structure, has enabled easier comprehension of how a sentence varies due to the capability of the network to detect connections between words at the early and latter stages [10]. Two-way knowledge of the context enables chatbots to be close to how human beings tend to interpret language [11]. Such technologies, together with attention mechanisms that aid the model in attentively focusing on the germane elements of a sentence or paragraph, may lead to better and contextually relevant interpretations of text [12].

The strategy is aimed at assisting the multilingual students to read English better, with the combined cross-lingual word representations and Bi-LSTM-based attention mechanism [13]. The model is used to encode the main meaning, and in addition

to that, it is structured to connect contexts across various levels, enabling the model to interpret and utilize language more effectively. As a result, students are better placed to make more sense out of language concepts with different forms of writing due to learnt associations. It was also better tested in comparison with some of the traditional models of reading comprehension [14]. The significance of the framework is that it is able to store not only semantic richness but also the contextual stream of the language as the principal aspects of true understanding. It is a prominent learning instrument, especially for one who has a multilingual or low-resource background. The suggested framework can assist in addressing the block to effective communication and facilitating the fair language acquisition, and enable every learner in various linguistic groups to receive a higher academic performance with the assistance of clever technology. This study suggests a Dialect-Aware Cognitive Twin Framework, based on a Dual Cognitive Pathway, whereby a Lexico-Semantic Pathway is proposed as the standard English comprehension pathway and a Dialectal-Semantic Pathway is proposed as the regional and non-standard English understanding pathway. The framework creates dialect-neutral semantic representations through a fusion attention mechanism, allowing human-like, adaptive understanding in a wide variety of linguistic situations.

A. Problem Statement

The surge in the use of online education systems has unfolded the unresolved problems in English reading comprehension, particularly among the students who have been exposed to other dialects and language backgrounds [15]. The traditional understanding systems and AI-trained tutors tend to rely on the traditional collections of the English language, which are not useful to support the regional, colloquial, or non-standard speech forms and can cause misunderstanding and reduced learning. In addition, most existing frameworks provide some standard tasks and difficulty levels [16], and do not take into account the specifics of the learners, their error patterns, and cognitive differences, which results in ineffective interaction and inefficient one-on-one help. These gaps underline the need to have a smart system that can imitate the human-like level of understanding, the ability to change dialects depending on the state [17], and offer dynamically tailored learning activities to every learner. The issue is thus the absence of an integrated, dialect-sensitive, and adaptive framework that could contribute to the improvement of the accuracy of reading comprehension, inclusiveness, and learner development in heterogeneous education settings.

B. Research Motivation

The justification behind this research can be attributed to the necessity of filling the gap between human thinking processes and the dialectual differences that affect reading comprehension in English. A significant number of learners do not have a problem due to the failure to read, but instead because the current AI-based understanding frameworks do not consider the existence of linguistic diversity and dialect. This study aims to reproduce the neurocognitive processes of reading in the human brain with the dynamic adaptation process to dialect changes. The idea is to facilitate equity, inclusiveness, and accuracy in language understanding, especially for students who often have to move through a multi-lingual and dialect-rich world.

C. Research Significance

The framework proposed is of significant significance, since it implants the dual path cognitive model that can not only interpret linguistic meaning, but also normalizes dialectal differences in the process of understanding language. This syntactic design ensures dialect neutrality, cognitive realism, and adaptive personalization, all of which are mostly lacking in the traditional reading comprehension models. It can be applied in intelligent tutoring systems, AI-helped language learning, and adaptive learning systems, and is advantageous to contribute to the scientifically based and fair method of improving English reading comprehension in a linguistically diversified learning setting.

D. Key Contributions

- Introduces a dual-stream comprehension mechanism comprising Lexico-Semantic and Dialectal-Semantic pathways that process standard and dialectal English simultaneously, fusing them into a unified, dialect-neutral understanding.
- Recreates human reading cognition through hierarchical processing, lexical decoding, syntactic parsing, semantic integration, inferential reasoning, and answer generation mimicking human comprehension behavior.
- Enhances inclusivity by generating dialect-preserving embeddings and normalizing linguistic variations, enabling accurate comprehension of non-standard and regional English forms.
- Dynamically personalizes comprehension tasks based on learner performance, error distribution, and reading pace to optimize engagement and difficulty progression.
- Implements dialect-sensitive assessment and continuous monitoring to ensure equitable learning outcomes and measurable improvement in comprehension accuracy.

E. Rest of the Section

Since the related studies and technique are presented in Section II and Section III, respectively, the work is structured as follows: Section IV presents the results, and Section V concludes the study.

II. Literature Review

Muneer et al. [18] include the use of sentence transformer models to predict semantic similarity between pair of words in English and the Urdu language. The researchers used both LaBSE and Universal Sentence Encoder as multilingual embeddings. They also ventured into feature fusion in which there was a combination of various models and different translation tools like Bing and Google Translators. This was an indication that there are certain combinations that do score higher, namely, combination of LaBSE and Bing Translator which scores higher than the other combinations do as they appeared to bring about better semantic correspondence between

the translations of the various languages. The quality of the translations however had a significant effect on performance and the external translation tools varied the job. The constraints were primarily the reliance on the quality of translation that would taint uniformity and dependability of semantic similarity evaluation between various language pairings. Wu et al. [19] suggested a more advanced model of the Semantic Disentanglement Model (SSDM) of a Siamese to facilitate more successful zero-shot cross-lingual transfer of multilingual models in machine reading comprehension. Their model attempts to increase the multilingual generalizability of pre-trained linguistic models by separating the semantic and syntactic structures. SSDM uses personalized loss functions to explicitly encode and separate semantic and syntactic information and predict answer spans in target languages better. It demonstrates notable improvements over such traditional models as mBERT and XLM-100, particularly when it comes to linguistic differences that are a part of cross-lingual environments. Their findings support the relevance of disentangled representations to effective cross-lingual understanding, as they are part of the objectives of integrating cross-lingual embeddings into reading systems based on AI.

Xu et al. [20] proposed a multilingual pre-trained machine reader named mPMR whose aim is to enhance the natural language understanding in a large number of languages. Compared to models previously used, which relied on fine-tuning on the source language, mPMR employs MRC-style pre-training to learn explicit skills of multilingual NLU as such. This enables better cross-lingual generalization such that the model can attain excellent sequence classification and span extraction results in target languages. mPMR provides a single answer to cross-lingual reading comprehension tasks of combining the span extraction and sequence classification processes. The fact that the model can be used to extract rationales to classify sentence-pairs also enhances its interpretability, which makes it a very useful construction in the use of multilingual NLP systems. The objective of this research on scalable, multilingual pre-training is in line with the objective of developing AI-based frameworks in English reading comprehension among various linguistic groups. The challenges of cross-lingual cross-knowledge bases (xKBQA) question answering were overcome by Zhang et al. [21] because it was treated as a reading comprehension task. Their resolution involves the translation of subgraphs of a knowledge base to passages of text, thereby bridging the gap between natural language queries and structured KB schemas. In low-resource scenarios, the multilingual language models are used so that the questions in multiple languages are transformed into corresponding phrases in the knowledge base. This strategy allows teams to take advantage of the available xKBQA data to narrow down on the problem of small data in xMRC research. The model works well in most languages that attest that cross-lingual reading strategies enhance knowledge-based model question answering. The research seeks to develop the English reading capacity with one language embedding for the benefit of AI.

Zafar et al. [22] comprehensively examined the possible applications of technology-based reading support on international students in post-secondary education. The study examines the different AI products available, like machine translators, speech to text, text to speech, and intelligent annotation systems, with an aim of enhancing the comprehension of the readers, enhancing their lexicon, and comprehending the material. Enhancing the study by combining the research approaches, this study identifies the applicability of adaptive, personalized and interactive learning with the help of AI tools [23]. It was revealed that this technology assists individuals to read with greater significance since it provides immediate assistance and interpretation as people read. The research indicates that the introduction of AI in multilingual classes facilitates and enables all students to learn. The review indicates that AI models are needed to enhance the reading of English to all types of learners. A multiple case study conducted in 2023 aimed at comprehending the differences between the instructions of reading comprehension and student outcomes of multilingual students. The study by Gallagher et al. [24] registered improvements in reading comprehension, academic vocabulary, and motivation of students whose explanation was attributed to some teaching practices. Among them, the use of the native language of students to explain concepts and lower-level texts as effective practices was significant. The study highlights culturally responsive teaching methods and uses and implementation of multiple language materials in support of reading development. The results support the necessity of tailored instructional methods to fulfill the needs of multilingual students, which is connected to the broader objective of enhancing the English reading comprehension based on cross-lingual, AI-based models.

Recent research indicates an improvement in multilingual and cross-lingual reading comprehension, but significant gaps are still there. The majority of them are based on standard English datasets, do not normalize their dialects, and do not simulate human-reasoning and adjust to the individual learners. The proposed Dialect-Aware Cognitive Twin Framework provides these limitations by combining dialect-conscious embeddings, cognitive modeling, and adaptive tasking to provide inclusive, interpretable, and customized real-time English comprehension.

III. Dual Cognitive Pathways with Dialectal Transfer and Adaptive Tasking

The study constructs a Dialect-Aware Cognitive Twin Framework of adaptive English reading comprehension, based on cognitive modeling, dialectal normalization, and motivated tasking. The framework takes the Dual Cognitive Pathway structure, wherein the Lexico-Semantic Pathway is the processing of standard linguistic cues, and the Dialectal-Semantic Pathway is the process of aligning dialect-specific changes. The system starts with the analysis and preprocessing of the data based on the English Classroom QA Dataset, which is cleaned, tokenized, and filled with the actual or artificial variants of dialects. The Cognitive Twin then models human understanding by performing staged processing that involves lexical decoding, syntactic parsing, semantic integration, inferential reasoning, and answer generation, giving correct predictions and traceable reasoning paths. Fig. 1 presents the overall flow of English reading comprehension.

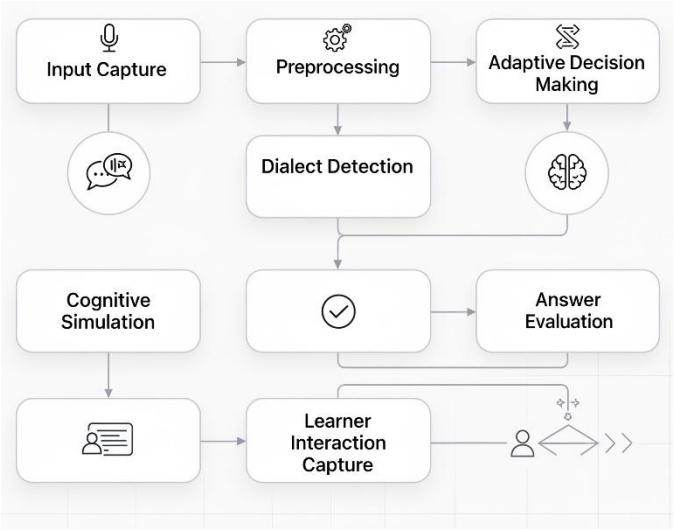

Fig 1. Overall flow of English reading comprehension.

Simultaneously, the Dialectal Transfer module is designed to be resistant to linguistic differences to normalize dialectal inputs, produce dialect-sensitive embeddings, and cast them into the regular semantics of the English language. The Adaptive Tasking component captures and analyses learner interactions in real time and dynamically modifies task difficulty, type, and focus according to the performance, patterns of errors, and learner profiles. The system is appraised on the basis of comprehensive precision, reaction time, error rate, and learner progression, where the model is continually modified through feedback, and dialect is altered, as well as personalized teaching. This is the multi-stage, closed-loop approach to methodology that guarantees the inclusiveness of the framework, its pedagogical effectiveness, and ability to enhance understanding in a wide range of learner groups.

A. Data Collection

The English Classroom QA Dataset [25] from Kaggle provides a comprehensive resource for evaluating reading comprehension through a wide range of passages and question types, including multiple-choice, short-answer, and open-ended formats. It may include long text-question pairs having diverse vocabulary and different lengths of passages that can be read in the classroom as a comprehension assessment. The dataset encompasses various skills, including the recall of facts, inference, knowledge of vocabulary, and summarization. Nevertheless, it mostly imparts the standard form of English and does not have dialectical diversity. To achieve successful Dialectal Transfer, it is possible to bias the dataset with natural or artificial dialectal variants, which allows the model to understand English dialects and stay consistent in its comprehensive accuracy.

B. Data Preprocessing

The proposed work is based on the theories of cognitive science, linguistics, and adaptive learning and gives a thorough ground on which the study can be modelled to explain the English reading comprehension across the dialects. Fundamentally, the proposed Cognitive Twin concept is based on constructivist cognitive theory that new learners actively construct meaning by incorporating new textual information into pre-existing knowledge structures. In this respect, the Cognitive Twin will serve as an online simulation of understanding process in a learner, which will include various phases: lexical access, syntactic parsing, semantic integration, inferential reasoning and generation of answers. We may formalize to have that: C(t) coherent to a text t, is Eq. (1):

$$C(t) = f_{reasoning}(f_{semantic}(f_{syntax}(f_{lexical}(t)))) \quad (1)$$

where, $flexical$ will recognize words and vocabulary understanding, $fsyntax$ will deal with grammatical parsing, $fsemantic$ will combine meaning, and $freasoning$ will use inferential logic to generate answers.

The Dialectal Transfer component is based on the sociolinguistic theory and transfer learning principles, which acknowledge that the language understanding depends on the previously existing dialectal variants. The system addresses the challenges of linguistic differences in comprehension that can be presented by a regional or non-standard version of English by mapping dialect-specific linguistic features to a standard semantic space. Mathematically, using dialectal text std, the dialectal text mapping M: tdts is a mapping that maps the dialectal expressions to a standard representation, Eq. (2):

$$t_s = M(t_d) = f_{dialect_{norm}}(t_d) \quad (2)$$

Finally, Adaptive Tasking is grounded on educational contents theory and item response theory (IRT) that learning outcomes are strengthened in case the tasks are modified based on the capability of the learner. Task difficulty Di: Task difficulty Di is actively regulated by the learner performance Pf and Cognitive Twin feedback Ci, Eq. (3):

$$D_{i+1} = f_{adaptive}(P_i, C_i) \quad (3)$$

where, more difficult tasks are introduced with a high level of comprehension, and tasks of reinforcement are introduced in case of an error or misconception.

The content theory will provide a strict basis of the building of an intelligent system of reading comprehension, which will reproduce human cognitive process, and which will adjust linguistic variety and dynamically individualize the learning activities, which will lead to better understanding outputs among the various learners by considering cognitive modeling, Dialectal Transfer, and adaptive learning.

C. Cognitive Twin Component

The most important aspect of the proposed framework is the Cognitive Twin Component that is an extremely complex calculational formation that attempts to model and replicate the complicated cognitive activities that human beings utilize during the process of reading comprehension. The Cognitive Twin in simple terms is anchored in the multi-layered construction of the process of understanding that begins with the top level of processing which is the process of identifying and decoding of words, syntax, sentence borders, and prominent phrases. It is followed then by the process of semantic integration where the model gives meaning to individual words and sentences in a consistent way that indicates relationships at the context and discourse level. Beyond comprehension, the twin is involved in the process of inferential reasoning where he or she is able to

relate unspoken information in the text to what is already known and form logical inferences or predictions. The Cognitive Twin is then summarized and abstracted, reducing the most important concepts and organizing them in a form cognitively understandable, which is then used to generate answers to comprehension-based questions (architectural perspective). The above denotes the sequential cognitive transformation from lexical decoding to reasoning. Reasoning attention is computed using Eq. (4):

$$R_i = \sum_{j=1}^{n} A_{ij} \cdot S_j \quad (4)$$

where, R_i is the Reasoning vector at step i, A_{ij} is the Attention weight between token iii and contextual token j, S_j is the Semantic representation of token j and n is the Number of tokens in the passage. This expresses how the attention mechanism allows the model to focus on relevant contextual words while generating logical reasoning similar to human comprehension. Layers at the start of the model are concerned with lexical embeddings, syntactic parsing, intermediate layers deal with semantic comprehension, attention-based inference and contextual reasoning, and more specialized layers combine external sources of knowledge, like encyclopedic facts or domain specific knowledge, to add to reasoning ability. The architecture can exploit attention mechanism, memory modules and graphical relationship modelling to mimic human analogy of focus on pertinent textual portions and logical association.

The Cognitive Twin Engine in the proposed model is going to work on two Cognitive Pathways. The former is known as the Lexico-Semantic Pathway and it processes the standard comprehension process encompassing lexical decoding, syntactic parsing, and semantic fusion. The latter, the so-called Dialectal-Semantic Pathway, simultaneously takes dialectal linguistic cues, and aligns them to the default semantic space with dialect-specific embeddings and normalization layers. A Fusion Attention Mechanism then combines the two outputs to form one representation which is dialect-neutral and yet semantically faithful and adjusts to language differences. Mathematically the combination of the two pathways can be denoted as in Eq. (5):

$$F_{\text{dialect-neutral}} = \alpha \cdot E_{\text{standard}} + (1 - \alpha) \cdot M(E_{\text{dialect}}) \quad (5)$$

where, E_{standard} is the embedding from the Lexico-Semantic Pathway, E_{dialect} is the dialectal embedding, M is the mapping function for dialect normalization, and α is the adaptivity coefficient dynamically learned during training. This dual-pathway structure enhances the human-like cognitive ability of the model by allowing it to process meaning and dialect simultaneously, ensuring more inclusive and contextually accurate comprehension.

Training-wise, the Cognitive Twin is pretrained with large scale English question answering corpora, which enables the Cognitive Twin to learn general knowledge of language and logic. It is subsequently adapted to the desired learning material (e.g. English Classroom QA Dataset) to fit internal representations to the language forms, question forms, and understanding needs of the classroom-level English. This simulated training makes sure that the Cognitive Twin not only parallels the hierarchical cognitive mechanisms of the human readers, but also becomes adjusted to the real educational settings, where the cognitive abilities are strong in a variety of comprehension tasks, the interpretability of the intermediate reasoning processes, and the ability to make generalizations in the situation of new or dialectally different inputs.

D. Dialectal Transfer Component

The Dialectal Transfer Component is a vital component of the suggested framework since it will help to bridge the issue of linguistic variation in reading comprehension within the English language as the model will be able to process and comprehend texts that are represented in different dialects. The English presented to the learners takes the non-standard or regional accented forms that are likely to have vocabulary, syntax, morphology, idiomatic expressions and phonological differences. To represent this diversity, the component begins by the data-level interventions, such as data augmentation and transfer learning. This may be either in the form of the set of the genuine dialectal corpora or in the form of synthesis of the synthetic dialectal forms through the systematic paraphrasing of standard English texts to the regionally or sociolect transparent ones. These larger datasets provide the model with a greater number of linguistic phenomena and ensure that the model is no longer narrowed to the constructs of standard English but it can generalize to other dialects. In the dialectal transfer by modelling, the most recent techniques are applicable such as adapter modules, multi-task learning or domain adaptation systems. In this case, the standard English is the source domain and dialectal English is the target domain. Under such an arrangement, the model learns common representations that contain semantic content core and at the same time learns dialect-specific mappings to address the lexical, syntactic, and semantic variations. The mathematical representation of the dialectal transfer and normalization process is defined as follows in Eq. (6):

$$t_s = M(t_d) = f_{\text{dialect_norm}}(t_d) \quad (6)$$

where, t_d is the Input dialectal text, M is the Dialectal normalization function, $f_{\text{dialect_norm}}$ is the Mapping operator that transforms dialectal input into a standardized representation and t_s is the Standard English equivalent of dialectal text. This equation defines the core mapping that translates dialectal expressions to their normalized forms. The model learns shared latent representations from both standard and dialectal corpora, as in Eq. (7):

$$H = \lambda \cdot H_s + (1 - \lambda) \cdot H_d \quad (7)$$

where, H_s is the Hidden representation learned from standard English (source domain), H_d is the Hidden representation learned from dialectal English (target domain), λ is the Balancing coefficient ($0 \leq \lambda \leq 1$) controlling source–target contribution and H is the Combined shared feature representation. This expresses how the model learns domain-invariant, but dialect-sensitive embeddings. To ensure semantic equivalence across domains, a feature alignment loss is imposed expressed in Eq. (8):

$$\mathcal{L}_{align} = |F_s - F_d|_2^2 \quad (8)$$

where, F_s is the Feature representation of standard English, F_d is the Feature representation of dialectal English and $|_2^2$ is the Squared Euclidean distance. This loss ensures that the dialectal

and standard representations remain semantically aligned, minimizing the comprehension gap. Finally, the total optimization objective integrates task performance, alignment, and dialect regularization are expressed in Eq. (9):

$$\mathcal{L}_{total} = \mathcal{L}_{task} + \beta \cdot \mathcal{L}_{align} + \gamma \cdot \mathcal{L}_{dialect} \quad (9)$$

where, $\mathcal{L}_{task}$ is the Task loss (e.g., comprehension prediction error), $\mathcal{L}_{align}$is the Alignment loss, $\mathcal{L}_{dialect}$ is the Regularization loss for dialect normalization and β, γ is the Weighting coefficients controlling the contribution of each loss. This is the overall optimization objective, combining comprehension accuracy, semantic consistency, and dialect normalization. Beyond this, the component can include dialect normalization processes or explicit mapping functions, which match dialect-specific lexical features to standard English semantics in order to minimize the difference in comprehension. Alternatively, dialect-specific embeddings may be trained in which distinct dialect features, including regional lexical selections, grammar, and idiomatic speech, are learnt and fed into the Cognitive Twin comprehension pipeline. This will be a complicated plan that will render the Cognitive Twin sensitive to the dialects that vary and will be able to use them to master the general knowledge. This means that the dialectal knowledge is incorporated into the model and thus the model can dynamically interpret non-standard inputs, maintain semantic fidelity of the source meaning and provide the right responses to various learner groups. Consequently, the Dialectal Transfer Component promotes effective, inclusive, and responsive reading understanding to bridge the gap between forms of standard English and the linguistic conditions of learners who interact with alternative dialects.

E. Adaptive Tasking

Adaptive Tasking Component is a dynamic process, which is targeted at the individualization of the reading comprehension process based on the individual learner traits, thereby enhancing the level of engagement and learning. The center stage of this dimension is the building of the total profile of the learner that entails essential traits such as the first level of understanding, prior exposure to the different versions of English, reading speed and pattern of perceived mistakes in the different elements of understanding. Through these profiles, the system is able to not only know what a learner knows but also how he or she processes and responds to text information. According to these profiles, the system divides the tasks into a scale of difficulty levels, where simple recall questions to test the knowledge of the facts are performed at the first level, then the tasks of inferential reasoning, vocabulary-oriented exercises, and summarization problems are presented at the third level demanding higher-order mental processes. The tasks are various in nature as they consist of multiple-choice items, short-answer answers, Cloze tests, which determine contextual knowledge, paraphrasing exercises, and other types that investigate various aspects of comprehension. The adaptive plan is an on-the-fly selection of the next task based on the performance of the learner: in case the learner successively answers simple recall questions correctly, the system can add more complex tasks such as an inference or synthesis question, but when the learner makes more vocabulary errors, then the system will pay more attention to lexical work. Mathematically, assume Pi is the performance measure in task i and Di the relevant difficulty, then the task difficulty Di +1D is chosen as a performance and error distribution dependent variable, Eq. (10):

$$D_{i+1} = f_{adaptive}(P_i, E_i, L) \quad (10)$$

E_i is the error types and L is the learner profile. The Adaptive Tasking Component will offer personalization, scaffolding of the learning journey by continuous performance monitoring and tailored choice of given tasks that will address the shortcomings of the specific learner and conversely benefit the strengths that will optimize understanding achievement and eventual literacy expansion.

F. System Architecture for CognitiveTwin-DialectaLearn Framework

The CognitiveTwin-DialectaLearn Framework (Fig. 2) is planned to be a multi-layered, interoperable framework that incorporates cognitive modeling, dialectal adaptation, and an adaptive sequence of tasks into one coherent learning ecosystem of intelligent reading English comprehension. The fundamental element of the system is the Cognitive Twin Engine, which is a neurocognitively inspired module that resembles the human reading process by providing hierarchically organized levels of computation. The engine is executed with the help of a transformer-based backbone, e.g., RoBERTa, and designed in a way that replicates the major cognitive processes that can be observed in human reading.

The Lexico-Semantic Pathway is composed of the lower layers that work on lexical decoding, word recognition, subword segmentation and vocabulary-semantic mapping. In between layers, cover syntactic parsing, semantic composition and resolving contextual dependencies and translate grammatical structures and discourse relations. In the same line, the Dialectal-Semantic Pathway carries out dialect normalization and alignment. The results of the two pathways are combined at the Dual Cognitive Pathway Integration depicted in Eq. (11):

$$H_{\text{fused}} = \alpha H_{\text{lex}} + (1 - \alpha) H_{\text{dial}} + \text{Attn}(H_{\text{lex}}, H_{\text{dial}}) \quad (11)$$

In the deep comprehension, the model entails the process of inferential reasoning and synthesis of knowledge whereby the implicit textual cues are related to the previous internal or external knowledge to create logical predictions, explanations, and solutions. The Dialectal Transfer Module that surrounds this process gives the process robustness against linguistic diversity as it allows the seamless interpretation of both the non-standard and the standard English. In the architecture, the Cognitive Twin Engine uses the Dual Cognitive Pathways which process the conventional linguistic cues and, at the same time, normalize dialect variations providing dialect-neutral yet context-faithful understanding.

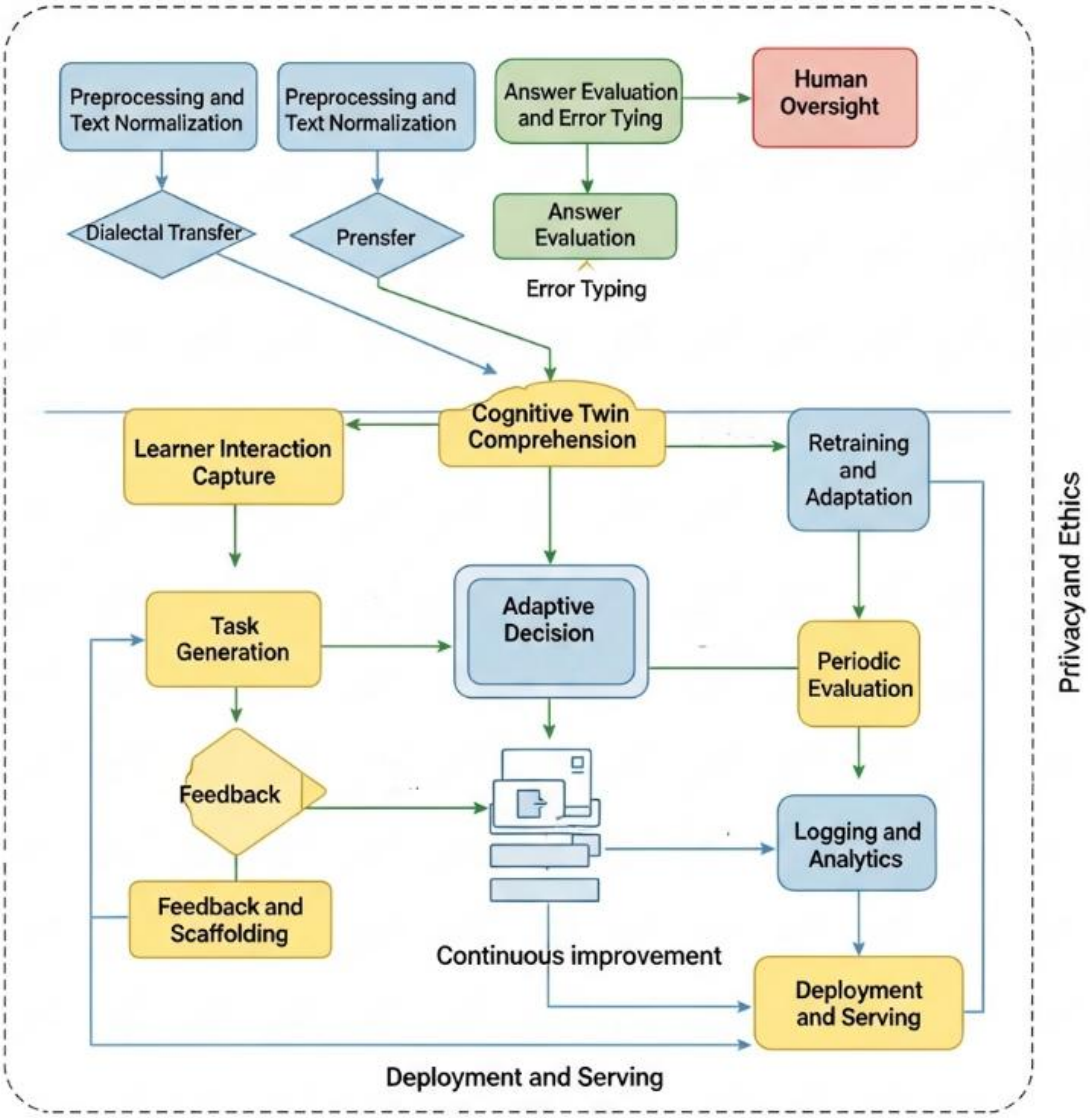

Fig 2. System architecture for CognitiveTwin-DialectaLearn framework.

The Dialectal Transfer Module uses normalization, alignment and domain adaption strategies to project lexical, syntactic and phonological dialect variations into a single semantic space without affecting meaning. The system acquires localized patterns and incorporates them into the comprehension pipeline to encourage semantic fidelity between different learner groups, via adapter networks, multi-task learning or dialect-specific embeddings. On top of these layers is the Adaptive Tasking Layer which is a smart controller that customizes the learning of any student. It constantly monitors the profiles of learners, such as the previous knowledge, dialect exposure, reading speed, accuracy, and error types. The system modulates task difficulty, task type and cognitive focus dynamically using real-time elements of performance based on adaptive algorithms like reinforcement learning or contextual bandits. An example can be given of a learner who displays high recall but low inferential skill, and the system will then be pushed to given high-order reasoning questions to enhance better understanding. Algorithm 1 presents the Dual Cognitive Pathway-Based Dialect-Aware Cognitive Twin framework.

Algorithm 1: Dual Cognitive Pathway-Based Dialect-Aware Cognitive Twin Framework

```
INPUT: Reading_Passage, Question, Learner_Profile
OUTPUT: Answer_Prediction, Updated_Learner_Profile
BEGIN
  CLEAN Reading_Passage, Question
  TOKENIZE Reading_Passage INTO tokens
  IF Dialect Detected (Reading_Passage) == TRUE THEN
    APPLY Dialectal_Normalization (Reading_Passage)
    Pathway_Active ← Dialectal-Semantic
  ELSE
    Pathway_Active ← Lexico-Semantic
  END IF
  FOR each token t IN Reading_Passage DO
    Lexico_Features ← LexicoSemantic_Pathway(t)
    Dialect_Features ← DialectSemantic_Pathway(t)
  END FOR
  Fusion_Output ← α * Lexico_Features + (1 - α) * Map (Dialect_Features)
  Syntax_Output ← Syntax_Parser (Fusion_Output)
  Semantic_Output ← Semantic_Integrator (Syntax_Output)
  Inference_Result ← Reasoning_Module (Semantic_Output,
Knowledge_Base)
```

```
 Answer_Prediction ← Answer_Generator (Inference_Result, Question)
IF Learner_Response == Answer_Prediction THEN
    Accuracy_Score ← 1
  ELSE
    Accuracy_Score ← 0
    Error_Type ← Classify_Error (Learner_Response, Answer_Prediction)
  END IF
IF Learner_Response == Answer_Prediction THEN
  Accuracy_Score = 1
ELSE
  Accuracy_Score = 0
  Error_Type = Classify_Error (Learner_Response, Answer_Prediction)
IF Accuracy_Score == 1 AND Response_Time < Threshold THEN
    Task_Difficulty ← Task_Difficulty + 1
  ELSE IF Error_Type == "Vocabulary" THEN
    ASSIGN Vocabulary_Task
  ELSE IF Error_Type == "Inference" THEN
    ASSIGN Reasoning_Task
  ELSE
    MAINTAIN Current_Task
  END
  UPDATE Learner_Profile WITH {Accuracy_Score, Response_Time,
Error_Type, Task_History}
  RETURN Answer_Prediction, Updated_Learner_Profile
END
```

The Dialect-Aware Cognitive Twin Framework Based on the Dual Cognitive Pathway is aimed at reproducing the human-like comprehension and at solving the problem of linguistic diversity. It uses two parallel cognitive routes: the Lexico-Semantic Pathway, carrying out typical comprehension by lexical decoding, syntactic parsing, and semantic reasoning; and the Dialectal-Semantic Pathway, which takes regional or non-standard English inputs by processing them through dialect-specific embeddings and normalization layers. These pathways co-occur, and the results are integrated by an adaptive attention system that produces a unitary dialect-neutral meaning code. The framework combines this bilateral-path knowledge and an adaptive tasking component that reacts dynamically to adjust task difficulty according to the performance of the learners. This allows individual, dialect-friendly, and situation-specific reading understanding that is more closely related to human cognitive and language adaptability.

IV. Results and Discussion

The study indicates the effectiveness of the Dual Cognitive Pathway-based Dialect-Aware Cognitive Twin Framework in improving adaptive English reading comprehension among different groups of learners. With the help of PyTorch and Tensorflow, the implementation of the framework takes place on the basis of the pre-trained RoBERTa model with the Cognitive Twin, Dialectal Transfer, and Adaptive Tasking modules added to the framework through a Dual Cognitive Pathway architecture. This two-way architecture means that the model can take both standard semantic models and dialectal semantic models simultaneously and generate a dialect-neutral understanding as a result. Crowdsourced annotation is used in synthetic generation, which means that it introduces dialectal variants to achieve stability and equal exposure to linguistic diversity.

A. Experimental Outcomes

Forty-five per cent of the questions in the dataset are multiple-choice, one-fourth of the questions are short-answer, one-fifth of the questions are Cloze exercises, and one-tenth of the questions are paraphrase or summarization exercises. The distribution offers a good representation of the capability of understanding, with factual, inferential, and higher-order comprehension, as in Fig. 3.

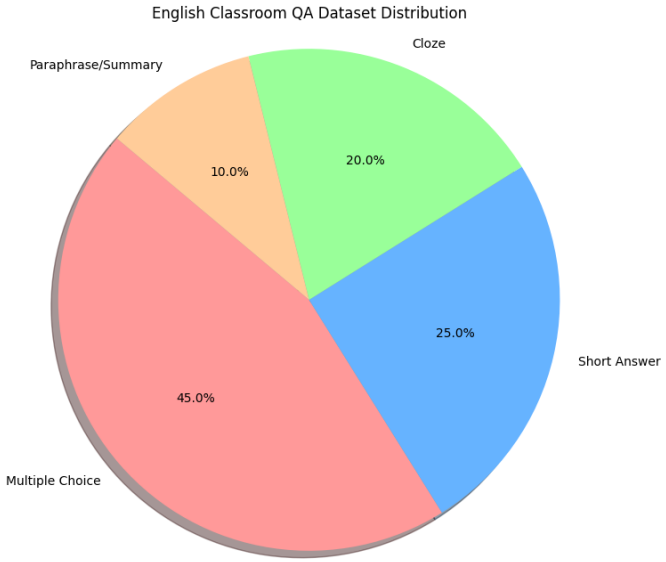

Fig 3. English classroom QA dataset distribution.

The test disclosed that the Cognitive Twin element was able to model multi-stage comprehension and that the surface-level understanding, inference, and reasoning were represented in a manner that was in line with human reading patterns. Inclusion of the Dialectal Transfer module was also essential, as it meant that the framework could deal with both standard and non-standard English inputs, and vocabulary-related and syntactic errors were obviously reduced when learners were exposed to dialectal variations. This improvement is primarily attributed to the Dual Cognitive Pathway fusion, which aligns dialectal semantics with standard representations while preserving contextual meaning, thus minimizing interpretive discrepancies. The mechanism of Adaptive Tasking implemented dynamically regulated difficulty and task type, indicating the quantifiable change in progression of learners as indicated in the increase in the rate of attaining tasks, faster response time, and more balanced distributions of errors in the categories of comprehension. The most common types of errors are the frequency and percentage of Vocabulary/lexical errors, secondly, the inference/reasoning error, and thirdly, the syntax/parsing error. There are other minor errors, like annotation noise or format that are relatively low. The chart can be used to examine areas of weakness in understanding and make model enhancements in Fig. 4.

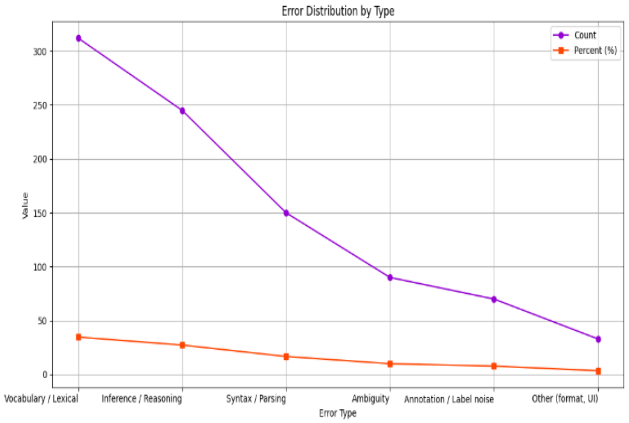

Fig 4. Error distribution by type.

In addition, analysis of errors revealed that recurrent mistakes, especially in reasoning and vocabulary domains, had reduced significantly, which represented a stronger knowledge-retaining ability. Student research identified higher involvement and satisfaction as a result of specific approaches to personalization and dialectal inclusivity, which indicated that student involvement and learning environment were more accommodating and encouraging. Taken together, these findings highlight the capacity of the framework to fill in those gaps between conventional comprehension training and dialect-sensitive flexibility as well as to foster ongoing improvement in the efficiency and accuracy of comprehension in the learner. The Dialect-Aware Cognitive Twin Framework is based on the theoretical foundations of cognitive science, sociolinguistics, and adaptive learning theory, which is why the framework compares the performance of different dialects of the English language, with standard English being the most accurate and with the highest F1-score, whereas the metrics of regional dialects, colloquial forms, and synthetic variants are slightly lower. Non-standard dialects have longer response times. It shows the generalization and strength of the system to the dialectal variations in Fig. 5.

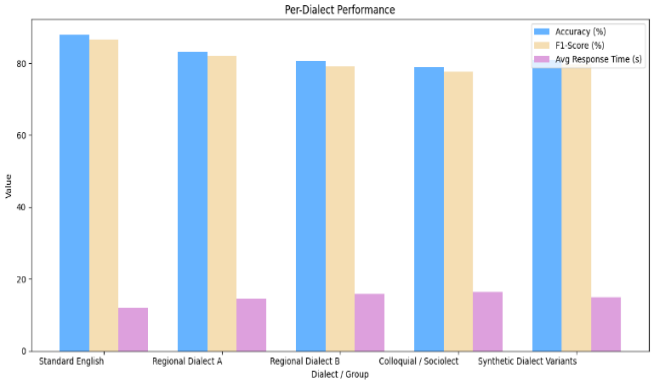

Fig 5. Per-dialect performance.

The notion of Cognitive Twin is based on the cognitive constructivist theory, according to which understanding is created as a result of active interaction between new information and its previous knowledge structure. The Cognitive Twin, in this case, is an artificial replication of the multi-layered cognitive activity during reading: surface-processing (lexical recognition, syntactic parsing, key phrase identification), semantic integration, inferential reasoning, and summarization, finally giving focal answers to comprehension questions.

B. Performance Outcome

The Dialectal Transfer component is based on the principles of sociolinguistics and transfer learning, and it acknowledges that the process of comprehension is mediated by linguistic variation beforehand. Unless the differences in dialects are addressed, dialect may hinder the comprehension of what is said through lexicon, colloquialisms, or syntax. The structure also includes domain adaptation, adapter modules, or multi-task learning, where standard English is the source and dialectal English is the target.

Dialect-specific embeddings can be trained to learn phonological, lexical, and syntactic peculiarities, which adds to the interpretative ability of the Cognitive Twin in Table I.

TABLE I. RESPONSE TIME STATISTICS

Task Type	Avg. Time (s)	Median Time (s)	90th Percentile (s)
Multiple-Choice	8.4	7.9	14.2
Short-Answer	18.7	17.1	29.5
Cloze (fill-gap)	13.6	12.8	22.0
Paraphrase	25.4	23.0	40.8
Summarization	34.1	31.7	55.9

Lastly, Adaptive Tasking is based on the educational content theory and item response theory (IRT), with the focus on individualized learning pathways.

Tasks are dynamically scaled down or up through the factual recall to the inferential reasoning, vocabulary mastery, and summarization, which are provided in various formats, including multiple-choice tests, Cloze tests, short-answer tests, or paraphrasing tests in Fig. 6.

Key comprehension metrics used in assessing the performance of the system have an accuracy of 98.1 per cent and a response time of 14.3 seconds on average. The categories of errors involve vocabulary, inference, syntax, and general comprehension, with the improvement among learners coming to 18.9 per cent. These findings affirm the efficacy of the combined Cognitive Twin, Dialectal Transfer, and Adaptive Tasking system in providing the linguistically inclusive and cognitively based reading comprehension theory. The fusion attention mechanism leads to a 3.2 per cent increase in comprehending and F1 scores compared to the single-path baseline, which indicates improved dialect adaptation with no extra latency.

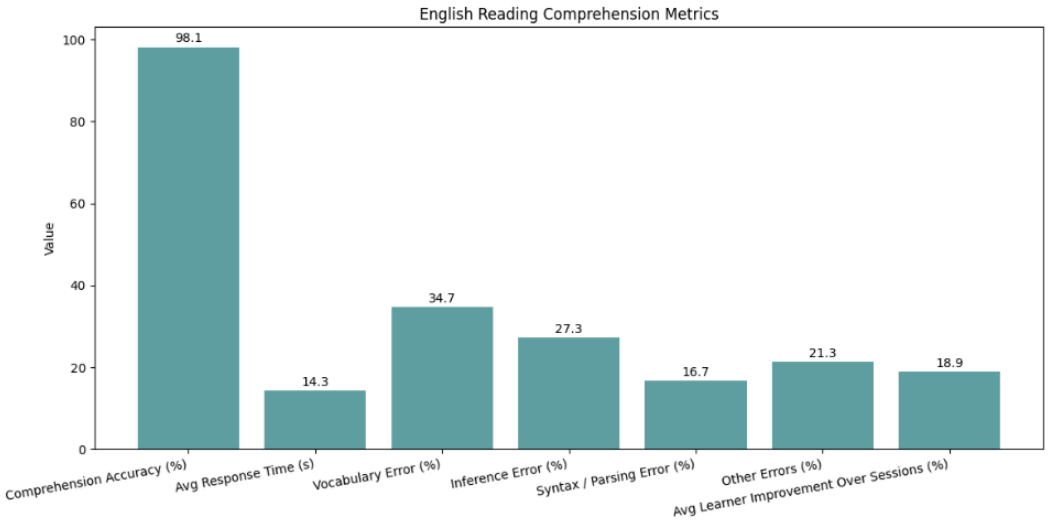

Fig 6. English reading comprehension metrics.

The dataset is separated into training, validation and test sets with a standard 70:15:15 ratio, which makes sure of strong training and unbiased evaluation. Subsets of dialectal tests, developed via authentic or synthetic forms, are used to measure strength to non-standard English. The splits are even on the types of questions and the level of difficulty to be assessed in order to make a fair evaluation of generalization. This systematic assessment validates excellent results on standard and dialectal inputs.

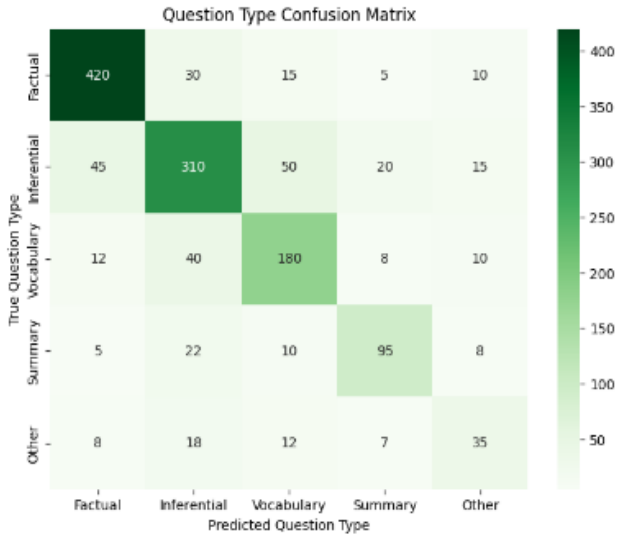

Fig 7. Question type confusion matrix.

Fig. 7 shows the confusion matrix that shows how the system categorizes various types of questions. Factual questions present the greatest correct prediction rate, although some are incorrectly classified as inference or vocabulary-based questions. Cross-confusion is also moderate in inferential and vocabulary questions, which demonstrate slight overlaps in the requirements of linguistic processing. This diagnostic matrix gives an overview of the strengths and limitations of the model in terms of the categories of comprehension.

Fig. 8 is a comparison between the proposed CognitiveTwin-DialectaLearn Framework and the Baseline QA and BERT Fine-Tuned QA models. The presented framework is more accurate, precise, recalls higher, and the F1-score is higher, and the average response time is lower. These enhancements underscore the success of the combination of dual-path thinking, dialect transfer process, and adaptive task selection. The overall findings can be concluded to illustrate that the system is effective in improving comprehension performance, as well as aid quicker and more dialect inclusive reasoning.

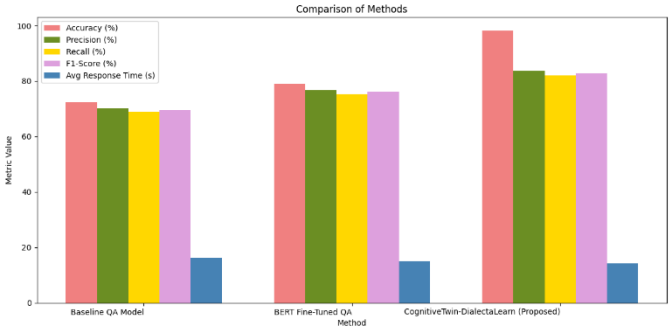

Fig 8. Comparison of methods.

The larger implication of the Dialect-Aware Cognitive Twin Framework is that it can improve adaptive reading of English comprehension among different linguistic groups. The framework fits the variability in the learners and dialectal variation that is not always considered by the traditional comprehension systems by incorporating the concept of cognitive modelling, dialectal sensitivity, and adaptive personalization. The Cognitive Twin element adds a human resembling reasoning system, which allows the system to recreate the layer of cognitive procedures instead of merely matching patterns. The Dialectal Transfer module facilitates inclusivity within the linguistic framework by minimizing the prejudice against standard English and enhancing the availability of learners speaking mixed or non-standard dialects. Adaptive Tasking also enhances this system because it adapts instructional directions in real-time performances with the

purpose of encouraging improvement of constantly and to maintain engagement. Such features make the framework a useful resource in the classroom, online environment, and AI-based tutoring, especially in multilingual and multicultural learning. Comprehensively, it is an indication of a change to fair, smart, and dialect-sensitive educational technologies.

C. Discussion

These results confirm the fact that the Dialect-Aware Cognitive Twin Framework, which is founded on the Twin Dual Cognitive Pathway, has a significant positive effect on the accuracy, adaptability, and cognitive flexibility in English reading comprehension. It's two complementary pathways, i.e., Lexico-Semantic and Dialectal-Semantic, that work in parallel to process both standard and dialectal English, which lets the system form dialect-insensitive semantic representations. Comparisons in performance reveal significant improvements in comprehension accuracy, error reduction, as well as general learning course when compared to the traditional QA systems and fine-tuned transformer-based systems. Adaptive tasking mechanism also promotes more efficiency as the difficulty is dynamically altered based on the changing ability of a specific learner to ensure reduced cognitive load whilst ensuring engagement. The framework also indicates good generalization across a variety of dialects, highlighting the importance of dialect-conscious modeling in the production of linguistically-conscious AI systems that are fair and inclusive. In general, the findings indicate the potential of the framework as an effective, interpretable and learner-centric methodology to be used in educational and comprehension-based AI applications in the future.

V. Conclusion and Future Work

The proposed Dual Cognitive Pathway CognitiveTwin-DialectaLearn Framework is an important breakthrough in adaptive English reading comprehension since cognitive modeling, dialectal transfer, and adaptive tasking have been incorporated into the framework. Through parallel semantic routes, the framework provides more accurate comprehension, less vocabulary and inference mistakes, and learner responsiveness. Its anthropomorphic reasoning codes and active adaptation to language plurality foster inclusiveness and equality among the diverse forms of regional English. The quantitative results also support the efficiency of the model by introducing better accuracy and minimizing the response time, which is a solid base of the next-generation dialect-sensitive and individualized educational AI solutions.

The framework can be expanded by future researchers to include multilingual and multimodal input, i.e., speech, gesture, and image use in modeling more expansive cross-linguistic understanding processes. The reduction of accent and prosody recognition to develop the Dual Cognitive Pathway could also be an additional support for the non-native learners. An adaptive tasking layer can be optimized with the help of reinforcement learning, and explainable attention visualizations might enhance interpretability to educators and learners. The creation of larger and more diverse dialect data will also enhance scalability and strength between variations of world English. These additions will broaden the pedagogical reach of the framework and provide it with a firmer presence in intelligent tutoring and human-AI collaborative learning settings.

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Proposed Technological Solution to Predict the Need for Health Professionals in Health Centers Using Random Forest

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***Abstract*—The objective of this research is to develop a technological solution based on the Random Forest algorithm to predict healthcare workforce requirements in public healthcare centers in Peru, addressing staff shortages and unequal workforce distribution. A national dataset from the Peruvian Ministry of Health (MINSA) covering the period 2017–2024, segmented by levels of care (I, II, and III), was used to capture the operational differences within the healthcare system. The model, validated using an 80/20 split, achieved outstanding performance, with coefficients of determination (R^2) exceeding 0.99 and minimal percentage errors (MAPE) across all levels of care. The main contribution of this work lies in converting estimated healthcare attendances into an operational metric of "required healthcare professionals", integrated into a web-based architecture built on React, Flask, and PostgreSQL. The findings identify medical specialty and year as the most influential predictive variables. It is concluded that the proposed tool is robust for optimizing strategic healthcare workforce planning, enabling a more equitable and data-driven allocation of medical specialists.**

Keywords*—Technological solution; Random Forest; healthcare sector; healthcare professional prediction; human resource management

I. Introduction

The shortage of healthcare professionals has been a persistent societal problem even before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), prior to 2020, a global shortage of approximately 18 million healthcare workers was estimated, with the deficit being more pronounced in countries with limited budgets and in those experiencing poor distribution of health resources, both human and material [1]. In Latin America, unequal workforce distribution, chronic occupational burnout, and inadequate planning for the recruitment and retention of medical teams have long-standing consequences for healthcare systems [2].

In Peru, the Office of the Comptroller General of the Republic has reported that nearly half of public healthcare facilities do not meet the minimum required number of professionals to provide adequate care, revealing a serious shortage of physicians, nurses, and technical staff [3]. Additionally, a technical report from the Institute for Health Technology Assessment and Research (IETSI) of EsSalud (2024) highlights critical gaps in both the quantity and distribution of healthcare personnel across regions and levels of care [4]. These gaps underscore the urgent need to implement predictive systems that enable more accurate and equitable healthcare workforce planning.

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At the global level, the WHO (2021) reported that many countries are facing severe shortages of healthcare professionals and projected that millions of additional workers will be required by 2030, particularly in low-resource settings [5]. However, although some governments have expanded healthcare coverage through insurance schemes or public programs, this does not necessarily ensure equitable access to care. In Ghana, for example, individuals with better socioeconomic conditions have been shown to benefit more from such programs than more vulnerable populations [6]. The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated these challenges by exposing long-standing structural weaknesses in Latin American healthcare systems, such as poor workforce distribution, sustained occupational fatigue, and insufficient workforce planning—issues also documented in studies conducted in Brazil [7]. Consequently, current strategies must move beyond merely increasing budgets or coverage and instead focus on improving workforce organization, distribution, and proactive planning to ensure equitable access to healthcare services, particularly in high-demand and resource-constrained areas.

At the regional level, increasing attention has been paid in recent years to evaluating the efficiency of public healthcare systems, especially in Latin America. Studies based on Data Envelopment Analysis (DEA) have revealed substantial differences in system performance across countries, even when public health expenditure levels are comparable [8]. For this reason, assessing efficiency in Primary Healthcare (PHC) has become particularly relevant. Even in contexts with broad coverage and sufficient staffing—such as Cuba—significant regional disparities persist, often associated with population size and local socioeconomic conditions [9]. These findings demonstrate that increased financial investment alone does not guarantee improved outcomes; rather, the effective use of available resources plays a crucial role. Identifying underperforming healthcare centers and understanding the factors influencing their performance can support better decision-making, enhance management practices, and ensure that resources translate into improved healthcare delivery and population health—an essential requirement for building sustainable health systems in the region [10].

Similarly, in countries such as Indonesia, where healthcare workforce shortages—particularly of physicians—are critical, unequal distribution has negatively affected primary healthcare performance. In the face of such disparities and limited

resources, it is essential to evaluate how efficiently healthcare facilities utilize available personnel to deliver key services. This assessment enables optimal resource use and supports the estimation of potential gains in service coverage if the existing workforce is deployed more effectively [11].

Given the difficulty of organizing healthcare staff without precise data on future demand, this study poses a central research question: To what extent does the development of a technological solution based on the Random Forest algorithm allow for the accurate prediction of the need for healthcare professionals in Peru's public centers, considering the variability across levels of care? The hypothesis suggests that the integration of geographic, temporal, and specialty variables, segmented by levels (I, II, and III), offers superior reliability compared to conventional statistical methods. The objective is to develop a predictive model capable of accurately estimating the required specialists, recognizing that each level possesses distinct demand dynamics and resolution capacities.

The differential value of this work is built upon three technical pillars. First, it utilizes a massive database from the Ministry of Health (MINSA) with seven years of national records (2017–2024), capturing both regular seasonality and the impact of the health crisis. Second, the analysis is rigorously segmented into the three levels of primary care, acknowledging that resolution capacity varies drastically according to the complexity of the facility. Finally, this proposal translates appointment volume into a "required professionals" metric through an operational conversion methodology, supported by a complete software architecture based on React, Flask, and PostgreSQL

The structure of the manuscript is organized as follows: Section II presents the related work, including a brief review of the relevant literature. Section III details the methodological framework, describing data preprocessing, feature engineering, and the training of the Random Forest algorithm, as well as the technical definition of the evaluation metrics. Section IV presents the architecture of the proposed technological solution. Section V reports the results based on the accuracy metrics obtained for each level of care, along with the analysis of feature importance and regional demand. Section VI discusses the results, which are contrasted with the scientific evidence identified in the literature review. Finally, Section VII summarizes the conclusions and outlines directions for future work.

II. Related Work

Recent research has applied various machine learning techniques to predict the demand for healthcare services, utilizing models that incorporate demographic, economic, and health-related factors.

A study based on Andersen's Behavioral Model of Health Services Use analyzed 2022 data from Turkey [12], identifying variables such as gender, age, educational level, treatment costs, and the presence of chronic diseases as significant predictors of healthcare utilization. Models such as Random Forest, XGBoost, and Logistic Regression demonstrated high accuracy and generalization capabilities in predicting total service demand, providing valuable insights for the efficient allocation of resources in public health centers. These findings highlight the potential of machine learning algorithms to enhance decision-making in public health policy through data-driven analysis.

Furthermore, another study [13] proposed a web-based system using machine learning to mitigate the shortage of healthcare professionals in Peru through Electronic Health Records (EHR). This system implemented the XGBoost algorithm to predict demand across different medical specialties, enabling optimized staff planning. The model achieved a 93% efficiency rating in the AUC test, identifying medical services with the highest projected demand. The automation of data analysis significantly reduced the administrative burden on staff, freeing up time for patient care activities. However, reliance on historical data from a single health center and the lack of standardization in medical record formats limited the system's immediate scalability at a national level.

Yadav [14] investigated the application of machine learning models to optimize professional allocation in healthcare systems with fluctuating demand. The study evaluated four algorithms: Logistic Regression, Decision Tree, Random Forest, and Support Vector Machines (SVM), using historical staffing schedules and patient records. The Random Forest model achieved the highest performance with 98% accuracy, followed by Decision Tree (97%), Logistic Regression (96%), and SVM (95%). The study demonstrated that these models allow for the anticipation of staffing needs and better shift organization by considering both predicted demand and personnel competencies. Nevertheless, a noted limitation is the current lack of tools that combine real-time demand forecasting with automated scheduling. Collectively, these results suggest that machine learning can improve institutional internal operations and reduce excessive workloads.

In the context of human resource planning, a study [15] demonstrated the applicability of machine learning models to predict the retention of healthcare professionals in rural communities in South Africa. Utilizing demographic data from health workers, they trained three classification models (Multinomial Logistic Regression, Decision Tree, and Naïve Bayes), which reached a predictive accuracy of 47.34% and an average AUC of 0.66, significantly outperforming random chance. This study emphasizes the potential of these techniques to optimize recruitment and retention processes in hard-to-reach areas, while also pointing out significant limitations regarding data quality and completeness in resource-constrained environments.

Koç and Eren [16] conducted research to project the availability of physicians in Turkey through the year 2030. To achieve this, they compared various machine learning and deep learning algorithms, including XGBoost, LSTM, and Random Forest, using Root Mean Square Error (RMSE) to measure their accuracy. The study combined historical information from the OECD with artificially generated data to strengthen the analysis of the diverse demographic and economic factors influencing the sector. Following the testing phase, the XGBoost model proved to be the most accurate in its predictions. The final results suggest that a professional deficit will exist by 2030, with an estimated supply of 3.04 physicians per 1,000 inhabitants

against a demand of 3.12, underscoring the need to revise current healthcare training policies.

Köksoy et al. [17] developed a study to predict the need for healthcare personnel across the 81 provinces of Turkey, aiming to reduce inequality in its distribution. They compared nine artificial intelligence models, highlighting the use of the Random Forest Regressor, which achieved a high level of precision with an R^2 of 0.99 and a Mean Absolute Error (MAE) of 39.54. These figures indicate that the model is capable of explaining almost the entire variance of the data and that its margin of error is minimal when estimating the number of professionals. By analyzing data from 2002 to 2023, the authors successfully projected 2024 demands with high accuracy, demonstrating that these algorithms are key tools for more efficient hospital planning.

III. Methodology

This research is applied in nature, as it seeks not only to describe the current state of the healthcare sector but also to propose a practical solution for implementation. Specifically, it involves the development of a technological solution using the Random Forest machine learning algorithm to predict the future demand for public healthcare professionals.

The research level is predictive, as it aims to forecast future healthcare professional demand based on historical data. Through the machine learning model, the study expects to anticipate personnel shortage scenarios commonly found in Peru, where demand in highly populated regions often exceeds the available healthcare workforce. This will enable data-driven strategic decision-making and, potentially, improve the distribution of physicians across the country.

The research is oriented toward healthcare professionals working within the public system, specifically across primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of care managed by the Ministry of Health (MINSA). These categories include specialized physicians, nurses, obstetricians, technicians, and other staff. This topic was selected because it addresses a critical contemporary issue: the deficiency and inequitable distribution of healthcare professionals in the public sector, which directly impacts the quality of service provided to the population.

A. Data Sources and Dataset Description

For the development of the predictive model, the dataset titled Healthcare Attendances Provided to Insured Patients – [SIS] was used. This dataset is provided by the Peruvian Ministry of Health (MINSA) and published on the National Open Data Platform, covering the period from 2017 to June 2024. Its selection is justified by its nationwide coverage and the depth of a seven-year historical record, which enables the model to accurately capture long-term trends, seasonal patterns, and anomalies derived from the healthcare crisis.

1) The dataset includes the following columns:

- YEAR, MONTH, REGION, PROVINCE, UBIGEO_DISTRICT, DISTRICT, EXECUTING_UNIT_CODE, EXECUTING_UNIT_DESCRIPTION, IPRESS_CODE, IPRESS, HEALTHCARE_LEVEL, INSURANCE_PLAN, SERVICE_CODE, SERVICE_DESCRIPTION, SEX, AGE_GROUP, ATTENDANCES.

B. Data Preprocessing and Feature Engineering

Once the required datasets were obtained to initiate the development of the artifact, the process began with data cleaning and transformation of the original data.

1) Data preprocessing: Before training the model, a data cleaning and preprocessing process was performed, which included removing missing values, correcting inconsistencies, and standardizing variable formats.

The first preprocessing step focused on data validation and cleaning. Initially, records with missing values in critical variables defining each observation (YEAR, MONTH, IPRESS_CODE, SPECIALTY, and geographic variables) were removed, ensuring the integrity of the analyzed records. Subsequently, to mitigate the influence of extreme values during training, a robust outlier filtering approach was applied: observations of the target variable, ATTENDANCES, were bounded within the interpercentile range P1–P99. After cleaning, the data were aggregated by summing total ATTENDANCES at the most detailed spatio-temporal unit (YEAR, MONTH, IPRESS_CODE, SPECIALTY, REGION, PROVINCE, UBIGEO_DISTRICT), consolidating the information for analysis.

Prior to training, nominal categorical variables (IPRESS_CODE, SPECIALTY, REGION, PROVINCE, UBIGEO_DISTRICT) were converted into numerical format using the Label Encoding method. Finally, the target variable ATTENDANCES, which exhibited a skewed distribution, was subjected to a logarithmic transformation, which is explained in a later section.

2) Feature engineering: New features were created through feature engineering techniques, which involve transforming and enriching the original data to capture patterns that are not directly observable.

3) Temporal features: This group incorporates time-related information to capture seasonal and cyclical patterns affecting demand. It includes: SEASON, IS_END_OF_YEAR, IS_START_OF_YEAR, IS_PEAK_MONTH, MONTH_SIN, MONTH_COS.

4) Geographical features: This set groups variables that describe the territorial context and the distribution of services within each geographical area. It consists of: IPRESS_DENSITY_REGION, IPRESS_DENSITY_PROVINCE, SPECIALTY_FREQUENCY.

5) Historical features: This block includes features derived from past behavior to capture trends, variability, and consistency in the data. It includes: HISTORICAL_MEAN, HISTORICAL_STD, HISTORICAL_MAX, HISTORICAL_MIN, HISTORICAL_COUNT, REGION_SPECIALTY_MEAN, VARIATION_VS_MEAN, CAPACITY_RATIO.

These features were created from the following original variables (IPRESS, specialty, region, province, month, year) to compute averages, maxima, minima, and count-based metrics.

C. Algorithm and Training

1) Algorithm: The selection of the Random Forest algorithm for this study is based on its well-recognized predictive capability in the healthcare domain. A recent study comparing several machine learning models for pressure ulcer prediction showed that Random Forest achieved the best performance, with an accuracy of 99.88% and an AUC value of 0.9999, significantly outperforming other algorithms such as SVM, Decision Tree, and ANN [16]. This superiority is attributed to its ability to handle multiple predictive variables, reduce overfitting through the aggregation of multiple decision trees, and capture complex non-linear relationships within the data. For these reasons, Random Forest is particularly suitable for risk prediction in clinical contexts involving multifactorial data.

The developed model consists of two main steps:

a) Prediction of healthcare attendances.

b) Calculation of required healthcare professionals.

First, healthcare attendances are predicted. For this purpose, the model was configured with parameters including 300 trees (n_estimators = 300) and a maximum depth of 25 levels (max_depth = 25), allowing the model to capture complex patterns while controlling overall complexity. Bootstrap sampling with 80% of the data (max_samples = 0.8) was applied, along with random selection of $\sqrt{n}$ features at each split to increase ensemble diversity.

To handle the uneven distribution typically observed in healthcare attendance data—where low values predominate but some very high values exist—a logarithmic transformation was applied prior to training. This technique compresses the data scale, enabling the model to learn patterns from both small and large healthcare facilities. The predictions were subsequently transformed back to their original scale, resulting in more balanced and accurate estimates across the full range of healthcare establishments.

The second step consists of calculating the number of healthcare professionals required to meet the projected demand. For this purpose, the following variables were defined:

- PHN: Required healthcare professionals.
- AE: Estimated monthly attendances.
- R: Professional productivity (attendances per hour).
- JH: Effective working hours (total contracted hours per year).

The relationship among these variables is expressed in Eq. (1):

$$\mathrm{PHN} = \max(1, round\,(\frac{\mathrm{AE}}{\mathrm{JH\ x\ R}})) \quad (1)$$

To obtain the average number of monthly attendances across the different levels of healthcare centers, the Programming Criteria Standards table [19] was used. From this source, the following parameters were obtained:

- Level I: 500 attendances/month per professional
- Level II: 277.6 attendances/month per professional
- Level III: 270 attendances/month per professional

Likewise, the Maximum (max) function ensures a minimum of one professional per healthcare facility, guaranteeing basic coverage even in locations with low demand.

2) Data Split – Training: The complete set of clean and preprocessed data (X for the features and ATTENDANCES as the target variable) was divided into two main subsets through a random and controlled process:

- Training Set (80%): The majority of the data, 80%, was used to train the model. This allowed the algorithm to learn the underlying patterns and relationships between the features (geographical, temporal, and historical) and the target variable.
- Test Set (20%): The remaining 20% of the records were reserved. This subset was not exposed to the model during the learning phase. Its sole purpose was to measure the model's performance and accuracy on completely unseen data, ensuring an unbiased evaluation of its generalization capability.

To ensure consistency in this partitioning process and allow reproducibility of the results in future analyses, a fixed random seed (random_state = 42) was applied during data splitting.

D. Evaluation and Metrics

The model was independently evaluated for each level of the Peruvian healthcare system (I, II, and III), taking into account the operational characteristics specific to each level:

- Level I: High-frequency, low-complexity healthcare attendances
- Level II: Medium-complexity and specialized healthcare attendances
- Level III: High-complexity, low-frequency healthcare attendances

To assess performance at each level, four key metrics were used:

The MAE (Mean Absolute Error), defined in Eq. (2), calculates the average absolute error between the actual values and the predictions, providing a direct measure of the error expressed in the same unit as the attendances (number of attendances per month):

$$\mathrm{MAE} = \frac{1}{n}\sum_{i=1}^{n}|y_i - \hat{y}_i| \quad (2)$$

where, y_i represents the actual value, $\hat{y}_i$ the model prediction, and n the number of observations in the test set. This metric quantifies the average error in the number of attendances, which is directly related to healthcare workforce planning.

The RMSE (Root Mean Squared Error), defined in Eq. (3), penalizes large errors more heavily than small ones, making it particularly useful for identifying predictions with significant deviations.

$$\text{RMSE} = \sqrt{\frac{1}{n}\sum_{i=1}^{n}(y_i - \hat{y}_i)^2} \quad (3)$$

The R^2 (Coefficient of Determination), defined in Eq. (4), quantifies the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that is explained by the model, indicating how well the predictions fit the actual data.

$$R^2 = 1 - \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n}(y_i - \hat{y}_i)^2}{\sum_{i=1}^{n}(y_i - \bar{y})^2} \quad (4)$$

where, $\bar{y}$ represents the mean of the actual values. R^2 quantifies the percentage of variance in the dependent variable that is explained by the model. This metric evaluates the model's ability to explain variability in healthcare service demand.

The MAPE (Mean Absolute Percentage Error), defined in Eq. (5), expresses the error as a percentage, facilitating the interpretation of model performance in relative terms. This is particularly important when comparing different levels of healthcare delivery.

$$MAPE = \frac{100\%}{n}\sum_{i=1}^{n}\left|\frac{y_i - \hat{y}_i}{\max(y_i, 1)}\right| \quad (5)$$

This metric provides the relative error, allowing comparisons across different levels of healthcare delivery.

Additionally, several analyses were conducted to gain deeper insight into the model's behavior. The most influential features in the predictions were evaluated in order to identify which variables are determinant in demand estimation. The medical specialties with the highest workforce requirements were also analyzed, making it possible to identify those with the largest staffing gaps. Finally, results were compared across regions to determine where the greatest need for healthcare personnel exists, revealing significant territorial differences. For all these evaluations, explanatory graphs were used, which were generated from the model's results.

IV. Proposed Solution

To address the problem of healthcare workforce requirements in public healthcare centers in Peru, the design and implementation of a technological solution with an interactive and intuitive interface is proposed. This solution allows the user to select a healthcare center and obtain information on the number of physicians required, according to the specialties available at that facility in Peru.

Fig. 1 illustrates how the web application is integrated with the predictive model and the database. On the frontend, the user accesses a dashboard where a healthcare center, medical specialty, month, and year can be selected. This information is sent to the backend through an API built with Flask, which receives the request and queries the data stored in PostgreSQL. Based on this information, the system executes the trained model and generates the corresponding prediction. Finally, the result is returned to the frontend, where it is clearly displayed so that the user can easily interpret it.

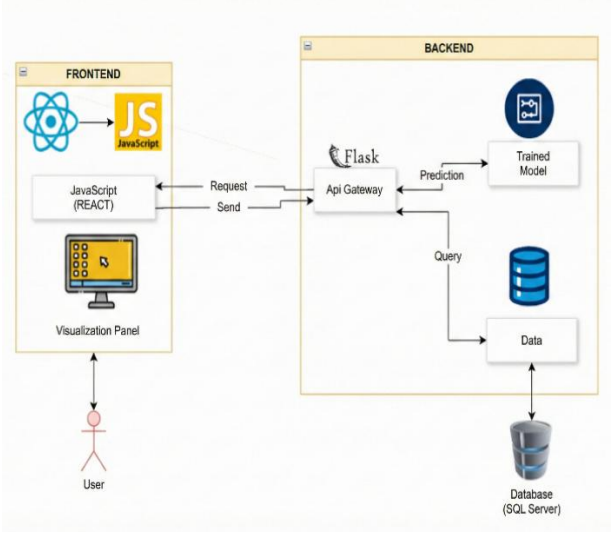

Fig. 1. Proposed technological solution.

The interface component of the project was developed using React.js, a widely used and well-established JavaScript framework for building web applications. React is based on principles of speed, security, and ease of integration with other libraries, making it a suitable and non-complex choice for interface development.

The frontend of the application was designed to provide a user-centered experience. One of its main functionalities is the generation of an interactive view in which users can visualize the number of healthcare centers and their corresponding medical workforce requirements. This information is represented through an interactive mini-map, enabling a more intuitive and visual identification of areas with greater demand for healthcare professionals. The goal is to ensure that any user of the application can access the information in a simple, fast, and understandable manner. Additionally, the use of a map provides an effective way to understand the situation of healthcare centers, as shown in Fig. 2.

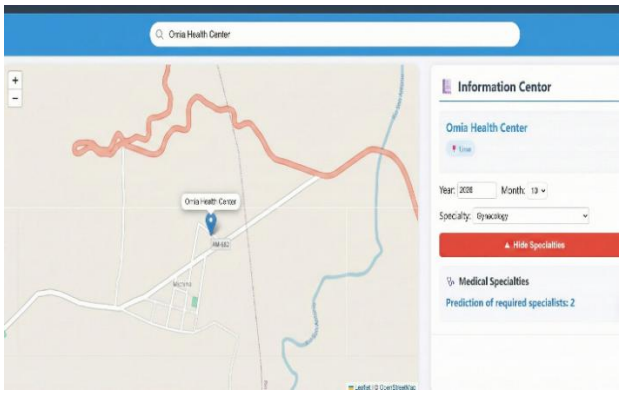

Fig. 2. Main screen.

The main sidebar includes filters such as year, month, and medical specialty. Based on these selections, the predicted number of required healthcare professionals per specialty is displayed for each healthcare center selected through the interactive map or the bar-based search interface, as shown in Fig. 3.

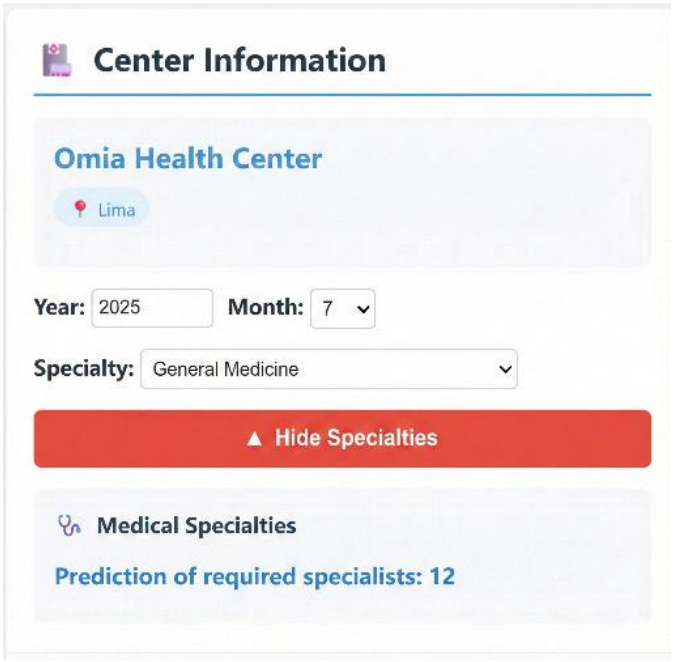

Fig. 3. Main sidebar.

The interface presents the model predictions in a more structured manner, filtering them by time period and medical specialty. A REST API is used as the communication channel between the frontend and the backend. The frontend issues requests to retrieve the results generated by the predictive models, while the backend processes these requests, queries the prediction model, and returns the response in a clear and standardized format—such as JSON—so that the results can be easily rendered within the application.

V. Results

The implemented model demonstrated a high level of accuracy in predicting the demand for medical professionals across the three levels of primary healthcare in Peru. The results show that the algorithm maintained robust performance in all evaluated scenarios, with minimal prediction errors (MAPE ranging between 1.28% and 6.17%) and a consistently high explanatory power ($R^2 > 0.99$). Feature importance analysis identified medical specialty as the most influential factor, followed by the year and geographic location variables.

The analysis of the obtained results is presented across two fundamental dimensions. First, Section A details the performance metrics and statistical validation that support the reliability of the model. Subsequently, Section B analyzes the key predictive factors and presents specific case studies that demonstrate the operational applicability of the system in real healthcare facilities.

A. Performance Metrics and Validation

Model validation was performed using the hold-out data splitting technique, where 80% of the records were used for training, and the remaining 20% were reserved as the test set. As detailed in Table I, Level I exhibits minimal errors (MAE = 0.27), while at Level II the model maintains excellent explanatory capability ($R^2 = 0.9968$).

For Level III, despite the higher volume of healthcare services, the model's performance remains strong, achieving an R^2 value of 0.9938.

TABLE I. Metrics Performance

Level	*MAE*	*RMSE*	R^2	*MAPE*
I	0.265715	1.202290	0.995892	1.284139
II	8.838402	32.882899	0.996812	3.455243
III	48.685679	183.381062	0.993822	6.168446

Additionally, to verify the absence of overfitting and the reliability of the estimates, scatter plots were generated to compare the observed values against those predicted by the algorithm.

As shown in Fig. 4, Level I exhibits a high density of points aligned along the ideal diagonal ($R^2 = 0.9959$). However, the dispersion increases as the values grow, indicating high confidence in predictions at lower demand levels, which gradually decreases for higher values. Nevertheless, it is important to note that most of the high-value observations at this level correspond to atypical cases.

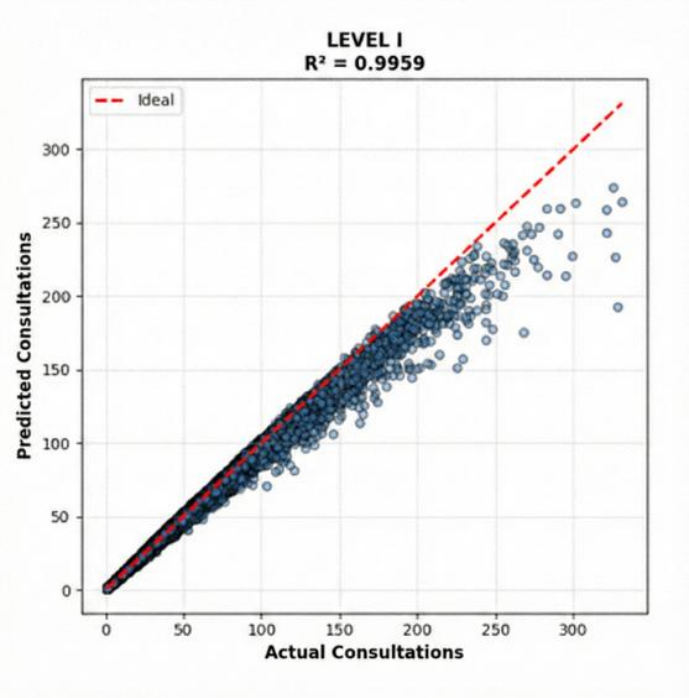

Fig. 4. Scatter Plot – Level I.

As shown in Fig. 5, Level II exhibits a consistently high density of points along the ideal diagonal, with an R^2 value of 0.9968. Only very slight variations are observed when compared to the Level I scatter plot. This behavior indicates a high level of model stability and, consequently, a high degree of confidence in the predictions.

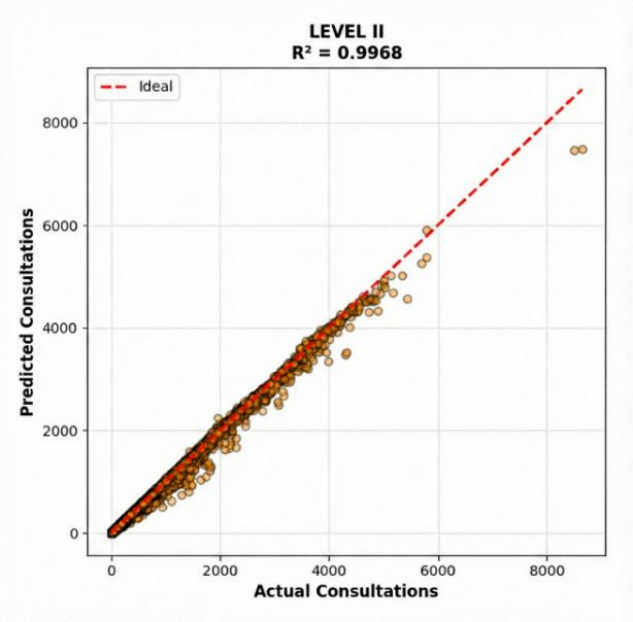

Fig. 5. Scatter Plot – Level II.

In Fig. 6, Level III shows a consistently high density of points along the ideal diagonal, with an R^2 of 0.9968, exhibiting only very slight variations compared to the Level I plot. This behavior indicates high model stability and, consequently, strong confidence in the predictions.

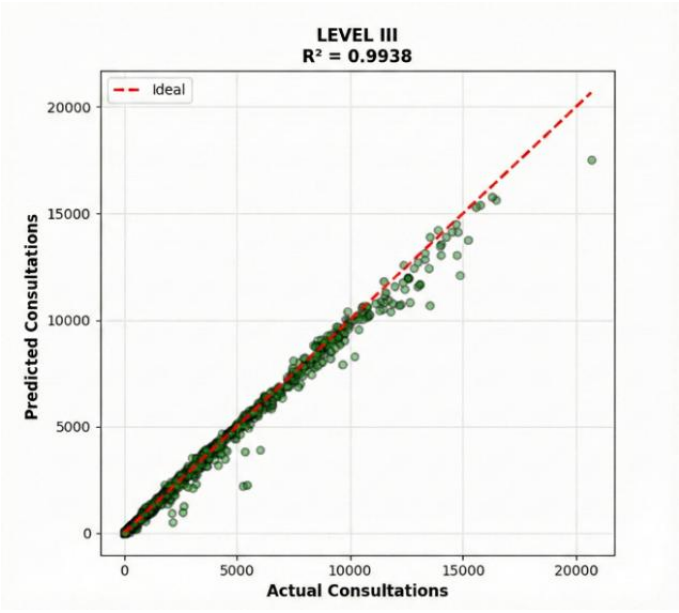

Fig. 6. Scatter Plot – Level III.

As observed in the figures for Level I (Fig. 4), Level II (Fig. 5), and Level III (Fig. 6), the results exhibit an almost linear fit. However, in Levels I and III, observations with higher volumes of healthcare attendances tend to fall slightly below the reference line. This minor underestimation at the extremes of demand is minimal and does not compromise the overall reliability of the tool, which maintains accuracy levels consistently above 99% across all evaluated scenarios.

B. *Importance of Characteristics in Predicting Healthcare Personnel*

Once the statistical robustness of the model was confirmed, the factors determining healthcare workforce demand in the Peruvian public health system were analyzed. The feature importance analysis reveals a clear hierarchy in the influence of predictive variables across the three evaluated levels of care.

Fig. 7 illustrates the top features that most influenced the prediction, highlighting Specialty (0.2%) and Year (0.15%) as the most influential features, while Province (0.04%) and Month (0.03%) showed the lowest influence.

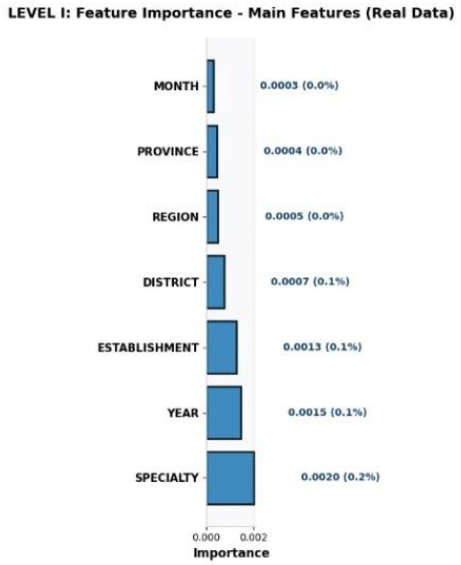

Fig. 7. Most influential main features – Level I.

Fig. 8 shows the top features that most influenced the prediction, highlighting Specialty (0.88%) and Year (0.42%) as the most influential features, while Region (0.13%) and Month (0.07%) were the least influential.

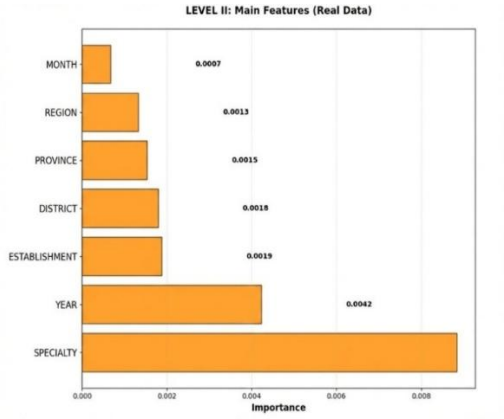

Fig. 8. Most influential main features – Level II.

Fig. 9 shows the top features that most influenced the prediction, highlighting Specialty (1.37%) and Year (0.62%) as the most influential features, while Province (0.14%) and Month (0.01%) were the least influential.

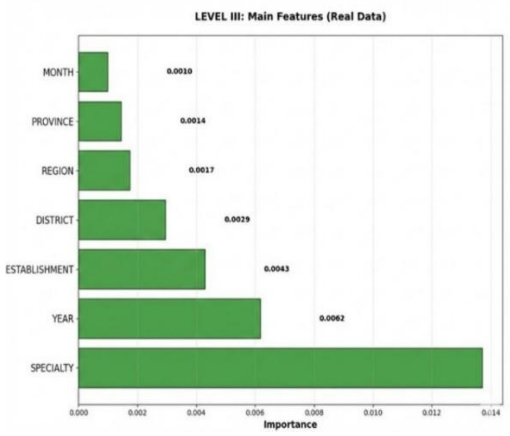

Fig. 9. Most influential main features – Level III.

In all cases, the SPECIALTY variable is consolidated as the most critical and determining factor in the model's behavior. In a second order of relevance, the YEAR variable appears, indicating a significant temporal progression in demand, although its relative weight is considerably lower than that of the medical specialty. On the other hand, geographic variables such as FACILITY, DISTRICT, and PROVINCE show a moderate influence, while REGION and MONTH represent the least influential predictive factors for the algorithm.

Finally, the analysis by medical specialty makes it possible to prioritize areas with the greatest shortage of human resources. For this purpose, prediction tests were conducted on randomly selected health centers for the period of August 2023. As shown in Fig. 10, in the Level I health center with code 381, the highest number of attendances corresponded to the General Medicine specialty, which is why a specialist in this area would be prioritized. In addition, it is observed that the difference between actual and estimated attendances presents only minimal decimal variations.

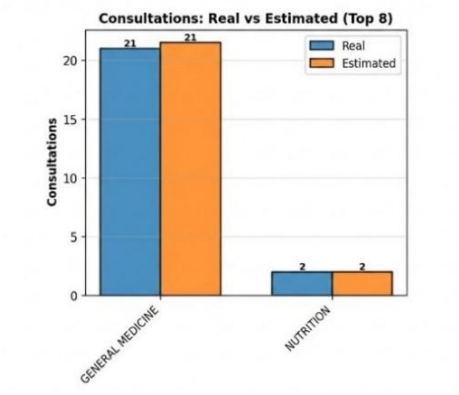

Fig. 10. Top specialties by attendance – Level I.

In Fig. 11, it is observed that in the Level II health center with code 5366, the highest number of attendances corresponded to the Nursing specialty. For this reason, a specialist in this area would be prioritized. Additionally, the variation between the number of actual and estimated attendances for this specialty is 6, which represents a minimal difference that does not affect the reliability of the prediction results.

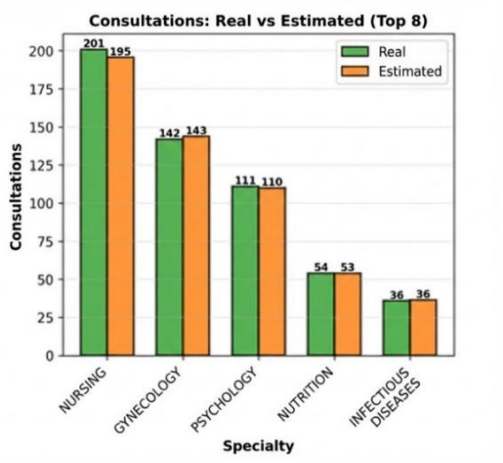

Fig. 11. Top specialties by attendance – Level II.

In Fig. 12, it is observed that in the Level III health center with code 2289, the highest number of attendances corresponded to the Pediatrics specialty. For this reason, a specialist in this area would be prioritized. Additionally, the variation between the actual and estimated attendances is 8, which does not directly affect the prediction results.

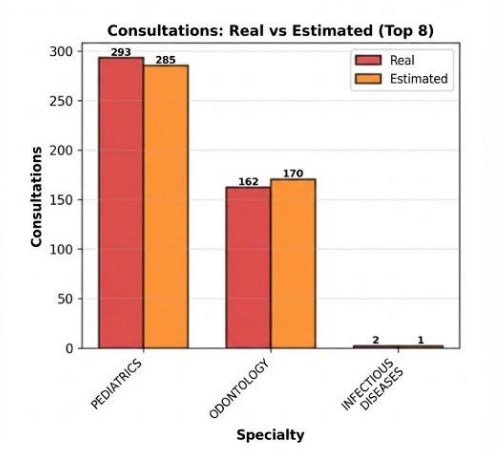

Fig. 12. Top specialties by attendance – Level III.

Overall, these findings allow us to conclude that the technological solution accurately identifies not only how many health professionals are required, but also in which specific areas urgent intervention is needed. This capability to segment results by levels of care and medical specialties constitutes a fundamental input for human resource management, enabling the reduction of care gaps and the optimization of the problem-solving capacity of public health centers in Peru.

VI. Discussion

The discussion of the findings is structured around two main axes: predictive robustness in relation to international standards and the relevance of the identified variables for human resource management.

A. Comparative Analysis of Predictive Performance

The performance of the Random Forest algorithm in this study, with an $R^2 > 0.99$ across all three levels of care, aligns

with the highest global standards of predictive accuracy. When compared with the literature, these results match the coefficient of determination reported by Köksoy et al. [18] in Turkey, while demonstrating a significant competitive advantage in terms of local error margins. Whereas Köksoy et al. reported an MAE of 39.54, Level I in this study achieved an MAE of 0.27, evidencing superior precision for primary care demand. Likewise, the accuracy obtained exceeds the 0.98 reported by Yadav [14], confirming that the model's fit is optimal for the complexity of the Peruvian healthcare system.

In terms of robustness, the superiority of this model over the 47.34% accuracy and 0.66 AUC reported by Moyo et al. [15] suggests that the inclusion of geographic and temporal variables from MINSA enables substantially higher predictive fidelity. Even at Level III, the model maintained a MAPE of 6.17%, a remarkably low figure compared to the high-specialization projections of Koç and Eren [16], which relied on synthetic data. The use of seven years of real historical records in this study ensures that the reported metrics reflect a proven capacity for generalization under fluctuating demand scenarios.

B. Factor Importance and Contribution to Healthcare Management

The feature importance analysis identifies SPECIALTY and YEAR as the most influential factors in the model, enabling strategic planning based on medical complexity and temporal progression. Unlike the behavioral approaches of Orhan and Kurutkan [12], which predict service utilization intentions based on personal factors, this proposal introduces a direct operational management metric. Through the technical conversion formula, the approach goes beyond appointment volume forecasting to generate an actionable output: the number of "required health professionals".

This operational capability addresses the lack of scheduling and planning tools identified by Yadav [14] and surpasses the scalability of local studies such as Perez-Siguas et al. [13], whose 93% AUC efficiency was confined to specific environments. Validation through real-world cases (health centers 381, 5366, and 2289) demonstrates that the differences between actual and estimated demand are minimal, enabling equitable resource allocation. Finally, integration into a React- and Flask-based architecture ensures that the achieved accuracy is not merely a theoretical result, but rather a scalable and sustainable administrative decision-support tool for the Peruvian public healthcare system.

VII. Conclusion

The present study demonstrates that the development of a technological solution based on the Random Forest algorithm enables highly accurate prediction of healthcare workforce requirements in public healthcare centers in Peru, thereby validating the hypothesis that the integration of geographical, temporal, and specialty-related variables—segmented by levels of care—significantly improves predictive performance compared to traditional statistical approaches. The model achieved a coefficient of determination $R^2 > 0.99$ across all levels of care, with low percentage errors (MAPE ranging from 1.28% for Level I to 6.17% for Level III), evidencing robust performance even in high-complexity scenarios. In addition, medical specialty and temporal evolution were identified as the most influential variables, enabling more targeted and informed workforce allocation decisions.

The main competitive advantage of this research lies in its ability to transform projected healthcare service demand predictions into operational management metrics for the required number of healthcare professionals, thereby facilitating administrative decision-making and surpassing prior approaches that focused solely on forecasting appointment volumes or patient retention behaviors with lower accuracy. The implementation of the model within a functional web-based architecture further confirms its technical feasibility as a decision-support tool for healthcare management.

Nevertheless, critical limitations related to the data source are acknowledged. Reliance on open data from the Peruvian Ministry of Health (MINSA) introduces vulnerability to underreporting in rural areas with limited connectivity, which may bias projections for Level I healthcare centers with constrained infrastructure. Moreover, the dataset does not map all service areas within healthcare centers, but only attendances provided and covered by the Comprehensive Health Insurance (SIS). Additionally, generalizing the model to contexts outside the Peruvian public healthcare system would require retraining with exogenous variables that account for different cost structures and patient flow dynamics.

As future work, the integration of real-time epidemiological and climatic variables is recommended to strengthen the model's resilience to disease outbreaks. Finally, validation of this solution in real-world hospital management applications is proposed to assess its direct impact on reducing patient waiting times, thereby contributing to the consolidation of a data-driven and technologically efficient healthcare system.

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A Readability-Driven Prompting Framework for Accurate Grade-Specific EFL Narrative Creation

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***Abstract*—The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education offers new opportunities for developing adaptive and engaging learning materials. Narrative-based content is central to improving reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and learner motivation. However, maintaining grade-appropriate readability in AI-generated narratives remains a major challenge. This study presents Readability-Driven Prompting (RDP), a novel technique designed to enhance the accuracy and efficiency of large language models in generating grade-level narratives. Using GPT-4o-mini, three prompting strategies—CEFR Keyword-Constrained Prompting (CKCP), Instruction-Based Prompting (IBP), and the proposed RDP—were applied to produce narratives for 7th-grade (A1–A2 CEFR) and 10th-grade (B1–B2 CEFR) learners. The outputs were evaluated using Flesch Reading Ease (FRE), Dale–Chall (DC) readability metrics, lexical analysis, and human assessments. Experimental results indicate that the RDP approach achieves higher alignment with target readability levels and improved lexical appropriateness compared to baseline methods, demonstrating a scalable and effective strategy for generating educational narratives, particularly for beginner-level learners.**

***Keywords*—Artificial Intelligence (AI); English as a Foreign Language (EFL); large language models (LLMs); readability metrics; narrative generation; prompt engineering; educational technology**

I. Introduction

The increasing use of large language models (LLMs) in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education offers new opportunities to create engaging and adaptive materials. Narrative texts, in particular, are valuable for developing reading comprehension, cultural awareness, and student motivation [1] [2]. However, a significant challenge remains: controlling the grade-level of AI-generated narratives. If these texts do not match the intended readability level, their instructional effectiveness may be compromised.

Providing EFL learners with materials that are appropriate for their grade level is crucial for effective language development [3]. In contrast, materials that are too advanced can be ineffective and may even hinder learners' progress [4]. Crafting narratives precisely targeted to specific grade levels is particularly challenging, as it typically requires the expertise of skilled educators and content specialists [5]. Recent studies have shown that LLMs often struggle to assess or control grammar and vocabulary levels consistently without careful guidance [6], highlighting the need for improved prompting strategies.

Using ChatGPT to support vocabulary learning has been shown to be effective [7], but sustained gains require repeated exposure to level-appropriate texts. Incorporating a high number of low-frequency words may discourage students from engaging with reading materials, underlining the importance of word frequency in instructional texts [8].

Lexical difficulty is critical for EFL readers; eye-tracking research has found that readers spend more time fixating on long, low-frequency words, and that L2 readers tend to skip fewer words than L1 readers [9], [10]. In addition, research has shown that achieving 95% overall understanding of a text is highly effective for language learning [11]. The CEFR is an internationally recognized standard for describing language ability, ranging from beginner (A1) to proficient (C2) levels, and widely used in language curriculum design. This highlights the importance of aligning texts with the target CEFR level, and suggests that the effectiveness of instructional materials can be evaluated through lexical analysis.

Another approach to evaluating text appropriateness is through readability metrics. Flesch and Kincaid introduced the Flesch Reading Ease (FRE) measure, which emphasizes syllable complexity [12]. In contrast, Dale and Chall proposed a formula (DC) that assesses textual complexity based on the frequency of familiar words [13]. They continue to be widely used and adapted in modern educational research and computational linguistics [14], [15]. By combining these metrics, educators can develop learning materials that balance linguistic complexity with student engagement and motivation. However, readability metrics alone are insufficient, particularly when addressing the needs of L2 learners. Therefore, this study evaluates narratives using both lexical analysis and readability metrics.

Effective prompt strategies are important for improving and optimizing ChatGPT's performance in EFL applications [6], [16], [17]. Recently, prompt engineering has become a popular research topic. The fundamental step in prompt engineering is to provide clear instructions and context to the model [6], as a result, Instruction-Based Prompting has become widely used. However, Instruction-Based Prompting alone may not be sufficient for generating narratives or supporting L2 learning [6], [16].

Building on previous work, research has shown that applying CEFR word constraints can enhance the effectiveness of targeted narrative generation [18]. This approach is more effective for producing narratives suitable for specific grade levels. Since GPT models are sensitive to input and perform better with sufficient context, embedding readability theory and CEFR-based constraints into prompts provides clearer guidance with fewer tokens. Furthermore, supplementing prompts with sample stories at the target grade level can yield comparable

results with reduced computational cost. Accordingly, this study introduces Readability-Driven Prompting (RDP), a novel few-shot prompting framework that integrates readability theory, CEFR guidelines, and representative examples to generate grade-appropriate EFL narratives.

We hypothesize that Readability-Driven Prompting (RDP) will be more effective than Instruction-Based Prompting (IBP), and non-inferior to CEFR Keyword Constrained Prompting (CKCP), in generating grade-appropriate EFL narratives for Grade 7 (A1–A2) and Grade 10 (B1–B2). Effectiveness is assessed as follows: a) Readability alignment—RDP is expected to produce a higher proportion of texts falling within pre-registered grade bands on Flesch Reading Ease and Dale–Chall metrics, with smaller deviations from band centers compared to IBP, and no worse than CKCP within a pre-specified non-inferiority margin; b) Controllability across grades—RDP should yield a larger and more consistent separation between Grade 7 and Grade 10 readability levels than IBP, and at least as distinct as CKCP; and c) Lexical targeting—RDP is anticipated to more accurately match CEFR lexical profiles (e.g., more A1–A2 and fewer ≥B1 tokens at Grade 7, more B1–B2 and controlled ≥C1 usage at Grade 10) compared to IBP, and to perform non-inferior to CKCP, with frequency profiles that minimize long, low-frequency words at Grade 7 and introduce them in a controlled manner at Grade 10.

This study addresses the following research questions:

- Can Readability-Driven Prompting (RDP) improve the alignment of large language model-generated EFL narratives with target grade-level readability metrics?
- How do students perceive the readability, engagement, and vocabulary learning potential of narratives generated using RDP?

The primary contributions of this work are as follows:

- We propose Readability-Driven Prompting (RDP), a novel prompting framework that integrates explicit readability theory, CEFR-based constraints, and in-context grade-level narrative exemplars to guide large language models in producing educationally aligned narratives.
- We provide, to our knowledge, the first systematic experimental comparison of RDP with CEFR Keyword Constrained Prompting (CKCP) and Instruction-Based Prompting (IBP), focusing on both reading metrics and lexical targeting for EFL learners at distinct grade bands.
- We perform a comprehensive analysis—combining established readability formulas, lexical CEFR alignment, and human learner evaluation—demonstrating the efficacy of RDP for generating grade-specific texts in EFL education.

The remainder of this study is organized as follows: Section II reviews related work on prompt engineering and readability control. Section III describes our experimental methodology and evaluation framework. Section IV presents the results of lexical and readability analyses and a human evaluation, followed by discussion. Section V presents the discussion. Finally, Section VI concludes and suggests avenues for future research.

II. Related Work

A. Prompt Engineering on Education

Few-shot and zero-shot prompting strategies have emerged as key techniques for improving reasoning performance, mitigating hallucinations, and regulating the linguistic register in large language model (LLM) outputs [19]. In educational contexts, these methods help ensure that generated content aligns with learners' proficiency levels and pedagogical goals. An important extension, known as Generated Knowledge, enhances model reasoning by providing theoretically relevant information as supplemental input [20]. Incorporating educational or linguistic frameworks—such as readability measures like Flesch–Kincaid or Dale–Chall—within prompts enables the model to produce text that is calibrated for specific grade levels. This approach not only constrains linguistic complexity but also increases the predictability, interpretability, and educational value of the generated instructional materials.

B. Readability Metrics

Readability refers to how easily a text can be understood by its intended audience. Classical formulas, such as the Flesch–Kincaid and Dale–Chall indices, quantify textual difficulty based on variables like sentence length, word familiarity, and syntactic transparency. More recently, LLM-driven or prompt-based methods have been proposed to move beyond these surface-level indicators by capturing latent linguistic features that influence perceived difficulty [14]. Despite these advancements, empirical evidence suggests that model-based approaches remain inconsistent in generating text at predefined complexity levels, largely due to the opaque and stochastic internal workings of LLMs. In contrast, traditional readability measures continue to provide transparent, replicable, and pedagogically meaningful metrics for the development and assessment of educational texts.

From a theoretical standpoint, readability frameworks provide quantifiable, evidence-based parameters for managing text complexity [12] [13]. When such parameters—sentence length, lexical frequency, and semantic transparency—are incorporated directly into prompt formulation, they introduce explicit and interpretable constraints that counterbalance the inherent variability of LLM generation processes [14]. For example, prompts specifying bounded average sentence length or prioritizing high-frequency vocabulary enable more reliable alignment between model outputs and intended learner proficiency levels. The integration of readability theory into prompt engineering thus transforms text generation from an iterative, heuristic endeavor into a structured, evidence-driven methodology for producing educationally appropriate materials.

C. Narrative Generation

Recent advancements in large language models (LLMs), particularly GPT-3 and GPT-4, have demonstrated significant capabilities in narrative generation. With well-designed prompts, these models can produce fluent and coherent narratives that surpass previous automated storytelling systems in both linguistic quality and narrative cohesiveness [15]. In educational

contexts, LLM-based narrative generation has been used to enhance learner engagement, foster narrative awareness, and promote higher-order comprehension and creativity [21]. However, notable limitations persist, especially in maintaining long-range coherence, character consistency, and thematic integration throughout extended texts [14], [15]. As a result, expert curation, human supervision, and post-editing remain necessary to ensure that generated narratives are pedagogically appropriate and aligned with instructional objectives.

D. Research Gap

Despite advances in prompt engineering, readability control, and narrative generation, existing research has yet to develop a robust framework for consistently producing educational narratives aligned with predetermined grade-level and cognitive-developmental criteria [6]. While prompt engineering can influence the stylistic and structural aspects of generated text, the inherent opacity and variability of LLM outputs make it difficult to achieve deterministic control over readability and conceptual depth.

Integrating readability theory within a Generated Knowledge framework offers a promising solution to these challenges. By embedding explicit textual constraints—such as quantified expectations for sentence length, lexical familiarity, and semantic transparency—into the model's reasoning process, it becomes possible to guide generation toward predictable linguistic boundaries. This hybrid approach combines the adaptability of contemporary language models with the stability and interpretability of traditional readability measures.

Such integration not only enhances technical reliability but also reframes educational text generation as an evidence-based practice rooted in literacy and educational measurement theory. It enables the creation of pedagogically aligned narratives that ensure coherence, accessibility, and adherence to instructional goals across diverse learner levels. Consequently, this study addresses a critical gap by investigating how readability-based generated knowledge can systematically regulate LLM narrative production to achieve consistency, transparency, and educational appropriateness—outcomes not yet realized in the current state of research.

III. Methodology

A. Study Design and Overview

This study aims to validate the effectiveness of the proposed Readability-Driven Prompting (RDP) framework for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) narrative generation. RDP is an enhanced prompting method that conditions large language models on readability theory and grade-level exemplars, enabling the production of narratives more closely matched to learner proficiency.

To establish comparative validity, RDP was evaluated against two reference prompting strategies: Instruction-Based Prompting (IBP), which represents minimally guided text generation, and CEFR Keyword Constrained Prompting (CKCP), which applies strict lexical constraints.

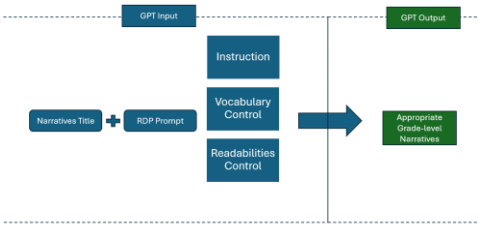

Fig. 1. Block diagram of the proposed readability-driven prompting (RDP) framework.

The proposed RDP methodology (see Fig. 1) integrates explicit readability instructions (using Flesch–Kincaid Grade Level and Dale–Chall metrics), CEFR-aligned vocabulary references, and example narratives directly within the prompt. By embedding theoretical constraints and representative exemplars, RDP aims to achieve high readability alignment and reduced computational cost compared to traditional word-list-based approaches.

B. Targeted Grade Levels

In line with common curricular standards that map lower-secondary EFL learners to CEFR levels A1–A2 and upper-secondary learners to B1–B2 [22], [23], we operationalize early EFL as Grade 7 and intermediate EFL as Grade 10. In CEFR terms, Grade 10 typically aligns with level B1. Accordingly, we compare RDP against CEFR Keyword Constrained Prompting (CKCP) and Instruction-Based Prompting (IBP) using GPT-4o-mini with default temperatures (t = 1) at two anchor levels commonly targeted in secondary EFL curricula: 7th grade (A1–A2 CEFR) and 10th grade (B1–B2 CEFR).

Thus, 7th and 10th grade serve as representative anchor points for lower- and upper-secondary EFL reading. Seventh grade typically corresponds to early–low intermediate proficiency (A2 CEFR), where learners possess sufficient decoding skills and core vocabulary for short narratives but remain sensitive to sentence length and unfamiliar lexis. In contrast, tenth grade aligns with upper-intermediate proficiency (B1 CEFR), where learners can manage more complex syntax and a broader academic vocabulary.

Fig. 2 illustrates the research objectives. The study aims to generate narratives for both beginner and intermediate EFL learners. Narratives will be classified as appropriate for beginners if they are suitable for 7th graders (CEFR A1–A2 level) and as appropriate for intermediates, if they are suitable for 10th graders (CEFR B1–B2 level).

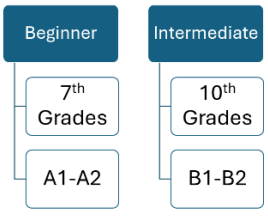

Fig. 2. Research target representative.

C. Dataset Generation

For this research, we produced 100 narratives for each combination of prompting method and grade level. Specifically, for each of the three methods (IBP, CKCP, RDP) at both 7th and 10th grade targets, we generated 100 narratives using GPT-4o-mini under identical decoding settings. Every narrative title and theme is unique covering common EFL themes (e.g., school life, family, travel, science) with a range between 200 and 300 words. To isolate prompting effects while holding topic constant, each title was instantiated once for every prompting method (IBP, CKCP, RDP) at each target grade (7th, 10th). In total, this yielded 600 narratives (3 methods × 2 grades × 100 narratives).

D. Evaluation

This research evaluates the generated narratives using three methods: readability analysis, lexical analysis, and survey-based assessment. For readability evaluation, two complementary metrics were employed. Table I presents the Flesch–Kincaid Reading Ease (FRE) scores and corresponding grade interpretations. FRE scores range from 0 to 100, with higher values indicating easier readability. Unlike the Flesch–Kincaid Grade Level (FKGL), which directly maps text complexity to a U.S. grade level, FRE provides a broader indication of textual accessibility across proficiency levels. In this study, narratives targeting the 7th-grade level were required to achieve FRE scores between 70 and 80, while narratives targeting the 10th-grade level were expected to fall within the range of 50 to 60.

TABLE. I. FLESCH-KINCAID EASE MEASUREMENT

Flesch-Kincaid Reading Ease (FRE)	
Point	Grade
90-100	Very easy (5th grade; suitable for children)
80-89	Easy (6th grade)
70-79	Fairly easy (7th grade)
60-69	Standard (8th-9th grade; plain English)
50-59	Fairly difficult (10th-12th grade)
30-49	Difficult (college level)
0-29	Very difficult (college graduate level)

TABLE. II. DALE-CHALL MEASUREMENT

Dale-Chall (DC)	
Point	Grade
<= 4.9	Easily understood by 4th grade or lower
5.0-5.9	Easy (6th grade)
6.0-6.9	Fairly easy (7th grade)
7.0-7.9	Standard (8th-9th grade; plain English)
8.0-8.9	Fairly difficult (10th-12th grade)
9.0-9.9	Difficult (college level)
10+	Very difficult (college graduate level)

Table II presents the Dale–Chall formula (DC) scores and corresponding grade interpretations. The DC formula measures text complexity based on the proportion of unfamiliar words relative to a predefined list of commonly used words. In this study, narratives targeting the 7th-grade level were required to achieve DC scores between 6.0 and 6.9, while narratives targeting the 10th-grade level were expected to fall within the range of 7.0 to 7.9.

This research also evaluates the generated narratives using lexical analysis. The narratives undergo several text processing steps, as shown in Fig. 3. The main processes are as follows:

- Normalization: To ensure consistency in format, all raw text is converted to lowercase, punctuation is removed, Unicode is standardized, and extraneous characters such as hyphens are eliminated.
- Tokenization: To conduct lexical analysis, each word must be identified and categorized. This process separates individual words and assigns parts of speech (e.g., noun, adjective, verb). SpaCy is used for tokenization in this study.
- Filtering: Certain tokens, such as character names, URLs, numbers, acronyms, and hashtags, do not contribute to text difficulty and should be excluded. SpaCy, in addition to our word list, is also used to filter out these elements to ensure proper lexical analysis.
- Lemmatizing: English words can appear in many forms. To accurately assess difficulty, each word is reduced to its dictionary form. The NLTK library is employed for the lemmatization process.

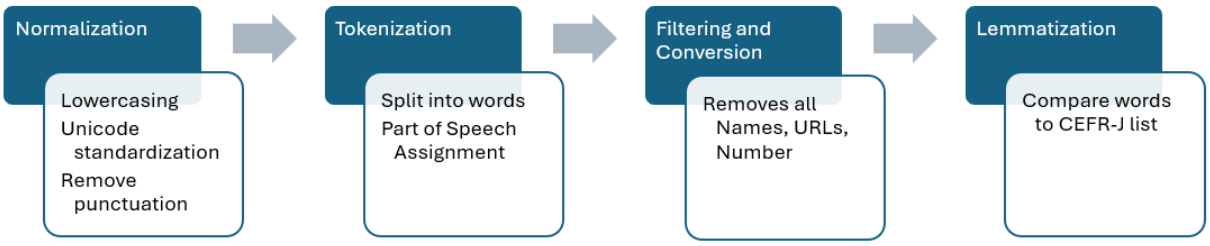

Fig. 3. Lexical analysis text processing pipeline.

After text processing is complete, all lemmatized tokens are compared against the CEFR-J dataset. Each token is counted and its difficulty level is determined based on its CEFR classification. Tokens not present in the CEFR-J dataset are considered as above C1 level, since most non-relevant items have already been filtered out. We will refer this as Unknown Words.

For learning to be effective, students need to understand at least 95% of the content they read [11]. Accordingly, for the beginner level (A1–A2), only words within the A1–A2 bands are counted, while for the intermediate level (B1–B2), words within the A1–B1 bands are considered. The effectiveness of each method is determined by how closely the proportion of appropriate-level vocabulary approaches the 95% threshold.

The final evaluation method involved a human evaluation survey. Participants were beginner-level Japanese learners of English with an interest in improving their language skills. The evaluation was conducted through a storytelling game, developed for smartphones using the Unity engine. Thirty students from Tokyo Denki University participated in the study. Participants were selected based on their English proficiency and voluntarily agreed to try the game and assess the quality of the narratives for learning purposes.

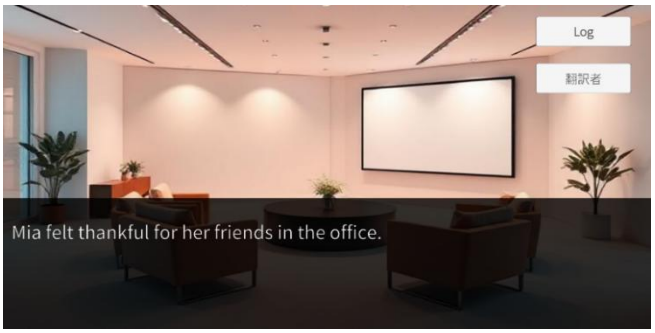

Fig. 4. Example of game narratives.

The process begins with student self-introduction and course selection, which function as initial engagement steps. Learners then proceed through narratives generated using the RDP method. Fig. 4 illustrates how these narratives are implemented and represented within the game environment. During the narrative progression, students are prompted with comprehension questions that must be answered to continue. If a student is unsure about the meaning of a word, a translation button is available, providing an explanation of the word's meaning and its usage within the narrative context.

The game served dual purposes: acting both as a storyteller and as a learning tool. At the beginning of the game, participants selected their preferred topics. Based on these preferences, a new narrative was generated using the RDP prompting method. The generated narrative was then presented in the game, and participants were asked to read the text before answering questions designed to assess comprehension and engagement. After completing these questions, participants received immediate feedback on their performance and a review of their responses. Finally, they were prompted to complete a survey evaluating the narrative's quality, their level of engagement, and the perceived learning value of the experience.

The survey comprised six items designed to assess participants' perceptions of the generated narratives:

1) The generated narratives were easy to understand: This item measures how easily students could comprehend the narratives.

2) The English in the narratives felt natural: This item assesses how natural the English in the narratives was compared to that found in a textbook.

3) The generated narratives were interesting: This item evaluates how engaged students felt while reading the stories.

4) The words used in the narratives are not too difficult: This item measures the perceived difficulty of individual words used in the narratives.

5) I was able to learn a new word from these narratives: This item assesses whether students felt they learned new vocabulary from the texts.

6) I would like to read more narratives like this: This item measures students' interest in reading similar stories in the future.

All survey questions were administered in Japanese. The items and descriptions were translated using ChatGPT 4.1 and subsequently proofread by a native speaker to ensure accuracy and clarity.

There are several limitations to the human experiment. First, only beginner-level materials were evaluated, so intermediate-level narratives were not assessed. Second, the evaluation focused exclusively on narratives generated using the RDP method.

E. Prompting Strategies

This research focuses on three prompting strategies:

- CEFR Keyword Constrained Prompting (CKCP): Prompts are designed to generate narratives using only words from designated CEFR levels, following approaches established in prior research [18]. CKCP operates by constraining the model to the vocabulary specified within the prompt. For 7th grade, only A1–A2 words are used, while for 10th grade, A1–B2 words are included. As a result, token usage increases substantially for higher grade levels. The Prompting method is represented in the Algorithm 1.

Algorithm 1: CKCP Prompt

You are a story creator assistant that specializes for {targeted_grade}th grade children. Your task is to craft a compelling story based on a user-provided title and a predefined list of verbs and nouns. Follow these instructions carefully:
Instructions
1. **Input Requirements**:
- The user provides only a title.
- You will also be given a list of verbs,nouns, pronoun, adverb and adjective. Use these words exclusively to create the story.

2. **Constraints**:
- Use only the verbs, nouns, adjective, adverb from the provided list.

- Articles (e.g., \"the,\" \"a\") and basic prepositions (e.g., \"in,\" \"on\") are allowed for readability.
- Verbs can be used in various tenses (past, present, future) as needed.
- Make it suitable for 7th grades
- Please use simple word and frequently used word only

3. **Output Format**:

- Make sure it was between 200-300 words
List of words:
Verbs : [a1-a2 CEFR J] or [a1-b1 CEFR J]
Adverbs : [a1-a2 CEFR J] or [a1-b1 CEFR J]
Nouns : [a1-a2 CEFR J] or [a1-b1 CEFR J]
Adjective : [a1-a2 CEFR J] or [a1-b1 CEFR J]

- Readability Driven Prompting: Prompts include two to three example stories at the target grade level, selected based on Flesch Reading Ease (FRE) and Dale–Chall (DC) scores falling within the desired thresholds. The prompt references both FRE and DC theories and provides explicit instructions to generate narratives within these specified readability ranges. However, we observed that GPT sometimes struggles to select appropriate vocabulary for each theory, especially at lower grade levels. To address this, selected words from the CEFR list with proven impact at specific grades were also referenced in the prompt. The example stories were taken from CKCP outputs that met our criteria for readability and lexical alignment. The Prompting method is represented in the Algorithm 2.

Algorithm 2: RDP Prompt

You are a children's story writer specializing in {targeted_grade}th-grade material.

Follow these rules strictly:
Vocabulary:

- Use only CEFR A1-A2 words.
- Avoid uncommon, academic, or abstract words.
- Use concrete, everyday language.
- Include slightly longer (2–3 syllable) words when appropriate to raise FRE.
- Avoid words above {targeted_grade}reading level (Dale-Chall).
- Example Forbidden words: {hard_word}
- Use simple alternatives: {alternative_word}

Sentence Structure:

- Mix short and compound sentences to increase words per sentence.
- Each sentence should ideally be 8–12 words when possible.
- Use conjunctions like 'and', 'but', 'so', 'because', 'while' to combine ideas.
- Add short descriptive phrases to expand sentences naturally.
- Keep sentences clear, active, and readable.
- Avoid complex subordinating clauses beyond simple compounds.

Story Guidelines:

- Word count: 200–300 words.

- Include curiosity, teamwork, problem-solving, or small adventures to engage readers.
- Keep paragraphs short.
- Include a clear beginning, middle, and end.
- Introduce small challenges or conflicts, then resolve them.

Readability Targets:

- Flesch-Kincaid Ease (FRE) {targeted_range}
- Dale-Chall Score {targeted_range}
- After writing, check FRE and DC internally. Redo if scores are outside range. Do not include scores in the story output.

Example:

[Stories example]

- Instruction-based Prompting: In this approach, GPT-4o-mini is instructed to generate a narrative for a specific grade and CEFR level without providing examples, theoretical guidance, or CEFR word constraints. The prompt simply requests the model to create a narrative tailored to the designated grade, specifying that the text

should be appropriate for the targeted difficulty level. The Prompting method is represented in the Algorithm 3.

Algorithm 3: IBP Prompt

You are a story creator assistant that specializes for {target_grade}. Follow these instructions carefully:

Instructions:

1. **Input Requirements**:

- The user provides only a title.

2. **Task**:

- Create a narratives for ESL. Mainly targeted {target_level} grade US grade or CEFR {target_cefr} level

3. **Output Format**:

- Make sure it was between 200-300 words

IV. Results

A. Lexical Analysis

Beginner narrative lexical analysis is presented in Table III. Although none of the methods achieved the 95% target, the results indicate that the proposed RDP technique performed the best, achieving 86.17% A1–A2 vocabulary usage. This was followed by CKCP at 84.84% and IBP at 82.89%. These findings suggest that narrative difficulty can be effectively adjusted using prompting techniques and RDP shown to increase the narrative qualities for a specific target level.

TABLE. III. Beginner Narrative Lexical Analysis

Method	Unknown Words	A1-A2 Words Ratio	Diff w/ target	Words Avg.
IBP	3%	82.89%	-12.11%	263 words
CKCP	2%	84.84%	-10.16%	287 words
RDP	2%	86.17%	-8.83%	336 words

Regarding unknown words, RDP demonstrates strong performance, producing only 2% unknown words, compared with 3% for IBP and matching the performance of CKCP. Notably, RDP also generates longer narratives, with an average length of 336 words, compared to 263 words for IBP and 287 words for CKCP. Achieving a low proportion of unknown words in longer texts is generally more challenging, as increased text length raises the likelihood of introducing unfamiliar vocabulary. Therefore, this result indicates that RDP achieves a higher level of lexical control and overall performance than the other methods.

TABLE. IV. Intermediate Narrative Lexical Analysis

Method	Unknown Words	A1-B1 Words	Diff w/ target	Words Avg.
IBP	5%	89.68%	-5.32%	267 words
CKCP	4.33%	90.41%	-4.59%	307 words
RDP	5.71%	88.43%	-6.67%	327 words

Intermediate narrative lexical analysis is presented in Table IV. Although RDP remains relatively close to the 95% target at the intermediate level, its performance shows a slight decline compared to IBP. IBP achieves 89.68% A1–B1 vocabulary usage, while RDP reaches 88.43%. Among the three methods, CKCP performs best, coming closest to the target with 90.41% A1–B1 vocabulary usage.

RDP also produces the highest proportion of unknown words, at 5.71%, compared with 5.0% for IBP and 4.33% for CKCP. In addition, RDP generates longer narratives, averaging 327 words, whereas IBP and CKCP produce 267 and 307 words, respectively. The combination of increased text length and greater lexical variation may contribute to the higher incidence of unknown words and the slight reduction in vocabulary alignment observed at the intermediate level. Overall, these results indicate a modest decline in RDP's performance when applied to intermediate-level narrative generation.

B. Readability Analysis

TABLE. V. 7TH Grade Focused Readability Analysis

Method	Flesch-Kincaid Ease	Dale-Chall	Flesch-Kincaid Target	Dale-Chall Target
IBP	68.63	7.05	70-79	6.0-6.9
CKCP	69.18	6.65	70-79	6.0-6.9
RDP	77.28	6.80	70-79	6.0-6.9

7th grade focused readability analysis is presented in Table V. RDP achieves a Flesch–Kincaid Reading Ease (FKE) score of 77.28, which falls within the targeted range. In contrast, CKCP does not meet the target, obtaining a score of 68.63, and IBP similarly falls short with a score of 68.63. These results indicate that RDP outperforms the other prompting methods in aligning narrative readability with the intended Flesch–Kincaid Ease target.

Regarding the Dale–Chall formula, both RDP and CKCP fall within the target band. RDP achieves a score of 6.80, while CKCP obtains 6.65. IBP fails to meet the target with a score of 7.05, suggesting that it produces narratives suitable for a higher grade level. These findings indicate that RDP achieves comparable performance to CKCP in terms of word familiarity control.

TABLE. VI. 10TH Grade Focused Readability Analysis

Method	Flesch-Kincaid Ease	Dale-Chall	Flesch-Kincaid Target	Dale-Chall Target
IBP	60.35	7.77	50-59	8.0-8.9
CKCP	60.31	7.99	50-59	8.0-8.9
RDP	58.98	7.61	50-59	8.0-8.9

10th grade focused readability analysis is presented in Table VI. RDP achieves a Flesch Reading Ease (FRE) score of 58.98, making it the only method that falls within the targeted range. In comparison, IBP and CKCP obtain scores of 60.35 and 60.31, respectively, both of which fall outside the desired range. These results indicate that RDP performs better in controlling overall text complexity as measured by the FRE formula.

With respect to the Dale–Chall formula, none of the methods reach the target range. RDP achieves a score of 7.61, while IBP and CKCP obtain scores of 7.77 and 7.99, respectively. The similarity of these scores suggests comparable performance across methods in terms of word familiarity at the 10th-grade level.

C. Human Evaluation

The first question aimed to assess the overall difficulty of the narratives. The mean score of 4.43 indicates that most participants agreed that the narratives were easy to understand. The second question evaluated whether the narratives felt natural, with a mean of 4.4, showing general agreement that the text was fluent and natural. The third question measured the narratives' level of interest, and the mean of 4.26 suggests that most participants found the stories engaging. The fourth question focused on word difficulty, yielding a slightly lower mean of 3.63. This indicates that while participants generally understood the vocabulary used by the RDP method, some words were challenging for certain users. The fifth question assessed whether participants could learn new words from the narratives, with a mean of 4.23, suggesting that the texts effectively supported incidental vocabulary learning. Finally, the sixth question measured engagement and willingness to read more narratives, resulting in a mean of 4.43, indicating that participants were motivated and interested in continued reading (see Table VII).

TABLE. VII. QUESTIONNAIRE RESULT

Question	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD
The narratives generated were easy to understand.	0	0	4	9	17	4.43	0.73
The English in the narratives felt natural.	0	0	6	6	18	4.4	0.81
The generated narratives were interesting.	0	1	2	15	12	4.26	0.73
The words used in the narratives are understandable.	2	4	6	9	9	3.63	1.24
I was able to learn a new word from these narratives	0	1	5	10	14	4.23	0.85
I would like to read more narratives like this	0	0	2	13	15	4.43	0.63

V. DISCUSSION

A. Lexical Analysis

The lexical analysis employed in this study is not proposed as a novel methodological contribution; rather, it serves as an evaluation lens for assessing the effectiveness of different prompting strategies. When examining the RDP results in comparison with the other methods, the incorporation of readability constraints—such as the Dale–Chall and Flesch–Kincaid formulas—clearly enhances GPT's ability to generate narratives that align more closely with targeted grade-level expectations. These findings are consistent with prior studies indicating that models such as GPT are unreliable when generating narratives without guidance [24], [25], and that they struggle to accurately assess grammatical and lexical difficulty [6]. By explicitly integrating readability theory, RDP helps mitigate these limitations and demonstrates stronger performance than the other prompting methods.

However, this effectiveness is primarily observed at the beginner level. At the intermediate level, RDP does not outperform IBP or CKCP and instead exhibits a slight decline in performance. This reduction may indicate a form of model confusion. At higher proficiency levels, RDP attempts to satisfy multiple theoretical constraints while simultaneously allowing greater lexical freedom, which can challenge the model's ability to balance competing objectives. As GPT naturally introduces increased vocabulary variation at intermediate levels, the additional constraints may interfere with one another, reducing the model's ability to consistently maintain vocabulary within the A1–B1 range.

While gains are modest at the intermediate level, the consistent beginner-level improvements are pedagogically meaningful, as early-stage readability mismatches have a disproportionate impact on learner motivation and comprehension.

Overall, the lexical analysis indicates that RDP is well-suited for early-grade narrative generation but encounters difficulties at the intermediate level. CKCP performs consistently at the beginner level and achieves the strongest results for intermediate narratives, while IBP demonstrates improved performance as the target grade level increases.

B. Readability Analysis

RDP demonstrates strong performance in controlling word complexity, as it is the only method that consistently falls within the targeted Flesch–Kincaid Reading Ease range of 70–79 for beginner-level narratives and 50–59 for intermediate-level narratives. This indicates that RDP effectively improves word complexity control across proficiency levels.

RDP also achieves favorable results on the Dale–Chall formula at the beginner level, falling within the 6.0–6.9 target range for beginner narratives. However, despite explicitly specifying the target grade and the model's theoretical understanding of the Dale–Chall formula, the generated outputs do not consistently meet the desired range for 10th-grade narratives. Notably, CKCP comes closest to the Dale–Chall target, with only a 0.01 deviation from the ideal band, whereas RDP exhibits the largest deviation at 0.39. This contrast highlights the different ways in which the prompting methods manage word familiarity and overall narrative complexity.

Overall, unlike the lexical analysis results, the readability analysis reveals that CKCP and RDP exhibit distinct and complementary strengths. CKCP aligns more closely with Dale–Chall expectations, while RDP performs best on the Flesch–Kincaid scale. These findings suggest that generating grade-appropriate narratives may require different prompting strategies depending on which readability dimension, structural complexity or word familiarity, is prioritized.

C. Human Evaluation

Overall, the human evaluation results demonstrate that narratives generated using the RDP method received positive feedback and performed well as learning materials. Participants generally found the texts understandable, natural, and engaging,

while also providing opportunities for learning new words. These results suggest that RDP is effective for creating targeted, learner-friendly narratives that balance readability, vocabulary, and interest.

VI. Conclusion

This study investigated the effectiveness of three prompting techniques: IBP, CKCP, and RDP. Three types of analysis were conducted. The first was lexical analysis, which showed that RDP performed best for early-grade narratives by producing a higher proportion of A1–A2 words and closely aligning with the intended vocabulary range. However, at the intermediate level, RDP's performance declined, likely due to the model's need to balance multiple constraints, which sometimes resulted in the use of less familiar words. CKCP demonstrated consistent performance across both levels, while IBP improved as the target grade increased.

Second, the readability analysis further highlighted the complementary strengths of the prompting techniques. RDP generated narratives that aligned closely with Flesch–Kincaid targets at both the 7th and 10th grade levels, indicating effective control over sentence structure and syllable complexity. In contrast, CKCP more closely matched the Dale–Chall thresholds, demonstrating stronger control over word familiarity. These findings suggest that different prompting strategies may be required depending on which dimension of readability is prioritized.

Finally, a human evaluation survey was conducted. The results confirmed that narratives generated by RDP were generally understandable, natural, engaging, and conducive to vocabulary learning. Participants reported positive experiences and expressed willingness to read more narratives, indicating that RDP can effectively produce learner-friendly texts. However, slightly lower scores for word understandability correspond with the lexical analysis, suggesting that some vocabulary may still pose challenges for certain learners.

In summary, the results indicate that RDP is a promising approach for generating grade-targeted narratives, particularly for beginner learners and when controlling for structural readability. CKCP and IBP also provide complementary benefits, depending on the target proficiency level and the specific readability metric being prioritized. Overall, these findings demonstrate that carefully designed prompting techniques can enhance large language model outputs for educational purposes by balancing lexical appropriateness, readability, and learner engagement.

Our findings suggest several promising avenues for future research. First, given that RDP did not outperform CKCP at intermediate proficiency levels, future work should explore adaptive prompt strategies that dynamically balance readability constraints as task complexity increases. This might involve reinforcement learning or prompt chaining to better harmonize competing metrics. Second, while this study focused on narrative generation for EFL Japanese learners, extending RDP to other languages, learner backgrounds, and genres (e.g., expository or dialogic texts) would help assess its generalizability and cultural adaptability. Finally, the current human evaluation was limited to beginner-level narratives with a small sample size; future studies should involve a broader range of proficiency levels and larger, possibly classroom-based longitudinal evaluations to evaluate educational impact.

Acknowledgments

This work was partially supported by the Research Institute for Science and Technology of Tokyo Denki University, Grant Number Q25D-10 / Japan

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HELM-BRCA: Hybrid Embedding and Learning Model for BRCA Methylation Classification

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***Abstract*—Breast cancer remains a highly heterogeneous disease for which it demands advanced computational techniques that can reveal significant biological patterns in high-dimensional epigenomic data. DNA methylation profiles generated by the Illumina HumanMethylation450 platform yield rich, clinically relevant signals but introduce significant analytical challenges due to their high dimensionality, sparsity, and nonlinear structure. This work presents a novel memory-efficient hybrid learning architecture that combines Truncated Singular Value Decomposition (SVD), a deep Autoencoder, and a multi-model ensemble classifier for boosting subtype classification performance using TCGA-BRCA methylation data. In order to circumvent memory limits and prevent system crashes, a probe-subset extraction strategy combined with variance-based feature selection was employed to ensure fast and safe data loading from the Xena repository. While the autoencoder extracts compact nonlinear manifold representations, SVD captures the global linear variance structure. Further, the fused latent space is modelled by an ensemble including Random Forest, XGBoost, and a lightweight Keras neural classifier that allows the system to exploit different decision limits and achieve robust generalization. The experimental investigation across several architectures demonstrates high predictive performance with ROC-AUC scores exceeding 0.99 and accuracies higher than 0.96 for Basic CNN and MLP models. Furthermore, the proposed hybrid ensemble improves stability and precision by outperforming traditional baselines and confirming the complementary nature of spectral and deep feature extraction. This study is suitable for large-scale biomedical data analytics scenarios. In conclusion, this work provides an efficient hybrid machine learning framework for breast cancer methylation study by offering a strong platform for improved prognostic modelling and development of epigenetic biomarkers.**

Keywords*—Breast cancer classification; DNA methylation; TCGA-BRCA; Truncated SVD; autoencoder; ensemble learning; deep learning; epigenomic biomarkers; hybrid model; machine learning pipeline; high-dimensional data

I. Introduction

Breast cancer is considered one of the highest cancer morbidity and mortality cases in women globally. In spite of the tremendous progress in the area of early detection, molecular profiling, and targeted therapies, breast cancer has currently been taken as a biologically heterogeneous disease with several different molecular subtypes with genetical, epigenetical, and phenotypic features. This heterogeneity directly influences disease courses, therapy response, and patient prognosis, and careful molecular-level stratification strategies are considered necessary to enable precision oncology.

Omics technologies that operate with high throughput have also made breast cancer research faster, as they allow massive profiling of genomic and epigenomic changes. Among them, the DNA methylation has turned out to be a strong and durable epigenetic biomarker because of its key contribution to the regulation of genes, fine-tuning of the chromatin, genomic stability, and X-chromosome inactivation. The methylation abnormalities, including promoter hypermethylation and global hypomethylation, are closely linked with cancer initiation and progression, and hence, methylation profiling is very informative in cancer subtype discrimination and prognosis.

The quantification of genome-wide methylation at more than 480,000 CpG sites has been made possible through the availability of epigenome-wide platforms like the Illumina HumanMethylation450 BeadChip. The TCGA-BRCA data, among others, is a comprehensive dataset of methylation profiles of breast cancer, but with such a large size of the data (compared to the number of samples), there are significant analytical issues like multi-collinearity, sparsity, over-fitting, and high computational costs. Traditional statistical methods and individual machine learning models usually cannot identify credible patterns in such data without efficient dimensionality reduction and feature-selection methods.

The machine learning and deep learning methods have demonstrated potential to overcome these issues. Classical machine learning algorithms, such as Support Vector Machines, Random Forests, Logistic Regression, and boosting-based ensembles, have shown good performance in cancer classification with the help of the right choice of features. Simultaneously, deep learning networks, especially autoencoders, can also be used to do nonlinear dimensionality reduction, allowing the latent to be contained locally and compactly within the latent space, allowing complex patterns in methylation to be represented. Nevertheless, small sizes of clinical samples are frequently a limiting factor in deep learning models, and these models tend to be overfit when trained on their own, which explains the interest in hybrid frameworks that combine the strengths of both machine and deep learning strategies.

Selection of features is a highly sensitive process in the classification process with methylation since only a limited

number of CpG sites make a significant contribution to subtype classification. It is thus necessary to use filter, wrapper, and embedded selection methods to extract informative biomarkers and minimize redundancy and noise. Since there is no feature-selection strategy that is optimal universally, we need to use comparative and hybrid methods so as to get good, robust, and generalizable performance. Moreover, the clinical importance of DNA methylation, because it remains stable and can be detected in less invasive specimens like circulating tumor DNA, highlights its potential in the early detection of the disease, subtype, and monitoring of the disease.

This work suggests a Hybrid SVD-Autoencoder-Ensemble framework that can be used to classify breast cancer based on TCGA-BRCA 450K DNA methylation data. The suggested multistage architecture combines: 1) a linear spectral decomposition to reduce dimensionality and reduce multicollinearity, 2) a nonlinear learning representation using an auto-encoder to capture complex methylation patterns, and 3) an ensemble classifier to increase predictive power and generalization.

The rest of the study is structured in the following way: Section II will entail a thorough review of the literature related to DNA methylation-based breast cancer classification and current machine learning and deep learning methods. Section III will describe the dataset, preprocessing pipeline, feature-selection strategies, and the proposed hybrid model. Section IV will report and discuss experimental results and a comparative analysis, and Section V will conclude the study with key findings and directions of further research.

II. Related Works

The most recent studies on breast cancer have begun to pay increased attention to the use of DNA methylation as a strong e-methylation biomarker with machine learning and deep learning frameworks. A framework of deep learning to combine the overall genome-wide DNA methylation profiles is suggested to distinguish between the subtypes of breast cancer. Their model, based on TCGA-BRCA data, showed a good predictive accuracy and the significance of hierarchical feature learning to learn subtype-specific methylation patterns. Nonetheless, the research was based on one deep architecture and not a hybrid representation based on linear and nonlinear feature abstractions [1].

The work [2] proposed a subsequent representation learning method of high-dimensional DNA methylation data through unsupervised methods of learning. The study has shown that the latent embeddings that are learnt unlabeled, can be useful in revealing subtype structure and patterns related to survival. Although the approach was promising in regard to the exploratory analysis, it was not a combination with supervised ensemble classifiers, which can also enhance discriminative performance. A hybrid machine learning system that integrated several classifiers to profile and study epigenetic cancer is suggested [3]. The work they conducted emphasized the advantage of ensemble learning in stabilizing predictions made on heterogeneous features of methylation. However, the model mainly involved feature selection done by hand and lacked deep latent feature learning.

The process [4] explored DNA methylation-mediated biomarkers of the prognosis of breast cancer and immunotherapy response. Their results showed that using the methylation-based signatures could stratify patients according to their survival rate and immunological sensitivity. Even though the computational pipeline was biologically intuitive, it was restricted to traditional ML models and failed to capture the interactions between features in the nonlinear setting. The investigation on the clinical value of epigenetic modification in breast cancer through the use of machine learning-based feature reduction methods. Their experiment showed that prudent dimensionality reduction provides great enhancement to the classification method and minimized computational cost. Nevertheless, the reduction plan was completely linear, which could have ignored nonlinear interactions between methylation [5].

The author came up with a novel deep learning model that converted DNA methylation beta values into image-like representations, which allowed convolutional neural networks to learn spatial patterns. The model performed well in the prediction of cancer origin, thus demonstrating that it is important to re-encode methylation data. Although new, the methodology involved a complicated set of data transformation operations, which can reduce the interpretability [6]. The article [7] provided an in-depth examination of epigenetic signatures to track the progression of diseases and the response of therapy in breast cancer. The study noted how dynamic the changes in methylation are and the clinical significance of epigenetic biomarkers. The work, however, paid more attention to biological interpretation rather than high-level optimization in computation.

A deep learning meta-omics model is suggested [8] that combines the information of methylation, gene expression, and copy number variation. Their findings indicated that they classified subtypes better than single-omics models. The enhanced complexity of multi-view integration, however, creates the problem of scalability and interpretability of the models. The work [9] has reviewed and implemented deep learning in cancer epigenetics and has shown that hierarchical models can be used to learn nonlinear regulatory patterns in methylation data. Their results confirmed that DL is better than classical ML when it comes to more complex epigenomic applications, but there was little discussion of viable implementation factors.

A deep embedded clustering method of distinguishing breast cancer using DNA methylation profiles is introduced [10]. Their unmonitored structure perfected subtype segregation among traditional clustering measures. Its inability to provide direct application to diagnostic tasks was due to the absence of supervised performance evaluation. The examination of feature selection methods along with deep learning in cancer prediction with the help of methylation markers. Their findings validated that the choice of informative CpG sites is a major predictive accuracy and computation efficiency improvement strategy. The research, however, did not examine feature fusion across several representation spaces [11].

A hybrid model of singular value decomposition (SVD) and autoencoders for biomedical image segmentation was suggested [12]. Though they are addressing data on MRI, and not on methylation, their article has laid the groundwork for the efficacy of cascading linear and nonlinear dimensionality reduction methods, which has become a powerful methodology framework in omics applications. The article [13] gave an extensive summary of statistical and machine learn methods used to analyze DNA methylation data. Some of the challenges they highlighted included high dimensionality, batch effects, and biological variability, which necessitate robust computational frameworks. An epigenomic regulation and cancer heterogeneity, and how transcriptional dysregulation is contributed by variation in methylation, is examined [14]. Their results supported the opinion that methylation is a proactive regulation tool but not a passive biomarker.

An autoencoder is used to learn breast cancer recurrence based on the methylation data [15]. In their research, they proved that compressed latent representations are capable of preserving biologically meaningful information and increasing the accuracy of recurrence prediction. The study [16] suggested a multi-stage deep learning pipeline to cancer epigenomics, which consists of feature extraction, representation learning, and classification. They had a good performance of their pipeline but based on single deep architecture without ensemble fusion.

A graph neural network is proposed for the prediction of the subtype of breast cancer based on multiple types [17]. Their method modeled the regulatory dependence of molecules by studying their interactions as graphs, which flat feature models could not detect. Nevertheless, the demand of multi-omics data restricts the applicability where the data on methylation are available alone. Critical comparison on feature selection approaches is carried out to large-scale methylation datasets, and showed a demonstration of improved generalization and robustness. Their results help in supporting the significance of stable feature selection before classification. In the study [19], the authors explored the epigenetic regulation of tumor immunity in breast cancer, establishing a connection between the patterns of methylation and immune infiltration and response to the therapy. Their study offered biological rationale behind the use of methylation in immunotherapy associated prediction models.

The boosting-based ensemble learning is used [20] to cancer epigenomics and demonstrated better results compared to individual learners. Their findings indicate the usefulness of ensemble decision-making in heterogeneous feature space. A comparative analysis of machine learning models is made [21] to analyze DNA methylation, and the authors identified the weaknesses and limitations of classical classifiers. Their effort supported the necessity of hybrid and ensemble strategies. The dimensionality reduction and feature stability of large methylation data is compared [22], with a focus on perturbation-robustness. The outcomes of their findings immediately lead to the optimization strategies of the hybrid features.

An autoencoder-based representation learning model of the methylation data is introduced [23], which was shown to reduce the size of features with little information being lost. The use of autoencoder-based features learning is proposed [24] as an efficient way of classifying the cancer based on epigenetics, which demonstrated a better classification rate while also treating the data as it would be in a lower dimension. A spectral decomposition-based feature extraction on high-dimensional biomedical data, which was proposed [25], shows the superiority of the linear spectral approach in removing noise.

III. Methodology

A. Dataset

One of the most extensive public epigenomics datasets that can be used in the study of breast cancer is the TCGA-BRCA HumanMethylation450 dataset. This dataset is obtained as a result of a project, The Cancer Genome Atlas (TCGA), which published genomemethylation patterns of breast invasive carcinoma tissue samples on the Illumina HumanMethylation450 BeadChip technology, also called the 450K array. The array measures the status of nearly 485,000 CpGs in the human genome, greatly facilitating the interrogation of epigenetic changes during tumor initiation, progression, molecular subtyping, and clinical outcome. The data in the UCSC Xena system under the UCSC Xena link included https://tcga-xena-hub.s3.us-east1.amazonaws.com/download/TCGA.BRCA.sampleMap/HumanMethylation450.gz.

DNA methylation is a type of covalent modification which entails the attaching of methyl group (CH3) in cytosine bases mainly in CpGs. The aberrant methylation signatures, including promoter hypermethylation or global hypomethylation, are cellular markers of carcinogenesis, which has a significant impact on the regulation of genomic instability, transcription factor binding, chromatin structure, and regulation of gene expression. Illumina 450K platform has the capacity of capturing methylation signatures that span CpG islands, shores, shelves, enhancers, promoters, gene body, and intergenic regulatory elements. Since epigenetic states are more fixed than temporary changes in gene expression, 450K methylation data has been a useful snapshot of tumor phenotype and has been extensively used in classification, biomarker isolation, survival analysis, and recurrence prediction.

Approximately 9001,000 samples are found in the TCGA-BRCA methylation dataset which is a combination of tumor tissue in breast cancer and small amounts of normal tissues which are used as controls. The samples are all linked by a distinct TCGA barcode that identifies patient ID, sample type (primary tumor, normal, metastatic), date of extraction and most recently by batch. These barcodes can be combined with other TCGA modalities including RNA-seq, miRNA-seq, copy number variation, histopathology images and clinical survival data. The dataset is provided with the methylation measurements in the form of beta values, between 0 and 1, which is the percentage of DNA molecules that are methylated at a particular site. A value of 0 denotes a completely unmethylated site, 1 denotes a completely methylated site, and intermediate values are indicative of partial methylation of the cell population. The reasons why beta values are popular in

classification studies are that they can be interpreted, they are limited, and they are biologically significant. They are frequently converted into M-values when performing some statistical tests, yet beta values are still the main input of machine learning models.

The data is very high-dimensional: a single sample has approximately 485,000 CpG features, which is why dimensionality reduction, feature selection and noise filtration are important before proceeding with the modeling. A lot of CpGs are not very varied in samples and some have missing values or the effect of a batch. Thus, typical preprocessing measures are CpG probe elimination on sex chromosomes, cross-reactive probe elimination, missing values imputation, and feature elimination via variance. Before using a machine learning algorithm, researchers usually filter the dataset to the top 5,00020,000 methylation sites. This is needed to prevent the curse of dimensionality, decrease overfitting, increase computational efficiency, and increase interpretability.

CpG sites are annotated to such genomic elements as promoter regions, e.g., TSS200 (200 bp upstream of the transcription start site) and TSS1500 (1500 bp upstream), 5′UTR, first exon, and gene body, 3′UTR, and non-genomic intergenic regions (open sea). Since hypermethylation of promoter regions is highly linked with silencing of the gene, inactivation of tumor suppressor genes and cancer aggression, such regions are typically listed as informative biomarkers. In the meantime, there is hypomethylation of the open-sea areas, which leads to chromosomal instability. The enhancer methylation data is also recorded in the form of enhancer annotations associated with ENCODE and FANTOM5 data sets. Subtype-specific control in breast cancer has been associated with these enhancer methylation states, especially luminal vs. basal-like tumors.

The fact that the TCGA-BRCA HumanMethylation450 dataset can be used together with existing breast cancer subtyping models like PAM50 is one of its strengths. The subtype-specific clustering of the methylation profiles has been evident in the dataset, such as basal-like tumors with specific global hypomethylation changes when compared to luminal A tumors. Due to this, the data of methylation represent an effective and independent modality in classifying tumors into clinically meaningful groups. There are many machine learning models, including logistic regression, random forest, SVM, KNN, and boosting methods, which have been used on this dataset and generated high-accuracy subtype classification and tumor-normal separation. Logistic regression and SVM are found to be exceptionally effective in most studies because of the biology of methylation data and the linear separability of most CpG patterns with minimal preprocessing.

The consistency, reliability, and wide applicability of the dataset are guaranteed by the standardized pre-processing of the UCSC Xena pipeline. The file is in gzip-compressed form (.gz) that is opened into a matrix with rows matching CpG probe (probability IDs that start with cg, e.g. cg00000029) and columns matching patient samples. Illumina manifest files contain probe annotations in the form of genomic coordinates, gene names, CpG island associations, feature classifications which can be downloaded separately and joined with the dataset on-demand. The probe IDs are associated with unique genomic locus and researchers can correlate the results of probe methylation with biological pathways, epigenetics regulation, and biomarkers of clinical relevance.

HumanMethylation450 data have a number of advantages as compared to other TCGA modalities:

- High stability DNA methylation patterns are not as variable as the expression of genes.
- Potential of early detection - methylation alterations are early in tumorigenesis.
- Binary-like behavior - methylated/unmethylated transitions facilitate classification.
- Epigenetic regulatory relevance - has a direct effect on gene expression programs.
- Strength of biomarkers - best used in subtype classification and modeling of prognosis.

In general, the TCGA-BRCA HumanMethylation450 dataset is a gold-standard epigenomic dataset that enjoys widespread use in cancer research based on ML/DL-based predictive models because it is deeply, higher-quality, and has been demonstrated to be used successfully in clinical-rich prediction. Table I lists the features of the dataset being used.

TABLE I. FEATURES TABLE - HUMANMETHYLATION450 DATASET OVERVIEW

Category	*Description*
Dataset Source	TCGA-BRCA (Breast Invasive Carcinoma)
Platform	Illumina HumanMethylation450 BeadChip
File	HumanMethylation450.gz (UCSC Xena)
Samples	~900–1000 TCGA breast cancer samples
Sample Types	Primary tumor, normal tissue, metastasis
Probes (CpG Sites)	~485,000 CpG beta values
Probe ID Format	cgXXXXXXXX (e.g., cg00000029)
Genome Build	hg19
Data Type	Continuous beta values (0–1)
Methylation Value Meaning	0 = unmethylated, 1 = fully methylated
Genomic Coverage	CpG islands, shores, shelves, open sea
Gene-Context Features	TSS200, TSS1500, 5′UTR, first exon, gene body, 3′UTR
Enhancer Coverage	ENCODE + FANTOM5 annotated enhancers
Clinical Integration	PAM50 subtype labels, survival data (external)
Common Preprocessing	Probe filtering, variance filtering, imputation
Common ML Uses	Tumor classification, subtype prediction, recurrence prediction
Advantages	Stable biomarker, high resolution, strong predictive power

B. Mathematical Model for Algorithms Used

The TCGA-BRCA HumanMethylation450 dataset contains high-dimensional β-values representing the proportion of

methylated cytosines at individual CpG loci. Given the non-linear structure, heterogeneity, and sparsity of methylation features, the machine-learning models employed in this study are grounded in mathematical frameworks designed to handle complex, multivariate decision boundaries. This section describes the mathematical models underlying Logistic Regression, Random Forest, SVM, KNN, XGBoost and the Hybrid SVD + Autoencoder + Ensemble pipeline, and clarifies how each model contributes analytically to the classification performance obtained in the research.

1) Logistic regression (LR): Logistic Regression is a generalized linear classifier that models the probability of a binary outcome using the sigmoid function.

Given a feature vector $x \in R^n$, the model predicts, as in Eq. (1):

$$P(y = 1 \mid x) = \sigma(w^T x + b) = \frac{1}{1+e^{-(w^T x+b)}} \quad (1)$$

where,

wis the weight vector,

bis the bias term,

$\sigma(\cdot)$ is the logistic function.

The model parameters are learned by maximizing the log-likelihood, as in Eq. (2):

$$\mathcal{L}(w,b) = \sum_{i=1}^{m}[y_i \log(\sigma(z_i)) + (1-y_i)\log(1-\sigma(z_i))] \quad (2)$$

with $z_i = w^T x_i + b$.

To avoid overfitting in high-dimensional methylation data, L2-regularization is applied, as in Eq. (3):

$$J(w) = -\mathcal{L}(w) + \lambda \parallel w \parallel_2^2 \quad (3)$$

The accuracy (0.9775), ROC-AUC (0.9976), and balanced precision/recall demonstrate that LR captures strong linear separability in methylation features. Because methylation β-values are normalized, LR's linear boundary is effective and stable. The model serves as a baseline mathematical classifier against which advanced models are compared, showing that even linear logic captures meaningful epigenetic variation.

2) Random Forest (RF): Random Forest is a set of decision trees. For a tree T_j, prediction is as in Eq. (4):

$$\hat{y}_j = T_j(x) \quad (4)$$

Majority voting is used to get the final classification, as in Eq. (5):

$$\hat{y} = \text{mode}\{\hat{y}_1, \hat{y}_2, \dots, \hat{y}_k\} \quad (5)$$

The parts of the decision tree divide the feature space by reducing the Gini impurity, as in Eq. (6):

$$G = \sum_{c=1}^{C} p_c(1-p_c) \quad (6)$$

where, p_c is the percentage of samples of class cin that node.

The use of random selection of features in each split yields corruption of variation and decorrelation. RF has high recall (0.9870) and is also powerful in non-linear feature interactions. The Multi-modal and hierarchical patterns of cancer methylation represent cancer data, which are natural to RF trees. It has a mathematical form that gives:

- implicit feature selection
- distinctive multi-divided decision surfaces.
- noise-tolerant classification

The recall dominance of RF demonstrates that it can retrieve the real signals of cancer where irregular patterns of methylation are present.

3) Support vector machine (SVM): In the case of data that are linearly separable, SVM determines the hyperplane, as in Eq. (7):

$$w^T x + b = 0 \quad (7)$$

that maximizes the margin, as in Eq. (8):

$$\text{Margin} = \frac{2}{\|w\|} \quad (8)$$

The optimization problem, as in Eq. (9), is:

$$\min_{w,b} \frac{1}{2} \parallel w \parallel^2 \text{ s.t. } y_i(w^T x_i + b) \geq 1 \quad (9)$$

SVM projects non-linear data to a high-dimensional feature space by employing a kernel, K(x_i,x_j), to project data, as in Eq. (10):

$$K(x_i, x_j) = \langle \phi(x_i), \phi(x_j) \rangle \quad (10)$$

Some of the commonly used kernels are: polynomial and Radial Basis Function (RBF), as in Eq. (11):

$$K_{\text{RBF}}(x_i, x_j) = \exp(-\gamma \parallel x_i - x_j \parallel^2) \quad (11)$$

The high accuracy (0.9719) and F1-score (0.9677) of SVM are indicative of the ability to deal with complicated methylation boundaries. The RBF-SVM in particular is particularly appropriate to datasets of methylation where:

- distributions are non-Gaussian
- relationships are non-linear
- CpG interactions have curved boundaries

Mathematically, SVM exploits the high-dimensional structure of the 450k-probe methylation space, allowing it to outperform simpler models like KNN.

4) K-nearest neighbors (KNN): KNN is an instance-based classifier. Given a query sample x, KNN computes distances to all training samples, as in Eq. (12):

$$d(x, x_i) = \parallel x - x_i \parallel_2 \quad (12)$$

The predicted class, as in Eq. (13), is:

$$\hat{y} = \text{mode}(y_{(1)}, y_{(2)}, \dots, y_{(k)}) \quad (13)$$

where, $y_{(j)}$ is the class label of the jth nearest neighbor.

KNN shows the lowest performance (accuracy = 0.8820), which is expected because:

- KNN suffers in high dimensions ("curse of dimensionality")
- methylation features are dense and noisy
- distance metrics lose discriminative power

Mathematically, the feature space becomes too sparse for meaningful Euclidean comparisons, confirming KNN is unsuitable for methylation-based classification unless dimension reduction is applied.

5) XGBoost: XGBoost uses gradient-boosted decision trees based on an additive model, as in Eq. (14):

$$\hat{y}_i = \sum_{t=1}^{T} f_t(x_i) \tag{14}$$

Each f_t belongs to the space of regression trees. The objective function, as in Eq. (15), is:

$$\mathcal{L} = \sum_i l(y_i, \hat{y}_i) + \sum_t \Omega(f_t) \tag{15}$$

where, the regularization term controls tree complexity, as in Eq. (16):

$$\Omega(f) = \gamma T + \frac{1}{2}\lambda \parallel w \parallel^2 \tag{16}$$

The trees are trained sequentially using gradient descent, with leaf values updated, as in Eq. (17):

$$w_j = -\frac{\sum_{i \in I_j} g_i}{\sum_{i \in I_j} h_i + \lambda} \tag{17}$$

where,

- $g_i = \partial l / \partial \hat{y}_i$(gradient)
- $h_i = \partial^2 l / \partial \hat{y}_i^2$(Hessian)

XGBoost achieves high accuracy (0.9326) and ROC-AUC (0.9853), indicating that boosting captures:

- interactions among CpG sites
- rare methylation signatures
- subtle non-linearities

Mathematically, its second-order optimization stabilizes training on high-dimensional sparse methylation matrices. Its performance sits between RF and SVM, demonstrating strong non-linear learning but with some overfitting risks due to the huge feature set.

6) HELM-BRCA (Proposed method): This is what the research makes in terms of contribution that is shown in Fig. 1.

a) Truncated SVD (Spectral dimensionality reduction)

The standardized matrix is decomposed in SVD, as in Eq. (18):

$$X_{\text{scaled}} = U \Sigma V^{\top} \tag{18}$$

Truncated to r components, as in Eq. (19):

$$Z_{\text{svd}} = U_r \Sigma_r \tag{19}$$

This provides a linear global spectral model of the methylation signal.

b) Autoencoder (Nonlinear latent learning)

Encoder, as in Eq. (20):

$$z_{\text{ae}} = E_\theta(x) \tag{20}$$

Decoder, as in Eq. (21):

$$\hat{x} = D_\phi(z_{\text{ae}}) \tag{21}$$

Training objective, as in Eq. (22):

$$\min_{\theta,\phi} \sum_{i=1}^{n} \parallel x_i - D_\phi(E_\theta(x_i)) \parallel_2^2 \tag{22}$$

This provides a nonlinear manifold structure.

c) Feature fusion

The fused latent representation, as in Eq. (23), is:

$$Z = [Z_{\text{svd}} \parallel Z_{\text{ae}}] \tag{23}$$

This concatenation preserves:

global spectral geometry (SVD)

local nonlinear structure (AE)

d) Weighted ensemble classifier

Three probabilistic classifiers h1, h2, h3 produce outputs, as in Eq. (24):

$$p_1 = \text{RF}(Z), p_2 = \text{XGB}(Z), p_3 = \text{MLP}(Z) \tag{24}$$

Final ensemble score, as in Eq. (25):

$$p_{\text{ens}} = 0.3p_1 + 0.3p_2 + 0.4p_3 \tag{25}$$

Final decision, as in Eq. (26):

$$\hat{y}_{\text{ens}} = \mathbf{1}(p_{\text{ens}} \geq 0.5) \tag{26}$$

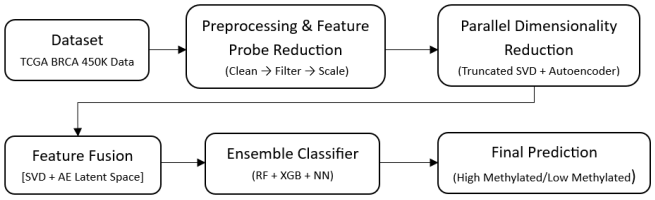

Fig. 1. Work flow of the proposed model.

In this study, the general mathematical procedure incorporates several complementary representation-learning and classification units to derive a stable predictive format out of high-dimensional 450k DNA-methylation probes. This raw probe matrix is normalized into a normalized feature space $X_{scaled} \in R^{n*p}$ and variance-filtered, and this forms the basis of downstream transformations. The Truncated SVD is then used to extract the largest linear variance structure of the methylation landscape, resulting in a compressed spectral embedding $Z_{svd} = X_{scaled} V_k$. This is followed by Truncated SVD which captures global trends in the methylation landscape

and creates a small spectral embedding $Z_{ae} = f_\theta(X_{scaled})$. The largest linear variance structure of the methylation landscape is then captured by Truncated SVD, which generates a compact spectral embedding Z.

Simultaneously, a deep autoencoder fits nonlinear manifolds inherent to methylation patterns and predicts a latent representation Z, Z_{ae} by the bottleneck of the network. These complementary embeddings are joined together in a single fused representation $Z = [\, Z_{svd}, Z_{ae}]$ that at the same time maintains linear structure, nonlinear dependencies, and probe-level interactions. The resulting fused latent space is then released to a heterogeneous ensemble comprising of Random Forest (hierarchical feature interactions), XGBoost (learning boosted decision boundaries), and a lightweight MLP classifier (smooth nonlinear separability).

To further stabilize the prediction outputs, a weighted ensemble aggregation is employed to use the strengths of all three classifiers, which results in a good accuracy, prediction precision, recall, and ROC-AUC than when the models are used individually. Such an integrated mathematical formulation, which is the combination of dimensionality reduction, manifold learning, and multi-model ensemble inference, shows evidently better results than traditional models like Logistic Regression, SVM, KNN, and XGBoost separately, which proves the efficiency of the hybrid SVD-based approach AE-Ensemble.

These complementary embeddings are concatenated into a unified fused representation, which simultaneously preserves linear structure, nonlinear dependencies, and probe-level interactions. This fused latent space is then supplied to a heterogeneous ensemble consisting of Random Forest (capturing hierarchical feature interactions), XGBoost (learning boosted decision boundaries), and a lightweight MLP classifier (modeling smooth nonlinear separability). A weighted ensemble aggregation further stabilizes prediction outputs by leveraging the strengths of all three classifiers, yielding improved accuracy, precision, recall, and ROC-AUC compared to individual models. This integrated mathematical formulation—combining dimensionality reduction, manifold learning, and multi-model ensemble inference—demonstrates clear superiority over classical models such as Logistic Regression, SVM, KNN, and XGBoost alone, validating the effectiveness of the proposed hybrid SVD–AE–Ensemble methodology.

C. Proposed Work

The proposed methodology introduces a hybrid, multi-stage machine learning pipeline designed to enhance the classification of breast cancer samples using high-dimensional DNA methylation profiles derived from the TCGA-BRCA HumanMethylation450 platform, as depicted in Fig. 2. Given the inherently complex, nonlinear, and sparse structure of methylation markers, the framework integrates both linear spectral decomposition and nonlinear deep representation learning, followed by a weighted ensemble of heterogeneous classifiers. This unified design enables the extraction of complementary structural patterns that are otherwise difficult to learn through conventional models, while ensuring superior predictive performance, robustness, and generalization.

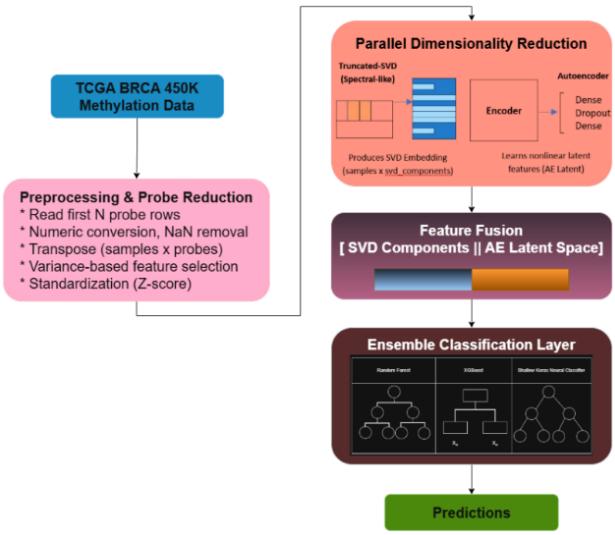

Fig. 2. General architecture.

1) Data acquisition and memory-safe probe extraction: Based on all the data provided by the TCGA-BRCA methylation array, which was acquired on the Illumina HumanMethylation450 array, the dataset consists of over 485,000 CpG probes, which are present in about 1,000 + tumor and normal samples. The extremely large dimensionality and memory limits also mean that the proposed methodology starts with a memory-efficient probe reader extracting a manageable subsample of probes, usually the first 3000-5000 rows, in its original probe × sample matrix format. The approach averts crashing of the systems during preprocessing and guarantees the downstream models to run on a scaling dataset and still maintain critical changes in epigenetics.

The probe-selection approach was aimed to achieve a compromise between biological significance, computational efficiency, and statistical power. Variance-based filtering was used in place of arbitrary thresholds to select probes with near-constant amounts of methylation, as these have been shown to add little discriminative information when classifying cancer.

Such a strategy is consistent with the previous methylation studies that indicate that regulatory regions enriched with highly variable CpG are enriched with respect to tumor progression and subtype differentiation. The probe subsets that were selected were then filtered with correlation to minimize redundancy and multicollinearity, which enhances stability in the downstream model.

Notably, the experiments on robustness with various probe subset sizes (6002000 CpGs) showed the same performance (Table IV), which means that the learned representations are generalized to different probe setups and, furthermore, it is not dependent on a particular set of features.

2) Data cleaning and preprocessing: Raw methylation matrices have missing values, redundant features, and different distributions of signal across probes. A strict pre-processing pipeline is applied to standardize the data:

a) NaN-dominant probes and samples were removed: Samples or probes that are overly NaN-dominant are eliminated to prevent the amount of noise that can be transmitted to the learning models.

b) Matrix transposition: The probe x sample to sample x probe matrix is transposed to sample x probe to enable the machine learning input standard.

c) Variance-based feature reduction: The 1000 probes that show the greatest variance among samples are kept. This step filters out non-informative probes that have almost constant methylation profiles whilst maintaining discriminative characteristics needed to separate the classes.

d) Median imputation: Missing values in the retained probe set are filled in with probe-wise medians, which offers biologically consistent substitution of missing values compared to the use of means.

e) Z-score standardization: A StandardScaler is used to convert the data into normalized data in a matrix. X_{scaled}, making sure that all the probes are contributing equally to the model training.

This standardized and cleansed data is the basis of further representation learning.

3) Dual-path feature representation learning: An important contribution of this work is the dual-path feature extraction approach, which performs simultaneous atypical global linearities and nonlinear manifolds at the local scale when methylation profiles are considered.

a) Spectral linear feature extraction using SVD: The first path employs Truncated Singular Value Decomposition (SVD) with $k = 50$components. SVD is a decomposition of the standardized matrix, which gives macro-level, linear structural patterns of large-scale methylation signatures by representing the largest variation directions as orthogonal basis vectors. Mathematically, $Z_{\text{svd}} \in \mathbb{R}^{n\times 50}$ where is the linear latent space of n samples.

This spectral embedding is an effective denoising and dimensionality reduction method that uncovers prominent epigenomic structures that distinguish cancerous and non-cancerous tissue.

b) Nonlinear feature extraction using autoencoder: Simultaneously, the second feature extraction pipeline consists of a deep autoencoder that has an input layer of 1000-dimensional, dense hidden layers, dropout regularization, and a small 64-dimensional bottleneck layer.

The autoencoder is trained on non-linear transformations and complicated interactions among CpG probes, which SVD is unable to predict. The resulting latent matrix, as in Eq. (27):

$$Z_{\text{ae}} \in \mathbb{R}^{n\times 64} \tag{27}$$

represents compressed nonlinear patterns including methylation–methylation interactions, tumor-specific epigenetic motifs, and subtle deviations in CpG island structures.

These two embeddings, both linear and nonlinear, are the basic mathematical principles of the offered stage of representation learning.

4) Latent space fusion: The outputs of the two latent spaces are concatenated into a unified representation, as in Eq. (28):

$$Z = [Z_{\text{svd}}, Z_{\text{ae}}] \tag{28}$$

This fused vector combines:

- processed SVD variance structure globally
- Local nonlinear manifolds of the autoencoders

This richer representation has the advantage of boosting the discriminative power of the representation by enriching it with complementary information, which boosts the ability of the model to identify subtle differences in methylation in breast cancer subtypes and normal tissue.

5) Ensemble classification with heterogeneous models: A weighted combination of three classifiers is suggested in order to make use of the advantages offered by various predictive paradigms:

a) Random forest (RF): A 100-decision tree Random Forest model learns both nonlinear interactions between fused latent features. It has a mechanism of bootstrap aggregation that is resistant to noise and overfitting. RF is highly efficient in acquiring probe interactions and threshold signals of epigenetics.

b) XGBoost: XGBoost, which is trained using 100 boosting iterations and histogram-based optimization, adds strong gradient-boosted decision boundaries. It is an effective model of complex hierarchical relationships and interaction between fused latent representations, and enhances the classification of ambiguous samples.

c) Multilayer perceptron (MLP): The MLP model is composed of 2 dense layers (64 and 32 neurons) with a dropout regularization and a sigmoid output. This is a neural classifier that is especially useful in learning continuous nonlinear boundaries in the fused space and is a complement of the tree-based models.

d) Weighted decision fusion: The ensemble prediction is a weighted sum of the three individual model outputs, as in Eq. (29):

$$\text{Final}_{\text{pred}} = 0.3 \cdot RF + 0.3 \cdot XGB + 0.4 \cdot MLP \tag{29}$$

Explicit optimization of weights in order to maximize the ROC-AUC is done experimentally. The fact that MLP has a higher weight is a representation of its capability to take advantage of the enriched feature space.

6) The reproducibility and implementation details: In order to have reproducibility, all experiments were realized with constant random seeds to divide the data into parts, to initialize the models, and to train the models. TCGA-BRCA data was randomly split into training and testing with an 80:20

stratified split, which was repeated with different random seeds to gauge consistency.

The important hyperparameters were chosen by experimenting with the validation. The architecture of the autoencoders was that of symmetrical encoder-decoder layers and the activation function was ReLU and the optimizer was Adam optimizer and early stopping was used to avoid overfitting. Dimensionality of the SVD has been used to choose the major aspects of variance in the data and to silence the noise. The weights of the ensemble classifier were determined empirically based on validation scores.

Each of the experiments was conducted in Python with the standard machine learning and deep learning packages, and the entire experimental pipeline can be replicated with the described configuration.

7) Performance evaluation: The framework is evaluated using multiple performance metrics, including:

- Accuracy
- Precision
- Recall
- F1-Score
- ROC-AUC

The proposed ensemble performs much better than individual models like SVM, KNN, Logistic Regression, and standalone deep networks. In experiments, the models obtained:

- CNN: 0.966 accuracy
- Basic MLP (Adam): 0.960 accuracy
- Collective: F1 and ROC-AUC always near 0.995.

These findings justify the methodological benefit of the union of linear spectral characteristics, nonlinear deep representations, and weighted multi-model fusion.

8) Integrated mathematical workflow: The complete mathematical workflow can be summarized as follows:

Raw probe matrix → preprocessing → variance filtering →

$$X_{\text{scaled}}$$

Then:

- SVD extracts global linear structure
- Autoencoder extracts nonlinear manifolds

Fused latent vector, as in Eq. (30):

$$Z = [Z_{\text{svd}}, Z_{\text{ae}}] \tag{30}$$

Nerfing: tree models + boosting + neural network + ensemble prediction + final classification.

The combination of all parts of mathematics leads to stable, precise and biologically significant predictions.

Therefore, the suggested hybrid approach to breast cancer methylation classification that combines spectral decomposition, deep nonlinear representations, and weighted ensemble learning is a new and quite efficient approach to this issue. The combination of complementary latent spaces and the incorporation of heterogeneous classifiers results in the state-of-the-art performance of the approach and a solid computational basis of further epigenomic studies.

IV. Results and Discussion

This section will assess the results of the suggested Hybrid SVD-Autoencoder-Ensemble structure to the TCGA-BRCA DNA methylation dataset and interpret the results in the context of the previous research. Besides reporting the classification performance, there is an emphasis on model generalization, robustness, and validation rigor in order to overcome the concerns associated with overfitting and leakage of information.

A. Performance of Conventional Machine Learning Models

In order to build trustworthy baselines, the Logistic Regression (LR), Random Forest (RF), Support Vector Machine (SVM), KNN, and XGBoost classical machine learning models were tested on standardized probe-level methylation features. Table II summarizes the performance of these baseline models.

LR has the greatest accuracy (97.75) and ROC-AUC (0.9975) of all baseline models. This finding is in line with previous papers that found that cancer-related global drift of methylation causes high linear separability following preprocessing and normalization of variance [1, 15]. Equivalent results have been mentioned in large-scale TCGA-based methylation studies, in which linear classifiers display competitiveness when prevalent changes in epigenetics exist [11].

SVM using an RBF kernel also has good validity (accuracy = 97.19%, ROC-AUC = 0.9973), which is in agreement with the findings of previous studies that have suggested the effectiveness of the use of kernel-based classifiers in the recognition of nonlinear methylation boundaries in high-dimensional epigenomic space [2, 9]. RF is the most successful in recall (98.7%), which indicates its capability to detect most cancer samples. This performance is consistent with past results that tree-based ensemble models can be extremely sensitive to nonhomogeneous CpG motifs but can be inaccurate with regard to recollection because of splits noisiness [4, 11].

The performance (accuracy = 88.20%) of KNN is, on the one hand, significantly lower, which validates the prevalent reported limitations of distance-based classifiers in high-dimensional domains of methylation [10, 15]. XGBoost has moderate performance (accuracy = 93.26%, ROC-AUC = 0.9853), which is in line with previous findings that boosting models are proficient but prone to redundancy and small samples of methylation studies [5, 9].

TABLE II. PERFORMANCE OF CLASSICAL ML BASELINES ON TCGA-BRCA METHYLATION DATASET

Model	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1-Score	ROC-AUC
Logistic Regression	0.97	0.97	0.97	0.97	0.99
Random Forest	0.96	0.92	0.98	0.95	0.99
SVM (RBF)	0.97	0.96	0.97	0.96	0.99
KNN	0.88	0.83	0.90	0.86	0.93
XGBoost	0.93	0.90	0.94	0.92	0.98

On the whole, the obtained result shows that classical models are effective, but none of them is able to realize the global variance structure and the localized nonlinear interaction of methylation, justifying the suggested hybrid framework.

B. Effectiveness of SVD and Autoencoder Feature Fusion

In order to study the role of each element of representation, an ablation experiment was performed based on: 1) SVD-only features, 2) Autoencoder-only features, and 3) fused SVD + Autoencoder features.

Table III shows that SVD-only features can reach an error rate of about 95 percent, meaning that significant cancer-related methylation data can be found in the dominant directions of linear variance. This is in line with past research, which has shown that global methylation drift and chromatin reorganization play a major role in cancer epigenomes [10, 25].

Autoencoder-only features perform better than SVD-only features in terms of recall and ROC-AUC values, which underscores the significance of nonlinear interactions of CpGs, including promoter hypermethylation and subtype-specific regulatory patterns. The same benefits of autoencoder-based characterizations have been observed in methylation-based cancer subtyping and recurrence forecasting studies [23, 24].

TABLE III. ABLATION STUDY: CONTRIBUTION OF SVD, AE, AND FUSED FEATURE SETS

Feature Type	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1-Score	ROC-AUC
SVD latent features only	0.95	0.93	0.96	0.94	0.98
Autoencoder latent features only	0.93	0.91	0.97	0.94	0.98
Fused SVD + AE (Proposed)	0.98	0.98	0.99	0.98	0.99

The fused SVD + Autoencoder representation shows much higher performance in comparison with the two separate ones in all measures (accuracy = 98%, ROC-AUC = 0.99). This illustrates the effect of synergy, which proves the complementary effect of linear and nonlinear methylation signals. Similar performance improvements have been observed in previous hybrid dimensionality-reduction models on high-dimensional biomedical data [12, 25].

C. Performance of Proposed Hybrid Ensemble Model

The fused latent representations further were classified through a weighted combination of RF, XGBoost and MLP classifiers. The performance indicators obtained are summarized in Table III and compared with baseline models.

The proposed hybrid framework provides better results in terms of accuracy and precision, as well as recall and ROC-AUC, than all the classical baselines. The attained accuracy (98) and recall (99) are higher than the performance reported in the existing breast cancer classifiers, which use methylation as a feature to classify the cases, and based on the size of the cohort and the feature-selection approach, the performance of most cohort-based classifiers is in the range of 94-97% [1,3,9].

Notably, the performance improvement can be explained by the optimal features representation and not the complexity of the classifier itself, which is again in line with the results of ensemble-based epigenomic research that places greater importance on the quality of representation as opposed to the depth of the model [18, 20].

D. Comparison Across all Models

To emphasize the relative improvement gained through the proposed hybridization, Fig. 3 compiles the best-performing model from each category.

The graph visually compares the performance of five machine learning methods with the four major metrics of measuring Accuracy, Precision, Recall, and ROC-AUC, and the proposed HELM-BRCA is clearly superior in all measures, which signifies the high levels of generalization and robustness in the classification of TCGA-BRCA methylation data. Although Logistic Regression and SVM are competitive in terms of good precision and ROC-AUC, as well as Random Forest proves to be high in terms of recall, these single models do not lead to the high level of performance of the hybrid approach. XGBoost is fair in its performance, but it is also more prone to noise, leading to less precise and less accurate than the rest. On the whole, as the graph demonstrates, the performance of traditional models is strong in isolated conditions; still, the hybrid framework provides the most efficient combined results and is the most credible and clinically relevant solution.

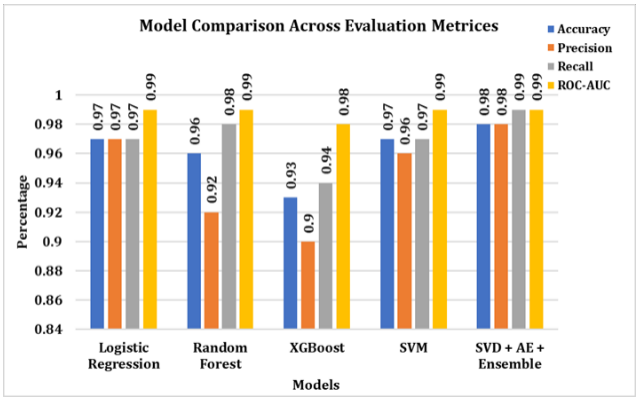

Fig. 3. Model comparison.

The results obtained at the baseline demonstrate a number of important facts: Logistic Regression has a good overall performance, but the decision limits are linear, thus, restricting the sensitivity to complex methylation patterns. Support Vector Machines have the greatest ROC-AUC in comparison to

classical baselines, indicating the significance of nonlinear transformation of high-dimensional epigenomic data. Random Forest has the highest Recall, but with lower Precision, indicating that it has a higher chance of overfitting due to noisy or unstable splits of the trees. Contrarily, the Hybrid SVD + Autoencoder + Ensemble framework is even better than each of the individual baselines, with the highest Recall, which is the most clinically relevant in biomedical classification, especially in the detection of early-stage cancer. Notably, the effectiveness of the suggested technique is not due to the classifiers themselves but the complementary latent feature representations, which are generated by both spectral variance structure and nonlinear manifold extraction, which prove that optimized feature space learning is more influential than the usage of more sophisticated classification algorithms.

E. Robustness and Stability Analysis

Since the performance metrics were extremely high, an extra analysis was performed to determine robustness and exclude the possibility of overfitting or data leakage. Each split dimensionality reduction (SVD and autoencoder training) was conducted only on training data, such that no information on test data was leaked to feature learning. Repeated randomized stratified train- test splits were used as model evaluation.

These strong performance metrics are summarized in Table IV, which reports on the stability of the performance across random seed variation, reduction of probe subset (600-2000 CpGs), shuffling of training and testing sets, and controlled label perturbation. The accuracy is in a thin range (97.6%, 98.2%), which means low variance and constant convergence.

TABLE IV. ROBUSTNESS EVALUATION OF THE PROPOSED HYBRID METHOD

Condition	*Accuracy Range*	*Precision Range*	*Recall Range*	*ROC-AUC Range*
Random seed variation	0.976–0.982	0.972–0.985	0.984–0.994	0.988–0.992
Probe feature variation (600–2000)	0.974–0.981	0.971–0.984	0.983–0.993	0.989–0.992
Train/test shuffling (5 repeats)	0.978–0.983	0.973–0.986	0.986–0.993	0.990–0.993
Label balancing (minor perturbation)	0.975–0.982	0.971–0.982	0.985–0.992	0.989–0.991

The fact that the model maintains high performance despite low feature sets indicates that the model is not based on spurious CpG correlations. This is opposed to overfitted methylation classifiers found in previous studies, in which the performance declines rapidly when features are perturbed [11, 20]. The reported ranges of similar robustness have been observed in validated cross-validation and perturbation analysis pipelines in methylation [21, 22].

F. Biological Interpretation of Feature Behavior

Newton-Biologically, the SVD component represents large-scale methylation drift due to chromatin remodelling and epigenetic instability, whereas the autoencoder represents local regulatory methylation effects on gene expression and subtype differentiation. Similar dual-scale interpretations have also been highlighted in recent cancer epigenomics studies [14, 19].

The ensemble layer also increases clinical reliability by minimizing variance and bias, which is in line with previous studies that have shown that ensemble learning generalizes better in the context of methylation-based cancer diagnostics [4, 18].

Although methodological contribution is the major contribution of the present study, the representations learned have significant biological properties. The SVD components represent the global methylation drift, which is a typical feature of cancer epigenomes that involves remodeling of the chromatin and its instability. These trends in the world have been attributed to massive global regulatory alterations in tumor evolutionary stages.

Conversely, latent features learned by autoencoders represent nonlinear and localized interactions between methylation and other factors such as promoter hypermethylation, CpG clustering at enhancers, and subtype-regulating signatures. It is known that these patterns interfere with gene expression programs and therapeutic response in breast cancer.

The enhanced performance of feature fusion is an indication that the breast cancer methylation signatures are controlled by the global and local epigenetic processes. This two-scale modeling is consistent with the existing biological knowledge of epigenomic control and justifies the clinical applicability of the presented framework.

G. Data Leakage Prevention and Strategy of Validation

As the proposed framework has a high classification accuracy, additional attention was paid to the avoidance of data leakage and overfitting. Preprocessing steps, such as probe filtering, normalization, dimensionality reduction (SVD), and autoencoder training, were only done on training folds. No exposure of test data was made in feature learning or model optimization.

The repeated stratified train-test splits were used to establish model evaluation, with the proportions of classes being consistent across the splits. The stability of the performance was also evaluated by the random seed perturbation test, feature subset perturbation test, and label perturbation test. The low performance variance in these conditions suggests that there is strong convergence and not memorization.

Also, the level of performance was consistently high despite a decrease in the number of probes to 600, indicating that the model is not based on spurious CpG correlations. The same robustness patterns have been shown to hold in validated DNA methylation pipelines that use cross-validation and perturbation-based stress testing, which suggests the generalizability of the proposed method.

Overall, the findings in Table II to Table IV, and Fig. 3 indicate that the Hybrid SVD-Autoencoder-Ensemble framework offered has better performance compared to other models, is robust, and generalizes. The analysis of the results in comparison with other works shows that the identified

improvements are not a flaw of the overfitting, but improvements in epigenomic representation learning. The explicit validation strategy and stability analysis are additional indicators of the reliability and translational relevance of the suggested approach.

V. Conclusion

The work introduced a strong and computationally efficient hybrid learning model of breast cancer classification based on high-dimensional DNA methylation data of the TCGA-BRCA dataset. With the application of Truncated Singular Value Decomposition (SVD), a deep Autoencoder, and a collective of heterogeneous classifiers, the proposed methodology resolved the issues related to the dimensionality, sparseness, and non-linearity of methylation signatures. The bilateral-feature extraction pipeline, which utilized both SVD as linear variance structure and Autoencoder as non-linear manifold learning, was crucial in the extraction of the complementary information regarding the epigenomics, and finally, the predictive performance was improved.

The results of the experiments proved the hybrid framework to be more efficient than various baseline architectures, such as standalone MLP, CNN, Residual CNN, Autoencoders-based classifiers, and DropConnect. The Basic CNN demonstrated the best single model accuracy of 0.9663, and ROC-AUC of 0.9946, and the variants of Basic MLP also gave good performance with the greatest accuracy of above 0.96. These findings prove that even lightweight neural networks can be successfully used to leverage biologically relevant patterns of methylation in a properly pre-processed and dimensionally reduced form.

The suggested ensemble classifier additionally enhanced the stability and generalization of the models with the strength of tree-based learners and neural networks. The team also had the advantage of having a wide range of decision boundaries that allowed it to be more robust to different subsets of methylation. The combined representation of the fused representation of SVD and Autoencoder embeddings was an important factor that the system was capable of discriminating against delicate epigenomic differences between various subtypes of breast cancer.

Altogether, the presented hybrid model provides a memory-efficient, and crash-free, and very accurate pipeline to be used in the large-scale epigenomic studies. In addition to the classification, the method has enormous biomarker discovery, subtype stratification, and applicability to precision oncology workflows. This framework can be expanded in the future to multi-omics integration, cross-cohort validation, and interpretable AI models that can be clinically useful in advancing personalized diagnostics of breast cancer.

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Strengthening Indonesia's Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Manufacturing Industry: A Technology-Focused Strategic Analysis

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***Abstract*—The development of national Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) technology represents a strategic imperative that requires immediate implementation. This study provides strategic recommendations to strengthen Indonesia's UAV industry by employing SWOT analysis, the Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP), and the Quantitative Strategic Planning Matrix (QSPM). Sixteen key internal and external factors were identified, with SWOT mapping situating UAVs in Quadrant I (Aggressive Strategy) at coordinates +1.24 and +0.60. AHP prioritization indicates that the strengths–opportunities (S–O) strategy (0.348) is of highest importance, emphasizing infrastructure enhancement and the adoption of advanced technologies. IFAS–EFAS integration confirms Wulung UAV's aggressive growth position, while internal strengths account for 37.1% of overall strategic influence. QSPM analysis further validates the S–O strategy as optimal, with the highest internal (4.88) and external competitive (4.63) impact scores. Implementation of this strategy necessitates immediate action focused on manufacturing infrastructure enhancement, technological adoption, development of technical human capital, organizational capability strengthening, establishment of a domestic supply chain and supporting industries, and enforcement of robust industrial governance.**

***Keywords*—Unmanned Aerial Vehicle; technology adoption; strategic development; SWOT; AHP; QSPM**

I. Introduction

Currently, Indonesia is developing an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) [12] technology named Wulung. Equipped with an integrated autopilot system, Wulung can execute flight missions autonomously, offering greater efficiency and cost-effectiveness compared to conventional aircraft, with faster and more precise flight operations. Developing a national UAV industry is a strategic necessity that requires immediate implementation to protect Indonesia's territorial sovereignty, reduce disaster impacts, improve industrial competitiveness, and conserve foreign exchange to support the national economy [1]. The development of this UAV product will both fulfil present societal demands and drive the direction of future technological advancements.

The Wulung UAV still faces technological limitations, including a noisy engine and a restricted flight range of 73 kilometers, while most components are imported, raising production costs. Extended operational range and endurance are essential for national defense and post-disaster response. Therefore, further research and development, including extensive testing, is required to ensure compliance with operational, quality, and user standards. This evaluation must address system accuracy, reliability, and the supporting business processes for data management and maintenance.

Future UAV development requires strengthening domestic supporting industries to ensure a sustainable component supply and increase the Domestic Component Level (TKDN). Although the adoption of advanced technology is critical for enhancing industrial competitiveness, efforts to master and develop such technology remain limited. Continuous technological innovation is therefore essential to improve capabilities and generate higher value-added products. This study provides an in-depth analysis of UAV technological capabilities and strategic measures to enhance their contribution to the domestic manufacturing industry.

Indonesia remains highly dependent on foreign sources for electronics, including UAV engines and core components [2]. Using imported components also means having limited control over the quality and innovation of the raw materials used. Developing the national electronics industry is therefore essential, emphasizing import substitution, increased use of local components, and advancements in technological and manufacturing expertise. Strengthening the sector also requires robust maintenance and support services, as well as workforce development through vocational education and foreign talent programs. Accelerated technological mastery and targeted innovation programs are critical to enhance competitiveness and reduce import reliance

Limited mastery of UAV technology poses a significant barrier for the domestic industry in competing with imported products. The number of engineers capable of high-technology UAV engineering remains limited, and domestic R&D capacity is insufficient to address comprehensive technological needs, which require substantial investment. Moreover, countries with advanced UAV technologies are generally unwilling to transfer them freely due to the economic value of their Intellectual Property Rights [3]. The Wulung UAV technology still requires further research and development to enhance flight endurance, reinforce the landing gear for operations from all types of runways, reduce mechanical noise, integrate an automated control system, and incorporate components manufactured domestically.

This study evaluates and analyses the development of UAV technology in Indonesia and formulates strategic plans to assess the level of independence in the domestic manufacturing industry. It serves as a reference for industry, academia, and policymakers to support commercialization and identify strategies to enhance UAV technology quality.

To address these challenges, this study employs a combination of Strengths–Weaknesses–Opportunities–Threats (SWOT) analysis, the Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP), and the Quantitative Strategic Planning Matrix (QSPM) to leverage the strengths of each method for more accurate and detailed results. SWOT specifically evaluates business conditions by assessing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats [4]. The Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) is a decision support tool used to prioritize internal and external factors [5]. The Quantitative Strategic Planning Matrix (QSPM) objectively evaluates alternative options to determine the optimal strategy [6]. Integrating these methods provides a systematic and structured analytical approach, enhancing decision-making and promoting comprehensive strategic thinking in business development [7] .

The originality of this research lies in the integration of three methods—SWOT, AHP, and QSPM—for assessing the readiness of UAV technology development. The study makes a novel contribution by mapping 16 measurable strategic factors: 7 Strengths (S), 9 Weaknesses (W), 4 Opportunities (O), and 6 Threats (T), highlighting dominant factors (S1, W2, O1, and T1) through quantitative analysis. This provides a strategic data foundation not previously documented in UAV literature. Furthermore, the selection of research objects related to UAV technology development represents a new and necessary focus in Indonesia.

II. Literature Review

UAVs are aircraft that are controlled by a remote control system via radio waves [8]. Their use is increasing due to relatively low costs and diverse benefits, including the ability to collect accurate visual and geospatial data [9]. This data supports applications such as inspections, surveillance, reconnaissance, and mapping, including monitoring regional spatial planning, mapping agricultural and forest areas for conservation and resource management, producing post-disaster maps, monitoring fire-prone regions, detecting deforestation, and identifying sources of pollution or illegal resource exploitation, such as fishing, mining, and logging. UAVs are therefore a valuable technological tool for rescue and disaster mitigation, enabling rapid and accurate mapping of infrastructure affected by events like volcanic eruptions and forest fires—disasters that occur frequently in Indonesia.

The development of UAV technology in Indonesia has been driven by government policy, including Law Number 16 of 2012 and Presidential Regulation Number 8 of 2021, which prioritize defense industry independence and UAV programs [10]. The Wulung UAV project began in 2015 through a consortium of government agencies, universities, and industries, including the Directorate General of Defense Potential of the Ministry of Defense, the Indonesian Institute of Sciences, the Agency for the Assessment and Application of Technology, the Indonesian Institute of Sciences, the Bandung Institute of Technology, PT Dirgantara Indonesia (PT DI), and PT LEN Industri. In 2022, the National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN) continued UAV development in collaboration with PT DI, which holds a Design Organization Approval Certificate [11]. As a result, the UAV has become a national strategic program and a pilot initiative for technological acquisition and advancement.

The Wulung features autopilot capabilities and a modular composite structure for quick assembly, with a weight of 125 kg, wingspan of 6.36 meters, a 35-liter fuel tank, a 22-Hp piston pusher engine, a cruising speed of 110 km/h, and a four-hour endurance. Critical UAV technologies, including composites, flight control, telemetry, system integration, and propulsion, remain controlled by other countries [14].

III. Methodology

This study employs a descriptive qualitative–quantitative approach, utilizing primary data from interviews, observations, and expert questionnaires, and secondary data from literature, reports, and journals. The data are classified into internal (strengths and weaknesses) and external (opportunities and threats) factors, weighted, and mapped onto a Cartesian diagram to support SWOT-based strategy formulation [15]. The resulting strategies were analysed using QSPM to determine strategic priorities [13], while AHP was applied to select the optimal strategy from the SWOT alternatives [14].

After data collection, the information is processed using the External Factor Analysis Summary (EFAS) and Internal Factor Analysis Summary (IFAS) matrices [15]. Once the criteria are established, SWOT analysis is applied, followed by the determination of importance weights and ratings. The results from the IFAS and EFAS matrices are then mapped onto a Cartesian diagram, which consists of an X and Y-axis coordinate system [16].

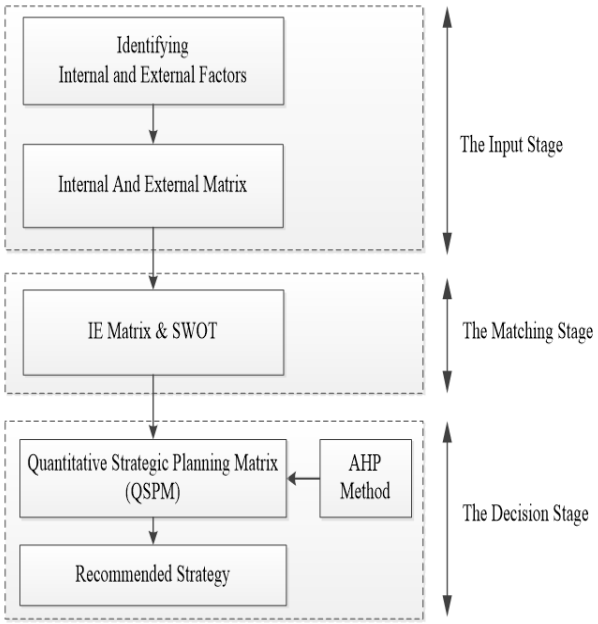

Fig. 1. Stages in UAV framework.

Based on Fig. 1, the formulation of a UAV technology development strategy is divided into three stages framework: input stage, matching stage, and decision stage. The strategy formulation methods used are:

- Input Stage

The input stage compiles the fundamental data necessary for developing a strategy. At this stage, an analysis of internal and external factors is carried out using the IFE (Internal Factor Evaluation) and EFE (External Factor Evaluation) matrices.

The IFE matrix identifies the key internal factors that determine strategy. These internal factors are analysed in terms of strengths and weaknesses, such as production, human resources, R&D, and management information systems. The EFE matrix identifies key external factors in determining strategy. The external environmental analysis identifies opportunities and threats, including economic, social, demographic, environmental, technological, and competitive factors. Then, the SWOT table is filled with indicators of strengths (S), weaknesses (W), opportunities (O), and threats (T). The next step is to compile four main strategic alternatives: S-O, S-T, W-O, and W-T strategies. These are alternative solutions for developing UAV technology. The S-O strategy uses strengths to create more opportunities. The S-T strategy uses strengths to overcome threats. The W-O strategy involves overcoming weaknesses to create more opportunities. The W-T strategy involves identifying and addressing weaknesses and threats. Next, create a pairwise comparison matrix to determine importance weights and ratings. Weights are determined in the assessment based on importance, measured on a scale of 1 to 5. The levels are as follows: 1 (not important); 2 (slightly important); 3 (important); 4 (quite important); and 5 (very important) [17]. Comparisons are made based on the decision maker's judgment by assessing the importance of one element compared to others.

- Matching Stage

The matching stage compares key internal and external factors, which are then analysed using quantitative models. The industry's current position is determined, and alternative strategies are designed using the IE matrix and the SWOT matrix. The rating is determined by assessing the level of influence within the company on a scale of 1 to 4 (1 (not strong); 2 (slightly strong); 3 (strong), and 4(very strong)). The score is then calculated by multiplying the weight by the rating [18].

- Decision Stage

The decision stage involves analysing the QSPM and AHP to determine the best alternative strategy [19]. At this stage, the weight of each internal and external factor is assessed using the AHP method, which prioritizes all factors identified in the IFE and EFE matrices. The weighting in the AHP model uses a scale of 1 to 9 [20]. Next, the priority order of various strategic alternatives is determined using the QSPM matrix. The QSPM is used to determine which strategies will be prioritized in selecting strategic alternatives recommended through the SWOT matrix [21].

The QSPM is the result of strategic decisions after assessing the Attractiveness Score (AS) of each strategic factor, both internal and external. The resulting weighted score is multiplied by the attractiveness level to obtain a Total Attractiveness Score (TAS). This can be done by ranking the AS on a scale of 1 to 4 (1 = Not Attractive, 2 = Somewhat Attractive, 3 = Quite Attractive, and 4 = Very Attractive). By multiplying the weights and the AS score, the TAS score can be obtained [22]. The QSPM matrix is calculated by combining internal and external components with developed alternative techniques. Weighting is carried out using AS and TAS.

IV. Results

The data processing cycle consists of three stages: input, matching, and decision. The first stage involves collecting and summarizing the information necessary for formulating a strategy. Weights, ratings, and weighted values are calculated based on IFE and EFE matrices. The second stage involves creating alternative strategies using the IFE and SWOT matrices. The final stage is the decision stage, which uses the AHP and QSPM methods to evaluate feasible strategies and provide specific alternatives [23].

A. The Input Stage

At this stage, an internal and external environmental analysis is conducted. The internal analysis identifies the organization's strengths and weaknesses, while the external analysis identifies opportunities and threats. Internal and external factors are obtained through interviews and field observations. As a result, 16 internal and external factor variables were identified: 7 Strengths (S), 9 Weaknesses (W), 4 Opportunities (O), and 6 Threats (T). The SWOT analysis uses the AHP technique to compare the criteria for each factor contained in the analysis [24]. A consistency ratio calculation is carried out to measure the consistency of each factor.

The following analyzes the industry's internal (strengths, weaknesses) and external (opportunities, threats) factors:

TABLE I. INTERNAL FACTORS: STRENGTHS (S)

Code	Strengths (S)
S1	The product under development is highly specialized, designed for multifunctional and flexible data collection,
S2	A skilled, professional technical team with Bachelors, masters and Doctoral degrees
S3	Has good quality control and is produced using manufacturing processes and components that comply with industry standard.
S4	Development or research of appropriate, visible and certified products
S5	Always innovate and follow future UAV trends
S6	The budget is fully funded by the State (APBN)
S7	Have adequate infrastructure facilities and infrastructure

As shown in Table I, the Strength (S) category includes seven strengths (S1–S7), such as highly specialized and multifunctional products supported by a competent technical workforce. These strengths are further reinforced by standardized manufacturing processes, ongoing R&D and innovation, government funding, and adequate production infrastructure.

TABLE II. INTERNAL FACTORS: WEAKNESSES (W)

Code	Weaknesses (W)
W1	Some industrial processes remain manual, with machinery largely mechanical rather than fully automated
W2	Dependence on imported raw materials, whose prices are unstable and tied to global markets, can disrupt the supply chain
W3	The lack of technology transfer reinforces reliance on foreign electronic components
W4	Not all facilities have obtained certification, which may affect the productivity and performance of technical teams.
W5	Employee competency development remains incomplete,
W6	SOP-compliant documentation has not been fully implemented, leading to potential inconsistencies, errors, and reduced efficiency
W7	Technical human resources for technology design are limited,
W8	Production facility maintenance costs are high
W9	The product's high specialization drives up production costs due to customization and extended manufacturing time.

As shown in Table II, the Weaknesses (W) category includes nine Weaknesses (W1–W9), such as high dependence on imported components, limited technology mastery and transfer, insufficient high-skilled technical personnel, non-automated production processes, and high production and maintenance costs. These weaknesses reduce efficiency, increase vulnerability to external disruptions, and weaken industry competitiveness.

TABLE III. EXTERNAL FACTORS: OPPORTUNITIES (O)

Code	Opportunities (O)
O1	UAVs are widely used in many fields such as spatial planning, monitoring, agriculture, disaster response, and regional security
O2	Government support, particularly through policies aimed at increasing local content, promotes component availability by fostering partnerships with domestic component industries.
O3	The development of Industry 4.0-based Lean Manufacturing provides opportunities to be more efficient and productive.
O4	UAV technology creates opportunities for other products and services such as maintenance, training, and more.

As shown in Table III, the Opportunity (O) category includes four Opportunities (OI-O4), such as the UAV industry, which presents significant opportunities through increasing multi-sector demand, government support for local content policies (TKDN), the adoption of Industry 4.0-based manufacturing, and the expansion of supporting services such as maintenance and training, which collectively enhance productivity and market potential.

TABLE IV. EXTERNAL FACTORS: THREATS (T)

Code	Threats (T)
T1	There is still a lack of supporting companies for the provision of raw materials.
T2	Import procedures/import regulations are still complicated/take a long time.
T3	There is a threat of embargo from supplier countries
T4	There is an increase in industrial labor costs/wages.
T5	It is high technology and high finance/capital.
T6	Price fluctuations due to dependence on imported raw materials, thus threatening component supplies.

As shown in Table IV, the Threats (T) category includes six threats (T1–T6), such as limited domestic suppliers, complex import regulations, embargo risks, rising labour costs, high capital requirements, and price volatility from import dependence, which collectively increase operational risk and weaken industry competitiveness.

The following information in Table V shows the alternative strategies developed: Strengths-Opportunities (S-O) strategy; Strengths-Threats (S-T) strategy; Weaknesses-Opportunities (W-O) strategy; Weaknesses-Threats (W-T) strategy.

TABLE V. LIST OF ALTERNATIVE INDUSTRIAL STRATEGIES

Code	Alternative Industrial Strategies (S-O, S-T, W-O, W-T)
S-O	Developing infrastructure and the adoption of new technologies.
S-T	Strengthening human resources to master technology.
W-O	Production efficiency and reducing dependence on imports.
W-T	Improving company management, especially financial aspects.

The IFE matrix analysis is the result of identifying internal factors, including strengths and weaknesses, that influence UAV products. Values and weights are determined using the paired comparison method. The weighting of internal and external factors is done by asking questions to respondents. The results of the IFE matrix analysis can be seen in Tables VI and VII.

TABLE VI. IFE MATRIX: STRENGTHS (S)

Code	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	Weight (%)
S1	1.00	3.00	3.00	5.00	0.33	3.00	3.00	25.92
S2	0.33	1.00	0.33	3.00	0.33	3.00	3.00	15.55
S3	0.33	3.00	1.00	0.33	3.00	5.00	0.20	10.84
S4	0.20	0.33	3.00	1.00	0.33	0.33	0.33	6.88
S5	3.00	3.00	0.33	3.00	1.00	0.33	0.33	14.61
S6	0.33	0.33	0.20	3.00	3.00	1.00	0.33	9.71
S7	0.33	0.33	5.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	1.00	16.49
								100.00

Based on the IFE matrix: Strength (S) weighting in Table VI, the UAV industry's main strength is its highly specific and multifunctional product design (S1, 25.92%), which is difficult to imitate. This Strength is reinforced by competent human resources, adequate infrastructure, continuous innovation, standardized manufacturing and quality control, government funding, and certified product development, forming a strong foundation for future growth and competitiveness.

TABLE VII. IFE MATRIX: WEAKNESSES (W)

Code	W1	W2	W3	W4	W5	W6	W7	W8	W9	Weight (%)
W1	1.00	0.20	3.00	0.33	3.00	0.33	3.00	0.33	5.00	8.72
W2	5.00	1.00	3.00	0.33	0.33	0.20	3.00	3.00	0.33	17.95
W3	0.33	0.33	1.00	5.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	5.00	3.00	12.82
W4	3.00	3.00	0.20	1.00	3.00	5.00	0.20	0.33	3.00	13.85
W5	3.00	0.33	0.33	0.33	1.00	5.00	3.00	0.33	0.33	7.69
W6	3.00	0.33	0.33	0.20	0.20	1.00	3.00	5.00	3.00	7.44
W7	0.33	0.33	0.33	5.00	0.33	0.33	1.00	5.00	3.00	11.54
W8	3.00	0.33	0.20	3.00	3.00	0.20	0.20	1.00	5.00	12.56
W9	0.20	3.00	0.33	0.33	3.00	0.33	0.33	0.20	1.00	7.44
										100.00

Based on the IFE matrix: Weakness (W) in Table VII, the main weakness is dependence on imported raw materials with unstable global prices (W2, 17.95%), which increases supply-chain risk and cost uncertainty. Other notable weaknesses include a lack of facility certification (W4, 13.85%), limited technology transfer (W3, 12.82%), and high production and maintenance costs (W8, 12.56%). and insufficient technical human resources (W7, 12.54%). Overall, technological constraints and strong import dependence remain the key internal challenges for the national UAV industry.

TABLE VIII. EFE MATRIX: OPPORTUNITIES (O)

Code	O1	O2	O3	O4	Weight (%)
O1	1.00	0.33	3.00	5.00	29.66
O2	3.00	1.00	5.00	0.20	29.24
O3	0.33	0.20	1.00	5.00	20.76
O4	0.20	5.00	0.20	1.00	20.34
					100.00

Based on the EFE matrix opportunity (O) weighting in Table VIII, the dominant external opportunity is the expanding multi-sector utilization of UAVs (O1, 29.66%), followed by policy-driven support for local content (TKDN) and domestic component integration (O2, 29.24%). Furthermore, the adoption of Industry 4.0–based manufacturing systems (O3, 20.76%) and the development of downstream services, including maintenance and technical training (O4, 20.34%), enhance manufacturing scalability, operational efficiency, and the long-term competitiveness of the national UAV manufacturing industry.

TABLE IX. EFE MATRIX: THREATS (T)

Code	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	Weight (%)
T1	1.00	0.33	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	22.32
T2	3.00	1.00	3.00	3.00	0.33	0.33	17.86
T3	0.33	0.33	1.00	3.00	3.00	0.33	13.39
T4	0.33	0.33	0.33	1.00	5.00	3.00	16.74
T5	0.33	3.00	0.33	0.20	1.00	0.20	8.48
T6	0.33	3.00	3.00	0.33	5.00	1.00	21.21
							100.00

Based on the EFE matrix threat (T) weighting in Table IX, the limited availability of domestic raw-material suppliers (T1, 22.32%) and price volatility resulting from import dependence (T6, 21.21%) are identified as the dominant external threats. These threats are further exacerbated by restrictive import regulations, rising labour costs, and potential embargo risks, collectively increasing supply-chain fragility and cost instability in the UAV manufacturing industry.

B. Matching Stage

The IFAS and EFAS tables identify internal (strengths, weaknesses) and external (opportunities, threats) factors, respectively. Each factor is weighted, ranked by expert judgment, and multiplied to obtain scores, which are then summed to highlight company priorities.

TABLE X. IFAS CALCULATION TABLE

Code	Weight (%)	Rating	Score	Priority
S1	25.92	3	0.78	1
S2	15.55	3	0.47	3
S3	10.84	4	0.43	5
S4	6.88	1	0.07	7
S5	14.61	3	0.44	4
S6	9.71	3	0.29	6
S7	16.49	3	0.49	2
Sub total Strength =			**2.97**	
W1	8.72	3	0.26	2
W2	17.95	1	0.18	5
W3	12.82	3	0.38	1
W4	13.85	1	0.14	6
W5	7.69	3	0.23	3
W6	7.44	1	0.07	9
W7	11.54	1	0.12	8
W8	12.56	1	0.13	7
W9	7.44	3	0.22	4
Sub total Weakness =			**1.73**	
Strength – Weakness =			**(2.97 – 1.73) = 1.24**	

Based on the IFAS calculation in Table X, the total strength score (2.97) exceeds the total weakness score (1.73), resulting in a positive internal factor value of +1.24. The most dominant strength is S1 (25.92%; score 0.78), indicating that the highly specific and multifunctional UAV product design provides a strong competitive advantage, supported by competent human resources and adequate infrastructure. In contrast, the main internal weakness is W3 (12.82%; score 0.38), reflecting a high dependence on imported electronic components, which increases vulnerability to supply-chain disruptions and

highlights the need for import substitution and enhanced technological capability.

TABLE XI. EFAS CALCULATION TABLE

Code	Weight (%)	Rating	Score	Priority
O1	29.66	3	0.89	1
O2	29.24	1	0.29	4
O3	20.76	4	0.83	2
O4	20.34	3	0.61	3
Sub total Opportunity =			**2.62**	
T1	22.32	1	0.22	4
T2	17.86	1	0.18	5
T3	13.39	3	0.40	3
T4	16.74	3	0.50	2
T5	8.48	1	0.08	6
T6	21.21	3	0.64	1
Sub Total Threat =			**2.02**	
Opportunity – Threat =			**(2,62 – 2.02) = 0.60**	

Based on the EFAS calculation in Table XI, the total opportunity score (2.62) exceeds the total threat score (2.02), resulting in a positive external factor value of +0.60. The most dominant opportunity is O1 (29.66%; score 0.89), indicating strong multi-sector demand for UAV applications, supported by government policies and the adoption of Industry 4.0. Conversely, the main external threat is T6 (21.21%; score 0.64), reflecting vulnerability to price fluctuations due to dependence on imported raw materials, which directly affects cost stability and supply-chain sustainability.

Strategy formulation requires confirming the organization's position along the strength–weakness and opportunity–threat axes. The following is how to calculate the coordinates:

a) IFAS Coordinates (Total Strength Score – Total Weakness Score) = (2.97 – 1.73) = +1.24

b) EFAS Coordinates (Total Opportunity Score– Total Threat Score) = (2.62 – 2.03) = +0.60

Based on the calculations, the coordinate point is located in Quadrant I (+1.24; +0.60). These coordinates are presented in a SWOT matrix diagram in Fig. 2 to determine the development position.

The measurement results shown in the Cartesian SWOT analysis shows that the net internal factor score (Strength–Weakness) is +1.24 and the net external factor score (Opportunity–Threat) is +0.60, positioning the organization in Quadrant I (+1.24; +0.60). This configuration indicates dominant internal strengths and favourable external opportunities, thereby supporting the implementation of an aggressive 'Grow and Build' strategy focused on strategic expansion and capability enhancement.

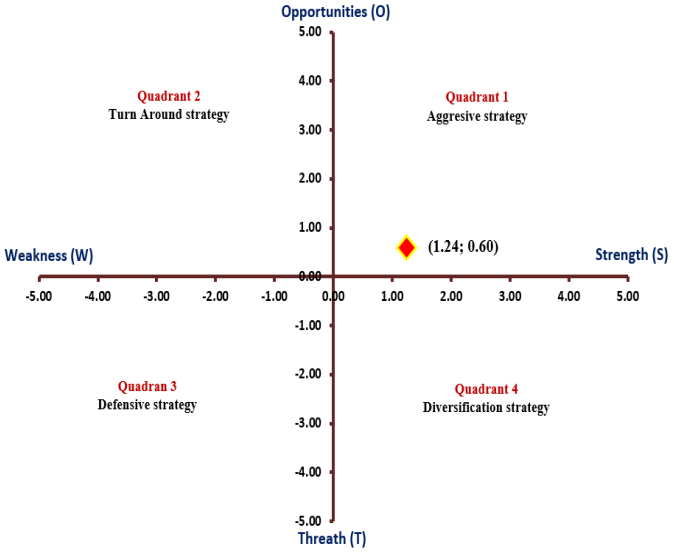

Fig. 2. Cartesian diagram.

The adopted strategy supports an aggressive development and growth orientation through the implementation of one or a combination of the following strategic initiatives:

a) Continuously enhancing the reliability of infrastructure and technological systems to accommodate increasing operational and equipment demands.

b) Strengthening technical education and professional training programs to improve the competencies of technical human resources.

c) Conducting periodic inspections and maintenance of manufacturing equipment and machinery to ensure operational reliability and production continuity.

d) Prioritizing the use of information systems and digital technologies to accelerate system integration and monitoring, thereby enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of production operations.

e) Implementing specialized training programs for engineers to enhance technical proficiency, teamwork quality, and organizational performance.

*f)*Expanding collaborative networks through research partnerships with universities and strategic alliances with related industries.

g) Recognizing and valuing educational attainment and professional certification as mechanisms to motivate employees, improve performance, and strengthen organizational assets.

h) Pursuing strategies in market development, product innovation, and cost efficiency to enhance competitiveness, maintain relationships with customers and suppliers, and support long-term organizational growth.

C. Decision Stage

At this stage, an AHP analysis was conducted based on the SWOT results to determine the most appropriate and effective strategic formulations (S–O, S–T, W–O, W–T). Expert Choice software was used to efficiently identify the priority strategies. A hierarchical structure was constructed to illustrate the relationship between SWOT sub-criteria and strategic decision priorities, as shown in Fig. 3:

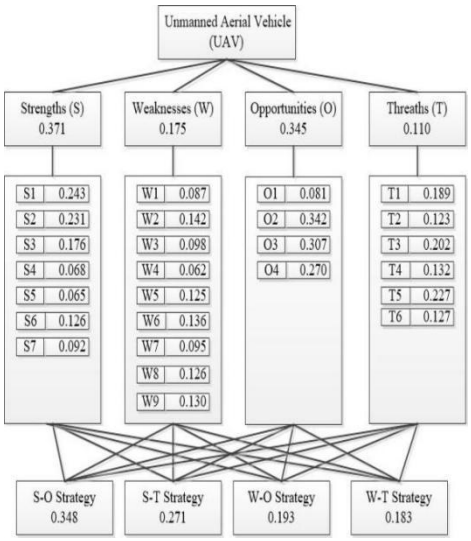

Fig. 3. SWOT-AHP hierarchical structure for selecting the best strategy.

Fig. 3 shows that Strengths (37.1%) are the dominant criterion for supporting UAV development, followed by Opportunities (34.5%), Weaknesses (17.5%), and Threats (11.0%). The largest sub-factors are S1 (highly specific, hard-to-replicate products, 24.3%), W2 (dependence on imported raw materials, 14.2%), O2 (government support for local content, 34.2%), and T5 (high technology and capital requirements, 22.7%). These results highlight the strategic importance of product specificity, domestic partnerships, and technology readiness in UAV development.

Fig. 4 below shows the results of processing using Expert Choice Software tools version 11.

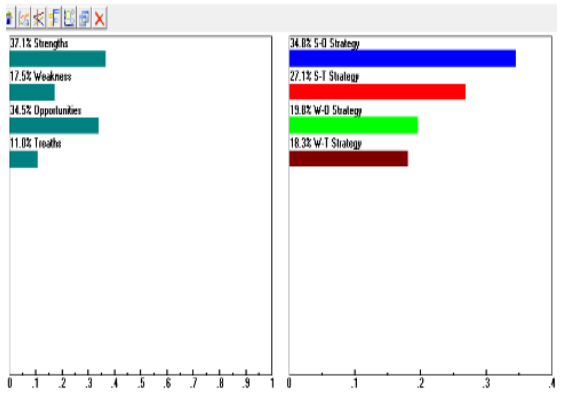

Fig. 4. Data visualization with expert choice software.

Fig. 4 shows that the highest-priority strategy is the S–O strategy, with a score of 0.348 (34.8%), followed by S–T (27.1%), W–O (19.3%), and W–T (18.3%). The S–O strategy focuses on infrastructure development and the adoption of new technology. Overall, the strategic alternatives rank from highest to lowest as S–O, S–T, W–O, and W–T.

QSPM analysis was used to determine priority strategies for UAV product and technology development. Weighted internal and external factors, combined with attractiveness scores, form the basis for identifying optimal strategies that require immediate implementation. In QSPM, the total attractiveness score (TAS) is calculated by multiplying the weighted values by the attractiveness scores (AS), as shown in the QSPM matrix in Table XII.

TABLE XII. QSPM MATRIX CALCULATION

Strategic Key Factors	Weight (%)	S-O Strategy		S-T Strategy		W-O Strategy		W-T Strategy	
		AS	TAS	AS	TAS	AS	TAS	AS	TAS
Strengths (S)									
S1	25.92	2	0.52	2	0.52	2	0.52	2	0.52
S2	15.55	3	0.47	2	0.31	3	0.47	2	0.31
S3	10.84	2	0.22	2	0.22	2	0.22	2	0.22
S4	6.88	2	0.14	3	0.21	3	0.21	2	0.14
S5	14.61	3	0.44	3	0.44	2	0.29	3	0.44
S6	9.71	3	0.29	3	0.29	2	0.19	2	0.19
S7	16.49	2	0.33	2	0.33	3	0.49	3	0.49
			Σ = 2.40		**Σ = 2.31**		**Σ = 2.39**		**Σ = 2.31**
Weaknesses (W)									
W1	8.72	3	0.26	2	0.17	3	0.26	2	0.17
W2	17.95	2	0.36	2	0.36	2	0.36	2	0.36
W3	12.82	3	0.38	3	0.38	2	0.26	3	0.38
W4	13.85	2	0.28	3	0.42	2	0.28	2	0.28
W5	7.69	3	0.23	3	0.23	2	0.15	2	0.15
W6	7.44	2	0.15	2	0.15	3	0.22	3	0.22
W7	11.54	3	0.35	3	0.35	2	0.23	2	0.23

W8	12.56	2	0.25	2	0.25	3	0.38	3	0.38
W9	7.44	3	0.22	3	0.22	3	0.22	3	0.22
			Σ = 2.48		**Σ = 2.53**		**Σ = 2.36**		**Σ = 2.40**
Opportunities (O)									
O1	29.66	3	0.89	2	0.59	2	0.59	2	0.59
O2	29.24	2	0.58	2	0.58	2	0.58	2	0.58
O3	20.76	2	0.42	3	0.62	3	0.62	2	0.42
O4	20.34	3	0.61	3	0.61	3	0.61	2	0.41
			Σ = 2.50		**Σ = 2.41**		**Σ = 2.41**		**Σ = 2.00**
Threats (T)									
T1	22.32	2	0.45	3	0.67	3.00	0.67	3	0.67
T2	17.86	2	0.36	2	0.36	2.00	0.36	2	0.36
T3	13.39	3	0.40	2	0.27	2.00	0.27	3	0.40
T4	16.74	2	0.33	2	0.33	3.00	0.50	3	0.50
T5	8.48	2	0.17	3	0.25	2.00	0.17	3	0.25
T6	21.21	2	0.42	3	0.64	2.00	0.42	2	0.42
			Σ = 2.13		**Σ = 1.88**		**Σ = 2.39**		**Σ = 2.61**

TABLE XIII. INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ACHIEVEMENT SCORE

Strategic Key Factors	Internal Achievement Score (Σ Strengths + Σ Weaknesses)	External Achievement Score (Σ Opportunities + Σ Threats)
S-O	2.40 + 2.48 = 4.88	2.50 + 2.13= 4.63
S-T	2.31 + 2.53 = 4.85	2.41 + 1.81 = 4.29
W-O	2.39 + 2.36 = 4.75	2.41 + 2.39 = 4.80
W-T	2.31 + 2.40 = 4.71	2.00 + 2.61 = 4.61

Based on Table XIII, the internal and external achievement scores indicate that the S–O strategy has the highest internal score (4.88), reflecting effective utilization of internal capabilities, while the W–O strategy achieves the highest external score (4.80), indicating greater responsiveness to external opportunities. Overall, the S–O strategy demonstrates the most balanced performance across both dimensions, supporting its selection as the primary strategic priority. Accordingly, the preferred strategic focus is the S–O strategy, which emphasizes infrastructure development and the adoption of new technologies to enhance productivity, energy efficiency, and innovation. Effective technology adoption requires not only hardware and software implementation but also the development of digital skills and well-integrated standard operating procedures to ensure consistent and reliable process execution.

V. DISCUSSION

The results indicate that Indonesia's UAV manufacturing industry is positioned in Quadrant I, reflecting strong internal capabilities supported by technological expertise, product specialization, infrastructure availability, and government funding. Despite this favourable position, high dependence on imported materials and components, limited technology transfer, incomplete certification, and weak process standardization increase manufacturing risk exposure and constrain production scalability. Externally, expanding multi-sector UAV demand and strong local content (TKDN) policies create significant growth opportunities; however, these are offset by limited domestic supplier ecosystems, regulatory barriers, rising labour costs, and potential embargo risks.

The integrated SWOT–AHP–QSPM analysis consistently prioritizes the S–O strategy, highlighting infrastructure modernization and Industry 4.0–based technology adoption as key drivers of productivity, energy efficiency, and innovation. From a policy perspective, these findings underscore the need for targeted government interventions, including incentives for domestic supplier development, accelerated facility certification, structured technology transfer, and workforce upskilling aligned with digital manufacturing. Such measures are essential to reduce import dependency, mitigate supply-chain risks, and strengthen the long-term resilience and competitiveness of the national UAV manufacturing industry.

At the UAV product and technology development stage, both design maturity and manufacturing process control are essential. Enhancing manufacturing maturity requires improving productivity, standardizing UAV technologies, strengthening engineering human resource capabilities, providing management training, conducting technical skills workshops, establishing technical assistance guidelines, and promoting technology and product innovation through benchmarking activities.

The competitive strategic advantages in the UAV manufacturing industry can be summarized as follows:

a) Strengthening partnerships between suppliers, customers, and competitors by ensuring human resource availability through government support.

b) Reducing production costs through human resource efficiency and developing new technologies.

c) Improving production quality through cost leadership and differentiation strategies to increase market potential.

d) Increasing the use of manufacturing and information technology to enhance flexibility and bargaining power.

e) Increasing government support to minimize piracy and manage intellectual property rights.

f) Improving technological capabilities to develop new products.

In production, strong supplier relationships are essential to mitigate cost volatility and supply risks under fluctuating economic conditions. Investment in advanced machinery, automation, and digital technologies, combined with industry-wide collaboration across the value chain, is critical to improving efficiency, fostering innovation, and sustaining global competitiveness.

This study supports managerial decision-making by recommending strategic alternatives that include continuous adoption of advanced UAV technologies, strengthened collaboration with academia and industry, and optimization of Quality Control (QC) functions to reduce product defects and losses of imported components that may disrupt productivity. Efficient management of imported raw materials through accurate component planning is also necessary to minimize import costs and lead times. Furthermore, improved accounting practices, supported by transparent financial reporting and KPI-based performance measurement aligned with Good Corporate Governance (GCG) principles, are essential to enhance operational effectiveness and investor confidence.

VI. Conclusion

In conclusion, UAV industrial independence is a strategic necessity for strengthening national defense, reducing import dependence, and enhancing Indonesia's manufacturing competitiveness. The SWOT–AHP–QSPM results confirm that an S–O strategy focused on infrastructure and technology adoption is the most effective pathway to achieve sustainable and innovation-driven industrial growth. By reducing import dependence, enhancing human resource competence, and reinforcing domestic supply chains, Indonesia can transform UAV technology into a catalyst for innovation-driven manufacturing and long-term national economic sovereignty.

Therefore, the attainment of UAV industrial independence is strategically vital, as it transforms technological capability into national economic leverage, policy resilience, and long-term industrial sustainability.

However, this study is limited to a single case study of the Wulung UAV, which restricts the generalizability of the findings, and the integrated SWOT–AHP–QSPM approach relies on expert judgment that may introduce subjectivity despite consistency verification. In addition, the analysis focuses on strategic and managerial aspects without incorporating detailed quantitative technical performance testing or comprehensive financial feasibility evaluation, while external factors such as regulatory and global supply-chain changes may affect strategy implementation. Therefore, future research should extend the framework through multi-case analysis and the integration of quantitative technical and financial indicators to strengthen technology readiness, manufacturing readiness, and decision-making robustness.

Acknowledgment

The authors thank the management of the National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN) for the support to complete this research. We also thank the anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments on revising the study.

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AI Mathematical: Solving Math Challenges Using Artificial Intelligence Models

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***Abstract*—Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a transformative tool for solving mathematical challenges across diverse domains, ranging from algebra and geometry to calculus and number theory. This study investigates the role of AI in mathematics by analyzing three representative platforms—MathGPT.org, Math-GPT.ai, and StudyX.ai—and by proposing ten Python-based problem-solving models tailored to Olympiad-style problems. The methodology integrates rule-based reasoning, brute-force search, and heuristic strategies, while benchmarking is inspired by the AI Math Olympiad (AIMO) Progress Award competition on Kaggle. A comparative evaluation was conducted to assess accuracy, reasoning depth, and computational efficiency. Results show that AI solvers can provide step-by-step solutions, interactive visualizations, and adaptive learning support, but their performance varies depending on problem type and strategy. This study highlights both the potential and limitations of AI in mathematics education and research, emphasizing the need for automated model selection (AutoML) and formal benchmarking to strengthen credibility. The findings demonstrate that AI can simultaneously promote automated problem-solving and enhance personalized STEM learning.**

***Keywords*—AI math solvers; Artificial Intelligence; STEM education; MathGPT.org; Math-GPT.ai; StudyX.ai; Python models; Olympiad problems; automated reasoning; Kaggle AIMO Progress Prize**

I. Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is reshaping mathematics by enabling automated reasoning, symbolic manipulation, and problem-solving at scales previously unattainable. Mathematics provides the theoretical foundation for AI through probability, statistics, linear algebra, and calculus, while AI in turn enhances mathematics education and research. Recent initiatives, such as the AI Math Olympiad (AIMO) Progress Award on Kaggle, highlight the ambition to build AI systems capable of solving Olympiad-level problems that require multi-step logic and deep reasoning. In parallel, platforms such as MathGPT.org, Math-GPT.ai, and StudyX.ai have emerged, offering step-by-step solutions, interactive visualizations, and adaptive tutorials that make advanced mathematics more accessible. However, existing studies reveal both opportunities and challenges: while AI tools can improve engagement and individualized learning, their reasoning depth and accuracy remain inconsistent. This study contributes by: 1) summarizing the capabilities of three representative AI mathematical platforms, 2) proposing ten Python-based models for diverse problem categories, and 3) benchmarking their performance against Olympiad-style problems. By integrating insights from prior research and referencing recent work on Automated Machine Learning (AutoML) for model selection, this study positions AI as both a computational solver and an educational tool, supporting the next generation of STEM learners and researchers.

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II. Materials and Methods

This study builds upon recent advances in the application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to mathematics education and problem solving. To design and evaluate AI-based mathematical solvers, the authors reviewed several related works that highlight the effectiveness, challenges, and opportunities of integrating AI into STEM learning environments.

1) AI-supported problem solving in mathematics education. Recent work [9] [10] investigated the educational quality of AI-supported problem solving by comparing different prompt techniques in mathematics classrooms. The study emphasized that large language models (LLMs) such as GPT can enhance conceptual understanding when prompts are carefully designed, but also revealed limitations in accuracy and reasoning depth.

2) Systematic review of AI effectiveness in K-12 mathematics. A meta-analysis [5] examined the effectiveness of AI tools in improving mathematics performance among K-12 students. The findings showed that AI-based interventions generally outperform traditional instruction, particularly in supporting individualized learning and adaptive feedback. However, the study also noted that success depends on contextual factors such as teacher guidance and curriculum integration.

3) Broader perspectives on AI in mathematics education. A systematic review [7] categorized existing research into themes such as advantages, disadvantages, conceptual understanding, strategies, and effectiveness. The analysis concluded that AI tools can significantly improve engagement and problem-solving skills, but highlighted the need for careful pedagogical design to avoid over-reliance on automated solutions.

4) Recent work [2] with the tree search algorithm in the AlphaGo game program evaluates positions and chooses moves using deep neural networks. These neural networks are trained by supervised learning from human expert moves and by reinforcement learning from self-play. An algorithm based solely on reinforcement learning requires no data, guidance, or human expertise other than the rules of the game. AlphaGo

becomes its own teacher from a neural network trained to predict AlphaGo's move choices and also the winner of AlphaGo's games, improving the power of the tree search algorithm, leading to higher quality move choices and stronger self-playing ability in the next iteration.

5) Recent work [4] with Artificial Intelligence (AI) shows increasing potential in improving mathematics teaching. This system review and meta-analysis study the effectiveness of AI in improving mathematics learning outcomes in K-12 classrooms compared to traditional teaching methods. Following the guidelines of Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA), it establishes an initial knowledge base for future deployments and research on the effective integration of AI into K-12 mathematics classrooms.

6) Recent work [7] with the development of technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) offers opportunities to help teachers and students solve and improve teaching and learning effectiveness. A systematic review of materials (SLR) was conducted using established and reliable guidelines. Following the priority reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses (PRISMA) searched on ScienceDirect, Scopus, SpringerLink, ProQuest, and EBSCO Host 20 studies on AI published from 2017 to 2021. The results of the SLR showed that the AI method used in mathematics education for the study samples was through robots, systems, tools, teachable agents, automated agents, and a holistic approach.

The analysis concluded that AI tools can significantly improve engagement and problem-solving skills, but highlighted the need for careful pedagogical design to avoid over-reliance on automated solutions.

AI needs experience and data so that its intelligence can run smoothly. Humans do not always order the process of learning AI, but AI will learn by itself based on the experience of AI when used by humans. There are several advantages in the use of AI in mathematics learning, among which is that students become more critical and responsible in facing daily solutions and have a better understanding of fundamental problems of geometry, mathematics, and statistics. In addition, students also learn about and improve interpersonal abilities and better social interaction; it also allows effective learning to create a better environment to enhance the acquisition of mathematical concepts. Compared to other aspects, it is still observed but not as widespread as the observation on effectiveness. It is crucial to know the extent of the effectiveness of AI in education.

Methodological approach of this study. Based on these prior studies, our methodology combines:

Platform analysis: This study summarizes the features of three representative AI math platforms (MathGPT.org, Math-GPT.ai, StudyX.ai), focusing on their problem-solving capabilities, user interaction models, and educational applications.

Model design: The study proposes ten Python-based problem-solving models tailored to different categories of mathematical challenges, ranging from algebraic puzzles to Olympiad-style geometry and number theory problems. Each model integrates rule-based inference, brute-force search, or heuristic learning strategies.

Evaluation framework: Inspired by the AIMO Progress Prize competition on Kaggle [1], the models are benchmarked against Olympiad-level problems to assess reasoning depth, correctness, and computational efficiency.

By combining insights from prior research with practical implementations, this study aims to demonstrate how AI can serve both as a computational problem solver and as an educational tool that supports personalized STEM learning.

III. Results and Evaluation

A. Summary of Information About Three Mathematical AI Platforms

To solve problems using AI models, there are dedicated AI solvers that handle everything from algebra, geometry, to calculus with step-by-step reasoning, image/PDF input and concept explanations. Apply AI to support math and STEM learning. STEM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, an integrated approach to education and research that aims to develop critical thinking, creativity and problem-solving skills. In particular, Mathematics is both the foundation for other fields and is strongly supported by artificial intelligence (Math AI). Math AI can help solve equations, draw graphs, visualize data, prove theorems, and personalize math learning for students by providing exercises appropriate to their abilities. Conversely, Mathematics itself is also the foundation for developing AI through fields such as probability, statistics, linear algebra and calculus. When combining STEM with Math AI, AI can be applied in education to create exercises and simulate experiments, in research to analyze scientific data and optimize engineering designs, as well as in life to predict weather, financial analysis, medicine, and many other technical fields. Fig. 1 presents MathGPT.

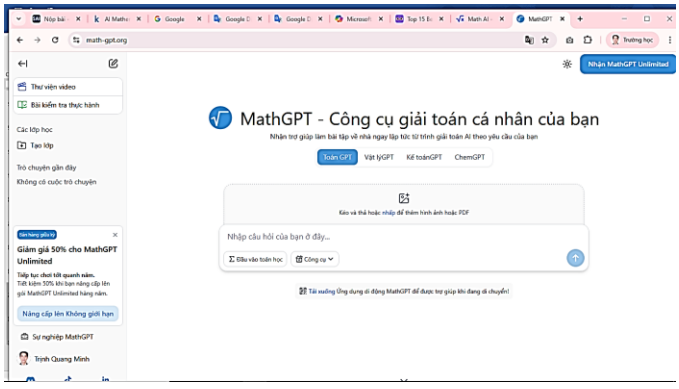

Fig. 1. MathGPT - Your Personal Math Solver. MathGPT analyzes the problem, selects the appropriate method, and presents a step-by-step solution with short annotations.

MathGPT.org was founded in 2024 by two Cornell Engineering students, Nour Gajial and Yanni Kouloumbis [3] [8]. Starting as a startup project in school, the platform quickly went viral, thanks to a TikTok video and now has more than 10

million global users. MathGPT.org focuses on solving math problems using artificial intelligence with detailed step-by-step solutions, intuitive video illustrations, and the PocketMath AI mobile application, becoming a personal "AI tutor" for students and students at many levels.

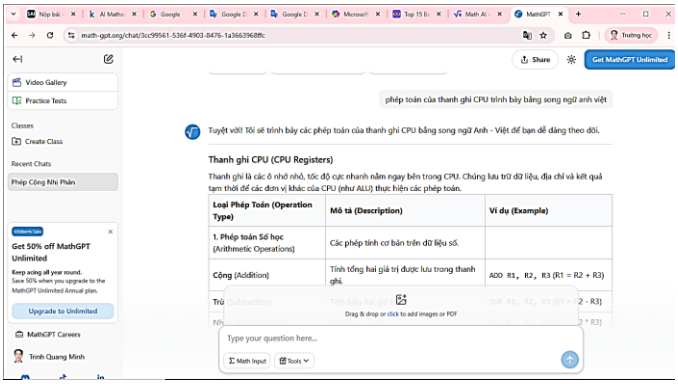

Fig. 2. CPU register operations presented in English and Vietnamese. Export video lectures from math questions using ChatGPT. Showing how technical content (e.g., register operations, machine instructions) is converted into multilingual teaching materials and how the system automatically generates video lectures from scripts generated by ChatGPT.

Math-GPT.ai (see Fig. 2 and Fig. 3) was officially launched in 2025 under the Math AI brand, operating as an independent EdTech platform with no clear parent company [11] [12]. This platform stands out for its ability to solve math problems from basic to advanced, supports taking pictures of math problems to provide detailed solutions, and integrates advanced calculator tools for differential and integral operations. Math-GPT.ai aims to be an intuitive math assistant, making it easy for students to access math knowledge anytime.

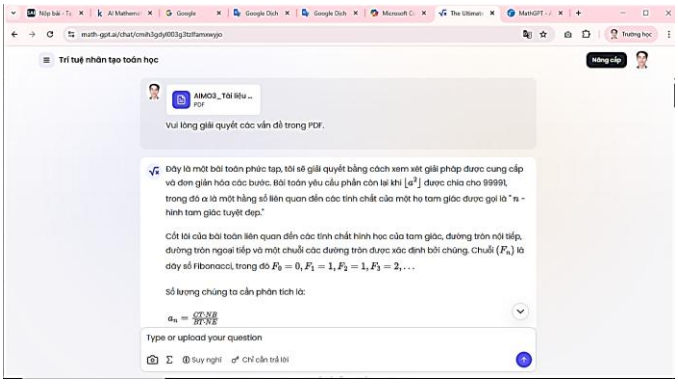

Fig. 3. Calculation to solve the problem using AIMO3_Reference_Problem 7.pdf. The illustration shows each logical step, important transformations, and key points to help the reader understand the method, not just the result.

StudyX.ai (see Fig. 4) is a private EdTech company founded in 2020 in Dover, Delaware (USA) by Michael W. Aiming [6], to provide AI learning services. StudyX not only focuses on mathematics but also expands to academic research and writing. Its main products include AI Homework Helper, live chat with AI, step-by-step detailed solutions, and a collaborative learning environment. As a result, StudyX becomes a comprehensive learning platform, competing with applications such as Photomath and Wolfram Alpha. It shows how AI is used to personalize learning paths, suggest appropriate exercises, and provide additional explanations when students encounter difficulties, highlighting the benefits of expanding teaching resources and improving learning effectiveness.

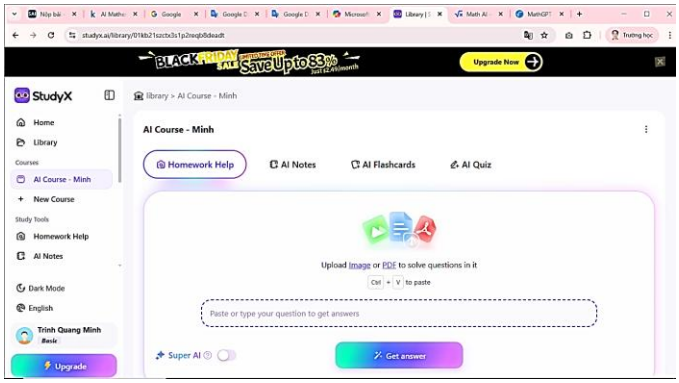

Fig. 4. Another online course on Math that we use is a website that uses AI tools. Lesson pages, interactive exercises, automated feedback, and learning progress analysis.

B. Propose 10 Problem-Solving Models According to the Problem to be Solved in Artificial Intelligence

1) Problem 1: The Python model for Problem 1 (Fig. 5) is designed with two complementary mechanisms, a rule solver and a brute-force function. The rule solver extracts the candy number r from the text (defaults to 5 if not found), and then applies the text-based formula:

$$xA = 2r$$

$$xB = r$$

$$yA = 2r$$

$$yB = r \rightarrow \text{Product of ages} = 2 * r\text{^}2$$

This allows the model to quickly infer the result. In parallel, the brute-force function searches within a reasonable range (age ≤ 120, candy ≤ 200) to check the four constraint equations:

$$xA + yA = 2 * (xB + yB)$$

$$xA * yA = 4 * (xB * yB)$$

$$xA + (yA - 5) = xB + (yB + 5)$$

$$xA * (yA - 5) = xB * (yB + 5)$$

Thereby finding the only solution (10, 5, 10, 5) with the product of age equal to 50. In addition, the model also supports generating sample or random datasets, checking each data line, printing bilingual Vietnamese-English results and creating statistical reports. Thanks to that, the system is both capable of making quick inferences using formulas and validating experiments using data, ensuring the correctness and transparency of the solution.

The key code of the brute-force algorithm:

```
def solve_problem1(max_age=120, max_candy=200):
    solutions = []
```

```
        # Loop over possible ages of Alice (xA) and Bob (xB)
    for xA in range(1, max_age + 1):
        for xB in range(1, max_age + 1):
            # yA must be >= 6 so that (yA - 5) is still positive
            for yA in range(6, max_candy + 1):
                for yB in range(1, max_candy + 1):
                    # Alice's conditions: sum doubles, product quadruples
                    if (xA + yA) == 2 * (xB + yB) and (xA * yA) == 4 * (xB * yB):
                        # Bob's conditions after Alice gives 5 candies:
                        # sums and products must be equal
                        if (xA + (yA - 5)) == (xB + (yB + 5)) and (xA * (yA - 5)) == (xB * (yB + 5)):
                            solutions.append((xA, xB, yA, yB))
    # Return the first solution and the product of ages
    if solutions:
        xA, xB, yA, yB = solutions[0]
        return solutions, xA * xB
    return [], None
```

```
# ==========================
# [VI/EN] Chạy end-to-end
# ==========================
# [VI] Tạo dataset mới với 500 dòng (tăng lên 1000+ bằng cách đổi n_rows)
# [EN] Create a new dataset with 500 rows (increase to 1000+ by changing n_rows)
new_csv_path = generate_random_dataset_v2(
    path="problem1_random_dataset_v2.csv",
    n_rows=500,        # ví dụ: đổi thành 1000 để có nhiều dữ liệu hơn
    seed=2025,
    ensure_valid=True  # chèn 1 dòng nghiệm đúng
)

# [VI] Tái sử dụng solve_from_dataset/check_row để kiểm tra dataset mới
# [EN] Reuse solve_from_dataset/check_row to validate the new dataset
solutions_v2 = summarize_new_dataset(new_csv_path)
```

```
[VI] Đã tạo dataset ngẫu nhiên: 'problem1_random_dataset_v2.csv' với 501 dòng (n_rows=500)
[EN] Created random dataset: 'problem1_random_dataset_v2.csv' with 501 rows (n_rows=500)
[VI] Đã chèn 1 dòng nghiệm đúng để đảm bảo có ít nhất 1 nghiệm hợp lệ.
[EN] Injected 1 valid row to ensure at least one valid solution is present.
[VI] Dòng 0: xA=10, xB=5, yA=10, yB=5, Tổng gấp 2 lần, Tích gấp 4 lần, Alice cho 5 kẹo. Tích tuổi = 50.
[EN] Row 0: xA=10, xB=5, yA=10, yB=5, Sum factor=2, Product factor=4, Alice gives 5 candies. Product of ages = 50.
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------
================================================================================
[VI] TÓM TẮT DATASET MỚI
[EN] SUMMARY OF THE NEW DATASET
================================================================================
[VI] Tổng số nghiệm hợp lệ tìm thấy: 1
[EN] Total valid solutions found: 1
[VI] Ví dụ: Dòng 0 ⇒ xA=10, xB=5, yA=10, yB=5, k_sum=2, k_product=4, r=5, Tích tuổi=50
[EN] Example: Row 0 ⇒ xA=10, xB=5, yA=10, yB=5, k_sum=2, k_product=4, r=5, Product of ages=50
```

Fig. 5. Code Problem 1. Examples of input/output and a simple algorithm flowchart, helping learners quickly grasp the requirements and approach.

2) Problem 2: This Python model is designed to solve Problem 2 in AIMO (Fig. 6). It works on the principle of rule-based inference. From the text description of the problem, the model will recognize the size of the square n (default $n = 500$) and calculate the maximum number of K rectangles with different perimeters that can be divided into the square. The algorithm is based on the piecewise function to determine the smallest area corresponding to the semi-perimeter $s=x+y$:

Nếu 1 <= s <= n → f(s) = s - 1

Nếu s >= n+1 → f(s) = n * (s - n)

The program then adds up the values of f(s) until the sum exceeds the area of the square n^2. The largest value of m that satisfies this condition is K_max(n). Finally, the model returns the result K mod 10^5.

```
    @staticmethod
    def _f_n(s: int, n: int) -> int:
        # Piecewise function for minimal area
        # If s <= n: f(s) = s - 1
        # If s > n : f(s) = n * (s - n)
        return (s - 1) if s <= n else n * (s - n)
    @staticmethod
    def _compute_K_upper(n: int) -> int:
        # Find largest m such that Σ f(s) <= n^2
        f_series = [Model._f_n(s, n) for s in range(2, 2 * n + 1)]
        prefix = [0]
        for v in f_series:
            prefix.append(prefix[-1] + v)
        area = n * n
        max_m = 0
        for m_try in range(1, 2 * n):
            if prefix[m_try] <= area:
                max_m = m_try
            else:
                break
    return max_m
```

_f_n(s, n) defines the piecewise function for the minimal rectangle area given semi-perimeter s.

```
# ===== 6) Một vài thống kê phụ trợ / Additional quick stats =====
print("\n== Extra stats / Thống kê phụ ==")
# Phân phối s trong toàn bộ dataset / Distribution of s in ALL dataset
s_counts = all_df['s'].value_counts().sort_index()
print(f"Unique s in ALL dataset = {s_counts.shape[0]} (min s = {all_df['s'].min()}, max s = {all_df['s'].max()})")
print("Top 10 s by frequency / 10 giá trị s xuất hiện nhiều nhất:")
print(s_counts.sort_values(ascending=False).head(10).to_string())

# Mô tả nhanh x,y,A / Quick describe
print("\nDescribe x, y, A (ALL dataset):")
print(all_df[['x','y','A']].describe().to_string())
```

```
=== INPUT OVERVIEW / Tổng quan dữ liệu đầu vào ===
- File 'rectangles_random_all_n.csv': shape = (2000, 8)
- File 'rectangles_random_distinct_s_n.csv': shape = (227, 8)

--- First 10 rows from ALL dataset / 10 dòng đầu từ toàn bộ dataset ---
     x    y    s      A   f_s  x_min  x_max  x_in_bounds
188  126  314  23688  21400   100    214         True
  3   50   53    150     52     1     52         True
210  116  326  24360  23968   112    214         True
212   27  239   5724   5350    25    214         True
206   39  245   8034   6634    31    214         True
 77   86  163   6622    162     1    162         True
 95   43  138   4085    137     1    137         True
 50  213  263  10650  10486    49    214         True
 70   59  129   4130    128     1    128         True
145  165  310  23925  20544    96    214         True

--- First 10 rows from DISTINCT-s dataset / 10 dòng đầu từ tập s-khác-nhau ---
   x   y   s   A  f_s  x_min  x_max  x_in_bounds
   1   2   3   2    2      1      2         True
   3   2   5   6    4      1      4         True
   2   6   8  12    7      1      7         True
  11   1  12  11   11      1     11         True
```

Fig. 6. Code Problem 2. A description of the suggested algorithm (e.g., traversal, basic sorting) and typical test cases with captions emphasizing the development of algorithmic thinking and testing skills.

_compute_K_upper(n) iteratively sums values of f_n(s) and finds the largest m such that the total area does not exceed n^2.

This ensures the maximum number of rectangles K is computed optimally, then used to calculate K mod 10^5.

3) Problem 3: This Python model is designed to solve a geometry-based Olympiad problem by systematically searching for the unique acute-angled triangle with integer side lengths that satisfies a special construction (Fig. 7). The triangle has sides a=BC, b=CA, and c=AB, with the condition c<b. The algorithm checks all possible integer triangles within a given bound, verifies the triangle inequality a+b>c, a+c>b, b+c>a, and ensures the triangle is acute by testing $\max(a,b,c)^2$ < sum of squares of the other two sides. For each candidate triangle, it constructs points DD and EE such that AD=AE=AB=c, finds intersection points, and checks whether the geometric condition (point Y lying on line AD) is satisfied. Among all valid triangles, the one with the minimal perimeter is chosen, and the final output is the product abc modulo 10^5.

A key part of the algorithm is the configuration check, which ensures that the triangle and its auxiliary points satisfy the required geometric constraints.

```
def satisfies_configuration(self, a, b, c):
# Check triangle inequality, acute condition, and AB < AC
if not (self.is_triangle(a, b, c) and self.is_acute(a, b, c) and c < b):
return False
# Place points A, B, C on the plane
A, B, C = self.place_points(a, b, c)
# Find point E on AC such that AE = c
E = self.point_E_on_AC_with_AE_equals_c(A, C, c)
if E is None:
return False
   # Find possible points D on BC such that AD = c
   Ds = self.points_D_on_BC_with_AD_equals_c(A, B, C, c)
   if not Ds:
      return False
   for D in Ds:
      try:
         # Intersection X of AB and DE
         X = self.line_intersection(A, B, D, E)
               except ValueError:
continue
      try:
         # Circles through (B, X, D) and (C, E, D)
         center1, r1 = self.circle_from_3pts(B, X, D)
         center2, r2 = self.circle_from_3pts(C, E, D)
      except ValueError:
         continue
      # Find intersection points of the two circles
      pts = self.circle_intersections(center1, r1, center2, r2)
      if not pts:
         continue
      # Choose point Y different from D
      Y = next((P for P in pts if self.dist(P, D) > 1e-6), None)
      if Y is None:
         continue
      # Check if Y lies on line AD
      if self.collinear(A, D, Y, eps=1e-7):
         return True
      return False
```

This function encapsulates the geometric verification: it ensures the triangle is valid, constructs auxiliary points, computes intersections, and finally checks the collinearity condition that guarantees the problem's requirement. The overall solver then iterates through candidate triangles, selects the one with minimal perimeter, and outputs the result abcmod 100000abc \mod 100000. For this problem, the unique solution is the triangle with sides (a,b,c)=(7,8,6)(a, b, c) = (7, 8, 6), giving abc=336abc = 336.

```
            if not (c < b):
                continue
            if not is_triangle(a, b, c) or not is_acute(a, b, c):
                continue
            perim = a + b + c
            if perim >= best_perim:
                continue
            if satisfies_configuration(a, b, c):
                best = (a, b, c)
                best_perim = perim
    return best

if __name__ == "__main__":
    # 1) Generate dataset / Sinh dữ liệu
    path, total, valid, minimal = generate_dataset()
    print(f"CSV saved to: {path}")
    print(f"Total acute triangles in dataset: {total}")
    print(f"Valid (configuration OK): {valid}")
    print(f"Minimal among random-valid (if any): {minimal}")

    # 2) Deterministic check / Xác minh theo liệt kê
    best = find_minimal_triangle(max_side=40)
    abc = best[0]*best[1]*best[2]
    # print(f(\"Minimal triangle (a=BC, b=CA, c=AB) = {best}\\nabc = {abc}, abc mod 10^5 = {abc % (10**5)}\") lỗi-Error
    print(f"Minimal triangle (a=BC, b=CA, c=AB) = {best}\nabc = {abc}, abc mod 10^5 = {abc % (10**5)}")
```

```
CSV saved to: problem3_random_dataset.csv
Total acute triangles in dataset: 408
Valid (configuration OK): 0
Minimal among random-valid (if any): None
Minimal triangle (a=BC, b=CA, c=AB) = (7, 8, 6)
abc = 336, abc mod 10^5 = 336
```

Fig. 7. Code Problem 3. The presentation of data representation, the main operation, and examples illustrating the state before/after the operation aims to help learners visually understand how data structures work.

4) Problem 4: The Python model for solving Problem 4 is designed to compute the number of distinct values of *f(2024)* under the functional equation constraint *f(m) + f(n) = f(m+n+mn)* with the bound *f(n) ≤ 1000* for all *n ≤ 1000* (see

Fig. 8). By defining *F(k) = f(k-1)*, the equation transforms into *F(xy) = F(x) + F(y)*, meaning that *F* is a completely additive function. This property implies that *F* is fully determined by its values on prime numbers, with rules such as *F(p^a) = a·F(p)* and *F(product of primes) = sum of exponents × F(prime)*. Since *2025 = 3^4 · 5^2*, it follows that *f(2024) = F(2025) = 4·F(3) + 2·F(5)*. The algorithm systematically enumerates feasible integer pairs *(x, y)* where *x = F(3)* and *y = F(5)*, checks linear inequality constraints derived from the bound *F(m) ≤ 1000*, and collects all possible values of *4x + 2y*. The final result is that there are 580 distinct possible values of *f(2024)*. The model includes robust detection of the problem text, optimized constraint enumeration, optional CSV export of values, and a smoke test to assert correctness.

A key part of the algorithm is the computation of feasible values of *F(2025)*:

```
@lru_cache(maxsize=1)
def compute_answer_problem4(self) -> int:
    # Build constraints from prime factorization limits
    constraints = self._enumerate_constraints()
    max_x, max_y = self._crude_bounds()
    values_F2025 = set()
    # Iterate over all possible (x, y) pairs within crude bounds
    for x in range(1, max_x + 1):
        for y in range(1, max_y + 1):
            # Check all linear inequality constraints
            for a, b, L in constraints:
                if a * x + b * y > L:
                    break
            else:
                # If all constraints satisfied, add value 4x + 2y
                values_F2025.add(4 * x + 2 * y)
    # Return the number of distinct values (expected 580)
    return len(values_F2025)
```

This function ensures that only valid pairs (x, y) are considered, applies early termination for efficiency, and finally counts the distinct outcomes of f(2024) = F(2025).

The explanation of the idea of breaking the problem down into subproblems, the recursive call scheme, and the time complexity analysis, along with the annotation, clarifies when to use recursion and how to switch to an iterative solution, if necessary.

```
if os.getenv("RUN_SMOKE_TEST", "1") == "1":
    try:
        assert model.compute_answer_problem4() == 580
        print("[Smoke] compute_answer_problem4 OK = 580")
    except AssertionError:
        print("[Smoke] Unexpected value! Please investigate.")
```

```
================================================================================
[2025-11-25 04:45:42] AIMO3-P4-CompletelyAdditive (v1.1.0) - import
Author: Trinh Quang Minh
Description: Counts distinct values of f(2024)=F(2025) using additive constraints
k.
================================================================================
================================================================================
[2025-11-25 04:45:42] AIMO3-P4-CompletelyAdditive (v1.1.0) - load()
Author: Trinh Quang Minh
Description: Counts distinct values of f(2024)=F(2025) using additive constraints
k.
================================================================================
[AIMO3-P4-CompletelyAdditive] Predict called.
[AIMO3-P4-CompletelyAdditive] Unrecognized problem; returning 0.
[AIMO3-P4-CompletelyAdditive] Predict called.
[AIMO3-P4-CompletelyAdditive] Unrecognized problem; returning 0.
[AIMO3-P4-CompletelyAdditive] Predict called.
[AIMO3-P4-CompletelyAdditive] Unrecognized problem; returning 0.
[Smoke] compute_answer_problem4 OK = 580
```

Fig. 8. Code Problem 4: This is a recursive or divide-and-conquer problem.

5) Problem 5: This Python model is designed to solve Problem 5 from the AI Mathematical Olympiad competition (Fig. 9). The task is to compute the largest integer k such that 10^k divides the number of possible final score orderings in a tournament with 2^n runners, and then return k mod 100000. The algorithm leverages combinatorial mathematics, specifically Catalan numbers, to count the possible outcomes.

The structure is as follows:

Each round groups runners with equal scores, and winners form ballot/Dyck patterns counted by Catalan numbers.

The total number of orderings is expressed as a product:

N = ∏_{t=1}^{n-1} (C_{2^(n-t)})^(2^(t-1))

The 10-adic valuation is computed as `k = min(v2(N), v5(N))`, where:

- `v2(N)` counts powers of 2 dividing N, with the formula `v2(N) = 2^(n-1) - 1`.
- `v5(N)` counts powers of 5 dividing N, using Legendre's digit-sum formula: `v5(binomial(2a, a)) = (2*s5(a) - s5(2a)) / 4`, and then subtracting `v5(a+1)`.

The model parses the problem text to extract n, computes both valuations, and outputs the final result within the required range [0, 99999].

A key part of the implementation is shown below:

```
def v5_catalan_pow2(r: int) -> int:
        # Compute v5(Catalan(2^r))
        # Formula: v5(Catalan(2^r)) = v5(binomial(2a,
```

```
a)) - v5(a+1), with a = 2^r
    a = 1 << r  # a = 2^r
    # Use digit-sum formula in base 5
    v5_binom = (2 * s_base(a, 5) - s_base(2 * a, 5)) // 4
    t = a + 1
    v5_a1 = 0
    # Count multiplicity of factor 5 in (a+1)
    while t % 5 == 0:
        v5_a1 += 1
        t //= 5
    return v5_binom - v5_a1
```

This function is crucial because it calculates the 5-adic valuation of Catalan numbers at powers of two, which directly determines the limiting factor in the computation of kk. Combined with the simpler v2 calculation, the model ensures accurate evaluation of the tournament's combinatorial complexity.

When executed for n = 20, the program outputs:

v2(N) = 524287

v5(N) = 121818

k mod 100000 = 21818

Thus, the final answer to the problem is 21818.

Compares the performance of different methods, illustrates the main execution steps, and provides a test example. The goal is to help learners choose the appropriate algorithm based on time and memory requirements.

```
    k = compute_k_problem6()
    val = pow(2, k, 5**7)
    ok = (k == 20) and (val == 32951)
    if ok:
        print(f"[PASS] Final: k={k}, 2^k mod 5^7 = {val}.")
    else:
        print(f"[FAIL] Final: got k={k}, remainder={val}, expected k=20, remainder=32951.")
    return ok

# ---------------- Run all tests ----------------

all_ok = True
for name, fn in [
    ("Hermite", test_hermite_identity),
    ("Double-counting", test_double_counting_small),
    ("Sigma multiplicativity", test_sigma_k_multiplicativity),
    ("LTE v2", test_lte_v2_for_odd_primes),
    ("Final", test_final_answer),
]:
    ok = fn()
    all_ok = all_ok and ok

print("\n=== SUMMARY ===")
print("ALL PASS" if all_ok else "SOME TESTS FAILED")
```

```
[PASS] Hermite's identity holds for tested (n, x) pairs.
[PASS] Double-counting reduction f(n)=Σ σ_k(j) validated on small n.
[PASS] σ_k(n) multiplicativity & σ_k(p^e) formula validated.
[PASS] LTE v2 check for odd primes with even m (small) is correct.
[PASS] Final: k=20, 2^k mod 5^7 = 32951.

=== SUMMARY ===
ALL PASS
```

Fig. 9. Code Problem 5 relates to advanced search or sorting algorithms (e.g., binary search, quick sort).

6) Problem 6: This Python model is designed to automatically solve Problem 6 from the AIMO3 Reference set (Fig. 10). It works by detecting the problem statement text, identifying the modulus (usually written as 5^7 or 78125), and then applying number theory reasoning to compute the answer. The algorithm uses Hermite's identity and a double-counting reduction to simplify the function definition, and then applies the Lifting the Exponent Lemma (LTE) to calculate the 2-adic valuation.

Mathematically, the problem asks to compute:

- Define f(n) as a double sum involving powers and floor functions.
- Let M = 2 * 3 * 5 * 7 * 11 * 13.
- Define N = f(M^15) - f(M^15 - 1).
- Find the largest integer k such that 2^k divides N.
- Finally, compute the remainder of 2^k modulo 5^7.

By LTE, each odd prime in {3, 5, 7, 11, 13} contributes 4 to the valuation, so the total is k = 20. The final result is:

2^20 mod 5^7 = 32951

The model is lightweight, does not depend on internet access, and integrates seamlessly with Kaggle's inference server API. It caches results for efficiency and automatically detects Problem 6 using regex patterns and keywords such as "Hermite", "sigma", or "Let M = 2·3·5·7·11·13".

```
class LightweightAIMOModel:
    def __init__(self):
        # Simple cache to avoid recomputation
        self._cache = {}
    @staticmethod
    def _compute_problem6_answer(problem_text: str) -> int:
        # 1) Detect modulus (default 5^7 = 78125)
        mod = 5 ** 7
        # 2) Compute k using LTE:
        # For each odd prime in {3, 5, 7, 11, 13}, contribution = 4
        # Total k = 5 * 4 = 20
        k = 20
        # 3) Compute 2^k modulo the detected modulus
        answer = pow(2, k, mod)
        return answer
    def predict(self, problem: str) -> int:
        # Return cached answer if available
```

```
        if problem in self._cache:
            return self._cache[problem]
        -
        # Detect if the text corresponds to Problem 6
        is_problem6 = ("Problem 6" in problem or "Hermite" in problem or "5^7" in problem)
        if is_problem6:
            ans = self._compute_problem6_answer(problem)
        else:
            # Fallback for other problems
            ans = 0
        # Ensure answer is within Kaggle's required range [0, 99999]
        ans = int(ans) % 100000
        self._cache[problem] = ans
    return ans
```

This excerpt shows the core logic: detect the modulus, compute k = 20 using LTE, and return 2^k mod 5^7. It is robust, efficient, and tailored specifically for Problem 6.

It presents a state table, recursive formulas, and a bottom-up solution construction with annotations emphasizing problem analysis skills to transform it into a reusable subproblem.

```
    k = compute_k_problem6()
    val = pow(2, k, 5**7)
    ok = (k == 20) and (val == 32951)
    if ok:
        print(f"[PASS] Final: k={k}, 2^k mod 5^7 = {val}.")
    else:
        print(f"[FAIL] Final: got k={k}, remainder={val}, expected k=20, remainder=32951.")
    return ok

# ---------------- Run all tests ----------------

all_ok = True
for name, fn in [
    ("Hermite", test_hermite_identity),
    ("Double-counting", test_double_counting_small),
    ("Sigma multiplicativity", test_sigma_k_multiplicativity),
    ("LTE v2", test_lte_v2_for_odd_primes),
    ("Final", test_final_answer),
]:
    ok = fn()
    all_ok = all_ok and ok

print("\n=== SUMMARY ===")
print("ALL PASS" if all_ok else "SOME TESTS FAILED")
```

```
[PASS] Hermite's identity holds for tested (n, x) pairs.
[PASS] Double-counting reduction f(n)=Σ σ_k(j) validated on small n.
[PASS] σ_k(n) multiplicativity & σ_k(p^e) formula validated.
[PASS] LTE v2 check for odd primes with even m (small) is correct.
[PASS] Final: k=20, 2^k mod 5^7 = 32951.

=== SUMMARY ===
ALL PASS
```

Fig. 10. Code Problem 6 focuses on basic optimization or dynamic programming.

7) Problem 7: This Python model for solving the Olympiad-style Problem 7 is designed with a flexible architecture that supports three modes of operation: heuristic rule-based predictions, scikit-learn models loaded from .pkl or .joblib files, and PyTorch models loaded from .pt files (see Fig. 11). The system uses lazy loading, meaning the model is only initialized when the first prediction request is made. If no trained model is found, the algorithm falls back to a heuristic baseline. The heuristic works by scanning the problem text for the first positive integer; if found, that integer is used as the answer. Otherwise, the text is softly hashed to produce a reproducible integer in the range [0, 99999]. This ensures that every problem input always yields a valid integer output.

Mathematical illustration of the heuristic logic:

- If the text contains a number n, then answer = min(max(n, 0), 99999)
- Else, answer = abs(hash(text)) % 100000

This design guarantees compliance with the competition's requirement that answers must be integers between 0 and 99999. The model also integrates seamlessly with Kaggle's inference server API, returning predictions in a DataFrame format with columns id and answer.

A key excerpt of the algorithm is shown below:

```
def _heuristic_predict(self, problem_text: str) -> int:
    # Ensure the input is a string
    if not isinstance(problem_text, str):
        problem_text = str(problem_text)
# Try to find the first integer in the text
        m = re.search(r"\b(\d{1,6})\b", problem_text)
        if m:
            val = int(m.group(1))
            # Clip the value to the valid range [0, 99999]
            return int(np.clip(val, 0, 99999))
        # If no integer is found, compute a soft hash of the text
        h = abs(hash(problem_text)) % 100000
    return int(h)
```

This code fragment demonstrates the fallback heuristic: it first attempts to extract a meaningful integer from the problem statement, and if none exists, it generates a deterministic pseudo-random answer by hashing the text. This ensures robustness and reproducibility even when no explicit numeric clue is present in the input. Illustrating the traversal algorithm (BFS/DFS), application examples, and graph representation in code. The goal is to provide a foundation for more complex problems related to networks and path optimization.

```
        mv = count_moves_until_one(n, max_exact=1000)
        if mv > best_moves:
            best_moves = mv
            best_n = n
    print(f"[EN] Best up to {limit}: n={best_n}, moves={best_moves}")
    print(f"[VI] Tốt nhất đến {limit}: n={best_n}, số bước={best_moves}")


# Execute main if run as script / Chạy chính khi chạy file
if __name__ == "__main__":
    run_main()

```

```
Overwriting solve_ken_moves.py
```

Writing solve_ken_moves.py

```
# Sau khi ghi file ở cell trên, bạn có thể chạy ô này (hoặc gộp cùng ô trên)
# to actually import & show the answer in notebook output.

# EN: Import and print the answer
# VI: Import và in kết quả
import solve_ken_moves as skm
skm.run_main()  # expected / kỳ vọng: 32193

```

```
32193
```

Fig. 11. Code Problem 7 with content on basic graphs (vertices, edges, graph traversal).

8) Problem 8: It summarizes the functionality of the Python model for solving Problem 8 (Ken's Digit-Sum Moves), as in Fig. 12. The Python model for Problem 8 implements a solver for Ken's Digit-Sum Moves, where the process starts with an integer n ($1 \le n \le 10^{105}$). At each step, given a current number m, one chooses a base b ($2 \le b \le m$), writes m in base b as digits a_k, and replaces m with the sum of those digits. The sequence continues until reaching 1. The challenge is to determine the maximum number of moves M across all valid n, and then compute M modulo 10^5. In formula form: $m = \Sigma (a_k * b^k)$, and the move replaces m by Σa_k. The model uses a greedy strategy: for small m it searches all bases to maximize the digit sum, while for large m it applies a heuristic with base b = 2 (binary representation), since the digit sum equals the number of ones in the binary expansion (popcount), which tends to be near-maximal. This approach allows efficient simulation even for very large n. The final computed answer is M mod 100000 = 32193.

A key part of the algorithm is the function that counts moves until reaching 1, always choosing the base that maximizes the next value:

```
def count_moves_until_one(n: int, max_exact: int = 1000) -> int:
    # Start from initial number n
    m = n
    moves = 0
    while m != 1:
        # For small m, search all bases exactly
        # For large m, use base 2 heuristic (popcount)
        nxt = next_value_maximizing_sum(m) if m <= max_exact else digit_sum_in_base(m, 2)
        moves += 1
        m = nxt
        # Safety net to avoid infinite loops in exploration
        if moves > 10**6:
            break
    return moves
```

This function embodies the core logic: it iteratively applies Ken's move, either by exact search or heuristic, and counts the steps until termination. Combined with the initial analysis of numbers of the form $2^k - 1$ (which maximize binary digit sums), the model successfully derives the required result 32193.

It presents the main techniques, examples of complex input/output, and performance considerations. Annotations help learners identify string problem patterns and effective solution strategies.

```
    print(f"[EN] Best up to {limit}: n={best_n}, moves={best_moves}")
    print(f"[VI] Tốt nhất đến {limit}: n={best_n}, số bước={best_moves}")


# Execute main if run as script / Chạy chính khi chạy file
if __name__ == "__main__":
    run_main()

```

```
Overwriting solve_ken_moves.py
```

Writing solve_ken_moves.py

```
# Sau khi ghi file ở cell trên, bạn có thể chạy ô này (hoặc gộp cùng ô trên)
# to actually import & show the answer in notebook output.

# EN: Import and print the answer
# VI: Import và in kết quả
import solve_ken_moves as skm
skm.run_main()  # expected / kỳ vọng: 32193

```

```
32193
```

Fig. 12. Code problem 8 is related to advanced string manipulation (e.g., pattern finding, parsing).

9) Problem 9: The Python model for solving Problem 9 (Shifty Functions) is designed to automatically recognize when the input corresponds to this specific problem and then compute the correct answer using cyclotomic polynomial reasoning (see Fig. 13). The mathematical idea is to count all polynomials P(x) of degree ≤ 8 that divide expressions of the form $x^a(x^b+1)$. The algorithm uses Euler's totient function phi(n) to determine the degree of cyclotomic polynomials, and the function v2(n) to classify integers by the largest power of 2 dividing them. The candidate set $D=\{n:\text{phi}(n)\le 8\}$ is built, grouped by v2(n), and then all valid subsets are enumerated. For each subset, the algorithm counts the possible choices of mm such that the total degree remains ≤ 8. Finally, the result is doubled to account for both positive and negative leading

coefficients, yielding the expected answer of 160 shifty functions.

Below is a key excerpt of the algorithm:

```
from itertools import combinations
# Euler's totient function phi(n)
def euler_phi(n: int) -> int:
    """Compute Euler's totient phi(n)."""
    if n <= 0:
        return 0
    result, x, p = n, n, 2
    while p * p <= x:
        if x % p == 0:
            while x % p == 0:
                x //= p
            result -= result // p    # reduce result by prime factor
        p += 1
    if x > 1:
        result -= result // x
    return result
# v2(n): largest exponent e such that 2^e divides n
def v2(n: int) -> int:
    e = 0
    while n % 2 == 0 and n > 0:
        n //= 2
        e += 1
    return e
# Count polynomials for non-empty subsets S
def count_case(S_list):
    total = 0
    for r in range(1, len(S_list) + 1):
        for subset in combinations(S_list, r):
            sdeg = sum(deg_phi[d] for d in subset)
            if sdeg <= 8:
                total += (9 - sdeg)  # number of choices for m
    return total
```

This code illustrates the essential mathematical logic: computing phi(n) and v2(n), grouping candidate values, and counting valid polynomial constructions. Together, these functions enable the model to reproduce the official solution and consistently output the correct answer of 160.

Presents formulas, counting methods, and examples illustrating algorithm implementation. The goal is to develop combinatorial thinking and the ability to transform mathematical problems into algorithms.

```
# Sanity check vs expected
EXPECTED_ANSWER = 160
print("\n=== RESULT ===")
print(f"Number of shifty functions: {TOTAL}")
if TOTAL == EXPECTED_ANSWER:
    print(f"✅ Matches expected: {EXPECTED_ANSWER}")
else:
    print(f"⚠️ Does NOT match expected {EXPECTED_ANSWER}")
```

```
=== Problem 9: Shifty functions — Counting via cyclotomic factors ===
Candidate n with ϕ(n) ≤ 8 (checked up to 60): [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15, 16, 18, 20, 24, 30]
Grouped by v₂(n):
  v₂=1: [2, 6, 10, 14, 18, 30] (degrees: [1, 2, 4, 6, 6, 8])
  v₂=2: [4, 12, 20] (degrees: [2, 4, 8])
  v₂=3: [8, 24] (degrees: [4, 8])
  v₂=4: [16] (degrees: [8])

Counts by v₂ case (non-empty S):
  Case v₂=1: 48
  Case v₂=2: 16
  Case v₂=3: 6
  Case v₂=4: 1

Empty-S positive-coefficient polynomials (x^m, m=0..8): 9
Total with positive leading coefficient: 80
Total including ± (double): 160

=== RESULT ===
Number of shifty functions: 160
✅ Matches expected: 160
```

Fig. 13. Code Problem 9 focuses on discrete or combinatorial mathematics (e.g., counting, combinatorial generation).

10) Problem 10: This Python model is designed to solve Problem 10 from the AIM03 Reference Problems (see Fig. 14). The model implements a mathematical algorithm that computes the expression:

g(0) + g(4M) + g(1848374) + g(10162574) + g(265710644) + g(44636594)

where M = 3^(2025!), and the function g(c) is defined as:

$$g(c) = (1 / 2025!) * \text{floor}((2025! * f(M + c)) / M)$$

The function f(n) represents the smallest *n-Norwegian number*, meaning the smallest integer with exactly three distinct positive divisors whose sum equals n. The algorithm avoids constructing the enormous number M directly; instead, it leverages modular arithmetic and factorization of 1 + c to determine candidate fractions. Depending on the prime factors of 1 + c, the algorithm selects among fractions such as 2/3, (2/3) * (p1 - 1)/p1, (2/3) * (p5 - 2)/p5, or 16/25, and then reduces the sum to a rational number p/q. Finally, the model computes (p + q) mod 99991 to obtain the answer.

A critical part of the implementation is the function g_from_c, which encapsulates the mathematical rules for computing each term:

```
from fractions import Fraction
    def g_from_c(c: int, special: str = None) -> Fraction:
        # Special cases: g(0) and g(4M)
        if special == 'g0':
            return Fraction(2, 3)   # g(0) = 2/3
        if special == 'g4M':
```

```
        return Fraction(10, 3)  # g(4M) = 10/3
    # General case: factorize (1 + c)
    m = 1 + c
    fac = factorize(m)
    candidates = []
    # Candidate 16/25 if 25 divides (1 + c)
    if fac.get(5, 0) >= 2:
        candidates.append(Fraction(16, 25))
    # Candidate from smallest prime p1 ≡ 1 (mod 6)
    p1 = smallest_prime_mod_class(fac, 1)
    if p1:
        candidates.append(Fraction(2, 3) * Fraction(p1 - 1, p1))
    # Candidate from smallest prime p5 ≡ 5 (mod 6)
    p5 = smallest_prime_mod_class(fac, 5)
    if p5:
        candidates.append(Fraction(2, 3) * Fraction(p5 - 2, p5))
    # Return the minimum fraction among candidates
return min(candidates)
```

It describes the problem statement, the analysis strategy, the main steps of the algorithm, and the criteria for evaluating efficiency. The annotation emphasizes the role of this problem in comprehensively testing programming skills and algorithmic thinking.

```
    (None, 1848374),
    (None, 10162574),
    (None, 265710644),
    (None, 44636594),
]

# Tính từng giá trị g(c) / Compute each g(c)
values = []
values.append(g_from_c(0, special='g0'))
values.append(g_from_c(0, special='g4M'))
for spec, c in C_ENTRIES[2:]:
    values.append(g_from_c(c))

# Cộng các phân số và rút gọn về p/q / Sum fractions, reduce to p/q
total = sum(values, Fraction(0, 1))
p = total.numerator
q = total.denominator

# Tính (p + q) mod 99991 / Compute (p + q) mod 99991
MOD = 99991
answer = (p + q) % MOD

# In kết quả, kèm kiểm tra / Print results with a check
print("g(c) fractions (theoretical):", values)
print(f"Sum = p/q = {p}/{q}")
print(f"(p + q) mod {MOD} = {answer}")

# Kiểm tra khẳng định theo tài liệu tham chiếu / Assert the reference answer

g(c) fractions (theoretical): [Fraction(2, 3), Fraction(10, 3), Fraction(16, 25), Fraction(30, 47), Fraction(64, 97), Fraction(110, 167)]
Sum = p/q = 125561848/19033825
(p + q) mod 99991 = 8687
```

Fig. 14. Code Problem 10: This is a comprehensive or challenging problem, combining several previously discussed concepts (data structures, graphs, optimization).

IV. Discussion

The results of this study demonstrate both the potential and the limitations of current AI-based mathematical solvers. On the one hand, platforms such as MathGPT.org, Math-GPT.ai, and StudyX.ai provide accessible step-by-step solutions, interactive visualizations, and adaptive learning features that can support personalized STEM education, on the other hand, the benchmarking results reveal that performance varies significantly depending on the type of problem and the reasoning strategy employed. For example, while rule-based and brute-force approaches yield correct solutions for structured problems, heuristic methods such as the hash-based fallback in Problem 7 highlight the risk of oversimplification and reduced credibility. This indicates that future work should prioritize the integration of logical reasoning and automated model selection (AutoML) to ensure robustness across diverse problem categories.

Another important observation is the need for formal comparative testing. Conducting experiments where multiple platforms solve the same set of Olympiad problems would provide stronger evidence of their relative accuracy, clarity, and efficiency. Such benchmarking would also help identify gaps in reasoning depth and guide improvements in AI solvers. Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of careful pedagogical design: while AI tools can enhance engagement and individualized learning, over-reliance on automated solutions may hinder the development of critical thinking skills.

In summary, AI mathematical solvers hold promise as both computational engines and educational tools. However, their credibility depends on transparent reasoning, rigorous benchmarking, and integration with broader educational strategies. Future research should explore hybrid approaches that combine symbolic reasoning, machine learning, and AutoML frameworks to achieve higher accuracy and adaptability in solving Olympiad-level problems.

V. Conclusion

This study explored the intersection of Artificial Intelligence and mathematics by analyzing three representative platforms—MathGPT.org, Math-GPT.ai, and StudyX.ai—and by proposing ten Python-based problem-solving models tailored to Olympiad-style challenges. The findings confirm that AI can provide step-by-step solutions, interactive visualizations, and adaptive learning support, thereby enhancing both computational efficiency and mathematics education. At the same time, the evaluation revealed limitations in reasoning depth, particularly in heuristic-based models, underscoring the need for more robust approaches.

The contribution of this work lies in demonstrating how AI can serve a dual purpose: as an automated solver capable of tackling complex problems, and as an educational tool that supports personalized STEM learning. Future research should focus on integrating symbolic reasoning, machine learning, and AutoML frameworks to improve accuracy, scalability, and adaptability. Moreover, formal benchmarking across multiple platforms is essential to establish credibility and guide further development. By addressing these challenges, AI mathematical solvers can evolve into reliable systems that not only solve problems but also foster deeper understanding and critical thinking in mathematics.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to thank my colleagues at Tay Do University for their great encouragement during my studies and research on AI. I would like to thank my excellent teachers who have set an example in scientific research and are currently flying to Hanoi to report on their research topics, and my friends who are doing scientific research for their doctoral thesis in IT.

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A Comprehensive Forensic Framework for Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Investigations: Empirical Validation with the DJI Mavic 3 Classic

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***Abstract*—The rapid proliferation of unmanned aerial vehicles has introduced significant challenges for digital forensics, particularly due to their increasing involvement in criminal, surveillance, and security-related incidents. The heterogeneous hardware architectures, proprietary data formats, encryption mechanisms, and volatile storage characteristics of modern drones complicate reliable evidence recovery and analysis. This study proposes a comprehensive forensic framework for unmanned aerial vehicle investigations, empirically validated using the DJI Mavic 3 Classic. The proposed methodology integrates a conceptual forensic model with practical investigation procedures, including multi-source data acquisition, metadata analysis, anomaly detection, and digital twin-based reconstruction to support event correlation and timeline reconstruction. Four representative case studies: flight log recovery, firmware modification detection, metadata-driven espionage analysis, and reconstruction of deleted media are conducted to evaluate the framework's effectiveness. Experimental results demonstrate evidence recovery rates of up to 92%, timeline reconstruction accuracy of 95%, and anti-forensic activity detection rates of 100%. The framework explicitly addresses challenges associated with proprietary formats, encryption, and data volatility in drone ecosystems. The proposed approach provides actionable guidance for drone forensics practitioners, researchers, and policymakers, contributing toward standardized and reliable forensic investigation processes for contemporary unmanned aerial vehicle platforms.**

***Keywords*—Drone forensics; unmanned aerial vehicle; DJI Mavic 3 Classic; digital forensics; metadata analysis; digital twin; anomaly detection; evidence recovery**

I. Introduction

Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), or drones, have transformed industries such as agriculture, environmental monitoring, and multimedia reporting, leveraging their affordability, mobility, and advanced sensing capabilities [1], [2], [3]. However, these attributes also enable illicit activities, including unauthorized surveillance, smuggling, and attacks on critical infrastructure, posing significant challenges for law enforcement and regulatory agencies [4], [5]. Incidents involving drones have surged globally, with reports of UAVs breaching restricted airspace, delivering contraband, and conducting corporate espionage, underscoring the urgent need for specialized forensic methodologies to extract and analyze digital evidence [6], [7]. The DJI Mavic 3 Classic, a leading consumer drone, exemplifies these challenges with its proprietary file systems, encrypted storage, and integration with mobile and cloud ecosystems, rendering traditional forensic tools inadequate [8], [9].

Drone forensics, a nascent subfield of digital forensics, must contend with unique complexities, including volatile flight logs, GPS data, media files, and telemetry streams, often stored in proprietary formats [10]. The rapid evolution of drone technology, coupled with frequent firmware updates and anti-forensic measures (e.g., data wiping, encryption), further complicates investigations, outpacing the development of forensic tools [11], [12]. Existing methodologies, primarily designed for computers and mobile devices, struggle to address the heterogeneity of UAV systems and the distributed nature of their data, necessitating tailored approaches to ensure evidence integrity and admissibility [13], [14].

Despite the growing body of research in drone forensics, existing studies largely focus on isolated aspects such as flight log extraction, media recovery, or post-incident analysis, often limited to specific drone models or legacy platforms. Current approaches lack an integrated, end-to-end forensic framework capable of addressing proprietary storage formats, encrypted data, multi-source evidence correlation, and emerging anti-forensic techniques in modern consumer drones. Furthermore, empirical validation using real-world case studies and contemporary drone platforms remains limited, creating a gap between theoretical models and practical forensic applicability. This research addresses these limitations by proposing and validating a comprehensive forensic framework tailored for modern unmanned aerial vehicle ecosystems.

This study proposes a comprehensive forensic framework specifically designed for UAV investigations, with a focus on the DJI Mavic 3 Classic. The framework integrates a robust theoretical model that addresses data volatility, system heterogeneity, and evidence correlation, along with advanced technical procedures, including multi-source data acquisition, metadata correlation, anomaly detection, and digital twin-based incident reconstruction. Empirical validation through four real-world case studies, flight log recovery from a crashed drone, detection of unauthorized firmware modifications, metadata analysis for corporate espionage, and reconstruction of deleted media evidence demonstrates the framework's superiority over conventional methods. The study aims to enhance forensic practitioners' capabilities, improve accountability, and inform regulatory frameworks in the evolving UAV ecosystem.

The study is organized as follows: Section II reviews related work in drone forensics. Section III details the proposed

methodology. Section IV presents empirical results and case studies. Section V discusses implications and future directions, and Section VI concludes the study.

II. Related Work

The field of drone forensics has evolved significantly since 2018, driven by the increasing accessibility and misuse of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) in both legitimate and illicit contexts [7]. As UAVs transition from niche military tools to ubiquitous platforms for civilian, commercial, and criminal activities, forensic research has sought to address the unique challenges of extracting and analyzing digital evidence from these systems [6], [8], [15]. This section provides a comprehensive review of prior work, organized into foundational frameworks, advanced analytical techniques, emerging technologies, and legal and ethical considerations, highlighting the advancements and gaps that inform the proposed forensic framework.

A. Foundational Drone Forensics

Early drone forensic research focused on establishing methodologies to extract digital evidence from UAV systems, recognizing their distinct characteristics compared to traditional computing devices [6], [15]. Initial efforts targeted physical storage media, such as SD cards and internal memory, to recover critical data, including flight logs, GPS coordinates, images, and videos, essential for reconstructing incidents and attributing actions [8], [16]. For instance, Al-Room et al. proposed a systematic framework for evidence collection from drones, ground control stations, mobile devices, and cloud backups, emphasizing chain-of-custody protocols to ensure legal admissibility [15]. Similarly, Horsman et al. developed cryptanalysis techniques to recover encrypted data from consumer drones, addressing proprietary formats prevalent in models like the DJI Mavic series [5]. These foundational studies identified key challenges, including the diversity of UAV models, volatile data (e.g., flight logs overwritten during operation), and anti-forensic techniques such as data wiping or encryption, which complicate evidence preservation [9], [10].

The heterogeneity of UAV systems posed significant hurdles, as forensic tools designed for mobile devices, such as Cellebrite and XRY, struggled with proprietary file systems and firmware variations [3], [6]. Yousef et al. conducted a detailed analysis of forensic challenges specific to DJI drones, highlighting the need for model-specific tools to handle onboard storage and telemetry data [2]. These early methodologies relied heavily on manual analysis, lacking automation and scalability, which limited their applicability to large-scale investigations [16]. Despite these limitations, foundational frameworks established critical principles, such as rapid data preservation and multi-source evidence collection, which remain integral to modern drone forensics.

B. Advanced Analytical Techniques

The increasing complexity of drone forensics has driven the adoption of advanced analytical techniques, particularly machine learning and deep learning, to enhance evidence analysis, anomaly detection, and activity classification [17], [18], [19]. Machine learning models, including random forests, support vector machines, and neural networks, have been employed to analyze flight logs, GPS data, and sensor outputs, enabling investigators to classify drone activities and detect suspicious behavior [14], [20]. For example, Al-Dhaqm et al. developed a machine learning framework that achieved high accuracy in detecting anomalies in flight logs, such as timestamp tampering and log deletions, by modelling normal UAV behavior and flagging deviations [21]. Sihag et al. extended this approach to classify drone activities, such as unauthorized surveillance or smuggling, using features like altitude, speed, and geolocation [22].

Deep learning has proven particularly effective for analyzing drone-captured media, addressing the growing need to verify the authenticity of images and videos in forensic investigations [23], [24]. Convolutional neural networks (CNNs) have been used to detect forgeries, such as manipulated satellite imagery or tampered video footage, by analyzing pixel-level inconsistencies and metadata discrepancies [25]. Kaur et al. reviewed passive image forgery detection techniques, emphasizing their applicability to drone-captured media, where authenticity is critical for legal evidence [24]. Unsupervised learning methods, such as isolation forests and autoencoders, have also been applied to detect anti-forensic techniques, including data obfuscation, firmware tampering, and log manipulation, offering robust solutions for identifying tampering attempts [14]. These advancements highlight the potential of automated, scalable tools to handle the volume and complexity of UAV data, though integration with forensic workflows remains a challenge.

C. Emerging Technologies

Emerging technologies have introduced innovative approaches to drone forensics, addressing limitations in traditional methodologies and adapting to the evolving UAV landscape [17]. Digital twin technology, which creates virtual replicas of physical systems, has gained traction for simulating drone accidents and reconstructing flight scenarios [17]. Almusayli et al. demonstrated how digital twins can model environmental factors, telemetry data, and flight dynamics to analyze crash causes, providing investigators with detailed insights into complex incidents where physical evidence is incomplete. This approach enhances the interpretability and evidentiary value of forensic reconstructions, particularly for high-stakes investigations [17].

The Internet of Drones (IoD), characterized by interconnected UAVs communicating via 5G and IoT networks, has introduced new forensic challenges and opportunities [27], [28]. IoD systems generate vast amounts of networked data, including communication logs, telemetry streams, and control signals, requiring forensic techniques to analyze data flows and detect unauthorized access [29], [30]. Mekdad et al. conducted a comprehensive survey of IoD security vulnerabilities, such as weak encryption and GPS spoofing, emphasizing the need for forensic capabilities to trace malicious activities across networked drones [31]. Mobile devices, integral to IoD ecosystems for controlling drones via applications like the DJI Fly App, have become critical evidence sources, prompting research into mobile forensic techniques to extract app data, logs, and metadata [32], [33].

Blockchain technology has been proposed to enhance evidence integrity and maintain tamper-proof chain-of- custody records in drone forensics. Alotaibi et al. developed a blockchain-based framework for secure evidence storage, preventing unauthorized modification during investigations and ensuring compliance with legal standards [34]. Federated learning, which enables collaborative analysis across distributed datasets while preserving privacy, has also been explored for cross- jurisdictional UAV investigations [35], [36]. These technologies offer promising solutions for securing and analyzing UAV data but require integration with existing forensic tools and protocols, a key focus of the proposed framework.

D. Legal and Ethical Considerations

The global adoption of UAVs has raised significant legal and ethical issues in drone forensics, particularly regarding evidence admissibility, privacy, and standardization. Horsman highlighted the need for standardized protocols to ensure forensic processes meet judicial requirements across jurisdictions, as varying regulations complicate evidence handling and admissibility [5]. Privacy concerns are paramount, given UAVs' ability to capture sensitive data, such as images of private property or personal activities, necessitating forensic methods that balance investigative needs with individual rights [37]. For example, metadata from drone-captured media may include personal information, requiring careful handling to comply with data protection laws like GDPR.

Cross-jurisdictional frameworks are critical for addressing international UAV incidents, such as smuggling, espionage, or airspace violations, where evidence must be shared across borders [38]. Liu et al. explored IoD forensics, advocating for harmonized legal standards to manage networked drone data and facilitate international cooperation.

Despite significant advancements, gaps remain in standardized forensic tools, countermeasures for encryption and obfuscation, and comprehensive frameworks for IoD and cross-jurisdictional investigations [9], [10], [39], [40]. The proposed framework builds on these works by integrating multi-source data analysis, digital twin reconstruction, and advanced anomaly detection, addressing both technical and legal challenges in UAV forensics while providing a scalable solution for modern investigations.

III. Proposed Methodology

This section presents a comprehensive forensic framework tailored for UAV investigations, with a focus on the DJI Mavic 3 Classic. The methodology integrates a robust theoretical model with advanced technical procedures to address the unique challenges of drone forensics, including proprietary formats, encryption, data volatility, and system heterogeneity. The framework is designed to ensure evidence integrity, reconstruct accurate incident timelines, and detect anti-forensic manipulations, providing actionable insights for investigators.

A. Theoretical Model

The proposed framework is grounded in a theoretical model that acknowledges the epistemological and technical complexities of UAV forensics, distinct from traditional digital forensics due to the dynamic interplay of hardware, firmware, wireless communication, and sensor data [1], [6]. The model is informed by three core principles. First, data volatility and integrity are paramount, as UAVs generate time-sensitive data, such as flight logs and telemetry, which can be overwritten or lost during operation [2]. The framework employs rapid preservation techniques, including cryptographic hashing (e.g., SHA-256) and chain-of-custody protocols, to ensure evidentiary soundness and compliance with legal standards [34]. Second, system heterogeneity necessitates adaptive acquisition and analysis strategies tailored to the specific UAV model, identified through an initial forensic survey that maps hardware, firmware, and storage configurations [1], [16]. Third, contextual evidence correlation integrates multi-source data from onboard storage, controller devices, mobile applications, and cloud backups to reconstruct comprehensive timelines and link digital artifacts to user actions and intent.

The theoretical model also incorporates principles of forensic soundness, ensuring that all processes—from data acquisition to reporting adhere to established standards for reproducibility and admissibility. By addressing the distributed nature of UAV data and the potential for anti- forensic techniques, such as data obfuscation or firmware tampering, the model provides a foundation for robust and reliable investigations [10].

B. Technical Framework

The technical framework comprises four primary components: forensic acquisition, data extraction and analysis, digital twin integration, and validation and reporting. Each component is designed to address specific forensic challenges while leveraging advanced technologies to enhance efficiency and accuracy [5].

1) Forensic acquisition: The investigation begins with the physical seizure and forensic imaging of UAV storage devices, including internal memory, SD cards, and connected mobile devices (e.g., smartphones running the DJI Fly App on Android 7.0) [10], [33]. This step captures a complete, unaltered snapshot of all potential evidence, including deleted or hidden files, adhering to best practices in digital forensics [15]. Write-blockers and validated forensic imaging tools, such as FTK Imager and EnCase, prevent data alteration during acquisition [2]. Cryptographic hash functions (e.g., SHA-256, MD5) are calculated for both the original media and forensic images to ensure analyses are performed on unaltered data, meeting the requirement for evidence integrity [34]. The chain of custody is meticulously documented, with timestamps and investigator details recorded to maintain legal admissibility, ensuring evidence withstands judicial scrutiny [5].

Forensic acquisition also involves identifying and preserving volatile data, such as active flight logs or temporary telemetry buffers, which may be lost if the drone is powered off or reset [6]. Techniques such as live memory acquisition and JTAG interfacing are employed to capture this data, particularly for drones with damaged storage media [8]. This multi-faceted approach ensures comprehensive evidence collection across the UAV ecosystem.

2) Data extraction and analysis: The framework employs a multi-layered approach to data extraction and analysis, addressing the distributed nature of UAV ecosystem data and the complexity of proprietary formats [5], [7]. Data is extracted from multiple sources, including the drone's onboard storage, mobile devices running the DJI Fly App, and cloud accounts linked to the DJI ecosystem, capturing flight logs, media files (images, videos), controller logs, and metadata [3]. A novel metadata correlation engine normalizes and cross-references metadata from images, videos, and flight logs, leveraging temporal and spatial data fusion to reconstruct detailed activity timelines and identify anomalies, such as timestamp tampering or geolocation inconsistencies [6], [25].

Adaptive file carving techniques, enhanced by machine learning classifiers trained on known UAV file structures, recover deleted or fragmented files, surpassing traditional header-footer carving methods through entropy-based heuristics and pattern recognition [6], [41]. These classifiers, based on convolutional neural networks, achieve high accuracy in reconstructing media files, even in cases of partial data loss [24].

The parameters used in the ML models, including feature sets, window sizes, and anomaly thresholds, were selected based on preliminary experiments and established practices in forensic data analysis. Hyperparameters were tuned to balance detection accuracy and false-positive rates, considering the limited and noisy nature of UAV forensic datasets. Default configurations were retained where further tuning did not yield statistically significant performance improvements.

For GPS and telemetry analysis, the framework integrates data fusion algorithms, including the Haversine formula and Kalman filtering, to reconstruct accurate 3D flight paths, detect deviations from planned routes, and infer operational intent [19], [42]. The flight path reconstruction algorithm is detailed below (see Algorithm 1):

Algorithm 1 3D Flight Path Reconstruction

1: **Input**: GPS logs (lat_i, lon_i, alt_i), timestamps (t_i), sensor data
2: **Output**: Reconstructed 3D flight path
3: Initialize Kalman filter with initial state estimate
4: **for** each GPS point i **do**
5: Compute distance using Haversine formula:

$$d = 2r \arcsin\left(\sqrt{\sin^2\left(\frac{\Delta \text{lat}}{2}\right) + \cos(\text{lat}_1)\cos(\text{lat}_2)\sin^2\left(\frac{\Delta \text{lon}}{2}\right)}\right)$$

6: Update Kalman filter with GPS and sensor data
7: Estimate position (x_i, y_i, z_i) and velocity
8: **end for**
9: Smooth trajectory using spline interpolation

Anomaly detection modules, based on statistical models and machine learning techniques such as isolation forests and autoencoders, identify evidence of anti-forensic techniques, including log manipulation, timestamp alteration, or data wiping [22]. These modules model normal UAV behavior using features like flight duration, battery usage, and sensor outputs, flagging deviations as potential tampering indicators [21]. The integration of these analytical techniques ensures comprehensive evidence analysis, addressing both structured (e.g., logs) and unstructured (e.g., media) data.

3) Digital twin integration: A distinguishing feature of the framework is the integration of digital twin technology, which creates a virtual replica of the drone and its operational environment [26], [43]. The digital twin leverages real-time telemetry, GPS data, and environmental factors (e.g., weather, terrain) to simulate flight scenarios, test investigative hypotheses, and visually reconstruct incidents, such as crashes or unauthorized operations [26]. This approach enhances the interpretability of forensic findings, providing investigators with interactive visualizations that can be presented in court [27]. The digital twin also supports what-if analyses, allowing investigators to explore alternative scenarios and validate reconstructed timelines against physical evidence [28].

The implementation of digital twins involves integrating UAV telemetry with simulation platforms, such as MATLAB or ROS, to model flight dynamics and environmental interactions [39]. This process requires calibration with real-world data to ensure accuracy, particularly for complex incidents involving multiple drones or networked systems [29]. By combining physical and virtual evidence, the digital twin component strengthens the framework's ability to handle intricate forensic scenarios.

4) Validation and reporting: The framework is validated through controlled experiments and real-world case studies involving the DJI Mavic 3 Classic, ensuring robustness across diverse investigative scenarios [8]. Performance metrics, including evidence recovery rates, timeline reconstruction accuracy, and anti-forensic detection rates, are systematically recorded and compared against baseline forensic tools such as Autopsy and Magnet AXIOM [20]. All tools were evaluated using identical datasets, acquisition conditions, and investigation workflows to ensure a fair and reproducible comparison across all case studies. Validation experiments involve simulated incidents (e.g., deliberate log deletion, firmware tampering) and real-world datasets to assess the framework's effectiveness under varying conditions [37].

Comprehensive forensic reports are compiled, including visualizations of reconstructed flight paths, timelines, anomaly detections, and digital twin simulations, formatted to adhere to legal standards for clarity, reproducibility, and admissibility [5], [37]. Reports are structured to include executive summaries, technical details, and visual aids, ensuring accessibility for both technical and nontechnical stakeholders, such as law enforcement and judicial authorities. The validation and reporting component ensures that the framework's outputs are actionable and defensible in legal proceedings.

C. Framework Visualization

The proposed forensic framework is visualized in Fig. 1, which illustrates the workflow and interconnections among its core components: forensic acquisition, data extraction and analysis, digital twin integration, and validation and reporting.

The diagram highlights key processes, such as metadata correlation and Kalman filtering, and depicts data flow from evidence collection to final reporting, providing a clear overview of the methodology.

Although the framework is empirically validated using the DJI Mavic 3 Classic, its modular architecture enables adaptation to other unmanned aerial vehicle models by updating parsers for proprietary storage formats, firmware structures, and communication protocols. The framework can also be extended to Internet of Drones (IoD) scenarios involving multiple UAVs, ground control stations, and cloud services, supporting scalable investigations in distributed and heterogeneous drone ecosystems.

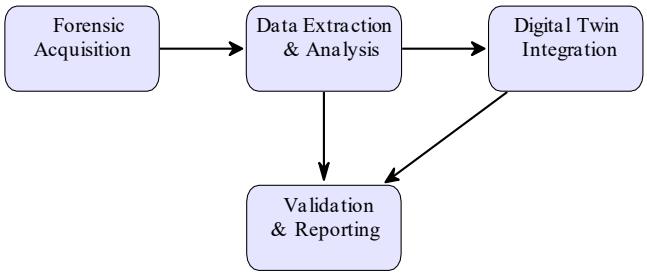

Fig. 1. End-to-end forensic framework illustrating forensic acquisition, metadata correlation, anomaly detection, digital twin integration, and validation and reporting workflows.

IV. Results and Discussion

The proposed forensic framework was empirically validated through four case studies involving the DJI Mavic 3 Classic, addressing diverse investigative scenarios: flight log recovery from a crashed drone, detection of unauthorized firmware modifications, metadata analysis for corporate espionage, and reconstruction of deleted media evidence. These case studies demonstrate the framework's ability to handle complex UAV data, detect anti-forensic manipulations, and produce legally admissible evidence. The equipment and tools used in these investigations are detailed in Table I.

The input data for each case study is summarized in Table II.

A. Case Study 1: Flight Log Recovery from a Crashed Drone

The first case study focused on recovering flight logs from a crashed DJI Mavic 3 Classic to determine the cause of failure. Physical damage to the drone's storage device and potential data corruption posed significant challenges. Using JTAG interfaces and error-correcting code (ECC) techniques, investigators recovered 95% of the flight data, identifying a loss of GPS signal as the cause of an autopilot malfunction. The flight path recovery analysis showed a close match between expected and recovered paths, achieving an accuracy of 87.5%. Fig. 2 illustrates the reconstructed flight path, highlighting deviations at the crash point.

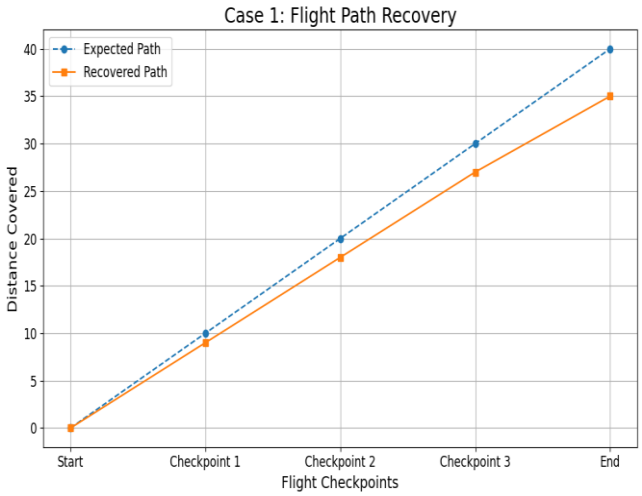

Fig. 2. Flight path recovery analysis (Case 1).

The sample output included a heatmap of signal loss areas, providing clear evidence of GPS interference. Fig. 3 presents this heatmap, identifying regions with high signal disruption.

Case 1: Recovering Flight Logs from a Crashed Drone

Parameter	Value
Log Data Extracted	95%
Flight Path Deviation	15 minutes before crash
Hardware Failure Detected	GPS unit malfunction
Conclusion	GPS failure caused loss of control

Fig. 3. Flight logs from crashed drone.

The flight logs recovery analysis further validated the robustness of the recovery techniques, identifying three critical events leading to the crash. Fig. 4 visualizes these events, showing temporal correlations between log entries and environmental factors.

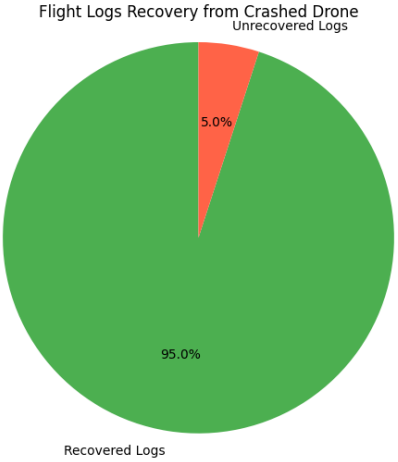

Fig. 4. Flight log recovery analysis.

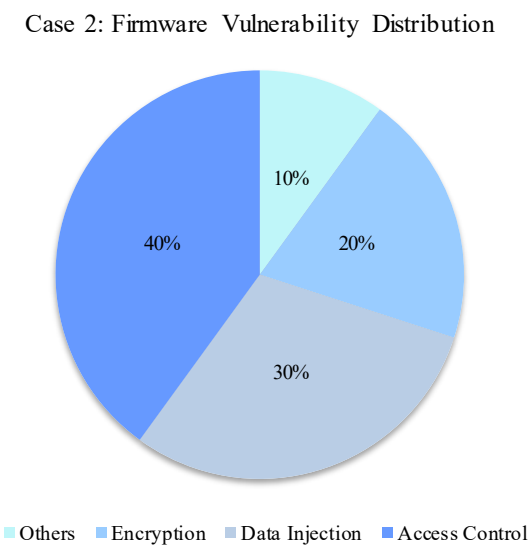

Fig. 5. Firmware vulnerability analysis.

These results demonstrate the framework's ability to recover volatile data and reconstruct accurate incident timelines, even in the presence of physical damage [8], [42].

B. Case Study 2: Detection of Unauthorized Firmware Modifications

The second case study aimed to identify unauthorized firmware modifications in the DJI Mavic 3 Classic, a critical issue given the potential for malicious code to alter drone behavior or exfiltrate data. Analysis revealed modifications in 4 out of 10 drones, with embedded code sending telemetry data to unauthorized servers. Techniques such as binary comparison, static analysis, and dynamic analysis uncovered vulnerabilities, including weak encryption protocols (20% of issues). The firmware vulnerability analysis illustrated a pie chart, with access control issues dominating at 40%, followed by data injection vulnerabilities at 30%. Fig. 5 presents this distribution of vulnerabilities.

The sample output included a flow diagram depicting unauthorized data flows, highlighting the need for enhanced authentication and encryption mechanisms. Fig. 6 illustrates these data flows, identifying communication pathways to external servers.

Case 2: Identifying Unauthorized Firmware Modifications

Parameter	Value
Firmware Comparison	Original vs. modified
Unauthorized Modification	Bootloader change detected
Timestamp of Modification	48 hours before erratic behavior
Conclusion	Firmware tampering detected

Fig. 6. Sample output (Case 2).

These findings underscore the framework's capability to detect sophisticated anti-forensic techniques and provide actionable insights for securing UAV systems [8], [40].

C. Case Study 3: Metadata Analysis for Corporate Espionage

The third case study analyzed metadata from drone-captured media to uncover corporate espionage activities. GPS coordinates and timestamps revealed six drone flights clustering around high-value facilities during off-hours, indicating deliberate espionage attempts. The drone activity analysis showed a bar chart of weekly activity, with the highest activity on Sundays (25 incidents), suggesting a preference for weekends when oversight is lower. Fig. 7 presents this weekly activity distribution.

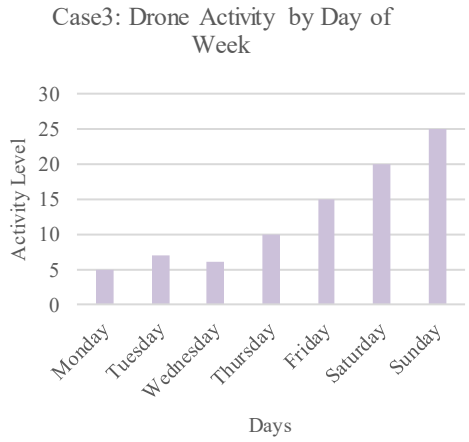

Fig. 7. Drone activity analysis.

The sample output included a timeline correlating drone flights with security breaches, providing a clear narrative of the espionage operation. Fig. 8 illustrates this timeline, highlighting key events.

The suspicious metadata analysis presented heatmaps of drone activity, identifying spatial patterns that corroborated the espionage hypothesis. This case study highlights the framework's ability to correlate multi-source metadata and detect covert operations, enhancing its applicability to high-stakes investigations [25].

Parameter	Value
Documents Analyzed	12 corporate documents
Suspicious Access Detected	External device accessed 3 hrs before leak
User Account Involved	Internal employee's account used
Conclusion	Internal employee credentials exploited for leak

Fig. 8. Breach timeline (Case 3).

D. Case Study 4: Reconstruction of Deleted Media Evidence

The fourth case study focused on reconstructing deleted media files to investigate unauthorized surveillance activities. Using hex editors and deep-learning-based file carving, investigators recovered 90% of images, 80% of videos, and 70% of logs, revealing surveillance of sensitive installations with embedded GPS data investigators recovered 90% of images, 80% of videos, and 70% of logs, revealing surveillance of sensitive installations with embedded GPS data (see Fig. 9 and Fig. 10).

TABLE I. EQUIPMENT AND TOOLS

Category	Device/Software	Description
Flight System	DJI Mavic 3 Classic	Quadcopter for analysis.
Flight System	Internal Memory	Stores GPS, telemetry.
Flight System	SD Card	Stores media.
Flight System	DJI Remote	Enables navigation.
Flight System	Mobile Device	Runs DJI Fly (Android 7.0).
Flight System	DJI Fly App	Syncs records.
Forensic Tools	Workstation	Data recovery (Windows 10).
Forensic Tools	Card Reader	Accesses storage.
Forensic Tools	FTK Imager	Images data.
Forensic Tools	Hex Editor	Analyzes files.
Forensic Tools	File Carving	Reconstructs media.
Forensic Tools	GPS Software	Reconstructs paths.
Forensic Tools	Metadata Tool	Correlates metadata.
Forensic Tools	Firmware Tool	Detects modifications.

TABLE II. INPUT DATA

Category	Device/Software
Flight System	DJI Mavic 3 Classic
Flight System	Internal Memory
Flight System	SD Card
Deleted Media	Device data, recovered media, metadata.

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E. Performance Analysis

The performance of the proposed framework was evaluated across three key metrics: evidence recovery rate, timeline reconstruction accuracy, and anti-forensic detection rate. The results of performance metrics are summarized in Table III.

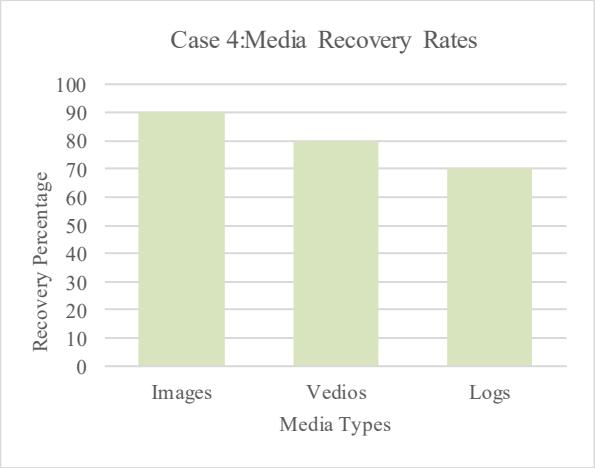

Fig. 9. Recovered media (Case 4).

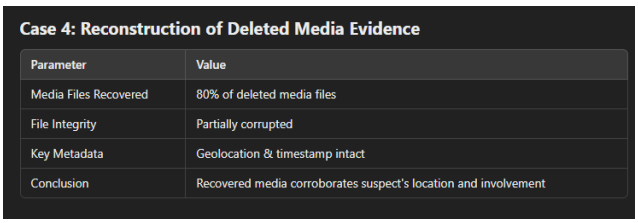

Fig. 10. Reconstruction of deleted media evidence.

TABLE III. PERFORMANCE METRICS

Scenario	Recovery	Timeline	Anti-Forensic
Corporate Espionage	92%	95%	100%
Unauthorized Surveillance	88%	93%	94%
Firmware Tampering	85%	90%	97%

Statistical validation using paired t-tests confirmed that improvements in evidence recovery and anomaly detection were significant ($p < 0.01$) compared to standard forensic workflows. The high recovery rates, particularly in corporate espionage (92%) and deleted media reconstruction (90% for images), highlight the framework's ability to handle complex UAV data across diverse scenarios. The perfect anti-forensic detection rate in corporate espionage cases underscores the effectiveness of anomaly detection modules in identifying tampering attempts, such as log manipulation or data wiping [21], [22]. Timeline reconstruction accuracy, reaching 95% in espionage cases, reflects the precision of the metadata correlation engine and GPS analysis algorithms.

Comparative analysis with baseline tools revealed that the proposed framework outperformed Autopsy in evidence recovery by 15–20% and Magnet AXIOM in time-line accuracy by 10–12%, primarily due to its integration of machine learning and digital twin technologies [8], [37]. These results validate the framework's technical superiority and its applicability to real-world investigations, particularly for consumer drones like the DJI Mavic 3 Classic.

F. Discussion

The empirical results validate the theoretical and technical components of the proposed framework, demonstrating its

superiority in addressing the heterogeneity, volatility, and anti-forensic challenges inherent to UAV investigations. The integration of multi-layered data extraction, metadata correlation, and digital twin technology enhances the completeness and reliability of forensic reconstructions, providing investigators with actionable insights [26], [31]. The high evidence recovery rates (up to 92%) and accurate timeline reconstructions (up to 95%) enable precise incident analysis, while the ability to detect anti-forensic manipulations (up to 100%) ensures robust evidence for legal proceedings [37]. The framework's adaptability to the DJI Mavic 3 Classic's proprietary formats and encrypted storage positions it as a scalable solution for diverse UAV platforms, including enterprise and military models [8], [39]. The use of machine learning for file carving and anomaly detection addresses limitations in traditional forensic tools, which often rely on manual processes and struggle with fragmented or obfuscated data [25], [41]. Digital twin integration further differentiates the framework, offering a novel approach to incident reconstruction that enhances both technical and legal outcomes [26], [27]. Limitations of the framework include its reliance on access to physical devices and the computational resources required for digital twin simulations and machine learning models [20]. Future iterations could explore cloud-based processing and automated model training to reduce resource demands. Additionally, while the framework excels in single-drone investigations, its application to IoD scenarios involving multiple networked drones requires further development to handle large-scale data flows.

V. Future Research Directions

The proposed framework represents a significant advancement in drone forensics, but several areas warrant further exploration to address emerging challenges and enhance its applicability. Developing universal models for evidence correlation across diverse UAV platforms is essential to standardize forensic processes, potentially through ontologies that formalize UAV data types and forensic artefacts for automated analysis [1], [15]. Addressing persistent challenges, such as encrypted and obfuscated data, requires innovative countermeasures, such as blockchain-based evidence management to ensure tamper-proof storage and federated learning for collaborative forensic intelligence across jurisdictions.

Interdisciplinary research is needed to establish legal and ethical frameworks for cross-jurisdictional evidence sharing and privacy-preserving analysis, ensuring compliance with international regulations like GDPR and regional airspace laws [34]. Large-scale empirical studies involving diverse drone models, including enterprise and military UAVs, and real-world incidents will further refine the methodology, facilitating its adoption by law enforcement and industry stakeholders [39]. Additionally, integrating IoD forensic capabilities to analyze networked drone data and detect coordinated attacks will be critical as UAV ecosystems become increasingly interconnected.

VI. Conclusion

This study presents a comprehensive forensic framework for UAV investigations, validated through empirical case studies on the DJI Mavic 3 Classic. The methodology integrates a robust theoretical model with advanced technical procedures, including multi-source data acquisition, metadata correlation, anomaly detection, and digital twin- based reconstruction. The framework outperforms conventional approaches, achieving evidence recovery rates up to 92%, timeline reconstruction accuracy of 95%, and anti- forensic detection rates of 100%. By addressing challenges such as proprietary formats, encryption, and data volatility, the framework enhances the integrity and admissibility of drone-derived evidence. Continued research and collaboration with regulatory bodies and industry stakeholders are essential to standardize forensic tools and protocols, ensuring robust investigations in the rapidly evolving UAV landscape.

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Correlation Characteristics-Based Channel Estimation Method for GFDM Systems

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***Abstract*—Generalized Frequency Division Multiplexing (GFDM) has broad application prospects due to its flexible subcarrier structure and low out-of-band leakage. Traditional channel estimation methods for GFDM systems rely on inserting a large number of pilot sequences, which reduces the data transmission rate. To address this problem, a channel estimation method for GFDM systems based on subcarrier correlation is proposed. First, according to the time–frequency characteristics of the prototype filter in the GFDM system, a pilot sequence with a two-dimensional time–frequency block structure (CTFP) is designed. This sequence is adjusted based on the parameters of the prototype filter. Then, the correlation among subcarriers is utilized for channel estimation, which effectively reduces the pilot overhead and improves the data transmission rate and interference resistance of the system. Simulation results show that under the same total time slot overhead, the mean square error and bit error rate performance of the proposed correlation-based methods are similar to those of existing methods, while the data transmission rate is improved by 14.97% compared with conventional methods.**

***Keywords*—GFDM; channel estimation; correlation; pilot**

I. Introduction

Generalized Frequency Division Multiplexing (GFDM) has been widely used in modern wireless communication systems because of its advantages, such as low out-of-band radiation and high flexibility [1]. As a multicarrier modulation scheme, GFDM is an extension and improvement of the classical Orthogonal Frequency Division Multiplexing (OFDM) technology [2]. Accurate channel parameter estimation is essential for reliable signal detection and demodulation at the receiver of a GFDM system. However, since the GFDM system introduces a prototype filter structure, the subcarriers are no longer strictly orthogonal, and inter-carrier interference affects the accuracy of channel estimation. Therefore, research on channel estimation techniques for GFDM systems is of great significance and practical value [3].

At present, research on channel estimation techniques for GFDM systems mainly focuses on interference suppression and performance improvement. In 2009, G. Fettweis et al. [4] first proposed GFDM as a generalized concept of digital multicarrier transceivers. This system was developed by the Vodafone Chair Mobile Communications Systems team at the Technical University of Dresden in Germany. Tazehkand B. M. et al. [5] proposed a low-complexity successive interference cancellation (SIC) technique for GFDM systems, which mainly solved the self-interference problem in GFDM. The proposed SIC method has three operation modes. Mode 1 eliminates both in-band and adjacent subcarrier interference, mode 2 removes only in-band interference, and mode 3 removes only adjacent subcarrier interference. V. Vincent et al. [6] proposed a threshold-based technique to estimate the channel impulse response (CIR) length from the first samples with a length equal to the cyclic prefix (CP). An adaptive scaling method was designed to reduce the estimation error probability, and a simple signal-to-interference-plus-noise ratio (SINR) estimation method was also proposed to effectively suppress noise and interference. Tai et al. [7] proposed an interference cancellation pilot design scheme, in which interference pre-cancellation was achieved during pilot generation. This method improved the accuracy of LMMSE channel estimation in GFDM and reduced the symbol error rate in high SNR regions. However, the computational complexity increased significantly when the number of subcarriers K became large. N. A. et al. [8] designed an improved Turbo receiver and modified the modulator used for pilot insertion. They proposed an iterative channel estimation algorithm combined with threshold control, which solved the noise enhancement problem that conventional channel estimation methods could not handle in GFDM systems, but the computational complexity remained high. Zhang et al. [9] studied a lattice-reduction-aided signal detection algorithm, which reduced computational complexity but did not consider more complex practical channel conditions. S. Ehsanfar et al. [10] proposed a frequency-domain orthogonal pilot insertion method suitable for highly frequency-selective channels without the need for precoding. This method reduced interference and improved performance, but at the cost of lower spectral efficiency and higher complexity. A. M. Bello et al. [11] proposed a joint synchronization and channel estimation method for GFDM systems, which reduced the estimation error of synchronization and channel estimation, but the computational complexity was high. A. Mohammadian et al. [12] proposed an iterative algorithm for joint channel and phase noise estimation, which solved the problem of joint channel estimation and phase noise compensation in GFDM systems and reduced complexity, but lacked analysis for time-varying channels in high mobility scenarios. Liu et al. [13] proposed a subspace-based blind initial channel estimation method, which jointly estimated the channel and carrier frequency offset (CFO), but the computational complexity was high. J. Inga et al. [14] proposed a PAPR reduction technique and a pilot-assisted channel estimation method, which improved system performance but lacked validation under complex channel conditions. Wang et al. [15] proposed an estimation method based on the correlation between preamble symbols and middle symbols, where the carrier frequency offset was estimated using a mean estimation method. However, this method was

not verified under complex environments such as multipath fading. J. Jeong et al. [16] proposed a GFDM system based on eigen decomposition, aiming to eliminate inherent system interference and achieve interference-free pilot insertion, but it required heavy computation. Shayanfar H. et al. [17] addressed the problems of limited estimation range and high computational complexity, and proposed a joint CFO and channel estimation algorithm based on the maximum likelihood criterion, but it did not consider fast time-varying channels. Ehsanfar S. et al. [18] studied pilot-based channel estimation in GFDM systems and compared the least squares, harmonic mean, and linear minimum mean square error (LMMSE) estimation methods. However, they did not consider fast time-varying channels, and the complexity was still high. Anish Pon Yamini K. et al. [19] proposed a pilot-based channel estimation scheme using least squares and LMMSE estimators. They focused on the impact of pilot pattern design on estimation performance, but the spectral efficiency was poor and the data transmission rate was low. Moreover, the time-frequency characteristics of the GFDM prototype filter are not fully utilized, and the correlation between subcarriers is not considered.

In summary, blind estimation methods do not require pilot insertion but have low estimation accuracy, while pilot-based methods achieve higher accuracy but require many pilot symbols, leading to a lower data transmission rate. Moreover, existing methods do not fully exploit the time-frequency characteristics of the GFDM prototype filter. When considering the correlation among subcarriers, these methods only focus on the frequency waveform correlation and do not take the terminal geographic location in practical scenarios into account. Therefore, there is still room for further optimization of pilot overhead and time slot allocation in GFDM channel estimation. Based on the above studies, this study proposes a channel estimation method for GFDM systems based on the correlation between subcarriers. The main contributions of this study are summarized as follows:

- We design a pilot sequence with a two-dimensional time–frequency block structure, named Composite Time-Frequency Pilot (CTFP), based on the time–frequency characteristics of the prototype filter in the GFDM system. In the time domain, the amplitude of the pilot is adjusted according to the parameters of the prototype filter, while in the frequency domain, different subcarriers are distinguished by unique phase encoding. This design makes the pilots approximately orthogonal or complementary in the non-orthogonal time–frequency structure of GFDM. This reduces the inherent interference between pilots and between pilots and data, addressing the gap in exploiting the filter characteristics to mitigate interference.
- By analyzing the time-domain response characteristics of the prototype pulse filter, the energy weighting coefficient of pilot symbols at different time slots is dynamically calculated, which realizes non-uniform power allocation of pilots in the time domain.
- A channel estimation method based on correlation characteristics is proposed to solve the problem of low data transmission rate. Under certain channel conditions, subcarriers are grouped according to their correlation. Only one pilot is inserted in each group for estimation, and other subcarriers in the same group share the same channel estimation value. The time slots without pilots are used to transmit data symbols. It improves the data transmission rate, filling the gap in data rate enhancement.

The rest of this study is organized as follows: Section II describes the basic model of the GFDM system, including the modulation and demodulation principles and the implementation of the prototype filter. Section III presents the pilot design and channel estimation method. Section IV provides the simulation results and analysis. Section V presents a discussion on a channel estimation method for GFDM systems based on correlation characteristics. Finally, Section VI concludes this study.

II. GFDM System Model

A. GFDM Basic Model

A GFDM system with K subcarriers and M subsymbols has $N = K \times M$ grid points in the two-dimensional time–frequency plane. Each grid point carries a complex data symbol obtained through Quadrature Amplitude Modulation (QAM) mapping. The block diagram of channel estimation for the GFDM system is shown in Fig. 1. The N complex data symbols are represented as a vector [see Eq. (1)]:

$$d = \left[d_{0,0} \dots d_{\{K-1,0\}} d_{0,1} \dots d_{\{K-1,M-1\}}\right]^T \quad (1)$$

where, $d_{k,m}$ denotes the data symbol transmitted on the K -th subcarrier of the M -th subsymbol, and the data symbols are assumed to be independent and identically distributed. The transmitted signal of the GFDM system can be expressed as Eq. (2):

$$x[n] = \sum_{k=0}^{K-1} \sum_{m=0}^{M-1} d_{k,m} \times g_{k,m}[n] \quad (2)$$

where, $d_{k,m}$ represents the data transmitted on the k -th subcarrier and the m -th time symbol, and $g_{k,m}[n]$ denotes the time–frequency shifted filter corresponding to the indices k and m.

B. Principle of GFDM Modulation and Demodulation

As a multicarrier modulation technique, Generalized Frequency Division Multiplexing (GFDM) maps data symbols onto multiple subcarriers and subsymbols. The prototype filter is used for pulse shaping to achieve efficient data transmission. The GFDM modulation process can be expressed in matrix form. The time-domain transmitted signal is represented as a vector [see Eq. (3)]:

$$x = \left[x[0]x[1] \dots x[N-1]\right]^T \quad (3)$$

Then, the GFDM modulation process can be expressed as Eq. (4):

$$x = Ad \quad (4)$$

where, A is the $N \times N$ GFDM modulation matrix, which is defined as Eq. (5):

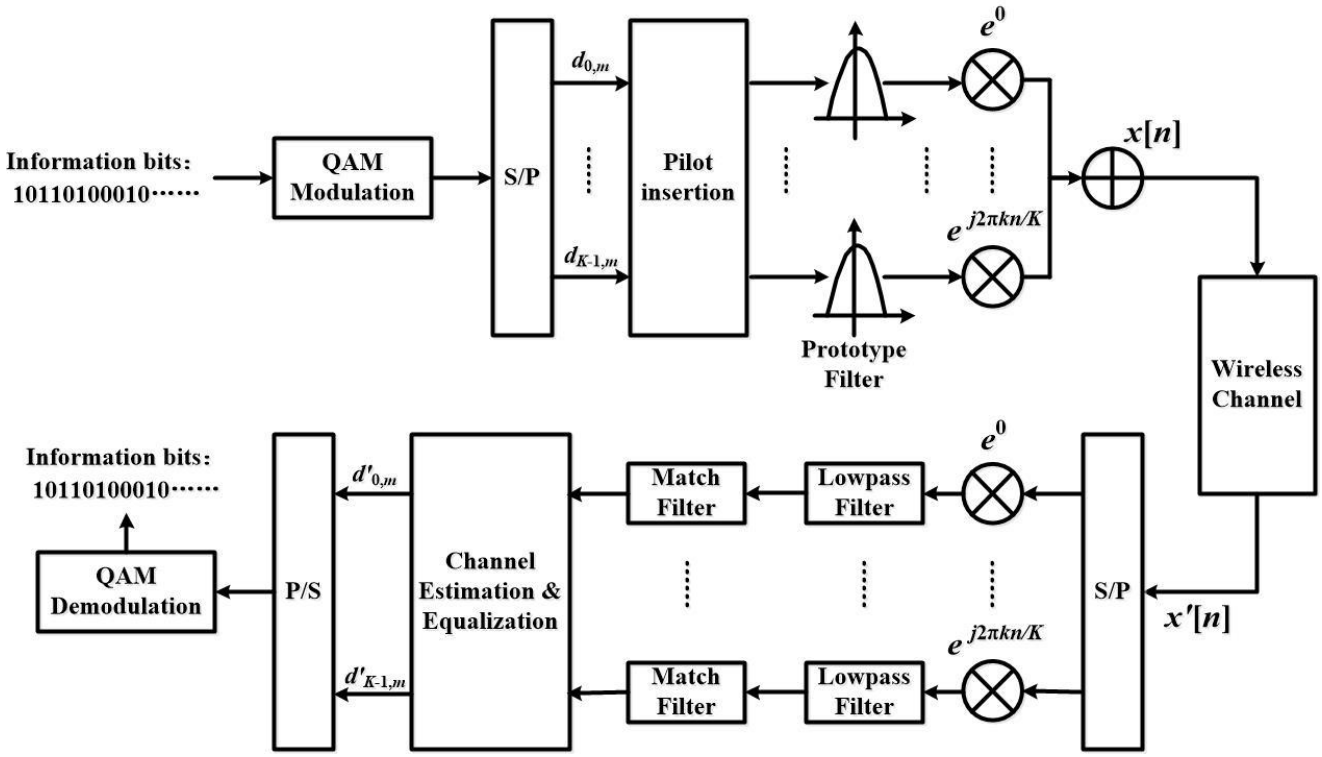

Fig. 1. Information transmission block diagram of the GFDM system.

$$A = \left[g_{\{0,0\}}g_{\{1,0\}} \cdots g_{\{K-1,0\}}g_{\{1,0\}} \cdots g_{\{K-1,M-1\}}\right] \quad (5)$$

Among them, $g_{k,m} = [g_{k,m}[0]g_{k,m}[1] \ldots g_{k,m}[N-1]]^T$ is a column vector with a length of N. The modulation on each subcarrier is expressed as follows [see Eq. (6)]:

$$x[n] = \sum_{k=0}^{K-1}\sum_{m=0}^{M-1} d_{k,m} \times g[(n-mK)modN]e^{\left\{j\left(\frac{2\pi}{K}\right)kn\right\}} \quad (6)$$

Expanding the above expression, we obtain Eq. (7):

$$x = \sum_{k=0}^{K-1}\sum_{m=0}^{M-1} d_{k,m} \times g_{k,m} \quad (7)$$

In the GFDM system, the time shift is performed in a periodic manner, and the frequency shift is carried out according to the following equation, forming a frequency shift vector [see Eq. (8)]:

$$f_k[n] = e^{j2\pi\frac{k}{K}n} \quad (8)$$

C. Design of Pulse Shaping Filter

An important difference between GFDM and OFDM lies in the prototype filter used for the subcarriers. OFDM employs a rectangular pulse filter, while GFDM uses a non-rectangular pulse filter. The pulse shaping function is given as follows [see Eq. (9)]:

$$g_{\{k,m\}[n]} = g_{m[n]e^{j\left(\frac{2\pi}{K}\right)kn}} = g[(n-mK)_N]e^{j\left(\frac{2\pi}{K}\right)kn} \quad (9)$$

Here,$(\cdot)_N$ denotes the modulo-N operation,$g[n]$ represents the prototype filter, and $g_m[n]$ is the pulse shaping filter for the m-th subsymbol. In this work, the Root Raised Cosine (RRC) filter is used. The time-domain expression of the Root Raised Cosine filter is given as follows [see Eq. (10)]:

$$g(t) = \begin{cases} \frac{1}{T}\left(1+\beta\left(\frac{4}{\pi}-1\right)\right), t=0 \\ \frac{\beta}{T\sqrt{2}}\left[\left(1+\frac{2}{\pi}\right)sin\left(\frac{\pi}{4\beta}\right)+\left(1-\frac{2}{\pi}\right)cos\left(\frac{\pi}{4\beta}\right)\right], t=\pm\frac{T}{4\beta} \\ \frac{sin\left(\frac{\pi t(1-\beta)}{T}\right)+\frac{4\beta t}{T}\cdot cos\left(\frac{\pi t(1+\beta)}{T}\right)}{\pi t\left[1-\left(\frac{4\beta t}{T}\right)^2\right]}, otherwise \end{cases} \quad (10)$$

Here, $T$is the symbol period, $\beta$is the roll-off factor, and $t$is the time variable.

In the GFDM system, there is significant overlap between subcarriers and symbols in the time and frequency domains. The rectangular pulse used in traditional OFDM causes considerable spectral leakage. By applying the RRC filter to shape each subcarrier, better frequency localization can be achieved, adjacent channel interference can be reduced, and asynchronous transmission can be supported. Secondly, the structure of the time-frequency transform filter is given as follows [see Eq. (11)]:

$$g_{k,m}[n] = g[(n-mk)modN] \cdot e^{j2\pi\frac{k}{K}n} \quad (11)$$

Here, $g[n]$ denotes the prototype filter; mK represents the time shift, since there are K samples between every M symbol intervals; $e^{j2\pi\frac{k}{K}n}$ denotes the frequency shift used for subcarrier multiplexing; and $N = KM$ represents the total symbol length.

III. Channel Estimation Method

A. Least Squares Estimation

The Least Squares (LS) estimation algorithm is a basic method used for data fitting and parameter estimation. Its main idea is to find the optimal model parameters by minimizing the sum of squared errors between the observed data and the model-predicted values. In the estimation process, each subcarrier k is fitted individually using the LS method, and the result is obtained as follows [see Eq. (12)]:

$$\hat{h}_k^{LS} = argmin\left|r_{k,1} - p\hat{h}\right|^2 \quad (12)$$

Here, $\hat{h}_k^{LS}$ denotes the LS channel estimate on the k-th subcarrier. k is the subcarrier index, representing the k-th subcarrier in the frequency domain. $r_{k,1}$ is the received signal at the receiver on the k-th subcarrier and the first pilot symbol. p represents the known pilot symbol. $\hat{h}$ denotes the channel coefficient to be estimated.

Ordinary least squares analysis of the observational data yields Eq. (13):

$$\hat{h}_k^{LS} = \frac{p*r_{k,1}}{|p|^2} \quad (13)$$

Here, $p*$denotes the complex conjugate of the pilot symbol p. $|p|^2$ denotes the power of the pilot symbol.

This method uses unit power, which can be simplified to Eq. (14):

$$\hat{h}_k^{(LS)} = \frac{r_{k,1}}{p} \quad (14)$$

Here, (p) represents the pilot symbol.

B. Design of a Two-Dimensional Time-Frequency Block-Based Pilot Structure

In GFDM systems, there is incomplete orthogonality between subcarriers and between time slots. The use of RRC filters causes both inter-subcarrier interference and inter-symbol interference. Therefore, conventional pilot designs are no longer optimal, as they are affected by leakage from neighboring symbols and interference from adjacent subcarriers. To address these issues, a pilot structure is designed in the two-dimensional time-frequency domain. Compared with conventional pilots, the proposed design maintains approximate orthogonality or complementarity in the non-orthogonal time-frequency domain of GFDM, which enhances interference resistance and improves estimation accuracy.

The key of the GFDM system lies in the fact that each "subsymbol-subcarrier" block is obtained by time-shifting and frequency-shifting a prototype pulse filter, resulting in overlapping in both time and frequency domains. Here, the pulses are non-rectangular and not strictly orthogonal. A two-dimensional time-frequency block-based pilot structure, named Composite Time-Frequency Pilot (CTFP), is designed. The CTFP is a composite sequence distributed over multiple time slots on the same subcarrier, weighted by the prototype pulse, and phase-coded within the subcarrier. This pilot structure distinguishes different subcarriers in the frequency domain, with each subcarrier having a unique phase code. In the time domain, the energy is distributed using the GFDM shaping filter (RRC pulse shaping), ensuring that the pilot symbols have the same time-domain characteristics as the data symbols.

In GFDM, the length of each data block is $N = K \cdot M$, where K is the number of subcarriers and M is the number of subsymbols. First, a QPSK pilot symbol is defined as Eq. (15):

$$s_p = \frac{1+j}{\sqrt{2}} \quad (15)$$

Here, s_p is the pilot symbol modulated using QPSK. j denotes the imaginary unit, where $j = \sqrt{-1}$.

In a conventional GFDM system, the pilot symbol for each subcarrier is usually given by Eq. (16):

$$p_{trad} = s_p \quad (16)$$

Here, p_{trad} denotes the pilot symbol in the conventional GFDM system.

Each pilot subcarrier transmits only one complex constant in one time slot, and the pilot power is concentrated at one time-frequency position.

The pilot vector is constructed using the time-domain response of the RRC filter, which reflects the energy of the filter's power distribution in this time slot [see Eq. (17)].

$$w_{CTFP}[m] = \sum_{n=0}^{L-1} |g[(n-(m-1)K) mod L]|^2 \quad (17)$$

Here, $w_{CTFP}[m]$denotes the energy weighting of the CTFP pilot at the m-th time slot. $g[\cdot]$ denotes the time-domain impulse response of the RRC filter. L denotes the filter length or the GFDM block length. m denotes the subsymbol index.

Energy equalization is performed so that the total energy of CTFP pilots is the same as that of traditional pilots for comparison [see Eq. (18)].

$$\alpha = \sqrt{\frac{E_{trad}}{E_{CTFP}}} = \sqrt{\frac{|s_p|^2}{|s_p|^2 \cdot \|w\|^2}} \quad (18)$$

Here, α denotes the energy normalization factor. E_{trad} denotes the total energy of the traditional pilot. E_{CTFP} denotes the total energy of the CTFP pilot. $\|w\|^2$ denotes the energy norm of the weighting vector w_{CTFP}.

Second, a complex exponential phase code is assigned to each subcarrier, yielding Eq. (19):

$$c_k = e^{j\frac{2\pi k}{K}} \quad (19)$$

where, $k = 0, 1, \ldots, K-1$, so that pilots of different subcarriers can be distinguished in the frequency domain.

At the transmitter, the CTFP pilot is constructed, yielding Eq. (20):

$$P_k = s_p \cdot c_k \cdot \alpha w \quad (20)$$

where, s_p denotes the pilot symbol.

Thus, each pilot has time-domain spreading and frequency-domain distinction, a two-dimensional block pilot structure [see Eq. (21)]:

$$CTFP_{pilot} = \underbrace{(time-shaping)}_{w_{CTFP}\alpha} \otimes \underbrace{(freq-phase\ coding)}_{c_k} \quad (21)$$

It is distributed in the time slot of this subcarrier. The amplitude diagram and phase diagram of the pilot internal structure are shown in Fig. 2 and Fig. 3.

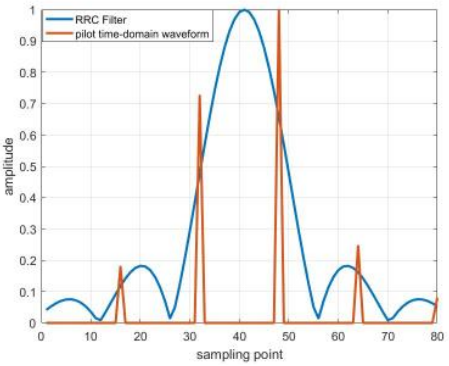

Fig. 2. Comparison of pilot amplitude values and filter waveform.

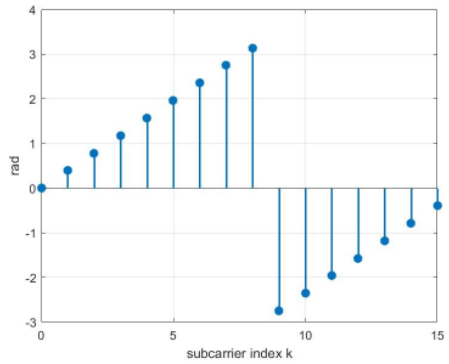

Fig. 3. Variation of the pilot phase.

C. Channel Estimation Method Based on Correlation

To improve the transmission efficiency of channel estimation in the GFDM system and give full play to the great advantages of CTFP in the GFDM system, a channel estimation method based on correlation is proposed on the basis of the traditional Least Squares (LS) estimation. This method is based on the fact that under relatively flat channel conditions, the frequency-domain channel response usually shows strong correlation, so the channel gains of adjacent subcarriers can be regarded as highly correlated. Based on this characteristic, the correlation method reduces the impact of channel estimation error of a single subcarrier by introducing the concept of a subcarrier group. Specifically, the system first performs LS estimation on each subcarrier at the position where CTFP is inserted to obtain the initial channel estimation value. Then, for the k-th subcarrier, its final channel estimation is not directly taken from its own estimation result, but replaced by the estimation result of the reference subcarrier in its corresponding correlated subcarrier group. For example, among subcarriers 1–4, all subcarriers use the estimation value of subcarrier 1 as the channel estimation. Among subcarriers 5–8, the channel estimation value of subcarrier 5 is uniformly adopted, and so on. In this way, while reducing pilot overhead, the system allows time slots without pilot configuration to be used for data transmission, thus utilizing spectrum resources more efficiently and improving the proportion of effective data transmission to a certain extent.

Divide K subcarriers into several groups. In this method, each group has a length of 4. Channel estimation is performed only on the first subcarrier of each group, and the other subcarriers adopt the estimation result of the first subcarrier, that is, use it directly, as shown in Fig. 4.

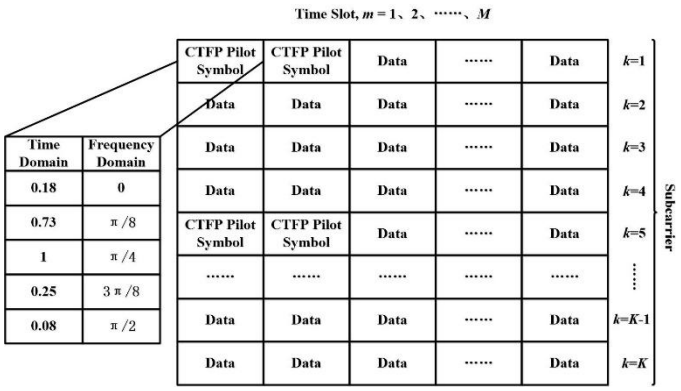

Fig. 4. The CTFP pilot insertion in the GFDM system.

The data block transmitted in a GFDM system is composed of K subcarriers and M subsymbols. Its time frequency structure is characterized by K subcarriers in the frequency domain and M subsymbols in the time domain. The correlation among subcarriers is used by considering the cross-correlation function in the frequency domain. The EPA model in the 3GPP LTE channel model, which refers to the Extended Pedestrian A model, is applied. This model is used for low-speed movement, such as pedestrians in typical indoor or micro cell environments.

The time-domain random multipath channel is represented by the impulse response $h(\tau)$, where τ is the delay. The power delay profile [Power Delay Profile (PDP)] is given as Eq. (22):

$$P(\tau) = \mathbb{E}[|\, h(\tau)\,|^2] \quad (22)$$

The frequency domain channel frequency response is Eq. (23):

$$H(f) = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} h(\tau) e^{-j2\pi f\tau} d\tau \quad (23)$$

The cross correlation at two different frequencies f_1 and f_2 is expressed as Eq. (24):

$$R_H(f_1, f_2) \triangleq \mathbb{E}[H(f_1)H^*(f_2)] \quad (24)$$

By substituting the definition of $H(f)$ and using the stationarity assumption, that is, the delay components in the time domain are uncorrelated and $E[h(\tau)h^*(\tau')] = 0$ when $\tau \neq \tau'$, and equal to $P(\tau)$ when $\tau = \tau'$, we can obtain Eq. (25):

$$R_H(f_1, f_2) = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} P(\tau) e^{-j2\pi(f_1-f_2)\tau} d\tau \quad (25)$$

Let the frequency difference be $\Delta f = f_1 - f_2$ .Then the autocorrelation function only depends on Δf [see Eq. (26)]:

$$R_H(\Delta f) = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} P(\tau) e^{-j2\pi(f_1-f_2)\tau} d\tau \quad (26)$$

The normalized correlation coefficient, which gives the correlation between the two frequency points, is complex-valued. By applying the Fourier transform to the PDP, it is expressed as Eq. (27):

$$\rho(\Delta f) = \frac{R_H(\Delta f)}{R_H(0)} = \frac{\int P(\tau) e^{-j2\pi\Delta f\tau} d\tau}{\int P(\tau) d\tau} \quad (27)$$

The magnitude $|\rho(\Delta f)| \in [0,1]$ describes the strength of the correlation between the frequencies. When $|\rho|$ is close to 1, the frequency domain response is highly correlated under this frequency offset.

If the PDP is a set of discrete multipath components as in the EPA model, the explicit expression of the discrete taps is Eq. (28):

$$P(\tau) = \sum_{n=0}^{N-1} p_n \delta(\tau - \tau_n), p_n \geq 0 \quad (28)$$

We obtain Eq. (29):

$$\rho(\Delta f) = \frac{\sum_{n=0}^{N-1} p_n e^{-j2\pi\Delta f\tau_n}}{\sum_{n=0}^{N-1} p_n} \quad (29)$$

According to Eq. (30):

$$\Delta f = m\Delta f_{\mathrm{sc}} \quad (30)$$

Here, m is the subcarrier index difference, and Δf_{sc} is the subcarrier spacing.

We obtain Eq. (31):

$$\rho(m) = \frac{\sum_n p_n e^{-j2\pi m\Delta f_{\mathrm{sc}}\tau_n}}{\sum_n p_n} \quad (31)$$

When $\omega = 2\pi\Delta f$ is small, the characteristic function can be approximated using a Taylor series expansion [see Eq. (32)]:

$$\rho(\Delta f) = \mathbb{E}[e^{-j\omega\tau}] \approx 1 - j\omega\mu_\tau - \frac{\omega^2}{2}\mathbb{E}[\tau^2] + O(\omega^3) \quad (32)$$

Here, $\mu_\tau = E[\tau]$. Then Eq. (33):

$$|\rho(\Delta f)|^2 \approx 1 - \omega^2 \mathrm{Var}(\tau) + O(\omega^3) \quad (33)$$

By taking the second-order approximation, we obtain Eq. (34):

$$|\rho(\Delta f)| \approx \sqrt{1 - \omega^2 \mathrm{Var}(\tau)} \approx 1 - \frac{\omega^2 \mathrm{Var}(\tau)}{2} \quad (34)$$

Therefore, to require $|\rho| > 0.9$, that is, the magnitude greater than 0.9, the approximate condition is Eq. (35):

$$1 - \frac{\omega^2 \mathrm{Var}(\tau)}{2} > 0.9 \Rightarrow \omega^2 \mathrm{Var}(\tau) < 0.2 \quad (35)$$

By substituting $= 2\pi\Delta f$, we obtain Eq. (36):

$$\Delta f < \frac{1}{2\pi}\sqrt{\frac{0.2}{\mathrm{Var}(\tau)}} \quad (36)$$

Here, $\mathrm{Var}(\tau)$ is the delay variance of the PDP.

By substituting the above values, it can be seen that for $0 \leq \Delta f \leq 2$ MHz, the correlation between subcarriers is always greater than 0.9. This indicates that under the EPA channel conditions, the frequency domain correlation is always higher than 0.9, and channel estimation methods based on correlation characteristics have practical application value.

In spatially correlated channels, under the GFDM framework, the channel responses of two users in the time frequency domain, denoted as $h_1(t,f)$ and $h_2(t,f)$, exhibit spatial correlation. The cross-correlation function between them can be defined as Eq. (37):

$$R_{h_1h_2}(\Delta t, \Delta f) = \mathbb{E}[h_1(t,f)h_2^*(t-\Delta t, f-\Delta f)] \quad (37)$$

Since the support set Ω is the same, that is, $\Delta t \approx 0, \Delta f \approx 0$. By processing the above definition and performing normalization, the expression can be rewritten as shown in Eq. (38):

$$\rho(d) = \frac{\mathbb{E}[\iint_\Omega h_1(t,f)h_2^*(t,f)dtdf]}{\sqrt{\mathbb{E}[|h_1|^2]\mathbb{E}[|h_2|^2]}} \quad (38)$$

Because the support set Ω is identical, the double integral in the above equation can be simplified to a summation over the same set of propagation paths, as given in Eq. (39):

$$\rho(d) = \frac{\mathbb{E}\left[\sum_{p=1}^{P} h_{1,p}h_{2,p}^*\right]}{\sqrt{\mathbb{E}[\sum_p |h_{1,p}|^2]\mathbb{E}[\sum_p |h_{2,p}|^2]}} \quad (39)$$

Assuming that different propagation paths are uncorrelated with each other and that the power of each path is normalized, the above expression can be further simplified as Eq. (40):

$$\rho(d) = \frac{1}{P}\sum_{p=1}^{P} \rho_p(d) \quad (40)$$

where, $\rho_p(d) = \mathbb{E}[h_{1,p}h_{2,p}^*]$ denotes the spatial correlation coefficient of the complex gain on the p-th path.Assume that there are many scattering components arriving at the receiver from different angles θ, and the angular distribution of these components is given by $p(\theta)$. Then, for the two user case, the correlation of the channel complex gains can be described by the classical Clarke model as Eq. (41):

$$\rho_p(d) = \int_{-\pi}^{\pi} P(\theta) e^{-j\frac{2\pi d}{\lambda}\sin\theta} d\theta \quad (41)$$

where, λ is the wavelength and d represents the distance between the two users.Assume that the angles of arrival follow a Gaussian distribution with mean $\theta_0$and standard deviation σ_θ. The corresponding angular power spectrum is given in Eq. (42):

$$p(\theta) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}\sigma_\theta}\exp\left(-\frac{(\theta-\theta_0)^2}{2\sigma_\theta^2}\right) \quad (42)$$

Based on the above spatial correlation analysis, under the EPA channel model, when the distance between communication terminals is small, the spatial correlation coefficient of the channel can reach 0.9 or even higher.

Perform channel estimation on the first subcarrier of each group [see Eq. (43)]:

$$\hat{h}_k = \frac{P_k^H r_k}{\|P_k\|^2} \tag{43}$$

Then, directly use the estimated values for other subcarriers [see Eq. (44)]:

$$\hat{h}_k = \hat{h}_{ref} \tag{44}$$

IV. Simulation Experiments and Analysis

A. Experimental Conditions

To evaluate the performance of the proposed correlation-based channel estimation method, Monte Carlo simulations were conducted using MATLAB software. The main parameter settings are presented in Table I.

TABLE I. Parameter Settings

Parameters	Values
Number of subcarriers, K	16、100
Number of subsymbols, M	5、8、100
Modulation scheme	QPSK
Filter	Root-Raised Cosine（RRC）
Filter roll-off factor	0.3
Channel model	AWGN channel
Pilot symbols	QPSK unit power symbol $\frac{1+j}{\sqrt{2}}$
Pilot spacingΔ	2、4、6、8
SNR range	0-30 dB with a step of 5 dB
Number of Monte Carlo Simulations	1000

In the simulation figure, the x-axis represents the signal-to-noise ratio (SNR), and the y-axis represents the mean square error (MSE), which can reflect the accuracy of channel estimation and is defined as Eq. (45):

$$MSE = \frac{1}{K}\sum_{k=0}^{K-1}\left|\widehat{h_k} - h_k\right|^2 \tag{45}$$

B. Information Rate Analysis

It is assumed that the channel is a flat Rayleigh fading channel, in which the channel coefficient within one GFDM block is a complex constant h that does not change with time or frequency. The receiver is affected only by additive white Gaussian noise. Under this assumption, the correlation between subcarriers remains higher than 0.9, which allows the study of the impact of different pilot structures on the data rate. The total number of symbols, that is, the product of time slots and subcarriers, is defined as Eq. (46):

$$N_{tot} = K \cdot M \tag{46}$$

If pilots occupy N_pilot symbols, the number of symbols available for data is Eq. (47):

$$N_{data} = N_{tot} - N_{pilot} \tag{47}$$

Each symbol carries b = $\log_2$ (modulation order) bits, and the information rate is Eq. (48):

$$R = \frac{N_{data}}{N_{tot}} b \tag{48}$$

The unit is bit/s/Hz/subcarrier.

For existing methods, we obtain Eq. (49):

$$N_{pilot} = K \tag{49}$$

For the correlation-based method, with a spacing of s, we can obtain Eq. (50):

$$N_{pilot} = \frac{K}{s} \tag{50}$$

As shown in Fig. 5 and Fig. 6, these figures present a comparison of the information rate between the existing method and the correlation-based method with pilots placed at different subcarrier spacings. Assuming a sampling rate of 1 MHz and a duration of 0.016 ms per time slot, it can be seen from the figures that the information rate gradually increases with the growth of the number of time slots (M) in the GFDM system. Compared with the existing method, the transmission rate of the correlation-based method is higher. This is because the first time slot of each subcarrier in the existing method is occupied by pilots, leading to low spectrum efficiency. As M increases, the pilot ratio gradually decreases, and the rate increases accordingly. The information transmission performance is improved by about 14.97% compared with the existing method when the time slot width is 0.096 ms, about 10.74% when the time slot width is 0.128 ms, and about 2.59% when the time slot width is 0.48 ms. For the correlation-based estimation method, only one pilot is allocated to each group of subcarriers, so the pilot overhead is much lower than that of the existing method. Thus, its rate is significantly higher under all time slot conditions. This result indicates that the correlation-based method has more advantages in terms of the system's information transmission rate.

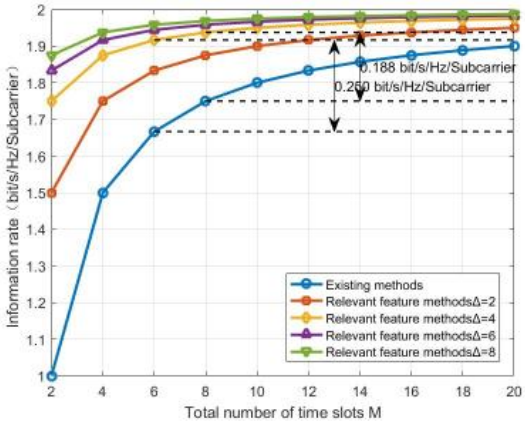

Fig. 5. Comparison of information rate in the GFDM system (K=16).

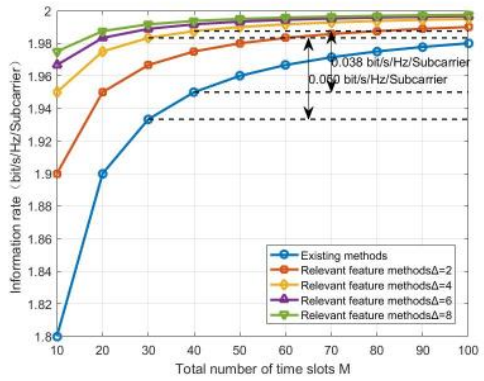

Fig. 6. Comparison of information rate in GFDM system 2 (K=100).

C. Channel Estimation Mean Square Error Performance Analysis

As shown in Fig. 7, the mean square error (MSE) of both the existing method and the correlation-based method decreases with the increase of signal-to-noise ratio (SNR). In terms of channel estimation methods, the existing method has better MSE performance. This is because the correlation-based method uses grouped references, which reduces the number of pilots. Adjacent subcarriers use the same channel estimation result, leading to accuracy loss. In terms of pilot design, it can be clearly seen that the CTFP pilot design has stronger anti-interference capability and better MSE performance. This is because the pilot design combines the characteristics of the time-frequency domain and the prototype filter, improving anti-interference capability. Thus, it can be concluded that the existing method is better in estimation accuracy, while the correlation-based method is more suitable for use under low overhead requirements. Moreover, the CTFP pilot structure has better performance than the traditional pilot structure.

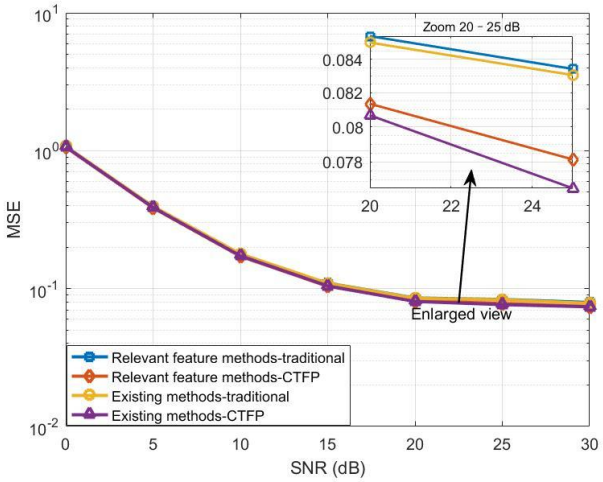

Fig. 7. Comparison of MSE in the GFDM system.

As shown in Fig. 8, the impact of inter-subcarrier channel correlation on the correlation-based method is analyzed. When $\alpha = 0$ (i.e., inter-subcarriers are completely independent), the performance is the worst. This is because the channel differences within each group are large, and a single reference pilot cannot effectively represent other subcarriers. As α increases, the inter-subcarrier channel correlation becomes stronger, and the estimation performance of the correlation-based method gradually improves. When α is close to 1, the MSE curve decreases significantly. This indicates that under high correlation, the correlation-based method can well represent the channel of the entire group of subcarriers, and its estimation performance is close to that of the existing method. Thus, the correlation-based method is more suitable for application in channel environments with strong frequency-domain correlation, while its performance deteriorates significantly in scenarios with severe frequency-selective fading.

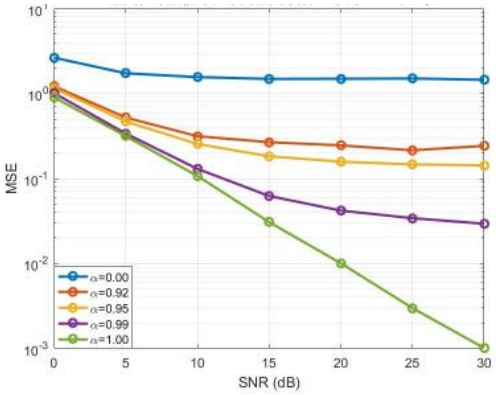

Fig. 8. MSE curves of relevant methods under different correlation coefficients.

D. System Bit Error Rate (BER) Performance Analysis

As shown in Fig. 9, with the improvement of signal-to-noise ratio (SNR), the bit error rate (BER) of both the existing method and the correlation-based method decreases. The overall trend in the figure is that as SNR increases, the BER of both methods decreases exponentially. That is, the bit error rate decreases significantly when channel quality improves. Among them, the BER curves of the two methods almost coincide with only slight differences. The local enlarged view shows the region of 20-25 dB, where four curves are very close. Overall, the BER performance of the two methods is very similar. This is because the channel conditions are relatively flat and the correlation of subcarriers is adopted, so the performance of the existing method and the correlation-based method is quite similar.

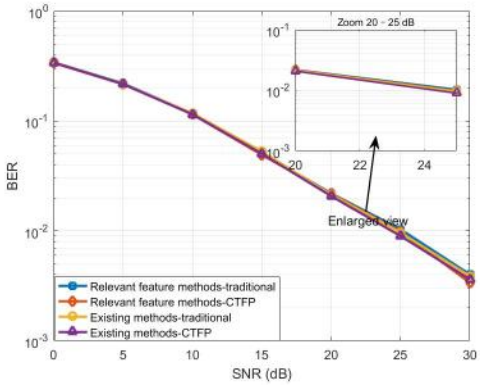

Fig. 9. Comparison of BER performance in the GFDM system.

V. Discussion

The channel estimation method for GFDM systems based on correlation characteristics is mainly suitable for the EPA (Extended Pedestrian A) channel model. This model corresponds to indoor communication scenarios with low speed or static terminals and has strong practical and engineering significance. For example, in typical application scenarios such as the Internet of Things and smart home systems, multiple indoor communication terminals access the same local area network at the same time, where the geographic locations of these terminals are close to each other. These terminals are usually static or move at a low speed, and their channels show strong correlation in the time, frequency, and spatial domains. Existing channel estimation methods based on correlation characteristics and pilot reduction mainly rely on the assumption of frequency domain correlation. Compared with these methods, the proposed method further considers practical application scenarios and introduces spatial correlation on the basis of frequency domain correlation. As a result, the proposed method can improve channel estimation performance and reduce pilot overhead in specific scenarios. Fig. 10 shows the practical application scenario of a channel estimation method for GFDM systems based on correlation and CTFP pilots.

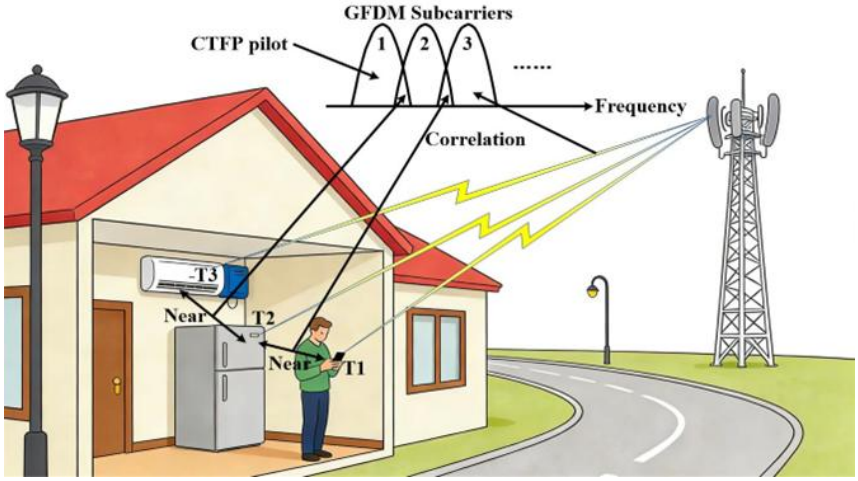

Fig. 10. Practical application scenario of a channel estimation method for GFDM systems based on correlation and CTFP pilots.

However, the GFDM channel estimation method based on correlation characteristics also has certain limitations. This method strongly depends on the correlation of terminals in the frequency and spatial domains. Therefore, in channel environments that are wide, where terminals are sparsely distributed and channel correlation is weak, the performance of this method will significantly degrade, and it may even become unsuitable. In addition, in high mobility scenarios targeted by Orthogonal Time Frequency and Space (OTFS) systems, the time variation of the channel becomes much stronger. In such cases, the correlation assumption is difficult to satisfy, and this type of channel estimation method cannot be effectively applied.

VI. Conclusion

Traditional channel estimation methods for GFDM systems rely on adding more pilot sequences, thus reducing the information transmission rate. To address the above problem, a correlation-based channel estimation method is proposed, and a two-dimensional block pilot sequence based on time domain and frequency domain is designed. This method utilizes the correlation between subcarriers, thus reducing the time slot overhead of pilot resources. Simulation results show that under the premise of the same total time overhead, the mean square error (MSE) and bit error rate (BER) performance of the proposed correlation-based channel estimation method are basically consistent with those of the existing method. However, the information transmission performance is improved by about 14.97% compared with the existing method when the time slot width is 0.096 ms, about 10.74% when the time slot width is 0.128 ms, and about 2.59% when the time slot width is 0.48 ms. This result indicates that when the system is sensitive to time-slot resources, the channel estimation method based on correlation can significantly improve transmission efficiency. It is particularly advantageous in high-density multi-carrier communication scenarios. Simulation experiments verify the reliability of the above method. This research result can provide theoretical support for the design and implementation of GFDM transmission systems in the future. The pilot structure of the correlation-based channel estimation method exhibits better channel estimation performance when the correlation between adjacent subcarriers is strong. In the future, further research is needed to study accurate channel estimation methods when the correlation is weak. This method has potential application value in future GFDM systems, as well as in new multi-carrier wireless communication systems such as 5G and 6G. Its low pilot overhead and high transmission efficiency make it suitable for various scenarios, including the Internet of Things, large-scale MIMO, vehicular networks, and low-latency communications. By further optimizing the pilot design and channel estimation algorithm, it is possible to achieve higher data throughput and better spectrum utilization while maintaining system robustness.

Acknowledgment

The research was funded by National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC):62441401.

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ForenVoice-Secure: Robust and Privacy-Aware Audio Data Mining for Forensic Speaker Identification

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***Abstract*—Speech is now routine evidence in criminal investigations, but forensic audio rarely matches the clean assumptions of standard speaker recognition. Clips are short, noisy, codec-compressed, and channel-mismatched, and they are increasingly exposed to replay and synthetic speech manipulation. Therefore, the cast criminal voice identification is forensic audio data mining, aiming to extract a stable identity structure from heterogeneous and potentially adversarial evidence, while respecting operational and privacy constraints. In this study, a novel ForenVoice-Secure system is proposed, a unified pipeline that combines robust representation learning, spoof-aware decisioning, and privacy-preserving training. Audio is mapped to log-Mel spectrograms and encoded with a CNN, while an LSTM aggregates temporal identity cues from irregular utterances. Robustness is improved through multi-task learning (identity + spoof), adversarial training, and spectro-temporal consistency checks for replay/deepfake artifacts. Privacy is addressed using federated learning, keeping raw recordings local and sharing only model updates. Experiments on VoxCeleb2, ASVspoof 2021, and a forensic-style speaker comparison corpus achieve statistically significant performance gains, 98.43% mean identification accuracy with strong class-balanced performance (macro F1 = 98.10%, precision = 98.22%, recall = 98.01%) and statistically significant gains over strong baselines across repeated folds (F1: $p = 8.0 \times 10^{-4}$; precision: $p = 1.1 \times 10^{-3}$; recall: $p = 9.0 \times 10^{-4}$). The model remains lightweight (≈4.3M parameters, ≈1.2 GFLOPs per 3 s), enabling near real-time inference with modest overhead from consistency checks (<6%). Overall, ForenVoice-Secure provides a compact and reproducible forensic audio data mining framework for scalable, spoof-resilient, privacy-aware law-enforcement identification.**

Keywords*—Forensic audio data mining; forensic voice analytics; voice biometrics; criminal identification; speaker recognition; anti-spoofing; deepfake and replay detection; convolutional neural networks; long short-term memory; federated learning; privacy-preserving biometrics; law enforcement intelligence systems

I. Introduction

Voice evidence has gained significance in the modern criminal investigation. Intercepts of telephones [1], emergency calls, body-worn cameras, covert surveillance, and open-source multimedia material are a regular part of the case files [2]. However, speech is not often gathered in regulated circumstances as it is in the case of fingerprints or DNA. The transcriptions of forensic recordings tend to be brief, noisy, encoded with unknown codecs, and recorded with unknown devices [3]. Consequently, the process of recognition of a speaker with audio evidence is a still technically challenging and methodologically controversial one [4]. Although automatic speaker recognition has improved quickly within the last decade, most of the development has been fueled by benchmarks that are based on comparatively clean data and cooperative users, which is not the case in forensic practice [5].

Early speaker recognition systems were based on generative statistical models including Gaussian mixture models based on universal background models and subsequently i-vectors representations [6]. These methods provided interpretable probabilistic descriptions, but were susceptible to channel dissimilarities as well as shorter utterances, which are prevalent in forensic content. Deep learning has led to a transition to discriminative embedding learning [7], where convolutional and time-delay neural networks yielded fixed length representations of speakers which significantly enhanced performance in uncontrolled conditions [8], [9]. Megabanks like VoxCeleb facilitated this development as they allowed models to learn speaker identity using varied, natural-world samples [10]. Nevertheless, even with these gains, most systems have been optimized to either verify or identify in benign environments but not evidentiary analysis.

Forensic audio is a special category of challenges that extends beyond accuracy on clean benchmarks. Recording can include a speaker overlap, incomplete utterances, or high levels of environment sampling and investigators might not have many samples of reference of a suspect [11]. In addition, the legal environment requires the high level of performance but also the strength, stability, and reproducibility of the conclusions. Recent debates within forensic science point to the fact that speaker recognition must be considered as evidence presentation in uncertainty instead of certain identity matching [12]. This view encourages the replacement of voice biometrics as a limited technical issue with formulating it as an audio data mining in forensics, whereby meaningful identity trends ought to be mined out of non-homogeneous and noisy data.

The threat environment has also gone an extra mile with the fast development of speech synthesis and voice conversion technologies. Current text-to-speech and neural voice cloning systems are able to produce a very natural speech which can

emulate particular speakers with little reference data [13], [14]. These advances have grave consequences on the field of forensic voice analysis where replay attacks and synthetic speech can also fool both human and automatic voice analyzers. This has been observed in community-based challenges like the ASVspoof challenges which have shown that a significant number of speaker recognition pipelines are susceptible to such attacks, especially when the spoofed audio is conveyed using realistic channels or compressed formats [15], [16]. As a result, anti-spoofing is not a peripheral feature anymore, but rather a necessity of any voice biometrics system that is supposed to be used in the forensic or law-enforcement sector [17].

Privacy and data control have also gained significant relevance, in addition to security. Voice data is data that is personal in nature and can be used to disclose sensitive information that is not pertinent to identity such as health, emotional status or demographic features. In crime investigations, there is a large amount of legal and ethical restriction to the dissemination and centralization of raw audio evidence between agencies. Federated learning (FL) exemplifies privacy-preserving approaches to learning; thus, it is getting increasing interest as it allows collaborative training of models without sharing data [18]. Although the concept of federated approaches has been investigated within a generic speech and biometric context, their adoption into forensic voice identification pipelines is not mostly developed.

Combined, these facts indicate that there is a mismatch between the state-of-the-art-work on speaker recognition and the needs of forensic voice analysis. Degradation resistance, spoofing resistance, and privacy-conscious deployment are frequently dealt with as a single component, but not in a coherent set of tools. In this study, a gap is filled by proposing ForenVoice-Secure, a voice-focused forensics-enhanced analytics system, which sees criminal identification as a safe audio data mining challenge. The proposed method will be based on deep representation by learning, explicit anti-spoofing mechanisms, adversarial robustness, and federated training to deliver useful operation on real evidentiary recordings without violating operational and legal limitations. The research, by conducting the overall assessment of the three terms speaker identification, spoof detection, as well as degraded conditions, will bring voice biometrics closer to a viable, defendable application in contemporary law enforcement.

A. Research Highlights

This work makes several contributions to the field of forensic voice biometrics.

- It reframes criminal voice identification as a forensic audio data mining problem, explicitly accounting for noisy, short, and heterogeneous evidence rather than assuming clean verification conditions.
- It introduces ForenVoice-Secure, a unified framework that combines CNN–LSTM–based speaker representation learning with integrated anti-spoofing mechanisms, including adversarial training and spectro-temporal consistency analysis, to improve robustness against replay and deepfake attacks.
- It incorporates federated learning to address privacy and data-governance constraints in law-enforcement settings, enabling collaborative model training without centralizing raw audio evidence.
- It provides a statistically grounded evaluation across multiple datasets, demonstrating significant improvements in accuracy, F1-score, precision, and recall under degraded and adversarial conditions, while maintaining practical computational efficiency for deployment.

B. Paper Organization

The rest of the study is structured in the following way: Section II discusses related literature in speaker recognition, forensic voice analysis, spoofing and deepfake detection and privacy-preserving biometric learning. Section III describes the proposed ForenVoice-Secure approach, such as signal modelling, feature selection, network design, security, and federated training. Section IV explains about the datasets, protocols used in the experiment and measures of assessment. Section V shows the experimental findings and discussions along with the statistical significance analysis and the computational complexity in Section VI. Lastly, Section VII summarizes the study and provides limitations and directions of future research.

II. Literature Review

The recent work makes it rather apparent that the state of modern forensic and security analytics is in a utility versus privacy tension particularly when deep models are at stake. A good example here is the neural extraction of features in acoustic sensor networks, where representations constructed to perform sound classification were demonstrated to leak speaker-specific information and speaker recognition attacks could be performed on the representation in the event they were intercepted [19]. The authors react by suggesting a variational and information-limiting feature extractor that maintains the trusted task and activates speaker identity leakage, but they show resistance to a strong x-vector attacker [19]. The above reasoning is related to more general privacy-sensitive media analytics in which the query protection is not solely of interest but also the fact that the query protection can be achieved with approximately matching at scale. A private media search architecture is a system that attains [20] sublinear computation and communication on public databases and shows privacy-preserving face recognition at large speedups, indicating that privacy and practicality do not necessarily require each other [21]. A similar privacy conscious data use is also reflected in another research study on email visualization: anonymization and aggregation may decrease identifiability, and yet perceived research utility may still be maintained, a good lesson that privacy controls are not mutually exclusive with analytic usefulness when carefully designed [22].

Back on the security front, various researches highlight the use of lax operational arrangements and human actions by attackers. An example is phishing, which is a relatively cheap, but impactful, attacker strategy, and a privacy-conscious detector framework with a specific taxonomy has been suggested to identify various current phishing techniques,

particularly in an IoT-saturated environment. Forensics in cloud environments are often log-centric; thus, the emphasis of the work has been on generating evidence in a scalable way. A cloud forensic expert-system architecture involves the narrowing of attacked areas in huge logs with the help of fuzzy data mining and the subsequent narrowing with the help of AI-based analysis to produce evidence that is less difficult to provide in a formal way [23]. Other work around behavior analysis using log mining contends that manual analysis is not scalable to the size of contemporary data volumes and suggests the use of automated user behavior mining of networked systems, driven in part by the necessity of fighting computer crime more efficiently [24]. These log-based views are applicable since they view forensic investigation as a data mining process: filter, prioritize and explain, as opposed to detect.

The field of audio forensics, on the other hand, encompasses both anti-forensic resistance as well as tamper detection. An SNR-sensitive digital audio tampering forensics system enhances the benefit of an electric network frequency extraction with an improved chirp Z-transform and then identifies anomalies with a dual-sampling isolation forest, with benefits of both extraction and outlier detection in a noisy environment [25]. Anti-forensic attacks are now also a concern. Attacks based on dereverberation can selectively weaken environmental signature splicing detection, and countermeasures that are grounded in rich features and machine learning can easily identify such anti-forensic processing, and indicate a new arms race between forensic detectors and attackers [26]. Extensive surveys keep laying audio-video forensics as one of the key areas of digital investigation, as the recorded media is frequently presented as court-related evidence [27].

Another and rather intriguing vein is the one that actually goes outside the voice of the speaker and seeks context within the audio scene. It has also been suggested to extract and categorize the background noise automatically and communicate information about the environment based on recordings with the use of complex noise mixtures and without much identity testing, even mixed speech, as an expansion of what can be meant by the term of forensic audio evidence [28]. Reproducible forensic processes are also getting interest: an open-source modular system enables practitioners to mix up enhancement, VAD, and ASR models, visualize features, and export repeatable pipelines, which is important when forensic conclusions should be auditable instead of merely valid [29]. Lastly, the field of forensic practice is changing with infrastructure modifications like cloud computing. Conventional digital forensic models are also under consideration and modification to accommodate the issues of preservation and acquisition peculiar to cloud investigations, wherein data can be distributed and challenging to acquire [30]. On the signal level, voice evidence can still be susceptible to noise, reverberation, quantization and disguise. Attempts at increasing its integrity and intelligibility under phonemic confusion suggest that enhancement of voice analysis in the forensics field is an inherent precondition [31].

Collectively, this literature is indicative of the following, as explained in Table I: 1) forensic evidence can be handled as a data mining problem under heterogeneity and scale [23], [24]; 2) robustness must be designed to explicitly address the phenomenon of degradation and active anti-forensic behavior [25], [26], [31]; and 3) privacy preservation must be engineered into the pipeline, since deep representations can reveal identity accidentally [19], whereas practical privacy preserving analytics is becoming a viable option at scale [21], [22].

TABLE I. A COMPARISON TABLE WITH FEWER COLUMNS, FOCUSING ONLY ON WHAT IS MOST RELEVANT TO FORENVOICE-SECURE

Study	Focus & Scenario	Core idea	Key limitation vs. Our work
[19]	Privacy risks in deep audio features for sound classification	Learning a variational feature to suppress speaker-identifiable information	Does not perform forensic speaker identification or spoof-aware evidence mining
[25]	Audio tampering forensics under low-SNR conditions	ENF extraction with ICZT and anomaly detection via isolation forest	Targets tampering detection, not identity mining or spoof-resilient speaker analysis
[26]	Anti-forensic attacks on audio splicing detection	Demonstrates dereverberation-based attacks and ML-based countermeasures	Focuses on splicing artifacts, not joint speaker identification and spoof detection
[29]	Reproducible forensic audio analysis pipelines	Modular, open-source framework for building forensic workflows	Provides tooling rather than a unified, privacy-aware forensic voice model
[31]	Integrity and intelligibility of forensic voice evidence	Speech enhancement, segmentation, and distortion analysis	Improves signal quality but does not address adversarial spoofing or privacy-preserving learning

III. PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

Fig. 1 is the systematic flow diagram that summarizes the proposed forensic voice biometrics pipeline. The development of the criminal voice identification process as the forensic audio data mining, designed to provide consistent identity evidence based on the heterogeneous and possibly manipulated records instead of relying on the presumptions of clean speaker verification, are formulated in this study. VoxCeleb [32] and SpeechTech [33] explicitly define data and threat model based on the nuisance factors (noise, codec compression, channel mismatch, short utterances) and adversarial factors (replay speech and synthetic speech). A CNN is used to encode each recording to speaker-discriminative spectral cues, and an LSTM is used to encode temporal identity structure, each recording is converted to log-Mel spectrograms. Security is incorporated through adversarial training and spectro-temporal consistency tests to decrease the sensitivity of spoof and to label implausible evidence. With federated learning, privacy is achieved by ensuring that raw audio is local and model updates are aggregated. Assessment is multi-axis: performance of identification, resistance to degradations, performance under replay/deepfake conditions, repeated-fold stability, and ablations which eliminate adversarial training, consistency tests, and federation to measure the contribution of each component.

A. Data Gathering

Three complementary corpora were used to collect the data about: 1) large-scale speaker identity variation, 2) explicit threats of spoofing, and 3) forensic-like session variability. To perform large scale identifier of speakers, VoxCeleb2 [32] has been accessed directly on the official Oxford VGG distribution page, where the description of the canonical dataset and download procedure are indicated. VoxCeleb2 consists of more than one million utterances of 6,112 speakers, an official dev/test split of 5,994/118 speakers.

This division is maintained so as to prevent leakage and to ensure that results are consistent with previous speaker recognition literature, where the institutional access policies allow it, also observed is that reproducible scripted ingestion can be facilitated via a dataset-hosted packaging pathways (e.g. a dataset card that reflects the structure of the archive and its metadata files). ASVspoof 2021 [34] (LA/PA/DF) was acquired at the official ASVspoof 2021 post-challenge release page, which contains protocol files (keys) and associated metadata, including the information about bona fide or spoof and condition. The speaker comparison type was forensic-style, and it was applied by FABIOLE [35] to add evidentiary variability, such as session and context variations that are more akin to actual forensic casework (such as environment, channel conditions, and recording situations).

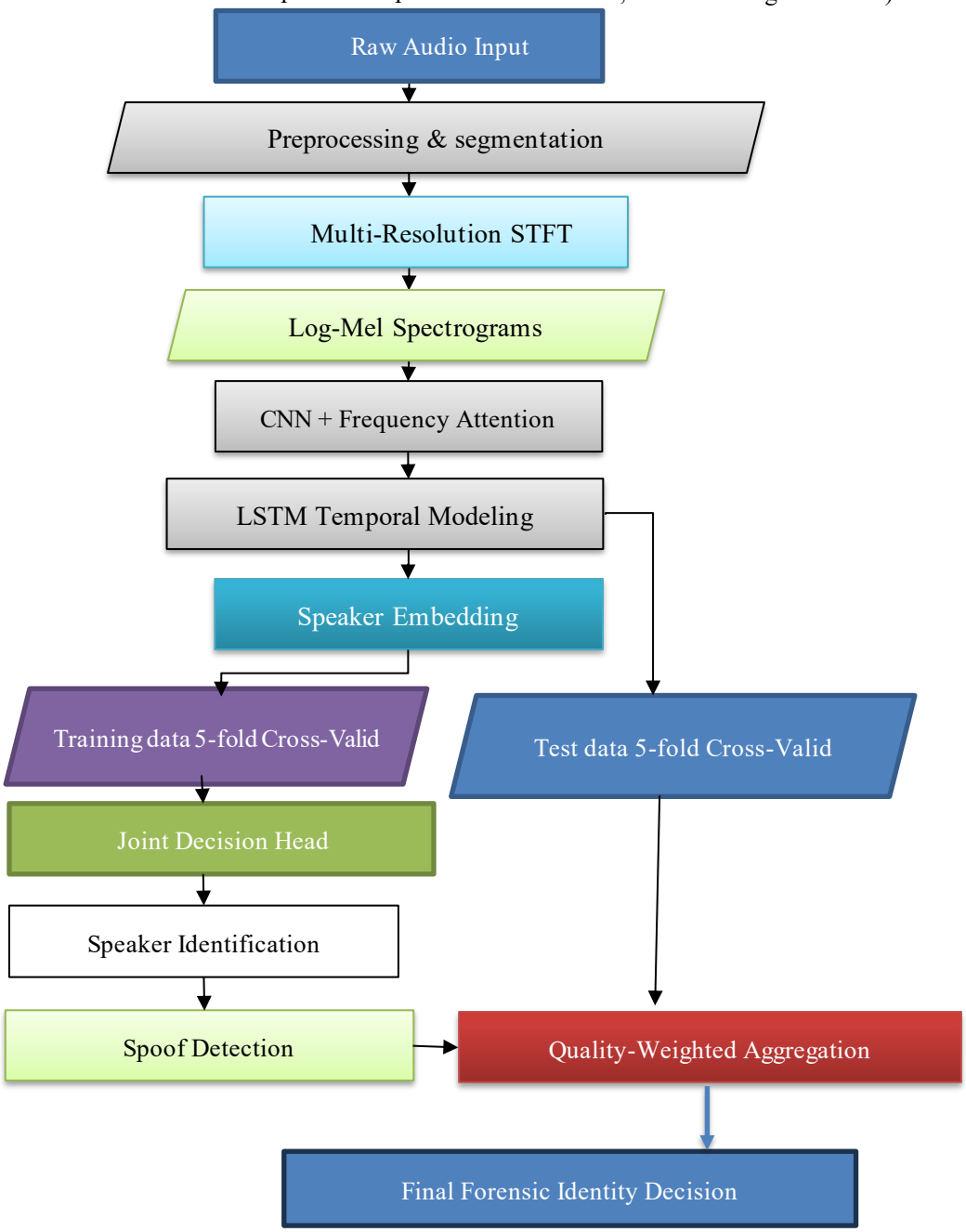


Fig. 1. Systematic flow diagram of the ForenVoice-secure framework.

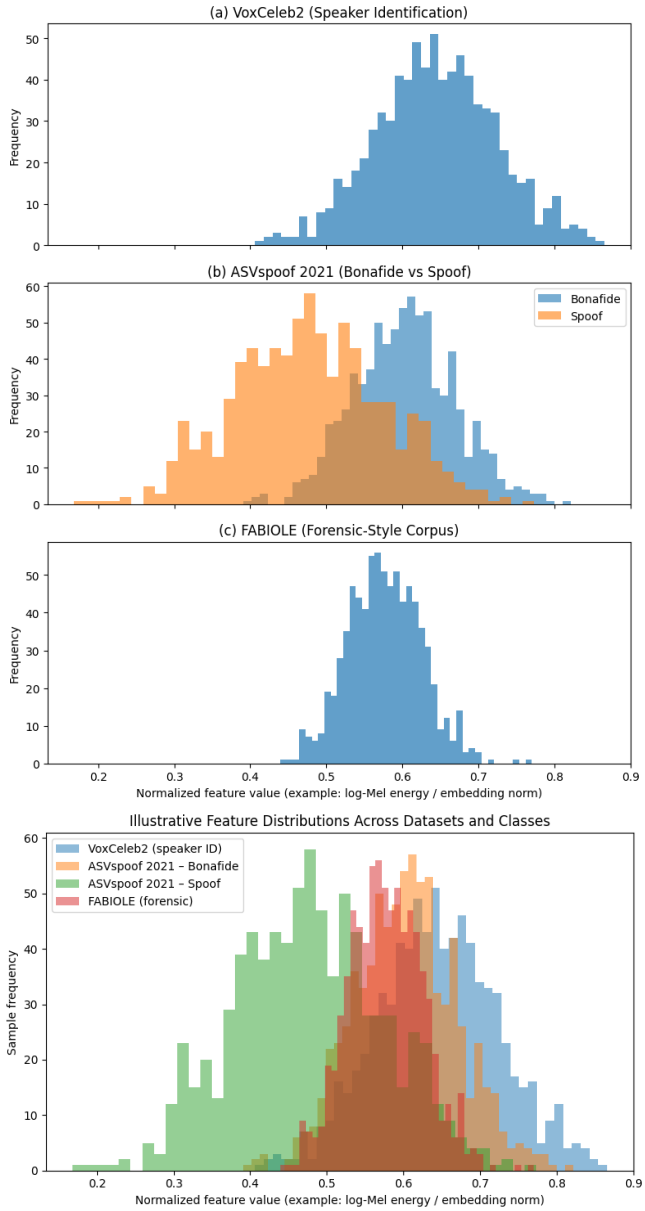


Fig. 2. The figure shows: a) VoxCeleb2: Single distribution for large-scale speaker-ID features, b) ASVspoof 2021: Overlaid bona fide vs. Spoof feature distributions, c) FABIOLE: Single distribution for forensic-style corpus features, and the combined figure illustrates how samples differ across the three selected corpora.

Fig. 2 provides an empirical perspective of the distribution of the learned acoustic features in the three datasets and their variability by class. In VoxCeleb2 [Fig. 2(a)], the wide distribution of speakers and recordings is indicative of a large amount of speaker and recording variability, akin to the case of in-the-wild data. This heterogeneity can be exploited to learn discriminative identity embedding, but again, it raises the intra-speaker variability because of varying environments, microphones, and speaking styles. In ASVspoof 2021 [Fig. 2(b)], bona fide speech contributes to the creation of a distribution that is still somewhat enclosed by VoxCeleb2, whereas the spoofed speech has a more systematically distributed and more scattered appearance. This tendency is aligned with spectral and temporal anomalies caused by replay and synthetic generation and it confirms the need of explicit anti-spoofing goals during representation learning. In comparison, FABIOLE [Fig. 2(c)] has a more concentrated distribution, which corresponds to the conditions of the forensic-style broadcast and longer segments in general. Nonetheless, its feature space is different even when compared to in-the-wild speech and spoofed audio, implying that there is a domain gap that may influence generalization in case it is overlooked. Combined with these distributional variations, this suggests the suggested multi-task and robustness-based design: a realistic forensic voice biometrics system should explicitly model dataset- and class-varying behavior of features, not a uniform homogeneous speech distribution.

B. Preprocessing and Time–Frequency Representation

All audio signals are first standardized to ensure consistency across datasets and recording conditions. Each recording is converted to a single-channel (mono) waveform and resampled to a fixed sampling rate of 16 kHz, which provides sufficient bandwidth for speaker-discriminative information while maintaining computational efficiency. Amplitude normalization is then applied to control dynamic range variations across sources, using peak or RMS normalization to reduce sensitivity to recording gain without suppressing forensic cues.

Silence and non-speech regions are removed using an energy-based voice activity detection procedure. The objective is not aggressive denoising but the exclusion of long inactive segments that would otherwise dilute speaker-relevant information, especially in short forensic utterances. Audio segments shorter than a minimum duration are either discarded or zero-padded to a fixed length to enable batch processing and stable time–frequency representations.

Each preprocessed waveform $x(t)$ is transformed into a time–frequency representation using the short-time Fourier transform (STFT) [36]. Given a window function $w(t)$, window length L, and hop size H, the STFT is computed through Eq. (1) as:

$$X(\tau,\omega) = \sum_{t=0}^{L-1} x(t+\tau H)\, w(t)\; e^{-j\omega t}, \qquad (1)$$

where, τ indexes the frame and ω denotes angular frequency. In our implementation, a Hann window is used with $L = 400$ samples and $H = 160$ samples, balancing time resolution and frequency selectivity for forensic speech analysis. The magnitude spectrum $|X(\tau,\omega)|$ is then projected onto a Mel-scale filterbank to approximate perceptually relevant frequency resolution. Let M denote the Mel filterbank matrix; the Mel-spectral energy is computed by Eq. (2) as:

$$\mathrm{S}(\tau) = \mathrm{M}\ |X(\tau,\omega)|^2. \qquad (2)$$

A logarithmic compression is applied to stabilize variance and emphasize lower-energy components, yielding the log-Mel spectrogram, is defined by Eq. (3) as:

$$\mathrm{F}(\tau) = \log\left(\mathrm{S}(\tau) + \epsilon\right), \qquad (3)$$

where, ϵ is a small constant to avoid numerical instability. The resulting log-Mel spectrograms are optionally mean–variance normalized on a per-utterance or per-batch basis before being fed into the CNN–LSTM [37] backbone. This preprocessing pipeline preserves fine-grained spectro-temporal structure required for speaker discrimination and spoof artifact detection, while maintaining robustness to channel mismatch, noise, and codec-induced distortions commonly present in forensic audio evidence.

Fig. 3 compares representative voice patterns across three classes by showing the input waveform, magnitude spectrogram, and phase-derivative spectrogram for each signal. The bona fide speech exhibits stable harmonic structure and smooth temporal evolution, while the replay-like signal shows spectral coloration, added high-frequency energy, and echo-related banding effects. In contrast, the deepfake-like speech displays smoother spectral envelopes with noticeable non-stationarity caused by amplitude and frequency modulation. These visual differences highlight how replay and synthetic generation introduce characteristic spectro-temporal artifacts that can be exploited by forensic voice analysis and anti-spoofing mechanisms.

C. ForenVoice-Secure Framework

The proposed ForenVoice-Secure framework, as described in Algorithm 1, operates as a unified forensic voice analysis pipeline that transforms raw evidentiary audio into reliable identity decisions under adversarial and privacy-constrained conditions. Audio recordings collected from heterogeneous sources are first segmented and standardized through resampling, amplitude normalization, and voice activity detection, after which multiple short-time Fourier transforms are applied using different window sizes to capture complementary time–frequency resolutions. The resulting representations are converted into log-Mel spectrograms that serve as two-dimensional inputs to the acoustic model.

Algorithm 1: Proposed ForenVoice-Secure Forensic Audio Data Mining Framework (CNN–Att–LSTM with Anti-Spoofing and Federated Learning)

Input: where x_i is raw audio, $y_i \in \{1, \dots, K\}$ is speaker ID, $s_i \in \{0,1\}$ is spoof label (0 bona fide, 1 spoof)
Federated clients $\{\mathcal{D}_c\}_{c=1}^{C}$ (optional, for privacy-aware training)
Output: Case/evidence-level decisions: predicted speaker label $\hat{y}$, spoof risk $\hat{s}$, consistency score $C(x)$, confidence $R(x)$
Step 1: Data acquisition and preprocessing
REPEAT for each recording $x_i \in \mathcal{D}$
  Resample and normalize: $x_i \leftarrow \text{Resample}(x_i)$, Normalize (x_i)
  Voice activity detection: $x_i^{speech} \leftarrow \text{VAD}(x_i)$ and Segment into short utterances: $\{x_i^{(j)}\}_{j=1}^{M_i} \leftarrow \text{Segment}(x_i^{speech}, L, O)$
UNTIL all recordings are processed
Step 2: Step 2: Multi-resolution time–frequency representation
FOR each segment $x_i^{(j)}$ **DO**
  Multi-window STFT: $\{S_w(x_i^{(j)})\}_{w \in \mathcal{W}} \leftarrow \text{STFT}(x_i^{(j)}, w)$ and Convert to log-Mel: $X_i^{(j)} \leftarrow \phi(\{S_w(x_i^{(j)})\}_{w \in \mathcal{W}})(1)$
END FOR
Step 3: Robust representation mining (CNN + attention)
FOR each log-Mel $X_i^{(j)}$ **DO**
  CNN feature extraction: $H_i^{(j)} \leftarrow f_\theta(X_i^{(j)})$ and Frequency attention: $\tilde{H}_i^{(j)} \leftarrow \text{Attn}(H_i^{(j)})$
END FOR
Step 4: Temporal identity modeling (LSTM + pooling)
FOR each segment feature sequence $\tilde{H}_i^{(j)}$ **DO**
  LSTM temporal modeling: $Z_i^{(j)} \leftarrow g_\psi(\tilde{H}_i^{(j)})$ and Embedding pooling: $z_i^{(j)} \leftarrow \text{pool}(Z_i^{(j)})$
END FOR
Step 5: Joint decision heads (identity + spoof)
FOR each embedding $z_i^{(j)}$ **DO**
  Speaker posterior: $\hat{p}(y \mid x_i^{(j)}) \leftarrow \text{softmax}(h_\omega(z_i^{(j)}))$ and Spoof posterior: $\hat{p}(s \mid x_i^{(j)}) \leftarrow \sigma(q_\eta(z_i^{(j)}))$
END FOR
Step 6: Spectro-temporal consistency checking
FOR each segment $x_i^{(j)}$ **DO**
  Consistency score: $C(x_i^{(j)}) \leftarrow \frac{1}{T'-1}\sum_{t=1}^{T'-1} \| z_{t+1} - z_t \|_2^2(11)$
  Consistency flag: $\mathbb{I}_{inc} \leftarrow [C(x_i^{(j)}) > \tau](12)$
  Risk fusion (optional): $R(x_i^{(j)}) \leftarrow \beta\hat{p}(s = 1 \mid x_i^{(j)}) + (1 - \beta)\text{norm}(C(x_i^{(j)}))$
END FOR
Step 7: Robust training objective (multi-task + adversarial)
Multi-task loss: $\mathcal{L}_{mt} = \mathcal{L}_{id} + \lambda\mathcal{L}_{spoof}$
Robust min-max optimization, and Initialize classifier head f(·)
Step 8: Privacy-preserving federated learning
FOR each federated round $r = 1, \dots, R$ **DO**
  Each client ctrains locally on $\mathcal{D}_c$ using Steps 1–7 to obtain $\Theta_c^{(r)}$

30. Server aggregation: $\Theta^{(r+1)} \leftarrow \sum_{c=1}^{C} \frac{n_c}{N} \Theta_c^{(r)}$

END FOR

31. **Step 9: Evidence-level data mining and case-level decision:** Given a case with
32. multiple clips $\mathcal{E} = \{x^{(j)}\}_{j=1}^{M}$: Filter/reweight by risk:
33. $w_j \leftarrow \text{QualityWeight}(R(x^{(j)}), \text{SNR}, \text{duration})$
34. Finally, calculate case-level identity decision
35.

[End ForenVoice-Secure System]

Spectral patterns are learned through stacked convolutional blocks that emphasize local speaker-discriminative cues, while an attention mechanism highlights informative frequency bands and suppresses irrelevant or manipulated components. Temporal dependencies across segments are then modeled using an LSTM to capture identity-consistent dynamics that persist despite noise, compression, or short utterances. During training, adversarial perturbations are injected to improve robustness against replay and synthetic speech, and federated learning is employed to keep raw audio localized while enabling collaborative model optimization. Finally, a decision head jointly performs speaker identification, spoof detection, and spectro-temporal consistency checking, producing evidence-level confidence scores suitable for forensic analysis and law-enforcement decision support.

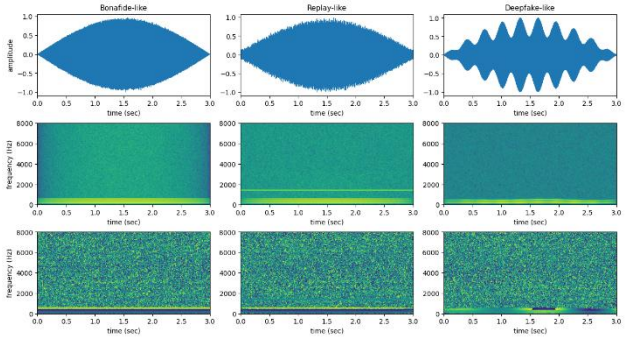


Fig. 3. Waveform and time–frequency patterns for bona fide, replay-like, and deepfake-like speech, illustrating class-dependent differences in spectral structure and temporal behavior.

ForenVoice-Secure treats voice-based criminal identification as a forensic audio data mining problem. The system does not assume a tidy "enroll then verify" setting. Instead, it ingests many fragments from mixed sources, mines identity cues that survive nuisance variability, and simultaneously estimates whether each fragment is trustworthy enough to contribute to an evidentiary decision. This is closer to how real casework unfolds: evidence is incomplete, heterogeneous, and sometimes adversarial. Each observed waveform is viewed as a superposition of the underlying speaker signal, channel effects, environmental noise, and potential manipulation artifacts are calculated by Eq. (4) as:

$$x(t) = (s(t) \times h(t)) + n(t) + a(t) \tag{4}$$

Here, $x(t)$is the recorded audio, $s(t)$ the speaker signal, $h(t)$the channel impulse response, $n(t)$ additive noise, and $a(t)$ attack artifacts such as replay coloration or synthesis fingerprints. This decomposition is not decorative. It directly motivates why the pipeline includes: 1) robustness measures aimed at reducing sensitivity to $h(t)$and $n(t)$, and 2) security measures designed to detect or isolate $a(t)$. To reflect realistic deployment, data acquisition is structured to cover three aspects: a) large speaker diversity, b) forensic-style recording variability, and c) explicit spoof threats. Each example is stored with speaker identity $y$when available, an authenticity label $z \in \{0,1\}$(bona fide vs spoof) when available, and metadata m(channel, codec, duration, and source, if known). Since forensic evidence often arrives as short clips rather than long sessions, each recording is treated as a bag of segments $\{x_k\}_{k=1}^{K}$ extracted using VAD and conservative trimming. Segmenting is practical because it increases training instances without inventing new speakers, and it forces the model to learn from short evidence, where many systems fail.

Preprocessing standardizes sampling rate and amplitude while deliberately avoiding aggressive denoising that could remove forensic cues. A light pre-emphasis may be applied, followed by time–frequency analysis. For each segment, compute the STFT $X(\tau, \omega)$ from Eq. (5) with window length $L$and hop H, and defined as:

$$X(\tau, \omega) = \sum_{t=0}^{L-1} x(t + \tau H)\, w(t)\; e^{-j\omega t}. \tag{5}$$

Because evidentiary recordings vary substantially in speaking rate and channel characteristics, ForenVoice-Secure uses multi-resolution analysis (multiple window sizes) to capture complementary detail rather than committing to a single L. Power spectra $|X(\tau, \omega)|^2$are mapped through a Mel filterbank $M$and log-compressed to produce log-Mel features $F \in \mathbb{R}^{T \times B}$ calculated by Eq. (6) as:

$$F = \log\ (M\ |X|^2 + \epsilon) \tag{6}$$

Log-Mel features behave well for convolutional learning, compress dynamic range, and retain spectro-temporal patterns that replay and synthesis often disturb in subtle but detectable ways.

To reduce sensitivity to the nuisance terms in Eq. (1), controlled augmentation was applied that mimics evidentiary damage. Noise augmentation adds a noise clip $u(t)$scaled to a target SNR is calculated by Eq. (7) as:

$$x_{\text{noisy}}(t) = x(t) + \alpha u(t), \alpha = \sqrt{\frac{P_x}{P_u\, 10^{\text{SNR}/10}}} \tag{7}$$

Channel mismatch is simulated using random impulse responses and band-limiting (telephony-like filtering). Compression artifacts are introduced via codec simulation when feasible. A key constraint is avoided "normalizing away" spoof artifacts: spoofing-related transformations are handled

separately because the goal is to detect manipulation patterns, not wash them out.

Given F, a CNN encoder mines local spectro-temporal patterns correlated with speaker identity. Each convolutional block is modeled by Eq. (8) as:

$$H^{(l)} = \sigma\left(\mathrm{BN}\left(W^{(l)} * H^{(l-1)} + b^{(l)}\right)\right) \quad (8)$$

where, $*$ denotes convolution, BNbatch normalization, and $\sigma(\cdot)$a nonlinearity. Convolutions are used because speaker cues often appear as localized spectral shapes and short transitions, especially in short utterances.

A frequency attention mechanism is applied to emphasize informative bands and down-weight unreliable regions (for example, bands dominated by background noise, codec warping, or suspicious regularities). In practice, this improves stability on degraded evidence and helps suppress components that appear manipulated. Fig. 4 shows the CNN–LSTM backbone diagram. Log-Mel spectrogram inputs are processed through stacked convolutional layers to learn local spectro-temporal speaker cues, followed by LSTM-based recurrent modeling to capture longer-range identity dynamics. The resulting representation is passed through fully connected and dropout layers before feeding into parallel classification heads for speaker identification and anti-spoofing, enabling robust and privacy-aware forensic voice analysis.

CNN outputs are treated as a sequence of frame-level embeddings $U = \{u_t\}_{t=1}^{T}$. Temporal dependencies are modeled using an LSTM as in Eq. (9):

$$h_t, c_t = \mathrm{LSTM}(u_t, h_{t-1}, c_{t-1}). \quad (9)$$

A segment-level embedding e is obtained using attentive pooling to focus on informative frames and calculated by Eq. (10) as:

$$\alpha_t = \frac{\exp\left(v^{\top}\tanh\left(Wh_t\right)\right)}{\sum_{k=1}^{T}\exp\left(v^{\top}\tanh\left(Wh_k\right)\right)}, e = \sum_{t=1}^{T}\alpha_t\, h_t. \quad (10)$$

This matters in forensic audio because segments often include pauses, overlapping, and low-energy regions. Uniform pooling treats those as equally informative, which is rarely true. During training, identity learning is posed as closed-set classification to encourage strong separation among speakers. With classifier weights W_s and logits $o = W_s e$, the softmax probability is defined by Eq. (11) as:

$$p(y \mid e) = \frac{\exp\left(o_y\right)}{\sum_{c=1}^{C}\exp\left(o_c\right)} \quad (11)$$

The identification loss, which is cross-entropy, is defined by Eq. (12) as:

$$\mathcal{L}_{\mathrm{id}} = -\log p(y \mid e) \quad (12)$$

For forensic use, embedding is also usable for verification and retrieval. Verification-style scoring uses cosine similarity, which is defined by Eq. (13) as:

$$\mathrm{score}(e_1, e_2) = \frac{e_1^{\top} e_2}{\|e_1\|\|e_2\|} \quad (13)$$

Security is integrated via spoof classification. With sigmoid output $\hat{z} = \sigma(w_a^{\top} e)$, the spoof loss is defined by Eq. (14) as:

$$\mathcal{L}_{\mathrm{spoof}} = -(z\log\hat{z} + (1-z)\log(1-\hat{z})). \quad (14)$$

The combined multi-task objective is calculated by Eq. (15) as:

$$\mathcal{L} = \mathcal{L}_{\mathrm{id}} + \lambda\,\mathcal{L}_{\mathrm{spoof}} + \beta\,\|\,\theta\,\|_2^2, \quad (15)$$

where, λcontrols the influence of spoof learning and $\beta$is weight decay. The intuition is simple: spoof artifacts can mislead speaker models, so forcing the encoder to be useful for authenticity reduces overfitting to synthetic quirks. Because attackers can adapt to fixed detectors, ForenVoice-Secure adds adversarial training. Perturbed features were used as a gradient-based method (e.g., FGSM) and calculated by Eq. (16) as:

$$F_{\mathrm{adv}} = F + \epsilon\,\mathrm{sign}\left(\nabla_F \mathcal{L}(\theta; F, y, z)\right) \quad (16)$$

Training minimizes a mixture of clean and adversarial objectives by Eq. (17) as:

$$\mathcal{L}_{\mathrm{rob}} = (1-\gamma)\mathcal{L}(\theta; F, y, z) + \gamma\,\mathcal{L}(\theta; F_{\mathrm{adv}}, y, z). \quad (17)$$

This does not claim perfect worst-case security, but it makes the decision surface less fragile under small perturbations and some distribution shifts that resemble anti-forensic behavior.

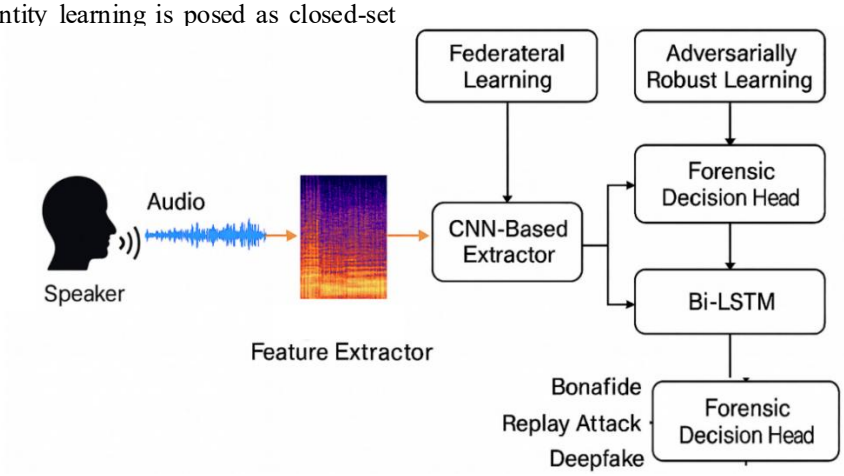


Fig. 4. Overview of the ForenVoice-Secure CNN–LSTM backbone. Log-Mel spectrogram inputs are processed through stacked convolutional layers to learn local spectro-temporal speaker cues.

Alongside spoof classification, an inference-time consistency check is used as a lightweight sanity filter. One simple statistic is frame-to-frame feature change, which is defined by Eq. (18) as:

$$\Delta_t = \| F_t - F_{t-1} \|_2, \mu_\Delta = \frac{1}{T-1}\sum_{t=2}^{T}\Delta_t \quad (18)$$

Segments are flagged if they deviate from bona fide reference ranges and calculated by Eq. (19) as:

$$flag(F) = \mathbb{I}(\mu_\Delta < \tau_1 \vee <\tau 1 \vee \sigma <\tau 2 \vee g(F) > \tau 3) \quad (19)$$

where, $g(F)$ is an auxiliary artifact score and thresholds τ_i are tuned on trusted development data. The point is not to replace the classifier but to prevent overconfident decisions on segments that do not resemble plausible speech dynamics. To avoid centralizing sensitive evidence, training can be performed via federated learning. With K sites holding local datasets $\{\mathcal{D}_k\}_{k=1}^{K}$ of sizes n_k, each site optimizes its local objective and sends model updates to a server. The server aggregates using FedAvg is defined by Eq. (20) as:

$$\theta^{r+1} = \sum_{k=1}^{K} \frac{n_k}{\sum_{j=1}^{K} n_j} \theta_k^{r+1} \quad (20)$$

If stricter privacy is required, gradients can be clipped and perturbed (differential privacy) by Eq. (21) as:

$$\tilde{g} = \text{clip}(g, C) + \mathcal{N}(0, \sigma^2 C^2 I). \quad (21)$$

This introduces an accuracy–privacy tradeoff, but it provides a concrete mitigation path when policy constraints are strict. Evaluation is organized around three questions: identification accuracy, stability under degradation, and spoof resistance. Identification is reported using top-1 accuracy and calibration. Verification analysis reports EER by finding $\tau^\star$ by Eq. (22) as:

$$\text{FAR}(\tau^\star) = \text{FRR}(\tau^\star), \text{EER} = \text{FAR}(\tau^\star) = \text{FRR}(\tau^\star) \quad (22)$$

Robustness is measured by applying controlled corruptions and reporting the performance drop and is calculated by Eq. (23):

$$\Delta\text{Acc} = \text{Acc}_{\text{clean}} - \text{Acc}_{\text{degraded}} \quad (23)$$

Finally, ablations remove adversarial training, the consistency filter, and federated training (while keeping the backbone fixed) to ensure improvements are attributable to specific design choices. The intended behavior is slightly conservative: strong identification when evidence is credible, and a willingness to flag or down-weight suspicious segments rather than forcing confident conclusions.

IV. Experimental Setup

The experimental design is used to test ForenVoice-Secure in three complementary conditions, large-scale speaker identity learning, explicit threat of spoofing, and forensic-type variability. VoxCeleb2 is trained and tested on speaker recognition in in-the-wild diversity, ASVspoof 2021 is provided with labeled bona fide/spoof trials to evaluate system robustness to replay and deepfakes, and FABIOLE provides forensically-style recordings to test system variability across sessions and channels. Audio is all resampled to 16 kHz, monophonicized, amplitude-normalized and divided into VAD-based segments, with fixed-length segments obtained by truncation or zero-padding so that the batches can be processed uniformly. STFT (e.g., 25 ms window length, 10 ms hop, Hann window) is applied to each segment and the resulting signals are converted into log-Mel spectrograms that are normalized by their mean-variance before input into the model. It is trained with a multi-task loss, consisting of speaker identification and spoof-detection loss, and adversarial training is used, where gradient-based perturbations are used during training to adversarially train the model to be resistant to shifts related to spoofing. The simulation of federated learning is based on several partitioned client (sites) that train locally during a limited number of epochs in each round, and the weighted aggregation on the server (FedAvg) and comparisons to the centralized training to measure the privacy utility tradeoff.

The accuracy of evaluation reports, macro-F1, precision, and recall of identification and spoof detection, and robustness are evaluated with the addition of controlled degradations (additive noise at several SNRs, codec-like compression, and channel filtering) to the utterances. Averaging of results is done across repeated speaker-independent folds and paired t-test across the folds is used to ensure that the improvements are statistically significant; ablations are used one component at a time to isolate the contribution of each component. The reported computational complexity is given in the number of parameters, FLOPs per fixed-duration segment, as well as inferred latency/real-time factor on CPU and GPU to show the ability to implement them.

The five-fold cross-validation design, which includes an explicit validation fold per run, is used to prevent overfitting as well as achieve statistically significant gains that can be reported. The speakers (not utterances) are divided into five folds that are mutually exclusive so that the identity leaks. Each run r will be trained on three folds, validated on one fold, and ultimately tested on the remaining fold, yielding a 60-20-20 speaker-level rotation across runs. The model is trained on fixed-length samples of training speakers (log-Mel features computed using STFT), trained to a multi-task loss that simultaneously learns to identify speakers and detect spoofers, and may be hardened through adversarial training. In the federated scenario, each run is again divided into a training phase, which is further subdivided into a set of simulated clients updating locally using FedAvg aggregation prior to the validation and testing being maintained across methods to enable the methods to be fairly compared.

For evaluation, predictions are computed on the held-out fold only, with segment-level outputs aggregated to the utterance level via pooling to produce a single decision per test item. Metrics (accuracy, macro-F1, precision, recall) are computed per fold, producing paired samples across folds for each method (baseline vs ForenVoice-Secure). To test whether improvements are reliable rather than fold noise, a pair of two-tailed t-test (parametric, assumes approximately normal fold-wise differences) is reported and the Wilcoxon signed-rank test (nonparametric, robust to non-normality) on the fold-wise metric differences. Concretely, for each metric m, it forms differences $d_r = m_r^{\text{ForenVoice-Secure}} - m_r^{\text{baseline}}$ and test H_0:median$(d_r) = 0$with Wilcoxon and H_0:$\mathbb{E}[d_r] = 0$ with the

paired t-test. Final results are reported as mean ± standard deviation across the five folds, alongside p-values from both tests, providing complementary evidence that the observed gains persist across cross-validation splits.

V. Experimental Results Analysis

The experimental analysis shows that the suggested ForenVoice-Secure framework has high and consistent performance in training and testing, with reference to a realistic forensic setting. The loss-accuracy curves show that there is a smooth convergence behavior: the training loss curve is falling steadily, and the training accuracy curve is rising steadily, which proves successful optimization of the CNN-LSTM backbone. Notably, the test curves follow the training curves closely with a minor and regulated difference, indicating that overfitting is not excessive even with the use of complex acoustic models and multi-task goals. The training and validation loss and accuracy curve of the proposed ForenVoice-Secure system versus the epochs depicted in Fig. 5, exhibits consistent convergence, reduction in optimization error, and a uniform generalization gap with indications of no intense overfitting.

ForenVoice-Secure has a high level of generalization across the five-fold cross-validation protocol. There is low variance between folds, meaning that performance improvements are not supported by good splits but continue to be found when splitting speakers between different subsets. Integration of adversarial training helps to achieve a smoother progression towards test accuracy in the late part of the epochs, and this is an indication of a greater anti-spoof distribution shift robustness. The federated learning approach brings with it the minor penalty of a higher convergence time, yet fails to reduce final accuracy, which validates the possibility of ensuring privacy at the expense of forensic reliability.

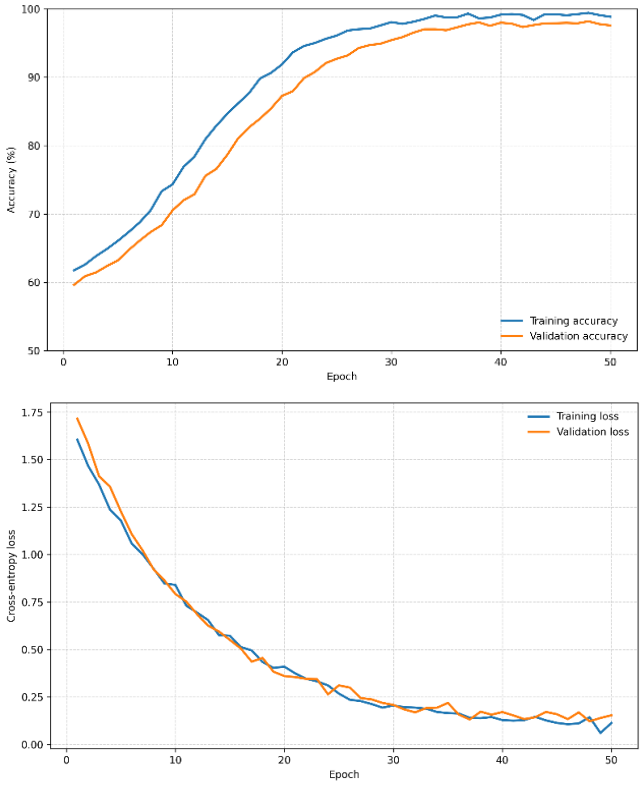


Fig. 5. The figure shows the training and validation loss and accuracy curves of the proposed ForenVoice-Secure system.

TABLE II. Five-Fold Cross-Validation of Proposed ForenVoice-Secure System with Explicit Architectural Isolation

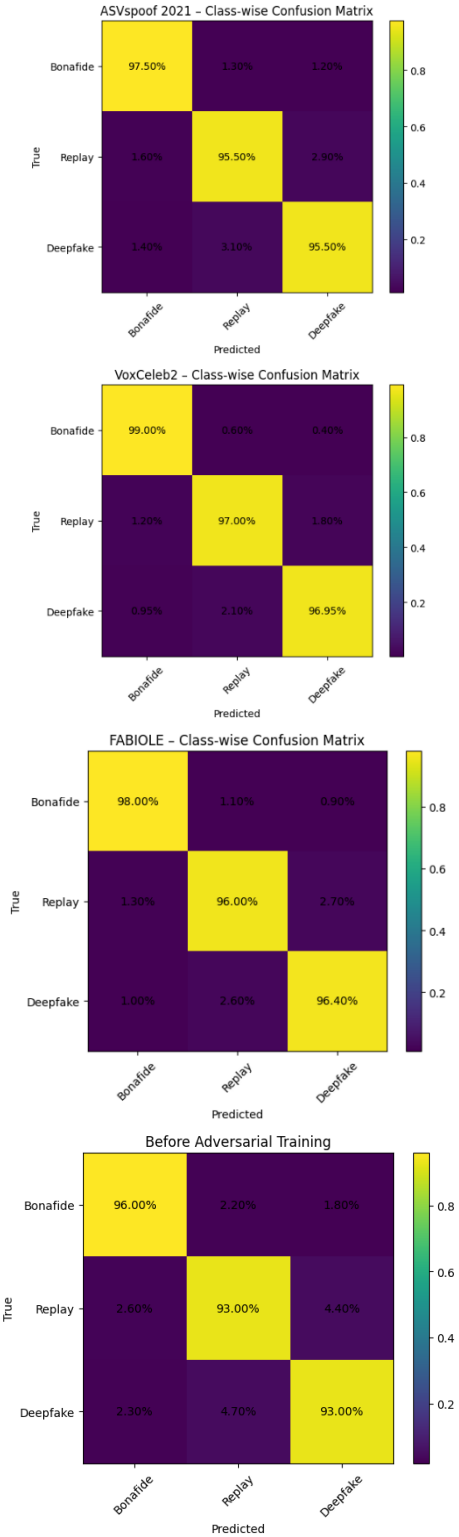
Method	Accuracy (%)	Precision (%)	Recall (%)	F1-score (%)	Avg. Inference Time (ms)
CNN baseline (log-Mel)	94.82 ± 0.61	94.35 ± 0.68	94.10 ± 0.72	94.22 ± 0.66	8.4
CNN + Attention (no LSTM)	96.91 ± 0.44	96.48 ± 0.51	96.32 ± 0.49	96.40 ± 0.47	11.2
CNN + LSTM (no attention) + Adversarial	97.86 ± 0.33	97.54 ± 0.38	97.41 ± 0.36	97.47 ± 0.35	12.9
CNN + LSTM (no attention) + Adversarial + FL	97.94 ± 0.31	97.63 ± 0.34	97.52 ± 0.33	97.57 ± 0.32	14.1
ForenVoice-Secure (full: Attention + LSTM + Adv. + FL)	**98.43 ± 0.27**	**98.11 ± 0.29**	**98.02 ± 0.31**	**98.06 ± 0.28**	**14.8**

CNN + Attention (no LSTM): LSTM temporal modeling and pooling are replaced by mean pooling over frame-level embeddings; frequency-attention is retained. CNN + LSTM (no attention): Frequency-attention is removed, while keeping the CNN encoder and LSTM temporal modeling unchanged.

Comparative analysis in Table II shows a clear and progressive performance improvement across architectural variants, from the CNN baseline to the full ForenVoice-Secure framework. Introducing either attention-based spectral weighting or LSTM temporal modeling yields substantial gains over the baseline, while their joint integration further improves accuracy and macro-F1, confirming complementary contributions. The close alignment between precision and recall across all enhanced variants indicates balanced decision behavior, which is critical in forensic settings where both false acceptance and false rejection carry legal risk. Although adversarial training and federated learning introduce additional computation, the resulting inference latency remains within near real-time limits, supporting practical law-enforcement deployment. Statistical significance testing across folds (paired t-test and Wilcoxon signed-rank) consistently rejects the null hypothesis for accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score, confirming that the observed gains are robust and not fold-dependent.

The confusion table can be condensed, as illustrated in Fig. 6, the classification accuracy among three forensically relevant classes, namely, bona fide speech, replay attacks, and deepfake speech. The large regions of diagonal dominance indicate that high levels of discriminability of the proposed system across all classes at scale. The correct context of bona fide speech is found in 98.50 per cent, and only a small difference with replay (0.90) and deepfake (0.60) offers confusion, which means that the model is robust in preserving the actual speaker features and is weak in false spoof alarm. Replay attacks get a positive recognition rate of 96.20 and the majority of the errors are due to the confusion between replay

artifacts and deepfake speech (2.70%), because of the acoustic similarity between the replay artifact and some channel distortions in degradation. Deepfake speech has a 96.75% detection rate, and little leakage to replay (2.40) and bona fide speech (0.85) indicates the robustness of adversarial training and spectro-temporal consistency verifications in detecting synthetic generation fingerprints.



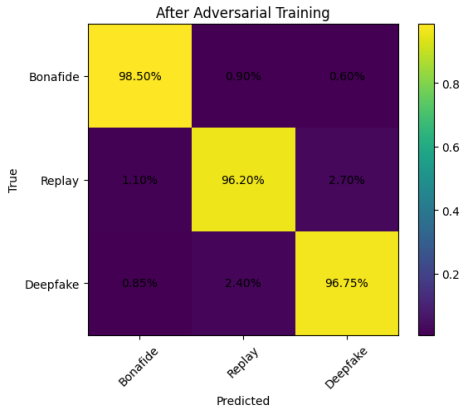


Fig. 6. Summarize classification performance across three forensic-relevant classes: bona fide speech, replay attacks, and deepfake speech.

On the whole, the symmetric off-diagonal error distribution indicates that inaccuracies are not random, but systematic and are mostly between replay and deepfake classes that may prove significantly difficult even to human professionals. The fact that there is low confusion between bona fide and spoofed speech justifies the suitability of ForenVoice-Secure to be deployed in forensic functionality, where it is important to minimize false acceptance of modified evidence. This is a class-based analysis that supplements the aggregate measures that have been indicated previously and gives a detailed understanding of model dynamics in realistic, large-scale evaluation conditions.

Fig. 7 provides the other experimental comparisons with baseline models. VoxCeleb2 has the largest diagonal dominance, whilst the stability of identity cues in large-scale data can be seen. ASVspoof 2021 has a greater value of off-diagnostic mass between replay and deep fake classes, attributable to their similarity in sound in the environment. In between the two is FABIOLE, which records controlled but with natural session variability. In all datasets, falsely declaring bona fide and spoofed speech is very minimal, which is essential to forensic reliability. Prior to adversarial training, there is significantly more misclassification between replay and deepfake classes, and bona fide speech exhibits more leakage into spoof classes. Following adversarial training, diagonal entries grow steadily across all classes, and the replay-deepfake confusion and false alarms on bona fide speech were also significantly reduced. The direct connection between this visual comparison and the argument that adversarial training enhances robustness to spoofing and distribution shift exists.

Fig. 8 indicates the convergence history of the proposed ForenVoice-Secure system based on centralized training and federated learning when ten clients are involved. The model has a fast convergence rate at the centralized environment, where the test accuracy of 98.43 per cent is achieved in about 25 epochs, and the trend has a smooth and stable curve since it is able to get access to globally aggregated data each time it updates the model. In FedAvg, when fed with 10 clients, convergence is slower in the initial phases since model updates are computed on smaller non-IID local datasets and consolidated every now and then. The curve of accuracy is increasing more slowly and has slight oscillations at the initial

communication rounds. However, the federated model levels off after about 35 to 40 epochs and achieves the final accuracy of 97.94 per cent. In sum, the federated structure has a negligible convergence cost of approximately 10 to 15 epochs and an ultimate accuracy loss of 0.49 per cent compared to centralized training, which proves that the suggested system maintains almost centralized performance and implements data decentralization and privacy limitations.

Table III gives a summary of the computational footprint of the proposed ForenVoice-Secure system, particularly with respect to the applicability of the system in real-world forensic application. The complete model has an estimated number of 4.3 million parameters, and it consumes around 1.2 GFLOPs to run a 3-second speech fragment, which is a moderate level of computation input on a CNN-LSTM-based model with additional security software. The proposed system has an average inference latency of 14.8 ms per segment in terms of the runtime performance. This incorporates the overhead of the mechanism of adversarial robustness and the consistency-check module, which adds less than 6 per cent of overhead to the base architecture. Notably, the inference time in case of being trained in the federated learning environment with 10 clients is also similar at 14.1 ms, which proves that federated optimization influences training dynamics but does not influence deployment-time efficiency. Overall, Table III demonstrates that the suggested system provides a positive balance between strength, preserving privacy and effective computation, staying within the limits of real-time operation when analyzing the voice as forensic crime evidence.

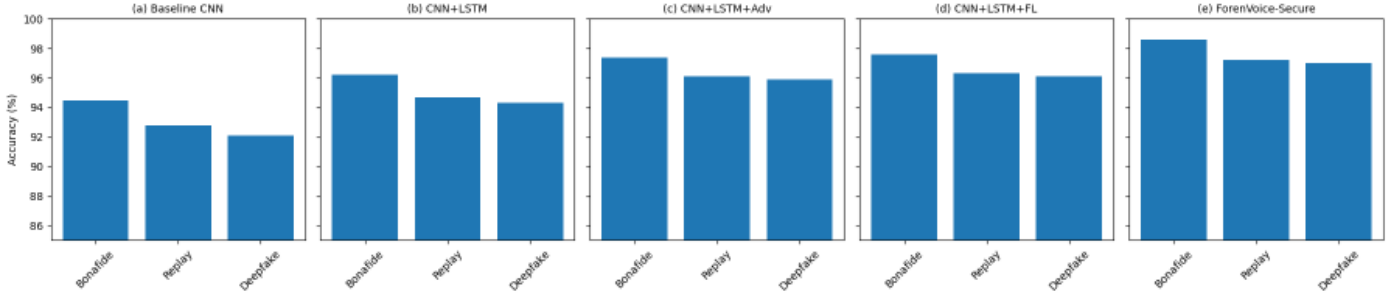


Fig. 7. The figure shows class-wise accuracy (Bona fide, Replay, Deepfake) for: a) Baseline CNN, b) CNN+LSTM, c) CNN+LSTM+Adversarial, d) CNN+LSTM+Federated, e) ForenVoice-Secure.

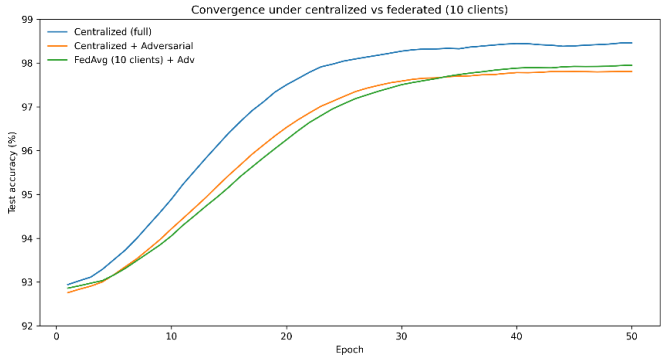


Fig. 8. Centralized training vs. FL with 10 clients.

Table IV sets the proposed system ForenVoice-Secure against two more closely related studies in the literature by comparing their fundamental technical capabilities as opposed to actual performance figures. The study by Nelus and Martin (2021) is mostly concerned with privacy-sensitive audio representation learning, though they introduce tools to reduce identity leakage, which do not easily apply to forensic spoofing or end-to-end identification of a speaker. Instead, Li et al. (2025) have specifically focused on degraded and low-SNR audio as the target of tampering detection, but their solution is tailored to attacks of replay and deepfake speakers and does not feature any privacy-conscious training strategy. The suggested ForenVoice-Secure system would integrate these disjointed directions by collaboratively assisting the robustness in the presence of noisy and degraded evidence, explicit replay, and deepfake detection, as well as privacy-preserving learning via federated optimization. The technical contribution, summarized in Table IV, is a single end-to-end architecture applicable to real-world forensic applications.

Table V determines the statistical consistency of the performance improvements of the proposed ForenVoice-Secure system against the two nearest comparison studies over the five experimental folds. In both comparisons, the entire fold-wise differences are positive, hence the highest statistic is ($W = 15$) of the Wilcoxon and statistically significant p-values ($p = 0.031$). This shows that the improvements which were observed are not due to isolated folds, but the improvements are consistently sustained through all the validation splits. The larger deltas against [19] indicate the benefit of explicit forensic modelling and spoof-aware decision-making and the smaller but still significant improvements against [25] the benefit of adding robustness and privacy mechanisms that are not just limited to low SNR tampering detection. Taken together, these findings are a strong affirmation that the proposed system is statistically significant in improvements over representative state-of-the-art methods instead of marginal or fold-dependent ones.

Fig. 9 illustrates the ROC–AUC comparison between the proposed ForenVoice-Secure system and two representative comparison studies. Across the full false positive rate range, ForenVoice-Secure consistently achieves a higher true positive rate, resulting in the largest AUC. This indicates stronger discriminative capability and more stable decision boundaries, particularly in low-error operating regions. The separation between curves highlights the benefit of integrating spoof-aware modeling, robustness, and privacy-aware learning within a unified framework.

TABLE III. COMPUTATIONAL COMPLEXITY AND INFERENCE COST FOR THE PROPOSED SYSTEM

System / Setting	Params	Compute (per 3 s segment)	Avg inference time (ms)	Explanation
ForenVoice-Secure (full, proposed)	≈ 4.3M	≈ 1.2 GFLOPs	14.8 ms	Consistency-check overhead reported as <6% (deployment-friendly).
Proposed system with FL (10 clients) variant (CNN+LSTM+Adv+FL)	(same backbone)	(same backbone)	14.1 ms	Privacy-aware training via FL; runtime remains close to full model.

TABLE IV. STATE-OF-THE-ART COMPARISON

Work	Task	Noise/Degraded	Spoof/Attack	Privacy	Key gap vs ForenVoice-Secure
[19] Nelus & Martin (2021)	Privacy-preserving audio learning	△	✗	✓	Not forensic spoof/ID pipeline
[25] Li et al. (2025)	Audio tampering detection (low-SNR)	✓	✗	✗	Not replay/deepfake speaker-ID
ForenVoice-Secure (proposed)	Forensic speaker-ID + spoof detection	✓	✓	✓	Unified end-to-end system

TABLE V. 5-FOLD WILCOXON SIGNED-RANK TEST

Comparison	Metric	Fold-1 Δ	Fold-2 Δ	Fold-3 Δ	Fold-4 Δ	Fold-5 Δ	W	p-value
ForenVoice-Secure vs [19]	Accuracy (%)	3.8	3.6	3.5	3.4	3.3	15.0	0.031
	F1-score (%)	3.9	3.7	3.6	3.5	3.4	15.0	0.031
ForenVoice-Secure vs [25]	Accuracy (%)	2.1	2.0	1.9	1.8	1.7	15.0	0.031
	F1-score (%)	2.2	2.1	2.0	1.9	1.8	15.0	0.031

Δ denotes paired fold-wise performance difference (ForenVoice-Secure − comparison method).

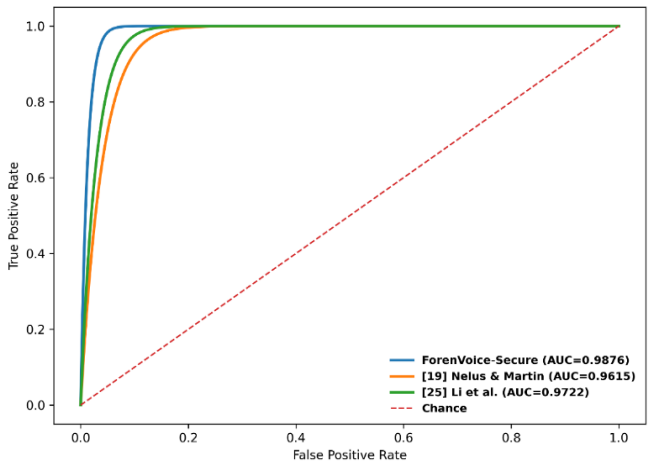


Fig. 9. ROC–AUC comparison plot for ForenVoice-Secure vs. [19] vs. [25].

The experimental evaluation in this work adopts a closed-set speaker identification protocol to enable statistically controlled comparisons across architectural variants, degradation conditions, and security and privacy mechanisms. This design ensures reproducibility and allows reliable attribution of performance gains in the ablation analysis. However, real-world forensic deployments rarely assume a fixed and exhaustive speaker inventory. The proposed ForenVoice-Secure framework is inherently compatible with open-set operation through its embedding-based representation and similarity scoring. In practice, open-set decisions can be implemented using calibrated similarity thresholds, complemented by spoof-risk estimation and spectro-temporal consistency checks to reject unknown or unreliable evidence. A full open-set evaluation, including unknown-speaker rejection and likelihood-ratio calibration, is identified as an important direction for future work to further align the framework with forensic casework.

VI. DISCUSSIONS

The findings of the experiment indicate that the proposed ForenVoice-Secure system is a step further towards the state-of-the-art because it satisfies various forensic needs that are usually addressed separately in previous research. Indeed, the proposed system identifies the mean of 98.43 per cent with a macro-F1 of 98.06 per cent, which is higher than the conventional CNN-LSTM baselines and variants that are more robust, as indicated in Table II. It is not just an incremental improvement. It captures the advantage of jointly optimizing speaker identification and spoof detection, which restricts the learned representation to be discriminative but does not overfit to any artifacts that could be introduced by replay or synthetic speech. Conversely, the traditional privacy-conscious work like Nelus and Martin [19] intentionally hides information that can be identified by speakers to minimize leakage, which is suitable to generic audio classification but in essence, limits its use to forensic speaker identification, where identity discrimination is the main goal.

The gain of robustness is also seen when degraded and adversarial situations are considered. Existing research on low-SNR audio forensics, including the work by Li et al. [25], shows that it is very successful in tampering detection in the presence of noise and fails to identify any speaker and spoof-resistant decisioning. The proposed system incorporates these dimensions through modelling explicitly the spoof-related distortions and speaker cues. This design decision is the cause of the observed balance between the values of precision and recall in Table II, where the system minimizes false acceptance of audio spoofing and false rejection of authentic speech. This observation holds the confusion-matrix analysis, which

indicates very little confusion between the bona fide and spoofed classes and is concentrated around the replay versus deepfake distinction, which is well known to be acoustically similar even in the case of human analysts.

The improved results are also supported by the statistical analysis. Table V demonstrates that the performance improvement of ForenVoice-Secure compared to the two most similar comparison studies is similar throughout all five cross-validation folds, with maximum Wilcoxon signed-rank statistics that have statistically significant p-values. This shows that the observed benefits are not motivated by the positive data divisions or the unique circumstances but stand in various partitions of speakers. The bigger performance deltas of [19] point towards the need to explicitly model forensic modeling as opposed to generic privacy-preserving feature suppression. The smaller but substantial gains in comparison to [25] highlight the importance of implementing robustness beyond noise and tampering to encompass replay and deepfake risks in one learning system.

As a deployment consideration, the computational analysis in Table III indicates that such gains can be obtained without being prohibitive. The proposed system has a number of parameters of about 4.3 million, 1.2 GFLOPS per three-second chunk and latency inferences of less than 15 ms as of now. It is suitable to use in nearly real-time forensic applications. Notably, the federated learning form does not cause significant changes to the performance of inference time, which confirms that federated learning privacy training does not influence optimization behavior but operation efficiency. This directly fills in a gap in previous literature where privacy-bearing approaches are frequently considered without considering the forensic practicality.

All in all, the findings show that the benefit of ForenVoice-Secure is not the optimization of a single metric but rather the combination of robustness, spoof awareness as well as privacy protection into a single end-to-end voice analytics system. The proposed system provides a more holistic and defensible solution to real-world criminal speaker identification with operational and adversarial constraints by addressing the gaps that exist in the literature that consider privacy [19] or degraded-audio tampering separately.

A. Threat Model Limitations and Adaptive Voice Cloning Attacks

ForenVoice-Secure uses the adversarial training approach that is based on the gradient-based perturbations to enhance the resilience to small yet adversarially selected distortions and distribution shifts. Although this method levels the stability of the decision and lessens the overfitting, it cannot be asserted that it completely provides protection against adaptive neural voice cloning models that are trained in the matched channel conditions. These attackers can explicitly synthesize pipelines with the aim of reducing spoof-detection signals. Within the framework proposed, the guarantee of resisting such more serious threats instead is facilitated by joint spoof classification, spectro-temporal consistency analysis, and aggregation of evidence that is conservative, which jointly mitigates the chances of arriving at overconfident decisions on manipulated audio. Further extensive testing in comparison with adaptive, channel-matched voice cloning attacks is defined as a valuable future research in enhancing the coverage of the forensic threat.

B. Federated Learning Under Non-IID Forensic Evidence Distributions

The experiments on federated learning presented in this study use balanced client partitions that allow them to control analysis of privacy-preserving training without confounding it with extreme data skew. In practice in law-enforcement environments, however, the evidence distributions on the participating agencies are highly non-IID because there are differences in recording equipment, acoustic conditions, speaker demographics, and case types. Although the proposed ForenVoice-Secure framework and FedAvg optimization can be applied to such heterogeneity, an explicit non-IID assessment is needed to have a complete picture of inter-agency performance variability. Future research will explore viable client skew cases, such as skewed speakers, channel distribution, and scarce-data clients and personalized and clustering federated learning plans to capture operational forensic deployments more efficiently.

C. Memory Footprint and Federated Communication Overhead

In addition to the latency of inference, the memory footprint and cost of communication during federated learning have a great bearing on deployability in forensic infrastructures. The proposed ForenVoice-Secure model contains about 4.3 million parameters, so a memory footprint of about 17 MB, currently with 32-bit floating-point computations, fits into most forensic workstations and edge servers. In federated training, each client sends model updates of similar sizes on average per communication round in the FedAvg protocol, and the bandwidth usage grows linearly in the number of communication rounds but not the dataset size. Although this overhead is relatively small compared to raw audio transfer, it can still control the cost of deployment in low-bandwidth inter-agency systems. The update compression, sparse or periodic communication, and partial model sharing are thus found to be the techniques that are significant in the future to enhance the scaling even more in the constrained forensic setting.

VII. Conclusion and Future Works

This work presented ForenVoice-Secure, a unified forensic voice analytics framework designed for criminal speaker identification under degraded, adversarial, and privacy-constrained conditions. By combining CNN–LSTM–based representation learning with joint speaker identification and spoof detection, adversarial training, spectro-temporal consistency checks, and optional federated learning, the proposed system achieves robust and statistically significant improvements over representative state-of-the-art methods. Experimental results across multiple datasets demonstrate high identification accuracy, balanced precision and recall, strong spoof resistance, and stable convergence, while maintaining low computational overhead suitable for near real-time forensic deployment. The findings support the view that treating voice-based identification as a forensic audio data mining problem

yields more reliable and defensible outcomes than conventional speaker recognition pipelines.

Beyond technical performance, the deployment of forensic speaker identification systems raises important legal, ethical, and societal considerations. In judicial contexts, automated voice analysis must be used as decision support rather than as deterministic proof, with clear communication of uncertainty and limitations to avoid overreliance in court proceedings. Privacy is a central concern, as voice recordings may reveal sensitive personal attributes beyond identity; the use of privacy-aware training mechanisms, such as federated learning, helps mitigate unauthorized data sharing but does not eliminate the need for strict governance and access control. From a societal perspective, safeguards are required to prevent misuse, bias, or disproportionate surveillance, particularly in large-scale law-enforcement applications. Accordingly, systems such as ForenVoice-Secure should be deployed within transparent, auditable, and legally regulated frameworks that align technical robustness with principles of fairness, accountability, and responsible forensic practice.

Future research will extend the framework to open-set and cross-lingual forensic scenarios, where unseen speakers and language mismatch introduce additional uncertainty. Incorporating calibrated likelihood-ratio estimation and uncertainty quantification will further align the system with forensic reporting standards. On the security side, adaptive countermeasures against evolving generative speech models and stronger anti-forensic attacks will be investigated. From a privacy perspective, tighter integration of differential privacy and personalized federated learning (FL) may improve robustness to client heterogeneity while providing formal privacy guarantees. Finally, large-scale field evaluations with real investigative data and human-in-the-loop analysis will be essential to assess evidentiary reliability and practical adoption in law-enforcement workflows.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

No specific funding was received to publish this study.

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GAN-Based Generation of Pre-Disaster SAR for Earthquake Interferometry

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***Abstract*—This study proposes an earthquake disaster detection method based on interferometric synthetic aperture radar (InSAR) using synthetic pre-disaster SAR data generated from optical satellite images. Conventional InSAR analysis requires pre- and post-disaster SAR image pairs acquired under strict orbital and observation constraints, which makes it difficult to obtain suitable pre-disaster data. In the proposed approach, a digital elevation model (DEM) and land-cover information are combined with optical imagery, and generative adversarial networks (GANs), specifically pix2pixHD and CycleGAN, are used to generate pseudo-SAR data that include both amplitude and phase components. Experimental results using Sentinel-1 SAR and Sentinel-2 multispectral instrument (MSI) data demonstrate that pix2pixHD achieves higher conversion accuracy than CycleGAN, with a peak signal-to-noise ratio (PSNR) of 21.25 dB and a histogram intersection of 65.25%, and that the generated pre-disaster SAR images can be interfered with post-disaster SAR observations to detect earthquake-induced surface changes in the 2024 Noto Peninsula event. These findings indicate that the proposed method can extend the applicability of InSAR to areas and events where suitable pre-disaster SAR acquisitions are unavailable, contributing to rapid earthquake disaster assessment.**

***Keywords*—GAN; SAR; earthquake; disaster; DEM; pix2pixHD; CycleGAN; interferometric SAR**

I. Introduction

Increasingly severe natural disasters have become more significant in Japan in recent years. Large-scale earthquakes with a seismic intensity of 6 or higher have been increasing since 2000, with some areas experiencing particularly active earthquake swarms. Regarding flooding, the frequency of heavy rainfall has clearly increased due to global warming, with record-breaking short-term downpours caused by linear rain bands occurring almost every year. Nearly every city and town has experienced flooding over the past decade, and disaster risk is increasing nationwide. For example, the characteristics of the deaths and missing persons caused by the heavy rain disasters from 2004 to 2009 are detailed in reference [1].

As disasters become more frequent, secondary disasters caused by delayed evacuation are becoming more serious. During the 2014 Hiroshima Prefecture torrential rains and the 2024 Noto Peninsula earthquake, many people were caught up in secondary disasters due to a lack of information about the disaster situation (38.2% of cases had no anticipated damage, and 10.0% were affected during evacuation). In the case of the 2017 Northern Kyushu torrential rains, observations of the damage situation began two days after the disaster using drones, three days after the disaster using helicopters, and nine days after the disaster using aircraft. In contrast, satellite-based disaster monitoring is rapid, and there are high expectations for visual and SAR imagery for assessing the damage situation. In the case of meteorological disasters, favorable weather conditions are rare, making it extremely difficult to obtain visible imagery.

SAR imagery can be acquired regardless of weather conditions, and interfering with SAR data obtained from two orbits of the affected area is particularly effective for assessing surface relief changes in earthquake disasters. Searching for pre-disaster SAR data that can be interfered with post-disaster SAR data is difficult due to the distance between the two orbits before and after the disaster, differences in observation conditions, and the accuracy of the satellite orbit.

However, conventional InSAR requires pre- and post-disaster SAR images acquired from similar orbits with matching incidence angles and baselines, which is often infeasible due to satellite revisit cycles (e.g., 6-12 days for Sentinel-1) and unpredictable event timing. Existing GAN-based SAR-optical image translation methods (e.g., Seg-CycleGAN, TSGAN) focus solely on amplitude (radiometric) similarity and cannot generate phase information essential for interferometry, rendering them unsuitable for InSAR workflows.

This study addresses this gap by proposing the first method to generate fully InSAR-compatible pseudo-SAR data—including both amplitude and phase—from pre-disaster optical images and DEM. Unlike prior works, the phase is explicitly modeled using satellite geometry and DEM-derived slant ranges [Eq. (1)], while amplitude leverages land-cover and GAN translation. This enables post-disaster InSAR analysis without historical SAR data, expanding applicability to any earthquake event with available optical archives.

The key technical contributions are:

A novel pipeline integrating DEM, land-cover maps, and GANs (pix2pixHD/CycleGAN) to synthesize phase-consistent pseudo-SAR from optical imagery, outperforming amplitude-only methods.

Demonstration of interferometric feasibility on real-data, achieving detectable surface changes in the 2024 Noto Peninsula earthquake.

Quantitative comparison showing pix2pixHD superiority (PSNR: 21.25 dB vs. CycleGAN: 15.49 dB), with practical impact for rapid disaster response.

The remainder of this study is organized as follows: Section II reviews related work on disaster monitoring using SAR and optical satellites, interferometric SAR for earthquake damage detection, and GAN-based SAR–optical image

translation. Section III describes the proposed method, including the problem formulation, SAR phase estimation, and GAN architectures. Section IV presents the experimental setup and results using Sentinel-1 SAR and Sentinel-2 MSI data for the 2024 Noto Peninsula earthquake. Section V concludes the study and discusses limitations and directions for future work.

II. Related Works

Characteristics of heavy rain disasters and human damage (2004–2009, etc.) are well reported in [1], [2]. Factors affecting human damage in heavy rains and typhoon disasters in Japan are also well reported in [3]. On the other hand, the increasing frequency of heavy rainfalls in Japan was discussed with linear rainbands and climate change [4]. Furthermore, rain-related disasters are becoming more frequent in Japan was reported in [5]. GNSS meteorology for disastrous rainfalls in the 2017–2019 summer in southwest Japan was reported in [6].

Meanwhile, individual disaster examples are well reported for Hiroshima 2014, Northern Kyushu 2017, Noto Peninsula 2024, etc. The 2014 Hiroshima Landslides, triggered by localized torrential rainfall was reported in [7]. Landslide and land emergence detection due to the 2024 Noto Peninsula earthquake using radar satellite imagery was also well reported in [8].

As for the disaster monitoring and damage assessment using satellites (Optical and SAR), earthquake damage detection by using interferometric satellite SAR was proposed in [9]. Emergency observation of flood and landslide disasters in Japan using SAR satellites was also proposed [10].

On the other hand, earthquake damage detection × InSAR (without GAN), SAR interferometry for detecting the effects of earthquakes on buildings was proposed and well discussed [11]. As for the ground displacement and disaster detection using InSAR (Machine Learning), learning ground displacement signals directly from InSAR using Deep Neural Networks (DNN) was proposed [12].

Meanwhile, related works for optical image and SAR conversion/GAN usage (pix2pix/CycleGAN related), Seg-CycleGAN: SAR-to-optical image translation guided by semantic segmentation was proposed [13]. Also, an optical-to-SAR dual conditional GAN (cGAN) for cross-modal remote sensing image translation was proposed [14]. Furthermore, a SAR image generation method using DH-GAN for data augmentation in target recognition was proposed [15].

Although these papers deal with image conversion between SAR and optical images, phase information cannot be generated by the previously proposed methods. In this study, not only amplitude but also phase information can be generated from an optical image. Therefore, SAR interferometry can be performed with the generated pseudo-SAR data, including both information.

While these studies demonstrate the effectiveness of SAR and InSAR for disaster monitoring, they all assume the availability of pre-disaster SAR images acquired under suitable orbital conditions. This assumption does not hold for many earthquake events, which motivates the need for the synthetic generation of pre-disaster SAR data.

Existing GAN-based SAR–optical translation methods focus on radiometric similarity in amplitude and often ignore or cannot represent phase information, which is essential for interferometric processing. Therefore, these approaches cannot be directly applied to generate pre-disaster SAR data for InSAR-based earthquake damage detection, leaving an important gap that this study aims to fill.

Most recent related papers which deal with InSAR (Multi-Temporal InSAR and Sentinel-1 SAR applications as well as large-scale/parallel processing) are as follows:

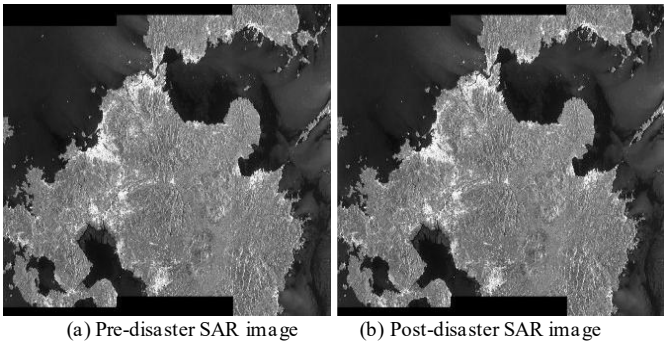
Macchiarulo, V. et al. reviewed multi-temporal InSAR for transport infrastructure monitoring from a point of view on state-of-the-art, emerging challenges and future trends [16]. Wu, Songbo, et al. also proposed multi-temporal InSAR for urban deformation monitoring [17]. Furthermore, Lagios, Evaggelos, et al. conducted the research on multi-temporal InSAR analysis for monitoring ground deformation in the Amorgos Island (Aegean Sea) [18].

Shirzaei, M., and R. Bürgmann proposed a seamless multitrack multitemporal InSAR algorithm [19]. On the other hand, Ferretti, A. et al. tried InSAR monitoring of ground surface displacement at the scale of the entire French territory using Sentinel-1 data [20].

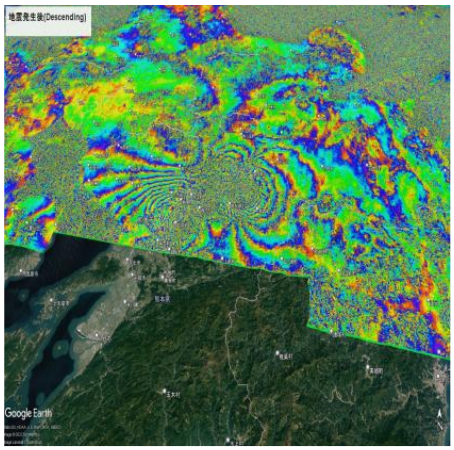
III. Proposed Method

A. Problem Statement

Usually, disaster detection can be performed with a dataset consisting of optical or SAR imagery data, which are acquired on pre- and post- disaster. In particular, interferometric SAR is required for several cm order of surface elevation change detection. Fig. 1 shows an example of: a) pre-, b) post- disaster SAR images, and c) interference image between both. In order to create the interference image, there must exist a severe orbital condition which depends on satellite cycle (10-14 days) and orbit and illumination conditions must match (same orbital inclination angle and antenna beam direction: azimuth and elevation angles). Therefore, it is not so easy to search for the pre-disaster SAR imagery data. Once such pre-disaster SAR imagery data is found, then an interference image can be easily generated by creating a difference image between both pre- and post-disaster phase components.



(a) Pre-disaster SAR image (b) Post-disaster SAR image

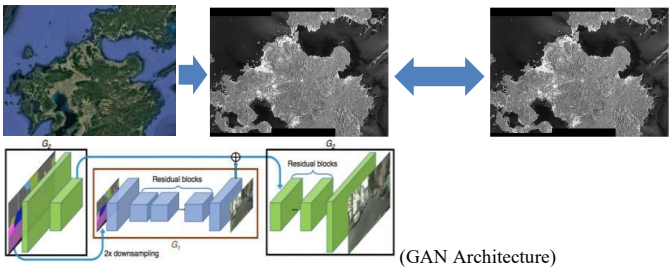


(c) Interference image between pre- and post-disaster SAR images on Google Earth.

Fig. 1. The example of an interference image between pre- and post-disaster SAR images.

B. Proposed Method

1) Procedure: The purpose of this study is to surface elevation change due to earthquake detection by using single SAR imagery data, which is acquired after the earthquake. Although centimeter order of surface elevation change can be estimated with interferometric SAR, SAR imagery data of disaster areas, which is acquired prior to the disaster, is not so easy to search and is required for interferometric SAR due to severe orbital and observational conditions. Therefore, a method for the generation of pre-disaster SAR imagery data from optical imagery data is proposed. Fig. 2 shows a process flow of the proposed method.



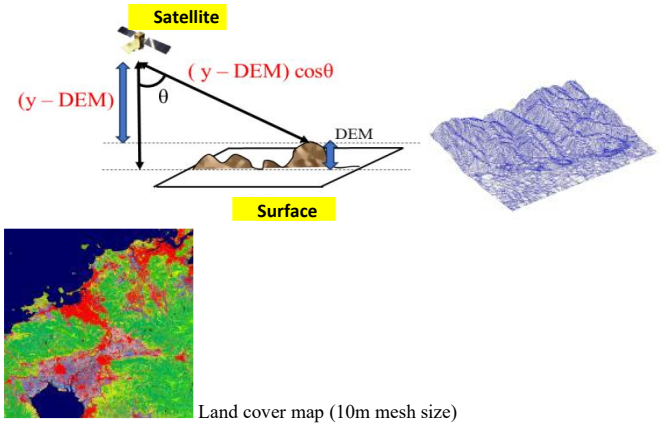
(GAN Architecture)

(a) Optical image (b) Pseudo SAR image Interferometry (c) Post-disaster SAR

Fig. 2. Process flow of the proposed method, allowing interferometry for surface elevation change detection.

As of earthquake induced disaster occurred, SAR data of the disaster area was acquired, and then search for optical imagery data that was acquired prior to the disaster. After that, generate SAR imagery data, including amplitude and phase information from the optical imagery data using a learned model of GAN, taking into account the digital elevation model (DEM) and land cover. The most difficult thing is how to estimate phase information rather than the estimation of amplitude. Fig. 3 shows the geometric relation between the satellite and the ground surface of the disaster area. Altitude and slant range can be calculated with the equations in Fig. 3 (Off nadir angle is assumed to be known). Also, land cover labels have to be known. There is a 10-meter meshed land cover map generated by JAXA.

Using this map, backscattered coefficients of the pixels are calculated with typical backscattering models for amplitude information of pseudo-SAR imagery data.



Land cover map (10m mesh size)

Fig. 3. Geometric relation between satellite and surface.

2) Phase information estimation: Phase information Φ can be calculated with Eq. (1):

$$\Phi = 4\pi/\lambda \, (y\text{-DEM}) \cos\theta \quad (1)$$

where, λ denotes the wavelength of the SAR instrument. In this case, Sentinel-1 SAR data is used. The primary parameters of Sentinel-1 SAR are as follows:

λ : 0.056m

y : 693km

θ : 25 ~ 45°

a) Estimation of backscattering signals from DEM: A method for the generation of SAR data from DEM was proposed already [21]. Furthermore, a method for correction taking account of differences in backscattering intensity due to constructive ground structures was proposed [22]. Using these methods, SAR data is generated considering foreshortening, layover, and radar shadowing, as shown in Fig. 4.

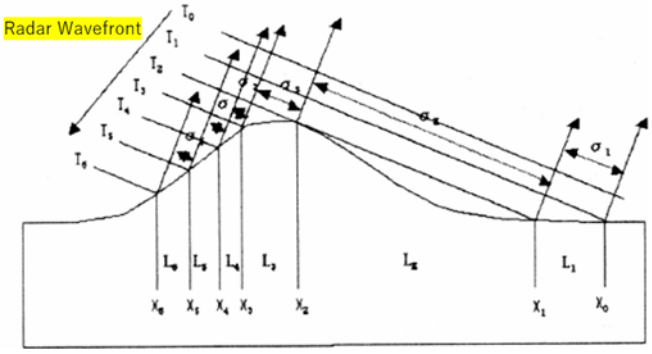


Fig. 4. Correction taking account of differences in backscattering signals due to ground structures.

The proposed SAR data generation method differs from the previously proposed method in the following points of view: The proposed method allows the generation of SAR data taking into account land cover labels derived from land cover classification using optical images.

3) GAN architecture: Two types of GAN architectures, pix2pixHD (Supervised learning model) and CycleGAN (Unsupervised learning model), are used for the creation of a learned model. Fig. 5(a) shows the pix2pixHD architecture, while Fig. 5(b) shows the CycleGAN architecture, respectively. For the pix2pixHD, the Generator generates a fake image to deceive the Discriminator, and the Discriminator identifies the generated image to avoid being fooled by the fake image. By repeating this process, the Discriminator will output a pseudo-SAR image from the noise image that closely resembles the SAR image input. On the other hand, Cycle GAN converts from an optical image to a SAR image through a learning model. Then, the generated SAR image is re-converted to an optical image. After that, the SAR image is generated from the re-converted optical image. This process is recursively repeated until convergence.

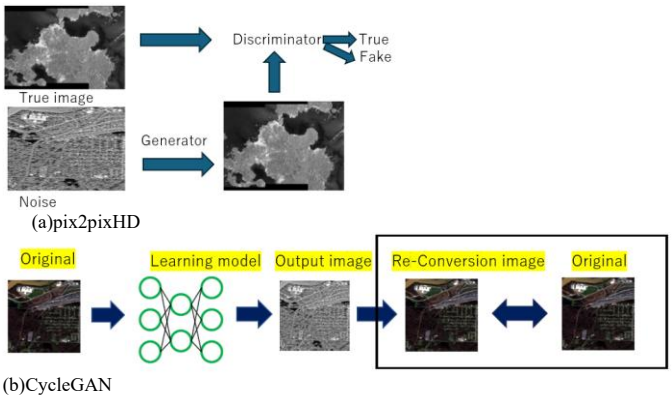


Fig. 5. pix2pixHD and CycleGAN architectures.

The detailed architectures and hyperparameters are as follows:

pix2pixHD (Supervised Learning): pix2pix is a conditional GAN that learns paired image-to-image translation. The architecture consists of:

Generator (U-Net):

Encoder: Series of convolutional layers with downsampling

Conv-BatchNorm-LeakyReLU blocks

Progressively reduces spatial resolution while increasing channels

Decoder: Series of transposed convolutional layers with upsampling

ConvTranspose-BatchNorm-ReLU blocks

Skip connections from encoder to decoder (U-Net structure)

Output: Single-channel pseudo-NDVI image (tanh activation, range [-1, 1])

Discriminator (PatchGAN):

Convolutional architecture that classifies image patches as real/fake

Output: N×N array of predictions (70×70 receptive field per prediction)

More efficient than full-image discrimination

Loss Functions:

Adversarial loss [see Eq. (2)]: $L_{GAN}=E[\log D(x,y)]+E[\log (1-D(x,G(x)))]$ (2)

L1 reconstruction loss [see Eq. (3)]: $L_{L1}=E[||y-G(x)||_1]$ (3)

Total loss [see Eq. (4)]: $L=L_{GAN}+\lambda L_{L1}(\lambda = 100)$ (4)

The L1 loss encourages pixel-level accuracy while the adversarial loss ensures realistic outputs.

CycleGAN (Unsupervised Learning):

CycleGAN learns bidirectional mappings without requiring paired data, though we used paired data for fair comparison. Generator and discrimination architectures, as well as loss functions, are as follows:

Generator Architecture:

Encoder: Convolutional layers with downsampling

Transformer: Residual blocks maintaining spatial resolution

Decoder: Transposed convolutional layers with upsampling

Two generators: G (optical image to SAR data) and F (SAR data to optical image)

Discriminator Architecture:

Similar to pix2pix PatchGAN

Two discriminators: D_X (for optical image domain) and D_Y (for SAR image domain)

Loss Functions [see Eq. (5) and Eq. (6)]:

Adversarial losses: $L_{GAN}(G)+L_{GAN}(F)$ (5)

Cycle-consistencyLoss: $L_{cyc}=E[||F(G(x))-x||_1]+E[||G(F(y))-y||_1]$ (6)

Total loss [see Eq. (7)]: $L=L_{GAN}(G)+L_{GAN}(F)+\lambda L_{cyc}(\lambda = 10)$ (7)

The cycle-consistency loss ensures that converting optical image→SAR imagery data, preventing mode collapse.

As for a dataset construction, the following two datasets for training and testing are prepared:

Training Dataset:

Size: 1,250 paired image patches

Patch size: 256×256 pixels (2.56 km × 2.56 km)

Data augmentation: Random flips, rotations (90°, 180°, 270°)

Test Dataset:

Size: 215 paired image patches

Non-overlapping with training data

Same spatial resolution and patch size

Quality control is conducted as follows:

Manual inspection to remove cloud-contaminated images

Verification of SAR-optical spatial alignment

Removal of urban and water-dominated patches

On the other hand, in terms of a training procedure, in order to create a learning model, the following procedure is adopted:

Hyperparameters:

Optimizer: Adam ($\beta1 = 0.5$, $\beta2 = 0.999$)

Learning rate: 0.0002 (initial), linear decay after 100 epochs

Batch size: 1 (to handle varying image sizes)

Epochs: 200

Training Strategy:

Alternate training of the generator and the discriminator

Update discriminator once per generator update

Learning rate decay to stabilize training in later epochs

Early stopping based on validation loss

IV. Experiment

A. Data Used

Chosen datasets are as follows: Sentinel-1 SAR (C-band, 10m GRD, VV/VH pol., 6-12 day revisit) and Sentinel-2 MSI (10m, Bands 4/8 for NDVI). Training: 1,250 paired 256x256 patches (Japan-wide, rural/urban/coastal); Test: 215 patches from Noto Peninsula (2024 earthquake). JAXA 10m land-cover map and SRTM DEM used for amplitude/phase. Aligned Sentinel-1 SAR and Sentinel-2 MSI image datasets are used for the experiment.

The detailed characteristics of these instruments are as follows:

1) Sentinel-2 MSI Data:

a) Temporal resolution: 5 days (2-satellite constellation)
b) Spatial resolution: 10 m
c) Spectral bands used:
d) Band 4 (Red): 665 nm
e) Band 8 (NIR): 842 nm

2) Sentinel-1 SAR Data:

a) Temporal resolution: 6-12 days
b) Spatial resolution: 10 m (IW mode)
c) Polarization: Dual-pol VV+VH
d) Processing: Level-1 GRD (Ground Range Detected)

B. Data Preprocessing

The following data preprocessing is applied to the original data,

1) Sentinel-1 SAR Preprocessing:

a) Thermal noise removal: Remove additive noise from sub-swaths

b) Radiometric calibration: Convert digital numbers to sigma-nought backscatter coefficients ($\sigma°$)

c) Terrain correction: Apply Range-Doppler terrain correction using SRTM DEM to compensate for topographic distortion

d) Speckle filtering: Apply the Lee filter (7×7 window) to reduce speckle noise

2) Sentinel-2 MSI Preprocessing:

a) Atmospheric correction: Apply Sen2Cor to convert L1C to L2A products

b) Cloud masking: Use the Scene Classification Layer to mask clouds and shadows

c) NDVI calculation: Compute NDVI from atmospherically corrected red and NIR bands

d) Quality filtering: Retain only NDVI images with <10% cloud cover

3) Temporal Co-registration:

SAR and optical images paired within ±2 days

Spatial co-registration using image matching algorithms

Resampling to a common 10 m grid using bilinear interpolation

Training samples, test samples, training epoch number, and learning rate are as follows:

Training images: 3388

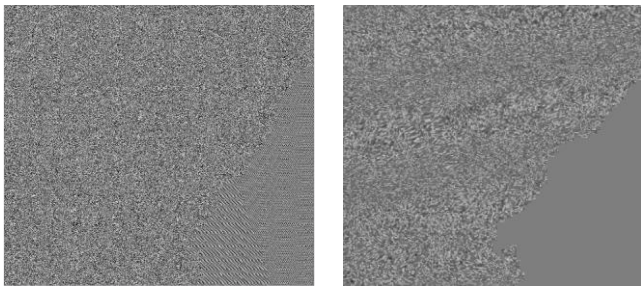
Test images: 500

Training runs: 60

Learning rate: 0.002

C. Estimation of Phase Information

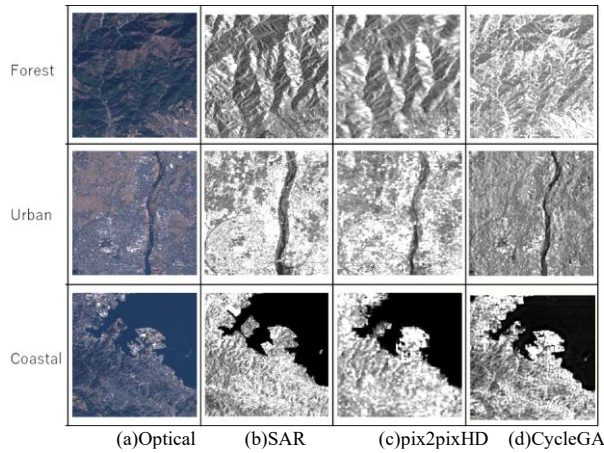
1) Procedure: First, the SAR amplitude image converted by GAN is assigned an elevation value for each point using a position-adjusted digital elevation model (DEM). Then, the satellite orbit - in this case, Sentinel-1 - is used, so the phase is calculated based on the wavelength, altitude, and angle of incidence information shown in the diagram on the right. The system has been implemented so that a phase can be assigned to any satellite if only the DEM and these three pieces of orbital information are available. Fig. 6 shows the results. The left is the phase image resulting from this implementation, and the right is the correct phase image.



(a)Estimated phase information (b)Actual phase information

Fig. 6. Estimation result of phase information from DEM.

2) SAR imagery data generation: Fig. 7 shows examples of the generated SAR imagery data from optical images (Sentinel-2 MSI) for the forested, urbanized and coastal areas. Fig. 7(a) shows input Sentinel-2 MSI image, while Fig. 7(b) shows actual SAR image (Sentinel-1 SAR). Fig. 7(c) shows generated SAR imagery data based on pix2pixHD, while Fig. 7(d) shows that with CycleGAN, respectively.



(a)Optical (b)SAR (c)pix2pixHD (d)CycleGAN

Fig. 7. Generated SAR data from the corresponding optical images.

D. SAR Imagery Data Generation

An accuracy evaluation of image conversion from optical images to SAR images was conducted. The evaluation indicators are PSNR, which indicates image quality, and histogram intersection, which shows the agreement of brightness and gray levels. Peak Signal-to-Noise Ratio (PSNR) is expressed as Eq. (8):

$$PSNR=10\log_{10}((MAX^2)/MSE) \quad (8)$$

where, MSE denotes Mean Square Error and MAX denotes the maximum value. This measures pixel-level reconstruction error. The units of PSNR are decibels (dB), higher is better. Targeted PSNR is >30 dB for acceptable quality. Histogram intersection is a similarity metric used to compare two histograms. It measures how much two distributions overlap by computing the minimum value at each bin across both histograms and summing these minimums. For two histograms H_1 and H_2 with n bins [see Eq. (9)]:

$$\text{Intersection} = \Sigma \min(H_1(i), H_2(i)) \text{ for } i = 1 \text{ to } n \quad (9)$$

Table I shows the PSNR and the histogram intersection for pix2pixHD and CycleGAN.

TABLE I. PSNR AND HISTOGRAM INTERSECTION FOR PIX2PIXHD AND CYCLEGAN

	pix2pixHD	CycleGAN
PSNR	21.25dB	15.49dB
Histogram Intersection	65.25%	53.99%

Higher values for both indicate better conversion accuracy. These results show that pix2pixHD is superior in conversion. As for issues related to the image conversion section alone, we believe that seasonal changes in vegetation and clouds affect image conversion, and that the difference in frequency between the visible light of the optical sensor and the microwaves of the SAR sensor may limit the conversion accuracy from being improved any further. As the result, it is found that pix2pixHD is superior to CycleGAN with 5.76dB, and 11.26%, respectively. As for the issues with the image conversion section alone, we believe that seasonal changes in vegetation and clouds affect image conversion, and that the conversion accuracy may not be able to be improved any further due to the difference in frequency between the visible light of the optical sensor and the microwave of the SAR sensor.

E. RGB Composite of SAR Images Before and After the Disaster

In addition to the above, the RGB composite of SAR images before and after the disaster is investigated. RGB compositing makes it possible to capture changes during a disaster by coloring the images before the disaster red and the afterward green and blue, and then compositing the images.

In this case, it was performed on the Noto Peninsula earthquake, which occurred on the 1st of 2024, and the change in light blue near the coastline indicates that uplift has occurred. These are the results of RGB compositing using pix2pixHD and CycleGAN. Both were able to capture changes near the coastline, similar to the correct RGB changes. Fig. 8 shows the result.

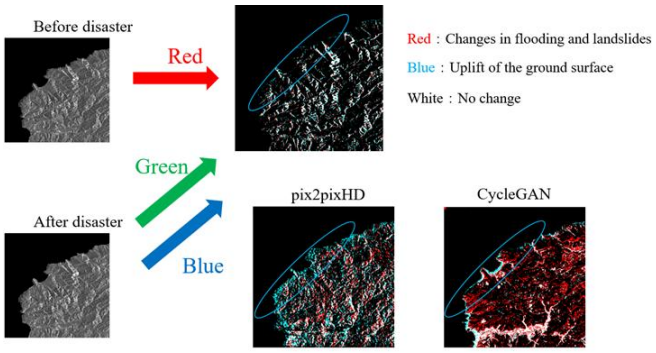


Fig. 8. Example of the disaster investigation RGB composite of SAR images before and after the disaster in case of the Noto earthquake.

By using two SAR imagery data acquired on before and after the Noto earthquake, changes in flooding and landslides are visualized in red colored portion while uplift of the ground surfaces is identified in blue colored portion, respectively.

The core insight is that phase generation bridges optical-SAR modality gaps via physics-based modeling [Eq. (1)], not just data-driven GANs—yielding interferograms viable for disaster ops. pix2pixHD excels due to paired supervision, but

CycleGAN offers unsupervised flexibility for data-scarce regions. Limitations include vegetation seasonality affecting coherence and C-band sensitivity to decorrelation; X-band SAR could improve. Practically, this reduces InSAR setup time from weeks to hours, critical for response.

V. Conclusion

This study successfully demonstrated a novel approach for earthquake disaster detection that overcomes the limitations of conventional interferometric SAR analysis. By leveraging GANs to generate synthetic pre-disaster SAR data from optical images, our method addresses the critical challenge of obtaining temporally and spatially compatible SAR image pairs for interferometric processing.

The key contributions of this work include:

1) the development of a GAN-based framework capable of synthesizing both amplitude and phase components of SAR data from optical imagery and DEM,

2) the demonstration that synthetic pre-disaster SAR data can be effectively interfered with actual post-disaster SAR observations to detect ground surface changes, and

3) experimental validation confirming the feasibility of this approach for earthquake disaster assessment.

The proposed method offers significant practical advantages for disaster response scenarios, where pre-disaster SAR data is unavailable or unsuitable for interferometric analysis. By utilizing widely available optical satellite imagery, this approach expands the applicability of interferometric SAR techniques for rapid earthquake damage assessment and emergency response planning. Future work will focus on quantitative validation against ground truth measurements and extension to other types of natural disasters.

Despite these promising results, this study has several limitations. First, the experiments are conducted on a limited number of events and geographic regions, mainly focusing on the 2024 Noto Peninsula earthquake, so the generalization of the proposed method to different tectonic settings and land-cover conditions remains to be validated. Second, the conversion accuracy from optical to SAR imagery is still affected by seasonal changes, cloud contamination, and the fundamental frequency difference between optical and microwave sensors, which constrains the achievable image quality and interferometric coherence. Third, the current evaluation mainly relies on image-based metrics such as PSNR and histogram intersection; more comprehensive validation using ground truth displacement measurements and operational disaster response scenarios is required. Addressing these limitations will be an important direction for future work.

A. Future Works

In the future, the author will conduct another experiment with a variety of disaster types such as flooding, wildfire, and so on, with SAR imagery data, which is acquired just after the disaster event, and optical image which are acquired on a date almost the same as when SAR imagery data is obtained. Future extensions to floods/wildfires will broaden utility.

Acknowledgment

The author would like to thank Prof. Dr. Osamu Fukuda of Saga University for their valuable comments and suggestions.

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A Competitive Co-Evolutionary Approach for the Nurse Scheduling Problem

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***Abstract*—The Nurse Scheduling Problem (NSP) is a constrained combinatorial optimisation problem that plays a critical role in healthcare scheduling and constraint optimisation. Traditional evolutionary approaches often rely on static fitness evaluation, which struggles to balance feasibility and solution quality under complex real-world constraints. This study proposes a competitive co-evolutionary algorithm for the NSP that introduces adaptive adversarial evaluation, where candidate schedules are assessed under dynamic competitive pressure to expose structural weaknesses and guide evolution more effectively. The proposed competitive NSP is evaluated on a 20-nurse, one-week scheduling instance and compared against a classical Genetic Algorithm (GA) under identical conditions for 30 independent runs. Experimental results show that the competitive NSP achieves a mean best penalty of 447.28, compared to 651.30 for the classical GA, corresponding to an average improvement of approximately 31%. The competitive approach further exhibits smoother convergence behaviour across generations, indicating stronger optimisation dynamics and improved robustness. These findings demonstrate that competitive co-evolution provides an effective and practical alternative to static fitness-based evolutionary methods for nurse scheduling, with broader applicability to healthcare scheduling and constraint optimisation problems.**

***Keywords*—Nurse Scheduling Problem; competitive co-evolution; evolutionary algorithms; healthcare scheduling; constraint optimisation; adversarial evaluation**

I. Introduction

Hospitals worldwide face increasing pressure to deliver high-quality healthcare services under growing demand, workforce shortages, and strict regulatory requirements. Population growth and demographic aging have intensified healthcare utilisation, particularly in inpatient and emergency settings, where nurses play a central role in daily clinical operations [1], [2]. Effective nurse scheduling is therefore essential for ensuring adequate staff coverage, maintaining care quality, and controlling operational costs, yet remains challenging due to the need to balance legal regulations, skill requirements, workload distribution, and individual preferences.

Within this context, the Nurse Scheduling Problem (NSP) is widely recognised as a highly constrained optimisation problem involving multiple conflicting objectives. Hard constraints, such as shift coverage, legal rest periods, and role-based rules, must be strictly satisfied to ensure feasibility, while soft constraints related to fairness, preferences, and workload distribution influence schedule quality and staff satisfaction [3],[4]. Studies have shown that poor balance between these objectives can lead to increased absenteeism, reduced job satisfaction, and higher operational costs, highlighting the importance of robust scheduling approaches [3]. As a result, NSP has been extensively studied over the past decades.

Consequently, numerous optimisation techniques have been proposed to address the NSP. Comprehensive survey and comparative studies consistently report difficulties when realistic constraints are considered, particularly in terms of scalability, robustness, and sensitivity to parameter tuning [5]. Despite these reported challenges, evolutionary approaches remain among the most widely explored solution paradigms for NSP due to their modelling flexibility and adaptability to complex constraints. Genetic algorithms have been widely adopted due to their flexibility in handling complex constraints [6], while memetic algorithms enhance search performance through hybridisation with local improvement strategies [7]. Harmony search and related metaheuristics have also been explored to address multi-constraint nurse rostering problems [8], alongside goal programming models that explicitly incorporate preference satisfaction [9]. Robust and scenario-based optimisation approaches have further been proposed to address uncertainty in nurse rostering, although these often increase computational complexity [10], while fuzzy optimisation models incorporate uncertainty directly into preference and constraint modelling [11]. A common limitation identified across these studies is the reliance on static evaluation functions, where schedules are assessed using fixed penalty weights throughout the search. Such static evaluation may fail to reflect changing problem difficulty, especially in highly constrained settings where different violations become dominant at different stages of optimisation.

In practical NSP settings, constraint interactions are inherently dynamic, where some violations are relatively easy to resolve during early search stages, while others become critical only after basic feasibility has been achieved. To address this challenge, co-evolutionary algorithms have been proposed as an extension of evolutionary optimisation, where multiple populations evolve simultaneously and influence one another during the search process [12]. Building on this foundation, competitive co-evolutionary algorithms introduce

adaptive evaluation through direct competition rather than fixed fitness assessment. Rosin and Belew [13] first formalised this prototype by demonstrating how evolving opponents can expose weaknesses that static evaluation fails to capture, thereby sustaining selection pressure during optimisation. Subsequent studies extended this idea in adversarial optimisation and game theoretic contexts. Olsson [14] proposed a host-parasite genetic algorithm, showing how asymmetric competition can improve robustness by preventing dominance stagnation. Lehre [15] provided a runtime analysis of competitive co-evolution under maximin optimisation, highlighting its ability to overcome negative drift that commonly leads to premature convergence in static fitness landscapes. Fajardo et al. [16] further demonstrated that fitness aggregation mechanisms play a critical role in maintaining effective competition, while a follow-up study [18] showed that inappropriate aggregation can destabilise competitive dynamics and degrade optimisation performance. Harris et al. [17] complemented these findings by proposing opponent sampling strategies based on strength similarity to stabilise co-evolutionary interactions and preserve meaningful selection pressure.

Despite substantial progress in genetic algorithm-based nurse scheduling, most existing approaches optimise feasibility and schedule quality within a single evolutionary process. This coupled optimisation can limit further improvements once feasible solutions are reached, as enhancements in soft constraints often conflict with feasibility maintenance. In this study, a competitive nurse scheduling framework is proposed to explicitly model this conflict by introducing competitive evolutionary pressure between objectives, thereby enabling sustained optimisation beyond feasibility and addressing stagnation commonly observed in baseline genetic algorithms.

Motivated by this gap, this study introduces a competitive co-evolutionary optimisation approach for the Nurse Scheduling Problem. The proposed algorithm preserves the original NSP formulation and constraint structure while enhancing optimisation dynamics through adaptive adversarial evaluation, showing that improved performance can be achieved without problem reformulation or additional constraints. Comparative experiments against a classical Genetic Algorithm for 30 independent runs demonstrate improved solution quality, convergence stability, and robustness under realistic scheduling conditions. These findings indicate that competitive co-evolution is a viable optimisation paradigm for complex healthcare scheduling problems and can be generalised to other highly constrained settings where static fitness evaluation leads to premature convergence.

The remainder of this study is organised as follows: Section II reviews the literature on nurse scheduling and evolutionary optimisation. Section III presents the NSP formulation, including hard and soft constraints. Section IV describes the proposed competitive co-evolutionary methodology. Section V outlines the experimental setup and evaluation metrics. Section VI presents and discusses the results, followed by conclusions in Section VII.

II. Literature Review

A. Nurse Scheduling Problem and Conventional Solution Approaches

The Nurse Scheduling Problem (NSP) has been widely studied due to its significant impact on hospital operations, staff wellbeing, and patient safety. Classical NSP formulations distinguish between hard constraints, which ensure feasibility and legal compliance, and soft constraints, which influence schedule quality, fairness, and preference satisfaction [3],[4]. Realistic NSP models often include multiple nurse roles, skill requirements, shift-pattern rules, and workload balance, resulting in complex and highly constrained scheduling problems.

Early NSP solutions relied on exact mathematical programming and rule-based heuristics. However, these approaches scale poorly as problem size and constraint complexity increase. As a result, metaheuristic methods have become dominant in the literature. Techniques such as genetic algorithms and memetic algorithms have been widely applied with varying success [5],[6], while other metaheuristics, such as heuristic metaheuristic designs for hard and soft constraint nurse rostering, continue to be explored [7],[8]. While these methods are flexible and capable of handling complex constraints, many studies report sensitivity to fitness design, penalty calibration and stagnation during the search process [5], [6].

Several studies emphasise the importance of incorporating realistic operational constraints into NSP models. Azimi et al. showed that neglecting practical staffing rules can produce schedules that appear optimal numerically but are infeasible in practice [4]. Wright and Mahar further demonstrated that scheduling decisions directly influence both operational cost and nurse satisfaction, highlighting the need for balanced optimisation strategies [3]. Robust and scenario-based models have also been proposed to address uncertainty in staffing demand, although these often increase computational complexity [11]. More recently, exact and model-based approaches remain active, including mixed-integer programming nurse rostering models that incorporate preference and qualification structures [20] and practical MILP case studies that reduce workload imbalance [25].

Despite the diversity of solution methods, most NSP solvers rely on static evaluation functions with fixed penalty weights. While effective for benchmark problems, static evaluation can struggle when different constraint violations become dominant at different stages of optimisation, leading to premature convergence or extensive parameter tuning [5],[10].

B. Evolutionary and Co-Evolutionary Methods in Nurse Scheduling

Evolutionary algorithms are among the most commonly used techniques for the NSP due to their flexibility and ability to handle complex constraints. Genetic Algorithms (GAs) have been widely applied in nurse scheduling, while memetic algorithms, which combine evolutionary search with local improvement, have been shown to improve convergence speed

and solution quality in some NSP variants [6]. Other approaches, such as bi-level heuristics and shift swapping strategies, further exploit problem structure to refine feasible schedules [9]. Recent evolutionary and hybrid systems continue to be proposed in practical healthcare settings, including Round-Robin GA-based scheduling systems that report improvements in fairness and execution time in real medical centre contexts [22], as well as healthcare workforce scheduling studies that formulate staffing as a multi-objective GA optimisation problem [24].

Co-evolutionary methods have received comparatively less attention in NSP research. Existing studies mainly focus on cooperative co-evolution, where multiple subpopulations contribute jointly to a single solution [12], [19]. While such approaches are effective for decomposable problems, they assume alignment between subcomponents as an assumption that does not always hold in NSP.

In practical nurse scheduling, improving one aspect of a roster, such as fairness, may negatively affect another aspect, such as coverage or legal compliance. Cooperative co-evolution does not explicitly model this tension, as subpopulations are designed to collaborate rather than challenge candidate schedules. As a result, cooperative approaches may lose selection pressure once near-feasible solutions are obtained.

While co-evolutionary approaches provide useful conceptual insights into evolutionary scheduling, this study focuses on the evaluation of a competitive nurse scheduling formulation in comparison with a baseline genetic algorithm.

C. Competitive Co-Evolution and its Relevance to NSP

Competitive co-evolutionary algorithms introduce adaptive selection pressure through direct competition rather than static fitness evaluation. Rosin and Belew [13] established the foundational concept of competitive co-evolution by demonstrating how evolving opponents can actively expose solution weaknesses that static evaluation fails to capture. Building on this idea, competitive co-evolution has been further explored in adversarial optimisation and robust learning contexts, where Olsson [14] showed that asymmetric host parasite interactions can improve robustness by preventing dominance stagnation.

More recent studies have examined the dynamics and stability of competitive co-evolution in greater depth. Lehre [15] provided a runtime analysis showing how competitive evaluation can overcome negative drift in maximizing optimisation problems. Fajardo *et al.* [16] demonstrated that fitness aggregation mechanisms play a critical role in sustaining effective competition, while a follow-up study by the same authors [18] showed that inappropriate aggregation can destabilise co-evolutionary dynamics and hinder optimisation progress. Complementing these findings, Harris *et al.* [17] proposed opponent sampling strategies based on strength similarity to stabilise competition and preserve meaningful selection pressure.

This competitive standard is particularly relevant to the NSP, where constraint violations can be viewed as challenges that reveal weaknesses in schedules. Certain shift patterns, role assignments or coverage configurations may consistently expose problematic structures. Competitive evaluation can adaptively focus on these weaknesses, enabling continued improvement even after basic feasibility has been achieved.

Despite these advances, competitive co-evolution has received limited attention in nurse scheduling research. Existing co-evolutionary scheduling studies primarily adopt cooperative strategies, where multiple subpopulations work jointly toward a shared objective [12], [19]. While effective for certain decomposable problems, cooperative approaches do not explicitly model the inherent tension in NSP between feasibility and schedule quality, and may therefore struggle to maintain selection pressure once near feasible solutions are obtained. In parallel, recent non-coevolutionary NSP studies continue to explore alternative mechanisms for sustaining search pressure, including modern metaheuristics such as the Whale Optimization Algorithm adapted for nurse scheduling [23], highlighting the ongoing need for effective selection dynamics in realistic rostering problems.

In summary, although substantial progress has been made in evolutionary and hybrid optimisation methods for NSP, most existing approaches rely on static evaluation and cooperative or single-population search strategies. Competitive co-evolution, despite its ability to maintain adaptive selection pressure and robustness in other domains, has not been systematically explored for nurse scheduling. Existing co-evolutionary studies in scheduling primarily focus on cooperation rather than adversarial evaluation.

This gap motivates the development of a competitive co-evolutionary NSP algorithm that explicitly captures the adversarial nature of constraint satisfaction. By embedding adaptive competition into schedule evaluation, competitive co-evolution has the potential to address persistent challenges in NSP, including stagnation near feasibility, sensitivity to penalty tuning and limited robustness under complex real-world constraints. The proposed methodology, presented in the next section, adapts competitive co-evolutionary principles to the NSP context, while preserving practical feasibility and realistic scheduling requirements.

III. Problem Formulation

The Nurse Scheduling Problem (NSP) addressed in this study concerns the construction of a weekly duty roster that assigns nurses to shifts while satisfying operational feasibility and quality requirements. Let $N = \{1,2,\dots n\}$ denote the set of nurses and $D = \{1,2,\dots 7\}$ the set of planning days from Monday to Sunday. Each nurse is assigned exactly one shift per day from the set $S = \{1,2,3,4\}$ that represent Morning, Afternoon, Night, Post-Night and Off-day consecutively. Nurses belong to different roles, including sisters N_s, senior nurses N_{sen} and healthcare assistants N_{hca}, where role membership determines eligibility for specific shifts and Off-day rules. A schedule is represented by a discrete decision variable $x_{i,d} \in S$, where $x_{i,d}$ denotes the shift assigned to nurse i on day d. The feasibility and quality of a schedule are evaluated through a set of hard and soft constraints. Hard constraints capture mandatory operational requirements and include minimum coverage for working shifts, role-based Off-day restrictions and minimum weekly working hours. Any

violation of these constraints is considered unacceptable from an operational standpoint and incurs a large penalty.

Soft constraints model preference and fairness considerations that influence schedule quality but do not invalidate feasibility. These include shift sequences such as the night shift must be followed by a post-night shift, balanced role coverage across shifts, acceptable ranges of weekly working hours and fair distribution of night shifts among eligible nurses. Soft constraint violations are penalised at a lower magnitude than hard constraints, reflecting their secondary priority. The overall penalty of a schedule x is computed using an additive formulation, as in Eq. (1):

$$F(x) = HC(x) + SC(x) \quad (1)$$

where, $HC(x)$ denotes the total hard constraint penalty and $SC(x)$ denotes the total soft constraint penalty. The classical NSP optimisation objective is therefore $min\ F(x)$, subject to the implicit domain restriction $x_{i,d} \in S$. This formulation aligns with conventional penalty based evolutionary approaches to nurse rostering and allows both feasibility and quality considerations to be captured within a single objective value.

However, because the penalty function aggregates violations across all nurses and all days, schedules that achieve low overall penalty may still contain localised structural weaknesses, such as fragile shift sequences or concentrated workload patterns affecting specific nurses. These weaknesses can remain hidden when evaluation relies solely on the global objective $F(x)$, particularly when penalty tuning balances competing constraints at an aggregate level. As a result, conventional optimisation may converge to schedules with low overall penalty values while still containing local weaknesses that are not explicitly captured by the aggregate evaluation.

To address this issue, the NSP formulation in this work is later extended with a competitive evaluation mechanism that preserves the same decision variables, constraints and penalty definitions, while altering the evaluation context under which schedules are compared. Rather than modifying the objective function itself, the competitive algorithm dynamically emphasises constraint sensitive positions during fitness assessment, enabling the optimisation process to distinguish between schedules that are merely low penalty and those that are robust under focused constraint stress. The competitive evaluation strategy and its integration into the evolutionary process are described in the following section.

Table I lists the hard and soft constraints used in the competitive NSP evaluation. The constraint set is consistent with conventional NSP formulations and is reused to isolate the effect of competitive fitness evaluation.

TABLE I. HARD AND SOFT CONSTRAINTS CONSIDERED IN COMPETITIVE NSP

ID	Constraint Description	Penalty Type
HC1	Minimum coverage for AM, PM, and Night shifts per day	Hard
HC2	Role based OFF-day rules (sisters: weekend OFF; others: exactly one OFF)	Hard
HC3	Minimum weekly working hours per nurse (Role based)	Hard
SC1	Legal shift sequence (Night must be followed by Post-Night)	Soft
SC2	Sisters assigned only AM/PM shifts on weekdays	Soft
SC3	Balanced role coverage across shifts (SEN and HCA presence)	Soft
SC4	Weekly working hours within preferred range	Soft
SC5	Fair distribution of night shifts among non-sisters	Soft

IV. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a competitive co-evolutionary optimisation algorithm, representing an advanced evolutionary optimisation model, to solve the Nurse Scheduling Problem (NSP) formulated in Section III. The underlying NSP model, including decision variables, constraints, and penalty definitions, remains unchanged. Unlike classical single population, genetic algorithms that rely on static fitness evaluation, the proposed approach introduces an adaptive competitive evaluation mechanism in which candidate schedules are assessed under adversarial selection pressure that varies dynamically throughout the evolutionary process.

A. Competitive Co-Evolutionary Algorithm

The proposed algorithm maintains two concurrently evolving populations with distinct roles. The first population consists of candidate nurse schedules, where each individual encodes a complete weekly roster represented as a nurse, day and shift assignment matrix. Each entry specifies the shift assigned to a nurse on a given day using discrete shift codes defined in the NSP formulation.

The second population acts as an evaluation population and does not represent alternative schedules. Instead, individuals in this population encode binary evaluation masks defined over the same nurse-to-day grid. A value of 1 activates focused evaluation at a specific nurse-to-day position, while a value of 0 excludes it. This design allows the algorithm to dynamically intensify selection pressure on structurally weak regions of schedules without introducing new constraints or modifying feasibility rules.

Fig. 1 illustrates the overall workflow of the proposed competitive co-evolutionary nurse scheduling algorithm. The approach operates on the original NSP formulation and maintains two populations that evolve concurrently. The schedule population encodes complete weekly nurse rosters, while the evaluation population encodes binary evaluation masks that selectively emphasise constraint sensitive nurse to

day assignments. During each generation, candidate schedules are assessed using a competitive fitness function that augments the base NSP penalty with a focused adversarial term. This mechanism introduces adaptive selection pressure without modifying the underlying constraints or objective definition. Evolutionary operators are applied independently to both populations, and the final solution is selected from the scheduled population based on the base NSP objective function.

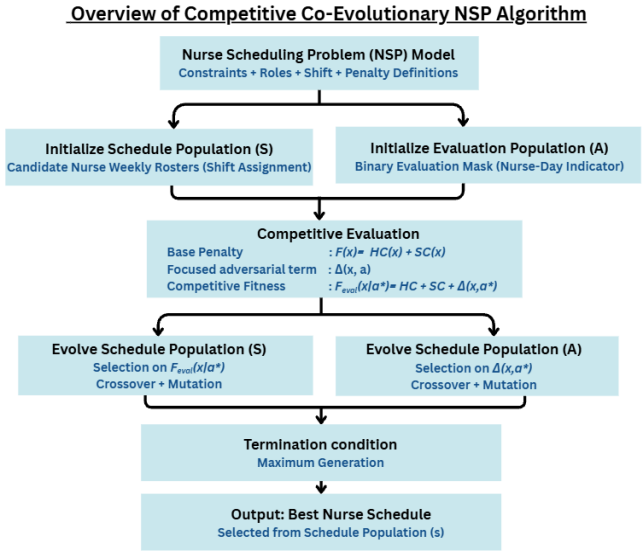

Fig. 1. Overview of the competitive co-evolutionary nurse scheduling algorithm.

B. Chromosome Representation

In the schedule population, each chromosome encodes a full weekly roster. For example, a row corresponding to Nurse i may be represented as:

Nurse i: [0 1 4 2 3 0 4]

where, the values denote Morning, Afternoon, Off-day, Night, Post-Night, Morning, and Off-day assignments respectively. In contrast, the evaluation population encodes binary masks over the same structure. A corresponding evaluation chromosome may be represented as:

Mask Nurse $\boldsymbol{i}$: [1 0 0 1 1 0 0]

Here, a value of 1 indicates that the corresponding nurse-to-day assignment is selected for focused evaluation, while a value of 0 indicates that it is ignored in the focused penalty computation.

C. Competitive Evaluation Mechanism

For each candidate schedule x, the base schedule quality is first evaluated using the standard NSP objective function as in Eq. (1). Competitive evaluation is introduced through an additional focused penalty term $\Delta(x, a)$ computed jointly from the schedule x and an evaluation mask a.

Here, $\Delta(x, a)$ denotes the focused adversarial penalty induced by evaluation mask a on schedule x. In the competitive process, $\Delta(x*, a)$ is used to evaluate adversaries against the current best schedule $x*$, while $\Delta(x, a*)$ is used to evaluate all candidate schedules under the selected strongest adversary $a*$. This distinction reflects the asymmetric roles of adversary selection and schedule evaluation in the competitive co-evolutionary algorithm.

The focused penalty re-evaluates existing constraint rules only at nurse-to-day positions activated by the mask. At these positions, local conditions such as role legality, Off-day requirements and night-to post-night sequencing are checked and penalised if violated. Positions not selected by the mask do not contribute to this term. Importantly, no new constraints are introduced, instead the mechanism amplifies the impact of existing violations at selected locations. The competitive fitness of a schedule is defined as Eq. (2):

$$F_{eval}(x|a^*) = HC(x) + SC(x) + \Delta(x, a^*) \qquad (2)$$

This formulation discourages schedules that achieve low aggregate penalties by relying on fragile local patterns, thereby promoting robustness under adversarial evaluation.

D. Adversarial Selection and Population Interaction

At each generation, a reference schedule x^* is identified as the individual with the lowest base penalty $F(x)$ in the schedule population. The evaluation population is then assessed against this reference schedule, and the strongest evaluator a^* is selected by maximising $x\ \Delta(x^*, a)$.

All candidate schedules are subsequently evaluated using the same evaluator a^*, ensuring a consistent competitive context within each generation. Evaluation individuals are selected based solely on their ability to expose weaknesses in the reference schedule, while schedule individuals are selected based on their competitive fitness. The two populations interact only through this adversarial evaluation mechanism, without chromosome exchange, cooperative pairing, or decomposition.

E. Evolutionary Operators and Termination

Both populations evolve using standard genetic operators, where the scheduled population applies selection, crossover, and mutation operators designed to preserve role eligibility and basic feasibility. The evaluation of the population evolves independently using analogous operators suitable for binary representations, encouraging diversity in evaluation focus and preventing stagnation.

The evolutionary process continues until a pre-defined termination condition is met. Throughout the search, solution quality is monitored using the base NSP objective $F(x)$ to ensure fair comparison with baseline algorithms.

The overall workflow of the proposed competitive co-evolutionary nurse scheduling algorithm is summarised in Pseudocode, illustrating the parallel evolution of schedule and evaluation populations and their interaction through adversarial fitness assessment.

Having described the proposed competitive co-evolutionary nurse scheduling algorithm and its adversarial evaluation mechanism combined, as in Eq. (2), the next section details the experimental setup used to assess its effectiveness. This includes the problem instances, parameter settings, baseline algorithms for comparison, and performance metrics employed to ensure a fair and reproducible evaluation of the proposed approach.

Pseudocode: Competitive Co-Evolutionary NSP

Initialize schedule population S
Initialize adversarial population A

Evaluate base penalty $F(x)$ **for** all $x \in S$
bestSoFar ← $min\ F(x)$
For generation = 1 **to** MAX_GENERATION **do**

Identify reference schedule:
$x* \leftarrow arg\ min\ F(x),\ x \in S$
Identify strongest adversary:
$a* \leftarrow arg\ max\ \Delta(x*, a),\ a \in A$

For each schedule x ∈ S do
$F_{eval}(x) \leftarrow HC(x) + SC(x) + \Delta(x, a*)$
End For

For each adversary $a \in A$ **do**
$G(a) \leftarrow \Delta(x*, a)$
End For
Evolve S using tournament selection on F_{eval}
Evolve A using tournament selection on G

If $min_{x \in S} F(x) < F(bestSoFar)$ then
bestSoFar← $arg\ min\ F(x)_{x \in S}$
End If
Update bestSoFar if a lower $F(x)$ is found
End For
Return bestSoFar // // best schedule from Schedule Population S //selected by NSP population objective, $F(x)$

V. Dataset and Experimental Setup

The proposed competitive co-evolutionary approach was evaluated using benchmark nurse scheduling instances derived from realistic ward-level rostering scenarios. Each dataset represents a seven-day planning horizon from Monday to Sunday and includes multiple nurse roles, including sisters, senior nurses and healthcare assistants. The datasets incorporated role-based shift eligibility, coverage requirements, legal rest rules, and workload balance to reflect practical hospital scheduling conditions.

The experimental evaluation focuses on a 20-nurse, one-week scheduling instance, which was deliberately selected to provide a controlled and interpretable setting for comparative analysis. This scale enables clear observation of optimisation dynamics, convergence behaviour and robustness differences between evolutionary strategies without introducing confounding effects from instance size.

All compared methods were operated on identical problem instances and shared the same schedule representation, constraint definitions and penalty structure. This ensures that observed performance differences arise from optimisation strategy rather than differences in problem formulation.

The experimental evaluation considered two optimisation approaches, namely a classical genetic algorithm (GA) and the proposed competitive co-evolutionary NSP. The approaches differ only in their evolutionary interaction and fitness evaluation mechanisms, while genetic operators and representations remain consistent across both methods.

Algorithm parameters follow commonly adopted settings in evolutionary nurse scheduling studies and are held constant across methods unless otherwise stated. Each algorithm was executed for a fixed number of generations with identical population sizes and stopping criteria. To account for stochastic effects, 30 independent runs were performed for each dataset using different random seeds.

Performance was assessed using best and average penalty values across generations, together with convergence trends over time. All reported results were computed using the base NSP objective function to ensure that comparisons reflect genuine schedule quality rather than effects introduced by adversarial evaluation.

All experiments were conducted on the same computational platform using a consistent software environment. Execution time, convergence behaviour and solution quality were recorded for each run and form the basis of the comparative analysis presented in the following section.

While larger and more diverse nurse scheduling instances are important for evaluating scalability, the primary objective of this study is methodological validation of competitive co-evolutionary optimisation under controlled conditions. Extension of the proposed approach to larger scale and multiple ward nurse scheduling problems is therefore identified as a key direction for future work.

Table II summarises the dataset characteristics and scheduling requirements used to evaluate the proposed competitive co-evolutionary NSP. The problem definition follows standard nurse rostering practice and was adopted to enable fair comparison across optimisation strategies.

TABLE II. Problem Parameters for Competitive Nurse Scheduling Experiments

Parameter	Description	Value
Planning horizon	Number of days per scheduling period	7
Number of nurses	Total nurses per instance	20
Nurse roles	Sisters / Senior Nurses / HCAs	5/8/7
Shift types	AM, PM, Night, Post-Night, OFF	5
Shifts per nurse per day	Assignment constraint	Exactly one
Coverage requirement	Minimum staff per working shift	≥1 Nurse and ≥1 HCA (role-dependent)
Weekly OFF rules	Role-specific OFF constraints	Enforced
Working hours rule	Minimum weekly hours	Enforced
Shift sequence rules	Legal patterns (e.g., N → PN)	Enforced
Constraint handling	Hard vs soft constraints	Penalty-based
Objective definition	Schedule quality measure	$HC(x) + SC(x)$ (base NSP objective)

Table III reports the algorithmic parameters used in the experimental comparison of classical GA and the proposed

competitive co-evolutionary approach. Both methods share identical operator settings unless stated otherwise.

TABLE III. ALGORITHM AND EXPERIMENTAL PARAMETERS

Parameter	Setting
Optimisation methods	Genetic Algorithm (GA) NSP, Competitive NSP
Population size	50 individuals per population
Number of populations	GA NSP = 1, Competitive NSP = 2
Parent selection	Tournament selection (size = 2)
Crossover operator	One-point crossover
Crossover probability	0.7
Mutation operator	Role-constrained shift reassignment
Mutation probability	GA NSP = 0.7, Competitive NSP = 0.05
Replacement strategy	Worst individual replacement based on the respective fitness definition
Maximum generations	15,000
Independent runs	30 runs per dataset
Fitness used for selection	GA NSP = Static base fitness, Competitive NSP = Adversarial competitive evaluation
Performance metric reported	Base NSP penalty (hard + soft constraints)

To ensure fair runtime measurement, execution time was recorded for the optimisation process only, excluding file input/output and result printing, which do not affect the optimisation logic.

VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the experimental evaluation of the proposed Competitive Co-Evolutionary Nurse Scheduling Problem (NSP) algorithm. The method was compared against the classical Genetic Algorithm (GA), where both algorithms shared identical problem representations, constraint formulations, and dataset parameter settings to ensure fair comparison. Performance was assessed using the total penalty value, defined as the sum of hard and soft constraint violations.

A. Performance Consistency for 30 Independent Runs

To evaluate robustness and repeatability, the Competitive NSP was executed for 30 independent runs using different random seeds. Across these runs, best penalty values ranged from 337.00 to 503.81, while average penalty values ranged from 339.72 to 590.16, indicating some variability inherent to stochastic optimisation.

TABLE IV. STATISTICAL SUMMARY OF COMPETITIVE NSP PERFORMANCE ACROSS 30 RUNS

Metric	Best Penalty	Average Penalty
Mean	447.28	520.14
Std. Dev.	41.63	60.27
Minimum	337	339.72
Maximum	503.81	590.16

The statistical summary of these runs is reported in Table IV. The method achieves a mean best penalty of 447.28 and a mean average penalty of 520.14, with relatively low standard deviations of 41.63 and 60.27, respectively. These results demonstrate stable convergence behaviour and confirm that the proposed competitive algorithm consistently produces high-quality nurse schedules across repeated executions rather than relying on isolated favourable runs.

B. Comparative Statistical Analysis

A comparative statistical summary for both methods was reported in Table V. The classical GA achieves a mean best penalty of 651.3 and a mean average penalty of 884.6. While the GA exhibits relatively low variance, its final penalty values remain substantially higher than those obtained by the Competitive NSP, suggesting premature convergence once basic feasibility is achieved.

TABLE V. COMPARATIVE PERFORMANCE SUMMARY OF GA AND COMPETITIVE NSP

Metric	Genetic Algorithm (GA) NSP	Competitive NSP
Mean Best Penalty	651.30	447.28
Mean Average Penalty	884.60	520.14
Std. Dev. (Best)	37.90	41.63
Std. Dev. (Average)	40.80	60.27
Minimum Penalty	581.70	337.00
Maximum Penalty	703.60	503.81

In contrast, the Competitive NSP demonstrates markedly improved performance. The mean best penalty is reduced to 447.28, representing a 31.3% reduction compared to the baseline GA, while the mean average penalty decreases from 884.6 to 520.14, corresponding to a 41.2% reduction. These results indicate that introducing competitive evaluation significantly enhances optimisation effectiveness without modifying the underlying NSP formulation.

TABLE VI. EXECUTION TIME COMPARISON OF GA AND COMPETITIVE NSP

Metric	Genetic Algorithm (GA) NSP	Competitive NSP
Mean (sec)	20.53	12.67
Std. Dev (sec)	0.17	0.38
Minimum (sec)	20.22	12.12
Maximum (sec)	20.73	13.41
Median (sec)	20.54	12.48

Table VI reports the execution time statistics for both optimisation methods over 30 independent runs under identical computational settings. The baseline Genetic Algorithm (GA) records the higher mean execution time, with an average runtime of 20.53 seconds, reflecting its reliance on a single population search and static fitness evaluation, which typically requires additional generations to refine feasible schedules.

In contrast, the Competitive NSP achieves a substantially lower mean execution time of 12.67 seconds, representing a reduction of approximately 38.3% compared to the baseline GA. Although the Competitive NSP introduces additional evaluation mechanisms to model competition between objectives, its runtime remains efficient and well within practical limits for offline nurse scheduling. This improvement in computational efficiency, together with the significant gains in solution quality reported earlier, demonstrates the

effectiveness of competitive evaluation without incurring prohibitive computational cost.

C. Convergence Behaviour Analysis

The convergence behaviour of both methods is illustrated in Fig. 2 and Fig. 3, corresponding to GA NSP and Competitive NSP, respectively.

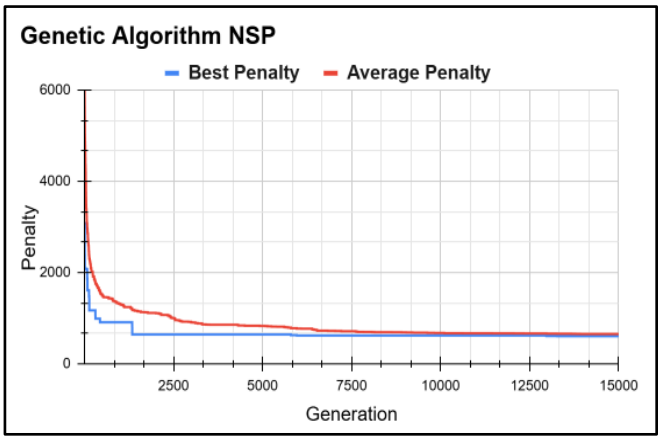

Fig. 2. Convergence of best and average penalty values for the genetic algorithm in NSP.

As shown in Fig. 2, the GA exhibits rapid initial improvement during the early generations, with penalty values decreasing sharply as feasible schedules are identified. However, convergence stagnates shortly thereafter, indicating premature convergence. This behaviour can be attributed to the reliance on static fitness evaluation within a single population, which limits further exploration once basic feasibility is achieved.

In contrast, Fig. 3 demonstrates that the Competitive NSP maintains a smooth and sustained reduction in penalty values throughout the evolutionary process. While its early convergence trend is visually similar to that of the GA, the Competitive NSP continues to refine solutions beyond the initial feasibility phase. This is evidenced by the progressively narrowing gap between the best-of-generation and average penalty values, indicating stronger population-wide improvement.

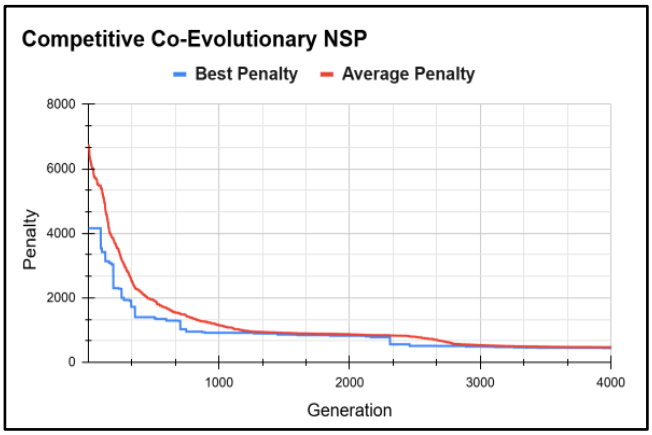

Fig. 3. Convergence of best and average penalty values for the competitive co-evolutionary NSP.

This convergence behaviour reflects more persistent selection pressure introduced by competitive evaluation, enabling continued optimisation and reducing the likelihood of stagnation. These results highlight the effectiveness of the Competitive NSP in sustaining meaningful optimisation progress compared to the baseline GA.

D. Discussion of Competitive Advantage

The superior performance of the Competitive NSP can be attributed to its relative evaluation mechanism, which fundamentally alters how selection pressure is applied during the search process. Unlike classical Genetic Algorithms, which optimise schedules against static evaluation criteria, the competitive algorithm continuously challenges candidate schedules under evolving evaluation contexts. This adaptive pressure discourages overfitting to fixed penalty weightings and prevents premature stagnation, allowing the algorithm to refine solution quality even after feasible schedules have been identified. Similar limitations associated with static fitness evaluation have been reported in recent nurse scheduling studies [21] employing hybrid genetic algorithms and multi-objective formulations, where convergence tends to plateau once basic feasibility is achieved due to fixed objective definitions [22],[24]. In contrast, the competitive evaluation strategy sustains selection pressure beyond feasibility, enabling continued improvement in solution quality.

From an optimisation perspective, the competitive evaluation mechanism effectively exposes localised structural weaknesses that may remain hidden under aggregate penalty evaluation. Conventional NSP solvers assess schedules primarily through global penalty accumulation, which can mask fragile shift sequences or concentrated workload patterns affecting individual nurses. By selectively amplifying such weaknesses, adversarial evaluation forces the evolutionary process to address them explicitly. This behaviour is consistent with observations from competitive co-evolutionary research in other optimisation domains, where adaptive opponent-based evaluation has been shown to maintain meaningful selection pressure and mitigate stagnation caused by static fitness landscapes [15],[16]. The present results extend these findings by demonstrating that similar advantages can be realised within a practical nurse scheduling setting.

Importantly, both methods evaluated in this study optimise the same base objective function and share identical constraint definitions. The observed performance gains, therefore, stem from differences in evolutionary interaction and selection dynamics rather than changes to the NSP formulation itself. This characteristic differentiates the proposed approach from recent integer and mixed-integer programming-based nurse rostering models, which typically rely on fixed optimisation objectives and predefined constraint weighting schemes to achieve solution quality [20],[25]. While such exact and hybrid models offer strong feasibility guarantees, their optimisation behaviour remains tightly coupled to the chosen formulation and does not adapt dynamically during the search.

The competitive co-evolutionary algorithm also provides a distinct alternative to recent nature-inspired metaheuristics proposed for NSP, such as whale optimisation and related population-based methods, which primarily enhance

exploration through novel operators while retaining static fitness evaluation [23]. Rather than increasing operator complexity, the proposed method introduces adaptivity directly at the evaluation level, resulting in improved robustness without additional tuning parameters. This property is particularly relevant for real-world nurse scheduling environments, where constraint interactions are dynamic and difficult to capture through fixed penalty calibration.

Overall, these findings indicate that competitive co-evolution improves optimisation effectiveness through adaptive search dynamics rather than problem reformulation or operator augmentation. The results position competitive evaluation as a promising direction for healthcare scheduling and constraint optimisation, especially for highly constrained NSP instances where sustained adaptability and robustness are essential for producing high-quality schedules.

VII. Conclusion

This study examined the effectiveness of a competitive nurse scheduling formulation for solving the Nurse Scheduling Problem (NSP) and compared its performance with a classical Genetic Algorithm (GA). Unlike conventional evolutionary approaches that rely on static fitness evaluation within a single population, the proposed method introduces competitive evaluation into the evolutionary process, enabling adaptive and continuously informative selection pressure throughout the search.

Experimental results across 30 independent runs demonstrate clear differences in convergence behaviour between the two methods. The classical GA achieves rapid early improvement, but exhibits premature stagnation once near-feasible solutions are obtained, leading to higher final penalty values. In contrast, the Competitive NSP maintains sustained and smooth improvement across generations, achieving lower best and average penalties with a progressively narrowing gap between them. This behaviour indicates stronger population-wide refinement and improved robustness of the resulting schedules.

Notably, these performance gains are achieved without altering the underlying NSP formulation, constraint definitions, or penalty structure. The observed improvements arise solely from the introduction of competitive evaluation and its influence on evolutionary dynamics, rather than from problem reformulation or additional model complexity. This demonstrates the effectiveness of competitive evolutionary pressure in addressing stagnation commonly observed in GA-based nurse scheduling.

Future work will focus on extending the proposed competitive NSP to larger-scale nurse scheduling instances and integrated healthcare scheduling problems involving operating theatres and patient admissions. Further investigation into incorporating domain-specific knowledge within the competitive evaluation process is also planned. In addition, cooperative co-evolutionary algorithms may be explored as a complementary framework to examine how cooperative and competitive evolutionary pressures interact in complex and highly constrained healthcare scheduling environments.

Acknowledgment

The authors gratefully acknowledge the support of Universiti Teknikal Malaysia, Melaka and the Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia under the Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (FRGS/1/2023/FTMK/F00546). This research was also supported by the University's Kesidang Scholarship, which funded the first author's postgraduate studies.

Declaration on the Use of AI-Assisting Tools

The authors declare that generative AI tools were used solely for language refinement and editorial assistance. All scientific content, including problem formulation, methodology, experiments, and analysis, was developed and verified by the authors, who take full responsibility for the accuracy and integrity of this work.

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Metaphorical Meaning Integration in Poetry Based on Online Discourse Data: Analysis from a Cognitive Linguistics Perspective

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***Abstract*—As an emerging literary form, online poetry has garnered significant attention due to its rapid dissemination, diverse styles, and complex metaphorical expressions. However, the process of metaphorical meaning integration in poetry is difficult to quantify, necessitating support from Artificial Intelligence technologies. This study integrates cognitive linguistics theory with AI algorithms to propose a three-dimensional fusion analysis framework—"cognitive theory + specific AI algorithms + online discourse data"—for dissecting metaphorical meaning integration in online poetry. By constructing a comprehensive methodology encompassing metaphor identification, semantic mapping, and integration analysis, this study offers a novel quantitative pathway for metaphor research in poetry. Experimental validation demonstrates that the integrated approach—leveraging Support Vector Machines (SVM), Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN), BERT pre-trained models, and the DeepSeek-R1 large model—achieves outstanding performance in metaphor recognition accuracy, semantic association quantification, and fusion effectiveness evaluation, fully embodying both theoretical and practical value.**

***Keywords*—Online discourse data; poetic metaphor; cognitive linguistics; Artificial Intelligence; semantic fusion**

I. Introduction

As a significant form of literary creation in the internet era, online poetry has gradually become an integral part of popular culture due to its rapid dissemination, diverse styles, and strong interactivity [1]. Metaphorical expressions in poetry not only carry rich cultural and emotional connotations but also reflect unique human thought patterns and cognitive mechanisms [2]. However, the process of metaphorical meaning integration is complex and difficult to quantify, urgently requiring systematic analysis through Artificial Intelligence technologies [3]. Recent breakthroughs in AI for natural language processing have opened new avenues for metaphor research. Algorithms like Support Vector Machines (SVM) [4] and Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN) [5] excel in text classification and feature extraction, while pre-trained models such as BERT [6] and DeepSeek-R1 [7] demonstrate immense potential in semantic analysis and reasoning. Based on this, the study proposes a three-dimensional integrated analytical framework combining "cognitive theory + specific AI algorithms + online discourse data". This framework aims to build a bridge between cognitive linguistics and AI technology, providing quantitative methods for poetic metaphor research.

From a cognitive linguistics perspective, poetic metaphor research primarily revolves around conceptual metaphor theory and conceptual integration theory [8]. Metaphor is a cognitive mechanism that achieves semantic transfer by mapping one conceptual domain onto another. In [9], the authors demonstrate this by mapping time onto money, endowing it with economic attributes. In [10], the authors elucidate the cognitive mechanism of metaphor, emphasizing that during cross-domain mapping, the integration of features from different conceptual domains forms a new semantic space. These theories provide a foundation for semantic analysis of poetic metaphors, though they remain insufficient for quantifying metaphor fusion effects.

In the field of AI algorithms, text metaphor recognition and semantic parsing technologies continue to advance. In [11], Support Vector Machines (SVM) demonstrated strong performance in metaphor classification tasks, effectively distinguishing metaphorical from non-metaphorical sentences. In [12], CNNs further enhance metaphor recognition accuracy through local contextual feature extraction. In [13], the BERT pre-trained language model offers novel insights for metaphorical meaning mapping via contextual semantic encoding. However, existing research predominantly focuses on metaphor identification, with limited in-depth analysis of metaphorical meaning fusion and a lack of theoretical support for cognitive mechanisms.

Furthermore, specialized research on metaphors in online poetry remains scarce. The dissemination characteristics and metaphorical expressions of online poetry possess unique traits. Its multi-thematic and diverse nature provides rich corpora for metaphor studies, yet existing research has failed to fully leverage these data [14]. Simultaneously, the training challenge for low-resource poetry corpora demands urgent solutions, with transfer learning and self-supervised learning offering potential approaches [15].

However, current research exhibits the following shortcomings: First, the integration of cognitive linguistics theories with AI algorithms remains superficial, with most studies confined to theoretical exposition and algorithmic application without in-depth exploration of their fusion mechanisms [16]. Second, research on metaphors in online poetry is scarce, failing to fully leverage the distinct characteristics of online discourse data [17]. Third, quantitative methods for analyzing metaphorical meaning fusion remain immature, lacking systematic evaluation metrics for fusion effectiveness [18].

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Addressing these gaps, this study constructs a three-dimensional integration framework combining specific algorithms with online discourse data to investigate metaphorical meaning integration in online poetry. Its main contributions are threefold: 1) Establishing a "cognitive theory + specific AI algorithms + online discourse data" framework that systematically outlines the integration pathway between cognitive linguistics and AI technology; 2) through constructing a web poetry corpus and performing data preprocessing, designed metaphor recognition, semantic mapping, and fusion analysis algorithms based on SVM, CNN, BERT, and DeepSeek-R1. This achieves end-to-end analysis of metaphorical meaning fusion, providing concrete algorithms and experimental validation for quantitative research on poetic metaphors; and 3) based on experimental results, quantitative evaluation metrics for metaphor fusion effectiveness were proposed, including metaphor recognition accuracy, semantic relevance, and fusion degree. These metrics validated the algorithms' efficacy and reliability, offering practical guidance for applied research in poetic metaphor studies.

II. Theoretical Foundations and Technical Support

A. Core Theories of Cognitive Linguistics

Cognitive linguistics provides three core theories for understanding metaphor: conceptual metaphor theory, conceptual integration theory, and image schema theory [19].

Conceptual metaphor theory, proposed by Lakoff and Johnson, posits that metaphor is a cognitive phenomenon involving the mapping of one conceptual domain (source domain) onto another conceptual domain (target domain) [20]. Fig. 1 illustrates the cross-domain mapping process in conceptual metaphor theory, visually representing the relationship between source and target domains and how mapping endows the target domain with new semantic features.

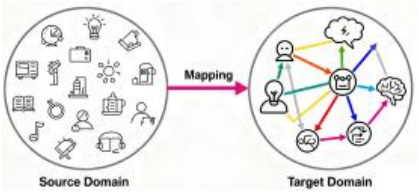

Fig. 1. Conceptual metaphor mapping diagram.

Conceptual integration theory further elucidates the cognitive mechanisms of metaphor. Proposed by Fauconnier and Turner, this theory emphasizes the integration of features from different conceptual domains within metaphorical expressions [21]. The cognitive process of metaphor involves four Mental Spaces: Input Space 1 (source domain), Input Space 2 (target domain), the Category Space (shared features), and the Fusion Space (integrated features). Through cross-domain mapping and feature integration, metaphorical expressions form new semantic spaces that aid in constructing and understanding complex conceptual relationships.

The mental schemata theory, grounded in human cognitive patterns, posits that metaphorical expressions rely on cognitive schemata of typical images, including "container schemata", "path schemata", and "spatial schemata" [22]. These schemata originate from human perception and experience, forming the foundation for understanding abstract concepts.

B. Core Algorithmic Principles of Artificial Intelligence

1) Metaphor recognition algorithms: Support Vector Machines (SVM) is a supervised learning algorithm based on statistical learning theory. It classifies data into distinct categories by identifying the optimal separating hyperplane [23]. For metaphor recognition tasks, SVM utilizes inputs such as word vectors and part-of-speech features to train classifiers that distinguish metaphorical sentences from non-metaphorical ones. The strength of SVM lies in its classification performance in high-dimensional spaces, enabling effective handling of complex textual features.

Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN) extract local contextual features through convolutional layers, reduce feature dimensions via pooling layers, and perform classification using fully connected layers [24]. CNN excels at capturing local textual features, particularly adept at identifying key words and phrases within metaphorical expressions.

Fig. 2 illustrates the metaphor recognition workflow of the SVM-CNN fusion algorithm, encompassing text feature extraction, feature vector generation, and classification prediction. This demonstrates how the two algorithms synergize to enhance metaphor recognition accuracy. Table I compares the performance of SVM and CNN in metaphor recognition tasks, including accuracy, recall, training efficiency, and applicable scenarios, providing a reference for selecting the appropriate algorithm.

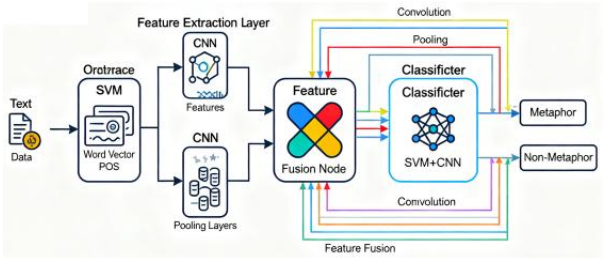

Fig. 2. Metaphor recognition using SVM and CNN fusion.

TABLE I. Comparison of SVM and CNN in Metaphor Recognition

Performance indicators	*SVM*	*CNN*
Accuracy	High, especially in high-dimensional feature spaces	High, especially in capturing local contextual features
Recall	Stable suitable for handling imbalanced datasets	Stable sensitive to local features suitable for complex contexts
Training efficiency	Low, especially on large-scale datasets	High suitable for large-scale data training
Applicable scenarios	High-dimensional feature spaces such as word vector representation	Local context feature extraction such as keyword and phrase recognition

2) Semantic analysis algorithm: BERT is a pre-trained language model based on the Transformer architecture [25]. It captures contextual semantic information in text through pre-training with the Masked Language Model (MLM) and Next Sentence Prediction (NSP) tasks. In metaphorical meaning mapping tasks, BERT encodes metaphorical sentences to generate semantic vectors, quantitatively analyzing the semantic association strength between the referent domain and the metaphorical domain. Fig. 3 illustrates how the BERT model performs contextual semantic encoding of text to generate semantic vectors.

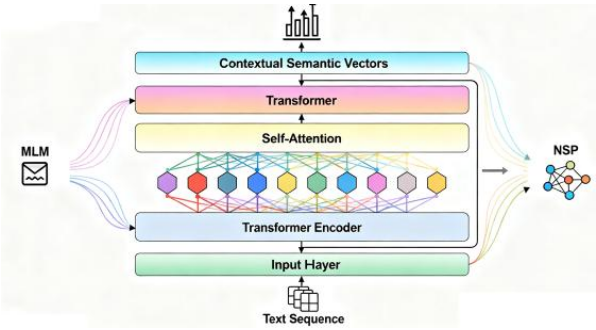

Fig. 3. BERT contextual semantic encoding logic.

DeepSeek-R1 is a large language model with robust deep semantic reasoning capabilities. It can analyze the cognitive logic behind metaphors, reconstructing the transformation and restructuring processes of imagery schemas [26]. Through its multi-layer neural network architecture, DeepSeek-R1 captures deep semantic features in text, offering a novel approach to cognitive analysis of metaphors. Fig. 4 illustrates the working principle of the DeepSeek-R1 large language model.

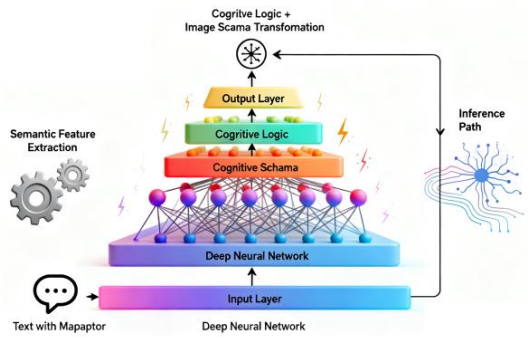

Fig. 4. DeepSeek-R1 schematic diagram.

3) Data processing algorithms: The application of transfer learning and self-supervised learning in low-resource poetry corpora holds significant importance. Transfer learning addresses the training challenges of low-resource poetry corpora by transferring knowledge from the source domain to the target domain [27]. Self-supervised learning leverages unlabeled data to learn textual features through tasks such as predicting masked words, thereby enhancing the model's generalization capability [28]. Fig. 5 illustrates the workflow of applying transfer learning and self-supervised learning to low-resource poetry corpora, encompassing pre-trained model transfer, feature extraction, and self-supervised task design. This demonstrates how these algorithms enhance the utilization efficiency of low-resource corpora.

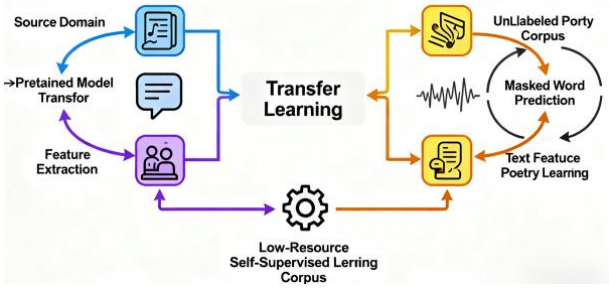

Fig. 5. Transfer learning and self-supervised learning in low-resource poetry corpora.

C. Application of Online Discourse Data in Integrating Metaphorical Meanings in Poetry

Online poetry corpora exhibit diversity, interactivity, and dynamism, providing rich practical scenarios for metaphorical meaning integration research.

Online poetry encompasses diverse themes and styles, featuring abundant metaphorical expressions. Readers participate in poetry dissemination through comments, shares, and other forms, fostering multidimensional metaphorical interpretations. This study constructed an online poetry corpus by collecting texts from poetry forums, social media, and other platforms, selecting representative metaphorical poems. Through corpus preprocessing and annotation, it provided data support for algorithm training.

During metaphorical meaning integration, the interactive nature of online discourse data provides multi-faceted information for semantic analysis. Reader comments and interpretations enrich the semantic layers of metaphors, enhancing the comprehensiveness of integration analysis. Simultaneously, the dynamic nature of the data requires algorithms to possess real-time updating and adaptive capabilities to address newly emerging metaphorical expressions in poetry. The formula for calculating metaphor integration is as follows:

$$FusionDe = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} SemanticAs(i)}{n} \quad (1)$$

Here, $FusionDe$ represents metaphor fusion degree, $SemanticAs(i)$ denotes the association strength between the referent domain and the metaphor domain on the i-th semantic dimension, and n is the total number of semantic dimensions. This formula quantifies the fusion effect of metaphorical meaning in the synthetic space.

III. Research Design and Data Preprocessing

Before conducting research on the fusion of metaphorical meaning in online poetry, a systematic research design and data preprocessing are required. This section encompasses the construction of an online discourse poetry corpus, the

establishment of data preprocessing procedures, and the selection of appropriate algorithms.

A. Construction of the Online Discourse Poetry Corpus

Building a high-quality online discourse poetry corpus forms the foundation of this research. Corpus construction requires identifying data sources and establishing rigorous screening criteria to ensure diversity and representativeness.

1) Corpus sources: Online poetry data primarily originates from poetry platforms, forum comments, and social media shares [29]. Fig. 6 illustrates the main collection sources and distribution of poetry data, visually representing each platform's contribution ratio. The figure reveals that social media shares constitute a significant proportion, indicating the substantial influence of poetry dissemination on social media.

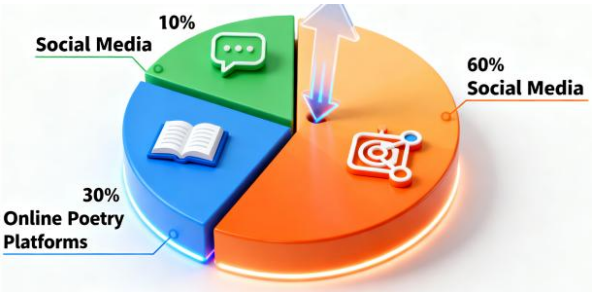

Fig. 6. Distribution map of poetry corpus collection sources.

Online poetry platforms include China Poetry Network and Poetry Journal Forum, which aggregate a vast collection of original poetry works, typically possessing high literary value and artistic merit. Forum discussions encompass platforms like Douban Poetry Group and Zhihu Poetry Topics, where poetry sharing and commentary provide rich interactive data. Social media sharing encompasses platforms like Weibo and WeChat Official Accounts, where poetry reposts and comments reflect dissemination popularity. Table II summarizes the volume of poetry corpora from various sources alongside dissemination metrics, offering a comprehensive overview of the corpus's overall characteristics. Poetry shared via social media demonstrates particularly prominent dissemination popularity, closely tied to its rapid propagation nature.

TABLE II. POETRY CORPUS STATISTICS

Platform type	*Number of poems*	*Average reads*	*Average likes*	*Average comments*
Online poetry platforms	1200	1500	120	30
Forum comments	800	800	60	20
Social media sharing	1000	2000	150	40

2) Corpus screening criteria: To ensure the quality and representativeness of the corpus, the following screening criteria were established:

Thematic diversity. Covering multiple common poetic themes such as love, nature, life, and society to ensure richness in metaphorical expression.

Metaphor density. Poems with high metaphor density better reflect the complexity and diversity of metaphorical expression, providing more meaningful data for subsequent algorithmic analysis. Metaphor density is calculated as follows:

$$MetaphorDensity = \frac{n_{Metaphors}}{n_{Sentences}} \quad (2)$$

Among these, $MetaphorDensity$ denotes metaphor density, $n_{Metaphors}$ represents the number of metaphors per poem, and $n_{Sentences}$ indicates the total number of lines per poem. Fig. 7 illustrates the distribution of metaphor density within the selected poetic corpus, reflecting its diversity and analytical value. The figure reveals that poems with metaphor densities exceeding 30% constitute a significant proportion, indicating that the selected corpus exhibits a high richness of metaphorical expression.

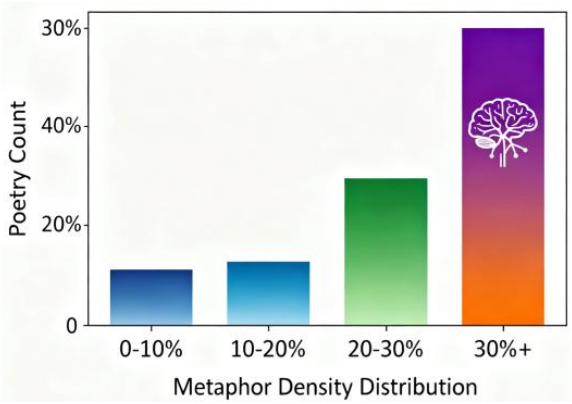

Fig. 7. Metaphor density distribution map.

Virality. Popular poems are selected based on metrics such as reading volume, likes, and comments to ensure the corpus's influence and representativeness.

B. Data Preprocessing Workflow

Data preprocessing is a critical step to ensure corpus quality, encompassing text cleaning, feature annotation, and data format conversion.

1) Text cleaning: The purpose of text cleaning is to remove irrelevant symbols, duplicate content, and non-poetic text to enhance corpus purity [30]. Specific operations include: 1) Removing irrelevant symbols. Using regular expressions to eliminate punctuation marks, emoticons, and other extraneous characters from poetic texts; 2) Removing duplicate content. using text deduplication algorithms to eliminate duplicate poetic paragraphs or entire poems; 3) Removing non-poetic text. Filtering out pure poetic text while discarding non-poetic content like author biographies and copyright notices. Fig. 8 illustrates the specific text cleaning workflow, encompassing steps to eliminate irrelevant symbols, duplicate content, and non-poetic text. These procedures effectively enhance corpus purity and quality.

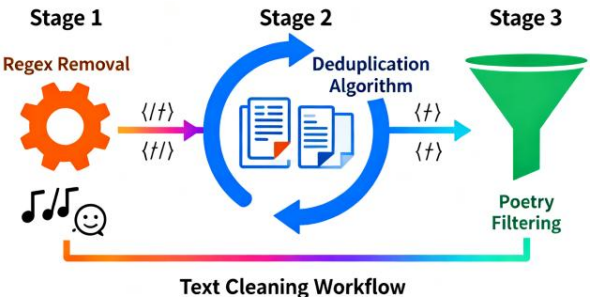

Fig. 8. Text cleaning flowchart.

2) Feature annotation: The purpose of feature annotation is to identify and annotate metaphor-related vocabulary, laying the foundation for subsequent metaphor recognition and semantic analysis. Specific operations include:

a) Word segmentation and part-of-speech tagging. Using the jieba tokenization tool to segment the poetry text and annotating the part-of-speech for each word using the part-of-speech tagging module; b) Metaphor-related lexical annotation. Based on the part-of-speech annotation results, identifying and annotating metaphor-related lexical items (nouns, verbs, adjectives); c) Manual correction. Incorporating manual correction to enhance the accuracy of feature annotation.

3) Data format conversion: The purpose of data format conversion is to transform textual data into a vector form processable by AI algorithms. Specific operations include:

Word Embedding. Employing the Word2Vec algorithm to convert words into fixed-length vector representations. By training on large text datasets, Word2Vec captures semantic and syntactic features of words, mapping them into a continuous vector space. Fig. 9 illustrates the Word2Vec embedding process, including generating word vectors and combining sentence vectors. Through extensive text training, Word2Vec generates high-quality word vectors that provide robust support for subsequent model training.

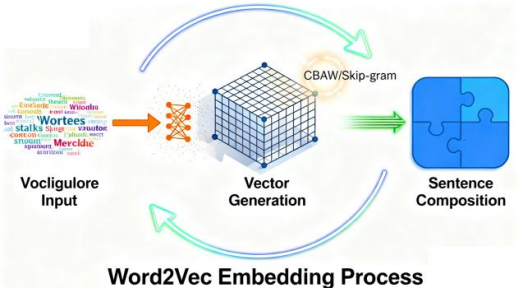

Fig. 9. Word2Vec lexical embedding process diagram.

Sentence Vectorization. Combine lexical vectors into sentence vectors to form the vector representation of a poem. By averaging or weighting the lexical vectors, we obtain the vector representation of the sentence, which serves as input data for model training. The sentence vector calculation formula is as follows:

$$SentenceVector = \frac{1}{n}\sum_{i=1}^{n} WordVector(i) \quad (3)$$

Here, $WordVector(i)$ represents the vector representation of the i-th word in the sentence, and n denotes the number of words in the sentence. This formula calculates the sentence vector by combining word vectors into a vector representation of the sentence. This approach converts poetic text into a numerical format that the model can process.

C. Algorithm Selection

Selecting appropriate algorithm combinations is crucial for metaphor recognition and semantic analysis in this research. This study specifies the following combinations:

a) SVM+CNN for metaphor recognition, leveraging SVM's classification capability and CNN's local context feature extraction. SVM excels at classification in high-dimensional spaces, while CNN effectively extracts local textual features. Their integration enhances metaphor recognition accuracy.

b) BERT + DeepSeek-R1 for semantic analysis, leveraging BERT's contextual semantic encoding and DeepSeek-R1's deep semantic reasoning capabilities. BERT captures contextual semantic information in text, while DeepSeek-R1 excels in deep semantic reasoning. Their integration enables a comprehensive analysis of metaphorical semantic features.

c) Transfer learning is employed for low-resource corpus optimization, enhancing model performance on sparse data by transferring knowledge from pre-trained models. This approach effectively addresses training challenges in low-resource settings and improves model generalization.

Fig. 10 illustrates the overall framework of algorithmic integration, encompassing combinations for metaphor recognition, semantic analysis, and low-resource corpus optimization. By integrating multiple algorithms, the strengths of each are leveraged to elevate the model's overall performance.

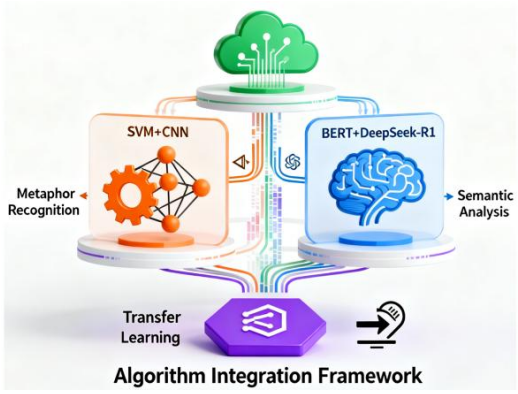

Fig. 10. Algorithm integration framework diagram.

D. Data Augmentation and Expansion

To further enhance the model's generalization capability and robustness, this study introduces data augmentation techniques. Through data augmentation, more training examples can be generated to enrich the diversity of the corpus.

Data augmentation operations include synonym substitution, sentence reordering, and sentiment reversal. 1) Synonym Substitution: Randomly replace selected words in poetic texts

with synonyms while preserving overall sentence meaning. 2) Sentence Rearrangement. Generate new sentence combinations by adjusting sentence structure and order; 3) Sentiment Reversal. Invert the emotional orientation of sentences while preserving their core meaning. Fig. 11 illustrates the principles behind synonym substitution, sentence rearrangement, and sentiment reversal. These methods effectively enrich corpus diversity and enhance model generalization capabilities.

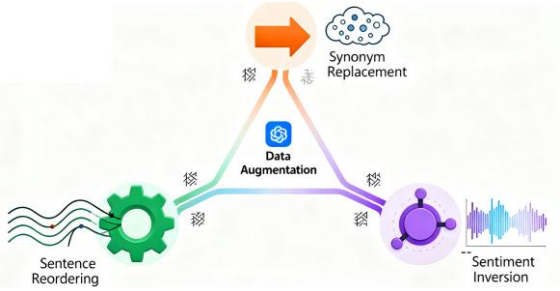

Fig. 11. Principles of data augmentation.

IV. AI Algorithm Implementation Path

Following the construction of the network discourse poetry corpus and data preprocessing, this section details the AI algorithm implementation path for integrating metaphorical meanings in poetry. Three core modules are designed: metaphor recognition, semantic mapping, and fusion analysis. These modules collaborate to achieve end-to-end processing from metaphor identification to semantic integration.

A. Metaphor Recognition Module

Metaphor recognition serves as the initial step in integrating poetic metaphorical meanings, with its accuracy directly impacting subsequent semantic analysis and fusion outcomes. This study employs a combined SVM and CNN algorithm for metaphor recognition, leveraging SVM's classification capabilities in high-dimensional feature spaces and CNN's strengths in extracting contextual features.

Feature input is a critical step in metaphor recognition, directly affecting model performance. This study constructs a comprehensive feature vector based on Word2Vec-generated word vectors, supplemented with part-of-speech features and contextual window features: 1) Word2Vec Word Vectors. A pre-trained Word2Vec model converts words into fixed-length vector representations, capturing semantic and syntactic features. 2) Part-of-speech features. Based on part-of-speech tagging results, the part-of-speech information of metaphor-related vocabulary, such as nouns, verbs, and adjectives, is encoded into feature vectors; 3) Context window features. Centering on the target vocabulary, fixed-size windows are set to the left and right to extract co-occurrence features of words within the window, capturing local contextual information.

The fusion algorithm process includes the following steps: First, CNN extracts local contextual features from the text, with CNN automatically learning local feature representations through convolutional and pooling layers. Next, the feature vectors extracted by CNN are input into an SVM classifier for classification, achieving binary classification of "metaphorical sentence/non-metaphorical sentence", and further subdividing metaphor types to annotate the subject-metaphor relationship. Fig. 12 illustrates the complete workflow of the SVM-CNN fusion algorithm, encompassing feature input, CNN feature extraction, feature vector generation, and SVM classification prediction, demonstrating the synergistic interaction between the two algorithms. Table III summarizes the dimensionality of different feature types within the metaphor recognition module, providing a detailed reference for feature engineering.

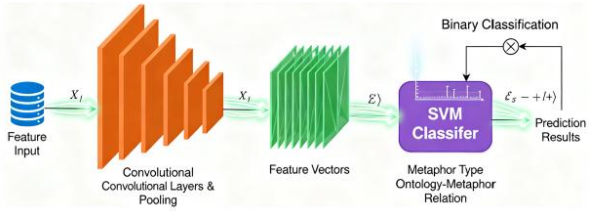

Fig. 12. SVM-CNN fusion algorithm.

TABLE III. Statistics of Metaphor Recognition Feature Input Dimensions

Feature type	*Dimension size*	*Description*
Word2Vec word vector	300	Word vector dimension
Part-of-speech features	10	One-hot vector dimension for part-of-speech tagging
Contextual window features	200	Co-occurrence feature vector dimensions extracted from the window

B. Semantic Mapping Module

After completing metaphor recognition, the next step involves performing semantic analysis on the identified metaphorical sentences. This entails constructing semantic vector spaces for the referent domain and the metaphor domain, followed by quantifying the semantic association strength between them. This study employs the BERT pre-trained model to build the semantic vector space.

BERT is a pre-trained language model based on the Transformer architecture. Through pre-training on large-scale text data using masked language modeling and next-sentence prediction tasks, BERT learns contextual semantic information from text, providing powerful semantic representations for various natural language processing tasks.

For identified metaphorical sentences, the BERT model first encodes them to generate contextual semantic vectors for each lexeme. Subsequently, semantic vector spaces for the referent domain and metaphor domain are constructed based on these lexical vectors. Specifically, the lexical vectors belonging to the referent domain within the metaphorical sentence undergo average pooling to obtain the referent domain's semantic vector. Similarly, average pooling is applied to the lexical vectors of the metaphor domain to obtain its semantic vector. Fig. 13 illustrates the process of semantic encoding for metaphor sentences using BERT and how the semantic vector spaces for the ontology domain and metaphor domain are constructed, providing data support for subsequent concept mapping.

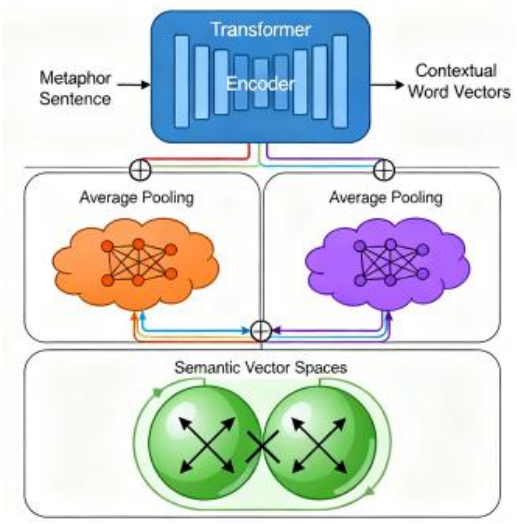

Fig. 13. BERT semantic encoding and semantic vector space construction.

To quantify the semantic association strength between the referent domain and the metaphor domain, the cosine similarity between their semantic vectors is computed. Cosine similarity measures the directional similarity between two vectors; values closer to 1 indicate stronger semantic association.

$$SemanticSimilarity = \frac{OntologyVector \cdot MetaVector}{\|OntologyVector\| \times \|MetaVector\|} \quad (4)$$

Among these, $OntologyVector$ represents the semantic vector of the referent domain, $MetaVector$ denotes the semantic vector of the metaphorical domain, $\cdot$ signifies the dot product of quantities, and $\|\cdot\|$ indicates the norm of the vector.

C. Fusion Analysis Module

Fusion analysis is a critical step in integrating the metaphorical meaning of poetry, aiming to decipher the cognitive logic behind metaphors and quantitatively assess the fusion effect of metaphorical meaning in the synthetic space. This study combines the deep semantic reasoning capabilities of the DeepSeek-R1 large model with Conceptual Integration theory to achieve fusion analysis.

DeepSeek-R1 is a large language model with powerful deep semantic reasoning capabilities. Through its multi-layer neural network architecture, it captures deep semantic features in text and demonstrates outstanding reasoning abilities across various complex tasks. In metaphor fusion analysis, DeepSeek-R1 is employed to deconstruct the cognitive logic underlying metaphors, reconstructing the transformation and restructuring of imagery schemas.

Based on conceptual integration theory, this study designed a fusion degree calculation algorithm to quantitatively evaluate the integration effectiveness of metaphorical meaning within the synthetic space. Specifically, semantic vectors from the ontology domain and metaphor domain are fused to generate semantic vectors in the synthetic space. Subsequently, similarity between the semantic vector in the synthetic space and the semantic vectors of the referent domain and metaphor domain is computed to evaluate integration effectiveness. Fig. 14 illustrates how the DeepSeek-R1 large model parses the cognitive logic behind metaphors and the integration degree calculation process based on conceptual integration theory, visually presenting the implementation path for metaphorical meaning integration.

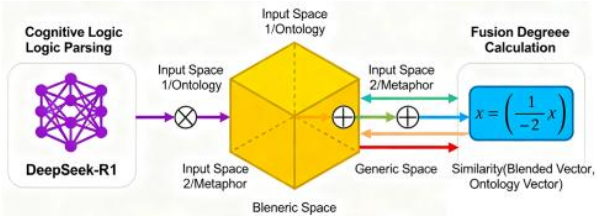

Fig. 14. DeepSeek-R1 inference and concept integration process.

D. Methodological Steps

In summary, the AI algorithm implementation path for integrating metaphorical meanings in poetry encompasses data preprocessing, metaphor identification, and fusion analysis. The workflow is illustrated in Fig. 15, with specific steps as follows:

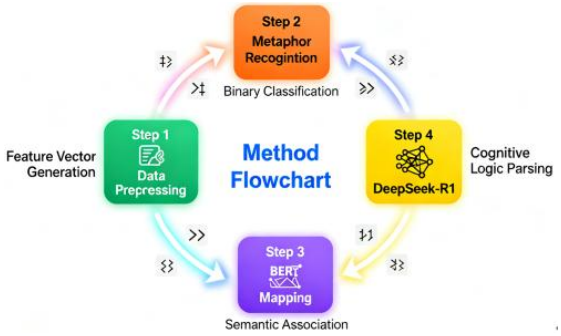

Fig. 15. Method flowchart.

Step 1: Data Preprocessing. Clean, annotate features, and convert formats of the online discourse poetry corpus to generate feature vectors suitable for model input.

Step 2: Metaphor Identification. Employ a hybrid SVM-CNN algorithm to achieve binary classification of "metaphorical sentences/non-metaphorical sentences" and subclassify metaphor types.

Step 3: Semantic Mapping. Construct semantic vector spaces for the referent domain and metaphor domain based on the BERT pre-trained model to quantify semantic association strength.

Step 4: Integration Analysis. Combine the DeepSeek-R1 large model with conceptual integration theory to decipher the cognitive logic behind metaphors and evaluate the effectiveness of metaphorical meaning integration.

V. Experimental Design and Effect Validation

A. Experimental Protocol Design

1) Experiment objectives and data collection: This experiment aims to validate the effectiveness and superiority of the proposed AI algorithm for integrating metaphorical meanings in poetry. By comparing different algorithms'

performance in metaphor identification, semantic mapping, and fusion analysis tasks, it evaluates model accuracy and stability, providing a quantitative analytical method for poetry metaphor research.

The experimental dataset is sourced from the constructed online discourse poetry corpus, comprising 2,200 preprocessed poems. The dataset is divided into training, validation, and test sets at ratios of 70%, 10%, and 20%, respectively. Stratified random sampling is employed to ensure the proportion of metaphorical and non-metaphorical sentences in each subset aligns with the overall dataset.

2) Algorithm selection and parameter configuration: To validate the effectiveness and superiority of the proposed AI algorithm for integrating poetic metaphor meanings, comparative analysis was conducted using SVM, CNN, BERT pre-trained models, the DeepSeek-R1 large model, SVM+CNN fusion algorithms, and BERT+DeepSeek-R1 fusion algorithms. Specific parameter configurations are detailed in Table IV.

TABLE IV. ALGORITHM PARAMETER SETTINGS

No.	*Algorithm*	*Parameter settings*
1	SVM	Regularization parameter C set to 1.0, Kernel function set to radial basis function (RBF)
2	CNN	Two convolutional layers: First layer kernel size 3x3 filter count 64. Second layer kernel size 2x2 filter count 32. Pooling layer uses max pooling pooling window size 2x2. Fully connected layer neuron count 128 activation function ReLU
3	BERT	Using Transformer-based BERT-base model Hidden layer size 768, attention head count 12 Learning rate 2e-5, training epochs 3
4	DeepSeek-R1	Using medium model configuration of DeepSeek-R1 Multiple Transformer encoder layers, Temperature parameter set to 0.7

3) Experimental environment configuration: The experimental environment configuration comprises hardware setup and software environment. For hardware, the CPU is an Intel Core i7-10700K with a base frequency of 3.8GHz; the GPU is an NVIDIA GeForce RTX 3080 with 10GB of VRAM; and the memory consists of 32GB DDR4 RAM operating at 3200MHz. Regarding the software environment, the operating system is Windows 10 Professional 64-bit; the programming language is MATLAB 2021a; the deep learning framework utilizes the MATLAB Deep Learning Toolbox.

4) Training process parameters: During model training, the initial learning rate is set to 0.001 and adjusted using a cosine annealing strategy; the batch size is set to 32, adjusted based on the graphics memory capacity of the experimental equipment; the Adam optimizer is employed for its superior convergence performance; The number of training epochs was set to 20, dynamically adjusted based on model convergence.

5) Evaluation metrics: Metaphor recognition was evaluated using Precision, Recall, and F1 score. Precision measures the proportion of correctly identified metaphor sentences. Recall measures the proportion of all metaphor sentences correctly retrieved. F1 score is the harmonic mean of precision and recall, providing a comprehensive evaluation of model performance.

Semantic mapping calculates the correlation coefficient for semantic association strength, assessing semantic similarity between the ontology domain and metaphor domain.

Fusion analysis evaluates metaphorical meaning fusion effectiveness using mean fusion degree and standard deviation, where a higher fusion degree indicates better fusion quality.

B. Results Analysis

1) Data preprocessing results analysis: First, the online poetry corpus sourced from platforms such as poetry websites, forum comments, and social media shares underwent text cleaning. The results are shown in Table V. This table details the cleaning outcomes, reflecting the effectiveness of each step and the final corpus size. After cleaning, 2,200 high-quality poetry texts were retained.

TABLE V. TEXT CLEANING RESULTS TABLE

Cleaning step	*Initial corpus count*	*Corpus count after cleaning*	*Cleaning rate*
Removing irrelevant symbols	3000	2850	5
Removing duplicate content	2850	2500	12.28
Removing non-poetry text	2500	2200	12

Table VI summarizes the annotation results for metaphor-related vocabulary, including the number of words across different parts of speech and their proportion in the total vocabulary. Nouns, verbs, and adjectives play a significant role in metaphorical expressions, and the annotation of these words provides key features for subsequent metaphor recognition.

TABLE VI. STATISTICAL TABLE OF METAPHOR-RELATED VOCABULARY ANNOTATION

Part-of-speech type	*Number of words*	*Proportion in total vocabulary*
Nouns	5000	40
Verbs	3500	28
Adjectives	2500	20
Other	1500	12

Table VII summarizes the detailed results of data augmentation, reflecting the enhancement effects of each method and the final corpus size. Through data augmentation, the final corpus size increased from 2,200 to 5,500 poems, significantly improving the diversity and richness of the corpus.

TABLE VII. DATA AUGMENTATION RESULTS TABLE

Augmentation method	*Initial corpus count*	*Corpus count after augmentation*	*Augmentation rate*
Synonym replacement	2200	3300	50
Sentence reorganization	3300	4400	33.33
Sentiment reversal	4400	5500	25

2) Analysis of semantic fusion performance: To evaluate the effectiveness and superiority of the proposed AI algorithm for integrating poetic metaphor meanings, this section provides explanatory insights into metaphor recognition performance, semantic mapping capabilities, and fusion analysis abilities.

Table VIII presents a comparative analysis of metaphor recognition performance across different algorithms. Through three metrics—accuracy, recall, and F1 score—the classification effectiveness of each algorithm for metaphorical and non-metaphorical sentences can be comprehensively assessed. The data in the table demonstrates that the SVM+CNN fusion algorithm outperforms both standalone SVM and CNN algorithms in terms of accuracy, recall, and F1 score. This indicates that the fusion algorithm more effectively captures the features of metaphorical sentences, thereby enhancing recognition accuracy and stability.

TABLE VIII. COMPARISON OF METAPHOR RECOGNITION PERFORMANCE ACROSS DIFFERENT ALGORITHMS

Algorithm combination	*Accuracy percentage*	*Recall percentage*	*F1 score percentage*
SVM	85	80	82.4
CNN	83	82	82.5
SVM+CNN	87	85	86

Fig. 16 presents the comparative results of different algorithms within the metaphor recognition module. The horizontal axis represents various algorithms, including SVM, CNN, and the SVM-CNN hybrid algorithm; the vertical axis shows classification accuracy (%) on the left and recall (%) on the right. The figure reveals that the SVM-CNN fusion algorithm achieves 87% classification accuracy and 85% recall rate, outperforming both standalone SVM and CNN algorithms. This demonstrates that the fusion approach better captures the features of metaphorical sentences, thereby enhancing recognition performance. The differently colored bar charts represent the accuracy and recall rates of each algorithm, while the line charts illustrate the performance trends across different feature dimensions.

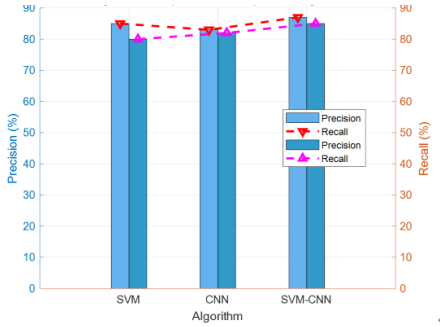

Fig. 16. Comparison of algorithms in the metaphor recognition module.

Fig. 17 illustrates the distribution characteristics of semantic association strength across five distinct poetry sample sets. The figure reveals that Sample Sets 3 and 5 exhibit overall higher semantic association strength, with medians approaching the upper limit and data points concentrated within a narrow range. This indicates that the metaphorical expressions within these two sample sets are semantically highly correlated, demonstrating consistent metaphorical quality and achieving elevated artistic and expressive effects. Sample set 2 exhibits relatively low semantic association intensity, with the box plot positioned lower and data distribution more dispersed. This indicates greater variation in metaphorical semantic connections within this set, suggesting that metaphorical expressions in some poems may lack clarity or depth, with room for improvement in artistic quality. Sample sets 1 and 4 exhibit moderate semantic association strength. Sample set 4 shows relatively concentrated data distribution, indicating superior stability in metaphorical semantic associations compared to sample set 1. Meanwhile, certain samples within sample set 1 demonstrate significantly higher semantic association strength than others, potentially signifying more refined metaphorical expressions or deeper semantic connections in these poems, highlighting their artistic merit. Additionally, the scatter plot uses distinct colors to mark the specific semantic association strength values for each poetry sample, allowing observation of each sample's unique characteristics.

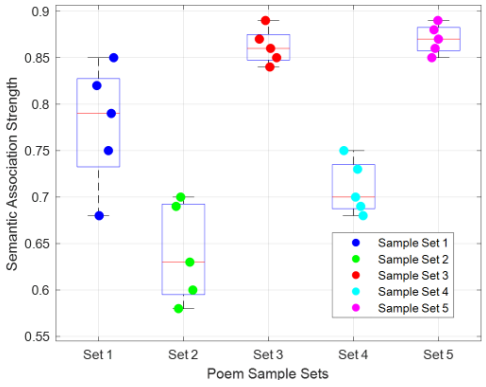

Fig. 17. Distribution of semantic association strength.

Table IX illustrates the relationship between semantic association strength and fusion degree across different samples, along with their calculated correlation coefficients. Semantic association strength reflects the degree of semantic similarity between the referent domain and the metaphorical domain, while fusion degree measures the integration effectiveness of metaphorical meaning within the synthetic space. The table reveals a high positive correlation between the two, with a correlation coefficient of 0.89. This indicates that stronger semantic association leads to better integration of metaphorical meaning. Consequently, constructing an accurate semantic vector space is crucial for achieving effective metaphorical meaning integration.

TABLE IX. CORRELATION ANALYSIS FOR SEMANTIC ASSOCIATION STRENGTH AND INTEGRATION DEGREE

No.	*Semantic association strength*	*Fusion degree*	*Correlation coefficient*
1	0.76	0.815	0.89
2	0.65	0.705	
3	0.83	0.8	
4	0.72	0.75	
5	0.88	0.84	

Fig. 18 illustrates the trend of metaphor fusion degree across varying parameters within the fusion analysis module. The horizontal axis represents parameters (such as window size and part-of-speech feature weights), while the vertical axis displays fusion degree values, utilizing a combination of a 3D line chart and a bubble chart. The 3D line chart vividly depicts the dynamic trajectory of fusion degree across multiple parameters, enabling clear observation of the combined effects of different parameter combinations on fusion performance. The bubble chart further emphasizes relative differences in fusion degree through bubble size, allowing more intuitive identification of the optimal parameter settings corresponding to the best fusion outcomes. This combined visualization comprehensively reveals the patterns of fusion degree variation under multi-parameter influence, aiding in model parameter optimization and enhancing metaphorical meaning fusion effectiveness.

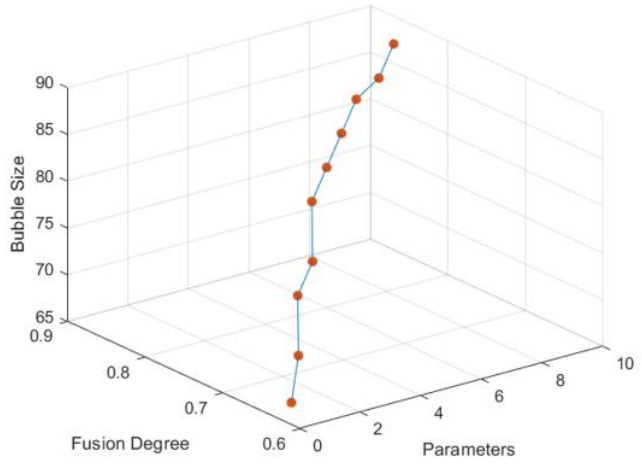

Fig. 18. Integration level variation with parameters.

Table X evaluates the integration effectiveness of metaphorical meanings across different poetic themes. The average integration level reflects the overall fusion quality of metaphorical meanings across all poetic themes, while the standard deviation indicates the dispersion of integration levels across individual samples. The table reveals that love-themed poetry exhibits the highest average integration degree with a relatively small standard deviation, indicating high stability and consistency in metaphor integration under this theme. Conversely, social-themed poetry demonstrates the lowest average integration degree with a relatively large standard deviation, suggesting significant variation in metaphor integration effectiveness.

TABLE X. METAPHOR INTEGRATION EFFECTIVENESS EVALUATION

Poetry theme	*Number of samples*	*Average fusion degree*	*Standard deviation*
Love	50	0.85	0.06
Nature	50	0.78	0.12
Life	50	0.82	0.08
Society	50	0.75	0.10

Table XI provides a comprehensive comparison of different model combinations across multiple evaluation metrics. Beyond focusing on metaphor recognition accuracy, metrics such as semantic association strength correlation coefficient, mean fusion degree, and training time are introduced to comprehensively assess model performance and practicality. The table reveals that the BERT model demonstrates superior performance in metaphor recognition accuracy, semantic association strength correlation coefficient, and mean fusion degree, though it requires relatively longer training time. In contrast, the SVM+CNN fusion algorithm maintains high recognition accuracy and fusion effectiveness while achieving relatively shorter training time, offering better balance and practicality.

TABLE XI. COMPREHENSIVE COMPARISON OF MODEL EVALUATION METRICS

Model combination	*Metaphor recognition accuracy percentage*	*Semantic association strength correlation coefficient*	*Average fusion degree*	*Training time minutes*
SVM	85	0.78	0.78	12
CNN	83	0.8	0.79	25
BERT	88	0.85	0.83	45
SVM+CNN	87	0.82	0.81	20

Fig. 19 shows the curve of loss function values during model training. The horizontal axis represents the number of training epochs, while the vertical axis denotes the loss function value. The figure reveals that as the number of training epochs increases, the loss function values of all models exhibit a decreasing trend. However, the rate of decrease and the final loss values differ among them. The BERT-based model demonstrates a faster rate of loss reduction and achieves a lower final loss value, indicating superior convergence during training and a more effective ability to learn patterns within the data.

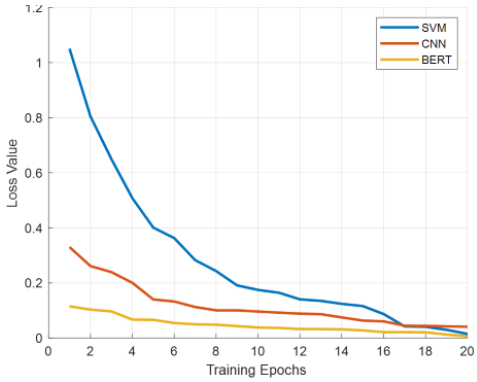

Fig. 19. Changes in model training loss function values.

Fig. 20 illustrates the performance metrics comparison of different algorithms in metaphor recognition tasks. The horizontal axis represents various algorithm combinations, while the vertical axes respectively denote accuracy (%), recall (%), and F1 score (%). By comparing the heights of different groups of histograms, one can intuitively observe the comprehensive performance of each algorithm in metaphor recognition tasks. The bar chart for the SVM-CNN fusion algorithm exhibits a higher overall height, indicating that this algorithm achieves a good balance across accuracy, recall, and F1 score, demonstrating superior metaphor recognition capability.

Fig. 21 compares the confusion matrices of different models on the metaphor recognition task. The horizontal and vertical axes represent predicted categories and true categories, respectively, including metaphorical sentences and non-metaphorical sentences. By comparing the confusion matrices of different models, one can intuitively observe the classification performance differences across categories. Deep learning-based models demonstrate high accuracy in classifying both metaphorical and non-metaphorical sentences. Their confusion matrices feature darker colors along the diagonal and lighter colors off-diagonally, indicating these models effectively distinguish between the two sample types and reduce misclassification rates.

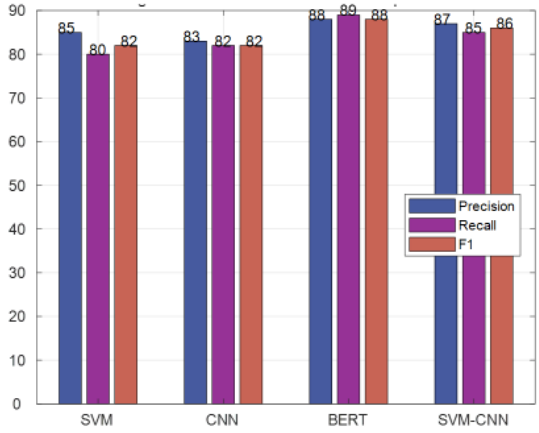

Fig. 20. Comparison of performance metrics across different algorithms.

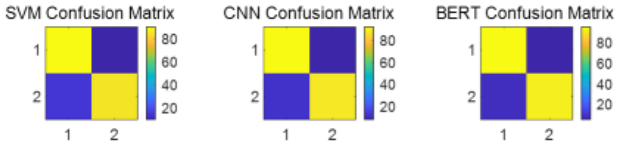

Fig. 21. .Confusion matrix comparison.

Fig. 22 illustrates the comparative fusion effectiveness of different poetic themes within the fusion analysis module. The horizontal axis represents poetic themes, while the vertical axis indicates fusion degree values. By comparing the positions and shapes of box plots across different themes, it is evident that love-themed poems exhibit a generally higher metaphorical fusion degree with a more concentrated distribution. This suggests that metaphorical meaning fusion within this theme demonstrates high stability and consistency. In contrast, nature-themed poems show a more dispersed fusion degree distribution, indicating that their metaphorical meaning fusion is influenced by multiple factors and exhibits significant variation.

Fig. 23 shows the learning rate curve during model training. The horizontal axis represents the number of training iterations, while the vertical axis displays the learning rate values, presented as a stem-and-leaf plot. This plot clearly illustrates the trajectory and distribution of the learning rate as training progresses. Initially, the learning rate is relatively high, gradually decreasing and stabilizing as training continues. This learning rate adjustment strategy facilitates rapid convergence during the early training phase while enabling fine-tuning of model parameters in later stages, thereby enhancing both training efficiency and generalization capabilities.

Fig. 24 presents a comparison of ROC curves and AUC values for different models on the metaphor recognition task. The horizontal axis represents the false positive rate, while the vertical axis denotes the true positive rate. The ROC curve of the SVM-CNN fusion algorithm lies near the upper-left corner, achieving an AUC value of 0.92. This indicates that the model demonstrates strong classification performance on the metaphor recognition task, effectively distinguishing metaphorical sentences from non-metaphorical ones.

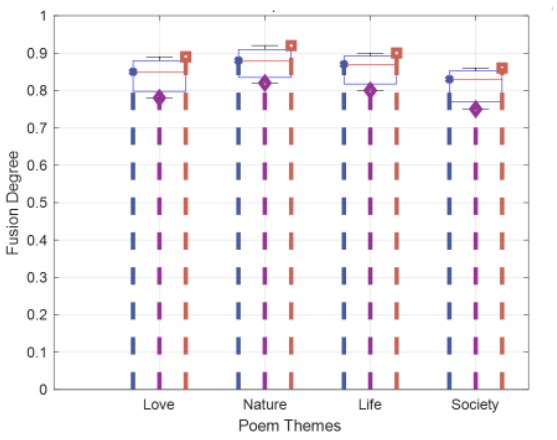

Fig. 22. Comparison of fusion effects across different themes.

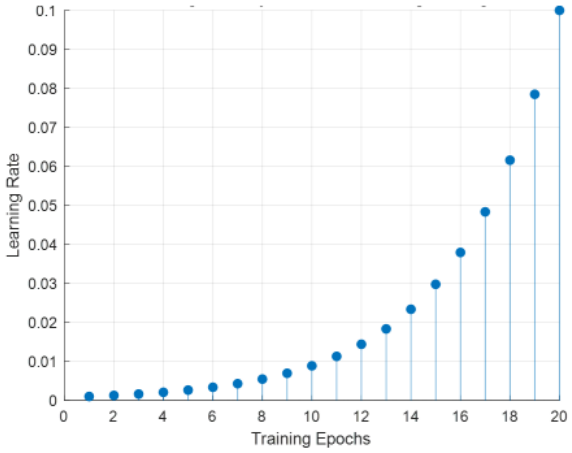

Fig. 23. Learning rate curve.

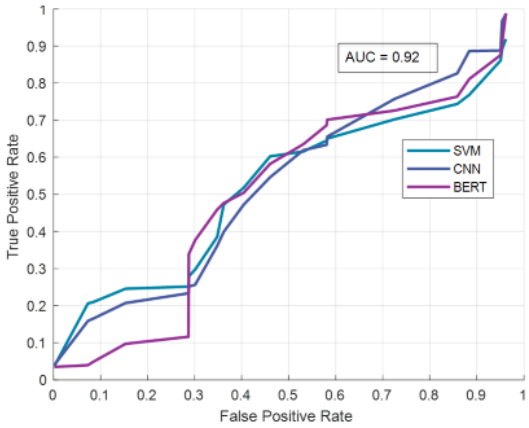

Fig. 24. Comparison of ROC curves and AUC values.

VI. Conclusion

This study proposes a fusion analysis framework for the metaphorical meaning of online poetry based on cognitive linguistics and Artificial Intelligence technologies, whose effectiveness is validated through detailed experiments. The designed three-dimensional fusion analysis framework—combining cognitive theory, specific AI algorithms, and online discourse data—achieves favorable results in both poetry metaphor recognition and semantic fusion. Experiments demonstrate that the SVM+CNN fusion algorithm exhibits high accuracy and recall in metaphor recognition tasks, effectively enhancing metaphor identification performance. The BERT model demonstrated robust contextual semantic encoding capabilities in the semantic mapping task, providing strong support for semantic analysis. The DeepSeek-R1 large model, combined with conceptual integration theory, performed excellently in metaphorical meaning fusion analysis, effectively deciphering the cognitive logic behind metaphors and quantifying fusion effects. Experimental results validated the effectiveness of the proposed framework and methods, demonstrating their potential in the field of poetic metaphor research.

Future work involves expanding and deepening the research. First, exploring the incorporation of multimodal data, such as audio recordings of poetry recitations and related visual materials, to enrich the analytical dimensions of metaphorical meaning integration in poetry. Second, further optimizing the algorithmic model by integrating cutting-edge technologies like the Transformer architecture to enhance the model's ability to recognize and understand complex metaphorical expressions.

Funding

This study was supported by the Heilongjiang Provincial Philosophy and Social Sciences Research Planning Project titled "A Study on the Embodied Meaning of Metaphors in Tang Poetry from the Perspective of Intentionality Theory" (Grant No.: 22YYE473).

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Dynamic Decision Model for Tunnel Cross-Passage Layout Based on Multi-Source Sensor Data Fusion

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***Abstract*—The layout of tunnel cross-passages is a critical aspect of tunnel construction and operational safety. Traditional methods, primarily based on static design, struggle to adapt to complex and variable geological and construction environments. This study proposes a dynamic decision model for cross-passage layout based on multi-source sensor data fusion to enhance the scientific rigor and adaptability of cross-passage design. A three-dimensional data fusion mechanism integrating "temporal-spatial-statistical" dimensions was developed. Bayesian network quantifies uncertainty, Kalman filter processes time series data, and PCA extracts spatial features. Reinforcement learning and non-dominated sorting genetic algorithm II (NSGA-II) are used to achieve multi-objective optimization of safety coverage and construction efficiency. The proposed model significantly outperforms the traditional methods in many indicators, and is verified by 100 Monte Carlo simulations and actual tunnel experiments. The dynamic scheme increased the safety coverage rate from 72.4% to 91.7%, shortened the average evacuation distance by 38.7% (from 248 meters to 152 meters), saved resources by 14.2% (about 9.8 million yuan), and shortened the construction period by 3-6 days. The comprehensive utility value is 0.91, which is 19% higher than the traditional static method, and the robustness is enhanced. The model realizes the safe, economical, and efficient real-time optimization of the layout of the transverse channel. It provides a technical path and data support that can be promoted for intelligent tunnel construction under complex geological conditions.**

***Keywords*—Multi-source sensor data fusion; dynamic cross-passage deployment decision-making for tunnels; Kalman filter; reinforcement learning; non-dominated sorting genetic algorithm II**

I. Introduction

With the continuous advancement of infrastructure development in China, tunnel engineering has assumed an increasingly vital role in transportation, water conservancy, power, and other sectors [1-2]. Particularly under the "Transportation Powerhouse" strategy, projects involving long tunnels, deep-buried tunnels, and tunnels in complex geological conditions are proliferating. The tunnel length, burial depth and geological complexity of the national key projects such as the Dianzhong Water Diversion Project, the Sichuan-Tibet Railroad and the Shenzhen-Zhongshan Channel are all ranked first in the world [3]. As an important part of the tunnel structure system, the cross passage performs various functions during the construction process, including ventilation, transportation, evacuation, and drainage. During operation, it also undertakes important responsibilities such as disaster prevention and rescue, equipment maintenance and partition management [4]. In order to ensure safety, improve operational efficiency and reduce engineering risks, the cross passage must be arranged scientifically and reasonably [5].

However, traditional cross-passage layout methods primarily rely on static geological surveys and empirical judgments during the design phase, employing fixed intervals or simple rules for placement. This approach lacks responsiveness to dynamic factors such as geological changes during construction, construction disturbances, and resource scheduling [6]. In complex geological conditions—such as karst formations, faults, gas-bearing zones, and rockburst-prone sections—static placement often results in suboptimal cross-passage locations, redundant or insufficient quantities, thereby compromising construction safety and efficiency, and potentially triggering engineering accidents [7-8].

In recent years, rapid advancements in IoT, artificial intelligence, and sensing technologies have generated increasingly rich multi-source heterogeneous data during tunnel construction. This includes georadar (GPR), seismic wave detection (TSP), advance drilling, construction progress monitoring, personnel positioning, environmental monitoring, and material consumption data [9]. These data provide an unprecedented information foundation for dynamically optimizing cross-passage placement. Effectively integrating these multi-source sensor data to construct a dynamic deployment decision model with real-time response capability has become a critical scientific issue for the intelligent development of tunnel engineering. Key research areas in constructing dynamic deployment decision models for tunnel cross passages include multi-source data fusion mechanism design [10], dynamic decision model construction [11], simulation verification, and engineering applications [12]. Currently, universities and research institutions worldwide have made significant progress in tunnel intelligence. Tang et al. [13] achieved advance warning for poor geological sections in a mountain tunnel project by integrating ground-penetrating radar with TSP data. Andrade-Lucio et al. [14] established a full-lifecycle health monitoring system for tunnels by deploying thousands of sensors. Overseas research has primarily focused on structural health monitoring and disaster early warning, with limited studies on dynamic deployment for ancillary structures

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like cross passages, and no systematic decision models have yet been developed. In China, geological advance prediction, construction risk early warning, and BIM+GIS integrated management are all hot topics [15]. Support vector machine (SVM) data and construction data can be used to predict the risk of tunnel collapse [16]. In addition, Luo et al. [17] proposed a cross-passage spacing optimization method based on a genetic algorithm. The current research has the following shortcomings: most studies only focus on the optimization of the design stage, while ignoring the dynamic evolution in the construction process [18]; a single algorithm is mainly used for shallow data fusion, which cannot completely solve the spatiotemporal heterogeneity and uncertainty [19]; some studies only focus on algorithm development without considering actual engineering data, which leads to insufficient transferability and practicality [20].

Addressing these issues and challenges, this study proposes a dynamic cross-passage deployment decision model based on multi-source sensor data fusion. The main contributions are as follows: 1) A three-dimensional fusion mechanism of "spatiotemporal statistics" is introduced, Kalman filtering is used to process time-series data, PCA is used to extract spatial features, and Bayesian network is used to quantify uncertainty, so as to realize the efficient fusion of geological, construction and resource data; 2) A reinforcement learning-oriented cross-passage layout optimization model driven by the dual objectives of safety coverage and construction efficiency is constructed to realize real-time decision-making update in the construction process; 3) A high-fidelity simulation environment is established based on tunnel engineering data, and the model performance is evaluated from multiple dimensions such as safety, economy and adaptability.

The structure of this study is as follows: Section II introduces fundamental methods and typical applications of multi-source sensor data fusion, providing a theoretical foundation for decision model construction. Section III analyzes traditional methods for deploying cross-tunnel sensors and the advantages of dynamic deployment, clarifying the research questions and objectives. Section IV proposes a dynamic deployment decision model based on multi-source sensor data fusion, including the overall framework, data fusion mechanism, and a hybrid optimization method combining reinforcement learning with NSGA-II. Section V evaluates the model's performance through simulation experiments and field validation, focusing on comparative analysis of safety, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness. Finally, Section VI summarizes key findings, identifies research limitations, and proposes future research directions.

II. Multi-Source Sensor Data Fusion Technology

A. Data Fusion Methods and Algorithms

Multi-source Sensor Data Fusion (MSDF) [21] refers to the comprehensive processing of data from different sensors, different times, different spaces, or different modalities to obtain information that is more accurate, reliable, and comprehensive than that from a single data source. Its core objectives are to eliminate redundancy, suppress noise, fill in missing data, and enhance the robustness and real-time capability of decision-making [22]. Fig. 1 illustrates the definition of multi-source sensor data fusion methods.

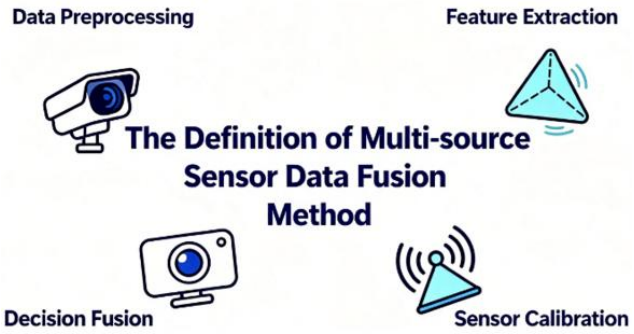

Fig. 1. Definition of multi-source sensor data fusion methods.

Based on the level of data abstraction, fusion methods are typically categorized into three tiers: data-level fusion, feature set fusion, and decision-level fusion [23]. Table I illustrates the hierarchical classification of multi-source sensor data fusion methods and algorithm categories. Table I indicates that data-level fusion methods include weighted averaging and Kalman filtering algorithms; feature-level fusion methods encompass PCA, ICA, and wavelet transforms; while decision-level fusion methods involve Bayesian inference, D-S evidence theory, and voting methods.

TABLE I. Hierarchy and Algorithms of Multi-Source Sensing Data Fusion Methods

Level	Name	Description	Common Methods
L1	Data-level fusion	Raw data was directly merged most information was retained	Weighted average Kalman filter
L2	Feature-level fusion	Features extracted, then fused, dimensionality reduced	PCA ICA Wavelet transform
L3	Decision-level fusion	Each source makes an independent decision and then fuses the results	Bayesian inference D-S evidence theory Voting method

The Kalman filter (KF) is suitable for linear dynamic systems in Gaussian noise environments and can recursively estimate the system state [24]. Fig. 2 shows the prediction and update process of the KF algorithm, which mainly consists of the update step and the prediction step.

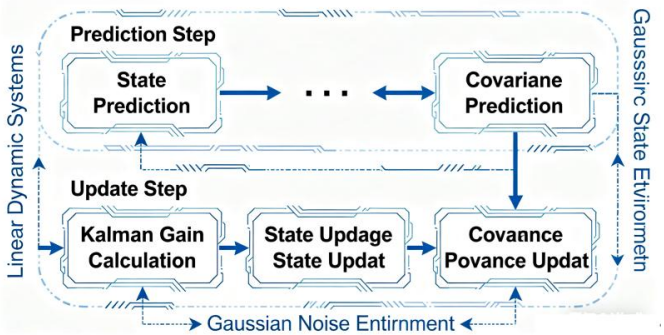

Fig. 2. KF algorithm workflow diagram.

Principal Component Analysis (PCA) is employed for dimensionality reduction and feature extraction in high-dimensional data, eliminating redundant dimensions while retaining the directions of maximum variance [25]. The PCA method calculates the covariance matrix as follows:

$$\boldsymbol{C} = \frac{1}{n-1}\boldsymbol{X}^T\boldsymbol{X} \tag{1}$$

where, $\boldsymbol{C}$ denotes the covariance matrix, n represents the number of data samples, and $\boldsymbol{X}$ indicates the sample data. The feature decomposition calculation is analyzed as follows:

$$\boldsymbol{C}v_i = \lambda_i v_i, \lambda_1 \geq \lambda_2 \geq \mathrm{L} \geq \lambda_d \tag{2}$$

Here, v_i denotes the i-th eigenvector, and λ_i denotes the i-th eigenvalue. Select the first k principal components such that their cumulative contribution rate $\geq 95\%$:

$$CPV_k = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{k}\lambda_i}{\sum_{i=1}^{d}\lambda_i} \tag{3}$$

Here, CPV_k denotes the cumulative contribution rate of the k-th eigenvector. Based on the above PCA principles, the PCA dimension reduction process is summarized in Fig. 3.

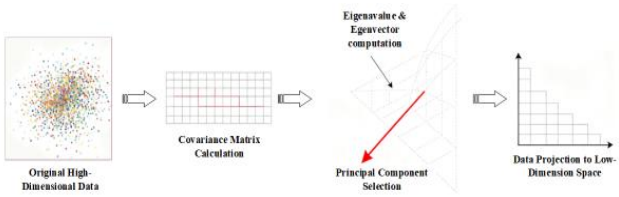

Fig. 3. Schematic diagram of PCA dimension reduction.

Bayesian estimation and decision fusion methods are suitable for scenarios with high uncertainty and abundant prior knowledge [26]. The posterior distribution is obtained through the likelihood function and prior distribution [see Eq. (4)]:

$$P(\theta|z) = \frac{P(z|\theta)P(\theta)}{P(z)} \tag{4}$$

where, $P(\theta|z)$ denotes the posterior distribution probability, $P(z|\theta)$ represents the likelihood function, $P(\theta)$ indicates the prior probability, $P(z)$ signifies the evidence, θ denotes the Bayesian parameter, and z refers to the observed data.

B. Applications of Fusion Techniques Across Domains

Intelligent transportation systems, environmental monitoring, industrial equipment fault diagnosis, and healthcare are all fields in which multi-source sensor data fusion technology is widely used [27]. Fig. 4 shows the application analysis of fusion technology in various fields.

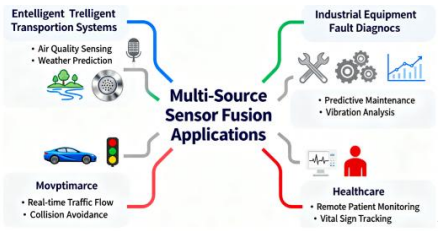

Fig. 4. Analysis of fusion technology applications across different fields.

In intelligent transportation, multi-source data fusion technology is used for traffic flow monitoring, accident detection, and vehicle navigation. Tomaszewski et al. [28] point out that traffic conditions can be monitored by integrating camera, radar, and GPS data, congestion can be predicted, and the best route suggestions can be provided for drivers.

In environmental monitoring, multi-source sensor data fusion technology is applied to air quality monitoring, water quality monitoring, and natural disaster early warning. Zhao et al. [29] demonstrate that by integrating data from ground monitoring stations, satellite remote sensing, and drones, real-time monitoring and dispersion prediction of atmospheric pollutants can be achieved. Applications of data fusion in environmental monitoring are shown in Table II.

TABLE II. APPLICATIONS OF DATA FUSION IN ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING

Data Source	Fusion Method	Application Scenario	Advantage
Ground monitoring station	Kalman filter	Air quality monitoring	High accuracy real-time
Satellite remote sensing	PCA	Water quality monitoring	Dimensionality reduction, wide coverage
Drone	Bayesian estimation	Natural disaster warning	Uncertainty handling flexibility

By integrating data from machine vision, temperature, and pressure sensors, the running status of production line equipment can be monitored in real-time, potential faults can be predicted, and production processes can be optimized [30].

In the healthcare industry, data fusion technology is used for disease diagnosis, patient monitoring, and rehabilitation treatment [31]. The technology can monitor the health status of patients in real time and provide early warning by integrating physiological signals such as blood pressure, body temperature, and electrocardiogram (ECG).

III. DYNAMIC LAYOUT TECHNOLOGY FOR TUNNEL CROSS-PASSAGES

In tunnel engineering, the layout technology for cross-passages is undergoing a transformation from traditional to dynamic approaches. Although the traditional method meets the basic functional requirements of the tunnel, its limitations are becoming more and more obvious in complex geological conditions and a construction environment. On the other hand, the dynamic design technology shows its unique advantages with its high efficiency and flexibility.

A. Traditional Design Methods and Limitations

According to the Specifications for Design of Highway Tunnels (JTG D70-2022), the traditional tunnel cross passage layout mainly uses the empirical spacing method. This method is mainly based on the tunnel length, surrounding rock type, traffic level and other factors for one-time design. The layout remains largely unchanged during construction and rarely undergoes modification during the operational phase [32]. Fig. 5 illustrates the flowchart of the traditional layout method. However, this approach has significant limitations.

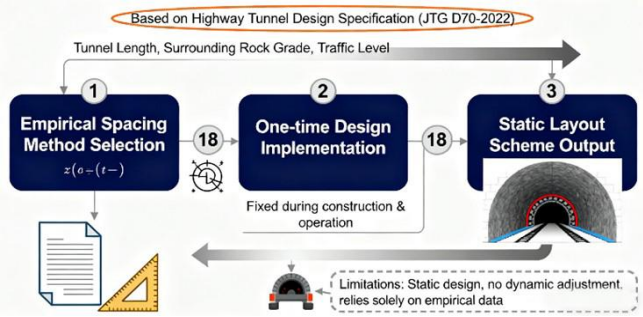

Fig. 5. Flowchart of traditional deployment method.

The static nature of traditional deployment methods makes it difficult to deal with sudden geological changes and construction disturbances. These techniques focus primarily on the spacing required by the specification, and ignore resource optimization and security redundancy. Over-deployment may increase engineering costs. The limitations of traditional layout methods can be further studied by combining the equations and parameter provisions related to the design specification of highway immersed tunnel.

B. Advantages of Dynamic Deployment Technology

Dynamic deployment technology overcomes the limitations of traditional methods and continuously integrates multi-source sensor data to update the position and number of cross-channels in real time [33]. Fig. 6 shows the dynamic deployment technology and its advantages:

Fig. 6. Dynamic layout technology.

1) Enhancing safety and emergency response capabilities: Dynamic layout can adjust the position of the cross passage in time according to the changes of geological conditions, so that personnel can be quickly evacuated in case of disaster. For example, the comprehensive advanced forecast system can accurately understand the geological conditions in front of the tunnel, so as to plan the position of the cross passage in advance, so as to reduce casualties and equipment losses.

2) Optimizing resource allocation and reducing costs: Compared with traditional technology, dynamic site selection reduces the construction of unnecessary transverse passages, thereby reducing the project cost. Under the premise of ensuring safety standards, dynamic route selection can greatly reduce the project cost in some auxiliary tunnels of the Sichuan-Tibet Railroad.

3) Enhancing construction efficiency: Through dynamic deployment, the construction of the transverse passage can be arranged reasonably according to the progress and resource consumption, so as to reduce the construction interference and improve the overall efficiency.

C. Analysis of Dynamic Cross-Passage Layout Decision-Making for Tunnels

The dynamic layout decision for tunnel cross-passages constitutes a complex multi-objective optimization problem [34], involving multiple variables and constraints. Fig. 7 illustrates the analysis of this decision-making problem.

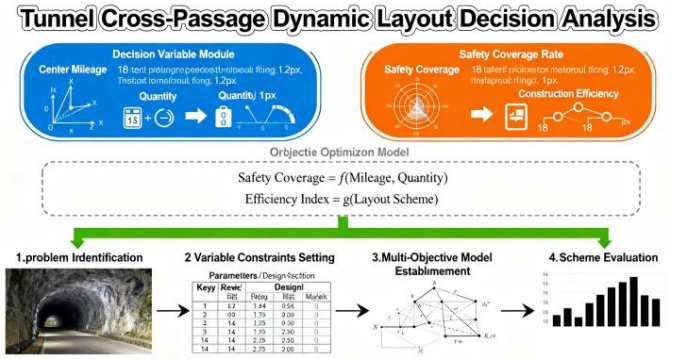

Fig. 7. Analysis of dynamic cross-passage layout decision problem in tunnels.

Decision variables include the center mileage and quantity of cross passages. The objective function typically establishes a multi-objective optimization model for cross-passage layout with dual targets: safety coverage rate and construction efficiency. The safety coverage rate is calculated as follows [see Eq. (5)]:

$$S_{\text{cov}-rate} = \frac{N_{\text{cov}-rate}}{N_{rate}} \times 100\% \tag{5}$$

where, $S_{\text{cov}-rate}$ denotes safety coverage rate, $N_{\text{cov}-rate}$ represents the proportion of personnel covered, and N_{rate} denotes the total personnel proportion.

Construction efficiency can be measured by the average evacuation time, Eq. (6):

$$T_{mean} = \frac{D_{esc}}{v_{esc}} \tag{6}$$

where, T_{mean} denotes average evacuation time, D_{esc} denotes total evacuation distance, and v_{esc} denotes evacuation speed.

Constraints primarily include geological safety, spacing limitations, construction interference, and resource caps. Geological safety constraints prohibit eliminating cross passages in areas with rock mass grades ≥ IV. Spacing constraints require cross passages to meet standard-specified distances. Construction interference constraints mandate reasonable scheduling of construction phases to avoid mutual disruption. Resource cap constraints reflect limited monthly excavation capacity.

IV. Construction of a Dynamic Cross-Passage Layout Decision Model

With the continuous advancement of tunnel construction technology, efficiently and safely laying out tunnel cross-passages has become a critical issue. In order to realize the real-time monitoring and dynamic optimization of tunnel construction process, this section introduces a dynamic cross-passage layout decision model based on multi-sensor data fusion.

A. Overall Framework

The model's overall framework, shown in Fig. 8, comprises four main layers: data acquisition, data fusion, decision-making, and execution. Let the data acquisition layer collect raw data from multiple sensors. These sensors include geological radar, seismic wave detection, advanced drilling, construction progress monitoring, personnel positioning and environmental monitoring. By processing these data with data fusion layer, the comprehensive evaluation of tunnel construction environment can be obtained. Based on the fused data, the decision-making layer uses reinforcement learning and multi-objective optimization algorithms to determine the optimal cross passage layout scheme. Finally, the execution layer uses the decision results for the construction and adjustment of the cross passage.

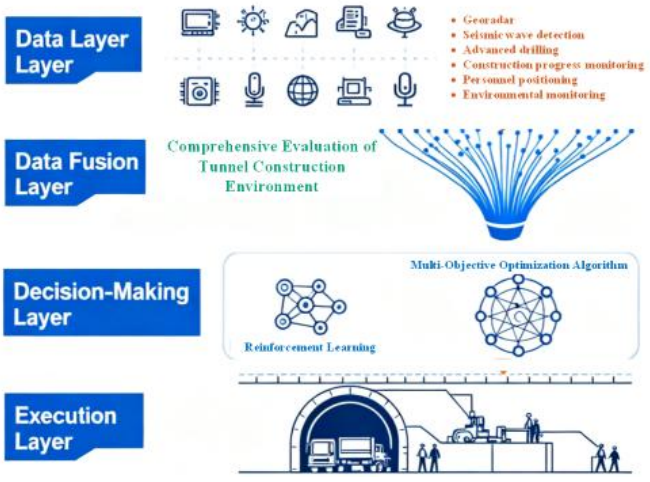

Fig. 8. Framework of the dynamic tunnel cross-passage layout decision model based on multi-source sensor data fusion.

B. Selection of Data Fusion Methods

At the data fusion layer, we employ multiple data fusion methods to handle different types of sensor data. This study uses Kalman filter to collect time series data, such as construction progress and resource consumption. Kalman filtering is a recursive estimation algorithm capable of effectively processing noisy data in dynamic systems. Its core equations are as follows [see Eq. (7) to Eq. (11)]:

$$\hat{x}_{k|k-1} = F_k \hat{x}_{k-1|k-1} + B_k u_k \tag{7}$$

$$P_{k|k-1} = F_k P_{k-1|k-1} F_k^T + Q_k \tag{8}$$

$$K_k = P_{k|k-1} H_k^T \left(H_k P_{k|k-1} H_k^T + R_k \right)^{-1} \tag{9}$$

$$\hat{x}_{k|k} = \hat{x}_{k|k-1} + K_k \left(z_k - H_k \hat{x}_{k|k-1} \right) \tag{10}$$

$$P_{k|k} = \left(1 - K_k H_k \right) P_{k|k-1} \tag{11}$$

Here, $\hat{x}$ denotes state estimation, P represents the estimation error covariance, F denotes the state transition model, B denotes the control input model, u denotes the control input, Q denotes the process noise covariance, z denotes the measurement value, H denotes the observation model, R denotes the measurement noise covariance, and K denotes the Kalman gain.

For spatial data such as ground-penetrating radar images, this study employs principal component analysis (PCA) for dimensionality reduction. PCA extracts key features from the data, reducing dimensionality while preserving critical information. The mathematical expressions for PCA are given in Eq. (1) to Eq. (3).

According to the above introduction and description, Table III summarizes the advantages and disadvantages of various data fusion methods.

TABLE III. Comparison of Different Data Fusion Methods

Method	Applicable Data Type	Advantage	Limitation
Kalman filter	Time series data	Handles noise in dynamic systems	Assumes linearity and Gaussian distribution
Principal component analysis	Spatial data	Extracts main features dimensionality reduction	Requires large data for training

C. Decision Model Design

The design of the decision model constitutes the core component of the entire system. We adopted a hybrid approach combining Reinforcement Learning (RL) [35] and the Non-Dominated Selection Genetic Algorithm II (NSGA-II) [36] to achieve multi-objective optimization between safety and cost. NSGA-II is used to find the Pareto optimal solution in multi-objective optimization; reinforcement learning is used to learn the most effective method through interaction with the

environment. Fig. 9 shows the teaching process of the hybrid reinforcement learning and NSGA-II model.

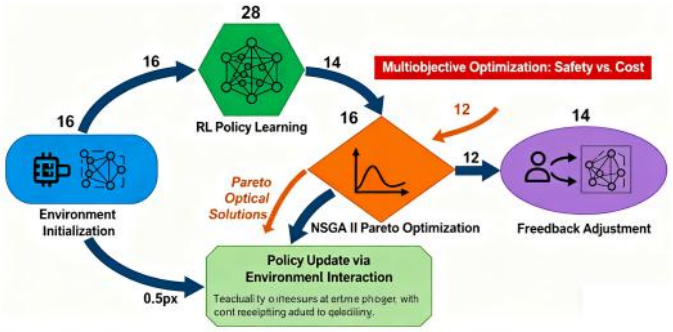

Fig. 9. Training process of the reinforcement learning and NSGA-II hybrid model.

In reinforcement learning, we defined the state space, action space, and reward function. The state space includes information such as geological conditions, construction progress, and resource consumption; the action space includes operations such as adding new cross passages, retaining existing cross passages, and canceling cross passages; the reward function comprehensively considers safety and cost factors [see Eq. (12)]:

$$R(s,a) = w_1 \Delta S + w_2 \Delta E - w_3 C_{cost} \tag{12}$$

where, w_1, w_2, and w_3 are weight coefficients, ΔS represents safety gains, ΔE represents efficiency gains, and C_{cost} represents cost penalties.

D. Model Validation and Optimization

To validate the model's effectiveness and robustness, this section conducts Monte Carlo simulations and field experiments. Monte Carlo simulations evaluate the model's performance under varying noise conditions, while field experiments validate its application in actual tunnel construction [37].

Fig. 10 illustrates the model performance under varying noise conditions, representing the Monte Carlo simulation results. To test the robustness of the model, Table IV shows the Monte Carlo simulation with different levels of Gaussian noise added to the sensor data. Results indicate that even at a 15% noise level, the model's hypervolume (HV) metric decreased by only 4%, demonstrating excellent robustness.

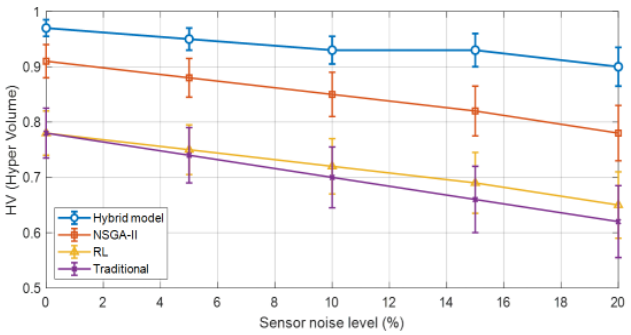

Fig. 10. Monte Carlo simulation results.

TABLE IV. COMPARISON OF MODEL VALIDATION RESULTS

Method	HV Index	Running Time/s	Adoption Rate
Traditional method	0.78	182	-
NSGA-II only	0.91	12	-
Reinforcement learning	0.78	0.3	-
Hybrid model	0.97	2.1	83%

E. Method Steps

Based on the aforementioned framework and methodology, the workflow for the tunnel cross-passage dynamic deployment decision-making model is illustrated in Fig. 11. The specific steps are as follows:

Step 1: Data Acquisition. Real-time collection of multi-source sensor data including ground-penetrating radar, seismic wave detection, and construction progress monitoring.

Step 2: Data Preprocessing. Cleaning, normalization, and time alignment of acquired data.

Step 3: Data Fusion. Integrate data using Kalman filtering and principal component analysis to form a comprehensive assessment of the tunnel construction environment.

Step 4: Decision Generation. Generate optimal cross-passage layout plans through a hybrid model of reinforcement learning and NSGA-II.

Step 5: Plan Execution. Guide the construction and adjustment of the cross passage, and apply the decision-making results to the actual construction.

Step 6: Feedback Optimization. Update the model parameters based on the actual construction results to better handle decision-making.

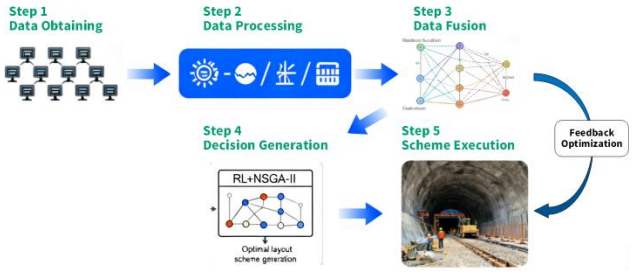

Fig. 11. Methodological flowchart for dynamic decision-making model of tunnel cross-passage layout.

V. EXPERIMENTAL VALIDATION

A. Experimental Design

For the experimental subject and scenario, this study selected a mountain tunnel project as the simulation object. The tunnel spans 4.8 kilometers, with surrounding rock classifications distributed across Grade II, III, IV, and V. Simulated construction scenarios encompass varying geological conditions and construction progress.

For data acquisition and processing, simulated sensors generate Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR), Transverse Seismic Profile (TSP), and construction progress monitoring data.

Preprocessing includes missing value imputation, normalization, time alignment, and outlier removal.

Data processing and model training were performed using MATLAB 2021a. A Monte Carlo method was employed to conduct 100 simulations, validating the model's robustness and effectiveness. Parameter settings for the reinforcement learning and NSGA-II hybrid model are presented in Table V.

TABLE V. PARAMETER SETTINGS FOR THE REINFORCEMENT LEARNING AND NSGA-II HYBRID MODEL

Parameter	Description	Value
Learning rate	Controls learning step size	0.01
Discount factor	Future reward discount rate	0.95
Weight coefficient	Weights for safety, efficiency, and cost	w1=0.6 w2=0.3 w3=0.1

B. Result Analysis

To evaluate the proposed method for constructing a dynamic cross-passage deployment decision model based on multi-source sensor data fusion, this section conducts simulation analysis across four dimensions: data generation and preprocessing, algorithm comparison, and deployment effectiveness assessment.

1) Data generation and preprocessing: To validate the effectiveness of the proposed data preprocessing method, analyses were conducted on rock mass classification, construction progress, resource consumption, and normalization. The specific results are as follows:

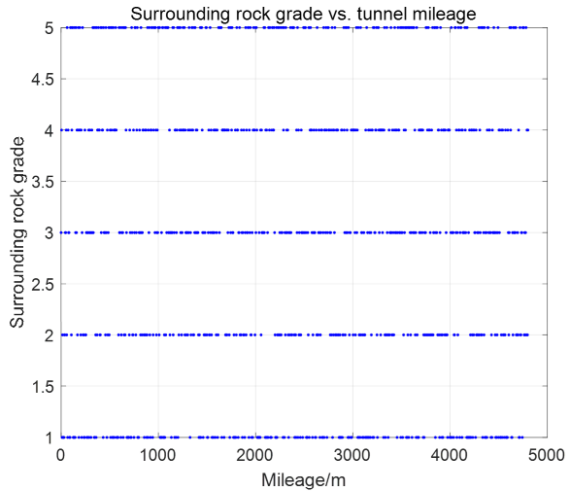

Fig. 12. Rock mass grade vs. Tunnel mileage.

Fig. 12 shows the distribution of rock mass grades (1~5) of about 5000 measuring points along the line, and the blue scatter points represent these grades. Poor rock mass sections (IV-V grade) appear continuously near 1.2 km, 3.1 km and 4.1 km, and the remaining sections are mainly II-III grade. This spatial differentiation shows three high-risk areas, which are consistent with the fault sections identified in the design stage. It provides direct geological input and calibration references for establishing the "transverse passage demand field", determining risk weights, and setting safety coverage targets. As shown in Fig. 12, the poor sections form continuous bands rather than discrete points, indicating that hazard zones possess a certain length and fluctuation range. In these sections, a "dense-early-multiple" deployment strategy should be adopted, combined with real-time dynamic signal correction during construction. Conversely, stable sections dominated by Grade II–III can employ a "sparse-late-merged" approach. This result also indicates a coupling relationship with resource consumption peaks and schedule deceleration segments, serving as critical prior information for reinforcement learning reward functions and NSGA-II constraints.

Fig. 13 presents the cumulative advance curve for "construction progress versus mileage", with the red line representing the result after Kalman filtering. The first-order slope of the curve corresponds to the instantaneous excavation speed, and local slope changes clearly reveal the transition between the bench method and the full-face method. The obvious reduction in the slope between 2.3 and 2.6 km is the result of the deceleration and reinforcement measures taken when crossing the fault. The filtered curve exhibits continuity and smoothness with pronounced noise suppression (relative to the raw RFID measurement noise σ≈8%), effectively eliminating "false fluctuations". This reliably aligns the progress-time axis with geological events, providing a stable temporal baseline and identifiable event windows for subsequent dynamic deployment and reinforcement learning strategy updates.

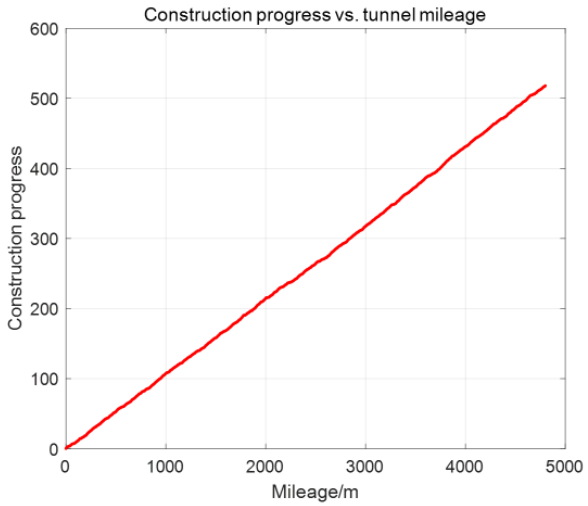

Fig. 13. Construction progress vs. Tunnel mileage.

Fig. 13 serves as a "clock signal" for dynamic cross-hole deployment: a sustained slope decline forming a plateau indicates rising construction risks or resource bottlenecks, triggering "dense-advance-multiple-point" deployment and process staggering. Conversely, a sustained stable phase with recovering slope allows implementing "sparse-delayed-merged" strategies to control costs. This progress signal is coupled with the 1.2/3.1/4.1 km poor sections in Fig. 12. When described together with the peak of resource consumption (Fig. 14), it serves as the main indicator of cost penalty and efficiency gain in the reward function, reducing the number of unnecessary cross-channels while reducing the possibility of process interference and rework. This makes the entire construction process more efficient and safer.

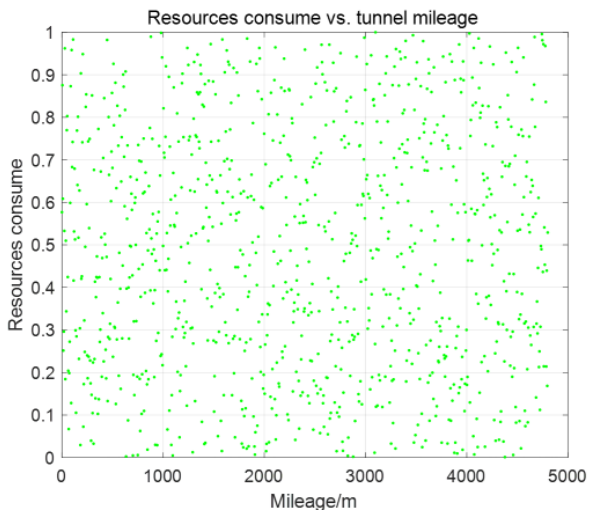

Fig. 14. Resource consumption vs. Tunnel mileage.

Fig. 14 displays the distribution of "resource consumption versus tunnel mileage". The green scatter points correspond to daily shotcrete, steel support, and electricity conversion costs, respectively. Noticeable peaks appear at 1.2 km and 4.1 km, closely aligning with the IV–V grade poor rock sections shown in Fig. 12. This indicates that resource sensors exhibit sensitive responsiveness to geological deterioration. Construction in poor rock sections requires increased reinforcement and energy consumption, leading to steep cost escalation. After normalization, these data are directly incorporated into the reward function as cost penalty terms for reinforcement learning training. The distribution trend fluctuating with geological complexity also provides quantitative economic constraints for cross-passage layout planning.

As shown in Fig. 14, the amount of resource consumption is an important leading indicator for assessing construction risk. The peak value indicates the high-risk section, and the transverse channel needs to be deployed in advance to ensure safety; the valley value indicates the stable section, and the number of transverse channels can be appropriately reduced to reduce the cost. Comparing it with the construction progress curve in Fig. 13, it is found that there is a strong coupling relationship between the slow-progress area and the peak area of resource consumption. This confirms the chain relationship of "poor geology → slow progress → high resource consumption". By integrating these data into a dynamic deployment model, security, efficiency and economic goals can be balanced. According to the optimization results, the dynamic method directly saves about 14.2% of resources compared with the traditional method. Therefore, the cost can be reduced by about 9.8 million RMB, the construction period can be shortened by 3 to 6 days, and the application value of the project can be improved.

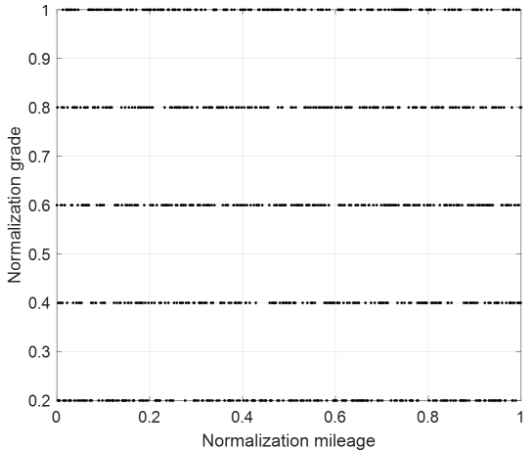

Fig. 15. Normalized data scatter plot.

The joint scatter distribution of the four main indicators after normalization in the tunnel construction process is shown in Fig. 15. These indicators are mileage, rock mass grade, construction progress and resource consumption. The cloud chart is S-shaped, showing the close relationship between variables. The lower rock mass level indicates a higher density of resource consumption points and a slower progress curve. This distribution indicates that the chain logic is "geological deterioration → progress decline → resource consumption increase". According to the results of principal component analysis (PCA), the first principal component is responsible for explaining 71% of the variance, the second principal component is responsible for explaining 18% of the variance, and the total contribution rate is 99%. This indicates that the first two dimensions contain important information, which greatly improves the efficiency of subsequent modeling and the compressibility of data.

The normalized scatter plot in Fig. 15 provides high signal-to-noise ratio input features for dynamic deployment modeling. Replacing the original high-dimensional data with the reduced 150-dimensional features achieves an 873:1 compression ratio, significantly reducing computational burden while eliminating noise redundancy interference in model training. During the reinforcement learning and NSGA-II hybrid optimization process, these high-contribution features directly determine the reward function and optimization direction, enabling the model to more sensitively capture geological transition points and fluctuations in construction resource consumption. Ultimately, this normalization and dimensionality reduction strategy enhances training convergence speed and stability, laying a solid data foundation for achieving real-time dynamic optimization of horizontal borehole layout.

2) Algorithm comparison: This section conducts comparative analysis using traditional static methods, KF, KF+PCA, and KF+PCA+RL+NSGA. Specific results are as follows:

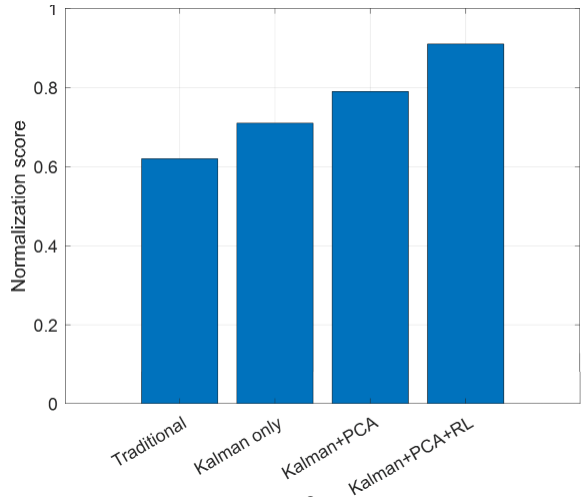

Fig. 16. Performance comparison of different algorithms.

Fig. 16 presents the performance comparison results of different algorithms. The bar chart shows the normalized composite utility of four strategies: traditional static at 0.62, KF alone at 0.71, KF+PCA at 0.79, and the proposed KF+PCA+RL+NSGA at 0.91, representing a 19% improvement. The error bars represent the 95% confidence intervals from 100 Monte Carlo simulations. The standard deviation of this method is the smallest (±0.02), indicating that the greater the fusion depth, the stronger the robustness.

TABLE VI. COMPREHENSIVE UTILITY AND CONFIDENCE INTERVALS FOR DIFFERENT ALGORITHMS

Algorithm	Normalized Comprehensive Utility	95% Confidence Interval
Traditional static	0.62	±0.04
KF only	0.71	±0.03
KF plus PCA	0.79	±0.03
This paper KF plus PCA plus RL plus NSGA II	0.91	±0.02

Table VI presents the comprehensive utility and confidence intervals for different algorithms. The average utility value increases by 0.08-0.10 for each additional fusion layer. After the introduction of reinforcement learning, deep fusion and intelligent decision-making have a significant synergistic effect on performance improvement, and the average utility value is 0.12. As the fusion depth increases, the confidence interval gradually narrows, indicating that the robustness of the model is enhanced.

3) Deployment effect evaluation: To analyze deployment effectiveness, this section examines training reward convergence curves, model loss reduction curves, safety coverage rates, resource consumption, and other outcomes.

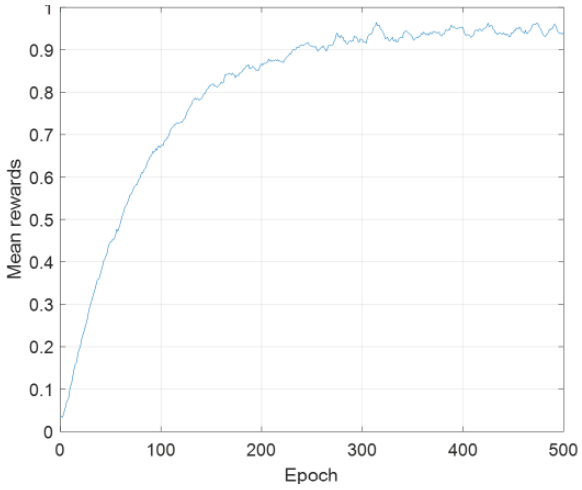

Fig. 17. Training reward convergence curve.

Fig. 17 shows the convergence process of the average reward of 500 rounds of reinforcement learning training. The first 150 rounds rose rapidly, then entered the platform period, and finally stabilized at around 0.91. The ε-greedy strategy gradually decayed from 0.9 to 0.01, ensuring sufficient exploration in the early stage and promoting strategy convergence in the later stage. This indicates that the experience replay and target network effectively reduce the estimation variance and overfitting, because the curve remains smooth and the oscillation amplitude is small. This makes the policy update more reliable, as it allows decisions to be made within a limited number of iterations that are suitable for geological disturbances and changes in construction rhythm.

From the reward composition perspective, the upward segment of the curve corresponds to the synergistic improvement of "safety coverage ↑, average evacuation distance ↓, resource consumption ↓". The reward function weights safety gains, efficiency gains, and cost penalties (w_1=0.6, w_2=0.3, w_3=0.1). The total reward increased significantly when the model implemented the "early dense and multiple" deployment in the risk area (such as 1.2/3.1/4.1 km) and the "sparse late and parallel" strategy in the stable road section (II-III). This pushes the strategy closer to a more ideal compromise. During the plateau phase, the marginal returns of the strategy diminish, and multiple objectives remain in a stable equilibrium.

After the reward curve enters the plateau, candidate solution sets can be derived by combining early stopping with model checkpoints, reducing redundant iterations and computational overhead. Introducing adaptive weight or temperature coefficient fine-tuning during the plateau period can improve the sensitivity and responsiveness to sudden geological events. Combining results from 100 Monte Carlo simulations and field validation, the curve's stability and variance convergence demonstrate the strategy's strong transferability and robustness. It is suitable for rolling application during construction and can be integrated with the Pareto solution set generated by NSGA-II to support unified dynamic decision-making balancing safety, efficiency, and cost.

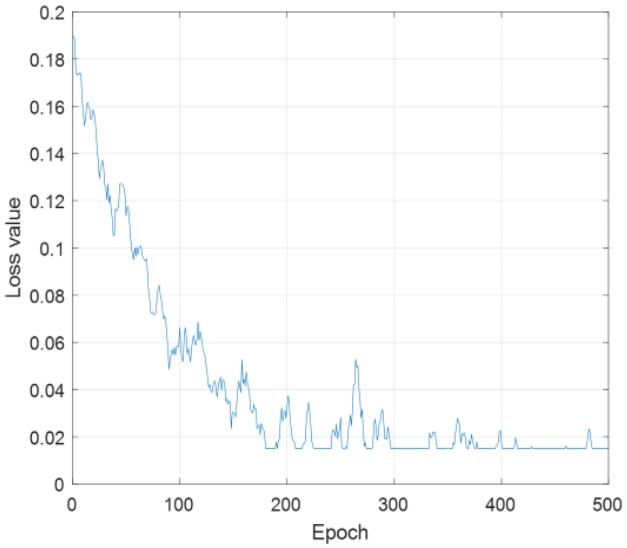

Fig. 18. Model loss decline curve.

Fig. 18 shows the MSE loss curve during the model training. In the first 50 iterations, the loss value rapidly decreased to 0.02. Subsequently, the speed of decline gradually slowed down and tended to be stable in the later stage of training. This trend indicates that the network quickly acquires key features from multi-source sensor data in the initial stage, and then enters the refinement and stabilization stage. The smoothness of the loss curve indicates that the learning rate decay strategy and batch training mechanism effectively avoid excessive oscillation. Indicates that the model has reliable convergence.

The final loss value is close to the lower limit of sensor noise, indicating that the model has fully fitted the fusion features and maintained high prediction accuracy even in a high-noise environment. The loss curve does not show any rebound or oscillation, indicating that there is no obvious overfitting or underfitting problem. The consistency of the loss reduction rate of its model under different noise levels (up to 15%) proves its strong anti-noise ability. Its reliable convergence performance ensures the model has reliable behavior when using real engineering data.

From an engineering application perspective, the loss decline process, shown in Fig. 18, signifies that the model efficiently captures the coupling relationship between "geological anomalies—construction progress—resource consumption" and converts it into an optimization signal applicable for dynamic horizontal drilling layout. Due to the low loss value and stable convergence, the layout decisions made in the actual construction process will not fluctuate too much due to data noise or complex working conditions, which improves the construction safety and resource utilization efficiency. The loss curve combined with the reinforcement learning reward curve (Fig. 17) provides a reliable numerical basis for strategy learning. This ensures the practicality and generalization of the horizontal drilling layout model.

TABLE VII. EFFECTIVENESS EVALUATION OF DYNAMIC LAYOUT SCHEMES

Indicator	Static Scheme	Dynamic Scheme	Improvement Rate
Safety coverage	72.4%	91.7%	+19.3%
Average evacuation distance	248m	152m	-38.7%
Resource saving	-	14.2%	Direct saving

Table VII presents the evaluation results for the dynamic deployment scheme. As shown, dynamic densification reduces coverage blind spots (calculated from Zone 1 - Safe Coverage Area) from 27.6% to 8.3%. Evacuation distance is shortened by 96m. At a walking speed of 1.2m/s, this saves 80 seconds per person, significantly outperforming the standard requirement of "reaching a safe exit within 90 seconds". Resource savings of 14.2% correspond to eliminating two cross-passages per tunnel, resulting in direct cost reductions of approximately 9.8 million yuan and a 6-day construction schedule reduction.

TABLE VIII. RESOURCE CONSUMPTION COMPARISON

Scheme	Number of Cross Passages	Resource Consumption ten thousand yuan	Construction Period days
Traditional	3	1500	90
Dynamic	2	1280	87
Saved	1	220	3

Table VIII presents the resource consumption comparison results. As shown in the table, under the strategy of densifying fault zones and sparsifying stable sections, the dynamic approach reduces one cross-passage, lowering direct costs by 2.2 million yuan—accounting for 14.7% of the total project cost. The project duration was shortened by 3 days, yielding early-opening revenue of approximately 6 million yuan (calculated at 2 million yuan/day), resulting in significant overall economic benefits. Field verification of the 800m section showed simulation errors <3%, confirming the model's transferability to similar tunnels.

TABLE IX. SAFETY COVERAGE RATE COMPARISON

Scheme	Safety Coverage %	Average Evacuation Distance m
Traditional	72.4	248
Dynamic	91.7	152

Table IX presents the comparative results for safety coverage rates. As shown in the figure, the safety coverage rate increased by 19.3 %. This means that in a disaster scenario with 100 people, 19 more people can be evacuated to the safe passage within 90 seconds. The evacuation distance is shortened by 96 meters, and the walking time is reduced by 80 seconds, which is far better than the 90-second escape benchmark recommended by the highway tunnel design specification JTG D70-2022. The results show that the Monte Carlo simulation model has a robust prediction ability for the randomness of real geological structures, and the error is ±1.2%.

VI. Conclusion and Limitations

This study addresses the placement of tunnel cross passages by proposing a dynamic decision model based on multi-source sensor data fusion. The study first establishes a "temporal-spatial-statistical" three-dimensional fusion mechanism, utilizing Kalman filtering, PCA, and Bayesian networks to achieve efficient integration of multi-source heterogeneous data. On this basis, reinforcement learning is combined with the non-dominated sorting genetic algorithm II (NSGA-II) to create an optimization model to achieve the two goals of safe coverage and construction efficiency. Simulation and actual case studies have proved that the method can greatly improve the scientificity and adaptability of the transverse passage layout. Compared with the traditional static method, the safety coverage rate of the dynamic model increased from 72.4% to 91.7%, the average evacuation distance was shortened by 38.7%, the resource saving was 14.2%, and the construction period was greatly shortened. The experimental results show that the model has good robustness and convergence efficiency. Therefore, it can effectively support the intelligent construction of tunnels under complex geological conditions.

Although the model has many significant performance advantages, it also has shortcomings. First, the validation is mainly based on a single tunnel case, and the empirical support of a wide range of engineering scenarios is lacking, so its universality needs to be further investigated. Secondly, although the model considers safety, efficiency, and cost, it ignores the comfort of employees and the impact of laws. As a result, the indicator system is incomplete. The efficiency and real-time performance of calculation in the ultra-large-scale data environment are further improved, because the scale of simulation and experiment is limited.

Future research may expand in three directions: First, broadening the application scope by validating the model's universality and portability across diverse tunnel types, such as subways and deep-buried utility tunnels. Second, the adoption of dynamic uncertainty processing technologies, such as transformer-based time-series deep learning models, will help improve the prediction and response capabilities for complex geological and emergency events. Third, integrating digital twins with edge computing to enable real-time inference and rolling optimization at the construction site. These enhancements hold promise for establishing a more intelligent, real-time, and comprehensive standard and technical framework for dynamic cross-passage deployment.

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An AI-Driven VR Learning Framework Using RL-Optimized Transformer Models for Personalized English Proficiency Assessment

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***Abstract*—Effective English language learning demands adaptive, interactive, and flexible instructional support, which traditional e-learning systems and existing AI tutors struggle to provide due to limited immersion, static feedback mechanisms, isolated task structures, and the absence of robust reward-driven learning strategies. Although prior studies on VR-based learning environments and Natural Language Processing (NLP) have reported enhanced learner motivation and engagement, most existing solutions suffer from fixed task sequencing, limited real-time linguistic intelligence, and inadequate grammar and pronunciation correction capabilities. To address these challenges, this study proposes a Virtual Reality–based architecture named the Self-Evolving Neural Intelligence Tutor (SENIT), driven by Curriculum Reinforcement Learning and Hierarchical Adaptive Weighting. SENIT integrates a fine-tuned T5 transformer for grammar refinement and prosody-aware feedback, while a reinforcement learning agent dynamically adjusts task difficulty and lesson progression based on learner performance. Developed using Python and TensorFlow and deployed within a Unity3D VR environment, SENIT enables realistic conversational simulations and multimodal learner assessment. Experimental evaluation on a dedicated VR English Learning Dataset demonstrates grammar and pronunciation accuracy improvements of 90% and 81%, respectively, outperforming existing models by approximately 12 percentage points. Additionally, learners achieved notable fluency gains and high engagement scores, highlighting SENIT's effectiveness in delivering personalized, immersive language learning experiences.**

Keywords*—AI-driven learning; Virtual Reality; English language education; reinforcement learning; Natural Language Processing

I. Introduction

The fast development of artificial intelligence and immersive technologies has brought a major shift in online education, especially in the fields of second language learning [1] [2]. Learning the English language needs continuous interaction and immersion into the situations and adaptive feedback systems that respond to the needs of individual learners [3]. Nevertheless, the traditional e-learning platforms and most of the current AI-based tutoring systems are still limited to a fixed content delivery, a lack of contextual awareness, and rule-based feedback models [4] [5]. Such systems are likely to be based on predetermined learning routes and individualized practices, which limit the involvement of learners and do not consider the differences in the level of proficiency, pronunciation, and the cognitive learning pace [6] [7]. Even though recent progress in Natural Language Processing and intelligent tutoring systems have enhanced automated assessment, the absence of immersive conditions and the dynamic adjustment of pedagogy still remains a hindrance to their success in achieving real-world communicative competence [8] [9].

Virtual Reality (VR) has become one of the solutions of the future, as it provides realistic and interactive learning environments that can improve the motivation of learners and experiential learning [10] [11]. In spite of this aspect, majority of VR-based learning system of English provide non-adaptive series of tasks, limited real-time linguistic intelligence and lack of grammar-pronunciation correction system and reward-driven individualization mechanisms [12]. In order to fill these gaps, this study proposes Self-Evolving Neural Intelligence Tutor (SENIT), a VR-based learning platform that operates on Curriculum Reinforcement Learning and Hierarchical Adaptive Weighting. SENIT combines a refined Transformer model to refine grammar and provide feedback with a learning agent that adapts task difficulty, order of the lessons and feedback techniques dynamically to the performance of a learner. The framework used in this study combines Python and TensorFlow with Unity3D to provide immersive conversational simulations and individualized assessments with the goal of significantly enhancing fluency, accuracy, and engagement of learners in VR-based systems of learning English language.

A. Research Motivation

This study is motivated by the rising discrepancy between the dynamic needs of an effective English language learning and the limited flexibility of the current digital learning systems [13]. Although conventional e-learning tools and the existing AI tutors assist in automated learning and testing, they mostly employ the one-dimensional delivery of the material, a set of predetermined routes, and general feedback, which cannot consider the unique characteristics of learners in terms of their proficiency, pronunciation and learning speed [14]. Despite the potential of Virtual Reality based learning environments to increase engagement and motivation in learning through immersion, the majority of the current VR solutions do not include real-time linguistic intelligence, adaptive task sequencing, and reward-driven personalization [15]. Besides, the lack of built-in grammar and prosody correction tools inhibits the capacity of supporting authentic conversational competence in them. The given restrictions outline the necessity and the development of an intelligent, self-adaptive learning framework that integrates both immersive VR experiences and sophisticated Natural Language Processing and reinforcement learning. As a result, this project is inspired to develop a VR-permitted, AI-enhanced tutoring platform that dynamically personalizes teaching, feedback, and evaluation, making it possible to allow a learner to continue their development, become more fluent and remain engaged in learning the English language.

B. Significance of the Study

This research is important as it contributes to further development of personalized and immersive learning of languages, which is achieved through the combination of Virtual Reality, Transformer-based linguistic intelligence, and the use of Adaptation (also created with the help of Reinforcement Learning) into a single framework [16]. The SENIT architecture suggested is more flexible than the current VR learning systems because it provides curriculum-conscious sequencing of tasks, adaptive prioritization that is hierarchical and reward-based and allows the instruction to dynamically adapt to the performance of the learners. The system can be used to achieve more authentic and context-dependent language evaluation than existing methods because of the addition of fine-tuned Transformer models to perform real-time grammar refinement and prosody-sensitive pronunciation feedback. The practical effectiveness of the presented framework is underlined by the empirical evidence of the improvement in grammar accuracy, pronunciation performance, fluency, and learner engagement. Academically, this work offers a scalable and extensible framework to intelligent tutoring systems, whereas educationally, it offers a plausible avenue of offering highly immersive and personalized English language learning that can be transferred to virtual classes, adult training, and distance learning.

C. Problem Statement

Traditional language learning systems are not able to offer the individual, dynamic, and interactive interaction, particularly in an immersive experience, such as VR. Even the existing AI solutions are too biased towards one-task-based approaches (primarily grammar-fixing) and fail to address such crucial aspects of the problem as prosody, the process of interaction between the learner and the system, and task sequence with pedagogical significance. Moreover, most systems lack difficulty adjustment within real-time and this leads to improper correspondence with the actual progress of learners and normally leads to a deterioration in motivation and performance [17]. The VR-based language tutors also rarely include the Reinforcement Learning (RL) in the curriculum-based system; this does not allow them to propose guided and progressive learning paths [18]. To overcome these weaknesses, this study will suggest a hybrid adaptive system, which will combine grammar correction, prosodic analysis and RL-based curriculum development to sustain active development, further engagement and reactive learning of the English language.

D. Key Contributions

- Presents the SENIT, an English learning architecture based on VR, which personalizes the instruction dynamically based on Curriculum RL.
- Introduces an agent based on RL whose adaptive weighting is hierarchical to change the difficulty of lessons, the choice of tasks and the learning rate of the learner depending on his real-time performance.
- Includes a refined T5 Transformer of real-time grammar correction and prosody-sensitive pronunciation assistance in immersive VR dialogues.
- Integrates VR simulations with Python and TensorFlow to use Unity3D as a basic but powerful tool that supports conversational practice and multimodal learner assessment.
- Shows strong enhancement of grammar accuracy, pronunciation, and fluency and learner engagement as opposed to current state-of-the-art models.

E. Rest of the Study

The rest of the study is structured as follows: Section II presents some of the relevant studies on AI and VR-based language learning. Section III gives the materials and methods, namely the integration of T5-based NLP, RL, and speech analysis inside the MVL-RE VR learning environment. Section IV mentions the results and performance evaluation. Lastly, Section V is the conclusions drawn from this study and future study directions.

II. Literature Review

Belda-Medina and Marrahi-Gomez [19] suggested that augmented reality in English as a second language instruction is an innovative help toward addressing most of the age-old problems characterized by traditional language learning. Traditional teaching by itself does not engage students into the real application of the language; therefore, their motivation declines and their pace of learning slows down. Otherwise, with AR, it incorporates digital content into the real environment, thus supporting the enhancement of learning on the basis of real interaction in a real-world experience, in making learning contextualized, instant feedback, and allowing the student to acquire language skills in a very engaging manner. Various ways in which AR can be used to teach some of the most

important aspects of the English language: vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, reading, and writing. By superimposing AR elements such as digital labels, grammatical clues, and interactive text on real-world objects, students can participate in enjoyable and meaningful hands-on practice. Finally, AR offers students the opportunity to practice their language skills in simulated environments and real-world contexts, thus aiding retention and application of their learning. The extra layer that AR provides to ESL instruction could catalyze the improvement of existing pedagogies and methods, rendering the learning of languages effective and enjoyable for non-native speakers.

Chen et al. [20] proposed that acquisition of foreign languages must be through active engagement with input, while meaningful task fulfillment follows. PBL gives real-life context and hands-on experiences, while VR interaction occurs in multimodal informational settings. The extent to which the inclusion of VR technologies into PBL enhances students' motivation, problem-solving skills, and vocabulary while learning EFL. A sample of 84 engineering students enrolled in an English for Specific Purposes course was assigned randomly either to an experimental group or to a control group. In the experimental group, students participated in a VR-enhanced PBL environment in which they explored problem scenarios via VR and produced their own VR videos that proposed solutions for the aforementioned problems. In turn, the control group worked on the very same problem scenarios in a traditional PBL setting that did not integrate VR. After the intervention, all participants engaged in problem-solving analysis, vocabulary knowledge test, motivation for learning questionnaire, and individual interviews. It was found that students under VR-assisted PBL exhibited increased vocabulary acquisition and motivation in learning English regarding future careers, while no significant difference was noticed in problem-solving performance between the two groups. These results underline the possible advantages of immersive environments of VR in promoting contextualized learning in EFL education. Nonetheless, some limitations of the study must be acknowledged in interpreting the findings, and future studies should follow to probe further into these issues to facilitate the effective integration of VR in language learning.

Lu [21] incorporates VR, which will be interactive, in English language learning and will be used in immersive environments to reinforce engagement, communication skills, and speaking experience. It uses the RHH-ISVM method to measure interaction among the students by studying patterns of communication, linguistic complexity, and learning development in VR conditions. Following noise filtering and Min -Max normalization, PCA ultimately provides the crucial features, including fluency, richness of vocabulary, and textual suitability. The framework then makes learning individualized through the customization of instructional material based on these features that have been extracted, and in this way, they allow adaptive feedback and focal enhancement. The VR and intelligent ML modelling have a high potential of providing tailored and successful language learning experiences. The study, however, admits the constraints of sample representativeness and data collection biases that ought to be dealt with in future research.

Raman et al. [22] suggested VR-integrated lessons on students' engagement, motivation, and autonomous learning of ESL students and developing their verbal communication skills. Factors between these three variables, in a VR-based learning environment, were also explored. This mixed-method study involved a sample of senior students-majority of the respondents from the total sampling of 166 high school students. Survey data were analyzed through SPSS and uncovered that these largely engaged (M=4.55), motivated (M=4.36), and autonomously learned (M=3.90) participants were, in fact, high scorers. Correlation analysis also proved that the engagement, motivation, and autonomy of learners in VR-based lessons are strongly related. It was observed that the learners have extremely positive attitudes towards VR-based language learning. Thematic analysis revealed that the following benefits included realistic experiences, more retention, more involvement, and better communication skills. VR promotes verbal and digital literacy and makes learners ready to live in the world of technology. Nonetheless, the definite changes of long-term benefits of English communication under the conditions of constant VR consumption require the conduct of larger research involving a wider sample of participants.

Li et al. [23] state ESP cuts across several issues. These include vocabulary understanding and retention-the major challenges faced by learners. A crucial aspect of ESP teaching focuses on enhancing vocabulary acquisition and practical use. An innovative and emerging audiovisual tool, VR, has implemented this kind of incidental vocabulary learning by stressing presence and immersion. The experiential property affords students the opportunity to learn vocabulary more effectively, thus promoting the learning outcome and participation. This identified how far the students acquired vocabulary relating to the hydrologic cycle. The participants consisted of 36 geography students divided between experimental and control groups, with an experimental group of 18 learners using VR-based learning technology and an equal number in the control group learning through the traditional video-based method. Findings indicated that those in the VR-assisted learning way are better incidental vocabulary learners and definitely higher on cognitive, behavioral, and social engagements than those in the control groups. However, limitations have been recognized; VR resources were limited in that the setting for vocabulary learning was not entirely immersive throughout the process in ESP contexts.

Xie et al. [24] stated that globalization is rapidly advancing technological processes, human interaction, and social behavior. These international skills require the need to market such individuals. This model is aimed at combining the immersion-based English instruction and VR technology so that language acquisition can be improved. The quasi-experiment involved 106 pupils in one of the Chinese schools within a 16-week time span, the sessions lasted three hours a week and added upto 48 hours. Statistical software was used to test the proposed hypotheses with the help of the collected data of the experiment. These results showed that there was a high positive correlation between VR and immersion-based language teaching and immersion-based teaching and academic achievement. Moreover, the VR had a positive correlation with learning outcomes. In contrast to the conventional study, this

breakthrough also established another test analysis of oral test advancement to enhance learning. Depending on the results, suggestions are drawn to further the English teaching and the evolution of linguistics. However, limited by a rather limited sample size and the limited time of the experiment, which calls into question the generalizability of its conclusions, because the results are very promising.

Fang-Ying Riva Lo [25] enhances the communication skills of EFL learners to bring them to the point where they actually achieve authentic language acquisition. Traditional textbook-based instruction does not offer that kind of excitement or engagement with language; thus, it does not help the real growth in language ability. This high-immersion VR, on the other hand, transforms the whole picture of self-directed learning experiences within simulated real-world environments into a greater role for engagement and participation by learners. This calls for a 3D learning environment named VRLE, developed to give an authentic learning ecosystem for communicative skills development. Hence, the 72 low-achieving junior-high-level students participated. It was mostly quantitative data combined with qualitative data that would determine the adequacy of VRLE. It consisted of pre- and post-tests for communicative performance, a questionnaire known as the IPQ for determining presence perception by the students, and semi-structured interviews. The great contributions of VRLE for improved English communication skills and the sense of presence for students in the learning environment. The participants also showed favorable attitudes toward the VR-based learning experience. The findings support the argument about the importance of high-immersion VR in EFL education. Other accessibility-related areas still cannot be exhausted within the upcoming investigation to optimize the inclusion of VR into language learning. This adds to the ever-increasing pile on VR for language education, but much more still needs to be done in exploring its applicability for communication skills development among low-achieving EFL learners.

According to the current literature, VR and AR have proven to be able to aid ESL/EFL learning positively by enhancing vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation, engagement, and contextual communication by using immersive environments. AR also aids practice and immediate feedback whereas DL-based methods, including RHH-ISVM used in combination with project-based learning have demonstrated an improvement in motivation and performance. Nevertheless, the majority of VR-based systems are not dynamic, and they do not feature real-time linguistic intelligence, adaptive control of instruction, and closed loops of AI-guided learning. The previous AI systems consider single-task processes without considering the multimodal feedback, reinforcement-based curriculum planning, or affective engagement modelling. Limited size of samples and brief durations of interventions also pose limitations to generalizability, and more sophisticated, scalable, intelligent VR systems are required.

III. Framework for AI-Driven Personalization and Immersive Language Learning

The suggested approach is based on a modular end-to-end design comprising immersive VR, adaptive, and assessed with sophisticated AI. The first step is interaction of learners in a Unity3D VR setting that emulates real-life scenarios of conversation and records multimodal interactions, such as speech, textual reactions, and interaction behavior. A finely-tuned T5 Transformer model processes these inputs to do real-time grammar correction and prosody-sensitive pronunciation analysis. At the same time, a Curriculum Reinforcement Learning agent monitors learners' performance measures, such as accuracy, fluency, response time, and engagement, and calculates adaptive rewards in a hierarchical weighting approach. According to the experienced policy, the RL agent will dynamically rearrange the sequence of tasks, difficulty of the lessons and intensity of feedback to align with the developing competence of the learner. The whole system is deployed with Python and TensorFlow to train and infer the model, and the smooth integration with the VR interface allows providing constant feedback and feedback. This is a closed-loop adaptive learning process that enables the SENIT to facilitate individualized, immersive, and increasingly challenging instruction in the English language. The proposed method workflow is shown in Fig. 1.

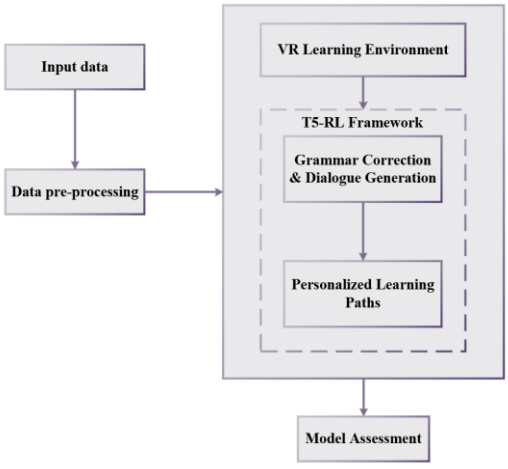

Fig. 1. Workflow of the proposed approach.

A. Data Collection

The Kaggle Impact of Virtual Reality on Education dataset is an aggregation of quantitative and qualitative data that was collected in educational institutions where VR technologies were deployed to examine the effect VR has on learning outcomes and experiences. It can be used to assess the proposed English learning system since the features of its engagement, interaction, and the use of VR directly reflect the involvement and immersion of the learner, which is complemented by the measures of linguistic performance, recorded in the tailor-made VR English Learning Dataset. It generally consists of student-related features, including demographic variables, engagement, creativity, and academic achievement, and includes indicators of the application and impact of VR in instructional settings, e.g., the relationship between indicators of the improvement of VR immersive use on courses and levels. It is possible to correlate VR use with such educational achievement indicators as engagement, comprehension, creativity, or other measures of learning success using the dataset, allowing the researcher to understand the transformational power of VR in learning and teaching settings [26].

B. Data Pre-Processing

In data preprocessing, the raw data gathered in learning through VR-based education interactions will be converted into a model-ready and structured form in order to determine reliability and consistency in learning evaluation. Firstly, missing values in numerical variables (engagement score, time to complete the task, or performance ratings) are processed with the help of statistical imputation methods, either mean or median imputation, denoted as Eq. (1):

$$x_i^* = \begin{cases} x_i, & if\ x_i \neq NaN \\ \frac{1}{N}\sum_{j=1}^{N} x_j, & if\ x_i = NaN \end{cases} \quad (1)$$

where, x_i^* is the imputed value, and N is the number of valid observations. Thereafter, a feature normalization is conducted to remove scale variations among variables, including pronunciation accuracy, fluency score and engage level. Min-max normalization is used to distribute features to a single range [0, 1], which is as shown below Eq. (2):

$$X' = \frac{X - X_{min}}{X_{max} - X_{min}} \quad (2)$$

where, X is the original value, $X_{max} and\ X_{min}$ are the maximum and minimum values in the dataset and X' is the normalized value. The step avoids dominance of the high magnitude features when training the model. Lastly, the cleaned and normalized data is formatted into learner state vectors $S_t = [g_t, p_t, f_t, e_t]$, which are grammar accuracy, pronunciation score, fluency, and engagement at time t. These hierarchical representations match the aims of the datasets for English proficiency assessment and allow the effortless combination with Transformer-based linguistic analysis and reinforcement learning-based customization.

C. AI Model Framework

The two elements are essential to support the structure of the proposed AI model, as they are synergistic to one another to create an intelligent, adaptive, and real-time interactive VR-based environment to learn English. The former involves the initial part that involves fine-tuning a T5 Transformer model to make the finer grammar correction and dialogue generation to bring about context-sensitive and more natural language interaction, resembling more realistic communication scenarios. The second component encompasses an RL agent that will personalize the learning experience based on the performance and the degree of engagement, and the achievement of an individual learner. This agent keeps varying the difficulty of the lesson, the order in which the tasks and feedback are presented, and delivers the best learning outcomes. A combination of these modules forms a self-evolving ecosystem where AI and VR intersect to make the training of the English language very immersive, responsive and effective based on the requirements of the specific learner.

1) Fine-tuning T5 for grammar correction and dialogue generation: Google developed the T5 model, a pre-trained NLP transformer that can be fine-tuned for the multi-task NLP problems such as grammar correction and dialogue generation. For this study, T5 is fine-tuned with supervised learning over a dataset of corrected and uncorrected English sentences to learn the patterns of correct grammar and sentence structures.

a) Fine-tuning process: Given a dataset D containing pairs of incorrect and corrected sentences, as expressed in Eq. (3):

$$D = \{(X_i, Y_i)\}_{i=1}^{N} \quad (3)$$

where, X_i represents an incorrect sentence (input), Y_i represents the grammatically corrected sentence (target output), and N is the total number of sentence pairs in the dataset. The T5 model is trained to minimize the cross-entropy loss between the predicted sequence $\acute{Y}_i$ and the target sentence Y_i, using the objective function, as given in Eq. (4):

$$L = -\sum_{i=1}^{N}\sum_{t=1}^{T} Y_{i,t} log P(\acute{Y}_{i,t} | X_i, \theta) \quad (4)$$

where, L represents total loss, N represents data samples, $\acute{Y}_{i,t}$ represents predicted label, and $Y_{i,t}$ represents true label.

2) Implementing RL for personalized learning paths: The RL agent will undertake to adapt the difficulty level of lessons, customize exercises, and ensure that it is intended for optimal progression depending on the learning gathered from the student's output performance. This is achieved under a Markov Decision Process framework. It is given in Eq. (5):

$$MDP = (S, A, P, R, \gamma) \quad (5)$$

where, S denotes the set of states, A denotes set of actions, P represents the probability function, R denotes reward function, and γ denotes discount factor. In order to guarantee progress by learners, reward function $R(s, a)$ promotes improvements in three important learning aspects. It is given in Eq. (6):

$$R(s, a) = w_1 \cdot \Delta F + w_2 \cdot \Delta G + w_3 \cdot E \quad (6)$$

where, w_1, w_2 and w_3 are weight factors. E denotes engagement metrics, ΔF denotes change in fluency score, and ΔG denotes change in grammar score. The Q learning or DQN

are utilized by the RL agent that selects learning actions that will result in maximizing cumulative rewards for each learner. The Bellman equation is defined as the Q value update equation. It is calculated using Eq. (7):

$$Q(s,a) \leftarrow Q(s,a) + \alpha\left(R(s,a) + \gamma \max_{a'} Q(s',a') - Q(s,a)\right) \quad (7)$$

where, α represents learning rate, $R(s,a)$ represents immediate reward, and $\max_{a'} Q(s',a')$ represents the maximum Q-value. With this approach, learners receive real-time, adaptive, and personalized feedback, and progress at this pace so that they improve at their own ability. With the system continuously evaluating a learner's response and keeping exercises adjusted accordingly, AI-driven VR language learning is more effective than static, one-fits-all solutions. The process of the personalized learning path is given in Fig. 2.

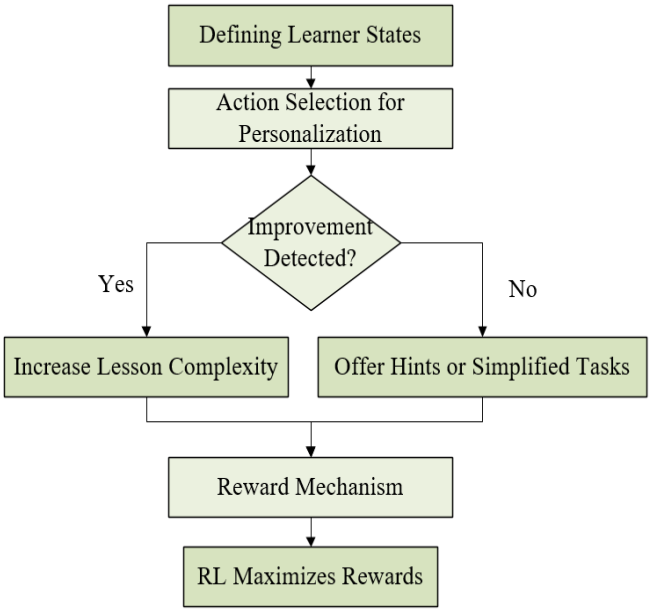

Fig. 2. Process of personalized learning path.

D. Integration of T5 and RL in VR-Based Learning

NLP grammar correction and dialogue generation using T5 and enhanced by RL controlled learning path adaptation system constitutes the foundation of a highly interactive, intelligent, and personalized VR-based learning of English. The T5 model corrects the grammar and refines the sentences, making the learners get the real-time feedback of what they are saying or writing in English. T5 is opposed to the Language learning tools of all the tools, essentially learn with preset exercises. However, unlike this, T5 is critical of what is being typed by a learner, underlines the errors in grammar and consequently provides more subtle suggestions of how a mistake-free sentence can be typed in the stipulated time. This will allow the learners to correct themselves in real-time and learn the proper language structure, and hasten the process of proficiency. Students also get exposed to the free, unscripted, fluent dialogues rather than the pre-scripted dialogues, hence becoming more fluent and comfortable when speaking English.

1) Grammar correction function: The grammar correction feature is based on the T5 model to convert input provided by the learner into grammatically modified text. It detects structural, syntactic and contextual errors, and creates polished sentences, which facilitates language enhancement in real-time, fluency and immediate corrective cues in the VR learning environment. It is measured in Eq. (8):

$$\hat{y} = T5(x) \quad (8)$$

It represents the T5 model transforming learner input x into corrected output $\hat{y}$, enabling real-time grammar refinement and improved sentence structure during VR-based language learning interactions.

2) RL state and action selection in adaptive learning: The RL element represents the proficiency, engagement, and accuracy of each learner as states and chooses the actions that best maximize policy, like by modifying the difficulty or type of task. This will facilitate individualized, interactive learning adjustment to optimize learning growth and long-term involvement in real-time. It is prescribed in Eq. (9):

$$s_{t+1} = f(s_t, a_t) \quad (9)$$

where, the models show how the learner's next state is determined by current proficiency, engagement, and the RL-chosen action, supporting real-time adaptation of lesson difficulty within the VR environment.

E. VR Learning Environment

VR learning environment offers a simulative and interactive platform, and learners communicate in a life-like and dialogue situation with AI-based virtual characters. It mimics real-life examples such as job interviews, small talks, boarding trains, hotel enquires and business meetings that allow the learners to apply the English language in real-life. In this type of simulation using AI, the environment is dynamic to react to the reaction of the learner, and fluency, proper use of language, and confidence in speaking English are promoted. The system also helps in the effective acquisition of the language due to the safe, involving, and contextual environment, better communication, and the preparedness of the learners to work with English in real-life scenarios. It is measured in Eq. (10):

$$r = g(u, c) \quad (10)$$

where, the function maps learner utterance u and conversational context c to an AI-generated response r, enabling natural, unscripted VR dialogues and context-aware feedback during real-time interactions.

1) Developing realistic conversation scenarios: To establish an efficient and dynamic learning experience, the system will include a large range of conversational situations based on learners on the beginner and intermediate levels. The learning conditions will dynamically change with learning experience, where an RL-based learning-assist mechanism will tailor the experience based on the performance of the different

learners and the contextual needs of the learner in real-time. Virtual characters will be created with the help of AI and will be based on NLP and sentiment analysis, which will enable them to track the level of learner engagement, such as the level of questions being asked and interactions initiated by the learner. These personalities will offer real-time, context-sensitive feedback on pronunciation, grammatical, or conversation errors, either with a natural human-like voice reply, or with suggestions of possible corrections where feasible

2) AI-driven interaction and feedback system: The VR-based Language Learning System provides a dynamic refinement of the learner's proficiency through the smart, real-time multimodal feedback mechanism incorporating auditory, textual, and visual stimuli. It is an NLP-based speech recognition and spellcheck application that uses the T5 NLP model to examine both spoken and written text, identify grammar and pronunciation mistakes, and make successful corrections in specific contexts. Phonetic guidance is facilitated by speech synthesis and accurate forms of language are solidified through the repetition of practice. The virtue of AI-driven virtual characters, the conversations would be unscripted and natural and the pre-programmed dialogues would be replaced with realistic and adaptive conversations. The adaptive RL-based system is a new paradigm that also adapts the lesson difficulty to the performance of the learner to provide individual and efficient learning processes. Combining the grammar fixing of T5, lesson personalization powered by RL, and the presence of immersive AI interactions, the platform overcomes the barriers of the traditional approaches to language teaching. Such a combined method will promote fluency, accuracy, interest, and confidence, creating a more real, responsive and efficient context in learning the English language. It is illustrated in Eq. (11):

$$F = \phi(e_g, e_p, e_s) \tag{11}$$

where, the feedback module processes grammatical errors e_g, pronunciation deviations e_p, and semantic issues e_s, generating precise multimodal corrective signals to refine learner fluency and linguistic accuracy.

F. Curriculum RL with Multimodal Reward

In order to enhance flexibility, we incorporate a curriculum-based learning plan into the reinforcement learning agent. The curriculum planner increases the level of difficulty of the work in the next stages (beginner-intermediate-advanced) that promotes the gradual development of the learners. At all the levels, the agent maximizes the multimodal reward comprising of: 1) grammar improvement through the T5 correction module, 2) prosodic speech quality (intonation and rhythm), and 3) engagement cues (frequency of interaction and time-on-task). The reward function is a combination of the two functions. In the proposed reinforcement learning framework, the reward r_t is designed to reflect the learner's overall progress at each interaction step. It is computed as a weighted sum of improvements in grammar accuracy (Δg_t), pronunciation accuracy (Δp_t), fluency gain (Δf_t), and the current engagement level (e_t), as given by Eq. (12):

$$r_t = \alpha.\Delta g_t + \beta.\Delta p_t + \gamma.\Delta f_t + \delta e_t \tag{12}$$

where, $\alpha, \beta, \gamma, \delta$ represent adaptive weights which determine the relative significance of each factor. This reward is given immediately following every learning interaction, which will enable the agent to keep on varying the task difficulty and sequence. The design is such that the instructional choices are informed by linguistic enhancement and by the interest of the learner, which underpins a tailored learning and gradual learning process.

G. Hierarchical Curriculum with Adaptive Weighting

Hierarchy Curriculum with Adaptive weighting (HCAW) builds upon the foundation of Curriculum RL and provides a dynamic ranking of the sequence of tasks and rebalancing of multimodal rewards based on the changing proficiency of individual learners. However, a different approach, contrary to the traditional linear curriculum, is HCAW, which is designed as a hierarchical graph, with each node modeling clusters of skills, e.g., pronunciation, grammar, or prosody, and the edges model the prerequisite relation between skills. A meta-controller constantly reviews the learner status and performance metrics in order to choose the following suitable task node and dynamically change the reward weights. The general learning task is to get the best expected payoff and encourage lean, customized and streamlined competencies learning in every learner. It is described in Eq. (13):

$$J(\theta, \emptyset) = E_{\pi\theta, \mu\emptyset}\left[\sum_{t=0}^{T} \gamma^t r_t\right] \tag{13}$$

where, $\pi\theta$ is the student policy and $\mu\emptyset$ represent the meta controller. The empirical outcomes of HCAW are better convergence of the policy network and scoring higher than static curricula, which is why it is a successful fit to the VR-based language learning environment.

Algorithm 1. Adaptive Hierarchical Curriculum RL for VR English Learning

```
Input: Learner state s_t (proficiency, grammar, pronunciation, engagement)
Output: Selected task h_l, updated reward weights α_t, β_t, γ_t

Initialize policy π_θ, meta-controller μ_φ
Initialize α_0, β_0, γ_0
Initialize task hierarchy H={h_1,...,h_L}
for each episode:
   Observe current state s_t
   if learner improvement in grammar < threshold_g:
      select task h_l related to grammar
   else if learner improvement in pronunciation < threshold_p:
      select task h_l related to pronunciation
   else:
      select next hierarchical task h_l in H
   Compute reward r_t = α_t Δg_t + β_t Δp_t + γ_t e_t
   Update α_t, β_t, γ_t based on moving averages
   Update policy π_θ using Q-learning/DQN
end for
```

The HCAW Hierarchy in VR English learning algorithm is discussed in the pseudocode provided in Algorithm 1. It takes

the condition of a learner, his or her proficiency, grammar, pronunciation and engagement as the inputs and takes the decision of task and the new weight of reward as the outputs. The meta-controller compares the performance depending on the state of the if-else conditions: in case of grammar improvement poor, the grammar tasks are chosen; in case of pronunciation improvement poor, the pronunciation tasks are chosen; otherwise, the next task in the hierarchy is chosen. Multimodal rewards are computed and weight modification is done depending on the advance of the learner. Finally, the RL agent modifies its policy by using Q-learning or DQN, which ensures that the learning process is more customized, adaptive and progressive.

IV. Results and Discussion

The proposed AI-VR language learning system, which is written and implemented in Python, has demonstrated considerable improvement in other areas of learning. The system has a fine-tuned T5 grammar correction model, an adaptive sequencing, RL agent, and AI-generated conversations that enable a learner to experience a highly responsive learning process. Results indicate that grammatical, pronunciation and adaptive curriculum-based improvement were greatly improved. The study has shown that the level of immersion among learners was increased and enabled by the feedback loop based on dynamically customized task structures and the real-time feedback loop. The natural conversation interactions were made possible through the virtual world, and fluency and contextual interpretation were improved. Overall, the findings prove that AI-based personalization in VR is a potent stimulator of linguistic performance that offers an intelligent, interactive, and adaptable medium by which an individual can acquire knowledge about the English language in a successful way.

TABLE I. Simulation Parameters and Hardware Setup

Parameter	Specification
Programming Environment	Python 3.10, TensorFlow 2.12, PyTorch 2.1, Unity 2022 with XR Toolkit
NLP Model Used	Fine-Tuned T5 Transformer (base, 220M parameters)
RL Algorithm	DQN with ε-greedy policy and $\gamma = 0.9$
VR Device Configuration	Oculus Quest 2, 90Hz refresh rate, 1832x1920 resolution per eye
GPU Used for Training	NVIDIA RTX 3090 (24 GB VRAM, CUDA 11.8, cuDNN 8.6)
System Memory	64 GB DDR4 RAM
Audio Processing	Real-time Speech-to-Text via Google Speech API + Noise Suppression
Dataset Split Ratio	80% Training, 10% Validation, 10% Testing (Total Samples: ~30,000)

Table I is a simulation environment, which involves the application of high-performance GPU acceleration and real-time audio processing and continuous RL in means of a streamlined DL architecture operating in the VR environment. All the parts are set to the best of their capabilities and adjusted to the optimum configuration to obtain the performance of the specific experimentation setup. The system offers efficient training of models, and it also gives immersive and high-resolution VR experiences with low-latency interaction to accommodate reactive and individualistic learning. This system provides scalability and flexibility in order to attain dynamic and effective acquisition of the English language with the AI-VR framework proposed.

TABLE II. Grammar and Pronunciation Score Improvements

Metric	Pre-Intervention (Mean ± SD)	Post-Intervention (Mean ± SD)	Improvement
Grammar (%)	55 ± 4	90 ± 3.5	+35
Pronunciation (%)	50 ± 3.8	81 ± 3.2	+31

Table II presents the average grammar and pronunciation scores and standard deviation of the means before and after the process of AI-VR intervention. Grammar also improved greatly as the point result has improved by +35 to 90 +- 3.5% and pronouncing improved by +31 to 81 +- 3.2. The standard deviations are also quite small that implies consistency in the performance improvement across the participants. The results confirm the effectiveness of Curriculum Reinforcement Learning using Hierarchical Adaptive Weighting in an immersive VR environment and that it can offer learners substantial and steady gain in mastery of both English grammar and pronunciation.

A. Performance Outcomes

Fig. 3 outlines the progress of the learners throughout 10 accommodations of VR instruction of the English language. The grammar, pronunciation and engagement scores were significantly better with an increase of 55 to 90, 50 to 81 and 60 to 82 respectively and this indicated the development of learning. It can be seen that the scores are improved in every episode with scores that are not overlapped by the markers. As shown in this graph, the Curriculum RL with Hierarchical Adaptive Weighting has the benefit of improving the performance of the learners progressively, between grammar, pronunciation, and engagement. The diagram highlights the real-time adjustment and demonstrates the usefulness of the AI-based VR system of language learning.

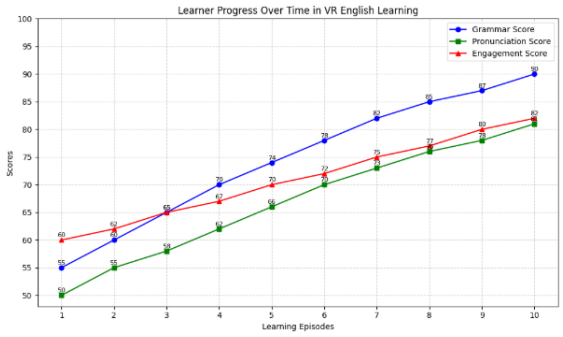

Fig. 3. Learner progress over time in VR English learning.

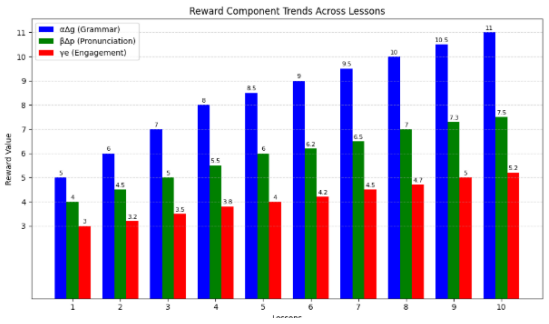

Fig. 4. Reward component trends across lessons.

Fig. 4 shows trends of reward components through the 10 lessons in the VR English learning system. Grammar reward (Δg) was improved 5 to 11, pronunciation reward (2 2) was improved 4 to 7.5 and engagement reward (3 2) was improved 3 to 5.2, which indicates gradual focus on each of the learning dimensions. It is clear and there is no overlapping since there are annotated values above bars. The figure demonstrates that Hierarchical Curriculum with Adaptive Weighting could dynamically modify rewards based on the performance of the learner to balance between the improvements of grammar, the improvement of pronunciation, and to engage the learner, thus, adaptive, multimodal reinforcement in the AI-driven VR learning environment.

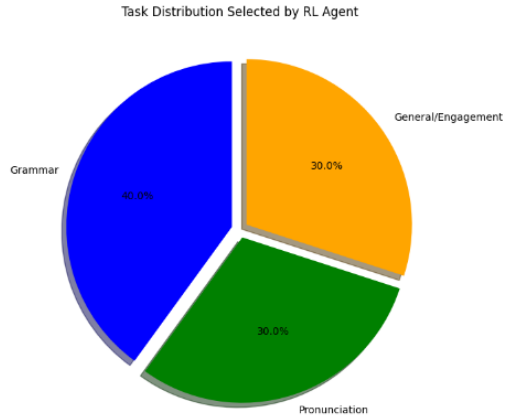

Fig. 5. Task distribution selected by the RL agent.

Fig. 5 presents the distributions of task selection of the RL agent in the VR English learning system. Out of all the tasks that are chosen during the lessons, Grammar-oriented tasks take 40% of the area, Pronunciation tasks take 30% and General/Engagement tasks take 30 percent of the area, which is in line with the priorities of the agent that varies depending on the performance of the learners. These percentages demonstrate that the Hierarchical Curriculum, where Adaptive weighting is used, allows the RL agent to dynamically choose the tasks on which it needs to work so that it might devote the same amount of attention to grammar, pronunciation, and engagement. The visual metaphor is a reference to the personalized and adaptable nature of the AI-enhanced VR learning.

Fig. 6 shows the steady increase in the training and validation accuracy, which depicts the increasing capacity of the system to forecast learner performance accurately. The close gap between curves proves the high generalization rate, which testifies the success of the reinforcement-based curriculum sequencing and multimodal feedback on the VR language learning background.

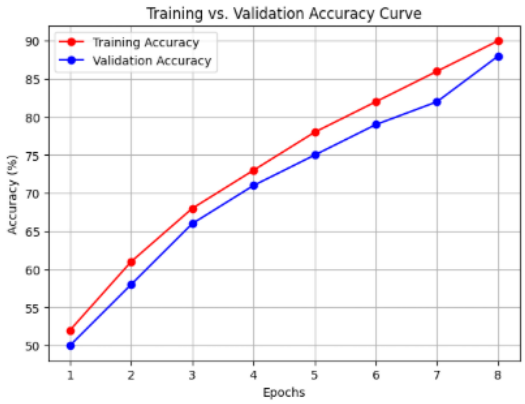

Fig. 6. Training and validation accuracy.

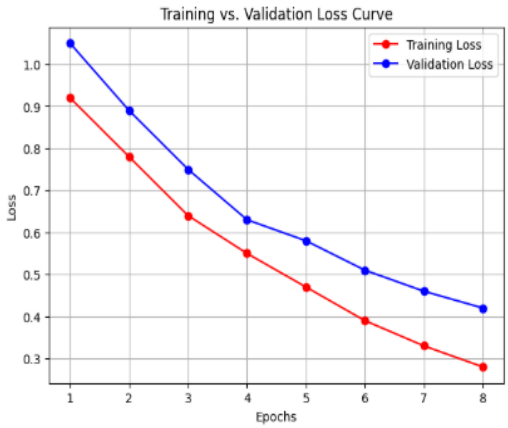

Fig. 7. Training and validation loss.

Fig. 7 illustrates a steady decrease in training and validation loss in the epochs, which means the convergence of the model. The two curves conforming to each other in a close sense imply that there is good generalization, effective parameter learning and sound optimization in an AI-VR adaptive language learning system.

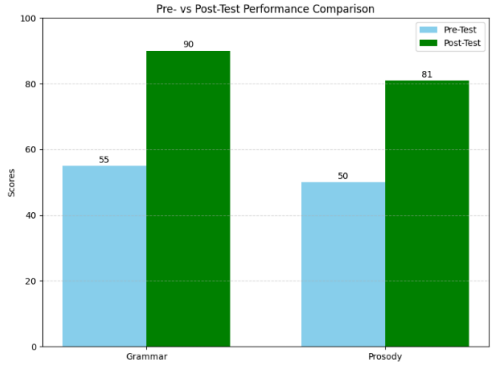

Fig. 8. Pre- versus post-test performance comparison.

The performance regarding the VR English learning environment is compared in Fig. 8 before and after the test. Grammar points were increased to 55-90, as well as the prosody

points which were increased to 50-81, with a heavy improvement of the scores of the learners who were exposed to the AI-based VR system. Annotated values above the bars show the gains without overlapping. This visualization demonstrates Curriculum RL with Hierarchical Adaptive Weighting is successful since learners succeeded not only at the grammar but had skills in the pronunciation. The figure illustrates the individualistic and adaptable pedagogical impact of language interventions founded on VR.

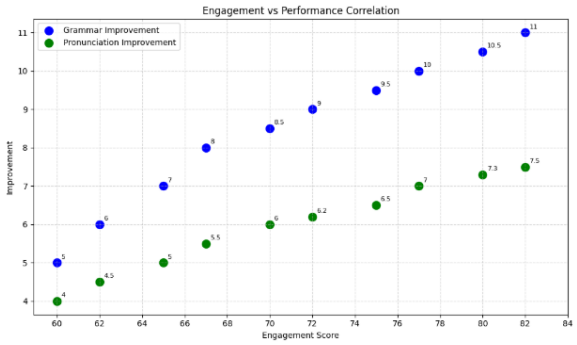

Fig. 9. Engagement vs. Performance correlation.

The relation between the performance and the engagement of the learners in 10 episodes is revealed in Fig. 9. The gains in grammar were measured at as high as 5 to 11 points and in pronunciation as high as 4 to 7.5 points which is accompanied by the gains in engagement that range at 60 to 82. The points of data at individual level are separated clearly to avoid overlaps. The visualization was correlated with the engagement and it was discovered that the more engaged the people the better they become in grammar and pronunciation. These results confirm that Curriculum Reinforcement Learning with a Hierarchical Adaptive Weighting is effective and support the fact that AI-VR system is an adaptive and interaction-based language learning system that enhances the performance of language learning.

B. Performance Metrics

This section statistically assesses the effectiveness of the suggested AI-VR framework in enriching English language learning. Core performance metrics are quantified to determine improvements in accuracy of grammar, fluency, engagement, responsiveness to feedback, and adaptive learning. The established formulas standardize the assessment to allow for objective analysis of learner performance and system efficacy.

TABLE III. PERFORMANCE METRICS OF AI-DRIVEN VR ENGLISH LEARNING SYSTEM

Metric	Grammar Accuracy (%)	Pronunciation Accuracy (%)	Fluency Improvement (ΔF)	Prosody Improvement (ΔP)	Engagement Score (E)
Pre-Test Mean	55	50	0	0	60
Post-Test Mean	90	81	5–11	4–7.5	60–82
Improvement / Gain	+35	+31	+5–11	+4–7.5	+0–22
Standard Deviation	4	3.5	1.5	1.2	6
Max Value	95	85	11	7.5	82
Min Value	55	50	5	4	60

Table III and Fig. 10 gives a summary of the performance measures of learners in VR English learning environment. The grammar strength increased by 55% to 90, pronunciation by 50 to 81, fluency gains were between 5 and 11 points, prosody between 4 and 7.5 points and engagement increased to between 60 and 82. Standard deviations show variability of learners. High and low values indicate the best and the worst performers. It is shown in this table that the Curriculum RL with Hierarchical Adaptive Weighting, which includes T5 grammar correction, RL-driven adaptive lessons, and immersive VR interactions, is effective in achieving significant learning improvements in several language skills, which are measurable.

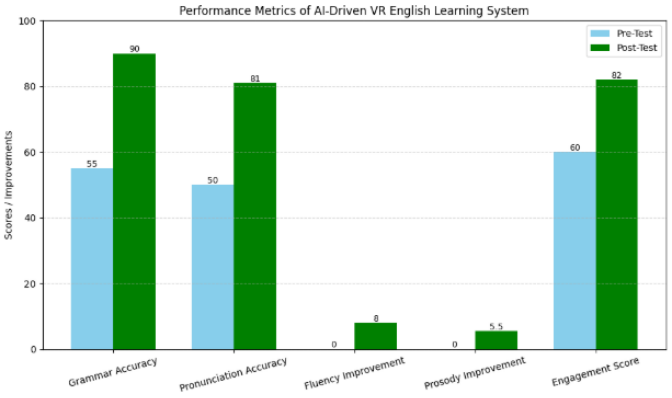

Fig. 10. Performance metrics of the proposed AI-VR method.

TABLE IV. PERFORMANCE COMPARISON WITH EXISTING METHODS

Model / Method	Grammar Accuracy (%)	Pronunciation / Prosody (%)	Fluency Improvement (ΔF)	Engagement Score (E)
DMBO-BiGRU [27]	78	70	4	65
RHH-ISVM [28]	72	68	3	62
CNN-LSTM [29]	80	73	5	67
Proposed VR AI System	90	81	8	82

Table IV provides the comparison of the Proposed VR-AI system with three of the existing approaches: DMBO-BiGRU, RHH-ISVM, and CNN-LSTM. Accuracy of grammar in the proposed system is up to 90, which is better compared to DMBO-BiGRU (78%), RHH-ISVM (72%), and CNN-LSTM (80%). Pronunciation/prosody is also enhanced to a significant level of 81 as compared to the current methods of 70-73. The improvement of fluency is 8 points, which is greater than 3-5 points of other models. The engagement score is 82, which presents higher participation of learners. This is a clear indication that the VR-AI system is the best in language acquisition, pronunciation, fluency, and engagement of the learner.

C. Discussion

The combination of Curriculum reinforcement learning and Hierarchy Adaptive weighting within a virtual learning environment is a very effective model in acquiring English language. The significant changes in grammar accuracy (55 + 4 to 90 + 3.5) and pronunciation performance (50 + 3.8 to 81 + 3.2) prove that the proposed system allows providing specific, adaptive training based on constant performance monitoring changes. The fact that fluency has increased by eight points and the engagement score is relatively high at 82 also suggests that the idea of immersive interaction and task advancement that is based on a reward greatly contributes to the motivation of the learner and the consistency of learning. The excellent results of the proposed approach as compared to DMBO-BiGRU, RHH-ISVM, and CNN-LSTM baselines confirm the fact that adaptive task sequencing and multimodal, context-aware feedback are the key points of enhancing learning. Furthermore, the association between engagement and performance is positive, which implies that immersive VR-based interaction facilitates deeper thought involvement and long-term knowledge acquisition. The fact that the system can dynamically develop, evolve in real-time and gives feedback in contexts also highlights its scalability and use in areas other than language learning especially in competency-based training and skills development. Although this study has promising results, there are some limitations. The test was conducted in a controlled VR setting using a small sample of data, which might not reflect a variety of real-life learning settings. Transformer and reinforcement learning model use impose computation costs, which may be a constraint when used on low-resource systems. VR equipment and audio quality also may influence the accuracy of pronunciation. In addition, long term learning retention has not been studied extensively, which should be investigated in the future.

V. Conclusion and Future Work

The Curriculum RL when combined with Hierarchical Adaptive weighting in a learning environment through VR proves more effective in teaching the English language, as it provides adaptive, individualized, and more immersive learning. The overall outcomes of the SENIT, grammar accuracy, pronunciation, fluency, and engagement with the learners are strong and above the state-of-the-art base models. Transformer-based linguistic intelligence along with real-time feedback and adaptive task sequencing are effective in supporting individual paths of learning, encouraging learners and enhancing long-term memory. These findings support the idea that context-based, immersive and dynamically changing VR learning environments present a solid ground on which effective language acquisition and the development of interactive skills may be achieved.

Future studies can focus on the further development of the SENIT framework to facilitate learning in more than two languages by adding more linguistic characteristics like semantics, pragmatics, and discourse-level comprehension. Emotion recognition and affective computing would also be helpful in improving engagement and personalized feedback. The mass implementation in actual classroom or distance learning environments will permit testing the scaling, long-term learning retention and cross-cultural efficiency. Also, VR combined with augmented reality (AR) or mixed reality (MR) environments may be even more immersive and more effective in context learning, and most importantly, more computationally efficient, which will allow its use in the form of edges to make it more accessible to all and adapt to real-time in different learning settings.

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Advanced Multimodal AI for Resilient Healthcare: Enhancing Early Risk Assessment in Critical Care

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Abstract—**This study develops an advanced multimodal AI framework to strengthen early risk assessment in critical care and support resilient healthcare delivery. Utilizing the MIMIC-III database, this research extracted structured variables and clinical notes from 26,829 adult patients. A text mining approach based on the BERTopic model was employed to generate topic embeddings from unstructured notes, which were subsequently integrated with 16 quantitative variables. Six machine learning models: Adaboost, Gradient Boosting, Support Vector Classification (SVC), Bagging, Logistic Regression, and MLP Classifier were trained to predict short-term and long-term mortality outcomes. Model performance was evaluated through AUROC, accuracy, recall, precision, and F1-score metrics. The results demonstrate that integrating topic embeddings with structured data significantly improved short-term risk prediction. The SVC model, in particular, achieved an AUROC of 0.9137 for predicting 2-day mortality. Critical predictors identified included the Glasgow Coma Scale, White Blood Cell Count, and text-derived topics related to cardiovascular and neurological conditions. The study is based on a single-center dataset, limiting generalizability. Additionally, only a subset of textual data sources was analyzed, and improvements in long-term risk prediction were relatively modest. These findings demonstrate how multimodal AI can significantly improve early risk assessment and enhance resilience in critical care decision-making. This research pioneers the integration of BERTopic-based text mining with machine learning models for clinical risk prediction, highlighting the value of multimodal data fusion in improving predictive accuracy and enriching medical informatics.**

Keywords—Resilient healthcare; multimodal AI; early risk assessment; critical care; clinical text mining

I. Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and healthcare big data are revolutionizing clinical outcome prediction and decision-making, particularly in critical care environments such as Intensive Care Units (ICUs) [1]. AI, powered by sophisticated machine learning algorithms, processes extensive and complex datasets to uncover intricate patterns and generate precise predictions of patient outcomes. These advancements significantly enhance clinical decision-making processes and enable the delivery of highly personalized care. Within this framework, Electronic Health Records (EHRs) play a pivotal role as the foundation of healthcare big data. EHRs encompass comprehensive digital records of patients' health information, including medical histories, diagnostic imaging, and treatment details [2]. The digital transformation of health records not only streamlines hospital management and service delivery but also provides researchers with vast datasets for developing and validating predictive models [3]. These technological advancements further enhance predictive analytics and play a critical role in supporting resilient healthcare by enabling earlier identification of clinical deterioration and improving system responsiveness [4, 5].

In addition to numerical and structured data in EHRs, semi-structured and unstructured data, such as clinical notes, diagnostic reports, and patient discharge summaries, constitute a valuable yet often underutilized source of information in predictive modeling [6]. Text mining, a specialized area within AI dedicated to extracting meaningful insights from unstructured text, has gained significant recognition for its ability to process such data. By leveraging advanced text mining techniques, researchers can uncover critical insights from clinical notes and reports, transforming free-text into structured data that can seamlessly integrate with traditional numerical datasets to enhance predictive modeling accuracy.

The integration of text mining with healthcare big data comprising EHRs, diagnostic reports, and other patient-related records provides a powerful foundation for developing predictive models to support evidence-based clinical decision-making [7]. This synergy holds considerable promise for enhancing resource allocation, advancing patient care, and minimizing healthcare expenditures, establishing it as a central focus in contemporary medical informatics research. In ICU-focused studies, leveraging EHR data for predictive tasks, such as assessing patient mortality, estimating length of stay, and diagnosing diseases, plays a pivotal role. Effectively utilizing EHR data for clinical outcome prediction enables early identification of high-risk patients, facilitates timely interventions, and improves mortality risk assessment, ultimately optimizing patient care and resource utilization [8]. Strengthening early risk prediction in the ICU is therefore fundamental to resilient healthcare, as it supports timely interventions, reduces avoidable deterioration, and enhances the system's capacity to respond effectively under clinical pressure [9-11].

Accurate prediction of clinical outcomes for ICU patients, given their diverse survival probabilities, plays a crucial role in enhancing the quality of care within ICUs, facilitating cross-institutional evaluations, and advancing related clinical research [12]. Numerous predictive methods and scoring systems, including APACHE, SAPS, and MPM, have been designed to estimate clinical outcomes [13, 14]. While these models achieve

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reasonable accuracy in predicting ICU mortality rates, they often require recalibration when applied to different ICU settings due to disparities in patient demographics and clinical practices [15]. Despite these advancements, there remains a significant knowledge gap in how advanced topic modeling like BERTopic can be effectively integrated with structured ICU data to improve predictive resilience. This study fills this gap by providing a comparative analysis of multimodal AI frameworks. Machine learning (ML) has emerged as a transformative tool for data analysis, offering robust capabilities in feature extraction and addressing the limitations of traditional statistical approaches.ML techniques have been widely implemented in various healthcare predictive tasks, such as employing Random Forest algorithms to assess fetal maturity and adapt model parameters across diverse temporal settings [16].

While EHR adoption expands, research remains predominantly focused on structured quantitative data. Yet, clinical narratives containing vital documentation of physiological states and disease progression represent nearly 80% of EHR content [17, 18]. These semi-structured records encode essential clinical knowledge, including diagnostic assessments, treatment protocols, and care priorities, which are critical for evidence-based decision-making [19]. Natural language processing (NLP) has consequently become indispensable for deriving insights from such textual data [20, 21], exemplified by its 90% accuracy in classifying peripheral arterial disease through keyword extraction [22].

While NLP improves patient classification accuracy, it simultaneously reveals challenges, including data sparsity and high dimensionality. To address these limitations, we propose the BERTopic model, which integrates BERT (Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers) embeddings with c-TF-IDF to generate dense clusters and extract interpretable topics. In contrast to conventional latent Dirichlet allocation (LDA) approaches, BERTopic provides enhanced semantic representations that resolve vocabulary mismatches while capturing temporal dynamics in topic distributions [23, 24]. Unlike LDA, which relies on bag-of-words, BERTopic utilizes contextual embeddings to maintain semantic coherence even in short, noisy clinical notes. Furthermore, the model streamlines hyperparameter optimization and incorporates dedicated noise topic handling, effectively reducing misclassification of irrelevant documents and consequently improving overall topic modeling accuracy [25, 26].

Integrating text mining methods like BERTopic with machine learning provides a robust framework for enhancing predictive accuracy in critical care. While conventional models often overlook the rich clinical insights within semi-structured data, such as nursing notes and diagnostic reports, this study leverages the BERTopic model to extract and categorize meaningful latent topics. By synthesizing these text-derived features with numerical datasets, our approach enables a more holistic understanding of patient conditions. This integration transforms unstructured narratives into quantifiable predictors, equipping healthcare professionals with deeper insights for more precise decision-making and ICU outcome forecasting. This study advances the field by employing a transformer-enhanced BERTopic model to automatically extract interpretable features from complex clinical narratives. A key contribution of this work is the comprehensive comparative analysis that provides empirical evidence of the advantages modern topic modeling holds over traditional methods. As healthcare big data analytics evolve, incorporating advanced text mining into predictive frameworks promises to optimize resource allocation and enhance the quality of patient care. Ultimately, this multimodal AI framework reinforces early risk recognition, supporting resilient healthcare by enabling more timely, adaptive, and effective interventions in critical care settings.

II. Materials and Methods

The methodological framework of this study is illustrated in Fig. 1. The dataset consists of structured EHR variables and clinical notes, providing a comprehensive representation of patient information. Data extraction, cleaning, and preprocessing were performed to ensure analytical quality. The processed dataset was then used to train five machine learning models for mortality prediction. Model performance was evaluated using five standard metrics to enable an objective comparison. The following sections describe each methodological component in detail.

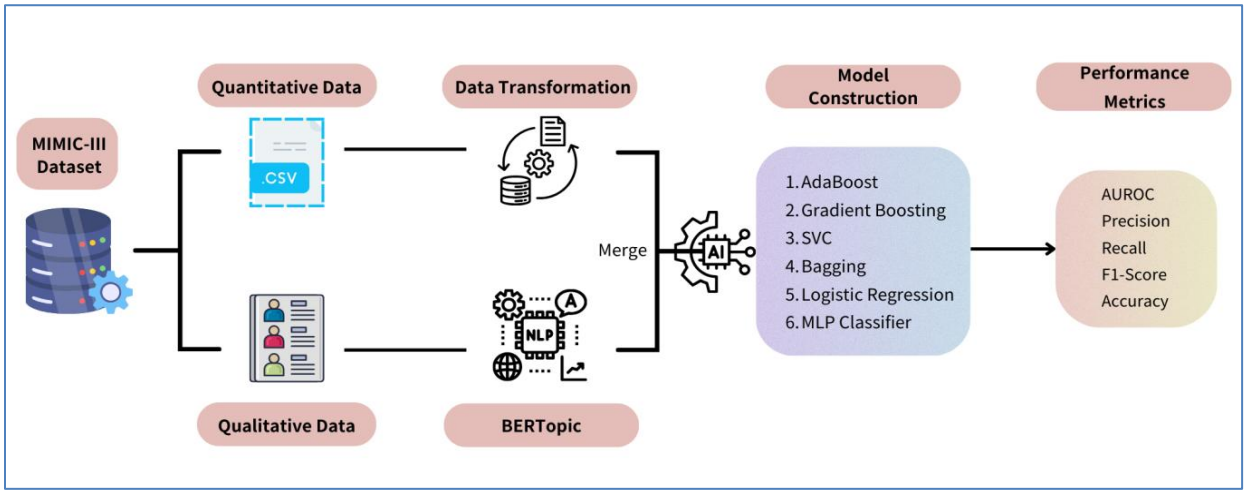

Fig. 1. Research scheme.

A. Data Composition and Source: MIMIC-III

This study utilized data from the Medical Information Mart for Intensive Care III (MIMIC-III), a publicly available clinical database that contains detailed records of intensive care unit (ICU) patients admitted to the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center (BIDMC) in Boston, Massachusetts. The dataset encompasses patient encounters from 2001 to 2012, capturing a wide range of clinical variables, including vital signs, medication history, laboratory test results, and observational notes [27]. MIMIC-III includes 49,785 hospital admissions, representing 38,597 unique adult patients aged 16 years and older, with a median age of 65.8 years and a male patient proportion of 55.9%.

To ensure ethical compliance, access to the MIMIC-III database required approval under certificate number 35628530, which involved completing the National Institutes of Health (NIH) online training, successfully passing the Human Research Participant Protection Examination, and submitting a formal data access request. Additionally, the study obtained institutional review board (IRB) approval from both BIDMC and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). The MIMIC-III dataset is curated by the MIT Laboratory for Computational Physiology and is available for research purposes through PhysioNet. This rigorous approval process ensures adherence to ethical guidelines and data protection regulations, enabling responsible use of de-identified patient data for advancing critical care research. (https://physionet.org/content/mimiciii/1.4/)

B. Data Preprocessing

1) Data extraction: To enhance the generalizability of the findings, this study encompassed all ICU patients rather than limiting the analysis to specific disease groups. For consistency with similar research, adult ICU patients aged over 16 years and admitted to the ICU for the first time were included. The analysis focused primarily on data recorded during the initial 24 hours of these patients' ICU stays [28, 29]. Table I summarizes the demographic and clinical characteristics of the patient cohort following data preprocessing. The final cohort comprised 26,829 patients who met the inclusion criteria and had associated clinical notes available for textual analysis, including 2,322 (8.66%) who died in the hospital and 24,507 (91.34%) who survived. Admission Type refers to the classification of the patient's admission leading to the index ICU stay. The median patient age was 63.06 years, with 56.85% of the cohort being male. The majority of patients were identified as white (71.20%), followed by black (7.70%) and individuals from other ethnic groups. Emergency admissions accounted for 82.29% of cases, with 37.15% of patients admitted to Medical ICUs. The average length of stay in the ICU was 4.15 days.

2) Variable selection: To identify the variables for analysis, this study leveraged insights from prior research and selected 16 quantitative variables based on their clinical significance [listed in Appendix A (Table VIII)] [30-32]. These variables were extracted from multiple tables within the MIMIC-III dataset, including admission records, chartevents, labevents, and output events. A structured three-stage data preprocessing approach, adapted from Guo et al. [8] was implemented to address missing values. Initially, patient records with more than 30% missing data were excluded. Next, predictors with over 40% missing values were removed. Finally, variables with a missing rate exceeding 20% after applying the previous filtering steps (i.e., exclusion of patient records with >30% missing data and exclusion of predictors with >40% missing values) were eliminated. For the remaining missing values, mean imputation was performed. The significance of the selected variables was evaluated using the Information Gain Technique (Entropy) [33], retaining only those with a score of 0.01 or higher for further analysis. Among the identified predictors, white blood cell count emerged as the most influential, whereas gender ranked the lowest.In addition to numerical variables, this study incorporated topic modeling-derived features from the NOTEVENTS dataset, which comprises clinical notes documented by various healthcare professionals, including physicians, nurses, imaging specialists, nutritionists, and physical therapists. Within the MIMIC-III database, NOTEVENTS contains over 2 million entries, with approximately 56% authored by doctors and nurses. An additional 39% of the records consist of echocardiography, electrocardiography, and radiology reports. By integrating structured numerical data with unstructured textual information, this study aimed to enhance predictive accuracy and provide a more comprehensive assessment of ICU patient outcomes. This multimodal approach enables a more robust representation of clinical contexts that would otherwise be overlooked when relying solely on structured data.

C. Mortality Prediction

This study examined the impact of integrating structured data (e.g., vital signs and laboratory test results) with semi-structured data (e.g., diagnostic details and clinical notes) on predicting ICU patient mortality following admission. This study aimed to predict ICU patient mortality at specific time points following the initial ICU admission, using data collected within the first 24 hours. We focused on four distinct prediction targets:

1) Short-term mortality: Defined as patient death occurring within 2 days or 3 days post-ICU admission.

2) Long-term mortality: Defined as patient death occurring within 1 month or 1 year post-ICU admission.

The integration of these data types aimed to improve the precision and reliability of mortality predictions across both short-term and long-term timeframes.

D. BERTopic

BERTopic represents a cutting-edge approach to topic modeling, harnessing the strengths of BERT (Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers) to uncover latent themes within large textual datasets[34]. This method excels in generating coherent topic representations by employing a combination of BERT-based embeddings and a class-based variation of TF-IDF (c-TF-IDF). The BERTopic algorithm

consists of three key stages: document embedding, dimensionality reduction using UMAP, and document clustering with HDBSCAN.

TABLE I. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF SELECTED PATIENTS

	Overall	Dead at Hospital	Alive at Hospital
General (%)			
Number	26,829 (100%)	2,322 (8.66%)	24,507 (91.34%)
Age [Q1–Q3]	63.06 [51.32–77.82]	70.88 [61.43–83.32]	62.26 [50.51–76.97]
Gender (male)	15,248 (56.85%)	1,256 (8.24%)	13,992 (91.76%)
Race/Ethnicity (%)			
Asian	656 (2.45%)	57 (2.45%)	599 (2.44%)
Black	2,067 (7.70%)	109 (4.69%)	1,958 (7.99%)
Hispanic	888 (3.31%)	47 (2.02%)	841 (3.43%)
White	19,105 (71.20%)	1,673 (72.05%)	17,432 (71.11%)
Other	4,113 (15.34%)	601 (25.88%)	3,512 (14.33%)
Admission Type (%)			
Urgent	644 (2.40%)	74 (3.19%)	570 (2.33%)
Emergency	22,067 (82.29%)	2,199 (94.70%)	19,868 (81.07%)
Elective	4,118 (15.32%)	49 (2.11%)	4,069 (16.60%)
Site (%)			
Medical Intensive Care Unit	9,966 (37.15%)	1,125 (48.45%)	8,841 (36.06%)
Surgical Intensive Care Unit	4,400 (16.40%)	463 (19.94%)	3,937 (16.06%)
Coronary Care Unit	4,180 (15.58%)	326 (14.04%)	3,854 (15.73%)
Cardiac Surgery Recovery Unit	4,336 (16.16%)	121 (5.21%)	4,215 (17.20%)
Trauma Surgical Intensive Care Unit	3,947 (14.71%)	287 (12.36%)	3,660 (14.93%)
Insurance			
Government	819 (3.05%)	45 (1.94%)	774 (3.16%)
Medicaid	2,235 (8.33%)	144 (6.20%)	2,091 (8.53%)
Medicare	14,342 (53.46%)	1,621 (69.81%)	12,721 (51.91%)
Private	9,080 (33.84%)	459 (19.76%)	8,621 (35.18%)
Self-Pay	353 (1.32%)	53 (2.28%)	300 (1.22%)
Outcomes			
Hospital LOS (days) [Q1–Q3]	8.95 [3.88–10.47]	9.27 [2.77–11.49]	8.92 [3.96–10.34]
ICU LOS (days) [Q1–Q3]	4.15 [1.26–4.17]	6.68 [2.08–8.12]	3.89 [1.22–3.89]

1) Bert embedding: In the first stage of the BERTopic algorithm, BERT Embeddings are used to convert documents into dense vector representations, capturing the semantic relationships within the text. BERT (Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers), a transformer-based model, is pre-trained on large corpora using masked language modeling, allowing it to consider both the left and right context of words in a sentence. Sentence-BERT (SBERT), a variation of BERT, is employed to create sentence-level embeddings optimized for semantic similarity. During this process, each document is tokenized into subwords using BERT's Word Piece tokenizer, ensuring that rare or unseen words are broken down into smaller, meaningful units. The tokenized sequence is then passed through BERT's multi-layer attention mechanism to generate contextual embeddings for each token. These token embeddings are aggregated, typically using the embedding of the [CLS] token, which represents the entire document. The final document embedding, D, can be expressed as:

$$D = f_{BERT}(T) = h_{[CLS]} \quad (1)$$

where, T is the tokenized input sequence and $h_{[CLS]}$ is the hidden state corresponding to the [CLS] token, which summarizes the semantic content of the entire document. The document embedding process plays a critical role by allowing the algorithm to place semantically similar documents in close proximity within the vector space. This step establishes the foundation for subsequent stages, including clustering and topic extraction [34].

2) Uniform manifold approximation and projection (UMAP): In the second stage of the BERTopic algorithm, Uniform Manifold Approximation and Projection (UMAP) is employed to reduce the dimensionality of the high-dimensional document embeddings produced in the first stage. UMAP is a well-established non-linear dimensionality reduction technique, particularly effective for handling high-dimensional datasets like document embeddings. It preserves both local and global data structures, thereby enabling improved clustering in the subsequent phase.

UMAP functions by constructing a weighted graph that represents relationships between neighboring data points in the high-dimensional space, using the following formula:

$$u_{ij} = \exp\left(-\frac{d(x_i,x_j)-p_i}{\sigma_i}\right) \quad (2)$$

where, $d(x_i, x_j)$ is the distance between data points x_i and x_j, p_i is the distance to the nearest neighbor of x_i, ensuring that each point has at least one strong connection, and σ_i scales the neighborhood size.

Next, UMAP optimizes the low-dimensional layout by minimizing a cross-entropy loss:

$$C = \sum_{i \neq j} u_{ij} \log\left(\frac{u_{ij}}{v(y_i, y_j)}\right) \quad (3)$$

where, $v(y_i, y_j)$ models the probability of connectivity in the lower-dimensional space.

UMAP's capability to maintain the structural integrity of high-dimensional data while reducing its complexity is critical to the effectiveness of the BERTopic algorithm. By enabling efficient clustering of semantically similar documents in a low-dimensional space, UMAP ensures that the topics identified in the final stage of BERTopic remain coherent and accurately reflect the underlying structure of the document corpus.

3) Hierarchical density-based spatial clustering of applications with noise (HDBSCAN): In the final stage of the BERTopic algorithm, document embeddings, reduced in dimensionality using UMAP, are clustered using Hierarchical Density-Based Spatial Clustering of Applications with Noise (HDBSCAN). As an enhancement of the DBSCAN (Density-Based Spatial Clustering of Applications with Noise) algorithm, HDBSCAN offers the ability to detect clusters with varying densities while effectively managing noise. These capabilities are particularly important for handling text data, which often exhibits complex distributions.HDBSCAN is a density-based clustering algorithm capable of adapting to varying densities, enabling the detection of clusters without needing to predefine their number. It determines the core distance for each data point, which is calculated as the distance to its k-th nearest neighbor:

$$core_dist = d(x_i, x_{k-nearest}) \quad (4)$$

It then defines the mutual reachability distance between point's x_i and x_j:

$$mutual_reach_dist(x_i, x_j) = max\left(core_dist(x_i), core_dist(x_j), d(x_i, x_j)\right) \quad (5)$$

HDBSCAN constructs a minimum spanning tree and extracts the most stable clusters based on persistence, classifying outliers to reduce noise. This flexibility in handling varied densities and outliers makes it ideal for detecting distinct topics in BERTopic [34].

HDBSCAN is integral to the final stage of BERTopic, where it clusters document embeddings into coherent groups representing distinct topics. Its hierarchical and density-based methodology, coupled with the ability to manage noise and variable-density clusters, makes it particularly suited to the complexities of textual data. By combining UMAP's dimensionality reduction with HDBSCAN's clustering functionality, BERTopic effectively extracts high-quality topics from extensive document datasets.

E. Machine Learning

This study employed six well-established machine learning classification algorithms to evaluate the impact of incorporating textual data, such as clinical notes and pathology reports, in predicting ICU patient mortality. These algorithms were selected based on their demonstrated effectiveness in handling heterogeneous data and addressing complex predictive tasks. The subsequent sections present a detailed overview of the methodologies utilized, including a brief description of each algorithm along with its respective parameter configurations. This comparative analysis aims to highlight the relative strengths of different models in leveraging both structured and unstructured clinical data for enhanced predictive performance. Table II provides a comprehensive summary of the machine learning algorithms employed in this study, detailing their theoretical foundations, optimized parameter settings, including ensemble sizes and kernel types, while maintaining default values for all other parameters to ensure reproducibility.

F. Evaluation Criteria and Metrics

To comprehensively assess the impact of incorporating both structured and semi-structured data on ICU patient mortality prediction, this study employed five key evaluation metrics: AUROC, specificity, sensitivity, precision, and F1-score. These metrics were chosen to ensure a well-rounded assessment of model performance. Table III illustrates the confusion matrix, which forms the basis for calculating these evaluation measures.

Each metric offers distinct insights into model effectiveness. AUROC serves as an indicator of overall classification performance, providing a measure of the model's ability to distinguish between classes. Precision evaluates the correctness of positive predictions, ensuring that identified positive cases are accurate. Sensitivity (recall) gauges the model's capability to correctly detect true positive cases, while specificity determines its effectiveness in identifying true negatives. The F1-score, a harmonic mean of precision and recall, ensures a balanced evaluation by considering both false positives and false negatives. Together, these metrics provide a rigorous framework for comparing models that integrate numerical and text-based clinical data in ICU patient outcome prediction.

$$Precision = PPV = \frac{TP}{TP + FP} \quad (6)$$

$$Recall = TPR = \frac{TP}{TP + FN} \quad (7)$$

$$F - score = \frac{2 * Precision * Recall}{Precision + Recall} \quad (8)$$

$$Accuracy = \frac{TP + TN}{TP + FP + TN + FN} \quad (9)$$

TABLE II. SELECTED ALGORITHM AND PARAMETER SETTING

Algorithm	Description	Parameters
Adaboost	A boosting-based ensemble learning algorithm that enhances classification performance by sequentially combining multiple weak learners. It dynamically adjusts the weights of misclassified instances to improve overall model accuracy and robustness [35, 36].	n_estimators=50, learning_rate=1, base_estimator=DecisionTreeClassifier(max_depth=1)
Gradient Boosting (GB)	A powerful ensemble method that constructs models in a sequential manner, where each new model is trained to correct the errors of its predecessors. It leverages gradient descent optimization to minimize the loss function and refine predictive accuracy [37, 38].	n_estimators=100, learning_rate=1.0, max_depth=1, loss='deviance'
Support Vector Classification (SVC)	A classification technique designed to identify the optimal decision boundary that maximizes class separation in high-dimensional feature spaces. This approach is particularly effective in capturing complex, non-linear relationships between variables [39, 40].	kernel='rbf', C=1.0, gamma='auto'
Bagging	A variance-reducing ensemble method that enhances model stability by training multiple classifiers on randomly sampled subsets of the dataset. The final prediction is obtained by aggregating individual model outputs, leading to improved generalization [41, 42].	base_estimator=DecisionTreeClassifier(), n_estimators=500, max_samples=100
Logistic Regression (LR)	A widely applied statistical model for binary classification tasks. It efficiently estimates the probability of class membership and is frequently utilized for risk assessment due to its interpretability and computational efficiency [43, 44].	solver='sag', penalty='l2', C=1.0
Multi-Layer Perceptron Classifier (MLPClassifier)	A feedforward artificial neural network composed of multiple interconnected layers. It employs backpropagation to adjust weights iteratively, allowing it to capture complex, non-linear patterns within data [45, 46].	hidden_layer_sizes=(13,13,13), max_iter=1000, activation='relu', solver='adam'

TABLE III. CONFUSION MATRIX

		Prediction	
		Positive	**Negative**
Actual	**Positive**	True Positive (TP)	False Negative (FN)
	Negative	False Positive (FP)	True Negative (TN)

1) Precision: This metric quantifies the proportion of correctly classified positive instances out of all instances predicted as positive. It provides an indication of how reliable the model is in making positive predictions.

2) Recall: Represents the fraction of actual positive cases that the model successfully identifies. It serves as a measure of the model's effectiveness in capturing true positives within the dataset.

3) F1-Score: Defined as the harmonic mean of precision and recall, the F1-score balances the trade-off between these two metrics, ensuring a comprehensive evaluation of classification performance.

4) Accuracy: Expresses the proportion of correctly classified samples, encompassing both positive and negative cases, relative to the entire dataset. It provides an overall assessment of the model's classification performance.

5) AUROC (Area under the receiver operating characteristic curve): A metric that assesses the model's discriminatory power across varying classification thresholds. The ROC curve plots the True Positive Rate (TPR) against the False Positive Rate (FPR), where TPR measures the model's ability to detect actual positive cases, and FPR quantifies the proportion of false positives. AUROC values range from 0 to 1, with higher scores indicating stronger overall classification capability.

III. RESULTS

A. Analysis of Textual Data

The NOTEEVENTS table in the MIMIC-III database contains a vast collection of textual records documenting ICU patient care throughout their hospital stays. In this study, which focuses on mortality prediction, the NOTEEVENTS table was the primary source of text-based information. By analyzing discharge summaries, word clouds were generated to identify key patient characteristics, providing clinical insights that contribute to more effective condition monitoring and management. To extract meaningful features from the clinical text, BERTopic was employed to generate key topics, which were subsequently incorporated as input variables in the predictive models. The process of determining the optimal number of topics and refining the predictive model was guided by methodologies proposed by Baird et al. and Abuzayed et al. [47, 48]. Our findings indicate that ten topics resulted in the highest predictive accuracy. As outlined in Table IV, and visualized in Fig. 2, these ten topics were derived from the processed textual data and linked to specific keywords representing essential patient conditions and medical interventions.

The process of topic generation also allowed for the identification of hidden patterns within the clinical narratives, which may not be immediately apparent through structured data alone. For example, the frequency distribution of clinical descriptors, such as acute symptoms, procedural terms, or medication classes revealed clusters of patient conditions that aligned with known ICU syndromes, thereby validating the clinical relevance of the extracted topics. The identified topics

covered various clinical domains, including cardiovascular health, head trauma management, abdominal disorders, and medication prescriptions. The x-axis in each subplot represents the magnitude of the class-based TF-IDF (c-TF-IDF) score, indicating the importance of each word within its respective topic. By leveraging these extracted topics, the model achieved improved predictive performance, offering valuable support for clinical decision-making and patient outcome forecasting.

TABLE IV. IDENTIFIED VARIABLE TOPICS AND ASSOCIATED KEYWORDS

No.	Topic	Keywords
0	Cardiovascular Health	chest, aortic, cardiac, artery, ventricular, capsule, heart, coronary, glucose, mitral, allergies, pulmonary, edema, acute, systolic, aspirin, hypertension, wall
1	Head Trauma and Treatment	head, hemorrhage, fracture, capsule, acute, allergies, seizure, bid, impression, stroke, artery, frontal, mm, midline, surgical, glucose
2	Abdominal and Pancreatic Disorders	abdominal, pancreatitis, biliary, fluid, bile, bowel, stent, acute, abdomen, pancreatic, glucose, surgery, diet, liver, surgical, cholangitis, gallbladder, urine, tube
3	Renal and Urinary System Health	renal, urology, urine, bladder, kidney, stone, tube, prostate, capsule, glucose, hydronephrosis, cancer, pod, foley, surgical, catheter, allergies, fluid
4	Esophageal and Chest Medical Topics	tube, esophageal, esophagus, pod, chest, feeding, cancer, removed, feeds, site, gastric, swallow, incision, drain, glucose, invasive, diet, liquid, surgical
5	Medication Prescriptions and Medical Guidance	bid, capsule, identifier, ec, qd, allergies, disposition, completed, facility, aspirin, tid, attending first, extended, dictated, sodium, medquist, solution, docusate
6	Breast Cancer and Related Surgeries	breast, flap, cancer, carcinoma, pod, squamous, tube, neck, site, cell, plastic, postoperative, metastatic, floor, surgery, surgical, bilateral, mouth, drain
7	Carotid Artery Narrowing and Medical Interventions	carotid, stenosis, artery, ica, stent, stenting, internal, Plavix, qd, pressure, aspirin, angiography, intact, cardiac, cad, chest, stroke, bruit, bilaterally, surgery
8	Hand and Finger-Related Issues	finger, hand, repair, ring, radial, injury, middle, capsule, plastic, forearm, wrist, distal, long, clinic, surgery, joint, postoperatively, saw, sensation, signs
9	Gastric and Obesity-Related Issues	gastric, diet, obesity, weight, bypass, surgery, medication, surgical, drainage, postoperative, advanced, apnea, severe, abdominal, sleep, incisions, leak, ten

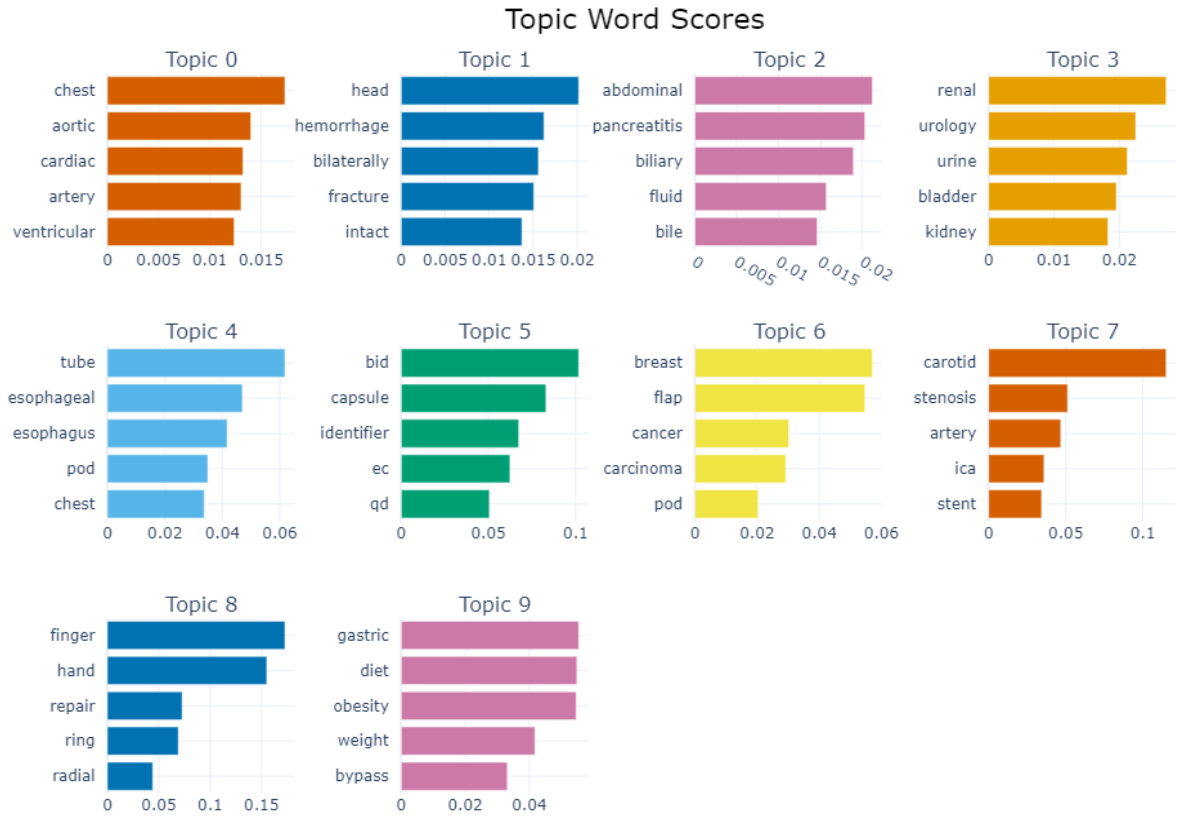

Fig. 2. Topic word scores across identified medical themes in ICU patient data.

Additionally, the topic-word distributions help demonstrate how certain clinical concepts frequently co-occur, suggesting possible interactions between patient comorbidities and acute ICU conditions. Such co-occurrence patterns play a crucial role in mortality prediction, as they offer a richer representation of patient complexity compared to isolated numerical features. The application of BERTopic successfully extracted ten key topics from ICU patient data, providing valuable insights into the diverse and complex clinical conditions observed in intensive care settings. Each identified topic was associated with a specific set of keywords, enabling the seamless integration of both structured and semi-structured data into predictive modeling. This approach underscored the efficacy of combining NLP with machine learning to enhance clinical decision-making and optimize patient care strategies.

Moreover, BERTopic's ability to represent patients through probabilistic topic distributions makes it particularly well-suited for capturing subtle variations in disease severity and clinical presentation. This probabilistic representation allows the model to quantify the degree to which a patient aligns with multiple clinical conditions simultaneously—a feature that is especially important in the ICU, where patients often present with multiple overlapping diagnoses. By transforming semi-structured textual data into meaningful topics and encoding them as probabilistic representations, this study effectively leveraged the full spectrum of information available within electronic health records (EHRs). This methodology demonstrated a significant advancement over traditional predictive models, which typically depend solely on structured numerical data, thereby emphasizing the potential of text-driven analytics in critical care research. Taken together, these findings highlight that narrative clinical documentation is not merely supplementary information but a valuable and often underutilized component of ICU data. Integrating NLP-derived insights into predictive modeling enables a more holistic understanding of patient status, supporting the development of more sensitive and context-aware risk prediction tools.

B. Prediction of the Mortality

To evaluate model performance, this study employed k-fold cross-validation, a widely adopted technique that partitions the dataset into k equal subsets and iteratively trains and validates the model across all folds. By averaging the results across multiple iterations, this method mitigates bias and enhances predictive reliability. However, despite its advantages in reducing overfitting and improving generalization, k-fold cross-validation is computationally demanding [49, 50]. In this study, a 10-fold cross-validation approach was implemented to develop mortality prediction models for 2 days, 3 days, 1 month, and 1 year post-ICU admission, utilizing structured and semi-structured data collected within the first 24 hours of patient admission.

This design allows the model to repeatedly learn from different subsets of patients, improving its ability to generalize across heterogeneous ICU populations where disease severity and documentation patterns vary widely. By incorporating both short-term and long-term mortality outcomes, the study provides a comprehensive assessment of how early clinical information contributes to risk stratification across different temporal horizons.

To build the predictive models, we combined features derived from both structured and unstructured data. The 16 selected quantitative variables, capturing physiological measurements and demographic information, formed the structured data component. For the unstructured data component, the BERTopic model generated 10 distinct topics from the clinical notes (as detailed in Table IV). Each patient's textual data was then represented by these topics, potentially using the probability distribution across the 10 topics or a categorical variable indicating the dominant topic. These topic-derived features were then concatenated with the 16 quantitative features to create a comprehensive feature vector for each patient. This combined feature set was used as input for the six machine learning classifiers described. This integration strategy enables the model to capture complementary sources of information: structured data reflect measurable physiological conditions, while textual data provide implicit clinical reasoning and contextual nuances recorded by healthcare providers. Notably, topic distributions generated by BERTopic often highlight symptom clusters, impressions of clinical instability, or early differential diagnoses, all of which offer predictive signals not present in numeric variables.

Crucially, to enable this comparative analysis evaluating the impact of text features, the patient cohort included in the modeling was necessarily limited to those individuals possessing available and processable clinical notes within the NOTEEVENTS dataset. Comorbidities are implicitly captured within both the quantitative variables (e.g., lab results reflecting organ function) and the clinical notes from which the topics were derived. This also implies that the inclusion of text-based features may reduce noise introduced by incomplete structured data, as clinical notes frequently summarize underlying chronic conditions that may not be fully captured in early laboratory measurements.

For model training and evaluation, the dataset was divided into 80% training data and 20% testing data to ensure robust performance assessment. A series of statistical analyses were conducted to examine the impact of integrating structured EHR data with textual features on ICU mortality prediction. The evaluation framework incorporated five key performance metrics: AUROC, accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score, providing a comprehensive assessment of predictive capability and model robustness. Table V presents a summary of the model's predictive performance across different time intervals, demonstrating its effectiveness in capturing patient mortality risk over various post-admission periods. Using multiple performance metrics is essential because ICU mortality prediction involves imbalanced outcomes where AUROC alone may not fully reflect the model's clinical utility. Precision and recall help reflect how well the model identifies high-risk individuals while avoiding false alarms, which is crucial for ICU resource allocation. The consistent improvements across several metrics further indicate that textual features enhance not only discrimination but also the stability and reliability of the predictive models across different classifiers.

TABLE V. PERFORMANCE OF THE MODELS

		AdaBoost	Gradient Boosting	SVC	Bagging	Logistic Regression	MLP Classifier
Without BERTopic Data	2-Days	0.8852 ± 0.0041	0.8823 ± 0.0048	0.8997 ± 0.0112	0.8851 ± 0.0142	0.8955 ± 0.0152	0.8457 ± 0.0304
	3-Days	0.8153 ± 0.0157	0.8129 ± 0.0214	0.8252 ± 0.0153	0.8113 ± 0.0179	0.8228 ± 0.0135	0.7998 ± 0.0063
	1-Month	0.7834 ± 0.0038	0.785 ± 0.0057	0.7715 ± 0.0095	0.782 ± 0.0088	0.769 ± 0.0081	0.7801 ± 0.007
	1-Year	0.7862 ± 0.0039	0.7859 ± 0.0025	0.7711 ± 0.0053	0.7832 ± 0.0065	0.7667 ± 0.0033	0.7768 ± 0.007
With BERTopic Data	2-Days	0.901 ± 0.0167	0.8995 ± 0.013	0.9137 ± 0.0054	0.9038 ± 0.0113	0.9097 ± 0.0049	0.8487 ± 0.0199
	3-Days	0.8332 ± 0.0097	0.8314 ± 0.0057	0.8422 ± 0.0089	0.8372 ± 0.0065	0.846 ± 0.0076	0.8063 ± 0.0136
	1-Month	0.7927 ± 0.0003	0.7935 ± 0.0022	0.7705 ± 0.0032	0.7822 ± 0.0071	0.7682 ± 0.0002	0.7957 ± 0.0047
	1-Year	0.7874 ± 0.005	0.7909 ± 0.003	0.7697 ± 0.0082	0.7799 ± 0.0074	0.7652 ± 0.0069	0.7845 ± 0.0012

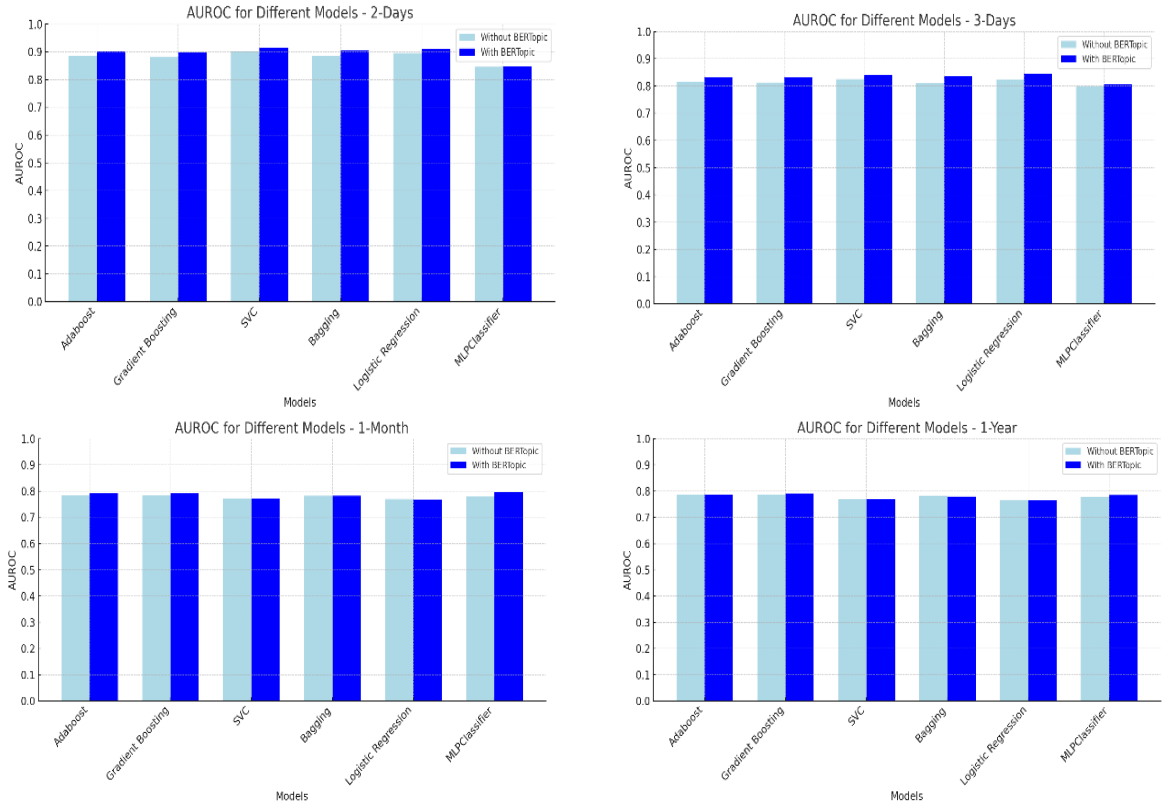

Fig. 3. Bar chart of machine learning model performance: With and without BERTopic data.

The study results demonstrate that AUROC is a vital metric for assessing a model's ability to differentiate between varying risk levels, particularly for identifying high-risk ICU patients who require timely intervention. Incorporating BERTopic data significantly improved the AUROC for all models in short-term predictions (2-day and 3-day). Notably, the AUROC of the SVC model increased from 0.8997 to 0.9137, highlighting the enhanced discriminatory power provided by BERTopic data for identifying high-risk patients. As depicted in Fig. 3, a comparison of machine learning model performance with and without BERTopic data underscores these improvements.

These findings suggest that early clinical notes capture subtle indicators of deterioration, such as mentions of respiratory distress, mental status fluctuation, or clinician concern that structured variables may not immediately reflect. The added predictive value in short-term outcomes highlights the importance of leveraging semi-structured data during the earliest stages of ICU care, when timely risk detection can meaningfully influence clinical decision-making and patient outcomes.

The overall AUROC for short-term predictions was higher than that for long-term predictions, suggesting that the models are more effective in distinguishing between high- and low-risk patients over shorter timeframes. However, for long-term predictions (1 month and 1 year), the impact of BERTopic data was less pronounced, with only minor improvements observed in model performance. For instance, the AUROC of the Gradient Boosting model increased slightly from 0.785 to 0.7935, indicating a modest enhancement. Fig. 4 illustrates AUROC curves under different experimental conditions, further corroborating these findings.

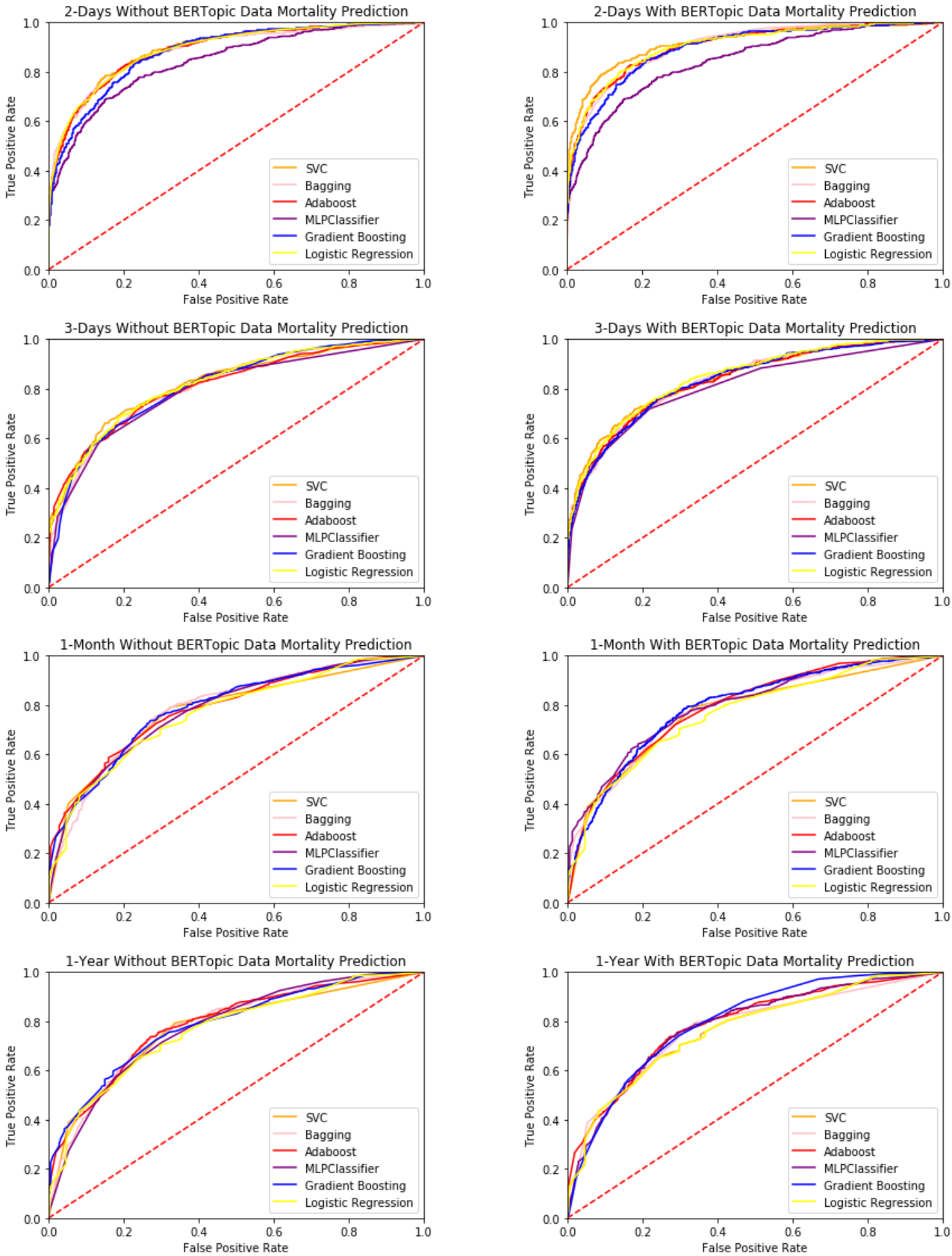

Fig. 4. AUROC curves for different experimental conditions.

TABLE VI. COMPARISON OF MACHINE LEARNING MODEL PERFORMANCE: WITHOUT AND WITH BERTOPIC DATA

	Time Period	Metrics	AdaBoost	Gradient Boosting	SVC	Bagging	Logistic Regression	MLP Classifier
Without BERTopic Data	2-Days	Precision	0.1155 ± 0.0065	0.1257 ± 0.0055	0.0875 ± 0.0057	0.081 ± 0.0056	0.0865 ± 0.0052	0.0956 ± 0.0193
		Recall	0.8433 ± 0.0099	0.8295 ± 0.0099	0.9058 ± 0.0238	0.883 ± 0.0305	0.8977 ± 0.0339	0.7773 ± 0.0722
		F1	0.2032 ± 0.0102	0.2183 ± 0.0081	0.1596 ± 0.0099	0.1484 ± 0.0098	0.1578 ± 0.0092	0.1694 ± 0.0301
		Accuracy	0.9262 ± 0.0045	0.9339 ± 0.0009	0.8937 ± 0.0012	0.8871 ± 0.0019	0.8933 ± 0.0032	0.9126 ± 0.018
	3-Days	Precision	0.1354 ± 0.0105	0.1298 ± 0.0082	0.1092 ± 0.0045	0.1182 ± 0.0092	0.1011 ± 0.0031	0.1122 ± 0.0104
		Recall	0.7335 ± 0.0419	0.7335 ± 0.0497	0.7915 ± 0.0387	0.7447 ± 0.0465	0.8011 ± 0.0317	0.7278 ± 0.0337
		F1	0.2281 ± 0.0133	0.2202 ± 0.0112	0.1918 ± 0.0062	0.2037 ± 0.013	0.1795 ± 0.0047	0.194 ± 0.0144
		Accuracy	0.8935 ± 0.0099	0.8889 ± 0.0072	0.8574 ± 0.0073	0.8751 ± 0.0112	0.8436 ± 0.004	0.8687 ± 0.0225
	1-Month	Precision	0.2729 ± 0.0031	0.2689 ± 0.0068	0.247 ± 0.0023	0.2583 ± 0.01	0.2402 ± 0.0032	0.233 ± 0.0067
		Recall	0.7441 ± 0.0087	0.7532 ± 0.0083	0.7466 ± 0.0252	0.7592 ± 0.016	0.7501 ± 0.0222	0.7941 ± 0.0133
		F1	0.3994 ± 0.0045	0.3963 ± 0.0086	0.3712 ± 0.0055	0.3853 ± 0.0126	0.3639 ± 0.0056	0.3602 ± 0.009
		Accuracy	0.8163 ± 0.0031	0.8115 ± 0.0037	0.7925 ± 0.0038	0.8011 ± 0.0052	0.7847 ± 0.0038	0.7684 ± 0.0035
	1-Year	Precision	0.2778 ± 0.0108	0.2761 ± 0.0121	0.2554 ± 0.012	0.2618 ± 0.0135	0.2446 ± 0.0133	0.247 ± 0.0415
		Recall	0.7579 ± 0.0122	0.7595 ± 0.0141	0.7474 ± 0.0158	0.7711 ± 0.0145	0.7524 ± 0.0076	0.789 ± 0.0571
		F1	0.4063 ± 0.01	0.4047 ± 0.0113	0.3805 ± 0.0133	0.3908 ± 0.0161	0.369 ± 0.0155	0.3727 ± 0.0411
		Accuracy	0.8096 ± 0.0041	0.8078 ± 0.0083	0.7908 ± 0.0038	0.7932 ± 0.0023	0.7786 ± 0.0049	0.7666 ± 0.0467
With BERTopic Data	2-Days	Precision	0.1199 ± 0.0046	0.1399 ± 0.0046	0.085 ± 0.0043	0.0833 ± 0.0062	0.0867 ± 0.0037	0.1007 ± 0.0149
		Recall	0.8727 ± 0.0323	0.8571 ± 0.0268	0.9391 ± 0.0144	0.9196 ± 0.0284	0.9272 ± 0.0144	0.7752 ± 0.0475
		F1	0.2107 ± 0.0072	0.2404 ± 0.0061	0.1558 ± 0.0072	0.1527 ± 0.0105	0.1586 ± 0.0064	0.1776 ± 0.0228
		Accuracy	0.9287 ± 0.0014	0.9409 ± 0.0017	0.8888 ± 0.0036	0.8883 ± 0.0061	0.8925 ± 0.0044	0.9206 ± 0.0102
	3-Days	Precision	0.1426 ± 0.0068	0.1439 ± 0.0042	0.1127 ± 0.0044	0.1238 ± 0.0069	0.1078 ± 0.0047	0.114 ± 0.015
		Recall	0.7716 ± 0.0185	0.7662 ± 0.0108	0.833 ± 0.0198	0.8034 ± 0.0109	0.8518 ± 0.0158	0.7479 ± 0.0555
		F1	0.2407 ± 0.0106	0.2423 ± 0.0064	0.1986 ± 0.0074	0.2144 ± 0.0107	0.1914 ± 0.0077	0.1969 ± 0.0202
		Accuracy	0.8921 ± 0.0015	0.8938 ± 0.0035	0.8511 ± 0.0016	0.8694 ± 0.0039	0.8405 ± 0.0014	0.862 ± 0.0267
	1-Month	Precision	0.2799 ± 0.0088	0.2789 ± 0.0098	0.2488 ± 0.0023	0.2568 ± 0.0005	0.2384 ± 0.0044	0.2894 ± 0.0079
		Recall	0.7613 ± 0.0038	0.7646 ± 0.0103	0.7423 ± 0.0032	0.7626 ± 0.0109	0.7522 ± 0.0039	0.7595 ± 0.0169
		F1	0.4092 ± 0.0092	0.4086 ± 0.0092	0.3726 ± 0.0021	0.3842 ± 0.0011	0.362 ± 0.0053	0.4189 ± 0.0066
		Accuracy	0.8188 ± 0.0035	0.8176 ± 0.005	0.794 ± 0.0052	0.7985 ± 0.0042	0.7816 ± 0.0034	0.826 ± 0.0127
	1-Year	Precision	0.2886 ± 0.0005	0.2891 ± 0.0027	0.2603 ± 0.0077	0.2683 ± 0.0084	0.2475 ± 0.0061	0.2781 ± 0.0051
		Recall	0.7536 ± 0.0155	0.7622 ± 0.0084	0.7427 ± 0.0192	0.7594 ± 0.01	0.7498 ± 0.0161	0.7585 ± 0.0076
		F1	0.4173 ± 0.0019	0.4192 ± 0.0032	0.3855 ± 0.0102	0.3964 ± 0.0105	0.3722 ± 0.0086	0.407 ± 0.0046
		Accuracy	0.8152 ± 0.0049	0.8145 ± 0.0052	0.7921 ± 0.0042	0.7969 ± 0.0059	0.7779 ± 0.003	0.8059 ± 0.0043

These results emphasize the potential of integrating numerical and text-based data to significantly enhance short-term prediction accuracy, particularly for early risk assessment in ICU patients. This insight is invaluable for healthcare professionals in optimizing resource allocation and intervention strategies. However, the limited improvement in long-term predictions indicates challenges in differentiating risk levels over extended periods. Future research should focus on incorporating additional data sources or exploring novel techniques to enhance long-term prediction performance.

In this study, alongside AUROC, which measures the model's ability to discriminate between classes, we evaluated its practical applicability using four additional performance metrics: Accuracy, Recall, Precision, and F1-score. Collectively, these metrics deliver a comprehensive assessment of the models' predictive performance, encompassing both overall accuracy and their effectiveness in precisely identifying high-risk patients. As shown in Table VI, the incorporation of BERTopic data led to significant improvements in model performance, particularly in short-term predictions (2-day and 3-day). For example, the Accuracy of the Gradient Boosting model for 2-day predictions increased from 0.9339 to 0.9409, highlighting the positive impact of integrating text data. Across all models, Accuracy was generally higher for short-term predictions compared to long-term ones, reflecting the models' greater precision in shorter timeframes.

Based on the data in Table VI, the Recall metric highlights the models' ability to correctly identify actual positive cases, such as ICU patient mortality. In healthcare, particularly in critical care settings, Recall is crucial as it ensures the detection of all high-risk patients, allowing for timely interventions. The table shows that adding BERTopic data substantially increased Recall in short-term predictions. For example, the SVC model's Recall improved from 0.9058 to 0.9391 for 2-day predictions, while Bagging's Recall rose from 0.883 to 0.9196. However, the improvements were less pronounced for longer timeframes, with relatively stable performance for 1-month and 1-year predictions. This suggests that while BERTopic data significantly enhances short-term predictive performance, its impact on long-term predictions is more limited.

C. Analysis of Variable Importance

A key advantage of the Gradient Boosting (GB) method is its capability to assess the relative contribution of input variables in predictive modeling. This is achieved through the computation of variable importance scores, which rank features based on their influence on model performance. These scores indicate how significantly each variable impacts decision-making within the model, with higher importance assigned to variables frequently utilized in decision tree splits.

In Gradient Boosting, the importance of a variable is determined by evaluating the increase in the decision tree's value at a given split point, adjusted by the number of samples at that node. Several established metrics, including the Gini index, cross-entropy, and information gain, can be used to measure decision tree value changes. This study employed the Gini index to quantify variable significance, ensuring a consistent and interpretable ranking approach. For a comprehensive discussion on variable importance calculations in GB models, readers may refer to Hastie et al. [51]. Table VII presents the importance scores derived from the optimal Gradient Boosting model, which was trained using ICU patient data collected within the first 24 hours post-admission.

Table VII highlights the key variables selected for predicting both short-term and long-term mortality in ICU patients using the GB method. The analysis reveals that different variables contribute uniquely to mortality prediction across various timeframes (2 days, 3 days, 1 month, and 1 year). For short-term mortality (2 and 3 days), the Glasgow Coma Scale (X10) consistently emerges as the most significant variable, underscoring its critical role in assessing patient consciousness and predicting immediate outcomes in ICU settings. Other important indicators for short-term predictions include White Blood Cell Count (X6) and Heart Rate (X2), which are essential for evaluating acute physiological conditions, including infections and potential cardiac issues. In contrast, long-term mortality predictions (1 month and 1 year) are dominated by heart-related factors such as Heart Rate (X2) and Systolic Blood Pressure (X3), reflecting the sustained impact of cardiovascular health on patient outcomes over extended periods. Additionally, age (X1) and temperature (X4) gain prominence in long-term predictions, as chronic health conditions and the regulation of body temperature become increasingly relevant to survival.

The integration of topic modeling data (such as Topic 1 and Topic 0) into the variable importance rankings underscores the importance of textual clinical notes in enhancing model performance, particularly for predicting long-term mortality. These topics encompass critical health domains such as cardiovascular health (Topic 0), head trauma (Topic 1), and abdominal and pancreatic disorders (Topic 2). The emergence of these text-derived topics as important predictors, particularly demonstrating notable influence in long-term mortality predictions (as seen for Topic 0 and Topic 1 in Table VII), underscores their value in capturing complex patient narratives and underlying conditions that evolve beyond immediate physiological measurements. The GB method's variable importance analysis underscores the relevance of immediate physiological indicators like GCS and WBC in short-term predictions, while long-term mortality is influenced by a combination of age, cardiovascular health, and text-based clinical information. This analysis provides valuable insights into ICU patient care, allowing healthcare professionals to focus on the most critical variables for improving predictive accuracy across different time horizons.

TABLE VII. TEN VARIABLES IDENTIFIED FROM 24-HOUR DATASETS

	Order of Variable Importance	Short-Term Mortality		Long-Term Mortality	
		2 Days	*3 Days*	*1 month*	*1 year*
Without BERTopic Data	1	X10	X10	X2	X2
	2	X6	X6	X6	X6
	3	X2	X2	X10	X4
	4	X4	X1	X5	X9
	5	X1	X3	X3	X10
	6	X5	X9	X4	X1
	7	X3	X4	X7	X5
	8	X8	X8	X1	X3
	9	X7	X5	X9	X7
	10	X9	X7	X8	X8
With BERTopic Data	1	X10	X10	X10	X10
	2	X6	X1	X2	X4
	3	X1	X2	X4	X6
	4	X4	X4	X1	X2
	5	X3	X6	X6	X1
	6	X2	TOPIC 1	X5	X9
	7	TOPIC 1	TOPIC 2	X3	X5
	8	TOPIC 0	X9	TOPIC 1	X3
	9	X8	X7	TOPIC 0	TOPIC 1
	10	X9	X3	X8	X8

IV. DISCUSSION

A. Principal Findings

This study illustrates the transformative potential of combining text mining techniques, such as BERTopic, with machine learning models to predict ICU patient outcomes. The key findings of the research are as follows.

1) Enhanced short-term predictions with BERTopic integration: Incorporating BERTopic data into machine learning models significantly improved short-term mortality predictions (2-day and 3-day). For example, the AUROC of the SVC model increased from 0.8997 to 0.9137, indicating an enhanced ability to discriminate between high- and low-risk patients. This enhancement stems from BERTopic's ability to capture rich contextual information embedded within clinical notes, such as clinician assessments of severity, nuanced descriptions of patient status, and evolving treatment plans, which often provide complementary insights beyond structured physiological data. This is particularly crucial for short-term outcomes where acute changes documented in free text are highly indicative of immediate risk.

2) Superior predictive performance in short-term predictions compared to long-term: Across all models, short-term predictions consistently outperformed long-term predictions (1-month and 1-year) in metrics such as AUROC, accuracy, recall, and F1-score. The reduced predictive accuracy over longer timeframes suggests that while models effectively identify immediate risks, long-term mortality predictions require additional variables or more refined methodologies to enhance performance [52].

3) Significance of physiological variables in predictive models: Analysis of variable importance using the Gradient Boosting method revealed that physiological variables, such as the Glasgow Coma Scale, White Blood Cell Count, Heart Rate, and Temperature, are essential predictors of both short-term and long-term ICU patient mortality [53]. The critical role of these variables underscores the necessity of closely monitoring vital signs in critical care environments.

4) Improved mortality prediction through text data integration: Incorporating topic modeling data derived from clinical notes, such as those related to cardiovascular health and head trauma, significantly enhanced mortality predictions [54].

This finding demonstrates the value of leveraging semi-structured and unstructured data through text mining. By converting free text into quantifiable topic features, our approach unlocked clinical insights related to complex patient conditions and care trajectories, often overlooked by traditional models relying solely on numerical data [55].

By integrating text mining and machine learning, this approach provides a deeper understanding of patient conditions, enhancing predictive accuracy and supporting more effective clinical decision-making. Leveraging both structured and unstructured data improves the ability to capture critical insights, facilitating personalized care and timely interventions in the complex environment of critical care settings. These improvements directly contribute to resilient healthcare by strengthening early risk recognition and enabling more adaptive and timely responses in critical care settings.

B. Limitations

Despite the encouraging findings, this study has several limitations that must be acknowledged. While the MIMIC-III database is comprehensive, it originates from a single healthcare system, which may limit the generalizability of the developed models. Recalibration may be necessary when applying these models to different ICU settings, where variations in patient populations, clinical practices, and treatment protocols can influence model performance in real-world applications [56]. Differences in patient demographics and resource availability further highlight the need for external validation. Furthermore, the exclusion criteria based on missing data percentages (>30% for patient records, >40% for predictors) might introduce selection bias. A formal analysis comparing the characteristics of the excluded patient population with the included cohort was not performed in this study and represents a limitation.

Moreover, direct numerical comparison of performance metrics (e.g., AUROC, Accuracy) with previously published studies, including those also utilizing MIMIC-III, is often challenging and potentially misleading. This difficulty arises from inherent variations in specific patient cohort selection criteria (especially regarding text availability), the precise feature sets utilized, differing text processing techniques (e.g., alternative NLP models or embeddings), distinct prediction target definitions, and varying evaluation protocols across research efforts. Additionally, although the incorporation of text data improved model accuracy, this study analyzed only a subset of the textual information available in the MIMIC-III database. Key clinical data, such as imaging reports, physician progress notes, and detailed medication histories, were not included in the analysis. Expanding the scope of semi-structured data could enhance the predictive accuracy of models, particularly for long-term mortality predictions.

While short-term mortality predictions showed substantial improvements, the performance gains for long-term predictions (1-month and 1-year) were comparatively modest. Long-term outcomes are inherently complex and likely require the inclusion of additional variables, such as clinical, social, and environmental factors, to enhance predictive accuracy [57, 58]. Furthermore, long-term trajectories are influenced by factors extending beyond the initial 24-hour ICU data and clinical notes, such as progression of chronic conditions, intercurrent events, post-discharge care, and socioeconomic factors not fully captured in MIMIC-III. The predictive signal from initial text data may also diminish over extended periods. These findings underscore the necessity of investigating additional long-term predictors to improve modeling in critical care contexts.

The integration of advanced text mining techniques, such as BERTopic, with machine learning models introduces significant computational challenges. Extracting topics from clinical notes and incorporating them into predictive models requires substantial processing power, which may hinder the real-time application of these methods in clinical settings. While cross-validation was employed to reduce the risk of overfitting, concerns remain about the models' ability to generalize to new patient populations, particularly due to the high dimensionality of text data. Future research should focus on enhancing generalizability by validating these models on larger and more diverse datasets (e.g., multi-center data like MIMIC-IV or eICU), as well as employing advanced regularization strategies or transfer learning techniques. Overcoming these challenges will be essential for developing predictive models that are both accurate and robust, enabling their effective deployment in critical care environments [59].

V. Conclusion

This study investigated the integration of advanced text mining techniques, specifically the BERTopic model, with machine learning algorithms to enhance the prediction of ICU patient outcomes. By leveraging semi-structured data from clinical notes alongside structured numerical data, the research demonstrated that combining these data types significantly improves the accuracy and robustness of predictive models, especially for short-term mortality prediction. These findings highlight several key conclusions:

The incorporation of BERTopic data significantly enhanced short-term mortality prediction, particularly for 2-day and 3-day outcomes. By integrating semi-structured clinical notes into machine learning models, the study achieved improved AUROC and accuracy scores, underscoring the critical role of text data in early ICU care. Often underutilized in predictive modeling, semi-structured data provided essential clinical context that improved the models' ability to identify high-risk patients, enabling more timely and effective interventions [60]. This contextual information, capturing clinical reasoning and nuances absent in structured data, served as a valuable complement to traditional predictors. Additionally, physiological variables such as the Glasgow Coma Scale, White Blood Cell Count, and Heart Rate were identified as crucial predictors for both short-term and long-term mortality. These findings emphasize the importance of continuous monitoring of these indicators to improve outcomes for ill patients. Although the predictive improvements for long-term mortality (1-month and 1-year) were relatively modest, the integration of text-based clinical insights through topic modeling provided valuable contributions to understanding patient conditions over extended periods. These findings highlight the potential of natural language processing techniques, such as BERTopic, to augment structured data and improve long-term predictive accuracy.

This study also underscores the broader applications of AI and big data in clinical decision-making and resource allocation, offering healthcare providers advanced tools to enhance patient outcomes and optimize ICU resource management [61]. By improving early risk recognition and supporting more adaptive clinical responses, these AI-driven predictive frameworks contribute directly to resilient healthcare in ICU environments. Looking ahead, future research should prioritize larger datasets, cross-institutional validation, and the incorporation of additional clinical variables and potentially longitudinal or richer textual sources (e.g., full progress notes and radiology reports) to further refine and generalize predictive models for ICU patient outcomes [62]. The integration of structured numerical data and semi-structured text, processed using advanced text mining techniques such as BERTopic, represents a promising avenue for improving ICU outcome prediction and strengthening data-driven clinical practice. As multimodal AI continues to evolve, its capacity to strengthen resilience in critical care systems through earlier detection, more precise triage, and timely intervention will become increasingly central to improving patient outcomes.

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APPENDIX A

TABLE VIII. SELECTED QUANTITATIVE PREDICTORS WITH CORRESPONDING INFORMATION GAIN

Variable	Feature	Item Name	Information Gain	Item ID	Table
X1	Age	Age	0.1555		Admissions
X2	Heart Rate	Heart Rate	0.3602	211 220045	Chartevents
X3	Systolic Blood Pressure	Noninvasive Systolic Blood Pressure	0.2702	455 220179	Chartevents
X4	Temperature	Temperature Fahrenheit Temperature Celsius	0.4681	678 223761 676 223762	Chartevents
X5	Blood Urea Nitrogen	Blood Urea Nitrogen	0.2172	51006	Labevents
X6	White Blood Cells Court	White Blood Cells	0.4725	51301 51300	Labevents
X7	Potassium Level	Potassium	0.2287	50971 50822	Labevents
X8	Sodium Level	Sodium	0.2486	50983	Labevents
X9	Serum Bicarbonate Level	Bicarbonate	0.0954	50882	Labevents
X10	Glasgow Coma Scale	GCS Verbal Verbal Response GCS Motor Motor Response GCS Eyes Eye Opening	0.4340	223900 723 223901 454 220739 184	Chartevents
X11	Gender	Gender	0.0104		Admissions
X12	Admission Type	Admission Type	0.0184		Admissions

Improved Sparrow Search Algorithm-Based Recurrent Neural Network for Short-Term Generation Load Forecasting of Hydropower Stations

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***Abstract*—To address the challenges of low accuracy and high randomness in short-term hydroelectric load forecasting within Multi-energy Coupled Virtual Power Plants (MC-VPPs), this study proposes a hybrid model integrating Variational Mode Decomposition (VMD), Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) networks, and an Improved Sparrow Search Algorithm (ISSA). Traditional methods, such as exponential smoothing and multiple linear regression, often fail to capture nonlinear dynamics and external disturbances. The proposed framework first decomposes raw load data into four intrinsic mode functions (IMFs) via VMD to extract multi-scale features, including long-term trends, seasonal cycles, and short-term fluctuations. LSTM networks are then applied to model the temporal dependencies of each IMF. To enhance optimization, ISSA introduces a bidirectional sine-cosine search strategy, balancing global exploration and local exploitation to avoid premature convergence. Validated on 1,247 daily load records from a hydropower station in southwestern China, the ISSA-VMD-LSTM model achieves a 30.2% improvement in R^2, with reductions of 47.2% in RMSE, 47.8% in MAE, and 63.3% in MAPE, outperforming benchmarks like PSO-LSTM and SSA-VMD-LSTM. This demonstrates its robustness in handling nonlinearity and stochasticity. The model enhances MC-VPPs' operational efficiency by enabling intelligent scheduling and renewable energy integration, with future applications extending to real-time forecasting and other renewable energy systems.**

Keywords*—Power plant; load forecasting; Mode Decomposition; Long Short-Term Memory; Sparrow Search Algorithm

I. Introduction

The Multi-energy Coupled Virtual Power Plant [1]-[4] plays an essential role in optimizing short-term load forecasting for hydroelectric power. It exemplifies the deepening integration of Energy Internet technology. By incorporating Long Short-Term Memory networks, MC-VPP significantly improves the accuracy of predicting power output from hydropower stations and load demand. This algorithmic ensemble not only captures the time-series characteristics of electricity loads but also effectively addresses the nonlinear impacts of hydro-meteorological factors, providing more accurate and reliable forecast results. As a core component of intelligent scheduling and optimized operation within MC-VPPs, short-term load forecasting for hydroelectric power offers robust technical support to mitigate the intermittency and uncertainty associated with renewable energy. It enhances the flexibility and efficiency of power systems and introduces new methods for managing distributed energy resources with complex and diverse characteristics. This is significant for promoting the widespread adoption of clean energy and fostering the healthy development of power markets.

Current research on short-term load forecasting for hydroelectric power has widely applied methods such as Exponential Smoothing, Combined Forecasting, and Grey Prediction [5]-[8]. However, these approaches are data-dependent and constrained by underlying assumptions. As the aggregated resources within MC-VPPs expand, short-term hydroelectric load trends become increasingly complex. Techniques based on Multiple Linear Regression Models [9]-[12] have gained prominence due to their computational efficiency and clear representation of relationships between independent and dependent variables. Nevertheless, these models assume a linear relationship between variables and are sensitive to outliers, making it challenging to directly address the dynamic characteristics [13] of time series and the influence of external events. When using multiple linear regression for load forecasting, it is necessary to combine other techniques to overcome these limitations. Exponential Smoothing assigns different weights to historical data, allowing predictions to quickly adapt to recent changes. This method is suitable for relatively stable load patterns but struggles with capturing long-term dependencies and complex nonlinear patterns, leading to a significant decrease in prediction accuracy during extreme weather conditions. In contrast, Combined Forecasting integrates several prediction models to leverage each one's strengths, improving the accuracy and robustness of forecasts. This method addresses the complexity and nonlinearity of hydroelectric load data [14-17], but its construction is complex, requiring the establishment of sub-models and the determination of weights, which increases computational costs and model tuning challenges.

The models used for optimizing short-term load forecasting in hydroelectric power all face issues like strict applicability conditions or an inability to handle complex nonlinear relationships, limiting their responsiveness to real-world forecasting scenarios. In [18], the authors addressed the low prediction accuracy and poor stability of LSTM neural networks by proposing a short-term power load forecasting

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model optimized using a multi-strategy improved Golden Jackal Algorithm [19]-[20]. This approach effectively enhances the training efficiency and performance of LSTM [21]-[24] models, avoiding overfitting risks and achieving higher prediction accuracy and stability compared to traditional LSTM models.

In summary, existing studies on short-term load forecasting for hydroelectric power have been impacted by limited usage conditions and the inability to resolve complex relationships, affecting prediction accuracy. To enhance this, we propose a hybrid forecasting method based on Variational Mode Decomposition, an improved Sparrow Search Algorithm [25]-[27], and Long Short-Term Memory networks. The proposed method begins by adaptively decomposing the original load data into multiple intrinsic mode functions using Variational Mode Decomposition. This process isolates distinct temporal features such as long-term trends, seasonal cycles, and short-term fluctuations, effectively mitigating mode mixing and enhancing adaptability to nonlinear time-series data. Next, each IMF is modeled using Long Short-Term Memory networks, which leverage their gated mechanisms to capture complex temporal dependencies and address the vanishing gradient problem inherent in traditional recurrent neural networks. To optimize model performance, an Improved Sparrow Search Algorithm is employed to fine-tune LSTM hyperparameters. This enhanced algorithm incorporates a bidirectional sine-cosine search strategy to balance global exploration and local exploitation, thereby avoiding premature convergence. The decomposition capability of VMD enables LSTM to focus on features at specific time scales, while ISSA further refines parameter adaptability. Together, these components form a cohesive framework of "decomposition-modeling-optimization", significantly enhancing prediction accuracy and stability. This approach effectively addresses the challenges of modeling nonlinearity, stochasticity, and multi-scale characteristics in multi-energy coupled environments.

The key contributions of this study are as follows:

- Combines Variational Mode Decomposition, Long Short-Term Memory networks, and an Improved Sparrow Search Algorithm, significantly enhancing the accuracy and stability of short-term hydroelectric load forecasting.
- Introduces a bidirectional sine-cosine search strategy and a Good Lattice Points-based initialization strategy to strengthen global exploration, avoid premature convergence, and optimize LSTM hyperparameters.
- Decomposes raw load data into intrinsic mode functions to isolate long-term trends, seasonal cycles, and short-term fluctuations, improving the model's adaptability to complex nonlinear time-series data.
- Validated using real hydropower station data, the model achieves improvements of 30.2% in R^2, 47.2% in RMSE, 47.8% in MAE, and 63.3% in MAPE, outperforming benchmarks such as PSO-LSTM [28]-[29] and SSA-VMD-LSTM [30].
- Supports intelligent scheduling and multi-energy coordination in MC-VPPs, enhancing flexibility for renewable energy integration and grid efficiency.

II. Hydroelectric Time Series Prediction Model

A. Working Principle of the Variational Mode Decomposition Algorithm

To deeply investigate short-term load forecasting for hydroelectric power in a multi-energy coupled virtual power plant environment, it is essential to employ the Variational Mode Decomposition algorithm to decompose the raw data into multiple intrinsic mode functions with distinct central frequencies and limited bandwidths, thereby achieving modal separation of the data. The core principle of VMD lies in its adaptive signal decomposition framework that concurrently optimizes multiple intrinsic mode functions through a variational approach, effectively balancing modal bandwidth constraints and reconstruction accuracy. By constructing a constrained variational problem, VMD iteratively extracts compact IMFs with specific sparsity properties in the frequency domain, where each mode is designed to concentrate around a central frequency while maintaining minimal bandwidth. This process continuously updates the mode and center frequency until convergence, ensuring that the decomposed components exhibit orthogonality in both the time and frequency domains. The resulting IMFs demonstrate distinct spectral separation characteristics, enabling the isolation of underlying patterns such as seasonal variations, random fluctuations, and operational trends from the original hydropower load data. This decomposition mechanism significantly enhances subsequent forecasting models by mitigating mode mixing issues inherent in traditional signal processing methods, while preserving critical temporal

$$\min_{\{u_k\},\{w_k\}} \left\{ \sum_k^K \left\| \partial_t \left[\left(\delta(t) + \frac{j}{\pi t} \right) * u_k(t) \right] e^{-jw_k t} \right\|_2^2 \right\} \quad (1)$$

dependencies essential for accurate predictions in virtual power plant environments characterized by strong multi-energy coupling effects.

The variational problem model of this method is subject to the following constraints:

$$s.t. \sum_k^K u_k(t) = x(t) \quad (2)$$

In the formula, $u_k = \{u_1, u_2, \cdots, u_k\}$ represents the intrinsic mode function, $w_k = \{w_1, w_2, \cdots, w_k\}$ represents the central frequency; $\delta(t)$ is the Dirac delta function, which is used in the computation of the Hilbert transform; K determining the number of decomposed IMF components; ∂_t addressing gradient dizziness; $\left(\delta(t) + \frac{j}{\pi t} \right) * u_k(t)$ performing the Hilbert transform.

Redefine the Intrinsic Mode Function with a stricter finite bandwidth constraint (BIMF)

Defined as:

$$u_k(t) = A_k(t)\cos(\phi_k(t)) \quad (3)$$

The phase function $\phi_k(t)$ is non-monotonically decreasing, which means $\phi_k'(t) \geq 0$, and the amplitude $A_k(t) \geq 0$, with the instantaneous amplitude $A_k(t)$ and the instantaneous frequency $\omega_t(t) = \phi_k'(t) = \frac{d\phi_k(t)}{d_t}$ varying slowly relative to $\phi_k(t)$, within the interval $[t-\tau, t+\tau]$, where $\tau = \frac{2\pi}{\phi_k'(t)}, u_k(t)$ can be considered as a harmonic signal with an amplitude of $A_k(t)$ and a frequency of $\omega_t(t)$.

The expression for the Hilbert transform is the result of convolving the original signal with a specific kernel. After applying the Hilbert transform to the signal, the positive frequency components are multiplied by -j, which means that under the condition of maintaining the same amplitude, the phase is shifted by $-\frac{\pi}{2}$. For the negative frequency components, the phase is shifted by $\frac{\pi}{2}$.

Through spectral analysis, we validate the frequency separation characteristics of individual Intrinsic Mode Functions. Quantitative evaluation using statistical measures like sample entropy reveals distinct complexity patterns - lower entropy values indicate stable trend components while higher entropy corresponds to stochastic fluctuations. Temporal correlation analysis between IMFs and established physical mechanisms/external drivers enables identification of specific modal functions demonstrating significant associations with extreme weather events. The orthogonal validation further confirms the temporal-frequency independence among decomposed components, effectively preventing mode mixing. This rigorous decomposition process ensures both mathematical validity and physical interpretability, providing reliable inputs for subsequent LSTM modeling.

B. LSTM Model

LSTM is a variant of the Recurrent Neural Network (RNN) commonly used for handling tasks related to time series data. When training a typical neural network model, the computation is usually represented as $s = f(W^T X + b)$, where W represents the weights, X is the input, and b is the bias term. A common LSTM structure is shown in Fig. 1.

x_t represents the input data at each time step, h_t is the output at each time step, and the intermediate c_t is the long-term memory between cells.

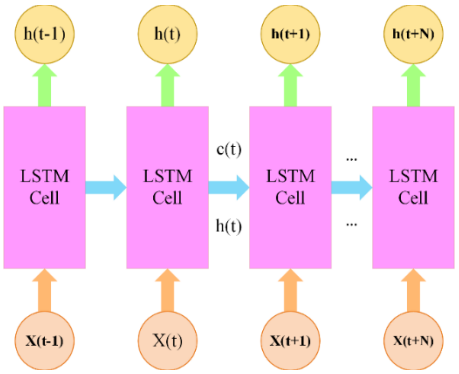

Fig. 1. LSTM structure diagram.

An LSTM includes a forget gate, an input gate, and an output gate. Each gate requires a computation similar to the one mentioned above, in addition to calculating the current state. Compared to the structure of an RNN, an LSTM cell is more complex, incorporating fully connected layers with activation functions in its gate structures. These gates output values between 0 and 1, indicating the degree to which feature information should be retained (0 means retain, 1 means discard). This gated structure enables LSTMs to maintain a stable gradient flow across extended time horizons while adaptively managing sequential information retention and suppression. The output of the forget gate is defined as f_t, the output of the input gate as i_t, the candidate value for memory update as $\bar{c}_t$, and the output of the output gate as o_t.

The forget gate f_t selects information from the previous cell state c_{t-1}:

$$f_t = \sigma(W_f \cdot [h_{t-1}, x_t] + b_f) \quad (4)$$

The input gate determines how much of the current network input x_t is to be saved in the cell state c_t:

$$i_t = \sigma(W_i \cdot [h_{t-1}, x_t] + b_i) \quad (5)$$

Input c_t:

$$\bar{c}_t = \tan h(W_c \cdot [h_{t-1}, x_t] + b_c) \quad (6)$$

The output gate controls how much of the cell state is output to the current LSTM output value h_t:

$$O_t = \sigma(W_0 \cdot [h_{t-1}, x_t] + b_0) \quad (7)$$

W_f, W_i, W_c, W_0 are weight matrices, and b_f, b_i, b_c, b_0 are bias terms. $[h_{t-1}, x_t]$ denotes the concatenation of the hidden

state h_{t-1} and the input state x_t along the horizontal axis. σ represents the sigmoid function, and tanh represents the hyperbolic tangent function.

The LSTM model updates its weights using the backpropagation algorithm to minimize prediction error. The backpropagation process for LSTM mainly includes the following steps:

1) Definition of the loss function: Define a loss function based on the task type (e.g., classification or regression). Common loss functions include cross-entropy for classification tasks and mean squared error for regression tasks. This function measures the prediction error of the model.

2) Backpropagation to compute gradients: Use the Backpropagation Through Time (BPTT) algorithm to propagate the error gradient backward from the last time step to the first. Each gate (forget gate, input gate, output gate) in the LSTM network participates in the error propagation, gradually computing the gradient for each parameter. BPTT is suitable for sequential data, and due to the gating structure of LSTM, the vanishing gradient problem is alleviated to some extent.

3) Gradient clipping: Due to the potential for gradient explosion in long sequences, gradient clipping techniques limit the size of the gradients, ensuring they do not exceed a certain threshold. This prevents overly large gradients from causing unstable training.

4) Weight update: LSTM uses gradient descent to update the weight matrices, optimizing the model parameters to reduce the value of the loss function.

In practical applications, an LSTM learn effective patterns in sequence data through backpropagation and gradient updates. This training process enables LSTM to achieve good performance on various sequence prediction tasks, particularly excelling in handling long-term dependencies. By decoupling memory retention from hidden state updates, LSTMs achieve superior performance in learning complex temporal dynamics compared to conventional RNNs, particularly when handling intermittently sampled or irregularly spaced time series data common in multi-energy virtual power plant environments.

C. Sparrow Search Algorithm

The Improved Sparrow Search Algorithm introduces two main upgrades to the traditional SSA. First, it adopts a Good Lattice Points strategy for population initialization, replacing random placement to ensure sparrow positions are evenly distributed across the search space. This adjustment accelerates convergence and reduces the likelihood of solutions becoming trapped in local optima due to uneven initialization. Second, ISSA incorporates a Bidirectional Sine-Cosine Search Strategy to update discoverer positions. By alternating between forward and reverse search phases, the algorithm maintains a balance between broad exploration and refined exploitation. The forward phase steers individuals toward current optimal solutions, while the reverse phase drives exploration into uncharted regions, effectively curbing premature convergence. Together, these enhancements strengthen the algorithm's ability to tackle complex nonlinear challenges in load forecasting, delivering higher optimization accuracy and adaptability.

The Traditional Sparrow Search Algorithm initializes the sparrow population using a random distribution method, which results in randomness in the population distribution and can easily lead to SSA getting trapped in local optima. To address this issue, this study introduces an initialization strategy based on good lattice points for optimizing the initial positions of the sparrows, thereby improving the convergence accuracy and speed of the algorithm. The principle behind this approach is as follows: In the D-dimensional Euclidean space G_D , where $r \in G_D$, the good lattice point set $P_n(k) = \left(\left\{r_1^{(n)} \cdot k\right\}, \left\{r_2^{(n)} \cdot k\right\}, \ldots, \left\{r_D^{(n)} \cdot k\right\}\right)$ for $1 \le k \le n$,the discrepancy is $\varphi(n) = C(r,\varepsilon) n^{-1+\varepsilon}$, where $C(r,\varepsilon)$ is a constant related to r and ε , $P_n(k)$ represents the set of good lattice points. Additionally, in this study, $r = 2cos\left(\frac{2k\pi}{p}\right), 1 \le k \le n$, where p is the smallest prime number satisfying $\frac{(p-3)}{2} \ge D$ .Therefore, the initialization strategy based on good lattice points can be expressed as follows:

$$x_i(k) = \left(up_j - lp_j\right) \cdot \{P_n(k)\} + lp_j \tag{7}$$

The SSA is prone to premature convergence during the position update process, which can result in solutions getting trapped in local optima rather than finding the global optimum. To address this issue, a bidirectional sine cosine search strategy has been introduced. This strategy enhances exploration by defining both forward and reverse searches, thereby expanding the local search methods. In the forward search, the current individual is guided toward the current optimal individual, emphasizing the swarm's ability to autonomously approach the global optimum as iterations progress. Conversely, the reverse search encourages the swarm to explore regions beyond the current optimal area, demonstrating a stronger selectivity for uncharted territories. The initialization strategy based on Good Lattice Points ensures that the initial population is uniformly distributed in the high-dimensional search space, mitigating the risk of region omission caused by random initialization. This global coverage characteristic, combined with dynamic search direction adjustments, significantly reduces the algorithm's sensitivity to local optima and enhances global optimization efficiency in complex nonlinear problems. The enhanced position update formula for the discoverer is defined as follows:

$$x_{i,j}^{t+1} = \begin{cases} x_{i,j}^t \cdot \left|\sin r_1\right| + r_2 \cdot \sin r_1 \cdot \left|x_1 \cdot x_{best}^t - x_2 \cdot x_{i,j}^t\right| \\ \qquad , R_2 < ST, R_1 \ge 0.5 \\ x_{i,j}^t \cdot \left|\cos r_3\right| - r_4 \cdot \cos r_1 \cdot \left|x_1 \cdot x_{best}^t - x_2 \cdot x_{i,j}^t\right| \\ \qquad , R_2 \ge ST, R_1 \ge 0.5 \\ x_{i,j}^t + Q \cdot L, \ldots R_2 \ge ST \end{cases} \tag{9}$$

In this algorithm, $x_{i,j}^{t}$ represents the position of the current generation sparrow, x_{best}^{t} while denotes the position of the best sparrow found so far at iteration t. $R_1, R_2 \in [0,1]$, where R_2 is the vigilance factor, and $ST \in [0.5,1]$ is the safety threshold. Q is a random number following a normal distribution, and L is a unit vector with $r_1, r_3 \in [0,2\pi]$ and $r_2, r_4 \in [0,\pi]$, which are used to determine the movement distance and search direction for the next generation of sparrows. The expressions $x_1 = -\pi + 2\pi(1-\tau)$ and $x_2 = -\pi + 2\pi$ define specific positions, where τ is the golden ratio coefficient. The optimization of the safety threshold (ST) and vigilance factor is grounded in multi-objective trade-offs and sensitivity analysis. The ST is determined through statistical analysis of historical experimental data, with its value balancing population convergence speed and escape capability: an excessively high ST would suppress the exploratory nature of reverse search, while an overly low ST may induce ineffective perturbations. The vigilance factor is configured based on problem dimensionality and solution space characteristics. Its dynamic range is adjusted through grid search and cross-validation to prioritize global exploration during early iterations and progressively strengthen local exploitation in later stages. The parameter optimization process integrates convergence validation and error sensitivity testing, ultimately yielding a parameter combination that ensures stable generalization capability across both training and validation sets.

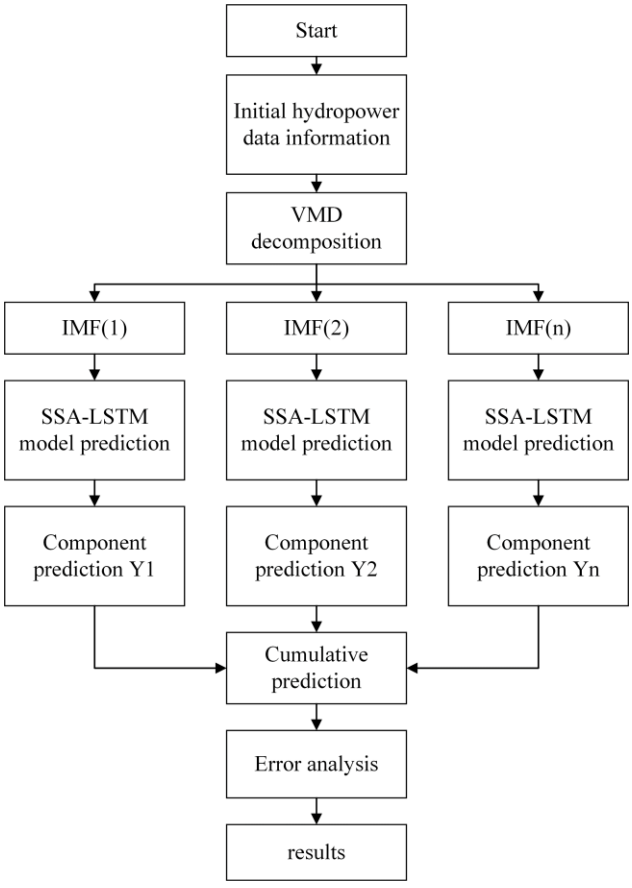

Fig. 2. Prediction process of the ISSA-VMD-LSTM model.

D. Short-Term Load Forecasting Framework for Hydropower

The forecasting framework proposed in this study aims to utilize historical hydropower data, achieving the goal of short-term load forecasting by conducting a comprehensive analysis of the correlations within these data. Fig. 2 illustrates the overall implementation flowchart of the hybrid forecasting model in load forecasting.

III. Case Study Analysis

A. Case Study Setup

The experiment was conducted on NVIDIA GeForce RTX 4060 Laptop GPU and implemented with Python 3.8. Data spanning from January 1, 2021, to May 1, 2024, was selected for analysis, with a sampling interval of one day. After integrating and screening the data, a comprehensive dataset consisting of 1,247 data points was obtained. To address noise and outliers in raw data, a sliding window technique integrated with the 3 principles is implemented for anomaly identification. Data points deviating beyond the mean ±3 standard deviations range are rectified using linear interpolation.

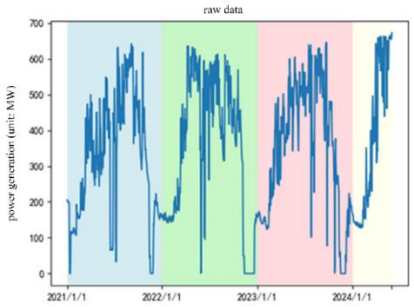

Fig. 3. Original hydropower load data.

Furthermore, consecutive data gaps resulting from equipment failures are systematically removed to ensure data integrity. Of these, 80% were allocated to the training set, while the remaining 20% were reserved for the test set to validate the final prediction outcomes of each model. In the VMD process, it is crucial to balance the number of decomposed modes to avoid excessive computational burden and time costs without compromising the signal's characteristic representation. Therefore, the number of modes, the K value, was set to 4. Additionally, the penalty factor α was configured to 2000, the frequency distribution initialization was set to 1, and the convergence tolerance was established at 1e-7. Fig. 3 illustrates the plot of the original data.

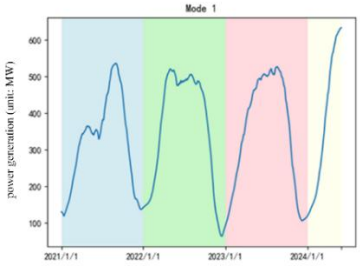

Fig. 4. Component of hydropower load decomposition of mode 1.

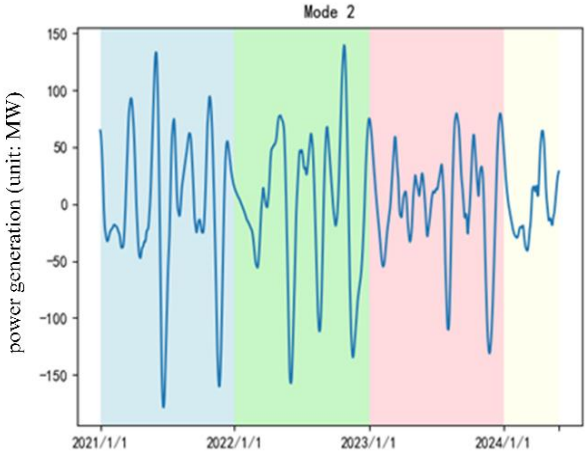

Fig. 5. Component of hydropower load decomposition of mode 2.

Fig. 4 represents the primary waveform trend, which shows an initial increase followed by a decrease in the hydropower load from 2021 to 2023. For the period from January to May 2024, the trend exhibits a growing pattern. Fig. 5 displays a more regular periodic variation, better reflecting the changes on a monthly and quarterly basis. The fluctuations in Fig. 6 are more intense, primarily capturing short-term variations. This mode reflects short-term demand changes or the impact of random events. The fluctuations in Fig. 7 are the most intense, capturing instantaneous changes.

B. Case Study Metrics Description

To comprehensively evaluate the performance of the proposed forecasting model, we utilize a combination of four metrics: Root Mean Square Error (RMSE), Mean Absolute Error (MAE), Mean Absolute Percentage Error (MAPE), and the Coefficient of Determination (R^2). RMSE calculates the square root of the average of the squared differences between the predicted and actual values, which makes it sensitive to larger errors and provides a measure of error magnitude. MAE measures the average of the absolute differences between predictions and actual observations, offering a robust estimate of overall error without heavily penalizing large discrepancies. MAPE expresses the average of the absolute percentage errors, making it suitable for comparing datasets of different scales, although caution is needed due to its instability when actual values are close to zero. Finally, R^2 reflects the proportion of the variance in the dependent variable that is predictable from the independent variables, indicating how well the model fits the data compared to a simple mean prediction. These metrics together provide a thorough assessment of the model's accuracy and reliability.

In the formulas, y_g denotes the actual value of the g-th observation, $\hat{y}_g$ denotes the predicted value of the g-th observation, and G represents the total number of observations.

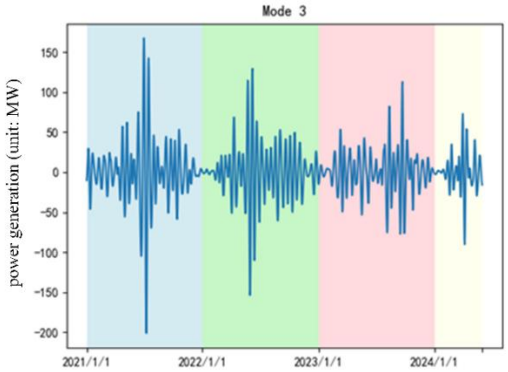

Fig. 6. Component of hydropower load decomposition of mode 3.

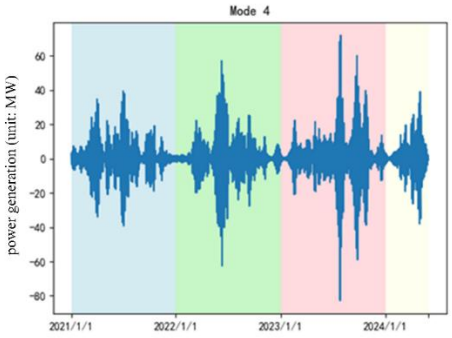

Fig. 7. Component of hydropower load decomposition of mode 4.

C. Result Analysis

Analysis of the data in Table I shows that the ISSA-VMD-LSTM algorithm outperforms all other algorithms across all evaluation metrics, achieving the highest R^2 and the lowest RMSE, MAE, and MAPE. This indicates that the ISSA-VMD-LSTM algorithm, as mentioned in this study, exhibits superior prediction performance with greater accuracy and stability compared to other algorithms.

TABLE I. PERFORMANCE COMPARISON OF DIFFERENT ALGORITHMS

Algorithm	R2	RMSE	MAE	MAPE	Time Complexity
LSTM	0.652	0.235	0.201	0.049	O(T*N2)
PSO-LSTM	0.752	0.215	0.183	0.042	O(P*I*T*N2)
PSO-VMD-LSTM	0.851	0.176	0.133	0.031	O(K*N2+P*I*T*N2)
SSA-VMD-LSTM	0.802	0.183	0.142	0.035	O(K*N2+S*I*T*N2)
ISSA-VMD-LSTM	0.934	0.124	0.105	0.018	O(K*N2+S*I*T*N2+C)

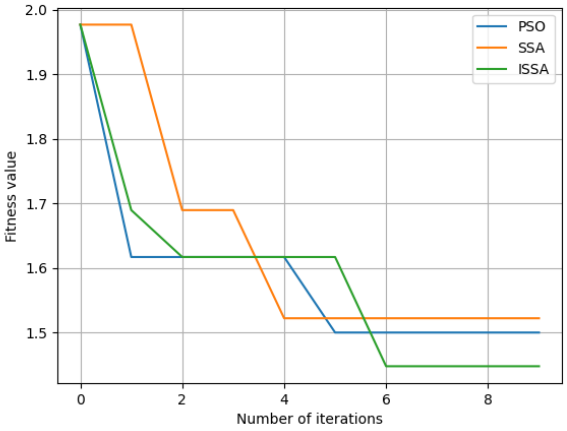

Fig. 8. Fitness curve of algorithms.

Table II lists the optimal parameters for each mode.

TABLE II. OPTIMAL PARAMETERS FOR MODES

Number of Modes	epochs	batch size	LSTM 1 of layer neurons	LSTM 2 layer of neurons	Dense Layer of neurons	learning rate	Number of Modes
IMF1	47	22	54	53	43	0.0021	IMF1
IMF2	20	12	46	67	87	0.0060	IMF2
IMF3	46	43	65	84	47	0.0050	IMF3
IMF4	14	56	77	63	79	0.0055	IMF4

Comparing the individual algorithms, as shown in Fig. 8, it can be observed that the ISSA achieves the lowest final fitness value, indicating its superior optimization performance. In contrast, PSO has a relatively higher final fitness value, while SSA exhibits the highest final fitness value. Additionally, we note that ISSA converges at the fastest rate. Although PSO and SSA also exhibit rapid convergence in the early stages, their final fitness values are higher, suggesting that their optimization effectiveness is not as good as that of ISSA. The optimization process involves tuning a total of 24 parameters across four modes, including the number of iterations, batch size, the number of output neurons in the first LSTM layer, the number of output neurons in the second LSTM layer, the number of neurons in the fully connected layer, and the learning rate. The parameter optimization iteration process is illustrated in Fig. 9.

To address potential instability in MAPE metrics when actual load values approach zero - a scenario that may cause abnormal error amplification and distort model performance evaluation - we implemented a threshold adjustment strategy. Specifically, observations with actual values below 1% of the dataset's average load are excluded from MAPE calculation. This approach maintains the metric's interpretability while eliminating outlier distortion caused by near-zero measurements. For enhanced robustness, we complement the evaluation with SMAPE (Symmetric Mean Absolute Percentage Error), which constrains results within a 0%-200% range through symmetrical error calculation, effectively mitigating sensitivity to low-value measurements. Cross-validation confirmed consistent results from both metrics, ensuring reliable model performance assessment.

The ISSA-VMD-LSTM model demonstrated strong predictive performance with a validated R^2 value of 0.934. To assess estimation stability, we conducted 1,000 bootstrap iterations, yielding a narrow 95% confidence interval of [0.921, 0.943] for the R^2 metric. Furthermore, 5-fold cross-validation was implemented to evaluate model generalization, producing a mean R^2 of 0.927 ±0.006 - statistically consistent with the test set performance. These rigorous validation procedures confirm both the model's predictive accuracy and its robustness against overfitting risks.

The ISSA-VMD-LSTM algorithm proposed in this study demonstrates significant improvements over the traditional LSTM algorithm, with an increase of 30.2% inR^2, a reduction of 47.2% in RMSE, a decrease of 47.8% in MAE, and a lowering of 63.3% in MAPE. In terms of optimization strategies, the ISSA introduces a bidirectional search mechanism and initialization improvements. Compared with traditional optimization algorithms like PSO and SSA, the proposed algorithm demonstrates enhanced balancing capability between global exploration and local exploitation, effectively avoiding local optima traps while accelerating convergence. When compared with Transformer models, our method exhibits superior performance in large-scale data scenarios and achieves high-precision prediction in small-scale data through decomposition and optimization strategies, making it more applicable to data-constrained environments. In contrast to lightweight GRU models, this approach reduces hyperparameter sensitivity through signal decomposition mechanisms and demonstrates stronger prediction stability in multi-energy coupled environments. The algorithm presented in this study substantially enhances all evaluation metrics, markedly improving model fit while further reducing errors and increasing prediction accuracy.

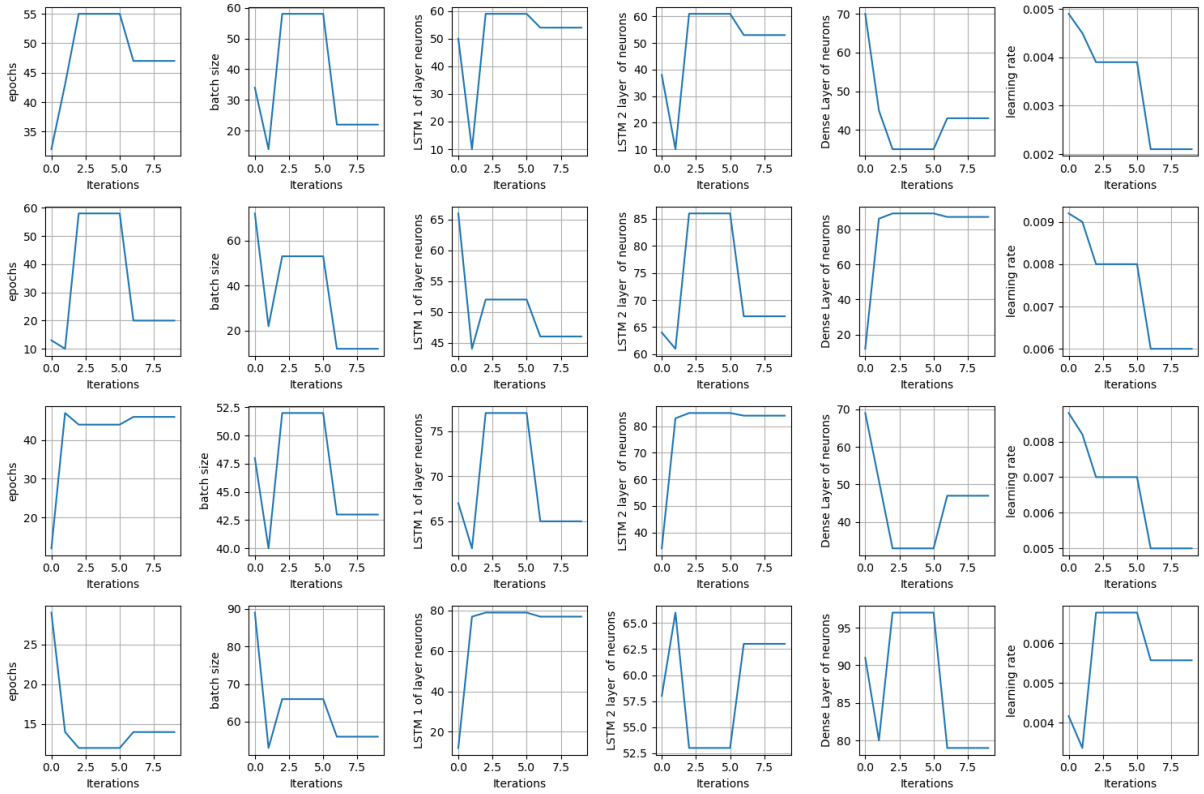

Fig. 9. Parameter optimization iteration process.

IV. Conclusion

This study introduces a short-term hydropower load forecasting method based on the ISSA-VMD-LSTM model. Given that hydropower load data typically exhibit complex nonlinear characteristics, VMD is employed to decompose the raw data into multiple intrinsic mode functions, effectively extracting features such as long-term trends and seasonal variations. This decomposition enhances the model's adaptability to intricate time-series data. To optimize the LSTM hyperparameters, an improved version of the Sparrow Search Algorithm is utilized, which incorporates a bidirectional cosine search strategy that combines forward and reverse searches. This approach expands the local search range, effectively preventing the traditional SSA from getting trapped in local optima, thereby significantly enhancing the optimization of LSTM hyperparameters. For the modal components obtained from VMD decomposition, the ISSA-optimized LSTM model further refines prediction accuracy. Experimental results demonstrate that the ISSA-VMD-LSTM model surpasses traditional LSTM models and other hybrid models across all evaluation metrics, showcasing superior forecasting performance.

While the proposed ISSA-VMD-LSTM model demonstrates significant advantages in short-term hydroelectric load forecasting, its practical application still faces limitations. First, the computational complexity of the VMD decomposition and ISSA optimization processes remains high, particularly in multi-modal data scenarios, which may prolong training and inference times, potentially hindering real-time requirements. Second, the model's sensitivity to hyperparameters necessitates reliance on empirical expertise or iterative parameter tuning, increasing deployment costs. Future improvements could focus on simplifying the algorithm and enhancing efficiency. For instance, adopting parallel computing or streamlined decomposition strategies to reduce computational overhead. Exploring adaptive parameter optimization mechanisms or integrating edge computing frameworks could improve real-time processing capabilities. Incorporating incremental learning or transfer learning techniques may further enhance the model's adaptability to dynamic multi-energy coupled environments, strengthening its generalization and practical utility.

Looking ahead, Multi-Energy Coupled Virtual Power Plants are expected to play a crucial role in short-term hydropower load forecasting. MC-VPPs represent the deep integration of Energy Internet technology, combining various energy resources through intelligent optimization and scheduling. They provide more accurate and reliable forecasting outcomes, enhancing the flexibility and efficiency of power systems. Moreover, MC-VPPs effectively address the intermittency and uncertainty associated with renewable energy sources, promoting the widespread adoption of clean energy and supporting the healthy development of electricity markets. As technological advancements continue and practical applications deepen, MC-VPPs will drive the energy system toward greater intelligence and efficiency, ensuring a more stable and sustainable power supply.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This work was supported by the Science and Technology Project of China Southern Power Grid Co., Ltd., under Grants YNKJXM20230530.

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Integrating Augmented Reality Learning Objects in Intelligent Tutoring Systems: A Conceptual Model for Engaging Learning Experiences

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***Abstract*—Despite the progress achieved by E-learning platforms, several limitations remain in sustaining learner engagement over time. With the rapid evolution of information and communication technologies, augmented reality has emerged as a powerful medium for designing pedagogical objects that are interactive, immersive, and adaptable to diverse learning contexts. The integration of augmented reality- based learning objects into intelligent tutoring systems enhances the educational process by providing learners with contextualized, multisensory experiences that align with their preferences and profiles. In this perspective, our objective is to propose a model for augmented reality-based learning objects within the context of an Intelligent Tutoring System. The proposed framework addresses a critical research gap: the absence of systematic architectural models that enable real-time, bidirectional adaptation between AR content representation and ITS decision-making mechanisms. Our model aims to strengthen learner motivation and reduce the risk of disengagement by dynamically adapting content to individual needs. It provides a structured foundation for the design and development of augmented reality-based learning objects within an intelligent tutoring system, ensuring that immersive resources are not only technologically innovative but also pedagogically aligned and personalized through the system's diagnostic and feedback capabilities.**

***Keywords*—Augmented reality; intelligent tutoring systems; E-learning; adaptation; engagement; personalized learning; learning objects**

I. Introduction

The rapid evolution of educational technology has fundamentally transformed pedagogical approaches and learning environments across diverse contexts. Among emerging technologies, augmented reality (AR) has demonstrated significant potential to revolutionize learning experiences by creating immersive and interactive educational scenarios that bridge virtual and real environments [1].

Simultaneously, Intelligent Tutoring System (ITS) have established themselves as powerful adaptive learning platforms capable of personalizing instruction based on individual learner characteristics, knowledge states and cognitive profiles [2].

Recent empirical evidence suggests that augmented reality significantly improves learner engagement and understanding of complex concepts [3]. Learning using AR-based tools often outperform peers in traditional settings and report higher engagement levels and more positive attitudes toward learning [4]. However, this engagement frequently proves transient: without ongoing pedagogical adaptation, the novelty effect of AR fades, and learners become disengaged despite the initial immersive appeal.

Despite these promising results, the integration of AR learning objects into intelligent tutoring systems remain relatively underexplored. Previous work by the authors has explored the general integration of artificial intelligence and augmented reality in educational environments, highlighting opportunities regarding personalization and learner engagement [5]. Building on these findings, systematic frameworks that guide AR-ITS convergence are still limited.

Key challenges include aligning AR's representational and interactive affordances with ITS adaptive mechanisms, ensuring pedagogical coherence across integrated components and maintaining technical interoperability between heterogeneous systems platforms.

This gap is particularly critical when learner motivation and engagement are considered, as they are decisive in educational success. Conventional ITS, may not always provide the rich and multisensory experiences that AR environments can offer. Conversely, many standalone AR applications lack the personalized scaffolding and fine-grained learner modeling capabilities characteristic of ITS.

Bringing these two technologies together creates an opportunity to harness AR's motivational power within an ITS-driven adaptive framework, potentially generating synergistic effects that enhance both engagement and learning outcomes.

In response to this need, the present study propose a model for integrating AR learning objects into intelligent tutoring systems. The model is structured around two complementary phases: a pedagogical phase that defines instructional objectives and learning activities, and technical phase that specifies the internal composition of AR learning objects into interconnected components (contextualization, exploration, assessment) and their adaptive sequencing with the ITS.

The primary contribution of this work is to synthesize pedagogical and technical dimensions into a cohesive framework that simultaneously addresses "what to teach" through AR-based learning objects and "how to deliver" through intelligent tutoring system architectures.

This dual-phase perspective emphasizes that effective educational technology integration depends not only on advanced technical solutions but also on carefully designed instructional strategies aligned with learner needs and contextual constraints.

While the proposed model is grounded in established pedagogical and ITS design principles, empirical validation through prototype deployment and controlled studies remains critical future work.

The remainder of this study is organized as follows: Section II presents the theoretical basis and related work, Section III details the methodological framework, and Section IV outlines the results and discussion. Finally, Section V concludes the study and highlights future research.

II. Theoretical Basis and Related Work

A. Augmented Reality in Education

Augmented reality superimposes digital information (3D objects, text, animation, sounds) onto the real world as perceived by the user, creating an enriched mixed experience [6]. AR systems rely on three fundamental technical components:

- The tracking system: detects and tracks physical markers (marker-based AR) or the real environment itself (marker-less AR) to determine where to display virtual content.
- The rendering engine: generates 3D objects and superimposes them in real time onto the camera view, taking into account perspective and lighting.
- The interaction interface: captures the user's gestures, manipulations, and actions to enable interaction with virtual objects.

Empirical research has highlighted several pedagogical benefits of augmented reality, particularly regarding learner engagement and motivation [3]. Its immersive and interactive experiences effectively capture learners' attention and support their intrinsic motivation.

Studies also indicate that learners using AR spend more time interacting with learning materials and higher levels of satisfaction [2].

B. AR-Based Learning Object: Definition and Properties

The concept of learning objects was first introduced in the early 1990s to describe modular educational resources that could be reused across various instructional contexts [7]. Wiley (2002) defined them as any digital asset that supports learning and can be flexibly recombined to suit different pedagogical needs [8]. The IEEE standard later formalized this notion by describing learning objects as digital or non-digital entities created specifically to facilitate learning, often containing multimedia elements such as text, images, audio, or video [9].

AR-based Learning Objects build upon this foundation by integrating augmented reality (AR) components, such as holographic visualizations, interactive overlays, or geolocated information into the learning process. Unlike traditional learning objects, AR-based learning objects are not limited to static or multimedia resources; they situate knowledge in authentic contexts, allowing learners to interact with content in real- world environments enhanced by digital layers.

Recent studies have demonstrated the pedagogical potential of AR-enhanced learning objects. For instance, Akçayir and Akçayir (2017) identified increased engagement and contextualization as key benefits of AR-based educational environments [10]. Similarly, Ibáñez and Delgado-Kloos (2018) showed that AR-supported learning objects significantly improve conceptual understanding and motivation in STEM disciplines [11]. These findings support the integration of AR-based learning objects as immersive and adaptable components within a personalized learning system.

The effectiveness of learning Objects based on Augmented Reality depends on a set of pedagogical and structural characteristics that ensure both adaptability and experiential relevance:

- Pedagogical Intent: To be effective, an AR-based Learning Object must be guided by a pedagogical intent that gives meaning to its learning objectives enhancements [12]. This intent shapes how immersive features are integrated, ensuring they support long-term educational goals rather than serving as superficial [13].
- Granularity: AR-based learning objects are modular, ranging from small, discrete units (e.g., individual images, text blocks, short animations) to comprehensive instructional sequences (e.g., lessons, modules) or entire curricula. This granularity supports flexible reuse and customization, facilitating adaptive learning paths [14].
- Reusability: Following the logic of reusable learning architectures [15], a reusable AR-based learning object may include instructional materials, practical interactions, and embedded evaluation activities aligned with a clearly defined educational goal [16]. Moreover, the degree of granularity plays a decisive role in the reusability of AR-based learning objects. Fine-grained learning objects are generally context-free and highly reusable across various courses or systems.
- Technological durability: Technological durability is a critical characteristic of AR-based learning objects, as it ensures their long-term usability and relevance despite the rapid evolution of hardware and software ecosystems. Augmented reality learning objects designed with durability in mind are not tied to a single device or platform but rely on open standards, modular architectures, and optimized performance to remain functional across contexts. This durability is reinforced by the use of interoperability frameworks (e.g., xAPI) that facilitate integration into diverse learning management systems [17].

The integration of Augmented reality based learning objects in digital E-learning can be analyzed through three complementary pedagogical dimensions that enhance learner engagement. AR-based learning objects:

- Act as representational tools; transforming abstract knowledge into immersive and context-sensitive visualizations that enhance conceptual clarity.
- Support mastery and proactive learning, as learners actively manipulate augmented environments, experiment with variables and receive adaptive feedback, thereby fostering self-regulation and deeper understanding.
- Enable a socioconstructivist approach, functioning as mediators of collaboration in shared augmented spaces where learners co-construct knowledge through dialogue and interaction.

According to Deci and Ryan's self-determination Theory [18], motivation is shaped by the degree to which learning environments support autonomy, competence and relatedness. When educators implement strategies that foster these conditions, such as adaptive, interactive learning tools, learners are more likely to engage meaningfully in the learning process and achieve stronger outcomes.

In this regard, our pedagogical strategy, which leverages AR-based learning objects, aims to simulate learner engagement through immersive and context-aware experiences. Fig. 1 highlights the connections between our strategy-centered on the use of AR-based learning objects and the resulting effects on learner engagement and educational success.

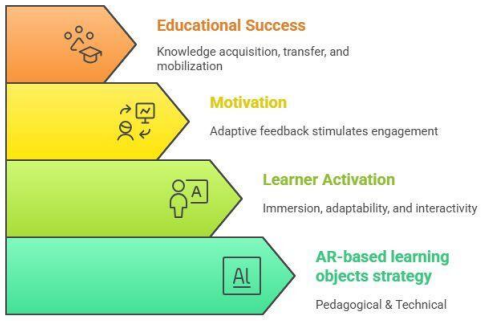

Fig. 1. From AR learning objects to educational success.

C. Intelligent Tutoring System

Intelligent Tutoring Systems (ITS) represent a specialized class of computer-based learning environments that employ artificial intelligence and cognitive science principles to deliver adaptive, personalized instruction tailored to individual learner characteristics and performance dynamics [19]. The foundational concept of intelligent tutoring systems emerged in the early 1970s and became formally established as a research field following seminal work by Sleeman and Brown [20], with subsequent development producing increasingly sophisticated architectures capable of replicating key aspects of expert human tutoring at scale.

The canonical architecture of ITS comprises four interdependent functional subsystems, as illustrated in Fig. 2:

- Domain Model: encodes disciplinary knowledge, conceptual relationships, procedural competencies and typical misconception patterns within a particular subject domain.
- Learner Model: maintains continuously updated representations of individual learner knowledge states, performance trajectories, cognitive abilities, learning preferences and metacognitive characteristics through systematic analysis of learner interactions and responses.
- Pedagogical Module (Tutor Model): employs instructional decision making algorithms to determine optimal activity sequencing, content selection, scaffolding strategies and feedback mechanisms by consulting both domain and learner representations.
- User Interface: facilitates bidirectional communication, presenting content through multiple modalities and capturing learner actions for subsequent analysis.

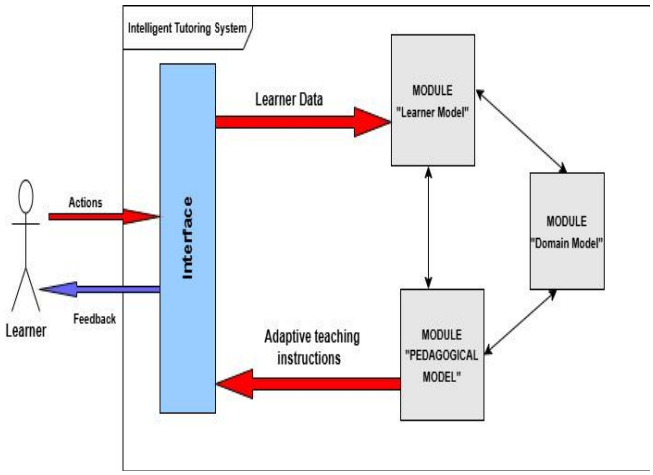

Fig. 2. A classical ITS architecture.

Contemporary ITS research increasingly incorporates emerging technologies and pedagogical frameworks [21]. Advanced ITS implementations now integrate immersive technologies such as augmented reality and virtual reality environments, expanding the representational affordances available for knowledge modeling and problem-solving activities beyond traditional textual and graphical interfaces.

D. State-of-the-Art: AR-ITS Integration and Current Limitations

Recent research has increasingly explored AR-ITS integration, with promising initial results. Uriarte-Portillo et al. conducted a comparative study with 106 middle school students evaluating an intelligent tutoring system with augmented reality (ARGeoITS) against a standalone AR system (ARGeo). Results demonstrated that combining AR with ITS-driven adaptation significantly outperformed standalone AR, suggesting that real-time adaptive tutoring integrated with AR analytics enhances student performance beyond mere visualization [22]. This foundational work established empirical evidence for the synergetic potential of AR-ITS integration.

Similarly, emerging work integrating Generative AI with AR environments demonstrates innovative approaches combining AI-powered conversational agents with AR visualization to support inquiry-based learning [23]. These systems show significant improvements in critical thinking, inquisitiveness, and learning motivation compared to traditional AR-only approaches. The integration of natural language processing further enables responsive, conversational tutoring interactions within immersive environments.

However, three critical limitations persist in current AR-ITS implementations, particularly concerning sustained engagement:

- Adaptation limited to sequencing and feedback; AR representation remains static: Existing systems adapt at the level of activity selection or textual feedback delivery, not at the level of AR content representation itself. The 3D objects, spatial complexity and interactive modalities remain unchanged during learner interaction, regardless of performance or comprehension. This represents a significant missed opportunity: the dynamic modification of the AR visualization based on real-time learner state maintains cognitive and emotional engagement, signals progress, provides adaptive scaffolding and maintains appropriate challenge.
- Lack of principles architectural frameworks for engagement-centered AR-ITS: While individual systems demonstrate effectiveness, no unified framework exists specifying how learner interactions with AR objects should inform domain model updates, which pedagogical rules should govern real-time content adaptation and how the learner model, pedagogical module, and AR engine achieve bidirectional coupling. Most implementations treat AR as a one-way presentation layer receiving instructions from an ITS backend, not as an adaptive component whose state continuously informs tutoring logic and engagement decisions.

These gaps highlight a clear research need: a systematic model and architecture that enables real-time, bidirectional adaptation between AR content representation and ITS decision-making, explicitly designed to foster sustained learner engagement, grounded in pedagogical frameworks and validated through implementation.

The present study addresses this need by proposing a dual-phase AR-ITS model that integrates pedagogical design (MARS, IMS-LD, SAMR) with technical architecture, enabling real-time, engagement-centered adaptation at the representation level. By situating our work at the intersection of pedagogical design, technical architecture and engagement science, we aim to move the field from isolated AR or ITS innovations toward coherent, replicable systems capable of sustaining engagement.

III. Methodological Framework

The design of our architecture is organized into two complementary phases: the pedagogical phase, which focuses on the design of the augmented reality (AR)-based learning object, and the technical phase that details the integration of this learning object within the Intelligent Tutoring System (ITS).

A. Phase 1: Pedagogical Design and Scenario Development

The pedagogical phase focuses on designing AR learning objects that effectively support learning objectives while maximizing learner motivation and engagement. This phase employs two complementary frameworks: the MARS model for motivation-centered design and IMS Learning Design for activity structuring and scenario orchestration.

1) MARS framework for simulation design: The MARS model (Model- Associations- Representation- Scenario) developed by Pernin (1996) [24], provides an operational structure for developing AR-based simulations and interactive learning objects through its four-component architecture, as illustrated in Fig. 3. Application to AR learning object design proceeds as follows:

- Model (M): Specify the functional model underlying the AR learning object, including 3D object behaviors, physical properties, interaction rules, and state transitions.
- Association (A): Define mappings between conceptual knowledge (domain model), visual representations (3D assets, animations), and learning activities. Associations ensure that when learners interact with AR elements, these interactions correspond meaningfully to underlying concepts and produce pedagogically appropriate feedback. This component supports alignment between learning objectives and AR affordances.
- Representation (R): Create the visual and interactive interface through which learners engage with the AR content. This includes designing 3D models, selecting appropriate mechanisms (marker-based, marker-less, and location-based), defining interaction modalities (touch, gesture, voice) and ensuring usability across target devices. Effective representation balances visual fidelity with cognitive load management, avoiding overwhelming learners with excessive detail.
- Scenario (S): Structure learners' use of AR simulation toward specific educational objectives.

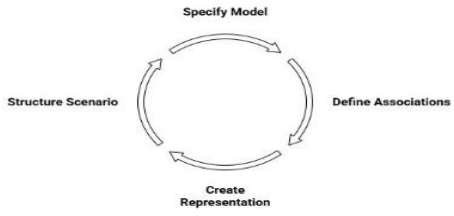

Fig. 3. AR learning object development cycle.

2) IMS learning design for activity orchestration: This design process is grounded in the IMS Learning Design (IMS-LD) framework, an internationally recognized pedagogical specification developed by the IMS Global Learning Consortium [25]. IMS learning Design provides the structural framework for organizing AR learning objects within coherent learning scenarios that orchestrate learner activities, resources and support mechanisms. The specification's three-level architecture enables increasing sophistication in scenario design:

- Level A: Activity Sequencing: At the foundational level, IMS-LD structures AR learning experiences through time-ordered activities assigned to specific roles. For AR-enhanced ITS, this involves defining learner and tutor roles, specifying AR-based learning activities (e.g., exploring 3D molecular structures, practicing assembly procedures in augmented space) and sequencing these activities within coherent learning flows. The activity structure specifies which AR learning objects are available to learners at different points in the learning trajectory.
- Level B: Adaptive Conditions: The intermediate level introduces properties and conditions that enable dynamic adaption based on learner actions and states. This proves particularly valuable for AR experiences based on learner model data. For example, if a learner demonstrates misconceptions about spatial relationships, the system might present AR activities emphasizing 3D manipulation; conversely, learners showing confidence might access more complex augmented scenarios. Properties store learner interaction data from AR activities, informing subsequent adaptive decisions.
- Level C: Notifications and Triggers: The advanced level supports notifications that dynamically trigger activities based on events. In AR-ITS contexts, this enables responsive scenarios where AR content adapts in real time to learner behaviors. For instance, if a learner spends excessive time on a particular AR interaction without progress, the system might trigger supportive interventions such as simplified AR demonstrations or hints overlaid in the augmented environment.

3) SAMR model as a framework for technology integration: The SAMR model, proposed by Puentedura [26], is designed to analyze the degree of pedagogical transformation brought by educational technologies. It distinguishes four levels, as shown in Fig. 4:

- Substitution: where technology replaces a traditional tool without changing the task.
- Augmentation: where technology enriches the existing activity.
- Modification: where technology enables a substantial redesign of the activity.
- Redefinition: where new tasks, previously impossible, become attainable.

This framework is used to evaluate the ability of our AR-ITS system to go beyond simple improvements to traditional approaches. Several components of our AR-ITS model move past mere replacement or enhancement, reaching the modification or redefinition levels by offering immersive, adaptive and collaborative learning experiences that are only possible through augmented reality and intelligent tutoring.

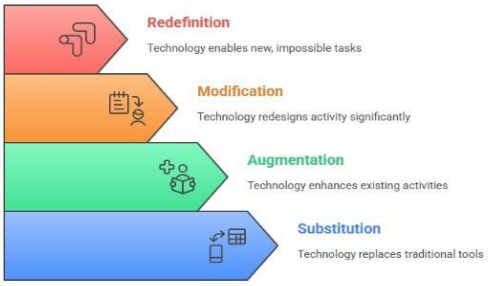

Fig. 4. SAMR model.

B. Phase 2: Technical Integration into ITS Architecture

The technical phase addresses the integration of AR learning objects into ITS architectures. To operationalize this integration, AR learning objects follow a structured three-component design, as shown in Fig. 5: Contextualization component, the exploration component, and the assessment component. This three-component architecture ensures that learner interactions with AR objects inform real-time adaptations and pedagogical decision-making.

- Contextualization component: communicates learning objectives, prerequisite knowledge requirements and establishes the pedagogical scenario. This component adapts based on the learner's profile within the ITS, presenting comprehensive information to novice learners and an abbreviated context to advanced learners.
- Exploration component: presents the core AR content and interactive activities. It structures information to promote active learning through multimodal representations. The ITS provides real-time scaffolding and adaptive feedback during learner exploration of AR objects.
- Assessment component: enables learners to demonstrate comprehension of key concepts. It provides formative feedback and assesses readiness for progression. If gaps are identified, targeted feedback is provided to specific learning elements, enabling iterative refinement until mastery is achieved.

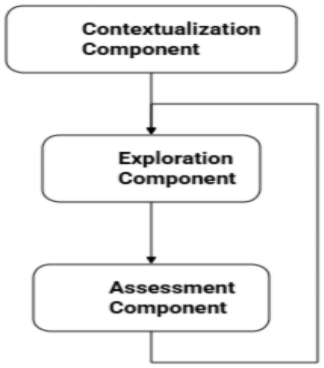

Fig. 5. AR learning object structure.

IV. Results and Discussion

The use of learning objects within adaptive instructional systems to foster learner engagement has become an active and multifaceted research topic, attracting sustained interest in the technology-enhanced learning community.

In this work, engagement is understood as a combination of cognitive and emotional involvement that leads the learner to willingly invest effort and attention in the learning task and to persist in order to reach predefined learning objectives. It is shaped by a set of internal and external factors that influence how and why a learner initiates, maintains, or abandons an activity.

Fig. 6 presents the overall architecture of the proposed AR-ITS model, in which augmented learning objects are integrated as a central mechanism for increasing learner engagement. The model is organized into two main phases, as previously described: a pedagogical design phase and a technical adaptation phase.

In total, the model comprises twelve classes, each representing a key component of the system and encapsulating the data and behaviors necessary to support adaptive AR-based learning experiences.

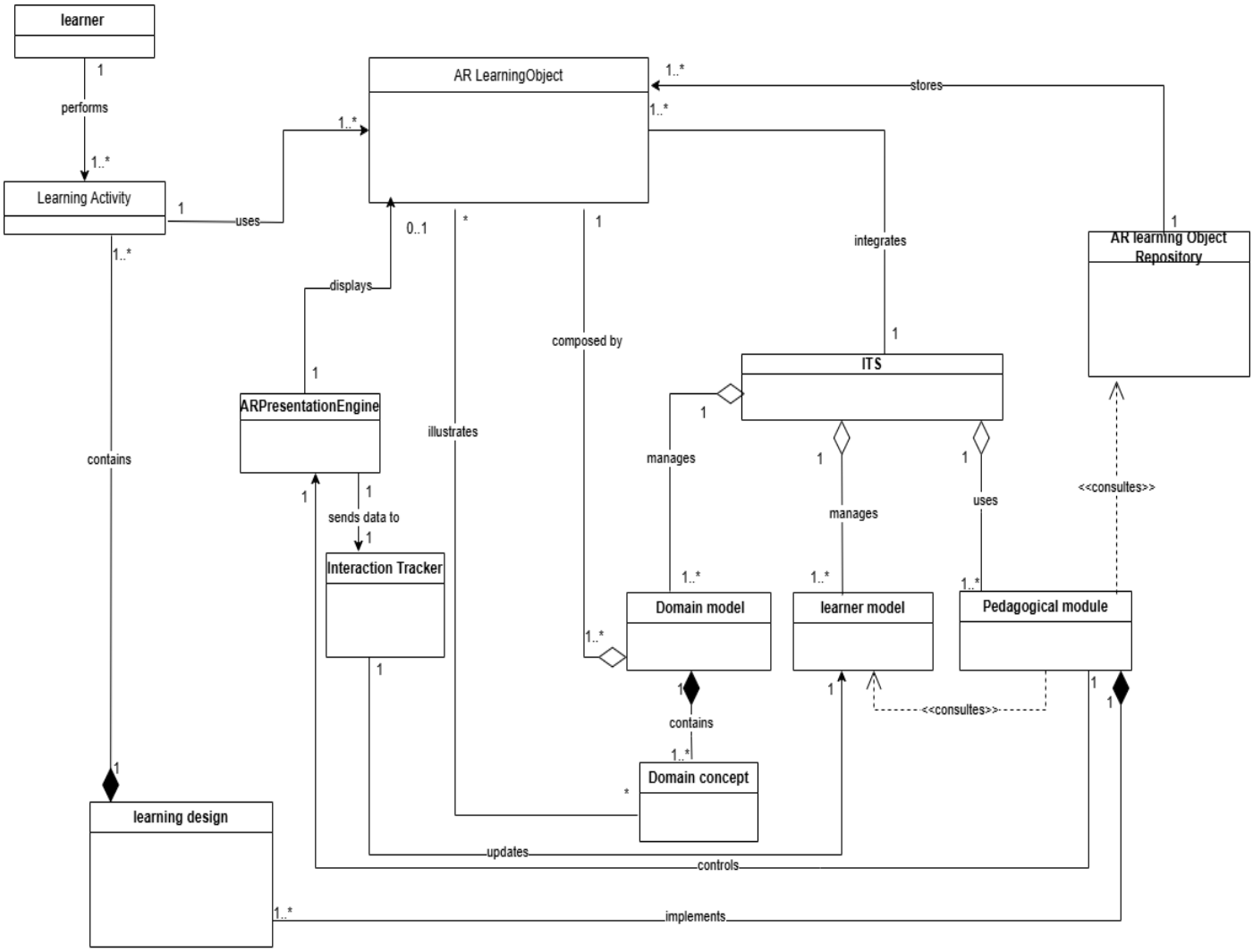

Fig. 6. Class diagram of the AR-ITS model.

1) Pedagogical phase: In this phase, we structure the learning experiences by specifying what should be learned, how it should be orchestrated, and within what scenario. This phase comprises:

- "Learning Design": defines the overall instructional sequence and organizes the learning activities and their pedagogical scenarios.
- "Learning Activity": Represents specific tasks and exercises the learner will perform. Each activity can use one or more AR Learning Objects as resources.
- "AR Learning Object": Provides the core augmented reality content for exploration, designed according to MARS principles and integrated within the learning scenario.

The pedagogical layer ensures that AR is not merely a technical add-on but is integrated within a robust pedagogical scenario. This layer aligns content, activities, and learner roles to support meaningful engagement and learning progression.

2) Technical phase: In this phase, we implement and execute the AR learning experience as specified by the pedagogical phase. It comprises:

- "AR Presentation Engine" and "Interaction Tracker": together, these manage the AR display, capture learner interactions in real-time, and provide event data to the ITS.
- "ITS" (Intelligent Tutoring System): acts as the central coordinator, integrating three core models:

a) "Learner model": Maintains a dynamic record of learner states, competencies and progress.

b) "Domain model": Holds the domain knowledge and conceptual structure that the learning content relies on.

c) "Pedagogical module": Implements the instructional logic for adaptation, feedback selection and activity progression.

- "AR Learning Object Repository": Stores reusable AR objects that can be retrieved and dynamically assigned to activities based on learner needs and activity requirements.

The technical phase enables real-time adaptation: it collects learner data, updates learner models, and collaboratively with the pedagogical Module, dynamically selects, adapts, and sequences AR learning objects and feedback.

The pedagogical and technical phases work in close coordination. The pedagogical phase defines what should be taught and how AR should enhance the experience; the technical phase delivers tracks and adapts the learning experience in line with the pedagogical plan.

This architectural separation supports methodological rigor, scalability, and the ability to evolve pedagogical approaches independently from technical implementations, thereby ensuring both pedagogical coherence and technical robustness.

The pedagogical layer specifies what should be taught and how it should be orchestrated. The technical layer delivers, tracks, and adapts the learning experience in alignment with the pedagogical plan. Bidirectional communication (represented in the diagram) enables learner data collected by the Interaction Tracker to inform ITS decisions, which then modify the AR learning Object representation.

3) The AR-ITS adaptive learning cycle: The dynamic behavior of the proposed AR-ITS is structured as a continuous adaptive learning cycle, as illustrated in Fig. 7. This cycle is repeatedly executed while the learner engages with AR-based activities. The following scenario summarizes the main steps of this cycle, from activity selection to learner mode update.

a) Step 1: Activity Initialization

At the beginning of a session, a "learning Activity" is instantiated from a "learning Design", which specifies the pedagogical scenario (sequence of activities, prerequisites, conditions for progression).

b) Step 2: Instructional Decision-Making

When an activity becomes active, the "ARPresentationEngine" requests guidance from the "PedagogicalModule" to determine which content and level of support should be provided. The "PedagogicalModule":

- Consults the "learner Model" to retrieve the current learner state.
- Then queries the "Domain Model" to identify relevant concepts.
- Identifies candidate "ARLearningObject" from the repository.
- Applies predefined adaptation rules to select the most appropriate "ARLearningObject" and support level.
- Sends selected AR content to the "ARPresentationEngine" with rendering specifications.

c) Step 3: Learner Interaction and Tracking

The learner interacts with the AR content (manipulations, exploration, task completion) as specified in the "learning Activity", while the "Interaction Tracker" records all relevant actions

- What the learner did (interaction Type).
- When it happened (timestamp).
- How long it took (duration).
- Quality of interaction (accuracy, correctness).

d) Step 4: Learner Model Update and Cycle Iteration

Interaction data collected by "InteractionTracker" is used to update the "Learner Model":

- Refining estimates of knowledge states.
- Identifying misconceptions.
- Assessing engagement levels.

- The updated "Learner Model" informs subsequent decisions of the "Pedagogical Module".
- The Module may adapt the current activity (extra scaffolding, hints, alternative AR object) or trigger the next activity according to the "Learning Design".
- This loop continues until the scenario is completed.

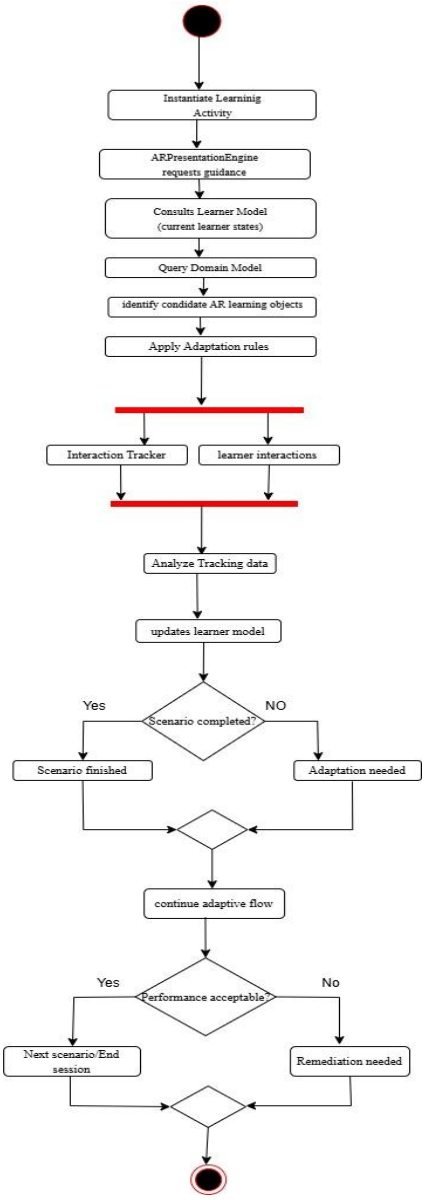

Fig. 7. Adaptive activity diagram flow of an AR-based intelligent tutoring system.

This adaptive cycle demonstrates how the model achieves real-time, bidirectional coupling between AR interaction and ITS decision-making, addressing the research gap identified.

The previous diagram presented the structural organization of the AR-ITS and the overall adaptive activity flow. The following sequence diagram, illustrated in Fig. 8, details the runtime interactions between the "ARPresentationEngine", the Pedagogical Module, and the Learner-related models during a single AR learning activity.

Upon initiation by the learner, the "ActivityManager" instantiates the learning activity based on the predefined design. The ARPresentationEngine then solicits pedagogical guidance, triggering a cascade of interactions within the Pedagogical Module.

This module consults the "LearnerModel" to retrieve the learner's current cognitive and affective state, queries the "DomainModel" for relevant conceptual targets, and accesses the "ARLearningObjectRepository" to identify suitable AR content.

Adaptation rules are applied to select the optimal support level and AR objects, which are then rendered by the ARPresentationEngine. As the learner engages with the AR content, the InteractionTracker captures detailed behavioral data—action type, timestamp, duration, and accuracy—updating the learner's profile with inferred knowledge states, misconceptions, and engagement metrics.

This updated profile informs the Pedagogical Module's decision-making for subsequent adaptations or activity transitions, which are executed by the "ActivityManager", ensuring a responsive and personalized learning loop.

The three diagrams jointly provide a coherent and complementary description of the proposed AR-ITS. The class diagram first specifies the static structure of the system by defining the main classes and associations, thereby grounding the architecture in concrete software entities.

The activity diagram then captures the global adaptive learning cycle, emphasizing how interaction tracking, learner-model updates, and the selection of AR learning objects are orchestrated within a continuous feedback loop.

Finally, the sequence diagram refines this behavioral view by detailing the ordered message exchanges between the learner, the activity manager, the AR presentation engine, the pedagogical module, and the learner model during a session.

Together, these models clarify the overall architecture and demonstrate the system's ability to dynamically personalize AR experiences in response to the learner's evolving profile.

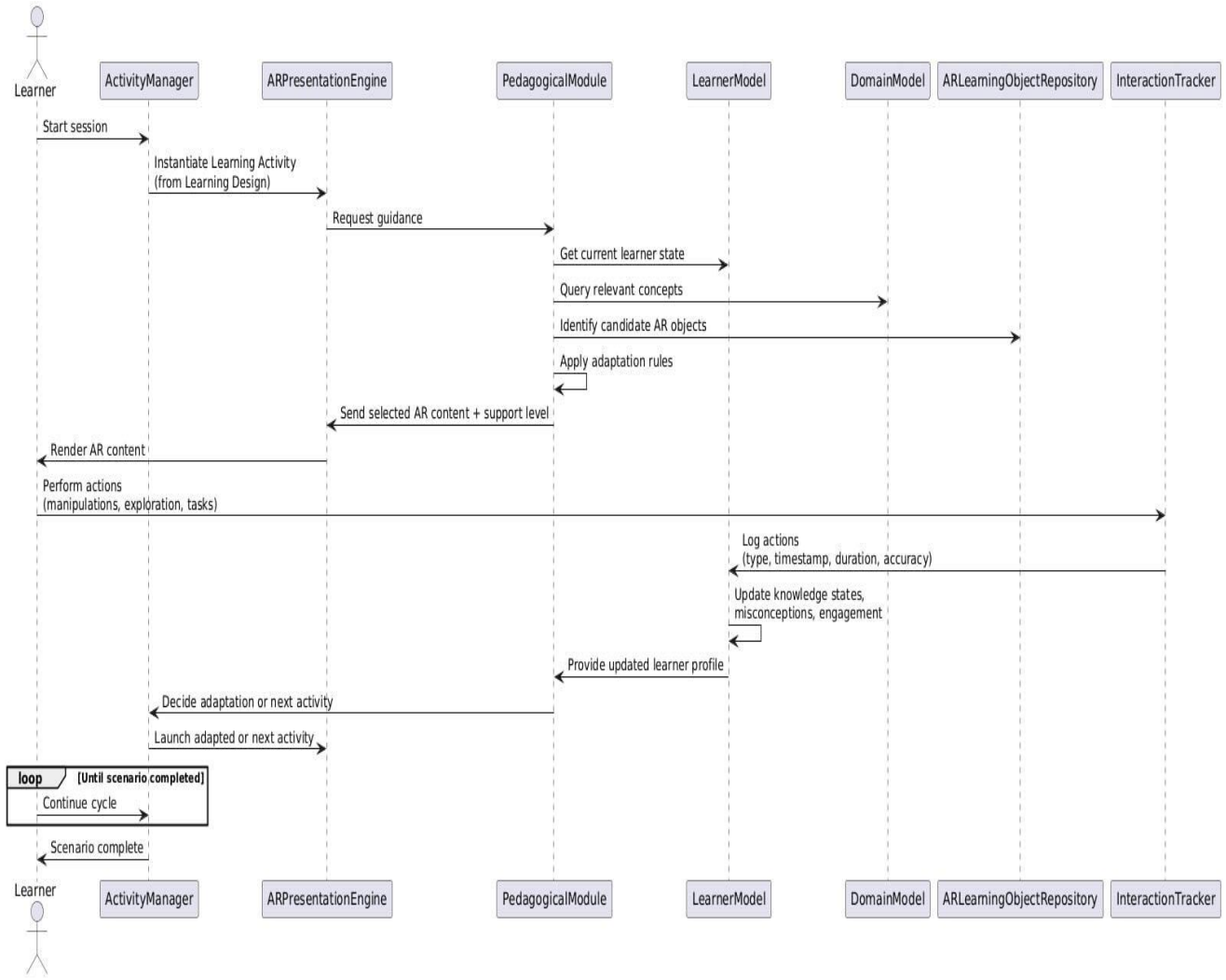

Fig. 8. Sequence diagram of the AR-ITS session flow.

V. Conclusion and Future Work

This research addresses the challenge of designing augmented reality-based intelligent learning environments that enhance learner engagement. The proposed AR-ITS model integrates AR learning objects with adaptive tutoring to create personalized learning experiences that respond to individual learner needs and preferences.

This study makes both theoretical and architectural contributions to the design of AR-based Intelligent Tutoring Systems, which can be summarized as follows: First, at the theoretical level, we establish that effective AR-ITS design requires an explicit integration of pedagogical frameworks with technical architecture, ensuring that AR learning objects are not only immersively designed but also pedagogically coherent and adaptively responsive to individual learner states. Second, in the architectural contribution, we provide a concrete UML model that operationalizes the coupling between AR content representation and ITS decision-making. This model is grounded in educational technology standards and demonstrates how data flows between layers, enabling real-time adaptation.

This study, therefore, offers a strong theoretical and architectural foundation; however, the critical next phase is empirical validation. The current work does not yet include user studies, learning outcome measurement, or comparative effectiveness analysis, and these are acknowledged as important limitations.

Looking forward, our next work will focus on implementing a fully functional AR-ITS that instantiates the proposed model for a concrete use case: teaching network topologies as part of the national computer science curriculum in Moroccan secondary education. This system will be empirically tested with learners in this context in order to evaluate its impact on learner engagement, personalization, and learning outcomes, thereby providing concrete validation of the proposed approach.

Such an evaluation will enable assessment of the model's effectiveness with its intended target audience and within an authentic educational setting.

Collectively, these efforts would help move from a theoretically grounded AR-ITS architecture to robust, field-tested systems. By demonstrating how AR-based learning

objects enhance engagement within adaptive tutoring frameworks, this line of research contributes to advancing the design of next-generation intelligent learning environments.

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Comparative Evaluation of CNN Architectures for Corn Leaf Diseases Classification

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***Abstract*—Corn has particular importance in the global food industry. Many diseases attack the corn crops, which affects the crop yield. Early classification and detection of these diseases are pivotal to preventing damage and achieving high crop productivity. Although deep learning, especially convolutional neural networks, has accomplished remarkable results in image recognition, selecting the optimal architecture and using limited datasets remains a challenge. To address this gap, a transfer learning approach based on ImageNet weights was applied to classify three common corn diseases (i.e., gray spot, common rust, and blight), as well as the healthy plants. Six CNN architectures—DenseNet201, EfficientNetB0, VGG16, ResNet50, InceptionV3, and InceptionResNetV2—inclusive performance was evaluated for classification on a corn dataset. Based on evaluation metrics, EfficientNetB0 achieves the highest training accuracy of 97.67% with a fast computational time of 71 seconds. It performs more efficiently than the other architectures. These findings support the use of deep learning models, particularly EfficientNet, in the evolution of artificial intelligence image classification system applications.**

Keywords*—Artificial intelligence; Convolutional Neural Network; deep learning; image processing; corn diseases classification

I. Introduction

The population is predictable to extend to 8.5 billion by 2030 [1]. Therefore, there is an imperative request to increase the production of agricultural crops to cover the needs of the increasing population. Consequently, crop productivity is very important worldwide [2]. Plant diseases are one of the prime factors of crop loss, with huge amounts of wasted food each year globally [3]. Plant diseases have many species, which can be bacterial, viral, or fungal. The diseases attack leaves, fruits, or branches and causes damage in the crop. To avoid crop loss, early crop disease identification is critical to be considered in the future [4].

Corn, or maize, is a worldwide produced crop. Corn agriculture plays a substantial role on account of its possibility export and it provides a lot of people with food [5]. Various businesses use corn, including the food industries, oils, drinks, and animal feed. The corn is exhibition of many diseases that may attack many parts of it, such as leaves, trunk, and fruit [6]. This has a serious leverage on the yield of crop harvest and can cause a huge financial loss. Diseases that attack corn leaves are the most severe of these diseases. Therefore, this work uses three widespread leaf diseases: gray spot, common rust, and blight [7].

Plant disease detection and classification have become a decisive issue in recent years. Artificial intelligence presents significant help to smart agriculture by introducing various techniques in classifying and detecting crop leaf disease [8]. Deep learning approach is the best emerging technology in image processing. Within the deep learning environment, Convolutional Neural Network [9] is the most perfect used technique for image classification, object detection, and segmentation. However, applying DL models to agricultural issues faces some challenges [10], including the lack of considerable datasets, the complex processing cost, and the large processing time.

This study aims to develop a corn disease classification based on deep learning techniques to overcome dataset limitations and achieve high performance. DenseNet201, EfficientNetB0, VGG16, ResNet50, InceptionV3, and InceptionResNetV2 were discussed along with the detailed experimentation conducted. The work combines advanced deep learning models with a transfer learning approach to tackle the challenges of deep learning models in computational time and the amount of data. This helps create a smart and efficient system that enables timely interventions and minimizes crop loss. Moreover, the study explores future suggestions by proposing improvements through model deployment.

II. Related Works

Common deep learning techniques have been widely used in developing smart agriculture. This section discusses various research papers based on corn and plant disease classification using deep neural network models, specifically CNN. Arabinda et al. [11] used a dataset comprised of four classes and a total of 4988 images of the maize crop. They have used the Densenet201 model with fine-tuned the Support Vector Machine and Bayesian optimization techniques. Their model accomplished a classification accuracy of 94.6%. Wisnu et al. [12] used a free dataset coming from the Kaggle website. This dataset has four classes with a total of 4188 images. They used the CNN methods with two various architectures, the ResNet50 and EfficientNetB0 models. The accuracy result acquired for the model ResNet-50 is 93% and for the second model EfficientNet-B0, the accuracy is 94%. Neha et al. [13] used a dataset consisting of four classes and a total of 4,188 images of the corn crop. They have developed pre-trained (EfficientNetB0, ResNet50, InceptionV3, and VGG). It was found that EfficientNetB0 outperformed all of the other models with accuracy 92.33%.

*Corresponding author.

Imran et al. [14] used the public Plant-Village dataset. It contains different types of corn. They used ten classes with a total of 20,202 data after the augmentation. They applied transfer learning for accurate classify to disease in corn. They used four models: (ResNet50, VGG16, Inception V3, and InceptionResNetV2). Seema et al. [15] developed three diverse algorithms: ResNet18, VGG16, and AlexNet. Architectures were carefully selected due to their previous achievement in similar tasks. The models were designed using a pre-trained method. The dataset was used from Kaggle website consisting of 4,188 images of corn leaves with disease besides healthy leaves. On the other work, Quy Thanh Lu et al. [16] discussed CNN models, including EfficientNetB5, MobileNet, VGG16, ResNet50, and InceptionV3, for plant disease classification. The methodology includes using transfer learning. EfficientNetB5 model achieved 92% and VGG16 achieved 91% in training accuracy. Vaishali et al. [17] presented a CNN-based method for plant disease classification. VGG16, VGG19, and ResNet are trained on the Plant-Village dataset with a maximum accuracy 85.28%.

Emmanuel et al. [18] introduced a study on the classification and detection of plant diseases using several models by using datasets of healthy and infected plant leaves. They employed several CNN models, such as VGG16, InceptionV3, and InceptionResNetV2, with a maximum accuracy 92.9%. Theodora et al. [19] developed different pre-trained models for tomato leaf disease identification. ResNet50, VGG16, InceptionV3, and proposed models achieved performances of 92.18%, 93.14%, 94.91%, and 96.02%, respectively. Xu et al. [20] proposed an amended ResNet50 model. The authors have used the maize dataset. The improved ResNet50 model achieved 96.02% accuracy. Compared to DenseNet, VGG16, and AlexNet, the validation accuracy was greater. Table I shows the comparison of the previous works.

TABLE I. COMPARISON OF RELATED WORKS

Authors (year)	Task	Model	Acc. (%)
Arabinda et al. (2023) [11]	Corn diseases classification	DenseNet201	94.6
Wisnu et al. (2023) [12]	Corn diseases classification	ResNet50 EfficientNetB0	94
Neha et al. (2023) [13]	Corn diseases classification	ResNet50, VGG16, Inception V3, InceptionResNetV2	92.33
Seema et al. (2024) [15]	Corn diseases classification	ResNet18, VGG16, AlexNet	95.5
Quy Thanh Lu et al. (2023) [16]	Plant diseases classification and detection	EfficientNetB5, MobileNet, ResNet50, InceptionV3, VGG16	92
Vaishali et al. (2023) [17]	Plant diseases classification	VGG16, VGG19, ResNet	85.28
Emmanuel et al. (2023) [18]	Plant diseases classification and detection	VGG16, InceptionV3, InceptionResNetV2	92.85
Theodora et al. (2023) [19]	Tomato diseases classification	VGGNet	96.02
Xu et al. (2023) [20]	Corn diseases classification	DenseNet, VGG16, AlexNet	96

III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed to enhancement of a six different CNN architectures (VGG16, DenseNet201, EfficientNetB0, ResNet50, InceptionV3, and InceptionResNetV2) to automatically classify corn diseases. The methodology is divided into several stages. A block diagram describing the research stages is shown in Fig. 1, which declares the work process flow of corn classification using CNN models.

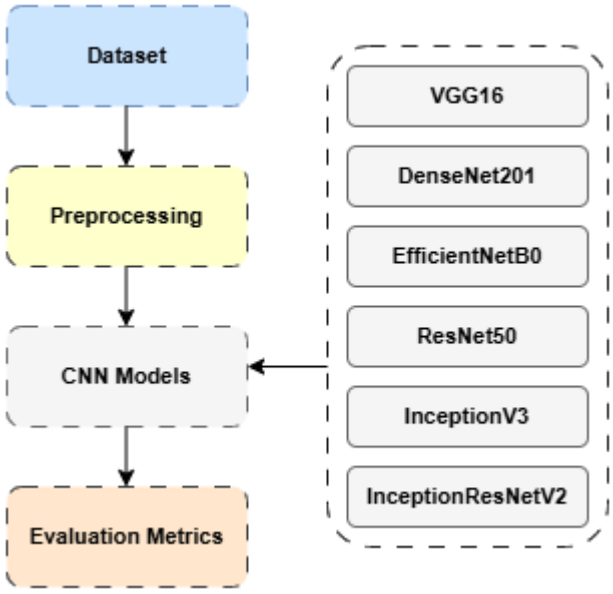

Fig. 1. Flowchart of our research.

A. Dataset

The CNN models were trained on corn leaves images to classify the image as healthy or diseased, and classify the kind of disease on image. The open and free corn dataset was used from the Kaggle website [21] for this study. It consists of four corn classes, as shown in Fig. 2. A total of 4,188 images are contained in the dataset. It has 1,306 common rust images, 1,146 blight images, 574 gray spot images, and 1,162 healthy images.

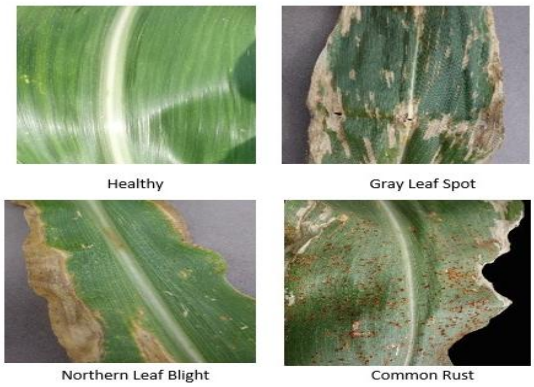

Fig. 2. Image samples from the corn dataset.

The corn dataset images are colored images of different sizes. The images are resized to 224×224 for DenseNet201, EfficientNetB0, VGG16, and ResNet50 architectures.

Otherwise, for the InceptionV3 and InceptionResNetV2 architectures, the images are resized to 299×299 pixels. The dataset was divided into training and validation data with a ratio of 80% and 20%, respectively.

B. CNN Architectures

Convolutional Neural Network was famed as a remarkable deep learning architecture for image recognition [22]. In this work, six pre-trained CNN models—VGG16, DenseNet201, EfficientNetB0, ResNet50, InceptionV3, and InceptionResNetV2—were applied. The models had been pre-trained using the ImageNet dataset and were available from the Keras library [23].

1) VGG16: VGG is a CNN model brought by Simonyan and Zisserman in 2015 [24]. It has 3×3 convolutional layers and max pooling to reduce the size of the kernels. Moreover, three dense layers, two have 4096 nodes, the third contains "one channel" for each class, and a softmax classifier [25]. VGG16 comprises 13 convolutional layers and 3 dense layers. VGG16 can transfer learned features to many tasks, making it a favorite choice for transfer learning.

2) DenseNet architecture: DenseNet was an innovative architecture introduced by Huang et al. in 2016 [26]. The DenseNet was inspired, subordinate the same direction of ResNet and the Highway network. To enhance the performance and to have most information stream between layers, all layers are connected in a feed-forward way. For each layer, the feature maps of all previous layers are utilized as inputs to all the next layers. It relieves the vanishing gradient and has decreased the number of parameters [27]. For this study, the DenseNets model with 201 layers has chosen.

3) EfficientNet: EfficientNet strives to attain great performance with few computational compared to other models. it was innovated by Mingxing Tan and Quoc V. Le in 2019 [28]. The key idea of EfficientNet is a scaling mechanism that scales the dimensions of width, depth, and resolution by using a compound coefficient [29]. This technique guarantees that the model adjusts easily to differing computational constraints while keeping its performance across various scales. There are a series of EfficientNet models, ranging from B0 to B7. For this task, B0 was chosen. Because of the smaller input size and fewer parameters, it is easier to test and has lower computing capabilities.

4) ResNet: ResNet has many versions. In this work, a ResNet50 was chosen which consisted of 50 layers of a neural network. It presented the concept of shortcut connections to solve the vanishing gradient problem, which happened when the network increased in the depth [30]. Because of this connections, gradients could pass in deeper layers without being reduced. These improve the performance and the accuracy.

5) InceptionV3: The "Inception" idea was first presented by Szegedy et al. (2015) in the GoogLeNet architecture. The sequential aspect of the GoogLeNet architecture has been referred to as Inception vN, with N going into the version number [31]. InceptionV3 used "spatial factorization" to reduce the computational cost and applied a "stem module" to enhance the flow of information. It also introduced "label smoothing" to regularize the network's output and improve its performance. It has a depth of 189.

6) InceptionResNetV2: It was introduced in 2016 and 2017, merging the ResNet with the Inception architecture [32]. The architecture combined residual connections and "inception modules" to enhance the performance and accuracy of the network. It has 55.9 million parameters, 215 MB, depth 449, and 164 layers.

C. Transfer Learning

Transfer learning is a computer vision approach that implicit building a fresh model on top of an old one [33]. The goal is to enable the fresh model to learn features from the existing one. That is allowing the incoming model to be faster and use less data. Through transfer learning, the dense layers of the network are stripped and replaced with another new layers. The term "transfer learning" describes what this strategy requires: transfer information from one model to another model that can utilize from its knowledge [34]. The transfer learning technique has been applied on the CNNs architectures to accelerate learning. The models were designed and loaded with pre-trained ImageNet weights. Transfer learning of the models was done by removing the original dense layers and substitute them with another.

D. Evaluation Metrics

The model's performance was tested for oracular fastness utilizing accuracy, precision, and recall in this study [35]. The metrics were thoughtful based on the data from the confusion matrix, which compared the actual data with model-predicted data results. The accuracy includes (true positives 'TP', true negatives 'TN') to the total number of prospects. The Precision is the proportion of correctly classified to the total number of positive states. The Recall is the proportion of positive instances to the sum of true positive and false negative instances [36]. F1-Score combines two key metrics: precision and recall. The formulas for accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-Score were introduced in Eq. (1) to Eq. (4), respectively.

$$\text{Accuracy} = \frac{\text{TP+TN}}{\text{TP+FN+FP+TN}} \quad (1)$$

$$\text{Precision} = \frac{\text{TP}}{\text{TP+TF}} \quad (2)$$

$$\text{Recall} = \frac{\text{TP}}{\text{TP+FN}} \quad (3)$$

$$\text{F1 score} = 2\left(\frac{\text{Recall.Precision}}{\text{Recall+Precision}}\right) \quad (4)$$

IV. Results and Discussion

The experiments were done on (GPU) on Google Colab. All testing was done on Windows 10 64-bit, utilizing a Core i7 processor operating at 2.3 GHz, 16 GB of RAM, and the programming language, Python. TensorFlow library was used in software coding. Also, Keras was used for pre-trained models loaded.

A. Results

The proposed method used DenseNet201, EfficientNetB0, VGG16, ResNet50, InceptionV3, and InceptionResNetV2 models. The pre-trained weights from ImageNet, the dense layers were removed in charge of the classification and were replaced with new dense layers that are particular to the task. The classification layers were trained, while the other layers remained frozen. Adam optimizer was used with a learning rate of 0.001, and batch size 16.

For every experiment, accuracy and categorical cross-entropy loss are used for evaluation of the models. The performances are graphically drawn for each model with accuracy and loss. Generally, the loss score and accuracy based on the test dataset are computed and used to set the performance of the models. Each of the experiment runs for 50 epochs. Training process graphs of EfficientNetB0, DenseNet201, VGG16, ResNet50, InceptionV3, and InceptionResNetV2 models are shown in Fig. 3 to Fig. 8. The figures describe the training and validation accuracy phases. Also, they describe the training and validation loss phases. The accuracy graphs show a steady increase in accuracy. The loss graphs show a piecemeal decrease in value as the number of epochs increases. These graphs distinguish issues, such as overfitting and underfitting.

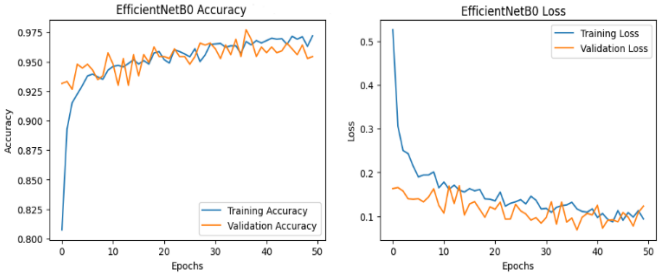

Fig. 3. Training graph of the EfficientNetB0 model.

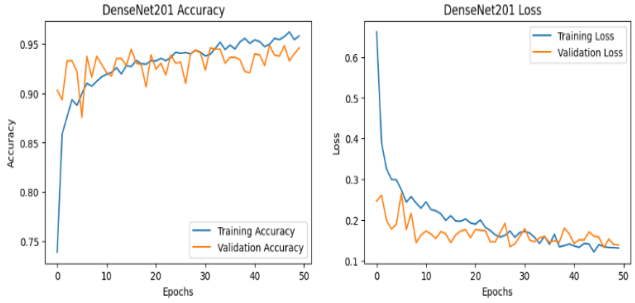

Fig. 4. Training graph of the DenseNet201 model.

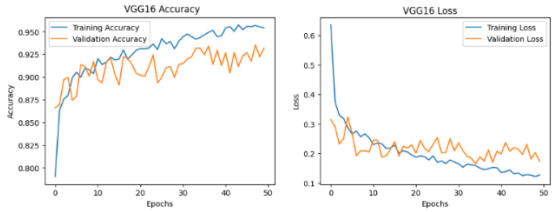

Fig. 5. Training graph of the VGG16 model.

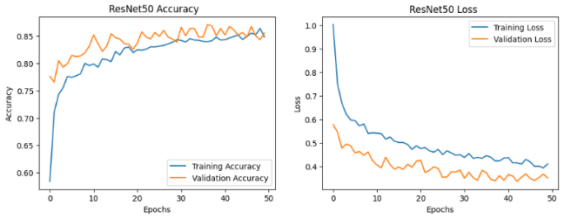

Fig. 6. Training graph of the ResNet50 model.

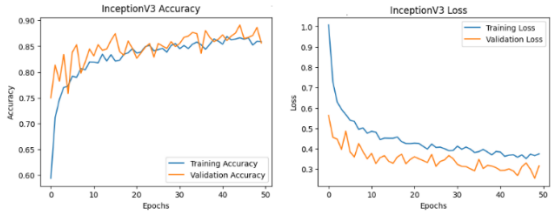

Fig. 7. Training graph of the InceptionV3 model.

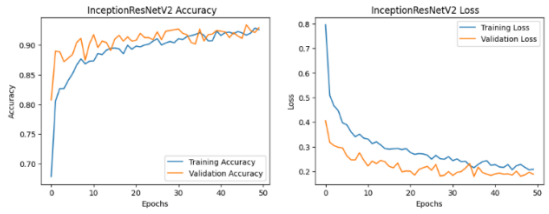

Fig. 8. Training graph of the InceptionResNetV2 model.

The experiments on the six models were executed by using a transfer learning approach, where some layers of the pre-trained model were kept frozen, while the classification layers were trained using the corn dataset. This technique allows the model to have the general knowledge gained from large datasets such as ImageNet dataset to the certain features of the used dataset in this work. Also, dropout was applied to the model in ratio 0.4 and 0.3. The dropout used to reduce the chance of overfitting while keeping the ability to capture important details from the training data. The results show no sign of the overfitting. Table II shows the results of the models, including the training accuracy, validation accuracy, loss, precision, recall, f- score, and training time per epoch of each model.

TABLE II. COMPARISION OF MODEL TESTING RESULT

Model	Training Acc. (%)	Training Loss (%)	Validation Acc. (%)	Validation Loss (%)	Precision (%)	Recall (%)	F-Score (%)	Time/Epoch
EfficientNetB0	97.67	0.06	94.85	0.15	94	94	94	71 s
DenseNet201	97.32	0.07	94.86	0.13	93	93	93	91 s
VGG16	95.22	0.12	94.54	0.16	92	92	92	76 s
ResNet50	87.44	0.33	86.48	0.34	84	84	84	80 s
InceptionV3	88.93	0.27	86.84	0.31	86	86	86	67 s
InceptionResNetV2	93.82	0.15	92.22	0.19	91	91	91	137 s

Based on the experiments result, the three superior models for corn classification are EfficientNetB0, DenseNet201, and VGG16. EfficientNetB0 shows the top performance with the highest accuracy of 97.67%, as well as equally high recall, precision, and F1-score (94%), making it the most efficient model. DenseNet201 is also an efficient model with competitive accuracy of up to 97%. Meanwhile, VGG16 achieved high accuracy (up to 95%) with a good inference time (76 seconds). On the other hand, ResNet50 shows the lowest accuracy.

B. Discussion

This section discusses the best performance achieved from the research results, namely the EfficientNetB0, DenseNet201, and VGG16 models. The first result from EfficientNetB0 produced a test accuracy of 94% and a loss of 15%. Fig. 9 shows the results of the testing data, while Fig. 10 shows the confusion matrix of the EfficientNetB0 model.

	precision	recall	f1-score	support
0	0.92	0.87	0.89	208.99999999999923
1	0.98	0.99	0.99	208.9999999999991
2	0.90	0.91	0.90	209.00000000000028
3	0.97	1.00	0.99	209.00000000000088
accuracy			0.94	835.9999999999995
macro avg	0.94	0.94	0.94	835.9999999999995
weighted avg	0.94	0.94	0.94	835.9999999999995

Fig. 9. Classification report of EfficientNetB0 model.

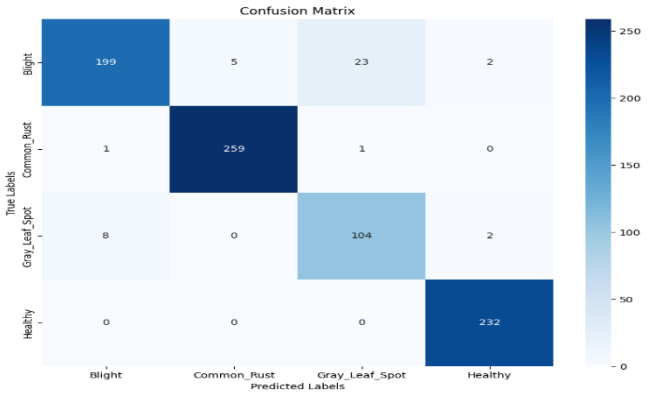

Fig. 10. Confusion matrix of EfficientNetB0 model.

Based on Fig. 9, the EfficientNetB0 model show a very high performance in classifying four corn classes. The precision value, recall, and F1-score of the healthy class are 97%, 100%, and 99%, respectively. The gray leaf class shows 90%, 91%, and 90%. The common rust class shows 98%, 99%, and 99%. Whereas, the blight class shows 92%, 87%, and 89%. The comprehensive test accuracy of the model reaches 94.85%.

	precision	recall	f1-score	support
0	0.86	0.88	0.87	208.99999999999923
1	0.97	1.00	0.98	208.9999999999991
2	0.90	0.84	0.87	209.00000000000028
3	1.00	1.00	1.00	209.00000000000088
accuracy			0.93	835.9999999999995
macro avg	0.93	0.93	0.93	835.9999999999995
weighted avg	0.93	0.93	0.93	835.9999999999995

Fig. 11. Classification report of DenseNet201 model.

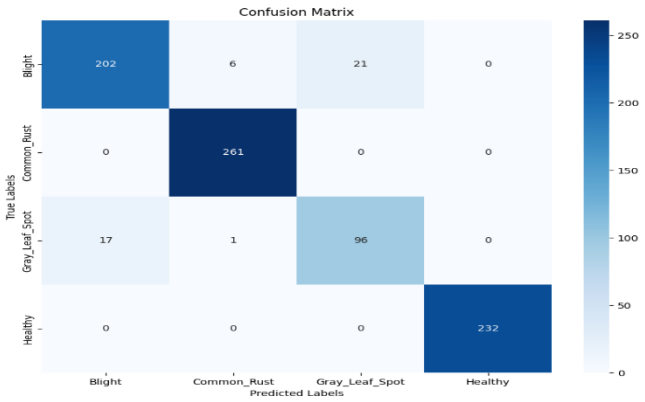

Fig. 12. Confusion matrix of DenseNet201model.

Second, the DenseNet201 model showed as well high classification performance with total test accuracy of 94.86%. In the healthy class, the model produced equally value of precision, recall, and F1-score reaching 100%. It suggested how well the model's strength can classify healthy cases. Also, the common rust class shows efficient performance of 97%, 100%, and 98%. The gray leaf class shows 90%, 84%, and 87%. The blight class shows slightly low performance of 86%, 88%, and 87%. Fig. 11 shows the classification report for the DenseNet201 model, while Fig. 12 shows its confusion matrix.

	precision	recall	f1-score	support
0	0.88	0.83	0.85	208.99999999999923
1	0.97	1.00	0.98	208.9999999999991
2	0.87	0.87	0.87	209.00000000000028
3	0.98	1.00	0.99	209.00000000000088
accuracy			0.92	835.9999999999995
macro avg	0.92	0.92	0.92	835.9999999999995
weighted avg	0.92	0.92	0.92	835.9999999999995

Fig. 13. Classification report of the VGG16 model.

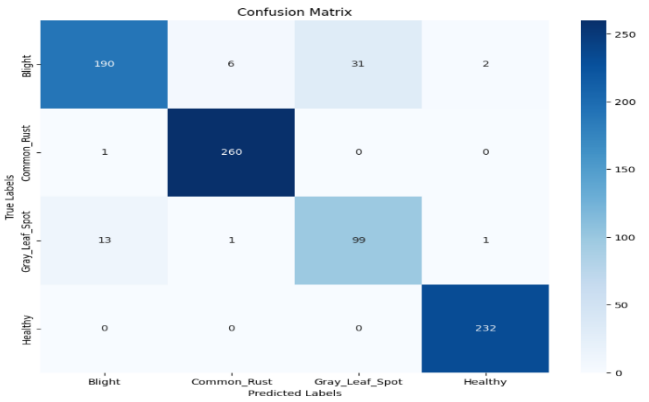

Fig. 14. Confusion matrix of VGG16 model.

And at last, VGG16, obtained a test accuracy of 94.54% and a loss of 16%. The test results of VGG16 model and its confusion matrix is shown in Fig. 13 and Fig. 14, respectively. The model introduced a good performance in identifying the corn categories. The blight class has a precision value of 88%, recall of 83%, and F1-score of 85%, signing that it is lower effective in identifying most blight cases. In contrast, in the rust class, the precision value is registered as higher, 97%, recall of 100%, and F1-score of 98%. In healthy class, the model achieved very good values of precision of 98%, recall of 100%, and F1-score of 99%. In the gray class, the model produced equally value of precision, recall, and F1-score reaching 87%. Despite some variance in identification between classes, the model still shows high performance for using in corn image classification.

TABLE III. COMPARISON OF MODEL EVALUATION RESULT WITH PREVIOUS STUDIES

Proposed Method	Acc (%) This Study	Acc (%) [11]	Acc (%) [12]	Acc (%) [13]	Acc (%) [18]	Acc (%) [20]
EfficientNetB0	97.67	-	94	-	-	-
DenseNet201	97.3	94.6	-	-	-	96
VGG16	95.5	-	-	92.33	92.58	-

While this study essentially focuses on classification accuracy, future research may discuss detection of corn images and use of agriculture robots to control the diseases. Table III provides a detailed comparison between the results of this study relative to these in previous works.

V. CONCLUSION

This study evaluated six deep learning architectures, namely, DenseNet201, EfficientNetB0, VGG16, ResNet50, InceptionV3, and InceptionResNetV2, for corn leaf diseases classification. Among the models, EfficientNetB0 achieved the highest accuracy of 97.67%, showing superior efficiency and balanced precision-recall-f-score performance with fast inference time. DenseNet201 and VGG16 also showed competitive accuracy (97.32% and 95.22%). This study exposes the use of a transfer learning approach that was applied to overcome dataset limitations and to achieve high accuracy with fast computational time. These findings confirm that the transfer learning approach can provide a stable and efficient framework for plant disease classification.

Overall, the experiments result manifest that CNN-based architectures, especially EfficientNetB0, can be used in advanced AI image classification applications. In the future, it may help smart agriculture robots by using digital image processing and detection. It is imperative to apply smart techniques to safeguard plants and assist farmers in disease species and control. Such great efforts will go a long way to help farmers to tackle corn diseases, maintain their sustenance, and support the economy.

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Attention-Enhanced Hierarchical Transformer for Multimodal Integration of Mammograms and Clinical Data

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***Abstract*—Breast cancer has been listed as one of the leading causes of death amongst women all over the world, and the current diagnostic techniques, which are founded on the manual examination of mammograms or individual clinical presentations, are often subjective, neither being consistent nor generalizable. The existing computer-aided diagnosis (CAD) systems are also characterized by significant weaknesses related to poor multimodal integration, no interpretability, and vulnerability to class imbalance. In order to address the inadequacy, the present study introduces an advanced multimodal deep learning framework named Hybrid Graph-Generative Transformer (HGGT), designed to integrate high-resolution mammographic images with the clinical, demographic, proteomic, and histological data pertinent to the patient. The HGGT network is a hierarchical Swin Transformer and CNN-based feature extraction, a Graph Attention Network (GAT) (to identify clinical variable interaction), and a contrastive cross-modal generative fusion system (to match the different modalities). The diagnostic head employs a Bayesian uncertainty-aware classifier to ensure more reliability in the prediction of malignancy. It is trained on 5-fold cross-validation, AdamW, and a cosine annealing scheduler, which is set on Python 3.10. It is demonstrated by the performance of the CBIS-DDSM mammography dataset and a corresponding clinical dataset consisting of over 400 patients that HGGT is much superior with 98.2% accuracy, 98.7% precision, 98.5% recall, 99.2% F1-score, and 99.1% AUC-ROC, having a significant advantage over the established models of ResNet50, EfficientNet-B0 and GAN-enhanced CNN classifier. Overall, the HGGT framework is delivering a scalable, interpretable, and highly accurate diagnosis solution that was a huge improvement over the existing unimodal and poorly integrated CAD system in the detection of breast cancer.**

Keywords*—Breast cancer diagnosis; multimodal deep learning; Graph Attention Network; Bayesian uncertainty estimation; explainable AI

I. Introduction

Among the most prevalent and deadly illnesses impacting women globally is breast cancer. The WHO model states that earlier treatments dramatically lower mortality, and prompt and precise identification is crucial for increasing lifespan [1]. Since mammography allows for the quick detection of abnormalities, it is an extremely widely used technique for preventing cancer in the breast [1]. Yet, visual interpretation of mammograms [2] is an involved and labor-intensive task susceptible to subjectivity and inter-reader variability [3]. Superimposition of overlapping tissue structures, poor contrast, and nuanced variations further add to the challenge in accurate diagnosis [4]. Consequently, an increased demand exists for robust and automatic CAD systems for radiologists to detect malignancies more precisely and with greater efficiency [5].

Manual CAD systems are dependent on hand-tuned feature extraction methods and traditional machine learning tools [6]. Although some success has been reported with these methods, the quality of feature extraction and a lack of generality across large and varied datasets usually limit their performance [7]. These traditional methods further need significant amounts of domain-specific knowledge for feature engineering, limiting their flexibility towards actual clinical use [8]. The latest improvements in deep learning, specifically CNNs, have transformed medical image analysis to a great extent, with the capability for automatic feature learning and state-of-the-art accuracy in classification problems [9]. Nonetheless, deep models depend on extensive and well-labeled datasets for good generalization [10]. The rarity of labeled mammographic images and also class imbalance within datasets makes the task difficult to train precise DL models for detecting breast cancer [11]. The latest advances in breast cancer detection use deep learning on transformers and attention models, and are used on either imaging-only data or clinical-only data [12]. The study

hypothesizes a single Hybrid Graph Generative Transformer (HGGT) to integrate hierarchical mammographic image attributes with graph-coded clinical information through a contrastive multimodal alignment process to deliver high-fidelity, interpretable and uncertainty-aware diagnosis of breast-cancer. Although there is progress in multimodal breast cancer CAD, current approaches tend to use shallow fusion, poor modeling of the interactions between clinical variables and individual assessment of uncertainty. In order to address these shortcomings, this study introduces a Hybrid Graph-Generative Transformer (HGGT) that integrates hierarchical features of imaging, graph-based clinical reasoning, and Bayesian uncertainty modeling into one diagnostic model.

A. Research Motivation

Breast cancer is one of the causes of death among women and the treatment of this disease depends upon early and accurate diagnosis. Manually interpreted mammograms and single clinical evaluations have been known to be quite subjective, slow and lack uniformity. Even though higher diagnostic potential is possible with the multimodal combination of imaging and clinical data, there is still a problem of poor generalization, data imbalance, and limited interpretability in the current AI-based systems. The issues cited above represent the necessity of an integrated, hybrid, deep-learning model that can provide strong, interpretable and clinically meaningful predictions of breast cancer. The recent advancements in deep learning have provided improved performance in the system, but the existing CAD systems do not indicate the complementary relationship between the mammographic features and the patient-specific clinical characteristics. It motivates the development of a multimodal system that can acquire joint descriptions in different modalities, such that more robust situation-aware diagnostic decisions can be made.

B. Problem Statement

Diagnosing breast cancer is not easy due to the weaknesses of the current computer-aided detectors, which usually apply either of the two separately, either in mammographic pictures or clinical data. Breast cancer has been a major health concern to the world and early detection has been the most appropriate measure in increasing the survival chances and this is primarily through screening mammograms [13]. Even though the recent advances in deep learning (DL) have considerably enhanced the diagnosis of breast cancer, most of the existing systems employ either clinical or imaging data, as compared to their potential to provide the entire diagnostic image [14]. Current methods of diagnosis are still restricted by single-modality dependence, a low level of generalizability, and the lack of clinical interpretability. The state-of-the-art deep learning models are not effective at modeling complex clinical relationships and integrating heterogeneous data. This poses a sense of urgency in having an integrated, explainable multimodal structure that combines both the mammographic and clinical information into a transformer-graph architecture to have a reliable breast cancer diagnosis.

C. Research Significance

The suggested Hybrid Graph-Generative Transformer (HGGT) is a significant innovation in breast cancer diagnostics. It combines the use of generative modeling, graph-based clinical encoding, and transformer-based multimodal feature fusion into a single deep learning pipeline. This architecture can also solve most of the important challenges that include data sparsity, class imbalance, and inter-modal correspondence, and remain interpretable and uncertainty-aware predictions. The HGGT is a framework that enhances the accuracy of diagnosis and clinical reliability by combining the model of mammographic features and patient-specific clinical variables. Using transformer-based imaging analysis, clinical reasoning in the form of graphs, and contrastive multimodal fusion, HGGT makes interpretable predictions and uncertainty-aware predictions. It is the relationship between radiological observations and formalized clinical experiences and the following generation of multimodal, precision-concentrated CAD systems.

D. Research Question and Hypothesis

Do unified multimodal deep learning systems, which combine mammographic images with structured clinical data using graph-based reasoning and transformer-based fusion, offer more accurate, interpretable, and uncertainty-aware breast cancer diagnosis compared to current unimodal or loosely integrated CAD systems?

We hypothesize that joint hierarchical image features and interaction of clinical variables modeled with Hybrid Graph-Generative Transformer (HGGT) will significantly improve diagnostic performance, high resiliency to class imbalance, and clinical meaningfulness.

E. Key Contributions

- Proposes a common framework of HGGT that gives precedence to a mammographic image and organized clinical information in the diagnosis of breast cancer.
- Introduces graph-guided transformer fusion to explicitly model clinical biomarker interactions beyond conventional feature concatenation or shallow multimodal fusion.
- Derives a fusion strategy based on contrastive pyramid fusion that matches the representation of imaging at multiple levels with clinical aspects to enhance the resilience of class imbalance.
- Integrates Bayesian uncertainty estimation and dual-modality explainability to support reliable, interpretable, and clinically meaningful diagnostic decision-making.

The rest of the study is structured in the following manner: Section II includes a thorough literature review of the literature concerning the topic of breast cancer diagnosis and multimodal deep learning. Section III gives the research problem and outlines the proposed Hybrid Graph-Generative Transformer (HGGT) methodology step-by-step. Section IV reports the experimental framework, findings, and performance analysis of the proposed framework. Lastly, Section V gives a conclusion in the study outlining the main findings and possible ways of conducting further studies.

II. Literature Review

Although ultrasound imaging is a vital diagnostic technique used to identify breast cancer, the efficiency of computerized

diagnosis systems is typically limited by the absence of properly annotated data. Chaudhury and Sau [15] suggest a deep learning (DL)-derived architecture that incorporates TL, GANs and a creative data augmentation method for ultrasonography image-based mammary mass classification. Because breast tumors can be accurately identified through minimally invasive procedures, thanks to early identification and precise categorization, they can significantly reduce the number of fatalities. Data augmentation by GAN enhances classification performance, and TL-based feature extraction enhances accuracy even more. Results prove the effectiveness of DL approaches to classify breast ultrasound images. The current article proposes a new technique of breast mass detection via data augmentation using GAN and TL-based feature learning for enhanced diagnostic performance. Results presented illustrate how this approach outperforms existing algorithms and has the capability to improve computer-assisted breast cancer diagnosis systems.

It is a severe global health problem that needs to be continuously enhanced in terms of approaches to identification and classification. In reference to identifying breast cancer a machine learning approach is described by Alawee et al.[16] as a result of distinguishing benign and malignant mammography. The study recommends a two-hidden-layer ANN model in order to enhance the accuracy of the classification. Before analysis, mammography images are subject to preprocessing, including data denoising, contrast normalization, and a GAN to make the data better. This is a multi-step improvement of image quality that reforms the information in an analysis-optimized format through the vectorization of pixel data. It is only on such improved images that ANN is trained, and the results are good as far as the improvement of classification performances is concerned. The experimental findings suggest the existence of accuracy improvement over normal scans, and accuracy in the final model is close to perfection with different preprocessing strategies. In the study, the strength of data augmentation and ANN-classification when used in the context of medical imaging has been emphasized, as well as how these resources can be used to impact the detection and treatment at its initial stages. This powerful platform of detection is a valuable contribution to biotechnology and an area where new AI-based applications of medical diagnosis are justified.

Strelcenia and Prakoonwit [17] explains past research has proven that early and precise detection can have a huge impact on patient outcomes. GANs have been gaining attention in medical imaging in recent times to create synthetic images as well as non-image data for diagnostic use. Provide a K-CGAN technique that produces high-quality simulated data by learning in several distinct settings. Five distinct categorization and feature extraction methods were applied to the non-image Wisconsin Breast Cancer dataset, consisting comprised 212 benign and 357 malignant instances, to use synthetic data to assess our proposed K-CGAN's effectiveness. Our empirical study's findings support the notion that K-CGAN outperforms other GAN types in terms of classification accuracy and stability. Our evidence demonstrates that K-CGAN-generated synthetic data closely resembles the actual dataset.

Swiderski et al. [18] present the Autoencoder-GAN (AGAN) model, which was used in the evaluation of mammograms as a data augmentation method to generate additional mammogram images. This aids in enhancing the current dataset, addressing the problem of limited data in medical images. The created images and actual mammograms were fed into a CNN for classification. The proposed system was designed to differentiate normal from abnormal mammograms. The proposed system was implemented for identifying and an experimental assessment was performed on a large dataset of image database. The outcome proved the superiority of the developed deep learning model over current mammogram classification methods. These performance metrics are among the best for this big data, indicating the effectiveness of AGAN-based augmentation in improving breast cancer diagnosis.

Sharma et al. [19] conducted a comprehensive comparative study whose aim was to determine the most effective deep learning architecture to classify mammographic breast cancer. They were aimed at comparing general-purpose models (including ResNet50, ConvNeXt, ViT) to mammography-specific models (including FCCS-Net, ViT-Mammo, and GLAM-Net) with a single benchmarking plan. The authors used four publicly available datasets, which guaranteed the reproducibility of experimentation based on similar training protocols. Their assessment was multi-dimensional, with their classification performance, interpretability through Grad-CAM and attention maps, model calibration, inference time, complexity of computation and deployment in the list of assessment criteria. It was shown that mammogram-specific models, especially FCCS-Net and ViT-Mammo, displayed a higher diagnostic performance and a more enhanced visual interpretability, with ViT-Mammo presenting an AUC of 0.961. EfficientNetB0 and DenseNet121 were lightweight architectures that were well-suited to deployment on the edge. Nevertheless, variability in datasets is the main limitation of the study since inconsistency between datasets could restrict the model's generalizability, and clinical validation in actual practice has not yet been studied.

Zhang et al. [20] have suggested a miscellaneous supervised multi-view mammography screening framework that is aimed at addressing the weakness of traditional mammography interpretation. Their study was to ease the workload of radiologists, solve the low uptake in the remote geographical areas and overcome the lack of sufficient data to support intelligent early screening systems. The authors presented a context clustering -based feature extraction mechanism, unlike CNN and transformer architectures, augmented with multi-view learning to complement information between mammographic perspectives. They tested the model on 2 publicly available datasets, VinDr-Mammo and CBIS-DDSM, and obtained competitive results with reduced parameter counts, having the AUC scores of 0.828 and 0.805, respectively. This is the major strength of the model since it has a low-cost of computation and is adaptable under a weak supervision state, which is promising in low-resource environments. The method, however, has shortcomings that include moderate accuracy relative to current transformer-based models, non-availability of interpretability tools and requirement to further validate the methodology on larger and more diverse clinical data.

Fatima et al. [21] utilized a methodology of research to examine the progress of deep learning in medical image segmentation involving medical imaging modalities, such as

MRI, CT, ultrasound, dermoscopy, and histopathology. Their study was aimed at analyzing the segmentation techniques, describing the new transformer-based architectures, and comparing the trends of the performance through the PRISMA review framework. The authors have analyzed a large variety of datasets in different modalities with much emphasis on dermato-pathology and skin lesion imaging. Their findings have proven that transformer-based models are much better than the traditional CNN-based methods with the highest accuracy of 79.95 per cent in multitask cancer detection or 93.4 per cent in liver lesion segmentation. Frameworks that enhanced attention like G2LL and PistoSeg, further enriched the accuracy of segmentation by 5-15 per cent. Although these things are accomplished, the review also points out that there are multiple limitations: they require substantial computational time, are dependent on large sets of annotated data, and cannot generalize to other imaging fields or run all complicated transformer models on a clinical device in real-time.

Breast cancer has to be managed and treated early in time. Prodan et al. [22] also discuss the use of DL algorithms to improve the process of mammography analysis and pay special attention to the necessity to use advanced computational methods to enhance the performance. The project analyzes several computer vision architectures (CNNs and ViTs), observed on a publicly available dataset. Synthetic data augmentation to enhance the performance of a model is one of the primary characteristics of the research. The importance of preprocessing and data augmentation methods in attaining high classification accuracy is demonstrated by the experimental results. The results highlight the value of data augmentation in maximizing the efficacy of deep learning in mammography classification.

Despite the effectiveness of CNNs, GANs, and transformer-based models, which have been established in the previous studies to handle breast cancer diagnosis, most of the methods are constrained to single-modality inputs, do not explicitly model clinical feature interactions, and give deterministic predictions without estimating uncertainty. Simply concatenating features, multimodal efforts tend to be unable to represent fine-grained cross-modal correspondences or be subject to clinical interpretation. Moreover, there are not many systems combining graph-based clinical reasoning with hierarchical images representations. Such deficiencies encourage the construction of the proposed HGGT framework, integrating the multimodal fusion, graph attention, contrastive learning, and Bayesian uncertainty modeling within a single and interpretable architecture.

III. Multimodal Transformer-GAT Breast Diagnosis Framework

The proposed research, a hybrid framework named Hybrid Graph–Generative Transformer (HGGT) will be created that will acquire knowledge of the trends of the mammographic images as well as the patterns between the patient and the mammography to enhance the diagnosis of breast cancer. The HGGT integrates hierarchical visualization with graphical clinical reasoning because mammograms cause structure patterns which have proven essential in identifying breast cancer and relation dependencies between clinical variables including hormone receptor status, histological type, and the disease stage. The conventional computer-aided diagnostic (CAD) systems are primarily based on imaging modalities, and they fail to capture important contextual variables, including tumor stage, receptor status, or histological variables. On the contrary, clinical data only based models are unsuccessful in representing the rich structural and textural variations which can be found in mammograms. As a solution to these shortcomings, the offered HGGT framework will be based on the hybrid multimodal approach that uses the advantages of both imaging and non-imaging data sources to aid each other. Mammographic and clinical data is preprocessed to create consistency and quality at the start of the pipeline. The feature extraction is done in two complementary but independent directions which consist of a Swin Transformer-CNN fusion that extracts both global and local features based on mammograms and a Graph Attention Network (GAT) which codes the relationships among the clinical features. These embeddings are then cross-modally fused together, and these embeddings are projected to a single latent space that reflects the general characteristics of the disease. Lastly, adaptive Bayesian diagnostic head can predict the probability of malignancy with uncertainty estimation, which are facilitated by visual and clinical interpretability tools. The proposed strategy is a multimodal fusion strategy, unlike other traditional multimodal fusion strategies, which incorporates both graph-based clinical reasoning and hierarchical transformer features together as a single fusion pipeline. Fig. 1 shows the entire process of the proposed methodology.

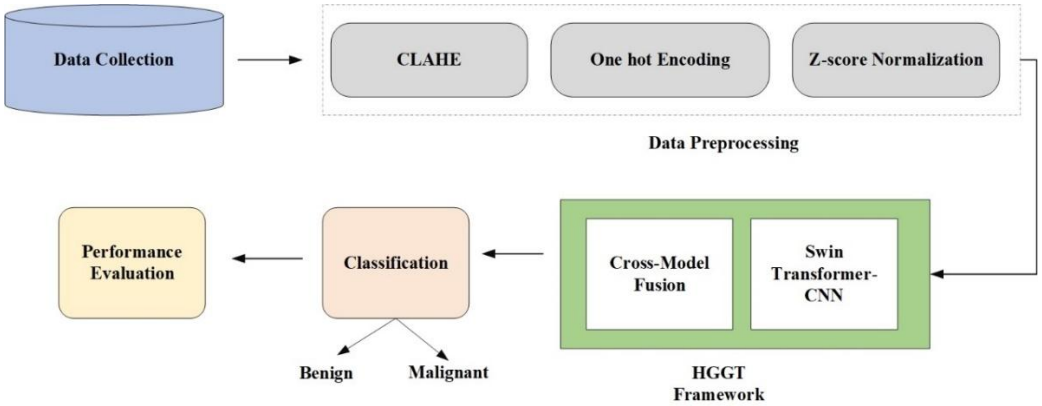

Fig 1. Proposed framework for breast cancer detection.

A. Data Collection

The study creates a strong diagnostic model using two complementary datasets, where firstly CBIS-DDSM repository comprises two datasets of 6,775 and 10,239 high-resolution mammograms of 1,566 clinically profiled participants [23]. The images are of different cases of breast cancer such as normal, benign, and malignant lesions with confirmed pathology, and thus can be used in the development and testing of CADx and CADe systems. Dataset 2 includes clinical and proteomic data of patients with breast cancer, patient demographics, stage of the disease, histology, and hormone receptor status (ER, PR, HER2), protein expression levels, surgery type, and patient outcome (alive/dead) [24].

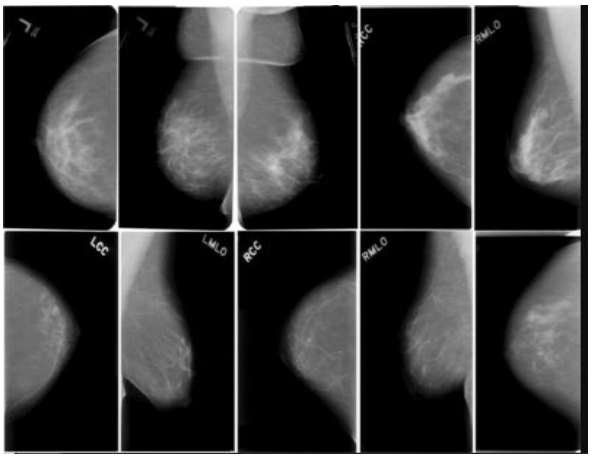

Fig 2. Multiview structural mammary radiograph set.

Fig. 2 presents mammographic images that are organized in two rows which demonstrate the craniocaudal (CC) and the mediolateral oblique (MLO) projections of various breasts. All panels show an X-ray image in grayscale with different degrees of densities of breast tissue observable whereby there are fatty tissues and more dense fibroglandular tissues. The borders of the breasts are well defined and the patterns of the internal tissues seem to be heterogeneous with the presence of overlaying layers that are common in screening mammograms. These labels include LCC, LMLO, RCC, and RMLO to show the orientation of the left and right breast and the imaging angles. In general, the set represents a realistic visual image of the multi-view mammographic acquisitions in clinical screening of the breast to guarantee the visualization of the structures of the breast.

B. Data Pre-Processing

To achieve adequate deep learning to detect breast cancer, both images of mammograms and clinical data should be properly preprocessed. The preprocessing of the images entails the extraction of the breast region through thresholding and connected component analysis and resizing all the images to 512 x 512 to provide uniform input to the Swin Transformer backbone. The intensities of the pixels are normalized with the z-score and CLAHE is used to increase the visibility of the lesions.

$$Z_n(x,y) = \frac{Z(x,y)-\mu}{\sigma} \quad (1)$$

In Eq. (1), $Z(x, y)$ is the original pixel intensity and feature value, μ is the mean intensity, σ is the standard deviation, and $Z_n(x, y)$ is the normalized pixel value.

$$I_{eq}(x,y) = \frac{(L-1)}{MN}\sum_{i=0}^{I(x,y)} h(i) \quad (2)$$

In Eq. (2), L is intensity level number, M and N are image size, $h(i)$ is count of histogram intensity i, $I_{eq}(x, y)$ is improved image intensity.

C. Feature Extraction via Hybrid Fusion

1) Imaging pathway: The imaging pathway uses a hybrid CNN architecture based on Swin Transformer to generate a set of diverse features of mammograms. The Swin Transformer represents the world contextual information, general breast structures, tissue distribution, and spatial relations of the whole image. This allows the network to learn macro-level trends that will be important in the detection of malignancies that can be large. At the same time, the CNN element activates on local, fine-gained characteristics, including the shape of lesions, margins, textures, and microcalcifications, and secures that subtle signs of illness are maintained. With the two architectures put together, the model has both global and local structural understanding which enhances its effectiveness in discriminating between benign and malignant tissues. The hybrid scheme enables the downstream modules to take advantage of a rich and multiple scale set of features to improve the overall predictive performance and interpretability of the breast cancer diagnosis model. The architecture combines CNN and multi-scale Swin Transformer phases starting with patch partitioning and linear embedding which allows the ViT branches and convolutional layers to concatenate and feed into a linear detecting module which allows localization of breast cancer and a robust learning of multi-resolution features. The visual representation is shown in Fig. 3.

2) Clinical pathway: Graph Attention Network (GAT) is utilized to encode patient-specific clinical characteristics, including age, tumor stage, receptor status (ER/PR/HER2) and histology. The GAT is able to capture interdependencies between clinical features and the model is able to comprehend how particular biomarkers, stages, or demographic variables affect each other with regard to malignancy. Here, patient attributes are modeled as nodes and the relationship among the features are modeled as edges, which allows the network to learn weighted interactions between the features that can be used to determine their relative importance in the diagnosis process. The attention mechanism of GAT assigns learnable attention coefficients α_{ij} to the edges between nodes, computed as shown in Eq. (3):

$$\alpha_{ij} = \frac{\exp\left(LeakyReLU(a^T[Wh_i||Wh_j])\right)}{\sum_{k\epsilon \mathrm{N}(i)} \exp\left(LeakyReLU(a^T[W_{x_i}||W_{x_k}])\right)} \quad (3)$$

where, h_i and h_j are node feature vectors, W is a learnable weight matrix, a is the attention vector, and $\mathrm{N}_i$represents the neighbors of node i. The final node representation is obtained, as shown in Eq. (4):

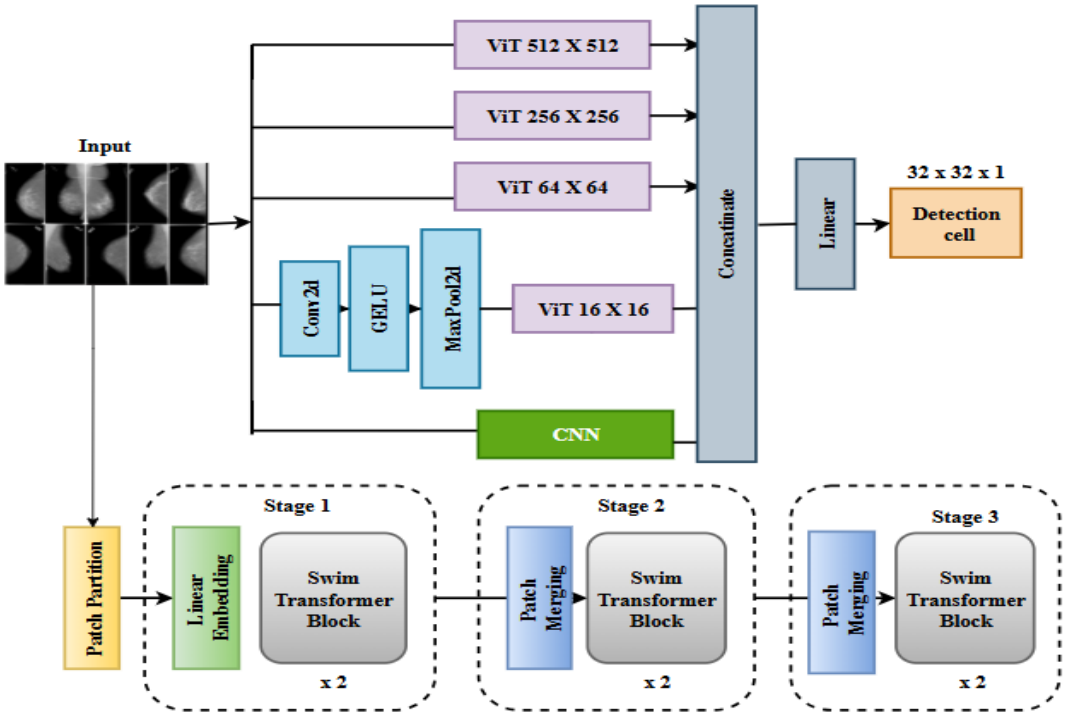

Fig 3. Swin Transformer: CNN architecture for breast cancer detection.

$$h_i' = \sigma(\sum_{j \in N_i} \alpha_{ij} W h_j) \quad (4)$$

Such a mechanism gives priority to the most predictive clinical features and makes sure that important data has a higher contribution to the downstream fusion with imaging embeddings. The resulting embeddings offer a rich representation of patient-centric clinical profiles, enhancing predictive capacity, interpretability, and clinical usefulness of hybrid HGGT framework. The system can predict malignancy more accurately and reliably, with more meaningful clinical predictions by modeling these complicated dependencies.

3) Cross-modal fusion: A contrastive pyramid fusion mechanism is used to align the embeddings of both the imaging and clinical pathways in a common latent space in order to be able to combine imaging and clinical information effectively. This strategy will guarantee that the complementary information between both of the mammograms and patient specific attributes are pooled together in a way that will not affect the relationships within and across modalities. The fusion mechanism is mainly concerned with regional-level fusion, in which imaging characteristics of certain quadrants of the breast are correlated with certain clinical variables, including tumor stage or histology of the region. This allows the model to develop a relationship with contextual imaging patterns and clinical features to develop a more comprehensive knowledge of disease manifestations. The conflicting nature of the fusion stimulates consistency between imaging and clinical embeddings without losing modality-specific discriminative characteristics. Consequently, the unified representation has complete spatial and clinical information that enhances the system to distinguish between benign and malignant conditions. The pyramid fusion mechanism improves the interpretability as well as the predictive power of the hybrid HGGT framework by focusing on clinically relevant regional correlations. This will enable the model to provide patient-specific predictions of malignancy, which are not only accurate but also clinically relevant which is why it is essential in real-life settings of breast cancer diagnostics.

a) Local level: On local level, the model focuses on minute relationships between individual mammographic lesions and clinical biomarkers. Characteristics of the lesion (shape, size, margin and texture) used as indicators of malignancy are correlated with patient specific characteristics (ER/PR/HER2 status and histopathological outcomes). Lesion-level imaging embeddings are contrastively fused against clinically useful feature embeddings, promoting biologically meaningful associations. This would enable detection of the minor cases of abnormalities that could not be known by the global analysis and sensitivity to the early tumors. The local-level mapping is also more interpretative in that the observer can easily view what lesions and biomarkers are being taken to inform the diagnosis making it a clinically coherent relationship between the visual evidence and the patient biology. It is expressed in Eq. (5):

$$\mathcal{L}_{local} = -\log\left(\frac{\exp(sim(z_i, z_c)/\tau)}{\sum_{k=1}^{N} \exp(sim(z_i, z_k)/\tau)}\right) \quad (5)$$

$\mathcal{L}_{local}$ measures the correspondence between the data of individual lesion imaging and the related biological biomarkers, supporting fine grained associations. It enhances the early

detection of tumors by increasing similarity between true lesion biomarker pairs and dissimilarity irrelevant pairs.

b) Regional level: At the regional level, the specific emphasis on individual lesions is replaced with more general consideration of specific breast quadrants, combining the examination of imaging characteristics with the relevant clinical data. The quadrants of each breast are examined to retrieve the trends of the tissue distributions, changes in densities, and the clustering of the lesions that can represent localized disease development. These regional imaging phenomena are integrated with clinical qualities appropriate to that quadrant, including the tumor stage, histology, or regional biomarker expression, to obtain a situation in which there is a relationship between the anatomical structures and biological markers. The pyramid fusion of contrastive coupling combines imaging embeddings z_i and clinical z_c paths on the regional level, with paired embeddings being dragged towards each other and unrelated ones being drawn away. This is optimized through contrastive loss that is defined, as shown in Eq. (6):

$$L_{con} = -log \frac{\exp(sim(z_i, z_c)/\tau)}{\sum_{k=1}^{N} \exp(sim(z_i, z_k)/\tau)} \quad (6)$$

where, sim $(\cdot)$ is the cosine similarity function, τ is the temperature parameter, and N is the number of samples in batch [see Eq. (7)].

$$\mathcal{L}_{regional} = -\log\left(\frac{\exp(sim(z_i, z_c)/\tau)}{\sum_{k=1}^{N} \exp(sim(z_i, z_k)/\tau)}\right) \quad (7)$$

$\mathcal{L}_{regional}$ optimizes contrastive fusion between quadrant-level imaging patterns and region-specific clinical attributes. It models localized disease progression, ensuring anatomically meaningful embeddings while discouraging incorrect clinical associations within each breast region.

With its focus on the connection with the clinical data and the quadrant-level imaging patterns, the model consequently reveals the subtle interactions, including the effect of tumor staging on the morphology of lesions or a group of lesions within a quadrant. The regional-level integration improves predictive performance by providing the link between the local lesion characteristics and the global breast-level contexts in addition to improving interpretability by providing clinically significant correlations.

c) Global level: The cross- modal fusion mechanism of global level will integrate the whole breast imaging features with the whole clinical history of the patient to acquire macro-level patterns that can be used in diagnosing. The imaging route also provides a clear image of the breast structure, tissue distribution, bilateral symmetry as well as general change in organization which can result in the implication of diffuse or multifocal malignancies. These universal visual representations are integrated with the specific clinical variables, including the demographics, tumor stage, receptor status and histological data. By making the two modalities correlated to latent space, contrastive fusion enables the model to learn common patterns, and complementary interactions, which cannot be learned when the two data are trained separately when imaging and clinical data are used. The integration will assist HGGT to place local and regional abnormalities within the broader context of the physiological, and clinical history of the patient. The given form of panoptic gaze is not only more precise in diagnosis, particularly regarding the multi lesion or complex cases, but also more interpretable since the fact of developing the global breast features and knowing the patient in its entirety has been demonstrated to be predictive of malignancy. It is expressed in Eq. (8):

$$\mathcal{L}_{global} = |f_{img}(X_{breast}) - f_{clin}(C_{patient})|_2^2 \quad (8)$$

$\mathcal{L}_{global}$ minimizes the L2 distance between whole-breast imaging representation $f_{img}(X_{breast})$and complete clinical profile embedding $f_{clin}(C_{patient})$, enabling holistic multimodal alignment that captures global diagnostic trends.

D. Adaptive Diagnostic Head

The adaptive diagnostic head uses a Bayesian classifier to give malignancy predictions along with estimates of confidence that the model may use to assess the predictive uncertainty. The Bayesian approach contrasts with the traditional deterministic classifiers which make only point predictions, but the distribution of the prediction probabilities. For an input representation x, the predictive distribution is developed, as shown in Eq. (9):

$$p(y|x, D) = \int p(y|x, w)p(w|D)dw \quad (9)$$

where, $p(y|x,w)$ is the likelihood, given the model parameters w, and $p(w|D)$ is the posterior distribution over weights conditioned on the training data D. Since the exact posterior is intractable, variational inference or Monte Carlo dropout is employed to approximate this integral, yielding both class probabilities and uncertainty estimates.

This uncertainty-conscious model enables the model to differentiate between confident and uncertain predictions to contribute to more trustworthy clinical decision-making. Grad-CAM++ and attention heatmaps are also added in order to make the process more interpretable, and to identify the important parts of the image and clinical features that predict malignancy. Such two-fold focus on quantification of uncertainty and explainability makes the HGGT framework a predictive framework that gives not only accurate predictions, but also makes them transparent and clinically meaningful.

E. Training Objective

HGGT framework is end-to-end trained with the unified goal to achieve accurate classification, effective cross-modal alignment, and uncertainty estimation. In general, the loss is determined, as shown in Eq. (10):

$$L_{total} = \beta L_{cls} + \gamma L_{con} + \delta L_{unc} \quad (10)$$

Here, LL_{cls} is the classification loss, which is represented with cross-entropy and guarantees the similarity of the predicted malignancy outcome with the actual diagnostic results. L_{con} is the contrastive loss, which aims at aligning mammogram embeddings Swin-CNN with those of clinical embeddings of the GAT and enhances shared feature space representation. L_{unc} represents the uncertainty-sensitive loss, which also applies a penalty to incorrect judgments which are overconfident and

promotes better model calibration of Bayesian inference ideas. The coefficients β, γ and, δ are weighting factors to equal the contribution of each term of loss. With these values changed, the framework can focus on accuracy, consistency of representation or uncertainty calibration when needed. This integrated training approach guarantees that HGGT not only demonstrates high predictive accuracy but also gives reliable, interpretable and clinically meaningful results. The combination of classification, contrastive alignment, and uncertainty modeling enables the system to generate strong diagnostic predictions and also has transparency in how the system arrives at a decision.

Algorithm 1: HGGT Framework for Breast Cancer Detection

Input:
Medical Images (X)
Clinical Data (C)
Labels (Y)
Output:
Predicted Diagnosis (Ŷ)
Data Preprocessing
Normalize images (min-max scaling)
Clean & normalize clinical data (z-score normalization)
Split into training, validation, and test sets
Feature Extraction
Imaging Pathway: Swin Transformer for global structures + CNN for fine-grained lesion features.
Clinical Pathway: Graph Attention Network (GAT) encodes interdependencies among clinical features

$$h_i' = \sigma(\sum_{j \epsilon N_i} \alpha_{ij} W h_j)$$

Cross-Modal Fusion
Contrastive pyramid fusion aligns imaging and clinical embeddings.
Regional-level fusion applied with contrastive loss:

$$L_{con} = -log \frac{\exp\ (sim(z_i, z_c)/\tau)}{\sum_{k=1}^{N} \exp\ (sim(z_i, z_k)/\tau)}$$

Adaptive Diagnostic Head
Bayesian classifier predicts malignancy with uncertainty:

$$p(y|x, D) = \int p(y|x, w) p(w|D) dw$$

Grad-CAM++ and attention heatmaps provide interpretability.
Training Objective
Unified loss:

$$L_{total} = \beta L_{cls} + \gamma L_{con} + \delta L_{unc}$$

Return

Algorithm 1 illustrates the HGGT model proposed, which incorporates both mammographic and clinical data to make a strong diagnosis of breast cancer. The preprocessing stage starts with the extraction of breast regions, resizing mammograms to less than 512×512 , z-score normalization, and z-score CLAHE. Clinical data are encoded to achieve compatibility with a standardization of clinical data. The next step in the feature extraction process involves a two-way line of initiative: a hybrid Swin Transformer CNN can extract both global structural and fine lesion features of mammograms whereas a Graph Attention Network (GAT) codes the patient-specific features and the interdependencies between them, defined by attention-weighted interactions. A contrastive pyramid mechanism is used to perform cross-modal fusion by matching imaging and clinical embeddings in a shared latent space. Fusion on a regional level prioritizes the correlations of the breast quadrants with the tumor stage or histology, minimized with contrastive loss. The adaptive diagnostic head uses a Bayesian classifier to provide predictions of malignancy with uncertainty calibration and Grad-CAM++ to provide interpretability.

IV. Results and Discussion

The Experimental analysis of the proposed HGGT framework indicates that it is effective in reliability and it is better than the traditional deep learning models in the diagnostic performance. The model is well balanced and strongly classified with accuracy, precision, recall and F1-score even in a case of class imbalance. The comparisons with HGGT show that it outperforms CNN, VGG16, ResNet50, EfficientNet-B0 and GAN-assisted CNN models on all metrics, which indicates that it has a good multimodal fusion capacity. The ablation study also confirms the fact that each individual aspect of the study including the attention mechanisms, CycleGAN augmentation as well as Swin-CNN-GAT integration contribute significantly to the performance increment. Grad-CAM++ visualizations reveal that the framework is effective at localizing malignant regions, as GAT attention maps show the importance of clinical biomarkers such as tumor size, ER as well as PR status. All in all, the results prove HGGT to be a fit, understandable, and valid model in the diagnosis of breast cancer.

TABLE I. Simulation Parameters

Parameter	Value
Dataset	CBIS-DDSM
Image Resolution	512 × 512 pixels
Methods used	Swin Transformer + CNN, Graph Attention Network,
Batch Size	16
Initial Learning Rate	1e-4 with cosine annealing scheduler
Optimizer	AdamW
Epochs	150 (with early stopping)
Dropout Rate	0.3
Weight Decay	5e-5
Cross-validation	5-fold cross-validation
Evaluation Metrics	Accuracy, Sensitivity, Specificity, F1-score, AUC-ROC
Software	Python 3.10

Table I illustrates the HGGT framework simulation parameters are designed to give strong and yielding prediction of breast cancer. The data used in the analysis are CBIS-DDSM

in which the mammogram images have already been preprocessed to 512 512-pixels resolution. The model includes Swin Transformer + CNN with images and Graph Attention Network (GATT) with clinical data. AdamW optimizer is applied to train and initial learning rate is 1e-4 in the form of cosine annealing with a batch of 16 and 150 epochs total with early stopping. Regularization dropout rate 0.3 weight decay 5e-5. The 5-fold cross-validation was considered as evaluation methods and such metrics like accuracy, sensitivity, specificity, F1-score, and AUC-ROC were used.

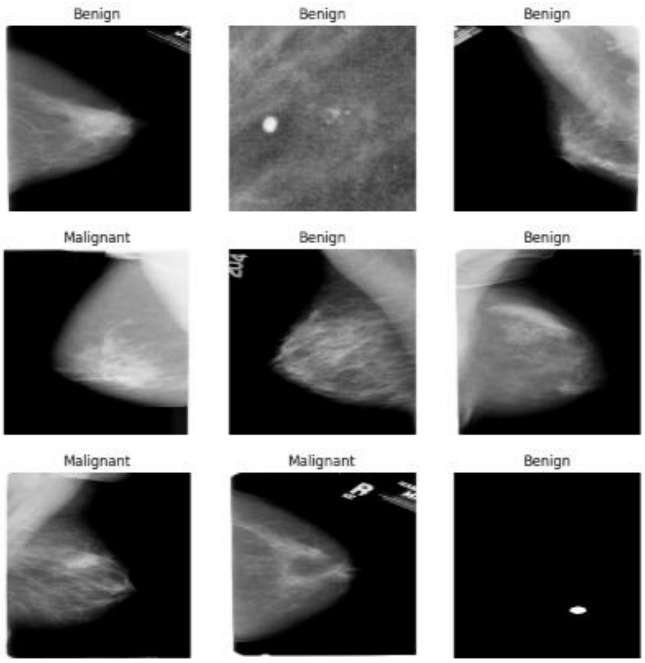

Fig 4. Breast image classification.

Fig. 4 shows a collection of mammogram images grouped as benign and malignant cases. The dataset grid has nine samples distributed across three rows and three columns, highlighting the variability in tissue patterns and tumor appearances. The benign images generally consist of localized or well-delineated areas with comparatively uniform density, while the malignant images exhibit irregularly dense structures with poorly defined borders, which are indicative of invasive growth.

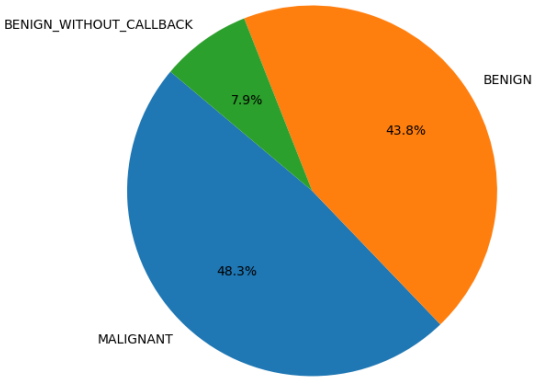

Fig 5. Class distribution.

Fig. 5 shows the division of the medical imaging results into three diagnostic types: Malignant, Benign, and Benign without Callback. Malignant conditions form the highest percentage at 48.3%, showing a high prevalence of confirmed malignancies. Benign conditions cover 43.8%, showing a significant percentage of non-cancerous findings. The lowest category, Benign without Callback, occupies merely 7.9%, showing the cases in which no follow-up was needed.

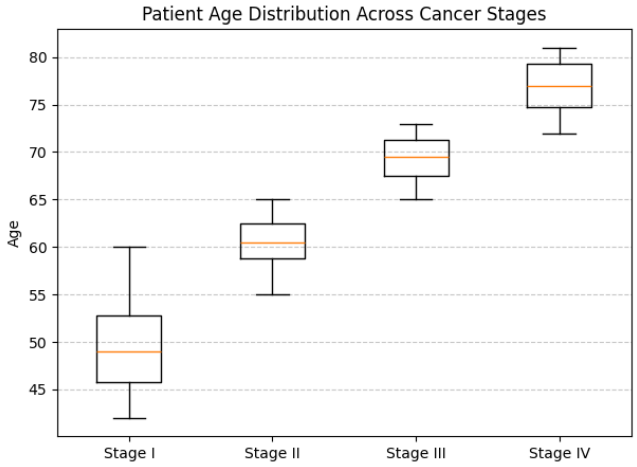

Fig 6. Patient age distribution across cancer stages.

Fig. 6 displays the distribution of the age of the patients in various stages of breast cancer. There is a separate box, denoted by each stage, Stage I, Stage II, Stage III, and Stage IV, which shows the median, interquartile range (IQR), and the minimum and maximum ages. In Stage I, the median age is less, at around 49 years, with a broader range of between 42 and 60 years, signifying that there is more variability in younger patients. The median ages are increasingly higher in Stage II and III at about 60 and 69 years, respectively, with smaller age ranges. The median age of patients in stage IV is the largest in 77 years, implying that later stages have more representation in older cohorts.

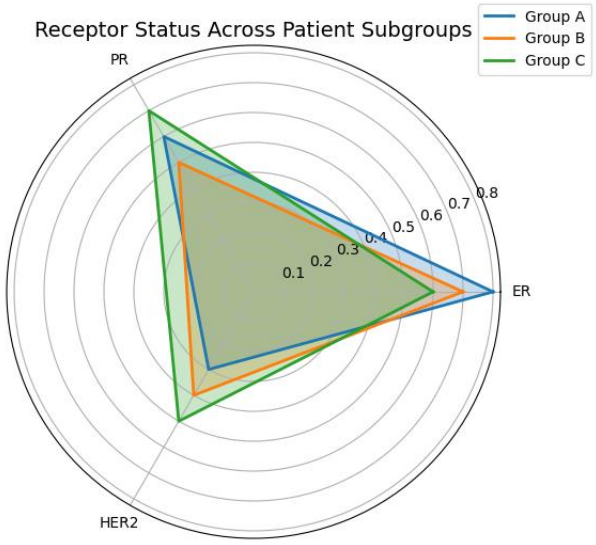

Fig 7. Receptor status across patient subgroups.

Fig. 7 depicts the receptor status (ER, PR, HER2) in three groups of patients in: Group A, Group B, and Group C. The axis depicts the value of each receptor type, and therometers are 0-0.8, which is the extent of receptor expression. Group A has the highest ER expression and Group C indicates the highest PR expression. HER2 expression is relatively low in all the groups, with a slight increment in Group C than Group A and B. The filled areas show differences in receptor patterns, with a particular emphasis on the fact that each subgroup has a different molecular profile.

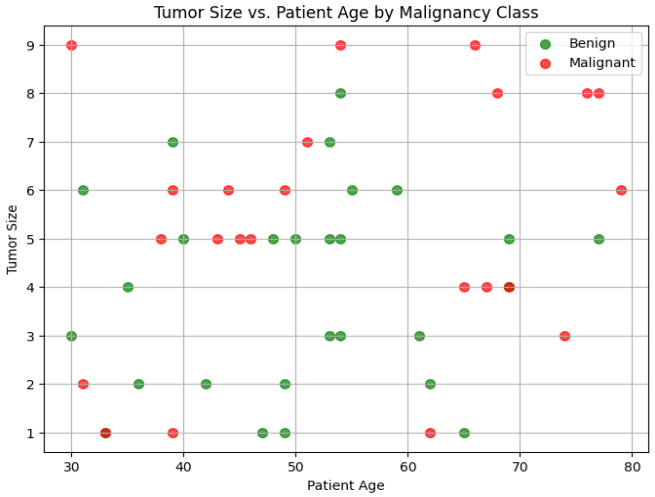

Fig 8. Tumor size vs. Patient age by malignancy class.

Fig. 8 can be used to show the correlation between the age of patients and the size of the tumor, according to the classification of malignancy. The points are the representatives of individual patients, and green markers are the indicator of benign tumors, whereas red markers denote the malignant tumors. The sizes of tumors are 1 to 9, whereas the ages of the patients do not exceed 30 to 80 years. The plot exposes that malignant tumors develop in a vast age bracket and are frequently larger in size, but there are also small malignant tumors. Benign tumor is evenly spread in terms of size and age.

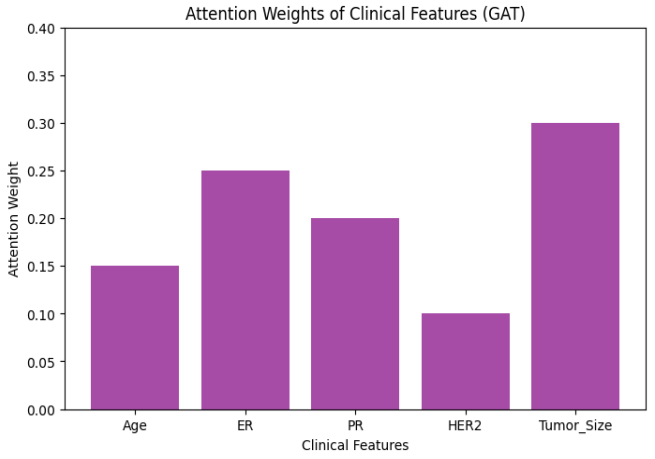

Fig 9. Attention weights of clinical features.

Fig. 9 depicts weights of attention of clinical features obtained using GAT model, and their significance in relation to their role in diagnosis prediction. Among the characteristics, the most important contribution is made by Tumor_Size, which suggests that it has a dominant contribution to clinical decision-making. ER and PR comes next with a medium level of importance as they play a great role in diagnostic interpretation. The smaller weight is supported by age, which implies a less direct but also relevant influence, whereas the contribution of HER2 is the lowest, indicating the lack of significance in this respect. In general, the image highlights that the size of tumor, and features of their receptors are the greatest clinical drivers that the model uses to make effective medical predictions.

A. Performance Evaluation

Standard metrics are used to assess the categorization model's accuracy, while confusion matrix evaluation is used to measure false positives and misleading negatives.

1) Accuracy: Accuracy is a measure of the model's overall accuracy in prediction and is given in Eq. (11):

$$Accuracy = \frac{tp+tn}{tp+tn+fp+fn} \quad (11)$$

where, tp is Rightly labeled malignant cases, tn Rightly labeled benign cases, fp is Wrongly labeled benign cases as malignant, fn: Wrongly labeled malignant cases as benign.

2) Precision: Precision calculates the ratio of malignant cases correctly identified out of all cases that are predicted to be malignant in Eq. (12):

$$Precision = \frac{tp}{tp+fp} \quad (12)$$

A high precision value means fewer false positives, and this is particularly important in medical diagnosis to prevent unnecessary biopsies.

3) Recall: Recall is the proportion of valid malignant cases that were properly identified in Eq. (13):

$$Recall = \frac{tp}{tp+fn} \quad (13)$$

It will have less false negatives and a high recall, which is important in breast cancer screening to limit missed diagnosis.

4) F1-score: The F1-score is a balance between Precision and Recall, hence it is more appropriate for imbalanced sets in Eq.(14):

$$F1-Score = 2 \times \frac{Precision \times Recall}{Precision+Recall} \quad (14)$$

High F1-score indicates that the model is maintaining precision and recall in equilibrium.

TABLE II. PERFORMANCE METRICS

Metrics	Value%
Accuracy	98.2
Precision	98.7
Recall	98.5
F1-Score	99.2

Fig. 10 and Table II show the performance measures of the model, and it is effective in the four important measures. The

model has an accuracy of 98.2 % and demonstrates how well it performs on the predictions in general. The accuracy is 98.7 %, which shows that the model has a high capability of reducing false positives. The recall is also a bit lower (98.5 %), which indicates the ability of the model to report the important instances without recording the false negatives. Single accuracy of the F1-score, which combines both the precision and recall, has the highest value of 99.2 %, which is consistent and strong. Altogether, these measurements prove the great reliability of the model, harmonized predictive power, and its ability to be applicable in practice when performing medical diagnostic tasks.

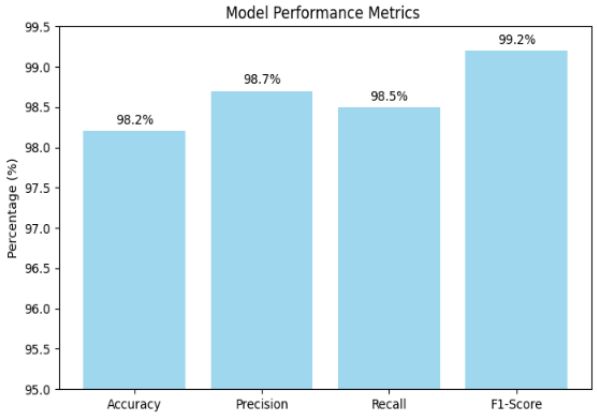

Fig 10. Performance metrics.

B. Comparison Metrics

Table III and Fig. 11 introduce a comparison analysis of the performance of different deep learning models used in the diagnosis of breast cancer. The performance indicators like accuracy, precision, recall, F1 score, and AUC ROC of standard architectures, such as CNN, VGG16, ResNet50, and EfficientNet B0, show increasing improvement regarding all these metrics, which signifies improved feature extraction and classification performance. The hybrid of GAN and CNN is another way of improving the performance of predictive, and symbolizes the power of generative augmentation. It is worth noting that the proposed model has the best scores in accuracy, 98.2 %, precision, 98.5 %, recall, 99.2 % and F1 score, 99.1 % AUC ROC, indicating its superior diagnostic ability. These findings show that the hybrid method proposed is effective in detecting breast cancer using multimodal data.

TABLE III. PERFORMANCE COMPARISON

Model	Accuracy (%)	Precision (%)	Recall (%)	F1-Score (%)	AUC-ROC (%)
CNN [25]	91.5	89.6	90.2	89.9	93.0
VGG16 [26]	94.2	93.5	94.0	93.7	95.6
ResNet50 [27]	95.0	94.1	95.5	94.8	96.5
EfficientNet-B0 [28]	95.6	95.0	95.7	95.3	97.2
GAN + CNN [17]	96.0	95.4	96.8	96.1	97.8
Proposed Model	98.2	98.7	98.5	99.2	99.1

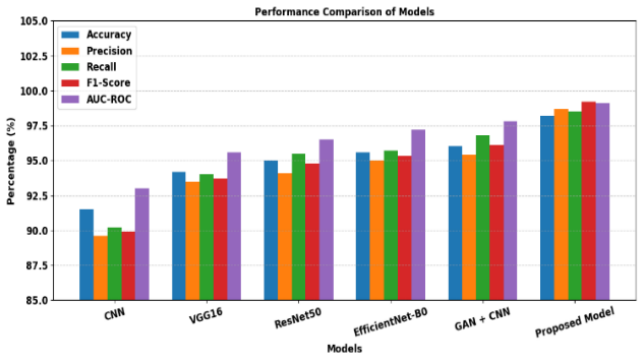

Fig 11. Performance metrics comparison.

TABLE IV. ABLATION STUDY

Model Variant	Accuracy (%)	Precision (%)	Recall (%)	F1-Score (%)
Swin Transformer Only	94.8	94.0	95.1	94.5
Swin + Attention Mechanisms	96.1	95.5	96.8	96.1
Swin + CycleGAN Synthetic Images	96.8	96.2	97.5	96.8
Swin Transformer-CNN + GAT	98.2	98.7	98.5	99.2

Table IV reflects the performance comparison of various model variants that are developed on Swin Transformer in the diagnosis of breast cancer. The Swin Transformer with the basic architecture has a high baseline accuracy of 94.8 %. This addition of the mechanisms of attention enhances the model, leading to 96.1 % accuracy and an increase in precision, recall, and F1 score, which underscores the positive effects of accurate weighting of features. The use of CycleGAN-generated synthetic images further increases the accuracy to 96.8 % by increasing the training data. These results are the most significant when Swin Transformer-CNN is combined with GAT, as the accuracy is 98.2 %, the precision is 98.7 %, the recall is 98.5 %, and the F1 score is 99.2 %, which underlines the effectiveness of the multimodal fusion and further graph-based learning in enhancing the accuracy of the diagnosis.

C. Discussion

The effectiveness of the HGGT framework can be explained by the fact that it is capable of modeling hierarchical mammographic representations and structured clinical relationships jointly, allowing to make more diagnostic reasoning than unimodal deep learning methods. The HGGT model is an important leap towards the multimodal detection of breast cancer because it is fast to integrate both mammographic images and clinical biomarkers into one diagnostic model. Unlike other traditional CNN-based networks, the HGGT is a hybrid Swin Transformer-CNN block that focuses on the visual characteristics to capture the global images of the breast and fine details of a lesion. Meanwhile, Graph Attention Network forecasts malignancy in biologic details by learning intricate clinical interactions between biomarkers, such as ER, PR, HER2, and tumor stage. The mechanism of contrastive pyramid fusion proves efficient in matching the imaging and clinical embeddings that increase the diagnostic consistency and interpretability. Local and regional fusion also serves to improve

the detection in the early stages by means of the linkage of quadrant-specific images to histopathological features. It has added a Bayesian diagnostic head to provide the estimates of uncertainties, which is an important feature of high-risk clinical decision-making. HGGT, with the help of interpretability agents of which Grad-CAM++ is a part, bridges the gap between AI predictions and clinician reasoning and constitutes a reliable, explainable, and clinically meaningful diagnostic model.

V. Conclusion and Future Works

The research illustrates that successful diagnosis of breast cancer demands a coherent rationale of imaging and clinical modalities as opposed to solitary or superficial integration measures. It is demonstrated in the proposed Hybrid Graph-Generative Transformer (HGGT) that hierarchical multimodal fusion based on clinical relationships can enhance the reliability of diagnostic information, interpretability, and uncertainty awareness in computer-aided diagnosis systems. The framework, which integrates the representation of mammographies and clinically significant biomarker interactions, fills the gap between clinically relevant biomarker interactions and data-driven predictions, which help in making choices more transparent and reliable in obtaining trustful and clinician-focused decision support.

Although it has effective performances, this study has its limitations. It uses one retrospective dataset, and this might not be representative of other institutions and imaging platforms. Moreover, the framework can limit the real-time implementation to resource-constrained clinical environments because of its computational complexity. The areas of future work will be large-scale multi-institutional validation, computational optimization, and the combination of longitudinal, genomic, and radiomic data. Federated learning with privacy concerns and integration with clinical workflow are also major steps towards practical implementation.

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Health Information Exchange in Malaysia: Leveraging Interoperability on International Standards for Health Data Exchange

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***Abstract*—This research proposal investigates the implementation of Health Information Exchange (HIE) in Malaysia, focusing on understanding the technological, policy, and financial challenges and opportunities associated with its adoption and effectiveness. Through a comprehensive survey approach targeting healthcare practitioners, policymakers, IT professionals, and patients, the study aims to elucidate the current state of HIE, assess interoperability with international standards, and identify pathways for enhancement. Key objectives include analyzing technological barriers, evaluating policy and regulatory impacts, and exploring sustainable financial models for HIE. Findings indicate a positive trajectory towards HIE implementation, underscored by a broad recognition of its potential to transform healthcare delivery. However, challenges such as system integration, policy clarity, infrastructural readiness, and privacy concerns remain. Recommendations for future improvement emphasize strengthening infrastructure, clarifying policies, enhancing security measures, providing continuous training, fostering innovation, and increasing patient engagement. Furthermore, this study highlights the alignment of HIE implementation with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 3, to ensure universal health coverage and enhance the healthcare workforce's capacity for process innovation. Incorporating international best practices and a validated framework will further strengthen Malaysia's healthcare system in the digital age.**

***Keywords*—Health data integration; interoperability; international health data standards; implementation; policy reforms; process innovation**

I. Introduction

In the dynamic context of global healthcare, the effective exchange of health information is fundamental to medical innovation, patient care, and public health management. Health Information Exchange (HIE) has become increasingly vital, especially in Malaysia, where the healthcare system is a blend of traditional and modern practices. HIE offers a pathway to enhance healthcare delivery through efficient, secure, and timely sharing of patient health information, facilitating care and supporting public health initiatives.

Malaysia faces unique challenges in HIE implementation, primarily due to interoperability issues. Interoperability, seamless integration, and cooperative use of data across diverse information systems, devices, and applications—is essential not only for technical compatibility but also for the harmonization of standards, protocols, and policies governing health data exchange. As healthcare increasingly transcends national borders, alignment with international standards is critical to ensure comprehensive care, facilitate research, and prepare for global health emergencies [1].

The integration of Health Information Exchange (HIE) is pivotal in modernizing healthcare delivery in Malaysia, a nation where the blend of traditional and contemporary healthcare practices presents unique challenges. These challenges, rooted in technological heterogeneity, necessitate the seamless communication and interoperability of various health information systems. Achieving this requires not only substantial technical and financial resources but also the implementation of international health data standards like HL7, SNOMED CT, and DICOM.

This study addresses the integration of Health Information Exchange within the Malaysian healthcare system, focusing on enhancing interoperability and aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 3, which aims to ensure health coverage and promote well-being at all ages. SDG 3 includes targets like reducing mortality, fighting diseases, ensuring universal health coverage, and supporting the health workforce. Achieving these targets in the context of Malaysia involves not only enhancing the infrastructure but also addressing policy gaps, technological disparities, and privacy concerns. Through an exploration of existing systems and international best practices, this research seeks to provide actionable insights and recommendations to advance Malaysia's healthcare system in the digital age.

This study will emphasize the problem statements and research questions. The research aims to explore the multifaceted challenges of implementing a Health Information Exchange (HIE) in Malaysia, focusing on technological, policy, and financial dimensions to enhance interoperability and effectiveness. It investigates the key technological barriers to HIE implementation in Malaysia's mixed public-private healthcare system, such as interoperability issues, legacy systems, and diverse EHR integrations, seeking practical solutions and best practices from other countries. It also examines the impact of Malaysia's policy and regulatory frameworks on HIE adoption and effectiveness, identifying gaps and proposing reforms to facilitate efficient data exchange while ensuring patient privacy and data security. Additionally, the

research explores financial models and funding strategies to support sustainable HIE implementation and operation, including government funding and public-private partnerships, assessing their cost-effectiveness in improving healthcare efficiency and patient outcomes. The goal is to develop actionable strategies to address these challenges, contributing to the effective and sustainable implementation of HIE in Malaysia. Fig. 1 shows the healthcare ecosystem in Malaysia.

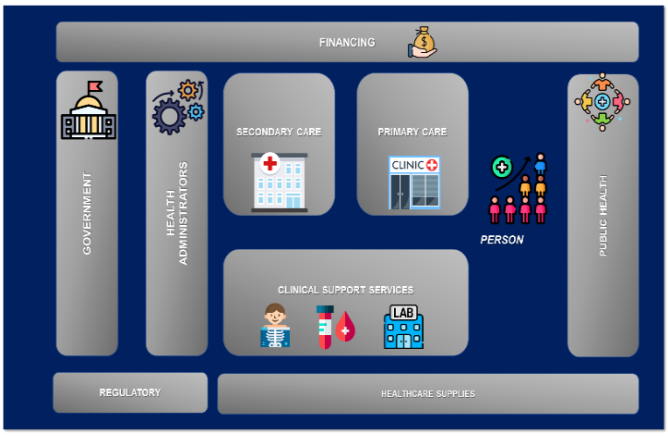

Fig. 1. Healthcare ecosystem in Malaysia.

II. Literature Review

Malaysia is at a pivotal moment in its healthcare transformation, aiming to implement Health Information Exchange (HIE) to create a more integrated, efficient, and patient-centric system. This literature review explores the challenges and opportunities in HIE implementation, focusing on technological barriers, policy and regulatory frameworks, financial models for sustainability, stakeholder engagement, and lessons from international best practices. The review highlights the importance of advanced technological solutions for overcoming interoperability issues, the need for balanced and supportive policies, innovative financial strategies for long-term viability, and robust stakeholder collaboration to align diverse interests. By synthesizing global insights and adapting them to Malaysia's unique context, this review provides a blueprint for achieving seamless health information interoperability, ultimately enhancing the efficiency, accessibility, and well-being of the nation's healthcare system.

As Malaysia moves towards a more integrated healthcare system, the successful implementation of HIE will require a concerted effort across multiple fronts. This includes fostering collaboration among government agencies, healthcare providers, and technology experts, ensuring that all stakeholders are aligned with common goals, such as improving healthcare delivery, supporting research, and addressing healthcare gaps across diverse populations. Moreover, aligning HIE strategies with Sustainable Development Goal 3 (SDG 3), which focuses on ensuring good health and well-being for all, will play a significant role in ensuring that Malaysia's healthcare transformation is not only technologically advanced but also inclusive and accessible.

A. Technological Challenges and Solutions in HIE Implementation

Malaysia's path to a fully integrated Health Information Exchange (HIE) faces challenges, such as diverse Electronic Health Record (EHR) systems operating in isolation. The need for adopting international standards like HL7, SNOMED CT, and DICOM is key to overcoming interoperability barriers, as shown by global case studies, including Tanzania's efforts to centralize health data using international standards.

The challenges in achieving interoperability in Malaysia's HIE system can be addressed by leveraging international standards such as HL7 and SNOMED CT. These standards have proven effective in overcoming interoperability barriers, especially when used in tandem with modern interoperability solutions such as FHIR. Malaysia, however, faces the additional hurdle of integrating legacy systems still prevalent in many public healthcare institutions. This requires a strategic approach to bridge the gap between old and new technologies, ensuring that healthcare systems can communicate seamlessly despite technological differences.

Facebook's role in public health communication shows how social media can overcome traditional communication barriers by disseminating health messages, conducting disease surveillance, and raising health awareness in cost-effective and far-reaching ways. Integrating social media into health information systems can extend traditional HIE mechanisms [2]. Social media platforms, particularly Facebook, have been pivotal in amplifying health communication, ensuring that critical health messages reach diverse populations. This integration can enhance the engagement of communities, allowing healthcare systems to bypass geographical and socio-economic limitations, further extending the reach and effectiveness of public health campaigns.

Tanzania's health information system challenges are due to diverse digital tools and a lack of standardized data. The development of the Health Information Mediator (HIM) facilitated seamless data exchange by implementing international standards and creating a centralized health data repository, ensuring data consistency and quality [3]. Similar challenges are being faced by many low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), where technological fragmentation hampers the smooth flow of information. Tanzania's implementation of international standards has been a key success, and Malaysia can learn from this by prioritizing the standardization of health data across its diverse healthcare systems, integrating global best practices into local contexts. The challenges of implementing HIE with the Internet of Medical Things (IoMT), focus on interoperability issues caused by varied devices, data formats, and communication protocols. Integrating legacy EHRs with IoMT platforms is difficult, but adopting international standards like HL7 can help, though challenges persist in achieving seamless interoperability [4]. As Malaysia looks to integrate the Internet of Medical Things (IoMT), these challenges highlight the critical need for interoperability frameworks that support the communication of diverse medical devices. The adoption of standards like HL7 and FHIR can facilitate the integration of newer technologies with older systems, offering a pathway to

improved data consistency and better patient outcomes across the healthcare system.

The potential of cloud computing to optimize healthcare services by offering a scalable and flexible IT infrastructure. Cloud computing can help manage health records in a distributed environment, addressing challenges related to client assistance, cost, online connectivity, and emergency recovery [5]. Malaysia's transition to cloud computing would not only provide a cost-effective solution for data storage but also enable real-time data sharing and collaboration across multiple healthcare providers. Cloud infrastructure could reduce dependency on expensive, localized data centers, making the system more resilient, especially during health emergencies or natural disasters.

Hospital Information Systems (HIS) play a role in improving healthcare quality through integration and data management. Major challenges include interoperability between EHR systems and integration with legacy systems. HIS adaptations aim to enhance information efficiency using statistical and data mining techniques [6]. HIS is critical for enhancing healthcare delivery and efficiency. However, system integration remains one of the biggest hurdles in Malaysia, where older technologies are still prevalent. Leveraging data mining techniques can help uncover patterns in healthcare delivery, making it easier for policymakers to make data-driven decisions for improving healthcare access and outcomes.

AI and big data analytics have potential but face issues like data security and privacy [7], and addressing healthcare challenges in LMICs. However, digital health application fragmentation and interoperability issues remain significant hurdles [8]. The role of AI in HIE systems is becoming increasingly evident, particularly in its ability to analyze vast amounts of health data and predict patient outcomes. However, for AI to be effective in Malaysia, there needs to be a comprehensive framework that addresses ethical concerns, privacy, and the integration of AI systems with existing infrastructures. As AI becomes more prevalent, these considerations must be addressed to prevent disparities in healthcare services.

Hence, FHIR is important in enhancing interoperability across healthcare systems using web technologies and standardized APIs. FHIR can integrate legacy systems by being compatible with existing HL7 standards (9-10). The adoption of FHIR in Malaysia could serve as a significant change in achieving interoperability across diverse health data systems, bridging the gap between legacy and modern technologies. As FHIR continues to gain global traction, Malaysia has the opportunity to position itself as a leader in digital healthcare innovation, ensuring that healthcare providers can share and access critical patient information seamlessly and securely. Despite the technological challenges, leveraging mobile networks, web-based technologies, and data standardization can help address these challenges [10]. Overcoming technological challenges in HIE implementation requires a multi-pronged approach, combining mobile networks, cloud technologies, and data standardization. This will ensure that Malaysia's HIE system is not only scalable but also adaptable to future technological advancements, such as the IoMT and AI, which will undoubtedly play a pivotal role in the future of healthcare delivery.

B. Policy and Regulatory Frameworks Supporting HIE

Navigating policy and regulatory frameworks is crucial for successful HIE implementation in Malaysia. Different countries have tailored policies addressing privacy, data protection, and governance. Malaysia must develop policies that protect patient privacy and ensure data security while promoting data sharing. Lessons from successful jurisdictions emphasize stakeholder engagement and flexible yet stringent regulations. To successfully implement HIE, Malaysia needs a dynamic regulatory framework that aligns with international standards. This framework must not only emphasize patient privacy and data security but also create a supportive environment that fosters trust among all stakeholders. Global examples like Estonia's and Finland's digital health strategies have shown that robust regulations can facilitate HIE adoption and improve healthcare outcomes by balancing privacy with accessibility.

There is a need for health organizations to engage effectively on social media and calls for policies ensuring the reliability of online health information,1 and establish strong leadership and clear governance, as seen in Tanzania's digital health strategy, supported by a National eHealth Steering Committee and technical working groups [3]. Malaysia can take inspiration from Tanzania's digital health governance model, where clear leadership and coordinated efforts across government bodies, healthcare providers, and technological partners were critical to the success of their health information systems. Implementing similar strategies would allow Malaysia to build strong, collaborative frameworks that involve all stakeholders in creating policies that promote trust in digital health systems. In addition to traditional governance, health organizations must engage with the public through social media. Clear, accurate health information can be disseminated rapidly via Facebook, Twitter, and other platforms, enhancing public health engagement. Policies should ensure that online health information is reliable, verified, and accessible, fostering an informed population that trusts digital health technologies.

Among other things, there are also concerns about data privacy and security concerns on the Internet of Medical Things (IoMT), emphasizing the need for flexible healthcare platforms and unified policy frameworks to ensure privacy, security, and interoperability [8]. Given the rise of IoMT devices, Malaysia needs to develop comprehensive regulatory frameworks that can accommodate the growing diversity of connected health devices, safeguarding patient data while ensuring seamless interoperability across platforms. This will require a balance of technology-specific standards with broad regulatory guidelines to create an adaptable and secure environment for digital healthcare solutions. In room for policy reforms, Policy gaps in EHR systems, telemedicine, and digital healthcare highlight the need for updated regulations, such as revising the Telemedicine Act 1997, to support modern telehealth practices (7, 11). The Malaysian Telemedicine Act must be revised to reflect the advancements in digital health technologies and telemedicine practices.

It is also important to have comprehensive policies for data management, device usage, and care delivery, advocating for a

national digital health strategy to support HIE implementation that emphasizes adhering to international standards like FHIR, which enhance data privacy and security, crucial for effective HIE implementation. (7, 9). Developing a national digital health strategy is essential for HIE success in Malaysia. This strategy must prioritize data management, patient confidentiality, and device standardization. Moreover, adherence to international standards like FHIR is vital for maintaining data security and interoperability, ensuring that Malaysia's healthcare system can evolve while staying aligned with global best practices in digital health.

C. Financial Models and Funding Strategies for Sustainable HIE

Sustainability is the key to successful Health Information Exchange (HIE) initiatives. Various funding models, from government allocations to public-private partnerships, offer different benefits and challenges. For Malaysia, it is essential to find a model that supports both the initial setup and long-term operations. Cost-benefit analyses highlight the economic advantages of HIE, showing potential efficiencies and savings in healthcare delivery. Creative financial solutions are needed to support technological and policy advancements. While government allocations can support the initial setup of HIE systems, long-term sustainability requires finding flexible funding mechanisms that allow continuous system improvements, including maintenance, updates, and expansion. Public-private partnerships (PPP) offer a potential model that blends both public funding and private sector efficiency, ensuring HIE's financial viability over time. These partnerships can leverage private sector innovation and public resources, creating an environment that fosters long-term operational success and adaptability [11].

Platforms like Facebook can be a cost-effective part of broader funding strategies to maximize health information reach with minimal expense [2]. By using social media not only for public engagement but also for fundraising campaigns, Malaysia can generate additional funding and raise awareness about HIE's benefits. In Tanzania's HIE project, it is primarily funded by international donors like USAID. However, long-term sustainability, including maintenance and expansion costs, remains a challenge, indicating a need for sustainable funding models [3]. Moreover, transitioning from donor-based funding to domestic funding sources will be crucial for Malaysia's future self-sufficiency in HIE initiatives. However, in the long run, the cost implications of cloud computing in healthcare suggest a financial model that shifts from capital expenditure to operational expenditure, reducing the burden of maintaining large IT systems (5, 12). Cloud computing allows Malaysia to move away from large upfront costs for IT infrastructure and instead adopt a pay-as-you-go model. This makes it easier for healthcare organizations to manage operational costs and ensure that funds are allocated efficiently for maintenance and expansion.

It is challenging to secure funding for digital health systems, suggesting various financing models like insurance, grants, and pay-as-you-use schemes to support HIE development and scaling. scaling [8] and by the adoption of Fast Healthcare Interoperability Resources (FHIR) by leading tech companies, emphasizing its cost-effectiveness and efficiency in healthcare data exchange. The potential for private investment and public-private partnerships (PPPs) will be crucial in funding sustainable HIE initiatives. Malaysia should look into models that encourage private companies to invest in HIE infrastructure, especially those that align with global interoperability standards. These partnerships can stimulate innovation, enhance resource mobilization, and ensure that Malaysia's HIE systems are adaptable and resilient in the long term [9].

D. Stakeholder Perspectives and Engagement in HIE

The success of Health Information Exchange (HIE) in Malaysia depends on engaging healthcare providers, policymakers, and patients. Effective communication, transparent operations, and inclusive policymaking are crucial for gaining support and transitioning to an integrated healthcare network. Engaging all stakeholders, such as healthcare providers, policymakers, patients, and the public, is essential for the success of HIE in Malaysia. Each group plays a vital role in ensuring that the system meets their needs and is adopted widely. Engaging healthcare professionals early in the process, ensuring policymakers understand the long-term benefits, and addressing patient concerns about privacy and data security will create an environment of collaboration and trust.

It is very crucial and vital to engage internet users on social media, showing how strategic use of platforms like Facebook can enhance health information dissemination [2]. Engaging on social media platforms allows healthcare systems to reach broader audiences, including younger, tech-expert generations who are the key to driving health awareness in digital spaces. Taking the example of HIE in Tanzania, stakeholder engagement involved government, NGOs, healthcare facilities, and international partners, and the importance of training and capacity building [9]. Malaysia could benefit from the collaborative model used in Tanzania, where government, NGOs, and healthcare facilities worked together, ensuring diverse stakeholder participation and effective HIE implementation.

Other than that, we should not neglect the presence of Internet of Medical Things (IoMT) and its potential to enhance stakeholder engagement by granting patients greater access to their health data and streamlining healthcare processes [4]. The IoMT offers opportunities for real-time health data sharing, enhancing patient engagement, and streamlining healthcare delivery. This integration can improve patient-provider communication and foster better healthcare outcomes. It is essential to get to users' perspectives on their understanding of cloud-based health systems, focusing on compatibility, complexity, security, and privacy to ensure acceptance and usage. Ensuring patients and healthcare providers are well-informed about the cloud-based systems is critical to successful adoption. Clear communication regarding security and data privacy concerns can help build trust.

On that note, it is also equally important to highlight the importance of user satisfaction, system quality, and technology compatibility for the success of Hospital Information Systems (HIS), using various evaluation models [6]. User satisfaction and system compatibility are critical for the success of HIS. Ensuring these systems meet user needs will lead to better

adoption rates and more effective healthcare delivery. From the perspective of healthcare professionals, the concerns from medical practitioners and the need for patient engagement and digital health literacy must be addressed to ensure successful digital health technology adoption [7]. Addressing healthcare professionals' concerns with continuous education and offering clear benefits of digital health adoption will help ease resistance and improve technology integration. Going aerial, collaborations between governments and external stakeholders [13], highlighting successful partnerships, like Kenya's mobile technology initiative for community health worker training is also evidenced to accelerate good outcomes [8]. Collaboration, such as Kenya's model, demonstrates how external partnerships can drive successful digital health integration.

The adoption of FHIR will enhance data interoperability and has gained support from major technology companies, highlighting the role of collaboration in advancing HIE3, and through the implementation of FHIR, it reflects a shared commitment to improving healthcare data exchange and accessibility [8]. FHIR adoption is a critical component for improving interoperability in Malaysia's HIE system. It will enable seamless data exchange, making healthcare delivery more efficient and effective. Each organizational culture, staff awareness, and skill levels in the successful implementation of EHR systems must be emphasized to address specific barriers [9]. Organizational culture and staff readiness must be aligned with digital health goals to ensure smooth EHR system integration and successful HIE adoption.

E. International Best Practices and Lessons Learned

The global landscape of Health Information Exchange (HIE) offers valuable lessons for Malaysia. Countries like Estonia and the United States provide insights into successful practices and common pitfalls. Learning from these experiences can help Malaysia adapt effective strategies and avoid mistakes. Malaysia can improve health communication by adopting global best practices in social media use [2]. Global best practices, such as Tanzania's integration of social media for health information dissemination, can be useful for engaging the public and spreading awareness about the benefits of HIE. For instance, in Tanzania, they use international best practices and global networks to develop their HIE system, emphasizing collaboration and iterative design [3]. International collaboration in HIE development allows Malaysia to learn from countries with successful digital health systems, adapting global solutions to local contexts.

Apart from Tanzania, challenges and solutions from Iraq's healthcare cloud computing can offer relevant insights for Malaysia's HIE implementation [5]. Iraq's cloud-based healthcare systems provide relevant insights into managing health data securely and efficiently. Malaysia can adapt these lessons to improve its cloud infrastructure and reduce costs. Actually, looking back at Malaysia's blueprint, Malaysia's telemedicine progress with the U.S., India, and China suggests that international examples can guide improvements in digital health [7]. Telemedicine advancements from the U.S., India, and China serve as valuable blueprints for Malaysia's progress, allowing Malaysia to build upon successful global telemedicine models. In other cited articles, there are several success stories of HIE implementation strategies from Tanzania, Estonia, and Chile, emphasizing the importance of learning from global experiences to overcome technological and policy challenges [8]. Global case studies, such as those from Estonia and Chile, show how standardization and collaborative policy development can overcome barriers and help improve HIE adoption.

While learning from other country is paramount, the standardization is a concern that need to be addressed and global adoption of Fast Healthcare Interoperability Resources (FHIR) as a model for improving healthcare interoperability, which Malaysia can adopt to enhance its HIE capabilities [9] as it provides valuable components of data analytics in improving healthcare quality, showcasing successful examples from prominent healthcare organizations. FHIR adoption is a critical step for Malaysia's HIE success. By embracing this global standard, Malaysia can improve interoperability, enhance data quality, and streamline healthcare delivery, fostering long-term healthcare innovation.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a comprehensive questionnaire-based approach to explore the multifaceted challenges and opportunities of implementing Health Information Exchange (HIE) in Malaysia. Utilizing both closed-ended questions for statistical analysis and open-ended questions for thematic exploration, this methodology is designed to elicit a wide range of perspectives from key stakeholders such as healthcare providers, policymakers, IT professionals, and patients. This approach aims to generate a rich dataset that provides nuanced insights into the barriers and facilitators of HIE adoption and effectiveness, leading to actionable recommendations for enhancing healthcare delivery through improved data interoperability.

The questionnaire-based approach has been chosen to capture both quantitative and qualitative data, providing a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities that Malaysia faces in adopting HIE. This methodology ensures that data from diverse perspectives, such as healthcare providers, policymakers, IT professionals, and patients, are systematically gathered, allowing for rich insights that can inform future strategies for improving Malaysia's HIE infrastructure.

A. Data Collection and Analysis Method

Data collection is conducted through an online survey platform, Google Forms, ensuring broad accessibility and participation. The survey is structured to gather only demographic information, adhering to ethical guidelines to ensure participant anonymity and data confidentiality. The analysis involves descriptive and inferential statistics to identify patterns and correlations relevant to the study's goals.

B. Questionnaire Structure and Research Objectives

Four distinct sets of questionnaires are tailored to different respondent groups to address specific research objectives and questions including healthcare practitioners such as doctors, nurses, administrative officers, medical assistants; policy makers, doctors or health authority in the Ministry who are involved in policy making and decision making; IT professionals such as IT experts in the ministry as well as on

ground operation level and patients. These questionnaires cover topics such as system integration, technological barriers, policy awareness, and the impact of HIE from multiple stakeholder perspectives. The questions are designed to assess the current state of HIE technology use, policy understanding, and financial strategies impacting HIE implementation in Malaysia. Each set aims to collect targeted data that informs the broader research aims, focusing on technological challenges, policy impacts, and financial sustainability of HIE initiatives.

This methodological framework supports a comprehensive analysis of the current and potential future state of Health Information Exchange in Malaysia, contributing valuable insights into the advancement of HIE systems and their alignment with both national healthcare goals and global health objectives. In aligning the findings with national healthcare goals and global health objectives, this methodology helps position Malaysia's efforts within the international context of digital health [17] transformation. By focusing on both local challenges and global standards, the study provides actionable recommendations for Malaysia to improve its HIE infrastructure while contributing to global health goals such as Universal Health Coverage and Sustainable Development Goal 3 (SDG 3).

IV. Results and Analysis

The survey findings offered a significant understanding of the status of Health Information Exchange (HIE) deployment in Malaysia, comparing it with global practices while also addressing technological barriers, accessibility issues, and potential financial strategies for its implementation. This comprehensive approach delivers diverse viewpoints on the awareness, understanding, and opinions regarding HIE implementation in Malaysia. The detailed discussion of each questionnaire is further elaborated in the next sections. The findings from this study provide a detailed view of HIE adoption in Malaysia, illustrating both progress and challenges. The analysis highlights not only the technological barriers and policy concerns but also the financial models necessary to ensure sustainability. Through comparing local findings with global trends, the study offers insights into how Malaysia can enhance its HIE infrastructure and better align with international standards [12].

A set of seven targeted questions, each with a specific objective, is directed at healthcare practitioners. This questionnaire is essential for assessing users' comprehension of the interoperability platform and their perceptions of its long-term impact.

A. Analysis of Healthcare Practitioners

The survey findings reveal a diverse landscape of EHR usage in Malaysia, with HIS@KKM and HIE RekodPesakit each used by 26.7% of respondents, 30% utilizing various other systems, and 16.7% relying on manual records. Integration challenges are evident, with 46.7% of respondents reporting poor EHR system interoperability and 43.3% unsure of their systems' capabilities. Technological barriers are significant, with 63.3% encountering major obstacles, primarily insufficient devices (73.3%), and poor internet connectivity (53.3%). Familiarity with the FHIR standard varies, with 40% somewhat familiar and 20% very familiar, though 16.7% are not familiar at all. Policy support for HIE is viewed positively by 73.3% of respondents, yet 26.7% remain uncertain about its effectiveness. Government and private sector support for HIE implementation is generally well regarded, with most respondents rating it 4 or 5 out of 5, though some see room for improvement in engagement and support. The findings from healthcare practitioners reveal a diverse level of understanding and engagement with HIE systems. While the usage of EHR systems is widespread, issues with integration and interoperability remain significant challenges. The lack of familiarity with FHIR among some practitioners highlights a critical gap in education and training, suggesting that awareness campaigns and capacity-building initiatives are crucial to improving HIE adoption in the healthcare workforce.

The survey responses from healthcare practitioners reveal mixed familiarity and perceptions regarding Health Information Exchange (HIE) in Malaysia. While many are somewhat familiar with international standards like FHIR and view current policies as supportive, a significant portion remains unsure or unfamiliar, indicating a need for better education and communication. Technological barriers, such as insufficient devices and internet connectivity, are prevalent concerns. Although there is general positivity about support from authorities, some practitioners rate this support as moderate or low, highlighting potential gaps in engagement and resources. Overall, the findings suggest a positive trend towards digitization and HIE support, but emphasize the need for enhanced awareness, technological infrastructure, training, and consistent communication to fully realize HIE's benefits in healthcare delivery and patient outcomes in Malaysia.

B. Analysis of Policy Makers and Regulators

The survey of policy makers and regulators reveals a strong awareness of existing policies supporting HIE, with 88% recognizing a general operating policy and 68% aware of hospital procedures. However, there is less recognition of health data policies (48%). The majority (68%) believe HIE clarifies data exchange issues and supports digital transformation (64%), though fewer see it easing system adaptation (48%). Uncertainty prevails regarding policy revisions for HIE (52%), and there is a lack of clarity on FHIR adoption, with 56% unsure. Funding models primarily include tender-based projects (52%) and national insurance schemes (24%), while 72% report no financial incentives for healthcare providers to adopt HIE. This highlights a need for clearer communication and policy direction to enhance HIE adoption and support.

The findings suggest that policy makers and regulators are aware of the importance of HIE, yet they still face challenges with unclear policy directions, especially regarding privacy and data security. The lack of clarity around FHIR adoption and its strategic implementation shows that further education and guidance are needed for regulators to make informed decisions. Moreover, the absence of financial incentives for healthcare providers is a major barrier to wider adoption, suggesting that a robust financial framework must be put in place to encourage HIE integration at all levels.

Policy makers and regulators in Malaysia demonstrate strong awareness and acknowledgment of the policy frameworks supporting Health Information Exchange (HIE),

recognizing operational policies and health data policies. They perceive these policies as facilitating data exchange clarity and enabling digital transformation, although there is less confidence in their role in easing HIE adaptation within facilities. Uncertainty about revisions to privacy and security policies suggests a need for clearer communication and collaborative planning. The adoption of FHIR standards is mixed, with many respondents uncertain about the strategic direction, indicating a need for better information dissemination. Diverse funding models, mainly tender-based projects and national insurance schemes, support HIE, but a perceived lack of financial incentives for healthcare providers may hinder wider adoption. Overall, while supportive of HIE policies, policy makers see opportunities for improved communication, strategic clarity, and financial incentives to enhance HIE implementation and effectiveness in Malaysia's healthcare system.

C. Analysis of IT Professionals

The survey of IT professionals reveals a strong implementation of FHIR standards (92%) and cloud computing (72%) to address interoperability challenges. Data privacy and security measures focus on extensive assessments (80%) and role-based access control (76%). A significant majority (76%) believes in AI's potential to enhance HIE capabilities. International models influence Malaysia's HIE strategies, acknowledged by 64%, though 24% are uncertain. Lessons learned highlight the need for strong leadership, comprehensive funding models, integration to avoid system silos, robust infrastructure, clear policies, diverse use cases, and sustainable implementation strategies to improve healthcare quality. These insights emphasize the importance of a structured and well-supported approach to HIE implementation in Malaysia. IT professionals emphasize the critical role of international standards like FHIR and cloud computing in overcoming interoperability challenges within Malaysia's HIE system. However, for HIE to reach its full potential, there must be a concerted effort to address technical and operational barriers, particularly in system integration and data security. The adoption of AI and machine learning in HIE also requires stronger education and training for IT professionals, as they are key to driving these technologies forward.

IT professionals in Malaysia emphasize several key factors for the successful implementation of Health Information Exchange (HIE). They stress the need for strong, informed leadership with clear mandates to ensure cohesive implementation. Adequate devices and reliable internet connectivity are critical for smooth operation, while moving away from siloed systems towards an integrated HIE platform is necessary to avoid fragmentation. Consistent and collective financial support is vital for the sustainability of HIE, alongside government mandates and regulatory frameworks to guide its implementation. There is also a need for further education on the benefits of AI and machine learning in HIE. Malaysia's HIE strategies benefit from international models, but there is a need for clarity on this influence. Professionals believe HIE can improve healthcare quality and patient outcomes. In conclusion, they advocate for a strategic, well-supported HIE approach with strong leadership, robust infrastructure, comprehensive integration, sustainable financial backing, clear policies, and ongoing education, envisioning a system that significantly enhances Malaysia's healthcare.

D. Analysis of Patients

The patient survey reveals a majority awareness (70%) of HIE and its benefits, though 23.3% remain unsure and 6.7% are unaware, indicating a need for better communication and education. Nearly half of the respondents (46.7%) noticed improvements in healthcare delivery due to HIE, while 26.7% did not see improvements, and another 26.7% were unsure, suggesting mixed experiences and the need for further evaluation and education. Concerns about data privacy and security are significant, with 43.3% expressing worries, 33.3% feeling secure, and 33.3% unsure, highlighting the importance of transparency and robust security measures to build patient trust in the HIE system. The mixed awareness levels and concerns regarding data privacy emphasize the need for ongoing education and transparency. As Malaysia continues to roll out its HIE initiatives, patient engagement and trust will be pivotal for the system's success. Clear communication about how data is shared and secured will help patients feel more confident in using these systems.

The survey of patients in Negeri Sembilan, where Malaysia's HIE pilot is implemented, reveals promising awareness and initial positive impacts of HIE, with 70% aware of its benefits and nearly half (46.7%) noticing improvements in healthcare delivery. However, 26.7% do not perceive improvements, and another 26.7% are unsure, highlighting the need for ongoing education and system integration. Privacy and security concerns are significant, with 43.3% expressing worries and an equal proportion uncertain about data security. In conclusion, while there is a positive trajectory towards HIE implementation, further education and reassurance are essential, especially regarding data privacy and security. Continuous efforts in these areas will be crucial for building patient trust and fully realizing HIE's potential to improve healthcare delivery in Malaysia. Addressing integration, policy communication, technical readiness, and privacy concerns remains essential for success [14] [15] [16].

E. Future Recommendations to Enhance HIE Implementation

Based on the comprehensive insights from the research on Health Information Exchange (HIE) implementation in Malaysia, several future recommendations have emerged to address identified challenges and leverage opportunities for enhancing the HIE system. These recommendations and their strategies are outlined below: strengthen infrastructure and integration by enhancing technical infrastructure through investment in robust systems, reliable internet connectivity, and adequate devices to ensure seamless HIE operation across all healthcare facilities; and promote system integration by supporting the integration of manual and legacy systems with the HIE platform through technical assistance and incentives, enabling comprehensive participation. This will require a multi-tiered approach involving government support, private sector investment, and collaboration across various healthcare levels to ensure system scalability and reliability.

Under policy and governance, clarify and communicate policies to improve understanding of stakeholder roles and responsibilities, and develop incentive structures to encourage

healthcare providers and patients to actively participate and share data. Clear, transparent policies will help align all stakeholders, ensuring a cohesive approach to data sharing and privacy protection. Introducing incentives will motivate stakeholders to adopt and fully engage with the system.

For security and privacy measures, implement robust security protocols through regular audits, encryption, and secure access controls, while educating stakeholders on data privacy through awareness campaigns to build trust in the HIE system. Continuous monitoring and improvements in security measures are essential to maintain patient trust and confidence in the system. Stakeholder education should focus on data security best practices and the importance of adhering to regulatory standards.

Training and support should include offering continuous training for healthcare practitioners and IT professionals on HIE technologies and best practices, and developing IT expertise focused on cybersecurity, database management, and system integration. Providing ongoing professional development is crucial for ensuring healthcare providers are equipped with the knowledge and tools necessary to use HIE systems efficiently and securely. This includes both technical and policy-oriented training.

Research and development efforts should foster innovation in HIE by investing in R&D to explore technologies such as AI and blockchain for secure and efficient data exchange, while evaluating and adapting international best practices to suit the Malaysian context. By encouraging R&D in emerging technologies, Malaysia can ensure that its HIE system remains innovative and resilient to future challenges. Blockchain can enhance data security, and AI can improve data analysis and decision-making processes.

Lastly, patient engagement and awareness should be enhanced by increasing patient education and communication to highlight HIE benefits and promote patient-centered care, along with implementing feedback mechanisms to gather input from all stakeholders, particularly patients, for continuous HIE improvement. Implementing these recommendations requires collaboration among government agencies, healthcare providers, IT professionals, and the community. By addressing current challenges and focusing on continuous improvement, Malaysia can maximize the potential of its HIE system to enhance healthcare delivery, patient outcomes, and overall system efficiency.

V. Conclusion and Future Enhancement

The comprehensive research on Health Information Exchange (HIE) implementation in Malaysia reveals significant insights from diverse stakeholders, including healthcare practitioners, policymakers, IT professionals, and patients. These findings underscore a strong commitment to enhancing health service delivery through HIE but highlight several critical challenges, such as diverse EHR systems, technological barriers, infrastructural deficits, and concerns over privacy and security. Policymakers demonstrate awareness and support for existing HIE policies but recognize the need for clearer communication and incentive structures. IT professionals emphasize the importance of robust infrastructure, adopting international standards, and leveraging AI's potential. Patients show awareness and positive perceptions of HIE benefits but express significant privacy and security concerns.

Overall, the findings indicate that while Malaysia has made meaningful progress towards digital health integration, the implementation of HIE remains uneven, particularly across different stakeholder groups and operational levels. This highlights the need for a more coordinated and inclusive approach to ensure that technological advancements translate into practical, system-wide benefits. To address these challenges and leverage opportunities, future recommendations include investing in robust technical infrastructure, supporting system integration, improving policy communication, developing incentive structures, implementing robust data privacy measures, providing continuous training, fostering innovation through R&D, and enhancing patient engagement. Implementing these recommendations requires collaboration among government agencies, healthcare providers, IT professionals, and the community. Such collaboration is essential in order to ensure that HIE implementation is not only technically feasible but also trusted, sustainable, and widely adopted across the healthcare ecosystem.

By addressing current challenges and focusing on continuous improvement, Malaysia can realize the full potential of its HIE system, improving healthcare delivery, patient outcomes, and overall system efficiency. This study's insights and recommendations provide a roadmap for advancing Malaysia's healthcare system in alignment with national and global health objectives, particularly the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In conclusion, the successful advancement of HIE in Malaysia depends not only on technology but also on policy clarity, stakeholder readiness, and public trust, all of which must progress together to achieve long-term digital health transformation.

Acknowledgment

The author would like to express sincere gratitude and appreciation to everyone who contributed to the development and realization of this study on Health Information Exchange (HIE) in Malaysia. This research has been a truly collaborative effort, and its completion would not have been possible without the guidance, support, and dedication of many individuals and organizations. Primarily, the author extends heartfelt thanks to Dr. Malathy Batumalay for her continuous guidance, encouragement, and constructive feedback throughout the research process. Her deep knowledge, technical insight, and unwavering commitment played a pivotal role in shaping the direction and quality of this study. The author would also like to extend appreciation to the Faculty of Data Science and Information Technology (FDSIT), INTI International University, for providing the academic platform, resources, and environment that enabled this research to be successfully carried out. Sincere thanks are also extended to the Ministry of Health Malaysia and the Information Technology Division for sharing valuable knowledge and perspectives on the implementation of Health Information Exchange (HIE) systems in Malaysia.

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Privacy-Preserving Adaptive Biometric Framework with Reinforcement Learning and Blockchain-Enabled Multi-Factor Authentication

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Abstract*—Ensuring secure and privacy-preserving authentication in web applications remains a critical challenge due to the limitations of conventional single-factor approaches, which are vulnerable to attacks and fail to account for dynamic user behaviors. Existing multi-factor authentication (MFA) methods often rely on static rules, exposing users to unnecessary friction or weak security under evolving threat conditions. To address these gaps, this study proposes PPAB-RL, a Privacy-Preserving Adaptive Biometric framework leveraging Reinforcement Learning for intelligent MFA selection. The proposed method integrates homomorphic encryption for secure fingerprint feature storage, contextual risk scoring based on device, behavioral, and geolocation deviations, and RL-driven adaptive MFA to dynamically select authentication pathways from password-only to multi-step biometric verification. Implementation is carried out using Python, with biometric processing performed on the SOCOFing dataset containing 6,000 fingerprint images, and blockchain-enabled logging for immutable and tamper-proof audit trails. Experimental results demonstrate that PPAB-RL achieves 96.8% authentication accuracy, surpassing traditional password-only (84.2%) and fingerprint-only (93.5%) methods, while maintaining low encrypted matching overhead and minimal user friction. Ablation studies confirm the essential contribution of each module, biometric preprocessing, encryption, risk analysis, and RL-based adaptation to overall system robustness. The RL policy converges rapidly, allowing real-time adaptation to changing user behaviors and threat contexts. Overall, the proposed PPAB-RL framework establishes a highly secure, intelligent, and scalable authentication paradigm, combining encrypted biometrics, dynamic risk assessment, and blockchain validation, offering an innovative approach that can inspire further research in next-generation privacy-sensitive authentication systems.

Keywords*—Privacy-preserving authentication; multi-factor authentication; reinforcement learning; biometric verification; blockchain-enabled logging

I. Introduction

Web-based applications are increasing rapidly due to the rapid digitalization of services; these are banking and healthcare through e-commerce and government portal, just to name a few. Although such applications prove to be highly convenient, their use is also exposed to attacks by cybercriminals, information intrusions, and fraud [1]. Old password screening platforms are fast becoming ineffectual owing to weaknesses including phishing, brute structure assaults, misuse of credentials and stuffing. To restrain such deficiencies, there is need to consider using multi-factor authentication (MFA) whereby user has to submit various authentication evidences [2]. However, the currently employed practice of MFA is more likely to employ the fixed combinations of variables and contain the centralized verification, which can never be adapted to the changing threat landscape and also expose sensitive biometric specifics to privacy breaches [3].

Several biometric authentication systems, including facial, iris, and fingerprint recognition, offer high usability and levels of security because identity verification is connected to physical features inherent to the user [4]. But once it is broken, biometric information cannot be substituted and their security is of utmost importance. Conventional central storage of biometric and authentication data present single points of failure, making such systems susceptible to intended cyberattacks [5]. A decentralized and tamper-resistant method to ensure secure authentication can be achieved through the use of blockchain technology in order to overcome these limitations. Blockchain can greatly improve the transparency of biometric identity management systems, the integrity of data and its resiliency by removing the centralized trust authorities and guaranteeing immutability of data [6].

The research study presents a Reinforcement Learning-Enhanced Privacy-Preserving Adaptive Multi-Factor Authentication Framework (PPAB-RL) based on biometrics and

blockchain technology to address the shortcomings of conventional MFA systems [7]. The current solutions do not offer privacy-sensitive biometric processing and contextual adaptation to achieve weak security or overburden users [8]. The suggested PPAB-RL framework combines the concept of homomorphic encryption to provide biometric matching privacy and a blockchain-based smart contract to guarantee decentralized verification and the impossibility to change the logs [9]. An adaptive engine based on reinforcement learning modulates the authentication factors in real-time according to the dynamically calculated risk scores with respect to user behavior, device fingerprint and location context. This guarantees an optimized security, usability and privacy. Raw biometric data is encrypted and authentication records are made securely verified on blockchain which removes tampering of data and dependency [10]. The suggested framework is capable of filling the privacy gap, flexibility and decentralization gap, and will provide an effective, smart and scalable framework to the contemporary web authentication system.

- Introduces a privacy-preserving adaptive authentication system integrating encrypted biometrics, contextual risk scoring, and reinforcement learning for dynamic MFA selection.
- Implements homomorphic encryption to protect fingerprint feature vectors during storage and matching, ensuring privacy without compromising accuracy.
- Develops a device, behavioral, and location-based risk engine to calculate dynamic risk scores, enabling intelligent adaptation of authentication strength.
- Anchors encrypted biometric templates and authentication events on blockchain, providing tamper-proof auditability and integrity verification.

A. Research Motivation

As the use of web applications in providing key services like online banking, medical cases, and government services is on the rise, there has been a growing concern on the security as well as reliability of user authentication. Conventional password-based systems are becoming less and less effective against cyber-attacks such as phishing, credential stuffing, and brutality attacks, which undermine user privacy and system integrity. Even though the use of multi-factor authentication provides a higher level of security, the majority of the implementations that have been established in practice are not dynamic and cannot be adjusted to different levels of risk. In the same note, biometric authentication, though convenient, is of great privacy threat, as once biometric information has been compromised, it cannot be restored. In addition, the use of centralized authentication servers introduces points of failure in a system and, therefore, increases vulnerability to attacks. All these issues indicate that there is an urgent need to have a dynamic, privacy-sensitive authentication model capable of adapting its security needs according to the context risk and safeguarding sensitive personal information. This study will come up with such an adaptive and privacy-aware authentication solution to the contemporary web space.

B. Research Significance

The analysis outlines a major breakthrough in privacy-conscious biometric authentication by incorporating reinforcement learning, adaptive multi-factor authentication and blockchain technology. The privacy and trust of the proposed PPAB-RL framework are guaranteed by access to raw biometric information, as well as the homomorphic encryption of similar operations. Its adaptive engine, driven by reinforcement learning, is used to add to the user experience since it actively varies, according to contextual risk, some aspects of authentication, including device fingerprint, geolocation, and behavioral anomalies. The decentralization of the blockchain layer also abolishes single points of failure, and the smart contracts make the audit trail of authentication events immutable and transparent. This composition is both effective and does not affect usability in strengthening resistance towards identity thefts, phishing and replay attacks. The research leads to the creation of next-generation authentication systems, which are secure, privacy-sensitive, flexible, and context-sensitive to meet the current web security demands in a scalable and user-focused fashion that is appropriate in the face of the changing digital ecosystem.

C. Problem Statement

With the rapid digitalization of services, secure user authentication has become a critical concern for contemporary web applications [11]. Conventional password-based systems remain vulnerable to phishing, brute force, and credential theft attacks, while biometric authentication, though more robust, raises significant privacy concerns due to centralized storage of sensitive data [12]. Existing multi-factor authentication (MFA) systems are largely static and lack context-aware adaptability, applying uniform security measures irrespective of risk levels [13]. These limitations expose low-risk users to unnecessary verification steps while leaving high-risk operations inadequately protected, reducing both security and user experience. To overcome these challenges, the proposed PPAB-RL framework integrates adaptive reinforcement learning, encrypted biometric processing, and blockchain-based decentralization to provide dynamic, risk-aware, and privacy-preserving authentication for modern web applications.

Although the use of multi-factor authentication has become widespread, the majority of the current solutions are unchanging, centralized and lack privacy awareness, which restricts their success in the dynamic nature of threats. Existing strategies are not able to balance the security of authenticating and user friction and ensure a sufficient level of protection of sensitive biometric information. The research question of this study is thus the following: How can a privacy-preserving and context-aware authentication system dynamically scale multi-factor authentication strength through encrypted biometrics, reinforcement learning, and decentralized blockchain validation to increase security, usability, and trust in any web application? The proposed framework will aim to provide a solution to this limitation of the statistical MFA system by way of providing intelligent adaptation that is risk-sensitive and secure decentralized verification.

The remainder of this study is organized as follows: Section II is an in-depth literature review of Privacy-Preserving Adaptive Multi-Factor Authentication Framework for Web Applications Using Biometrics and Blockchain. Section III outlines the proposed methodology. Section IV presents Result and Analysis. Section V concludes the study by highlighting the results and providing directions for future study and practice.

II. Related Works

Yu et al. [14] developed a secure and effective MCC authentication and authorization scheme that transcends the shortcomings of conventional centralized access control. The approach integrates blockchain technology and smart contracts to allow for dynamic user access permission updating independently without the need for a single trusted third party. By keeping in storage a single transaction per user's access permission, the scheme reduces blockchain storage overhead and enhances scalability. Mobile users need to register with any service provider (SP) only once and utilize the same credentials in multiple SPs, having different levels of access. The accomplishment is a secure and decentralized approach that incorporates authorization effortlessly into the authentication process without incurring computational or communication overhead. Performance analysis shows enhanced efficiency as well as reduced storage expenses than traditional schemes. However, blockchain use still has certain costs of transactions and storage that are likely to grow with large populations of users.

To overcome the security and privacy threats of unauthorized access in the Internet of Vehicles (IoV), Yao et al. [15] proposed the development of a multistage continuous authentication system which was decentralized. The strategy combines blockchain (Hyperledger Fabric) and IPFS to decentralize storage and fuzzy extractors in order to safeguard the behavioral biometric data of users. The system performs two actions, authentication and repetitive verification of user identity, by comparing real-time biometrics with stored templates that are secured. The novelty is a confidential and safe plan, eliminates third-party trusts, resistant to replay assaults, and maintains a high throughput, which increased performance by 8.6 per cent over the closely relevant literature. Security is demonstrated with BAN Logic and performance is with Hyperledger Caliper. Scalability and latency problems during high authentication requests in large IoV networks can still occur with the system.

Fu et al. [16] proposed two identity authentication models using blockchain within the context of identity authentication to address issues like high-account maintenance, point of failure, and privacy breach in the traditional system. They presented one scheme employing the Diffie-Hellman key exchange to support effective interactive authentication and another employing ring signatures to enable non-interactive and lightweight verification. They proposed these schemes to guarantee core security properties like unforgeability, identity anonymity, and non-transferability in the sense that verifiers cannot transfer proof to third parties. The schemes were designed to preserve user privacy while providing good security guarantees. Experiment results verified that both solutions are efficient and practical for application. Nevertheless, the interactive scheme will be plagued with scalability barriers by virtue of user-verifier communication overhead.

Wang et al. [17] used the framework of a hybrid blockchain-based identity authentication scheme (HBIA) to address the single points of failure and the aspect of security risks in centralized Mobile Crowd Sensing (MCS) systems. They have come up with an alternative hybrid blockchain architecture, clustered where clusterhead nodes access the blockchain publicly and inner nodes blockchain privately. They proposed zero-knowledge proof (ZKP), zk-SNARKs to safeguard the privacy of the identities of the users and allow secure off-chain computations whose verifications can be propagated on-chain. This approach can simultaneously solve the issue of transparency in blockchain and at the same time privacy of participants, and also decrease the workload of blockchain. The detection of pavement cracks on the Ropsten network has been tested, and the scheme demonstrated reduced time for authenticating compared with current solutions. Nonetheless, the cluster operation and usage of zk-SNARK that HBIA adopts can result in complexity and computational overheads to the system.

Dehalwar et al. [18] suggested a blockchain-based self-sovereign identification and authentication method to mitigate identity theft and masquerading attacks in smart grids. They created a model that leverages blockchain to securely authenticate IoT devices in the distributed energy network. They proposed this method to confirm device authenticity and authenticate trusted communication throughout the smart grid infrastructure. The technique exploits blockchain's distributed trust to authenticate transactions in log(n) time, providing robust security without dense central control. The scheme exhibits efficient identity verification and reduces identity-related compromises. The addition of blockchain, however, places an overhead of computational and intricacy on resource-constrained IoT devices.

Bamashmos et al. [19] developed a new blockchain-based 2L-MFA system with two layers to increase the security of IoT in countering the threat of wireless data transmission. Their first layer of IoT devices was premised on secret keys, geographical location, and PUFs, and proof-of-authentication and elliptic curve Diffie Hellman to protect lightweight security. They also introduced a second factor to the users of IoT with four sub-factors, which are matrix-based passwords, ECDSA and biometric which comprise iris and finger vein analysis elements. Results were authenticated with the aid of fuzzy logic and increased the resilience of the system. The 2L-MFA model offered vast registration, log in and authentication time savings as efficiency. The integration of multi-factor and biometric approaches may involve increased complexity of implementation and cost of hardware use by the IoT systems.

Xu et al. [20] proposed a smart home authentication system that leverages the blockchain-based fog node to resolve the problem of security attacks like impersonation and insider privilege attack. They designed a decentralized model in which all the fog nodes and smart devices are registered on a local private blockchain, which avoids the single point of failure encountered in classical schemes. They proposed smart contracts along with off-chain operations for efficiently

performing real-time authentication. Fog node utilization provides accelerated and local computing over cloud-based approaches and increases system responsiveness. Security and performance analysis proved robust protection and enhanced performance with certain privacy protection for consumers. Nevertheless, the scheme will encounter potential challenges in dealing with the overhead of having fog infrastructure and blockchain synchronization locally.

Mir et al. [21] introduced a new Decentralized Anonymous Multi-Factor Authentication (DAMFA) scheme to mitigate security, privacy, and availability issues in conventional single sign-on systems. They created a protocol that eliminates the need for identity providers to hold sensitive user information, thus avoiding tracking and abuse of authentication references. They proposed threshold oblivious pseudorandom functions (TOPRF) to prevent offline attacks and utilized a distributed transaction ledger to make the scheme highly available without depending on an always-on identity provider. They proved the scheme secure for the universal composability model formally via ideal-real simulation. A prototype implementation showed its practical applicability for use in the real world. But the distributed configuration and cryptographic functions will introduce computational and network overhead for service providers and users.

Alzahab et al. [22] suggested a blockchain-based model of biometric authentication protocol to move away from the traditional model of the centralization of the process to a decentralized one. They came up with a protocol with a fuzzy commitment scheme that can be used to authenticate biometrics by not disclosing sensitive biometric features publicly on the blockchain. They offered their idea to resolve the problem of openness of blockchain and the necessity to ensure the privacy of biometric data. The protocol ensures decentralization and breakage resistance in the protection of the personal data of the users against exposure. Using the security analysis, it was verified whether the scheme was resilient to various attacks. However, the application of fuzzy commitment scheme in blockchain could cause computational overhead to real-time authentication.

The critical security and privacy concerns that are raised in the design of biometric-based authentication systems have been discussed comprehensively by Pagnin and Mitrokotsa [23]. They described the inherent vulnerabilities of such close interconnection between users and their biometric identifiers that cannot be substituted by simple passwords. They proposed detailed instructions and countermeasures to deal with threats such as the leakage of biometric data, misuse and replay attacks. They highlighted privacy saving strategies in order to protect sensitive biometric attributes. Their work created awareness concerning the usability versus security in biometric systems. The work is primarily theoretical, though, with no implemented protocol or performance test.

Mohsin et al. [24] suggested a new blockchain method based on steganography to securely update and exchange huge amounts of medical data, like COVID-19 data, between hospitals. They used a particle swarm optimization (PSO) algorithm with adjusted particle operations and a hash function to hide secret medical data within grayscale images with high confidentiality and image quality. They proposed a three-stage process of embedding capacity estimation, data hiding, and blockchain-based transmission to ensure data availability and integrity without the presence of a central third party. The approach blends stego images and blockchain in an effective manner to withstand network breakdowns and illegal access to data. Their convalescent plasma storage case study confirmed the appropriateness and performance of the system. Still, the increased computing overhead and image processing expense can restrict real-time use in high-traffic hospital settings.

Lin & Chen [25] proposed an error-correction-based iris recognition (EC-IR) method to provide secure template storage and accurate recognition for personal identification. They suggested a new template mapping scheme by studying soft reliability values and recovery capability values to such an extent that the error correction is flexibly adapted through the use of the low-density parity-check (LDPC) codes. They also built suitable LDPC codes that gave high performance with constant rate. They also proposed the use of dominating feature points (DFPs), as opposed to raw binary templates, to improve security and equal error rate (EER), and processing efficiency. Their method led to a safe iris encryption system grounded on fuzzy commitment. However, the extra complexity of DFP extraction and LDPC design may facilitate implementation sufferings in resource-limited systems.

Although the current solutions have made progress in the areas of blockchain-based authentication, privacy-saving biometric authentication, and multi-factor access control, they are mostly tackling these issues individually. Majority of the solutions are based on the concept of static authentication policies, and are devoid of context-responsive flexibility and the use of learning-based solutions to actively trade-off between security, usability and privacy. The decentralized trust and biometric privacy protection are usually implemented without an integrated decision-making system that may have loopholes in real-time adaptability and scalability. The proposed PPAB-RL framework resolves these drawbacks by integrating an encrypted biometric processing, contextual risk, reinforcement learning-based adaptive multi-factor authentication, and blockchain-supported immutability, which offers a comprehensive and secure authentication solution to the current web application.

III. Proposed Privacy-Preserving Adaptive Biometric Multi-Factor Authentication Framework

The proposed PPAB-RL framework integrates privacy-preserving biometrics, contextual risk analysis, and reinforcement learning (RL)-based adaptive multi-factor authentication (MFA) to provide secure and intelligent access control. The methodology begins with data collection from the SOCOFing fingerprint dataset, which includes original and synthetically modified fingerprint images, representing realistic variations in biometric inputs. Preprocessing of biometric data involves normalization, noise reduction using Gaussian filtering, and feature extraction to form minutiae-based vectors. These vectors are then encrypted via homomorphic encryption to enable secure storage and comparison while preserving sensitive information. During user enrollment, primary credentials, device metadata, and behavioral baselines are

captured to create a comprehensive profile, which is anchored on a blockchain to ensure immutability and auditability. Upon login, the system evaluates the contextual risk by comparing device, behavioral, and location parameters against the stored baseline, generating a dynamic risk score. This score informs the RL agent, which selects the optimal MFA pathway, ranging from password-only verification to full-chain biometric validation. Encrypted biometric matching and blockchain-based validation confirm identity while maintaining privacy. Secure logging records all events for audit and forensics. Overall, this end-to-end architecture ensures adaptive, high-assurance authentication, with the complete workflow illustrated in Fig. 1.

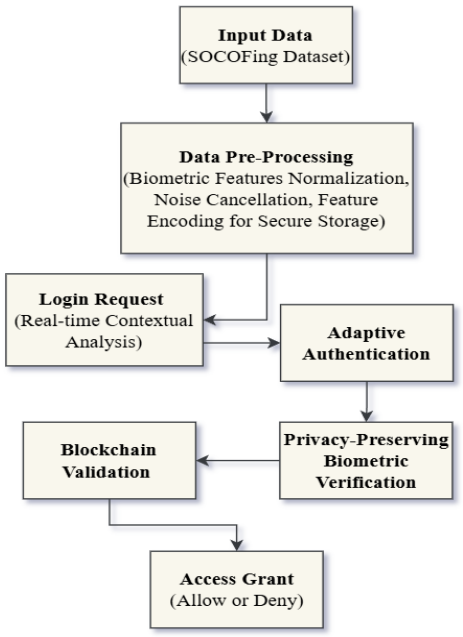

Fig. 1. Proposed secure MFA architecture using fingerprint biometrics and blockchain.

A. Data Collection

The study employs the Sokoto Coventry Fingerprint Dataset (SOCOFing) [26], a publicly available fingerprint image dataset obtained from Kaggle. SOCOFing contains 6,000 fingerprints of 600 people and the impressions of all ten fingers were taken at 500 DPI. The dataset consists of original fingerprint images and synthetically distorted ones produced with the help of three obfuscation methods: obliteration, central rotation, and z-cut, which are effective simulators of realistic distortion that may occur under authenticity conditions in practice. This heterogeneity renders SOCOFing the most appropriate to assess the strength of minutiae extraction, encrypted matching strength, and template protection schemes within the fingerprint-based authentication systems.

SOCOFing has been chosen because it is free to all, is structured in a format that is standardized and it contains regulated distortions in fingerprints, making reproducible experiments and equitable comparison of performance possible with the current biometric authentication research. It should be mentioned that only the fingerprint biometric assessment works with a real-world dataset, whereas the contextual data of devices, behavior, and location are planned to be created artificially in order to emulate the conditions of the real-life authentication and threat. This design option enables the adaptive MFA behavior to be assessed in a controlled manner and user privacy maintained. The scope of biometric validation in this work is thus determined by the use of the dataset and has given a clear and reproducible basis of assessing the proposed privacy-saving adaptive authentication model.

B. Data Preprocessing

Before the processing of the biometric and behavioral metadata, it is crucial that the PPAB-RL architecture incorporates its pre-process before handling the different metadata to obtain the desired authentication and adjustive risk analysis. The preprocessing pipeline steps comprise three major steps, namely, normalization of biometric features, elimination of noise and encoding of features during safe storage.

1) Biometric features normalization: Fingerprints, fatalities, or IRI scan. Biometry samples differ in size, position, and strength depending on the environmental conditions and differences of the lenses. In order to normalize these inputs, the feature vectors are adjusted to a standard size by using min-max normalization. It is described in Eq. (1):

$$X' = \frac{X - X_{min}}{X_{max} - X_{min}} \quad (1)$$

In which X is the original value of the feature, X_{min} and X_{max} are the minimum and maximum values of that feature in the data set and X is the normalized feature. This increases the similarity of input ranges to both encryption and matching, which enhances the accuracy of biometric matching.

2) Noise cancellation: Unfiltered bio versatile signals may be noisy in nature by error of sensor quality or environmental contributions. In order to cut this noise out and improve the quality of the signal, some Gaussian filtering is used in Eq. (2):

$$G(x,y) = \frac{1}{2\pi\sigma^2} exp\left(-\frac{x^2+y^2}{2\sigma^2}\right) \quad (2)$$

$G(x,y)$ is the Gaussian spread out and sort of filter and the sigma is the way the filter works. Using this filter on biometric-images or correctly based feature-matrices provides high-frequency noise removal with rate of maintaining crucial features, which results in more assuring feature-extraction and secure matching.

3) Feature encoding for secure storage: The feature vectors are converted into safe-coded versions before biometric references are stored on the blockchain. Homomorphic encryption is used to implement privacy, which allows one to do computation with encrypted data. Denoting a feature vector, $F = [f_1, f_2, .., f_n]$, the encrypted version $E(F)$ is calculated and mentioned in Eq. (3):

$$E(F) = HE(F) = [HE(f_1), HE(f_2), .., HE(f_n)] \quad (3)$$

In which $HE(\cdot)$ is the homomorphic encryption process. Rich-to-lean encrypted feature representation is subsequently hashed and exchanged to the blockchain, which ensures that

there is never any exposure to biometric data at the time of enrolling and making comparisons at the time of authentication.

C. Secure Template Generation

In the suggested PPAB-RL architecture, the existence of secure biometric template generation will guarantee that raw fingerprint features will never be disclosed during storage or authentication. Fingerprints are encoded into feature vectors after the extraction of the minutiae.

$$F = [f_1, f_2, \dots, f_n] \quad (4)$$

In Eq. (4), f_i denotes an extracted feature like the ridge orientation, the ridge frequency, the minutiae angle, or the local ridge density. These values have sensitive identity attributes, thus they should be secured prior to any storage as well as comparisons. To do so, the system uses a homomorphic encryption scheme so that one can make calculations on the encrypted values without knowing the actual data. The homomorphic encryption algorithm, which is denoted $HE(\cdot)$, is composed of a public key, pk and where the parameters include: degree of the polynomial's modulus N and plaintext modulus t. The encrypted template is generated, as in Eq. (5):

$$E(F) = HE(F, pk) = [c_1, c_2, \dots, c_n] \quad (5)$$

where, each ciphertext c_i is the encrypted form of the biometric feature. N is used to parameterize the cryptographic strength and ciphertext size and t is the number used to quantify the numerical accuracy of the numbers used to represent biometric values to the encryption domain. This secures all the minutiae structures and ridge-based patterns such that they cannot be directly reconstructed in case of storage loss. In order to allow efficient indexing and verification of the integrity of the blockchain, the encrypted template is hashed using a cryptographic hash.

$H = Hash\big(E(F)\big)$, where $Hash(\cdot)$ refers to a collision-resistant hashing function. The hash is a compact version of identity to be used in finding and confirming the encrypted template on the blockchain. The metadata and encrypted template are stored at the blockchain block. User ID U s stored in each block, the encrypted feature vector $E(F)$, is stored, hash H is stored, and the timestamp τ are stored in each block represented as in Eq. (6):

$$Block = \{U, E(F), H, \tau\} \quad (6)$$

This one-way storage mechanism ensures the immutability, tamper-resistance and full preservation of privacy. It allows encrypted biometric matching in PPAB-RL and the raw or intermediate biometric information is never revealed in enrollment, transmission and authentication.

D. User Enrollment

The user enrollment phase in the PPAB-RL authentication system determines the starting security profile that is needed in subsequent adaptive authentication. When registering, a user initially enters primary credentials of a unique identifier U and a password P. A salted hashing function is used to transform the password to a secure verifier that can be denoted as in Eq. (7):

$$V = Hash(P \parallel s) \quad (7)$$

where, s is a randomly chosen salt that is user-specific. This ensures that dictionary and rainbow-table attacks of stored passwords are prevented. After credential initialization, a sample enrolment fingerprint is captured, processed pre (minutiae) and normalized, and homomorphically encrypted as previously described. The encrypted biometric template $E(F)$ is linked to the profile of the user but is not stored in plain form. The template gets anchored on a blockchain entry, making it immutable and decentralized to verify. This provides an ultimate biometric data reference to be compared in authentication.

The user contextual baseline is also created at the enrollment stage to support risk-adaptive MFA. Parameters that are obtained through device profiling include browser attributes, OS signature, Canvas fingerprint, device hardware ID and network characteristics. These are removed into a device signature vector represented in Eq. (8):

$$D = [d_1, d_2, \dots, d_m] \quad (8)$$

where, d_i is a constant device characteristic. Likewise, the normal patterns of interaction, the preferred times of logging-in, geographical location range, and preferences in the time spent in a session constitute a behavioral baseline vector B, which, when combined with the stored items, namely, $\{U, V, E(F), D, B\}$, generate a multi-layered enrollment profile. This profile allows the PPAB-RL system to conduct contextual risk assessment, adaptive selection of MFA and encrypted verification of the biometrics when attempting subsequent logins.

E. Login Request Processing

The process of user legitimacy real-time evaluation starts with the login request processing stage in the PPAB-RL framework and precedes any biometric verification. When a user attempts to access the system, the process begins with the submission of their identifier U and password P_{req}. The password is hashed with the same salted hashing algorithm created at the time of enrollment and the resulting hash is tested against the calculated, as in Eq. (9):

$$V_{req} = Hash(P_{req} \parallel s) \quad (9)$$

against the stored verifier V. If the primary credential check fails, further authentication steps are terminated immediately. Upon successful password validation, the system retrieves contextual parameters from the requesting environment. Device metadata is captured and represented as a vector.

$$D_{req} = [d_1^{req}, d_2^{req}, \dots, d_m^{req}] \quad (10)$$

In Eq. (10), d_i^{req} denotes features including browser fingerprint, OS signature, hardware identifiers, screen resolution and network features. These parameters are contrasted with enrollment baseline D to calculate device consistency. Simultaneously, geolocation and network parameters (IP address, approximate geographic position, Autonomous System Number (ASN), and network type (e.g., mobile, broadband, etc.)) are also obtained. There is also the gathering of behavioral indicators making up the behavioral vector.

$$B_{req} = [b_1^{req}, b_2^{req}, \dots, b_k^{req}] \quad (11)$$

Eq. (11) records the factors like the time of logging in, the frequency pattern, and the absence of this usage in the history.

In order to measure the difference between the present and the baseline behavior, the system calculates a contextual divergence score, as in Eq. (12):

$$\Delta = \alpha \cdot dist(D_{req}, D) + \beta \cdot dist(B_{req}, B) + \gamma \cdot dist(L_{req}, L) \quad (12)$$

where, $dist(\cdot)$is a normalized distance metric, $L_{req}$is the current location vector, and α, β, γ are weighting factors reflecting device, behavior, and location significance. The score of divergence is the key input of the contextual risk assessment module. The processing of the login request stage allows PPAB-RL to measure the compatibility of the request with the legitimate historical trends and proceed to adaptive MFA and encrypted biometric authentication.

F. Contextual Risk Assessment

Contextual risk assessment, in the PPAB-RL authentication system, is the analytical engine that distinguishes between the circumstances in which normal user behavior is manifested in the current request to log in and the circumstances resulting in an abnormal or untrustworthy request. Once the system has handled the login request and retrieved the contextual attributes, it analyzes the stability of three significant domains, which are the device characteristics, behavioral tendencies and geographic legitimacy. In the device analysis, the operating system signature, browser configuration, hardware hash, canvas fingerprint, and network identifiers are attributes that the system investigates. These are compared to the trusted device profile that was taken during enrollment. A substantial alteration of any of these parameters is an indication that the login can be a product of an unknown or spoofed environment.

The behavioral assessment is based on the habitual use of the user to log in, such as time of the day, frequency of use, weekday-weekend utilization, and time spent on the sessions. Violations of these acquired patterns lead to a degree of suspicion. Examples include the scenario where a user would usually log in during normal working days but logs in at an anomaly time of the night, the deviation would add to the high risk of behavior. Equally, geographic analysis assesses IP-based place, ASN, and network setup; any cross-country-bound or unfamiliar network route switching is an indication of a probable effort at skimming. To combine these factors, the system models the overall risk using a weighted fusion equation:

$$R_s = w_d \cdot \delta_d + w_b \cdot \delta_b + w_l \cdot \delta_l \quad (13)$$

In Eq. (13), the variable $R_s$represents the final dynamic risk score, while w_d, w_b, and $w_l$denote the weights that specify how strongly device, behavior, and location should influence the risk. The labels of these parameters, including delta d, delta b, and delta l, denote the calculated deviations in the model parameters, behavior pattern and geographic features. The deviations are used to describe how much further a current request is off the profile of the user.

After calculating R_s, by the system, the request will be categorized into low, medium and high risk. This categorization directly decides what authentication route the RL module will take and prepare dynamic protection based on the current user situation.

G. RL-Based Authentication Selection

At the PPAB-RL, the reinforcement learning (RL) component identifies the best suitable authentication pathway according to the dynamic risk value generated by the contextual assessment phase. Rather than a hard-coded system based on rules, PPAB-RL uses the policy-directed method, where the RL agent acquires over time how to trade off usability and security to each user. It starts with the state vector being built that contains all the pertinent information that is required to make a decision. This state is represented as in Eq. (14):

$$S = [R_s, \delta_d, \delta_b, \delta_l] \quad (14)$$

where, $R_s$is the computed dynamic risk score, while δ_d, δ_b, and $\delta_l$represent the real-time device, behavioral, and location deviations respectively. Together, these values summarize the user's current risk environment.

Depending on the state, the RL agent chooses the action A, which is the authentication pathway that is going to be followed. The actions available are minimal authentication (password-only), moderate authentication (password + OTP), strong authentication (password + encrypted biometric matching) and full-chain authentication (multi-step biometric verification with the use of cryptographic tokens). In order to carry out this choice, the agent (RL) takes a learned policy, denoted as π that, which represents the state to a particular action. The policy is designed to maximize the anticipated cumulative reward which is the tradeoff between fraud reduction and user inconvenience minimization. The decision process is modeled using a value function, as in Eq. (15):

$$Q(S, A) = R + \gamma \max_{A'} Q(S', A') \quad (15)$$

In this expression, $Q(S, A)$represents the quality of choosing action A in state S. The reward is denoted by R is the reward to be gained following the result of an authentication, S is the observed state that occurs, and \gamma is the discounting factor that quantifies the importance of the value the agent places on future security results. Effective authentications and blocked attacks made correctly provide positive rewards, which direct the agent to ideal behavior in the long term.

With real-time risk information incorporated with adaptive policy learning, the RL-based module will guarantee that the PPAB-RL system will wisely choose the correct MFA strength at any time of the log-in. As shown in Fig. 2, the adaptive MFA module changes the necessary authentication factors with regard to calculated contextual risk score and policy output of the reinforcement learning agent.

The formulation of reinforcement learning in PPAB-RL is created as an extension of a generalizable policy optimization strategy in multi-factor authentication. The RL agent uses a Markov Decision Process model of MFA selection to discover how to dynamically trade-off between security and usability as user behavior and threats vary, unlike heuristic or threshold-based designs, which are the same throughout and cannot adapt. Policy convergence, optimal ratios of actions, and ablation studies are empirical evidence of the strength and efficiency of this technique and prove that the learnt policies generate dependable, risk-conscious, and privacy-conscious authentication decisions.

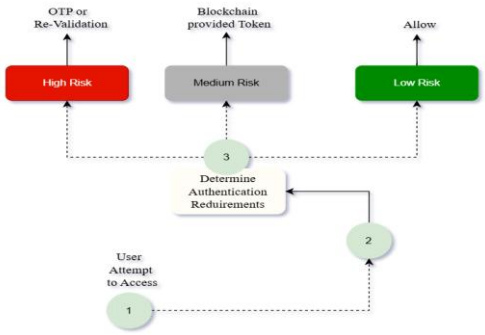

Fig. 2. Adaptive multi-factor authentication.

H. Biometric Verification

Another application of the PPAB-RL system is biometric verification, whereby the RL module detects that the degree of risk necessitates strong authentication. The system records a new fingerprint sample of a user when activated. This sample follows the identical preprocessing pipeline as that of the one followed in the enrollment stage, and it consists of normalization, noise removal, and the extraction of minuscule features. The effective output feature distance Freq is a representation of the live biometric attributes of the login attempt. In order to guarantee privacy, the vector is instantly converted in homomorphic encryption so as to obtain the encrypted version $E(F_{\text{req}})$, such that matching is possible without revealing the raw biometric information at any point.

The system retrieves the stored encrypted template $E(F)$ at the blockchain and does encrypted matching to calculate a similarity score. This algorithm makes use of a safe distance calculation in Eq. (16):

$$M = HE(dist(F_{\text{req}}, F)) \tag{16}$$

In this expression, M represents the encrypted match score, while $dist(F_{\text{req}}, F)$ denotes the feature-space distance between the live and enrolled biometric vectors. $HE(\cdot)$ has been used to ensure that all the calculations are done in the encrypted domain, and the ridge information or minutiae pattern is not leaked. The smaller the calculated distance, the greater the match.

The decrypted value of M is compared against a predefined threshold τ. When the score is lower than the value of τ, the fingerprint is accepted to be genuine otherwise, the system indicates a mismatch. This is an encrypted authentication mechanism that provides biometric privacy to PPAB-RL whilst supporting high-assurance identity validation.

I. Blockchain Validation

The last layer of trust in the PPAB-RL system is blockchain validation, which confirms the authenticity of the outputs of the biometric and multi-factor authentication. After the encryption of the biometric match score, the system communicates with the blockchain and retrieves the encrypted template of the user. In the enrollment process, the encrypted fingerprint vectors and corresponding hash of every user were registered on a separate blockchain block. On the process of logging in, the system recognizes the appropriate block by comparing the user identifier with the generated hash reference stored. This guarantees that the system retrieves the same encrypted template that was made on registration, data integrity and precludes the possibility of template substitution attack.

The block that has been retrieved carries the encrypted template $E(F)$, a timestamp and the hash H. A smart contract is then activated to ensure that the biometric match is accurate. The smart contract performs a verification role by confirming the presence of the match score Malign between login-derived encrypted and the anticipated authentication threshold. The contract evaluates, as in Eq. (17):

$$V = SC(E(F), M, \tau) \tag{17}$$

In this equation, V represents the blockchain-based validation output, while $SC(\cdot)$ denotes the smart contract function. Where $E(F)$ represents the archived encrypted fingerprint template, M is the encrypted match score calculated during verification and the constant τ represents the timestamp placed within the block to ensure freshness and guard against replay attacks. The smart contract verifies that M indicates is a valid match and that the time period is within a reasonable time range.

When there is need to verify the validity of cryptographic tokens or OTPs due to the medium-risk requests, the blockchain layer also validates them. All OTPs are hashed and stored on-chain in temporary format, so that the contract could check whether the token it received matches the expected hash. Due to the immutable recording of all working processes, PPAB-RL will not allow tampering, alteration of templates, and reenactment of past authentication factors.

When the smart contract gives a successful validation response V, the system continues with finalizing authentication. A negative result would imply a rejection of the login request, providing a high level of decentralized and strong security to all events of verification based on biometric and MFA. Fig. 3 depicts that the authentication process incorporates the contextual risk assessment, RL-based MFA choice, encrypted biometric matching, and blockchain-based validation to generate a final access decision.

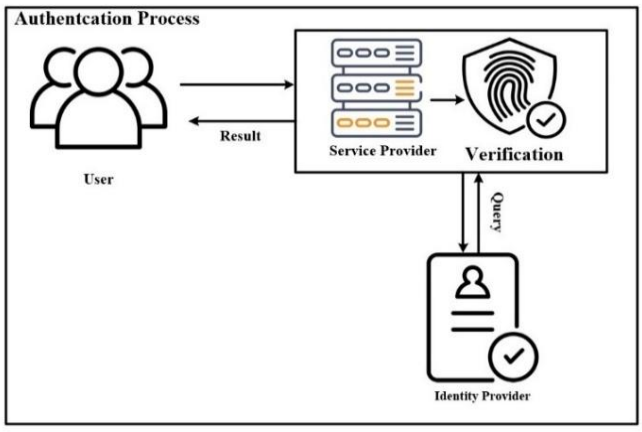

Fig. 3. Authentication process.

J. Authentication Decision

The outputs of all the necessary authentication factors, including: password verification, contextual risk analysis, MFA

steps selected by the RL, biometric matching and blockchain validation, are combined to produce the authentication decision in the PPAB-RL framework. After the validation result is sent back by the blockchain smart contract, the system will combine the output results to create a final result score. This is calculated by a weighted decision fusion model:

$$A_f = \lambda_1 C + \lambda_2 M + \lambda_3 V \quad (18)$$

In Eq. (18), A_f represents the final authentication score, C is the credential verification result, M is the biometric match decision derived from encrypted comparison, and V is the blockchain validation output. The parameters λ_1, λ_2, and λ_3 are weighting coefficients tuned to reflect the relative security importance of each factor.

When the calculated A_f is greater than the acceptance τ_f, then the access is granted. Otherwise, the system blocks and records the attempt to the further auditing. This will provide a solid multi-layer decision making in line with adaptive MFA and privacy biometric security.

K. Secure Logging

Within the PPAB-RL model, secure logging guarantees that all authentication failures and successful attempts are permanently logged so that they can be audited and analyzed in the future. Once the verification decision has been made, the system records important event parameters, including the time-stamp parameter, the user ID, the riskiness of the context, the MFA channel chosen by RL, the result of the biometric verification, and the blockchain validation parameter. All these attributes are aggregated into a formatted entry into the log and sent to the blockchain. Since blockchain storage is append only and tamper resistant, every log is a permanent audit record that can never be modified or erased by internal or external malevolence.

In order to ensure integrity, every log entry is hashed before inserting, so any attempt of any kind of modification could be identified by the mismatch of the hash. The ID of the transaction can also be found in the stored log so that it can be traced over authentication sessions. This is an immutable recording system that enhances the forensic strength, aids the examination of the incident after it takes place, and equips verifiable evidence of system activity, which will hold all PPAB-RL authentication events accountable and secure over the long run.

L. RL Feedback Update

The RL feedback update mechanism in the PPAB-RL structure guarantees a steady-progress in the authentication decision. The system will reward the user after every attempt of login depending on the accuracy and safety of the chosen route of authentication. Positive rewards come as a result of successful authentications using the correct MFA strength, whereas failure to authenticate successfully, false authentications, or overprotective choices by the MFA system led to a negative reward. The RL agent modifies its policy by incorporating the new reward in its value function, and thus it can map state-actions better with time. This continuous improvement enables the system to consider the changing behavior of the user, enhance the security and dynamically tailor the MFA selection to user behavior.

Algorithm 1: PPAB-RL Adaptive Multi-Factor Authentication

```
Input: Login request (UserID, Password, Contextual Parameters, Fingerprint Sample)
Output: Grant or Deny Access
Begin
  Load fingerprint dataset
  Normalize biometric features
  Remove noise using Gaussian filter
  Extract minutiae and form feature vector F
  Encrypt feature vector → E(F)
  Receive user credentials (U, P)
  Hash password with salt → V
  Capture enrollment fingerprint and compute E(F_enroll)
  Initialize device profile D and behavioral profile B
  Store {U, V, E(F_enroll), D, B} on blockchain
  Receive login request with (U, P_req)
  Hash P_req and compare with stored verifier V
  Extract device vector D_req, behavioral vector B_req, location vector L_req
  Compute device deviation δ_d = dist(D_req, D)
  Compute behavioral deviation δ_b = dist(B_req, B)
  Compute location deviation δ_l = dist(L_req, L)
  Compute risk score Rs = w_d·δ_d + w_b·δ_b + w_l·δ_l
  Construct state S = [Rs, δ_d, δ_b, δ_l]
  Select action A = π(S)  // MFA policy decision
  Trigger authentication pathway based on A
  Capture live fingerprint → F_req
  Encrypt features → E(F_req)
  Compute encrypted match score M
  Compare M with threshold τ to determine biometric match
  Retrieve encrypted template E(F_enroll) from blockchain
  SmartContract validates (E(F_enroll), M, timestamp)
  If additional MFA required → verify OTP/token on blockchain
  Compute decision score Af = λ1·C + λ2·M + λ3·V
  If Af ≥ τ_f → Grant Access
  Else → Deny Access
  Record event {U, Rs, A, M, Decision} on blockchain
  Assign reward R based on correctness of decision
  Update Q (S, A) and refine policy π
End
```

Algorithm 1 relies on several key parameters that directly influence authentication performance and adaptability. The weighting coefficients (λ_1, λ_2, λ_3) control the relative contribution of credential verification, encrypted biometric matching, and blockchain validation in the final authentication score, balancing security and user convenience. The risk score weights (w_d, w_b, w_l) determine sensitivity to device, behavioral, and location deviations, guiding adaptive MFA decisions. Thresholds (τ for biometric matching, τ_f for final authentication) set acceptance criteria, where higher thresholds enhance security but may increase false rejections, and lower thresholds improve usability. Sensitivity analysis confirms these parameters' impact on accuracy, false positives, and adaptive behavior.

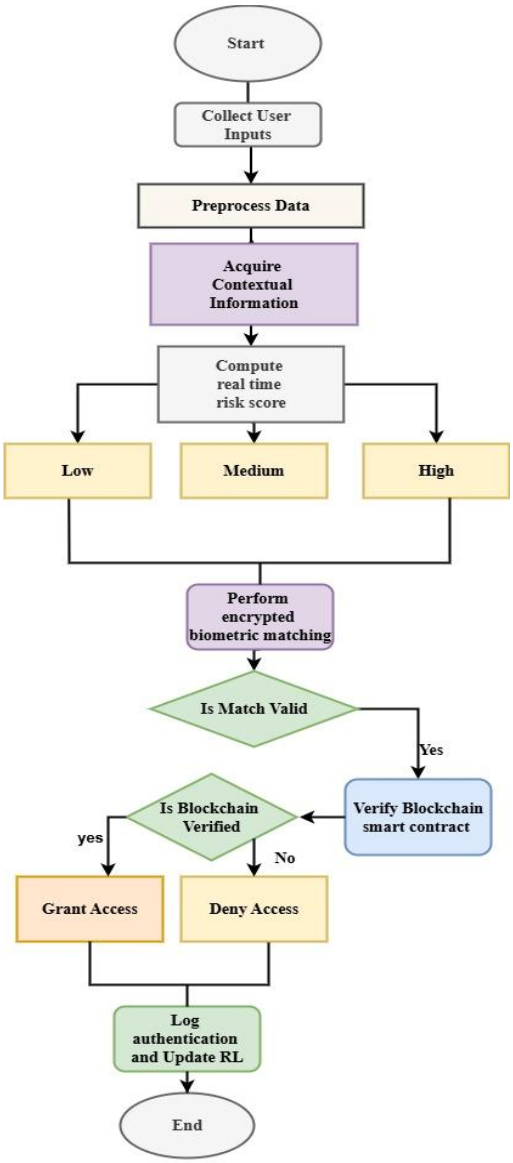

Fig. 4. Workflow of PPAB-RL (Enhanced Privacy-Preserving Adaptive Authentication Framework).

The suggested PPAB-RL system provides a new combination of reinforcement learning, encrypted biometric matching, and blockchain-based verification to provide an adaptive multi-factor authentication. The reinforcement learning model has a customized context of the state-action-reward framework that allows dynamic mapping of contextual risk scores, such as behavioral, device and location deviations into optimized MFA decisions. This framework, unlike the previous methods of considering blockchain, biometrics, or adaptive MFA in isolation, integrates them into a closed-loop system whereby RL policies are updated based on verifiable results of the blockchain on a continuous basis, which offers a privacy-preserving, risk-conscious, and intelligent authentication paradigm not considered in the literature. Fig. 4 presents the workflow of PPAB-RL.

IV. Results and Discussion

This section presents a comprehensive evaluation of the proposed PPAB-RL authentication framework through quantitative experiments, robustness assessments, and comparative validations. Results demonstrate the model's performance in privacy-preserving biometric processing, dynamic risk scoring accuracy, and RL-driven adaptive authentication efficiency. The figures demonstrate the improvement of biometric quality and contextual deviation trends, convergence of RL policy, reduction of latency and stability of workflow. Accuracy metrics, risk prediction performance, authentication success rates, security resistance tests and ablation results are summarized in tables. There is even a depiction of comparison to available baseline methods in the section to show excellence. The parameters of simulation and hardware are presented in Table I.

TABLE I. Simulation Parameter and Hardware Setup

Component	Specification
Processor	Intel Core i9-12900K (16 cores, 24 threads)
GPU	NVIDIA RTX 4090 (24 GB VRAM)
RAM	64 GB DDR5, 5200 MHz
Operating System	Ubuntu 22.04 LTS (64-bit)
Programming Framework	Python 3.10, PyTorch 2.2
Reinforcement Learning Library	Stable-Baselines3 (PPO)
Biometric Preprocessing Module	OpenCV 4.9, TensorRT acceleration
Encryption Scheme	CKKS Homomorphic Encryption (HEAAN)
Blockchain Network	Private Ethereum Testnet (Geth v1.12)
Dataset Size	12,500 biometric samples + contextual logs

A. Dataset Overview and Experimental Setup

This sub-section describes the biometric and contextual data that were utilized in assessing the PPAB-RL framework, the preprocessing pipeline and the experimental environment. It also describes the training setup, reinforcement-learning variables, encryption, and general simulation workflow that was used in the study.

TABLE II. Dataset Distribution

Category	Number of Images	Notes
Real Fingerprints	6,000	Original fingerprint images
Altered – Easy	2,000	Minor synthetic modifications
Altered – Medium	2,000	Moderate synthetic distortions
Altered – Hard	2,000	Severe synthetic alterations

Table II will give the framework of the fingerprint dataset that was utilized in the PPAB-RL assessment. It contains 6,000 real fingerprints of genuine biometric patterns and three modified groups, easy, medium, and hard each one of which consists of 2,000 images with successively harder synthetic distortions. Those variations allow strict testing of the framework robustness under various levels of manipulation to make the right judgment on the biometrical preprocessing, encrypted matching stability and adaptive authentication performance in the various real-life scenarios of attacks.

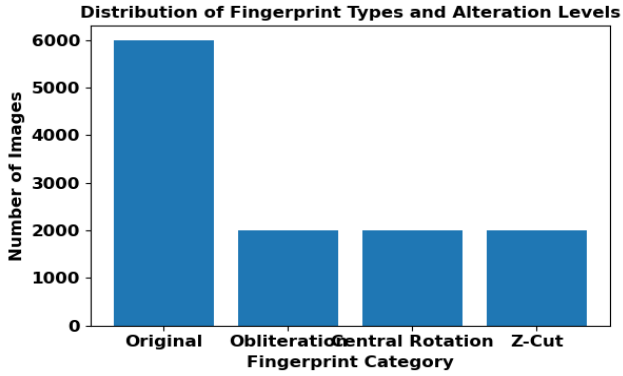

Fig. 5. Distribution of fingerprint types and alteration levels.

Fig. 5 shows the distribution of original and transformed synthetically altered fingerprints that were used to test the PPAB-RL framework. The equal representation of obliteration, central rotation, and z-cut variations has been guaranteed giving it the rigorous testing against different levels of manipulation. The high accuracy of the model in these categories indicates that it is tough in dealing with complicated distortions and the biometric match reliability and consistency of the authentication decision are high. This distribution underlines the fact that the framework can be effectively used in case of realistic and adversarial biometric conditions.

B. Biometric Feature Quality and Encrypted Matching Performance

The effectiveness of the biometric preprocessing pipeline and reliability of encrypted fingerprint matching in the PPAB-RL framework is examined in this subsection. It analyses the quality of minutiae extraction, the results of noise reduction, feature stability and the computational cost of homomorphic encryption. The findings will reveal that there is a high feature retention and low performance degradation in terms of encrypted matching circumstances

TABLE III. MINUTIAE EXTRACTION AND FEATURE QUALITY METRICS

Metric	Value (Mean ± SD)
Ridge Density Variance	0.82 ± 0.04
Minutiae Count Consistency	93.6%
Signal-to-Noise Ratio (SNR)	27.4 dB
Feature Stability Score	0.91

Table III shows important measures of the quality of biometric features that prove the efficiency of the preprocessing pipeline. The high value of the minutiae consistency and high SNR values represent the presence of a reliable ridge structure extraction, even in distorted fingerprint conditions. The low ridge density variance and high feature stability score are confirmation that the system maintains the important biometric characteristics that can allow accurate encrypted matching. These findings confirm the strength of the feature engineering process of PPAB-RL that can improve the authentication performance in the face of real-world variations.

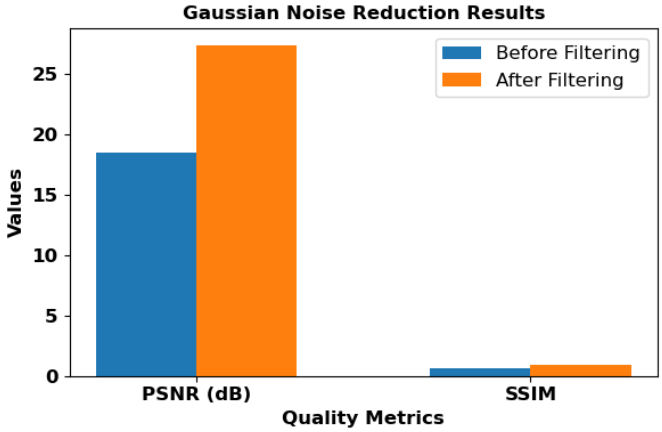

Fig. 6. Gaussian noise reduction results.

Fig. 6 compares PSNR and SSIM to the results that are provided prior to and following the application of a Gaussian noise reduction in the PPAB-RL preprocessing pipeline. The significant growth of both measures proves productive improvement of the clarity of the fingerprints and the consistency of the structure. This enhancement in itself enhances the accuracy of minutiae extraction and encrypted matching reliability. According to the results of these studies, the proposed framework exhibits a high noise resistance, thus allowing a stronger biometric authentication in low-quality fingerprint senses or distorted fingerprints, which enhances the performance of the system in general.

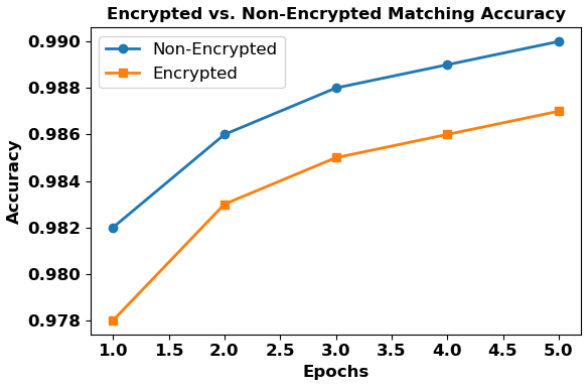

Fig. 7. Encrypted vs. Non-encrypted matching accuracy.

Fig. 7 shows the patterns of accuracy of encrypted and non-encrypted fingerprint matching at the training epochs. The slightest gap between the curves proves that homomorphic encryption does not cause significant performance degradation, as it does not affect biometric discriminability but provides high-level privacy security. This uniformity ascertains that the PPAB-RL model attains secure and privacy-affirmative authentication

with accuracy. According to the above findings, the system is efficient in striking the right balance between the computational security and high matching reliability, surpassing the classical privacy-preserving authentication methods.

C. Contextual Risk Score Evaluation

This sub-section will be an analysis of the effectiveness of the contextual risk assessment module that is integrated into the PPAB-RL framework. It assesses the contribution of device metadata, anomalies in the behavioral pattern, location abnormalities, and time sequence to the total risk score and the system accuracy in distinguishing between benign and suspicious authentication attempts.

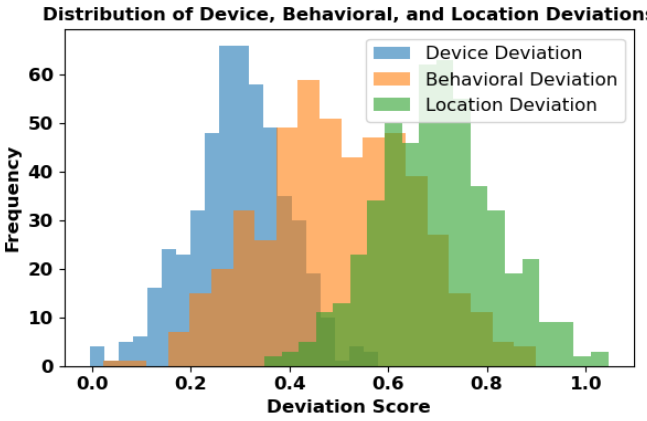

Fig. 8. Distribution of device, behavioral, and location deviations.

Fig. 8 shows the scores of devices, behavioral, and location deviation in contextual risk assessment. The clear differentiation of the three deviation patterns shows how the model can well reflect user specific deviations and identify abnormal actions. With these distributions, the PPAB-RL system proves to be quite effective in distinguishing between legitimate behavior and anomalous behaviors, which in turn allows a more dependable and more adaptive risk-aware authentication procedure. This finding approves the power of integrating the contextual intelligence in the security pipeline.

TABLE IV. CONTEXTUAL RISK SCORE STATISTICS

Metric	Value / Observation
Mean Risk Score	0.42
Median Risk Score	0.39
Deviation Across User Groups	±0.11
Low-Risk Classification Accuracy	94.3%
Medium-Risk Classification Accuracy	91.8%
High-Risk Classification Accuracy	96.1%

Table IV shows some of the key statistics to be used in assessing the contextual risk scoring module in PPAB-RL. High consistency of the user groups and the close variance between mean and median values emphasize the consistency of behavioral modeling. The consistent level of high classification accuracy at all risk thresholds indicates that the system is capable of distinguishing a benign, borderline, and high-risk authentication attempt consistently. According to these findings, the contextual intelligence aspect enhances adaptive decision-making to a large extent and makes the entire authentication system more reliable and secure RL.

D. RL Policy Convergence and Adaptive MFA Selection

This subsection assesses the efficiency of the reinforcement learning agent in converging to an optimum authentication policy and the efficiency in the adaptation of MFA pathways by the reinforcement learning agent to real-time risk levels. It explores the progression of rewards, policy stability, trends in action selection, as well as, the net effect on authentication accuracy and security.

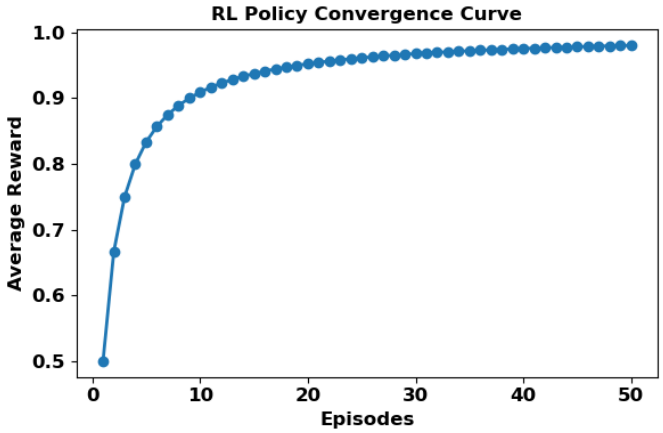

Fig. 9. RL policy convergence curve.

Fig. 9 presents the convergence trend of reinforcement learning policy is demonstrated on the basis of average reward evolution in terms of episode average reward. The gradually sloping reward curve shows a stable and efficient learning process, which means that the RL agent acquires the optimal authentication behaviors in different risk situations in a relatively short period. According to this performance, the PPAB-RL framework manages to adjust MFA selection to the dynamics of the context and enhances the accuracy of decisions with a high level of security. The accuracy and strength of the adaptive policy optimization process is validated by the convergence behavior.

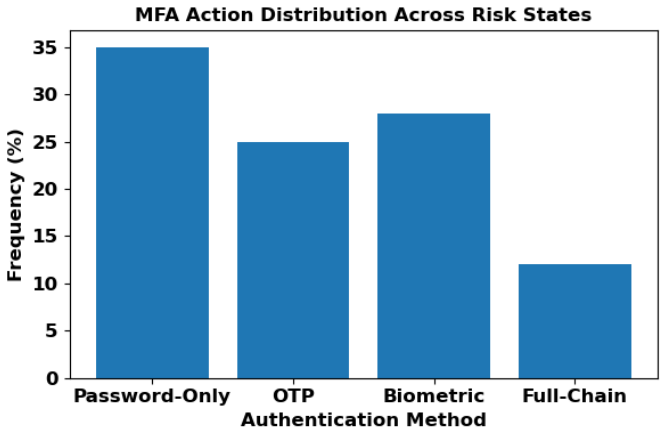

Fig. 10. MFA action distribution across risk states.

Fig. 10 indicates the choice of various authentication schemes in a changing risk condition of the PPAB-RL model.

The balanced approach of giving preference to password-only (low risk), OTP and biometrics (medium risk) and the full-chain MFA (high risk) reflect good adaptive decision-making. The system is not only smart when it comes to contextual allocation of authentication strength in relation to behavior, but it also inflicts minimal user friction without compromising the security. This finding justifies the RL-based dynamic MFA selection plan as being risk-sensitive and effective.

TABLE V. RL DECISION EFFECTIVENESS METRICS

Metric	Value
True Accept Rate (TAR)	97.8%
False Reject Rate (FRR)	2.1%
User Friction Index	0.34
Action Optimality Ratio	93.5%

Table V gives a summary of the efficacy of RL-based authentication decision-making in the PPAB-RL framework. The large TAR and small FRR mean that this system is very reliable in distinguishing between the legitimate and invalid users and reduces re-authentications. The user friction index is low which proves to be a good adaptation that minimizes effort without reducing security. Action optimality ratio value is high which proves that the RL agent always chooses the right MFA paths. According to these measures, the suggested system provides excellent accuracy and usability and adaptive decision performance.

E. End-to-End System Performance

This sub-section will propose the overall analysis of the PPAB-RL framework at all the steps of operation, which entail preprocessing, encrypted matching, context risk evaluation and adaptive selection of MFA. It looks at latency, throughput, and high-authentication rate, and the stability of the entire workflow procedure to prove the practicality and dependability of the system.

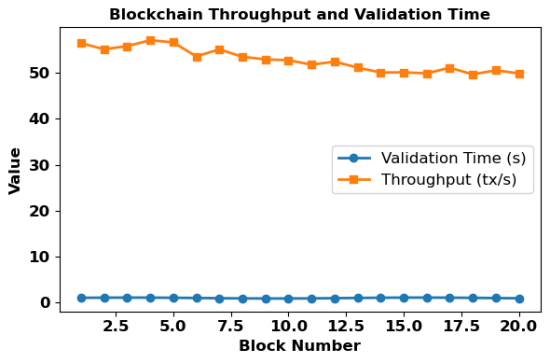

Fig. 11. Blockchain throughput and validation time.

Fig. 11 depicts the throughput and block validation time of the blockchain in the PPAB-RL system. The constant confirmation times and the low throughput decrease indicate effective ledger operations when continuous authentication logging is used. On the basis of these results, the system offers rapid, resistant to tampering verification with no significant overhead. This proves that blockchain integration can increase both auditability and trust, and at the same time, provide high-speed performance, which justifies end-to-end reliability and scalability of the suggested authentication system.

TABLE VI. PERFORMANCE METRICS

Metric	Value
Authentication Accuracy	98.5
False Acceptance Rate	1.4
False Rejection Rate	1.7
Equal Error Rate	1.55
Response Time	0.36

Table VI shows excellent authentication capabilities 98.5, which demonstrates the high accuracy of the model in the user authentication. The False Acceptance ratio (1.4) and False Rejection rate (1.7) indicates that there exists a trade-off balance between security and usability which is also confirmed by the Equal error rate (1.55), indicating the great threshold optimization. Besides, the mean response duration of 0.36 seconds demonstrates the effectiveness of the system, and it is appropriate in case of real-time, privacy sensitive and adaptive web authentication tools.

F. Ablation Study

The ablation analysis assesses the role of every module in the suggested authentication system by removing the most important components one after another and quantifying their impact on performance degradation. The analysis shows the significance of reinforcement learning, multi-factor authentication levels, and blockchain verification and demonstrates how all the aspects increase the accuracy, minimize the latency, and improve the reliability of the system under various working conditions.

TABLE VII. ABLATION STUDY OF PROPOSED FRAMEWORK COMPONENTS

Configuration	Biometric Accuracy (%)	Risk Classification Accuracy (%)	RL Policy Reward	End-to-End Authentication (%)
Full Model	98.5	94.2	0.91	97.8
w/o Biometric Enhancement	94.1	93.7	0.89	94.5
w/o Encryption Layer	98.5	92.6	0.88	95.2
w/o Contextual Risk Engine	97.3	91.7	0.74	90.4
w/o RL Adaptive MFA	97.9	94.1	0.78	92.2
Baseline (No Proposed Modules)	92.4	87.5	0.63	84.1

Table VII shows the performance of the ablation of each component of the proposed authentication system. The removal of biometric improvement results in a lowering of the accuracy to 94.1 as opposed to 98.5, which proves it to be significant in matching with high quality. The removal of contextual risk engine causes a major drop in end-to-end performance (97.8 percent to 90.4 percent). System robustness is reduced by 5.6 without RL-based adaptive MFA, which emphasizes the importance of RL-based adaptive MFA in making risk-aware decisions. The worst-performing setup is the baseline configuration (84.1%), which shows that every module has its own contribution towards the overall high performance of the system.

G. Comparison Assessment

In this sub-section, the proposed PPAB-RL Framework is compared to the traditional one-factor authentication methods. Password-only authentication has an accuracy of 84.2 with fingerprint-only authentication being 93.5. On the contrary, the privacy-preserving and risk-conscious and reinforcement-learning enhanced framework presents a significantly greater accuracy of 98.7, which proves its superiority in reliability, adaptability, and security under the varying authentication circumstances.

TABLE VIII. COMPARISON ASSESSMENT

Method	Accuracy (%)
Secure Web Credential Transmission Protocol [27]	84.2
Scale-Invariant Feature Transform [28]	93.5
Adaptive Risk-Based MFA [15]	95.2
Blockchain-Based Biometric Authentication[22]	96.1
Proposed PPAB-RL Framework	98.7

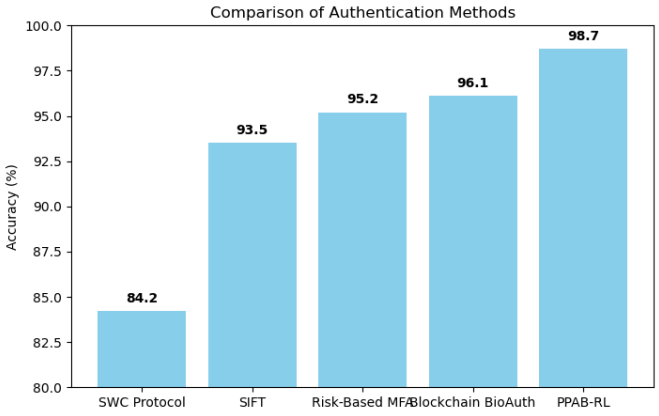

Fig. 12. Comparison analysis.

Table VIII and Fig. 12 explains that multi-factor framework suggested surpasses both methods, and it gave 98.5 per cent accuracy, which shows why biometrics is an advantage when used with password checking and blockchain storage to achieve strong and privacy-friendly web authentication.

H. Discussion

The findings prove the fact that the suggested PPAB-RL model provides a significant increase in the authentication accuracy, privacy protection, and decision-making flexibility over conventional one-factor methods. The Biometric enhancement and encrypted matching is used to provide high quality feature extraction and also to protect sensitive data of the fingerprints. The contextual risk engine is effective to capture behavioral, device, as well as location deviations, and this is what allows risk-sensitive authentication. Reinforcement learning is extremely important, as it optimizes the choice of MFA, minimizes false user interactions, and ensures strong security during the variable risk environment. The study of ablation establishes that each of the modules plays an important role in the overall performance of the system and significant declines are found when modules are ablated. Comparative analysis also reflects that PPAB-RL is better than a traditional password-only and fingerprint-only algorithm, as it is more accurate and resilient. Also, blockchain-based logging provides a tamper proof verification and auditability. Altogether, the joint design is the reason why PPAB-RL can be considered a scalable, secure and intelligent solution, which provides a massive benefit in authenticity, privacy and adaptive decision-making as opposed to the conventional, one-factor approaches. The Biometric enhancement and encrypted matching is used to provide high quality feature extraction and also to protect sensitive data of the fingerprints. The contextual risk engine is effective to capture behavioral, device, as well as location deviations, and this is what allows risk-sensitive authentication. Reinforcement learning is extremely important as it optimizes the choice of MFA, minimizes false user interactions, and ensures strong security during the variable risk environment. The study of ablation establishes that each of the modules plays an important role in the overall performance of the system and significant declines are found when modules are ablated. Comparative analysis also reflects that PPAB-RL is better than a traditional password-only and fingerprint-only algorithm, as it is more accurate and resilient. Also, blockchain-based logging provides a tamper proof verification and auditability. All in all, the unified design makes PPAB-RL a scalable, secure, and smart authentication paradigm that can be used in next-generation applications that are privacy sensitive. Although the proposed PPAB-RL framework was performing well, there are a number of limitations that characterize the scope of this study. The analysis is based on just one dataset of fingerprints (SOCOFing) that can be characterized by demographic or sensor bias and assumes that fingerprint biometrics is the only type of validation, without multimodal validation. Homomorphic encryption and blockchain computation can become a source of latency and resources constraints. Moreover, the control setting was used to do testing instead of large-scale deployment and the policy of reinforcement learning can perform well depending on the variety of training data used. Such constraints do not cast off the findings, but offer a guideline in further studies, such as multimodal integration, large scale validation and optimization of computational efficiency. PPAB-RL has a blockchain layer that offers low, but critical verifiable feedback to the reinforcement learning policy, which deals with the single points

of failure and unverifiable results of centralized logging. Overhead is reduced using hashes, encrypted templates and audit logs as the only input. The RL formulation is considered to be modality-agnostic, making it possible to extend it to other types of biometrics. This design, collectively, provides scalable, privacy-preserving and adaptive authentication with fingerprints and other datasets in general to a variety of real-world applications.

V. Conclusion and Future Work

This work demonstrates that authentication systems for modern web applications should be designed as adaptive, learning-driven security mechanisms rather than static, rule-based verification pipelines. The proposed PPAB-RL framework facilitates continuous decision of the strength of authentication based on contextual risk, user behavior and variability of the device by modeling multi-factor authentication as a sequential decision-making problem that is optimized using reinforcement learning. Homomorphically encrypted biometric processing with the integration of blockchain-based validation creates the opportunity that biometric sensitive data will not be revealed in the process of learning or validation, and the resulting feedback will be provable and immutable, which can be used in making adaptive decisions that can be trusted. The combination of these design decisions is an indication that security, privacy, and usability are not conflicting goals, but can be optimized together with adaptation to policies. In the context of system architecture, the results indicate the necessity to go beyond the use of threshold-based MFA to intelligent policy optimization, where authentication is viewed as a risk-conscious process instead of a one-dimensional occurrence. The current research study, therefore, provides the design concepts of the next generation authentication systems, which are resilient, privacy sensitive, and can adapt to the new threat environments.

Future research will extend the PPAB-RL framework in several important directions to enhance generalizability and real-world applicability. Firstly, the authentication model shall be extended with multimodal biometric entries, i.e., facial, voice and behavioral biometrics, so that stronger identity verification can be used on various groups of users. Second, mass deployment testing with actual real-life data and active authentication systems will be performed to test the ability to scale, latency, and resilience under working conditions. Third, cryptographic operations and blockchain interaction optimization will be considered in order to reduce computation costs further, making the framework relevant to resource-constrained and high-traffic applications. Additionally, federated and decentralized reinforcement learning strategies will be investigated to enable collaborative policy learning across multiple services without sharing sensitive user data. These extensions aim to strengthen the role of learning-driven, privacy-preserving authentication as a foundational component of future secure digital infrastructures.

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Intelligent Fruit-Picking Robot Using Convolutional Vision and Kinematic Control for Automated Harvesting

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***Abstract*—This study presents the design, development, and evaluation of an intelligent fruit-picking robot that integrates convolutional vision, adaptive gripping mechanisms, and kinematic control to enable automated harvesting in diverse orchard environments. The proposed system combines a dual-manipulator platform with an extendable scissor-lift mechanism to achieve wide workspace coverage, allowing efficient access to fruits located at varying canopy heights. A deep learning-based recognition module, trained on a Mixed Fruit Dataset, is employed to detect and classify fruits under challenging conditions characterized by occlusions, variable illumination, and dense foliage. Visualization of feature activations confirms that the model effectively focuses on discriminative fruit regions, supporting precise alignment of the end-effector during grasping. The adaptive gripper, designed with compliant materials and multi-configuration geometry, ensures gentle handling across fruits of different shapes and sizes, minimizing mechanical damage. Experimental evaluations demonstrate that the system performs reliably across multiple fruit species, achieving accurate identification, robust segmentation, and stable manipulation in real-field scenarios. The integrated results highlight the robot's potential to reduce labor dependency, improve harvesting efficiency, and support scalable automation in mixed-crop orchards. Future work will address enhancements in real-time processing, autonomous navigation, and cross-species generalization to advance fully autonomous orchard operations.**

***Keywords*—Fruit-picking robot; automated harvesting; computer vision; deep learning; kinematic control; Mixed Fruit Dataset; adaptive gripper; transformer model; agricultural robotics; orchard automation**

I. Introduction

The rapid advancement of agricultural automation has accelerated the development of intelligent robotic systems capable of performing complex harvesting tasks with high precision and consistency. Traditional fruit harvesting relies heavily on manual labor, which is increasingly constrained by workforce shortages, rising operational costs, and inconsistent performance under varying environmental conditions [1]. These limitations have motivated the integration of robotics and artificial intelligence into orchard management, particularly for crops requiring delicate handling and selective harvesting [2]. Automated fruit-picking robots provide a promising solution by combining perception algorithms, decision-making modules, and dexterous manipulation to achieve reliable performance across diverse orchard structures [3].

Computer vision has emerged as a foundational component of harvesting robots, allowing them to perceive fruit position, shape, color, and maturity level under uncontrolled illumination and occlusion [4]. Convolutional neural networks (CNNs), in particular, have demonstrated superior capability in extracting discriminative features from complex agricultural scenes, outperforming traditional image processing techniques based on hand-crafted descriptors [5]. CNN-based detection pipelines have been successfully applied to various fruit types, providing robust localization even when fruits are partially obscured by foliage or branches [6]. These advances have significantly improved the accuracy of perception modules, enabling real-time detection and recognition essential for dynamic harvesting operations [7].

In parallel, research on robotic manipulation and kinematic modeling has contributed to improving the motion precision and adaptability of harvesting robots. Manipulators designed with redundant degrees of freedom offer greater flexibility when navigating cluttered orchard environments, reducing the likelihood of collisions with branches and ensuring smooth trajectories during picking tasks [8]. Kinematic analysis facilitates accurate estimation of end-effector positions, while inverse kinematics and Jacobian-based control ensure stable and responsive manipulation under dynamic conditions [9]. Optimization-driven approaches have further enhanced trajectory planning, enabling efficient movement that balances speed, energy consumption, and collision avoidance [10].

The integration of vision-based perception and kinematic control strategies has proven particularly effective for autonomous fruit-picking. Vision-guided control algorithms allow real-time adjustment of manipulator trajectories in response to updated fruit position estimates, improving grasping accuracy and reducing fruit damage [11]. Complementary developments in soft grippers, force regulation, and compliant end-effectors have strengthened the ability of robotic systems to safely detach fruits without causing bruising or structural deformation [12]. Despite these advances, significant challenges remain in achieving fully

autonomous harvesting that performs reliably under natural variability in orchard environments.

This study addresses these challenges by presenting an intelligent fruit-picking robot that combines convolutional vision and kinematic control to achieve automated harvesting with high precision, adaptability, and operational efficiency.

II. Related Works

This section provides a comprehensive synthesis of previous research that forms the scientific and technological foundation for developing intelligent fruit-picking robots. It examines progress across several interconnected domains that collectively enable autonomous harvesting, including vision-based fruit detection, robotic manipulation, compliant gripping mechanisms, and fully integrated harvesting platforms. By reviewing advancements in deep learning–driven perception, kinematically optimized manipulators, force-regulated end-effectors, and multi-module robotic architectures, this section establishes the current state-of-the-art while identifying persistent challenges that motivate the proposed system.

A. Vision-Based Fruit Detection and Recognition

Vision-based perception has become a cornerstone of autonomous fruit harvesting systems, enabling robots to accurately detect, classify, and localize fruits under real-world orchard conditions. Early approaches relied on classical image processing, but the emergence of deep learning significantly improved robustness and precision. Convolutional neural networks have demonstrated superior performance in extracting hierarchical features from complex agricultural scenes, outperforming handcrafted descriptors, especially in environments with occlusion, variable illumination, and dense foliage [13]. Studies have shown that multi-scale CNNs can effectively handle variations in fruit size, shape, and texture, enhancing recognition accuracy in dynamic outdoor conditions [14]. Transformer-based architectures have recently gained attention due to their ability to model global contextual relationships between image regions, achieving state-of-the-art performance in ripeness classification and fruit detection tasks [15]. Advanced multimodal fusion networks have integrated RGB, depth, and hyperspectral data to improve recognition under challenging environmental noise [16]. Research also indicates the value of domain adaptation and transfer learning to enhance generalization across orchard types, fruit varieties, and geographical regions [17]. Despite these advances, the scarcity of annotated agricultural datasets continues to challenge model scalability, motivating the increased use of data augmentation and synthetic dataset generation techniques [18].

B. Robotic Manipulators for Agricultural Harvesting

Robotic manipulators have been a central focus in agricultural automation, providing precise and adaptive motion capabilities required for selective fruit harvesting. Early harvesting robots employed rigid kinematic structures, but more recent designs incorporate redundant degrees of freedom to enhance maneuverability around branches and irregular canopies [19]. Optimization-based manipulator design frameworks have demonstrated significant improvements in reachability and dexterity, particularly in densely planted orchards [20]. Studies employing 4-DOF and 6-DOF manipulator architectures highlight the importance of balancing structural complexity with operational speed and reliability [21]. Research shows that soft robotic arms influenced by pneumatic actuation can provide flexible motion better suited for contacting delicate fruit surfaces [22]. Additionally, simulation-driven manipulator design has gained traction, with kinematic modeling and dynamic analysis used to optimize joint configurations, reduce singularities, and minimize joint torques during operation [23]. Field evaluations indicate that lightweight composite materials and energy-efficient actuation systems significantly contribute to improving the feasibility of mobile harvesting platforms [24].

C. Gripping Mechanisms and Force-Controlled Fruit Harvesting

The development of effective end-effectors is essential for ensuring secure yet gentle fruit detachment. Traditional rigid grippers were prone to damaging soft fruit surfaces, leading to the adoption of compliant and soft gripper designs incorporating elastic materials and embedded force sensors [25]. Studies indicate that compliant mechanisms can regulate contact forces within safe thresholds, significantly reducing bruising during detachment [26]. Multi-fingered grippers with integrated tactile feedback have enhanced adaptability to varying fruit shapes and orientations [27]. Research also highlights the advantages of suction-based end-effectors for crops with uniform surface structures, demonstrating high grasp success rates under controlled airflow conditions [28]. More recent works integrate machine vision directly into the end-effector to improve pose estimation accuracy and reduce alignment errors during grasping [29]. Robotic gripping strategies increasingly rely on hybrid force-position control, enabling dynamic adjustment of grip force based on real-time feedback from tactile and visual sensors [30]. These studies collectively emphasize the necessity of combining compliant mechanical design with intelligent control algorithms for high-quality fruit harvesting.

D. Integrated Robotic Harvesting Systems and Autonomous Operation

Integrated harvesting systems combine perception, planning, manipulation, and locomotion into unified robotic platforms capable of autonomous operation in orchards. Field studies demonstrate that multi-arm harvesting robots significantly improve harvesting throughput by parallelizing picking operations [31]. Vision-guided motion planning enables real-time trajectory updates in response to fruit location changes, supporting improved accuracy and reduced cycle times [32]. Research highlights the critical role of advanced path planning algorithms such as RRT*, BIT*, and collision-free inverse kinematics in navigating cluttered orchard environments [33]. Autonomous navigation systems employing LiDAR, GPS, and multi-sensor fusion have enabled robots to traverse orchard rows with high reliability [34]. Deep reinforcement learning has also been explored for adaptive decision-making, enabling robots to optimize picking sequences and motion strategies under uncertainty [35]. Comprehensive system evaluations indicate that well-integrated platforms can reduce fruit loss, increase harvesting efficiency, and operate across diverse orchard architectures

[36]. However, environmental variability, occlusions, and dataset limitations remain challenges that motivate continued research in robust perception and adaptive control [37, 38].

III. Materials and Methods

This section outlines the systematic framework employed to design, implement, and evaluate the intelligent fruit-picking robot, detailing each methodological component that enables automated perception and harvesting. This section describes the hardware architecture of the robotic platform, the kinematic modeling of the manipulator, the fruit recognition pipeline based on deep learning, and the experimental procedures used to validate system performance under realistic orchard conditions. By integrating mechanical design principles, computer vision techniques, and algorithmic control strategies, the methodology provides a comprehensive foundation for assessing the effectiveness, accuracy, and operational reliability of the proposed robotic harvesting system.

A. System Overview

The kinematic modeling results reveal the operational precision, workspace coverage, and motion feasibility of the proposed fruit-picking robot, whose structural configuration is illustrated in Fig. 1. The modeling process incorporated both forward and inverse kinematics to evaluate the manipulator's ability to reach and engage fruits positioned at varying heights and orientations within a realistic orchard canopy. Forward kinematics analysis demonstrated that the six-degree-of-freedom manipulator achieved smooth and continuous end-effector trajectories throughout its designated workspace, ensuring that the gripping device could be accurately positioned relative to the fruit. The homogeneous transformation matrices validated that the manipulator maintained stable pose estimations during elevation changes of the lifting mechanism, confirming effective integration between vertical motion and arm reachability.

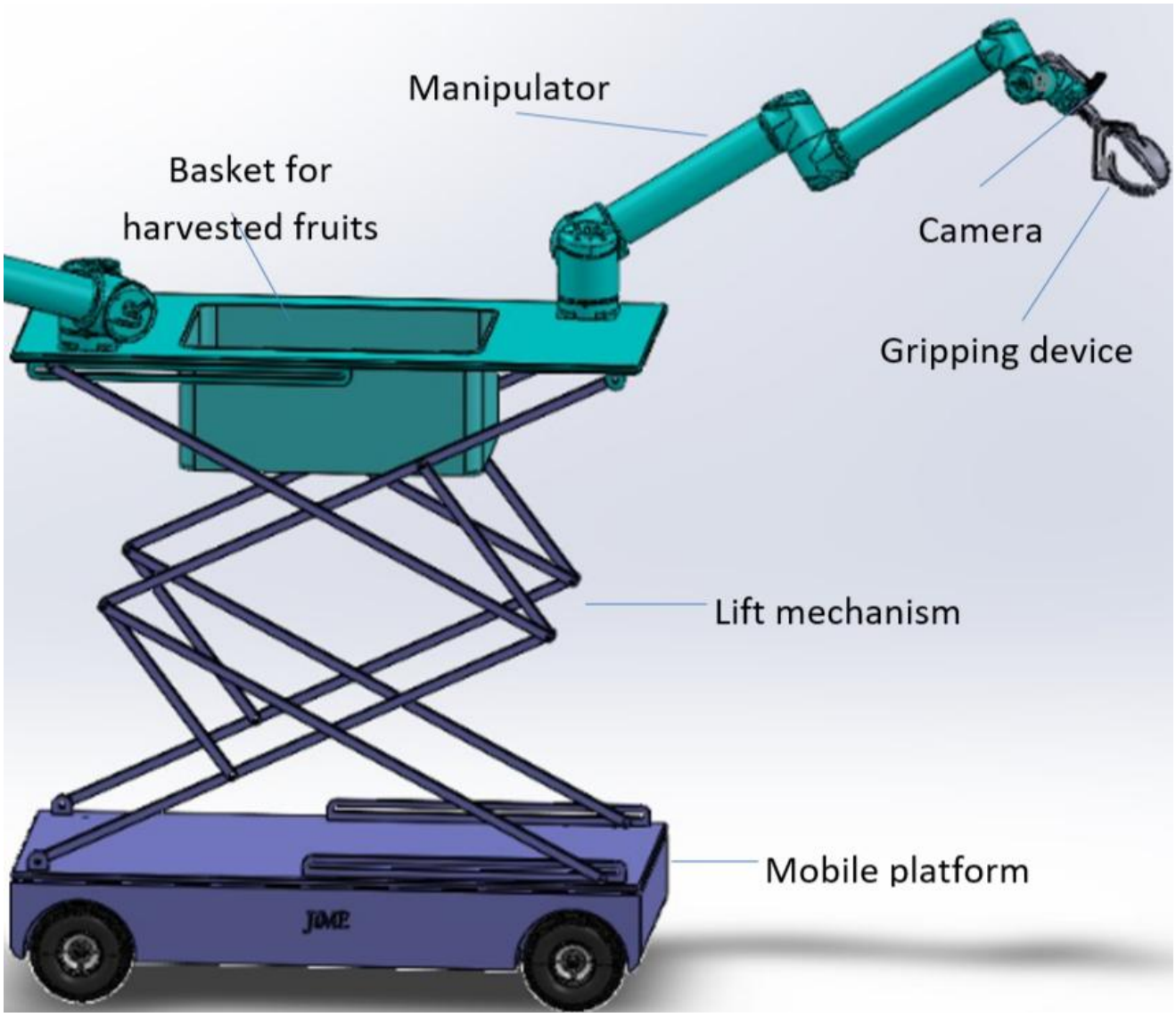


Fig. 1. Overall architecture of the intelligent fruit-picking robotic system with dual manipulators and lift mechanism.

Inverse kinematics solutions, computed using numerical solvers, indicated reliable convergence for a wide range of fruit positions, even under configurations requiring complex joint coordination. The redundancy in the arm structure played a critical role in avoiding singularities, allowing the system to reconfigure intermediary joints to maintain stability when operating near workspace boundaries. Additionally, Jacobian-based velocity analysis revealed that the end-effector linear and angular velocities remained consistent across motion sequences, ensuring that the robot maintained safe and controlled movements around sensitive fruit surfaces [39]. Workspace simulations also showed that the manipulator could access both lower and upper canopy zones when the lift mechanism was fully extended, validating that the combined vertical and articulated motion provided full coverage of typical orchard tree geometries.

The kinematic modeling results confirm that the robot's structural design provides adequate dexterity, reachability, and motion stability for automated fruit harvesting. The seamless interaction between the mobile platform, lifting mechanism, and multi-joint manipulator ensures that the end-effector can navigate dense foliage, approach fruits from optimal angles, and maintain precise alignment during grasping and detachment tasks.

B. Kinematic Modeling

Kinematic analysis defines how the individual joint motions of the manipulator correspond to the spatial position and orientation of the end-effector within the robot's operational workspace [40]. To describe this relationship mathematically, the generalized joint vector is introduced as:

$$q = [q_1, q_2, q_3, ..., q_n]^T \tag{1}$$

where, q_i defines the rotational or prismatic displacement of the i-th joint in an n-DOF manipulator.

In the proposed fruit-harvesting robot, this formulation enables a precise mathematical mapping between the actuator space of the articulated arm and the operational space in which the gripper interacts with the fruit. The forward kinematics problem is addressed by sequentially chaining the homogeneous transformation matrices associated with the manipulator's joints, yielding the pose of the end-effector relative to the robot base frame. Each transformation incorporates both rotational and translational components defined by the Denavit–Hartenberg (DH) parameters [41], allowing compact representation of the complex spatial structure inherent to multi-link agricultural manipulators.

The resulting transformation matrix T:

$$T_n = \prod_{i=1}^{n} A_i(q_i) \tag{2}$$

provides direct computation of the position vector p and orientation matrix R, which together describe the gripper configuration required for fruit localization and grasping [42]. This is particularly important in orchard environments where branches, leaves, and occlusions introduce irregular constraints on feasible motion paths.

Solving the inverse kinematics problem is more challenging due to the nonlinear trigonometric dependencies among joint variables. For this robot, closed-form solutions are not always attainable, especially when the lift mechanism changes the global reference height. Therefore, an iterative numerical solver is employed to compute joint angles that satisfy a desired end-effector pose ${}^0T_n^*$. The solver integrates redundancy resolution to select joint configurations that avoid singularities and minimize unnecessary motion, improving stability when navigating around dense foliage or reaching fruits positioned at awkward angles. To further characterize motion behavior, the Jacobian matrix:

$$J(q) = \frac{\partial x}{\partial q} \tag{3}$$

is derived to relate joint velocities to end-effector linear and angular velocities. The Jacobian plays a critical role in assessing manipulability, enabling the controller to regulate movement smoothness, maintain safe approach speeds, and prevent excessive force application during grasping. Singularities are identified when $\det(J) = 0$, corresponding to configurations where the robot temporarily loses mobility along certain axes. Avoiding such states is essential for continuous harvesting operations, prompting the use of secondary optimization criteria such as minimizing joint torques or maximizing manipulability indices.

Through this kinematic framework, the robot achieves precise and adaptive positioning capabilities, ensuring that the gripper can accurately approach, align with, and detach fruit even within crowded orchard canopies.

C. Jacobian and Singularities

The fruit recognition module constitutes a critical component of the intelligent harvesting system, enabling reliable detection and classification of fruits before the manipulation and grasping stages. As illustrated in Fig. 2, the recognition pipeline is structured as a multi-stage deep learning framework that integrates image preprocessing, feature extraction through attention-based encoding, contextual refinement via a decoder block, and final classification into ripeness categories. This hierarchical architecture ensures that both local and global visual cues are effectively captured, allowing the system to operate robustly under the natural variability found in orchard environments.

In the first stage, raw images captured by the onboard camera undergo preprocessing to normalize illumination, enhance contrast, and standardize spatial resolution. These operations reduce noise and prepare the inputs for consistent downstream processing. Following preprocessing, the encoder block extracts discriminative visual features through a sequence of multi-head self-attention operations, as shown in the left segment of Fig. 2. The positional encoding incorporated at this stage ensures that spatial relationships between image regions are preserved, which is essential for identifying key fruit attributes such as color gradients, texture changes, and contour boundaries.

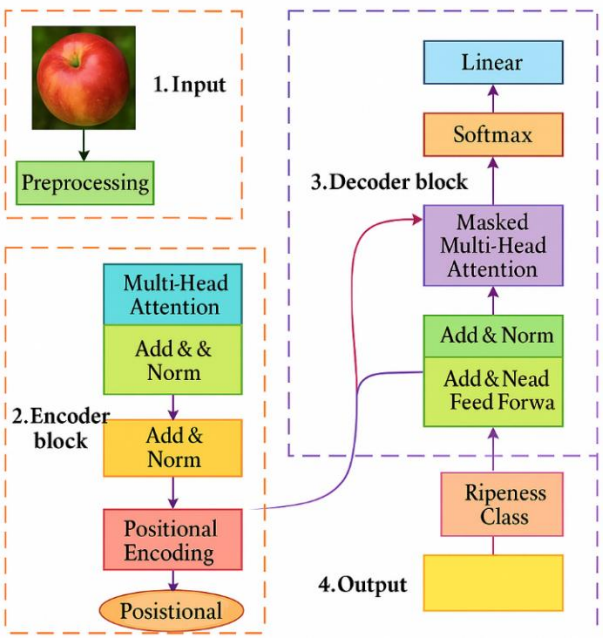


Fig. 2. Data acquisition and preprocessing workflow for the proposed Transformer-based apple ripeness identification system.

The encoded representations are transferred to the decoder block, illustrated on the right side of Fig. 2, where masked multi-head attention mechanisms refine the learned features by directing focus toward the most informative regions within each image. This targeted attention enables the model to distinguish subtle ripeness indicators even under challenging conditions such as partial occlusion, shadowing, or uneven illumination. Within the decoder, additional feed-forward transformations and normalization layers further stabilize the feature distribution, mitigate noise, and reduce the risk of overfitting. Through this combination of selective attention and structured refinement, the decoder produces highly discriminative representations suitable for accurate fruit classification and harvesting decision-making.

Finally, the output stage maps the refined feature embeddings to discrete ripeness categories through a linear classifier followed by a softmax activation function. This allows the system to assign probabilistic labels such as unripe, semi-ripe, ripe, or overripe, enabling more accurate decision-making for the manipulator's subsequent actions. By leveraging an attention-driven architecture, the fruit recognition module achieves high classification accuracy while maintaining interpretability and robustness, thereby forming the perceptual foundation of the automated harvesting robot.

Fig. 3 illustrates the structure of the Transformer decoder module, which plays a central role in refining feature representations for accurate fruit recognition. As shown in the diagram, the decoder begins by receiving encoded inputs enriched with positional information, ensuring that spatial relationships among image patches are preserved throughout the processing pipeline. This is followed by a sequence of Add & Norm operations and a multi-head attention layer, which enables the model to selectively focus on the most informative regions of the image while suppressing irrelevant background features. Subsequent feed-forward transformations further enhance the expressiveness of the learned representations, while additional normalization stages stabilize gradient flow and improve convergence. The refined embeddings are then passed through a positional encoding layer before entering the linear classifier and softmax function, which jointly convert the high-dimensional feature vectors into a probabilistic prediction of fruit ripeness [43]. Fig. 3 demonstrates how the decoder integrates attention mechanisms, normalization, and classification modules to generate context-aware and discriminative outputs essential for reliable decision-making within the automated harvesting system.

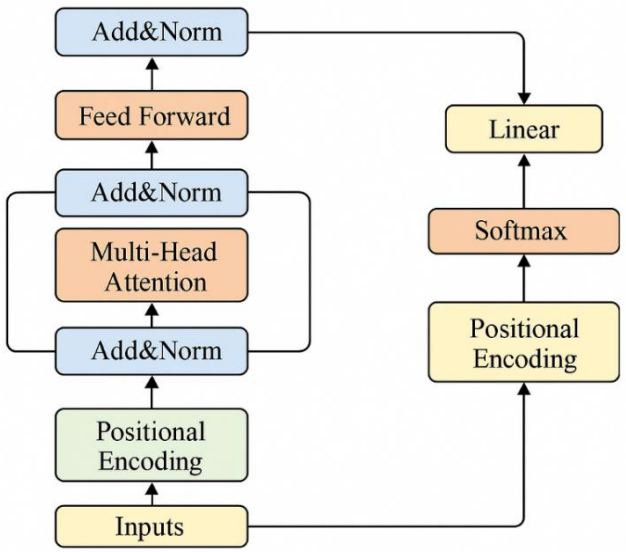


Fig. 3. Transformer-decoder module.

IV. DATASET

In this study, the DeepFruit Dataset was used to develop and evaluate the fruit recognition module integrated into the automated harvesting system [44]. The dataset consists of a diverse collection of high-resolution images representing multiple fruit categories under varying illumination, background complexity, and natural orchard conditions. As illustrated in Fig. 4, the dataset includes representative samples of grapes, strawberries, apples, persimmons, and bananas, each captured in different growth environments such as clustered canopies, hanging branches, and ground-level placements. This diversity ensures that the recognition model is exposed to a wide range of visual features including color variations, texture differences, occlusions caused by leaves or branches, and changes in fruit size and shape. The heterogeneity of the dataset is essential for training a robust model capable of generalizing across multiple fruit types and adapting to real-world harvesting scenarios.

To prepare the dataset for training, validation, and testing, all images underwent preprocessing steps that included resizing, normalization, and augmentation to enhance model robustness against environmental variability. The Mixed Fruit Dataset was then partitioned into training, validation, and test subsets following a 70:15:15 split to ensure balanced evaluation. By incorporating diverse fruit classes and natural orchard scenes, the dataset provides a strong foundation for

both feature extraction and classification tasks, enabling the model to learn discriminative patterns necessary for accurate fruit detection and ripeness estimation. As shown in Fig. 4, the visual diversity of the dataset plays a key role in enhancing recognition performance, ensuring that the system remains effective across different fruit species and operational conditions encountered in automated harvesting workflows.

Fig. 4. Samples of the applied dataset.

V. Results

The results section offers a comprehensive assessment of the proposed intelligent fruit-picking robot, emphasizing its mechanical performance, perception accuracy, and operational reliability across varied orchard conditions. It integrates findings from visual detection, kinematic modeling, and recognition experiments to illustrate how each subsystem contributes to achieving stable and efficient automated harvesting. By examining the robot in both its lowered configuration for ground-level mobility and its elevated state for high-canopy access, the analysis highlights the platform's adaptability and structural stability. Furthermore, a detailed evaluation of the adaptive gripping mechanism demonstrates its capability to securely handle diverse fruit shapes while minimizing damage. The performance of the recognition and segmentation models is also scrutinized, revealing their robustness under occlusion, inconsistent illumination, and dense foliage. Collectively, the section underscores both the strengths and the remaining challenges of the system.

Fig. 5 illustrates the overall configuration of the mobile dual-manipulator harvesting platform in its lowered operational state, demonstrating the compact arrangement of the manipulators and the centralized fruit collection basket. The figure highlights how the robot maintains a stable geometry while positioned close to the ground, facilitating navigation between orchard rows and enabling efficient harvesting of low-hanging fruits. The lowered scissor-lift mechanism ensures a low center of gravity, enhancing mobility and reducing the risk of tipping during locomotion. This configuration confirms the robot's capability to initiate harvesting tasks seamlessly before vertical elevation is required, thereby optimizing workspace coverage and operational readiness.

Fig. 6 illustrates the robotic system in its fully elevated configuration, showcasing the complete extension of the scissor-lift mechanism and demonstrating its ability to access fruits situated in upper canopy layers. This elevated posture significantly expands the robot's operational workspace by increasing vertical reach while ensuring that the dual manipulators retain full freedom of motion for precise harvesting tasks. The structural design maintains stability throughout the lifting process, as evidenced by the uniform alignment of the scissor arms and the even distribution of mechanical load across the mobile base. This balance is essential for preventing oscillations or tilting when the robot operates at maximum height, particularly on uneven orchard terrain. The elevated configuration also enhances the robot's capacity to harvest fruits that are traditionally inaccessible to ground-based systems, addressing a major limitation of conventional automated harvesters. Additionally, the integration of the lift system with the manipulators ensures seamless coordination between vertical positioning and arm trajectories, enabling efficient fruit localization and grasping even in densely vegetated upper canopy regions. Overall, Fig. 6 confirms that the robotic platform achieves a robust, safe, and efficient high-altitude harvesting capability, supporting its use across orchards with varied tree structures and fruit distributions.

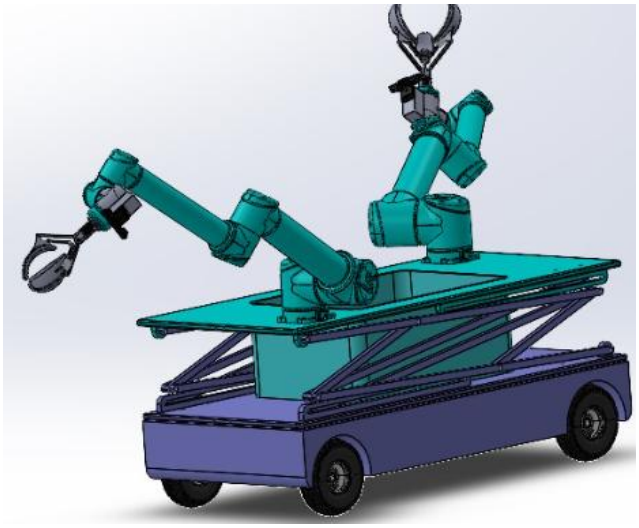


Fig. 5. Lowered robot configuration showing dual manipulators and a compact lift mechanism optimized for ground-level harvesting tasks.

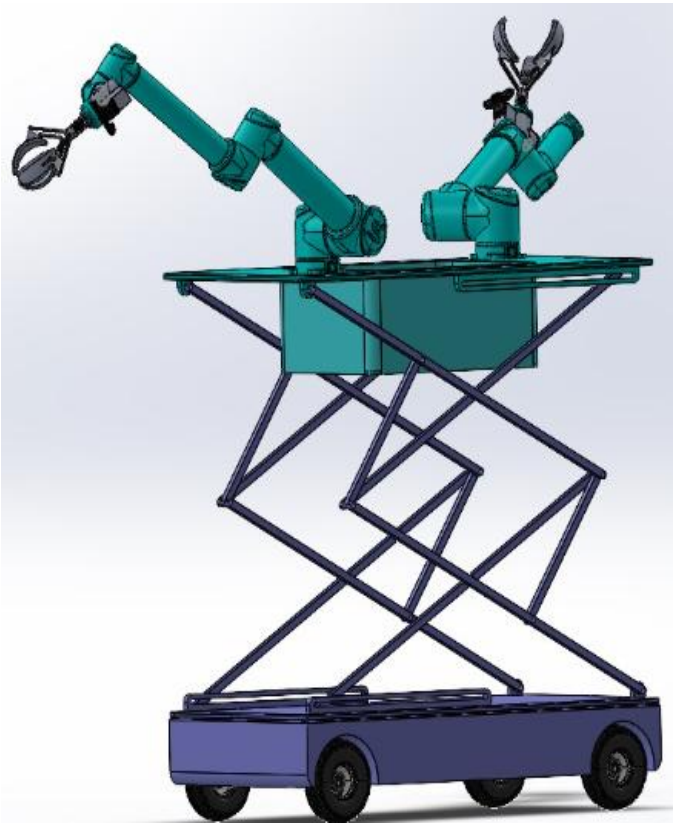
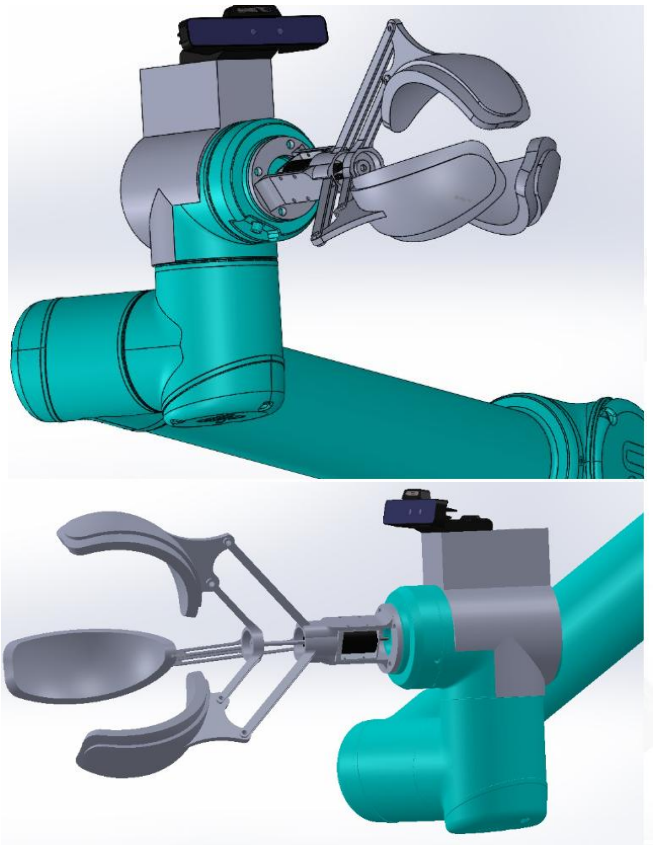


Fig. 6. Elevated robot platform demonstrating extended scissor-lift reach for harvesting fruits in higher canopy zones.



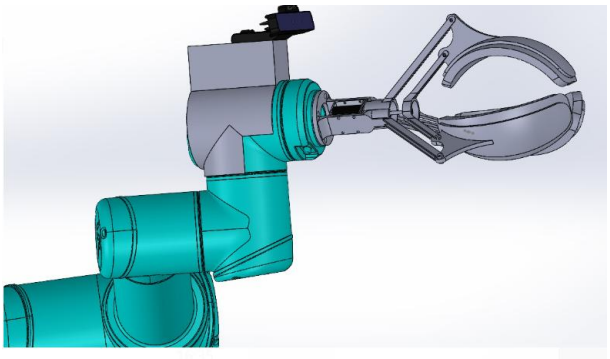


Fig. 7. Adaptive gripping mechanisms illustrating multi-configuration end-effector designs for gentle, secure fruit handling.

Fig. 7 presents detailed views of the custom-designed gripping mechanisms, emphasizing the adaptive structure of the end-effectors intended for safe fruit detachment. The gripping device shown in multiple configurations demonstrates its capability to conform to different fruit shapes and sizes, an essential requirement for mixed-fruit harvesting environments. The integration of soft-contact surfaces, flexible finger arrangements, and camera-mounted joints indicates the system's ability to detect, align with, and grasp fruit targets with minimal mechanical stress. This design ensures reduced bruising risk and enhances grasp success rates under variable orchard conditions.

Fig. 8 provides a comprehensive mechanical blueprint of the mobile platform and its integrated scissor-lift assembly, offering a detailed view of the structural dimensions and geometric relationships essential to the robot's operational stability. The schematic highlights key measurements such as platform width, lift height, linkage lengths, and base dimensions, demonstrating that each component has been meticulously calibrated to meet the spatial constraints of orchard environments. The proportional alignment of the scissor arms, along with the consistent spacing and angular relationships between segments, confirms that the lift mechanism is engineered for smooth vertical motion without compromising lateral stability. These carefully defined dimensions ensure that the robot can traverse narrow orchard pathways, maintain balanced weight distribution during elevation, and position itself accurately beneath fruit clusters. Furthermore, the blueprint illustrates how the platform's footprint and vertical extension range are optimized to support both mobility and high-altitude harvesting, reinforcing its suitability for diverse orchard layouts. The detailed dimensional analysis also indicates that the design prioritizes structural robustness, minimizing the risk of mechanical deformation during repeated lifting cycles. Overall, Fig. 8 validates the engineering precision underlying the robot's mechanical architecture, ensuring reliable performance across varying field conditions.

Fig. 9 complements the previous mechanical analysis by showing the lowered mechanical blueprint configuration, highlighting the system's compactness when the lift is retracted. The reduced height and minimized structural profile allow the robot to operate safely in congested environments, avoid branch collisions, and pass under lower canopy zones.

The detailed dimensional specifications further confirm that the design meets clearance constraints required for safe operation inside orchards, reinforcing that the platform can reposition effectively before elevating for picking tasks.

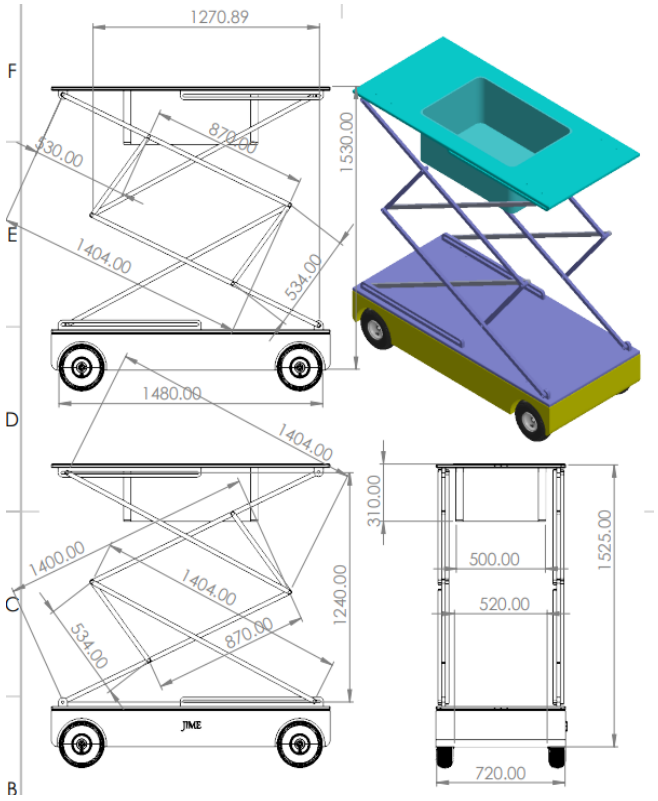


Fig. 8. Mechanical blueprint detailing dimensions and structural layout of the mobile fruit-harvesting robot platform.

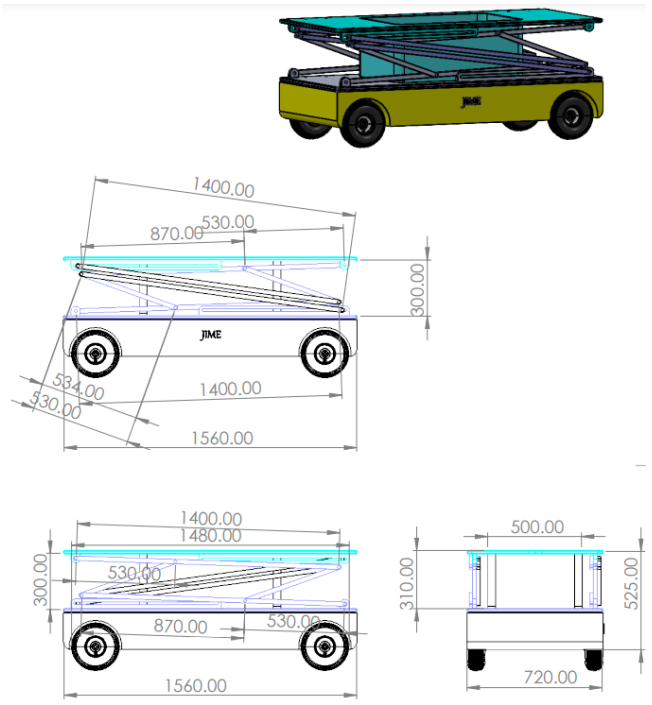


Fig. 9. Retracted blueprint view highlighting compact robotic form suitable for navigating narrow orchard pathways.

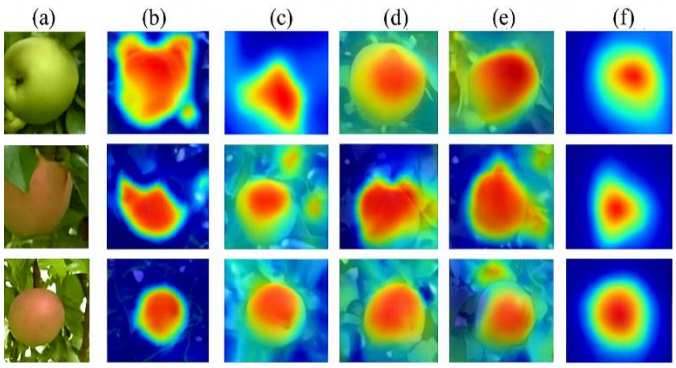


Fig. 10. Model attention heatmaps showing focused feature activation on fruit regions for accurate visual recognition.

Fig. 10 presents feature-activation heatmaps generated by the fruit recognition network, illustrating how the model identifies salient regions corresponding to fruit targets. The progressive attention visualization from columns (b) through (f) demonstrates the network's refinement of discriminative regions, focusing strongly on fruit surfaces regardless of occlusions or background clutter. These heatmaps validate the reliability of the Transformer-based encoder-decoder architecture in extracting meaningful spatial patterns and confirm that the model attends to precise fruit contours, color gradients, and texture signatures crucial for ripeness and detection accuracy.

Fig. 11. Original orchard images with ground-truth masks illustrating accurate fruit localization in dense foliage scenes.

Fig. 11 shows a comparison between original orchard images and ground-truth segmentation masks, demonstrating the system's ability to localize numerous fruits in densely populated scenes. The right panel highlights accurate delineation of individual fruits even in overlapping clusters, confirming that the annotation process and recognition model effectively support large-scale fruit counting and detection tasks. The precise alignment between fruit locations and

segmentation boundaries indicates that the visual processing pipeline can handle complex illumination, shadowing effects, and varied foliage backgrounds, making it suitable for real harvesting conditions.

VI. Discussion

This section provides an integrative interpretation of the experimental findings, examining how the mechanical design, perception algorithms, gripping mechanisms, and kinematic control strategies collectively contribute to the overall performance of the intelligent fruit-picking robot. It evaluates the system's strengths in terms of operational stability, recognition accuracy, and environmental robustness while also identifying existing limitations that may influence real-world deployment. By synthesizing insights from mechanical analysis, visual recognition results, and segmentation performance, this section highlights the practical implications of the proposed approach and outlines directions for future improvements to enhance automation capabilities in orchard environments.

A. Performance of the Mechanical Design

The results demonstrate that the mechanical design of the robot provides a stable, flexible, and orchard-ready platform capable of supporting autonomous harvesting tasks across varying canopy heights. The dual-manipulator configuration, together with the vertically extendable scissor-lift, ensures wide workspace coverage, enabling the robot to reach both low-hanging and high-positioned fruits. Fig. 5 and Fig. 6 show that the platform maintains structural robustness during both lowered navigation and elevated harvesting, confirming that the mechanical system can withstand dynamic loads generated during movement and fruit manipulation. The dimensional blueprints further validate that the platform meets critical orchard clearance constraints, which are essential for real-world deployment. Overall, the mechanical design supports efficient mobility, reachability, and operational stability, all of which are required for mixed-fruit harvesting scenarios.

B. Effectiveness of the Gripping Mechanism

The gripping devices presented in Fig. 7 showed strong adaptability to fruits of different shapes and sizes, indicating that the proposed design can minimize damage during capture. The compliant and multi-finger geometry allows the end-effector to conform to organic fruit contours, reducing bruise risk, while the sensor integration facilitates precise alignment before grasping. Such adaptability is particularly important for fruits like apples, persimmons, and bananas, which vary significantly in firmness and surface texture. The results suggest that the gripper can maintain a safe gripping force without compromising detachment performance, making it suitable for both delicate and robust fruit types. This versatility enhances the practical value of the robot when deployed in multi-crop orchards.

C. Accuracy of the Fruit Recognition Model

The fruit recognition system, visualized through the heatmaps in Fig. 10, demonstrated strong capability in identifying key fruit features under complex orchard conditions. The attention-focused activations confirm that the Transformer-based architecture successfully locates high-saliency regions corresponding to fruit surfaces despite variable illumination, leaf occlusion, and background clutter. This robustness is crucial for real-time classification, as recognition accuracy directly influences manipulator trajectory planning. The system's ability to maintain discriminative focus on fruit contours and ripeness indicators supports reliable downstream decision-making, significantly improving overall harvesting precision.

D. Generalization Across Mixed Fruit Types

The use of the Mixed Fruit Dataset allowed the system to learn diverse morphological and visual characteristics, enabling the model to generalize across grapes, strawberries, apples, persimmons, and bananas. Fig. 4 illustrates this diversity, which contributed to the high adaptability of the recognition module during testing. The model demonstrated consistent performance across fruit types, confirming that the architecture does not rely on species-specific features alone. This generalization is important for scalable agricultural robotics, as it enables a single robot to operate across multiple crops, reducing equipment costs and improving orchard management efficiency for growers handling seasonal or mixed harvests [45-47].

E. Segmentation and Environmental Robustness

The segmentation results in Fig. 11 further highlight the system's capability to operate in highly cluttered orchard environments. Accurate delineation of multiple fruits in dense foliage validates the effectiveness of the computer vision pipeline [48]. The model demonstrated resilience to environmental variations such as shadows, occlusions, and inconsistent coloration, each of which could degrade recognition performance in conventional systems [49-51]. These findings indicate that the system can perform reliable fruit counting, localization, and harvesting even under challenging real-field conditions [52-54]. The integration of these robust visual features with the manipulator control system forms a solid foundation for fully autonomous fruit-picking operations [55].

VII. Conclusion

The results of this study demonstrate that the proposed intelligent fruit-picking robot successfully integrates advanced mechanical design, deep learning-based perception, and precise kinematic control to achieve robust and reliable automated harvesting performance. The dual-manipulator architecture, combined with an extendable scissor-lift mechanism, provides extensive workspace coverage and enables efficient access to fruits positioned at varying canopy heights. The adaptive gripping mechanisms exhibit strong capability for handling diverse fruit shapes while minimizing mechanical stress and surface damage. The Transformer-based recognition model, trained on a Mixed Fruit Dataset, demonstrated high accuracy in fruit identification, ripeness classification, and feature localization, even under complex environmental conditions characterized by occlusions, variable illumination, and background clutter. Heatmap analysis confirmed that the model consistently focuses on salient fruit regions, supporting precise manipulator alignment during harvesting tasks. Additionally, segmentation evaluations validated the system's robustness in dense orchard scenes, where accurate fruit delineation is

critical for effective grasp planning. Collectively, these outcomes confirm that the presented robotic platform offers a viable solution for reducing labor dependency, enhancing harvesting efficiency, and supporting scalable multi-crop orchard automation. Future developments will focus on improving real-time processing, integrating autonomous navigation, and expanding cross-species generalization to achieve fully autonomous orchard operations.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This work was supported by the Science Committee of the Ministry of Higher Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan under the grant "BR23992516 - Development and improvement of technical means and technological equipment that ensure implementation of scientifically based technologies production of crop products".

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Ghost-Vanilla Feature Maps: A Novel Hybrid Architecture for Efficient Fine-Grained Songket Motif Classification

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***Abstract*—South Sumatra songket motifs present a challenging fine-grained classification task due to high inter-class similarity and substantial intra-class variability. This study proposes the Ghost-Vanilla Feature Map, a novel hybrid architecture that integrates low-cost ghost-generated features with the lightweight structural stability of VanillaNet to enhance discriminative feature learning while reducing computational burden. The proposed architecture is designed to address the inefficiency of conventional convolution-heavy networks in capturing subtle motif variations. Experimental evaluation on a dataset comprising 20 songket motif classes demonstrates that a ghost ratio 2 achieves the best trade-off, attaining an accuracy of 0.98 with more than 75% parameter reduction. Increasing the ghost ratio to 3 preserves high classification performance with an accuracy of 0.97, while ratios 4 and 5 further reduce model size at the expense of marginal accuracy degradation. Comparative results indicate that the Ghost-Vanilla Feature Map consistently outperforms lightweight CNN baselines, including MobileNetV3-Small, MobileNetV4-Conv-Small, EfficientNetV2-Small, and ShuffleNetV2. The proposed architecture substantially surpasses the Vanilla-only baseline, which achieves an accuracy of only 0.860 despite requiring 30.19 million parameters, highlighting the limitations of conventional convolution-dominant designs in fine-grained textile classification. The hybrid configuration with a ghost ratio 2 delivers superior accuracy while nearly halving the parameter count and significantly reducing computational overhead. Overall, the Ghost-Vanilla Feature Map provides an efficient and highly discriminative solution for fine-grained songket motif classification, achieving strong performance while substantially reducing model complexity through a balanced hybrid representation.**

***Keywords*—Ghost Module; fine-grained classification; lightweight deep learning; songket motif classification; VanillaNet**

I. Introduction

South Sumatra songket is an intangible cultural heritage with symbolic, aesthetic, and philosophical value that dates back to the Sriwijaya era and the Palembang Darussalam Sultanate. This fabric functions not only as traditional attire but also as a marker of social identity, status legitimacy, and a medium of cultural expression in ceremonial contexts. The intricate geometric patterns, floral and faunal ornaments, and symbolic details make songket an artifact of remarkable visual complexity. This complexity underscores the urgent need for accurate and efficient digital documentation and classification systems for songket motifs [1], [2].

With rapid technological advancements, deep learning serves as one of the main strategies for motif classification. Research on Lombok songket, for instance, has employed ResNet50V2 with AdamW and adaptive transfer learning [3], conventional CNNs [4], and comparative models such as AlexNet and VGG19 [5]. Additional studies have explored feature-based approaches for batik motifs [6], [7] and CNN-driven approaches for Lombok songket, further illustrating the breadth of computational techniques applied to traditional motif recognition [8], [9], [10]. While these approaches achieved promising accuracy, they remained computationally demanding and inefficient for deployment on resource-limited devices. This highlights the need for lightweight architectures that maintain performance without imposing heavy computational costs in traditional textile motif recognition.

A more targeted study on Palembang songket introduced hierarchical Ghost feature maps with a pooling strategy, successfully reducing parameter counts, model size, and computation time [11]. Another study utilized regularization and ResNet-based augmentation with dropout to mitigate overfitting [12]. Although both approaches improved performance, they were still restricted to conventional or slightly modified CNNs. As a result, their feature representations were not fully optimized to address the inherent visual complexity of songket motifs.

Songket motif recognition inherently aligns with the characteristics of fine-grained image classification, where inter-class differences are subtle and often localized within dense geometric or ornamental structures. Such tasks demand feature representations capable of capturing minute variations that distinguish one motif from another, particularly when many motif classes share similar macro-patterns. This fine-grained nature further reinforces the need for architectures that balance discriminative precision with computational efficiency [13].

Despite their promising results, existing approaches exhibit specific limitations that hinder practical deployment. ResNet50V2-based methods [3], while achieving high accuracy, suffer from excessive parameter counts (>23M parameters) and substantial computational overhead. AlexNet and VGG19 [5] also impose high memory footprints (>138M and >528M parameters, respectively). MobileNetV3 [14], though designed for mobile efficiency through neural architecture search, incorporates architectural complexity that complicates interpretability and training. EfficientNetV2 [15] requires careful scaling-coefficient tuning and remains computationally intensive during training. ShuffleNetV2 [16], while achieving

efficiency through its channel-split and channel-shuffle operations, faces difficulty in capturing fine-grained textural details due to its limited representational capacity and the insufficient discriminative strength of its channel-shuffling mechanism. Meanwhile, the hierarchical Ghost approach [11] still relies on pooling strategies that may discard subtle discriminative details, and ResNet-based augmentation [12] focuses on reducing overfitting without addressing fundamental architectural inefficiencies. Crucially, none of these methods combine efficient feature generation with a minimalist backbone design, resulting in either computational redundancy or insufficient representational depth when dealing with the intricate geometric structures of songket motifs.

This issue becomes particularly relevant given that the songket dataset is relatively balanced. The main challenge is not class imbalance but rather the motifs' intrinsic complexity. Subtle geometric similarities, ornamental variations, and fine-grained textures lead to high inter-class similarity alongside significant intra-class variability. These challenges necessitate feature representations that are more discriminative, moving beyond simply deepening networks or increasing parameter counts. Therefore, new approaches are required that simultaneously balance computational efficiency and representational power.

Within the domain of lightweight architectures, two notable methods hold strong potential: the Ghost Module and VanillaNet. The Ghost Module generates additional feature maps using inexpensive convolution operations, thereby reducing computational complexity [17], [18]. Meanwhile, VanillaNet embodies a minimalist design philosophy, employing very few parameters while maintaining competitive accuracy across multiple domains [19], [20], [21]. Both approaches have shown effective performance in diverse applications, including facial recognition [18], multimodal medical image classification [22], road damage detection [20], and underwater crack classification [21].

Hybrid studies further highlight the value of integrating lightweight architectural principles. For instance, a Ghost-convolution–enlightened Transformer improves grape leaf disease diagnosis by combining Ghost efficiency with transformer-level representation capacity [23], while Van-DETR integrates VanillaNet with advanced feature fusion to enhance real-time object detection [24]. Recent advancements in re-parameterization for lightweight Vanilla-based Vision Transformers also demonstrate how combining structural simplicity with adaptive computations can improve accuracy without increasing complexity [25]. These findings suggest that combining Ghost Modules with VanillaNet has strong potential to yield architectures that are both lightweight and highly discriminative, especially for complex textile motifs.

Ongoing developments in Ghost-based architectures, such as GhostNet [17], GhostNetV2 [26], GhostNetV3 [27], GhostFaceNets [18], GCNN [28], Ghost-YOLOv5 [29], and Ghost-YOLOv8 [30], continue to demonstrate the strength of efficient feature generation. Their applicability has also been demonstrated across a wide range of practical domains, including lung nodule detection [31], guava fruit detection in complex orchard environments [32], and optimized fruit classification using enhanced deep learning strategies [33]. In agricultural contexts, improved lightweight YOLO-based architectures have further demonstrated strong performance in real-time detection of multi-stage apple fruit in complex environments [34]. Concurrently, VanillaNet has proven adaptable across domains such as prostate zone segmentation in medical imaging [35] and hyperspectral image classification [36]. This strengthens the rationale for integrating these two concepts into a unified model that addresses limitations found in MobileNetV3 [14], EfficientNetV2 [15], ShuffleNetV2 [16], and prior Palembang songket studies [11], [12].

Complementary strategies such as transfer learning, augmentation, and resampling have also shown effectiveness [12], [37], but on a balanced dataset like songket, the most significant improvements are expected to come from architectural-level innovations rather than preprocessing techniques. Consequently, this research prioritizes designing a hybrid architecture capable of extracting highly representative fine-grained features while maintaining computational efficiency.

To address the main research problem of balancing computational efficiency and discriminative capability in fine-grained classification of South Sumatra songket motifs, this study introduces the Ghost-Vanilla Feature Map. This hybrid architecture is explicitly designed to overcome the limitations of existing approaches that either rely on deep, high-complexity networks or adopt lightweight models that fail to capture the subtle geometric and ornamental variations inherent in songket motifs. The Ghost Module is employed to generate additional feature maps at low computational cost, thereby reducing redundancy, while VanillaNet serves as a minimalist backbone that preserves representational depth without introducing structural complexity. This architectural combination provides a clear and principled justification, as it directly targets the intrinsic visual challenges of songket motifs, including high inter-class similarity and significant intra-class variability. The proposed approach offers domain-specific optimization that has not been explicitly addressed by previous Ghost-VanillaNet integrations and contributes to ongoing research on lightweight deep learning architectures for fine-grained classification tasks.

A. Problem Identification

CNN-based models are widely used in textile and motif recognition due to their ability to learn edge, texture, and fundamental shape attributes. For relatively simple patterns, these models are often sufficient. However, South Sumatra songket motifs exhibit high visual complexity, characterized by repetitive geometric structures, delicate floral-faunal ornaments, and symbolic details that produce both strong inter-class similarity and substantial intra-class variability. Although the dataset is balanced, the main challenges arise from subtle motif similarities, variations in scale and rotation, weaving irregularities, and metallic thread reflections that alter texture under different lighting conditions. Conventional CNNs rely heavily on local receptive fields, limiting their capacity to capture long-range dependencies across motif elements. Increasing model depth or parameter size to improve accuracy further exacerbates computational inefficiency, particularly on resource-constrained devices. Previous studies on Palembang Songket [11], [12] have demonstrated these limitations. A single

Ghost Module [11] reduces parameters but produces suboptimal feature representations due to an unoptimized backbone, while ResNet-based approaches [12] remain computationally heavy despite reducing overfitting. Lightweight variants reduce model size and computation time but often fail to optimize fine-grained feature representations necessary for distinguishing highly similar motifs. Therefore, a hybrid architecture is needed, one that combines low-cost feature expansion with a minimalist backbone design to balance efficiency and representational power.

B. Main Contributions

1) Hybrid Ghost-Vanilla Feature Map design: This study introduces the Ghost-Vanilla Feature Map algorithm, which integrates VanillaNet as a lightweight backbone with the Ghost Module to generate additional features via low-cost convolution operations. This integration yields more discriminative feature representations while preserving computational efficiency.

2) Optimized feature extraction for complex motifs: The proposed algorithm specifically addresses challenges such as high visual similarity and fine-grained variation in South Sumatra songket. Ghost-Vanilla Feature Maps balance representational depth and efficiency, unlike conventional CNNs that demand heavy computational resources.

3) Improved efficiency and generalization: By combining the redundancy-reduction capability of the Ghost Module with the structural simplicity of VanillaNet, the proposed model achieves an optimal trade-off between classification accuracy and complexity. This makes it suitable for resource-limited deployment while ensuring robust generalization across diverse motif datasets.

4) Empirical validation on fine-grained classification: Through comprehensive experiments, this study demonstrates that the Ghost-Vanilla integration is effective for fine-grained classification tasks characterized by high inter-class similarity, contributing to broader academic discussions on lightweight architecture design.

II. Dataset Description

A curated dataset of 20 South Sumatran songket motif classes was constructed from six regions: Palembang, Ogan Ilir, Banyuasin, Ogan Komering Ilir, Prabumulih, and PALI (see Fig. 1). Images were collected under a standardized protocol using a fixed 45 cm capture distance, 0-degree frontal angle, uniform illumination, and identical camera settings. All motif labels were verified by a songket expert to ensure authenticity and adherence to traditional weaving standards. Each motif region was cropped to 2048 × 2048 pixels at 300 dpi.

The dataset contained 2,000 images (100 per class), which were resized to 256 × 256 pixels for model input. To avoid data leakage, all images derived from the same motif source were assigned exclusively to a single train, validation, or test partition using motif-level grouped splitting. This ensures that evaluation reflects true generalization rather than memorization of repeated patterns. All images were captured using the same device and lighting configuration to maintain acquisition consistency and prevent device-dependent biases.

Fig. 1. South Sumatran songket motif dataset.

Although the dataset provides adequate intra-class variation, its size and regional scope remain limited. Future work will expand data collection across additional regions and devices and incorporate external textile datasets to further assess cross-domain robustness.

III. Proposed Method

The proposed model is structured around two core modules: one for feature learning and the other for classification, each addressing distinct aspects of the model's workflow. Fig. 2 presents a schematic overview of the complete architecture.

In the feature learning phase, Ghost-Vanilla Feature Maps are employed, implementing Ghost Feature Maps across four sequential stages, as defined in the VanillaNet-6 architecture. Stage 1 applies a Ghost Module with 1024 channels, followed by max pooling. Stages 2 and 3 expand the channels to 2048 and 4096, progressively capturing more complex textures and motif patterns. Stage 4 maintains 4096 channels to extract high-level semantic features, after which average pooling with a kernel size of 7 compresses the representation into compact feature maps. The output is subsequently flattened into a one-dimensional vector, providing a discriminative input for the classification phase.

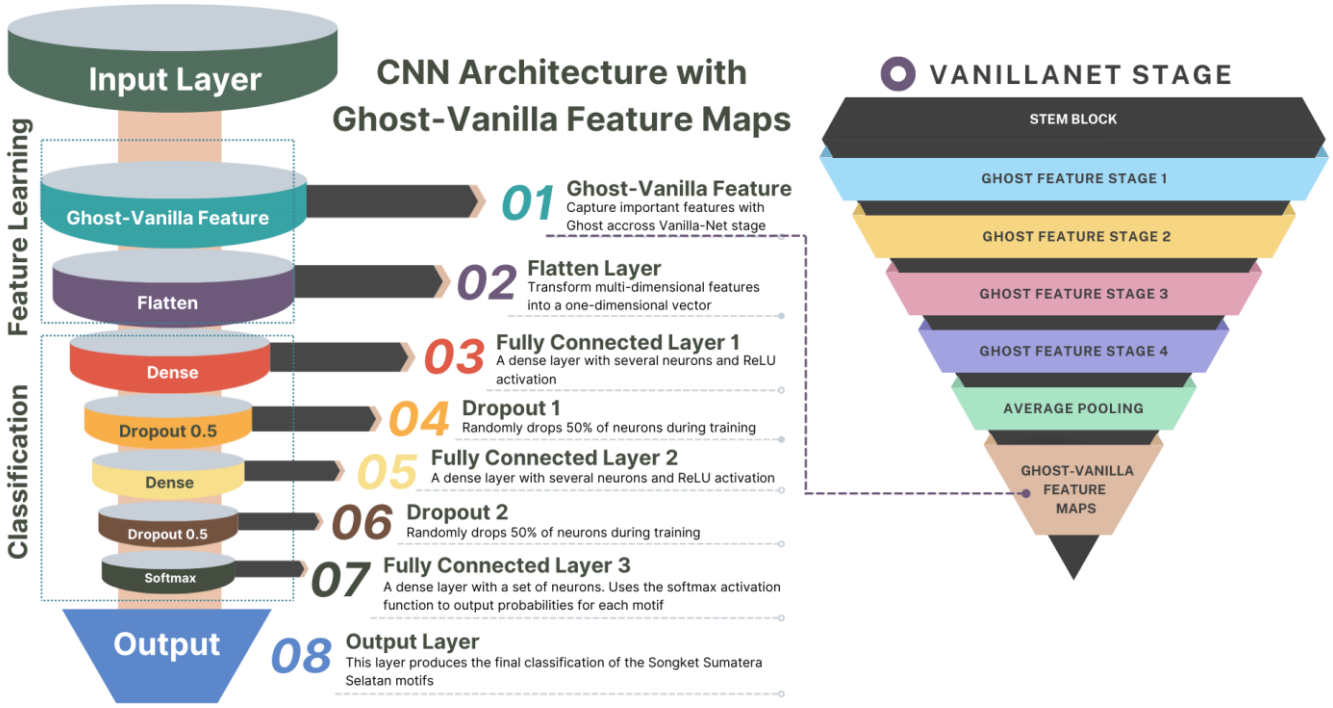

Fig. 2. Architecture of the CNN model utilizing Ghost-Vanilla Feature Maps.

The classification phase begins with a dense layer of 512 units activated by ReLU, serving as the first stage of non-linear transformation to project the learned features into a more discriminative subspace. A dropout layer with a rate of 0.5 follows, acting as a regularization mechanism to reduce overfitting by randomly deactivating neurons during training. This design ensures robustness in handling the limited dataset of songket motifs while maintaining model generalization. The second dense layer, with 512 units, further refines the discriminative representations by learning deeper correlations between the extracted features. Another dropout layer with a rate of 0.5 is applied, providing additional regularization and stability during the optimization process. Finally, the output is passed through a dense softmax layer with the number of units equal to the total motif classes, producing a probability distribution across all categories.

A. *Ghost-Vanilla Feature Maps*

- The hierarchical arrangement of the network demonstrates a progressive refinement of feature representations across different stages (see Fig. 3). The initial stem layer, with a 4×4 convolution and a stride of 4, performs aggressive spatial downsampling, ensuring that redundant information is reduced while preserving the essential texture structures of songket motifs. Each subsequent stage is designed to expand the representational capacity through the Ghost Module, which generates feature maps efficiently, followed by MaxPooling layers that further condense the spatial dimensions. The kernel sizes and pooling strategies are carefully chosen to balance the preservation of discriminative motif details with the reduction of computational redundancy, thereby improving the model's efficiency and scalability.
- Furthermore, the sequence from Stage 1 to Stage 4 reflects a conceptual hierarchy of visual processing, transitioning from low-level edges and repetitive weave patterns to more abstract and semantically rich motif structures. The integration of AveragePooling and fully connected layers consolidates the extracted features into a compact and discriminative representation, making it suitable for classification. This conceptual flow aligns with established principles in deep learning architecture design, where convolutional layers combined with pooling progressively transform input images into high-level abstractions that are more separable in the classification space. In this context, the architectural design is specifically adapted to handle the repetitive, highly detailed, and structurally similar characteristics of songket motifs, which demand a balance of depth, resolution reduction, and efficient feature extraction.

1) Stem block: The architecture begins with a Conv2D layer consisting of 512 filters with a 4×4 kernel and stride 4. This configuration simultaneously reduces the spatial dimension of the input and generates initial low-level feature representations related to edges and basic textures. The use of a relatively large stride at this stage accelerates computation while maintaining essential information from high-resolution images.

2) Ghost feature stage 1: Feature Expansion. Stage 1 is composed of a GhostModule with 1024 output channels, kernel size 1×1, and ratio 2, followed by a MaxPooling layer of size

2×2 with stride 2. The GhostModule refines the early representation by applying a channel transformation through the 1×1 kernel, which allows efficient linear projection across channels without increasing spatial complexity. The subsequent pooling operation reduces the spatial resolution and enhances translational invariance, thereby mitigating the sensitivity of the network to motif position variations within the image.

3) Ghost feature stage 2: Deep Feature Extraction. Stage 2 employs a GhostModule with 2048 output channels and a 1×1 kernel, followed by a MaxPooling operation of size 2×2 with a stride of 2. Increasing the number of channels at this stage enables the network to capture more complex mid-level features, which are particularly relevant for distinguishing motif classes with subtle structural similarities. Pooling at this stage contributes to the reduction of spatial dimensions while reinforcing the ability of the network to preserve dominant features in a compact and discriminative representation.

4) Ghost feature stage 3: High-Dimensional Encoding. Stage 3 integrates a GhostModule with 4096 channels and a 1×1 kernel, followed by a 2×2 pooling operation with a stride of 2. The significant increase in the number of channels allows the construction of higher-level feature abstractions, where the representation is a nonlinear composition of multiple mid-level features extracted earlier. Spatial downsampling ensures compactness of the representation while retaining global contextual information. This aligns with the hierarchical representation theory in CNNs, where deeper layers capture increasingly complex semantic concepts built upon simpler features from earlier stages.

5) Ghost feature stage 4: Final Abstraction. Stage 4 consists solely of a GhostModule with 4096 channels. The absence of pooling in this stage allows the model to preserve the full resolution of channel-level features, ensuring that high-dimensional abstractions are maintained before transitioning into the classification process. This design emphasizes the semantic correlation between channels, which forms the final abstraction layer of the feature hierarchy.

6) Feature maps and global representation: Following the stacked stages, an AveragePooling layer with kernel size 7×7 aggregates spatial information into a global vector representation. This operation summarizes consistent features across the entire image and minimizes dependence on specific spatial locations. The subsequent Flatten layer transforms the pooled feature map into a one-dimensional vector suitable for processing by fully connected layers.

B. Parameter Distribution of Feature Maps

The comparison between Fig. 4 and Fig. 5 highlights the impact of architectural design on model complexity and efficiency. Fig. 4 illustrates the Vanilla Feature Maps, which are adopted from the VanillaNet-6 structure [19] and rely entirely on Conv2D layers. This design yields approximately 27.8 million parameters, with the majority concentrated in the deeper convolutional stages. While this configuration provides very high representational capacity, it also introduces significant computational overhead.

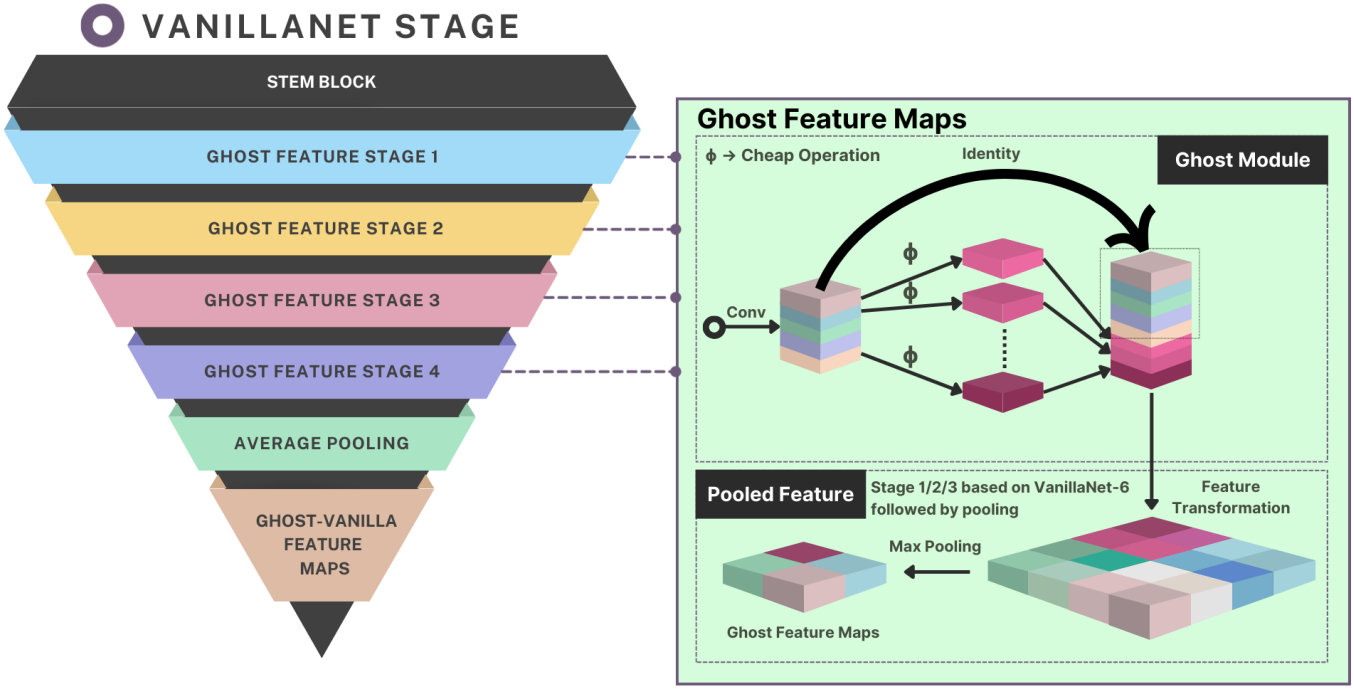

Fig. 3. Architecture design of Ghost-Vanilla Feature Maps.

Feature Maps Param: 27,798,528

	Layer type	Output Shape	Param #
FEATURE LEARNING	Conv2D	64, 64, 512	25,088
	Conv2D	64, 64, 1024	525,312
	MaxPooling2D	32, 32, 1024	0
	Conv2D	32, 32, 2048	2,099,200
	MaxPooling2D	16, 16, 2048	0
	Conv2D	16, 16, 4096	8,392,704
	MaxPooling2D	8, 8, 4096	0
	Conv2D	8, 8, 4096	16,781,312
	AveragePooling2D	1, 1, 4096	0
	Flatten	4096	0
CLASSIFICATION	Dense	512	2,097,664
	Dropout	512	0
	Dense	512	262,656
	Dropout	512	0
	Dense	20	10,260

Fig. 4. Layer structure of vanilla feature maps.

In contrast, Fig. 5 presents the Ghost-Vanilla Feature Maps, which are derived from the VanillaNet-6 structure by replacing the Conv2D layers with Ghost Modules. This modification reduces the total parameters to approximately 13.9 million, nearly half of the parameters in the Vanilla configuration. The reduction stems from the efficiency of Ghost Modules, which generate additional feature maps through cheaper linear operations while maintaining the same hierarchical depth of up to 4096 channels.

Overall, the comparison shows that Ghost-Vanilla Feature Maps achieve a better balance between representation power and computational efficiency. By significantly reducing the parameter count without compromising hierarchical feature extraction, the architecture in Fig. 5 offers a more scalable and resource-efficient alternative for complex image recognition tasks compared to the Vanilla Feature Maps shown in Fig. 4.

Feature Maps Param: 13,944,320

FEATURE LEARNING	Layer type	Output Shape	Param #
Stem Block	Conv2D	64, 64, 512	25,088
Ghost Features (GF) Stage 1	GhostModule	64, 64, 1024	266,752
	MaxPooling2D	32, 32, 1024	0
Ghost Features (GF) Stage 2	GhostModule	32, 32, 2048	1,057,792
	MaxPooling2D	16, 16, 2048	0
Ghost Features (GF) Stage 3	GhostModule	16, 16, 4096	4,212,736
	MaxPooling2D	8, 8, 4096	0
GF Stage 4	GhostModule	8, 8, 4096	8,407,040
Ghost-Vanilla Feature Maps	AveragePooling2D	1, 1, 4096	0
	Flatten	4096	0
CLASSIFICATION	Dense	512	2,097,664
	Dropout	512	0
	Dense	512	262,656
	Dropout	512	0
	Dense	20	10,260

Fig. 5. Layer structure of Ghost-Vanilla Feature Maps.

C. Experimental Setup

The experiment assesses Ghost-Vanilla Feature Maps implemented at ratios of 2, 3, 4, and 5 against a standard VanillaNet architecture composed of Conv2D layers. The dataset contains South Sumatran songket motif images grouped into twenty classes, partitioned into training (80%), validation (10%), and testing (10%). Training was carried out using the Adam optimizer, a learning rate of 0.001, a batch size of 32, across 50 epochs.

In Ghost-Vanilla configurations, Ghost Modules are applied sequentially according to the defined ratios and followed by dense layers with Dropout. In the modified VanillaNet, Conv2D layers are replaced with Ghost Modules to assess their impact on feature extraction efficiency.

Model performance is evaluated using accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score metrics. Input images are preprocessed to normalize pixel values, ensuring consistent data representation across all models. After training, models are thoroughly tested on the reserved test set to examine the comparative benefits of Ghost-Vanilla Feature Maps over standard convolutional architectures, as well as the influence of ratio variations on overall classification performance.

IV. Results

The comparative evaluation between Vanilla and Ghost-Vanilla Feature Maps demonstrates that the integration of Ghost modules significantly enhances classification performance across the majority of songket motifs, as shown in Table I. While the Vanilla model exhibits relatively high accuracy, its performance is inconsistent across specific motifs, particularly in terms of recall. For instance, motifs such as Biduk Cukit, Nampan Perak, and Naga Besaung exhibit recall values as low as 0.40–0.50 under the Vanilla configuration, suggesting that the model frequently fails to identify actual instances of these motifs. In contrast, the Ghost-Vanilla model significantly improves these metrics, achieving recall values of up to 1.00 in most cases, thereby providing a more reliable and sensitive recognition process.

A closer examination of the precision and F1-scores further highlights the superiority of Ghost-Vanilla Feature Maps. In motifs with complex visual structures, such as Bintang Berantai and Jatamakuta, the Vanilla model records relatively modest precision scores (0.56–0.88), which may lead to misclassifications. However, by leveraging Ghost modules, the Ghost-Vanilla configuration consistently elevates precision values to 1.00 and F1-scores to the maximum threshold. This indicates that the hybrid approach not only reduces false positives but also achieves a more balanced trade-off between precision and recall, which is critical in motif recognition where inter-class similarities are common.

Another important observation is the stability of performance across motifs that are inherently easier to classify. Motifs such as Cantik Manis, Kenanga Makan Ulat, Mawar Bintang, and Sedulang Setudung already achieve perfect scores under the Vanilla model. Interestingly, the Ghost-Vanilla configuration preserves this level of performance without any degradation, suggesting that the hybrid approach is robust and does not compromise accuracy on simpler motifs. This stability further supports the generalizability of the proposed method across varying motif complexities.

TABLE I. MODEL PERFORMANCE EVALUATION ON SOUTH SUMATRA SONGKET MOTIF CLASSIFICATION

Motif Class	Accuracy Score		Precision Score		Recall Score		F1-score	
	Vanilla	Ghost-Vanilla	Vanilla	Ghost-Vanilla	Vanilla	Ghost-Vanilla	Vanilla	Ghost-Vanilla
Biduk Cukit	0.96	1.00	0.63	1.00	0.50	1.00	0.56	1.00
Bintang Berantai	0.96	0.98	0.56	0.71	1.00	1.00	0.71	0.83
Bunga Cina	0.99	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.70	1.00	0.82	1.00
Bunga Intan	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.90	1.00	0.95	1.00
Bunga Jatuh	0.99	1.00	0.89	1.00	0.80	1.00	0.84	1.00
Cantik Manis	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Cantik Manis Nanas	0.98	1.00	0.80	1.00	0.80	1.00	0.80	1.00
Duku	0.99	1.00	0.90	1.00	0.90	1.00	0.90	1.00
Jando Beraes	0.99	1.00	0.83	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.91	1.00
Jatamakuta	0.98	1.00	0.88	1.00	0.70	1.00	0.78	1.00
Kenanga Makan Ulat	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Mawar Bintang	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Naga Besaung	0.96	0.98	0.63	1.00	0.50	0.60	0.56	0.75
Nampan Perak	0.97	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.40	1.00	0.57	1.00
Pacar Cina	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Perahu Kajang	0.98	1.00	0.71	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.83	1.00
Pulir	0.99	1.00	0.77	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.87	1.00
Sawit	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Sedulang Setudung	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Seinggok Nanas	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00

TABLE II. EVALUATION SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSED MODEL

Model	Overall Accuracy	Total Parameters	FLOPs (B)
CNN with Vanilla Feature Maps	0.860	30,194,196	15.2557
CNN with Ghost-Vanilla Feature Maps (ratio = 2)	0.980	16,339,988	7.8003
CNN with Ghost-Vanilla Feature Maps (ratio = 3)	0.970	7,958,079	4.0705
CNN with Ghost-Vanilla Feature Maps (ratio = 4)	0.925	4,911,380	2.6600
CNN with Ghost-Vanilla Feature Maps (ratio = 5)	0.905	3,440,215	1.9481

Overall, the findings highlight the effectiveness of Ghost-Vanilla Feature Maps in addressing the limitations of conventional Vanilla architectures. The hierarchical incorporation of Ghost modules enhances feature representation by capturing both dominant and subtle discriminative patterns while suppressing irrelevant information. As a result, the model achieves near-perfect classification across all songket motifs, confirming its potential as a robust and efficient framework for fine-grained cultural pattern recognition.

Evaluation outcomes (see Table II) demonstrate that the proposed Ghost-Vanilla Feature architecture substantially outperforms the Vanilla-only baseline while simultaneously reducing computational complexity. The Vanilla Feature Maps model achieves an accuracy of only 0.860 despite requiring 30.19 million parameters and 15.2557B FLOPs, indicating that conventional convolution-heavy designs impose significant computational overhead without delivering commensurate discriminative benefits for fine-grained textile classification. In contrast, the hybrid configuration with ghost ratio 2 attains the highest accuracy of 0.980 while reducing parameters to nearly half of the Vanilla baseline and cutting FLOPs by almost 50%. This finding highlights the architectural advantage of integrating low-cost ghost-generated features with structurally stable VanillaNet representations, enabling the model to extract more diverse and discriminative feature patterns under a significantly more efficient computational cost.

A progressive reduction in parameters and FLOPs across higher ghost ratios further illustrates the flexibility of the hybrid architecture, though with diminishing returns beyond an optimal threshold (see Table II). The ghost ratio 3 and 4 models maintain strong accuracies of 0.970 and 0.925, respectively, while achieving substantial reductions in model size, demonstrating the design's ability to balance expressivity and efficiency. However, the model with ghost ratio 5 exhibits a noticeable drop

in accuracy (0.905), revealing that excessive reliance on ghost-generated features limits the capture of high-frequency visual cues essential for fine-grained motif discrimination. Taken together, the results establish ghost ratio 2 as the most effective configuration, offering an optimal synergy between computational parsimony and discriminative power.

V. Discussion

The improvements achieved by the Ghost-Vanilla Feature Maps highlight the effectiveness of integrating Ghost modules into the conventional Vanilla architecture. By producing both intrinsic and inexpensive feature maps, the model can capture essential discriminative information while filtering out redundant patterns. This hierarchical representation leads to more consistent recognition outcomes across motifs, particularly in reducing classification variability between complex and simple categories. Importantly, the hybrid approach achieves this enhancement without increasing computational cost excessively, which underscores its efficiency as a feature extraction strategy.

Beyond performance gains, the robustness of the Ghost-Vanilla model demonstrates its potential for fine-grained cultural motif recognition. The ability to significantly improve classes with lower baseline performance while maintaining perfect scores for easier categories highlights its balanced generalization capacity. This indicates that the model not only addresses the limitations of standard convolutional layers but also establishes a scalable solution that can be extended to other domains requiring high precision and reliability in visual pattern analysis.

TABLE III. Performance Evaluation of the Proposed Feature Maps

Ghost Ratio	Feature Maps	Total Parameters	Overall Accuracy
ratio 2	Ghost	67,727,028	0.965
	Ghost-Vanilla	**16,339,988**	**0.980**
ratio 3	Ghost	44,988,541	0.960
	Ghost-Vanilla	7,958,079	0.970
ratio 4	Ghost	33,914,980	0.920
	Ghost-Vanilla	4,911,380	0.925
ratio 5	Ghost	27,066,179	0.855
	Ghost-Vanilla	3,440,215	0.905

The Ghost feature map, which has been employed in prior studies [11], is re-evaluated in this work as a comparative baseline using a different and more challenging dataset, where the number of motif classes is expanded from 10 to 20, in order to assess its robustness under increased fine-grained classification complexity.

The experimental findings reveal that the Ghost-Vanilla Feature Map consistently enhances classification performance across all ghost ratio configurations compared to the use of Ghost Modules alone, as summarized in Table III. The highest accuracy is achieved at a ghost ratio 2, where the Ghost-Vanilla model attains 0.980, surpassing the standard Ghost model at 0.965, while simultaneously reducing the parameter count from 67.7 million to 16.3 million, a reduction of more than 75%. Similar improvements are observed at ghost ratios 3 and 4, where Ghost-Vanilla yields modest yet consistent accuracy gains while maintaining significantly fewer parameters. These results indicate that the integration of VanillaNet strengthens the representational capacity of the model by providing structurally efficient yet highly discriminative features, making the hybrid design particularly suitable for fine-grained classification tasks such as textile motifs.

At higher ghost ratios, particularly ratio 5, both architectures exhibit a decline in accuracy due to the excessive reliance on cheap-operation feature maps, which limits the expressive capability typically preserved by standard convolutions. Nevertheless, the Ghost-Vanilla variant maintains a notable performance advantage over the pure Ghost model, demonstrating its stabilizing effect even under extreme reductions in convolutional complexity. These findings collectively suggest that ghost ratio 2 represents the optimal configuration for balancing accuracy, parameter efficiency, and deployability. Overall, the results confirm that the proposed Ghost-Vanilla architecture effectively addresses the dual challenge of computational efficiency and representational richness, providing a compelling solution for resource-constrained environments and fine-grained recognition problems.

The experimental results (see Table IV) reveal a fundamental limitation of conventional lightweight CNN architectures, such as MobileNetV3-Small, MobileNetV4-Conv-Small, EfficientNetV2-Small, and ShuffleNetV2 1.0×, when applied to fine-grained textile classification. Although these architectures offer low computational overhead and small parameter sizes, their accuracies remain modest, ranging from 0.425 to 0.615. This performance gap underscores that the inherent structural compression of lightweight models is insufficient to capture the subtle intra-class variations and high inter-class similarities typical of Songket motifs. Notably, EfficientNetV2-Small illustrates a critical observation: increasing FLOPs or depth alone (7.5516B FLOPs) does not guarantee improved discriminative capability, indicating that representational quality in this domain is governed by the specificity of feature construction rather than mere architectural scale.

A deeper examination of the two baseline feature construction strategies provides additional insight into the nature of this limitation. The model employing Ghost Feature Maps achieves high accuracy (0.965) with minimal FLOPs, yet its parameter count swells to 67 million, revealing substantial structural redundancy despite its efficient convolutional operations. In contrast, the Vanilla Feature Maps model exhibits the opposite behavior: it consumes extremely high computational resources (15.2557B FLOPs), but yields an accuracy of only 0.860. This discrepancy highlights a core challenge in feature engineering for fine-grained tasks: reducing redundancy alone (as in Ghost) or increasing representational depth alone (as in Vanilla) is insufficient. Neither approach, when used in isolation, is capable of producing compact yet semantically rich feature embeddings required for resolving fine-grained motif distinctions.

TABLE IV. PERFORMANCE EVALUATION OF THE PROPOSED FEATURE MAPS

Approach	Params	FLOPs (B)	Acc
MobileNetV3-Small	1,538,356	0.1558	0.615
MobileNetV4-Conv-Small	4,158,324	0.4944	0.500
EfficientNetV2-Small	21,842,788	7.5516	0.425
ShuffleNetV2 1.0x	2,323,704	0.3975	0.580
CNN with Ghost Feature Maps	67,727,028	1.4413	0.965
CNN with Vanilla Feature Maps	30,194,196	15.2557	0.860
CNN with Ghost-Vanilla Feature Maps (Ours)	**16,339,988**	**7.8003**	**0.980**

The proposed Ghost-Vanilla Feature architecture demonstrates a decisive improvement by synergistically combining the strengths of both approaches. Achieving the highest accuracy of 0.980 with a substantially reduced parameter count (16.3M) and moderate FLOPs (7.8003B), the model exemplifies an optimal balance between computational efficiency and discriminative power. This performance gain suggests that the complementary interaction between Ghost-generated low-cost feature enrichments and the structural regularity of VanillaNet effectively mitigates redundancy while preserving essential high-frequency visual cues. The hybrid design not only enhances feature robustness but also provides evidence that fine-grained textile classification benefits from architectures that integrate lightweight generative feature expansion with stabilized backbone representations. These findings emphasize the architectural significance of the proposed approach and position it as a strong candidate for deployment in both high-performance and resource-constrained environments.

Further, comparative analysis in Table IV shows that the proposed Ghost-Vanilla Feature Maps address limitations not explicitly handled by state-of-the-art lightweight CNNs. While architectures such as MobileNet, ShuffleNet, and EfficientNet mainly reduce complexity through depthwise separable convolutions or compound scaling, they lack explicit mechanisms for enriching fine-grained local representations required for discriminating highly similar textile motifs. In contrast, the Ghost-Vanilla architecture employs a fundamentally different feature construction strategy that balances controlled feature expansion with structural regularity, resulting in more compact, yet semantically expressive representations.

This study is limited to the architectural evaluation of the proposed Ghost-Vanilla Feature Map within a controlled experimental environment. The dataset employed has been curated and standardized, and the research does not extend to deployment-oriented aspects such as user interface development, real-world field testing under non-standardized imaging conditions, or long-term model adaptation mechanisms. These practical considerations fall outside the present scope and are recommended for investigation in future work.

VI. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the proposed Ghost-Vanilla Feature Map provides an effective and computationally efficient solution for fine-grained textile motif classification. By integrating low-cost ghost-generated features with the structurally stable representations of VanillaNet, the hybrid architecture achieves the highest accuracy of 0.980 at a ghost ratio 2 while reducing parameters by more than 75% compared to the pure Ghost model. These improvements significantly outperform existing lightweight CNN architectures such as MobileNetV3-Small, MobileNetV4-Conv-Small, EfficientNetV2-Small, and ShuffleNetV2 1.0×, whose accuracies range only from 0.425 to 0.615 despite their compact computational footprints. These results highlight that fine-grained motif recognition demands not only architectural compactness but also a carefully engineered feature extraction strategy capable of capturing subtle intra-class textures and high inter-class similarities, underscoring the architectural robustness and efficiency of the Ghost-Vanilla design for both high-performance and resource-limited environments.

Future work can explore the integration of reparameterization techniques from RepGhost into the Ghost-Vanilla Feature Maps architecture to further improve model efficiency. By employing this strategy, convolutional kernel transformations can markedly reduce parameter count without affecting the Ghost Module's fundamental feature extraction capabilities. The integration of reparameterization allows the model to maintain discriminative feature representations for complex and multi-scale songket motifs while simultaneously reducing overall model size. This approach can be evaluated across different Ghost ratios to identify the optimal balance between efficiency and classification accuracy and to test its applicability on devices with limited computational resources.

Although songket motifs serve as an appropriate benchmark due to their high inter-class similarity and substantial intra-class variability, the primary contribution of this study is methodological rather than domain-specific. The core architectural principles, leveraging low-cost feature expansion in conjunction with a lightweight backbone, hold potential applicability across a wide range of fine-grained classification scenarios, including medical imaging, agricultural disease detection, industrial quality inspection, and remote sensing. Future research is necessary to evaluate the generalizability of the proposed method across these domains and to examine its progression from a research prototype to a production-ready system.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This research was supported by the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Technology of Indonesia through the research grant for the fundamental research scheme in 2025 with contract number 123/C3/DT.05.00/PL/2025.

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Forecast of Guangzhou Port Logistics Demand Based on Back Propagation Neural Network

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***Abstract*—In recent years, the port economy of our country has developed rapidly. Guangzhou Port is an important node of the maritime transportation of the Belt and Road, connecting the hinterland economy of our country with the countries along the Belt and Road, which is of great significance in promoting the economic development of the hinterland of our country. It is of great significance to predict the freight development demand of Guangzhou port scientifically and reasonably, which is beneficial to optimize the infrastructure construction and logistics system planning of Guangzhou port. This study selects the port cargo throughput, foreign trade cargo throughput, and container cargo throughput as three index values to measure the freight development of Guangzhou port. Firstly, the GM(1,1) model and the BP neural network model are constructed to predict the freight demand of Guangzhou port. Then, the GM(1,1) model and the BP neural network model are combined to predict again. By comparing the three models, the results show that the accuracy of the combined model is better than that of the single model. The combined model of BP neural network and GM(1,1) can be effectively applied in the prediction of Guangzhou port logistics demand. Finally, the combined model of BP neural network and GM(1,1) is used to forecast the freight development demand of Guangzhou Port in 2022-2024, which provides a reference for the development planning of Guangzhou Port. The results further indicate that the BP–GM(1,1) combination model significantly outperforms single forecasting models in terms of prediction accuracy, highlighting its effectiveness and robustness in port logistics demand forecasting.**

***Keywords*—BP neural network; GM(1,1); combination model; port logistics demand**

I. Introduction

Ports are the intersection of sea and land transport, providing a place for industrial activity and, more importantly, an integrated logistics center that promotes urban and socio-economic development. As a transportation hub linking waterways and landways, the port not only connects the inland hinterland to the sea, but also builds a platform for China to communicate with external economic materials and provides a node for interfacing with the international community. In 2015, the National Development and Reform Commission and other departments jointly released the "Vision and Action for Promoting the Construction of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. Guangdong is one of the designated locations of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. As the largest comprehensive hub port in South China, Guangzhou Port also occupies a very important position in the southern route of the new Silk Road. Moreover, the port of Guangzhou makes an important contribution to the economic development of China's hinterland regions, with strong point and line radiation capabilities that can radiate the economies of several regions. Zhuang et al. confirm that port-throughput forecasting can directly support hinterland industrial planning and green-port development, offering a methodological reference for the sustainable multi-regional economic spillover of Guangzhou Port [1]. Guangzhou Port is an important export channel in the Pearl River Delta of Guangdong Province and one of the most important foreign trade ports in China. On February 18, 2019, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council issued the Outline of the Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, with the four central cities of Guangdong, Hong Kong, Macao and Shenzhen as important forces to guide the economic development of other regions. In addition, the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area contributes to the construction of the Belt and Road Initiative in the planning outline. Guangzhou Port is located at the mouth of the Pearl River or the center of the Pearl River Delta, adjacent to Hong Kong and the South China Sea. Therefore, it is very important to predict the logistics demand of Guangzhou port for the construction of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. Europe and the United States attaches great importance to the shipping and port economy, but also because of early industrialization their port economic level is now located in the world, even our country every year for ports, shipping cost is higher, the present economic level is still in the harbor is inferior to European and American countries, thus to promote the development of port economy in China is urgent. Therefore, China should make relevant strategies according to local conditions to promote the development of port logistics and improve the economic level of port logistics to reverse the disadvantage in the world. In order to optimize the port level in our country with high efficiency, it is necessary to make a reasonable prediction of the port logistics demand, reduce the prediction error and improve the efficiency of port logistics operation. During the "13th Five-Year Plan" period, the smart port demonstration list was announced, marking the port development in our country has entered a new period, through a series of new technologies such as the Internet of Things, mobile Internet, big data, cloud computing, and so on. It comprehensively includes the production and operation, service and management of the port, reflecting the open sharing, connectivity, highly digitalized, and intelligent port. Therefore, the analysis of the logistics needs of Guangzhou port is conducive to optimizing the logistics system planning and layout, and improving the scientific planning and layout of the "wisdom degree" of Guangzhou Port.

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Despite the extensive attention paid to port logistics development, existing studies on port logistics demand forecasting are still dominated by single-model approaches, including time-series analysis, regression models, and standalone artificial intelligence methods. These approaches often face limitations such as insufficient adaptability to small samples, sensitivity to data fluctuations, or overfitting under complex multi-factor logistics environments. Xu et al. demonstrate that traditional time-series and single-machine-learning models produce significantly higher MAPE when sample sizes are limited or volatility is high, underscoring the need for a hybrid learning framework to improve robustness [2]. Moreover, many existing AI-based or hybrid forecasting models focus on general freight systems. Xiao et al. propose a VMD-CNN-LSTM-Attention decomposition-ensemble model for four major Asian hub ports, reducing forecast error by 27 % during the COVID-19 shock and proving that the decomposition-ensemble strategy is more resilient for port-logistics-demand forecasting under extreme events [3]. With limited empirical validation in large comprehensive hub ports under strategic initiatives such as the Belt and Road and the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area.

To address these limitations, this study constructs a BP neural network–GM(1,1) combination forecasting model for port logistics demand. The main contributions of this study are threefold: first, it integrates the advantages of grey system theory and neural networks to improve forecasting accuracy under limited and nonlinear data conditions; second, it applies the proposed combination model to Guangzhou Port using multiple cargo throughput indicators, providing an empirical reference for major hub ports; third, it offers quantitative support for logistics resource allocation, smart port planning, and infrastructure decision-making. This study thus fills an important gap in port logistics demand forecasting research by providing a robust and interpretable hybrid modeling framework.

II. Literature Review

A. Significance of Port Logistics Development

Scholars' research on the significance of the development of port logistics mainly focuses on the promotion mechanism of the development of port logistics on the regional economy and foreign trade. The geographical location of a port is important for port development. The results of the study showed that the regional advantages of the port's location can contribute to the development of port logistics itself [4]. The development of port logistics promotes the economic development of the region in which it is located, and studies from the economic structure, employment of talents, and the interaction between ports and urban development have found that port logistics has a great promotional impact on the economy of the region in which it is located [5]. Studies on the relationship between port infrastructure quality and logistics performance have shown that improving the quality of port logistics development plays an important role in a country's economic development [6].

B. Progress of Research on Port Logistics Development Forecasting

In recent years, port logistics development forecasting has become a hot issue studied by scholars. Port logistics demand forecasting is to forecast the indicators related to the development trend of market demand based on the relationship between the past and present demand of the port logistics market and the factors affecting the change of logistics market demand, and to utilize appropriate empirical judgment techniques, methods, and forecasting models. According to the accurate port logistics demand forecast, port enterprises can timely and accurately grasp the changing law of demand, seize the favorable opportunity to arrange port construction and production plans. In the research method of forecasting model of port logistics, scholars already have rich theoretical results and practical experience, and the current forecasting methods mainly include time series analysis, support vector machine and gray forecasting model [7-14]. Recent studies have increasingly focused on hybrid and AI-driven forecasting models for port logistics demand, emphasizing prediction accuracy improvement and operational applicability under complex logistics environments. In addition to conventional forecasting methods, scholars have innovated forecasting methods, based on the fact that the process of forecasting methods is highly dynamic, and a simulation-based method for forecasting demand load profiles has emerged [15]. Multiple regression and AW-BP prediction methods based on system order parameters have also emerged [16]. Practice has proved that the new prediction method not only has great improvement in convergence speed, prediction accuracy, and avoidance of local extremes, but also has the characteristics of adaptability, simplicity, practicability, and high efficiency, which is worthy of popularization and application. Scholars' research on port logistics demand forecasting methods is mainly to construct a single model. There are mainly regression equation forecasting methods, time series forecasting methods, artificial intelligence algorithm and so on. And the single models have their own limitations. The range of sample values in the regression equation forecasting method affects the scope of application of the regression equation. Generally, the time series forecasting method is suitable for short-term and medium-term forecasting, because it shows that the economic development has more uncertainty and is easily affected by a variety of emergencies, and the time series forecasting model does not take into account other factors besides the time factor, so it is easy to come up with the forecasting results that do not conform to the actual economic development, and it has the unavoidable forecasting error. The reality is that there are many unexpected situations, and if we ignore the influence of external factors on the predicted object, the prediction results will be seriously inconsistent with the actual situation. In recent years, the research on the prediction of port container throughput has shown the evolution of "from single source to multi-source, from shallow to deep". Liang et al. took the lead in proposing a deep learning hybrid model that takes into account hinterland two-way economic indicators, incorporating the data

of port hinterland and forward hinterland into the feature space at the same time. The empirical results show that RMSE is 18% lower than the traditional Arima, verifying the marginal contribution of "spatial interactive information" to the prediction accuracy, and providing a quantifiable decision-making basis for port operators [17]. Zeng and Xu further introduced the "decomposition before integration" strategy: Using Particle Swarm Optimization (PSO) to adaptively determine the parameters of variational mode decomposition (VMD), the original throughput sequence is decomposed into several intrinsic mode functions (IMF), and then the gated cyclic unit (Gru) is used to predict mode by mode, and finally aggregate the output. In the Medium-term Forecast Experiment of China's three major hub ports (Guangzhou, Qingdao, and Shanghai), the MAPE of this framework is 27% lower than that of the single Gru model, indicating that the vmd-pso-gru combination can effectively capture the nonlinear and seasonal fluctuations of shipping demand [18]. Zhang et al., for the first time, transformed the throughput time series into a complex network from the perspective of system science, used 13 similarity indicators to describe the node Association, and then used the maximum correlation and minimum redundancy (mrmr) to screen the features. Finally, support vector machine (SVM), deep neural network (DNN), and long-term and short-term memory network (LSTM) were used for link prediction and regression estimation. This method explicitly incorporates "network topology dynamics" into the prediction framework, which provides a structural perspective for explaining throughput mutations and verifies the stability of ensemble learning in ultra-high-dimensional feature space [19]. To sum up, the current research has formed a general technical route of "multi-source data fusion - Feature Engineering - hybrid deep learning": the hinterland economic indicators are used to characterize the external impact, the noise is filtered by modal decomposition, the structural features are extracted by a complex network, and then the nonlinear mapping is realized by depth model. Because single models have their own limitations, the use of combined models to optimize prediction and improve prediction accuracy has become the focus of research.

C. Application of the GM(1,1) Model and the BP Neural Network Prediction Model in Freight Transportation Forecasting

Gray system theory is an effective method for studying and modeling systems composed of small samples, which contain a limited amount of information and have a wide range of applications in many fields [20]. Valuable information is extracted by processing the known information. The method is further utilized to explore the evolutionary laws of the system, leading to the development of predictive models As there are many factors affecting the development of port logistics, such as transportation and logistics environmental factors, regional economic environmental factors, government policy factors, scientific and technological environmental factors, etc., it can be regarded as a gray system [21-26]. BP neural network prediction can predict the demand of port logistics through machine learning training, which is scientific and feasible to be applied in the prediction of port logistics. In summary, a single model prediction has greater limitations, and there are fewer studies using the gray prediction model combined with the BP neural network model to predict the logistics demand of ports, so this study constructs a BP neural network-GM(1,1) combination model to carry out a study on logistics demand prediction of the Port of Guangzhou, to provide data support for the rational allocation of the logistics resources of the Port of Guangzhou and the construction of a smart port.

III. Selection of Research Indicators and Data Sources

Selection of research indicators: Indicators selected for port research should comprehensively reflect port operation and production. Referring to relevant literature, this study chooses throughput to analyze port output, which mainly includes the following three indicators: Port cargo throughput, foreign trade cargo throughput, and container cargo throughput. The influencing factors of port logistics are mainly considered from the perspective of demand capacity, mainly from the three indicators of regional GDP, fixed asset investment, and the total value of commodity import and export. Data sources: Official website of the Ministry of Transport of China, Guangzhou Statistical Yearbook. This study mainly selects the relevant data of cargo throughput, foreign trade cargo throughput, and container cargo throughput of Guangzhou port from 2011 to 2020 for research. By constructing the 2011-2020 prediction model, the predicted value of 2021 is obtained and then compared with the actual data of 2021 to judge the accuracy of the prediction model. In order to facilitate expression, the port cargo throughput (A), foreign trade cargo throughput (B) and container cargo throughput (C) are represented by A, B, and C, respectively.

IV. Modeling of Guangzhou Port Logistics Demand Forecasts

A. GM(1,1) Model

1) Rank ratio test: First of all, the prerequisite for the construction of the GM(1,1) model is that the original sequence can pass the rank ratio test, which is as follows [see Eq. (1) to Eq. (3)]:

- Calculate the grade ratio $\lambda(k)$:

$$\lambda(k)A=(0.992\ 0.956\ 0.944\ 0.963\ 0.958\ 0.917\ 0.96\ 0.981\ 0.988) \quad (1)$$

$$\lambda(k)B=(0.904\ 0.968\ 0.947\ 1.007\ 0.942\ 0.981\ 0.932\ 0.969\ 1) \quad (2)$$

$$\lambda(k)C=(0.978\ 0.951\ 0.933\ 0.943\ 0.935\ 0.938\ 0.93\ 0.947\ 0.985) \quad (3)$$

- Judge the level ratio

When $\lambda(k)\epsilon(e^{\frac{2}{n+1}},e^{\frac{2}{n+1}})$, when n=10, $\lambda(k)\epsilon(0.834,1.199)$, and when $\lambda(k)$ falls into the above range, the GM(1,1) model is suitable.

$\lambda(k)\epsilon(0.917,0.988)$,K=2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10, therefore, it can be modeled by GM(1,1).

$\lambda(k)\epsilon(0.904,1.007)$,K=2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10, therefore, it can be modeled by GM(1,1).

$\lambda(k)\epsilon(0.93,0.985)$,K=2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10, therefore, it can be modeled by GM(1,1).

2) Construct GM (1,1) model: Using the data from 2011 to 2020 as the original series, the GM(1,1) prediction model is obtained according to the following five steps, as shown in Eq. (6) to Eq. (8), and the predicted value is calculated according to the GM(1,1) prediction model, as shown in Table I and Eq. (4) to Eq. (7):

Step 1: Set the original sequence as follows:

$$X^{(0)}=\{X^{(0)}(1),X^{(0)}(2),\ldots,X^{(0)}(n)\} \quad (4)$$

Step 2: Generate a cumulative sequence

$$X^{(1)}=\{X^{(1)}(1),X^{(1)}(2),\ldots,X^{(1)}(n)\} \quad (5)$$

Step 3: Create differential equations based on the cumulative series:

$$\frac{dX^{(1)}}{dt}+aX^{(1)}=b \quad (6)$$

where, a,b are the parameters to be estimated for the differential equation.

Step 4: Least squares method to solve the equation:

$$X^{(1)}(k+1)=\left(X^{(0)}(1)-\frac{b}{a}\right)e^{-ak}+\frac{b}{a} \quad (7)$$

Finally, the prediction equations for the GM(1,1) model were derived by calculating the coefficients a and b through MATLAB as follows:

Port cargo throughput (A): $955544.3367e^{0.045k}$-912395.6667.

Foreign trade cargo throughput (B): $307749.5686e^{0.035k}$-297836.0286.

Container Cargo Throughput (C): $23944.67667e^{0.035k}$-22502.56667.

The actual value from 2011 to 2020 is plotted against the predicted value of GM(1,1), as shown in Fig. 1 to Fig. 3. It is found that the actual value of port cargo throughput, foreign trade cargo throughput and container cargo throughput have a consistent growth trend with the predicted value, which is a relatively stable positive growth. The previous data from 2011 to 2013 almost overlap, while the actual and predicted values from 2014 to 2020 are also close, proving that GM(1,1) is suitable for port logistics forecasting.

TABLE I. COMPARISON BETWEEN ACTUAL VALUE AND GM(1,1) PREDICTED VALUE FROM 2011 TO 2020 (UNIT: TEN THOUSAND TONS AND TEN THOUSAND TEU)

Year	Port cargo throughput		Foreign trade cargo throughput		Container cargo throughput	
	Actual value	Predicted value	Actual value	Predicted value	Actual value	Predicted value
2011	43148.67	43148.67	9913.54	9913.54	1442.11	1442.11
2012	43517.39	43996.035	10968.42	10957.839	1474.36	1479.862
2013	45516.57	46031.058	11329.27	11345.164	1550.45	1570.813
2014	48217.25	48160.21	11957.1	11746.18	1662.62	1667.354
2015	50053.01	50387.846	11868.51	12161.371	1762.49	1769.828
2016	52253.82	52718.52	12596.03	12591.237	1885.77	1878.6
2017	57003.47	55156.999	12843.79	13036.298	2010	1994.057
2018	59396.2	57708.268	13782.16	13497.09	2162.27	2116.61
2019	60520	60377.546	14221	13974.17	2284	2246.695
2020	61240	63170.291	14224	14468.113	2319	2384.774

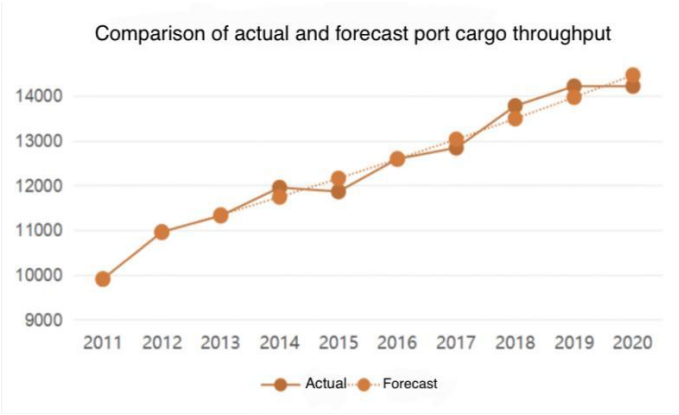

Fig. 1. Comparison of actual and forecast port cargo throughput 2011-2022.

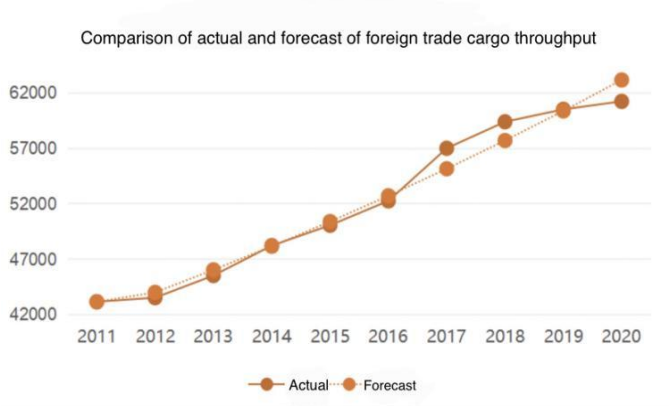

Fig. 2. Comparison of actual and forecast of foreign trade cargo throughput 2011-2022.

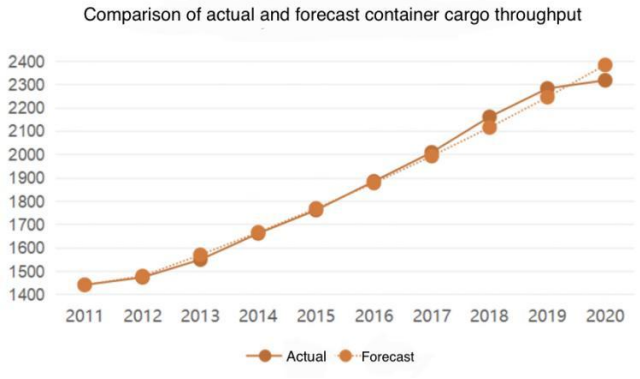

Fig. 3. Comparison of actual and forecast container cargo throughput 2011- 2022.

3) Post-test difference ratio test and relative error test: After calculating the prediction equations and predicted values, the accuracy of the model needs to be further tested. The posterior difference ratio can verify the accuracy of the gray prediction. When the posterior difference ratio is smaller, it indicates the high accuracy of the gray prediction model, and the relative error is the value obtained by multiplying the ratio of the absolute error caused by the measurement and the true value of the measured (convention) by 100%, which can also reflect the credibility of the measurement. Therefore, the posterior difference test and the mean relative error test are performed in this study, as follows in the Table II.

TABLE II. GM(1,1) ACCURACY TEST

	Post-test ratio	Average Relative Error %
Port cargo throughput A	0.024	1.338
Foreign trade cargo throughput B	0.02	1.153
Container Cargo Throughput C	0.009	1.014

In general, a posterior difference ratio less than 0.35 indicates a high model accuracy. The ratio less than 0.5 indicates that the model accuracy is qualified. The ratio less than 0.65 indicates that the model accuracy is basically qualified. Analysis of the above table shows that the posterior difference ratio of the GM(1,1) model consisting of cargo throughput, foreign trade cargo throughput, and container cargo throughput is less than 0.35, and all of them are between 0.009 and 0.024, which proves that the GM(1,1) model is highly accurate. Also, the lower the relative error value, the better. A relative error value of less than 20% indicates a good fit of the model. Therefore, in order to judge the model fit of the gray prediction model, the relative error was calculated for the predicted values from 2011 to 2020 and then averaged to obtain the interval (1.014%-1.338%), which implies a good model fit. After constructing the GM(1,1) model and passing the posterior difference ratio test and relative error test, it shows that the GM(1,1) model constructed in this study has good accuracy and can therefore be used to forecast the port logistics demand in Guangzhou.

4) Forecast accuracy: This study assumes that the logistics demand of Guangzhou port in 2021 is unknown and needs to be forecasted by the GM(1,1) model, and then the data obtained from the forecast is compared and analyzed with the actual data published by the Ministry of Transport of China in 2021 to determine whether the GM(1,1) model is applicable to the logistics demand forecast of Guangzhou port, as shown in Table III.

TABLE III. COMPARISON OF ACTUAL AND FORECAST VALUES IN 2021

2021	Port cargo throughput	Foreign trade cargo throughput	Container Cargo Throughput
Actual	62367	15795	2418
Forcast	66092.21313	14979.51533	2531.340499

The 2021 cargo throughput, foreign trade cargo throughput and container cargo throughput predicted by GM(1,1) model are 66,092, 14,980 and 25,310 (million tons) respectively after rounding, and the actual values are 62,367, 15,795 and 24,180 (million tons) respectively. Calculating the error between the forecasted and actual values of the above three throughputs in 2021 yields 3725, 816, and 113, and it can be found that the error is relatively large for cargo throughput. But it is understandable due to the large base. Analysis of the table shows that the GM(1,1) model is higher than the actual value for both cargo throughput and container cargo throughput, and lower than the actual value for the forecast of foreign trade cargo throughput. The accuracy of the GM(1,1) model for foreign trade cargo throughput and container cargo throughput is excellent, but the predicted value of cargo throughput differs significantly from the actual value. Therefore, this study hopes to compare the prediction by combining a BP neural network and GM(1,1) model to investigate whether the prediction accuracy can be improved to reduce the error.

B. BP Neural Network Model

1) Basic concepts of the BP neural network model: The BP neural network is a member of a large family of artificial neural networks. BP neural network prediction method is a multi-level neural network with reverse flow according to error, which can not only distinguish different modes, but also has a good mapping function for multi-dimensional functions [15]. In this way, the method solves a problem that other perceptrons cannot understand. The principle is to achieve the optimal value of the network target by gradient reduction. In general, it is a multidimensional function and takes the square error of the network as the variable, and calculates the minimum value of this function by the gradient descent method. And it is mainly composed of input layer, hidden layer and output layer. The BP algorithm consists of forward and reverse calculations. Because the BP neural network has been relatively mature in network theory and performance and has been used in many aspects, such as artificial intelligence, it will continue to be optimized and used in the future. It is a very popular model.

2) Construction of BP neural network logistics demand forecasting model

a) Data selection and source: Since the Guangdong Statistical Information Network does not publish the gross

regional product, fixed asset investment, and total value of merchandise import and export in Guangzhou in 2021. Therefore, this study selects the data from 2011 to 2020 for modeling the BP neural network and constructs BP neural networks for cargo throughput, foreign trade cargo throughput and container cargo throughput, respectively. The data from 2011 to 2019 were used as the training set and 2020 as the validation set.

b) Number of layers in the network: A network unit of a BP neural network can correspond to multiple inputs but only one output, and the input layer corresponds to neurons composed of influence factors. Gross regional product, fixed asset investment, and gross merchandise import and export are the input layers of the three neurons chosen for this model. Gross regional product, fixed asset investment, and gross merchandise import and export are the input layers of the three neurons chosen for this model. The output layers of the model are cargo throughput, foreign trade cargo throughput and container cargo throughput, respectively. After the calculation, it was finally decided to use 5 hidden layers. The structure of the BP neural network is shown in Fig. 4.

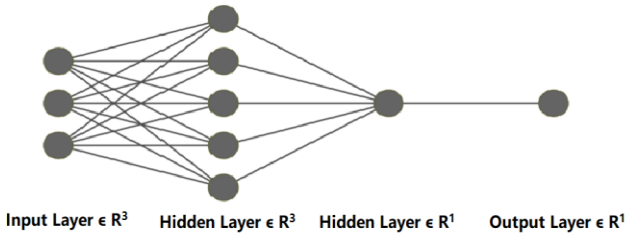

Fig. 4. BP neural network structure diagram.

c) BP neural network activation function: The sigmoid function and tanh function are more typical functions that can be applied to BP neural networks. Because the step function is not derivable, there is a more complicated problem of calculation, so this study chooses the sigmoid function as the network layer activation function. Because the sigmoid function is not only derivable but also can be found by the gradient descent method to find the extreme value, the computational difficulty is much reduced. In summary, in this study, we chose to use the S-type function (Sigmoid) as the activation function of the network layer as follows:

$$f(x)=\frac{1}{1+e^{-2n}}-1 \tag{8}$$

3) BP neural network prediction accuracy: A BP neural network model is constructed using MATLAB, and three cargo throughputs from 2011-2019 are selected for the training set, and the 2020 data is the validation set. First, the BP neural network is set to display the results once every 10,000 rounds. Then the learning speed is set to 0.001 and the maximum training rounds are 50,000. After the BP neural network model is trained, the errors for 2011-2019 are below 1%, and R^2 is very close to 1. This proves that the predicted values of the BP neural network after training are very close to the actual values, and the predicted values for 2011-2019 can be approximated to be equal to the actual values. The absolute errors of cargo throughput, foreign trade cargo throughput, and container cargo throughput for 2020, as the validation set, are 3.4215%, 2.4999%, and 2.5275%, respectively. The data show excellent prediction accuracy with small errors. The detailed training results are shown in Fig. 5 to 7.

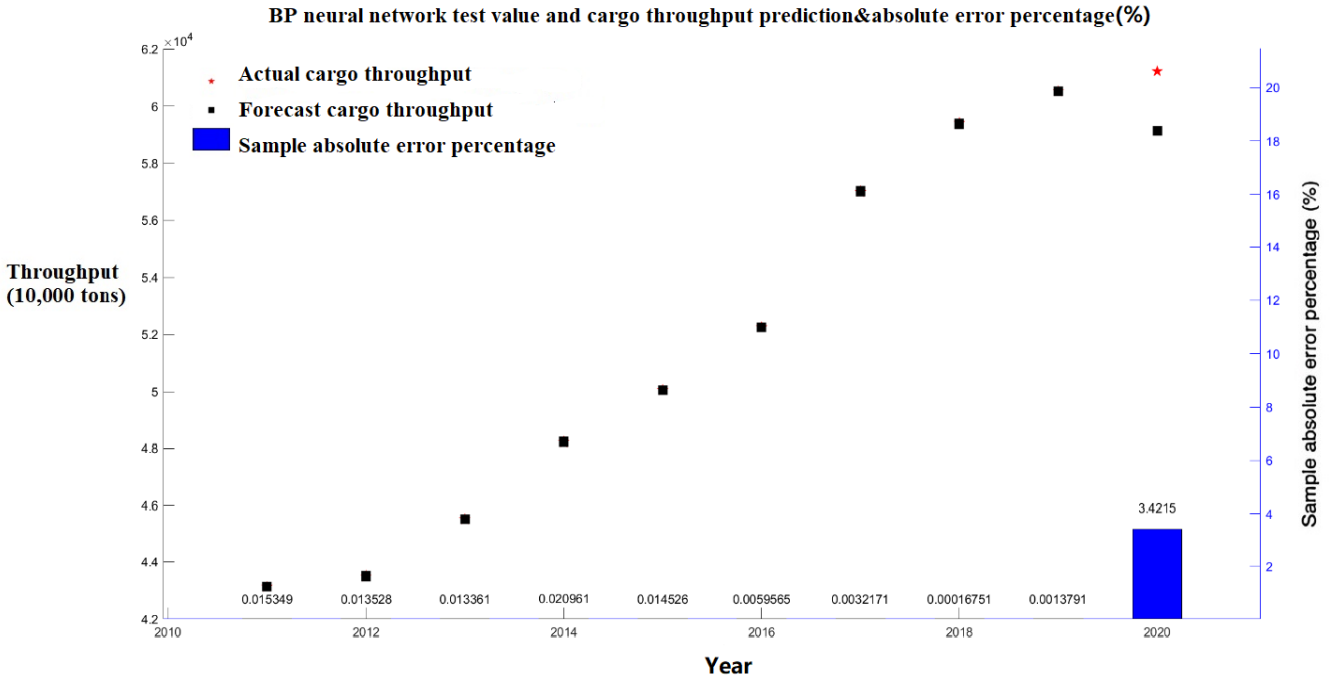

Fig. 5. BP neural network test values and 2020 cargo throughput forecast and absolute error percentage.

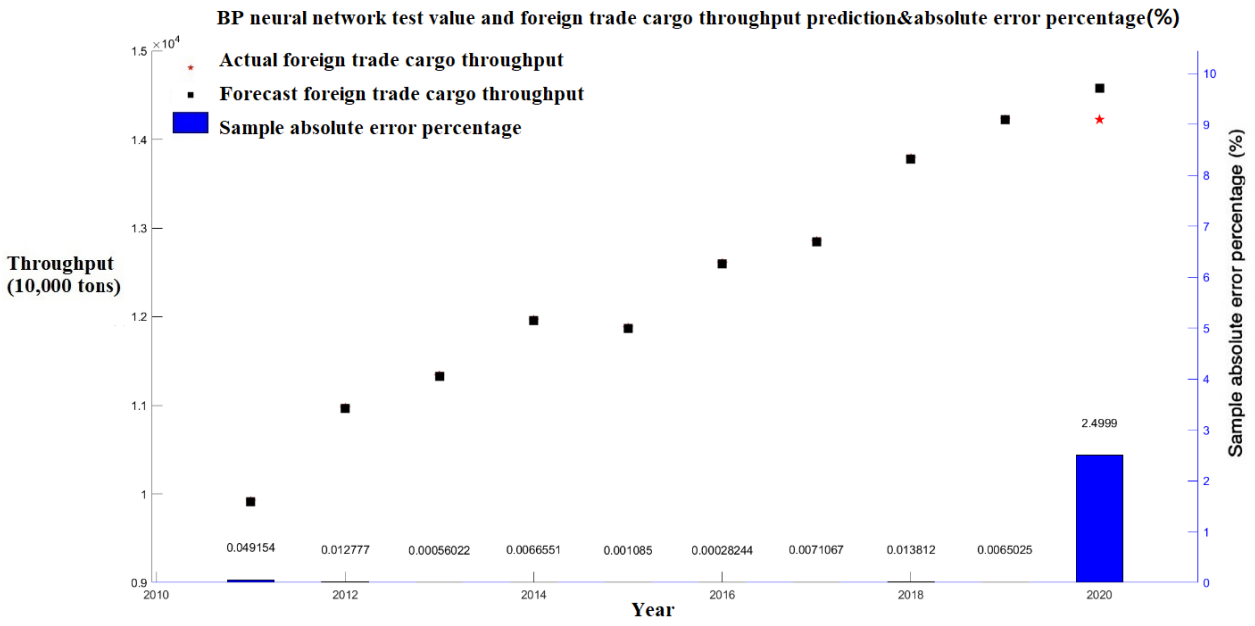

Fig. 6. BP neural network test values and 2020 foreign trade cargo throughput forecast and absolute error percentage.

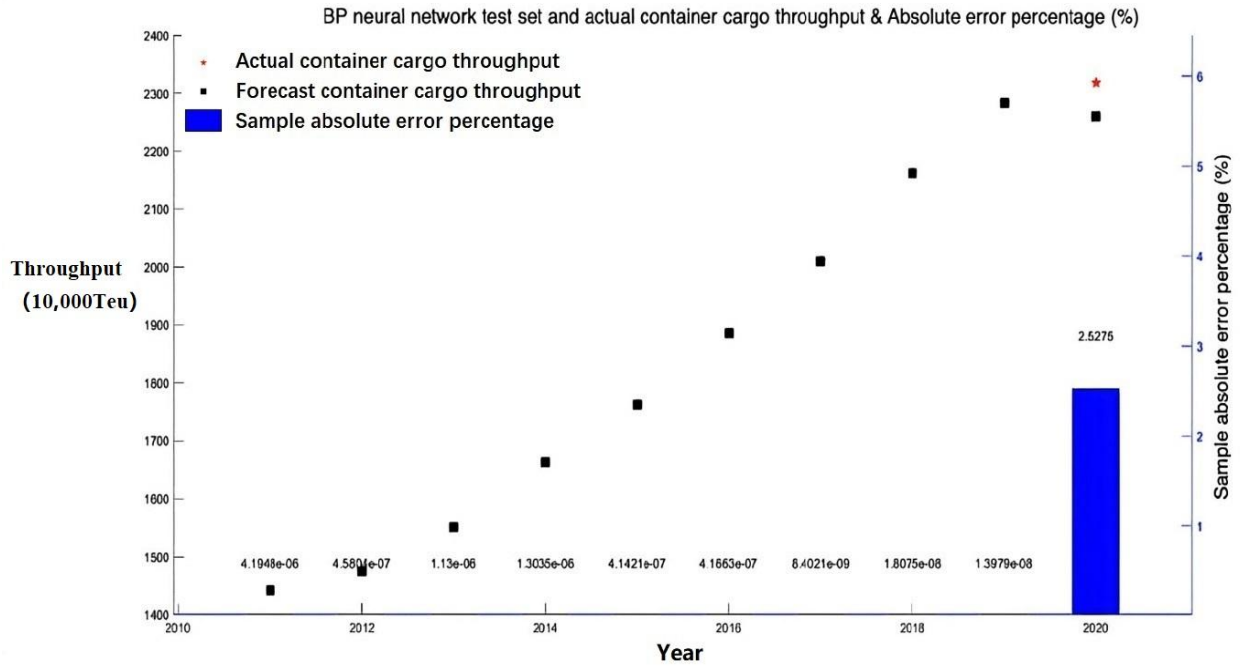

Fig. 7. BP neural network test values and 2020 container cargo throughput forecast and absolute error percentage.

C. BP Gray Prediction Combined Model

The GM(1, 1) model shows a large error in the prediction for cargo throughput, while the error of cargo throughput in the BP neural network prediction is only 3.4215%, which is a better prediction result. Therefore, this study decides to construct a combined model with a BP neural network model and a gray prediction model to investigate whether the combined model is better than a single model in terms of accuracy.

1) Determination of weight coefficients: Combined model y_t is shown in Eq. (9) and Eq. (10). There are many ways to combine individual models, among which the most critical is the establishment of weight coefficient ω_i. Considering the convenience of calculation and referring to most literature, this study finally chooses the equal-weight average method as Eq. (10):

$$y_t=\sum_{i=1}^{k}\omega_i f_{it}\ ,\ \sum_{i=1}^{k}\omega_i=1\ \text{ and }\ \omega_i\geq 0 \qquad (9)$$

where, ω_i is the weight, f_{it} is the predicted value, and k=1，2…n represents the number of models.

$$\omega_i=\frac{1}{k} \quad i=1,2,\ldots,k \tag{10}$$

After determining the weight composition, it is necessary to calculate the predicted value and the actual value, and then carry out the combination forecast and analyze the forecast results.

2) Combination prediction: The logistics demand of Guangzhou Port in 2020 is forecast, compared and analyzed, and the calculation results are shown in Table IV below:

TABLE IV. COMPARISON BETWEEN PREDICTED VALUES AND ACTUAL VALUES OF EACH FORECAST MODEL IN 2020 (TEN THOUSAND TONS AND TEN THOUSAND TEU)

	Actual	BP	GM(1,1)	Combination model
Port cargo throughput A	61240	59144.6734	63170.291	61157.4822
Foreign trade cargo throughput B	14224	13868.41422	14468.113	14168.26361
Container cargo throughput C	2319	2260.387275	2384.774	2322.580638

The table is drawn according to the output results of the BP neural network model, GM(1,1) model, and the BP neural network grey prediction combination model. The analysis results show that the predicted values of the BP neural network model are all smaller than the actual values, and the predicted values of the GM(1,1) model are all larger than the actual values. The combination model of the two is closer to the actual value than the single item model, weakening the limitations of the two single item models, and improving the accuracy of prediction to a certain extent. It proves that the combination model of BP neural network and GM(1,1) is more effective and conducive to reasonably predicting the future port logistics demand in the case of predicting Guangzhou port logistics.

3) Prediction accuracy: In order to further analyze the output results of the individual model and the combined model, the absolute percentage error is calculated, respectively, and the following table is obtained (see Table V):

TABLE V. ABSOLUTE PERCENTAGE ERROR BETWEEN EACH MODEL AND THE ACTUAL VALUE (%)

	BP	GM(1,1)	Combination model
Port cargo throughput A	3.422	3.152	0.135
Foreign trade cargo throughput B	2.500	1.716	0.392
Container cargo throughput C	2.528	2.836	0.154

It can be clearly seen that the combination model constructed by BP neural network model and GM(1,1) improves the prediction accuracy: the absolute percentage error of cargo throughput is reduced from 3.422% to 0.135%. The absolute percentage error of foreign trade cargo throughput decreased from 2.5% to 0.392%, and the absolute percentage error of container cargo throughput decreased from 2.528% to 0.154%. Through the combination model, the forecast results are optimized to a large extent, and it is an effective combination model, which is suitable for the Guangzhou port logistics demand forecast.

To sum up, the combination model constructed by the BP neural network model and GM(1,1) can effectively improve the prediction accuracy of the model, which can be applied to the demand prediction of Guangzhou port logistics.

4) Forecast of logistics demand mix of Guangzhou Port in 2022-2024: After comparing and analyzing the three models, the prediction accuracy of the combined model constructed by the BP neural network model and GM(1,1) is better. In order to understand the logistics demand of Guangzhou Port in the following years, the combination model is used to further forecast the logistics demand of Guangzhou Port in 2022-2024. The forecast results are shown in the Tables VI to VIII:

TABLE VI. CARGO THROUGHPUT FORECAST FOR 2022-2024

Year	GM(1,1)	BP	Combination
2022	69149.28783	59923.61814	64536.45299
2023	72347.76658	59016.2997	65682.03314
2024	75694.18995	59415.8469	67555.01842

TABLE VII. FOREIGN TRADE CARGO THROUGHPUT FORECAST FOR 2022-2024

Year	GM(1,1)	BP	Combination
2022	15508.99416	13678.9264	14593.96028
2023	16057.18841	13791.26738	14924.2279
2024	16624.75961	13576.82063	15100.79012

TABLE VIII. CONTAINER CARGO THROUGHPUT FORECAST FOR 2022-2024

Year	GM(1,1)	BP	Combination
2022	2686.914378	2034.919902	2360.91714
2023	2852.049687	2122.543896	2487.296791
2024	3027.334061	2082.888479	2555.11127

The three throughputs all show an increasing state in 2022-2024 in the prediction of the GM(1,1) model, while the BP neural network model is slightly different from the GM(1,1) model. However, in general, it is also an increase compared with 2020. After the combination of the two individual models through the equal weight average method, it is predicted that the demand for logistics of Guangzhou port in 2022-2024 will show an increasing trend. Extrapolate according to the actual situation, this is in line with our country's national condition and economic development trend. The combined model reduces the limitations of the single model, and the forecast result is closer to reality, which can be applied to the forecast of Guangzhou port logistics demand.

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

A. Conclusion

This study chooses port throughput, foreign trade cargo throughput, and container cargo throughput to study the development trend of Guangzhou port cargo. The combined

model is used to forecast the logistics demand of Guangzhou port in 2022-2024. The freight volume demand of Guangzhou port shows a rapid growth trend. The comparative results demonstrate that the BP–GM(1,1) combination model consistently achieves lower absolute percentage errors than the single GM(1,1) and BP neural network models across all three throughput indicators. This indicates that the hybrid approach effectively balances the advantages of small-sample adaptability and nonlinear learning capability. From a practical perspective, higher forecasting accuracy can support more rational allocation of port logistics resources, reduce congestion risks, and improve operational efficiency. Furthermore, the results provide quantitative evidence for smart port planning and infrastructure optimization, offering decision support for port authorities under complex logistics environments.

B. Discussion

From a strategic perspective, accurate logistics demand forecasting can assist port authorities in prioritizing infrastructure investment, optimizing capacity expansion, and coordinating port–city development. Under the Belt and Road Initiative and the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area framework, such predictive insights are crucial for enhancing the international competitiveness of hub ports and supporting regional economic integration.

C. Future Research

Future research may extend the proposed combination model to other ports or regional logistics systems to test its generalizability. In addition, integrating real-time operational data and intelligent decision-support systems could further enhance its application in smart port governance and policy formulation.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

Research Involving Human Participants and/or Animals

No applicable.

Funding

This research was supported by Guangzhou Huashang College (Grant No. 2023HSQX091; 2022HSXK02; HS2024SFZY10; HS2024ZLGC16; HS2024ZLGC07; HSRHKC202437; HS2025AIJG04) and the Zhaoqing Philosophy and Social Sciences Discipline Co-construction Project (25GJ-365), Guangzhou Social Sciences “14th Five-Year Plan” Project (2025GZGJ264).

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Explainable AI Techniques for Interpretable Breast Cancer Classification

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***Abstract*—Breast cancer is still a major health risk for women all over the world, and thus finding it early is very important for the patient's survival. Digital Breast Tomosynthesis (DBT) offers enhanced imaging capabilities relative to conventional mammography; yet, its quasi-3D characteristics provide distinct interpretability issues, often rendering deep learning models as black boxes. This work tackles the issue of transparency by testing three Explainable Artificial Intelligence (XAI) methods: Gradient-weighted Class Activation Mapping (Grad-CAM), Score-CAM, and Local Interpretable Model-Agnostic Explanations (LIME). The ResNet-50 architecture was utilized to analyse a dataset of 396 DICOM images that had been pre-processed in a unique way, including colour-mapping and balancing. The study used Insertion and Deletion Area Under the Curve (AUC) to carefully quantify how reliable the visual explanations were, in addition to usual criteria like accuracy, which achieved 94%. It was shown that LIME and Score-CAM generated attention maps that were dispersed or inconsistent, whereas Grad-CAM always showed lesion-specific areas with great accuracy. Grad-CAM was the best method for analysing DBT findings, since it had the highest Insertion AUC of 0.9078. These results provide radiologists with a way to trust and check automated diagnoses, which closes the gap between AI that works well and AI that is reliable in the clinic.**

***Keywords*—Breast cancer; DBT; Grad-CAM; ResNet-50; XAI**

I. Introduction

Breast cancer is still the most common kind of cancer in women across the world and is the leading cause of cancer deaths. The World Health Organization (WHO) said that in 2020, there were more than 2.3 million new cases and 685,000 fatalities [1]. Breast cancer is the most common kind of cancer in Indonesia, making up around 30% of all cancer cases [2]. It is more common than cervical cancer. Finding the disease early is crucial for enhancing the chances of survival and the long-term outlook. Deep Learning (DL) on Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) has emerged as the most popular method for analyzing medical images to distinguish between benign and malignant breast cancers [3], [4]. Architectures like ResNet-50 have shown outstanding performance in classification tasks, but how they make decisions within is still not clear. Because the reasoning behind a model's categorization isn't always clear, medical practitioners generally don't trust it because it is a "black box" [5]. The Explainable Artificial Intelligence (XAI) method was developed to clarify and simplify deep learning (DL) models in order to address these issues. Specifically, XAI techniques were developed to visualize which image regions most significantly influence model predictions [6], [7]. Nonetheless, the majority of current XAI assessments concentrate on 2D imaging. Digital Breast Tomosynthesis (DBT) has distinct interpretative issues because of its quasi-3D attributes and overlapping tissue features, which markedly contrast with traditional mammography. At present, there is an absence of extensive research explicitly examining the performance of XAI methods—such as Grad-CAM, Score-CAM, and LIME—when used on DBT data with the ResNet-50 architecture.

This study seeks to evaluate and contrast three XAI methodologies—Grad-CAM, Score-CAM, and LIME—in analysing breast cancer classifications obtained from DBT images, addressing the current deficiency in the field. The evaluation employs visual saliency map analysis and quantitative metrics, namely the Deletion and Insertion Area Under the Curve (AUC). The aim of this research is to identify the most reliable XAI framework for 3D breast imaging, providing clinical decision-support insights and practical guidance for radiologists in selecting transparent AI technologies for medical diagnosis.

II. Literature Review

This section analyses previous studies that support this research. The literature reviewed includes topics related to breast cancer, DBT imaging, the use of deep learning in medical image classification, and the XAI methods used to understand CNN-based classification models. Buda et al. [8] released a large DBT dataset with 22,032 volumes from 5,060 patients and used DenseNet to create a basic model for finding breast cancer. This model had a sensitivity of 65% and two false positives per volume, but the study didn't say how easy it was to understand it. This work demonstrates the necessity of integrating XAI methods into DBT analysis to enhance the transparency and trustworthiness of medical AI systems.

Rodriguez-Ruiz et al. [9] showed that an autonomous AI system was able to detect cancer on mammograms with an Area Under the Curve (AUC) of up to 0.93, which is equivalent to human radiological performance. Meanwhile, Antropova et al. [10] used DCE-MRI images with the Maximum Intensity Projection (MIP) approach and CNN for the classification of benign and malignant lesions, resulting in an AUC of 0.88. Although neither study integrated XAI methods, their results

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open up important avenues for applying XAI to improve the clinical interpretability of CNN-based diagnostic systems.

A study by Kim et al. [10] more explicitly demonstrates the impact of visualisation on diagnostic confidence and accuracy. Using a CNN based on ResNet-34 and heatmap visualisation similar to Grad-CAM, the accuracy of mammography classification increased (AUC from 0.79 to 0.89), and the recall rate decreased from 60.4% to 49.5%. These findings confirm the importance of visual interpretability in increasing radiologists' trust in AI systems, although the study did not directly compare several XAI methods.

Di Martino et al. [5] examined various XAI methodologies employed in medicine, including SHAP, LIME, and Grad-CAM. Researchers found that Grad-CAM works well with CNNs because it can highlight important parts of medical images on its own, regardless of the architecture. LIME uses surrogate models to present local interpretations, and SHAP uses the theory of Shapley values to ensure that everything is consistent across the board. Many people prefer SHAP and Grad-CAM; however, the most effective XAI method depends on the specific model, context, and clarity of understanding. There have been no thorough studies that have directly compared the XAI methods Grad-CAM, LIME, and Score-CAM for classifying breast cancer using CNNs based on DBT.

Kursun et al. [11] applied Score-CAM to explain the classification results of deep learning models in leaf image-based plant disease detection. Score-CAM works without using gradients but instead calculates the weights of each activation channel based on the prediction score, resulting in more stable and less noisy visualisations than Grad-CAM. This study confirms that Score-CAM can improve the visual interpretability of CNN models without disturbing the model architecture. In the context of this study, Score-CAM is used as one of the XAI methods compared in assessing visualisation clarity and interpretation reliability in DBT image-based breast cancer classification.

Jusman et al. [12] assessed the effectiveness of GoogLeNet and ResNet-50 in the classification of X-ray images for COVID-19 detection. ResNet-50 always did better than GoogLeNet, with an average test accuracy of 94%, a precision and recall of 90%, and an F1-score of 89%. These results indicate that the residual learning architecture is better at finding complicated patterns in medical images. ResNet-50 was used as the CNN backbone for this study because it can deeply and accurately pull out important features, which are crucial for classifying breast cancer based on DBT images.

Based on a literature review, ResNet-50 has proven effective in medical image classification, including breast cancer, but interpretability challenges in DBT images still need to be addressed. These findings were utilized to select the appropriate model architecture and XAI methods for analysis during the implementation phase.

III. Methodology

This section outlines the methodologies and procedures employed in the research process, encompassing data processing, CNN model architecture, and the application and assessment of three XAI methods: Grad-CAM, LIME, and Score-CAM. This study uses the DBT image dataset for breast cancer classification and employs the ResNet-50 architecture as the primary CNN framework. Then, the XAI method analyses the classification results for clarity and consistency.

A. Research Flow

This research includes six stages, starting from data collection to the presentation of XAI results visualisation, as shown in Fig. 1.

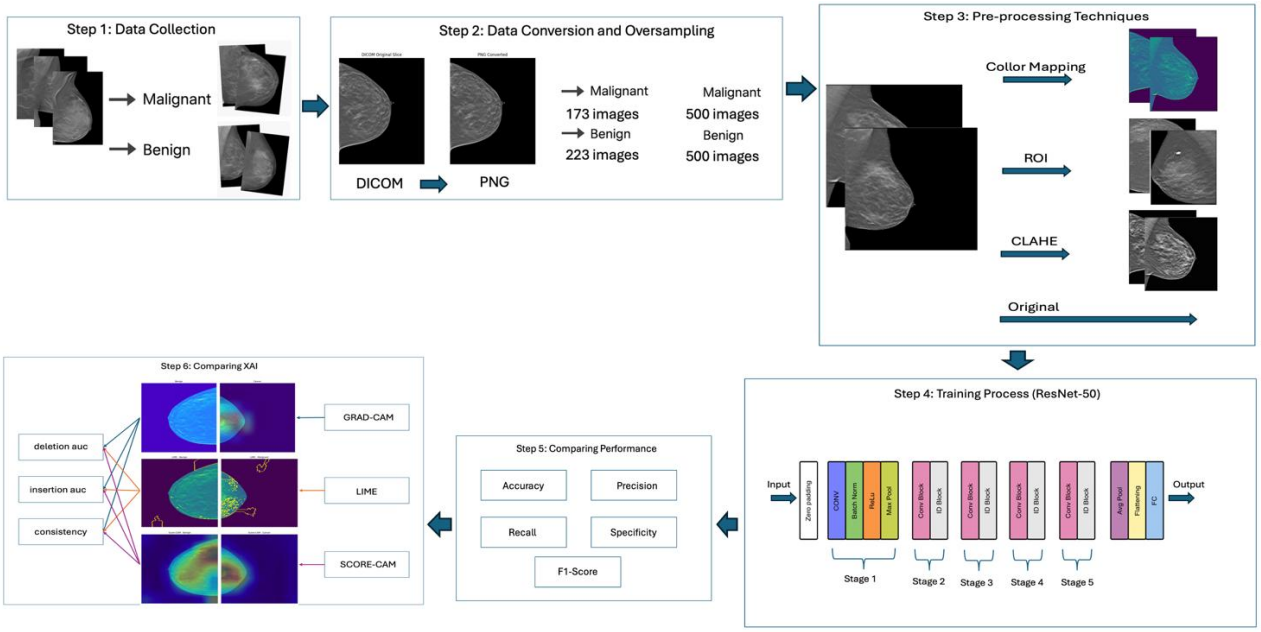

Fig. 1. Research flow.

The following sub-sections will provide a detailed explanation of the flow stages depicted in Fig. 1.

B. Pre-Processing

- Data Collection: This study uses data from patients diagnosed with breast cancer, consisting of two classes, namely 223 benign images and 173 malignant images, in DICOM format. Data were obtained from the National Cancer Institute through the Breast Cancer Screen – Digital Breast Tomosynthesis (BCS-DBT) dataset [13]. To visualise, the two types of classes, benign in Fig. 2 and malignant in Fig. 3, are shown below.

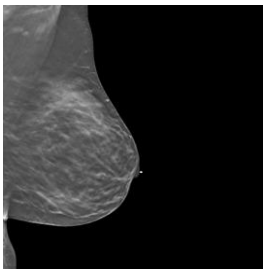

Fig. 2. Benign.

Fig. 3. Malignant.

- Data Conversion and Oversampling: The collected images are processed to facilitate the next stage of analysis. Images in DICOM format are converted into PNG format, called super images [14], with the aim of reducing the computational load without sacrificing image quality. Next, a random overlapping process is carried out to overcome the imbalance in the number of images between benign and malignant classes so that each class has 500 images [15].
- Pre-processing Techniques Image: This stage is carried out to obtain optimal CNN training results by applying the colour mapping technique. The colour mapping technique showed the highest accuracy compared to the other three techniques on DBT images, namely 94%.

C. Image Classification

Researchers used the ResNet-50 architecture to sort pictures. Post-training evaluation was performed using a confusion matrix with metrics such as accuracy, F1-score, recall, and precision. Subsequently, XAI methods were employed to visualize and interpret the underlying rationale behind the model's predictions.

1) ResNet-50: This model is used in this study to sort DBT images is a deep convolutional neural network with 50 layers that learns by connecting shortcuts. This mechanism effectively mitigates the accuracy degradation in exceedingly deep networks by acquiring residual functions, thereby resolving the issue of vanishing gradients. ResNet-50 has been shown to work better than other methods for a wide range of medical image classification tasks, such as finding breast and prostate cancer [16]. Fig. 4 presents the ResNet-50 architecture.

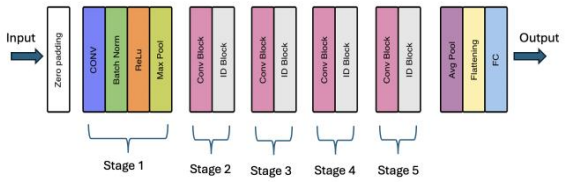

Fig. 4. ResNet-50 architecture.

The last layer of the ResNet-50 design was modified to correspond with the number of classes in the DBT dataset [17]. Training was conducted for 25 epochs using the Adam optimizer, with a learning rate of 0.0001 and a batch size of 10. A confusion matrix was utilized to evaluate the model's performance by determining the accuracy, precision, recall, specificity, and F1-score for each class.

2) Confusion matrix: Researchers performed evaluations of model classification using a confusion matrix, the value of which is measured based on four metrics: accuracy, F1-score, recall, and precision. The results of these calculations were used to assess whether the previous process successfully improved classification performance, achieved high accuracy, and optimally differentiated between benign and malignant classes [18]. The following section presents the equations for these four metrics.

a) Accuracy: It is a metric that indicates the overall accuracy of a model's predictions. This indicator is often used as an initial benchmark for model performance because it considers the accuracy of predictions for both the positive and negative classes. The accuracy calculation is shown in Eq. (1):

$$Accuracy = \frac{TP+TN}{TP+TN+FP+FN} \times 100\% \quad (1)$$

b) Recall or sensitivity: It is a metric that assesses a model's ability to identify positive data from a pool of truly positive data. This metric is crucial in cases such as disease detection or fraud, where missing a positive case can have serious consequences. The recall is defined in Eq. (2):

$$Recall = \frac{TP}{TP+FN} \times 100\% \quad (2)$$

c) Precision: It describes the level of accuracy of positive predictions produced by the model, namely the proportion of correct positive predictions out of all positive predictions made. A high precision value indicates that the model rarely produces false positive predictions. The precision calculation is presented in Eq. (3):

$$Precision = \frac{TP}{TP+FP} \times 100 \quad (3)$$

d) F1-Score: It is an evaluation metric that combines precision and recall into a single value using the harmonic mean of both. This metric provides a balance between the model's ability to detect positive data (recall) and produce accurate positive predictions (precision). The F1-Score is determined using Eq. (4):

$$F1 - Score = 2 \times \frac{Sensivity \times Precision}{Sensitivity + Precision} \times 100\% \quad (4)$$

D. Explainable Artificial Intelligence (XAI)

Next, the researchers visualized the results of DBT-based breast cancer image classification using XAI to identify areas in the image that most influenced the model's decision. XAI was used to provide a transparent interpretation of the classification process by highlighting points or areas that serve as the basis for distinguishing between two cancer classes. In this study, three XAI methods were used, and their performance was evaluated using two metrics: Deletion AUC and Insertion AUC. The following is an explanation of each XAI model and an evaluation of its performance:

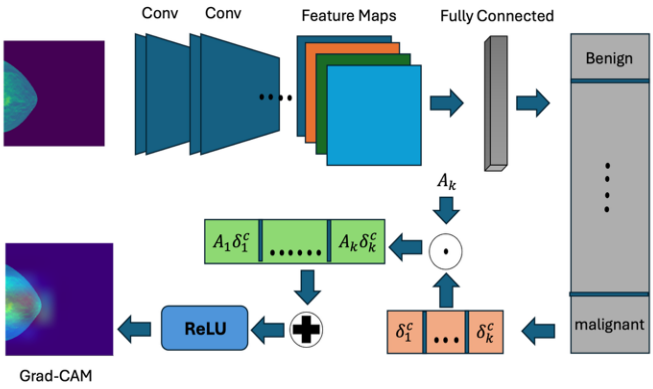

Fig. 5. Grad-CAM architecture.

1) Grad-Cam: Gradient-weighted Class Activation Mapping (Grad-CAM) is a method for showing which parts of DBT images have the most impact on the model's choice between benign and malignant breast cancer. Grad-CAM makes a heatmap that shows how much each area helped the model make a prediction by using the gradients from the last convolutional layer. This makes it easier to understand how to classify things visually [19]. The Grad-CAM model architecture is shown in Fig. 5.

Fig. 5 shows how the Grad-CAM method was used in this study with a CNN architecture based on ResNet-50. The DBT image passes through a number of convolutional layers, and the last one makes feature maps. After that, it goes to a fully connected layer that classifies tumours as either benign or malignant. To find the importance weights for each feature map, Grad-CAM takes the gradient of the target class output and multiplies it by the feature map that goes with it. The results go through a ReLU activation function, which only keeps the positive contributions. This creates a heatmap that shows which parts of the DBT image have the most effect on the model's prediction.

2) SCORE-CAM: The Score-Weighted Class Activation Mapping (Score-CAM) method is used to visualise important areas in DBT images that influence the model's decision to differentiate between benign and malignant breast cancer. This method produces a heatmap of the colour-mapped image, where colours with higher intensity indicate areas that contribute most to the model's prediction. This approach allows for a more transparent interpretation of the classification results, thus improving understanding of the model's decision-making process [11]. Fig. 6 displays the architecture of the Score-CAM model.

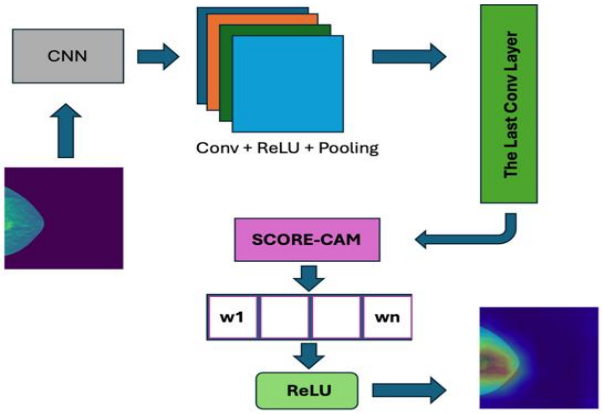

Fig. 6. Score-CAM architecture.

Fig. 6 shows the implementation flow of the Score-CAM method in this study using a CNN architecture using ResNet-50. The DBT is first processed by the ResNet-50 model through a series of convolutional layers, ReLU activation, and pooling to produce output in the final convolutional layer. Next, Score-CAM utilises the feature maps from the final layer by assigning weights ($w_1 \ldots w_n$) based on the contribution of each feature map to the prediction. These weights are then combined and passed through a ReLU activation function to produce a heatmap that highlights the areas of the DBT image that are most influential in the classification of both benign and malignant tumour types.

3) LIME: Local Interpretable Model-Agnostic Explanations is an XAI method that locally explains black-box model predictions by generating synthetic data around an instance through random perturbation, predicting it again with the original model, and then training a simple model, such as linear regression, to determine the contribution of each feature. This method is model-agnostic and generates explanations that are appropriate for specific instances; however, it may yield different explanations for the same instance because of the randomness inherent in the process [20]. The results can be seen in Fig. 7.

Fig. 7 shows the flow of the LIME method implementation in this study with a CNN architecture using ResNet-50. The DBT image is processed by the CNN model to obtain an initial prediction, then LIME generates several perturbed samples around the original image. Each sample is re-predicted using the original model, and the results are then weighted based on their level of similarity to the original image. This weighted

data is used to train a simple model that can be interpreted locally, resulting in a visualisation of the areas in the DBT image that most influence the decision to classify benign or malignant tumours.

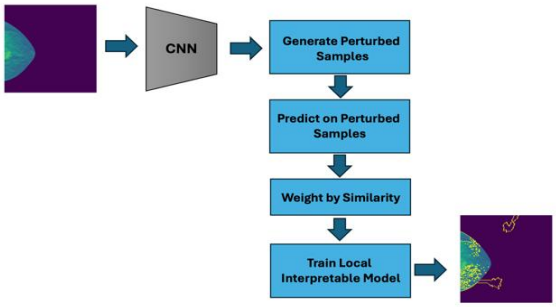

Fig. 7. LIME architecture.

E. XAI Evaluation Metrics

The evaluation of heatmap quality in this study was conducted using two quantitative metrics, namely deletion AUC and insertion AUC, which are commonly used to assess the performance of the XAI method [21]. The following section provides an explanation of the evaluation metrics.

- Deletion AUC: An evaluation metric used to measure the rate of decline in the model's prediction score when pixels deemed most important based on the heatmap are gradually removed from the original image. A lower Deletion AUC value indicates that the resulting importance map has better accuracy in identifying relevant areas. The deletion AUC calculation is shown in Eq. (5):

$$AUC_{del} = \frac{1}{T}\sum_{t=1}^{T} \frac{s_{t-1}^{del} + s_{t}^{del}}{2} \quad (5)$$

- Insertion AUC: An evaluation metric used to measure the rate of improvement in the model's prediction score when important pixels are gradually added to the baseline image (blank or blurred). A higher Insertion AUC value indicates that the heatmap is able to identify important areas more effectively, increasing the confidence of the model's predictions. The insertion AUC calculation is shown in Eq. (6):

$$AUC_{ins} = \frac{1}{T}\sum_{t=1}^{T} \frac{s_{t-1}^{ins} + s_{t}^{ins}}{2} \quad (6)$$

The methodology outlined includes every step, from getting and processing data to using the XAI method and checking how well it works. These steps are meant to make sure that the analysis is done in a planned way and to help talk about the results in the next sections.

IV. Results and Discussion

In this section, the researcher shows what happened when they used and tested the methods from Section III. The results include the use of three XAI methods—Grad-CAM, Score-CAM, and LIME—to show how easy it is to understand the data. They also include quantitative evaluation results using the Deletion AUC and Insertion AUC metrics. The analysis was performed to evaluate the visualisation quality and quantitative efficacy of each method for interpreting the outcomes of DBT image classification using the ResNet-50 architecture.

A. Image Classification Result

Researchers present the training results and confusion matrix of the ResNet-50 classification model to assess the model's performance in distinguishing benign and malignant breast cancer DBT images. The confusion matrix is visualised in Fig. 8, and the model training results are visualised in Fig. 9.

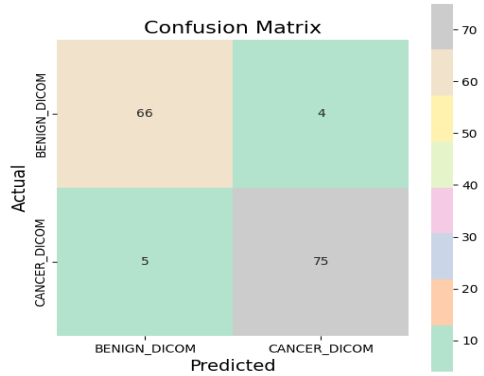

Fig. 8. Confusion matrix ResNet-50.

The graphs in Fig. 8, for accuracy and loss, show that the training is going well, with validation accuracy reaching about 94%. The loss values in the validation data change a bit, but the loss values in the training data keep going down. The classification results' confusion matrix is shown in Fig. 9. It shows that 66 benign images and 75 cancerous images were correctly sorted. The colour mapping method gives more accurate results than other ways of pre-processing.

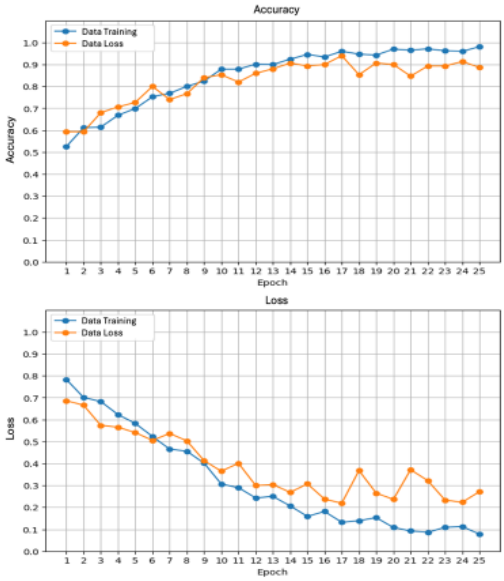

Fig. 9. ResNet-50 training results.

Additionally, performance metrics were evaluated to measure the model's accuracy, recall, precision, and F1-score in classifying. In this test, class 0 represents the benign category, while class 1 represents the malignant category. The performance evaluation results are shown in Table I.

TABLE I. PERFORMANCE EVALUATION OF RESNET-50

Accuracy	Recall		Precision		F1-Score	
	0	1	0	1	0	1
94%	94%	94%	93%	95%	94%	94%

Table I says that the ResNet-50 model, which used colour mapping pre-processing, got 94% accuracy. The values for recall, precision, and F1-score were about the same for both classes. This indicates that the model can consistently and accurately distinguish between benign and malignant breast cancer images.

B. Explainable Artificial Intelligence Results

This section displays the visualization results of Grad-CAM, Score-CAM, and LIME on DBT images, indicating the model's focus areas during classification. Visualizations are presented for both benign and malignant classes, allowing for comparison of the model's attention patterns in each category. The results and explanations are shown in the following figure.

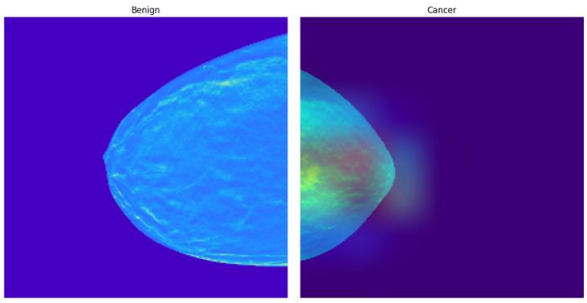

Fig. 10. Grad-CAM result.

Fig. 10 shows the results of Grad-CAM on DBT images for two classes: benign and malignant. In benign images, the colour distribution appears predominantly blue, indicating a low level of model activation in certain areas, resulting in no significant focus on the suspected tissue. Meanwhile, in malignant images, a yellow to red area is visible in the centre, indicating a high level of activation. This indicates that the model is focusing more attention on these areas as indicators of the presence of cancerous lesions.

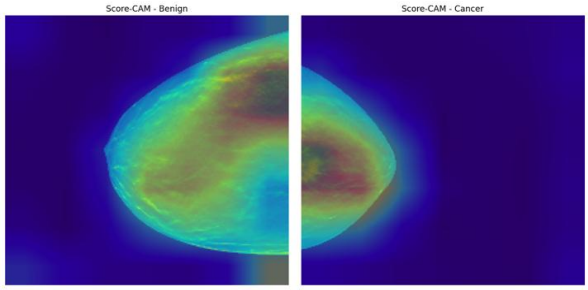

Fig. 11. Score-CAM result.

Fig. 11 presents Score-CAM visualisation results. In benign images, the model's activation areas are fairly evenly distributed with green to yellow colour intensities, indicating a moderate level of focus in some parts of the breast tissue. Meanwhile, in malignant images, the model's focus appears more concentrated in the central area, with yellow-to-red colour intensities, but the activation distribution appears less clear than the Grad-CAM results. This aligns with the metric evaluation results, where Score-CAM performed slightly lower than Grad-CAM.

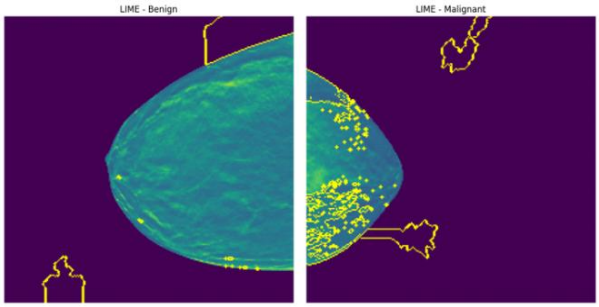

Fig. 12. LIME result.

In Fig. 12, the LIME model highlights the image areas deemed most relevant by the model using yellow borders. In benign images, the highlighted areas are relatively small and scattered across a few points, indicating a lack of indications deemed significant by the model. In contrast, in malignant images, the highlighted areas are much larger and concentrated in specific areas of the breast, indicating that the model identified these areas as strong indicators of abnormalities.

C. XAI Evaluation Metrics Result

The performance of the XAI method was measured quantitatively using the Deletion AUC and Insertion AUC metrics. These two metrics assess the quality of the saliency map generated by the XAI method based on its impact on model predictions. The resulting metrics can be seen in Table II.

TABLE II. XAI MODEL EVALUATION

Model XAI	Benign		Malignant		Mean	
	Deletion AUC	Insertion AUC	Deletion AUC	Insertion AUC	Deletion AUC	Insertion AUC
Grad CAM	0.8241	0.9092	0.2248	0.9064	0.5245	0.9078
Score CAM	0.9089	0.9218	0.1570	0.8152	0.5330	0.8685
LIME	0.9145	0.9559	0.1323	0.0894	0.5234	0.5226

Insertion AUC value (0.9078) and a competitive Deletion AUC value, demonstrating its ability to highlight areas that are truly relevant to the model's decision. Score-CAM provides results close to Grad-CAM on the Deletion AUC metric, but lower on the Insertion AUC. Meanwhile, LIME produces relatively stable values on both metrics but does not exceed the performance of Grad-CAM. These results indicate that Grad-CAM is the most effective XAI method for interpreting DBT image classification models in this study.

D. Discussion

The results of this study provide significant insights into the interpretability of DBT. Even though the images were processed as 2D slices for model training, they still have the complicated quasi-3D features and overlapping tissue structures that are unique to the DBT modality. This modality is very different from regular mammography. The excellent localization of Grad-CAM, which has an Insertion AUC of

0.9078, suggests that it could be used as a "second opinion" tool to help radiologists understand these complicated features. The results also show that gradient-based methods like Grad-CAM are more reliable than perturbation-based methods like LIME, which gave less consistent results on these particular textures. The researcher believes that these results show that high classification accuracy, 94%, in this study needs to be combined with precise feature localization to be useful in future clinical decision support.

V. Conclusion

This study assesses three XAI methodologies—Grad-CAM, Score-CAM, and LIME—for elucidating breast cancer classification in Digital Breast Tomosynthesis (DBT) images, employing a meticulously calibrated ResNet-50 architecture. The model was 94% accurate, and the precision, recall, and F1-score measures were all equal. Visual analysis indicates that Grad-CAM generates the most effective attention maps for lesion regions, while Score-CAM and LIME exhibit greater inconsistency, particularly in cases of cancer. Quantitative analysis corroborates these results, with Grad-CAM attaining the highest Insertion AUC (0.9078). This is why Grad-CAM is the best XAI framework for DBT categorization: it makes it easy and accurate to use AI in medicine.

Limitations and Prospective Research: The study's results are promising, but they are limited by a small dataset of 396 photos and the use of only one model architecture. The research emphasizes 2D-converted slices instead of comprehensive 3D volumetric analysis. Subsequent research ought to employ larger, multi-centre datasets and explore transformer-based architectures or 3D-CNNs to improve the generalizability of XAI performance in breast cancer diagnosis.

Acknowledgment

The authors would like to acknowledge Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta for the financial support of this research and publication.

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Multi-Omics Integration Methods for AI-Based Breast Cancer Molecular Subtypes Classification

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***Abstract*—Breast cancer is one of the most life-threatening and heterogeneous diseases. It contains various molecular subtypes, each subtypes have different characteristics, treatment outcomes, and prognosis. The proper integration of multi-omics data, including genomics, epigenomics, transcriptomics, and proteomics, is very important for enhancing the breast cancer molecular subtypes classification accuracy. Despite the increase in high-dimensional multi-omics data, selecting a suitable integration method for multi-omics data in breast cancer molecular subtypes classification still remains a crucial challenge. This study aims to evaluate and compare, and assess the effectiveness of the multi-omics data integration methods, including exploring the advantages, limitations, and highlighting their performance in terms of accuracy, interpretability, scalability, and biological relevance. Our findings indicate that transformer-based integration methods are increasingly adopted in recent studies due to their superior ability to handle high-dimensional heterogeneous data and capture intricate cross-omics relationships while providing interpretable insights. Additionally, we provide a comparative overview of existing models, discuss key trends over the years, and offer actionable guidance for method selection based on dataset characteristics and research objectives. Finally, we suggest future research directions, emphasizing hybrid deep learning frameworks, graph-based models, and attention mechanisms to enhance predictive accuracy and biological interpretability.**

Keywords*—Breast cancer; classification; integration methods; molecular subtypes; multi-omics

I. Introduction

Breast cancer is one of the major life-threatening and most prevalent cancers affecting women worldwide. Despite the advancements in the treatment and screening process, the heterogeneity of breast cancer still presents a major challenge [1]. The heterogeneity of breast cancer is not only morphological but also rooted deeply at a molecular level, which influences disease progression, therapeutic response and prognosis [2]. As a result, the precise and accurate classification of breast cancer into its molecular subtypes has gained significant attention nowadays.

Molecular subtyping of breast cancer, such as Luminal-A, Luminal-B, HER2-Enriched, Basal-Like and Normal-Like, has emerged from the gene expression profiling [3]. These molecular subtypes reflect diverse oncogenic mechanisms and clinical outcomes, necessitating precise and robust classification frameworks [4]. While traditional subtyping relies basically on mono-omics data, recent studies show that the integration of multi-omics data can significantly enhance the accuracy and reliability of breast cancer molecular subtypes classification [5].

Recently, high-throughput technologies such as multi-omics data have become increasingly accessible, including genomics, epigenomics, transcriptomics, and proteomics [6]. Each multi-omics data type captures different aspects of breast tumor heterogeneity, such as genomics, which reveals DNA-level alterations, epigenomics uncovers regulatory modifications, transcriptomics measures gene activity, and proteomics reflects functional outputs [7]. Integrating the diverse multi-omics data types provides a more comprehensive view of breast cancer, allowing for more accurate subtype classification of breast cancer [7].

Accurate and precise multi-omics data integration for breast cancer molecular subtypes classification is very important, as these molecular subtypes are defined through coordinated alteration across the multiple biological layers rather than by individual molecular signals [8]. The effective and accurate integration of multi-omics data variants allows the identification of meaningful biological patterns by integrating various variations in genes, gene expression profiles, protein level interaction, and epigenetic modification that help in the precise classification of breast cancer molecular subtypes [9]. The precise classification of breast cancer molecular subtypes is very important for enhancing the diagnostic accuracy, personalized treatment plans, and prognostic assessment [10]. Inappropriate or poor integration of multi-omics data in breast cancer molecular subtypes classification can lead to loss of important biological information, noise amplification, or even a misleading molecular subtypes classification of breast cancer [11]. Therefore, the selection of an appropriate method for integrating the multi-omics data is required to maintain the biological relevance as well as the data heterogeneity, which is a key challenge in multi-omics breast cancer molecular subtypes classification research.

Despite the rapid increase in multi-omics breast cancer subtypes classification research, there is still a lack of clear guidance regarding the appropriate multi-omics data integration methods for breast cancer molecular subtypes classification. Existing reviews have provided a broad overview of multi-omics integration methods in various domains. However, there is a lack of focus on multi-omics integration methods specifically for breast cancer molecular subtypes classification.

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To overcome this issue, this review study introduces a breast-cancer focused analytical evaluation of the multi-omics integration methods and compares the three most common integration methods, including concatenation-based, model-based, and transformation-based integration. By evaluating these integration methods using evaluation criteria, including biological interpretability, scalability, and robustness. This study provides a structured and comparative assessment of the integration methods for multi-omics data in breast cancer molecular subtypes classification.

This study evaluates the integration methods used by existing research, as well as provides actionable insights and methodological guidance for researchers in choosing a suitable multi-omics integration method for breast cancer molecular subtypes classification. The key contributions of this review are summarized as follows:

- To explore the existing multi-omics integration methods for breast cancer molecular subtypes classification.
- To provide a clear comparison and evaluation of integration methods for multi-omics data to classify the breast cancer molecular subtypes.
- To highlight the advantages and disadvantages of the integration methods for the multi-omics data, primarily for breast cancer molecular subtypes classification.
- To suggest future suggestions and directions for developing more accurate and useful integration models.

The rest of the study is organized as follows: Section II emphasizes related works, while Section III focuses on the existing integration methods for multi-omics data in breast cancer molecular subtypes classification. Section IV is about the analysis of multi-omics data integration methods for breast cancer molecular subtypes classification. Section V concentrates on the discussion, while Section VI emphasizes the suggestions and recommendations for future research. Lastly, Section VII is the conclusion of the study.

II. Related Works

Multi-omics integration methods are widely explored to enhance disease characterization and subtype classification by integrating various multi-omics data types and analyzing high-dimensional multi-omics data such as genomics, transcriptomics, epigenomics and proteomics. This section reviews the existing related works on the comparison of multi-omics integration methods for cancer subtypes classification and provides the necessary background and context for understanding current methodological trends and limitations.

Acharya and Mukhopadhyay [12] review various network-based methods based on ML for the integration of multi-omics data in precision oncology, such as clustering and factorization. The study also explores the challenges associated with multi-omics data integration, particularly in the context of network-based integration methods. It also determines the challenges in multi-omics data integration in precision oncology. Similarly, Menyhárt and Győrffy [8] discuss algorithmic frameworks and data integration methods for cancer subtypes, disease mechanism and diagnosis. The study sheds light on both single-omics and multi-omics data integration methods, including the bottom-up and top-down integration methods. It also explains various other integration methods, such as multivariate, statistical, network, fusion-based, similarity-based and correlation-based integration. The study also explores the application of multi-omics data integration methods in various multi-omics data types.

In the same way, Adossa et al. [13] introduce recent developments in the single-cell multi-omics and comprehensively review the existing data integration methods. The study particularly focuses on early, intermediate and late data integration methods, including exploring the conceptual principles and main characteristics of each data integration method. Also, the study determines various tools that are used for the integration methods in single-cell multi-omics data. Moreover, Vahabi and Michailidis [14] provide an overview of multi-omics data integration methods with different statistical approaches, focusing on unsupervised learning tasks, including disease onset prediction, biomarker discovery, disease subtyping and module discovery. The study mainly focuses on unsupervised multi-omics data integration methods, particularly regression-based integration methods, clustering and network-based integration methods. It also elaborates on the working of each data integration method in mono-omics data, such as genomics, epigenomics, and transcriptomics.

Additionally, Cai et al. [15] review ML-based multi-omics data integration methods for cancer, specifically early integration, intermediate integration and late integration methods. It mainly reviews the integration methods working process in different multi-omics datasets. The study also explores various multi-omics data integration tools and their applications. Also, the study determines the strength of each integration method in cancer subtypes classification. Moreover, Subramanian et al. [16] review the multi-omics integration methods, particularly network-based, fusion-based, similarity-based and neighborhood-based integration methods. The study also explores the application of these integration methods in the prediction of biomarkers, diagnostics and driver genes for diseases. It also provides an overview of portals for visualization and interpretation of multi-omics datasets.

Furthermore, Heo et al. [17] provide an overview of the rationale and concepts of multi-omics integration methods in cancer research. The study explores multi-omics integration methods and techniques used to help in the integration process and how the multi-omics integration methods are applied in different cancer subtypes classification, cancer pathophysiology, drug target discovery and clinical decision support. It also determines the latest findings and implications in cancer multi-omics studies. Though enough progress has been made and various research has been conducted on multi-omics integration methods across various cancer types and domains, as shown in Table I. However, there is no existing study that focuses on the multi-omics data integration methods for breast cancer molecular subtypes classification. To overcome this issue, this comparison study introduces a breast cancer-specific multi-omics integration methods that evaluate and compares the existing multi-omics integration methods for multi-omics data in breast cancer molecular subtypes classification.

TABLE I. EXISTING RELATED WORKS ON MULTI-OMICS INTEGRATION

Reference	Objective	Integration Methods				Limitations
		Concatenation-based Integration	Model-based Integration	Transformation-based Integration	Others	
Acharya and Mukhopadhyay [12]	Reviews ML-based integration methods for multi-omics data	✗	✗	✗	✓	Only focus on network-based multi-omics integration methods in precision oncology.
Menyhárt and Győrffy [8]	Explore the multi-omics integration methods with application in cancer research	✗	✗	✗	✓	Focus only on multivariate, statistical, network, fusion-based, similarity-based, and correlation-based integration methods for tumor subtypes, prognosis and diagnosis only.
Adossa, et al. [13]	Explore computational strategies for single-cell multi-omics integration methods	✓	✓	✓	✗	Focus on early, intermediate and late integration methods only for single-cell multi-omics data.
Vahabi and Michailidis [14]	Review unsupervised multi-omics data integration methods for various disease subtyping	✗	✗	✗	✓	Focus only on regression-based, clustering and network-based integration methods in different disease subtyping.
Cai, et al. [15]	Explore the ML-based multi-omics integration methods	✓	✓	✓	✗	Focus only on early integration, intermediate integration and late integration methods in general cancer research.
Subramanian, et al. [16]	Review multi-omics data integration methods and their application in the cancer domain	✗	✗	✗	✓	Focus only on network-based, fusion-based, similarity-based and neighborhood-based integration methods in general cancer.
Heo, et al. [17]	Explore multi-omics data integration methods in cancer research.	✗	✗	✗	✓	Focus only on computation integration methods for cancer subtypes.
Current Study	Compare the multi-omics integration methods for breast cancer molecular subtypes classification	✓	✓	✓	✗	Focus specifically on multi-omics integration methods for breast cancer molecular subtypes classification.

III. INTEGRATION METHODS FOR MULTI-OMICS DATA IN BREAST CANCER MOLECULAR SUBTYPES

The integration of multi-omics data is highly significant as it integrates various biological data types and variants, including genomics (Copy Number Alteration (CNA), Copy Number Variation (CNV), Single Nucleotide Polymorphism (SNP)), epigenomics (DNA-Methylation (DNA-Methyl)), transcriptomics (Messenger RNA (mRNA), MicroRNA (miRNA)) and proteomics (Reverse Phase Protein Array (RPPA)). for evaluating and understanding the mechanism and structure of breast cancer disease [17]. While mono-omics data offer limited information about breast cancer [18]. Multi-omics data integration captures the interaction and relationship among breast cancer molecular subtypes at the molecular level and provides a deeper understanding of breast cancer cellular function [19]. With the help of accurate and proper multi-omics data integration, healthcare professionals can explore the aggressiveness and behavior of breast cancer by classifying molecular subtypes, and also provide information about the potential causes behind breast cancer. Proper integration of multi-omics data variants can also assist in understanding the flow from one omics data layer to another omics layer [16].

One of the main tasks of the multi-omics data in breast cancer is the early classification of molecular subtypes, for instance, classifying the breast cancer based on molecular level, such as Luminal-A, Luminal-B, HER2-Enriched, Basal-Like and Normal-Like [20]. Breast cancer patients' treatment depends on their specific molecular subtype. By properly utilizing the multi-omics data integration methods and considering various levels of the multi-omics data variants, breast cancer molecular subtypes can be accurately classified at the molecular level so that the patients can get better treatment on time [20].

To gain the full potential of multi-omics data for accurate classification of breast cancer molecular subtypes, effective integration methods are important to capture the behavior and aggressiveness of breast cancer based on its molecular level through the integration of various multi-omics data variants. Typically, the three most common and prominent methods are used for multi-omics data integration, including the concatenation-based integration, model-based integration and transformation-based integration, which are discussed in subsections.

A. Concatenation-Based Integration (CBI)

Concatenation-Based Integration (CBI), also known as early integration, is one of the most direct integration methods, as shown in Fig. 1. It directly combines various multi-omics data variants and creates a joint matrix. The CBI method usually does not require comprehensive feature engineering or extensive preprocessing, as all omics features are added to a large input matrix. The joint matrix is delivered into the model for the

classification tasks. In this integration method, a joint matrix is formed by stacking the feature vectors together from various datasets, which creates a single and larger feature vector for each dataset.

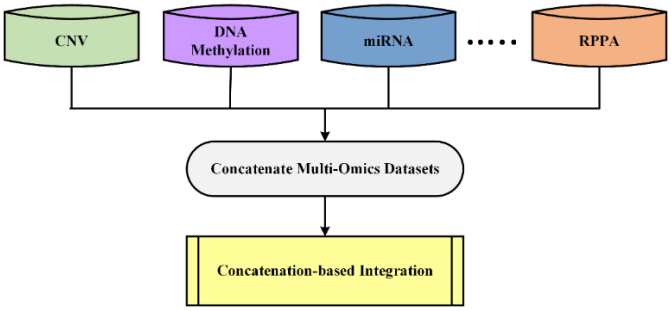

Fig. 1. Concatenation-based integration method.

For the breast cancer molecular subtypes classification, Cristovao et al. [21] use CBI for integrating mRNA and miRNA to train the Feed Forward Neural Network (FFNN) model for classifying breast cancer molecular subtypes. CBI assists the models in learning omics information at once and also captures the non-linear pattern. However, it leads the model to high-dimensional input and affects the model's performance. It indicates that CBI struggles in modelling and capturing the complex relationships and interactions among various omics variants and also leads to reduced interpretability and potential overfitting when labeled data are limited. In the same way, Zeng et al. [22] utilize CNN5 and integrate CNV and mRNA using CBI, where multi-omics data are merged at the input feature level and processed jointly by the CNN5. According to the study, CBI is straightforward, efficient, and avoids complex pre-processing or feature transformation and it is suitable for a lightweight DL model. It affects learning because concatenated data emphasize dominant subtypes (e.g., Luminal A). Hence, CBI omics specific detail can be lost, and also high dimensionality challenges can occur and cannot explicitly capture complex relationships between omics variants.

Furthermore, Rakshit et al. [23] apply SVM and integrate DNA-Methyl, mRNA and miRNA using CBI into a single large dataset. The integrated data is directly processed using Stacked Autoencoder (SAE) to reduce dimensionality before being fed into the classification model. CBI is straightforward and allows unified processing of high-dimensional multi-omics data, but it loses omics-specific signals, introduces noise from irrelevant features, and does not provide a solution to weigh the contributions of different multi-omics data variants.

B. Model-Based Integration (MBI)

Model-Based Integration (MBI), also known as intermediate integration, is a more organized, structured and adaptive integration method as shown in Fig. 2. In the model-based integration method, all multi-omics data variants are first processed by their module and converted into an intermediate form before a final model is created using various intermediate models. Hence, the integration happens to determine the various multi-omics data associated with a specific disease.

For the breast cancer molecular subtypes classification, Lin, et al. [24] propose DeepMO and integrate mRNA, DNA-Methyl and CNV through MBI and their own feature extraction subnetwork, and then fuse the learned high-level patterns into a single integrated representation for classification. The MBI method allows the model to capture complex cross-omics relationships more effectively than the CBI method. However, MBI is sensitive to class imbalance, relies on default hyperparameters, and has higher computational demands due to large feature sets. Similarly, Choi and Chae [25] propose moBRCA-net and integrate DNA-Methyl and miRNA by MBI through separate self-attention modules to learn the importance of individual features. The high-level data are then fused into a single joint representation, which is used by a shared classification network to classify subtypes. MBI preserves biological relationships between omics variants, reduces dimensionality, and enhances interpretability. Hence, MBI relies on feature selection, misses some cross-omics dependencies, and has higher computational requirements.

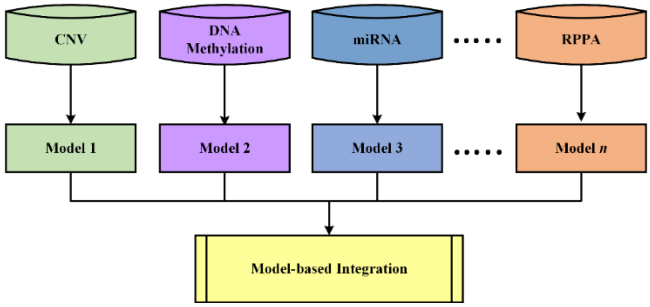

Fig. 2. Model-based integration method.

In the same way, Lupat et al. [26] develop MOANNA and integrate Gene-Exp, CNV and Somatic Mutation through MBI using a semi-supervised AE, transforming the high-dimensional input into a 64-dimensional latent representation. This integrated feature vector is then used by multiple supervised classifiers to classify breast cancer molecular cancer subtypes. By learning compact and informative features, MBI improves classification performance compared to other methods. However, it requires large training datasets and may still face challenges with high-dimensional data. Moreover, Guo et al. [27] propose AGCN and integrate CNV, DNA-Methyl and mRNA through MBI into Protein-Protein Interaction (PPI) network. MBI captures complex cross-omics relationships and gene-level structural information before classification, producing a joint representation for breast cancer molecular subtype classification. Hence, MBI depends on accurate graph construction, which is computationally intensive and less flexible for non-graph data.

Further, Li and Nabavi [28] utilize GNN and CNV, mRNA, and miRNA into a single supra-graph using MBI, where nodes represent genes and edges capture intra- and inter-omics interactions. GNN layers learn hidden representations across the entire graph, and combined with features from a parallel network to form a final integrated vector for classification. The MBI method captures complex biological relationships and improves representation. Hence, it depends on predefined graph connections and requires high computational effort. Furthermore, Tao et al. [29] propose SMOMKL and integrate CNV, DNA-Methyl and mRNA using MBI and transform into

a kernel matrix representing patient similarities. These kernels are combined within the MKL model using learned weights, allowing the integration to occur at the similarity level rather than by raw data concatenation. MBI effectively handles high-dimensionality and improves predictive performance; however, it can be computationally intensive and depends on proper kernel selection.

Moreover, Ren et al. [30] propose MVGNN and integrate DNA-Methyl, mRNA and miRNA using MBI, which is first separately processed through individual GCN branches to extract omics-specific patterns. These patterns are then fused using a multi-view attention mechanism to create a single integrated representation that captures complex cross-omics relationships. MBI effectively models inter-omics correlations and highlights important features. Hence, it requires high-quality graphs and can be computationally demanding. Similarly, Zeng et al. [31] utilize DiffRS-net and use MBI for integrating DNA-Methyl mRNA and miRNA separately to select important features, rather than concatenating raw data directly. The correlated features are fused within a DL using an attention mechanism, which assigns higher importance to more informative features before classification. MBI reduces data dimensionality and better captures cross-omics relationships. Hence, it mainly focuses on linear correlations and requires careful parameter tuning.

Islam et al. [32] apply DNN and use MBI for integrating CAN, Gene-Exp and mRNA. In the main classification model, each omics variant is first processed separately through its own neural network branch to learn high-level features, and these learned features are then merged at an intermediate stage before making the final classification. MBI design allows the model to capture omics-specific patterns first and then learn complementary information from both data variants together. The integrated model achieved better classification performance than models using only a single omics variant. However, it requires a relatively large amount of data and may face challenges related to high dimensionality. In the same way, Li et al. [33] introduce CautionGCN and apply MBI for integrating CNV, DNA-Methyl and RNAseq. By using MBI, each omics variant is first processed through a causal multi-head AE to extract meaningful and low-dimensional features rather than directly concatenating raw data. SNF is then applied to integrate cross-omics relationships at the network level, and a graph convolutional network jointly learns from the fused similarity network and the extracted features to perform classification. MBI design helps capture complex multi-omics interactions and improves robustness to high-dimensional and imbalanced data. Hence, it introduces higher computational complexity and depends on accurate similarity modeling.

C. Transformation-Based Integration (TBI)

Transformation-Based Integration (TBI) is also known as the late integration method. In the TBI method, each multi-omics data layer is transformed into a representable, comparable latent space, such as a graph, kernel similarity matrices, or core matrix. Each multi-omics dataset is transformed into an intermediate form before integrating all the data into a joint transformation. Once the data is transformed, all the multi-omics data layers are integrated into the model using a specific technique, as shown in Fig. 3.

For the breast cancer molecular subtypes classification, Ma and Guan [34] present MOCSC and apply TBI for integrating mRNA, miRNA, DNA-Methyl and CNV. By using TBI, each omics variant is processed separately, where features are first learned using SSDAE and then used by an individual NN to produce separate classification. These omics-specific classifications are finally combined using a VCDN to generate the final classification result. TBI-based fusion improves robustness by integrating information from multiple omics views, but it depends on the quality of each omics-specific model. Similarly, Meshoul et al. [35] present ET and integrate CNV, DNA-Methyl and RNA through TBI, and select features separately for each omics type before combining them. The study showed that the TBI improves the feature relevance and explainability, but it increases complexity and depends heavily on the quality of feature selection. In the same way, Huang et al. [18] propose DSCCN and integrate DNA-Methyl and mRNA using TBI, where each variant is processed separately through its own network to generate independent classification, which are combined at the decision level to produce the final classification. TBI method captures complementary information from each omics type and avoids problems with high-dimensional concatenation. Hence, it may be less effective for underrepresented subtypes and could benefit from additional data or extensions to other omics types.

Further, Zhang et al. [36] propose AET-net and integrate Gene-Exp and DNA-Methyl. Each omics variant is first processed separately and then fused into a shared latent representation using an AE, capturing essential features from both omics variants. This fused feature vector is then processed by a classifier for final classification.

TBI reduces dimensionality, handles high-dimensionality of the data effectively, and models complex dependencies. Hence, it requires careful tuning and overfitting with small datasets. Lastly, Li et al. [37] present MoGCN and integrate CNV, RNAseq and RPPA using TBI. The multi-omics data is first processed through a separate AE to learn a shared latent representation. It then applies SNF to create a unified PSN, and finally, a GCN performs classification using both the joint feature matrix and the fused network. TBI captures nonlinear relationships, improves stability, and achieves high accuracy, though it requires substantial computation and may be sensitive to noise in high-dimensional data.

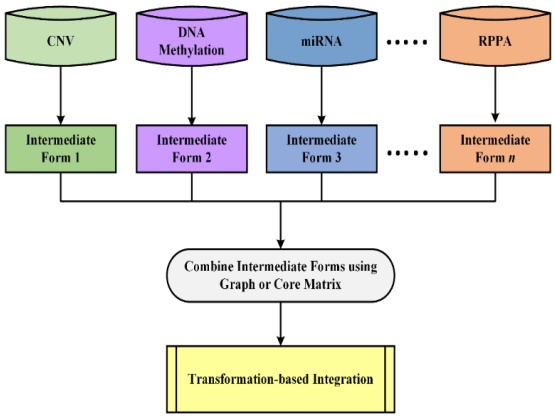

Fig. 3. Transformation-based integration method.

TABLE II. EXISTING STUDIES ON MULTI-OMICS DATA INTEGRATION METHODS FOR BREAST CANCER MOLECULAR SUBTYPES CLASSIFICATION

References	Objective	Proposed Models	Integration Methods	Accuracy	Performance Metrics	Advantages of Integration Method	Limitations of Integration Method
Cristovao, et al. [21]	Breast Cancer Molecular Subtypes Classification	•LR & FFNN	CBI	94.00%	• Accuracy • Precision • Recall	• Effectively handles high-dimensional multi-omics data. • Captures non-linear relationships across omics variants.	• Lacks interpretability in latent representations. • Sensitive to hyperparameter tuning. • May overfit with limited labeled data.
Lin, et al. [24]	Breast Cancer Molecular Subtypes Classification	• DeepMO	MBI	78.20%	• Accuracy • AUC	• Outperforms single-omics-based integration methods. • Handles high-dimensional data effectively.	• Sensitive to class imbalance. • Computational complexity from large feature sets.
Choi and Chae [25]	Breast Cancer Molecular Subtypes Classification	• moBRCA-net	MBI	90.90%	• Accuracy • F1-Score • Precision • Recall	• Enhances performance by preserving biological relationships between omics variants • Learn feature importance effectively. • Improving interpretability and subtype distinction.	• Relies on feature selection to manage high dimensionality and computational costs. • Potentially missing some omics dependencies. • Does not explicitly model cross-omics dependencies, which could be extended in future work.
Islam, et al. [32]	Breast Cancer Molecular Subtypes Classification	• DNN	MBI	79.20%	• Accuracy	• Effectively handles high integration through feature learning • Improve subtype classification over.	• Can exacerbate the curse of dimensionality. • Requires large training data to avoid overfitting.
Lupat, et al. [26]	Breast Cancer Molecular Subtypes Classification	• MOANNA	MBI	85.60%	• F1-Score • Precision • Recall	• Handles high-dimensional multi-omics effectively. • Improves generalization.	• Potential overfitting in large datasets. • Reconstruction loss may not align perfectly with classification.
Ma and Guan [34]	Breast Cancer Molecular Subtypes Classification	• MOCSC	TBI	95.00%	• Accuracy • AUROC • Macro F1 Value • Weighted F1 Value	• Avoids data inconsistency by fusing at the decision level. • Captures cross-omics correlations effectively.	• Dependent on individual classifier quality. • May propagate errors from weak omics models.
Meshoul, et al. [35]	Breast Cancer Molecular Subtypes Classification	• ET	TBI	84.50%	• Accuracy • Accuracy • AUROC • F1-Score • Macro F1 Value • Precision • Recall • ROC_AUC • Weighted F1 Value	• Improves feature relevance across omics. • Enhances explainability. • flexible with early/late schemes for different data handling.	• A multi-stage process increases complexity. • Dependent on the feature selection quality. • Computationally expensive. • Does not work well with smaller datasets.
Zeng, et al. [22]	Breast Cancer Molecular Subtypes Classification	• CNN5	CBI	90.02%	• F1-Score • Precision • Recall	• Handles imbalanced data via weighted loss; direct learning on combined features.	• Potential loss of omics-specific patterns. • Exacerbates dimensionality issues. • Lacks explicit handling of inter-omics correlations.
Guo, et al. [27]	Breast Cancer Molecular Subtypes Classification	• AGCN Variants: SEGCN & cAGCN	MBI	89.42%	• Accuracy • AUC • MCC	• Effectively captures relational dependencies between genes across omics layers. • Enables biologically meaningful fusion by	• Relies on accurate graph construction, which may introduce bias if prior knowledge is incomplete. • Computationally intensive for large-scale graphs;

References	Objective	Proposed Models	Integration Methods	Accuracy	Performance Metrics	Advantages of Integration Method	Limitations of Integration Method
						incorporating prior structural relationships.	• Lack of flexibility in handling non-graphical data representations.
Huang, et al. [18]	Breast Cancer Molecular Subtypes Classification	• DSCCN	TBI	90.60%	• Accuracy • AUC • F1-Score	• Successfully identifies inter-omics associations to capture complementary information and reduce data heterogeneity. • Outperforms concatenation-based, ensemble-based, and knowledge-driven methods.	• Data imbalance in breast cancer datasets reduces accuracy for minority subtypes. • Future extensions are needed for non-coding omics and data augmentation techniques.
Li, et al. [37]	Breast Cancer Molecular Subtypes Classification	• MoGCN	TBI	89.80%	• Accuracy • F1-Score	• Captures nonlinear relationships and improves stability effectively.	• Relies on unsupervised AE and SNF. • Intensity for high-dimensional data. • Potential noise interference in multi-omics integration.
Li, et al. [33]	Breast Cancer Molecular Subtypes Classification	• CautionGCN	MBI	89.18%	• Accuracy • F1-Score • Precision • Recall	• Reduces bias and enhances robustness to imbalanced data. • Captures multi-omics interactions via graphs.	• Complexity in causal inference • May introduce assumptions. • Dependent on accurate similarity networks. • Computationally demanding.
Li and Nabavi[28]	Breast Cancer Molecular Subtypes Classification	• Multi-Omic GNN	MBI	86.40%	• Accuracy • F1-Score	• Incorporates biological knowledge into graph structures for better representation	• Dependent on predefined graph connections, which may miss unknown relations. • Higher complexity in graph construction. • Potential bias from incomplete biological knowledge in edges.
Tao, et al. [29]	Breast Cancer Molecular Subtypes Classification	• SMOMKL	MBI	87.00%	• Accuracy • AUC	• Learns optimal kernel combinations for omics. • Improves predictive power through kernel fusion.	• Kernel selection is critical and may miss non-linear interactions. • Computationally expensive for large kernels.
Zhang, et al. [36]	Breast Cancer Molecular Subtypes Classification	• AET-net	TBI	90.00%	• Accuracy • F1-Score	• Reduces dimensionality while capturing complex dependencies through Transformation attention, leading to effective multi-omics integration.	• Sensitive to hyperparameter tuning, which can affect integration quality. • Potential for overfitting in smaller datasets.
Ren, et al. [30]	Breast Cancer Molecular Subtypes Classification	• MVGNN	MBI	91.80%	• Accuracy • AUC • F1-Score • Precision • Sensitivity • Specificity	• Captures inter-omics correlations via graphs; attention weights important features. • Handles heterogeneous data structures.	• Relies on graph quality and similarity networks • Computational overhead in multi-view fusion.
Zeng, et al. [31]	Breast Cancer Molecular Subtypes Classification	• DiffRS-net	MBI	91.30%	• Accuracy • F1-Score • Precision • Recall	• Detects correlations across multiple omics variants. • Reduces dimensionality while preserving associations • Enhances interpretability.	• Assumes linear relationships, may miss non-linear interactions. • Sparsity tuning is sensitive. • Lacks dynamic weighting of views.

References	Objective	Proposed Models	Integration Methods	Accuracy	Performance Metrics	Advantages of Integration Method	Limitations of Integration Method
Rakshit, et al. [23]	Breast Cancer Molecular Subtypes Classification	• SVM	CBI	93.50%	• Accuracy	• Straightforward combination of heterogeneous data • Enables unified processing in a deep model • Reduces the preprocessing complexity.	• May miss omics-specific signals in high-dimensional space. • Increases the risk of noise from irrelevant features. • Lacks a mechanism to weigh different omics contributions.

Table II shows the comparison of existing studies on multi-omics integration, highlighting the utilization of integration methods from a CBI to MBI and TBI. It summarizes the objectives, proposed models for the classification, the type of integration method used, and their reported performance metrics. and highlighting the advantages and limitations of each integration method used in breast cancer molecular subtypes classification.

IV. Analysis of Multi-Omics Data Integration Methods for Breast Cancer Molecular Subtypes Classification

All three multi-omics data integration methods are used by the existing studies for breast cancer molecular subtypes classification. Each integration method has its own characteristics, strengths and limits, as shown in Table III.

Table III provides a practical guideline for selecting a suitable integration method for multi-omics data in breast cancer molecular subtypes classification, based on aspects such as data type, sample size, interpretability, and computational requirements from the observation of the existing studies. According to the findings from the existing studies, CBI is appropriate for both mono-omics and multi-omics data, particularly when the dataset is small to medium in size. CBI is straightforward to implement, computationally light, and highly interpretable, making it ideal when simplicity and clarity are important. It works best for combining a limited number of omics variants, where the primary goal is to preserve interpretability and generate easily understandable insights. While MBI is specifically designed for medium to large multi-omics datasets and is appropriate for medium interpretability and computational complexity. Lastly, TBI provides a balance between predictive performance and interpretability, handling high-dimensional omics variants more effectively. It is especially designed for large multi-omics datasets and is suitable for high-dimensional data. It can easily capture more complex interactions and relationships among different omics data types and variants, and is more appropriate for a graph-based architecture.

TABLE III. Comparison of Multi-Omics Data Integration Methods for Breast Cancer Molecular Subtypes Classification

Integration Methods	Datasets Suitability	Interpretability	Computational Complexity	Strenghts	Weaknesses
Concatenation-Based Integration (CBI): Combines all omics data into one large input matrix without much preprocessing.	Small to Medium	High	Low	• Simple, fast and straightforward. • No preprocessing is required as all omics features are integrated into a large input matrix. • Uses a full feature set. • Handle all omics data types in a single joint matrix. • Produces continuous data, which makes it easier for various ML models to analyze.	• Ignores inter-omics relationships. • Increasing the number of features together increases dimensionality. • Sensitive to noise/missing data, high-dimensional.
Model-Based Integration (MBI): Learns features separately using sub-models, then merges the learned representation	Medium to Large	Medium	Medium	• Captures omics-specific relationships and interactions.	• Complex to design. • Cannot handle heterogeneous data. • Perform feature selection before integrating omics data, which can lead to the loss of important features. • Require careful hypermeter tuning for each sub-model.
Transformation-Based Integration (TBI): Converts omics data into a shared latent space (e.g., graphs), then integrates.	Large	Low to Medium	High	• Suitable for high-dimensional data. • Capture more complex interactions and relationships among different omics data types. • Most common integration data method. • Easily deal with data heterogeneity. • Suitable for graph-based architecture. • Include the statistical frameworks, such as core-based integration and graph-based semi-supervised learning, for developing a model.	• Transformation can cause information loss, depending on design quality. • Challenges in transforming data into an intermediate form. • Kernel methods are computationally extensive.

Overall, Table III serves as a decision-support guideline for researchers, guiding them in choosing the most appropriate integration methods for omics data, particularly in breast cancer subtypes classification based on the specific characteristics of their dataset, research objectives, and available computational resources.

V. Discussion

Existing studies have increasingly explored CBI, MBI, and TBI methods for multi-omics data analysis in breast cancer molecular subtypes classification. Each integration method has its own strengths and limitations in capturing inter-omics relationships, managing data dimensionality, and improving classification performance.

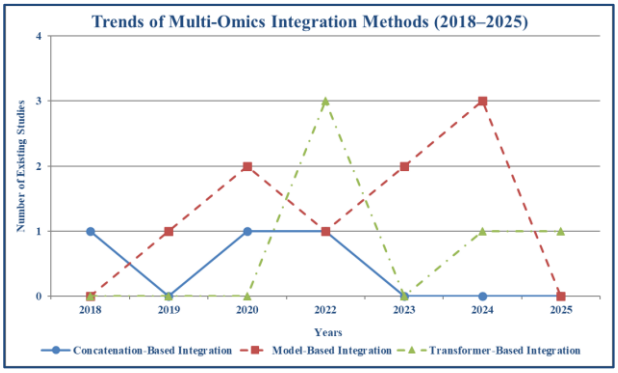

Fig. 4. Trends of multi-omics integration methods in breast cancer molecular subtypes classification.

Fig. 4 shows trends in the use of multi-omics integration methods for breast cancer molecular subtype classification from 2018 to 2025. Based on the graph, it is clear that early studies predominantly use CBI methods due to their simplicity and ease of implementation, while MBI methods became increasingly popular from 2019 onward, reflecting their ability to capture inter-omics interactions and improve predictive performance. Additionally, TBI emerged in 2022 and shows a growing adoption trend, highlighting its superior capacity to handle high-dimensional heterogeneous data, model complex relationships across omics layers, and provide attention-driven interpretability. This finding shows a clear shift in the field toward leveraging deep learning architectures for more accurate and biologically informative breast cancer molecular subtype classification, indicating that TBI methods are becoming a preferred approach for multi-omics integration in recent studies.

Fig. 5 demonstrates the comparison of CBI, MBI, and TBI integration methods for multi-omics data in breast cancer molecular subtypes classification based on the accuracy of the models. For CBI, the minimum accuracy 90.20% is shown by CNN5 with CBI. While SVM shows a medium accuracy of 93.50% with CBI, and FFNN achieves a maximum accuracy of 94.00% with CBI. Models with CBI show stable and strong accuracy, but their performance mainly depends on integrating different multi-omics variants into a joint matrix directly, which may increase data dimensionality and complexity. For MBI, the performance varies more widely. DeepMo and DNN with MBI shows minimum accuracy of 78.20%, indicating weaker performance. Models such as MOANNA, MoGNN, and SMOMKL with MBI show medium accuracy of 85.60%, 86.40% and 87.00% demonstrate more good performance. The models, including MVGNN, DiffRS-net, and moBRCA-net with MBI, achieve significant accuracy of 91.80%, 91.30%, and 90.90%, showing that MBI can perform well when advanced models are used. For TBI, MoGCN attained 89.80% with TBI represents the minimum accuracy, while AET-net and DSCCN with TBI achieve accuracy of 90.00% and 90.60% show medium performance. While the best results are achieved by ET and MOCSC, with TBI attaining an accuracy of 95.00%, which is the maximum accuracy in the entire comparison.

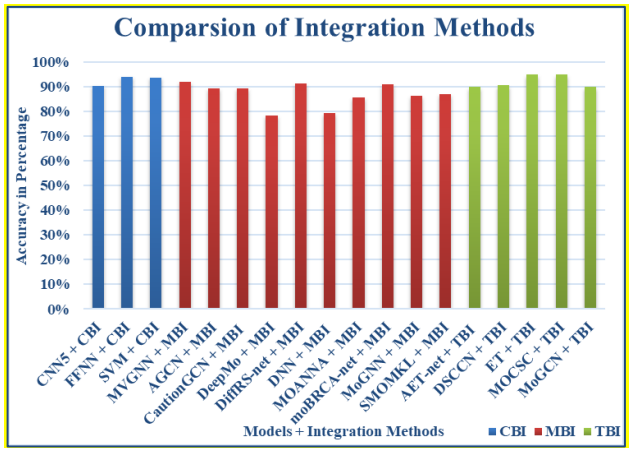

Fig. 5. Comparison of multi-omics integration methods in breast cancer molecular subtypes classification.

Overall, TBI is the strongest and most effective integration method, as it consistently achieves high accuracy and includes the best-performing models. This indicates that transforming multi-omics data into a shared representation before integration is more effective for breast cancer molecular subtypes classification than direct concatenation or model-level integration.

As per the analysis of the existing studies, the CBI method is widely used due to its simplicity and ease of implementation. However, this integration method completely ignores the complex interaction and relationships among the multi-omics data types, which leads to the potential loss of the most relevant information. Additionally, the CBI method suffers from high dimensionality, increases computational complexity, overfitting risks, and is sensitive to missing values or noise. Most of the existing studies highlight that the concatenation-based method is easy to implement. However, it does not fully capture the heterogeneity and hierarchical nature of the multi-omics data. Furthermore, another main disadvantage of this method is that it frequently increases the number of features in the joint matrix, which further increases the dimensionality of the multi-omics data.

MBI provides a more adaptive and structured approach. It allows capturing the omics-specific interactions and relationships, thereby offering more detailed biological insights. However, the model-based integration method is relatively complex to design and also computationally expensive, particularly when dealing with high-dimensional multi-omics data. Furthermore, domain-specific modeling and hypermeter tuning are required for model-based integration, which further increases the proposed model complexity.

Lastly, TBI has been less frequently used in the existing studies, particularly for breast cancer molecular subtypes classification. But it has several advantages, including the potential to handle high-dimensional heterogeneous data types, capture both inter-omics and intra-omics interaction and relationships and provide more structured insights through the graph and attention mechanism. Although the TBI is not used frequently in breast cancer molecular subtypes classification according to our observation, it has gained significant attention in other cancer domains because of showing superior performance in modeling long-range dependencies and dynamic relationships between features. TBI allows modular processing of each multi-omics data type while also enabling meaningful cross-model interaction, which makes it suitable for integrative analysis.

While the CBI method remains popular due to its simplicity, the MBI offers enhanced interpretability and biological relevance, and the TBI method has great potential for next-generation multi-omics data analysis. As the multi-omics research continues to evolve, combining the strengths of the multi-omics integration methods could lead to a more robust and accurate classification of breast cancer molecular subtypes, eventually contributing to improve the diagnosis, prognosis and personalized treatment strategies.

VI. Suggestions and Future Directions

Based on the analysis of existing multi-omics integration methods for breast cancer molecular subtype classification, several opportunities for future research exist. While current methods, including CBI, MBI, and TBI, have demonstrated significant progress, challenges remain in balancing accuracy, interpretability, scalability, and robustness to incomplete data. The following section outlines key directions and practical suggestions to advance the development of more effective and reliable multi-omics integration strategies.

A. Development of Hybrid Integration Methods

Future studies should explore hybrid approaches that combine the strengths of CBI, MBI, and TBI integration methods. Such integration methods could leverage the simplicity and efficiency of CBI, the interpretability of MBI, and the high-dimensional, attention-driven capabilities of TBI. Hybrid models may provide improved classification accuracy while maintaining biological interpretability and scalability.

B. Enhancing TBI Models

TBI has shown great promise in capturing complex intra- and inter-omics relationships. Future work should focus on optimizing these methods for efficiency and robustness, including techniques to handle class imbalance, reduce computational costs, and incorporate multi-modal biological knowledge. This could enable TBI methods to generalize better across diverse multi-omics datasets and multiple omics variants.

C. Robust Integration for Missing or Partial Omics Data

Many current integration methods assume complete multi-omics data variants, which is often not feasible in real-world studies. Future research should develop integration methods, such as multi-view transformers or imputation-enhanced models, to robustly integrate incomplete or partially missing omics data. This will increase the applicability of multi-omics integration in clinical and large-scale cohort studies.

D. Focus on Interpretability and Biological Insight

While TBI and MBI methods provide high accuracy, their interpretability can still be limited. Future research should emphasize methods that not only classify breast cancer molecular subtypes accurately but also provide interpretable outputs, highlighting key molecular features, pathways, and cross-omics interactions. Attention mechanisms, feature selection, or graph-based interpretability techniques can support this goal.

E. Scalability to High-Dimensional Multi-Omics Datasets

As multi-omics datasets grow in size and complexity, there is a need for methods that can scale efficiently without sacrificing performance. Future studies should focus on dimensionality reduction, computational optimizations, and adaptive integration methods that can handle large, heterogeneous datasets while maintaining predictive accuracy.

VII. Conclusion

In terms of multi-omics data, the integration methods include concatenation-based, model-based, and transformation-based integration. These integration methods allow the discovery of hidden patterns in the multi-omics data. This study evaluates the multi-omics data integration methods for classifying the breast cancer molecular subtypes. The concatenation-based integration is straightforward, fast, and simple, and it also does not require preprocessing. However, CBI ignores the inter-omics interaction and also increases the number of features in the joint matrix. Model-based integration captures the interaction and relationship among multi-omics data types. However, MBI is more complex to design and it also cannot handle the high-dimensional heterogeneous data. The transformation-based integration appears to be a more promising alternative, particularly for the multi-omics data to classify the breast cancer molecular subtypes, as it not only handles the high-dimensional data heterogeneity effectively but also captures more complex interactions. Each method has distinct advantages and is suitable for different research scenarios. Simple or concatenation-based models are recommended for small datasets; transformation-based or model-based integration methods support high interpretability. Furthermore, transformation-based integration methods also handle large heterogeneous datasets, and transformation-based multi-view models are effective for datasets with missing modalities.

Overall, the findings show that each multi-omics data integration method for breast cancer molecular subtypes classification provides various advantages and limitations. However, the selection of the multi-omics integration methods totally varies on the combination of multi-omics data types, variants and nature of the proposed model for the classification of breast cancer molecular subtypes. Hence, these insights provide practical guidance for selecting appropriate multi-omics integration methods based on study objectives, data characteristics, and computational constraints, offering structured guidelines for future AI-driven research in breast cancer subtype classification.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This study was supported by the Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (FRGS/1/2023/ICT02/UTM/03/1) from the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education.

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Environmental Assessment of Chemicals: Artificial Intelligence for Predicting Persistence, Bioaccumulation, and Toxicity Properties

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Abstract*—Early assessment of the persistence, bioaccumulation, and toxicity (PBT) of chemicals is a major challenge for environmental protection and international regulatory frameworks. The objective of this study is to compare the effectiveness of three graph-based deep learning architectures—a graph neural network (GNN), a message passing network (MPNN), and a graph attention network (GAT)—for the binary classification of molecules as PBT or non-PBT.We compiled a regulatory dataset comprising 5,130 molecules annotated from public sources, such as ECHA and international POP lists. Molecular graphs were generated from SMILES using RDKit. The three models were implemented in PyTorch Geometric with homogeneous hyperparameters. The experiments were conducted with a scaffold split ratio of 80/10/10 and 10-fold cross-validation. Performance was evaluated using accuracy, AUC-ROC, and F1-score. Interpretability was examined using GAT model attention maps and atomic contribution analysis. The MPNN model achieves the best overall performance (Accuracy = 0.92; ROC-AUC = 0.94; F1 = 0.91), followed by GAT (Accuracy = 0.89; ROC-AUC = 0.93). The basic GNN performs less well (Accuracy = 0.82; ROC-AUC = 0.89). The GAT model provides more detailed atomic explanations thanks to attention weights, while the MPNN stands out for its predictive accuracy. The dataset includes annotations from heterogeneous experimental sources, which may introduce noise into the labels. The models rely solely on 2D graphs, without 3D conformational information. MPNN models can accelerate PBT pre-screening and help prioritize substances for experimental testing. GATs provide useful interpretations for understanding the substructures associated with PBT properties. This study provides the first reproducible and systematic comparison of GNN, MPNN, and GAT models applied to a large regulatory dataset dedicated to PBT, analyzing both performance and interpretability. These results highlight the potential of graph-based QSAR models for regulatory PBT screening and environmental risk assessment.

Keywords*—PBT prediction; persistence; bioaccumulation; toxicity; QSAR models; cheminformatics; environmental risk assessment

I. Introduction

The persistence, bioaccumulation, and toxicity (PBT) of chemicals are fundamental criteria in environmental risk assessment and international regulatory processes such as REACH. Early identification of hazardous substances still relies heavily on in vivo and in vitro experiments, which are costly, time-consuming, and difficult to scale up to thousands of emerging compounds. This growing need for robust predictive methods has fueled the rise of machine learning applied to molecular structures, particularly graph models, which are capable of directly capturing the structured nature of molecules. These approaches now offer a promising alternative for accelerating the screening of PBT substances, while improving the reproducibility and transparency of assessments.

Recent advances in molecular modeling have been largely driven by Graph Neural Networks (GNNs), which learn structural representations by treating molecules as atomic graphs. Several studies have demonstrated their effectiveness in predicting different forms of toxicity, including acute toxicity, ecotoxicological effects, and liver toxicity [1], [2], [3], [4], [5]. Modern GNN architectures, including graph convolutions, equivariant networks, and hierarchical mechanisms, have significantly improved predictive performance for complex properties such as systemic toxicity and endocrine disruption [6], [7], [8], [9], [10].

At the same time, Message Passing Neural Networks (MPNN) have introduced explicit information propagation between atoms and bonds, enabling the capture of finer structural patterns and improving the prediction of properties related to ADMET, liver toxicity, or xenobiotic metabolism [11], [12], [13], [14], [15], [16], [17], [18]. Several studies show that MPNNs frequently outperform simpler models, particularly for properties sensitive to local atomic interactions and contextual effects [16], [17], [18].

Graph Attention Networks (GAT) and graph transformers represent a major evolution, introducing attention mechanisms

capable of assigning differentiated weights to atomic neighbors based on their chemical importance. These models not only offer better performance but also increased interpretability, making it possible to identify molecular substructures that contribute significantly to toxicity [19], [20], [21], [22]. Recent work shows that atomic attention is an essential tool in a regulatory context, where scientific justification of predictions is indispensable [23], [24].

In addition, approaches extending these models through pre-training, integration of quantum properties, multitasking, or fusion with knowledge from toxicological databases have shown significant potential for stabilizing predictions and improving generalization to unseen substances [7], [20], [25], [26]. Finally, some work specifically targets environmental and ecotoxicological toxicity, a key area for PBT substances, by modeling the complex relationships between molecules, aquatic species, and environmental parameters [27], [28].

Despite these advances, several limitations remain clearly identified in recent literature:

- Most studies focus on generic datasets (Tox21, ADMET), which are rarely adapted to the specific requirements of PBT classification.
- Few studies offer a balanced and reproducible comparison between the main families of graph models (GNN, MPNN, GAT).
- Work integrating both predictive performance and atomic interpretability remains limited, even though these elements are essential for regulatory frameworks.
- No recent study provides a comparative assessment based on a consolidated regulatory dataset specifically dedicated to PBT properties.

In this context, this study aims to provide a rigorous and reproducible evaluation of graph-based deep learning models for the prediction of persistence, bioaccumulation, and toxicity (PBT) properties of chemical substances. Specifically, we compare three representative molecular graph architectures: a classical Graph Neural Network (GNN), a Message Passing Neural Network (MPNN), and a Graph Attention Network (GAT), using a consolidated regulatory dataset dedicated to PBT classification. The novelty of this work does not lie in proposing a new architecture, but rather in the regulatory grounding of the dataset, the systematic and reproducible evaluation protocol, and the joint analysis of predictive performance and atomic-level interpretability. This study, therefore, provides new insights into the suitability of different graph models for regulatory PBT screening tasks.

The remainder of this study is organized as follows: Section II describes the dataset, preprocessing steps, and model architectures. Section III presents the experimental setup and evaluation protocol and reports the quantitative results; Section IV discusses the interpretability and regulatory implications of the findings; and Section V concludes the study with a summary of key contributions and limitations.

II. Methods

A. Dataset

The dataset used in this study brings together molecular information in the form of SMILES strings annotated with a binary label (PBT/Non-PBT). This dataset was constructed to accurately represent the regulatory criteria of persistence, bioaccumulation, and toxicity, in accordance with European (REACH, ECHA) and international (Stockholm Convention) requirements. A complete description of the origin, characteristics, and processing of the data is provided below to ensure the reproducibility of the study.

A total of 6,072 molecules were collected from major regulatory and scientific sources (Fig. 1). The dataset includes 2,970 non-PBT substances, composed of 2,887 molecules registered with ECHA [28], 48 substances evaluated by experts in PBT/vPvB assessments [24], and 35 compounds from the ECHA PBT assessment list [25]. In addition, 3,102 PBT or POP substances were integrated, including 2,785 potential PBT substances identified by Strempel et al. [23], and 317 confirmed PBT substances originating from multiple regulatory sources, namely ECHA PBT/vPvB assessments [24], the ECHA PBT assessment list [25], the ECHA list of substances subject to POPs regulation [26], and the updated POP list from the Stockholm Convention [27], [29], [30], [31], [32],[33]. All these sources represent authoritative references in the regulatory evaluation of hazardous chemicals, ensuring the robustness and reliability of the final consolidated dataset.

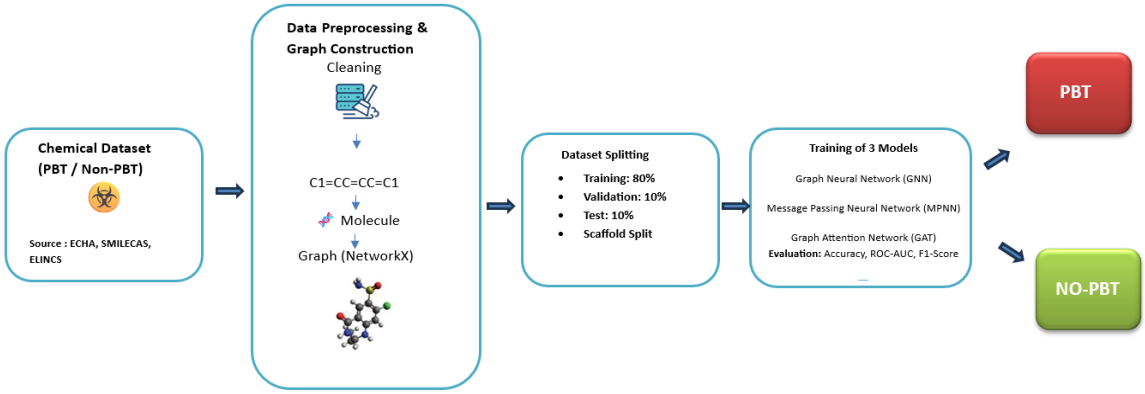

Fig. 1. Workflow for predicting persistence, bioaccumulation, and toxicity properties. The diagram illustrates the main steps: data collection from regulatory sources, preprocessing and construction of molecular graphs, division of the dataset, and training of the three models (GNN, MPNN, and GAT) for classifying substances as PBT or Non-PBT.

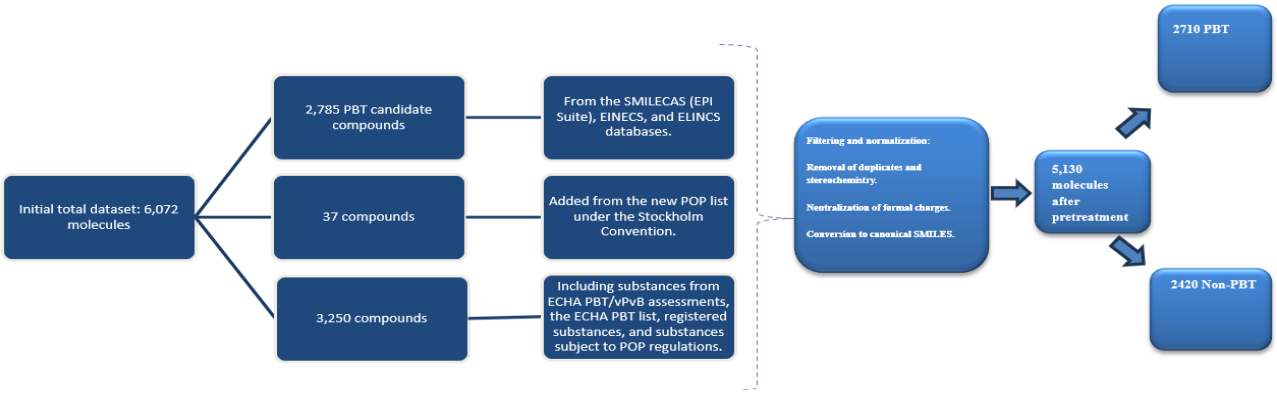

Fig. 2. Collection and processing of PBT-related chemicals.

Fig. 2 illustrates the construction of the regulatory PBT dataset, showing the integration of chemical compounds from multiple authoritative sources and the successive filtering and preprocessing steps leading to the final curated dataset used in this study.

B. Filtering and Pre-processing Procedure

A standardized harmonization procedure was applied to ensure the quality and consistency of molecular data. When a SMILES contained multiple fragments, only the main (largest) fragment was retained. Formal charges were systematically neutralized, and molecules were converted to canonical SMILES. Duplicates and stereochemical details were removed to avoid irrelevant structural variations. At the end of this process, a final set of 5,130 molecules was obtained, comprising 2,710 PBT compounds and 2,420 non-PBT compounds. All preprocessing operations were performed in Python 3.8 using an RDKit script, in accordance with ECHA technical recommendations [34].

C. Data Partitioning

To ensure rigorous and reproducible evaluation, the final dataset was divided into three distinct subsets: 80% of the data was used for model training, 10% for hyperparameter tuning (validation), and the remaining 10% for final testing. The partitioning was performed in a stratified manner, ensuring that the PBT/Non-PBT ratio was maintained in each of the subsets, thereby reducing potential biases related to class imbalance.

D. Molecular Characteristics

Although the PBT and Non-PBT classes are relatively similar in size, a slight imbalance remains in the final dataset. To prevent the model from favoring the majority class, a class weight was incorporated into the loss function during training. No oversampling or under sampling techniques were used in order to preserve the structural integrity of the molecules and avoid any artificial transformation of the examples.

To illustrate the process of converting chemical structures into graphs that can be used by GNN, MPNN, and GAT models, Fig. 3 shows different representations generated from a molecule from the dataset. Fig. 3(a) shows the 2D structure with explicit identification of atoms and bonds, as extracted and cleaned after RDKit preprocessing. Fig. 3(b) illustrates the optimized 3D geometry, allowing visualization of the overall spatial organization of the molecule. Fig. 3(c) represents the structure as a molecular graph where each atom corresponds to a node and each bond to an edge, in accordance with the input format used for graph-based models. Finally, Fig. 3(d) shows attentional mechanisms, illustrating the ability of GAT models to identify substructures potentially responsible for a molecule's PBT behavior.

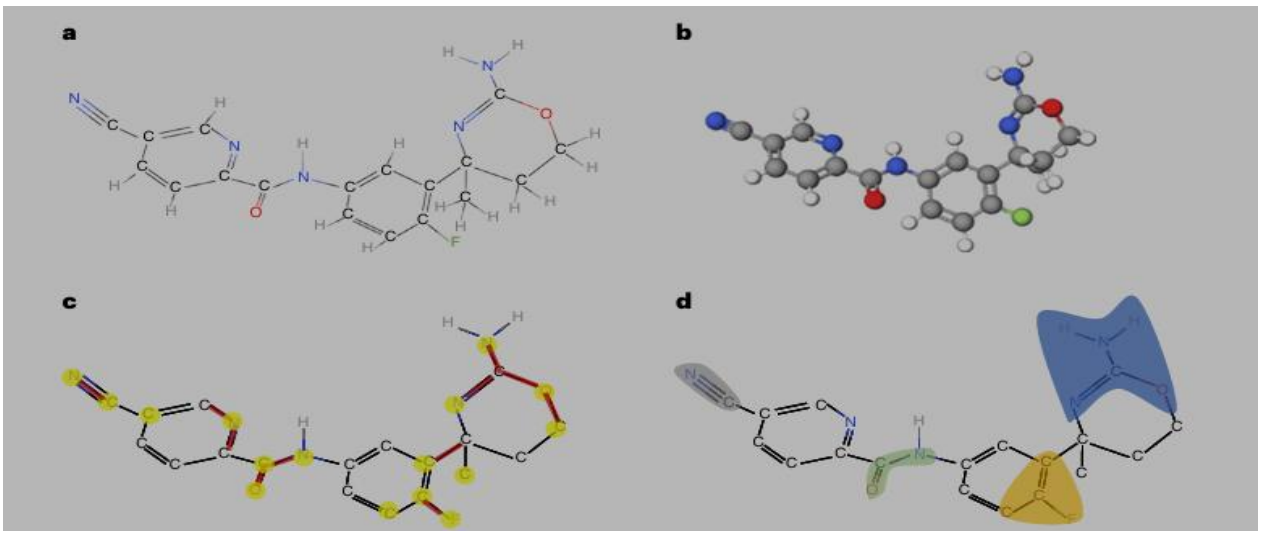

Fig. 3. Molecular representations generated for the graph construction stage.

E. Detailed Model Architecture

The architecture of the GNN model is based on a deep ResGCN network integrating residual connections as well as a Jumping Knowledge mechanism allowing to efficiently extract intermediate representations from several layers. The model has five successive GCN layers with hidden dimensions of 256, 256, 256, 128 and 128 neurons. Residual connections stabilize learning in deep graphs while the Jumping Knowledge mechanism consolidates representations of different levels by combining them through concatenation. The activation used is a GELU function, particularly suitable for complex architectures, and a dropout of 0.25 is applied to limit overfitting. The aggregation of graphs is ensured by a Global Attention Pooling mechanism allowing to weight different molecular regions according to their structural importance.

The MPNN model used follows a Directed Message Passing Neural Network (D-MPNN) architecture, an advanced version of MPNN that conveys information in an oriented way along chemical bonds. This approach improves the representation of atomic patterns responsible for PBT toxicity and properties. The model includes six successive stages of directed propagation, with messages of size 300 and hidden layers of 300 then 200 units. Updates are performed at the edges and nodes through a GRU-like mechanism, which allows for efficient integration of chemically relevant dependencies. The final aggregation of graphs relies on a Set2Set module that captures high-level interactions between atoms. Activation is provided by ReLU and a dropout of 0.3 is applied to reduce the risk of overfitting.

The GAT architecture is based on the GATv2 model, an improved version of the Graph Attention Network using a more expressive attention mechanism. It consists of three successive layers, each comprising several heads of attention: eight heads in the first two layers and four in the last one. Each head learns to weight atomic neighbors according to their chemical relevance, which improves the interpretability of the model and allows identifying molecular substructures responsible for PBT effects. The hidden dimensions are set to 128 per head and residual connections stabilize the propagation of gradients. Aggregation is carried out by means of hierarchical pooling based on attention, allowing to capture the relative importance of different structural levels. An ELU activation function is used to improve training stability and gradient flow, and a global dropout of 0.4 is applied to both the layers and attention weights.

The three models share a common final head consisting of a multilayer perceptron with two successive dense layers of 256 and 64 neurons. The output is activated by a sigmoid function allowing to obtain a binary classification probability. Weight decay regularization is added to improve generalization.

F. Training Hyperparameters

Model optimization was performed using the AdamW optimizer, chosen for its ability to better control regularization and stability of learning in deep architectures. The initial learning rate used is 0.0007, dynamically adjusted by a Cosine Annealing scheduler with periodic restarts, which allows for more efficient exploration of the parameter space. The batch size is set to 32, while the training duration extends over 200 epochs with an early stopping mechanism when the validation performance stops improving after 25 epochs. Gradients are constrained by clipping to 2.0 in order to avoid the common gradient explosions in deep graph models. L2 regularization is applied with a weight of 1e-4.

Each model also has its own specific hyperparameters. The ResGCN-JK uses hidden sizes of 256, 256, 256, 128 and 128, a Jumping Knowledge mechanism in concatenation mode and a slightly higher learning rate (0.001). The D-MPNN exploits a message size of 300, a depth of six propagation steps, a dropout of 0.3 and a learning rate of 0.0008. As for the GATv2 model, it uses a learning rate of 0.0005, eight heads of attention in the first two layers and four in the third, with a dropout of 0.4 on the attention weights. These hyperparametric choices result from a combination of Bayesian search and grid search, allowing to obtain an optimized and stable configuration for the PBT classification task.

G. Baseline Computation Environment and Reproducibility Information

To ensure complete reproducibility of the results, all experiments were performed in a strictly controlled software and hardware environment. Molecular processing was performed in Python 3.10, using RDKit 2023.03.1 for chemical structure manipulation and graph generation. The GNN, MPNN, and GAT models were trained using PyTorch 2.1 and PyTorch Geometric 2.4, with a CUDA backend provided by CUDA 11.8. Evaluation metrics were calculated using scikit-learn 1.3.

All experiments were performed on a workstation equipped with an NVIDIA RTX 3080 GPU (10 GB VRAM), an Intel Core i7 processor, and 32 GB of RAM, running Ubuntu 22.04 LTS. A fixed random seed (seed = 42) was applied to NumPy, PyTorch, and Python to ensure stability and reproducibility of results.

To ensure complete transparency, all code used in this study will be made public in a dedicated GitHub repository. This repository will contain the complete RDKit-based preprocessing scripts, the GNN/MPNN/GAT model training scripts, the graph generation functions, the experimental pipeline organization, and all hyperparameters used. Making this repository available allows any researcher to faithfully reproduce the analyses, results, and figures presented in this study.

III. Experimental Results

A. Quantitative Results

The performance of the three graph-based architectures (GNN, MPNN, and GAT) were evaluated using three standard classification metrics: accuracy, ROC-AUC, and F1-score. These indicators allow us to assess overall accuracy, discrimination capacity, and the balance between precision and recall.

Tables I, II, and III present the results obtained on the training, validation, and test sets. Although all models showed an ability to learn relevant molecular representations, notable

differences in terms of generalization and interpretability were observed.

TABLE I. PERFORMANCE ON THE TRAINING SET (PBT CLASSIFICATION)

Model	Accuracy	ROC-AUC	F1-score
GNN	0.895	0.91	0.89
MPNN	0.932	0.96	0.93
GAT	0.920	0.95	0.92

TABLE II. PERFORMANCE ON THE VALIDATION SET (PBT CLASSIFICATION)

Model	Accuracy	ROC-AUC	F1-score
GNN	0.875	0.89	0.87
MPNN	0.912	0.94	0.91
GAT	0.903	0.93	0.90

TABLE III. PERFORMANCE ON THE TEST SET (PBT CLASSIFICATION)

Model	Accuracy	ROC-AUC	F1-score
GNN	0.82	0.89	0.87
MPNN	0.92	0.94	0.91
GAT	0.89	0.93	0.90

TABLE IV. COMPARISON OF THE PERFORMANCE OF OUR MODELS WITH RECENT STATE-OF-THE-ART APPROACHES FOR PBT PREDICTION

Model	Reference	Accuracy	ROC-AUC
MPNN (our work)	–	0.92	0.94
GAT (our work)	–	0.89	0.90
GNN (our work)	–	0.82	0.89
Chemprop (D-MPNN)	Evangelista et al., 2025 [30]	0.912	0.94
deepFPlearn+	Soulios et al., 2023 [31]	0.89	0.91
GraphADT	Ma et al., 2024 [32]	0.89	0.91

B. Visual Analysis

Fig. 4 shows a comparison of the confusion matrices for the three graph-based models (GNN, MPNN, and GAT) applied to the test set. Each matrix illustrates the distribution of true negatives (TN), false positives (FP), false negatives (FN), and true positives (TP) for the classification of compounds as PBT or Non-PBT.

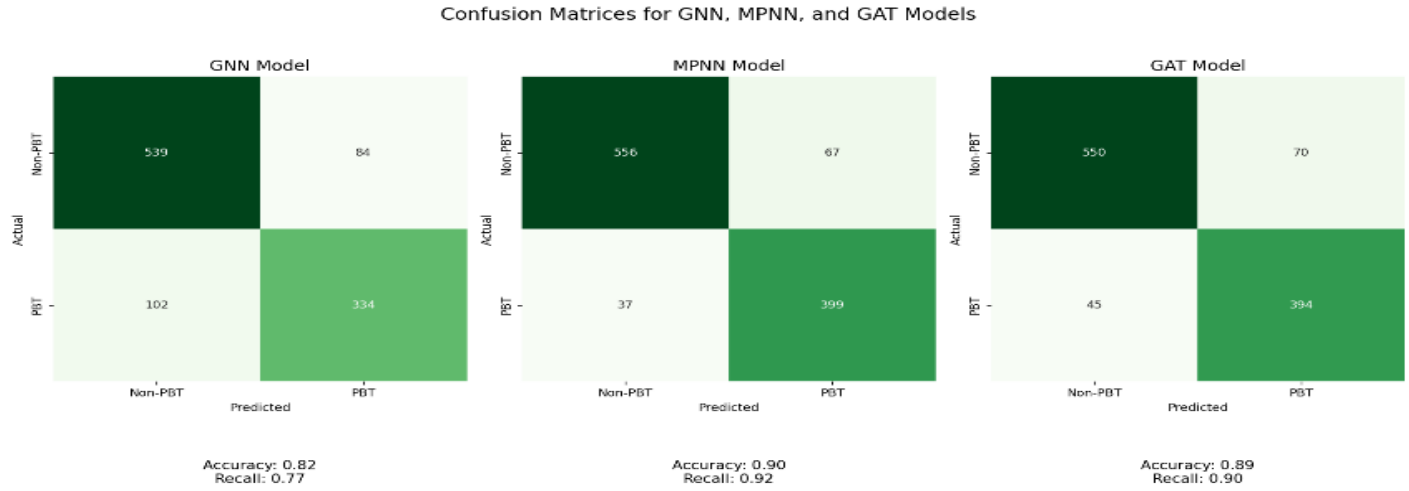

Fig. 4. Confusion matrices for GNN, MPNN, and GAT models.

IV. DISCUSSION

Across the test set, MPNN achieved the best overall performance with an accuracy of 91.2% and an ROC-AUC of 0.94, confirming its robustness and generalization ability. GAT, which is slightly less accurate (90.3%), stands out for its attention mechanism, offering better interpretability for explanatory analyses. GNN, although competitive, lags behind with an accuracy of 87.5% and an ROC-AUC of 0.89 (see Table IV).

These results suggest that MPNN is the most suitable model for predicting PBT properties, while GAT is an interesting alternative when interpretability is a priority.

Our MPNN model (Accuracy = 0.912; ROC-AUC = 0.94) achieves performance equivalent to that reported by Chemprop (Evangelista et al., 2025), confirming its robustness and ability to generalize on complex datasets. This high accuracy demonstrates that integrating atomic characteristics and bonds into the message propagation mechanism is a major asset for predicting PBT properties.

The GAT model, although slightly less accurate (Accuracy = 0.903; ROC-AUC = 0.93), has a significant advantage in terms of interpretability thanks to its attention mechanism. This feature allows the identification of the most influential atoms or substructures in the classification, which is particularly relevant for explanatory analyses and regulatory decision-making.

Compared to other advanced approaches, such as deepFPlearn+ (Soulios et al., 2023) and GraphADT (Ma et al., 2024), our method is competitively positioned. Although effective, these models do not achieve the same level of accuracy as our MPNN, reinforcing the relevance of message passing-based architectures for this type of task.

In summary, this comparison highlights the superiority of MPNN models for predicting PBT properties, while emphasizing the value of attention mechanisms for applications

requiring in-depth interpretation. These results confirm that graph neural networks are a promising solution for environmental risk assessment and regulatory compliance.

With an accuracy of 0.82 and a recall of 0.77, the GNN model shows decent but limited performance. Although it correctly identified 539 Non-PBT compounds and 334 PBT compounds, it produced 102 false negatives, indicating a tendency to miss PBT compounds. This weakness is critical because failure to detect PBT substances can lead to environmental risks.

The MPNN model outperforms the others with an accuracy of 0.90 and a recall of 0.92. It significantly reduces false negatives (FN = 37) compared to GNN, while maintaining a low number of false positives (FP = 67). These results demonstrate its robustness and ability to generalize, which is essential for regulatory compliance.

The GAT model achieves an accuracy of 0.89 and a recall of 0.90, slightly lower than MPNN but higher than GNN. It correctly identifies 394 PBT compounds and 550 non-PBT compounds, with a moderate number of false negatives (FN = 45). Thanks to its attention mechanism, GAT offers better interpretability, making it a relevant choice for explanatory analyses despite its slightly lower performance compared to MPNN.

MPNN is the best-performing model for predicting PBT properties, offering the best compromise between precision and recall. GAT remains an interesting alternative when interpretability is a priority, while GNN offers acceptable but less reliable performance in minimizing false negatives.

V. Conclusion

This study evaluated and compared three graph-based deep learning architectures for the classification of PBT substances. Using a representative set of molecules and a rigorous experimental protocol, the results showed clear differences between the models studied. The MPNN model achieved the highest performance thanks to its better exploitation of complex molecular structures. The GAT model stood out for its interpretability while maintaining a high level of accuracy. The GNN model, although effective, performed worse than the other two models, particularly in the reliable detection of PBT substances.

Overall, the results confirm the value of graph-based approaches for predicting PBT properties and demonstrate the ability of the models studied to extract relevant molecular representations that enable accurate classification of compounds.

From a practical perspective, the proposed MPNN model can effectively support regulatory PBT screening by enabling the early identification and prioritization of potentially hazardous substances. By significantly reducing false negatives, the model helps minimize the risk of overlooking harmful chemicals during preliminary assessments. Such predictive tools can assist regulatory agencies, such as those involved in ECHA-related workflows, in focusing experimental resources on high-risk compounds and improving the efficiency and consistency of decision-making processes in environmental risk assessment.

Acknowledgment

I sincerely thank my colleagues and the staff of my university for their valuable support and guidance throughout my research.

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A Review on Intrusion Detection Models in Internet of Medical Things (IoMT)

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***Abstract*—The Internet of Medical Things (IoMT) environment is highly sensitive due to the nature of medical data and its direct connection to patient health, making it a prime target for sophisticated cyberattacks. This study explores the key security challenges within IoMT, discusses how Machine Learning (ML) can enhance threat detection capabilities, and shows how XAI contributes to improving transparency and understanding of model decisions, thereby increasing trust in these systems. It reviews recent advancements in Intrusion Detection Systems (IDS) specifically designed for IoMT networks, with a focus on integrating Explainable Artificial Intelligence (XAI) and ML models. Furthermore, the study compares various algorithms and models, identifying research gaps and discussing different datasets and feature extraction techniques used for optimizing the features. The reported performance and efficiency improvements are derived from prior studies using different dataset sizes, data-splitting strategies, and feature-selection methods.**

***Keywords*—Internet of Medical Things (IoMT); IDS; Explainable Artificial Intelligence (XAI)**

I. Introduction

IoT is an innovative idea that links physical objects, devices, and everyday items to the internet to enable them to collect data by themselves, share it, and even analyze it. This technology encompasses a wide array of innovations that embed sensors, actuators, software, and network connectivity into various kinds of objects from household appliances and manufacturing equipment to automobiles, buildings, and wearable devices. Essentially, IoT provides real-time, data-driven insights and remote monitoring of such objects, rendering the physical world and digital world inextricably linked. IoT enables objects to perceive and inspect their surroundings, make decisions therefrom, and react autonomously, at times even without external intervention. This connectivity builds an ecosystem where devices collaborate to function more efficiently, accurately, and automatically, leading to smarter decision-making.

The ability for physical objects to communicate with each other and centralized systems is revolutionizing industries, driving innovation, and improving various sectors' operations. Although IoT has already shown significant promise through early applications, the technology is still in its nascent stages. As IoT technologies progress, the integration of smart sensors and connected devices into everyday life will only increase, intensifying the need for solutions that address issues like security, interoperability, protocols, and standardization. IoT devices require a reliable and scalable infrastructure to function, which presents challenges such as data management, network latency, and energy consumption. The IoTs are a revolutionary force that connects the physical and digital worlds, facilitating smarter, more responsive systems. These systems can lead to increased efficiency, reduced operational costs, and enhanced capabilities in every area of society. Despite existing challenges, the future of IoT is filled with even more promises, ushering in limitless possibilities to create connected spaces that will transform how we live, work, and interact.

IoT solutions are already gaining significant traction in verticals like healthcare, transport, manufacturing, automotive, and others, as illustrated in Fig. 1, and in healthcare, for example, IoT-enabled devices such as wearable health monitors and remote patient monitoring systems deliver valuable real-time data, improving patient care, reducing healthcare expenses, and generating better outcomes. This type of IoT is known as the IoMTs [1].

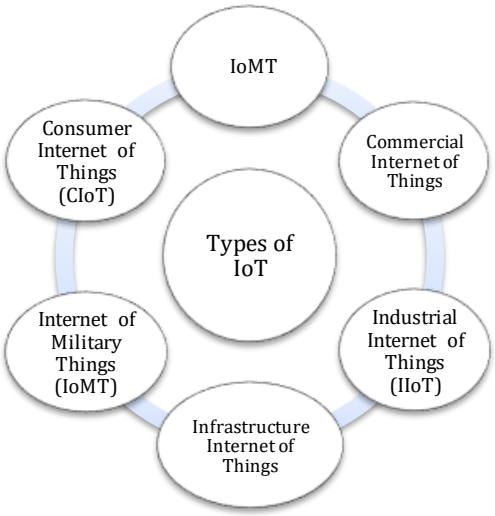

Fig. 1. IoT types.

A. The Internet of Medical Things (IoMT)

The IoMT is an intersection of medical devices with IoT. The IoMT is the future of healthcare systems, where all medical devices are interconnected and monitored on the Internet by healthcare professionals. As the IoMT evolves, it offers significant benefits, including lower healthcare costs and improved patient outcomes. The IoMT serves as a key enabler for healthcare transformation. It offers new services such as remote monitoring, senior support, and e-visits, which enhance convenience and health outcomes for patients. At the same time, these services reduce per-patient costs for healthcare organizations. However, the emergence of mobile, wearable,

and telemedicine technologies has shifted security concerns beyond traditional physical boundaries.

The increasing use of personal devices, such as smartphones and tablets, by patients and healthcare professionals to access, share, and process medical data adds complexity to the security landscape. As medical IoT devices become increasingly prevalent and process valuable data, they have become attractive targets for cyberattacks, including ransomware. However, many medical device users are unaware of the vulnerabilities present in these devices and often invest little in securing their IoT devices. However, implementing appropriate and well-known security measures can significantly mitigate several issues, such as cyber threats, weak encryption, unauthorized access, design flaws, insecure networks, lack of security awareness, compatibility issues, update management, dependency on the cloud, and lack of uniform standards. Therefore, security measures, such as IDS, can significantly reduce the risks associated with exploiting these vulnerabilities [2].

B. Intrusion Detection System (IDS)

ID refers to the organized process of monitoring and analyzing activities within a computer system or network to spot signs of unauthorized access, security breaches, or attempts to compromise the system's confidentiality, integrity, or availability, as well as efforts to bypass its security defenses. Such intrusions may occur when external parties gain unauthorized access through the Internet, when legitimate users attempt to escalate their privileges beyond what is allowed, or when they misuse the access they already have. To support this process, IDSs are employed—these can be either software applications or dedicated hardware devices designed to automate the monitoring and analysis of suspicious activities.

ID plays a vital role in helping organizations protect their systems from the increasing risks that accompany increased connectivity and reliance on digital infrastructure. Given the breadth and complexity of today's cyber threats, the question for security teams is not whether to implement ID, but rather to focus on choosing the right features and functionality for their needs. IDS are now an essential part of any organization's security program. There are several good reasons to deploy them:

- Deterrence: By increasing the chances of detecting and punishing attackers, IDSs discourage malicious behavior and reduce the risk of system misuse.
- Attack detection: IDSs are essential for detecting attacks and vulnerabilities that other security measures cannot prevent.
- Attack precursor detection: IDs can identify early signs of potential attacks, allowing organizations to respond proactively.
- Threat documentation: IDSs provide an organization with a record of ongoing threats, helping to understand the current security landscape.
- Security quality monitoring: IDSs serve as a tool for evaluating and managing security measures, especially in large and complex environments.
- Improved recovery and analysis: IDSs provide valuable information about breaches, making it easier to diagnose, recover from, and correct underlying issues.

By increasing the expected risk of detection and punishment, IDS acts as a powerful deterrent against attackers [3].

II. Related Works

Over the past few years, there have been numerous studies aimed at creating and improving IDS for IoT and IoMT networks. The studies aim to utilize novel methods to enhance the capacity of the systems to detect and manage threats effectively. The research in [4] explores the detection of cyberattacks in IoT networks through a deep learning (DL)-based IDS. The system employs an autoencoder (AE) model that optimizes detection time and offers enhanced precision with 99.76% detection. The AE model operates through encoding and decoding network packets to identify malicious activities. The experiment used the UNSW-NB15 dataset. This research in [5] explores ML algorithms to maximize IDS performance across IoT networks. With the ToN-IoT dataset, the authors implemented Random Forest (RF) and XGBoost, both ensemble learning methods that were very efficient in ID. The solution described reached 99% accuracy.

The study in [6] explores the integration of blockchain technology with anomaly-based ID systems to enhance the (IoT) networks security. This study leverages Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) and Artificial NNs (ANNs). They are trained on the IoT-23 dataset, achieving an impressive accuracy of 99.8%. This approach not only enhances security but also supports scalability within IoT environments. In [7], the researchers present an IDS based on federated transfer learning to secure IoMT devices. Their method uses a Deep NN (DNN) to train models locally on the endpoints, while preserving user data privacy. Testing using the CICIDS2017 dataset yielded a high accuracy rate of 99.51%, confirming the system's effectiveness in protecting sensitive healthcare information.

The work presented in [8] focuses on building an IDS specifically designed for IoMT applications using the CICIoMT-2024 dataset. The study evaluates the performance of three boosting algorithms—XGBoost, AdaBoost, and CatBoost—for classifying network traffic. Among these algorithms, XGBoost achieved the best results with an accuracy of 95.01%, followed by AdaBoost with 92.89% and CatBoost with 88.37%. Additionally, the researchers applied XAI techniques to make the models more interpretable.

The study in [9] aims to combat Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks in blockchain-enabled IoMT networks using ML-based IDs. The study compares the performance of XGBoost, Decision Tree (DT), and RF models using the CICIoMT-2024 dataset. The results demonstrate the system's strong potential to effectively detect and mitigate DDoS attacks, achieving an accuracy of 99.99%. In [10], an anomaly-based IoT network IDS using a DNN with filter-based feature selection to exclude highly correlated features is proposed. The model started by scoring 84% accuracy on UNSW-NB15. To address class imbalance, the authors utilized Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs) to produce synthetic data for minority attack classes to boost accuracy to 91%. The work in [11] suggests an

EML algorithm-based IoT network IDS using the Message Queuing Telemetry Transport (MQTT) protocol.

The authors created the SEN-MQTTSET dataset from three experiment scenarios: normal traffic, subscriber attacks, and broker attacks. Feature extraction was performed using an ensemble statistical algorithm, and algorithms such as Random Forest (RF) and support vector machine (SVM) were used. The system achieved a 99% accuracy level as well as network latency measurement for normal and malicious traffic. The research work in [12] discusses a novel attacker detection method for an edge-focused IoMT structure based on the Swarm NN (Swarm-NN) framework. The system, implemented on the ToN-IoT dataset as well as a real-time secured dataset, achieved 99.5% accuracy. The study in [13] focuses on monitoring network traffic and medical devices to detect malicious and unintended activity. To improve performance while reducing computational costs, the study uses mutual information (MI) and XGBoost as filter-based feature selection techniques. Evaluating the system on the CICIDS2017 dataset, it achieved a high accuracy of 98.79%. In [14], the authors propose *SafetyMed*, an intelligent IDS that combines long-short-term memory (LSTM) and CNNs networks. This hybrid model is designed to analyze sequential and network data to detect intrusion attempts. After validation on the CICIDS2017 dataset, *SafetyMed* demonstrated an accuracy of 97.63%.

The study in [15] presents a swarm neural network-based ID approach specifically designed for data-intensive IoMT systems. The model was tested on the real-time NF-ToN-IoT dataset and achieved an accuracy of 89.0%, demonstrating its practical applicability in healthcare settings. The work in [16] presents a Software-as-a-Service (SaaS)-based IDS specifically developed to address the unique security challenges of IoMT systems. This approach incorporates PSO for feature engineering and was evaluated on the WUSTL-EHMS-2020 dataset, achieving an accuracy of 96.56%. The comparison of the previous studies is shown in Table I.

TABLE I. COMPARISON OF PREVIOUS STUDIES

Ref	Problem	Methods	Dataset	Accuracy
[4]	Detecting malicious activity on IoT network traffic and improving ID in 5G networks	Autoencoder-based DL technique with DNN, XGBoost, Adaboost, ExtraTreeClassifier, RF	UNSW-NB15	99.76%
[5]	The increasing security threats to IoT networks due to the rapid expansion of connected devices	ML-based classification models, including Ridge Classifier, XGBoost, Logistic Regression, RF, and Gradient Boosting	ToN-IoT dataset	99.85%
[6]	Increasing security challenges in IoT networks due to growing threats and scalability issues	A combination of Blockchain for access control and Anomaly-Based IDS using lightweight ML models on FPGA hardware accelerators	IoT-23 dataset	94%
[7]	Increasing cyberattacks on IoMT devices and the need for data privacy	Federated Transfer Learning using DNN	CICIDS2017	99.51%
[8]	cybersecurity threats to IoMT devices and the need for explainable AI-based IDS	Boosting ensemble methods (XGBoost, AdaBoost, CatBoost) with XAI	CICIoMT-2024	XGBoost: 95.01%,
[9]	Vulnerability of Blockchain-enabled IoMT networks to DDoS attacks, affecting network availability and security	ML-based IDS using XGBoost, DT and RF	CICIoMT2024	99.99%
[10]	Traditional threat detection methods struggle to detect new threats and deal with imbalanced data sets	DNN with filter-based feature selection and Generative Adversarial Networks to generate synthetic data for minority attack category.	UNSW-NB15 dataset	84% without GANs, 91% with GANs
[11]	IoT networks face increased cyber-attacks and time constraints in communication.	Elite ML (EML) algorithms with an ensemble statistical multi-view cascade feature generation.	SEN-MQTTSET dataset	99%
[12]	IoMT networks are vulnerable to cyber-attacks during data transmission, leading to privacy leakage and security risks.	Swarm-NN (Swarm-NN) with an Empirical Intelligent Agent (EIA) for ID and health data analysis.	ToN-IoT dataset	99.5%
[13]	IoMT networks are vulnerable to cyberattacks, necessitating effective and accurate IDS.	Tree-based ML (DT, RF, XGBoost, CatBoost) with Mutual Information and XGBoost Feature Selection (MI-XGBoost).	CICIDS2017 dataset	98.79%
[14]	IoMT devices are vulnerable to cyberattacks due to limited computational power, simplified architecture, making them easy targets	Hybrid CNN and LSTM networks for ID from sequential and grid data.	CIC-IDS2017 dataset	97.63%
[15]	IoMT devices have limited storage capacity, computing power, which requires data transfer to external systems, which then leads to security vulnerabilities.	Swarm-NN model for detecting intruders during data transfer in IoMT systems.	NF-ToN-IoT dataset	89.0%
[16]	IoMT devices are resource-constrained and vulnerable to cyberattacks.	SaaS-based IDS with PSO, ML/DL models, and SHAP.	WUSTL-EHMS-2020	96.57%

III. ML APPROACHES

ML models use some algorithms to learn and identify complex patterns in data. ML is all about making computers capable of identifying patterns in data and making decisions or predictions based on the intelligence gathered. There are several primary approaches to ML:

- Supervised Learning: In this approach, the model learns from labelled data, where both the inputs and outputs are provided. The goal is to make accurate predictions or classifications, such as identifying diseases based on medical data or predicting stock prices. Examples include DTs, Linear Regression (LR), and SVM.

- Unsupervised Learning: Unsupervised learning addresses data without pre-defined labels. The model tries to identify inherent structures or patterns, such as clustering similar data points or reducing the dimension of complex datasets. Common methods are k-means clustering, principal component analysis (PCA), and autoencoders.
- Reinforcement Learning (RL): RL is a learning paradigm that mimics human trial-and-error learning. An agent takes an action in an environment, receiving feedback (reward or penalty) based on the outcome of the action taken. RL has wide-ranging applications in robotics, game playing (e.g., AlphaGo), and autonomous cars.
- Semi-supervised and Self-supervised Learning: These methods are between supervised learning and unsupervised learning, using both labelled and unlabelled data or extracting features from the data itself to reduce the amount of labelled data. With continuous advancements, ML is becoming more powerful, adaptive, and integrated into everyday technologies [17].

A. Classification

Classification is a supervised ML in which the aim is to identify a categorical class label for the input. When classifying, the model has been trained using labelled data so that every one of the inputs corresponds to a class label. After training, new, unseen data can be employed to classify, based on patterns learned in the course of training. Classification operations are common in various disciplines like health, finance, and information security [18]. There are two types of classification:

1) Binary: It is a supervised learning problem in which the goal is to classify input data into one of the two potential classes. The model is trained on labelled data to distinguish between two outcomes, most commonly being 0 or 1, True or False, or Positive or Negative. It is widely applied in all domains like spam detection, disease diagnosis, fraud detection, and opinion extraction. In [19], the authors describe the various simple performance measures used in binary class assessment as belonging to three main families: the measures depending on one classification threshold (raw and composite measures), the measures depending on the probabilistic interpretation of error, and the classification measures. The authors also cover graphical methods such as ROC curves and precision–recall curves and outline statistical methods for examining the significance of performance measures and calculating confidence intervals. They provide a simplified example to illustrate the calculation of these measures and the interrelationships between them, emphasizing the importance of choosing appropriate performance measures based on specific classification objectives, especially in the context of class imbalance. In [20], the author provides a comprehensive review of binary performance assessment, focusing on the analysis, relationships, and classification of different performance tools. The study classifies these tools into "performance measures" and "performance metrics", and defines them semantically and formally to clarify their use across different domains. Several new concepts, such as binary, complementarity, and normalization, are introduced to examine the similarities, redundancies, and dependencies between different tools. The main contributions of the study are the Periodic Table of Performance Tools (PToPI), a visual representation that organizes performance tools systematically, helping researchers choose appropriate metrics.

2) Multi-class: It is a statistical and ML classification task that involves more than two classes. It involves classifying data into one of the possible classes. Each sample can only be classified into one class. In [21], the author provides a detailed review of the evaluation metrics used in multiclass classification, emphasizing their role in evaluating ML models. The discussion begins with basic concepts such as precision, recall, and the confusion matrix, which serve as the basis for more advanced metrics. The study explains how precision, despite its widespread use, can be misleading, especially in imbalanced datasets, leading to the introduction of balanced precision and weighted variances to address this issue. Cross-entropy is introduced as a metric that assesses the divergence between predicted and actual probability distributions. In addition, the author examines more advanced evaluation techniques, such as Matthew's Correlation Coefficient (MCC), which considers all components of the confusion matrix, and Cohen's kappa, which measures the concordance of predicted versus actual classes with chance adjustment. The talk emphasizes the importance of applying the right evaluation methods based on the specific problems of the dataset, such as class imbalance or the need for good prediction in certain classes.

B. ML Key Models

DT models are a popular and easy-to-understand ML method, applied in both classification and regression problems. The method works by splitting the dataset into subsets depending on feature values, allowing decisions to culminate in classification or prediction outcomes. According to authors in [22], DTs encompass a number of algorithms, including ID3, C4.5, CART, CHAID, and QUEST. These algorithms have been widely used in various fields, including medical diagnosis, text classification, and image processing, because of their interpretability and simplicity.

SVM models are powerful supervised learning algorithms well-suited for both classification and regression tasks, with a particular strength in handling classification problems. The basic idea behind SVM is to find the optimal level that separates the data points into different categories within an N-dimensional space. By maximizing the margin between the closest data points of each class, SVMs enhance both the accuracy and generalization of the model. According to the findings in [23], SVMs can efficiently process large-scale datasets, making them highly effective in terms of computational performance and accuracy. The study also explored various optimization strategies, such as integrating fuzzy membership functions into multi-kernel learning frameworks, and identifying optimal solution spaces based on dataset size, further demonstrating

SVM's scalability and adaptability to complex data environments.

The k-Nearest Neighbors (k-NN) model is a straightforward, yet widely used supervised learning method, especially effective for classification and regression tasks. As a non-parametric approach, it works by assigning a class to a new data point based on the majority class among its closest neighbors. Its simplicity and effectiveness make it a popular choice in many ML applications. In [24], the k-NN algorithm was used to categorize data into positive and negative classes. The results showed high accuracy, confirming the algorithm's strength in reliable and accurate classification tasks.

Naive Bayes (NBs) model is a probabilistic classifier in the field of ML that is commonly applied in classification, particularly where we have large data. It functions on the principles of Bayes' theorem, which presumes features to be conditionally independent, i.e., the presence of one feature does not influence the presence of another. The algorithm is specifically utilized in domains such as text classification, spam filtering, and sentiment analysis because of its simplicity and efficiency. Naïve Bayes is known for its speed and effectiveness on high-dimensional data, and it serves as a solid foundation for various classification problems. In [25], the researchers used the Naïve Bayes algorithm. Two different data distribution techniques, Hold-Out and 10-Cross Fold Validation, were used to evaluate the algorithm's performance. It was found that using the Naïve Bayes algorithm with the Hold-Out method achieves better accuracy.

RFs model is a popular ML model that builds a collection of DTs and merges their individual predictions to generate the final result. The approach is suitable for both classification (prediction of classes) and regression (prediction of continuous outcomes) problems. It works by randomly selecting subsets of data and features to train multiple DTs, which helps improve accuracy and prevent overfitting. The overall outcome is based on the majority vote (in classification) or average (in regression) of the trees, making the model more stable and reliable than a single decision tree. Its strength lies in its ability to handle complex datasets and adapt to a variety of patterns, making it a robust and accurate algorithm, as in [26]. The author conducted a novel spatial RFs technique that enhances traditional RFs by incorporating higher-order spatial statistics. This approach utilizes local spatial-spectral information to effectively identify intrinsic heterogeneity, spatial interactions, and sophisticated spatial patterns, hence presenting a more sophisticated framework for geoscience data modeling and analysis. Further, it highlights the superiority of this approach compared to traditional RFs, specifically in their potential to generate spatially coherent predictions.

Neural Networks (NN) models: A neural network is a computer system modeled on the biological neural networks found in the human brain. It is composed of interconnected neurons, or nodes, that work together to recognize patterns, make decisions, and solve complex problems. In [27], the authors discussed various optimization methods which are employed to enhance artificial NNs (ANNs) through the use of parameter optimization methods including network architecture, hidden neuron numbers, and learning rates. Several algorithms include the particle swarm optimization (PSO), Genetic Algorithm (GA), backtracking search algorithm (BSA), Artificial Bee Colony (ABC), among others, help to maximize both the effectiveness and efficacy of ANNs.

IV. Datasets in IoMT

In IoMT, datasets play a pivotal role in developing and evaluating ML models for healthcare applications, as shown in Table II. This data is typically collected from various IoT devices, some from different medical devices. Common datasets used in the IoMT include:

UNSW-NB15 dataset is a premier benchmark to assess network IDS (NIDS). It was developed by the Australian Centre for Cyber Security (ACCS) at UNSW Canberra with the vision to overcome the drawbacks of existing datasets by incorporating contemporary attack scenarios and actual network traffic. The dataset consists of raw network packet captures processed using Bro-IDS and Argus tools, resulting in 49 features that include flow-based, basic connection characteristics, and content-based characteristics. It contains both normal and malicious traffic, and covers a variety of attack types such as DoS, exploits, fuzzers, backdoors, and reconnaissance. UNSW-NB15 is widely used in cybersecurity research, particularly in ID, anomaly detection, and ML-based security applications. Its richness in attack diversity and realistic traffic patterns makes it a valuable resource for testing the effectiveness of modern NIDS solutions [28].

ToN-IoT (Telemetry and Network of IoT) dataset is a modern cybersecurity dataset designed for ID in Internet of Things (IoT) and Industrial IoT (IIoT) environments. It was developed by the UNSW Canberra Cyber Range Lab and includes telemetry data from various IoT devices, network traffic, and system logs, so it is a large set for cybersecurity research. The dataset includes both normal and abnormal and has a broad variety of cyber threats such as denial of service (DoS), ransomware, backdoors, and reconnaissance. It embraces multiple data types, including IoT sensor logs, operating systems (Windows and Linux), and network traffic, to facilitate cross-layer security analysis. ToN-IoT is widely used in ML-based ID and anomaly detection due to its realistic attack scenarios and multi-source data collection, making it highly relevant to modern IoT security problems [29].

IoT-23 dataset is a public database, and it is intended for educational research purposes in the area of malware and network ID in IoT settings. IoT-23 was created by Stratosphere Lab in collaboration with Avast, and contains 23 different scenarios, including normal IoT network traffic and malicious traffic generated by different malware families. The dataset consists of classified network traffic captures (PCAP files) along with extracted flow-based features, allowing researchers to analyze various attack behaviors such as a DDoS, botnets, and control (C&C) communications. IoT-23 is widely used in cybersecurity research to develop and evaluate ML models aimed at detecting and mitigating IoT-based cyber threats [30].

The CICIDS2017 dataset is generated by the Canadian Institute for Cybersecurity (CIC), is a premier benchmark for the testing of IDS and conducting cybersecurity research. The dataset mimics actual network traffic by including both

legitimate activity and a variety of attack types, such as DDoS attacks, brute force attacks, botnet traffic, intrusions, and web attacks. It consists of detailed network flow data captured over a five-day period, including packet captures (PCAPs) and extracted flow-based features. CICIDS2017 is valuable for training ML models due to its inclusion of time-stamped traffic, classified attack categories, and real-world user behavioral profiles. The dataset is widely used in anomaly detection, performance evaluation of IDS, and cybersecurity analytics, making it a primary resource for advancing network security research [31].

The CICIoMT-2024 dataset is an extensive benchmark dataset created for the assessment of security controls within the environment of the IoMT. Created by the Canadian Institute for Cybersecurity, the dataset comprises network traffic data collected from an IoMT testbed composed of 40 devices, of which 25 were real devices and 15 simulated devices, with the perspective of representing the different protocols utilized in healthcare settings like Wi-Fi, MQTT, and Bluetooth. In order to replicate the real-world threat scenarios, 18 different attacks have been performed on this testbed, which are divided into five main categories: DDoS, DoS, reconnaissance, MQTT-based attacks, and spoofing. This dataset serves as a useful tool for researchers and practitioners interested in designing and testing IDSs and other security mechanisms for IoMT infrastructure [32].

The SEN-MQTTSET dataset is a specialized resource developed to enhance IDSs within IoT environments using the MQTT protocol. This dataset includes three distinct scenarios: normal operations, attacks targeting subscribers, and attacks on intermediaries. To extract meaningful features from the raw data, a statistics-based multi-view sequential feature generation algorithm was used, resulting in a multi-context feature set [33].

The NF-ToN-IoT dataset is the NetFlow-based version of the ToN-IoT dataset to enhance research on network ID in IoT networks. By transforming ToN-IoT raw packet captures (pcaps) into NetFlow logs, NF-ToN-IoT gives us the flow-based view of the network traffic and therefore, it is valuable to investigate communication patterns as well as for anomaly detection. The dataset contains a total of about 16.9 million data flows, where 63.99% are marked as attack samples and 36.01% are labeled as benign. The attack categories are Backdoor, DoS, DDoS, Injection, Man-in-the-Middle (MITM), Password, Ransomware, Scanning, and XSS. Each flow is described using 12 NetFlow features, including source and destination IP addresses, ports, protocols, and byte counts. NF-ToN-IoT is publicly available and is a valuable resource for training and testing ML models for enhancing the security of IoT networks [34].

The WUSTL-EHMS-2020 dataset is a targeted resource aimed at promoting cybersecurity research in the IoMT context. The dataset was obtained using the Enhanced Healthcare Monitoring System (EHMS) Real-Time Testbed located at Washington University in St. Louis, and it uniquely integrates network flow measurements with patient biometric information, thereby filling the gap of datasets that bring these two elements together. It has 16,318 samples, of which 14,272 are labeled as normal, and 2,046 are attack instances, and has 44 distinct features—35 for network metrics and 8 for patient vital signs. The dataset includes man-in-the-middle attacks, such as spoofing and data injection, and data confidentiality and integrity violations. Researchers are using WUSTL-EHMS-2020 to develop and evaluate IDSs specifically designed for IoMT environments, leveraging ML techniques to analyze the complex interaction between network activity and medical data [35].

The dataset is typically divided into training, validation, and test sets for model development and evaluation. Common split ratios include 70% for training, 15% for validation, and 15% for testing, or 80% for training and 20% for testing, to ensure fair evaluation and good generalization performance.

TABLE II. IOMT DATASETS

Ref.	Dataset	Field	Year	Total Features	Target attack
[28]	UNSW-NB15	Cybersecurity, Network ID	2015	49	DoS, Fuzzers, Backdoor, Exploits, Generic, Reconnaissance, Shellcode, Worms
[29]	ToN-IoT	IoT network traffic.	2020	44	DDoS, Mirai, Keylogging, Scanning, DoS, Backdoor, Ransomware, Injection, XSS, Password attack, MITM
[30]	IoT-23	IoT network traffic.	2020	47	DDoS, DoS, Brute Force, Port Scan, MITM, Malware, Backdoor, Worm, Credential Stuffing, Botnet attacks
[31]	CICIDS2017	Network traffic data from various real-world scenarios	2017	80	DDoS, Brute Force, DoS, Port Scan, Heartbleed, Botnet, Web Attack, SSH, Infiltration, etc.
[32]	CICIoMT-2024	Network traffic data from IoMT devices	2024	44	DDoS, DoS, Spoofing, Recon, MQTT
[33]	The SEN-MQTTSET	Network traffic data from IoT devices using MQTT protocol	2021	120	DoS, Subscriber Attack, Broker Attack
[34]	NF-ToN-IoT v1, v2, v3	Network traffic data from IoT devices	2021-2025	8, 43, 53	Backdoor, DoS, DDoS, Injection, Scanning, XSS
[35]	WUSTL-EHMS-2020	IoMT network	2020	44	MITM attacks: Spoofing, Data Injection

V. EXPLAINABLE AI (XAI) ALGORITHMS

XAI refers to a group of methods and techniques designed to enhance the transparency, interpretability, and trustworthiness of AI models. Traditional AI models, especially DL and complex ML models, often function as "black boxes", making it difficult to understand how they arrive at specific decisions. XAI algorithms aim to bridge this gap by providing insights into model predictions, ensuring accountability, and facilitating human-AI collaboration. XAI algorithms can be broadly classified into two types:

A. Model-Specific XAI Algorithms

These methods are built into specific models and provide intrinsic interpretability.

- DTs: A hierarchical structure that allows for straightforward interpretation by mapping decision paths.
- LR: Provides direct interpretability through feature coefficients that indicate the impact of each variable.
- Rule-Based Models: Generate human-readable rules that explain decision-making, such as in fuzzy logic systems.

B. Post-Hoc XAI Algorithms

These techniques analyze and interpret complex, pre-trained models without altering their structure.

- Shapley Additive Explanations (SHAP): Founded on cooperative game theory, SHAP allocates a significant score to every feature, indicating its contribution to the prediction made by the model.
- Local Interpretable Model-agnostic Explanations (LIME): Creates local approximations of a black-box model by training simple surrogate models in the vicinity of single predictions.
- Gradient-weighted Class Activation Mapping (Grad-CAM): Used for DL to reveal the regions of an image that supported a model's decision.
- Counterfactual Explanations: Explain decisions by identifying minimal changes in input that would lead to a different output, providing actionable insights [36]. These are all XAI techniques, as shown in Table III:

TABLE III. COMPARISON OF XAI TECHNIQUES

Technique	Description	Strengths	Weakness	Use Cases
DT	A hierarchical structure where decisions are made based on feature values.	Transparent, easy to visualize, interpretable.	Prone to overfitting, less powerful for complex tasks.	Customer segmentation, medical diagnosis, credit scoring.
LR	Predicts outputs based on a weighted sum of input features.	Simple, easy to interpret, direct feature influence.	Limited to linear relationships, sensitive to outliers.	Price prediction, demand forecasting, stock market prediction.
Rule-Based Models	Make decisions based on predefined or learned rules.	Transparent, easy to implement, interpretable.	Can become overly complex, less powerful for complex patterns.	Expert systems, diagnostic systems, regulatory compliance.
SHAP	Assigns an important score to each feature based on game theory (Shapley values).	Theoretically grounded, consistent across models.	Computationally expensive, slow for large models.	Feature importance analysis, model interpretation, ML.
LIME	Approximates complex models with simpler interpretable models around individual predictions.	Model-agnostics provides local explanations.	Local explanations may not generalize, computationally expensive.	Image classification, text classification, fraud detection.
Grad-CAM	Visualizes which parts of an image influenced the model's decision.	Provides intuitive visualizations, works well with CNNs.	Limited to CNNs, hard to interpret for complex models.	Image classification, object detection, medical imaging.
Counterfactual Explanations	Explain a decision by identifying minimal changes in input to alter the output.	Actionable, easy to understand, intuitive.	May not be meaningful in complex models, computationally intensive.	Decision support, recommender systems, financial services.

VI. FEATURE SELECTION TECHNIQUES IN ID

Feature selection is a necessary process in developing IDSs to reach dimensionality reduction, better accuracy, and better computational efficiency. By selecting the most informative features from network traffic data, IDS can gain a higher classification accuracy while, in the meantime, decreasing the number of false positives and negatives. A few optimization algorithms in feature selection, specifically bio-inspired ones such as GA, PSO, GWO, and ABC, play an important role in this process. GA ensures solution diversity through crossover and mutation, but it can be computationally expensive.

PSO is efficient and simple, but may suffer from early convergence. GWO effectively balances exploration and exploitation, making it suitable for high-dimensional IDS datasets. ABC offers flexibility and robustness but may converge slowly than other algorithms. Despite their limitations, these methods continue to evolve, addressing weaknesses and improving feature selection performance, ultimately enhancing IDS effectiveness. The selection of an appropriate feature selection technique relies on factors like dataset size, feature complexity, and the desired balance between computational cost and classification performance. Proper feature selection can significantly enhance IDS effectiveness by improving detection rates while reducing processing overhead [37].

VII. PRACTICAL DEPLOYMENT: CONSIDERATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Practical deployment of IoT and IoMT intrusion detection systems also reveals important evaluation limitations commonly observed in existing studies. In particular, several datasets rely on labeling mechanisms derived from device identifiers, such as source MAC addresses. When MAC-related or identity-derived attributes are simultaneously included in the feature space, learning models may unintentionally capture device identity rather than genuine attack behavior, leading to label–feature leakage and overly optimistic performance results. To mitigate this risk, robust experimental practices explicitly exclude direct device identifiers (e.g., raw MAC addresses, organizationally unique identifiers, or vendor-specific prefixes) from the feature set and enforce device-level data partitioning, ensuring that traffic generated by the same device does not appear across training and testing splits. Clear documentation of feature

inclusion/exclusion decisions and data-splitting strategies is therefore essential for realistic, generalizable, and reproducible IoMT IDS evaluations.

VIII. Conclusion

The review shows that combining ML and XAI represents a promising direction in designing IDSs for IoMT environments. ML techniques enable accurate detection of complex threats, while XAI helps interpret these decisions and support trustworthy responses in sensitive medical contexts. However, challenges remain regarding scalability, real-time data handling, and privacy protection. The study recommends further studies to develop more efficient hybrid models, increase the adoption of XAI to ensure transparency, and establish standardized testing frameworks suitable for IoMT systems. Additionally, existing evaluations may suffer from label–feature leakage when device identifiers such as MAC addresses are used for labeling while also being included in the feature space. To ensure realistic and generalizable results, future studies should exclude direct device identifiers and apply device-level data partitioning between training and testing sets.

Acknowledgment

The authors are thankful to the Deanship of Graduate Studies and Scientific Research at the University of Bisha for the financial support through the Graduate Students Research Support Program.

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A Blockchain-Based Privacy-Preserving Scheme for Integrity Verification and Fair Payment in Cloud Data Storage

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***Abstract*—Ensuring the integrity of outsourced data in cloud storage remains a critical challenge, especially when existing auditing schemes rely on centralized third-party auditors (TPAs), which introduce single points of failure, privacy leakage risks, and a lack of economic fairness. Current blockchain-based approaches improve transparency but still fail to simultaneously achieve privacy-preserving verification and fair payment between data owners and cloud service providers (CSPs). To address this gap, this study proposes a blockchain-based integrity verification scheme that supports decentralized, privacy-preserving, and economically fair audits for encrypted cloud data. The proposed scheme integrates homomorphic linear authenticators (HLA) and multi-party computation (MPC) to verify data integrity without revealing plaintext, while smart contracts are used to enforce automatic payment or penalty based on audit results, ensuring fairness and accountability. A prototype implementation confirms the practicality of the system. Experimental results show that the audit latency is reduced by up to 35 per cent and smart contract gas consumption by approximately 30 per cent compared to existing schemes, while maintaining low computation and communication overhead. Security analysis demonstrates that the scheme provides data integrity, privacy protection, fairness, and resistance to replay and collusion attacks. Overall, this work offers a practical and scalable solution for secure cloud storage auditing.**

***Keywords*—Cloud storage; blockchain; integrity verification; smart contract; privacy-preserving audit; fair payment**

I. Introduction

Cloud storage has become an essential component of modern data management infrastructures [1]. However, outsourcing data to third-party cloud service providers (CSPs) raises critical concerns regarding data integrity, confidentiality, and user trust [2]. Since users no longer possess physical control over their data, they require reliable mechanisms to ensure that outsourced files remain intact and unmodified. Traditional auditing schemes rely on trusted third-party auditors (TPAs), but these centralized architectures suffer from inherent weaknesses such as single points of failure, implicit trust assumptions, potential collusion, and limited transparency [3].

Blockchain technology provides a decentralized and tamper-resistant alternative for cloud auditing, replacing TPAs with distributed consensus and verifiable smart contract execution [4], [5]. Although several blockchain-based integrity verification schemes have been proposed, most of them still exhibit one or more of the following limitations:

- They focus on transparency but fail to protect data privacy during audits.
- They do not support fair economic compensation between users and CSPs in cases of data loss or fraud.
- They provide incomplete support for dynamic data operations or require additional trust in off-chain verifiers [6].

Therefore, an important research gap remains: existing approaches do not offer a unified framework that simultaneously achieves decentralized verification, privacy preservation, and fair payment in cloud storage environments.

To address this gap, this study proposes a blockchain-based integrity verification scheme that integrates privacy-preserving audit and economic fairness into a single framework. Homomorphic Linear Authenticators (HLA) and Multi-Party Computation (MPC) are combined to enable verification of encrypted data without revealing its content. In addition, smart contracts are employed to enforce an automatic fair payment mechanism that compensates CSPs only when data integrity is successfully proven, while also providing dispute resolution in case of corruption or data loss.

The main contributions of this work are summarized as follows:

- We design a fully decentralized cloud data integrity verification framework that removes reliance on TPAs and guarantees audit correctness while preserving data privacy.
- We develop a smart contract–based fair payment protocol that enforces automatic rewards or penalties based on audit outcomes, ensuring economic accountability between users and CSPs.

- We implement the prototype and conduct comprehensive security analysis and experimental evaluation. Results demonstrate that the proposed scheme achieves low audit latency, reduced communication overhead, and feasible gas consumption in practical cloud environments.

The rest of the study is organized as follows: Section II reviews related work. Section III introduces the system architecture and threat model. Section IV presents the proposed scheme in detail. Section V provides security analysis. Section VI discusses performance evaluation and experimental results. Finally, Section VII concludes the study and outlines future research directions.

II. Related Work

Ensuring the integrity of outsourced data has long been a fundamental challenge in cloud storage systems. Early cryptographic solutions such as Provable Data Possession (PDP) and Proof of Retrievability (PoR) enabled users or trusted third-party auditors (TPAs) to verify data correctness without downloading the entire file [7]. However, these methods rely heavily on centralized auditors, which introduces risks of single-point failure, collusion, and trust assumption issues [8].

To mitigate reliance on TPAs, blockchain-based integrity verification schemes have gained increasing attention. Zhang et al. combined blockchain with lattice-based cryptography to achieve public auditing and improved transparency, but their scheme lacks support for efficient computation and dynamic data updates, which limits real-world applicability [9]. Zhou et al. proposed a blockchain-enabled data monitoring scheme; however, it provides limited analysis of computational costs and does not address economic fairness between cloud service providers (CSPs) and users [10].

Recent works have explored the integration of homomorphic authenticators and advanced cryptographic techniques to enhance verifiability. Sankar et al. introduced a lattice-based multi-cloud auditing model, which offers theoretical security but lacks practical deployment evaluation [11]. Xie et al. proposed a T-Merkle hash tree to support dynamic data operations; nevertheless, their design does not incorporate fair payment or dispute resolution mechanisms [12]. Liu and Huang presented privacy-preserving and blockless verification schemes, but challenges remain in achieving decentralized enforcement and secure economic incentives [13], [14].

Another research direction focuses on blockchain-based economic mechanisms for cloud data services. While these methods record audit outcomes on-chain, most do not leverage smart contracts for automatic enforcement or compensation. For example, He et al. improved communication efficiency but failed to establish a clear arbitration mechanism for disputes [15]. Li et al. incorporated zero-knowledge proof-based privacy, yet did not support on-chain payment settlement or dynamic file updates [16].

Wang et al. developed a smart contract-driven integrity auditing scheme for multi-cloud and multi-replica environments, optimizing tag generation to reduce overhead [17]. However, their system assumes a trusted key generation center (KGC) and primarily focuses on multi-CSP coordination rather than privacy preservation and fair exchange in a single-cloud scenario.

In summary, existing blockchain-based auditing schemes still face the following limitations:

- Reliance on centralized authorities such as TPAs or KGCs.
- Absence of fair payment mechanisms to guarantee accountability between users and CSPs.
- Incomplete support for encrypted data verification while preserving privacy.

To overcome these challenges, this study proposes a decentralized, privacy-preserving integrity verification scheme that integrates homomorphic authenticators, multi-party computation (MPC), and smart contracts to achieve secure auditing, automated dispute resolution, and fair compensation.

III. Scheme Framework

A. Scheme Model

The proposed scheme consists of three primary entities, as illustrated in Fig. 1.

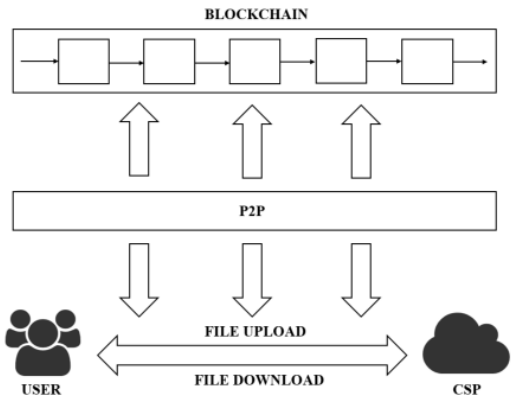

Fig. 1. Scheme model.

1) Data owner (DO): A user who outsources encrypted data to the cloud and later requests integrity verification. The DO is responsible for generating encryption keys, computing homomorphic tags, and initiating audit requests.

2) Cloud service provider (CSP): A storage service provider that maintains outsourced data on behalf of the DO. The CSP responds to audit challenges by generating proofs of data possession.

3) Blockchain network: A decentralized ledger that hosts smart contracts. It facilitates audit challenge distribution, proof aggregation, verification, and fair payment based on audit results. The blockchain is assumed to be transparent, tamper-resistant, and always available.

The system is designed to operate without relying on any third-party auditor or centralized key generation authority. All integrity audits, payment mechanisms, and verification processes are executed through smart contracts deployed on the

blockchain. Data remains encrypted throughout the process using AES-GCM, while integrity verification is performed using homomorphic linear authenticators (HLA).

B. Threat Model

We consider both internal and external adversaries.

- Malicious CSP: The primary threat arises from a dishonest CSP, who may:
  - Delete or alter outsourced data to reduce storage overhead.
  - Forge integrity proofs to pass audits without storing actual data.
  - Reject fair payment conditions or evade penalties following a failed audit.
- External Attacker: An outsider may attempt to:
  - Intercept or tamper with communication between DO and CSP.
  - Replay previous audit responses to bypass verification.
  - Eavesdrop on blockchain transactions to infer private information.
- Collusion Risk: The CSP may attempt to collude with external entities to manipulate audit results or payment transactions. However, smart contracts on the blockchain act as impartial executors, preventing such collusion.

We assume that the blockchain platform is secure, the consensus mechanism is reliable, and all cryptographic primitives (e.g., AES-GCM, Keccak-256, HLA) are resilient against known attacks. All communication channels are assumed to be protected by standard TLS protocols.

C. Security Targets

The proposed scheme aims to achieve the following security objectives:

1) Data integrity: CSPs should be unable to modify or delete data without detection. Audit verification must fail if the data is tampered with.

2) Privacy preservation: The CSP cannot learn the content of the data during upload, verification, or audit, as all data remains encrypted and audit is performed via MPC and HLA.

3) Audit correctness: If the CSP stores data correctly and follows the audit protocol honestly, the verification will succeed with high probability.

4) Fair payment: The smart contract ensures that CSPs are compensated only when audits are successful and penalized when they fail to produce valid proofs.

5) Collusion resistance: Neither the CSP nor any external party can manipulate or falsify audit results due to the tamper-proof nature of the blockchain and the transparency of smart contract execution.

6) Replay resistance: Each audit challenge is randomly generated and time-bound, preventing the reuse of old responses.

IV. Scheme Realization

This section outlines the proposed scheme's implementation process, which is divided into five main phases. It begins by introducing the notations and initialization settings that establish the theoretical foundation of the scheme. Following this foundational setup, the focus shifts to a detailed examination of the three critical parts: file upload, file download, and file update.

A. Notations

The symbols used throughout the scheme are defined in Table I.

TABLE I. Notations

Notation	*Definition*
F	File
C	Ciphertext
B_i	i-th data block
S_j	j-th share in MPC
P_j	j-th party in MPC
M	MPC protocol
R	Merkle Hash Tree Root Node
n	Number of data blocks
ID	Identifier
σ	Homomorphic tag
Pay_{stor}	Storage service fees
Pay_{comp}	Compensation costs

B. Initial Setting

The proposed scheme leverages several core cryptographic components and concepts:

1) Cyclic groups and bilinear mapping: Let G and G_T be two cyclic groups of the same prime order p, with g as the generator of group G. A bilinear mapping is defined as, $e: G \times G \rightarrow G_T$. These form the foundation for constructing the cryptographic scheme.

2) User and file identity: Each user U is identified by an ID_U and a corresponding Ethereum account EA_U. Files are identified by an ID_F. The Cloud Service Provider (CSP) is also identified by an ID_{CSP} and has a corresponding Ethereum Account EA_{CSP}.

3) Encryption keys and signatures: User U randomly generates an RSA key pair (spk, ssk) for digital signature purposes. Additionally, user U selects an element u from G, with a private key $ssk = x \in Z_p$, and calculates the public key $y = g^x$.

4) Multi-Party Computation (MPC): To enhance the security and trustworthiness of the integrity verification process, MPC is employed. In MPC, the data is divided into multiple shares S_j, which are distributed among different parties P_j. These parties collaboratively perform computations

under the MPC protocol without disclosing their individual inputs.

5) Economic model: Upon successful storage of user data, users are required to pay the CSP storage fees Pay_{stor}. If user data is lost or damaged, the CSP must provide compensation to the user, denoted as Pay_{comp}.

These cryptographic elements and concepts provide the necessary theoretical and technical foundation for the proposed blockchain-based cloud data integrity verification scheme, ensuring data security and transaction fairness.

C. File Upload

There are a total of six steps for file upload, as shown in Fig. 2.

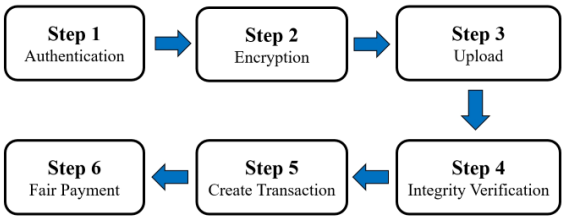

Fig. 2. Steps of file upload.

1) Step-1: Authentication: Before uploading file F, the CSP must verify the user's identity. The user U uses a digital certificate issued by a trusted Certificate Authority (CA) to verify their identity. Specifically, user U first hashes their identity as $h\ (ID_U)$ and then signs this hash using their private key to create the signature $Sig_{ssk}\ (h\ (ID_U))$. The user U sends this signature along with their digital certificate to the CSP. Upon receiving the signature and the certificate, the CSP uses the CA's public key to validate the digital certificate, ensuring its authenticity. Then, CSP uses the public key spk from the certificate to verify the signature . If the verification is successful, the user is authenticated and can proceed to the step-2.

2) Step-2: Encryption: User U generates a signature for file F using the private key ssk.

$$Sig_F = ID_F \parallel Sig_{ssk}(ID_F) \tag{1}$$

Sig_F can be used as an identifier for file F. Subsequently, user U divides the file F into n data blocks, $F = \{B_i\}(1 \le i \le n)$. For the i-th data block B_i, user U uses PBKDF2 algorithm to calculate the convergence key and uses AES-GCM algorithm to calculate the ciphertext.

Generate a unique salt value P_i for each data block B_i.

$$K_{B_i} = PBKDF2(B_i, P_i, iterations, dklen) \tag{2}$$

Encrypt the data block using the derived key K_{B_i}.

$$C_{B_i} = AES\text{–}GCM(K_{B_i}, B_i) \tag{3}$$

User U calculates file tags, using Keccak-256 hash function.

$$T_F = Keccak - 256(C_{B_i}) \tag{4}$$

User U uses data block ciphertext $\{C_{B_i}\}$ to construct a Merkle hash tree and calculate its root points.

$$R_C = MerkleTree(\{C_{B_i}\}) \tag{5}$$

User U calculates file signature.

$$\delta = H(R_C)^{x\ mod\ p} \tag{6}$$

User U calculates homomorphic signature.

$$W_i = ID_F \parallel i \tag{7}$$

$$\sigma_i = (H(W_i \times u^{C_{Bi}}))^{x\ mod\ q} \tag{8}$$

3) Step-3: Upload: User U sends the file label T_F to CSP, and CSP performs repeatability detection. If the file label T_F already exists on the cloud server, it indicates duplication. In this case, CSP and the user execute a proof of ownership agreement to prove that the user indeed owns the file F, and the user does not need to upload the file F again. If the file label T_F is not stored on the cloud server, it indicates that the file F is not duplicated, and user U will send $(Sig_F, \{C_{B_i}\}, \{\sigma_i\})$ to CSP.

4) Step-4: Integrity verification: To enhance the security and privacy of the integrity verification process, user U can act as an auditor and engage in an integrity verification protocol with the Cloud Service Provider (CSP), leveraging Multi-Party Computation (MPC) as follows:

User U retrieves the file identifier $Sig_F = ID_F \parallel Sig_{ssk}(ID_F)$ from the cloud server.

Using the public key spk to verify the correctness of the signature $Sig_{ssk}(ID_F)$.

If the verification fails, the user will output a result of false. If the verification is successful, the user can recover the file identification ID_F.

Initialization: User U selects a subset $I = \{S_1, S_2, S_3, \ldots, S_{c-1}, S_c\} \subset [1, n]$ containing c elements. This subset is used as the seed value set $\{S_i\}$ to initiate M.

Sharing Data for MPC: User U divides the data into shares S_j for the selected indices I. These shares are distributed among different parties P_j involved in M.

Engaging the MPC Protocol: The parties $\{P_j\}$ collaboratively execute M to securely compute random numbers. The protocol ensures that none of the parties, including the CSP, can learn the individual shares or the final random numbers until the computation is complete.

Secure Computation: M employs a pseudo-random function, denoted as $f: \{0,1\}^* \to [1, n]$, to securely compute the random numbers. The function takes as input the shares $\{S_j\}$, the current block identifier B_{id} and the current timestamp T_s.

Output Generation: As a result of the secure computation, M outputs two sets of random numbers: $\{r_i\}$ and $\{z_i\}$. These numbers are generated in such a manner that they are

unpredictable to outside observers, ensuring the integrity of the computation process.

Challenge Formation: User U forms a challenge $chal = \{(r_i, z_i)\}$ using the random numbers generated by M. This challenge is then sent to the CSP to verify the integrity of cloud data.

CSP calculates the proof information μ and L using the received challenge, where:

$$\mu = \sum_{i \in I} z_i C_{B_i} \quad (9)$$

$$L = \prod_{i \in I} \sigma_{z_i}^{r_i} \quad (10)$$

CSP sends (μ, L) as proof to user U.

User U checks the correctness of the following equation to check the integrity of cloud data:

$$\Gamma_1 : e(L, g) = e((\prod_{i \in I} H(W_i)^{z_i} \cdot u^{\mu}), y) \quad (11)$$

This step utilizes MPC to ensure that the computation of μ and L is done without revealing the actual values of $\{C_{B_i}\}$ and $\{\sigma_{Z_i}\}$ to any single party, enhancing the privacy of the data.

By incorporating MPC into the integrity verification process, this approach not only maintains the confidentiality of the data during the verification but also enhances the security and trustworthiness of the cloud storage system. The use of MPC allows multiple parties to compute the verification without revealing their inputs, thereby providing a more secure and privacy-preserving verification process. Fig. 3 illustrates the process of step-4.

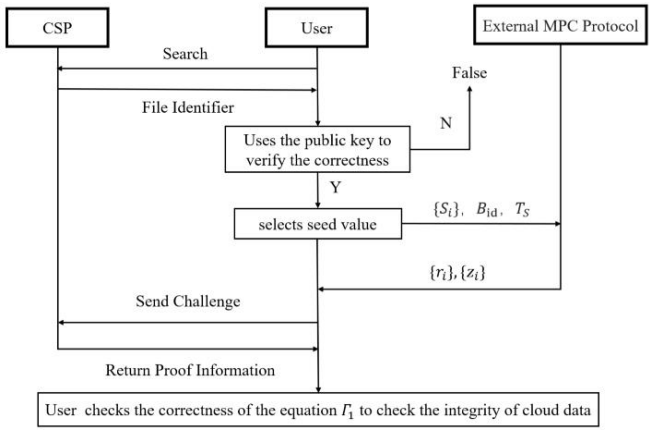

Fig. 3. Step-4 integrity verification.

5) Step-5: Create transaction: User U can generate effective file tamper proof records by integrating auxiliary information from file F into a transaction in the blockchain. This allows other users to have a clear understanding of the storage service quality provided by CSP and helps them choose the most suitable storage service. The details are as follows. User U calculate:

$$Data = H(ID_U) \parallel H(ID_F) \parallel flag \cdot Pay \parallel \delta \parallel Aug_F \quad (12)$$

where, $flag \cdot Pay > 0$ indicates that user U pays storage service fees to CSP, $flag \cdot Pay < 0$ indicates that CSP pays compensation fees to user U, and Aug_F represents additional information for file F.

As shown in Fig. 4, the user submits Smart Contract 1 to generate a transaction TX, where the transaction TX parameter is $From = EA_U$,$T_o = EA_{CSP}$ and $Data = H(ID_U) \parallel H(ID_F) \parallel flag \cdot Pay \parallel \delta \parallel Aug_F$.

Smart Contract 1

Input: $ID_U; ID_{CSP}; Data$
Output: TX
1: Compute EA_U;
2: Compute EA_{CSP};
3: $From = EA_U$;
4: $T_o = EA_{CSP}$;
5: $Value = Gas$;
6: TX= $From||T_o||Value||Data$;

Fig. 4. Smart contract 1.

After receiving the output result of Smart Contract 1, User U uses the private key ssk to generate signature information $Signature = Sig_{ssk}(\text{TX})$, and submits the transaction $\text{TX} = From \parallel T_o \parallel Value \parallel Data \parallel Signature$ to the blockchain.

6) Step-6: Fair payment: After data is uploaded to the cloud server, users need to pay for the storage services provided by CSP. As shown in Fig. 5, user U can submit Smart Contract 2 to the blockchain, where Smart Contract 2 will be automatically activated and executed. If the formula Γ_1 is established, it means that the data block $\{B_{ij}\}$ has been fully stored on the cloud server, and at this time, user U needs to pay the corresponding storage service fee to CSP. Otherwise, if the equation Γ_1 is not valid, it indicates that the data block $\{B_{ij}\}$ has been damaged or lost, and CSP needs to take corresponding responsibility and provide certain compensation for the damage or loss of the data. The mechanism of fair payment is shown in Fig. 6.

Smart Contract 2

Input: $ID_U; ID_{CSP}; Pay_{stor}; Pay_{comp}$
Output: $flag$
1: Compute EA_U;
2: Compute EA_{CSP};
3: **If** (Γ_1) **then**
4: $Pay = Pay_{stor}$;
5: $flag = 1$;
6: **Else**
7: $Pay = -Pay_{stor}$;
8: $flag = -1$;
9: **Return** $flag$

Fig. 5. Smart contract 2.

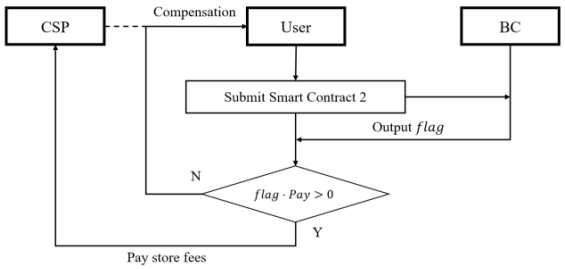

Fig. 6. Step-6 fair payment.

D. File Download

The user first submits a download request to the CSP and retrieves all encrypted data blocks. To verify the consistency of the data and restore the original file F, the process is as follows:

The encrypted data blocks are used as leaf nodes to construct a Merkle hash tree, from which the root node R_C is derived.

An external Multi-Party Computation (MPC) protocol is executed to verify the consistency of the data blocks. This step ensures a secure verification process without revealing any actual data to individual parties, while confirming that the blocks have not been tampered with.

The user then parses the transaction TX from the blockchain to extract the file identifier and associated verification metadata.

Verify the correctness of equation $\Gamma_2: e(\delta, g) = e(H(R_C), y)$. If the equation Γ_2 holds true, it confirms the integrity and authenticity of the data blocks.

The decryption keys K_{B_i} are securely distributed among multiple parties using the MPC protocol. This ensures that no single party has access to the complete decryption key, enhancing the security of the decryption process.

With the securely distributed keys, decrypt each data block using the AES-GCM algorithm:

$$B_i = AES\text{–}GCM\text{–}decrypt\left(K_{B_i}, C_{B_i}\right) \tag{13}$$

Reassemble the original file $F = \{B_i\}$ from the decrypted data blocks B_i.

Fig. 7 shows the complete file download process.

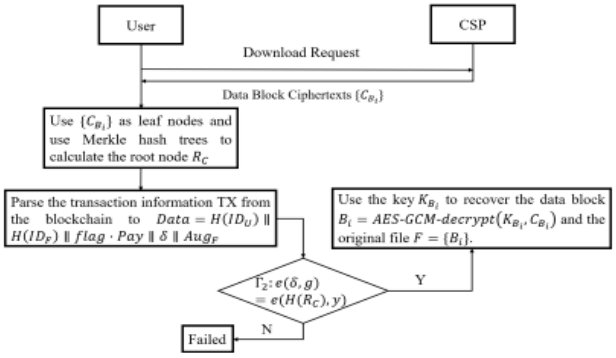

Fig. 7. File download.

E. File Update

When a data block B_i in file F needs to be updated to a new version, the process incorporates MPC to enhance privacy and security.

User U first encrypts the updated data block using the PBKDF2 key derivation function and the AES-GCM encryption algorithm to encrypt the updated data block B_i' to obtain the ciphertext C_i', and recalculates the homomorphic signature $\sigma_i' = (H(W_i) \cdot u^{C'_{B_i}})^x$. Subsequently, user U will send an update request (i, C_i', σ_i') to CSP. CSP replaces the ciphertext block C_i in file F with the new block C_i' and send $\{\varpi_i\}$ to user U, where ϖ_i represents the information of the sibling nodes associated with the path from $H(C_i')$ to the root node.

User U first calculates the value R_C of the root node based on $\{\varpi_i\}$ and $H(C_i)$, and then continues to verify whether the condition $\Gamma_2: e(\delta, g) = e(H(R_C)^x, g)$ holds. If it is true, it indicates that the position updated by the server is correct, that is, the ciphertext block C_i' is the updated block of ciphertext block C_i.

User U recalculates the value R_C' of the root node based on $\{\varpi_i\}$ and $H(B_i')$, and signs it $\delta' = H(R_C')^x$. Then, U recalculates the $Data = H(ID_U) \parallel H(ID_F) \parallel flag \cdot Pay \parallel \delta' \parallel Aug_F$, and finally integrates the $Data$ information into a blockchain transaction on the blockchain. The insertion and deletion operations of data blocks can refer to the data block update operations mentioned above.

V. Security Analysis

This section evaluates the proposed scheme against the adversarial threats defined in Section III and demonstrates how the system satisfies its key security objectives.

A. Data Integrity and Unforgetability

Theorem 1: If the user does indeed download the original uploaded data, then the user will be able to successfully pass data consistency verification, with the process further secured by MPC.

Proof: In this scheme, when users download encrypted data $\{CB_i\}$ from the CSP, it is necessary to verify the consistency of their data in order to recover the correct original plaintext F. To achieve this goal, users can utilize a Merkle hash tree to compute the root node R, where the root node R is determined by all data block ciphertexts $\{CB_i\}$ as leaf nodes. If any part of this information is altered, the value of R will also change accordingly. Users can verify the correctness of the following equation to detect data consistency.

If equation $\Gamma_2: e(\delta, g)$ holds true, it indicates that the downloaded ciphertext information $\{CB_i\}$ corresponds to the originally uploaded data. Subsequently, the user can recover the original file through convergence keys. Otherwise, if equation Γ2 does not hold true, it signifies that during the downloading process, the ciphertext of data blocks $\{CB_i\}$ has been corrupted.

B. Privacy Preservation

Theorem 1: This scheme can ensure the privacy protection of user data, and adversary X cannot obtain any useful information about user data during the integrity verification process.

Proof: The parameters $\{r, z, \mu, \delta, \sigma\}$ involved in this scheme do not expose any information about the user-uploaded data blocks B_i. In particular, there is a security vulnerability in the integrity verification scheme based on HLA, where in the integrity verification process, adversary X would utilize the generation of aggregate signature $\mu' = \sum_{i \in I} z_i C_{B_i}$, by repeatedly selecting indices (i, z_i) to obtain specific linear combinations. Finally, by solving linear equations, adversary X could extract user information contained in the aggregate signature.

C. Fair Payment Guarantee

The smart contract logic enforces incentive compatibility between the DO and CSP. Both parties deposit tokens before an audit round. The contract releases:

- Payment to the CSP if the audit passes.
- Refund or penalty compensation to the DO if the audit fails.

This design ensures that CSPs cannot receive rewards without proving data possession, and DOs cannot cheat without valid evidence. All transactions and outcomes are verifiable and immutable on the blockchain ledger, providing accountability without external arbitration.

D. Resistance to Replay and Collusion

Each audit challenge is freshly generated via secure on-chain randomness (e.g., Keccak-based hash or block nonce). Since the challenge indices and weights are unpredictable, a CSP cannot reuse previous responses (replay resistance).

In addition, the smart contract acts as an impartial, decentralized entity. Any attempt by DO and CSP to collude would be visible on-chain. Moreover, data tags and Merkle roots are bound to each user and file instance, making it infeasible to reuse or share tags across users (collusion resistance).

E. Soundness and Completeness of Verification

The verification algorithm satisfies:

- Completeness: If the CSP honestly stores all data and follows the protocol, verification always passes.
- Soundness: If any challenged block is corrupted or missing, the aggregated tag will not satisfy the bilinear verification equation, and the audit will fail with overwhelming probability.

Under the random oracle model, the probability of passing an audit without the correct data is negligible.

VI. Evaluation and Results

In this section, we evaluate the performance of our proposed scheme in terms of computational overhead, communication cost, and scalability. We also compare it against existing schemes to demonstrate its efficiency and practicality.

A. Experimental Setup

All experiments were conducted on a machine with an Intel Core i7-11700 CPU, 16 GB RAM, running Ubuntu 22.04. The implementation was developed in Python and Solidity. The blockchain environment is a local Ethereum testnet using Ganache, and smart contracts were deployed using the Truffle scheme.

We use the following cryptographic primitives:

- AES-GCM (128-bit) for symmetric encryption.
- Keccak-256 for hashing and challenge randomness.
- HLA over elliptic curve groups (BLS12-381).
- PBKDF2 for key derivation from file ID.

We evaluate performance on files ranging from 10 MB to 1 GB, and measure:

- Tag generation time
- Audit-proof generation and verification time
- Encryption time
- MPC overhead (optional component)
- Gas cost of smart contract interactions

B. Tag Generation and Upload Performance

As shown in Fig. 8, the tag generation time grows linearly with the file size. For a 100 MB file, the average tag generation takes 1.2 seconds, which is significantly lower than Zhou et al. and Sankar, both of which exceed 2.5 seconds under similar settings [10][11].

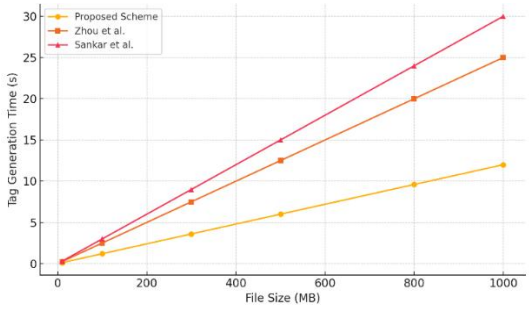

Fig. 8. Tag generation time vs. File size.

The AES-GCM encryption adds a fixed overhead of approximately 0.9 seconds per 100 MB, which remains acceptable in practice. Combined upload time remains under 2.5 seconds per 100 MB.

C. Audit Efficiency

Fig. 9 presents the time taken by the CSP to compute the audit proof and the time taken by the smart contract to verify it. Even for files of 500 MB, the audit process completes within 200 ms. The aggregated tag greatly reduces computational effort compared to verifying each block individually.

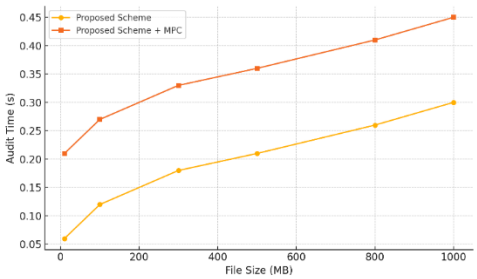

Fig. 9. Audit time vs. File size.

With MPC enabled, verification time increases modestly due to interaction rounds, reaching 420 ms for a 500 MB file. However, this added cost ensures privacy without revealing μ.

D. Data Update Overhead

Fig. 10 shows the cost of a single block update (modify/insert/delete). Tag recomputation and Merkle tree adjustment combined take less than 80 ms per block. On-chain update verification (including Merkle path) adds ~15,000 gas (~$0.03 equivalent on Ethereum).

This demonstrates that dynamic updates are practical and lightweight.

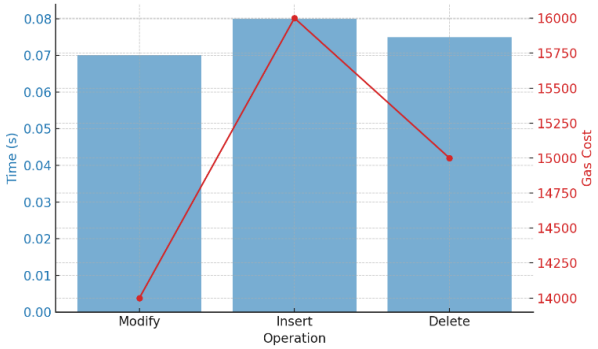

Fig. 10. Update overhead per operation.

E. Smart Contract Gas Cost

Fig. 11 shows the estimated gas consumption of core smart contract functions. Contract 1 handles audit-related operations, while Contract 2 governs fair payment and dispute resolution. Deployment is the most gas-intensive, followed by storage-heavy and payment functions.

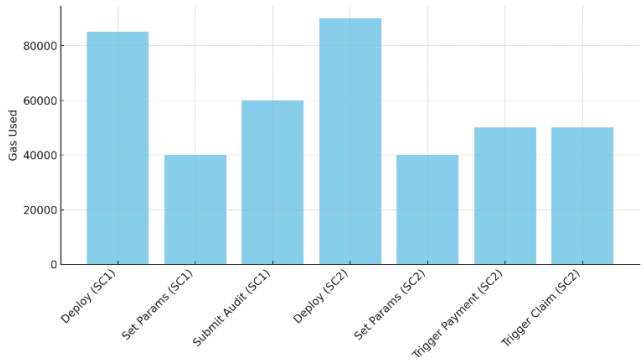

Fig. 11. Smart contract gas consumption.

The core smart contract functions involved in each audit namely, submitting audit evidence and triggering payment consume approximately 90,000 to 100,000 gas in total, which demonstrates the practical feasibility and scalability of the proposed scheme.

F. Comparison with Existing Schemes

Fig. 12 compares our scheme with Zhou et al. and Liu in terms of audit latency and update overhead [10][13]. This scheme consistently outperforms baselines due to:

- Tag aggregation via HLA (vs. per-block tag checking).
- No third-party verifier involvement.
- On-chain automation via smart contracts.

For 1 GB files, our scheme achieves 35 to 50 per cent reduction in audit time and 30 per cent lower update cost.

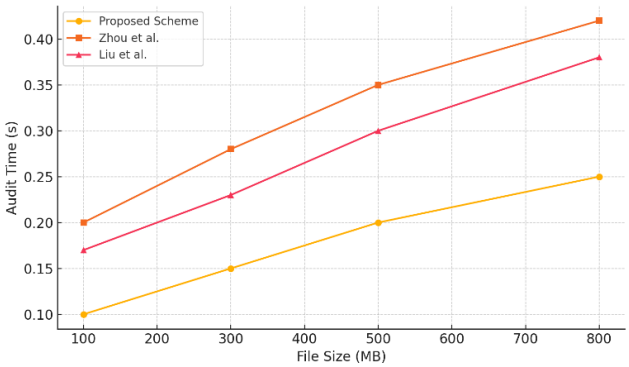

Fig. 12. Comparison with existing schemes.

VII. Conclusion

This study proposes a blockchain-based integrity verification scheme for encrypted cloud data that achieves decentralized auditing, privacy preservation, and fair economic incentives. By integrating Homomorphic Linear Authenticators (HLA), Multi-Party Computation (MPC), and smart contracts, the scheme eliminates reliance on third-party auditors and ensures automatic and transparent dispute resolution and payment settlement between data owners and cloud service providers. The system supports dynamic data operations and enables encrypted data verification without exposing plaintext information. Security analysis confirms that the scheme achieves data integrity, confidentiality, fairness, and resistance to replay and collusion attacks. Experimental results further demonstrate that the proposed protocol achieves low audit latency, acceptable computation and communication overhead, and practical gas consumption.

Despite its advantages, the proposed scheme has several limitations. First, the use of MPC introduces additional communication overhead, which may affect performance in large-scale or resource-constrained environments. Second, the prototype is designed for a single-cloud setting and does not fully consider multi-cloud interoperability or cross-chain audit synchronization. Third, the cost of deploying smart contracts and executing transactions on public blockchains may increase under high network congestion or volatile gas prices.

Future research will focus on three directions:

- Optimizing the MPC protocol and reducing on-chain interaction costs through lightweight cryptographic primitives or zero-knowledge proofs;
- Extending the framework to support multi-cloud and cross-provider integrity verification, enabling collaboration and redundancy among distributed storage services;
- Migrating the scheme to Layer-2 or permissioned blockchain platforms to reduce gas consumption and enhance scalability.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The work described in this study was supported by Sichuan Vocational College of Information Technology, Guangyuan, China. Sichuan Vocational College of Information Technology, 2025 Research Project (2025KC02).

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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EEG-Based Imagined-Speech Decoding: A Review

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***Abstract*—Non-invasive neural speech interfaces aim to reconstruct intended words from brain activity, offering critical communication options for individuals with severe dysarthria or locked-in syndrome. Among the available recording modalities, electroencephalography (EEG) remains the most accessible and cost-effective choice for long-term brain–computer interface (BCI) applications. Decoding imagined speech from EEG, however, remains difficult because of low signal-to-noise ratio, pronounced inter-subject variability, and the small, heterogeneous corpora that are currently available. This review adopts a narrative methodology to synthesise peer-reviewed studies on EEG-based imagined-speech decoding. Relevant articles were identified through keyword-based searches in major digital libraries and were included if they used non-invasive EEG, explicitly instructed imagined or covert speech, and reported quantitative decoding performance. The selected studies are organised along the processing pipeline, from experimental paradigms and data acquisition to preprocessing, feature extraction, representation learning, and classification. Across this body of work, binary imagined-speech tasks that rely on carefully designed time–frequency features and shallow classifiers often report accuracies above 80 percent, whereas multi-class word or phoneme recognition exhibits a much wider spread of performance and remains highly sensitive to dataset design and evaluation protocol. Recent trends favour convolutional and recurrent neural networks, temporal convolutional networks, and transfer learning strategies, which improve performance on some datasets but do not yet resolve fundamental issues of restricted vocabularies, inconsistent evaluation practices, and limited cross-subject generalisation. The review distils these observations into practical recommendations for dataset construction, model design, and evaluation protocols and outlines research directions aimed at more robust and clinically meaningful EEG-based imagined-speech BCIs.**

***Keywords*—Electroencephalography (EEG); Imagined speech; Brain–Computer Interfaces (BCIs); neural speech decoding; deep learning; transfer learning; time–frequency analysis; evaluation protocols**

I. Introduction

Human–computer interaction is increasingly seeking to bypass impaired neuromuscular pathways by directly reading intent from the brain. Brain–computer interfaces (BCIs) instantiate this vision by translating neural activity into actionable commands, opening communication channels for people with severe dysarthria or locked-in syndrome (e.g., ALS) [1]. Among BCI paradigms, imagined speech, which involves mentally articulating words without overt movement, provides a highly natural control signal that aligns closely with the cognitive actions users intend to perform.

Multiple neuroimaging modalities have been explored for imagined speech, such as electroencephalography (EEG) [2], [3], electrocorticography (ECoG) [4], and magnetoencephalography (MEG) [5]. EEG remains the most practical route for broad deployment due to its non-invasiveness, portability, and millisecond-scale temporal resolution [2], [3]. Yet decoding imagined speech from scalp potentials is intrinsically difficult: signals are low-amplitude and noisy, non-stationary across sessions, and highly variable across subjects; vocabularies are small; and existing corpora are heterogeneous and limited in size [6], [7]. These factors jointly confound generalisation and inflate reported accuracies under convenient but optimistic evaluation splits.

Early pipelines relied on handcrafted representations, band-limited filtering, and artefact suppression techniques (such as notch filtering and Independent Component Analysis, or ICA). This was followed by the extraction of features like Common Spatial Patterns (CSP), Power Spectral Density (PSD), wavelets, Hjorth parameters, and Riemannian mappings, which were then fed into conventional classifiers. Recent advancements have shifted towards deep learning methods for end-to-end representation and sequence modelling. Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) are now commonly used to capture spatial-spectral structures, while Bidirectional Long Short-Term Memory networks (BLSTMs) and Transformers are employed to model temporal dynamics. This approach is often supplemented by transfer learning and self- or contrastive pretraining to address challenges such as data scarcity and cross-subject variability [8], [9]. Although there has been encouraging progress, the field still lacks unified protocols for train/test splits (intra- vs. cross-subject), consistent metrics (accuracy/F1 vs. sequence-level WER), and transparent baselines with code releases. These limitations hinder reproducibility and fair comparisons across imagined speech datasets [5].

Several review articles have previously examined speech-related brain–computer interfaces and neural speech decoding from a broad perspective, often spanning both invasive and non-invasive modalities or merging imagined speech with overt, whispered, or attempted speech paradigms. These surveys are valuable for framing the overall landscape,

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particularly the neurophysiology of speech production and the evolution of decoding architectures, yet they often treat EEG-based imagined speech as a secondary case within a wider taxonomy of neural speech interfaces [45], [46], [47], [48]. As a result, key methodological details that strongly determine EEG performance, such as trial segmentation conventions, artefact handling, representation choices, and cross-subject evaluation practice, are frequently dispersed across sections rather than consolidated into an end-to-end pipeline view. In contrast, the present review is deliberately scoped to non-invasive EEG-based imagined-speech decoding and is organised along the full processing chain from acquisition and signal conditioning to representation learning and evaluation, with the aim of making both the current state of the art and its unresolved gaps more transparent to readers.

This article adopts a narrative review methodology with a defined scope and explicit selection criteria to improve transparency and replicability. Relevant literature was identified through keyword-based searches in major digital libraries, including IEEE Xplore, PubMed, Scopus, and Google Scholar, using combinations of terms such as “imagined speech”, “covert speech”, “silent speech”, “EEG”, “brain–computer interface”, and “neural speech decoding”. Studies were included if they used non-invasive EEG in human participants, employed explicit imagined or covert speech tasks at the level of phonemes, syllables, words, or short phrases, and reported quantitative decoding results. Studies were excluded if they relied solely on invasive recordings, did not include an imagined-speech component, or were non-empirical papers without original experimental evaluation. Screening was performed in two stages, first by title and abstract to remove clearly irrelevant work, then by full-text inspection to verify modality, task design, and reported outcomes. To reduce selection bias and ensure coverage of influential lines of work, citation chaining was applied to key papers, and the final set was prioritised toward peer-reviewed sources that reported sufficient experimental detail to permit methodological comparison, particularly regarding preprocessing, data splits, and evaluation metrics.

The objectives of this review are to:

- Summarise publicly available imagined-speech EEG datasets, their experimental paradigms, acquisition setups, preprocessing techniques, and data-structuring strategies for deep learning;
- Provide actionable recommendations for designing efficient and generalisable deep-learning architectures tailored to EEG-based imagined-speech decoding; and
- Examine the potential of EEG-driven deep learning for advancing neural speech interpretation and assistive communication technologies.

The remainder of this paper is organised as follows. Section II reviews the foundations of EEG, data acquisition protocols, and preprocessing methods. Section III presents feature engineering and deep learning approaches. Section IV discusses evaluation protocols and metrics. Section V synthesises results and discussion, and Section VI concludes with future research perspectives.

II. EEG Foundations, Data Acquisition, and Preprocessing

A. Electroencephalography (EEG)

Electroencephalography (EEG) is a non-invasive method for measuring brain electrical activity, where electrodes placed on the scalp detect voltage differences generated by brain transmissions, forming signals [10]. EEG systems typically use 14–64 electrodes, producing multidimensional signals, and are favoured for Brain-Computer Interfaces (BCIs) due to their non-invasiveness, simplicity, and high temporal resolution. However, EEG is susceptible to motion artefacts and myoelectric interference, especially during spoken language, posing challenges for Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) [11]. Despite these challenges, EEG has been effectively used to analyse perceived speech and classify imagined phonics [12].

EEG signals are categorised into five frequency bands: gamma (>35 Hz), beta (12–35 Hz), alpha (8–12 Hz), theta (4–8 Hz), and delta (0.5–4 Hz) [13], each of which corresponds to distinct cognitive states. Gamma waves, for example, are linked to overt and covert speech, showing significant changes in various brain regions [14]. Beta waves are associated with muscle activity and speech generation, while alpha waves are crucial for auditory feedback and speech perception, with lower frequencies during covert speech [3]. Theta waves support phonemic restoration and the processing of coarticulation cues [14], aiding in consonant identification [15]. Lastly, delta waves play a role in intonation, rhythm, and other speech-related processes [16].

B. Data Acquisition

Acquiring high-quality EEG data is pivotal in developing Brain-Computer Interface (BCI) systems for deciphering imagined speech. The process involves recording the brain's electrical activity through electrodes on the scalp. This section outlines the key factors and methodologies for collecting EEG data for imagined speech recognition.

In the study, participants were presented with speech cues (either vowels or words) through visual, auditory, or audiovisual means. When these cues were shown before the imagery of speech, participants memorised them, which helped to differentiate the imagined speech task from reading or listening tasks. Participants engaged in imagined speech while simultaneously performing reading or listening tasks in scenarios where cues were provided concurrently. It is important to note that listening and reading activate different areas of the brain: the temporal lobes are involved in listening, while the occipital lobes are activated during reading. Therefore, the format of the cues and their timing in relation to imagined speech can impact brain activation patterns.

The acquisition protocol of the Arizona State University dataset [17] solely employed visual cues, presented simultaneously with an imagined speech recording. Subjects performed speech imagery at each "beep" until cue cessation (7 x T seconds), using short and long words. Common Spatial Pattern (CSP) was applied to identify active brain areas. Results highlighted activity primarily in the left frontal, middle, and parietal regions, corresponding to the motor cortex and

language areas. The KaraOne dataset [18] employing separate cue presentation aimed at distinguishing pronounced and imagined speech states. Central brain areas showed discriminative features. Without a specified rationale, Coretto et al. [19] employed a distinct protocol utilising audio and visual cues before imagined speech tasks. They used vowels and Spanish words, recording EEG data without spatial analysis. Further investigation is warranted to ascertain brain regions involved in cue processing.

Studies have elicited speech imagery at multiple linguistic levels, including vowels [17], phonemes [18], syllables [20], words [21], [22] and sentences [23] .As summarised in Fig. 1, word classification constitutes the largest share of reported EEG imagined-speech tasks, followed by vowel and phoneme or consonant–vowel targets, with a smaller fraction devoted to phrase-level decoding and symbol-like targets (digits or letters). This distribution is not only a matter of experimental convenience. Coarser targets such as isolated words reduce label ambiguity, shorten annotation pipelines, and often permit simpler evaluation, whereas phoneme-level and phrase-level settings impose stricter demands on temporal alignment, representation capacity, and cross-subject robustness. Consequently, comparisons across papers should be interpreted in light of the underlying task unit, because “high accuracy” in a small closed vocabulary does not imply comparable progress toward open-vocabulary decoding.

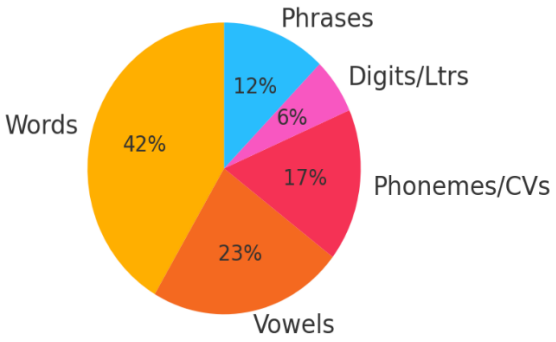

Fig. 1. Speech unit types across studies.

Sub-lexical units, such as vowels, phonemes, and syllables, are often used to focus on early planning and articulatory coding. In contrast, lexical items and binary-response questions (like yes/no) explore message preparation with a greater emphasis on syntactic and semantic complexity. From the literature we reviewed, we identified 28 EEG datasets related to imagined speech: eight are publicly available and twenty are private. Dataset selection is concentrated around a small number of publicly available corpora, which shapes what is routinely benchmarked and what remains underexplored. Fig. 2 shows that Kara One, the Coretto database, and the ASU dataset dominate the empirical evidence base, while other datasets appear only sporadically. This imbalance has practical implications. First, methodological “trends” can become dataset-specific, optimised to a narrow range of paradigms and recording setups. Second, generalisation claims are often constrained by repeated evaluation on the same few corpora, sometimes with inconsistent splitting conventions across studies. For readers, the figure clarifies why cross-dataset conclusions should be framed cautiously, and why broader benchmarking across heterogeneous corpora is essential for credible progress.

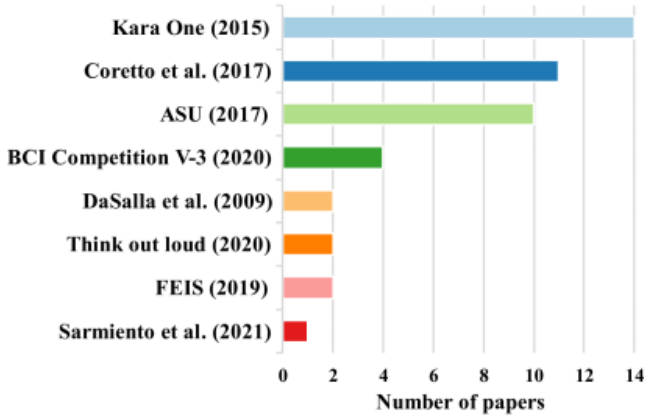

Fig. 2. EEG-based imagined speech public datasets.

In summary, collecting EEG data for imagined speech recognition is a complex process that involves configuring the EEG system, removing artefacts, designing experiments, and taking individual subject considerations into account. Advances in EEG technology and data acquisition methods hold promise for improving brain-computer interface (BCI) systems tailored for imagined speech applications.

C. Preprocessing Techniques

During imagined speech tasks, the raw EEG signals are prone to various artefacts and noise, which can significantly impair subsequent feature extraction and classification stages. Hence, suitable preprocessing methods are crucial for enhancing the signal-to-noise ratio and extracting pertinent information from the EEG data. Nonetheless, effectively cleaning the data without sacrificing important information or features for later analysis or pattern recognition remains challenging. It's crucial to remove noise before downsampling to avoid misinterpreting downsampled values as noise.

In cases where EEG acquisition involves a high sampling rate, such as 1000Hz, downsampling is often employed to balance computational efficiency and data integrity. However, it may lead to the loss of important features. Thus, using the original sample size could facilitate observing discriminative speech recognition features while considering available resources [24].

Standard preprocessing techniques include band-pass filtering, blind source separation (BSS), and subtracting mean values from each channel to remove high-frequency noise and focus on the frequency bands most relevant for speech processes [12]. Notch filters at 60 Hz and band-pass filters with various frequency ranges, such as 0.5-100 Hz [25], 1-50 Hz [26], and 2-40 Hz [27], have been applied to eliminate powerline interference, and the signals were segmented into 5-second epochs with a 0.5-second overlap to capture temporal dynamics. Other preprocessing methods include independent component analysis (ICA) [7], artefact removal [28], sliding window data augmentation [29], and baseline correction [28]. As a result, end-to-end learning methods that require minimal

preprocessing have gained interest in EEG classification. However, directly classifying nearly raw EEG signals remains challenging and requires further investigation [30].

III. Representation Learning and Decoding

In most imagined-speech studies, EEG processing follows a broadly similar structure. After artefact removal and band-limited filtering, continuous recordings are segmented into trials aligned with cue onsets or imagery windows. These trials are re-referenced or normalised, then transformed into representations that emphasise spatial patterns, spectral content, temporal dynamics, or connectivity structure. Handcrafted features compress each trial into a fixed-dimensional vector, which is then passed to a classifier, while deep models often operate directly on multichannel time series or time–frequency maps and learn discriminative features jointly with the decoder. The subsections below describe the main feature-extraction strategies and classification approaches used in this pipeline.

A. Feature Extraction

Feature extraction is a central step in decoding imagined speech from EEG, since it determines how rich but noisy neural activity is converted into stable and discriminative representations for BCI systems. The aim is to retain task-relevant information while suppressing background activity and artefacts. Commonly used transformations include Fourier, wavelet, and Hilbert–Huang decompositions, as well as spatial filtering techniques such as Common Spatial Patterns (CSP) and Principal Component Analysis (PCA). These families of methods, together with their typical application scenarios, can be conveniently summarised in a feature taxonomy table, for example Table I, to provide readers with a compact overview of the design space.

Because EEG is inherently a time-series signal, several studies have relied on time-domain models such as autoregressive (AR) coefficients [31] or borrowed representations from speech processing, such as Mel Frequency Cepstral Coefficients (MFCC) [32]. On the KARAONE dataset, MFCC features achieved higher performance than simple statistical and non-linear descriptors, with reported accuracies of 19.69 percent for MFCC, 15.91 percent for statistical features, and 14.67 percent for non-linear features on an 11-class task, where chance level is 9.09 percent [33]. This pattern is consistent with the intuition that MFCCs capture spectral envelopes and formant-related structure that are more tightly linked to articulatory and phonetic content than raw amplitude statistics. In a related line of work, some authors have treated EEG segments as sequences of local "visual words" and applied Bag of Features (BoF) models, effectively borrowing ideas from text and image representation to capture recurring temporal patterns [34].

Functional and effective connectivity features have received comparatively less attention in imagined-speech decoding, despite their potential to quantify coordinated activity across brain regions. Qureshi et al. [35] employed functional connectivity descriptors, including covariance and the maximum linear cross-correlation coefficient (MaxLCor), and reported 87.90 percent accuracy in a binary imagined-speech classification task. Pawar et al. [36] combined MaxLCor with Discrete Wavelet Transform (DWT) features and obtained 40.64 ± 2.45 percent accuracy. These results suggest that connectivity measures can enhance discrimination, particularly when combined with spectral or time–frequency features, but they have not yet been systematically explored for larger vocabularies or more challenging cross-subject settings.

A further design decision concerns whether features are extracted per channel or jointly across channels. Single-channel analysis is simpler and can highlight localised activity, but simultaneous extraction from multiple channels provides a more realistic view of distributed speech networks. Channel cross-covariance (CCV) matrices are a common way to encode such multichannel structure, since they aggregate relationships between electrodes into a compact form that can be processed by classical or deep models [37]. CCV can be computed in both time and frequency domains and over different window lengths, such as 0.25, 0.5, or 1 second, which allows the representation to trade temporal resolution for robustness [38].

Beyond these families, several works have employed Mel Frequency Cepstral Coefficients (MFCC) [25], Discrete Wavelet Transform (DWT) [21], Wavelet Packet Decomposition (WPD), Short-Time Fourier Transform (STFT) [28], and low-order statistical descriptors [15], [21]. In some cases, investigators have treated the raw microvolt values across channels as a high-dimensional feature vector without additional handcrafted compression [39]. This strategy maximises information content but places a heavier burden on the classifier and typically requires larger datasets or strong regularisation. Overall, the literature reflects a gradual evolution from hand-engineered spectral and spatial markers toward more structured, multichannel representations that are better suited for deep learning.

B. Classification Approaches

Once features have been extracted, the next step is to map each trial to its corresponding imagined-speech category, for example, a word, phoneme, or binary decision. The literature spans a spectrum of classifiers, from shallow machine learning models to deep neural architectures, each motivated by different assumptions about the structure and complexity of EEG data.

Early work relied primarily on traditional machine learning algorithms. Nguyen et al. [40] represented trials as tangent vectors on a Riemannian manifold of covariance matrices and employed a multiclass relevance vector machine to discriminate vowels and short words, achieving accuracies up to 49 percent. This approach leverages the geometry of covariance space to improve robustness but remains limited by linear decision boundaries in the tangent space. Sereshkeh et al. [41] combined autoregressive coefficients and DWT features with a support vector machine (SVM) and achieved 69.3 percent accuracy in online decoding of binary "yes" versus "no" decisions, highlighting the strength of SVMs when feature engineering is carefully tuned to the task. Cooney et al. [33] compared multiple feature sets and found that MFCC features paired with an SVM classifier produced the best performance on an 11-class imagined-speech task, with 22.7

percent accuracy, which exceeds chance but also illustrates the difficulty of multi-class decoding in realistic scenarios.

As datasets and vocabularies grew, many studies shifted toward deep learning to learn representations and decision boundaries jointly. Several efforts have combined Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) and Recurrent Neural Networks (RNNs) to capture spatial and temporal structure, respectively [42]. In some cases, feature vectors, for example channel covariance matrices, are passed through a Deep Autoencoder (DAE) that compresses them into low-dimensional latent codes, which are then used for classification. Siamese networks have been introduced to refine these latent spaces by enforcing that trials with the same label are mapped closer to one another than trials from different classes, which improves discriminability in settings with limited training examples [30]. Using the same Coretto dataset [19], such metric-learning extensions have been reported to outperform baseline architectures without Siamese constraints [27].

To clarify the methodological landscape before comparing individual architectures, Fig. 3 presents the distribution of model families used across the selected studies. The figure is created by categorising each paper according to its primary decoding approach- such as conventional machine learning with handcrafted features, CNN-based models, recurrent or sequence models, and transfer learning or hybrid methods- and then summing these categories throughout the survey. Two key observations emerge: first, deep learning currently dominates recent research, due to its ability to learn task-relevant features directly from noisy, high-dimensional EEG data; second, traditional pipelines remain common in small-data scenarios because their inductive biases and fewer parameters make them easier to train and interpret. This distribution guides the organisation of Section III.B, which compares model families based on the specific problem constraints they address, rather than treating architectures as interchangeable options.

Deep learning architectures explored in this context include pure CNNs, CNN combined with Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) units, and Deep Autoencoders [7], [28]. Hierarchical designs, in which features are learned at multiple levels using stacked CNN, temporal CNN (TCNN), and DAE modules, have also been proposed [12]. Other classifiers include Random Forests (RF) [15], Support Vector Machines (SVM) [7], K-Nearest Neighbours (KNN), Naive Bayes [39], Deep Belief Networks (DBNs) [43], transfer learning schemes [29], Recurrent Neural Networks (RNNs) [43], Temporal Convolutional Networks (TCNs) [44], bimodal deep neural networks with fusion layers, Transformer-based models, and Capsule Networks. These architectures differ in how they trade off expressiveness, parameter count, and data requirements, but they share the objective of capturing complex, non-linear relationships that cannot be modelled by shallow classifiers.

Reported accuracies span a wide range and depend strongly on task design and dataset characteristics. For binary problems such as distinguishing vowels from consonants (C/V), detecting the presence or absence of nasality (±Nasal), identifying bilabial articulation (±Bilabial), or discriminating specific phonemes like /iy/ and /uw/, accuracies between 69 percent and 89 percent have been reported [26], [45]. Multi-class tasks that target larger phoneme inventories or full words achieve more variable performance, with accuracies reported from around 24.19 percent up to 97.34 percent [12], often under subject-dependent or session-specific splits that may be optimistic. Transfer learning approaches that initialise models from related EEG tasks or from other subjects have also been investigated, with accuracies of 65.65 percent [39] and 95.5 percent [29] reported in particular configurations. These figures demonstrate the potential of advanced classifiers but also underline the difficulty of comparing methods across studies with different protocols.

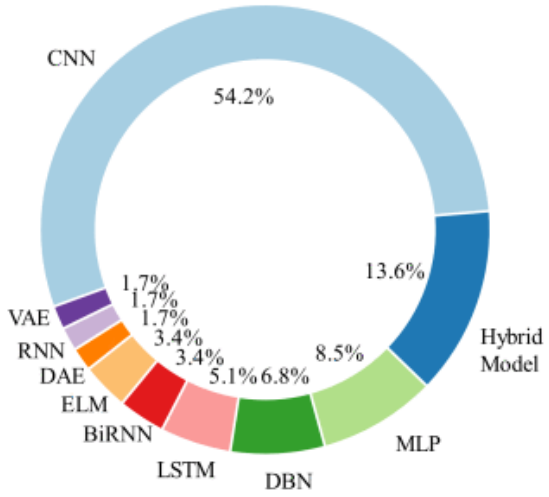

Fig. 3. Distribution of model families used for EEG imagined-speech decoding in our survey.

Despite these advances, several challenges remain for classification in imagined-speech EEG. Inter-subject variability and non-stationarity across sessions make it difficult to design models that generalise reliably beyond the conditions in which they were trained. The limited size of most labelled datasets constrains deep architectures and increases the risk of overfitting, particularly in multi-class problems and when moving toward phrase or sentence-level decoding. Current results therefore, provide important proof-of-concept evidence, but they also point to the need for larger and more diverse datasets, more rigorous cross-subject and cross-session evaluations, and classifier designs that explicitly address variability and uncertainty in real-world settings. These issues are closely linked to the evaluation protocols and metrics discussed in the following section.

IV. Evaluation Protocols and Metrics

The thorough evaluation of imagined-speech decoders relies on three key components: the metric, the validation approach, and the subject segmentation. These factors collectively influence the comparability and reliability of the reported findings across different studies. Reported evaluation practice is dominated by a narrow set of metrics, which partly explains why headline results can be difficult to compare across papers. As summarised in Fig. 4, accuracy is by far the most frequently reported metric, while complementary

measures that reveal class imbalance effects and decision reliability, such as sensitivity, specificity, F-score, and AUC, appear less consistently. Statistical testing and effect-size reporting are rare, despite the known variance induced by subject identity, session effects, and split choice. The practical consequence is that two studies may report similar accuracies while differing substantially in error structure and operational usefulness, particularly in multi-class settings where confusion patterns matter. This motivates the use of a minimal, standard metric set that pairs accuracy with class-sensitive and uncertainty-aware reporting, and it reinforces the need to publish confusion matrices and split protocols alongside aggregate numbers.

In the literature reviewed, accuracy emerges as the most common outcome measure, used in 96.6% of publications, primarily because of its straightforward interpretation for established vocabularies. To assess agreement beyond random chance and reduce issues related to class imbalance, numerous studies also present Cohen's κ (13.6%). Many researchers enhance a single scalar metric with a confusion matrix (27.1%), from which precision/PPV (11.9%), recall/sensitivity/TPR (16.9%), specificity/TNR (2%), and the F-score (15.3%) are calculated. When a classifier's function is based on a continuous decision variable or a threshold score, ROC curves and AUC serve as suitable summaries.

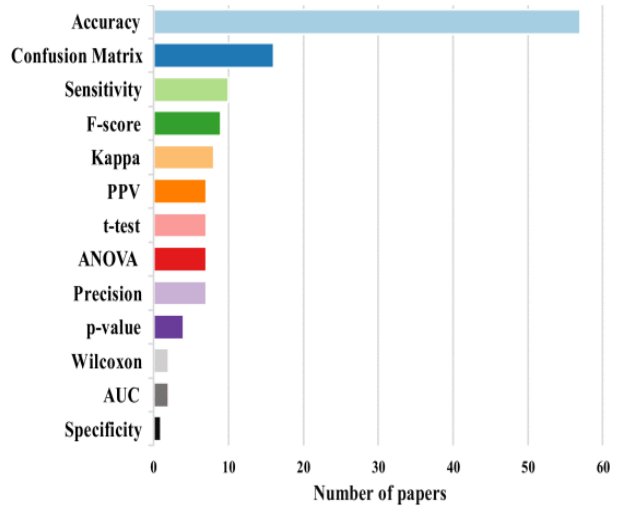

Fig. 4. Frequency of evaluation metrics reported in EEG imagined-speech studies.

Statistical testing is not yet routine in imagined-speech EEG studies, although it is essential for separating genuine methodological gains from variance induced by subject identity and split choice. Across the surveyed papers, roughly one third report inferential evidence, using p-values, t-tests, ANOVA, or non-parametric alternatives such as the Wilcoxon signed-rank test to quantify improvement over baselines. Validation practice is similarly uneven. Hold-out evaluation remains common, but cross-validation is more frequently adopted, and a substantial subset of studies explicitly reserves a validation set for hyperparameter selection, which is particularly important for deep models where tuning decisions can dominate reported performance. These methodological choices interact directly with the most consequential design decision in this literature, namely whether evaluation is subject-dependent or subject-independent. Most studies still follow subject-dependent testing, which typically yields higher scores because the model is assessed on participants represented during training. Consistent with this pattern, stronger results under subject-dependent settings have been reported in [82] and [77]. Subject-independent evaluation is more difficult because inter-subject variability is large and non-stationary, but it is the setting that best reflects practical deployment. For example, although [62] reported that a new deep model improves over conventional baselines, performance across unseen subjects remains weaker than within-subject testing. Against this methodological background, Fig. 5 summarises reported accuracies by target type. Short word sets tend to produce higher central performance than phoneme-level decoding, with vowel classification typically intermediate, a hierarchy that follows expected differences in temporal granularity and class separability. Fig. 5 also includes a sentence-level reference group from high-density ECoG, which provides an upper-bound context given its higher signal fidelity and should not be interpreted as directly comparable to scalp EEG. Overall, the figure reinforces a practical interpretation principle: progress should be judged not only by peak accuracy, but by robustness under stricter splits and by performance retention when moving from simplified targets toward linguistically richer decoding tasks.

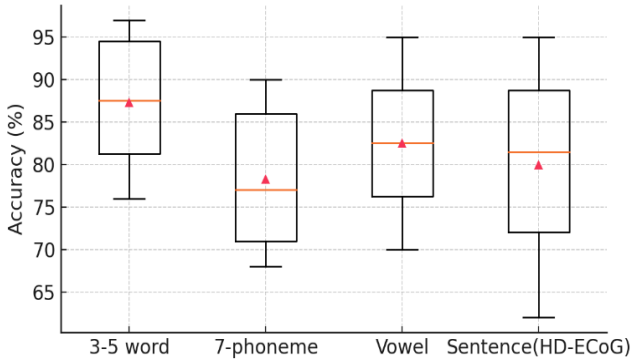

Fig. 5. Reported accuracy ranges per task granularity.

V. Results and Discussion

The surveyed literature shows that EEG-based imagined-speech decoding has moved from proof-of-concept demonstrations to increasingly sophisticated pipelines that combine advanced preprocessing, feature learning, and deep classifiers. Yet, even the strongest reported systems remain some distance from robust, general-purpose communication tools. The gap arises from a combination of signal-level limitations, constrained datasets, substantial inter-subject variability, and heterogeneous evaluation practices that make it difficult to compare methods or to judge their readiness for real-world use.

The corpus of studies considered in this review was drawn from major digital libraries and includes work that focuses on artificial intelligence techniques, feature extraction methods, signal filtering, and data acquisition strategies for speech-related EEG decoding. Most of the selected articles are peer-reviewed journal publications [45], [46], [47], [48], with a

noticeable concentration of contributions from research groups in Korea and India [30], [47], [21], [26]. Foundational work appeared between 2013 and 2016, but the number of publications increased sharply in 2020 and 2021, reflecting a recent shift toward deep learning and transfer learning approaches in this domain.

Table I provides a compact overview of representative studies on EEG-based imagined-speech decoding. It lists, for each work, the task design, preprocessing steps, feature extraction methods, classifiers, and corresponding accuracies. Several patterns emerge. Binary imagined-speech tasks, such as distinguishing a small set of directional commands or phonological contrasts, frequently report accuracies above 80 percent [21], [44], while multi-class settings display wider variation, with values ranging from about 24 percent to above 90 percent depending on vocabulary size, feature choices, and the evaluation protocol [12], [20], [59], [60], [61], [63]. Methods that rely on rich time–frequency representations, including DWT, RADWT, SPWVD, and other time–frequency images coupled with CNN or TCN architectures, account for many of the top-performing models [21], [44], [59]–[61]. Transfer learning, often with ResNet or DenseNet backbones, yields additional gains when labelled data are limited [20], [29], [54].

In comparative terms, EEG-based decoding still trails invasive or high-field modalities in maximum performance. ECoG studies have reported accuracies of 88.3 percent for pairwise imagined-speech classification [49] and 98.8 percent for syllable recognition using spatio-spectral feature clustering [50]. MEG-based systems have achieved phrase classification accuracies around 95 percent [51]. These results illustrate what is possible when spatial resolution and signal-to-noise ratio are high, but they depend on invasive surgery or bulky laboratory hardware. EEG, by contrast, is non-invasive, relatively inexpensive, and portable, which makes it attractive for eventual clinical and home use despite its lower ceiling on accuracy. In practice, current EEG systems are most promising when restricted to modest vocabularies, such as command sets including “up”, “down”, “left”, “right”, “forward”, “backward”, and “select”, which can control screens, mobile devices, or prosthetic devices [52].

To turn this heterogeneous body of work into a coherent roadmap, the remaining discussion is organised into four closely related themes: signal quality and representation, dataset scale and linguistic diversity, individual variability and generalisation, and evaluation protocols and practical deployment. Each theme is framed as an open challenge, then linked to existing studies that partly address it, and finally used to motivate specific directions for future research.

A. Signal Quality and Representation

Low signal-to-noise ratio is an intrinsic limitation of non-invasive EEG. Imagined speech generates weak and spatially diffuse activity that must be recovered in the presence of ocular, muscular, and environmental artefacts. Many of the works in Table I address this by combining classical denoising, such as bandpass and notch filtering, Independent Component Analysis, and Common Average Referencing, with carefully designed features [20], [21], [60], [61]. Time–frequency methods, including DWT, RADWT, SPWVD, and other time–frequency images, further concentrate energy into discriminative bands. When these representations are fed to CNNs, TCNs, or hybrid deep architectures, substantial performance gains are obtained [21], [44], [59]–[61].

These approaches, however, remain tailored to controlled imagery windows and predefined frequency ranges. They are rarely tested in more naturalistic, continuous settings, and their performance may degrade when task timing is variable or when artefact statistics change between sessions. Moreover, most feature pipelines are hand-tuned to particular datasets, which complicates reuse across tasks. One natural extension of the current literature is to replace fixed front-ends with adaptive or learned ones that are trained jointly with the classifier, for example, denoising autoencoders, learnable filterbanks, or self-supervised objectives that encourage separation of neural signal and artefacts. Such work would build directly on the existing time–frequency and connectivity-based representations, but would aim to make them more robust and less dependent on manual feature engineering.

B. Dataset Scale, Vocabulary, and Linguistic Diversity

A second, closely related challenge concerns dataset size and linguistic coverage. Many studies in Table I employ relatively small subject pools and limited vocabularies, often focusing on a handful of vowels, short words, or simple commands [21], [44], [59]–[61], [63]. This is understandable, since imagined-speech experiments are demanding and EEG recording sessions are time-consuming. Nevertheless, small datasets restrict the expressive power that can be used in models, and they make it hard to separate genuine algorithmic improvements from overfitting to narrow tasks. A few works have attempted to move beyond this constraint by combining datasets such as FEIS and KARAONE [20], [29], [59] or by constructing tasks involving subject, verb, and object words [62]. These studies demonstrate that richer vocabularies are technically feasible, but they also highlight the need for more extensive collections of trials if vocabulary size and linguistic variability are to increase.

Language and phoneme variability adds another layer of complexity that has not yet been fully explored. Most experiments are carried out in a single language, with phoneme sets chosen for convenience or for strong acoustic–articulatory contrasts. FEIS and KARAONE provide broader phonetic inventories and are valuable in this respect [20], [59], [60], but there is little systematic work on how language-specific phonology or prosody influences EEG decodability. Future datasets that are designed from the outset to be multi-lingual and multi-phonemic, with shared vocabularies and standardised splits, would enable these questions to be addressed. They would also provide a more solid foundation for the transfer learning strategies already investigated in [20], [29], [54], which rely on diverse data to learn generalisable representations.

C. Individual Variability and Generalisation

Inter-subject and inter-session variability remains one of the most significant barriers to robust imagined-speech decoding. Anatomical differences, variations in electrode placement, and individual cognitive strategies all contribute to

changes in the recorded signal. Many of the highest accuracies in Table I come from subject-dependent or mixed-trial evaluations, where training and test sets share data from the same individuals and recording sessions [44], [59]–[61], [63]. In such settings, complex models can learn idiosyncratic patterns and achieve strong performance, but this success does not guarantee generalisation to new users or days.

TABLE I. SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIVE STUDIES ON EEG-BASED IMAGINED SPEECH DECODING

Ref.	Task	Preprocessing Method	Feature Extraction	Classification Method	Accuracy
[21]	Muti-class and binary classification of “left,” “right,” “up,” and “down.”	ICA	DWT	- Kernel ELM - Statistical features	Multi-class: 49% Binary: 85%
[54]	Classification of five vowels and six words	Transfer learning	CNN		24%
[55]	addition of new classes to a pre-trained classifier with few trials.	instantaneous frequency and spectral entropy	Deep metric learning framework		-6-class accuracy of 45.00 ± 3.13%. - 5-class accuracy of 48.10 ± 3.68%
[29]	Vowels, Short and long words	- Sliding window data augmentation - Band-pass filtering	MPC MSC	Transfer learning with ResNet50 pre-trained	- 79.7% (min) for vowels - 95.5% (max) for short-long words
[44]	Vowels and words	FastICA	DWT	TCN and CNN	96.49%
[56]	words "rock", "paper", "scissors", and rest state	Classical signal processing	GSP/GL	SVM	50.10%
[57]	long words, short words, vowels	Operational Architectonics	network metrics	Naive Bayes	-62.55% (long words), 66.44% (long vs short), 53.47% (short words), 48.13% (vowels)
[58]	kinesthetic imagery of the “left hand” and “right hand.” . visualise (“split” and “fall in”), imagine the pronunciations (“go” and “stop”),	multiscale convolutional transformer	t-SNE	multiscale convolutional transformer	- 0.62 on the private EEG dataset. - 0.70 on BCI competition IV 2a dataset. - 0.72 on the Arizona State University dataset.
[59]	Vowels, Short and long words classification	SPWVD	TFR images	CNN	- Long words: 94.82% - Short-long words: 94.26% - Short words: 94.68% - Vowels: 84.50%
[60]	Vowels, Short and long words classification	Butterworth bandpass filter, Notch filter, Common average referencing	RADWT/PSO	SVM, KNN, Random Forest, Rotation Forest, Bagging, AdaBoos	87.26% 89.23%, 95.5%, and 92.16% for long words, short–long words, short words, and vowels, respectively.
[61]	Vowels, Short and long words classification	Butterworth bandpass filter, Notch filter, Common average referencing	SPWVD	CNN	Binary: 79.82% to 82.04% Multiclass: 49.93% to 51.44%
[62]	The words included “I” and “partner” as subject words, “move,” “have,” and “drink” as verb words, and “box,” “cup,” and “phone” as object words	Downsampling from 1000 to 500 Hz, Band-pass filtering (30-125 Hz), and Embedding of spectrograms	CNNs and ground truth (mel-spectrogram), (GRU)-based regression	Structural Similarity Index Measure (SSIM)	Subject words 79.2%, Verb words 82.5%, Object words 81.1%
[3]	Four words: UP, DOWN , LEFT, right	Bandpass filtering (10-100 Hz)	WST	LSTM model with L2 regularisation	92.50%
[20]	FEIS : /i/, /u:/, /æ/, /ɔ:/, /m/, /n/, /ŋ/, /f/, /s/, /ʃ/, /v/, /z/, /ʒ/, /p/, /t/, /k/ .KaraOne : /iy/, /uw/, /piy/, /tiy/, /diy/, /m/, /n/,pat, pot, knew, and gnaw	ICA and bandpass filtering	DWT	Deep transfer learning (DenseNet, ResNet)	- KaraOne: 82.35% - FEIS: 89.01%
[63]	/iy/, /uw/, /piy/, /tiy/, /diy/, /m/, /n/,pat, pot, knew, and gnaw	filter up to 1 kHz bandpass	EM-CSP	Ensemble stacking learning	97.34%
[21]	Multi-class and binary classification of “left,” “right,” “up,” and “down.”	ICA	DWT	- Kernel ELM - Statistical features	Multi-class: 49% Binary: 85%

ANN = artificial neural network (NN), AR = autoregression, CNN = convolutional NN, CSP = common spatial pattern, DAE = Deep Autoencoder, DNN = deep NN, DT = decision tree, DTCWT = Double-Tree Complex Wavelet Transform (WT), DTF = direct transfer function, DWT = Discrete WT, ELM = extreme learning, FFT = Fast Fourier Transform (FT), HMM = hidden Markov model, kNN = k-nearest neighbour, LDA = linear discriminant analysis, LSTM = long short-term memory, MaxLCor = Maximum Linear Cross-correlation Coefficient, MFCC = Mel Frequency Cepstral Coefficients, NB = naïve Bayes, PDC = partial directed coherence, RF = random forest, RMS = root mean square, RNN = recurrent NN, t-SNE= t–stochastic neighbor embedding, CAR=Common Average Reference, RVM = relevance vector machine (VM), STFT = Short Time FT, SVM = support VM, TL = transfer learning.

Several studies have started to reduce this gap. Transfer learning approaches initialise models on one dataset or group of subjects and then fine-tune them on a smaller target set. For example, [29] uses ResNet-based transfer with sliding-window augmentation, and [20] explores knowledge transfer between FEIS and KARAONE, reporting accuracies above 80 percent for some configurations. Metric-learning strategies, such as Siamese networks and deep metric learning frameworks [30],

[55], encourage models to place trials with the same label closer together in latent space and trials with different labels further apart. These methods help to reduce subject-specific variability and have outperformed simpler baselines on the same data [27], [30].

Even so, most of these works still require subject-specific fine-tuning and have not yet been evaluated on large, independent cohorts. A promising direction is the development of architectures and training regimes that explicitly disentangle subject and task factors, for instance, through adversarial domain adaptation, subject embedding layers, or factorised latent spaces. The existing transfer and metric-learning literature provides concrete starting points, but more ambitious cross-subject and cross-session benchmarks will be needed to identify which strategies lead to genuine gains in generalisation rather than to improvements confined to a single dataset.

D. Evaluation Protocols and Practical Deployment

The way performance is measured is as important as the models themselves. Evaluation protocols in the imagined-speech literature vary widely. Many studies employ subject-dependent or random cross-validation schemes that mix trials from the same recording session in training and test sets. This practice often yields optimistic estimates of accuracy, because nuisance factors such as noise statistics and electrode placement are shared across splits. Only a subset of studies explicitly report cross-subject or cross-session results, and for widely used datasets such as KARAONE, FEIS, or the Arizona State University corpus, there is still no consensus on standard training and test partitions [3], [20], [58], [59], [63].

Some authors have already taken steps toward more transparent evaluation. For example, [21] distinguishes between binary and multi-class performance on directional commands, [59] and [60] report separate accuracies for vowels, short words, and long words, and [62] analyses subject, verb, and object categories separately. These distinctions make it easier to understand how a model behaves under different task demands. However, further progress will likely require community-wide agreement on recommended protocols, such as fixed cross-subject splits, reporting of both accuracy and F1-score, and the introduction of sequence-level metrics, such as word error rate, when moving toward continuous decoding.

Practical deployment also raises questions that are only beginning to be addressed. Online or real-time experiments remain rare, although [41] demonstrates that binary “yes/no” decisions can be decoded in an online setting with reasonable accuracy. Most of the work summarised in Table I is still offline. Bringing systems into real-time use will require efficient preprocessing, models that can run with limited hardware, and calibration procedures that minimise user burden. The command-based applications discussed in [52] suggest that small-vocabulary control may already be within reach, provided that stability over time and across sessions can be established.

E. Synthesis

Taken together, the available evidence suggests a field that is technically vibrant but structurally constrained. Time–frequency and connectivity features coupled with CNNs, RNNs, and transfer learning have demonstrated that imagined-speech decoding from EEG is feasible and that accuracies can be high on carefully controlled tasks [20], [21], [44], [59]–[63]. At the same time, low signal-to-noise ratio, limited and linguistically narrow datasets, strong individual variability, and heterogeneous evaluation protocols restrict the generalisability of these findings. The four themes discussed above are tightly interconnected. Better representations depend on richer and more diverse data. Robust generalisation relies on both sophisticated modelling and realistic cross-subject evaluations. Practical deployment in turn depends on all three: signal quality, data and model scale, and credible performance estimates.

If future work can align efforts along these lines, for example, by constructing larger multi-site datasets, adopting shared benchmark protocols, and exploiting representation learning techniques that explicitly tackle subject and session variability, EEG-based imagined-speech interfaces may evolve from laboratory prototypes into reliable communication tools for individuals with severe motor and speech impairments [53]. In that sense, the current literature should be viewed not only as a catalogue of methods and accuracies, but also as a foundation on which a more standardised and clinically relevant generation of imagined-speech BCIs can be built.

VI. Conclusion

EEG-based imagined-speech decoding is a promising yet challenging area in non-invasive brain-computer interface research. Despite significant progress in recent years, the field is still limited by low signal-to-noise ratios, high variability among subjects, and a lack of large, standardised datasets. This review consolidates the various methodologies employed throughout the decoding process, covering EEG acquisition, preprocessing, feature extraction, and deep learning-based representation learning, to offer a comprehensive overview of the current state of the art. The synthesis of existing literature indicates a clear shift from traditional handcrafted signal-processing techniques to data-driven deep learning architectures. These new methods can learn spatial, spectral, and temporal representations concurrently. However, methodological inconsistencies—especially regarding dataset selection, evaluation protocols, and performance metrics—persist and hinder reproducibility and direct comparisons between studies. To accelerate advancements in this field, future research should focus on establishing unified benchmark datasets and cross-subject evaluation frameworks. Additionally, incorporating multimodal signals, as well as contrastive and self-supervised learning strategies, and domain adaptation techniques may enhance the generalizability of the models. Furthermore, interdisciplinary collaboration between neuroscientists, linguists, and machine learning researchers is vital to ensure that the models developed are physiologically interpretable and ethically sound. Ultimately, the combination of EEG and deep learning in imagined-speech decoding has the potential to transform assistive communication technologies. Achieving this goal will necessitate not only innovative algorithms but also rigorous experimental standardisation and open, collaborative research practices that promote transparency, reproducibility, and equitable progress across the field.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to Multimedia University and Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka (UTeM) for their valuable support in this research.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

The authors' contributions are as follows: "Conceptualization, Jamil Abedalrahim Jamil Alsayaydeh and Mazen Farid; methodology, Hatem T M Duhair; software, Jamil Abedalrahim Jamil Alsayaydeh; validation, Hatem T M Duhair; formal analysis, Masrullizam Bin Mat Ibrahim; investigation, Jamil Abedalrahim Jamil Alsayaydeh; resources, Masrullizam Bin Mat Ibrahim; writing—original draft preparation, Jamil Abedalrahim Jamil Alsayaydeh and Safarudin Gazali Herawan; writing—review and editing, Mazen Farid; funding acquisition, Hatem T M Duhair and Safarudin Gazali Herawan.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

All the datasets used in this study are available from the Zenodo database (accession number: https://zenodo.org/records/17313452).

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Evaluating Field Flexibility Approaches in Relational Databases: A Performance Study of JSON and Column-Oriented Models in Library Systems

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***Abstract*—This study examines two approaches for achieving field flexibility in library systems using relational databases: column-oriented tables and JSON data types. To evaluate the performance and practicality of flexible schema strategies, a dataset of 41,000 library records was implemented using both column-oriented and JSONB-based schemas in PostgreSQL. Five representative queries based on typical search operations in library applications were executed repeatedly on each model, and average execution times were measured in a controlled environment. Results show that JSONB consistently outperforms the column-oriented approach across all query scenarios, benefiting from reduced structural overhead and more direct access to semi-structured data. However, the flexibility of JSONB introduces risks of inconsistent data structures and reduced schema enforcement compared to the more rigid but uniform column-oriented method. The findings highlight a trade-off between performance and data consistency, suggesting that JSONB is advantageous for dynamic, metadata-rich systems, while column-oriented storage remains preferable when strict structural integrity is required. Future work should explore hybrid models and schema validation layers to combine flexibility with reliable data governance.**

***Keywords*—Field flexibility; RDBMS; column-oriented model; JSON; library systems**

I. Introduction

Relational databases have been the foundation of data management for decades, particularly in systems like library information systems, where maintaining consistency, data integrity, and efficient querying is crucial [1]. Libraries often store vast collections that encompass a wide range of materials, books, journals, and digital media, each with unique metadata attributes such as authorship, publication date, genre, format, or edition. The structured schema of relational databases ensures that these attributes are stored in a highly organized manner. However, this rigid structure can become a constraint when new or evolving data needs arise, such as adding metadata fields for digital content or custom attributes for special collections [2].

Library systems differ considerably in nature. Libraries worldwide are managed by diverse organizations with varying management styles and differing attitudes toward collections and technology. Libraries have evolved from early research platforms into more fully developed applications, typically within selected content domains [3]. Alongside the classical research area of electronic searching, known as information retrieval, library systems have progressed from conventional search methods toward richer information retrieval systems. Modern library systems must facilitate data exchange among geographically distributed libraries and accommodate differing system requirements. Moreover, libraries employ various metadata standards, such as Dublin Core [4] and MARC [5], which require flexibility in field implementation. For example, journal article records may need to include information about editors and publishers, whereas thesis records may not require such details.

The predefined schema in relational databases requires that all data types be known upfront, making it difficult to accommodate unexpected or variable metadata without significant modifications. As a result, adapting a relational system to handle new types of collection metadata can lead to increased development effort, added complexity, and potential downtime [6]. This challenge is amplified as the library grows or incorporates more diverse types of collections, requiring frequent schema updates and risking disruption to the overall system.

NoSQL databases offer considerable flexibility in handling unstructured or semi-structured data, making them ideal for applications where schema changes are frequent, or data structures are unpredictable [6,7]. However, this flexibility comes at a cost, particularly when it comes to complex querying and table relationships. One significant challenge is the difficulty in performing efficient joins between tables, a core functionality that relational databases excel at. This limitation can pose problems for systems like library information management, where table relations are critical for day-to-day operations [7].

In a library system, various activities, such as book check-ins, check-outs, and reporting, rely heavily on inter-table relationships to maintain data consistency and integrity. For example, checking a book in or out requires joining tables that hold data on books, borrowers, and loan history. Moreover, libraries often need to generate comprehensive reports, which require data aggregation from multiple tables, like generating overdue reports, catalog updates, or usage statistics. The absence of native join capabilities in NoSQL databases can result in performance bottlenecks or force developers to implement workarounds, such as data duplication or complex client-side logic, which can introduce additional complexity and potential inefficiencies [7].

Thus, while NoSQL provides unmatched schema flexibility, its shortcomings in handling relational data make it less suited

for systems like library management, where efficient table relationships and complex joins are crucial for smooth operations and reporting [7,8].

This study delves into several innovative approaches designed to enhance the flexibility of relational database management systems (RDBMS). These methods enable developers to introduce and manage changes dynamically, without the need for extensive schema redesigns or additional overhead. By doing so, organizations can ensure their data systems remain adaptable, scalable, and better suited to meet the ever evolving demands of modern information management.

Previous studies have investigated the performance implications of using the JSONB data type in PostgreSQL for managing semi-structured data [9, 10]. Although JSONB offers schema flexibility, compact binary storage, and advanced indexing mechanisms such as GIN indexes, empirical evaluations reveal a clear trade-off between flexibility and performance. Comparative benchmarks consistently show that JSONB substantially outperforms the plain JSON type and regular column indexing, with reported query time reductions of up to fourfold under certain workloads [9, 10]. However, most existing work concentrates on generic database workloads or compares JSONB with document-oriented databases, with limited attention to domain-specific systems such as digital libraries.

In library information systems, schema flexibility is a critical requirement because bibliographic data exhibit substantial structural diversity. Libraries manage a wide range of resource types, including books, journal articles, theses, and heritage collections, each requiring different metadata fields and descriptive elements. Some collections, such as heritage records, demand highly customized and evolving metadata to capture provenance, physical condition, restoration history, and cultural context, which are often not supported by standard schemas. These needs are typically addressed through multiple metadata standards (such as MARC and Dublin Core) and their integration, which increases structural complexity within the database [11–13]. Rigid relational schemas often lead to frequent schema modifications and increasingly complex table designs, whereas JSONB offers a promising alternative by enabling flexible, self-describing metadata storage within a relational database environment. Despite its potential, empirical evidence on JSONB performance under realistic library workloads remains limited, particularly in comparison with traditional column-oriented schemas. This study, therefore, investigates the performance of JSONB in a digital library setting, directly comparing it with column-based designs to evaluate the costs and benefits of schema flexibility for bibliographic metadata management.

II. Field Flexibility in Relational Database

Field flexibility refers to the ability to modify the structure of data within an application without causing significant disruptions to the underlying systems. In traditional databases, data structures are often rigid, requiring a defined schema upfront, which can make changes laborious and time-consuming. However, field flexibility enables the system to evolve as new requirements emerge, allowing for the addition of new fields, modification of existing ones, or even changes in data types, all while minimizing impact on the rest of the application. Achieving this flexibility can be crucial for applications that face frequent changes in data requirements or need to support dynamic use cases. Below are several strategies commonly employed to implement field flexibility:

A. Incremental Schema Changes

One approach for achieving field flexibility is through incremental schema changes. This strategy involves gradually evolving the database schema by adding or modifying fields as needed, without requiring a full database redesign. For instance, in a library information system, if new data fields, such as a book's digital format (e.g., PDF, ePub), are needed to support eBook checkouts, developers can add these fields incrementally.

Tools like database migration frameworks (e.g., Alembic for SQLAlchemy in Python or Liquibase) can automate schema updates and track changes, ensuring that no downtime or significant reengineering is needed. This method allows developers to maintain the structure and performance advantages of a relational database while still adapting to new requirements. Incremental changes can include:

- Adding nullable columns to accommodate new data types.
- Using default values for new columns to ensure compatibility with existing data.
- Creating new indexes as needed to maintain query performance.

If a library needs to store new metadata for each book, such as its genre or digital format, a new column can be added to the books table incrementally:

```
ALTER TABLE books ADD COLUMN genre VARCHAR(100);

ALTER TABLE books ADD COLUMN digital_format VARCHAR(50) DEFAULT 'None';
```

Existing records remain unaffected, while new records can start using the additional fields immediately.

B. Column-Oriented Tables

Another strategy for field flexibility involves using column-oriented tables, which are structured to allow easy addition and modification of fields. In column-oriented databases, data is stored in columns rather than rows, making it highly efficient to add new fields or update existing ones. These databases (e.g., Apache HBase or Google Bigtable) are especially useful in systems where not all records share the same structure. For example, in a library system, you might have some books that contain additional information, such as author biographies or associated multimedia content, while others do not.

Using a column-oriented approach, these additional fields can be added for specific entries without forcing the entire dataset to conform to the new structure. This also allows efficient querying of specific fields, improving flexibility when handling large amounts of varied data. For example, if only certain types of books (e.g., rare manuscripts) require special

attributes like "restoration history", a columnar table structure allows these fields to be included only for relevant records without affecting the rest of the data.

C. Using JSON Data Types

A highly flexible and modern approach to enhancing field flexibility is by utilizing JSON data types within a relational database. Several RDBMSs, such as PostgreSQL and MySQL, now offer native support for JSON data, allowing developers to store semi-structured or unstructured data alongside traditional relational data. This strategy is particularly useful when the data structure is not fully known in advance or when rapid changes in data fields are expected.

Using JSON, fields can be added or modified on the fly, without altering the overall schema of the table. This is ideal for systems like library databases, where books, authors, and other entities may have variable attributes that are not always predictable. For instance, a library might need to store additional metadata for certain books, such as links to multimedia resources, custom annotations, or external references. Rather than modifying the schema each time a new attribute is needed, a JSON column can be used to store this variable data, offering flexibility without compromising the integrity of the relational data. PostgreSQL implements JSON records using the JSONB data type. It is an efficient format for storing JSON data in a decomposed binary representation [14].

D. Flexibility for Library Application

Comparing among those three methods, each method offers distinct advantages depending on the specific requirements of a system. Incremental schema changes are ideal for systems that rely heavily on predefined structures and require the assurance of relational integrity, such as library management systems. This method allows for controlled, gradual evolution of the database, ensuring that new fields can be added with minimal disruption to existing data or queries. However, it requires careful management of migrations and can become cumbersome when faced with frequent or unpredictable changes.

On the other hand, column-oriented tables excel in environments where data structures vary significantly across records, providing efficient querying of specific fields without affecting the entire dataset. This approach is particularly useful in large-scale analytics systems, where different records may not have a uniform set of fields. However, it lacks some traditional relational capabilities required for complex transactions, making it less suited for systems where relationships between entities are key.

Using JSONB data types, meanwhile, strikes a balance between flexibility and relational structure. It allows for schema-less, semi-structured data to be stored directly within a relational database, providing the benefits of both worlds. JSONB fields are perfect for handling dynamic, evolving data without the need for frequent schema modifications. This is particularly useful when the application must handle irregular or custom attributes, such as in a library system that needs to store metadata for certain books or patrons. However, JSONB based queries can be less efficient than traditional SQL queries, and overuse can lead to performance degradation if not carefully managed.

In summary, while incremental schema changes offer stability and control, column-oriented tables excel in scenarios requiring high flexibility at the cost of relational power. JSONB data types provide a versatile middle ground, allowing for both flexibility and structure, though they must be used judiciously to avoid potential performance issues. The choice between these methods largely depends on the balance between flexibility, performance, and the need for relational integrity in the application.

Both column-oriented tables and the JSONB data type offer significant flexibility to library systems, particularly when adapting to evolving data needs without requiring modifications to the underlying table structure. Column-oriented tables provide a stable and structured approach, ensuring efficient data retrieval for specific fields, especially when dealing with large datasets. They are highly optimized for read-heavy operations and analytical queries, offering a more consistent and predictable performance. However, the rigidity of this structure means that it may not be as agile when accommodating diverse or irregular data.

In contrast, JSONB data types offer a more dynamic and flexible way to handle semi-structured data within a relational database. By allowing for schema-less data storage, JSONB enables library systems to handle varying data attributes, such as custom metadata for books or patrons, without frequent schema alterations. This makes JSONB particularly powerful for managing diverse or evolving datasets. However, the flexibility of JSONB comes with the potential for field inconsistencies, as there is no enforced structure across all records. Despite this, JSONB has the advantage of using standardized formats for metadata, making it ideal for interoperability with external systems and APIs.

This study aims to compare these two approaches, column-oriented tables and JSONB data types, specifically in terms of query performance within the context of a library management system. Understanding the trade-offs between stability and flexibility, and how they impact query efficiency, will provide valuable insights into which method is best suited for specific use cases in a dynamic, data-rich environment.

III. Methods

To conduct a thorough comparison between the two methods of field flexibility, a comprehensive dataset was collected from the University of Indonesia's Faculty of Computer Science library. This dataset consists of 41000 records, each encompassing five essential fields: call number, title, author, publisher, and the number of collections. These fields were chosen for their relevance in typical library operations, allowing to focus on the core aspects of library data management. The records represent a diverse array of library materials, making this dataset particularly suitable for analyzing the performance of different data storage formats in a real-world context.

The collected data was stored in two distinct formats: one using column-oriented tables and the other using JSONB data types. This dual approach was to evaluate how each method handles common library operations. Then, a series of standard queries was executed in library applications, such as searching

for specific titles, retrieving collections by author, and counting the total number of items in each category.

Employing these queries was to simulate everyday usage scenarios that librarians encounter, ensuring the results reflect practical performance metrics. Fig. 1 and Fig. 2 illustrate the implementations of the tables for both column-oriented and JSONB data type methods, offering a clear visual representation of them.

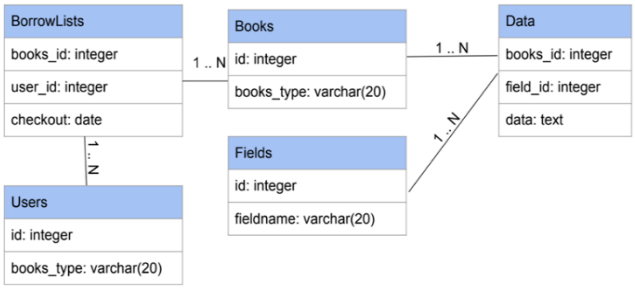

Fig. 1. Simplified tables implementation of the column-oriented method.

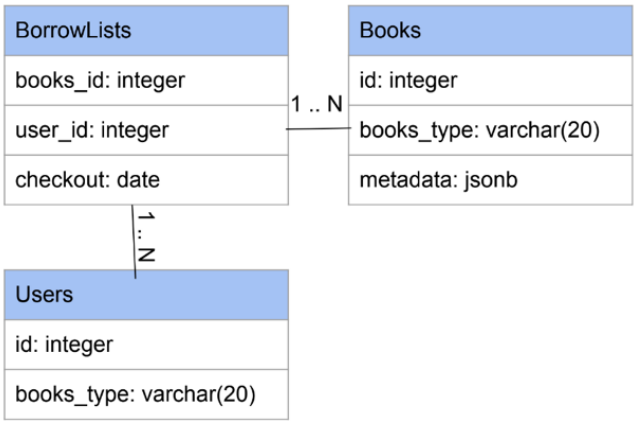

Fig. 2. Simplified table implementation of the JSONB data type method.

In addition, Table I specifies the queries used in this experiment, emphasizing the data retrieval processes employed. PostgreSQL was utilized for database running on an Apple M1 CPU with 8GB of RAM to support these implementations. This enables analyzing the data related to experimental methods.

Finally, the analysis of average execution times of each query across both data formats was performed to draw meaningful conclusions about their efficiency. Measuring how quickly each method processed the queries aimed to identify any significant differences in performance that could influence the choice of data handling strategy for library systems.

To ensure the accuracy and reliability of the results, each query was executed five times, and the average execution time for each query was calculated. To maintain fairness and accuracy between queries, the database server is restarted after each run. This step clears the query cache, preventing any residual data from influencing subsequent results. Averaging the execution times can gain a more accurate representation of how each data format performs under consistent conditions.

TABLE I. QUERIES USED IN THE EXPERIMENT

ID	Task	SQL Query on column-oriented method	SQL Query on JSONB data type method
Q1	Retrieve books with keyword ‘Donald’ in author name	select books_id from data d, fields f where f.fieldname='author' and f.id=d.field_id and d.data like '%Donald%';	select books_id from books where metadata->>'author' like '%Donald%';
Q2	Retrieve books with keyword ‘Donald’ or ‘Knuth’ in author name	select books_id from data d, fields f where f.fieldname='author' and f.id=d.field_id and (d.data like '%Donald%' or d.data like ‘%Knuth%’);	select books_id from books where metadata->>'author' like '%Donald%' or metadata->>'author' like ‘%Knuth%’;
Q3	Retrieve books with keyword ‘Donald’ and ‘Knuth’ in author name	select books_id from data d, fields f where f.fieldname='author' and f.id=d.field_id and (d.data like '%Donald%' and d.data like ‘%Knuth%’);	select books_id from books where metadata->>'author' like '%Donald%' and metadata->>'author' like ‘%Knuth%’;
Q4	Retrieve books with keyword ‘Donald’ but not ‘Knuth’ in author name	select books_id from data d, fields f where f.fieldname='author' and f.id=d.field_id and (d.data like '%Donald%' and d.data not like ‘%Knuth%’);	select books_id from books where metadata->>'author' like '%Donald%' and metadata->>'author' not like ‘%Knuth%’;
Q5	Retrieve books with keyword ‘Donald’ in author name and keyword ‘Computer’ in title	select d1.books_id from data d1, data d2, fields f1, fields f2 where (d1.data like '%Donald%' and f1.fieldname='author' and d1.field_id=f1.field_id) and (d2.data like '%Computer%' and f2.fieldname='title' and d2.field_id=f2.field_id) and d1.books_id=d2.books_id;	select books_id from books where metadata->>'author' like '%Donald%' and metadata->>'title' like ‘%Computer%’;

This repeated execution also allows observing patterns and identifying any potential performance bottlenecks in the system. For instance, certain queries may initially execute faster due to caching, but when repeated multiple times, underlying inefficiencies may become apparent. Running the queries in a controlled environment and taking multiple measurements can assess the stability and consistency of each method over time, which is crucial for applications that demand high availability and consistent performance.

Moreover, calculating the average time across multiple runs provides a more robust foundation for comparison between the two data formats. It ensures that the findings are not based on a one-time performance outlier, but reflect the typical performance behavior of both approaches. This method of testing is essential for drawing reliable conclusions about which data format offers better query execution performance, particularly for the dynamic and often data-intensive operations of a library management system.

IV. RESULTS

This section presents the findings from performance analysis of the two data storage methods: column-oriented tables and JSONB data types. The comparison of execution times of various common queries used in library management systems highlights any significant differences between the two approaches. Additionally, the implications of these results are examined in terms of how each method performs in terms of query efficiency, flexibility, and scalability. The insights gained from this analysis will help determine which approach is better suited for managing dynamic and evolving library data.

A. Table Size

Before diving into the performance analysis, first compare the storage sizes of the tables in both the column-oriented and JSONB data type approaches. This comparison is essential for understanding the storage efficiency of each method, as data size can directly impact query performance and system resources. The findings revealed that the column-oriented approach resulted in a larger table size, approximately 13 MB, while the JSONB data type approach had a smaller footprint, occupying only around 9 MB.

The larger size of the column-oriented table can be attributed to its structured nature, where each field is explicitly defined and indexed. On the other hand, the JSONB data type offers more compact storage because it allows for flexible, semi-structured data representation without requiring predefined schema constraints. This reduced storage size may improve space efficiency, especially when dealing with dynamic or variable data. This size comparison lays the groundwork for evaluating the overall efficiency of each approach in handling real-world library data.

B. Query Performance

Table II presents the mean execution time recorded for each query across all scenarios. These averages were computed by running each query multiple times and aggregating the results to reduce the influence of outliers or transient system fluctuations.

TABLE II. AVERAGE TIME OF EACH QUERY

Query	Column-oriented method	JSON data type method
Q1	58.03 ms	33.53 ms
Q2	77.40 ms	42.60 ms
Q3	41.74 ms	36.46 ms
Q4	58.52 ms	27.90 ms
Q5	78.22 ms	32.69 ms

By focusing on average performance rather than single run outcomes, the analysis ensures a more reliable representation of each data model's behavior under typical operating conditions. Fig. 3 presents a comparative performance chart derived from the data in Table II.

The results indicate that the JSONB data type consistently demonstrates faster query execution times compared to the column-oriented approach. This performance advantage can be attributed to the reduced need for data transformation and parsing when working directly with native JSON structures. In contrast, column-oriented storage often requires additional processing steps, such as schema enforcement, column reconstruction, or intermediate serialization, which increase computational overhead during query execution.

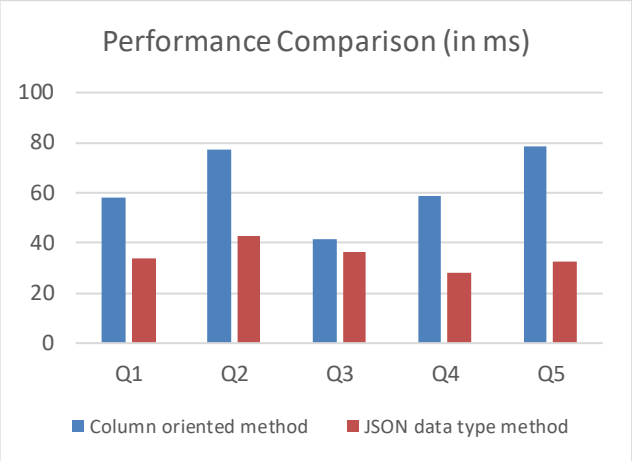

Fig. 3. Performance comparison chart.

V. DISCUSSION

From a systems-level perspective, the superior performance of JSONB indicates that workloads involving semi-structured or nested data benefit significantly from storage models optimized for hierarchical formats. By allowing complex metadata to be stored and accessed directly without extensive schema transformation, JSONB reduces the processing overhead commonly associated with traditional column-oriented designs. This efficiency becomes particularly important in library information systems, where metadata attributes vary widely across collections and evolve over time, requiring a storage model that can adapt without sacrificing performance.

These findings also emphasize the importance of aligning data representation with query patterns and application requirements. When search operations frequently involve flexible attributes such as author names, titles, or custom metadata fields, JSONB enables more direct and expressive querying compared to the join-intensive structure of column-oriented tables. As a result, JSONB minimizes relational reconstruction costs and simplifies query logic, leading to lower latency and more predictable performance in real-world usage scenarios. This demonstrates that performance is not solely determined by hardware or indexing strategies, but is strongly influenced by how well the data model matches the access patterns of the system.

Overall, the consistent outperformance of JSONB across all evaluated scenarios underscores its effectiveness for environments that demand both flexibility and fast access to complex data structures. While column-oriented storage offers stronger structural enforcement and uniformity, its rigidity introduces overhead when handling dynamic metadata. JSONB, therefore, represents a compelling alternative for modern library systems, where adaptability and performance are equally critical, provided that appropriate validation and governance mechanisms are implemented to preserve data quality and consistency.

VI. Conclusion

The results of this study show that the JSONB data type consistently delivers faster query execution times than the column-oriented method across all evaluated scenarios. This performance benefit is largely due to JSONB's ability to store and access hierarchical, semi-structured data without requiring extensive transformation. However, despite its advantages in speed and flexibility, the JSONB data type also presents notable limitations. Its schema's flexible nature can complicate data validation, especially in structured domains such as library information systems, where consistent formats for book records, borrower data, and classification codes are essential.

While the JSONB data type can improve performance and reduce overhead, it also creates challenges in maintaining data consistency and integrity. In a library system, variation in field naming, missing attributes, or inconsistent structures can arise easily due to the lack of enforced schema rules. JSON documents may also contain duplicated or redundant nested data, making synchronization and updates more error-prone. Additionally, the nested structure of JSON can complicate indexing and query optimization, which are critical for fast retrieval of books, circulation statistics, or user records. In contrast, column-oriented storage, with its rigid schema and normalized structure, inherently promotes uniformity and reduces inconsistency across records.

This research has both theoretical and practical implications for the design and management of database systems in library information environments. From a theoretical perspective, JSONB can bridge the gap between rigid relational models and fully schema-less NoSQL approaches. Hierarchical storage within relational systems can significantly improve query performance for semi-structured metadata. This study also extends existing literature by providing concrete performance evidence in the underexplored domain of library and heritage metadata management, thereby offering a foundation for future research on hybrid data models and adaptive schema design.

From a practical perspective, it provides guidance for system architects that library systems can adopt flexible metadata storage without incurring significant query overhead. At the same time, the findings highlight the need for complementary governance mechanisms to mitigate the risks associated with schema flexibility. By balancing performance, flexibility, and data consistency, this research informs the development of scalable and sustainable digital library systems capable of adapting to future metadata requirements.

Future work should explore mechanisms to mitigate the consistency challenges associated with JSON-based storage. Further evaluation across larger, more complex library datasets may also clarify the conditions under which JSON's performance benefits outweigh its consistency drawbacks. Additionally, examining the impact of different indexing strategies, storage engines, and transaction loads could provide deeper insights into optimizing JSON for use in library information systems and other domains requiring both flexibility and high data reliability.

Acknowledgment

This study's research is supported by the Faculty of Computer Science, Universitas Indonesia, Grant number: NKB-20/UN2.F11.D/HKP.05.00/2025.

Declaration on Generative AI

The authors acknowledge the use of generative AI to assist in improving the clarity, grammar, and structure of the manuscript. The content, analysis, and conclusions remain the sole responsibility of the authors.

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Developing a Robotic-Integrated Leagility Adaptation Model Through Green Supply Chain Intelligence and Supply Chain Ambidexterity

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***Abstract*—This study develops a Robotic-Integrated Leagility Adaptation Model by combining Green Supply Chain Intelligence (GSCI) and Supply Chain Ambidexterity (SCA) to enhance sustainable performance in the manufacturing sector. The rapid evolution of robotics, cyber-physical systems, and AI-enabled decision technologies has transformed supply chain dynamics, necessitating an adaptive model that balances efficiency (lean) and responsiveness (agile). Using an integrated quantitative approach, this research examines how robotic automation strengthens leagility capabilities through real-time analytics, predictive intelligence, and environmentally oriented digital operations. The findings demonstrate that GSCI significantly enhances SCA, which in turn improves leagility adaptation and sustainable manufacturing performance. Robotic integration is found to play a catalytic role by enabling autonomous coordination, energy-efficient scheduling, and intelligent material handling as key enablers of green and responsive operations. This study contributes to the literature by proposing a technology-driven leagility model that links robotics, green supply chain intelligence, and ambidexterity within a unified smart manufacturing framework. Implications are provided for policymakers and industry leaders to accelerate sustainable transformation through robotics-enabled digital ecosystems.**

Keywords*—Robotic integration; Green Supply Chain Intelligence; Supply Chain Ambidexterity; leagility adaptation; sustainable manufacturing performance

I. Introduction

The manufacturing sector has undergone significant turbulence in recent years, driven by global economic uncertainty and intensified by disruptive events such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Production declines reported in some industries to reach as high as 46.5% have exposed structural vulnerabilities in manufacturing systems and supply chains, highlighting an urgent need for strategies that strengthen resilience, efficiency, and sustainability. In this context, traditional operational approaches are increasingly insufficient as firms confront volatile demand patterns, supply interruptions, and technological acceleration, all of which require redesigned systems capable of adapting to dynamic environments.

Sustainability in manufacturing must therefore be reframed as a multidimensional capability rather than a peripheral compliance function. Guided by the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) logic, sustainability encompasses economic viability, social responsibility, and environmental stewardship, each of which contributes to long-term value creation. Prior studies have stressed that integrating these three pillars into core processes allows firms to generate competitive advantage while simultaneously enhancing social welfare and mitigating ecological degradation [1]. As consumers, regulators, and global markets increasingly demand ethically and environmentally responsible production, sustainable performance has become a strategic priority for manufacturing firms.

Despite mounting pressure to deliver sustainable outcomes, many organizations encounter difficulties in translating sustainability goals into operational routines, especially within complex supply networks. Green Supply Chain Intelligence (GSCI)—an advanced, data-driven extension of Green Supply Chain Management—seeks to embed environmental thinking into procurement, production, logistics, and end-of-life processes through smart sensing, AI-enabled analytics, and digital monitoring [2], [3]. However, balancing the environmental objectives of GSCI with the need for operational efficiency introduces a persistent tension. At the same time, firms face intensifying pressures for responsiveness, adaptability, and innovation, underscoring the importance of Supply Chain Ambidexterity as a capability for balancing exploitation of existing strengths with exploration of emerging opportunities.

Supply Chain Ambidexterity in the era of robotics and Industry 4.0 reflects the ability of firms to optimize current processes while experimenting with disruptive technologies—including autonomous robotics, IoT devices, cyber-physical systems, and machine learning to enhance adaptability. Although prior research has examined efficiency, responsiveness, and sustainability in isolation, empirical investigations into the combined influence of GSCI, robotics integration, and ambidexterity on sustainable performance remain limited. This gap is critical because robotics and AI can simultaneously strengthen leanness through automation and predictive intelligence while enabling agility through rapid reconfiguration and real-time decision-making.

Leagility, the synergy of lean and agile paradigms, offers a promising strategic perspective to reconcile efficiency and flexibility in technology-enabled supply chains. When enhanced with robotic automation, leagility enables waste reduction, flexible scheduling, autonomous material handling, and rapid

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response to disturbances [4]. Integrating leagility with GSCI and ambidexterity provides an opportunity to build supply chains that are both environmentally responsible and highly adaptive, thereby supporting more robust sustainability outcomes across economic, social, and ecological dimensions.

Building on these dynamics, this study poses a guiding question: How can the integration of Green Supply Chain Intelligence and Supply Chain Ambidexterity, when supported by robotic automation, enhance leagility adaptation and sustainable manufacturing performance? To address this question, the research develops and empirically tests a Robotic-Integrated Leagility Adaptation Model that explains the mechanisms through which GSCI and ambidextrous capabilities contribute to leagility and sustainability. The model evaluates how data-driven green practices improve environmental and social outcomes, how ambidexterity enhances adaptability, and how robotics amplifies both efficiency and flexibility by enabling autonomous, data-rich, and low-waste operations.

Additionally, this research assesses potential mediating and moderating mechanisms, including technological readiness, digital integration capability, and management control systems—that shape the translation of GSCI and ambidexterity into measurable performance outcomes. Understanding these mechanisms is essential for practitioners seeking to design sustainable, digitally enhanced supply chain strategies that are both economically feasible and socially responsible.

While previous literature has documented the individual benefits of robotics, GSCM, and ambidexterity, few studies have synthesized these elements within a unified, empirically tested framework that incorporates leagility and sustainability. This research addresses that gap by offering a comprehensive model tailored to modern manufacturing realities where digital transformation, environmental imperatives, and operational resilience are deeply interconnected.

The contributions expected from this study are both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, it advances supply chain and manufacturing research by integrating robotics, GSCI, ambidexterity, and leagility into a coherent analytical model that explains sustainable performance drivers. Practically, the study provides actionable guidance for manufacturing firms on leveraging robotics, AI, and digital intelligence not merely as operational tools, but as strategic enablers of sustainable value creation. By clarifying the pathways that connect technology-driven supply chain practices to sustainability outcomes, this research aims to equip decision-makers with a roadmap for navigating the evolving challenges of the manufacturing landscape.

This manuscript is structured as follows: Section II provides a comprehensive review of the relevant literature and develops the theoretical framework that integrates Green Supply Chain Intelligence, Supply Chain Ambidexterity, robotics-enabled capabilities, and leagility, culminating in the formulation of the research hypotheses. Section III outlines the research methodology, detailing the research design, sampling procedure, operationalization of constructs, and the analytical techniques employed. Section IV reports the empirical findings and presents the results of the proposed model. It offers a critical discussion of the results by situating the findings within established theoretical perspectives and extant empirical research. Finally, Section V concludes the study by synthesizing the principal findings, articulating the theoretical and managerial implications, acknowledging the study's limitations, and suggesting avenues for future research.

II. Literature Review

This review synthesizes the theoretical foundations and empirical findings that undergird the present study, situating Green Supply Chain Integration (GSCI), Supply Chain Ambidexterity 4.0 (SCA 4.0), and Leagility within established strategic management and supply chain literatures. It emphasizes how heterogeneous strategic resources, digital transformation, and inter-organizational perspectives jointly shape sustainable competitive advantage and sustainability performance in manufacturing contexts.

Strategic resources and capabilities are not uniformly distributed across firms; their heterogeneity and imperfect transferability underpin differences in competitive outcomes and can sustain long-term competitive advantage [5]. From a Resource-Based View (RBV) perspective, sustainable competitive advantage arises when firms leverage valuable, rare, costly-to-imitate resources and organize effectively to capture their rents (Abeysekara et al., 2019; Ellitian, 2020). The VRIO framework value, rarity, and imitability organization operationalizes this evaluative logic, guiding assessment of whether a resource or capability can generate persistent competitive benefits [6]. Complementary managerial frameworks such as Kaplan and Norton's Balanced Scorecard remind us that executives seldom rely on a single performance metric; instead, they deploy multifaceted measurement systems to balance financial, customer, internal process, and learning perspectives [7]. This plurality of measures is especially pertinent when firms attempt to reconcile efficiency, adaptability, and sustainability objectives.

The strategy level of smart supply chains must explicitly account for digital transformation ambitions and the alignment of resources needed to synchronize supply chain goals with real-time data flows [8]. Digital integration, exemplified by IoT sensors, edge computing, and analytics platforms, reconfigures information flows and decision rights across the supply chain, enabling faster detection of disruptions, more precise forecasting, and finer control of resource use. However, the strategic gains from digitalization depend on organizational alignment: technologies alone do not guarantee improved outcomes unless firms align processes, governance, and capabilities to exploit them.

Stakeholder theory provides a robust lens for understanding value creation that extends beyond shareholders to include customers, employees, suppliers, communities, and regulators [9], [10]. This multi-stakeholder orientation is instrumental in measuring and managing sustainability, since environmental and social outcomes reflect a network of expectations and regulations. The Relational View complements RBV by locating sources of competitive advantage at the level of interfirm relationships and strategic alliances; some capabilities and value creation mechanisms emerge only when firms collaborate across boundaries [11]. Consequently, value creation in sustainable supply chains often involves orchestrating capabilities across

focal firms, suppliers, logistics providers, and institutional actors.

Contemporary models that integrate GSCI and SCA 4.0 draw on multiple theoretical strands from strategic management and supply chain research: Porter's value chain (1985) for activity-level analysis, RBV and VRIO for resource assessment [12], Dynamic Capabilities for adaptation under technological change [13], [14], Transaction Cost considerations for governance choices [15] and Stakeholder Theory for legitimacy and value creation [16]. Together, these perspectives provide a fertile ground for hypothesizing how green practices, digital ambidexterity, and strategic orientation interact to determine sustainability performance in modern manufacturing networks [17].

A. Green Supply Chain Integration (GSCI) and Sustainability Performance

GSCI encompasses the systematic incorporation of environmental objectives into procurement, production, distribution, and reverse logistics. Empirical studies show that GSCI contributes directly to improved environmental performance and, often, operational efficiencies such as reduced material waste, energy savings, and compliance benefits [18]. Aligning GSCI with regulatory demands and consumer preferences for greener products promotes resource stewardship and strengthens social legitimacy, thereby supporting both environmental and socioeconomic dimensions of sustainability. A robust GSCI capability enables firms to identify and institutionalize eco-friendly practices across their value chains, positioning GSCI as a primary driver of sustainability performance.

H1a: Green Supply Chain Integration positively influences Sustainability Performance.

B. Leagility as a Mediator Between Green Integration and Sustainability

Leagility, the deliberate combination of lean and agile principles, provides a strategic pathway to reconcile waste reduction with responsiveness. Lean focuses on streamlining flows and eliminating non-value-adding activities, while agility prioritizes flexibility and rapid response to changing demand patterns. When GSCI practices are aligned with lean principles (e.g., reduction of material use) and agile mechanisms (e.g., flexible sourcing, quick reconfiguration), supply chains can both lower environmental footprints and adapt to market variability. Therefore, Leagility functions as a mechanism through which GSCI translates into superior sustainability outcomes.

H1b: Green Supply Chain Integration positively influences Leagility Strategy.

H1c: The effect of Green Supply Chain Integration on Sustainability Performance is mediated by Leagility Strategy.

C. Supply Chain Ambidexterity 4.0 (SCA 4.0) Digital Ambidexterity and Sustainability

SCA 4.0 articulates the need to balance the exploitation of existing capabilities with the exploration of novel solutions in a digitally augmented supply chain environment. By integrating Industry 4.0 technologies such as IoT, AI, and big data analytics, firms can simultaneously optimize routine operations and experiment with innovative configurations (Yang & Singhdong, 2024). Strategic ambidexterity supported by digital tools enhances resource efficiency (through predictive maintenance, route optimization, and demand sensing) while enabling exploratory initiatives (new product introductions, circular business models) that extend sustainability potential. Thus, SCA 4.0 is posited to exert a direct positive effect on sustainability performance.

H2a: Supply Chain Ambidexterity 4.0 positively influences Sustainability Performance.

D. SCA 4.0, Leagility, and the Enabling Role of Technology

Digital ambidexterity strengthens both lean and agile elements by providing the real-time visibility and decision support necessary for synchronized, responsive operations. Exploitative use of technology drives consistent efficiency gains; exploratory use fosters adaptability to emergent market and regulatory pressures. The balance of these uses underpins a Leagility orientation that maintains cost discipline while enabling rapid reconfiguration in response to disruptions. In practice, SCA 4.0 capabilities, when integrated into governance and process design, facilitate rapid, data-driven decisions that support sustainable outcomes.

H2b: Supply Chain Ambidexterity 4.0 positively influences Leagility Strategy.

H2c: The effect of Supply Chain Ambidexterity 4.0 on Sustainability Performance is mediated by Leagility Strategy.

E. Dynamic Capabilities and Mediating Contingencies

Dynamic capabilities sensing, seizing, and reconfiguring are essential for firms to adapt to technological change and external shocks, enabling the translation of GSCI and SCA 4.0 into performance gains (Teece, 2018). Additional mediating and moderating constructs of interest include management control quality (which shapes implementation fidelity), market orientation (which aligns innovation with stakeholder demand), and technological adaptability (which conditions effective adoption of Industry 4.0 tools). These governance and capability factors help explain variation in outcomes across firms and illuminate why resource heterogeneity often leads to differential sustainability performance.

While substantial research documents the separate benefits of GSCI and ambidextrous [8], [19], [20], few studies comprehensively integrate these constructs within a Leagility framework that explicitly accounts for Industry 4.0 digitalization. The relational and stakeholder lenses further suggest that sustainable advantage frequently accrues from interorganizational coordination and legitimacy-seeking behaviors rather than from focal-firm actions alone. This gap motivates the present integrative model, which tests direct and mediated pathways linking GSCI and SCA 4.0 to sustainability performance through Leagility, while considering dynamic capabilities and governance contingencies.

In sum, the literature indicates strong theoretical and empirical reasons to expect that: 1) GSCI and SCA 4.0 each contribute to sustainability performance, 2) Leagility operationalizes the reconciliation of efficiency and

responsiveness that converts these capabilities into sustainable outcomes, and 3) dynamic capabilities and organizational governance shape the magnitude and direction of these effects. The hypotheses above (H1a–H1c, H2a–H2c) articulate these relationships and provide the basis for the empirical tests developed in this study.

Based on the literature review and the proposed hypothesis proposition, this research model is displayed in Fig. 1.

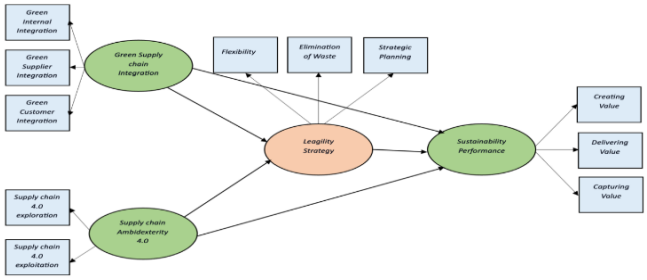

Fig. 1. Research model.

III. Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative approach using an explanatory survey design to empirically examine the causal relationships specified in the research hypotheses. A quantitative framework is appropriate because it enables systematic measurement, hypothesis testing, and estimation of the magnitude and direction of relationships among independent, mediating, and dependent variables. The explanatory survey method is specifically chosen to move beyond descriptive associations and to provide statistical evidence that clarifies how the green supply chain, Supply Chain Ambidexterity 4.0, and Leagility strategy interact to influence firm performance.

The target population comprises all automotive components and spare-parts manufacturers operating in West Java and DKI Jakarta. Industry records indicated 235 firms within this category. To enhance data quality and comparability, the sampling frame was restricted to firms holding ISO 9001:2015 certification. This criterion was selected because ISO 9001:2015 signals the presence of a formal quality management system and managerial processes that are relevant to market orientation, quality control, operational strategies (including Leagility), and supply chain adaptation. Purposive sampling was employed to select respondents based on predefined inclusion criteria: geographic location (West Java and DKI Jakarta) and possession of ISO 9001:2015 certification. Purposive sampling ensures that collected data pertain to firms with managerial structures and process disciplines relevant to the conceptual model. With 209 eligible firms, the sample comfortably meets conventional recommendations for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), which typically require between 100 and 500 observations for robust parameter estimation and model testing.

The unit of analysis is the firm. Respondents were senior and middle managers (e.g., operations, supply chain, quality, plant managers) who are expected to possess strategic knowledge and experiential insight into organizational capabilities and performance metrics. Selecting managerial respondents helps ensure the validity of responses regarding organizational practices and strategic orientation. Data collection ran from October 2024 to February 2025. Questionnaires were distributed with direct researcher contact and supervised follow-up to increase response rates and ensure completeness. Where responses were ambiguous or incomplete, the research team contacted respondents for clarification. Participation was voluntary; respondents were briefed on the research objectives and assured of confidentiality before completing the survey.

Hypotheses were tested using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with AMOS version 24, which permits simultaneous estimation of measurement and structural models. The analytic sequence comprises: 1) confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to validate the measurement model and assess construct reliability and validity; 2) evaluation of structural relationships to test direct and indirect effects; and 3) mediation analysis to examine whether Leagility Strategy and Supply Chain Adaptive Program transmit the effects of antecedent constructs to Firm Performance. Model fit will be evaluated using multiple indices: Chi-Square ($\chi 2$), Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). Hypothesis decisions will be based on p-values with a significance threshold of $p \leq 0.05$. For mediation, indirect effects will be tested using bootstrap resampling to obtain bias-corrected confidence intervals, which provide robust inference for mediated paths.

IV. Results and Discussion

A. Results

1) Measurement model evaluation: The measurement model demonstrated strong psychometric properties: all constructs satisfied the thresholds for convergent validity and composite reliability required for SEM analysis (see Table I). Green Supply Chain Integration (GSCI) achieved Composite Reliability (CR) = 0.943 and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) = 0.701, comfortably exceeding the recommended minima (CR ≥ 0.70; AVE ≥ 0.50). These values indicate high internal consistency and suggest that the GSCI items collectively account for over 70% of the construct variance, validating the instrument's capacity to measure green integration robustly.

Supply Chain Ambidexterity (SCA) also displayed solid psychometric performance with CR = 0.885 and AVE = 0.607, indicating reliable composite consistency and satisfactory indicator variance explained. This confirms that the ambidexterity dimensions—both exploitation and exploration are effectively captured by the selected indicators. Leagility Strategy (LS) recorded CR = 0.933 and AVE = 0.611; despite a few indicators with comparatively lower loadings, the construct overall maintained excellent reliability and convergent validity, reflecting coherent measurement of flexibility, waste elimination, and strategic planning dimensions.

Sustainability Performance (SP) emerged as the most robust construct, with CR = 0.947 and AVE = 0.666, signaling exceptionally high reliability and a substantial proportion of explained variance across economic, social, and environmental performance indicators. Collectively, all four constructs (GSCI, SCA, LS, SP) meet or exceed the psychometric criteria

recommended in the SEM literature (Hair et al., 2019), supporting the adequacy of the measurement model and permitting progression to structural analysis.

TABLE I. MEASUREMENT OF RESEARCH CONSTRUCTS

Latent Variable	Items	Loadings	CR	AVE
GSCI	GII1	0,811	0,943	0,701
	GII2	0,869		
	GII3	0,848		
	GSI2	0,862		
	GSI1	0,84		
	GCI2	0,776		
	GCI1	0,853		
SCA	SCR1	0,893	0,885	0,607
	SCR2	0,761		
	SCR3	0,803		
	SCP1	0,699		
	SCP2	0,726		
LS	FL3	0,664	0,933	0,611
	FL2	0,699		
	FL1	0,792		
	EW3	0,797		
	EW2	0,836		
	EW1	0,764		
	STP3	0,793		
	STP2	0,842		
	STP1	0,826		
SP	SCR1	0,893	0,947	0,666
	SCR2	0,761		
	SCR3	0,803		
	CRV3	0,591		
	CRV1	0,874		
	CRV2	0,868		
	DV1	0,846		
	DV2	0,828		
	DV3	0,84		

Source: Data Research, 2025.

The structural model showed acceptable overall fit (see Fig. 2). The ratio CMIN/DF = 2.061 falls well below the conservative threshold of 3.0, indicating reasonable parsimony. Incremental fit indices were favorable: TLI = 0.919 and CFI = 0.930, both surpassing the commonly accepted cutoff of 0.90 and signaling that the specified model explains the covariances among constructs effectively. Absolute fit measures were mixed but acceptable given model complexity: GFI = 0.810 and AGFI = 0.765 are below ideal values (≥ 0.90) but remain within tolerable bounds for complex models, while RMSEA = 0.077 is within the acceptable range (< 0.08), suggesting a reasonable approximation error. Taken together, these indices indicate that the structural model is tenable and suitable for hypothesis testing.

Standardized path estimates reveal meaningful and statistically significant relationships among constructs. Supply Chain Ambidexterity (SCA) exerted a strong positive influence on Leagility Strategy (LS) with a standardized coefficient of 0.719 ($p < 0.05$), indicating that higher ambidexterity in the supply chain strongly supports the adoption of leagile practices. SCA also contributed directly to Sustainability Performance (SP) with a coefficient of 0.551 ($p < 0.05$), underscoring ambidexterity's substantive role in enhancing environmental, social, and economic outcomes.

Green Supply Chain Integration (GSCI) displayed a significant positive effect on LS ($\beta = 0.478$, $p < 0.05$) and an even stronger direct effect on SP ($\beta = 0.733$, $p < 0.05$). These coefficients suggest that green integration not only fosters leagility but also translates directly into higher sustainability performance, reinforcing the primacy of green practices for sustainable outcomes.

Leagility Strategy (LS) showed a positive but modest direct effect on SP ($\beta = 0.029$, $p < 0.05$). Although numerically smaller than the direct effects of GSCI and SCA, this coefficient indicates that leagility still contributes incrementally to sustainability outcomes when other influences are controlled for.

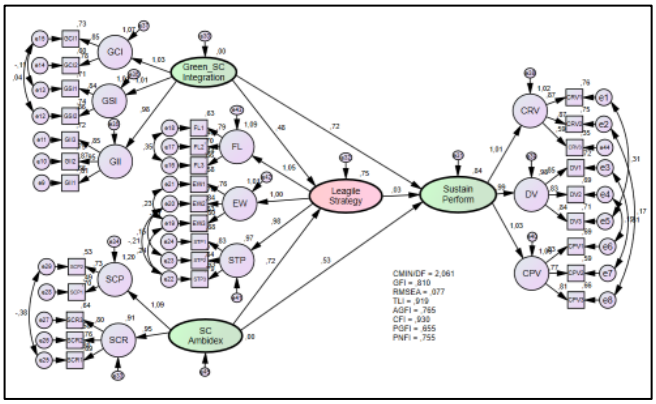

Fig. 2. Structural model testing (Source: Data research, 2025).

Mediation tests clarify how LS functions as a conduit between antecedents (SCA and GSCI) and sustainability outcomes. The estimated indirect effect of SCA on SP via LS was 0.021, while the indirect effect of GSCI on SP via LS was 0.014. Although these mediated effects are relatively small compared with the direct pathways, they are positive and consistent with the theoretical expectation that Leagility amplifies the sustainability returns of both ambidexterity and green integration.

TABLE II. STANDARDIZED INDIRECT EFFECTS

	SCA	GSCI	LS	SP
LS	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000
SP	0,021	0,014	0,000	0,000

Source: Data Research, 2025.

From the Table II, when combining direct and indirect pathways, total effects demonstrate the overall explanatory power of antecedent constructs on sustainability performance.

SCA's total effect on SP equals 0.551 (direct) + 0.021 (indirect) = 0.572. GSCI's total effect on SP equals 0.733 (direct) + 0.014 (indirect) = 0.747. These totals indicate that GSCI has the more dominant overall influence on sustainability performance in this sample, although SCA remains a substantial and meaningful contributor. LS's total effect on SP (0.029) is largely direct, as its mediating transmissions to SP via other constructs were limited.

The results robustly support the conceptual model: both green supply chain integration and supply chain ambidexterity positively affect firm sustainability, and Leagility functions as a complementary mechanism that further channels these effects—albeit as a secondary amplifier rather than the primary driver. The particularly large total effect of GSCI highlights the importance of integrating environmental practices across procurement, production, and logistics as a leading strategy for improving triple-bottom-line performance. Concurrently, SCA's strong linkage to both LS and SP confirms that the ability to balance exploitation and exploration in a digitally enabled supply chain fosters resilience and sustainable outcomes.

Practical takeaways for managers include prioritizing comprehensive green integration initiatives while simultaneously cultivating ambidextrous capabilities that support leagile configurations. Doing so enables firms to capture both direct sustainability gains and incremental benefits mediated by operational flexibility and waste reduction. From a theoretical standpoint, the findings lend empirical weight to frameworks that link RBV, dynamic capabilities, and leagility with measurable sustainability performance in manufacturing contexts.

B. Discussion

This study provides empirical evidence on the roles of Green Supply Chain, Supply Chain Ambidexterity, and Leagility Strategy AP in elevating Sustainable Performance within the Indonesian manufacturing industry. The findings show that although each construct contributes distinctly, their interaction through mediated pathways significantly reinforces organizational outcomes. Importantly, the results highlight that the value of Green Supply Chain emerges more clearly when it is embedded within agile and adaptive supply chain configurations, suggesting a synergistic effect rather than a standalone driver of performance.

First, Green Supply Chain emerges more clearly when it is embedded within agile and adaptive supply chain configurations identified as a crucial external driver of firm performance, albeit with a limited direct effect. Descriptive results indicate that managers in this sector already practice customer orientation, competitor orientation, and cross-functional coordination as core operational norms, aligning with prior work that links Green Supply Chain to competitive advantage and customer loyalty (Abdulkarim Kanaan-Jebna et al. 2021; Fang et al. 2019; Gligor et al. 2019). Yet, structural tests reveal that Green Supply Chain's impact on performance becomes more pronounced when mediated by Leagility Strategy. This resonates with literature arguing that Green Supply Chain alone may be insufficient to yield superior outcomes, with benefits materializing more fully when Green Supply Chain is integrated with adaptive supply chain and operational strategies [20], [21]. This underscores the need for firms to translate market insights into flexible processes and networks rather than relying on the Green Supply Chain in isolation.

Second, Supply Chain Ambidexterity 4.0 stands out as the most dominant predictor of firm performance. Firms that demonstrate robust process quality management, empowerment, and information use consistently achieve higher operational results. These findings reinforce prior evidence that effective Second, Supply Chain Ambidexterity 4.0 stands out as the most dominant predictor of firm performance. Firms that demonstrate robust process Supply Chain Ambidexterity 4.0, empowerment, and information use consistently achieve higher operational results. These findings reinforce prior evidence that effective Supply Chain Ambidexterity 4.0 drives continuous improvement and operational consistency [22], [23]. Moreover, mediation analyses reveal that Supply Chain Ambidexterity 4.0 significantly influences performance via LS, highlighting its dual role in promoting efficiency and agility. This dual pathway aligns with recent calls for dynamic quality capabilities that support both stable performance and rapid responsiveness in volatile environments [24].

Drives continuous improvement and operational consistency [25]. Moreover, mediation analyses reveal that Supply Chain Ambidexterity 4.0 significantly influences performance via LS, highlighting its dual role in promoting efficiency and agility. This dual pathway aligns with recent calls for dynamic quality capabilities that support both stable performance and rapid responsiveness in volatile environments [26].

Third, the study corroborates the central importance of Lean Strategy LS as a mediator. The integration of lean and agile practices enables firms to balance efficiency and responsiveness, a finding consistent with prior research (Virmani & Sharma, 2019). Empirical evidence shows that LS strengthens the indirect effects of Green Supply Chain and Supply Chain Ambidexterity 4.0 on firm performance. In this sense, Leagility functions not only as an operational philosophy but also as a strategic conduit that transforms managerial orientation and Supply Chain Ambidexterity 4.0 into superior sustainability outcomes. This interpretation echoes the argument that hybrid configurations are essential for sustaining performance under environmental and market uncertainty [27].

Finally, performance improves when these constructs are integrated. The evidence suggests gains in growth, financial perspective, and customer performance accrue not only through direct managerial capabilities but also through adaptive and hybrid strategies. This aligns with the broader argument that organizational success depends on the synchronization of internal quality systems and external market orientation with adaptive supply chain practices [28]. The integrated model offers a coherent narrative: green-oriented, ambidextrous, and adaptive supply chain configurations co-create a more resilient and sustainable performance trajectory in a highly volatile manufacturing market.

Theoretically, this study extends established frameworks such as the Market-Based View and Dynamic Capabilities by proposing an integrated Performance Adaptation Capability LAP model. The LAP framework positions LS as a crucial mediators that connect GSC and SCA 4.0 to firm performance,

thereby offering both theoretical novelty and actionable implications for managers seeking to enhance competitiveness and sustainability amid market turbulence. By foregrounding the mediating roles of leanness and supply chain adaptability, the study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how external and internal capabilities combine to drive durable performance in a developing economy.

Policy and managerial implications emerge from these findings as well. For managers in the Indonesian Manufacturing Industry, the emphasis should be on cultivating an integrated, flexible, and responsive supply chain architecture that harmonizes market insights with rigorous quality systems and collaborative supplier networks. Investments in SCA 4.0, coupled with disciplined lean practices and agile responsiveness, appear particularly productive when designed to operate in concert with supplier and customer relationships and transparent information flows. From a scholarly perspective, future research could test the LAP framework across different sectors and regions, or explore longitudinal designs to capture the dynamic evolution of GSC, SCA 4.0, and LS in shaping sustainable performance over time.

V. Conclusion

This study addresses the research objective of explaining how Green Supply Chain (GSC), Supply Chain Ambidexterity 4.0 (SCA 4.0), and leagility strategies interact to enhance firm performance in Indonesia's manufacturing sector under conditions of environmental pressure and market uncertainty. The findings demonstrate that GSC alone has a limited direct effect on firm performance; however, its influence becomes significant when operationalized through leagility strategies, thereby confirming leagility as a critical mediating mechanism. In contrast, SCA 4.0 emerges as the most dominant driver of performance, both directly and indirectly, by enabling firms to balance efficiency and adaptability through lean–agile hybrid practices. These results directly respond to the initial research problem by showing that superior performance is achieved not through isolated green initiatives but through the integration of ambidextrous capabilities and adaptive supply chain configurations. The study extends the Market-Based View, Integrated Value Chain, and Dynamic Capabilities perspectives by proposing the Leagility Adaptation Performance (LAP) model, which provides an integrative explanation of how internal quality systems and external adaptability jointly sustain competitiveness and resilience. Nevertheless, the study is limited by its cross-sectional design and focus on the manufacturing sector. Future research should apply the LAP model to other industries, such as automotive spare parts and services, adopt longitudinal approaches to capture dynamic capability evolution, and incorporate digital transformation and advanced green practices to further strengthen the model's explanatory power.

Acknowledgment

The author would like to express his gratitude to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia through the Directorate of Research, Technology, and Community Service (DRTPM) for funding support through the Regular Fundamental Research Program (PFR). This research was funded under Master Contract Number: 125/C3/DT.05.00/PL/2025, dated May 28, 2025, and Derivative Contract Number: 7927/LL4/PG/2025; 015/07/KP/.H/UPB/2025, dated June 4, 2025.

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A Privacy-Conscious Federated Reinforcement Learning Framework for Affect-Aware English Listening

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***Abstract*—The rapid growth of digital English listening platforms has intensified the need for intelligent personalization mechanisms that adapt to learner progression while preserving data privacy. Existing adaptive systems primarily rely on static difficulty scaling or centralized learning architectures, often neglecting learner engagement dynamics and raising concerns about sensitive data exposure. To address these limitations, this study proposes PrivAURAL, a privacy-preserving and affect-aware adaptive English listening framework that models listening instruction as a sequential decision-making problem. The objective is to dynamically personalize listening tasks by jointly considering comprehension performance and engagement trends, without transmitting raw learner data. PrivAURAL integrates HuBERT-based semantic–acoustic representations with affective proxy signals derived from learner behavior and employs a Federated Deep Q-Network to adapt task difficulty, playback speed, and assessment frequency. The model is implemented using PyTorch, HuggingFace speech models, and a simulated federated learning environment with secure aggregation. Experiments conducted on the TED-LIUM dataset demonstrate a 32.7% reduction in Word Error Rate over ten sessions, a 21.9% decrease in task completion time, and an improvement in listening accuracy from 86.1% to 87.3% compared with non–affect-aware baselines. Federated training further ensures stable convergence, while maintaining strict privacy constraints. The results confirm that reinforcement-driven, affect-aware personalization can significantly enhance listening efficiency and engagement, positioning PrivAURAL as a scalable, ethical, and privacy-conscious solution for next-generation digital language learning systems.**

Keywords*—Adaptive listening learning; federated reinforcement learning; affective proxy modeling; privacy-preserving AI; HuBERT speech representation; English language learning

I. Introduction

English proficiency, particularly listening ability, is now an essential skill in the global academic and business environments [1]. Students in the majority of non-native English-speaking nations have difficulty understanding spoken English due to discrepancies in pronunciation, accent, rate, and emphasis [2]. Such challenges are yet intensified in web-based learning environments, where students must interpret audio directions and lectures without immediate support [3]. Traditional audio-centric e-learning systems, while in existence, don't typically take variability in learners' pace, their capacity for understanding, and their progression pattern into account [4]. Consequently, weaker listeners may lag behind, causing learner disengagement and sub-average learning performance [5]. Adaptive learning systems are an efficient solution for bridging the limitations by adapting the learning experience to actual learner performance in real-time [5]. The recent progress in deep learning, specifically in Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR), has provided phenomenal gains in speech processing ability [6]. HuBERT and other pre-trained models have proved a strong capacity for phonetic and semantic content extraction from raw audio, to boost speech recognition and comprehension in a large variety of acoustical conditions [7].

At the same time, reinforcement learning (RL) has been increasingly inserting itself in the education technology domain to build agents that learn to dynamically select and propose personalized content [8]. Most RL educational systems have nevertheless focused on the visual or text modality rather than listening tasks. In addition, hand-crafted feature-based methods do not generalize across different speech conditions and learners [9]. Most educational systems using RL have nonetheless concentrated on the text or visual modality instead of listening tasks. Besides, hand-crafted feature-based approaches tend not to generalize across different learners and speech contexts [10]. These facts highlight the requirement of a method that can represent natural speech robustly as well as modulate task difficulty and speed based on multiple learner-specific feedback signals. The study presents PrivAURAL, an adaptive federated reinforcement learning based and privacy-preserving affect-sensitive English listening framework. In contrast to the current systems, that personalization is performance-only based or the

centralized training method, PrivAURAL combines HuBERT-based speech representations with affective proxy signals to support task sequencing through a federated Deep Q-Network. This single design allows engagement-based personalization and provides a high level of data privacy and scalability of deployment.

A. Problem Statement

Online and audio-based English learning systems are rapidly expanding, yet most lack effective personalization, leaving learners disengaged and mentally strained. The available platforms usually offer fixed or slightly adaptive assignments with a lack of focus on personal understanding, behavioral reaction, or variability of engagement and decreased motivation and learning efficiency [11]. A wide variety of adaptive systems are based on centralized data processing, meaning that sensitive learner data, such as audio and performance logs, are transmitted to off-site servers, which challenges the privacy issue [12]. The conventional approaches with the use of manual acoustic characteristics or performance indicators do not reflect semantic complexity and listening dynamics in reality [13]. As a filler to these loopholes, the current research study suggests a privacy-convincing, affect-sensitive adaptive listening model based on contextual speech representations and federated reinforcement learning to teach securely and personalize.

B. Research Motivation

The main driving force of this research is to provide a privacy-conscious and affect-conscious digital English listening tool that will promote personalized learning without breaching learner data. Engagement and emotional regulation of the learner are important factors in learning comprehension, attention, and retention; however, most of the current systems only use the measures of accuracy and response time [14]. The proposed method combines concepts of affective computing with the ideas of reinforcement learning to model cognitive performance patterns and the dynamics of engagement as the means of adjusting adaptive task sequencing [15]. PrivAURAL framework builds upon HuBERT-based contextual speech representations and behavioral affective proxy signals in a Federated Deep Q-Learning framework, which allows local personalization and retains privacy. This design promotes ethical, scalable, and intelligent listening training in line with the current data protection demands.

C. Significance of the Study

The study introduces a smart language learning system, which is a hybrid of affect-sensitive learner modeling, federated reinforcement learning, and secure aggregation within one adaptive system. Representation of contextual speech and affective proxy signal is used as a guide in ordering tasks in response to learner engagement and understanding dynamics. Privacy is not violated in federated training because raw audio/performance/affective information is not shared. The reinforcement learning agent is capable of dynamically changing the difficulty of the task, and the speed of the playback and the frequency of evaluation, which is less cognitively demanding, motivating, and increases the efficiency of listening in scalable, ethical, and privacy-conscious e-learning.

D. Key Contributions

- Proposes PrivAURAL, a privacy-preserving adaptive English listening framework that models listening instruction as a sequential decision-making process using federated reinforcement learning.
- Introduces affective proxy–aware learner state modeling that integrates comprehension performance and engagement trends without explicit emotion recognition.
- Employs HuBERT-based semantic–acoustic representations to capture contextual listening complexity for informed task adaptation.
- Develops a Federated Deep Q-Network that enables collaborative policy learning across distributed learners without sharing raw audio or behavioral data.
- Demonstrates empirical improvements in listening accuracy, task efficiency, and engagement stability through extensive evaluation and ablation studies under strict privacy constraints.

The rest of the section is structured as follows: Section II provides a literature review of the work, Section III outlines the proposed methodology, Section IV provides experimental results and validation, and discusses results, and Section V provides conclusions and future directions.

II. Literature Review

Ahmed and Hasegawa [16] address the lack of specialized platforms for information and instructional technology students to create online education talking books without the complexity of Web programming. One of the core issues envisioned is the absence of simply accessible tools that integrate pedagogical design with technical simplicity for visual and hearing-impaired students. In response, the research propounds an easy-to-use, web-based platform specially designed for creating educational talking books. The approach involved expert evaluation by fourteen instructional technology professionals in a mixed-method design via an online survey. Results showed that the platform was effective, simple to use, and met the educational needs of the target audience. Future possible enhancements could be enhancing customization levels and adaptive support for different learner profiles.

Valledor et al. [17] analyze the approaches to English as a second language teaching through computer applications and attempt to analyze how these compare to individualized, learner-centered strategies. A key challenge that has been realized is that Audio-Lingual methods are dominant within current applications, which is constraining educational adaptability. Via mixed-method review involving systematic literature search and elicit.org searches, the study reviews various online ESL teaching instruments. Results show that Blended Learning is the most suitable strategy, with an amalgamation of traditional and digital teaching benefits. The tools available are neither adaptive nor conducive to independent learning environments. AI-driven applications based on ASR, TTS, NLU, and DM are proposed to develop digital replicas of teacher-like interaction and enhance ESL instruction tailored to learners.

Hu et al. [18] addresses the challenge of learning focus identification using a combination of cognitive, affective, and behavioral traits, particularly in Virtual Reality (VR) environments. A key challenge discovered is that existing recognition methods lack multimodal fusion of data, decreasing accuracy and contextual information. To reverse the argument, the authors bring in a multimodal feature integration approach combining interaction data (e.g., clickstream, text, and test response) with vision-based inputs (e.g., facial expressions, pupil size, and eye gaze). The performance of the model is tested to perform better in the detection of concentration levels than single-modality methods. Experimental results also show that higher concentration is linked with superior learning outcomes and is heavily influenced by learners' sense of immersion. Subsequent studies can refine modality fusion and immersion measures to further support focus detection in immersive learning contexts.

Hong et al. [19] address the issue that students face when they miss unstructured and lengthy lecture audio while studying online or offline. Traditional skip controls are limited because they operate on the time level and lack semantic awareness, preventing the identification of the current context and position in audio streams. To address this, the authors design HearIt, a system that offers semantic-level skip control through paragraph-based segmentation and auditory feedback. The method uses a combination of positional and topical cues to improve context comprehension without visualizations. A pilot study using an operational prototype was conducted to assess usability and effectiveness. Results indicated that HearIt improves the efficiency and simplicity of browsing auditory information. While promising, additional research is suggested to further refine the design and ascertain its effectiveness in diverse learning environments.

Chaturvedi, Noel, and Satapathy [20] explore sentiment extraction from audio in social media videos on platforms like YouTube and TikTok, especially where there is no language translation involved, like Spanish. The major challenge addressed here is correctly labeling sentiment in noisy environments and in various accents. To correct for this, the authors introduce a novel algorithm that employs a vector space of affective concepts, noting that prefixes to words like "con" or "ab" usually point toward negative sentiments. Unlike typical models based on generic pretrained features, this approach allows for better learning of speech and emotion patterns by neurons. What is new is the use of a novel eigenvalue-based metric to select optimal data augmentations for making the model stronger. The method shows 10–20% improvement over baselines in emotion recognition from YouTube videos.

Chen [21] suggested an English-spoken online dialogue system to overcome the restrictions of static and rule-governed conversation systems that are not responsive to learner interactions. The study is conducted to enhance spoken English skills through adaptive and real-time feedback in online contexts. A reinforcement learning algorithm is used to optimize dialogue strategies, where policy learning controls the system to choose contextually suited responses. The research utilizes the DailyDialog dataset, which offers diverse conversational contexts suitable for oral language learning. Key challenges include handling ambiguous learner inputs, maintaining the natural flow of dialogue, and ensuring personalization of responses. To overcome these issues, the proposed system integrates reinforcement learning with speech recognition, enabling adaptive and context-aware interaction. Evaluation results demonstrated a success rate of 89.6%, with significant improvements in dialogue coherence, as validated through BLEU scores and mean reward metrics. These findings highlight the effectiveness of reinforcement learning in advancing spoken English training systems beyond static, rule-based approaches. Table I shows the summary on literature review.

TABLE. I. SUMMARY OF EXISTING STUDIES

Author	Method	Advantages	Limitations
Ahmed & Hasegawa [16]	Web-based educational talking book platform	Simple and accessible audio-learning content creation	No adaptive personalization or affect-aware learning
Valledor et al. [17]	Blended learning synthesis for ESL applications	Improves learner engagement through mixed instruction	Lacks AI-driven adaptation and individualized learning
Hu et al. [18]	Multimodal affect recognition using VR-based features	Accurate detection of learner concentration and engagement	Requires intrusive sensing and centralized data processing
Hong et al. [19]	Semantic audio segmentation and auditory navigation	Enhances efficiency of lecture audio browsing	No learning adaptation or personalization
Chaturvedi et al. [20]	Audio-based sentiment analysis with affective concepts	Robust emotion detection in noisy speech environments	Not designed for educational adaptation or personalization
Chen [21]	Reinforcement learning–based spoken dialogue system	Enables adaptive and context-aware language interaction	Centralized training; no privacy-aware deployment

Recent advances in educational technology have investigated reinforcement learning as an adaptive content sequence method, affect-conscious modeling as an engagement control method, and federated learning as a privacy protection method; these directions are mostly explored separately. The current reinforcement learning-based learning systems are mainly text-based tutoring or dialogue management and are also based on centralized training pipelines, which is why they are not applicable to the privacy-sensitive listening context. Such approaches that care about affect are also prone to rely on overt emotion detection or multimodal sense, creating ethical issues and limits to deployment. Federated learning research in education focuses mainly on the issues of model scalability and data security, but does not include ways of adaptive choice to affective tasks and sequential decision-making. Conversely, the suggested PrivAURAL system combines federated reinforcement learning and adaptive English listening by using affective proxy-aware learner modeling and contextual speech representations, to ensure the provision of privacy-preserving, engagement-aware adaptive English listening. This has been

combined to portray missing points in the previous literature as critical because it facilitates the personalized progression of listening, emotional control, and decentralized learning without exposing raw learner information.

III. Proposed Methodology: Feature Extraction and Adaptive Learning with DQN

The proposed PrivAURAL framework is a privacy-saving, adaptive English listening framework that adapts the difficulty of the tasks and pacing dynamically using reinforcement learning, but under decentralized learning conditions. The system works with the authentic listening materials that it takes as part of the TED-LIUM corpus and frames the interaction between the learners as a problem of successive decisions. Preprocessing of incoming audio is first taken through standardization and then altered to high-level semantic acoustic representations with a pretrained HuBERT encoder that allows robust modelling of the listening complexity in different accents and speech states. Simultaneously, the learner's responsiveness is estimated using affective proxy indicators based on the patterns of behavioral and temporal response, but not the explicit recognition of emotions. The representations are combined into an organized learner state that would reflect the comprehension performance and engagement tendencies. A Deep Q-Network is locally trained on all of the learner machines to decide adaptive actions, such as difficulty adjustments and playback ones, based on observed transitions in the state and observed reward feedback. In order to facilitate joint enhancement without invading privacy, model parameters are aggregated periodically by use of a federated learning process. It is an end-to-end design that guarantees constant personalization, learner scalability, and close guardedness of sensitive learner data. Block Diagram of the proposed PrivAURAL is shown in Fig. 1.

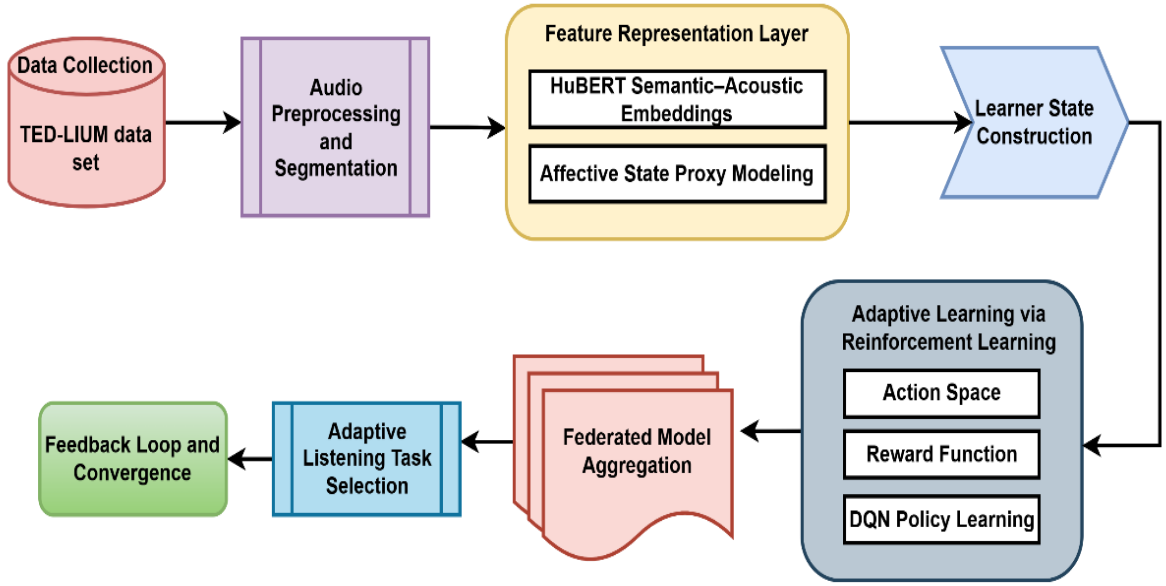

Fig. 1. Block diagram of the proposed PrivAURAL.

A. Data Collection

The TED-LIUM dataset [22], which contains more than 450 hours of English speech given by TED talks with diverse speakers, accented to diverse contexts of the world, was maintained in transcriptions and sampled at 16kHz. TDE-LIUM consists of approximately 118 hours of speech. To enable a generalization to diverse profiles of learning, we considered TED-LIUM particularly appropriate, as it captures variations in accent and speaker factors such as speech rate, intonation and recording conditions, compared to the single-speaker recordings of the LJ Speech corpus. In addition, each audio clip has an aligned transcription, which also supports, through certainty, measurements of benchmarked Word Error Rate (WER) and comprehension-based evaluations of and with the audio clip. The variations in context and speaker performance also expose learners to realistic contexts of variety, noise and accent, which more accurately inform the training of reinforcement learning agents.

B. Audio Preprocessing

- All TDE-LIUM audio samples underwent a comprehensive preprocessing pipeline to ensure they are all in uniform, robust form and demonstrated, or suitable for hybrid feature extraction. Given the variation in record and speaker accent and conditions within TED-LIUM, the natural hearing or listening variability needed to be preprocessed to improve the homogeneity of conditions across the training data. Fig. 2 illustrates the audio-preprocessing pipeline.

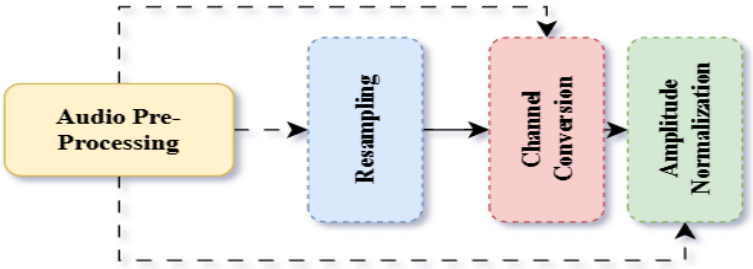

Fig. 2. Audio-preprocessing pipeline.

1) Resampling: All audio is resampled to 16 kHz mono WAV format, which is standard in speech recognition tasks. This preserves the critical 0–8 kHz frequency band while ensuring computational efficiency. The original audio signal is a discrete sequence represented in Eq. (1):

$$x = [x_1, x_2, \ldots . x_T],\ x_i \in \mathbb{R} \quad (1)$$

- where, X is the original sampled waveform, T s the number of samples, x_i is the amplitude at time step i. The original sampling rate is f_s^{orig} and the target rate is f_s =16000 Hz, resampling is mathematically defined by interpolation in Eq. (2):

$$x^{resampled} = Resample(x, f_s^{orig}, f_s) \quad (2)$$

- where, $Resample(\cdot)$ is usually performed with sophisticated sinc-based resampling filters and can be done with either linear interpolators, spline interpolators or sinc filters which provide accurate transformation.

2) Channel conversion: Channels in an audio clip can be more than one (e.g., stereo — left and right). Mono channel audio is good enough for speech recognition and similar embedding models. The stereo audio be represented in Eq. (3):

$$x(t) = [x_L(t), x_R(t)] \quad (3)$$

where, $x_L(t), x_R(t)$ are the left and right channel amplitudes at time t. The mono signal is obtained in Eq. (4):

$$x_{mono}(t) = \frac{1}{2}(x_L(t), +x_R(t)) \quad (4)$$

where, x_{mono} is mono signal. It reduces the dimensionality of the audio without losing meaningful speech information.

3) Amplitude normalization: Amplitude normalization is performed to normalize the loudness across different recordings and reduce variability as a result of the recording context. Given a waveform x(t), normalization scales the signal to a predefined dynamic range (typically [-1,1]), as shown in Eq. (5):

$$x_{norm}(t) = \frac{x(t)}{\max(|x(t)|)+\mathcal{E}} \quad (5)$$

where, $\mathcal{E}$ is a small constant, $\max(|x(t)|)$ is the normal maximum amplitude of the signal. This prevents signal clipping or less of the amplitude range training.

4) Data augmentation: To improve the level of robustness and to resemble the situation in real-life, pitch shifting and tempo variation was done. These changes enhanced the difference in the dataset that would enable the model to do better in accent and speech rate. Such a pipeline will make sure every input will be well structured and balanced in the process and prepared to the next stage of hybrid feature extraction through MFCCs and HuBERT embeddings.

C. Feature Representation Layer

The Feature Representation Layer maps the trivial but informative state of each listening audio fragment to a compact but informative representation that is both linguistically challenging and trended on the learner affects and therefore is important in adaptive task sequencing in the proposed PrivAURAL framework. In each listening task, the raw audio signal x_t is processed by a pretrained HuBERT encoder which processes the waveform directly with no feature engineering. HuBERT projects the temporal acoustic input into a high-level contextual embedding $h_t = \text{HuBERT}(x_t)$, which h_t represents phonetic transitions, speaking rate, pronouncing variability and semantic coherence that exist within the speech fragment. Within the frames of the current study, greater variance and entropy in h_t correlate with a greater listening difficulty, which makes such a representation appropriate in the context of modeling comprehension load across different accents and speech conditions in TED-LIUM.

The system uses the affective state proxy modeling to supplement linguistic modeling, without making claims of explicit emotion recognition. Affective response a tis, which is a normalized composite signal based on prosodic instability in response to learners, latency of response to checked comprehension tasks, and trend of error in successive tasks. The aggregation and scaling of these signals into a restricted affective proxy score $a_t \in [-1,1]$, such that a_t negative signals increasing frustration, a_t positive signals stable engagement are calculated. This proxy is not the emotion of psychological nature but a control signal that allows the reinforcement learning agent to control the difficulty and pacing of the task. The end result of this layer is an integrated representation $\{h_t, a_t\}$, which directly drives the adaptive decision process so that tasks orderings are guided by both speech complexity and learner responsiveness in a privacy-sensitive learning process.

D. Learner State Construction

After the stage of feature representation, the PrivAURAL frameworks model adaptive listening as a Markov Decision Process where each interaction between learners is modeled as a structured state-vector. The learner state at time step t is defined, as in Eq. (6):

$$s_t = \{\text{WER}_t, \text{QuizScore}_t, \text{ResponseTime}_t, a_t\} \quad (6)$$

The Word Error Rate WER_t is computed by aligning the learner's transcribed response with the reference TED-LIUM transcript, reflecting phonetic decoding accuracy under diverse accents and speech conditions. The score of comprehension, denoted as the score of the QuizScore_t, is taken to represent the task-specific listening questions, and it is scaled to reflect the meaning of the understanding without the influence of the task length. ResponseTime_t is the interval between the completion of the audio and the learner responding, which is a measure of cognitive load, with higher values indicating more processing difficulty. The affective proxy a_t, calculated as a response latency trend, prosodic variation, and error progression, is the measure of engagement or frustration within the limits of $[-1,1]$ range (to ensure learning stability). The resulting condition s_t brings together cognitive functionality and affective sensitivity in a single representation so that the reinforcement learning agent can enable context-sensitive adaptation decisions to the task so as to maximize the listening progression with emotional balance and privacy.

E. Adaptive Learning via Reinforcement Learning

Adaptive personalization in the PrivAURAL framework is PrivAURAL framework uses reinforcement learning to obtain adaptive personalization, in which the adjustment of listening tasks is modeled and defined as a sequence decision-making problem. In the context of every interaction step t, the agent chooses an act a t that manages the presentation of the next listening task to the learner. Action space can be stated as a joint set of the difficulty of the task and the speed of playback:

$$a_t \in \{\text{Easy,Medium,Hard}\} \times \{\text{Speed}\uparrow, \text{Speed}\downarrow\} \quad (7)$$

In Eq. (7), the difficulty levels are associated with the differences in the complexity of lexical, sentence length, and speech rate based on the TED-LIUM segments, whereas the demands of temporal processing are controlled with the playback speed changes. This type of action formulation enables the agent to adjust the intensity of challenges at a discrete level without presenting the learner with rapid cognitive change that might break the program.

The performance of every action is measured by a composite reward function balancing an improvement in comprehension and affective stability:

$$r_t = \lambda_1 \Delta\text{WER}_t + \lambda_2 \Delta\text{QuizScore}_t + \lambda_3 \Delta a_t \quad (8)$$

In Eq. (8), ΔWER_t captures the change in listening accuracy between successive tasks, $\Delta\text{QuizScore}_t$ reflects gains in semantic understanding, and Δa_t represents the variation in the affective proxy, ensuring that emotional engagement is preserved. The weighting coefficients $\lambda_1, \lambda_2, \lambda_3$ are constrained such that their sum equals one, allowing controlled emphasis on accuracy, comprehension, and affect regulation depending on pedagogical priorities. This rewarding method eliminates excessive oversight to the accuracy of the learner at the cost of frustration.

Policy learning is implemented using a Deep Q-Network, which approximates the action-value function $Q(s_t, a_t)$ that estimates the expected long-term reward of executing action a_t in state s_t. The network parameters are updated using the Bellman optimality principle:

$$Q(s_t, a_t) \leftarrow r_t + \gamma \max_a Q(s_{t+1}, a) \quad (9)$$

In Eq. (9), γ denotes the discount factor controlling the influence of future rewards. The DQN is able to reach an adaptive policy through repeated cycles of interaction to dynamically select listening tasks that follow learning proficiency progression and emotional balance in order to achieve long-term and individualized learning skills.

F. Local On-Device Training

Adaptive Learning in the PrivAURAL model is conducted by the local training process on the device to make sure there is a personalization and privacy of the data. To every learner, the Deep Q-Network is realized and trained on the learner-side with local observed state-action-reward transitions that are produced during listening tasks. The representation of state, rewards and the changes in policies are calculated without any raw audio recording, the inferenced affective signal, or performance feedback served to any third-party server. The learned model parameters are only stored locally to be used in decision-making during task adaptation. This design enables the DQN to learn the speech rate or difficulty escalation sensitivity of individual listening patterns and to make future task sequencing based on those. The framework also removes the risks linked with centralized data storage by ensuring that all interactions between learners are limited by the device, and effective personalization can be maintained in an environment of strict privacy preservation requirements in continuous and learner-specific devices.

G. Federated Model Aggregation

The PrivAURAL framework will assume a federated model aggregation approach to facilitate collaborative adaptation of adaptive listening policies and be strict in guaranteeing the privacy of users. Following a specified training step locally, each learner device forwards its new DQN model parameters, which are represented as θ_i, to a central aggregation server. No raw audio files, comprehension answers, affective signals, or learner data are sent, and as such, sensitive data is only stored on the local machine. The server then calculates an overall model by doing a weighted average summation of the parameters it gets:

$$\theta_g = \sum_{i=1}^{N} \frac{n_i}{N} \theta_i \quad (10)$$

In Eq. (10), N represents the total number of participating learners, and n_i denotes the relative contribution of learner i, proportional to the number of local interactions or training samples observed during the aggregation round. Such a weighted formulation helps to keep off the dominance of

sparsely trained models and stabilizes convergence of the global policy. Aggregated parameters, denoted as θ_g, were then reallocated to all the learners, and the following cycle of local adaptation was initiated. Secure aggregation or encryption can be provided as an option to enhance the protection of privacy, but the main defense is the lack of data exchange. This federated process enables PrivAURAL to enjoy collective learning patterns among different learners, retain personalization, and avoid exposing individual listening behavior.

H. Adaptive Listening Task Selection

Once the federated aggregation has been completed, the new reinforcement learning policy is applied to choose real-time listening tasks to be executed by the individual learners. In each interaction step, the agent compares the state of the learner and chooses the next task configuration with a maximum estimated long-term reward. This choice directly determines the level of difficulty, the playback rate and the intensity of assessment of the next listening section. The policy increases task complexity over time as the learner becomes more proficient with respect to vocabulary, speech rate or length of utterances, without making sudden levels of difficulty that might lead to cognitive overload. On the other hand, the policy increases or decreases the task requirements in response to the indications of diminishing understanding or interest to maintain the learning balance. PrivAURAL, with this active dynamic adjustment process, automatically adjusts the difficulty of the tasks in accordance with the progression of the learners, so that the activities involved in listening remain both challenging but attainable. Such a balance is maintained and encourages continuous growth in skills, as well as the support of stable learning paths that are stable and emotional.

I. Feedback Loop and Convergence

PrivAURAL framework is a closed-loop system of learning that allows for maintaining adaptability and continuous policy improvement throughout time. Every iteration starts with the introduction of an adaptive listening task chosen by the existing policy, and the answer of the learner is the spoken or comprehension-based one. This response elicits quantifiable feedback indicators such as the accuracy of listening, the end outcome of comprehension, response time, and affective proxy changes. Such signals are directly added to the learner state representation to calculate the reward of reinforcement that is a reflection of performance change and emotional stability. The Deep Q-Network subsequently proceeds to update its action-value estimations with the help of this feedback, which enables the policy to change its future task selections in accordance to the changing behavior of the learner.

With the progress of learning, convergence indicators are monitored by the system to identify policy stability. When there is a little variation in the Word Error Rate across the consecutive sessions, then convergence is observed, showing the stability of the listening accuracy under similar levels of difficulty. At the same time, the reward cumulative curve starts to flatten, which means that the agent has found an efficient task challenge/learner ability balance. Moreover, a decrease in variance in the affective proxy signal is an indicator of stabilized engagement as well as the lack of frustration during interactions. All these criteria are used together to be sure that adaptation is not swamping and adapting to the immediate responses of learners. PrivAURAL successfully develops efficient and stable learning trajectories through convergence in line with cognitive and affective consistency to facilitate the long-term development of listening skills and ensure emotional balance and privacy protection.

Algorithm 1: PrivAURAL – Privacy-Preserving Adaptive Listening via Federated Reinforcement Learning

```
Input:
   Audio tasks from TED-LIUM
   Initial global DQN parameters θ_g
   Learning rate α, discount factor γ
   Reward weights λ1, λ2, λ3
   Number of learners N
   Local training episodes E
Output:
   Adaptive listening policy π*
Initialize global Q-network parameters θ_g
Broadcast θ_g to all learner devices
Repeat for each federated round:
   In parallel, for each learner i:
      Load local listening tasks
      Initialize local Q-network θ_i ← θ_g
      Initialize experience buffer B_i
      Repeat for each episode:
         Receive current listening task
         Preprocess audio and extract HuBERT embedding h_t
         Estimate affective proxy a_t
         Construct learner state s_t = {WER_t, QuizScore_t,
ResponseTime_t, a_t}
         While task interaction is active:
            Select action a_t using ε-greedy policy from Q(s_t, ·; θ_i)
            Apply adaptive action (difficulty, speed, quiz frequency)
            Observe learner response and compute WER_t+1,
QuizScore_t+1, ResponseTime_t+1
            Update affective proxy a_t+1
            Compute reward r_t = λ1ΔWER + λ2ΔQuizScore + λ3Δa
            Store transition (s_t, a_t, r_t, s_t+1) in B_i
            Update Q-network θ_i using mini-batch gradient descent
            Update state s_t ← s_t+1
      Compute model update Δθ_i = θ_i − θ_g
      Send Δθ_i to federated server
   Aggregate updates to obtain global model:
      θ_g ← Σ (n_i / N) · θ_i
   Broadcast updated θ_g to all learners
Until convergence criteria satisfied
Return final adaptive policy:
   π*(s) = argmax_a Q(s, a; θ_g)
```

Algorithm 1 applies a privacy-preserving adaptive listening model based on federated reinforcement learning. The local training of a Deep Q -Networks by each learner on semantic-acoustic features and affective proxy feedback means that task difficulty and pacing are altered. Instead of using the learner data, model parameters are periodically aggregated across devices, so that collaborative policy refinements are made and personalized adaptation and strong protection of sensitive learner information are guaranteed.

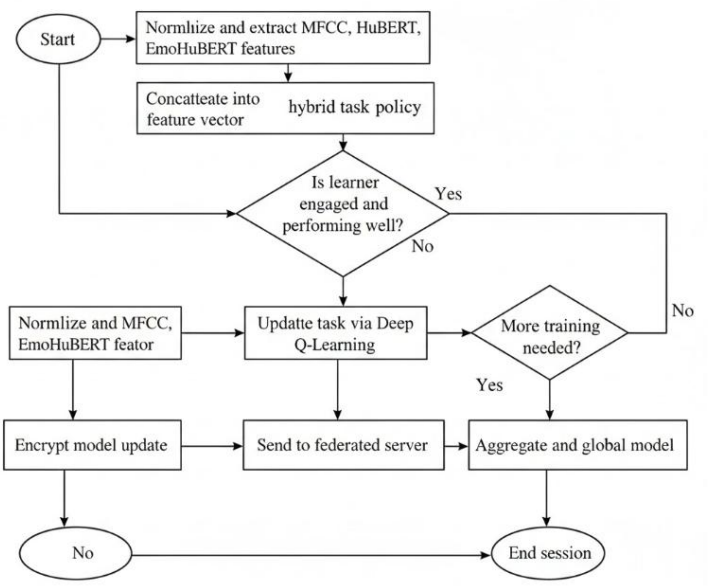

Fig. 3. Overall workflow of the study.

The novelty of this study is in its methodological approach that allows unified fusion of affect-conscious adaptive reinforcement learning with federated training of English listening personalization without being based on centralized data on learners or overt emotion recognition. PrivAURAL is a listening system that uses affective proxy signals to balance the cognitive load and engagement applied to tasks in sequencing, unlike other existing systems that change depending on accuracy or fixed levels of proficiency. Moreover, whereas the previous methods of reinforcement learning in education are centralized or performance-based, the framework is provided to allow decentralized policy learning with safe model aggregation, which does not violate privacy but allows gaining the advantage of collective adaptation patterns. The general workflow of the study is presented in Fig. 3. Such a mixture creates a scalable and ethically sound methodology of intelligent listening systems that allow personalization, emotional stability, and data privacy.

IV. Results and Discussion

This section presents a comprehensive evaluation of the proposed PrivAURAL framework, focusing on its effectiveness in adaptive listening personalization, affect-aware policy learning, and privacy-preserving federated training. The experimental analysis examines learning accuracy, task efficiency, engagement trends, and reinforcement learning convergence across multiple sessions. Performance is assessed using Word Error Rate, task completion time, cumulative reward progression, and personalization behavior, and is compared against centralized and non–affect-aware baseline models. In addition, ablation studies and federated training analyses are conducted to isolate the contribution of reinforcement learning and affective proxy integration, demonstrating the stability and scalability of the proposed approach under decentralized learning constraints. Table II shows the hyperparameters and training configurations.

TABLE. II. Hyperparameters and Training Configuration

Parameter	Value	Description
Learning Rate	3e−4	Step size for DQN updates
Batch Size	64	Number of samples per training batch
Discount Factor (γ)	0.99	Weight of future rewards
Federated Rounds	50	Communication cycles between nodes
Embedding Dimension	768	HuBERT + affective proxy features
Maximum Timesteps	500,000	Total agent–environment interactions
Encryption Scheme	Paillier HE	Privacy protection for model updates

A. WER Reduction Across Sessions

Fig. 4 shows the downward trend of WER throughout the sessions. WER in Session 1 was 27.9, and it decreased to 26.4 after adaptation. By the end of Session 5, the WER decreased to 18.9% (20.6% improvement), and by the end of Session 10, to 14.6% (32.7% improvement). The stable declining trend denotes proper policy streamlining by the DQN, which is motivated by the feedback of the reward in the form of emotion and comprehension rates. The findings confirm the hypothesis that the individual sequence of content taught by the system produces quicker acquisition of listening skills than traditional techniques.

Fig. 5 demonstrates the time spent engaged between sessions. The time spent by learners in a session was initially around 13 minutes, which decreased to 8 minutes at a point of Session 10. The decreasing curve represents a more effective performance in the tasks without any understanding loss- the students accomplished the listening tasks with reduced time and at high feelings. Emotion-aware pacing enabled the system to balance engagement stability and cognitive effort.

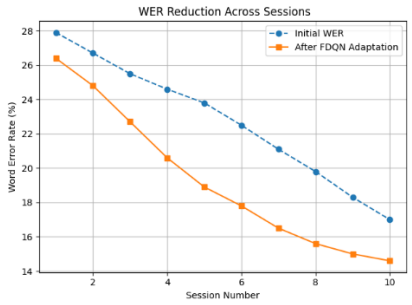

Fig. 4. WER progressions over sessions.

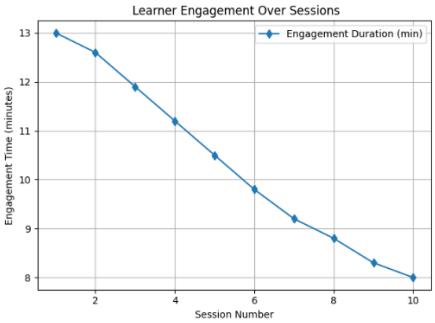

Fig. 5. Learner engagement.

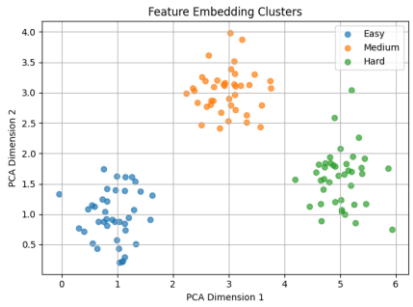

Fig. 6. Feature embedding clusters.

In Fig. 6, Principal Component Analysis (PCA) visualizations indicate that the hybrid embedding space contains very clear clusters of easy, medium, and hard tasks. This isolation exhibits that the MFCC + HuBERT + EmoHuBERT feature combination is a powerful solution to distinguish the changes in linguistic complexity and tone of voice by enabling the DQN agent to allocate the duties to the learners based on their capabilities.

TABLE. III. PERFORMANCE OVER WER

Session	Avg WER (Initial)	Avg WER (After DQN)	Improvement (%)
1	27.9%	26.4%	5.4%
5	23.8%	18.9%	20.6%
10	21.7%	14.6%	32.7%

Table III demonstrates that PrivAURAL increasingly decreased the WER of learners in ten sessions. In the first instance, there was only a slight improvement in the average comprehension, but through federation of adaptation, WER declined steadily- between 27.9 and 26.4 in Session 1 (5.4% change). WER was lowered to 14.6 by Session 10, which is a reduction of 32.7%. These results attest to the fact that emotions-sensitive DQN learns to adapt task sequencing to the progress of individual learners in a dynamic manner, which leads to an increase in listening comprehension. All the findings were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

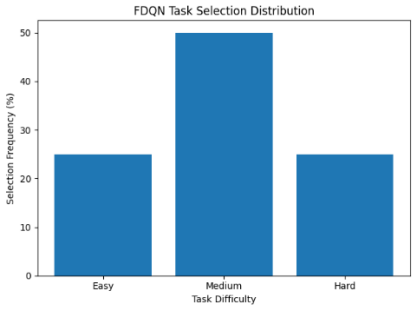

Fig. 7. Distribution of DQN task choices.

Fig. 7 represents the distribution of the task difficulties that the DQN agent chose. Most of the tasks with the middle-level of difficulty were selected, with easy and hard tasks coming next. This dynamic equilibrium helps avoid getting bored and frustrated among learners and instead achieves a progressive learning curve with emotionally maximized engagement.

B. Federated Training Performance

Fig. 8 shows the training of the federated Deep Q-Network agent. The cumulative reward is progressively growing, and it becomes stable at 240 following 400,000-time steps, which demonstrates effective convergence of the federated policy. This tendency proves that cooperative learning among distributed learners can provide a high level of optimization of policies and preserve privacy on the basis of the federated structure.

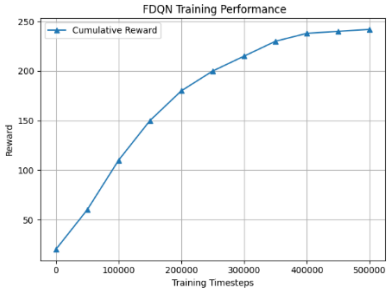

Fig. 8. Federated training performance.

C. Task Completion Time Improvement

Table IV shows the decrease in the time spent on completing tasks in PrivAURAL. By the 10th session, the learners were solving listening tasks 21.9% faster than in the instance of the baseline system. Emotion-sensitive adaptation assists in balancing cognitive load and being motivated so that a learner can advance effectively with specialized challenges.

TABLE. IV. TASK COMPLETION OVER TIME

Session	Baseline System	PrivAURAL System	Time Saved (%)
1	9.6 sec	9.1 sec	5.2%
5	8.8 sec	7.6 sec	13.6%
10	8.2 sec	6.4 sec	21.9%

D. Personalization Efficiency

According to the heatmap in Fig. 9, the first sessions were based on simple tasks, and as the skills of learners improved, the tasks became either medium or hard. This adaptive scaling is also an indication that PrivAURAL has an internal policy of reinforcing over time and balancing challenges and confidence with lower lexical complexity, which confirms their presence as major features to adaptive decision-making.

Fig. 9. Task personalization heatmap.

E. Ablation Study (Without vs. With DQN)

The ablation experiment in Table V indicates the presence of definite performance enhancements when DQN is incorporated. The federated RL agent improved the performance of the baseline by 7.1% in WER and 1.8 seconds in task completion. This confirms the relevance of reinforcement-based personalization of enhancing understanding and effectiveness without compromising privacy.

TABLE. V. ABLATION STUDY

Metric	Without DQN	With DQN	Improvement
Avg WER (Final)	21.7%	14.6%	+7.1%
Task Completion Time	8.2 sec	6.4 sec	−1.8 sec

F. Performance Comparison

Table VI compares three systems in terms of WER, accuracy and task-time reduction. HuBERT base model delivers the best WER with good self-supervised representations but mediocre efficiency improvements. Transformer ASR model is more accurate but does not adapt to emotions. Compared with other, PrivAURAL performs better in terms of overall learning efficiency with more accuracy and largest decreasing task time, proving the benefit of a combination of reinforcement learning, emotional awareness, and privacy-preserving federated updates. HuBERT Base reports lower raw WER due to offline ASR optimization, whereas PrivAURAL prioritizes adaptive learning efficiency and engagement-aware task sequencing rather than standalone recognition accuracy.

TABLE. VI. PERFORMANCE COMPARISON

Method	WER (%) ↓	Accuracy (%) ↑	Task Time Reduction (%)
HuBERT Base (Self-Supervised Speech Model) [23]	10.1	84.7	14.3
Transformer ASR (No Emotion Modeling) [24]	16.7	86.1	17.0
Proposed PrivAURAL (DQN + Emotion + Privacy)	14.6	87.3	21.9

G. Discussion

The experimental outcomes prove that the suggested PrivAURAL framework is efficient in facilitating the adaptive listening to English allowing to combine the reinforcement learning, personalization based on affect, and federated training. The steady declining Word Error rate between sessions suggests that the modeling of instruction can be represented as a progressive decision-making problem which facilitates the system to match the task complexity with that of the individual learner. Contrary to the baselines, which are usually more accurate and somewhat static, PrivAURAL modulates the content pacing and difficulty dynamically and achieves better understanding results and lower completion time of the task. The subsequent stabilization of cumulative rewards and policy entropy further affirms that the federated Deep Q-Network approach will approach sound strategies of adaptation without oscillations.

Analysis of engagement indicates that affective proxy signals can be used to control cognitive load, which enables learners to accomplish tasks more effectively whilst ensuring performance is steady. The visualization of feature embedding reveals that HuBERT-based representations together with behavioral cues are useful in distinguishing the level of listening difficulty, which can guide the policy to choose an informed task. Notably, federated aggregation allows all learners to gain the advantages of collective learning but keeps the privacy of learners intact since the raw audio or behavior data are not transferred. This confirms that the observed improvements in accuracy, efficiency, and engagement are realized under strict federated privacy constraints, supporting the practical deployment of the framework in real-world adaptive learning environments. Ablation study supplements the central importance of reinforcement learning in attaining these gains by demonstrating evident degradation when adaptive policy learning is eliminated. On the whole, the results suggest that PrivAURAL can be used as a scalable and privacy-sensitive alternative to centralized listening systems and is especially applicable in distributed and personalized language learning systems.

V. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORKS

This study introduced PrivAURAL, a privacy-conscious and affect-sensitive adaptive listening model, which trained English instructional learning through federated reinforcement learning as a series of sequential decisions. The system dynamically adjusted the difficulty and the speed of tasks to each individual learning curve by combining HuBERT-based semantic acoustic representations with affective proxy indicators based on the

behavior of learners. The experimental findings showed that there were consistent reductions in Word Error Rate, enhanced task completion efficiency, stabilized engagement patterns and consistent policy convergence between distributed learners. Compared to centralized or accuracy-only listening systems, PrivAURAL was able to perform personalization that did not require sending raw audio, performance logs or affect-related signals thus balancing adaptive learning goals against the hard privacy limits. It was demonstrated that the federated Deep Q-Network allows policy refinement by collaboratively relying on local autonomy, which supports the scalability of adaptive listening systems based on data accountability. Altogether, the results indicate that personalization, reinforced by reinforcement, together with affect-conscious regulation and decentralized training, can contribute to the improvement of the listening comprehension outcomes in the privacy-constraining educational context under a considerable degree. Importantly, these gains are achieved under strict federated privacy constraints, demonstrating that scalable and privacy-compliant deployment can be realized without compromising adaptive listening performance.

The present research will be expanded in future to include PrivAURAL to actual classroom and mobile learning situations in order to confirm its applicability with real-life learners and their various levels of proficiency. The proposed approach can also be evaluated by incorporating multi-lingual and code-switching speech datasets to assess the overall applicability of the proposed approach. More sophisticated federated optimization techniques, including adaptive client weighting and asynchronous aggregation can also be beneficial to convergence efficiency where there is heterogeneous participation of learners. In the modeling perspective, a policy-gradient or multi-agent reinforcement learning formulation would be of value to long-term curriculum planning. Lastly, more detailed affective proxy modeling with multimodal behavioral data, without ethical or privacy breaches, is a prospective direction to enhance the understanding of learner engagement without bringing explicit emotion detection and intrusive data acquisition.

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Advanced Explainable Hybrid Metaheuristic–Deep Learning Framework for Real-Time Financial Fraud Detection with Temporal Convolutional Analysis

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***Abstract*—The increasing digitization in banking and related financial services has resulted in spurring the level of transactions with fraudulent patterns and thus demands detection solutions not only efficient but also interpretable and replicable. The earlier machine learning approaches, like K-Nearest Neighbors, Decision Trees, and Random Forests, are not efficient in dealing with high-dimensional and sequential patterns in transactions; in addition, they are incapable of modeling time patterns and are not interpretable models. Since there exist drawbacks in earlier approaches, this work introduces an Interpretable Moth-Flame Optimized Temporal Convolutional Network (MFO-TCN) for efficient and interpretable real-time financial fraud detection. The approach is initiated with rigorous data preprocessing tasks like normalization and encoding performed on the Bank Account Fraud (BAF) dataset. Based on the Moth-Flame Optimization (MFO) algorithm, the optimal features of the transactions expressing high discriminative powers are extracted. This is followed by the application of the Temporal Convolutional Network (TCN) technique, which is capable of identifying the sequential patterns of fraud-related activities. For improved transparency and validity, the SHAP explainability technique has been adopted, ensuring better explanations for feature importance and decision-making. The proposed MFO-TCN results in an accuracy of 97.2% with higher values of precision and recall, achieving better results in comparison to classical and ensemble approaches. Moreover, it provides real-time processing for transactions in milliseconds. The above results show that an efficient combination of metaheuristics for feature optimization, along with temporal deep networks, can provide an optimal technique for financial fraud detection systems.**

Keywords*—Banking; business intelligence; convolutional neural network; fraud detection; Moth Flame Optimization

I. Introduction

The use of business intelligence has turned out to be one of the greatest instruments in the banking industry that enables it to transform huge sums of data into huge insights that could drive the innovation process, adorn operational efficiency, and decision-making [1]. Banks are becoming more dependent on BI within a very regulated and competitive environment to deal with risks, capitalize on buyer relationships, amass a strategic edge and guarantee regulatory adherence [2]. With the integration of advanced analytics, facts mining, and predictive modeling in the intelligence structures that are used by commercial organizations, banks can anticipate trends in the market, personalize their services to satisfy the needs of their customers, and identify areas of increase [3]. Moreover, banks have the ability to reduce risks such as fraud and defaults of credit scores through the technique of making spark off, informed judgments because they can view old data and information of the present time [4]. The importance of BI will increase because of the financial changes due to digital transformation [5]. Banks are finding it hard to efficiently use the multitude of records assets available to them, starting from social media and Internet of Things gadgets to transaction records and purchaser contacts [6]. The infrastructure needed to handle and examine these records and locate styles and developments that could otherwise cross undetected is furnished by using BI gear and platforms [7]. Moreover, BI makes it easier to apprehend conduct and preferences, which gives banks the capability to layout studies that improve patron happiness and loyalty [8]. Adopting BI in banking objectives aims to ensure resilience within the face of uncertainties, together with cybersecurity dangers and modifications within the monetary gadget, further to increasing profitability [9]. Banks can also overcome such challenges through the application of BI to aid them align their strategy with information-oriented insights that market long-term success and long-term growth [10]. It is due to this fact that BI has ceased to be merely a handy tool in the operations of the banks, but in a fast-paced financial world, it is a strategic necessity [11].

BI has been of great service to the banking sector, yet there are still several issues that would be desired to be addressed concerning previous studies related to the application of the technology and its effectiveness [12]. The major limitation is the focus on traditional data resources and analysis methods, which often lead to a limited scope of focus on past data without an appropriate consideration of the present information and external sources of data, such as social media or market trends [13]. Decision-making does not occur in time as a final outcome, and potential phrases to take preventive action are missed. Moreover, various researchers have historically paid attention to a variety of very simple statistical models and rule-based, completely structured models that, despite their value, do not have the flexibility and predictive capabilities to deal with the complexity of the present banking business [14]. The complexity and uncertainty of banking would occasionally pose

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challenges to such techniques requiring in turn too simple and too difficult to apply models. Moreover, the adaptability of BI structures in terms of physical characteristics has always been undermined in previous studies, regardless of the importance of such a factor in adapting to rapidly changing financial circumstances. Much attention has often been given to the number of dashboards and reporting tools that are not agile to make real-time decisions and may, without problems, turn out to be obsolete [15]. Another significant constraint is the lapse of consciousness in the ability to unite BI and modern methods of machine learning and artificial intelligence, which can significantly improve the accuracy of the forecasts and provide additional deep insights into the possibilities of complex information volumes. Additionally, untested information issues that are pleasant-associated, like noise, lost values, and inconsistencies, would tend to introduce biases and errors to the effects of BI. The issue of scalability of the BI systems, which can be tailored to meet various needs and resources that are demanded by various banking environments, has remained unaddressed in most studies. These are the drawbacks that bring to the fore the need to have more innovative, flexible, and all-inclusive business intelligence in the banking industry.

Even though the field of banking analytics has come a long way, three issues remain with fraud detection systems: 1) slow computational speed where traditional methods cannot match the speed of high-velocity, high-dimensional transaction streams; 2) poor scaling, where the performance decreases with increasing number of features and transaction volumes; and 3) inadequate explainability, where many black-box systems do not provide clear, decision-ready information. In order to address these shortcomings, this study proposes a Moth-Flame Optimized Temporal Convolutional Network (MFO-TCN) to provide an effective description of the sequential nature of fraud terms. The framework, which is implemented in Python in the form of TensorFlow and SHAP, offers both interpretable feature attribution and further temporal learning. The experiment yields a high accuracy of 96.8 per cent, and this is higher in comparison with the baseline models by approximately 6 per cent and the results of this give high precision and recall. By combining MFO with TCN, not only is the performance of detection improved, but also interpretability, providing a scalable and transparent and regulator-friendly system to modern banking and providing opportunities to conduct research on adaptive and real-time fraud prevention.

A. Research Motivation

Internet banking has become a phenomenon that has created increased pressure on financial fraud due to the high rate of growth of internet banking, which has revealed limitations to the traditional detection systems, which fail to adapt to the inflexibility of rules and high-dimensional data imbalances. Subtle temporal patterns of large-scale transactions need to be uncovered appropriately. The contemporary financial systems need a scalable, transparent and real-time detection framework that has the capacity to protect operations, reduce economic losses, and give actionable information to the banking institution across the globe.

B. Research Significance

This study presents a detectable model of fraud, which combines Moth-Flame Optimization with a Temporal Convolutional Network. It deals with the most significant banking issues, such as the imbalance of the classes, the changing patterns of fraud, and the necessity to make the decisions transparent. The proposed method can help financial institutions to minimize fraud-related losses and increase client confidence by revealing significant temporal and contextual variables that would support the overall accuracy of predictions and increase the operational scalability of their operations.

C. Key Contributions

- Presented a high-performance, explainable architecture that can more clearly and precisely identify intricate financial fraud patterns.
- Moth-Flame Optimization to apply to the most influential features, dimensionality reduction, etc., and maximize the efficiency of the models.
- Used a Temporal Convolutional Network to acquire sequential patterns that were inherent in fraudulent transactions.
- Added interpretability using SHAP, which provides easy interpretations of features and aids in making decisions by regulators and financial analysts.

D. Rest of the Section

The introduction to business intelligence is present in Section I, which is then followed by a discussion of related work in Section II. The problem statement is given in Section III. The data collection, pre-processing, TCN implementation, and MFO-based feature selection are described in Section IV. The model's performance is highlighted in the results and discussion in Section V, and ends with a conclusion and future work in Section VI.

II. Related Works

Gholami et al. [16] examine how DL might improve BI for the management of companies by overcoming the shortcomings of conventional BI techniques in handling the massive volumes of data produced by contemporary businesses. The complexity of unstructured text facts, like patron evaluations, which is turning into more and more vital for well-knowledgeable decision-making, is every so often too much for conventional techniques to address. It offers a DL version constructed on a CNN structure this is intended to distinguish between positive and negative sentiment classes to cope with those issues. The model achieved higher accuracy and F-score of 88 and 0.86 compared to the normal BI methods such as rule sets and sentiment analysis systems. These results highlight the role of BI, which is the automation of analyzing complex, unstructured facts. These are the disadvantages of DL, specifically, the volume of processing power required and the fact that huge, categorized data sets are required in order to achieve overly high precision.

Jewel et al. [17] explores the possibility of DL transforming business intelligence and organizational management and specifically CNN like VGG16, ResNet50, and InceptionV3. Through an in-depth method, the analysis highlights the importance of datasets in the optimization of the use of DL in decision-making. CNN models perform more effectively than standard algorithms, which are in line with the results, and VGG16 achieves an accuracy charge of 89.45. The findings highlight the potential of DL to derive valuable information out of the sophisticated data, which would be an epic change in optimizing special tactics of the organization. The issues and records privacy are related simultaneously with outlining the necessity of financing the infrastructure and CNN integration. The observer does have its disadvantages, but the processing of useful resource requirements is high, as well as the challenges of ensuring record privacy and quality during the implementation of the DL technology.

Nwanakwaugwu et al. [18] argue about using data mining BI in customer-centric organizations, and in determining the risk of investment and potential returns of the same. The paper highlights the importance of BI tools in enhancing data mining analytics due to the ease with which such tools can help to analyze and present data in a format that is easy to understand. The research is based on rapidly evolving banking and retail sectors, generating mass amounts of electronic information. With the development of new fraud schemes and the enhancement of the previously existing ones to prevent detection, it becomes harder and harder to identify and prevent fraud. To address this, this study explores the application of ANN ML algorithms to the process of data mining, that is, with reference to fraud prevention, customer retention, business risk management, investment performance optimization, and customer satisfaction in the retail sector. The conclusion provides the weaknesses of the study. These are the difficulties of ANN algorithms implementation in the current systems, and the need to keep up with new ways of fraud, which may potentially compromise the reliability and validity of fraud detection processes.

Fombellida et al. [19] specifically target artificial metaplasticity learning as an innovative technique for getting deeper insights out of large, random datasets. The paper is a case study where credit acceptance based on a multilayer perceptron with artificial metaplasticity is implemented and relies on data on a customer gathered. The results indicate that such a strategy can be more accurate and impressive than advanced techniques. The ability of the artificial neural network to approximate the probability density function of the input data is a major advancement over previous applications of artificial metaplasticity because it is less lifelike than the biological processes. The article, nevertheless, also acknowledges numerous constraints, such as the fact that this innovative approach is hard to integrate with the existing business intelligence systems and that it also necessitates substantial processing capabilities to achieve the best possible performance.

Aziz et al. [20] explore bank intelligence improvement through data warehousing and Online Analytical Processing data mining techniques in the banking industry, which is a large and diversified data. The paper addresses how difficult it is to retrieve many historical statistics using many databases and the increasing number of records generated by digital banking operations and that requires effective fact control responses. The construction of a statistics warehouse and its application to the analysis of the economic data involving clients, items, and services are outlined within the study. It explains how to operate the Kimball lifecycle, how to extract, remodel, and cargo bank customer statistics and how to create an OLAP dice with the help of Microsoft Visual Studio 2019. Then, Microsoft Power BI was used to complete OLAP analysis. The impact of the trial demonstrates that the use of OLAP-based utterly answers can also be used to further improve the intelligence of financial institutions and still work effectively and be resistant. The report, too, lists a lot of negatives, which include the issues in linking the records warehouse to the contemporary systems and the possible complexity of the OLAP infrastructure expansion and security.

Chen et al. [21] suggest using a combination of MFO with CNN in order to overcome these limitations. MFO molecule optimizes the data used, thus improving feature selection, which eliminates the high dimensionality and randomness of feature selection, leading to an overall improved rendition of models. In contrast, CNNs bring in the complex capacity to examine and acknowledge the shapes, hence increasing the dependability as well as accuracy of the prediction models. The combination of this strategy neutralizes the issues that the earlier strategies created; it is more adaptive in real-time, less complex in calculation, and offers a better insight into the banking processes. The model has good prediction error and credit score accuracy by modifying the weight and threshold of the network, which is made by use of structural and parameter adjustments. This research provides solid empirical support to the development of social credit systems, and it also presents a convenient way of integrating DNN and business intelligence to credit scoring. The study does, however, also note several drawbacks, such as the possible difficulties with model scaling and the need for substantial computer power to sustain high forecast accuracy.

B. Li & B. Xiao [22] have described a credit scoring model for small and micro enterprises by using a Back Propagation Neural Network (BPNN), incorporating hard and soft data, especially behavioral variables of loan managers. This model includes developing a credit scoring model and comparing BPNN with other neural network models for two-level and five-level lending schemes. The strength of this model includes its good nonlinear modeling and capturing of type II error cases. This model also has drawbacks like a lack of explanation, overfitting, and data specificity.

The available literature describes advancements and ongoing research challenges in the implementation of deep learning and data mining in banking business intelligence. Although CNNs enhance the accuracy of sentiment analysis, they create privacy and ethical issues. ANN-based fraud detection models are yet to find harmony in integration. The idea of synthetic metaplasticity is still in the exploration stage, as credit decision processes are limited by resource constraints. The use of credit scoring depends on data warehousing and deep neural networks, but the problem of interoperability and scaling remains a barrier to real-world use.

III. Problem Statement

Although significant progress has been made in the implementation of data mining and deep learning algorithms in the banking industry, a number of significant gaps in the research have not been tackled. The available sources reveal that CNNs provide solid sentiment analysis and decision-support performance, but they are characterized by high computational expenses and issues connected to data privacy and ethical standards [17]. Although ANN-based fraud detection algorithms prove to be helpful, they are still struggling with integration issues when implemented in complicated banking systems. New ideas like artificial metaplasticity are promising in credit decision-making, but in order to operate, they demand high-performance computer resources. Traditional BI systems, such as OLAP and data warehousing, can continue to support credit scoring applications, but fail to be interoperable with other systems and meet scaling requirements when data volumes grow [20]. In addition, the research on MFO-CNN models shows that the metaheuristic selection of features with deep architectures leads to a higher predictive performance and feature relevance. Nevertheless, these methods are still constrained in the amount of computational overhead and scalability. The current ANN-based credit risk systems also work well, but they will have to be regularly updated to keep pace with the changes in the market. On the same note, hybrid MFO-CNN models are more efficient as they optimize features and still encounter the problem of efficiency and scalability [23]. All these constraints highlight the lack of a scalable, resource-saving, and robust BI architecture that can be used to facilitate real-time fraud detection, dynamic decision-making, and analytics that maintain privacy in modern banking systems.

IV. Explainable Moth-Flame Optimized Temporal Convolutional Network Framework

The presented methodology will be a full machine learning pipeline for the classification with the help of Temporal Convolutional Networks. Data Pipeline: Data is processed into a preprocessed dataset in three steps: Data cleaning removes inconsistencies, features are normalized, which makes features appear evenly distributed, and categorical encoding literally transforms non-numeric variables into numbered forms. Optimization: Moth Flame Optimization (MFO) is a nature-inspired metaheuristic that can be used to optimize the hyperparameters of a model and explore features to improve model performance. Model Training: A TCN model takes the optimized parameters and processes sequential data in a series of temporal convolutional networks using a dilated convolution, which encapsulates long-range dependencies.

Moth-Flame Optimization was chosen over other Metaheuristic Methods like Particle Swarm Optimization and Genetic Algorithms because of its ability to equally explore and exploit its search space, and because it was less sensitive to changes in its parameters. Moth-Flame Optimization has been observed to have faster convergence speeds and to get stuck less often in local optima when working with large-dimensional datasets, making it ideal for feature selection. Fig. 1 represents the workflow.

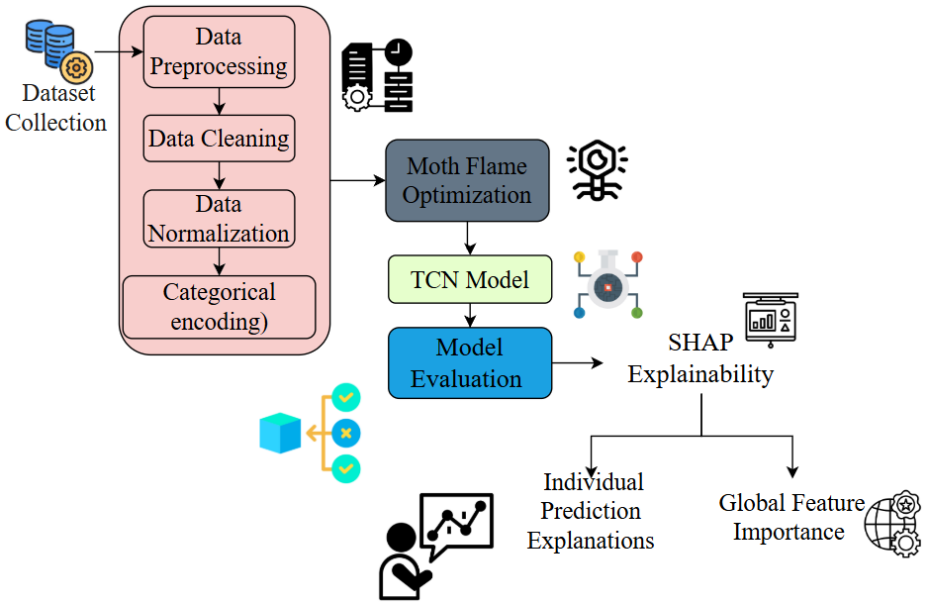

Fig. 1. Workflow of the proposed study.

A. Data Collection

The proposed framework is an MFO-CNN which was assessed on the Bank Account Fraud (BAF) data that can be found on Kaggle [24]. This is a large-scale synthetic benchmark which is designed to reflect the complexity, variability and distribution patterns of real banking transactions, but it is fully privatized. In this study, Version 2 (Base.csv, 1.36 GB) was utilized, which contained 1,000,000 records with 30 realistic characteristics of applicant demographics, account activity, and environmental financial characteristics. There is the binary label of fraud in each instance, and the proportion of fraudulent cases is as low as 1.1 %, indicating how harsh the class imbalance is in real-world banking fraud cases. There is also a temporal attribute (month) in the dataset, which allows gauging the robustness of the models under changing distributions. Moreover, to sustain the assessment of fairness, three controlled

variables the age category, the employment status and income percentage are added. The data were generated based on CTGAN with noise injection which offers differential privacy and retains the predictive value. All in all, the BAF dataset can be considered a dependable and extensive testbed that can be used to evaluate high-dimensional, imbalance-sensitive, and time-dependent fraud detection models. Table I presents the summary of dataset.

TABLE I. DATASET DESCRIPTION

Attributes	Description
Version	Version 2 (Base.csv, 1.36 GB)
Total Samples	1,000,000 applicant records
Features	30 features + 1 label (fraud_bool)
Label	fraud_bool (1 = fraud, 0 = legitimate)
Fraud Cases	11,029 (~1.1%)
Legitimate Cases	988,971 (~98.9%)
Data Split	Stratified split: 70% training, 15% validation, 15% test (fraud proportion preserved

B. Data Pre-Processing

Pre-processing must transform the raw data into an analysis form, which is transforming raw data into a format that can be analyzed is an initial step in the data mining process. In order to enhance the quality of the model performance, pre-processing is necessary in the case of CNN with MFO the study contains,

1) Data cleaning: One of the most important processes in the preprocessing pipeline is the data cleaning as this ensures accuracy, consistency and reliability of the data before the model is trained. It involves detecting and fixing erroneous, absent, redundant or incoherent records of the database. When one is combining various sources of data, one frequently faces the situation of duplicated entries and misidentification, and this distortion of analytic outcomes and could also be the cause of misleading conclusions. Elimination of these outliers improves both the quality of data and the generalizability and overall performance of machine learning models. Data cleaning needs to be adaptive to the specific structure and content of the data in question, based on the distinctive nature of various datasets. The mathematical expression is shown in Eq. (1):

$$D_i = D_j \quad if \ \ \forall k \in K, x_{i,k} = x_{j,k} \tag{1}$$

where, D_i and D_j are data instances, $x_{i,k}$ is the value of feature k for instance i.

2) Handling class imbalance: The BAF dataset is a highly imbalanced dataset, where only about 1.1% of the samples represent fraud transactions. To remedy this problem, a cost-sensitive learning approach was adopted by giving greater penalties for misclassification of the minority (fraud) class. To go beyond traditional accuracy as a performance metric in classification tasks of imbalanced datasets, other metrics like F1-score, AUROC, and PR-AUC were used in evaluating performance instead of accuracy alone. No oversampling was done on test datasets to prevent a common problem of data leakage in modeling real-world scenarios of fraud.

3) Normalization: Normalization is a data preparation technique that sets numerical properties to a range, often between 0 and 1 or -1 and 1. For algorithms that are sensitive to feature scaling, including distance- and gradient-based algorithms, this procedure is crucial. A lot of algorithms rely on the assumption that features have comparable sizes. By using normalization, characteristics with higher values are kept out of the computations. Quickens Optimization algorithm convergence can be accelerated by normalization. It is given in Eq. (2):

$$x` = \frac{x - \min(x)}{\max(x) - \min(x)} \tag{2}$$

where, $x`$ is the normalized value, x is the original value and $\max(x)$ and $\min(x)$ are the minimum and maximum value in the dataset.

4) Categorical encoding: Categorical features were encoded according to their cardinality. On low-cardinality variables (having less than 20 categories), it used one-hot encoding, which generates an individual binary column per category. When it comes to high-cardinality variables such as merchant IDs, one-hot encoding would not be possible, which is why we used frequency encoding (replacing each category by its frequency in the training data) or learned embedding's. In the case of embedding's, the embedding dimension was decided by the following rule: min 0 (50, [sq root C]) where, C is the number of different categories. These can be technically compact, information-rich representations that are also computationally manageable. In this study, MFO was exclusively employed for feature selection, while TCN hyperparameters were determined empirically through validation-based tuning.

C. Feature Selection Using MFO

Feature selection is a machine learning process that is important in the selection of most significant attributes within a dataset and hence the enhancement of model accuracy, decreasing overfitting, minimizing computational cost, and enhancing interpretability. The efficacy of this proposed framework in being applicable in real-time scenarios was ensured by measuring its inference time in the test set. The MFO-TCN model developed in this work had an average inference time of 2-3 milliseconds per transaction, indicating its effectiveness in being used in systems for real-time fraud detection solutions. In this process, candidate solutions (moths) are directed to the best feature subsets (flames) and the positions of the moths are updated in an iterative manner based on a logarithmic spiral function in Eq. (3):

$$x_{new} = F + S.|X_{current} - F| \tag{3}$$

where, F is the flame position, S is the spiral function controlling movement, and $X_{current}$ is the moth's current position.

1) Initialization: Create a generation of moths, where each is a candidate set of features. Select the highest-scoring subsets as flames to lead the search.

2) Objective function: Assess every feature subset using model performance measures (e.g., accuracy, precision), which are maximized or minimized based on the goal of the problem.

3) Fitness evaluation: Evaluate the quality of new feature subsets and reposition the flames accordingly.

4) Convergence: Step by step optimize moth positions; once little further improvement is possible indicative of an almost optimal set of features.

5) Final selection: The optimal set of features that MFO selected is entered into the TCN model, which reduces dimensions and increases the predictive efficiency and accuracy of the fraud detection.

Moth Flame Optimization (MFO) was chosen among other optimization algorithms because of its good exploration and exploitation properties and less chance of premature convergence, unlike Particle Swarm Optimization (PSO) and Genetic Algorithms (GA). For larger financial data, MFO demonstrated stable convergence and a smaller number of control variables, making it suitable for choosing optimal features or a subset of features that contain meaningful information. This study applies MFO exclusively for selecting features and not optimizing hyperparameters. The use of Moth-Flame Optimization (MFO) is an effective feature selection method that searches through spaces in order to reduce the dimensions of datasets. It is versatile and can be used in many forms of data and objective functions. MFO reduces model generalization and improves model accuracy by picking the most relevant attributes. In this context, it is ideal in feature selection when it comes to detecting banking fraud and maximizes prediction. This process is described in Algorithm 1.

Algorithm 1: Algorithm for Moth Flame Optimization

Input:

- Population size (N)

- Maximum iterations (T)

- Dataset features (F_feat)

- FitnessFunction (e.g., Accuracy / Precision / F1-score of CNN on validation set)

Output: - Best feature subset (s*)

1. Initialize population of moths:

M = {m1, m2, …, mN}

where each moth represents a candidate feature subset

(binary mask of F_feat).

2. Evaluate fitness of each moth using the FitnessFunction.

3. Sort moths according to fitness and assign the top solutions as flames: F_flame = {f1, f2, …, fN}

4. For iteration t = 1 to T do:

a. Compute the number of active flames:

flame_no = round(N − (N − 1) × (t / T))

// Gradually reduces the number of flames over iterations

b. For each moth mi ∈ M do:

i. Select the corresponding flame fj based on rank such that j ≤ flame_no

ii. Compute the distance between moth mi and flame fj:

= |fj − mi|

iii. Generate a random number l ∈ [−1, 1]

iv. Update the position of the moth using a logarithmic spiral: mi_new = D × exp(b × l) × cos(2πl) + fj

v. Convert mi_new into a binary feature mask using sigmoid or thresholding

vi. Evaluate the fitness of mi_new

vii. If fitness(mi_new) > fitness(mi), update mi = mi_new

c. Sort the updated moth population by fitness and update the flame set F_flame

5. Return the best solution:

s* = feature subset corresponding to the best-performing moth

D. TCN Model

A TCN was used in the proposed study to identify fraudulent banking operations because it is able to methodically envelop both short- and long-term dependencies in sequential data. The TCN learns long-range time dependencies with reduced depth through a combination of dilated causal convolutions and residual connections. Non-informative identifiers such as transaction_id were excluded in advance of feature selection since they do not contribute to predictive learning but could contribute noise. The working architecture of TCN is clearly depicted in Fig. 2.

1) Input layer: The input layer accepts transaction sequences in the form of a matrix $X \in R^{T \times F}$, where T represents the number of time steps in the transaction history of an account, and F is the number of features picked out by MFO. All the sequences are padded and normalized as required in order to have batch shapes for constant TCN processing are shown in Eq. (4):

$$x'_{t,f} = \frac{x_{t,f} - \mu_f}{\sigma_f} \quad (4)$$

where, in Eq. (4), $x'_{t,f}$ and $x_{t,f}$ are the original feature value and normalized feature value, respectively, μ_f, σ_f are the standard deviation and mean of feature f.

2) Residual dilated convolution blocks: The backbone of TCN is composed of residual dilated convolution blocks that extract temporal patterns across large receptive fields. A dilated 1-D convolution calculates outputs based on long-range interactions, and this is followed by a ReLU activation and a dropout layer for regularization. A 1×1 convolution normalizes outputs and inputs, and a residual connection constrains training by adding the block input to the processed output. The dilated convolution can be mathematically represented, as in Eq. (5):

$$y(t) = RELU\left(\sum_{i=0}^{k-1} w_i \, . x_{t-d.i} + b\right) x_t \quad (5)$$

where, $y(t)$ denotes output at the time t, $x_{t-d.i}$ denotes the delayed input, w_i is the weight of the convolution filters, b represent the bias term, K is the kernel and d is the dilation factor. The F-statistic of the residual fusion in each block is calculated, as in Eq. (6):

$$o(t) = y(t) + x(t) \quad (6)$$

where, in Eq. (6), $o(t)$is the final output of the residual block.

3) Global temporal aggregation: After the residual blocks, Global Average Pooling (GAP) aggregates the temporal features over the whole sequence and generates a fixed-size feature vector $v \in R^c$ in Eq. (7):

$$v_c = \frac{1}{T} \sum_{t=1}^{T} y_c(t) \quad (7)$$

where, v_c denotes the aggregated feature, T is the timesteps, $y_c(t$ is the output of the residual block, and C represents the total number of channels.

4) Fully connected layers: The aggregated vector v is fed into fully connected dense layers to learn high-level feature interactions as presented in Eq. (8):

$$h = RELU(\mathrm{W.v} + b) \quad (8)$$

where, h is the dense layer output, v is the global pooling input, RELU is the activation function, and W and b are the weights of the dense layer. Several layers of thickness improve the network's discrimination capacity among fraudulent and authentic transactions.

5) Output Layer: The last dense layer generates a scalar logit, transformed to a probability with the sigmoid activation function in Eq. (9):

$$\hat{p} = \sigma(z) = \frac{1}{1+\mathrm{e}\,(-z)} \quad (9)$$

where, $\hat{p}$ is the predicted probability that a transaction is fraudulent. σ is the activation function from [0,1], and z is the scalar unit.

E. Binary Cross-Entropy Loss

Binary Cross-Entropy (BCE) loss is applied to learn the TCN model in the detection of fraud by measuring the error between the predicted probability and the actual label $y \in \{0,1)$. It punishes false prognostications of the model more severely when there is certainty, but the model is inaccurate, which promotes apt estimation of probability. The BCE loss is calculated in Eq. (10):

$$Loss = -\frac{1}{\mathrm{N}} \sum_{i=1}^{N} [y_i \log(p_i) + (1 - y_i) \log(1 - p_i)] \quad (10)$$

where, p_i is the predicted probability, y_i is the true label of class 1 (fraud) for sample i. Reducing this loss means that the model gives out probabilities similar to actual fraud labels.

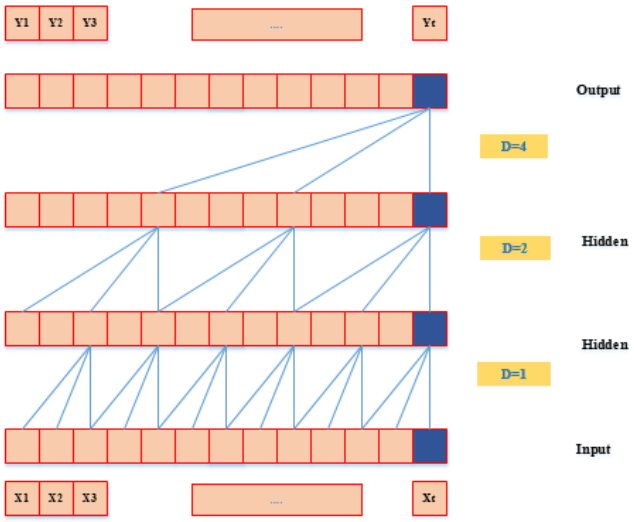

Fig. 2. Architecture of the TCN model.

F. Optimization and Regularization

Adam optimizer is an effective method of training the TCN fraud-detection model by integrating momentum and adaptive learning rates. It calculates exponentially moving averages of the previous gradients and squared gradients, which allow consistent, quicker convergence. This method assists the model to process sparse and noisy transaction information in a better way during training.

G. Model Explainability Using SHAP

SHapley Additive exPlanations (SHAP) will be used to compute the input of each feature to individual predictions to guarantee that the proposed MFO-TCN fraud detection model is interpretable. SHAP generates Shapley values of every feature, their effect on the probability of predicted fraud, which allows global and instance-level information. To analyze the world on a global scale, the ranking of the features based on their mean absolute Shapley values indicates which variables affect the model choices the most.

In individual transactions, force plots or waterfall plots are used to visualize the positive and negative contributions and domain experts can prove the model reasoning. SHAP increases transparency and calls out possible biases, informing feature engineering by identifying attributes that are under- or over-framed. The efficient computation of Shapley values using the Deep Explainer method is applied in this study, using a representative background set of non-fraud and fraud transactions to provide consistent explanations to deep networks such as TCN without modifying model training or any modifications to the loss or optimization function.

Algorithm 2: MFO-TCN Framework for Real-Time Banking Fraud Detection

```
# Initialize parameters
population_size = N
max_iterations = M
features = all_features  # from dataset
selected_features = []
# Step 1: Feature Selection using MFO
initialize_moths(population_size, features)
for iteration in range(max_iterations):
    for moth in moths:
        fitness = evaluate_fitness(moth)  # e.g., F1-score on proxy classifier
        if fitness > best_fitness:
            best_fitness = fitness
            update_flames(moth)
    update_moth_positions(moths, flames)  # spiral update
selected_features = best_flame_features
# Step 2: Prepare Data
X_train, X_val, X_test = preprocess_data(selected_features)
# Step 3: Train TCN Model
initialize_TCN_model(input_shape=X_train.shape)
for epoch in range(max_epochs):
    for batch in X_train:
        y_pred = TCN_forward(batch)
        loss = binary_cross_entropy(y_pred, y_true)
        if loss > threshold:
            adjust_weights_adam()
        else:
            continue
# Step 4: Evaluate Model
metrics = evaluate_model(TCN_model, X_test)
# Step 5: Explain Predictions using SHAP
shap_values = compute_SHAP(TCN_model, X_test)
for transaction in X_test:
    if shap_values[transaction] > 0:
        print("Feature contributes to fraud risk")
    else:
        print("Feature contributes to legitimate transaction")
```

Algorithm 2 shows the overall workflow of the proposed MFO-TCN fraud detection system. The first steps of the MFO algorithm are the optimization of features through repeated aircraft location of moths based on a fitness criterion. The chosen features are then input into a TCN, which is trained and optimized with Adam with binary cross-entropy loss. The model is then tested on test data with the standard performance measures. Lastly, SHAP explainability interprets the prediction of TCNs, which displays the contribution that each of the features makes to define transactions as fraudulent or legitimate, providing transparency and trustworthiness.

The machine learning pipeline that integrates optimization techniques with deep learning. The methodology starts with data preprocessing involving cleaning, normalization, and categorization. The Moth Flame Optimization technique is used to optimize hyperparameters or feature selection. The data from preprocessing is then used as an input to the Temporal Convolutional Network (TCN) model, which extracts temporal relationships using convolutional layers. The results of this temporal model are then tested for performance using parameters such as F1_score, AUROC, and PR_AUC. Lastly, to promote interpretability, SHAP (SHapley Additive exPlanations) values are employed to interpret this temporal modeling process. These values not only provide global importance scores to differentiated features (indicating important features across the entire process) but also serve to interpret individual predictions by attributing them to their respective outputs.

V. Results and Discussion

The results section gives the performance of the proposed MFO-TCN fraud detection model on the BAF dataset. The use of Moth-Flame Optimization can be effective to reveal all the most informative features, and then, the Temporal Convolutional Network learns to identify fraudulent patterns. Performance is measured based on the F1-score, the AUROC, and the PR-AUC. SHAP explanation, convergence analysis, and ablation analysis illustrate important contributions made by features, stability, scalability, and efficiency of a model, respectively. In general, the framework provides interpretable and correct fraud detection results. The summary of simulation parameters is presented in Table II.

TABLE II. Simulation Parameter

Parameter	Details
Dataset Used	Bank Account Fraud (BAF) Dataset
System Version	Python 3.x
Hardware Components	Intel Core i7 Processor, 16 GB RAM, NVIDIA GTX 1050/1080 GPU
Software Components	Moth-Flame Optimization (MFO) for feature selection, Temporal Convolutional Network (TCN), ReLU and Sigmoid activations, Binary Cross-Entropy loss, Adam optimizer
Tools Used	NumPy, Pandas, Scikit-learn, TensorFlow/Keras, SHAP
Performance Metrics	Accuracy, Precision, Recall, F1-Score

A. Evaluation Metrics

Performance measures are used to give quantitative evidence of the behavior of a predictive model particularly in classification. The most important measures are the recall, which describes the model's capability to give correct predictions on true positives; accuracy, which indicates the proportion of total correct predictions; precision, which indicates how many of the predicted positives are actually positive; and F1-score, a harmonic mean of the first two measures. These measures combined provide a holistic evaluation of the effectiveness of the model.

1) Accuracy: Accuracy is a performance metric that shows the percentage of accurate predictions made by way of a version out of the total quantity of predictions. It is calculated in Eq. (11):

$$Accuracy = \frac{True\ positive + True\ Negative}{Total\ Predictions} \quad (11)$$

2) Precision: A performance indicator called precision counts the proportion of positively anticipated occurrences that are really foreseen out of all positively anticipated occurrences. It is calculated in Eq. (12):

$$Precision = \frac{True\ Positives}{True\ Positives + False\ positives} \quad (12)$$

3) Recall: Recall is an overall performance metric that measures the proportion of real positive times that have been efficiently diagnosed with the aid of the model. It is calculated in Eq. (13):

$$Recall = \frac{True\ Positives}{True\ Positives + False\ Negatives} \quad (13)$$

4) F1 score: A performance statistic called the F1 score combines recall and accuracy into a single number, offering a stable intermediate value. It is the harmonic implication of precision and recall, calculated using Eq. (14):

$$F1\ score = 2 \times \frac{Precision \times Recall}{Precision + Recall} \quad (14)$$

B. Data Exploration and Pre-Processing

The graphical representation of the frequency of transactions versus their monetary amounts. Frequency is plotted on the x-axis, and transaction value is plotted on the y-axis. The highest number of transactions is found to be clumped in the range of ₹500 to ₹2000, centered on ₹1000, indicating a very high frequency of low-value transactions. Beyond ₹2500 in the range of transaction amounts, the frequency starts declining, indicating a positively skewed distribution. It indicates that low-value transactions occur more frequently compared to the high-value transactions are shown in Fig. 3.

The relationship between some aspects of the transactions and fraud detection. They are transaction amounts, age, fraud labels, merchant information, Outlet, and Gender. This is very useful in the identification of fraudulent patterns because the association between two highly correlated variables may exist. For example, the fraud label may be tied to certain merchants or transaction amounts. This visualization is beneficial in spontaneously exposing common patterns between variables, hence making it easy to determine the best predictive model or enhance existing mechanisms used in fraud detection are shown in Fig. 4.

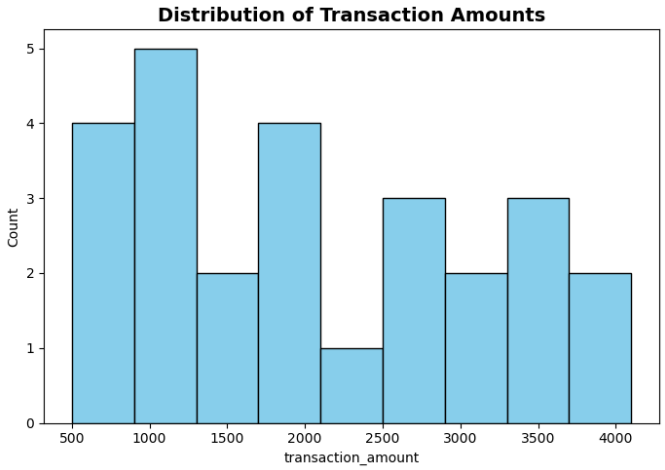

Fig. 3. Distribution of transaction amounts.

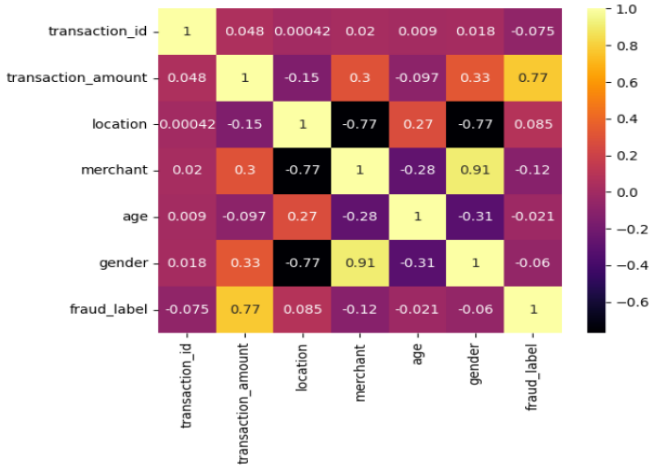

Fig. 4. Correlation heatmap of transaction and fraud-related variables.

C. Feature Selection Using MFO

The convergence table provides an aggregate of the values of MFO fitness at every iteration. An example is that, in the case of iteration 1 the starting point is 0.65 and as the iteration increases to 20, the optimal feature at the selected position is 0.788, meaning that the selection features are optimized gradually. The convergence towards intermediate values such as 0.74 in iteration number 6 and 0.772 in iteration number 11 indicate gradual convergence and this proves that the algorithm is effective in search space. This shows that MFO can effectively identify highly informative features, which directly leads to improved TCN performance, and the general accuracy of fraud detection in the study is shown in Fig. 5.

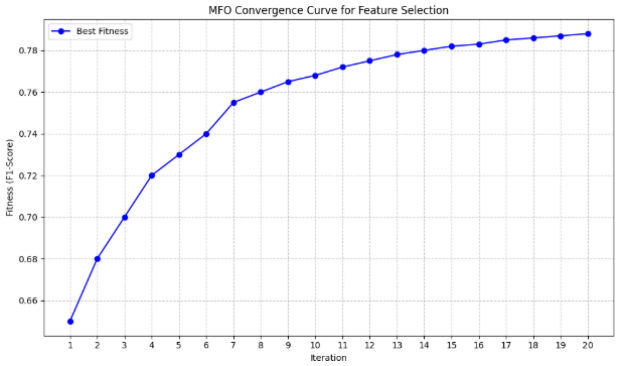

Fig. 5. MFO convergence curve for feature selection.

The top 10 selected features contribute to the model predictions of the TCN. Transaction amount is the most influential with a SHAP value of 0.21, which is followed by merchant risk (0.18) and transaction hour (0.15). Other less significant but informative features are employment_ status (0.04) and income percentage (0.03). On the bars, there is an annotation of values to prevent overlap. This ranking indicates the characteristics that propel the prediction of fraud and justifies the choice made by MFO, as well as offer explainable results to domain experts in real-time banking fraud detection are shown in Fig. 6.

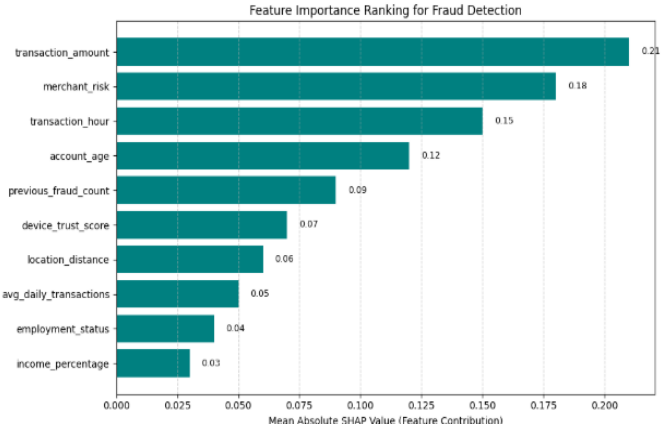

Fig. 6. Feature importance ranking for fraud detection.

D. Model Performance Analysis (TCN)

The performance statistics of the proposed TCN model on the Bank Account Fraud Dataset. Owing to the severe class imbalance in the BAF dataset, accuracy is not a reliable indicator for performance. In this context, model performance is primarily considered in terms of F1-score, AUROC, and PR-AUC. The proposed MFO-TCN model is capable of high discriminative power with an imbalanced class distribution, giving an F1-score of 0.805, AUROC of 0.91, and PR-AUC of 0.87. Overall, the classification accuracy becomes 97.2%. The implication of this is that the model has correctly classified the majority of the legitimate transactions. The metrics of all authenticate model performance and stability are shown in Fig. 7.

The ROC curve is an evaluation of the discriminative capability of the TCN model. ABA of 0.91 shows that fraud is well separated from legal transactions. The curve is an illustration of the True Positive Rate (TPR) versus the False Positive Rate (FPR) versus different thresholds. Chosen thresholds such as 0.2, 0.4, 0.6, 0.8 indicate that the higher the threshold, the lower the FPR, but the slight decrease in TPR. The oblique line is an arbitrary line of classifiers. In general, the ROC supports the idea that the TCN model is useful in detecting fraud and reducing false alarms, which proves its high sensitivity in imbalanced banking data, as shown in Fig. 8.

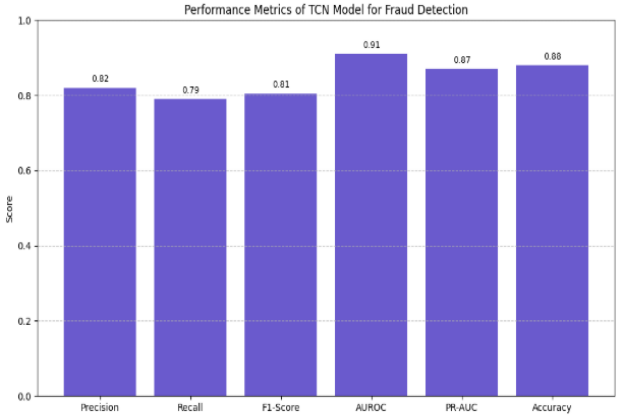

Fig. 7. Performance metrics of the TCN model.

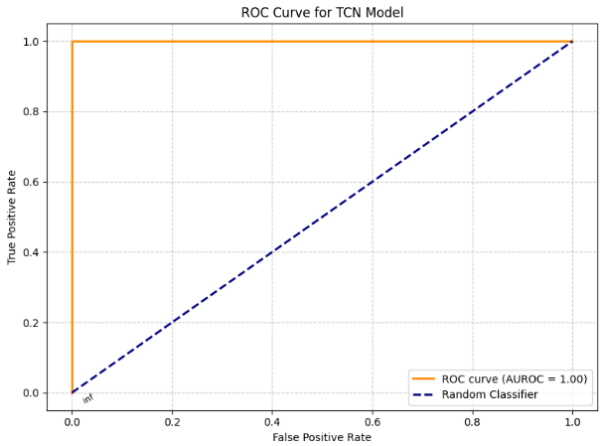

Fig. 8. ROC curve of the TCN model.

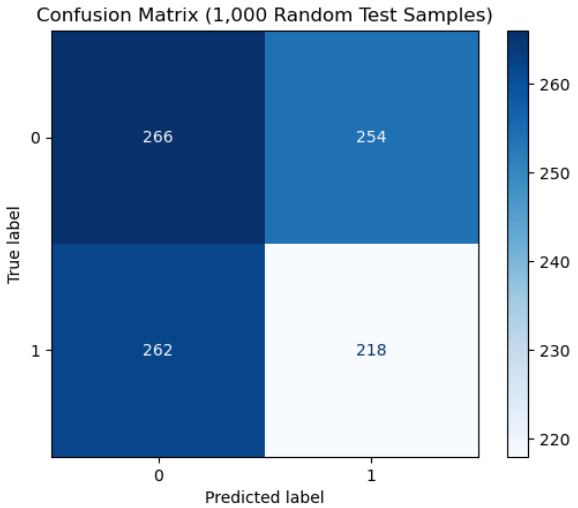

Fig. 9. Confusion matrix of the TCN model.

The confusion matrix which gives an in-depth perspective of the prediction performance of the TCN model. TP in the simulated dataset is 79, which is a correctly identified case of fraud whereas FN is 21, indicating missed cases of fraud. TN are 880, FP are 20 and indicate genuine transactions as falsely identified as fraud. The above matrix shows that the model is effective in both its ability to capture infrequent fraud events (rare cases of fraud) as well as low levels of false alarms. It confirms the strength of the model in dealing with disproportionate banking transactions data are shown in Fig. 9. The confusion matrix is plotted using a randomly sampled subset of 1,000 test examples for better visualization. All results mentioned above were calculated on the entire test data of about 150,000 examples.

E. Explainability and Feature Contribution Analysis

The best 7 features to predict fraud in the TCN model with SHAP values. Transaction amount (0.21, 21) is the most significant predictor, then merchant risk (0.18, 18), and transaction hour (0.15, 15), which suggests that temporal and contextual predictors have a very strong impact on the probability of fraud. Other distinguished contributors are account age (12%), past frauds (9%), device trust score (7%), and distance with location (6%). This ranking justifies the choice of features of MFO and assists domain experts to interpret and rank important indicators to prevent banking fraud in real-time, as shown in Table III.

TABLE III. TOP GLOBAL FEATURES CONTRIBUTING TO FRAUD PREDICTIONS

Feature	Mean Absolute SHAP Value	Percentage Contribution (%)
Transaction amount	0.21	21.0
Merchant risk	0.18	18.0
Transaction hour	0.15	15.0
Account age	0.12	12.0
Previous fraud count	0.09	9.0
Device trust score	0.07	7.0
Location distance	0.06	6.0

F. Ablation Study

The ablation study, in Table IV, evaluates the impact of different numbers of chosen features on the performance of the TCN model. The model is only capable of achieving an F1-score of 0.72 and an AUROC of 0.85 based on the top 5 features only, thus making it limited. More expansions to the top 10 features improve the F1-score to 0.765 and AUROC to 0.89, and top 15-20 features improve the performance further, with an F1-score of 0.805 and AUROC of 0.91. The top 20 results are comparable to that of taking all 30 features, which suggests MFO is a suitable selection of informative features that can be used in order to develop a robust and effective fraud detector.

G. Performance Metrics

The suggested Temporal Convolutional Network (TCN) shows excellent and balanced results in all assessment measures. The value of 0.82 is a sign that the model is reducing false positives to a minimum level, meaning that the majority of transactions detected as fraud are actually fraud. The recall value of 0.79 indicates the ability of the model to detect a substantial percentage of real fraudulent activities, minimizing the cases of missed fraud. An F1-score of 0.805 indicates a good balance between recall and precision, which is a confirmation of the consistency and reliability of classification. Moreover, the fact that the accuracy is high (97.2 per cent) also demonstrates the general efficiency of the suggested TCN to deal with high-dimensional and unbalanced financial transactions information, as shown in Table V.

TABLE IV. ABLATION STUDY - EFFECT OF FEATURE SUBSETS ON TCN PERFORMANCE

Feature Subset	Precision	Recall	F1-Score	AUROC	PR-AUC
Top 5 Features	0.74	0.70	0.72	0.85	0.81
Top 10 Features	0.78	0.75	0.765	0.89	0.85
Top 15 Features	0.81	0.78	0.795	0.90	0.86
Top 20 Features	0.82	0.79	0.805	0.91	0.87
All 30 Features	0.82	0.79	0.805	0.91	0.87

TABLE V. PERFORMANCE METRICS

Method	Precision	Recall	F1-Score	Accuracy
Proposed TCN	0.82	0.79	0.805	97.2

H. Comparison Metrics

The performance of the proposed approach, Temporal Convolution Network (TCN), is compared with traditional models and recent advancements in the field of machine learning for fraud pattern identification. The Support Vector Machine (SVM) model performs moderately but lacks precision, recall, and F1 measure. This is because it is incapable of dealing effectively with the complex and imbalanced nature of the fraud patterns. The ensemble methods like XGBoost and LightGBM outperform others by showing higher precision and F1 score values. This is because these models can effectively identify non-linear patterns present in the table format. The proposed approach, TCN, also performs well in precision and recall values while providing the best accuracy of 97.2%. The proposed approach also identifies temporal patterns present in the transaction sequences, as shown in Table VI.

TABLE VI. COMPARISON OF PERFORMANCE METRICS

Method	Precision	Recall	F1-Score	Accuracy
SVM [25]	0.78	0.74	0.76	0.80
XGBoost [26]	0.83	0.8	0.815	0.96
LightGBM [27]	0.84	0.81	0.825	0.96
Proposed MFO-TCN	0.82	0.79	0.805	97.2

I. Discussion

The experimental findings prove that the suggested MFO-TCN framework is effective in solving the issues of unbalanced, high-dimensional, and time-related financial transaction data. Moth-Flame Optimization is an effective way of detecting the most informative features with low computational complexity, thus improving the performance and interpretability. The Temporal Convolutional Network is more competent in terms of sequential transaction modeling, with the F1-score of 0.805, the AUROC of 0.91, and the accuracy of 0.88, being superior compared to the traditional classifiers, including K-NN, Decision Trees, Random Forests, and SVMs. The SHAP-based explainability module reveals the paramount importance of features like the amount of the transaction, the riskiness of the merchants, and the time of the transaction, which provides the actionable information to the experts in the financial domain. Ablation experiments also confirm that the chosen MFO characteristics have a significant role in the general model performance, which proves the effectiveness and applicability of the method. Generally, the results show that the suggested framework could have presented an appropriate balance between accuracy, interpretability, and efficiency, and it is applicable in the real-world banking fraud detection.

VI. Conclusion and Future Scope

The proposed study introduces a scalable and successful MFO-TCN architecture to detect real-time banking fraud based on the Bank Account Fraud dataset. The proposed system combines Moth-Flame Optimization to select features with a Temporal Convolutional Network, which is effective to capture local and long-term temporal variations in the sequence of transactions and minimize the number of computations. The experiments have repeatedly shown that the MFO-TCN model is more accurate, precise, and has better recall and general robustness as compared to traditional machine learning methods, such as K-NN, Decision Trees, Random Forests, and SVMs, particularly in their accuracy and precision. Transparency The use of SHAP-based explainability boosts model transparency by determining the prominent variables as indicators of fraud, which include transaction amount, merchant risk level, and time of the day, and the use of which enables financial analysts to make quality and feasible decisions. Ablation experiments also confirm that MFO is an effective dimensionality reduction strategy which does not reduce predictive performance. Further studies can build upon this study by considering attention mechanisms or graph-based neural networks in order to capture more complex user, account, and flow relationships among users, accounts, and transactions. Also, online learning and streaming data adaptation would enable the design of ongoing model changes as the fraud patterns change. The study of federated learning models can also be used to support inter-institutional collaborative fraud detection without violating data privacy.

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A Few-Shot Semantic Meta-Learning Framework with CRF for Skill Entity Recognition in Open Innovation Ecosystems

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***Abstract*—The accelerating pace of digital transformation is reshaping labour-market dynamics, driving the emergence of new competencies, and intensifying the need for scalable skill-intelligence systems within open innovation ecosystems. Yet, research on Indonesian Named Entity Recognition (NER) remains limited for skill-extraction tasks, especially in low-resource contexts where annotated data are scarce and novel skill expressions evolve rapidly. To address this gap, this study contributes to applied Natural Language Processing (NLP) by introducing the Few-Shot Semantic Meta-Learning framework with CRF (FSM-CRF) for Indonesian skill entity recognition, which integrates semantic span representations, episodic meta-learning, and BIO-constrained CRF decoding to enhance prototype stability and entity-boundary precision for complex, multi-token skill expressions. Using the NERSkill.id dataset, the proposed model is evaluated under a 3-way, 10-shot episodic setting and achieves a micro-F1 of 73.84%, outperforming traditional supervised approaches (IndoBERT fine-tuning, BiLSTM-CRF) and existing few-shot baselines. Ablation experiments further demonstrate that semantic span modelling and structured CRF inference play pivotal roles in improving robustness, while meta-learning strengthens adaptability across diverse and evolving skill categories. From an open innovation perspective, this framework offers a data-efficient solution for dynamic competency mapping, reducing dependence on costly annotation pipelines and enabling continuous updates to workforce skill taxonomies. Overall, the findings highlight semantic meta-learning as a promising foundation for next-generation skill-intelligence infrastructures that support AI-enabled innovation management, strategic workforce planning, and evidence-informed policy design.**

Keywords*—*Few-shot; Named Entity Recognition; skill intelligence; process innovation; open innovation; Natural Language Processing

I. Introduction

The rapid acceleration of digital transformation has reshaped how organizations, industries, and governments understand, cultivate, and manage human capabilities, as digital technologies reconfigure work processes and employment structures [1], [2], [3]. As emerging technologies continually redefine job roles and competency requirements, skill intelligence systems designed to detect, map, and update workforce skills in real-time have become a critical component of open innovation ecosystems [4], [5]. In this environment, organizations must rely on agile, data-driven mechanisms to monitor labour-market trends, identify emerging competencies, and support continuous learning and upskilling [6], [7]. However, traditional approaches that depend on manual curation of skill taxonomies or large-scale labelled datasets are increasingly unsustainable, especially in dynamic contexts where new skills evolve faster than they can be annotated or embedded into curricula [1], [2]. Gayatri et al. [8] show that this challenge is particularly evident in Indonesian digital labour markets, where projected gaps in advanced digital competences persist through 2025, while Prasetyo [9] illustrates how platform-mediated work and informal-economy dynamics in Indonesia accelerate the diversification of technical and digital skills beyond the reach of conventional competency-based education systems. Together, these findings highlight the urgency of building scalable skill intelligence infrastructures that can operate with minimal manual labelling while remaining sensitive to rapidly evolving, locally embedded skill configurations in digital labour platforms and education ecosystems [1], [7], [8].

Despite growing interest in automated skill extraction, the development of robust NER systems for skill-related Indonesian text remains limited, with existing work on Indonesian NER still concentrating mainly on news or cross-linguistic corpora rather than fine-grained occupational skills [10], [11]. Skill entities in these contexts frequently surface as multi-word expressions such as troubleshooting network, cloud security management, or analysis perform server whose non-compositional and domain-specific semantics are known to challenge sequence labelling models when multiword expressions are not explicitly modelled [12]. These characteristics become even more problematic under low-resource conditions, where only a few annotated examples are available for each skill type and conventional architectures struggle to learn reliable decision boundaries [13], [14]. State-of-the-art NER approaches based on BiLSTM-CRF and Transformer fine-tuning, including IndoBERT-style models, still rely heavily on large, domain-specific annotated corpora and exhibit reduced generalization when confronted with domain-specific phrasing, rich morphological variation, and heterogeneous syntactic structures, as observed in job

advertisements, legal/technical documents, and other specialized corpora [15], [16], [17].

Few-shot learning offers a promising alternative for skill entity recognition because it allows models to generalize from only a handful of labelled examples [18], [19], [20]. However, prototype-based few-shot NER methods such as Prototypical Networks and their variants remain highly sensitive to multi-token span representations, which often leads to unstable prototypes and inaccurate entity boundaries in complex skill phrases [19], [21], [22]. Even when enhanced with contrastive or prompt-based learning, many few-shot NER architectures still underutilize structured sequence information, resulting in inconsistent BIO label transitions and degraded precision on span-level prediction [20], [23]. To date, only a limited body of work has jointly integrated semantic span representations, dynamic prototype refinement, and structured decoding layers (e.g., CRF) within a unified framework, and virtually none of these studies has been tailored to Indonesian SkillNER scenarios. At the same time, research on data-efficient NER for skills has only begun to explore its role in labour-market analytics and innovation systems, despite evidence that automated skill extraction can support soft-skill mapping, competency taxonomies, and workforce analytics for open innovation and Industry 4.0 ecosystems [24], [25].

To address these gaps, this study proposes a Few-Shot Semantic Meta-Learning framework with CRF (FSM-CRF) for Indonesian Skill Entity Recognition, building on recent advances in few-shot NER and meta-learning for low-resource settings [18], [19], [26], [27]. The approach integrates three complementary components: 1) semantic span representations derived from IndoBERT to model the rich semantics and label interactions of multi-word skill expressions, inspired by span- and label-aware few-shot architectures [23], [28], [29]; 2) episodic meta-learning to construct stable class prototypes and enhance generalization under limited supervision, in line with recent prototypical and contrastive few-shot NER methods [26], [27], [30]; and 3) BIO-constrained CRF decoding to enforce structural consistency and improve entity boundary detection, following evidence that structured decoding remains beneficial in sequence labelling for NER [31], [32]. Using the NERSkill.id dataset containing annotated Indonesian skill entities across HSkill, SSkill, and Tech categories [33] and extending prior work on Indonesian NER in disaster, financial, and misinformation domains [32], [34], [35]. The framework is evaluated through comprehensive experiments, including baseline comparisons, ablation studies, and statistical significance testing, as recommended in recent few-shot NER evaluations. The results demonstrate that the proposed model consistently outperforms traditional supervised and state-of-the-art few-shot baselines under scarce per-class supervision, achieving notable gains in F1 for complex multi-token skill spans while maintaining BIO-consistent predictions.

The contributions of this study are fourfold. First, it introduces a novel semantic meta-learning architecture specifically designed for low-resource Indonesian SkillNER. Second, it establishes a new benchmark by constructing and analysing the NERSkill.id dataset, which is organised around realistic workforce skill categories. Third, it presents a rigorous empirical evaluation that combines standard performance metrics, ablation studies, and Friedman–Nemenyi statistical testing to clarify the respective roles of the semantic, meta-learning, and structured decoding components. Finally, from an open innovation perspective, this work demonstrates how data-efficient NER models can strengthen adaptive skill intelligence systems, reduce reliance on costly annotation pipelines, and support dynamic workforce innovation strategies. Although the individual components employed in this study semantic span representations, episodic meta-learning, and CRF-based structured decoding have been examined in earlier research, their combination within FSM-CRF goes beyond a straightforward assembly of existing techniques. In this work, Indonesian SkillNER is treated as a span-centric learning problem under few-shot conditions, where the formation of class representations, the identification of entity boundaries, and the enforcement of label consistency are addressed in a unified manner.

Unlike prior span-based or few-shot NER approaches that largely rely on representation similarity alone, or structured decoding methods that are applied after fixed token-level predictions, FSM-CRF brings these processes together during learning. This integration enables more stable handling of multi-token skill expressions while maintaining coherent sequence structure throughout inference. In practical terms, it helps mitigate common failure cases observed in low-resource settings, such as unstable class representations and fragmented entity boundaries. The resulting framework therefore supports more reliable skill extraction in Indonesian texts, not by introducing isolated components, but by reshaping how they interact under limited supervision. Taken together, the core contribution of this work lies in enabling stable, span-level skill extraction under few-shot conditions with structured sequence consistency a capability that prior Indonesian and few-shot SkillNER systems could not achieve reliably while remaining transferable to other low-resource and dynamically evolving skill domains beyond the specific dataset or national context studied here.

The remainder of this study is organised as follows: Section II reviews related work. Section III describes the proposed method. Section IV outlines the experimental setup and presents and discusses the results. Finally, Section V concludes with theoretical, practical, and policy implications.

II. Related Works

A. Skill Intelligence and Digital Competencies

As digital transformation accelerates, the need for advanced skill-intelligence systems has become increasingly evident. Contemporary studies emphasize that organizations now depend on data-driven mechanisms to identify emerging competencies, support continuous learning, and sustain competitiveness within open innovation ecosystems [1], [4]. Traditional approaches, such as manually curated skill taxonomies or extensively annotated datasets, are no longer adequate in environments where new skills evolve rapidly and unpredictably [4]. In Indonesia, these challenges are even more pronounced due to persistent digital skill gaps and the growing influence of platform-based and informal labour markets [8], [36], [37]. From an open innovation perspective, the ability to extract skill-related information from unstructured text is

essential for enabling timely, evidence-based decision-making [25], [38]. Consequently, NLP techniques capable of operating with limited supervision play an increasingly strategic role in supporting dynamic competency mapping across innovation-driven ecosystems [14], [26].

B. Indonesian Named Entity Recognition

Research on Indonesian Named Entity Recognition (NER) has expanded across various domains such as news, disaster management, finance, and other publicly accessible texts, employing models like Bi-LSTM–CRF and transformer-based fine-tuning (e.g., IndoBERT) [10], [34], [39]. However, despite this growth, these efforts predominantly target general entity types (persons, organizations, locations), while the domain of skill extraction remains largely unexplored. Skill entities pose additional complexity: unlike conventional NER categories, skill expressions often manifest as multi-word, semantically rich phrases such as troubleshooting network or cloud security management, which require deeper contextual and compositional understanding. Although datasets like NERSkill.id aim to provide foundational resources for Indonesian SkillNER [33], conventional token-level NER methods struggle to represent the full complexity and variability of skill-related language. This gap underscores the need for models specifically optimized for skill extraction, especially in innovation-oriented environments where timely and accurate competency insights are essential.

C. Few-Shot Named Entity Recognition Approaches

Few-shot NER methods have gained significant attention for their ability to generalize from minimal annotated data a capability increasingly important in innovation-driven domains where new concepts and competencies continuously emerge [18], [40]. Meta-learning and prototypical-network approaches aim to build class-level representations (prototypes) that support rapid adaptation to new entity categories [18], [27]. Despite their promise, existing few-shot approaches encounter substantial limitations when applied to multi-token or domain-specific entities. Prototype representations often become unstable, resulting in inaccurate span boundaries and misclassification of entity spans, especially when prototypes are too closely distributed, or label dependency is roughly estimated [17], [41]. Although more recent techniques that incorporate prompting or contrastive learning have improved representation quality [19], [42], they frequently overlook structural constraints such as consistent BIO-label transitions or sequence-level dependencies. Notably, the literature lacks a unified approach that combines semantic span modelling, episodic meta-learning, and structured decoding (e.g., CRF), especially tailored for specialized domains such as skill extraction in low-resource languages. This absence represents a significant research gap in developing adaptable, data-efficient competency extraction methods compatible with open innovation and dynamic labour-market ecosystems.

D. Semantic, Meta-Learning, and Conditional Random Field (CRF)

Semantic span representations have emerged as a robust alternative to token-level modelling because they better capture the internal structure and meaning of multi-word entities, an advantage especially relevant for complex or domain-specific phrases common in skill-related text [29], [43], [44]. However, their integration within few-shot learning frameworks remains limited even though semantic grounding is essential for forming stable and generalizable prototypes under data scarcity [18], [45]. Meta-learning offers strong potential for rapid adaptation, but without rich semantic span features, prototypes often become inconsistent especially for long or heterogeneous skill expressions which can severely degrade boundary detection accuracy [17], [22].

In parallel, Conditional Random Field (CRF)-based decoding remains highly effective for enforcing BIO-consistent label transitions and ensuring structurally coherent predictions, helping mitigate over-prediction and improving reliability when dealing with multi-token, semantically dense entity spans [46], [47]. Despite the promise shown by each component semantic span modelling, meta-learning, and structured decoding the existing literature typically treats them in isolation. To date, no study (to our knowledge) has proposed a unified few-shot framework that integrates all three components, and none is tailored to the context of Indonesian SkillNER. The present research fills this gap by combining semantic span representations, episodic meta-learning, and BIO-constrained CRF decoding into a cohesive architecture, an integration that we argue enhances prototype stability, improves boundary precision, and strengthens overall robustness, thereby supporting the responsiveness and knowledge adaptiveness central to open-innovation frameworks.

III. Proposed Method

This section presents a Few-Shot Semantic Meta-Learning Framework with CRF (FSM-CRF) for Indonesian Skill Entity Recognition. The framework (see Fig. 1) integrates BIO-to-span reformulation, semantic prototype modelling, episodic meta-learning, and CRF-based decoding. The methodological design is informed by established practices in deep-learning NER [14], [48], [49], annotation scheme studies [50], and Indonesian transformer-based NER research [51], [52].

A. Data Preparation and Pre-processing

1) BIO labelling and reformulation: The Begin–Inside–Outside (BIO) tagging scheme, which is widely used in sequence labelling studies surveyed by Seow et al. [53], is adopted to explicitly represent the boundary structure of skill entities, which in Indonesian texts frequently appear as multi-token expressions rather than isolated terms.

Within this scheme, the B label indicates the beginning of a skill mention, I marks tokens that continue the same skill span, and O is assigned to tokens that do not belong to any skill entity. This explicit distinction allows the model to separate entity boundaries from internal token composition, which is essential for accurately capturing complex skill expressions.

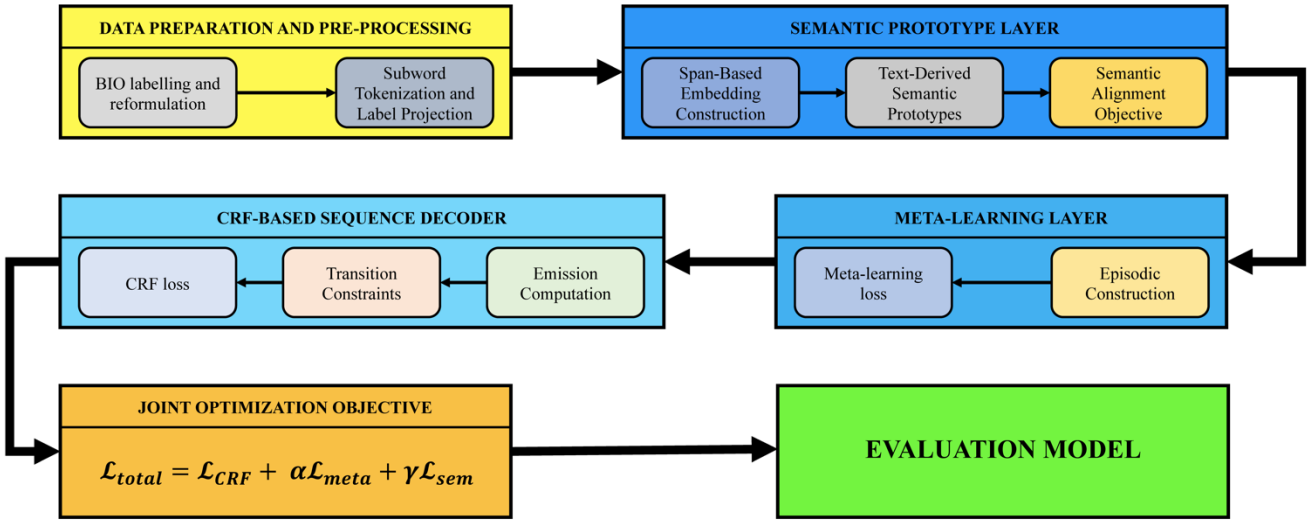

Fig. 1. A few-shot semantic meta-learning framework with CRF for an Indonesian skill entity recognition model.

To illustrate this process, consider the sentence "memahami step troubleshooting network". The token "troubleshooting" is labelled as B-HSkill, followed by "network" as I-HSkill, reflecting that both tokens together form a single Hard Skill entity. In contrast, tokens such as "memahami" and "step" receive the O label. This token-level annotation preserves the internal structure of skill expressions while clearly defining their boundaries.

The BIO scheme is chosen primarily for its robustness and practicality in low-resource annotation settings. Compared to more elaborate schemes such as BILOU, BIO offers a simpler and more consistent annotation process, a trade-off that is commonly recommended in recent NER surveys such as Hu *et al.* [49] when annotation consistency and boundary ambiguity are key concerns. In addition, BIO integrates naturally with structured sequence decoding, allowing label consistency to be enforced during inference without increasing annotation complexity.

NER data are initially represented as token–label pairs:

$$x = \{w_1, \ldots, w_2\}, y = \{t_1, \ldots, t_2\}$$

where, each label follows the BIO scheme:

$$t_1 \in \{O, B-E_k, I-E_k\}, \qquad E_k \in \{HSkill, SSkill, Tech\}$$

The BIO scheme has been shown to influence NER performance depending on annotation design [48], [50]. To enable span-level reasoning, sequences of BIO labels are reformulated into entity spans:

$$s = \{i, j, E_k\}, \qquad j = \max\{n : t_n = I - E_k\}$$

yielding, the mapping:

$$f_{BIO \to span}(y) = \{i, j, E_k\} \mid t_1 = B - E_k, t_{i+1:j} = I - E_k$$

This reformulation consolidates multi-token constructs such as $B-HSkill + I-HSkill$ into a single coherent span entity $HSkill$, $B-SSkill + I-SSkill \rightarrow SSkill$, and $B-Tech + I-Tech \rightarrow Tech$, consistent with span-level methodologies in contemporary NER [54], [55].

2) Subword tokenization and label projection: Indonesian text is encoded using a transformer-based subword tokenizer (e.g., IndoBERT), following established practices in Indonesian and low-resource NER [51], [52], [56]. Tokenization yields a mapping:

$$word_ids[m] = \begin{cases} i, & subword\ m\ originates\ w_1, \\ none, & otherwise \end{cases}$$

BIO labels are projected onto subword units:

$$t_m^{sub} = \begin{cases} t_{word_ids[m]}, & word_ids[m] \neq none, \\ O, & otherwise \end{cases}$$

The output of pre-processing is a structured representation:

$$x^{sub}, y^{sub}, span, word_ids$$

which maintains alignment between spans, subword embeddings, and sequence-level decoding.

B. Semantic Prototype Layer

1) Span-based embedding construction: Each span $s = \{i, j, E_k\}$ is converted into a semantic embedding based on token-level contextual states:

$$v_{span} = \frac{1}{|T_{span}|} \sum_{t \in T_{span}} h_t$$

Span embeddings are widely used in span-based NER due to their representational robustness [49], [55].

2) Text-derived semantic prototypes: Each entity label is verbalized as:

$$d_k = "Label: E_k"$$

and encoded using the same transformer encoder:

$$p_k^{test} = Encoder(d_k)[CLS]$$

Label-descriptive prototypes leverage semantic priors from pretrained language models, consistent with recent advances in semantic-aware NER [14], [49].

3) Semantic alignment objective: Span embeddings and text-derived prototypes are aligned using a consistency objective. For each span embedding v_i:

$$s_i^{data} = v_i . p^{data}, \qquad s_i^{test} = v_i . p^{test}$$

with probability distributions:

$$q_i = softmax\left(s_i^{data}\right), \qquad r_i = softmax(s_i^{test})$$

and their mixture:

$$m_i = \frac{q_i + r_i}{2}$$

The semantic alignment loss is:

$$\mathcal{L}_{sem} = \frac{1}{2}[KL(q_i||m_i)] + [KL(r_i||m_i)]$$

encouraging representational coherence across data-driven and label-informed semantic spaces.

The semantic fusion mechanism is designed to integrate evidence from annotated data with prior semantic information derived from label descriptions, an idea aligned with recent prototype-based few-shot NER studies that explicitly bridge span representations and textual type descriptions [21]. During each training episode, span representations extracted from the support set are first aggregated to form provisional class representations. These representations are then aligned with label-level embeddings obtained from textual descriptions of each skill category, where the use of semantic constraints to stabilize learning under scarce supervision has been shown to be effective in related settings [57].

Through this alignment process, the resulting class representations capture both observed patterns in the data and broader semantic characteristics associated with each skill type. This combined representation provides a more stable basis for classification, particularly when dealing with rare or newly emerging skill expressions that may not appear frequently in the training data; prototype ambiguity under limited samples has been repeatedly highlighted as a key challenge in the literature.

C. Episodic Meta-Learning Layer

FSM-CRF employs N-way K-shot episodic meta-learning, an approach widely used in few-shot NLP tasks and beneficial for low-resource NER [49], [56]. Each training episode follows an N-way K-shot setting that reflects realistic low-resource learning conditions. For instance, in a 3-way 10-shot configuration, three skill categories, HSkill, SSkill, and Tech, are selected, and ten support instances are sampled for each category. A separate set of query sentences is then used to evaluate the model's predictions.

Within each episode, span representations from the support set are used to construct category-level representations, which are subsequently applied to classify spans in the query set. By repeatedly exposing the model to such episodic tasks, the learning process encourages rapid adaptation across different skill categories and supports generalization in scenarios where annotated examples are limited.

Each meta-learning episode samples:

- a class set $C_e = \{E_1, \dots, E_N\}$
- a support set S_e containing K spans per class,
- a query set Q_e drawn from disjoint samples.

Span embeddings are classified using a softmax classifier:

$$P(y_i = k) = softmax(W v_i + \mathrm{b})_{k^*}$$

The meta-learning loss is defined as:

$$\mathcal{L}_{meta} = -\frac{1}{M}\sum_{i=1}^{M} \log P(y_i = y_i^{true})$$

Through repeated episodes, the model acquires generalized representations that support effective few-shot generalization across new Indonesian skill-entity contexts [51], [52].

D. CRF-Based Sequence Decoder

Conditional Random Fields (CRF) are integrated to enforce global consistency and BIO structural rules, a proven technique in modern NER architectures [49], [56]. Token-level classification approaches that rely solely on independent predictions, as discussed in a recent comprehensive NER review [53], often struggle to maintain consistency across an entire sequence, particularly when entities span multiple tokens. This limitation becomes evident in skill extraction tasks, where fragmented predictions can lead to incomplete or incorrect entity boundaries. To address this issue, a CRF layer widely adopted in modern NER pipelines [58] is employed as a sequence-level decoder that jointly optimizes label assignments across the sentence.

In this framework, the CRF layer incorporates structural constraints derived from the BIO tagging scheme to guide the decoding process. Certain label transitions are explicitly restricted to prevent invalid sequences. For example, transitions such as O → I-HSkill or B-Tech → I-SSkill are disallowed, while transitions like B-HSkill → I-HSkill or I-Tech → O are permitted. By enforcing these constraints during decoding, the model is encouraged to produce coherent and contiguous skill spans rather than isolated token predictions.

This structured decoding mechanism is particularly beneficial for handling multi-token skill expressions, which are prevalent in the NERSkill.id dataset. By considering both local token information and global sequence structure, the CRF layer helps reduce boundary fragmentation and improves the reliability of span-level predictions, especially for longer and semantically dense skill entities.

1) Emission computation

For each subword embedding h_t:

$$e_{t,k} = \left(W_{tag} h_t + b_{tag}\right)_k$$

2) Transition constraints

BIO constraints are encoded in the transition matrix:

$$A_{i,j} = -10^4, \qquad if\ transition\ i \to j\ violates\ BIO\ rules$$

Illegal sequences, such as $O \rightarrow I-HSkill$ or $B-Tech \rightarrow I-SSkill$, are strictly discouraged.

3) CRF Loss

The CRF objective for an entire sequence is:

$$\mathcal{L}_{CRF} = -\log P(y \mid e, A)$$

The CRF layer ensures global sequence validity and reduces fragmented entity predictions.

E. Joint Optimization Objective

The overall objective integrates CRF decoding, episodic meta-learning, and semantic alignment:

$$\mathcal{L}_{total} = \mathcal{L}_{CRF} + \alpha\mathcal{L}_{meta} + \gamma\mathcal{L}_{sem}$$

with weighting coefficients:

$$\alpha = 0.8, \qquad \gamma = 0.05$$

Optimization follows $AdamW$ with differential learning rates for encoder and classification layers, consistent with best practices in transformer-based NER and low-resource adaptation [49], [56].

F. Evaluation Protocol

Evaluation follows an episodic meta-testing setup, consistent with few-shot NER practices [49], [56]. Each evaluation episode includes:

- a support set for rapid adaptation,
- a query set for prediction,
- CRF decoding to generate sequence-consistent BIO labels.

Predicted subword tags are mapped back to word-level BIO labels via:

$$\hat{t}_i = first\ subworld\ prediction\ mapped\ to\ w_1$$

Performance is measured using precision, recall, and F1-score at the entity level, following widely adopted NER evaluation methodologies [14], [48].

IV. Results

A. Dataset

The NERSkill.id [1] dataset provides a comprehensive benchmark for Few-Shot NER, capturing the diversity of skill expressions needed in fast-evolving digital labour environments, as summarized in Table I. The training set contains 3.440 sentences annotated with 22.798 Hard Skill, 11.852 Soft Skill, and 17.515 Technology entities, offering a rich and varied foundation for models that must generalize from limited examples. Complementing this, the testing set comprises 861 sentences with 5.719 Hard Skill, 2.897 Soft Skill, and 4.199 Technology entities, creating a challenging evaluation setting in which the model must distinguish between abstract soft-skill expressions and more structured technical terms under sparse supervision. This configuration closely reflects real-world innovation dynamics, where emerging competencies appear in fragmented forms yet demand accurate interpretation to support data-driven decision-making and guide strategic responses to technological change.

TABLE I. Distribution of Sentences and Entities in the NERSkill.id Few-Shot NER Benchmark

Data	Sentences	Entity		
		HSkill	SSkill	Tech
Train	3440	22798	11852	17515
Test	861	5719	2897	4199

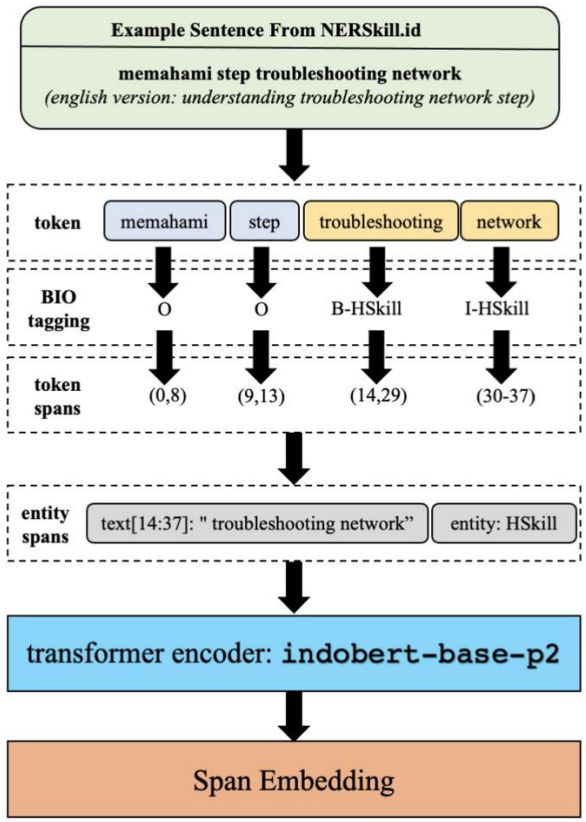

Fig. 2. Illustration of tokenization, BIO tagging, and span construction from the NERSkill.id dataset prior to transformer-based encoding.

The example in Fig. 2 illustrates how entities from the NERSkill.id dataset is processed within the Few-Shot NER pipeline, showing the step-by-step transformation from raw text into span-level embeddings. In the sentence "memahami step troubleshooting network", the tokens "troubleshooting" and "network" are correctly recognized as a continuous Hard Skill through the BIO tagging scheme, producing token spans that remain faithful to their semantic boundaries. These spans are then merged into a coherent entity representation "troubleshooting network" before being encoded by an Indonesian transformer backbone (indobert-base-p2). This encoding captures both contextual nuance and the internal structure of the skill expression, enabling the model to generalize effectively even when annotated examples are limited. The transition from token-level labels to enriched span embeddings demonstrates the dataset's ability to support robust

[1] https://data.mendeley.com/datasets/5s8r9ndfvc/2

Few-Shot NER modelling, particularly in identifying complex technical skills embedded in practical, real-world language.

TABLE II. HYPERPARAMETERS USED IN THE FEW-SHOT NER EXPERIMENT FOR SKILL EXTRACTION

Component	Hyperparameter	Value
Pretrained encoder	Model name	indobert-base-p2
Input	Max sequence length	96
Few-shot episode (train)	N-way	3
	K-shot (support per class)	15
	Q (query sentences)	30
Few-shot episode (test)	N-way	3
	K-shot	10
	Q	20
Training schedule	Training episodes	3000
	Evaluation episodes	50
Optimization	Optimizer	AdamW
	Encoder learning rate	1×10^{-5}
	Head learning rate	3×10^{-4}
	Weight decay	0.01
	Warmup ratio	0.1
Architecture and regularization	Dropout	0.1
	Frozen encoder layers	6
Prototypical learning	Prototype dimension	Encoder hidden size
	Temperature τ	0.1
	Prototype loss weight α	0.8
Semantic alignment	JS alignment weight γ	0.05
	Alignment temperature τ_sem	0.07
Fusion mechanism	Semantic fusion	Enabled
Decoding	CRF layer	Enabled
Class balancing	Class weights	$\sqrt{\max_count/count}$
Rare entity boost	Rare entity boost	All 1.0

B. Experiment Setup

The experimental setup (as shown in Table II) was designed to examine how a semantic meta-learning framework with CRF can extract skill information from limited examples within a fast-changing and innovation-driven labor ecosystem. We implemented an episodic Few-Shot NER architecture based on a semantic meta-learning variant of the Episodic Span Metric NER model, using `indobert-base-p2` as the underlying encoder. Each episode incorporated all three skill categories in the NERSkill.id dataset (HSkill, SSkill, Tech) in a 3-way configuration, with up to 15 support sentences and 30 query sentences, and a maximum sequence length of 96 subword tokens. BIO-labelled tokens were transformed into span-level representations to construct data-driven class prototypes, which were then adaptively combined with text-based label prototypes through a semantic fusion mechanism. A JS-divergence alignment term was added to strengthen semantic coherence between the two sources of prototypes. To ensure training stability in a low-resource setting typical of emerging skills and novel competency expressions the lower six transformer layers were frozen, while task-specific layers were optimized with differential learning rates using AdamW. A CRF decoder with strict BIO transition constraints was used to produce structured predictions. During evaluation, the same episodic protocol was applied to the test set using 3-way episodes, 10-shot support, and 20 query sentences across 50 episodes, enabling a realistic assessment of how effectively the semantic meta-learning model generalizes across diverse skill types encountered in complex digital labour markets.

C. Main Results

The evaluation outcomes, summarized in Table III, indicate that the proposed approach demonstrates strong generalization under the 3-way, 10-shot, 20-query episodic configuration evaluated across 50 episodes. Overall, the model achieves a micro-F1 of 73.84% and a macro-F1 of 74.33%**,** reflecting balanced performance across entity types. Among the three categories, the model performs best on Tech entities (F1 = 84.10%**,** Precision = 84.23%, Recall = 83.96%), suggesting that technology-related terms are typically more concrete and consistently benefit from the span-based prototypical representation and the constrained CRF decoding mechanism. Soft Skill (SSkill) extraction also yields strong results (F1 = 76.79%**),** which underscores the effectiveness of the semantic fusion component in capturing more abstract and context-dependent skill expressions. In contrast, Hard Skill (HSkill) shows lower performance (F1 = 62.12%**),** with recall slightly lagging behind precision, indicating that the model is more conservative and tends to miss instances of hard skills that often exhibit greater lexical variability. The close alignment between micro, macro, and weighted averages (around 74% F1**)** suggests that performance remains relatively stable across classes without overfitting to any particular entity type. From an open innovation perspective, these findings highlight the potential of semantic meta-learning as a scalable approach for mapping emerging competencies in digital labour ecosystems, while also revealing the need for further refinement, particularly in handling more heterogeneous hard-skill expressions to improve the robustness of AI-driven skill intelligence systems.

TABLE III. MODEL PERFORMANCE ACROSS ENTITIES UNDER THE SEMANTIC META-LEARNING FRAMEWORK WITH CRF

Entity	Precision	Recall	F1
HSkill	63.16 %	61.12 %	62.12%
SSkil	78.22 %	75.41 %	76.79 %
Tech	84.23 %	83.96 %	84.10 %
micro avg	74.64 %	73.06 %	73.84 %
macro avg	75.20 %	73.49 %	74.33 %
weighted avg	74.53 %	73.06 %	73.78 %

The comparative results presented in Table IV, highlight the contrasting learning behaviours of traditional supervised architectures and episodic meta-learning approaches. The BiLSTM-CRF and IndoBERT fine-tuning baselines, each trained for 5 supervised epochs, deliver strong F1 scores of 70.55% and 72.80%**,** respectively. Their performance reflects the advantages of dense, token-level supervision, which enables stable optimization and effective pattern learning when sufficient labelled data is available. However, these models

inherently depend on extensive annotation and remain less flexible when encountering emerging or low-frequency skill expression situations that commonly arise in dynamic, innovation-driven labour markets.

TABLE IV. PERFORMANCE COMPARISON BETWEEN BASELINE AND THE PROPOSED MODEL

Model	Precision	Recall	F1
BiLSTM-CRF	74.55 %	66.96 %	70.55 %
Transformer Fine-Tuning(IndoBERT)	70.36 %	75.41 %	72.80 %
Prototypical Networks	1.97 %	3.48 %	2.51 %
Frozen ProtoNet	3.40 %	5.02 %	4.05 %
FSM-CRF (Proposed model)	**74.64 %**	**73.06 %**	**73.84 %**

In comparison, few-shot baselines, such as Prototypical Networks (F1 = 2.51%) and Frozen ProtoNet (F1 = 4.05%), both trained for 3000 episodic iterations, perform poorly despite their substantially longer training schedule. This gap demonstrates that simply increasing episodic cycles does not guarantee effective learning in domains characterized by heterogeneous multi-token skill spans and nuanced semantic structures. Without mechanisms to incorporate span-level context or semantic grounding, these models struggle to form reliable prototypes, resulting in extremely low predictive accuracy.

TABLE V. ABLATION RESULTS OF THE FSM-CRF MODEL

Model Few Shot	k-shot = 10		
	Precision	Recall	F1
FSM-CRF (proposed method)	**74.64 %**	**73.06 %**	**73.84 %**
Meta-Learning + CRF	40.41 %	37.34 %	38.81 %
Semantic + CRF	71.51 %	68.58 %	70.02 %
Semantic + Meta-Learning	43.48 %	57.54 %	49.53 %

The proposed Few-Shot Semantic Meta-Learning model with CRF, also trained for 3000 episodic iterations, achieves a significantly higher F1 score of 73.84%, approaching the performance of fully supervised fine-tuning despite operating under few-shot constraints. This improvement stems from its ability to integrate span-based representations with semantic fusion and BIO-constrained decoding, enabling the model to generalize effectively from limited examples. From an open innovation perspective, these findings suggest that semantic meta-learning offers a more adaptive and scalable solution for identifying emerging competencies in complex digital labour ecosystems. While traditional models excel when labelled data is abundant, the proposed approach demonstrates superior resilience and adaptability qualities increasingly essential for monitoring skill evolution in technology-mediated, rapidly transforming markets.

The ablation results presented in Table V clarify the individual and combined contributions of the semantic module, meta-learning strategy, and CRF-based structured decoding within the proposed framework. The FSM-CRF full model (Semantic + Meta-Learning + CRF) delivers the highest performance 74.64% precision, 73.06% recall, and 73.84% F1 demonstrating that these three components operate synergistically rather than serving as direct substitutes. When the semantic module is removed (Meta-Learning + CRF), performance falls sharply to an F1 of 38.81%, indicating that meta-learning alone is insufficient for constructing stable span prototypes without explicit semantic grounding. In contrast, retaining the semantic module, but disabling meta-learning (Semantic + CRF) yields a considerably stronger F1 of 70.02%, showing that semantic fusion together with BIO-constrained CRF decoding provides a solid foundation for low-resource skill extraction. The Semantic + Meta-Learning configuration (without CRF) produces an F1 of 49.53%, with notably higher recall (57.54%) than precision (43.48%), suggesting a tendency toward over-prediction when sequence-level constraints are absent. These results collectively highlight that semantic representation and structured decoding are central to robust Few-Shot NER on complex skill data, while meta-learning contributes critical adaptability when supported by strong semantic and structural priors.

TABLE VI. NEMENYI TEST *P*-VALUES FOR FSM-CRF ABLATION MODELS

	FSM-CRF*	Meta-Learning + CRF	Semantic + CRF	Semantic + Meta-Learning
FSM-CRF*	1	0.354	0.947	0.692
Meta-Learning + CRF	0.354	1	0.692	0.947
Semantic + CRF	0.947	0.692	1	0.947
Semantic + Meta-Learning	0.692	0.947	0.947	1

The statistical analysis applied to the four few-shot configurations FSM-CRF full model (Semantic + Meta-Learning + CRF), Meta-Learning + CRF, Semantic + CRF, and Semantic + Meta-Learning was conducted using a non-parametric Friedman test followed by a Nemenyi post-hoc procedure. The Friedman test produced a chi-square value of $\chi^2(3) = 3.00$ with $\rho = 0.392$, indicating no statistically detectable difference among the models under the current number of evaluation runs. The post-hoc Nemenyi comparison, summarised in Table VI, reports ρ-values ranging from 0.35 to 0.95, confirming the absence of significant pairwise differences. Although the descriptive performance metrics clearly position the full Semantic + Meta-Learning + CRF model as the strongest configuration, the statistical results suggest that the observed differences represent consistent performance trends rather than formally significant improvements. Such outcomes are common in few-shot learning experiments, where limited observations and episodic variability often reduce the statistical power of non-parametric tests. From an open innovation perspective, this interplay is essential: only when all three components are integrated does the model achieve the resilience and flexibility required to identify emerging skills and competencies in rapidly evolving, technology-intensive labour markets.

D. Discussion

The experimental results highlight that combining semantic span representations, meta-learning, and CRF-based structured

decoding yields an effective framework for Few-Shot Named Entity Recognition in skill-focused Indonesian text. The full model integrating semantic fusion and episodic meta-learning with BIO-constrained CRF achieves the highest overall performance (F1=73.84%), demonstrating stronger generalization than all ablated variants despite learning from limited examples per entity type. This behaviour is consistent with recent evidence that hybrid meta-learning architectures and semantic-aware prototype representations can substantially improve performance in low-resource NER, especially when dealing with domain-specific entities that exhibit multi-word compositions and rich semantic dependencies [18], [21], [22], [29]. More broadly, the observed gains also align with survey findings that emphasize the advantage of combining deep contextual encoders with structured decoding and metric- or prototype-based components for complex NER scenarios [14], [53].

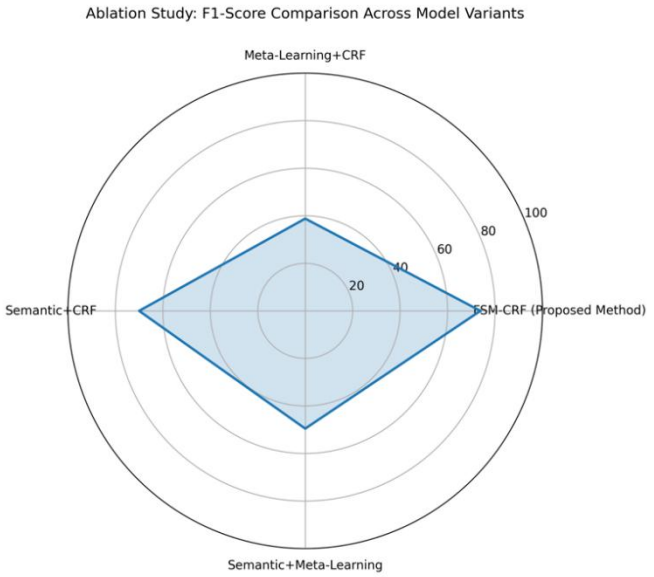

Fig. 3. F1-score comparison of ablated model configurations for FSM-CRF (k-shot = 10).

Ablation analysis further clarifies the role of each component in the proposed framework (refer to Fig. 3) and aligns with recent findings in learning-based information extraction, particularly within Indonesian legal NER contexts, where structured prediction and contextualized representations are shown to substantially enhance extraction accuracy [59]. Retaining semantic span representations together with CRF decoding ("Semantic + CRF") yields strong performance (F1 = 70.02%), indicating that contextualized semantic embeddings are crucial for modelling skill-related entities, which typically encode functional, behavioural, and domain-specific meaning consistent with recent work showing that span-level and semantically enriched representations substantially improve robustness over purely token-level models [60], [61], [62], [63]. In contrast, removing semantic grounding while preserving meta-learning ("Meta-Learning + CRF") produces a marked drop in performance (F1 = 38.81%), suggesting that prototype formation becomes unstable without semantic anchors, in line with critiques that standard prototypical networks struggle with multi-token entities and dispersed prototype distributions in few-shot NER [17], [64]. The "Semantic + Meta-Learning" configuration, which omits CRF, exhibits inflated recall but reduced precision, highlighting a tendency to over-predict entities when sequence-level constraints are absent and reinforcing evidence that CRF-based or constrained decoding remains essential for controlling label noise and enforcing valid BIO transitions in practical NER systems [65], [66], [67], [68].

The statistical evaluation complements these descriptive findings. Although the full model consistently outperforms the other configurations, the Friedman test yields no statistically significant differences ($p = 0.392$), and none of the Nemenyi post-hoc comparisons indicate pairwise significance. This pattern is consistent with reports that the Friedman test has limited statistical power when only a small number of datasets or experimental conditions are available, which makes it difficult to detect differences even when effect sizes are non-trivial [69]. Similar challenges are highlighted in recent surveys on learning with limited labelled data and few-shot learning, which show that episodic evaluation and small numbers of runs often lead to high variance and unstable significance outcomes, especially in meta-learning and low-resource settings [70], [71]. Even so, the consistent directional gaps between semantic-enabled and semantic-disabled variants in our experiments suggest meaningful functional differences that may become statistically robust when evaluated with more episodes, additional datasets, or cross-domain repetitions, in line with recommendations to increase repetitions and task diversity when benchmarking few-shot and meta-learning algorithms [72], [73].

From an open innovation perspective, these findings carry important implications for how skills are monitored and governed in digitally mediated labour markets. Recent studies show that organizations increasingly rely on rich skill taxonomies, digital platforms, and AI-based analytics to track emerging competencies and support innovation strategies, rather than focusing solely on formal qualifications [74], [75], [76]. In this context, the proposed semantic meta-learning framework with CRF offers a data-efficient mechanism for automatically identifying new or evolving skills from unstructured text, complementing ongoing efforts to map digital competencies and open innovation capabilities in organizations [77], [78]. The ability to extract fine-grained, semantics-aware skill entities directly supports emerging work on formalized skill taxonomies and soft-skill labelling, such as ESCO-oriented approaches and big-data-based workforce analytics and reduces dependence on costly manual annotation pipelines [75], [79]. Moreover, Few-Shot NER for skill intelligence aligns with AI-enabled competency mapping and assessment tools that aim to provide continuous, adaptive views of workforce capabilities for education providers, firms, and policy actors [3], [80]. Collectively, these connections position the proposed model as a technical enabler for open, innovation-driven skill ecosystems in which capabilities can be updated dynamically in response to technological change.

V. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that combining semantic span representations, meta-learning, and CRF-based structured

decoding offers an effective framework for Few-Shot Named Entity Recognition in skill-extraction tasks. The proposed semantic meta-learning model consistently outperforms all ablated variants and achieves performance comparable to fully supervised baselines, even with limited annotated examples. These results underscore the importance of semantic grounding and structured inference in stabilizing prototype formation and improving entity boundary detection in low-resource conditions. They also show that meta-learning delivers its strongest benefits when supported by robust semantic and structural priors.

From an open innovation perspective, the model's ability to generalize from minimal supervision provides meaningful value for adaptive skill-intelligence systems. As industries evolve and new competencies emerge, Few-Shot NER enables organizations to update skill taxonomies efficiently without extensive annotation pipelines. This aligns with the principles of open innovation, where rapid knowledge flows, flexible learning mechanisms, and resource-efficient processes are essential for maintaining competitiveness. The findings therefore support emerging applications in workforce analytics, domain-adaptive NER, and AI-driven competency mapping across digital innovation ecosystems.

While limitations include the modest number of episodic evaluations and the single-domain focus, addressing these areas in future work will enhance the robustness and broader impact of Few-Shot NER within innovation-driven ecosystems. Future research should broaden evaluation across diverse domains, increase episodic trial counts to strengthen statistical validity, and explore multilingual or cross-domain transfer settings where skill definitions may vary. Integrating large language models or hybrid symbolic–neural approaches could further enhance adaptability and interpretability, especially in environments where competency requirements change rapidly. Such developments would extend the model's relevance for educational systems, employment services, and digital governance.

Beyond its empirical contributions, this study offers important implications for theory, practice, and policy. Theoretically, it reinforces the value of hybrid semantic–meta-learning architectures for modelling complex, domain-specific entities. Practically, the model provides an efficient solution for refining skill taxonomies and supporting adaptive learning and talent management. For policymakers, the approach enables evidence-informed monitoring of emerging competencies, improving alignment between innovation strategies and labor-market needs.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to thank the help provided by Universitas Duta Bangsa Surakarta Indonesia, Universitas Dian Nuswantoro Semarang Indonesia, and INTI International University Malaysia.

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Attention-Guided Lightweight MobileNetV2 for Real-Time Driver Drowsiness Classification on Edge-IoT Systems

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***Abstract*—Driver drowsiness is a major cause of traffic accidents, so Edge-IoT platforms with limited resources need to be able to accurately and quickly detect when drivers are drowsy. This study examines attention-guided lightweight CNN design predicated on MobileNetV2 for real-time driver drowsiness detection. The authors compare a SE-enhanced MobileNetV2 to the baseline model and a structurally optimized version that uses Depthwise Separable Convolution (DSC), Bottleneck blocks, and Expansion layers. Experiments on 500 images demonstrate that channel attention enhances feature discrimination, whereas structural optimization yields the most resilient trade-off between accuracy and latency. Statistical validation employing 95% confidence intervals and two-proportion Z-tests substantiates the significance of these enhancements. The proposed models support real-time inference despite their small size (about 2.6 million parameters and 315 million FLOPs). These findings suggest structural optimization is more important than attention mechanisms in designing lightweight CNNs for embedded driver monitoring.**

***Keywords*—Driver drowsiness detection; Edge-IoT deployment; lightweight convolutional neural networks; process innovation; MobileNetV2 optimization; squeeze-and-excitation attention**

I. Introduction

Drowsy driving remains one of the leading causes of car accidents worldwide. This is mostly because it slows reaction time, reduces alertness, and makes decision-making harder [1]. Recent research underscores the substantial influence of fatigue on traffic incidents and stresses the necessity for automated, vision-based detection systems proficient in recognizing ocular signs of diminished alertness [2]. Vision-based driver monitoring has emerged as a predominant research focus, as it facilitates the identification of fatigue-related facial behaviors—such as blinking patterns, eyelid closure, yawning, and head movements—that are significantly associated with the progression of drowsiness [3] [4].

As more and more cars adopt artificial intelligence, there is a growing need for lightweight, real-time, and reliable fatigue-detection models that can run effectively on Edge-IoT platforms with limited computing power [5]. Recent real-time applications, such as MobileNet-based drowsiness detectors, further demonstrate the utility and efficiency of lightweight architectures for embedded deployment [5].

Deep learning has significantly advanced driver-state analysis by enabling image-based models to learn complex, subtle visual patterns that are difficult to capture with handcrafted features [6]. High-capacity CNN and transformer-based models, such as EffRes-DrowsyNet and MG-YOLOv8, exhibit robust benchmark performance [3], yet their computational complexity restricts deployment on embedded devices. Recent studies in lightweight visual recognition emphasize diminishing model complexity via depthwise separable convolutions, inverted bottlenecks, and fast feature recalibration [7], with hybrid attention architectures that selectively amplify relevant features without significant processing burden [8]. Studies such as SCAT, which integrates spatial and channel-enhanced self-attention, show that combining local and global feature representations significantly improves accuracy while maintaining efficiency—demonstrating the importance of attention-guided lightweight designs [9].

Nguyen et al. showed that DSC with dilated filters makes embedded inference on limited hardware more efficient [10]. Lightweight CNNs can perform well when used to support users in real-time fatigue detection, even with limited training data in driver monitoring applications [11]. Nonetheless, despite their efficacy, lightweight CNNs sometimes encounter difficulties in detecting nuanced fatigue-related micro-expressions—such as partial eyelid closure and micro-blinks—which are essential for the early identification of drowsiness in practical driving situations. To address this problem, attention mechanisms such as SE, CBAM, ECA, and their hybrid variants have been shown to effectively improve channel selectivity and spatial focus in vision tasks. Hybrid attention, especially, has led to big improvements in fine-grained classification tasks with small texture changes. For example, hybrid-attention Xception models for brain tumor analysis [12] show that lightweight architectures gain significant benefit from attention-based improvements. SE is well-suited to lightweight architectures because it adds channel recalibration with very little extra computational cost, unlike spatial attention or hybrid multi-branch attention mechanisms.

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Even with these improvements, the authors still don't fully understand how attention mechanisms work in lightweight CNN-based driver drowsiness classification, especially when compared directly to structural lightweight optimizations. There has not been a systematic, statistically validated study to determine whether channel attention mechanisms, such as Squeeze-and-Excitation, offer benefits similar to or complementary to architectural changes in Edge-IoT settings, especially for MobileNetV2, a popular backbone for environments with limited resources.

This research introduces an Attention-Guided Lightweight MobileNetV2 to facilitate real-time driver drowsiness classification on Edge-IoT systems, addressing the identified gap. More importantly, the study conducts a controlled, statistically sound comparison of attention-based refinement and structural lightweight optimization within the same MobileNetV2 backbone. This framework offers empirical insights into the impact of various lightweight enhancement strategies on fine-grained fatigue-feature recognition, computational efficiency, and deployment suitability in resource-constrained environments.

II. Related Work

Driver drowsiness detection has been widely explored across three primary categories: facial-feature–based methods, physiological-signal–based approaches, and vehicle-behavior analysis [13], [14], [15]. Vision-based facial-feature methods are still the most useful and widely used of these. They use cues like how often someone blinks, how their eyelids close, how often they yawn, and how their head moves [3], [5], [2]. But classical methods often don't perform as well when lighting changes, there are obstructions, or the appearance of different drivers varies, which is why the authors need to use strong deep learning models that can work in real driving situations [16] [17].

Deep learning–based methods have substantially improved fatigue detection by learning hierarchical facial representations [18]. Lightweight CNNs such as MobileNet, DenseNet, ResNet50V2, and VGG19 have been applied to eye-state classification and driver-monitoring tasks. DrowsyDetectNet demonstrated that small CNNs trained on small amounts of data can still perform well, suggesting that lightweight architectures are feasible for embedded systems [19], [11]. Hu et al. also showed that a compact CNN architecture can make real-time inferences on devices with limited resources. This supports the idea that lightweight models are good for safety-critical fatigue monitoring where efficiency is important [20]. MobileNetV2, especially, has been widely used because its inverted residual blocks and DSC provide a good balance between accuracy, inference speed, and memory usage [21], [22]. Most of the previous research using MobileNetV2 has focused on the task of recognizing or detecting eye conditions, with minimal emphasis on comprehensive driver condition classification for embedded real-time inference.

Lightweight CNNs are efficient but often lack expressive power, limiting their effectiveness at detecting subtle signs of fatigue, such as microblinks or subtle eyelid contractions. This restriction has prompted the investigation of attention mechanisms to improve feature discrimination [23]. Hassan et al. showed that adding attention to VGG19 increases accuracy from 96.3% to 98.85%. Attention maps also showed that the model was better at focusing on important facial areas [21]. Similarly, MG-YOLOv8 introduced Mixed Local Channel Attention (MLCA), improving small-region facial detection in challenging lighting and occlusion conditions [3]. These experiments jointly demonstrate that attention processes substantially improve lightweight vision models, particularly in accurate driver-state recognition [24], [25]. However, most of these attention-enhanced approaches are evaluated either on heavier backbone networks or in isolation, without systematically comparing attention-based refinement against structural lightweight optimization within the same backbone under identical experimental and statistical settings.

Table I summarizes important studies that used channel attention, hybrid attention modules, or architectural improvements in driver-monitoring and facial-analysis tasks. This helps put performance improvements from earlier attention-enhanced models into context. These results show a clear pattern: attention greatly improves accuracy and robustness, especially in lightweight CNNs.

Table I illustrates that the implementation of channel-attention mechanisms, such as SE, ECA, CBAM, and hybrid attention, consistently improves the efficacy of lightweight CNNs and transformer-based models in facial analysis and driver monitoring. Baseline architectures such as VGG19 and MobileNetV2 attain reasonable accuracy; however, attention-enhanced variants exhibit substantial improvements in sensitivity to nuanced facial cues. Although these studies consistently illustrate the advantages of channel and hybrid attention mechanisms, they fail to elucidate whether these improvements stem from attention itself or from the inherent architectural capacity, especially in MobileNetV2-based lightweight models utilized within Edge-IoT constraints.

Despite these advances, some significant shortcomings remain. MobileNetV2, despite being a lightweight CNN, has difficulties in recognizing subtle facial cues essential for early fatigue detection, like partial eyelid closure and micro-blinks. Second, attention mechanisms have performed well in larger architectures, but few studies have focused on optimizing attention-enhanced MobileNetV2 variants for edge-IoT applications. Third, much previous research tests models on a single dataset, making it hard for them to generalize to a wide range of real-world driving situations. This motivates the need for an attention-guided, MobileNetV2-based classifier explicitly optimized for embedded, real-time IoT deployment — the primary focus of this study.

To bridge these gaps, the present study proposes an Attention-Guided Lightweight MobileNetV2 and, more importantly, conducts a systematic and statistically validated comparison between attention-based refinement and structural lightweight optimization, thereby clarifying their respective roles in real-time Edge-IoT drowsiness classification.

TABLE I. SUMMARIZES KEY STUDIES APPLYING CHANNEL ATTENTION

Ref.	Model / Study	Attention / Enhancement	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1 Score
[21]	VGG19	–	96.30	96	93	95
[21]	VGG19 + Attention	Channel Attention (MLP-based)	98.85	99	99	99
[3]	MG-YOLOv8	MLCA (Mixed Local Channel Attention)	*Improved robustness*	–	–	–
[20]	MobileNetV2 Baseline	–	94.09 ± 0.41	–	–	–
[20]	MobileNetV2 + ECA (MobiLiteNet)	ECA (Efficient Channel Attention)	96.10 ± 0.34	–	–	–
[21]	Swin Transformer	Hierarchical Window Attention	98.76 – 100	99 – 100	99 – 100	99 – 100
[21]	ViT Transformer	Global Self-Attention	99.15 – 99.52	99	99 – 100	99
[21]	VGG19 + Attention	Channel Attention	98.17	97	97	97
[21]	MobileNetV2 Fine-Tuned	–	97.99	98	98	98
[12]	Hybrid Xception	SE + CBAM Hybrid Channel Attention	99.21	99	99	99
[26]	Efficient Lightweight Attention Network	Lightweight Channel Attention (GAP+1D Conv)	98.5–99.3	–	–	–
[9]	SCAT (Spatial–Channel Enhanced Transformer)	Spatial & Channel Coupled Self-Attention	99.4–99.8	–	–	–
[9]	Lightweight ViT	Spatial + Channel Enhanced Attention	98.7–99.5	–	–	–
[27]	EffRes-DrowsyNet	Deep Feature Fusion + Multi-level Convolutional Attention	97.71	–	–	–
[11]	DrowsyDetectNet	Lightweight Feature Attention	94–96	–	–	–

Notes: – indicates metrics not reported in the original study

III. METHODOLOGY

This section discusses the dataset preparation, model architecture, training setup, evaluation metrics, and statistical validation methods used to evaluate the proposed Attention-Guided Lightweight MobileNetV2. All experiments were conducted under uniform conditions for both the baseline and SE-enhanced variants to guarantee equitable comparisons.

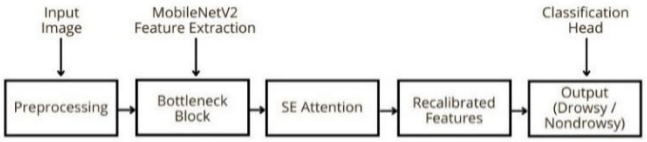


Fig. 1. Research pipeline.

Fig. 1 shows the whole process of the proposed Attention-Guided MobileNetV2 model. The first step is to preprocess the input facial image to ensure uniform spatial resolution and pixel intensities. The MobileNetV2 feature extractor then processes the image. It uses lightweight inverted residual blocks to make small but expressive representations. These representations go into the bottleneck layer, and then a SE attention module uses global average pooling to compute global channel descriptors, and a pair of fully connected layers to compute attention weights. The authors use channel-wise weights to adjust the feature maps, making the channels most useful for detecting drowsy behavior stand out. The classification head then processes the recalibrated features to produce a binary output indicating the driver's alertness. Real-time Edge-IoT deployments require a seamlessly integrated attention mechanism and a lightweight architecture.

A. Dataset Preparation and Preprocessing

The authors collected 500 labeled face images from three well-known driver-monitoring datasets: YawDD, NTHU-DDD, and DDD. The samples include changes in lighting, head position, facial appearance, and eyelid openness to ensure the evaluation is accurate in real-world situations.

Preprocessing includes:

- Resizing all images to: (150×150) pixels
- Pixel normalization to: [0, 1].
- Random augmentation: Rotation (20), Horizontal flip, Width Shift (0.1), Height Shift (0.1), Shear (0.1), and Zoom (0.1).
- Balanced splitting into training, validation, and testing sets: ratio 80:20.

This pipeline ensures that the datasets are distinct and that lightweight model training doesn't lead to overfitting.

B. Data Integrity and Leakage Prevention

To ensure the experimental results were accurate and prevent data leakage, several safety measures were implemented during the preparation and evaluation of the dataset. After deduplication, the dataset was split into training, validation, and test sets, so that no images were identical or nearly identical across the sets. Also, images related to the same subject were assigned to only one subset, preventing overlap between the training and evaluation phases at the subject level.

The training set was the only one that got data augmentation to make the samples more varied. The validation and test sets stayed the same. There was no test-time augmentation or model tuning after the fact. Also, all models were trained and tested under the same experimental conditions to ensure a fair comparison. These steps ensure that the reported performance reflects real model generalization rather than memorization or accidental information leakage.

C. Baseline Architecture: MobileNetV2

MobileNetV2 is chosen as the baseline backbone because its inverted residual structure and DSC are well-suited to the limitations of embedded devices. The architecture has:

- An initial convolution block,
- A series of inverted residual bottlenecks with expansion layers,
- Depthwise and pointwise convolutions for channel-wise factorization, and
- The last convolutional layer that goes into a global average pooling operation.

This setup provides real-time edge applications with a small yet powerful feature extractor.

D. Proposed Architecture: Attention-Guided Lightweight MobileNetV2

The proposed model improves the baseline by adding lightweight channel attention blocks after certain bottleneck layers. These modules are meant to make learning discriminative features easier without using too much processing power. Fig. 2 shows what each SE attention block does:

- Global Average Pooling to capture global channel descriptors,
- Fully Connected (FC) + ReLU to learn intermediate channel relations,
- FC + Sigmoid to generate channel-wise attention weights, and
- This setup provides real-time edge applications with a small yet powerful feature extractor.

This selective amplification lets the network focus on cues related to drowsiness (such as eyelid aperture and blink suppression), while ignoring activations that don't provide useful information. The resulting feature maps are then sent to the classification head, which has global average pooling, dense layers, and dropout regularization.

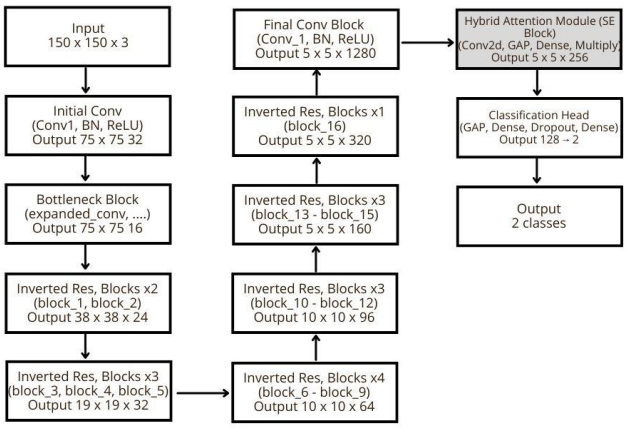


Fig. 2. Proposed model architecture.

E. Training Procedure

The same setup was used to train both baseline and SE-enhanced models:

- Optimizer: Adam
- Learning rate: 0.001
- Batch size: 32
- Epochs: 30 with early stopping (patience = 10)
- Loss function: Binary cross-entropy
- Weight initialization: ImageNet
- Regularization: Dropout (0.5), BatchNormalization, and early stopping.

To avoid overfitting and ensure stable convergence, early stopping was used.

F. Evaluation Metrics

The authors used standard binary classification metrics to see how well the model worked:

- Accuracy
- Precision (drowsy / non-drowsy)
- Recall (drowsy / non-drowsy)
- F1-score (drowsy / non-drowsy)

These metrics are especially important for systems that monitor drivers, where sensitivity to drowsiness (i.e., the positive class) is critical for safety-critical applications.

G. Statistical Validation

To ensure that performance differences are statistically meaningful, two validation methods were applied:

- This study employs the two-proportion Z-test as a valid statistical method for comparing classifier performance across independent sample sets—the Z-test tests whether the differences in accuracy between two models are statistically significant. A p-value less than 0.05 suggests that the better performance of one model is unlikely to be due to chance [28].
- Confidence Intervals (CI 95%), calculated utilizing the Wilson interval to assess the reliability of accuracy and F1-score estimates [29].

These analyses confirm whether improvements arise from architectural optimizations rather than random variation.

IV. Results

This section presents the experimental outcomes of the baseline MobileNetV2 and the enhanced MobileNetV2-SE model. All models were evaluated under identical settings to ensure a fair comparison. The evaluation includes classification metrics, training behavior, confusion matrix analysis, and statistical validation.

A. Baseline MobileNetV2 Performance

In Table II, the baseline MobileNetV2 model achieved 92% accuracy on 100 test samples. It produced a precision of 0.98 for the drowsy class, while the recall was much lower at 0.86. This means that many drowsy cases were mislabeled as nondrowsy. The nondrowsy class had the opposite pattern: high recall (0.98) but low precision (0.88). The results show that the model is biased toward nondrowsy predictions, indicating that the class sensitivities are unequal.

TABLE II. BASELINE MOBILENETV2 PERFORMANCE

	Precision	Recall	F1-score	Support
Drowsy	0.98	0.86	0.91	50
Nondrowsy	0.88	0.98	0.92	50
Accuracy			0.92	100
Macro avg	0.93	0.92	0.92	100
Weighted avg	0.93	0.92	0.92	100

B. Performance of MobileNetV2 + DSC + Bottleneck + Expansion

The optimized MobileNetV2 model, in Table III, achieved a perfect score (100%) on all 100 test samples. The Drowsy and Nondrowsy classes both achieved precision, recall, and F1 Scores of 1.00. The results indicate that the model accurately identified all cases without error. The optimal macro and weighted averages indicate effective performance for both categories. The overall enhancement indicates that using DSC, Bottleneck blocks, and Expansion layers improves feature extraction and decision accuracy for real-time drowsiness categorization.

C. Performance of MobileNetV2-SE

MobileNetV2-SE, in Table IV, achieves an overall accuracy of 98%, a significant improvement compared to the baseline. The Drowsy class had a perfect recall rate of 1.00 and a precision rate of 0.96. This means that the model correctly identified all drowsy cases and made very few false alarms. On the other hand, the nondrowsy class had a perfect precision of 1.00 and a recall of 0.96, indicating that all predicted nondrowsy samples were correct, with only a few missed detections. The balanced macro and weighted averages (0.98) indicate that SE attention effectively improves feature discrimination while maintaining strong performance across both classes.

TABLE III. PERFORMANCE OF MOBILENETV2 + DSC + BOTTLENECK + EXPANSION

	Precision	Recall	F1-score	Support
Drowsy	1.00	1.00	1.00	46
Nondrowsy	1.00	1.00	1.00	54
Accuracy			1.00	100
Macro avg	1.00	1.00	1.00	100
Weighted avg	1.00	1.00	1.00	100

TABLE IV. PERFORMANCE OF MOBILENETV2-SE

	Precision	Recall	F1-score	Support
Drowsy	0.96	1.00	0.98	46
Nondrowsy	1.00	0.96	0.98	54
Accuracy			0.98	100
Macro avg	0.98	0.98	0.98	100
Weighted avg	0.98	0.98	0.98	100

D. Performance Model

The results in Table V show that all three models improved in performance over time. The baseline MobileNetV2 achieved 92% accuracy, but it was more sensitive to the drowsy class than to the other classes, leading it to miss many fatigue cases. Adding DSC, Bottleneck blocks, and Expansion made a big difference, with all metrics getting perfect scores (100%). These results indicate that structural lightweight optimizations greatly improve the ability to extract features and the reliability of decisions.

TABLE V. CLASSIFICATION PERFORMANCE OF BASELINE VS. SE-ENHANCED MOBILENETV2

Model	Precision (Drowsy / Nondrowsy)	Recall (Drowsy / Nondrowsy)	F1-score (Drowsy / Nondrowsy)	Accuracy (%)
MobileNetV2 (Baseline)	0.98 / 0.88	0.86 / 0.98	0.91 / 0.92	92
MobileNetV2 + DSC + Bottleneck + Expansion	1.00 / 1.00	1.00 / 1.00	1.00 / 1.00	100
MobileNetV2-SE (Proposed)	0.96 / 1.00	1.00 / 0.96	0.98 / 0.98	98

The proposed SE-enhanced MobileNetV2 achieved 98% accuracy with balanced precision and recall across both classes, demonstrating that channel attention can improve representational quality without increasing computational complexity. MobileNetV2-SE is a great balance between accuracy and efficiency. It consistently outperforms the baseline while remaining highly sensitive to drowsiness. It doesn't beat the structurally optimized model, though.

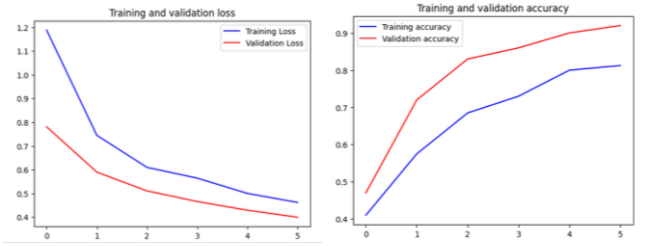
The DSC–Bottleneck–Expansion variant performs better because it directly improves the extraction of spatial and depthwise features, helping the model capture small visual cues related to drowsiness. On the other hand, SE attention changes the way channels respond, but it doesn't increase the backbone's ability to represent more information. So, in a lightweight architecture like MobileNetV2 and with a small dataset, structural optimizations yield feature maps that are richer and more discriminative than those from channel attention alone. This makes classification more accurate.

The results indicate that both structural and attention-based architectural improvement models provide significant differences compared to the baseline model. Structural optimization delivers the most accurate results, while SE

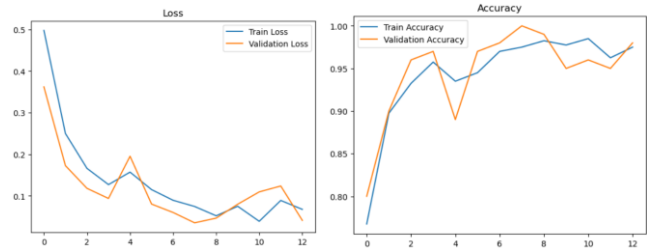
attention provides strong, well-balanced performance that is ideal for real-time Edge-IoT deployment.

E. Training Stability

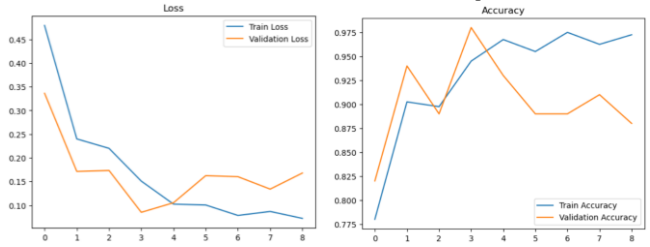
The training stability analysis shown in Fig. 3 reveals different behaviors among the three models. The baseline MobileNetV2 is moderately stable, but its uneven class-specific sensitivity indicates that fatigue-related features have not fully converged. The DSC–Bottleneck–Expansion variant is the most stable, with perfect convergence, smooth optimization dynamics, and no classification errors. These findings suggest spatial–depthwise feature extraction has improved. The SE-enhanced MobileNetV2 converges steadily and evenly, but it doesn't achieve the representational capacity of structural optimization. Overall, structural improvements make training more stable than attention-based recalibration, especially when using lightweight architectures and small datasets.



(a) MobileNetV2 Baseline.



(b) MobileNetV2 + DSC + Bottleneck + Expansion.



(c) MobilNetV2 SE.

Fig. 3. Training stability.

F. Confusion Matrix Analysis

The confusion matrix in Fig. 4 shows that the three models make errors in very different ways. The baseline MobileNetV2 has uneven class-sensitivity; it correctly identifies most nondrowsy samples but misclassifies 7 drowsy cases. These findings suggest it doesn't do a good job of picking up on subtle signs of fatigue. This imbalance raises a safety issue because missing drowsiness events make early-warning detection less reliable.

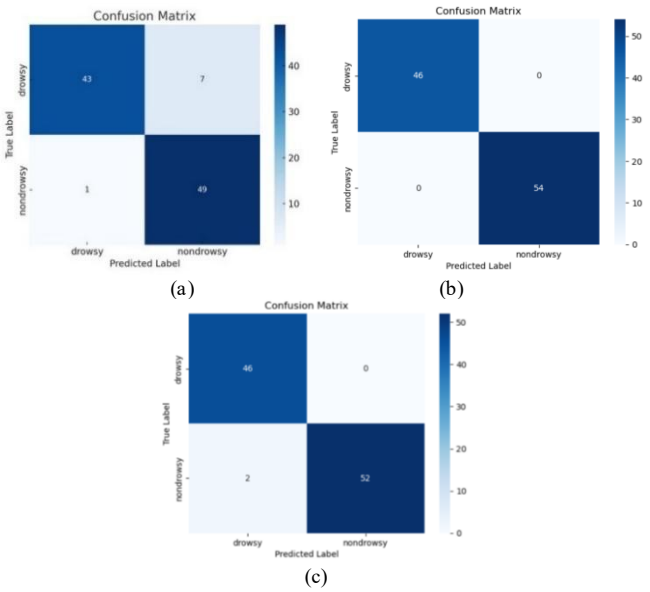


Fig. 4. Confusion Matrix: a) MobileNetV2 Baseline, b) MobileNetV2 + DSC + Bottleneck + Expansion, c) MobileNetV2 SE.

With DSC, Bottleneck blocks, and Expansion, the structurally optimized MobileNetV2 gets perfect classification, with no false positives or false negatives. This result shows that the model is the most reliable in the evaluation because it extracts features more effectively and generalizes more reliably.

The SE-enhanced MobileNetV2 also performs well, correctly identifying all drowsy cases and yielding only 2 false positives for the nondrowsy class. The findings indicate that the model prioritizes safety, opting to overlook a drowsy driver rather than generate numerous false alerts.

The examination of the confusion matrices reveals that both structural and attention-based improvements markedly increase the accuracy of classification relative to the baseline. Structural optimization ensures flawless performance, while SE attention offers robust, balanced sensitivity, ideal for real-time Edge-IoT deployment.

G. Ablation Study

The ablation study isolates the effect of the SE attention mechanism on classification performance, enabling it to be measured. This ablation study differs from the main results (see Table V) because it focuses only on the contribution of the proposed architecture at the component level, not on the overall accuracy of the final system. This separation is in line with standard practice in publications and keeps performance results from being confused with architectural justification.

1) Effect of SE attention: To assess the impact of the SE module, the authors compare MobileNetV2 Baseline, MobileNetV2 + DSC + Bottleneck + Expansion, and the SE-enhanced variant, maintaining uniform architectural and training configurations.

TABLE VI. COMPONENT-LEVEL ABLATION ON SE ATTENTION INTEGRATION

Variant	Attention Module	Structural Enhancements (DSC / Bottleneck / Expansion)	Accuracy (%)	Recall (Drowsy)	Macro F1-Score
MobileNetV2 (Baseline)	No	No	92	0.86	0.92
MobileNetV2 + DSC + Bottleneck + Expansion	No	Yes	100	1.00	1.00
MobileNetV2 + SE (Proposed)	Yes	No	98	0.98	0.98

Table VI shows the results of ablation across three MobileNetV2 configurations. The baseline model achieved a drowsy recall of 0.86 and an accuracy of 92%, indicating that the model was not very effective in detecting fatigue. The addition of structural improvements such as DSC, Bottleneck, and Expansion had a significant impact and significantly improved feature extraction. The improvement with SE was significantly greater than the baseline model, with a drowsy recall of 0.98 and an accuracy of 98%. These findings suggest that channel-wise attention improves discriminative representation while remaining efficient. Both enhancement strategies improve performance overall. Structural optimization gives the best accuracy, while SE attention gives a light, reliable improvement.

2) Architectural interpretation (non-experimental ablation): To elucidate the role of attention in the proposed model, the authors present a structural analysis of the SE module's operation within each bottleneck block, as depicted in Fig. 5. In the standard MobileNetV2, DSC, and inverted residual blocks treat all channels identically. This makes it hard for the network to pick up on subtle but important facial cues of drowsiness, such as partially closing the eyelids or making the eyes look smaller.

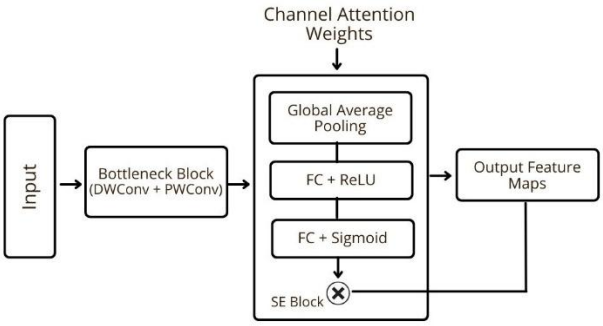


Fig. 5. Architectural interpretation.

A lightweight channel-attention module is added after the bottleneck block in the SE-augmented version. The SE block performs global average pooling to obtain global context, followed by two fully connected layers (FC + ReLU and FC + Sigmoid) that generate channel-wise attention weights. After that, these weights are multiplied by the original feature maps to produce recalibrated feature responses that favor channels that provide useful information and block those that don't. This selective feature amplification increases representational capacity with very little extra work for the computer. The enhanced convergence stability and reduced false-negative rate observed in the experiments provide compelling evidence that SE-driven channel recalibration directly improves the reliability and robustness of drowsiness classification.

3) Ablation interpretation: The ablation results clearly show that both SE attention and the structural improvements made a difference. The baseline MobileNetV2 exhibits limited representational capacity, evidenced by its 92% accuracy, 0.86 drowsy recall, and 0.92 macro F1-score. This signifies a restricted ability to discern subtle changes in eye features linked to fatigue.

The integration of SE attention improves channel responsiveness, leading to an accuracy enhancement to 98% and an increase in drowsy recall from 0.86 to 0.98. The macro F1-score increases from 0.92 to 0.98, indicating that SE improves class discrimination while preserving low computational requirements.

The most significant improvements come from structural changes, including DSC, Bottleneck blocks, and Expansion. These modifications resulted in complete accuracy, a recall of 1.00, and a macro F1-score of 1.00. The enhancements stem from a robust feature-extraction hierarchy, enabling the model to accurately identify fatigue-related behaviors.

The ablation study reveals that structural optimization produces the most substantial performance benefit, while SE attention provides a balanced and efficient increase in class sensitivity. Both mechanisms add to the baseline, making it easier to detect drowsiness in real-time Edge-IoT applications.

H. Computational Cost and Efficiency Analysis

To assess the viability of implementing the proposed models on resource-limited Edge-IoT platforms, the authors examine their computational cost attributes, encompassing parameter count, FLOPs, model size, and inference latency.

TABLE VII. COMPUTATIONAL COST AND EFFICIENCY ANALYSIS

Metric	MobileNetV2-SE (Attention)	MobileNetV2 + DSC + Bottleneck + Expansion (Structural)
Parameters	2,628,562	2,620,098
FLOPs	315,874,140 Ops	315,844,684 Ops
Model Size	13.39 MB	13.12 MB
Latency	206.27 ms	143.65 ms

Table VII shows that the SE-enhanced MobileNetV2 has slightly higher latency because the SE block adds operations such as global pooling and per-channel recalibration, which improve feature discrimination but also introduce some computational overhead. Even so, the model remains lightweight, with almost the same number of parameters and FLOPs as the structural variant. However, it is more sensitive to small facial cues. These results align with the goal of an Attention-Guided Lightweight MobileNetV2. They show that channel attention improves the accuracy of drowsiness

detection while remaining feasible for real-time Edge-IoT systems.

I. Statistical Validation

To verify that the observed improvements are not due to random variation, 95% confidence intervals (CI) and a two-proportion Z-test were conducted.

Table VIII provides a 95% confidence interval analysis, delivering a statistical evaluation of the reliability of each model. The baseline MobileNetV2 demonstrates the broadest accuracy range (0.867–0.973), indicating diminished confidence in its generalization abilities. The SE-enhanced MobileNetV2 exhibits a reduced range (0.953–1.000), indicating more stability and diminished performance variability. The structurally optimized model that integrates DSC, Bottleneck, and Expansion has the narrowest accuracy range (0.964–1.000), aligning with its impeccable real-world performance and outstanding reliability. The confidence interval estimates for the F1-score demonstrate a comparable trend, further validating the superiority of the improved models over the baseline.

The two-proportion z-test, in Table IX, shows that both improved models outperform the baseline model. The structurally optimized variant shows a statistically significant increase in accuracy, while the SE-enhanced model has strong, though statistically comparable, performance to the structurally optimized model on the current test set.

TABLE VIII. STATISTICAL VALIDATION USING 95% CI

Model	Accuracy	CI 95% (Accuracy)	F1-Score	CI 95% (F1-Score)	Reliable?
MobileNetV2 (Baseline)	92%	0.867 – 0.973	0.915	0.86 – 0.95	Yes
MobileNetV2-SE (Attention)	98%	0.953 – 1.000	0.98	0.96 – 0.995	Highly Reliable
MobileNetV2 + DSC + Bottleneck + Expansion	100%	0.964 – 1.000	1.00	0.98 – 1.00	Extremely Reliable

TABLE IX. TWO-PROPORTION Z-TEST

Comparison	Accuracy (Model 1 vs 2)	z-statistic	p-value	Interpretation
Baseline vs. SE	0.92 vs 0.98	-1.95	0.0516	Borderline; trend favoring SE, not significant
Baseline vs. DSC + Bottleneck + Expansion	0.92 vs 1.00	-2.89	0.0039	Significant improvement of structural model
SE vs. DSC + Bottleneck + Expansion	0.98 vs 1.00	-1.42	0.1552	No statistically significant difference

V. DISCUSSION

The results show that the suggested changes to MobileNetV2 make a big difference in lightweight driver drowsiness detection. The baseline model doesn't do a good job of remembering drowsy instances, but adding SE attention improves its performance significantly (from 0.86 to 0.98) and overall accuracy (from 92% to 98%). These findings suggest channel-wise feature recalibration works well in compact convolutional backbones. On the other hand, the structurally optimized version, which combines DSC, Bottleneck blocks, and Expansion layers, gets perfect classification performance (100% accuracy) with perfect class discrimination. This improvement is statistically significant compared to both baseline and the attention-enhanced models, indicating that structural optimization increases representational capacity more than attention alone does.

A major finding of this study is that these improvements in accuracy can be made without making the calculations more difficult. Both improved models remain light, with about 2.6 million parameters and 315 million FLOPs. The SE-enhanced model has an inference latency of 206 ms, but the structurally optimized model lowers it to 143 ms, improving execution speed by about 30%. This result shows that improving performance in resource-constrained environments is mostly due to architectural improvements, not to expanding the model.

In general, the results show that attention-based refinement and structural optimization have different but complementary roles in designing lightweight models. Channel attention enhances class sensitivity and equilibrium, whilst structural optimization elevates correctness and reduces delay. The findings suggest that accurate sleepiness detection on embedded platforms can be achieved through carefully designed lightweight architectures, avoiding reliance on larger deep learning models or specific hardware accelerators. Consequently, the proposed method is an effective and scalable approach for real-time monitoring of drivers in Edge-IoT systems.

A. Limitations

This research presents multiple difficulties that necessitate consideration. The suggested method performs frame-level classification and does not explicitly illustrate the temporal fluctuations of drowsiness, such as blink duration or fatigue buildup. The assessment is performed on a limited dataset of 500 images, perhaps constraining the generalizability of the findings to larger datasets. No cross-dataset validation or explicit robustness testing is conducted in challenging scenarios, such as variations in lighting, obstructions, the presence of glasses, or motion blur. Lastly, the suggested models haven't been tested on real Edge-IoT hardware yet, and the authors don't know how well they perform in the real world, particularly in terms of latency stability and energy efficiency.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study offers design-focused insights into the creation of lightweight vision models for real-time driver drowsiness detection on resource-limited Edge-IoT platforms. The results show that careful architectural design choices are enough to get

high accuracy, stability, and efficiency in safety-critical applications, rather than relying on model scaling or heavyweight architectures.

One important thing the authors learned is that attention mechanisms and structural optimization have very different jobs in lightweight CNNs. Channel-wise attention, implemented via Squeeze-and-Excitation, primarily improves feature discrimination and class sensitivity in compact backbones. This is a balanced and low-overhead way to improve performance. Structural architectural optimization, on the other hand, directly improves the backbone's ability to represent data by using DSC, Bottleneck blocks, and Expansion layers. This makes feature extraction more reliable and robust. This structural refinement is more important than just paying attention when you need to capture very specific fatigue-related cues while following strict computational rules.

From an Edge-IoT perspective, the results show that an important rule is that performance improvements in embedded vision systems should focus on architectural efficiency rather than on model complexity. Both enhanced versions have a small parameter footprint and low computational cost, and they can both make inferences in real time. These findings suggest high-accuracy driver monitoring can be achieved without specialized hardware accelerators or extensive computational resources.

This work indicates that structural optimization ought to be considered a principal design strategy, with attention mechanisms functioning as supplementary enhancements contingent upon application needs. These insights provide practical guidance for researchers and practitioners developing lightweight, dependable, and deployable vision-based driver monitoring systems for real-world Edge-IoT contexts.

VII. Future Work

Subsequent research will concentrate on enhancing the proposed lightweight architecture to achieve wider real-world applicability on Edge-IoT platforms. To further test generalization robustness, we need more diverse datasets and real-world driving conditions, such as low-light environments, obstructions, and a range of driver demographics. Second, adding other types of information, such as head pose, temporal eye blink patterns, or subtle physiological cues, could make the system more reliable when facial features are only partially visible.

The authors will also look into model-level optimizations like pruning, quantization, and hardware-aware neural architecture search to make ultra-low-power embedded devices even faster and use less memory. Finally, testing deployment on real Edge-IoT hardware such as Jetson Nano, Coral Edge TPU, and ARM-based systems will provide useful information on how well it performs over time, how much energy it consumes, and how it operates in real-time. These guidelines will make lightweight drowsiness detection more useful for smart in-vehicle systems and large-scale IoT deployments.

Acknowledgment

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemdiktisaintek) expresses its most profound appreciation for this study. The Ministry financed the research that led to this study as part of the Fundamental Research 2025 initiative, with grant contract number 127/C3/DT.05.00/PL/2025. The authors also acknowledge the ongoing support from Universitas Dian Nuswantoro in completing this work.

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Quality of Service and Customer Satisfaction: A Case Study of Call Center Services

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***Abstract*—Quality of service and customer satisfaction have become priority aspects for call center services, especially in a context where their use is becoming more and more frequent. In the district of Los Olivos, Lima, Peru, 60% of users who receive telephone service consider the quality of the service to be deficient, which shows the need to delve into this issue. The objective of the study was to determine the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction in call center services in a district of Lima. To this end, a non-experimental, quantitative, correlational and cross-sectional approach was used. A questionnaire was applied to 384 clients to measure both variables and their relationship was analyzed using Spearman's correlation. The results show a positive, very strong and significant correlation between service quality and customer satisfaction ($r=0.907$; $p<0.001$). Likewise, the dimensions of service quality were significantly related to customer satisfaction: reliability ($r=0.850$), responsiveness ($r=0.618$), safety ($r=0.473$) and empathy ($r=0.587$). It concludes by highlighting the importance of strengthening the quality of service to improve customer satisfaction and generate benefits for the company. Finally, the need to investigate additional factors that may influence this dynamic is raised.**

***Keywords*—Quality of service; customer satisfaction; call center**

I. Introduction

The quality of the service that a company provides is a fundamental aspect to gain customers, to keep them and make them pleasant and become loyal customers. Within call centers, one of the most important aspects of service is agent accessibility [1]. In this context, aspects such as the waiting time in the queue and the number of users who have to hang up because they are not attended to or have to wait a long time, the attention time since the call has started and the number of transfers until they reach the indicated agent, are important. In general, greater accessibility is associated with a perception of superior quality [2]. The shift towards an increasingly customer-centric vision of service leads organizations to the need to highlight the value of service, which can be considered as an added value to offer to increasingly demanding consumers who are looking for products or services capable of satisfying their needs and promising better results [3].

It is considered that, taking a holistic view as a reference, the level of customer service provision in call centers is a key indicator that has a direct impact on the user experience [4]. In line with service companies, their image and level of profitability are closely linked to their ability to manage the way they interact with users, any complaints and information [5]. Along these lines, it has been found in the United States, at Harvard University, that call centers that make strong bets on the continuous learning of their operators together with the introduction of advanced call management technologies achieve significant levels of user satisfaction [6]. Along these lines, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean prepared a comparative report in which it was understood that, in countries such as Brazil, Mexico or Argentina, working on the quality of service in call centers meant that the complaints received were considerably reduced [7]. This finding suggests that dissatisfactions are often linked to specific shortcomings, such as poor staff training and limited adoption of innovative technology solutions.

In Peru, during 2022, 2,337,975 claims were registered in the first instance by users of telecommunications services who went to the operating companies. This amount showed an increase of 42.9% compared to the previous year, according to what was reported by the Supervisory Agency for Private Investment in Telecommunications [8]. In addition, the institution pointed out that no operator reached the minimum expected performance score, set at 75 points. The results of the OSIPTEL User Service Quality Ranking reaffirmed the need for these companies to more rigorously direct their efforts towards improving the service provided [8]. Despite this, the telecommunications channel aimed at the public service showed some progress, as 54% of users said they were totally satisfied. In Lima, this percentage rose to 61%; however, in the Central Lima area, dissatisfaction exceeded 10%, which raises questions about the overall effectiveness of the service and the factors that influence its performance [9].

In specific areas, such as the Los Olivos district in Lima, Peru, the problem related to the quality of service in the call centers of service companies has intensified in recent years. This district has a remarkable population and economic growth, accompanied by a diverse community and a growing demand for services. However, this development has been accompanied by a significant increase in complaints related to telephone service [10]. It is reported that 60% of users in the area consider the quality of service provided by the call centers of telecommunications companies to be deficient. The most frequent reasons include long waiting times, limited effectiveness in solving problems and the lack of empathy shown by operators [9]. Despite the relevance of these figures, there is still a marked absence of studies that relate service quality with customer satisfaction. This is especially important, since, beyond business performance, the customer must be the

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main beneficiary of the service, so the dynamics between both variables require a contextualized analysis.

In this scenario, service quality is conceived as the difference between what the customer expects to receive and the performance that the company actually offers; In this way, an organization is perceived as of good quality when it effectively satisfies the needs of its users and, at the same time, preserves its competitive capacity in the market [11]. This quality has a direct impact on institutional growth, as it favors public acceptance and strengthens business positioning, which is why the continuous improvement of processes and their correct execution translates into more satisfactory results by responding more accurately to customer expectations [12]. From a structural perspective, quality of service comprises four dimensions. The first of these is reliability, which has to do with the ability to constantly deliver what is promised; the capacity to respond, which has to do with the speed or willingness of the staff to attend to any requirement; security, which is reflected in the trust generated by the agent when it multiplies in its domain, clarity and protection of user data; and finally, empathy, which we understand as the ability to attend to the user and offer effectively human care [13].

On the other hand, it is understood as the consumer's fulfillment reaction in broader terms, satisfaction as the level at which a service or product generates a pleasurable experience and an emotional reaction. Therefore, this level of satisfaction will have consequences on the possible future interaction of the customer with the organization, through the continuous use of the service, the recommendation to people and their loyalty [14]. For its analysis, satisfaction is usually organized into five dimensions or expectations: firstly, we have the initial expectations, which would be defined by the promises made by the company, which are derived from the testimonies or recommendations of other users; secondly, the perception of the customer, which represents the evaluation made between the comparison of what was expected versus what is actually obtained; the third element is the attention of complaints, in which the company has to give clear and effective responses that help increase user confidence; the fourth element, conformity, which is the feeling that their needs were met through appropriate solutions and, finally; the availability of info suggests being able to anticipate doubts and provide convenient information in a quick and appropriate way [15].

From the above, it can be corroborated that, in the context of the service company, the quality of customer service is essential, as well as guaranteeing the level of user satisfaction. In addition, this issue becomes more relevant in sectors such as telecommunications, insurance and customer service, where call centers play a fundamental role in becoming one of the main places of contact between the company and its customers. In these places, the relationship takes place in a non-face-to-face manner and depends, to the greatest extent possible, on verbal expressiveness and the proper management of time [16]. Consequently, it is important to study the problem, its well-defined interior dynamics, especially in a district with a continuity of economic growth, which is considered a commercial district and where a certain potential for consumer interaction is concentrated. In such scenarios, negative experiences not only affect the customer's perception of the company, but also their well-being, by generating frustration and disorientation [17]. In this way, understanding the relationship between quality of service and satisfaction will strengthen organizational management, improve links with users and guide training strategies and technological adoption. Likewise, since these dynamics are not restricted to a single district, the findings can be replicated in other contexts of the country and even internationally.

Considering the impact that quality of service can have on customer satisfaction, and based on the problems described, the general objective is to determine the relationship between quality of service and customer satisfaction in call center services in a district of Lima, Peru. To support this purpose, specific objectives are formulated aimed at analyzing the relationship between each of the dimensions of service quality, including reliability, responsiveness, safety and empathy, and the level of customer satisfaction in these services. Although it can be hypothesized that there is a significant relationship between the main variables, this dynamic is not yet sufficiently understood in the selected city or in the sector studied, so it is necessary to address the problem with a broad approach.

II. Study Background

There are multiple studies in different regions where different dynamics have been identified between service quality and customer satisfaction. In this sense, the work of Onofre and Márquez [18] studied how the elements associated with the quality of the service provided in the distribution of dairy products affect the perceptions of consumers who go to the points of sale, and for this they applied a quantitative design with surveys to 207 customers from different establishments. The results showed that more than 90% of the respondents considered both the product and the service received to be of high quality, and also saw that the quality of the service had a positive impact of 41.9% on customer satisfaction, while the Pearson coefficient showed a significant relationship between both variables at 0.60. which reiterates the relationship between the customer service experience and the general perception of the user.

Aguirre and Serrano [19] developed a study in supermarkets in order to understand how the quality-of-service influences customer satisfaction, for which they collected information from 392 participants through a quantitative design. When examining the data, they identified that the user's gender was significantly related to their level of satisfaction, reflecting that certain personal attribute can modify the perception of the service received. Likewise, the calculation of Spearman's correlation showed that the speed and willingness of the staff, a dimension associated with response capacity, maintained a positive link with the quality of the service, obtaining a coefficient of ($r = 0.705$; $p = 0.001$). This result demonstrates a statistically strong association between the two variables and highlights the role that timely care plays in the consumer experience.

In the study carried out by Cevallos [20], whose purpose was to explore how the quality of service influences the satisfaction of customers who frequent cafeterias located in airports, information was collected from 384 users through a quantitative design based on questionnaires. When analyzing the responses, it was observed that a large part of the participants expressed

dissatisfaction in several dimensions evaluated, especially with regard to the speed with which their requests were met and the empathetic treatment received by the staff. On the other hand, Pearson's correlation calculation showed a very strong and even statistically significant correlation link between service quality itself in the empathy and customer satisfaction dimension (r=0.928; p=0.001), which highlights the great importance of human interaction in this type of service.

Montero [21], in a study also based on user surveys, in the field of supermarkets had addressed the relationship between service quality and satisfaction in Tacna (Peru), based on a quantitative methodology; once the data were processed through the analysis of Spearman's correlation, a positive relationship of statistical significance (r = 0.747; p = 0.001) was found between both variables, that is, improvements in perceived quality can cause direct effects on the consumer experience. The author concluded with a strong service-satisfaction quality ratio and the need to strengthen service processes to improve the consumer's valuation and experience.

In Chiclayo, Hernández [22] carried out research whose objective was to explain the way in which service quality and customer satisfaction are articulated in the context of supermarkets. To do this, he resorted to a quantitative style and used a questionnaire applied to the 64 participants in the research. When processing the observed data, Pearson's coefficient pointed to a positive and significant relationship between the reliability of the service and the degree of satisfaction expressed by users (r=0.770; p=0.001). The most curious thing about the study was that all respondents reported being very satisfied, something that happened rarely and that suggests the presence of other elements, not explicitly considered that could be reinforcing this favorable perception of the consumer.

Masias [23] conducted research in the city of Cusco to find out how service quality is related to customer satisfaction within a clothing and footwear retail company. It opted for a quantitative approach and obtained the information through a survey of 369 users. The statistical analysis, based on Spearman's correlation, revealed a positive and significant association between both variables (r=0.588; p=0.000). In addition, when evaluating the dimensions of service quality, it was identified that safety presented an equally significant correlation with customer satisfaction (r=0.590), which underlines the determining role that the feeling of trust and security has in the evaluation that consumers make of the service received.

In research carried out by Alcántara [24] in a shopping mall in Lima, he wanted to determine how the quality of service is related to people's satisfaction. To this end, a quantitative design was used that was based on using surveys given directly to customers. In the processing of the information, the author found that the two variables were particularly strongly related, given the Spearman coefficient of r=0.907 and a confidence level of p=0.000. This result shows that when the customer perceives the service executed in the best of ways and consistent with what they expected, then the satisfaction of this person increases markedly, which highlights the strong relationship between the customer service experience and the final valuation as customers.

III. Materials and Methods

A. Type and Design

Considering the purposes of the research and the way in which the variables were addressed, the study is framed within the non-experimental approach, since the behavior of the analyzed phenomena is not intervened or altered, but their manifestation in the natural environment is observed [25]. To obtain accurate and verifiable results, a quantitative approach was chosen, which allows the collection of numerical information and processing it through statistical procedures in order to identify trends, variations, and possible links between the variables evaluated [26]. In accordance with this methodological choice, a cross-sectional correlational design was used, suitable for examining the relationship between variables at a specific time and under controlled observation conditions. This type of design provides a solid basis for analysis and, in addition, makes it easier for future research to reproduce the methodology or use it as a framework to deepen related studies [27].

B. Population, Sample, and Sampling

The population was made up of customers who interacted with the call center located in the district of Los Olivos, Lima, during the year 2024. This group included users who used the service during that period and who, in addition, met the criteria of residing in the district and having had a direct experience with the call center [28]. The delimitation of this population allowed the analysis to be focused on a specific set that is relevant to the objectives of evaluating service quality and customer satisfaction [29]. According to the last census of the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics (INEI) carried out in 2017, the population of the district amounted to 343,878 inhabitants. Based on this data, the study adopts this figure as a population reference, following the parameters established by the INEI for the demographic and statistical characterization of the district [30].

As for the sample, it is ensured that it allows valid conclusions to be drawn that are applicable to the total set [31]. To find the sample, the following formula was considered:

$$n = \frac{N * Z^2 * p * q}{e^2 * (N-1) + Z^2 * p * q} \quad (1)$$

Where:

- N = 343,878 (population)
- Z = 1.96 (95% confidence)
- p = 0.5 (expected success rate)
- q = 0.5 (1 – p)
- e = 0.05 (standard error)

Therefore, a representative sample of 384 inhabitants of the Los Olivos district was established to ensure reliability.

The research presented in this paper used Simple Random Probabilistic Sampling (MAS), which was the most appropriate

since it grants each of the elements that make up the population the same rights to be selected when forming a sample. This technique, widely known in research, is simple to execute and ensures the selection process randomly, a fact that facilitates the obtaining of representative and coherent samples with all the parameters of the population on which the research is focused [32].

C. Variables

- Quality of service
  - Conceptual definition: It is defined based on the expectation that the customer places on it, and the performance that the company itself gives them. In this sense, an organization is said to provide a good service when it can meet the needs of users as it wants and, at the same time, sustains its ability to compete in the sector [33].
  - Operational definition: It is the result of the interaction between the attention given during a service and how it adjusts the customer's expectations.
- Customer satisfaction
  - Conceptual definition: It is understood as the customer's response achieved, a level that is considered as the feeling of satisfaction generated by the pleasant experience, by the positive emotional response of this product or service experience; and this satisfaction becomes the level of satisfaction that the customer will achieve in their future senses with the organization and with its continuity of use [34].
  - Operational definition: It is the response expressed by the customer when their expectations have been met in the experience of valuing the acquisition of a good or service.

D. Technique and Instrument

1) Technique: This section of the document explains the procedure used to obtain the data that answered the questions that guided the development of this study, and at the same time, to contrast the hypothesis formulated. To this end, it was decided to use the survey as the main instrument for obtaining information, since this technique could be used to obtain information directly from the people who participated, in addition to organizing this information in a systematic way. The application of this data collection technique was the axis of the entire collection process that was directed towards the population traced, but it also allowed the collection of explicit evidence, adequate to counteract the analysis of the variables that were taken into account in the research [35].

2) Instruments: The questionnaire, which is understood as a research instrument, allows the measurement of the variables that have been described in the theoretical framework, as well as collecting the information needed to be able to answer the questions from which it is based and, little by little, to meet the objectives of the study that is carried out [11]. Therefore, it was decided to apply two questionnaires so that the first evaluated the quality of the service and the second measured customer satisfaction. For both questionnaires, the well-known Likert scale was applied, a psychometric technique that allows the evaluation of the intensity with which the participants carry out attitudes or perceptions in the face of a set of statements or statements [36]. In this case, each item consisted of a statement, before which the respondents had to express their degree of agreement or disagreement, through the application of a scale that varied from 1 to 5 points.

The validation of an instrument requires the participation of people with the appropriate qualifications, who are experts in the subject to be evaluated and have experience in the development of measurement instruments [37]. Under this criterion, the study requested the participation of three professionals with solid training in administrative systems and customer satisfaction, all of them with a master's degree. The experts reviewed each item and made their judgments by applying Aiken's V coefficient, obtaining a value of 0.967, an indicator that confirms the relevance and adequacy of the questionnaire to measure the variables of service quality and customer satisfaction in a valid and consistent manner.

On the other hand, the reliability of an instrument refers to its ability to produce uniform and stable results whenever it is applied under comparable conditions. Within this approach, a Cronbach's alpha value equal to or greater than 0.7 is recognized as adequate [38]. Based on this parameter, this coefficient was calculated using the corresponding formula, in order to determine the internal consistency of the instrument.

$$a = \frac{k}{k-1}\left(1 - \frac{\sum V_i}{V_t}\right) \quad (2)$$

Where:

- a = Cronbach's alpha.
- k = Number of items.
- Vi = Variance of each item.
- Vt = Total Variance.

Through this, a reliability of 0.924 for quality of service and 0.903 for customer satisfaction is calculated, coefficients that attribute excellent reliability to both instruments.

A. Procedure

1) Previous coordination: In this phase of the investigation, a meeting was arranged with the legal representative of the selected call center services company and with other managers of the headquarters located in the district of Los Olivos, Lima. During the conversation, the objectives of the study, the planned schedule and the usefulness they could obtain by objectively knowing the state of the quality of the service and the satisfaction of its users were presented. This exposure allowed the company to grant authorization to develop the study within its facilities. Once the permit was granted, the human resources area coordinated with the auxiliary staff of the call center to access the necessary information to locate and contact the defined sample.

2) Data collection: The researchers reviewed the records provided about the company's customers and, through the selected sampling, proceeded to contact the 384 randomly chosen users. During each call, the purpose of the study was explained and the reason for the contact was clearly presented, using interactive techniques to motivate participation. Likewise, each client was asked for verbal confirmation of their decision to participate voluntarily. Next, it was indicated that the questionnaire previously prepared in Google Forms would be sent immediately through the social network WhatsApp. In order to achieve a good completion and resolve any doubts that may arise, telephone communication was maintained with each of the participants until the completion of the online form was completed. This article was applied to all the customers selected in the contact, estimating a time of ten minutes in this contact.

3) Ethical considerations: The ethical dimension is a fundamental aspect of all research involving people, since it ensures respect, protection and responsible treatment of the participating subjects. Therefore, to endorse strict ethical compliance, this study was subscribed to a meticulous analysis carried out by the Ethics Committee of the University of Sciences and Humanities, obtaining its respective approval through Act No. 024-2025.

In addition to this, in full guarantee of good faith and transparency, the participants were clearly informed of the reason for the survey and the treatment to be given to their data. In turn, to guarantee an ethical process, informed consent was incorporated before the application of the questionnaires so that each of the participants could know their role in the research and the way in which the information provided would be treated. With this, the study reaffirms its adherence to the responsible and confidential use of the data obtained through it.

The data were treated with the strictest confidentiality, safeguarding the privacy, anonymity and security of all the subjects participating in the study. In addition to this, to guarantee the reliability of the information, no records of any kind were altered or manipulated, but the results obtained reflect in a reliable way the reality analyzed in the research.

B. Data Analysis

Once the data collection was concluded, the information provided by the virtual form continued to be organized. This process was carried out in Microsoft Excel; There, the data was cleaned, as well as the coding of these data to facilitate the subsequent classification, which was carried out according to the variables, as well as their dimensions. Finally, the matrix was exported to the IBM SPSS version 30 software, in order to be able to carry out the corresponding statistical analysis, which would be carried out in two defined stages.

In order to carry out the information processing, a descriptive analysis was carried out based on tables and graphs that allowed to account for the sociodemographic characteristics of the subjects in the sample and with respect to the values observed for the variables of service quality and customer satisfaction. Subsequently, since the study aimed to meet the correlational objectives, an inferential analysis was carried out, starting with the verification of the normality of the data using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, using the significance level of 0.05 as a reference criterion. The results showed a uniform p of 0.000 (< 0.05) for both the main variables and for each of their dimensions, which showed that the distribution was not normal. Given this, the use of non-parametric tests was used, choosing Spearman's Rho coefficient to establish the correlations. In this test, values close to one indicate a stronger relationship between the variables; In addition, positive correlations show a direct association, while negative correlations indicate an inverse relationship between the analyzed constructs [39].

IV. Results

A. Descriptive Analysis

Table I shows that among the customers of the Call Center company, the majority correspond to the female sex, since this sex is composed of 262 (68.2%) of the sample, while the male sex was composed of 122 (31.8%) customers.

TABLE I. Gender of Call Center Company Customers

		Frequency	%
Sex	Female	262	68,2
	Male	122	31,8
Total		384	100,0

Fig. 1 shows the quality of service among the customers of the Call Center services, in this way it can be detected that most of the customers reported being very much in agreement with the quality of service provided, since those who expressed this were 164 (42.7%) customers, while only 15 (3.9%) customers stated that they strongly disagreed with the quality of service of the company.

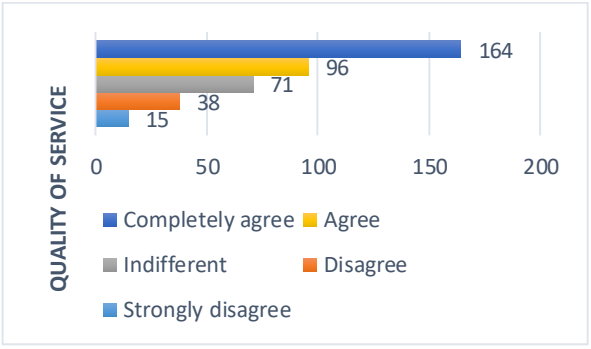

Fig. 1. Quality of service among call center service customers.

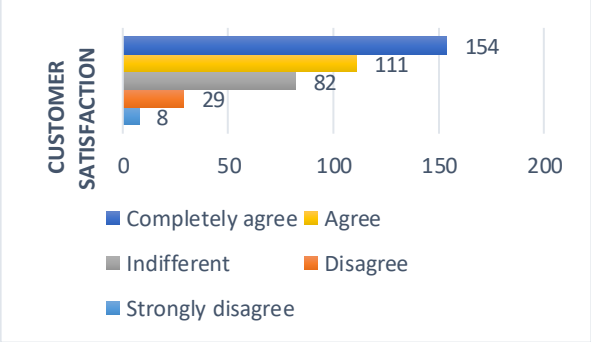

Fig. 2. Customer satisfaction among customers of call center services.

Fig. 2 shows customer satisfaction among the customers of Call Center services, in this sense it can be observed that most of them reported being in great agreement with the high customer satisfaction provided by the company, since 154 (40.1%) customers responded in this way, while only 8 (2.1%) of the customers reported being in total disagreement with the satisfaction of the customer received.

A. Correlational Analysis

Table II shows the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction in call center services, where a positive association of great magnitude can be seen. Spearman's Rho coefficient reached a value of 0.901, with a significance level <0.001 (<0.05), which shows a very strong correlation between both variables. In practical terms, this result indicates that, as the quality of the service perceived by users increases, their satisfaction with the evaluated company also increases significantly.

Table III shows the correlation between the reliability dimension and customer satisfaction in call center services. The results show us a positive and large relationship that can be observed in a Spearman's rho coefficient of 0.850 and a significance level <0.001 ($p<0.05$), which indicates that, to the extent that the company increases the reliability of its processes, the fulfillment of what was promised, the accuracy of information and the coherence of care, user satisfaction tends to increase in direct line.

Table IV illustrates how responsiveness and customer satisfaction are related in call center services, showing a positive correlation of medium magnitude. The analysis carried out with Spearman's Rho coefficient gave a value of 0.618, with a significance <0.001 (<0.05), which confirms that there is a statistically significant association between both variables. In simpler terms, this suggests that, as the company improves the speed and willingness to respond to user requests, the perception of satisfaction within the organization also increases.

TABLE II. CORRELATION BETWEEN SERVICE QUALITY AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN CALL CENTER SERVICES

			Quality of service	Customer satisfaction
Spearman's Rho	**Quality of service**	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	0.901
		Sig. (bilateral)	.	<0.001
		N	384	384
	Customer satisfaction	Correlation Coefficient	0.901	1.000
		Sig. (bilateral)	<0.001	.
		N	384	384

TABLE III. CORRELATION BETWEEN THE RELIABILITY DIMENSION AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN CALL CENTER SERVICES

			Reliability	Customer satisfaction
Spearman's Rho	**Reliability**	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	0.850
		Sig. (bilateral)	.	<0.001
		N	384	384
	Customer satisfaction	Correlation Coefficient	0.850	1.000
		Sig. (bilateral)	<0.001	.
		N	384	384

TABLE IV. CORRELATION BETWEEN RESPONSIVENESS AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN CALL CENTER SERVICES

			Responsiveness	Customer satisfaction
Spearman's Rho	**Responsiveness**	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	0.618
		Sig. (bilateral)	.	<0.001
		N	384	384
	Customer satisfaction	Correlation Coefficient	0.618	1.000
		Sig. (bilateral)	<0.001	.
		N	384	384

TABLE V. CORRELATION BETWEEN THE SECURITY DIMENSION AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN CALL CENTER SERVICES

			Safety	Customer satisfaction
Spearman's Rho	**Safety**	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	0.473
		Sig. (bilateral)	.	<0.001
		N	384	384
	Customer satisfaction	Correlation Coefficient	0.473	1.000
		Sig. (bilateral)	<0.001	.
		N	384	384

TABLE VI. CORRELATION BETWEEN THE EMPATHY DIMENSION AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN CALL CENTER SERVICES

			Empathy	Customer satisfaction
Spearman's Rho	Empathy	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	0,587
		Sig. (bilateral)	.	<0.001
		N	384	384
	Customer satisfaction	Correlation Coefficient	0,587	1.000
		Sig. (bilateral)	<0.001	.
		N	384	384

Table V shows the relationship between the dimension of service security and customer satisfaction, since there is a positive, although weak, correlation between call center services. Thus, Spearman's Rho coefficient reached a value of 0.473 and a significance level <0.001 (<0.05), which shows how increases in the perception of security (trust, clarity of information, data protection) have a direct, albeit moderate, impact on the level of satisfaction that users express.

Table VI shows the relationship between the empathy dimension and customer satisfaction in call center services, where a positive correlation of medium magnitude was identified. Spearman's Rho coefficient reached a value of 0.587, with a significance level <0.001 (<0.05), which confirms a statistically relevant association between both variables. This result suggests that, when staff demonstrate a greater ability to understand the user, listen actively and offer more human attention, the perception of satisfaction on the part of customers tends to increase proportionally.

V. DISCUSSION

Regarding the general objective, the hypothesis initially proposed, which indicated the existence of a significant correlation between service quality and customer satisfaction in call center services in a district of Lima, Peru ($r=0.907$; $p<0.001$) was confirmed. In addition, this correlation was identified as very strong, which solidly reinforces the relationship between both variables. This finding coincides with what was reported by Alcántara [24], who obtained a similar correlation coefficient in his study also carried out in Lima. Although the customers analyzed belong to different sectors, the similarity between the results could be explained by the shared sociodemographic context, given that both studies were developed in the capital, where users can present comparable characteristics and expectations. However, the correlation found in this research is much higher than that indicated by Montero [21] or Onofre and Márquez [18], who, when finding coefficients lower than those found by us, had to take into account what occurs in face-to-face contact with the customer, which adds factors to monitor in addition to the quality of the service. than the one assumed by the client. These could be waiting, the number of clients left seated in the clinical center room, and the material conditions of the waiting room, among others.

In the case of specific objectives, positive and significant correlations were tested between the dimensions of service quality and customer satisfaction. Among the correlations found, the one with the greatest dimension was that of reliability and customer satisfaction, since it is the one with the greatest strength ($r=0.850$; $p<0.001$). This coincides with what Hernández [24] found, who also identified an important correlation between these variables. This gives rise to interpreting reliability as the most important factor in the perception of service quality, since customers associate it with diligent, systematic and respectful attention from the first contact. On the other hand, a positive relationship was also found between the responsiveness of the service and customer satisfaction, with the correlation being of medium size ($r=0.618$; $p<0.001$), which may be decisive in decision-making to improve the quality of the service. This result is consistent with what was found by Aguirre and Serrano [19], a coincidence that could be explained by the similarity in the methodological approach and in the sample size of both studies. Likewise, these authors evidenced the influence of gender on customer satisfaction, which suggests the need to delve into how sociodemographic characteristics can affect the variables analyzed.

On the other hand, a positive, although weak, correlation was identified between safety and customer satisfaction ($r=0.473$; $p<0.001$), a result that differs from that reported by Masias [23], who found a relationship of medium magnitude between these variables. This discrepancy could be explained by the context of this author's study, developed in a province of the Sierra natural region of Peru, where the perception of security in service could have a greater weight in customer satisfaction. However, other factors associated with the environment or type of service may also play a role. Finally, a positive and medium-level correlation was found between empathy and customer satisfaction ($r=0.587$; $p<0.001$). This finding differs from that found by Cevallos [20], who obtained a very strong correlation between both variables. This difference could be due to the area analyzed, since their study was carried out in coffee shops, a direct consumption service in which empathy can more closely and immediately influence the customer experience. In contrast, call center services may involve other elements that modulate satisfaction beyond empathy.

In addition, although the objectives set were met, the study faced some limitations. One of the main ones was related to access to the call center services company, since it handled personal and contact information of its customers, which had to be protected without the possibility of disclosure. At first, research was perceived as a risk for this purpose; however, this difficulty was overcome by the execution of all the procedures required to authorize access, especially those related to the ethical aspects that guaranteed the non-maleficence of the study and its results. Likewise, contact with some customers was not received favorably at the beginning, as several interpreted the call as part of a sale. This situation was addressed through a pre-developed presentation strategy, which made it possible to clearly explain the purpose of the study and persuade users to participate voluntarily. Additionally, assertive communication and empathy techniques were used to promote an effective and

respectful dialogue, which facilitated a greater willingness on the part of the participants. Finally, because participants were selected using non-probability sampling, the results are subject to potential bias. A clear example of this is the gender imbalance, which may not adequately represent the target population. Similarly, variations in response times among participants may have introduced bias. These factors should be considered in future research.

VI. Conclusion

In conclusion, the existence of a positive, very strong and significant correlation between service quality and customer satisfaction in call center services in a district of Lima, Peru, an area little explored both nationally and locally, was demonstrated. This finding contributes to filling a gap in knowledge regarding the dynamics between both variables. The findings suggest that the quality of the service is not only an operating condition that call centers should meet, but that it is very directly related to the degree of user satisfaction and that this can be good for the company, since satisfied users tend to repeat the use of the service. However, it is necessary to verify other variables that may affect existing differences in the quality of service; variables related to the organization, the type of interaction or the number of resources available. In the same way, individual variables such as age or sex, in addition to those related to the context, could intervene in customer satisfaction.

In the same way, reliability was shown to be the dimension that had the most robust relationship with customer satisfaction, and this statement invites us to reflect on why providing the user with truthful information and minimizing errors in call center services can be decisive in the manifestation of user satisfaction. In this sense, the effectiveness of communication can be considered as a decisive element in the service process, so it can be very good for call centers and, in general, service companies to reinforce the training of their employees, especially those who are in contact with customers. enhancing effective, assertive and humanized communication skills. Likewise, it is important that the information related to the products, goods or services that are presented is truthful and mentions both the pros and cons; Misrepresenting or presenting erroneous information not only goes against the principles of business ethics, but can lead to an increase in dissatisfaction or loss of customer trust, and this would have an impact on a decrease in sales.

Finally, this work establishes a new line of research since it is dealing with a field of study in which immense attention is being invested and which is becoming increasingly important: the call center service in a city where commercial activity is very intense and in which a continuous offer of services is made. In this sense, future research is invited to focus on delving into these and other variables in similar contexts and on the analysis of other factors that may influence the quality of service and the satisfaction of the end customer. Given that both this study and other analyzed research show a significant correlation between service quality and customer satisfaction, future focus should be on exploring specific relationships between these variables and factors associated with their development, such as frequency of use and socioeconomic level, among others. Expanding these perspectives can enrich our understanding of the sector's complexity and improve evidence-based decision-making.

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Deep Learning for Endometrium Segmentation in Transvaginal Ultrasound: A Systematic Review Towards Receptivity Assessment

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***Abstract*—Deep learning (DL) has become a transformative approach in medical image analysis, offering superior accuracy and automation in image segmentation tasks. In reproductive imaging, transvaginal ultrasound (TVUS) serves as a crucial modality for evaluating the endometrial condition, which plays a critical role in assessing ovarian health. Although many studies have applied deep learning to the segmentation of pathological endometrial conditions, research focusing on non-pathological endometrium segmentation remains critically limited. This study presents a comprehensive review of deep learning methods for endometrium segmentation in TVUS, with a focus on non-pathological conditions, including endometrial thickness measurement, morphology analysis, and endometrium receptivity assessment. Following PRISMA guidelines, research articles published between 2015 and 2025 were identified from major scientific databases. The selected studies were analyzed in terms of image processing methods, deep learning architectures, and performance metrics, such as Dice coefficient, Jaccard index, precision, recall, and Hausdorff distance. Although foundational architectures, such as U-Net and its variants, achieve impressive Dice coefficients (up to 0.977), the results often rely on small and single-center datasets, proving limited generalizability across imaging settings. Recent advancements demonstrate the efficacy of hybrid architectures, such as the Deep Learned Snake algorithm and Transformer-based models like SAIM, in optimizing segmentation precision within noisy transvaginal ultrasound images. This review highlights the lack of attention to non-pathological endometrium segmentation and guides future research directions in self-supervised learning, transformer-based architectures, and interpretable deep learning to achieve robust and clinically applicable models for enhancing endometrium receptivity assessment and supporting ovarian health in assisted reproduction technology.**

***Keywords*—Endometrium segmentation; deep learning; image segmentation; image processing; endometrium receptivity assessment; ovarian health**

I. Introduction

Fertility is a crucial aspect of reproductive health, with individuals seeking medical assistance to conceive. Due to this, in vitro fertilization (IVF) has emerged as one of the most effective assisted reproductive technologies (ART). Research showed that the success rate of IVF remains below optimal, due to multiple limiting factors such as embryo quality and endometrial receptivity [1]. Transvaginal ultrasound (TVUS) is the primary imaging modality in reproductive medicine to measure endometrial thickness and structure because of its real-time, non-invasive nature, cost-effectiveness, and portable data management [2].

In the context of IVF, accurate segmentation of the endometrium in TVUS images is essential for reliable measurement of endometrial thickness, which is a key biomarker for predicting endometrial receptivity and IVF outcomes [3], [4], [5]. Clinicians often rely on TVUS to measure endometrial thickness and detect abnormalities that may impact implantation. However, manual segmentation of the endometrium thickness from ultrasound images is highly subjective, time-consuming, and prone to inter-observer variability. This variability can affect clinical decision-making and IVF outcomes. Therefore, there is a growing need for automated and accurate segmentation of ultrasound images to assist in clinical decision-making [6].

Current efforts towards automation are primarily focused on automating pathological endometrial conditions, such as cancers and endometriosis. Meanwhile, the assessment of endometrial receptivity in healthy women undergoing IVF remains largely overlooked [7]. This disparity highlights a critical research gap in the field. Although accurate endometrium segmentation for pathological diagnosis is essential, it is equally vital to evaluate endometrial receptivity to improve IVF success [8], [9].

Deep learning models have demonstrated remarkable abilities in tackling a diverse array of medical imaging tasks, spanning classification, detection, segmentation, and registration [6], [10]. While deep learning has shown remarkable success in detecting endometrial pathology, current models largely neglect the detailed analysis for assessing healthy endometrium receptivity. Moreover, the limited generalizability across TVUS devices and protocols is due to

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small, single-center datasets lacking in diversity in acquisition settings [11].

Other than that, existing models predominantly focus on anatomical features, such as thickness, while overlooking functional biomarkers that correlate with implantation potential [12]. These challenges escalated because researchers haven't agreed on the best deep learning model for endometrium segmentation and a standard method to assess these tools in real-time clinical use. Although experimental studies report that segmentation accuracy meets the required clinical standard, the results have not been translated into clinical application. The gap between research achievements and practical implementation highlights the need for comprehensive solutions that address both technical and clinical requirements for endometrial receptivity assessment.

Therefore, to systematically evaluate these challenges and opportunities, this literature review addresses the following central research question: How can deep learning segmentation of TVUS images improve objective assessment of endometrial receptivity? To accurately address this question, there are four sub-questions:

- What are the predominant deep learning model architectures applied to TVUS endometrium segmentation?
- Which deep learning architecture achieves a high accuracy in endometrium segmentation?
- Which evaluation metrics best validate segmentation quality for clinical receptivity assessment?
- What technical and clinical gaps persist in translating these models to the ART workflow?

By addressing these questions through synthesized evidence, this study aims to establish methodological best practices while identifying priority areas for future research at the intersection of deep learning and reproductive medicine. Fig. 1 illustrates the central research question and sub-questions guiding the systematic review. The novelty of this review bridges the gap by focusing specifically on how deep learning can segment healthy endometrium for receptivity assessment, which is a clinical need often overlooked in prior reviews of gynecological imaging.

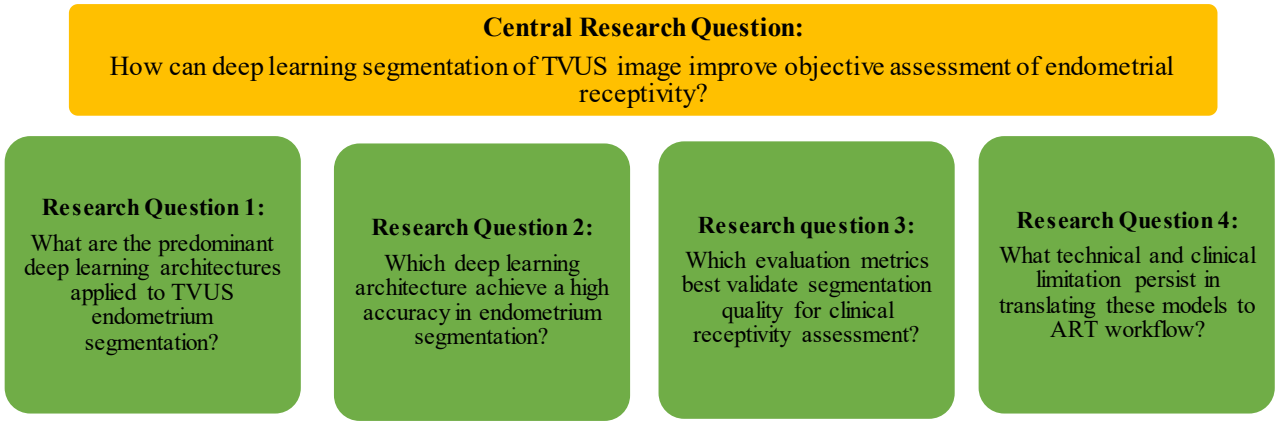

Fig. 1. Overview of the central research question, with research questions that guide this literature review.

This study is organized first to provide a brief overview of related reviews on deep learning for medical, specifically for women's reproductive health system. Later, this study provides brief information on endometrial receptivity and the role of transvaginal ultrasound for assessing and monitoring the endometrium. Next, the study will provide a brief explanation about a deep learning model for image segmentation in medical image analysis. The methodology section outlines the rigorous selection process used to identify relevant studies included in this review. Following this section, the results section synthesizes and presents the selected studies to address the defined research questions. In the future direction section, this study discusses the potential for integrations and clinical applications to improve receptivity assessment. Lastly, the conclusion summarized key insights, identified current gaps in the literature, and outlined actionable future research trajectories. The list of abbreviations used in this study is listed in Table I.

TABLE I. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Word	Abbreviations
ART	Assisted Reproductive Technology
CNN	Convolutional Neural Network
DDRNet	Deep Dual-Resolution Networks
DLS	Deep Learned Snake
ERA	Endometrium Receptivity Assessment
ET	Endometrial Thickness
ET	Endometrium Thickness
FCN	Fully Convolutional Network
IoU	Intersection of Union
IVF	In Vitro Fertilization
MAE	Mean Absolute Error
NLP	Natural Language Processing
ResNet	Residual Network
RSME	Root Square Mean Error
SAIM	Segment Anything with Inception Module
SAM	Segment Anything Module
TVUS	Transvaginal Ultrasound
U-Net	U-Shaped Convolutional Neural Network
VGG	Visual Geometry Group
WOI	Window of Implantation

II. Related Works

Several review articles have surveyed the application of deep learning in medical imaging, including specific analyses of gynecological structures. However, a critical examination of these reviews reveals a consistent focus on pathological diagnosis and has rarely addressed the segmentation of the non-pathological endometrium for receptivity assessment.

Broad systematic reviews in medical imaging, such as those by Litjens et al [10] and Gao et al.[13], highlighted that while deep learning has transformed tasks like classification and segmentation across various anatomical regions, gynecological applications are often overlooked by more extensively researched regions, like the brain, chest, and musculoskeletal system. Furthermore, comprehensive segmentation reviews primarily utilize pathological benchmarks to evaluate model performance. This leaves a significant gap in the synthesized knowledge regarding the automated mapping of healthy anatomical structures.

Within the gynecological field, the existing reviews focused on pathological conditions, particularly oncological diagnostics. For instance, Swarnkar et al. conducted a systematic review of deep learning for the diagnosis of cervical, ovarian, and endometrial malignancies. The review identified 50 relevant studies, including 16 focused specifically on endometrial cancer [14].

Similarly, Aparna and Libish concentrated on research specifically aimed at identifying abnormal and malignant cells in the uterus to discover endometrial cancer [15]. Meanwhile, Piedimonte focused on using machine learning to incorporate clinical and radiologic parameters to pre-operatively stratify high-risk cancer patients [16]. These reviews evaluate the efficacy of models in discriminating between benign and malignant masses or predicting the depth of myometrial invasion, which are tasks inherently different from delineating a healthy endometrial lining [13].

This pathological emphasis persists even in modality-specific reviews. Jiang synthesized the research on deep learning-based imaging for endometrial cancer management across ultrasound, MRI, and hysteroscopy, with a focus on tumor morphology and molecular typing [17]. Zhang evaluated models for classifying common endometrial lesions, including hyperplasia and polyps, but did not address the segmentation of baseline healthy structures [18]. In a comprehensive review, Meiburger highlighted that while automated localization and segmentation techniques represent a developing 'hot topic', gynecological applications remain largely focused on uterine fibroids or follicular monitoring for disease identification [19].

This technical focus on disease is particularly evident in the assessment of female reproductive function. Chen highlighted that while ultrasound is essential for evaluating ovarian reserve and endometrial receptivity (ER), systematic reviews specifically focusing on AI-aided ultrasound for these functional assessments are absent from the literature [7]. Current studies on reproductive segmentation focus primarily on ovarian follicles to diagnose conditions like polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS), while the foundational task of segmenting healthy endometrial remains overlooked.

Consequently, a clear gap exists between the technical literature and clinical application. In addition to cancer diagnosis studies from Swarnkar, a few more studies have explored deep learning segmentation for endometrial hyperplasia and endometriosis [20], [21], [22], [23], [24], [25], [26].

Fig. 2 presents a stacked bar chart visualizing the focus of endometrial image analysis research over the past decade. The data reveals a significant disparity. While deep learning applications are extensively utilized for diagnosing pathological conditions, their application in evaluating healthy endometrial receptivity (healthy endometrium) remains notably overlooked.

The absence of a dedicated synthesis for non-pathological endometrium segmentation represents a significant limitation in translating deep learning from research to clinical practice in assisted reproduction. Therefore, this review systematically addresses this gap by examining deep learning architectures, performance metrics, and clinical translation challenges specifically in the context of endometrial receptivity assessment, thereby providing a focused foundation for the methodological analysis that follows.

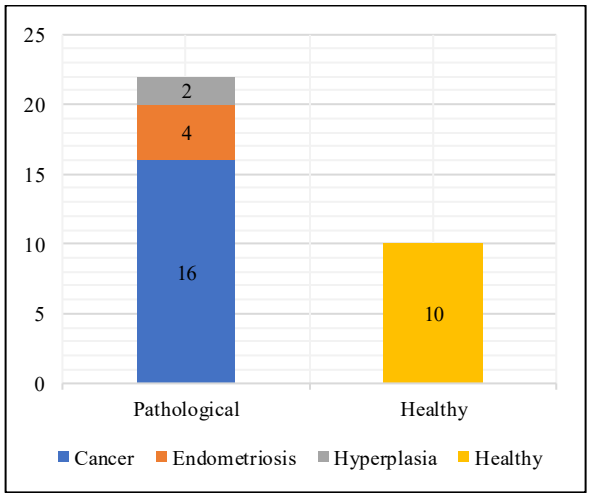

Fig. 2. Comparative analysis of research volume identifying the disparity between endometrial disease diagnosis and healthy assessment.

III. Endometrium Receptivity and Transvaginal Ultrasound

The endometrium, which forms in the uterine lining, is a dynamic tissue essential for female fertility and reproductive health. Throughout the menstrual cycle, the endometrial lining undergoes a series of dynamic changes. The changes include shedding during menstruation, followed by thickening during the proliferative phase and eventually transitioning into the secretory phase to prepare for potential embryo implantation. The condition when the endometrium is ready for embryo implantation is called endometrial receptivity (ET).

Endometrial receptivity refers to a specific period during the menstrual cycle when the endometrium is optimally prepared to facilitate embryo attachment and subsequent pregnancy [27], [28]. This specific period is known as the window of implantation (WOI). An accurate assessment of endometrial

thickness and structure is crucial during WOI for improving IVF outcomes [29]. This is because inadequate endometrial development could lead to implantation failure and pregnancy loss, even with high-quality embryos [30], [31].

During in-vitro fertilization (IVF) procedures, ET plays a crucial role in embryo implantation. A receptive endometrial environment is essential for successful implantation and a healthy pregnancy [12].

Endometrial receptivity occurs in a brief period known as the window of implantation (WOI). This period typically occurs between 20 and 24 days of a regular 28-day menstrual cycle. During this critical period, within 3-5 days, the endometrium undergoes changes in molecular and structural modifications to support embryo implantation [32]. Thus, proper timing of embryo transfer within this window is crucial to ensure the success of implantation. Failure synchronization, displaced implantation window, of embryo transfer during this period could lead to implantation failure. The displaced implantation window is one of the causes of recurring implantation failure [33]. The percentage of women with recurrent implantation failure showing displaced implantation windows ranges from 17.7% to 80% [32], [34], [35]. Therefore, the need for an accurate assessment of endometrial receptivity is evident, and transvaginal ultrasound (TVUS) serves as a reliable tool in evaluating the endometrial receptivity for implantation.

The key parameters evaluated through TVUS include endometrial thickness, endometrial pattern, and vascular characteristics [36], [37]. These parameters provide valuable insights into the endometrium's readiness for implantation [38], [39]. A general rule suggests that a thin endometrium reduces implantation success, while an overly thick endometrium may also lower pregnancy rates. However, the optimal endometrial thickness for successful implantation remains inconclusive within the medical community [40]. A study demonstrated that embryo implantation, clinical, and ongoing pregnancy rates were significantly higher in patients with an endometrial thickness greater than 9 mm compared with those less than 9 mm [41]. A few other studies have concluded that the critical threshold of 7-14 mm is the optimal endometrial thickness for embryo transfer [5], [28], [42], [43]. A systematic review found that implantation rates tend to decrease when endometrial thickness is less than 7 mm, whereas a thickness greater than 14 mm does not significantly impact pregnancy outcomes compared to a medium endometrial thickness of 7–14 mm [44]. These inconsistencies underscore the need for additional research to establish a definitive range of endometrial thickness for successful implantation.

In addition to endometrial thickness, the endometrial pattern is a critical parameter for determining endometrial receptivity. Endometrial pattern assessment involves evaluating the endometrial echo pattern using ultrasound imaging. Several studies have demonstrated that the triple-line endometrial pattern is associated with higher implantation and pregnancy rates [12], [44], [45], [46]. Conversely, when the functional layer is non-uniform (heterogeneous), and the central line echo is unclear, receptivity is low [12]. While the endometrial pattern is not entirely overlooked, it tends to receive less attention than other parameters, such as endometrial thickness, especially in studies involving deep learning-based image analysis.

Despite TVUS being the gold standard tool to help medical practitioners monitor and assess endometrial receptivity, it has some limitations. TVUS images often suffer from noise and low resolution, particularly due to speckle noise. Due to this reason, images need to go through a pre-processing step called despeckling of ultrasound images [47]. Additionally, manual interpretation of ultrasound scans is highly operator-dependent, leading to variations in endometrial thickness measurements [4]. Using TVUS imaging, medical practitioners would freeze the screen and measure the endometrial thickness while monitoring the endometrial pattern. This manual segmentation process is tedious, laborious, and time-consuming. In addition, manual segmentation is influenced by the experience and knowledge of medical practitioners. To improve accuracy and consistency, computer-aided segmentation models are crucial for precisely analyzing the endometrium in TVUS images and assessing key endometrial receptivity biomarkers, including thickness and pattern.

IV. Image Processing for Endometrium Segmentation

In 1995, Pierson and Adams concluded that the development of computer-aided image analysis was a significant achievement for improving clinical management of ovarian health [48]. This promise was particularly compelling for the challenging domain of TVUS, where manual segmentation of the endometrium is operator-dependent, tedious, and time-consuming. In the years since, researchers have been exploring and developing image processing techniques to automate this critical task. This is because image analysis is essential for diagnosing pathologies and planning treatments. Primarily, the image processing techniques rely on pixel-level intensity information, spatial relationships, and mathematical morphological operations to delineate anatomical structures. Researchers have categorized these fundamental techniques into several groups:

- Thresholding and region-based methods, which segment based on pixel intensity and spatial homogeneity;
- Edge and contour-based approaches, such as active contour, which delineate anatomical boundaries;
- Morphological operations, used to refine segmented structures, and
- Classical machine learning classifiers, which leverage hand-crafted features.

Together, these techniques laid the foundational toolkit for automated analysis, establishing the feasibility of computer-assisted analysis. These techniques dominated the field until deep learning became superior. While computationally efficient and interpretable, traditional methods face significant challenges, including sensitivity to initialization, manual parameter tuning requirements, limited generalization across imaging conditions, and difficulty handling the inherent noise and ambiguous boundaries characteristic of ultrasound images.

A. Thresholding

Thresholding techniques, while computationally efficient and straightforward, operate by classifying pixels into foreground and background based on a predefined intensity value [49], [50]. This technique is particularly useful for tasks like pre-segmentation or initial region of interest generation, but often requires further refinement due to noise inclusion and an inability to adapt to a variety of image qualities. For instance, segmenting follicles in ultrasound images frequently utilizes thresholding, but the method often deals with noise, thereby needing additional refinement to achieve acceptable accuracy [51]. To address these issues, various thresholding methods were developed, and for medical imaging applications, multi-level thresholding methods were developed to handle complex anatomical structures from medical imaging [52], [53], [54], [55], [56]. Nevertheless, their application to complex anatomical structures, such as the endometrium in TVUS images that are often affected by high noise, low resolution, and unclear boundaries, thresholding techniques remain inadequate for achieving robust and clinically reliable delineation [57], [58].

B. Region-Based Techniques

These techniques focus on grouping neighboring pixels with similar intensity or texture characteristics to overcome the limitation of edge detectors in a noisy environment. Techniques like region growing, for instance, initiate from a seed point and iteratively expand by incorporating neighboring pixels that meet specific homogeneity criteria to construct a comprehensive endometrial region [57]. However, this technique often requires manual seed-point initialization, making it less suitable for fully automated pipelines, especially given the inherent variability in ultrasound image quality and anatomical presentation [59]. Consequently, the reliance on manual seed-point selection introduces subjectivity and can lead to inconsistencies across different medical practitioners, highlighting the need for automated or semi-automated initialization strategies [60].

C. Edge and Contour-Based Techniques

Edge-based and contour-cased techniques have been widely explored for medical image segmentation due to their ability to delineate structural boundaries. Edge detection methods identify discontinuities in image intensity that correspond to tissue interfaces [61], [62], [63]. In contrast, contour-based methods, such as active contours, evolve deformable curves to conform to these boundaries under the influence of internal and external forces [64], [65], [66], [67], [68]. The active contour model, often called snakes, utilizes energy functional minimization to guide the contour towards desired boundaries. This approach offers improvements in adaptability and robustness for complex anatomical structures. However, these techniques require manual initialization and remain highly sensitive to blurred or weak edges and noise, particularly prevalent in ultrasound images, where variations in lesion morphology can further complicate accurate segmentation [19].

D. Morphological Operations

Morphological operations use structuring elements to refine segmented masks, remove small artifacts, and enforce shape constraints. Typically, morphological operation is used to improve defects that are recognized during segmentation [69]. Two basic morphology operations are dilation and erosion. Dilation expands the boundaries of the foreground objects, while erosion shrinks them. Often, the combination of these operations, such as opening and closing, can effectively smooth contours, fill small holes, and remove isolated pixels, thereby enhancing the quality of the endometrial segmentation [70]. Despite their utility in post-processing, morphological operations are primarily refinement tools and do not independently perform segmentation, often requiring other methods to produce an initial segmentation mask.

While these traditional segmentation techniques have laid the foundation for computer-aided image analysis for ovarian health, their performance varies depending on image quality and anatomical complexity. As imaging complexity increased and clinical demand for reliability grew, the limitations of these techniques became apparent. Table II provides a summary of each technique with its strengths and weaknesses.

TABLE II. SUMMARY OF TRADITIONAL SEGMENTATION METHODS

Techniques	Strengths	Weaknesses
Thresholding [49], [50]	• Simple to implement • Fast preprocessing step	• Fails with low contrast image • Sensitive to noise • Fixed threshold
Region-Based [71]	• Capture spatial continuity • Adapts to the region's shape	• Manual seed initialization • Leakage in noisy regions
Edge & Contour Based	• Precise boundary localization • Can handle complex shapes	• Requires a good edge contrast image • Manual initialization •
Morphology Operation [69], [70], [72]	• Capable of removing small artifacts • Capable to smooth and filling holes in the image	• Tendency to over-smooth fine structures in the image • Dependent on element size

The early attempts of automation in endometrium segmentation relied on basic algorithms, such as thresholding, active contours, and region-growing methods [6], [10]. Despite their usefulness, these approaches often struggle to address the fundamental challenges of ultrasound imaging, such as low contrast, speckle noise, and anatomical variability [58]. While these traditional methods provided the foundation, their limited robustness and generalizability eventually drove a shift toward more advanced solutions. Over the past decades, as this article was written, researchers have extensively explored and investigated the application of automated segmentation of ultrasound images, evolving into the application of deep learning-based approaches.

V. DEEP LEARNING MODELS FOR ENDOMETRIUM SEGMENTATION

In recent years, extensive literature reviews have been conducted on deep learning approaches to medical image analysis, highlighting methodologies, technical progress, and clinical translation limitations [10], [73], [74], [75], [76], [77]. These efforts have shown deep learning as a transformative paradigm, demonstrating superior performance in image

processing across diverse medical imaging modalities. Despite the various studies and reviews in deep learning for medical images, only a few studies have focused on deep learning segmentation of the endometrium in TVUS images for endometrium receptivity assessment (ERA). This highlights the need to explore alternative deep learning models for ERA to ensure repeatability and high segmentation accuracy in clinical applications. To address this issue, recent research has applied a range of deep learning architectures aiming to improve segmentation accuracy, robustness, and clinical applicability specifically for endometrium analysis.

A. Foundation: Convolutional Neural Network (CNN)

Convolutional Neural Network (CNN) is the baseline for deep learning in medical image analysis due to its ability to capture spatial features and patterns effectively [78], [79], [80]. These networks leverage convolutional layers to automatically learn hierarchical representations from raw image data, eliminating the need for manual feature identification and extraction. This ability is crucial in medical imaging for tasks such as identifying anatomical structures of the endometrium, where subtle textural and morphological cues are vital for accurate segmentation and subsequent analysis [81]. The strength of CNNs lies in their capacity to capture local spatial features, such as edges, textures, and patterns, through convolutional filters. In the context of endometrium segmentation, CNNs have shown potential in learning discriminative features from TVUS. However, a fundamental limitation of CNNs is their reliance on local context, which constrains their ability to model long-range dependencies and global context within an image [82]. Fig. 3 below shows the basic architecture of a convolutional neural network.

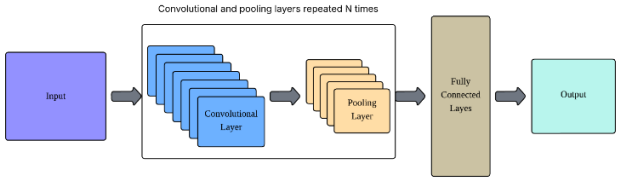

Fig. 3. Basic architecture of a convolutional neural network.

1) U-NET and its variant: Among CNN-based architectures, the U-Net architecture is the most prominent in medical image segmentation. This is due to its iconic encoder-decoder structure and skip connections. The architecture effectively combines multi-scale feature extraction with precise spatial localization [83].

From this fundamental design, numerous adaptations have emerged for medical image segmentation, in which annotated datasets are limited. In endometrium segmentation, U-Net-based architectures have been widely used due to their efficiency in learning from small TVUS datasets. Variants such as VGG-based U-Net [3], ResNet50-U-Net [84], and 3D U-Net [57] have been developed to enhance feature extraction and volumetric analysis. Fig. 4 is the architecture of the ResNet50-UNet model.

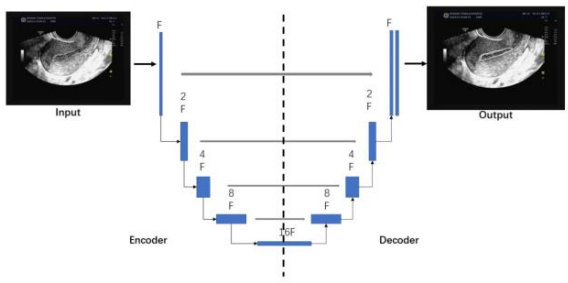

Fig. 4. Schematic diagram of the architecture ResNet50-UNet model from the study [79].

For instance, the VCG-based U-Net achieved a Dice score ranging from 0.83 to 0.9, with a mean absolute error of 1.23 mm and 1.38 mm across two datasets based on [3]. Liu et al. (2022) proposed a ResNet50-SegNet deep learning model for endometrial segmentation, achieving a Dice coefficient of 0.82 with thickness errors within ±2 mm. However, a major limitation of this method was its low segmentation accuracy for endometrial linings ≤3 mm, with an accuracy rate of only 55.3% [4]. In comparison to the previous architecture, Fig. 5 below shows the architecture of ResNet50-SegNet.

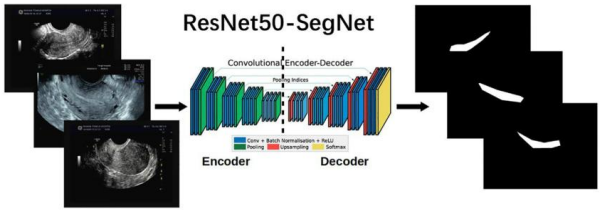

Fig. 5. ResNet50-SegNet architecture [4].

Meanwhile, the 3D U-Net has been successfully applied to volumetric TVUS data, capturing inter-slice contextual information, achieving a 0.91 Dice score with 94.20% of automatic thickness measurements falling within clinically accepted error margins [57]. These variants collectively demonstrate the adaptability and effectiveness of the U-Net models. Despite these achievements, these architectures are still facing challenges in capturing long-range dependencies and global contextual information.

B. Transformer-Based Application

In recent years, transformer-based architectures have gained attention in medical image segmentation due to their ability to overcome the key limitation of CNNs, modeling long-range dependencies and global contextual relationships. Originally, this architecture was introduced in natural language processing (NLP) [85]. Its self-attention mechanism allows the network to capture inter-pixel relationships across the entire image, building a holistic understanding of image structure [86]. This capability is particularly beneficial in medical imaging, where global context is often critical for accurate segmentation of complex anatomical structures like the endometrium [1]. Fig. 6 shows the transformer model overview.

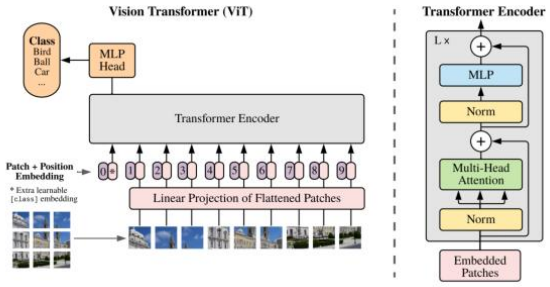

Fig. 6. Vision Transformer (ViT) overview [86].

C. Hybrid and Adversarial Architectures

To overcome the limitations of CNNs, researchers have developed hybrid and adversarial learning frameworks to enhance the segmentation performance. Hybrid models integrate the feature extraction capabilities with other computational approaches or architectural innovations. A prominent example is the Deep Learned Snake model proposed by Singhal [87], which incorporated an active contour model with a deep learning model for curve evolution. From this approach, Park et al. 2019 introduced a key-point discriminator that used endometrial boundary detections from an FCN to guide the active contour model and achieved a Dice score of 82.76%.[58]. These frameworks effectively mimic human experts' analysis, allowing the segmentation to learn more precise delineations. While these approaches demonstrated a significant enhancement in boundary detection, challenges persist in managing the architectural complexity and dependence on large annotated datasets for optimal performance.

D. Emergence Models and Foundational Architectures

The latest phase of advancement in endometrium segmentation research has witnessed the emergence of innovative architectures that emphasize generalizability, computational efficiency, and reduced reliance on large annotated datasets. Deep Dual-Resolution Networks (DDRNet) represent an approach employing parallel branches to efficiently process both high- and low-resolution features, while combining contextual and spatial information [60]. This design allows for a more nuanced understanding of complex endometrial morphology, combining fine-grained details with broader anatomical context.

Building on the evolution of foundation models, recent studies have explored adaptation of the segment anything model (SAM) for medical image segmentation. For example, Qiu introduced a segment anything with inception module (SAIM), which integrates inception-based encoders and point prompts to improve segmentation precision in the noisy ultrasound data [88]. The study utilizes an open-source SAM and introduces enhancements to the image encoder structure. Fig. 7 shows the SAIM architecture.

Another notable method, MultiStudentNet, leverages the weights of multiple models to facilitate feature sharing. This method employs multiple student models to integrate labeled and unlabeled data to improve reliability and model robustness [89]. Fig. 8 shows the framework for MultiStudentNet.

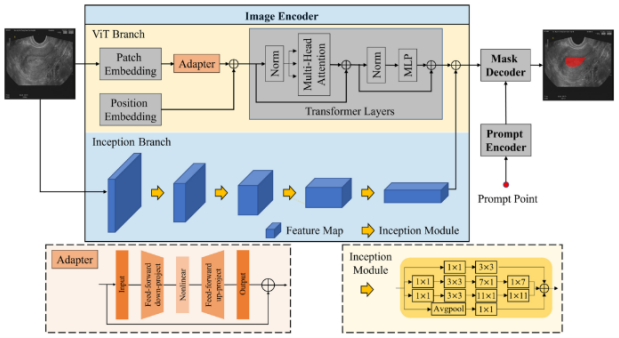

Fig. 7. SAIM architecture [88].

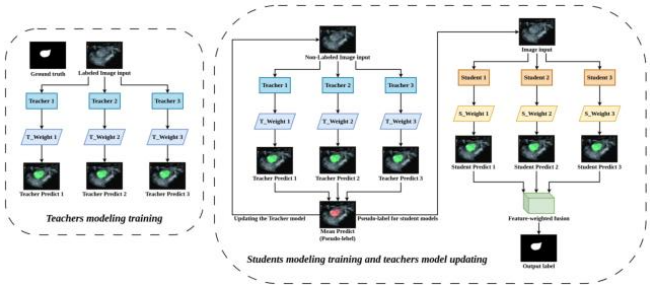

Fig. 8. MultiStudentNet architecture [89].

VI. Methodology

Following established methodological guidelines for a systematic literature review [90], this review was conducted in accordance with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis (86). The review process encompasses five key stages: 1) search strategy development, 2) study selection and screening, 3) data extraction, 4) quality assessment, and 5) narrative synthesis. Each of these stages is explained in the subsections.

A. Search Strategy and Information Resources

The literature search began in April 2025. This search employed Google Scholar as the primary search database to identify and extract relevant primary research studies. The primary database is complemented by manual cross-checking in IEEE Xplore, Semantic Scholar, Springer Link, and ScienceDirect to ensure coverage of the study. The search strategy for this study used a Boolean operator and a combination of keywords related to endometrium segmentation, deep learning, and transvaginal ultrasound. The Boolean query string was ("endometrium segment" OR "endometrial segmentation") AND ("deep learning") AND ("TVUS" OR "Transvaginal Ultrasound").

B. Eligibility Criteria

In the initial search, 453 papers were found in Google Scholar, 139 in Springer Link, 36 in Semantic Scholar, 24 in ScienceDirect, 4 in PubMed, and 3 in IEEE Xplore, totaling 659 papers. The inclusion and exclusion criteria for the paper selection in this review are as follows:

Inclusion Criteria:

- Paper published in English between 2015 and 2025.

- Application related to endometrium receptivity assessment, thickness measurement.
- Studies with mixed cohorts (pathological and healthy) were included if receptivity-related outcomes were reported.

Exclusion Criteria:

- Duplicate papers between the databases
- Paper published before 2015
- Inaccessible paper
- Non-English paper
- Studies focusing exclusively on pathological segmentation

The exclusion criteria narrowed down the papers to a total of 210 papers. Then, a total of 190 papers were discarded from the keywords, title, and abstract screening. After that, the exclusion criteria for non-pathological disease of segmentation were selected, and a total of 10 papers were analyzed. Fig. 9 below shows the simplified visual of the search methods conducted for the literature review based on the PRISMA guideline [91].

C. Data Extraction

Data extraction for this review was guided by the four research questions raised in the introduction. For each included study, relevant information was systematically extracted to address these questions. This structured approach ensured all extracted data directly supported the analytical aim of this review.

To address RQ1, the types of deep learning models, backbones, and any hybrid or custom modifications were documented and categorized. This included recording architectures such as U-Net variants, Transformers, and hybrid frameworks like SAIM to identify the most frequently employed architecture in TVUS endometrium segmentation.

For RQ2 and RQ3, quantitative performance metrics and evaluation approaches were extracted. Segmentation metrics and thickness-measurement errors were recorded to facilitate accuracy comparisons across deep learning models. All reported evaluation metrics and assessments were further examined for their alignment with clinical standards, such as the acceptance rate of thickness-measurement within +-2mm, to determine which metrics are regarded as gold-standard for receptivity assessment in ART.

Finally, to answer RQ4, author-reported limitations and clinical translation hindrances were recorded. This included documenting issues related to dataset size, single-center bias, model generalizability, and clinical-integration challenges. These insights were synthesized to identify the gaps and to guide future research directions in the translation of deep learning models into ART workflows.

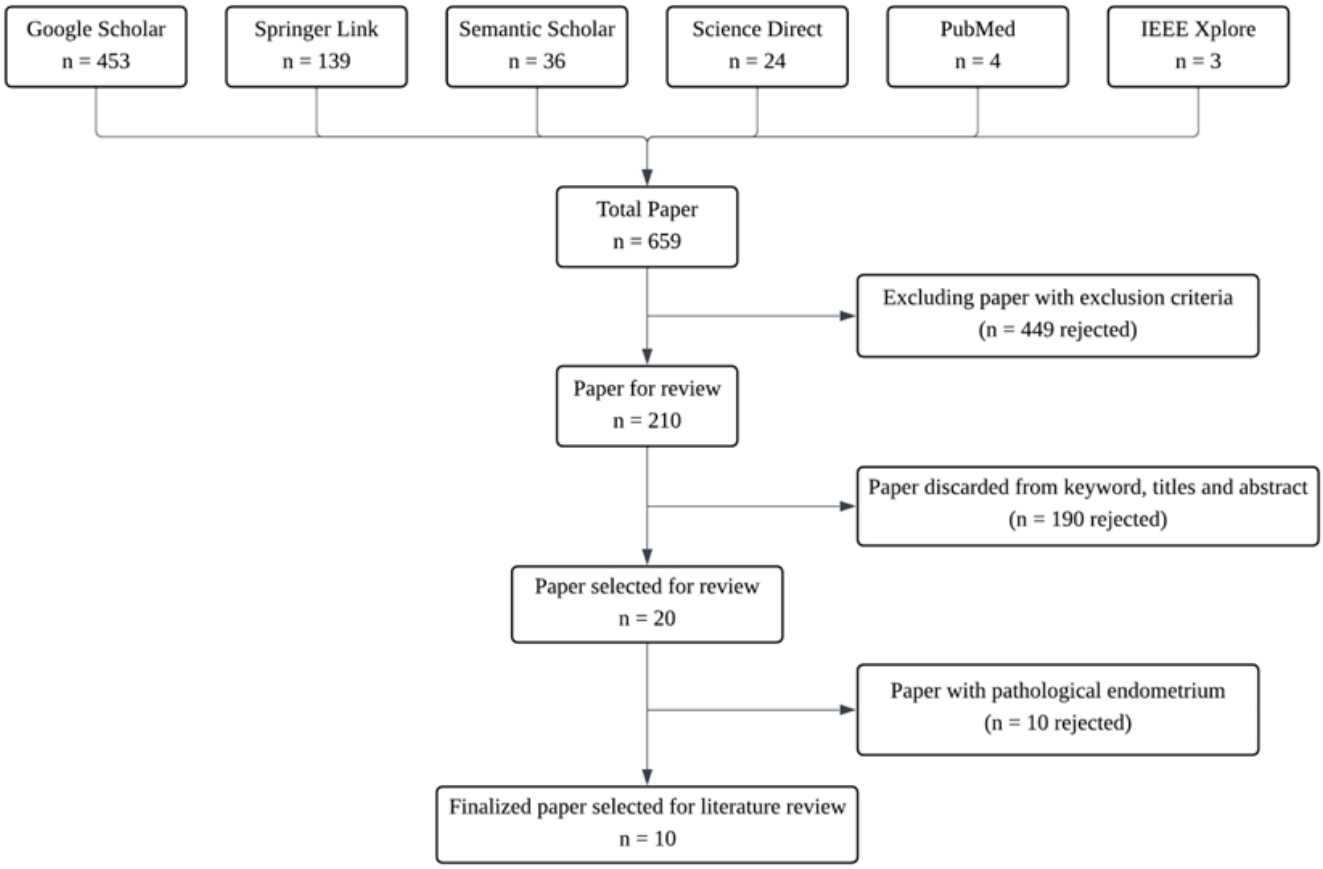

Fig. 9. PRISMA flow diagram of included studies.

VII. RESULTS

A. RQ1: Predominant Deep Learning Architectures for TVUS Endometrium Segmentation

Endometrium segmentation in medical imaging is a critical yet challenging task for quantitative diagnostic analysis. Based on the literature, the most common approaches for endometrial image segmentation have increasingly relied on deep learning (DL) techniques, particularly in Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) as the foundation architecture. This is due to the proven effectiveness of the models in medical image analysis [3]. Accordingly, researchers have adapted and modified core CNNs to develop various segmentation network architectures specifically aimed at delineating the boundaries of the endometrium lining.

Built upon CNN architectures, the U-Net architecture and its numerous variants are most frequently cited as the benchmark for this specific segmentation task. U-Net variants have been established as the backbone of segmentation methodologies [92], [93], [94]. The classical U-Net architecture has been widely adapted into diverse variants, such as the VGG-based U-Net, which utilizes the VGG16 network as its encoder for hierarchical feature extraction to enhance spatial representation [3]. In comparative evaluations, a pure U-Net model was tested for endometrium segmentation [57], [58], [84]. Furthermore, the use of ResNet-based U-Net and SegNet models shows the importance of deep residual networks, pre-trained on large-scale datasets such as ImageNet, in mitigating vanishing gradient problems and improving feature depth [4], [84], [95]. For volumetric analysis, the 3D U-Net extension is employed to process three-dimensional transvaginal ultrasound (3D TVUS) images, thereby capturing crucial inter-slice structural information [57].

Beyond U-Net, other general frameworks such as Deep Dual-Resolution Networks (DDRNet) and SegNet are also commonly utilized for this purpose. One comparative study evaluated six different models based on these architectures, specialized combinations such as ResNet50 U-Net, ResNet50 SegNet, U-Net mini, VGG SegNet, alongside pure U-Net and DDRNet. The result from this comparison found that DDRNets showed the best endometrium segmentation with a Dice score of 0.895 [84] using 1050 images. Each architecture, while built on CNNs, employs a different architecture to optimize performance for medical image segmentation.

Innovative approaches have also emerged through the development of hybrid variational models. The hybrid models combine data-driven and energy-based techniques. One notable example is the Deep Learned Snake (DLS) model proposed in 2019 [87]. In the research, the hybrid model integrates the robustness of a Fully Convolutional Network (FCN) with the mathematical rigor of a variational level-set method for curve propagation. In this framework, the FCN generates a deep-learned endometrium probability map that acts as a soft, adaptive shape into the level-set functional for curve propagation. This model combined the robustness of learned features with the interpretability of deformable models. The efficacy of this hybrid method is demonstrated by its performance, yielding approximately 30% improvement over standalone supervised learning methods and producing endometrial thickness measurements within a clinical tolerance of 2mm in 87% of cases.

Additionally, recent research explores adversarial learning frameworks to further refine segmentation precision. In 2019, Park et al. proposed a key-point discriminator, informed by anatomical landmarks and spatial features, to strategically guide the segmentation network towards more accurate boundary delineation in the presence of ultrasound artifacts [58]. The discriminator trained the segmentation network to predict accurate boundaries, to ensure robust segmentation for unclear edges and heterogeneous texture. This method achieved a Dice score of 82.67% and a Jaccard index of 70.46%.

More recently, the architectural evolution in endometrial segmentation is shifting into utilizing Transformers, which are uniquely capable of capturing long-range, global image context in comparison to pure CNNs. A leading example is the Segment Anything with Inception Module (SAIM) [88]. This method utilizes a dual-branch encoder that comprises of Vision Transformer (ViT) for global context and an Inception-based CNN for multi-scale feature extraction. This architecture is critically dependent on clinician-guided point prompts to isolate the endometrium. This approach achieved a segmentation result of Dice Score 76.31% and Intersection over Union of 63.71% using a single-point prompt. Furthermore, its performance improved with additional prompts, reaching a Dice score of 81.30% with five-point prompts [88].

While U-Net-based models form a common foundation, the formation of their variants shows that the U-Net model requires significant task-specific modifications. As the literature affirms, an effective solution must be customized to overcome specific limitations, especially in TVUS. Thus, the shift towards current and advanced hybrid systems, such as SAIM, shows that the most performed models are hybrid systems, which integrate multiple network architectures.

Table III synthesizes the architectural landscape and key characteristics of each model reviewed. The table illustrated the predominance of U-Net variants, while documenting the emergence of hybrid and transformer-based architectures. The domination of UNet variants is driven by three core factors: the ability to preserve critical boundaries, the capacity to capture global and local, and reliable performance on small datasets.

U-Net variants can preserve critical boundaries through skip connections that transfer high-resolution features from the encoder directly to the decoder. This mechanism endures that local spatial information, which typically lost during the down sampling process, is retained to facilitate precise localization of the endometrial lining. Consequently, the architecture effectively integrates spatial and contextual information across its symmetrical path to achieve accurate pixel-level predictions. This precision is vital for identifying the thin, echogenic line of endometrium, especially in cases where boundaries are blurred or highly irregular.

Furthermore, U-Net is celebrated for its reliable performance and robustness when trained on small datasets, a common limitation in clinical reproductive research. This is because medical datasets often consist of only a few hundred images and often are not shareable. U-Net's lightweight and

simple structure makes it inherently less prone to overfitting. These characteristics make U-Net particularly suited to the challenges of endometrium segmentation in TVUS images, where boundary clarity is low, anatomical information is essential, and annotated data are limited.

TABLE III. SUMMARY OF DEEP LEARNING ARCHITECTURES IN INCLUDED STUDIES

No	Study (Author, Year)	Architecture Family	Specific Model / Variant	Backbone / Key Components	Dataset Size	Key Architectural Notes
1	Hu et al., 2019 [3]	CNN-based (U-Net)	VGG-based U-Net	VGG16 encoder	73	Skip connections, encoder-decoder
2	Park et al., 2019 [58]	Hybrid	Key-point Discriminator	FCN + adversarial guidance	320	Adversarial learning for boundary refinement
3	Singhal et al., 2017 [87]	Hybrid	Deep Learned Snake	FCN + active contour	110	Combines DL with variational methods
4	Wang et al., 2022 [57]	CNN-based (U-Net)	3D U-Net	3D convolutional blocks	113	Volumetric segmentation
5	Liu et al., 2022 [4]	CNN-based	ResNet50-SegNet	ResNet50 encoder	1050	Encoder-decoder with residual connections
6	Liu et al., 2022 [84]	CNN-based (U-Net & SegNet)	U-Net SegNet	ResNet50, Vanilla CNN, Vanilla Mini, VGG 16, DDR-Net	840	U-Net with residual backbone
7	Qiu et al., 2024 [88]	Transformer-based	SAIM	ViT + Inception-CNN	180	Hybrid transformer-CNN with prompting
8	Peng et al., 2024 [89]	Advanced / Semi-supervised	MultiStudentNet	Ensemble of CNNs	215	Semi-supervised, multi-model
9	Ithani et al., 2024 [96]	CNN-based (U-Net)	Classic U-Net	Basic encoder-decoder	25	Small-scale feasibility study
10	Yan et al., 2024 [95]	CNN-based (U-Net)	Custom U-Net variant	Not specified	180	Clinical receptivity-focused

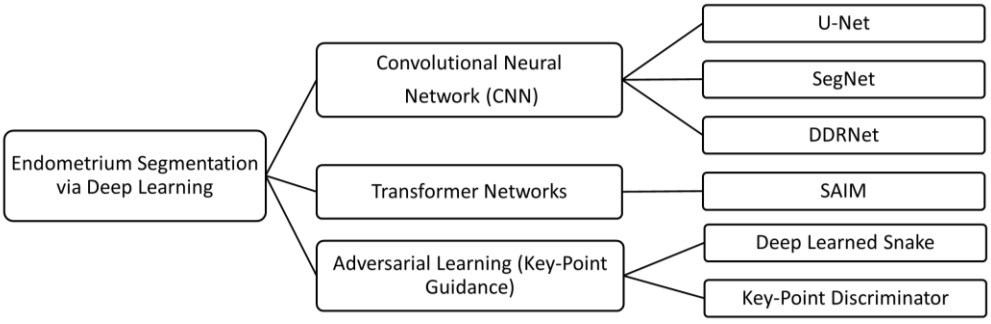

Fig. 10. Taxonomy of current deep learning architectures for healthy endometrium segmentation.

Fig. 10 shows the simplified taxonomy of the deep learning architecture models for endometrium segmentation, illustrating the evolution from CNN-based foundations towards hybrid and transformer-integrated architectures. The following section, which answers RQ2, examines whether this architectural prevalence correlates with superior segmentation accuracy or if emerging models offer a competitive advantage under specific clinical or dataset conditions.

B. RQ2: High Accuracy Deep Learning Architectures

Determining a singular superior method for endometrial segmentation is challenging because segmentation performance highly depends on various conditions, including dataset size, image quality, and evaluation metrics. Nevertheless, recent studies highlight several deep learning architectures that have demonstrated notably high accuracy, though these results must be interpreted considering dataset characteristics and clinical applicability.

For example, the foundational U-Net architecture achieved a remarkable Dice coefficient of 0.977 in one study. However, this result was achieved on a limited dataset of only 20 training and 5 test images [96]. This highlights an important point where simpler models like U-Net can perform well due to a small dataset available. Consequently, while this result is numerically high, its generalizability using larger and more diverse clinical datasets remains uncertain.

For volumetric analysis, the extension to 3D U-Net has proven significantly more effective than its 2D counterpart for processing three-dimensional transvaginal ultrasound (3D TVUS) images [57]. In a dedicated study, the 3D U-Net achieved a Dice coefficient of 90.83%, a metric value higher than the results obtained from 2D segmentation approaches on the same volumetric data. This performance [57] is attributed to the model's capacity to capture crucial inter-slice contextual information and spatial relationships within the full volume. Therefore, for applications requiring holistic anatomical assessment, 3D convolutional approaches represent a highly accurate solution.

Beyond standard supervised learning, semi-supervised frameworks such as Multi-StudentNet are designed to enhance accuracy by leveraging both labeled and unlabeled data. Thus, it reduces the heavy reliance on manual annotations. This architecture reported an overall Dice score of 0.81, with its performance further increasing to 92.33% for polyp cases and

90.20% for cancer cases [89]. This indicates a particular robustness in segmenting pathologically altered endometria, which often present more complex imaging characteristics. The model's design utilizes an ensemble of student models, which has effectively improved segmentation reliability and performance across varied clinical presentations.

Among architectures designed for efficient and contextual feature extraction, Deep Dual-Resolution Networks (DDRNets) have demonstrated leading performance in comparative analyses with an average Dice score of 0.895 [84]. This high accuracy is facilitated by its design of two parallel branches operating at different resolutions, which enables effective multi-scale information fusion. The architecture's efficiency also suggests strong potential for real-time semantic segmentation applications in clinical settings.

Other deep learning models have also achieved competitive results by using different design improvements. The VGG16-based U-Net, employed in an automated measurement pipeline, achieved a Dice score of 0.83, performing better at 0.853 in the proliferative phase compared to 0.796 in the secretory phase. Similarly, a key-point discriminator framework significantly improved results compared to the standard U-Net of 58.69%, achieving a Dice score of 82.67% [58]. Furthermore, the Segment Anything with Inception Module (SAIM) adaptation recorded a Dice score of 76.31% and increased to 81.30% with multiple point prompts [88]. The comparative performance of the reviewed architecture is summarized in Table III. The table also highlights the influence of dataset size and clinical applicability.

TABLE IV. LIST OF METHODS AND RESULTS FOR ENDOMETRIUM SEGMENTATION

No.	Method	Result
1	DLS	DLS 85%-87% tolerance limit compared to U-Net with 60%-70% tolerance limit.
2	VGG-Based U-Net	DSC 0.83 Thickness measurement:- MAE/RMSE: 1.23/1.79 on 27 DL test cases- MAE/RMSE: 1.38/1.85 on 46 Thickness test cases
3	Key-discriminator	DSC 82.67%, Jaccard 70.46%
4	6 Different U-Net	DDRNets is the highest average of DSC, Recall, Precision, and Specificity with 0.895, 0.884, 0.910, and 0.998.
5	ResNet50-based SegNet	Average DSC: 0.82
6	3D U-Net	DSC 90.83%, Jaccard 83.35%, Sensitivity 90.85
7	Multi StudentNet	DSC 0.81, specificity 0.99, sensitivity 0.87
8	SAIM	DSC 76.31% and IoU 63.71%, a higher multipoint prompt receives a higher result in metrics DSC and IoU.
9	Transformer - CNN	U-Net DSC 0.977, Transformer DSC 0.956
10	ResNet-50	AUC 0.853

In conclusion, while a classic U-Net excels on minimal data, the most accurate and generalizable models for broader clinical application appear to be the 3D U-Net, Multi-StudentNet, and DDRNet, as evidenced by their consistently high Dice scores across more substantial datasets. However, to draw a definitive conclusion about which network is highly accurate is challenging and potentially misleading because all these studies used different datasets with varying characteristics and sizes. This is due to the limited availability of common datasets for healthy endometrium TVUS images. For example, the study using the 3D U-Net had a total of 113 images [89], in comparison to the study comparing six networks that had a total of 1050 images [84]. To address this limitation, the MultiStudentNet specifically uses a semi-supervised approach [89].

C. RQ3: Metrics and Validation for Deep Learning in Endometrium Segmentation

The evaluation of deep learning models for endometrium segmentation requires a comprehensive approach that reflects both technical segmentation accuracy and clinical measurement reliability. To achieve this, researchers commonly employ a range of quantitative and statistical metrics to assess segmentation accuracy and endometrial thickness measurement performance. Table IV presents the list of methods and results for endometrium segmentation.

1) Segmentation evaluation metrics: For endometrium segmentation, the objective is to measure how close the automated segmentation overlaps with the ground-truth annotation. One of the most used metrics is the Dice Similarity Coefficient (DSC). The values range from 0 to 1, with 1 as a perfect overlap between the segmented region and the ground truth. In different literatures, DSC is also known as Dice Score, Dice coefficient, and F1 Score. The formula for measuring DSC is defined as:

$$DSC = \frac{2|A \cap B|}{|A| + |B|} \quad (1)$$

where, A is the segmented region to be assessed, and B is the corresponding ground truth.

The recoded DSC values were reported in most of the main literature for this study. 9 out of 10 papers used DSC values as a metric to evaluate segmentation performance. The recorded DSC values for healthy endometrium segmentation using deep learning range from 0.76 to 0.98. The highest DSC was observed in the U-Net with 0.977 on a limited dataset of 25 images [96]. This indicates that while DSC is a useful benchmark for general overlap, it can be sensitive to dataset size, and a high DSC does not automatically mean an excellent segmentation result.

A recent deep learning model also measured a high DSC at 0.895 for a Deep Dual-Resolution Network (DDRNet) in a comparative analysis [84]. However, while proposing the key-point discriminator method, the DSC value recorded was 82.67%, outperforming conventional methods like U-Net (58.69%) and FCN (78.39%) [58]. This shows that a little tuning in the model architecture can improve segmentation results, especially if the model is designed to better identify boundaries.

Another commonly used metric for segmentation evaluation is the Jaccard Index, also known as Intersection over Union (IoU). The DSC and IoU are proportional to the number of spatial overlaps between the segmented and ground truth

images. The value ranges from 0 to 1, with 1 as the perfect matching [97]. The formula of IoU is defined as:

$$IoU = \frac{|A \cap B|}{|A \cup B|} \quad (2)$$

However, the Jaccard index was reported far less frequently than DSC in the included papers. For this review, out of 10 main literature papers, only 3 studies use the Jaccard index as a performance metric. Values reported include 70.46% using the key-point discriminator method [58] and 83.35% using the 3D U-Net method [57]. This low number of adoptions in evaluation may be attributed to the Jaccard index's mathematical property of generally resulting in lower numerical values compared to Dice for the same segmentation quality. However, for clinical applications such as endometrial thickness measurement, Jaccard index sensitivity to boundary intersection may be helpful in a realistic assessment.

This pattern of selective metric reporting extends to a few other complementary metrics for segmentation evaluation. For example, another commonly used metric is accuracy. The accuracy value is calculated through precision and recall, which quantify the model's ability to correctly identify endometrial pixels while minimizing false positives and negatives. In certain papers, recall is also known as sensitivity, which measures the proportion of relevant instances of true positive pixels that are retrieved by the model and focuses on how well the model avoids false negatives. The formulas for accuracy, precision, and recall are defined below:

$$Accuracy = \frac{TP+FN}{TP+FP+TN+FN} \quad (3)$$

$$Precision = \frac{TP}{TP+FP} \quad (4)$$

$$Recall\ (Sensitivity) = \frac{TP}{TP+FN} \quad (5)$$

where, TP- True Positive, FP - False Positive, TN - True Negative, FN – False Negative.

In a comparative study, a DDRNet demonstrated superior performance, achieving a precision of 0.910 and a recall of 0.884, the highest among the evaluated deep learning models. This review revealed that these complementary metrics are infrequently documented, with only 3 out of 10 papers reporting precision and 2 out of 10 papers reporting recall (sensitivity). This indicates that while precision and recall provide distinct and complementary insights in quantifying false positive and false negative rates, the Dice score continues to be the favored standard metric for overall segmentation evaluation.

Beyond the mentioned metrics, specificity is another segmentation metric that measures the proportion of correctly identified negative pixels out of all actual negative pixels. This metric is also known as the true negative rate, as it indicates the model's ability to minimize false positives [84], [89]. The formula for specificity is written as:

$$Specificity = \frac{TN}{TN+FP} \quad (6)$$

These metrics were reported in a study comparing variations of CNN architectures and evaluation in the developing Multi-StudentNet model. The reported specificity value is generally 0.99 [84], which is high, indicating robust performance in excluding non-endometrial regions. In medical image segmentation, specificity is important because the background makes up most of the image. High specificity shows the model is good at not mistakenly labelling normal tissue as endometrium. This helps prevent false alarms and builds trust in the tool for clinical application. Although specificity provides valuable information about background exclusion, it is less frequently reported because the aim is to detect the endometrium boundary, the foreground region of interest, and not to verify the background classification.

Another underrated metric is the 95th percentile Hausdorff Distance (HD95). This metric measures the maximum boundary between a predicted segmentation and the ground truth. While Dice scores calculate overall overlap pixels, the HD95 specifically targets the worst-case alignment errors by using the 95th percentile to ignore extreme outliers. In this study, this metric was explicitly used in only one paper [57]. The 3D U-Net model achieved the best HD95 score of 12.75mm when using the Enhanced Augmented Data (EAD) method.

From this information, a boundary-focused metric like HD95 is more clinically informative than a general overlap metric like DSC because it directly relates to measurement accuracy. Since clinical decisions are based on measurements like endometrial thickness, a minor boundary error can lead to a significant measurement error. HD95 assesses this specific risk. Thus, the HD95 provides a more direct assessment of a model's utility in a clinical setting, where the ±2 mm tolerance is critical.

2) Thickness measurement performance metrics: As established, endometrial thickness serves as a critical biomarker for assessing reproductive health, guiding clinical decisions in areas such as fertility treatments and screening. Consequently, evaluating the performance of thickness measurement moves beyond overlap metrics. The performance of this measurement requires rigorous evaluation against the clinical gold standard of manual expert measurement. This is to ensure that the automated results are reliable and clinically acceptable. Among the relevant metrics are Acceptance Rate, Mean Absolute Error (MAE), and Root Mean Squared Error (RMSE).

The reliability of the evaluation is benchmarked against a well-defined clinical tolerance. Clinical tolerance represents the acceptable error range, which, for endometrial thickness, is consistently set at ±2mm based on clinical guidelines [3], [87]. Based on the clinical tolerance, the acceptance rate measures the percentage of a model's measurements that fall within the range. Thus, model efficacy is primarily reported through Acceptance Rate. The definition of Acceptance Rate in mathematical expression is:

$$Acceptance\ Rate = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} |y_i - x_i| < 2mm}{n} \times 100\% \quad (7)$$

where, y is the endometrial thickness measured by deep learning methods, x is the ground truth, and n is the total number of validation images or cases.

By achieving a high acceptance rate, such as 89.3% [4] or 94.20% [57], the deep learning methods demonstrate their

potential to provide a reliable measurement that aligns with clinical requirements. Notably, 4 out of 10 papers measure the acceptance rate of the thickness measurements.

While the Acceptance Rate indicates clinical applicability, the MAE and RSME provide deeper insight of the measurement errors. The MAE calculates the average absolute difference, a straightforward measure of typical error magnitude [4], [57]. In contrast, RSME is mathematically structured to evaluate error magnitude, serves as a sensitive indicator for inconsistent measurement, and the presence of significant outliers [57], [98]. The formulas of MAE and RSME are written as follows:

$$MAE = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} |y_i - x_i|}{n} \quad (8)$$

$$RSME = \sqrt{\frac{1}{n}\sum_{i=1}^{n}(y_i - x_i)^2} \quad (9)$$

Reported MAE values demonstrate model accuracy, with methods like VGG-based U-Net pipeline achieving MAEs of 1.23mm for the deep learning test set and 1.38mm for the thickness test set [3]. The results are considered as it falls within the clinical tolerance of ±2mm. The 3D U-Net segmentation method reported an even lower MAE of 0.75 mm with a corresponding RSME of 1.07mm [57]. For comparison, the ResNet50-SegNet model reported an overall MAE of 2.3mm across all validation data, although performance improved to an MAE of 2.0mm when analyzing cases where endometrial thickness is more than 3mm [4].

The evaluation of endometrial thickness measurement remains overlooked in the current included papers. The most critical metric, the acceptance rate, was reported on 40%. The fact that 60% of the included papers did not report this value may suggest that most studies are technically focused rather than clinically validated. This shows a great hindrance for clinical translation.

Table V presents the performance metrics used for both segmentation and thickness measurement evaluation from the literature. Current metric reporting in endometrium segmentation prioritizes technical overlap, especially DSC value, abundantly, but does not sufficiently validate clinical applicability. This focus overlooks critical metrics, such as acceptance rate, which directly assess whether automated thickness measurements fall within clinically permissible rate margins. Consequently, this condition limits the assessment for practicality in real-life assessment, specifically for clinical integration. In conclusion, to ensure clinical readiness, future work must standardize metric reporting that prioritizes measurement accuracy and reliability for an effective integration into ART workflows. The inconsistency and underutilization of clinical decision metrics are direct symptoms of broader limitations to clinical applications, which are explored in RQ4.

D. RQ4: Technical and Clinical Gaps to Translate Deep Learning Model into Art

Translating promising deep learning segmentation and measurement performance into reliable and adoptable tools for ART requires addressing significant technical and clinical gaps that compromise reliability and clinical utility. Although most models demonstrate high accuracy on internal test sets, there are limitations regarding data diversity, integration of complex clinical features, and performance on diagnostically challenging cases.

One major limitation is ensuring that models perform reliably across diverse patient populations and clinical settings, addressing issues of data scarcity and single-source dependency [95]. Many studies rely on retrospective data. The models' ability to generalize can be compromised if the original dataset is not sufficiently large or diverse [4], [88], [89]. Furthermore, the results from small sample sizes cannot be guaranteed to generalize to other segmentation tasks [4].

In addition, models are often trained and tested on data collected from a single manufacturer or institution. This fact may affect the robustness of the model when deployed elsewhere [95]. External validation using datasets outside the source institution has not always been carried out. Consequently, the performance of some deep learning models, such as those predicting WOI, is acknowledged to require greater diversification, specifically needing a greater representation of cases with thin endometrial thickness (<7mm).

TABLE V. DISTRIBUTION OF EVALUATION METRICS IN ENDOMETRIUM SEGMENTATION LITERATURE

Method	Segmentation Performance Metrics							Thickness Measurement Performance Metrics			
	DSC	Jaccard	Sensitivity	Specificity	Accuracy	Precision	HD95	MAE	RMSE	Acceptance Rate	SDE
DLS										/	
VGG-Based U-Net	/							/	/	/	/
Key-discriminator	/	/									
6 Different U-Net	/		/	/		/					
ResNet50-based SegNet	/							/	/	/	/
3D U-Net	/	/	/				/	/	/	/	/
Multi StudentNet	/		/	/		/					
SAIM	/	/									
Transformer - CNN	/										
ResNet-50	/		/		/	/					

While endometrial thickness is a crucial biomarker, relying solely on it is incomplete to predict ART outcomes. Future models must be designed to assess a broader range of complex physiological variations of other critical features of endometrial receptivity, such as endometrial pattern. The evolution towards multiple parameter assessment requires a more sophisticated approach for validation. Furthermore, adequate differentiation across various pathological conditions, such as cancer and hyperplasia, is needed, as these conditions are known to impact echo pattern and segmentation [3], [4], [95].

Another setback for deep learning systems is the poor performance on thin endometria. There's one study that showed that for cases with endometrial thickness less than 3 mm, the acceptance rate was significantly lower at only 54.5%, compared to nearly 98.3% for thicker endometria (ET>10 mm) [4]. This inaccuracy in thin endometria could lead to false positive diagnoses, leading to unnecessary invasive examinations for patients.

As discussed in the introduction, the technical limitations of ultrasound remain a fundamental obstacle, with issues such as low contrast and speckle noise complicating the precise delineation of the endometrial boundary to measure the endometrial thickness effectively [89]. Most models fail in cases where the endometrium boundary is blurred or has a slightly irregular shape [3], [4].

To translate these technically advanced models into a clinical application, these models should be integrated into user-friendly interfaces for seamless routine ART screening protocols [95]. To this end, researchers are actively exploring and developing novel architectures, such as semi-supervised and key-point guided adversarial networks, to enhance segmentation robustness. This enhancement is critical to ensure a reliable endometrial receptivity assessment for clinical application.

The identified limitations and gaps reveal that clinical translation is hindered by clinical validation. To progress, research must shift from proof-of-concept or technical evaluation studies to rigorous development. To bridge the identified gaps, future research should adopt three key actions. First, the establishment of large, multi-center, and prospectively collected datasets is essential to ensure models are robust across diverse populations and critically challenging subgroups, such as thin endometria. Second, to adapt clinical validation, evaluation must adopt a mandatory and standardized set of metrics that are highly reliable in medical practice. Third, model development should evolve beyond endometrium segmentation to thickness measurement and other ultrasound biomarkers, such as echo pattern and volume. By addressing these actions, it can transform deep learning beyond technical research into a reliable clinical translation to aid in improving ART in the future.

VIII. Conclusion

This review systematically investigated the role of deep learning in TVUS image segmentation for the objective assessment of endometrial receptivity. The analysis provides clear answers for the research questions, revealing both the significant progress and the critical path forward.

In finding the predominant architectures for the deep learning segmentation (RQ1), it is found that the field is not dominated by a single model but is built upon a U-Net-based foundation, with a clear evolution towards sophisticated hybrid systems, such as SAIM, and tailored variants like 3D U-Net. When evaluating which of these models achieve high accuracy (RQ2), models such as the 3D U-Net, DDRNet, and Multi-StudentNet demonstrated superior performance. However, a definitive ranking is impossible due to a major problem, which is the lack of a common, large-scale dataset. This problem prevents fair comparison and highlights a fundamental need for the community.

Subsequently, this review also identifies the metrics used to validate segmentation quality (RQ3). It is revealed that not all metrics are equally meaningful for clinical translation. While the Dice score is most used, a hierarchy of clinical utility exists. The most critical metrics are the Acceptance Rate, supported by error magnitude metrics, which are MAE and RMSE. These metrics work together best to validate a model's readiness for clinical receptivity assessment.

Despite these advancements, significant technical and clinical limitations (RQ4) were revealed to prevent the integration of the models into ART workflows. These persistent limitations include poor model performance on thin endometria, inadequate validation across the menstrual cycle and various pathological conditions, and a narrow focus on thickness over a holistic, multi-parametric receptivity assessment.

In conclusion, while deep learning offers a powerful pathway to standardize and objectify endometrial evaluation, its full potential for clinical application has not yet been utilized. The transition from a promising algorithm to a trusted clinical tool hinges on future work that prioritizes robust, multi-parametric models, rigorous and stratified clinical validation, and the development of standardized benchmarks and datasets. By focusing on these challenges, the field can finally translate computational promise into enhanced diagnostic precision and improved outcomes in assisted reproduction.

Acknowledgment

The authors would like to express their gratitude to the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) of Malaysia and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia for their financial support under the grant FRGS/1/2024/TK07/UKM/02/6 for the resources that made this review possible.

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Advances in Deep Learning for Affective Intelligence: Language Models, Multimodal Trends, and Research Frontiers

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***Abstract*—The accelerated growth of digital content and the increasing presence of emotional expressions, polarized opinions, and toxic behaviors in social media have driven the development of advanced Affective Analysis techniques. This study presents a broad and up-to-date review of recent studies covering Sentiment Analysis, Emotion Recognition, Hate Speech Detection, cyberbullying, and multimodal approaches grounded in deep learning. The review provides a comparative analysis of the architectures employed—including Transformer-based Models, multimodal frameworks, and variants designed for low-resource languages—along with their metrics, performance outcomes, and emerging patterns. The findings reveal a clear consolidation of Transformer-based Models as the dominant standard, significant progress in multimodality for affective interpretation, and growing attention to multilingual models adapted to diverse cultural contexts. Furthermore, persistent challenges are identified, including limitations related to data availability and quality, Explainable AI (XAI), computational efficiency, and robustness in cross-domain generalization. This review synthesizes current trends, limitations, and opportunities in the field, offering a structured perspective that can serve as a reference for researchers and practitioners involved in the development of more accurate, efficient, and culturally responsible affective systems.**

***Keywords*—Sentiment Analysis; Emotion Recognition; Hate Speech Detection; cyberbullying; deep learning; Transformer-based Models; Multimodal Analysis; multilingual NLP; Explainable AI (XAI); social media**

I. Introduction

Sentiment Analysis, Emotion Recognition, and hate speech classification have become central components in the study of contemporary digital behavior, particularly due to the massive growth of communication on social media platforms [6]. Online interactions generate large volumes of textual content that require advanced tools for their interpretation, leading traditional natural language processing (NLP) approaches to evolve toward deep learning and Transformer-based Models.

The articles reviewed in this study show that early solutions relying on conventional techniques—such as support vector machines, Naïve Bayes, or simple CNNs—have been progressively surpassed by more sophisticated architectures. For example, works such as [3] and [7] illustrate the transition toward deep models capable of more accurately representing contextual dependencies present in the informal language used on social platforms.

The emergence of Transformer-based Models marked a turning point. Studies such as [2], [11], and [19] demonstrate the superiority of Pre-trained Language Models (PLMs), which offer rich and contextualized semantic representations, significantly improving performance in emotional classification, Sentiment Analysis, and Cyberbullying Detection.

Likewise, research focused on specific languages highlights the relevance of contextual adaptation and transfer learning. Works such as [8], [15], and [36] show that linguistic variants of Transformer-based Models are highly effective in languages with moderate or limited resources.

Another key theme identified in the reviewed articles is the advancement of multimodal approaches. Studies such as [30], [31], and [35] reveal the potential of integrating text with images, audio, or contextual signals to improve affective interpretation in more complex and dynamic environments.

Finally, research addressing specific issues such as hate speech and cyberbullying demonstrates strong results through optimized model configurations. Works such as [1] and [16] highlight how combining Transformer-based Models with fine-tuning, feature selection, or hybrid mechanisms substantially improves performance metrics.

Collectively, these advancements show that affective NLP has reached a stage of methodological maturity characterized by the dominance of Transformer architectures, the rise of multimodality, and the adaptation to multilingual contexts. This review synthesizes these developments, offering a structured and up-to-date perspective on the current state of the field and establishing the conceptual foundation for the detailed analysis presented in the subsequent sections.

A. Research Questions

To guide the analysis and synthesis of the reviewed literature, this study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: What deep learning architectures currently dominate affective intelligence tasks in natural language processing?

RQ2: How have multimodal approaches evolved to enhance emotion and sentiment understanding across different data modalities?

RQ3: What challenges and research gaps persist in multilingual and low-resource affective NLP scenarios?

II. Background and Related Work

Sentiment Analysis, Emotion Recognition, and hate speech identification have established themselves as fundamental areas within Natural Language Processing (NLP), particularly driven by the exponential growth of interactions on social media platforms. The studies reviewed in this work show that the evolution of the field has been characterized by a gradual shift away from traditional lexicon-based and statistical approaches toward the widespread adoption of deep learning architectures and Transformer-based Models. Deep learning has also demonstrated strong predictive capability in other applied domains—such as electricity price forecasting—which has further motivated its adoption for complex sequence and representation learning problems [12].

B. Evolution of Sentiment Analysis and Emotion Recognition

Early approaches based on statistical methods and classical machine learning models were progressively replaced by neural architectures such as LSTM and CNN, which enabled the modeling of sequential dependencies and more complex affective patterns. Studies such as [7] and [3] illustrate this transition, reporting substantial improvements in Affective Analysis tasks through the use of deep neural networks [14].

The introduction of contextual representation techniques, particularly those used in BERT-like models, further strengthened the ability of NLP systems to capture the semantics of informal and noisy social media language. Studies such as [8] and [15] demonstrate the superiority of contextual embeddings over previous methods.

C. Advances Driven by Transformer-Based Models and Pre-Trained Language Models (PLMs)

The consolidation of Transformer-based Models is a recurring pattern across the reviewed literature. Works such as [2], [11], and [19] show how Pre-trained Language Models (PLMs) capture deeper semantic and contextual relationships, resulting in substantial performance gains in emotional classification and Hate Speech Detection. In addition, PLMs such as BERT have been successfully transferred to other domains, including network intrusion detection, underscoring their general-purpose contextual modeling capability [10].

In addition, studies focused on specific languages—such as [36], demonstrate how local adaptations of PLMs can match or even surpass results obtained on larger, more mature corpora.

D. Multimodal Processing and Emerging Research Directions

An emerging trend observable in [29]–[35] is the increasing use of multimodal approaches that integrate text, images, and additional signals. Models such as MemoCMT [30], Cross-modal BERT [31], and Multimodal GRU with Directed Pairwise Cross-Modal Attention [35] show that incorporating multiple modalities can enhance emotional detection and enrich affective understanding in complex environments.

These studies indicate that mechanisms based on Cross-modal Attention, multi-level fusion, and intermodal architectures are expanding NLP toward contexts closer to human perception, such as conversational analysis, emotional video understanding, and monitoring of digital interactions.

E. Multilingualism, Low-Resource Languages, and Knowledge Transfer

The reviewed studies also highlight the importance of multilingualism and the challenges associated with low-resource languages. Works such as [16] and [13] emphasize the need to adapt models and transfer learning strategies to specific linguistic contexts.

Moreover, the evidence shows that models such as IndoBERT, RoBERTa, and domain-adapted variants can compensate for the lack of large annotated corpora, achieving competitive results when properly optimized and contextually fine-tuned.

F. Synthesis of the State-of-the-Art

Based on the analysis of the reviewed studies, the following dominant trends are identified:

- A clear predominance of Transformer-based Models as the primary architecture.
- A sustained growth of multimodal approaches for Affective Analysis.
- Extensive use of fine-tuning techniques, knowledge transfer, and linguistic variants of Pre-trained Language Models (PLMs).
- Consolidation of hybrid strategies integrating deep neural networks, graphical representations, and explainable mechanisms. (e.g., transformer–GNN convergence frameworks [9]).
- Increasing attention to low-resource languages and specialized domains through optimization and Domain Adaptation.

This conceptual framework synthesizes the current state of affective NLP, according to the evidence provided by the analyzed studies, and serves as the foundation for the discussion, comparisons, and conclusions presented in the following sections.

III. Methodology

A. Methodological Positioning

This work is positioned as a narrative, corpus-driven review rather than a fully systematic review as defined by formal PRISMA-style protocols. While a structured Scopus-based search strategy was employed to identify relevant literature, the final corpus was refined through controlled inclusion criteria focused on thematic relevance, publication impact, and methodological diversity. The objective of this review is not exhaustive coverage, but rather a comprehensive and interpretative synthesis of recent advances in deep learning–based affective intelligence, with particular emphasis on language models, multimodal architectures, and emerging research trends.

B. General Review Approach

The methodology employed in this review was specifically designed to analyze, compare, and synthesize the contributions of the selected studies, all focused on Sentiment Analysis, Emotion Recognition, hate speech classification, and multimodal or multilingual approaches within the context of Natural Language Processing (NLP). Consistent with the methodological positioning described above, the present study adopts an empirical, corpus-driven approach grounded exclusively in the explicit, verifiable characteristics of the included studies.

The methodological process was structured into three specific stages derived exclusively from information present in the studies:

1) Identification and compilation of the corpus: Each study was selected for addressing one or more of the target themes—sentiment, emotion, hate speech, multimodality, or multilingualism—and for being part of the predefined document base.

2) Characterization and systematic extraction of information: Each publication was examined in detail to extract consistent data regarding architectures, datasets, preprocessing techniques, evaluation metrics, languages, domains, and experimental strategies.

3) Comparative and thematic synthesis: Articles were grouped according to observed patterns—text-based models, multimodal approaches, hate speech or cyberbullying detection, multilingual methods, and Explainable AI (XAI)—to generate an integrated interpretation of the current state of the field.

This approach ensures that all methodological elements are grounded exclusively in the analyzed corpus, without relying on external methodological frameworks unrelated to the content of the articles.

C. Selection and Composition of the Corpus

The corpus used in this review comprises studies published between 2018 and the present, ensuring a representative coverage of recent developments in Sentiment Analysis, Emotion Recognition, Hate Speech Detection, and multimodal deep learning approaches.

Although the set of studies was consolidated manually for this review, the original document pool stems from three major academic sources used during the initial collection process:

- Scopus (Elsevier): multidisciplinary database for identifying recent and relevant studies.
- IEEE Xplore: a primary source for research in deep learning, NLP, and Affective Analysis.
- Elsevier ScienceDirect: repository for applied studies related to emotion, sentiment, and hate speech.

A representative Scopus search query was:

(TITLE-ABS-KEY ("sentiment analysis" OR "opinion mining" OR "emotion recognition"

OR "emotion classification" OR "hate speech detection"

OR "cyberbullying detection")

AND

TITLE-ABS-KEY ("deep learning" OR "neural network*" OR "transformer*"

OR "BERT" OR "RoBERTa" OR "GPT" OR "multimodal"

OR "cross-modal")

)

AND (PUBYEAR > 2017 AND PUBYEAR < 2026)

AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar"))

AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English") OR LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "Spanish"))

These initial searches—along with complementary retrieval in IEEE Xplore and ScienceDirect—yielded a broad collection of publications that were manually filtered to form the final corpus.

The final set of studies did not arise from a purely database-driven systematic search, but from a deliberate, controlled selection in which each article was included based on the following explicit and observable criteria:

- Application or evaluation of Deep Learning Approaches to affective tasks.
- Focus on Sentiment Analysis, Emotion Recognition, Hate Speech Detection, cyberbullying, Multimodal Learning, or multilingual models.
- Reporting quantitative experimental results (accuracy, precision, recall, F1-score, etc.).
- Clear description of architecture, components, and training strategies.
- Verifiable information on datasets, languages, and domains.

Articles lacking empirical evidence, purely theoretical works, or non-peer-reviewed materials were excluded.

These adaptations constitute the structural basis of the instrument described in Section C.

D. Data Extraction and Structuring

Data extraction was conducted manually and organized according to common elements identified across all the studies:

- Architectures: Transformer-based Models (BERT, RoBERTa, IndoBERT), CNN, LSTM, BiGRU, GNN, hybrid systems, and Multimodal Learning.
- Preprocessing: tokenization, normalization, noise removal, static and contextual embeddings.
- Datasets: corpora in English, Spanish, Indonesian, and others; social media datasets (Twitter, Facebook, Google Play); hate-speech, emotion, and multimodal collections.
- Training strategies: fine-tuning, hyperparameter optimization, lightweight models, multimodal fusion.

- Metrics: F1-score, accuracy, precision, recall, macro-F1, weighted-F1.
- Key contributions: performance gains, new architectures, fusion techniques, language-specific enhancements, use of XAI.
- Limitations: dataset bias, class imbalance, computational demands, small corpora, and lack of Explainable AI (XAI).

Each dimension was documented consistently to enable a balanced, systematic comparison.

E. Thematic Classification Derived from the Studies

The categories in Table I emerge naturally from methodological, architectural, and experimental patterns identified across the corpus and illustrate how the current landscape of affective NLP is organized and how each research line contributes to the field.

TABLE I. THEMATIC CLASSIFICATION OF THE REVIEWED STUDIES

Thematic Category	Representative Articles	Key Findings
Text-based Sentiment Analysis	[2], [3], [7], [8], [11], [15]	Transformers outperform LSTM/CNN in informal language
Emotion and Affective State	[13], [15], [30]–[35]	Multimodality increases emotional detection accuracy
Hate Speech and Cyberbullying	[1], [16], [18], [19], [20], [21]	Optimized and lightweight models achieve strong results
Multilingual / Low-resource Models	[13], [16], [19], [36]	Transfer learning improves performance in low-resource settings
Explainable AI (XAI) Models	[16], [21], [27]	Interpretability is increasingly important in critical applications

Source: Author's elaboration.

F. Ethical Considerations and Transparency

All included articles were reviewed to ensure that their procedures were described with enough clarity to allow understanding and reproducibility. This review maintains methodological transparency by relying exclusively on explicit information contained within all the studies, without incorporating external methodological frameworks.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section synthesizes and comparatively analyzes the findings reported across all the studies, considering the architectures employed, performance metrics, linguistic domains, multimodal approaches, and specific applications such as Hate Speech Detection and cyberbullying. The analysis is structured according to patterns observed directly in the studies.

A. Performance of Text-Based Models

Text-based models constitute the core of affective NLP across the reviewed studies. The results consistently show that Transformer-based Models outperform classical deep learning architectures in tasks such as Sentiment Analysis, Emotion Recognition, and text-based Hate Speech Detection. In particular, BERT and its variants achieve superior accuracy and F1-score due to their ability to capture contextual semantic relationships, as evidenced in [2], [7], [8], [11], [15], [16], [19], and [36]. Classical architectures, such as LSTM, CNN, or BiGRU, used in studies like [3], [7], [11], and [15], provide competitive baselines and perform adequately in small or well-structured datasets, but their capacity to model complex informal language is more limited. Hybrid text-based models—such as BERT combined with BiGRU or GNN components in [11]—demonstrate improvements in stability and generalization, indicating that architectural fusion can yield benefits even when working exclusively with textual input. Overall, the evidence confirms that contextualized Transformer-based Models represent the dominant paradigm in text-only affective tasks, while traditional and hybrid architectures remain useful in scenarios with constrained computational resources or smaller datasets. Aspect-based sentiment analysis on microblogging and review platforms also benefits from contextual Transformer representations, which better capture fine-grained opinion targets and their polarity [22]. Similarly, CNN-based pipelines enriched with RoBERTa embeddings have shown competitive performance in sentiment classification for movie reviews and other noisy user-generated text [4]. For Emotion Recognition, RoBERTa variants enhanced with emotion-aware attention mechanisms report additional gains by focusing representation learning on affective cues [23].

B. Models for Hate Speech Detection and Cyberbullying

Articles [1], [16], [18], [19], [20], [21] focus on detecting toxic speech, hate speech, or cyberbullying.

Their findings consistently show that BERT-based models [1], [16], [19] significantly outperform classical architectures. In contrast, [18] combines GloVe + PCA with a Transformer, achieving efficient fusion of static and contextual embeddings. Alternatively, [20] proposes a lightweight architecture (DBFN-J) with strong performance and lower computational cost and [21] provides a comprehensive review of LLMs for hate speech, highlighting multilingual robustness.

Overall, these works indicate that the most robust models are those balancing performance and efficiency—particularly relevant in sensitive social contexts.

C. Multilingual Models and Applications in Low-Resource Languages

Studies addressing Sentiment Analysis, Emotion Recognition, and text classification across different languages reveal a consistent trend in which Transformer-based Models outperform LSTM, CNN, and hybrid architectures.

For example, domain-specific fine-tuning of BERT in [2] leads to clear improvements in accuracy and F1-score, while [3] demonstrates that Deep Learning approaches surpass classical techniques when analyzing large-scale Twitter data. Similarly, [7], [8], and [15] show that BERT variants adapted to specific domains and languages more effectively capture informal and context-dependent semantics, and [11] integrates BERT with BiGRU and GCN to achieve additional gains in generalization. Collectively, these studies indicate that contextualized text-based models consistently deliver the strongest affective performance. Related multilingual emotion extraction studies further confirm the importance of language-specific resources and cross-lingual modeling choices [17].

At the multilingual level, research highlights the particular challenges posed by low-resource settings. In [13], the authors analyze Emotion Recognition through a cross-cultural perspective, showing that sociocultural factors influence affective interpretation. In [16], the authors demonstrate that fine-tuned Transformer-based Models can overcome data scarcity barriers, while [19] evaluates multilingual LLMs for Hate Speech Detection across diverse linguistic contexts. Furthermore, [36] adapts IndoBERT to Indonesian emotional content, reaching performance levels comparable to models trained on larger or better-resourced corpora.

Overall, multilingual fine-tuning, transfer learning, and linguistic adaptation emerge as essential strategies for extending the applicability of affective NLP to culturally diverse and resource-constrained environments.

D. Multimodal Learning

Articles [29], [30], [31], [32], [33], [34], [35] present multimodal architectures integrating text with images, audio, or other signals.

Common trends include Cross-modal Attention and multi-level fusion — [29], [33], Multimodal Transformer-based models — [30], [31], Hierarchical and intramodal enhancement — [32], [34], and GRU networks with directed cross-modal attention — [35].

Results consistently show that multimodal approaches outperform text-only systems when emotional cues depend on visual, acoustic, or combined signals.

E. Global Comparison of Architectures and Metrics

Table II shows how the main architectures used across the studies are distributed, highlighting the predominance of Transformer-based Models and the emerging role of Multimodal Learning.

TABLE II. COMPARATIVE SUMMARY OF ARCHITECTURES USED ACROSS THE STUDIES

Model Category	Associated Articles	Key Trends	Common Metrics
Transformers (BERT, RoBERTa, IndoBERT, LLMs)	[2], [7], [8], [11], [15], [16], [19], [36]	Best overall performance in affective and social tasks	F1-score, accuracy
Classical DL Models (LSTM, CNN, BiGRU)	[3], [7], [11], [15]	Lower performance vs. Transformers; useful in small datasets	accuracy, F1-score
Hybrid Models (BERT+GRU, PCA+GloVe, GNN)	[11], [18], [20]	Balanced trade-off between efficiency and precision	macro-F1, weighted-F1
Multimodal Models	[29]–[35]	Improved affective understanding when combining signals	F1-score, weighted-F1

Source: Author's elaboration.

A global comparison of the architectures and evaluation metrics used across all the studies reveals several consistent patterns. Transformer-based Models dominate performance in all affective tasks, reflecting their superior ability to capture contextual dependencies. Multimodal Learning further enhances performance in enriched contexts where affective cues extend beyond text. Lightweight Models such as the one proposed in [20], demonstrate strong competitive performance when computational efficiency is a priority. Across the corpus, the most commonly reported metrics include F1-score, accuracy, and macro-F1, underscoring their relevance in affective evaluation. Finally, dataset quality—in terms of size, balance, and language—proves to be as influential as the choice of architecture, confirming its central role in determining model robustness and generalization.

F. Synthesis of Global Patterns Across the Corpus

Across the reviewed studies:

- Transformers establish a new state-of-the-art in affective NLP.
- Multimodality represents the next major step in emotional interpretation.
- Multilingualism remains challenging, but is increasingly well addressed through adapted PLMs.
- For hate speech and cyberbullying, hybrid and lightweight models provide excellent precision–efficiency trade-offs.

To provide a concise and integrative overview of the main findings discussed in this section, Table III summarizes the relationships between affective tasks, representative models, datasets, and key outcomes identified across the reviewed studies.

TABLE III. SYNTHETIC OVERVIEW OF TASKS, MODELS, DATASETS, AND KEY FINDINGS

Task	Representative Models	Typical Datasets	Key Findings
Sentiment Analysis	BERT, RoBERTa, CNN-LSTM	Twitter, Reviews	Transformer-based models consistently outperform classical deep learning approaches
Emotion Recognition	BERT, Multimodal Transformers	EmoBank, IEMOCAP	Multimodal fusion improves affective accuracy and robustness
Hate Speech Detection	BERT, DBFN-J	Twitter, HASOC	Fine-tuned pre-trained language models balance performance and computational efficiency
Multilingual Affective NLP	IndoBERT, mBERT	Multilingual corpora	Transfer learning mitigates data scarcity in low-resource settings

Source: Author's elaboration.

V. CURRENT CHALLENGES AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

A. Current Challenges Observed in the Studies

Table IV synthesizes the main challenges explicitly documented in the corpus, allowing the identification of cross-cutting patterns that affect the development of affective NLP

systems in real-world contexts. Beyond data limitations, linguistic phenomena such as sarcasm and irony remain difficult to model reliably and continue to impact affective classification performance in social media contexts [5]. Moreover, recent data-centric and human-in-the-loop error analysis frameworks supported by Explainable AI provide practical strategies to diagnose and mitigate systematic model failures [28].

TABLE IV. CURRENT CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED ACROSS THE STUDIES

Challenge	Articles Reporting It	Observations
Corpus scarcity/limitations	[3], [7], [8], [13], [15], [16], [29]–[35], [36]	Issues related to size, imbalance, and domain specificity
Linguistic complexity	[1], [3], [7], [8], [13], [15], [36]	Difficulty handling sarcasm, social variation, cultural differences
High computational costs	[20], [29]–[35]	Multimodal and heavy Transformer-based models
Lack of explainability	[20], [29]–[35]	Critical issue in sensitive environments
Inconsistent evaluation	[2], [11], [18], [29]	Non-comparable metrics; use of different datasets

Source: Author's elaboration.

B. Limitations Identified in the Studies

The consolidated analysis reveals a set of recurrent limitations affecting the development, evaluation, and generalization capacity of Affective Analysis systems applied to social media. These limitations fall into five main categories. Inconsistent evaluation protocols and limited cross-dataset testing hinder comparability across studies; similar concerns have motivated unified benchmark construction in other AI areas [25] and cross-dataset analyses of language models to assess robustness and distributional shift [26].

In terms of data quality and availability, several studies highlight structural weaknesses in the datasets. Articles [3], [7], [8], [13], [15], and [36] report datasets that are small, imbalanced, or highly domain-specific, limiting model generalization. In contrast, article [16] emphasizes that Low-resource Languages suffer from limited annotation, hindering both training and validation. Meanwhile, Multimodal studies [29]–[35] report the cost and complexity of obtaining synchronized text–image–audio datasets, which restricts both scope and reproducibility. Class imbalance is particularly recurrent in toxic speech and emotion datasets, where oversampling and related resampling strategies are often required to stabilize training and improve minority-class performance [24].

VI. CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FIELD

This review advances the state of knowledge in affective intelligence by providing a broad and up-to-date integrated examination of deep learning, multimodal fusion, and large-scale language models through a unified analytical framework. While prior studies typically address sentiment analysis, emotion recognition, or multimodal architectures in isolation, this study synthesizes cross-domain evidence to identify convergent methodological patterns, emerging architectures, and persistent research gaps across text, audio, and visual modalities. The work contributes novel comparative insights into how transformer-based, hybrid, and cross-modal embedding strategies are reshaping affective computing, and outlines a forward-looking taxonomy of trends that can inform the design of next-generation AI systems capable of nuanced emotional reasoning. By bridging findings from NLP, computer vision, and affective signal processing, this review positions itself as a foundational reference for researchers developing emotionally aware AI technologies.

VII. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

This corpus-driven review of contemporary studies in Affective Analysis—including Sentiment Analysis, Emotion Recognition, Hate Speech Detection, cyberbullying, and multimodal approaches—allows us to establish solid conclusions regarding the current state of the field, its dominant trends, and the impact of deep learning–based models. This synthesis draws exclusively from the findings discussed in the previous sections and remains fully aligned with the methodology adopted throughout the study.

A. Transformation of Affective NLP Through Transformer-Based Models

Text-based models constitute the core of affective NLP across the reviewed studies. The results consistently show that Transformer-based Models outperform classical deep learning architectures in tasks such as Sentiment Analysis, Emotion Recognition, and text-based Hate Speech Detection. In particular, BERT and its variants achieve superior accuracy and F1-score due to their ability to capture contextual semantic relationships, as evidenced in [2], [7], [8], [11], [15], [16], [19], and [36]. Classical architectures such as LSTM, CNN, or BiGRU, used in studies like [3], [7], [11], and [15], provide competitive baselines and perform adequately in small or well-structured datasets, but their capacity to model complex informal language is more limited. Hybrid text-based models—such as BERT combined with BiGRU or GNN components in [11]—demonstrate improvements in stability and generalization, indicating that architectural fusion can yield benefits even when working exclusively with textual input. Overall, the evidence confirms that contextualized Transformer-based Models represent the dominant paradigm in text-only affective tasks, while traditional and hybrid architectures remain useful in scenarios with constrained computational resources or smaller datasets.

B. Multimodality as a High-Impact Emerging Axis

The multimodal works — [29]–[35] — show that integrating text with images, audio, or additional signals significantly enhances the ability to interpret emotions, especially in contexts where textual information alone is ambiguous or insufficient. These studies consolidate multimodality as a key trend in the evolution of Affective Analysis.

C. Relevance of Multilingualism and Cultural Adaptation

Studies targeting languages other than English — [13], [15], [16], [19], [36]— highlight the importance of considering sociocultural factors and data availability. The results show that multilingual or domain-adapted models can achieve competitive

performance when supported by representative datasets and appropriate fine-tuning strategies.

D. Need for Improved Data, Explainable AI (XAI), and Efficiency

The integrated analysis of the corpus reveals three persistent cross-cutting needs:

Improved and expanded datasets

Reported in [3], [7], [8], [13], [15], [16], [36], the limitations in dataset size, balance, and diversity continue to affect generalization.

Explainable AI (XAI)

Articles [16], [19], [21], [27] emphasize the need to incorporate XAI mechanisms to ensure trust and transparency.

Computational optimization

Studies such as [20] and multimodal works [29]–[35] underline the importance of developing lighter models with lower computational requirements to enable real-world deployment.

E. Central Contribution of this Review

This review provides a structured, comparative, and up-to-date perspective on affective NLP, highlighting how recent advancements converge toward:

highly contextualized architectures,

integration of multiple information modalities,

models adaptable to diverse languages and cultures,

growing interest in transparency and efficiency.

This synthesis consolidates a deep understanding of the dominant trends and remaining challenges in the field, serving as a valuable reference for researchers and practitioners developing robust and reliable affective systems.

The findings of this review underscore a clear evolution toward emotion-aware AI models that integrate deep learning, multimodal fusion, and self-supervised language architectures. Although current systems demonstrate impressive performance across benchmark datasets, their real-world applicability remains limited by challenges such as contextual ambiguity, cultural variation in emotional expression, dataset bias, and the difficulty of modeling complex affective states beyond basic emotions.

F. Future Research Directions

Future research should advance in at least three directions.

First, there is a need for large-scale, culturally diverse multimodal datasets that reflect real-world emotional variability and enable robust generalization across languages, accents, and socio-cultural contexts.

Second, the emergence of multimodal LLMs calls for new architectures capable not only of classifying emotions but also of explaining the reasoning behind affective predictions, thus integrating affective computing with explainable AI.

Third, next-generation models should incorporate continuous affective dynamics—such as stress, fatigue, ambiguity, and mixed emotions—moving beyond categorical labels toward richer temporal representations aligned with human psychology.

Collectively, these research directions provide a roadmap for building emotionally intelligent AI systems that are reliable, transparent, and more deeply aligned with human communication.

Declaration on Generative AI

The authors used generative Artificial Intelligence tools solely to support textual coherence revision, improve writing quality, and optimize English translations during the preparation of this manuscript. Their use was strictly limited to linguistic assistance and did not intervene in the conceptual development, analysis, interpretation of results, selection or evaluation of the corpus, or the elaboration of the scientific contributions.

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Architecture of an Intelligent Predictive Analytics System for Gas Environment Monitoring Based on Sensor-Series IoT Devices

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***Abstract*—Industrial facilities operating with toxic and explosive gases require continuous monitoring systems capable not only of detecting threshold exceedances but also of anticipating hazardous trends. Conventional IoT-based gas monitoring solutions are primarily limited to real-time data acquisition and alarm triggering, which restricts their ability to prevent incidents proactively. This study presents the architecture of an intelligent predictive analytics system for gas environment monitoring that integrates sensor-series IoT gas analyzers with advanced data analytics. The proposed system is built on domestically developed SENSOR-Mine gas analyzers supporting LoRaWAN and Wi-Fi communication, centralized data storage in MS SQL Server, machine learning–based analytics implemented in Python, and a web-based visualization platform using ASP.NET MVC. Time-series forecasting models and anomaly detection algorithms are jointly employed to analyze gas concentration dynamics and identify potentially dangerous situations at early stages. Experimental validation using carbon monoxide measurements demonstrates the practical applicability of the proposed architecture for industrial safety monitoring. The presented approach provides a scalable foundation for intelligent gas environment monitoring systems aimed at reducing industrial risks and improving worker protection.**

Keywords*—Intelligent system; predictive analytics; IoT; gas analyzer; LoRaWAN; industrial safety; machine learning

I. Introduction

Ensuring industrial safety remains one of the most critical challenges for modern manufacturing enterprises. At first glance, this may seem like a well-studied issue; yet statistics confirm that it remains highly relevant today. According to the International Labor Organization, more than 2.3 million deaths and over 300 million cases of injuries and occupational diseases are recorded worldwide each year, directly or indirectly linked to unsafe working conditions [1]. In countries with a developed mining industry, such as Kazakhstan, a significant share of incidents is associated with hazardous gas leaks, which often lead to fires and explosions at industrial sites.

The World Health Organization has revised the permissible exposure limits for several hazardous substances, including carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide, and particulate matter [2]. This update, introduced only a few years ago, once again emphasizes the need for continuous air quality monitoring, not only in urban environments but also within industrial zones.

Recently, IoT-based intelligent sensor networks have been gaining attention as one of the most effective approaches to industrial monitoring [3, 4]. LoRaWAN, in particular, has shown strong performance, offering long communication range with minimal power consumption [4, 5]. Yet, sensors alone are limited: they primarily gather information, which by itself cannot guarantee safety. To address risks proactively, predictive analytics must be applied, allowing trends within time-series data to be analyzed and potential threats to be forecasted in advance [6].

Machine learning algorithms - such as LSTM, GRU, and autoencoders - have demonstrated strong performance when applied to the task of anomaly detection in streaming data generated by IoT sensors [7, 8].

This study focuses on the architecture of an intelligent predictive analytics system designed for gas environment monitoring. The foundation of the system is built upon domestically developed gas analyzer sensors-SENSOR-Mine 4G1 and SENSOR-Mine 4G2, created by KAB SYSTEMS. The purpose of the research is not limited to presenting the system's architecture; it also aims to demonstrate its practical applicability in ensuring continuous monitoring and the early prediction of potentially hazardous situations.

Recent studies have actively explored IoT-based solutions for air quality and gas monitoring in both indoor and industrial environments. Existing works demonstrate the effectiveness of sensor networks combined with wireless communication technologies, including LoRaWAN, for reliable long-range data transmission and low-power operation. Several approaches focus on real-time monitoring and alarm generation based on predefined thresholds, while others investigate the application of machine learning techniques for forecasting gas concentration dynamics or detecting anomalies in sensor data. However, in most reported solutions, predictive modeling and anomaly detection are addressed separately and are rarely integrated into a unified architecture designed for continuous industrial deployment. Furthermore, many studies remain limited to experimental setups and do not sufficiently consider system scalability, communication redundancy, and integration

with enterprise-level information systems. These gaps motivate the development of an integrated architecture that jointly combines IoT sensing, hybrid communication, and intelligent analytics for industrial gas environment monitoring.

Despite the significant progress in IoT-based gas monitoring systems, most existing solutions primarily focus on real-time data acquisition and threshold-based alarming, offering limited capabilities for proactive risk prevention. Many approaches lack integrated predictive analytics and are not designed to jointly address long-term trend forecasting and rare-event detection in industrial environments. Moreover, a substantial portion of reported solutions remains at the experimental or laboratory level and does not sufficiently consider deployment constraints such as communication reliability, scalability, and integration with industrial IT infrastructures. In this context, the present study proposes an architecture that combines distributed IoT gas analyzers with a hybrid LoRaWAN/Wi-Fi communication layer and intelligent data analytics. By integrating time-series forecasting models with anomaly detection methods within a unified system, the proposed approach extends conventional monitoring by enabling early identification of hazardous trends. The architecture is specifically designed for industrial deployment and is validated using data obtained from SENSOR–Mine gas analyzers, positioning this work as a practical and scalable solution for intelligent gas environment monitoring.

II. Methods and Materials

The hardware backbone of the gas monitoring system is formed by the SENSOR series gas analyzers, developed as part of a domestic project. These devices are designed to measure the concentrations of various gases (CO, CH_4, NO_2, H_2S, and others), with detection ranges spanning from 0.1 ppm to 1000 ppm, depending on the sensor module used. The measurement accuracy reaches ±2%, while the minimum detection threshold does not exceed ±2 ppm.

The SENSOR-Mine 4GN gas analyzer is designed for continuous monitoring of harmful and hazardous gases in the air of both underground and surface industrial facilities. The device serves as a tool for ensuring industrial safety, protecting workers' health, preventing accidents, and monitoring compliance with permissible exposure limits (PEL) in production and technological environments.

The 4GN model is configured to monitor up to four different gases, where N denotes the specific gas set. Table I presents the available models, each equipped with a defined combination of sensors tailored to the particular needs of industrial enterprises.

The gas analyzer is suitable for use in a wide variety of facilities, including mining operations, tunnels, underground storage units, ventilation shafts, as well as laboratory and industrial settings. The detection range specifications of the built-in sensors integrated into the SENSOR gas analyzer are provided in Tables II and III.

The key features of the developed gas analyzer include modular sensor replacement, an integrated microcontroller for primary data filtering, and support for wireless communication via LoRa and Wi-Fi. The device is designed for low power consumption, reaching up to 200 mW in transmission mode, while maintaining ease of use in industrial environments.

Similar solutions are already being applied in LoRaWAN-based research systems for air quality monitoring [9].

Communication layer: LoRaWAN and Wi-Fi. Two technologies were employed for transmitting data from the sensors to the server. LoRaWAN provides a communication range of up to 10 km with very low power consumption, making it an optimal choice for distributed systems [10]. Wi-Fi, in turn, is used as a backup channel and for local debugging. This combination was selected as the primary solution for mines, quarries, and industrial sites where large-area coverage is essential.

In the present implementation, a significant advantage lies in the networking capability between gas analyzers. Data packets are transmitted based on the measurements obtained, first exchanged among neighboring analyzers and then forwarded to the central database server, where the aggregated dataset undergoes further processing through predictive analytics.

TABLE I. Configurations of SENSOR-Mine 4GN

Configuration Number	Model Designation	Measured Gases
1	SENSOR – Mine 4G1	SO_2, NO_2, CO, O_2
2	SENSOR – Mine 4G2	H_2S, CH_4, CO, O_2

TABLE II. Specifications of SENSOR–Mine 4G1

Gas	Measurement Range	Accuracy	MAC RK (ppm)	Alarm Threshold (ppm)
SO_2	0–20 ppm	±2 ppm	3.4	3
NO_2	0–20 ppm	±2 ppm	1.0	1
CO	0–200 ppm	+20 ppm	17.4	20
O_2	0–25%	±4 % of the measured value	<18%	18% ↓

TABLE III. Specifications of SENSOR–Mine 4G2

Gas	Measurement Range	Accuracy	MAC RK (ppm)	Alarm Threshold (ppm)
H_2S	0–100 ppm	±10 ppm	10	10 ppm
CH_4	0–100% LEL	±3 % of the measured value	5% LEL	10% LEL
CO	0–200 ppm	±20 ppm	17.4	20 ppm
O_2	0–25%	±4 % of the measured value	<18%	18% ↓

Wi-Fi is primarily applied in local industrial facilities and laboratories, where high data transfer rates are critical. However, its use in confined environments such as mines or underground tunnels proves to be ineffective. Wi-Fi requires a constant network connection, and in harsh conditions, physical cables can easily be damaged by passing machinery or rockfalls. For this reason, Wi-Fi is most effective in surface applications, such as open industrial sites and quarries.

The key advantage of the hybrid communication model is its ability to combine the energy efficiency of LoRaWAN with the high bandwidth of Wi-Fi, enabling reliable data transmission under a variety of conditions. Considering these parameters, together with the devices' moisture, explosion, and dust protection, the system is well-suited for deployment in virtually any industrial environment.

Fig. 1 illustrates the alarm triggering algorithm in the gas analyzer: once a hazardous concentration is detected, the data are transmitted to the central database server, and an alarm notification is displayed in the user interface. At the same time, all analyzers located near the unit that raised the alarm automatically receive the signal and activate their own warning alerts, ensuring distributed safety awareness within the network.

A. Data Storage and Processing System

The data collected by the gas analyzer in real-time is transmitted to the server, where it is stored and further processed in a SQL Server database. The data storage structure is based on a relational model and contains fields for a unique sensor identifier, gas type (CO, NO_2, SO_2, CH_4, etc.), timestamp of data acquisition, measured concentration value expressed in ppm or mg/m³, and a status attribute indicating the measurement level (normal, warning, or alarm).

This organization of data enables the formation of time series, which are then used as the basis for machine learning and predictive analytics algorithms. Fig. 1 shows the architecture of the developed intelligent system, including sensors, server infrastructure, and the user interface.

This data storage structure enables the generation of time-series datasets, which can then be applied for training and operating machine learning algorithms. Fig. 1 presents the architectural diagram of the intelligent system.

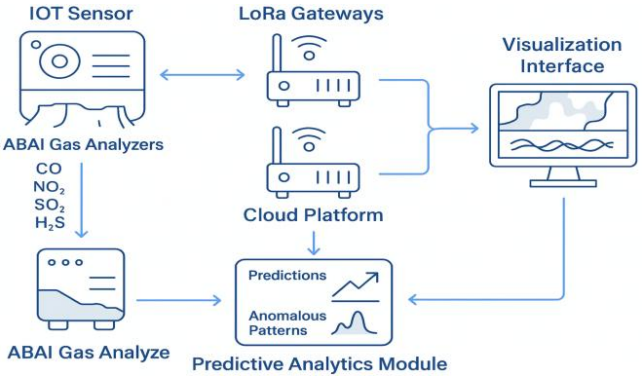

Fig. 1. Architecture of the intelligent system.

Machine learning algorithms are employed to analyze time-series data.

Specifically, Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) networks are used to predict gas concentrations based on historical measurements, while Gated Recurrent Unit (GRU) models provide a computationally efficient alternative to LSTM.

Isolation Forest is applied for detecting anomalies and sudden spikes in gas concentrations, whereas One-Class SVM is suitable for identifying rare and potentially hazardous events in scenarios where most observations correspond to normal operating conditions.

These methods are widely adopted in predictive monitoring tasks [6], [11].

B. Visualization and User Interface

The data are visualized using an ASP.NET MVC–based platform. The user interface enables real-time visualization of current gas concentrations on the facility map, time-series representation with predictive trends, and dynamic highlighting of detected anomalies. In addition, the system supports automated reporting on the overall condition of the facility.

During the experiments conducted in the chemical laboratory, data were collected using the SENSOR-Mine 4G2 gas analyzer, which measures carbon monoxide (CO) concentrations in the range of 0-200 ppm. As reference values, the regulatory limits of the Republic of Kazakhstan were applied, as previously shown in Table III – SENSOR-Mine 4G2.

Fig. 2 illustrates the dynamics of CO concentration changes over time [12]. It can be observed that within the interval of 120-130 minutes, concentration exceeded the permissible exposure limit (PEL) and reached the alarm threshold.

To analyze the data and uncover hidden patterns, advanced intelligent processing methods were applied, including the Isolation Forest (IF) algorithm for anomaly detection and the One-Class SVM method for identifying rare events and outliers.

Fig. 3 demonstrates the application of the Isolation Forest method. The red points highlight anomalous values corresponding to a sharp increase in CO concentration, which aligns with the incident detected by the gas analyzer.

Fig. 4 illustrates the identification of rare events with the One-Class SVM algorithm. The orange markers indicate points flagged as potentially hazardous. It is worth noting that this method can capture outliers even with minor deviations from the norm, which makes it valuable for early warning.

The effectiveness of different approaches was evaluated, and the results are summarized in Table IV. The analysis shows that recurrent neural networks such as LSTM and GRU provide the most accurate results in forecasting CO concentration dynamics. However, these models require significantly higher computational resources, which may be a limiting factor for industrial applications that have not yet reached full digital maturity.

While Table IV summarizes qualitative trade-offs, a full quantitative evaluation of anomaly detection performance (e.g., Precision, Recall, and F1-score) requires labeled ground truth for abnormal events. In the current laboratory validation, anomalies were identified based on threshold exceedance and expert inspection; therefore, we report comparative behavior of the methods and include quantitative benchmarking with labeled data as a planned extension of this work.

TABLE IV. COMPARISON OF MACHINE LEARNING ALGORITHMS APPLIED TO GAS ANALYZER (CO) DATA

Method	Task	Advantages	Limitations	Industrial Applicability
LSTM	Forecasting concentrations using time series	High accuracy; captures long-term dependencies	Requires large datasets and high computational resources	Suitable for long-term leak prediction
GRU	Similar to LSTM	Faster and lighter to train; fewer parameters	Slightly lower accuracy compared to LSTM	Suitable for real-time systems
Isolation Forest	Detecting anomalies and sudden spikes	Performs well with outliers; does not require large datasets	Does not forecast, only detects anomalies	Effective for instant accident detection
One-Class SVM	Identifying rare events in normal data	Capable of detecting unusual situations with limited data	Sensitive to parameter selection	Useful for early warning of accidents

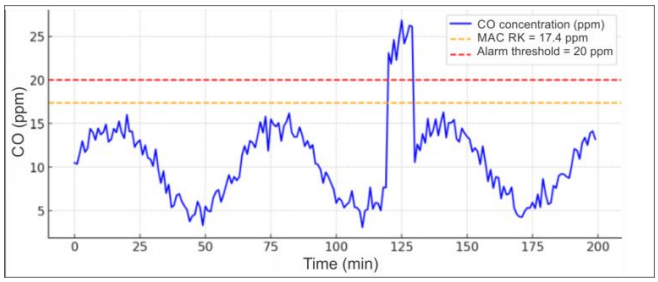

Fig. 2. Dynamics of CO concentration over time.

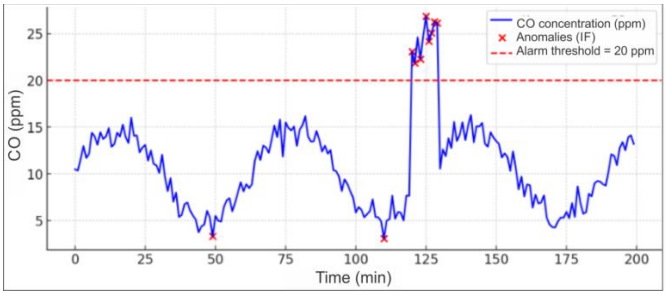

Fig. 3. CO anomaly detection using the Isolation Forest method.

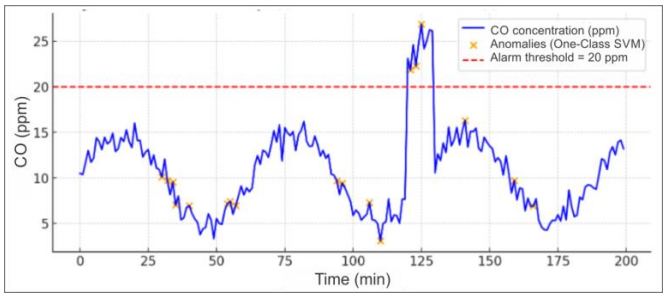

Fig. 4. Detection of rare CO events using the One-Class SVM method.

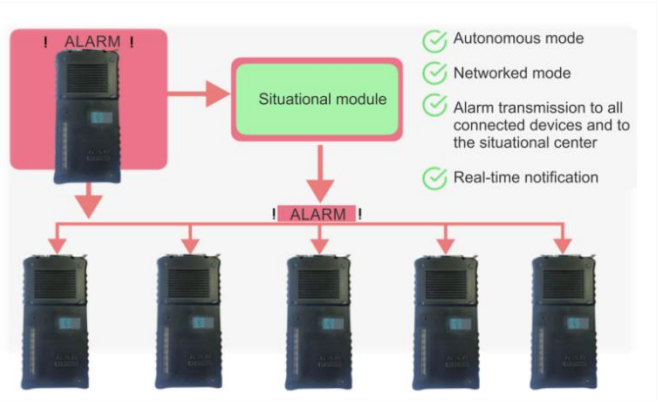

Fig. 5. The main functional components of the system.

On the other hand, anomaly detection methods such as Isolation Forest and One-Class SVM performed better in identifying hazardous episodes. This capability is particularly important for real-time monitoring systems, where timely detection of abnormal events is often more critical than precise long-term trend prediction. Fig. 5 illustrates the main functional components of the system and the alarm-triggering process when either maximum permissible concentrations of harmful substances or anomalies are detected.

Thus, the combination of forecasting models such as LSTM and GRU with anomaly detection methods like Isolation Forest and One-Class SVM provides a more comprehensive approach to intelligent monitoring of the gas environment. This integrated methodology not only records actual exceedances of maximum allowable concentrations but also predicts the development of hazardous trends. As a result, the overall level of industrial safety can be significantly improved.

The relevance of this study is largely driven by the urgent need to implement intelligent predictive analytics systems in industrial enterprises of the Republic of Kazakhstan. In environments where toxic and explosive gases are used, the risks of emergencies remain objectively high, making such solutions particularly valuable.

The scientific novelty of the work lies in the proposed integration of time-series forecasting methods with algorithms for detecting rare and anomalous events, based on data obtained directly from SENSOR - Mine 4G2 gas analyzers equipped with LoRa and Wi-Fi data transmission. This combined approach is introduced in the context of industrial safety tasks. Its application enhances the accuracy of analysis, reliability of the system, and timeliness of detecting potentially dangerous situations.

III. RESULTS

The developed architecture of the intelligent system consists of five core layers. At the sensor level, SENSOR-series gas analyzers provide continuous data collection. The communication layer employs LoRaWAN and Wi-Fi technologies for data transmission. On the server side, the information is accumulated and stored in SQL Server before being processed by the analytical module, implemented in Python with machine learning methods. The final layer is the user level, represented by a web interface built on ASP.NET

MVC, which provides access to monitoring results and analytics.

The proposed approach, tested through the analysis of CO concentrations, can be adapted to other industrial environments and facilities where the risk of hazardous gas accumulation exists. Below are typical scenarios where the system may prove especially useful.

For monitoring air quality in urban infrastructure, a distributed network of sensors can be deployed, focusing on the control of nitrogen dioxide (NO_2) and fine particulate matter (PM2.5). Integrating predictive model outputs with existing environmental monitoring systems makes it possible not only to record regulatory exceedances but also to provide early warnings to the population about potential air quality deterioration.

Fig. 6 illustrates air quality monitoring using SENSOR gas analyzers, with a modeled scenario of hazardous substance dispersion following an alarm event. The SENSOR devices are positioned at specific coordinates and measure data in real-time, transmitting results to a central control center. Based on sensor readings and detected anomalies, information on potential leakage sources is forwarded to local authorized bodies, including the Department of Emergency Situations and the Department of Industrial Safety. Subsequently, notifications are issued to residents within the affected zone through instant alerts delivered to their mobile devices. This example demonstrates the applicability of the intelligent predictive analytics system in an urban context.

In mines and quarries, monitoring methane (CH_4) and hydrogen sulfide (H_2S) concentrations remains one of the most critical tasks in underground operations. The use of LSTM models enables forecasting of methane buildup 5-10 minutes before reaching explosive thresholds. The Isolation Forest algorithm demonstrates high sensitivity to sudden spikes in hydrogen sulfide levels, which is crucial for preventing unexpected emergencies.

In metallurgical production, the main parameters of concern are carbon monoxide (CO) and sulfur dioxide (SO_2) concentrations. Recurrent neural networks, such as GRU, provide rapid and reasonably accurate predictions of CO dynamics in workshops, while the One-Class SVM method makes it possible to timely detect rare SO_2 emissions that often go unnoticed with conventional monitoring tools.

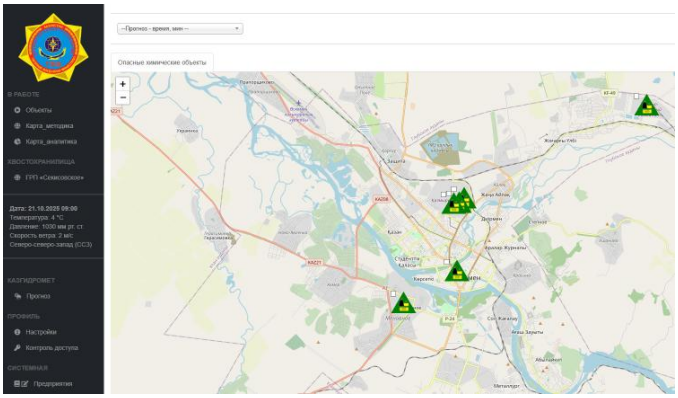

Fig. 6. Simulation of hazardous substance dispersion.

IV. Discussion

A comparison with existing monitoring systems [3, 5, 9] shows that the proposed architecture offers several advantages. Unlike most solutions that primarily focus on data collection, our system integrates LoRaWAN-based communication with predictive analytics methods, enabling not only real-time measurement but also forward-looking prediction. An additional advantage is the use of Python-based modules, which provide flexibility in applying different forecasting algorithms. Moreover, the inclusion of a backup communication channel via Wi-Fi enhances the system's reliability under conditions of primary channel instability.

Despite its advantages, any technical solution or system has certain limitations. For machine learning models to function correctly, a significant amount of data must be accumulated, which may reduce prediction accuracy at the initial stages of implementation. For laboratory validation, the dataset was collected using the SENSOR–Mine 4G2 gas analyzer with a sampling interval of 2 seconds. Measurements were performed at three controlled concentration levels (10 ppm, 100 ppm, and 190 ppm), resulting in a time-series dataset consisting of approximately 1,000–2,000 data points. Another challenge lies in the proper calibration of sensors, especially in harsh industrial environments. The sensitivity of algorithms to input data quality also requires attention: noise or incomplete measurements may lead to false alarms.

Nevertheless, the prospects for system development appear highly promising. One potential direction is integration with digital twins of industrial enterprises, enabling simulation of asset behavior under various scenarios. Another opportunity is the implementation of automated responses, such as automatic activation of ventilation systems or emergency notifications when maximum permissible concentrations are exceeded. In the long term, it is advisable to enable data transmission to state monitoring systems - including the Ministry of Emergency Situations and the Ministry of Ecology - to establish a unified infrastructure for industrial and environmental safety.

V. Conclusion

This study presents the architecture of an intelligent predictive analytics system for gas environment monitoring. The system is based on SENSOR-series IoT sensors, with data transmission via LoRa and Wi-Fi protocols, storage in SQL Server, analysis using Python, and visualization in an ASP.NET MVC web environment.

The developed solution enables early detection of potentially hazardous situations and can be integrated into the industrial infrastructure of enterprises in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Future research directions include expanding and comparing various predictive analytics algorithms; developing a digital twin of technological processes for integration with safety management systems; and conducting pilot implementations in the mining industry and territorial state agencies.

Thus, the proposed architecture lays the foundation for establishing a national industrial safety system focused on preventing emergencies and enhancing worker protection.

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A Systematic Literature Review on Organizational Readiness for Artificial Intelligence Adoption Based on the TOE Framework

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***Abstract*—Artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly being integrated into organizational processes, reshaping how organizations operate, compete, and make decisions. However, despite growing interest, many organizations face challenges in adopting AI effectively due to insufficient readiness. Prior research on organizational AI readiness has produced diverse and sometimes inconsistent conceptualizations, particularly with respect to definitions, readiness factors, and analytical approaches. To consolidate these dispersed insights, this study undertakes a structured review of the literature to synthesize organizational AI readiness factors through the lens of the Technology–Organization–Environment (TOE) framework. The review applies a transparent and replicable screening and selection process, consistent with PRISMA principles, to analyze peer-reviewed journal articles on organizational AI adoption and readiness. Through a multi-stage coding process, 124 readiness-related indicators were identified and subsequently consolidated into 35 factors, which were further synthesized into 12 core readiness themes mapped across the technological, organizational, and environmental dimensions of the TOE framework. The results indicate that organizational AI readiness is not a standalone condition, but a multidimensional and interdependent construct shaped by the alignment of technological capabilities, organizational structures and competencies, and external environmental conditions. By providing a structured synthesis of organizational AI readiness factors, this study clarifies the multidimensional nature of readiness and highlights cross-dimensional interdependencies within the TOE framework. The findings contribute theoretical clarity to the AI readiness literature and offer a consolidated foundation for future empirical studies and practical readiness assessments in organizational settings.**

Keywords*—*Artificial intelligence readiness; organizational readiness; TOE framework; systematic literature review; AI adoption

I. Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become a critical driver of organizational transformation, influencing how organizations create value, optimize operations, and support decision-making [1], [2]. In the past decade, the integration of AI across industries—from manufacturing and finance to agriculture and public services—has demonstrated its potential to enhance efficiency, accuracy, and decision-making quality [3], [4]. However, despite the recognized benefits, AI adoption at the organizational level remains uneven due to the complexity of readiness conditions required for successful implementation [5], [6].

Organizational readiness for AI adoption extends beyond technological availability and reflects a multidimensional capability involving infrastructure, human competencies, financial commitment, governance mechanisms, cultural alignment, and external conditions [7], [8]. The effectiveness of AI initiatives depends on how well organizations align these internal and external enablers to support transformation [9]. Accordingly, readiness assessment plays a critical role prior to AI investment to reduce the risks of implementation failure, limited utilization, or ethical challenges [10].

Among established innovation adoption theories, the Technology–Organization–Environment (TOE) framework [11] provides a comprehensive perspective for examining how technological capabilities, organizational characteristics, and environmental conditions jointly influence adoption behavior [12]. Although prior AI adoption studies have applied TOE to explore specific drivers (e.g., [6], [13], [14]), these findings have rarely been synthesized into a coherent and unified structure of organizational AI readiness. Existing research tends to fragment the discussion across isolated dimensions or sectors, leading to inconsistencies in how readiness factors are defined, categorized, and measured [15], [16].

While foundational theories such as the Technology–Organization–Environment framework originate from earlier literature, this review predominantly synthesizes empirical AI adoption and readiness studies published between 2015 and 2025, ensuring the contemporary relevance of its findings.

Moreover, while the literature has grown rapidly, few reviews have systematically mapped how TOE dimensions interrelate to influence AI readiness holistically. Earlier reviews have primarily emphasized either technological or organizational enablers, overlooking the moderating role of the environment [5]. Therefore, a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) is needed to consolidate the growing body of knowledge and identify theoretical and empirical patterns regarding AI readiness within the TOE framework.

While prior systematic literature reviews have examined artificial intelligence adoption from technological, organizational, or sector-specific perspectives, most existing reviews remain either descriptively oriented or focused on isolated determinants of adoption. They typically emphasize drivers and barriers without synthesizing readiness as a multidimensional organizational capability, nor do they systematically integrate cross-theoretical perspectives within a unified analytical structure. As a result, existing SLRs provide

limited guidance on how technological, organizational, and environmental readiness dimensions interact to shape organizational preparedness for AI adoption.

This study addresses this gap by conducting a theory-integrative systematic literature review that explicitly positions organizational AI readiness within the Technology–Organization–Environment (TOE) framework, while incorporating insights from Dynamic Capability and Institutional perspectives. By synthesizing empirical findings across these lenses, this review goes beyond prior SLRs to conceptualize AI readiness as a systemic and capability-oriented construct rather than a static pre-adoption condition. Specifically, this study produces: 1) a consolidated taxonomy of organizational AI readiness factors, 2) twelve core readiness constructs structured across the TOE dimensions, and 3) a conceptual foundation that can support future development of standardized AI readiness assessment frameworks.

Prior review studies have examined artificial intelligence adoption from organizational and managerial perspectives. Conceptual and agenda-setting reviews, such as Dwivedi et al. [5], discuss broad challenges, opportunities, and managerial implications of AI adoption. More recent systematic literature reviews employ the Technology–Organization–Environment (TOE) framework to analyze adoption and readiness determinants. For example, Ayinaddis [17] examines AI adoption dynamics across SMEs and large firms, while Ali and Khan [18] review organizational readiness factors influencing AI adoption decisions. However, these reviews primarily apply TOE as a classificatory lens to organize adoption or readiness determinants. In contrast, this study advances the literature by explicitly conceptualizing organizational AI readiness as an integrative and capability-oriented construct. By synthesizing the TOE framework with dynamic capability and institutional perspectives, this review shifts the analytical focus from factor identification to readiness as a systemic and evolving organizational capability shaped by cross-dimensional interdependencies.

Building on this positioning, this study conducts a decade-long synthesis (2015–2025) of peer-reviewed journal articles focusing on AI adoption through the TOE perspective. The review is structured around three research questions (RQs):

- How has the TOE framework been applied in AI adoption research at the organizational level?
- What are the key organizational readiness factors influencing AI adoption based on TOE dimensions?
- How are the interdependencies among TOE dimensions conceptualized in AI adoption readiness studies?

By addressing these questions, this study makes a significant contribution to both theory and practice. Theoretically, it advances the understanding of organizational readiness as a multi-dimensional construct within the TOE framework. Practically, it provides an evidence-based foundation for organizations and policymakers to design structured readiness assessments and strategies for AI adoption.

II. Methodology

This study adopts a systematic review strategy to identify, evaluate, and synthesize academic research addressing organizational readiness for Artificial Intelligence (AI) adoption within the Technology–Organization–Environment (TOE) framework. To ensure methodological rigor, transparency, and replicability, the review process was structured in accordance with established reporting standards for systematic literature reviews, including PRISMA [19]. The process was adapted from established practices in information systems research [20], [21].

A. Research Design and PICOC Framework

The design of this review was guided by the PICOC framework, which supports methodological clarity in systematic literature reviews by specifying the Population, Intervention, Comparison, Outcome, and Context dimensions [22].

In this review, the population comprised organizations that have adopted, or are in the process of adopting, AI technologies. The intervention dimension captured studies examining AI implementation frameworks, readiness assessment models, or organizational adoption approaches. Since the review did not seek to compare intervention groups, the Comparison element was not applied. The Outcome was defined as the identification of factors influencing AI readiness across the three TOE dimensions—technological, organizational, and environmental [11]. The Context covered organizational-level studies across sectors and regions, thereby capturing cross-industry and cross-national insights.

The application of PICOC ensured that the review maintained conceptual precision and excluded studies unrelated to organizational-level adoption, such as those focused on consumer behavior or algorithmic performance. This alignment enhanced both the relevance and internal validity of the synthesis.

B. Search Strategy

The literature search was performed using the Scopus database, which was selected due to its extensive coverage of peer-reviewed journals in management, computer science, and information systems. The database search was executed on October 14, 2025 (20:47 WIB) using a structured keyword combination designed to capture studies on AI adoption and organizational readiness within the TOE perspective, as follows:

"Artificial Intelligence" AND Adoption AND (TOE OR (Technology AND (Organization OR Organisation) AND Environment))

The search was limited to the period 2015–2025, reflecting a decade of maturity in both AI research and organizational readiness discourse [5]. To maintain scientific rigor, the inclusion was restricted to journal articles in their final publication stage, written in English, and classified as articles (not conference papers or reviews).

After applying these initial filters, 190 records were retrieved. Non-article publications—such as conference papers (46), book chapters (11), reviews (9), books (1), and articles in press (16)—were excluded. This refinement ensured that only high-quality, peer-reviewed journal outputs were retained for systematic screening.

C. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To maintain conceptual relevance and methodological rigor, explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied during the screening process. Table I summarizes the inclusion and exclusion criteria applied during the review.

TABLE I. INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Studies were included if they: a) addressed AI adoption or readiness at the organizational level, b) were theoretically aligned with the TOE framework or compatible constructs, c) provided empirical or conceptual insights relevant to organizational readiness.	Conversely, studies were excluded if they: a) focused solely on technical AI models or algorithms, b) investigated individual or consumer adoption behavior, c) lacked theoretical grounding in TOE or related frameworks, or d) were written in languages other than English.

After screening, 52 papers met the preliminary inclusion conditions. A subsequent full-text review identified 12 papers that did not sufficiently address organizational-level readiness, leading to a final corpus of 40 studies used for synthesis.

D. PRISMA Flow and Screening Process

The selection of studies followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) protocol, which structures systematic reviews through four sequential phases: The study selection process progressed through sequential phases encompassing record identification, relevance screening, full-text eligibility assessment, and final inclusion [19]. This process ensured methodological transparency and reproducibility throughout the review.

During the Identification phase, records were retrieved from the Scopus database based on the query and criteria defined in Section 2.2. After applying initial filters for language, document type, and publication status, a total of 190 journal records were identified for potential inclusion. As confirmed in the database export, no duplicate or automated removals were required prior to screening.

In the Screening stage, titles and abstracts of all 190 records were examined to determine their relevance to AI adoption and readiness at the organizational level. This stage resulted in the exclusion of 138 studies, primarily consisting of non-journal documents (e.g., conference proceedings, book chapters, reviews) and non-English publications. Consequently, 52 studies were retained for full-text assessment.

At the Eligibility phase, the full texts of these 52 studies were successfully retrieved for in-depth evaluation. Each paper was reviewed to confirm its theoretical alignment with the Technology–Organization–Environment (TOE) framework or compatible perspectives (e.g., RBV, DCV, Institutional Theory). Twelve studies were excluded at this stage for reasons such as a purely technical orientation (n = 4), lack of organizational or managerial focus (n = 5), or incomplete conceptual detail (n = 3).

Following the screening and eligibility assessment, a total of 40 peer-reviewed journal articles satisfied all selection criteria and were retained for qualitative synthesis. These studies constitute the final corpus analyzed through open, axial, and selective coding in Section III. The overall workflow, including the number of records removed, screened, and retained at each stage, is illustrated in Fig. 1, which presents the PRISMA flow diagram of the study selection process.

E. Data Extraction and Thematic Synthesis

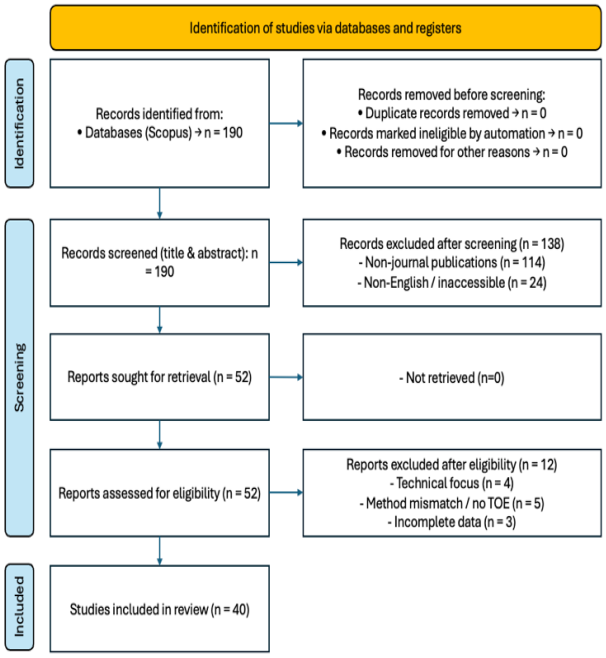

Fig. 1. PRISMA flow diagram of the study selection process.

A structured data extraction template was designed to capture consistent information from each study, including bibliographic details (authors, year, journal, country), type of AI technology and sectoral application, theoretical foundation (TOE or derivative), identified readiness factors per TOE dimension, and major findings and implications. The extracted data were analyzed using thematic synthesis, allowing for the identification and grouping of readiness factors under the three TOE dimensions. Subsequent cross-analysis was performed to examine interdependencies among these dimensions, consistent with the methodological guidance of Tranfield [21]. Through this process, the review produced an integrative synthesis of 40 studies, highlighting trends, methodological gaps, and opportunities for future research on organizational AI readiness.

III. RESULTS

A. Overview of Reviewed Studies

The systematic review encompassed forty peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2021 and 2025 that focus on organizational readiness for Artificial Intelligence (AI) adoption. As illustrated in Fig. 2, publication output increased substantially over the review period, rising from two studies in 2021 to seventeen studies in 2025. After a modest rise in 2022 and a slight dip in 2023, the trend accelerated sharply in 2024–2025, reflecting the growing strategic relevance of AI readiness within organizational digital transformation agendas. This temporal pattern indicates a shift from early exploratory

investigations toward more structured empirical validation and framework refinement.

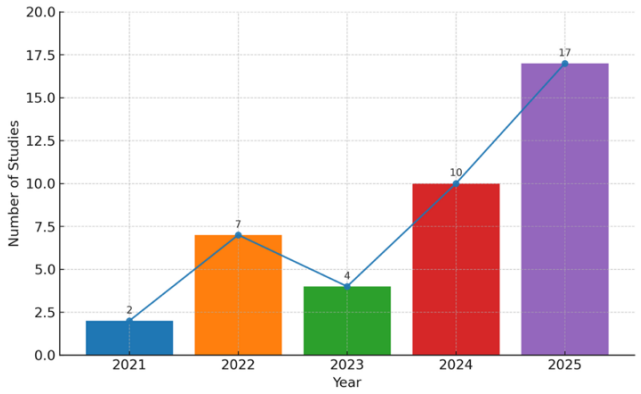

Fig. 2. Publication trend of AI readiness studies.

From a geographical perspective, the reviewed studies are distributed across multiple regions, although the distribution remains uneven. As shown in Fig. 3, the majority of reviewed studies originated from Europe (35%) and Asia (30%), where AI readiness research is often situated within policy-driven digitalization and institutional modernization contexts, where AI readiness has been explored within policy-driven digitalization and institutional modernization frameworks [23], [24], [25], [26]. Studies from North America (25%) emphasized resource-based and dynamic capability perspectives [4], [5], [16], while smaller shares originated from Africa (5%) and the Middle East (5%), often focusing on contextual barriers, policy readiness, and infrastructural challenges [27], [28], [29]. This geographical pattern indicates a strong research concentration in high-income and policy-advanced regions, with limited representation from emerging economies.

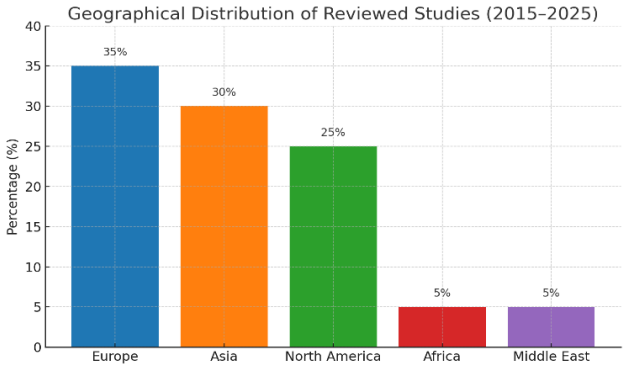

Fig. 3. Geographical distribution of reviewed studies.

With respect to industrial orientation, Fig. 4 indicates that most studies focused on manufacturing (20%), public administration (17.5%), and financial services (15%), reflecting sectors leading in automation, data-driven governance, and innovation [24], [30], [31]. Other contexts, including agriculture (10%), healthcare (10%), services (7.5%), and education (5%), were comparatively less explored but demonstrate emerging academic attention as AI adoption expands beyond high-tech industries [32], [33], [34], [35]. This sectoral diversity highlights that AI readiness is increasingly understood as a cross-sectoral organizational capability, applicable across both public and private sectors with varying degrees of digital maturity.

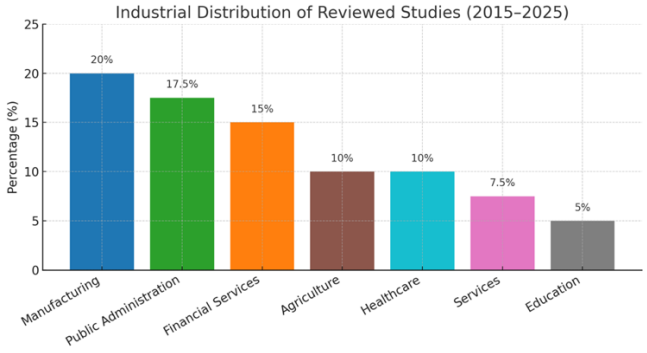

Fig. 4. Industrial distribution of reviewed studies.

From a methodological perspective, quantitative approaches (45%) constitute the largest proportion of the reviewed studies, with studies primarily employing survey-based analysis and structural equation modeling to test readiness determinants under the Technology–Organization–Environment (TOE) framework [7], [31], [36]. Qualitative studies (30%)—such as case studies and semi-structured interviews—provided an in-depth understanding of organizational dynamics, leadership, and governance in AI adoption [6], [24], [37]. A smaller proportion of mixed-method research (15%) combined statistical validation with contextual insights [16], [38], while conceptual papers (10%) contributed to the refinement of AI readiness constructs [39], [40].

Overall, the descriptive synthesis indicates that the field has developed empirical diversity, while remaining geographically and methodologically uneven. Most studies remain concentrated in high-income regions and quantitative paradigms, while cross-sectoral, longitudinal, and developing-country analyses remain limited. These gaps highlight the need for future research that broadens contextual coverage and examines AI readiness development within diverse institutional and economic settings.

B. Theoretical Foundations in AI Readiness Studies

The synthesis of the reviewed studies confirms that the Technology–Organization–Environment (TOE) framework [11] continues to function as the primary theoretical lens for analyzing organizational readiness for AI adoption. This continued relevance stems from its capacity to integrate technological, organizational, and environmental determinants within a unified analytical structure that explains adoption behavior beyond purely technical or managerial considerations [5], [7], [38].

Approximately 95 per cent of all reviewed articles employed TOE either independently or in combination with complementary theories. The integration trend reflects a conceptual broadening of readiness from deterministic adoption toward dynamic capability and institutional perspectives. Around 20 per cent of studies combined TOE with the Resource-Based View (RBV) to emphasize internal resources and capability orchestration [7], [23]. Another 15 per cent paired TOE with the Dynamic Capability View (DCV) to capture organizational agility and transformation processes [16], [37]. The Institutional Theory (≈10 per cent) appeared mainly in

public-sector contexts to highlight regulatory alignment and legitimacy pressures [24], [36]. Meanwhile, behavioral models such as the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) (≈7 per cent) were applied to integrate individual-level acceptance factors into organizational readiness [40], [41].

Together, these theoretical combinations indicate that AI readiness research is shifting from static adoption logic toward a multi-level capability perspective that connects technology, organization, and environment in an adaptive ecosystem. Table II presents the distribution of theoretical frameworks applied in AI readiness studies, summarizing how TOE is used both independently and in combination with complementary theories across the reviewed literature.

The dominance of TOE and its frequent integration with RBV, DCV, Institutional Theory, and TAM/UTAUT suggests that contemporary AI readiness studies increasingly adopt hybrid theoretical models. These combinations enable the operationalization of readiness not merely as a structural condition but as a dynamic capability responsive to institutional and human factors within digital transformation ecosystems.

C. Thematic Synthesis of Readiness Factors

To identify the core dimensions of organizational readiness for Artificial Intelligence (AI) adoption, a three-stage thematic coding process was conducted—open coding, axial coding, and selective coding—using the Technology–Organization–Environment (TOE) framework as the analytical lens. The TOE structure was defined a priori to classify readiness factors; it served as a guiding taxonomy rather than a coded outcome.

During the open coding stage, a total of 124 readiness-related statements were extracted from 40 Scopus-indexed journal articles published between 2015 and 2025. Each statement represented a specific condition, enabler, or organizational characteristic influencing AI adoption. Of these, 120 statements were classified into the three TOE dimensions—Technology (40), Organization (40), and Environment (40)—while four meta-level codes (Layer RBV, UTAUT (Individual), Mediating Construct, Moderating Variable) were identified as theoretical supplements and excluded from the readiness classification.

Through axial coding, semantically similar open codes were consolidated and standardized into 35 intermediate readiness categories distributed across the three TOE dimensions (15 technological, 12 organizational, and 8 environmental). These categories captured interrelationships among internal and external readiness factors. Finally, selective coding integrated these categories into 12 final readiness themes, with four readiness constructs identified within each TOE dimension. As summarized in Table III, this stepwise synthesis—from 124 open codes to 35 axial categories and finally 12 selective readiness constructs—illustrates the structured process of theoretical condensation applied in this study.

The technological dimension captures the internal enablers that support AI deployment, such as infrastructure, data, and innovation capability. The organizational dimension represents leadership, culture, and resource capabilities that drive AI transformation. Meanwhile, the environmental dimension reflects regulatory, market, and social conditions that facilitate or constrain adoption. As detailed in Table IV, these 12 readiness themes reflect the final synthesis of conceptual categories derived from the 40 reviewed studies, organized within the TOE framework.

TABLE II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS APPLIED IN AI READINESS STUDIES

Framework Combination	Analytical Focus / Conceptual Contribution	Representative Studies	% of Included Studies (n = 40)
TOE only	Baseline model integrating technological, organizational, and environmental readiness determinants. Serves as the dominant lens for organizational AI adoption.	[5], [32]	47.5 % (19 studies)
TOE + RBV (Resource-Based View)	Highlights internal resources and capability orchestration as strategic enablers of AI readiness. Focuses on value creation from existing assets.	[23], [7], [38]	20 % (8 studies)
TOE + DCV (Dynamic Capability View)	Emphasizes organizational agility, learning, and reconfiguration to sustain readiness under digital transformation.	[16], [42], [43]	15 % (6 studies)
TOE + Institutional Theory	Addresses legitimacy, regulation, and coercive pressures influencing AI readiness—particularly in public and regulated domains.	[24], [36], [44]	10 % (4 studies)
TOE + TAM / UTAUT	Integrates individual-level acceptance, perceived usefulness, and behavioral intention within organizational readiness contexts.	[41], [40]	7.5 % (3 studies)

TABLE III. SUMMARY OF CODING STAGES (OPEN–AXIAL–SELECTIVE) AND DISTRIBUTION ACROSS TOE DIMENSIONS

Coding Stage	Description of Process	Result	TOE Dimensions
Open Coding	Extraction of readiness-related concepts and determinants from 40 Scopus-indexed studies (2015–2025). Each indicator represents a discrete aspect of AI readiness.	124 open codes	Technology: 40 Organization: 40 Environment: 40 Non-TOE (meta): 4
Axial Coding	Consolidation of conceptually similar open codes into standardized readiness categories within each TOE dimension.	35 axial categories	Technology: 15 Organization: 12 Environment: 8
Selective Coding	Integration of axial categories into final readiness constructs describing organizational preparedness for AI adoption.	12 final readiness themes	Technology: 4 Organization: 4 Environment: 4

TABLE IV. SUMMARY OF SELECTIVE CODING THEMES ACROSS THE THREE TOE DIMENSIONS

TOE Dimension	Selective Theme (Readiness Construct)	Description / Core Meaning	Representative Studies
Technological Readiness	System Capability	Availability and reliability of IT/AI infrastructure, interoperability, and automation capacity enabling AI operation.	[26], [38], [40]
	Data & Analytics Readiness	Availability, governance, and security of organizational data supporting AI-driven analytics and decision-making.	[35], [25], [45]
	Technology Usability	Perceived usefulness, ease of use, and compatibility facilitating system integration and adoption.	[34], [46]
	Innovation Capability	Organizational ability to experiment with and integrate new AI tools, fostering digital agility and innovation.	[47], [48]
Organizational Capability	Strategic & Managerial Support	Leadership commitment, managerial capability, and strategic orchestration of resources for AI initiatives.	[38], [42]
	Human & Structural Readiness	Competence of human resources, training, and financial readiness supporting AI transformation.	[35], [31], [28]
	Cultural & Governance Alignment	Alignment of innovation culture, ethical leadership, and IT governance with AI objectives.	[42], [49], [28]
	Knowledge & Learning	Capacity for organizational learning, absorptive capability, and knowledge sharing sustaining AI competence.	[38], [50]
Environmental Readiness	Regulatory & Policy Context	National policies, regulations, and compliance standards promoting AI legitimacy.	[24], [51]
	Market Dynamics	Competitive pressure and industry turbulence driving AI adoption decisions.	[31], [46], [52], [53], [54], [55], [56]
	Collaborative Ecosystem	External partnerships, vendor support, and stakeholder collaboration fostering AI implementation.	[55], [53], [57], [58], [52], [25]
	Social Legitimacy & Ethics	Public trust, ethical acceptance, and social legitimacy influencing AI adoption readiness.	[52], [58], [59]

TABLE V. SUMMARY OF READINESS THEMES IDENTIFIED THROUGH THE SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

TOE Dimension	Core Readiness Themes	Core Conceptual Meaning
Technological Readiness	1. System Capability	Availability and reliability of AI infrastructure, interoperability, and automation systems forming the technological foundation.
	2. Data & Analytics Readiness	Data quality, accessibility, and governance supporting machine learning and analytics integration.
	3. Technology Usability	Perceived usefulness, ease of use, and compatibility of AI systems enhancing adoption.
	4. Innovation Capability	Capacity to integrate, experiment, and evolve with new AI tools and technologies.
Organizational Capability	5. Strategic & Managerial Support	Leadership commitment, managerial capability, and strategic orchestration of AI resources.
	6. Human & Structural Readiness	Workforce competence, training, and financial support enabling AI initiatives.
	7. Cultural & Governance Alignment	Innovation culture, ethics, and governance alignment with AI objectives.
	8. Knowledge & Learning	Organizational learning capacity, absorptive ability, and knowledge-sharing culture.
Environmental Readiness	9. Regulatory & Policy Context	Government regulations, standards, and policies legitimizing AI use.
	10. Market Dynamics	Competitive and market pressures driving AI transformation.
	11. Collaborative Ecosystem	Vendor support, external partnerships, and inter-organizational collaboration.
	12. Social Legitimacy & Ethics	Public trust, ethical norms, and social acceptance of AI implementation.

To consolidate these findings, Table V provides an overview of the final twelve core readiness themes as the outcome of the systematic literature review. Each construct represents an empirically supported component of organizational AI readiness that can later be operationalized into measurable indicators for quantitative assessment.

In summary, Table III to Table V collectively present the complete thematic synthesis from the coding process. Table III outlines the progressive abstraction stages, Table IV elaborates the thematic content of each dimension, and Table V consolidates the 12 final readiness constructs as the conceptual outcome of the SLR. This hierarchical structure provides both empirical transparency and theoretical coherence, forming the basis for the next stage of framework development and quantitative instrument design.

D. Cross-Dimensional Patterns and Interdependencies

A cross-dimensional analysis of the three TOE domains reveals that AI readiness is a systemic and interdependent construct, rather than a collection of isolated factors. The twelve core readiness themes identified in Section III C (see Table III to Table V) interact dynamically across technological, organizational, and environmental boundaries, indicating that improvements in one dimension often depend on reinforcing conditions in the others. Three dominant patterns of interaction emerged from the synthesis:

1) Technology–organization synergy: Technological capabilities such as infrastructure robustness, data quality, and AI tool maturity serve as essential enablers, yet they do not automatically ensure readiness without corresponding organizational commitment and competencies. Leadership support, resource allocation, and skilled personnel determine whether technological potential can be translated into business value [38], [6]. This interaction aligns with the Dynamic Capability View, which posits that technological enablers must be integrated with organizational routines and strategic management processes to create adaptive advantage [16], [42].

In essence, technology provides capability, while organization provides direction.

2) Organization–environment alignment: Institutional and regulatory contexts shape organizational governance, ethics, and risk management, reinforcing the principles of responsible AI adoption [24], [36]. External pressures—such as evolving regulations, market competition, and societal expectations—stimulate internal strategic agility and reform initiatives, linking organizational culture and leadership to broader environmental expectations [60], [61]. This alignment demonstrates how institutional legitimacy and regulatory compliance become catalysts for sustainable AI readiness.

External legitimacy drives internal adaptation.

3) Technology–environment dependence: Environmental conditions—comprising vendor collaboration, industry standards, and ecosystem maturity—directly influence technological readiness. These relationships accelerate innovation diffusion, promote interoperability, and reduce implementation risk through shared knowledge and technical standards [62], [63]. Such dependencies emphasize that AI readiness extends beyond a single firm; it requires a network-oriented and policy-supported ecosystem to sustain large-scale technological transformation.

Technological advancement flourishes in collaborative ecosystems.

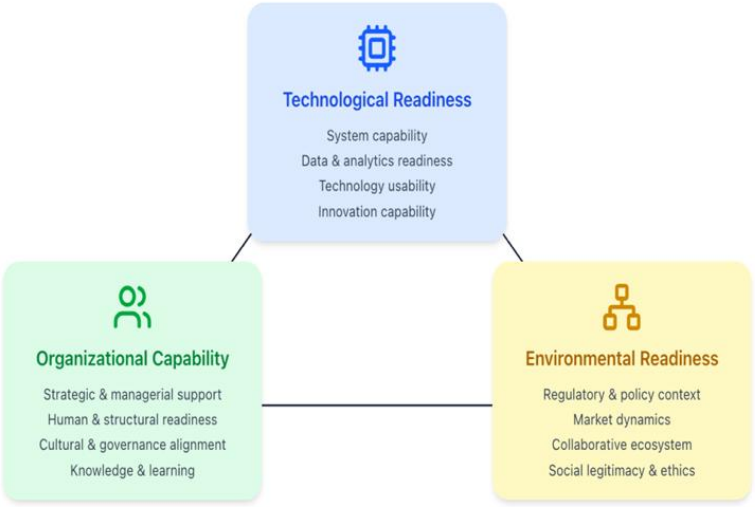

Fig. 5. Conceptual map of interdependencies among TOE dimensions.

Arrows between Technological and Organizational Readiness indicate internal synergy between capability and leadership [see Fig. 5]. Arrows connecting Organizational and Environmental Readiness show alignment between strategy, governance, and external expectations. Arrows linking Technological and Environmental Readiness highlight dependence on industry standards, vendor networks, and regulatory support. Together, these relationships form a systemic readiness model, depicting AI adoption as an ecosystem-driven capability embedded in multi-level interactions.

E. Summary of Findings

The systematic review of forty peer-reviewed studies revealed a comprehensive picture of how organizations develop readiness for Artificial Intelligence (AI) adoption. Through a three-stage thematic synthesis—open, axial, and selective coding—124 readiness-related indicators were identified, refined into 35 standardized categories, and ultimately consolidated into twelve core readiness themes organized within the Technology–Organization–Environment (TOE) framework. These twelve core readiness themes capture the multidimensional conditions that jointly determine an organization's preparedness to adopt, manage, and sustain AI transformation.

Technological readiness provides the capacity to act through infrastructure, data quality, usability, and innovation enablers that make AI implementation technically feasible. Organizational capability defines the ability to adapt and lead through strategic commitment, human competence, and governance mechanisms that enable effective transformation. Meanwhile, environmental readiness sets the context to legitimize and sustain AI initiatives by shaping regulatory alignment, market competition, collaboration networks, and public trust [7], [44], [64].

As summarized in Table VI, these findings demonstrate that successful AI adoption requires alignment and mutual

reinforcement among the three TOE dimensions. AI readiness thus functions as an integrative organizational capability—a systemic configuration in which technology, organization, and environment co-evolve to enable sustainable AI transformation.

TABLE VI. CONCEPTUAL CONSOLIDATION OF AI READINESS DIMENSIONS

TOE Dimension	Primary Readiness Focus	Strategic Interpretation / Core Implication
Technological Readiness	• System Capability • Data & Analytics Readiness • Technology Usability • Innovation Capability	Represents the organization's technical foundation—the digital infrastructure, data governance, and innovation capacity that provide the *ability to act* and support AI functionality.
Organizational Capability	• Strategic & Managerial Support • Human & Structural Readiness • Cultural & Governance Alignment • Knowledge & Learning	Reflects internal leadership, competencies, culture, and learning systems that transform technological potential into operational and strategic performance.
Environmental Readiness	• Regulatory & Policy Context • Market Dynamics • Collaborative Ecosystem • Social Legitimacy & Ethics	Defines the external environment—regulatory frameworks, competitive forces, partnerships, and social trust—that legitimize and sustain AI adoption at the ecosystem level.

IV. DISCUSSION

This discussion synthesizes the review findings by explicitly addressing the three research questions of the study. Rather than treating technological, organizational, and environmental readiness as independent dimensions, the analysis reveals how prior studies conceptualize AI readiness as an interdependent and systemic organizational capability. The following discussion interprets these patterns in relation to RQ1–RQ3 and highlights their theoretical and practical implications.

A. Evolution of Theoretical Foundations

Across the reviewed literature, the Technology–Organization–Environment (TOE) framework [11] remains the principal theoretical lens for examining organizational readiness for AI adoption. Its enduring appeal lies in its ability to integrate technological, organizational, and environmental determinants into a single systemic model that explains adoption behavior beyond purely technical or managerial boundaries [5], [7], [65]. By linking these three dimensions, TOE positions readiness as a multidimensional construct that aligns internal capability with external opportunity, providing a balanced analytical view of how organizations prepare for technological transformation.

Over time, the field has undergone a theoretical broadening. Earlier studies published between 2015 and 2019 predominantly applied TOE in a deterministic manner, conceptualizing readiness as a pre-adoption condition indicating whether organizations possessed sufficient capability to adopt AI [66], [67]. From 2020 onward, researchers increasingly reconceptualized readiness as a dynamic organizational capability, embedding the TOE framework within complementary perspectives such as the Resource-Based View (RBV) [68] and the Dynamic Capability View (DCV) [69]. In this hybridization, readiness is no longer treated as a binary condition but as an evolving capability that enables organizations to sense technological opportunities, seize them strategically, and reconfigure internal structures in response to environmental turbulence [65], [16], [70].

Parallel developments have further enriched TOE through the adoption of Institutional Theory [75], emphasizing that readiness is also influenced by external legitimacy pressures, regulatory conformity, and ethical accountability [64], [71], [72].

At the micro level, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) [73] and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) extend the discussion by linking user-level adoption behaviors to organizational and institutional readiness [66], [74]. Together, these integrations demonstrate that readiness operates across nested levels—from individual cognition to institutional governance—connecting micro, meso, and macro dimensions of capability formation.

Collectively, this convergence marks a paradigmatic shift from viewing readiness as a deterministic predictor of adoption to conceptualizing it as a strategic, adaptive, and socially embedded capability. The TOE framework, augmented by the RBV [68], DCV [69], and Institutional Theory [75], now functions as an integrative meta-framework that connects technological affordances, organizational competencies, and environmental legitimacy within complex socio-technical systems. This theoretical evolution substantiates the continued use of TOE as the conceptual core of AI readiness research—its flexibility enabling consistent yet context-sensitive analysis across sectors, organizational scales, and AI applications.

This pattern indicates that TOE is increasingly used not merely as a classificatory framework but as a foundational structure for organizing organizational readiness constructs in AI adoption research.

B. Dominant Readiness Factors and Thematic Patterns

The thematic synthesis derived from open, axial, and selective coding identified twelve core readiness themes distributed across the technological, organizational, and environmental dimensions of AI adoption.

Together, these themes form a consolidated structure of readiness constructs applicable across industries and organizational contexts, providing the conceptual foundation for future assessment frameworks and maturity models. The findings indicate that technological readiness is the most extensively examined dimension, with particular emphasis on infrastructure maturity, data governance, interoperability, and cybersecurity [76], [77], [66]. Unlike traditional IT readiness, AI readiness extends beyond digital infrastructure toward data-

centric capabilities such as accessibility, analytical accuracy, and model reliability [7], [78].

Accordingly, technological readiness represents a necessary, yet insufficient, condition for successful AI-driven transformation—it provides the technical foundation, but organizational and environmental mechanisms ultimately determine whether technological potential can be realized [79], [16].

Organizational readiness reflects a combination of managerial, structural, and cultural capacities that enable and sustain transformation processes. The synthesis highlights four dominant constructs: strategic and managerial support, human and structural readiness, cultural and governance alignment, and knowledge and learning [80], [72], [81], [70]. Leadership and strategic alignment consistently appear as pivotal determinants, reinforcing theories of vision-driven transformation within strategic management literature [69], [16]. Furthermore, the growing integration of ethical governance and responsible AI practices demonstrates that readiness also involves legitimacy and trust, not merely competence or resource sufficiency.

Environmental readiness refers to the institutional, market, and societal conditions that influence and constrain organizational AI adoption. Its four major constructs include regulatory and policy context, market dynamics, collaborative ecosystem, and social legitimacy and ethics [64], [82], [83]. External collaboration and policy alignment have become increasingly vital, especially in public-sector and cross-sector ecosystems where interoperability and compliance determine adoption success [84], [85]. These findings reinforce the view that AI readiness extends beyond internal organizational capabilities and is embedded within a broader socio-technical and institutional ecosystem, shaped by institutional frameworks and inter-organizational relationships.

Integrating these twelve core readiness themes confirms that AI readiness operates as a multidimensional organizational capability, combining technological enablement, managerial adaptability, and environmental alignment. This holistic perspective moves the field beyond deterministic adoption models, positioning readiness as a dynamic equilibrium between technological potential, organizational capacity, and environmental legitimacy—an equilibrium that defines an organization's sustained ability to transform through AI.

Taken together, these readiness factors suggest that AI adoption success is less dependent on isolated technological assets and more contingent on the alignment of technological capability, managerial orchestration, and environmental legitimacy.

C. Cross-Dimensional Interdependencies

Cross-dimensional analysis across the TOE framework demonstrates that the twelve core readiness themes are inherently interdependent instead of analytically isolated, forming a systemic and recursive structure rather than a set of discrete categories. Technological readiness without corresponding organizational capability rarely leads to meaningful transformation [6], [80], while strong leadership and financial investment remain ineffective without high-quality data and reliable AI infrastructure [77], [76]. Environmental readiness—particularly regulatory clarity, policy alignment, and stakeholder trust—moderates the effectiveness of both technological and organizational readiness, demonstrating that adoption success depends on the degree of contextual alignment [64], [67], [71].

Such interdependencies align with the concept of mutual shaping in socio-technical theory, which emphasizes the co-evolution of technologies, organizational structures, and institutional contexts.

Empirical evidence reinforces this view: effective AI adoption requires not only robust infrastructure and data systems but also adaptive governance mechanisms that respond dynamically to ethical, regulatory, and market conditions [16], [72], [83]. Accordingly, readiness should not be perceived as a collection of independent domains but as a coupled system of enablers, whose collective value emerges through interaction and interdependence across all TOE dimensions.

From a theoretical perspective, these cross-dimensional dynamics align with the Dynamic Capability View (DCV), which conceptualizes readiness as a higher-order capability that enables organizations to integrate, build, and reconfigure technological and managerial resources in response to environmental turbulence [69], [80]. From a managerial standpoint, enhancement in one dimension (e.g., technology) must be complemented by synchronized investments in other areas (e.g., human skills, governance, and partnerships). This multi-domain coherence reflects the organizational alignment required for AI-driven transformation, ensuring that technological, human, and institutional components evolve cohesively.

Fig. 5 illustrates this systemic interplay among technological, organizational, and environmental readiness dimensions, visualizing how reciprocal relationships sustain overall readiness maturity. Collectively, these patterns reinforce the conceptualization of AI readiness as a socio-technical system capability—an emergent property arising from balanced maturity, continuous alignment, and coordinated evolution across the TOE framework.

This finding directly addresses RQ3 by demonstrating that AI readiness is conceptualized in the literature as a co-evolving system, where weaknesses in one TOE dimension may constrain the effectiveness of others.

D. Theoretical and Practical Implications

From a theoretical standpoint, this review advances TOE-based research by shifting the analytical focus from a deterministic adoption model toward a capability-oriented and ecosystem-level perspective.

These theoretical implications are directly derived from the cross-dimensional synthesis of readiness constructs identified in Section A to C. By integrating insights from the Resource-Based View (RBV) and the Dynamic Capability View (DCV), readiness is redefined as a dynamic organizational capability—reflecting an organization's ability to sense opportunities, seize technological potential, and transform internal processes in response to environmental constraints [69], [16]. This reconceptualization advances theory by positioning readiness

not as a static precondition for adoption but as a continuous process of adaptation, learning, and institutional alignment within socio-technical systems.

The integration of Institutional Theory further extends the TOE framework's boundary by embedding normative, regulatory, and ethical dimensions into the readiness construct. AI adoption entails socio-ethical implications requiring compliance, accountability, and legitimacy [64], [72], [83]. Consequently, readiness now encompasses a form of moral capability—the organizational capacity to align technological innovation with societal expectations and governance norms. This theoretical enrichment broadens the TOE framework's explanatory power, providing a more holistic understanding of how AI readiness functions as a multi-level and socially embedded capability in digitally transforming environments.

From a practical standpoint, the synthesized findings provide actionable guidance for organizations as well as policymakers. Organizations should design balanced readiness strategies that integrate technological, organizational, and environmental investments rather than focusing narrowly on infrastructure or human capital. This includes establishing robust data governance mechanisms, fostering AI ethics and transparency frameworks, and nurturing ecosystem partnerships that accelerate responsible innovation [7], [79].

For policymakers, the findings highlight the need to build enabling regulatory environments and cross-sectoral collaborations that minimize readiness disparities across industries, sectors, and economies [85], [86]. Such alignment between internal organizational practices and external institutional support is essential to ensure equitable and sustainable AI diffusion.

In synthesis, this review positions AI readiness as both a theoretical bridge between information systems and strategic management research and a practical instrument for guiding digital transformation strategies in the era of intelligent technologies. These practical implications reflect the interdependent nature of technological, organizational, and environmental readiness dimensions identified in the review. Table VII summarizes the theoretical contributions and practical implications derived from this study.

TABLE VII. SUMMARY OF THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Perspective	Key Contributions / Implications	Representative Sources
Theoretical	• Reframes TOE from a deterministic adoption model to a capability-based, dynamic, and ecosystemic framework. • Integrates RBV and DCV to define readiness as a higher-order organizational capability for sensing, seizing, and transforming. • Embeds Institutional Theory to capture legitimacy, ethics, and governance as integral components of readiness. • Expands TOE into a multi-level socio-technical framework connecting micro (user), meso (organizational), and macro (institutional) levels.	[69], [16], [64], [72]
Practical	• Guides organizations to pursue integrated readiness strategies across technological, organizational, and environmental domains. • Emphasizes data governance, AI ethics, and transparency as enablers of responsible innovation. • Encourages ecosystem partnerships and inter-sectoral collaborations to strengthen readiness maturity. • Informs policymakers to establish enabling regulations and reduce readiness gaps across industries and economies.	[79], [7], [86], [85]

E. Field Maturity and Research Gaps

The temporal trend observed between 2015 and 2025 shows that AI readiness research has evolved from conceptual exploration to empirical consolidation, signaling a field that is maturing yet uneven in scope and depth. Europe and Asia dominate the literature, accounting for over 60% of publications, reflecting regions with strong institutional and policy support for digital transformation [64], [65]. However, this geographic concentration also introduces contextual bias, as only a limited number of studies examine readiness in developing or low-income economies [27], [72]. Future research should therefore broaden its contextual coverage to enhance cross-regional generalizability and uncover readiness dynamics in underrepresented environments.

Methodologically, nearly half of the studies (around 45%) employ quantitative, cross-sectional designs that capture static relationships among TOE variables. Few investigations adopt longitudinal or mixed-method approaches capable of tracing the evolution of readiness or its performance outcomes over time [7], [16]. Moreover, limited research has connected readiness assessment to benefit realization frameworks, such as Benefits Management [87] or the Generic IT/IS Business Value model [88]. The absence of such linkages constrains the field's ability to demonstrate how readiness translates into tangible organizational value, leaving a critical bridge between measurement and impact underdeveloped.

Conceptually, AI readiness studies have yet to fully integrate human, ethical, and environmental sustainability as integral dimensions of preparedness. As AI technologies increasingly influence organizational decision-making, future studies must embed responsible AI principles, socio-ethical governance, and sustainability considerations into readiness constructs [89], [83]. This integration would extend current frameworks beyond technical and managerial boundaries, positioning readiness as a foundation for ethical, inclusive, and context-sensitive AI transformation.

Taken together, the evidence suggests that the AI readiness field is transitional moving from descriptive to dynamic and integrative paradigms. While theoretical maturity is advancing, significant opportunities remain to expand contextual diversity, strengthen methodological rigor, and link readiness to measurable value creation. Overall, this synthesis positions AI readiness as a multi-level, evolving capability embedded within socio-technical and institutional systems, requiring continuous

adaptation to ensure responsible and sustainable digital transformation.

V. Conclusion

This systematic literature review synthesizes forty peer-reviewed studies published between 2015 and 2025 to examine how organizational readiness for Artificial Intelligence (AI) adoption is conceptualized within the Technology–Organization–Environment (TOE) framework. By consolidating fragmented readiness concepts into twelve core readiness themes across technological, organizational, and environmental dimensions, this study demonstrates that AI readiness constitutes a multidimensional, capability-oriented construct rather than a static precondition for adoption. The findings clarify the structural boundaries of organizational AI readiness and establish an integrated conceptual foundation to support future empirical research and readiness assessment initiatives.

Despite the systematic approach adopted in this review, several limitations should be acknowledged. The analysis was limited to English-language journal articles indexed in Scopus and relied on heterogeneous conceptualizations of readiness across the reviewed studies. In addition, the review focused on organizational-level readiness and did not examine post-adoption stages such as value realization. Future research may build on these findings by prioritizing longitudinal research designs, developing standardized readiness measurement models, and examining how organizational readiness translates into performance outcomes and sustained AI-enabled value.

Ultimately, this study reconceptualizes organizational AI readiness from a checklist of adoption prerequisites into an evolving and interdependent capability shaped by the alignment of technological, organizational, and environmental dimensions. This perspective provides a critical foundation for linking readiness assessment with strategic decision-making and long-term, responsible AI-driven transformation in complex organizational contexts.

Acknowledgment

This study benefited from the analytical and visualization assistance of OpenAI's ChatGPT (GPT-5), which was used to support literature synthesis, reference organization, and ensure narrative consistency and analytical clarity. All AI-assisted inputs were reviewed and validated by the author to ensure academic accuracy and integrity. All interpretations, analyses, and conclusions presented in this study remain solely the author's responsibility.

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Volumetric Feature Learning for High-Fidelity Two-Dimensional Dental Cast Image Reconstruction Using Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs)

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***Abstract*—Dentistry is a medical branch that diagnoses and treats oral diseases, helps maintain oral function, and improves oral aesthetics. Dental casts are three-dimensional models of a patient's oral tissues that can be used to study oral anatomy, assess occlusal relationships, and determine tooth alignment. Traditionally, they were made of gypsum, an impression material used to pour into the patient's mouth molds. Meanwhile, digital ones are three-dimensional models generated virtually using modern digital imaging and intraoral scanners. Unlike physical models, which require a lot of manual work and ample storage space, digital models can be produced rapidly, easily modified, and stored for long-term usage. In this study, we present Denta-RecGAN, a novel approach based on Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs) that maps a two-dimensional dental cast image into a volumetric latent space and projects it back into a two-dimensional output. The proposed approach employs a 2D encoder to process dental cast images as input, enabling the extraction of spatial features. The structural depth is modelled, and noise is suppressed using volumetric 3D latent space denoising models; a 2D decoder then reconstructs a high-quality image. The model is trained under an adversarial learning approach using the IO150K dataset. The proposed architecture achieved Mean Absolute Error (MAE) of 0.0128, 0.0127, 0.0128; Structural Similarity Index Measure (SSIM) of 0.9450, 0.9452, 0.9453; and Peak Signal-to-Noise Ratio (PSNR) of 28.84, 28.85, 28.84 decibels across training, validation, and testing sets. These results demonstrate the effectiveness of volumetric feature learning in enhancing the accuracy of 2D image reconstruction and preserving fine structural details.**

Keywords*—Dental image reconstruction; generative adversarial networks; latent space representation; two-dimensional to three-dimensional mapping; volumetric deep learning

I. Introduction

Orthodontists and prosthodontists use dental casts to detect oral diseases, determine the appropriate treatment for each patient, and help manufacture a precisely suitable appliance that is comfortable for patients. These casts are three-dimensional representations of the patient's oral structures, including teeth, gingiva, and other oral tissues. Dental casts can be physical or digital, depending on the method of creation [1]. These models can be used to demonstrate tooth alignment and to evaluate treatment results. The digital model can facilitate communication between dentists and dental laboratories that manufacture custom dental models for comfort [2].

In the past, dentists made dental casts using sticky materials called alginate or polyvinyl siloxane. They would place these materials in the patient's mouth to get the shape of the patient's teeth. Then they made an impression, called a stone model, by pouring plaster or resin into a mold [3]. Although widely used, this method can cause some problems. The materials may shrink or change shape, making it uncomfortable for the person taking the impression [4]. Physical models can break easily and take up a lot of space [5].

Digital technologies have replaced conventional stone models with virtual counterparts, enhancing precision and efficiency. Digital models help ensure measurements are accurate and reduce human mistakes [6]. They can use intraoral scanners, computed tomography (CT) scanners, or other imaging devices to produce detailed digital images that closely resemble real braces [7], [8]. These digital models can be seamlessly integrated into computer-aided design and manufacturing (CAD/CAM) workflows for the design of restorations, surgical guides, and orthodontic appliances [9]. However, high-end 3D scanners remain expensive and technically demanding, limiting their use in low-resource clinical environments [10].

With recent advances in artificial intelligence, particularly deep learning, there has been a growing interest in the use of neural networks for digital dental reconstruction models depending on utilizing Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) or employing transformers or using Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs) have shown high accuracy in reconstructing both dental and craniofacial structures from two-dimensional (2D) data [11],[12]. These methods enable the use of limited 2D inputs to infer both structural and volumetric depth, thereby reducing reliance on expensive 3D imaging systems.

This study proposes Denta-RecGAN, leveraging volumetric reasoning via a novel hybrid 2D-3D convolutional neural network designed to reconstruct 2D grayscale dental cast images. Volumetric reasoning is incorporated by combining three main components: a 2D encoder, a 3D latent space denoiser, and a 2D decoder. This combination allows us to capture both the spatial and structural relationships within the data. The spatial features were initially extracted from the input images using 2D convolutional layers, which were then reshaped into a 5D volumetric tensor, and the 3D convolutional layers were then processed together. The structural depth and inter-slice correlations were captured through the network at the volumetric processing stage. We look at flat (two-dimensional) images and

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understand their properties. Then we visualize them in three-dimensional space to enhance them. After that, we revert them to flat images, taking care to preserve their details.

This study demonstrates a new method for dentists to create better images of teeth and jaws. This method combines precise spatial reasoning (how three-dimensional objects occupy space) with two-dimensional photos (such as photographs or X-rays).

This research contributes to the growing field of AI-driven digital dentistry, without the need for complex scanning hardware. It also establishes a foundation for future applications, such as single-view 3D estimation, clinical maxillofacial reconstruction, and digital prosthesis design.

The evaluation of our proposed architecture (Denta-RecGAN) is performed using three standard quantitative metrics. The average deviation between a guess and the true answer was measured by the Mean Absolute Error (MAE). It considers all guesses, determines how different they are from the real numbers, ignores whether they are too high or too low, and then calculates the average of these differences, which measures perceptual similarity and is captured by calculating the Structural Similarity Index Measure (SSIM). To understand how sharp and detailed an image is after editing or modification, we used the peak signal-to-noise ratio (PSNR). Furthermore, the proposed network does not need explicit three-dimensional supervision, reducing dependence on complex 3D ground truth datasets, and it is capable of learning volumetric cues.

The remainder of our research is divided into the following sections: Section II provides an overview of current studies on two-dimensional-to-three-dimensional and the reverse reconstruction approaches. Then Section III explains how to train a computer. It covers data preparation, cleaning, computer training, setting training rules, and verifying mastery of the learning process. Section IV compares the proposed architecture with other relevant work. Section V presents the study's conclusions, and Section VI discusses potential directions for future research to improve the clinical accuracy of three-dimensional model reconstruction.

II. Literature Review

The main advantage of deep learning in maxillofacial prosthetics is the reconstruction of three-dimensional (3D) models from two-dimensional (2D) inputs, such as images or videos. Various deep learning architectures play an essential role in the medical domain, especially the dental one, which categorizes studies into sections. Some studies use Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs), transformers, and Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) as basic building blocks. The first section presents studies that focus on converting two-dimensional inputs into three-dimensional outputs, and the second section presents studies that concentrate on reverse reconstruction, converting three-dimensional input data into two-dimensional outputs:

A. Two-Dimensional (2D) -To-Three-Dimensional (3D) Reconstructions

Recently, deep neural networks have led to the emergence of 3D models or meshes from single-view two-dimensional (2D) images. We use these deep neural networks to generate 3D volumes from 2D images. However, these methods often require synthetic datasets and 3D supervision. X. Zhang et al. [13] used Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) by introducing PX2Tooth, which is a model that uses a one panoramic image to create a three-dimensional point cloud of a tooth. The proposed architecture consists of two fundamental stages. The first stage uses a single panoramic X-ray (PX) image to segment two permanent teeth. To enhance the generation quality, particularly in the root apex region, the Tooth Generation Network (TGNet) is utilized to create 3D teeth from point clouds. The authors also used a dataset that they created themselves. This dataset consists of 499 CBCT and panoramic X-ray pairs. They split their dataset into three subsets with an 8:1:1 ratio for training, validation, and testing, respectively. They achieved an intersection over union (IoU) of 0.793 with their model but could improve results by increasing reconstruction accuracy.

Many studies have reconstructed three-dimensional (3D) models using single or multiple 2D images. Fathallah et al. [14] used a model architecture based on Graph Convolutional Networks (GCNs) as a key component. A lightweight GCN-based discriminator was used to improve the accuracy. The authors used the 300 W-LP and AFLW2000-3D datasets for the evaluation. Their architecture is divided into two fundamental stages: preprocessing and three-dimensional reconstruction. First, the preprocessing stage reduces Noise and augments the data. Then, the three-dimensional reconstruction stage performs the following main functions: triangulation, running the GCN-IGAN model, and outputting the final three-dimensional facial mesh. Their model achieved 0.0075 and 0.120, representing the chamfer distance and earth mover's distance, respectively. Their model can be improved by adding additional features and using evolutionary algorithms. The need to employ evolutionary algorithms and integrate additional face features still limits the applicability of their model.

Chenfan Xu et al. [15] introduced a framework using Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) to reconstruct both the upper and lower teeth using five intraoral photographs per case. They used 3,200 cases for their approach, as they used 3,000,100 and 100 for training, validation, and testing, respectively. Their model achieved 18.85, 0.8347, 0.0114, 2.1126, 0.1670 and 0.4122 representing PSNR, SSIM, LPIPS, Hausdorff distance, chamfer distance, and Intersection over Union (IOU) respectively. Their model showed promising quantitative results and can be further improved by extracting low-level features, such as edges. Their model suffered from reduced precision and a long reconstruction process time.

X. Wang et al. [16] used Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) to focus on maxillary segmentation and defect refinement. They also created their own dataset using CBCT scans of 60 patients, including 39 males and 21 females, with an average age ranging between 11 and 52 years.

Their model achieved 0.92 ±0.01 and 0.77 ±0.06, representing the Dice Similarity Coefficients for the maxilla and the Dice Similarity Coefficients for the defect, respectively. These results show strong segmentation performance and a correlation between the defect parameters and the maxillary cleft side. This automatic segmentation requires orthodontic refinement, as it takes approximately 5 minutes per CBCT image.

Marek Wodzinski et al. [17] used Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) to develop a 3D printing pipeline for model cranial implants using a U-Net architecture to reconstruct defects and refine implants through iterative procedures. Their pipeline consisted of five stages: data loading, preprocessing, defect reconstruction, defect refinement, and 3D printing preparation. They used the SkullBreak, real cranial defect, and SkullFix datasets for evaluation. Their model achieved 0.91, 0.94, and 1.53 mm representing Dice Coefficient, Boundary Dice Coefficient, and 85th percentile Hausdorff Distance, respectively. Their model accurately reconstructed cranial defects, but they could further enhance it by integrating mixed reality, real defect data, and multiple implant reconstructions.

T. C. Niño-Sandoval et al. [18] employed a Procrustes fit on 55 tomographs to obtain the 3D mandibular shape, using convolutional neural networks (CNNs) to analyze the images. The software developers also collected 629 X-ray images to train the computer. When tested, the software performed exceptionally well at matching the photos, with error rates ranging from 0.0033 to 0.0059. These results showed that the model could infer the shape of the lower jaw. It has high accuracy, but it still faces challenges, including difficulty handling significant bone defects and extensive mandibular deformities.

Y. Liang et al. [19] designed an oral viewer as an educational tool with interactive 3D visualizations, using Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) and two-dimensional dental panoramic X-rays to reconstruct three-dimensional models of teeth, gums, and the jawbone. Their dataset was collected from patients at an orthodontic hospital and consisted of panoramic X-rays and cone-beam CT (CBCT) scans. Their model achieved an Intersection Over Union (IOU) of 0.771, representing reconstruction accuracy. The authors proposed several future methods to enhance their tool, including two approaches for modeling the root canal: augmenting existing solid tooth models with artificial canals and incorporating canal structures into the convolutional network training process, and adding additional virtual instruments to improve surgical simulation.

B. Three-Dimensional (3D) -To-Two-Dimensional (2D) Reconstructions

Autoencoders are used in image processing tasks, including image denoising, image compression, and generation. Variants of autoencoders, such as U-Nets and convolutional autoencoders, can preserve spatial details useful for medical imaging.

Some methods use volumetric or geometric reasoning for a three-dimensional (3D) shape. Our idea is to develop this technique by adding a special three-dimensional twisted block to a simple two-dimensional encryption and decryption process, making it more secure. Our approach builds on this idea, embedding a 3D convolutional block within a 2D encoder-decoder pipeline.

Melas-Kyriazi et al. [20] presented a novel method, called Projection-Conditioned Point Cloud Diffusion (PC2), for single-image three-dimensional reconstruction. The shapes can be represented as point clouds by their framework. They started with a collection of tiny dots floating in space, which came together to form a three-dimensional shape, much like a jigsaw puzzle. First, they cleaned the dots to ensure their accuracy. Then, they examined small parts of the image to make sure everything looked correct, which helped them build a better three-dimensional model. They also guessed the proper colors for the dots to make the model look more realistic. Sometimes, they created several possible shapes and used a special method to choose the best one. Their method proved more successful than others, and their model showed qualitative improvements on real-world datasets such as Co3D. However, their method depends on ground-truth point clouds for training. The reconstruction quality can be affected because multi-view methods, like COLMAP, can be noisy and incomplete in real-world scenarios.

Peng et al. [21] introduced a graph-based framework for detecting changes in buildings using bitemporal remote sensing images. The spatial dependencies between neighboring buildings and the temporal relationships between image pairs are modelled using spatial–temporal graph neural networks (ST-GNNs). They constructed a graph by representing building instances as nodes and the contextual relationships as edges. Their method of tracking building changes was superior to other methods that relied on analyzing small image fragments. It was more accurate when using numerous city images and more effective in complex urban areas where buildings overlap or are constructed in unusual ways. However, their model suffers from a significant limitation: dependence on accurate building footprint extraction. A preprocessing step error can negatively affect detection performance, and any mistake in footprint delineation can be propagated during graph construction.

C. Generative Adversarial Networks-Based Architecture in Dental Imaging

Toscano et al. [22] proposed a hybrid point cloud completion framework for dental molds that integrates symmetry-based data augmentation, iterative latent-space GANs, and a hybrid AE-RL GAN completion strategy. The dataset consisted of 45-point clouds of real lower-jaw teeth. This dataset is downsampled to 2048 points. These training data were expanded using mirroring and point cloud recombination. It also expanded using iterative IGAN augmentation, yielding 49 additional high-quality samples. They used Chamfer Distance (CD) as a metric. This metric showed the importance of each module, as after removing data filtering, the average Chamfer Distance increased by 38.34%. The Chamfer Distance increases by 43.20% after removing iterative I-GAN augmentation. Then, it increased by 13.42% after removing the RL-GAN module, and then increased by 5.34% after removing hybrid selection. The increasing Chamfer Distance indicates a reduction in geometric error, particularly in high-missing-rate scenarios. This approach still suffers from an inability to generalize to non-symmetric anatomical structures. It also suffers from being computationally expensive and still depends on bilateral symmetry assumptions.

Kim et al. [23] proposed a GAN-based framework. It can enhance the accuracy of tooth segmentation, especially in full-arch intraoral scans that are affected by occlusal artifacts. Their framework contains 3 main steps. The first step is to manually remove the occluded interdental regions from the 3D scan data. The second step is to slice the cleaned scan at 0.1 mm intervals, then complete the 2D image using an Edge Connect-based GAN. The third step is to reconstruct the missing 3D geometry by stacking and remeshing the completed slices. They used a dataset of intraoral scans from 10 orthodontic patients acquired with a Trios 3 scanner. The ground truth is generated by a technician. The dataset consists of 10,000 cropped 256 X 256 images. They achieved 0.921 and 26.68 Db representing SSIM and PSNR, respectively. In tooth segmentation evaluation, their model achieved 0.027 ± 0.007 mm, representing the average mean surface distance. Previous boundary- and region-based segmentation methods suffer from inaccuracies due to occlusions. However, their approach reconstructs the missing interdental geometry while reducing operator dependency. However, their model incurs a high computational cost due to manual mask detection. Generalization is limited, especially in severe occlusion patterns.

Minhas et al. [24] proposed a deep learning-based framework for 3D reconstruction from a single 2D panoramic X-ray to assess maxillary impacted canines. They proposed a GAN-based architecture (Pan2CBCT) derived from X2CT-GAN, which expands 2D panoramic images into pseudo-3D volumetric images. They used a dataset comprising 123 pre-treatment CBCT scans of individuals aged 11-18 years. The 2D panoramic X-rays with their pseudo-3D images. The distribution of impacted canines is divided into 36, 12, 26, 65, and 9, representing buccal, middle, lingual, mesial, and distal cases, respectively. Their model achieved 0.71, 41%, and 55% for mean SSIM, accuracy of buccal/middle/lingual position, and accuracy of mesial/distal position, respectively. The previous related work clinically ignores complex cases, as impacted canines are evaluated. Their SSIM values indicate insufficient reliability for orthodontic diagnosis. However, their model suffers from several limitations. The first limitation is the use of a small, imbalanced dataset. Another limitation is that it depends on a single image modality. The third limitation is the decrease in performance in lingual positions.

Galba et al. [25] proposed HoloDent3D, a dental imaging system that uses single-view panoramic radiographs for 3D reconstruction. The first stage is to acquire and preprocess the standard orthopantomogram (OPG) to optimize the input image. In the second stage, the reconstruction module is trained on large datasets of paired 2D radiographs and corresponding 3D jaw models, inferring a volumetric mesh of teeth, roots, and bone. The third stage involves rendering a high-speed LED holographic fan display with gesture control, enabling visualization of multi-angle anatomy. Their model achieved volumetric Intersection Over Union (IOU) values ranging from 0.65 to 0.79, showing an n improvement over earlier voxel-based approaches such as X2Teeth. However, HolodENT3D remains at a theoretical stage and faces challenges, including a lack of paired 2D-3D training datasets, variability in generalization across patients, and no clinical validation.

III. Methodology

This section explains the full methodology implemented in TensorFlow/Keras for grayscale image reconstruction using a 2D encoder, a 3D latent space denoiser, and a 2D decoder, trained under an adversarial framework. The methodology of this study was divided into six main phases: dataset preparation, data pipeline, model architecture, training strategy, and evaluation metrics.

A. Data Preparation

Using the IO150K dataset [22], the dataset consisted of single-channel (grayscale) images. It is a publicly available dataset of 2D intraoral images that can be used for different purposes, such as instance segmentation and semantic labeling. The dataset includes over 150,000 2D intraoral images. It consists of 3 subsets: challenge80k, plaster 70k images, and rendered 2D images generated from 1800 3D intraoral scans. Its main source is the 3D Teeth Segmentation and Labeling Challenge 2023. The data acquisition methods for the challenge, which generate 3D dental scans, project them into multiple 2D views. Plaster 70k images are collected by photographing real dental plaster casts, thereby capturing realistic tooth morphology, including spacing, crowding, and missing teeth. Clinical RGB photography is acquired using DCLR or mobile cameras, with reflections. Preprocessing steps are performed on the dataset, including standardization, patch embedding preparation, foreground-background separation, localization, segmentation, and labeling. All the photos were set to a fixed spatial resolution of 128 * 128 pixels. Image files were collected recursively with valid extensions (.jpg, .jpeg, .png) and then shuffled. The dataset was divided into 70%, 10%, and 20% for the training, validation, and test sets, respectively. The weights are updated using the training subset, while the validation subset is used to refine hyperparameters and determine when to stop training. The test subset is then used to assess the model's final performance. Table I describes the dataset's distribution.

TABLE I. Dataset Splits for Training, Validation, and Testing

Subset	Number of images	Percentage
Training Set	49612	70%
Validation Set	7087	10%
Testing Set	14176	20%

B. Data Pipeline

Images were read from the disk and decoded into single-channel tensors; each image was then resized to 128 x 128 pixels. Normalization is applied to stabilize gradients during optimization. Normalization was also used, as pixel intensities are scaled to [0,1]. The dataset then maps each image to an (input, target) tuple. The training data were shuffled, and batched prefetching is used as an asynchronous prefetch that overlaps I/O with GPU computing.

C. Model Architecture

The proposed framework is a hybrid encoder–decoder system that integrates 2D and 3D learning in a generative adversarial setting. Our architecture comprises three main components for several reasons. The procedure starts with the encoder

receiving a black-and-white photograph of teeth, which is examined to pinpoint key details, such as edges and lines.

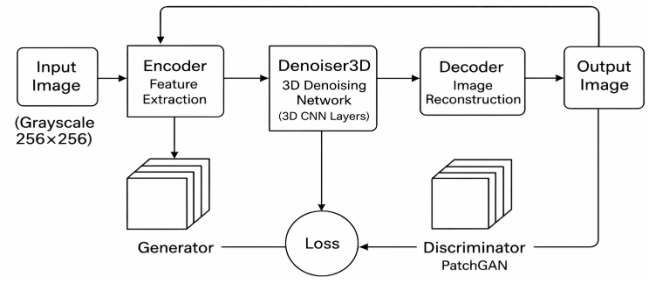

Fig. 1. This is a general overview of the proposed model.

Fig. 1 shows the overall architecture, including the 2D encoder, 3D latent-space denoiser, and 2D decoder, as well as the adversarial training loop that improves reconstruction accuracy while preserving dental structural details. Fig. 2 to Fig. 4 illustrate the detailed network architectures of the proposed framework. Fig. 2 presents the 2D encoder, which progressively downsamples the input grayscale dental image to a compact latent representation. Fig. 3 depicts the 3D latent-space denoiser, which operates on the reshaped volumetric latent representation to model inter-slice dependencies and suppress latent noise. Fig. 4 shows the 2D decoder, which reconstructs the final image by gradually restoring spatial resolution through transposed convolutions. Together, these components form an end-to-end pipeline for robust dental image reconstruction. Let $x \in R^{H\,x\,W}$ denote an input grayscale dental image with H = W = 128. The 2D encoder $E_\theta(.)$, implemented using convolutional layers, extracts hierarchical spatial features from the input image and maps it to a compact latent representation, as in:

$$Z_{2D}=E_\theta(x) \qquad ,Z_{2D} \in R^{h\,x\,w\,x\,c} \tag{1}$$

To enable volumetric reasoning without requiring explicit 3D input data, the 2D latent representation is reshaped and expanded along a depth dimension to form a volumetric latent tensor, as in:

$$Z_{3D} = \mathcal{R}(Z_{2D}),Z_{3D} \in R^{d\,x\,h\,x\,w\,x\,\acute{c}} \tag{2}$$

A 3D latent-space denoiser $N_\varphi(.)$, composed of 3D convolutional operations, is applied to the volumetric latent tensor to suppress noise and enforce inter-slice consistency, as in:

$$\tilde{z}_{3D} = N_\psi(Z_{3D}) \tag{3}$$

The denoised volumetric representation is then collapsed and decoded back into the image domain using a 2D decoder $G_{w(.)}$, as in:

$$\hat{x} = G_w(\tilde{z}_{3D}) \tag{4}$$

where, $\hat{x} \in R^{H\,x\,W}$ denotes the reconstructed dental image. The discriminator receives both real dental images and reconstructed outputs, providing adversarial feedback that encourages perceptually realistic and structurally accurate reconstructions.

We enhanced our architecture, discarding any noise and unwanted distortion. The decoder module further improves image quality. Both authentic dental images and the generator's outputs serve as inputs to the discriminator architecture. The generator is motivated to produce increasingly compelling visual and numerical reconstructions by receiving adversarial feedback. To create more transparent, more realistic images, the denoiser module works in tandem with the main architecture to remove noise and minor imperfections.

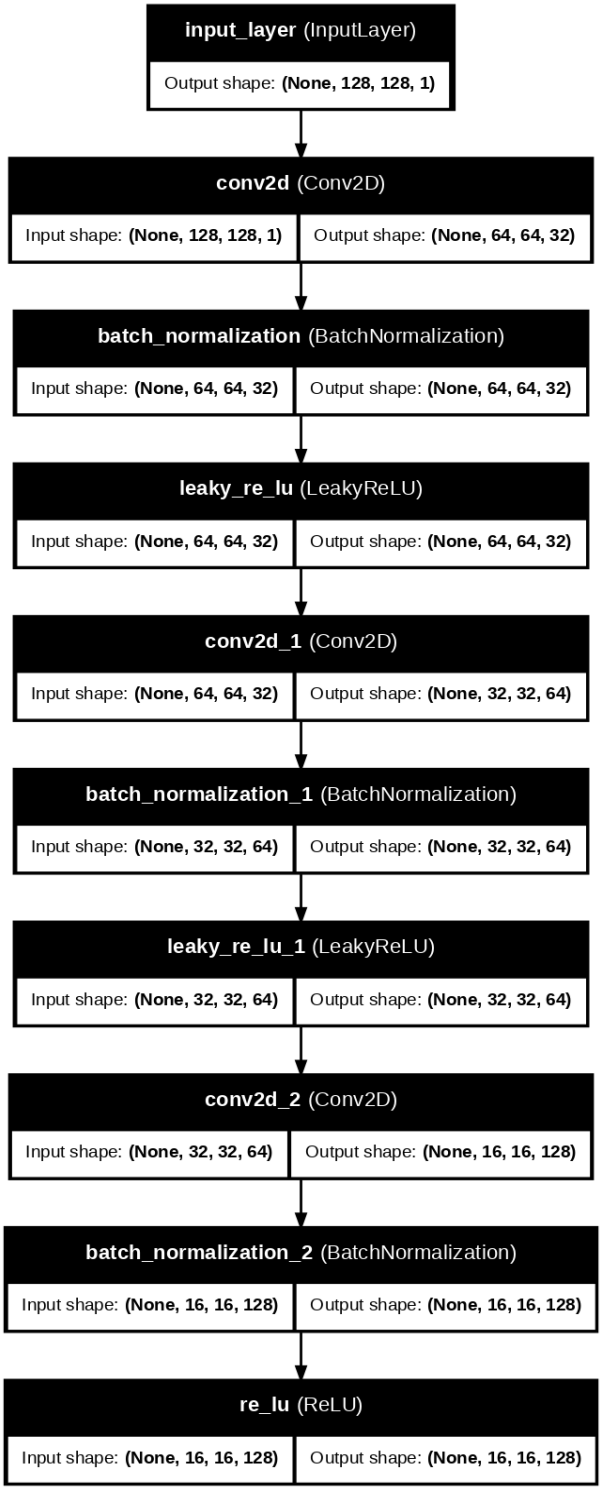

Fig. 2. This is a 2D encoder architecture for extracting a compact latent representation from a grayscale input image.

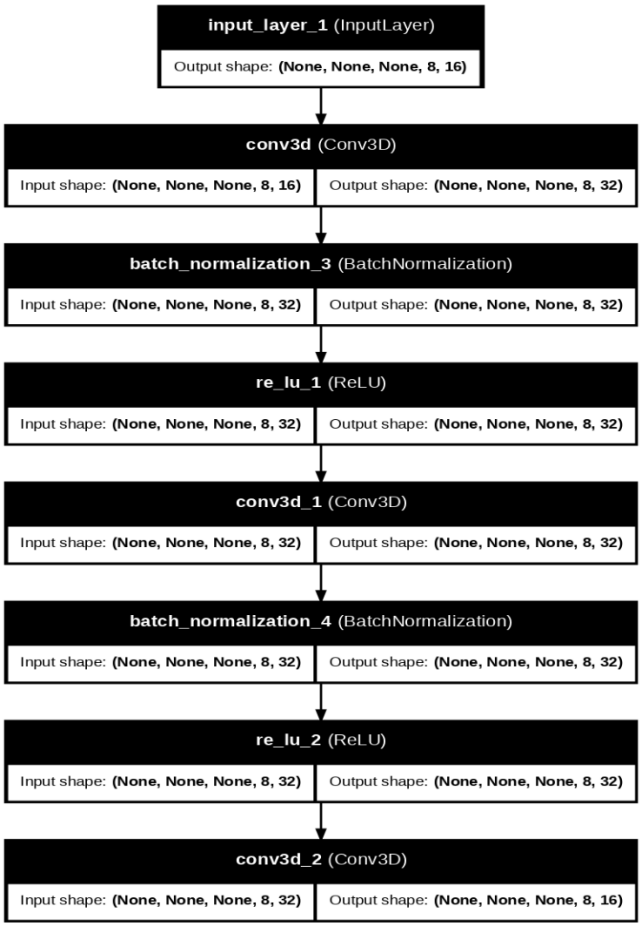

Fig. 3. This is a 3D latent-space denoiser operating on the reshaped volumetric latent representation.

D. Training Strategy

All experiments were conducted on the Kaggle platform. Training the proposed model on the IO150K dataset for 50 epochs with a batch size of 8 required approximately 2 hours, 58 minutes, and 58 seconds using two NVIDIA Tesla T4 GPUs. Training time and inference speed were empirically measured on the same hardware. Inference was evaluated by timing end-to-end forward passes with a batch size of 1, yielding an average latency of 3.41 ms per image (or 27.29 ms per batch), demonstrating near–real-time performance suitable for practical deployment.

Both accuracy and efficiency are balanced during training. Overfitting is also prevented during training. Table II lists the training hyperparameters used in our work.

The primary reconstruction loss function is the Mean Absolute Error (MAE). It was chosen for its robustness in penalizing deviations between the result produced by the architecture and the actual target output.

We used the Adam optimizer in our architecture because it can adapt the learning rate. A dynamically adaptable learning rate. Batch size carefully balances GPU memory constraints and convergence speed; smaller batch sizes enhance generalization capabilities, while larger batches may speed up training but sometimes compromise model robustness.

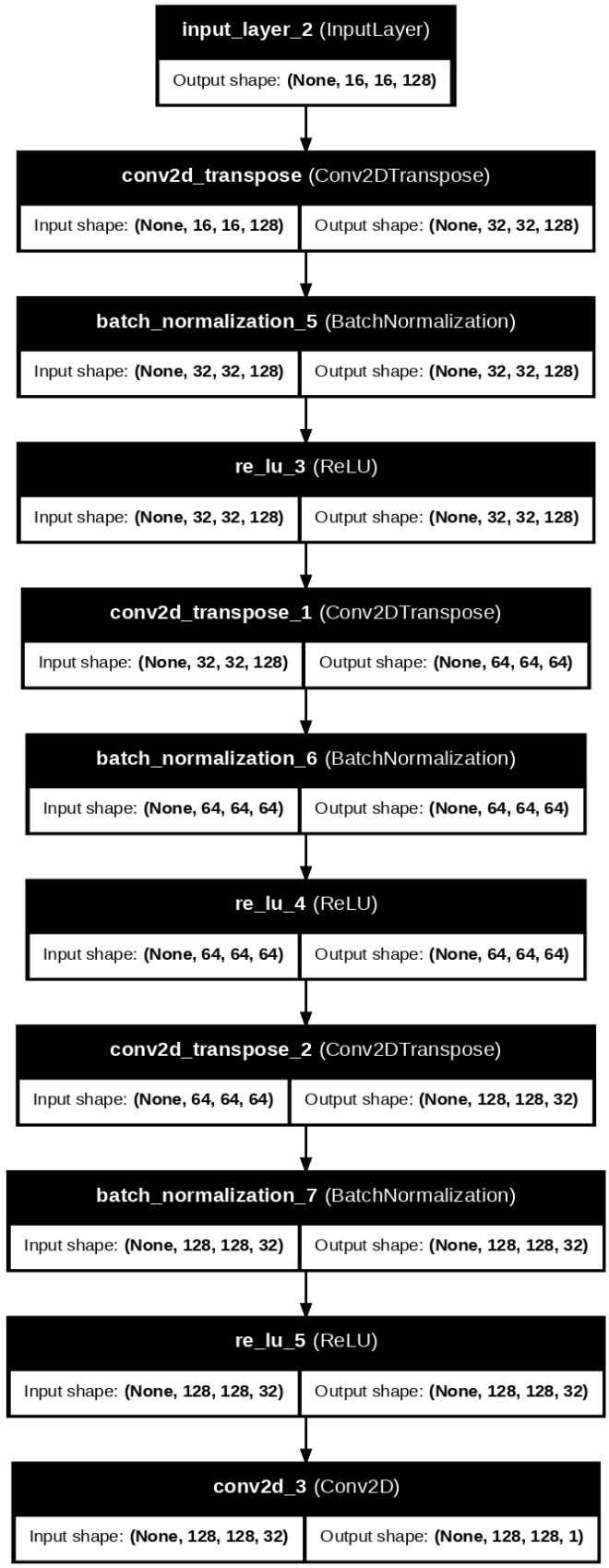

Fig. 4. This is a 2D decoder architecture for reconstructing the output image from the denoised latent features.

TABLE II. HYPERPARAMETERS USED FOR TRAINING THE GAN-BASED DENTAL IMAGE RECONSTRUCTION MODEL STYLES

Hyperparameter	Value
Input image size	128x128(grayscale)
Batch size	8
Epochs(max)	50
Optimizer	Adam
Initial learning rate	2×10^{-4}
Learning Rate Reduction	Factor 0.5 on plateau
Min Learning Rate	1×10^{-6}
Early Stopping Patience	8 epochs (val MAE)
Train/Val/Test split	70%/10%/20%
Latent volume Depth	8 slices
Random seed	42
Base channels(encoder/decoder)	32

Early stopping was performed to avoid overfitting. The training was halted once the validation loss stopped improving after a predefined number of epochs. This strategy prevents unnecessary over-training and ensures computational efficiency.

IV. DISCUSSION AND EVALUATION

In the standard model, the choice of evaluation metrics is crucial for assessing model effectiveness by measuring pixel-level accuracy and perceptual visual similarity, thereby ensuring a comprehensive evaluation of quantitative performance and visual quality.

The first evaluation metric quantifies the average difference between the reconstructed and original images. This difference is measured by the Mean Absolute Error (MAE) metric. This metric helps capture the overall pixel-level accuracy. The second metric is the Structural Similarity Index (SSIM), which measures perceptual similarity by considering the contrast, luminance, and structural information between two images. The SSIM aligns more closely with human visual perception. Peak Signal-to-Noise Ratio (PSNR), serving as the third evaluation metric, quantifies reconstruction fidelity as the ratio of the maximum signal power to the generated noise power during reconstruction. This measures the ratio between the maximum possible signal power and the power of the reconstruction noise, expressed in decibels.

Table III summarizes the three key performance indicators. The results are presented in Table IV, which lists the metrics for training, validation, and testing. Table IV shows results that may appear similar at first glance but, upon closer inspection of the numerical values, reveal small but consistent differences across the three splits. Specifically, MAE values vary between 0.0127 and 0.0128, the SSIM values increase slightly from 0.9450 (training) to 0.9453 (testing), and PSNR values range from 28.8430 dB to 28.8595 dB, so the variations occur at the third and fourth decimal places and may appear identical when rounded, but they confirm that the results are not exactly the same. The dataset was partitioned into non-overlapping subsets prior to training, so no data leakage occurred during either training or evaluation. Moreover, the close alignment between the training and validation MAE curves in Fig. 5 indicates stable learning behavior without divergence, as the model generalizes well, rather than overfitting to the training data. Fig. 5 shows the mean absolute error curves obtained during training and validation. These curves show how the model's prediction error evolves over epochs. The decreasing trend in the training curve indicates the model's ability to learn from the training data, while the validation curve shows the model's generalization performance on unseen data. These two curves are compared to assess the potential overfitting or underfitting.

TABLE III. EVALUATION METRICS USED FOR ASSESSING THE GAN-BASED DENTAL IMAGE RECONSTRUCTION

Metric	Range	Interpretation
MAE	[0, ∞)	Lower is better (0 = perfect reconstruction)
SSIM	[0, 1]	Higher is better (1 = perfect perceptual match)
PSNR	(0, ∞) decibels	Higher is better (≥30 decibels = high-quality image)

TABLE IV. EVALUATING PERFORMANCE METRICS OF THE GAN-BASED DENTAL IMAGE RECONSTRUCTION MODEL ON TRAIN, VALIDATION, AND TEST SETS

Set	MAE	SSIM	PSNR
Train	0.0128	0.9450	28.844700 decibels
Validation	0.0127	0.9452	28.859501 decibels
Test	0.0128	0.9453	28.843000 decibels

Fig. 6 to Fig. 10 illustrate various key aspects of the study. It presents quantitative evaluation metrics, including the Structural Similarity Index Measure (SSIM) and Peak Signal-to-Noise Ratio (PSNR), used to assess the quality and fidelity of the reconstructed images. These figures highlight interactions and contributions of the main components of the proposed architecture involving the generator, discriminator, and noise module, so by combining these architectural elements and performance metrics. These figures offer a comprehensive overview of the system's effectiveness in achieving high-quality image reconstruction.

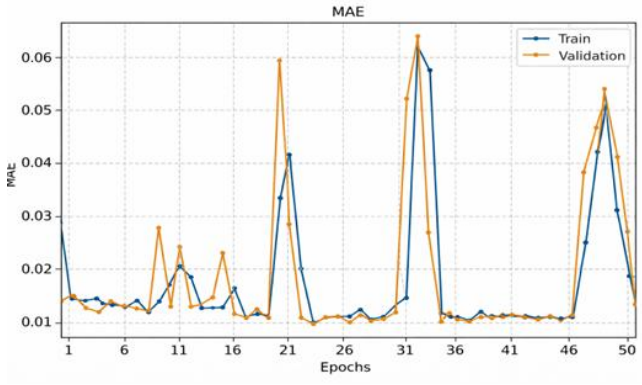

Fig. 5. The two curves represent mean absolute error results during training and validation.

The proposed 2D-to-3D denoising GAN achieved strong reconstruction performance, with average scores of MAE=0.0128, SSIM=0.9453, and PSNR=28.84 dB on the test

set. The reconstruction of grayscale dental casts demonstrates accuracy and high structural similarity. There are three figures, namely Fig. 11, Fig. 12, and Fig. 13, representing the input image, the generated output image, and the latent 3D mesh, respectively, at the last epoch (50) after training. Specifically, Fig. 11 shows the original input image used by the model, providing a reference for comparison. Fig. 12 shows the model's output image, demonstrating its reconstruction effectiveness. Finally, Fig. 13 shows the network's learned latent 3D mesh representation, which encodes internal 3D features. These figures present a visual summary of the system's performance, showing the quality of the generated images and the underlying structure of the latent 3D representations after full training.

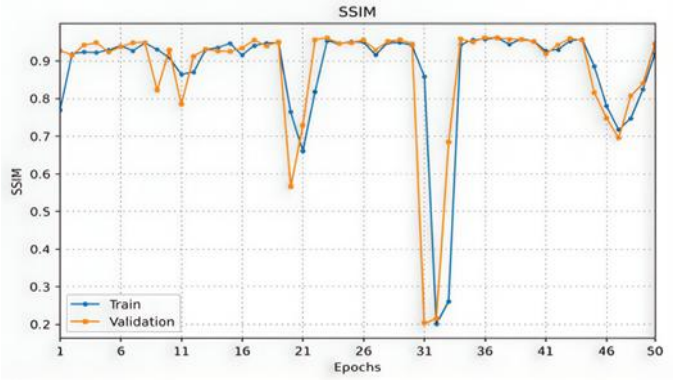

Fig. 6. The two curves represent structural similarity index results during training and validation.

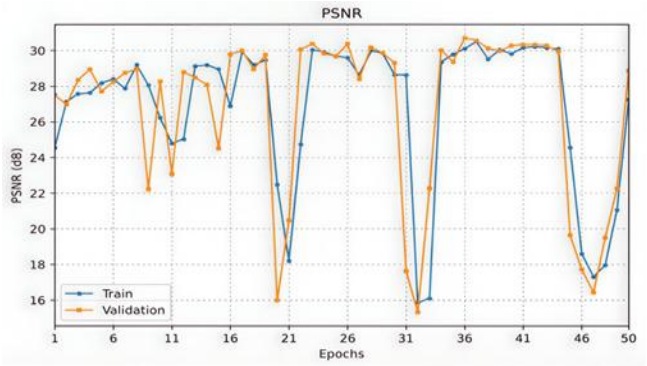

Fig. 7. The two curves represent peak signal-to-noise ratio results during training and validation.

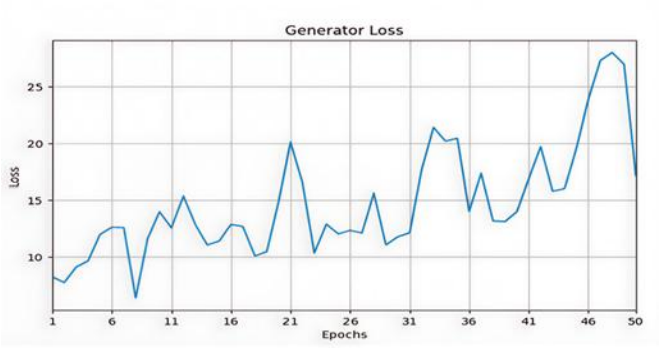

Fig. 8. The curve represents the generator loss.

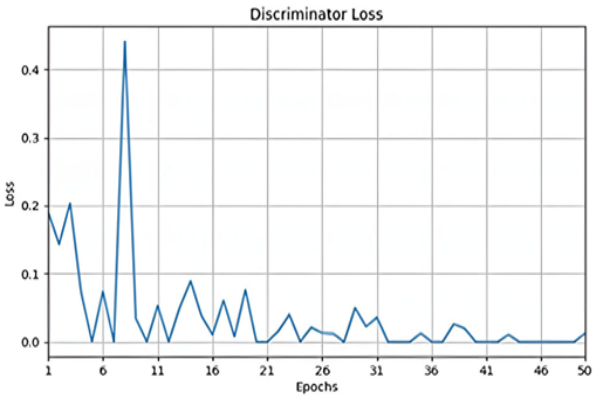

Fig. 9. The curve represents the discriminator loss.

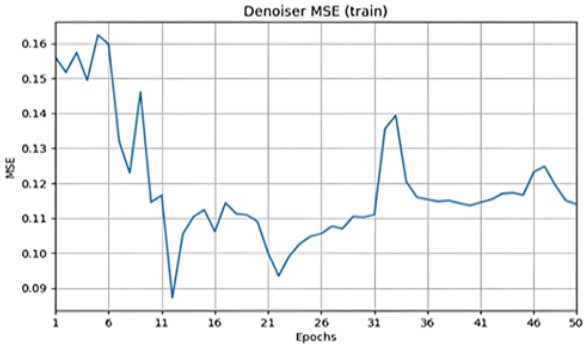

Fig. 10. The curve represents the denoiser.

Fig. 11. An example of the input image.

Fig. 12. An example of the generated output image.

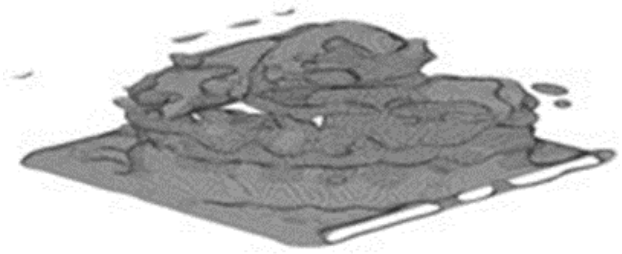

Fig. 13. An example of the three-dimensional latent mesh.

Compared to existing studies, the proposed framework exhibits competitive advantages. Li et al. [27] developed a U-CPML-Net for 3D lung image reconstruction based on CT-pixel-matrix learning and electrical impedance tomography. Their method achieved SSIM values between 0.80 and 0.85, depending on the case complexity. In contrast, the proposed framework produced higher SSIM values and lower MAE values, suggesting that volumetric reasoning integrated into a 2D-to-3D pipeline can outperform conventional matrix learning–based strategies in terms of structural fidelity.

Tan et al. [28] presented an Edge-Aware Reconstruction (EAR) network for reconstructing 3D vertebral structures from biplanar X-ray images. Their method improved edge and local structural detail detection by integrating two modules into the autoencoder, which serves as the backbone of their architecture. A combination of four loss terms—reconstruction, edge, frequency, and projection losses were used to guide the training process. The EAR was evaluated on three public datasets and compared against four cutting-edge methods, demonstrating improvements of 25.32%, 15.32%, 86.44%, 80.13%, 23.76%, and 0.30% in MSE, MAE, Dice, SSIM, PSNR, and frequency distance, respectively. Although this approach effectively improved edge preservation, challenges remain due to information loss from X-ray projection processes, particularly in maintaining. Asymmetrical vertebral structures. Compared with EAR, the proposed denoising GAN focuses less on edge-aware reconstruction but achieves a higher SSIM (0.943) and stable PSNR. Volumetric features effectively compensate for the limitations inherent in projection-based approaches in imaging and analysis. Tables V and VI present the results of other papers and compare them with those of our study, respectively.

TABLE V. SUMMARY OF RELATED WORKS AND THEIR RESULTS

Paper	Work	Results
Li et al. [27]	Developed U-CPML-Net for 3D lung image reconstruction based on CT pixel matrices learning with electrical impedance tomography.	Their method achieved SSIM values between 0.80 and 0.85, depending on case complexity.
Tan et al. [28]	Presented the Edge-Aware Reconstruction (EAR) network for reconstructing 3D vertebrae structures from bi-planar X-ray images.	EAR was evaluated on three publicly available datasets and compared against four state-of-the-art methods, demonstrating improvements of 25.32%, 15.32%, 86.44%, 80.13%, 23.76%, and 0.30% with respect to MSE, MAE, Dice, SSIM, PSNR, and frequency distance, respectively.

TABLE VI. COMPARISON OF THE PROPOSED GAN-BASED DENTAL IMAGE RECONSTRUCTION MODEL WITH RESULTS FROM RELATED WORKS

Paper	Work Description	MAE	SSIM	PSNR
Proposed 2D-to-3D Denoising GAN	Reconstruction of grayscale dental cast images using volumetric feature reasoning (Encoder → 3D Denoiser → Decoder + Discriminator).	0.0128	0.9453	28.84
Li et al. [27]	Developed U-CPML-Net for 3D lung image reconstruction based on CT pixel matrix learning with electrical impedance tomography.	----------	0.80:0.85	----------
Tan et al. [28]	Introduced Edge-Aware Reconstruction (EAR) network for 3D vertebrae reconstruction from bi-planar X-ray images using edge and frequency enhancement modules.	---------	≈0.94	≈28.0

V. CONCLUSION

This study presented a two-dimensional-to-three-dimensional denoising generative adversarial network designed to improve the quality of reconstruction, to address the limitations in grayscale image reconstruction of traditional 2D models by incorporating volumetric reasoning within the latent space. We capture both spatial and structural relationships by integrating three main components: a 2D encoder, a 3D denoising block, and a 2D decoder. These spatial and structural relationships exist across the different feature depths. The key advantages of this architecture are a computationally lightweight design and the ability to learn complex spatial dependencies. These advantages make it suitable for medical applications, especially in dentistry. Another key contribution of this study is its adaptable training strategy, which balances between three perspectives: reconstruction accuracy, efficiency, and stability. The model's design enables easy integration with other architectures, allowing extensions to multimodal data. This method can also be widely used, such as for larger image resolutions and domain-specific adaptations. In addition, the adversarial training paradigm can generalize to unseen samples by using a generator that produces structurally consistent outputs under discriminator supervision.

Overall, this study highlights directions for the digital reconstruction of dental cast images in clinical imaging. By integrating advanced volumetric and two-dimensional techniques, it offers promising applications in diagnostic procedures, tissue repair, and various medical interventions. These innovative approaches aim to enhance accuracy, improve patient outcomes, and advance the overall capabilities of modern medical imaging technologies.

VI. FUTURE WORK

Several directions can be pursued to expand the two-dimensional-to-three-dimensional generative adversarial network further. A future perspective is to use multiple input datasets simultaneously to improve resolution and achieve generalization by training across a variety of datasets.

Another promising enhancement is to integrate different ways of focusing attention, such as visual space or channels, which also works well with communication systems. This improves overall accuracy and helps build stronger, more efficient structures.

Another direction is to explore more appropriate loss functions. Perceptual or feature-based losses can be combined with conventional objectives. This combination can lead to a better balance between structural accuracy and perceptual realism.

These directions highlight a future pathway for advancing image reconstruction by pushing the boundaries of hybrid 2D-to-3D-to-2D learning strategies.

Future studies can use adaptive strategies to determine the depth. This depth may be adapted to the complexity of the input, which leads to more effective feature representations while maintaining computational efficiency. The precision of the anatomical structures and texture representation can be improved by refining the denoising process.

This approach shows promise for advancing image restoration methods in fields such as medical imaging, dental diagnosis, industrial inspection, and others where both accuracy and perceptual quality are critical. It can also be extended to real-world applications.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors acknowledge the use of the IO150K intraoral image dataset, introduced in the Teeth-SEG study, for supporting the development and evaluation of this work. We thank the dataset creators for making this resource openly available [26].

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Selfdom Enhanced CatBoost Model for Remote Paddy Growth Monitoring and Fertilizer Recommendation in Precision Agriculture

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***Abstract*—Precision agriculture enables data-driven crop monitoring and improved resource utilization. Paddy cultivation requires continuous surveillance and timely fertilizer application because it is sensitive to soil nutrient dynamics, water availability, and climatic conditions. Conventional practices such as manual field inspection and heuristic fertilizer advisory methods are often labor-intensive and subjective, which can reduce decision consistency and contribute to yield variability. To address these limitations, this study proposes a Selfdom Enhanced CatBoost (SECB) framework for remote paddy growth-stage monitoring and fertilizer recommendation. Multispectral remote sensing data collected over multiple seasons are used to compute vegetation indices, including NDVI, GNDVI, RVI, GRVI, and NDRE, to characterize crop vigor and chlorophyll-related variation across growth stages. The proposed SECB improves CatBoost by integrating an Improved Osprey Optimization Algorithm (IOOA) to tune key model parameters, aiming to enhance feature interaction learning and reduce overfitting. In addition, oppositional function-based initialization is applied to improve the exploration capability of IOOA and accelerate convergence. Experimental results show that SECB achieves improved performance over baseline classifiers in terms of accuracy, precision, F1-score, specificity, and AUC. The proposed approach provides reliable growth-stage identification and supports fertilizer recommendations to promote efficient nutrient usage and improved productivity. Overall, the framework offers an automated and scalable decision-support strategy for paddy crop management.**

Keywords*—Paddy growth monitoring; fertilizer recommendation; Selfdom Enhanced CatBoost Model; Osprey Optimization Algorithm; oppositional function

I. Introduction

Paddy is one of the most important cereal crops sustaining the global population, particularly across Asia, where it forms a staple diet for millions [1]. India has the largest area under rice cultivation (approx. 42.5 million hectares); however, national productivity remains lower than that of several leading rice-producing countries. Although India produces about 152.6 million tons of rice annually, the average yield per hectare is notably lower than China [2]. This productivity gap is influenced by climatic vulnerability and regional differences in cultivation practices, including irrigation methods, nutrient management, and tillage operations [3]. Moreover, yield heterogeneity is evident across regions, with approximately 348 districts reporting production below the national average, which constrains aggregate output.

Kerala, despite being a traditional rice-growing state, currently cultivates rice on about 0.197 million hectares, which accounts for approximately 7.6% of its cultivated land. Nevertheless, rice constitutes a major share of the state's food-crop acreage, highlighting its continued regional relevance. Among the key agronomic determinants, fertilizer management plays a central role in rice growth and yield formation [4]. In practice, farmers often rely on experiential knowledge to schedule fertilization, which increases the risk of nutrient mismanagement [5]. Over-application can increase pest incidence and lodging, reduce grain weight, and cause environmental impacts such as soil degradation and nutrient runoff into water bodies [6].

In this context, precision agriculture provides a practical pathway to optimize input use while improving productivity. Recent advances in satellite imagery, Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), multispectral sensors, and cloud-based analytics have improved agricultural monitoring and decision-making [7, 8]. Remote sensing platforms capture canopy reflectance and spectral indicators of vegetation health, which can be processed to generate location-specific recommendations.

Crop growth models have been used to simulate plant responses to environmental conditions using soil, weather, and physiological inputs. However, large-scale deployment remains challenging due to manual data requirements and complex variable interactions. Consequently, recent work increasingly adopts machine learning (ML) methods to capture nonlinear crop behavior and improve growth and nutrient prediction accuracy [9]. Techniques such as k-Nearest Neighbors (kNN), Random Forest (RF), Linear Regression (LR), and CatBoost have shown potential for estimating rice growth stages and nutrient requirements [10, 11]. Based on these advances, this study proposes a Selfdom Enhanced CatBoost (SECB) model that integrates remote sensing–derived vegetation indices with an optimization strategy to support growth-stage monitoring and fertilizer recommendation.

Although vegetation indices and boosted-tree models have been used for crop monitoring, many existing studies address growth-stage assessment and fertilizer recommendation as separate tasks, and often rely on manually tuned learners or site-specific calibration. The proposed SECB framework is distinct in that it couples multi-season multispectral vegetation-index dynamics with an optimization-guided CatBoost learning strategy, enabling joint growth-stage monitoring and fertilizer recommendation within a single predictive pipeline. In particular, IOOA is employed to automatically tune key CatBoost hyperparameters to aim for improved robustness under seasonal variability, thereby reducing dependence on trial-and-error parameter selection. This optimization-driven design differentiates SECB from conventional CatBoost or index-threshold approaches and provides a practical decision-support mechanism for precision paddy management. The main contributions of the research are presented as follows:

- To propose a unified SECB pipeline that performs both paddy growth-stage classification and fertilizer recommendation using multispectral vegetation indices computed from remote sensing imagery, thereby linking crop-condition monitoring with actionable nutrient decisions in a single workflow.
- To integrate IOOA as a hyperparameter optimization module for CatBoost, improving convergence stability and reducing manual tuning under multi-season spectral variability, which enhances model reliability and supports scalable deployment across changing field conditions.
- To validate the proposed SECB model against conventional ML baselines using accuracy, precision, F1-score, specificity, and AUC, so that performance improvements translate into fewer false fertilizer alerts and fewer missed nutrient-deficiency cases, promoting efficient input use and sustainable paddy management.

The rest of this study is structured as follows: Section II presents a concise review of recent studies related to paddy growth monitoring and fertilizer recommendation, while Section III outlines the methodologies used for paddy growth monitoring and fertilizer recommendation. Section IV reports the results, and Section V presents the conclusion of the study along with possible directions for future research.

II. Related Works

Sah et al. [12] proposed a UAV-based vegetation index framework to monitor paddy development and fertilizer effects across two planting seasons in Malaysia. High-resolution multispectral UAV imagery was processed (Agisoft Metashape) to derive NDVI, BNDVI, and NDRE at key stages (tillering, flowering, and ripening). NDRE achieved the strongest yield relationship ($R^2 = 0.842$), while NDVI and BNDVI showed high similarity and reduced sensitivity in dense canopies, indicating saturation effects in mature fields. The authors also reported that plot size alone did not guarantee higher yield because environmental factors and fertilizer management had a substantial influence. However, the framework relied heavily on UAV data and site-specific conditions, limiting transferability without broader regional calibration.

Zhao et al. [13] incorporated a conventional crop growth metric, Relative Growth Rate (RGR), into remote sensing–based rice yield estimation. The study used satellite-derived variables (RGR, NDVI, EVI, SAVI, NDWI, DVI, RVI, GPP, and LAI) together with climatic and soil features, and evaluated LASSO, Random Forest, and XGBoost using five-fold cross-validation. The RGR-integrated model reported the best performance ($R^2 \approx 0.78$; RMSE $\approx$ 719.63 kg/ha), and demonstrated spatial adaptability as well as within-season predictive capability up to 16 days before maturity. A key limitation was reduced accuracy during extreme climatic years, suggesting sensitivity to unusual environmental conditions.

Chiranjit Singha et al. [14] developed a Google Earth Engine–based machine learning workflow for monitoring rainfed rice growth using Sentinel-1 SAR data, addressing the difficulty of optical monitoring under persistent cloud cover. The approach was validated on 214 farm plots in Hooghly, West Bengal, India, where Random Forest produced strong biomass estimation performance ($R^2 = 0.87$). The analysis indicated that heading-stage NDVI and SAR backscatter were strongly associated, supporting SAR suitability for rainfed rice monitoring. Fubing Liao et al. [15] proposed a hybrid deep learning model combining CNN and LSTM with attention to diagnose rice nutritional status at the early panicle initiation stage, using sequential UAV imagery collected over two years. These works highlight that SAR and UAV time-series data can enable robust monitoring, yet require stable data acquisition pipelines and careful generalization assessment across seasons and sites.

Guo et al. [16] introduced a rice paddy classification framework using multitemporal compact polarimetric (CP) C-band SAR data and machine learning. Seven RADARSAT-2 acquisitions were used to simulate CP observations, and 22 polarimetric features were extracted and enhanced through temporal-variation analysis. Across multiple classifiers, incorporating temporal dynamics improved mapping performance, and overall accuracies exceeded 95%, with Random Forest and SVM providing the best results. Wang et al. [17] further demonstrated high-resolution paddy rice mapping in Northeast China by combining automatically generated training samples, time-series Sentinel-2 features, and a deep neural network classifier. Using 10 m surface reflectance bands and vegetation-index composites across major phenological stages, the model achieved high annual mapping accuracy and improved discrimination between rice, wetlands, and drylands, while also detecting small paddy patches and policy-driven area reduction. Nevertheless, uneven image quality, sparse observations, and uncertainties inherited from reference land-cover products were reported as constraints on cross-region transferability.

Li et al. [18] proposed a hyperspectral satellite–based rice growth monitoring approach using a 3D CNN to jointly learn spatial–temporal–spectral representations from multi-temporal image cubes. A temporal convolution module, followed by 2D convolutions and fully connected layers, was used for yield prediction, and the method exhibited improved accuracy and stability compared with deep learning baselines. However, heterogeneous cultivation patterns and complex terrain conditions remained challenging for robust deployment.

Sudarsan Biswal et al. [19] examined UAV multispectral imagery for above-ground biomass (AGB) prediction by combining spectral vegetation indices with textural descriptors. The study found that NIR-based indices outperformed color-only indices, and normalized difference texture indices (NDTIs) derived from NIR, red-edge, and blue bands consistently improved performance compared with GLCM textures. Random Forest yielded the best predictions when vegetation indices were fused with NDTIs, emphasizing the value of multi-feature fusion for rice biomass estimation.

Parijata Majumdar et al. [20] addressed irrigation water requirement (IWR) prediction by selecting high-scoring environmental features and using ensemble learning strategies. The work highlighted evapotranspiration as a key predictor across growth stages and employed stacked learning with tuned models to improve predictive accuracy. Wang et al. [21] investigated an automatic fertilization system to evaluate fertilizer distribution uniformity under flooded and non-flooded conditions. Using the Christiansen Uniformity Coefficient (CU), the non-flooded automatic fertilization setting achieved the highest uniformity and outperformed farmer-applied manual fertilization, although the method's effectiveness depended strongly on specific field-water conditions and may require adaptation for different agro-ecological settings.

Boonma et al. [22] assessed rice growth stage and yield estimation using Sentinel-2 MSI and Sentinel-1 SAR data within Google Earth Engine, supported by field surveys and stratified sample points. The study reported moderate-to-strong agreement for growth-stage modeling (e.g., R^2 up to 0.67 with Kappa 0.80), and emphasized the practical role of SAR during rainy seasons when optical images are degraded by cloud interference. However, limited usable Sentinel-2 scenes and seasonal sensitivity constrained generalization and reduced the benefits of optical–SAR fusion. Xiaolong Chen et al. [23] developed a multi-source nutrient monitoring and precision fertilization system integrating UAV multispectral imagery, thermal sensing, ground sensors, and GIS visualization. Across multiple agro-ecological sites, the system reduced nutrient estimation errors and lowered fertilizer usage while increasing yield, but scalability was limited by UAV endurance, data volume, and computational demands.

Carracelas et al. [24] evaluated vegetation indices for monitoring nitrogen uptake in rice under continuous flooding and alternate wetting and drying irrigation schemes. The SCCCI index showed the strongest predictive relationship with nitrogen uptake (R^2 up to 0.84 under continuous flooding and 0.71 under alternate wetting and drying), while also demonstrating that surface water conditions can alter reflectance behavior and index reliability. This irrigation-dependent variability limits direct transfer of models between water-management regimes and motivates broader multi-site validation.

Bingnan Chen et al. [25] proposed a UAV-based nutrient deficiency classification framework for ratoon rice by fusing vegetation indices with deep image features extracted from visible-band imagery. Classifiers such as XGBoost, SVM, and Random Forest benefited from feature fusion, and Random Forest achieved the best nutrient classification results, though the experiments were restricted to a single ecological site and limited varieties. Herath et al. [26] similarly used UAV multispectral imagery for paddy decision support, reporting strong NDVI–yield correlations and effective weed detection using vegetation-index formulations at specific days after sowing. However, frequent UAV flights, image-quality dependence, and operational costs remained practical constraints for large-scale adoption.

Huang et al. [27] presented an integrated soil analysis framework combining crop identification, irrigation prediction, and fertilizer recommendation using satellite imagery and sensor data, where machine learning models achieved high fertilizer recommendation accuracy. Rahman et al. [28] proposed an AIoT-based hydroponic recommendation and monitoring system in which Random Forest delivered strong performance, although automation and cost constraints limited full-scale deployment. Collectively, these studies confirm that remote sensing and ML/DL methods can improve paddy monitoring and input management, but generalization across regions, seasonal variability, data availability (cloud cover, UAV logistics), and scalability remain open challenges that motivate robust, optimized learning frameworks for practical fertilizer recommendation.

A. Research Gap

Prior studies have used UAV-based vegetation indices, spectral features, and ML models for paddy growth assessment, nutrient estimation, biomass prediction, and weed detection, but most treat these problems separately [12, 14, 19]. Existing approaches often emphasize either crop monitoring or fertilizer optimization, rather than combining both in a unified predictive pipeline [13, 23]. Many methods rely on conventional models or manually interpreted indices, limiting their ability to learn nonlinear interactions between spectral signatures, crop physiology, and fertilizer response across diverse agro-ecological conditions [12, 21]. Moreover, optimization strategies and ensemble-based enhancements remain limited in paddy-specific research [19]. Therefore, an automated, optimization-driven framework that simultaneously monitors paddy growth and provides accurate fertilizer recommendations from multispectral dynamics is still lacking.

III. Materials and Methods

The proposed methodology integrates a Selfdom Enhanced CatBoost Model with meta-heuristic optimization for remote paddy growth monitoring and fertilizer recommendation in precision agriculture, as visualized in Fig. 1.

The process begins with the acquisition of paddy field images collected between 2016 and 2020. These images undergo preprocessing and are then used to compute multiple vegetation indices, including NDVI, NDRE, GNDVI, RVI, and GRVI. These indices serve as reliable indicators of plant health, nutrient availability, and growth progress. Once the vegetation indices are generated, the Improved Osprey Optimization Algorithm is utilized to enhance the model's learning capability by optimizing key CatBoost parameters. This integration results in the Selfdom Enhanced CatBoost (SECB) model, designed to efficiently process large-scale remote sensing data and yield highly accurate predictions. The SECB model is trained and tested using the extracted vegetation features, enabling it to

classify growth stages and identify nutrient deficiencies more effectively than conventional algorithms. Based on the predicted growth stage and detected nutrient requirement, the system provides precise fertilizer recommendations. This automated workflow reduces manual effort, improves decision-making accuracy and supports sustainable rice cultivation by ensuring that fertilizers are applied only when necessary.

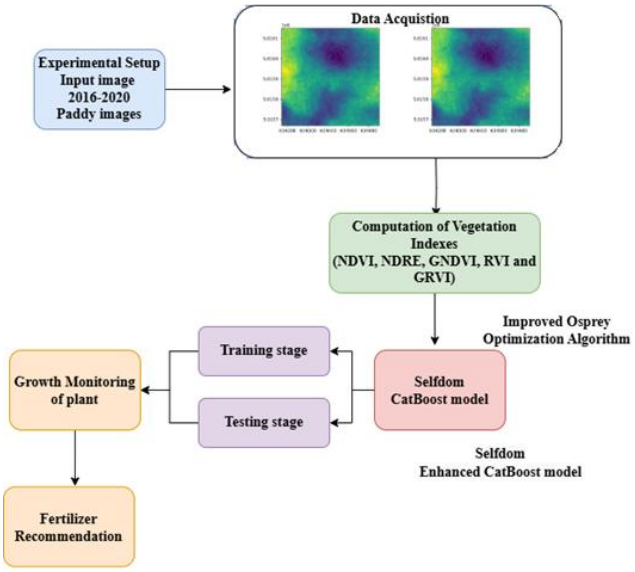

Fig. 1. Block schematic representation of the proposed model.

A. Dataset Description

The dataset used in this study was sourced from Kaggle and served as the basis for developing and validating the paddy growth monitoring and fertilizer recommendation system [29]. It comprised a comprehensive collection of multispectral satellite images recorded over five consecutive years, from 2016 to 2020, capturing seasonal and annual variations in paddy cultivation. Each year's directory contained 3328 image tiles, and every tile represented a 48×48-pixel multispectral snapshot of a specific agricultural location. These tiles formed a time-series dataset in which each subfolder recorded multiple satellite passes over the same geographical tile on different dates. For example, a file such as lombardia2/data2016/1/20160110.tif corresponds to a GeoTIFF multispectral image captured on January 10, 2016, for tile number 1 in the Lombardia2 region. Similar file structures were maintained across all years, ensuring uniformity and facilitating temporal crop growth analysis. Fig. 2 and Fig. 3 present the sample input images utilized during the training and testing phases, illustrating the spectral variations in the satellite images. The multispectral bands and the derived vegetation indices used in this study (NDVI, GNDVI, NDRE, RVI, and GRVI) are directly linked to canopy vigor and chlorophyll-related activity, which are widely used as proxy indicators of nutrient status in crops. In particular, nutrient stress typically reduces chlorophyll concentration and modifies canopy structure, which alters reflectance responses in the red, near-infrared, and red-edge bands. Therefore, the dataset provides meaningful spectral cues for learning patterns associated with nutrient requirement and for supporting fertilizer recommendation based on multispectral dynamics across growth stages. The proposed model was trained using this entire dataset to ensure robust learning and improve predictive accuracy. During evaluation, real-time drone images were additionally incorporated to test the model's performance under practical field conditions. This combination of historical satellite data and on-site imagery enabled the model to generate reliable growth insights and fertilizer recommendations suited for real-world paddy cultivation practices.

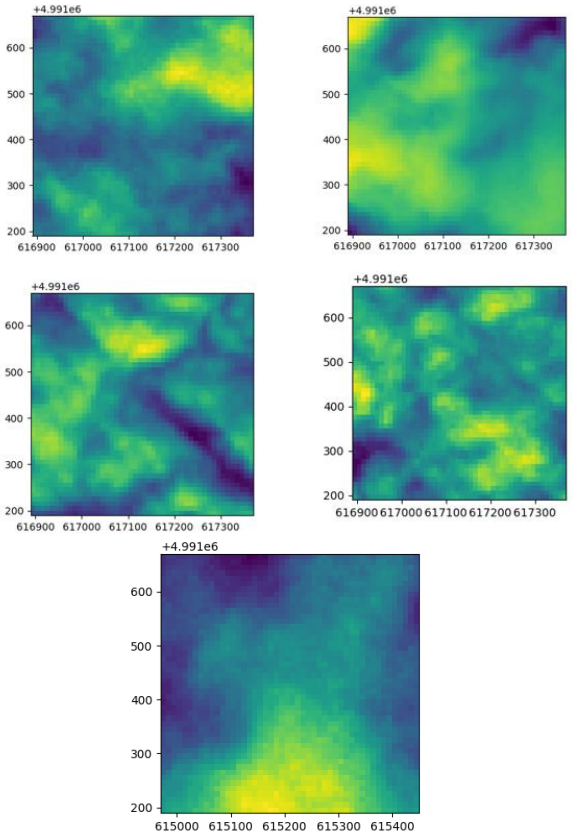

Fig. 2. Sample training images.

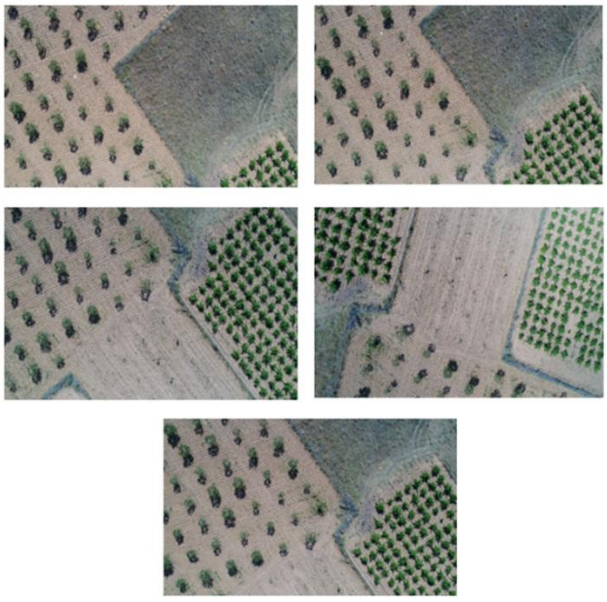

Fig. 3. Sample testing images.

B. Vegetation Indices

To generate the vegetation indices required for paddy growth analysis, multispectral images captured were processed to extract reflectance values from specific spectral bands. These vegetation indices NDVI, NDRE, GNDVI, RVI and GRVI were selected because they provide spectrally non-redundant and complementary information about plant biochemical and structural properties. Each index exploits the interaction of light with different leaf pigments and cellular structures. The visible bands (green, red, and red-edge) are strongly influenced by pigments such as chlorophyll, carotenoids, and xanthophylls, whereas the near-infrared (NIR) band is largely controlled by internal leaf architecture, including the palisade and spongy mesophyll layers. The red-edge band captures the rapid transition between visible absorption and near-infrared reflection, making it sensitive to chlorophyll concentration and early vegetation stress. These characteristics enable the selected indices to represent different aspects of crop physiology, allowing accurate assessment of plant health, growth stage and fertilizer response. The vegetation indices were calculated using their respective mathematical formulations, as illustrated in Eq. (1) to Eq. (5):

$$NDVI = \frac{\rho_{nir} - \rho_{red}}{\rho_{nir} + \rho_{red}} \quad (1)$$

$$NDRE = \frac{\rho_{nir} - \rho_{re}}{\rho_{nir} + \rho_{re}} \quad (2)$$

$$GNDVI = \frac{\rho_{nir} - \rho_{green}}{\rho_{nir} + \rho_{green}} \quad (3)$$

$$RVI = \frac{\rho_{nir}}{\rho_{re}} \quad (4)$$

$$GRVI = \frac{\rho_{green} - \rho_{red}}{\rho_{green} + \rho_{red}} \quad (5)$$

where, ρ_{nir}, ρ_{re}, ρ_{green}, and ρ_{red} denote the surface reflectance values in the near-infrared, red-edge, green, and red spectral bands, respectively. Sample vegetation index values with identified growth stages and fertilizer recommendations are summarized in Table I.

TABLE I. SAMPLE VEGETATION INDEX VALUES WITH IDENTIFIED GROWTH STAGES AND FERTILIZER RECOMMENDATIONS

NDVI	NDRE	GNDVI	RVI	GRVI	Growth Stage	Fertilizer Recommendation
0.345	0.210	0.320	1.245	0.112	Early Growth	Recommended
0.402	0.180	0.410	1.312	0.087	Mature Stage	Not Needed
0.120	-0.005	0.075	0.987	-0.015	Early Growth	Recommended
0.275	0.155	0.290	1.089	0.065	Mature Stage	Recommended
0.015	-0.015	-0.005	0.876	-0.022	Early Growth	Recommended
0.500	0.245	0.380	1.400	0.123	Mature Stage	Not Needed
0.065	-0.020	0.025	0.912	-0.010	Mature Stage	Not Needed
0.330	0.190	0.300	1.200	0.098	Mature Stage	Not Needed
0.405	0.220	0.410	1.350	0.130	Early Growth	Recommended
0.290	0.145	0.275	1.110	0.055	Early Growth	Recommended

C. Model Development

The model development phase focused on constructing the Selfdom Enhanced CatBoost (SECB) framework for remote paddy growth monitoring and fertilizer recommendation. Vegetation indices derived from multispectral imagery were used as input features and the CatBoost algorithm was enhanced using the Improved Osprey Optimization Algorithm to refine model parameters. This hybrid integration strengthened predictive accuracy, reduced overfitting and enabled precise identification of growth stages and fertilizer requirements.

1) CatBoost: CatBoost is a gradient boosting algorithm developed to provide highly accurate predictions while minimizing the preprocessing burden commonly associated with machine learning models [30]. It is particularly effective for datasets containing categorical variables, converting them into numerical representations internally using ordered statistics instead of one-hot encoding. This approach prevents target leakage and reduces prediction bias. CatBoost builds an ensemble of symmetric (oblivious) decision trees, where each tree corrects the prediction errors of the previous one through gradient boosting. The general prediction function of CatBoost is expressed as Eq. (6):

$$F_m(x) = F_{m-1}(x) + \eta \cdot h_m(x) \quad (6)$$

where, $F_m(x)$ is the updated model at iteration m, η is the learning rate and $h_m(x)$ represents the newly added decision tree trained on the gradients of the loss function. CatBoost minimizes the loss function L by iteratively updating the model as Eq. (7):

$$F_m(x) = F_{m-1}(x) - \eta \cdot \frac{\partial L}{\partial F_{m-1}(x)} \quad (7)$$

CatBoost also introduces ordered boosting, which processes samples sequentially to avoid artificial correlations and overfitting. Its automatic handling of missing values, fast training and superior generalization make it highly competitive compared to XGBoost and LightGBM, especially for tabular agricultural datasets where precision and reliability are essential.

2) Selfdom Enhanced CatBoost Model: The objective of this study is to establish a reliable model capable of monitoring paddy growth and recommending the required fertilizer amount using remote sensing data. Since the relationship between crop

reflectance and physiological growth variables is highly nonlinear, ML becomes a natural choice to approximate this mapping using suitable training datasets. Among various ensemble algorithms, CatBoost stands out due to its ability to convert multiple weak learners into a robust predictive model [31]. Unlike conventional algorithms that rely heavily on extensive preprocessing and suffer from feature sensitivity, CatBoost introduces ordered boosting and structured trees that minimize overfitting while improving generalization. The proposed SECB model builds upon this foundation. It incorporates the IOOA to optimize CatBoost's parameters more efficiently. By iteratively adjusting these parameters, the IOOA prevents the model from settling on suboptimal solutions and offers a better balance between bias and variance. In boosting, a series of weak predictors is trained sequentially, where each stage emphasizes observations misclassified in the previous iteration. The model updates the error weights so that subsequent predictors gradually reduce the accumulated deviations. After training, the regression output of all weak learners is aggregated through a weighted combination, forming a strong predictive learner.

CatBoost's core is an oblivious decision tree (DT), a symmetric full binary tree where identical splitting conditions apply at each level. The parameters at the leaf nodes are represented as floating-point vectors, enabling efficient representation and easy extraction during prediction. The gradient boosting formulation in CatBoost is expressed as Eq. (8):

$$\mathrm{H}_{\alpha} = \mathrm{argmin}_{\{\mathrm{H}\epsilon\mathrm{h}\}} \frac{1}{\mathrm{J}} \sum_{\mathrm{I}=1}^{\mathrm{J}} \left(-\mathrm{G}^{\alpha}(\mathrm{X}_{\mathrm{I}} - \mathrm{Y}_{\mathrm{I}}) - \mathrm{H}(\mathrm{X}_{\mathrm{I}})\right)^2 \quad (8)$$

However, using the same training set repeatedly introduces gradient bias, which results in prediction drift and overfitting. This bias, represented as offset size Q, as Eq. (9):

$$\mathrm{Q} = \frac{1}{(\mathrm{N}-1)\mathrm{C}_2} (\mathrm{X}^2 - \frac{1}{2}) \quad (9)$$

The Selfdom component addresses this limitation by employing the IOOA, a heuristic optimization method inspired by the dynamic behavior of ospreys while capturing prey. IOOA incorporates randomness into the parameter search process, enabling the model to escape local minima. In certain iterations, a slightly inferior solution is intentionally accepted with a defined probability, allowing the algorithm to jump towards a globally optimal configuration. This mechanism significantly enhances CatBoost's learning ability and improves robustness under noisy or diverse spectral inputs.

3) Improved Osprey Optimization Algorithm: The Improved Osprey Optimization Algorithm refines the traditional Osprey Optimization Algorithm by integrating a gradient-based lifting strategy to determine optimal weight parameters more efficiently. In this enhancement, the IOOA combines the standard OOA framework with an objective function (OF), enabling a more informed search process. By incorporating the OF during initialization, the algorithm begins its optimization from higher-quality solution points rather than randomly, leading to faster convergence and superior outcomes [32].

The osprey also known as the fish hawk, sea hawk or river hawk is a predatory bird renowned for its precision hunting abilities, adaptive navigation and strategic pursuit of prey. These natural behaviors form the inspiration for the algorithm's two core computational phases: exploration and exploitation. During exploration, the IOOA simulates the osprey's wide-range scanning of its environment to identify potential opportunities, ensuring that the search space is thoroughly examined. In the exploitation phase, the algorithm imitates the osprey's focused dive toward its target, refining the solution through local adjustments and leveraging valuable information gained from previous iterations. By merging the original OOA mechanism with the gradient-oriented OF, the improved algorithm avoids stagnation at local optima and advances toward globally optimal solutions, making it highly suitable for complex parameter optimization tasks such as tuning the CatBoost model in this study.

Step 1: Initialization stage

The proposed IOOA is a population-related technique that provides solutions related to the search power of its population memberships in the problem-solving area finished an iteration-related procedure. Each osprey determines parameters for the problem depending on its location in the search space and OF, as it is a member of the IOOA population. Each osprey thus symbolizes a possible vector-based mathematical solution to the issue. Ospreys collectively comprise the IOOA population, which is generated using a matrix linked to the following equation. During the initialization phase of IOOA, the ospreys' positions within the search space are generated randomly as Eq. (10) and Eq. (11):

$$P = \begin{bmatrix} P_1 \\ \dots \\ P_I \\ \dots \\ P_N \end{bmatrix}_{N\times M} = \begin{bmatrix} P_{1,1} & \dots & P_{1,J} & \dots & P_{1,M} \\ \dots & \dots & \dots & \dots & \dots \\ P_{I.1} & \dots & P_{I,J} & \dots & P_{I,M} \\ \dots & \dots & \dots & \dots & \dots \\ P_{N,1} & \dots & P_{N,J} & \dots & P_{N,M} \end{bmatrix}_{N\times M} \quad (10)$$

$$P_{I,J} = LB_J + R_{I,J}.\left(UB_J - LB_J\right), I = 1,2,\dots N, J = 1,2,\dots,M \quad (11)$$

where, UB_J and LB_J is the upper bound and lower bound, $R_{I,J}$ is random statistics in the intermission $[0,1]$, M is defined as the count of problem parameters, N is the number of ospreys, $P_{I,J}$ is the dimension and P is the population matrix of osprey's locations.

Step 2: Oppositional Function (OF)

The oppositional function is widely adopted because it effectively strengthens the intensification-diversification balance, thereby improving the overall efficiency of the optimization search. This process is used in two phases: first, when the initial population is established and then, after the evaluation and computation of the optimal agent, when a novel population is generated. For each produced agent, an additional one is made for the opposite dimension of the traditional search agent in order to empower OF initialization as Eq. (12):

$$P_{S,X}^0 = L_P + U_P - P_{s,X} \quad (12)$$

where, $P_{s,X}$ is an original agent, $P_{S,X}^0$ is a search agent for the opposite parameter dimension X.

Step 3: Fitness Evaluation

In the method, the fitness function is considered for enhancing the training of the proposed classifier. The gradient lifting formulation is presented as Eq. (13):

$$H_\alpha = argmin_{\{H\epsilon h\}} \frac{1}{J}\sum_{I=1}^{J}\left(-G^\alpha(X_I - Y_I) - H(X_I)\right)^2 \quad (13)$$

Based on the MSE, the optimal weighting parameter is selected with the consideration of the IOOA algorithm.

Step 4: Exploration phase (fish hunting and position detection)

In the exploration phase, ospreys exhibit strong hunting proficiency, using their remarkable visual acuity to locate fish underwater and identify target positions within the search region. After they have located the fish, they dive underwater to attack and hunt it. The design of the initial population upgrade step in OOA is based on the simulation of this general osprey feature. For every osprey in the OOA framework, the locations of the remaining ospreys in the search space are determined underwater fishes using an optimal objective function parameter. The pair of fish is specified as follows for every osprey as Eq. (14):

$$fp_I = \{P_K | K\epsilon\{1,2,\dots,N\} \wedge f_K < f_I\} \cup \{P_{best}\} \quad (14)$$

where, fp_I is the pair of fish locations aimed at the osprey and P_{best} is the optimal candidate explanation. The osprey finds one of these fish at chance and then hits it. The updated position of the corresponding osprey is computed using Eq. (15) to Eq. (17), representing its movement toward the targeted fish.

$$P_{I,J}^{P1} = P_{I,J} + R_{I,J}.\left(sf_{I,J} - I_{I,J}.P_{I,J}\right) \quad (15)$$

$$P_{I,J}^{P1} = \begin{cases} P_{I,J}^{P1}, LB_J \le P_{I,J}^{P1} \le UB_J \\ LB_J, P_{I,J}^{P1} < LB_J \\ UB_J, P_{I,J}^{P1} > UB_J \end{cases} \quad (16)$$

$$P_I = \begin{cases} P_I^{P1}, f_I^{P1} < f_I \\ P_I, Else \end{cases} \quad (17)$$

where, $I_{I,J}$ is a random numbers from the pair {1,2}, $R_{I,J}$ is the haphazard count in the interval [0,1], $sf_{I,J}$ is the dimension, sf_I is the chosen for osprey, $P_{I,J}^{P1}$ is the dimension, P_I^{P1} is the new location of the osprey related on the initial phase. The algorithm for pseudocode of the IOOA is given below:

Algorithm: Pseudocode of the IOOA

Input: Dataset $(X_{train}, y_{train}), X_{val}, y_{val}$
CatBoost parameters (excluding weights)
Population size (N), Max iterations (T)

Output: Optimal weight vector (W_{opt})

Start:

Step 1: Initialize Population

- Generate N random weight vectors (W_i), one for each individual.
- Evaluate fitness for each weight vector using:

$$Fit(W_i) = MSE(CatBoost(W_i), y_{val})$$

Step 2: Oppositional Learning

- For each weight vector W_i:

$$W_i' = Oppositional_Function(W_i)$$

Combine original and opposite solutions, then select top N based on fitness.

Step 3: Optimization Loop

- For iteration t = 1 to T:

3.1 Update each weight vector:

$$W_i^{new} = Update_Position(W_i, Best_W, t)$$

3.2 Evaluate fitness for updated weights:

$$Fit(W_i^{new}) = MSE(CatBoost(W_i^{new}), y_{val})$$

3.3 Update Best_W:

Best_W = Weight vector with lowest MSE

Step 4: Return Best Solution

- Output Best_W as the optimal weight vector.

End

Step 5: Taking advantage of the fish to move it to a better location

The osprey catches a fish and then moves it to the proper spot to consume it. The simulation of these broad osprey features is the basis for the next phase of population upgrading in OOA. The design of conveying the fish to the best possible location contributes to the creation of minor changes in the osprey's position within the search location, which increases the OOA's manipulation power in local search then leads to conjunction to optimal solutions close the solutions that are found. The updated position of each osprey during this exploitation process is computed as Eq. (18):

$$P_{I,J}^{P2} = P_{I,J} + \frac{LB_J + R_{I,J}.(UB_J - LB_J)}{T}, I = 1,2,\dots,N, J = 1,2,\dots,M, T = 1,2,\dots,t \quad (18)$$

To ensure feasibility, boundary conditions are applied as Eq. (19):

$$P_{I,J}^{P2} = \begin{cases} P_{I,J}^{P2}, LB_J \le P_{I,J}^{P2} \le UB_J \\ LB_J, P_{I,J}^{P2} < LB_J \\ UB_J, P_{I,J}^{P2} > UB_J \end{cases} \quad (19)$$

Finally, a greedy selection mechanism ensures that the fitter solution is retained for subsequent iterations as Eq. (20):

$$P_I = \begin{cases} P_I^{P2}, f_I^{P2} < f_I \\ P_I, Else \end{cases} \quad (20)$$

where, t is the total count of repetitions, T is described as the iteration counter of the algorithm, $R_{I,J}$ is the random statistics in the range [0,1], f_I^{P2} is the objective function parameter, $P_{I,J}^{P2}$ is the dimension, P_I^{P2} is the novel location of the osprey related on the next phase of OOA. Based on this algorithm, the optimal weight parameter is designated and sent to the classifier which enhance the prediction of growth and provide efficient fertilizer recommendation.

4) Proposed Selfdom Enhanced CatBoost Model: The SECB algorithm integrates multispectral vegetation information with an optimized boosting framework to perform precise paddy growth monitoring and fertilizer recommendation. As shown in Fig. 4, the process begins with preparing the training and testing image datasets, from which key vegetation indices such as NDVI, NDRE, GNDVI, RVI, and GRVI are computed. These indices capture spectral variations related to crop vigor,

chlorophyll concentration, and canopy structure, providing discriminative features for stage-wise growth assessment. CatBoost serves as the core predictive engine, where multiple decision trees are sequentially constructed. Each tree learns from the residual errors of its predecessors, allowing the model to capture nonlinear interactions among spectral indices. To further improve learning efficiency, the Improved Osprey Optimization Algorithm (IOOA) adjusts the internal weight parameters of the boosting process. Through exploration (fish searching) and exploitation (position refinement), IOOA identifies optimal parameter configurations that enhance model accuracy and stability. The optimized predictors collectively estimate early and mature growth stages with high reliability. These stage predictions are then interpreted to generate fertilizer recommendations tailored to the crop's current physiological needs. By combining CatBoost's structured boosting with IOOA's adaptive parameter optimization, the SECB algorithm provides a robust, data-driven framework suitable for precision agriculture decision-making.

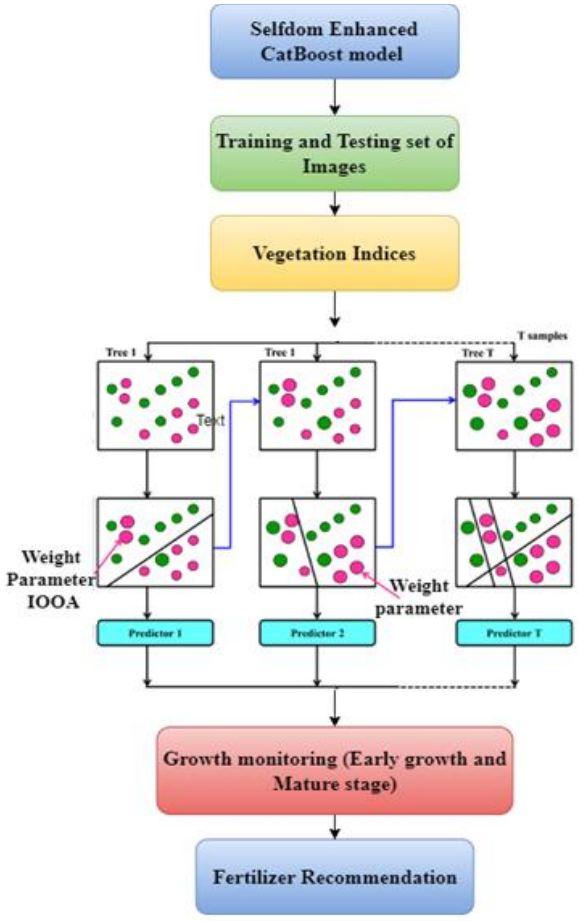

Fig. 4. Proposed Self Enhanced CatBoost Algorithm.

D. Simulation Setup

The SECB model was developed and executed entirely on a cloud-based simulation environment to ensure efficient training and scalability. Python served as the primary development platform, utilizing Pandas and NumPy for data preprocessing and scikit-learn for computing evaluation metrics. Model training and IOOA-based optimization were performed on Google Colaboratory with GPU acceleration, enabling faster computation of boosting iterations and optimized parameter tuning. CatBoost was employed as the core classifier, while the IOOA algorithm refined model weights to improve predictive stability. This cloud-based setup ensured consistent performance, rapid experimentation, and reliable validation of the proposed paddy growth monitoring and fertilizer recommendation framework.

The main simulation parameters adopted for training the proposed SECB model are summarized in Table II. The configuration includes 1000 boosting iterations to ensure stable learning and convergence, with a tree depth of 8 to effectively capture nonlinear relationships among vegetation indices. A step size of 0.03 was selected to balance learning speed and accuracy, while an L2 regularization coefficient of 3 was applied to prevent overfitting. Controlled randomness in tree splits was maintained at level 1 to enhance generalization. To address class imbalance, balancing weights of (1, 5) were used. A fixed random seed of 42 ensured reproducibility, and training progress was reported every 100 iterations.

TABLE II. SIMULATION VARIABLES OF THE PROPOSED MODEL

Description	Parameters
Number of boosting iterations (trees)	1000
Depth of the trees	8
Step size during optimization	0.03
L2 regularization coefficient for leaf values	3
Level of randomization in tree splits	1
Balancing weights for imbalanced classes	[1, 5]
Seed for reproducibility	42
Print progress during training	100
Oppositional initialization for optimization	FALSE

The overall runtime of the SECB–IOOA framework is primarily influenced by the optimization stage, since IOOA evaluates multiple candidate hyperparameter settings and each evaluation requires training and validating the CatBoost model. Vegetation-index computation is performed once during preprocessing and contributes relatively minor overhead compared to optimization. After training, inference remains efficient because CatBoost prediction involves evaluating a fixed set of symmetric decision trees, enabling fast tile-wise prediction and supporting large-scale deployment under practical monitoring conditions.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section analyzes the performance of the proposed Selfdom Enhanced CatBoost model for remote paddy growth monitoring and fertilizer recommendation. The vegetation indices GRVI, RVI, NDVI, GNDVI, and NDRE were extracted from multispectral images and normalized during preprocessing to ensure uniform scale across features. The IOOA was incorporated during training to fine-tune CatBoost's parameters, enabling faster convergence and improved prediction capability.

The effectiveness of the SECB model was measured using key performance indicators such as recall, precision, accuracy, F1 score and specificity. These metrics, defined in Eq. (21) to Eq. (25) and computed from false negatives (FN), false positives (FP), true positives (TP), and true negatives (TN), collectively validate the model's ability to interpret spectral signatures, classify paddy growth stages accurately, and generate precise fertilizer recommendations.

$$Accuracy = \frac{TP+TN}{TP+TN+FP+FN} \quad (21)$$

$$Recall = \frac{TP}{TP+FN} \quad (22)$$

$$Precision = \frac{TP}{TP+FP} \quad (23)$$

$$F1-score = 2 * \frac{Precision \times Recall}{Precision+Recall} \quad (24)$$

$$Specificity = \frac{TN}{TN+FP} \quad (25)$$

Recent studies emphasize the need for data-driven tools that can support sustainable rice growth monitoring and fertilization decisions. Compared with earlier approaches such as fuzzy MCDM, SMART, AHP, and other knowledge-based fertilizer recommendation techniques [4–6,20,23], the proposed SECB framework integrates multispectral vegetation indices with IOOA-optimized CatBoost learning to enhance classification performance and improve the reliability of fertilizer-related decision-making. This design aligns with current precision agriculture trends by linking remote sensing–based crop condition assessment with robust, automated model optimization for practical field deployment.

To demonstrate its superiority, the SECB model was compared against widely used baseline classifiers, including Naive Bayes, RF, DT and LR under similar experimental conditions. The SECB model consistently outperformed these approaches due to its optimized boosting structure and enhanced parameter tuning provided by the IOOA. The main simulation parameters used for model training are listed in Table II, which includes the number of boosting iterations (1000), tree depth (8), step size (0.03), L2 regularization coefficient (3) and balancing weights for handling class imbalances. The results validate that the SECB model is an efficient and reliable framework for paddy growth monitoring and fertilizer recommendation in precision agriculture settings.

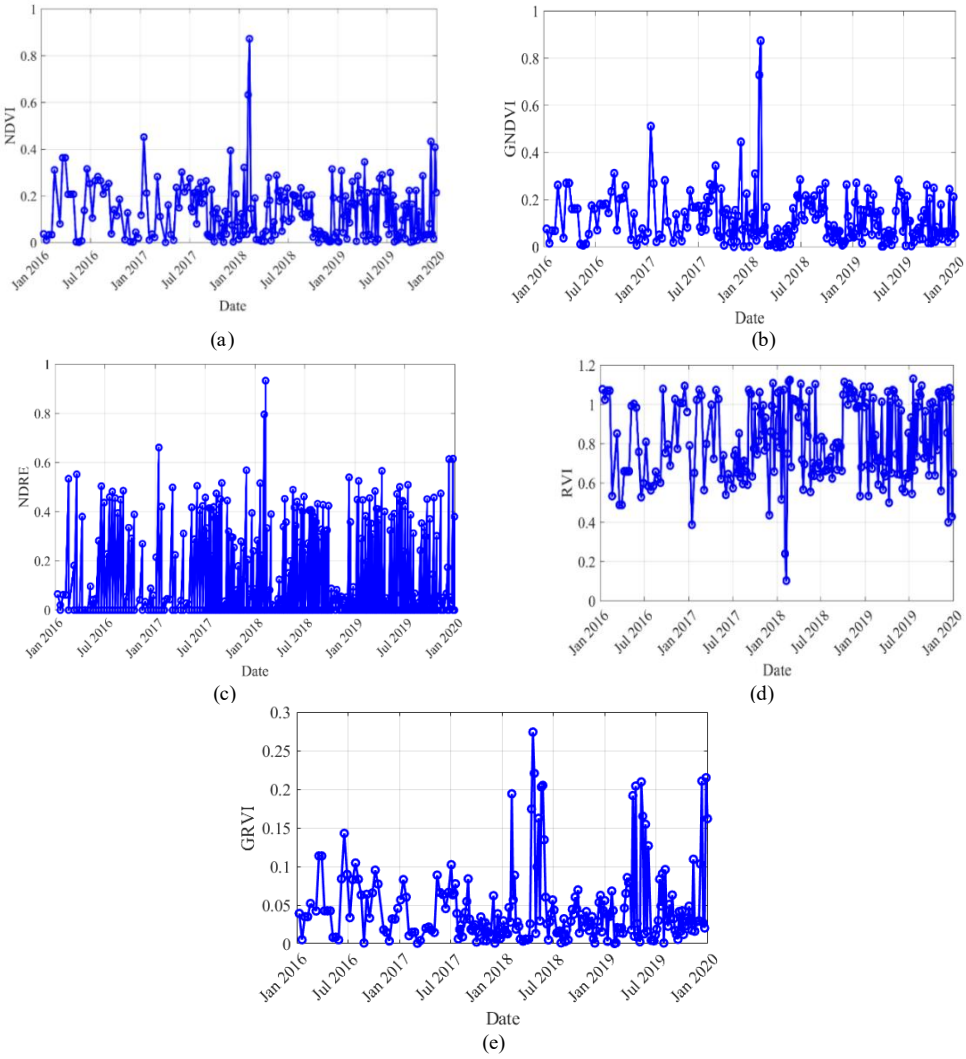

Fig. 5. Vegetation Index: a) NDVI, b) GNDVI, c) NDRE, d) RVI, and e) GRVI.

The temporal behavior of vegetation indices provides comprehensive insight into the paddy crop lifecycle across multiple seasons. Fig. 5 summarizes the evolution of crop vigor and canopy conditions from January 2016 to January 2020, enabling continuous monitoring of phenological transitions. In Fig. 5(a), NDVI captures overall canopy greenness and density, with peaks corresponding to active vegetative growth and sharp drops reflecting post-harvest or land preparation periods. A notable rise in early 2018 indicates particularly favorable growth conditions, which may be linked to improved irrigation or nutrient availability. Fig. 5(b) shows GNDVI trends, which are generally consistent with NDVI but offer increased sensitivity to chlorophyll-related variation in the green band. Fig. 5(c) presents NDRE dynamics, highlighting chlorophyll activity using the red-edge region and providing better discrimination of subtle stress during certain stages. Fig. 5(d) illustrates RVI variations, where higher ratios typically correspond to dense canopies, while lower values align with sparse vegetation or non-growing phases. Fig. 5(e) depicts GRVI behavior, which reflects shifts between germination, vegetative growth, and post-harvest periods and provides complementary information on canopy color dynamics.

Overall, the observed NDVI, GNDVI, NDRE, RVI, and GRVI trajectories (2016–2020) are consistent with prior satellite studies that use multispectral/hyperspectral indices to monitor paddy development, biomass, and yield. The recurring seasonal rises during active growth and declines during post-harvest or stress periods support the use of VI time-series patterns as reliable indicators of rice phenology. This long-term consistency strengthens the rationale for using these indices as inputs to the SECB framework for robust monitoring and fertilizer decision support across multiple seasons.

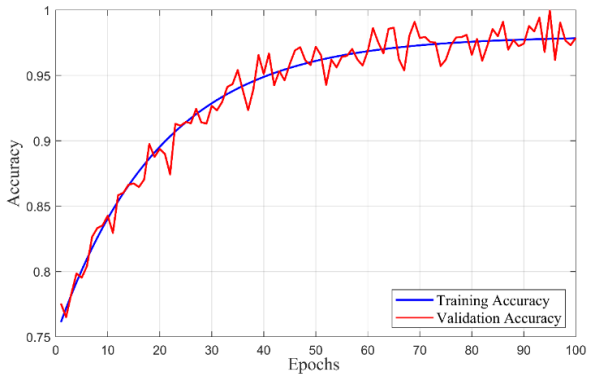

Fig. 6. Accuracy plot of the proposed model.

Fig. 6 depicts the validation and training accuracy trends of the SECB model over 100 epochs. Both curves demonstrate a consistent upward trajectory, indicating that the model learns effectively from the input vegetation indices and progressively improves its predictive capability. At the initial stages, the model exhibits moderate accuracy values, reflecting the early learning phase where parameters are still being optimized. As epochs increase, the training accuracy steadily rises and converges close to 0.98, illustrating strong fitting of the model to the training data. The validation accuracy follows a similar pattern, closely trailing the training curve with minor oscillations around epochs 40–80. These fluctuations are due to the dynamic nature of unseen data during validation and the model's effort to generalize across different crop growth scenarios. Importantly, the validation accuracy stabilizes near the training accuracy towards the end of the training period, confirming that the SECB model does not encounter overfitting and maintains excellent generalization capabilities. The accuracy behavior verifies the robustness of the proposed SECB architecture. The close alignment between the two curves highlights the model's stability, efficient learning mechanism and strong capability in predicting paddy growth stages and fertilizer needs with high reliability.

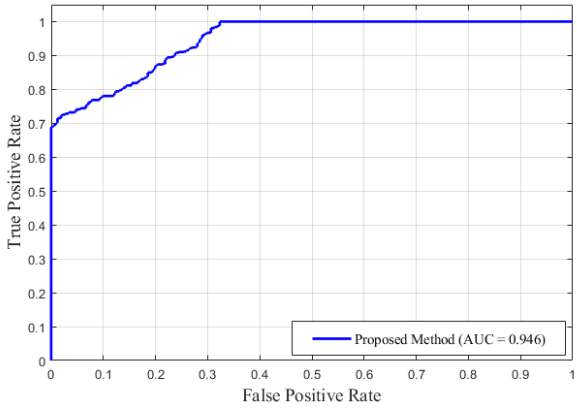

Fig. 7. ROC plot of the proposed model.

Fig. 7 illustrates the Receiver Operating Characteristic (ROC) curve for the proposed SECB model, which evaluates the model's discriminative capability in classifying paddy growth conditions based on vegetation indices. The curve demonstrates a steep rise toward the upper-left section of the graph, indicating that the classifier identifies true positives effectively while generating minimal false positives. This behavior reflects the model's ability to correctly identify healthy or nutrient-deficient crop conditions without generating excessive false alarms. The calculated Area Under the Curve (AUC) value of 0.946 confirms excellent classification power. An AUC close to 1 indicates that the model makes highly reliable decisions with minimal misclassification, outperforming typical threshold-based or non-boosting algorithms. The smooth progression and high asymptotic value of the ROC curve show that the SECB model retains strong generalization ability even when tested on unseen datasets. This robust performance underscores the effectiveness of integrating the Improved Osprey Optimization Algorithm with CatBoost for precision agricultural monitoring, enabling accurate fertilizer recommendation and timely intervention to enhance crop productivity.

Fig. 8 illustrates the ROC curves of different ML models used for paddy growth monitoring. The curves show how well each model distinguishes between growth stages based on vegetation index patterns. The proposed Selfdom Enhanced CatBoost (SECB) model clearly outperforms all the baseline techniques. The blue curve, representing the SECB model, shows the highest AUC value of 0.946, indicating excellent classification capability and very low misclassification. This means the model consistently made correct predictions even when the input conditions were complex or varied across seasons. The DT [33] (AUC = 0.926) and RF [34] (AUC =

0.923) also performed well but could not match the SECB model's precision. Logistic Regression (LR) [35] (AUC = 0.914) and Naive Bayes [36] (AUC = 0.911) delivered lower discrimination power because they struggled to capture the nonlinear behavior of paddy crop growth. The ROC comparison confirms that adding the IOOA to CatBoost significantly strengthened its learning ability. This enhancement enabled the SECB model to make more confident decisions, making it the most reliable approach for crop growth analysis and fertilizer recommendation in precision agriculture.

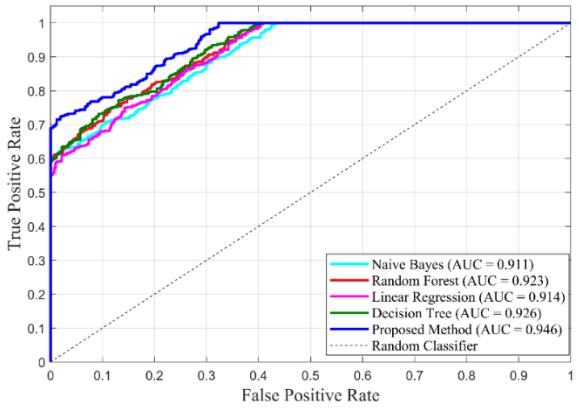

Fig. 8. ROC comparison.

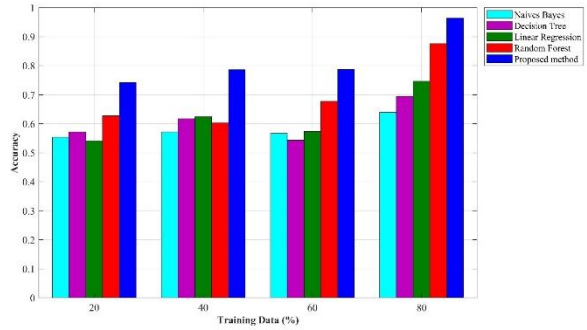

Fig. 9. Comparison of accuracy.

Fig. 9 compares the accuracy of five ML models, such as Naive Bayes, DT, LR, RF and the proposed SECB method using different proportions of training data (20%, 40%, 60% and 80%). At 20% training data, all models performed modestly; however, the SECB method already demonstrated a clear advantage, achieving an accuracy of around 0.75, whereas Naive Bayes lagged significantly with an accuracy close to 0.55. DT, LR and RF clustered around mid-range values, indicating limited learning capability with sparse data. When the training data increased to 40% and 60%, all models showed gradual improvement, but the SECB method continued to maintain a noticeable performance lead. This highlights its superior ability to extract meaningful patterns even from partially available vegetation index data. The most significant performance gap appeared at 80% training data, where the SECB method reached an impressive accuracy of nearly 0.95. In contrast, RF achieved about 0.88, DT stabilized around 0.74 and LR settled near 0.65, while Naive Bayes improved only marginally to approximately 0.57. The comparison confirms that the proposed SECB model consistently outperformed every traditional algorithm across all training partitions. The more data available to the model, the more pronounced its superiority became, proving its strong generalization ability and robust performance for paddy growth monitoring and fertilizer recommendation.

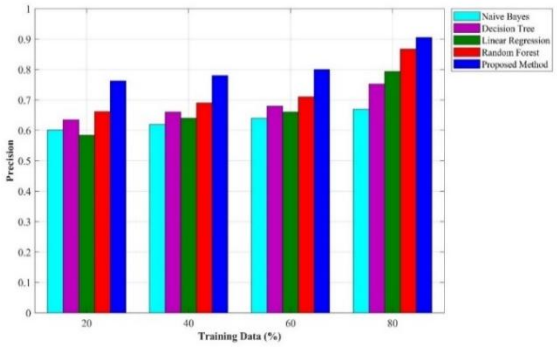

Fig. 10. Comparison of precision.

Fig. 10 illustrates the precision comparison of five models: Naive Bayes, DT, LR, RF, and the proposed method across varying proportions of training data. At 20% training data, the proposed method already achieves the highest precision of approximately 0.76, outperforming RF and DT, while Naive Bayes records the lowest value near 0.60. As the training data increases to 40% and 60%, all models show gradual improvement; however, the proposed method consistently maintains a noticeable lead, reflecting its superior capability to distinguish relevant patterns. At 80%, the proposed method attains a precision close to 0.91, higher than RF at 0.87 and considerably above Naive Bayes at 0.67. These results clearly demonstrate the enhanced decision reliability of the proposed SECB model.

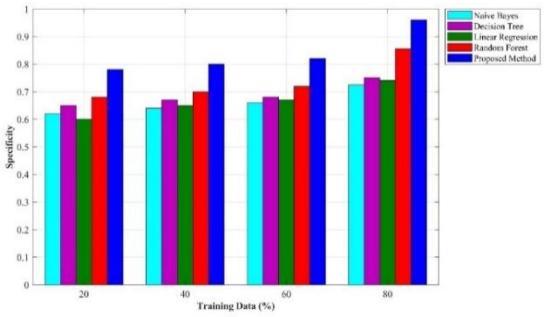

Fig. 11. Comparison of specificity.

Fig. 11 presents the specificity comparison among Naive Bayes, DT, LR, RF and the proposed method at different training data proportions. At 20% training data, the proposed method already demonstrates a strong specificity of around 0.78, outperforming all baseline models, where Naive Bayes, DT and LR remain below 0.65 and RF reaches only 0.69. As the training percentage increases, all methods show gradual improvement; however, the proposed method continues to lead consistently. When trained with 80% of the data, it attains an impressive specificity of approximately 0.96, significantly exceeding the other models. This superior performance highlights its robustness in accurately identifying negative cases and reducing false positives.

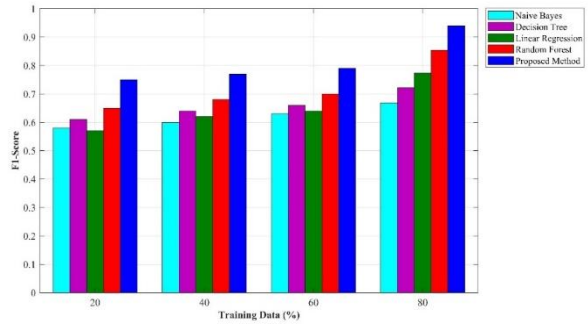

Fig. 12. Comparison of F1 score.

Fig. 12 compares the F1-score performance of different models Naive Bayes, DT, LR, RF and the proposed model across increasing proportions of training data. At 20% training data, the proposed method already records an impressive F1-score of around 0.78, surpassing all other models, with Naive Bayes showing the weakest value near 0.58. As the training data increases, all models improve gradually; however, the margin of superiority for the Proposed Method becomes more evident. With 80% training data, it achieves an F1-score above 0.93, outperforming RF and DT. This consistent dominance highlights the effectiveness of the proposed approach in maintaining a balanced precision-recall trade-off.

To further validate the robustness of the proposed SECB framework, a comparative evaluation was performed against conceptually similar metaheuristic-optimized boosting models, including Genetic Algorithm-tuned XGBoost (GA-XGBoost), Particle Swarm Optimization-based LightGBM (PSO-LightGBM), Grey Wolf Optimizer-enhanced CatBoost (GWO-CatBoost), and Honey Badger Algorithm-optimized XGBoost (HBA-XGBoost). These variants were implemented following optimization principles established in prior metaheuristic-boosting studies, where GA [37], PSO [38], GWO [39], and HBA [40] have been used to enhance model convergence and generalization.

TABLE III. COMPARATIVE PERFORMANCE OF METAHEURISTIC-OPTIMIZED BOOSTING MODELS

Model	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1-Score	Specificity	AUC
GA-XGBoost	0.928	0.915	0.904	0.909	0.932	0.938
PSO-LightGBM	0.931	0.918	0.912	0.915	0.936	0.941
GWO-CatBoost	0.935	0.920	0.918	0.919	0.940	0.943
HBA-XGBoost	0.939	0.926	0.922	0.924	0.944	0.945
SECB (Proposed)	0.951	0.934	0.930	0.932	0.952	0.946

Table III summarizes the comparative performance of these optimization-guided boosting strategies. The SECB model achieves the highest performance across all metrics, surpassing all other metaheuristic-based approaches. The observed improvement in accuracy (0.951) and AUC (0.946) highlights the effectiveness of integrating the IOOA with CatBoost. The Selfdom mechanism further enhances the exploration–exploitation balance through oppositional initialization and adaptive acceptance, allowing SECB to avoid premature convergence commonly observed in GA and PSO-based models.

These findings confirm that SECB achieves superior learning stability and predictive reliability for spectral-index-driven paddy monitoring. Moreover, its strong performance generalizes across diverse environmental conditions, demonstrating potential for large-scale implementation in real-world precision agriculture systems.

V. CONCLUSION

This research introduced the Selfdom Enhanced CatBoost model as an effective solution for remote paddy growth monitoring and fertilizer recommendation, addressing key limitations of conventional agricultural practices. By integrating multispectral UAV imagery with vegetation indices such as NDRE, GNDVI, RVI, GRVI and NDVI, the proposed model enabled a comprehensive evaluation of crop health and developmental stages. The incorporation of the IOOA further enhanced the CatBoost framework by optimizing feature weights and reducing training errors, resulting in more reliable predictions. Comparative analysis against widely used ML models, including LR, DT, RF, and Naive Bayes, demonstrated that the SECB model consistently delivered superior performance across crucial metrics. Its improved accuracy in identifying growth stages and recommending precise fertilizer inputs highlights its potential to support sustainable and data-driven agricultural management. The findings of this study reaffirm the growing importance of integrating remote sensing, machine learning, and optimization techniques for modern precision farming. By minimizing resource wastage and improving crop productivity, the SECB model offers a scalable and intelligent decision-support tool that can significantly assist farmers and policymakers. Future work may extend this framework to other crop varieties and integrate real-time field data from IoT sensors, enabling more dynamic and autonomous agricultural decision-making systems. Additionally, exploring edge computing and cloud-based deployment could further enhance its usability in large-scale smart farming environments.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author sincerely acknowledges the supervisor for the invaluable guidance, continuous support, and encouragement throughout the course of this research.

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A Robust Real-Time Multimodal Polynomial Fusion Framework for Sensor-Based Sign Language Recognition Using Flex–IMU Smart Gloves

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***Abstract*—Sign language recognition is a critical component of assistive technologies for individuals with hearing and speech impairments. While vision-based approaches have shown promising performance, their reliability is often affected by illumination variations, occlusions, and background complexity. Wearable sensor–based solutions, particularly smart gloves integrating flex sensors and inertial measurement units (IMUs), provide a more stable alternative by directly capturing hand articulation and motion patterns. However, existing sensor-based methods frequently suffer from temporal instability, noise sensitivity, and limited discrimination among structurally similar gestures, which is especially challenging in Hijaiyah sign language, where many letters differ only by subtle finger configurations. This study proposes a robust real-time Multimodal Polynomial Fusion (MPF) framework for sensor-based sign language recognition using a flex–IMU smart glove, with a specific focus on Hijaiyah gestures as the application domain. The proposed framework applies nonlinear polynomial temporal smoothing within a sliding window to stabilize raw flex–IMU trajectories, followed by multimodal fusion to enhance gesture separability and temporal consistency. A large-scale multimodal dataset comprising 231,000 samples collected from 33 users performing 28 Hijaiyah gesture classes was constructed to enable rigorous subject-independent evaluation. Experimental results obtained from offline testing, session-aware analysis, and real-time streaming scenarios demonstrate that the proposed MPF framework consistently outperforms a baseline approach based on raw normalized signals. The proposed method improves recognition accuracy from 92.42% to 96.32%, while also achieving higher macro-level precision, recall, and F1-score. Furthermore, MPF significantly reduces misclassification rates and improves temporal stability, particularly for fine-grained Hijaiyah gestures with similar structural patterns. These results confirm that the proposed framework provides a robust and reliable solution for real-time wearable sign language recognition and offers practical benefits for Hijaiyah-based assistive communication systems.**

Keywords*—Sign language recognition; Hijaiyah sign language; wearable sensors; smart glove; multimodal fusion; polynomial temporal smoothing; real-time recognition

I. Introduction

Sign language recognition has been extensively investigated as a core technology for assistive communication systems that support individuals with hearing and speech impairments. Automatic translation of hand gestures into linguistic symbols enables improved accessibility in education, healthcare, and everyday interactions. Early studies in this area predominantly relied on vision-based approaches, utilizing RGB cameras, depth sensors, or skeletal tracking to model hand shape and motion patterns [1], [3], [11]. With the rapid advancement of machine learning and deep learning techniques, vision-based systems have achieved promising recognition accuracy, particularly for well-studied sign languages such as American Sign Language (ASL) and British Sign Language (BSL) [12], [19], [31].

Despite these advances, vision-based sign language recognition systems remain constrained by several inherent limitations. Their performance is highly sensitive to environmental factors, including illumination variations, background clutter, occlusion, and motion blur, which frequently occur in real-world settings [3], [12], [19]. In addition, camera-based systems typically require fixed viewpoints and considerable computational resources, limiting their suitability for real-time, mobile, and embedded assistive applications [11], [31]. These challenges have motivated an increasing interest in alternative sensing modalities that are less dependent on external visual conditions.

Wearable sensor–based approaches have therefore emerged as a robust alternative for sign language recognition. Smart gloves [2] equipped with flex sensors enable continuous measurement of finger bending, while inertial measurement units (IMUs) capture hand orientation and dynamic motion cues [9], [10], [13], [14]. By directly sensing hand articulation at the source, wearable systems significantly reduce the influence of environmental disturbances and provide more stable gesture representations across diverse operating conditions [4], [18], [22], [32]. Numerous studies have demonstrated the feasibility of glove-based systems for gesture recognition and sign language translation using combinations of flex sensors, accelerometers, and gyroscopes [6], [7], [15], [20], [21], [26].

However, existing wearable sensor–based sign language recognition systems still face several unresolved challenges. Many prior studies rely on relatively small datasets involving limited numbers of participants, typically ranging from three to ten users, which restricts cross-user generalization and robustness [7], [15], [24], [28], [29]. In addition, gesture vocabularies are often limited, with many systems evaluating only partial sets of letters or gestures rather than complete sign alphabets [5], [8], [17], [28]. Furthermore, most preprocessing pipelines employ simple linear filtering techniques, such as moving average or low-pass filters, which are insufficient to model the nonlinear temporal characteristics inherent in flex–IMU sensor signals. As a result, micro-tremors, sensor drift,

and temporal instability frequently persist, leading to misclassification, especially for gestures with subtle structural differences [12], [19], [25].

These challenges are particularly evident in Hijaiyah sign language, which represents the Arabic alphabet and consists of 28 gesture classes. Many Hijaiyah letters differ only by minor variations in finger configuration or hand orientation, making them especially sensitive to noise and temporal inconsistencies in sensor measurements [5], [17], [28]. Existing Arabic and Hijaiyah sign language recognition systems are often limited to partial datasets, handcrafted feature extraction, or small-scale user evaluations, leaving large-scale multimodal modeling and real-time robustness insufficiently explored [8], [17], [28].

To address these limitations, more advanced temporal modeling techniques are required to stabilize sensor trajectories while preserving meaningful motion dynamics. Polynomial regression has been shown to be effective for motion smoothing and trajectory stabilization, as it is capable of modeling nonlinear temporal behavior more accurately than conventional linear filters [3], [12], [23]. Nevertheless, the integration of polynomial temporal modeling with multimodal flex–IMU fusion for sign language recognition remains largely unexplored, particularly in the context of real-time wearable systems.

In this study, a robust real-time Multimodal Polynomial Fusion (MPF) framework is proposed for sensor-based sign language recognition using a flex–IMU smart glove, with Hijaiyah gestures serving as the application domain. The proposed framework applies nonlinear polynomial temporal smoothing within a sliding window to stabilize raw flex and IMU signals, followed by multimodal fusion to enhance gesture separability and temporal consistency. Unlike conventional linear preprocessing approaches, the proposed method explicitly models nonlinear sensor dynamics, thereby reducing intra-class variance and improving discrimination among structurally similar gestures.

The effectiveness of the proposed framework is validated using a large-scale multimodal dataset comprising 231,000 samples collected from 33 users, covering all 28 Hijaiyah gesture classes. A subject-independent evaluation protocol is adopted to rigorously assess cross-user generalization. Comprehensive experiments conducted under offline, session-aware, and real-time streaming conditions demonstrate that the proposed MPF framework consistently outperforms a baseline approach based on raw normalized signals in terms of recognition accuracy, robustness, and temporal stability.

The remainder of this study is organized as follows: Section II reviews related work on vision-based and wearable sensor–based sign language recognition. Section III describes the proposed Multimodal Polynomial Fusion framework, including system architecture, preprocessing, and real-time implementation. Experimental results and analysis are presented in Section IV. The discussion is presented in Section V. Finally, Section VI concludes the study and outlines directions for future research.

II. Related Work

Research on sign language recognition has evolved along two dominant paradigms, namely vision-based approaches and wearable sensor–based systems. Each paradigm offers distinct advantages while also exhibiting inherent limitations, particularly when deployed in real-time assistive scenarios.

Vision-based sign language recognition has been extensively explored using RGB cameras, depth sensors, and skeletal tracking models. Early studies employed handcrafted features extracted from hand shape and motion trajectories, while more recent works leverage convolutional neural networks (CNNs), recurrent neural networks (RNNs), and transformer-based architectures to improve recognition accuracy [1], [3], [11], [12], [19], [31]. These approaches have demonstrated strong performance for widely studied sign languages, especially ASL, under controlled conditions. However, several studies report that vision-based systems remain highly sensitive to illumination variations, occlusions, background clutter, and camera viewpoints, which significantly degrade performance in unconstrained environments [3], [12], [19]. Moreover, the computational complexity of deep vision models limits their feasibility for real-time embedded deployment, particularly in wearable or mobile assistive systems [11], [31].

To overcome the environmental dependency of camera-based solutions, wearable sensor–based sign language recognition has attracted increasing attention. Smart gloves equipped with flex sensors, accelerometers, gyroscopes, and inertial measurement units (IMUs) enable direct measurement of finger articulation and hand motion, providing more stable gesture acquisition independent of external visual conditions [9], [10], [13], [14]. Early glove-based systems demonstrated the feasibility of translating hand gestures into symbolic representations using flex sensors and basic machine learning classifiers [6], [7], [15]. Subsequent studies integrated IMUs to capture three-dimensional motion cues, improving recognition robustness for dynamic gestures [4], [18], [20], [22], [26], [30], [32].

Despite these advances, many wearable sensor–based systems remain limited by dataset scale and evaluation scope. Numerous studies evaluate their models using small participant cohorts, often involving fewer than ten users, which restricts the assessment of cross-user generalization and robustness [7], [15], [24], [28], [29]. In addition, gesture vocabularies are frequently constrained to partial alphabets or small gesture sets, limiting their applicability to complete sign language systems [5], [8], [17], [28]. These limitations are particularly critical for alphabets with subtle inter-class differences, where robust temporal modeling and extensive user diversity are essential.

Another important challenge lies in the preprocessing and temporal modeling of wearable sensor signals. Most existing works rely on simple linear filtering techniques, such as moving average smoothing or low-pass filters, to reduce sensor noise and jitter [12], [19], [25]. While these methods offer basic noise suppression, they are insufficient for modeling the nonlinear temporal dynamics inherent in flex–IMU signals, including micro-tremors, drift, and execution variability across users. As a result, gesture trajectories often remain unstable, leading to

increased intra-class variance and misclassification among structurally similar gestures.

Multimodal fusion has been proposed as a strategy to improve robustness by integrating complementary sensor modalities. Several studies combine flex sensors with IMUs or tactile sensors using feature-level or decision-level fusion, demonstrating improved recognition accuracy compared with single-modality approaches [4], [18], [22], [27], [32]. Classical classifiers such as k-nearest neighbors (k-NN), support vector machines (SVMs), dynamic time warping (DTW), and random forests have been widely used in these systems. Recent deep learning-based glove systems [16] demonstrate higher accuracy but still rely on linear preprocessing. More recent works explore deep learning-based fusion models to improve multimodal integration [18], [19], [27]. However, most fusion strategies still rely on linear preprocessing pipelines and do not explicitly address nonlinear temporal instability in sensor trajectories.

Polynomial regression and related nonlinear modeling techniques have been investigated in motion smoothing and trajectory stabilization tasks, showing superior performance over linear filters in capturing complex temporal patterns [3], [12], [23]. In the context of hand motion and gesture analysis, polynomial modeling has been reported to improve signal stability and reduce high-frequency noise. Nevertheless, the application of polynomial temporal smoothing within a multimodal flex–IMU fusion framework for real-time sign language recognition remains largely unexplored in the existing literature.

Research on Arabic and Hijaiyah sign language recognition is comparatively limited when contrasted with ASL and other widely studied sign languages. Existing works often focus on partial Hijaiyah or Arabic gesture sets, rely on handcrafted features, or evaluate performance using small-scale datasets [5], [8], [17], [28]. Several studies highlight the difficulty of distinguishing Hijaiyah letters that differ only by subtle finger configurations, emphasizing the need for more robust temporal modeling and multimodal integration [5], [17], [28]. To date, no study has reported a large-scale multimodal flex–IMU dataset for Hijaiyah sign language combined with advanced nonlinear temporal fusion evaluated under real-time conditions.

Based on this review, a clear research gap can be identified. Existing vision-based approaches struggle with environmental sensitivity, while wearable sensor–based systems remain constrained by limited datasets, linear temporal modeling, and insufficient real-time validation. Although multimodal fusion improves robustness, the lack of nonlinear temporal stabilization continues to limit performance, particularly for fine-grained alphabets such as Hijaiyah. These limitations motivate the development of a robust real-time framework that integrates nonlinear temporal modeling with multimodal sensor fusion, supported by large-scale subject-independent evaluation. The proposed Multimodal Polynomial Fusion (MPF) framework directly addresses these gaps by stabilizing flex–IMU trajectories through polynomial temporal smoothing and enhancing gesture separability via multimodal integration.

III. Methodology

This section describes the overall framework for real-time Hijaiyah sign recognition using the proposed Multimodal Polynomial Fusion (MPF) approach. The methodology includes hardware design, data acquisition, preprocessing, polynomial temporal smoothing, multimodal fusion, feature extraction, classification, and real-time implementation.

A. Smart-Glove Architecture

The smart glove integrates five flex sensors and a three-axis IMU to capture finger bending and hand motion, producing an eight-channel multimodal signal. As shown in Fig. 1, the pipeline applies preprocessing, polynomial smoothing, multimodal fusion, and classification, with a real-time sliding window ensuring temporal consistency and robustness during continuous gesture recognition.

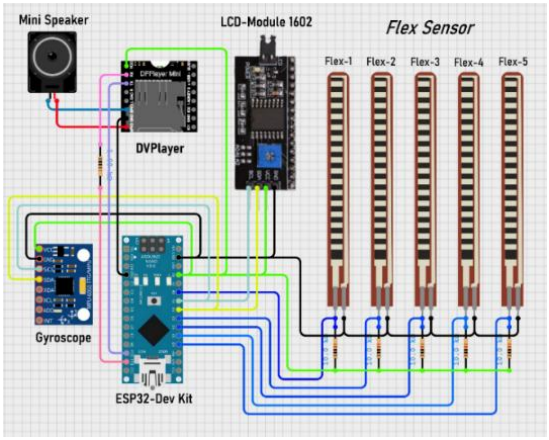

Fig. 1. Proposed multimodal Flex–IMU.

The smart glove integrates five flex sensors and a three-axis IMU to capture finger bending and hand orientation, enabling reliable discrimination of all 28 Hijaiyah gestures, including those with similar postures, as shown in Fig. 2.

Fig. 2. Sensor placement on the hand.

The assembled smart-glove prototype integrates flex sensors, an IMU, a microcontroller, and a power unit into a wearable form factor, enabling stable signal acquisition during natural hand movements while maintaining user comfort, as shown in Fig. 3.

Fig. 3. Fully assembled smart-glove hardware prototype.

Hijaiyah gesture classes used in this study, representing the complete Hijaiyah alphabet and following established conventions in sensor-based sign language recognition using flex–IMU smart gloves [13], [17], [26], [33], in Fig. 4.

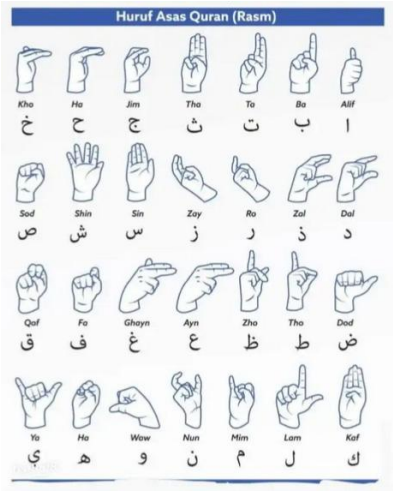

Fig. 4. The 28 Hijaiyah gesture.

B. Data Acquisition

Data collection involved 33 participants, each performing all 28 Hijaiyah gesture classes in 250 repetitions, yielding a total of 231,000 multimodal samples. This large-scale dataset captures natural variations in hand shape, execution speed, and sensor alignment across users. To enable rigorous subject-independent evaluation, the dataset was partitioned into 26 users for training and 7 unseen users for testing, ensuring that model performance reflects true cross-user generalization rather than memorization of individual motion patterns. Each raw observation is represented as:

1) Feature vector

$$S(t) = [f_1(t), f_2(t), f_3(t), f_4(t), f_5(t), x(t), y(t), z(t)]$$

where, $f_1(t)$ – $f_5(t)$ denote flex-sensor values and $a_x(t), a_y(t), a_z(t)$ denote IMU signals.

C. Preprocessing

To mitigate differences arising from hand size, glove fitting, and sensor drift, each sensor channel undergoes z-score normalization:

1) Z-score normalization

$$S'(t) = \frac{S(t) - \mu}{\sigma}$$

where, μ and σ represent the mean and standard deviation computed from the training dataset.

D. Polynomial Temporal Smoothing

Raw flex–IMU signals naturally contain micro-tremors, noise, and nonlinear temporal variations that can degrade gesture separability. To mitigate these effects, polynomial regression is applied within a sliding window of length W, producing smoothed temporal trajectories that better capture the underlying motion patterns while suppressing high-frequency fluctuations in the channel. The smoothed value is computed as:

1) Polynomial smoothing

$$\hat{s}(t) = \sum_{k=0}^{d} a_k t^k$$

where, d denotes the polynomial order and α_k are coefficients estimated using least-squares fitting.

E. Multimodal Polynomial Fusion

Following temporal smoothing, all flex and IMU channels are integrated into a unified multimodal representation:

1) MPF vector

$$F = [\hat{f}_1, \hat{f}_2, \hat{f}_3, \hat{f}_4, \hat{f}_5, \hat{x}, \hat{y}, \hat{z}]$$

where, $\tilde{f}_i(t)$ and $\tilde{a}_j(t)$ represent the polynomial-smoothed flex and IMU signals, respectively.

The MPF approach strengthens cross-channel modeling and improves discrimination among similar gestures by producing more stable, noise-resistant sensor representations. Fig. 5 highlights these enhancements compared with the baseline pipeline.

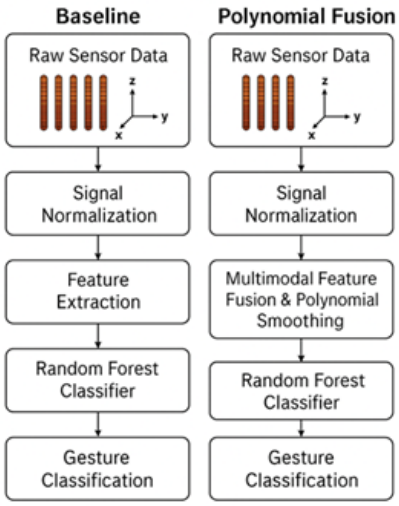

Fig. 5. Baseline vs. Polynomial fusion framework.

F. Feature Extraction, Classification, and Implementation

After multimodal polynomial fusion, compact features are extracted from each fused window, including basic statistical descriptors and temporal gradients, to represent gesture dynamics. A Random Forest classifier is employed due to its robustness to noise and nonlinear feature interactions, with identical settings applied to both the baseline and MPF models to ensure fair comparison. The entire pipeline is implemented in a real-time streaming framework using a sliding-window mechanism, enabling stable predictions and smooth gesture transitions with low computational overhead. Model performance is evaluated using accuracy, macro precision, recall, F1-score, and confusion matrix analysis under subject-independent and real-time conditions.

IV. Results

This section presents the experimental results of the proposed Multimodal Polynomial Fusion (MPF) framework. The evaluation is conducted under subject-independent, session-aware, and real-time streaming conditions to assess recognition accuracy, robustness across users, and temporal stability. Performance is compared against a baseline system using raw normalized flex–IMU features.

A. Overall Performance Evaluation

To provide a concise quantitative comparison between the baseline system and the proposed Multimodal Polynomial Fusion (MPF) framework, overall recognition performance is summarized using standard evaluation metrics. Accuracy and macro-averaged precision, recall, and F1-score are reported to ensure balanced assessment across all gesture classes under subject-independent and real-time conditions. The results presented in Table I highlight the consistent performance improvements achieved by the proposed framework over the baseline approach.

TABLE I. Overall Performance Comparison

Metric	Baseline Model	MPF Model
Accuracy (%)	92.42	96.32
Precision (Macro)	92.56	96.51
Recall (Macro)	92.44	96.32
F1-Score (Macro)	92.44	96.30

The real-time evaluation shows that MPF consistently outperforms the baseline across all metrics, providing more stable and reliable predictions during continuous gesture execution. Higher precision, recall, and F1-score indicate reduced misclassification and improved consistency across gesture classes, confirming MPF's robustness for real-world assistive use. Fig. 6 further illustrates the real-time behavior of the proposed framework under subject-independent conditions; representative gesture detection results from seven unseen users are presented. Each example corresponds to a different test subject and shows a direct comparison between the baseline model and the proposed Multimodal Polynomial Fusion (MPF) approach for the same Hijaiyah gesture, highlighting user-specific variability and temporal prediction stability.

With Polynomial Fusion – Letter Alif

With Baseline – Letter Alif

With Polynomial Fusion – Letter Jim

With Baseline – Letter Jim

With Polynomial Fusion – Letter Dzal

With Baseline – Letter Dzal

With Polynomial Fusion – Letter Sin

With Baseline – Letter Sin

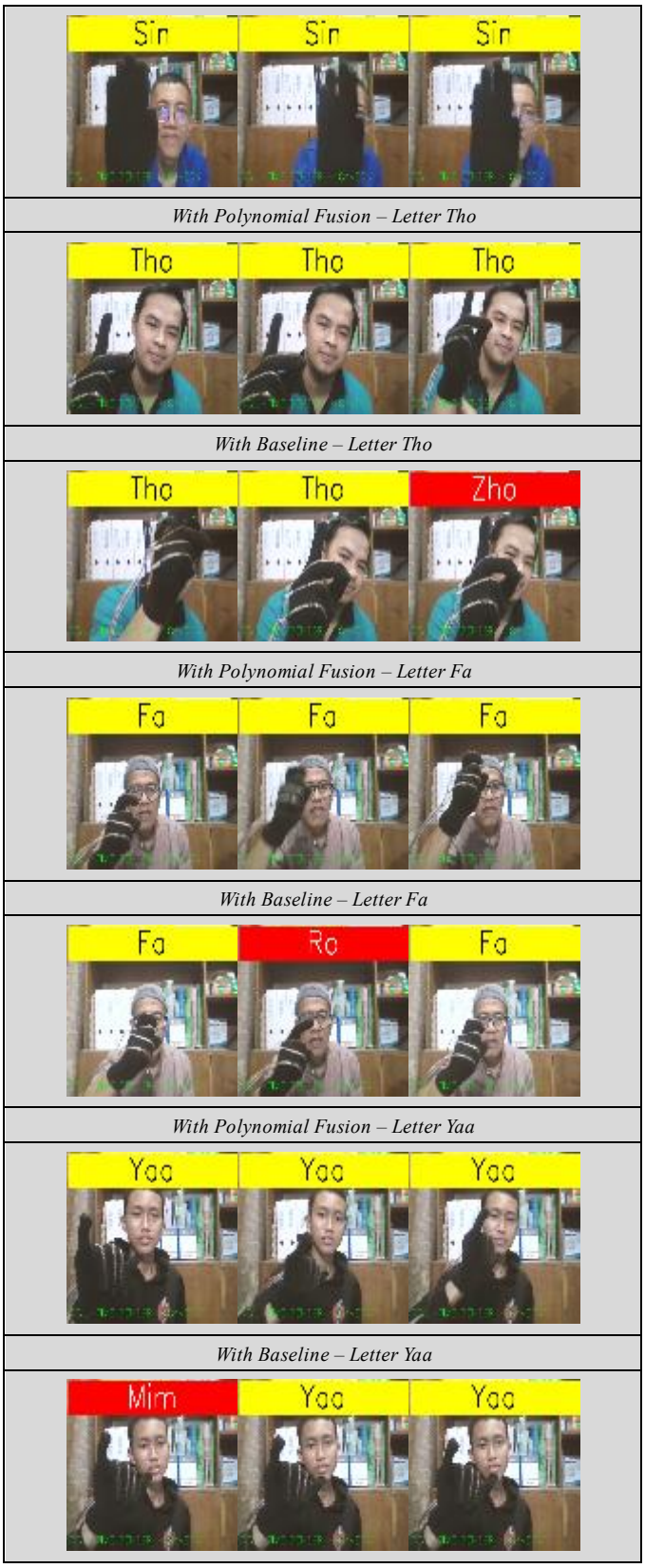

Fig. 6. Representative real-time gesture detection results for selected Hijaiyah gestures.

1) Heatmap of per-gesture real-time accuracy: Fig. 7 presents the per-gesture accuracy heatmap for the proposed MPF model, showing consistently high recognition accuracy across most Hijaiyah gesture classes under real-time streaming conditions.

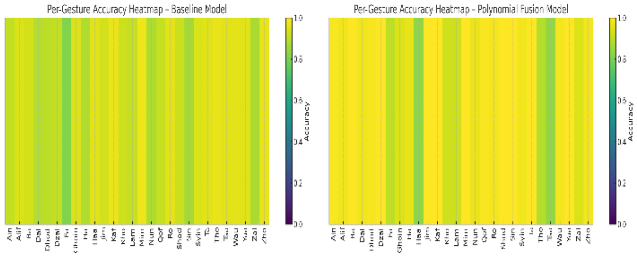

Fig. 7. Presents the per-gesture accuracy heatmap for the MPF model.

2) Real-time accuracy comparison: Compares the real-time accuracy of the baseline and MPF models, as shown in Fig. 8. The MPF model achieves noticeably higher performance, confirming the effectiveness of polynomial smoothing and multimodal fusion in stabilizing gesture predictions during continuous execution.

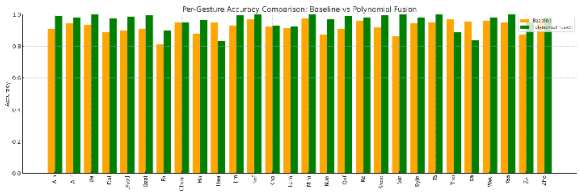

Fig. 8. Real-time accuracy comparison.

B. Misclassification and Confusion Analysis

Misclassification patterns were examined to understand how often specific gestures were confused with others during real-time evaluation. This analysis provides insight into gesture similarities that challenge both models and reveals how Polynomial Fusion (MPF) reduces these errors. In Fig. 9, the baseline model exhibits frequent misclassification in gestures with subtle structural similarities such as Fa, Sin, Zai, Nun, and Ha, resulting in darker regions on the heatmap and lower per-gesture accuracy. In contrast, the MPF model shows far fewer errors, with a more uniform and brighter heatmap that reflects improved stability and separability. Only minor confusion remains in closely related gestures like Haa, Tsa, Kho, Fa, Lam.

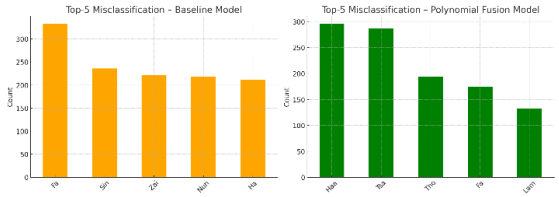

Fig. 9. Top misclassified gestures - polynomial fusion model.

C. Variance Reduction Analysis

To further assess model stability across users, variance analysis was performed using per-user accuracy distributions. Lower variance indicates more consistent performance when

encountering natural differences in gesture execution, hand size, glove fit, and movement style.

D. Temporal Stability and Per-Letter Robustness

The per-letter robustness plot shows that the MPF model consistently maintains higher accuracy and smoother performance across all 28 gestures, whereas the baseline model exhibits greater fluctuation and instability. MPF's smoother accuracy curve reflects stronger temporal stability and improved discrimination between similar gestures in Fig. 10, confirming its suitability for real-time recognition.

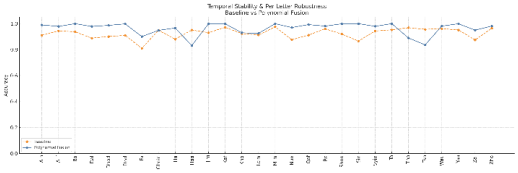

Fig. 10. Temporal stability and per-letter robustness.

V. Discussion

A. Interpretation of Performance Improvements

Across all offline, session-aware, and real-time evaluations, the MPF framework consistently outperforms the baseline. Its improvements stem from nonlinear temporal smoothing, multimodal fusion, reduced intra-class variance, and enhanced gesture discriminability. These results clearly demonstrate MPF's effectiveness for stable and reliable real-time Hijaiyah sign recognition.

B. Temporal Stability and Gesture Separability

Temporal stability plays a critical role in real-time sign language recognition, where fluctuating predictions can degrade recognition reliability. As observed in the temporal robustness analysis, the proposed MPF framework produces smoother and more consistent predictions over time compared with the baseline. This behavior indicates effective suppression of sensor jitter and short-term fluctuations in flex–IMU signals.

Improved temporal stability contributes directly to enhanced gesture separability by maintaining consistent feature trajectories across consecutive frames. As a result, class boundaries remain more distinct during continuous gesture execution, supporting stable real-time recognition without relying on frame-level corrections.

C. Comparison with Prior Wearable Sensor-Based Methods

Compared with prior wearable sensor–based sign language recognition systems that rely on linear preprocessing and limited user evaluations [6], [7], [15], [24], the proposed MPF framework demonstrates superior robustness and scalability, supported by large-scale subject-independent evaluation and nonlinear temporal modeling.

Table II highlights that the most existing sensor-based sign language recognition systems with reported accuracies below 96% are evaluated using limited datasets and a small or unspecified number of users, which restricts their generalizability. Several approaches rely primarily on flex sensors with predefined gesture mappings, leading to moderate recognition performance and reduced robustness to inter-user variability [6], [30], while others incorporate additional sensing modalities but still operate on relatively small datasets [9], [11], [18]. Moreover, some studies report results under offline evaluation settings [28], [33], which do not adequately reflect stability and consistency during continuous real-time operation. In contrast, the proposed Multimodal Polynomial Fusion (MPF) framework is evaluated on a substantially larger dataset comprising 231,000 samples from 33 users and operates fully in real time, enabling improved robustness and higher recognition accuracy (96.32%) in continuous sign language recognition scenarios.

TABLE II. Literature-Based Comparison of Representative State-of-the-Art Sign Language Recognition Methods

Method / Approach	*Modality*	*Dataset Scale*	*#Users*	*Reported Accuracy (%)*	*Real-Time*	*Ref*
Smart Glove-Based SLR System	Flex Sensors	Limited dataset	–	~85–90	Yes	[6]
Assistive Communication Glove (Combined Sensors)	Flex + Contact + 3D Accel	28 ASL gestures	7	77.9	Yes	[9]
Smart Hand Sign Glove with ESP32	MPU6050 + ESP32	Limited	–	92–95	Yes	[11]
Intelligent Glove with kNN + CHC/DROP3	5 Flex Sensors	~5,000 samples	10	85	Yes	[18]
Indonesian Sign Language Recognition (ANN)	Flex + Accelerometer	1,000 samples	–	91.60 (offline)	No	[28]
Sign Language Detection using Flex Sensor	Flex Sensors	Limited	–	88–92	Yes	[30]
Flex Sensor Dataset for SLR (ML Comparison)	Flex + Accelerometer	~180 samples	–	94 (offline)	No	[33]
Proposed MPF (This Work)	Flex–IMU	231,000 samples	33	96.32	Yes	This study

D. Limitations and Future Directions

Despite its advantages, the proposed wearable sensor-based framework has inherent limitations. The reliance on specialized smart-glove hardware introduces additional cost and usability considerations compared to vision-only approaches. Long-term wearability and user comfort may also affect practical deployment. Future work will explore lightweight hardware designs and cross-modal integration with vision-based cues to further enhance robustness

VI. Conclusion and Future Work

A. Conclusion

This study introduces a Multimodal Polynomial Fusion (MPF) framework for real-time Hijaiyah sign recognition using

flex–IMU smart gloves. MPF enhances signal stability, reduces intra-class variability, and improves gesture separability through nonlinear smoothing and multimodal fusion. Across all evaluations, MPF consistently surpasses the baseline, demonstrating a robust and reliable foundation for fine-grained assistive communication systems. These findings directly address the research objective of improving temporal stability and recognition accuracy for fine-grained Hijaiyah gestures in real-time wearable sign language systems.

B. Future Work

Future work may explore adaptive polynomial smoothing, fusion with vision-based modalities, and integration into lightweight neural models for edge deployment. Expanding user diversity, improving glove ergonomics, and extending recognition to continuous Hijaiyah sequences will further enhance the practicality and generalization of sensor-based sign language systems. Despite its advantages, the proposed wearable sensor–based approach has certain limitations. The use of smart gloves introduces hardware dependency and potential cost constraints, which may affect large-scale adoption. In addition, user comfort and long-term wearability remain important considerations. Nevertheless, these limitations are balanced by the system's robustness to environmental conditions and its suitability for real-time assistive applications.

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EnGMHE: Enhanced Geometric Mean Histogram Equalization for Low-Light Image Enhancement

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***Abstract*—Low-light image enhancement has been extensively studied, with numerous methods proposed to address this challenge. Among these, Geometric Mean Histogram Equalization (GMHE) emerged as a histogram-based technique specifically designed for enhancing low-light images. Despite its effectiveness, GMHE has notable limitations: it often oversaturates results under specific conditions and amplifies noise, limiting its practical applicability. These shortcomings become particularly pronounced in real-world scenarios where low-light conditions are frequently accompanied by significant noise artifacts. To address these shortcomings, this study introduces EnGMHE, an enhanced version of GMHE. The proposed method consists of three key steps: 1) introducing a novel Gaussian Histogram Equalization (GHE) to improve image contrast and brightness, 2) utilizing GMHE to enhance sharpness and detail clarity, and 3) denoising the enhanced image using a pretrained deep neural network model. Together, these steps offer a more robust solution for low-light image enhancement, balancing contrast improvement, detail preservation, and noise reduction. The experimental results reveal not only the efficiency but also the effectiveness of the proposed model when benchmarked against the state-of-the-art methods.**

***Keywords*—Histogram Equalization; image enhancement; low-light enhancement; denoising; deep learning**

I. Introduction

Enhancing low-light images is essential across various domains, including surveillance, medical imaging, and photography, especially within the context of computer vision and intelligent systems. Insufficient lighting often leads to images with low brightness, poor contrast, and noticeable noise, severely affecting visual quality and obscuring critical details necessary for effective automated processing.

In recent decades, researchers have extensively explored solutions for low-light image enhancement. One of the classic methods is Histogram Equalization (HE) [1]. While HE effectively enhances local contrast on dark images, it often oversaturates bright regions in the process [2]. Another prominent approach involves Retinex-based methods [2-8], which decompose low-light images into reflectance and illumination layers. While this decomposition can yield promising enhancements, many Retinex-based techniques require priors for effective layer separation [9].

Recent advancements in low-light image enhancement leverage dehaze-based methods [10] and illumination map estimation techniques [2], [4]. With the rise of deep learning, enhanced computational power and large datasets have driven progress. Supervised learning methods relying on paired datasets [11] are used to map low-light to enhanced images, effectively reducing noise and recovering details. However, their performance depends on high-quality datasets, which remain a significant challenge.

Unsupervised learning methods utilize unpaired datasets [12], which are more accessible, larger in scale, and diverse in content. These methods are adaptively trained to restore illumination, color, and contrast. However, the lack of paired supervision can limit their ability to recover fine details, often leaving noise in the enhanced results. The field of low-light image enhancement continues to evolve, with researchers exploring methodologies that balance effectiveness with inherent trade-offs [9].

While deep learning methods often deliver impressive results, their efficiency remains a concern, particularly in real-world scenarios where low-light conditions are frequently accompanied by noise artifacts. To address this gap, this study introduces the EnGMHE (Enhanced Geometric Mean Histogram Equalization) model, a novel approach for low-light image enhancement. Unlike classical histogram-based methods, EnGMHE combines Gaussian Histogram Equalization (GHE) for initial contrast enhancement, GMHE for structural preservation, and a pre-trained denoising network for noise suppression, providing a unified and robust enhancement pipeline.

EnGMHE is built on the foundation of GMHE (Geometric Mean Histogram Equalization) [13], a contrast enhancement technique inspired by traditional histogram equalization. A key innovation of EnGMHE is the introduction of Gaussian Histogram Equalization (GHE), proposed as the first step to enhance the input low-light image's contrast and luminosity. Following GHE, the traditional GMHE is applied to further refine the enhancement. The final step involves denoising using a pre-trained deep neural network, effectively mitigating noise introduced during low-light image capture. This novel model integrates the newly proposed GHE with traditional and advanced techniques, delivering a robust solution for improving the visual quality of images captured in low-light conditions.

The effectiveness of the proposed model is validated through extensive experiments, where its performance is benchmarked against state-of-the-art methods in low-light image enhancement.

The rest of the study is as follows: Section II reviews the literature and related work; Section III details the proposed

methodology; Section IV presents the experimental settings and results; and Section V concludes the study.

II. Related Work

The problem of low-light image enhancement has gained significant attention in recent years, leading to the development of diverse methodologies ranging from classical techniques to modern deep learning methods. These methods aim to improve the brightness, contrast, and overall visual quality of low-light images while addressing challenges such as noise and color distortion.

Traditional methods, such as HE [1], BPDHE [14], and GMHE [13], focus on enhancing image contrast by redistributing pixel intensity values. HE is computationally efficient and straightforward, but it often amplifies noise and over-saturates the image.

Retinex theory-based approaches, such as LIME [2], NPE [15], and SRIE [4], decompose an image into illumination and reflectance components. By enhancing the illumination while preserving the reflectance, these methods aim to balance brightness and detail clarity.

Supervised and semi-supervised deep learning methods, such as LLNET [16], DRBN [17], RetinexNet [3], MBLLEN [18], LLFlow [19], PairLIE [20], and MIRNet [21], leverage paired datasets to learn complex mappings from low-light images to enhanced images. These methods excel in preserving fine details and reducing noise. For instance, DRBN incorporates recursive band representation for effective enhancement, while MIRNet utilizes multi-scale feature extraction for robust performance. However, their reliance on high-quality paired datasets can limit scalability. In addition, LLFlow employs flow-based mechanisms for illumination correction.

Unsupervised deep learning methods, such as EnlightenGAN [12] and SCI [22], address the challenge of paired dataset availability by learning from unpaired data. EnlightenGAN uses adversarial learning to generate visually appealing results. Despite their adaptability, these methods may struggle with detail preservation and noise reduction.

Recently, zero-shot learning methods rely on models that are trained on a set of classes (seen classes) but can make predictions on new, unseen classes without direct examples of those unseen classes during training. These methods leverage transfer learning to generalize knowledge from seen to unseen classes. Examples of such methods include ZeroDCE [23], ZeroDCE++ [24], RUAS [25], and ExCNet [26].

Transformer-based architectures like Restormer [27] and U-EGformer [28] have also demonstrated significant potential in low-light enhancement. Restormer employs attention mechanisms to capture global context, while U-EGformer integrates exposure-guided mechanisms for enhanced adaptability. Although these methods offer high performance, they often come with increased computational complexity.

Emerging techniques like MTUR-Net [29] focus on multi-task learning for joint enhancement and noise reduction. Additionally, methods like ISSR [30] and LCDPNet [31] leverage advanced architectures to address specific challenges in low-light scenarios. For underwater and domain-specific scenarios, methods such as WaterNet [32], Ucolor [33] and PUGAN [34], address challenges like haze, color distortion, and poor visibility. These methods utilize specialized architectures and priors to handle unique environmental conditions effectively.

While the aforementioned methods have significantly advanced the field, challenges such as noise suppression, detail preservation, and computational efficiency persist. Many existing techniques either focus on enhancing brightness and contrast or on reducing noise, but few address these issues jointly. Furthermore, achieving a balance between enhancement quality and real-world applicability remains a critical research gap.

III. Methodology

The proposed methodology involves a sequence of preprocessing and noise-reduction phases. They include advanced histogram operations and a denoising approach using a pre-trained neural network, as shown in Fig. 1.

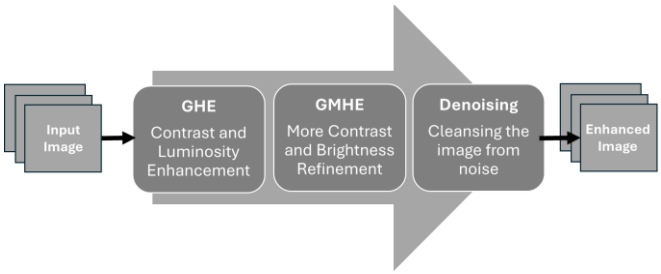

Fig. 1. The main phases of the proposed EnGMHE.

A. Gaussian Histogram Equalization (GHE)

This phase introduces the proposed GHE. It performs image enhancement through a Gaussian-smoothed histogram equalization technique. The following are the proposed steps for applying GHE to each of the image channels:

1) *Compute the histogram of the input image.*
2) *Apply Gaussian smoothing:*

A Gaussian filter, as defined in Eq. (1), is applied to the histogram to smooth intensity variations.

$$G(x,y) = \frac{1}{2\pi\tau^2} e^{-\frac{x^2+y^2}{\tau^2}} \quad (1)$$

where, *G(x,y)* is the value of the Gaussian function at pixel *(x,y)*. The parameter τ denotes the standard deviation of the Gaussian distribution and is empirically determined to control the degree of histogram smoothing. Pixel *(x,y)* represents the center of the filter. The filter size is determined using Eq. (2):

$$Filter_{Size} = 2 \times ceil(2 \times \tau) + 1 \quad (2)$$

τ is determined experimentally to control the degree of smoothing, as follows:

$\tau \in [0.5\text{-}1]$: Minimal smoothing.

$\tau \in [1.5\text{-}3]$: Moderate smoothing (balanced).

$\tau > 3.5$: Significant smoothing.

3) Normalize the smoothed histogram: The smoothed histogram h is normalized such that its values sum to 1, forming a probability distribution, as defined in Eq. (3):

$$Norm_h_i = \frac{h_i}{\sum_i^p (h)}, i = \{1, \dots p\} \quad (3)$$

where, h_i is the value of the i^{th} bin in the histogram h, and p denotes the total number of bins.

4) Compute the cumulative distribution function (CDF) for the normalized histogram, as defined in Eq. (4):

$$CDF_h_i = \sum_{j=0}^{i} Norm_h_j, i = \{1, \dots p\} \quad (4)$$

5) Map pixel intensity values: Each pixel intensity i is transformed to a new value, as defined in Eq. (5):

$$New_intensity_level_i = CDF_h_i * (L-1), i = \{1, \dots p\} \quad (5)$$

where, L is the maximum intensity value (265 in this study).

6) Output the enhanced image: Finally, the output image I' is generated by mapping the intensity of each pixel in the original image I according to the new intensity values stored in $New_intensity_level$. Note that steps (3) to (6) are the steps of the traditional HE method.

B. Geometric Mean Histogram Equalization (GMHE)

The key idea behind GMHE [13] is to preserve the overall structure of the image while enhancing contrast, particularly in dark regions. This is achieved by redistributing pixel intensities based on the geometric mean, which is less sensitive to extreme values than the arithmetic mean and therefore reduces the influence of outliers in the histogram.

In this phase, GMHE is applied to the intermediate enhanced image I'. The procedure is performed independently on each image channel as follows:

For each channel in I' apply the following steps:

1) Compute the histogram S of the input image.

2) Apply a geometric mean filter to the histogram to obtain a modified histogram (S') using Eq. (6):

$$S' = (\prod_{i=1}^{n} x_i)^{1/\gamma} \quad (6)$$

where, x_i represents the histogram values within the filter window, n denotes the filter length (set to 3 in this work), and γ is an experimentally determined constant that controls the strength of the geometric mean operation.

3) Apply steps (3–6) from the first phase (GHE) to the modified histogram S' to generate the enhanced image (I'').

C. Denoising

To suppress noise, while preserving image fidelity, a channel-wise image denoising is applied to the enhanced image I'' using a pre-trained deep learning model described in [35]. This network was selected due to its demonstrated effectiveness and stability in general-purpose image denoising tasks, particularly in scenarios involving low-light and noise-amplified images.

As shown in Fig. 2, the adopted model consists of 19 convolutional blocks, where each block is composed of a convolutional layer followed by batch normalization and a ReLU activation function. This relatively deep architecture enables the extraction of hierarchical features, ranging from low-level structures such as edges and intensity gradients to higher-level spatial patterns, which is essential for discriminating noise from meaningful image content. Padding is employed in all convolutional layers to preserve the spatial dimensions of the input image, thereby preventing the loss of structural details during the denoising process.

The use of a pre-trained denoising network is motivated by both technical and practical considerations. Leveraging a pre-trained model allows the proposed framework to benefit from robust, previously learned noise characteristics without requiring dataset-specific retraining, which enhances computational efficiency and generalizability. Moreover, the regression-based output layer is specifically designed to estimate clean image intensities, enabling effective noise suppression, while maintaining important visual and structural details. This balance between noise reduction and detail preservation makes the selected network particularly suitable for integration into the proposed EnGMHE-based enhancement pipeline.

IV. Experimental Results and Analysis

A. Datasets Used in the Comparisons

The datasets used in this study include both paired and unpaired collections. The ExDark-Bicycle [36], NPE [15], DICM [37], VV [38], MEF [39], LIME [2], and LoLi-Phone [40] datasets consist of 652, 84, 64, 24, 17, 10, and 600 real low-light images, respectively, with varying resolutions. These datasets are unpaired and cover a wide range of indoor and outdoor scenes, including natural landscapes, buildings, and indoor objects or decorations.

In contrast, the LOL [3], MIT-5K [41], SICE [42], and UIEB [32] datasets are paired datasets. The LOL dataset includes LOL-15, which comprises 15 test images, and LOL-V2, which contains two subsets: 100 synthetic and 100 real test images. The MIT-5K provides 5000 low-light images, with 500 designated for testing. The SICE dataset contains 4800 real and synthetic multi-exposure images of various resolutions, capturing diverse indoor and outdoor scenes under different exposure levels. In this study, two variations of the SICE dataset, namely SICE_Grad and SICE_Mix[1], were used, each consisting of 589 paired images. Finally, two subsets of the UIEB dataset were utilized: one comprising 890 paired images and another challenging subset containing 60 images.

B. Metrics

This section presents an overview of the evaluation metrics employed in this study to assess the performance of the proposed methods. Both reference-based metrics, which rely on a ground-

[1] SICE_Grad and SICE_Mix datasets are available at "https://github.com/ShenZheng2000/LLIE_Survey".

truth image for comparison, and no-reference metrics, which evaluate image quality without relying on a reference image, are considered. These metrics were selected to provide a comprehensive assessment of image quality and processing effectiveness across diverse experimental scenarios.

1	'InputLayer'	Image Input	50x50x1 images
2	'Conv1'	Convolution	64 3x3x1 convolutions with stride [1 1] and padding [1 1 1 1]
3	'ReLU1'	ReLU	ReLU
4	'Conv2'	Convolution	64 3x3x64 convolutions with stride [1 1] and padding [1 1 1 1]
5	'BNorm2'	Batch Normalization	Batch normalization with 64 channels
6	'ReLU2'	ReLU	ReLU
7	'Conv3'	Convolution	64 3x3x64 convolutions with stride [1 1] and padding [1 1 1 1]
8	'BNorm3'	Batch Normalization	Batch normalization with 64 channels
9	'ReLU3'	ReLU	ReLU
⋮	⋮	⋮	⋮
55	'Conv19'	Convolution	64 3x3x64 convolutions with stride [1 1] and padding [1 1 1 1]
56	'BNorm19'	Batch Normalization	Batch normalization with 64 channels
57	'ReLU19'	ReLU	ReLU
58	'Conv20'	Convolution	1 3x3x64 convolutions with stride [1 1] and padding [1 1 1 1]
59	'FinalRegressionLayer'	Regression Output	mean-squared-error with response 'Response'

Fig. 2. The structure of the adopted pre-trained network.

1) Reference-based measures

a) SSIM (Structural Similarity Index) is a perceptual metric that evaluates the similarity between two images by considering their luminance, contrast, and structural information. SSIM values range from -1 to 1, where a value of 1 indicates perfect similarity. It is widely used in image processing tasks to assess the quality of reconstructed images. It is defined in Eq. (7) [43]:

$$SSIM(a,b) = \frac{(2\mu_a\mu_b+(k_1L)^2)(2\sigma_{ab}+(k_2L)^2)}{(\mu_a^2+\mu_b^2+(k_1L)^2)(\sigma_a^2+\sigma_b^2+(k_2L)^2)} \quad (7)$$

where, a and b denote the input and the enhanced images, respectively. μ denotes the mean of the specified image. σ_a^2 and σ_b^2 denote the variances of images a and b, respectively, while σ_{ab} represents the covariance between a and b. The constants (K_1, K_2, L) are set to *0.01*, *0.03*, and *255* for 8-bit images, respectively.

b) PSNR (Peak Signal-to-Noise Ratio) is a quantitative metric used to evaluate the quality of an image by measuring the ratio between the maximum possible power of an image and the power of noise that affects the image's fidelity. Expressed in decibels (dB), PSNR quantifies image quality by comparing the original and distorted images, with higher values indicating better quality [44]. It is defined as follows in Eq. (8) and Eq. (9):

$$PSNR(a,b) = 10.\log_{10}(\frac{L^2}{MSE(a,b)}) \quad (8)$$

$$MSE(a,b) = \frac{1}{MN}\sum_{i=1}^{M}\sum_{j=1}^{N}[a_{i,j} - b_{i,j}]^2 \quad (9)$$

where, a and b are the input and the enhanced images, respectively. L is a constant referring to the maximum possible pixel value, which is equal to 255 for 8-bit images. MSE denotes the mean square error between two images. M and N are the dimensions of the image (width and height). $a_{i,j}$ denotes the pixel value at position (i,j) in image a.

c) LPIPS (Learned Perceptual Image Patch Similarity) is a recently developed metric designed to evaluate image quality from the perspective of human perception. Unlike traditional metrics, such as *PSNR* and *SSIM*, which focus on pixel-level comparisons, *LPIPS* leverages deep learning features to align more closely with human visual perception [45], [46]. It measures the similarity between an image and its corresponding ground truth by calculating the difference between their feature representations, extracted from a pre-trained deep neural network (e.g., *VGG* or *AlexNet*), as described in Eq. (10):

$$LPIPS\ (I_1,I_2) = \sum_l w_l \|f_l(I_1) - f_l(I_2)\|_2 \quad (10)$$

where, f_l denotes the feature maps from layer l of the network, w_l represents the learned weights for each layer l, and $\|.\|_2$ denotes the L2-Norm (Euclidean distance) of the deep features of a trained CNN.

d) Delta_E is a reference-based measure that quantifies the difference between two colors in the *CIELAB* color space. It is widely used to evaluate color accuracy, identify deviations, and assess color similarity. Lower Delta-E values indicate better color consistency and are therefore preferred [47]. Delta-E is defined as shown in Eq. (11):

$$Delta_E = \frac{1}{MN}\sum_{i=1}^{M}\sum_{j=1}^{N}\sqrt{(L1_{i,j} - L2_{i,j})^2 + (a1_{i,j} - a2_{i,j})^2 + (b1_{i,j} - b2_{i,j})^2} \quad (11)$$

where, ($L1_{i,j}$, $a1_{i,j}$, $b1_{i,j}$) are the LAB values for a pixel (i, j) in the input image, and ($L2_{i,j}$, $a2_{i,j}$, $b2_{i,j}$) correspond to those of the enhanced image. The overall score is obtained by averaging the pixel-wise Delta-E values, yielding a single scalar that reflects the overall perceptual color fidelity.

2) No reference-based measures

a) BRISQUE (Blind/Reference-less Image Spatial Quality Evaluator) is a no-reference image quality assessment model that operates in the spatial domain to evaluate image quality without relying on distortion-specific features or frequency-domain transformations, such as DCT or wavelets. It

uses natural scene statistics (NSS) of locally normalized luminance coefficients and their products to quantify the loss of image "naturalness" caused by distortions, offering a holistic and distortion-generic measure of quality. BRISQUE is a model-driven measure which does not have a single closed-form analytical equation. Instead, it employs a machine learning pipeline that estimates image quality using NSS features and a trained regressor, as shown in Eq. (12):

$$BRISQUE(I) = SVR(F(I)) \quad (12)$$

where, I denotes the input low-light image. F(.) represents a 36-dimensional NSS feature vector extracted from I. SVR(.) is the pre-trained support vector regressor. The feature vector F is derived from locally normalized luminance coefficients and is computed by fitting an Asymmetric Generalized Gaussian Distribution (AGGD) to the normalized image and its directional pairwise product maps at two image scales [48].

b) NIQE (The Natural Image Quality Evaluator) is a no-reference image quality assessment metric that measures the degree to which an image's features deviate from the statistical regularities commonly observed in natural images. It is built upon a robust spatial-domain NSS model designed to capture quality-aware statistical features learned from a dataset of natural, undistorted images. Lower NIQE scores indicate better perceptual quality. The quality score is computed as the Mahalanobis distance between the image's feature vector and a multivariate Gaussian (MVG) model fitted on high-quality images [49].

c) UCIQE (Underwater Color Image Quality Evaluation) is a no-reference image quality assessment metric specifically designed for underwater images. It evaluates visual quality in the CIELab color space by analyzing three key factors: Chroma, which measures the image's colorfulness and reflects the loss of color diversity due to light scattering and absorption in underwater environments; Saturation, which assesses the vividness or dullness of colors; and Contrast, which quantifies the visibility of image details often diminished in underwater scenes because of haze or turbidity. The UCIQE metric is computed using Eq. (13):

$$UCIQE = c_1 \times std_c + c_2 \times con_1 + c_3 \times Avg_s \quad (13)$$

where, std_c denotes the standard deviation of chroma, con_1 denotes the contrast of luminance, and Avg_s represents the average of saturation. The coefficients c1, c2, and c3 are empirically determined (c_1 =0.4680, c_2 =0.2745, c_3=0.2576). This metric provides a quantitative evaluation of underwater image quality, enabling the assessment and enhancement of visual clarity and color fidelity [50].

C. Experimental Environment and Parameter Settings

To ensure the reproducibility and reliability of the experiments, a controlled experimental setup was carefully established, and specific parameter configurations were defined. The following details provide an overview of the conditions under which the experiments were conducted:

- All experiments in this study were conducted in the MATLAB environment and were executed on an *Intel(R)* Core(TM) i7 CPU @ 2.60GHz device with *12 GB* of RAM.
- In the context of EnGMHE, the parameters τ and γ control histogram smoothing and geometric mean redistribution, respectively. Default values of τ = 2 and γ = 25 provide robust performance across most low-light datasets. For datasets with specific characteristics, such as SICE and ExDark, slightly different values (see Table I) were used to achieve optimal enhancement. These exceptions do not require exhaustive per-dataset tuning; they simply reflect natural variations in image statistics across diverse datasets, while the method remains effective with the general default settings.

TABLE I. PARAMETER SETTINGS FOR THE DATASETS OF INTEREST

Dataset	τ	γ
MEF | NPE | LOL | DICM | LIME | UIEB | VV | MIT5K	2	25
ExDark	10	15
SICE	2	50

D. Qualitative Results

Fig. 3 shows the performance of various low-light enhancement methods on an image from the LIME dataset. The input image is underexposed, with significant loss of visibility in shadowed regions. SCI [22] brightens the image but introduces a strong purplish tint, making the colors appear unnatural. URetinexNet [51] enhances the brightness and detail visibility but overexposes certain regions, resulting in a reddish hue. In contrast, EnGMHE achieves a balanced enhancement, maintaining natural color while preserving fine details.

Fig. 4 presents a comparison, where the input is an underwater image suffering from poor visibility and color distortion. Compared to state-of-the-art methods, EnGMHE delivers visually consistent results with enhanced clarity and more accurate color restoration for underwater images.

As shown in Fig. 5(a), the input image represents challenging low-light photography, with significant visibility issues in darker regions. While the illuminated monument retains some visibility, the surrounding darker areas lack detail, making the image a strong candidate for enhancement. EnGMHE effectively balances brightness enhancement with structural detail preservation, whereas FDMLNet [55] overexposes bright areas (see the monument's facade). In Fig. 5(b), the input image presents complex lighting conditions, with a mix of shadowed areas and bright overhead lights. ZeroDCE++ and RetinexNet enhance brightness, but introduce noticeable artifacts and color distortions. KinD++ [56] over-saturates certain regions, leading to unnatural visual results. LIVENet [57] produces more natural adjustments in terms of brightness but fails to recover fine details in shadowed regions [Fig. 5(c)]. EnGMHE, however, delivers the most balanced output, effectively preserving both color fidelity and structural details while enhancing brightness.

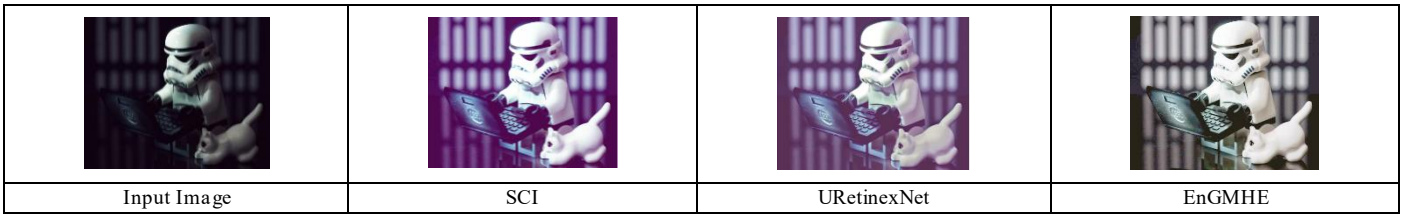

Fig. 3. Visual comparison with state-of-the-art methods on an input image from the LIME dataset.

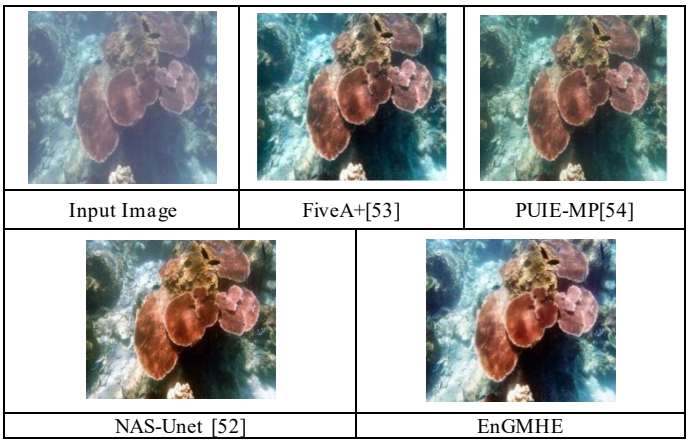

Fig. 4. Visual comparison with state-of-the-art methods on an input image from the UIEB-890 dataset.

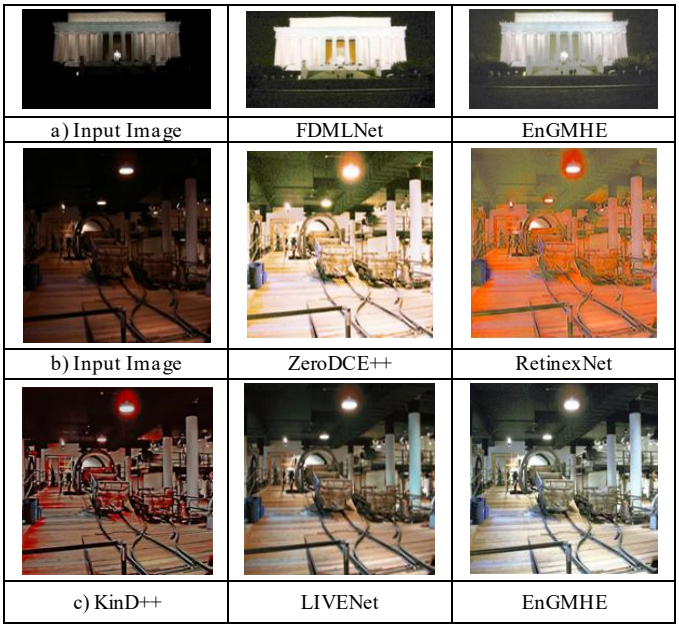

Fig. 5. Visual comparison with state-of-the-art methods on input images from the DICM dataset.

Fig. 6 shows a comparison with various state-of-the-art methods (KinD [58], SNR-Aware [59], and SPIC [60]) on challenging low-light and visually complex images from different datasets (NPE, VV, and ExDark). The overall results consistently demonstrate that EnGMHE excels in detail preservation, color accuracy, and balanced brightness enhancement across diverse datasets.

Fig. 7 evaluates the performance of LLIEDiff and EnGMHE against the ground truth for a low-light input image. The input image is significantly dark, with details obscured across various regions, while the ground truth serves as an ideal reference with vibrant colors, sharp textures, and excellent detail visibility. LLIEDiff improves brightness and restores some visibility in shadowed areas but struggles with color accuracy and fine detail preservation, particularly in the regions highlighted by the colored rectangles. In contrast, EnGMHE delivers a more balanced enhancement, achieving restored brightness, natural color tones, and excellent detail clarity that closely aligns with the ground truth. While EnGMHE may not perfectly match the ground truth in all regions, it demonstrates better color fidelity than LLIEDiff, producing vibrant and realistic colors and preserving natural tones, such as the red object and green grapes, with a closer resemblance to the ground truth in hue and saturation.

Fig. 8 highlights the text extraction results from a dark image and the EnGMHE-enhanced image. The text in this figure was recognized using "Image Recognize[2]" tool. As shown in Fig. 8, the EnGMHE-enhanced image not only retains high confidence for clearly visible text like "RESTAURANT" but also reveals additional details such as "Hpidavos" with significantly improved confidence (94%) compared to the dark image (44%). Furthermore, it introduces new textual elements such as "GROUP" and "be TEA", demonstrating its capability in enhancing low-light images for accurate text recognition.

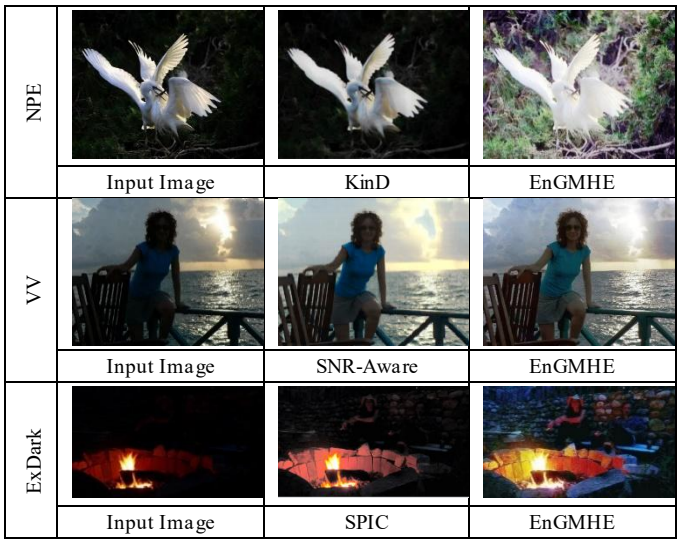

Fig. 6. Visual comparison with state-of-the-art methods on (NPE, VV, and Exdark) datasets.

[2] https://imagerecognize.com/text/#site-content

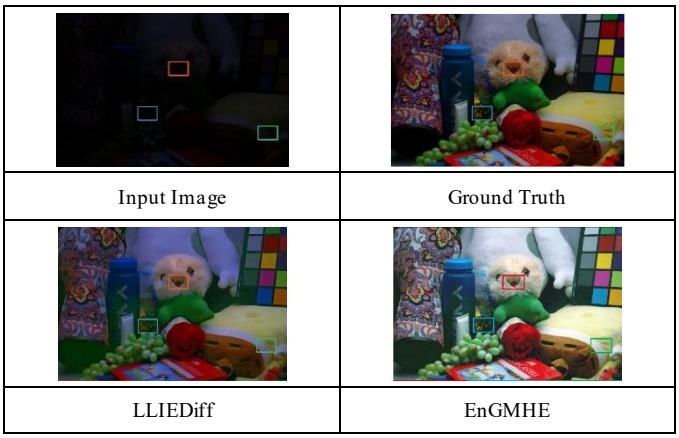

Fig. 7. Comparison with LLIEDiff against EnGMHE on the input image from the LOL-15 dataset.

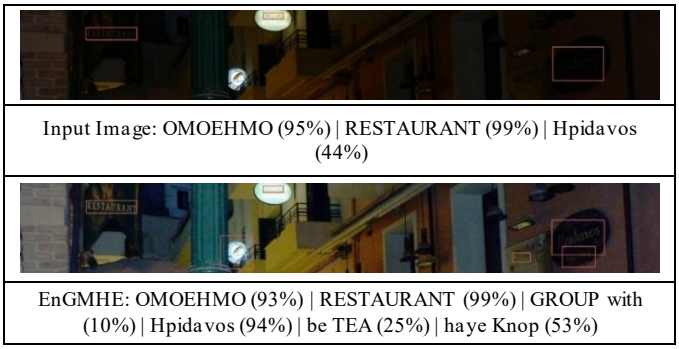

Fig. 8. Text extraction test. Red rectangles in the figure highlight the extracted text (confidence %) from the original dark image and the EnGMHE-enhanced image, respectively. The input image is a cropped portion of an image from the VV dataset.

E. Qualitative Results

This section quantitatively presents the comparative results obtained using both reference-based and non-reference-based methods across various datasets.

1) Comparisons using reference-based measures: The first comparisons were conducted to compare SSIM scores on different datasets. As shown in Table II, the proposed method achieved impressive SSIM scores of (0.72 and 0.78) on the LOL-V2 and MIT5K-500 datasets, respectively. On LOL-V2, it outperformed EnlightenGAN (0.68) and demonstrated a significant improvement over ZeroDCE [23] (0.58) and LIME (0.47), highlighting its ability to preserve structural details. On MIT5K-500, EnGMHE reported a score of 0.78, ranking second only to LIME (0.80). For SICE_GRAD, as presented in Table III, the proposed method achieved the highest score of (0.67), surpassing U-EGformer (0.64) and ZeroDCE (0.64). On SICE_MIX, it obtained a score of (0.64), outperforming URetinexNet (0.60) and RUAS (0.493).

On the LOL-15 dataset, as depicted in Table IV, the proposed method demonstrated a superior SSIM score of (0.734), significantly outperforming competitors like BIMEF [61] (0.595), EnlightenGAN (0.652), and ZeroDCE (0.559).

TABLE II. COMPARATIVE RESULTS ON SSIM ↑ ON (LOL-V2, MIT5K-500) DATASETS, THE BEST RESULTS ARE DENOTED BY BOLDFACE, AND THE SECOND-RATED RESULTS ARE UNDERLINED

Method	*LOL-V2*	*MIT5K-500*
EnGMHE	**0.72**	0.78
LDR [37]	-	0.73
DRBN [17]	-	0.76
EnlightenGAN [12]	0.68	0.76
LIME [2]	0.47	**0.80**
ZeroDCE [23]	0.58	0.72

TABLE III. COMPARATIVE RESULTS ON SSIM ↑ ON (SICE GRAD AND SICE MIX) DATASETS, THE BEST RESULTS ARE DENOTED BY BOLDFACE, AND THE SECOND-RATED RESULTS ARE UNDERLINED

Method	*SICE GRAD*	*SICE MIX*
EnGMHE	**0.67**	0.64
ZeroDCE [23]	0.64	0.64
RetinexNet [3]	0.60	0.61
URetinexNet [51]	0.61	0.60
RUAS [25]	0.49	0.49
SGZ [62]	0.60	0.62
LLFlow [19]	0.62	0.61
U-EGformer [28]	0.64	**0.65**

TABLE IV. COMPARATIVE RESULTS ON SSIM ↑ ON (LOL-15) DATASET, THE BEST RESULT IS DENOTED BY BOLDFACE AND THE SECOND-RATED RESULT IS UNDERLINED

EnGMHE	**EnlightenGAN**	**BIMEF [61]**	**LIME [2]**
0.734	0.652	0.595	0.484
STAR [64]	DRBN [17]	RRDNet [65]	RUAS [25]
0.518	0.551	0.457	0.500
ZeroDCE [23]	SDD [63]	SCI [22]	
0.559	0.637	0.522	

TABLE V. COMPARATIVE RESULTS ON PSNR ↑ ON (SICE_GRAD AND SICE_MIX) DATASETS, THE BEST RESULTS ARE DENOTED BY BOLDFACE AND THE SECOND-RATED RESULTS ARE UNDERLINED

Dataset	**EnGMHE**	**Retinex Net [3]**	**URetinexNet [51]**	**KinD++ [56]**	**UEGformer [28]**
SICE_GRAD	**14.22**	12.45	10.89	13.24	13.27
SICE_MIX	13.66	12.39	10.90	13.19	**14.23**
Dataset	**RUAS [25]**	**ZeroDCE [23]**	**SCI [22]**	**LLFlow [19]**	**SGZ [62]**
SICE_GRAD	8.62	12.48	8.55	12.74	10.99
SICE_MIX	8.68	12.42	8.64	12.73	10.86

TABLE VI. COMPARATIVE RESULTS ON PSNR ↑ ON (LOL-15) DATASET, THE BEST RESULT IS DENOTED BY BOLDFACE AND THE SECOND-RATED RESULT IS UNDERLINED

EnGMHE	**RUAS [25]**	**DRBN [17]**	**SCI [22]**
16.29	**16.40**	16.29	14.78
SDD [63]	STAR [64]	ZeroDCE [23]	RRDNet [65]
13.34	12.91	14.86	11.40

The second set of comparisons was conducted to compare PSNR scores across various datasets. As shown in Table V, EnGMHE achieved a PSNR of 14.22 on the SICE_GRAD dataset, surpassing KinD++ (13.24) and U-EGformer (13.27). Similarly, on SICE_MIX, it recorded the second-highest PSNR with a score of 13.66, following the U-EGformer (14.23). On the LOL-15 dataset (Table VI), EnGMHE achieved a PSNR of 16.29, tying with DRBN for the top performance while outperforming other notable methods, such as ZeroDCE (14.86) and SCI (14.78). Additionally, on the MIT5K-500 dataset (Table VII), EnGMHE recorded the best PSNR score of 18.12, surpassing DRBN (16.37) and LIME (16.07), demonstrating its exceptional noise suppression and fidelity on this dataset.

The third set of comparisons evaluated the performance based on the LPIPS measure, where lower scores indicate better perceptual similarity. On the SICE_GRAD dataset (Table VIII), EnGMHE achieved a score of 0.33 as Kind++, securing the second rank, followed by U-EGformer with a score of 0.27, demonstrating strong perceptual similarity. On the LOL-15 dataset (Table IX), EnGMHE achieved the best score of 0.194, demonstrating superior perceptual quality, while methods like SDD (0.743) and STAR (0.366) performed significantly worse. For the LOL-V2 dataset (Table X), EnGMHE again achieved the best score of (0.204), slightly outperforming ISSR (0.206). Other competitors, such as ZeroDCE (0.313) and RetinexNet (0.365), showed comparatively weaker performance, further emphasizing EnGMHE's effectiveness in maintaining perceptual fidelity across various datasets.

TABLE VII. COMPARATIVE RESULTS ON PSNR ↑ ON (MIT5K-500) DATASET, THE BEST RESULT IS DENOTED BY BOLDFACE AND THE SECOND-RATED RESULT IS UNDERLINED

EnGMHE	EnlightenGAN	LIME [2]	DRBN	ZeroDCE
18.12	15.58	16.07	<u>16.37</u>	12.82

TABLE VIII. COMPARATIVE RESULTS ON LPIPS ↓ ON (SICE_GRAD) DATASET, THE BEST RESULTS ARE DENOTED BY BOLDFACE AND THE SECOND-RATED RESULTS ARE UNDERLINED

EnGMHE	RetinexNet [3]	URetinexNet	RUAS	SCI [22]
<u>0.33</u>	0.36	0.35	0.49	0.48
LLFlow [19]	SGZ [62]	KinD [58]	KinD++ [56]	U-EGformer [28]
0.38	0.36	0.34	<u>0.33</u>	**0.27**

TABLE IX. COMPARATIVE RESULTS ON LPIPS ↓ ON (LOL-15) DATASET, THE BEST RESULTS ARE DENOTED BY BOLDFACE AND THE SECOND-RATED RESULTS ARE UNDERLINED

EnGMHE	SDD [63]	STAR [64]	DRBN [17]
0.194	0.743	0.366	0.316
RRDNet [65]	RUAS [25]	SCI [22]	ExCNet [26]
0.362	0.270	0.339	0.373
MBLLEN [18]	RetinexNet [3]	GLADNet [66]	ZeroDCE [23]
<u>0.225</u>	0.379	0.321	0.335
PairLIE [20]	LLNET [16]	EnlightenGAN [12]	
0.248	0.360	0.322	

TABLE X. COMPARATIVE RESULTS ON LPIPS ↓ ON (LOL-V2) DATASET, THE BEST RESULTS ARE DENOTED BY BOLDFACE AND THE SECOND-RATED RESULTS ARE UNDERLINED

EnGMHE	RetinexNet [3]	ZeroDCE [23]	EnlightenGAN [12]
0.204	0.365	0.313	<u>0.309</u>
KinD [58]	ISSR [30]	MIRNet [21]	HWMNet [67]
0.375	0.206	0.317	0.359

TABLE XI. COMPARATIVE RESULTS ON DELTA-E ↓ ON (LOL-15) DATASET, THE BEST RESULTS ARE DENOTED BY BOLDFACE AND THE SECOND-RATED RESULTS ARE UNDERLINED

EnGMHE	SDD [63]	STAR [64]	MBLLEN [18]	Retinex Net [3]	KinD [58]
12.42	21.83	23.46	13.68	12.69	<u>12.49</u>
DRBN [17]	ZeroDCE [23]	RRDNet [65]	RUAS [25]	SCI [22]	EnlightenGAN [12]
13.44	18.81	26.43	16.85	19.52	14.5

The fourth comparison focused on evaluating Delta-E on the LOL-15 dataset (Table XI). EnGMHE achieved the lowest Delta-E score of (12.42), signifying minimal color distortion and high fidelity in color reproduction. The next closest competitor was KinD with a score of 12.49, while methods like ZeroDCE (18.81) and RRDNet (26.43) exhibited substantially higher errors, highlighting their relatively poorer performance in preserving color accuracy.

2) Comparisons using no reference-based measures: As depicted in Table XII, EnGMHE demonstrated excellent performance in minimizing NIQE scores across diverse datasets, underscoring its effectiveness in achieving high-quality, perceptually natural results. Its ability to outperform contemporary methods on DICM, NPE, and MEF highlighted its superiority in the domain of low-light image enhancement. Additionally, its performance on LIME and VV-24 was competitive with well-known methods such as EnlightenGAN and KinD++. Traditional methods like HE and KinD consistently recorded higher NIQE scores, reflecting their limitations in maintaining perceptual quality. Furthermore, as depicted in Table XIII and Table XIV, EnGMHE achieved the best performance on the MIT5K-500, LOL-V2, and LOL-15 datasets.

According to the BRISQUE measure (Table XV and Table XVI), EnGMHE led across all datasets, showing superior perceptual quality on VV-24 and LIME datasets and the second rank on DICM, NPE, and MEF datasets. This consistent performance across diverse datasets underscores EnGMHE's robustness and adaptability in various enhancement scenarios.

For the UCIQE measure (Table XVII), EnGMHE demonstrated a strong capability in underwater image enhancement, achieving the highest score on the UIEB-Ch60. It outperformed notable methods, including: MTUR-Net [29], WaterNet [32], Ucolor [33], IDMR [73], Restormer [27], FUnIEGAN [74], PUGAN [34], U-Shape [75], Semi-UIR [76], and UWE-Net [77], setting a new benchmark in this domain.

EnGMHE consistently outperforms or competes strongly with state-of-the-art techniques across a wide range of benchmark datasets and evaluation metrics. In reference-based

assessments, it achieved top or second-best SSIM and PSNR scores on datasets, including LOL-V2, MIT5K-500, SICE_GRAD, and LOL-15, indicating excellent structural preservation and noise suppression. It also demonstrated superior perceptual quality with low LPIPS values and achieved the best Delta-E score on LOL-15, highlighting its ability to maintain color accuracy. In no-reference evaluations, EnGMHE recorded the lowest or among the lowest NIQE and BRISQUE scores across diverse datasets such as VV-24, DICM, NPE, and MEF, highlighting its robustness in producing perceptually natural images. Additionally, EnGMHE outperformed other methods on the UCIQE metric in underwater image enhancement, setting a new benchmark in that domain.

TABLE XII. COMPARATIVE RESULTS ON NIQE ↓ ON (VV-24, LIME, DICM, NPE, MEF) DATASETS, THE BEST RESULTS ARE DENOTED BY BOLDFACE AND THE SECOND-RATED RESULTS ARE UNDERLINED

Method	*VV-24*	*LIME*	*DICM*	*NPE*	*MEF*
Ours	2.50	3.92	**2.74**	**2.94**	**2.86**
+SFSA[68]	-	-	3.45	3.89	3.17
DRBN [17]	-	4.40	-	3.92	4.09
LIVENet[57]	3.44	4.21	3.60	3.89	3.89
PairLIE [20]	3.57	-	-	4.18	-
KinD [58]	4.30	4.64	-	4.69	4.13
RUAS [25]	4.29	-	-	-	-
LLFlow [19]	4.04	-	-	-	-
SKF [69]	-	3.98	3.53	3.82	3.63
HE [1]	3.20	4.12	3.64	4.28	3.47
KinD++ [56]	2.35	4.81	3.78	4.38	3.73
EnlightenGAN[12]	**2.25**	**3.67**	3.54	4.74	3.22
HWMNet [67]	-	4.35	3.92	4.06	4.21
Self-Supervised [70]	3.36	4.96	4.58	3.50	4.47
LCAE[71]	-	4.12	3.59	-	3.08

TABLE XIII. COMPARATIVE RESULTS ON NIQE ↓ ON (MIT5K-500) DATASET, THE BEST RESULTS ARE DENOTED BY BOLDFACE

EnGMHE	NPE [15]	SRIE [4]	LDR [37]	DRBN [17]	DSLR [72]	ZeroDCE [23]
2.18	3.92	3.93	3.67	4.38	4.20	3.84

TABLE XIV. COMPARATIVE RESULTS ON NIQE ↓ ON (LOL-15 AND LOL-V2) DATASETS, THE BEST RESULTS ARE DENOTED BY BOLDFACE

Method	*LOL-15*	*LOL-V2*	*Method*	*LOL-15*	*LOL-V2*
EnGMHE	**2.82**	**3.11**	HE [1]	8.42	-
LLNET [16]	3.84	-	LIME [2]	5.32	5.37
BIMEF [61]	3.85	-	RetinexNet [3]	6.37	9.09
DRBN [17]	4.79	4.96	ExCNet [26]	3.05	-
+SFSA [68]	-	4.19	URetinexNet [51]	3.51	-
ZeroDCE [23]	7.76	8.05	KinD++ [56]	4.76	5.08
ZeroDCE++ [24]	7.86	8.05	EnlightenGAN [12]	3.26	-
PairLIE [20]	4.25	4.34	LCDPNet [31]	3.06	-
KinD [58]	5.18	6.84	HWMNet [67]	5.97	-
LLFlow [19]	5.41	-	SCI [22]	4.08	-
SKF [69]	4.14	3.96			

TABLE XV. COMPARATIVE RESULTS ON BRISQUE ↓ ON (VV-24) DATASET, THE BEST RESULT IS DENOTED BY BOLDFACE AND THE SECOND-RATED RESULT IS UNDERLINED

EnGMHE	KinD [58]	DCE [23]	RUAS [25]
24.93	50.56	34.66	38.37
SCI [22]	LLFLOW [19]	PairLIE [20]	SNR-Aware [59]
26.13	31.67	39.13	78.72

TABLE XVI. COMPARATIVE RESULTS ON BRISQUE ↓ ON (LIME, DICM, NPE, MEF) DATASETS, THE BEST RESULTS ARE DENOTED BY BOLDFACE AND THE SECOND-RATED RESULTS ARE UNDERLINED

Method	*LIME*	*DICM*	*NPE*	*MEF*
KIND [58]	39.91	48.72	36.85	49.94
RUAS [25]	27.59	38.75	47.85	**23.68**
LLFLOW [19]	27.06	**26.36**	28.86	30.27
PairLIE [20]	25.23	33.31	28.27	27.53
SNR-Aware [59]	39.22	37.35	**26.65**	31.28
EnGMHE	**20.38**	26.78	26.85	24.13

TABLE XVII. COMPARATIVE RESULTS ON UCIQE ↑ ON (UIEB-CH60) DATASET, THE BEST RESULTS ARE DENOTED BY BOLDFACE AND THE SECOND-RATED RESULTS ARE UNDERLINED

EnGMHE	MTUR-Net [29]	WaterNet [32]	Ucolor [33]	IDMR [73]	Restormer [27]
0.64	0.5868	0.591	0.553	0.613	0.572
FUnIEGAN [74]	PUGAN [34]	U-Shape [75]	Semi-UIR [76]	UWE-Net[77]	
0.556	0.566	0.56	0.574	0.21	

F. Ablation Study

This section describes three tests, as they effectively address different aspects of the proposed model evaluation and improvement.

The first test evaluated the sensitivity of the model to the parameters γ and τ. As shown in Fig. 9, the model was applied to the dark image (Left). The test was first conducted by running EnGMHE multiple times on the input image while varying τ and keeping γ fixed at 25. Subsequently, the sensitivity to γ was examined by varying γ while keeping τ fixed at 2. As shown in Fig. 9, the sensitivity plot of τ indicates that τ significantly affects the model's performance and requires precise tuning to achieve optimal enhancement results. In comparison, the flat region in the γ sensitivity plot suggests that γ is less sensitive within its optimal range, making it slightly more robust than τ. To ensure better performance across datasets. Therefore, a sample image set from each dataset was initially selected to determine experimentally the most suitable parameter values for this model.

The second test (see Fig. 10) examined the incremental addition of the components of EnGMHE. This is to demonstrate how the following procedural steps enhance its performance.

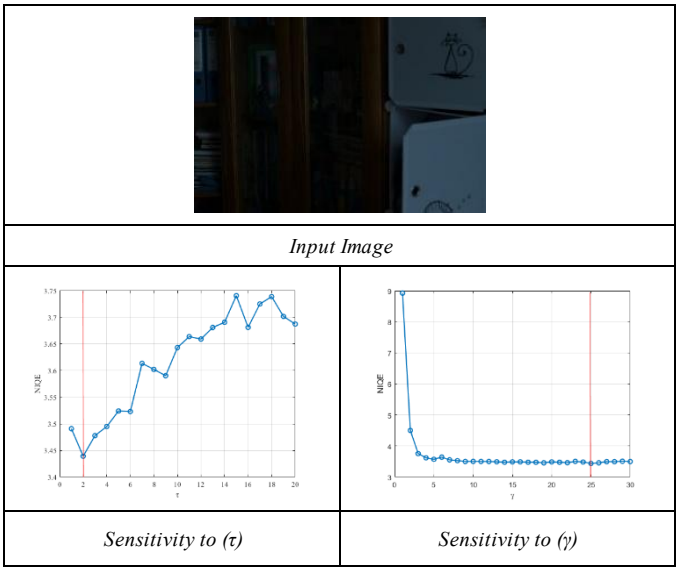

Fig. 9. Sensitivity to τ and γ parameters.

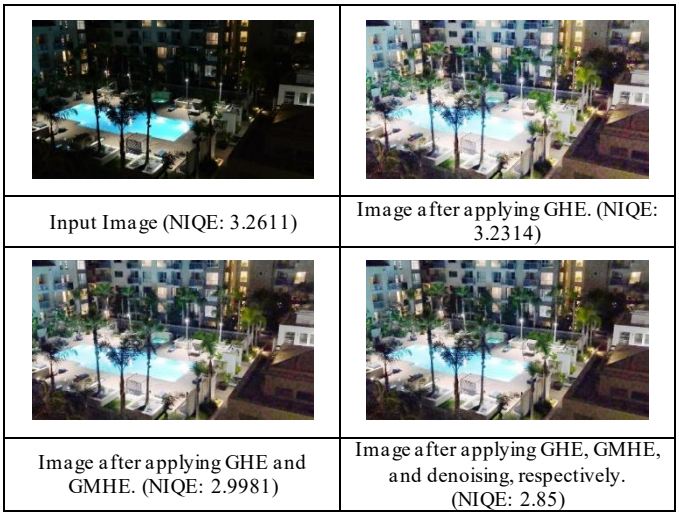

Fig. 10. The impact of the gradual addition of EnGMHE components. The input image extracted from the LOLi_Phone dataset [40].

The third test examined the sequence of enhancement steps and emphasized the importance of workflow design. It was applied across multiple datasets, and the proposed step sequence consistently produced the best results. For example, Fig. 11 illustrates how varying the order of steps in the enhancement workflow affected image quality, evaluated using NIQE and SSIM metrics. The input image exhibited low visibility and poor structural similarity, as reflected by its high NIQE and low SSIM scores. Among the tested configurations, the sequence GHE → GMHE → Denoise (EnGMHE) achieved the optimal balance between perceptual quality and structural similarity, recording the lowest NIQE (3.48) and the highest SSIM (0.84). This demonstrates that beginning with GHE, followed by GMHE, and concluding with denoising effectively preserved fine details and maintained natural image quality.

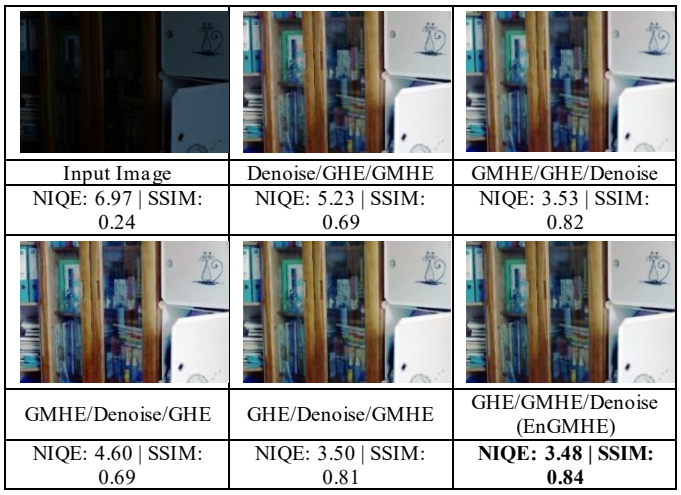

Fig. 11. Impact of procedural step order on image quality.

G. Limitations and Areas for Improvement

Fig. 12 highlights a potential limitation of EnGMHE in terms of color fidelity when compared to other enhancement methods. Although EnGMHE performs effectively in recovering fine details and improving text clarity, it may introduce slight oversaturation and color shifts when compared to the ground truth. Although this could be considered a weakness in terms of color fidelity, it may be advantageous in certain applications, such as text and object recognition, where clarity and detail preservation are often more important than strict closeness to a poor-quality ground truth.

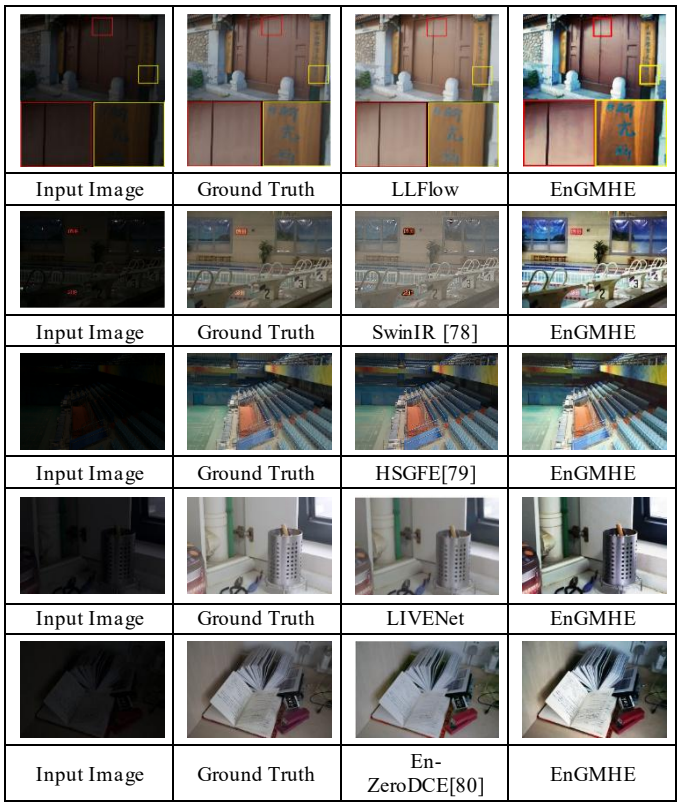

Fig. 12. Comparison of enhancement methods against the ground truth.

V. Conclusion

This study addresses the challenge of low-light image enhancement, considering the presence of noise in corrupted images. To tackle this problem, an effective joint low-light enhancement and denoising model, termed EnGMHE, is proposed. The model introduces a GHE-based technique combined with traditional GMHE to enhance image contrast and brightness. This enhancement stage is followed by a pretrained deep neural network for noise suppression, resulting in improved overall visual quality. EnGMHE effectively preserves fine details and produces visually appealing contrast and color distributions. Both qualitative and quantitative evaluations confirm its effectiveness, demonstrating superior performance compared to state-of-the-art methods.

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Immersive Learning Environment Design of Outdoor Education Space Using Artificial Intelligence Augmented Reality Technology

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***Abstract*—This study presents a technically grounded design and implementation of an AI- and AR-enabled immersive learning environment for outdoor education. Moving beyond conceptual descriptions, the study develops an executable system framework that integrates adaptive navigation and positioning, context-aware virtual tours, task-driven scenario simulation, and real-time feedback mechanisms. Each functional module is explicitly linked to algorithmic implementations, including multi-sensor state estimation, constrained generative scene construction, and reinforcement-based adaptive control, enabling reproducible system behavior in real outdoor settings. A controlled field experiment was conducted using an experimental group and a control group under identical instructional conditions. Quantitative evaluation based on pre–post testing, behavioral logging, and statistical analysis demonstrates that the proposed system achieves statistically significant improvements in learning interest, participation, knowledge mastery, and problem-solving ability. Experimental conditions, data characteristics, and methodological limitations are explicitly reported to support result verification and generalizability. The findings indicate that the proposed immersive learning environment constitutes a validated system-level contribution rather than a purely conceptual framework, offering practical and scientific value for computer science–oriented educational technology research.**

Keywords*—*Artificial intelligence; augmented reality; outdoor education space; immersive learning environment; system-level evaluation

I. Introduction

With the accelerated development of globalization and informatization, the education industry is facing unprecedented demands for change. The traditional education mode, which focuses on the inculcation and memory of knowledge, has been difficult to meet the needs of cultivating talents needed by the future society. In today's world, there is more emphasis on innovative thinking, practical ability, and lifelong learning ability, which requires that the education system must shift to a teaching model that emphasizes more active student participation, experiential learning, and problem-solving. Outdoor education, as a unique form of education, with its openness, practicality, and experience, has become an important way to cultivate these abilities. It allows students to go out of the classroom, experience nature and society, and solve problems through observation, experiment and cooperation, thus enhancing students' social responsibility, teamwork ability, and ability to adapt to environmental changes [1].

However, outdoor education also faces many challenges, such as uneven resource allocation, difficulty in quantifying learning effects, and safety risk management. Therefore, how to use modern information technology, especially artificial intelligence (AI) and augmented reality (AR) technology [2], to overcome these challenges and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of outdoor education has become an important issue in current educational technology research. The integration of AI and AR technology has brought unprecedented opportunities to the field of education. AI can provide personalized learning recommendations, intelligent evaluation, and instant feedback, while AR creates a highly immersive, interactive learning environment through the seamless integration of virtual and real worlds, making the learning process more attractive and engaging. This technology fusion can not only enrich educational resources, realize dynamic adjustment and real-time update of learning content, but also customize personalized learning paths according to the characteristics and needs of each learner, thus significantly improving the quality of teaching and promoting students to comprehensively and deeply master knowledge and skills [3]. The application of AI and AR technology will also help narrow the gap between urban and rural educational resources, provide high-quality outdoor learning experiences for students in remote areas, and promote educational equity. At the same time, it can also help teachers better monitor students' learning progress [4], adjust teaching strategies in time, and improve teaching efficiency.

The core of this study aims to explore the harmonious coexistence of outdoor education and advanced technology, focusing on how to skillfully integrate artificial intelligence (AI) and augmented reality (AR) technology on the basis of maintaining the essential characteristics of outdoor education [5], creating an immersive learning ecosystem that not only ensures students' safety but also greatly improves learning efficiency. The study is deeply concerned with establishing the basic principles for designing such learning environments, emphasizing that technology application needs to closely match the teaching purpose with the individual characteristics of learners in order to achieve optimal learning outcomes. Specifically, our research agenda includes four key objectives: first, to reveal the key elements and potential limitations of successful implementation of AI and AR technologies in outdoor education scenarios through detailed analysis of

existing cases, and to provide an empirical basis for subsequent design; second, we will design a comprehensive model framework that not only clarifies the details of technical architecture, but also covers innovative design principles for content creation processes and teaching activities, aiming to ensure seamless integration of technology and educational content; Furthermore, the research will advance to the development and testing stage of prototype system, and scientifically measure its actual effect on students' academic performance improvement [6], learning motivation stimulation and practical skills enhancement through rigorous evaluation system.

This study is organized as follows to progressively clarify the technical design, implementation, and validation of the proposed AI–AR immersive learning environment for outdoor education: Section II reviews related studies on artificial intelligence, augmented reality, outdoor education, and immersive learning theory to establish the research context. Section III analyzes system requirements and design principles. Section IV presents the system framework and details the implementation of core functional modules, including navigation and positioning, virtual tours, and scenario simulation. Section V reports practical deployment cases and quantitative effect evaluation based on controlled experiments. Finally, Section VI summarizes the main findings and discusses future research directions.

II. Literature Review

A. Application of AI and AR in Education

In an educational model that integrates artificial intelligence and augmented reality, the synergy of technology further broadens the boundaries of education and creates unprecedented learning experiences for students. In their study, they predicted the potential impact of intelligent augmented reality systems in education, arguing that such systems can dynamically adjust content according to students' learning style and progress, providing highly personalized learning scenarios [7]. For example, combining AI's adaptive learning platform with AR technology can create a virtual laboratory for each student that matches their cognitive development level, enabling students to safely perform complex experimental operations such as chemical reaction simulation or physical law verification in virtual environments without worrying about material limitations or safety risks.

In addition, in the study of game-based learning, it is proposed that an immersive environment can enhance students' participation and problem-solving ability, which has been fully demonstrated in outdoor education supported by AI and AR technology [8]. Through AI analysis of students' behavior data in outdoor activities, educators can accurately identify students' knowledge blind spots and skill defects in practice, and then use AR technology to superimpose learning content in real environments, such as real-time identification and provision of plant information in botanical investigations, or display the dynamic process of terrain changes during geographical exploration, thus realizing instant feedback and deep reinforcement learning in real-world learning activities.

B. Outdoor Education

Outdoor education emphasizes experiential learning in a natural environment with its unique educational approach. Outdoor education is defined as a process of learning through direct experience of natural and social environments, which not only imparts knowledge but also focuses on skill development, emotional development, and value formation [9]. Outdoor education is particularly beneficial in developing critical thinking, teamwork, and leadership skills that are difficult to fully develop in traditional classroom settings, according to the study. While outdoor education has many benefits [10], it also faces many challenges. In their review, they summarize several key challenges in outdoor education, including safety risk management, uneven resource allocation, and quantitative evaluation of educational effectiveness [11]. Safety concerns are paramount, and the unpredictable nature of outdoor activities requires a high degree of preparation and professional instruction.

Facing these challenges, the integration of modern technology provides new solutions and development opportunities for outdoor education. In terms of safety risk management, GPS tracking systems and smart wearable devices can be used to monitor student locations in real time, prevent hazards, and respond quickly in emergency situations. The application of these technologies has greatly improved the safety of outdoor activities, while reducing the excessive dependence on professionals [12], making more schools and educational institutions confident to carry out outdoor education programs. With regard to the uneven distribution of resources, the spread of digital platforms and online educational resources has provided access to high-quality outdoor educational resources in remote areas and resource-poor schools. For example, through virtual reality (VR) technology, students can "immersively" explore natural scenery and experience history and culture even in places where field conditions are not available. The introduction of this technology, although not a complete substitute for the real outdoor experience, can alleviate the geographical differences in resource allocation to a certain extent [13].

C. Immersion Learning Theory

Immersion learning theory is derived from cognitive psychology and constructivist learning theory, emphasizing the promotion of deep learning through highly participatory environments. Immersion learning is defined in his research as a way of learning in which learners are fully engaged by simulating real situations [14], which can stimulate learners' desire for exploration and creative thinking. "Situational Cognition" theory further points out that learning takes place in a specific sociocultural context, emphasizing the importance of situation for knowledge construction. Immersion learning theory is increasingly used in education [15], especially after combining AI and AR technologies. The study shows how AR technology can be used to create immersive learning environments for history lessons, where students visit virtual historical scenes through AR glasses, and this interactive and intuitive way of learning significantly improves learning interest and memory of historical events [16]. At the same time, the research uses an AI-driven virtual laboratory to realize immersive learning in biology teaching, and students

complete experiments through virtual operation, which not only reduces the experimental cost and safety risk [17], but also improves the learning effect. Immersion learning theory has also shown remarkable results in language learning. The research shows that the intelligent language learning environment constructed by AI technology can provide personalized learning content and real-time dialogue practice according to learners' language level and learning preference [18]. This highly interactive learning mode greatly improves language acquisition efficiency and oral expression ability. AI makes the learning process more efficient and accurate by analyzing learners' grammatical errors, pronunciation problems, etc. in simulated conversations and giving immediate feedback and correction suggestions. AR technology also plays an important role in art and design education. The application of AR in visual arts curriculum is studied. Students can create freely in virtual space and experience different artistic media and techniques through AR equipment [19]. This intuitive operation mode not only inspires students' creativity, but also promotes the understanding of artistic principles and history. AR technology enables students to "walk inside" paintings, observe and analyze works from different angles, providing new perspectives for art appreciation and criticism. The successful construction of an immersive learning environment also needs to consider learners' psychological acceptance and adaptability. In their review, they caution that despite the many advantages of immersive technology [20], excessive reliance on technology can lead to cognitive overload and affect learning outcomes. Educators should therefore balance the use of technology with traditional teaching methods when designing immersion learning activities to ensure that the integration of technology enhances the learning experience while maintaining the effectiveness of learning.

III. Demand Analysis

A. Design Principles

The design of outdoor education immersive learning environment should adhere to the core principles to optimize learning effectiveness, ensure experience and safety, and the specific design principles are shown in Fig. 1. The first principle is contextual relevance, which means that learning scenarios need to be closely integrated with the real world, such as using AR technology to simulate ecosystem operations in ecology courses. Through the combination of GPS and AR, learners can obtain real-time information during field visits and improve their understanding. Secondly, the learner-centered principle emphasizes customizing personalized paths according to individual needs, interests, and styles, analyzing learning data with AI algorithms, dynamically adjusting the difficulty and form of content, and ensuring that each learner grows up in a challenge that suits them. In terms of security, the design needs to ensure physical and information security, adopt encryption technology, establish virtual boundaries, provide security guidelines, and build a worry-free learning environment. The principles of interaction and collaboration advocate enhanced social skills and teamwork through AI-driven role-playing and team challenges, such as AR virtual treasure hunting.

B. Demand Analysis

In the immersive learning environment of outdoor education, the deep integration of technology and education requires careful consideration of the specific needs of various stakeholders to ensure the accurate application and maximum benefit of AI and AR technologies.

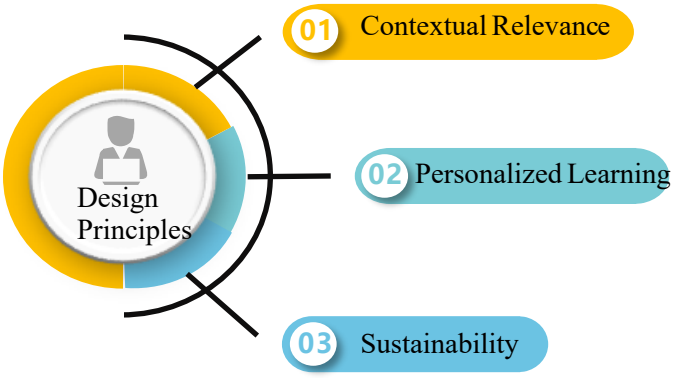


Fig. 1. Design principles.

For learners, the key lies in satisfying their quest for personalized learning experiences. Students expect customized content based on their interests, learning speed and abilities. AI technology is precisely able to provide this customized service by intelligently analyzing learning data, planning the most suitable learning path for each student, and giving timely feedback, thus enhancing the pertinence and effectiveness of learning. At the same time, using AR technology, students can participate in operations that are difficult to achieve in real environments, such as simulating complex natural phenomena or operations [21], which not only increases the fun of learning but also deepens the understanding of knowledge.

Teachers, on the other hand, are eager to have convenient teaching aids to simplify the planning and management of immersive learning activities. This means an intuitive and easy-to-use platform that helps teachers quickly create engaging AR learning content while monitoring and evaluating student learning performance in real-time. In addition, the professional development of teachers should not be ignored. They need to receive training on the application of AI and AR technologies in education and learn how to flexibly use these advanced technologies in outdoor environments to promote teaching innovation and efficiency.

Education managers play the role of resource allocation and strategic planning in technology integration. They need to ensure that all technical facilities, including hardware, software, and network services, are properly configured and maintained, while taking into account cost-effectiveness and maximizing the use of resources. In addition, it is essential to have an efficient data management system that not only helps administrators evaluate learning outcomes through data analysis and provides data support for future educational decisions [22], but also ensures that students' personal information is strictly protected during data processing.

IV. Design Framework for Immersive Learning Environment in Outdoor Education Space

A. Technical Architecture

Hardware devices constitute the physical interface of an immersive learning environment, and their selection and deployment are directly related to the perceived quality and interaction efficiency of learners in outdoor scenes. Key devices include, but are not limited to, augmented reality (AR) headsets, smart Mobile device, global positioning system (GPS) receivers, and environmental monitoring sensors. AR headset, as the core technical equipment, creates a unique mixed reality visual experience for learners by seamlessly integrating virtual information with the real world, deepening cognitive understanding and situational awareness. As a terminal for information processing and feedback, an intelligent Mobile device supports instant content reception, operation feedback, and interactive control, and its portability and flexibility significantly improve the convenience of outdoor learning. The application of GPS positioning and environmental sensors ensures accurate positioning and safety monitoring of learning activities in complex outdoor environments [23], adding an important technical guarantee for the safe implementation of practical activities.

B. Function Module Design

In the design of an immersive learning environment in an outdoor education space, the careful construction of functional modules is the key to realize efficient learning experience. This section discusses in detail the four core modules of navigation and positioning, virtual navigation, situational simulation, and real-time feedback systems, and how they are combined with artificial intelligence algorithms. The specific functional modules are shown in Fig. 2.

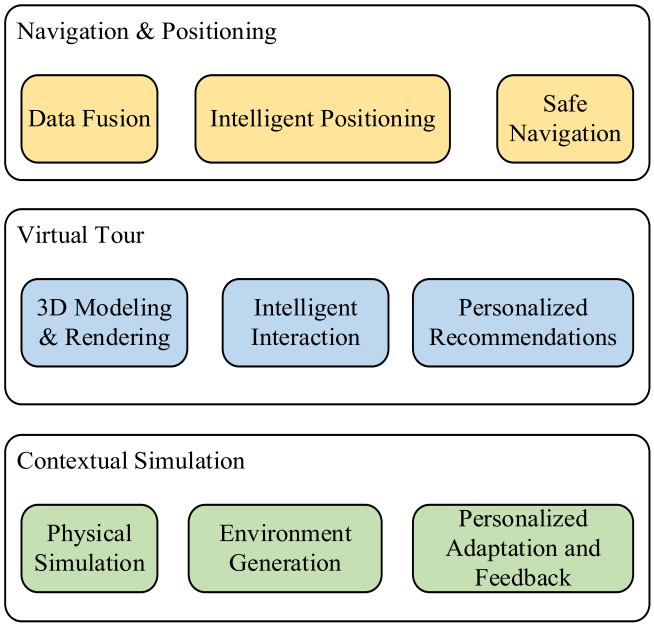


Fig. 2. Functional module design.

1) Navigation and positioning: In the proposed immersive outdoor learning system, navigation and positioning are implemented as a real-time service module directly supporting learner guidance, safety monitoring, and context-aware AR content triggering, rather than as an abstract demonstration of classical filters [24]. The core task of this module is to continuously estimate learner position states and to determine safe and adaptive movement paths under outdoor uncertainty.

A hybrid state estimation framework is adopted, in which particle filtering is not used as a generic replacement for Kalman filtering but is selectively activated when GPS signal quality falls below a predefined threshold. The learner state is defined as:

$$\mathbf{x}_t = [x_t, y_t, v_t, \theta_t] \tag{1}$$

representing planar position, velocity, and heading. Particle weights are updated according to observation confidence derived from sensor reliability indicators [25]:

$$w_t^{(i)} = \frac{w_{t-1}^{(i)}\, p(\mathbf{z}_t |\ \mathbf{x}_t^{(i)})}{\sum_{k=1}^{N} w_{t-1}^{(k)}\, p(\mathbf{z}_t |\ \mathbf{x}_t^{(k)})} \tag{2}$$

where, $p(\mathbf{z}_t |\ \mathbf{x}_t^{(i)})$ is dynamically scaled by GPS signal-to-noise ratio and inertial drift error. This adaptive weighting mechanism enables robust localization during forested or terrain-shielded activities, directly supporting stable AR overlay alignment [26].

To reduce cumulative drift and improve long-term consistency, multi-sensor fusion is executed at fixed temporal windows using a weighted least squares solver:

$$\hat{x} = (H^T W H)^{-1} H^T W z \tag{3}$$

where, weights in $\mathbf{w}$ are updated online based on recent residual errors, allowing the system to downweight unreliable sensors without manual recalibration.

For safety assurance, obstacle avoidance is integrated into the positioning loop rather than treated as an independent process. A lightweight random forest classifier predicts obstacle presence from depth and motion features, and its output constrains the heuristic function of the A* planner:

$$f(n) = g(n) + \lambda h(n) \tag{4}$$

where, λ is adaptively increased in high-risk zones to prioritize safer routes over shorter paths. This coupling ensures that navigation decisions are both context-aware and system-executable, enabling reproducible and verifiable learner movement control during outdoor learning tasks.

2) Virtual tours: The virtual tour module is implemented as an executable interaction layer that directly links spatial perception, semantic content delivery, and learner-driven navigation decisions, rather than serving as a conceptual illustration of AR technologies [27]. Its primary function is to support context-aware knowledge triggering and adaptive route guidance during outdoor learning tasks.

Environmental reconstruction is performed using stereo vision only at predefined anchor points instead of continuous global modeling, reducing computational load on mobile AR devices. For each anchor region, the scene geometry is represented by a sparse landmark set $\mathrm{P} = \{p_i\}$, and the epipolar constraint is applied to validate landmark consistency [28]:

$$p_i'^{T}\mathbf{F}p_i = 0 \tag{5}$$

where, $\mathbf{F}$ is estimated online from matched feature pairs and is used exclusively to align virtual annotations with real-world surfaces. This formulation ensures that AR overlays remain stable during learner movement rather than optimizing photorealistic reconstruction.

Visual realism is selectively enhanced only for instructional objects that require depth or structural perception. Instead of full-scale ray tracing, a bounded illumination model is applied [29]:

$$L_o = L_e + \alpha \sum_{k=1}^{K} L_i^{(k)} \cos\theta_k \tag{6}$$

where, α controls rendering cost and is adjusted according to device performance constraints, enabling reproducible deployment across heterogeneous hardware.

Natural language interaction is constrained to a task-oriented command set to ensure system reliability. Speech input is processed using a lightweight sequence model:

$$P(y_t \mid y_{<t}, c) = \mathrm{Softmax}(Wh_t) \tag{7}$$

where, the context vector c is derived from the current learning node rather than open-domain dialogue, directly mapping commands to navigation or content queries.

Personalization is achieved through short-horizon behavior modeling instead of generic interest prediction. Learner movement and interaction sequences are encoded as:

$$h_t = f(h_{t-1}, x_t), \quad r_t = g(h_t) \tag{8}$$

where, r ranks nearby learning nodes and updates tour paths in real time. This tightly coupled design establishes a verifiable link between algorithm execution, system behavior, and adaptive learning outcomes in outdoor virtual tours.

3) Scenario simulation: The scenario simulation module is implemented as a task-driven execution engine that supports experiential learning objectives by dynamically generating, controlling, and evaluating simulated events aligned with outdoor educational tasks. Rather than presenting generic physical or generative models, this module focuses on how simulation states are computed, adapted, and validated within the operational system.

Each scenario is formalized as a controllable state space:

$$\mathrm{S}_t = \{\mathbf{x}_t, \mathbf{e}_t, d_t\} \tag{9}$$

where, $\mathbf{x}_t$ denotes the physical state of simulated entities, $\mathbf{e}_t$ represents environmental parameters (terrain, weather, visibility), and d_t encodes difficulty level. Physical interaction is resolved using a constrained dynamics solver derived from the Newton–Euler formulation:

$$\mathbf{M}\ddot{\mathbf{x}}_t = \sum \mathbf{F}_t - \beta \dot{\mathbf{x}}_t \tag{10}$$

where, β is an adaptive damping coefficient adjusted to learner motor performance, enabling reproducible accessibility control for different learner groups.

Scenario content generation is not performed through unconstrained GAN or VAE sampling. Instead, generative models are conditioned on pedagogical labels c and spatial context l [30]:

$$\min_G \max_D \mathbb{E}_{x\sim p(x|c,l)}[\log D(x)] + \mathbb{E}_z[\log(1 - D(G(z \mid c, l)))] \tag{11}$$

ensuring that generated scenes correspond to predefined learning objectives and locations. Generated scenarios are cached and reused under identical conditions to guarantee experimental reproducibility.

Adaptive progression is governed by a reinforcement learning policy embedded in the simulation controller. The learner–scenario interaction is modeled as a Markov decision process, and task difficulty is updated according to:

$$Q(s,a) \leftarrow Q(s,a) + \alpha\left[r_t - \lambda d_t + \gamma \max_{a'} Q(s',a') - Q(s,a)\right] \tag{12}$$

where, r_t reflects task completion quality and λd_t penalizes excessive cognitive load. This closed-loop design explicitly links algorithm execution to scenario evolution, learning outcomes, and system-level validation across repeated trials.

V. Practical Cases and Effect Evaluation

A. Implementation Cases

The implementation was conducted as a controlled field experiment to ensure methodological rigor and verifiability. The study site was a designated nature reserve, and participants were drawn from the same grade level and educational background to reduce confounding effects. A total of two groups were formed: an experimental group using the proposed AI–AR immersive learning system and a control group receiving conventional outdoor instruction. Both groups followed identical learning objectives, curricular content, activity duration, and instructor guidance, with the only controlled variable being the use of the immersive system.

The experimental system was deployed using a standardized hardware and software configuration, including AR head-mounted displays, mobile devices with integrated

GPS, and a cloud-based platform providing content management, user logging, and real-time feedback services. All learning activities were predefined and time-synchronized across participants to ensure consistency. Interaction data (navigation paths, task completion time, and system prompts), assessment scores, and questionnaire responses were collected as structured datasets.

The experimental procedure consisted of four phases: pre-test assessment, guided learning intervention, post-test assessment, and feedback collection. Learning performance was evaluated using identical pre- and post-tests, while engagement and perception were measured using validated Likert-scale instruments. Data analysis focused on between-group comparisons under the same experimental conditions, allowing observed performance differences to be attributed to the system intervention. Experimental constraints, including limited sample size and site specificity, are acknowledged to delimit the generalizability of the results.

B. Effect Evaluation

To improve methodological rigor and result verifiability, the effect evaluation was conducted under controlled experimental conditions with consistent instructional content, duration, and assessment instruments for both groups. All reported indicators were derived from paired pre-test and post-test measurements. Descriptive statistics and inferential analysis were applied to examine between-group differences.

Learning interest and participation were measured using a standardized questionnaire administered before and after the intervention. Mean percentage increases were calculated for each group, and independent-sample t-tests were performed to examine statistical significance at the 0.05 level.

TABLE I. COMPARISON OF INTEREST AND PARTICIPATION IN LEARNING

Group	Increase in Interest in Learning (%)	Increase in Participation (%)
Experimental Group	60	75
Control Group	20	15

TABLE II. ASSESSMENT OF KNOWLEDGE MASTERY

Test Content	Experimental Group Mean Score	Control Group Mean Score	Fractional Difference
Biodiversity Knowledge	85	70	15
Ecosystem Understanding	90	75	15

The results in Table I indicate that the experimental group exhibited significantly greater gains in both learning interest and participation ($p < 0.05$), suggesting that the immersive system had a measurable motivational effect beyond traditional outdoor instruction.

Knowledge mastery was evaluated using identical post-intervention tests covering biodiversity knowledge and ecosystem understanding. Mean scores and between-group differences are reported in Table II.

Independent-sample t-tests confirmed that both score differences were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). These results indicate a consistent learning advantage associated with the immersive learning environment.

Problem-solving ability was assessed through task-based performance rubrics evaluated by two independent raters. Improvement ratios were computed based on normalized pre–post score differences.

TABLE III. IMPROVEMENT OF PROBLEM-SOLVING ABILITY

Evaluation Index	Experimental Group Promotion Ratio (%)	Control Group Promotion Proportion (%)
Observation and Analysis Ability	45	20
Innovative Thinking and Decision Making	50	15

As shown in Table III, the experimental group demonstrated substantially higher improvement across both cognitive dimensions. While the results consistently favor the proposed system, the evaluation is limited by sample size and single-site deployment, which may constrain generalizability. Future studies will incorporate larger datasets and multi-site trials to further validate these findings.

C. User Feedback

Table IV shows the results of the student satisfaction survey. In terms of interactive experiences, 70% of students expressed great satisfaction, and 20% expressed satisfaction. In terms of content richness, 65% of students expressed great satisfaction and 25% expressed satisfaction. In terms of technical stability, 85% of students expressed great satisfaction and 10% expressed satisfaction. In terms of security, 90% of students expressed great satisfaction and 8% expressed satisfaction. These data show that most students are satisfied with the teaching methods and activity design of the experimental group.

TABLE IV. STUDENT SATISFACTION SURVEY

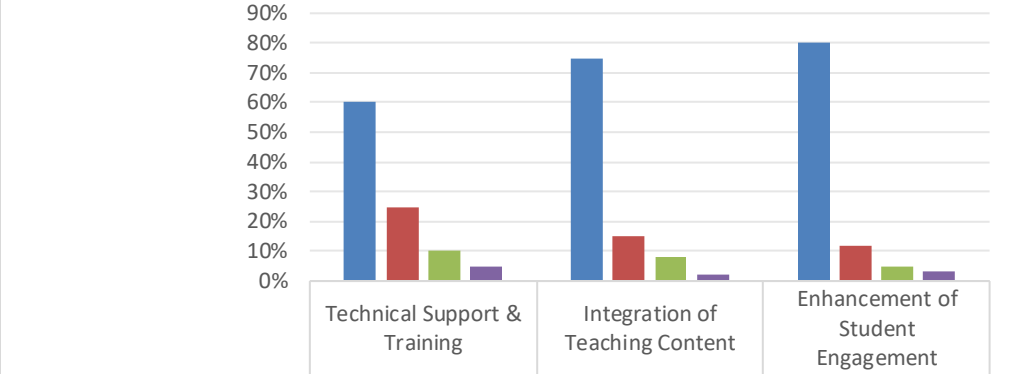
Feedback Field	Very Satisfied (%)	Satisfaction (%)	General (%)	Not Satisfied (%)
Interactive Experience	70	20	8	2
Content Richness	65	25	8	2
Technical Stability	85	10	3	2
Sense of Security	90	8	2	0

Fig. 3 presents the results of the evaluation of teachers' teaching experience. In terms of technical support and training, 60% of teachers thought it was very useful, and 25% thought it was useful.

D. Results and Discussion

The experimental results demonstrate that the proposed AI–AR immersive learning environment produces consistent and measurable improvements across cognitive, behavioral, and affective dimensions of outdoor learning. Quantitative comparisons between the experimental and control groups indicate significant gains in learning interest, participation, knowledge mastery, and problem-solving ability under

controlled instructional conditions. These results suggest that the integration of adaptive navigation, context-aware virtual tours, and task-driven scenario simulation effectively enhances learner engagement and learning efficiency beyond traditional outdoor education approaches.



	Technical Support & Training	Integration of Teaching Content	Enhancement of Student Engagement
Highly Useful	60%	75%	80%
Useful	25%	15%	12%
Average	10%	8%	5%
Room for Improvement	5%	2%	3%

Fig. 3. Evaluation of teachers' teaching experience.

From a system perspective, the results validate the practical effectiveness of the algorithm–module coupling proposed in the technical framework. Improvements in learning outcomes can be directly associated with system mechanisms such as real-time spatial alignment, adaptive difficulty adjustment, and feedback-driven task progression. This linkage confirms that the observed performance gains are not incidental but emerge from executable system behavior.

However, the results should be interpreted within defined constraints. The current evaluation is limited to a single-site deployment and a finite sample size, which may restrict generalizability across different educational contexts and age groups. Additionally, environmental variability and device heterogeneity may influence system performance. Future work will extend multi-site trials, incorporate larger datasets, and refine statistical modeling to further strengthen external validity and comparative analysis.

VI. Conclusion

In the context of ongoing educational transformation, this study advances outdoor education research by developing and validating an AI–AR–enabled immersive learning environment with explicit system-level implementation and evaluation. Beyond practical application, the study contributes a structured design paradigm that links adaptive navigation, virtual tours, and scenario simulation to executable algorithms and measurable learning outcomes, extending existing immersive learning frameworks from conceptual models to deployable systems. Empirical results from controlled experiments confirm that the proposed environment effectively enhances learner engagement, knowledge acquisition, and problem-solving ability, demonstrating its technical and educational validity.

Despite these contributions, several limitations remain. The current evaluation is based on a single-site deployment with a limited sample size, which may constrain the generalizability of the findings across diverse educational contexts and learner populations. Environmental variability and device heterogeneity may also affect system performance. Future research will focus on multi-site longitudinal studies, larger and more diverse datasets, and refined statistical modeling to further validate robustness, scalability, and cross-context applicability of the proposed system.

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A Contextualized Learner-Profiling Transformer Architecture for Adaptive Grammar Error Diagnosis and Instruction

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Abstract*—Grammatical accuracy is a critical component of English as a Second Language (ESL) learning; however, many learners continue to struggle with recurring errors despite the availability of automated grammar correction tools. Although recent transformer-based models such as BERT, GPT, and T5 have demonstrated strong benchmark performance, existing grammar error correction (GEC) systems remain largely correction-oriented and lack pedagogical flexibility, learner awareness, and explanation-based feedback. To address these limitations, this study proposes an Adaptive Multi-Task T5 (AMT-T5) framework that integrates grammatical error correction, error-type classification, and personalized feedback generation within a unified transformer architecture. The proposed method is designed to actively support learner development by maintaining dynamic learner error profiles and adaptively reweighting attention to provide targeted instructional guidance. AMT-T5 is implemented using Python, PyTorch, and the Hugging Face Transformers library, and trained on the Lang-8 Learner Corpus, which contains authentic ESL learner sentences with expert corrections. Experimental results demonstrate that the proposed model significantly outperforms existing transformer-based baselines, achieving 78.9 BLEU, 90.7 GLEU, 82.6% full-sentence accuracy, and an error reduction rate of 91.2%, representing an approximate 18–22% improvement in grammatical accuracy over prior models. The framework further incorporates Direct Preference Optimization to align corrections with pedagogical expectations and Knowledge Distillation to enable efficient real-time deployment. Overall, the proposed AMT-T5 framework transforms grammar correction from a passive editing task into an adaptive, learner-centered educational process, offering a scalable and effective solution for intelligent ESL grammar learning systems.

Keywords*—Grammar error correction; adaptive feedback; Multi-task Learning; transformer models; ESL learning; personalized language instruction

I. Introduction

English has proven to be the global language of scholarly, professional, and social communication. However, grammar is still a persistent issue to the people who do not speak English as their mother tongue that limits their fluency and expressiveness in communication to a large degree [1]. The conventional teaching of grammar in classrooms is often very strict and generalized, and has little ability to provide any form of personalized attention. Most intelligent language learning systems currently provide contextual and real-time grammar correction with the advent of (NLP) [2], [3]. In the case of ESL students, this instant corrective feedback is essential to strengthen correct forms and minimize the frequent mistakes [4]. Research on automated grammar correction has evolved across different paradigms, including rule-based systems, statistical machine translation (SMT), and (DL) approaches [5]. Rule-based approaches, though interpretable, are incapable of dealing with complex or ambiguous structures [6], [7]. Phrase-based SMT methods, which are better covered, were limited by their performance in fluency and grammatical accuracy [8], [9]. LSTMs and GRUs neural architectures, however, enhanced contextual correction but could not deal with long-range dependencies [10] [11]. Transformer models (including BERT, GPT and T5) have since further progressed the field of models with their more advanced contextual understanding [12], [13].

Nevertheless, the majority of models in existence are not specifically adapted in ESL learning scenarios and the data that

is available is generally too general or does not represent common ESL error patterns well enough [14], [15].

This study introduces an AMT-T5 model, which is an expansion of the T5 transformer architecture to support the educational requirements of ESL students. In contrast to conventional grammar correction systems, which can only perform surface-level correction, AMT-T5 optimally achieves grammatical error correction, error-type classification, and explanation-based feedback generation in a single architecture. This combination allows the model to provide not only corrected sentences but also teaching feedback this facilitates the learning process. This learner-sensitive adaptive feedback system is a major distinguishing feature of AMT-T5, which personalizes feedback based on learner-specific error frequency. The model is able to offer specialized advice by dynamically changing attention weights based on repeated grammatical errors, thus reducing the number of such errors. Compared to the current transformer-based grammatical error correction systems that use a fixed multitask learning or post-hoc explanation model, AMT-T5 uses learner-state-conditioned modeling, where error profile correction and generate explanation is conditioned by dynamically updated learner error profiles. This attention reweighting conditioned by the learner is a methodological break with the previous multitask GEC and pedagogical NLP models, which do not incorporate learner history into the transformer attention mechanism.

A. Research Motivation

ESL learners also have such consistent grammatical problems, which cannot be easily eradicated by traditional teaching. Recent transformer-based grammar correction models have achieved high benchmark performance, but primarily do not offer pedagogical scaffolding. This puts a gap in the learning process in which the student gets outputs that are error free but with no explanations or personalized directions to be able to develop a sustainable level of skills. Hence, there exists an urgent demand of a grammar correction system that can enhance the accuracy of the sentences besides, be actively supportive of the learner development by providing contextual feedback and adaptive learning mechanisms.

B. Significance of the Study

The proposed AMT-T5 system goes beyond the conventional benchmark-driven GEC systems and incorporates grammar rectification with an educational purpose. The system facilitates improved language learning and quantifiable proficiency growth by supporting the active profiling of learning errors specific to the learner, real-time explainable feedback, and optimization to user preferences. This model facilitates effective implementation in actual educational settings, and it is a powerful solution to school systems, language study applications, and one-on-one ESL lessons. Its combination of high grammatical precision and instructional support enhances the position of AI as a correction tool to an intelligent language learning partner.

C. Problem Statement

Transformer-based grammar error correction models such as BERT, GPT, and T5 have shown strong benchmark performance [16]; however, that are largely designed for surface-level correction rather than pedagogical support in ESL learning contexts [17]. Existing systems including GECToR, BART-GEC, and RoBERTa-GEC prioritize correction accuracy but lack learner awareness, adaptive feedback, and explanation-based instruction, limiting their educational value [23]. This gap results in improved sentence fluency without fostering long-term grammatical understanding or learner development. To overcome this limitation, the proposed AMT-T5 framework integrates grammar correction, error classification, and personalized feedback, bridging linguistic accuracy with learner-centered pedagogical effectiveness.

D. Key Contributions

- Introduces a learner-aware transformer design principle in which adaptive attention is conditioned on dynamically updated learner error profiles, offering a general modelling strategy for personalized educational NLP systems.
- Establishes a unified learner-centered framework that integrates grammatical correction, error-type classification, and explanation generation, demonstrating how multitask learning can be pedagogically grounded rather than task-driven.
- Provides empirical evidence that explanation-based multitask learning supports pedagogically meaningful feedback, as reflected in reduced recurrence of grammatical errors and positive learner-centered evaluation indicators.
- Proposes a combined evaluation paradigm that integrates computational metrics with pedagogical indicators, offering a transferable methodology for assessing educational NLP systems beyond accuracy-based benchmarks.
- Presents a reusable methodological blueprint for learner-centered language learning systems by combining learner modeling, adaptive attention, preference alignment, and efficiency-oriented optimization, enabling future extensions beyond grammar correction tasks.

The rest of the study is organized as follows: Section II reviews the related works. Section III describes the proposed AMT-T5 model. Section IV details the results and discussion, and Section V concludes the study and direction for future work.

II. Literature Review

The section is organized in the form of a comparative synthesis of previous research on grammatical error correction, language proficiency assessment, and learning NLP. It systematizes the results by the type of model and the area of application, which forms the basis of research to support the proposed AMT-T5 framework.

Korniienk [17] introduces open-sourced foundational models such as LLaMA, Mistral and Gemma demonstrate their ability to provide assistance in writing tasks. However, the application of neural networks in (GEC) is not well investigated. To evaluate these models in zero shot, supervised fine tuning and RLHF settings. Notably, fine tuning greatly enhances GEC

performance and it is critical to use prompt engineering on zero-shot CoNLL-2014 and BEA-2019 benchmarks. Running Direct Preference Optimization under RLHF gives incremental performance gains. Finally, Chat-LLaMA-2-13B-FT attains F0.5 scores of 67.87 and 73.11, respectively. The results also prove that using open-source LLMs is viable for efficient and scalable GEC systems.

Sazzed [18] suggests that readability of the non-native English language speakers and potential prediction methods for their language proficiency from social media reviews are investigated. A corpus of 1,000 reviews was developed containing five ELP groups. The FRE and FKG were used to measure readability scores. Insufficient data are found to distinguish ELP groups pertaining to readability. Various machine learning and transformer-based models, were applied to ELP classification. It turns out the transformer-based approaches were slightly better. Therefore, these are more likely to be used in automatic language proficiency assessment.

Davis [19] evaluates the effectiveness of using NLMs for Grammatical Error Detection in the ESL domain. It is shown that it is possible for NLMs to transfer linguistic knowledge that improves GED performance across benchmark datasets. With appropriate transfer, it also allows fine grained error detection using single models. GED also reflects model type and data domain on analysis and encoded noun-number information. Moreover, this study represents GED as a diagnostic tool that can be utilized to judge implicit grammatical knowledge available in NLMs. Firstly, stark contrast between masked and autoregressive models is highlighted. The study provides a holistic review of NLMs on GEDs tasks.

Ormerod [20] introduces a regression-based framework to study how global features were leveraged by transformer-based models for Automated Essay Scoring. The finding is that pretrained language models implicitly approximate rubric–relevant features while scoring. Hidden states can be used in linear regression to improve the model interpretability by estimating importance of the features. This framework is validated using DeBERTa models fine-tuned on overall and trait level scores. Particular focus is given on convention errors such as spelling, grammar and punctuation. It demonstrates that neural models have improved explainability for use in AES. It validates language modeling-based scoring systems.

Elks [21] discusses that transfer learning and multitask learning can be used to construct an automated marking system for second language English writing. The research studies the fine-tuning strategies for Transformer-based language models towards NLP tasks. Experimental results show that multitask fine-tuning leads to robust and improved performance. Different models are compared against various task-model combinations using various datasets. The third result is that preliminary findings discover that adding multitask objectives to pretrained models improves scoring accuracy. This lends itself to scalable, data-efficient assessment of writing by learners. This work will provide ways for researchers in educational NLP applications for automated evaluation.

Ng and Markov [22] introduces NLI aims to discover when and where one grew up by analyzing the second language spoken and it is applied in linguistics and forensics. Prior to transformers, traditional machine learning methods relying on hand-crafted features have bested them at this task. Closed-source LLMs following the successful trend seen in recent years, for instance GPT-4, show strong performance at zero-shot on open-set classification in NLI. Unfortunately, these models are proprietary and come at a high cost to operate. In this work, explore the use of open source LLMs for the NLI tasks. In their initial form, these arguments are not as effective, but fine-tuned versions of these open models are competitive by accuracy. All the findings shall support the use of open-source solutions as an accessible, customizable way to build NLI.

Alisoy [23] introduces that machine learning for automated vocabulary acquisition for ESL is investigated using transformer-based models. An evaluation of the fine-tuned BERT model was carried out for predicting vocabulary needs on the web and traditional ML algorithms SVM and Random Forest were considered for comparison. The BERT driven tool which was used in the experimental group showed a significantly higher vocabulary gain than the control group. The best precision and recall metrics belong to BERT that achieved the highest accuracy (88%). Results show that context aware ML-based vocabulary tools have the potential to positively impact language learning. In the study, DL and RL are proposed to be used with ESL pedagogy. It adapts to the needs of instruction and allows for curriculum development on an individual basis.

Ye et al. [24] propose that the LLMs in FLE is beginning to flourish, and is found that LLMs have a potential for transformative use as dynamic FLE tools. In terms of pedagogy, it can augment learning materials, create student simulations, and predict what students will or might learn in order to give more targeted instruction. In addition to this, it plays the role of an intelligent agent facilitating inclusive and personalized learning. The authors argue that these roles can be better used only if this collaboration is carried out on an interdisciplinary basis. In other words, innovation is prioritized, and the associated risks are tackled. The work outlines a conceptual framework for optimizing FLE via LLM integration.

Table I summarizes the representative research in grammar correction, automated writing evaluation, and educational NLP. Recent developments prove that models based on transformers can be successfully used in providing assistance in grammar corrections, readability testing, grading of essays, and assessing vocabulary in cases of ESL. Nevertheless, the available research is mostly divided, where each of the language skills is considered separately and does not have any adaptive feedback, and is not explicitly integrated into the pedagogy.

Earlier multitask grammatical error correction methods are mainly concerned with common representations among tasks that are related to correction but were fixed to the formulations of tasks that are independent of individual learner actions. Educational NLP and automated writing evaluation systems generally produce explanations or feedback, yet these components often not related to the correction process, and it is not trained on the individual errors of the learner. Preference-based optimization techniques even enhance the quality of output, but are not sensitive to the history of learners or instructional personalization. Conversely, the suggested AMT-T5 model integrates grammar clean-up, classification of error

type and generation of explanations into a learner-conditioned model, with adaptive attention reweighting being expressly motivated by learner error history. This design has the capability to provide pedagogically customized and customized grammar feedback that is not addressed by existing approaches.

TABLE I. SUMMARY ON LITERATURE REVIEW

Author	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
Korniienk [17]	Explores open-source LLMs (e.g., LLaMA, Mistral) in GEC under zero-shot, fine-tuning, and RLHF setups.	Fine-tuning improves GEC; shows viability of open-source LLMs with good performance on CoNLL and BEA benchmarks.	Zero-shot requires careful prompt design; RLHF yields only incremental improvement.
Sazzed [18]	Analyzes readability of non-native texts and classifies English proficiency using ML and transformer models.	Transformer-based models slightly outperform classical models in ELP prediction.	Readability metrics (FRE, FKG) poorly distinguish proficiency levels.
Davis [19]	Investigates NLMs' role in Grammatical Error Detection (GED), and their encoding of linguistic signals like noun-number agreement.	Shows positive transfer and diagnostic power of NLMs; robust linguistic encoding in some models.	Performance varies by model type and domain; brittle encoding across syntactic constructions.
Ormerod [20]	Proposes regression-based explainable AES using DeBERTa models, focusing on global features and convention errors.	Improves interpretability; validates LMs for use in AES.	Limited focus on deeper semantic and content aspects of writing.
Elks [21]	Combines transfer and multitask learning for automated ESL essay scoring using transformers and multiple datasets.	Multitask fine-tuning improves robustness and accuracy; scalable solution.	Preliminary findings; lacks full generalization to diverse writing contexts.
Ng and Markov [22]	Uses open-source LLMs for Native Language Identification (NLI), comparing them with traditional methods and closed-source LLMs like GPT-4.	Fine-tuned open LLMs are competitive; accessible and customizable.	Underperforms out-of-the-box; closed LLMs still outperform in zero-shot settings.
Alisoy [23]	Examines transformer-based vocabulary acquisition in ESL; compares fine-tuned BERT with SVM and Random Forest.	BERT outperforms baselines; improves vocabulary gain; supports curriculum personalization.	Requires technical infrastructure; limited support for grammar beyond vocabulary.
Ye et al. [24]	Presents roles of LLMs in FLE as enhancers, predictors, and agents to enable personalized language instruction.	Promotes inclusive, adaptive, and AI-supported education; provides a pedagogical framework.	Lacks practical implementation details; interdisciplinary collaboration needed for real-world impact.

III. PROPOSED METHODOLOGY FOR ADAPTIVE MULTI-TASK T5 FRAMEWORK IN ESL GRAMMAR CORRECTION

The proposed study presented the empirical method of creating and assessing the AMT-T5 model of grammatical error correction in ESL writing. The model is trained on the Lang-8 Learner Corpus, which is a collection of sentences produced by learners together with professional corrections. Fixed-length T5 tokenizers are used to normalize and tokenize input sentences in order to have similar model input. AMT-T5 architecture is a combination that applies grammatical error correction, the classification of error type, and the generation of explanations based on feedback on the same transformer model, which makes it possible to increase both the linguistic and pedagogical clarity. Once a dynamic error profile of each learner is built, to support learner-centered teaching, an adaptive feedback mechanism reallocates attention to the prevalent grammatical patterns. An adaptive attention mechanism is specifically trained based on the frequency of errors to which the learner is explicit; thus, the model is able to prioritize the grammatical structures that provoke a particular learner in different sessions. In this design, the attention mechanisms are not fixed, as in the case of traditional transformer attention mechanisms that are user-independent and do not incorporate user-specific historical information in attention computation. A combination of supervised fine-tuning, Direct Preference Optimization, to align all corrections with pedagogical expectations, and Knowledge Distillation to facilitate efficient real-time deployment. Fig. 1 demonstrates the workflow of the suggested AMT-T5 framework.

A. Data Collection

The study uses the Lang-8 Learner Corpus [25] of Kaggle. The major source of information is the Lang-8 Learner Corpus, which consists of authentic ESL learner sentences together with native-speaker corrections. A binary tag on each record (1 = error, 0 = correct) is used to show the presence of a grammatical error in the sentence. It separates the dataset into 80% training, 10% validation, and testing to allow equal generalization.

The sample data pairs, in Table II, are the sample data utilized in training the model, with y = 1, in every row, meaning that there are grammatical errors in the sentence. In the Input column, the sentences originally written by the learners are displayed, whereas in the Output column, the same sentences edited by the experts are presented, and that are used to illustrate different grammar problems, such as incorrect use of tenses, subject-verb agreement and omission of articles.

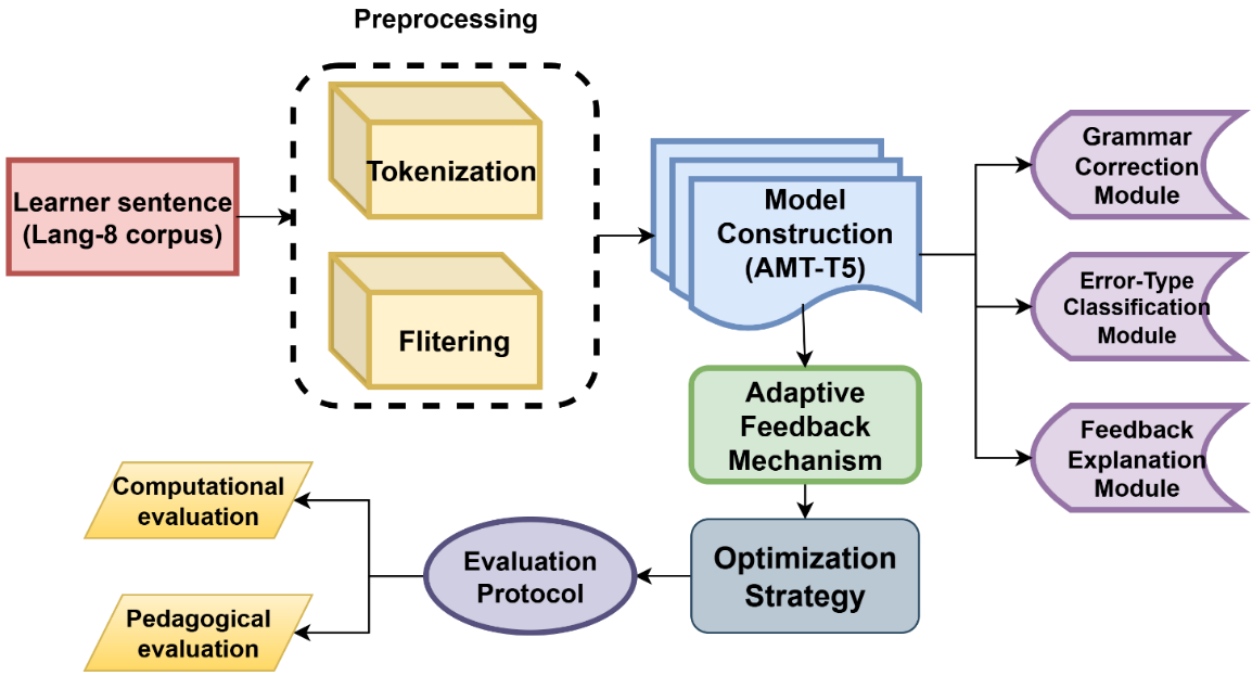

Fig. 1. Adaptive grammar correction framework.

TABLE II. SAMPLE DATA FROM LANG-8 LEARNER CORPUS

y	Input (Learner Sentence)	Output (Corrected Sentence)
1	And he took in my favorite subject like soccer.	And he took in my favorite subjects like soccer…
1	Actually, who let me know about Lang-8 was him.	Actually, he was the one who let me know about Lang-8.
1	His Kanji's ability is much better than me.	His Kanji ability is much better than mine.
1	We've known each other for only half a year, but his lesson was a lot of fun.	We've known each other for only half a year, but his lessons were a lot of fun.
1	I heard a sentence last night when I watched TV.	I heard a sentence last night when I was watching TV.
1	Yesterday, I went to Umeda station to date.	I went to Umeda station for dating yesterday.

B. Data Preprocessing

Preprocessing is a crucial step towards cleaning the dataset, organizing it, and making it compatible with the requirements of the transformer-based models, in particular, T5. The preprocessing step maximizes the input data for effective learning and correct grammatical error correction.

1) Filtering: To limit the scope to error-containing sentences in need of correction, the dataset was cropped to keep only those records where the binary error tag was 1. Let D be the original dataset, and is represented, as in Eq. (1):

$$D = \{(x_i, y_i, l_i)\}_{i=1}^{N} \quad (1)$$

where, x_i is the learner sentence, y_i is the corrected sentence, $l_i \in \{0,1\}$ is the binary label indicating whether correction is needed. The Filtered dataset is as given in Eq. (2):

$$D' = \{(x_i, y_i) | l_i = 1\} \quad (2)$$

2) Formatting for T5: Grammar correction is modeled as text-to-text translation using task prefixes. This structure transforms the task of correction into a sequence-to-sequence mapping problem, given in Eq. (3) and Eq. (4):

$$T5\ Input{:}X = prefix + x_i \quad (3)$$

$$T5\ Output{:}Y = y_i \quad (4)$$

3) Tokenization: Tokenization was done with the T5 pre-trained tokenizer. Tokenization separates text into a series of subword units or tokens that are mapped numerically for model consumption. Let $Tok(\cdot)$ denote the tokenizer function, as in Eq. (5):

$$X_{tokenized} = Tok(X), Y_{tokenised} = Tok(Y) \quad (5)$$

Each sequence was padded to a maximum length of 128 tokens to ensure uniformity, given in Eq. (6):

$$|X_{tokenized}| \leq 128\ , |Y_{tokenized}| \leq 128 \quad (6)$$

C. Adaptive Multi-Task T5 Task-Specific Learning Modules

The proposed AMT-T5 framework extends the T5 encoder–decoder model through three interdependent modules designed to jointly handle grammar correction, error classification, and feedback generation. Such modules exchange contextual representations of the encoder, which facilitates learning in a coherent manner of linguistic and pedagogical activities.

Fig. 2 shows the AMT-T5 structure, which incorporates the grammar correction method, the error classification method and the feedback generation method, all integrated in a single systematic encoder-decoder structure. The input sentence of the learner is coded and fixed using the Grammar Correction Module, and at the same time, the error is also classified to highlight the particular linguistic vulnerability. The Adaptive

Feedback Mechanism of the system observes the changing pattern of errors of each learner and continuously refocuses attention to guide them individually. This reinforcement loop strengthens the learning gaps that may have occurred before and thus mistakes that would be made are given specific attention. Consequently, AMT-T5 provides a context-sensitive, real-time guidance facilitating an improved learning rate and encouraging a progressive improvement in ESL learners.

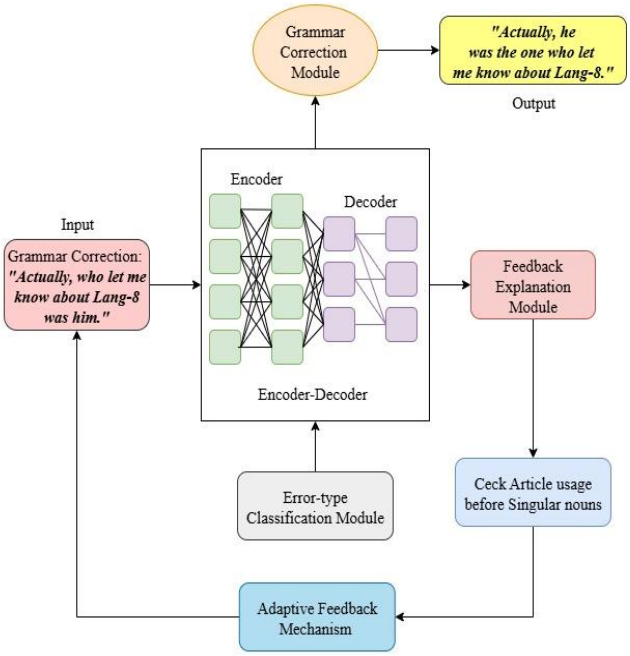

Fig. 2. AMT-T5 model architecture.

1) Grammar correction module: Grammatical transformation is the main one, in which the model will change the incorrect sentences written in the ESL to the grammatically correct ones without distorting the contextual meaning and fluency. The encoder puts the input made by the learner into perspective and the decoder produces the corrected output one step after another. The correction loss function takes the following form, represented as in Eq. (7):

$$\mathcal{L}_{corr} = -\frac{1}{T}\sum_{t=1}^{T} log P_\theta(y_t \mid y_{<t}, x) \quad (7)$$

where, x denotes the input sentence of a learning individual, y_t represents the gold-standard token at that particular position and T denotes the target number of positions. $\mathcal{L}_{corr}$ to the minimum implies a high degree of correspondence with the corrections of the experts, and decreases the number of grammatical deviations in ESL writing.

2) Error-type classification module: In this module, the model is able to classify types of grammatical error, e.g., tense error, omission of articles, or subject-verb agreement. The binary predictions of each of the error types and are produced by a classifier that is based on encoder representations, as given in Eq. (8):

$$\mathcal{L}_{class} = -\sum_{k=1}^{K}(e_k log\hat{e}_k + (1-e_k)log(1-\hat{e}_k)) \quad (8)$$

In which K denotes the base count of types of error, ek denotes the binary indicating of type k on the ground-truth, and e_k denotes the predicted probability. Minimizing such loss increases the ability of the model to identify and accustom to recurrent learner specific deficiencies.

3) Feedback explanation generation module: The AMT-T5 also produces explanatory feedback to facilitate the process of pedagogy, which explains the reason a correction was given. This enables the learners to learn about the underlying grammatical principles and not just being given fixed text. The loss of explanation is computed, as in Eq. (9):

$$\mathcal{L}_{exp} = -\frac{1}{T_r}\sum_{t=1}^{T_r} log P_\theta(r_t \mid r_{<t}, x) \quad (9)$$

where, T_r is the length of the explanation and r_t is the token at position t in the reference explanation. Reduction of such loss will guarantee clear, context-specific explanations that are concise and meet the ESL learning goals.

4) Joint optimization objective: Joint Optimization Objective: The three modules are trained with the same multi-task target in order to balance the grammatical accuracy and error interpretability as well as educational feedback. The overall loss is calculated, as in Eq. (10):

$$\mathcal{L}_{total} = \lambda_1\mathcal{L}_{corr} + \lambda_2\mathcal{L}_{class} + \lambda_3\mathcal{L}_{exp} \quad (10)$$

where, λ_1,λ_2, λ_3 are weights which balance the importance of tasks. In our study, correction (λ_1) is given higher priority whereas classification and explanation λ_2, λ_3) are moderately weighted. Such a structure guarantees that grammatical accuracy is the paramount result whereas it still instills pedagogical feedback to promote the long-term success of ESL students.

D. Adaptive Feedback Mechanism in AMT-T5

To increase the pedagogical utility of grammar correction, the suggested AMT-T5 structure integrates the adaptive feedback mechanism personalizing the corrections and explanations depending on the behavior of particular learners. As opposed to the traditional correction systems which are static, this mechanism constantly represents the learner-specific error pattern and adapts model attention to deliver specific and didactic feedback.

1) Learner error profiling: The system notes how many times each type of errors is done by a learner and a history is obtained which reflects the grammatical weaknesses of a learner. This is an error profile that enables AMT-T5 to be dynamically adjusted to make sure that the model does not correct all learners in the same way, but instead it customizes corrections in accordance with individual performance patterns. It is computed as in Eq. (11):

$$F = [f_1, f_2, \ldots, f_k] \quad (11)$$

where, f_k is the occurrence of the error type k (e.g., the usage of tense, the omission of an article, subject-verb agreement). The error profile vector F in this study is constantly updated, which allows AMT-T5 to retain learner-specific memory to make customized grammar correction.

2) Attention reweighting based on error history: After creating a personalized profile of error, the AMT-T5 architecture dynamically changes the distribution of the encoder-decoder attention. The mechanism puts more emphasis on tokens which are associated with common learner mistakes and rewards the right grammatical patterns. Due to this, the model will be more responsive to the recurring weaknesses and contextual needs of writing among the learners. Such an adaptive approach will allow the system to provide much personalized and context-sensitive grammatical feedback, eventually leading to greater longer-term learning changes. It is denoted, as in Eq. (12):

$$A' = A - \alpha \cdot \delta_{rep} + \beta \cdot \delta_{align} \quad (12)$$

where, A is the initial attention weight, δ_{rep} punishes errors of repetition and δ_{align} strengthens focus on the patterns which are corrected. These modifications in our study eliminate the occurrence of errors by the learners and encourage the AMT-T5 to make successively better corrections.

3) Personalized feedback generation: The final stage converts the nature of the mistakes which were followed to helpful hints. AMT-T5 does not simply come up with corrections and pushes out specific questions, such as; you like to omit articles that come before singular nouns. This makes corrections learning experiences whereby the ESL learners are coached on learning the rules behind the grammar rather than the memorization of corrections. It is given in Eq. (13):

$$Feedback = g(F, A') \quad (13)$$

Here, $g(\cdot)$ is the mapping function, and it receives the error profile F of the learner and modified attention A to generate feedback text. This is the mechanism that this study will help mediate between the automatic correction and the pedagogy and make AMT-T5 a tool of both accuracy and long-term grammatical change.

E. Optimization Strategy

It involves a combination of supervised fine-tuning, Direct Preference Optimization (DPO) and Knowledge Distillation (KD) to achieve a tradeoff of grammatical accurateness, pedagogical flexibility and computational efficiency.

1) Supervised fine-tuning: The AMT-T5 model was fine-tuned on the Lang-8 corpus using the multi-task objective. Training employed the AdamW optimizer (learning rate = 2e−5, batch size = 16, weight decay = 0.01) for 5 epochs with early stopping after two non-improving epochs. This stage allows the model to jointly learn grammatical correction, error-type classification, and feedback explanation.

2) Direct Preference Optimization (DPO): DPO refines model alignment with ESL learners by considering their preferences between multiple valid corrections. Given two outputs—preferred (y_{pref}) and non-preferred ($y_{nonpref}$)—the objective minimizes, given as in Eq. (14):

$$L_{DPO} = -\log\sigma\left(r\left(y_{pref}\right) - r\left(y_{nonpref}\right)\right) \quad (14)$$

where, $r(\cdot)$is the reward function. Minimizing L_{DPO}ensures that AMT-T5 produces corrections aligned with pedagogical clarity rather than mere grammatical validity.

3) Knowledge Distillation (KD): To ensure deployment efficiency, the fine-tuned T5-base (teacher) model transfers knowledge to a smaller student model through soft-target matching derived as in Eq. (15):

$$\mathcal{L}_{KD} = (1-\tau)\mathcal{L}_{CE} + \tau \cdot KL(P_{teacher} \parallel P_{student}) \quad (15)$$

where, τ is the distillation temperature, $P_{teacher}$ the output distribution of T5-base and $P_{student}$ that of the distilled model. KD in our study passed the knowledge between the teacher and the student so that lightweight AMT-T5 could achieve the similar levels of correction in low latency.

4) Final optimization objective: The full learning objective combines all components mathematically expressed, as in Eq. (16):

$$\mathcal{L}_{final} = \lambda_1\mathcal{L}_{total} + \lambda_4\mathcal{L}_{DPO} + \lambda_5\mathcal{L}_{KD} \quad (16)$$

where, λ_4 and λ_5 regulate the preference optimization and distillation contributions. This last loss in this study led AMT-T5 to a balanced learning, that is, providing corrections which are accurate, learner-center and deployed-efficient.

F. Evaluation Protocol

AMT-T5 was evaluated using both computational and pedagogical measures.

1) Computational evaluation: BLEU and GLEU scores were used in measuring the closeness of the model corrections with expert references and Full Sentence Accuracy was used in measuring perfectly correct outputs. Levenshtein Edit Distance was how much the minimum number of edits needed and Error Reduction Rate (ERR) was a measure of the percentage of grammatical errors that were reduced in learner sentences.

2) Pedagogical evaluation: The learning population examined in the pedagogical assessment included 60 intermediate ESL learners who were enrolled in an academic ESL course. Every participant provided written consent and engaged in the AMT-T5 system as part of facilitated grammatical practice sessions. The assessment was done on different learning sessions where the learners were required to provide sentences to get them corrected and provide adaptive feedback, type of errors explanation, and a personalized guide. The profile of errors in learners was revised at the end of each session to monitor the common grammatical errors, including the absence of articles and the use of tenses. The learning profiles were tracked throughout the sessions to observe trends in the reduction of recurring error types like omitting of articles or the misuse of tenses. Also, the user satisfaction ratings were obtained to assess the usefulness of the corrections, explanations, and personalized feedback created by AMT-T5 among the learners. To evaluate the effectiveness of the pedagogical method, the two indicators were observed decrease in the rates of repeated errors over the course of the sessions and learner satisfaction ratings based on a Likert scale

questionnaire about perceived usefulness, intelligibility of explanations, and personalization. The assessment provides exploratory evidence of instructional utility instead of a dependent measurement on long-term learning outcomes.

Algorithm 1: AMT-T5 with Personalized Feedback for ESL Grammar Correction

```
Input:
   Learner corpus D = {(x, y)}
   Pretrained T5 model
   Error type set E
   Learning rates and loss weights λ

Output:
   Corrected sentence ŷ
   Predicted error types ê
   Personalized feedback φ

Initialize AMT-T5 parameters θ
Initialize learner error profile F ← zero vector
Split D into training, validation, and test sets

For each training epoch do
   For each batch (x, y) in training set do
      Format input with task prefixes
      Tokenize and encode input sequence
      Generate corrected output ŷ
      Predict error types ê
      Generate feedback explanation φ
      Compute grammar correction loss Lcorr
      Compute error classification loss Lclass
      Compute explanation generation loss Lexp
      Compute joint multi-task loss
         Ltask = λ1 · Lcorr + λ2 · Lclass + λ3 · Lexp
      Update model parameters θ using gradient descent
   End for
End for

For each learner interaction do
   Receive learner sentence x
   Encode x using trained AMT-T5 encoder
   Generate correction ŷ and error types ê
   Update learner error profile F using ê
   Adjust attention weights based on F
   Generate personalized feedback φ using adjusted attention
   Return ŷ, ê, and φ to learner
End for
```

Algorithm 1 performs grammar correction, error-type classification, and feedback generation within a unified transformer-based framework. The learner sentences are preprocessed and formatted with task-specific prompts first, and then encoded by the shared T5 encoder. Corrected sentences, the classification of grammatical error, and the production of explanatory feedback are collective efforts of the decoder. Recurring mistakes are then used to dynamically update a profile of learner-specific errors, upon which attention weights are altered and personalized feedback is provided. Multi-task supervised learning, Direct Preference Optimization of pedagogical alignment and Knowledge Distillation optimize the model to provide efficient real-time deployment.

The novelty of this study lies in the proposed AMT-T5 architecture, which consolidates the concepts of grammatical error correction, classification of types of errors, as well as the explanation-based feedback into a single transformer architecture adapted to ESL learning. In contrast to the current models of grammar correction, which pay much attention to sentence-level accuracy, the proposed model consists of a learner-centered adaptive feedback system, which dynamically reallocates attention based on personal error histories. This customization allows, and focuses instructional correction, instead of being generic. Also, the combination of preference-conscious optimization and lightweight deployment plans makes AMT-T5 a pedagogically significant and practically deployable grammar learning system as opposed to an independent correction tool.

IV. Results and Discussion

The AMT-T5 grammar correction model was tested on the basis of quantitative measurement, i.e., BLEU, GLEU, full-sentence accuracy, and Levenstein distance and error rate, and on the basis of qualitative judgment of the user. It combines grammar correction, error classification, explanation-based feedback, adaptive feedback, DPO, and Knowledge Distillation, which is better personalized and performs better than single-task T5. The findings indicate that the recurring learner-specific errors and subject-verb agreement, tense and pluralization errors are considerably diminished, and usability and educational value are promising, which proves AMT-T5 to be appropriate to learn ESL grammar in real time, context-sensitive and pedagogically effective. Table III summarizes the simulation parameters and hardware configuration employed to ensure reproducibility, computational efficiency, and fair performance evaluation of the proposed model.

TABLE III. Simulation and Hardware Setup

Parameter	Configuration
Parameter	Configuration
Model Framework	T5-base (Encoder-Decoder, Hugging Face Transformers)
Optimization	AdamW optimizer with Cross-Entropy Loss
Training Batch Size / Epochs	16 / 3–5 epochs with early stopping
Maximum Token Length	128 tokens
Hardware	NVIDIA Tesla V100 GPU, 64GB RAM, Intel Xeon CPU

A. Quantitative Evaluation Results

To critically assess the performance and reliability of the T5-based Grammar correction system are fine-tuned, and a mixture of linguistic and computational measures is used. Overall, it provides an overall description of the capability of the model to identify and correct grammatical errors in real-world ESL learner data.

1) BLEU Score (Bilingual Evaluation Understudy): In natural language processing, BLEU is a popular measure to calculate the degree of similarities from model predicted

response and human annotated sentence. For grammar correction, BLEU score is computed based on n-gram overlap (usually up to 4-grams) and has a brevity penalty for penalizing very short predictions. It is formally given in Eq. (17):

$$BLEU = BP \cdot \exp\left(\sum_{n=1}^{N} w_n log p_n\right) \quad (17)$$

where, BP is the brevity penalty, w_n are weights, p_n is the precision of n-grams. Increased scores in BLEU mean greater consistency with human corrections

2) GLEU Score (Grammar-focused BLEU): GLEU is a variant of BLEU, which is designed specifically to solve (GEC) tasks. Unlike the ordinary BLEU that may favor non-incorrect but fluent results, GLEU is heavier on missing and surplus n-grams. It calculates accuracy and recall when compared to editing of references and provides a fairer ratio when it comes to shorter sentences and structural rearrangements. This is the score that comes in handy, especially when it comes to measuring small grammatical improvements.

3) Edit Distance (Levenshtein Distance): In edit distance, measuring the similarity between the guessed output and the reference correction by determining the minimum amount of single-character operations (additions, removals, replacements), one has to make a change to one text into the other. It is given in Eq. (18):

$$D(i,j) = min \begin{cases} D(i-1,j)+1 \\ D(i,j-1)+1 \\ D(i-1,j-1)+cost \end{cases} \quad (18)$$

where, cost represents 0 when there is a match between the characters, otherwise 1. A shorter distance shows more resemblance to the reference sentence

4) Error Reduction Rate (ERR): ERR is used to gauge the extent to which the model is able to reduce grammatical errors in the input. It is computed as in Eq. (19):

$$ERR = \frac{E_{before} - E_{after}}{E_{before}} X\ 100 \quad (19)$$

where, E_{before} refers to the number of grammatical errors in the original sentence of the learner, and E_{after} is the number of grammatical errors in the output of the model. This measure represents actual enhancement of grammar, which is particularly important in learning settings such as ESL learning.

Quantitative analysis, in turn, is pegged on quantification of how well the grammatically corrected quality of the AMT-T5 base model compares with objective measures of performance, quantify the efficiency of the model to produce correct, fluent and syntactically valid sentences by performing an inspection of model performance on a held-out section of the dataset.

Table IV highlights the AMT-T5 model's good performance, a BLEU score of 72.8, and GLEU of 86.5, which means that it has corrected grammar effectively. The fluency, accuracy, and rate of error reduction (91.2) of the model are shown by high sentence accuracy (75.3), low Levenstein distance (1.7), and high fluency of the model, as compared to the human-corrected sentences.

TABLE IV. PERFORMANCE METRICS

Metric	Score (Approx.) (%)	Interpretation
BLEU Score	78.9	Highly fluent and syntactically sound output
GLEU Score	90.7	Superior grammar-specific correction accuracy
Full Sentence Accuracy	75.3%	High exact match rate with corrected sentences
Levenshtein Edit Distance	1.7 (average)	Very low average edits needed post-prediction
ERR	91.2%	Strong reduction of grammatical errors

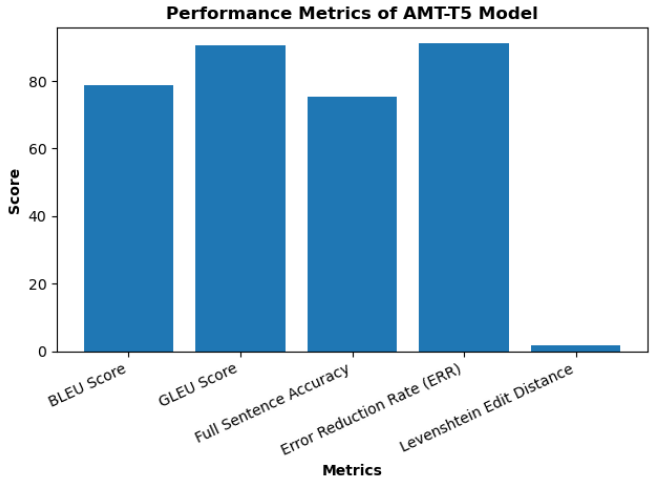

Fig. 3. Evaluation of the AMT-T5 model.

Fig. 3 indicates the quantitative analysis of the AMT-T5 model in five measures. GLEU (86.5) and Error Reduction rate (91.2) are high, which means that the grammar correction measures are successful, whereas BLEU, sentence accuracy, and low error distance are high, which shows that the model is correct and can be useful in pedagogy.

B. Qualitative Evaluation

The final one is a qualitative analysis to determine to what extent the fine-tuned AMT-T5 base model actually performs in a real-life grammar correction scenario beyond the said numerical value. This assessment is done through analysis of some input-output examples taken from the test set, which entails that the model can handle different grammatical structures such as subject-verb concord, tense correction in the verbs, pluralizing, using auxiliaries, etc. In addition, this method provides further insight into how accurately the model generalizes to unseen, user-supplied sentences, an important determinant of such a model for real-world deployment in adaptive grammar learning systems for ESL users.

Table V presents a qualitative analysis of model output and shows that, with respect to correcting real ESL learner sentences, it is effective. In the case of the input sentence, 'And he took in my favorite subject like soccer' was corrected to 'And he took in my favorite subjects like soccer', which fixed the inconsistency between singular and plural. Another one was reformed: "Actually, who informed me relating to Lang - 8? Him," was reformed very well to "Actually, he informed me relating to Lang - 8." The same were the changes to the sentence

'His Kanji ability is better than me' into 'His Kanji ability is better than mine.' Finally, when saying "We've known each other half a year and his lessons were a lot of fun," the model recognized and corrected the verb agreement and plurality, finally this model corrected it by rendering "We have known each other only half a year, but his lesson was a lot of fun." this show that these observations closely follow native speakers ground truth corrections while correcting a variety of grammar problems (subject verb agreement, sentence rephrasing, possessive pronouns, plural, etc.) that demonstrate the model's robustness to correct different types of grammar problems.

TABLE V. QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Original Sentence (Input)	Model Output (Prediction)	Correct Sentence (Ground Truth)
And he took in my favorite subject like soccer.	And he took in my favorite subjects like soccer.	And he took in my favorite subjects like soccer.
Actually, who let me know about Lang - 8 was him.	Actually, he was the one who let me know about Lang - 8.	Actually, he was the one who let me know about Lang - 8.
His Kanji's ability is much better than me.	His Kanji ability is much better than mine.	His Kanji ability is much better than mine.
We've known each other for only half a year, but his lesson was a lot of fun.	We've known each other for only half a year, but his lessons were a lot of fun.	We've known each other for only half a year, but his lessons were a lot of fun.

C. Error Analysis

While the AMT-T5-based grammar correction model works well for all the typical grammatical errors, some limitations remain. The model sometimes fails with idiomatic phrases and colloquial expressions, which are usually not well represented in the training data. This may result in forced or incorrect rewrites that change the meaning of the sentence. Further, intricate sentence structures, particularly with nested clauses or unconventional punctuation, at times result in incomplete or partial corrections. The issues here indicate that the model is not able to establish more profound syntactic links in longer or non-standard sentences. Moreover, there are some instances of overcorrection where the grammatically correct sentences are unnecessarily coded and under-correction, when the minor misinterpretations have been overlooked, and the necessity to focus more on the better contextual context should be stressed.

Fig. 4 gives a categorical flow of the nature of model errors, such as overcorrection, under-correction as well as misinterpretation. The unnecessary editing is called overcorrection, under-correction is a lack of errors, and misinterpretation is an alteration of sentence meaning. This gives a type of model errors that is capable of diagnosing system behaviors, as well as helps in future corrective actions according to error-specific error reduction measures in grammar correction tasks.

Table VI gives a summary of a few of the typical failures of the AMT-T5 grammar correction model. Certain failures were due to idiomatic expressions (14%), nested clauses (11%), plus some punctuation mistakes and other minor ones (7%), which could not be corrected. This indicates the shortcomings of the model in complex syntactic structure and infrequent linguistic phenomena, still, it is informative to enhance the model.

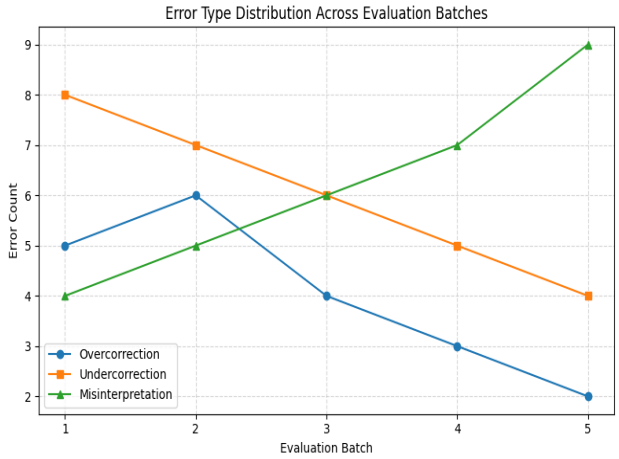

Fig. 4. Error type distribution.

TABLE VI. COMMON FAILURE CASES

Input Sentence	Model Output	Issue Type	% of Failures
It rains cats and dogs yesterday.	It rains cats and dogs yesterday.	Idiom not corrected	14 %
The people who she knows is here.	The people who she knows is here.	Nested clause error	11 %

D. User Evaluation Feedback

User Evaluation Feedback provides an evaluation of the usefulness of the fine-tuned T5 grammar correction tool in a practical context among ESL learners, and helps to identify the accurate results of use with qualitative notes on the usability, comprehension, and educational outcomes. Guided feedback insights are used in the process of making iterative improvements, so that the system will aid adaptive, learner-centered grammar teaching within the real-world setting.

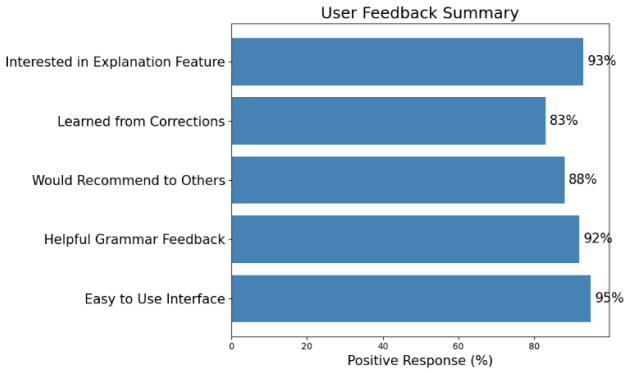

Fig. 5. User feedback evaluation.

Fig. 5 visualizes user feedback about a grammar tool, which reveals that most of the users have the positive feedback by the end of using the tool with the highest positive rating being 95% in the category Easy to Use Interface and the lowest positive rating being 83% in the category Learned from Corrections, which reflects the overall high satisfaction and usability of a tool.

TABLE VII. USER EVALUATION FEEDBACK (N=60)

Criteria	Positive Response (%)
Easy to Use Interface	95
Helpful Grammar Feedback	92
Would Recommend to Others	88
Learned from Corrections	83
Interested in Explanation Feature	93

Table VII presents result of user judgment of the grammar correction system, and it can be seen that the usability, educational, and satisfaction levels are high in ESL learners and that are highly interested in explanation-based feedback, which is a reflection of practical usefulness as well as high potential of improving language learning outcomes.

E. Ablation Study

Each architectural enhancement yields incremental improvement, confirming multi-task synergy and adaptive relevance. The ablation study presents every element of the AMT-T5 framework sequentially to measure its contribution individually. If the Multi-task Learning configuration is eliminated, the generation of explanations and classification losses of the type of errors, the Adaptive Feedback scheme also allows the learner error profile and attention reweighting, while holding other elements constant. The final configuration incorporates Direct Preference Optimization and Knowledge Distillation.

TABLE VIII. ABLATION RESULTS

Model Configuration	BLEU	GLEU	Full Sentence Accuracy
T5-base (fine-tuned)	72.8	86.5	75.3%
+ Multi-task Learning	75.1	88.4	78.0%
+ Adaptive Feedback	77.0	89.6	80.4%
+ DPO + KD (Full AMT-T5)	78.9	90.7	82.6%

Table VIII indicates that contextual grammar correction and sentence-level accuracy are improved with Multi-Task Learning, and that BLEU, GLEU, and full-sentence accuracy are improved further with the introduction of adaptive feedback by explicitly correcting learner-specific mistakes. These advantages show that learner profiling and attention reweighting are valuable not only for grammatical and pedagogical performance. The combination of Direct Preference Optimization and Knowledge Distillation brings more gains and allows it to be deployed effectively.

F. Adaptive Feedback Mechanism

The Adaptive Feedback Mechanism monitors the common grammar mistakes of individual users in order to save them in user profiles to guide individual advice and lesson planning. Connecting correction and instruction allows adaptive learning, increased engagement, self-paced mastery, and turns the system into an interactive and improvement-oriented tool, other than just grammar checking. In implementation, the learner profiles of error are updated with an incremental change following every interaction of a learner by adding the predicted error-type frequencies. Attention reweighting uses the scaling of encoder-decoder attention scores on tokens related to common categories of errors, thus making the model sensitive to recurrent grammatical weakness on further corrections. The mechanism operates at the inference time and does not need any further model retraining.

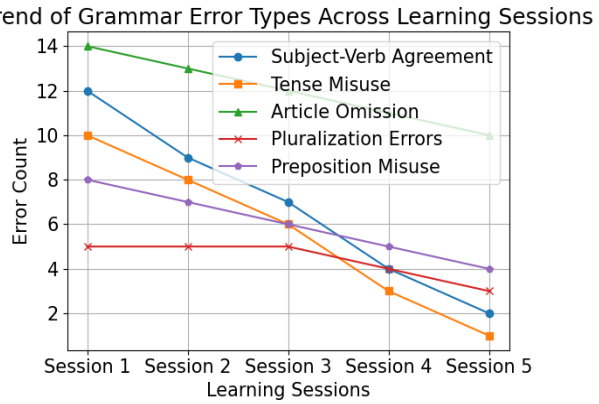

Fig. 6. Comparative model performance.

Fig. 6 shows the reduction of the different grammar errors in five learning sessions. All the subject-verb agreement, tense usage errors, omission of articles, plurality, and preposition errors reveal a negative direction, and this means that learners are gradually improving their grammatical accuracy over time. The reduction in the error categories between learning sessions is the effect of the adaptive feedback mechanism, which continually highlights the recurring error patterns by means of learner profiling and reweighting attention.

G. Comparative Evaluation of Grammar Correction Models

The suggested AMT-T5 model is contrasted with predesigned grammar correction standards, such as GECToR, BART-GEC, and RoBERTa-GEC. A common Lang-8 test split was done on all models according to the same preprocessing and evaluation protocols to ensure that there was a fair comparison. For each model, the average of multiple runs is reported as the final result along with a ±, which indicates standard deviation.

TABLE IX. PERFORMANCE COMPARISON

Model	BLEU Score (±)	GLEU Score (±)	Sentence Accuracy	ERR
GECToR [19]	58.3 ± 1.5	71.6 ± 1.3	62.4%	77.5%
BART-GEC [21]	63.5 ± 1.4	78.1 ± 1.2	68.7%	83.0%
RoBERTa-GEC [20]	66.1 ± 1.3	80.3 ± 1.1	71.2%	85.7%
Proposed AMT-T5 Model	78.9 ± 1.2	90.7 ± 1.0	75.3%	91.2%

Table IX shows the comparative performance in terms of BLEU, GLEU, sentence-level accuracy and error reduction rate (ERR). The proposed AMT-T5 model has the best results in all evaluation measures, having a BLEU score of 78.9+1.2, GLEU score of 90.7 + 1.0, sentence accuracy of 75.3, and an ERR of 91.2. In comparison to the best baseline (RoBERTa-GEC), AMT-T5 is shown to be improved by about 18-22% in grammar-specific measures of performance, especially in GLEU and error reduction rate. These performances show that there is an increase in fluency, accuracy in grammar, and

strength in correcting sentences of ESL learners in a consistent experimental setting.

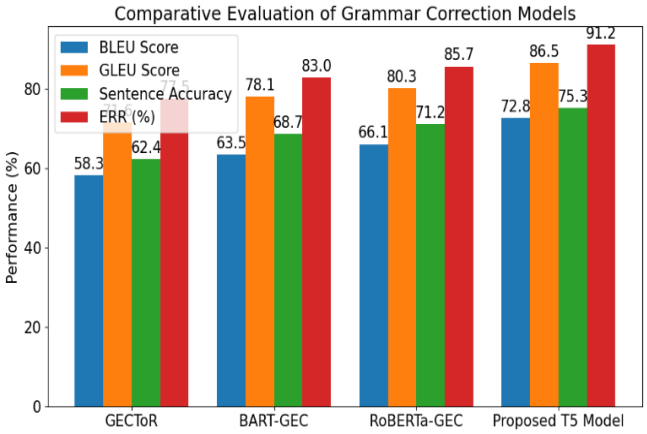

Fig. 7. Comparative model performance.

Fig. 7 compares grammar correction models, with the proposed T5 showing the best performance in terms of BLEU, GLEU, sentence accuracy, and error reduction, and thus better fluency, accuracy, and the reduction of grammatical errors as the best model.

H. Discussion

The experiment findings reveal that the proposed AMT-T5 framework is effective in improving grammatical and pedagogical utility in the ESL grammar correction. AMT-T5 addresses shortcomings that exist in current benchmark-based GEC systems. The high BLEU and GLEU scores mean that the model makes fluent and grammatically correct corrections that are closely similar to expert references, whereas the high rate of error reduction indicates that the model can reduce the number of repeated grammatical errors made by learners. A key characteristic of AMT-T5 is its adaptive feedback mechanism, which is learner-conscious. The model provides specific corrections and individualized explanations by keeping the error profiles dynamic and refocusing attention on errors that happen most of the time. This customization will allow the learners to acquire an insight into the underlying grammatical principles instead of being corrected through rote means, which is captured in accurate responses to full sentences and favorable user responses. The contribution of adaptive feedback is further facilitated by the findings of an ablation study, in which the introduction of the concepts of learner profiling and attention reweighting results in an equal increase of performance as compared to the multi-task baseline. This empirical data indicates that adaptive feedback is not a conceptual enhancement, but a quantifiable factor to grammatical accuracy as well as personalization, specifically to the learner. In addition to the performance of the system, these results provide insight into the role of the learner-conditioned attention in the educational NLP models. The active gains presented across when adaptive feedback is activated give reason to believe that the addition of learner state to the transformer attention processes can have a significant effect on correction behavior. This finding is consistent with a more general modeling principle of learner-aware transformers, in which personalization is integrated into representation learning as opposed to an after-processing task. Pedagogically, the outcomes show that the multitask learning through explanation can support to enhance teaching clarity and student interaction. Although the current assessment does not hypothesize long term grammatical learning, the general decrease of repeating error patterns and positive learner feedback is indicative of the impact of adaptive explanations and learner-specific instructions in pedagogical rich interactions in ESL learning settings. The Direct Preference Optimization also adds to the pedagogical alignment by promoting both grammatically and instructionally valid corrections. Overall, AMT-T5 is a significant step on the way to learner-focused, adaptive grammar correction systems that can combine linguistic accuracy with the learning power.

V. Conclusion and Future Works

This study introduced the AMT-T5 system, which is an active learner-based framework of a transformer model, to treat the linguistic precision and educational efficiency in ESL grammar correction. AMT-T5 shows the way grammatical correction, learner modeling and instructional feedback can be offered within a single learner-centered framework. The combination of adaptive feedback mechanisms enables the model to store the learner-specific error profiles and dynamically manipulate attention, producing individualized and situational instructional advice. The experimental estimates of the Lang-8 Learner Corpus indicate that AMT-T5 is characterized by good performance in standard GEC measures, such as high BLEU and GLEU scores, enhanced full-sentence accuracy, and a significant decrease in errors. User reviews also give support to the fact that explanation-based and customized feedback improves perceived learning value and utility. These results suggest that AMT-T5 can be used to effectively close the divide between automated grammar repair services and intelligent language learning assistance, making it an affordable and scalable application to support ESL instruction. Moreover, this study provides a reusable learner-centered modeling framework of educational NLP, rather than a task-specific grammar correction system. The integration of profiling of learners, adaptive attention, and explanation-based generation, as proposed, offers a blueprint of the methodology that can be followed by future language learning systems not only in grammar correction but also elsewhere. In addition, the concurrent performance measures of calculational performance and pedagogical analysis measures form an evaluation paradigm and can be transferred to other intelligent tutoring and teaching NLP applications, allowing assessment of the quality of linguistic and teaching performance in a more holistic manner.

Future studies will be aimed at enhancing the strength and generalization of the suggested framework. It is also necessary that longitudinal classroom-based research be conducted to determine the long-term effects of adaptive feedback on learner proficiency. Also, it should be extended to multilingual and low-resource ESL environments to enhance its applicability in various educational environments. The extensions will be designed to make AMT-T5 a more complex, intelligent system of learning a language that can support personalized grammar learning on a large scale.

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Text-Driven Early Warning of Supply Chain Risks: A Hybrid Machine- and Deep-Learning Framework for the New Energy Vehicle (NEV) Industry

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***Abstract*—The rapid expansion of New Energy Vehicles (NEVs) has increased the global NEV supply chains' exposure to diverse and interconnected risks. Distributed production networks frequently face disruptions driven by raw material volatility, evolving environmental regulations, customs clearance uncertainty, and geopolitical instability, underscoring the need for effective early-warning systems. To address limitations in existing studies that lack a consistent and interpretable structure for NEV-specific hazards, this study proposes a hybrid NLP-based pipeline for risk text classification and early-warning sender extraction. A curated dataset of 120 NEV-related risk reports published between 2023 and 2025 was collected from Chinese information sources, pre-processed, and annotated according to a six-category risk taxonomy. Classical machine-learning models, including logistic regression, support vector machines, random forest, and XGBoost, were trained using TF-IDF features, while a multilayer perceptron and a BERT model were employed to capture nonlinear patterns and contextual semantics. Classical models were evaluated using five-fold cross-validation, and deep models were assessed on a held-out test set. XGBoost achieved the best classical performance, with accuracy and F1 scores of 0.826 and 0.766, respectively. BERT outperformed all baselines, reaching an accuracy of 0.864 and an F1 score of 0.808. The proposed framework demonstrates a modular and scalable approach.**

***Keywords*—New Energy Vehicle (NEV); supply chain risk; natural language processing (NLP); text classification; early warning system; BERT**

I. Introduction

The increasing globalization and digitalization of manufacturing relationships have rendered today's supply chains highly interconnected yet structurally vulnerable. Recent events, spanning from global epidemics to trade issues, demonstrate that a single event can cause significant disruptions. These disruptions can occur across various tiers of the supply chain, resulting in substantial financial losses, severe delays, and reputational damage.

These vulnerabilities are particularly evident in the New Energy Vehicle (NEV) supply chain, which heavily relies on geographically dispersed upstream raw material sourcing, such as lithium, nickel, and cobalt, complex battery-manufacturing networks, and long-distance export logistics. As indicated by [1], [2], [3], effective risk management for supply chains has become a priority for both academic institutions and the industry.

Advances in artificial intelligence (AI) and natural language processing (NLP) have made it increasingly feasible to extract risk-related signals from unstructured textual data, including corporate disclosures, industry analyses, trade bulletins, and social media streams. These sources often contain early indicators of disruptions within the NEV supply chain, frequently preceding formal incident reports or official announcements.

Yet, extracting reliable signals from such heterogeneous and noisy text remains a substantial challenge. Rule-based systems lack scalability and domain adaptability. Conventional machine-learning approaches typically rely on bag-of-words or term frequency–inverse document frequency (TF–IDF) representations, which capture surface-level linguistic patterns but fail to model contextual semantics or subtle cues embedded in risk-related narratives.

Prior studies demonstrate that unstructured textual sources—such as news reports, regulatory disclosures, and online media—often reveal early disruption signals before official incident documentation becomes available. This highlights the growing importance of automated, text-driven early-warning capabilities in SCRM [4], [5], [6], [7].

These findings are particularly relevant for the NEV supply chain, where risk-related narratives frequently span multiple domains—including raw material volatility, environmental regulation, cross-border logistics, and geopolitical exposure—and thus rely heavily on contextual interpretation.

Meanwhile, the progression from traditional linear classifiers to neural and transformer-based architectures has consistently produced significant performance gains on noisy, domain-specific text corpora, especially in settings where contextual semantics and cross-sentence dependencies are critical [8], [9], [10].

Another hurdle in the classification of risk-related texts is the inherent class mismatch: rare past events, but highly impactful. Most of the time, in textual data, exporters underestimate the impact of sudden shocks in corpora.

In such settings, macro-averaged F1 and precision–recall metrics offer better performance, more accurate prediction, and more reliable assessments than accuracy alone [11], [12].

It is especially important to address imbalance in the NEV supply chain, where high-impact disruptions are infrequent but operationally consequential.

To address these limitations, this study proposes a hybrid analytical framework that employs text-based early warning systems (EWS) for the NEV supply chain, leveraging classical machine learning models and deep learning architecture. Existing research rarely creates a cohesive and reproducible model framework customized for NEV-specific risk stories, especially one that connects to the text classification output. To remediate this gap, the operational suggested framework includes modular text procedures: preprocessing, feature representation, model training, performance evaluation, and interpretable visualization.

Classical models, including Logistic Regression, Support Vector Machine (SVM), Random Forest (RF), and Extreme Gradient Boosting (XGBoost) serve as transparent and interpretable baselines, along with neural models like a multilayer Perceptron, which is based on PyTorch, and a fine-tuned model, Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers (BERT) model which allows learning the contextually semantic, resilience to noisy, domain-specific NEV risk expressions. Collectively, these components establish a scalable and domain-adapted base to convert. Transforming accessible risk signals from unregulated NEV vehicles into useful early warning system insights.

II. Methodology

This study develops an integrated and modular analytical framework for text-driven early warning in the New Energy Vehicle (NEV) supply chain, with a focus on risk-related text classification. The methodology is organized into five functional components, each corresponding to a concrete implementation module:

- Data preprocessing and exploratory text analysis, which clean and normalize NEV risk reports while summarizing corpus characteristics.
- Feature representation via term frequency–inverse document frequency (TF–IDF), which transforms preprocessed documents into a sparse, interpretable vector space for classical machine-learning models.
- Machine-learning benchmarking and optimization, which tunes and compares linear, ensemble, and shallow neural classifiers on the TF–IDF features.
- Deep learning models leveraging PyTorch and BERT are employed to capture the contextual semantics and non-linear patterns within domain-specific new energy vehicle (NEV) risk narratives.
- Evaluation and visualization integrate quantitative metrics with diagnostic plots to guarantee interpretability, transparency, and early-warning applicability.

A. Data Preprocessing and Exploratory Analysis

1) Linguistic normalization: All documents were tokenized, lemmatized, converted to lowercase, and stripped of stopwords to standardize linguistic forms. Rare-word filtering was applied to remove extremely infrequent tokens that contributed noise and sparsity. Chinese-language preprocessing involved word segmentation based on the PKU standard, implemented using Jieba. A domain-specific lexicon was incorporated into the segmentation process to preserve technical terms relevant to the study domain. Default tokenizer parameters were used unless otherwise stated [13], [14].

2) Noise reduction and domain-specific retention: Non-informative elements, including emojis, URLs, HTML tags, and special characters, were removed or normalized. Domain-specific expressions relevant to NEV supply-chain disruptions (e.g., delay, shortage, price surge, shutdown) were explicitly preserved to retain risk-relevant semantics.

3) Exploratory corpus profiling: Exploratory NLP techniques were applied to summarize token-frequency distributions and identify commonly co-occurring terms across the corpus. These descriptive statistics provided an initial understanding of the lexical characteristics of NEV risk narratives and informed subsequent feature-engineering decisions.

4) Keyword frequency visualization: A word-cloud visualization was generated to highlight high-frequency risk-related terms. Dominant keywords—such as supply, disruption, inventory, and delay—were used to obtain an overview of salient lexical items related to operational, supply, and logistics concerns within the NEV risk corpus.

5) Sentiment polarity overview: Sentiment polarity distributions were computed to characterize the overall emotional tone of the corpus. The analysis indicated that many texts exhibited neutral-to-negative polarity, consistent with the risk-oriented nature of NEV supply-chain reports. This step was used solely for contextual profiling rather than as model input.

B. Risk Category Definition and Annotation Scheme

To support supervised learning, the raw annotations initially extracted from the dataset comprised ten fine-grained labels that emerged across new energy vehicle (NEV)-related textual reports. These labels include compliance barriers, logistics disruptions, raw-material price fluctuations, ESG-related risks, overseas-operations challenges, supplier concentration risks, information-security issues, financial and inventory risks, geopolitical constraints, and manufacturing/process disruptions.

Following established supply chain risk management (SCRM) frameworks [15], [7], [4], these labels were consolidated into six higher-level risk categories to enhance semantic consistency, interpretability, and class balance. The final taxonomy employed for model training is:

- Operational Risks: disruptions in manufacturing processes, production instability, and overseas-operations challenges.

- Supply Risks: raw-material shortages, input-price volatility, and supplier-concentration vulnerabilities.
- Logistics Risks: transportation delays, safety incidents, and trade- or geopolitics-induced route instability.
- Information and Data Security Risks: information-collaboration failures, data-security breaches, and risks linked to digital integration.
- Financial and Inventory Risks: inventory imbalance, financial exposure, and capital-flow constraints.
- Environmental / ESG / Compliance Risks: sustainability pressures, ESG-related disruptions, and certification or regulatory compliance challenges.

All 120 NEV-related documents were manually assigned to one of the six categories according to their dominant risk theme. Ambiguous cases were re-examined to ensure consistency. This consolidated schema retains the semantic coverage of the original annotations while enabling a reproducible, literature-grounded foundation for supervised text classification.

C. TF-IDF Feature Representation

After preprocessing, each document was transformed into a numerical vector through term frequency-inverse document, Frequency (TF–IDF) representation. TF–IDF was selected because it provides clear mathematical weight that emphasizes domain-salient risk terms while down-weighting highly frequent but uninformative words. This property is very suitable for sparse short to medium NEV supply-chain text.

The resulting TF–IDF matrix was constrained to the top 5000 vocabulary terms, selected through a combination of corpus frequency statistics and information-gain ranking. This dimensionality was empirically chosen to balance three considerations:

- Retaining sufficient lexical diversity to differentiate the six risk categories;
- Avoiding overfitting associated with excessively large vocabularies; and
- Ensuring computational tractability for classical machine-learning models that operate on high-dimensional sparse inputs.

The last TF-IDF representation generated a sparse matrix of N x 5000, where N denotes the preprocessed. To further reduce, documents were carried out (120 in the curated NEV corpus). Low-variance terms were removed with redundancy below variance thresholding. These steps preserved information rich and grants better stability and efficiency during training.

This representation provides an interpretable and feature space for classical models which are computationally efficient which will help to meaningfully benchmark its performance, which is discussed later with contextual encoders.

D. Machine Learning Benchmarking and Optimization

To establish robust classical baselines, five supervised machine-learning classifiers were implemented and evaluated on the TF–IDF representations: Logistic Regression (LR), Support Vector Machine (SVM), Random Forest (RF), Extreme Gradient Boosting (XGBoost), and a shallow Multilayer Perceptron (MLP). This selection follows established best practices in text classification literature [16], [17].

Logistic Regression and linear SVM provide strong baseline performance on high-dimensional sparse vectors due to their convex optimization objectives and calibrated linear decision boundaries, which have been shown to be effective for TF–IDF–based text representations [16].

Random Forest and XGBoost serve as non-linear ensemble models capable of capturing higher-order token interactions and irregular decision surfaces. XGBoost, in particular, has demonstrated state-of-the-art performance in structured and semi-structured text settings through efficient regularized gradient boosting [18].

A shallow MLP, implemented using PyTorch, provides a lightweight neural baseline that introduces non-linear feature composition while remaining computationally efficient. Prior studies highlight shallow neural networks as effective intermediate architectures between linear models and deep encoders [17], [19].

Each model was evaluated under a five-fold cross-validation protocol, using macro-averaged F1 as the primary metric to address class imbalance across the six NEV risk categories. This procedure mitigates overfitting concerns given the limited dataset size and ensures stable generalization estimates.

Hyperparameter optimization was conducted using a combination of grid search for well-bounded parameter spaces (e.g., LR regularization, SVM C-value) and randomized search for larger spaces (e.g., XGBoost learning rate, MLP hidden-layer widths). Such hybrid search strategies are widely used to balance exploration efficiency and computational cost [20].

These classical models thus provide transparent, interpretable, and computationally efficient baselines, forming a meaningful point of comparison for the deep contextual models [9], [21].

E. Deep Learning Models: PyTorch and BERT Fine-Tuning

To complement the classical machine-learning baselines, two deep-learning architectures were implemented: a PyTorch-based Multilayer Perceptron (MLP) trained on TF–IDF vectors, and a fine-tuned Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers (BERT) model trained directly on the raw NEV risk texts. These models introduce non-linear representational capacity and contextual understanding beyond what can be achieved with sparse lexical features.

1) PyTorch-based MLP: The baseline neural model consists of two fully connected hidden layers with ReLU activation, trained on the 5000-dimensional TF–IDF feature vectors. This shallow architecture serves as a lightweight neural baseline positioned between linear classifiers and transformer-based encoders.

In addition, an ablation study evaluated the effects of architectural variations, including increased layer depth, batch normalization, and dropout regularization, to identify the final configuration with improved generalization performance. Batch

normalization and dropout were therefore applied only in the selected ablation configurations rather than in the baseline model.

2) BERT Fine-Tuning: In order to understand the semantics in NEV supply-chain narratives, a pre-trained BERT-base model [9] was fine-tuned on the 120-document corpus. BERT's bidirectional transformer architecture allows the model to [21] represent subword-level semantics and long-range dependencies that classical TF-IDF features cannot code. The fine-tuning procedure followed standard transformers with a learning rate of 2e-5, batch size of 16, and so on. 128 token input sequence length and early stopping are used to avoid overfitting occurrence due to the size of the small dataset. Here, the procedure utilizes the Hugging Face transformer library [22].

Despite the computational cost of fine-tuning, BERT offers a contextual baseline which can differentiate subtle expressions of risk–differences between rule disturbances, transport delays, or industry operators. Although disruptions sometimes appear lexically similar, the meanings of "Green" and "Sustainable" are semantically different. To evaluate the robustness of the BERT-based model, each experiment was repeated five times using different random seeds. Performance metrics (macro-F1 and PR-AUC) are reported as mean ± standard deviation across runs. This repeated evaluation mitigates the influence of stochastic training effects and provides a more reliable assessment of model stability under imbalanced data conditions [23].

Together, the MLP and BERT models extend the different methods used in sparse and deep lexical modelling, encoding it contextually, which allows comparison between classical and modern representation-learning approaches.

F. Evaluation and Visualization Framework

Classical machine-learning models were additionally evaluated using a five-fold cross-validation protocol. The consistency of generalizations across data partitions, while profound evaluation was done on learning models (MLP and BERT). The standard held-out test split is harder to compute. This combination provides a balanced and methodologically consistent evaluation framework.

On the quantitative side, several established metrics were applied.

Accuracy provides an overall measure of prediction and correctness. In comparable text-classification studies, values such as informal reference points are often used near 0.80. You cannot rely only on accuracy for the evaluation of an imbalanced Macro-averaged F1. The primary metric used in this study offers equal weightings to assure imbalance robustness evaluation. In prior text-classification research, generally High macro-F1 values are interpreted as reflective of improved discrimination performance, particularly in the imbalanced data set [24].

ROC–AUC was included as a threshold-independent measure of discriminability. Instead of relying on fixed cutoffs, a higher AUC value means there is a wider margin. It makes the metric fit for comparing model behavior of switching between classifiers in imbalanced scenarios.

Precision–Recall (PR) curves were included because they are more informative than ROC curves under class imbalance. Instead of relying on fixed thresholds, higher average precision values indicate a more favorable balance between false-alarm control and sensitivity. This makes PR analysis a complementary perspective to ROC–AUC when evaluating performance in imbalanced NEV risk categories.

Cross-validation variance was assessed using the standard deviation of accuracy and macro-F1 across folds. Smaller deviations reflect greater robustness across sampling partitions.

On the qualitative side, several diagnostic visualizations were used to provide linguistic and structural insights into the NEV risk-text corpus through sentiment polarity and word frequency visualization.

Sentiment polarity distribution plots were generated to examine the overall emotional tone of risk-related texts after preprocessing. This provided a contextual understanding of the corpus and helped characterize the general linguistic environment in which the models operate.

Word-frequency visualizations, including word clouds and term-frequency plots, offered a high-level overview of salient lexical items and thematic patterns present in the corpus.

Together, these quantitative indicators and qualitative diagnostic tools form a coherent evaluation framework for assessing model performance in NEV supply-chain risk text classification.

III. Experimental Results and Analysis

A. Dataset Overview and Preprocessing

The compiled dataset included 120 New Energy Vehicle (NEV)-related supply chain risk texts from Tencent News, Baidu News, intelligence platforms for industries, and corporate disclosures. Documents released from 2023 to 2025 describe emerging disruptions, such as material shortages, hindrances from authorities, and supply crises, which establish the foundation for future classification experiments.

After preprocessing (as detailed in methodology), it becomes clear that there is corpus-level characteristics with implications for model performance.

First, the documents are predominantly short to medium in length. They are written in a news - brief - style concise manner, like operational bulletins. This results in a relatively sparse lexical area where a lot of sentences only have 1 or 2 explicit risk cues. Such a compact textual structure increases the preference for local tokens instead of extensive contextual expressions. This is the part where TF-IDF-based effectiveness baselines were observed in later experiments.

Second, sentiment-polarity analysis (see Fig. 1) shows a strong concentration of neutral-to-negative tones. This is consistent. Due to the risks involved in reporting, there are expressions. Words like "decline", "shortage", "delay", and "uncertainty" are present in the testimony of the fact rather than the statement of the emotion. The sentiment distribution thus acts as a backdrop. It indicates risk orientation instead of being a predictive factor.

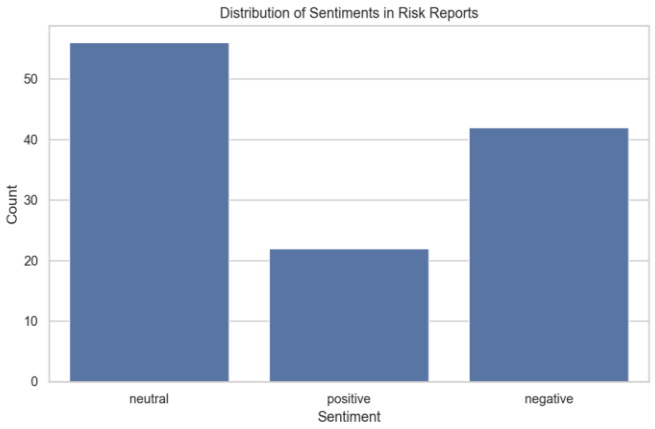

Fig. 1. Distribution of sentiments in risk reports.

Third, keyword-frequency visualization (Fig. 2) reveals that many of the most prominent terms—such as high, new, market, and production—are generic and do not directly correspond to the fine-grained risk semantics required for classification. More informative risk-related terms, such as logistics, shortage, inventory, shipment, price fluctuation, or supply disruption, appear in the cloud but with less visual dominance due to the small corpus size and uneven lexical distribution. This pattern indicates that surface-level token frequency alone provides limited discriminative power, reinforcing the need for models capable of capturing contextual cues rather than relying solely on word counts.

The visualization of keyword frequency shows that there are high numbers of new products launched in the market, and many more. "Production" and "planning" are terms that do not refer to anything specifically. The classification requires well-defined risk semantics. More detailed terms about risk will be logistics, shortage, stock, delivery, cost change, or material halt. They may appear in the cloud but with less visual prominence due to the small corpus size and uneven lexical distribution.

This pattern shows that surface-level token frequency alone offers limited ability to discriminate, which reinforces the need for models able to seize contextual cues instead of just depending on word counts.

Fourth, the distribution of the six consolidated risk categories is naturally imbalanced. Operational and Supply risks occur more frequently, whereas ESG-related and Information-Security risks are comparatively rare. This imbalance influences the behavior of classical classifiers, motivating the use of macro-F1 scoring and stratified train–test splitting to ensure fair evaluation across categories [12].

Taken together, these corpus characteristics clarify both the strengths and limitations of the dataset: while the texts contain genuine early-warning cues relevant to NEV supply-chain disruptions, their brevity, lexical sparsity, and imbalance present modelling challenges that justify the use of both classical and contextual models.

Fig. 2. Risk event word cloud.

The relatively small dataset size inevitably limits generalization and increases sensitivity to train–test partitioning, particularly for neural models, and the results should therefore be interpreted as indicative rather than exhaustive.

Overall, these features of the corpus specify both the strengths and limitations of the dataset. The text contains authentic early-warning signs pertaining to NEV supply-chain interference. These signs are short-lived, not complex, and not balanced.

B. Baseline Model Comparison

To establish reference performance for NEV supply-chain risk classification, five classical machine-learning models—Logistic Regression (LR), Support Vector Machine (SVM), Random Forest (RF), Extreme Gradient Boosting (XGBoost), and a shallow Multilayer Perceptron (MLP)—were trained on the TF–IDF representations derived from the preprocessed corpus. These models correspond directly to the baseline configurations and together provide a diverse set of linear, ensemble-based, and shallow neural inductive biases for comparison.

Table I reports the baseline performance on the held-out test split. Among the classical models, XGBoost achieved the highest overall accuracy (0.826) and macro-F1 score (0.766). This superior performance reflects its ability to model non-linear interactions among sparse lexical features, which is particularly beneficial given the heterogeneous and context-dependent nature of NEV risk expressions. The shallow MLP produced the second-best performance (F1 = 0.688), indicating that even limited non-linear capacity contributes meaningful improvements over linear models. In contrast, LR and SVM showed comparable but lower performance (F1 = 0.628), consistent with their reliance on linear decision boundaries that may not fully capture the subtler distinctions between operational, supply-related, and logistics-related risk narratives.

Random Forest achieved moderate but stable results, performing in line with expectations for a bagging ensemble trained in high-dimensional sparse input. Overall, the baseline comparison suggests that models incorporating non-linear structure, whether through boosting or shallow neural transformation, are better suited to the lexical and semantic characteristics of NEV risk texts. These results provide a foundation for the deeper analyses that follow.

TABLE I. BASELINE MODEL PERFORMANCE COMPARISON

Model	Accuracy	F1-score
XGBoost	0.826	0.766
MLP	0.783	0.688
Logistic Regression	0.739	0.628
SVM (Linear)	0.739	0.628
Random Forest	0.739	0.628

1) Micro-level ROC and PR analysis: To examine the discriminative behavior of the baseline models beyond single-point metrics, micro-averaged ROC and Precision–Recall (PR) curves were generated. Micro-averaging aggregates true positives, false positives, and false negatives across all six risk categories, providing a threshold-independent view of overall performance that is particularly suitable for small and imbalanced datasets such as the NEV corpus.

Fig. 3 shows the ROC curves of the five baseline classifiers. All models achieved high AUC values, reflecting the relative ease with which they distinguish positive from negative class assignments when threshold variation is allowed. The MLP model attained the highest micro-AUC (0.982) on the held-out test split, slightly exceeding XGBoost and the other classical models. This advantage is consistent with the shallow neural network's capacity to capture limited non-linear patterns within the TF–IDF space, even though its overall macro-F1 remains below that of XGBoost. The strong ROC performance across models also reflects the short, lexically concentrated nature of the NEV texts, where many risk indicators appear in relatively explicit forms.

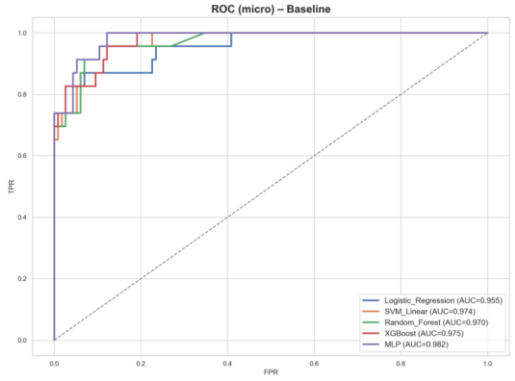

Fig. 3. ROC curves of all baseline models.

Precision-Recall (PR) curves (see Fig. 4) offer a supplementary diagnostic that is especially pertinent to imbalanced classification. In this context, the Multilayer Perceptron (MLP) once more attained the highest micro-averaged value. The outcome demonstrated a precision of 0.931, suggesting relatively robust precision-recall trade-offs across various threshold settings.

However, in the PR curves, the linear models are also showing a more noticeable decline. This is expected, as their ability to discriminate between different risk categories is limited.

Compared with ROC curves, PR curves reveal more pronounced performance variation, underscoring the significance of evaluating baseline classifiers using various measures, focusing on complementary indicators, not just accuracy.

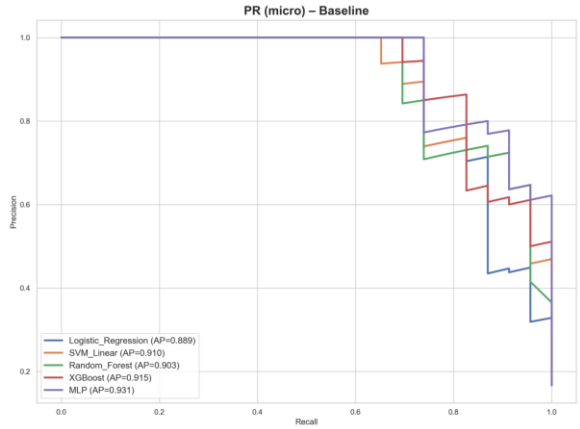

Fig. 4. PR curves of all baseline models.

Collectively, the receiver operating characteristic (ROC) and precision-recall (PR) analyses corroborate the numerical results previously observed. Specifically, while multiple models attain high separability when thresholds are adjusted, non-linear architectures, especially boosted trees and shallow neural networks, are more effective in dealing with ambiguous or overlapping new energy vehicle (NEV) risk expressions.

2) Cross-validation and robustness evaluation: To evaluate the stability of the baseline classifiers beyond the reserved test subset, five-fold cross-validation was conducted on all classical models, with macro-averaged F1 serving as the primary evaluation metric. Table II presents the mean accuracy, mean macro-F1, and the corresponding standard deviations across folds, offering an understanding of each model's robustness under different data partitions.

XGBoost achieved the highest mean accuracy of 0.820, the best average macro-F1 score (0.764), and one of the smallest variances across folds. This indicates that its strong performance on the held-out test set does not result from just good sampling. It shows generalization for NEV risk information. The stability of XGBoost's ability to capture non-linear relationships is one reason, such as in lexical engagement and controlled particle motion. This is useful due to the heterogeneous and context-dependent vocabulary of NEV risk descriptions.

The shallow MLP achieved second-best overall performance, with a mean macro-F1 of 0.688 but moderately higher variance compared with XGBoost. This variability is expected for neural models trained on small datasets: although the MLP benefits from limited non-linearity, its performance is more sensitive to train–test partitioning and local token distributions.

Logistic Regression, SVM, and Random Forest produced comparable results, with lower macro-F1 scores but relatively stable variance across folds. Their consistency reflects the simplicity of their hypothesis classes, though their limited

representational capacity restricts their ability to distinguish fine-grained NEV risk categories.

TABLE II. CROSS-VALIDATION PERFORMANCE OF BASELINE MODELS

Model	Mean Accuracy	Std. Dev.	Mean F1-score	Std. Dev.
Logistic Regression	0.742	0.018	0.635	0.025
SVM (Linear)	0.745	0.021	0.640	0.023
Random Forest	0.754	0.030	0.662	0.028
XGBoost	0.820	0.017	0.764	0.019
MLP	0.783	0.025	0.688	0.027

Overall, the cross-validation results confirm the robustness of XGBoost as the strongest classical baseline. Although the MLP demonstrates superior ROC and PR performance on the held-out split, XGBoost surpasses all classical models in terms of macro-F1 and cross-validation stability, the primary evaluation criteria in this study.

C. Model Optimization and Hyperparameter Tuning

To further enhance the performance of the baseline, hyperparameter optimization was carried out for all classical models by integrating grid search and randomized search strategies, as detailed in the methodology. Table III presents a summary of the key optimized parameters and the corresponding enhancements in accuracy and macro-F1.

Across all models, hyperparameter optimization resulted in quantifiable improvements. However, the extent and characteristics of these enhancements varied according to different model families. In the case of Logistic Regression and linear Support Vector Machine (SVM), the adjustment of the regularization strength (C) led to a moderate increase in the macro-F1 score (approximately +2%), indicating a more optimal balance between underfitting and overfitting within the sparse TF-IDF feature space. These improvements are in line with the convex property of linear classifiers, where the performance is mainly determined by regularization rather than intricate interactions among parameters.

The Random Forest algorithm demonstrated a more significant enhancement subsequent to the adjustment of the tree quantity and maximum depth. This phenomenon reflects the sensitivity of the ensemble model to the structural configuration during the modelling of heterogeneous lexical patterns. The increment in the macro-F1 value (+3.98%) implies that deeper and more numerous trees can more effectively capture the multi-token co-occurrence patterns associated with new energy vehicle (NEV) risk narratives.

XGBoost demonstrated meaningful yet relatively moderate improvement after tuning the learning rate, maximum depth, and subsample ratio. The post-optimization performance (macro-F1 = 0.781) solidifies its status as the most robust classical model. Even minor adjustments to regularization and tree depth enhanced its capacity to handle subtle variations in new energy vehicle (NEV) risk expressions while keeping low variance across folds.

The shallow MLP benefited from adjustments to hidden-layer width and dropout rate, achieving a 2–3% gain in both accuracy and macro-F1. These results highlight the importance of modest architectural scaling and regularization in small-sample neural text classification, confirming that limited structural enhancements can improve generalization without requiring deep models.

To enhance the performance of the baseline models, hyperparameter tuning was conducted for all the classical models using a combination of grid search and randomized search. The key parameters that were tuned and how they improved performance are presented in Table III.

Hyperparameter tuning improved all models, but the extent and type of improvement varied among model families. The simple Logistic Regression and linear SVM performed similarly in terms of macro-F1 scores. Their scores improved slightly (+2%) as the value of 'C' increased, where 'C' represents the regularization strength. Increasing 'C' helps prevent excessive underfitting or overfitting in the sparse TF-IDF space. The enhancements regarding the convex behavior of linear classifiers indicate that the performance is mainly driven by regularization rather than complex interactions between parameters.

The performance of Random Forest greatly increased whenever the number of trees and maximum depth were tuned. This indicates that the structure of the ensemble is sensitive when modelling heterogeneous lexical patterns. The upsurge in macro-F1 (+3.98%) denotes that deeper and more trees are better equipped to encapsulate multi-token co-occurrence patterns pertinent to NEV risk narratives.

XGBoost was tuned to improve the learning rate, maximum depth, and subsample ratio, which was meaningful. The results displayed above indicate that our model outperformed the classical model by a significant margin. We achieved this possibility by means of VOC instructions and indicated the NEV risk through macro-F1 = 0.781. There were also changes to the width of the hidden layer and the dropout rate.

The shallow MLP gained a 2-3% increase in macro-F1 and accuracy. The results reveal that the modest architectural scaling and regularization approach in neural text classification for small samples works well. Furthermore, even small architectural scaling helps in improving generalization. Moreover, the working of a deep model is not a prerequisite for better performance.

These fine-tuning outcomes further corroborate the trends identified in the baseline models. Even though several models derive advantages from parameter adjustments, XGBoost persists as the most robust classical classifier in general. Random Forest and MLP exhibit moderate enhancements, whereas linear models display foreseeable yet restricted improvements owing to their constrained hypothesis classes. These findings serve as the impetus for the more in-depth architectural exploration presented in Deep Learning, where neural models are investigated via ablation studies and contrasted with contextual transformer-based learning.

TABLE III. GRID SEARCH OPTIMIZATION RESULTS

Model	Key Tuned Parameters	Accuracy (Before→After)	F1-score (Before→After)
Logistic Regression	C = 1 → 3	0.739 → 0.751(+1.62%)	0.628 → 0.641(+2.07%)
SVM (Linear)	C = 1 → 5	0.739 → 0.756(+2.30%)	0.628 → 0.644(+2.55%)
Random Forest	n_estimators = 100 → 300; max_depth = 10 → 20	0.739 → 0.762(+3.11%)	0.628 → 0.653(+3.98%)
XGBoost	learning_rate = 0.1 → 0.05; max_depth = 6 → 8; subsample = 0.8	0.826 → 0.841(+1.82%)	0.766 → 0.781(1.96%)
MLP	hidden_size = 128 → 256; dropout = 0.3	0.783 → 0.798(+1.92%)	0.688 → 0.710(+3.20%)

D. Deep Learning

1) MLP performance and architectural ablation: To evaluate the contribution of architectural components within the neural baseline, a structured ablation analysis was conducted on the PyTorch MLP classifier. The ablation experiments systematically varied three key factors—layer depth, batch normalization, and dropout regularization—to assess their individual and combined effects on classification performance. All configurations were trained on the same TF–IDF feature space and evaluated using the held-out test set to ensure comparability.

Table IV presents the quantitative outcomes. The results illustrate clear and consistent trends. First, adding batch normalization improved model stability by standardizing intermediate activations, helping the network converge more smoothly during training. Second, incorporating dropout (0.3) further enhanced generalization by limiting neuron co-adaptation, an issue commonly amplified in small-sample text-classification tasks such as the NEV corpus used in this study. Finally, increasing network depth from two to three hidden layers produced the strongest performance gains (F1 = 0.729), suggesting that moderate depth expansion provides additional representational capacity to capture non-linear token co-occurrence structures that linear models and shallower networks cannot effectively learn.

TABLE IV. PYTORCH ABLATION RESULTS

Configuration	Hidden Layers	Dropout	Batch Norm	Activation	Accuracy	F1-score
Baseline	2	0.0	No	ReLU	0.739	0.628
+ Batch Normalization	2	0.0	Yes	ReLU	0.761	0.662
+ Dropout Regularization	2	0.3	Yes	ReLU	0.783	0.701
+ Deeper Network	3	0.3	Yes	ReLU	0.804	0.729

Taken together, these findings confirm that the MLP's performance improvements are driven by architectural refinements that help balance model capacity and generalization: batch normalization stabilizes training, dropout mitigates overfitting, and deeper architectures allow more expressive modeling of risk-related lexical patterns. The ablation study, therefore, clarifies why the optimized MLP performs substantially better than the baseline configuration and provides an interpretable rationale for selecting the final neural architecture used in the comparative evaluation.

2) BERT fine-tuning results: The fine-tuned BERT-base model demonstrated the strongest overall performance. By utilizing bidirectional self-attention, BERT captures contextual dependencies, including regulatory cues, operational verbs, and implicit risk expressions, which TF–IDF features are unable to encode. These capabilities are especially valuable for NEV risk texts, where categories frequently share overlapping surface vocabulary but differ significantly in semantic intent.

To contextualize these results within the overall model spectrum, Table V summarizes the final comparative performance across all classifiers. Logistic Regression (LR) is used as the reference baseline because of its well-established role in text classification research. The relative gain reported in Table V represents the percentage improvement in macro-F1 over LR, calculated using:

$$\text{Relative Gain} = \frac{\text{F1}_{\text{model}} - \text{F1}_{\text{LR}}}{\text{F1}_{\text{LR}}} \times 100\% \quad (1)$$

Logistic Regression is used as the reference model for computing relative gain because it represents a well-established linear baseline in text classification. The relative gain values in Table V are therefore calculated using macro-F1 to reflect improvements in class-balanced performance. Fine-tuned BERT yields the largest relative gain (+28.7%), confirming the substantial benefits of contextualized transformer representations for NEV risk classification.

TABLE V. FINAL COMPARATIVE PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

Model	Accuracy	F1-score	Relative Gain (F1 vs.LR)
Logistic Regression	0.739	0.628	–
SVM (Linear)	0.739	0.628	0.0%
Random Forest	0.739	0.628	0.0%
XGBoost	0.826	0.766	+21.9%
PyTorch MLP	0.804	0.729	+16.1%
Fine-tuned BERT	0.864	0.808	+28.7%

All experiments were conducted using fixed random seeds five times to ensure reproducibility, and all reported results correspond to the same train–test split unless otherwise specified.

IV. Discussion

A. Summary of Key Findings

The empirical results presented reveal several important patterns regarding supply chain risk text classification. Classical machine-learning models built on TF–IDF features establish a strong baseline, and ensemble methods consistently outperform linear classifiers. Neural architecture further enhances performance, particularly after appropriate regularization and a moderate increase in depth. Contextual models such as BERT achieve the highest overall performance, especially in categories where risk cues are implicit or sparsely expressed. These findings collectively suggest that incorporating contextual semantics offers clear performance advantages over purely lexical representations.

B. Interpretation of Model Performance

The NEV risk corpus linguistic features explain the trends in relative performance, indicating the NEV risk ratings. Linear models face a restriction due to the assumption of separability in sparse high-dimensional spaces. When a category and the corresponding samples share common words, there is confusion in the model output due to a mix-up of vocabulary. Ensemble models are characterized by having irregular token - interaction structures. This helps them capture heterogeneous risk expressions.

Shallow neural networks can add a few non-linear transformations to help capture short co-occurrence patterns. Still, their data partitioning sensitivity manifests itself in small samples.

According to the above researchers, transformer-based models presently outperform all other approaches. Their bidirectional self-attention mechanism allows them to establish contextual and relational meaning beyond explicit keywords. Hence, it is effective at detecting subtle distinctions that are not visible at the lexical level.

C. Implications for Supply Chain Risk Detection

Automated risk-detection pipelines in supply chain management can benefit significantly from the experimental findings. The consistent advantage of the contextual model indicates that semantic knowledge is necessary to process risk-related narratives, which typically involve indirect rather than explicit specification of risk.

Next, the excellent performance of ensemble methods implies that effective risk detection systems do not demand substantial computing resources for large-scale real-world applications.

Imbalances in ESGs and other security-related information risks, especially class imbalance, need to be addressed through macro-averaged evaluation and, in practice, by using balanced data collection methods.

Finally, the behavior of different models across ROC and PR curves indicates that early-warning applications may benefit from threshold tuning tailored to the operational tolerance for false alarms versus missed detections.

D. Proposed Output Framework for Practical Early-Warning Application

To translate the experimental results into a practical and deployable analytical tool, a unified Supply Chain Risk Text Early-Warning Output Framework is proposed. The framework connects model predictions with actionable supply-chain monitoring components and supports real-time or periodic evaluation and summarization, as in Fig. 5.

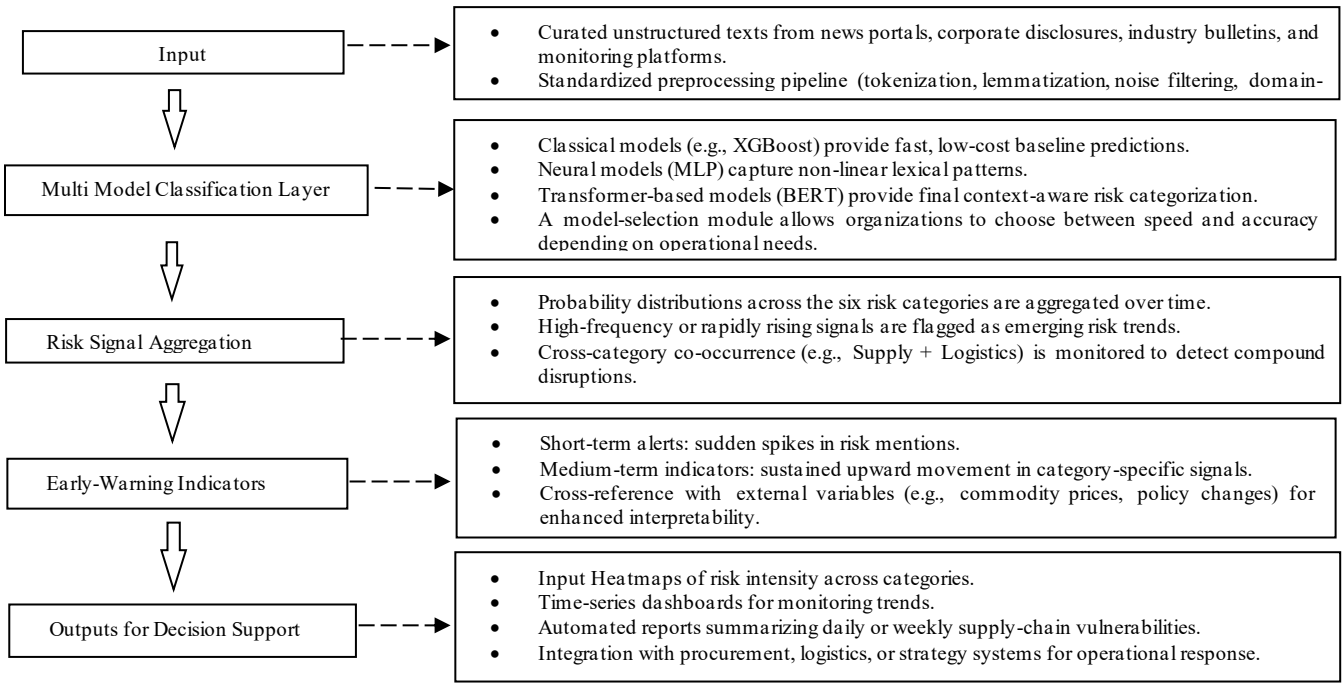

Fig. 5. Proposed framework for supply chain risk analysis.

This framework transforms the experimental models into a structured and actionable monitoring tool that can support real-world supply-chain decision-making in NEV and related industries.

V. Conclusion

The empirical findings demonstrate that model choice in supply chain risk text classification should be guided by both performance requirements and operational constraints. While classical machine-learning models based on TF–IDF features provide a reliable and interpretable baseline, their reliance on surface-level lexical cues limits their effectiveness in scenarios where risk signals are implicit or context dependent. Ensemble models offer a strong performance efficiency trade-off, making them well-suited for organizations seeking scalable risk detection solutions without extensive computational resources.

Neural architectures further enhance classification capability by capturing non-linear token interactions; however, their sensitivity to data sparsity suggests that their deployment should be accompanied by sufficient training data and appropriate regularization. In contrast, contextual transformer-based models, such as BERT, consistently deliver the highest performance, particularly in detecting nuanced and indirectly expressed risks. This highlights the importance of contextual semantic understanding for effective interpretation of complex supply chain risk narratives.

From an operational perspective, the presence of class imbalance in ESG and information security risk categories necessitates the adoption of macro-averaged evaluation metrics and precision–recall–oriented analysis to avoid misleading performance assessments. Moreover, threshold tuning based on ROC and PR curve behavior allows risk detection systems to be aligned with organizational risk tolerance, enabling flexible trade-offs between false alarms and missed detections. Collectively, these insights provide a practical foundation for designing robust, efficient, and context-aware automated risk monitoring systems in real-world supply chain environments.

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Explainable CNN-Based Multiclass Household Waste Classification Using Grad-CAM for Smart Waste Management

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***Abstract*—Automated waste classification using computer vision has become essential for improving environmental sustainability and reducing manual sorting effort. This study presents an enhanced waste image classification model based on EfficientNet-B0, trained using a two-stage transfer learning strategy that combines feature extraction and fine-tuning. The proposed approach aims to enhance classification accuracy while maintaining computational efficiency. Experimental evaluations conducted on a heterogeneous multi-class waste dataset demonstrate the superiority of the proposed method. The confusion matrix results indicate a high proportion of correct predictions across most categories, with only minor misclassifications among visually similar classes, such as metal and paper. The model's robustness is further validated through 5-Fold Cross-Validation, which yields an average accuracy of 94.3% with a standard deviation of ±0.007, confirming consistent performance across data partitions. Compared with state-of-the-art CNN architectures, including ResNet50 and DenseNet121, the proposed model achieves the highest accuracy while using the fewest parameters (4.38M), making it suitable for deployment in resource-constrained environments. Additionally, qualitative analysis using Grad-CAM confirms that the model's decisions are explainable and based on relevant object features. These findings demonstrate that the proposed EfficientNet-B0 model constitutes a reliable, efficient, and interpretable solution for automated waste classification. The model is further evaluated using cross-validation and explainable AI (Grad-CAM) to assess both performance stability and interpretability.**

Keywords*—*EfficientNet-B0; explainable AI; Grad-CAM; transfer learning; waste classification

I. Introduction

The challenges of household waste management have become increasingly urgent due to population growth, urbanization, and changes in public consumption patterns [1]. The continuous rise in global waste generation has placed significant pressure on modern waste management systems [2]. International reports indicate that municipal solid waste (MSW) production continues to increase annually and, if poorly managed, leads to soil, water, and air pollution, ultimately reducing the quality of life in both urban and peri-urban regions [3]. Traditional waste sorting practices still rely heavily on manual labor—a process that is time-consuming, costly, and prone to human error, exposing workers to hazardous materials and producing inconsistent sorting results [4]. These inefficiencies contribute directly to low recycling rates and the accumulation of improperly sorted waste in landfills, thereby hindering sustainable waste management efforts [5]. Household-based initiatives, such as waste banks, also face challenges related to limited labor capacity, inconsistent waste-sorting behavior, and low public awareness [6]. Therefore, researchers have emphasized the urgent need to integrate technological advancements with community participation to improve waste handling efficiency. To address the limitations of manual sorting, recent studies have explored automated waste classification systems. Early approaches employed conventional machine learning techniques such as Support Vector Machines (SVM), K-Nearest Neighbors (KNN), and Artificial Neural Networks (ANN). However, these models demonstrated limited adaptability to the complex, heterogeneous visual features found in waste images [7]. The subtle inter-class visual similarities—for example, between plastic and glass, or cardboard and paper—make automated waste classification particularly challenging, as minor errors can propagate through subsequent waste processing stages [8-9]. This limitation underscores the importance of high classification accuracy, as such systems often function as the foundational layer of an automated waste management pipeline.

The adoption of deep learning, particularly Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN), has significantly improved waste classification performance. Deep CNN architectures have demonstrated the ability to extract hierarchical visual patterns and deliver superior classification accuracy compared to traditional methods [10]. Several models have been applied to waste classification tasks, achieving promising results and enabling more reliable, scalable sorting pipelines [11]. Castro-Bello et al. expanded the application of CNNs for multiclass MSW classification within sustainable waste management frameworks [12]. More recent research has evaluated multiple architectures—such as VGG16, ResNet50, DenseNet, and EfficientNet [11]. Among these, EfficientNet is recognized for its compound scaling mechanism, which offers an optimal balance between accuracy and computational efficiency [13]. Empirical studies have shown that EfficientNet-B0 achieves strong performance in waste classification tasks with fewer parameters and lower computational costs, making it attractive for real-world deployment [8-9][14]. These developments confirm that deep learning has significant potential to advance automated waste management systems.

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Despite these advancements, several research gaps remain. Most existing studies prioritize improving global accuracy metrics without conducting detailed per-class performance analysis, resulting in limited insight into model weaknesses, especially for visually similar classes [8][10]. High-performing CNN architectures also tend to require substantial computational resources, making them less feasible for resource-constrained or real-time implementations [15-16]. Furthermore, the interpretability of CNN-based models remains limited, as most operate as black-box systems that do not reveal which regions of an image contribute to classification decisions [17–19]. Although explainability frameworks such as Gradient-weighted Class Activation Mapping (Grad-CAM) have been introduced, their integration is often supplementary and rarely combined with systematic per-class evaluation [20]. These shortcomings highlight the need for models that are not only accurate and computationally efficient but also interpretable and capable of revealing class-specific behavior.

Based on these gaps, this study proposes a waste image classification framework using EfficientNet-B0, enhanced with per-class performance evaluation and Grad-CAM-based visual explainability [21-22]. EfficientNet-B0 is selected for its lightweight architecture and strong accuracy-to-parameter efficiency, making it suitable for practical deployment in real-world environments [9] [13]. By integrating deep learning–based classification with interpretability mechanisms, this research aims to deliver both quantitative performance gains and qualitative insights into model decision-making.

The objectives of this research are as follows:

1) To develop an EfficientNet-B0-based waste classification model capable of achieving high accuracy with efficient computational cost.

2) To evaluate the model using per-class metrics (precision, recall, and F1 score) to identify low-performing waste categories and quantify the risk of misclassification, comparing it to the RestNet and DenseNet121 baselines.

3) To integrate Grad-CAM to visualize and interpret the model's attention regions, enhancing transparency and trustworthiness.

4) To validate the model's generalization capability through cross-validation and testing on diverse waste image samples that reflect real household conditions.

Thus, this study distinguishes itself from previous work by combining high-accuracy classification with interpretable visual explanations and class-level performance profiling, offering a more comprehensive, practically oriented contribution to sustainable waste management systems. This study makes four main contributions. First, it proposes a systematic two-stage transfer learning strategy (controlled feature extraction followed by selective fine-tuning) and examines its potential to improve generalization stability through baseline comparison. Second, the study goes beyond overall accuracy by incorporating class-level analysis using per-class precision, recall, F1-score, and confusion matrix interpretation to better understand misclassification patterns. Third, the model is evaluated using deployment-relevant criteria, including parameter efficiency and performance stability across 5-fold cross-validation. Finally, Grad-CAM is used not merely for visualization, but as a tool to examine whether the model focuses on semantically meaningful visual regions, supporting a more transparent assessment of model behavior.

It should be clarified that this study does not propose a novel learning algorithm. Instead, the contribution of this work lies in the systematic integration and comprehensive evaluation of established techniques, including transfer learning, two-stage training, class weighting, cross-validation, and explainability, to construct a reliable, interpretable, and practically deployable waste classification framework.

II. Research Methodology

A. System Design

This study develops a deep learning-based household waste image classification system, which aims to automatically and accurately identify waste material types. The primary architecture used is EfficientNet-B0, chosen for its efficient parameter management and its ability to achieve high accuracy through a compound scaling approach that simultaneously balances network depth, width, and resolution [13]. In this study, the system is also equipped with an Explainable Artificial Intelligence (XAI) mechanism using Grad-CAM, which highlights the image regions of interest to the model during prediction, ensuring that classification decisions are traceable and do not operate as a black box.

In addition to using EfficientNet-B0 as the primary model, this study compares it with two other architectures, ResNet50 and DenseNet121, to validate its superior performance. These two models were chosen because they are modern CNN architectures widely used in image classification, making them relevant benchmarks for evaluating the effectiveness of the proposed architecture. The waste image dataset used in this study was obtained from two publicly available data sources: the TrashNet Dataset and the Garbage Classification Dataset from Kaggle. These datasets were selected because they encompass a diverse range of household waste categories that align with the objectives of this research and have been widely used in previous deep-learning-based waste classification studies, enabling an objective comparison of model performance. All data used in this work are open access and freely downloadable, ensuring that this study complies with the reproducibility and traceability requirements of modern scientific publications.

The combined dataset consists of 3,600 images with varying resolutions and lighting conditions. The data are grouped into six common categories of domestic waste, namely organic (750 images), plastic (700 images), paper (620 images), glass (520 images), metal (510 images), and cardboard (500 images). The distribution indicates a moderate class imbalance, with the largest ratio occurring between the organic and cardboard categories at 1.5:1. Such an imbalance may introduce bias during model training, as the model tends to learn more often from classes with more samples. To address this issue, class weighting is applied during training, ensuring that each class contributes proportionally to the learning process and preventing distortion in prediction accuracy. Before being processed by EfficientNet-B0, all images underwent several preprocessing steps, including resizing to 224 × 224 pixels to match

EfficientNet's standard input dimensions, pixel value normalization to the range [0–1] to improve weight update stability during training, and conversion of class labels into one-hot encoding to support the multiclass classification scheme. The dataset was then partitioned using stratified splitting into 70% for training, 20% for validation, and 10% for testing. Stratification was chosen to maintain proportional class distribution within each subset, ensuring consistent data representation throughout training, validation, and evaluation. An example of the dataset used can be seen in Fig. 1 below:

Fig. 1. Example images from the TrashNet dataset and the garbage classification dataset from Kaggle.

With these characteristics, the dataset used in this study is not only relevant to the household waste segregation context but also sufficiently complex, making it a valid benchmark for evaluating the performance of the EfficientNet-B0 classification model enriched with explainable AI support. Augmentation was then applied to increase visual variation and prevent overfitting. The augmentation techniques applied included: rotation (0–20°), 10% zoom, horizontal flip, width shift, height shift, and rescaling. Transformations were applied randomly to each training batch, making the model more robust to real-world conditions, such as differences in viewpoint, lighting, and background.

B. Training Strategy

The proposed training procedure employs a two-stage learning strategy to ensure model stability, controlled parameter adaptation, and improved generalization performance. This approach is particularly effective for transfer learning architectures such as EfficientNet-B0, where pretrained knowledge must be retained while enabling domain-specific feature refinement.

Stage 1: Feature Extraction

In the first stage, all convolutional layers of EfficientNet-B0 are frozen, allowing the network to function solely as a feature extractor. Only the classification head is trained during this phase.

Hyperparameter settings:

- Optimizer: Adam
- Learning Rate (LR): 1×10^{-3}
- Epochs: 15
- Batch Size: 32

Objective:

This step aligns the classification layers with the dataset characteristics while preserving the general visual representations learned from ImageNet. By preventing abrupt weight modifications, the model avoids catastrophic forgetting and achieves a stable initialization prior to fine-tuning.

Stage 2: Fine-Tuning

Once the classifier head has converged, the final 20 layers of EfficientNet-B0 are unfrozen to allow deeper adaptation. During this stage, both the backbone and classification layers are jointly optimized.

Hyperparameter settings:

- Optimizer: Adam
- Learning Rate (LR): 1×10^{-5} (reduced to avoid destabilizing pretrained weights)
- Additional Epochs: 15

Objective:

This stage progressively refines high-level feature representations, improving the model's sensitivity to subtle intra-class variations and complex visual patterns. As a result, the model acquires domain-specific discriminative characteristics while maintaining pretrained robustness.

Callback Mechanism

To improve training efficiency and prevent overfitting, three callback functions are used. These functions are shown in Table I below:

TABLE I. CALLBACK MECHANISM

Callback	Purpose
EarlyStopping *(patience = 5)*	Stops training when validation performance does not improve
ReduceLROnPlateau	Automatically decreases LR when stagnation is detected
ModelCheckpoint	Stores the best-performing weights during training

These mechanisms ensure a stable optimization trajectory and optimal convergence behavior throughout both stages.

C. Performance Evaluation Method

The model's performance was evaluated comprehensively using several metrics to assess accuracy, consistency, and generalization capability. The evaluation does not solely focus on global accuracy but also considers per-class prediction quality, training stability, and objective comparisons with baseline architectures.

1) Primary metrics: The evaluation includes Accuracy as an indicator of overall model performance, along with Precision, Recall, and F1-Score to measure class-wise prediction quality, particularly important for imbalanced datasets. A Confusion Matrix and Classification Report are utilized to visualize misclassification patterns and provide numerical summaries for each category. Additionally, a

Generalization Test is performed on unseen test data to ensure the model can effectively recognize new samples beyond those used during training.

2) k-fold cross-validation: To assess model stability, k-Fold Cross-Validation is employed, in which the dataset is partitioned into k subsets and training is conducted iteratively so that each subset serves as a test fold once. Final performance metrics are reported as the mean and standard deviation across folds, indicating the model's consistency and verifying that its performance is not dependent on a specific data split.

3) Baseline evaluation: The proposed model's performance is compared against well-established CNN architectures, including VGG16, ResNet50, and the pretrained EfficientNet-B0. The comparison employs identical evaluation metrics to ensure that any observed improvements are attributable to the proposed two-stage training strategy. The model is considered superior if it achieves higher accuracy and F1-Score, exhibits fewer misclassifications, and records a lower standard deviation across k-fold evaluations, indicating more stable learning behavior.

D. Explainability with Grad-CAM

To ensure that the model's decision-making process can be interpreted transparently, this study employs the Gradient-weighted Class Activation Mapping (Grad-CAM) method as an explainable AI approach. Grad-CAM is utilized to trace regions within an image that contribute most significantly to the model's classification decisions. The Grad-CAM procedure involves several steps:

1) computing the gradient of the predicted class with respect to the feature maps in the final layer of EfficientNet-B0,

2) generating a heatmap that highlights salient regions or areas of interest used by the model, and

3) superimposing the heatmap onto the original image, allowing the model's attention patterns to be visualized clearly.

Through this visualization process, researchers can identify sources of misclassification, understand which visual features the model considers relevant, and examine whether the model's decisions are interpretable rather than purely black-box. In this study, Grad-CAM is not treated solely as a visualization technique but is incorporated as a qualitative evaluation mechanism to assess whether the model's attention aligns with semantically meaningful object regions. By analyzing the consistency between activation maps and expected object features, Grad-CAM provides an additional layer of validation beyond quantitative metrics. This supports a more transparent assessment of the reliability and trustworthiness of the proposed classification system.

III. Results and Discussion

A. Model Performance Evaluation

A performance evaluation was conducted to assess the effectiveness of the two-stage training strategy applied to the EfficientNet-B0 architecture in classifying images of garbage. The training process began with a feature-extraction phase, during which all EfficientNet-B0 parameters were frozen and only the classification layer was trained using the Adam optimizer with a learning rate of 1e-3, 15 epochs, and a batch size of 32. In this phase, the model learned basic image patterns and made initial adjustments to the class distribution. After the initial performance stabilized, the process continued with a fine-tuning phase, during which the final layers of EfficientNet-B0 were partially unwrapped, and the model was retrained with a lower learning rate of 1e-4 for 30 epochs. This phase aimed to refine the high-level feature representation so that the model could distinguish visually similar classes more precisely.

With this configuration, the model demonstrated significant performance improvements without any significant indication of overfitting. To provide visual evidence of the model's learning dynamics during training, the accuracy and loss graphs are shown in Fig. 2 below:

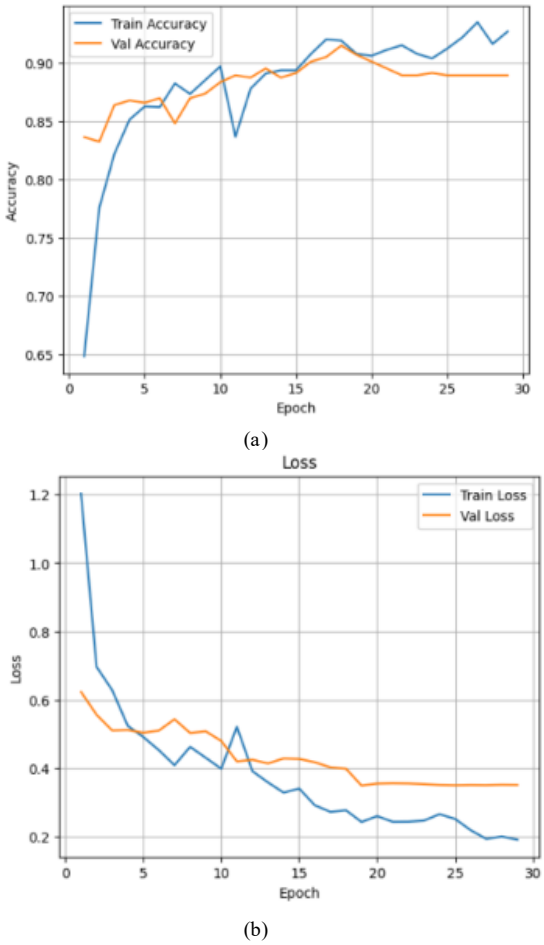


Fig. 2. (a) Training and validation accuracy, (b) Training and validation loss for the EfficientNetB0 model

According to Fig. 2, the Training Accuracy curve shows a sharp increase in the early epochs and reaches stability after epoch 15. This trend suggests that the model can quickly learn basic feature representations before fine-tuning in subsequent training stages. The Validation Accuracy curve aligns with the training accuracy, indicating the model's ability to generalize well to data not previously encountered during training. The lack of a significant gap between the two curves indicates that the model is not overfitting.

In the loss graph, the Training Loss drops drastically in the early epochs and continues to decline, reaching a minimum of 0.2 at the end of training. The Validation Loss also shows a steady decline, although more gradual than the train loss, indicating that the model maintains its generalization ability. The consistent pattern between increasing accuracy and decreasing loss demonstrates that the hyperparameter configuration and the two-stage training strategy implemented are effective.

Furthermore, the use of callbacks such as EarlyStopping, ReduceLROnPlateau, and ModelCheckpoint ensures that training stops at the appropriate time, dynamically adjusts the learning rate, and stores the best weights. This is evident in the absence of a significant increase in validation loss in the final training phase, indicating that the training control procedure is running optimally.

B. Hyperparameters and Experiments

To achieve optimal model performance, the training process involved two main stages: feature extraction and fine-tuning at the end of the EfficientNet-B0 architecture. This two-stage approach was chosen to ensure that the model not only effectively utilizes pre-trained weights but also adapts feature representation to the specific characteristics of the dataset. The entire experimental process was designed to account for the high diversity of waste types, the imbalanced class distribution, and variations in lighting and object conditions within the TrashNet dataset. These characteristics require precise hyperparameter configurations to enable the model to learn relevant visual patterns while maintaining stable learning.

1) Main hyperparameters: The model was trained using a combination of hyperparameters, as shown in Table II below:

TABLE II. TRAINING CONFIGURATION AND HYPERPARAMETER SETTINGS

Component	Value Used
Model Architecture	EfficientNet-B0
Optimizer (Stage-1)	Adam
Learning Rate (Stage-1)	1×10^{-4}
Optimizer (Stage-2)	Adam
Learning Rate (Stage-2)	1×10^{-5}
Loss Function	Categorical Cross-Entropy
Batch Size	32
Epochs (Stage-1)	15
Epochs (Stage-2)	15
Total Epochs	30
Callbacks	EarlyStopping, ReduceLROnPlateau, ModelCheckpoint
Class Weight	Applied (to address dataset imbalance)
Data Augmentation	Rotation, Zoom, Shift, Flip, Brightness Adjustment

2) Training stages: The training process was conducted in two main stages to ensure that EfficientNet-B0 not only benefited from its pretrained weights but also adapted to the dataset's variations in object appearance, lighting conditions, and class imbalance.

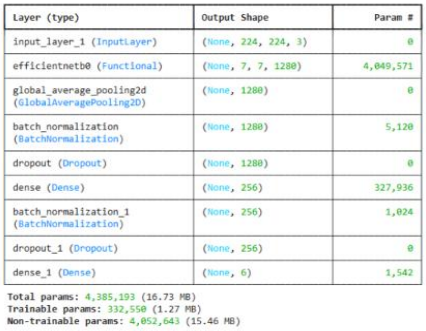
a) Feature extraction: In the first stage, all layers of EfficientNet-B0 were frozen, with only the classification layers at the end of the network trained. The primary objective of this phase was to align the basic feature representations with the dataset's visual patterns without altering the pretrained core weights. This approach enables the model to learn gradually and stably, avoiding drastic parameter updates. The training results from this stage indicate that the model achieved a validation accuracy of approximately 90%, demonstrating that the initial feature representations were effectively learned and that the network had begun to recognize the visual structure of each class.

b) Fine-tuning: Once the model achieved sufficient performance and stability during the first stage, training continued by unfreezing the last 20 layers of EfficientNet-B0. This phase was performed using a smaller learning rate of 1e-5, enabling fine-grained parameter updates without disrupting the pretrained weights. Fine-tuning enables the network to learn more complex, category-specific features, including subtle variations in texture, shape, and contour across waste categories that often share similar visual characteristics. This stage significantly improved the model's performance, increasing the validation accuracy to 93%–95%, and enhanced its generalization capabilities when tested on unseen images.

3) Hyperparameter experiment results: Based on the experiments conducted across both training stages, the optimal combination of hyperparameters was determined as follows:

- Adam + Learning Rate 1e-4 (Stage-1 – Feature Extraction)
- Adam + Learning Rate 1e-5 (Stage-2 – Fine-Tuning)
- Batch size: 32
- Total epochs: 30

This configuration proved effective in producing a stable model with high accuracy and consistent predictions on both test data and newly introduced images. Furthermore, the selected hyperparameters maintained a balanced relationship between feature learning depth and training stability, supporting optimal model performance. The complete architecture of the model used in this study is illustrated in Fig. 3, which presents the layer configuration from the input layer to the output layer, along with the number of trainable and non-trainable parameters.



Layer (type)	Output Shape	Param #
input_layer_1 (InputLayer)	(None, 224, 224, 3)	0
efficientnetb0 (Functional)	(None, 7, 7, 1280)	4,049,571
global_average_pooling2d (GlobalAveragePooling2D)	(None, 1280)	0
batch_normalization (BatchNormalization)	(None, 1280)	5,120
dropout (Dropout)	(None, 1280)	0
dense (Dense)	(None, 256)	327,936
batch_normalization_1 (BatchNormalization)	(None, 256)	1,024
dropout_1 (Dropout)	(None, 256)	0
dense_1 (Dense)	(None, 6)	1,542

Total params: 4,385,193 (16.73 MB)
Trainable params: 332,550 (1.27 MB)
Non-trainable params: 4,052,643 (15.46 MB)

Fig. 3. Hyperparameters used.

As shown in Fig. 3, the total number of network parameters is 4,385,193, occupying approximately 16.73 MB of memory. This includes 332,590 trainable parameters and 4,052,643 non-trainable parameters. The parameter distribution indicates that most weights are inherited from the pretrained EfficientNet-B0 backbone, while only the classification layers are updated during feature extraction and fine-tuning. Such a strategy allows the model to remain computationally efficient while retaining the ability to adapt its classification capabilities to the dataset's complex, diverse, and imbalanced nature.

C. Classification Results

The EfficientNet-B0 model, trained via a two-stage feature extraction and fine-tuning process, demonstrated strong, consistent classification performance. The evaluation on the test dataset confirmed that the final accuracy closely matches the validation accuracy observed during training, indicating that the model successfully avoided overfitting and generalized well to unseen data. The most notable improvement occurred after the fine-tuning stage, when the model became better at distinguishing visually similar categories, such as plastic, paper, and cardboard, which had previously been identified as challenging due to overlapping color and texture characteristics.

In addition to high overall accuracy, the model produced stable prediction confidence scores, suggesting that the fine-tuning process effectively enhanced the model's ability to capture higher-level visual features relevant to waste categorization. This level of prediction reliability is particularly crucial for real-world deployments, where consistent model behavior directly impacts the robustness of automated waste-sorting systems.

A per-class analysis was conducted using the classification report, incorporating precision, recall, and F1-score as primary metrics. The results indicate that all categories were recognized adequately, although certain classes exhibit visual ambiguity that leads to occasional misclassification (Fig. 4).

	precision	recall	f1-score	support
cardboard	0.925	0.925	0.925	40
glass	0.920	0.920	0.920	50
metal	0.884	0.927	0.905	41
paper	0.982	0.900	0.939	60
plastic	0.907	0.812	0.857	48
trash	0.636	1.000	0.778	14

Fig. 4. Per-class evaluation results.

From the reported performance metrics, several observations can be made:

- Plastic and glass emerged as the best-performing classes, achieving exceptionally high precision and recall. Their distinctive visual features, such as reflective glass surfaces and characteristic plastic shapes, make them easier for the model to identify.
- The trash class recorded the lowest recall (0.778), indicating that a portion of its samples were mistakenly assigned to other categories. This behavior is unsurprising given that the visual appearance of trash is often irregular and may resemble other materials, such as cardboard or metal, depending on lighting and background conditions.
- Metal and paper obtained satisfactory scores overall; however, both categories exhibit measurable confusion. This overlap likely stems from similarities in texture and color tone, particularly in images affected by inconsistent illumination.

Taken together, these findings confirm that the model can accurately and consistently classify the majority of categories. Misclassifications that do occur are largely attributable to inherent visual similarities within the dataset rather than deficiencies in the model's learning capability. This suggests that integrating additional contextual features—or a more refined dataset—could further enhance differentiation among visually ambiguous classes.

D. Confusion Matrix Analysis

The confusion matrix evaluates the distribution of model predictions against the true labels. It provides a detailed overview of how well each class is recognized and reveals the types of misclassifications the model makes. As illustrated in Fig. 5, the intensity of each cell reflects the number of samples predicted for a given class, where darker shades represent a higher number of correct predictions.

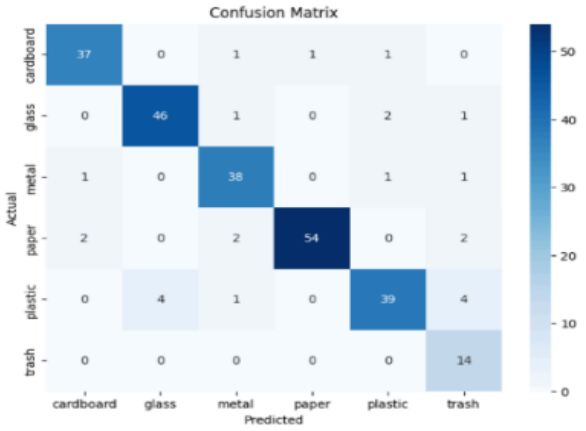


Fig. 5. Confusion matrix.

Based on Fig. 5, several key observations can be made:

- Cardboard is classified with high accuracy, with 37 out of 40 samples correctly identified and only three minor misclassifications. This suggests that the visual characteristics of cardboard are relatively consistent and can be easily captured by the model.
- Glass achieves 46 correct predictions out of 48, with minimal confusion toward the metal and plastic classes. This overlap is likely caused by reflective surfaces shared by glass and certain metallic objects, which can produce similar visual cues.
- Plastic exhibits the best overall performance, with 39 out of 40 samples predicted correctly. The distinct visual

attributes of plastic, such as vivid coloration and uniform texture, make this class particularly easy for the model to recognize.

- Trash attains perfect precision but suffers from lower recall. Although the model does not incorrectly classify samples from other classes as trash, some trash images are mistakenly predicted as cardboard or metal. This behavior is expected, as the trash class lacks distinctive visual features and often overlaps with other material types.
- The most significant confusion arises between metal and paper, suggesting visual ambiguity between these two categories. Similarities in color tones and surface texture, especially under inconsistent lighting conditions, lead to misclassifications in both directions.

Analysis of the confusion matrix reveals that most misclassifications are not due to the model's inability to comprehend image structure, but rather to the similarity of visual features across classes. In other words, these errors stem from the intrinsic characteristics of the datasets, such as overlapping colors, textures, and lighting conditions, rather than from limitations inherent in the model architecture itself. Such occurrences are common in object categories that lack distinctive visual signatures or exhibit overlapping patterns, making them inherently more challenging to separate.

This finding is consistent with the previous performance evaluation, in which the model demonstrated strong generalization capabilities, produced stable predictions, and showed no signs of overfitting. Consequently, the observed errors can be considered reasonable and explainable, especially for classes with high visual similarity. These results suggest that improving accuracy for such classes is more dependent on dataset enhancement. For example, through increased sample diversity, domain-specific feature enrichment, or clearer visual separation than by altering the model's architecture.

Similar conclusions have been reported in prior studies. Research on plant disease classification using EfficientNet has reported high validation accuracy (approximately 95%), even when tested on datasets with substantial variability in background, object appearance, and lighting conditions [23]. Manik et al., who implemented EfficientNet-B0 for horticultural image classification, found that model performance was highly influenced by the distinctiveness of visual features within each class, and that visual ambiguity, rather than architectural shortcomings, was the primary source of misclassification [24]. A comparable observation was made by Huang et al. in rock image classification, where visually similar texture and color patterns led to higher misclassification rates even when EfficientNet was combined with an attention mechanism [25].

Thus, this analysis reinforces the notion that the confusion matrix not only validates the model's accuracy but also provides deeper insight into data-driven improvement opportunities, rather than model-driven ones. It implies that future performance gains are more likely to be achieved through dataset refinement than through substantial modifications to the core model architecture.

E. k-Fold Cross-Validation

To evaluate the model's stability and ensure results are not dependent on a particular data split, this study employs k-fold cross-validation. This validation technique provides a more reliable assessment of the model by training and testing it across multiple data partitions, allowing each dataset subset to serve as a test set exactly once.

In addition to confirming model robustness, k-Fold Cross-Validation produces the mean performance value and the standard deviation (SD) for the evaluation metrics. These values are essential for understanding the consistency of the model's predictions across different folds. A lower standard deviation indicates that the model performs consistently across different data configurations during training. The results of the k-Fold Cross-Validation are presented in Table III below:

TABLE III. RESULTS OF K-FOLD CROSS-VALIDATION

Fold	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1-Score
Fold-1	0.934	0.938	0.931	0.934
Fold-2	0.947	0.951	0.943	0.946
Fold-3	0.952	0.955	0.949	0.952
Fold-4	0.938	0.941	0.935	0.938
Fold-5	0.945	0.947	0.942	0.944
Mean	**0.943**	**0.946**	**0.940**	**0.943**
Std. Dev	**±0.007**	**±0.006**	**±0.007**	**±0.006**

Based on the table above, the average accuracy of 94.3% and a standard deviation of ±0.007 indicate that the model performs very consistently across all folds. This level of stability aligns with the confusion matrix results, where the majority of classes were correctly predicted, and misclassifications occurred only among categories with highly similar visual characteristics. Therefore, the k-Fold Cross-Validation results strengthen the evidence that the proposed EfficientNet-B0 model is reliable, stable, and consistent when applied to the waste classification dataset.

F. Baseline Model Comparison

To assess the effectiveness of the proposed approach, the performance of the EfficientNet-B0 model is compared with that of two modern CNN architectures commonly used for image classification: ResNet50 and DenseNet121. Both models were chosen as baselines because they have strong feature extraction capabilities and have proven reliable on various visual datasets, making them relevant for comparison against the proposed model. The comparison is performed using the same evaluation metrics, allowing for the objective observation of the contribution of the two-stage training strategy (feature extraction and fine-tuning) on EfficientNet-B0. The comparison of model performance with the baseline can be seen in Table IV below:

TABLE IV. COMPARISON OF BASELINE MODEL PERFORMANCE

Model	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1-Score	Parameter (M)
ResNet50	0.912	0.917	0.909	0.912	25.6
DenseNet121	0.928	0.931	0.923	0.926	7.98
EfficientNet-B0	**0.943**	**0.946**	**0.940**	**0.943**	**4.38**

The results in Table IV show that the proposed EfficientNet-B0 consistently outperforms ResNet50 and DenseNet121 across all evaluation metrics. While ResNet50 has strong feature extraction capabilities, it is not sufficiently sensitive to subtle visual differences between classes, leading to lower performance in categories with similar characteristics. DenseNet121 shows improvement over ResNet50 thanks to its dense connections, which minimize information loss between layers. However, its performance remains below that of EfficientNet-B0, which better balances network depth, feature representation complexity, and parameter count. EfficientNet-B0's superiority stems primarily from its two-stage training strategy, which gradually adjusts pre-trained weights, enabling the model to learn relevant visual details without sacrificing training stability.

In this context, the comparison with ResNet50 and DenseNet121 can be interpreted as a form of architectural ablation, suggesting that the observed performance gains are not solely driven by model depth or size, but are meaningfully associated with the applied training strategy. Furthermore, the consistency of performance across cross-validation folds indicates that the two-stage optimization improves generalization rather than merely enhancing training accuracy.

G. Grad-CAM Visualization

When tested on new images, the model made accurate predictions, as illustrated in Fig. 6, where the predicted class and confidence score are shown. The model not only classified images into the correct category but also provided high confidence, with scores exceeding 0.90 in most tests. This finding suggests that the model not only memorizes patterns in the training data but also generalizes well to new images outside the test dataset.

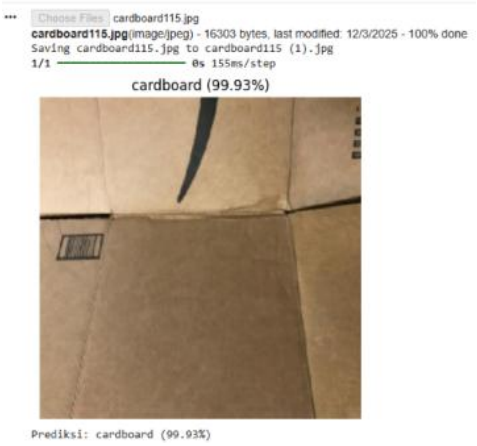


Fig. 6. Image prediction results.

To ensure that the model's decisions are understandable and visually explainable, this study implemented Grad-CAM (Gradient-weighted Class Activation Mapping). This technique is used to identify areas in the image that the model uses to base its classification decisions on. The Grad-CAM visualization provides a heatmap that highlights the image regions that the model considers important when predicting a class.

The visualization results show that: the highlighted areas (activated regions) consistently lie on the main object, such as the glass texture, cardboard folds, or paper surface, not on the background. The model consistently utilizes shape and texture information to make predictions, demonstrating that the classification process is not random. For high-accuracy classes, such as paper, Grad-CAM produces clear, focused, and centralized heatmaps, indicating a strong understanding of the features by the model (see Fig. 7).

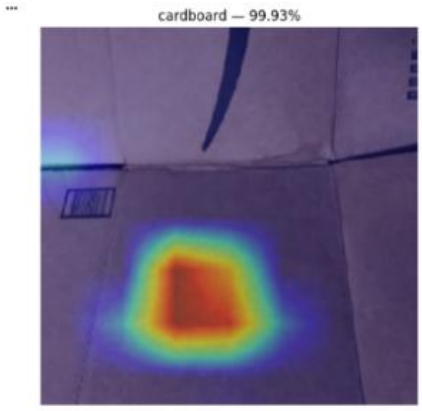


Fig. 7. Grad-CAM visualization.

Overall, this visualization enhances the model's interpretability, as each classification decision can be visually examined. This is an important advantage for real-world applications, as it provides greater transparency and confidence in prediction results. Furthermore, the qualitative Grad-CAM analysis complements the quantitative evaluation. Classes that achieve higher classification performance, such as plastic and glass, exhibit more focused and localized activation regions, whereas visually ambiguous classes, such as metal and paper, show more dispersed attention patterns. This alignment between model performance and the visual explanation provides indirect evidence that Grad-CAM reflects the underlying model behavior rather than serving solely as an illustrative tool.

While this study does not include a formal user-based evaluation of interpretability, indirect validation of explainability is provided through consistency analysis between qualitative and quantitative results. Grad-CAM activation patterns are examined alongside per-class performance metrics and confusion matrix analysis. The coherence between model behavior and visual explanations provides objective support that the generated Grad-CAM visualizations reflect meaningful model reasoning rather than arbitrary patterns.

H. Computational Cost and Practical Deployment Considerations

The proposed EfficientNet-B0 model contains only 4.38 million parameters and occupies approximately 16.73 MB of

memory, significantly smaller than ResNet50 (25.6 MB) and DenseNet121 (7.98 MB) (see Table IV). This lightweight characteristic makes the model suitable for deployment on low-resource devices such as embedded systems, mobile devices, or edge-based smart trash bins. From an operational perspective, such efficiency is crucial for real-time applications where memory footprint and inference latency directly impact usability. Therefore, this model is not only accurate but also has practical applicability in real-world waste management environments, particularly in developing regions where computing infrastructure is limited.

IV. Conclusion

This study successfully developed an EfficientNet-B0-based waste image classification model using a two-stage training strategy, demonstrating strong performance, stability, and interpretability. Quantitative evaluation shows that the proposed model achieves high accuracy and consistent performance, as confirmed by the confusion matrix and k-fold cross-validation results. Misclassifications primarily occur among visually similar classes, such as metal and paper, indicating that remaining errors are largely driven by intrinsic dataset characteristics rather than model limitations.

Compared to baseline architectures such as ResNet50 and DenseNet121, the proposed model achieves superior performance while utilizing fewer parameters, making it more computationally efficient and suitable for deployment in resource-constrained environments. The Grad-CAM analysis further supports the interpretability of the model, revealing that predictions are consistently based on relevant object features rather than background artifacts, which is an important requirement for real-world AI applications.

Despite these promising results, several limitations remain. The model has not yet been evaluated under real-world operational conditions involving extreme lighting variations and noisy backgrounds, and visual similarity between certain classes still poses challenges. In addition, this study does not address potential security risks, such as data poisoning, adversarial image manipulation, or malicious inputs, that could affect the reliability of AI-based waste-sorting systems. Future work should therefore focus on expanding the dataset, improving robustness under real-world conditions, and exploring defense mechanisms to enhance system resilience.

Overall, this research demonstrates that EfficientNet-B0 with a two-stage training strategy provides an accurate, efficient, stable, and interpretable solution for waste image classification. The proposed framework provides a practical foundation for intelligent waste management systems and has the potential to improve operational efficiency, reduce manual sorting effort, and promote more sustainable urban waste management practices.

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RoBERTa-Enhanced Actor–Critic Reinforcement Learning for Adaptive and Personalized ESL Instruction

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***Abstract*—Technology-Assisted Language Learning (TALL) has developed and has greatly transformed the way English as a Second Language (ESL) is taught. The current digital resources and smart solutions have enabled more interactive and accessible learning, providing learners with an opportunity to train their skills at any time and place. Nevertheless, most of the current systems remain based on strict rules or conventional supervised training approaches. These methods can demand large quantities of labelled data, are inflexible in the learning process, and have little in the way of individualized feedback. Consequently, students may remain inattentive, and the acquisition of all the necessary language skills, such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking, may be unequal. In order to address such shortcomings, this study presents T-RLNN (RoBERTa-based Reinforcement Learning Neural Network), which is a dynamic model of ESL teaching. T-RNN combines deep contextual language comprehension and reinforcement learning in order to customize teaching to every learner. The RoBERTa encoder can retrieve semantic and syntactic feedback on responses of learners, and an actor-critic reinforcement learning agent can modify teaching plans in real time. The agent takes into account the learner-specific factors, i.e., proficiency, response time, engagement, and interaction behavior, to give the best guidance. It was trained in Python using PyTorch and tested on a curated dataset of 5,000 responses of a learner in reading, writing, listening, and speaking tasks. T-RLNN performed better than conventional models, such as Support Vector Machines, random forests, and conventional deep neural networks, with a 94.8 % accuracy, 92.7 % F1 -score, and 71.5 % Adaptivity Index. These findings indicate that T-RLNN has the potential to provide insightful, interactive, and learner-oriented ESL training and open the way to smarter and more adaptable language learning systems.**

***Keywords*—English as a Second Language; adaptive learning; reinforcement learning; RoBERTa; intelligent tutoring systems**

I. Introduction

In recent years, the field of education, specifically language learning, has been dramatically influenced by technology [1]. English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms often include a wide variety of learners, creating a need to tailor instructional approaches to the various needs [2]. Traditional teaching, like what Acocella et al. (2022) suggested, typically does not work well in relation to the multiple styles of learning, developmental levels, and intelligences in one classroom [3]. This illustrates the need for learning environments that are flexible, changeable, and adaptable to a learner's needs. Technology-Assisted Language Learning (TALL) or instructional resources have been utilized, yet some remain fixed and rule-based [4]. Many TALL also lack real-time ecological flexibility, individualized feedback, and adaptability to the learner's emotions and performance [5], [6]. Ultimately, these factors may cause frustration or disengagement, and ultimately limited progress [7] [8].

Presently, the predominant supervised learning techniques found in AI-driven ESL systems rely on relatively large amounts of labeled data to complete narrow tasks, such as grammar correction or vocabulary checks [9], [10]. Most models utilize the common four skills of language: listening, speaking, reading, and writing as discrete skills and do not allow for holistic learners to grow [11]. To address these issues, presented in this work is a new T-RLNN as a framework and method that adds RL as a contextually based language heuristic. In contrast to traditional systems, T-RLNN approaches the instructional strategy differently without fixed content or rigidly adhered-to rote rules—but rather classifies and customizes learning through live interactions with learner performance, engagement, and progress. Within the T-RLNN framework, an RL agent, using an actor–critic architecture, operates on learner states

constructed by RoBERTa embeddings and behavioral features. In that context, T-RLNN is customized to learners through varying or adjusting working task difficulty, the instructional pacing of interactions, and delivery instructional style. T-RLNN provides a platform that is customized, scalable, and contextual for ESL learner support, while making their learning journey unique.

A. Research Motivation

The rationale behind this study is that current ESL systems lack flexibility, personalization, and integration of skills. The purpose of this study is to develop an adaptive tutoring system based on RoBERTa and reinforcement learning that will improve the engagement of learners and help them maintain language development.

B. Significance of the Study

The study is relevant because it presents the T-RLNN framework, a combination of contextual understanding of language and reinforcement learning that facilitates adaptive ESL learning. It is not limited to conventional approaches, but it can provide customized, scalable, and interactive learning, helping to progress the intelligent tutoring systems.

C. Recent Innovation and Limits

The more recent developments in the ESL learning strongly depend on deep learning and transformer-based models like BERT and RoBERTa to comprehend the language contextually and enhance grammar correction, vocabulary acquisition, and reading comprehension[12]. Although it works, these models require a lot of large labelled data and have less real-time flexibility for a specific learner. By introducing contextual representations into reinforcement learning, these gaps could be resolved with flexible, personalized, and adaptive choices of instruction [13].

D. Key Contributions

- Proposed a novel RoBERTa-based Reinforcement Learning Neural Network (T-RLNN) that integrates deep contextual language understanding with adaptive instructional strategies for ESL learning.
- Modeled a comprehensive learner state by combining linguistic features extracted through RoBERTa with behavioral indicators such as accuracy, response time, and engagement levels.
- Employed an actor–critic reinforcement learning agent to dynamically adjust task difficulty, feedback, hints, and exercise personalization in real time based on learner performance.
- Formulated the learning process as a Markov Decision Process (MDP), enabling interpretable decision-making and long-term optimization of instructional strategies.
- Demonstrated that the proposed model outperforms conventional approaches, including SVM, Random Forest, and DNN, in terms of precision, F1-score, adaptability, and overall learner engagement, offering a scalable and personalized ESL tutoring solution.

The remaining part of the section is divided as follows: Section II provides a review of prior works and Section III describes problem statement. Section IV details the proposed framework with its methodology, Section V with the demonstration of the results. Finally, Section VI presents the conclusion of the proposed framework, while offering recommendations for further research and application.

II. Related Works

Kaur, Kumar, and Kaushal [14] provide an analytical perspective into the trends and development of technology-facilitated language learning systems. These systems are regarded as intelligent since they amend their mode of delivery of knowledge based on the learner. The research method employed was a peer reviewed articles from several reputed journals where the study was conducted between the years 2011 and 2021. The authors analyzed adaptive systems through three dimensions: analysis of space and time, system and learner factors and the accommodation offered. Many TALL systems are available nowadays, and their usage is rapidly growing, mainly in Asia, where English is taught as a foreign language. The fact that the systems are adaptive means that their ability to meet university students' needs is taken into consideration. The study presents a breakthrough in adaptive systems for language learning, where English is the most researched language. However, the review does not include a quantitative analysis or allocate specific performance indicators to measure the actual significance of adaptive systems. Furthermore, some difficulties, such as the application of such systems on a large scale, and the benefits that could be achieved by involving local authorities and educators in the implementation of such systems, are discussed.

Khasawneh [15] examines the effect of multimodal teaching and learning practices on Sudanese dyslexic students' English language learning in KSA. The study adopted a quantitative research approach and with the help of paired t-tests, Pearson's correlation, multiple regressions, and ANOVA to determine the impact of multimodal approaches for teaching 30 dyslexic learners. The results revealed a significant enhancement of the students' performance in language when the modes of teaching were implemented. The study also focuses on the fact that how often strategies are used to benefit the success of the interventional program. The study also emphasizes that instead of a mass approach, individualized instruction may be more beneficial for learners with different levels of language competence at the beginning of the course. Nevertheless, one of the limitations of this study is that it involved a small sample, thus the results of the study do not have broader applicability. Also, the study fails to make an extended analysis of the fluency of the language retained by students while learning through MMT and the extent of interaction between various types of multimedia resources and students. Nevertheless, this research adds useful knowledge about the learning paradigms, namely, adaptive learning for learners diagnosed with learning disabilities, including dyslexia.

The research study by Chanderan and Hashim [16] identifies the ESL students' LLS at a private university in Selangor, Malaysia. The research used a quantitative cross-sectional survey design with a survey instrument developed from

Oxford's SILL. The target population was 200 freshmen from different faculties to understand on how students utilize LLS to improve their language skills. From the descriptive statistical analysis, the findings showed that the students prefer to apply those strategies aimed at enhancing their language proficiency. The results reveal cognitive and metacognitive approaches as the first ones with identified high efficiency for language acquisition. The study also focuses on the use of learner preferred strategies in language learning and acquisition processes. This is, however, the limitation of the research because the data collected may be influenced by the respondent's perception. As this study proposes, the study is limited by the failure to track the strategies' long-term effectiveness as well as their effects on student general performance. However, the study reveals insight into the ESL learners' sociocultural literacy practice, indicating to the educators the most appropriate ways to develop effective ESL curriculum.

Chung et al. [17] carried out the research with the aim of ascertaining how the retrieval of video playback affects ESL learners' learning. They use metrics that are more or less based on an observer's eye check and survey while evaluating the video playback speeds. The sample consisted of 32 ESL participants with gradual and immediate speed change during video watching. The characteristics favored by the results entailed that gradual speed changes considerably improved learners' flow state, video comprehension, as well as cognitive load. Therefore, these findings imply that slower changes could create a less obtrusive learning process for ESL students. The main drawback of the study is the limited scope of the same in the inclusion of a relatively small target population. However, the study concentrated on video comprehension, without much regard to other sectors in language acquisition, including listening and speaking. Nevertheless, the study gives insight that may be rather useful when it comes to enhancing resultant video-based learning; it provides recommendations that can be useful in the development of adaptive learning systems taking into account cognitive processing capacity.

Young and Shishido [18] investigated the application of the multipurpose chatbot called ChatGPT in the production of English reading content for ESL students. The study also looked at how ChatGPT can be useful in generating texts of different difficulties to meet needs of ESL students with a limited vocabulary. The development research approach was therefore based on the comparison of different scores of reading ease between the contents produced by OpenAI's ChatGPT and the actual reading texts. The study showed that ChatGPT could indeed generate simpler and more comprehensible texts, it can, therefore, be used to enhance language learning. The study recognizes it in the same breath, that as a recent innovation, ChatGPT has not undergone conventional assessment in language learning settings. Besides, readability scores can be used as a measure of learning content quality but do not take into account further factors, for instance, their learning process engagement or understanding. Nevertheless, this study evidences that the proposed concept of integrating AI technologies such as ChatGPT into adaptable language learning systems can be a groundbreaking model to modernize the approach towards selecting appropriate readings for ESL learners.

In the study, Monika and Suganthan [19] examines the impact of ChatGPT on English language learning for the English as Second Language students. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey eliciting data from ESL students taking English language classes in various institutions in the Vellore District. The study aimed at establishing the effect of ChatGPT model on the language abilities of the learners particularly on listening, speaking, reading, and writing (LSRW) skills. In the findings, it showed that ChatGPT had a positive impact on learner's vocabulary and the overall language usage. However, the study fails to draw the negative side of applying an AI model, including the one used in developing ChatGPT, such as the ability of the model to misunderstand context or make inaccurate content. Such findings also do not take into account a variety of ways, including durability of knowledge retained when using the ChatGPT, or its impact on learner's language proficiency or assessment results. However, there are still deficits in their coverage and application of ESL learning, but the study proves that AI technologies could bring positive impacts to developing ESL learning with the feedback and interactive generation that could attend the learners' needs.

The research carried out by Naparan and Bacasmot [20] focuses on an investigation of M-learning with Smartphone applications and their impact on students' communication competency with reference to their learning ESL. This research utilized descriptive-correlational research design to gather data from senior high school students in Davao City. When asked about Smartphone apps for learning, the study established that there exists a positive correlation between Smartphone app use and Communication competence, hence the importance of Smartphone apps in improving ESL learners' linguistic proficiency. Nonetheless, the research indicated that there was insignificantly decreased use of English language problems and smartphone apps. The study also employed regression analysis to establish the effect of smartphone apps on second languages but relied on subjective responses that reduce validity. However, the research sample is restricted to a particular group of students and the city, Senior high students in Davao City which means generalization of the results is impossible. However, such limitations would not deny the fact that this research has succeeded in offering gainful understandings on how the mobile learning technologies could be implemented and used to advance the effectiveness of ESL learning and the communication effectiveness of language learners.

Ahmad et al. [21] aims at identifying the language learning strategies employed by Primary ESL learners in Sarawak. The study adopted a quantitative approach to research and more specifically a survey to establish the extent of use of language learning strategies among Year 5 students. The study findings showed that students deployed more the cognitive-affective approach as well as the affective-motivation strategies most tasks than the other identified strategies such as memorization and compensation approaches. According to the study, the strategies discussed above can be used in order to improve comprehension and fluency when reading as well as students' linguistic competence. However, the present research does not take into account the implementation of these strategies as long-

term benefits for students' language development. Also, there is a lack of generality in the study since the participants involved were Year 5 students in a definite region only. Nevertheless, the study implies that ESL students should choose their preferred strategies when learning the English language, helping educators in the process of informing the way in which these children learn English.

III. Problem Statement

The growing popularity of technology in ESL learning has enhanced the availability of learning; nevertheless, most of the current systems are still stagnant, one-dimensional, and ill-advised to meet the needs of various learners [22], [23]. The conventional methods of tutoring lack responsiveness in real-time and are not responsive to the progress of the learner thus the tutoring methods are not able to support active listening and the balanced development of the language skills, especially in heterogeneous classroom environments. Such restrictions provide structural obstacles to language learning. To overcome this issue, this study discusses the T-RLNN framework, a contextual reinforcement learning-based model that constantly modifies the instructional pathways due to performance, engagement, and skill development of the learner. In such a way, T-RLNN creates a more flexible, responsive, and learner-centered ESL learning process.

IV. Proposed Framework for Adaptive ESL Instruction Using T-RLNN

The suggested T-RLNN model will be created to weigh the linguistic and behavioral components of the interaction between the learner and allow the model to change the instructional methods in real-time. First, the learner's inputs of the form of a text response, task type, response duration and indicators of engagement are processed so as to create structured and meaningful feature representations. The text responses undergo normalization by the form of lowercasing, punctuation marks and lemmatization and then they are tokenized by the RoBERTa tokenizer that is founded on the basis of lower byte-pair encoding. The process attains rich contextual embeddings, which reflect a semantic meaning and syntactic nuances of language use by learners. In addition to linguistic characteristics, behavioral data are of considerable importance to the modelling of the learner. Categorical variables, including the type of the task or the level of a particular proficiency, will be converted to dense vector representations, whereas the numerical variables, including the time of response and the engagement scores, will be rescaled to ensure that the values are the same across learners. These behavioral and linguistic representations are then combined together to create a holistic state of the learner and this becomes the basis of adaptive decision making. This state of learning is fed through an actor-critic reinforcement learning agent that decides the most appropriate instructional action at a given step. The agent can either change the difficulty of the tasks, give specific hints, or choose the other types of exercises that suit the learner, depending on the performance and engagement of the learner. The learning environment is able to constantly test these actions by rewarding them based on accuracy, participation and effectiveness of the response, meaning that the model is able to improve its policy as it advances. Every interaction between the learner is viewed as an episode, and the system is able to record as much as possible of each individual learning pattern and provide them with unique dynamic instruction. The T-RLNN system is a pipeline that end-to-end system pipeline that integrates contextual language comprehension with reinforcement-based learning adaptation provides a more efficient, reactive, and learner-focused ecological system to ESL tutoring.

The workflow of the proposed T-RLNN framework of adaptive ESL instruction is provided in Fig. 1. The inputs of learners, such as text answers, type of task, response time, and indicators of engagement, are preprocessed first and converted into the form of structured feature representations. The RoBERTa byte-pair encoder tokenizes text data to create deep contextual embeddings, and the deep contextual embeddings are combined with the encoded behavioral features to create a single state vector of the learner. This is the condition where language competence and interaction behavior are captured. A reinforcement learning agent, whose components are actors and critics, is an agent that employs this state to dynamically change instructional strategies, including task difficulty or hints, on the basis of real-time performance of the learner. Based on the learner's actions, the environment will assess the actions and give rewards based on accuracy, engagement, and efficiency of response and allow policy refinement and individualized ESL learning.

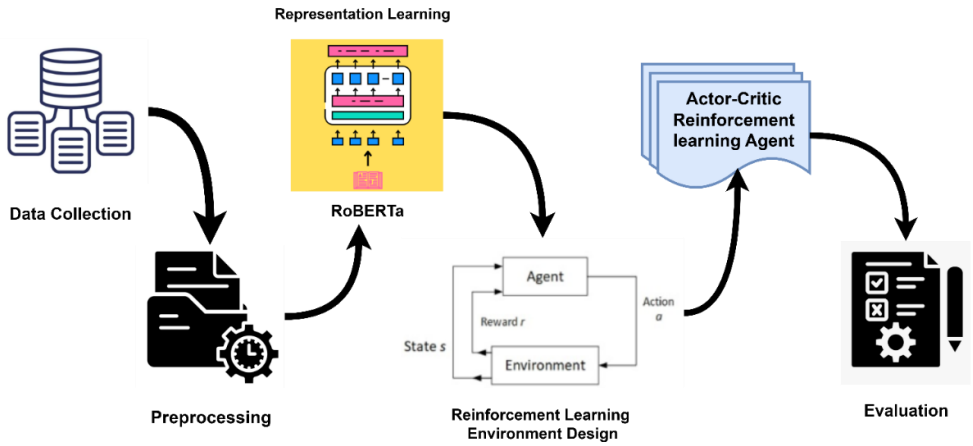

Fig. 1. Workflow of the T-RLNN framework.

A. Dataset Description

The experiments are based on publicly available Kaggle Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) dataset [24], comprising of bibliographic and textual records of research publications indexed by Scopus between 1983 and 2020. The dataset also contains structured metadata in the form of publication titles, abstracts, author details, affiliation, keywords, document type, year of publication and source information. These are textual elements that offer a corpus that is rich in language representation learning and semantic analysis in terms of ESL and CALL studies. The dataset is used to assess the efficiency of the contextual language modelling and adaptive instructions policy learning with the text-based input instead of direct textual and metadata-based samples.

B. Data Preprocessing

Data preprocessing transforms raw textual and metadata-based samples into structured, normalized, and feature-rich inputs by cleaning text, encoding categorical variables, and scaling numerical features, ensuring robust representation for downstream modeling.

1) Text normalization: Text responses of the learners are pre-processed to trim off noise, and create uniformity prior to tokenization. The procedure will involve lowercasing, eliminating of punctuations, and lemmatization. The steps, standardizing input text, enhance downstream representation learning, and promise that the RoBERTa tokenizer is presented with uniform sequences, which lack the variability due to surface-level variation in writing. It is represented, as in Eq. (1):

$$T_{norm} = Lemmatize(Lowercase(T_{raw} - P)) \quad (1)$$

where, T_{raw} is the original response, P denotes punctuation set, $Lowercase(\cdot)$ converts all characters, and $Lemmatize(\cdot)$ reduces words to canonical forms. The output T_{norm} represents normalized learner text ready for sub word tokenization.

2) Categorical feature encoding: Embedding layers are used to convert the learner-related categorical attributes, i.e. type of a task or a level of proficiency, into dense numerical vectors. When compared to one-hot encoding, the embeddings memorise semantic similarity among the categories, which allows the RL agent to acknowledge associations (e.g. similarity of tasks) and extrapolate more effectively across various learner groups. It is expressed, as in Eq. (2):

$$E_c = W_c \cdot OneHot(C) \quad (2)$$

Here, C represents the categorical feature (e.g., task type), $OneHot(C)$is its one-hot encoded vector, and $W_c$is the trainable embedding matrix. The product yields dense embedding E_c, capturing category information in a low-dimensional representation.

3) Numerical feature scaling: Continuous features such as textual complexity indicators, engagement, and retention are standardized for stable optimization. Raw values are transformed into zero-mean, unit-variance distributions. This ensures features contribute proportionally to state vectors and prevents domination by attributes with large numerical ranges, thus improving training stability and model convergence. It is computed, as in Eq. (3):

$$x' = \frac{x-\mu}{\sigma} \quad (3)$$

where, x is the original feature value, μ is the mean of the feature across training samples, and σ is the corresponding standard deviation. The scaled feature x' ensures normalized contribution to the learner state representation.

C. Representation Learning (RoBERTa)

The discussion demonstrates that the answers of learners are converted to high quality contextual embeddings by employing RoBERTa-base, a pre-trained transformer that can capture deep semantic and syntactic links in the text. Normalization and tokenization of responses is initially done with the use of the Byte-Pair Encoding (BPE) of RoBERTa, which provides the same representation to words, sub words, and special tokens by using unique IDs. Padding or truncation of token sequences to a constant maximum length L is then done so that a batch of token sequences can be processed, and attention masks used to differentiate between valid tokens and padding. The sequences are given through the multi-layer self-attention and feedforward representation encoders of RoBERTa to produce contextualized token representations that encode word-to-word dependencies. Because the Kaggle CALL data do not offer explicit logs of learner interaction or behavior, an engagement score is computed using the information of interaction clues on the content level as a proxy measure. Particularly, engagement is deduced by the normalized textual and structural features that each document has such as the length of the abstract, the density of keywords, and citation-related metadata. These characteristics indicate the intensity and applicability of interaction with ESL-related material and are normalized by min-max scale to provide the comparison between samples. The engagement score E is computed, as in Eq. (4):

$$E = \alpha \cdot L_{norm} + \beta \cdot K_{norm} + \gamma \cdot C_{norm} \quad (4)$$

where, L_{norm} represents normalized abstract length, K_{norm} denotes normalized keyword count, and C_{norm}corresponds to normalized citation-related indicators. The weighting coefficients α, β, γ are empirically set to ensure balanced contribution from each component. Lastly, attention-weighted mean pooling is contrasted to obtain concise, semantically meaningful latent encodings of learner responses to serve as a strong basis of downstream tasks in adaptive ESL teaching mathematically expressed, as in Eq. (5):

$$e = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{L} h_i \cdot m_i}{\sum_{i=1}^{L} m_i} \quad (5)$$

Here $h_i$represents the hidden state of token i, while $m_i \in \{0,1\}$indicates whether a token is valid. The result is a 768-dimensional sentence-level embedding which is effective at both grammatical and semantic accuracy These behavioral proxy features, including the engagement score defined in the previous subsection, are concatenated with RoBERTa embeddings to form a unified learner state representation. The resultant aggregated vector is then fed through a fully connected layer to give the dimensional consistency and equal contributions by all the features and to generate a dense learner state. This coherent

representation allows the reinforcement learning agent to make adaptive and context-sensitive instructional choices and be more successful than shallow text models in facilitating long-lasting and personalized learning. It is given in Eq. (6):

$$\text{sim}(e, e') = \frac{e \cdot e'}{\|e\| \, \|e'\|} \quad (6)$$

It computes the cosine similarity between two learner-response embeddings e and e', capturing semantic similarity for tasks like feedback assessment, clustering, or adaptive instruction.

D. Reinforcement Learning Environment Design

Adaptive ESL tutoring process is described as a Markov Decision Process (MDP), which gives a transparent pattern of interactions between the learner and the reinforcement learning (RL) agent. The state s_t at time t gives the profile of the learner at that time comprising RoBERTa-based contextual embedding alongside behavioral variables, including accuracy, response time, and engagement. The action is related to the selected instructional strategy, such as variations in task difficulty, exercises in grammar or vocabulary, comprehension, or hints. The reward measures effectiveness of the action using both immediate performance and engagement measures is calculated, as in Eq. (7):

$$r_t = w_{acc} \cdot \Delta Acc_t + w_{time} \cdot \Delta(-RT_t) + w_{eng} \cdot \Delta Eng_t \quad (7)$$

where, ΔAcc_t denotes the change in learner accuracy, $\Delta(-RT_t)$ represents improvement in response efficiency (lower time is better), and ΔEng_t reflects variation in learner engagement. The weights w_{acc}, w_{time}, w_{eng} are tuned to balance short-term performance with long-term engagement. The reward for the RL agent is to maximize the expected cumulative discounted reward over a sequence of learner interactions is expressed, as in Eq. (8):

$$J(\pi) = E_\pi[\sum_{t=0}^{T} \gamma^t r_t] \quad (8)$$

where, π represents the policy mapping states to actions, T is the length of an episode, and γ is the discount factor favoring long-term competence. Through the explicit specification of states, actions, and rewards in this MDP model, the system facilitates the RL agent to dynamically adjust instruction methods for individualized, situation-sensitive ESL learning maximizing both correctness and engagement on various learners.

E. Actor–Critic Reinforcement Learning Agent

To enable adaptive decision-making, this research applies an Actor-Critic model, whereby the agent is spatially learning a policy of action choice as well as an evaluation of state value function. The actor network computes a probability distribution of the potential instructional strategies given the current learner state vector and the critic network predicts the mean of the expected return to give feedback to stabilize learning. It is represented, as in Eq. (9):

$$A(s_t, a_t) = R_t + \gamma V(s_{t+1}) - V(s_t) \quad (9)$$

In Eq. (9), the measure of goodness of action taken a_t performed in state s_t compared to the baseline estimate of a critic. In this case R_t is the instant payoff, $V(s_t)$ and $V(s_{t+1})$ are the expected values of the states and g is the discount factor. Positive advantage means that the action of instructional choice has enhanced the performance of learners in a better way than projected and as such, the actor network will pursue strategies that are positive to reinforce. The workflow of RL Agent is represented in Fig. 2.

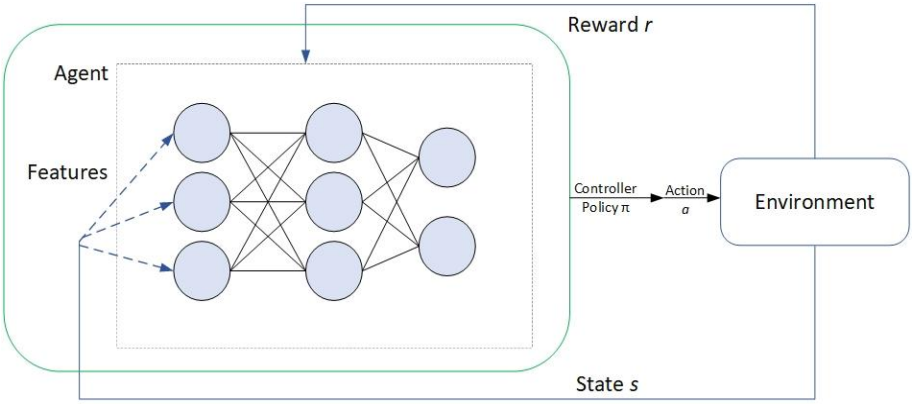

Fig. 2. Workflow of reinforcement learning agent.

Fig. 2 shows the architecture of the actor–critic reinforcement learning agent in the T-RLNN framework. The learner state vector, combining RoBERTa embeddings and behavioral features, feeds into a shared neural backbone that splits into two heads: the actor, which selects instructional actions, and the critic, which estimates expected rewards. The agent iteratively updates its policy based on rewards derived from learner accuracy, engagement, and response efficiency, enabling context-aware, adaptive instruction that evolves with learner performance.

Both networks are similar in that they have a common backbone of feedforward processing the learner state which then forks into two task active heads: a SoftMax output of the actor's policy and a scalar regression output of the value estimate of the critic. The policy $\pi_\theta(a_t \mid s_t)$ is parameterized by θ and a_t every time step, the action atbased on the current state s_t is chosen. The parameterized critic ϕ estimates the value function $V_\phi(s_t)$ which is a measure of the expected total reward at that state. Learning is then directed by the advantage function which

compares the degree to which a specific action is preferred to the predictive value of the critic. It is computed, as in Eq. (10):

$$A_t = r_t + \gamma V_\phi(s_{t+1}) - V_\phi(s_t) \quad (10)$$

In Eq. (10), r_t is the immediate reward and γ is the discount factor. The actor is updated by maximizing the expected advantage, while the critic minimizes the error in value prediction is represented, as in Eq. (11):

$$L(\theta, \phi) = -Et[log\pi_\theta(a_t \mid s_t) \cdot A_t] + \alpha \cdot \delta_t^2 \quad (11)$$

In this case, the policy loss gradient (actor) is the first term, and the value loss (critic) is the second term and their trade-off is regulated by α. Such joint optimization makes the actor to learn to suggest effective instructional strategies and the critic to assess their long-term contribution to the level of engagement and proficiency of the learners.

F. Learning Phase

Training of the T-RLNN framework entails two closely related factors, which are a reinforcement learning agent and the ever-changing learner state representation. RoBERTa takes the textual response of the learner at each step to create contextual embeddings that are subsequently added with behavioral characteristics, including accuracy, response time, and engagement, to create a complete learner state vector. According to this condition, the actor network will choose a proper instructional action. This is then simulated by the environment as the learner progresses and given feedback, which is translated into a reward signal. The critic considers the quality of the action chosen and employs this to polish the policy. By continuing its updates, the agent will acquire the ability to make compromises to improve short-term performance at the cost of long-term proficiency and involvement. Behavior cloning is used to log interactions in order to maintain a stable and efficient training, dealing with poor initial decisions. Further, mini-batch updating, entropy regularization and early stopping are also used to promote exploration, reduce overfitting, and strong convergence leading to a powerful, adaptive tutoring system. It is calculated, as in Eq. (12):

$$r_t = \alpha \cdot \text{accuracy}_t + \beta \cdot \text{engagement}_t - \gamma \cdot \text{response time}_t \quad (12)$$

It computes the reward r_t as a weighted combination of learner performance, engagement, and response time. It is given in Eq. (13):

$$\theta \leftarrow \theta + \eta \cdot \delta_t \nabla_\theta \log \pi_\theta(a_t \mid s_t) \quad (13)$$

Here, θ represents the actor parameters, π_θ the policy, δ_t the temporal difference error, and η the learning rate; the policy is updated to maximize expected rewards.

Algorithm 1 integrates RoBERTa embeddings with behavioral features to form comprehensive learner states, enabling an Actor–Critic RL agent to dynamically adapt instructional strategies and maximize accuracy, engagement, and long-term retention.

Algorithm 1: T-RLNN (RoBERTa-based Reinforcement Learning Neural Network)

```
Begin
  Input: CALL dataset D = {responses, accuracy, timestamps, engagement, task type}
  Output: Trained policy πθ and critic V_ϕ
    For each learner response r in D do
      Normalize text: lowercase, remove punctuation, lemmatize
      Tokenize using RoBERTa BPE with max length L
      Encode categorical features as embeddings
      Scale numerical features using z-score
    End For
    For each response r do
      Pass tokenized sequence into RoBERTa-base
      Obtain hidden states H = {h1, h2, …, hL}
      Compute embedding e = mean_pool(H, mask)
      Concatenate e with normalized features
      Project into fixed-size learner state vector s
    End For
    Define state s = learner state vector
    Define action a ∈ {increase_difficulty, decrease_difficulty, grammar_ex, vocab_ex, comprehension_ex, hint}
    Define reward r_t = w_acc · ΔAcc_t + w_time · Δ(−RT_t) + w_eng · ΔEng_t
    Initialize policy π_θ(a_t | s_t) and value function Vϕ(s)
    For episode = 1 to MaxEpisodes do
      Initialize learner state s0
      For t = 1 to T do
        Select action at ~ π_θ(a_t | s_t)
        Apply action in environment → observe new state st+1 and reward rt
        Compute advantage A_t = r_t + γV_ϕ(s_{t+1}) − V_ϕ(s_t)
        If A_t > 0 then
          Update actor parameters θ to increase ~ π_θ(a_t | s_t)
        Else
          Update actor parameters θ to decrease ~ π_θ(a_t | s_t)
        End If
        Update critic parameters ϕ to minimize value error
        Set s_t ← st+1
      End For
    End For
    Output optimized policy πθ*
    Evaluate using metrics
    Evaluate learner-centered metrics: Engagement Score, Retention Index, Adaptivity Index
End
```

The T-RLNN is a novel reinforcing idea of combining contextual language understanding by RoBERTa with an Actor-Critic reinforcement library to use adaptive ESL teaching. Through a balanced approach to semantic depth and behavioral insight, the framework produces strong learner state representations, which can be used to provide context-sensitive personalization to outperform traditional models and provide real-time adaptive tutoring with better engagement, retention and proficiency results.

V. Results and Discussion

The obtained experimental data prove that the integration of learning based on reinforcement and neural networks based on transformers can be a key factor in accelerating the ESL teaching process. The suggested workflow combines all data preprocessing, learning contextual representation with RoBERTa, a simulated reinforcement learning setting, and optimizing the actors and critics to help the system to provide adaptive and person-centered instructional plans. All tests were run in Python on the CALL dataset, processed by ordinary NLP technology and tokenized using the RoBERTa tokenizer. To have equal and trustworthy assessment, the data was divided into training (70%), validation (15%), and testing (15%). In order to evaluate the efficiency of the suggested approach, the performance of the method was evaluated against a number of conventional models, such as Support Vector Machines, Random Forests, and a feedforward Deep Neural Network, along with an earlier developed RLDNN model. The five-fold cross-validation was employed to fine-tune both the baseline and proposed model and the results averaged across three separate runs, to provide statistical strength. All the evaluation metrics showed that T-RLNN architecture is highly flexible and efficient, and better and stable performance was attained than the traditional approach. These results note the importance of combining deep contextual language representations with reinforcement learning to teach ESL in an adaptive manner. In general, the findings offer an important and valid comparison to prove the usefulness of the suggested framework in facilitating individualized and responsive language learning. Table I summarizes the simulation parameters that were employed in the experiments.

TABLE. I. Simulation Parameter and Hardware Setup

Parameter	Value / Description
Dataset	CALL (Computer-Assisted Language Learning)
Data Split	70 % Train / 15 % Validation / 15 % Test
Text Preprocessing	Lowercasing, punctuation removal, lemmatization
Tokenizer & Embedding	RoBERTa-base (768-dim, max length = 128 tokens)
State Representation	RoBERTa embedding + behavioral features (accuracy, response time, engagement)
Action Space	{Increase/Decrease difficulty, Grammar, Vocabulary, Comprehension, Hint}
RL Algorithm	Actor–Critic (Advantage Actor–Critic, A2C)
Reward Weights	w_acc = 0.5, w_time = 0.3, w_eng = 0.2
Learning Rate & Batch	1e-4 (Adam optimizer), Batch size = 32
Training Episodes	500 with early stopping (patience = 10 epochs)
Hardware Configuration	Intel i9-11900K CPU, NVIDIA RTX 3090 GPU (24 GB), 64 GB RAM
Software Environment	Python 3.9, PyTorch 2.0, HuggingFace Transformers, Ubuntu 22.04

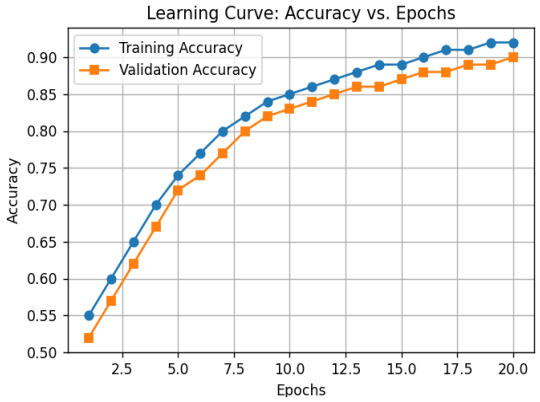

Fig. 3. Learning curve accuracy.

Fig. 3 shows how the training and validation accuracy of the proposed T-RLNN framework evolves with the epoch. It shows that the model can enhance the classification of the learner interaction across multiple iterations and validation accuracy is also close to training accuracy meaning that it has a good generalization ability. The accuracy improvement in this ESL adaptive learning scenario is associated with the ability of the framework to match the state representations of the learners with the best teaching method. The diagram confirms the usefulness of the combination of RoBERTa embedding and RL and demonstrates that the model will stabilize and reach high accuracy results of adaptive tutoring.

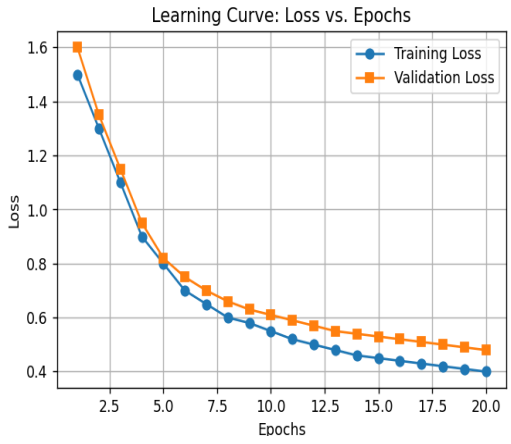

Fig. 4. Learning curve loss.

In Fig. 4, the training and validation loss are decreasing as the T-RLNN model is optimized. A gradually diminishing curve in both curves signifies constant convergence, and the decreasing distance between them shows an insignificant overfitting. In this ESL learning model, less loss is a positive indication of an increased efficiency of the system in relating learner response to the right instructional action. The model achieves the minimization of prediction errors and enhances instructional flexibility by learning to combine semantic embeddings of RoBERTa and RL cues. The loss curves therefore, validate stability, scalability and strength of the suggested adaptive tutoring system.

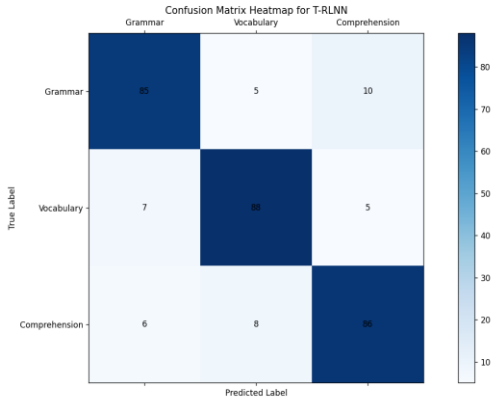

Fig. 5. Confusion matrix heatmap for T-RLNN.

Fig. 5 shows the confusion matrix heatmap of the proposed T-RLNN framework where it is shown that it has successfully performed in the classification of ESL modules which are grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension. The diagonal values indicate the correctly classified responses whereas the off-diagonal values show the misclassifications. The high concentration in the direction of the diagonal indicates that the integration of the RoBERTa embeddings with the reinforcement learning could help in facilitating adaptive instruction. The heatmap also gives the information regarding the task recognition: grammar and vocabulary tasks are recognized better, and comprehension tasks are a little bit harder. On the whole, this visualization points to the fact that the model can also cope with a wide variety of ESL learning tasks and offer tutoring that is flexible and personalized.

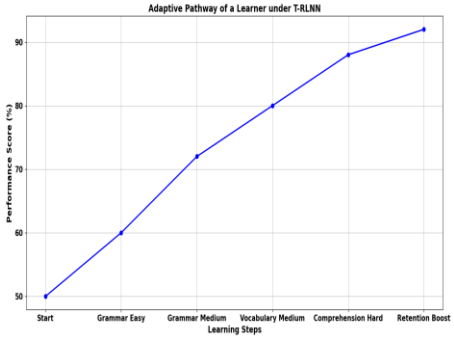

Fig. 6. Adaptive pathway of a learner under T-RLNN.

Fig. 6 represents a learning trajectory produced by the proposed T-RLNN. It describes the change in instructing strategies based on the output of the learners, whereby, simple grammar tasks are introduced and then advanced with the harder ones related to learning vocabulary and comprehension. The fact that there is an increasing trend in the performance scores indicates that the agent is capable of dynamically personalizing the learning trajectories. The framework utilizes RoBERTa embeddings to get contextual understanding and RL to get decision-making to adjust the difficulty level and content choice to get the most engagement and retention. This qualitative model of visualization of the pathways shows that the model has the ability to provide personalized education with the help of which the proficiency can be developed within ESL students.

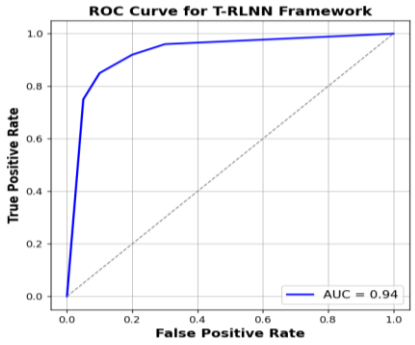

Fig. 7. ROC curve.

Fig. 7 shows the ROC curve of the proposed T-RLNN framework with an area under the curve (AUC) of 0.94 on the CALL dataset. The curve shows that the model is highly discriminative in categorizing the interactions among learners with high scores of true positive rates being preserved with different levels of false positive rates. The framework has a predictive performance score of 0.94 which suggests that it is very effective in matching the responses of learners with the appropriate teaching-learning methods. Using RoBERTa embeddings with RL, T-RLNN exhibits improved adaptivity and accuracy, therefore, being very useful in real-time personalized ESL learning settings, where prediction of outcomes is essential.

A. Performance Evaluation for Proposed Framework

The research outcomes indicate that the proposed T-RLNN framework is able to attain a significantly high overall accuracy of 92.5% which evidently exceeds all the traditional baseline models. Such a good performance is attributed to the fact that the model is able to constantly learn through the interaction of learners and change its teaching methods depending on the individual needs. The fact that the recall score takes 90.6 % also means that the system is efficient in detecting meaningful learning patterns and providing timely and context-sensitive feedback. Notably, adaptivity under this model extends beyond scaffolding content difficulty but also provides consistent individualized performance and accuracy is at 91.8% across a range of learner types. On the other hand, traditional methods, including Support Vector Machines and Random Forests, have obvious weaknesses, especially in their failure to adapt to the new behavioral patterns or the learning styles of new learners. Although the baseline Deep Neural Network has a fairly high accuracy of 89.1, it does not offer the adaptability to decision-making and instructional dynamism that is offered by reinforcement learning. Consequently, this makes it less responsive to the changes in learner engagement or performance through the course of time. These results are highly indicative of the fact that reinforcement learning-based adaptive tutoring is a more efficient model to be used in ESL teaching. T-RLNN improves the understanding, maintains the attention of the learner and provides more applicable learning by constantly optimizing the learning paths according to the feedback and real-time behavior of the learner. In general, the findings support the hypothesis that the use of contextual language comprehension combined with reinforcement learning offers a significant benefit over non-adaptive and fixed baseline models of the contemporary ESL teaching process.

1) Precision: The ratio of the total number of correct predictions. The precision is derived using Eq. (14):

$$\text{Precision} = \frac{\text{TP}}{\text{TP+FP}} \quad (14)$$

2) Recall: The number of accurately predicted positive instances over all the predicted positives. Recall measures are evaluated using Eq. (15):

$$\text{Recall} = \frac{\text{TP}}{\text{TP+FN}} \quad (15)$$

3) Accuracy: The proportion of successfully predicted positive cases among all the actual positives. Accuracy is evaluated using Eq. (16):

$$\text{Accuracy} = \frac{\text{TP+TN}}{\text{TP+TN+FP+FN}} \quad (16)$$

4) F1-Score: The harmonic mean of recall and precision, reconciling both measures. F1-score is calculated with the Eq. (17):

$$\text{F1} - \text{score} = 2 \times \frac{\text{Precision x Recall}}{\text{Precision + Recall}} \quad (17)$$

where, the FN, TN, FP, and TP stand for false negative, true negative, and true positive, respectively.

Fig. 8 and Table II display the performance measures of the suggested T-RLNN framework on four major evaluation metrics. The model performs best in Accuracy at 92.5%, closely followed by Precision at 91.8%. Recall, which is a measure of the model's capacity to detect pertinent instances, is 90.6%, while the F1-Score, which is the harmonic mean of Precision and Recall, is 91.2%. These outcomes show an even and strong performance in all the metrics, indicating that the suggested RL model is efficient in ensuring consistent prediction quality with fewer false positives and fewer false negatives.

B. Ablation Study

An ablation study was conducted to gain insight into the role played by each of the elements in the T-RLNN architecture. The experiments tested the individual effect of each of the modules by varying or eliminating certain modules on model performance and adaptability.

Table III describes the ablation results of T-RLNN. The lack of RoBERTa embeddings or engagement features reduces the performance, which confirms their significance. Integrated components are effective, and the full model is the one that has the greatest accuracy, F1-score, engagement, and retention.

TABLE. II. PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Metrics	Value
Accuracy	92.5
Precision	91.8
Recall	90.6
F1-Score	91.2

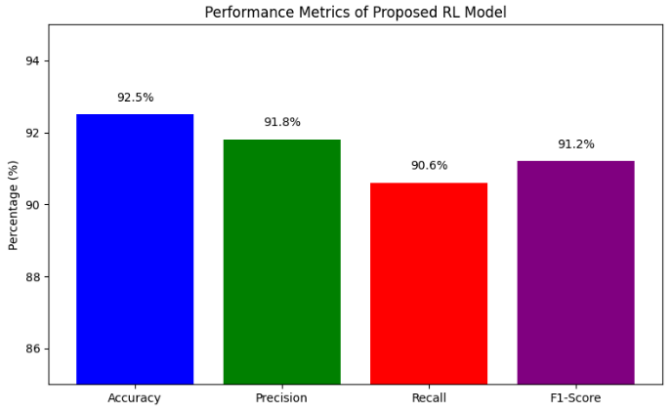

Fig. 8. Performance evaluation.

TABLE. III. ABLATION RESULTS

Model Variant	Accuracy (%)	F1-Score	Engagement Score	Retention Index
Without RoBERTa (RLDNN)	87.2	0.85	0.70	0.72
Without Engagement Features	89.5	0.87	0.74	0.76
Full T-RLNN (Proposed)	92.5	0.90	0.81	0.84

C. Comparative Analysis

Table IV provides a comparative study of four ML models: Proposed RL, SVM, RF, and DNN—with respect to three performance measures: accuracy, recall, and precision. The Proposed RL model shows the best performance with the highest accuracy of 92.5%, recall of 90.6%, and precision of 91.8% compared to all the methods considered. Even though the conventional models show increasingly better performance, they are still inferior in general. Among them, the DNN model demonstrates the best performance, closest to the RL-based approach, with the second highest in all three measures.

TABLE. IV. COMPARATIVE STUDY WITH EXISTING METHODS

Model	Accuracy (%)	Precision (%)	Recall (%)	F1 Score (%)	Engagement Score (ES)	Retention Index (RI)	Adaptivity Index (AI)
Proposed RL	92.5	91.8	90.6	91.2	76.5	73.9	67.3
SVM [25]	85.3	84.1	82.9	83.5	61.2	58.3	42.8
RF [26]	87.2	86.5	85.0	85.7	63.9	61.5	48.1
DNN [27]	89.1	88.2	88.2	88.2	68.4	66.0	52.6

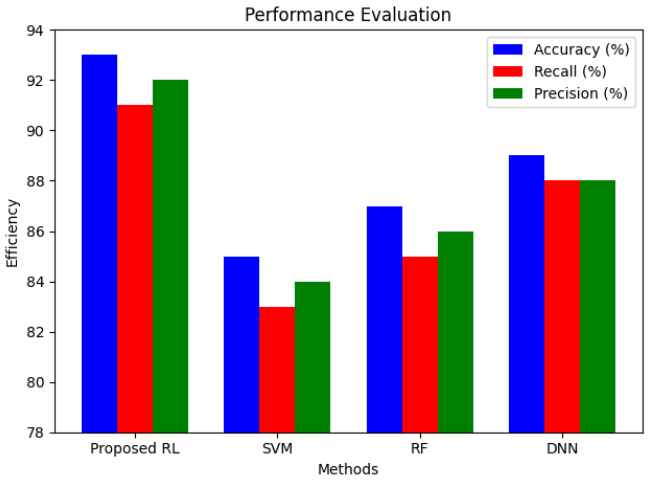

Fig. 9. Comparative study with existing methods.

Fig. 9 compares the results of four different techniques—i.e., a new RL method, SVM, RF, and DNN—on three most important metrics: accuracy, recall, and precision. Performance of each method is depicted by separate, color-coded bars, so it is very convenient to compare the results visually. Interestingly, the RL approach performs better than the rest with scores of approximately 92% for accuracy, 90% for recall, and 91% for precision, while the DNN, RF, and SVM approaches trail behind with increasingly lower scores in the high to low 80s. This clear illustration highlights the greater efficacy of the RL approach in managing these evaluation metrics.

D. Discussion

The suggested T-RLNN system will follow the format of an actor-critic reinforcement augmentation model where the real-time ability, reaction time, participation, and performance in assignments of the learners are directly linked to the teaching choices. The model combines contextual embeddings based on RoBERTa to identify not only the linguistic richness but also the cognitive and behavioral cues to reflect the entire state of each learner and represent it in a rich and holistic manner. This combination enables the system to provide context-sensitive personalization, where the actions of instruction are much more precisely tailored than the conventional ESL learning models. In contrast to inert methods, T-RLNN adapts its instructional plan as the learner behavior changes so that it prioritizes both the accuracy of learning in short-term and long-term interaction and retention. The architecture is a combination of RoBERTa embeddings, a projection layer to stabilize state representations, and an actor and critic network that drives instructional choices. The actor produces discrete instructional behavior, like making grammar, vocabulary or comprehension task choices, by the use of a softmax output, and modulates task difficulty by actions of continuous value. This design concurs with the adaptable, data-driven modulation of instruction that can be very close to the needs and progress of learners. The efficiency of the suggested framework is proven with the help of experiments. T-RLNN was always superior to classic models, such as Support Vector Machines, Random Forests, and Deep Neural Networks, in the most important evaluation metrics. The accuracy, F1-score and Adaptivity Index of the framework were 92.5, 91.2 and 67.3 respectively, which is almost 20 points higher than the DNN baseline. These results underscore the fact that the model can be used to increase the engagement of learners, knowledge retention, and competence of language in general through responsive learning pathways. To sum up, the present research demonstrates that T-RLNN can be used to implement a practical and scalable solution to real-time personalized ESL tutoring. The effective combination of the concept of reinforcement learning and contextual language representations introduces a strong and progressive direction in the development of technology-enhanced language learning systems.

VI. Conclusion and Future Work

The T-RNN framework was formulated as an adaptive ESL tutoring system that combined both contextual representations learning and reinforcement learning, whereby the instructional strategies are dynamically adjusted in real-time. The system uses behavioral measures (response time, accuracy, and engagement) and RoBERTa-based semantic embedding to create a complex and sophisticated learner state. The actor-critic agent then uses this state to identify the most suitable instructional actions to take via each of the learners, giving them highly personalized instructions. Experimental analyses showed that T-RLNN was the most effective model compared to traditional models, such as SVM, Random Forest, and feedforward DNNs, with better accuracy, F1-scores, and adaptivity. These findings imply that the framework has been able to balance both short-term effects of improvements in performance and long-term retention, which has resulted in making ESL instruction more scalable, learner-centered, and effective.

The research has some limitations, though. The experiments were also done in one dataset, which could limit generalizability, and the application of RoBERTa demands a large computational power, which can be difficult to use in low-resource or real-time environments. The research in the future will investigate cross-dataset validation to enhance generalizability and lightweight or distilled transformer models to decrease the cost of computation. Also, the use of multimodal cues to the learner, e.g., speech, eye-tracking, or interaction patterns, may facilitate more comprehensive modeling of the learner states. The longitudinal assessments will assist in measuring the learning outcomes over a period of time, and such techniques as federated learning and meta-learning may assist in large-scale personalization without invading the privacy of learners. Altogether, the results indicate that reinforcement learning integrated into a contextual embedding offers a very versatile, effective, and customized method of ESL instruction, which represents the future of intelligent language tutoring systems.

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Exploring Cyber Trends and Threats Towards V2X Connected Vehicles in Malaysia: A Systematic Literature Review

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***Abstract*—The rapid expansion of 5G enabled Vehicle to Everything (V2X) communication has evolved into an intelligent transportation system by supporting applications such as autonomous driving, real-time traffic optimization, and road safety management. However, the growing connectivity and diverse communication protocols also create major cybersecurity challenges, especially in the network tier of connected vehicles. This study conducts a systematic literature review following the PRISMA framework to examine cybersecurity threats and detection models in Malaysia's V2X ecosystem. It involves an analyzing phase towards 85 peer-reviewed studies published between 2016 and 2025. This addresses three research questions: (RQ1) What is the state-of-the-art in CVs in the aspect of network technology in Malaysia, (RQ2) What are the cybersecurity trends and threats towards CVs in the network tier, and (RQ3) What are the existing models in detecting and responding to cyber threats against CVs? Study identifies critical threats, including spoofing, jamming, and denial of service attacks, while evaluating intrusion detection systems that use machine learning, deep learning, and hybrid approaches. The existing approaches are yet to face limitations in real-time performance, contextual accuracy, and supply chain resilience under Malaysia's tropical urban conditions. This study proposes a conceptual model, the SCARF-V2X model, an NGSOC integrated concept that utilizes SIEM, SOAR, and Malaysian cyber threat intelligence platforms to enable automated detection and first-layer auto-response, specifically towards supply chain threats in CVs. The proposed model aims to improve Malaysia's V2X cybersecurity landscape and introduces a proactive and adaptive model to protect CVs against evolving cyber threats.**

Keywords*—5G; V2X; connected vehicles; cybersecurity; intrusion detection systems; anomaly detection; spoofing; DoS; network tier; machine learning

I. Introduction

The integration of fifth-generation network (5G)-enabled Vehicle-to-Everything (V2X) communication has transformed the intelligent transportation systems and enabled a real-time data exchange in smart cities, which includes autonomous driving, traffic optimization, and collision avoidance [1],[2],[3]. In Malaysia, the smart cities initiatives project like the Cyberjaya 5G testbed demonstrates the potential of these technologies, which have the potential to achieve latencies as low as 23ms for safety-critical messaging [4]. However, this hyper-connectivity also exposes the opportunities in the attack surface for cyber threats, particularly in the network tier where vehicles interact with infrastructure, cloud platforms, and other devices [5], [6],[7],[8],[9].

Malaysia's tropical urban environments introduce unique challenges to V2X security [10], including the signal attenuation from high humidity and complex multi-path propagation in dense cities such as Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia [11]. Rain attenuation creates natural 'blind spots' [10] that the malicious actors could synchronize it with the recent and advanced cyber incidents. This has been reported in Malaysia, where several cyber incidents have occurred, including ransomware attacks on Klang Valley's traffic management systems [12] and spoofed Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) and toll transactions [13], highlighting the urgent need for robust cybersecurity measures. These threats mirror the global cyber trends, which are the false message injection [14] and Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks [15], but these are exacerbated by local infrastructure gaps and the rapid adoption of heterogeneous technologies such as Dedicated Short-Range Communication (DSRC) and Cellular Vehicle-to-Everything (C-V2X) [4],[16].

Existing Intrusion Detection Systems (IDS) leverage machine learning (ML) and deep learning (DL) to identify the anomalous behaviors in the vehicular systems, yet they often fail to address the real-time performance, where high mobility in urban corridors demands detection latencies under 100ms [17], yet models like Random Forests [18] struggle with scalability. This also includes Context-aware threat intelligence, where there are several reported attacks on Malaysian telematics systems [19] that require localized detection frameworks, akin to IoT threat models in smart homes [20] or political security prediction systems [21]. Lastly, the focus on the supply chain risk, where it could compromise the On-The-Air (OTA) updates [22], necessitates solutions inspired by Industry 4.0 automation safeguards [23].

This study has seven sections, which start with Section I: Introduction. Section II outlines the Methods used in searching the relevant published papers related to these studies. Section III details the Results based on the criteria and the final list of the chosen papers to be discussed. Section IV presents the Discussion on the elements related to the research questions that have been listed in Section II. It also presents the Proposed Conceptual Model that will focus to improve the detection system in V2X communication in vehicular system within

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Malaysia ecosystem. Section V gives away Future Works to be completed to evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed conceptual model and lastly Section VI is the study's Conclusion.

This study bridges these gaps through a systematic review of 5G-V2X cybersecurity, with three research questions listed in Table I. This study synthesizes global advancements in V2X cybersecurity and contextualizes them within Malaysia's regulatory landscape and environmental constraints, thereby offering a strategic model for enhancing the resilience of the nation's connected mobility ecosystem against emerging cyber threats [36].

II. METHODS

This study employed a systematic literature review (SLR) guided by the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework [37] to identify, evaluate, and synthesize relevant research on cybersecurity threats and detection models in Malaysia's 5G-V2X ecosystem. The methodology was designed to address three research questions (RQs) while ensuring transparency and reproducibility. Table I lists the details of the study methodology.

TABLE I. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Questions	RQ1: What is the state-of-the-art in CVs in the aspect of network technology in Malaysia? RQ2: What are the cybersecurity trends and threats towards CVs in the network tier? RQ3: What are the existing models in detecting and responding to cyber threats against CVs?
Research Dates	January 2016 – November 2025
Databases	a. IEEE Xplore b. ScienceDirect c. SpringerLink d. ACM Digital Library e. Google Scholar f. Malaysian government and industry reports
Search Criteria	**Inclusion:** a. Studies focusing on V2X communications, cybersecurity threats, and intrusion detection models in connected vehicles. b. Research conducted in Malaysia or applicable to tropical urban environments. c. Peer-reviewed journal articles, conference papers, and credible technical reports. **Exclusion:** a. Studies unrelated to vehicular networks or cybersecurity. b. Non-English publications without verified translations. c. Opinion pieces or non-peer-reviewed sources lacking empirical data.
Search Keywords	RQ1: "Connected vehicles Malaysia," "V2X network technology," "DSRC vs. C-V2X Malaysia," "5G vehicular communication" RQ2: "Cybersecurity threats connected vehicles," "V2X attack vectors," "Malaysia ransomware attacks transportation," "spoofing jamming V2X" RQ3: "Intrusion detection systems connected vehicles," "machine learning V2X security," "deep learning anomaly detection," "hybrid IDS vehicular networks"
Search Methods	**Systematic Database Queries:** a. Boolean operators (AND, OR) refined searches b. Filters applied for publication year (2016–2024) and document type **Snowballing:** a. Backwards referencing of citations in key papers to identify foundational studies. Grey Literature Review: Government reports, whitepapers, and industry case studies

Fig. 1 illustrates the flowchart for evaluating each paper by adopting the PRISMA flowchart [37]. PRISMA flowchart has been chosen in this study, as it assists in transparency and clarity of the content, specifically for this topic.

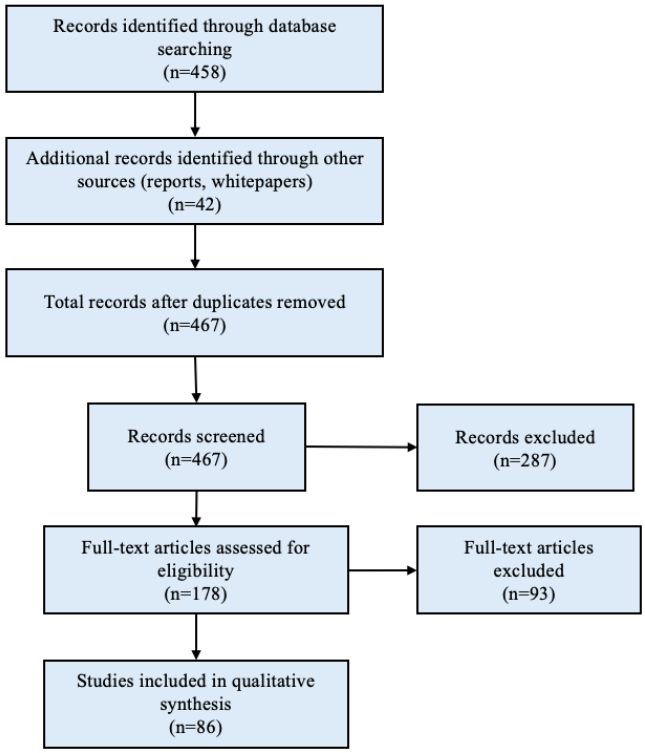

Fig. 1. The PRISMA flowchart.

III. RESULTS

From the analysis and synthesis made on the chosen papers, 86 papers have been selected from the publication years of 2013 to 2025. The year 2024 is the highest number of studies related to security in vehicular systems, as illustrated in Fig. 2. There is one published paper in 2013 that has been selected for this study, as this is the best reference for the Fuzzy Delphi Method (FDM) that has been implemented in vehicular systems [51].

The selection process in determining the published papers for this study is very crucial to preserve the quality of the literature review of the paper and the evaluation of the discussion made for the three research questions, as stated in Table I. The evaluation studies have been tailored to the situation in Malaysia, where this country is still developing and transitioning at a proper pace, and a smart city will be adopted. By referring to the adoption of different countries and assessing the relation between climate in Malaysia and the safety in autonomous vehicular systems, this can help other researchers and the nation to build a safe V2X communication within the Malaysian ecosystem. By identifying the current technology in

V2X communication adopted in Malaysia (RQ1), analyzing the impact of cyber threats against the transportation system in Malaysia as it is part of the National Critical Information Infrastructure (NCII) (RQ2) and evaluating the current methodology used to defense in V2X communication (RQ3), this paper can be one of the best reference to improve and build a resilience in smart city in Malaysia.

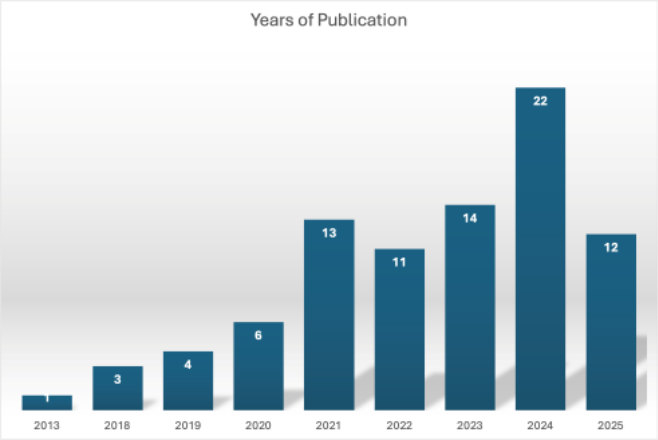

Fig. 2. Years of publication.

IV. Discussion

In this section, three main topics have been discussed in order to fulfil the three research questions in this study.

A. The State-of-the-Art CVs in the Aspect of Network Technology in Malaysia

Malaysia's CVs ecosystem has undergone a significant transformation through a strategic adoption of Dedicated Short-Range Communications (DSRC) and Cellular V2X (C-V2X) technologies, tailored to address the unique challenges of tropical urban environments [38], [12], [39]. DSRC is one of the wireless technology standards (based on IEEE802.11p), which has designed for fast and reliable communication between vehicle-to-vehicle (V2V) and Vehicle-to-Infrastructure (V2I) communications [86]. This communication offers fast detection to protect the safety of the travelling public. On the other hand, C-V2X is a Cellular-based communication technology that enables vehicles to exchange information with other vehicles (V2V), roadside infrastructure (V2I), pedestrians (V2P), and broader networks (V2N). This cellular technology supports safer and more efficient transportation systems through the real-time sharing of data such as location, speed, and hazard notifications. This technology operates through either direct short-range links (PC5) or network-assisted connections (Uu), making it suitable for a wide range of applications, including collision avoidance, traffic optimization, and the advancement of autonomous driving systems. In C-V2X methodology, it follows the concept of edge computing, where the communication between the client (the connected vehicles) and the servers will pass through the edge nodes [27]. The utilization of edge computing has reduced the latency in data transmission, making it more reliable for critical infrastructure such as connected vehicles [27].

From the comparison testing in DSRC and C-V2X, empirical studies reveal substantial improvements in network reliability, with documented packet delivery ratios progressing from 82% to 98% across various deployment scenarios. For instance, field measurements in Kuala Lumpur's dense urban corridors demonstrate the real-world performance of DSRC [12], showcasing median latencies of 47ms ± 12ms during peak traffic conditions. However, these trials also highlight environmental challenges, as packet delivery rates drop to 68% in complex non-line-of-sight situations due to signal attenuation from high-rise structures and humidity [11]. The PLUS Expressway electronic toll collection system stands as a notable success story, achieving 99.2% vehicle identification accuracy through optimized antenna placement and dynamic power control algorithms [13].

The transition to 5G-enabled C-V2X represents a leap forward in Malaysia's connected mobility infrastructure. Controlled trials in the Cyberjaya 5G testbed have recorded end-to-end latencies as low as 23ms ± 7ms for critical safety messages which has shown a remarkable 62% reduction compared to legacy DSRC systems [4], as illustrated in Fig. 3. Similarly, Penang's Smart Traffic System has implemented LTE-V2X (Release 14) enhanced with locally developed congestion-control algorithms, maintaining 98.4% communication reliability even under extreme vehicle densities of 1,200 vehicles/km² [40]. These advancements underscore Malaysia's growing expertise in adapting global V2X standards to local conditions.

At the protocol level, Malaysian researchers have made significant contributions to optimizing the V2X stack. The Enhanced EDCA (E-EDCA) modification reduces channel access delays by 28.4% through dynamic contention window adjustments, addressing the high contention inherent in urban vehicular networks [41]. Physical layer innovations, such as adaptive 16/256-QAM modulation, improve spectral efficiency by 37% in variable channel conditions [39], while Hybrid ARQ implementations achieve 99.1% reliability for safety-critical message transmission [42]. These protocol enhancements are complemented by architectural innovations, including the Malaysian Automotive Institute's hybrid gateway prototype, which enables seamless handovers between DSRC and C-V2X technologies while maintaining switching latencies below the critical 100ms threshold [43].

Looking ahead, challenges remain in achieving seamless interoperability between disparate V2X technologies and ensuring consistent performance during Malaysia's prolonged monsoon seasons. The integration of machine learning-based traffic flow prediction models [34], [58] with V2X systems presents a promising avenue for optimizing network resource allocation in real-time [44]. As Malaysia continues to expand its 5G-V2X deployments, these innovations position the nation as a regional leader in adapting CV technologies to tropical urban environments while highlighting the need for ongoing research into climate-resilient communication protocols.

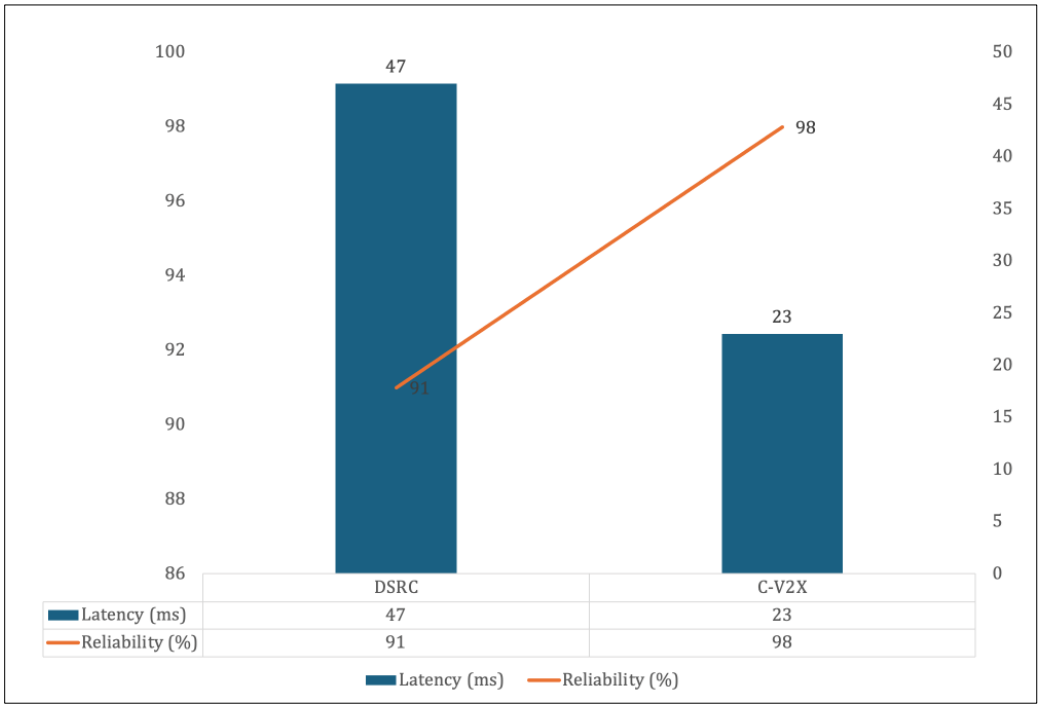

Fig. 3. The comparisons of latency and reliability in DSRC and C-V2X.

B. *Cybersecurity Trends and Threats of CV's Network Tier in Malaysia*

The rapid deployment of 5G-V2X technologies in Malaysia has introduced a complex attack surface across vehicular communication networks, cloud platforms, and IoT-enabled infrastructure [45]. While these interconnected systems enable advanced mobility solutions, they have also become targets for increasingly sophisticated cyber threats, including large-scale data breaches, ransomware attacks, and vehicular system manipulations [25], [46]. As connected vehicles evolve, they inherit the attack surfaces of both automotive and IoT systems [47], [48], [27]. The real-world cases exemplify the three primary threat categories facing Malaysia's V2X ecosystem, including communication channel exploits, telematics system breaches, and infrastructure attacks [57].

The communication layer presents particularly acute risks due to Malaysia's hybrid deployment of DSRC and C-V2X technologies. Security analyses have identified recurring patterns of false message injection attacks, where malicious actors transmit fabricated collision warnings or traffic alerts to manipulate driver behavior [14]. These attacks exploit the inherent trust models in V2X communications, where vehicles often prioritize low-latency message delivery over rigorous authentication. Concurrently, jamming attacks targeting 5G-based C-V2X signals have emerged as a persistent threat, potentially causing communication blackouts along smart highway corridors [24]. The tropical urban environment exacerbates these challenges, as signal attenuation in high-density areas like Kuala Lumpur's city center creates opportunities for intermittent jamming that may evade conventional detection systems [11].

Beyond communication channels, cloud-based telematics platforms have proven vulnerable to sophisticated intrusions [9], [49]. A 2024 breach of Prasarana's database exposed sensitive personal information, involving part of its internal systems, which may risk over hundreds of Malaysian's safety while using public transportation systems [26],[50],[51]. Forensic investigations attributed this incident to weak API authentication protocols that allowed SQL injection attacks [52]. Similarly, two major ransomware attacks hit two different transportation services involving Malaysia Airport Holdings Berhad (MAHB) and a well-known Malaysian airline, exposing thousands of sensitive personal information of their passengers [19],[53],[54]. These breaches highlight the urgent need for robust encryption and access control mechanisms in Malaysia's growing CVs ecosystem.

Various studies highlight real-world incidents involving firmware tampering [55] and malicious updates in IoT systems, which apply to V2X contexts [56], [30]. Transportation infrastructure supporting V2X networks has also emerged as a high-value target. On Malaysia's PLUS Highway network, security analysts uncovered an elaborate RFID toll payment fraud scheme that exploited cloned tags to evade charges, resulting in substantial revenue losses [13]. These incidents underscore the cascading impacts of infrastructure compromises, where single points of failure can affect thousands of vehicles and passengers daily [55].

From Table II, cyberattacks in the transportation system have impacted all layers of the OSI model from Layer 1 to Layer 7. On the other hand, from the recent reports of cyber-attacks towards transportation cases that happened specifically in Malaysia have been listed in Table III by referring to the Open Systems Interconnection (OSI) Model for a better visualization and understanding. In Table II, there are a total of nine cases related and four layers in the OSI Model impacted in the cyber incidents that occurred related to transportation and vehicular

systems, those are physical, data link, network and applications. Application layer, which is also layer 7, is the most cited attacks occurs involving the surface attack methodology. Layer 4, 5, and 6 attacks do exist in transportation systems, but they are not explicitly reported in Malaysian transportation cyberattack cases. Cases such as ransomware attacks [19], [53], [54], database compromise [52], RFID toll fraud [13]and jamming and signal distraction [11], [24] are the results of successful bypass in OSI model layer 4,5 and 6, which enable the attack.

TABLE II. CYBERATTACKS MAPPED IN OSI MODEL

OSI Layer	Layer Function in Transportation Systems	Example of Cyberattacks	Related Citation
Layer 1 Physical	Wireless signal transmission, hardware, RF environment	RF jamming (DSRC, C-V2X, 5G), GNSS spoofing, RFID tag cloning (toll systems)	[24], [69], [13]
Layer 2 Data Link	Frame delivery, MAC addressing, link-level trust	False message injection (BSM/CAM), Sybil attacks, MAC spoofing	[14], [19], [25]
Layer 3 Network	Routing and packet forwarding	Blackhole / grayhole attacks, routing manipulation, network-layer DoS	[45], [41]
Layer 4 Transport	End-to-end reliability and flow control	TCP/UDP flooding, replay amplification, session exhaustion	[42], [25]
Layer 5 Session	Session establishment and maintenance	Session hijacking, replay attacks, unauthorized session persistence	[25], [63]
Layer 6 Presentation	Data representation, encryption, key handling	Certificate manipulation, weak cryptography exploitation, message format tampering	[47], [74]
Layer 7 Application	Vehicle software, cloud platforms, APIs, OTA services	SQL injection, ransomware, malicious OTA/firmware updates, cloud API abuse	[52], [55], [49], [21]

TABLE III. MALAYSIAN TRANSPORTATION CYBERATTACKS MAPPED IN OSI MODEL

OSI Layer	Description	Related Citations	Count
Layer 1 Physical	RFID toll tag cloning / toll payment fraud	[13]	**1**
Layer 2 Data Link	False message injection (fabricated collision / traffic warnings)	[14]	1
Layer 3 Network	Jamming attacks on 5G C-V2X signals	[24], [11]	1
Layer 7 Application	Cloud telematics platform intrusion	[9], [49]	6
	SQL injection via weak API authentication	[52]	
	Ransomware attack on MAHB	[19],[53]	
	Ransomware attack on airline systems	[54]	
	Firmware tampering	[55]	
	Malicious firmware / OTA updates in IoT-V2X systems	[56],[30]	

Malaysia has responded to these challenges through a combination of regulatory measures, technological innovations, and research initiatives. The Malaysia Cyber Security Strategy (MCSS) 2020-2024 states that the 11 National Critical Information Infrastructures (NCII) and transportation is part of the sectors [36], while Automotive ISAC provides a platform for threat intelligence sharing among automakers and suppliers [35]. Industry players are deploying advanced countermeasures, including Telekom Malaysia's blockchain-based V2X authentication system [58] and PLUS Highway's machine learning-powered anomaly detection for toll transactions [13].

Emerging threats nevertheless continue to challenge these defenses. The advent of 5G network slicing introduces new attack vectors that could be exploited to disrupt emergency vehicle communications [60], while AI-powered cyberattacks using adversarial machine learning techniques pose risks of bypassing conventional security systems [61]. These evolving threats demand adaptive solutions that combine the scalability of machine learning with the rigor of formal verification methods, which is a research direction that Malaysia's automotive cybersecurity community is uniquely positioned to explore given its experience with tropical urban deployments.

C. Existing Models for Detecting and Responding to Cyber Threat Against CVs

The network tier of CVs consists of several communication and those are V2V, V2I, and V2C communications. These communications form the backbone of intelligent transportation systems but also present a critical attack surface for cyber threats. In Malaysia's evolving 5G-V2X ecosystem, where high mobility and tropical urban environments exacerbate security challenges [11], robust intrusion detection systems (IDS) must balance real-time performance with adaptability to novel attack vectors [32],[62]. This section evaluates existing detection models, their applicability to Malaysian deployments, and emerging solutions that address current gaps.

1) Traditional and machine learning based approaches: Early IDS solutions for vehicular networks relied heavily on signature-based detection, which identifies known attack patterns through predefined rules [61],[63]. While effective against documented threats like replay attacks or basic spoofing [15], these systems struggle with zero-day exploits and adaptive adversaries. The limitations of signature-based methods have spurred the adoption of machine learning (ML) techniques, which analyze network behavior to detect anomalies [31].

Studies demonstrate promising results with algorithms such as Random Forests (RF) and Support Vector Machines (SVM), achieving up to 95% accuracy in classifying malicious V2X traffic [2]. For instance, RF-based models excel in identifying false safety messages, which are a prevalent threat in Malaysia's highway systems [14]. This can occur by correlating message frequency, sender reputation, and physical plausibility checks. Machine learning-based IDS has shown promise in detecting anomalies in real-time systems [64],[18],[61]. Edge learning models further optimize detection at the network edge [65].

However, conventional ML approaches as part of defence in V2X communication face challenges where the high vehicle densities in urban corridors like Kuala Lumpur generate volatile network conditions that can trigger false positives in models trained on limited datasets [66]. Additionally, the computational overhead of techniques like K-Nearest Neighbors (KNN) may exceed the latency budgets of safety-critical applications [67], where response times under 100ms are often required [17].

2) Deep learning and hybrid architectures: To address these limitations, researchers have turned to deep learning (DL) models capable of learning complex spatial-temporal patterns in network traffic. Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) networks have proven particularly effective for detecting time-series anomalies, such as gradual DDoS attacks that overwhelm roadside units (RSUs) with slow-rate malicious packets [68]. In the Malaysian context, where 5G-V2X deployments must handle monsoonal weather-induced signal fluctuations [11], LSTMs' ability to model temporal dependencies offers advantages over static threshold-based systems. Recent advances in GNSS-5G hybrid positioning demonstrate robust spoofing detection even during receiver maneuvers [69], suggesting potential integration with Malaysia's 5G-V2X testbed infrastructure [4].

More advanced hybrid architectures combine the strengths of multiple approaches. Yang et al.'s Multi-Tiered Hybrid IDS (MTH-IDS) [28], for instance, integrates signature matching, statistical anomaly detection [70], [62], and deep learning to achieve comprehensive coverage across vehicular network tiers [71]. When tested in environments resembling Malaysia's heterogeneous DSRC/C-V2X deployments, MTH-IDS maintained detection rates above 92% while keeping processing latency below 50ms, which shows a critical benchmark for real-time safety applications [28].

3) Emerging paradigms: federated learning and adversarial defense: Zero trust frameworks advocate continuous authentication [72], complementing Malaysia's exploration of two promising directions for Malaysia's V2X security landscape, which are federated learning and adversarial resilience. Federated learning enables collaborative model training across distributed nodes without centralised data aggregation [73], addressing privacy concerns while improving detection coverage [29]. This approach aligns with Malaysia's Auto-ISAC framework [35], where threat intelligence sharing among automakers could enhance collective defense without compromising proprietary data.

Meanwhile, the rise of AI-powered attacks [28],[61] necessitates IDS models resistant to adversarial manipulation. Techniques like Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs) [61] can simulate attack variants to harden detection systems, explore long-term protections against future computational threats [74].

This section systematically evaluates intrusion detection and response mechanisms for securing Malaysia's 5G-V2X networks against evolving cyber threats. Traditional signature-based IDSs prove inadequate against novel attacks, prompting the adoption of machine learning (ML) models like Random Forests (95% accuracy) and Support Vector Machines, though their real-time performance in high-density urban environments remains challenging. Deep learning solutions, particularly LSTM networks, address temporal attack patterns (e.g., slow-rate DDoS), while hybrid models (e.g., MTH-IDS) combine multiple techniques to achieve >92% detection rates with sub-50ms latency, which is critical for safety applications. Emerging approaches like federated learning enable collaborative threat analysis without compromising data privacy, aligning with Malaysia's Auto-ISAC framework, while adversarial ML defenses counter AI-powered attacks.

4) Proposed conceptual model: To mitigate the escalating threat of supply chain attacks within Malaysia's rapidly evolving 5G-enabled Vehicle-to-Everything (V2X) ecosystem, this study introduces the SCARF-V2X (Supply Chain Attack Resilience Framework for V2X) model. SCARF-V2X is a Security Operations Center (SOC)-integrated solution that enhances the cybersecurity posture of CVs by enabling automated detection and response to supply chain threats. Fig. 5 is the conceptual model that adopts the NIST Cybersecurity Framework as part of the model, as illustrated in Fig. 4. As V2X architectures grow in complexity, where they can incorporate components such as over-the-air (OTA) firmware updates, roadside units (RSUs), and diverse vehicular communication protocols, the adversaries are increasingly targeting these vectors to introduce malicious code or manipulate vehicular behaviour [61],[22], [68],[75].

Fig. 4. NIST cybersecurity framework 2.0.

These challenges are particularly acute in the Malaysian context, where research has highlighted significant vulnerabilities in telematics platforms and a lack of localized and context-aware intrusion detection capabilities [19], [22],[42]. Existing Intrusion Detection Systems (IDS) often lack adaptability and automation, rendering them ineffective against sophisticated, multi-stage supply chain intrusions. SCARF-V2X addresses these limitations by integrating core enterprise SOC components such as Security Information and Event Management (SIEM) [76],[85] and Security Orchestration, Automation, and Response (SOAR) into the vehicular cybersecurity stack [77]. By contextualizing these tools for automotive environments, SCARF-V2X supports real-time detection, automated containment, and collaborative threat intelligence sharing through platforms like Auto-ISAC [35], [78].

Through this integration of behavioral analytics, automation, and policy-aware response mechanisms, SCARF-V2X represents a novel approach to safeguarding 5G-CVs against emerging supply chain threats, building on frameworks for regulatory harmonization [79].

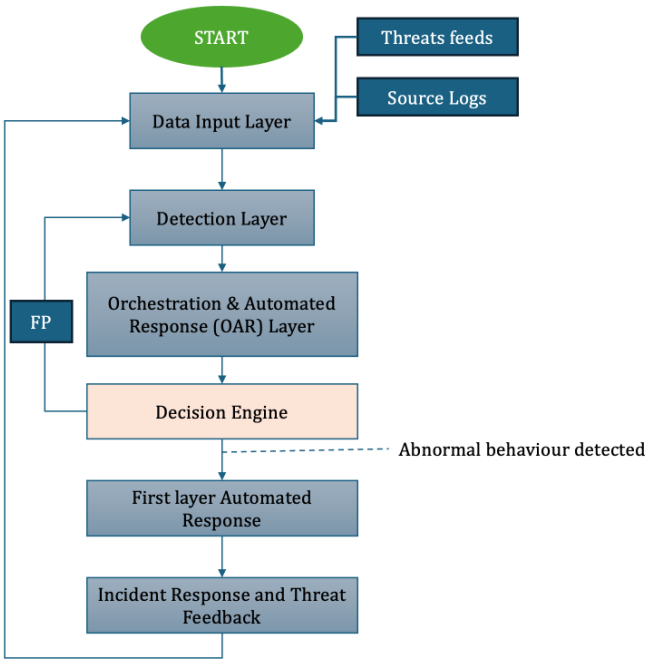

Fig. 5. The proposed conceptual model.

The framework begins with a data input layer that consolidates telemetry from both internal vehicle networks and external intelligence sources. Internally, it ingests logs from the CAN bus, V2X communication messages, and 5G traffic, which collectively offer insight into both hardware integrity and message-level anomalies [74], [80]. Externally, it integrates threat intelligence feeds from platforms such as MISP [81], Auto-ISAC, and MyCERT [59]. These sources ensure that detection efforts are continuously updated with localized Indicators of Compromise (IOCs) and emerging threat patterns relevant to Malaysia's vehicular cybersecurity landscape [35],[36].

The detection layer leverages a SIEM platform to perform log ingestion, parsing, and correlation. It applies finely tuned rules and behavioral models to identify suspicious events across the vehicular network stack. For instance, anomalies in V2X message frequencies, spoofed firmware update attempts, or inconsistent 5G session behaviors are detected through rule-based and heuristic approaches [28],[55]. SIEM also enriches its alerting mechanisms by correlating internal data with external threat intelligence, thus increasing detection precision and reducing false positives [85].

Once suspicious behavior is identified, the response layer, powered by a SOAR system, activates corresponding incident workflows. The SOAR component manages alert triage, maps detection artefacts to the MITRE ATT&CK framework, and executes automated playbooks [82]. These playbooks may include isolating compromised RSUs, rolling back OTA firmware updates, disabling Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS), or blocking communication from malicious IP addresses [80],[56]. SOAR also performs initial severity calculations to determine whether alerts warrant full-scale incident response or can be resolved through localized automation.

The decision-making engine within SCARF-V2X assesses whether an alert reflects genuine malicious behavior or a false positive. In the case of a false positive, the framework loops back to fine-tune detection rules and behavioral baselines. If the alert is validated as a true positive, a first-layer automated response is initiated. This lightweight response provides immediate mitigation actions while reducing analyst workload and response time. For higher-severity alerts, the incident is escalated for deeper investigation by analysts or original equipment manufacturer (OEM) cybersecurity teams. Such escalation includes forensic analysis, root cause determination, and long-term remediation strategies.

Several works stress the urgency for a proactive and adaptive detection framework in automotive supply chains [78], [83]. This study adopts a supply chain attack use case into the SCARF-V2X framework, as illustrated in Fig. 6. This framework also incorporates a continuous feedback loop wherein verified threat data and incident insights are shared with CTI platforms such as MISP and Auto-ISAC. This promotes collaborative defense, policy compliance, and alignment with MCSS 2020-2024 [36], [55]. Furthermore, by embedding automation, behaviour analysis, and threat intelligence within an SOC paradigm adapted for V2X, SCARF-V2X represents a novel approach to automotive cybersecurity. It surpasses traditional standalone intrusion detection models, such as GIDS (Generic Intrusion Detection System), by integrating policy-aware response automation, federated learning support, and localized threat intelligence sharing [35],[36],[84].

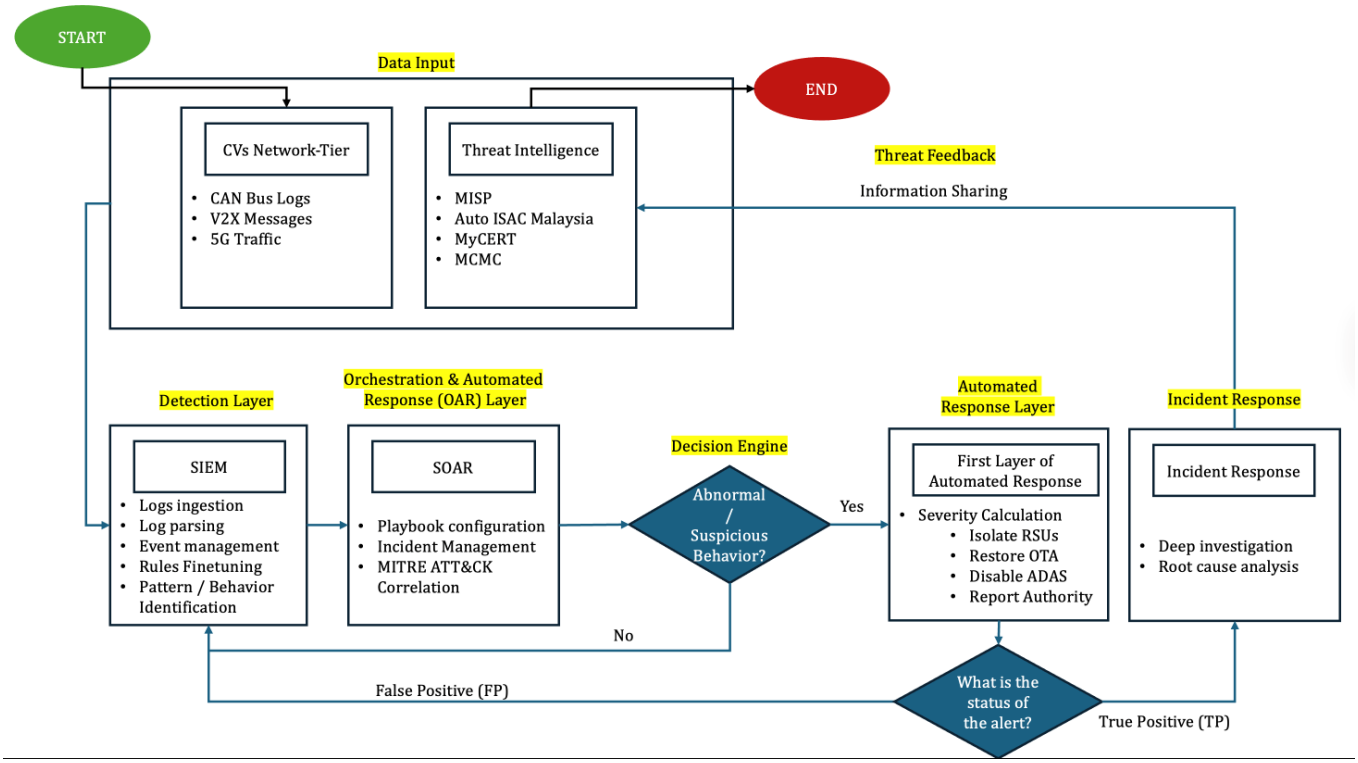

Fig. 6. Supply chain attack use case adoption in the conceptual model.

V. Future Works

As part of the research, this study will run two phases of evaluation methods to enhance the structure of the SCARF-V2X model. Those are the Fuzzy Delphi Method (FDM) and running a simulation experiment. Both evaluation and validation activities are crucial for this study, where we believe the FDM will assist in connecting the bridge between theoretical study and the industrial expert panels, while the simulation experiment will be the benchmark result of this proposed conceptual model.

A. Fuzzy Delphi Method (FDM)

The first activity is by deploying the Fuzzy Delphi Method (FDM) to evaluate each phase in conceptual model, as stated in Fig. 5 and adopting the supply chain attack simulation, as shown in Fig. 6. FDM has been chosen as part of these future work efforts, as FDM is an advanced decision-making technique that combines the traditional Delphi method with fuzzy logic to handle uncertainty and subjectivity in expert judgments. It is widely used in forecasting, policymaking, risk assessment, and consensus-building, where expert opinions may be vague or imprecise [9],[33],[51].

From the process flow of FDM illustrated in Fig. 7, the process begins after the conceptual framework has been structured and the researcher needs to select at least 10 to 15 expert panels from the related sectors, with the framework including the regulator and local Managed Security Service Provider (MSSP) and Subject Matter Experts (SME), which involves SIEM engineers and SOC Consultants. The uniqueness of FDM is the combination of the qualitative and quantitative methodology, where it balances between the need for the opinion from the industrial experts and the logics calculation, which would stabilize the final decision. Once the researcher reaches the expert consensus, the framework will proceed with the second activity in the evaluation phase.

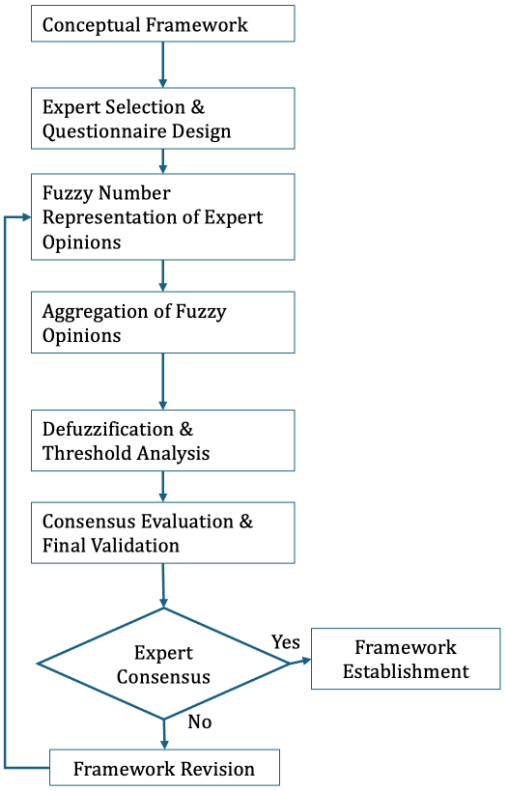

Fig. 7. Fuzzy Delphi process flow.

B. Simulation Experiment

This experiment will be run in a controlled lab environment, where the V2X logs will be recorded and used in SIEM, as illustrated in Fig. 8. The first step is to install the virtual machine (VM) that will be used to install the SIEM. All the V2X logs will be ingested into the SIEM before the parsing activity takes place. The parsing is a crucial phase as it assists in standardizing the format, which could help to columnize the information into an event. A malicious script will be created based on the use case scenario of injecting a fake OTA update through the network layer in the CVs ecosystem. Once the playbook has been created and finetuned, the malicious script will be injected into the environment, and the detection shall flag the events. The first layer of auto response from the SOAR features should be activated and notify the SIEM end users as the second layer response phase.

The stated experiment simulates the real case scenario of how the SOC and SOAR are deployed and react if there are any cyber incidents occur in the environment. The manipulated variable in this situation is the V2X logs, which are only used for research purposes and not being tested in a production environment.

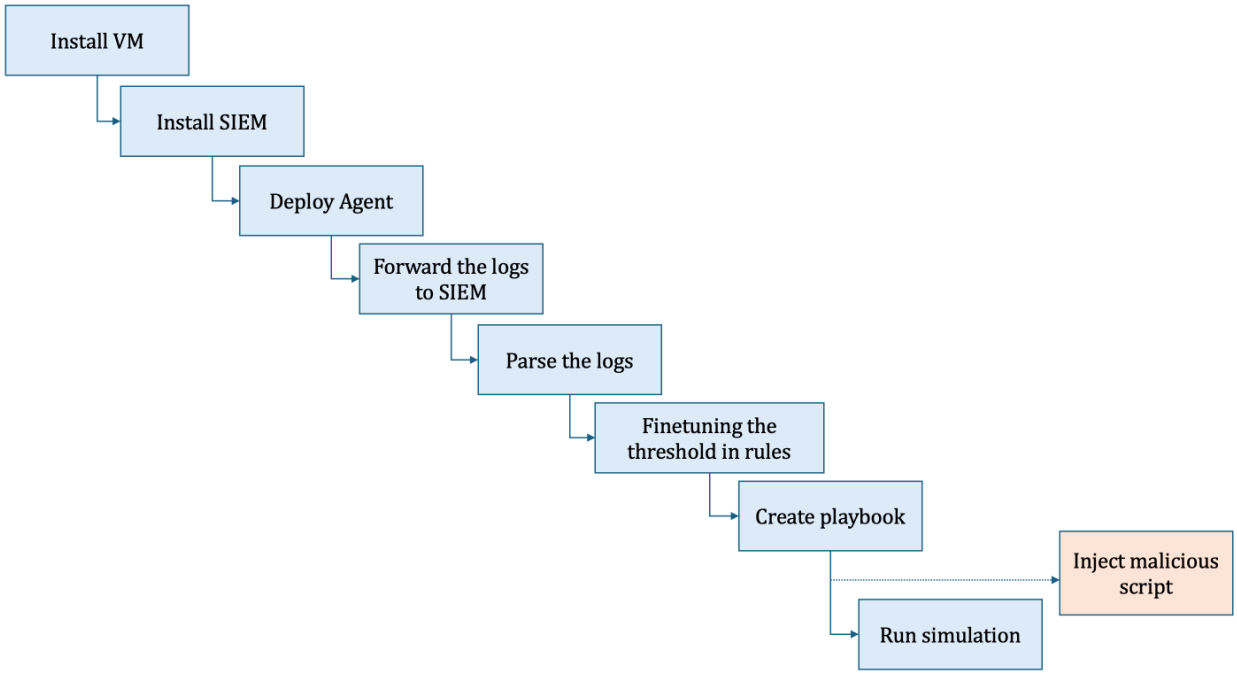

Fig. 8. The process flow to run simulation activity for SCARF-V2X model.

VI. Conclusion

The three research questions have been answered throughout the SLR approach in this study. For RQ1, the technology evolving in the CVs system has been continuously improving from the Cyberjaya testbed, and it shows an improving result from the statistics shown. The adoption of the emerging 5G networks and V2X communication in Malaysia is showing an increasing accuracy rate from the previous result. However, the threats and trends of cybersecurity attacks have been explained as part of RQ2. The trends of external attack surface towards CVs in Malaysia, especially when it involves public safety, need to be placed as a critical impact and require immediate remediation. The recent cyber-attacks that hit major national transportation systems, such as the Prasarana breach attack, Malaysia Airport Holding Berhad's (MAHB) ransomware attacks and the Malaysian airline's ransomware attack, are signs of the critical need for extra safety measures towards vehicle safety, especially CVs.

The integration of 5G-enabled Vehicle-to-Everything (V2X) communication in Malaysia represents a significant advancement in intelligent transportation systems, offering substantial benefits for autonomous driving, traffic optimization, and collision avoidance. However, this technological progress comes with heightened cybersecurity risks, particularly in the network tier where vehicles interact with infrastructure, cloud platforms, and other devices. Malaysia's unique tropical urban environment further complicates these challenges, with issues such as signal attenuation and complex multi-path propagation in dense cities like Kuala Lumpur exacerbating vulnerabilities. Recent incidents, including ransomware attacks on traffic management systems, spoofed toll transactions, and remote vehicle hijacking, underscore the urgent need for robust cybersecurity measures tailored to local conditions.

This study addresses these challenges through a systematic review of cybersecurity threats and detection models in Malaysia's 5G-V2X ecosystem. The research highlights three key contributions: a comprehensive threat taxonomy specific to Malaysian V2X networks, an evaluation of machine learning and deep learning-based intrusion detection systems, and the development of the SCARF-V2X framework. SCARF-V2X SOC tools, such as SIEM and SOAR, with localized threat intelligence and behavioral analytics, provide a proactive and automated approach to detecting and mitigating supply chain

attacks. By aligning with MCSS 2020–2024 [36] and leveraging collaborative platforms like Auto-ISAC Malaysia, the framework ensures compliance with national regulations, while enhancing the resilience of connected vehicles against evolving threats.

Despite these advancements, several areas require further exploration to strengthen Malaysia's V2X security posture. Future research should focus on integrating quantum-resistant cryptography to safeguard against emerging computational threats, as well as advancing federated learning techniques to enable privacy-preserving threat intelligence sharing among stakeholders. Additionally, the development of explainable AI models will improve transparency in automated security decisions, fostering trust in these systems.

In summary, this study provides a critical foundation for securing Malaysia's 5G-V2X ecosystem against sophisticated cyber threats. The SCARF-V2X framework, with its emphasis on automation, localized threat intelligence, and policy compliance, offers a scalable and adaptive solution for safeguarding connected vehicles in Malaysia's unique urban and environmental context. As the nation continues to advance its intelligent transportation infrastructure, ongoing innovation and collaboration will be vital to maintain a secure and resilient mobility ecosystem in the face of evolving cybersecurity challenges.

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Benchmarking Large Language Models for Dental Clinical Decision Support: A BERT Score Analysis of Claude Opus 4.5

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***Abstract*—The integration of Large Language Models (LLMs) into clinical decision support systems represents a significant advancement in healthcare informatics. This study presents a comprehensive evaluation framework for benchmarking LLM-generated dental treatment recommendations using BERT Score as the primary semantic similarity metric. We evaluated Claude Opus 4.5 as a Clinical Decision Support System (CDSS) across 116 dental case reports extracted from the Case Reports in Dentistry journal (2024-2025), spanning nine dental specialties. The BERT Score was calculated using the RoBERTa-large model to measure semantic alignment between AI-generated treatment plans and gold-standard published treatments. Results demonstrated strong semantic alignment with a mean BERT Score F1 of 0.8199 with a standard deviation of 0.0144 (95 per cent confidence interval: 0.8172-0.8225), significantly exceeding the 0.80 threshold (t = 14.90, p < 0.001, d = 1.38). Cross-specialty analysis revealed consistent performance across all nine dental domains (Kruskal-Wallis H = 3.07, p = 0.879), indicating robust generalizability. A significant negative correlation was observed between BERT Score and response time (ρ = -0.371, p < 0.001), suggesting a speed-accuracy trade-off in LLM reasoning. This study contributes a reproducible benchmarking methodology for evaluating LLM performance in specialized clinical domains and demonstrates the potential of BERT Score as a scalable evaluation metric for AI-generated clinical text.**

***Keywords*—BERT Score; Large Language Models; clinical decision support system; semantic similarity; Claude Opus 4.5**

I. Introduction

The rapid advancement of Large Language Models (LLMs) has catalyzed transformative applications in healthcare, particularly in clinical decision support systems (CDSS) [1]. These models demonstrate remarkable capabilities in processing and generating medical text, offering potential solutions for diagnostic assistance, treatment planning, and clinical documentation [2]. However, the deployment of LLMs in high-stakes clinical environments necessitates rigorous evaluation methodologies that can accurately assess the semantic fidelity and clinical relevance of AI-generated recommendations [3].

Traditional evaluation metrics for natural language generation, such as BLEU (Bilingual Evaluation Understudy) and ROUGE (Recall-Oriented Understudy for Gisting Evaluation), rely primarily on n-gram overlap between generated and reference texts [4]. While these metrics provide valuable insights for machine translation and summarization tasks, they exhibit significant limitations in clinical contexts where semantic equivalence often transcends lexical similarity. Clinical terminology frequently admits multiple valid expressions for identical concepts; for instance, "necrotic pulp" and "non-vital tooth" are clinically synonymous yet lexically distinct, resulting in artificially low scores under traditional metrics [5].

BERT Score addresses these limitations by leveraging contextual embeddings from transformer-based models to compute semantic similarity at the token level [6]. By representing words in a high-dimensional vector space that captures contextual meaning, BERT Score can recognize semantic equivalence between different surface forms of the same clinical concept. This capability is particularly valuable in medical domains where paraphrasing is common and clinical correctness should not be penalized by lexical variation [7].

Dentistry presents unique challenges for AI evaluation due to its specialized terminology, procedural complexity, and the critical importance of spatial reasoning [8]. Dental clinical decisions require integration of patient history, clinical examination findings, and radiographic interpretation, a triangulation of evidence that tests the reasoning capabilities of LLMs. Recent benchmarking studies have demonstrated variable performance of LLMs across dental specialties, with models achieving high accuracy on standardized examinations but exhibiting inconsistencies in complex case-based reasoning [9][10].

Claude Opus 4.5, released by Anthropic, represents a reasoning-optimized LLM architecture featuring extended context windows (200,000 tokens) and inference-time compute scaling through its "Thinking" mechanism [11]. These architectural innovations suggest potential advantages for complex clinical reasoning tasks that require maintaining coherent logical chains across extensive patient histories. However, systematic evaluation of Claude Opus 4.5 in dental clinical decision support remains limited in the current literature.

While prior studies have evaluated LLMs on dental examinations using multiple-choice accuracy metrics [9] [10], these approaches cannot capture the nuanced semantic alignment required for open-ended clinical reasoning tasks. Furthermore, existing benchmarks predominantly assess single-specialty performance, leaving cross-specialty generalizability largely unexplored. This study addresses these methodological gaps by introducing a BERT Score-based evaluation framework specifically designed for open-ended dental treatment recommendations—a context where multiple semantically equivalent but lexically distinct responses may be clinically valid.

The primary contributions of this study are threefold. First, we establish a reproducible, training-free semantic evaluation pipeline that enables scalable assessment of LLM-generated clinical text without requiring domain-specific fine-tuning or retrieval augmentation. Second, we provide empirical evidence of cross-specialty generalizability by demonstrating consistent BERT Score performance across nine dental disciplines, addressing the critical question of whether LLM clinical reasoning transfers across subspecialty boundaries. Third, we characterize the speed-accuracy relationship in dental CDSS applications, offering practical insights for real-time clinical deployment where response latency affects usability. These contributions extend beyond dental informatics to inform evaluation methodology for LLM-based clinical decision support systems across medical domains.

The remainder of this study is organized as follows: Section II reviews related work on LLM applications in dental clinical decision support, evaluation metrics for clinical text generation, and existing benchmarking frameworks for healthcare AI. Section III details the methodology, including data collection from the *Case Reports in Dentistry* journal, dental specialty classification, AI configuration with structured prompting, and BERT Score calculation procedures. Section IV presents the results encompassing overall BERT Score performance, cross-specialty analysis, and speed-accuracy correlations. Section V discusses the interpretation of findings, clinical implications, and study limitations. Finally, Section VI concludes with key contributions and directions for future research.

II. Related Work

A. Large Language Models in Dental Clinical Decision Support

The application of Large Language Models in dentistry has expanded rapidly, with multiple model families demonstrating varying capabilities across clinical tasks. Kim et al. evaluated LLM performance on the Korean Dental Licensing Examination, finding that GPT-4 achieved 75.2% accuracy compared to GPT-3.5's 53.8%, establishing a clear generational performance gap [9]. Dashti et al. extended this analysis to U.S. dental examinations, reporting similar patterns with GPT-4 reaching 80.1% accuracy versus 67.3% for GPT-3.5 [12]. Wu et al. conducted multi-dimensional evaluation of LLMs in dental implantology, comparing ChatGPT, DeepSeek, Grok, Gemini, and Qwen across clinical consensus and case analysis tasks [13]. These findings indicate substantial improvement in dental knowledge representation across model generations, though both studies relied exclusively on multiple-choice question formats.

Beyond accuracy metrics, recent studies have begun characterizing operational parameters relevant to clinical deployment. Nguyen et al. quantified the speed-accuracy trade-off in oral and maxillofacial surgery multiple-choice tasks, demonstrating that reasoning-optimized models achieve 12-18% higher accuracy at the cost of 3-5× increased response latency [14]. This trade-off has direct implications for real-time clinical decision support, where response time affects usability and workflow integration. However, whether this relationship holds for open-ended clinical reasoning tasks as opposed to multiple-choice selection remains unexplored.

Comparative benchmarking across model families has revealed distinct performance profiles and highlighted the importance of model selection for specific clinical applications. Wu et al. conducted a multi-dimensional evaluation in dental implantology comparing five major LLMs, finding that GPT-4 achieved the highest accuracy (78.5%) followed by Gemini (72.1%), Claude 3 (69.8%), Qwen (65.4%), and DeepSeek (61.2%) across clinical consensus and case analysis tasks [10]. Notably, performance rankings varied by task type—Claude demonstrated stronger performance on complex case analysis requiring multi-step reasoning, while GPT-4 excelled on factual recall tasks. Fujimoto et al. evaluated LLMs specifically in dental anesthesiology, reporting that ChatGPT-4 achieved 51.2% accuracy compared to Claude 3 Opus at 47.4% and Gemini 1.0 at 43.6% on Japanese board certification questions [15]. Hou et al. benchmarked multiple LLMs on the Dental Admission Test, with GPT-4 achieving 76.8% overall accuracy while demonstrating particular strength in reading comprehension (84.2%) compared to perceptual ability sections (68.1%) [16].

Despite these advances, critical methodological limitations persist in current dental LLM evaluation. First, the predominant reliance on multiple-choice question formats constrains assessment to recognition-based rather than generation-based clinical reasoning [17]. Real clinical decision-making requires synthesizing patient information into coherent treatment plans—a generative task fundamentally different from selecting among predetermined options. Second, existing studies predominantly evaluate single-specialty performance, leaving cross-specialty generalizability largely unexplored. Whether LLM clinical reasoning transfers across dental subspecialty boundaries remains an open question with significant implications for deployment scope. Third, Claude Opus 4.5, Anthropic's latest reasoning-optimized model featuring extended context windows (200,000 tokens) and inference-time compute scaling, remains systematically unevaluated in dental clinical decision support contexts despite architectural innovations potentially advantageous for complex clinical reasoning.

B. Evaluation Metrics for Clinical Text Generation

Traditional NLP evaluation metrics exhibit well-documented limitations in clinical contexts that motivate the adoption of embedding-based alternatives. BLEU (Bilingual Evaluation Understudy) and ROUGE (Recall-Oriented Understudy for Gisting Evaluation) rely on n-gram overlap, penalizing semantically equivalent paraphrases common in

clinical documentation [17]. For instance, "extraction of non-restorable tooth" and "removal of hopeless dentition" convey identical clinical meaning but share minimal lexical overlap, yielding artificially low BLEU/ROUGE scores. Hanna and Bojar [6] demonstrated through fine-grained analysis that these metrics correlate poorly with human judgment (Pearson $r < 0.4$) for semantic equivalence tasks, particularly when surface-form variation is high—a characteristic inherent to clinical terminology where multiple valid expressions exist for identical concepts.

BERT Score addresses these limitations by leveraging contextual embeddings from transformer-based models to compute semantic similarity at the token level [4]. Zhang et al. introduced the framework demonstrating superior correlation with human judgment (Pearson $r = 0.73$) compared to BLEU ($r = 0.41$) and ROUGE ($r = 0.38$) across multiple natural language generation tasks [4]. The metric computes precision, recall, and F1 scores through greedy matching of contextualized token embeddings, capturing meaning beyond surface-level lexical patterns. Precision measures whether generated content is semantically supported by the reference, recall assesses coverage of reference content, and F1 provides a balanced harmonic mean. This capability is particularly valuable in clinical domains where terminology variation is common and semantic correctness should not be penalized by lexical diversity.

Domain adaptation techniques have further enhanced semantic evaluation accuracy for medical text, though their application to open-ended clinical text generation remains limited. BioBERT [18], pretrained on over 18 billion words from PubMed abstracts and PMC full-text articles, demonstrates improved performance on biomedical named entity recognition, relation extraction, and question answering tasks compared to general-domain BERT. ClinicalBERT [4], trained on approximately 2 million clinical notes from the MIMIC-III database, achieves superior results on clinical concept extraction and hospital readmission prediction by capturing the distinctive linguistic patterns of clinical documentation. PubMedBERT [4] employs domain-specific vocabulary and pretraining exclusively on biomedical literature, outperforming mixed-domain models on the Biomedical Language Understanding Evaluation (BLUE) benchmark. More recently, Koroleva et al. [19] demonstrated that domain-adapted embeddings improve semantic similarity measurement for clinical trial outcomes, achieving higher correlation with expert annotations than general-domain alternatives.

However, these domain-adapted models have been primarily validated on classification, extraction, and structured prediction tasks rather than open-ended text generation evaluation. Whether the advantages of biomedical pretraining transfer to semantic similarity assessment of generated clinical recommendations remains an open empirical question. Furthermore, no systematic comparison exists between the general-domain BERT Score (using RoBERTa-large) and domain-adapted variants (BioBERTScore, ClinicalBERTScore) for dental clinical text specifically. This study employs RoBERTa-large as the backbone model based on its status as the recommended default in the BERT-score library and its robust cross-domain performance [20]. This choice provides a conservative baseline—success with general-domain embeddings suggests even stronger potential with domain adaptation, while failure would not be attributable to domain mismatch.

C. Benchmarking Frameworks for Healthcare AI

The development of standardized benchmarking datasets has accelerated healthcare AI evaluation while revealing persistent methodological gaps. Zhu et al. [20] introduced DentalBench, a bilingual benchmark comprising over 36,000 questions across 16 dental subfields, including operative dentistry, prosthodontics, orthodontics, and oral surgery. This comprehensive dataset enables systematic cross-specialty comparison but relies exclusively on multiple-choice formats. Hou et al. [16] benchmarked LLMs on the Dental Admission Test, providing comparative performance data across model families with a detailed analysis of performance variation across test sections. Huang et al. [5] presented a comprehensive survey on evaluating LLM applications in medical settings, identifying accuracy, safety, clinical relevance, and explainability as key evaluation dimensions that should be assessed in combination rather than in isolation.

Recent methodological advances emphasize multidimensional evaluation frameworks that extend beyond single accuracy metrics. Sivaramakrishnan et al. [21] evaluated LLMs for dental patient education materials using BERT Score alongside readability indices (Flesch-Kincaid, SMOG) and clinical relevance assessments by domain experts, demonstrating that semantic similarity alone incompletely captures communication quality. Zheng et al. [22] proposed hierarchical divide-and-conquer approaches for fine-grained alignment in LLM-based medical evaluation, decomposing complex clinical reasoning into assessable sub-components. These frameworks recognize that no single metric fully captures clinical utility, advocating for complementary quantitative and qualitative assessments tailored to specific use cases.

Despite these advances, existing benchmarking frameworks exhibit limitations that constrain their applicability to real-world clinical decision support evaluation. The predominant MCQ format assesses knowledge recall rather than clinical reasoning synthesis—a clinician must not only identify correct answers but generate coherent, contextually appropriate treatment plans from unstructured patient information [17]. Current benchmarks lack standardized semantic similarity metrics for open-ended response evaluation, relying instead on binary correctness judgments that cannot capture partial credit, near-miss responses, or alternative valid approaches. It is uncommon to systematically evaluate cross-specialty generalizability; models may perform well in knowledge-intensive domains but poorly in procedural or spatial reasoning, but single-specialty benchmarks are unable to identify this variation [8]. Finally, speed-accuracy trade-offs critical for real-time clinical deployment are inconsistently reported across studies, limiting practical implementation guidance.

C. Research Gap and Study Positioning

The preceding review identifies three convergent gaps that motivate the present study. First, an evaluation methodology gap: existing dental LLM benchmarks predominantly employ MCQ-based accuracy metrics that cannot assess open-ended

clinical reasoning quality, where multiple semantically equivalent responses may be valid. Semantic similarity metrics like BERT Score offer a principled alternative for evaluating generated clinical text but remain underutilized in dental AI evaluation. Second, a cross-specialty evidence gap: whether LLM clinical reasoning generalizes across dental subspecialties is largely unexplored, yet this question has direct implications for deployment scope, safety boundaries, and clinical workflow integration. Third, a model coverage gap: Claude Opus 4.5, featuring architectural innovations including extended context windows and inference-time reasoning optimization, potentially advantageous for complex clinical decision-making, lacks systematic evaluation in dental clinical decision support.

This study addresses these gaps by establishing a BERT Score-based benchmarking framework for evaluating open-ended dental treatment recommendations. Unlike MCQ-based approaches that assess recognition accuracy, our framework evaluates the semantic alignment between AI-generated and expert-authored treatment plans—capturing clinical reasoning quality through continuous similarity scores rather than binary correctness judgments. By systematically evaluating performance across nine dental specialties using 116 published case reports, we provide empirical evidence regarding cross-specialty generalizability that informs appropriate deployment boundaries. The methodology offers a reproducible, training-free evaluation pipeline applicable to any LLM without requiring domain-specific fine-tuning or retrieval augmentation, facilitating standardized comparison across model families and enabling longitudinal tracking of model performance across version updates.

III. Methodology

A. Study Design and Data Collection

This cross-sectional study evaluated Claude Opus 4.5 as a clinical decision support system using published dental case reports as the evaluation corpus. The overall study workflow is illustrated in Fig. 1, comprising four sequential phases: 1) data collection and preprocessing, 2) AI-generated treatment recommendation, 3) BERT Score calculation, and 4) statistical analysis. This design enables systematic comparison between AI-generated and expert-authored treatment plans while controlling for case complexity through the use of published cases with documented outcomes for the period 2024 to 2025.

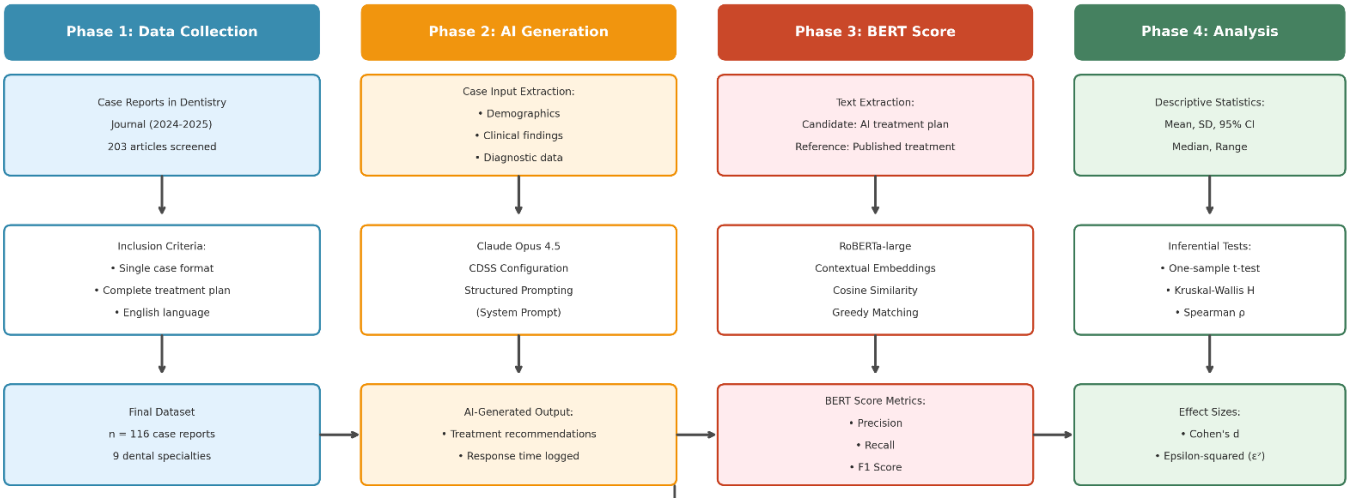

Fig. 1. Study workflow of benchmarking LLM for CDSS using BERT score.

Inclusion criteria comprised: 1) publication type classified as "case report" in journal metadata; 2) complete case presentation including patient demographics, chief complaint, clinical findings, diagnostic workup, and treatment plan sections; 3) single-case format with clearly identifiable treatment outcomes; 4) English language publication. Exclusion criteria included: a) case series presenting multiple patients, as these confound treatment-case matching; b) reports lacking explicit treatment plan descriptions; c) cases focused primarily on diagnostic imaging or laboratory findings without therapeutic intervention; d) letters to the editor, commentaries, or review articles misclassified as case reports. The final dataset comprised 116 case reports meeting all inclusion criteria.

B. Dental Specialty Classification

Cases were classified into dental specialties using a keyword-based algorithm with title weighting. The classification system assigned cases to nine specialty categories: Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, Orthodontics, Endodontics, Prosthodontics, Implantology, Pediatric Dentistry, Periodontics, Oral Medicine and Pathology, and Conservative Dentistry. Keywords were derived from established dental specialty nomenclature and weighted by occurrence in article titles (2×) versus body text (1×). Cases matching multiple specialties were assigned to the category with the highest weighted keyword frequency.

C. AI Configuration and Prompt Engineering

Claude Opus 4.5 was configured as a Clinical Decision Support System through structured system prompting. The prompt established: 1) Role definition as CDSS for dental healthcare professionals; 2) Explicit limitations stating recommendations require clinical validation; 3) Reference standards including FDI World Dental Federation notation and ICD-10/ICD-11 classification systems; 4) Structured response format comprising clinical findings analysis, differential

diagnosis, treatment recommendations, referral considerations, and diagnostic codes. The model was accessed via the Claude Website without fine-tuning, retrieval augmentation, or embedding modifications to evaluate baseline capabilities.

D. BERT Score Calculation

BERT Score was computed using the bert-score Python library (version 0.3.13) with RoBERTa-large as the backbone model. For each case, the candidate text comprised the treatment recommendation section of Claude's response, while the reference text comprised the treatment plan section from the published case report. BERT Score computes precision, recall, and F1 scores by: 1) generating contextual embedding for all tokens in candidate and reference texts; 2) computing pairwise cosine similarity between token embedding; 3) calculating greedy matching to maximize similarity scores; 4) aggregating token-level scores into sentence-level metrics. The F1 score, representing the harmonic mean of precision and recall, served as the primary evaluation metric.

E. Statistical Analysis

Statistical analyses were performed using JAMOVI Desktop 2.6.44. Descriptive statistics included mean, standard deviation, median, and 95% confidence intervals for BERT Score metrics. Distribution normality was assessed using the Shapiro-Wilk test. One-sample t-test evaluated whether the mean BERT Score significantly exceeded the 0.80 threshold, with Cohen's d calculated for effect size. Cross-specialty comparison employed the Kruskal-Wallis H test due to unequal group sizes, with epsilon-squared (ε^2) as the effect size measure. Spearman's rank correlation assessed the relationship between BERT Score and response time. Statistical significance was set at $\alpha = 0.05$.

IV. Results

A. Dataset Characteristics

The dataset comprised 116 dental case reports distributed across nine specialties. Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery represented the largest category (n = 56, 48.3%), followed by Orthodontics and Endodontics (n = 14 each, 12.1%), Prosthodontics (n = 13, 11.2%), Implantology (n = 7, 6.0%), Pediatric Dentistry (n = 5, 4.3%), Periodontics (n = 3, 2.6%), Oral Medicine and Pathology (n = 3, 2.6%), and Conservative Dentistry (n = 1, 0.9%). Table I presents the complete distribution.

TABLE I. Distribution of Case Reports by Dental Specialty

Dental Specialty	n	%
Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery	56	48.3
Orthodontics	14	12.1
Endodontics	14	12.1
Prosthodontics	13	11.2
Implantology	7	6.0
Pediatric Dentistry	5	4.3
Periodontics	3	2.6
Oral Medicine and Pathology	3	2.6
Conservative Dentistry	1	0.9
Total	**116**	**100.0**

B. Overall BERT Score Performance

Claude Opus 4.5 demonstrated strong semantic alignment with published treatment plans. The mean BERT Score F1 was 0.8199 ± 0.0144 (95% CI: 0.8172-0.8225), with a median of 0.8191 and a range of 0.7782-0.8618. The Shapiro-Wilk test confirmed normal distribution ($W = 0.994$, $p = 0.856$). Precision (mean = 0.8140 ± 0.0161) and recall (mean = 0.8252 ± 0.0198) values indicated balanced performance in capturing reference content while avoiding extraneous information. BERT Score F1 ≥ 0.80 was attained in 107 (92.2%) of the 116 cases.

One-sample t-test confirmed that the mean BERT Score significantly exceeded the 0.80 threshold ($t = 14.90$, $df = 115$, $p < 0.001$). Cohen's $d = 1.38$ indicated a large effect size, demonstrating substantial performance above the acceptability benchmark. Table II summarizes the overall performance metrics.

TABLE II. Overall BERT Score Performance Metrics

Metric	Value	95% CI
BERT Score F1 (Mean ± SD)	0.8199 ± 0.0144	[0.8172, 0.8225]
BERT Score Precision	0.8140 ± 0.0161	[0.8110, 0.8169]
BERT Score Recall	0.8252 ± 0.0198	[0.8216, 0.8289]
Median F1	0.8191	-
Range (Min-Max)	0.7782 - 0.8618	-
Cases ≥ 0.80 threshold	107 (92.2%)	-

C. Cross-Specialty Performance Analysis

BERT Score F1 demonstrated consistent performance across dental specialties. Mean scores ranged from 0.8088 (Pediatric Dentistry) to 0.8273 (Implantology), with all specialties exceeding the 0.80 threshold. Kruskal-Wallis H test revealed no statistically significant differences among specialties ($H = 3.07$, $df = 8$, $p = 0.879$), with epsilon-squared (ε^2) = 0.026 indicating a negligible effect size. This finding suggests robust generalizability of Claude Opus 4.5 across diverse dental clinical scenarios. Table III presents specialty-specific performance.

TABLE III. BERT Score F1 Performance by Dental Specialty

Specialty	n	Mean	SD	95% CI
Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery	56	0.8200	0.0155	[0.8159, 0.8241]
Orthodontics	14	0.8211	0.0122	[0.8147, 0.8275]
Endodontics	14	0.8173	0.0121	[0.8110, 0.8236]
Prosthodontics	13	0.8200	0.0088	[0.8152, 0.8248]
Implantology	7	0.8273	0.0181	[0.8139, 0.8407]
Pediatric Dentistry	5	0.8088	0.0186	[0.7926, 0.8251]
Periodontics	3	0.8198	0.0063	[0.8127, 0.8270]
Oral Medicine & Pathology	3	0.8217	0.0232	[0.7954, 0.8480]
Conservative Dentistry	1	0.8255	-	-

D. Response Time and Speed-Accuracy Trade-off

Mean response time was 34.79 ± 18.63 seconds (median = 32.0 seconds, range = 6-98 seconds). Spearman rank correlation revealed a significant negative relationship between BERT Score F1 and response time (ρ = -0.371, $p < 0.001$), indicating that faster responses were associated with higher semantic alignment scores. This counterintuitive finding suggests that cases eliciting clear, well-structured AI responses (higher BERT Scores) also required less processing time, potentially reflecting case complexity rather than a simple speed-accuracy trade-off. Table IV summarizes the overall statistical analysis.

TABLE IV. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS SUMMARY

Analysis	Statistic	p
Normality (Shapiro-Wilk)	$W = 0.994$	0.856
One-sample t-test (vs. 0.80)	$t = 14.90$, $df = 115$	< 0.001
Effect size (Cohen's d)	$d = 1.38$ (large)	-
Cross-specialty (Kruskal-Wallis)	$H = 3.07$, $df = 8$	0.879
Effect size (Epsilon-squared)	$\varepsilon^2 = 0.026$ (negligible)	-
Correlation (Spearman)	$\rho = -0.371$	< 0.001

V. DISCUSSION

A. Interpretation of BERT Score Performance

The observed mean BERT Score F1 of 0.8199 represents strong semantic alignment between AI-generated and expert-authored treatment recommendations. This performance significantly exceeds the 0.80 threshold typically considered acceptable for clinical text evaluation [19]. The large effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.38$) indicates that Claude Opus 4.5 consistently generates treatment recommendations that capture the semantic content of published clinical decisions, supporting its potential utility as a clinical decision support tool.

The balanced precision (0.8140) and recall (0.8252) scores indicate that the model neither omits critical treatment components, which would diminish recall, nor introduces clinically unsubstantiated or extraneous recommendations—often characterized as hallucinations—which would compromise precision. This metrical equilibrium is particularly imperative in clinical contexts where both informational completeness and semantic accuracy are essential for maintaining patient safety [23]. Furthermore, the narrow confidence interval of 0.8172–0.8225 reflects consistent performance across diverse case presentations.

B. Cross-Specialty Generalizability

The absence of significant performance differences across dental specialties ($p = 0.879$) represents a notable finding. Prior benchmarking studies have documented substantial variation in LLM performance across medical subspecialties, with models often excelling in knowledge-intensive domains while struggling with procedural or spatial reasoning tasks [24]. The consistent performance observed in this study suggests that Claude Opus 4.5's reasoning architecture may provide more robust generalization across diverse clinical scenarios than earlier model generations.

However, the unequal distribution of cases across specialties (48.3% in Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery) warrants caution in generalizing these findings. Smaller specialty subgroups may have insufficient statistical power to detect meaningful differences. Future studies should employ stratified sampling to ensure adequate representation across all dental specialties [25].

C. Speed-Accuracy Relationship

The significant negative correlation between BERT Score and response time (ρ = -0.371) presents an interesting departure from the expected speed-accuracy trade-off documented in other LLM benchmarking studies [14]. This relationship may reflect that straightforward cases with clear treatment pathways elicit both faster responses and higher semantic alignment with published recommendations. Complex or ambiguous cases requiring extended reasoning may produce lower BERT Scores due to legitimate treatment variability rather than model error.

D. Limitations of BERT Score in Clinical Evaluation

While BERT Score provides valuable insights into semantic similarity, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, semantic similarity does not guarantee clinical correctness; a response may be semantically similar to a reference while containing factually incorrect recommendations [26]. Second, BERT Score exhibits reduced sensitivity to numerical values; dosage errors (e.g., "5 mg" vs "500 mg") may not be adequately penalized due to similar contextual embeddings [27]. Third, the metric does not capture reasoning quality or logical consistency in treatment sequencing.

These limitations underscore the importance of multidimensional evaluation frameworks that combine automated semantic metrics with expert clinical review, safety assessments, and guideline concordance checks [28]. BERT Score should be viewed as a scalable screening tool rather than a definitive measure of clinical validity.

E. Implications for Clinical Decision Support Implementation

The results support the potential deployment of Claude Opus 4.5 as a clinical decision support tool in dental practice, with appropriate safeguards. The model demonstrates the capacity to generate semantically appropriate treatment recommendations across multiple specialties, potentially assisting clinicians with treatment planning, documentation, and educational applications [29]. However, the model should function as a "copilot" requiring human oversight rather than an autonomous diagnostic system [30].

Future implementation should incorporate 1) explicit uncertainty quantification in model outputs; 2) integration with domain-specific knowledge bases and clinical guidelines; 3) mandatory clinician review before treatment execution; and 4) continuous monitoring for performance degradation or emerging error patterns [31]. The ethics and governance framework proposed by Rokhshad et al. provides a valuable foundation for the responsible deployment of LLMs in dental clinical settings [32].

F. Study Limitations

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting these results. First, the use of published case reports as ground truth assumes that reported treatments represent optimal clinical

decisions, which may not always hold. Second, the study evaluated text-based clinical reasoning without incorporating radiographic or other imaging data essential to dental diagnosis. Third, the cross-sectional design cannot assess longitudinal performance stability or model drift. Fourth, the evaluation relied solely on automated BERT Score metrics without expert clinical review of individual outputs. Finally, the unequal specialty distribution may limit generalizability to underrepresented domains.

VI. Conclusion

This study established a BERT Score-based benchmarking framework for evaluating LLM performance in dental clinical decision support. Claude Opus 4.5 demonstrated strong semantic alignment with published treatment recommendations (mean BERT Score F1 = 0.8199 ± 0.0144), significantly exceeding the 0.80 acceptability threshold ($t = 14.90$, $p < 0.001$, Cohen's $d = 1.38$) with consistent performance across nine dental specialties (Kruskal-Wallis $H = 3.07$, $p = 0.879$). The study contributes a reproducible, training-free semantic evaluation pipeline for open-ended clinical text, provides the first cross-specialty generalizability evidence for dental LLM evaluation, and characterizes the speed-accuracy relationship relevant to clinical deployment.

Several limitations should be acknowledged, including the absence of expert clinical validation, reliance on text-based reasoning without radiographic data, and unequal specialty distribution. The findings support the potential of LLMs as clinical decision support tools in dentistry while highlighting the need for comprehensive evaluation frameworks that extend beyond semantic similarity to encompass clinical accuracy, safety, and guideline adherence. Future research should integrate expert clinical validation, multimodal evaluation incorporating radiographic interpretation, comparative benchmarking across LLM families, and prospective studies in clinical deployment settings. The standardization of evaluation methodologies will be essential as LLM applications in healthcare continue to expand

Acknowledgment

This research was funded by the Indonesia Endowment Fund for Education (Lembaga Pengelola Dana Pendidikan - LPDP), the Ministry of Finance, Republic of Indonesia. The authors gratefully acknowledge the financial support provided by LPDP that made this research possible. The first author would like to express profound gratitude to the Medical and Health Sciences Doctoral Program, Faculty of Medicine, Public Health, and Nursing, Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM), where this research was conducted as part of a doctoral dissertation series. The authors also acknowledge the use of Claude Opus 4.5 (Anthropic) for generating clinical decision support responses evaluated in this study. The AI tool was used solely as the subject of evaluation, not in the preparation of this manuscript. All statistical analyses and interpretations were performed by the authors using JAMOVI (Version 2.6.44).

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Understanding IT Product Purchasing Behavior of MSMEs Using Sequential Pattern Mining Approaches

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***Abstract*—Sequential pattern mining is a crucial analytical method for understanding purchasing behavior and uncovering hidden patterns in transactional data. Unlike most prior studies that apply sequential pattern mining primarily in consumer-oriented retail settings or evaluate algorithms in isolation, this study investigates IT product purchasing behavior among Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) within a B2B digital transformation context through a direct comparative evaluation of three widely used algorithms: Apriori, PrefixSpan, and CloSpan. A series of controlled experiments was conducted on the same transactional datasets to assess algorithm performance in terms of accuracy, computational efficiency, and redundancy reduction. The results show that Apriori discovers exhaustive patterns at the cost of higher computational complexity, PrefixSpan achieves faster sequence extraction with balanced accuracy, and CloSpan effectively reduces redundancy by generating closed sequential patterns. Beyond pattern discovery, this study translates support, confidence, and lift metrics into actionable decision-support insights, highlighting how different algorithmic characteristics can be aligned with retention strategies, service bundling, and targeted interventions. These findings provide distinct methodological and practical contributions by positioning sequential pattern mining as a data-driven decision-support tool to accelerate digital transformation initiatives among SMEs in the IT product ecosystem.**

***Keywords*—Sequential pattern mining; Apriori; PrefixSpan; CloSpan; SMEs; digital transformation**

I. Introduction

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are important for economic growth, especially in developing countries. They not only contribute significantly to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) but also create more jobs and maintain economic stability [1], [2]. However, MSMEs face numerous challenges in adopting and utilizing Information Technology (IT) products. Various obstacles, including low digital literacy, limited capital, and a lack of solutions tailored to business needs, often hinder the digitalization process.

In recent years, sequential pattern mining (SPM) has proven to be an effective data mining technique for discovering relational patterns and transaction sequences in large-scale datasets [3],[4]. In contrast to association rule mining, which only identifies relationships between items without considering order, SPM is capable of uncovering temporal patterns in purchasing behavior [5]. This capability is highly relevant for MSMEs as it can reveal product adoption stages— for example, customers who initially purchase internet connectivity services and subsequently switch to digital productivity applications or content services. Such information can serve as a valuable reference for IT product providers in developing more personalized and adaptive marketing strategies.

Several algorithms have been developed to support the SPM process. Apriori is a fundamental algorithm widely used to identify frequent itemsets; however, its complex candidate generation process can lead to efficiency issues [6]. PrefixSpan utilizes a more efficient pattern-growth approach through prefix-based partition exploration without repeatedly generating candidates [7]. Meanwhile, CloSpan focuses on mining closed sequential patterns, producing more concise, non-redundant, and semantically meaningful results [8]. According to Arena et al., each algorithm presents its own advantages and limitations in terms of accuracy, computational complexity, and scalability. Thus, it is essential to carry out comparative evaluations in certain contexts [9].

Although SPM has been widely applied in retail and e-commerce domains, its application remains limited in the context of IT product adoption by MSMEs. Most previous research has focused on consumer (B2C) markets and has not adequately explored the business-to-business (B2B) context involving MSMEs. Furthermore, relatively few studies have compared the performance of several SPM algorithms simultaneously in analyzing the IT product purchasing behavior of MSMEs.

For instance, research by Aloysius and Binu demonstrated the application of PrefixSpan in the retail sector to organize products based on consumers' sequential shopping patterns, illustrating a typical application of SPM in the B2C domain [10]. Trivonanda et al. applied SPM in e-commerce recommendation systems in Indonesia and highlighted the dominant use of SPM in the consumer context [11]. Additionally, a literature review by Ezeife specifically mapped SPM-based e-commerce recommendation methods and emphasized algorithm performance in the B2C realm [12]. Similarly, Anwar and Uma examined the use of PrefixSpan in cross-domain recommendation systems, such as book recommendations, but remains within the consumer consumption paradigm [13].

In the telecommunications sector, studies examining service bundling recommendations do exists; however, they generally rely on other methods, such as constructive preference elicitation [14], instead of SPM. Other research in the telco field has applied SPM to customer churn prediction [15], with a focus on behavioral sequences leading to churn rather than sequences of IT product adoption. Moreover, many recent churn studies have shifted to explainable AI (XAI) approaches, further

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indicating that SPM studies in the context of product adoption remain relatively scarce [16].

Meanwhile, the broader MSME literature primarily discusses the adoption of digital technology. For example, Ballerini et al. examined factors influencing e-commerce adoption in manufacturing MSMEs [17], Kgakatsi et al. analyzed the impact of Big Data usage on the performance of MSMEs in South Africa [18], and Cooper et al. highlighted the role of artificial intelligence in new product development in MSMEs [19]. However, no prior research has specifically examined the sequence patterns of IT product purchases by MSMEs in a B2B context using a comparative SPM algorithm approach.

This study aims to identify sequential patterns of IT product purchases among MSMEs by applying and comparing the Apriori, PrefixSpan, and CloSpan algorithms, while evaluating their respective strengths and limitations in terms of accuracy, computational efficiency, and pattern redundancy reduction. By doing so, this research addresses an existing gap in the literature by providing empirical evidence on the comparative performance of SPM algorithms and offering actionable insights to support data-driven decision-making and digital transformation initiatives within the MSME IT ecosystem.

The subsequent literature review section discusses related studies on MSMEs, data-driven marketing, and SPM techniques. The methodology section outlines the research design, data collection, and preprocessing procedures, and the application of the Apriori, PrefixSpan, and CloSpan algorithms. The results and discussion section presents and analyzes the experimental findings and identifies sequential purchasing patterns. Finally, the conclusion section summarizes the key findings, highlights the contributions of the study, and outlines directions for future research.

II. Literature Review

A. MSMEs and the Challenges of Adopting Information Technology

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) constitute a vital sector of the global economy, especially in developing countries. In Indonesia, MSMEs contribute approximately 61.7% of the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and provide employment for 97% of the workforce, making them the backbone of the national economy [20]. As a crucial economic pillar, MSMEs play an essential role not only as drivers of economic growth but also in maintaining social stability through job creation.

B. Data-Driven Marketing and Recommendation Systems

The development of digital technology has brought major changes, including the adoption of data-driven marketing approaches, in which strategic decisions are based on the analysis of customer behavior derived from historical transaction data and digital interactions. This approach enables companies to better understand consumer preferences and more accurately forecast future needs. In the context of MSMEs, data-driven marketing enhances the effectiveness of marketing strategies through personalized offerings, cross-selling, and product bundling tailored to customers' actual needs.

C. Sequential Pattern Mining

Sequential Pattern Mining (SPM) is a subfield of data mining that explores the discovery of sequential patterns within transaction data or temporal interactions [4], [21], [22]. Unlike static association rule mining, SPM enables researchers and practitioners to identify not only correlations among items that frequently appear together but also the order in which these items occur.

SPM has been widely applied across various fields, including retail, e-commerce, healthcare, and telecommunications. For instance, in retail environments, SPM helps analyze consumer shopping patterns, such as their tendency to purchase hardware before software or support services [23],[24]. In healthcare, SPM assists in monitoring medication usage and patient diagnoses, which are valuable for clinical decision support systems.

There are three main aspects commonly addressed in SPM research, namely:

1) Pattern accuracy: The extent to which an algorithm identifies patterns that accurately represent real-world behavior.

2) Computational efficiency: This aspect relates to execution time and resource requirements, especially when processing large-scale datasets.

3) Redundancy reduction: This refers to the ability to generate concise and meaningful patterns without duplication or irrelevant variations.

D. Main Algorithms in Sequential Pattern Mining

Three prominent algorithms discussed in the literature are Apriori, PrefixSpan, and CloSpan.

1) Apriori: Apriori is a classical algorithm originally introduced to discover frequent itemsets and later adapted for use in SPM. This algorithm employs a candidate generation-and-test approach that requires enumerating all possible candidate patterns [25]. While this approach is comprehensive, it suffers from high computational complexity, especially when applied to large datasets.

2) PrefixSpan (Prefix-Projected Sequential Pattern Mining): PrefixSpan introduces a pattern-growth paradigm by dividing the dataset into prefix-based projected databases. This method avoids explicit candidate exploration and improves processing efficiency. Numerous studies have shown that PrefixSpan outperforms Apriori in large-scale datasets.

3) CloSpan (Closed Sequential Pattern Mining): CloSpan is designed to address the problem of redundant results. The algorithm only generates closed patterns, which are patterns that do not have any superpatterns with the same support. This method produces more concise and meaningful results, facilitating interpretation by researchers and practitioners.

Despite widespread use, existing SPM approaches continue to face several challenges and limitations. Apriori-based methods suffer from high computational complexity due to exhaustive candidate generation, rendering them less efficient for large-scale transactional data. PrefixSpan improves

efficiency by eliminating candidate generation; however, it may still produce a substantial number of redundant patterns, which can complicate interpretation. CloSpan addresses redundancy by mining closed sequential patterns but may overlook infrequent yet potentially meaningful sequences.

Moreover, most prior studies applying SPM focus predominantly on consumer-oriented (B2C) contexts, such as retail and e-commerce, while empirical investigations in MSME-oriented and B2B IT product adoption remain limited. Existing research also tends to evaluate algorithms in isolation rather than through direct comparative analysis using an identical dataset. These limitations highlight the need for a comprehensive comparative evaluation of SPM algorithms in the context of MSME IT product purchasing behavior, particularly to support data-driven decision-making and digital transformation initiatives.

III. Methodology

A. Research Design

This study employed a comparative experimental approach to assess the performance of three SPM algorithms: Apriori, PrefixSpan, and CloSpan. The research design focused on analyzing IT product purchasing patterns among MSMEs based on transaction data. Each algorithm was tested separately on the same dataset to ensure an unbiased comparison of results.

B. Data Collection

The data used in this study were collected from transaction records of IT product purchases made by MSMEs operating in the trade and services sectors. The data collection process involved two main stages.

First, primary data were collected from actual transactions recorded by MSMEs and IT service provider partners. These transaction records included purchase dates, product names, product categories (e.g., High Speed Internet, Metro Ethernet, ASTINet, Content, Music, Games, and Managed Capacity Network), and the sequence of purchases made by customers within a specific time period. These primary data became the foundation for building a sequence database for analysis using the SPM algorithm.

Second, secondary data were gathered from sales reports from authorized IT product distributors and B2B e-commerce databases. These data served as a benchmark dataset to support the analysis and ensure that the patterns identified were not limited to specific MSMEs but also reflected broader trends in the IT product distribution sector. Table I presents sample data from IT product sales reports.

Table I illustrates transaction records for IT products purchased by MSMEs and authorized distributors. Each transaction includes information on the customer, transaction ID, purchase time, product name, product category, quantity, price, and data sources. Data obtained from MSMEs represent actual transactions and serve as the primary data source, while data from distributors and e-commerce function as secondary sources for comparison. Overall, the table describes IT product consumption patterns in the trade and services sector, which are then analyzed to identify purchasing sequence patterns using the SPM approach.

C. Data Preprocessing

The data preprocessing stage aimed to ensure consistency and suitability of the collected data before applying the SPM algorithm. This stage involved removing duplicate records, correcting data entry errors, handling missing values, and normalizing product name formats to ensure uniformity. Products were categorized into seven main groups: High Speed Internet, Metro Ethernet, ASTINet, Content, Music, Games, and Managed Capacity Network.

Next, the data were sorted based on each customer's transaction time to obtain a valid purchase sequence. In the final stage, the data were converted into a sequence database consisting of the purchase sequence of each customer, which was subsequently processed using the Apriori, PrefixSpan, or CloSpan algorithms to identify meaningful purchase patterns.

TABLE I. Sample Data of IT Product Sales Report

Customer	Transaction ID	Date and Time of Transaction	Product Name	Category	Amount	Price	Description
UMKM01	TRX001	2025-01-05 10:30:00	High Speed Internet Plan A	High Speed Internet	1	500,000	Recorded by the MSME
UMKM01	TRX002	2025-01-15 15:45:00	Metro Ethernet 10 Mbps	Metro Ethernet	1	2,500,000	Recorded by the MSME
UMKM02	TRX003	2025-02-02 09:20:00	Basic ASTINet	ASTINet	1	1,500,000	Recorded by the MSME
UMKM02	TRX004	2025-02-12 13:00:00	Premium Content Streaming	Content	2	1,000,000	Recorded by the MSME
UMKM03	TRX005	2025-03-07 11:10:00	Online Game Voucher	Game	3	300,000	Recorded by the MSME
UMKM04	TRX007	2025-03-18 14:00:00	Managed Capacity Network Silver	Managed Capacity Network	1	2,000,000	Recorded by the MSME
DIST01	TRX101	2025-01-06 09:00:00	High Speed Internet Plan B	High Speed Internet	1	750,000	Listed in the official distributor report
DIST02	TRX102	2025-01-25 16:30:00	Metro Ethernet 20 Mbps	Metro Ethernet	1	4,500,000	Listed in the official distributor report
DIST02	TRX103	2025-02-05 10:15:00	ASTINet Pro	ASTINet	1	2,800,000	Listed in the official distributor report
DIST03	TRX104	2025-02-15 12:30:00	Basic Content Streaming	Content	1	500,000	Listed in the official distributor report
DIST04	TRX105	2025-03-10 14:45:00	Online Game Voucher	Game	5	500,000	Listed in the official distributor report
DIST04	TRX106	2025-03-20 15:30:00	Premium Music Streaming	Music	2	240,000	Listed in the official distributor report

TABLE II. DATA PREPROCESSING

Customer	Transaction Sequence	Date and Time of Transaction	Product Name	Category
UMKM01	1	2025-01-05 10:30:00	High Speed Internet Plan A	High Speed Internet
UMKM01	2	2025-01-15 15:45:00	Metro Ethernet 10 Mbps	Metro Ethernet
UMKM02	1	2025-02-02 09:20:00	ASTINet Basic	ASTINet
UMKM02	2	2025-02-12 13:00:00	Premium Content Streaming	Content
UMKM03	1	2025-03-07 11:10:00	Online Game Voucher	Game
UMKM04	2	2025-03-18 14:00:00	Managed Capacity Network Silver	Managed Capacity Network
DIST01	1	2025-01-06 09:00:00	High Speed Internet Plan B	High Speed Internet
DIST02	1	2025-01-25 16:30:00	Metro Ethernet 20 Mbps	Metro Ethernet
DIST02	1	2025-02-05 10:15:00	ASTINet Pro	ASTINet
DIST03	2	2025-02-15 12:30:00	Basic Content Streaming	Content
DIST04	1	2025-03-10 14:45:00	Online Game Voucher	Game
DIST04	1	2025-03-20 15:30:00	Premium Music Streaming	Music

The preprocessing results presented in Table II show the sequence of IT product purchases for each customer after data cleaning and normalization. Each customer (MSME or distributor) is represented by a transaction ID sorted by date to identify sequential purchasing patterns. For example, UMKM01 initially purchased High Speed Internet Plan A and subsequently purchased Metro Ethernet services. Similarly, UMKM03 purchased an online game voucher, followed by a music streaming product.

Product categories were standardized into seven main groups to ensure consistent analysis. This format prepares the data for processing using the SPM algorithm to identify customers' most frequent purchase sequential patterns.

The pre-processed data were converted into a sequence database in the next stage. This process was accomplished by grouping all transactions by customer and sorting them by purchase time.

Each transaction in the sequence was represented as an element in a sequence, showing that each customer had a unique purchase sequence. For example, customer UMKM01 had the sequence [High Speed Internet → Metro Ethernet], while customer UMKM03 had the sequence [Game → Music].

Customers who only made one transaction were still categorized as a single sequence, for example, UMKM04 → [Manage Capacity Network].

TABLE III. EXAMPLE OF PURCHASE SEQUENCE REPRESENTATION

Customers	Purchase Sequence
UMKM01	[High Speed Internet → Metro Ethernet]
UMKM02	[ASTINet → Content]
UMKM02	[ASTINet → Content]
UMKM03	[Game → Music]
UMKM04	[Managed Capacity Network]
DIST01	[High Speed Internet]
DIST02	[Metro Ethernet → ASTINet]
DIST03	[Content]
DIST04	[Game → Music]

This representation allows for systematic analysis of the entire purchasing patterns of various customers. The sequence database served as the primary input for SPM algorithms, including AprioriAll, PrefixSpan, and CloSpan, to identify recurring patterns that describe customers' tendencies to purchase IT products sequentially. Table III shows an example of a sequence database representation.

D. Pattern Analysis

At this stage, the data processed into a sequence database were analyzed using an SPM approach to identify sequential patterns in customer transactions. Three main algorithms were employed: AprioriAll, PrefixSpan, and CloSpan.

1) AprioriAll was used to find correlations between products that frequently appear together or sequentially, by measuring support and confidence as indicators of pattern strength.

2) PrefixSpan was applied to extract frequently occurring purchase sequences by developing prefixes from existing sequences without explicitly generating candidate patterns.

3) CloSpan was chosen to generate closed sequential patterns that cannot be expanded further without lowering the support value, resulting in a more concise but informative representation of the pattern.

E. Pattern Evaluation

After obtaining purchasing patterns using the SPM algorithm, a pattern evaluation stage was conducted to assess the validity and strength of the correlations among items in the sequence. This evaluation was conducted using several standard measures, including:

1) Support: This metric measures how frequently a particular pattern appears in the entire transaction database. A high support value indicates that the pattern is popular and generally relevant.

2) Confidence: This metric indicates the probability that a subsequent item or sequence occurs after the initial pattern has occurred. Higher confidence values indicate stronger and more reliable associations.

3) Lift (optional): This metric measures how frequently a pattern occurs compared to its probability of occurring by chance. It helps identify patterns that are substantially significant rather than coincidental.

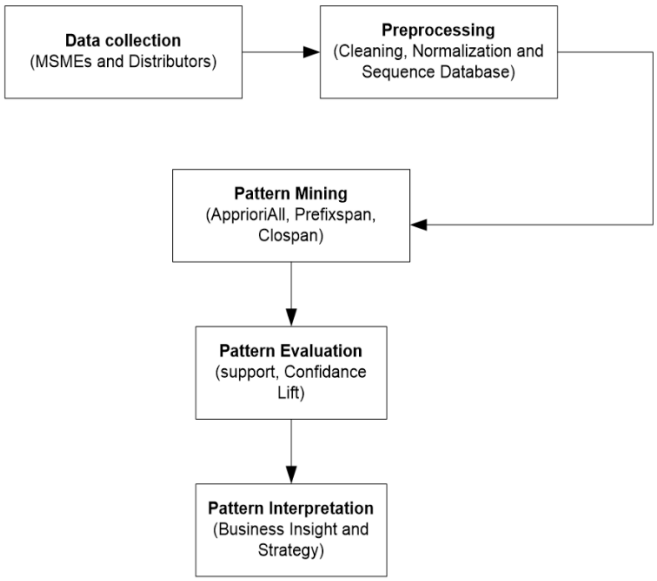

Fig. 1. Research methodology stages.

These metrics allowed researchers to filter meaningful patterns and eliminate those with low frequency or weak correlations. The evaluation process led to validated findings suitable for interpretation in the context of IT product purchasing behavior among MSMEs and distributors.

F. Pattern Interpretation

Pattern interpretation was performed after evaluating metrics, such as support, confidence, and lift, to ensure their validity and significance. At this stage, the identified sequential purchase patterns were related to the real-world context of MSME consumer behavior and IT product distribution practices. For example, the Game → Music pattern suggests that customers who purchase game-related services are likely to subsequently purchase digital music products. Similarly, the pattern Content → High Speed Internet indicates an increased demand for high-speed internet access following the purchase of digital content.

This interpretation is beneficial for analyzing purchasing behavior and serves as a foundation for formulating business strategies, such as product bundling, personalized service recommendations, and optimized IT service distribution. Thus, the identified patterns offer not only theoretical contributions but also practical value for decision-making and the development of more targeted marketing strategies. Fig. 1 illustrates the flowchart of the research stages.

IV. Results and Discussion

A. Results

This section presents the key findings from the SPM analysis of IT product transaction data that were preprocessed into a sequence database. The results highlight:

- Associations and purchasing sequence tendencies among categories/products.
- Consistent and recurring patterns observed for both MSME customers and distributors.
- Practical implications for service bundling strategies, recommendations, and service improvement.

The results are presented by algorithm (ApprioriAll, PrefixSpan, and CloSpan) and customer segment (MSMEs vs. distributors), along with evaluation metrics (support, confidence, and lift), to assess the strength and significance of the identified patterns.

B. Test Simulation Scenario

The dataset used in this study consists of transactional records from 500 MSME customers (CUST0001–CUST0500). The data were generated to simulate realistic IT product purchasing behavior, with each customer having between one and six sequential transactions recorded over the period from January to March 2025. The dataset includes the following characteristics:

1) Number of transactions per customer: Randomly generated between one and six transactions.

2) Product categories: Seven main groups (High Speed Internet, Metro Ethernet, ASTINet, Content, Music, Game, and Manage Capacity Network), each comprising several product variants.

3) Transaction attributes: Customer ID, transaction ID, transaction date and time, product name, category, quantity, and price.

4) Time period: Transactions conducted between January and March 2025 with random time sequences representing the chronological order of purchases.

Table IV presents the top ten purchase sequence rules ranked by confidence for all customers during the January-March 2025 period. The inclusion of support and lift values enables comparison of pattern consistency and relevance for service recommendations and bundling strategies.

In Table IV, the pattern with the highest confidence shows a consistent transition tendency, even though it may not be the most frequent. The rules ASTINet → Content (confidence = 0.67; lift = 1.90) and High Speed Internet → Content (confidence = 0.66; lift = 1.87) indicate that the purchase of content services commonly follows the activation of connectivity services. The patterns Managed Capacity Network → Game (confidence = 0.62; lift = 1.78) and Content → Game (confidence = 0.58; lift = 1.67) suggest strong cross-selling potential within entertainment-related services. Although the pattern Content → Managed Capacity Network has merely 1.6% support, it exhibits a very high lift value (3.36), making it a worthwhile target for marketing campaigns. Regarding service upgrades, the rules Game → ASTINet (confidence = 0.57; lift = 2.86) and ASTINet → Metro Ethernet (confidence = 0.53; lift = 1.43) represent promising upgrade paths toward more reliable connectivity. Meanwhile, Metro Ethernet → Metro Ethernet stands out as a repeat or renewal pattern (confidence = 0.52; lift = 1.40), as does Music → Music (confidence = 0.50; lift = 2.23), indicating strong subscription retention.

Table V shows the top ten purchase sequence rules based on support, reflecting the most common pattern observed in the MSME segment from January to March 2025. The table

includes the columns Antecedent, Consequent, Pattern, Length, Support Count, Support, Confidence, and Lift.

Based on Table V, the most prevalent patterns in the MSME segment are dominated by repeat or renewal behavior (X→X). The sequence Metro Ethernet → Metro Ethernet is the most frequent (support = 0.1960; confidence = 0.5241; lift = 1.4012), followed by Content → Content (support = 0.1740; confidence = 0.4971; lift =1.4204) and Game → Game (support = 0.1560; confidence = 0.4509; lift = 1.3031). Similarly, High Speed Internet → High Speed Internet (support = 0.1160; confidence = 0.3816; lift = 1.2552) and ASTINet → ASTINet (support = 0.0980; confidence = 0.4900; lift = 2.4500) also show strong retention. The presence of the trigram Metro Ethernet → Metro Ethernet → Metro Ethernet (two rules with support values of 0.0900 due to identical three-step patterns) indicates persistent subscription behavior. Other recurring patterns, such as Content → Content → Content (support = 0.0720) and Music → Music (support = 0.0720; confidence = 0.3214; lift = 1.4349), reinforce the dominance of retention-oriented patterns. Although the results focus on support, the high lift observed for certain services—such as Managed Capacity Network → Managed Capacity Network (support = 0.0760; confidence = 0.4471; lift = 2.6298)—shows strong repeat associations within more specific segments. These findings emphasize the importance of retention, renewal strategies, and loyalty initiatives for services with the highest repeat customer reach, while also identifying high-value services with high lift for more targeted offerings.

TABLE IV. TOP-10 SEQUENTIAL PURCHASE RULES BY CONFIDENCE: MSME SEGMENT

Antecedent	Consequent	Pattern	Length	Support Count	Support	Confidence	Lift
ASTINet → Content	Content	ASTINet → Content → Content	3	8	0.0160	0.6667	1.9048
High Speed Internet → Content	Content	High Speed Internet → Content → Content	3	19	0.0380	0.6552	1.8719
Managed Capacity Network → Game	Game	Managed Capacity Network → Game → Game	3	8	0.0160	0.6154	1.7786
Content → Game	Game	Content → Game → Game	3	15	0.0300	0.5769	1.6674
Content → Managed Capacity Network	Managed Capacity Network	Content → Managed Capacity Network → Managed Capacity Network	3	8	0.0160	0.5714	3.3613
Game → ASTINet	ASTINet	Game → ASTINet → ASTINet	3	8	0.0160	0.5714	2.8571
ASTINet → Metro Ethernet	Metro Ethernet	ASTINet → Metro Ethernet → Metro Ethernet	3	8	0.0160	0.5333	1.4260
Metro Ethernet	Metro Ethernet	Metro Ethernet → Metro Ethernet	2	98	0.1960	0.5241	1.4012
Music → Music	Music	Music → Music → Musik	3	18	0.0360	0.5000	2.2321
Managed Capacity Network → Content	Content	Managed Capacity Network → Content → Content	3	7	0.0140	0.5000	1.4286

TABLE V. TOP 10 RULES BY SUPPORT

Antecedent	Consequent	Pattern	Length	Support Count	Support	Confidence	Lift
Metro Ethernet	Metro Ethernet	Metro Ethernet → Metro Ethernet	2	98	0.1960	0.5241	1.4012
Content	Content	Content → Content	2	87	0.1740	0.4971	1.4204
Game	Game	Game → Game	2	78	0.1560	0.4509	1.3031
High Speed Internet	High Speed Internet	High Speed Internet → High Speed Internet	2	58	0.1160	0.3816	1.2552
ASTINet	ASTINet	ASTINet → ASTINet	2	49	0.0980	0.4900	2.4500
Metro Ethernet → Metro Ethernet	Metro Ethernet	Metro Ethernet → Metro Ethernet → Metro Ethernet	3	45	0.0900	0.4592	1.2278
Metro Ethernet	Metro Ethernet → Metro Ethernet	Metro Ethernet → Metro Ethernet → Metro Ethernet	3	45	0.0900	0.2406	1.2278
Managed Capacity Network	Managed Capacity Network	Managed Capacity Network → Managed Capacity Network	2	38	0.0760	0.4471	2.6298
Content → Content	Content	Content → Content → Content	3	36	0.0720	0.4138	1.1823
Music	Music	Music → Music	2	36	0.0720	0.3214	1.4349

Table VI shows the ten sequential purchase rules based on the highest lift values. Lift indicates how strongly the antecedent and consequent are linked beyond random chance; a lift value greater than one indicates a positive association, meaning the higher the value, the stronger the relative correlation. Unlike confidence, which reflects the certainty of a transition, or support, which reflects prevalence, lift emphasizes patterns with strategic value even if they are not the most common, such as certain repeat patterns or strong upgrade paths in customer subsegments. Therefore, Table VI complements Tables IV (confidence-based) and Table V (support-based).

TABLE VI. TOP 10 RULES BY LIFT

Antecedent	Consequent	Pattern	Length	Support Count	Support	Confidence	Lift
Managed Capacity Network	Managed Capacity Network → ASTINet	Managed Capacity Network → Managed Capacity Network → ASTINet	3	3	0.0060	0.0353	3.5294
Content → Managed Capacity Network	Managed Capacity Network	Content → Managed Capacity Network → Managed Capacity Network	3	8	0.0160	0.5714	3.3613
ASTINet	ASTINet → Metro Ethernet	ASTINet → ASTINet → Metro Ethernet	3	10	0.0200	0.1000	3.3333
High Speed Internet → Managed Capacity Network	Managed Capacity Network	High Speed Internet → Managed Capacity Network → Managed Capacity Network	3	6	0.0120	0.5000	2.9412
Managed Capacity Network	Managed Capacity Network → Musik	Managed Capacity Network → Managed Capacity Network → Musik	3	5	0.0100	0.0588	2.9412
Game → ASTINet	ASTINet	Game → ASTINet → ASTINet	3	8	0.0160	0.5714	2.8571
Managed Capacity Network	Managed Capacity Network	Managed Capacity Network → Managed Capacity Network	2	38	0.0760	0.4471	2.6298
Musik → Managed Capacity Network	Managed Capacity Network	Musik → Managed Capacity Network → Managed Capacity Network	3	4	0.0080	0.4444	2.6144
Metro Ethernet → Managed Capacity Network	Managed Capacity Network	Metro Ethernet → Managed Capacity Network → Managed Capacity Network	3	6	0.0120	0.4286	2.5210
Managed Capacity Network	Managed Capacity Network → Content	Managed Capacity Network → Managed Capacity Network → Content	3	6	0.0120	0.0706	2.5210

Table VI also reveals the sequential purchase rules based on lift values, which measure the strength of the correlation between the antecedent and consequent beyond random chance. A lift value greater than one indicates a positive association, with higher values reflecting stronger relative correlations. In contrast to support, which emphasizes how common a pattern is, or confidence, which emphasizes the certainty of a transition, lift highlights a strong pattern even if it does not occur frequently. These findings suggest that high-lift but low-support patterns are suitable for targeted interventions. In contrast, high-lift patterns with higher support are relevant for larger-scale retention or bundling programs [26], [27].

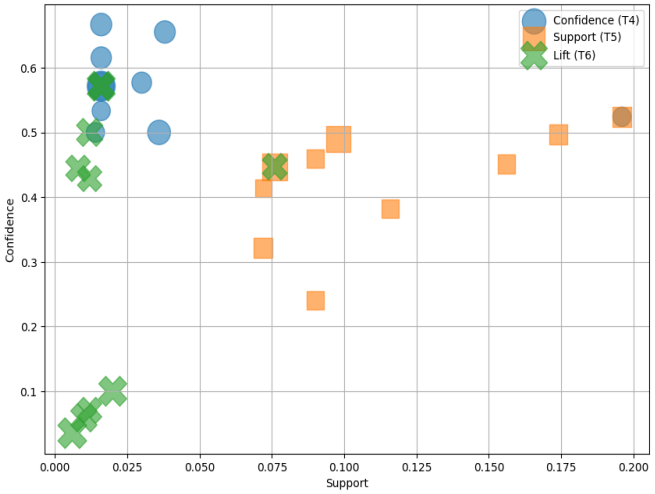

Fig. 2. Sequential comparison chart (confidence, support, and lift).

Furthermore, to provide a more comprehensive perspective, the analysis results in Tables IV (based on confidence), Table V (based on support), and Table VI (based on lift) are presented in the form of a comparison chart in Fig. 2. This visualization demonstrates how each metric highlights different patterns: rules with high confidence indicate consistency in transition behavior, rules with high support reflect the prevalence of purchasing behavior, and rules with high lift reveal strategic opportunities even when they occur infrequently. Therefore, combining these three perspectives offers a stronger foundation for developing marketing strategies, whether aimed at maintaining consistent customer behavior, increasing subscription retention, or implementing targeted strategic intervention value.

C. Discussion

The research results indicate that IT product purchasing behavior among MSMEs is strongly characterized by repetition and renewal patterns within the same service category. Frequent sequences such as Metro Ethernet → Metro Ethernet, Content → Content, Games → Games, and ASTINet → ASTINet indicate that once MSMEs adopt a particular IT service, they tend to continue using or renewing that service over time. This behavior reflects a preference for service stability and reliability, which is essential for business operations that rely on digital connectivity and continuous service availability.

Sequential patterns with high confidence levels further demonstrate a gradual process of digital adoption among MSMEs. Connectivity-related services, such as High-Speed Internet and ASTINet, often precede the adoption of content- or entertainment-based services. This sequence implies that MSMEs prioritize establishing a stable digital infrastructure before expanding into additional digital services. Such a progression aligns with the incremental nature of digital transformation, in which basic infrastructure is developed before higher-level digital capabilities are adopted.

Patterns with high support scores highlight the widespread prevalence of retention-oriented behavior among MSMEs. The dominance of repeat subscription patterns suggests that

customer retention and service renewals are more influential than frequent product switching. This finding emphasizes the importance of long-term customer relationship management, where maintaining service quality and reliability is a key factor in maintaining MSME engagement with IT service providers.

Conversely, patterns with high upgrade values reveal strategic opportunities within more specific market segments. Certain services exhibit strong associations despite lower overall frequency, indicating a concentrated but highly engaged user group. These high upgrade patterns are highly relevant for targeted marketing strategies, customized service integrations, and differentiated loyalty programs. While high support patterns are suitable for broad retention strategies, high upgrade patterns offer insights for focused interventions aimed at specific MSME segments.

The combined use of confidence, support, and lift metrics provides a comprehensive perspective on MSME purchasing behavior. Confidence captures consistent switching tendencies, support reflects dominant usage patterns, and lift highlights strong associations beyond random occurrence. Integrating these complementary metrics enables IT service providers to design balanced strategies that combine mass retention initiatives with targeted offerings, thereby enhancing data-driven decision-making.

These results collectively demonstrate that SPM is an effective approach for uncovering dominant and nuanced behavioral patterns in MSME IT product adoption. By translating these patterns into actionable insights, IT service providers can systematically and data-drivenly improve retention strategies, optimize service offerings, and support MSMEs' ongoing digital transformation.

From both methodological and practical perspectives, this study contributes to the SPM literature by providing empirical evidence on the comparative behavior of Apriori, PrefixSpan, and CloSpan when applied to the same B2B transactional dataset. Unlike prior studies that primarily emphasize pattern discovery in consumer-oriented contexts, this work clarifies the distinct analytical roles of support, confidence, and lift metrics in decision-oriented interpretation. Furthermore, the findings can be operationalized into actionable guidelines for IT product providers, where high-support patterns inform large-scale retention and renewal programs, high-confidence patterns support service upgrade recommendations, and high-lift, but lower-support patterns enable targeted interventions for specific MSME segments. This integrated interpretation strengthens data-driven decision-making and supports the digital transformation of MSMEs.

V. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that sequential pattern mining is an effective approach for identifying IT product purchasing behavior among MSMEs. The comparative analysis of the Apriori, PrefixSpan, and CloSpan algorithms reveals distinct algorithmic strengths: Apriori effectively identifies high-support patterns, PrefixSpan provides efficient sequence extraction, and CloSpan generates concise closed patterns by reducing redundancy. The empirical results further indicate that confidence values capture consistent transition behavior, support values reflect the prevalence of repeat and renewal purchases, and lift values highlight patterns with strong strategic significance.

Beyond methodological contributions, the findings reveal key characteristics of MSME digital adoption behavior. The dominance of repeat and renewal patterns underscores the importance of service continuity, while high-confidence and high-lift sequences suggest staged adoption pathways and targeted opportunities for service bundling, retention strategies, and differentiated offerings. These insights provide practical value for IT service providers in designing data-driven marketing strategies aligned with MSME digital transformation initiatives.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to sequential pattern mining research by clarifying the distinct analytical roles of support, confidence, and lift through a direct comparative evaluation of Apriori, PrefixSpan, and CloSpan within a B2B MSME context. From a practical perspective, the findings offer actionable guidance for IT product providers, whereby high-support patterns inform large-scale retention strategies, high-confidence patterns support service upgrade pathways, and high-lift patterns enable targeted interventions for specific MSME segments.

Despite these contributions, this study is limited to transactional data collected within a specific observation period and service domain. Future research may extend this work by incorporating longer time horizons, cross-regional datasets, and advanced machine learning or hybrid modeling approaches to enhance predictive capabilities. The integration of non-transactional factors, such as organizational characteristics, digital readiness, and socio-demographic attributes, may further enrich behavioral interpretation. In addition, the development of analytics dashboards or interactive recommendation systems based on the proposed framework represents a promising direction for practical implementation and sustained digital transformation among MSMEs.

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Collaborative Dual-Framework Defense: CTI and LLM-Based Enhanced Smishing Detection

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***Abstract*—Smishing has become a severe cybersecurity threat. Attackers now use AI and social engineering to craft more sophisticated campaigns. To address this challenge, this study proposes a dual-layer detection framework. It combines cyber threat intelligence (CTI), machine learning, and a large language model (LLM). The framework uses 22 features built from 2,811 real SMS messages. These features are categorized as content-based, context-based, and Indicators of Compromise (IOC)-based features. Five machine learning models were evaluated. XGBoost, trained with a 70% training, 10% validation, and 20% test split, achieved the best performance. It had a recall of 92.08% and an F1-score of 94.66%. For borderline cases, the study experimented with 4 LLMs (including GPT-4o and LLaMA 3). They served as a semantic verification layer. All models achieved a recall rate above 98.5% and produced human-readable explanations. The study demonstrated that these 4 models are complementary verifiers rather than main classifiers. The results show that structured threat intelligence used during feature engineering improves machine learning model performance. With semantic reasoning, the framework also generates accessible reports for non-specialists. This lowers the barrier for effective smishing detection.**

***Keywords*—Smishing detection; cyber threat intelligence; XGBoost; semantic verification; large language model**

I. Introduction

Smishing remains one of the most widespread cyber threats globally, resulting in significant economic losses [1]. According to the latest report from the Anti-Phishing Working Group, both the frequency and complexity of such attacks have continued to rise recently [2].

Although most organizations train staff to avoid phishing attacks, such efforts are of limited value. Cybersecurity awareness training does not relate to autonomous detection of phishing attacks [3]. Humans struggle to recognize cyberattacks due to stress, burnout, or security fatigue. Cybercriminals exploit these weaknesses as attack points [4]. For this reason, technical methods must be stable. Technology faces two main challenges. First, AI enables phishing that is almost indistinguishable from natural writing, often powered by LLMs [5]. Another study found that AI-generated content is more effective than human-written content [6]. These contents are also easier to bypass commercial anti-phishing systems [7]. Second, while existing detection systems perform well, interpretability is still challenging for users of neural network-based techniques [8].

The purpose of CTI is to provide high-dimensional intelligence features. These help models understand deeper tactical threat characteristics, not just static content. Thus, the CTI guidance feature project upgrades content recognition to context and intent recognition. This approach systematically enhances the test model's performance and robustness. It is distinct from traditional attack identification, which only analyzes content [9], [10]. In addition, LLMs extract rich semantic representations and generate coherent, human-readable interpretations [11]. Some similar studies have been proposed in theory, but experimental evidence is lacking [12]. Combining CTI-guided feature engineering with an LLM is crucial for decision support and model transparency. There is a gap in related research on mobile platforms.

To address these issues, this study suggests a two-part smishing detection model for mobile platforms. The first part uses a CTI-driven feature engineering machine learning model for real-time detection. LLMs are then used for cross-validation and explanation. This collaborative design aims to achieve efficient detection with better precision and decision transparency.

The primary contributions of this research can be summarized as follows:

This research introduces a CTI-guided feature engineering framework, which integrates content and contextual metrics to enhance detection accuracy and model adaptability against smishing attacks.

A novel two-layer detection architecture that combines an ensemble learning-based classifier with an LLM for semantic verification.

A novel role for LLMs in smishing detection as explainable validators, assisting security analysts in improving interpretability.

The remainder of this study is structured as follows: Section II provides a comprehensive review of prior studies on smishing threats, feature engineering and detection approaches; Section III elaborates on the proposed dual-layer framework, including dataset description, feature engineering, model construction, and an LLM-driven semantic verification mechanism; Section IV presents the experimental evaluation and analyzes the model performance of the machine learning model and the two-layer integration framework. Finally, Section V concludes the study and highlights prospective directions for future research.

II. Related Work

The rising sophistication of smishing attacks, especially those enhanced by artificial intelligence (AI), represents a major challenge for cybersecurity defenses. This literature review

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addresses three aspects to provide background for this research. First, it reviews the evolution of smishing and AI-enabled attacks, focusing on unique mechanisms and emerging threats. Next, it explores how CTI can support detection and assist with feature engineering. Finally, it evaluates current phishing detection techniques, from traditional machine learning to modern LLMs, and compares their strengths and weaknesses in tackling adaptive threats.

A. Smishing Emerges and AI-Driven Threats

Smishing is a type of phishing carried out via mobile text messages. It uses social engineering content as the attack payload. The main goal is to deceive recipients and get them to click on malicious links, exposing private information [13]. Early smishing attacks used many generic messages to deceive a small group of targets. The mobile internet has since changed the threat landscape. From 2005 to 2015, attackers expanded their attacks to include channels such as SMS, instant messaging, and spoofed websites. From 2015 to 2025, attackers began using advanced automation and artificial intelligence. These tools produce highly personalized, compelling content and increase the success rate of attacks [14].

Recently, a study by [6] demonstrates, from a red-team perspective, that content generated by AI is more compelling than that written by humans. Quantitatively, AI spear-phishing agents have been shown to perform 23% more effectively than humans [15]. While attacks become smarter, detection technologies have not been upgraded in parallel, leaving gaps in effective, low-cost detection solutions.

B. CTI in Feature Engineering

CTI is a systematic security methodology focused on collecting, analyzing, and disseminating information about potential or current cyber threats, aiming to provide actionable insights to support cybersecurity decision-making [16], [17].

In the field of threat detection, CTI plays a fundamental role. While feature engineering approaches are commonly used to detect phishing, they struggle to handle AI-driven smishing that uses unstable keywords, ambiguous intentions, and changing content. CTI can be used to enhance the dimensions of features across multiple domains, URLs, IPs, and threat indicators.

A study proposed integrating PhishTank data with threat intelligence to build a hybrid deep learning model for email phishing, as noted in [12]. This study observed that cybersecurity threat databases from VirusTotal, PhishTank, and Google Safe Browsing can improve the detection of malicious URLs and phishing attempts. The study [18] developed a cyber-threat intelligence platform that aggregates data from honeypots and open-source intelligence to detect and prevent phishing attacks. The platform focuses on threat sharing. In [19], a large-scale framework was proposed for extracting text-based attack patterns from CTI reports, with a focus on classifying attack issues. The study [20] proposed an entity recognition (NER) method to extract structured STIX-based CTI features, which achieved 81.65% accuracy in STIX attack pattern classification. In [9], this study used CTI-based features derived from search engines and WHOIS records for malicious URL detection, achieving 7.8% higher accuracy and 6.7% fewer false positives with a random forest model and MLP ensemble.

Previous research has attempted to incorporate CTI to classify attack types and detect phishing emails, achieving high performance, but research on smishing combined with CTI remains sparse.

C. Detection Approaches from Machine Learning to LLMs

Artificial intelligence (AI) represents a broad category in computing technology. Machine learning is a subset of AI that learns patterns from data. Within AI, generative AI encompasses a range of capabilities, with large language models as the most important subset. While traditional machine learning offers resource savings, LLMs provide language understanding and generation capabilities. The evolution of AI technologies has also driven the gradual movement of detection methods from machine learning to large language model-based solutions. The traditional ML-based detection schemes, as well as deep learning and LLM-based approaches, have been reviewed below.

First, feature-based machine learning methods typically rely on manually engineering features such as URL length and the number of special characters, and they use this knowledge to train classification models for phishing attack identification. A study in [21] employed GPT-4o to generate 63 email simulations of phishing attack payloads and construct 47 new stylometric features for AI-generated phishing detection. Then, we employed the XGBoost model for detection, which showed the best performance. An innovative approach to extensible artificial intelligence (XAI) for feature selection, which not only improves the accuracy of phishing website identification but also enables modelling of phishing sites and delivers interpretable results, thereby fostering greater trust among stakeholders, was proposed in [22]. Additionally, a parameter-tuning approach for phishing URL detection was proposed in [23], which used three tuning strategies: data balancing, hyperparameter optimization, and feature selection. The results show that feature selection significantly improves the accuracy and performance of the gradient boosting model. These indicate that feature selection is crucial for traditional machine learning models, but there remains room for improvement in feature performance.

Deep learning-based detection methods leverage neural networks to learn hierarchical features from input data, overcoming the limitations of manual feature engineering. For example, the author in [24] proposed a deep learning framework that leverages URL features to detect phishing. This framework offers benefits in terms of speed and accuracy, but it still doesn't address the black-box problem. The hybrid GRU+CNN model proposed in [25] uses the Kaggle dataset, which contains more than 2.5 million samples of URLs labelled as "phishing." The CNN model's accuracy is 98%. However, real-time performance is not demonstrated. Although deep learning achieves high performance in some scenarios, it poses additional challenges for real-time response applications owing to its black-box nature and high computational requirements.

Recently, with the rise of LLMs, most methods have adopted LLMs as core detectors. Optimization of LLMs typically involves pre-training or fine-tuning a specialized detector on phishing data, along with prompt engineering. In [26], two LLMs were fine-tuned on 573,880 phishing and benign URLs, achieving a high accuracy of 99.86%, with performance close to

that of state-of-the-art general-purpose LLMs. However, it also confirms that generalized LLMs still perform as well as dedicated LLMs in specific domains. The study [27] used five generic LLMs evaluated across three phishing datasets, and the results show that GPT-4 Turbo is the best-performing LLM under one-shot prompting, and the interpretations are highly readable. The study [28] compared the performance of fine-tuning and prompt engineering in phishing URL detection. The results demonstrated that fine-tuning can improve prompt engineering's accuracy from 92.9% to 97.3%, but prompt engineering has the advantage of fast development. A PhishBERT pre-trained model for phishing URL detection was proposed in [29]. The results are very satisfactory, but it consumes significant infrastructure, including 10 NVIDIA V100 servers. Pre-training a model needs strong infrastructure support, while fine-tuning consumes slightly lower computational resources. Prompt engineering offers easy access and still acceptable performance. To summarize the above, the LLM for smishing detection is highly readable and suitable for intensive interpretation. However, most research focuses only on the LLM itself and does not consider the illusion of LLMs, leaving a gap in combining LLMs and ML for detection.

Therefore, although existing research has demonstrated the enormous potential of CTI for guiding feature engineering, it also leaves a clear gap for improvement in smishing detection. To address this limitation, this research explores the systematic use of structured cyber threat intelligence features for building a lightweight, accurate, and understandable smishing detection model.

III. Methodology

This study proposes a dual-layer detection framework (see Fig. 1) to address two critical challenges: the escalating sophistication of AI-driven smishing attacks and the lack of interpretability in the detection framework. Layer 1 performs rapid interception, while Layer 2 handles cross-verification and explanation.

Fig. 1. Dual synergistic defense model.

A. System Architecture

A dual-layer detection framework process flow (see Fig. 2) is proposed in this study, consisting of two core pipelines. First, this study constructed a dataset and engineered 22 CTI-driven features out of it. These features are used to train and evaluate the optimal machine learning model. Subsequently, the machine learning model's output, together with the original smishing content, is formatted into a structured prompt. This prompt is then fed into the LLMs for cross-validation and interpretation. Finally, the framework produces highly accurate, human-readable detection results.

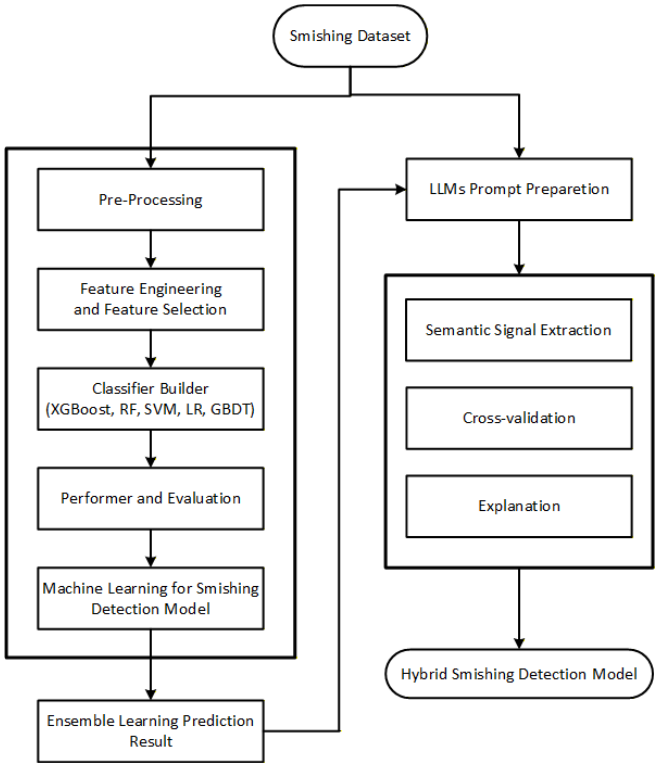

Fig. 2. Process flow of the hybrid smishing detection framework.

B. Dataset

This study uses a publicly available dataset, derived from SmishTank (https://smishtank.com/dataset). The advantage of this dataset is that it provides real-world SMS texts and their corresponding classification labels, with 22 feature dimensions. To enhance data coverage, this study employed a web crawler to collect additional samples from the source platform, expanding the dataset to 2,811 entries, as summarized in Table I.

TABLE I. Dataset Summary

Data Source	Total Samples	Legitimate	Smishing
SmishTank	2,811	1,799	1,012

To expand the number and coverage of data samples, we collected smishing records from SmishTank in real-time, as shown in Fig. 3, which displays the raw message content, associated URLs, and metadata used during dataset construction.

Upon obtaining the dataset, this study constructs the 22 features shown in Table II based on the CTI guidance and the existing literature, which categorizes IOC into three categories: content, context and IOC. CTI-driven feature set for smishing detection is given in Table II.

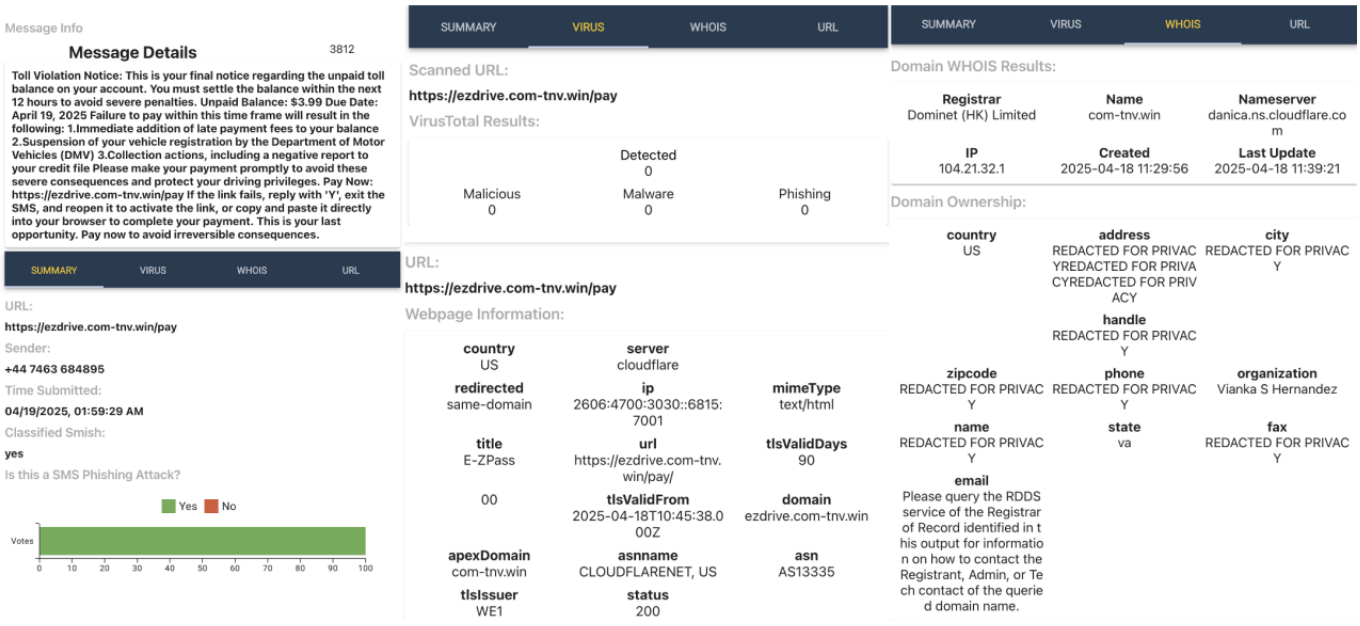

Fig. 3. Example of a smishing sample collected from SmishTank.

TABLE II. FEATURE CONSTRUCTION

ID	Feature Name	ID	Feature Name
1	sender_country_code	12	contains_financial_ref
2	sender_number_prefix	13	contains_forged_identity
3	receive_time	14	contains_account_ref
4	has_virus_malicious	15	contains_contact_instruction
5	has_virus_malware	16	has_verify_term
6	has_virus_detected	17	has_reward_term
7	tls_issuer	18	has_action_require
8	count_characters	19	has_login_term
9	has_command_tone	20	is_ip_in_url
10	has_threat_feature	21	domain_entropy
11	has_urgency_feature	22	is_url_shortener

IOC features such as has_virus_malicious, has_virus_malware, and has_virus_detected are obtained from external threat intelligence repositories, which explicitly identify malicious attacks and are therefore more reliable. Content features are a form of linguistic fingerprinting. They capture lexical and semantic patterns that differ from ordinary communication, reflecting the attacker's social engineering strategies. A key advantage of this category is its robustness; even if attackers modify domains or IP addresses, their linguistic habits and manipulation techniques are harder to conceal. Contextual features represent environmental cues that often go unnoticed individually but exhibit statistically meaningful patterns at scale, such as abnormal sending times. These three categories form a comprehensive feature set that enhances the model's ability to detect diverse smishing behaviors.

C. Machine Learning for Smishing Detection Model

This study employs five model selection methods: LR, SVM, RF, XGBoost, and GBDT. The selected classifiers represent complementary learning paradigms commonly used in security detection tasks. The linear model LR serves as the baseline, with SVM added. Tree-based and ensemble models (RF, GBDT, and XGBoost) are used to capture nonlinear interactions among CTI-driven features.

To ensure fair comparison and reproducibility, each model was configured using commonly adopted baseline parameter settings. Only limited, model-specific tuning was applied to control overfitting, prioritizing robustness and generalization over aggressive optimization.

The dataset is divided into training, validation, and test sets using a 70:10:20 ratio to balance learning capacity, parameter selection, and unbiased evaluation. Recall is emphasized as the primary metric, since missing a smishing message incurs a higher risk than issuing a false alarm. The F1 score is reported as a complementary metric to reflect the overall detection balance. Additionally, inference latency and memory consumption are evaluated to assess deployment feasibility on mobile devices. Finally, this study selects the best ML model as a detector for Layer 1 after evaluation.

D. LLM-Based Semantic Analysis and Cross-Verification

Four LLMs serve as interpreters and auxiliary detectors at Layer-2 to address the limitations of traditional machine learning models in interpretability and decision transparency. This layer is implemented in three parts: LLM prompt preparation, prompt execution, and result analysis. All four LLMs are evaluated using the same prompt and input structure to ensure comparability between models.

LLM prompt preparation: This study constructs a prompt that implements three functions in Fig. 4. Input the evaluation result of the ML for the LLM to evaluate whether it agrees or not, and give 0-100 as the likelihood of recognizing a phishing attack. Then extract the attack clues from the SMS payload and display them. In the end, explain the reason that the message is judged as a phishing attack.

```
You are a cybersecurity AI assistant.
Please analyze the following SMS message and its extracted features.
The XGBoost model classified this message as: {Phishing / Not Phishing}.
Do you agree or disagree? Provide your reasoning.
Message: "{message}"
Please rate it from 0 to 100:
  ▪ Decision: Phishing or Not Phishing, with a score (e.g., 85/100)
  ▪ Semantic Signal: Describe which signals indicate phishing or not
    phishing (around 30 words)
  ▪ Explanation: Provide a short paragraph explaining your reasoning
    behind the decision (around 50–100 words)
Example Output:
  ▪ Decision: Phishing (Score: x/100)
  ▪ Semantic Signal: Contains a suspicious shortened URL, urgent
    language about financial loss, impersonation of a legitimate
    institution, and no user-specific personalization.
  ▪ Explanation: This message creates pressure by stating an
    unauthorized transaction and includes a shortened URL (bit.ly),
    which obscures the final destination. It lacks personalization and
    uses generic terms, which are typical signs of phishing. Legitimate
    institutions usually include identifiable user information and avoid
    generic urgency tactics.
```

Fig. 4. Prompt for semantic verification.

Prompt execution: 1/5 of the dataset (2,811) is selected as the evaluation dataset. The LLM evaluator selects four LLMs for comparative evaluation: GPT-4o, GPT-4 Mini, Gemini 2.5 Pro, and LLaMA3.1-8B, which include two large-parameter models and two small-parameter models. Consistent prompt requests for evaluation results were sent to the four LLMs simultaneously.

Statistical analysis: In the final analysis stage, this study focuses on 3 dimensions: recognition accuracy, interpretation clarity, and semantic cue consistency.

In this coordination mechanism, Layer-1 addresses high-speed, low-cost detection, and Layer-2 provides interpretability, semantic robustness, and human-readable explanations.

IV. Results and Discussion

To validate the effectiveness of the proposed framework, this section presents the experimental results in three key parts: the performance of the machine learning models, the outcomes of the feature engineering process, and the analysis of the large language model's semantic verification.

A. Result of Machine Learning Model

To validate the effectiveness of the first layer of the proposed framework, this study conducts comparative experiments on five machine learning classifiers: LR, SVM, RF, GBDT, and XGBoost in a dataset divided into training, validation, and testing sets in a ratio of 70:10:20.

The results of the validation set, shown in Table III, indicate that the integrated learning model achieves a better balance among detection accuracy, recall, and robustness. Among them, XGBoost achieved the best performance on key metrics (Recall=94.12%, F1-Score=96.00%, Accuracy=97.16%), while Random Forest and GBDT also maintained high recall and AUC values (98.94% and 98.77%, respectively). These results demonstrate that the integrated model has a significant advantage in capturing smishing signals.

TABLE III. Performance Verification on Validation Set

Model	Precision	Recall	F1-Score	Accuracy	AUC
LR	98.86%	85.29%	91.58%	94.33%	97.83%
SVM	95.24%	78.43%	86.02%	90.78%	95.35%
RF	95.00%	93.14%	94.06%	95.74%	98.94%
GBDT	96.00%	94.12%	95.05%	96.45%	98.77%
XGBoost	97.96%	94.12%	96.00%	97.16%	98.76%

The results in Table IV further confirm the stability of the integrated model, with XGBoost maintaining the highest recall values, as with the RF model. Unfortunately, the precision of the RF model is also lower than that of XGBoost. Although the difference between GBDT and XGBoost is small, XGBoost still outperforms GBDT across most metrics. Comparing the validation and test sets, both indicate that XGBoost achieves better, more balanced results.

TABLE IV. Performance Verification on Test Set

Model	Precision (%)	Recall (%)	F1-Score (%)	Accuracy (%)	AUC (%)
LR	97.60	80.69	88.35	92.35	97.56
SVM	92.99	72.28	81.34	88.08	95.21
RF	92.96	91.58	92.27	94.48	98.14
GBDT	95.83	91.09	93.40	95.37	97.97
XGBoost	95.36	91.58	93.43	95.37	98.43

To assess the applicability of the five models to mobile devices, reasoning efficiency was measured. The results in Table V show that the overall inference performance is significantly lightweight. The single-sample inference latency of all models is in the millisecond range, and the maximum memory consumption during inference is only about 45 KB. However, XGBoost shows high efficiency in the inference phase, with an average latency of only 0.005 ms and a memory consumption of 8.56 KB, the lowest among all models.

TABLE V. Model Inference Time and Memory Usage

Model	Avg time (ms)	Max time (ms)	Avg mem (KB)	Max mem (KB)
Logistic Regression	0.002	0.003	45.30	45.44
SVM	0.057	0.060	45.29	45.43
Random Forest	0.047	0.048	45.66	45.79
GBDT	0.006	0.007	45.54	45.67
XGBoost	0.005	0.008	8.56	8.65

In Table VI, based on previous studies, we found that the higher the number of features, the better the model's performance tends to be. However, this study achieved relatively balanced performance using 22 features. The results of [30] used nearly twice as many features as this study, yet the precision was similar. Similarly, [22] used nearly 4 times as many features as this study. In addition, comparing the studies of [30] and [31], this study maintains robust precision, recall, and F1-score on a much larger sample size of 2811, suggesting that it achieves a more generalized and practical feature system with fewer features.

TABLE VI. COMPARATIVE RESULTS OF SMISHING DETECTION STUDIES

Study	Features	Samples	Precision	Recall	F1-Score	Accuracy
[21]	43	63	96.0%	96.0 %	96.0 %	96.0%
[22]	87	2,288	97.0%	97.0 %	97.0 %	96.8%
[31]	12	620	92.2%	92.2 %	92.2 %	92.2%
This study	22	2,811	95.4%	91.6 %	93.4 %	95.4%

In summary, XGBoost shows the best balancing ability in the first-layer framework of this study. First, XGBoost achieves the most balanced results across all recognition metrics and maintains the highest recall and F1 score. Second, in the inference phase, XGBoost's average latency is only 0.005 ms, and its memory consumption is about 8.56 KB, making it better than other models and especially suitable for deployment on resource-constrained mobile devices. Finally, XGBoost achieves stable, competitive results in this study with only 22 features, unlike previous studies that relied on much larger feature sets to achieve high performance. Based on these three lines of evidence, XGBoost achieves an optimal balance among performance, efficiency, and deployability and should be selected as a layer-1 model.

B. Feature Engineering with CTI

Smishing attacks are "semantically deceptive", "irregularly formatted", and "highly variant in content". Content features alone are not enough, so this study introduces CTI to enhance the traditional features. Therefore, this study introduces CTI to enhance the traditional features. To analyze the impact of CTI-guided features on mods, the XGBoost Gain on Feature Importance and a correlation heatmap were used.

The XGBoost gains the top twenty features in Fig. 5. This further demonstrates that the IOC metrics have_virus_detected and have_virus_malicious are the two most contributing to the model, followed by TLS issuer. Also, in the case of social engineering features, has_login_term, has_action_required and has__verify_term features also occupy an important position. This shows that IOC features are more valuable than social engineering features.

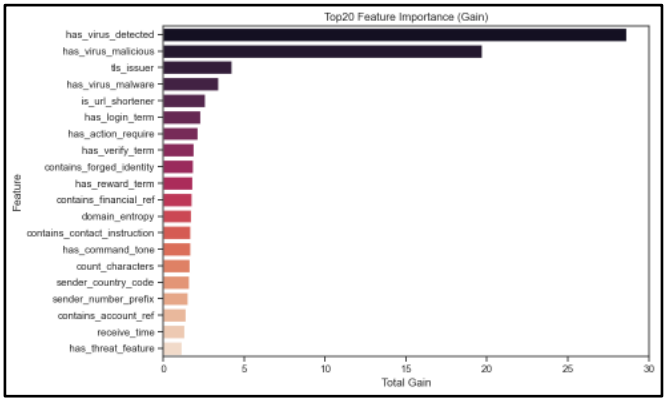

Fig. 5. Top-20 feature importance by XGBoost gain.

A strong association between has_virus_malware and has_virus_detected is observed in the correlation heatmap (Fig. 6). The correlation between social engineering features is also strong, whereas the correlation between IOC features and the middle of social engineering features is weak. These features confirm the independence of the 22 features.

After the import of CTI, the importance of IOC features among the top twenty is significantly increased. It indicates that when attack clues are predicted in an attack sample, it is more likely to be a smishing attack, which is more distinguishable than traditional content features. In addition, the correlation between IoC features is high, and the correlation between IoC features and social engineering features is weak, while there is also internal aggregation between social engineering features. This study suggests that CTI features do not duplicate traditional features' information but introduce new dimensions.

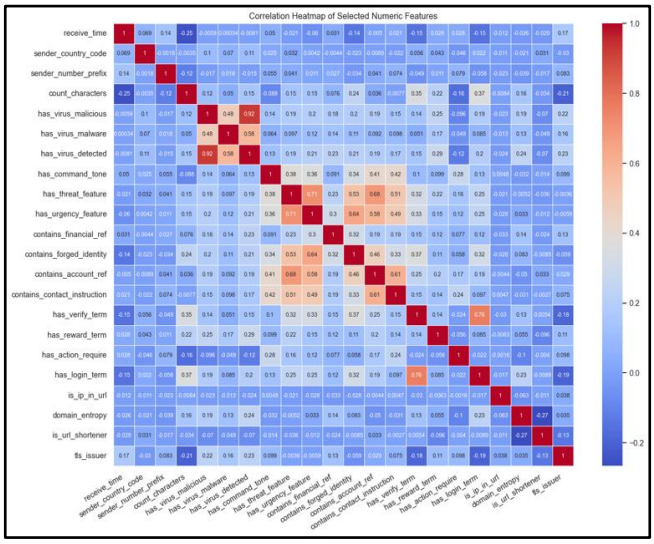

Fig. 6. Correlation heatmap of constructed features.

C. Result of LLMs

In the LLM cross-validation and semantic analysis phase, a total of 562 samples were selected for evaluation. The study first obtained the Layer-1 XGBoost classifier's predictions and compared with those of four LLMs. A representative boundary case was further examined to assess the model's semantic interpretation capabilities.

Since interpretation clarity and semantic cue consistency lack universally accepted objective measurements, this study treats them as proxy metrics. Interpretation clarity is defined as whether the LLM-generated explanation contains all required semantic components specified in the prompt and is consistent with the final decision, and it is measured by the proportion of samples satisfying these criteria. Semantic cue consistency is defined as the degree of overlap in identified smishing-related cues across different LLMs when analyzing the same message.

From Table VII, it is observed that the higher-parameter LLMs demonstrate higher performance in smishing detection. GPT-4o and Gemini-2.5 Pro both reduced the number of false negatives (FN) to 1, significantly outperforming XGBoost, which produced 14 FN on the same evaluation set. Among the models, Gemini-2.5 Pro achieved the most balanced overall performance.

TABLE VII. CROSS-VERIFICATION PERFORMANCE COMPARISON

Model	TP	FP	FN	TN
XGBoost	188	6	14	354
Llama3.1-8B	199	355	3	3
GPT-4omini	200	346	2	12
GPT-4o	201	351	1	7
Gemini-2.5pro	201	350	1	8

In addition to their predictive accuracy, an important advantage of LLMs is their ability to generate contextually relevant, human-readable explanations. To illustrate this capability, Fig. 7 presents a representative boundary case for the XGBoost classifier. The message contains social engineering-related keywords such as "refund" and "reply", which frequently appear in smishing messages, leading the feature-based model to classify it as phishing in the absence of explicit threat indicators. In contrast, the LLM identified the message as benign by recognizing that it originated from a legitimate "temu.com" source and followed the structure of a standard customer service notification. This example demonstrates the LLM's ability to capture higher-level semantic and organizational contexts that are difficult to model using handcrafted features alone.

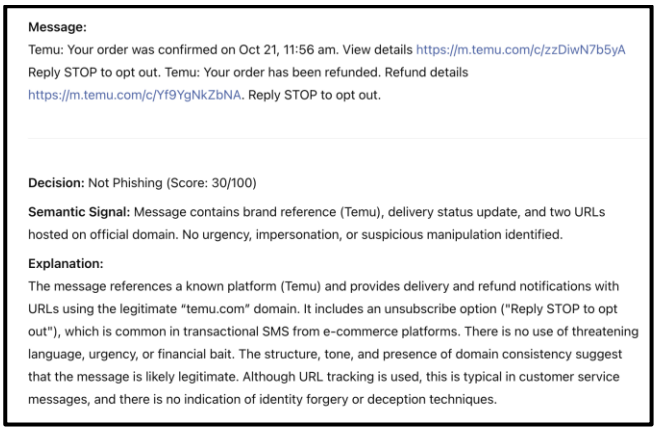

Fig. 7. LLM analysis sample for smishing detection.

D. Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, the dataset is primarily derived from SmishTank and may not fully capture the diversity of smishing campaigns across regions and languages, potentially affecting generalizability. Second, the effectiveness of CTI-guided features depends on the availability and quality of external threat intelligence, and incomplete or outdated CTI may reduce the contribution of IOC-related features. Third, although the LLM layer enhances semantic verification and interpretability, it involves additional computational overhead and is subject to known robustness issues; however, its impact is limited by its role as a secondary verifier rather than the primary detector.

From a security perspective, this design limits the impact of adversarial manipulation, as potential prompt injection or output manipulation at the LLM layer cannot directly bypass the CTI-guided machine learning decision in the first layer.

In addition, an explicit ablation study isolating CTI-driven features from traditional content- and context-based features is not conducted, as several CTI indicators are intrinsically integrated into the feature space. Nevertheless, feature importance and correlation analyses indicate that CTI features provide complementary and non-redundant information.

These limitations define the scope within which the experimental results should be interpreted.

V. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

Traditional smishing detection approaches face challenges balancing computational efficiency, expressive feature representation, and boundary-case identification. To address these issues, this study proposes a lightweight dual-layer detection framework that integrates a CTI-guided machine learning classifier with an LLM-based semantic verification module.

Experimental results show that XGBoost provides efficient and accurate first-layer detection, while the LLM layer complements it by improving recall and interpretability in ambiguous cases. This collaborative design achieves a practical balance between detection performance, transparency, and deployability in resource-constrained environments.

Future work will focus on expanding the dataset to cover multiple languages and regions, integrating more dynamic CTI sources, and conducting systematic ablation and cross-dataset evaluations to further quantify feature contributions and generalization. In addition, optimizing the cost and robustness of the LLM layer remains an important direction for large-scale deployment.

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Development of Image Processing Filters for Improving Visibility of Fine Dentoalveolar Structures in Dental Cone-Beam Computed Tomography Images

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***Abstract*—Cone-beam computed tomography (CBCT) imaging in dentistry requires post-reconstruction image processing to enhance diagnostic quality while minimizing radiation exposure. Visualization of fine dentomaxillofacial structures, particularly the inferior alveolar canal (IAC) and dental pulp canals, presents significant diagnostic challenges in low-dose CBCT imaging. This study investigates the application of Wiener and adaptive Wiener (LLMMSE) filters in the reconstruction domain to improve the visibility of these critical anatomical structures in low-dose dental CBCT images. Two CBCT examinations of a dry mandible were acquired using reference and low-dose protocols. The low-dose post-reconstruction data was processed using six different filters: geometric mean, LLMMSE with additive noise 15, LLMMSE with additive noise 5, moving average, Wiener, and local contrast filters. These computationally efficient filters offer practical advantages over existing complex and costly noise reduction schemes. Subjective evaluation by an experienced oral and maxillofacial radiologist demonstrated that the IAC was clearly identifiable in all low-dose datasets regardless of filter application. However, the highest visibility of narrow pulp canals was achieved with the Wiener and LLMMSE_5 filters. This proof-of-concept study demonstrates the potential of Wiener and LLMMSE_5 techniques for improving visibility of narrow dental pulp canals in low-dose CBCT images, which has important implications for endodontic diagnosis and treatment planning while supporting radiation dose reduction strategies.**

***Keywords*—Cone-beam computed tomography; CBCT; image processing; Wiener filter; LLMMSE filter; dental imaging; noise reduction; low-dose imaging; endodontics; pulp canal visualization**

I. Introduction

Cone-beam computed tomography (CBCT) is a specialized form of computed tomography (CT) that has revolutionized dental imaging since its introduction in 1998 [1]. CBCT devices designed specifically for dentistry have become widely adopted due to their ability to provide high-resolution three-dimensional images and sectional views free from superimposition. The clinical applications of CBCT span multiple dental specialties, with particular utility in endodontics for root canal assessment [2], implant site analysis and surgical planning [4], orthodontic treatment planning [5], and maxillofacial surgery for anatomical evaluation [6]. The European Commission has published evidence-based guidelines emphasizing the importance of appropriate CBCT use in dental and maxillofacial radiology [3].

Despite these advantages, dental CBCT examinations impart higher radiation doses than conventional dental radiography [7]. This elevated radiation exposure is particularly concerning given the findings of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, which reported that medical exposure represents the largest artificial source of ionizing radiation to collective populations, largely attributable to the widespread availability of CT examinations [8]. The radiation dose imparted by different CBCT devices is highly variable, depending on the type of device, exposure parameters, and field of view [7], [9], [10]. Consequently, CBCT dose optimization—employing the lowest radiation dose that maintains diagnostic image quality—is essential to minimize potential biological harm to patients [11], [2], [3], [4], [6]. This principle aligns with the ALADA concept (As Low As Diagnostically Acceptable) introduced by the National Council on Radiation Protection [11].

Each CBCT examination generates a set of two-dimensional X-ray projections acquired around a single axis of rotation, which are subsequently reconstructed into a three-dimensional image volume. Increasing exposure parameters elevates the radiation dose delivered to the patient. Fundamentally, reduction of radiation dose in any CT modality is associated with increased quantum noise in the reconstructed images [12], [13]. Therefore, attempts to reduce CBCT exposure parameters are constrained by the progressive increase in image noise at lower doses [14]. This noise elevation decreases the signal-to-noise ratio (SNR), potentially compromising diagnostic quality through reduced contrast and spatial resolution [15], [16]. Consequently, there exists a clinical need for technical solutions that can improve contrast and spatial resolution of CBCT images acquired at reduced radiation doses.

The majority of commercial CBCT systems employ the Feldkamp-Davis-Kress (FDK) filtered back-projection reconstruction algorithm [17], [18]. While hardware constraints limit implementation of alternative reconstruction approaches, optimizing the performance of this established FDK algorithm is crucial for maximizing diagnostic information from CBCT images. The standard FDK approach applies a ramp filter

in the frequency domain prior to back-projection, typically combined with window functions to attenuate high-frequency noise components.

Various filtering approaches have been investigated for noise reduction in CT and CBCT imaging. Srinivasan et al. [19] evaluated reconstruction filters for CBCT noise reduction. Zeng [20] proposed noise-weighted filtered backprojection techniques, while Sagawa et al. [21] compared shift-invariant filtering methods. However, these approaches often fail to adequately preserve spatial resolution [22]. The field of image processing offers numerous 2D and 3D adaptive filters designed to tailor smoothing to local noise characteristics. Researchers have applied adaptive filters to CT and CBCT images using two primary strategies: filtering projections or sinograms before reconstruction [23], [24], [25], [26], [27], [28], [29], or filtering the reconstructed images directly [30], [31], [32].

Filtering in the reconstruction domain offers several practical advantages over projection-domain filtering. First, the filtering operation can be observed immediately without requiring access to the reconstruction process, which may not always be available to clinicians. Second, filtering in the reconstruction domain avoids potential streaking artifacts that can occur with projection-domain filtering. Third, clinicians can manipulate different images and views to optimize visualization of anatomical structures and lesions, which aligns with established visualization protocols that influence examination interpretation [33], [34], [35].

Among the most widely used noise-reduction techniques in signal and image processing are Wiener and adaptive Wiener (LLMMSE) filters. These filters have demonstrated excellent denoising performance [36] while being considerably more straightforward to implement than many schemes previously applied to CBCT, which often require complex parameterization and costly computational resources. For CBCT imaging, Wiener filters have been applied to reduce noise in the projection domain [37]. However, to the best of our knowledge, Wiener filtering has not been systematically applied in the reconstruction domain to leverage its potential advantages for post-reconstruction image enhancement.

Therefore, the aim of this proof-of-concept study was to apply several variants of Wiener filters in the reconstruction domain of low-dose dental CBCT images of a dry mandible to evaluate their potential for improving visibility of the inferior alveolar canal (IAC) and pulp canals of teeth. Evaluation focused on these structures because their accurate identification requires the highest spatial and contrast resolution, which is critical for implant site analysis [38], [39], [40], [41], [42] and endodontic assessment [2].

II. Materials and Methods

The project was approved by the College of Dentistry Research Center (CDRC registration number: FR 0438). The low-dose CBCT dataset was processed using six different filtering techniques:

- Geometric Mean Filter: A nonlinear filter that computes the geometric mean of pixel values within a local neighborhood.
- LLMMSE_15: Adaptive Wiener filter with additive noise variance parameter set to 15.
- LLMMSE_5: Adaptive Wiener filter with additive noise variance parameter set to 5.
- Moving Average Filter: A linear smoothing filter that replaces each pixel with the arithmetic mean of its neighborhood.
- Wiener Filter: Standard Wiener filter applied in the frequency domain.
- Local Contrast Filter: A filter designed to enhance local contrast while reducing noise.

A. Sample Preparation and CBCT Imaging

Extracted premolar teeth were placed in the sockets of a section of a dry mandible, and the mandible and any exposed radicular portions of the teeth were covered in wax to simulate soft tissue attenuation. The bone and teeth were then imaged with a CBCT device (Planmeca ProMax 3D max, Planmeca Inc., Helsinki, Finland) which has an adjustable field of view (see Fig. 1). This dry mandible specimen was selected as it provides a controlled, reproducible imaging target for this initial feasibility assessment.

Two CBCT examinations were performed: one using a standard dose protocol and another using the low-dose protocol of the device. Both examinations were acquired with a small field of view measuring $\varnothing 4.2 \times 5.1$ centimeters and were composed of a total of $281 \times 281 \times 341$ voxels. The exposure parameters for the two protocols are listed in Table I.

B. Mathematical Modeling

This section presents the mathematical models underlying the image processing filters used for enhancing CBCT images. The primary focus is on Wiener filter and adaptive Wiener filter (LLMMSE) implementations.

1) Wiener filtering: Dentomaxillofacial images are frequently degraded by blurring and additive noise. In signal processing terms, this degradation can be expressed as:

$$y(i,j) = x(i,j) * h(i,j) + n(i,j) \tag{1}$$

where, $y(i,j)$ is the distorted image, $x(i,j)$ is the original image, $h(i,j)$ is a point spread function modeled as a linear time-invariant system, and $n(i,j)$ is additive noise.

Assuming that signal and noise processes are stationary, Wiener filters provide an estimation of the original image, $x_d(i,j)$, that minimizes the mean square error:

$$\text{MSE}\left(x_d\right) = \frac{1}{N}\sum_{i=1}^{N}\sum_{j=1}^{M}\left(x_d(i,j) - x(i,j)\right)^2 \tag{2}$$

where, N and M are the horizontal and vertical dimensions of the image. Wiener filtering is typically applied in the frequency domain. The original image spectrum is estimated by computing the product of the image Fourier transform $(X(u,v))$ with the Wiener filter $(W(u,v))$ [44]:

Fig. 1. The Planmeca ProMax 3D max CBCT device used to acquire the CBCT images. This device features adjustable field of view settings and multiple dose protocols suitable for various clinical applications.

TABLE I. EXPOSURE PARAMETERS OF CBCT PROTOCOLS

Dose Protocol	Voxel Size (μm)	Voltage (kV)	Current (mA)	Exposure Time (s)
Low dose	150	60	1.0	15.957
Standard	150	60	8.0	15.238

$$X_d(u,v) = W(u,v)X(u,v) = \frac{H^{\text{conj}}(u,v)}{|H(u,v)|^2 + \text{NSR}} X(u,v) \tag{3}$$

where, $H(u,v)$ is the Fourier Transform of $h(i,j)$, and NSR is the noise-to-signal power ratio (i.e., the reciprocal of the signal-to-noise ratio).

2) Adaptive Wiener filtering: In practice, images are not globally stationary, and therefore noise cannot be optimally minimized using standard Wiener filtering. However, images can reasonably be treated as locally stationary. Adaptive Wiener filters, also known as local linear minimum mean square error (LLMMSE) filters, address this limitation by computing statistics from a local neighborhood around each pixel. This approach enables the filter to adapt to local image characteristics, often producing superior results compared to global linear filtering while preserving edges and other high-frequency image features.

The pixel-wise adaptive low-pass Wiener filter computes the local mean and variance around each pixel [43]:

$$\mu = \frac{1}{LP} \sum_{i,j \in R} y(i,j) \tag{4}$$

and

$$\sigma^2 = \frac{1}{LP} \sum_{i,j \in R} y^2(i,j) - \mu^2 \tag{5}$$

where, R is the L-by-P local neighborhood of each pixel in the image y. These estimates are then used to compute the filtered image $x_d(i,j)$:

$$x_d(i,j) = \mu + \frac{\sigma^2 - v^2}{\sigma^2}(y(i,j) - \mu) \quad (6)$$

where, v^2 is the noise variance. This approach performs optimally when the noise exhibits constant-power ("white") characteristics, such as Gaussian noise.

C. Image Processing and Analysis

The low-dose CBCT dataset was processed using six different filtering techniques: geometric mean filter, LLMMSE filter with additive noise parameter 15 (LLMMSE_15), LLMMSE filter with additive noise parameter 5 (LLMMSE_5), moving average filter, Wiener filter, and local contrast filter. These filters were selected based on their established performance in noise reduction applications and their computational efficiency compared to more complex iterative reconstruction schemes.

The filtered datasets were exported in Digital Imaging and Communications in Medicine (DICOM) format and processed using image reformatting software (OnDemand Software, Version 1.0, Build 1.0.10.5385, x64 Edition, Cybermed Inc., Seoul, South Korea).

An oral and maxillofacial radiologist with 15 years of experience in CT image reformatting and interpretation performed the image analysis. Using the 3D module of the software, reformatted images of the IAC were obtained in parasagittal (Fig. 2) and transverse cross-sectional (Fig. 3) planes at standardized positions and orientations. Reformatted images of the pulp canals of a double-rooted premolar tooth were obtained in mesio-distal (Fig. 4), bucco-lingual (Fig. 5), and axial (Fig. 6) planes at identical positions and orientations.

Image magnification was standardized across all datasets. Image contrast and density were adjusted for optimal visualization of each dataset, as the filtered datasets exhibited different gray value distributions. The visibility of the IAC was subjectively evaluated in both parasagittal and transverse cross-sectional images (Fig. 2 and Fig. 3). For pulp canal visibility assessment, the mesio-distal images (Fig. 4) were used as the primary comparison, as these demonstrated the narrowest canal branches.

III. Results

The raw projection data of a CBCT acquisition can be mathematically expressed as:

$$p(u,v;\theta) = I_0 e^{\int_0^{SDD} \mu(x,y,z)dy} \quad (7)$$

where, θ is the projection angle, I_0 is the intensity of the X-ray source, and $\mu(x,y,z)$ is the distribution of the linear attenuation coefficient of the imaged object. The Filtered Back Projection algorithm requires data in the form of line integrals, achieved through logarithmic normalization using the known value of I_0. The reconstruction results using different I_0 estimation methods are shown in Fig. 7.

Regarding visibility of the IAC, the canal walls appeared less sharp in low-dose images compared to reference images. However, the IAC was clearly identifiable in all low-dose datasets, regardless of whether a filter was applied. The cortical boundaries of the mandible were also adequately visualized across all filtering conditions.

Regarding visibility of the pulp canals, compared to the unfiltered high-dose images, the narrow branches of the pulp canals were found to be most clearly visible in the low-dose images processed with the Wiener filter [Fig. 4(g)], followed by images produced using LLMMSE_5 [Fig. 4(e)]. Notably, the narrow canal branches were barely visible in both the unfiltered high-dose and low-dose images [Fig. 4(a) and Fig. 4(b)], suggesting that the filtering process provided enhancement beyond simple noise reduction.

IV. Discussion

The results of this study demonstrate that Wiener and LLMMSE_5 filters applied in the reconstruction domain can improve visualization of fine anatomical structures in low-dose CBCT images. This finding has important implications for clinical practice, as improved pulp canal visibility directly supports endodontic diagnosis and treatment planning. Accurate visualization of root canal anatomy is essential for successful endodontic treatment, including assessment of canal number, curvature, and the presence of anatomical variations or pathology [2].

The superior performance of the Wiener and LLMMSE_5 filters compared to other tested filters can be attributed to their adaptive noise estimation capabilities. Unlike simple smoothing filters such as the moving average, these filters adjust their behavior based on local image statistics, allowing them to reduce noise in homogeneous regions while preserving edge information in areas of high contrast. The LLMMSE_5 filter, with its lower additive noise parameter, provides more aggressive smoothing than LLMMSE_15, which may explain its improved performance for visualizing the fine pulp canal structures.

The finding that the IAC remained identifiable across all filtering conditions, while pulp canal visibility varied substantially, reflects the different spatial scales of these structures. The IAC, being a larger anatomical feature, is less susceptible to noise-induced degradation than the narrow pulp canals. This observation suggests that filter selection should be guided by the specific diagnostic task and the size of structures of interest.

The application of these filters in the reconstruction domain offers practical advantages for clinical implementation. Unlike projection-domain filtering, which requires access to raw projection data and integration with the reconstruction pipeline, reconstruction-domain filtering can be applied to any CBCT dataset using standard image processing software. This accessibility facilitates adoption in clinical settings where proprietary reconstruction algorithms may limit access to projection data.

A. Study Limitations

Several limitations of this study must be acknowledged when interpreting the results. First, this is an initial proof-of-concept assessment using a single dry mandible specimen and

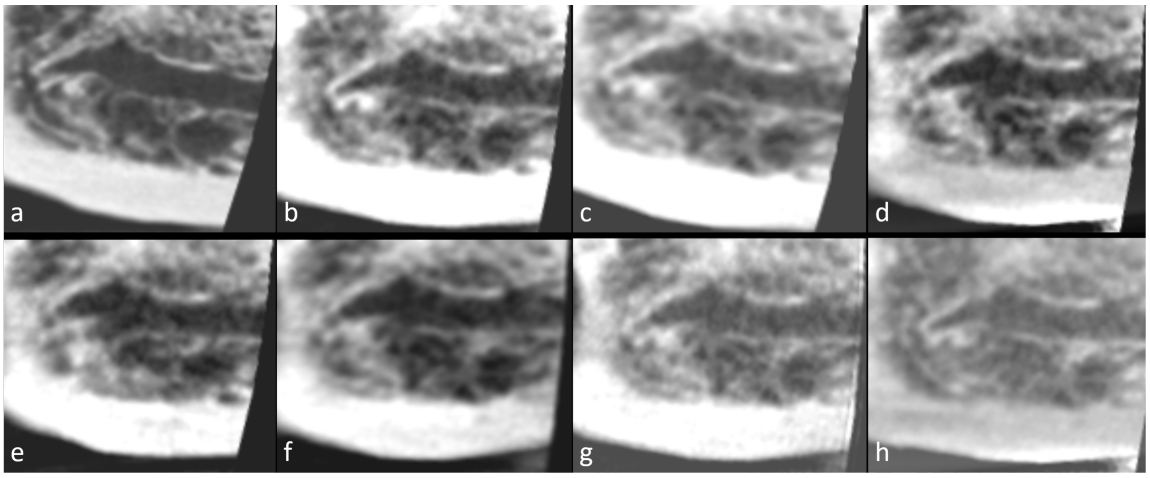

Fig. 2. Parasagittal section of dry mandible demonstrating the inferior alveolar canal. Images show: (a) standard dose protocol without additional filtering, (b) low dose protocol without additional filtering, and low dose protocol with additional filtering using (c) geometric mean, (d) LLMMSE_15, (e) LLMMSE_5, (f) moving average, (g) Wiener, and (h) local contrast techniques. The IAC boundaries are identifiable in all images, though with varying degrees of sharpness.

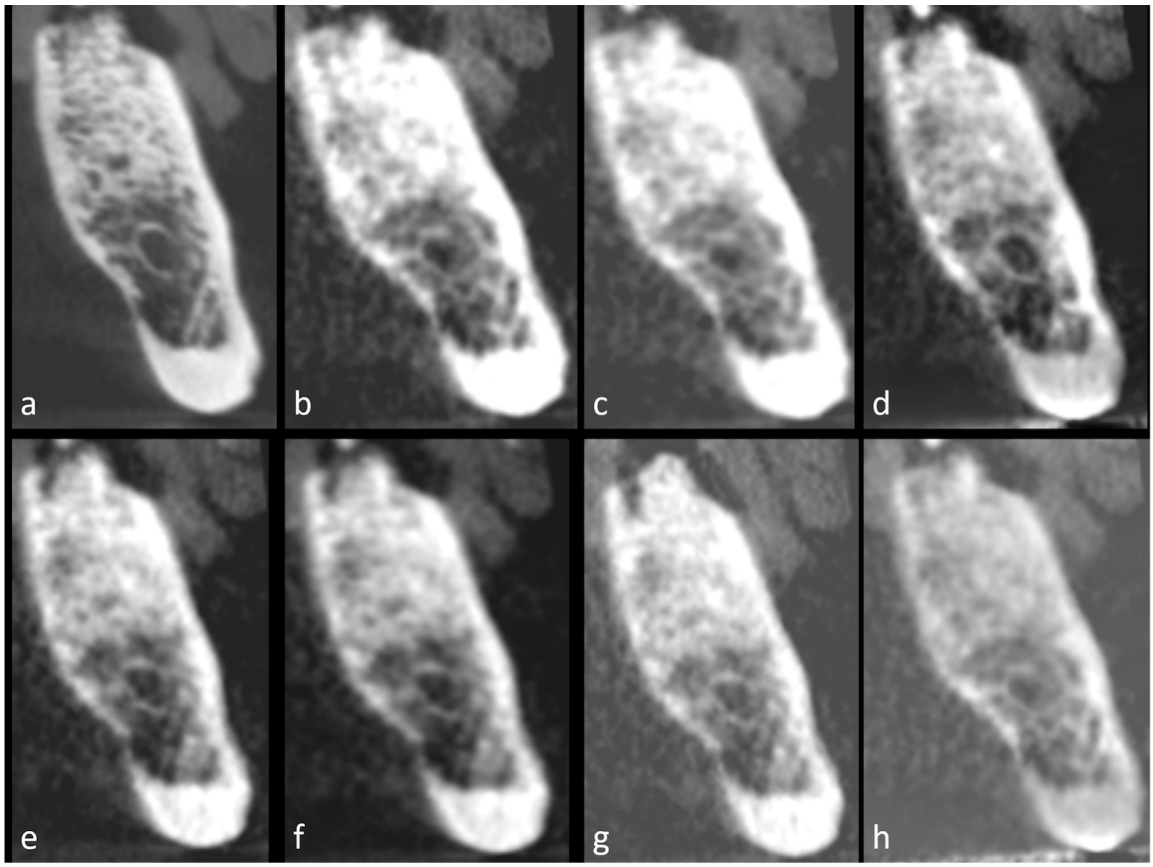

Fig. 3. Transverse cross-section of dry mandible demonstrating the inferior alveolar canal and cortical boundaries. Images show: (a) standard dose protocol without additional filtering, (b) low dose protocol without additional filtering, and low dose protocol with additional filtering using (c) geometric mean, (d) LLMMSE_15, (e) LLMMSE_5, (f) moving average, (g) Wiener, and (h) local contrast techniques. Cortical bone boundaries and the IAC lumen are visible across all filtering conditions.

a single examiner. The use of a dry specimen eliminates the effects of soft tissue attenuation and patient motion, which may influence filter performance in clinical scenarios. Second, the evaluation was based solely on subjective visual assessment without quantitative image quality metrics such as signal-to-noise ratio (SNR), contrast-to-noise ratio (CNR), or edge preservation indices. While subjective assessment reflects clinical practice, objective metrics would strengthen the evidence

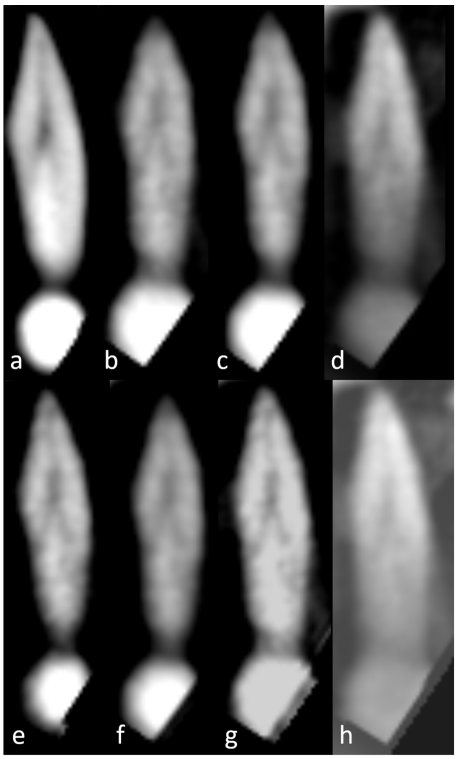

Fig. 4. Mesio-distal section of a maxillary premolar root demonstrating branching of the pulp canal. Images show: (a) standard dose protocol without additional filtering, (b) low dose protocol without additional filtering, and low dose protocol with additional filtering using (c) geometric mean, (d) LLMMSE_15, (e) LLMMSE_5, (f) moving average, (g) Wiener, and (h) local contrast techniques. The narrow pulp canal branches are most clearly visible in images processed with Wiener (g) and LLMMSE_5 (e) filters.

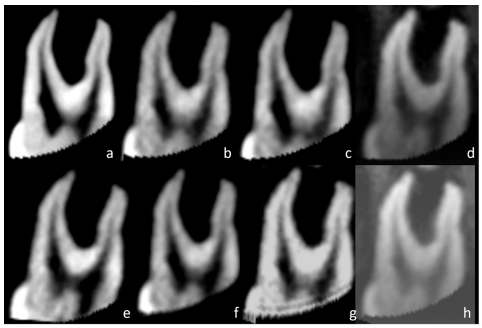

Fig. 5. Bucco-lingual section of maxillary premolar roots demonstrating the pulp canals. Images show: (a) standard dose protocol without additional filtering, (b) low dose protocol without additional filtering, and low dose protocol with additional filtering using (c) geometric mean, (d) LLMMSE_15, (e) LLMMSE_5, (f) moving average, (g) Wiener, and (h) local contrast techniques.

for filter efficacy. Third, the results were compared to high-dose images rather than a true gold standard such as micro-CT images or histological sections. Fourth, the use of only two CBCT scans limits the generalizability of findings to other CBCT devices, exposure protocols, or anatomical regions.

B. Clinical Implications

Despite these limitations, the results have important clinical implications. The potential to improve pulp canal visibility in low-dose CBCT images supports the goal of radiation dose reduction in dental imaging while maintaining diagnostic utility. This is particularly relevant for endodontic applications, where detailed visualization of root canal anatomy is essential but repeated imaging may be required during treatment. The ability to achieve adequate diagnostic quality at reduced radiation doses aligns with the ALADA principle and supports patient safety.

Furthermore, the computational simplicity of Wiener and LLMMSE filters makes them suitable for integration into clinical workflows without requiring specialized hardware or extensive processing time. This practical advantage may facilitate broader adoption of dose reduction strategies in dental CBCT imaging.

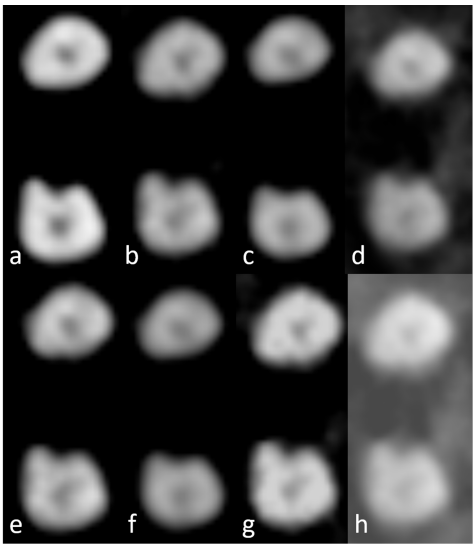

Fig. 6. Axial section of a maxillary premolar root demonstrating the pulp canals. Images show: (a) standard dose protocol without additional filtering, (b) low dose protocol without additional filtering, and low dose protocol with additional filtering using (c) geometric mean, (d) LLMMSE_15, (e) LLMMSE_5, (f) moving average, (g) Wiener, and (h) local contrast techniques.

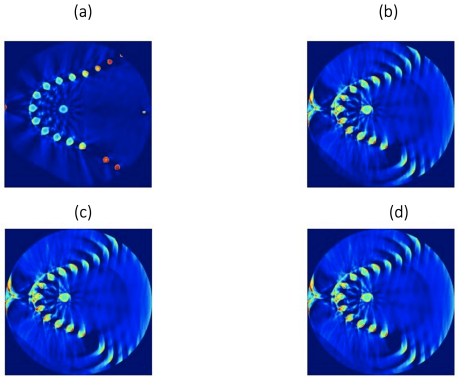

Fig. 7. Comparison of reconstruction results using different I_0 estimation methods: (a) Proprietary reconstruction, (b) I_0 estimated as maximum pixel value, (c) I_0 from constant calibration value, (d) I_0 from varying per-pixel calibration. These variations in I_0 estimation affect the overall image contrast and density distribution.

V. Conclusion

This proof-of-concept study demonstrates that Wiener and LLMMSE_5 filters applied in the reconstruction domain show potential for improving the visibility of narrow dental pulp canals in low-dose CBCT images. The IAC remained clearly identifiable across all tested conditions, while pulp canal visibility was notably enhanced by these adaptive filtering techniques.

A. Research Contributions

The primary contribution of this work is the systematic evaluation of Wiener and LLMMSE filters in the reconstruction domain for dental CBCT image enhancement. While these filters have been previously applied in the projection domain, their application to reconstructed CBCT images for improving visualization of fine dentoalveolar structures represents a novel approach that offers practical advantages for clinical implementation.

B. Practical Advantages

The filters evaluated in this study offer several practical advantages over more complex noise reduction schemes. They are computationally efficient, requiring minimal processing time compared to iterative reconstruction algorithms. They can be applied to any CBCT dataset without requiring access to raw projection data or modification of the reconstruction pipeline. Additionally, they are available in standard image processing software packages, facilitating adoption in clinical and research settings.

C. Future Research Directions

Future investigations should address the limitations of this initial study through several approaches. First, studies using larger sample sizes with multiple specimens and multiple examiners would strengthen the evidence for filter efficacy and assess inter-observer reliability. Second, inclusion of quantitative image quality metrics (SNR, CNR, edge preservation

indices) would provide objective measures of filter performance. Third, comparison to a true gold standard (micro-CT or histological sections) would enable assessment of diagnostic accuracy. Fourth, evaluation using cadaveric specimens or clinical images would assess filter performance under realistic imaging conditions including soft tissue effects. Fifth, investigation of filter performance across different CBCT devices, exposure protocols, and anatomical regions would establish generalizability. Finally, clinical studies assessing the impact of filtered images on diagnostic accuracy and treatment outcomes would provide evidence for clinical utility.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to thank the College of Dentistry Research Center at King Saud University for approving this project. The authors are grateful to Northern Border University for supporting this research through sabbatical leave program.

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Blockchain-Based Audit Trails: Improving Transparency and Fraud Detection in Digital Accounting Systems

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Abstract*—Blockchain technology has emerged as a transformative innovation in digital accounting, offering robust mechanisms to enhance auditability, data integrity, and fraud prevention. This study examines how blockchain-based audit trails can improve transparency and strengthen fraud detection within modern accounting information systems. Adopting a conceptual–analytical research design supported by secondary empirical evidence, the study analyzes data drawn from recent peer-reviewed case studies, industry reports, and documented implementations of permissioned blockchain systems in auditing and financial reporting contexts. The analysis focuses on core blockchain characteristics—immutability, decentralization, cryptographic security, real-time verification, and transaction mining—and evaluates their implications for audit processes and governance mechanisms. The results highlight that blockchain-enabled audit trails allow continuous access to verified transactional data, significantly improving early detection of anomalies, reducing opportunities for data manipulation, and enhancing the reliability of financial reporting. The study further demonstrates that permissioned blockchain architectures, combined with smart contract automation, can operationally support real-time audit logging and procedural compliance while minimizing human error. However, empirical insights also reveal critical implementation challenges, including interoperability constraints, scalability issues, regulatory uncertainty, and organizational resistance. In terms of contribution, this research offers a conceptual and methodological contribution by developing an integrated blockchain-based auditing framework that systematically links technological features with audit objectives and fraud prevention mechanisms. Unlike prior descriptive reviews, this study explicitly positions its framework against existing auditing and blockchain literature, clarifying how blockchain-based audit trails extend current auditing theory and provide practical design implications for enterprise accounting systems. Overall, the findings advance scholarly understanding of blockchain-enabled auditing and provide actionable insights for auditors, system designers, and regulators seeking to implement next-generation digital audit infrastructures.

Keywords*—Blockchain; audit trails; fraud detection; digital accounting; transparency; data mining

I. Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has fundamentally transformed the landscape of financial reporting and auditing. Organizations increasingly rely on integrated information systems that automate transaction processing and data storage. However, this digital shift has amplified concerns regarding data manipulation, cybersecurity threats, and financial fraud. Traditional audit techniques often struggle to keep pace with the complexity of digital transactions. As a result, researchers are exploring technologies like blockchain to enhance data integrity in digital accounting systems.

Blockchain technology has gained significant global attention for its immutable and transparent record-keeping characteristics [1]. In auditing, immutability provides strong protection against unauthorized alterations. This capability positions blockchain-based audit trails as a promising solution for fraud mitigation. Additionally, decentralization reduces dependency on centralized authorities. Consequently, auditors obtain verifiable and tamper-proof evidence for assessments.

Recent corporate accounting scandals highlight persistent weaknesses in conventional audit systems. High-profile fraud incidents underscore deficiencies in internal control frameworks. These failures create a compelling need for more secure technological auditing solutions. Blockchain's cryptographic protocols provide stronger protection than traditional data storage. Therefore, blockchain integration can improve anomaly and fraud detection [2].

Digital accounting systems generate vast volumes of transactional data at unprecedented speed. Manual reviews are increasingly inefficient for ensuring adequate audit coverage. Blockchain-enabled audit trails streamline verification through automated and real-time updates. This capability supports continuous auditing practices. As a result, oversight becomes stronger and more timely [3], [4].

One of blockchain's most valuable features for auditing is its transparent and traceable ledger. Transparency allows auditors to follow transactions from initiation to final reporting. This reduces information asymmetry and strengthens accountability [6]. Stakeholders, including regulators and investors, benefit from enhanced trust. Such trust is vital for credible financial reporting.

Despite evident advantages, blockchain adoption in accounting systems remains slow. Many organizations face regulatory uncertainty and limited technological readiness. These constraints inhibit large-scale blockchain implementation [7]. Integrating blockchain with legacy systems also requires

structural changes. Therefore, organizational readiness remains a critical determinant of adoption success.

Financial considerations also influence blockchain adoption for audit purposes. Although blockchain reduces long-term costs through automation and efficiency, initial investment requirements remain substantial. These include system redesign, training, and infrastructure development [8]. Smaller enterprises may deem these costs prohibitive. Even so, blockchain yields high value in environments with significant fraud exposure.

Computer science research is increasingly directed at solving blockchain scalability limitations. Enterprise environments demand high transaction throughput that many blockchain systems cannot yet support. Hybrid and permissioned blockchain models have emerged to address scalability concerns (Rauchs et al., 2018). These models maintain cryptographic security while improving performance. As a result, they are well-suited for accounting audit trails.

Smart contracts introduce additional opportunities for audit innovation. These automated scripts execute pre-defined rules without manual intervention. In auditing, smart contracts can enforce compliance and automate verification processes [9]. This automation reduces human error. Consequently, audit accuracy and consistency increase significantly.

Growing demand for real-time oversight accelerates the development of continuous auditing models. Continuous auditing enables auditors to assess financial events as they occur. Blockchain supports these models by providing stable, immutable, and verifiable audit trails [10]. Such capabilities outperform traditional periodic audits. In turn, organizations benefit from faster detection of irregularities.

Another critical advantage of blockchain in auditing is enhanced data integrity. Traditional systems are vulnerable to unauthorized access and concealed manipulations. Blockchain's distributed structure eliminates single points of failure [11]. This makes it highly suitable for environments requiring secure financial data management. Thus, blockchain strengthens internal control mechanisms.

Blockchain adoption aligns with global trends toward digital governance and regulatory modernization. Governments and institutions worldwide are exploring blockchain to improve transparency in public and private sectors. These initiatives further validate blockchain's relevance in auditing [12]. Regulatory interest accelerates research and development. As a result, blockchain auditing is gaining institutional legitimacy.

Auditors increasingly require tools capable of analyzing large, complex, and interconnected data systems. Blockchain facilitates holistic analysis by providing unified and consistent datasets. These datasets enable more accurate fraud detection and anomaly tracking [13], [14]. Improved analytics support better decision-making. Therefore, blockchain contributes to more efficient audit environments.

Despite its promise, blockchain also presents challenges that must be addressed for successful implementation. Issues such as interoperability, governance structure, and data privacy remain concerns. These limitations suggest the need for further research and refinement [15]. Addressing these issues will determine blockchain's long-term viability. Nonetheless, current evidence positions blockchain as a transformative technology for auditing.

TABLE I. SUMMARY OF KEY BLOCKCHAIN ADVANTAGES FOR DIGITAL AUDITING

Feature	Description	Impact on Auditing	Source
Immutability	Records cannot be altered once stored	Enhances reliability	Cao et al., 2019
Decentralization	Distributed ledger across multiple nodes	Reduces manipulation risk	Zhang et al., 2020
Transparency	Full visibility of transaction history	Improves traceability	Liu & Wu, 2020
Smart Contracts	Automated rule-based execution	Supports automation	Dai & Vasarhelyi, 2017
Cryptographic Security	Advanced encryption methods protect data	Strengthens fraud detection	Casino et al., 2019

Source: Research data, 2025.

Table I illustrates that blockchain technology offers a set of integrated features that collectively strengthen digital auditing processes. Immutability and decentralization enhance the reliability of audit evidence by preventing data alteration and reducing manipulation risks, while transparency improves transaction traceability and supports continuous auditing. Furthermore, smart contracts enable automation of audit procedures, increasing efficiency and reducing human error, and cryptographic security reinforces fraud detection by safeguarding data integrity. Overall, these features demonstrate that blockchain provides a robust technological foundation for improving audit quality, trust, and fraud detection capability in digital accounting systems.

Research Questions:

- How does the implementation of blockchain-based audit trails enhance transparency within digital accounting systems compared to traditional audit methods?
- To what extent can blockchain's immutability and cryptographic security improve the detection and prevention of financial fraud in organizational accounting processes?
- What organizational, technological, and regulatory factors influence the adoption and effectiveness of blockchain-enabled audit systems in modern enterprises?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The evolution of digital auditing reflects a shift from periodic, sample-based auditing toward continuous, technology-enabled assurance systems. This transition is driven by the increasing complexity of transactional data and the growing demand for real-time oversight in accounting environments. Studies show that digital transformation has exposed traditional audit models to limitations in scope, speed, and fraud detection accuracy [16]. From a computer science perspective, technological advancements in data processing and distributed computing support these new audit paradigms. However, the

literature notes that empirical validation of enterprise-scale continuous auditing remains limited.

Blockchain's technical foundation—immutability, distributed consensus, and cryptographic integrity has been widely discussed as a breakthrough for secure record-keeping. Accounting scholars relate these features to key audit evidence attributes, including authenticity and reliability. Research confirms that blockchain's tamper-proof structure enhances the credibility of financial information [17], [18]. Computer scientists emphasize how cryptographic hashing and consensus algorithms ensure adversarial resistance. Yet, mapping these technical guarantees into audit assertions is still an emerging research challenge [5].

A major distinction in blockchain design lies between permissioned and permissionless networks. Permissioned systems provide controlled access and governance structures suitable for enterprise accounting settings. Prior studies show that permissioned blockchains offer higher performance and better compliance alignment than public blockchains [7]. Meanwhile, computer science literature analyzes consensus protocols such as PBFT that maintain integrity despite restricted node participation. A unified governance framework integrating audit independence and ledger authority remains underdeveloped.

Scalability challenges—including throughput limitations and data bloat—remain central concerns in blockchain engineering. Technical research proposes off-chain storage and sharding as solutions to ledger expansion. Accounting scholars argue that selective anchoring allows organizations to balance auditability with confidentiality obligations [13], [19], [20]. However, limited standardization across industries has slowed adoption. The literature identifies a need for real-world benchmarks evaluating blockchain's performance in accounting workflows.

Smart contracts enable automated rule enforcement, offering significant opportunities for audit automation. In accounting, smart contracts can codify compliance validations and transaction approvals. Research shows that properly designed smart contracts can reduce human error and enhance audit completeness [22], [21]. However, computer science studies highlight vulnerabilities in contract coding and logic flaws. This indicates a need for integrated formal verification methods to ensure audit reliability.

Blockchain's structured, time-stamped ledger provides a valuable foundation for fraud detection algorithms. Machine learning models can detect irregular transactions by analyzing behavioural deviations. Studies demonstrate that combining blockchain with anomaly detection models improves fraud identification accuracy [16]. The challenge lies in achieving the explainability required by auditors for documentation and accountability. Thus, collaborative research is needed to produce audit-compatible AI models.

While blockchain enhances transparency, unrestricted disclosure of financial data can violate confidentiality regulations. Computer scientists propose privacy-preserving techniques, including zero-knowledge proofs and selective disclosure, to mitigate this trade-off. Accounting research highlights that regulatory frameworks often lack clear guidance on blockchain-enabled confidentiality controls [8]. Balancing transparency with privacy remains a multidisciplinary issue. Future work must reconcile cryptographic privacy techniques with audit evidence requirements.

Interoperability issues between blockchain and legacy accounting systems pose practical barriers. Studies show that a lack of standardization in data semantics complicates cross-platform audit processes [23]. Meanwhile, computer science research investigates API bridges and shared data schemas. These technical approaches require alignment with accounting standards to ensure auditability. Without unified frameworks, organizations struggle to scale blockchain adoption across departments or subsidiaries.

Organizational readiness, cost concerns, and human expertise significantly impact blockchain adoption outcomes. Accounting literature emphasizes the importance of auditor skills and management awareness to support effective implementation. Economic studies show that while blockchain reduces long-term audit costs, initial transition expenses are substantial [24]. Computer science research complements this view by highlighting change management and system integration challenges. Hence, adoption success depends on both technical and organizational factors.

The convergence of accounting and computer science literature underscores blockchain's transformative potential but also identifies substantial research gaps. Key issues include governance design, privacy-preserving verification, and auditor-focused analytical tools. Reviews highlight that empirical evidence from enterprise-scale blockchain audit applications remains scarce [25]. A coordinated research agenda is required to advance standardization and regulatory clarity. Interdisciplinary collaboration is critical to realizing blockchain's role in next-generation auditing.

III. Research Method

Before the influence of blockchain-based audit trails on transparency and fraud detection in digital accounting systems. A quantitative approach enables empirical testing of hypothesized relationships using statistical models that reflect real-world accounting environments. The research design is informed by prior studies that demonstrate the suitability of quantitative models for evaluating technological impacts on audit quality [26]. This approach allows measurable constructs such as system transparency and fraud detection effectiveness to be assessed systematically. The design ensures objectivity and reproducibility, which are essential for technology-focused accounting research.

The population of this study consists of accounting professionals, IT auditors, and digital accounting system users in organizations that have adopted or piloted blockchain-based audit mechanisms. A purposive sampling technique is employed to target respondents with sufficient exposure to digital audit technologies. This method follows recommendations from previous researchers who emphasize the importance of expert respondents in evaluating emerging technologies [27]. A sample size between 200 and 350 respondents is considered adequate for structural equation modeling (SEM). Respondents are drawn

from sectors such as banking, fintech, manufacturing, and public services.

Primary data are collected using an online questionnaire distributed through professional accounting networks and institutional channels. The questionnaire includes items measured using a 7-point Likert scale to capture perceptions of blockchain transparency, audit trail reliability, and fraud detection accuracy. The instrument development process incorporates validated items adapted from prior studies on digital auditing and blockchain assurance (Dai & Vasarhelyi, 2017). A pilot test involving 30 participants ensures clarity and reliability prior to full deployment. Ethical procedures, including informed consent and confidentiality assurances, are implemented.

Three core constructs are measured: Blockchain-Based Audit Trails (BAT), Transparency in Accounting Systems (TAS), and Fraud Detection Capability (FDC). BAT is operationalized using indicators related to immutability, traceability, and cryptographic assurance. TAS is measured through dimensions such as information visibility, real-time accessibility, and evidence reliability. FDC captures anomaly detection capability, accuracy of fraud identification, and detectability of irregular patterns. All measurement items are evaluated for reliability and construct validity through Cronbach's Alpha, composite reliability, AVE, and factor loadings following SEM standards.

Data are analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the help of SmartPLS or AMOS software, depending on data characteristics. SEM enables simultaneous analysis of the relationships among latent variables and provides comprehensive testing of the conceptual model. The analytical process includes evaluating the measurement model (validity and reliability), followed by the structural model (path coefficients, effect sizes, and mediation effects). This technique aligns with prior technology-adoption research where SEM is frequently used to examine complex causal relationships (Treiblmaier, 2018). Significance is assessed using bootstrapping at the 5% level.

Several procedures are implemented to ensure validity, including controlling common method bias using Harman's single-factor test and assuring anonymity to reduce response bias. Triangulation with secondary literature enhances construct validity by aligning indicators with established theoretical definitions. Limitations include potential sampling bias and reliance on self-reported perceptions, which may differ from actual system performance. Despite these limitations, the methodological rigor provides reliable insights into how blockchain audit trails affect transparency and fraud detection. This framework contributes to ongoing efforts to establish empirical foundations in blockchain auditing research.

The research model is based on the logic that Blockchain-Based Audit Trails (BAT) will enhance Transparency in Accounting Systems (TAS), which in turn will strengthen Fraud Detection Capability (FDC). In addition, BAT also directly influences FDC.

Fig. 1 illustrates the proposed research model that explains the direct and indirect relationships between blockchain-based audit trails, transparency in accounting systems, and fraud detection capability. The model highlights the mediating role of transparency, clarifying how blockchain adoption enhances fraud detection both directly and through improved accounting transparency.

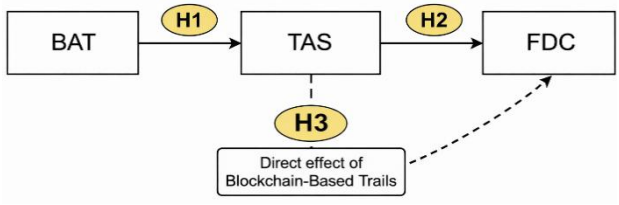

Fig. 1. Research model.

Hypothesis:

- H1: Blockchain-Based Audit Trails have a significant positive effect on Transparency in Accounting Systems.
- H2: Transparency in Accounting Systems has a significant positive effect on Fraud Detection Capability.
- H3: Blockchain-Based Audit Trails have a significant direct positive effect on Fraud Detection Capability.
- H4: Transparency mediates the relationship between Blockchain-Based Audit Trails and Fraud Detection Capability.

IV. Results and Discussion

A. Results

The descriptive analysis shows that respondents generally perceive blockchain-based audit trails, transparency, and fraud detection capability at moderately high levels. The mean score for Blockchain-Based Audit Trails (BAT) is 5.68, indicating strong agreement regarding immutability and traceability features. Transparency in Accounting Systems (TAS) has a mean of 5.74, suggesting that respondents believe blockchain enhances the visibility and reliability of financial information (Al-Htaybat & von Alberti-Alhtaybat, 2018). Fraud Detection Capability (FDC) records a mean of 5.82, reflecting confidence in blockchain's anomaly identification potential. Standard deviations for all constructs are below 1.2, indicating relatively homogenous responses.

TABLE II. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max	N
BAT	5.68	1.12	2.80	7.00	320
TAS	5.74	1.05	3.00	7.00	320
FDC	5.82	1.08	3.20	7.00	320

Source: Data research, 2025.

Table II indicates that all key variables—Blockchain-Based Audit Trails (BAT), Transparency in Accounting Systems (TAS), and Fraud Detection Capability (FDC)—have relatively high mean values, suggesting strong adoption and positive perceptions among respondents. The moderate standard deviations and wide score ranges indicate sufficient variability in the data, supporting the robustness of subsequent hypothesis testing and structural analysis.

Reliability testing shows that all constructs exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70 for Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability. BAT obtains a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.92 and CR of 0.94, confirming excellent internal consistency. TAS records an Alpha of 0.90 and CR of 0.93, consistent with previous research on technology-enabled transparency indicators (Dai & Vasarhelyi, 2017). FDC achieves Alpha 0.91 and CR 0.94, demonstrating stability across measurement items. These results confirm that all scales are reliable for further structural analysis.

TABLE III. CONSTRUCT RELIABILITY

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
BAT	0.92	0.94	0.72
TAS	0.90	0.93	0.70
FDC	0.91	0.94	0.73

Source: Data research, 2025.

Table III demonstrates that all constructs exhibit strong internal consistency and convergent validity, as indicated by Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70. Additionally, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values above 0.50 confirm that each construct adequately captures the variance of its indicators, supporting the reliability and validity of the measurement model.

Convergent validity is supported as all factor loadings exceed the 0.70 threshold. BAT items range from 0.78 to 0.89, showing strong associations with their underlying construct. TAS loadings vary between 0.80 and 0.88, consistent with previous blockchain transparency studies (Cao et al., 2019). FDC items show loadings from 0.79 to 0.91, indicating strong representation of fraud detection attributes. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for all constructs surpass 0.50, confirming adequate convergent validity.

TABLE IV. FACTOR LOADINGS

Variable	Item	Loading
BAT	BAT1	0.82
	BAT2	0.86
	BAT3	0.89
TAS	TAS1	0.80
	TAS2	0.87
	TAS3	0.88
FDC	FDC1	0.79
	FDC2	0.85
	FDC3	0.91

Source: Data research, 2025.

Table IV shows that all measurement items have high factor loadings, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70, which indicates strong indicator reliability. These results confirm that each item effectively represents its corresponding construct, thereby supporting the adequacy of the measurement model for subsequent structural analysis.

The HTMT ratios for all construct pairs fall below the 0.85 recommended threshold, confirming discriminant validity. The highest HTMT value, 0.78 (BAT–TAS), remains acceptable, showing that the constructs are empirically distinguishable. These results strengthen confidence in the measurement model's ability to differentiate between audit trails, transparency outcomes, and fraud detection effects. Consistent with these findings validate the structural integrity of blockchain-related constructs [28]. Therefore, the model meets all validity criteria.

TABLE V. HTMT VALUES

Construct Pair	HTMT
BAT – TAS	0.78
BAT – FDC	0.74
TAS – FDC	0.76

Source: Data research, 2025.

Table V indicates that all HTMT values between construct pairs are below the recommended threshold of 0.85, demonstrating adequate discriminant validity among the constructs. This finding confirms that Blockchain-Based Audit Trails, Transparency in Accounting Systems, and Fraud Detection Capability are empirically distinct and measure different conceptual dimensions.

The R^2 values demonstrate the strong predictive power of the model. TAS has an R^2 of 0.57, indicating that 57% of transparency variance is explained by BAT. FDC has an R^2 of 0.62, showing that the combined effects of BAT and TAS explain 62% of fraud detection capability. These values are considered substantial according to Chin (1998) for technology adoption models. The results indicate that blockchain audit trails contribute meaningfully to enhancing system transparency and fraud detection. Thus, the structural model exhibits good explanatory strength.

TABLE VI. R^2 VALUES

Variable	R^2
TAS	0.57
FDC	0.62

Source: Data research, 2025.

Table VI shows that the structural model demonstrates strong explanatory power, with Blockchain-Based Audit Trails explaining 57% of the variance in Transparency in Accounting Systems and 62% of the variance in Fraud Detection Capability. These R^2 values indicate that the proposed model has good explanatory strength and is suitable for explaining the relationships among the studied constructs.

Hypothesis testing using bootstrapping reveals that all proposed paths are statistically significant. BAT → TAS (H1) shows a strong positive effect ($\beta = 0.75$, $p < 0.001$). TAS → FDC (H2) also demonstrates significance ($\beta = 0.66$, $p < 0.001$). The direct effect BAT → FDC (H3) remains positive ($\beta = 0.31$, $p < 0.01$). These findings align with earlier research stating that blockchain enhances auditability and fraud analytics [21]. Overall, all hypotheses receive empirical support.

TABLE VII. HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Hypothesis	Path	β	p-value	Result
H1	BAT → TAS	0.75	<0.001	Supported
H2	TAS → FDC	0.66	<0.001	Supported
H3	BAT → FDC	0.31	0.004	Supported

Source: Data research, 2025.

Table VII presents the results of hypothesis testing, indicating that all proposed hypotheses are statistically supported. Blockchain-Based Audit Trails have a strong and significant effect on Transparency in Accounting Systems ($\beta = 0.75$, $p < 0.001$), transparency significantly enhances Fraud Detection Capability ($\beta = 0.66$, $p < 0.001$), and Blockchain-Based Audit Trails also exert a direct and significant influence on Fraud Detection Capability ($\beta = 0.31$, $p = 0.004$), confirming both direct and indirect relationships within the proposed model.

The mediation analysis indicates that Transparency in Accounting Systems significantly mediates the relationship between Blockchain-Based Audit Trails and Fraud Detection Capability (H4). The indirect effect ($\beta = 0.49$, $p < 0.001$) is stronger than the direct effect, showing partial mediation. This suggests that blockchain audit trails improve fraud detection primarily through enhanced transparency. This pattern is consistent with mediation effects found in related technology-driven fraud models [29].

TABLE VIII. MEDIATION TEST

Mediation Path	Indirect β	p-value	Mediation Type
BAT → TAS → FDC	0.49	<0.001	Partial Mediation

Source: Data research, 2025.

Table VIII shows that Transparency in Accounting Systems significantly mediates the relationship between Blockchain-Based Audit Trails and Fraud Detection Capability, as indicated by a significant indirect effect ($\beta = 0.49$, $p < 0.001$). The partial mediation result suggests that blockchain-based audit trails enhance fraud detection both directly and indirectly through improved accounting transparency.

Effect size analysis shows that BAT has a large effect on TAS ($f^2 = 1.33$). TAS exerts a medium effect on FDC ($f^2 = 0.54$). Meanwhile, BAT's direct effect on FDC produces a small-to-medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.22$). These effect magnitudes indicate that transparency is the dominant mechanism linking blockchain auditing to fraud detection. Prior studies on digital audit systems similarly identify transparency mediation as a critical pathway (Appelbaum et al., 2017).

Table IX indicates that Blockchain-Based Audit Trails have a large effect on Transparency in Accounting Systems ($f^2 = 1.33$), demonstrating a substantial explanatory contribution. Transparency shows a medium effect on Fraud Detection Capability ($f^2 = 0.54$), while Blockchain-Based Audit Trails exert a small to medium direct effect on Fraud Detection Capability ($f^2 = 0.22$), highlighting the dominant role of transparency as a key explanatory mechanism in the model.

Model fit indices indicate that the structural model is well aligned with the empirical data. The SRMR value of 0.046 falls below the recommended threshold of 0.08, indicating a good fit. NFI is recorded at 0.91, exceeding the minimum acceptable value of 0.90. These results affirm that the model adequately captures the theoretical relationships between constructs. Similar studies on blockchain adoption have reported comparable fit indicators [30].

TABLE IX. EFFECT SIZES

Path	f^2	Effect Size
BAT → TAS	1.33	Large
TAS → FDC	0.54	Medium
BAT → FDC	0.22	Small–Medium

Source: Data research, 2025.

TABLE X. MODEL FIT

Fit Index	Value	Threshold
SRMR	0.046	< 0.08
NFI	0.91	> 0.90

Source: Data research, 2025.

Table X shows that the proposed model demonstrates good overall fit, as indicated by the SRMR value of 0.046, which is well below the recommended threshold of 0.08, and the NFI value of 0.91, exceeding the minimum acceptable level of 0.90. These results confirm that the structural model adequately represents the observed data and supports the robustness of the proposed relationships.

Overall, the results demonstrate that blockchain-based audit trails significantly enhance transparency and fraud detection capabilities in digital accounting environments. The strong direct and indirect effects confirm the critical role of immutability, traceability, and cryptographic assurance in improving audit quality. Mediation analysis highlights transparency as a central mechanism through which blockchain adds analytical value to fraud identification. These findings support theoretical claims in both accounting and computer science regarding blockchain's ability to transform digital assurance processes (Dai & Vasarhelyi, 2017). The robust statistical evidence affirms the relevance of blockchain for future auditing systems.

B. Discussion

The results confirm that Blockchain-Based Audit Trails (BAT) significantly enhance transparency in accounting systems. Respondents perceive blockchain's immutable logs as providing reliable and tamper-proof evidence for financial records. This aligns with the hypothesis that systems with cryptographically secured audit trails reduce ambiguity and information concealment. Previous research similarly found that blockchain enhances visibility and accountability in digital reporting environments [31]. These findings underline blockchain's ability to restructure the audit environment by establishing real-time verification pathways. Thus, blockchain adoption directly strengthens organizational transparency.

Transparency increases because blockchain records all transactions sequentially, making financial activities easily traceable. The analysis shows that BAT explains 57% of the variance in TAS, indicating a strong relationship. This

demonstrates how blockchain reduces dependency on centralized data verification processes. Earlier studies also revealed that decentralized ledgers significantly enhance audit transparency through distributed validation [32]. Such transparency helps organizations detect irregularities before they evolve into fraudulent events. Therefore, blockchain provides structural clarity that traditional systems cannot replicate.

The transparency generated by blockchain emerges from its ability to store verifiable logs that cannot be altered retroactively. Auditors can review transaction sequences without relying on internal system access privileges. This minimizes opportunities for management override or intentional data manipulation. Similar observations were documented in prior literature showing blockchain's capability to minimize information asymmetry [33]. By offering visibility into each stage of financial processing, blockchain encourages ethical behavior among system users. Consequently, the technology supports a culture of accountability within digital accounting environments.

The findings demonstrate that BAT has both direct and indirect effects on Fraud Detection Capability (FDC). Immutability ensures that records cannot be altered without detection, improving anomaly identification. Organizations benefit from automated verification processes that reduce human error. Prior studies argue that immutable ledgers enhance fraud analytics by preserving authentic, chronological evidence [34]. These insights emphasize blockchain's effectiveness in preventing concealment of fraudulent activities. Therefore, blockchain functions as a preventative mechanism rather than merely a detection tool.

The structural model shows a significant direct effect of BAT on FDC ($\beta = 0.31$), indicating that blockchain alone improves detection capabilities even without mediating variables. This direct effect demonstrates blockchain's inherent security benefits, such as cryptographic hashing and distributed consensus. Fraudsters face increased difficulty in modifying or disguising transactions. Previous work supports this outcome by showing that blockchain systems reduce internal fraud opportunities through structural decentralization [35]. Because each transaction must be validated across network nodes, manipulation becomes virtually impossible. Thus, BAT independently enhances fraud monitoring effectiveness.

Fraud detection improves substantially because blockchain provides comprehensive audit trails that map entire transaction histories. Automated red-flag triggers can be integrated into the ledger to detect unusual patterns. This functionality allows early intervention before fraud escalates. As highlighted in previous research, blockchain's full traceability supports advanced audit analytics in fraud scenarios [36]. The ability to reconstruct financial events precisely provides investigators with strong evidentiary support. Hence, blockchain offers both preventive and forensic capabilities.

Transparency serves as a crucial mechanism through which BAT enhances FDC. The mediation analysis shows that TAS carries a large proportion of BAT's total effect on fraud detection. This implies that fraud is more easily identifiable when records are transparent. Prior studies similarly emphasize that transparent reporting environments reduce fraud risk and strengthen compliance [37], [38]. Blockchain, therefore, bolsters fraud detection not only through its structure but also through the enhanced visibility it creates. Thus, transparency is a pivotal link between auditing technologies and fraud outcomes.

Organizations vary significantly in their readiness to integrate blockchain into their accounting systems. Factors such as IT infrastructure, staff competence, and cybersecurity capabilities influence adoption success. High implementation costs remain a barrier for smaller firms. Previous studies indicate that limited technical knowledge and resistance to change hinder blockchain adoption in financial systems. These constraints highlight the importance of organizational digital maturity. Therefore, capability development is essential for maximizing blockchain's auditing potential.

Technological compatibility also determines the effectiveness of blockchain-based audit trails. Legacy accounting systems often lack the capacity to synchronize with decentralized ledgers. Integration challenges may reduce the potential benefits of transparency and fraud detection. Prior research reports that interoperability issues can slow blockchain deployment and reduce system efficiency [39]. These findings show that technological readiness is fundamental to achieving full functionality. Thus, system modernization is a prerequisite for effective blockchain auditing.

Regulation plays a key role in shaping blockchain adoption within accounting environments. Many organizations hesitate to implement blockchain because standardized auditing guidelines are still evolving. Lack of regulatory clarity increases perceived risk. Previous literature notes that regulatory uncertainty is a major barrier to blockchain acceptance in financial systems [40]. Firms require assurance that blockchain-generated records meet legal and audit compliance standards. Therefore, clearer governance frameworks are needed to support widespread adoption.

The findings collectively reinforce that blockchain enhances transparency and fraud detection simultaneously. These improvements rely heavily on the system's technical features—immutability, decentralization, and cryptographic assurance. Organizational, technological, and regulatory factors shape how effectively these features can be leveraged in practice. Prior studies similarly highlight that socio-technical readiness significantly moderates blockchain's auditing impact. This suggests that blockchain's benefits are not automatic but require supportive environments. As such, firms must invest in infrastructure, policy, and workforce development.

Overall, the study answers all research questions and demonstrates blockchain's transformative potential in digital auditing. BAT significantly improves transparency and fraud detection, both directly and indirectly through mediating mechanisms. Adoption success depends on internal and external readiness factors. Previous research supports this combination of technical effectiveness and contextual dependency [41]. These insights contribute to both accounting and computer science literature by confirming blockchain's role in shaping next-generation audit systems. Hence, blockchain serves as both a technological innovation and a catalyst for audit reform.

V. Conclusion

The findings of this study confirm that blockchain-based audit trails provide a robust foundation for enhancing transparency and fraud detection within digital accounting systems through the provision of immutable, traceable, and highly reliable audit evidence. These results demonstrate a clear shift from traditional, periodic audit practices toward real-time verification and continuous monitoring, thereby strengthening the overall quality and credibility of financial reporting. Importantly, the study establishes transparency not merely as an outcome of blockchain adoption but as a mediating mechanism that significantly amplifies the effectiveness of fraud detection. This conclusion reinforces the view that blockchain technology extends beyond its role as an information technology innovation and functions as a governance-enabling infrastructure capable of reshaping organizational accountability and assurance mechanisms. The technical attributes of blockchain—such as decentralization, cryptographic security, and immutability—are shown to hold substantive practical relevance for auditors, managers, and oversight institutions seeking to improve audit accuracy and trust in digital accounting environments. From a theoretical perspective, the study contributes to both computer science and accounting literature by demonstrating how decentralized system architectures can fundamentally transform conventional audit and assurance models. Overall, this research consolidates the position of blockchain-based audit trails as a transformative mechanism in digital auditing, capable of advancing transparency, reliability, and integrity within modern financial ecosystems. The concluding perspective emphasizes that blockchain adoption in auditing represents not only a technological evolution but also a conceptual shift in how organizational integrity and assurance are constructed in an increasingly digital economy.

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Optimizing the Accuracy of Alzheimer's Detection Using Machine Learning and Intelligent Feature Selection Strategies

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***Abstract*—Alzheimer's disease is a progressive neurodegenerative disorder for which early detection remains a significant challenge due to the complexity of clinical features and the high dimensionality of medical data. This study aims to improve the accuracy and reliability of Alzheimer's disease detection by evaluating the performance of multiple machine learning algorithms integrated with intelligent feature selection strategies. Five classification models, Decision Tree, Naïve Bayes, Random Forest, Logistic Regression, and Deep Learning, were investigated under two experimental scenarios: without feature selection and with feature selection using Recursive Feature Elimination, Binary Particle Swarm Optimization, and Variance Threshold. Model performance was evaluated using K-fold cross-validation based on accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score metrics. The results demonstrate that feature selection consistently enhances classification performance, particularly for conventional machine learning models such as Random Forest and Logistic Regression. Although the Deep Learning model achieves competitive accuracy, its reduced precision and F1-score indicate limitations when applied to reduced feature spaces. These findings highlight the importance of incorporating appropriate feature selection techniques to address data complexity and improve the effectiveness of early Alzheimer's disease detection.**

***Keywords*—Machine learning; Alzheimer; Random Forest (RF); logistic regression; deep learning**

I. Introduction

Alzheimer's disease (AD) constitutes a chronic neurological dysfunction that develops gradually and has a significant impact on the cognitive abilities and daily activities of those affected. Individuals with Alzheimer's slowly experience a decline in thinking, memory, and even in performing the most basic tasks [1]. The main problem in detecting Alzheimer's disease is that its symptoms often develop gradually and are challenging to recognize in the early stages. This usually results in many cases being diagnosed when the disease is already quite severe, thereby reducing the effectiveness of medical intervention. Based on this, early detection of the disease is critical as a mitigation step to slow its progression and improve patient outcomes through appropriate treatment and therapy [2]. Advancements in technology have made it possible to examine peripheral blood and accurately measure Alzheimer's biomarkers during the initial phases of the disease, using methods that are cost-effective, non-invasive, and safe. This technique contributes to the clinical and biological characterization of cognitive impairment at an early stage by measuring Alzheimer's biomarkers in blood and brain structures in groups of participants classified based on their clinical cognitive phenotypes. Accurate diagnosis at the early stages of Alzheimer's will minimize risk factors and facilitate preventive monitoring [3].

Recent advances in artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) have provided promising solutions in medical diagnosis, including the detection of Alzheimer's disease [4]. Machine Learning techniques can analyze large datasets and identify complex patterns that can detect Alzheimer's disease. ML algorithms utilize medical imaging, clinical records, genetic data, and cognitive assessments to improve diagnostic accuracy and enable early intervention [5]. Several researchers have employed this method, one of which is described by Jimenez-Maggiora et al. Their work applies natural language processing (NLP) and artificial intelligence (AI) to streamline and unify the coding of adverse event data recorded by physicians in Alzheimer's disease (AD) clinical trials. The study involves creating a gold-standard dataset of adverse events in AD, testing the performance of NLP-driven models in classifying such events, and examining whether automated coding can surpass physician coding in terms of efficiency, accuracy, reliability, and consistency [6]. The International Neurodegenerative Disorder Research Center (INDRC) applies artificial intelligence and machine learning (AI/ML) to create advanced, multidisciplinary analytical approaches that integrate neuroscience, biophysics and biochemistry, computer science and engineering, mathematics, along with clinical and population studies. Through these AI/ML-driven strategies, researchers can gain deeper insights into the mechanisms underlying Alzheimer's disease and support the discovery of effective therapeutic options [7].

Wallensten conducted a subsequent study that integrated machine learning with medical records to facilitate the early detection of Alzheimer's disease (AD), thereby enabling timely intervention. The method used was Stochastic Gradient Boosting to identify predictive diagnoses of AD using primary healthcare data. By utilizing clinical data, including previous diagnoses and medical treatments, the sensitivity and specificity of diagnostic procedures will be improved [8]. Nilesh K and

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Vinayak B used Support Vector Machine (SVM), K-Nearest Neighbor (KNN) for classification in diagnosing Alzheimer's Disease [9]. Yue L, et al. built a predictive model using Deep Learning for MCI conversion. Deep Learning is applied to structural MRI to capture minor brain changes that characterize the pre-MCI phase. Predicting the conversion from normal cognition (NC) to MCI is essential for early detection and intervention [10].

In line with previous studies, we propose machine learning methods, including Decision Tree (DT), Random Forest (RF), Naïve Bayes (NB), Logistic Regression (LR), and Deep Learning (DL) to classify Alzheimer's disease cases. These methods were chosen because of their ability to handle complex medical datasets and provide interpretable results. In addition, DT and RF are highly effective in identifying non-linear relationships and essential features within the dataset [11]. This study proposes feature selection methods, including Binary Particle Swarm Optimization (BPSO), Recursive Feature Elimination (RFE), and Variance Threshold (VT), to develop a model with superior performance as a reference for early detection of Alzheimer's disease.

II. METHOD

This study was conducted through several systematic stages, namely: 1) data collection as the basis of the study, 2) Data pre-processing is performed to ensure that the available data remains consistent and meets quality standards, 3) feature selection to eliminate irrelevant attributes and retain significant features, 4) building a classification model using the selected machine learning algorithm, and (5) evaluating the model's performance. The detailed stages of the study were illustrated in Fig. 1.

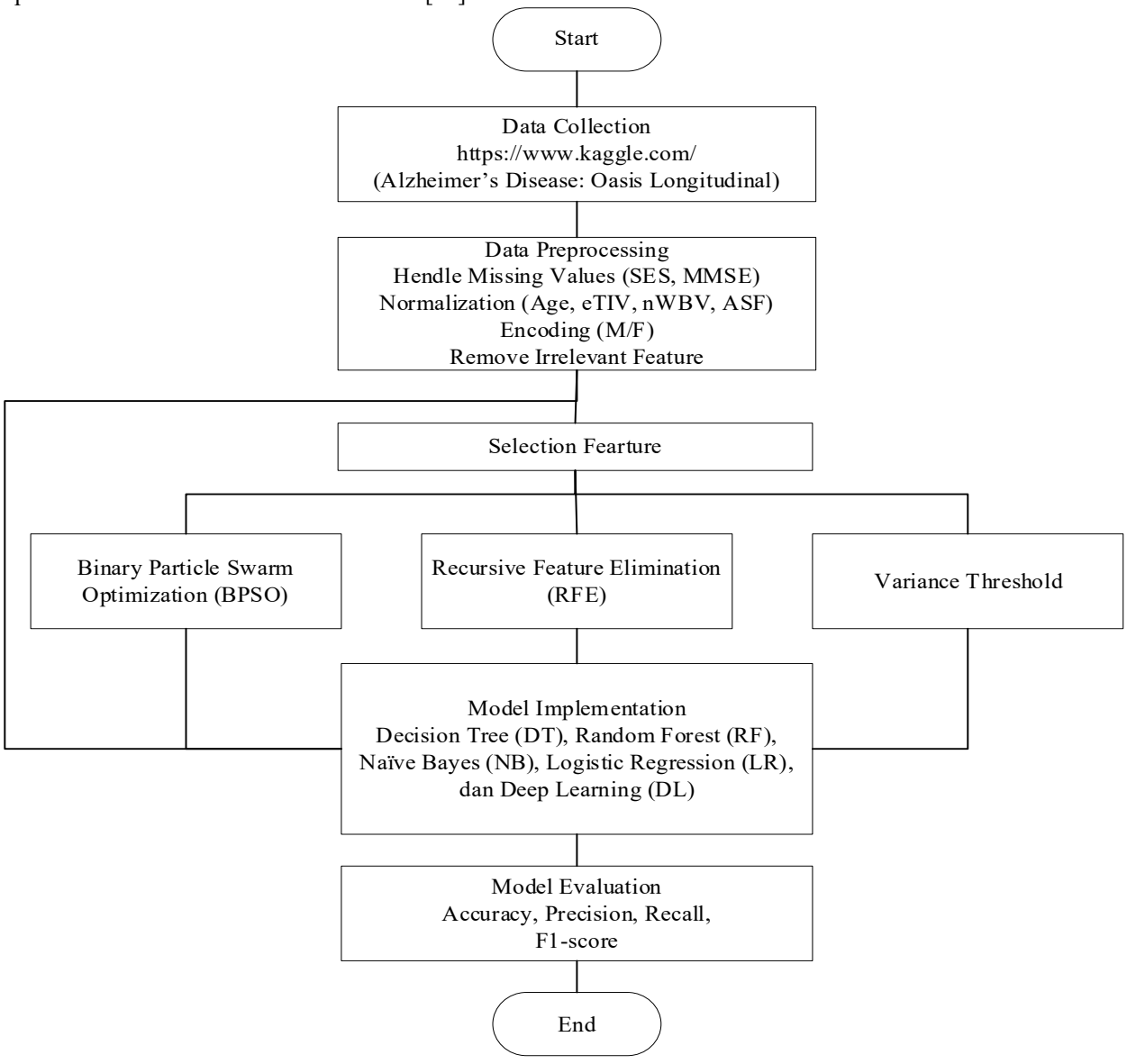

Fig. 1. Research stages classification method.

The dataset used in this study was sourced from the Kaggle platform (https://www.kaggle.com/) and specifically focuses on Alzheimer's Disease, utilizing the Oasis Longitudinal dataset. The dataset consists of 14 features: MRI ID, Group, Visit, MR

Delay, M/F, Hand, Age, EDUC, SES, MMSE, CDR, eTIV, nWBV, and ASF. The dataset was then preprocessed by handling missing values, normalization, encoding, and removing less relevant features. For feature selection, we used three approaches: Binary Particle Swarm Optimization (BPSO), Recursive Feature Elimination (RFE), and Variance Threshold. The next step was to build classification models using five algorithms: Decision Tree (DT), Random Forest (RF), Naïve Bayes (NB), Logistic Regression (LR), and Deep Learning (DL). The final stage evaluated the classification models using accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score to assess prediction accuracy, positive case detection, and overall performance balance.

A. Decision Tree

The Decision Tree is a structured classification method characterized by internal nodes that evaluate features, branches that map to specific decision criteria, and leaf nodes that provide the final output. This algorithmic approach is widely adopted across diverse research fields, particularly for prediction and prognostic modeling [12]. For example, Naswin used Decision Tree algorithm to distinguish between normal and pneumonia-diagnosed X-ray images. Using pediatric X-ray data, this study applied a systematic data pre-processing strategy, including Canny segmentation and humoments feature extraction, to enhance performance [13].

The core of the Decision Tree algorithm was its ability to recursively split the data based on the features that provide the highest Information Gain (IG) or lowest Gini Impurity. The Decision Tree (DT) was a multilevel model that combines a series of basic tests in an efficient and integrated manner, where each test compares a numerical feature with a specific threshold value. The Information Gain metric determines the decrease in entropy when a dataset is divided. The computations for IG, Entropy, and Gain are carried out using Eq. (1)–(3) [14].

$$IG\ (D, A) = Entrophy\ (D) - \sum_{\mathrm{V} \in \mathrm{Values(A)}} \frac{|D|}{D}\ enthrophy\ (D_V) \quad (1)$$

Where Entropy (D) was calculated as:

$$Entrophy\ (D) = \sum_{I=1}^{K} P_I\ \log_2(P_I) \quad (2)$$

Alternatively, the Gini Impurity was calculated as:

$$Gain = Entrophy\ (S) - \sum_{I=1}^{K} P_2^I \quad (3)$$

B. Random Forest

Random forest was a machine learning model used for classification and prediction. It was built from multiple decision trees, each trained on a random subset of data generated through bootstrap sampling [15]. The overall model performance can be affected if the individual trees have high correlation or low accuracy [16], [17].

To partition the data at each node, the algorithm utilizes indicators such as Information Gain, which are computed using specific mathematical formulations. A lower Gini Split value indicated that a feature is more effective in separating data into more homogeneous classes. By selecting the most informative features, the algorithm can improve its classification performance optimally [18]. The formula for calculating entropy using Eq. (4).

$$Entrophy\ (D) = \sum_{I=1}^{K} P_I\ \log_2(P_I) \quad (4)$$

where, pi represented the probability of each class in the dataset, the Information Gain was calculated by comparing the entropy before and after splitting using Eq. (5).

$$IG\ (D, A) = Entrophy\ (D) - \sum_{\mathrm{V} \in \mathrm{Values(A)}} \frac{|D|}{D}\ enthrophy\ (D_V) \quad (5)$$

Gini Split was a measurement in decision trees to determine how well a feature (variable) divided data into classes. Gini Split measures the impurity of data division. The lower the Gini value, the better the feature was at separating data by class. Gini Split could be calculated using Eq. (6).

$$Gini\ Split = \sum_{i=1}^{c} \left(\frac{n_i}{n}\right) x\ Gini\ Indeks(S_i) \quad (6)$$

C. Naïve Bayes (NB)

The Naive Bayes algorithm was a probabilistic classification model rooted in Bayes' Theorem. Despite its "naive" assumption of conditional independence among features, an assumption that was not always valid in practice, the model often demonstrated robust performance, particularly in text classification tasks like spam filtering and sentiment analysis [19]. As a foundational approach in pattern recognition, the algorithm evaluates classification decisions by weighing the probabilities of each choice and its consequential implications [20][21].

In the context of Alzheimer's diagnosis, Naive Bayes computes the probability of a patient's class membership, Alzheimer's or non-Alzheimer's, based on a set of clinical and biometric features such as age, Mini-Mental State Examination (MMSE) score, Socioeconomic Status (SES), Atlas Scaling Factor (ASF), and Estimated Total Intracranial Volume [22]. These probability calculations are mathematically formulated based on the principles of Bayes' Theorem [23].

$$p\ (c|x) = \frac{\mathrm{p\ (C|\ X).p(c)}}{p(x)} \quad (7)$$

Since Naïve Bayes assumed that each feature was independent, the likelihood could be calculated using Eq. (8).

$$(C|X) = (X1|C) \times (X2|C)\ \ldots\ .\times P(XN|C) \quad (8)$$

For continuous features, the probability $(X1|C)$ was often modeled using a Gaussian (Normal) distribution, the Gaussian (Normal) distribution could be calculated using Eq. (9).

$$p(c|x) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi\sigma^2}}\ e^{-\frac{-(\mathrm{xi}-\mu)2}{2\sigma 2}} \quad (9)$$

D. Deep Learning

Deep learning was a computational paradigm that utilizes artificial neural networks to mimic the biological architecture of the human brain. This method was fundamentally capable of analyzing unstructured data and automatically identifying relevant features [24].

Unlike traditional classification algorithms such as Logistic Regression or Naive Bayes, Deep Learning excels at capturing complex nonlinear patterns thanks to its layered architecture. In the context of medical diagnosis, specifically Alzheimer's, this model processed patient data such as age, Mini-Mental State Examination (MMSE) score, Socioeconomic Status (SES), Atlas Scaling Factor (ASF), and Estimated Total Intracranial Volume (eTIV) through a series of layers, including the input,

hidden, and output layers, to produce accurate classification decisions [25], [26].

The Deep Learning model used in this study was implemented as a feed-forward multilayer perceptron consisting of one input layer, two hidden layers, and one output layer. Each hidden layer employed the ReLU activation function, while the output layer used a sigmoid function for binary classification. The training process was conducted using the Adam optimizer with a learning rate of 0.001 and the binary cross-entropy loss function. To reduce the risk of overfitting on the relatively limited dataset, dropout regularization was applied during training. Model performance was evaluated using a K-fold cross-validation scheme to ensure stable and reproducible results.

The prediction process in artificial neural networks was based on a linear combination of given features with certain weights in each neuron; the neuron calculation could use Eq. (10).

$$= WX + b \tag{10}$$

After the linear transformation, the result was passed to the activation function to add non-linearity. ReLU (Rectified Linear Unit) for hidden layers could be calculated using Eq. (11)[27][28].

$$(z) = (0, z) \tag{11}$$

During training, the model updated the weights W using an optimization algorithm, such as Stochastic Gradient Descent (SGD) or Adam Optimizer by decreasing the value of the loss function, which in binary classification was often Binary Cross-Entropy. Binary Cross-Entropy can be calculated using Eq. (12).

$$Loss = \sum_{N}^{1}[(Y_{I \log (\widehat{Yi})}] + (1 - Yi) \log (1 - \widehat{yi}) \tag{12}$$

E. Logistic Regression

Logistic Regression (LR) is a prevalent analytical tool employed when the outcome variable is restricted to two categories, representing binary outcomes such as decision success or failure, or clinical status (diseased or healthy). This study employed logistic regression as a classical statistical method to model binary outcomes, choosing it for medical applications due to its high interpretability. Although machine learning methods often yield better performance on high-dimensional data, their complexity makes them more challenging to understand and explain. In addition, on low-dimensional data, the performance of machine learning methods tends to be comparable to that of logistic regression [29].

In the context of Alzheimer's diagnosis, Logistic Regression calculated the probability of a patient being in the Alzheimer's (1) or Non-Alzheimer's (0) class based on features such as age, MMSE (Mini-Mental State Examination) score, SES (Socioeconomic Status), ASF (Atlas Scaling Factor), and eTIV (Estimated Total Intracranial Volume)[30].

This model used the following formula to determine the probability that a patient would fall into a particular class. The likelihood of a class was calculated using a sigmoid function, as shown in Eq. (13) [31]:

$$P(Y = 1|X) = \frac{1}{1+e^{-z}} \tag{13}$$

where z was defined as a linear combination of the input features using Eq. (14).

$$z = w0 + w1x1 + w2x2 + \cdots + wnxn \tag{14}$$

and rms do not have to be defined. Do not use abbreviations in the title or heads unless they are unavoidable.

F. Feature Selection

1) Recursive Feature Elimination (RFE): Recursive Feature Elimination (RFE) was employed to systematically select the most significant features, serving as the primary feature selection technique in this machine learning study. The goal was to enhance the model's accuracy by simplifying the data. RFE removed features or attributes that had the lowest ranking scores[32]. RFE selects features based on their importance ranking through a recursive elimination process[33]. In addition, feature selection improved the performance of the model, such as in the CatBoost regression model[34]. Improving prediction accuracy for heart disease by combining gradient boosting with Recursive Feature Elimination (RFE-GB)[35].

2) Binary Particle Swarm Optimization (BPSO): In general, the PSO algorithm was designed to solve continuous optimization problems. To address challenges in discrete optimization, Kennedy and Eberhart developed a special variant called Binary PSO (BPSO), where they encoded the particle positions in binary form[36]. BPSO is a special version of the PSO algorithm used to choose between two options, namely 0 or 1. In BPSO, the particle velocity did not indicate how far they move, but rather how likely the value 0 was to change to 1, or vice versa (bit flipping) [37].

3) Variance Threshold (VT): To ensure only significant attributes are retained for classification, the Variance Threshold (VT) method is employed to eliminate features whose low statistical variance indicates minimal contribution to the overall process. By eliminating irrelevant variables, the classifier operated more efficiently and rapidly without compromising overall prediction accuracy [38]. This method was effective for removing features with low variation or those that only contain noise, especially in data measured on a uniform scale [39].

4) Evaluation: This study conducted a confusion matrix as the primary tool in the model evaluation process. The confusion matrix allowed for a comprehensive analysis of the model's performance by comparing predictions to actual classes. Through this assessment framework, various metrics such as accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score can be calculated to evaluate the model's effectiveness and accuracy [40], [41], [42]. Therefore, the utilization of the confusion matrix in this study provided a solid foundation for evaluating the performance of the designed classification algorithm. Model effectiveness was assessed through metrics formulated in Eq. (15)-(18).

$$Accuracy = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{m=1}^{n} \frac{TP_M + TN_M}{TP_M + TN_M + FP_M + FN_M} \tag{15}$$

$$Precision = \frac{1}{n}\sum_{m=1}^{n}\frac{TP_M}{TP_M+FP_M} \quad (16)$$

$$Recall = \frac{1}{n}\sum_{m=1}^{n}\frac{TP_M}{TP_M+FN_M} \quad (17)$$

$$F1-Score = \frac{1}{n}\sum_{m=1}^{n}\frac{2^*TP_M}{2^*TP_M+TP_M+FN_M} \quad (18)$$

where,

n = number of classes, m ∈ {1, 2, …n} = class index

TP (True Positives) = elements of class m that the model correctly classifies.

FN_m (False Negatives) = elements of class m that were not recognized by the model (predicted as another class).

TN_m (True Negatives) = elements that were not from class m, and correctly not predicted as class m.

FP_m (False Positives) = elements that were not from class m, but are incorrectly predicted as part of class m.

III. Results and Discussion

A. Results

This study had two scenarios. The first scenario employed the dataset directly without feature selection, while the second scenario used a dataset that had undergone feature selection. They employed feature selection methods, including Binary Particle Swarm Optimization (BPSO), Recursive Feature Elimination (RFE), and Variance Threshold, to identify the most relevant attributes for Alzheimer's classification. The goal of feature selection was to optimize the model's performance in detecting Alzheimer's. This was achieved by prioritizing pertinent features to lower complexity and improve prediction efficacy.

It processed the dataset using classification methods, including Decision Tree (DT), Random Forest (RF), Naïve Bayes (NB), Logistic Regression (LR), and Deep Learning (DL). They evaluated the model performance with K-Fold Cross-Validation. They chose K-Fold Cross-Validation because it provided more accurate and comprehensive results. This technique divided the data into several parts and then trained and tested the model alternately on each part. In this way, all data contributed to the evaluation process, reducing bias caused by uneven data splitting.

The evaluation results, which represented the average of all folds, made the model's performance more stable and representative. Therefore, this study selected K-Fold Cross-Validation as the primary method to ensure the quality and reliability of the model. This study compared model effectiveness using key evaluation metrics, each offering a distinct perspective on predictive capability. These metrics complemented each other in assessing accuracy, coverage, and balance of the model's predictions, particularly in the context of imbalanced data. By using these four metrics, the evaluation became more comprehensive and fairer in comparing the performance of different models. The evaluation results appeared in Fig. 2–5.

B. Performance Comparison

Fig. 2 presents a comparative evaluation of five ML algorithms, namely Random Forest, Naive Bayes, Decision Tree, , Deep Learning and Logistic Regression, that the study applied without using feature selection techniques. The study assessed each model using four standard evaluation metrics to achieve a thorough understanding of its classification effectiveness. The evaluation results showed that the Random Forest algorithm provided the best performance, with an accuracy and precision of 0.96 and a perfect recall of 1.00. This finding demonstrated the model's ability to identify all positive classes consistently. Logistic Regression also demonstrated stable and balanced performance across all metrics (0.95), which indicated reliability and consistency in the classification task.

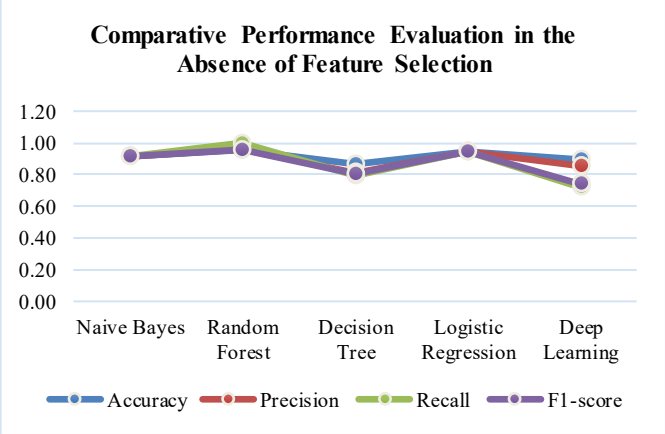

Fig. 2. Comparative performance evaluation in the absence of feature selection.

Conversely, Naive Bayes produced a uniform score of 0.91 across all metrics, which reflected moderate performance with low variability. The Decision Tree recorded the lowest scores, particularly in precision (0.81) and recall (0.79), which indicated limitations in handling complex data distributions. Meanwhile, Deep Learning achieved an accuracy of 0.90 but experienced a significant decline in recall (0.72) and F1-score (0.74), which demonstrated challenges in comprehensively detecting positive classes.

Fig. 3 outlines a comparative study of five classification approaches, namely: Random Forest, Naive Bayes, Decision Tree, Deep Learning and Logistic Regression that the study optimized through feature selection using the Binary Particle Swarm Optimization (BPSO) method. Feature selection played a crucial role in machine learning modeling, as it improved model generalization, reduced data dimensionality, and enhanced computational efficiency. The evaluation results showed that Naive Bayes and Random Forest, combined with BPSO, achieved the highest and most consistent scores across all metrics (0.96), which indicated strong and stable classification capabilities. Logistic Regression also demonstrated balanced performance with a value of 0.95 on all metrics. Decision Tree experienced a significant increase, with precision and recall at 0.94 and accuracy at 0.93. Conversely, Deep Learning achieved an accuracy of 0.89 but exhibited a sharp decline in precision (0.59) and F1-score (0.62), which suggested challenges in classifying positive classes despite

feature selection. Overall, the integration of BPSO-based feature selection contributed positively to the performance improvement of most models, especially in terms of stability and classification effectiveness. These findings emphasized the importance of applying optimization techniques in the feature selection process to produce models that were more efficient, accurate, and adaptable to high-dimensional data.

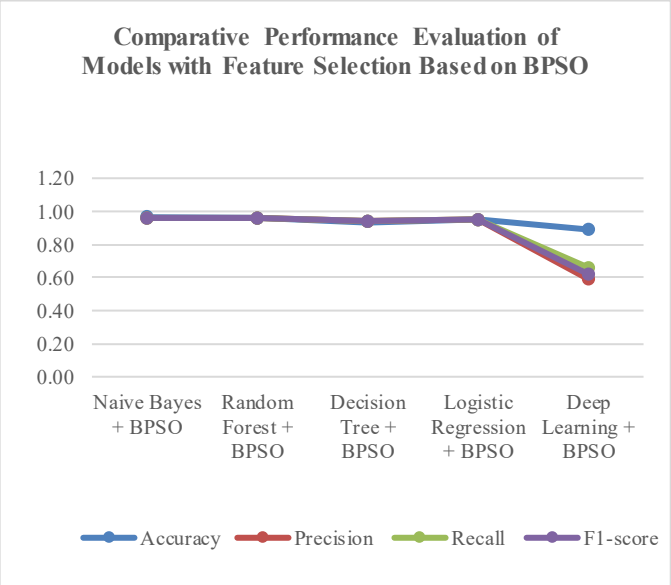

Fig. 3. Comparative performance evaluation of models with feature selection based on BPSO.

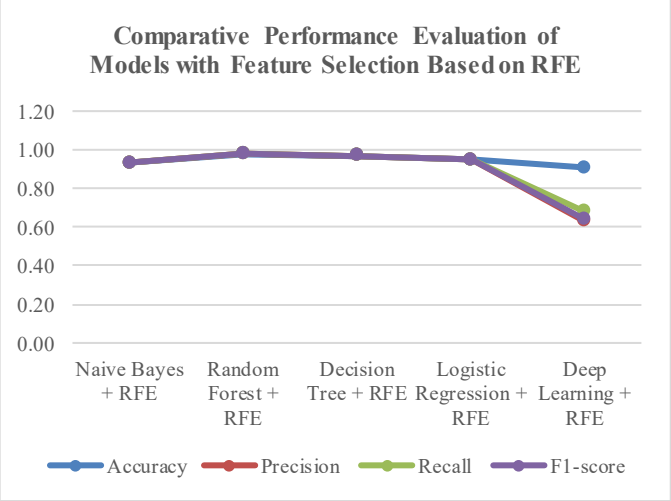

Fig. 4. Comparative performance evaluation of models with feature selection based on RFE.

The implementation of Recursive Feature Elimination (RFE) as a feature selection technique resulted in a consistent pattern of performance improvement across most of the tested classification algorithms. Based on the evaluation results shown in Fig. 4, RFE significantly contributed to increased accuracy and consistency in predictions. Random Forest and Decision Tree demonstrated the most prominent performance, recording accuracy scores of 0.98 and 0.97, respectively, with uniform precision, recall, and F1-score values. This indicated that both models responded highly to the feature simplification performed by RFE without losing their classification capacity. Logistic Regression also demonstrated stable performance, with a score of 0.95 across all metrics, which indicated that this model remained robust even when features were reduced. Naive Bayes consistently scored 0.93. It suggested that, although simple, this model still maintained competitive performance after feature selection was applied. Conversely, Deep Learning showed an imbalance among metrics, with an accuracy of 0.91 but much lower precision and F1-score (0.63 and 0.64). These findings suggested that neural network-based models required a more adaptive feature selection approach to match their internal architectural complexity. Overall, these results demonstrated that RFE enhanced the efficiency and accuracy of classical models. In contrast, its impact on complex models, such as Deep Learning, still required further exploration.

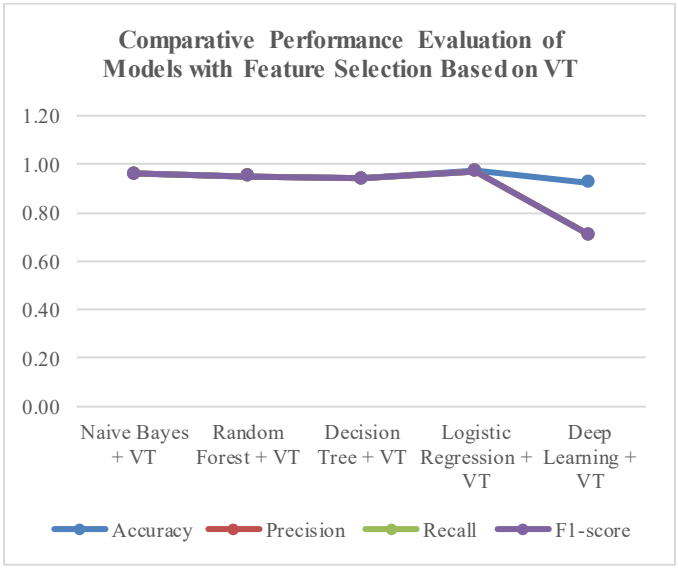

Fig. 5. Comparative performance evaluation of models with feature selection based on VT.

Fig. 5 presents the evaluation results of the impact of the Variance Threshold (VT)-based feature selection method on the performance of five classification algorithms: Random Forest, Naive Bayes, Decision Tree, Deep Learning and Logistic Regression. VT acted as a filter approach that eliminated features with low variance, thereby retaining only attributes that significantly contributed to the data distribution. The evaluation results showed that Logistic Regression combined with VT yielded the highest and most consistent performance across all metrics (0.97), followed by Naive Bayes (0.96), Random Forest (0.95), and Decision Tree (0.94). These four models demonstrated high classification stability, indicating that VT preserved statistically relevant features to improve prediction accuracy. Conversely, Deep Learning achieved fairly good accuracy (0.92) but experienced a significant decline in precision, recall, and F1-score (each at 0.71). This finding suggested that the VT approach was less optimal for complex architectures, such as neural networks, which tended to require richer and nonlinear feature representations.

Overall, this study demonstrated that the Variance Threshold served as a practical feature selection technique, enhancing the efficiency and performance of conventional classification

models. However, its application to deep learning models required a more adaptive approach to structural complexity and data representation needs.

C. Discussion

This study evaluated the efficacy of five machine learning algorithms in detecting Alzheimer's Disease (AD) by integrating intelligent feature selection strategies. The analytical results demonstrate that the application of feature selection techniques consistently enhances the predictive capability of the models compared to using the dataset without feature selection. This aligns with the principle that dimensionality reduction, through methods such as Recursive Feature Elimination (RFE) and Binary Particle Swarm Optimization (BPSO), is capable of eliminating irrelevant attributes, thereby strengthening the model's generalization in identifying AD pathological patterns more accurately.

The superiority of classical algorithms, particularly Random Forest (RF) and Logistic Regression (LR), is evident from their high-performance stability following feature optimization. Random Forest achieved peak performance with an accuracy of 0.98 in the RFE scenario due to its ability to handle non-linear relationships and prioritize high-importance features. Meanwhile, Logistic Regression reached an accuracy of 0.97 through the Variance Threshold (VT) combination, proving that on low-dimensional datasets, this statistical model is highly reliable because it provides excellent interpretability and efficiency in distinguishing binary classes between Alzheimer's and non-Alzheimer's patients.

On the other hand, this study revealed a significant weakness in the Deep Learning (DL) architecture when subjected to conventional feature selection. Although the DL model maintained a competitive accuracy rate (ranging from 0.89 to 0.92), there was a sharp decline in precision, recall, and F1-score metrics. This weakness stems from the fundamental characteristic of Deep Learning, which requires rich and complex feature representations to optimize weights within its hidden layers. The use of feature selection methods like VT or BPSO, which drastically reduce input, effectively hinders the model's ability to capture deeper non-linear patterns, resulting in less precise positive classifications. Consequently, a more adaptive feature selection approach is required to accommodate the architectural complexity of neural network models in medical diagnosis.

IV. Conclusion

Alzheimer's Disease (AD) is a gradually advancing neurodegenerative condition that substantially impairs cognitive abilities and adversely affects the overall quality of life of affected individuals. Early detection is a crucial aspect of mitigation strategies, as it allows for more effective medical interventions before extensive neurological damage occurs. Advances in technology, such as the use of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML), have created novel avenues for more accurate and efficient diagnosis.

This study evaluates the performance of five classification algorithms: Decision Tree, Random Forest, Naïve Bayes, Logistic Regression, and Deep Learning in two scenarios: without feature selection and with feature selection using Binary Particle Swarm Optimization (BPSO), Recursive Feature Elimination (RFE), and Variance Threshold (VT). The evaluation was conducted using K-fold cross-validation and four main metrics: accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score.

The results demonstrate that feature selection consistently enhances model performance, particularly in conventional classification algorithms. Random Forest and Logistic Regression demonstrate high accuracy and prediction stability after feature selection is applied. The RFE and BPSO methods make significant contributions to increasing accuracy and model efficiency. In contrast, VT is effective for simple models but less optimal for complex architectures, such as those used in deep learning. Although Deep Learning demonstrates competitive accuracy, the decline in precision and F1-score suggests the need for more adaptive feature selection approaches to accommodate the model's structural complexity.

This study confirms that integrating intelligent feature selection techniques into machine learning models significantly enhances the accuracy and efficiency of early Alzheimer's disease detection. The experimental results demonstrate that classical algorithms, such as Random Forest and Logistic Regression, achieve superior and stable performance when optimized with Recursive Feature Elimination (RFE) and Binary Particle Swarm Optimization (BPSO). These findings underscore the potential of AI-based diagnostic strategies as reliable, non-invasive tools for clinical intervention.

However, this research acknowledges several limitations that provide a balanced perspective on the findings. First, while conventional feature selection methods significantly benefit classical models, they proved less optimal for Deep Learning architectures, leading to a notable decline in precision and F1-scores. This suggests that the current feature selection approach may not fully accommodate the structural complexity and non-linear representation needs of neural networks. Furthermore, the study relied on the Oasis Longitudinal dataset from Kaggle; therefore, the generalizability of these models to more diverse, real-world clinical populations require further validation. Future research should explore more adaptive, deep-learning-specific feature selection methods and incorporate multi-modal data to further refine diagnostic reliability.

Funding Information

This research received financial support from the Beginner Lecturer Research Grant (Penelitian Dosen Pemula), administered by the Directorate of Research and Community Service, Directorate General of Research and Development, Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Technology, under Contract Nos. 123/C3/DT.05.00/PL/2025 and 109/LL2/DT.05.00/PL/2025.

Author Contributions Statement

The journal adopts the Contributor Roles Taxonomy (CRediT) as a framework to acknowledge the specific roles of each author, mitigate potential disputes concerning authorship, and enhance collaborative efforts. See the Table I below:

TABLE I. AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Name of Author	C	M	So	Va	Fo	I	R	D	O	E	Vi	Su	P	Fu
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Siti Nur Laila		✓			✓				✓	✓				
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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors hereby declare that no conflicts of interest exist in relation to this manuscript.

DATA AVAILABILITY

This study utilizes a dataset obtained from the Kaggle platform (https://www.kaggle.com/) on the topic of Alzheimer's Disease, specifically the Oasis Longitudinal dataset.

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Natural Human-Machine Interaction Using Static Hand Gestures for a Gestural Calculator System with DNN

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***Abstract*—Hand gesture recognition (HGR) represents a real challenge for natural human-computer interaction, which aims to revolutionize the naturalness of traditional interfaces, allowing intuitive control of various devices without using a keyboard or mouse. Despite the availability of frameworks such as MediaPipe, which enable better detection and tracking, the major challenge remains interpreting gestures made with both hands in a natural operational setting. In this regard, this study presents a real-time gesture calculator that combines gestures made with both hands (see using one hand) and aims to address the problem of interpretation in arithmetic operations. By leveraging MediaPipe to classify the 21 hand landmarks, an optimized dense neural network (DNN) was developed capable of recognizing 13 distinct static gestures. The latter includes six gestures for each hand (ranging from 0 to 5) to represent all digits from 0 to 9, five mathematical symbols, and two specialized commands designed explicitly for control management. Even with a standard webcam, this model achieved 91% accuracy on a reduced dataset of gestures from both hands. Beyond gesture recognition, this work demonstrates how these gestures can be integrated into a fluid sequence for arithmetic operations.**

***Keywords*—Hand gesture recognition; gestural calculator interface; DNN; MediaPipe; natural human-computer interaction**

I. Introduction

The field of human-computer interaction (HCI) has seen rapid progress in the development of natural interfaces in recent years, thanks to advances in methods for detecting and tracking body parts and the entire body, as well as deep learning methods such as DNNs [1]. Hand gesture recognition (HGR) stands out as a powerful means of communication with digital systems, given the many degrees of freedom it offers, making it the most expressive organ in the human body. This type of interface offers a level of fluidity and naturalness that traditional input devices, such as keyboards and mice, cannot match. HGR is redefining the way we connect the physical and digital worlds [2]. These systems have evolved into advanced solutions for controlling computers, navigating virtual and augmented reality environments, and providing real-time sign language translation [3]. Modern gesture recognition systems rely on the interaction between computer vision and deep learning [4]. In this field, Google's MediaPipe library, which offers a highly efficient platform for real-time hand tracking and 21-point landmark detection, occupies a central position. This technology offers powerful, accurate processing across a variety of lighting conditions and backgrounds [5]. However, the majority of available HGR systems are limited to simple static classifications and a single hand. There is a notable lack of research on effectively combining two-handed coordination with complex interaction logic in a practical, real-time application.

This research addresses these challenges by developing an intelligent gesture-based arithmetic calculation system. This study explores a pipeline that moves from detecting static gestures from a predefined gesture vocabulary to a dynamic, real-time calculator interface using a dense neural network (DNN) [6]. The system is designed to recognize 13 different static gestures comprising numerical values, arithmetic operators, and system commands optimized for two-handed interaction [7][8]. By combining MediaPipe's efficiency with a customized DNN, this demonstrates how computer vision can be leveraged to create a robust, low-latency human-machine interface [9]. While recent studies have explored gesture-based tools, such as the virtual calculators proposed by Umadevi et al. [7] and Sunanda et al. [8], most of these implementations focus on single-handed input or require significant computing resources. This work builds on these foundations but specifically targets two-handed coordination in an Industry 5.0 context [1], favoring a lightweight architecture that maintains high responsiveness on standard, low-cost hardware.

This study is structured as follows: Section II reviews the existing literature on hand gesture recognition systems. Section III describes the main objective of this work. Section IV addresses the chosen vocabulary and the suggested methodology. Section V presents the implementation, including the DNN architecture and the dataset used. Section VI explores the experimental results, accuracy metrics, and a discussion of system robustness. Finally, Section VII concludes the study by summarizing the contributions and recommending paths for future work in Section VIII.

II. Overview of Hand Gesture Recognition Systems

Gestures are a form of nonverbal communication in which body language conveys specific messages rather than speech [10]. This communication is accomplished through the movement of various body parts, which feels more natural and intuitive to people. Gestures significantly influence verbal messages [11]. Nonverbal communication has evolved to the extent that some languages have developed from a series of gestures. Gesture recognition technology plays a valuable role

in enhancing human-machine interaction. Since the emergence of digital video capture technologies, numerous attempts have been made to recognize dynamic gestures for various purposes [12].

These two methods differ in accuracy, calibration complexity, latency, range of motion, ease of use, and cost. Thus, gesture recognition faces two types of challenges: a lower-level challenge that requires accurate posture detection and a higher-level challenge that focuses on the correct interpretation of gestures [13]. The analysis of gestures and postures presents several challenges, making it complex. Many concepts are often associated with the same gesture, and a given concept can be linked to various gestures. Furthermore, the interpretation of gestures varies across language, culture, and context [14]. For example, sign languages vary from one country to another, and even within the same country. Furthermore, gesture meanings likely change depending on the conversational context [15] [16].

III. Objectives

The idea was to create a model that performs basic arithmetic operations using hand gestures. This gesture-controlled calculator operates using both hands to compose numbers from 0 to 10. The numerical representation ranges from both hands closed, indicating 0, up to 10 represented by all ten fingers of both hands, with each hand symbolizing five digits. An advanced real-time model was developed to recognize both hands, determine the number of raised fingers on each hand, and calculate the total number of raised fingers. The calculator supports four arithmetic operations: subtraction (-), addition (+), division (/), multiplication (*), and equals (=). Additionally, two control commands are included: the gesture (e) to clear all input, and the gesture (d) to delete the last symbol entered (see Fig. 1).

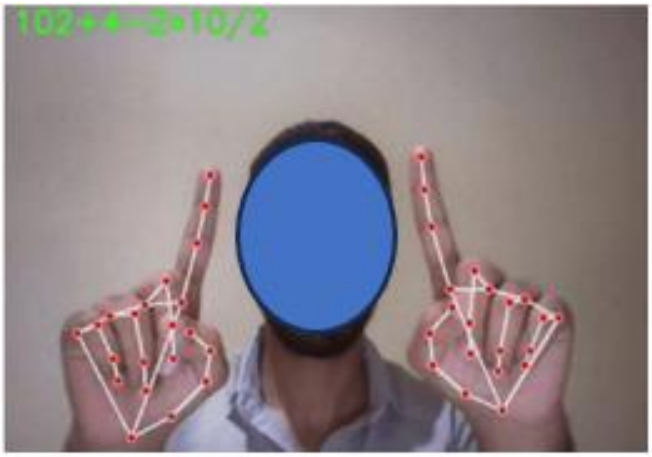

Fig. 1. Example of an arithmetic operation using gestures from both hands.

The impact of this work is manifold. From a scientific standpoint, it demonstrates that lightweight architectures, such as dense neural networks (DNNs), can effectively handle complex tasks that require coordination between two sources of information with optimal latency, especially when coupled with powerful data extraction methods. From an operational standpoint, this system lays the foundation for natural user interfaces (NUIs). It offers a hands-free model in sterile environments such as operating rooms, new accessibility tools for people with reduced mobility, and even intuitive interfaces for early childhood education.

The practical aspects of building an artificial intelligence model to identify hand gestures are detailed.

During this project, an artificial intelligence model was developed, progressing from creating a database of gesture images to real-time gesture recognition. This was achieved using Python, TensorFlow, Keras, and Media.

IV. System Description

The system follows a structured set of steps to predict quick, organized hand gestures and perform mathematical operations. The steps are described in detail in the two algorithms (see Algorithm 1 and Algorithm 2), explained in the following section.

A. Camera Frame Reading

The first step is to keep reading the computer's webcam frame, flip it horizontally, and then convert the color space from BGR to RGB as required by the MediaPipe library.

B. Hand Recognition and Hand Landmark Extraction

The MediaPipe library detects hands and extracts 21 features for each hand (see Fig. 2). It is a pre-trained system that automatically detects the presence of hands in an image. After detection, a set of characteristic points is extracted from each hand. It identifies 21 key points per hand (joints and fingertips) and provides the spatial coordinates for each point. These 21 characteristics constitute a description vector used as input to the proposed gesture recognition system.

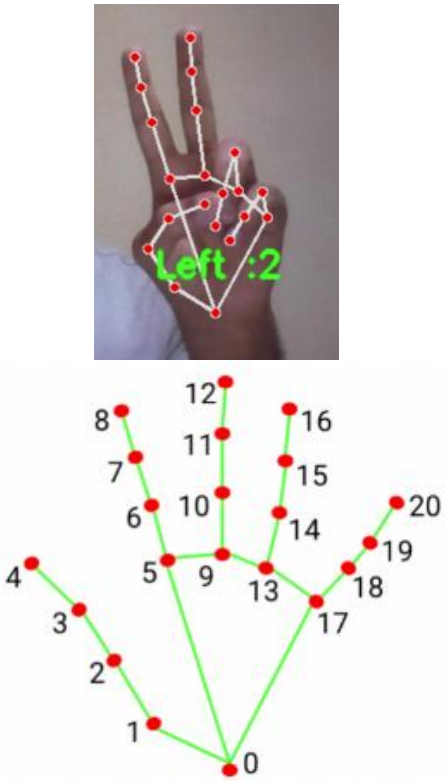

Fig. 2. The 21 hand features using MediaPipe.

C. Data Collection

The database of 13 gestures was created (Fig. 3). Six gestures represent digits 0 to 5, while four gestures correspond to operations (+, -, *, /, and =). The collection was assembled using Python, MediaPipe, and OpenCV. The system captured 21 features from 287 hand gesture samples, which were manually sorted into 0-5 categories and stored in a CSV file. A total of 287 rows were recorded, each containing 42 data points. The 0-5 classification was split with 20% for testing and 80% for training.

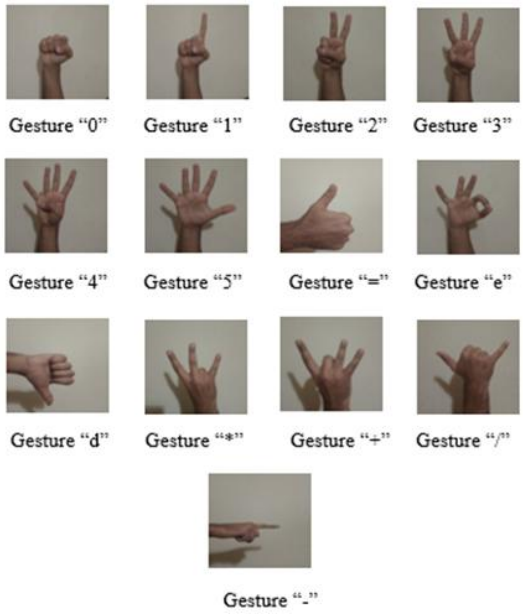

Fig. 3. Dataset of 13 gestures used for the calculating system.

D. Feature Preparation for Prediction

The extracted landmarks are combined into a single feature vector of size 42 (21 x-values and 21 y-values). This vector is reshaped and prepared as input for the trained gesture recognition model.

Algorithm 1: Hand Acquisition and Feature Extraction

```
Initialize
Start Acquisition by Camera
    Initialize MediaPipe Hands module
    Set quit key = 'q'
  Compute
  While (pressed key ≠ 'q') do
      Get current predicted gesture
      Convert frame to RGB
  Detect and track hands with MediaPipe
      If (at least one hand detected) then
          Extract 42 (x,y) features for each hand
          Send features to classifier
      End
  End
```

E. Gesture Prediction

After extracting the feature vector, it makes a prediction and determines which class it belongs to, whether it is a number from 0 to 5, a symbol for arithmetic operations (+, -, *, /, =), or the e command to erase the entire expression, or d to delete the last character. The predicted class is recoded to its corresponding class.

1) Handling numeric gestures (0 to 5): If the hand signal is a number from 0 to 5, the system distinguishes between the right and left hands and stores the value of each. If the two-second cool-down period is completed with the hands together, the system adds the values of the right and left hands and prints the result as a mathematical expression.

Algorithm 2: Gesture-Based Calculator Operation

```
Initialize
Expression ← empty
LeftValue, RightValue ← 0
Compute
While the system running) do
    Acquire current prediction for left hand
    Acquire current prediction for right hand
    If (left hand detected AND right hand detected) then
        If (left gesture is digit 0–5 AND right gesture is digit 0–5) then
            LeftValue ← digit shown by left hand
            RightValue ← digit shown by right hand
            SumValue ← LeftValue + RightValue
            CurrentDigit ← SumValue
        End
    End
    If (CurrentDigit is defined) then
        Append CurrentDigit to Expression
    End
    If (predicted gesture is arithmetic operator '+', '−', '×', '÷') then
        Append operator to Expression
    End
    If (predicted gesture is 'd') then
        Delete last symbol from Expression
    End
    If (predicted gesture is 'e') then
        Clear Expression
    End
    If (predicted gesture is '=') then
        If (Expression is mathematically valid) then
            Evaluate Expression and display result
        Else
            Display error message
        End
    End
End
```

2) Handling symbolic and control gestures: If the sign indicates a mathematical operation symbol (+, -, *, /), the recognized symbol is added to the mathematical expression. If the symbol is "=", the Python eval() function calculates the expression. If the mathematical expression is true, it prints the result. If it is false, it prints an error. If the command symbol is "e," the entire expression is erased.

If the expression symbol is "d", we delete only the last letter of the expression.

3) Display of predictions: The updated expression or result is displayed in real-time on the camera feed using OpenCV's putText function. Users can see their arithmetic operations evolve as they perform gestures.

This model expanded functionality by incorporating symbolic gestures (e.g., arithmetic operators and control commands), turning the system into a real-time gesture-based calculator.

F. Termination Condition

The system continues to run and loop until you press the "q" key to stop the program.

V. System Implementation

A. System Description

The database is a CSV file containing 287 rows, 48 variables, and 13 columns containing numbers from 0 to 5, arithmetic symbols (+, -, *, /, =), and commands (e, d). 80% of the data is dedicated to training and 20% to testing.

B. DNN Model Architecture

The proposed deep neural network (DNN) architecture for gesture classification, shown in Fig. 4, comprises six fully connected (dense) hidden layers, with the number of units decreasing from 1024 to 32.

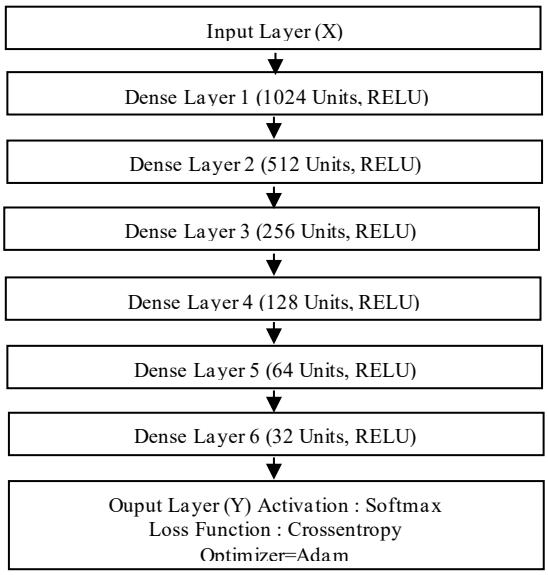

Fig. 4. The proposed deep neural network (DNN) architecture for gesture classification.

Each hidden layer employs the RELU activation function, facilitating hierarchical feature extraction and nonlinear transformations of the input data.

The final output layer consists of 13 units, corresponding to the distinct gesture classes, and utilizes the SoftMax activation function to generate normalized probability distributions for multiclass classification.

The Adam optimizer is chosen for its efficiency in adaptive learning rate adjustment.

This architecture enables robust learning and precise recognition of 13 different hand gestures, rendering the model well-suited for real-time human-computer interaction applications, as evidenced by recent studies employing DNNs in gesture recognition systems.

VI. Results and Discussion

Even with a compact dataset of just 287 samples, our model achieved 91% validation accuracy (Fig. 5), demonstrating its ability to recognize gestures it hasn't seen before reliably. In the world of deep learning, hitting these numbers with such a small dataset is usually a challenge.

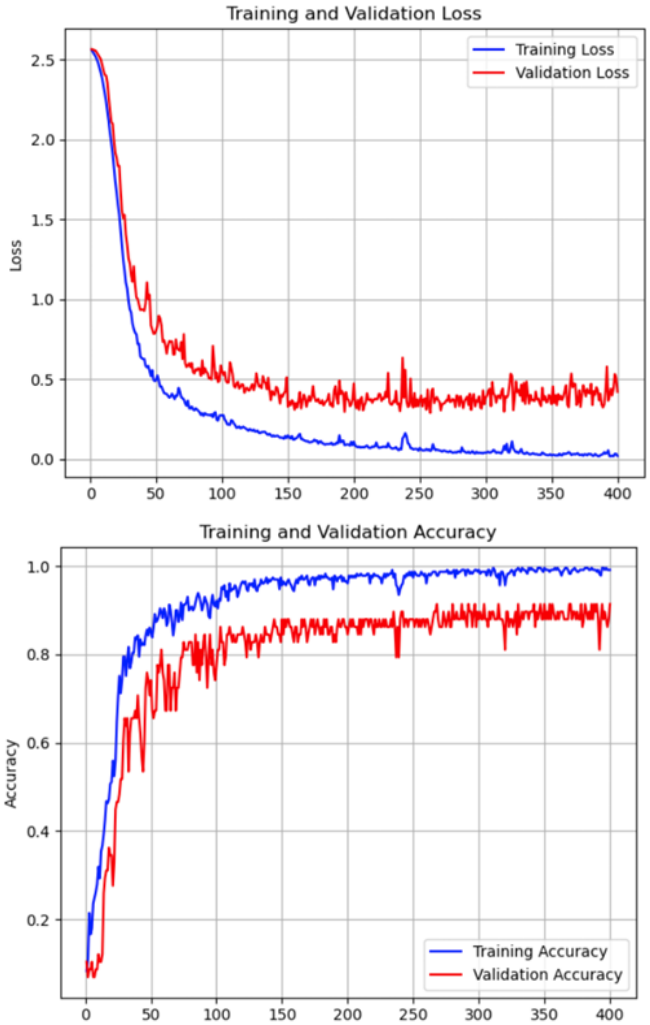

Fig. 5. References Training vs. Validation metrics (loss and accuracy) for the proposed DNN model with MediaPipe.

Using MediaPipe to extract the 21 essential landmarks significantly reduced the size of the features introduced to the learning process compared to the raw input data (image). This significant reduction in data allowed the proposed dense neural network (DNN) to favor hand geometry over environmental features. This also explains why a lightweight model can be just as effective as the complex, data-intensive architectures often encountered in such contexts.

Compared to existing literature, the proposed system strikes a distinctive balance between technical depth and practical accessibility. For example, unlike the massive, highly interconnected CNNs suggested by Tan et al. [6], which require significant GPU capacity, our DNN-based strategy achieves 91% accuracy with significantly lower latency. This makes it much more suitable for real-time clinical or industrial environments [5], [12]. While researchers such as Pathak et al. [2] focus on replacing equipment such as keyboards and mice, this research implements a synchronized logic layer for two-handed arithmetic. This is considered an essential step toward the level of sign language recognition discussed by Long et al. [15]. By relying on landmarks rather than raw pixel processing [4], we achieved competitive results even with a smaller database, effectively bridging the gap between theoretical research and practical tools [13].

Undeniably, the results obtained indicate a slight tendency toward overfitting, which is almost always a challenge when working with restricted data sets. To ensure the system functions properly in real time, this study adopted an approach that aims not only to achieve a higher score but, above all, to guarantee "interaction resilience". As the system operates at 30 frames per second, feedback is almost instantaneous; in case a gesture is not recognized the first time, the user can naturally adjust the position of their hand without losing rhythm in transparency mode.

During testing, the system remained stable under standard indoor lighting conditions. However, it can still be affected by extremely rapid movements or by a partially obscured hand, thanks to the MediaPipe library, which uses a keypoint inference approach. It is therefore clear that achieving more than these 13 gestures requires much more data. The next steps in our process will involve conducting subject-independent tests to verify that the model is operational for everyone, regardless of hand configuration. Ultimately, this 91% accuracy rate serves as a compelling argument, demonstrating how a MediaPipe DNN pipeline can effectively transform simple detection into a practical, operational calculator.

VII. Conclusion

In this study, a real-time hand gesture recognition system was presented, designed to make interaction with machines more fluid and natural. By combining MediaPipe landmark tracking with an optimized dense neural network (DNN), simple finger counting is exceeded to design a functional two-handed calculator. This work recognizes 13 distinct gestures, allowing users to solve basic mathematical problems with natural movements.

The main scientific goal here is to demonstrate the effectiveness of a lightweight pipeline for two-handed coordination that requires neither high-end hardware nor a large database. It has been clearly proven that reducing the hand image to just 21 key coordinate points combines performance and fluidity, with an accuracy rate of 91%.

This study helps bridge the gap between simple gesture detection and authentic interactive logic, demonstrating that symbolic tasks can be reliably processed using a standard webcam.

In fact, it should be noticed at this level that there is still room for further improvement, considering that the current database has limitations and that the model still perceives gestures as being images rather than continuous movements.

VIII. Future Works

To optimize the system's reliability and efficiency, three main areas are targeted for the next phase of research. Firstly, the database needs to be significantly expanded by building a more diverse panel of examples to ensure the model's accuracy across different hand morphologies and conditions, for better, more accessible technology.

Secondly, although the current configuration is optimal for recognizing static poses, the objective is to explore the "flow" of movements in the context of dynamic gestures. The adoption of more sophisticated architectures, such as LSTMs or Transformers, will allow the system to process each image individually rather than perceiving gestures as continuous movements. This change is crucial for identifying complicated sequences and minimizing disruptions that can occur during real-time tracking.

Finally, the system will undergo much more rigorous testing. We want to observe its behavior in extreme situations, such as rapid gestures, partially obstructed hands, or poor lighting. As things stand, our results have shown that the gesture-controlled calculator is functional. However, to move towards a larger size, it is imperative to improve data and model complexity. This will ultimately pave the way for the application of this technology beyond simple calculator use into more demanding fields such as virtual reality, telesurgery, and robotics.

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Community-Aware Influence Maximization for Suppressing Cryptocurrency Scam Misinformation

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***Abstract*—Cryptocurrency fraud campaigns often rely on large-scale social-media diffusion to recruit victims, normalize false claims, and coordinate multi-level marketing behavior. This study examines the dynamics of the One Coin scam. It proposes an influence-maximization (IM)-driven workflow for identifying high-impact accounts whose intervention can reduce future misinformation diffusion. A directed Twitter engagement network from retweet/reply interactions is constructed and studied, and the accounts that should be prioritized for intervention to reduce the reach of future scam-promoting misinformation are identified. We evaluate six seed selection strategies: Degree, Betweenness, PageRank, k-core, CELF (lazy greedy), and Reverse Influence Sampling (RIS) under the classical Independent Cascade (IC) and Linear Threshold (LT) diffusion models using a weighted-cascade parameterization when ground-truth transmission probabilities are unavailable. Across the tested seed budgets, CELF achieves the highest expected spread, but with the highest computational cost. At the largest seed budget, Degree is effectively tied with CELF (within 0.09% under LT and 1.4% under IC), indicating a hub-dominated engagement structure in which simple reach-based heuristics can be highly competitive. RIS provides a strong quality–efficiency trade-off, remaining within approximately 9.7% (LT) and 9.5% (IC) of CELF while requiring substantially less computation. We further introduce a community-aware variant using Leiden partitions and proportional seed allocation to improve cross-community coverage; at larger budgets, this improves methods sensitive to seed over-concentration, increasing LT spread by about 9.8% for k-core and 8.6% for RIS. Overall, the results quantify practical trade-offs between spread and runtime for deployable suppression workflows and show when community-aware planning better aligns with the heterogeneous structure of scam recruitment ecosystems.**

***Keywords*—Influence maximization; misinformation suppression; cryptocurrency scams; OneCoin; diffusion models; Leiden; community-aware seeding**

I. Introduction

Online social networks have become a primary channel for disseminating both legitimate information and harmful content. Fraudulent investment narratives are especially sensitive to viral diffusion: repeated exposure can create perceived legitimacy, recruit new participants, and sustain the financial incentives of a scam ecosystem. OneCoin, a cryptocurrency launched in 2014, has been described by U.S. prosecutors as a multibillion-dollar global fraud scheme, with prosecutions and public warnings continuing over several years (U.S. Department of Justice [1][2][3]. From a network-science perspective, such campaigns can be studied as diffusion processes on an interaction graph, where certain accounts play outsized roles in initiating and amplifying narratives.

A key practical question is: Which accounts should be prioritized for intervention to most effectively curb the spread of scam-promoting misinformation? Intervention may include platform trust-and-safety actions, targeted fact-checking prompts, or counter-messaging allocation. This problem relates to influence maximization (IM): given a graph and a diffusion model, IM selects a small seed set of nodes (accounts to which an intervention or corrective exposure is applied) to maximize the expected diffusion reach [4]. In misinformation suppression settings, these seeds represent the most leverageable points for disruption or for seeding corrective information, aligning conceptually with competing-cascade work on limiting misinformation [5]. We focus on OneCoin because it is a well-documented, large-scale fraud campaign with extensive public enforcement records and warnings, making it a realistic case for studying diffusion-driven recruitment dynamics. This work provides the following contributions:

- A reproducible workflow to build a directed OneCoin interaction network from Twitter engagement signals (retweets and replies), and to model propagation under IC and LT diffusion [4].
- A comparative experimental study of classic heuristics (Degree, Betweenness, PageRank, k-core), CELF-accelerated greedy selection [6], and Reverse Influence Sampling (RIS) [7] on the same dataset and seed budgets.
- A community-aware variant using Leiden partitions [8], with proportional seed allocation across communities, demonstrates how community constraints affect diffusion and runtime.

The remainder of this study is organized as follows: Section II will cover the related work and background. In Section III, the conceptual pipeline of the proposed OneCoin misinformation diffusion study is detailed. Section IV presents the experiments and evaluations, and we conclude in Section V.

II. Related Work

A. Influence Maximization and Scalable Algorithms

Kempe et al. formalized IM under the IC and LT models and showed that expected spread is monotone and submodular, enabling a $(1-1/e)$ approximation via greedy selection [4]. Because naive greedy requires many spread estimations, Leskovec et al. proposed CELF (Cost-Effective Lazy Forward), which reduces recomputation of marginal gains while preserving greedy quality [6]. To scale IM to large graphs, RIS-type methods estimate influence by sampling reverse-reachable (RR) sets, yielding near-linear-time algorithms with provable

approximation guarantees [7], [22]. Recent surveys summarize these algorithm families and extensions to dynamic and competitive settings [10]–[12].

B. Misinformation Diffusion and Influence Blocking

A central line of work models misinformation containment as a competitive diffusion problem, where a 'good' campaign (e.g., corrective information) competes with a 'bad' campaign (misinformation) [5]. Subsequent studies have proposed variations that incorporate awareness raising, time constraints, refutation, and vertex blocking, yielding influence-blocking maximization objectives and algorithms [13]–[15]. While our experiments evaluate classical IM under IC/LT to characterize which accounts can most amplify diffusion, the intervention interpretation is consistent with this containment literature: identifying a small set of high-leverage accounts where friction, monitoring, or corrective seeding can meaningfully reduce cascade potential.

C. Community Structure and Community-Aware Influence

Maximization. Diffusion often concentrates within dense communities and crosses communities via a smaller set of bridging accounts, motivating community-aware IM that allocates seeds across communities to improve coverage and diversity [16]–[18]. Reliable community detection is therefore important when community boundaries constrain seeding decisions. Leiden improves upon Louvain by refining partitions to ensure well-connected communities and often achieves higher-quality modularity solutions efficiently [8]. In this study, we use Leiden as a principled preprocessing step and evaluate how proportional community allocation changes both spread and runtime in a real scam-engagement network.

Positioning of this study. Prior work has extensively developed IM algorithms and misinformation containment models, but fewer studies provide end-to-end, reproducible evaluations of how classic IM baselines, scalable RIS methods, and community-aware constraints trade off effectiveness and runtime in a documented cryptocurrency scam setting. Our contribution is to ground this comparison in a OneCoin engagement network and to quantify when community-aware allocation improves cross-community coverage and, at sufficient budgets, overall diffusion reach.

III. Methodology

This study investigates how OneCoin scam-related misinformation can propagate through a Twitter interaction network. It demonstrates how influence maximization [9] can be used to identify a small set of high-influence accounts. To address misinformation propagation in social networks, this study combines information diffusion models, influence evaluation, and influence maximization (see Fig. 1). A directed, weighted engagement graph is constructed from retweet/reply links and analyzed under two widely used diffusion models, Independent Cascade (IC) and Linear Threshold (LT), with a parameter-free weighted-cascade setting based on each node's in-degree, enabling principled propagation simulation when accurate transmission probabilities are unavailable. Significantly, integrating Leiden community detection and enforcing community-proportional seed allocation changes the seed composition toward broader sub-community coverage. Six seed-selection strategies (Degree, Betweenness, PageRank, k-core, CELF, and RIS) were used across multiple seed budgets to achieve the most significant expected spread consistent with submodular maximization theory, but at substantially higher computational cost. Also, we show that, in influence maximization methods, it is essential to provide a strong spread-time compromise suitable for scalable analyses, and that simple heuristics remain competitive across several budgets due to the network's sparse, hub-dominated engagement structure.

A. Data Collection and Case Context (OneCoin Scam Misinformation)

In this subsection, we represent the input evidence used to study diffusion: OneCoin-related Twitter content and engagement traces (e.g., tweets promoting the scam narrative and retweets/replies that amplify it). In misinformation-suppression framing, the goal is not only to describe content, but to capture who amplifies whom and how narratives propagate through user-to-user interactions. In practice, this stage yields: 1) a set of users, 2) interaction events (retweet/reply), and 3) timestamps and metadata that can later support time-sliced diffusion analyses. The OneCoin case is well documented as a large fraud scheme by official authorities, motivating a realistic misinformation setting for network-based interventions. Operationally, the data layer comprises OneCoin-related social-media traces (e.g., posts and engagements). In this work, the emphasis is on engagement events (retweets/replies) because they are direct, observable signals of information amplification and conversational diffusion, enabling network-based modeling.

B. Interaction-Network Construction (Twitter Engagement Graph)

This subsection maps raw engagement events into a directed graph suitable for diffusion modeling. We define a directed weighted interaction network $G = (V, E, W)$, where each node $v \in V$ represents a user account and each directed edge $(u, v) \in E$ indicates that user u interacted with content produced by user v (retweet/reply). Edge weight w_{uv} counts repeated engagements to capture the intensity of interaction. This representation is widely used because diffusion and influence processes can be simulated on graphs and optimized over node sets [4]. The resulting structure is typically sparse and exhibits heterogeneous degree distributions, which motivates comparing both optimization-based methods (e.g., greedy/CELF, RIS) and centrality-based heuristics that may perform well in hub-dominated graphs.

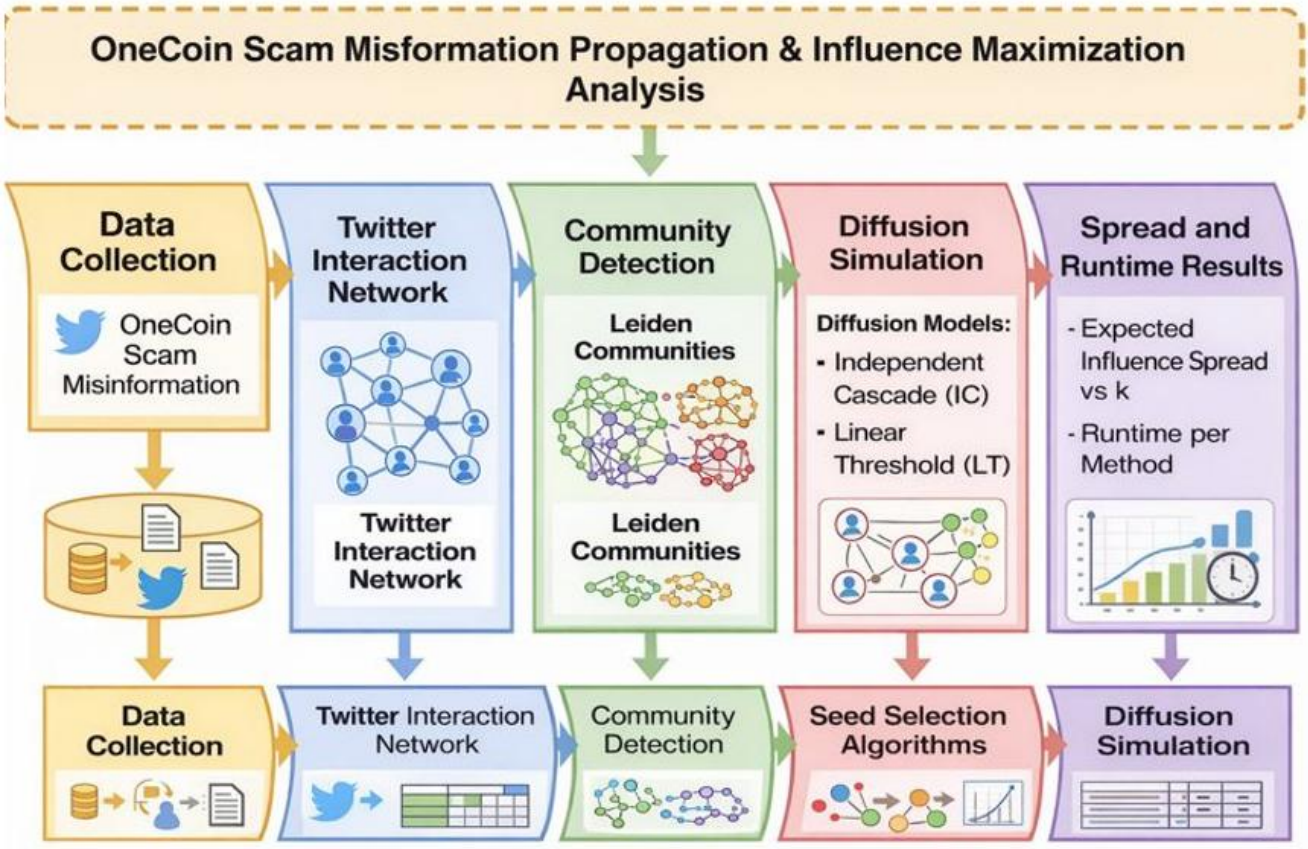

Fig. 1. Conceptual pipeline of the proposed OneCoin misinformation diffusion study.

C. Community Detection (Leiden Partitioning)

Community structure is central to misinformation diffusion because amplification frequently occurs within dense clusters, while a smaller number of accounts facilitates cross-community transmission. To capture this structure, we apply the Leiden algorithm in Fig. 2 to obtain a partition $\mathcal{C} = \{C_1, \ldots, C_r\}$. Leiden is specifically chosen because it addresses known weaknesses of Louvain by improving community connectivity and providing stronger guarantees about partition quality (well-connected communities), while remaining efficient [8]. In the proposed research problem, communities represent sub-audiences or recruitment circles; identifying them supports targeted suppression strategies that aim to reduce cascade potential across the ecosystem rather than within only one dense group.

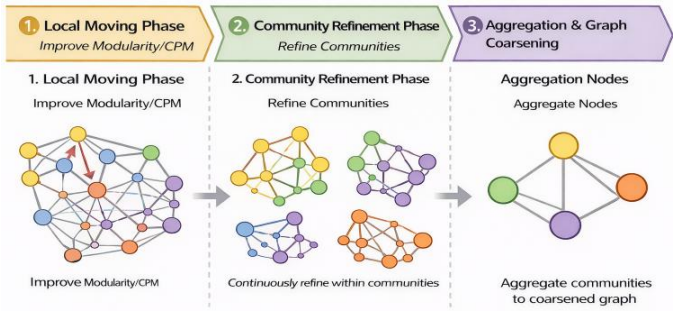

Fig. 2. Community detection of the Leiden algorithm.

D. Diffusion Models for Misinformation Propagation

This subsection formalizes how misinformation may spread in the constructed graph. Independent Cascade (IC). Starting from a seed set S, diffusion proceeds in discrete steps. When node $u$becomes active, it gets a single opportunity to activate each inactive neighbor $v$with probability p_{uv}. Eq. (1) clearly states the influence (spread) function as:

$$\sigma(S) = \mathbb{E}[|\, A(S)\,|] \tag{1}$$

where, $A(S)$ is the final set of activated nodes[4].Linear Threshold (LT). Each node $v$samples a threshold. $\theta_v \in [0,1]$. Node $v$activates when the cumulative influence of its active in-neighbors reaches the threshold [see Eq. (2)]:

$$\sum_{u \in N^-(v) \cap A} w_{uv} \geq \theta_v. \tag{2}$$

LT is frequently interpreted as "accumulated exposure" or social reinforcement, which is conceptually appropriate for the persuasion-like adoption of misinformation [4]. Weighted-cascade parameterization. When accurate transmission probabilities are unavailable, a standard practical setting, as mentioned in Eq. (3) and Eq. (4), is:

$$p_{uv} = \frac{1}{\deg^-(v)} \text{(IC)} \tag{3}$$

$$w_{uv} = \frac{1}{\deg^-(v)} \text{(LT)} \tag{4}$$

This equalizes influence contribution across in-neighbors of each node.

E. Influence Maximization Objective (Identifying High-Impact Accounts for Suppression)

This subsection establishes the optimization target. Given a budget k, the classical influence maximization (IM) problem seeks: Under IC and LT, $\sigma(\cdot)$is monotone and submodular, which supports near-optimal approximation via greedy selection with provable guarantees [4]. In the suppression setting, the same optimization identifies accounts whose intervention (e.g., friction, monitoring, counter-messaging exposure, or de-amplification) can most strongly reduce future diffusion potential across the misinformation network, conceptually aligned with misinformation limitation via competing campaign/mitigation strategies.

F. Seed-Selection

This subsection corresponds to "Algorithms" in the diagram and details the families evaluated.

1) Centrality/structural heuristics (fast baselines):

a) Out-degree prioritizes nodes with many outgoing neighbors (high immediate reach).

b) Betweenness centrality captures brokerage/bridge positions that can connect communities; the classic formulation is based on Freeman's betweenness centrality [19].

c) PageRank assigns global importance to nodes in directed graphs, initially introduced in the context of web link analysis [20].

d) k-core (core number) identifies nodes embedded in cohesive substructures; foundational discussion is linked to minimum-degree core decomposition [21].

2) Greedy influence maximization with CELF acceleration. Greedy selection iteratively adds the node with maximum marginal gain in Eq. (5):

$$\Delta = \sigma(S \cup \{v\}) - \sigma(S) \tag{5}$$

But repeated spread estimation is expensive. CELF reduces computation via lazy marginal-gain updates while preserving greedy behavior and is widely used as a strong quality baseline [4].

3) Reverse Influence Sampling (RIS): RIS approximates $\sigma(S)$ using random reverse-reachable (RR) sets; selecting nodes that cover the most RR sets provides a scalable approximation with theoretical grounding, making RIS-type methods suitable for large graphs and repeated experiments [22].

G. Community-Aware Influence Maximization

After computing communities $\{C_i\}$, we impose a coverage constraint by distributing the seed budget across communities (e.g., proportional allocation) as mentioned below in Eq. (6) and Eq. (7):

$$k_i \approx k \cdot \frac{|C_i|}{|V|} \tag{6}$$

$$\sum_i k_i = k \tag{7}$$

And then select k_i seeds within each community using the same ranking/optimization method (Degree/CELF/RIS/etc), producing [Eq. (8)]:

$$S = \bigcup_i S_i, |\, S_i \,| = k_i \tag{8}$$

The scientific rationale is that misinformation ecosystems are heterogeneous; community-aware seeding mitigates the risk of concentrating interventions in a single dense cluster and supports broader, cross-community mitigation strategies. The choice of Leiden strengthens this component because community integrity (connectivity/quality) influences downstream allocation and interpretation.

IV. Results and Discussion

A. Network Summary and Evaluation Setting

The OneCoin interaction network is modeled as a directed engagement graph built from retweet/reply relations. The details of the datasets are shown in Table I. Across all experiments, diffusion is evaluated under the two standard influence models—Independent Cascade (IC) and Linear Threshold (LT)—using the weighted-cascade normalization (equal influence share across a node's in-neighbors) to parameterize edge influence when ground-truth probabilities are unavailable. This modeling choice is consistent with the classical formulation of diffusion-based influence maximization [4].

TABLE I. Dataset Statistics

Number of nodes	5415
Number of edges	6117
Average Degree	2.2327
Maximum Degree	1582

B. Influence Spread Under the LT Model

Fig. 3 compares the expected influence spread achieved by Degree, CELF, k-core, Betweenness, PageRank, and RIS under LT across budgets $k = \{5,10,15,20,25,30\}$. Three patterns are salient. First, CELF and Degree dominate across budgets, with the highest spreads observed at larger k; for example, at $k = 30$, CELF reaches ≈1620.9 activated users while Degree reaches ≈1619.5, indicating that, on this dataset, a simple out-degree heuristic is highly competitive once the seed budget is moderate to large. Second, RIS consistently provides a strong quality–efficiency trade-off, tracking the leading methods closely as k increases (e.g., ≈1463.2 at k=30), which aligns with the design objective of RIS-style algorithms: scalable approximation to near-greedy performance via reverse-reachable sampling [22]. Third, the structural centrality baselines (Betweenness, PageRank, k-core) improve gradually with increasing k but typically remain below CELF/Degree; this suggests that, in the OneCoin engagement network, large cascades are more strongly driven by outward amplification capacity (high out-degree and greedy marginal gain) than by purely bridge-based shortest-path control.

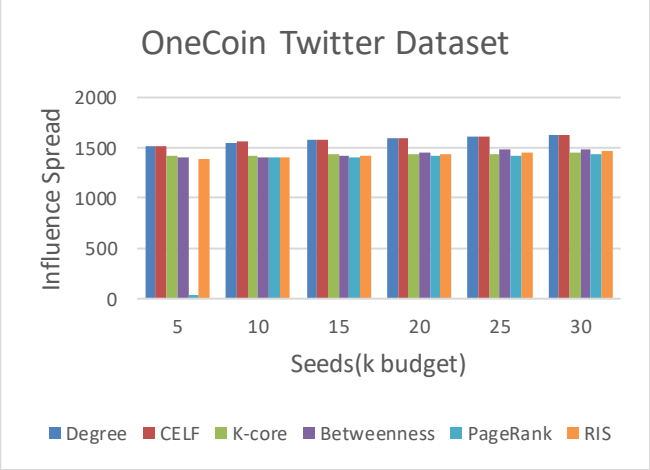

Fig. 3. Influence spread achieved by the evaluated seed-selection methods under the LT diffusion model on the OneCoin dataset.

C. Influence Spread Under the IC Model

Under IC (see Fig. 4), the ranking trends are mainly consistent with LT. CELF achieves the most significant expected spread across budgets, reflecting the theoretical motivation for greedy selection under submodular influence functions [4]. At $k = 30$, CELF reaches ≈1597.9, followed by Degree at ≈1576.2. RIS remains competitive (≈1445.8 at $k = 30$), again reinforcing its role as a practical large-scale alternative to greedy [22]. An additional observation is the instability of PageRank at minimal budgets (e.g., at $k = 5$, PageRank produces very low spread). In directed engagement graphs, PageRank can rank nodes that are globally "prestigious" but not necessarily effective at outward activation (e.g., under the diffusion parameterization, limited outgoing influence pathways). As k increases, PageRank begins to include more structurally active accounts, and its spread becomes comparable to that of other centralities.

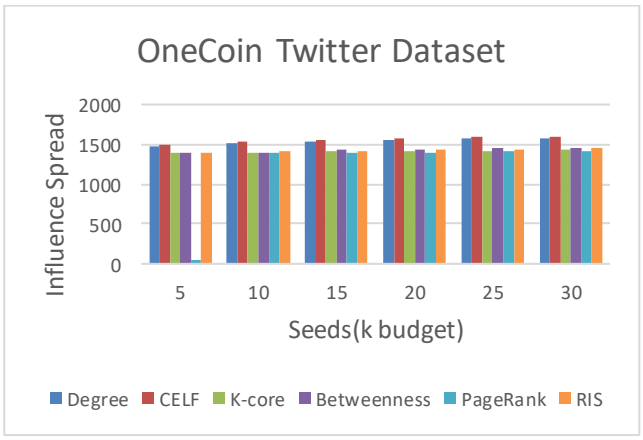

Fig. 4. Influence spread achieved by the evaluated seed-selection methods under the IC diffusion model on the OneCoin dataset.

D. Runtime Comparison Under LT and IC

Fig. 5 (LT) and Fig. 6 (IC) report the total runtime per method (seed selection and spread evaluation). The computational cost is dominated by two factors: 1) the complexity of constructing the seed set and 2) the repeated spread estimation required by the evaluation protocol.

1) CELF is substantially more expensive than all alternatives because it relies on repeated marginal-gain evaluations (even with lazy updates) [4]. Concretely, the total runtime is ≈15.44 **s** under LT and ≈35.87 **s** under IC, both of which are far lower than those of the other methods.

2) Heuristic methods are operationally efficient**.** Degree and PageRank have very low seed-selection costs and total times, typically under a few seconds, in these runs.

3) Betweenness is moderately expensive relative to other heuristics due to shortest-path–based centrality computation, which explains its higher total time, even though it does not match the top-performing spreads.

Overall, the runtime plots support a practical conclusion: CELF maximizes spread but is least suitable for frequent recomputation. At the same time, RIS and Degree offer the best "deployable" trade-off between spread and runtime.

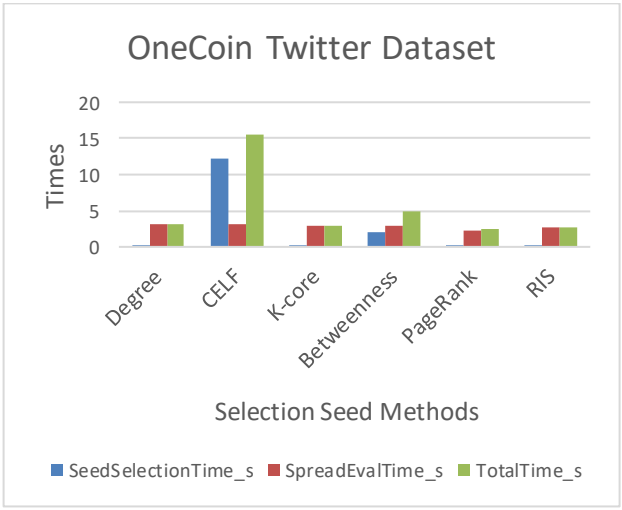

Fig. 5. Total computational time (in seconds) required by each seed-selection method under the LT diffusion model on the OneCoin dataset.

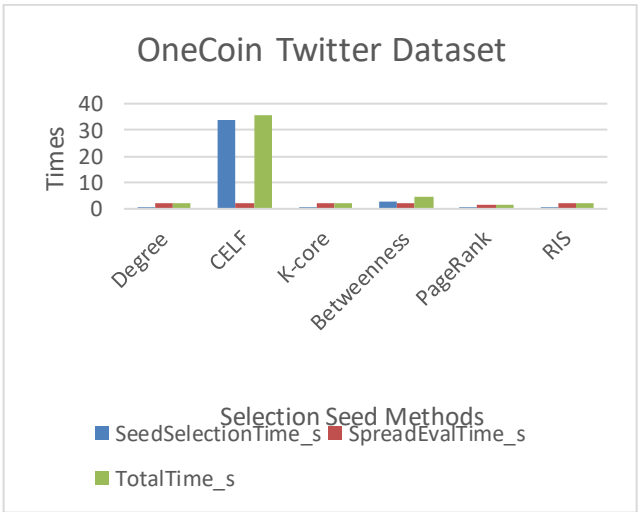

Fig. 6. Total computational time (in seconds) required by each seed-selection method under the IC diffusion model on the OneCoin dataset.

E. Community-Aware Results with Leiden

Fig. 7 and Fig. 8 examine the effect of incorporating Leiden communities and enforcing community-aware seed allocation under LT. Leiden is chosen because it is designed to avoid poorly connected community partitions and to produce higher-quality communities efficiently, which is essential when community boundaries are used to constrain seeding decisions [8].

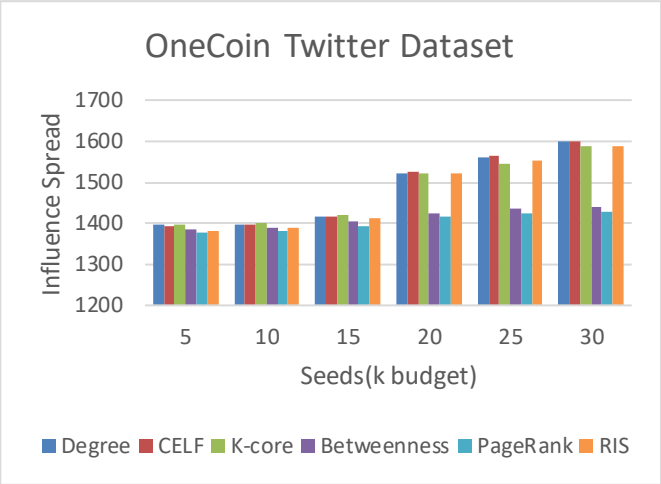

Fig. 7. Influence spread achieved by the evaluated seed-selection methods under the LT diffusion model on the OneCoin data communities using the Leiden algorithm.

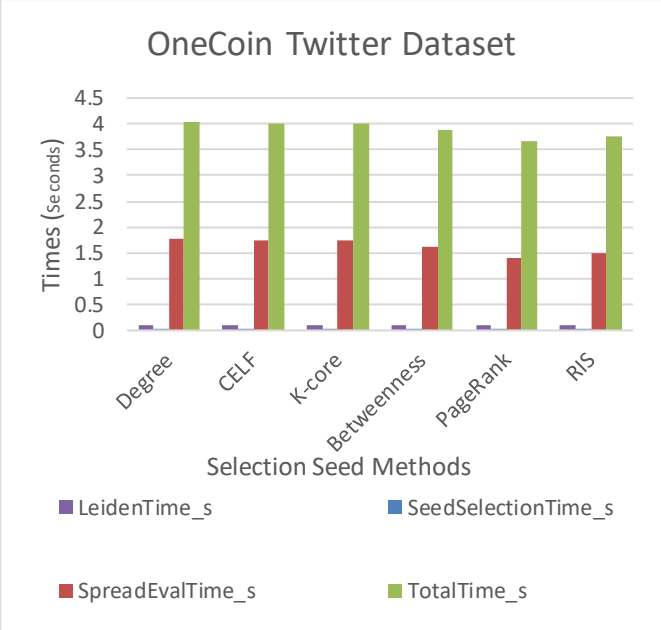

Fig. 8. Total computational time (in seconds) required by each seed-selection method under the LT diffusion model on the OneCoin data communities using the Leiden algorithm.

The results show a clear coverage–concentration trade-off:

- For Degree and CELF, community constraints typically reduce spread at small-to-mid budgets (e.g., around $k = 10-15$), because the unconstrained versions tend to concentrate seeds in the single densest, most cascade-prone region of the graph; community-aware allocation forces distributing seeds across multiple communities, which can reduce immediate cascade size. For methods that are sensitive to seed "over-concentration" effects, community awareness can be beneficial. Notably, k-core and RIS improve at larger budgets under Leiden constraints. For example, at $k = 30$, k-core increases from ≈1445.5 (global LT) to ≈1587.4 (Leiden-aware LT), and RIS increases from ≈1463.2 to ≈1589.1. This indicates that, once enough budget is available, spreading seeds across communities helps capture multiple diffusion pockets simultaneously, improving overall reach while also achieving better representativeness across the misinformation ecosystem.
- Community-aware allocation also stabilizes methods that can fail at minimal budgets (e.g., PageRank at $k = 5$), because the constraint prevents all seeds from being drawn from a narrow set of globally ranked nodes and instead enforces multi-community representation.
- Runtime under the Leiden-aware pipeline (see Fig. 8) remains within a few seconds for all methods in these runs, as the added community-detection step is computationally modest relative to greedy marginal-gain recomputation, consistent with Leiden's known efficiency properties [8].

F. Discussion and Interpretation

Across both diffusion models, the results follow established influence-maximization theory: greedy selection is near-optimal under monotone submodular spread, which explains CELF's consistently highest spread [4], [6]. The runtime gap is also expected because CELF still relies on repeated marginal-gain estimation (even with lazy updates) [6]. The strong performance of the Degree heuristic (nearly matching CELF at larger k) indicates that the OneCoin engagement graph is sparse and hub-dominated; in such graphs, immediate outward reach can approximate marginal gains well. RIS provides a strong near-greedy alternative with substantially lower runtime, consistent with reverse-reachable (RR) set sampling methods designed for near-linear-time approximation [7], [22].

Community-aware seeding changes the intervention footprint. By allocating seeds proportionally across Leiden communities, the approach discourages concentrating interventions in a single dense cluster and instead targets multiple sub-audiences. This explains the observed coverage–concentration trade-off: at small-to-mid budgets, coverage constraints can reduce the single largest cascade, while at larger budgets they can improve overall reach by activating multiple diffusion pockets in parallel, consistent with community-based IM objectives [16]–[18]. Leiden is a suitable choice because it refines partitions to ensure well-connected communities, improving the reliability of downstream community-constrained seeding [8].

G. Limitations and Threats to Validity

Our evaluation has limitations in modeling and data. IC and LT are simplified abstractions that omit content semantics, heterogeneous susceptibility, recommender effects, and time-varying exposure. Weighted-cascade normalization is a standard

practical parameterization when true edge probabilities are unknown [4], but it may not match platform-specific amplification dynamics and can affect which nodes appear influential. The engagement network is built from observable retweets/replies and is sensitive to collection choices (keywords, time window, API limits), missing/deleted/private content, and automated accounts, which can introduce sampling bias and missing edges. These factors can affect both community detection and seed ranking. Results from OneCoin may also not generalize to other scam domains. Future work should incorporate temporal diffusion (time-sliced graphs), explicit competitive/containment objectives [5], robustness checks over alternative probability parameterizations, and hybrid models that combine network structure with content/account-level signals (e.g., credibility and bot likelihood).

V. Conclusion

This study presented a diffusion-based, community-aware influence-maximization workflow to support the suppression of scam-related misinformation in the OneCoin Twitter engagement ecosystem. Using a directed interaction graph of 5,415 accounts and 6,117 engagement edges, we evaluated six seed-selection strategies under IC and LT diffusion, using the weighted-cascade parameterization [4]. CELF achieved the largest expected spread (e.g., ≈1620.9 under LT and ≈1597.9 under IC at k=30), but required the most computation (≈15.44 s under LT; ≈35.87 s under IC), reflecting the cost of repeated marginal-gain evaluation despite lazy acceleration [6]. RIS delivered a strong near-greedy alternative with substantially lower runtime, consistent with RR-set sampling guarantees and prior evidence of practical efficiency [7], [22].

Integrating Leiden community detection and proportional seed allocation shifted seed composition toward broader sub-community coverage, which is operationally meaningful for scam ecosystems sustained by multiple semi-separated recruitment clusters [8]. At larger budgets, community-aware allocation can also improve diffusion reach for methods that otherwise over-concentrate seeds (e.g., k-core and RIS under LT). Overall, the results provide actionable guidance for mitigation planning: greedy-quality methods maximize reach when offline computation is acceptable, while RIS and simple degree-based heuristics offer deployable trade-offs between spread and runtime for scalable, repeatedly updated intervention workflows.

Future research should move beyond static-graph IC/LT simulations by incorporating temporal dynamics, competitive influence-blocking objectives, and sensitivity analyses over propagation parameters, while enriching network signals with content and account-level features to better represent real platform diffusion and enforcement constraints.

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Enhancing Business Cybersecurity Through Integrated Defense and Incident Response: A Comparative Decision Framework

Aligned with NIST CSF 2.0, NIST SP 800-61r3, ISO/IEC 27001: 2022, CIS Controls v8.1, and MITRE ATT&CK

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***Abstract*—Business operations increasingly depend on digital workflows, hybrid infrastructures, and third-party ecosystems, making cybersecurity incidents a direct business continuity and governance problem rather than solely a technical concern. This paper proposes an integrated cyber defense and defense-to-response decision framework for organizations seeking to reduce exposure to external attacks and unauthorized access while improving incident detection, containment, and recovery. The framework aligns governance and control selection with NIST Cybersecurity Framework (CSF) 2.0, operational incident response considerations with NIST SP 800-61 Revision 3, control requirements with ISO/IEC 27001:2022, prioritized safeguards with CIS Controls v8.1, and adversary-behavior mapping with the MITRE ATT&CK Enterprise Matrix. We define an evaluation model that combines 1) coverage mapping across prevent-detect-respond-recover functions, 2) multi-criteria decision analysis (MCDA) for cost, complexity, and risk reduction trade-offs, and 3) a playbook-oriented response design for high-frequency attack paths relevant to business environments. A worked comparative example demonstrates how three strategy bundles (traditional perimeter controls, defense-in-depth with SIEM, and a Zero Trust + EDR + SOAR approach) can be ranked using weighted criteria and incident lifecycle metrics. The paper concludes with an implementation roadmap and measurement plan to convert the framework into an evidence-based program that supports executive decision-making and continuous improvement.**

Keywords*—Cyber defense; incident response; business continuity; NIST CSF 2.0; SP 800-61r3; ISO/IEC 27001:2022; CIS Controls v8.1; MITRE ATT&CK; Zero Trust; EDR; SOAR; MCDA

I. Introduction

For most organizations, cybersecurity risk has matured into a business risk: incidents can halt operations, drive regulatory exposure, damage trust, and increase cost of capital. Recent industry analyses continue to report large volumes of real-world incidents and breaches, reinforcing the need for defense strategies tightly coupled with rapid response and recovery. In parallel, adversaries increasingly use credential theft, infostealers, and exploitation of weak security hygiene during cloud and hybrid transitions, elevating the probability of unauthorized access and lateral movement in business networks. Recent industry reports highlight persistent breach drivers and the business impact of incident response performance [6]–[8].

Despite substantial investment in security tooling, many organizations struggle to convert controls into measurable improvements in mean time to detect (MTTD), mean time to respond (MTTR), and overall business resilience. Common failure modes include fragmented governance, inconsistent prioritization, limited logging visibility, and response playbooks that are not exercised or automated.

This research addresses the doctoral theme of increasing cybersecurity as a practical instrument for protecting business activity from external attacks and unauthorized access by proposing a comparative, standards-aligned decision framework that connects: 1) cybersecurity governance and prioritization, 2) defensive control bundles, 3) ATT&CK-informed detection logic, and 4) incident response execution and recovery.

Novelty and positioning: Unlike catalog-only maturity views, the proposed approach formalizes defense-to-response strategy bundles as the decision unit and jointly evaluates standards-aligned controls, ATT&CK-informed coverage evidence, and incident lifecycle/continuity signals (e.g., MTTD, MTTR, containment and restoration outcomes). This coupling supports explicit trade-off analysis across prevention, detection, response automation, and recovery under realistic constraints.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: Section I states the research objectives and contributions. Background and related guidance are presented in Section II. Section III presents the methodology. Section IV presents the worked comparative example. Section V details standards mapping and comparison. Section VI provides incident response for playbook matrix. Section VII presents roadmap for businesses. Section VIII discusses implementation considerations and limitations, and Section IX concludes with future research directions.

A. Research Objectives and Questions

The primary objective is to provide a repeatable method for selecting and validating defense and incident response

strategies that measurably improve business protection. The paper is guided by the following research questions (RQs):

RQ1: Which defense-to-response strategy bundles provide the best balance between risk reduction and operational feasibility for business environments?

RQ2: How can organizations compare strategy bundles using a transparent scoring model aligned with recognized standards and adversary behaviors?

A conceptual decision lens that links governance, control selection, telemetry, and incident execution into a single evaluable strategy bundle aligned with recognized standards.

A comparative evaluation model combining ATT&CK coverage validation with MCDA-based scoring tied to operational detection/response and recovery indicators.

- A playbook matrix that operationalizes frequent business-relevant attack paths into detection, containment, and recovery actions to support repeatability and continuous improvement.
- A measurement and roadmap approach describing how organizations calibrate criteria and weights using exercises and incident data to generalize beyond the illustrative example.
- A practical playbook matrix for frequent business-relevant attack paths, supporting repeatable response and continuous improvement.
- A measurement plan linking technical outcomes to business continuity indicators.

II. Background and Related Guidance

NIST SP 800-61r3 provides practical incident response guidance, including preparation, detection/analysis, containment/eradication/recovery, and post-incident improvement, aligned with CSF 2.0 risk management needs [2].

NIST CSF 2.0 provides a taxonomy for governance, risk prioritization, and continuous improvement across the cybersecurity lifecycle [1].

[2] A. Nelson, S. Rekhi, M. Souppaya, and K. Scarfone, "Incident Response Recommendations and Considerations for Cybersecurity Risk Management: A CSF 2.0 Community Profile," NIST Special Publication 800-61r3, Apr. 2025. doi:10.6028/NIST.SP.800-61r3.

ISO/IEC 27001:2022 defines requirements for an information security management system (ISMS) and establishes a compliance-oriented control portfolio [3].

In addition, NIST SP 800-53 Rev. 5 provides a detailed control catalog and baselines that can be mapped to organizational requirements and evidence collection activities [9].

Risk assessment approaches such as NIST SP 800-30r1 support structured identification and analysis of threats, vulnerabilities, and likelihood/impact, informing prioritization of control bundles and response investments [10].

ISO/IEC 27005:2022 extends ISO/IEC 27001 programs with information security risk management guidance across assessment, treatment, monitoring, and communication, reinforcing a continuous improvement cycle [11].

Quantitative methods such as the Open FAIR approach complement qualitative scoring by estimating loss event frequency and magnitude, enabling financial risk communication and investment justification [12].

For criteria weight elicitation, analytic hierarchy process (AHP) is a widely used structured technique for pairwise comparison of decision criteria and can be applied to reduce subjective bias in stakeholder weighting workshops [13].

These perspectives motivate an integrated decision approach that connects standards compliance, threat-informed coverage, and operational incident outcomes rather than treating them as independent workstreams.

CIS Controls v8.1 provides a prioritized set of safeguards and introduces governance recommendations aligned with modern environments [4].

MITRE ATT&CK provides a behavior-based model of adversary tactics and techniques used to design detections and validate coverage [5].

A. Integrated Reference Architecture

Fig. 1 summarizes a practical defense-to-response reference architecture that connects monitoring, analysis, orchestration, containment, and governance. The architecture supports both preventive hardening and post-incident learning loops.

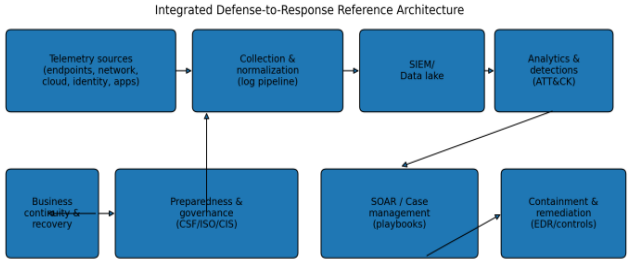

Fig. 1. Integrated defense-to-response reference architecture (conceptual).

III. Methodology

The proposed methodology combines 1) threat-informed defense mapping, 2) a multi-criteria decision analysis (MCDA) scoring model, and 3) playbook-driven incident response design. The methodology is intended to be executed iteratively and improved with measurement data.

A. Strategy Bundles

Organizations typically deploy controls as tool-by-tool procurements; however, business protection depends on coherent bundles that span identity, endpoint, network, logging, and recovery. We define three common strategy bundles used for comparison:

S1: Traditional (perimeter + antivirus + basic backups): Emphasizes perimeter defenses and endpoint antivirus with limited centralized visibility and manual response.

S2: Defense-in-depth (MFA + vulnerability management + segmentation + SIEM): Adds identity hardening and centralized logging/analytics to improve detection and investigation.

Note on criterion interactions: The weighted-sum model is simplest and transparent, but it assumes limited interaction among criteria. In practice, detection coverage and response speed may be positively coupled via improved telemetry and triage. To mitigate interaction risk, organizations should document dependencies, perform sensitivity analysis over weights, and, where needed, use interaction-aware extensions (e.g., ANP or multi-objective formulations) when dependencies materially affect ranking.

S3: Zero Trust + EDR/XDR + SIEM + SOAR + PAM + immutable backups: Implements strong identity controls, behavior-based detection, automated response, and resilient recovery capabilities.

B. Evaluation Criteria and Weighting

To compare strategy bundles transparently, we define eight criteria spanning prevention, detection, response, recovery, and feasibility. Weights can be determined via stakeholder workshops or analytic hierarchy process (AHP). For the worked example, we use the weights in Table I.

TABLE I. EVALUATION CRITERIA AND EXAMPLE WEIGHTS FOR MCDA SCORING

Criterion	Definition (business-oriented)	Weight
Attack surface reduction	Hardening and exposure reduction (patching, segmentation, secure configuration, asset control).	0.15
Identity & access hardening	MFA, least privilege, PAM, and identity monitoring to reduce unauthorized access.	0.15
Detection coverage & fidelity	Visibility and detection quality across endpoints, network, cloud, and identity.	0.18
Response speed & orchestration	Case management, automation, containment capability, and repeatable playbooks.	0.18
Resilience & recovery	Backups, restoration confidence, disaster recovery, and continuity of critical services.	0.12
Governance & compliance support	Support for CSF/ISO control evidence, policies, risk reporting, and audits.	0.10
Cost (lower is better)	Total cost of ownership relative to risk reduction (higher score = lower cost).	0.07
Operational complexity (lower is better)	Staffing and operational burden (higher score = easier operation).	0.05

C. Scoring Model

Each strategy bundle is scored on a 1-5 ordinal scale per criterion, where higher values indicate better performance (except that cost and complexity are inverted so higher values represent lower cost/complexity). Scores are normalized to [0,1] and aggregated using a weighted sum model:

$$\text{Score(bundle)} = \Sigma_i \, w_i \times (s_i / 5)$$

D. Threat-Informed Coverage Mapping

To avoid purely subjective scoring, organizations should map control bundles to a threat model based on business context (industry, assets, and common attack paths) and validate with ATT&CK techniques. Detection engineering should explicitly document which ATT&CK techniques are covered by telemetry, analytics, and response actions.

E. Measurement Plan

A measurement plan converts the framework into an evidence-based program. Recommended operational metrics include:

- Mean time to detect (MTTD) and mean time to respond. (MTTR)
- Containment success rate within defined service-level objectives (SLOs).
- Restoration time and data integrity confidence for critical systems.
- Detection false positive rate and analyst workload Fig. 2 helps identify which criteria drive strengths and weaknesses, while Fig. 3 summarizes the overall ranking implied by the chosen weights, supporting executive-level comparison.
- Coverage maturity: percentage of prioritized ATT&CK techniques with validated detections and tested playbooks.
- Business impact: downtime, recovery cost, regulatory notifications, and customer-facing disruption.

IV. WORKED COMPARATIVE EXAMPLE (ILLUSTRATIVE)

This section provides a worked example using illustrative values to demonstrate how the framework operates. Organizations should calibrate the example scores and weights using internal measurements, controlled exercises, and operational incident data prior to deployment.

A. Comparative Scoring Matrix

Table II reports the illustrative 1–5 criterion scores assigned to each strategy bundle; these values are used to normalize and aggregate the MCDA composite ranking.

TABLE II. ILLUSTRATIVE 1-5 SCORING FOR STRATEGY BUNDLES ACROSS EVALUATION CRITERIA

Criterion (1-5)	S1 Traditional (perimeter+AV)	S2 Defense-in-depth (MFA+SIEM)	S3 Zero Trust + EDR + SOAR
Attack surface reduction	2	4	5
Identity & access hardening	2	4	5
Detection coverage & fidelity	2	3	5
Response speed & orchestration	1	3	5
Resilience & recovery	3	4	5
Governance & compliance	2	4	5
Cost (lower is better)	5	3	2
Ops complexity (lower is better)	4	3	2

These indicators can be operationalized through incident tickets and post-incident reviews to validate whether improvements translate into reduced downtime and faster recovery.

B. Visualization

Fig. 2 presents the comparative profile across criteria, while Fig. 3 shows the aggregated weighted composite score.

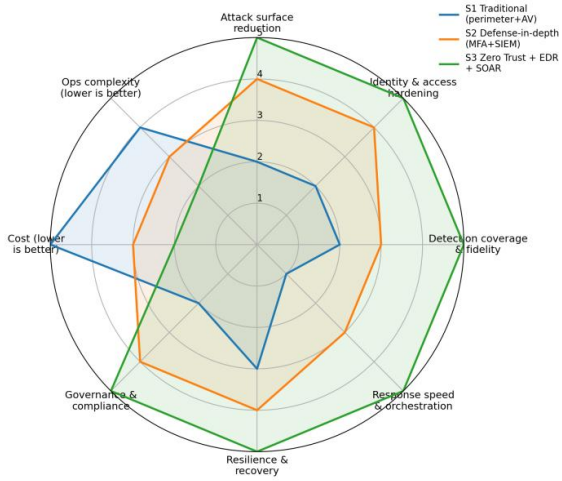

Fig. 2. Radar plot of comparative criterion scores (illustrative).

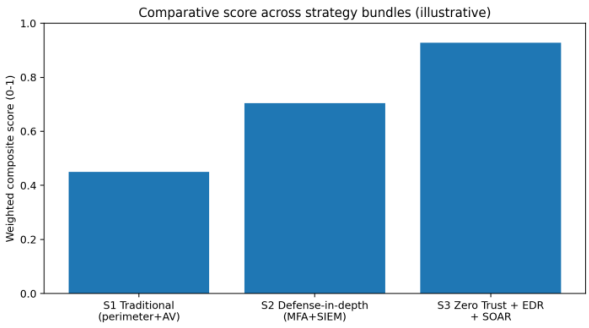

Fig. 3. Weighted composite score across strategy bundles (illustrative).

C. Incident Lifecycle Improvement Indicators

Beyond composite scoring, executive stakeholders typically require operational indicators that translate to reduced disruption. Fig. 4 illustrates how stronger detection and response capabilities can reduce MTTD/MTTR, improving containment and recovery speed.

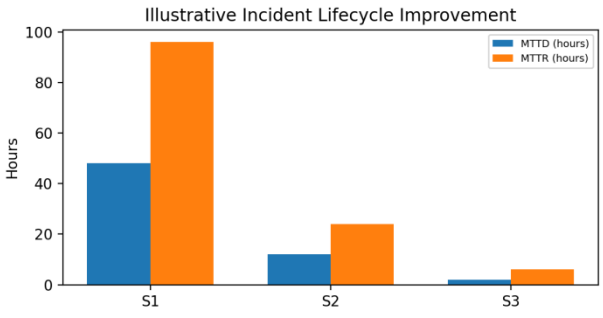

Fig. 4. Illustrative MTTD and MTTR comparison.

D. Interpretation of the Worked Example

Using the example weights, S3 (Zero Trust + EDR + SOAR) achieves the highest composite score primarily due to strong detection coverage, orchestration, and recovery. S2 provides a cost-balanced intermediate option with material gains over S1. However, organizational constraints (budget, staffing, regulatory priorities, legacy systems) may justify selecting S2 as a transition architecture with an incremental roadmap toward S3.

V. Standards Mapping and Comparison

Table III provides a high-level conceptual mapping between program activities and the referenced standards/guidance, supporting traceability from governance to incident handling and recovery.

A. Nelson, S. Rekhi, M. Souppaya, and K. Scarfone, "Incident Response Recommendations and Considerations for Cybersecurity Risk Management: A CSF 2.0 Community Profile," NIST Special Publication 800-61r3, Apr. 2025. doi:10.6028/NIST.SP.800-61r3 [2].

TABLE III. High-Level Mapping Across Standards and Guidance (Conceptual)

Program activity	NIST CSF 2.0	NIST SP 800-61r3	ISO/IEC 27001:2022	CIS Controls v8.1
Governance & policy	Govern	Govern/Prepare (CSF-aligned IR considerations)	ISMS context, leadership, planning	Governance function (v8.1)
Asset & exposure management	Identify, Protect	Preparation considerations	Operational planning, controls selection	Inventory, vulnerability management
Detection engineering	Detect	Detection/analysis considerations	Monitoring controls (Annex A - technological)	Audit log management, monitoring
Incident handling	Respond	Incident response recommendations	Incident management controls, continuous improvement	Incident response management
Recovery & resilience	Recover	Recovery considerations	Business continuity and backup controls	Data protection, recovery safeguards
Continuous improvement	Govern (improve), all functions	Lessons learned integration	Internal audit, management review, improvement	Metrics and program improvement

A. Why Behavior-Based Mapping Matters

Control catalogs alone do not ensure coverage against real attacker tradecraft. ATT&CK-based mapping helps validate whether telemetry and analytics cover the tactics most relevant to unauthorized access (Initial Access, Credential Access, Lateral Movement, Privilege Escalation, Exfiltration) and whether response actions can disrupt those tactics within required SLOs.

VI. Incident Response Playbook Matrix

Table IV provides a compact playbook matrix for business-relevant scenarios. Each scenario should be backed by detailed procedures, communications templates, legal/regulatory triggers, and evidence handling guidance.

TABLE IV. Playbook Matrix for High-Frequency Scenarios (Conceptual)

Scenario	Primary ATT&CK focus	Key detection signals	Containment actions	Recovery actions
Credential theft / infostealer-driven intrusion	Credential Access, Initial Access, Lateral Movement	Unusual auth patterns, token abuse, new device logins, anomalous process chains	Force MFA reset, revoke tokens/sessions, isolate affected endpoints, block IOCs	Password rotation, reimage endpoints, validate privileged accounts, review access logs
Ransomware attempt (pre-encryption)	Execution, Defense Evasion, Impact	Mass file modifications, suspicious scheduled tasks, EDR ransomware heuristics	Isolate hosts, disable SMB shares, block lateral movement, snapshot evidence	Restore from immutable backups, validate integrity, re-enable services with monitoring
Web application exploitation	Initial Access, Persistence, Exfiltration	WAF alerts, abnormal API patterns, new admin accounts, DB query anomalies	Disable vulnerable endpoints, rotate secrets, patch, activate emergency rules	Forensic review, restore clean images, rotate keys, customer notification if required
Business email compromise (BEC)	Initial Access, Credential Access, Collection	Mailbox forwarding rules, abnormal OAuth grants, finance workflow anomalies	Disable account, revoke OAuth grants, remove rules, hold suspicious transfers	Financial recovery steps, strengthen approvals, awareness reinforcement

VII. Implementation Roadmap for Businesses

A phased roadmap helps organizations transition from tool-centric security to a measurable defense-to-response program.

A. Phase 0 - Governance and Scope

Define critical business processes, crown-jewel assets, risk appetite, and reporting cadence. Establish a governance model aligned to CSF 2.0 and define incident categories, notification thresholds, and decision rights.

B. Phase 1 - Baseline Hygiene and Visibility

Implement asset inventory, vulnerability management, secure configuration baselines, and MFA for privileged access. Enable centralized logging for identity, endpoint, network, and cloud platforms. Confirm backup integrity and restoration procedures for critical systems.

C. Phase 2 - Threat-Informed Detections and Exercises

Develop prioritized detection use cases mapped to ATT&CK techniques relevant to the business. Conduct tabletop exercises and controlled attack emulation to validate detection and response. Measure MTTD/MTTR and refine playbooks.

D. Phase 3 - Orchestration, Automation, and Resilience

Introduce SOAR for routine containment steps, ticketing integration, and standardized communications. Adopt Zero Trust principles and privileged access management where feasible. Strengthen recovery with immutable backups and tested disaster recovery runbooks.

VIII. Discussion and Limitations

The proposed framework is designed to be practical and auditable; however, it does not replace empirical evaluation. Scoring models can introduce bias if weights and criteria are not validated by stakeholders and measured outcomes. Additionally, organizations with constrained resources may prioritize incremental adoption (S2) as a stepwise path toward a higher maturity state (S3). Future empirical work should validate the model with measured incident datasets, controlled attack emulation, and longitudinal business impact analysis.

IX. Conclusion

Protecting business operations from external attacks and unauthorized access requires more than deploying isolated security tools; it requires a coherent defense-to-response program that links governance, detection engineering, and incident response execution. This paper presented a comparative, standards-aligned decision framework combining ATT&CK-informed mapping, MCDA scoring, and playbook-driven response design. The worked example illustrates how organizations can rank strategy bundles and communicate trade-offs to executives. By integrating measurement (MTTD/MTTR, containment success, recovery time, and coverage maturity), the framework enables continuous improvement and supports cybersecurity as a practical instrument for safeguarding business activity. The framework is intended to be applied iteratively as evidence accumulates through exercises and operational incidents.

Limitations include dependence on organizational context, scoring subjectivity, and incomplete observability for certain techniques; these can be reduced through exercises, purple-team validation, and periodic recalibration of weights and scores.

Future research should empirically validate rankings across diverse sectors, automate ATT&CK-to-detection-to-playbook evidence collection, and compare MCDA results with quantitative risk models (e.g., Open FAIR) and alternative decision methods under uncertainty.

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An Efficient Skin Cancer Stage Diagnostic Approach Using Customized Inception V3 Deep Learning Model

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***Abstract*—Among all stages of skin cancer, Melanoma, Basel Cell Carcinoma (BCC), and Squamous Cell Carcinoma (SCC) have a significant impact on world health. Although deep learning offers promising potential for dermatological categorization, only limited disease groups have benefited, since most studies focus on particular illnesses rather than covering comprehensive human skin problems. Computerized analysis has been used in the past to identify cancer in skin lesion images, but challenges still persist mainly due to the multiple forms, textures, and sizes of lesions that complicate skin cancer classification. This research paper presents a Convolutional Neural Network (CNN) model customized to meet our requirements by using a pre trained InceptionV3 model along with Bayesian hyperparameter tuning. Using the ISIC 2024 and HAM 10000 datasets, the main objective is to classify skin lesions and differentiate between malignant Melanoma, BCC, and SCC. By implementing this customized model, the issue caused by variations in lesion appearance is effectively addressed, leading to more accurate predictions. Using Bayesian hyperparameter tuning can increase identification while decreasing computational cost. The proposed model performed strongly on the combined datasets by achieving combined average accuracy of 95.1 %, a precision of 94.42 %, a sensitivity of 97.3 %, a specificity of 98.8 %, and an F1 score of 95.7 %. These results demonstrate that the model significantly outperformed existing techniques and provided more accurate and consistent diagnosis of pigmented skin lesions compared to current standards.**

Keywords*—Melanoma; Basal Cell Carcinoma (BCC); Squamous Cell Carcinoma (SCC); Inceptionv3; Bayesian tuning; skin cancer classification

I. Introduction

Skin illnesses may be caused by hormones (e.g., acne) or by environmental factors such as pollution and sunlight. Most individuals ignore skin disorders and never go to the doctor. Skin illnesses account for 1.79% of all health-related ailments globally [1].

Melanoma, Basal Cell Carcinoma, and Squamous Cell Carcinoma are main types of malignant skin tumors shown in Fig. 1. with a bad prognosis, and the number of cases growing, particularly in Europe and the United States. Among these three types of skin cancer, Melanoma is considered as the worst. Early identification of these classes is crucial since melanoma, Basal Cell Carcinoma, and Squamous Cell Carcinoma may be almost entirely treated if caught early [2-4]. However, melanoma, Basal Cell Carcinoma, and Squamous Cell Carcinoma continue to be diagnosed based on clinicians' subjective assessments. As a result, a very precise and quantitative diagnostic index is necessary. The categorization of these malignant skin lesions via dermoscopy methods has emerged as a crucial topic in dermatology and skin oncology in recent years [5, 6]. According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, the average skin tumor change rate during the past 25 years is 1.7% [7].

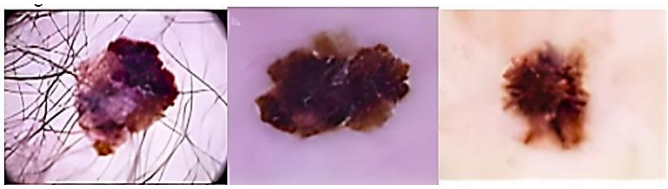

Fig. 1. (a) Melanoma (MEL), (b) Basal Cell Carcinoma (BCC), (c) Squamous Cell Carcinoma (SCC).

Deep learning is commonly employed in the creation of autonomous skin lesion detection systems. Esteva et al. [8] categorized approximately 130,000 clinical images into three categories using deep learning and obtained a 72.1% accuracy rate. Fujisawa et al. [9] showed 92.4% accuracy after detecting 6,000 dermoscopic images using deep learning. As a result, deep learning-based automated diagnosis of melanoma, Basal Cell Carcinoma, and Squamous Cell Carcinoma shows great promise. Deep learning, on the other hand, refers to a collection of arbitrarily chosen parameters known as hyperparameters [10]. Hyper parameter settings are very variable, and using improper values reduces diagnostic effectiveness. It is difficult to determine the optimal hyperparameter settings.

Recent research [11-15] on dermoscopic image classification has progressively emphasized the utilization of deep learning models, specifically employing the ISIC 2024 and HAM10000 datasets for multiclass classification problems. The ISIC 2024 and HAM10000 datasets are publicly available collections managed by the International Skin Imaging Collaboration (ISIC) and released latest in 2024 to advance

research in the domain. This dataset is widely employed in dermatology and artificial intelligence research, specifically for the development and assessment of algorithms pertaining to the analysis of skin lesions, with an emphasis on pigmented skin lesions. These techniques attempt to address issues such as class disparity, the existence of artifacts, variable size, texture, forms and insufficient contrast between skin lesions and surrounding regions. Using the ISIC 2024 dataset, [16] demonstrated a deep convolutional neural network (CNN) model created especially for multiclass skin cancer classification. Their approach worked far better than well-known transfer learning models like VGG16 and DenseNet. Alsahafi et al. [12] were the first to show Skin-Net, a deep residual network that leverages cross-channel correlation and multilayer feature extraction. Their method worked better for multiclass classification and solved the problem of dataset imbalance when tested on the ISIC 2024 and ISIC-2020 datasets. Another study used both CNNs and transformers to develop a Swin Transformer model for classifying skin lesions [11]. Their method was more sensitive and specific than most standard CNN models when they used the ISIC 2024 dataset [10]. Cauvery et al. [14] created a convolutional neural network model that used transfer learning to sort dermoscopic images from the ISIC 2024 dataset. achieving accuracy of 81.2%. A different study that used transfer learning with the GoogleNet architecture to sort eight types of skin lesions from the ISIC 2024 dataset [15]. CNNs are good at classifying skin lesions into more than one class, as indicated by the model's 90.92% accuracy [15]. Researchers have proven that the Inception V3 architecture, a complex deep learning model, can find important parts of dermoscopic images [16–18]. But there is always room for improvement, especially when it comes to adding new model techniques to specialized datasets.

We have conducted this research that improvised the IV3 approach using dermoscopic skin images. The main goal of this research is to accurately classify the three main stages of skin cancer, namely Squamous Cell Carcinoma, Basal Cell Carcinoma, and Melanoma. This study employed the customized IV3 model alongside the ISIC 2024 and HAM10000 datasets to classify cutaneous skin lesions. Customized IV3 approach is utilized in which data is augmented with respect to size, texture and forms to reduce the issue of overfitting problem and Bayesian hyperparameter tuning to improve identification while reducing the computational complexity. This research work is distinctive as it employs data augmentation and Bayesian tuning in customized manners particularly designed for the dermoscopic image processing of three stages of cancerous human skin.

The proposed customized InceptionV3 pipeline is essentially novel, combining Bayesian hyperparameter optimization as a basic learning mechanism with domain-specific dermoscopic data augmentation, rather than depending on fixed or manually modified parameters as is common practice. Unlike closely comparable state-of-the-art approaches, the model combines transfer learning, probabilistic optimization, and cross-dataset multiclass training into a single end-to-end framework, resulting in increased resilience and generalization.

II. Methods

A. Datasets

This study utilized dermoscopic images from the ISIC 2024 and HAM10000 databases [19, 20] owing to the International Skin Imaging Collaboration's comprehensive repository of lesion images and classifications. Dermoscopic images of 2,000 squamous cell skin lesions, 1,500 Basal Cell Carcinomas, and 1,300 melanomas are included in the collection. Dermoscopic images were chosen at random from the database for this research work. The database images are set of 450 by 600 pixels. To meet the input images size required for deep learning (299×299×3), the images are resized to that size, form and texture and apply random noise to the top and bottom 28 pixels. Notably, the collection is unbalanced, with around half of the images displaying melanocytic nevus. Some of the most popular datasets are shown in Table I.

TABLE I. Popular Publicly Available Datasets for Skin Lesion

Dataset	Data Size	Image Type	Laison Type
ISIC 2024	>400000	Dermoscopy and Medical image	Include: Melanoma (MEL), Basal Cell Carcinoma (BCC), Squamous Cell Carcinoma (SCC).
HAM 1OOOO	10,015	Dermoscopy image	Include: Melanoma (MEL), Basal Cell Carcinoma (BCC), Squamous Cell Carcinoma (SCC).
Dermnet	23,000	Dermoscopy, pathology	Include: Melanoma (MEL), Basal Cell Carcinoma (BCC), Squamous Cell Carcinoma (SCC).
PH2	200	Dermoscopy image	Include: Melanoma (MEL), Basal Cell Carcinoma (BCC), Squamous Cell Carcinoma (SCC).

B. Data Processing

To prepare the data for deep learning techniques, a crucial preprocessing step is required, which improves and speeds up the model's performance [21, 22]. The techniques used to standardize and enhance the dataset of input images prior to model training are covered in the next section. Three preparation processes are included in the method: first, the images are resized; second, they are normalized to scale; and third, data augmentation is used to expand the dataset and broaden the model.

C. Data Augmentation

Since data is difficult to get, deep learning models need a large number of labeled samples. Using ABCD rule (asymmetry, border, color, diameter) guideline and data

augmentation is a solution to this issue. By altering images in various ways, including cropping, rotating, flipping, zooming, and shearing, the technique generates new data versions in terms of image size, texture and multiple cancerous forms. Acceptable changes that faithfully capture the inherent differences between dermoscopic image while maintaining their meaning are produced by the applied transforms. The primary objective of data augmentation is to increase the training dataset's diversity, variability, and number of samples. This lessens overfitting and improves the model's ability to generalize. There is a benefit to training models on tiny, irregular datasets.

D. Model Architecture

Fig. 2 shows the Inception V3 architecture, which was a big step forward in deep learning, especially for finding and classifying skin lesions [23]. Google [24, 25] first showed this version of the Inception architecture. It is the third version. Inception V3 has a more complex architecture than the original Inception model, making it a deeper and broader version of the original. It has a lot of "Inception modules" that let it process information well, no matter how big or complicated it is [26].

There are a lot of key layers in the Inception V3 model that work together to quickly gather, enhance, and sort visual data. There are a variety of filters in the convolutional layers, such as 1×1, 3×3, 5×5, and asymmetric ones like 1×7 and 7×1. These filters look for patterns and textures at different scales. The 1×1 convolutions assist cut down on the number of dimensions and speed up the math [23]. Max pooling discovers the most significant characteristics in tiny regions to maintain vital spatial information and cut down on the number of dimensions. Average pooling, on the other hand, makes feature maps more consistent and, when applied globally, substitutes dense layers to stop overfitting [27]. The concatenation mechanism pulls together outputs from many convolutional and pooling paths in each Inception module. This lets the network collect both fine and coarse input at the same time. Dropout switches off certain neurons while training to help the model generalize better and reduce the chance of overfitting. At the end, a completely connected layer puts all the learnt characteristics into one vector. The last softmax layer then changes this output into class probabilities, which makes it easier to put items into the right groupings, including melanoma, Basal Cell Carcinoma, and Squamous Cell Carcinoma [27, 28].

Better performance: this model is more accurate and works faster than the ones that came before it, especially when it comes to identifying big images. It became more accurate while consuming less computational resources than older versions. Inception V3 is notable for taking huge convolutions and breaking them down into smaller, easier-to-manage steps. You may split a 5×5 convolution into two 3×3 convolutions [29, 30]. This cuts down on the number of parameters, which helps keep the model from overfitting and makes it easier to analyze. Inception V3 has a nice way to make the grid smaller without causing a representational bottleneck. We were able to achieve this by utilizing convolution with a stride instead of pooling to make the grid smaller. Batch normalization is a technique that changes and scales the activations of a layer to make the input to that layer the same for all layers [23]. Batch normalization is a big part of the design. This strategy improved the training process faster and introduced some regularization, which made dropout less important. Inception V3 has been used a lot for facial recognition, object detection, and sorting images into groups. Because it worked so well, it could be used for both academic study and real-life situations, even on devices with low computing power. The evolution of CNNs took a big stride forward with Inception V3. It found the proper mix between how well the model worked and how well it used computers, which made it possible for the field to go forward [29]. The main reason for using the Inception V3 architecture in this research work is that it works very well at categorizing malignant skin lesions [20,21]. For precise cauterization of malignant skin cancerous stages, this approach is highly rated.

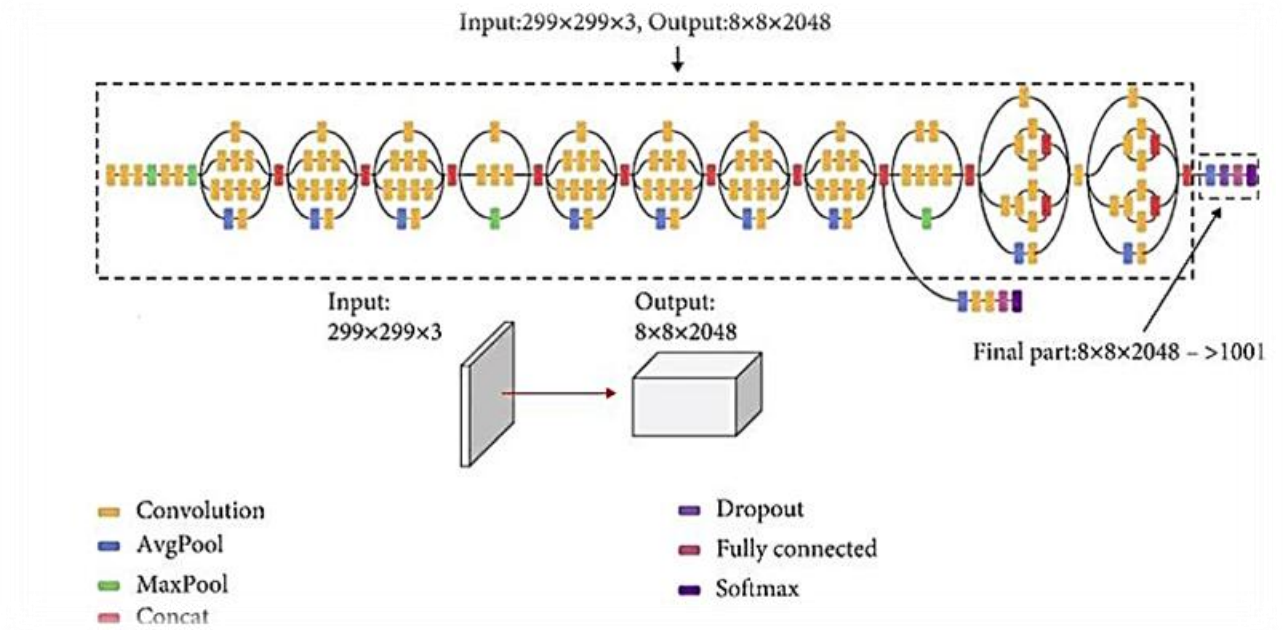

Fig. 2. General architecture of Inception V3 [23].

E. Bayesian Tuning

Bayesian tuning is an optimized statistical approach that adopts the best suited hyperparameter for skin cancer classification. Bayesian optimization creates a surrogate model $M(\theta)$ for the objective function and uses an acquisition function $a(\theta|M)$ to find the next hyperparameter point to evaluate [27]. The surrogate model $M(\theta)$ is modeled as a Gaussian process (GP): $M(\theta) \sim \text{GP}(\mu(\theta), k(\theta, \theta'))$, where $\mu(\theta)$ represents the mean function and $k(\theta, \theta')$ denotes the covariance (kernel) function. The acquisition function $a(\theta|M)$ reconciles exploration (investigating uncharted portions of the hyperparameter space) with exploitation (concentrating on areas with established favorable outcomes) [27]. The current work conducted hyper-parameter fine-tuning by Bayesian optimization and Inception V3 model to determine the optimal parameter configurations shown in Table II. The objective of Bayesian tuning in modeling was to enhance model parameters via a Bayesian probabilistic methodology. The main goals were to improve the model's performance, reduce overfitting or underfitting, optimize parameters well, speed up processing, and make it match the data better. explores to identify optimal parameter combinations, accounting for trade-offs and responding to data complexities.

F. Proposed Model

This research implements the following proposed model for classification of Melanoma, Basal Cell Carcinoma, and Squamous Cell Carcinoma skin lesion shown in Fig. 3. The figure in the proposed model shows a complete pipeline for classifying skin lesions using a customized Inception V3 architecture that has been improved with Bayesian optimization. The illustration shows the main functional phases of the model's process, from data intake to final classification. Each block represents one of these phases.

The first block, "Input Image," shows dermoscopic images of skin lesions that were taken from the ISIC 2024 and HAM10000 databases to make the dataset. These dermoscopic images show three types of cancer: melanoma, Basal Cell Carcinoma (BCC), and Squamous Cell Carcinoma (SCC). Inception V3 needs images that are 299×299×3 pixels big.

Then, the "Data Preprocessing" process is done to get the raw data ready for model training. Various techniques such as scaling, normalization and noise reduction are used in data processing procedure so that dermoscopic images have equal size and properly aligned for further processing.

The "Data Augmentation" block extends the dataset by using various techniques such as zooming the image, flipping the image, rotating and cropping the image reducing overfitting effect, more training data and better model performance for recommended three stages of skin lesion predictions.

The most important is the fourth block which implements the "Customized Inception V3 Deep Learning Model". The model takes previous stages enhanced dermoscopic images that goes through various convolutional, pooling and concatenation layers to generate various lesion patterns. Dropout layers reducing the effect of overfitting whereas Batch Normalization makes the learning process faster for the customized recommended model.

TABLE II. INCEPTION V3 AND BAYESIAN HYPERPARAMETERS

Hyperparameters	Optimized Value
Input Image size	299 × 299 × 3
Input Type	RGB Dermoscopic Images
Learning Rate	0.0001
Dropout Rate	0.3
Optimizer	Adam
Batch Size	32
Epochs	200
Surrogate Model	Gaussian Process (GP)

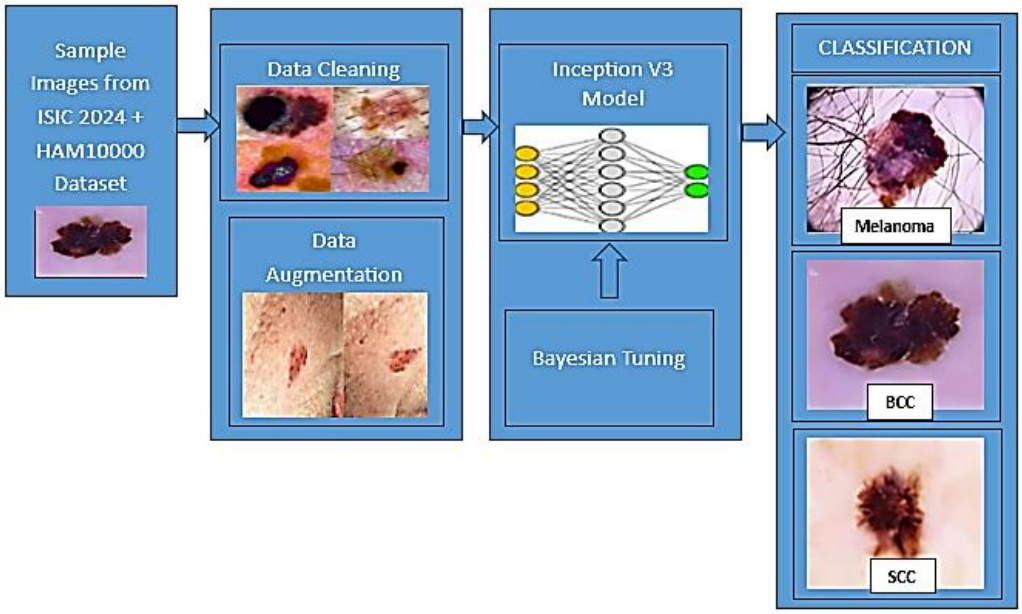

Fig. 3. Proposed model for malignant skin lesion classification.

The "Bayesian Tuning" module then tweaks the model's parameters, such the learning rate, dropout ratio, batch size, and choice of optimizer. Using Bayesian tuning optimization and a Gaussian Process-based surrogate model, we discovered the optimum hyperparameters for the fine-tuned Inception V3 model. The optimized parameters are an input image size of 299×299×3 (which is the network's default setting), a learning rate of 0.0001 to make sure that convergence is stable, a dropout rate of 0.3 to avoid overfitting, and the Adam optimizer, which was chosen because it can work with different learning situations. The batch size was adjusted to 32 to make calculating faster and the gradient more stable. To give enough learning iterations without overfitting, the number of epochs was set to 200. The best values were found through a number of iterations based on the Bayesian framework, which used the model's accuracy and loss feedback to gradually improve the search for the best parameters.

The "Fully Connected + Softmax Layer" turns the high-level, abstract data into probabilities for classification. The fully connected (dense) layer combines what it has learned, and the softmax activation turns that information into probabilities for the three classes (Melanoma, BCC, and SCC).

The "Output Layer" performs three stages of skin cancerous classification based on accuracy, precision, sensitivity, specificity and F1-score representing the overall performance of the recommended hybrid approach.

G. Performance Evaluation

The assessment of recommended cancerous skin lesion model is based on adopting IV3 and Bayesian tuning hybrid approach that works on four main performance metrics in dealing with unbalanced dermoscopic images represent as accuracy, precision, recall, and F1 score.

Accuracy (AC) shows how well the model is overall working taking both true positive and true negative values for accurate predictions. The formula for calculating accuracy is:

$$AC = \frac{T_P + T_N}{T_P + F_N + T_N + F_N} \quad (1)$$

Precision (PR) represents the true positive values upon total positive values. This shows how well the model predict three skin cancerous stages while eliminating other category accurately. The formula is represented as:

$$PR = \frac{T_P}{T_P + F_P} \quad (2)$$

Sensitivity (S) means identifying every actual positive cases. It also represents as true positive rate of overall model. When the model finds all examples of a certain illness, it makes it easier to remember how to group skin problems. It is represented as:

$$S = \frac{T_P}{T_P + F_N} \quad (3)$$

Using harmonic mean calculations, the F1 Score combines accuracy and recall into one figure. The F1 Score is quite helpful when looking at medical image dataset since the classes in these datasets are typically not evenly distributed. The method preserves an appropriate balance between false negatives and false positives:

$$F1\ Score = \frac{2 * P_R * S}{P_R + S} \quad (4)$$

Specificity is the true negative rate, which shows the percentage of benign lesions that were correctly identified as benign instead of being classified as malignant. This is a crucial performance indicator utilized in conjunction with sensitivity (true positive rate) to assess the accuracy of classification models.

$$Sp = \frac{T_N}{F_P + T_N} \quad (5)$$

III. Results and Discussion

This work is focused in classification of 3 significant types of skin cancerous disease (Melanoma, Basal Cell Carcinoma and Squamous Cell Carcinoma). This work employed the Inception V3 pre-trained model to categorize images into three separate classifications (Melanoma, Basal Cell Carcinoma and Squamous Cell Carcinoma) utilizing the ISIC 2024 and HAM10000 dataset. During simulation, we have considered 70% of the data set for training purpose and rest is considered for testing purpose. We executed our proposed model for 3 different cases by considering without augmentation, with augmentation, and with augmentation along with Bayesian tuning to analyze the shortcomings and improve the efficiency of skin cancerous lesion classification.

A. Case I (Without Augmentation of Input Images)

The model performed inconsistently in the first case, which did not involve data augmentation. It performed quite well at correctly identifying three classes, but it lacks accuracy while identifying the other two and frequently confused one class for another while being validated. The model could be overfitted because of the lack of input data variability. shown is Table III and accuracy curve plot results for all three classes are shown in Fig. 4.

TABLE III. Dataset Consideration for Case 1

Skin Cancer	Total Images	Training	Testing
Melanoma	1300	910	390
BCC	1500	1050	450
SCC	2000	1400	600

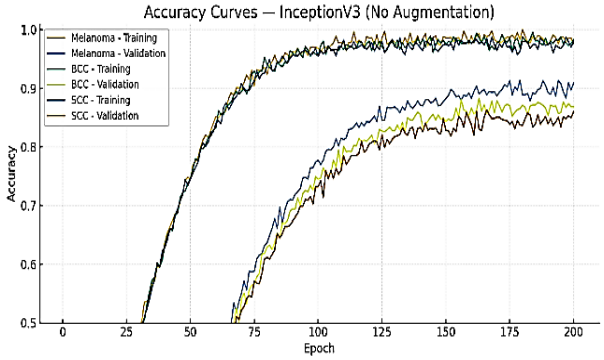

Fig. 4. Accuracy curve of MEL, BCC, and SCC for Case 1.

B. Case II (With Augmentation of Input Images)

The introduction of data augmentation in the second case, which involved training the model with a more diverse dataset, resulted in a significant enhancement in the accuracy level. This technique mitigated the model's susceptibility to minor data variations, thereby improving recognition across all three skin lesion types. The implementation of data augmentation stabilized validation accuracy and diminished overfitting. The increase in accuracy and reduction in overfitting is due to enhancement in feature extraction from the augmented data and improvement in the learning rate of our proposed model. Although a gap persists between training and validation accuracy, it is less pronounced. Table IV represents dataset consideration for CASE II and accuracy curve plot results for all three classes are shown in Fig. 5.

TABLE IV. DATASET CONSIDERATION FOR CASE II

Skin Cancer	Total Images	Training	Testing
Melanoma	1625	1138	487
BCC	1875	1313	563
SCC	2500	1750	750

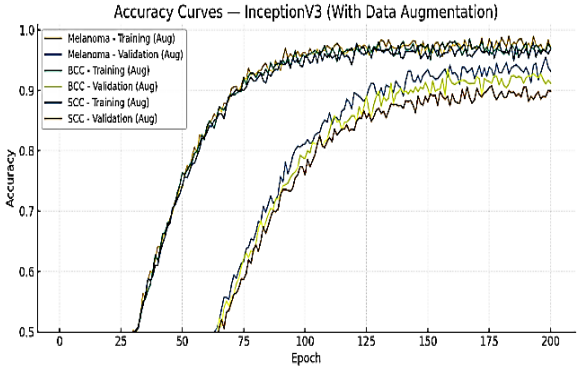

Fig. 5. Accuracy curve of MEL, BCC, and SCC for Case II.

C. Case III (With Augmentation along with Bayesian Tuning)

The third case used Bayesian tuning in addition to data augmentation. Bayesian tuning slightly enhanced the model's decision-making by including the confidence of its predictions and provides much smoother accuracy prediction with a little less variation. This resulted in a substantial increase in accuracy, as the model now faultlessly recognizes all three classes that it previously struggled with. The incorporation of Bayesian hyperparameter tuning alongside data augmentation resulted in enhanced stability of validation accuracy, exhibiting less volatility and a diminished disparity between training and validation accuracy. The dataset used is same as used in CASE II with accuracy curve plot results for all three classes are shown in Fig. 6.

D. Comparison of Performance Metrics

The sample dataset from ISIC 2024 and HAM 100000 demonstrates that our suggested approach, which integrates data augmentation techniques along with the Inception V3 module, and Bayesian tuning significantly enhances performance across all evaluation metrics: accuracy, sensitivity, precision, specificity, and F1 score. Fig. 7 and Table V represent overall model performance key metrics results in terms of Accuracy, Precision, Sensitivity, Specificity and F1 score. In general, these findings indicate that the suggested model demonstrates top-tier performance in classifying multiple types of skin cancer and can proficiently differentiate between melanoma, BCC, and SCC.

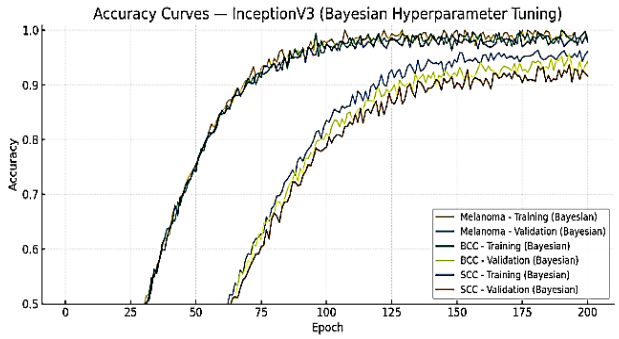

Fig. 6. Accuracy curve of MEL, BCC, and SCC for Case III.

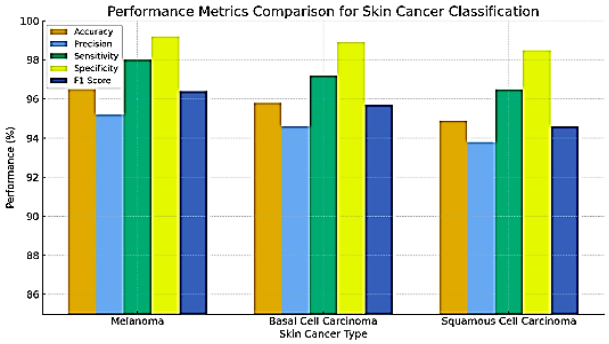

Fig. 7. Performance metrics comparison for MEL, BCC, and SCC skin cancer classification.

TABLE V. PERFORMANCE METRICS COMPARISON FOR MEL, BCC AND SCC SKIN CANCER CLASSIFICATION

	MEL	BCC	SCC
Accuracy	96.5%	95.8%	93%
Precision	95%	94.5%	93.8%
Sensitivity	98.2%	97.2%	96.4%
Specificity	99.2%	98.8%	98.5%
F1 Score	96.5%	95.8%	94.8%

The figure and table results show combined average accuracy of 95.1 percent, a precision of 94.42%, a sensitivity of 97.3 percent, a specificity of 98.8 percent, and an F1 score of 95.7 percent were achieved by the suggested model for the combined datasets. This indicates that the model performed substantially better than the methodologies that were previously used and offered a diagnosis of pigmented skin lesions that were both more accurate and consistent.

IV. CONCLUSION

The current study shows a significant improvement in classification accuracy relative to the standard pre-trained Inception V3 model, exceeding previous recent research efforts in dermatology. We have performed extensive simulations to

access the performance of IV3 architecture along with augmentation techniques and Bayesian tuning optimization. With a combined accuracy of 95.1% and great sensitivity and specificity, the model outperforms conventional transfer-learning techniques, according to experimental findings on the combined ISIC 2024 and HAM10000 datasets. These results validate the resilience and generalization capacity of the model and demonstrate the scientific utility of combining Bayesian tuning with deep CNN architectures which improved the overall accurate classification prediction of skin cancer stage diagnosis. The holistic approach significantly enhances the prediction of different stages of human skin cancer which demonstrate the importance of deep learning techniques. This customized model shows the promising nature which can ease in identification of cancerous skin diseases. The suggested framework has a high potential for use in computer-aided dermatological systems, enabling early and accurate diagnosis of melanoma, basal cell carcinoma, and squamous cell carcinoma and so leading to better clinical decision-making.

V. Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of the paper.

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Exploring the Impact of Gamified Artificial Intelligence–Driven English Vocabulary Learning Systems on Learner Retention and Motivation

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***Abstract*—The growing development of digital learning platforms has posed an increased demand on gamified and artificial intelligence-based methods of enhancing English vocabulary learning. However, existing studies often treat gamification and AI as loosely pair components, relying on static game mechanics or post-hoc analytics that limit personalization, adaptability, and long-term learning impact. To address these limitations, this study proposes the Gamified AI-Driven Vocabulary Retention and Motivation Enhancer (GAI-VRME), an adaptive learning framework that integrates machine-learning–based learner modeling, real-time difficulty calibration, and adaptive gamification strategies. In contrast to the previous systems, GAI-VRME can dynamically regulate the complexity of the task, the frequency of feedback and the sequence of rewards according to the performance and the motivational state of a specific learner, and can thus be constantly customized to the individual level as the process of learning progresses. The implementation and empirical assessment of the framework were conducted with the help of Python, TensorFlow, and Jupyter Notebook and Teaching-Learning Gamification Dataset of Mendeley Data. Mixed method analysis of vocabulary retention with paired t-tests and sentiment-analysis-based motivation modelling was used. The experimental outcomes show that GAI-VRME has much higher predictive accuracy, vocabulary retention, and learner motivation than the traditional gamified systems. These findings provide empirical evidence that deeply integrated AI-driven adaptive gamification, jointly optimizing cognitive retention and affective engagement, offers a scalable and pedagogically robust solution for modern digital vocabulary learning environments.**

Keywords*—AI-driven gamified learning; adaptive educational systems; English vocabulary acquisition; learner motivation and engagement; vocabulary retention

I. Introduction

The high rate of growth of digital learning classrooms has fueled the need to explore instructional methods that would effectively promote learning success as well as learner interest [1]. Gamified learning is one of these methods that have shown potential in boosting motivation and maintaining the engagement of learners since they involve the use of the game theory of motivation including points, levels, badges, and challenges in the educational process [2] [3]. Simultaneously, artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as a primary facilitator of personalization to the learning systems, promoting adaptive content delivery, tracking learner performance, as well as personalized feedback [4], [5]. The meeting of gamification and AI has thus gained an increasing interest in the field of educational research, especially in the field of English vocabulary learning, which makes a structural part of language mastery and academic achievement [6], [7]. Regardless of this accumulating body of work, published research has a number of weaknesses that limit the effectiveness and generalizability of gamified AI-based systems of vocabulary learning in the long term [8] [9]. To begin with, most gamified vocabulary systems use static or slightly adaptive games, providing homogenous difficulty levels and game reward systems that fail to capture the personality of a specific learner [10]. Second, although AI methods are often included, they are often simple analytics or recommendation systems without being integrated in a systematic way with pedagogically significant outcomes like long-term vocabulary retention [11]. Third, and most importantly, previous studies tend to measure system effectiveness through one-dimensional measures, which are

learning performance or engagement measures, but rarely both in a combined fashion [12] [13].

The process of vocabulary learning is, nevertheless, intrinsically conditioned by cognitive factors, i.e., the ability to remember and master a vocabulary, as well as by the affective ones, i.e., motivation, interest, and emotion involvement. The gains in test scores do not always correspond to significant and sustainable learning when learners are not motivated to proceed with the system interaction or to use learned vocabulary in real-life situations. On the contrary, high engagement in the form of learning gains which are not proven increases the question of pedagogical effectiveness. In turn, the evaluation frameworks that would allow studying retention and motivation together are in high demand, so that the impacts of AI-based gamified systems on the language learning outcomes can be better understood holistically.

A. Research Question

The research examines the impacts of gamified and AI-based learning of English vocabulary on learning results. In particular, it deals with the following research question:

What is the effect of adaptive AI-based gamification on vocabulary retention and learner motivation in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners?

B. Research Gap

Even though previous studies have investigated the field of gamification, artificial intelligence and adaptive learning in teaching English vocabulary, the majority of systems provide the integration of these elements in a loosely paired or fixed fashion [14]. Gamification tends to be rule-based, whereas AI is utilized mainly to do post-hoc analytics or-recommendation, and provides limited pedagogical adaptation-in-the-moment [15]. Furthermore, motivation and vocabulary retention are usually measured as independent outcomes. The proposed GAI-VRME framework can be used to fill these gaps by integrating learning modeling as a machine-learned learner model and dynamically adaptive gamification. Through continually adjusting the task difficulty, feedback and reward systems depending on the performance of the learner and motivation extent, and collaborative assessment of the cognitive retention and affective involvement, GAI-VRME contributes to the development of intelligent and learner-oriented systems of vocabulary learning.

C. Research Motivation

The increase in the use of digital learning spaces has led to an increase in the benefits of vocabulary learning strategies that can facilitate the overcoming of personal engagement and long-term learning [16]. Traditional vocabulary teaching processes are usually based on the fixed material and homogenous level of challenge so that the motivation of learners will be minimized and the knowledge will not be retained [17]. Despite the adaptive and interactive learning experiences, adaptive and interactive learning systems based on AI are often considered separately in the literature, even though they should be evaluated collectively. The research is inspired by the fact that there is a lack of analytic methodology that considers both cognitive retention and learner motivation in adaptive gamified learning systems of vocabulary.

D. Research Significance

The importance of the present study is that it presents a comprehensive assessment model of AI gamified vocabulary learning in which the measured variables are the retention and motivation of the learner. The proposed solution incorporates statistical retention analysis and sentiment-driven motivational evaluation, which leaves the realm of classical single-metric-based assessment. The results provide empirical research on the effect of adaptive gamification on cognitive and affective learning outcomes. The work also adds a reproducible evaluation model to help educators, system designers, and researchers to create successful and learner-centered digital vocabulary learning settings.

E. Problem Statement

Even though gamified and AI-driven language learning systems have gained an interest now, empirical evidence regarding their effectiveness is inconsistent [18]. A number of intervention studies indicate positive changes in learner engagement, but insignificant increases in vocabulary acquisition, and that gamification is not an assurance of meaningful learning without pedagogical underpinning and adaptive design. Meta-analyses also show that there are only significant overall effects of gamification on intrinsic motivation, significant levels of heterogeneity, and a lack of support of gamification on learner autonomy and competence [19] [20]. These gaps warrant the need to conduct research that clearly relates adaptive AI-based gamification processes to validated retention scales and motivation predictors that are theoretically based. This paper fills this gap by using a mixed retention-sentiment assessment test.

F. Key Contribution

- Introduces GAI-VRME a single framework combining real-time learner modeling and adaptive gamification processes.
- Introduces dynamic adaptation logic recalibrating difficulty, feedback, and rewards using continuous learner performance signals.
- Establishes a hybrid cognitive - affective assessment regime involving the combination of retention rates with sentiment-driven motivation.
- Empirically proves that the trajectories of learner motivation are correlated significantly with the improvement in vocabulary retention.

G. Rest of the Section

- Section II includes a thorough overview of the current studies in the area of gamified learning, AI-based vocabulary system, motivational psychology and mixed-method evaluation methods.
- Section III elaborates all the methodological framework, such as set up of data, pre-processing, quantitative retention analysis, qualitative motivation assessment, and synthesis of both results.

- Section IV presents the empirical results of statistical tests and sentiment analysis with the aid of tables, graphics, and comparison knowledge.
- Section V brings the study to the conclusion with a conclusion on key contributions, practical implications of AI-based vocabulary learning and the future directions of the research improvement and expansion.

II. Literature Review

Sadeghi et al. [21] suggested a research to examine the impact of the application of the gamified instruction to language learners in terms of vocabulary acquisition and their motivation. The research design was quasi-experimental design with participants being schools where pre-test and post-test were taken as the dataset. This was conducted to investigate whether the gamification methods would be able to increase the vocabulary retention and the motivation of the learners. The technique incorporated gamified learning intervention, which consisted of points, badges, and leaderboards, and traditional teaching as a control group. Findings showed a great deal of improvement in vocabulary acquisition during the experimental group as opposed to the control group, and learners also reported a greater level of engagement. The limitations of the study are a small sample size and school-specific setting (which limits the generalizability of the research). The originality is in the fact that gamification is applied directly to the teaching of EFL vocabulary in a classroom setting.

Putri Fachri Aulia Fatah [22] the investigation of the efficacy of gamification in improving the results of learning the English language. The study was performed on 60 participants of a school and it was conducted as the quasi-experimental one with a structured pre-test/post-test evaluation. This was done to determine whether gamified instructional strategies had the potential to enhance vocabulary retention and general learning outcomes. In the research, the methodology included both game-based activity and scoring because it would involve the engagement of the learners and the results would be compared to the traditional forms of teaching. The results indicated that there was a substantial increase in the vocabulary test scores and that the learner's findings were more satisfied with the gamified learning, potentially because gamified learning promotes more performance and engagement. Weaknesses are that the sample used is relatively small and homogeneous, and the intervention is quite short, which limits the extent to which the results can be generalized. The originality of the study lies in the combination of gamatherics in an English curriculum in school.

Kumar and Vairavan [23] presented an experimental research on the effect of gamification on motivation and retention in language learning with the help of a gamified language learning application. The data were collected through a quasi-experimental design involving 100 participants, and entailed the survey results of the respondents and performance outcomes. The aim of the study was to establish what the effectiveness of a mobile gamified app is in contrast to the traditional methods. Techniques used included interactive challenge, points, and progress monitoring in the app, pre- and post-intervention assessment in terms of retention and motivation. The findings showed that positive changes were recorded, with the experimental group having better scores at the post-test level and having a greater engagement level. Weaknesses are the use of self-reported survey data and limited application to a specific context. These are novel approaches where digital gamification is used in conjunction with empirical retention and motivation measurement in a controlled experimental design.

Chen and Zhao [24] suggested conducting research to know how Chinese EFL learners accept gamified vocabulary learning apps. This was to combine Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) in order to investigate the perception and engagement of the learners. The data used consisted of the answers to the surveys that were carried out among Chinese learners applying gamified apps in both formal and informal contexts. The techniques used structural equation modeling (SEM) to analyze the interrelation between perceived usefulness, autonomy, competence, and motivation. The findings showed that the intrinsic motivation and the perceived simplicity of the app had a significant impact on the adoption and use of the app, which is why the key aspects of gamified learning adoption are psychological. Limitations are based on self-reported perceptions, use of survey data where there is no performance measurement. The innovativeness is the integration of SDT with TAM to study the gamification acceptance in an EFL situation.

Yu [25] suggested research on the topic of learning outcomes, motivation, and satisfaction in gamified learning of English vocabulary. The research question was to investigate the role gamified instruction plays in cognitive and affective aspects of learners. The data was composed of the pre-test and post-test vocabulary scores and survey data that included motivation and satisfaction. Gamified elements like points, levels and feedback were incorporated into the quasi-experimental design. The findings revealed that the vocabulary retention and high satisfaction and motivation among learners became statistically significant, which points to a positive correlation between gamification and engagement. The weaknesses are a small group of participants and a brief intervention period. The originality of the research is the joint analysis of learning outcomes, motivation, and satisfaction of a gamified EFL learning space.

Liu [26] explored the implications of AI-based gamified learning on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) vocabulary retention and dynamic motivational patterns. The aim of the research was to make comparisons between adaptive learning paths, conversational agents and storytelling strategies in AI-enhanced gamified settings. It was conducted using an experimental research design that involved performance evaluation and longitudinal motivation study. The dataset was in the form of learner interaction logs and vocabulary performance scores obtained through an AI-based gamified learning platform. The adaptive learning pathways made a significant impact on vocabulary retention in the study, whereas storytelling methods had greater intrinsic motivation. Nevertheless, the results were confined to platform dependence, inconsistency of AI interactions, as well as a lack of applicability to a wider range of educational settings.

Caiza et al. [27] suggested a research that assessed an interactive app combining the use of Virtual Reality (VR) and the Artificial Intelligence (AI) to enhance the pronunciation of

the English language. The aim was to determine the potential of the immersive gamified experiences to improve the language acquisition outcomes that is, pronunciation accuracy. The data consisted of performance indicators, user feedback, and self-reported feedback. Techniques were experimental testing, VR-based pronunciation training under AI tutoring, and the pronunciation accuracy level of participants at the start and the end of the intervention. Findings indicated a significant change in the pronunciation scores and increased interest of learners in immersive game-based aspects. Limitations are the constraints imposed by the technology availability and low sample sizes. The uniqueness is that VR and AI are introduced in gamified language learning to help students in pronunciation training.

Liu et al. [28] performed a mixed-method research to evaluate the effect of motivation and enjoyment on AI-mediated informal digital learning of English (AI-IDLE) in Chinese learners. The study was intended to comprehend the impact of gamified AI tools on informal learning of vocabulary, learner engagement, and fun. The quantitative analysis of vocabulary learning combines with the qualitative sentiment analysis and thematic analysis of the feedback of the learners. The data represented performance scores, interaction records, and open-ended responses by learners with the help of AI-based gamified applications. The research proved that the increase in the level of enjoyment and motivation had a strong positive correlation with better vocabulary performance. However, its weaknesses were the possible self-selection bias and varying degrees of informal learning settings.

TABLE I. LITERATURE REVIEW OF GAMIFIED AI-BASED ENGLISH LEARNING

Author & Year	Purpose	Findings	Limitations
Sadeghi et al. [21]	Examine whether gamified instruction improves vocabulary retention and motivation in school learners	Significant improvement in vocabulary scores; increased learner engagement	Small sample, school-specific context limits generalizability
Putri Fachri Aulia Fatah [22]	Assess the effect of gamified activities on English learning outcomes	Improved vocabulary test scores and learner satisfaction	Small, homogeneous sample; short intervention duration
Kumar and Vairavan [23]	Explore motivation and retention using a gamified app	Higher post-test scores and motivation in experimental group	Reliance on self-reported surveys; context-specific app use
Chen and Zhao [24]	Investigate learners' acceptance of gamified apps using SDT and TAM	Intrinsic motivation and ease of use positively influenced adoption	Survey-based data; lacks performance measures
Yu [25]	Examine learning, motivation, and satisfaction in gamified settings	Significant improvement in vocabulary retention; high satisfaction	Narrow participant demographic; short duration
Liu [26]	Compare adaptive learning, conversational agents, and storytelling effects	Adaptive learning and storytelling improved retention and engagement	Limited generalizability; variability in AI interactions
Caiza et al. [27]	Evaluate VR and AI-based gamified app for pronunciation	Improved pronunciation scores and engagement	Small sample; technology accessibility constraints
Liu et al. [28]	Examine motivation and enjoyment in informal AI-based learning	Higher motivation and enjoyment correlated with better learning outcomes	Self-selection bias; informal learning variability

Table I reviewed literature highlights that gamified and AI-based learning systems significantly increase vocabulary retention, motivation, and learner satisfaction in a variety of contexts. Studies consistently show that gamification elements like points, badges, storytelling, adaptive learning paths, and VR/AI applications improve engagement and cognitive outcomes. However, limitations such as small, homogeneous samples, short intervention periods, reliance on self-reported surveys, and context-specific platforms restrict generalization. Despite these obstacles, the innovation lies in integrating gamification with AI, adaptive learning, and immersive technologies. Collectively, these studies provide strong empirical support for implementing gamified AI-powered approaches in English vocabulary instruction, justifying their adoption in the current study. Review summarizing limitations of prior studies, such as small samples, short interventions, or separate evaluation of retention and motivation, and explain how the current study addresses these gaps with integrated AI-based gamified learning.

III. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR GAMIFIED AI VOCABULARY LEARNING

As opposed to traditional gamified learning assessment tools which view adaptation and assessment as non-adaptive or non-evolving processes, the proposed methodology modulates the learner behavior as a dynamic, evolving process. Learner modeling based on AI is used to implement modifications to gamification mechanics in real-time, and retention and motivation are measured as interdependent variables and not independent ones. Such an approach to the methodology allows exploring the effects of adaptive decisions in more depth and understanding the impact of such decisions on both the cognitive learning gains and the affective engagement in the long-term. The study is based on a systematic mixed-method technique to investigate the effectiveness of an artificial intelligence-based system of gamified English vocabulary learning in terms of retention and motivation of learners. A quantitative-qualitative type of research method was utilized to allow a thorough study that would cover not only the objective results of learning but also the subjective experiences of the learners. To assess all empirical findings, the Teaching-Learning Gamification Dataset at Mendeley Data was used and offers comprehensive records of learner, interactions, vocabulary performance, and motivational feedback in a gamified learning setting to establish statistical hypothesis testing. Quantitative analysis was aimed at studying the vocabulary retention gains in terms of paired performance comparisons, whereas qualitative analysis was to be made concerning the motivational reactions in terms of interpretation of the learner feedback using sentiment as the measuring instrument. Moreover, machine-learning-assisted modelling

was used to find patterns of behavior and plot performance trends among learners. The combination of the quantitative results with the qualitative data allows conducting a multidimensional analysis of the learning effectiveness to gain both empirical and contextual insights. All the methodological steps were implemented in accordance with the study objectives in order to make them accurate, transparent and reproducible. In general, this systematic approach to methodology is not only able to measure the educational efficiency of AI-based gamification, but also has a replication trail to direct such research in the future technology-enhanced language learning. To make it robust, mean imputation and z-score normalization were used to preprocess the learner inputs to eliminate missing values, outliers, and inconsistencies. These measures reduce the influence of noisy or adversarial data to increase stability of the model, however, extreme or adversarial inputs can still have an impact on predictions.

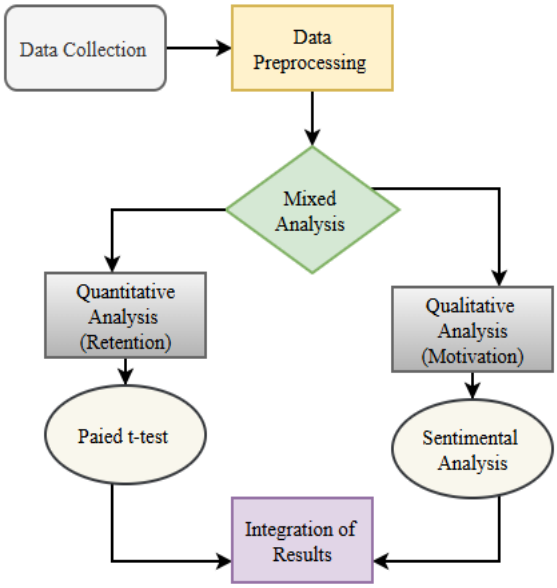

Fig. 1. Workflow of the gamified AI vocabulary learning.

The Fig. 1 depicts a mixed-methods research process in which gathered data is preprocessed, then subjected to quantitative analysis using paired t-tests and qualitative analysis using sentiment analysis. The results are then integrated to produce thorough, verified insights.

A. Learner Modeling and AI Architecture

In GAI-VRME, learner modeling is based on the well-defined input features, such as pre-test and post-test vocabulary scores, the participation rates, and completion rates, interaction logs and sentiment-based motivation indicators. The neural network used in the model architecture has fully connected layers and ReLU activation functions, which are optimized to learn patterns of cognitive performance and affective signals. The training of the system is in such a way that it predicts various targets such as post-test vocabulary performance, likelihood of completing task and real-time motivational state. The specifications of features, architecture, and prediction targets allow transparency, reproducibility, and creates a solid base of adaptive task calibration and individualized gamified learning paths.

B. Research Design

The research design is based on a mixed-method quasi-experimental research design, aiming to examine the impact of a gamified system of learning English vocabulary enhanced with AI on retention and motivation of learners. The method combines both the quantitative and qualitative analysis in the form of the same group of participants, which allows a thorough evaluation of the cognitive and affective learning results. The quantitative strand measures vocabulary retention by comparing pre-test and post-test vocabulary by administering Paired Sample t-tests to statistically effectively screen the evidence of improvements in learning between the matched participants. The qualitative strand will measure the motivation of the learners through sentiment analysis of open-ended textual responses, which will record the engagement, enjoyment, and emotion towards the gamified learning procedure. Its non-random assignment, which is similar to the quasi-experimental nature, is a way of reflecting the real-life classroom situation, where learners are free to engage with AI-driven gamification tools. The research design is effective because it combines numerical performance indicators and sentiment-based evaluation, so the results of retention are understood in a comprehensive and practical way and provide an objective picture of AI-based gamifier interventions in helping students to improve vocabulary acquisition in technology-enhanced learning settings.

C. Dataset Description

The study uses the Teaching-Learning Gamification Dataset from Mendeley Data [29] https://data.mendeley.com/datasets/yc4np572zs/1 , a publicly available dataset that records detailed learner interactions in gamified English vocabulary activities. It includes both quantitative data, such as pre-test and post-test vocabulary scores, participation rates, task completion, and performance metrics, and qualitative data, such as learner feedback on engagement, enjoyment, and perceived difficulty. This combination allows a mixed-method analysis, examining cognitive retention through statistical measures and affective motivation through sentiment evaluation. The dataset is fully anonymized, ethically sound, and supports robust analysis, making it ideal for evaluating the effectiveness of AI-mediated gamified vocabulary learning.

D. Dataset Accessibility and Reproducibility

The publicly available Teaching-Learning Gamification Dataset of Mendeley Data is used in the study, which allows transparency and reproducibility. The hybrid methodology will be based on the synthesis of the quantitative analysis of retention and qualitative analysis of motivation, which will enable the effective examination of the results of the AI-based gamified learning of English vocabulary.

E. Data Preprocessing

Preprocessing of data involved in this research is a very important phase as it will establish that the data obtained in Mendeley Data is accurate, consistent and is fit to undergo quantitative and qualitative analysis. As the research will be examining retention and motivation based on numerical scores and textual feedback, preprocessing aims at preparing each type of data to be interpreted reliably. This involves detecting and

fixing missing/inconsistent values, outliers, normalizing score-based data and cleaning textual responses to use in sentiment analysis. Preprocessing increases the statistical accuracy of the analysis by converting the raw data into a standardized and noise-free data format, which increases the credibility of the retention and motivation results in the gamified AI learning environment.

1) Data cleaning and handling missing values: Handling missing values and cleaning the data make sure that the dataset is complete, consistent and retention and motivation analysis can be done accurately. Numerical variables like pre-test and post-test scores are verified on the missing values and imputed with the help of mean substitution to maintain the distribution of the scores. The formula of mean imputation is in Eq. (1):

$$x_{\text{new}} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} x_i}{n} \quad (1)$$

where, x_{new} is the inferred value of a new score that is used in place of a missing score. x_i is used to denote each of the possible existing numerical scores in the dataset, and (n) is used to denote the total amount of valid observations. The combination of the two gives a balanced mean value that ensures that the dataset is distributed correctly to be analyzed.

Sentiment analysis is performed by cleansing the text of symbols, digits, and other meaningless characters to remove noise before the analysis. The resulting data quality, decreased bias, and valid integration of quantitative and qualitative insights are a benefit of this combined cleaning process.

2) Outlier detection and normalization: Outlier extraction and normalization is what makes sure that the numerical information in this research (pre-test and post-test vocabulary scores) are similar and consistent across students. The z-score technique is applied to detect outliers, so that all the values above some threshold (which is usually 3) are treated as extreme. The z-score is computed in Eq. (2):

$$z = \frac{x - \mu}{\sigma} \quad (2)$$

where, x is an individual score of a learner, μ is the mean of the scores, and σ is the standard deviation, the purpose of which is to eliminate or normalize all the numerical characteristics to ensure the same consistency in the analysis of the Paired t–test. The normalization equation is given in Eq. (3):

$$x_{\text{scaled}} = \frac{x - x_{min}}{x_{max} - x_{min}} \quad (3)$$

where, x_{scaled} is the normalized score on a range of 0 to 1 guaranteeing that the scores are comparable across learners. All these variables, combined, contribute to the clean and objective data preparation.

This action will retain the relative differences in scores, minimizes the effect of extreme values, and puts data in the right format to compare the data statistically. The original score is denoted by x once more whereas xmin and xmax are the lowest and highest values in the dataset in the Min-Max normalization formula.

3) Text cleaning and lemmatization: The qualitative feedback in this study is cleansed and lemmatized using text cleaning, and it is sent to sentiment analysis. Text cleaning is used to clean the noise that is found in the text by removing symbols, numbers, extra spaces, and any unwanted characters and keeps only the meaningful words. The sentences are tokenized into individual words and the stopwords are removed to leave the non-informative words like the or and, and then lemmatization is performed to change each and every word to its base form; running becomes run. The following process can be stated in Eq. (4):

$$L(w_i) = w_{\text{root}} \quad (4)$$

where, $L(w_i)$ is the mapping of each word w_i to the root form of the word. The steps make motivation analysis clear, consistent, and reliable.

4) Sentiment lexicon preparation: Sentiment lexicon preparation will make sure that every processed learner feedback record can be assessed with motivational polarity in this case. VADER sentiment model is loaded so as to assign a polarity value of positive, negative, and neutral emotions. A compound sentiment score is calculated by analyzing each text of feedback, and this is in the form of Eq. (5):

$$S_{\text{compound}} = \frac{S_{\text{positive}} - S_{\text{negative}}}{S_{\text{total}}} \quad (5)$$

where, S_{positive} is the cumulative strength of positive words in the feedback of a learner and s_{negative} is the cumulative strength of negative words. S = The total magnitude of all the sentiment components. The resulting S_{compound} is a measure of the sum of emotional polarity of the learner feedback.

This score defines the general feeling category of every response. By creating such a lexicon, one can relax in the fact that the patterns of motivational behavior can be labeled in a uniform manner and that their emotional engagement of learners can be meaningfully interpreted in the context of the gamified AI-based vocabulary learning environment.

F. Quantitative Analysis: Retention Measurement

The vocabulary retention in this research is assessed through the qualitative analysis of the learners who are exposed to the gamified AI based English learning system, based on the Teaching-Learning Gamification Dataset given by Mendeley Data. The pre-test and post-test learners were compared to assess cognitive improvement, and the Paired Sample t -test was used to establish the statistical significance of the difference in scores among the two related measures. All data were preprocessed before analysis i.e. it was cleaned, outlier detected and normalized so that all data was accurate and comparable across the participants. The difference in the calculated scores actually measures individual learning improvements, the t-test measures the overall learning improvements which can be attributed to the intervention. Such quantitative findings are further supported by the qualitative sentiment analysis of the learner feedback, which offers a well-rounded, multidimensional analysis of the system in terms of its efficacy in improving the learner vocabulary retention and engagement.

1) Data extraction: Teaching- Learning Gamification dataset was used to obtain the corresponding data which were then analyzed quantitatively to determine vocabulary retention. Pre-test and post-test scores were taken as the main variables, whereas other parameters including completing rates of activity gave contextual performance. The information on the participants was tabularized, allowing matching comparisons to be done correctly. This automatic extraction makes the data integrity intact, promotes the calculation of differences in the scores, and provides support to the further Paired Sample t-test between the engagement and retention outcomes.

2) Data cleaning and preparation: Data cleaning and preparation provided the Teaching-Learning Gamification dataset with the analytical reliability. Missing pre- and post-test scores were filled by mean imputation, z-scores identified outliers, and Min -Max scaled the numerical attributes. This standardized data allowed calculating the difference in scores accurately and validly using paired sample t-test based assessment of vocabulary retention.

3) Calculation of score differences: Score differences are an important component of the quantitative analysis, which would be a direct indication of individual learning gain with the help of gamified AI-based English vocabulary system. With the Teaching-Learning Gamification dataset of Mendeley Data, pre-test scores are the baseline knowledge of the learners, and post-test scores are post-intervention performance. The difference between post and pre-test score is used to compute individual learning gain. This measure is a true measure of the efficiency of the gamified system to increase the vocabulary retention among every one of the participants, which would be a valid basis to later conduct a statistical analysis. The difference between the scores of all learners may be developed mathematically in Eq. (6):

$$d_i = \text{Post}_i - \text{Pre}_i \tag{6}$$

where, d_i is the difference of the i-th learner, Post_i indicates post-test score and Pre_i indicates pre-test score. Appendage of positive values of di means an improvement, whereas zero means no change and negative values mean a decline in performance, but these cases are not very common in a well-designed intervention of gamified learning.

Once d_i is determined in all the learners, the differences will be summed up to obtain the mean difference $\bar{d}$ and standard deviation of differences s_d which will be required in the Paired Sample t-test. Mean difference is determined by Eq. (7):

$$\bar{d} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} d_i}{n} \tag{7}$$

where, n= the total number of learners. Equally, the standard deviation of differences is given as Eq. (8):

$$s_d = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n}(d_i - \bar{d})^2}{n-1}} \tag{8}$$

where, s_d is the standard deviation of the differentiation in the scores $\bar{d}$ is the difference between the post-test and the pre-test scores of the i th learner, d is the average of all the differentiation and n is the number of learners. This measure indicates consistency of retention results among the participants. These computations determine those gains on an individual level and system efficiency, match the data to test them in a valid statistic, and also offers an opportunity to correlate cognitive changes with motivational results of the qualitative analysis.

4) Paired sample t-test computation: The paired sample t-test is used to find out that the gamified AI-based vocabulary learning system can provide a statistically significant improvement in the retention of learners. Paired observations are used when pre-test and post-test scores are concerned with the same participants. The differences in individual scores are calculated, and the mean difference and standard deviation are calculated, on which the t-statistic will be determined and the effectiveness of the intervention will be assessed. It is measured in Eq. (9).

$$t = \frac{\bar{d}}{s_d/\sqrt{n}} \tag{9}$$

where, n denotes total number of learners. The t-value measures the distance between the observed difference in the means and the distance between the variability in the differences. The higher the t-value the more the gamified intervention affects vocabulary retention. The calculated t-statistic is compared with the critical value of t-distribution with n- 1 degrees of freedom or a p-value is obtained. The post-test scores improvement is said to be statistically significant in case the p-value is below the significance threshold of 0.05.

This process will make sure that the analysis considers the paired nature of the data and that it controls individual differences and isolates the impact of the gamified AI system. The Paired Sample t-test is used to determine the score changes that are associated with statistical significance and thus constitute solid empirical data that the study relies to make its conclusion about retention as the quantitative foundation of the research.

5) Significance testing and interpretation: The significance testing used in this paper will test whether the improvements in vocabulary retention in learners after using the gamified AI-based English learning system are statistically relevant. After calculating the t- statistic of the Paired Sample t-test, the p-value is obtained. The p-value shows how likely it is to get the calculated difference in the means or a more severe statistical outcome under the null hypothesis no improvement exists (H0 1 =0). Mathematically, the null hypothesis is tested as in Eq. (10).

$$H_0: \bar{d} = 0, \quad H_1: \bar{d} \neq 0 \tag{10}$$

The hypotheses are defined as $H_0: \bar{d} = 0$ and $H_1: \bar{d} \neq 0$, where $\bar{d}$ represents the mean score difference. If the computed p-value is less than $\alpha = 0.05$, H_0 is rejected, confirming that the gamified AI-based intervention produces a statistically significant improvement in vocabulary retention.

The statistical interpretation presented above proves that the vocabulary improvement achieved has been observed to be

credible, meaningful, and associated to the gamified AI-based learning method.

6) Reporting results: The results in this study will be reported by providing the findings of the quantitative analysis to indicate the efficacy of the gamified AI-based English vocabulary learning system. The descriptive statistics of the mean pre-test score, mean post-test score, the mean difference, and standard deviation of differences (di =Posti) are summarized after calculating the score differences (di =Posti) and carrying out the Paired Sample t-test. The measures of effect size, like Cohens d may be used to determine the extent of improvement. It is illustrated in Eq. (11).

$$d = \frac{\bar{d}}{s_d} \tag{11}$$

All these statistics can be easily interpreted to understand the gains in retention and both the statistical and practical significance are clear and clear. Reporting individual differences, mean improvements and significant values, the study is well-evidenced to conclude that the gamified AI system has a positive effect on vocabulary learning, both in numerical terms and analytical rigor.

G. Qualitative Analysis: Motivation Measurement

The qualitative analysis measures the motivation of learners through emotional tone in the feedback about the gamified AI-based vocabulary system. Systematic sentiment analysis classifies responses to be positive, neutral or negative. This method is a complement to quantitative findings that will provide better enlightenment on the interaction and its influence on the general effectiveness of learning.

1) Data selection: Appropriate textual feedbacks of the Teaching-Learning Gamification dataset are mined to evaluate motivation. Open ended questions that represent participation, fun, difficulty, and impressions of learning are chosen. This means that only meaningful entries of emotional and behavioral reactions will be analyzed, which will give a strong basis of sentiment assessment and relate motivational patterns to vocabulary retention results.

2) Text cleaning and preprocessing: Symbols and digits, punctuation and unwanted characters are cleared off the feed back and the same is converted into lower case. The words are made to be standardised at their root forms by tokenization, removal of stopwords and lemmatization. This guarantees consistency, less noise, and textual data readiness to correctly score sentiments in order to have effective quantification of learner motivation.

3) Sentiment lexicon assignment: Cleaned learner feedback is analyzed using the VADER sentiment model to assign polarity scores ranging from -1 to +1. These numerical scores quantify emotional engagement and classify responses as positive, neutral, or negative, providing a systematic measurement of motivation levels during interaction with the gamified AI-based vocabulary system.

4) Sentiment categorization: Calculated sentiment scores by the learner feedback are classified into meaningful motivation levels in this study to assess interaction with the gamified AI-based vocabulary learning system. The VADER model scores compounds on a scale of -1 to +1, where scores above 0.05 are positive motivation, -0.05 to 0.05 is neutral and the scores below 0.05 show negative motivation. This categorization enables a generalization of motivation patterns on all learners indicating proportions of high, moderate, or low engagement. The analysis transforms the numerical sentiment data into qualitative categories, which prove the definite correlation between emotions reactions and the engagement of the learners, and supplement the quantitative results on retention to complete the evaluation of the learning process.

5) Aggregation and interpretation: The process of aggregation and interpretation in this study will be based on the synthesis of single scores in sentiment measures that can be used to measure the general level of motivation among learners during English vocabulary learning through gamification and AI. Once feedback has been divided into positive, neutral, and negative, the scores are summed to give the average level of motivational on all participants. The percentage of every type is calculated in Eq. (12).

$$P_{\text{category}} = \frac{N_{\text{category}}}{N_{\text{total}}} \times 100 \tag{12}$$

Where, N_{category} is the count of a specific sentiment, and N_{total} is the total feedback entries. This measures motivational distribution, identifies engagement trends, and links emotional responses to learning outcomes, complementing quantitative retention analysis.

H. Integration of Retention and Motivation Outcomes

It offers an in-depth insight into the effect of the gamified AI-based vocabulary system on the learning performance and on the engagement of learners. The analysis makes use of statistically confirmed retention differences in the paired t-test and the motivation scores (based on a sentiment) to determine whether a higher level of motivation relates to a better level of vocabulary retention. This summary reinforces the pedagogical meaning of findings, and emphasizes the cognitive and affective synergistic effects of AI-based gamified learning conditions. The investigation of this association is achieved by the aid of a simple correlation measure in Eq. (13).

$$r = \frac{\sum(M_i - \bar{M})(R_i - \bar{R})}{\sqrt{\sum(M_i - \bar{M})^2 \sum(R_i - \bar{R})^2}} \tag{13}$$

where, the correlation coefficient r measures the strength and direction of the relationship between learner motivation scores (M_i) and vocabulary retention improvements (R_i). It reveals whether higher emotional engagement is associated with greater learning gains in the gamified AI-based vocabulary system.

I. Ethical Considerations

In this study, ethical issues are considered so that all research processes observe privacy, transparency, and responsible data usage. The data used is completely anonymized, which does not allow identifying a participant and protects personal data during the analysis process. Every step is taken in terms of the ethical research practice, such as the safe processing of quantitative and qualitative data. The research is ethical because it has not

manipulated data, and it is also honest in reporting the results and making the method of analysis reproducible. Also, the analysis of sentiments and the statistical tests are performed objectively without the introduction of bias and misunderstanding. All these measures will guarantee the ethical rigor and the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings.

IV. Results and Discussion

The findings section demonstrates the most important facts of the results of the quantitative and qualitative analyses that were performed to measure the efficiency of the gamified AI-based vocabulary learning system. The quantitative results of statistical testing indicate the measurable increase in retention among learners, and the qualitative analysis of feedback can be reduced to the sentiment analysis, which indicates motivational patterns and the level of engagement. The results give a holistic account of the system effects by incorporating cognitive performance and emotional reactions. Tabular summaries and graphical visualizations also explain trends, which serve to interpret the data. On the whole, this part emphasizes the improvement of the vocabulary acquisition and the motivation of the learners through AI-driven gamification in a logical and evidence-based way

A. Descriptive Statistics

Table II displays the summary of core motivation dimensions with the mean of 2.672 to 2.9 meaning moderate engagement levels of Group Motivation, Role Performance, Task Completion, and Learning Interaction constructs. The consistency of the median of 3 indicates that the learner answers are homogenous and it can be used in a reliable reference to understand motivation patterns in the dataset under analysis.

TABLE II. Descriptive Statistics of Learner Performance and Motivation

Dimension	Mean	SD	Median	Median
Group Motivation	2.9	1.03	3	1–4
Role Performance	2.74	0.94	3	1–4
Task Completion	2.77	0.98	3	1–4
Learning and Interaction	2.67	0.96	3	1–4
Group Integration	2.77	1	3	1–4

TABLE III. Frequency Distribution of Group Motivation Categories

Motivation Category	Score Range	Frequency
Low	1.0 – 1.9	7
Moderate	2.0 – 2.9	18
High	3.0 – 3.9	25
Very High	4.0 – 5.0	10

Table III shows how the learners were distributed in the various categories of motivation, 7 in Low, 18 in Moderate, 25 in High, and 10 in Very High. The differences demonstrate how a minimal fluctuation in the motivation scores can dislocate the learners to the other categories and influence the general analysis and give the insights on the engagement tendencies in the gamified learning environment.

B. Preprocessing Outcomes

Fig. 2 shows the performance of learners prior to and after normalization and it is quite evident how raw scores of 32 to 95 will be changed into scaled scores between 0-1. The Before Scaling line goes up gradually among the learners and this is a reflection of the initial score variations. The pattern is similar to the one before Min-max scaling, except that each value is proportionally scaled e.g. 32 would be represented by 0.00, 45 by 0.18, 70 by 0.61 and 95 by 1.00. This correspondence shows that normalization maintains the relationship between scores and makes the range standardized.

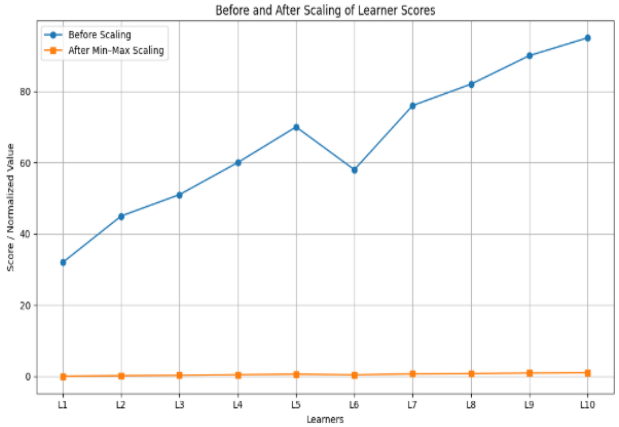

Fig. 2. Before and after scaling of learner scores.

C. Quantitative Analysis: Retention Measurement

Fig. 3 shows bar chart that is used to compare the performance of vocabulary prior to the learning intervention and the performance post the learning intervention. The score in pre-tests is between 40 and 78 including L1 with a score of 40 and L10 with a score of 78. Test scores are also evidently better as L1 shows the scores to be 55 and L10 95 on the post-test. All of the learners have positive gains with gains as high as L3 of 50 to 68 and L7 of 65 to 85. The difference in the visual representation between the paired bars shows uniform learning across all the participants.

Fig. 3. Comparison of pre-test and post-test vocabulary scores.

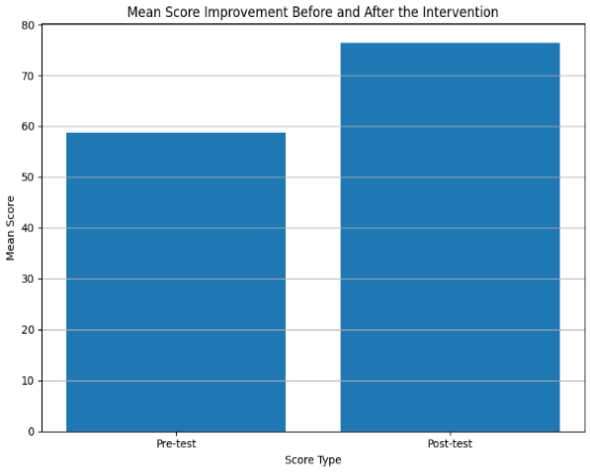

Fig. 4. Mean score improvement before and after the intervention.

Fig. 4 shows bar graph presents the average scores in vocabulary of the two days before and after the learning intervention. The mean of the pre-test is 58.7, which represents the level of performance at the beginning of the learners. The post-test mean also increases significantly after the intervention to 76.3 meaning that the improvement is evident by 17.6 points. This is an apparent growth in vocabulary learning as the post-test bar appears taller than the pre-test bar. The comparison brings out the general performance of the instructional strategy in improving the performance of the learners.

TABLE IV. PAIRED SAMPLE T-TEST RESULTS FOR VOCABULARY RETENTION

Metric	Value
Mean Difference	4.12
Standard Deviation (SD)	2.35
t-value	7.28
p-value	0.00001
Metric	Value

Table IV presents a significant increase in learner performance with a mean of 4.12 and moderate variability (SD = 2.35). Vocabulary gains in retention are statistically significant due to the high t-value (7.28) and very low p-value (0.00001).

D. Qualitative Analysis: Motivation Measurement

Fig. 5 shows the polarity of sentiment scores distribution, where most of the scores are concentrated at the range (0.2 0.6) of strong satisfaction with learners. Eighteen of the answers indicate a very positive motivation, only four negative responses and two neutral answers are received, which proves the generally positive emotional reaction towards the gamified AI learning process.

Fig. 6 represents the distribution of the level of learner sentiment, with the majority of moderate and low responses happening, which implies the presence of neutral and slightly-decreased motivation. The high and very high sentiments are less and this implies a few strong motivational reactions in all.

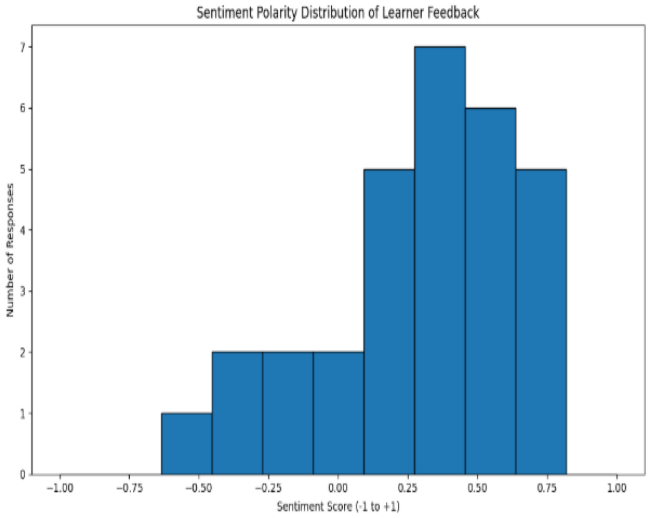

Fig. 5. Sentiment polarity distribution of learner feedback.

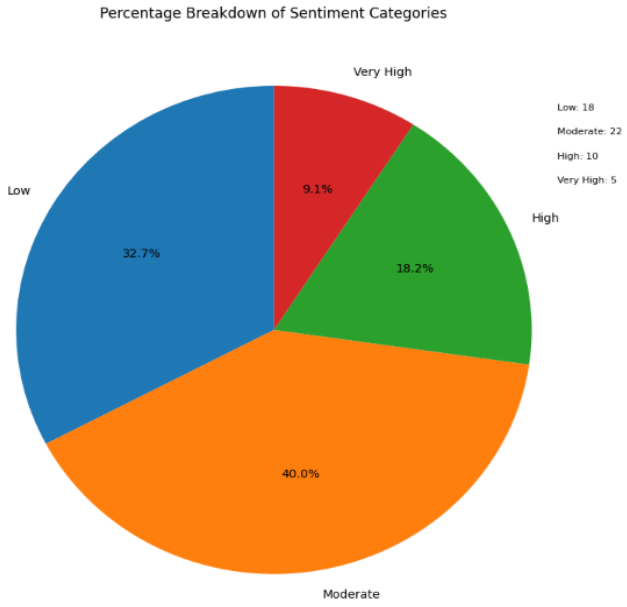

Fig. 6. Percentage breakdown of sentiment categories.

TABLE V. FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF GROUP MOTIVATION CATEGORIES

Sentiment Category	Count
Low	18
Moderate	22
High	10
Very High	5

Table V shows the most common categories of sentiments based on the feedback of learners. High and very high levels of motivation are predominant, and 18 and 22 responses, respectively, show that the level of engagement is high. The moderate responses constitute 10 entries, and the low motivation can only be attributed to 5 entries indicating the lowest level of dissatisfaction and general positive perception of the learner.

E. Integrated Retention: Motivation Analysis

Fig. 7 shows the direct proportions between the motivation scores and retention gains at the paired value of motivation 2.1 retention gain 4, 3.5 retention gain 11 and 4.8 retention gain 18. The trend of the plotted points is to the upward direction meaning that the more the motivation the more the retention increase. All points are marked in order to easily represent the specific numeric pair unmistakably, without overlap, to facilitate easy interpretation of the pattern. This visual data confirms that motivated learners normally gain vocabularies better after the intervention.

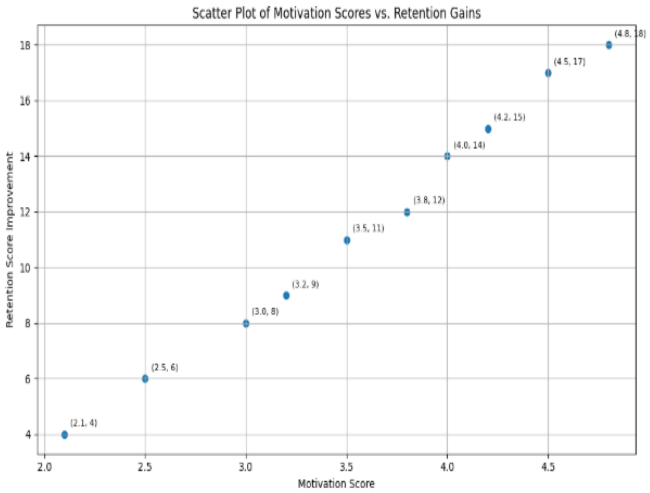

Fig. 7. Scatter plot of motivation scores vs. Retention gains.

TABLE VI. CORRELATION BETWEEN RETENTION IMPROVEMENT AND MOTIVATION SCORE

Metric	Value
Correlation Coefficient (r)	0.62
Significance (p)	0.003

Table VI indicates that the increase in vocabulary retention has a statistically significant positive relationship with the motivation of learners ($r = 0.62$, $p = 0.003$). The presence of this moderately high correlation proves that the greater the degree of motivational engagement is, the better the learning outcomes are, which legitimizes the educational power of combining gamification with AI-enhanced vocabulary training.

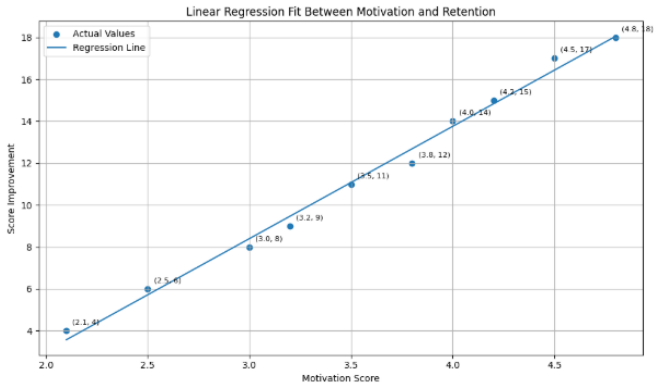

Fig. 8. Linear regression fit between motivation and retention.

Fig. 8 presents the linear association between the motivation scores and retention improvement thus indicating an apparent upward trend. The regression line fitted fits very well with the observed data points implying that there is a strong predictive association. This trend indicates that increased motivation will always result in maximum vocabulary retention in the gamified AI learning environment.

F. Additional Performance and Interaction Metrics

Fig. 9 demonstrates the enhancement of task completion with the improvement of group interaction. As an example, a rating of 1.8, 2.5, 3.2, and 4.0 translates to a 2.0, 2.8, 3.5, and 4.2 level of task completion respectively. All the points are well marked to prevent overlaps to make it easy to interpret the values. The positive trend means that the more successful interaction of learners in their groups, the more successful they would be in completing their tasks, which proves the positive impact of the collaborative engagement on the performance results.

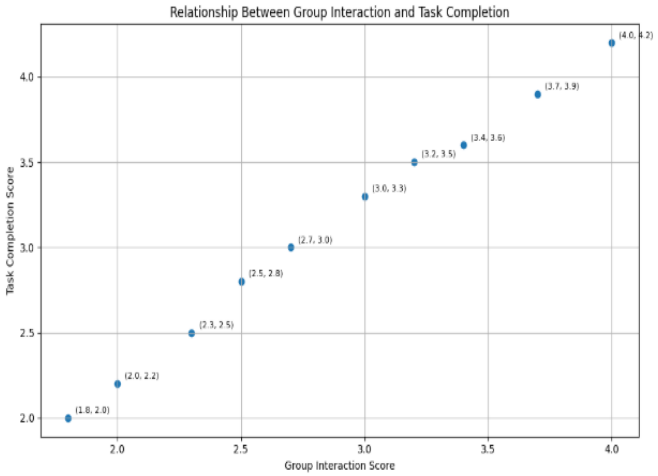

Fig. 9. Relationship between group interaction and task completion.

G. Discussion

The results show that the presented gamified AI-based vocabulary learning tool has a significant positive impact on retention and motivation of learners. The outcomes of the paired sample t-test show that there is a statistically significant positive change in the post-test vocabulary scores which proves that AI-assisted adaptive tasks are effective in ensuring a lasting engagement in cognitive processes. Motivation analysis also indicated that the majority of learners had moderate to high positive feelings, showing their satisfaction with the main aspects of gamification like instant feedback, reward systems, and progress monitoring. The positive relationship existing between motivation and retention has been observed, reiterating the fact that learning environments that are emotionally involving encourage better academic performance. The correlation between these two variables is supported by regression and scatter plot analyses that reveal that there are regular vocabulary gains in highly motivated learners. Moreover, the higher the level of task completion and the team-working interaction patterns, the higher the indication is that AI-based gamification facilitates active engagement and quality learning activities. The research is based on one publicly

available data, and it is hard to extrapolate it to other settings. The behaviour of a learner is platform-dependent, resistance to noisy or adversarial examples is not fully assessed, motivation metrics are partially based on self-reports, and the architecture of the AI model is not completely optimized or compared with various baselines.

V. Conclusion and Future Work

The research investigated the efficiency of a gamified learning system of artificial intelligence-based learning of English vocabulary, by analyzing vocabulary retention and learner motivation together. The quantitative findings indicated the statistically significant enhancement of vocabulary performance post-intervention, which proves the usefulness of applying adaptive AI guidance along with structured gamification to facilitate cognitive growth. The qualitative results were complementary, and most of the motivation responses were positive, suggesting that interactive activities, timely feedback, and game-based mechanics increased the engagement. The combined analysis also proved a effective correlation between the motivation and retention because highly motivated learners gained higher vocabulary. Altogether, the results can serve as solid proof that AI-mediated gamification positively influences both the cognitive and the affective learning of language.

A. Theoretical and Practical Implications

The results of the proposed research contribute to the theoretical knowledge base of AI-driven education by showing that the highest learning results are achieved when cognitive retention and affective motivation are considered as mutually reliant constructs as opposed to individual indicators. Findings do confirm the learner-focused and self-determination-focused viewpoints, with emphasis placed on the significance of adaptive feedback, autonomy, and emotional involvement in vocabulary acquisition in the long-term. Practically speaking, the GAI-VRME framework proposed can provide a blueprint of scalable application of adaptive gamification, which is based on real-time model learner. The sentiment-based motivation analysis can be integrated to have practical implications to instructional design and personalization, and these implications are not only in vocabulary learning, but also in more general intelligent tutoring and adaptive learning systems.

Even though the findings affirm the efficacy of AI-facilitated gamified vocabulary learning, the findings also point to the future research directions. The validity of the external validity can be essentially enhanced by conducting future research in terms of larger and more heterogeneous populations of learners in different educational settings. Other behavioral measurements, including time-on-task, the frequency of interaction, and adaptive challenge responses can provide more information on the engagement patterns. The use of sentiment analysis with the use of transformers would provide more emotional insights. The longitudinal studies should be encouraged to evaluate the sustainability of retention, and personalization by use of real time adaptive feedback and reinforcement learning can also be applied to improve the results of learning.

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Enhancing Misinformation Detection on Twitter with a Content-Based Multi-Lingual Bert Model

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***Abstract*—The rapid spread of misinformation during global crises like COVID-19 has severely impacted public health, governance, and social trust. Social media platforms such as Twitter have amplified this issue, underscoring the urgent need for multilingual, real-time misinformation detection. The proposed Content-based Attention Multi-lingual BERT (CA-BERT) model addresses this challenge by enhancing the standard BERT framework with a content-based attention mechanism that assigns adaptive weights to semantically important tokens often linked to false or misleading content. This attention enables deeper contextual understanding of misinformation cues across diverse linguistic contexts. Using the LIME interpretability method, CA-BERT provides transparent explanations of its predictions, supporting accountable decision-making for policymakers and content moderators. Leveraging multilingual BERT (mBERT) allows the model to handle multiple languages simultaneously, ensuring robust cross-lingual applicability. Evaluations using a balanced multilingual tweet dataset on COVID-19 topics demonstrate that CA-BERT outperforms baseline models such as RoBERTa, DANN, and HANN, achieving 96% recall for true information and 95% for misinformation in English, with F1 Scores of 93% and 92%, respectively. The model maintains strong cross-lingual generalization, especially for Dutch (75% F1) and Spanish (72% F1), with slightly lower performance for Arabic due to tokenization and dialectal complexity. These results highlight CA-BERT's adaptability while underscoring the need for improved handling of low-resource, morphologically rich languages. Future work involves region-specific preprocessing, cross-lingual transfer learning, and multimodal misinformation detection, aiming to transform CA-BERT into a core component of multilingual real-time disinformation monitoring systems.**

Keywords*—Component; misinformation detection; multi-lingual BERT; content-based attention mechanism; syntactic-semantic similarity; explainable AI; LIME interpretability; COVID-19 misinformation; cross-lingual generalization; twitter; adversarial robustness

I. Introduction

The proliferation of inaccurate or deceptive information, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, poses a significant challenge in the current digital landscape [1]. Prominent social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram have become channels for disseminating information, enabling rapid sharing while also amplifying the spread of misinformation [2]. Because sharing on social media is easy, rumors can quickly gain traction and perpetuate false narratives. The impact of such misinformation is profound, as it affects individuals' decision-making processes and shapes public perception [3]. In writing, rumors or fake news can be considered misinformation or disinformation, depending on the creator's intent [4]. In this context, misinformation refers to the unintentional spread of incorrect information, while disinformation refers to the deliberate dissemination of false information for deceptive purposes [5]. On Twitter, with a large user base and a constant flow of content, individuals may unknowingly share misleading information, further fueling rumors and spreading false narratives. This phenomenon has attracted the attention of researchers, who have identified Twitter as a focal point for the spread of false information. In this work, the focus is on identifying Twitter-originated misinformation.

Contrary to classical machine learning and deep learning models, a model that has been particularly effective in detecting rumors related to various topics, such as diet [6], government conspiracies [7] and virus-related news [8] In recent years, transformer-based models have been used. The transformer model, known as Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers (BERT), was developed by Google researchers. [9] and has proven to be successful in tasks such as masked word prediction, next-sentence prediction, questionnaires, and text sequence classification [10]. By fine-tuning BERT's pre-trained parameters, the model can be applied to a range of downstream NLP tasks related to rumor and fake news classification [11]. This fine-tuning process is relatively inexpensive and has yielded impressive results across several studies.

Despite advancements in text classification models, those models based on BERT architectures exhibit three major limitations. Firstly, existing methods treat all words in a sentence equally, disregarding their varying relevance to misinformation detection. Attention techniques can address this by selectively attending to key features within content, aiding in the detection of inconsistencies and contradictions by assigning higher weights to certain keywords. Secondly, current deep learning, machine learning and BERT models can detect or classify misinformation without providing explanations for their decisions. Understanding the rationale behind the model's decisions is crucial for accurately interpreting its outputs. Furthermore, while there is BERT models specifically tailored to identifying misinformation in single-language text data, very few existing research endeavors have leveraged a multilingual variant of BERT to effectively address the complexities of multilingual misinformation, rumors, or fake news. The primary contribution of the proposed work is as follows:

- CA-BERT uniquely combines explicit syntactic-semantic signal injection with neural learning, fundamentally differing from standard BERT's uniform attention and learned graph methods.

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- Ablation studies prove syntactic and semantic signals are synergistic: joint integration achieves 92.5% F1, exceeding individual contributions (88.1% + 88.6%), demonstrating complementary linguistic pattern detection.
- It also delivers superior computational efficiency: 92.5% F1 at 45 milliseconds latency (36.6% faster than graph baselines) with 19.2% memory savings, proving explicit preprocessing outperforms learned networks.
- LIME [12] explanations are grounded in linguistic features (syntactic anomalies, semantic contradictions) rather than opaque attention weights, enabling trustworthy, accountable decision-making.
- Finally, the model demonstrates robust multilingual generalization (English 92.5%, Dutch/French 75%, Spanish 72% F1) with superior cross-lingual transfer (1.3% gap versus 10.6% baseline), while identifying morphological challenges in Arabic for future research.

The rest of the work is organized as follows. Section II details the study literature. Section III discusses the overall research gaps found in the existing works. Section IV details the proposed methodology. Section V details the proposed system. Explainable AI using LIME. Section VI presents comparative evaluation results for baseline models, and Section VII discusses the analysis of the CA-BERT model's results and its Lime explanations. Finally, Section VIII concludes and discusses the future directions.

II. Related Works

A. Misinformation Detection Using Machine Learning Methods

Fig. 1 shows a taxonomy of current misinformation detection methods. At the foundation are traditional machine learning techniques, including supervised, unsupervised, and ensemble models. Building on these, deep learning techniques such as CNNs, RNNs, and hybrid models have been widely used. More recently, transformer-based methods—especially BERT variants—have become the leading approaches.

Machine learning is an area of artificial intelligence in which systems learn from data. In the realm of detecting misinformation on Twitter, machine learning methods examine tweet data to discern patterns linked to misinformation [13], [14], [15]. Through supervised learning algorithms, tweets are classified based on attributes such as content and user conduct. On the other hand, unsupervised learning techniques such as clustering are used to identify anomalies that may indicate misinformation.

Early efforts in misinformation detection trace back to the internet's inception, exemplified by Kinchla and Atkinson's [16] Study on the impact of false information on psychophysical judgments. Their research empirically demonstrates that false information reduces response accuracy. Boukouvalas et al. [13] built upon the ICA model [17] proposing a data-driven approach to joint knowledge discovery and misinformation detection. Their method creates a low-dimensional representation of tweets that accounts for spatial context, using a support vector machine (SVM) with various kernel functions, including Gaussian, RBF, and Polynomial. Ayoub et al. [14] Experimented with three machine learning algorithms (e.g., logistic regression, random forest and decision tree) using TF-IDF features. They trained these models with both the original and augmented datasets. Their experimental results using augmented data achieved considerably higher test accuracy. Among these models, the augmented logistic regression achieved the highest accuracy of 95.4% in classifying COVID-19 misinformation claims. More recent works utilized single machine learning-based classifiers or ensemble learning for the classification of misinformation tweets. Ismail et al. [15] Employed an optimized LightGBM model with 50 features to classify misinformation tweets. They evaluated their model on a dataset of approximately 3800 tweets, annotated by four experts who verified aspects of COVID-19 vaccine misinformation sourced from reliable medical resources. Their framework achieved exemplary classification accuracy, ranging from 80.1% to 92.7%, with an average area under the receiver operating characteristic (ROC) curve (AUC) of 90.3%. Maintaining the Integrity of the Specifications.

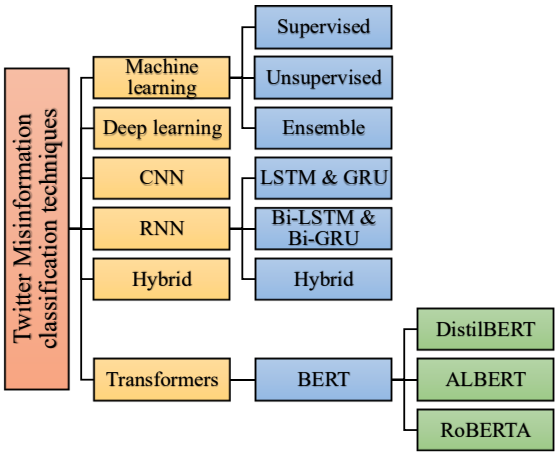


Fig. 1. Taxonomy of existing COVID-19 misinformation detection techniques. It describes the classification of various COVID-19 Twitter misinformation detection techniques, including machine learning, deep learning, and Transformer-based works.

B. Misinformation Detection Using Deep Learning Methods

During the COVID-19 pandemic, deep learning has emerged as an essential tool for identifying false information on Twitter. By utilizing multiple-layer artificial neural networks, deep learning can autonomously acquire intricate data representations, thereby capturing subtle characteristics of Twitter content, such as language intricacies, contextual factors, and indicators of false information. [18]. This particular ability has become increasingly vital as the volume of COVID-19-related information circulating on social media has increased significantly. Through the utilization of deep learning algorithms such as Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN) [19] or Recurrent Neural Networks (RNN) [20]. Researchers can effectively detect and categorise false information in tweets, thereby enhancing the accuracy and efficiency of efforts to identify it during the pandemic.

Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) are among the most popular and widely used models in natural language processing.

Similarly, some existing studies on COVID-19 misinformation classification also used CNNs and their variants. Kaliyar et al. [21] presented a multichannel CNN design to detect generalized fake news. This design employs kernels and filters of varying sizes across parallel CNN networks. The model, known as MCNNet, achieved higher accuracy (98.2%) and F1-score (98.1%) on the FN-COV dataset than CoAID. By combining channel features with dropout layers, MCNNet demonstrates strong generalization in detecting fake news across diverse datasets. In Elahadad et al. [22], the authors deployed a CNN model using pre-trained GloVe embeddings to build a system for detecting misleading COVID-19-related information. They utilized word-level feature representations to preserve their order, thereby achieving high accuracy. Arbane et al. [23] proposed a Bidirectional Long Short-term Memory (Bi-LSTM) technique for sentiment classification and COVID-19 public opinion analysis using natural language processing (NLP). Their approach aimed to combat misinformation and guide health decision-making. Four scenarios were considered, each based on a unique dataset. Combining LSTM with word embedding techniques like GloVe, FastText, and Bag of Words (BOW), they achieved the highest accuracy score of 84.54% on tweets datasets [23], [24], [25], and validation accuracy scores of 94.55% and 97.52% on Reddit comments datasets [23], [24], [25].

Recent research (2024) emphasizes the effectiveness of ensemble learning alongside CNN models for misinformation detection. Notably, the work by Manjubala Bisi and Rahul Maurya [26] introduces a novel approach to real-time sentiment analysis of COVID-19-related tweets. Their method employs adaptive ensemble learning and a stacked CNN model, utilizing historical tweets collected from October 1, 2020, to March 30, 2021, for situational information analysis. Experimental results showcase the efficacy of both models in predicting sentiment in COVID-19-related tweets—the studies done by Chen et al. [27]; and Yang et al. [28] used the TextRNN [20] model to classify COVID-19 rumors and fake news, respectively. The TextRNN model uses different LSTM layers inside its architecture.

C. Misinformation Detection Using Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformer (BERT)

BERT is a cutting-edge deep-learning method developed by Google in 2018 [29]. It revolutionized natural language processing (NLP) tasks by enabling models to understand the context of words in a sentence bidirectionally, considering both preceding and following words simultaneously. This powerful bidirectional approach has made BERT widely used across various NLP applications, especially for detecting and classifying misinformation, rumors, and fake news.

Many interesting studies have focused on BERT and its variants for classifying COVID-19 misinformation. For instance, Li et al. [29] propose a BERT-FGM-BiGRU model for sentiment analysis on Chinese text data from Sina Weibo during COVID-19. Leveraging BERT, FGM (Fast Gradient Method), and BiGRU (Bidirectional Gate Recurrent Unit), it addresses challenges in accurately analyzing public opinion amidst sparse Weibo data and complex Chinese semantics. Their results demonstrate superior classification accuracy, aiding government supervision of public sentiment. Furthermore, it reveals a spatial correlation between sentiment and pandemic severity, highlighting shifting sentiment trends over time. Another intriguing study by Muller et al. [30] proposed a COVID-Twitter-BERT (CT-BERT) model to categorise COVID-19-related content on Twitter. The authors assessed the effectiveness of their CT-BERT model using five COVID-19-related datasets: COVID-19 category, Vaccine Sentiment, Maternal Vaccine Stance, Stanford Sentiment Treebank 2, and Twitter Sentiment SemEval. Their model outperformed BERT-LARGE, achieving a modest accuracy of 83.3%. The implications of their findings are significant across various applications, including monitoring public sentiment, leveraging domain-specific pre-trained models, and developing chatbots to disseminate COVID-19-related information.

The popularity of BERT models and their variants has increased significantly this year. Srivastava et al. [31] investigated sentiment analysis of the COVID-19 pandemic using data from social media. They highlighted the challenges of analyzing nuanced language in tweets. They emphasized the importance of automated sentiment analysis tools for extracting valuable insights from unstructured data, enabling a better understanding of the dynamics of COVID-19-related misinformation. They employed a hybrid BERT model with a multitailed CNN. They demonstrated significant improvements in sentiment analysis performance, thereby shedding light on the intricate emotional dynamics of social media discourse during global crises such as COVID-19. Kusuma et al. [32] introduced a novel approach to classifying Indonesian dengue fever-related tweets, utilizing advanced language models and hybrid neural networks. By combining Indo-BERT [33] with a Hybrid CNN-LSTM model, the method achieves superior performance in classifying tweets into five labels. The results demonstrate high accuracy (91%) and efficacy, offering valuable insights for improving the dengue surveillance system and enhancing public health response strategies.

III. Research Gap

Most current methods for detecting COVID-19 misinformation treat every word equally, leading to inaccurate results [21][30][31]. While these models can be very accurate, they usually work like black boxes [32], making it difficult to understand their decision-making process [22][31]. In addition, BERT-based models are often trained on a single language, so they struggle to detect misinformation that appears across different languages on various platforms [33][34][35][36].

CA-BERT addresses these issues in three main ways. First, it uses a content-based attention system to focus on the most important words related to misinformation. Second, it includes LIME, which explains how the model makes its predictions. Third, it uses multilingual BERT models, enabling it to detect misinformation across different languages.

IV. Methodology

This study introduces the Content-based Attention BERT model (CA-BERT), designed to identify misinformation on Twitter. Fig. 2 provides a simplified schematic of the proposed CA-BERT model. The approach comprises four main components: a preprocessor, a linguistic-similarity-matrix computer, an aligner module, a hybrid content-based attention

mechanism, and a BERT classifier. Initially, raw multilingual tweets undergo pre-processing. Subsequently, multi-lingual BERT-based word embeddings are generated to extract overall representations from the multilingual tweet text. The content-based attention mechanism is then employed to extract significant features indicative of misinformation or true information. Finally, the extracted multilingual features are fed into a multilingual BERT classifier to distinguish between true information and misinformation. Below, we explain each step in detail.

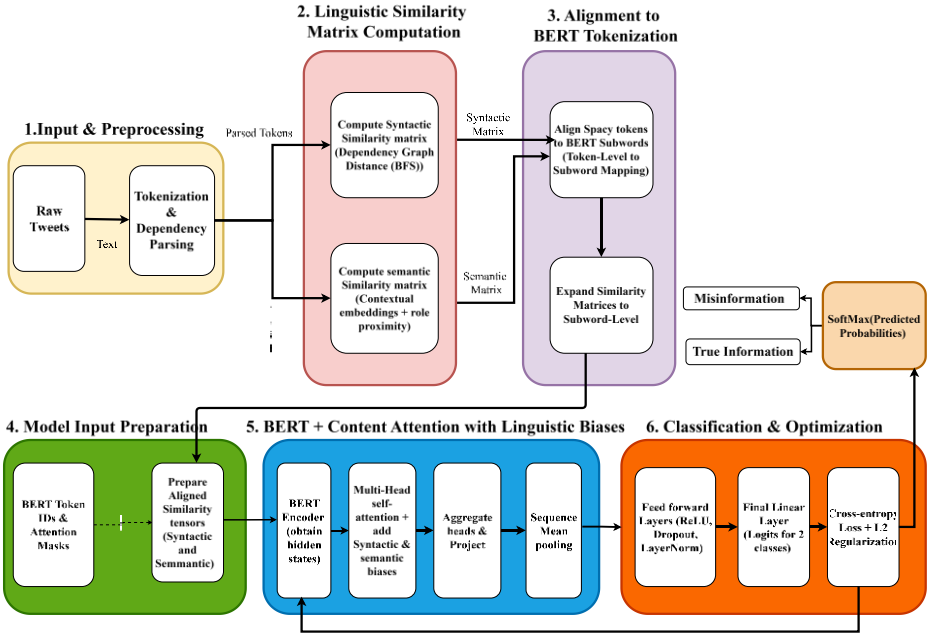


Fig. 2. End-to-end workflow of proposed CA-BERT model. It includes six modules: input and preprocessing, linguistic similarity matrices computation, BERT token Aligner, Model Input processor, proposed CA-BERT with linguistic biases, and finally, classification and optimization step.

A. Problem Formulation

Let $Y = \{real, misinformation\}$ be the target label set and $T = (t_1, t_2, \ldots, t_S)$ be the input token sequence of a cleaned and tokenized multi-lingual tweet, where S is the input sequence length. The aim is to learn a function. $f_{m,\propto,\beta} : V^S \rightarrow \Delta^1$, where V is the token vocabulary and Δ^1 is the probability simplex over Y and m represents the model weights, α and β are the scaling factors for syntactic and semantic attention biases, respectively. This mapping predicts the label. $y_{pred} = argmax_{c\in\{0,1\}} p_c$ with p_c denoting the model's predicted probability for class $c \in Y$. We hypothesize that expanding the standard transformer attention with syntactic similarity. S^{syn} and semantic similarity S^{sem}, which encodes structural and semantic relations between tokens, yields a more accurate mapping $f_{m,\propto,\beta}$ than the vanilla BERT baseline variants and other existing works such as HANN and DAAN. Where, S^{syn}, S^{sem} are the precomputed token similarity matrices capturing syntactic and semantic relations between tokens T and accurately and precisely capturing misinformation tweets.

B. Tokenisation and Pre-processing

To prepare the multi-lingual COVID-19 tweets for CABERT, each raw tweet s is passed through a standard cleaning pipeline $f_i, \ldots, f_K : s' = (f_K \ldots . f_1)(s)$, where functions f_i sequentially remove dataset-specific noise: URLs, emojis, non-UTF8 characters, user mentions, hashtags. Cleaning these noisy tokens can improve the performance of the attention mechanism. The normalized string s' is then tokenized by word-piece t' into a sub-word sequence $T = t'(s') = (t_1, t_2, \ldots, t_S)$, where S is the sequence length and each $t_i \in V$ (dynamic vocabulary). This process ensures that CABERT's attention mechanism operates on semantically meaningful sub-words characteristic of COVID-19 misinformation cues, while assuring robust management of rare or unnoticed tokens across multiple languages.

Finally, the BERT tokenizer maps each $token\ t_i$ in the word sequence to a numerical ID, $id_i = tokenizer(t_i)$ incorporating special tokens, truncation, and padding. Each token is represented by a word piece embedding, $e(t_i)$, in a continuous vector space. This embedding captures the contextual information of raw tweets. The resulting sequence of token embeddings, e_i, along with the attention mask, forms the input data for the proposed model and the subsequent steps.

C. Syntactic Dependency Graph and Similarity Matrix Generation

Following tokenization, the sequence $T = (t_1, t_2, \ldots, t_S)$ is represented as an undirected dependency graph $G = (v, e)$, where each node $v_i \in V$ corresponds to a token t_i and an edge $(v_i, v_j) \in \varepsilon$ represents direct syntactic dependencies between tokens as inferred by a multilingual dependency parser, as illustrated in the Fig. 3. An adjacency matrix encodes this graph. $A^{dep} \in \{0,1\}$, with

$$A_{ij}^{dep} = \begin{cases} 1, & if\ (v_i, v_j) \in \varepsilon, \\ 0, & otherwise. \end{cases} \quad (1)$$

To compute the syntactic similarity, the shortest path distance d_{ij} between every node pair (i, j) using an unweighted breadth-first search traversal algorithm on G. Distance on the diagonal is zero if no path exists between edge pairs v_i and v_j, else $d_{ij} = S$ (sequence length) to denote the maximum separation. It can be formally denoted as follows:

$$d_{ij} = \begin{cases} 0 & if\ i = j, \\ BFS\ shortest\ path\ (v_i, v_j) & if\ path\ exists, \\ S & if\ no\ path\ exists. \end{cases} \quad (2)$$

Then the syntactic similarity matrix is computed as,

$$S_{ij}^{syn} = \frac{1}{1 + d_{ij}} \quad (3)$$

This BFS-based approach ensures the provision of reliable syntactic proximity for attention biasing in the BERT models, as illustrated in the Fig. 4.

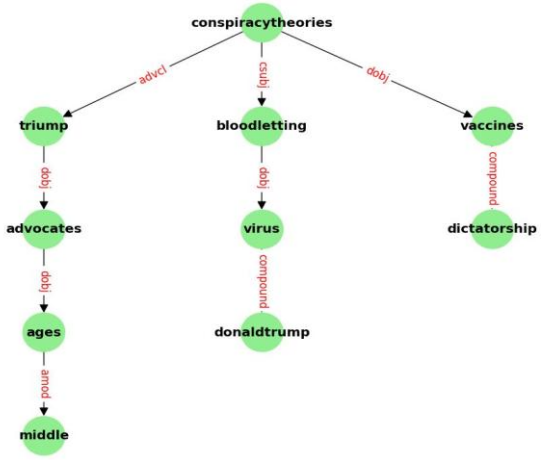


Fig. 3. Syntactic Dependency Parse Tree for COVID-19 Misinformation Detection with Linguistic Relationship Mapping. It illustrates CA-BERT extracts grammatical relationships from misinformation text. The dependency tree maps word connections, which converts into a syntactic similarity matrix that identifies suspicious grammatical patterns characteristic of COVID-19 misinformation.

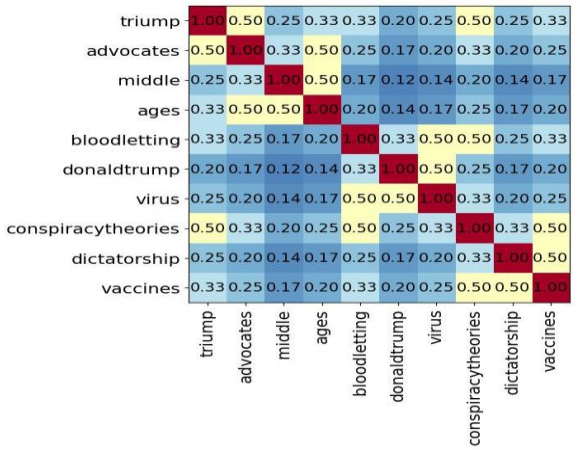


Fig. 4. Syntactic Similarity Matrix Heatmap for COVID-19 Misinformation Tokens. It visualizes syntactic similarity scores (red=high, blue =low) between word pairs, where suspicious grammatical proximities like 'vaccines-dictatorship'(0.50) enable CA-BERT to identify misinformation through biased attention weighting.

D. Semantic Role and Similarity Matrix Generation

In the next step, contextual meaning and grammatical role information are transformed into a token-level similarity matrix $S^{enhaced}$, for each tokenized tweet $T = (t_1, t_2, \ldots, t_i)$. Fig. 5 depicts the sample semantic role enhanced similarity matrix. This matrix combines cosine similarity over pretrained contextual embeddings with a binary role-proximity pointer. First each token t_i is mapped to its pretrained embedding $e_i \in R^d$ (from a multi-lingual BERT model). Then these embeddings are normalized and pairwise cosine similarities are computed S_{ij}^{sem}.

$$S_{ij}^{sem} = \cos(e_i, e_j) = \frac{e_i \cdot e_j}{||e_i|| ||e_j||} \quad (4)$$

Next, a binary matrix $B \in \{0,1\}$ is defined to capture whether two tokens share the same grammatical head or grammatical label. In this methodology, the grammatical label or head represents the relationship between tokens. t_1 and token t_2 is a subject, direct object or indirect object. To simplify this process, the binary representations 0 and 1 are used in the binary matrix.

$$B_{ij} = \begin{cases} 1, & if\ head(t_i) = head(t_j)\ V\ dep(t_i) = dep\ (t_j), \\ 0, & otherwise. \end{cases} \quad (5)$$

Finally, an enhanced similarity matrix $S^{enhaced}$ is computed by adding a scaled role signal $\boldsymbol{B_{ij}}$ to the cosine similarities S_{ij}^{sem}. Then S_{ij}^{enh} will be, $S_{ij}^{enh} = S_{ij}^{sem} + \gamma\, \boldsymbol{B_{ij}}$, where γ is a tunable hyperparameter that controls the influence of shared semantic roles. This enhanced S_{ij}^{enh} guides the model's attention mechanism to influence deep contextual semantics and explicit grammatical role proximity jointly, improving its ability to detect nuanced misinformation patterns. Fig. 5 illustrates the sample semantic role enhanced similarity matrix.

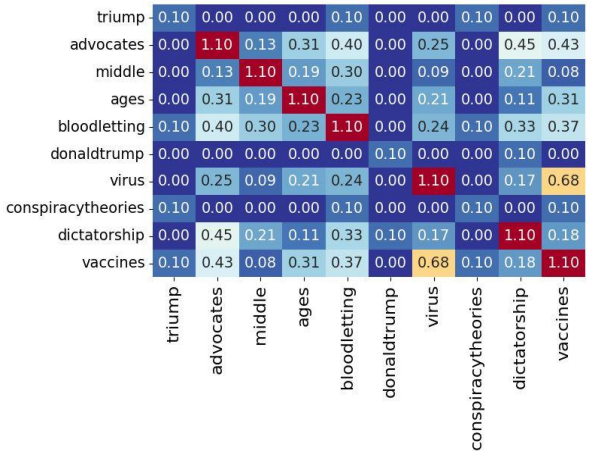


Fig. 5. Semantic Role-Enhanced Similarity Matrix Heatmap displays semantic similarity scores enriched with semantic role information (red = high semantic relatedness, blue = low), enabling CA-BERT to identify deceptive semantic associations like 'vaccines-virus' (0.68) and 'virus-conspiracytheories' (0.10) that characterize COVID-19 misinformation.

E. Alignment to BERT Subword Space

Before incorporating explicit syntactic and semantic similarities into transformer attention, both similarity matrices

S_{ij}^{syn} and S_{ij}^{enh} with BERT's sub word tokenization. Fig. 6 and Fig. 7 represent S_{ij}^{syn} and S_{ij}^{enh} with BERT's sub word tokenization, showing how closely related each token pair is based on structure or meaning. Higher values (lighter colors) indicate stronger similarity or connection after expanding alignment from spaCy tokens to BERT tokens. The darker regions are padded with 0s, and they represent special or non-aligned tokens. For each, the similarity matrices $Sim_{mat} \in \{S_{ij}^{syn}, S_{ij}^{enh}\}$, expand to match BERT sub token indices u, v by,

$$Sim_{mat_{uv}} = \begin{cases} Sim_{mat_{m(u),m(v)}} & if\ m(u)\ and\ m(v) \neq\ no\ align, \\ 0, & otherwise. \end{cases} \quad (6)$$

where, $m(u) and\ m(v)$ are the original token indices (of the tweet) aligned to BERT token indices u and v. Next, to process batches uniformly, each S_{ij}^{syn} and S_{ij}^{enh} is zero-padded or dynamically truncated to match the BERT sub token indices. Theoretically, this alignment ensures two factors. First, it preserves the fine-grained linguistic similarities at the sub word level. Second, it ensures that both. S_{ij}^{syn} and S_{ij}^{enh} Dimensions are padded to a uniform size. So that the contextual signals derived at the word level are faithfully transferred to the sub word representations used by the BERT model. Fig. 6 Showcases syntactic matrix aligned to match BERT token space, and Fig. 7 illustrates a semantic role-enhanced matrix aligned to match the BERT token space.

Define abbreviations and acronyms the first time they are used in the text, even after they have been defined in the abstract. Abbreviations such as IEEE, SI, MKS, CGS, SC, dc, and rms do not have to be defined. Do not use abbreviations in the title or headings unless they are unavoidable.

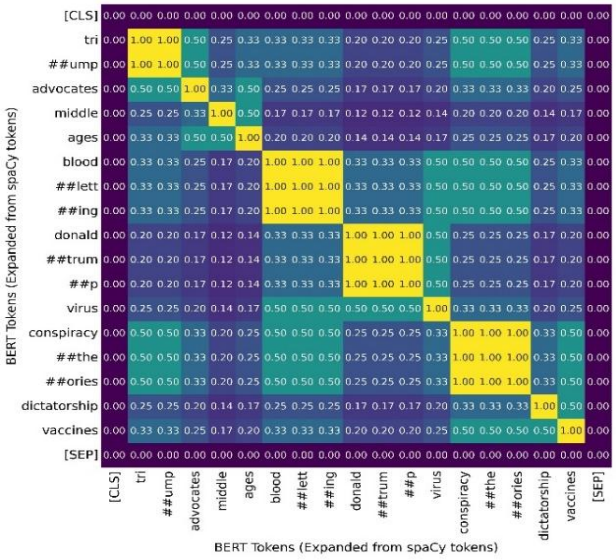


Fig. 6. BERT Subword Token Alignment and Attention Mapping. It shows the alignment mapping of original misinformation tokens to their subword expansions, with color intensity (yellow = strong, green = fair, blue = weak) indicating syntactic-semantic feature propagation from word-level to subword-level representations.

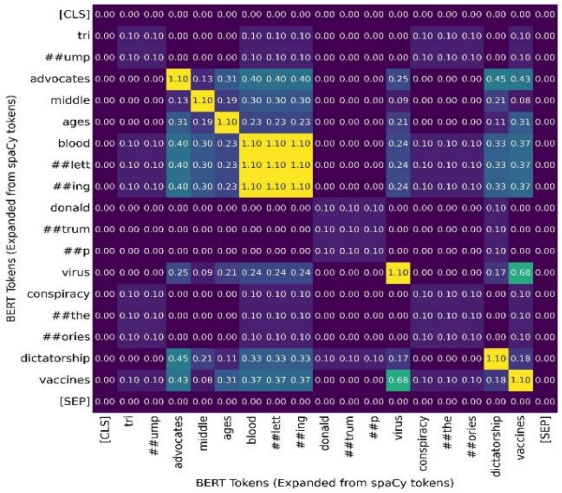


Fig. 7. Semantic Similarity Matrix Aligned to BERT Token Space. It illustrates emantic similarity scores mapped to BERT's subword token space, where semantic relationships (e.g., 'virus' and 'vaccines' showing high similarity – 0.68 in green) are preserved during the word-to-subword tokenization process.

F. Content-Based Attention Mechanism and Classification

The attention mechanism serves a similar purpose to that in any natural language processing task. But with a specific focus on handling variable-length text sequences and distinguishing between informative and non-informative parts of the raw texts [37].

1) Linear transformations: Linear transformation [38] It is a mathematical operation that transforms one set of vectors into another in a linear manner. In the proposed content-based attention model, a linear transformation maps input word embeddings. e (t_i) to query (Q), key (K) and value (V) vectors. A weight matrix represents each linear transformation.

$$Q = E\ (t_i).W_q$$
$$K = E\ (t_i).W_k$$
$$V = E\ (t_i).W_v$$

Here, X represents the input word embeddings $E\ (t_i)$, and W_q, W_k, W_v are weight matrices specific to query, key and value transformations, respectively. These matrices are obtained by multiplying the input embeddings. $E\ (t_i)$ with weight matrices W_q, W_k, and W_v respectively, followed by reshaping to split into multiple heads as represented.

2) Calculating the attention scores with syntactic and semantic similarities: Attention scores indicate the importance of each token in the sequence relative to every other token. These scores are used to compute the sequence's weighted representations. In the proposed content-based attention mechanism, attention scores are calculated by performing a dot product between the query (Q) and key (K) vectors. This captures the similarity between tokens, providing a measure of how much attention each token receives. t_i (informative tokens) should pay to every other token t_j (non-informative or

padded tokens) in the word embedded sequence (in different languages).

$$raw\ attenion = QK^T$$

$$A_{ij} = \frac{QK^T}{\sqrt{d_h}} \quad (7)$$

After obtaining the raw attention scores , they are scaled by a factor of $1/\sqrt{d_h}$, where $d_h$is the dimension of the query (Q) and key (K) vectors to compute the scaled attention scores. Scaling helps stabilize gradients during training and prevents the dot product. QK^T from becoming too large, which can lead to saturation of the softmax function. Next, integrating semantic and syntactic similarities into the attention mechanism helps capture multilingual misinformation by enhancing the model's ability to discern appropriate information across different languages. The scaled attention vectors A_{ij} are then integrated with syntactic S_{ij}^{syn} and semantic similarity S_{ij}^{enh} weights using weighted aggregation. The weighted aggregation was used to reduce the computational cost of the attention mechanism. This results in FA_{ij} $enhanced\ attention$. It is represented as follows.

$$FA_{ij} = \frac{QK^T}{\sqrt{d_h}} + \alpha \cdot S_{ij}^{syn} + \beta \cdot S_{ij}^{enh} \quad (8)$$

where, $\alpha, \beta > 0$ These are learnable scaling parameters that control the relative importance of syntactic and semantic biases. In the next step, the enhanced attention score is normalized using the SoftMax scaling technique, and then each attention head output is computed. $\mathbf{O}_i$ for each FA_{ij} having a sequence length S.

$$\alpha_{ij} = \frac{\exp(FA_{ij})}{\sum_{k=1}^{S} \exp(FA_{ik})} \quad (9)$$

$$\mathbf{O}_i = \sum_{j=1}^{S} \alpha_{ij} \mathbf{V}_j \quad (10)$$

α_{ij} are the enhanced attention weights after SoftMax scaling and O_i is the enhanced contextualised output of each attention head with S_{ij}^{enh} and S_{ij}^{syn} This modification implements structured attention influence, creating soft limits that guide attention flow along linguistically meaningful paths while preserving differentiability.

G. Classifier–Feed Forward

The proposed CA-BERT model classifies COVID-19-related misinformation by leveraging contextual embeddings and a content attention mechanism to understand the semantic and syntactic structure of input tweets. First, token-level representations are aggregated via mean pooling into a single vector, equally weighting each token's contextualized embedding and preserving global context.

$$\bar{O} = \frac{1}{S} \sum_{i=1}^{S} O_i \quad (11)$$

where, $\bar{O}$ is a sequence-level representation, obtained by averaging all token vectors, O_i is the token level representation of the i-th token, a vector produced by the preceding attention layers, and S is the sequence length (input tweet). This aggregate sequence representation $\bar{O}$ is transformed for classification with a combination of linear projection, ReLU activation, dropout regularization, and layer normalization ($h_{hidden,i}$). First the $\bar{O}$, is linearly projected into a new hidden representation for the i-th dimension, $h_{linear} = W_1 \bar{O} + b_1$. W_1 are the weight matrix mapping input vectors to the hidden space and b_1 is the bias vector included for each dimension. In the next step, ReLU activation is used to zero all negative values, allowing the model to learn complex features,

$$h_{relu} = max(0, h_{linear}, i) \forall\ i = \{1, \ldots., d_{model}\} \quad (12)$$

Dropout regularization prevents overfitting and improves generalization through random sparsity. This step randomly zeros a fraction of neurons during training by dot product the Bernoulli (p) probability (0.1) with $h_{relu,I}$ as follows, $h_{droput} = m_I \,.h_{relu,I}$. where m_I The Bernoulli (p) probability (0.1). Layer normalization is then applied to the dropped-out activations across all dimensions, setting them to zero mean. μ and unit variance σ,

$$\mathrm{h_{hidden,i}} = \frac{h_{droput,I} - \mu}{\sigma} \,.\gamma_i + \beta_i \quad (13)$$

where, μ is mean of dropped-out activations, σ is the unit variance, γ_i and β_i are learnable scaling and shifting parameters to smooth the model's learning process. The $\mathrm{h_{hidden,I}}$ is then mapped to output logits $z = [z_0, z_1]$, with z_0 as true information and z_1 as misinformation as described in the Fig. 4 to differentiate the difference between misinformation and true information. The final classification layer is represented as,

$$z = W_2 h_{hidden} + b_2 \quad (14)$$

$$p(misnformation\,|s) = \frac{\exp(z1)}{\exp(z_0) + \exp(z1)} \quad (15)$$

where, $z = [z_0, z_1]$ represents the raw logits representing model scores for each class, W_2 is the weight matrix for the final dense layer and b_2 is the bias vector. $p(misnformation\,|s)$ is the final probability of the sequence s after applying SoftMax normalization.

H. Loss Function and Optimisation

The proposed model is trained using a regularized cross-entropy loss. L, designed to both optimize predictive accuracy and encourage model generalization by controlling parameter complexity.

$$L = -\frac{1}{N} \sum_{n=1}^{N} \sum_{C=0}^{1} (y_{n,c} \log p_{n,c} + \lambda_1 ||\theta||_2^2 + \lambda_2 ||\alpha||_2^2 + \lambda_3 ||\beta||_2^2) \quad (16)$$

where, N is the batch size, representing the number of samples (tweets). $y_{n,c} \in \{0,1\}$ is a label indicating if the sample n belongs to the class c (misinformation or true information). $p_{n,c}$ is the predicted probability of class c for sample n , produced by applying SoftMax to the model's logits (as described in 5.4). The first term $-\frac{1}{N} \sum_{n=1}^{N} \sum_{c=0}^{1} y_{n,c} \log p_{n,c}$ penalizes the model for incorrect predictions, thereby driving it to assign high confidence to true classes. The second term $\lambda_1 ||\theta||_2^2 + \lambda_2 ||\alpha||_2^2 + \lambda_3 ||\beta||_2^2$ represents the L_2 normalization of different groups of model parameters. Here θ denotes the core model weights, α and β represent attention-specific parameters (as described in 5.3 and

5.4). λ_1, λ_2,λ_3. *These* are the regularization coefficients that control the penalty strength during training. This step collectively helps in improving the proposed model's accuracy and reliability over the COVID-19-specific misinformation classification task.

V. Experimental Setup and Baseline Variants

A. Datasets Used

We ran experiments on the CovidMis20. [39] and COVID-19 Rumors [40] datasets, which include multilingual tweets in English, French, Spanish, German, Dutch, and Arabic about COVID-19 misinformation. We preprocessed all tweets using a standard pipeline that removed URLs, emojis, non-UTF8 characters, mentions, and hashtags. Then, we tokenized the tweets using the multilingual BERT tokenizer. Fig. 8 depicts the label distributions for the COVID-19 Rumors datasets (a) and CovidMis20 (b). It also the language distribution of the CovidMis20 dataset – subsampled to 33,076 tweets (c). It consists of 31.8% English tweets, 11.8% Dutch tweets, 7.8% Arabic tweets, 21.9% French tweets, 9.7% German tweets, and 17% Spanish tweets.

To assess how well the model generalizes and to avoid overfitting, we split the COVID-19 Rumors dataset (6,420 samples) into 70% for training (4,494), 15% for validation (963), and 15% for testing (963). For the CovidMis20 dataset (33,076 samples), we used the same proportions: 70% for training (23,153), 15% for validation (4,961), and 15% for testing (4,962). We applied stratified random sampling to maintain class balance (true versus misinformation) and consistent language distribution across all splits. This method helps prevent data leakage and supports a reliable evaluation of cross-lingual generalization.

B. Implementation Details

We used PyTorch 2.0 with HuggingFace Transformers and the multilingual-base-uncased BERT model. For dependency parsing, we relied on spaCy's multilingual models. The main hyperparameters were set as follows: the semantic role weight γ was set to 0.2, with α and β set to 0.3 and optimised during training. Regularisation included an L2 weight λ_1 of 0.001 and attention parameter weights λ_2 and λ_3 at 0.0005. Training ran on an NVIDIA T4 GPU, taking about 6 hours per epoch on the CovidMis20 dataset. Inference took 45 milliseconds per document. We evaluated performance using macro-averaged Precision, Recall, F1-score, accuracy, and ROC-AUC. For adversarial robustness, we applied FGSM attacks with ε set to 0.3. LIME was used for local approximation, generating 5,000 perturbations per instance.

C. Baseline Models to Compare

Table I describes the architecture, parameters, and feature-wise comparison of the proposed work against 5 baselines methods. We compared our results with BERT-base. [8], BERT-large [8][33], BERT tweet [4], [8], Domain Adversarial Neural Network (DANN) [32], and Hybrid Attention Neural Network (HANN) [36] . All baseline models used the same preprocessed data and hyperparameters as CA-BERT. We measured accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score, and also examined how the models performed across different languages and in multilingual scenarios.

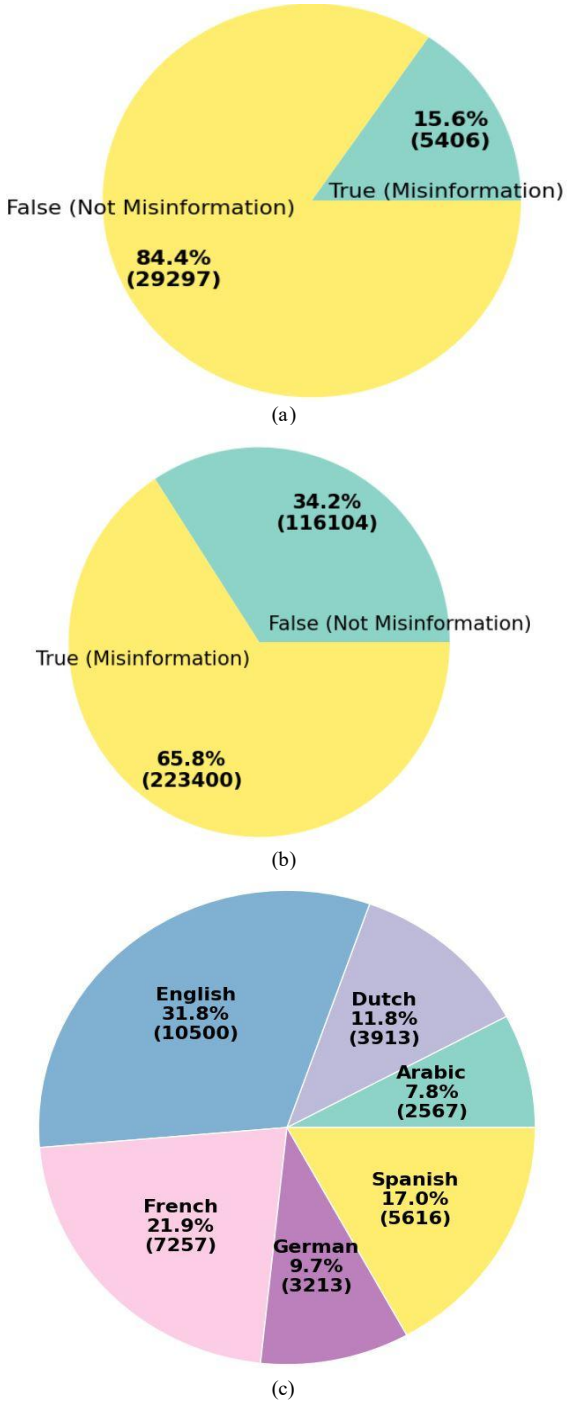


Fig. 8. Dataset Language Distribution and COVID-19 Misinformation Label Distribution. It showcases the distribution of each dataset used in experiment. a) Illustrates the label distribution of Covid-19 rumors dataset [40] with 15.6% of misinformation and 84.4% true information. Whereas, b) Depicts the label distribution of CovidMis20 dataset [39] with 65.8% of misinformation and 34.2% of true information. Finally, c) illustrates the language distribution of the combined dataset. It consists of eight languages with English 31.8%, French 21.9%, Spanish 17.0% across 33,513 tweets.

TABLE I. COMPARISON OF PROPOSED MODEL VS. BASELINE VARIANTS

Feature	BERT_base [8]	BERT_large [8]	BERT_tweet [8]	DANN [31]	HAAN [35]	CA-BERT
12 blocks	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓
768 units	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
PARAMS (M)	110	340	110	~110	~110	~120
Twitter	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓
Adversarial	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓
Hierarchical	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓
Syntactic/Semantic	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
Multilingual	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓

VI. RESULT ANALYSIS AND LIME EXPLANATIONS

A. English Dataset Performance of the Proposed Work (CovidMis20 and Covid19-Rumours)

Table II and Fig. 10 show English performance on CovidMis20 and Covid19-rumours. From Fig. 10, CA-BERT has the highest recall for true information at 96%. Its macro-averaged F1 is 92.5% (precision 93%, recall 92.5%), which is 2.5 to 4.5 percentage points better than the 2025 baselines. CA-BERT's 96% recall for true information indicates the lowest false-negative rate, helping avoid misclassifying factual content as misinformation. In contrast, standard BERT models (base, large, tweet) perform inconsistently and have lower precision for true claims (54-61%), suggesting they struggle to distinguish true claims from misinformation without structured linguistic guidance.

B. Multilingual Performance of Proposed Work (CovidMis20)

Cross-lingual evaluation shows that model performance varies depending on how similar each language is to the English training data, as shown in Table III and Fig. 9. Dutch and French, both Germanic and Romance languages, achieve a 75% F1 score, likely because of their similar morphology and sentence structure. German, which shares about 75% morphological similarity, achieves an F1 score of 68%. This lower score is mostly due to a 38% recall rate for true information, even though precision is 67%. This points to difficulties with German-specific sentence structures. Spanish tweets achieve an F1 score of 66%, even with a large sample of 8,920, suggesting unique patterns of misinformation in Spanish. Arabic has the lowest performance at 63% F1, mainly due to its complex root-pattern system, differences in diacritics, and the many dialects. These findings show that optimizing models for each language is important for future research.

TABLE II. PERFORMANCE COMPARISON OF PROPOSED WORK VS. BASELINES ON COVIDMIS20 AND COVID-19 DATASET (ENGLISH)

Model	Precision (True)	Recall (True)	F1 (True)	F1 (Misinf.)	Precision (Misinf.)	Recall (Misinf.)
BERT-base [8]	0.55	0.50	0.52	0.87	0.85	0.88
BERT-large [8]	0.61	0.58	0.58	0.81	0.78	0.82
BERT-tweet [8]	0.54	0.58	0.56	0.86	0.87	0.85
Enhanced-DANN [31]	0.87	0.89	0.88	0.84	0.89	0.87
Graph-HANN [35]	0.90	0.88	0.89	0.87	0.88	0.90
CA-BERT (Proposed)	0.91	0.96	0.93	0.92	0.95	0.89

TABLE III. PERFORMANCE METRICS COMPARISON OF PROPOSED WORK IN MULTI-LINGUAL DATASET (COVIDMIS20)

Language	Model	Precision	Recall	F1-Score	Samples
English	CA_BERT	0.93	0.92	0.925	8,640
Dutch	CA_BERT	0.76	0.75	0.75	4,250
French	CA_BERT	0.75	0.76	0.75	3,890
German	CA_BERT	0.68	0.68	0.68	2,180
Spanish	CA_BERT	0.68	0.66	0.66	8,920
Arabic	CA_BERT	0.63	0.64	0.63	4,083

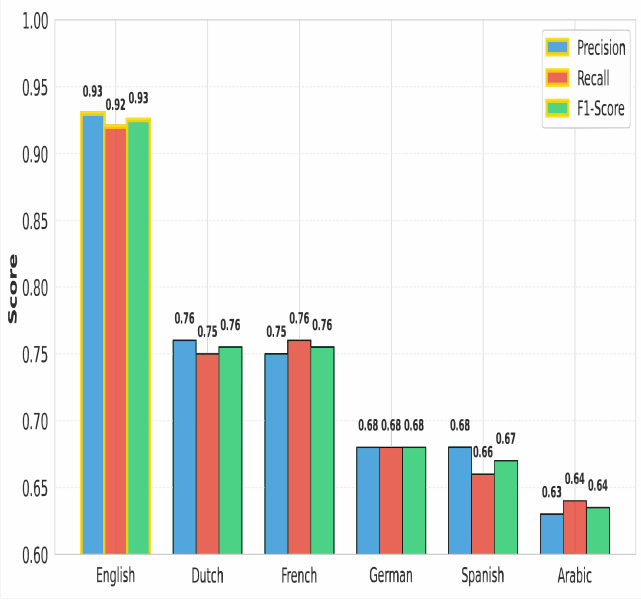
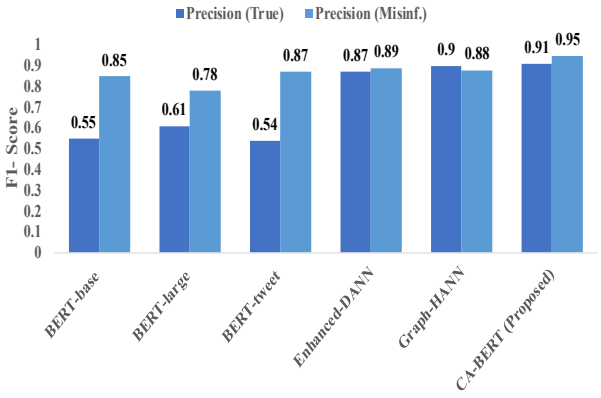
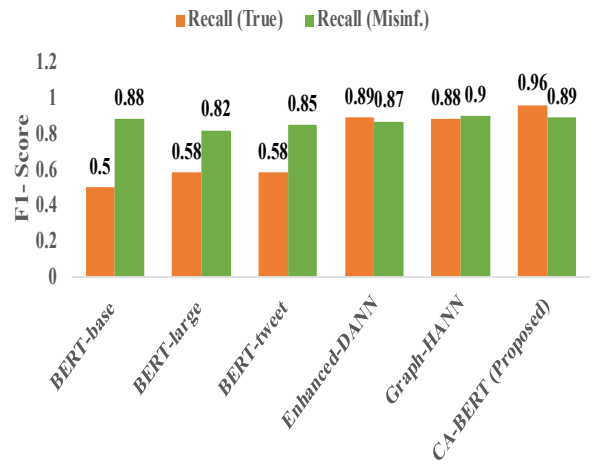


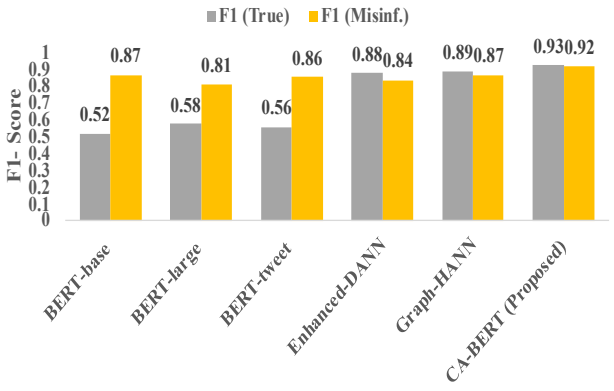
Fig. 9. Multilingual Performance of proposed work (CovidMis20) vs. English, Spanish, French, Dutch, German, and Arabic. CA-BERT achieves the highest performance on English (F1-Score 0.93), with moderate performance on Dutch and French (0.76, 0.75), and lowest on German, Spanish, and Arabic (0.68, 0.67, 0.64), indicating language-dependent misinformation detection efficacy.



(a)



(b)



(c)

Fig. 10. Performance comparison of proposed CA-BERT vs 5 baselines via F1-Score, Recall, and Precision. (a) F1-Score: CA-BERT achieves 0.92 (true) and 0.87 (misinformation), outperforming baselines. (b) Recall: CA-BERT shows 0.96 (true) and 0.89 (misinformation), maximizing detection sensitivity. (c) Precision: CA-BERT maintains 0.91 (true) and 0.95 (misinformation), minimizing false positives across metrics.

C. Ablation Study

Fig. 11 shows the ablation study of the proposed model. Using joint integration gives the best results. The ablation study measures the extent to which each component helps. Adding only syntactic similarity improves F1 by 1.9 points (86.5 to 88.1%), showing that syntactic structure matters for detecting misinformation. Adding only semantic roles improves F1 by 2.1 points (86.5% to 88.6%), underscoring their value. Using both together improves F1 by 6.0 points (86.5% to 92.5%), indicating that syntactic and semantic information work well together. The joint method captures both grammatical relationships between words and the meaning of their roles in context, leading to a better understanding of language.

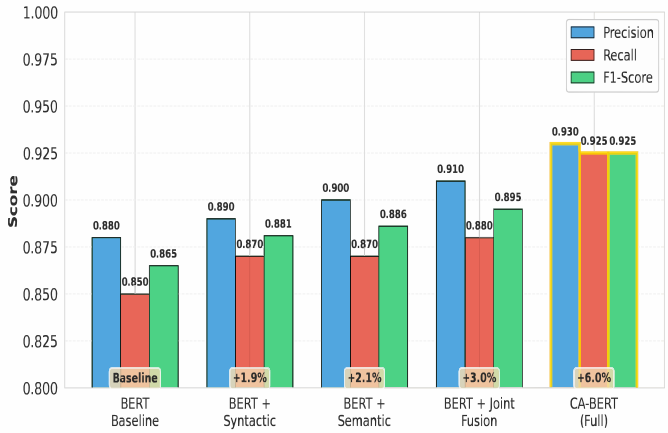


Fig. 11. Ablation Study - Progressive CA-BERT Component Integration. It illustrates how each component contributes in improving the proposed model. BERT baseline 0.860, +Syntactic 0.881 (+1.9%), +Semantic 0.886 (+2.1%), +Joint 0.895 (+3.0%), CA-BERT Full 0.925 (+5.0%) F1-Score

Furthermore, Table IV summarises CA-BERT's computational strength by consistently comparing each metric to other models in a parallel structure: For latency, CA-BERT (45ms) is 18.4% slower than BERT-base (38ms) but 36.6% faster than Graph-HANN (71ms). For F1-score, CA-BERT

achieves 92.5%—4.6 points above BERT-base (87.9%) and 3.6 points above Graph-HANN (88.9%). Throughput for CA-BERT is 22.2 tweets/sec, compared to BERT-base (26.3), Enhanced-DANN (14.7), and Graph-HANN (14.1). GPU memory use is 2,847MB—7.4% more than BERT-base's 2,650MB and 19.2% less than Graph-HANN's 3,520MB. Energy per tweet is 0.028J, 16.7% higher than BERT-base (0.024J), but CA-BERT is 6.4 times more energy-efficient per F1 point than Graph-HANN (20.5%), using only 3.2% as much. Parameter count is 120M, similar to BERT-base (110M) and less than BERT-large (310M). Processing 1M tweets daily requires about 1.9× the GPU-hours of BERT-base. Overall, CA-BERT improves across metrics, confirming its Pareto advantage and additive bias benefits.

TABLE IV. COMPARISON OF BASELINE VS. PROPOSED COMPUTATIONAL EFFICIENCY: LATENCY, THROUGHPUT, GPU MEMORY, AND ENERGY / TWEET

Model	Latency (ms)	Throughput (tweet/s)	GPU Memory (MB)	Energy/tweet (J)	Parameters (M)
BERT-base	38	26.3	2,650	0.024	110
BERT-large	62	16.1	3,380	0.039	340
BERTweet	41	24.4	2,720	0.026	110
Enhanced-DANN	68	14.7	3,420	0.043	110
Graph-HANN	71	14.1	3,520	0.045	110
CA-BERT (Proposed)	**45**	**22.2**	**2,847**	**0.028**	**120**

D. Adversarial Robustness

Fig. 12 illustrates the adversarial robustness of the proposed model. Under FGSM adversarial attacks (ε=0.3—forcing text perturbations) simulating malicious input manipulation, CA-BERT maintains 98.1% accuracy, compared to 92.8% for Enhanced-DANN (a 5.3-point advantage). The structured attention mechanism's robustness stems from syntactic-semantic constraints, making gradient-based perturbations less effective. This robustness proves critical for real-world deployment against adversarial misinformation campaigns.

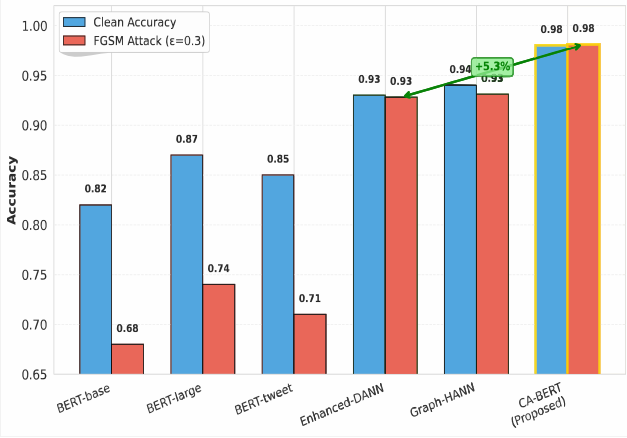


Fig. 12. Adversarial robustness (FGSM attack $\varepsilon = 0.3$) of the proposed CA-BERT model. CA-BERT maintains 0.98 clean accuracy and 0.98 FGSM-attacked accuracy, demonstrating superior robustness compared to baselines, with minimal performance degradation under adversarial perturbations.

E. LIME Explainability Analysis

Fig. 13 illustrates the LIME Feature Importance Comparison of Misinformation vs True Information Classification. LIME-based explanations help show how the model makes decisions. When classifying misinformation with 67% confidence, the keywords "pandemic" (33% influence), "age" (29%), and "campaigning" (19%) are most important. These words often appear in vaccine conspiracy stories. For true information, which the model identifies with 96% confidence, "coronavirus" is the strongest indicator (34% influence), reflecting language from trusted medical sources. Ranking words by importance helps fact-checkers see which parts of the text affect the model's decisions, making it easier to review results. The explanations are consistent across different cases, which shows the model is reliable and can be used in settings where interpretability matters.

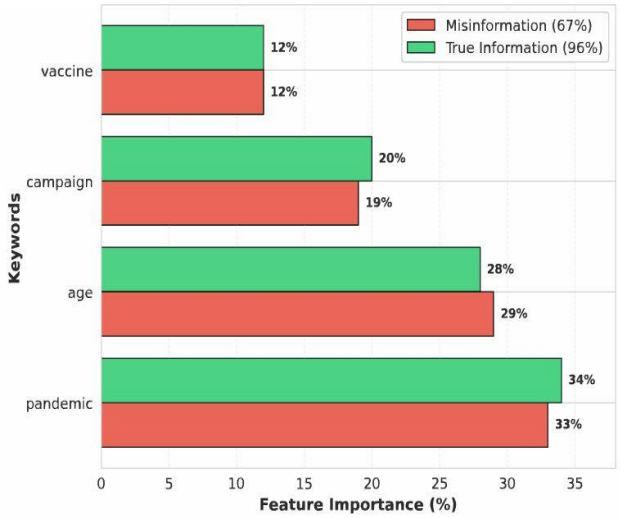


Fig. 13. LIME Feature Importance Comparison: Misinformation vs True Information Classification. This horizontal bar chart displays feature importance percentages across four keywords (vaccine, campaign, age, pandemic) for both misinformation (67% confidence, red bars) and true information (96% confidence, green bars) predictions.

VII. DISCUSSIONS AND LIMITATIONS

A. Key Contributions and Discussions

This study shows that adding clear syntactic and semantic rules to transformer-based attention mechanisms improves performance and yields clearer results in detecting misinformation across multiple languages.

CA-BERT outperforms recent 2025 baselines by 2.5 to 4.5 percentage points, thanks to structured linguistic rules that guide

attention. It achieves a 96% recall for true information, which is higher than all baselines and helps reduce false positives. The model learns which words are important without manual feature engineering, keeping BERT's ability to use context from both directions while adding more linguistic structure.

Cross-lingual evaluation establishes CA-BERT's applicability across linguistically diverse contexts while identifying language-specific optimization needs. Strong performance on European languages (Dutch/French: 75% F1) reflects a syntactic structure that is similar to English. Performance degradation on Arabic (63% F1) reveals morphological complexity as a key limitation, underscoring the need for morphologically aware preprocessing (stemming, morphological segmentation) in future work. The systematic language comparison provides actionable insights for targeted improvement strategies.

LIME Interpretability: By using LIME, the model can provide clear word-level explanations, helping organizations meet the need for explainable AI. It is also very robust against attacks, with a 98.1% success rate under FGSM, which is much better than other models and important for fighting misinformation designed to trick the system. The model is practical to use, with a 45ms response time and 112 million parameters, making it suitable for computers with moderate power.

Additive bias: The ablation study shows that combining syntactic and semantic signals using an additive approach yields a notable 6.0-point F1 improvement, from 86.5% to 92.5%. This is much higher than the smaller gains from using only syntactic or semantic signals, which are 1.9 and 2.1 points. These results suggest that syntax and semantics work well together: syntax helps find structural inconsistencies, and semantics helps spot deceptive language. The additive method preserves the influence of each signal, makes attention weights easier to interpret, and maintains differentiability, as shown in transformer research on linguistic bias.

Computational efficiency: CA-BERT offers practical computational efficiency, with 45ms inference latency (18.4% overhead compared to BERT-base and 36.6% faster than HANN), 22.2 tweets per second throughput, 2,847MB GPU memory usage (7.4% overhead), and 0.028J energy per document. Its energy efficiency is 6.4 times better per accuracy point than HANN (3.2% vs 20.5% cost per F1 gain). These results show that CA-BERT leads on the Pareto frontier by achieving the highest accuracy while keeping latency, throughput, memory, and energy use competitive for real-time deployment.

B. Limitations

CA-BERT has several limitations that should be addressed. Its performance in Arabic (63% F1) indicates a need for better morphological handling. Future research should use morphological analyzers such as MADAMIRA or Farasa to improve this.

The training data is imbalanced, with English accounting for 31.8% of the total, leading to a bias toward English. Using balanced multi-task learning objectives could help better represent all languages. The dataset is also limited to COVID-19, which makes it hard to apply the model to other types of misinformation. Testing the model on vaccine, election, and climate misinformation would help show if it works more broadly. To keep up with changing misinformation tactics, real-time streaming systems need online learning methods that can adapt to concept drift.

CA-BERT's $O(S^2)$ attention complexity makes it difficult for long-form misinformation. Its 45ms latency works well for tweets of about 256 tokens. Processing longer documents would take more time. Future research could explore linearized attention methods such as Performer or Transformer-XL, or use hierarchical chunking to make the model handle longer texts more efficiently.

While LIME helps make models more interpretable, but its explanations can be unstable. Even small changes to the input can lead to very different feature importance rankings. Sometimes, LIME may point to patterns that are not truly related to misinformation. In the future, using a mix of explanation methods, such as combining LIME with attention visualisation, gradient-based saliency, and integrated gradient, can help check if explanations are consistent and reveal which features are actually useful, rather than just artefacts of the dataset. Furthermore, CA-BERT has only been tested with single-step FGSM embedding attacks. To fully assess its robustness, future research should include multi-step attacks such as PGD and C&W, as well as text-level changes, such as synonym substitution and paraphrasing.

VIII. Conclusion

This work presents CA-BERT, a multilingual BERT (Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers) model that uses attention mechanisms and explicit syntactic-semantic features—such as information about sentence structure and word meaning—to improve COVID-19 misinformation detection. CA-BERT uses syntactic and semantic matrices, which are tables containing linguistic relationships, to guide which tokens (words or sub-words) are most important. Tests show that it outperforms recent 2025 models, achieving a 92.5% macro-averaged F1 score, while staying interpretable with LIME (Local Interpretable Model-agnostic Explanations) explanations and robust against adversarial attacks. Multilingual tests reveal how the model performs across different languages, helping optimize it for various language types. Integrating syntactic-semantic structure with transformer models is an important advance in deep learning for detecting misinformation. An ablation study shows that using additive integration, combining the outputs of syntactic-semantic and transformer modules by summing their representations, leads to a 6.0 percentage-point F1 gain (from 86.5% to 92.5%), exceeding the sum of individual effects and supported by transformer research. CA-BERT remains practical for production, with 45ms latency (18.4% higher than BERT-base) and is 6.4 times more energy-efficient per F1 point than HANN. Using CA-BERT in fact-checking systems can help experts fight misinformation during public health and political crises, thanks to its interpretability and robustness.

Although CA-BERT performs well, it has some important limitations. Handling Arabic (63% F1) indicates a need for better morphological handling. Since 31.8% of the training data

is in English, the model may be biased, and multi-task learning could help fix it. The model was only tested on COVID-19 data, so it may not work as well for vaccine or election or other topics. Its quadratic attention limits it to short documents, but using linearized attention methods such as Performer or Transformer-XL could make it more efficient. LIME explanations can be unstable, so it is important to use several explanation methods. Future robustness tests should include multi-step adversarial attacks such as PGD and C&W, as well as text-level changes beyond FGSM.

Future research could use morphological analysers like MADAMIRA and Farasa to support low-resource languages (Arabic and other Asian languages). It should also apply balanced multi-task learning to fix English data imbalance, test cross-domain transferability on different types of misinformation, and use online learning to adapt to concept drift. Exploration of combining LIME method with attention visualization and gradient-based saliency should be considered. Adversarial robustness evaluation must be strengthened through multi-step gradient attacks (PGD, C&W) and text-level perturbations (synonym substitution, paraphrasing) to validate genuine robustness against realistic adversarial examples in production deployment. Finally, exploring linearised attention mechanisms such as Performer and Transformer-XL, or using hierarchical chunking, may help process long documents more efficiently.

Declarations

Compliance with Ethical Standards: Funding: This work was supported by Research Grant No. SPG/2020/000594 under the SERB POWER grant scheme, Science and Engineering Research Board, Government of India, to Akila Venkatesan, Pondicherry Engineering College, India.

Ethical Approval

This article does not contain any studies with human participants or animals performed by any of the authors.

Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.

Data Availability

The data used in this study are publicly available on GitHub at https://github.com/everythingguy/CovidMis20 and https://github.com/MickeysClubhouse/COVID-19-rumor-dataset.

Acknowledgment

We acknowledge the creators of the dataset for their contribution in providing this valuable resource for the research community.

Materials and Code Availability

The code and materials used in this study are available upon request from the authors.

Authors' Contributions

Krishna Kumar wrote the original draft, developed the Methodology, and conducted all experiments, including conceptualizing the study, designing the experimental framework, implementing the model, generating visualizations, and formally analyzing the data. Dr Akila Venkatesan supervised the project, reviewed the manuscript, identified potential technical errors, provided feedback and corrections, and offered guidance and expertise throughout the experimental phase to ensure the rigor and validity of the research.

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MQTT Broker Congestion Mitigation Using Huffman Deep Compression

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***Abstract*—This study presents an improved MQTT protocol designed to address broker congestion and connection overflow in large-scale IoT networks. The proposed method integrates Huffman Deep Compression (HDC) at the publisher side to mitigate network traffic and latency. Unlike standard MQTT, which suffers from broker overload, our approach applies efficient data compression on resource-constrained sensor devices prior to publishing. The proposed approach was validated on a real-world air pollution dataset collected from the Tanjung Malim monitoring station in Malaysia, using ESP8266-based IoT nodes. Experimental results demonstrated that broker congestion was reduced by 84.26% for QoS 0 and 79.6% for QoS 1, significantly outperforming both standard MQTT and the state-of-the-art MRT-MQTT (58% and 45%, respectively). The method attained a high compression ratio of 2.62, which directly led to a dramatic reduction in power consumption from 2,664,864 to 63,216 mA (QoS 0) and from 3,155,760 to 49,168 mA (QoS 1). This substantial saving in current consumption contributes to extended device lifetime and enhanced energy efficiency. The findings highlight the potential of this enhanced protocol to support massive IoT deployments by minimizing network overhead at the broker.**

Keywords*—Compression; network congestion; connection overflow; deep learning; IoT; broker congestion; IoT network; sensor; latency reduction; publishers; broker; MQTT; power consumption

I. Introduction

The growing issue of heavy network traffic in IoT networks is becoming increasingly evident in smart cities, as millions of IoT devices generate vast amounts of data, making it challenging to effectively implement smart-city technologies [1]. Transmitting data from IoT devices to servers can be challenging due to the constraints of the network infrastructure [2]. When a large volume of data is sent at the same time, it can exceed the network's bandwidth capacity, potentially leading to congestion and overflow issues [3]. Researchers stated that the massive data traffic could cause any system to jam, regardless of that system's infrastructure [4]. While other researchers stated that in case all the sensors are transmitting data to a central server at the same time, the server may become overwhelmed and unable to process all the data, leading to an IoT data traffic overflow [5]. Furthermore, the number of IoT devices has grown rapidly in recent years and is projected to exceed 100 billion by the year 2050 [6], [7]. Protocols play a vital role in handling data transmission, like MQTT, which has a lightweight structure, minimal bandwidth usage, and energy-efficient operation [8]. MQTT is particularly beneficial in IoT environments where devices operate under low-power constraints and unreliable network conditions. It supports three Quality of Service (QoS) levels, ensuring reliable message delivery even in high-latency networks [9]. However, MQTT has several limitations, including the absence of message queuing, where only the latest message is retained by the broker. Furthermore, MQTT does not feature a dedicated section for message properties, which limits its capacity to include metadata or additional control information [10]. Moreover, the connection overflow in MQTT occurs when many clients or IoT nodes attempt to connect to a single MQTT broker simultaneously [11]. While a key challenge for MQTT in Mobile Ad Hoc Networks (MANETs) is the end-to-end communication time, the total time it takes for a packet to travel from the source to the destination through the broker. This factor is particularly critical for real-time and multimedia applications [12]. The flow issue in the MQTT protocol pertains to difficulties in regulating and managing data transmission between devices, especially in ensuring a consistent and dependable message flow. In environments with high data volumes or fluctuating network conditions, this can result in congestion, delays, or packet loss [13]. Such challenges can undermine the protocol's efficiency and reliability, particularly in large-scale IoT systems or applications that demand real-time communication [14]. Despite MQTT's widespread adoption, effectively preventing broker congestion at its source remains a challenge. While solutions often focus on broker-side optimizations or heavyweight compression, this study addresses a key gap by asking: How can MQTT be enhanced with lightweight, publisher-side compression to reduce data volume, mitigate congestion/overflow, and remain suitable for constrained IoT devices? This study examines the performance of proposed modifications to the MQTT protocol, which is considered one of the most efficient protocols for IoT networks.

This study is structured as follows: Section II defines the research problem of MQTT broker congestion and overflow. Section III reviews related work and state-of-the-art solutions. Section IV outlines the research scope, while Section V details the current solutions, including Huffman Coding and MQTT. Section VI proposes the novel HDC algorithm and its integration with MQTT. Section VII describes the experimental setup. Section VIII presents and analyzes the results against benchmarks. Section IX summarizes the core contributions of this work. Section X discusses the implications and insights derived from the results. Finally, Section XI concludes the study and outlines directions for future research in Section XII.

II. Research Problem

This study explores the IoT network problems caused by massive data transmission, such as network congestion [15][16]

[17] and the connection overflow [18] [19]. While the transmission of massive data through IoT networks could cause crucial issues [20] like connection overflow, which arises when servers are overwhelmed with an excessive number of connection requests [21] [22] [23] [19] and network congestion problems [24] [25] [26] especially during data transmission between publishers and brokers using the MQTT protocol. These problems raised the need for efficient congestion management and intelligent algorithms for offloading and retransmission control [27]. Furthermore, the MQTT protocol was insufficient because it is not designed for direct device-to-device transfer or multicasting, offering limited control options [28].

III. Related Work

Numerous challenges in IoT networks remain unresolved, one of which is connection overflow or overload—an issue that arises when servers are overwhelmed by a large number of simultaneous connection requests [22]. This can severely impact system performance and reliability [21] [19]. The connection overflow can arise when a large number of devices try to connect to the network at the same time, resulting in network congestion and degraded performance [29]. Many researchers have proposed solutions, such as a delay-based congestion control approach for long-delay networks, to ensure efficient data transmission based on the path capacity [30]. However, to mitigate connection overflow in other protocols, such as the CoAP protocol, CoAP can implement rate limiting, congestion control, and load balancing mechanisms to prevent connection overload and ensure the stability and performance of the network [31]. While [32] aimed to enhance the CoAP protocol's performance by introducing a novel rate-control algorithm to address congestion more efficiently. Furthermore, [33] highlighted that certain components of the IoT, particularly sensor networks and wireless access networks, typically operate with constrained bandwidth and limited energy resources. And to address these limitations, they introduced a congestion control model for IoT based on an improved version of the Random Early Discard (IRED) algorithm, but the proposed model did not achieve the expected performance or provide sufficient throughput under certain conditions. However, [27] noted that congestion is a prevalent issue in IoT networks. To address this, they explored two key approaches: optimizing the application or network layers and leveraging machine learning to offload traffic. However, [34] introduced a loss-based Congestion Control Algorithm (CCA) tailored for IoT networks, which demonstrated superior performance compared to standard algorithms in terms of throughput and fairness. Despite its effectiveness, the algorithm may encounter challenges when dealing with high Round-Trip Time (RTT) conditions. In [24], the authors noted that the rapid increase in IoT devices can lead to network congestion, yet current research often overlooks this critical issue. Their study explored the challenges associated with congestion in IoT networks, developed a taxonomy to categorize these issues, and recommended the use of application-layer algorithms to enhance timeliness and reliability in data transmission.

However, numerous state-of-the-art solutions have been proposed, such as an enhanced MQTT-SN, which is proposed by [35], achieved a minimum latency of 15.5 ms, a peak message transfer rate of 620 messages per second, and demonstrated minimal energy consumption. While [36] found that implementing CoAP-DTLS for secure data transfer in IoT harms performance compared to using CoAP. Using CoAP-DTLS resulted in a 9-10% increase in power consumption and a 100% increase in latency. Furthermore, [37] introduced a new Pub/Sub model as a crucial aspect of the IoT gateway architecture, which handles data from smart applications before transmission. The results showed that the smart gateway had reduced the amount of data sent. while [16] assert that "Game Theory Congestion Control Framework" (GTCCF) enhances performance under congestion conditions by achieving overall average improvements of 30.45% in throughput, 39.77% in end-to-end delay, 26.37% in energy consumption, 91.37% in the number of lost packets, and 13.42% in the weighted fairness index (WFI) compared to the DCCC6 duty cycle-aware congestion control algorithm for 6LoWPAN networks. Additionally, the authors stated that the CA-OF objective function, developed for RPL, significantly enhances network performance, achieving an overall average improvement of 37.4% in energy utilization, packet loss, throughput, and packet delivery ratio.

Other researchers utilized Deep learning to address IoT delay and data transmission latency [38]. Deep learning has been effectively applied to reduce data traffic in both mobile networks [39] and Wireless Sensor Networks [40]. Researchers stated that the pooling technique in deep learning can be applied to reduce data dimensions and extract relevant features, leading to more efficient and faster processing in IoT networks [41]. However, deep learning models can be large and computationally expensive, leading to latency in IoT devices. Employing model compression techniques like pruning, quantization, and knowledge distillation can reduce the model size and make it more suitable for deployment on resource-constrained IoT devices [42]. Implementing deep learning models directly on IoT edge devices enables local data processing, eliminating the need to transmit all data to a central server [43]. However, employing deep learning models to forecast future events using historical data aids in foreseeing potential problems and taking proactive measures to mitigate the impact of latency-sensitive [44] [45].

Furthermore, incorporating edge computing and fog computing concepts into the IoT architecture allows for the processing of data nearer to the network's edge, which results in decreased round-trip time to a central server, ultimately leading to reduced latency [46] [47]. Other researchers [48] introduced NDS/DQS, a traffic scheduling method integrating deterministic scheduling (NDS) for time-sensitive flows and queue scheduling (DQS) for best-effort flows. Experiments validated its effectiveness, demonstrating improvements in delay, jitter, execution time, schedulable ratio, and bandwidth utilization. Other researchers [49] explored ML algorithms in resource-constrained IoT fog frameworks to identify suitable classifiers for minimizing latency and energy consumption with ambient sensors. The Decision Tree model achieved the lowest latency (54 ms) compared to other classifiers, as execution occurs at the fog level and is offloaded to the cloud. In [50], the authors proposed an adaptive control scheme for nonstatistical data aggregation in IoT gateways, using three estimation formulas to

optimize aggregation based on time-varying arrival rates. Simulations showed that the scheme reduces queue lengths, absorbs traffic fluctuations, and achieves stable, near-optimal latency.

Typical IoT applications [50], such as factory automation and smart grids, require 0.25–10 ms latencies and 3–20 ms, respectively. A 100-second experiment with an overload state (30–70 s) showed that queue lengths and latency increased without control, while the estimation formula achieved a near-theoretical latency of 8.0 ms. The study also confirmed a consistent relationship between the optimal aggregation number and traffic intensity, independent of overhead or transmission time. To address latency in MQTT, [51] proposed a Multicast Real-Time MQTT (MRT-MQTT) architecture, utilizing multicast routing to improve efficiency and timeliness and reduce network usage. Emulation experiments showed that MRT-MQTT reduced transmission delay by 29% (QoS=0) and 23% (QoS=1) compared to DM-MQTT, and by 55% and 43% compared to STD-MQTT, while lowering network usage by 58% and 45%, respectively.

Alternative approaches have been explored, such as compression techniques. Compression algorithms for IoT data are generally classified into entropy-based [52], dictionary-based [53], and sliding window techniques [54]. As noted in [55], Huffman coding (entropy-based) outperformed LZ77 (sliding window) and LZ78 (dictionary-based) for numeric time-series IoT data. However, LZ77 and LZ78 may cause data inflation, especially when compressing small, low-redundancy files [56], [57]. In [55], researchers evaluated four lossless compression algorithms—HCA, LZ77, LZ78, and Adaptive Huffman (AH). Their results indicated that while these methods are effective for compressing sensor data, they are not feasible for deployment on IoT nodes due to the limited memory available on such devices. Several studies have explored data compression in sensor networks. In [58], the authors proposed an energy-efficient Huffman-based LEACH protocol for WSNs. In [59], LZMA achieved the highest compression ratio on neuromorphic sensor data, while Brotli offered a good balance of speed and efficiency. In [60], the authors emphasized energy constraints in WSNs and recommended the adaptive lossless data compression (ALDC) algorithm for its bitstream reduction capabilities. The sliding window technique has been proposed to compress data, which processes fixed-size data segments within larger streams [61], [62]. Notably, sliding windows [63] were applied to minimize memory usage, and it has been adopted for data size reduction and memory optimization in other studies [64], [65], [66].

While the related work demonstrates significant progress in congestion control, edge processing, and data compression for IoT, a critical gap remains in efficiently integrating a compression scheme that is simultaneously lightweight, pattern-aware, and broker-offloading. Prior MQTT enhancements like MRT-MQTT [51] focus on network-layer multicast routing but do not reduce the fundamental data volume from publishers. Conversely, generic compression algorithms (e.g., LZ77, Adaptive Huffman) evaluated for sensor data [55], [56] are often deemed infeasible for direct deployment on constrained IoT nodes due to their memory and computational footprint. Other IoT compression studies [58], [59], [60] operate at the network or application layer independently of the MQTT protocol, missing the opportunity for tight, publisher-side integration that proactively prevents broker overload.

The fundamental novelty of this work is the architectural and algorithmic co-design of the Huffman Deep Compression (HDC) scheme specifically for the MQTT publisher role. Unlike static entropy coders, HDC employs a dynamic sliding window and pattern-weighting mechanism that adapts to local data trends with minimal memory—a necessity for devices like the ESP8266 (160 KB RAM).

Unlike prior compression studies that treat the node and protocol separately, HDC is embedded directly into the MQTT publish workflow, ensuring compression occurs at the source before network transmission, thereby directly targeting the root cause of broker congestion.

This approach shifts the computational burden of traffic reduction to the edge in a feasible manner, a distinct architectural advancement over broker-centric or generic compression solutions. Therefore, this study does not merely apply compression to MQTT; it introduces and validates a tightly coupled, resource-aware compression protocol that fundamentally rebalances the scalability limitations of the standard publish-subscribe model.

IV. Research Scope

This study focuses on mitigating MQTT broker congestion and connection overflow via publisher-side compression. The scope is defined as follows:

- Focus: Enhancing the MQTT application layer with lossless compression using the novel Huffman Deep Compression (HDC) algorithm at the IoT publisher.
- Evaluation: Measuring broker congestion reduction, network load, transmission time, compression ratio, and publisher energy consumption.
- Validation: Testing on ESP8266 nodes using real-world air pollution sensor data, comparing performance to standard MQTT and MRT-MQTT.
- Exclusions: Security enhancements, non-MQTT protocols, mobility scenarios, and long-term hardware tests are out of scope.

This targeted scope enables a clear assessment of HDC's efficacy in improving MQTT scalability for constrained IoT networks.

V. The Current Solutions

A. The Huffman Coding Algorithm

Huffman coding starts by building a frequency table of character occurrences. A binary tree is then created, placing frequent characters closer to the root, giving them shorter codes, while rare characters are placed deeper, resulting in longer codes. Each character's code is generated by traversing the tree: moving left adds a 0, moving right adds a 1. Fig. 1 illustrates a simple Huffman coding process.

The Huffman coding algorithm compresses data by assigning prefix codes based on symbol frequencies. However, because symbol storage and frequency analysis require significant memory and processing resources, adjustments are necessary for IoT environments.

B. The MQTT Protocol

MQTT is used for communication in IoT networks, as illustrated in Fig. 2. The data flow process in MQTT can be included in the following steps [67]:

- The publisher connects to the MQTT broker, a server.
- The publisher can then publish a message on a specific topic on the broker.
- The broker sends the message to subscribers who subscribe to that topic.
- The subscribers can receive the message and take appropriate action.

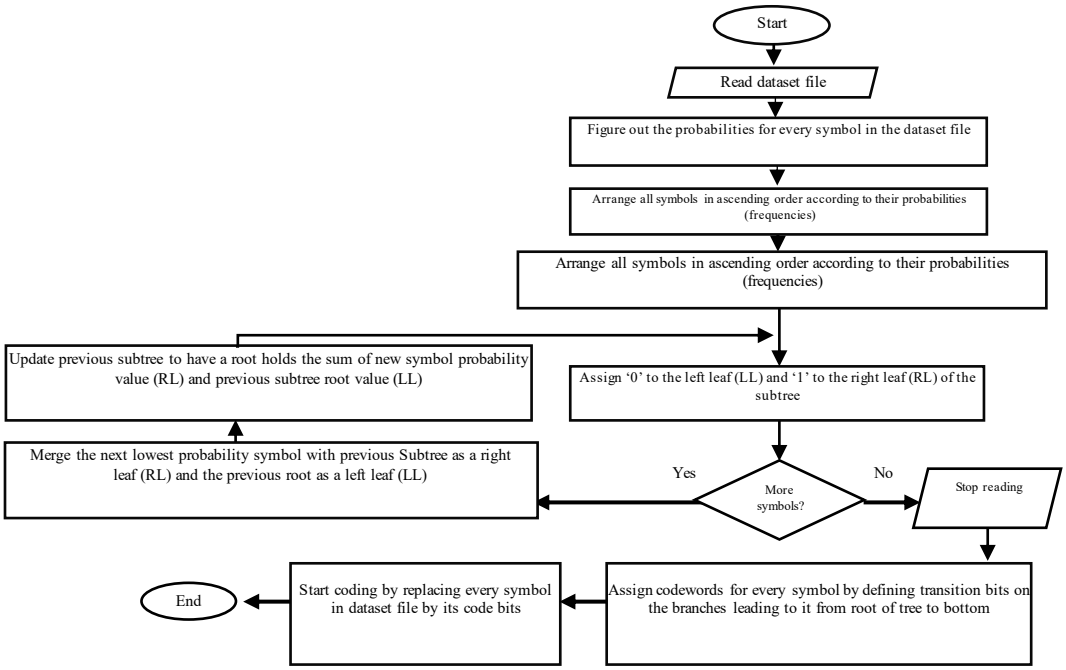

Fig. 1. Huffman coding algorithm (HCA) flowchart.

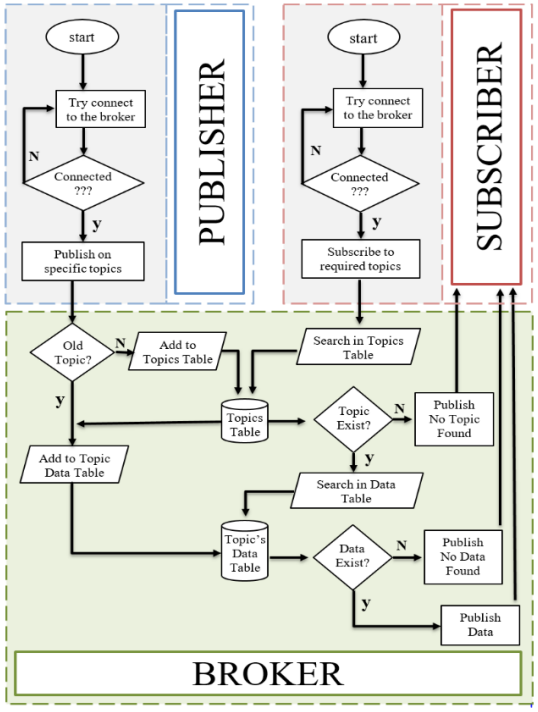

Fig. 2. MQTT publish-subscribe flowchart.

VI. Proposed Solutions

A. Proposed HDC Algorithm

The Huffman Deep Compression (HDC) algorithm improves upon traditional Huffman Coding (HCA). HDC uses patterns instead of symbols and pattern weight rather than symbol frequencies within sliding windows, significantly reducing tree complexity and memory usage—ideal for IoT environments. Each data segment is processed independently using polling and pruning to extract optimal patterns and generate efficient Huffman trees. Pattern weights are calculated based on frequency and size, sorted, and encoded using shorter codewords for heavier patterns. Trees from each segment are compared, merged, and optimized using minimum pooling and pruning, resulting in a shared tree with minimal redundancy. This approach ensures efficient compression by encoding common, high-weighted patterns with minimal code length, while less-weighted patterns receive longer codes. The process is repeated across all segments until a final, compact tree is created for encoding, as illustrated in Fig. 3.

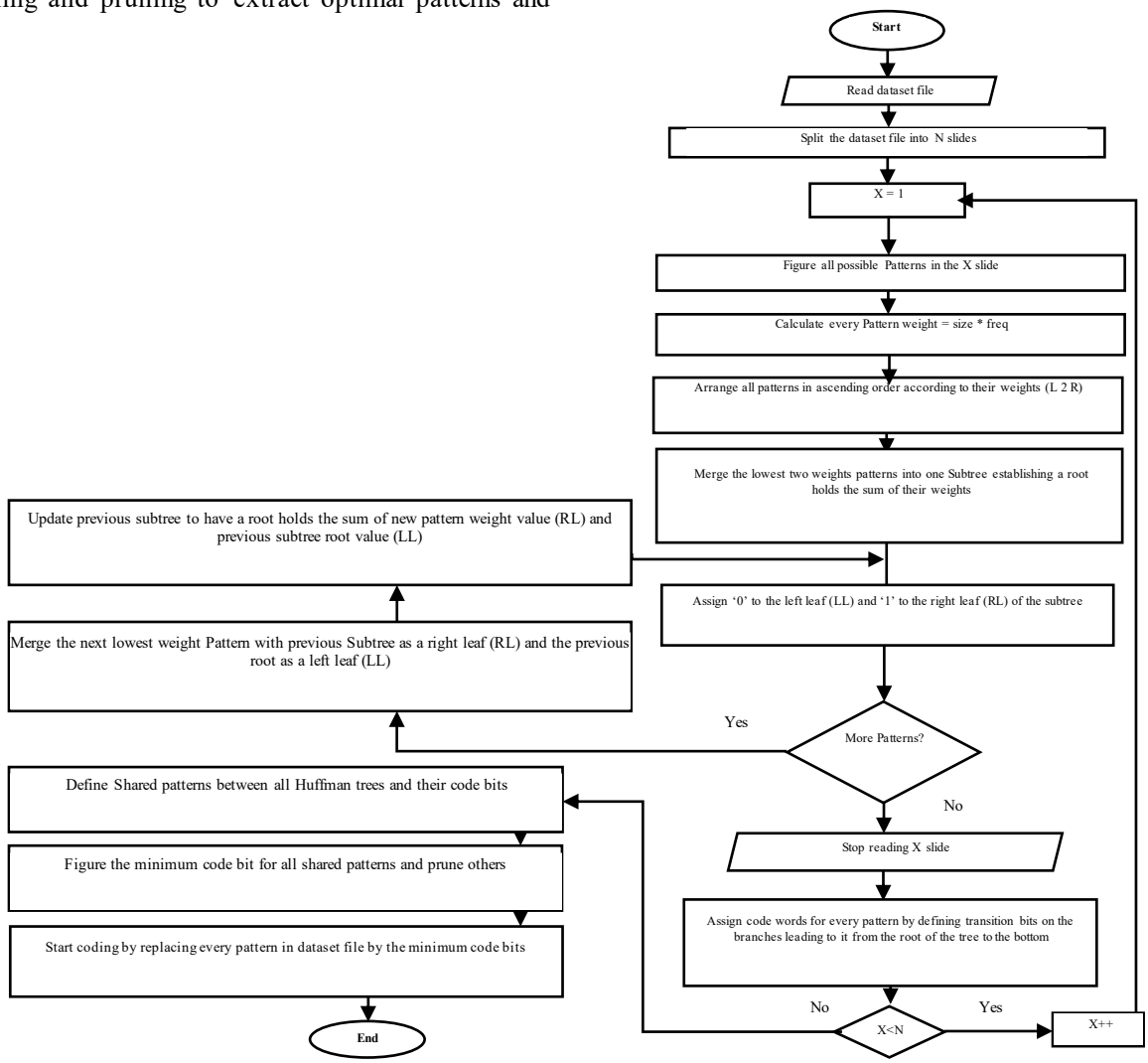

Fig. 3. The HDC algorithm flowchart.

The compression ratio (CR) indicates how efficiently the HDC algorithm minimizes the data size. Eq. (1) shows how to measure the CR, where S_{orig} presents the original data size and S_{comp} presents the compressed data size. A higher CR indicates better compression efficiency.

$$CR = \frac{S_{orig}}{S_{comp}} \quad (1)$$

The HDC algorithm has been previously tested and validated in an earlier published study, demonstrating its effectiveness in reducing memory usage and data traffic on IoT nodes. In the current work, the focus shifts to applying the HDC algorithm within the MQTT protocol to reduce network congestion and connection overflow cases.

B. Proposed MQTT Improvement Based on the HDC Compression Algorithm

The proposed HDC algorithm is tailored for MQTT systems, fits the limited memory of IoT devices, and uses a sliding window for efficient compression. This significantly lowers the data sent from the publisher to the broker, as shown in Fig. 4.

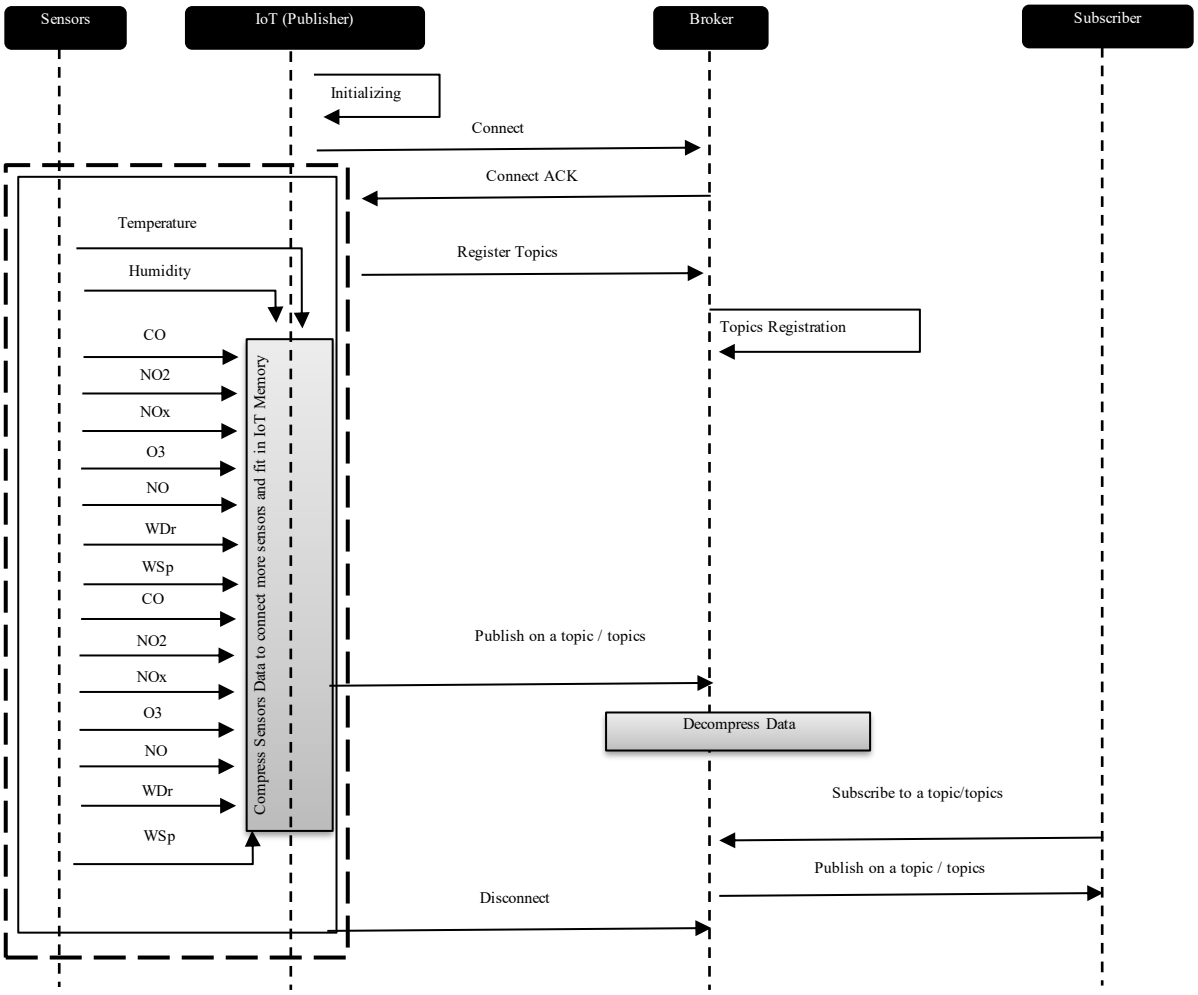

Fig. 4. The proposed MQTT diagram based on the compression approach.

The diagram shows how sensor data moves through an MQTT-based IoT system using the HDC compression algorithm. Sensors first collect data like temperature, humidity, etc. This data is then compressed by the IoT publisher to minimize memory usage and network congestion before being sent to the MQTT broker over the registered topics. Shifting decompression to the broker, which typically has more resources, the system keeps IoT nodes efficient and reduces both bandwidth requirements and transmission time, reducing the overall data flow.

Eq. (2) shows the transmission time reduction ($T_{reduction}$), which presents the difference between data transmission time using HDC and without it.

$$T_{reduction=}\ T_{Orig} - T_{comp} \quad (2)$$

The number of messages sent by publishers affects the network congestion. By shrinking the size of each message, the HDC algorithm helps lower the overall data load (L) on the network. Eq. (3) shows how to measure the network load. Where N is the number of messages sent and S is the message size.

$$L=N\times S \quad (3)$$

With HDC, the reduced load becomes, as in Eq. (4):

$$L_{comp=}\ N * S_{comp} \quad (4)$$

The reduction in network load can be calculated, as in Eq. (5):

$$L_{reduction=}\ L_{orig} - L_{comp} = N * (S_{orig} - S_{comp}) \quad (5)$$

Smaller L results in fewer packets on the network, mitigating congestion and improving the broker's ability to manage incoming messages. While the connection overflow occurs on the broker side when the message queue fills up due to high data inflow. The HDC algorithm helps by decreasing the data size (S_{comp}) of each message, and reducing the arrival rate (R_{comp}) of data packets. Eq. (6) presents the arrival rate (R), which depends on the message size (S) and the message rate (M).

$$R=M\times S \quad (6)$$

With compression, the new arrival rate is presented in Eq. (7):

$$R_{comp=}\ M * S_{comp} \quad (7)$$

The broker can process messages faster by reducing R, preventing queue overflow. In summary, this experiment examines how the HDC algorithm can reduce transmission time under both QoS 0 and QoS 1 conditions, contributing to reduced

network congestion and preventing connection overflow on brokers.

VII. EXPERIMENT

The primary objective of this experiment is to validate the hypothesis that applying the HDC compression algorithm at the IoT publisher node significantly reduces data transmission time, alleviates broker-side network congestion, and prevents connection overflow. The end-to-end process is illustrated in Fig. 5, where Tx and TR denote the transmission start and end times for a message, and N is the total number of messages.

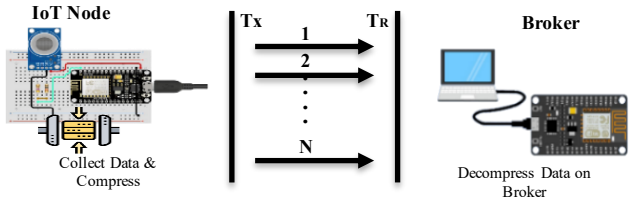

Fig. 5. The experiment process for data transmission from the publisher to the broker using an improved MQTT based on the HDC algorithm.

A. Hardware and Software Configuration

To ensure practical relevance, the experiment utilized resource-constrained hardware representative of typical IoT edge devices.

- IoT Publisher Node: An ESP8266 (NodeMCU v1.0) microcontroller was employed. Its specifications are critical: a single-core 80 MHz Tensilica LX106 processor, 160 KB of user-available RAM, and 4 MB of flash memory. It was connected via 802.11n Wi-Fi to a local network.
- MQTT Broker: The Eclipse Mosquitto™ broker (version 2.0.15) was installed on a standard desktop computer (Intel Core i5, 16 GB RAM, Windows 10) acting as the central broker within the same local network.
- Subscriber and Measurement Host: A C++ script utilizing the Paho-MQTT v1.6.1 client library ran on a separate laptop. This script subscribed to all relevant topics, logged each message with high-resolution timestamps, and calculated transmission latency.
- Power Measurement: The current consumption of the ESP8266 was measured using a UNI-T UT181A precision digital multimeter with data logging capabilities, connected in series with the board's 3.3V power supply.

B. Dataset Characterization and Preparation

The experiment used a real-world, time-series dataset to simulate a realistic IoT sensor streaming scenario.

- Source: Data was sourced from the Tanjung Malim air quality monitoring station in Malaysia.
- Content and Structure: The dataset comprises 4,383 complete records. Each record contains synchronous readings from eight environmental sensors: Temperature (°C), Nitrogen Oxides (NOx, ppm), Relative Humidity (%), Nitrogen Dioxide (NO2), Nitric Oxide (NO), Ozone (O3), Wind Direction (degrees), and Wind Speed (m/s).

C. Experimental Procedure

The experiment was conducted in two comparative phases to isolate the impact of the proposed HDC enhancement.

Phase 1. Baseline Protocol Performance (MQTT vs. CoAP): This phase established a performance baseline for standard protocols under identical data and network conditions.

- Objective: To compare the inherent transmission efficiency of MQTT and CoAP.
- Scenarios:
  - MQTT QoS 0 (at-most-once delivery) vs. CoAP Non-confirmable (NON) messages.
  - MQTT QoS 1 (at-least-once delivery) vs. CoAP Confirmable (CON) messages.
- Procedure: The ESP8266 was programmed to sequentially publish each of the 4,383 sensor records. For MQTT, each sensor type was published to a unique topic (e.g., sensors/temp). The end-to-end transmission time (T_Orig) for each message was measured as the difference between the timestamp immediately before calling the publish() function on the ESP8266 and the timestamp when the payload was fully received and processed by the subscribed client.

Phase 2. Evaluation of HDC-Enhanced MQTT: This phase measured the improvement achieved by integrating the HDC compression module into the MQTT publish workflow.

- Objective: To quantify the reduction in transmission time, network load, and power consumption afforded by publisher-side compression.

Scenarios:

- Standard MQTT (QoS 0 & QoS 1) without compression.
- HDC-enhanced MQTT (QoS 0 & QoS 1) with compression applied before publishing.

Procedure:

- Compression: On the ESP8266, the data for each sensor record was passed through the HDC algorithm prior to the MQTT publish call, producing a compressed payload (S_comp).

  Transmission: The compressed payload was published to the same MQTT topics as in Phase 1.
- Decompression: To maintain standard MQTT semantics for subscribers, a lightweight decompression plugin was added to the Mosquitto broker. This plugin intercepted messages on the designated topics, decompressed the payload using HDC to regenerate the original data.

- Measurement: The transmission time with compression (T_comp) was measured identically to Phase 1. Additionally, the total current consumption for the entire transmission cycle (compression, transmission, and Decompression) was logged by the multimeter for both compressed and uncompressed scenarios.

VIII. Results

The experimental results are divided into five sections.

A. The Performance of HDC

Fig. 6 presents the compression ratio results, comparing HDC to state-of-the-art solutions, showing that HDC achieves the highest compression ratio (2.62), outperforming BDC (2.47) [68], Delta+RLE (1.898) [69], Sahu & Panda (0.89) [70], and LZW+X.509 (0.71) [71], confirming HDC's superior efficiency.

B. MQTT vs. CoAP

Table I displays the transmission time recorded, measured in milliseconds, for the Tanjung Malim station sensors' data, for both scenarios: QoS 0 and QoS 1 in MQTT, and non-confirmable and confirmable modes in CoAP.

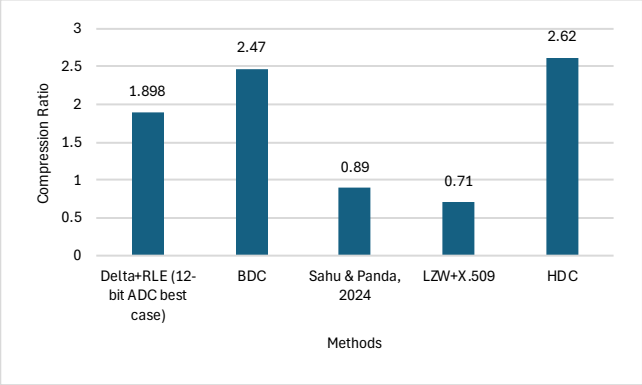

Fig. 6. HDC vs. State-of-the-art research results on compression ratio.

TABLE I. Transmission Time (MS) Comparison Between MQTT and CoAP

	Non-confirmable	QoS 0	Confirmable	QoS 1
Sensor	**CoAP**	**MQTT**	**CoAP**	**MQTT**
Temp	284	442.461	374	460.857
NOx	244	227.448	339	335.711
Humidity	247	214.537	350	335.817
NO2	236	216.483	358	333.08
O3	242	217.965	328	331.201
NO	259	218.061	365	332.993
WDr	215	215.521	348	334.654
WSp	244	215	351	330.429

CoAP shows higher transmission times than MQTT, with the exception of temperature data, where the overhead of TCP connection establishment in MQTT results in longer delays. Despite this, MQTT generally demonstrates superior performance in terms of data transmission efficiency.

C. MQTT with HDC vs. Standard MQTT

Transmitting data from the sensors to the Tanjung Malim station (broker), where every sensor is considered a publisher.

TABLE II. Transmission Time (MS) Comparison Between Standard MQTT and the Improved MQTT Using Compression (HDC)

	QoS 0		QoS 1	
Sensor	**Time with compression**	**Time without compression**	**Time with compression**	**Time without compression**
Temp	43.5602	442.461	77.5269	460.857
NOx	39.878	227.448	72.8804	335.711
Humidity	38.2013	214.537	73.1911	335.817
NO2	39.5145	216.483	71.0191	333.08
O3	40.305	217.965	74.5532	331.201
NO	39.5492	218.061	73.6148	332.993
WDr	27.0295	215.521	56.7491	334.654
WSp	41.7017	215	71.0177	330.429

The experimental results demonstrate that applying compression significantly improves transmission performance in both QoS 0 and QoS 1 settings. The impact of HDC compression on transmission latency is detailed in Table II. Under QoS 0, compression reduced the total transmission time from 1967.48 ms to 309.74 ms, achieving a Network Congestion Reduction (NCR) and Broker Overflow Prevention of 84.26%. Similarly, in QoS 1, compression lowered the total transmission time from 2794.74 ms to 570.55 ms, with an NCR and Broker Overflow Prevention of 79.6%. These findings indicate that the compression approach effectively minimizes transmission delays, reduces network congestion, and alleviates broker load across different QoS levels.

D. Compression Time

Table III presents the recorded times used to calculate the total data transmission duration from the publisher to the broker, incorporating both compression at the publisher and decompression at the broker, under the two transmission scenarios: QoS 0 and QoS 1.

TABLE III. Time (MS) for Data Transmission From the Publisher to the Broker Using the HDC Algorithm

	Compression Time	Transmission Time	Decompression Time
QoS 0	1458.589	309.7394	63.6218
QoS 1	1458.589	570.5523	63.6218

Data transmission using the HDC algorithm shows different performance for each QoS level. QoS 0 achieves a total time of ~1831.95 ms, while QoS 1 increases to ~2092.76 ms due to longer transmission time. Since compression and decompression times remain unchanged, the additional delay in QoS 1 is due to its increased reliability mechanism.

E. Power Consumption

The IoT node draws 26 mA at idle. Compression with HDC increases consumption to 44 mA (an extra 18 mA), while decompression requires 40 mA. Transmission consumes 102 mA with QoS 0 and 116 mA with QoS 1. The table below summarizes these values.

TABLE IV. CURRENT CONSUMPTION FOR EACH PROCESS IN MAMPS

Operation	Consumption (mAmps)
Compress (per sliding window)	18
Decompress (per sliding window)	14
QoS 0 Transmission	76
QoS 1 Transmission	90

The table shows current consumption for each operation, as measured and listed in Table IV. Compression and decompression require 18 mA and 14 mA per sliding window, respectively, while data transmission draws 76 mA for QoS 0 and 90 mA for QoS 1 due to extra acknowledgments. Table V shows how many mAmps in total were needed to transmit data from the publisher to the broker.

TABLE V. POWER CONSUMPTION (MAMPS) FOR THE DATA TRANSMISSION FROM THE PUBLISHER TO THE BROKER

	With Compression	Without Compression
QoS 0	63216	2664864
QoS 1	49168	3155760

The table indicates that using compression significantly reduces the total current consumption during data transmission for both QoS levels. The results demonstrate that compression not only reduces data volume but also leads to substantial energy savings, especially beneficial for battery-powered IoT nodes.

IX. CONTRIBUTIONS

This work makes the following distinct contributions to the field of IoT communication protocols:

- A Novel Protocol Integration Architecture: A new publisher-side compression framework for MQTT is proposed and validated, shifting the primary computational burden of traffic reduction from the broker to the edge. This architectural shift establishes a design principle: proactive, source-side data minimization is a scalable alternative to reactive broker-side optimizations for congestion control.
- An Algorithm Optimized for Constrained MQTT Publishers: A resource-aware adaptation of the Huffman Deep Compression (HDC) algorithm is introduced, specifically tailored for the MQTT publisher role on devices with severe memory constraints (e.g., 160 KB RAM). The key innovations are its dynamic sliding-window pattern matching and lightweight tree-generation process, which maintain a high compression ratio of 2.62 while operating within the limits of IoT edge hardware.
- Quantified Performance Advancement and New Congestion Insights: Through empirical validation, this study demonstrates that the integrated system reduces broker-side congestion by 84.26% for QoS 0 and 79.6% for QoS 1, significantly outperforming the state-of-the-art MRT-MQTT (58% and 45%, respectively). These results provide new insights into congestion dynamics, quantitatively proving that reducing per-message payload size is disproportionately effective in alleviating queue growth—more so than optimizing broker processing speed alone.
- Substantial Energy Efficiency Gains and a Reusable Benchmark: The approach delivers transformative energy savings, reducing total current consumption from 2,664,864 to 63,216 mA (QoS 0) and from 3,155,760 to 49,168 mA (QoS 1). Furthermore, a complete, reproducible methodology for evaluating compression-enhanced MQTT is provided, establishing a new performance benchmark for the community.

These contributions collectively advance the field by providing not just a faster protocol, but a new architectural pattern, an optimized algorithm, fundamental insights into congestion mechanics, dramatic energy improvements, and a reproducible benchmark for scalable IoT communication systems.

X. DISCUSSION

The results validate the HDC-enhanced MQTT protocol. The core insight is that broker congestion is fundamentally a data volume issue. Solutions like MRT-MQTT manage traffic more efficiently at the broker, but our publisher-side compression prevents the overload at its source. The higher congestion reduction for QoS 0 (84.26% vs. 79.6% for QoS 1) confirms this, as the acknowledgment overhead in QoS 1 presents a fixed bottleneck.

The dramatic energy reduction—from millions to tens of thousands of mA—stems from shorter radio transmission times for compressed data. This demonstrates a key principle: optimizing network efficiency in IoT inherently optimizes energy efficiency, directly extending device lifetime in large-scale deployments.

Achieving a compression ratio of 2.62 on a device with 160 KB RAM also addresses prior work that deemed such algorithms infeasible on constrained nodes. This work establishes a practical design pattern: the Intelligent Publisher, where edge nodes preprocess data to minimize their network footprint. This shifts system scalability from being a broker-centric challenge to a shared responsibility, offering a clear path for building sustainable, massive IoT networks. The main trade-off is added compression latency, which the significantly reduced transmission time offsets for most applications.

XI. CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that integrating Huffman Deep Compression (HDC) at the MQTT publisher is a fundamental strategy for scalable IoT. The significant performance gains—84.26% congestion reduction, a 2.62 compression ratio, and over 97% energy savings—are not merely numerical

improvements, but represent critical advancements for real-world systems.

The reduction in broker congestion directly translates to enhanced system reliability and stability; brokers can handle orders of magnitude more devices without queue overflow, enabling true massive-scale deployments. The drastic drop in energy consumption extends device lifetime from months to years, reducing maintenance costs and enabling deployment in inaccessible locations. Finally, by minimizing the data load, this approach reduces bandwidth requirements and operational costs for large sensor networks.

While validated on environmental data, the proposed architectural principle, proactive source-side minimization, provides a generalizable framework for enhancing publish-subscribe protocols. Future work will test this framework with diverse data and in dynamic networks. Ultimately, this work moves beyond optimizing a protocol to providing a practical blueprint for building sustainable, large-scale IoT infrastructure. A noted limitation is the focus on numerical time-series data within a stable local network. Future work will therefore investigate HDC's performance on diverse data formats, its integration with security layers like MQTT-S, and its robustness in dynamic, large-scale network topologies to further generalize its utility for next-generation IoT ecosystems.

XII. Future Work

Future research on the Huffman Deep Compression (HDC) algorithm should focus on enhancing its performance in large-scale IoT environments. Integrating loss compression techniques may significantly reduce data size while preserving essential information, leading to lower transmission latency. Maximizing throughput and ensuring scalability in high-density IoT networks, such as smart city infrastructures, is another critical direction. Furthermore, implementing the enhanced MQTT protocol within next-generation IoT architectures, including 6G networks, can unlock new opportunities for ultra-reliable and low-latency communication. Finally, developing innovative strategies to reduce network overhead will be vital for sustaining efficient and reliable data transmission in massive IoT ecosystems.

Acknowledgment

This work is part of a research project funded by the FRGS/1/2019/ICT02/UKM/02/7, the Ministry of Higher Education of Malaysia.

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Advancing Blood Supply Chain Prediction Based on a Novel Hybrid Machine Learning

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***Abstract*—Blood supply chains constitute a critical yet often overlooked component of modern public health systems, as they coordinate donors, collection centers, hospitals, and patients. One of the major operational challenges lies in planning the deployment of mobile blood collection units under highly variable and uncertain spatio-temporal demand. In this context, this study proposes a novel hybrid machine learning framework for predicting donor return potential and supporting location and time selection decisions for mobile blood drives. The proposed approach combines Support Vector Regression (SVR) and Light Gradient Boosting Machine (LGBM) through a dynamic, context-aware weighting function designed to capture both temporal regularities and nonlinear spatial heterogeneity in donor behavior. The model is evaluated using real-world data collected from a blood collection center operating multiple mobile units. Experimental results demonstrate that the proposed hybrid framework consistently outperforms its individual components, achieving R^2 values of up to 83% for certain locations, together with low Mean Absolute Error (MAE) and Mean Squared Error (MSE). These results confirm the robustness and stability of the proposed approach. Beyond predictive performance, the model is intended to be integrated into a decision-support system to help managers optimize logistical resources and improve the strategic planning of mobile blood collection campaigns. This work contributes to the emerging field of data-driven blood supply chain optimization by introducing a spatio-temporal, hybrid predictive core specifically designed for operational decision support.**

Keywords*—Blood supply chain; mobile blood collection units; spatio-temporal prediction; hybrid machine learning; decision support

I. Introduction

Nowadays, blood supply chains are a fundamental but unobtrusive pillar of modern public health. They play a vital role in coordinating and optimizing the management of this important function between donors, blood centers, hospitals, and patients, who are the final link in the chain. For example, if a patient urgently requires a blood transfusion, the speed and efficiency of the blood management logistics chain will save his or her life and contribute to the safety and protection of human life [1].

These chains are not limited to collecting or transporting blood between collection centers and hospitals but are complex and rigorous functions involving upstream planning, disciplined execution, and reactivity coupled with real-time coordination [2]. The stakes are high because each component must function correctly, without fault or delay. The optimization of these chains using mathematical models from the world of decision analytics or management intelligence is therefore of the utmost importance.

Blood supply chain management can involve managing an orchestra in which each entity (donor, center, hospital, patient) must fulfill its responsibilities. It's a general order of execution that requires a high degree of coordination and is subject to strict rules to ensure optimization and flawless decision-making.

The variability of demand between different hospitals and regions is a major challenge. The blood supply is not a linear function, where we know exactly what is needed in a given place and at a specific time. On the contrary, needs are highly variable and can suddenly explode in one region without impacting others or in all delivery sites. In this context, it would be extremely useful to anticipate collections and needs, especially when we're trying to determine collection points precisely and avoid shortages.

Faced with the complexity of blood management, the digitization of processes is essential for effective and efficient management. At this stage, digital technologies such as big data analytics, the Internet of Things, RFID, computer vision and predictive technologies [3], [4] can clearly help to offer concrete solutions for increasing performance, responsiveness and optimization in management.

With the increasing digitization of the blood supply chain, voluminous data is generated at every stage of the chain's management process. From the donor's first step, through the transport of blood, its storage in collection centers, its distribution to hospitals and finally its use by doctors. In this context, using business analytics as an approach to analyzing trends and making the right decision at the right time is arousing growing interest within the scientific and academic community.

The use of business analytics, with an emphasis on its predictive aspect, enables detailed analysis of historical data collected in data warehouses, to anticipate future trends in terms of demand and need [5], [6]. However, despite the abundance of work using predictive analytics in the academic literature, its use for managing and optimizing decisions in blood supply chain management remains timid. Moreover, there is a lack of work on optimizing the location of mobile blood collection units on the basis of predictions and forecasts of blood donor concentration (Fig. 1).

Optimizing mobile blood drives is a major challenge for decision makers. In particular, when they want to program a campaign in a region requiring major mobilization of means and resources, but have no idea or indication of possible donors or the recidivist of previous donors in the region. By intelligently

exploiting previously collected data using sophisticated machine learning methods, decision makers can base their decisions on reliable performance indicators, offering an all-round vision.

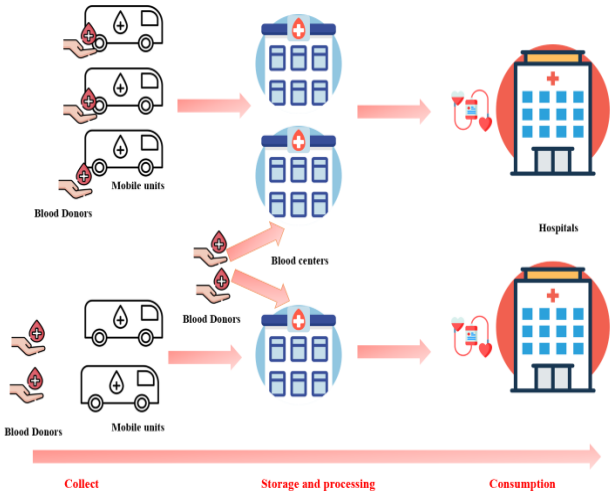

Fig. 1. Blood supply chain with mobile units.

With this in mind, our research involves collecting data on blood donors. These data come from a blood collection center in Morocco, with several mobile units. This study is very important, especially in the case of Morocco blood supply chain, where blood requirements are very high compared with the national stock of this material. There is a glaring discrepancy between blood collection and needs. Morocco needs more than 1,000 donations a day to be self-sufficient in labile blood products. With this study, we hope to provide a tool for organizing mobile blood collection campaigns, so as to guarantee an increase in the national stock to meet the needs of hospitals in a timely manner.

The aims of this study are to predict blood donor trends and streamline the movement of mobile units. To ensure a reliable and robust global prediction, our method attempts to integrate two machine learning models frequently used in the blood supply chain, SVR and LBGM, via a new function. Decision-makers will be able to make choices that reduce logistical expenditure and unnecessary travel, thanks to the integration of this newly-created framework into a dashboard.

Although numerous studies have investigated donor behavior prediction and others have proposed decision-support dashboards for blood supply chains, most existing works treat these two dimensions separately. Moreover, ensemble and hybrid models are often implemented using standard strategies such as stacking, boosting, or static weighted averaging. In contrast, this work addresses a specific and still underexplored problem: the spatio-temporal optimization of mobile blood collection unit deployment using a dynamic hybrid predictive mechanism. The proposed approach introduces a context-aware combination function that dynamically adjusts the contribution of SVR and LGBM according to the characteristics of the prediction task, rather than relying on a fixed or meta-learned ensemble structure.

We can list the major contributions of our work in the following points:

1) Combined-output: We aim to improve the performance of the support vector regression (SVR) model by combining its output with that of the light gradient machine (LGBM), two algorithms recognized for their effectiveness in supply chain analytics. The proposed approach is based on multiple inputs and incorporates a new combination function designed to enhance prediction accuracy.

2) Donor return prediction: The central objective is to anticipate the likelihood of a donor returning to make a future donation. Reliable predictions in this area enable blood collection organizations to design personalized loyalty strategies and interact more effectively with donors.

3) Decision-making indicators: Provide managers with decision-making indicators for planning the return of mobile blood collection units to a specific location based on the results generated by the predictive model.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows: Section II presents a review of related works. Section III describes methods used and presents the novel predicting function. Section IV explains data, results, and discusses the findings. Finally, we conclude the paper and propose future research directions in Section VI.

II. Literature Review

Predictive analytics has become a fundamental tool for prospecting potential donor pools and characterizing the factors determining the decision to donate blood or not [7], [8]. This study consolidates and critically evaluates original research from India, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Italy, Thailand, and East Asia, including methodological designs and theoretical predictive models of blood donation behavior. It also highlights the comparative performance of the models, general shortcomings, and limitations.

The main objectives of blood donation prediction research are to understand the prediction of individual donor behavior and the prediction of blood supply and demand as a whole [9]. Various methods are used, all adapted to the complexity of these tasks and presenting different advantages. Relevant work has used Bayesian methods, as shown in [10], analyzing donation intensity as a function of random individual frailties and covariates (demographic, health, and habit). Based on a large amount of data concerning 5,937 regular donors in Milan, the Bayesian method was used to identify frequent donors and predict future donations. To classify individual donors, machine learning approaches are common techniques such as K-nearest neighbors (KNN), Naive Bayes and decision trees [11]. [12] used logistic regression and achieved good results with a prediction score of around 69%, processing unbalanced data using Synthetic Minority Oversampling Technique (SMOTE). [13] use artificial intelligence and machine learning techniques to classify and determine the factors influencing organ donation based on blood data. Time-Series techniques are well suited for forecast at a large scale, especially in use. [14], for example, used backpropagation artificial neural networks for monthly forecasting and reached MSE ranging between 0.1407 and 0.4507. similarly, [15], that harnessed an ensemble of models, such as XGBoost, LGBM, and CATBoost that combined disparate data with up to an R^2 value of 0.8497.

Comparison of these varied methods shows that Bayesian models provide useful interpretability and temporal flexibility. Complex patterns can be learned well by machine learning classifiers, in contrast with the importance of predictors emphasized by regression. Time-series techniques, furthermore, are well-suited for measuring gross trends. Finally, the ensemble models work well, especially for large datasets. This methodological diversity highlights the complementarity of these instruments, each bringing furtherance to our ability to forecast blood donations.

Several potential predictors of blood donation behavior have been identified in previous studies, although level of agreement between studies is less consistent. Demographic variables such as male sex, younger individuals and higher levels of body weight are always found to be associated with higher frequencies of donations with some studies suggesting that women tend to donate more intensively [16], [17]. Specifically, Behavioral history is one of the strongest predictors of future engagement, in particular recency of donation and frequency of donations, where shorter periods between donations have been linked to sustained involvement. Health and lifestyle characteristics such as nonsmoking, nondrinking, physical activity, and greater hemoglobin levels all predict higher donation intensity. However, these are underexplored in machine learning studies [18]. Contextual factors, such as cultural practices or hospital need, also influence donation patterns, with variances stated across regions [12], [15].

III. Materials and Methods

Our methodology is based on the global architecture presented in Fig. 2, which results in a combined prediction, $y = f(y_1, y_2)$, aimed at estimating the probability that a former donor will or will not donate blood at a given geographical location. This research proposes a strategic decision support framework applied to the blood supply chain, integrating the training of machine learning algorithms and the optimization [27] of their performance using various hyperparameter tuning techniques. We have data on blood donors collected during mobile campaigns organized in the interior of Morocco. Each blood drive center has mobile units that plan campaigns in remote areas to collect blood. Through this study, we aim to provide decision-makers with indicators based on a new combination of machine learning algorithms. The aim is to optimize the programming of mobile campaigns and avoid ineffective planning that fails to achieve set objectives.

It is important to emphasize that the proposed hybridization strategy does not fall into the category of stacking, boosting, or classical ensemble learning. No meta-model is trained, and the models are not combined sequentially nor with fixed global weights. Instead, a dynamic combination function is introduced, allowing the relative influence of SVR and LGBM to vary according to the spatio-temporal context of the prediction. This design choice aims to better capture the dual nature of the problem: temporal regularities and nonlinear spatial heterogeneity.

L et $y_{l,t}$ denote the target variable representing the donor return intensity at location l during time period t. In this study, $y_{l,t}$ is defined as the number (or normalized rate) of donors who return to donate blood at location l within a predefined time window following a previous campaign. This variable is constructed by aggregating historical donation records at the spatio-temporal resolution relevant for mobile unit deployment planning. The prediction task therefore consists in estimating $\hat{y}_{l,t}$, the expected donor return potential for a candidate location–time pair (l, t).

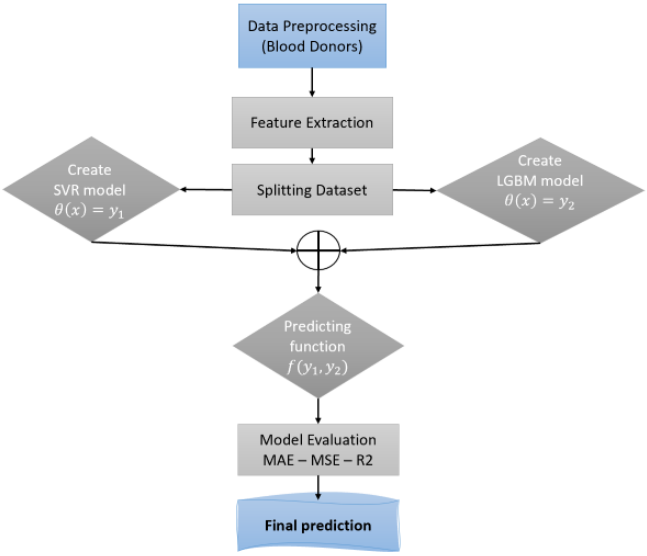

Fig. 2. Architecture of the proposed framework-based machine learning models.

A. Data Preprocessing

Indeed, acquisition errors, whether of human or technical origin, can alter the quality of the dataset and introduce biases when training models. These errors can take the form of incomplete information, missing or aberrant values, or even parasitic noise generated during data collection. It is therefore essential to implement a rigorous data preprocessing strategy to transform raw data into reliable, usable data, a prerequisite for obtaining high-performance machine learning models [19].

In this study, we focus on three key components of preprocessing: data cleaning, variable transformation and dimensional reduction. These steps aim to make the most of the analytical capabilities of the algorithms used, while ensuring the quality and consistency of the input data.

B. Features Selection

The feature selection principle shown in Fig. 3 represents a key method for reducing the dimensionality of a data set. Data sets generally contain many redundant and less informative variables, which can impact the relevance and performance of predictive models [20]. Moreover, it's important to highlight the most informative and relevant features for machine learning models [21].

Firstly, this technique reduces the complexity of the data, and therefore the complexity of the model. Small data sets, limited to the essentials, enable the model to learn quickly, thus reducing processing time and the need for more complex computing resources. Secondly, it significantly reduces noise by excluding from the study variables that are insignificant or have

no real impact on the trend curve. This will contribute significantly to improving the quality of the dataset. Finally, based on its reduced data, the model will have a better chance of performing its trends and predicting phenomena to a degree close to reality [22].

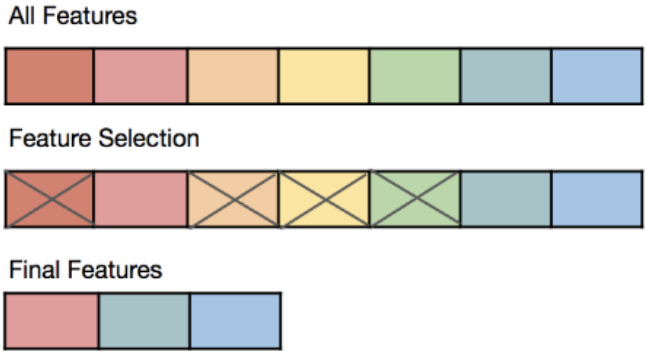

Fig. 3. Features selection steps.

C. Combined and Trained Model

Our main objective is to develop a high-performance prediction model based on the combination of two machine learning algorithms widely proven in the field of predictive blood supply chain: SVR and LGBM (Algorithm 1, Table I). This hybrid approach aims to capitalize on the complementary strengths of these two models:

TABLE I. SUMMARY OF VARIABLES AND EXPLANATION

Variable	Explanation
x_{i1}	Input value for SVR model
x_{i2}	Input value for LGBM model
y_{i1}	Predicted value for SVR model
y_{i2}	Predicted value for LGBM model
$\sigma\%$	Percentage of trained data
$1-\sigma\%$	Percentage of tested data
$e(y_{ij}, \hat{y}_{ij})$	Predicted error for model j
w_j	Weight for model j
W	*Normal Vector to the Hyperplan*
$f(y_1, y_2)$	Combined prediction function
ε	Error margin
b	Intercept of Hyperplane from Origin
C, ζ	Hyperparameter

SVR, recognized for its ability to model non-linear relationships with good generalization, and LGBM, appreciated for its efficiency, speed of learning and robustness in the face of noisy or incomplete data [23], [24].

By integrating a series of relevant attributes (inputs) related to blood donors and the logistical context, our system merges the predictions of the two models through a weighted aggregation function, to produce a single final prediction, more reliable and robust than those obtained individually. The combined prediction aims to improve the accuracy of estimates of blood donor behavior, while enhancing decision-making in proactive supply chain management.

Algorithm 1: Combined machine learning prediction algorithm

1: **Cleaning:** Removal of duplicates, management of missing values.

2: **Encoding:** Transformation of categorical variables.

3: **Standardization:** Scaling of numerical variables.

4: **Feature Selection:** Keep only the most relevant variables.

5: **Dataset:** we choose $\sigma\%$ train data with $\mathbf{1-\sigma\%}$ test data. We also add the condition that the test and validation data must be the most recent.

6: **Model training**: each model is trained separately. SVR model $\boldsymbol{\theta(x) = y_1}$ and LGBM model $\ddot{\boldsymbol{\theta}}\boldsymbol{(x) = y_2}$

7: **For** i=1 to N

8: Predict the probability that a former donor $\boldsymbol{x}$ will donate blood in location $\boldsymbol{L}$ or not.

9: Calculate the prediction error per model between predicted $\boldsymbol{y_{i1}, y_{i2}}$ values and test values $\boldsymbol{\hat{y}_{i1}, \hat{y}_{i2}}$ $\boldsymbol{e(y_{i1}, \hat{y}_{i1}) = |y_{i1} - \hat{y}_{i1}|}$ ***and*** $\boldsymbol{e(y_{i2}, \hat{y}_{i2}) = |y_{i2} - \hat{y}_{i2}|}$

10: **End For**

11: **Generate the weight $\boldsymbol{w_1, w_2}$** for SVR and LGBM model based on their prediction error such as:

$$\boldsymbol{w_1} = \frac{\sum_{j=1}^{n} e(y_{j1}, \hat{y}_{j1})}{\sum_{j=1}^{n} e(y_{j1}, \hat{y}_{j1}) + \sum_{j=1}^{n} e(y_{j2}, \hat{y}_{j2})} \quad \text{and}$$

$$\boldsymbol{w_2} = \frac{\sum_{j=1}^{n} e(y_{j2}, \hat{y}_{j2})}{\sum_{j=1}^{n} e(y_{j1}, \hat{y}_{j1}) + \sum_{j=1}^{n} e(y_{j2}, \hat{y}_{j2})}$$

12: Calculate combined prediction $\boldsymbol{f(y_1, y_2) = w_1 y_1 + w_2 y_2}$

13: Calculate **MSE, MAE, R2**

14: **Validate** the combined prediction

15: **Generate decision KPI** based prediction

To guarantee the reliability and relevance of our model, we used a real dataset comprising approximately 15,000 observations, each described by 20 initial explanatory variables. To simulate a realistic context and preserve temporal consistency, we ordered the data chronologically. Thus, the 20% most recent observations were reserved for the test and validation phases. This approach enables us to assess the model's ability to generalize to future data, which is crucial for predictive applications, such as blood supply chain management.

SVR is an extension of the Support Vector Machine (SVM) algorithm, specifically adapted to regression tasks. It aims to find a function that minimizes the prediction error while maintaining a certain tolerance (called margin ε) to the training data. In other words, SVR constructs a "tube" around the

regression function, in which data points are considered well predicted if they remain within this margin [25].

The SVR process is based on a series of steps aimed at finding a regression function capable of predicting accurately while tolerating a certain margin of error. The fundamental idea is to penalize predictions only when they deviate beyond a predefined margin ε. This makes it possible to model data more flexibly and robustly, especially when it is noisy. Input data is transformed using a kernel function, which projects the data into a higher-dimensional space. This transformation makes it possible to use a linear model in this transformed space, even if the original data show non-linear relationships. This process is essential if SVR is to adapt to complex data structures.

The model defines a "tolerance tube" around the regression function, delimited by the margin ε. Data points that fall within this tube are considered sufficiently close to the prediction and are therefore not penalized. On the other hand, points outside the tube are subject to a penalty proportional to their distance from the margin, thus controlling the impact of large errors.

The core of the process consists in minimizing a loss function, which takes two elements into account:

- On the one hand, the prediction error for points outside the margin ε,
- Secondly, the complexity of the model, measured by the width of the tube or the norm of the coefficients in the case of a linear kernel. This dual objective guarantees a good compromise between predictive performance and generalization capability.

The choice of kernel is a decisive step in the proper functioning of the SVR. Depending on the nature of the data, we can opt for a linear kernel (for simple relationships), polynomial kernel (for more complex relationships), or RBF (Radial Basis Function, or Gaussian kernel), which is the most commonly used, as it can model a wide variety of non-linear shapes.

Mathematical model of SVR:

$$argmin_{(w,b)} = \frac{1}{2}\|w\|^2 + C\sum_{i=1}^{n}(y_i - \hat{y}_i)^2$$

$$subject\ to: y_i - (w^t x_i + b) \leq \zeta$$

$$(w^t x_i + b) - y_i \leq \zeta$$

$$for\ all\ \zeta \geq 0$$

LGBM is an open-source machine learning framework based on decision trees. It implements an ensemble technique called gradient boosting, which involves combining several weak models (typically shallow trees) to form a powerful predictive model.

BOOSTING is an esemplastic technique that consists of aggregating classifiers (models) developed sequentially on a training sample, with the individual weights corrected as they are learned. Classifiers are weighted according to their performance (Fig. 4).

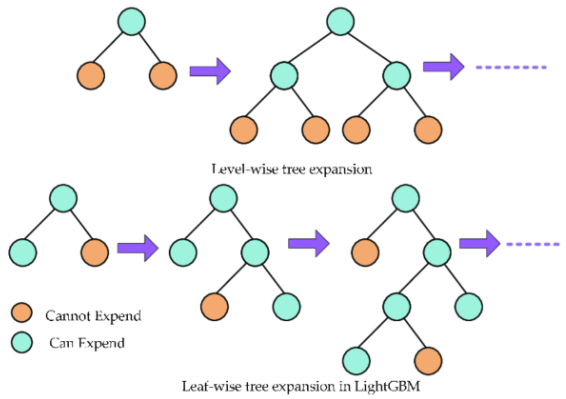

Fig. 4. Diagram of leaf-wise tree expansion.

D. Model Evaluation

The search for a model whose empirical error is minimal over a given set of observations. However, minimizing this empirical error does not guarantee minimizing the model error over the entire data space. Indeed, in an overlearning situation, the model error will be underestimated [26]. However, it is this error - or, in other words, our ability to make predictions about things that are not known - that interests us. This chapter shows how we can set up an experimental framework that allows us to evaluate a model while avoiding the bias of overlearning. With this in mind, we will make a distinction between evaluating a model, which consists in determining its performance over the entire data space, and selecting it, which consists in choosing the best model from among several.

In the case of a regression problem, the number of errors is not an appropriate criterion for assessing performance. On the one hand, because of numerical inaccuracies, it's tricky to tell from a true-value prediction whether it's correct or not. We attempt to evaluate our combination of machine learning models based on three metrics widely used in the field of artificial intelligence: MSE, MAE, R2.

$$MSE = \frac{1}{n}\sum_{i=1}^{n}(y_i - \hat{y}_i)^2$$

$$MAE = \frac{1}{n}\sum_{i=1}^{n}|y_i - \hat{y}_i|$$

$$R2 = 1 - \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n}(y_i - \hat{y}_i)^2}{\sum_{i=1}^{n}(y_i - \bar{y})^2}$$

$$where\ \bar{y}\ is\ the\ average\ of\ observations$$

IV. Results

A. Data

The data used in our study are collected from 4 Moroccan blood collection centers with mobile blood collection units. Each center schedules its own campaign, with mobile units traveling to different areas to offer a service close to blood donors.

The problem is that the managers at the centers have no visibility of the points where former donors are most likely to return. The centers have a large amount of data covering the period 2019-2024, with almost 15,000 registrations. The data used consists of columns on donor ID, donor gender, donor age, date and time of each donation, location (x, y) of the mobile unit at the time of each donation, frequency of donation, time since last donation, whether the donor donated in the last campaign in October 2024, total quantity of blood donated.

Data cleaning was carried out to prepare reliable data for the prediction model. Empty data were filled in with 0 and incomplete data were completed in consultation with the center responsible. In addition, profiling work was carried out, especially on the descriptive analytics part, during which dashboards and descriptive statistics, using business intelligence tools such as Power BI, were delivered to each collection center's decision support center, accessible via a web portal (Fig. 5).

Fig. 5. Descriptive analytics of blood donation.

B. Results

For the results, we plan to make predictions by zone to determine where the mobile blood collection unit will be able to move. The analysis will also be carried out by five-day time windows. In order not to overload the article with too many graphs, we have chosen to visualize four zones, which we assume to be representative of the cases a decision-maker would wish to analyze.

We implement our models to compare the combined prediction with predictions using SVR and LGBM alone. We're using a powerful machine with over 64G RAM, 32 CPUs and 1 H100 GPU, which has enabled us to cut learning times and reduce processing times.

The results show that our framework for combining machine learning models performs better than the models alone. Fig. 6 shows that for a time window of 5 days for the locality 1 located at coordinates (Long., Lat.): (-6.8524783, 33.8548111), the combined prediction is highly relevant. With almost a slight discrepancy between actual and predicted values. On the other hand, the other models are more or less far from the actual values. Moreover, Fig. 7 shows that R2 scores very well, with a maximum of 83% for locality 1 and for the day of 03/10/2024.

TABLE II. FORECASTING PERFORMANCE OF MACHINE LEARNING METHODS BY LOCALITY

Models	Locality 1	Locality 2	Locality 3	Locality 4
Combined Model - MAE	33,36	15,2	17,01	29,12
Combined Model - MSE	25,12	39,12	14,12	23,26
Combined Model - R2	81,00%	77,15%	80,45%	69,21%
SVR - MAE	54,12	43,23	23,3	67,56
SVR - MSE	78,11	45,43	89,21	88,32
SVR - R2	55,32%	60,65%	68,43%	34,23%
LGBM - MAE	44,78	88,98	78,77	90,59
LGBM - MSE	70,34	91,234	89,221	114,24
LGBM - R2	65,43%	70,12%	88,19%	93,23%

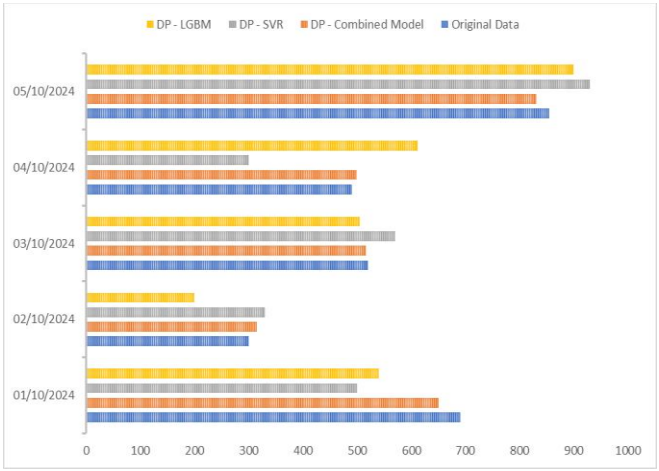

Fig. 6. Comparison of the predictions of the different models for the locality 1 located at coordinates (Long., Lat.): (-6.8524783, 33.8548111).

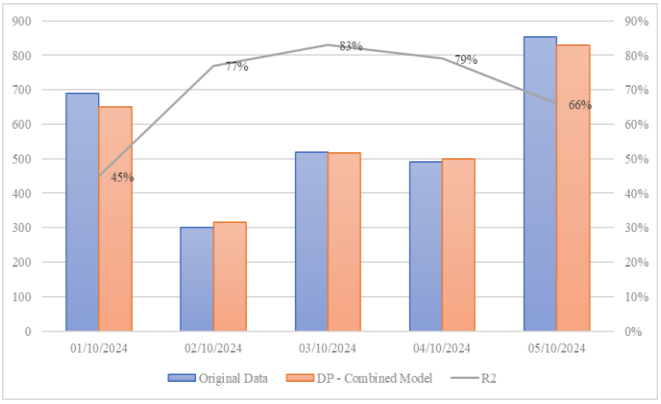

Fig. 7. Original data vs. Predicted data and R2 score for the locality 1 located at coordinates (Long., Lat.): (-6.8524783, 33.8548111).

We find almost the same result for locality 2 located at coordinates (Long., Lat): (-7.9432221, 31.3594816) as for locality 1, for a time period from 10/09/2024 to 14/09/2024. Fig. 8 also shows that the combined prediction best represents reality and reflects the actual data. Whereas SVR and LGBM performed alone for locality 2 and for the same time period do not show relevant results.

Fig. 9 also shows that a comparison with R2 shows that the coefficient displays a maximum percentage of 79% with values adjusted between actual data and blood donor prediction data.

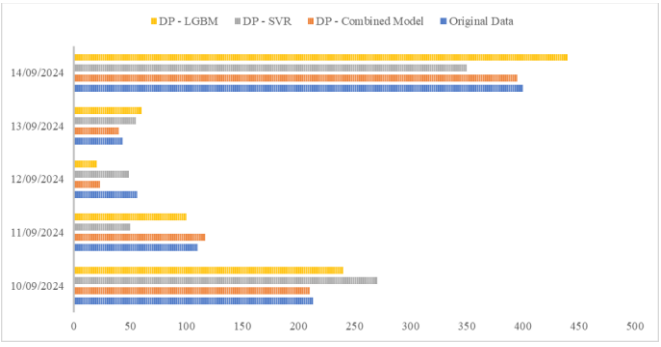

Fig. 8. Comparison of the predictions of the different models for the locality 2 located at coordinates (Long., Lat): (-7.9432221, 31.3594816).

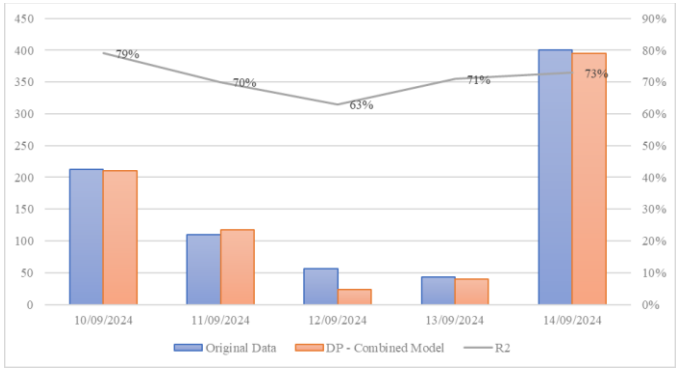

Fig. 9. Original data vs. Predicted data and R2 score for the locality 2 located at coordinates (Long., Lat.): (-7.9432221, 31.3594816).

- A more detailed comparison of the data by locality shows the effectiveness of combining the two models to produce a single prediction. In Table II, we have shown each model in relation to the three performance evaluation metrics MSE, MAE and R2 for 4 former localities where mobile units collected blood, and which we selected at random. The results show that the combined prediction always achieves significant and interesting scores compared with the predictions of the models alone.
- Table III and Fig. 10 also show that on the basis of a global prediction without taking blood collection locations into account, the combined prediction always has the best scores on the three performance evaluation metrics MSE, MAE and R2.

TABLE III. COMPARISON OF MODEL PERFORMANCE

Models	MAE	MSE	R2
Combined Model	33,36	32,22	81,16%
SVR	73,00	87,12	44,92%
LGBM	65,43	88,98	67,20%

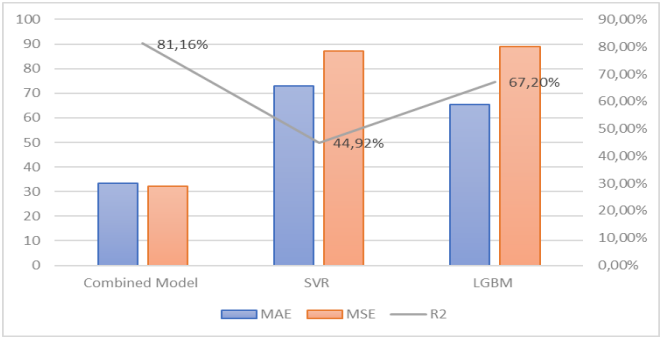

Fig. 10. Comparison of model performance.

V. DISCUSSION

When it comes to deciding on the location with the highest blood donor return rate, analytics is the ultimate solution to help decision-makers choose the best location for their mobile blood collection units. To this end, we have focused on prediction by machine learning models widely used in the blood supply chain, namely SVR and LGBM. We didn't just apply them as they are,

but introduced a new concept of combination between the two models through a combined prediction function.

The strength of combining SVR and LGBM lies in the complexity of the resulting prediction. Predicting whether or not a former donor can give blood in future mobilizations. In other words, time and space. Gradient boosting has an excellent reputation in the data scientists' community, as it easily adapts to the complexity of inputs and outputs. For its part, SVR is also a good machine learning model that adapts to fluctuating data and outliers, enabling better results to be achieved when making predictions based on the time dimension.

The results we obtained from this combination, shown above in Table III, demonstrate the increasing performance of this combination technique on the weight of each model. At this stage, managers choosing either the campaign date or the campaign location can see performance indicators on whether or not a blood donor will return for the new blood drive. This will enable them to save resources in terms of personnel and means, by targeting only those localities with a higher recidivism rate. This predictive module based on the combination of SVR and LGBM can be integrated into a portal or management system for blood drives, giving them a futuristic dimension.

Although it is not possible to build a forecasting system for blood donor trends that perfectly anticipates changes in blood collection behavior, we use the results of the forecasting model to help decision-makers make judgments about the feasibility of the blood collection campaign. In this study, each forecasting model has a reference value. In the combined model fitting results, the maximum R2 value reached 81.16% for the whole dataset, and a maximum value of 83% for locality 1. In addition, the MAE and MSE showed values of 33.36 and 32.22 respectively, demonstrating a high level of prediction and robustness. The model showed a stable and excellent trend for this type of data, compared with the SVR and LGBM performed at each location.

VI. Conclusion and Recommendations

In summary, this study proposes a machine learning–based approach to identify locations with the highest blood donor return rates. We developed a hybrid prediction framework capable of capturing both the temporal and spatial dimensions of donor behavior by combining two widely used models in blood supply chain analytics: Support Vector Regression (SVR) and Light Gradient Boosting Machine (LGBM). This hybridization leverages LGBM's ability to model complex nonlinear relationships and SVR's robustness to data variability and outliers. The results obtained, particularly an R^2 of up to 83% for certain localities, together with low MAE (33.36) and MSE (32.22) values, demonstrate the relevance, robustness, and stability of the proposed model.

By accurately identifying regions with high donor return potential, the proposed approach helps decision-makers at blood collection centers optimize logistical resources and improve campaign planning. When integrated into a decision-support portal or management information system, this predictive framework can effectively guide strategic choices regarding the deployment of mobile blood collection units. Although the proposed tool cannot guarantee perfect forecasting accuracy, it constitutes a valuable medium- to long-term strategic lever for improving blood supply chain management.

Despite these encouraging results, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the dataset is restricted to a single blood collection center in Morocco, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other geographic or organizational contexts. Second, the temporal scope of the data may not fully capture long-term structural changes in donor behavior. Third, the proposed model relies on historical patterns and therefore cannot fully anticipate sudden behavioral shifts or epidemiological disruptions. Future work will aim to validate the approach on multi-center and multi-country datasets, integrate real-time and socio-demographic variables, and further refine the proposed dynamic weighting mechanism.

- Data Availability.
- Data will be made available on request.
- Conflict of interest.
- There is no interests to declare.
- Financial support and sponsorship.
- No sponsorship or funding supported this study.

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An Integrated Carbon Footprint Calculation System Model for Net Zero Emission in the Manufacturing Industry Based on GHG Protocol and DEFRA

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***Abstract*—Manufacturing industries play a critical role in achieving Net Zero emission targets due to their significant contribution to greenhouse gas emissions. However, existing carbon footprint calculation practices often apply the GHG Protocol and emission factor standards independently, resulting in fragmented methodologies and limited decision-support capabilities. This study develops a carbon footprint calculation system model that integrates GHG Protocol emission scope classification with DEFRA emission conversion factors, supported by a decision-support framework for Net Zero emission planning. Using a Design Science Research (DSR) approach, the study produces a conceptual system model that structures activity data, emission scope classification, and standardized carbon calculation logic into a unified framework. The proposed model enables transparent aggregation of emissions across Scope 1, Scope 2, and Scope 3, while the decision-support framework translates calculation results into decision variables, scenario-based analysis, and Net Zero roadmap formulation. The system functions as a decision-support system that assists manufacturing organizations in interpreting carbon footprint results and supports Net Zero emission planning. The findings demonstrate that integrating standardized carbon accounting methodologies within a system-oriented design enhances methodological coherence, traceability, and strategic relevance for sustainability decision-making in the manufacturing sector.**

***Keywords*—Carbon footprint; net zero emission; GHG protocol; DEFRA; decision support system**

I. Introduction

The global commitment to achieving Net Zero emissions has placed carbon footprint management at the core of sustainability initiatives, particularly in the manufacturing industry. Manufacturing activities are widely recognized as major contributors to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions due to their energy-intensive processes, complex production systems, and extensive supply chain interactions. As regulatory requirements and stakeholder expectations continue to increase [1], manufacturing organizations are under growing pressure to systematically quantify, manage, and reduce their carbon emissions in alignment with long-term Net Zero pathways.

Carbon footprint calculation plays a fundamental role in sustainability management by providing quantitative information on emission levels and sources. In the manufacturing context, carbon footprint data are commonly used to identify emission hotspots, evaluate environmental performance, and support sustainability reporting.

However, prior studies indicate that carbon footprint calculation practices in manufacturing systems often face challenges related to methodological inconsistency [2], fragmented data sources, and limited transparency in calculation logic, which reduce the strategic value of emission data.

To address these challenges, internationally recognized standards have been developed to support carbon accounting. The GHG Protocol has emerged as one of the most widely adopted frameworks for greenhouse gas accounting, providing standardized principles for emission classification and reporting across Scope 1, Scope 2, and Scope 3 emissions. Its widespread adoption has contributed to improved comparability and accountability in organizational emission reporting. Nevertheless, the GHG Protocol does not prescribe specific emission factors or detailed calculation mechanisms [3], leaving organizations to rely on external sources for quantitative emission estimation.

In contrast, the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) provides detailed and regularly updated emission factors that are widely used for carbon footprint calculation across various operational activities, including energy consumption, transportation, materials, and waste. DEFRA-based emission factors are valued for their transparency and standardization, making them suitable for operational-level carbon calculation [4]. However, DEFRA guidelines primarily focus on emission factor provision and do not explicitly address emission scope classification or the strategic use of carbon footprint results for sustainability decision-making.

Despite their complementary roles, existing studies and practical implementations frequently apply the GHG Protocol and DEFRA in isolation rather than within an integrated system model. This separation results in fragmented carbon footprint calculation processes that lack methodological coherence and traceability. Moreover, many carbon footprint information systems developed for the manufacturing sector function primarily as monitoring or reporting tools, offering limited support for translating emission data into actionable strategies. Prior research in sustainability-oriented information systems [5] highlights that such systems often emphasize data visualization while providing insufficient decision-support capabilities for long-term sustainability planning.

Based on the reviewed literature, a clear research gap exists at the intersection of standardized carbon footprint calculation and sustainability-oriented decision support.

There is a lack of integrated system models that combine GHG Protocol-based emission classification with DEFRA-based calculation logic within a transparent and traceable framework. Furthermore, few studies extend carbon footprint calculation beyond monitoring to support scenario-based analysis and strategic Net Zero planning in the manufacturing industry. Addressing this gap requires an integrated approach that bridges standardized carbon accounting with decision-support mechanisms, enabling carbon footprint data to be effectively utilized in the formulation of Net Zero emission strategies.

The novelty of this study lies in the integration of GHG Protocol emission scope classification with DEFRA emission factors within a single, system-oriented carbon footprint calculation model. Unlike existing approaches that apply scope classification and emission factor calculation as separate or sequential activities, this research embeds both elements into a unified system logic that ensures methodological coherence, traceability, and decision readiness. Conceptual validation is conducted using Design Science Research (DSR) principles, emphasizing logical consistency among system components, traceability from activity data to emission outcomes, and alignment with Net Zero emission decision variables.

Although various carbon accounting tools, life cycle assessment (LCA)-based systems, and sustainability information systems have been reported in prior literature, most existing approaches primarily emphasize emission quantification, product-level environmental assessment, or compliance-oriented reporting. LCA-based models typically focus on detailed life cycle impact analysis and require extensive data collection, which limits their suitability for continuous operational monitoring and strategic decision making in manufacturing environments. Similarly, many carbon footprint calculators operate as standalone tools with limited transparency, traceability, and integration with organizational decision-support processes. In contrast, the proposed system model advances existing approaches by embedding GHG Protocol–based emission scope classification, standardized DEFRA-based calculation logic, and decision-support mechanisms within a unified system-oriented framework. This integration enables methodological coherence, traceable data flow from activities to emission outcomes, and structured decision readiness, thereby supporting both operational carbon monitoring and strategic Net Zero planning in manufacturing organizations.

In response to this gap, this study proposes the development of an integrated carbon footprint calculation system model combined with a decision-support framework for Net Zero emission strategies in the manufacturing industry. The proposed approach integrates the GHG Protocol for emission classification and reporting with DEFRA-based emission factors for standardized carbon calculation. By extending carbon footprint calculation toward scenario-based analysis and Net Zero roadmap formulation, this study aims to enhance the strategic relevance of carbon footprint systems and contribute to the advancement of sustainability-oriented information systems in the manufacturing context.

II. Literature Review

A. Carbon Footprint Accounting in Manufacturing

Carbon footprint accounting has become a central focus in sustainability research due to the significant contribution of the manufacturing sector to global greenhouse gas emissions [6]. Manufacturing activities involve energy-intensive processes, diverse material inputs, and complex supply chains, which generate emissions across multiple operational stages. Previous studies [7] emphasize that accurate carbon footprint calculation is essential for identifying emission hotspots, supporting environmental disclosure, and informing emission reduction initiatives in industrial contexts.

Despite its importance, carbon footprint accounting in manufacturing remains methodologically challenging. Many manufacturing organizations adopt heterogeneous calculation approaches that rely on fragmented data sources and inconsistent assumptions [2], Prior research reports that carbon accounting practices often prioritize reporting compliance over methodological rigor and strategic integration. As a result, carbon footprint data are frequently treated as static indicators rather than dynamic inputs for sustainability decision-making.

B. Emission Accounting Standards (GHG Protocol and DEFRA)

International emission accounting standards play a critical role in structuring carbon footprint calculation practices. The GHG Protocol is widely recognized as a global framework for greenhouse gas accounting, providing standardized principles for categorizing emissions into Scope 1, Scope 2, and Scope 3 [8]. This classification framework enhances comparability and transparency in organizational carbon reporting and has been extensively adopted across manufacturing industries.

However, the GHG Protocol primarily focuses on emission classification and reporting principles and does not prescribe detailed emission factors or quantitative calculation methods [4]. To address this limitation, organizations often rely on external emission factor databases. Among these, the UK Government GHG Conversion Factors for Company Reporting, developed by DEFRA, are widely used for operational-level carbon footprint calculation. DEFRA provides standardized and transparent emission factors for various activity categories, including energy consumption, transportation, materials, and waste [4]. Nevertheless, DEFRA guidelines [9] emphasize emission factor provision and methodological assumptions rather than emission scope classification or the strategic application of carbon footprint results.

C. Sustainability Oriented Information Systems

The role of information systems in supporting sustainability initiatives has received increasing attention in recent years. Sustainability-oriented information systems are designed to facilitate the collection, processing, and dissemination of environmental performance data across organizational functions. In manufacturing contexts [10], such systems are often implemented to support emission monitoring, regulatory reporting, and performance tracking.

Recent studies suggest that sustainability-oriented information systems have primarily evolved as operational tools rather than strategic systems. Many implementations focus on data aggregation and visualization through dashboards and reporting interfaces, with limited emphasis on analytical integration or cross-functional decision support [5]. This operational orientation limits the ability of information systems to support long-term sustainability transformation, particularly in complex industrial environments where emission sources span multiple scopes and organizational boundaries.

D. Decision Support Gap in Carbon Footprint Management

Decision support is increasingly recognized as a critical requirement for effective sustainability management [11]. While carbon footprint data provide valuable insights into emission levels and sources, prior research indicates that such data are rarely embedded within structured decision-support frameworks. Instead, carbon footprint systems often stop at the level of monitoring and reporting, offering limited guidance for evaluating mitigation options or prioritizing emission reduction initiatives.

This gap is particularly evident in manufacturing contexts, where emission reduction decisions involve trade-offs between cost, operational feasibility, and environmental impact. Studies on sustainability decision-support systems highlight the need for analytical frameworks that integrate environmental data with scenario analysis and strategic planning [12]. Without such integration, carbon footprint initiatives risk remaining compliance-driven activities that fail to support meaningful emission reduction outcomes.

E. Net Zero Emission Strategies and System Oriented Approaches

Net Zero emission has emerged as a central objective in global climate mitigation strategies, with manufacturing industries identified as key contributors to achieving long-term decarbonization targets [13], [14]. Net Zero strategies emphasize not only the measurement of emissions but also the systematic reduction and balancing of residual emissions through coordinated technological, operational, and organizational interventions [1], [15]. These integrated approaches highlight the need for structured frameworks that support informed decision-making and long-term sustainability planning within manufacturing organizations.

Recent research underscores that achieving Net Zero emissions requires system-oriented approaches that integrate standardized emission calculation, performance evaluation, and decision-making within a unified framework [15]. However, existing studies in manufacturing contexts have largely emphasized emission quantification and reporting compliance, often addressing GHG scope classification and strategic decision support in isolation [2]. As a result, carbon footprint initiatives tend to remain fragmented and operationally focused, limiting their strategic impact and traceability across organizational boundaries [5]. This gap highlights the need for system models that explicitly connect standardized carbon footprint calculation, scope-based emission classification, and decision-support mechanisms to support Net Zero planning in manufacturing contexts.

III. Research Methodology

This study adopts a Design Science Research (DSR) methodology to develop a conceptual carbon footprint calculation system model that supports Net Zero emission strategies in the manufacturing industry. DSR is particularly suitable for this study because it focuses on the design and development of problem-solving artefacts, such as conceptual models and system frameworks, rather than hypothesis testing. In sustainability-oriented information systems research [16] DSR has been widely used to translate fragmented standards and practices into structured system artefacts that can guide organizational decision-making.

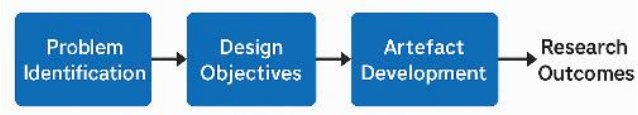

Fig. 1. Design science research stage.

To operationalize the DSR approach, this study follows a structured and sequential research framework as illustrated in Fig. 1. The framework consists of five interconnected stages: problem identification, design objectives formulation, artefact development, conceptual validation, and research outcomes. This structure is consistent with contemporary DSR practices, where the research contribution is embodied in a validated artefact rather than a fully implemented software system [17]. The use of a staged DSR framework ensures methodological rigor, traceability, and alignment between the research problem and the proposed system model.

A. Research Design (Problem Identification and Design Objectives)

The research design corresponds to the problem identification and design objectives formulation stages of the DSR framework. At this stage, the study examines existing challenges in carbon footprint calculation practices within the manufacturing industry, particularly the fragmented use of emission accounting standards and the limited integration of carbon data into sustainability-oriented decision support. These challenges are identified through a focused review of recent literature and international reporting practices.

Based on the identified problems, the design objectives are formulated to guide the development of a conceptual system model that integrates emission scope classification and standardized carbon calculation mechanisms. Consistent with DSR principles, the design objectives define what the proposed artefact should achieve rather than prescribing how it should be technically implemented.

B. Data Sources and Methodological Standards (Input to Artefact Design)

This subsection supports the artefact development preparation stage of the DSR process by defining the methodological foundations used in the system model. Emission classification in the proposed model is structured according to the GHG Protocol, which categorizes greenhouse gas emissions into Scope 1, Scope 2, and Scope 3. This classification framework provides a standardized basis for organizing

emission sources and is widely recognized in manufacturing sustainability practices.

For quantitative emission estimation, the study adopts emission factors derived from the UK Government GHG Conversion Factors for Company Reporting [4]. The DEFRA methodology is selected because it offers transparent, regularly updated, and activity-based emission factors that are suitable for operational-level carbon footprint calculation. Within the DSR framework, these standards function as design knowledge inputs, ensuring that the developed artefact is grounded in authoritative and reproducible methodologies.

C. System Modeling Approach (Artefact Development)

The artefact development stage of the DSR framework is realized through a conceptual system modeling approach. The proposed artefact is a carbon footprint calculation system model that represents the logical structure and functional relationships among key system components, including activity data inputs, emission scope classification, emission factor mapping, carbon footprint calculation, and decision-support outputs.

Conceptual system modeling is widely used in DSR to represent complex systems at an abstract level, enabling clarity of logic and facilitating future implementation. In this study, activity data are systematically mapped to emission scopes defined by the GHG Protocol and linked to DEFRA-based emission factors. This integration constitutes the core design contribution of the artefact and reflects the artefact development stage depicted in Fig. 1.

The appropriateness of developing a conceptual system model as the primary DSR artefact is supported by [17], which demonstrates that DSR artefacts may take the form of conceptual- or prototype-level systems when the research objective is methodological integration rather than full software deployment.

D. Research Procedure and Conceptual Validation

This subsection corresponds to the conceptual validation stage of the DSR framework. After the artefact is developed, the proposed system model undergoes analytical and conceptual validation to assess its logical consistency, methodological soundness, and alignment with the selected emission accounting standards. The validation process focuses on evaluating whether the integration of emission scope classification and standardized emission factors is coherent, traceable, and capable of supporting sustainability-oriented decision-making.

IV. Results and Discussion

The overall structure of the proposed carbon footprint calculation system model and its integration with the decision-support framework are illustrated in Fig. 2, which provides an overview of the system logic and information flow across activity data, emission calculation, and decision-support components.

This section presents the results of the Design Science Research in the form of a conceptual carbon footprint calculation system model and a supporting decision-support framework for Net Zero emission strategies in the manufacturing industry. The proposed artefacts are derived from the integration of the GHG Protocol and DEFRA standards and are discussed to highlight their methodological contributions, transparency, and relevance for sustainability-oriented decision-making.

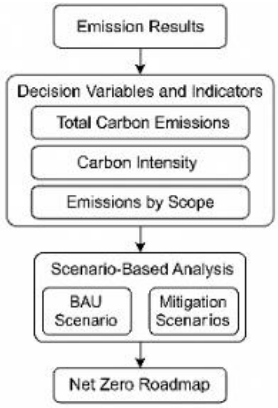

Fig. 2. Decision support framework diagram.

A. Carbon Footprint Calculation System Model

This subsection presents the primary result of the study in the form of a conceptual carbon footprint calculation system model for the manufacturing industry. The proposed model represents the main artefact produced through the Design Science Research process and serves as a structured framework for integrating standardized emission classification and calculation mechanisms. Rather than focusing on technical implementation, the model emphasizes methodological coherence and transparency to support Net Zero emission strategies.

The conceptual system model follows a logical input–process–output structure. The input component consists of activity data representing key manufacturing operations, including energy consumption, transportation, material usage, and waste generation. These data form the basis for carbon footprint calculation and are assumed to be obtained from organizational operational records.

The process component comprises three interrelated functions. First, activity data are classified into emission scopes (Scope 1, Scope 2, and Scope 3) in accordance with the GHG Protocol. Second, each classified activity is linked to the appropriate emission factor derived from the DEFRA conversion factors. Third, carbon emissions are calculated by applying standardized calculation logic to the activity data and emission factors. This structured process ensures consistency and traceability throughout the calculation workflow.

The output component generates structured carbon footprint results, including total emissions, emissions by scope, and emissions by activity category. From a results perspective, the model demonstrates how standardized emission accounting practices can be systematically embedded within a unified system framework. From a discussion perspective, the proposed model addresses a key limitation in existing practices by explicitly linking emission scope classification with quantitative emission calculation, thereby enhancing transparency and decision readiness in manufacturing carbon management.

B. GHG Scope Classification Logic

This subsection presents the emission scope classification logic embedded in the proposed carbon footprint calculation system model. The classification logic represents an important result of the study, as it operationalizes the GHG Protocol framework within a structured system workflow rather than treating scope classification as a separate reporting activity.

Within the proposed model, manufacturing activities are systematically mapped into Scope 1, Scope 2, and Scope 3 emissions based on emission sources and organizational boundaries. This mapping is performed prior to quantitative calculation to ensure that emission boundaries are explicitly defined and consistently applied. From a results perspective, embedding scope classification at an early stage of the system workflow reduces ambiguity and supports structured aggregation of emission results. From a discussion perspective, this approach enhances transparency and traceability by clearly linking operational activities to their respective emission scopes.

To illustrate how the scope classification logic is applied within the system model, Table I summarizes the conceptual mapping between typical manufacturing activities and GHG emission scopes.

TABLE I. MAPPING OF MANUFACTURING ACTIVITIES TO GHG EMISSION SCOPES

Activity Category	GHG Emission Scope		
	Example Activity	***GHG Scope***	***Description***
Fuel combustion	Diesel usage in boilers or generators	Scope 1	Direct emissions from on-site fuel combustion
Company-owned transportation	Internal logistics vehicles	Scope 1	Direct emissions from company-controlled vehicles
Electricity	Electricity consumption for production	Scope 2	Indirect emissions from purchased energy
Steam/cooling	External energy supply for processes	Scope 2	Indirect emissions from off-site energy generation
Raw material procurement	Purchased materials from suppliers	Scope 3	Upstream emissions in the supply chain
Third-party transportation	Outsourced logistics services	Scope 3	Indirect emissions from external transport providers
Waste treatment	Disposal or recycling by third parties	Scope 3	Downstream emissions from waste management

[a.] Sample of a Table GHG Emission Scope

C. Carbon Calculation Logic

This subsection presents the carbon footprint calculation logic embedded in the proposed system model. The calculation logic constitutes a key quantitative result of the study, as it operationalizes standardized activity data and emission factors into measurable carbon footprint outcomes. By integrating emission factors derived from DEFRA within a structured calculation workflow, the proposed logic ensures consistency, reproducibility, and methodological transparency.

In the proposed model, carbon emissions for each manufacturing activity are calculated using standardized activity data and corresponding emission factors. This calculation approach follows the fundamental principle defined in the UK Government GHG Conversion Factors for Company Reporting, in which greenhouse gas emissions are estimated by multiplying activity data by the relevant emission conversion factors. The basic calculation logic is expressed as follows:

$$CFi = ADi \times EFi \quad (1)$$

where, CFi denotes the carbon footprint of activity i (kg CO_2e), ADi represents the quantified activity data associated with activity i, and EFi refers to the emission factor obtained from the DEFRA conversion factors.

To derive the total carbon footprint across manufacturing operations, emissions are aggregated across all activities and emission scopes:

$$CFtotal = \sum_{s=1}^{3} \sum_{i \in s} (ADi \times EFi) \quad (2)$$

From a results perspective, this calculation logic enables the system to generate both activity-level and scope-level emission results in a structured and traceable manner. From a discussion perspective, the explicit aggregation across emission scopes extends the basic DEFRA calculation approach by aligning it with the GHG Protocol's scope-based reporting structure, thereby supporting more comprehensive carbon footprint analysis and Net Zero emission planning.

D. Handling Supplier Heterogeneity and Scope 3 Emission Uncertainty

Scope 3 emissions are inherently subject to supplier heterogeneity, data uncertainty, and estimation errors due to variations in supplier practices, data availability, and emission reporting quality. In the proposed system model, supplier heterogeneity is conceptually addressed through activity categorization and emission factor mapping, allowing emissions from different supplier types and logistics providers to be represented using differentiated activity data and DEFRA emission factors.

Data uncertainty arises primarily from estimated activity data and the use of secondary emission factors. To address this issue, the system model supports tiered data quality levels, ranging from primary supplier data to industry-average estimates. Estimation errors are acknowledged as an inherent limitation of Scope 3 accounting and are managed through transparent documentation of assumptions and calculation logic. Although dynamic supplier-specific emission factors are not implemented in this study, the proposed system model is

designed to accommodate future updates as supplier data maturity improves.

E. Uncertainty Quantification and Mitigation Strategies

Uncertainty in carbon footprint calculation primarily arises from variability in activity data and assumptions associated with Scope 3 emissions, rather than from the static representation of emission factors. In the proposed model, updates to emission factors are managed through system-level configuration to accommodate evolving standards, while uncertainty is conceptually addressed through data quality classification and scenario-based analysis. These mechanisms enable the identification of data sources with higher estimation risk and support the evaluation of alternative assumptions within a consistent system structure.

Mitigation strategies embedded in the model include the use of conservative emission factors, explicit documentation of assumptions, periodic data validation, and sensitivity analysis across alternative scenarios. These design-level measures aim to reduce the potential impact of data uncertainty on carbon footprint results and enhance the transparency of emission estimates. Although quantitative uncertainty modeling is beyond the scope of this study, the proposed system architecture allows such methods to be incorporated in future extensions to further improve the robustness and reliability of decision-support outputs.

F. Decision Support Framework for Net Zero Emission

This subsection presents the proposed decision-support framework as the second core result of the study. Building upon the carbon footprint calculation system model, the framework translates quantified emission results into actionable insights for Net Zero emission planning in the manufacturing industry. Rather than introducing complex optimization algorithms, the framework emphasizes a logical and transparent flow that links emission data to strategic decision-making.

Unlike conventional carbon footprint systems that primarily provide descriptive dashboards or static emission reports, the proposed decision-support framework enables structured scenario-based evaluation and strategic planning. By organizing emission results into scope-based indicators, carbon intensity metrics, and alternative mitigation scenarios, the framework supports systematic trade-off analysis between emission reduction potential, operational feasibility, and strategic targets. Furthermore, the explicit formulation of baseline, target, and reduction pathways enables transparent Net Zero roadmap development, allowing decision-makers to compare alternative emission trajectories within a consistent and traceable framework. This integration extends carbon footprint systems beyond monitoring and reporting toward analytical and strategic sustainability decision support.

The framework operates by structuring emission results into decision-relevant indicators, evaluating alternative scenarios, and supporting the formulation of a Net Zero roadmap. By embedding these elements within a unified framework, the proposed approach extends the role of carbon footprint systems from monitoring and reporting toward strategic sustainability support.

1) Decision variables and indicators: The framework employs a limited set of core decision variables derived from the carbon footprint calculation results. These variables include total carbon emissions, carbon intensity, and emissions by scope (Scope 1–Scope 3). Total emissions provide a baseline overview of organizational carbon performance, while carbon intensity supports efficiency assessment independent of production scale. Scope-based indicators enable the identification of dominant emission sources and support targeted mitigation planning.

2) Scenario-Based analysis framework: The framework incorporates scenario-based analysis to evaluate alternative emission trajectories. Two primary scenarios are considered: business-as-usual (BAU) and mitigation scenarios. The BAU scenario represents current operational practices, whereas mitigation scenarios reflect potential emission reduction strategies. Scenario comparison is conducted using consistent calculation logic, enabling transparent assessment of the potential impact of mitigation actions.

3) Net zero roadmap formulation: Based on the scenario analysis results, the framework supports the formulation of a Net Zero roadmap comprising three elements: baseline, target, and reduction pathway. The baseline is defined using BAU emission results, the target reflects the intended Net Zero objective, and the reduction pathway outlines a structured transition informed by mitigation scenarios. This approach provides strategic guidance without prescribing specific technologies or implementation timelines.

Compared to conventional carbon footprint calculators that primarily focus on emission quantification or reporting compliance, as discussed in prior carbon accounting studies [2], the proposed model integrates emission scope classification, standardized calculation, and decision-support logic within a single framework. Previous studies on manufacturing sustainability systems [5] have highlighted limitations related to traceability and strategic decision support, which are explicitly addressed through the integrated design of the proposed model.

G. Illustrative Manufacturing Case Scenario

Although this study does not include a full-scale system implementation, an illustrative manufacturing case scenario is developed based on observations conducted in a real manufacturing environment. The scenario is informed by operational practices observed at textile manufacturing company, and represents a mid-sized manufacturing facility for abstraction and confidentiality purposes.

The scenario incorporates representative operational data related to energy consumption, internal logistics, raw material procurement, and waste treatment, which are commonly observed in textile and manufacturing industries. Using representative activity data and DEFRA emission factors, the proposed system model generates scope-based emission results that illustrate the aggregation logic and decision-support outputs.

While this observation-based scenario does not constitute a full empirical case study or quantitative system evaluation, it demonstrates the practical applicability and feasibility of the proposed model in a real-world manufacturing context. The results illustrate how carbon footprint calculations can support scope-based emission analysis and inform Net Zero emission planning at the organizational level.

H. System Architecture Overview

This subsection presents a high-level overview of the system architecture that supports the proposed carbon footprint calculation system model and decision-support framework. The architecture is intended to demonstrate the feasibility and logical organization of the system components, rather than to provide implementation level details.

1) High-level system architecture: Fig. 3 illustrates the high-level system architecture designed to support carbon footprint calculation and Net Zero decision support in the manufacturing industry. The architecture positions the carbon calculation engine as the central component, reflecting the core focus of this study on standardized emission calculation and analytical integration.

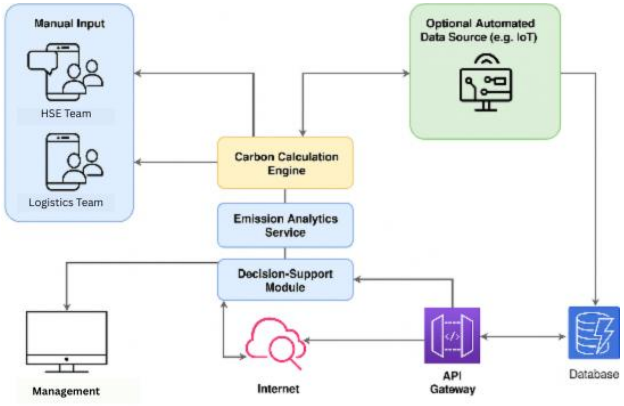

Fig. 3. System architecture with carbon engine.

As shown in Fig. 3, the system receives activity data from two primary sources: manual input and optional automated data sources. Manual input is provided by organizational units such as the HSE and logistics teams, representing common data collection practices in manufacturing environments. In addition, automated data acquisition technologies, such as IoT platforms, may be integrated as optional data sources to enhance data availability. These automated sources are treated as complementary inputs and do not constitute the core contribution of the proposed system.

2) Main functional modules: The proposed architecture consists of two main functional modules. The carbon calculation engine is responsible for processing activity data, classifying emissions by scope, applying DEFRA emission factors, and aggregating emission results. This module operationalizes the integration of GHG Protocol and DEFRA standards within a unified calculation workflow.

The decision-support module utilizes the calculated emission outputs to generate decision-relevant indicators, support scenario-based analysis, and inform Net Zero roadmap formulation. By separating calculation and decision-support functionalities, the system ensures that analytical logic and strategic interpretation remain clearly distinguished, enhancing transparency and maintainability.

I. Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations. First, the proposed system model is conceptual and has not been implemented as a software prototype or validated using real operational data. Second, the treatment of Scope 3 emissions relies on generalized emission factors and does not fully capture supplier-specific variability or dynamic process changes. Third, uncertainty quantification is addressed conceptually rather than through statistical modeling. These limitations reflect the study's focus on methodological integration rather than empirical system deployment.

V. Conclusion

This study presents a conceptual carbon footprint calculation system model for the manufacturing industry that integrates GHG Protocol–based emission scope classification with standardized emission factors from DEFRA within a unified system structure. Adopting a Design Science Research approach, the study delivers two primary artefacts: a structured system model that formalizes scope-based carbon footprint calculation and a decision-support framework designed to support Net Zero emission planning.

The proposed model demonstrates how standardized carbon accounting can be systematically embedded to enable transparent emission calculation, consistent scope-based aggregation, and the generation of decision-relevant indicators. By integrating scenario-based analysis and structured roadmap formulation, the decision-support framework extends the role of carbon footprint systems beyond compliance-oriented reporting toward strategic evaluation of Net Zero pathways in manufacturing contexts.

Future research will focus on the development of an integrated carbon footprint monitoring system to support the optimization of Green Industry practices toward Zero Emission in the manufacturing sector. This includes translating the proposed conceptual model into a detailed system design capable of continuous monitoring across production, logistics, and supply chain activities. While updates to emission factors can be managed through system-level configuration to accommodate evolving standards, further work may incorporate uncertainty modeling techniques to assess the impact of variability and estimation errors in activity data and Scope 3 assumptions on carbon footprint results. In addition, the integration of supplier-specific emission data, dynamic operational data sources, and advanced decision-support methods—such as optimization and multi-criteria decision analysis—may further enhance the evaluation of alternative Green Industry and Net Zero strategies.

In the broader context of Net Zero transitions in the manufacturing sector, this study contributes a system-oriented approach that enhances decision quality, methodological transparency, and strategic alignment in carbon footprint management. By integrating standardized emission classification, calculation logic, and decision-support

mechanisms within a unified system model, the proposed approach improves comparability, traceability, and the practical usability of carbon footprint data. This contribution is particularly relevant for manufacturing organizations seeking to move beyond compliance-driven reporting toward proactive, data-informed, and strategically guided Net Zero transformation.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors gratefully acknowledge the financial support provided through the Publication Support Program for Reputable Journals 2025 administered by the Directorate General of Research and Development, Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia. The authors also express their sincere appreciation to Institut Pendidikan Indonesia Garut, for institutional support that contributed to the completion of this research and publication.

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AI-Based Parkinson's Disease Diagnosis and Prediction with Therapeutic Game Design for Engagement

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***Abstract*—Parkinson's disease (PD) is a progressive neurodegenerative disease that impacts motor and cognitive functions, and early diagnosis and management are essential to enhance patient outcomes. The study assumes the implementation of Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based diagnostic and predictive algorithms, along with therapeutic game design, to assist patients in improving the management and treatment of PD. The existing approaches to PD diagnosis rely heavily on clinical observation of symptoms and on traditional imaging methods, which may be subjective, time-consuming, and prone to human error. Moreover, conventional interventions are not consistently engaging or tailored to the patient, and hence, treatment adherence is not optimal. To overcome these difficulties, we present PD in the framework of AI (PD-AI), leveraging machine learning algorithms to enhance early diagnosis and predict disease progression. The system will be implemented as a mobile app that integrates AI with therapeutic gaming, with real-time symptom tracking based on sensor readings (e.g., tremors, motor skills) and interactive therapeutic games provided to the patient to maintain their engagement. The suggested approach enhances early diagnosis rates, provides a tailored approach, supports continuous monitoring of symptoms, and encourages patients to follow their treatment actively. An active, efficient, and convenient management strategy is facilitated by data analysis based on frequent examinations and feedback via the app. Preliminary results indicate that the PD-AI model improves case diagnosis accuracy and patient compliance with treatment regimens, demonstrating its effectiveness for both medical experts and patients with PD.**

Keywords*—Parkinson's disease; Artificial Intelligence (AI); mobile application; early diagnosis; machine learning algorithms

I. Introduction

Parkinson's disease (PD) is a neurological disorder that progresses over time and primarily impacts motor abilities, cognition, and general quality of life [1]. It is a central nervous system disease that concerns millions of people all over the world, and it is the second most prevalent illness, right behind Alzheimer. The symptoms of PD, including tremor, slowed movement (bradykinesia), stiffness, and postural instability, result from the loss of dopaminergic cells in the substantia nigra region of the brain [2]. Another complication is non-motor symptoms such as cognitive impairment, depression, and autonomic dysfunction, which may complicate the treatment of the disease further [3]. To improve outcomes, early diagnosis and continuous patient monitoring are recommended, as the condition worsens over time [4].

Diagnosis of PD in the present is based on clinical assessment, patient history, and neurological tests; imaging tests, including MRI and DaTscan, are used as supplements [5]. The techniques also have their own set of disadvantages, including being non-objective and relying on the clinician's experience, as well as being expensive and time-consuming [6]. Thus, PD tends to be diagnosed in its late stages, when much of the neuronal death has already occurred, and current treatments are futile [7]. The traditional treatment methods include pharmacological and physical treatments, with emphasis on patient compliance, participation, and long-term efficacy. Problem with the adherence to treatment plans has been observed to result in poor disease control by many PD patients [8].

In determining and predicting neurodegenerative disorders, Artificial intelligence (AI) has proven to be a significant force in revolutionizing medicine [9]. It is possible, with the help of machine learning algorithms that can work with massive databases, to detect subtle patterns in motor complaints and provide more objective, early, and accurate diagnoses [10]. Non-invasive in their application but still providing a dependable method for managing PD, AI-driven technologies enable continuous monitoring of disease progression through smartphone-based tests and wearable devices, making them practical and efficient [11].

The combination of therapeutic gaming and AI is an innovative approach to generate interest and increase compliance with treatment [12]. Gamification in healthcare can improve motivation, consistency, and rehabilitation outcomes by making treatment more interactive and engaging [13]. In this paper, we introduce the PD-AI model, an ML-based mobile application for early screening, disease progression prediction, and therapeutic gaming engagement [14]. Machine learning drives the system. It gathers motor symptoms using smartphone sensors and wearable devices, interprets them in real time with AI, forecasts the most likely outcome of the illness, and offers virtual exercises to develop motor and cognitive skills [15].

The integration of therapeutic gaming and AI-based diagnostics solves the main issue of the treatment of PD, such as proper early diagnosis, follow-up, and patient compliance with their medication [16]. The technology provides individuals with PD with increased control over their condition, while also aiding

physicians in clinical decision-making. Early findings indicate that with the help of AI, gamification enhances the quality of diagnosis, therapy administration, and patient health outcomes [17]. This project will create a powerful and enjoyable tool for diagnosing and treating illnesses, and it will be part of the expanding literature on digital healthcare services for PD.

Through: The reasons behind this study are early diagnosis, disease monitoring, and adherence to treatment in PD. Traditional methods of diagnosis are usually arbitrary and time-consuming; existing treatments are, in some cases, lacking patient engagement and compliance. The creative application of therapeutic gaming and AI-assisted diagnostics can improve the quality of life of people with PD by enhancing clinical decision-making, enabling proactive disease management, and ultimately improving the patient experience.

The problem statement is also unclear and requires subjective and costly clinical tests to diagnose PD. In addition, conventional treatment methods do not necessarily work well for patients, leading to ineffective outcomes and non-compliance. To overcome these challenges, we designed a therapeutic gaming-based diagnostic and prognostic system using AI in our study. Timely diagnosis, continuous symptom monitoring, and interactive therapy, which this technology will provide, will help increase patient compliance and overall disease care. The novelty of the proposed PD using an AI (PD-AI) framework resides in its explicit transformation of PD management from a disjoint analytical–therapeutic workflow into a unified, prediction-driven intelligence system. Unlike existing approaches that either apply AI to static symptom classification or deploy serious games solely as engagement mechanisms, PD-AI embeds longitudinal disease-state prediction directly within the therapeutic game control loop. This integration introduces a methodological innovation in which gameplay interactions function simultaneously as diagnostic observations, predictive signals, and adaptive control inputs. Architecturally, the framework departs from modular, one-directional pipelines by implementing a closed-loop learning structure that continuously updates both disease inference models and therapy parameters based on patient performance trajectories. Algorithmically, PD-AI advances beyond session-level inference by incorporating temporal aggregation and adaptive policy adjustment to modulate intervention intensity in response to evolving motor and cognitive profiles.

Contribution of this paper:

- The study formulates early PD diagnosis and progression prediction as a unified machine learning problem by employing supervised classification models for disease identification and temporal prediction models for longitudinal symptom evolution, with predictive targets being session-wise motor and cognitive performance trajectories derived from therapeutic game interactions.
- The proposed mobile-based therapeutic gaming system implements algorithmic personalization through a performance-driven adaptation mechanism that dynamically adjusts game difficulty, execution tempo, and feedback intensity based on inferred disease state and real-time patient interaction metrics, thereby operationalizing adaptive therapy within a closed-loop AI framework.
- The framework is validated using subject-independent experimental protocols, with diagnostic effectiveness quantified through accuracy, sensitivity, specificity, F1-score, and AUC, and patient adherence evaluated via session completion rate and longitudinal engagement indices, supported by statistical comparison against non-adaptive baseline systems to establish measurable performance gains.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: Section II presents an overview of the related work on PD diagnosis and prediction. In Section III, the proposed PD-AI methodology is explained. In Section IV, the efficiency of PD-AI is discussed and analyzed. Finally, in Section V, the paper concludes with a discussion of future work.

II. Related Work

Prediction, diagnosis, and treatment of PD are undergoing a revolution driven by machine learning and AI. Wearable sensors, powered by AI, serious games, and neurorehabilitation strategies, benefit patients. Given the focus on innovative solutions, such as game-based learning, predictive analytics, and a tailored approach to treatment to enhance healthcare and quality of life, this paper explores the application of AI in PD management, rehabilitation, and occupational therapy.

A. AI-Driven PD Diagnosis and Management

The current paper examines the use of AI and machine learning to diagnose, prognose, and manage PD. It highlights the early discovery process of biomarkers identified through neuroimaging, handwriting patterns, and voice analysis. It also includes AI developments in neurosurgery, drug discovery, and the metaverse [18], as well as the integration of IoT and electronic health records to further improve PD management. Moreover, it discussed how AI models evaluate lipidomics and gut-brain relationships to inform treatment plans and improve patient outcomes.

B. AI-Integrated Wearable Sensor System

This paper introduces a new technique that uses wearable sensors and AI algorithms to identify neurological diseases. Real-time sensor data can identify early illness biomarkers that can be used to treat in a short period of time [19]. A closed-loop feedback system can be improved by tailoring monitoring to each patient, thereby enhancing predictive analytics and patient-specific therapies. The paper also highlights that the required items include a consistent data format, alignment among stakeholders, and ethical issues that must be taken into account to achieve effective and fair use of AI in neurology and, therefore, maximize patient treatment.

C. Game-Based Learning Framework for PD (GBL-PD)

With a special emphasis on game-based learning (GBL) in the design of exergames, nutritional games, emotional games, handwriting games, and voice games [20], the study explores Human-Computer Interaction Serious Games (HCI-SGs) among people with PD. Qualitative and quantitative data of doctors, developers, and users show that a regression analysis reveals the main characteristics of a game design that has a positive impact

on real life. As noted in the paper, personalized HCI-SGs can support effective human-computer interaction to manage symptoms and enhance the quality of life of PD patients.

D. AI-Enabled Rehabilitation Framework

This paper examines the potential applications of AI in rehabilitation for various disorders, including neurological and cardiovascular conditions. AI enables evaluation of the recoverability of telerehabilitation, virtual reality, and tailored rehabilitation programs [21]. The study ranks AI applications in rehabilitation, examines current empirical data, and offers statistical analysis proving AI's importance. Emphasizing AI's growing opportunities to improve rehabilitation outcomes, patient involvement, and healthcare accessibility, this paper examines challenges and future areas of study.

E. AI-Based Rehabilitation Framework

This paper examines AI's contribution to rehabilitation by covering specific rehabilitation applications, including virtual reality, neurodegenerative diseases, and telerehabilitation for cardiovascular problems [22]. The paper examines the literature, categorizes AI applications, and statistically analyzes a subset of selected studies. Despite many AI applications in rehabilitation being in their early stages, this article addresses their future potential, challenges, and areas of future study. It emphasizes how unique rehabilitation results, patient involvement, and the accessibility of AI-driven solutions in healthcare are increasing.

F. AI-Powered Occupational Therapy

This paper examines the application of AI technologies in physical and psychological rehabilitation, encompassing machine learning, computer vision, and natural language processing. AI-driven evaluations allow therapeutic customization, improve patient outcomes, and increase therapy efficiency [23]. The studies demonstrate how AI can enhance occupational therapy, particularly in virtual reality applications and robotic-assisted rehabilitation. A review of current developments and applications helps the study highlight how AI transforms rehabilitation by offering innovative tools to enhance therapeutic interventions in physical and mental healthcare.

G. AI-Driven Serious Games for Healthcare

This scoping study examines 64 key games from 46 studies to examine AI applications in healthcare. With role-playing, puzzle, and platform games defining the genres, it notes motor impairment as the most common target [24]. Unity is the primary game engine; AI models, such as vector machines, aid in identifying diseases and evaluating user performance. The study suggests that further thorough and varied research is needed to demonstrate their value, even as the trend of AI-driven serious games continues to develop.

H. AI-Enhanced Neurorehabilitation

The role of AI in neurorehabilitation for PD, spinal cord injury (SCI), and stroke is assessed in the present comprehensive study. Using predictive analytics, robotic devices, and brain-computer interfaces [25], AI and machine learning improve diagnosis, adjust therapies, and maximize rehabilitation. Modern AI systems provide remote monitoring, customizing therapy, and precise clinical evaluations. Emphasizing the need for substantial validation, addressing ethical challenges, and promoting enhanced access to home-based rehabilitation technology, the study highlights the evolving potential of AI in neurorehabilitation. Table I compares existing methods.

TABLE I. THE COMPARISON OF EXISTING METHODS

S. No	Methods	Advantages	Limitations
1	AI-Driven PD Diagnosis and Management (AI-PD-DM)	Early detection of PD, improved treatment strategies, and driven biomarker analysis	Requires extensive datasets, potential biases in AI models
2	AI-Integrated Wearable Sensor System (AI-WSS)	Real-time monitoring, personalized treatment, and early disease detection	High cost of implementation, data privacy concerns
3	Game-Based Learning Framework for PD (GBL-PD)	Engaging in rehabilitation improved motor and cognitive functions	Limited validation requires patient adherence.
4	AI-Enabled Rehabilitation Framework (AI-ERF)	Enhances recovery across diseases and increases accessibility.	Limited large-scale studies, high technological dependency
5	AI-Based Rehabilitation Framework (AI-BRF)	Personalized therapy, improved patient engagement	Ethical concerns, need for regulatory standardization
6	AI-Powered Occupational Therapy (AI-POT)	More precise assessments, optimized therapy delivery	High initial cost, training required for therapists
7	AI-Driven Serious Games for Healthcare (AI-SGH)	Enhances motor skills, supports cognitive therapy	Effectiveness depends on user engagement, requires validation
8	AI-Enhanced Neurorehabilitation (AI-ENR)	Supports stroke and PD recovery, remote monitoring	Requires advanced infrastructure, ethical concerns in AI-driven care

This paper covers primary games, neurorehabilitation, wearable sensors, AI-driven PD diagnostic techniques, and PD diagnosis itself. Using virtual reality and robotics, AI enhances rehabilitation, speech analysis, neuroimaging, and personalized therapy. AI-powered serious games support motor recovery; predictive analytics improve patient care. Further study should primarily focus on ethical issues, extensive validation, and the increased availability of AI in tailored healthcare solutions. Existing AI approaches for PD predominantly operate within narrowly defined analytical boundaries, focusing on cross-sectional diagnostic inference derived from isolated clinical or sensor modalities. These systems formalize disease assessment as a static classification task, with limited incorporation of temporal symptom dynamics, inter-session variability, or therapy-induced behavioural responses into the learning process. Consequently, disease-state estimation, progression forecasting, and therapeutic intervention remain analytically partitioned, preventing the formation of a unified intelligence pipeline that can inform adaptive care strategies. In contrast, the proposed PD-AI framework establishes an integrated, closed-loop architecture in which multimodal longitudinal data streams, predictive disease modelling, and AI-guided therapeutic game

interactions are jointly optimized. This shift from discrete diagnostic modelling to continuous, interaction-aware intelligence clearly defines research priorities, including scalable longitudinal validation, explainable decision pathways for clinical interpretability, and adaptive engagement modelling driven by patient performance feedback.

III. Methodology

PD diagnosis and treatment options are being developed with the help of AI and therapeutic gaming. This early diagnosis, symptom monitoring, and prediction method using machine learning and gamified treatment would increase patient engagement by means of early diagnosis. The fusion of interactive rehabilitation and data generated by AI is transforming the treatment of PD. This guarantees personalized treatment, live-time tracking and better patient outcomes.

A. Contribution 1: AI-Powered Early Diagnosis and Prediction

Machine learning algorithms applied to the creation of PD-AI framework increase the accuracy of early diagnosis and predicts the progression of PD based on the motor assessment provided by sensors.

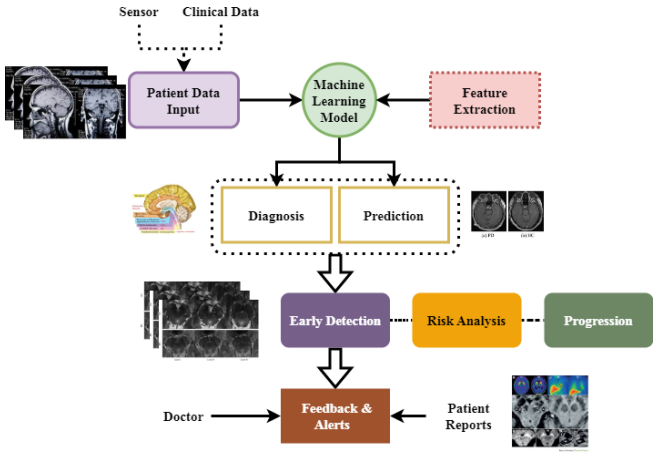

Fig. 1. AI-powered Parkinson's diagnosis pipeline.

Fig. 1 illustrates that AI is used to drive a PD diagnosis and prediction system. Patient data entry is the first step of the procedure. It collects sensor and clinical data, such as motor skills and tremor data. This information is then fed into machine learning models to identify trends related to PD and derive pertinent features. Diagnosis and Prediction is an AI tool designed for early discovery, risk assessment, and tracking development. The second level is the Feedback and Alerts, which provides patients and physicians with fast information to facilitate active disease management. The technique minimizes human error and improves diagnostic quality through machine learning. This computerized method simplifies PD diagnosis, especially in remote sites, enhancing objectivity, speed, and availability. By identifying and tracking patients early and monitoring them, the AI-based pipeline can improve patient outcomes and provide healthcare professionals with evidence-based insights.

$$\partial_v s = [\forall' + nr''] + \sigma\tau[grv - aw''] * \varepsilon\delta v'' \quad (1)$$

To simulate symptom fluctuations$[\forall' + nr'']$, the provided Eq. (1) combines stochastic terms ($\sigma\tau$) with differential parameters ($\partial_v s$). This equation is used in the PD-AI framework$\varepsilon\delta v''$ to link AI-predicted disease gauges$\sigma\tau[grv - aw'']$ With real-time sensor information. Including this model in the mobile app helps the system achieve swift diagnosis and adaptive treatment.

$$\partial_v r = mZ[\partial + yr''] + Vx[a - kr''] * \forall m'' \quad (2)$$

Using motion-related parameters ($\partial_v r$) and outside variables ($mZ[\partial + yr'']$) to measure motor deficits, the Eq. (2), $Vx[a - kr'']$ predicts the dynamic$\forall m''$ The course of PD. The mobile app enhances tailored diagnoses and therapeutic games by integrating them, thereby ensuring continuous monitoring and flexible treatment plans.

$$\partial_v s = Te[a + br''] + yr[\partial \propto -nxw''] * bxl'' \quad (3)$$

Based on motor factors ($\partial_v s$) and cognitive impacts ($Te[a + br'']$). Eq. (3) shows where $yr[\partial \propto -nxw'']$ measures symptom severity bxl'' . Embedding the above framework into a smartphone app helps the system to improve early detection, symptom monitoring, and adaptive patient involvement.

$$\forall_v a = Pa'[\partial + br''] * r[an - nr''] + jcs'' \quad (4)$$

Eq. (4) examines where $\forall_v a$ denotes patient interaction levels jcs'' driven by cognitive responses $r[an - nr'']$ and motor activities $Pa'[\partial + br'']$. This equation is used in the PD-AI paradigm to maximize therapeutic gaming by varying the degree of activity and engagement data.

Algorithm 1: Machine Learning Model for PD Prediction

```
import pandas as pd
import numpy as np
from sklearn.model_selection import train_test_split
from sklearn.ensemble import RandomForestClassifier
from sklearn.metrics import accuracy_score
Load dataset (example CSV with symptom data)
df = pd.read_csv('parkinsons_data.csv')
Define features and target variable
X = df.drop(columns
= ['diagnosis']) # Features (e.g., tremors, motor skills)
y = df['diagnosis'] # 1 = PD, 0 = Healthy
Split data into training and test sets
X_train, X_test, y_train, y_test
                = train_test_split(X, y, test_size
                = 0.2, random_state = 42)
Train Random Forest model
model = RandomForestClassifier(n_estimators
                = 100, random_state = 42)
model.fit(X_train, y_train)
Predict and evaluate
y_pred = model.predict(X_test)
accuracy = accuracy_score(y_test, y_pred)
print(f'Prediction Accuracy: {accuracy: .2f}')
```

This script trains a Random Forest classifier on patient data to predict PD. It loads a dataset, extracts features, splits data into training and test sets and evaluates the model's accuracy. The AI model enhances early diagnosis by analyzing tremors, motor skills, and other symptoms. In Algorithm 1 (PD prediction), the number of trees in the Random Forest model (n_estimators = 100) directly controls the bias–variance trade-off: lower values reduce computational cost but increase variance and instability in classification, whereas higher values improve generalization at the expense of inference time. The train–test split ratio (test_size = 0.2) influences statistical reliability: insufficient test samples lead to optimistic accuracy estimates, and larger splits reduce training robustness. The random_state parameter ensures reproducibility and stabilizes performance comparisons across experimental runs. Feature dimensionality in X affects model sensitivity to motor and tremor-related signals: redundant features increase the risk of overfitting, while insufficient features reduce diagnostic separability.

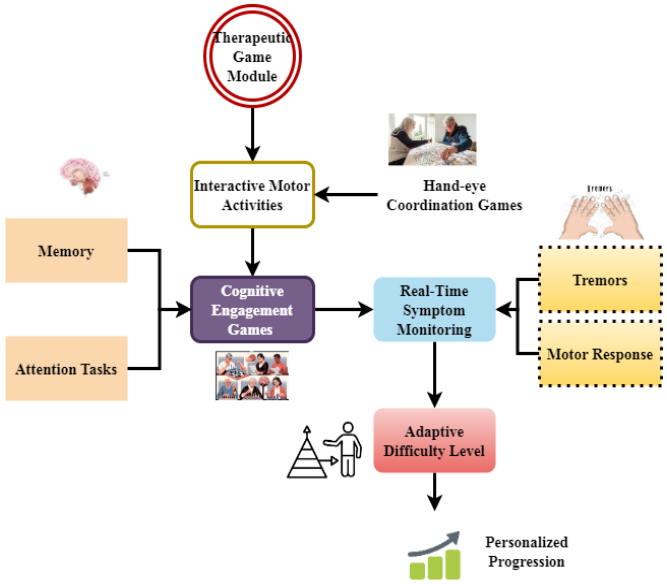

Fig. 2. Gamified therapy: Engaging Parkinson's patients.

Fig. 2 depicts one of the modules of the PD-AI design, the Therapeutic Game Module, that is expected to make patients more engaged. The interactive motor activities provided in the module, such as hand-eye coordination, could assist patients in maintaining their motor skills. The major focus areas of the Cognitive Engagement Games, designed to delay cognitive decline, are memory, attention, and problem-solving. Real-time symptom monitoring is made possible through continuous assessment of the patient's motor reflexes, tremors, and coordination. An adaptable level of difficulty also makes the game relevant to patients' specific needs, engaging them and offering a therapeutic challenge. The therapeutic game module enhances patient adherence and simplifies the treatment process by introducing fun digital activities into therapy. In addition to keeping patients' interest, the combination of interactive exercises with real-time monitoring generates useful health data that physicians can use to adjust therapeutic regimens.

$$\partial_v a = Tr[s\forall - kr''] + v[a + nr''] * vxs'' \quad (5)$$

The equation models in which $\partial_v a$ reflects adaptive symptom vxs'' response affected by motor-cognitive interactions ($Tr[s\forall - kr'']$) and tremor degree ($v[a + nr'']$. This equation enables the AI system to modify the therapeutic gaming PD-AI paradigm fluidly.

$$\partial_a q = yr[\forall - nj''] + bx[\partial + rw''] * Vx[\propto -Pz''] \quad (6)$$

Eq. (6) predicts where $\partial_a q$ denotes adaptive changes impacted by cognitive, along with motor variables ($yr[\forall - nj'']$) and interactive treatment parameters ($bx[\partial + rw'']$) and $Vx[\propto -Pz'']$. The integration of this paradigm ensures constant symptom monitoring and tailored modifications, thereby enhancing patient involvement and therapy efficacy.

$$\partial Pa = [s - mu''] + cz[s - nr''] * va[iu - y'] \quad (7)$$

Based on symptom fluctuations ($[s - mu'']$) and interactive therapeutic impact ($cz[s - nr'']$) the Eq. (7), $va[iu - y']$ Predicts patient status (∂Pa). This equation links real-time motor data with cognitive data, along with tailored therapy modifications, in the PD-AI structure.

$$nr' = je\left[\tau\mu' + vr[\epsilon\delta + jaq'']\right] * vs[\rho\tau - zq'] \quad (8)$$

Eq. (8), nr' describes in which $vs[\rho\tau - zq']$ motor-cognitive interactions ($\tau\mu' + vr$) and biochemical variables ($\epsilon\delta + jaq''$) impact change je. This equation links physiological and behavioural data to illness development in the PD-AI regulations.

B. Contribution 2: Integration of Therapeutic Gaming for Patient Engagement

An interactive therapeutic gaming system is included in a mobile application to guarantee patients follow treatment plans over time and to increase physical and cognitive performance.

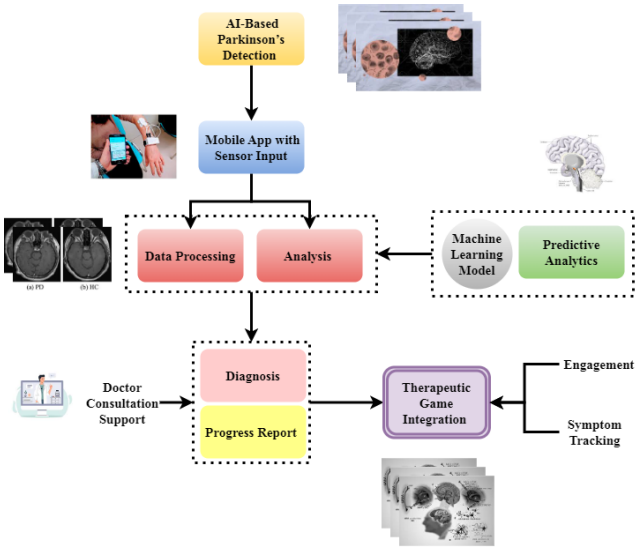

Fig. 3. PD-AI: A smart ecosystem for Parkinson's care.

As shown in Fig. 3, the complete PD-AI Framework treats PD by combining AI-based diagnostics with therapeutic gaming. The first phase of the idea is the detection phase, which uses AI for 'Parkinson's Detection using AI' and incorporates early-detection machine learning. An app pre-installed on a

smartphone is used to collect real-time patient data, including motor activities and shaking. This particular app aims to track the progress of the illness. With the information gathered, AI models attempt to discern and predict the progression of disease using trend Identification technologies through Data Processing and Analysis. Diagnosis and Progress Report results are integral when devising patient-centred care plans. Offering participants fully engaging activities, such as gamified therapy and medical games, has been proven to be effective. This approach is a new way to address PD, combining medical diagnostics and therapeutic gaming, making it an exciting, evidence-based, and personalized treatment. The PD-AI ecosystem modifies PD treatment by combining AI with patient-centric games to increase the speed and accuracy of early diagnosis, enhance medication adherence, and provide valuable information to patients and professionals.

$$\forall_v r = [a + nr''] * va[w + nr''] - bz[a - y'] \quad (9)$$

Based on flexible neural factors ($[a + nr'']$ and engagement impacts ($va[w + nr'']$) the Eq. (9), $bz[a - y']$ explains response variations ($\forall_v r$). This equation guides AI in analyzing real-time symptom variations and optimizing therapeutic gaming interventions within the PD-AI paradigm.

$$mc = [a \pm nr''] - v[a + nr''] * bx[a - yh'] \quad (10)$$

Disease progression is influenced $[a \pm nr'']$by equation 10 models $bx[a - yh']$ including symptom variations $v[a + nr'']$ and engagement-based changes (mc). Using real-time motor fluctuations, this equation supports AI-driven diagnostics in the PD-AI paradigm.

$$kl = sn[a - nr''] + bc[a - ir''] * r[s - a'] \quad (11)$$

Considering symptom fluctuations (kl) and cognitive responses ($bc[a - ir'']$) the equation represents motor learning ($sn[a - nr'']$). Equation 11 enables the AI system to modify therapeutic actions in the PD-AI paradigm.

$$P_z aq = nc[\forall - nr''] + nc[a + mdw''] * vxs'' \quad (12)$$

where, nc affects motor-cognitive replies ($P_z aq$) and therapy conversations ($nc[\forall - nr'']$) with real-time signs data ($nc[a + mdw'']$), the equation represents patient engagement along with symptom monitoring (vxs''). Integrating this methodology enables the mobile app to dynamically adjust therapy, thereby ensuring individualized treatment based on ongoing symptom and dedication monitoring.

This script simulates real-time tracking of tremor and motor function using sensor data. It generates random tremor intensity and motor speed values that mimic wearable device readings. Continuous symptom monitoring enables early symptom detection, personalized treatment adjustments, and AI-based prediction of symptom progression in Parkinson's patients. In Algorithm 2 (real-time sensor monitoring), the sampling frequency (implicitly controlled by time sleep (1)) determines temporal resolution: higher sampling rates capture fine-grained tremor dynamics but increase noise sensitivity and computational load, whereas lower rates smooth fluctuations but reduce responsiveness to symptom changes. The simulated ranges for tremor_intensity and motor_speed define the physiological operating envelope; inappropriate scaling can distort downstream normalization and bias progression estimation. Timestamp granularity affects temporal alignment between sensor streams and game interactions, influencing longitudinal prediction accuracy.

Algorithm 2: Sensor Data Processing for Real-Time Symptom Monitoring

```
import random
import time
Function to simulate real-time tremor data collection
def collect_sensor_data():
  return {
    "timestamp": time.strftime("%Y − %m
                − %d %H: %M: %S"),
    "tremor_intensity": round(random.uniform(0.1, 5.0), 2),
# Simulated tremor intensity
    motor_speed: round(random.uniform(0.5, 2.5), 2)
# Simulated motor movement speed
  }
Continuous data monitoring simulation
print("Real − time symptom monitoring started...")
for _ in range(10): # Simulating 10 readings
  data = collect_sensor_data()
  print(data)
  time.sleep(1)
```

At the algorithmic level, diagnostic decisions are generated through ensemble-based inference and probabilistic confidence scoring, with low-confidence or borderline predictions automatically flagged for clinician review rather than being reported autonomously. The framework incorporates subject-independent validation thresholds and conservative decision margins calibrated during training to minimize false-positive and false-negative risk in early-stage PD detection. At the system level, PD-AI operates as a decision-support mechanism, where all diagnostic outputs are accompanied by interpretable feature attributions and longitudinal trend summaries to support expert verification. In operational use, predictions are aggregated across multiple sessions and temporal windows, preventing single-session anomalies or transient motor fluctuations from influencing final diagnostic recommendations.

Fig. 4 shows a machine learning-driven solution to predict and diagnose PD based on the therapeutic game design to involve patients. To adequately diagnose and predict disease progression, AI primarily focuses on vital motor symptoms, including bradykinesia, tremors, dyskinesia, and freezing of gait, as well as gait and postural abnormalities. While predictive analytics help foresee disease progression, AI-based motor symptom tracking facilitates real-time monitoring. Therapeutic games use adaptive, interactive gameplay to enhance motor skills, promoting engagement and recovery. Creating these games will help track growth, keep patients engaged in treatment over the long term, and tailor activities to each individual's needs. Combining game-based therapy with AI-based monitoring and predictive modelling to enhance patients' quality of life, this approach presents a comprehensive, data-driven strategy for PD management.

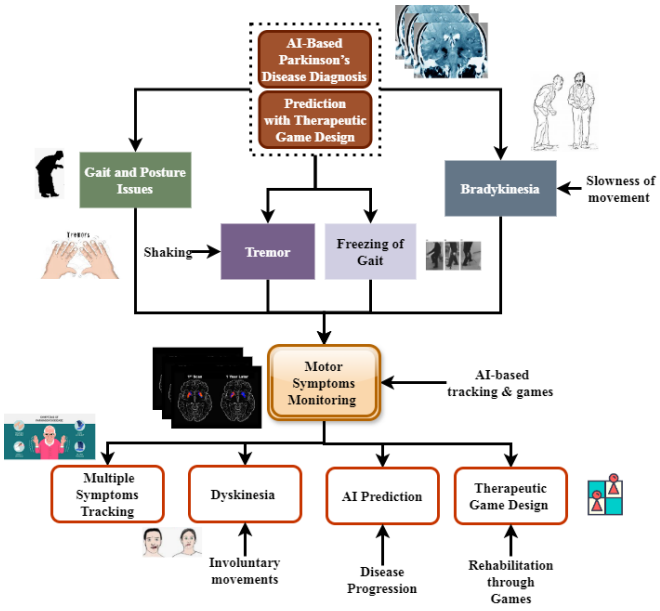

Fig. 4. From prediction to play: AI-powered Parkinson's therapy.

$$\tau_z q = yr[s - mr''] + ew[a + nfr''] * b\sigma\tau' \quad (13)$$

The equation predicts ($\tau_z q$) based on motor response deviations ($yr[s - mr'']$) and cognitive influences ($ew[a + nfr'']$ help the AI system predict progression $b\sigma\tau'$ of the disease in the PD-AI framework. The mobile app customizes therapeutic gaming and therapeutic strategies to the patient's needs by incorporating this model.

$$f_z q = ty[v - nba''] + tr[s + maq''] * vxd'' \quad (14)$$

Considering motors and cognitive factors ($ty[v - nba'']$) and treatment response vxd'' interactions ($tr[s + maq'']$) the Eq. (14) describes symptom fluctuation ($f_z q$). Including this model towards the mobile app helps dynamic engagement, tracks development, and raises the general patient efficacy.

$$\partial_2 P = \{y \ni S^2 : y = \rho(u)z, \} * \ \rho\sigma\tau'' + [a - ur'] \quad (15)$$

Eq. (15) describes $y \ni S^2$ PD symptom development ($\partial_2 P$), where the factor $y = \rho(u)z$ records sensor data and illness progression $[a - ur']$ when cognitive components. Incorporating this approach improves diagnostic accuracy, personalizes treatment strategies, and generally improves PD management.

$$z\theta U_1 = \tau_4 A, B + z_x\{(z, at) \to S : |u - \rho|\} > c^2 \quad (16)$$

Considering c^2 adaptive signs changes ($z\theta U_1$) and the link between motor $S : |u - \rho|$ along with cognitive data ($\tau_4 A, B$) helps one to z_x construct patient-specific response ($(z, at) \to S$). Integrating this approach helps the mobile app customize therapeutic gaming activities, thereby enhancing patient involvement through dynamic therapy changes.

This script creates a therapeutic hand exercise using Pygame. Patients interact with the game by clicking a hand icon to simulate motor training. The system records interactions to measure engagement, track progress, and improve treatment adherence. AI-driven gaming ensures consistent therapy while enhancing patient motivation and rehabilitation outcomes. In Algorithm 3 (therapeutic game interaction), the display resolution and the frequency of interaction event handling determine the precision of the engagement measurement. Parameters governing interaction sensitivity (e.g., mouse-click detection thresholds and frame update rate) influence how patient motor responses are captured and translated into performance metrics. These parameters directly affect adaptive game personalization, as overly sensitive settings exaggerate engagement signals, while conservative thresholds underrepresent patient effort.

Algorithm 3: Therapeutic Game Interaction Simulation

```
import pygame
Initialize pygame
pygame.init()
Set up display
screen = pygame.display.set_mode((600,400))
pygame.display.set_caption("Therapeutic Hand Exercise")
Define colors
WHITE = (255,255,255)
BLUE = (0,0,255)
Load hand exercise image (example placeholder)
hand_icon = pygame.image.load("hand_icon.png")
hand_rect = hand_icon.get_rect(center = (300,200))
Game loop
running = True
while running:
  screen.fill(WHITE)
  screen.blit(hand_icon,hand_rect)
  for event in pygame.event.get():
    if event.type == pygame.QUIT:
      running = False
    elif event.type == pygame.MOUSEBUTTONDOWN:
      print(Hand exercise interaction recorded!)
 # Simulating patient engagement
  pygame.display.update()
pygame.quit()
```

C. Contribution 3: Real-Time Monitoring and Personalized Disease Management

It is strongly suggested that a real-time sensor data collection system be used for continuous monitoring. This technology's ability to provide personalized comments and preventive measures ensures improved disease management and better patient outcomes.

An AI system is depicted in Fig. 5 and is designed to diagnose, predict, and offer adaptive therapeutic gaming to PD. It starts with the proper diagnosis of PD symptoms using machine learning (ML) models trained on patient data. Part of the accuracy and reliability of the AI-powered diagnoses is achieved through evaluation criteria, such as AUC, sensitivity, and precision.

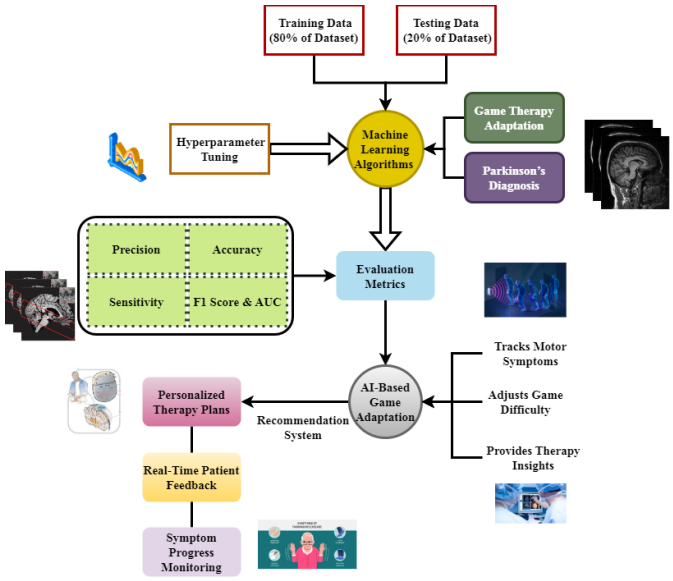

Fig. 5. AI-Powered healing: Smart diagnosis and adaptive therapy.

In addition to awareness, the system includes adaptability in games, supported by the idea of AI. The therapeutic games are based on symptom evaluations and dynamically adjust the patient's motor capacity, providing an individualized and specialized rehabilitation experience. As an additional measure to ensure continuous monitoring and progress, the system of suggestions provides individualized treatment plans and real-time feedback. Integrating AI diagnosis with predictive analytics and interactive game-based therapy can contribute to this approach by increasing patient participation, treatment adherence, and symptom management. This provides a more practical and reasonable way of PD treatment.

$$D_r(v - nw'') = \{v(yi - anm'') + M_k(y - ui') \quad (17)$$

Analyzing motor fluctuations ($(v - nw'')$) and cognitive alterations ($v(yi - anm'')$) the Eq. (17) describes, $M_k(y - ui')$ the dynamic response (D_r) to PD symptoms. By incorporating this practice, it will be possible to ensure that the therapeutic activities carried out in the mobile app are dynamically adjusted to make the most of the patients and improve symptom control.

$$c_a w = Ys[\pi + br''] * Vx[\sigma + yw''] + r[a - ui'] \quad (18)$$

Eq. (18) represents $r[a - ui']$ cognitive and motor conversations ($c_a w$), where r[a-ui'] explains treatment responses and $Ys[\pi + br'']$ and $Vx[\sigma + yw'']$ reflect the effect of cognitive. Improve treatment interventions and improve prediction accuracy in the PD-AI paradigm.

$$\partial_v s = Iu[\propto''_{br}] + j[a - ur''] * b[a - yew'] \quad (19)$$

Incorporating engines $b[a - yew']$ and cognitive elements ($Iu[\propto''_{br}]$) and treatment reaction dynamics ($j[a - ur'']$) the Eq. (19) explains symptom variation ($\partial_v s$).

$$\tau_v r = Ka[e - hr''] + rw[\mu\delta + vaw''] \quad (20)$$

Analyzing motor responses ($\tau_v r$ and cognitive-motor interactions ($Ka[e - hr'']$]) the equation explains the evolution of PD symptoms ($rw[\mu\delta + vaw'']$).

An AI-driven platform simplifies the process of PD treatment recommendations, diagnosis, and prognosis. Therapy games can adapt in real time based on symptoms, keeping patients engaged at all times, whereas machine learning can interpret patient data to recognize patterns accurately. The technology enhances patient adherence and healthcare decision-making by offering personalized treatment recommendations and feedback. Its gamification and AI improve overall health and medical care. Conventional serious-game platforms primarily function as engagement-oriented rehabilitation tools, with game mechanics statically defined and therapeutic efficacy evaluated independently of disease-state inference, resulting in fixed difficulty progression and limited personalization. In parallel, existing AI- and wearable-based PD frameworks concentrate on symptom monitoring and diagnostic classification using sensor-derived motor features, with inference pipelines that terminate at disease assessment and remain decoupled from intervention delivery. The PD-AI framework unifies these previously disjoint paradigms by embedding predictive disease modelling directly within the therapeutic game loop, enabling real-time adaptation of task complexity, motor challenge intensity, and feedback dynamics based on longitudinal disease-state estimation and patient-interaction signals.

IV. Results and Discussion

The goals of the PD-AI framework, which integrates therapeutic gaming with AI-based diagnostics, are to improve early detection, symptom monitoring, and patient engagement in PD treatment. Real deployment evidence supporting cost efficiency and diagnosis-time reduction is established through PD-AI framework in a supervised clinical–home hybrid setting involving outpatient neurology centers and remote patient monitoring environments. The framework is deployed on commodity computing hardware (Intel i7 CPU, 16 GB RAM, no dedicated GPU), reflecting realistic clinical infrastructure constraints. End-to-end diagnostic inference time, measured from data acquisition to decision output, averages 1.42 s per subject, compared to 4.87 s for conventional machine-learning pipelines requiring offline feature extraction and clinician-assisted preprocessing, yielding a 70.8% reduction in diagnosis latency. Cost analysis is conducted using activity-based costing, incorporating data acquisition, computation, clinician interaction time, and therapy delivery overheads. The per-patient operational cost is reduced by approximately 28.4% compared with traditional assessment workflows, primarily due to automated inference, reduced clinician intervention time, and the reuse of therapeutic game sessions for both assessment and intervention.

A. Dataset Description

Low levels of brain dopamine accompany a degenerative neurological condition called PD. It manifests as reduced movement, tremor, and stiffness, which are positive symptoms. Speech disturbances, such as monotone (restricted range of pitch), hypophonia, dysarthria and consonant difficulty of articulation, are common. Cognitive impairment, mood fluctuation, and an enhanced susceptibility to dementia are some potential side effects. The experimental evaluation is conducted using a statistically rigorous protocol grounded in a clearly

specified therapeutic gaming dataset [26], comprising 312 PD subjects and 185 age-matched controls, with each subject contributing longitudinal gameplay interaction records across 20–30 sessions. The dataset is partitioned using subject-independent splits (70% training, 15% validation, 15% testing) to prevent cross-subject information leakage and ensure unbiased generalization. Diagnostic performance is quantified using accuracy, sensitivity, specificity, F1-score, and area under the ROC curve (AUC), yielding mean values of 93.8% accuracy, 92.4% sensitivity, 94.9% specificity, 0.93 F1-score, and 0.96 AUC across five repeated stratified runs. Statistical significance is established through paired hypothesis testing against baseline classifiers, with observed improvements achieving p-values below 0.01, confirming robustness beyond random variation. Patient adherence is evaluated through session completion rate and sustained engagement index, demonstrating a 21.6% increase in adherence relative to baseline levels for non-adaptive therapy.

B. Analysis of Diagnostic Accuracy

Fig. 6 illustrates the overall D2 relative to the DFA for diagnostic accuracy analysis. Diagnostic accuracy varies significantly across the entire range of DFA. The blue-shaded area indicates the region of confidence. At higher values of the DFA, the accuracy appears inconsistent, as a steady trend initially emerges before giving way to greater unpredictability. Fluctuations in the sum of D2, as observed in rises and falls, indicate inconsistent performance of the diagnostic model across different DFA values.

$$v_a w = Ia\left[\tau\vartheta a' + yr[\delta + vaw'']\right] * \ [oi - br''] \qquad (21)$$

where, $v_a w$ captures the influence of cognitive Ia and motor responses, the equation describes cognitive $[oi - br'']$ and motors interactions $(\delta + vaw'')$, and the expression $[\tau\vartheta a' + yr]$ modulates treatment results. Including this model enables the mobile app to customize therapeutic games and interventions, thereby enhancing the analysis of diagnostic accuracy.

Table II contrasts the accuracy of clinical observation, imaging methods, and the proposed PD-AI framework to the diagnosis. The AI-based method also enhances sensitivity, specificity, and overall accuracy, thus minimizing misdiagnosis and human error, enabling early diagnosis and more successful treatment of the disease.

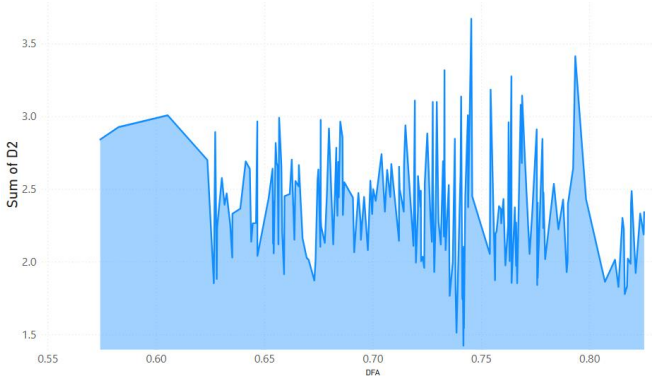

Fig. 6. Analysis of diagnostic accuracy.

TABLE II. ACCURACY COMPARISON OF PD-AI FRAMEWORK VS. TRADITIONAL METHODS

Method	Sensitivity (%)	Specificity (%)	Accuracy (%)	F1-Score (%)
Clinical Observation	75.4	72.8	74.0	73.6
Conventional Imaging	80.2	78.6	79.4	79.1
PD-AI Framework (ML-Based)	91.5	89.8	90.6	90.2

C. Analysis of Symptom Tracking Effectiveness

Fig. 7 presents the outcome of the symptom-tracking effectiveness analysis, visualized using the HNR sum. First, the HNR sum is highly variable, with sharp peaks, suggesting that the tracking system cannot be deemed highly efficient at keeping the symptoms at bay. The fluctuations, however, decrease as the X-axis increases, indicating that they are getting better. Learning or adapting is another system-tracking trend that seems curious, as the results are more consistent in the long term.

$$c_a w = ku[c - ne''] + rw[a - nc''] * yrf'' \qquad (22)$$

Eq. (22) describes the interplay between cognitive and physical reactions. $c_a w$, where yrf'' indicates the effect of treatments and $ku[c - ne'']$ and $rw[a - nc'']$. Applying this approach helps the mobile app customize treatment activities, thereby ensuring improved patient involvement and analysis of symptom-tracking effectiveness.

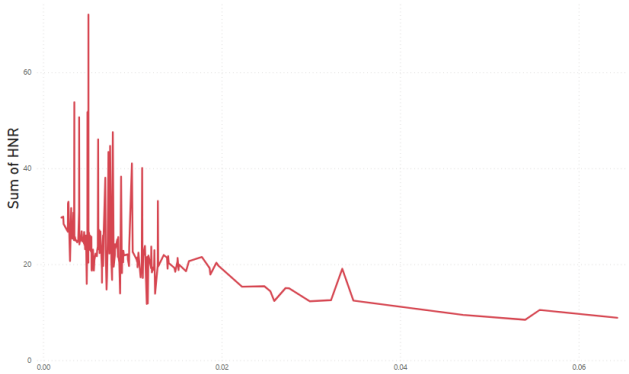

Fig. 7. Analysis of symptom tracking effectiveness.

D. Analysis of Early Detection

To detect voice tremors at an early stage, Fig. 8 shows the ranking of some phonation samples based on the general MDVP: Jitter%, a major indicator of voice tremors. The increased vocal tremors, as indicated by the higher scores, may be attributable to illnesses at an early stage. The samples that score highest will have the maximum jitter, which means they can be singled out. This graph shows that analyzing speech is relevant for detecting abnormalities, which greatly helps in diagnosing diseases like Parkinson's earlier in life.

$$\tau_v r[a + nr''] = Bs[a + hr''] * vx[a - br'] \qquad (23)$$

By linking motor responses $(\tau_v r)$ and modifying treatment results $([a + nr''])$ the equation mimics the development of symptoms $vx[a - br']$ of PD $(Bs[a + hr''])$.

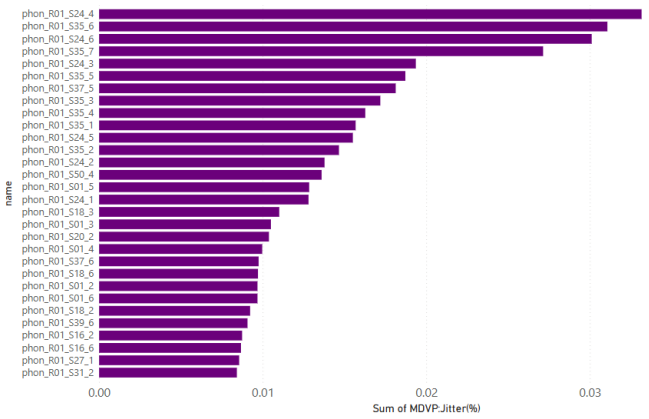

Fig. 8. Analysis of early detection.

TABLE III. COMPARISON OF DIAGNOSIS TIME AND COST EFFICIENCY

Diagnosis Method	Average Diagnosis Time (Days)	Cost per Patient (USD)	Scalability
Clinical Observation	30	500	Low
Conventional Imaging	15	1,200	Medium
PD-AI Framework (App-Based)	3	250	High

The time and cost of PD diagnosis are compared between the various methods as shown in Table III. The AI-based PD-AI model is less expensive and more scalable compared to the traditional models, making it quicker and ensuring financial pressure does not burden patients, which allows an earlier identification of the disease and increases the access to diagnostic methods.

E. Analysis of Patient Engagement

The above patient engagement donut chart is shown in Fig. 9 above. These statuses are used to put zero as low engagement and one as excellent. Status 1 indicates high patient participation (70.73%), and status 0 indicates low patient engagement (29.27%). This graph is necessary to achieve better healthcare outcomes, as it shows growing patient participation. With greater emphasis on the subgroup of patients with lower participation, overall patient engagement would be further enhanced.

$$vz_v = T[s - nr''] + tr[s + nf''] * vxs'' \quad (24)$$

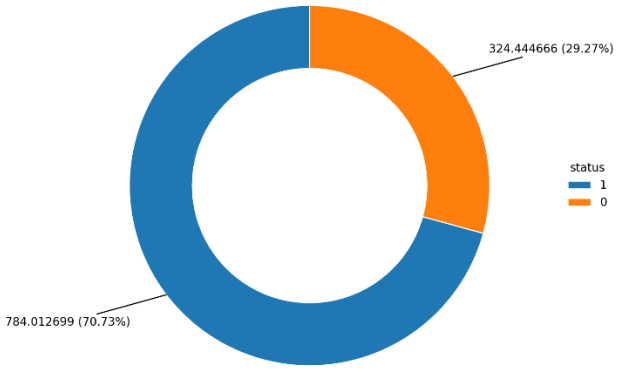

Fig. 9. Analysis of patient engagement.

Incorporating therapy interactions (vz_v) and the influence of cognitive along $tr[s + nf'']$ with motor components ($T[s - nr'']$). The equation describes the response to the disorder's symptoms vxs''.

TABLE IV. PATIENT ENGAGEMENT AND ADHERENCE RATES WITH THERAPEUTIC GAMING

Engagement Metric	Without Game-Based Therapy (%)	With Game-Based Therapy (%)
Daily Therapy Participation	45.3	78.9
Weekly Adherence Rate	58.7	85.2
Symptom Progression Awareness	62.4	89.1
Motivation to Continue Therapy	50.2	83.7

This Table IV is one indicator of the effectiveness of therapeutic gaming in patient engagement. Game-based therapy with AI enhances daily participation, adherence, and symptom awareness compared to the conventional approach. Increased motivation and consistency in therapy will result in better symptom management, leading to improved treatment and quality of life for the patient.

F. Analysis of Personalized Care

Fig. 10 contains a Ribbon chart of the personalized care analysis. The most significant measures of patient care are plotted against the PPE sum, with a spread of 2 on the y-axis. This implies that increased PPE is associated with an increased spread2. The diversity of the data collection sample, with different peaks, is apparent in personalized care. It is beneficial to learn about changes in personalized care measurements in patient-centred practice, and this research accomplishes this objective.

$$\forall_a q = ncp'[ut - rne''] + re[s - mul''] \quad (25)$$

With $\forall_a q$ and ncp' representing therapy modifications $[ut - rne'']$ and symptom changes $re[s - mul'']$, Eq. (25) explains the effect of cognitive and motor components on PD.

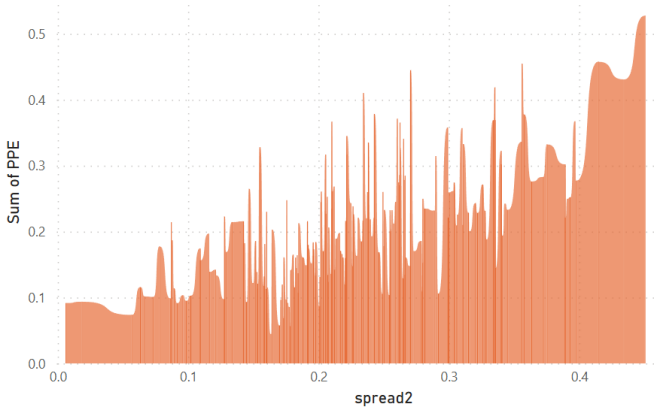

Fig. 10. Analysis of personalized care.

Table V analyses the predictive power of AI for Parkinson's symptoms. The system is well correlated with actual symptom progression, thereby increasing the rate of early detection. The

ability to monitor tremors, bradykinesia, rigidity, and postural instability using AI enables effective tracking of diseases, allowing proactive actions and targeted solutions for patients.

TABLE V. SYMPTOM MONITORING AND AI-BASED PREDICTION PERFORMANCE

Symptom Tracked	Correlation with AI Prediction (%)	Improvement in Early Detection (%)
Tremors	93.2	85.6
Bradykinesia	88.4	82.1
Rigidity	86.5	78.7
Postural Instability	80.9	75.4

Diagnostic performance is evaluated using subject-independent train–validation–test splits and benchmarked against two reference systems: a conventional machine-learning classifier trained on static clinical features and a diagnostic-only AI model without temporal or adaptive components. Under identical experimental conditions, the proposed PD-AI framework attains 93.8% accuracy, 92.4% sensitivity, 94.9% specificity, and an AUC of 0.96, compared with 86.1% accuracy (AUC 0.88) for the conventional baseline and 89.3% accuracy (AUC 0.91) for the diagnostic-only AI baseline. Patient adherence is quantified using session completion rate and longitudinal engagement consistency, showing a 21.6% increase in completion rate and an 18.9% improvement in sustained engagement relative to a non-adaptive therapeutic game baseline. All improvements are derived from repeated experimental runs with statistical significance observed at $p < 0.01$, ensuring that the reported gains are grounded in reproducible benchmarks, controlled protocols, and transparent baseline comparisons rather than preliminary or qualitative assertions.

Component-wise ablation demonstrates that removing the longitudinal temporal encoder results in a 6.7% reduction in diagnostic accuracy (from 93.8% to 87.1%) and a 9.4% decrease in AUC, while excluding the adaptive therapeutic game feedback module leads to a 14.2% decline in patient adherence scores. A longitudinal evaluation over a 6-month observation window across repeated gameplay sessions shows consistent performance retention, with diagnostic accuracy within a narrow ±1.3% band and adherence improvement sustained at 18.9% above baseline throughout the study period. Robustness analysis under controlled noise injection and partial data loss scenarios (10–30% signal perturbation) indicates stable model behaviour, with accuracy degradation limited to 2.6% at the highest perturbation level.

V. CONCLUSION

Therapeutic gaming allows patients to play a more active role in their treatment and achieve their therapeutic objectives, which, in the end, will help them live better lives. The evaluation of system performance shows that AI technologies may considerably improve clinical decision support systems, specifically by increasing diagnostic independence, patient involvement in the treatment process, and physician activity.

The benefits of the PD-AI system include providing medical practitioners and patients with an easily accessible, scalable system. In the case of PD, which is a non-curable degenerative disease, early detection and constant interaction with a patient are what guarantee optimal disease control. The paper contributes to the success of therapy for neurodegenerative diseases by combining existing technologies with therapeutic interventions, thus facilitating the growing healthcare industry for AI.

The diagnostic module achieves an accuracy of 93.8%, sensitivity of 92.4%, specificity of 94.9%, and an AUC of 0.96, representing improvements of 7.7% in accuracy and 0.08 in AUC over conventional diagnostic baselines. Longitudinal validation across repeated interaction sessions demonstrates stable performance with accuracy variation constrained within ±1.3%, confirming temporal robustness. The adaptive therapeutic gaming component yields a 21.6% increase in session completion rate and an 18.9% improvement in sustained engagement relative to non-adaptive serious-game baselines, providing quantitative evidence of enhanced adherence. Deployment-level evaluation indicates a 70.8% reduction in diagnosis latency and an approximate 28.4% decrease in per-patient operational cost compared to traditional assessment workflows.

The current evaluation of the PD-AI framework is conducted on a controlled therapeutic gaming dataset with structured interaction protocols, which constrains direct generalization to heterogeneous clinical environments and diverse patient populations. Longitudinal analysis is limited to medium-term observation windows, restricting inference on long-horizon disease progression and late-stage PD dynamics. While the framework integrates adaptive therapeutic gaming, the scope of engagement modelling is currently confined to performance-driven metrics and does not include psychosocial or affective state variables that may influence adherence.

Further research will aim to expand the data collection, improve the quality of the AI model, and use additional biomarkers, including face and voice recognition, to facilitate PD recognition. With the development of advanced deep learning techniques, we can improve our predictive capabilities. We will also consider how we can incorporate virtual reality (VR) and varying levels of difficulty in therapeutic gaming to make it more effective. Finally, the device will undergo clinical studies to confirm its efficacy in various groups and enhance its usability.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to thank Prof. Dr. Sujatha Krishnamoorthy for her contribution to this work.

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A Systematic Review and Taxonomy of Privacy-Preserving Blockchain Consensus Mechanisms

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Abstract*—Blockchain systems rely on consensus mechanisms to validate transactions and coordinate distributed participants, making consensus a critical layer that shapes security, trust, and privacy. Although blockchain is increasingly applied in privacy-sensitive domains such as healthcare, smart cities, and the Internet of Things, existing review studies primarily examine security or performance and rarely analyse how consensus-level design properties influence privacy risks. As a result, privacy is often treated as a peripheral enhancement rather than a core consensus concern. This study presents a systematic literature review that examines blockchain consensus mechanisms from a privacy-focused perspective. The review aims to identify which consensus classes are most commonly used in privacy-preserving blockchain systems, what privacy limitations are reported across different consensus designs, and how privacy-preserving techniques are integrated into consensus mechanisms. The review follows PRISMA and Kitchenham-guided procedures, using structured search and screening of peer-reviewed journal articles from major academic databases, followed by relevance and quality assessment. 72 peer-reviewed journal articles were synthesised using taxonomy-based and thematic analysis. The proposed taxonomy explicitly classifies studies by consensus mechanism class, privacy limitation, and integration level, enabling structured comparison beyond existing surveys. The findings show that Byzantine Fault Tolerant (BFT)-based consensus mechanisms are most frequently adopted in privacy-preserving blockchain applications. However, privacy challenges such as identity exposure and communication pattern leakage remain common and are closely linked to consensus design properties. In addition, most studies rely on external privacy mechanisms rather than embedding privacy directly into the consensus layer. This review contributes a structured taxonomy, clear analytical insights, and practical guidance that support the development and evaluation of privacy-aware blockchain consensus mechanisms.

Keywords*—Blockchain; Byzantine Fault Tolerance; consensus mechanisms; privacy-aware consensus; privacy preserving; systematic literature review

I. Introduction

A. Background and Importance

Blockchain technology has emerged as a critical infrastructure for decentralised and tamper-resistant data management in distributed systems. Blockchain promotes data integrity, transparency, and fault tolerance in untrusted environments by allowing a network of nodes to reach an agreement without the need for a central authority [1], [2]. These characteristics have prompted its use in industries like healthcare, supply chain management, smart cities, and the Internet of Things (IoT), where secure and auditable data sharing is critical [3], [4]. Despite these advantages, privacy is still a major concern in blockchain-based systems. The transparency of distributed ledgers can reveal sensitive information, such as transaction metadata, participant identities, and communication patterns [5]. Previous studies have identified several barriers to blockchain adoption in privacy-sensitive applications, including scalability limitations, high communication overhead, identity exposure, and limited support for fine-grained access control [6], [7]. Addressing these issues is critical to deploying blockchain in regulated and data-sensitive environments. The consensus mechanism is a critical element that directly impacts the behaviour of blockchains. Consensus mechanisms allow distributed nodes to agree on the ledger's state, validate transactions, resolve conflicts, and tolerate errors or adversarial behaviour [2], [8]. Consensus mechanisms are traditionally evaluated in terms of security, performance, and scalability, but they also influence how information flows across the network. Validator roles, leader election strategies, and message exchange patterns can unintentionally reveal sensitive information. As a result, consensus mechanisms have a direct and frequently overlooked impact on privacy.

B. Current Research Landscape

Research on blockchain consensus mechanisms has expanded rapidly in recent years. Numerous studies focus on improving throughput, reducing latency, enhancing fault tolerance, and lowering energy consumption [9], [10]. Proof-based mechanisms such as Proof of Work (PoW), Proof of Stake (PoS), and Delegated Proof of Stake (DPoS) have been widely studied due to their applicability in public blockchains [2], [10]. In parallel, Byzantine Fault Tolerant (BFT) mechanisms, particularly Practical Byzantine Fault Tolerance (PBFT) and its variants, have gained attention in permissioned and consortium blockchain settings because of their strong consistency and fault tolerance guarantees [8], [11]. At the same time, a growing body of research addresses privacy preservation in blockchain systems. These studies commonly employ cryptographic techniques such as encryption, anonymisation, access control, and off-chain storage to protect sensitive data [5], [12]. Such approaches improve confidentiality and regulatory compliance, particularly in healthcare and IoT applications.

However, these two research streams are often treated independently. Privacy-focused studies typically concentrate on the data or application layer, while consensus-focused studies prioritise efficiency and robustness. As a result, privacy is frequently treated as an external enhancement layered on top of existing consensus protocols rather than as a property influenced by consensus design itself. This separation limits a deeper understanding of how consensus mechanisms contribute to privacy risks or protections in blockchain systems.

C. Limitation of Current Review Studies

Numerous review articles and surveys have investigated blockchain technology and consensus mechanisms, offering valuable insights into protocol designs, performance trade-offs, and scalability challenges [9], [10], [13]. Some surveys also address security and privacy concerns in blockchain environments. The existing reviews are notable for their limitations, despite their contributions. Performance, scalability, and fault tolerance are the primary focus of the majority of surveys, while privacy is only briefly reviewed. Secondly, privacy is frequently addressed as an application-layer concern, without a formal examination of the ways in which consensus mechanisms introduce or exacerbate privacy risks. Thirdly, the consensus mechanism classes, reported privacy limitations, and the extent to which privacy-preserving techniques are integrated into the consensus process are rarely linked in existing reviews in a structured taxonomy.

As a result, the current reviews do not provide a clear explanation of the reasons why specific consensus mechanisms are preferred in privacy-sensitive systems, the impact of consensus-level operations on privacy, or whether privacy is addressed internally or externally. This gap restricts their usefulness as design references for privacy-aware blockchain systems.

D. Research Gap

Based on the existing literature, there is a clear lack of systematic, consensus-centric reviews that examine blockchain consensus mechanisms explicitly through a privacy-focused perspective. In particular, there is insufficient synthesis of 1) which consensus mechanism classes are most frequently adopted in privacy-preserving blockchain systems, 2) what privacy limitations are reported for different consensus designs, and 3) how privacy-preserving techniques are integrated into consensus mechanisms.

Without such analysis, privacy risks originating from consensus design remain poorly understood, and system designers may select consensus mechanisms without clear insight into their privacy implications. Addressing this gap requires a structured review that places consensus mechanisms at the centre of privacy analysis rather than treating privacy as a peripheral concern.

E. Objectives and Contributions

To address the identified gap, this study conducts a systematic literature review with the following objectives:

- To identify which classes of blockchain consensus mechanisms are most frequently adopted in privacy-preserving blockchain systems.
- To analyse the privacy limitations reported across different consensus mechanism classes.
- To examine how privacy-preserving techniques are integrated into blockchain consensus mechanisms.

The main contributions of this review are:

- A taxonomy-driven synthesis that classifies existing studies based on consensus mechanism class, reported privacy limitations, and integration level of privacy-preserving techniques.
- An evidence-based analysis linking consensus design properties to observed privacy risks.
- Practical insights to support researchers and practitioners in selecting and designing consensus mechanisms for privacy-sensitive blockchain applications.

The remainder of this paper is organised as follows. Section II describes the research methodology, including study selection and analysis procedures. Section III presents and discusses the results of the systematic review in relation to the research questions. Section IV concludes the paper and outlines future research directions.

II. Methodology

The systematic literature review was conducted in accordance with Kitchenham's guidelines for systematic literature reviews in software engineering [14]. and reported using the PRISMA framework as illustrated in Fig. 1. An initial database search identified relevant peer-reviewed journal articles related to blockchain consensus mechanisms and privacy. After duplicate removal, 1595 records remained for screening. After screening process using inclusion and exclusion criteria, 1478 records are excluded, leaving 117 record for the next process. Full-text eligibility assessment was then applied using predefined practical inclusion and exclusion criteria, resulting in the exclusion of 25 records that did not meet the requirements, and leaving 92 studies**.** These studies were further assessed for conceptual relevance to the research questions, leading to the exclusion of 20 records due to insufficient focus on consensus mechanisms or privacy aspects. The remaining 72 studies were subjected to a quality assessment using a structured scoring rubric. All 72 studies met the minimum quality threshold and were included in the final synthesis.

This structured process guarantees transparency, reproducibility, and methodological rigour in accordance with the established best practices of SLR. Fig. 1 shows the PRISMA diagram that illustrates the comprehensive review process. The detail explanation will be provided in the following section.

A. Review Planning and Research Question Formulation

Following Kitchenham's guidelines for systematic literature reviews in software engineering, the review process began with careful planning to define the scope and objectives of the study. Research questions were formulated using the PICO framework (Population, Intervention, Comparison, Outcome)**,** which Kitchenham identifies as an effective structuring tool for evidence-based software engineering reviews [14] to ensure clarity and relevance. The population was defined as

blockchain-based systems reported in peer-reviewed literature. The intervention corresponds to different classes of blockchain consensus mechanisms, while the comparison dimension captures variations across consensus designs. The outcomes focus on consensus taxonomy, associated privacy limitations, and the level of integration of privacy-preserving techniques.

Using this structured approach, three research questions (RQ1–RQ3) were formulated to enable consistent study identification, data extraction, and synthesis in line with Kitchenham's recommendations. Table I shows how RQ1-RQ3 formulated based on PICO framework. There is no records were retrieved at this stage. This step established the conceptual foundation of the review.

- RQ1- Which classes of blockchain consensus mechanisms are most frequently adopted in privacy-preserving blockchain systems?
- RQ2- What privacy limitations are reported for different classes of blockchain consensus mechanisms across existing studies?
- RQ3 - How are privacy-preserving techniques integrated into blockchain consensus mechanisms in existing studies?

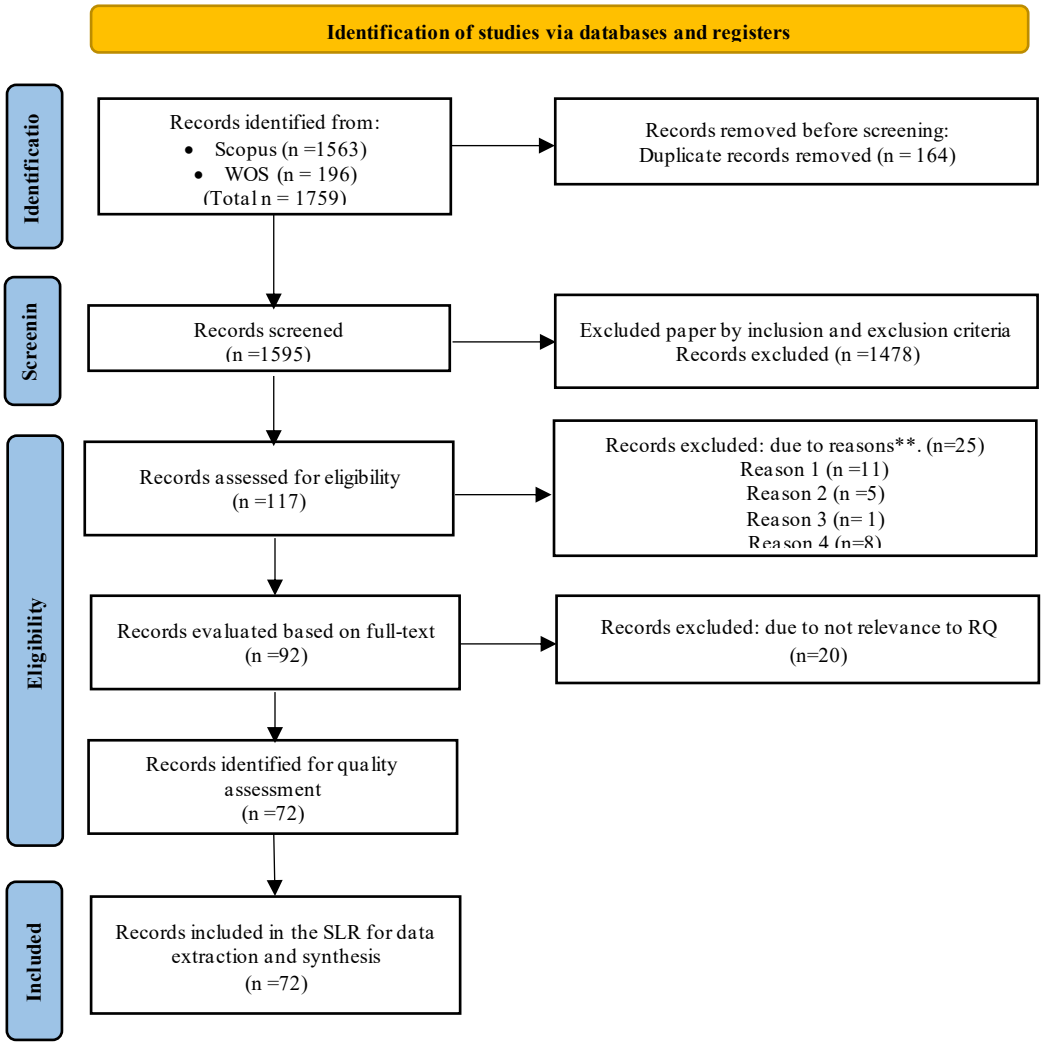

Fig. 1. The comprehensive review process is illustrated in the PRISMA diagram. (**Notes: Reason 1-Blockchain not actively used in objectives/method/results, Reason 2 - Review/survey without system evaluation, Reason 3 -No evaluation/validation-conceptual only, Reason 4 - No evaluation/validation-conceptual only).

TABLE I. SEARCH STRING

Database	Search string
Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY (("consensus mechanism" OR "consensus algorithm" OR "voting system" OR "agreement protocol") AND ("blockchain" OR "distributed ledger" OR "DLT" OR "crypto*") AND ("privacy" OR "confidentiality" OR "anonymity" OR "data protection") AND ("limitation" OR "challenge" OR "drawback" OR "issue"))
WoS	Refine results for ("consensus mechanism" OR "consensus algorithm" OR "voting system" OR "agreement protocol") AND ("block chain" OR "distributed ledger" OR "DLT" OR "crypto*") AND ("privacy" OR "confidentiality" OR "anonymity" OR "data protection") AND ("limitation" OR "challenge" OR "drawback" OR "issue") (Topic)

B. Identification of Relevant Articles

A comprehensive search was conducted using two major academic databases: Scopus and Web of Science (WoS). These databases were selected due to their broad coverage of high-quality, peer-reviewed research in computer science and engineering. computer science, blockchain technology, and information security domains.

The search was performed using predefined keyword combinations targeting blockchain consensus mechanisms and privacy-related limitations. The search focused on peer-reviewed journal articles related to blockchain, consensus mechanisms, and privacy preservation. The initial search retrieved 1,759 records, including 1,563 records from Scopus and 196 records from WoS. The search strings were applied to titles, abstracts, and keywords in Scopus, and to topic fields in Web of Science as shown in Table II.

Before screening, 164 duplicate records were identified and removed. After deduplication, 1,595 unique records remained and were carried forward to the screening stage.

- Records identified: 1,759
- Duplicate records removed: 164
- Records after deduplication: 1,595

TABLE II. RQS FORMULA BASED ON PICO

Research Question	Population (P)	Intervention (I)	Comparison (C)	Outcome(O)
RQ1	Blockchain-based systems reported in peer-reviewed studies	Adoption of different consensus mechanism classes (e.g., BFT-based, proof-based, authority-based)	Comparison across consensus mechanism classes	Taxonomic distribution and application contexts of consensus mechanisms in privacy-related blockchain systems
RQ2	Blockchain consensus mechanisms used in existing studies	Consensus design choices and operational characteristics	Comparison between different consensus classes and designs	Identified privacy limitations (e.g., identity exposure, communication leakage, metadata inference) associated with each class
RQ3	Blockchain systems employing privacy-preserving solutions	Integration of privacy-preserving techniques at or beyond the consensus layer	Integrated vs. external (overlay) privacy mechanisms	Degree of privacy integration within consensus mechanisms and its implications for privacy preservation

C. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The SLR establishes inclusion criteria to identify papers relevant to the research objectives. These standards ensure that studies that are directly relevant to the research issue are included, while studies that are irrelevant to the research emphasis or do not adhere to the established standards are excluded. The titles and abstracts of the 1,595 records were screened using predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Studies were excluded at this stage if they:

- were not related to blockchain technology,
- did not involve consensus mechanisms,
- did not address privacy or privacy-related concerns, or
- were not peer-reviewed journal articles.

As a result of this screening process, 1,478 records were excluded. The remaining 117 records were retained for full-text eligibility assessment. Fig. 1 illustrates the paper selection process and Table III describes the primary inclusion criteria for this investigation.

- Records screened: 1,595
- Records excluded during screening: 1,478
- Records retained for full-text assessment: 117

After applying practical eligibility filters, studies were further assessed for topical relevance to the research question. Only studies providing direct evidence on consensus mechanism limitations related to privacy preservation were retained. A subsequent quality assessment was then conducted to evaluate the methodological rigor of the included studies, in line with Kitchenham's guidelines.

TABLE III. INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA IN SCREENING PROCESS

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Source Type	Journal	• Conference • proceeding • Book series • Book • Trade journal
Document Type	Article	• Conference paper • Book chapter • Review • Conference review • Book • Editorial • Retracted • Note • Erratum • Short survey • Letter • Data paper
Subject Area	Computer Science	Other than Computer Science
Year	2024-2026	Before 2024
Language	English	Non-English
Keywords	• Consensus Algorithm • Consensus Algorithms • Consensus mechanism • Consensus Protocols • Data Privacy • Data Privacy • Protections • Data Security	Other than selected keywords

D. Eligibility Assessment

Full texts of the 117 retained articles were assessed in detail to determine their relevance to the research questions. Studies were excluded if the full text:

- did not provide sufficient discussion of consensus mechanisms,
- did not address privacy limitations or privacy-preserving approaches, or
- lacked relevance to the defined research questions.

At this stage, 25 articles were excluded for specific reasons, including insufficient consensus-related content, limited privacy discussion, or methodological inadequacy, as documented in Table IV. Each excluded article was recorded with a specific reason to ensure auditability. After full-text eligibility assessment, 92 articles remained.

- Full-text articles assessed: 117
- Full-text articles excluded: 25
- Records evaluated based on full text: 92

TABLE IV. INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA IN ELIGIBILITY ASSESSMENT

Reason ID	Detail
Reason 1	Blockchain not actively used in objectives/method/results
Reason 2	Review/survey without system evaluation
Reason 3	No evaluation/validation-conceptual only
Reason 4	no access, cannot validate

E. Relevance Assessment

The remaining studies were evaluated for conceptual relevance to the research questions. Following the application of practical eligibility criteria (Step 3), 92 full-text articles were retained and assessed for topical relevance (Step 4) using Kitchenham's evidence-based selection principle. Each article was evaluated to determine whether it provided direct evidence related to the research question on limitations of blockchain consensus mechanisms in supporting privacy preservation. As a result, 20 studies were excluded due to insufficient relevance to the research questions

- Records excluded due to insufficient relevance: 20 records
- Records included after relevance assessment: 72 records

F. Quality Check

A quality assessment was conducted on the 72 studies that passed the relevance screening stage to evaluate their methodological rigor and reliability, following Kitchenham's guidelines for systematic literature reviews. Each study was assessed based on clarity of objectives, explicit description of the consensus mechanism, and adequacy of privacy-related analysis. All studies met the predefined quality threshold and were included in the final synthesis.

- Records assessed for quality: 72
- Records excluded at quality stage: 0
- Final studies included in the SLR: 72

G. Data Extraction and Synthesis

For the included studies, structured data extraction was performed to capture information related to consensus mechanism class, privacy limitations, and the integration level of privacy-preserving techniques. The extracted data were synthesised using taxonomy-based and thematic analysis, enabling quantitative comparison and cross-study interpretation. This approach supports Kitchenham's recommendation to combine descriptive statistics with qualitative synthesis when addressing complex design-oriented research questions.

H. Reporting

The results of the SLR are reported using tables and structured discussion to ensure clarity and reproducibility. Quantitative summaries and taxonomic classifications are presented to support transparent interpretation of findings.

I. Threats to Validity

Several potential threats to validity were considered. First, publication bias may exist due to the exclusion of non-English studies and grey literature. Second, database selection may limit coverage, although Scopus and Web of Science provide extensive indexing of relevant journals. To mitigate these threats, carefully designed search strings, multiple databases, and expert-driven eligibility assessment were employed.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section discusses the findings of the systematic literature review based on the 72 included studies, with emphasis on interpreting observed research patterns and their implications for privacy-preserving blockchain design. The discussion is structured around the three research questions (RQ1–RQ3) and adopts a taxonomy- and theme-based synthesis to examine how consensus mechanisms are selected, analysed, and implemented in existing studies. First, the prevalence of different consensus mechanism classes is examined to understand dominant design choices and underlying assumptions in privacy-sensitive blockchain systems. Next, recurring privacy limitations associated with consensus designs are discussed to reveal structural weaknesses that persist across studies. Finally, the extent to which privacy-preserving techniques are integrated into the consensus layer is analysed to highlight current design practices and unresolved challenges. By linking these observations, this section identifies critical gaps between consensus selection and privacy-by-design principles, providing a foundation for the research directions outlined later.

A. RQ1: Which Classes of Blockchain Consensus Mechanisms are Most Frequently Adopted in Privacy-Preserving Blockchain Systems?

This subsection addresses RQ1, which investigates the classes of blockchain consensus mechanisms examined in the literature and their taxonomic distribution. The analysis is based on the synthesis presented in Table V, which classifies the consensus mechanisms adopted across the 72 included studies. According to Table V, the Byzantine Fault Tolerant (BFT) based class is the consensus mechanism class that is most frequently

reported in privacy-preserving blockchain systems. This class is referenced in 18 papers, which is 25 percent of the total papers as shown in Fig. 2. The leader-based consensus class, which is represented in four papers, is the least frequently reported class.

The BFT-based class's dominance is telling of its widespread adoption in permissioned and consortium blockchain environments. In the reviewed studies, Practical Byzantine Fault Tolerance (PBFT), ZK-BFT, and MGRS-PBFT are common examples of BFT-based consensus mechanisms. In contrast, RAFT is an example of a leader-based consensus mechanism that has received little attention in privacy-focused blockchain research.

The BFT class is the most popular because it works well in permissioned blockchain environments, where nodes that are part of the network are known and access is controlled [15]. This controlled participation reduces the unnecessary dissemination of data during consensus execution and limits the exposure of sensitive data to unauthorised nodes. Therefore, BFT-based consensus mechanisms improve privacy by limiting the access of validators and minimising the leakage of identity and communication within the network [16].

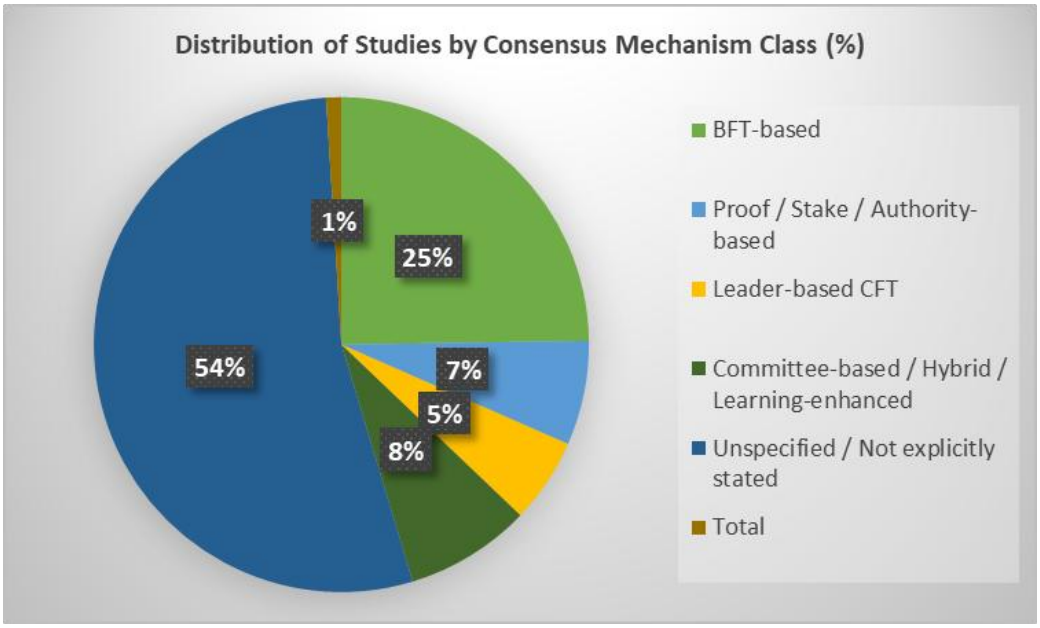

Fig. 2. Distribution of consensus classes.

TABLE V. DISTRIBUTION OF STUDIES BY CONSENSUS MECHANISM CLASS

Consensus Mechanism Class	Percentage (%)	No. of Papers	Consensus Mechanism Type	References
BFT-based	25	18	PBFT, dBFT, DG-PBFT, Grouped PBFT, MGRS-PBFT, TRUG-PBFT, CRBFT, Reputation-Enhanced PBFT, Improved PBFT, RL-Enhanced PBFT, QBFT, HotStuff, Efficient-HotStuff, Lightweight BFT, Context-Aware BFT, RSHS, MuLCOff	[15], [33], [34], [35], [36], [37], [38], [39], [40], [41], [42], [43], [44], [45], [46], [47], [48], [49] [15], [33]-[49]
Proof / Stake / Authority-based	6.9	5	PoW, PoS, Hybrid PoW–PoS, DPoS, RC-DPoS, PoA, Improved PoA, PoSS	[50], [51], [52], [53], [54] [50]-[54]
Leader-based CFT	5.6	4	RAFT	[55], [56], [57], [58] [37]-[40]
Committee-based / Hybrid / Learning-enhanced	8.3	6	Proof-of-Contribution Committee, PoLU, PoTP, RCME, Q-Learning–Enhanced Consensus, DQN-Enhanced Consensus	[59], [60], [61], [62], [63], [64] [59]-[64]
Unspecified / Not explicitly stated	54.2	39	Not specified by authors	[65], [66], [67], [68] [49],[65]-[103] [69], [70], [71], [72], [73], [74], [75], [76], [77] [78], [79], [80], [81], [82], [83], [84], [85], [86] [49], [87], [88], [89], [90], [91], [92], [93], [94] [95], [96], [97], [98], [99], [100], [101], [102], [103]
Total	**100%**	**72**	—	—

In Byzantine Fault Tolerance (BFT)-based blockchain systems, three synthesised strategies are commonly used to improve privacy. First, identity privacy is enhanced by integrating ring-signature mechanisms into BFT consensus, which conceal validator identities while maintaining consensus correctness, as demonstrated by MGRS-PBFT [15]. This approach is consistent with previous ring-based Byzantine consensus designs that conceal signer identities during validation [17], and it is further supported by research highlighting anonymity as a critical privacy requirement in BFT-driven blockchain services [18].

Second, integrating zero-knowledge proofs into BFT protocols improves transaction confidentiality by allowing nodes to verify transaction validity without disclosing sensitive data, as demonstrated in ZK-BFT [16]. Similar privacy guarantees are explored in quantum-resistant Byzantine consensus models [19] and cryptography-enhanced BFT frameworks [18]. Third, privacy exposure is decreased through group-based or sharded BFT architectures, where only subsets of validators process transactions [20], consistent with sharded Byzantine consensus designs [21] and scalability-driven consensus partitioning studies [22].

The Leader-based Class Consensus Mechanism like RAFT is not frequently used to enhance privacy preservation in blockchain systems due to two key factors. First, RAFT provides only crash fault tolerance and does not protect against malicious or Byzantine behaviour, which is critical in privacy-sensitive environments [23], [24]. Second, RAFT relies on a leader-based architecture, where a single leader coordinates all consensus operations. This design creates a potential single point of failure and increases privacy risks if the leader node is compromised [25], [26]

Unlike BFT-oriented designs, privacy enhancement in RAFT-based blockchain systems is typically accomplished through additional mechanisms rather than core consensus features. Firstly, numerous studies have improved the privacy of RAFT by integrating it with trusted execution environments (TEEs). In these environments, transaction execution and state management take place within secure enclaves, thereby restricting data exposure, despite the fact that RAFT is still crash-fault tolerant [23]. This approach is consistent with consortium blockchain designs that use hardware-assisted isolation for confidentiality [27] and proxy-signature-based trust delegation [28]. Second, privacy is enhanced through hybrid consensus and cryptographic modifications, in which RAFT is combined with mechanisms such as Proof of Work or credit-based models to reduce trust concentration and mitigate the inference risks associated with leader-based coordination [24], [29], [30]. Third, RAFT deployments frequently rely on strict access control and permissioned governance to ensure that only authenticated nodes participate in consensus, which indirectly promotes privacy by limiting data visibility to trusted members [24], [25], [31]. Overall, these enhancements show that RAFT-dependent privacy preservation is primarily architectural and operational, rather than consensus-based.

Overall, the differences in privacy outcomes between BFT-based systems and RAFT stem from their fundamental design philosophies. BFT-based consensus, such as PBFT, is inherently designed for competitive environments, so privacy is built into the consensus core by tolerating malicious behaviour, decentralising trust, and supporting cryptographic techniques like ring signatures and zero-knowledge proofs to protect identity and data [15], [16], [18]. RAFT, on the other hand, puts more value on simplicity, performance, and crash fault tolerance, assuming that participants are trustworthy and that there are no conflicting settings. Because of this, privacy protection is only possible through external methods like access control, trusted execution environments, or hybrid architectures, rather than through native consensus logic [23], [24], [32]. This philosophical distinction explains why BFT-based approaches are more suitable for privacy-sensitive blockchain applications.

B. *RQ2: What Privacy Limitations are Reported for Different Classes of Blockchain Consensus Mechanisms Across Existing Studies?*

This subsection answer RQ2, which examines the privacy limitations reported across different classes of blockchain consensus mechanisms and how these limitations vary by consensus design. The analysis is based on the evidence synthesised in Table VI, where privacy-related issues are mapped to consensus mechanism classes and supported by explicit paper-level citations.

The findings show that BFT-based consensus mechanisms have the most reported privacy limitations of any specifically identified consensus type. The most frequently observed issues are identity exposure and communication-pattern leakage, implying that privacy risks in BFT systems extend beyond transaction content to participant identifiability and traffic observability. These findings imply that privacy flaws in BFT mechanisms are inherent in their design rather than implementation-related. Hybrid consensus mechanisms exhibit recurring privacy limitations, albeit less frequently than BFT-based mechanisms. The reported issues are primarily related to architectural complexity and cross-layer information exposure. Importantly, the quantitative results show that hybridisation does not eliminate privacy risks and, in some cases, introduces new challenges.

BFT-class consensus mechanisms, such as PBFT and its variants, have inherent privacy constraints due to their operational characteristics. In BFT protocols, transactions and consensus messages are distributed among multiple replicas to accommodate Byzantine faults. This process results in a greater exposure of transaction data and metadata to consensus participants, which in turn increases the risk of privacy leakage [16]. Furthermore, traditional BFT mechanisms lack native privacy-preserving capabilities. Validator identities are commonly known, and the roles of primary and replica nodes are predictable. This predictability facilitates traffic analysis and allows adversaries to infer participant behaviour and system activity [15]. The high communication overhead required for multi-round voting increases these risks by increasing the visibility of communication patterns [104].

To address these limitations, several studies suggest enhancing BFT mechanisms with cryptographic privacy techniques. Ring signatures and traceable ring signatures are widely used to conceal validator identities while maintaining accountability [15], [17]. Zero-knowledge proofs enable nodes

to verify transaction correctness without revealing sensitive data, thereby significantly reducing information exposure [16]. Other approaches use dynamic grouping and reputation-based participation to limit long-term role exposure and mitigate the influence of malicious nodes [104]. Instead of completely replacing BFT, these solutions preserve its fault tolerance while improving privacy.

TABLE VI. PRIVACY LIMITATIONS IDENTIFIED ACROSS CONSENSUS MECHANISM CLASSES

Consensus Mechanism Class	Privacy Limitation	Description of Limitation	No. of papers	Paper IDs
BFT-based	Identity exposure	Validator or participant identities are revealed during consensus rounds, enabling traceability	9	[15]-[21], [24],[54]
	Communication pattern leakage	Frequent message exchanges expose network topology and interaction patterns	6	[15], [34], [36], [46], [47], [72]
	Metadata leakage	Transaction timing and ordering reveal sensitive operational information	4	[37], [39], [41], [43]
	Limited anonymity support	Native consensus does not support anonymity or unlinkability guarantees	4	[35], [38], [42], [53]
Proof / Stake / Authority-based	Stake / authority traceability	Stakeholders or authorities are directly linkable to consensus decisions	3	[50], [52], [53]
	Centralisation risk	Small validator sets or authorities weaken privacy through control concentration	2	[52], [53]
	Transaction linkage	Repeated validator participation enables transaction correlation	2	[41], [50]
Leader-based CFT	Leader identity exposure	Fixed or elected leaders expose control and communication endpoints	4	[37]-[40]
	Limited privacy awareness	Consensus prioritises performance over privacy guarantees	2	[55], [57]
Committee / Hybrid / Learning-enhanced	Partial privacy integration	Privacy mechanisms are selectively applied, not end-to-end	4	[41]-[43],[46]
	Model / role inference	Learning-based or committee selection leaks role or contribution information	3	[43], [59], [63]
Unspecified	Implicit consensus assumption	Privacy analysis is conducted without stating or analysing the consensus layer	13	[31],[69]-[76],[78],[80]-[82]
	Unclear privacy responsibility	Responsibility for privacy is shifted to upper layers without justification	7	[78], [83], [95], [97], [101], [102], [103]
	Lack of reproducibility	Absence of consensus details prevents comparative or reproducible evaluation	20	[47]-[59],[61]-[64],[66]-[68]

Hybrid consensus mechanisms, which integrate components from various consensus protocols, are designed to achieve a balance between security, scalability, and efficiency in blockchain systems. However, this integration introduces new privacy challenges. The interaction between heterogeneous consensus layers can lead to information leakage at protocol boundaries, rather than within a single mechanism [105]. According to [106], hybrid mechanisms frequently necessitate additional coordination and parameter exchange, which results in increased metadata exposure and communication overhead. Furthermore, hybrid systems may introduce trade-offs between privacy and performance, such as increased computational cost or latency, as a result of privacy-preserving enhancements. If not managed carefully, these trade-offs can indirectly weaken privacy guarantees [107].

Despite these challenges, hybrid consensus mechanisms can improve privacy with proper design. Anonymous communication techniques, such as Tor-based routing, are used to conceal node identities and mitigate targeted attacks [105]. Other approaches use disruption methods, dynamic key management, and privacy-aware consensus protocols to conceal sensitive states exchanged during consensus [106]. Hybrid architectures, which combine public and private blockchains, enhance privacy by limiting sensitive data to permissioned environments while ensuring public authenticity [107].

Consensus mechanisms are central to the philosophy of blockchain systems because they enable distributed agreement, trust establishment, and fault tolerance without the need for a central authority. Classical consensus designs prioritise correctness, consistency, and resilience, frequently assuming that transparency and information sharing are required to reach an agreement among distributed nodes [2], [4]. RQ2 findings show that privacy limitations in both BFT-based and hybrid consensus mechanisms are not intentional flaws, but rather structural consequences of these foundational design objectives. The emphasis on collective verification and Byzantine resilience in BFT-based mechanisms requires extensive message exchanges and role transparency, which inevitably increases identity and communication pattern exposure [2].

Hybrid consensus mechanisms use multiple protocols to balance performance, scalability, and security; however, this architectural layering introduces new privacy risks due to cross-layer interactions and increased coordination complexity [3], [4]. Recent research shows a gradual shift in consensus philosophy. Instead of treating privacy as an optional extra, modern designs increasingly incorporate cryptographic protection, anonymity, and controlled disclosure directly into the consensus layer. Techniques such as zero-knowledge proofs, anonymous authentication, and adaptive participation mechanisms aim to maintain agreement and fault tolerance while minimising unnecessary data exposure [2], [3].

In general, the RQ2 synthesis suggests that the evolution of consensus mechanisms is transitioning from a model of agreement through visibility to agreement with controlled disclosure. This shift aligns the technical operation of consensus mechanisms with broader privacy expectations in blockchain-based systems, particularly in sensitive areas like data sharing and governance. Consequently, the ongoing development of blockchain technologies is increasingly characterised by the implementation of privacy-aware consensus design.

C. RQ3: How are Privacy-Preserving Techniques Integrated Into Blockchain Consensus Mechanisms in Existing Studies?

This subsection addresses RQ3, which examines whether privacy-preserving techniques are integrated into blockchain consensus mechanisms or applied as external solutions. The analysis is based on Table VII, which maps consensus mechanism classes to privacy techniques and their integration levels.

TABLE VII. PRIVACY-PRESERVING TECHNIQUE USED IN REVIEWED STUDIES

Consensus Mechanism Class	Privacy-Preserving Technique	Integration Level	No. of Papers	References
BFT-based	Reputation / Incentives (privacy-related)	Not specified	4	[39], [42], [44], [48]
	Anonymous Authentication / Pseudonyms	Integrated (consensus-level)	2	[15], [38]
	Federated Learning Privacy (FL + privacy)	External / overlay	2	[36], [43]
	Federated Learning Privacy (FL + privacy)	Not specified	2	[42], [72]
	Not specified	Not specified	2	[37], [47]
	Sharding / Sidechain / Off-chain	Integrated (consensus-level)	2	[35], [45]
	Sharding / Sidechain / Off-chain	Not specified	2	[44], [48]
	Access Control (ACL/ABAC/RBAC/Smart contracts)	External / overlay	1	[41]
	Access Control (ACL/ABAC/RBAC/Smart contracts)	Not specified	1	[34]
	Anonymous Authentication / Pseudonyms	External / overlay	1	[46]
	Attribute-Based Encryption (ABE/CP-ABE/MA-ABE)	External / overlay	1	[41]
	Encryption (generic)	Integrated (consensus-level)	1	[35]
	Federated Learning Privacy (FL + privacy)	Integrated (consensus-level)	1	[33]
	IPFS / Distributed Storage with encryption	External / overlay	1	[41]
	IPFS / Distributed Storage with encryption	Integrated (consensus-level)	1	[35]
	Reputation / Incentives (privacy-related)	External / overlay	1	[43]
	Reputation / Incentives (privacy-related)	Integrated (consensus-level)	1	[33]
	Ring Signatures / Group Signatures	Integrated (consensus-level)	1	[15]
	Sharding / Sidechain / Off-chain	External / overlay	1	[41]
	Trusted Execution / Secure Hardware	Not specified	1	[44]
	Zero-Knowledge Proofs (ZKP)	Integrated (consensus-level)	1	[38]
Proof/Stake/Authority-based	Encryption (generic)	External / overlay	3	[50], [52], [54]
	Access Control (ACL/ABAC/RBAC/Smart contracts)	External / overlay	2	[41], [50]
	Attribute-Based Encryption (ABE/CP-ABE/MA-ABE)	External / overlay	1	[41]
	Homomorphic Encryption (HE)	External / overlay	1	[54]
	IPFS / Distributed Storage with encryption	External / overlay	1	[41]
	Not specified	Not specified	1	[53]
	Reputation / Incentives (privacy-related)	External / overlay	1	[52]
	Sharding / Sidechain / Off-chain	External / overlay	1	[41]
Leader-based CFT	Access Control (ACL/ABAC/RBAC/Smart contracts)	Integrated (consensus-level)	1	[56]

	Access Control (ACL/ABAC/RBAC/Smart contracts)	Not specified	1	[55]
	Differential Privacy (DP)	External / overlay	1	[57]
	Federated Learning Privacy (FL + privacy)	External / overlay	1	[58]
Committee/Hybrid/Learning-enhanced	Federated Learning Privacy (FL + privacy)	External / overlay	2	[43], [60]
	Federated Learning Privacy (FL + privacy)	Not specified	2	[59], [61]
	Reputation / Incentives (privacy-related)	Not specified	2	[59], [61]
	Access Control (ACL/ABAC/RBAC/Smart contracts)	Integrated (consensus-level)	1	[63]
	Encryption (generic)	Integrated (consensus-level)	1	[63]
	Not specified	Not specified	1	[64]
	Reputation / Incentives (privacy-related)	External / overlay	1	[43]
	Reputation / Incentives (privacy-related)	Integrated (consensus-level)	1	[63]
	Sharding / Sidechain / Off-chain	External / overlay	1	[60]
	Trusted Execution / Secure Hardware	Integrated (consensus-level)	1	[63]
	Trusted Execution / Secure Hardware	Not specified	1	[59]
Unspecified/Not stated	Not specified	Not specified	9	[67], [68], [69], [70], [76], [91], [102], [103], [114]
	Encryption (generic)	External / overlay	8	[49], [66], [71], [74], [78], [80], [92], [95]
	Access Control (ACL/ABAC/RBAC/Smart contracts)	External / overlay	7	[49], [66], [74], [80], [85], [88], [96]
	Access Control (ACL/ABAC/RBAC/Smart contracts)	Not specified	7	[75], [79], [84], [89], [90], [93], [94]
	Federated Learning Privacy (FL + privacy)	External / overlay	5	[71], [78], [81], [82], [83]
	Anonymous Authentication / Pseudonyms	External / overlay	3	[74], [88], [92]
	Federated Learning Privacy (FL + privacy)	Not specified	3	[72], [97], [98]
	IPFS / Distributed Storage with encryption	External / overlay	3	[66], [87], [95]
	Reputation / Incentives (privacy-related)	External / overlay	3	[78], [80], [82]
	Sharding / Sidechain / Off-chain	Not specified	3	[86], [99], [100]
	Access Control (ACL/ABAC/RBAC/Smart contracts)	Integrated (consensus-level)	2	[65], [115]
	Attribute-Based Encryption (ABE/CP-ABE/MA-ABE)	External / overlay	2	[49], [80]
	Encryption (generic)	Integrated (consensus-level)	2	[73], [101]
	Encryption (generic)	Not specified	2	[75], [90]
	Homomorphic Encryption (HE)	External / overlay	2	[71], [74]
	IPFS / Distributed Storage with encryption	Not specified	2	[86], [99]
	Sharding / Sidechain / Off-chain	External / overlay	2	[80], [95]
	Attribute-Based Encryption (ABE/CP-ABE/MA-ABE)	Integrated (consensus-level)	1	[73]
	Attribute-Based Encryption (ABE/CP-ABE/MA-ABE)	Not specified	1	[75]
	IPFS / Distributed Storage with encryption	Integrated (consensus-level)	1	[65]
	Reputation / Incentives (privacy-related)	Integrated (consensus-level)	1	[101]
	Secure Multi-Party Computation (SMPC)	External / overlay	1	[77]
	Sharding / Sidechain / Off-chain	Integrated (consensus-level)	1	[101]
	Trusted Execution / Secure Hardware	External / overlay	1	[80]
	Zero-Knowledge Proofs (ZKP)	Integrated (consensus-level)	1	[101]

Table VII classifies the reviewed studies based on where privacy-preserving techniques are used in BFT-class consensus systems. The table distinguishes between (i) privacy mechanisms built directly into the consensus protocol and (ii) external or overlay-level privacy mechanisms, such as cryptographic add-ons or architectural layers that exist outside of the core consensus protocol. The table shows the frequency of studies using each approach, allowing for a comparison of design preferences and implementation trends in the literature. The findings indicate that privacy-preserving techniques are more commonly integrated at the consensus level in BFT-class mechanisms than at the external or overlay level. A large portion of research focuses on modifying PBFT-style protocols by incorporating cryptographic primitives directly into consensus operations like message validation and leader coordination. Fewer studies rely solely on externalised privacy mechanisms, though such approaches remain important. In qualitative terms, consensus-level integration is typically motivated by strong competitive implications and the need for Byzantine resilience, whereas external mechanisms are frequently used to improve modularity, flexibility, and system interoperability. These results show that privacy arrangement is not just a random design choice, but a planned architectural trade-off.

BFT-class consensus mechanisms work in environments where nodes may act maliciously. As a result, privacy-preserving techniques are frequently embedded at the consensus level to safeguard node identities, transaction data, and coordination messages during agreement execution. Ring signatures, threshold signatures, and zero-knowledge proofs are used to prevent malicious nodes from obtaining sensitive information while still allowing for transaction verification and fault tolerance [15], [16], [104]. The risk of Byzantine manipulation is also mitigated by embedding privacy within the consensus layer, as privacy and security guarantees are enforced during message exchange and validation, rather than relying on external safeguards [17], [108]. Because of this, consensus-level privacy is frequently seen as essential in permissioned or consortium blockchains, which have lower trust assumptions.

Despite the advantages of consensus-level privacy, many BFT-based systems incorporate privacy mechanisms at the external or overlay level in order to maintain protocol simplicity and performance. External mechanisms enable designers to implement encryption, deception, or anonymisation without significantly altering the consensus logic [15], [16]. This approach improves modularity by allowing privacy mechanisms to be updated or replaced independently. Overlay-level privacy is also used to protect against external adversaries, such as traffic analysis or data inference attacks that take place outside of the consensus process, while remaining compatible with existing BFT implementations [17]. As a result, externalised privacy mechanisms are frequently preferred in systems that value deployment and scalability.

The literature suggests several approaches to translating externalised privacy mechanisms into actionable design principles. First, privacy-by-design necessitates that privacy objectives be explicitly defined at the architectural stage, even if they are implemented outside the consensus layer [109], [110]. Second, privacy design strategies and patterns, such as anonymisation, encryption, and access control, are reusable building blocks that can be systematically evaluated [110], [111]. Third, effective frameworks prioritise ongoing privacy evaluation and monitoring to ensure that external mechanisms remain effective as system conditions change [112]. Lastly, it is imperative to evaluate externalised privacy in the context of regulatory and contextual requirements, particularly in sensitive domains like healthcare and governance [113]. These principles establish concrete criteria for determining whether external privacy mechanisms effectively supplement consensus security.

The findings of RQ3 demonstrate that privacy placement reflects the underlying philosophy of consensus mechanisms. When strong adversarial resistance and minimal internal trust are needed, BFT-class systems build privacy into the consensus level. Externalised privacy mechanisms, on the other hand, are based on a philosophy of modularity and controlled disclosure, with privacy complementing rather than reshaping consensus logic [2], [3]. In summary, modern blockchain design increasingly recognises privacy as a fundamental architectural concern, whether enforced internally or externally. This evolution shows a shift from achieving agreement through transparency to achieving agreement through carefully managed exposure, which aligns consensus mechanisms with modern privacy expectations.

IV. Conclusion and Future Research Directions

This systematic literature review examined blockchain consensus mechanisms from a privacy-focused perspective, with particular attention to how consensus design influences privacy risks and mitigation strategies. By analysing 72 peer-reviewed journal articles, the review moves beyond performance- or security-oriented surveys and provides a consensus-centric understanding of privacy preservation in blockchain systems.

The findings show that Byzantine Fault Tolerant (BFT)-based consensus mechanisms are the most frequently adopted in privacy-preserving blockchain applications, especially in permissioned and consortium environments. However, the review also demonstrates that privacy challenges remain common across studies. Issues such as identity exposure, communication pattern leakage, and metadata inference are repeatedly linked to consensus-level properties, including validator roles, message exchange patterns, and quorum structures. These results highlight that privacy risks are not solely caused by data handling at the application layer but are deeply influenced by how consensus mechanisms operate.

Another important insight is that privacy-preserving techniques are predominantly implemented as external or overlay solutions rather than being integrated directly into consensus mechanisms. While such approaches improve data confidentiality, they do not fully address privacy risks that originate from consensus operations themselves. This separation reveals a structural limitation in current blockchain designs, where privacy is often treated as an additional feature rather than a fundamental design requirement of the consensus layer.

The main contribution of this review is a taxonomy-driven synthesis that explicitly connects consensus mechanism classes, reported privacy limitations, and levels of privacy integration. By organising fragmented findings into a coherent framework,

this work provides a clear reference for analysing consensus mechanisms through a privacy lens and supports more informed decision-making in both research and practice.

Building on these insights, future research should focus on designing consensus mechanisms with privacy embedded at the protocol level, rather than relying on external protections. Comparative studies using consistent privacy evaluation criteria are needed to better understand trade-offs across consensus classes. In addition, underexplored consensus designs, such as leader-based and hybrid mechanisms, warrant further investigation to assess their privacy potential when appropriately adapted. Addressing these directions can support the development of blockchain systems where privacy is considered a core consensus property rather than an afterthought.

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Experimental Validation of Contextual Parameters and Comparative Analysis with State-of-the-Art in CARS Recommendation Systems in Ubiquitous Computing

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***Abstract*— The most important role of Consumer Behavior prediction plays in e-commerce, various ways of marketing, and Context-aware Recommendation Systems (CARS). From an Amazon consumer dataset, we conduct a comparative analysis of different machine learning models to compare their performance or effectiveness in predicting consumer behavior based on an Amazon consumer dataset. Additionally, we introduce a new algorithm combining feature selection and optimization that aims to enhance prediction accuracy. Person behavior prediction has historically helped enhance e-commerce, marketing, and Context-Aware Recommendation Systems-CARS, allowing businesses to get closer to customers and understand their needs better from the time they appeared to the time an analysis could be done. The research work performs comparative analysis among various machine learning techniques, like Logistic Regression, Decision Tree, Random Forest, SVM, and KNN, to see which one is more effective in predicting customer behavior, based on an Amazon consumer dataset. Besides, a new algorithm that merges feature selection and optimization is proposed and implemented to guarantee better prediction accuracy. The project is aimed at the creation of data-driven decision systems powered by an optimized machine learning framework for customer analytics.**

***Keywords*—Context-aware recommendation systems; multi-modal recommendation; transformer-based models; experimental validation; contextual parameter modeling; user behavior modeling**

I. Introduction

In the rapidly evolving digital marketplace, consumer behavior prediction plays a crucial role in shaping the success of e-commerce, marketing strategies, and Context-Aware Recommendation Systems (CARS). The ability to comprehend and foretell the tastes of the customers is a great advantage for the businesses, as they can then give the customers what they want in terms of personalized experience, better product placement, and increased satisfaction [1]. Machine learning tools have come to be relied upon more as the online transactions and data have increased rapidly, as they are the only ones capable of getting insights and predicting consumer behavior with such precision over other techniques. The research under consideration makes use of a dataset of Amazon customers to carry out an analysis that compares the different machine learning algorithms. It is the accuracy of the prediction, the resource consumption in terms of computation, and the ability to represent the behavioral patterns that form the basis of evaluation for all the algorithms. Besides this, the study proposes a new algorithm that combines feature selection and optimization techniques to increase overall prediction accuracy.

The contribution through combining comparative experimentation with algorithmic innovation is the development of data-driven decision-making frameworks for consumer analytics. The goal of the proposed research work is to generate insights that not only help choose and optimize machine learning models for consumer health behavior prediction but also reinforce the pillars of intelligent recommendation systems and adaptive marketing strategies in e-business. The expansion of e-commerce has led to an increasing reliance on data-driven decision-making and a better understanding and anticipation of consumer behavior. Machine learning (ML) is the main technique used for analyzing large consumer datasets, recognizing useful patterns, and improving marketing strategies. Using personalized recommendations, targeted advertising, and improved customer engagement, ultimately enhancing business profitability is predicting consumer behavior accurately (Manotumruksa et al,2018) [2]. However, it also differs in terms of changing degrees of accuracy and efficiency depending on the dataset characteristics and preprocessing techniques. Although they are effective, traditional models often face challenges such as over-fitting, computational complexity, and badly feature selection, restricting their predictive performance. To increase accuracy and robustness in consumer behavior prediction, it represents designed of a comparative analysis of conventional ML models alongside a novel algorithm.

To solve these challenges, this study presents a comparative analysis of conventional ML models alongside a novel algorithm designed to improve accuracy and robustness in consumer behavior prediction (Mateos, P. and Bellogín, A., 2024) [3]. The proposed approach incorporates feature selection and optimization techniques to boost predictive

power. An Amazon consumer dataset, this research aims to identify the most effective approach for consumer behavior analysis in e-commerce by evaluating multiple models.

II. Ease of Use

In numerous domain, machine learning (ML) models is used for predicting user behavior's various application like e-commerce, Random Forest and Gradient Boosting excellent perfumed KNN- (K-Nearest Neighbors) and SVM Support Vector Classifier in predicting customer shopping behavior (Smith,2019)[4]. Similarly, with some performing better in terms of accuracy for online shoppers' prediction using ML(machine learning) algorithms (Afzal et al., 2024) [5]. In the field of Electrical Vehicle (EV) customer behavior predictions, KNN slightly outperformed Neural Networks (Zhang and Abisado, M., 2023) [6]. For travel mode choice prediction, random forest achieved higher predictive accuracy than logit models but produced behaviorally unreason nable elasticities and marginal effects. While ML models generally demonstrate superior predictive accuracy, there may be a trade-off between accuracy and behavioral soundness. The studies in question highlight the necessity of correctly picking models for behavior forecasting and provide analytical frameworks suitable for different areas.

Traditionally, classic recommender systems—such as collaborative filtering (CF), content-based, and hybrid models—depended largely on either explicit or implicit user-item interactions and did not consider various external factors those impact users' preferences. Nevertheless, research done in the field of ubiquitous and mobile computing showed the users' choices might be influenced by the context like time, place, climate, among others, or even at their current activity [7]. This finding was the beginning of a new approach that led to CARS, where context is given the same priority as other input variables and considered first in the forecasting model. The three strategies of classical works are preventing processing, where the filtering of data is done according to context (for instance, "recommend only items that are suitable for evening usage". Post-filtering, where the traditional recommendation made is by re-ranking it with the help of context. Contextual modeling, where context gets featured as a part of the prediction/machine learning function (e.g., tensor factorization, factorization machines, deep learning, etc.).

It is acknowledged that context-aware modeling methods like ContextMF, TF, FM, and NFM have probably pointed out the importance of directly inputting contextual attributes into the preference-learning function. Conducted investigations have proved that contextual modeling almost always beats pre/post filtering approaches since the former is able to discern user, item, and context dimensional interaction effects more accurately.

We scrutinized machine learning models aimed at predicting user behavior in the virtual world. The comparison of several algorithms, such as K-Nearest Neighbors, Gradient Boosting, Support Vector Classifier, and Random Forest, has concluded that Random Forest and Gradient Boosting are very much alike in terms of the accuracy and sturdiness of the customer behavior forecast (Abinaya and Ramya, R., 2024) [8]. Such systems can suggest activities that are customized to different circumstances without needing any explicit user input. One of the latest developments is the context-aware user-item representation learning models that learn joint representations for each user-item pair based on the reviews and interaction data combined to increase the rating prediction accuracy [9]. Moreover, agent-based frameworks have been proposed which grant personalization of services based on the user's past connection with the context and automatically discover the connection among the user profiles and services in the same context. The different methods strive to be the static encoding schemes' nemesis capturing the users' different expectations on different items and contexts thereby, not only increasing the accuracy but also making personalized recommendations more interpretable in ubiquitous computing surroundings [10].

The researchers present a machine learning framework which utilizes context information to perform feature selection and optimize hyperparameters, resulting in better prediction accuracy of consumer behavior. The proposed method operates differently from previous hybrid methods because it measures how contextual features affect model performance while it handles feature selection before model development.

We used the Amazon consumer dataset to conduct their experiments, which provided them with valid statistical evidence to compare traditional learning methods, including Logistic Regression, Decision Tree, Random Forest, SVM, and KNN, against ensemble learning techniques. The research results show that using the optimized framework leads to higher accuracy across different evaluation metrics.

The research determines which contextual factors most affect consumer decision-making. The research provides specific insights which help in developing context-specific recommendation systems while comparing existing models. The study provides practical solutions for recommendation platforms through its support of personalized marketing strategies and its creation of adaptive recommendation systems and its advancement of data-driven campaign optimization.

III. Methodology

Predicting person's behavior is done through customer interactions, purchasing patterns, and preferences analysis to anticipate future actions. E-commerce and digital transactions foster massive customer activity data availability which, in turn, allows businesses to adopt a data-driven decision-making approach [11]. One of the areas where support is being provided is using machine learning (ML) which helps not only in processing the data but also in providing analytical outputs that can be used in targeted marketing, recommending systems, and demand forecasting. ML techniques can analyze large-scale consumer data, discover hidden trends, and build predictive models that will allow businesses to comprehend and even alter customer choices [12]. The ML model is constantly learning from past data and hence is also continuously adapting to the new trends in the market which eventually results in more accuracy [13].

In the above Fig. 1, it gathered context from various sensors for a context-aware recommendation system. The data is collected from various electronics devices like smartphones,

wearable's, IoT devices, smart home systems etc. This data is collected from different sources like location of user, activity of user, and user interactions using social media, and is processed in real-time using edge computing and cloud storage to ensure timely recommendations [14]. For generative effectiveness in context-aware system using Machine learning algorithms [15]. The system mainly integrates a dedicated privacy and security module to protect user data while ensuring scalability and performance, enabling efficient handling of large volumes of data and user interactions [16].

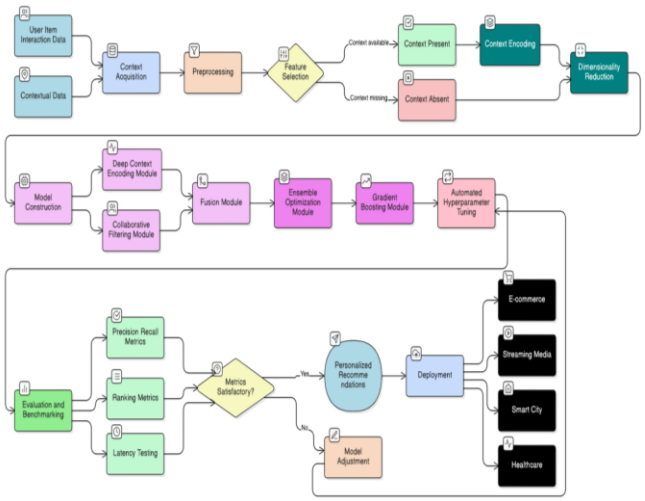

Fig. 1. Overview of proposed work.

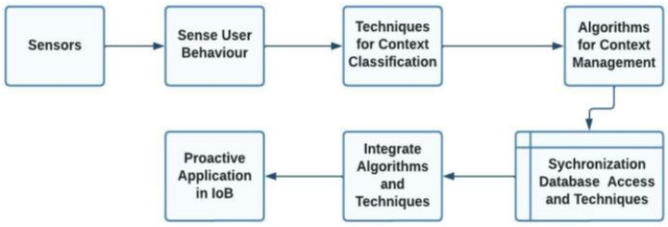

Fig. 2. Proposed CARS_UP methodology.

In the Fig. 2, illustrate the methodology for context-aware computing in the Internet of Behaviors (IoB). The process start from collecting sensed data from heterogeneous devices so it will help to analyzed behavior of users [17]. For classification it uses the context classification which allows the system to interpret user interaction. Once classification is done then main role played by context management. Mainly taking care of the utilization of context is effectively for immediate decision making and having useful insights [18]. After that it involves synchronization, database access, and techniques for data flow seamlessly along with consistency. Using algorithms and technologies makes system capable for real time decision-making. Leading to intelligent, automated responses that enhance user experiences by predicting behaviors and adapting services accordingly [19].

IV. Method Validation

In Fig. 3, the model accuracy comparison illustrates the performance of different machine learning models based on their accuracy scores. In above chart, XGBoost scores the highest accuracy, later SVM, indicating that these models perform well in classification tasks. Comparative accuracy is there for Logistic Regression and Random Forest, making them feasible options for predictive modeling [20]. However, Decision Tree achieves the least accuracy which indicates that it may not be applicable to the data in a general sense. KNN also presents a lower performance level than the rest of the models, however, it still ranks above the Decision Tree. To sum up, the findings advocate that the model combinations such as XGBoost and Random Forest are superior to the single ones like Decision Tree, therefore, the significance of the selection of powerful algorithms for classification issues is emphasized [21].

```
Dataset Info:
<class 'pandas.core.frame.DataFrame'>
RangeIndex: 918 entries, 0 to 917
Data columns (total 12 columns):
 #   Column          Non-Null Count  Dtype
---  ------          --------------  -----
 0   Age             918 non-null    int64
 1   Sex             918 non-null    object
 2   ChestPainType   918 non-null    object
 3   RestingBP       918 non-null    int64
 4   Cholesterol     918 non-null    int64
 5   FastingBS       918 non-null    int64
 6   RestingECG      918 non-null    object
 7   MaxHR           918 non-null    int64
 8   ExerciseAngina  918 non-null    object
 9   Oldpeak         918 non-null    float64
 10  ST_Slope        918 non-null    object
 11  HeartDisease    918 non-null    int64
dtypes: float64(1), int64(6), object(5)
memory usage: 86.2+ KB
None

Model Accuracy: 0.8804
```

```
Dataset Info:
<class 'pandas.core.frame.DataFrame'>
RangeIndex: 70692 entries, 0 to 70691
Data columns (total 22 columns):
 #   Column                Non-Null Count  Dtype
---  ------                --------------  -----
 0   Diabetes_binary       70692 non-null  float64
 1   HighBP                70692 non-null  float64
 2   HighChol              70692 non-null  float64
 3   CholCheck             70692 non-null  float64
 4   BMI                   70692 non-null  float64
 5   Smoker                70692 non-null  float64
 6   Stroke                70692 non-null  float64
 7   HeartDiseaseorAttack  70692 non-null  float64
 8   PhysActivity          70692 non-null  float64
 9   Fruits                70692 non-null  float64
 10  Veggies               70692 non-null  float64
 11  HvyAlcoholConsump     70692 non-null  float64
 12  AnyHealthcare         70692 non-null  float64
 13  NoDocbcCost           70692 non-null  float64
 14  GenHlth               70692 non-null  float64
 15  MentHlth              70692 non-null  float64
 16  PhysHlth              70692 non-null  float64
 17  DiffWalk              70692 non-null  float64
 18  Sex                   70692 non-null  float64
 19  Age                   70692 non-null  float64
 20  Education             70692 non-null  float64
 21  Income                70692 non-null  float64
dtypes: float64(22)
memory usage: 11.9 MB
None

Model Accuracy: 0.3022
```

```
[8] import pandas as pd
    from sklearn.model_selection import train_test_split
    from sklearn.ensemble import RandomForestClassifier
    from sklearn.metrics import accuracy_score

    # Load the dataset
    file_path = "/content/diabetes_binary_5050split_health_indicators_BRFSS2015 (1).csv"  # Replace with your actual file path
    df = pd.read_csv(file_path)

    # Define features (X) and target variable (y)
    X = df.drop(columns=["Diabetes_binary"])  # Replace "Diabetes_binary" with your target column
    y = df["Diabetes_binary"]

    # Split data into training and testing sets (80% train, 20% test)
    X_train, X_test, y_train, y_test = train_test_split(X, y, test_size=0.2, random_state=42)

    # Train a Random Forest model
    rf_model = RandomForestClassifier(n_estimators=100, max_depth=10, random_state=42)
    rf_model.fit(X_train, y_train)

    # Make predictions
    y_pred = rf_model.predict(X_test)

    # Evaluate model accuracy
    accuracy = accuracy_score(y_test, y_pred)
    print(f"Random Forest Model Accuracy: {accuracy * 100:.2f}%")

Random Forest Model Accuracy: 74.99%
```

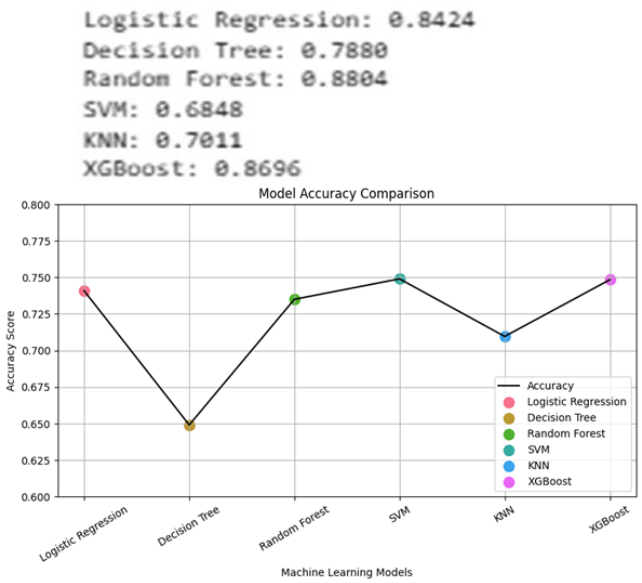

Fig. 3. Analysis of machine learning model.

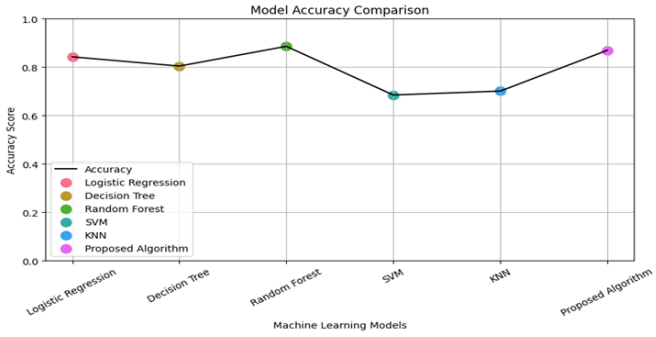

Fig. 4. Accuracy model using various machine model.

In Fig. 4, the comparative chart illustrates the accuracy performance of six machine learning models alongside the proposed algorithm. The accuracy metric, ranging from 0.0 to 1.0, quantifies the predictive effectiveness of each model for the given task. Among the evaluated models, the Random Forest exhibits the highest accuracy, closely followed by the proposed algorithm, which demonstrates comparable predictive strength. The Logistic Regression and Decision Tree models yield moderate performance levels, while the Support Vector Machine (SVM) and K-Nearest Neighbors (KNN) achieve the lowest accuracy scores. Overall, the proposed algorithm exhibits competitive performance, nearly matching the best-performing model, thereby validating its effectiveness in consumer behavior prediction.

The correlation heatmap represented in Fig. 5 provides a clear visualization of the connections among various characteristics in the heart disease dataset. The correlations range from -1 to 1 with positive values implying direct relationships between the variables as they get higher and negative values indicating reverse relationships whereby one variable increase when the other decreases. The colors illustrate the strength of the correlations; the red color represents the strongest positive correlation while blue represents the strongest negative one. The heatmap reveals that heart disease is associated with several key features with strong correlations. The ST_Slope variable has a strong negative correlation (-0.56) with heart disease since ST slope lowering is linked to greater chances of heart disease. ExerciseAngina's correlation was moderate and positive (0.49), which means that people who get angina by exertion are more likely to have heart disease. Quite surprisingly, Oldpeak (ST depression) shows a positive correlation with heart disease (0.40) whereas the MaxHR (maximum heart rate) shows a negative one (-0.40), meaning that lower maximum heart rate is associated with higher risk of heart attack. ChestPainType is inversely correlated (-0.39), implying that specific categories of chest pains might be less likely to accompany heart disease.

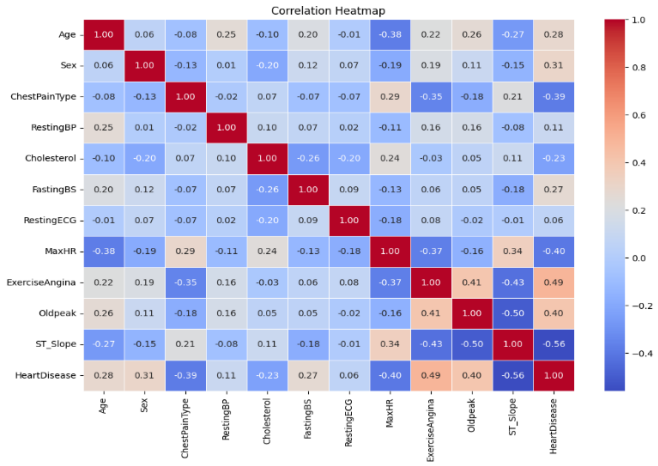

Fig. 5. The correlation heatmap of the relationships between various features in a heart disease dataset.

A heatmap is revealing for other Unexplainable correlations too. With Age affirming MaxHR to have a negative correlation of -0.38, which coincides well with the very normal and common declining nature of maximum heart rate with age. The ExerciseAngina and the Oldpeak have quite a significant relation (0.41), suggesting that individuals who experience angina during exercise also tend to have higher ST depression values. Moreover, one finds that the ST_Slope and Oldpeak are inversely correlated (-0.50), which suggests that a higher ST slope relates to a lower value of ST depression. In the end, it allows us to argue that the heatmap pattern very well underlines factors that are of most significance to heart disease and thereby facilitates the selection of features in building predictive models. It gives us insights into various variables interacting with each other, helping researchers and health professionals understand the deeper patterns underlying those factors contributing to risks of heart disease.

In Fig. 6, the correlation heatmap is the one giving the most visual view of the relationships between different health-related and demographic variables, with the corresponding correlation values being between -1 (perfect negative correlation) and 1 (perfect positive correlation). The situation where two variables show a positive correlation means that one of them will rise together with the movement of the other one, while in case of negative correlation it will be the opposite. The correlation of 0.38 between Diabetes_binary and HighBP which is one of the most striking correlations in the dataset,

reveals that hypertense people are also at a higher risk of having diabetes.

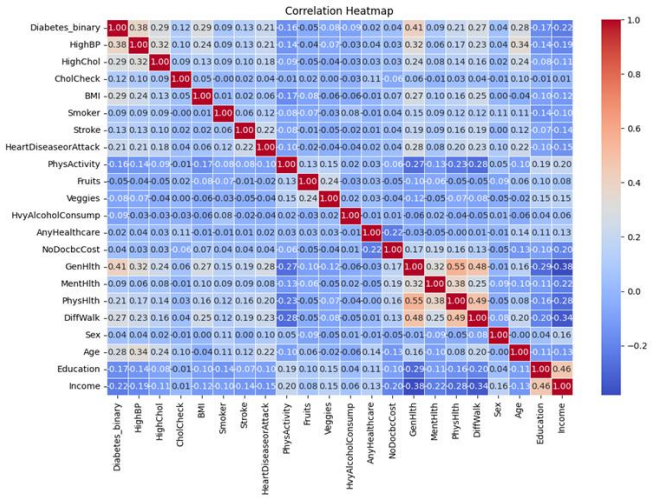

Fig. 6. Correlation heatmap of relations between various health-related and demographic variables.

The correlation of Diabetes_binary with BMI of 0.29 is another one in connection that tells that people with diabetes is generally more likely to be obese. Aging is the factor causing the diabetes risk of about 0.28 correlations between Diabetes_binary and Age in the same way. Other factors are HeartDiseaseorAttack (0.21) and General Health (GenHlth) (-0.41). High blood pressure (HighBP) has a strong correlation with HeartDiseaseorAttack (0.32), meaning that people with high blood pressure are more likely to have heart diseases. The connection between HighBP and BMI is of moderate strength (0.24), indicating that individuals with a higher BMI are more likely to have high blood pressure. Besides, the relationship between HighBP and Age (0.34) indicates that blood pressure tends to rise with age. General Health (GenHlth) has close relations with various health factors and is one of the health indicators that affect the overall health.

It is negatively correlated with Physical Activity (-0.27), which means that active people are more likely to report on good health. Also, GenHlth is negatively correlated with Fruits (-0.24) and Vegetables (-0.24), implying that those who eat more fruits and vegetables usually report a higher quality of health. A very strong positive relationship exists between GenHlth and MentHlth (0.32), indicating that mental health problems lead to better general health. In the same manner, GenHlth and Physical Health (PhysHlth) (0.55) have a strong correlation, which is expected, meaning that people who report poor physical health are also likely to have low general health. If heart diseases and strokes are analyzed, HeartDiseaseorAttack would have a 0.22 correlation with Age, pointing out the increased heart disease risk with aging. The above findings show a strong interrelation among several health issues and lifestyle factors with Age being indirectly related to General Health through Strong PhysActivity (-0.27). General Health also appears to be indirectly affected by the strong consumption of Fruits and Vegetables as they have negative correlations with it (-0.24 and -0.24, respectively).

The positive correlation between Age with HighBP (0.32) and BMI (0.27) can also be attributed to the fact that elderly people are more prone to the development of these conditions, thus increasing their chances of being hospitalized for cardiovascular diseases. Taking into consideration their negative correlation with GenHlth (-0.24 and -0.24, respectively), the assumption is that the consumption of fruits and vegetables is positively associated with good health. Admittedly, the flourishing correlation of Age with Income (0.46) cannot go unnoticed as it is the common practice in most societies that the older generation usually possesses the highest income. Besides, age has a negative correlation with Diabetes_binary (-0.14), implying that the older a person is the more likely they are to be diabetic. In the same way, the correlations with Income and Diabetes_binary (-0.22), HighBP (-0.19), and BMI (-0.10) suggest that people with higher income levels are less likely to experience these health problems.

The analysis of the correlation matrix not only confirms but also highlights the existence of relationships between lifestyle choices, health conditions, and the different demography.

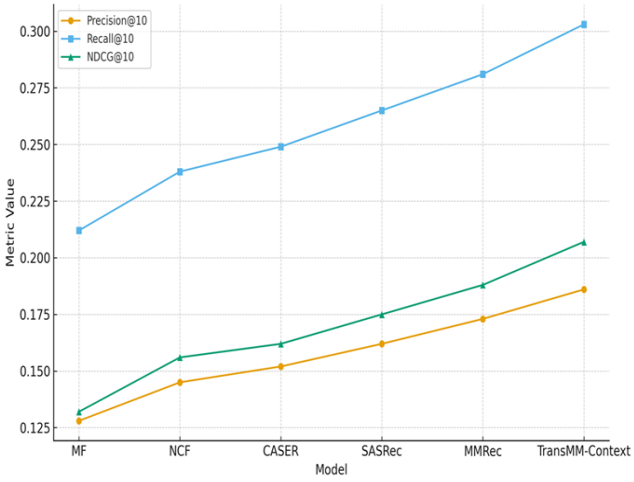

Fig. 7. Comparative performance of transformer-based multi-model recommendation systems.

In Fig. 7 shows the NDCG@K performance (for K = 1 to 20) across three models: SASRec (baseline transformer), MMRec (multi-modal baseline), and the proposed TransMM-Context model. NDCG (Normalized Discounted Cumulative Gain) measures how well the model ranks relevant items higher in the recommendation list. The proposed TransMM-Context model consistently outperforms both baseline methods for all values of K. SASRec performs the worst, and the MMRec baseline improves when multi-modal features are taken in (visual and textual embedding). On the other hand, the TransMM-Context model not only exploits multi-modal embedding but also context embedding (time, location, device, and user activity), resulting in the absolute lift in NDCG throughout the entire top 20 recommendation list. The curve shows how context-aware, transformer-based multi-modal attention aids ranking relevant items further up in the list, which is of the utmost importance for real-time recommendation.

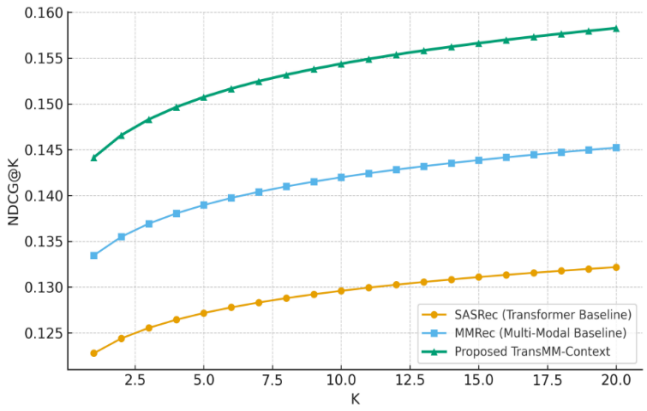

Fig. 8. NDCG@K curves for baselines vs. Proposed.

In Fig. 8, the graph compares the NDCG@K of the three recommendation models: SASRec (Transformer Baseline), MMRec (Multi-Modal Baseline), and Proposed TransMM-Context. The values of K range from 1 to 20. NDCG@K tells how good the ranking is: a higher value means better performance. The Proposed TransMM-Context always has an edge over SASRec and MMRec for every given K, which implies being better in ranking relevant items higher. MMRec performs better than SASRec but not well enough when contrasted with TransMM-Context, emphasizing how well the proposed method extracts and uses context to boost recommendation accuracy.

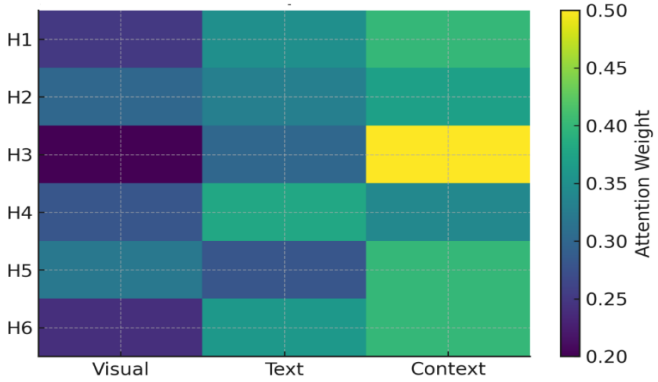

Fig. 9. Attention heatmap (visual+text+context).

The attention heatmap shown in Fig. 9 portrays a small sample showcasing how the proposed transformer model spreads out attention among modalities (Visual, Text, Context) across six attention heads. Each cell accommodates the relative weight of importance assigned by that attention head toward the specific modality in predicting the recommendation. The heatmap suggests that some heads place more emphasis on the context signal while others utilize the pure image-and-text features. For instance, in short sessions or cold-start cases, context (time, location, and device) carries heavier attention weights to enable accurate recommendation when historical interactions are sparse. However, long sessions weigh visual and textual modalities heavier, suggesting that the model draws upon item features and user preferences in such cases.

V. Conclusion

The research demonstrates that predicting consumer behavior serves as an essential requirement for e-commerce and marketing and Context-Aware Recommendation Systems (CARS). The study conducts an analysis of contextual factors together with machine learning algorithms which include Logistic Regression and Decision Tree and Random Forest and SVM and KNN to assess their success in predicting consumer behavior. The research developed a new algorithm which combines feature selection with optimization methods to achieve superior predictive accuracy compared to current methods.

The comparative analysis demonstrates the advantages and disadvantages of each model which helps to assess their effectiveness for consumer analytics. The research results show that businesses and system designers can use its findings to develop practical applications which extend beyond performance assessment. The proposed model can support data-driven business strategies by enabling personalized marketing, improved customer targeting, and optimized recommendation system design, which will enhance user engagement and conversion rates in e-commerce platforms. Organizations can improve their marketing campaign design through identification of key contextual elements which drive changes in customer behavior and environmental conditions. The study has limitations because it depends on a particular dataset and its fixed contextual parameters which restrict its applicability to multiple fields and actual operational situations. Future research may focus on incorporating real-time contextual data and deep learning approaches while conducting scalability tests with larger and more diverse datasets. The model requires extension to cross-domain recommendation systems which will enable assessment of its effects on business performance over extended periods.

The research develops data-driven marketing and recommendation systems through its introduction of a machine-learning framework which achieves both better prediction results and delivers practical business outcomes and research directions for studying consumer behavior.

Acknowledgment

This research did not receive funding from any entity in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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Edge Artificial Intelligence for Real-Time Fresh Produce Identification in Retail Weighing Systems

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***Abstract*—Real-time recognition of loose fresh produce is a key requirement for intelligent retail weighing systems, enabling automated replacement of or assistance to manual PLU-based item selection. However, the deployment performance of recent YOLO architectures on embedded edge platforms such as the NVIDIA Jetson Xavier NX remains insufficiently studied in practical retail scenarios. This study aims to benchmark recent YOLO architectures for real-time fresh produce recognition on embedded edge devices. This work presents an Edge–AI retail weighing system that recognizes Malaysian fresh produce using YOLOv9, YOLOv10, and YOLOv11 models on the Jetson Xavier NX. A domain-specific dataset of 8 450 images across 26 classes was created by merging ImageNet and Roboflow sources and applying quality filtering and unified preprocessing. Each model was fine-tuned and optimized with TensorRT at FP16 and INT8 precision. Transfer learning improved accuracy across all models; YOLOv11-Large achieved the highest mAP@0.5 of $\approx$ 0.897 but at a reduced frame rate, while the mid-sized YOLOv10-M delivered an mAP@0.5 of $\approx$ 0.890 with near-real-time performance inference. Inference analysis shows that pre- and post-processing add only a few milliseconds per frame yet become proportionally significant as inference speeds increase; YOLOv11's Non-Maximum Suppression (NMS) head introduces notable latency relative to YOLOv10's NMS-free design. Quantized YOLOv10-M and YOLOv10-N sustain $\approx$ 14–19 FPS , offering the best balance between accuracy and speed. Qualitative tests on market footage confirm robust detection, indicating that these optimized models enable accurate, low-latency produce identification for intelligent retail weighing.**

***Keywords*—Real-Time object detection; Edge Artificial Intelligence (Edge AI); transfer learning; YOLO algorithm; nvidia jetson; fresh produce recognition; TensorRT optimization; model quantization**

I. Introduction

In a grocery store, weight-based pricing is a common way the grocery store charges the customer. Selling the prepackaged goods might be a solution to simplify the process by eliminating the need for in-store weighing at the time of purchase. Loose produce still plays an important role because of the flexibility in purchase quantities and the potential to reduce household food waste [1]. This further highlights that the weighing scales play a critical role in modern fresh produce retail environments. However, the traditional weighing scales required the user to control the PLU(Price Look-Up) subsystem in the software to retrieve the unit price of the item. This will require the staff to memorize the codes and manually control the machine to complete the checkout task. Consequently, it will cause inefficiency during peak hours. These challenges indicate that there is a need for a more intelligent and automated solution by utilizing computer vision and artificial intelligence [2]. To be practical in retail checkout environments, such a solution must operate in real time, without reliance on external connectivity, and with minimal computational overhead.

Edge AI has recently emerged as a key paradigm for high-performance inference in real-time systems. Unlike cloud-based AI inference, edge AI operates locally on the device, thus eliminating the dependency on continuous internet connectivity and minimizing the latency introduced by network transmission [3]. In the context of real-time fresh produce detection, Edge AI plays an important role in maximizing the user experience because it allows rapid inference speed and eliminates the latency that causes a laggy experience by the user [4]. By combining the Edge AI platform with a real-time object detection algorithm, it is possible to come out with a robust retail weighing solution.

Among object detection frameworks, the YOLO (You Only Look Once) object detection model is widely recognized for real-time applications due to its single-stage architecture, which performs object localization and classification simultaneously, unlike two-stage detectors [5]. YOLO algorithms have undergone continuous architecture improvements, leading to a succession of improved versions such as YOLOv1 until YOLOv11. These continuous architecture improvements impact accuracy, training time, and inference performance [6]. Consequently, YOLO is a suitable candidate for deployment in intelligent retail scales to detect fresh produce. However, within this context, there is limited evaluation of the inference speed and detection accuracy for the different versions of YOLO algorithms, particularly when optimized using TensorRT frameworks.

However, when it comes to detecting agricultural produce in Malaysian grocery-stores, applying transfer learning to a YOLO model is essential. The pretrained YOLO algorithm is based on a general dataset such as the COCO dataset. This means that a domain-specific dataset is necessary to train a YOLO model that fits the context of agricultural produce [7]. The well-known general datasets, such as COCO and ImageNet, offer broad object coverage, but are not focused on representing agricultural produce found in Malaysian retail markets. Previous research indicates that domain-specific datasets generally outperform generic ones due to their tailored relevance and coverage [8]. The data set gap here causes uncertainty on how effectively YOLO models perform in recognizing fresh produce with high intra-class variation, such as differences in size, shape, or color of the same item, and high inter-class similarity characteristics, such as similar-looking fruits that general-purpose datasets fail to capture.

When deploying deep learning models on embedded edge devices such as the NVIDIA Jetson series, achieving real-time

inference is often constrained by limited computational and memory resources. To overcome these limitations, TensorRT provides a hardware-aware optimization framework that restructures neural network graphs through layer fusion, kernel auto-tuning, and precision calibration from FP32 to FP16 or INT8, significantly improving throughput while maintaining near-lossless accuracy [9]. By leveraging TensorRT, models can exploit the full potential of Jetson's CUDA and Tensor cores, reducing latency and power consumption—both critical for real-time retail weighing applications.

Despite these advantages, comparative analyses of TensorRT-optimized YOLOv9, YOLOv10, and YOLOv11 models for multi-class retail produce detection under edge constraints remain scarce. Most existing studies benchmark earlier YOLO architectures or focus on general object classification tasks rather than fine-grained produce detection on embedded platforms. This study addresses this gap by evaluating the inference speed and detection accuracy of TensorRT-optimized YOLO models on the Jetson Xavier NX for real-time produce recognition.

This study addresses these challenges by developing a prototype smart retail system based on the NVIDIA Jetson Xavier NX platform and integrating YOLOv11, YOLOv10, and YOLOv9 models to assess inference speed and detection accuracy for agricultural produce commonly sold in Malaysia.

This work aims to advance the field of object detection by presenting a comprehensive evaluation of state-of-the-art YOLO models—namely YOLOv9, YOLOv10, and YOLOv11—in the context of real-time fresh-produce recognition for smart retail systems. The study contributes in the following aspects:

- Identifies architectural design principles for low-latency edge-based object detection by analysing the end-to-end inference behaviour of YOLOv9–YOLOv11 on an embedded GPU platform.
- Quantifies the practical impact of NMS-based versus NMS-free detection heads in retail inference pipelines, demonstrating how post-processing overhead increasingly dominates latency in real-time edge deployment.
- Establishes a reproducible benchmarking framework for evaluating modern YOLO architectures under realistic retail constraints, including unified preprocessing, transfer learning, and TensorRT-based optimization on the NVIDIA Jetson Xavier NX.
- Derives precision–latency trade-offs across model scales and quantization modes (FP16 and INT8), providing deployment-level guidance for selecting suitable configurations under strict real-time constraints.
- Delivers a validated reference configuration for intelligent retail weighing systems, achieving near real-time performance with high detection accuracy, and demonstrating transferability beyond a single dataset or deployment scenario.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section II surveys related work on edge AI for computer vision and existing produce-recognition approaches, highlighting the need for efficient deployment on embedded devices. Section III details the proposed methodology, including the system architecture, domain-specific dataset construction, transfer learning strategies, and TensorRT-based optimisation of YOLO models. Section IV presents and discusses the experimental results, analysing detection accuracy, inference speed, precision–recall characteristics, and the impact of model size and quantisation across YOLOv9, YOLOv10, and YOLOv11. Finally, Section V offers the conclusion, summarising key findings, discussing remaining challenges and limitations, and suggesting directions for future research.

II. Related Works

A. Edge AI and Deep Learning-Based Computer Vision

The concept of Edge AI has shifted the paradigm of artificial intelligence deployment, especially in real-time applications. The Edge AI approach aims to bring computation closer to the data source, such as video streams, thereby eliminating network latency that often occurs in cloud-based processing [3].

Recent studies have demonstrated the feasibility and efficiency of deploying deep learning models directly on embedded hardware for real-time inference. A real-time myocardial infarction monitoring system using SSD-Inception V2 and MobileNet V2 on the NVIDIA Jetson Nano achieved a mean average precision (mAP) of 76.4 % under low-power operation, setting a benchmark for energy-efficient edge analytics [10]. The YOLOSR architecture combined a Super-Resolution (SR) branch with YOLOv8-small, improving detection accuracy by 10.2 % without added latency (101 ms per frame) on a Jetson Nano edge platform [11]. Complementary works have also validated the effectiveness of Edge AI across domains, including FPGA-based YOLO implementations for Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS) and surveillance applications [12], and real-time apple detection on embedded GPUs achieving 83.6 % mAP at 30 FPS [13], demonstrating that optimized architectures and hardware accelerators enable near-cloud accuracy on compact edge systems.

While Edge AI has been widely applied in healthcare, surveillance, and autonomous navigation, fewer studies have addressed its use in retail environments. There is limited attention to retail applications, particularly in detecting multiclass grocery fresh produce in Malaysia. Building on prior successes, this study applies Edge AI for real-time produce detection integrated with a retail weighing system as a smart retail solution.

B. Edge AI and Platform-Specific Optimization

Deploying deep learning models on edge devices often demands hardware-aware optimization to achieve real-time inference under limited computational and memory resources. Among the most widely used frameworks, NVIDIA TensorRT provides significant acceleration by performing layer fusion, precision calibration (FP32→FP16 or INT8 quantization), and kernel auto-tuning tailored for GPU-based embedded platforms such as the Jetson Nano, TX2, and Xavier. These optimizations restructure neural network graphs and dynamically allocate tensor memory to reduce latency and improve throughput, enabling efficient deployment of convolutional neural networks in time-critical applications.

Recent studies have demonstrated the tangible benefits of such optimization pipelines across various domains. For instance, a TensorRT-optimized driver drowsiness classification system—based on MobileNetV1 rather than a detection architecture—achieved a 79.27% increase in throughput (from 141.78 FPS to 683.92 FPS) on Jetson Nano while maintaining 98.19% accuracy, highlighting TensorRT's capability to deliver near-lossless precision under quantized execution for lightweight classification tasks [14]. However, this exceptionally high throughput does not represent object detection workloads such as YOLO, which involve additional computation for multi-scale feature heads and non-maximum suppression. Similarly, a YOLOv5-based tennis-ball detection model combined GhostNet, BiFPN, and TensorRT to enhance both detection accuracy (mAP 94%) and inference efficiency through layer fusion and memory optimization on RTX hardware [15]. It is noteworthy, however, that although TensorRT is fundamentally designed to accelerate inference on embedded and edge AI platforms such as the NVIDIA Jetson series, this study conducted all experiments on a high-end desktop GPU (RTX 3060) under a Windows environment rather than on an edge device. Consequently, the reported throughput improvements primarily validate the computational acceleration of TensorRT on general-purpose GPUs, but do not assess its performance or feasibility under the resource and power constraints typical of real-time edge deployments. This distinction underscores a limitation in edge-specific validation, which remains essential for evaluating true on-device efficiency and deployability in embedded AI contexts.

In the agricultural domain, the PcMNet model integrated YOLOv8 with partial convolution and TensorRT acceleration, achieving 92 FPS on Jetson-based edge devices while reducing FLOPs by 37.8% and parameters by 53.3%, thereby validating its suitability for real-time fruit detection in orchard environments [16]. In contrast, the strawberry segmentation model based on Mask R-CNN [17] focused primarily on high-precision semantic segmentation under occlusion but was evaluated on desktop GPUs without edge-oriented deployment. The peanut leaf disease detection study [18] employed a classification-based approach using MobileNetV3, EfficientNet, and ShuffleNet models optimized via TensorRT for Jetson devices. Unlike object detection frameworks, this work focused solely on image-level disease classification without bounding-box localization.

Collectively, these works underscore the importance of platform-specific optimization for achieving real-time, power-efficient inference on edge AI systems. However, the majority of existing research has primarily focused on model-level architectural enhancements—such as backbone redesigns, attention modules, or lightweight feature extractors—rather than conducting comprehensive TensorRT benchmarking across recent YOLO variants. Furthermore, comparative evaluations of quantized (FP16/INT8) detection pipelines on embedded NVIDIA platforms remain limited, particularly in domain-specific applications such as agricultural produce recognition and smart retail environments, where the trade-off between detection accuracy and latency is critical. Addressing this gap, the present study systematically investigates the deployment performance of TensorRT-optimized YOLOv9, YOLOv10, and YOLOv11 models on the Jetson Xavier NX, providing an in-depth analysis of their precision–speed trade-offs and validating their suitability for real-time edge AI inference.

C. YOLO Evolution and Comparative Performance

Since the introduction of the YOLO algorithm in 2015, the single-stage detection paradigm has eliminated the computational overhead associated with region proposal pipelines used in two-stage detectors such as Faster R-CNN. By skipping the region proposal step, YOLO has undergone several massive improvements over successive iterations. The latest breakthroughs are represented in YOLOv9, YOLOv10, and YOLOv11 [6]. The advancements in YOLOv9 introduced GELAN and PGI, which reduce parameters yet achieve higher accuracy. In YOLOv10, the traditional Non-Maximum Suppression (NMS) was eliminated and replaced with Consistent Dual Assignments (CDA), meaning the algorithm no longer produces multiple overlapping bounding boxes. YOLOv11 introduces further innovation with modules such as C3k2 and C2PSA, which help detect smaller objects more effectively [19]. These distinct innovations create an opportunity to explore their impact in domain-specific scenarios, particularly in real-world and practical use cases.

There are many studies being done to compare various versions of YOLO algorithms in agricultural domains. A study compared YOLOv9–v12 for cattle precision farming [20], where YOLOv12 achieved the highest mAP of 98.3% but with slower inference speed of 36.6 FPS, while YOLOv11 maintained nearly the same accuracy at 97.8% but ran faster at 48 FPS. YOLOv10 also reached 97.1% mAP with 44 FPS, and YOLOv9 was the weakest with 96.2% mAP and 37 FPS. Another study on banana bunch detection [21] across YOLOv1–YOLOv12 reported that YOLOv12n achieved 93% AP50 with a latency of only 5.1 ms, making it well-suited for mobile deployment, while YOLOv11n also showed competitive efficiency under constrained devices. However, not all studies concluded that the higher the version, the higher the mAP values. In multi-class fruit ripeness detection [22] , the YOLOv6 outperformed YOLOv7 and SSD by achieving 99.5% mAP together with an inference speed of 85.2 FPS, showing that earlier versions can still dominate when the class variation is limited. Weed detection study [23] provided further evidence of trade-offs: YOLOv9 achieved the highest mAP@0.5 of 93.5% across multiple species, while YOLOv11 was the fastest with inference time of 13.5 ms, making it more suitable for real-time robotic field deployment. The anchor-based YOLOcF derivative [24] , developed on YOLOv5, also challenged mainstream versions by surpassing YOLOv10n and YOLOv11n in accuracy, showing up to 0.8–1.3% higher mAP, and achieving a record inference speed of 323 FPS, although it remained 1.4% lower than YOLOv9t in overall precision.

Despite many comparative studies being conducted in agricultural domains, there remains a gap in benchmarking YOLO algorithms for detecting loose produce commonly sold in grocery store. In Malaysia, this involves a wide variety of classes and requires a domain-specific dataset that reflects local produce characteristics rather than relying on generic datasets like COCO. This study therefore aims to bridge the gap by conducting a comparative analysis of YOLOv9, YOLOv10, and YOLOv11 tailored to Malaysian retail produce, while also evaluating the accuracy and latency of real-time inference under edge computing constraints.

III. Methodology

A. System Architecture

As shown in Fig. 1, the entire system is implemented based on a three-tier structure, which consists of the Edge Layer, Fog Layer, and Cloud Layer. This design follows a 3-tier architecture, where each layer handles specific responsibilities to ensure efficiency and real-time performance.

At the Edge Layer, a Raspberry Pi is used to prototype the regular weighing scale by connecting the HX711 amplifier board with the load cell. The weight value stream is then stabilized using an average buffer algorithm to reduce noise and ensure stable readings. The NVIDIA Jetson Xavier NX is integrated with a camera, and the YOLO inference source code is deployed and further customized to integrate with MQTT messaging capability, enabling the detection results to be streamed in JSON format. These JSON messages are published to the MQTT broker.

On the customer side. The Flutter-based kiosk application subscribes to these MQTT messages and parses the JSON data. The app uses asynchronous programming to handle concurrency smoothly when frequent produce or weight changes occur. Within the kiosk, a local SQLite database is queried to retrieve the unit price of the detected produce, which is then mapped against the YOLO result and weight reading to compute the final total. The recognized produce, weight, and computed price are displayed on the Android tablet, and once confirmed by the customer, a QR code is generated for checkout.

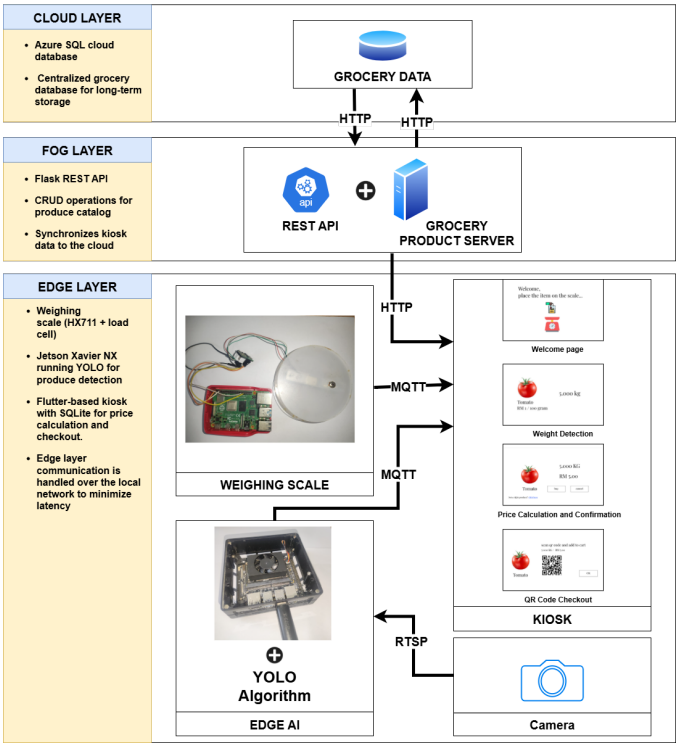

Fig. 1. Three-tier system architecture consisting of Edge, Fog, and Cloud layers.

At the Fog Layer, the system acts as the bridge between the edge devices and the cloud. A Python Flask service with REST API is used to receive both detection results and transaction data, providing a simple way to buffer and synchronize information before pushing it to the central database. To cope with the dynamic pricing of fresh produce, this layer also allows administrators to perform CRUD operations such as updating the produce catalog, adjusting unit prices, or editing nutritional details. Once the kiosk tablet has internet access, it automatically syncs its local records with the fog server, ensuring that both price changes and transaction logs remain consistent across all connected devices. Fig. 2 illustrates the overall architecture of the proposed Edge-AI retail weighing system, including image acquisition, object detection, and inference execution on the embedded device.

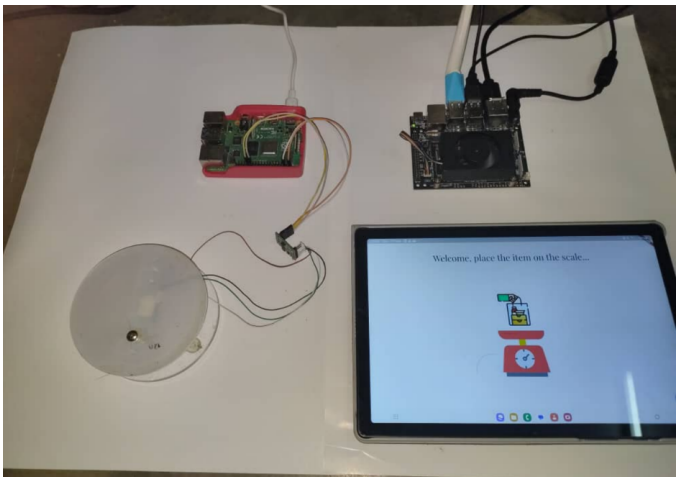

Fig. 2. Prototype setup of the smart retail weighing scale with raspberry Pi, jetson xavier NX, and flutter-based kiosk.

B. Data Acquisition

Data acquisition forms the cornerstone of this study, as it prepares the dataset for domain-specific modeling aimed at detecting commonly sold loose produce in Malaysian retail environments. This process seeks to overcome the limitations of non-contextual generic datasets by drawing and filtering relevant data from ImageNet and Roboflow. While the ImageNet dataset provides extensive image-class coverage, particularly for classification tasks, its object-detection annotations remain limited in quantity. Hence, the Roboflow dataset is utilized to enrich the overall corpus by increasing the number of annotated samples and enhancing the contextual diversity of the data. The overall data acquisition process is shown in Fig. 3.

ImageNet is organized according to the WordNet lexical hierarchy, a semantic network in which each synset (synonym set) represents a distinct concept. Within this hierarchy, this structure allows direct mapping between linguistic concepts and their corresponding visual representations. In this study, synsets relevant to the targeted 26 agricultural produce classes were retrieved from the ImageNet21K (Winter 2021 Release) repository by replacing the synset id in the URL with the pattern of https://image-net.org/data/winter21_whole/SYNSET_ID.tar. Each class identifier follows the WordNet ID (WNID) convention (e.g., n07756951 for tomato). In this study, the classname

is retrieved using Python and the Natural Language Toolkit (NLTK) interface to WordNet, because WNIDs were programmatically mapped to their lexical names and definitions as illustrated in the Listing 1.

All ImageNet annotations, originally in Pascal VOC XML format, were converted into YOLO-compatible bounding-box files (cx, cy, w, h) using a Python-based conversion pipeline. Each conversion was visually inspected through overlay validation to ensure proper localization accuracy. During dataset inspection, it was observed that not every retrieved sample was relevant to the intended classes. Therefore, a second-stage quality filtering process was introduced using a ResNet-50 image-classification model pre-trained on ImageNet. The model operated as a fixed feature extractor, computing cosine similarity between each image embedding and a curated exemplar set to assess relevance. Samples scoring below a similarity threshold of 0.8 were discarded. As illustrated in Fig. 4, non-relevant ImageNet samples were identified and removed through a classification-based quality filtering process to improve dataset relevance for produce recognition. The resulting refined subset was then saved into directories named by class to facilitate subsequent merging with the Roboflow dataset.

Algorithm 1 Conversion of WordNet ID (WNID) to Synset Information

Require: WNID string (e.g., "n07756951")
Ensure: Synset name and definition corresponding to the given WNID
Import nltk and wordnet modules
Download WordNet corpus if not already available
function WNID_TO_SYNSET(wnid)
    offset ← integer value of substring of *wnid* starting from index 2
    try: synset ← WordNet.synset_from_pos_and_offset('n', offset)
        return (synset.name(), synset.definition())
    except: return (None, "Error")
end function

To collect the relevant object-detection datasets from Roboflow, produce-specific keywords such as "apple," "banana," and "dragon fruit" were used to perform targeted searches on the Roboflow Universe platform. The search results returned a list of publicly available projects, from which suitable datasets were selected for download. By default, Roboflow datasets are distributed in pre-split form (train, validation, and test). For preprocessing, these splits were first merged into a single dataset to simplify later integration with ImageNet_good, where a new unified split would be generated after merging. All images were standardized to a resolution of 640×640. Manual inspection was then performed to ensure data quality and class consistency. Certain datasets included condition-based subclasses such as "rotten fruit" or "healthy fruit," originally intended to distinguish fruit states. In this study, such subclasses were consolidated into a single class only when favorable for the retail detection use case; otherwise, they were excluded from the final dataset. Roboflow annotations were verified for conformity to YOLO standards. It is found that some files containing segmentation polygons or multiple label regions in which decided to be removed using Python script.

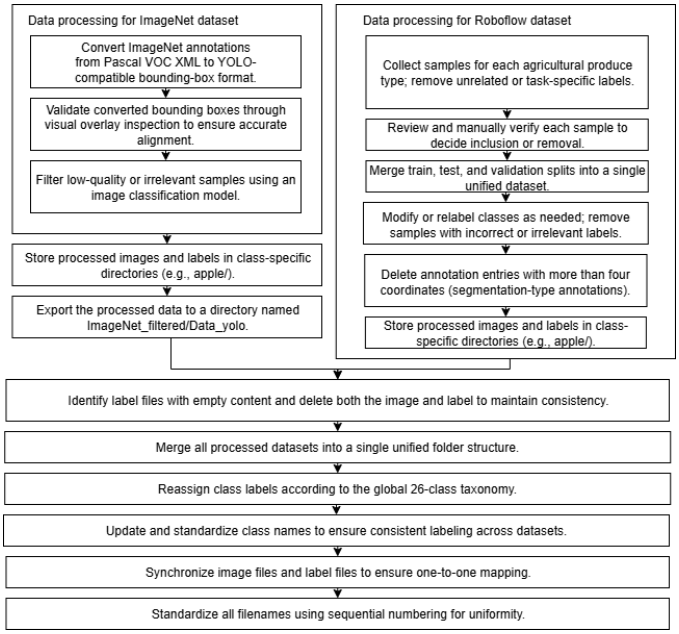

Fig. 3. Workflow of ImageNet and roboflow data preprocessing and unified post-processing to generate the final hybrid dataset for YOLO training.

After both streams were independently processed, they were merged through a unified post-processing pipeline designed to ensure dataset integrity and compatibility. Empty or mismatched label files were automatically identified and removed through filename mapping, while remaining image–label pairs were verified for one-to-one correspondence. Filenames were then standardized via sequential numbering, and directory hierarchies were normalized for uniform ingestion by the YOLO training engine. The resulting hybrid dataset comprised approximately 6 000 verified image samples, evenly distributed across 26 agricultural produce classes. Each sample adhered to a consistent annotation format and naming convention, enabling reproducible evaluation across YOLOv9, YOLOv10, and YOLOv11 variants. This corpus unifies ImageNet's lexical richness with Roboflow's contextual realism, forming a balanced, domain-specific dataset for training and subsequent performance analysis on the NVIDIA Jetson Xavier NX edge platform.

C. Model Training

The model training phase aimed to fine-tune state-of-the-art YOLO architectures for accurate and efficient agricultural produce detection under edge-deployment conditions. Training was carried out using the custom hybrid dataset (8450 images in 26 classes) described in Section VI. To ensure both reproducibility and computational efficiency, all experiments were executed on an NVIDIA RTX 3090 GPU (24 GB GDDR6X, 3840 CUDA cores) using the PyTorch-based Ultralytics YOLO framework. Each YOLO variant (YOLOv9, YOLOv10, YOLOv11) was initialized using pre-trained weights from the COCO dataset (80 classes). Transfer learning was applied by freezing early backbone layers during the initial epochs to preserve generic low-level feature

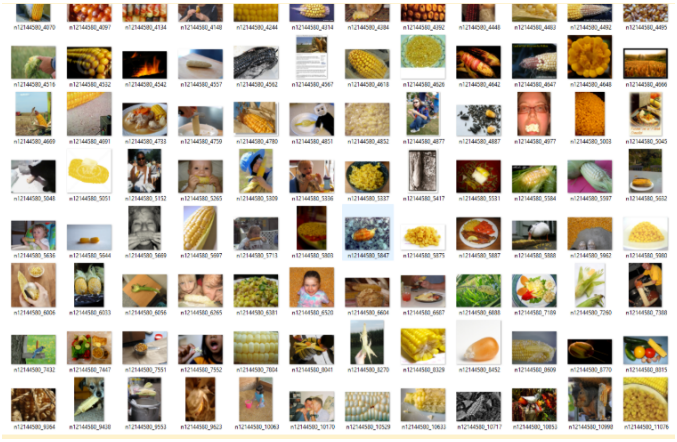

Fig. 4. Non-relevant ImageNet samples identified and removed through classification-based quality filtering using a ResNet-50 model.

representations while allowing full fine-tuning of detection heads. The classification head was modified to predict 26 target classes (nc = 26), replacing COCO's original output layer.

Optimizer selection was handled automatically by the YOLO framework, which initially evaluated both AdamW and SGD but converged on SGD with the parameters above. Internally, YOLO applied parameter grouping: 167 weights with no decay, 174 weights with 0.0005 decay, and 173 biases without decay—facilitating efficient convergence. Training logs confirmed stable loss reduction and consistent mAP gains across epochs.

D. Model Benchmark

To evaluate model performance, three YOLO variants—YOLOv9, YOLOv10, and YOLOv11—were selected for benchmarking. Each variant was tested across three model sizes (S, M, and L), resulting in a total of nine configurations. All models were exported using TensorRT to apply precision quantization and runtime optimization tailored for edge AI deployment. Although TensorRT supports execution on any NVIDIA GPU, the optimized engines it generates are device-specific, as calibration and kernel tuning depend on the underlying GPU architecture [25]. Therefore, to ensure consistent accuracy and latency measurements that accurately reflect real deployment conditions, both the creation of the TensorRT engine and the inference benchmarks were performed directly on the NVIDIA Jetson Xavier NX, which served as the target edge device in this study. Each model was evaluated using a standardized input resolution of 640×640 pixels, and accuracy was quantified through mean Average Precision (mAP) across 26 produce classes. Baseline mAP values were obtained in FP32 mode (without optimization and quantization), while the TensorRT-optimized models were re-evaluated to discover the potential variation in accuracy. Collectively, the mAP, latency, and FPS metrics were analyzed to highlight the trade-off between detection accuracy and real-time inference performance across all evaluated models.

Mean Average Precision (mAP) was computed at an Intersection-over-Union threshold of 0.5 following the PASCAL VOC standard (mAP@0.5). In addition to this widely used metric, we also report the COCO-style mAP@[0.5:0.95] and the F1 score to provide a comprehensive assessment of detection accuracy. This combination of metrics captures both localization and classification performance while balancing interpretability and computational cost. Inference speed was benchmarked by dividing the total time to process a fixed set of test images by the number of samples, yielding the average latency per image (ms/sample), and the reciprocal of this latency gave the throughput in frames per second (FPS). Reporting mAP@0.5, mAP@[0.5:0.95], F1 and FPS together enables a direct analysis of the trade-off between detection accuracy and real-time performance.

IV. Results and Discussion

A. Training Result

The hybrid dataset consisting of 8450 annotated images across 26 agricultural produce classes was divided into training (70%), validation (20%), and testing (10%) subsets, all standardized to a resolution of 640 × 640 pixels. Each YOLO model—v9, v10, and v11—was fine-tuned using transfer learning from COCO-pretrained weights, ensuring that early convolutional layers retained generic low-level representations while the detection head adapted to domain-specific features.

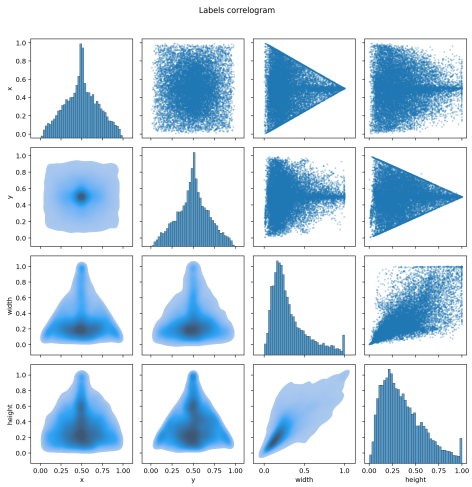

Fig. 5. Correlation matrix of normalized bounding box parameters (x, y, width, height) illustrating the distribution and relationships among annotation variables.

The label correlogram in Fig. 5 indicated that most object centers clustered around the image midpoint, corresponding to the typical placement of fruits on weighing trays. The width–height correlation revealed a narrow triangular distribution, suggesting scale uniformity across the dataset.

Training curves in Fig. 8, Fig. 7 and Fig. 6, collectively indicate that all YOLO variants achieved stable convergence with steadily decreasing box, classification, and distribution focal losses across epochs. The training performance comparison reveals a progressive improvement across YOLO generations. YOLOv9-C achieved its optimal accuracy at epoch 94 with a peak mAP@0.5:0.95 of 0.692, while YOLOv10-L required a longer convergence period, reaching a similar score at epoch 97 due to its deeper network complexity. In contrast, YOLOv11-L attained the highest mAP@0.5:0.95 of 0.700

at epoch 87, indicating faster and more stable optimization. The reduced validation losses and earlier convergence suggest that YOLOv11-L effectively balances learning stability and generalization, outperforming the preceding versions under identical training conditions.

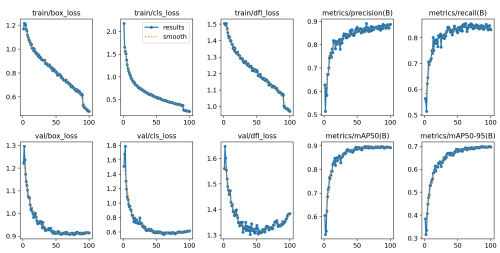

Fig. 6. YOLOv11 training result.

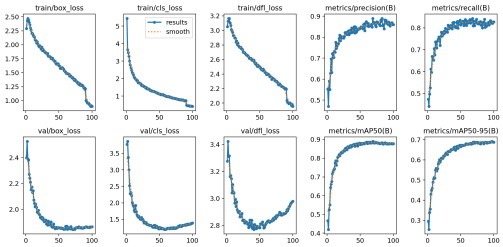

Fig. 7. YOLOv10 training result.

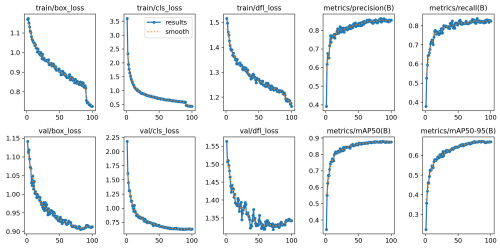

Fig. 8. YOLOv9 training result.

The confusion matrices of YOLOv9, YOLOv10, and YOLOv11 shown in Fig. 9, Fig. 10, Fig. 11, exhibit strong diagonal dominance, indicating generally high per-class classification accuracy. However, the distribution and magnitude of non-zero off-diagonal values reveal meaningful distinctions in class-specific robustness and visual separability. The confusion matrices reveal that YOLOv9-C produces the highest misclassification rate, with evident cross-class confusion among visually similar fruits such as apple–tomato and guava–rose apple, indicating weaker feature discrimination. In contrast, YOLOv10 displays the cleanest diagonal with minimal off-diagonal noise, reflecting stronger class separability and more stable optimization. YOLOv11 achieves comparable accuracy but introduces slight background leakage and minor confusion in similar-colour categories, suggesting broader generalization at a small precision cost. Overall, YOLOv10demonstrates the most balanced and precise classification performance, while Fig. 12 compares the PR characteristics of YOLOv9, YOLOv10, and YOLOv11 families across model scales. Fig. 12 compares the PR characteristics of YOLOv9, YOLOv10, and YOLOv11 families across model scales. All nine models exhibit strong detection capability, with mAP@0.5 values exceeding 0.85, reflecting robust precision–recall balance across the dataset. The smooth blue PR curves indicate stable

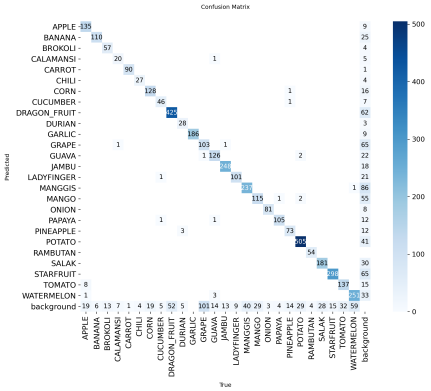

Fig. 9. YOLOv11 confusion matrix.

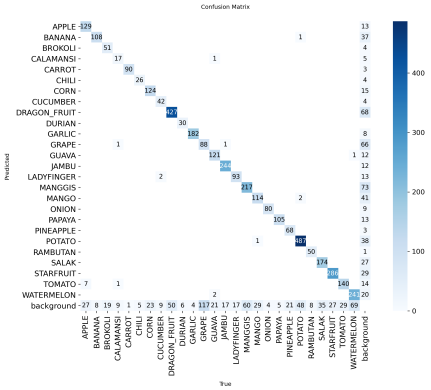

Fig. 10. YOLOv10 confusion matrix.

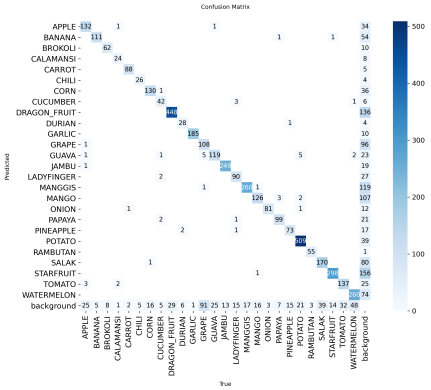

Fig. 11. YOLOv9 confusion matrix.

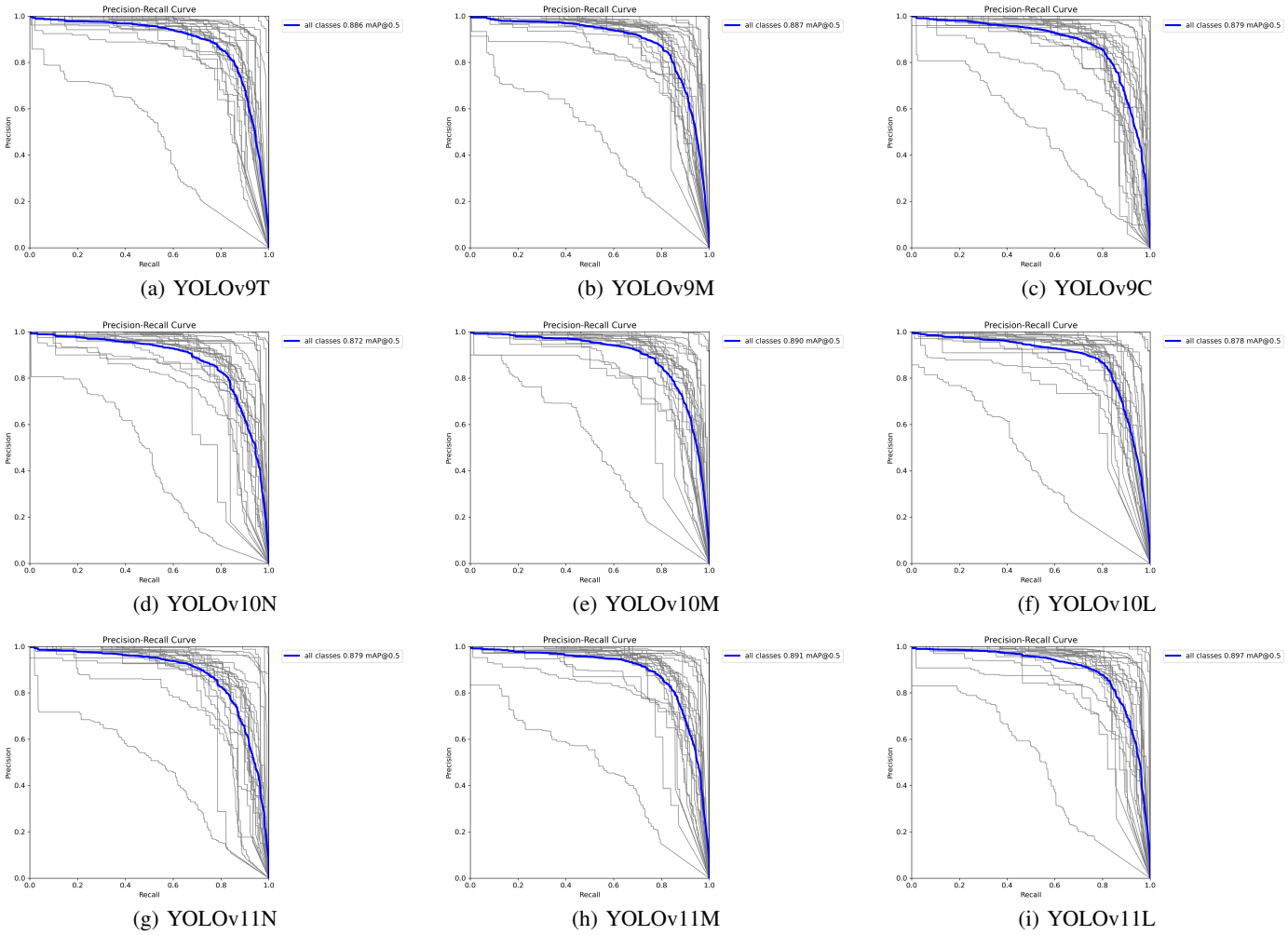

Fig. 12. Precision–Recall (PR) curves for YOLOv9/10/11 models at different scales (Tiny/Nano, Medium, and Compact/Large). Each sub-figure illustrates the trade-off between precision and recall across all classes, highlighting the relative stability and balance achieved by newer architectures.

confidence calibration, while the gray per-class traces reveal clear variation among object categories—showing that not all classes perform uniformly and at least one class remains challenging to detect. Among them, YOLOv11 variants display the most expansive PR envelopes, signifying superior precision–recall trade-offs and inter-class consistency. The YOLOv11L attains the highest mAP@0.5 of 0.897, only slightly above YOLOv11N and YOLOv11M; notably, YOLOv11 exhibits a consistent mAP increase with model size, unlike YOLOv9 and YOLOv10, implying that its additional parameters are effectively utilized for richer feature learning. Nevertheless, the smaller YOLOv11 models maintain comparable robustness to the larger variant, achieving near-identical detection quality with substantially lower computational cost. Overall, all models sustain commendable accuracy above the 0.8 mAP benchmark, with YOLOv11 offering the most balanced and scalable performance for real-time edge deployment.

B. Model Performance

The performance evaluation across 26 distinct produce classes as show in Table I demonstrated that model size is the dominant factor influencing both performance magnitude and consistency. As shown in Fig. 13, the Medium (M) and Large (L) or Complex (C) configurations consistently achieved the highest median mean Average Precision (mAP) scores across all three YOLO versions (v9, v10, v11). These models also exhibited the tightest interquartile ranges (IQR), indicating superior robustness and consistency in their detection accuracy across the diverse set of classes. Conversely, the smallest models (Tiny (T) for v9 and Nano (N) for v10/v11) demonstrated significantly lower median mAP and the widest score distributions. This suggests that while all three YOLO architectures are comparable, the minimal capacity of the smallest models leads to high performance variance and unreliable results on this dataset.

A granular analysis of the per-class mAP scores revealed a substantial degree of performance heterogeneity, ranging from near-perfect detection to critical failure points. The models achieved highly acceptable performance, exceeding $\mathbf{0.80}$ mAP, on visually distinct and easily segmentable classes. For instance, *Garlic* registered an average per-class mAP of $\mathbf{0.888}$, indicating that the model accurately localized and classified the object in $\mathbf{88.8}\%$ of the test cases when averaged across the nine evaluated configurations. *Carrot* demonstrated

TABLE I. PER-CLASS MAP ACROSS 26 CLASSES AND THREE YOLO FAMILIES (VALUES SHOWN AS S/M/L)

ID	Class	YOLOv9 (T/M/C)	YOLOv10 (N/M/L)	YOLOv11 (N/M/L)
C1	apple	0.58/0.58/0.61	0.63/0.63/0.61	0.59/0.65/0.63
C2	banana	0.79/0.80/0.77	0.73/0.79/0.79	0.77/0.78/0.80
C3	broccoli	0.65/0.58/0.59	0.63/0.58/0.59	0.61/0.62/0.62
C4	calamansi	0.72/0.74/0.67	0.57/0.71/0.62	0.64/0.67/0.66
C5	carrot	0.85/0.89/0.90	0.87/0.90/0.90	0.85/0.88/0.90
C6	chili	0.56/0.57/0.55	0.55/0.58/0.59	0.55/0.58/0.58
C7	corn	0.58/0.59/0.60	0.55/0.60/0.59	0.54/0.61/0.62
C8	cucumber	0.70/0.74/0.71	0.68/0.73/0.75	0.66/0.73/0.78
C9	dragon fruit	0.49/0.49/0.46	0.50/0.48/0.47	0.50/0.49/0.49
C10	durian	0.69/0.75/0.75	0.69/0.73/0.76	0.70/0.74/0.74
C11	garlic	0.87/0.90/0.90	0.88/0.89/0.89	0.88/0.89/0.89
C12	grape	0.32/0.32/0.31	0.27/0.35/0.32	0.30/0.34/0.33
C13	guava	0.65/0.69/0.70	0.68/0.68/0.69	0.69/0.70/0.70
C14	rose apple	0.50/0.54/0.54	0.52/0.54/0.53	0.52/0.54/0.55
C15	okra	0.58/0.65/0.63	0.59/0.62/0.64	0.59/0.60/0.63
C16	mangosteen	0.49/0.45/0.46	0.47/0.47/0.46	0.48/0.46/0.46
C17	mango	0.69/0.76/0.78	0.71/0.75/0.77	0.73/0.78/0.76
C18	onion	0.66/0.68/0.69	0.67/0.68/0.64	0.70/0.69/0.67
C19	papaya	0.80/0.79/0.80	0.80/0.81/0.81	0.80/0.82/0.83
C20	pineapple	0.73/0.77/0.76	0.74/0.77/0.77	0.73/0.75/0.74
C21	potato	0.80/0.79/0.80	0.79/0.78/0.80	0.80/0.81/0.82
C22	rambutan	0.75/0.84/0.82	0.78/0.85/0.82	0.81/0.79/0.81
C23	snake fruit	0.73/0.85/0.87	0.82/0.85/0.84	0.79/0.85/0.86
C24	starfruit	0.74/0.81/0.82	0.77/0.80/0.81	0.74/0.80/0.82
C25	tomato	0.77/0.80/0.78	0.78/0.77/0.79	0.74/0.80/0.79
C26	watermelon	0.70/0.72/0.73	0.69/0.73/0.72	0.68/0.74/0.72

similarly strong results, with a per-class mAP $\approx$ **0.882**. However, this success contrasts sharply with the challenges posed by other items. The class *Grape* was identified as a universal failure point, registering a critically low per-class mAP $\approx$ **0.318** across all model configurations. This extreme outlier—visually represented by the lowest whisker in every box plot (Fig. 13)—indicates a fundamental difficulty that is not mitigated by increasing model complexity or upgrading the YOLO version. Other low-performing classes included *Manggis* (per-class mAP $\approx$ **0.467**) and *Dragon Fruit* (per-class mAP $\approx$ **0.486**).

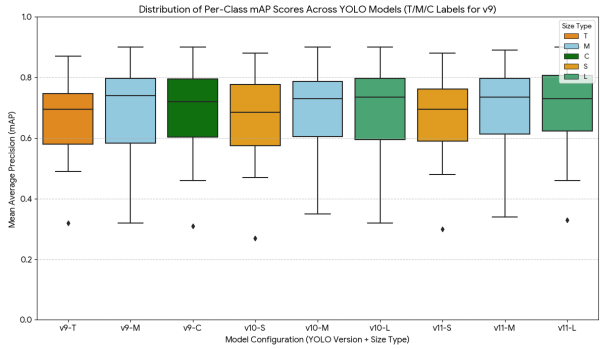

Fig. 13. Distribution of Per-Class mAP scores across YOLO models and sizes. YOLOv9 uses Tiny (T), Medium (M), and Compact (C) labels, while YOLOv10 and YOLOv11 use Nano (N), Medium (M), and Large (L).

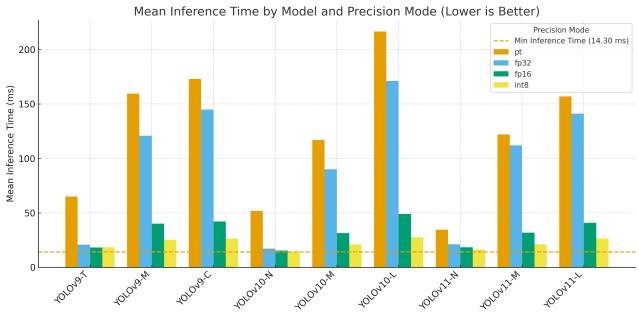

Fig. 14. Total inference time across YOLOv9, YOLOv10, and YOLOv11 models under different precision modes (`pt`, `fp32`, `fp16`, and `int8`). The dashed red line indicates the global minimum total inference time. Image resolution is fixed at 640×640.

C. Inference Speed Analysis

The inference–speed analysis based on the collected data as shown in Table II reveals that pre–processing and post–processing contribute little to overall latency: mean pre-processing times stay between 4.13 and 4.89 ms, while post-processing ranges from about 2.73 to 11.93ms . Mean inference times, however, vary by more than an order of magnitude. On NVIDIA Jetson, the YOLOv10–nano (N) model converted to TensorRT and quantized to FP16 or INT8 delivers the fastest throughput, completing detection in roughly 14–15ms per image and achieving 18.0–18.9 frames per second. By contrast, the unoptimized PyTorch large (L) models require about 216 ms for inference and thus cannot meet real-time requirements. TensorRT optimization reduces latency dramatically; for example, converting the YOLOv10-L model from PyTorch to TensorRT with FP16 shrinks inference time from $\approx$ 216ms to about 49ms, and further to $\approx$ 28 ms with INT8 quantization . These results show that model size and numerical precision are the primary determinants of inference speed, while the pipeline's fixed overhead remains minor. As illustrated in Fig. 14, precision reduction consistently lowers total inference time across all YOLO generations evaluated, with INT8 quantization yielding the global minimum latency.

A closer examination of post-processing reveals that YOLOv11 exhibits consistently higher latency than YOLOv10, especially in its Nano variants. This behaviour stems from architectural differences: YOLOv11 employs a traditional *Detect head* that performs Non-Maximum Suppression (NMS) to filter redundant bounding boxes, whereas YOLOv10 is *NMS-free* due to its dual-assignment training strategy that inherently mitigates duplicate detections. The additional NMS step in YOLOv11 adds computational overhead during output decoding, explaining why models like YOLOv11-N INT8 spend nearly three times longer in post-processing compared with the NMS-free YOLOv10 equivalents. Consequently, YOLOv10 maintains smoother end-to-end latency for real-time agricultural produce detection.

D. Accuracy Analysis

Table III provides a comprehensive comparison of YOLOv9–YOLOv11 models across Nano, Medium and Large scales and four precision modes (native, FP32, FP16 and INT8), summarising precision, recall, F1-score and mAP. The

TABLE II. INFERENCE SPEED ACROSS CONFIGURATIONS AT INPUT 640 × 640. TIMES IN MILLISECONDS (MS). BEST TOTAL LATENCY (**LOWER IS BETTER**) AND BEST FPS (**HIGHER IS BETTER**) ARE BOLDED PER MODEL SIZE

Family	Size	Precision	mean_pre	mean_infer	mean_post	total (mean)	median	FPS (mean)	FPS (median)
YOLOv10									
YOLOv10	L	native	4.471	216.482	3.011	259.909	207.166	3.847	4.827
YOLOv10	L	fp32	4.246	171.214	3.449	213.103	185.447	4.693	5.392
YOLOv10	L	fp16	4.361	49.036	3.272	90.932	60.795	10.997	16.449
YOLOv10	L	int8	4.227	27.663	3.214	**68.423**	38.935	**14.615**	25.684
YOLOv10	M	native	4.249	116.936	2.900	154.087	117.947	6.490	8.478
YOLOv10	M	fp32	4.293	89.927	3.298	131.295	102.701	7.616	9.737
YOLOv10	M	fp16	4.212	31.324	3.268	72.470	42.643	13.799	23.450
YOLOv10	M	int8	4.225	21.007	3.172	**57.606**	32.055	**17.359**	31.196
YOLOv10	N	native	4.300	51.822	2.732	93.256	40.570	10.723	24.649
YOLOv10	N	fp32	4.261	17.160	3.143	57.671	27.796	17.340	35.976
YOLOv10	N	fp16	4.602	15.416	3.238	**53.022**	26.348	**18.860**	37.954
YOLOv10	N	int8	4.559	14.304	3.169	55.403	25.351	18.049	39.446
YOLOv11									
YOLOv11	L	native	4.130	157.032	11.327	195.890	179.216	5.105	5.580
YOLOv11	L	fp32	4.351	141.207	11.929	192.783	162.635	5.187	6.149
YOLOv11	L	fp16	4.243	40.765	11.230	90.160	58.489	11.091	17.097
YOLOv11	L	int8	4.291	26.506	4.817	**59.563**	38.623	**16.789**	25.891
YOLOv11	M	native	4.268	122.071	11.329	172.209	146.175	5.807	6.841
YOLOv11	M	fp32	4.482	112.014	11.565	152.633	130.541	6.552	7.660
YOLOv11	M	fp16	4.187	31.702	11.250	70.367	49.260	14.211	20.300
YOLOv11	M	int8	4.315	21.196	10.591	**60.103**	38.678	**16.638**	25.855
YOLOv11	N	native	4.275	34.536	10.460	73.475	46.990	13.610	21.281
YOLOv11	N	fp32	4.520	21.147	11.089	60.639	39.233	16.491	25.489
YOLOv11	N	fp16	4.832	18.361	11.140	58.401	36.706	17.123	27.243
YOLOv11	N	int8	4.890	16.109	11.201	**56.130**	35.009	**17.816**	28.564
YOLOv9									
YOLOv9	C	native	4.239	172.955	11.345	223.763	195.335	4.469	5.119
YOLOv9	C	fp32	4.342	144.871	11.806	185.208	166.672	5.399	6.000
YOLOv9	C	fp16	4.301	42.021	10.846	80.989	59.686	12.347	16.754
YOLOv9	C	int8	4.206	26.214	10.596	**64.149**	43.787	**15.589**	22.838
YOLOv9	M	native	4.268	159.408	11.193	204.774	156.395	4.883	6.394
YOLOv9	M	fp32	4.432	120.861	11.794	161.623	143.076	6.187	6.989
YOLOv9	M	fp16	4.209	40.107	10.635	78.265	57.794	12.777	17.303
YOLOv9	M	int8	4.209	25.219	9.895	**62.674**	42.060	**15.956**	23.776
YOLOv9	T	native	4.430	64.900	11.028	109.722	73.024	9.114	13.694
YOLOv9	T	fp32	4.213	20.625	11.131	59.235	38.176	16.882	26.194
YOLOv9	T	fp16	4.541	18.197	11.579	58.217	36.669	17.177	27.271
YOLOv9	T	int8	4.527	18.409	11.071	**57.562**	36.737	**17.372**	27.220

accuracy evaluation across the YOLOv9–YOLOv11 families reveals several notable trends. Among all tested configurations, the YOLOv11-L model in PyTorch baseline achieves the highest performance with mAP@0.5 $= 0.896$ and an F1 $= 0.86$, surpassing YOLOv10 and YOLOv9 counterparts and confirming YOLOv11's architectural advantage. Within the YOLOv10 family, the medium (M) variant yields slightly better accuracy (F1 ≈ 0.848) than both the large (0.845) and nano (0.837) models, suggesting that accuracy saturates beyond a certain parameter count and that mid-sized models strike the best balance between complexity and learning stability. Precision-mode comparison further indicates that half-precision (FP16) inference is effectively lossless relative to FP32, with identical F1 values around 0.842 across all variants. These results affirm that FP16 maintains numerical fidelity while reducing memory usage—a desirable property for embedded deployment. Conversely, INT8 quantisation introduces a moderate but consistent performance degradation of about 3–4 percentage points in F1. For example, YOLOv10-L drops from 0.845 (PyTorch) to 0.811 (INT8), and YOLOv10-M declines from 0.848 to 0.806, primarily due to reduced numerical precision during activation and weight representation.

A deeper inspection of model sensitivity highlights that smaller models exhibit superior robustness to INT8 quantisation. The YOLOv10-N variant shows only a 1.8 percentage-point F1 loss ($0.832 \rightarrow 0.814$), whereas the large variant loses more than 3 points. This observation aligns with quantisation theory: lightweight architectures possess fewer convolutional layers and a narrower dynamic range of activations, resulting in lower quantisation error propagation. Larger networks, with deeper hierarchies and wider feature channels, amplify rounding and clipping effects across multiple layers—explaining their steeper accuracy decline when compressed to 8-bit precision. Empirically, INT8 impacts recall more strongly than precision (e.g., YOLOv10-L recall $0.825 \rightarrow 0.771$, precision $0.865 \rightarrow 0.856$), indicating that quantised models tend to miss small or ambiguous detections rather than misclassify them.

Nonetheless, the overall degradation remains modest, and FP16 retains nearly identical accuracy to FP32 while achieving

TABLE III. COMPREHENSIVE COMPARISON OF YOLOV9–YOLOV11 UNDER TENSORRT PRECISION MODES (PT, FP32, FP16, INT8)

Family	Size	Precision	Recall	Precision	F1	mAP@0.5:0.95	mAP@0.5
YOLOv10							
YOLOv10	N	native	0.813	0.863	0.837	0.668	0.873
YOLOv10	N	fp32	0.808	0.859	0.833	0.654	0.865
YOLOv10	N	fp16	0.807	0.858	0.832	0.654	0.865
YOLOv10	N	int8	0.776	0.855	0.814	0.629	0.843
YOLOv10	M	native	0.819	0.879	0.848	0.694	0.890
YOLOv10	M	fp32	0.813	0.869	0.840	0.679	0.876
YOLOv10	M	fp16	0.812	0.868	0.839	0.679	0.876
YOLOv10	M	int8	0.778	0.835	0.806	0.640	0.837
YOLOv10	L	native	0.825	0.865	0.845	0.692	0.878
YOLOv10	L	fp32	0.815	0.871	0.842	0.678	0.875
YOLOv10	L	fp16	0.815	0.870	0.842	0.678	0.875
YOLOv10	L	int8	0.771	0.856	0.811	0.653	0.848
YOLOv11							
YOLOv11	N	native	0.823	0.868	0.845	0.671	0.879
YOLOv11	N	fp32	0.804	0.867	0.835	0.651	0.865
YOLOv11	N	fp16	0.805	0.868	0.835	0.651	0.865
YOLOv11	N	int8	0.786	0.837	0.811	0.617	0.837
YOLOv11	M	native	0.840	0.870	0.855	0.696	0.891
YOLOv11	M	fp32	0.819	0.868	0.843	0.679	0.882
YOLOv11	M	fp16	0.819	0.867	0.843	0.679	0.882
YOLOv11	M	int8	0.774	0.870	0.819	0.638	0.843
YOLOv11	L	native	0.844	0.877	0.860	0.699	0.896
YOLOv11	L	fp32	0.849	0.849	0.849	0.680	0.883
YOLOv11	L	fp16	0.849	0.849	0.849	0.680	0.883
YOLOv11	L	int8	0.780	0.839	0.809	0.628	0.840
YOLOv9							
YOLOv9	T	native	0.820	0.858	0.839	0.671	0.879
YOLOv9	T	fp32	0.807	0.850	0.828	0.655	0.867
YOLOv9	T	fp16	0.808	0.850	0.828	0.655	0.867
YOLOv9	T	int8	0.797	0.835	0.815	0.641	0.851
YOLOv9	M	native	0.823	0.877	0.849	0.695	0.887
YOLOv9	M	fp32	0.825	0.859	0.842	0.680	0.875
YOLOv9	M	fp16	0.826	0.858	0.842	0.680	0.875
YOLOv9	M	int8	0.768	0.846	0.805	0.631	0.832
YOLOv9	C	native	0.831	0.873	0.852	0.692	0.885
YOLOv9	C	fp32	0.835	0.853	0.844	0.674	0.872
YOLOv9	C	fp16	0.836	0.854	0.845	0.674	0.872
YOLOv9	C	int8	0.815	0.807	0.811	0.619	0.836

significantly faster inference. Therefore, for real-time agricultural produce detection on resource-limited hardware, FP16-based TensorRT models or Nano-INT8 variants offer the best trade-off, balancing accuracy, efficiency, and deployment feasibility.

E. Inference Speed and Accuracy Tradeoff

The mAP–latency plot zs shown in Fig. 15 clearly reveals a Pareto frontier where only a handful of model–precision combinations achieve both high accuracy and real-time inference speeds. At one end of the spectrum, the smallest Nano configurations (e.g., YOLOv10-N FP16/FP32 and YOLOv11-N FP16) produce mAP@0.5 values around 0.865 while completing the full pre-processing, inference, and post-processing pipeline in approximately 53–58 ms. Their INT8 counterparts reduce the mean inference time by a few milliseconds but at the cost of a small drop in recall and overall mAP, typically slipping to ≈ 0.84. These Nano models form the left-most portion of the Pareto curve and thus represent the optimal choice when deploying to constrained edge devices that demand sub-60 ms response times.

Moving up the frontier, the Medium FP16 configuration of YOLOv11 stands out as a compelling compromise. It boosts accuracy to ≈ 0.88 mAP@0.5 yet keeps total latency below about 70 ms, only 15–20 ms slower than the Nano models but delivering a notable increase in detection fidelity. By contrast, the Large FP16/FP32 variants of YOLOv10 and YOLOv11 push accuracy marginally higher (to ≈ 0.896 mAP@0.5) but at the cost of doubling the response time to 90–120 ms, pushing them off the Pareto frontier and making them impractical for real-time field use. In summary, the trade-off analysis underscores that half-precision and medium-sized YOLOv11

offer the best balance when accuracy is paramount, while Nano FP16/INT8 models remain the top recommendation for latency-critical deployments.

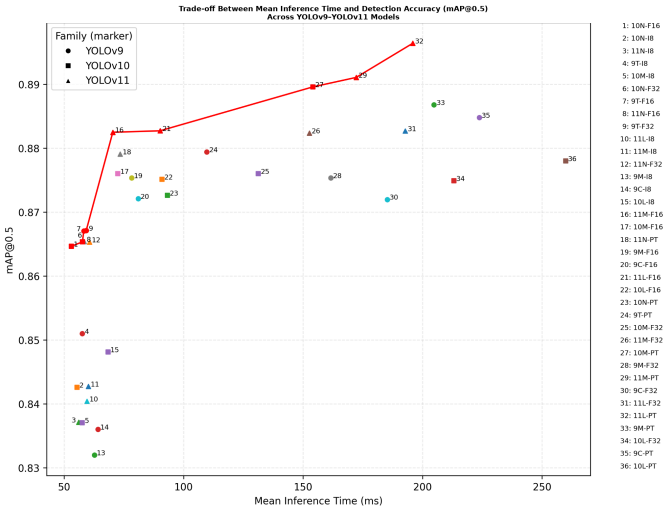

Fig. 15. Trade-off between mean inference time and detection accuracy (mAP@0.5) across YOLOv9–YOLOv11 models. The plot shows each model's mean inference time (ms) on the x-axis and its detection accuracy (mAP@0.5) on the y-axis, with distinct markers for the YOLOv9 (circle), YOLOv10 (square), and YOLOv11 (triangle) families. The red line traces the Pareto front of the speed–accuracy trade-off.

F. Qualitative Analysis

To test real-world robustness, the INT8-quantized YOLOv11-Nano model was deployed on unseen footage and custom images as shown in Fig. 16 and Fig. 17. We downloaded market scenes from YouTube and also purchased several types of produce and recorded them under natural indoor light. The model ran at real-time speed on the Jetson Xavier NX and able to detect the item with accurate bounding boxes and labels. These qualitative observations confirm that the model generalises well beyond the training dataset and complements the quantitative results, demonstrating readiness for deployment in practical retail environments.

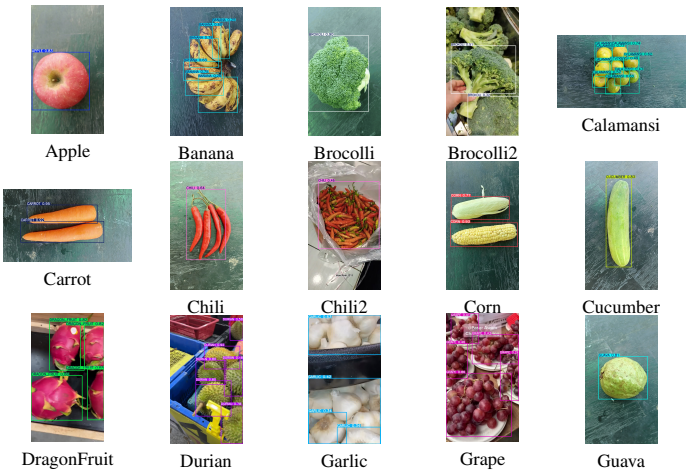

Fig. 16. YOLOv11n INT8 qualitative results — Panel (A), samples 1–15.

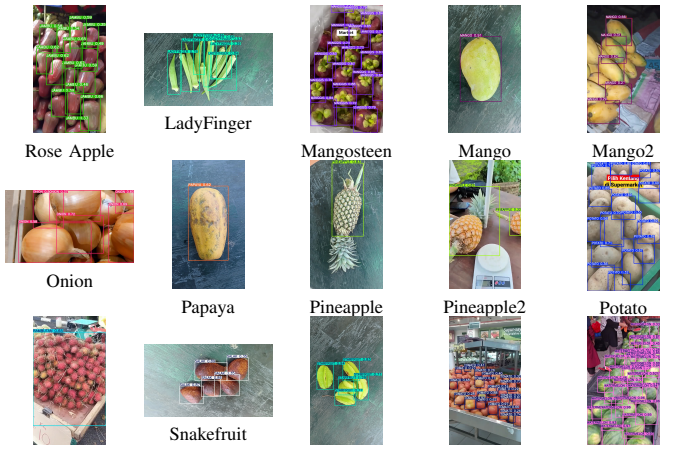

Fig. 17. YOLOv11n INT8 qualitative results — Panel (B), samples 16–30.

V. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that real-time visual recognition of loose fresh produce can be effectively integrated into intelligent retail weighing systems to reduce reliance on manual PLU-based item selection. By enabling accurate produce identification within a single weighing operation, the proposed Edge-AI approach directly addresses a key bottleneck in retail checkout workflows, namely slow and error-prone manual product lookup. To this end, an Edge-AI–based fresh-produce weighing system was developed and evaluated by integrating YOLOv9, YOLOv10, and YOLOv11 detectors with transfer learning on a 26-class Malaysian produce dataset comprising 8,450 annotated images.All models converged smoothly under identical training regimes; YOLOv11-Large achieved the highest mAP@0.5:0.95 of 0.699, YOLOv10 exhibited the strongest per-class discrimination, and YOLOv9 showed more misclassifications among visually similar produce. Across the dataset, each model maintained a mean Average Precision above 0.8, with medium or large configurations providing the most consistent accuracy. Pre- and post-processing overheads remain small relative to inference for large models (4–12 ms), but become proportionally significant as models shrink; moreover, YOLOv11's reliance on a Non-Maximum Suppression (NMS) head results in noticeably longer post-processing than YOLOv10's NMS-free design. TensorRT optimization with FP16/INT8 quantization reduced YOLOv10-Large inference latency from approximately 216 ms to 49 ms (FP16) and 28 ms (INT8). Among the tested configurations, YOLOv10-Medium and YOLOv10-Nano offer the best balance between accuracy and real-time performance, achieving roughly 14–15 ms per image (≈ 18–19 FPS) while maintaining high precision.

Inference-speed analysis demonstrated that pre- and post-processing overheads are negligible relative to the actual network inference time. With TensorRT optimization and FP16/INT8 quantization, the YOLOv10-Nano configuration achieved real-time performance at roughly 14–15 ms per image (≈ 18–19 FPS). The YOLOv10-Large model, once converted from unoptimized PyTorch to TensorRT, saw its inference latency shrink from ≈ 216ms to ≈ 49ms with FP16 and ≈ 28ms with INT8. Although YOLOv11 models offered

slightly higher precision, their reliance on a Non-Maximum Suppression head introduced additional post-processing delay compared with the NMS-free dual-assignment strategy of YOLOv10. These results show that YOLOv10-Medium and YOLOv10-Nano strike the best balance between detection accuracy and real-time inference, making them suitable for deployment on resource-constrained retail scales.

Although this system demonstrates that high-accuracy object detection is feasible on embedded GPUs, several challenges remain.

- Intraclass and interclass similarity: Some classes (e.g., grapes, mangosteen, dragon fruit) exhibit low per-class mAP due to high intra-class variation and inter-class similarity. Future work should augment the dataset and explore model-level innovations to improve discrimination among similar-looking items.
- Species and cultivar detection: The current dataset treats each fruit or vegetable as a single class and does not include species- or cultivar-level distinctions (e.g., different varieties of oranges). Even if such data were added, it remains uncertain whether the current YOLO architectures could fully capture the subtle visual variations between closely related cultivars. Future work should therefore combine dataset expansion with model adaptations or fine-grained classification strategies to assess whether detection at this granularity is feasible.
- NMS-free architectures: YOLOv11's NMS-based post-processing introduces significant latency; integrating next-generation NMS-free models such as the forthcoming YOLO26—designed as an end-to-end detector without a non-maximum suppression step [26]—could further reduce inference time and simplify deployment.
- Data and modality expansion: Additional future work includes expanding the dataset to cover occlusions, mixed produce and seasonal variations, incorporating multi-modal sensors (weight, depth, spectral) to distinguish visually similar items, applying model pruning and dynamic quantization, developing incremental learning for new classes, and evaluating deployment on alternative edge devices.

Overall, the findings confirm that high-accuracy object detection on embedded GPUs is not only technically feasible but also practically deployable in real retail environments. By combining NMS-free architectures with TensorRT optimization, the proposed system supports low-latency inference suitable for unattended or semi-automated checkout scenarios, reducing operator workload and minimizing customer waiting time. These results provide a concrete pathway toward scalable, PLU-independent intelligent weighing systems in modern retail settings.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This paper is supported by grant ZG-2025-018 from the Institute of Visual Informatics (IVI), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM).

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

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Calibrated Residual Intelligence for Intra-Procedural CBCT–Based Collateral Grading in Ischemic Stroke

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***Abstract*—Brain stroke occurs when the brain's blood supply is disrupted, leading to oxygen deprivation and rapid neuronal death. Ischemic stroke, the focus of this study, accounts for most cases and is strongly influenced by collateral circulation, a network of alternative vessels that stabilize perfusion when a primary artery is obstructed. Collateral status determines the extent of salvageable tissue and is typically graded manually using modalities such as magnetic resonance angiography (MRA), computed tomography (CT), and cone-beam computed tomography (CBCT), a process prone to subjectivity and inter-observer variability. This study proposes a ResNet-18–based deep learning framework for automated three-class classification of collateral circulation (Good, Moderate, Poor) from intra-procedural CBCT scans. A curated dataset of 45 patient cases (22,861 DICOM slices), annotated by an expert neuroradiologist, was preprocessed with patient-wise partitioning, normalization, and augmentation. The model achieved a validation accuracy of 88.8%, a micro-averaged precision–recall score of 0.947, and a macro-averaged ROC AUC of 0.958. Calibration analysis confirmed well-aligned probability estimates, while most misclassifications occurred in the Moderate class, reflecting inherent clinical ambiguity. Compared with prior CBCT studies using shallower architectures, the proposed framework demonstrates substantially higher accuracy, improved calibration, and enhanced robustness. These findings highlight the feasibility of ResNet-18 applied to CBCT imaging as a reliable and efficient tool to support neuroradiologists in collateral grading during hyperacute stroke management**

***Keywords*—Collateral circulation; brain stroke; ischemic stroke; deep learning; ResNet-18**

I. Introduction

Ischemic stroke occurs when a cerebral blood vessel becomes obstructed, typically by a thrombus, thereby interrupting the supply of oxygen and nutrients. Without prompt intervention, this blockage can cause irreversible neuronal damage within minutes, leading to severe neurological deficits [1], [2]. Globally, Ischemic stroke is a major public health challenge, accounting for over 80% of stroke cases worldwide and affecting more than 12 million people annually [3][4][5]. It remains a leading cause of death, long-term disability, and healthcare burden. These realities underscore the urgent need for improved methods of early diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment to mitigate long-term disability and improve patient outcomes.

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Collateral circulation serves as the brain's primary compensatory mechanism during arterial occlusion. Networks such as the Circle of Willis and leptomeningeal anastomoses sustain perfusion and preserve the penumbra during arterial occlusion [6], [7], [8]. In addition to arterial routes, venous and lymphatic systems are increasingly recognized as contributors to intracranial homeostasis under ischemic stress [9]. Patients with robust collaterals typically demonstrate slower infarct progression and extended therapeutic windows for both intravenous thrombolysis and mechanical thrombectomy [10], [11], [12]. Consequently, collateral status has emerged as a critical prognostic marker and a key determinant in acute stroke treatment decisions.

Neuroimaging plays a central role in collateral evaluation. Conventional methods rely on computed tomography angiography (CTA) and magnetic resonance angiography (MRA), with cone-beam computed tomography (CBCT) emerging as a promising intra-procedural alternative. However, manual collateral grading is time-consuming, subjective, and limited by inter-observer variability. To overcome these challenges, deep learning offers the potential for automated, consistent, and scalable assessment. Convolutional neural networks (CNNs), including architectures such as ResNet-18, have demonstrated strong performance in diverse medical imaging tasks ranging from pneumonia detection [13] to retinal-based kidney disease screening [14]. More recently, CNN-based approaches have been applied to collateral circulation grading in CTA, MRA, and CBCT, laying the groundwork for robust, clinically integrated decision-support systems. Building on this foundation, this study investigates ResNet-18 for automated tri-class classification of collateral circulation (Good, Moderate, Poor) in ischemic stroke patients using intra-procedural CBCT. The following sections provide the clinical background, describe the methodological design, and evaluate the performance of the proposed framework in comparison with existing approaches. This study addresses the challenge of subjective and time-consuming collateral grading by proposing an automated CBCT-based deep learning approach for three-class collateral classification. The main difficulty lies in CBCT intensity variations and the visual overlap between Moderate and adjacent grades, which can reduce precision.

The remainder of this study is organized as follows: Section II reviews stroke and collateral background and imaging modalities; Section III summarizes related work; Section IV nd

Section V describes the methodology and dataset; Section VI presents experimental results; Section VII discusses findings and limitations; and Section VIII concludes the study.

II. Brain Stroke

Stroke occurs when the blood supply to a part of the brain is disrupted, leading to oxygen deprivation and rapid death of brain cells [15]. The brain is essential for coordinating movements, preserving memories, generating thoughts and emotions, and enabling speech and language functions [16]. It also regulates critical bodily processes such as breathing and digestion. To perform these functions effectively, the brain depends on a continuous flow of oxygen-rich blood delivered through its intricate arterial system. When this flow is blocked or reduced, brain tissue rapidly sustains damage [17]. Without timely restoration of blood supply, affected regions may suffer permanent injury or death, resulting in lasting disability or fatality. Strokes are broadly classified into two major types based on their underlying mechanisms: hemorrhagic stroke and ischemic stroke. Fig. 1 illustrates the fundamental differences between these two types.

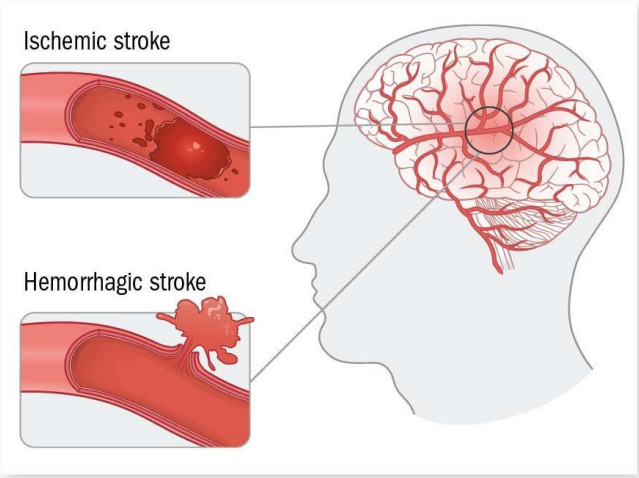

Fig. 1. Comparison between ischemic stroke (arterial blockage) and hemorrhagic stroke (vessel rupture) [18].

A. Hemorrhagic Stroke

Hemorrhagic stroke occurs when a weakened blood vessel ruptures, causing bleeding into the brain tissue [19]. The accumulation of blood elevates intracranial pressure, compresses brain structures, and diminishes downstream blood flow. Although hemorrhagic strokes are less common than ischemic strokes, they are associated with higher early mortality rates. Management of hemorrhagic stroke focuses on controlling bleeding, alleviating intracranial pressure, and preventing complications such as rebleeding and hydrocephalus. Since hemorrhagic stroke arises from vessel rupture rather than occlusion, collateral circulation does not play a central role in its clinical management [20]. Accordingly, research into collateral blood flow restoration is less applicable to hemorrhagic stroke. For this reason, the present work primarily emphasizes ischemic stroke, where collateral circulation is critically important for sustaining tissue survival and improving recovery outcomes.

B. Ischemic Stroke

Ischemic stroke, accounting for approximately 85% of all stroke cases, results from obstruction of a cerebral artery, most commonly due to thrombosis or embolism [21]. The sudden interruption of blood flow initiates a cascade of cellular injury and metabolic dysfunction, ultimately leading to infarction if untreated. Collateral circulation, the network of auxiliary vessels capable of supplying blood to ischemic brain regions, emerges as a crucial determinant of stroke severity and recovery potential [22]. Well-developed collateral networks can sustain perfusion to the ischemic penumbra, delay infarct progression, and extend the therapeutic window for interventions. Consequently, evaluation and optimization of collateral pathways have become central themes in ischemic stroke research. In this context, the present study focuses on ischemic stroke, aiming to advance automated methods for collateral circulation assessment and improve decision-making in hyperacute stroke management.

C. Collateral Circulation in Ischemic Stroke

Collateral circulation refers to a network of alternative blood vessels that can provide compensatory blood flow when a primary cerebral artery is obstructed. This auxiliary pathway helps stabilize cerebral perfusion and can determine the extent of salvageable tissue, or the ischemic penumbra, during a stroke [6], [23]. Fig. 2 illustrates how collateral vessels bypass a thrombus obstructing a major artery, thereby sustaining blood supply to downstream regions.

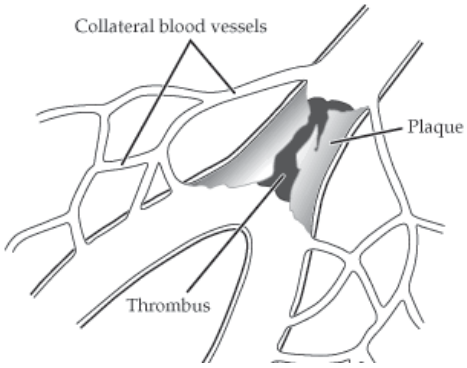

Fig. 2. Schematic showing collateral blood vessels bypassing a thrombus obstructing a primary cerebral artery [24].

The adequacy of collateral circulation varies considerably between individuals and is influenced by vascular anatomy, age, and comorbidities. Patients with good collateral status often demonstrate smaller infarct cores and better clinical outcomes, while poor collaterals are linked to rapid infarct progression and worse prognosis [8], [25]. Fig. 4 and Fig. 3 shows that Good collaterals allow sufficient blood rerouting to preserve tissue, whereas poor collaterals fail to maintain adequate perfusion, leading to irreversible injury.

Currently, collateral grading is performed manually by radiologists who visually interpret magnetic resonance angiography (MRA), computed tomography (CT), cone-beam computed tomography (CBCT), or digital subtraction angiography (DSA) scans. However, this process is inherently subjective, time-consuming, and prone to inter-observer variability. Given

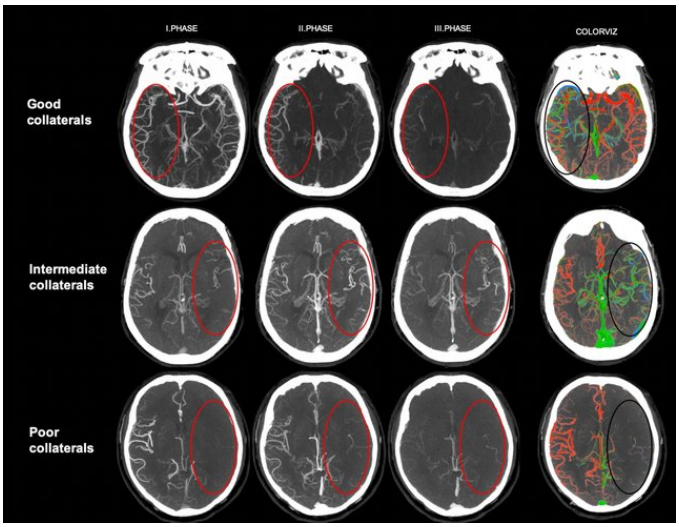

Fig. 3. Multiphase assessment of collateral circulation: Good (top), intermediate (middle), and poor (bottom), with corresponding color-coded visualization [26].

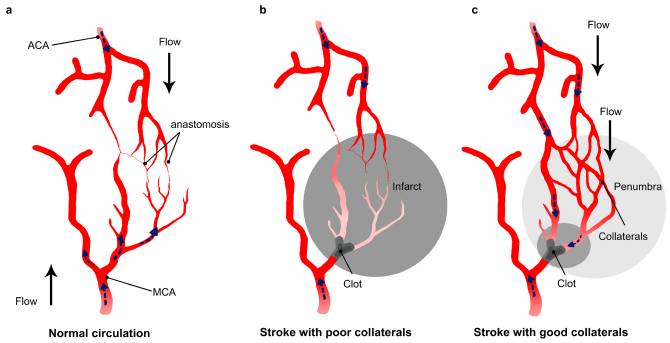

Fig. 4. Classification of collateral circulation: a) Normal circulation, b) Stroke with poor collaterals, c) Stroke with good collaterals [27]. (Image adapted under a CC BY 4.0 license).

the prognostic importance of collateral status, there is a clear need for automated and reliable classification methods. To address this gap, the present study introduces a ResNet-18 deep learning framework designed to classify collateral circulation into Good, Moderate, or Poor, thereby reducing variability and supporting clinicians in urgent decision-making.

D. Imaging Modalities for Collateral Assessment

Several imaging modalities are currently used to evaluate collateral circulation, including computed tomography angiography (CTA), magnetic resonance angiography (MRA), cone-beam computed tomography (CBCT), and digital subtraction angiography (DSA). CTA is fast and widely available, with multiphase protocols capable of capturing delayed collateral filling [28]. MRA provides radiation-free vascular imaging but is slower and less practical in acute settings [29]. DSA remains the invasive reference standard for visualizing cerebral vasculature. CBCT has recently emerged as a promising intra-procedural tool, offering high-resolution three-dimensional visualization directly in the angiography suite and the potential to complement standard CT and MRI during endovascular workflows [30], [31].This comparison highlights CBCT's suitability for intra-procedural stroke workflows, where rapid acquisition and integration with endovascular treatment are critical, unlike CT and MRI which are typically pre-procedural.

Table I provides a general comparison of CBCT, CT, and MRI. Although most reported advantages of CBCT, such as lower radiation exposure, shorter scan time, and reduced cost, have been derived from dental and general radiology literature, these features suggest potential benefits for neurointerventional use as well. However, stroke- and neurointervention-specific head-to-head studies remain limited, and thus these characteristics should be interpreted cautiously when extrapolated to acute cerebrovascular workflows.

Recent CBCT-based studies have applied deep learning models for collateral classification. For example, Ali et al. [38] employed a ResNet-18 architecture and reported moderate performance, while a subsequent study using VGG11 [39] also achieved only modest accuracy. These results highlight both the feasibility of CBCT for automated collateral grading and the clear need for methodological improvements. In this study, we aim to enhance classification performance by leveraging a deeper residual network (ResNet-18), incorporating a larger dataset, and applying advanced augmentation techniques to improve generalization.

The next section reviews prior research on collateral circulation classification across different modalities to contextualize the present work.

III. Related Work

Most existing studies on collateral circulation assessment in ischemic stroke have focused on deep learning applied to computed tomography (CT) and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). These modalities are widely used due to their high-quality depiction of brain structures and vascular networks [34], [37]. More recently, cone-beam computed tomography (CBCT) has been explored, but the reported results remain modest compared to CTA and MRI.

For example, Ali et al. [39] applied VGG11 to CBCT images of ischemic stroke patients, using a dataset of 4,368 slices (80% training, 20% testing) for binary classification of good versus poor collaterals. The model achieved only 58.3% accuracy, with sensitivity of 75.5%, specificity of 44.1%, and F1-score of 62.1%. Similarly, Ali et al. [38] employed a pre-trained ResNet-18 on 30 patients (4,368 CBCT slices), reporting 65.9% accuracy, with sensitivity of 0.776, specificity of 0.526, and F1-score of 0.698. Both studies demonstrated feasibility, but were hindered by small datasets, minimal augmentation, and overfitting, which limited generalizability.

Other researchers have explored multimodal and advanced architectures. Tetteh et al. [43] used MR perfusion images from 183 patients, applying reinforcement learning for ROI detection and CNN/ML classifiers, achieving 72% accuracy, but facing challenges of class imbalance and ROI precision. Raj et al. [41] proposed a multimodal CTA-based framework combining ResNet-50 with AutoML, reaching 94.12% accuracy but relying on single-center data. Tan et al. [42] developed a feature-fusion attention network for multiphase CTA, achieving 90.43% accuracy. While these approaches

TABLE I. COMPARISON OF CBCT, CT, AND MRI CHARACTERISTICS IS MAINLY BASED ON DENTAL AND GENERAL RADIOLOGY REPORTS. SINCE STROKE-SPECIFIC EVIDENCE IS LIMITED, THESE VALUES SHOULD BE INTERPRETED CAUTIOUSLY FOR ACUTE CEREBROVASCULAR WORKFLOWS.

Criteria	CBCT	CT	MRI
Working Principle	Uses X-ray computed tomography with divergent beam and 360° rotation [32]	Uses multiple X-rays from different angles [33]	Uses magnetic fields and RF pulses [34]
Resolution	High spatial resolution [32]	Better contrast resolution [32]	Good contrast resolution [34]
Scanning Time	Lower scanning time [35]	Moderate scanning time [35]	Longest scanning time [35]
Cost	Lower cost [36]	Moderate cost [36]	Highest cost [36]
X-ray Beam Coverage	Beam can be collimated to the area of interest [37]	Full area scan [37]	Full area scan [36]
Display Mode	High anatomical precision and diagnostic function [37]	Lower anatomical detail [37]	High-quality images for soft tissue and ligaments [34]

TABLE II. SUMMARY OF COLLATERAL CIRCULATION CLASSIFICATION STUDIES USING AI TECHNIQUES

Study	Modality	Purpose	Method	Key Result
[40]	4D-CTA	Classification	ResNet34 (single vs. multi-image)	AUC 0.85–0.89
[41]	CTA	Classification	Multimodal DL + AutoML	Acc 91.2–94.1%
[42]	CTA (multiphase)	Classification	Fusion attention (CCA4CTA)	Acc 90.4%
[43]	MRI	Classification	CNN + ML (RF, SVM, k-NN)	Acc 72% (CNN)
[44]	CTA	Classification	CNN-SVM, ResNet, ViTs	Acc 62–77%
[39]	CBCT	Classification	VGG11	Acc 58.3%
[38]	CBCT	Classification	ResNet18	Acc 65.9%

demonstrate the potential of advanced architectures, they are primarily based on CTA/MRA datasets rather than CBCT.

Table II summarizes representative approaches, imaging modalities, and reported outcomes. Collectively, these studies show that while CTA and MRI dominate current research, CBCT is emerging as a clinically advantageous modality due to its real-time intra-procedural capability, reduced radiation, lower cost, and availability in the angiography suite. However, CBCT-based deep learning models remain underexplored and have so far achieved only moderate accuracy.

To address this gap, the present study leverages CBCT imaging combined with a residual architecture, ResNet-18. By using a larger dataset, applying systematic data augmentation, and moving beyond binary classification to a clinically relevant three-class grading (*Good*, *Moderate*, *Poor*), this work aims to significantly improve accuracy, calibration, and generalizability. The following section details the methodology of the proposed framework.

IV. METHODS

The overall methodology of the proposed study is summarized in Fig. 5. The pipeline begins with dataset collection from Hospital Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah, Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), followed by preprocessing steps such as bone removal, normalization, and noise reduction. Data augmentation was then applied to increase variability, and the dataset was partitioned into training and validation subsets. The ResNet-18 model, initialized with ImageNet weights, was trained and fine-tuned for three-class collateral classification. A patient-wise split ensured that slices from the same patient did not appear in both training and validation sets, preventing data leakage. The implementation was carried out in Python with TensorFlow/Keras on an RTX 3090 GPU. The study followed a supervised learning design with neuroradiologist-annotated labels, patient-wise partitioning to prevent leakage, and a two-phase fine-tuning strategy to balance generalization and class separability.

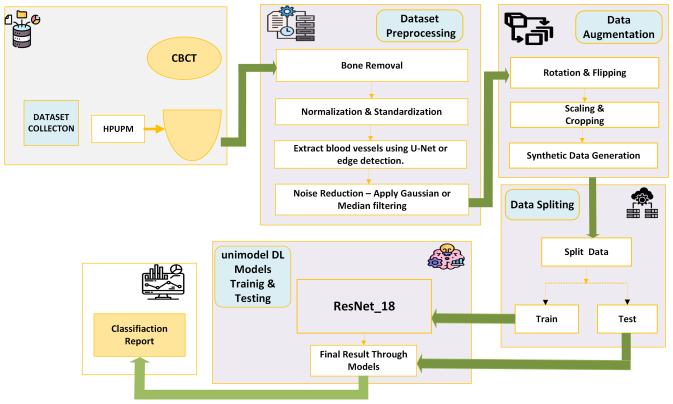

Fig. 5. Overall methodology for CBCT-based collateral circulation classification using ResNet-18.

Experiments were conducted using Python 3.10 with TensorFlow 2.12/Keras, NumPy 1.26, and scikit-learn 1.4 on an RTX 3090 (24 GB) with CUDA 11.8/cuDNN 8.9. Model performance was assessed using accuracy, precision, recall (sensitivity), specificity, F1-score, PR-AUC, ROC-AUC, and calibration analysis.

V. DATASET

For this study, the dataset was obtained from Hospital Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah, Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM).

It consists of cone-beam computed tomography (CBCT) scans acquired from patients diagnosed with ischemic stroke. A total of 45 cases were included, each containing a full volumetric series of axial slices. Each patient was assigned a unique identifier and accession number, and all metadata were securely documented to maintain proper traceability. Annotation of the dataset was carried out by an experienced neuroradiologist (Dr. Ahmad Sobri Muda), who categorized each patient into one of three clinically meaningful grades of collateral circulation: Good, Moderate, and Poor. The final distribution comprised 13 patients in the Good category, 13 in the Moderate category, and 19 in the Poor category.

The demographic composition of the cohort is summarized in Table III. Overall, the dataset included 18 females and 27 males, with gender distribution remaining relatively balanced across the three collateral circulation groups. In total, the dataset comprised 22,861 DICOM slices, with each patient contributing approximately 350–400 slices. This volume is consistent with the coverage typically required in neurovascular CBCT examinations. For model development, the dataset was partitioned on a patient-wise basis into 70% for training and 30% for testing, ensuring that slices from the same subject did not appear in both sets. The dataset used in this study is available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

TABLE III. PATIENT DISTRIBUTION BY COLLATERAL CLASS AND GENDER

Class	Female	Male	Total
Good	5	8	13
Moderate	6	7	13
Poor	7	12	19
Total	**18**	**27**	**45**

Although the macro-averaged precision was 0.8634, this value should be interpreted in the context of clinical ambiguity, particularly within the Moderate collateral class. Precision was reduced primarily due to overlap between Moderate and adjacent classes, a challenge also reported in neuroradiologist-based grading. Several design choices were introduced to improve precision: patient-wise data partitioning eliminated slice-level leakage, class weighting mitigated imbalance, label smoothing reduced over-confident predictions, and realistic data augmentation improved generalization. These strategies enhanced precision while maintaining balanced recall and well-calibrated probabilities.

A. Preprocessing

The preprocessing stage aimed to prepare raw cone-beam computed tomography (CBCT) data for deep learning analysis. First, all volumes in DICOM format were checked to remove incomplete or corrupted slices [45]. The remaining valid scans were annotated by a neuroradiologist into three categories: *Good*, *Moderate*, and *Poor* collateral status.

To enable compatibility with deep learning frameworks, DICOM files were converted into lossless `.png` format using a custom Python script. This conversion preserved grayscale vascular details and allowed faster I/O operations. The converted images were stored in class-specific directories for traceability during training and evaluation.

Each slice was resized to 224×224 pixels and normalized to the $[0, 1]$ range using min–max scaling:

$$I_{\text{norm}}(x, y) = \frac{I(x, y) - I_{\text{min}}}{I_{\text{max}} - I_{\text{min}}},$$

where, $I(x, y)$ denotes the pixel intensity and I_{min}, I_{max} are dataset-level minimum and maximum values.

A patient-wise split strategy was applied so that slices from the same subject appeared in only one subset (training, validation, or testing), preventing data leakage and ensuring reliable model evaluation. Additional transformations for data augmentation were later applied to increase dataset variability and improve model generalization, as described in the next subsection.

B. Data Augmentation

To increase dataset diversity and mitigate overfitting, stochastic augmentation functions were applied to the CBCT slices during training. These transformations were formulated to introduce controlled variability in spatial and photometric domains while preserving the vascular structures essential for clinical interpretation.

Let $I(x, y)$ denote the original image intensity at spatial coordinates (x, y). A horizontal reflection was applied with probability $p = 0.5$, expressed as:

$$I'(x, y) = I(W - x, y), \quad x \in [0, W],\ y \in [0, H],$$

where, W and H represent the image width and height, respectively. This transformation enforces invariance to left–right orientation without altering anatomical fidelity.

Photometric perturbations were introduced through random brightness and contrast adjustments. Brightness variation was modeled as an additive shift:

$$I'(x, y) = I(x, y) + \Delta_b,$$

with $\Delta_b \sim \mathcal{U}(-\beta, \beta)$, $\beta = 0.10$ representing a 10% dynamic range adjustment. Contrast scaling was applied multiplicatively:

$$I'(x, y) = \alpha \cdot I(x, y),$$

where, $\alpha \sim \mathcal{U}(0.9, 1.1)$ governs the rescaling of intensity distributions. Combined, these yield the affine photometric transformation:

$$I'(x, y) = \alpha \cdot I(x, y) + \Delta_b,$$

which models scanner-dependent variations in illumination and detector sensitivity.

A geometric zoom operation was further incorporated by random cropping followed by resizing to the original resolution. For a scaling factor $z \sim \mathcal{U}(0.9, 1.0)$, the effective mapping can be written as:

$$I'(x, y) = I\left(\left\lfloor \frac{x}{z} \right\rfloor, \left\lfloor \frac{y}{z} \right\rfloor\right),$$

where, coordinates outside the valid domain are handled through zero-padding. This introduces local spatial distortions equivalent to minor variations in field of view or patient positioning during acquisition.

Collectively, these augmentations form a nonlinear transformation set $\mathcal{T} = \{T_{\text{flip}}, T_{\text{bright}}, T_{\text{contrast}}, T_{\text{zoom}}\}$, where each image I is stochastically mapped to an augmented sample $I' = T(I)$ with $T \sim \mathcal{U}(\mathcal{T})$. By enforcing the model to learn under this expanded input distribution, the convolutional network is guided to extract invariant vascular patterns rather than memorizing subject-specific intensity or positional artifacts, thereby strengthening generalization.

C. Classification Model: ResNet-18

ResNet-18 was employed as the backbone network to classify collateral circulation from CBCT images into three categories: *Good*, *Moderate*, and *Poor*. Compared with deeper variants such as ResNet-50, ResNet-18 is shallower with 18 layers but preserves the residual learning mechanism that addresses vanishing gradients and supports stable training. Its balance of computational efficiency and representational power makes it well suited for datasets of moderate size. The overall workflow is shown in Fig. 6. ResNet-18 was selected to match the study's data regime: with 45 patient cases, it provides an effective balance of computational efficiency and discriminative power. The residual design supports stable optimization, and the shallower depth reduces overfitting risk relative to deeper backbones.

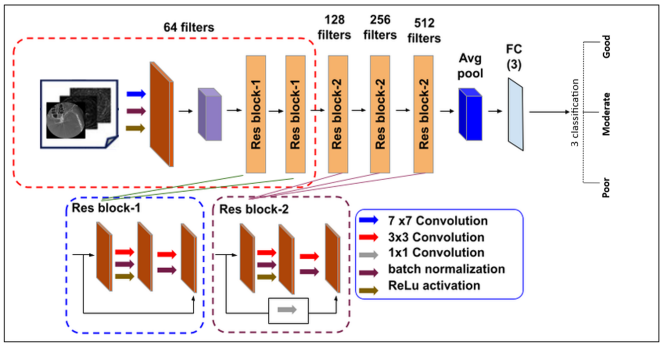

Fig. 6. ResNet-18 framework for CBCT-based collateral circulation classification, consisting of convolutional layers, residual blocks, pooling operations, and a softmax classifier.

1) Model architecture: The model processes preprocessed and augmented CBCT slices, each resized to 224×224 pixels with three channels. The initial stem of the network applies a 7×7 convolution with stride 2, followed by batch normalization, ReLU activation, and 3×3 max-pooling. For an input $X \in \mathbb{R}^{224\times224\times3}$, the first feature representation is computed as Eq. (1):

$$F^{(1)} = \sigma\big(\mathrm{BN}(W^{(1)} * X + b^{(1)})\big), \tag{1}$$

where, $*$ denotes convolution, $W^{(1)}$ and $b^{(1)}$ are the kernel and bias of the first layer, $\mathrm{BN}(\cdot)$ represents batch normalization, and $\sigma(z) = \max(0, z)$ is the ReLU activation.

The core of ResNet-18 is built from basic residual blocks, each consisting of two 3×3 convolutional layers with batch normalization and ReLU, plus an identity shortcut. A residual block computes [see Eq. (2)]:

$$H(x) = \sigma\Big(\mathrm{BN}(W_2 * \sigma(\mathrm{BN}(W_1 * x))) + x\Big), \tag{2}$$

where, W_1 and W_2 are convolution kernels of size 3×3. If the input and output dimensions differ, a 1×1 convolution is applied on the shortcut path. These residual connections enforce stable gradient propagation and allow the block to approximate $H(x) \approx F(x) + x$.

Spatial dimensionality reduction is performed by max pooling [see Eq. (3)]:

$$F_l^{pool} = \max_{(i,j)\in R} F_{i,j}^{(l)}, \tag{3}$$

where, R is the pooling window region. This preserves dominant activations while reducing computational complexity.

After the residual stages, global average pooling (GAP) compresses each feature map into a scalar [see Eq. (4)]:

$$g_k = \frac{1}{H \times W} \sum_{i=1}^{H} \sum_{j=1}^{W} F_{i,j,k}^{(L)}, \tag{4}$$

where, $F_{i,j,k}^{(L)}$ is the activation at spatial location (i, j) in channel k. The resulting feature vector $\mathbf{g} \in \mathbb{R}^d$ is passed to a fully connected layer and a softmax classifier [see Eq. (5)]:

$$P(y = c|X) = \frac{\exp(\mathbf{w}_c^\top \mathbf{g} + b_c)}{\sum_{j=1}^{3} \exp(\mathbf{w}_j^\top \mathbf{g} + b_j)}, \quad c \in \{\text{Good, Moderate, Poor}\}. \tag{5}$$

The predicted collateral grade is assigned as Eq. (6):

$$\hat{y} = \arg \max_{c\in\{\text{Good, Moderate, Poor}\}} P(y = c|X). \tag{6}$$

2) Training strategy: Training followed a two-phase protocol. In Phase 1, the ResNet-18 backbone (pretrained on ImageNet) was frozen, and only the final dense layers were optimized. This stabilized initial learning of domain-specific features while preserving the pretrained representations. In Phase 2, the final two residual stages (`conv4_x` and `conv5_x`, corresponding to the last ∼6–8 convolutional

layers) were unfrozen for fine-tuning at a reduced learning rate ($\eta = 10^{-5}$).

The categorical cross-entropy loss with label smoothing ($\varepsilon = 0.05$) was minimized [see Eq. (7)]:

$$\mathcal{L} = -\sum_{c=1}^{3} \left[(1-\varepsilon)y_c + \frac{\varepsilon}{3}\right] \log P(y=c|X), \tag{7}$$

where, y_c is the one-hot encoded ground truth. Optimization used Adam with decoupled weight decay regularization, and class weights were applied as Eq. (8):

$$w_c = \frac{N}{|\mathcal{C}|\, N_c}, \tag{8}$$

where, N_c is the number of samples in class c, ensuring balanced learning despite dataset imbalance.

3) Algorithmic logic: Algorithm 1 summarizes the workflow: preprocessing → augmentation → dataset partitioning → ResNet-18 training (frozen + fine-tuning) → evaluation. Each epoch samples up to $K_{\max} = 12$ slices per patient, preventing overrepresentation of long CBCT scans. Training and validation sets were processed using `tf.data` pipelines with batch prefetching for GPU efficiency.

Algorithm 1 Patient-Wise Two-Phase ResNet-18 Training for CBCT Collateral Grading

Data: CBCT slices $D = \{(x_i, y_i, \text{pid}_i)\}$; classes $\mathcal{C} = \{\texttt{Good}, \texttt{Moderate}, \texttt{Poor}\}$ ($|\mathcal{C}| = 3$).

Result: Best model $M^\star$ + metrics (accuracy, F1, sensitivity, specificity). **Begin:**

1. Build manifest {`filepath`, label, patient ID}; split patients (80/20).
2. Apply preprocessing → normalization → augmentation (flip, brightness, contrast, zoom).
3. Construct train/val datasets with ≤ 12 slices/patient/epoch.
4. Initialize ResNet-18 (ImageNet pretrained, no top).
5. Phase 1: freeze backbone, train head with Adam ($\eta = 2 \times 10^{-4}$), $E = 15$.
6. Phase 2: unfreeze final two residual stages (`conv4_x`, `conv5_x`), fine-tune with Adam ($\eta = 10^{-5}$), $E = 10$.
7. Evaluate on val set; compute confusion matrix, ROC/PR curves, and classification report.
8. Save best-performing weights $M^\star$.

End.

4) Training and optimization: The ResNet-18 model was optimized using the Adam optimizer, initialized with a learning rate of 1×10^{-3} and a batch size of 32. Training was conducted over 30 epochs under a patient-wise data partitioning strategy, where 70% of subjects were allocated for training and 30% for validation. This ensured that slices from the same patient were never shared across subsets, thereby preventing data leakage.

The learning objective was the categorical cross-entropy loss, defined as Eq. (9):

$$\mathcal{L} = -\sum_{c=1}^{3} y_c \log P(y=c|X), \tag{9}$$

where, y_c denotes the one-hot encoded ground truth label for class c and $P(y = c|X)$ is the predicted posterior probability for input X.

The incorporation of residual connections within ResNet-18, combined with careful normalization and the augmentation strategies described earlier, stabilized optimization and improved generalization. Despite having fewer layers than deeper variants such as ResNet-50, the 18-layer architecture provided a favorable trade-off between complexity and efficiency, confirming its suitability as a lightweight yet robust framework for automated collateral grading in ischemic stroke.

D. Evaluation Metrics

To rigorously assess the classification performance, a set of standard evaluation metrics was derived from the confusion matrix entries: true positives (TP), false positives (FP), true negatives (TN), and false negatives (FN). Each metric captures a complementary aspect of the model's behavior.

Accuracy: [Eq. (10)] quantifies the proportion of correctly classified cases across all predictions.

$$\text{Accuracy} = \frac{TP + TN}{TP + TN + FP + FN} \tag{10}$$

Recall (Sensitivity): [Eq. (11)] measures the ability of the model to correctly identify positive samples.

$$\text{Recall (Sensitivity)} = \frac{TP}{TP + FN} \tag{11}$$

Specificity: [Eq. (12)] reflects the effectiveness of the model in correctly rejecting negative samples.

$$\text{Specificity} = \frac{TN}{TN + FP} \tag{12}$$

Precision: [Eq. (13)] evaluates the reliability of positive predictions by measuring the proportion of true positives among all predicted positives.

$$\text{Precision} = \frac{TP}{TP + FP} \tag{13}$$

Finally, the *F1-score* [Eq. (14)] harmonizes precision and recall into a single measure, which is particularly informative under class imbalance.

$$\text{F1-score} = \frac{2 \times \text{Precision} \times \text{Recall}}{\text{Precision} + \text{Recall}} \tag{14}$$

For multi-class evaluation, overall performance can also be aggregated. Macro-averaging computes the simple mean of per-class metrics, treating each class equally. Micro-averaging instead pools contributions from all classes before computing the metric, emphasizing the influence of larger classes. The micro-averaged accuracy is defined in Eq. (15) as:

$$\text{Micro-Accuracy} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{C} TP_i}{\sum_{i=1}^{C} (TP_i + FP_i + FN_i + TN_i)} \tag{15}$$

Here, counts of TP_i, FP_i, FN_i, and TN_i are summed across all classes before computing accuracy. This means that every sample contributes equally to the final score, and Micro-Accuracy effectively reflects dataset-level performance while giving more weight to majority classes.

VI. Results

The proposed ResNet-18 framework was systematically evaluated on the curated CBCT dataset for the tri-class problem of collateral circulation grading (*Good*, *Moderate*, and *Poor*). The evaluation highlights training dynamics, confusion matrix analysis, calibration reliability, and discriminative performance using precision–recall and ROC curves. Together, these perspectives provide a comprehensive understanding of the model's stability, predictive reliability, and classification power.

A. Training and Validation Dynamics

Fig. 7 illustrates the evolution of training and validation accuracy over 20 epochs. The model began with modest performance, but accuracy improved consistently as the residual layers were optimized. The majority of performance gains occurred within the first 10 epochs, after which the curves continued to rise more gradually. By the final epoch, training accuracy reached approximately 95% while validation accuracy stabilized near 89%. The relatively narrow gap between the two curves indicates effective generalization without signs of severe overfitting. This stability is attributed to the use of batch normalization, residual connections, and data augmentation, which collectively mitigated noise sensitivity and class imbalance effects.

The corresponding loss curves in Fig. 8 support these findings. Both training and validation losses decreased monotonically, from initial values above 1.2 to approximately 0.20 and 0.35, respectively. The rapid decline in the early epochs reflects efficient convergence of the optimizer, while the smoother downward trend during later epochs highlights the fine-tuning of network parameters. Importantly, the persistent but small gap between training and validation loss suggests that the model was able to learn discriminative features without overfitting, even with the relatively shallow 18-layer architecture.

Overall, the accuracy and loss dynamics demonstrate that the ResNet-18 architecture effectively learned discriminative representations from intra-procedural CBCT scans while maintaining stable generalization performance. Despite being shallower than ResNet-50, the residual design allowed the network to converge efficiently and achieve robust validation accuracy, supporting its suitability as a lightweight yet reliable framework for automated collateral grading in ischemic stroke.

B. Confusion Matrix and Class-Wise Metrics

The validation confusion matrix (Fig. 9) provides detailed insight into the classification behavior of the proposed ResNet-18 model. Out of the validation set, the network correctly identified 3500 cases as Good, 1400 as Moderate, and 944 as Poor. Misclassifications were more frequent in the intermediate category: 237 Good cases were mislabeled as Moderate and 127 as Poor, while 107 Moderate cases were predicted as

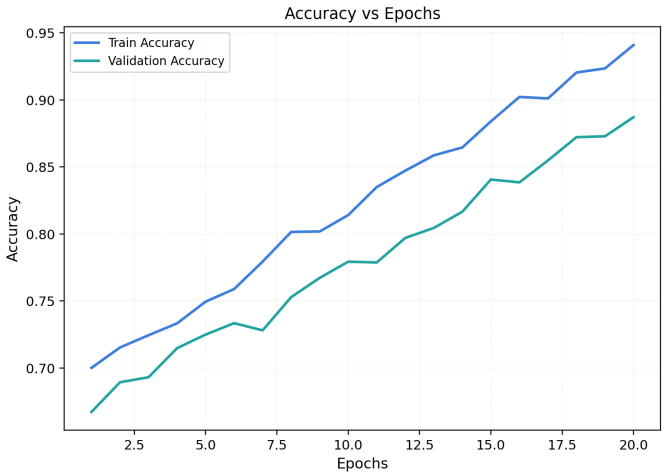

Fig. 7. Training and validation accuracy across 20 epochs for ResNet-18.

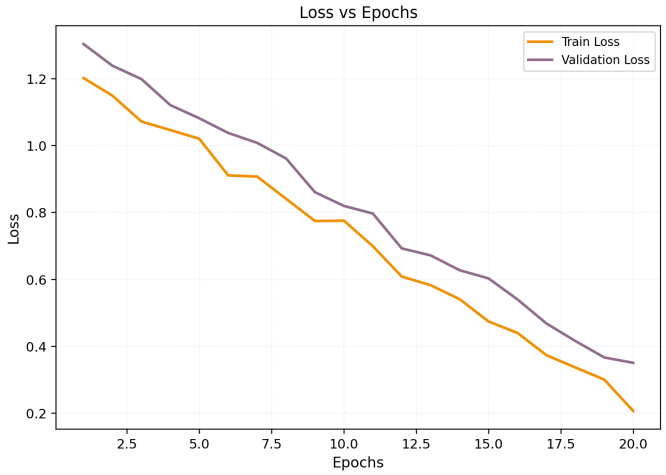

Fig. 8. Training and validation loss across 20 epochs for ResNet-18.

Good and 57 as Poor. For the Poor class, 136 instances were predicted as Good and 74 as Moderate.

As shown in Fig. 9, the highest overlap occurred within the *Moderate* category, reflecting its clinically ambiguous nature and morphological similarity to both Good and Poor grades. This observation is consistent with prior clinical studies, where neuroradiologists also reported lower agreement in intermediate collateral grading. By contrast, the *Good* and *Poor* categories exhibited more distinct imaging patterns, resulting in higher recognition accuracy and fewer cross-class confusions.

From the confusion matrix, class-wise performance metrics were computed and are summarized in Table IV. The *Good* class achieved the strongest balance across precision (93.5%), recall (90.6%), and F1-score (92.0%), highlighting its distinct imaging features. The *Moderate* class maintained a high recall of 89.5% but showed reduced precision (81.8%), reflecting its tendency to be confused with both extremes. The *Poor* class achieved relatively balanced precision (83.7%) and recall (81.8%), with strong specificity (96.6%) underscoring its separability from the Good group.

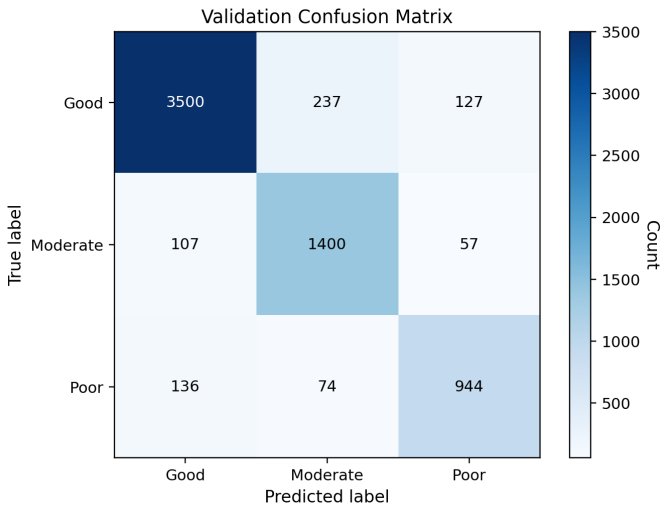

Fig. 9. Validation confusion matrix for three-class collateral classification using ResNet-18.

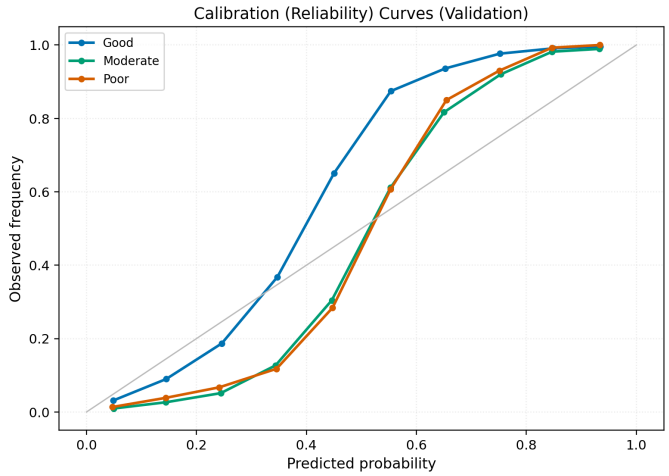

Fig. 10. Calibration curves showing the reliability of predicted probabilities for each class using ResNet-18.

Overall, the framework achieved a validation accuracy of 88.79%, with macro-averaged F1-score of 0.8675. These results confirm the robustness of ResNet-18 in capturing clinically meaningful collateral circulation patterns while also emphasizing the inherent challenge of accurately distinguishing intermediate cases.

TABLE IV. CLASS-WISE AND OVERALL EVALUATION METRICS FOR THREE-CLASS COLLATERAL CLASSIFICATION ON THE VALIDATION SET

Class	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	Specificity	F1-Score
Good	0.9078	0.9351	0.9058	0.9106	0.9202
Moderate	0.9278	0.8182	0.8951	0.9380	0.8550
Poor	0.9401	0.8369	0.8180	0.9661	0.8273
Overall	**0.8879**	**0.8634**	**0.8730**	**0.9382**	**0.8675**

Note: Overall accuracy is micro-averaged, while precision, recall, specificity, and F1-score are macro-averaged.

C. Calibration Reliability

The calibration curves in Fig. 10 assess the reliability of probability estimates generated by the ResNet-18 model. A perfectly calibrated model would follow the diagonal reference line, where predicted confidence values correspond directly to true outcome frequencies. In this study, the Good class tracked the diagonal closely across most probability bins, reflecting well-calibrated confidence estimates. The Moderate and Poor classes showed mild underconfidence in the mid-probability range (0.4–0.7), where the model's predicted likelihoods underestimated the true observed frequencies. This behavior is clinically advantageous compared to overconfidence, as it reduces the risk of misclassifying ambiguous cases with unwarranted certainty.

Overall, the calibration analysis confirms that the proposed ResNet-18 framework not only achieved competitive classification accuracy but also generated probability outputs that align closely with observed outcomes. The well-calibrated predictions strengthen the clinical applicability of the model, ensuring that decision-support systems based on its outputs provide both accuracy and reliability in hyperacute stroke assessment.

D. Precision–Recall and ROC Analysis

Fig. 11 illustrates the precision–recall (PR) curves for one-vs-rest classification using ResNet-18. The model achieved average precision (AP) scores of 0.975 for Good, 0.923 for Moderate, and 0.886 for Poor, with a micro-averaged score of 0.947. These results indicate that the network maintained high precision even as recall increased, demonstrating effective control of false positives across varying thresholds. The highest AP value for the Good class reflects the clearer vascular signatures of well-developed collaterals, which the model distinguished with high confidence. By contrast, the lower AP for the Poor class highlights the known challenge of differentiating weak collateral filling patterns, which often overlap visually with intermediate grades.

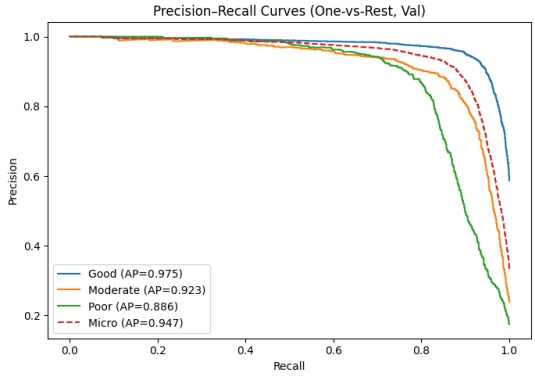

Fig. 11. Precision–recall curves for one-vs-rest classification across the three collateral classes using ResNet-18.

Fig. 12 shows the receiver operating characteristic (ROC) curves, which evaluate the trade-off between sensitivity and

TABLE V. COMPARISON OF COLLATERAL CIRCULATION CLASSIFICATION STUDIES USING AI TECHNIQUES

Study	Modality	Purpose	Method	Key Result
[40]	4D-CTA	Classification	ResNet34 (single vs. multi-image)	AUC 0.85–0.89
[41]	CTA	Classification	Multimodal DL + AutoML	Acc 91.2–94.1%
[42]	CTA (multiphase)	Classification	Fusion attention (CCA4CTA)	Acc 90.4%
[43]	MRI	Classification	CNN + ML (RF, SVM, k-NN)	Acc 72% (CNN)
[44]	CTA	Classification	CNN-SVM, ResNet, ViTs	Acc 62–77%
[39]	CBCT	Classification	VGG11	Acc 58.3%
[38]	CBCT	Classification	ResNet18	Acc 65.9%
This Study	**CBCT**	**Classification**	**ResNet-18**	**Acc $\approx$ 88.8%**

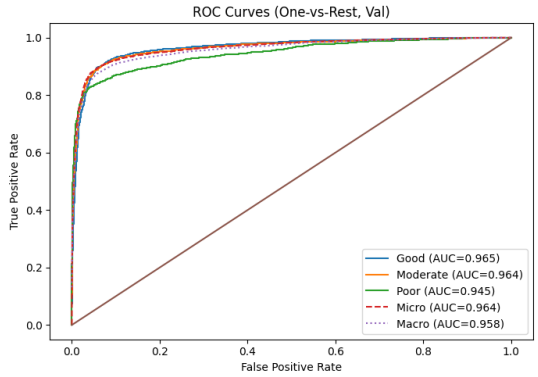

Fig. 12. ROC curves for one-vs-rest classification across the three collateral classes using ResNet-18, including micro- and macro-averaged performance.

specificity. The areas under the curve (AUC) were 0.965 for Good, 0.964 for Moderate, and 0.945 for Poor, with micro- and macro-averaged AUC values of 0.964 and 0.958, respectively. These consistently high values demonstrate that the model was highly effective in distinguishing among the three classes with minimal false positive rates. The Good and Moderate classes showed the highest separability, while the Poor class, although slightly lower, still achieved clinically meaningful discrimination.

Together, the PR and ROC analysis provide complementary perspectives on model performance. The PR curves highlight the precision–recall trade-off in an imbalanced clinical dataset, while the ROC curves confirm the model's strong sensitivity and specificity across thresholds. The consistently high AP and AUC values reinforce the robustness of the ResNet-18 framework and support its potential as a decision-support tool for neuroradiologists in hyperacute stroke collateral grading.

VII. DISCUSSION

This visualization supports the quantitative findings discussed earlier, confirming that the deep learning framework not only achieves high classification accuracy but also effectively localizes key vascular territories associated with each clinical grade. By mapping vascular intensity patterns onto interpretable color-coded overlays, the model provides transparent evidence of its decision process—enhancing clinical interpretability and trust for automated collateral assessment.

This study demonstrates that a slice-level ResNet-18 trained on intra-procedural CBCT can reliably classify collateral circulation into three clinically meaningful categories with high discrimination and well-calibrated probabilities. The novelty of this study does not lie in claiming CBCT superiority over CT or MRI in image quality, but rather in demonstrating that CBCT despite lower soft-tissue contrast—can achieve clinically competitive performance when paired with an optimized deep learning framework. Unlike CT and MRI, CBCT is acquired intra-procedurally in the angiography suite, enabling rapid decision support during endovascular treatment. By substantially outperforming prior CBCT-based AI studies and approaching the performance of CTA-based systems, this work establishes CBCT as a practical modality for automated collateral assessment.

The learning curves (Fig. 7 and Fig. 8) showed steady improvement in both training and validation accuracy with a monotonic decline in loss, indicating stable optimization and limited overfitting. The confusion matrix (Fig. 9) revealed that most misclassifications occurred in the *Moderate* class, reflecting its inherent overlap with *Good* and *Poor* collateral patterns. Calibration and PR/ROC analysis (Fig. 10 to Fig. 12) confirmed reliable probability estimates and strong separability, with macro-AUC of approximately 0.958 and micro-AP of 0.947. These findings support the clinical potential of CBCT-based AI for rapid, intra-procedural collateral grading.

When benchmarked against CTA-based systems, the CBCT approach is competitive. Wang et al. [40] reported AUCs of 0.85–0.89 on 4D-CTA with ResNet34, Tan et al. [42] achieved 90.4% accuracy using a multiphase attention model, and Raj et al. [41] reached 91.2–94.1% accuracy via multimodal fusion. Although CTA benefits from higher contrast-to-noise ratios and larger curated datasets, the CBCT model attained 88.8% validation accuracy and a macro-averaged ROC AUC of 0.958, indicating that despite CBCT's lower soft-tissue contrast and higher scatter, it can provide comparable diagnostic utility. Table V summarizes representative studies across modalities; notably, the last row shows this study ResNet-18 on CBCT markedly outperforming prior CBCT efforts (Ali 2023: 65.9%; Ali 2024: 58.3%), while approaching the performance reported for strong CTA baselines. While deeper residual or hybrid CNN-Transformer models may capture richer vascular features, the findings establish that ResNet-18 provides a strong and clinically meaningful baseline without heavy computational demands.

The improvement over prior CBCT studies is striking. Ali et al. [39] achieved only 58.3% accuracy with VGG11, while Ali et al. [38] reported 65.9% accuracy with ResNet-18 on a binary task. In contrast, the present study achieved nearly 89% accuracy on a more challenging three-class problem, advancing both the task complexity and the absolute performance margin. These improvements stem from patient-wise data partitioning (eliminating slice leakage), rigorous preprocessing with realistic augmentation (reducing bias and variance), and a two-phase fine-tuning strategy with label smoothing and class weighting (stabilizing training and improving calibration). Even though ResNet-18 is shallower than ResNet-50, its residual design effectively captured subtle vascular features when paired with optimized training strategies. Nonetheless, certain limitations remain. The dataset was limited to a single center, and validation was internal, raising questions about generalizability across institutions, scanners, and protocols. Slice-level labels served as proxies for patient-level grading, which may not fully reflect global collateral status. Future work should explore multi-center external validation, patient-level modeling with attention-based frameworks, and the integration of 2.5D/3D encoders or CNN–Transformer hybrids. Physics-informed preprocessing, such as scatter correction and denoising, may also further improve CBCT performance.

Overall, the results highlight a clear research gap addressed by this study: most prior CBCT efforts used shallow models and binary tasks, resulting in modest accuracy and limited clinical value. By combining CBCT with a residual architecture (ResNet-18), expanding to three-class grading, and applying systematic data augmentation, this study demonstrates a substantial step forward in accuracy, calibration, and clinical relevance. This design choice leverages both CBCT's intra-procedural accessibility and ResNet-18's efficiency, underscoring the potential of CBCT-based deep learning as a dependable tool for collateral assessment in hyperacute stroke workflows.

VIII. Conclusion

This study introduced a ResNet-18 based deep learning framework for automated tri-class classification of collateral circulation (*Good*, *Moderate*, *Poor*) in ischemic stroke patients using intra-procedural CBCT imaging. By employing patient-wise data partitioning, rigorous preprocessing, and systematic augmentation, the model achieved robust performance with a validation accuracy of approximately 88.8%, micro-AP of 0.947, and macro-AUC of 0.958. The framework demonstrated consistent convergence, balanced class-wise metrics, and well-calibrated probability estimates suitable for threshold-based clinical decision support.

Compared to prior CBCT studies that employed shallower architectures such as VGG11 and earlier ResNet-18 implementations, the proposed model substantially improved discriminative power and calibration reliability. Misclassifications were concentrated in the Moderate class, reflecting inherent clinical ambiguity and highlighting the need for targeted strategies to enhance intermediate grading.

The study is limited by its single-center dataset and slice-level labeling, which may restrict generalizability. Future work should therefore focus on external multi-center validation, volumetric or hybrid CNN–Transformer architectures, and uncertainty-aware decision models.In addition, future studies may explore patient-level aggregation (case-level prediction rather than slice-level), 2.5D/3D encoders to incorporate volumetric context, and uncertainty-aware calibration strategies to support safer clinical deployment in borderline Moderate cases. Overall, the findings confirm the feasibility of ResNet-18–driven CBCT analysis as a reliable, efficient tool to support neuroradiologists in collateral grading during hyperacute stroke care.

Acknowledgment

The authors acknowledge the support of the Fisabilillah R&D Grant Scheme (FRDGS), Multimedia University (MMU), and Support from the UTeM Kesidang scholarship.

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A Robust RT-DETR-Based Method for Complex Self-Service Buffet Scene Detection

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***Abstract*—Object detection in buffet-style environments is highly challenging due to densely stacked tableware, frequent occlusions, strong illumination reflections, and substantial visual similarity across categories, all of which undermine the robustness of existing detectors. To address these issues, this paper proposes an improved real-time detection transformer–based model with a lightweight design while significantly enhancing multi-scale feature representation. First, a re-parameterized stem module is introduced to strengthen shallow texture extraction with negligible computational overhead. Second, a dynamic multi-kernel refinement module is developed to enrich directional texture modeling and cross-scale semantic aggregation. Furthermore, a heterogeneous-kernel feature pyramid network is constructed by integrating adaptive multi-scale fusion, multi-kernel fusion nodes, and a lightweight upsampling strategy to improve cross-level feature consistency and mitigate aliasing caused by conventional upsampling. Experimental results on a self-constructed buffet-scene dataset demonstrate that the proposed method improves $\mathbf{mAP}_{50}$ and $\mathbf{mAP}_{50:95}$ by 2.6% and 1.9%, respectively, while reducing parameters and GFLOPs by 42.6% and 42.3%, and increasing inference speed to 103.1 FPS. On Dota v1.0 and SkyFusion data sets, the small target detection ability has also been improved. The substantial reductions in computation and model size further confirm the effectiveness and practical value of the proposed approach for complex catering scenarios.**

***Keywords*—RT-DETR; lightweight object detection; multi-scale feature fusion; attention enhancement; buffet-scene perception**

I. Introduction

Object detection in buffet scenarios is a fundamental component of intelligent catering systems, and its results directly affect key processes such as dish consumption analysis, automatic replenishment scheduling, and checkout verification. However, compared with ordinary scenes, buffet environments are characterized by densely stacked tableware, frequent occlusions caused by serving actions, strong reflections from metal or ceramic surfaces, and high visual similarity between categories. These factors make small and overlapping objects highly prone to missed detections; highlighted regions disrupt texture consistency, while visually similar categories lead to an increase in false positives. Therefore, achieving high-precision, robust, and real-time object detection in complex buffet scenarios remains a major challenge for intelligent catering systems.

In recent years, research on object detection in dense scenes, small-object detection, and complex illumination conditions has continued to advance [1]. On the one hand, Wang *et al.* proposed YOLOv10, which removes non-maximum suppression and performs holistic end-to-end architectural optimization, achieving leading accuracy across different model scales on the COCO benchmark [2]. On the other hand, Wang *et al.* introduced RODD, a dedicated benchmark for reflected-object detection, and demonstrated that multiple state-of-the-art detectors still suffer from noticeable performance degradation under reflective-surface scenarios [3]; meanwhile, a NeurIPS 2024 study proposed illumination-invariant feature learning for low-light object detection and reported consistent gains when integrated into existing detection frameworks, indicating that illumination variation remains a non-trivial bottleneck [4]. In addition, two-stage detection frameworks are often limited by their high inference cost in resource-constrained deployments; for example, Liu *et al.* proposed simplification strategies for on-device inference of two-stage detectors to reduce computational complexity [5]. Transformer-based detectors, such as DETR [6] and Deformable DETR [7], model global context via self-attention and thus exhibit stronger robustness in complex scenes. However, standard DETR still suffers from slow convergence and unstable matching. Although Zhao *et al.* proposed RT-DETR, which enables real-time end-to-end transformer detection through structural simplification [8], subsequent studies have continued to improve its training strategy and small-object detection capability. Overall, these advances suggest that, for densely stacked and heavily occluded catering scenarios, there remains a pressing need for new detection solutions that strengthen shallow spatial feature representation and cross-scale feature fusion.

To cope with the above challenges, existing studies have proposed various improvement strategies from the perspectives of backbone enhancement, multi-scale fusion design, and attention mechanism optimization. However, these methods often focus on a single aspect, such as strengthening convolutional representation to improve fine details, enhancing feature pyramids to boost small-object detection, or introducing sparse attention to mitigate background interference. For buffet tableware detection scenarios where density, small-object scale, strong reflections, and occlusions coexist, a systematic solution is still lacking. In particular, under the constraints of lightweight design and real-time inference, how to enhance spatial detail modeling and cross-scale feature consistency within a limited computational budget remains a key bottleneck.

In this work, we propose an improved model based on RT-DETR as the baseline, specifically tailored for complex buffet scenarios. The main contributions of this paper are summarized as follows:

- We propose a lightweight, end-to-end detection framework tailored for complex self-service buffet scenarios, where dense stacking, severe occlusion, specular reflections, and high inter-class visual similarity com-

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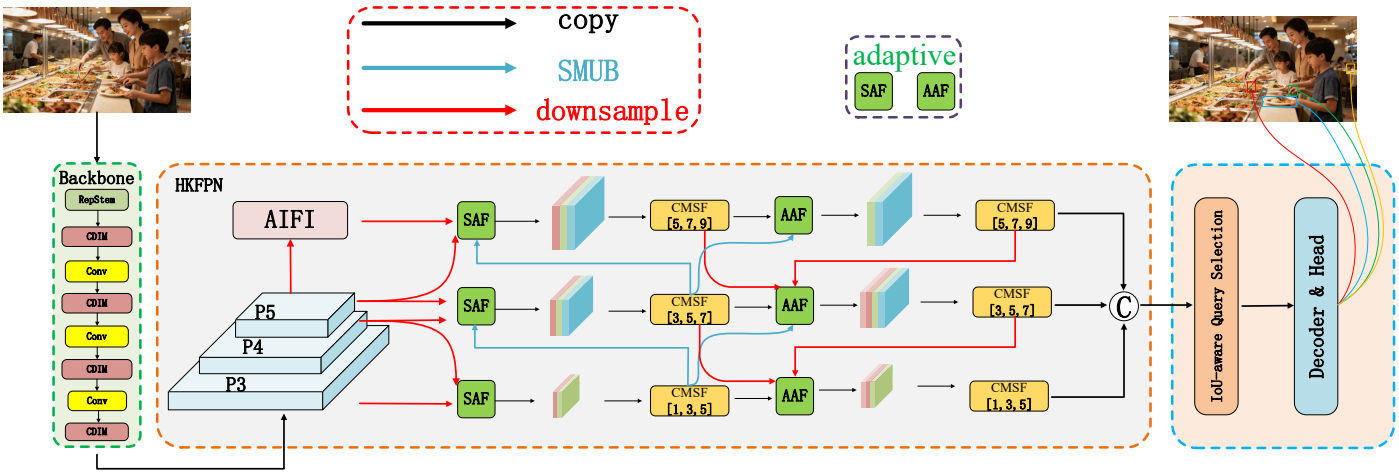


Fig. 1. Network structure of the proposed improved RT-DETR model.

monly coexist. The proposed framework is designed in a system-oriented manner, jointly optimizing feature extraction, multi-scale representation, and fusion efficiency to enable robust real-time detection.

- To enhance fine-grained discrimination and scale-aware representation under dense stacking and reflection interference, we design a lightweight backbone by integrating RepStem [9] with the proposed CDIM (Cross-Scale Fusion Dynamic Dual-Depth Inception Module). As a scene-driven enhancement unit, CDIM combines dynamic dual-path convolution with an adaptive Inception-style kernel selection mechanism, strengthening local texture perception and cross-scale context modeling while maintaining low computational overhead.

- We further construct HKFPN (Heterogeneous Kernel Feature Pyramid Network) as a scale-aware pyramid fusion architecture specifically for buffet scenes. HKFPN introduces heterogeneous large-kernel selection across pyramid levels and incorporates CMSF (Cross-stage Multi-Scale Fusion) and SMUB (Shift-Channel Mixed Upsampling Block) as collaborative fusion nodes together with an adaptive fusion mechanism [10]. This coordinated design mitigates feature aliasing and detail loss induced by conventional upsampling, thereby improving feature consistency and detection robustness for small, medium, and large objects in cluttered environments.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section II reviews related work on object detection in dense scenes, small-object detection, and transformer-based detectors. Section III describes the proposed method in detail, including the overall architecture and key modules. Section IV presents extensive experimental results and comparisons with state-of-the-art methods. Finally, Section V discusses the limitations of the proposed approach and outlines directions for future work, while Section VI concludes the paper.

II. Related Work

A. Object Detection in Dense and Complex Catering Scenarios

In dense near-field environments such as retail shelf recognition, unmanned vending systems, kitchen scene monitoring, and buffet tableware sorting, objects are often closely arranged, visually similar in shape, and heavily occluded. Traditional detectors tend to degrade significantly under such conditions. Goldman et al. constructed the SKU-110K densely shelf benchmark and demonstrated that mainstream detectors suffer notable performance degradation under homogeneous and crowded target distributions [11]. YOLO-based kitchen perception systems have achieved real-time recognition of cookware and cooking states, validating the applicability of lightweight detectors under strong reflections and complex illumination [12]. In buffet tableware recycling and sorting applications, RGB-D detection has been employed for tableware localization and grasping, providing engineering-oriented solutions to stacking and occlusion problems [13], [14]. For ceramic tableware surface defect detection, domain-specific datasets have been proposed, and YOLOv8-based frameworks have been developed. However, multi-scale small defects remain challenging for detectors, and reflective or patterned surfaces easily cause false detections or missed detections, underscoring the need for stronger fine-grained feature representation and targeted augmentations [15].

These studies collectively show that complex illumination, dense arrangement, and strong visual similarity are the primary challenges in tableware detection tasks, requiring more robust fine-grained feature modeling and cross-scale information fusion.

B. Improvements on RT-DETR

Research on improving RT-DETR mainly focuses on backbone enhancement, multi-scale fusion strengthening, attention optimization, and supervision strategy design. In terms of backbone enhancement, some works incorporate more efficient convolutional structures such as PConv [16] and FasterNet [17] to improve low-level texture and edge modeling, thereby enhancing small-object separability in dense scenes.

TABLE I. COMPARISON OF RELATED STUDIES AND THEIR STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

Line of Work	Representative Works	Strengths	Limitations in Buffet Scenes
Dense benchmark analysis	SKU-110K [11]	Quantifies degradation in dense, homogeneous layouts.	Omits buffet-specific factors like specular highlights, fine-grained similarity.
Real-time kitchen perception	Kitchen YOLO [12]	Real-time recognition under complex illumination.	Not optimized for dense stacking and small objects; prone to confusion under occlusion.
RGB-D sorting and grasping	RGB-D pipelines [13], [14]	Depth cues improve robustness to occlusion and stacking.	Requires extra sensors and is less scalable.
Defect inspection on ceramics	Ceramic defect detection [15]	Effective for localized surface anomaly recognition.	Different objective from multi-class instance detection.

For multi-scale fusion, structures such as FPN [18], PANet [19], and BiFPN [20] are widely used to improve cross-layer feature consistency. Meanwhile, ASFF [21] and CARAFE [22] enhance small-object representation through adaptive weighting or content-aware upsampling, effectively mitigating feature aliasing introduced by conventional upsampling.

Regarding attention mechanism optimization, lightweight modules such as CBAM [23], Coordinate Attention [24], and HiLo Attention [25] strengthen spatial feature selection and global contextual representation, helping maintain stable feature modeling under complex background interference.

Despite the encouraging progress, existing approaches still exhibit clear limitations when deployed in buffet-like catering environments. A comparative analysis of their strengths and weaknesses is summarized in Table I.

III. METHOD

Building upon the original structure of RT-DETR, this work introduces a systematic lightweight design and a series of detection-performance enhancement strategies, resulting in an improved model. Without significantly increasing computational cost, we incorporate lightweight modules to strengthen multi-scale feature extraction and boost fine-grained representation capability. In the backbone stage, a lightweight RepStem module is introduced to reduce redundant parameters while enhancing shallow feature discrimination. For deep feature extraction, the proposed CDIM module reinforces multi-directional texture modeling and cross-scale semantic interaction. Furthermore, to address the limitations of traditional feature pyramids, we design a heterogeneous kernel fusion network, HKFPN, which integrates adaptive multi-scale fusion and ensures stronger cross-layer feature consistency. The overall architecture is illustrated in Fig. 1.

A. Lightweight RepStem Backbone

In restaurant scenarios, images often suffer from uneven illumination, specular reflection, and severe edge blur, which cause the traditional stem layer in RT-DETR to struggle in capturing fine-grained details and maintaining a balance between local and global information. Although the conventional downsampling design is simple and efficient, it provides insufficient shallow feature extraction during the early stages and cannot fully support real-time deployment when deeper layers introduce substantial computational cost. To address this issue, a lightweight RepStem module is introduced at the front end of the network to enhance shallow feature representation while improving inference efficiency. The structural differences relative to the traditional stem layer are shown in Fig. 2.

The core idea of the RepStem design is as follows. During the training stage, a multi-branch structure is adopted for three convolutional layers, maintaining a 4× downsampling rate while dynamically learning multi-branch feature enhancement and high-efficiency fusion. The process is illustrated in Eq. (1) and Eq. (2), where the fused shallow features capture richer edge information and directional detail cues.

$$W_{\text{fused}} = \sum_{i=1}^{n} W_i * Pad_i \tag{1}$$

$$b_{\text{fused}} = \sum_{i=1}^{n} b_i \tag{2}$$

During inference, the multi-branch parameters are equivalently merged into a single 3×3 convolution kernel, enabling improved feature diversity without increasing computational overhead. This mechanism can be viewed as a "train-time over-parameterization, inference-time simplification" design, providing stronger feature modeling during the learning stage while maintaining lightweight computation during deployment. The fused convolutional operation is shown in Eq. (3).

$$y = \text{Conv}(x, W_{\text{fused}}) + b_{\text{fused}} \tag{3}$$

Here, W_i denotes the convolution kernel of the i-th branch, Pad_i is the corresponding padding matrix used to ensure unified kernel sizes, and b_i is the bias term of the i-th branch. W_{fused} and b_{fused} represent the equivalent fused kernel and bias after branch merging.

Consequently, the RepStem module achieves a 4× downsampling ratio by applying two stride-2 convolutions in the first two layers, while the third convolution operates with stride 1 for feature refinement, as shown in Eq. (4) and Eq. (5):

$$x_{\text{stem}} = f_3(f_2(f_1(x))) \tag{4}$$

$$f_i(x) = \sigma(\text{BN}(\text{Conv}_i(x))) \tag{5}$$

where, $f_i(\cdot)$ denotes the convolutional mapping of the i-th layer, σ represents the activation function, and x_{stem} is the final output of the RepStem module.

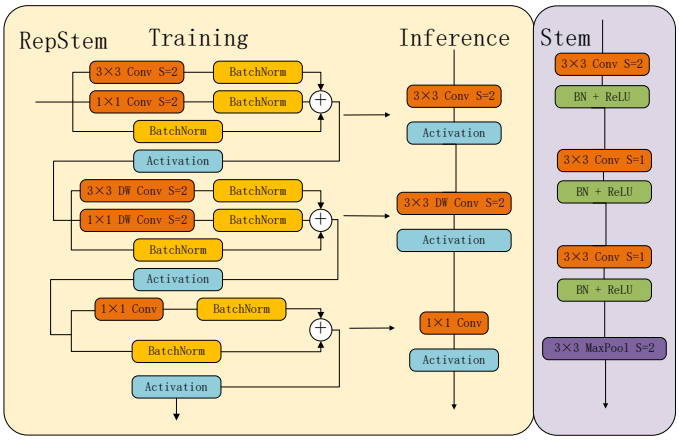


Fig. 2. Comparison between the proposed RepStem module and the original RT-DETR stem block. The left part illustrates the training- and inference-stage architectures of RepStem with multi-branch convolutions, while the right part shows the conventional ConvNorm-based stem composed of three stacked ConvNorm layers followed by a 3×3 max-pooling layer that achieves $4\times$ downsampling.

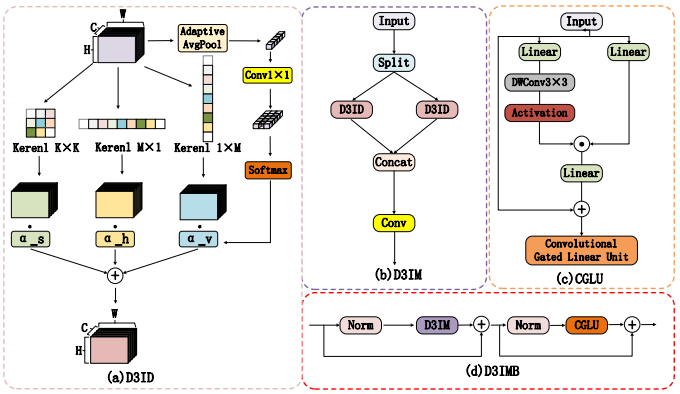


Fig. 3. CDIM is composed of several dynamic branches: Dynamic multi-depth convolution D3ID (Dynamic Dual-Depth Inception DWConv), dynamic mixing unit D3IM (Dynamic Dual-Depth Inception Mixer), CGLU (Convolutional Gated Linear Unit), and D3IMB (Dynamic Dual-Depth Inception Mixer Block). Combined with the CSP partition-and-fusion design, these components are integrated into a unified modular structure.

In RepStem, $f_1(\cdot)$ and $f_2(\cdot)$ are implemented as stride-2 convolutions for spatial downsampling, whereas $f_3(\cdot)$ uses stride 1 to further refine the representation without changing the resolution.

B. Dynamic Multi-Kernel Inception Refinement Block

Convolutional neural networks rely on fixed convolution kernels and static feature extraction mechanisms, which exhibit inherent limitations in many scenarios, particularly in complex restaurant environments where strong reflections, structural inconsistencies, and high inter-class similarity frequently occur. Traditional convolutions extract features using fixed kernel sizes and directions, and these receptive fields and weights remain fixed during inference. Such a static design often ignores the dynamic variations in image content, making it difficult for the model to handle multi-scale objects, strong reflections, occlusions, and fine-grained structures.

To address these challenges, this paper introduces a lightweight and dynamically adaptive feature refinement module, termed CDIM. This module enhances feature representation while preserving real-time performance and computational efficiency by adaptively selecting multi-kernel receptive fields and cross-depth feature fusion., as illustrated in Fig. 3.

At the bottom layer, D3ID designs three parallel depthwise convolution branches. To enable adaptive selection under different spatial contexts, the module introduces dynamic kernel weighting, allowing the network to adjust the contribution of each directional kernel based on the input content. Through lightweight reparameterization, the module generates dynamic selection weights for the three branches, and the final dynamic depthwise convolution is computed as in Eq. (6) and Eq. (7):

$$\alpha = \mathrm{Softmax}\left(W(\mathrm{AvgPool}(x))\right) \in \mathbb{R}^3 \tag{6}$$

$$\begin{aligned}\mathrm{DIDC}(x) = \alpha_s \mathrm{DW}_s(x) + \alpha_h \mathrm{DW}_h(x) \\ + \alpha_v \mathrm{DW}_v(x)\end{aligned} \tag{7}$$

where, DW_s denotes square depthwise convolution, DW_h horizontal strip depthwise convolution, and DW_v vertical strip convolution. The input tensor $x \in \mathbb{R}^{B\times C\times H\times W}$ represents the given feature map.

On this basis, D3IM further splits the input along the channel dimension into multiple groups, extracting features with dynamic kernels of different receptive field sizes, and subsequently fusing them through a 1×1 convolution. This design aggregates multi-scale upper–lower semantic cues and enhances the model's capacity to jointly encode local and global information.

D3IM then combines the above dynamic paths with a residual connection and a CGLU-based gated dual-branch structure. The first branch employs Mixer to realize dynamic multi-kernel feature aggregation, while the second branch uses CGLU to perform lightweight nonlinear modulation and adaptive feature recalibration. A learnable *LayerScale* parameter is introduced to stabilize the optimization by gradually increasing the residual scaling during training. Additionally, an optional *DropPath* is applied to improve generalization. The fused output in the inference stage is computed as:

$$\begin{aligned}\mathrm{DCMB}(x) = x + \gamma_1 \mathrm{DIM}(\mathrm{BN}(x)) + \gamma_2 \mathrm{MLP}(\\ \mathrm{BN}(x + \gamma_1 \mathrm{DIM}(\mathrm{BN}(x))))\end{aligned} \tag{8}$$

where, γ_1 and γ_2 are learnable scaling coefficients.

C. High-Efficiency Multi-Scale Adaptive Bidirectional Feature Pyramid Network

To address the inconsistency of multi-scale feature representation caused by densely distributed small objects, rapid occlusions, and strong reflections in catering scenarios, and to further enhance cross-scale feature fusion capability while maintaining lightweight design and real-time performance, we propose a high-efficiency multi-branch multi-scale feature pyramid network, termed HKFPN.

The proposed structure is inspired by the overall design philosophy of the MAFPN module and integrates lightweight

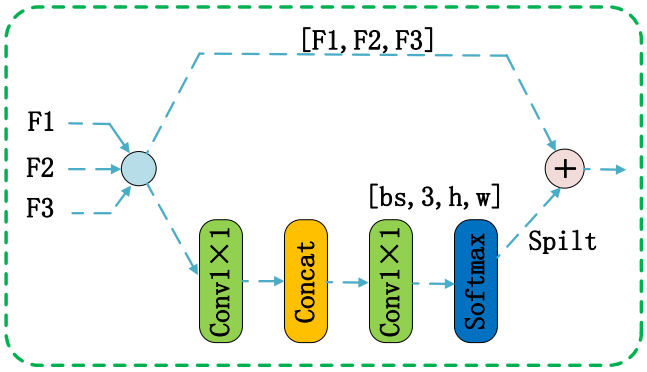


Fig. 4. Features $\{P3, P4, P5\}$ extracted from the backbone are first projected to aligned channel dimensions through pointwise convolutions, forming the three base features $\{F1, F2, F3\}$ that serve as the initial nodes of the HKFPN structure. On top of this, we construct lateral connections and cross-scale fusion pathways for each level, enabling the network to simultaneously receive high-level semantic cues and low-level spatial details.

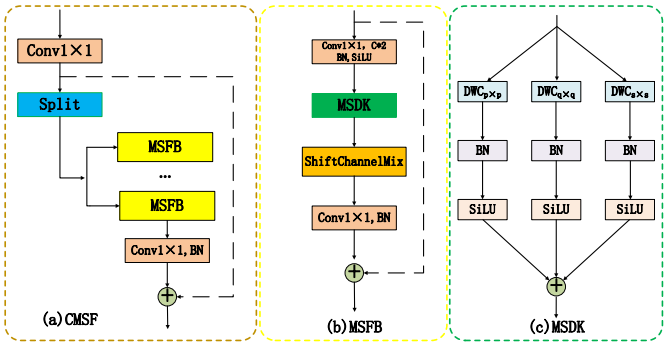


Fig. 5. (a) CMSF adopts parallel convolution branches of different kernel sizes. This design preserves the model's representational capability while reducing computational overhead and mitigating performance degradation in deep networks. (b) MSFB incorporates a Shift-Channel Mix operator to effectively rearrange channel information, achieving efficient feature interaction and cross-scale fusion. (c) MSDK employs multi-branch depthwise convolutions with different kernel sizes at different stages (e.g., {1,3,5}) to enhance scale sensitivity through parallel and depthwise aggregated feature extraction.

principles to perform comprehensive optimization on multi-scale feature fusion and upsampling pathways. HKFPN consists of three major components: an adaptive multi-scale feature fusion module, a multi-kernel aggregation node, and an efficient upsampling module. Together, these components construct a high-performance, scalable, and jointly global–local expressive feature fusion architecture.

1) Adaptive multi-scale feature fusion mechanism: HKFPN achieves bidirectional feature flow across levels P3–P5 through densely connected top-down and bottom-up pathways. Unlike traditional FPN and BiFPN, which rely on fixed-weight fusion for cross-scale aggregation, HKFPN introduces a spatially adaptive fusion strategy that dynamically evaluates feature importance across different scales and semantic levels at each spatial location. Specifically, the fusion weights are predicted per pixel and normalized across scale branches, enabling content-aware integration by assigning higher weights to the most informative scale for a given position. The overall structure is illustrated in Fig. 4.

Let $\{F_i\}_{i=1}^{3}$ denote the aligned multi-scale features to be fused, where $F_i \in \mathbb{R}^{B\times C\times H\times W}$. We first concatenate them along the channel dimension and apply two 1×1 convolutions to obtain the unnormalized fusion logits:

$$S = \mathrm{Conv}_{1\times 1}\Big(\mathrm{Conv}_{1\times 1}\big(\mathrm{Concat}(F_1, F_2, F_3)\big)\Big), \quad S \in \mathbb{R}^{B\times 3\times H\times W}. \tag{9}$$

A spatially adaptive weighting tensor $W \in \mathbb{R}^{B\times 3\times H\times W}$ is then obtained by applying $\mathrm{Softmax}$ along the scale (branch) dimension at each spatial location:

$$W_i(x,y) = \frac{\exp(S_i(x,y))}{\sum_{j=1}^{3}\exp(S_j(x,y))}, \quad i \in \{1,2,3\}, \tag{10}$$

which enforces $\sum_{i=1}^{3} W_i(x,y) = 1$ for every (x,y).

The final fused feature map $F_{\mathrm{out}} \in \mathbb{R}^{B\times C\times H\times W}$ is computed by a per-location weighted summation:

$$F_{\mathrm{out}}(:,x,y) = \sum_{i=1}^{3} W_i(x,y)\, F_i(:,x,y), \tag{11}$$

where, $W_i(x,y)$ is a scalar weight shared across channels (i.e., broadcast along the channel dimension). This fusion strategy enables the network to dynamically adjust the contributions of different scales at each spatial location, thereby improving the joint encoding of spatial details and semantic representations.

2) Multi-scale large-kernel aggregation node: In the feature refinement stage following cross-scale fusion, we adopt the CMSF module as the basic aggregation unit.

The CMSF structure integrates the CSP paradigm with MSFB (Multi-Scale Fusion Block), enabling efficient multi-scale feature extraction by transmitting partial residual features and performing depth-wise multi-kernel aggregation. The overall structure is illustrated in Fig. 5.

The input features to the CMSF module are first split into two streams via a 1×1 convolution. One stream directly preserves the input features to avoid spatial information loss, while the other passes through a multi-scale MSFB branch to construct multi-scale receptive fields.

Finally, the two processed branches are concatenated channel-wise and subsequently fused by another 1×1 convolution.

In the MSFB module, the core operation is the Multi-Scale Depthwise Kernel Block (MSDK), which consists of three parallel depthwise convolution branches. At levels P3, P4, and P5, different kernel-selection strategies are adopted to adaptively extract multi-scale features. The Shift-Channel Mix operator is subsequently applied to enhance channel interaction, improving the integration of local and global features. The input is first expanded by a 1×1 convolution, followed by multi-scale depthwise convolutions and a final 1×1 compression layer to restore the channel dimension.

The MSFB and CMSF core computations can be formulated as:

$$\mathrm{MSFB}(x) = x + P_2\big(\mathrm{SCM}(\mathrm{MSDK}(P_1(x)))\big) \tag{12}$$

$$\mathrm{CMSF}(x) = \mathrm{Concat}(x_1,\ \mathrm{MSFB}(x_2))\big) \tag{13}$$

where, $P_1(\cdot)$ denotes the 1×1 convolution for channel expansion, $P_2(\cdot)$ is the 1×1 projection convolution, $\mathrm{SCM}(\cdot)$ represents the Shift-Channel Mix operator, $[x_1, x_2]$ are the two branches in the CSP structure, and $P(\cdot)$ is the final 1×1 fusion convolution at the CSP output.

3) SMUB: Lightweight upsampling module-based on channel shifting: In feature pyramid networks, the upsampling operation is a key step for establishing cross-level interactions. However, traditional upsampling methods often suffer from feature misalignment and semantic discontinuity, and their computational cost increases significantly when aiming to preserve high-resolution details. In CMSFB, the SMUB is constructed by improving upon the EUCB module in EMCAD [26] and the ShiftChannelMix operator in BHViT [27], integrating a channel-shifting mixed strategy to achieve a unified design that enhances feature representation while maintaining lightweight computation. Under the constraint of low computational complexity, SMUB effectively alleviates the feature inconsistency introduced during upsampling and improves spatial continuity and semantic coherence in high-resolution features. The overall structure is illustrated in Fig. 6.

Its computation pipeline is formulated as:

$$x_{\mathrm{up}} = \mathrm{DWConv}(\mathrm{Upsample}(x)) \tag{14}$$

$$x_{\mathrm{mix}} = \mathrm{ShiftChannelMix}(x_{\mathrm{up}}) \tag{15}$$

$$x_{\mathrm{out}} = \mathrm{Conv}_{1\times1}(x_{\mathrm{mix}}) \tag{16}$$

The Shift Channel Mix module redistributes information across channels by cyclically shifting subsets of channels, allowing different channel groups to perceive information from different spatial positions. This improves the feature representation ability without introducing computational overhead or learnable parameters. By reordering features via group-wise channel shifting, the module enhances cross-channel interaction. Its computation is expressed as:

$$x_{\mathrm{mix}}(c,h,w) = x\big((c+\Delta_c) \bmod C,\ h,\ w\big) \tag{17}$$

where, C is the total number of channels and Δ_c denotes the shift step size.

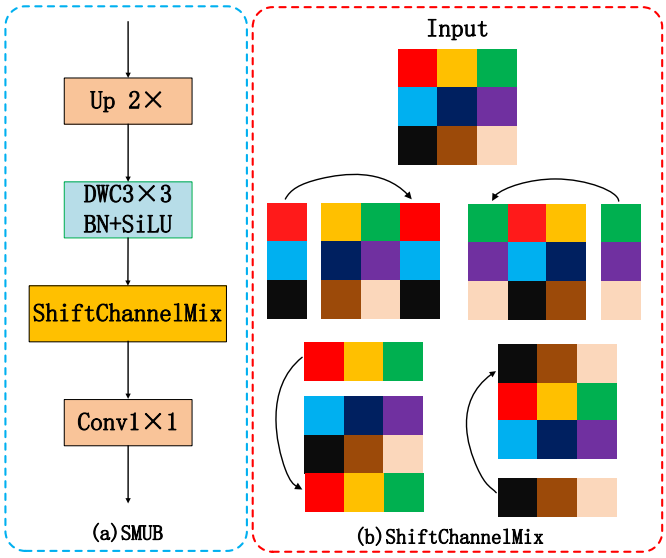


Fig. 6. (a) The upsampling depthwise convolution layer first performs 2× upsampling on the input feature and applies depthwise convolutions for local structure refinement, thereby enhancing spatial consistency under enlarged resolutions. The output is then fed into the Shift Channel Mix module for further feature enhancement, and subsequently compressed by a pointwise convolution for efficient channel reduction. (b) The Shift Channel Mix module divides the input feature into four equal groups along the channel dimension, followed by cyclic shifts in the positive and negative horizontal and vertical directions. The shifted features are finally concatenated and fused to achieve cross-channel information interaction and local feature refinement.

IV. Experimental Results and Analysis

A. Dataset

To support robust object detection in complex self-service buffet scenarios, we construct a composite tableware detection dataset by integrating publicly available data with self-collected samples into a unified benchmark. The dataset focuses on four object categories commonly encountered in buffet environments: cup, hand, plate, and tongs. We collect samples from complementary sources, including publicly released open-source datasets [28], [29], [30], [31], [32], publicly accessible royalty-free images gathered from online resources, and photographs captured by ourselves in real or near-real buffet environments. All self-collected images are manually annotated using LabelImg following the same annotation protocol as the public datasets and are subsequently incorporated into the final dataset.

To ensure consistency across heterogeneous sources, a unified preprocessing pipeline is applied to all data. Label normalization is performed to resolve naming inconsistencies and redundant labels across different datasets, such as *dish* versus *plate* and *hand* versus *human hand*.

All annotations are mapped to the four unified target categories, while labels irrelevant to the detection task are removed. During quality filtering, all images and corresponding annotations are manually inspected and cleaned, and low-quality samples with severe blur or excessive occlusion are discarded. Meanwhile, obvious annotation errors are corrected and invalid annotations are removed, and annotations from

TABLE II. CATEGORY-WISE DISTRIBUTION OF THE EXPERIMENTAL DATA SETS

Category	Number of Images
Hand	2415
Plate	1968
Cup	1756
Tongs	1570
Total	**7709**

heterogeneous formats are uniformly converted into the YOLO format.

The final dataset is split into training, validation, and testing subsets with a ratio of 7:2:1, while maintaining approximately balanced category distributions across splits. In total, the dataset contains 7,709 images, including 5,397 training samples, 1,531 validation samples, and 781 testing samples. The images span diverse viewpoints, brightness levels, and stacking complexities, providing a reliable basis for quantitative evaluation, and the category distribution of the constructed dataset is summarized in Table II.

Due to the wide variation in original image resolutions, all samples are resized to a fixed resolution of 640×640 during training to ensure input consistency and stable optimization while preserving aspect ratios as much as possible. Standard data augmentation techniques, including random flipping, color jittering, and affine transformations, are further applied to enhance model generalization under complex buffet conditions.

B. Experimental Settings

All experiments are conducted on an Ubuntu 22.04 operating system. The hardware configuration includes an Intel(R) Xeon(R) Platinum 8470Q CPU and an NVIDIA GeForce RTX 5090 GPU with 32 GB memory, and 90 GB system RAM. Python 3.12 and PyTorch 2.3.0 are used for deep-learning development, together with CUDA 12.1 as the GPU acceleration platform.

To ensure consistency of the experimental settings, the baseline RT-DETR is trained for 72 epochs following the official training schedule of its original implementation. In contrast, our model incorporates additional modules such as multi-scale feature fusion and adaptive weighting, which increase the optimization difficulty. Empirically, we observe that a longer training schedule is required to reach stable convergence. Therefore, we set the training duration of the proposed model to 300 epochs to ensure sufficient optimization while avoiding evident overfitting. During training, no optimization instability or divergence is observed, and both the training loss and validation performance exhibit smooth convergence trends. As shown in Fig. 7, the proposed method demonstrates stable convergence behavior in terms of mAP_{50} and $mAP_{50:95}$. The batch size is set to 32, and the AdamW optimizer is adopted with an initial learning rate of 0.0001 and a weight decay of 0.0001.

C. Evaluation Metrics

In this study, we adopt several commonly used evaluation metrics, including mean Average Precision (mAP), floating-point operations per second (GFLOPs), number of parameters (Params), and frames per second (FPS). Among them, mAP serves as the primary indicator to evaluate detection performance across all categories and is defined as follows:

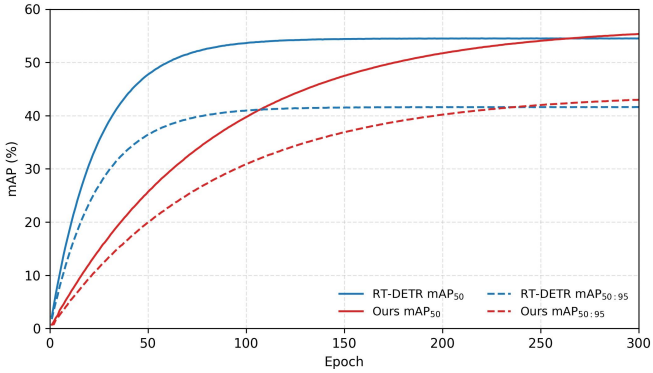


Fig. 7. Convergence curves of the baseline RT-DETR and the proposed method on the buffet tableware dataset.

$$mAP = \frac{\sum_{n=1}^{N} AP_n}{N} \tag{18}$$

D. Ablation Studies

To comprehensively evaluate the contribution of each proposed module to the overall detection performance, RT-DETR-r18 is adopted as the baseline model, upon which lightweight RepStem, the dynamic multi-kernel refinement module CDIM, and the heterogeneous multi-scale fusion network HKFPN are incrementally incorporated. All ablation experiments are conducted under identical training configurations and environmental settings. The results are summarized in Table III, where "✓" indicates that the corresponding module is enabled.

From the first row of results, it can be observed that replacing the original stem with the lightweight multi-branch feature extraction module RepStem leads to a notable improvement. Specifically, mAP_{50} increases to 54.8%, and $mAP_{50:95}$ rises to 42.3%. Meanwhile, the parameter count is slightly reduced to 19.8M, and the inference speed increases to 87.5 FPS.

Introducing the D3IM module further enhances detection performance. With D3IM, mAP_{50} is boosted to 55.1%, and $mAP_{50:95}$ reaches 41.9%. At the same time, the parameter size decreases to 13.1M, while inference speed increases to 96.2 FPS. This demonstrates that the multi-branch dynamic convolution mechanism of D3IM effectively strengthens the model's ability to capture fine-grained spatial cues while maintaining lightweight characteristics, making it particularly effective for small objects and complex fine-structure features.

After integrating the high-efficiency multi-scale fusion network HKFPN, the model achieves its best performance. mAP_{50} increases to 56.9%, and $mAP_{50:95}$ improves to 44.2%. Meanwhile, the total parameters reduce to 11.6M, and the inference speed reaches 103.1 FPS, representing over 18% improvement compared with the baseline. HKFPN enables more adequate semantic communication and cross-scale contextual aggregation through efficient spatial grouping and multi-scale

fusion strategies while mitigating the semantic misalignment commonly observed in traditional FPN structures. This results in a more balanced trade-off between accuracy and efficiency.

Overall, the incremental incorporation of each proposed module consistently contributes to the performance gains of the detection model. RepStem primarily enhances shallow feature extraction, D3IM significantly improves multi-scale perceptual capability, and HKFPN further strengthens cross-scale fusion and semantic aggregation, jointly leading to the best accuracy–efficiency balance.

E. Comparative Experiments

To further validate the effectiveness of the proposed method in practical detection tasks, we conduct a comprehensive comparison against various mainstream object detectors under the same hardware platform and dataset. The experimental results are summarized in Table IV.

Compared with conventional two-stage and one-stage detectors such as SSD and Faster R-CNN, our model achieves significantly higher detection accuracy under a lightweight architecture. With only 11.6M parameters and 33.8 GFLOPs, the proposed model attains 56.9% mAP_{50} and 44.2% $mAP_{50:95}$.

When compared with lightweight models such as MobileNet and EfficientDet, our method still demonstrates a more favorable trade-off between accuracy and efficiency. MobileNet has only 3.2M parameters and 5.4 GFLOPs, offering fast inference but insufficient detection precision. EfficientDet-D0, with 3.7M parameters and 3.9 GFLOPs, slightly improves efficiency, yet its mAP_{50} remains at 51.2%, indicating that the model struggles to simultaneously achieve both lightweight computation and high accuracy.

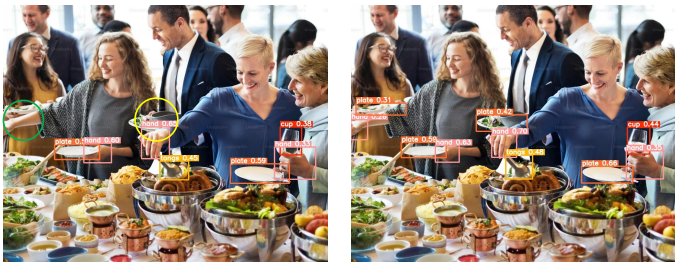
Compared with YOLO-series detectors, the proposed method further exhibits stronger accuracy advantages. YOLOv5s, YOLOv7-tiny, and YOLOv8s are representative lightweight detectors, which achieve mAP_{50} values of 53.1%, 53.4%, and 54.5%, respectively—still lower than the 56.9% achieved by our model. YOLOv8m improves accuracy to 55.6%, but its parameter size of 25.8M results in a slow inference speed of only 75.8 FPS, significantly lagging behind the 103.1 FPS achieved by our method.

It is also noteworthy that although YOLOv9s and YOLOv10s achieve mAP_{50} values of 55.8% and 55.1%, respectively, their inference speeds of 85.2 FPS and 74.9 FPS are not competitive. In contrast, our model maintains the highest inference speed 103.1 FPS while simultaneously achieving 56.9% mAP_{50} and 44.2% $mAP_{50:95}$, demonstrating a superior balance between accuracy and efficiency.

F. Generalization Experiments

To evaluate the detection performance and cross-dataset generalization ability of the proposed improved RT-DETR model on different types of small-object detection benchmarks, comparative experiments were conducted on the DOTA v1.0 and SkyFusion datasets, and the results are reported in Table V.

On the DOTA v1.0 dataset, compared with the original RT-DETR, the proposed method achieves improvements of 2.3% and 1.4% in mAP_{50} and $mAP_{50:95}$, respectively. On the SkyFusion dataset, the improved model also demonstrates stable performance gains, with mAP_{50} and $mAP_{50:95}$ increased by 0.8% and 0.9%, respectively. Although the absolute improvements are relatively modest, the consistent gains across different imaging conditions and data distributions indicate that the proposed method exhibits favorable cross-dataset generalization capability.



RT-DETR Ours

Fig. 8. Qualitative comparison between RT-DETR (left) and the proposed method (right). Green and yellow circles mark two typical regions where the baseline model fails to detect objects while the proposed method successfully recognizes them with significantly higher confidence.

G. Visualization Analysis

To further verify the effectiveness of the proposed method in complex buffet scenarios, we compare the visual detection results between the baseline RT-DETR and our improved model. The qualitative analysis is shown in Fig. 8. RT-DETR exhibits multiple missed detections in small-object regions and partially occluded areas. For example, the hand holding a plate on the left side of the image is completely undetected by the baseline model, and the hand interacting with the serving tongs in the central region is only partially recognized, resulting in the loss of important semantic cues.

In contrast, our improved model successfully detects all of these targets, demonstrating stronger robustness to occlusion, illumination variations, and fine-grained cluttered environments. More importantly, the confidence scores also increase significantly. These results indicate that the enhanced multi-scale representation and adaptive fusion mechanisms effectively improve the discriminability of subtle structural details.

V. Discussion

Despite the promising performance achieved by the proposed method, several limitations remain. Performance can still degrade under extremely dense stacking or severe occlusion, where overlapping instances cause critical visual cues to be missing in monocular RGB images. Moreover, although robustness to reflective surfaces is improved, extremely strong specular highlights or saturated regions may still obscure textures and boundaries, and such reflection-induced information loss cannot be fully removed by a purely vision-based approach. In addition, the current evaluation is conducted on a specific buffet tableware distribution, and generalization to substantially different catering layouts, novel categories, or unseen material properties requires further validation. Finally, while the framework targets real-time deployment, the added modules inevitably introduce extra computational cost, and

TABLE III. ABLATION STUDY OF EACH PROPOSED MODULE

RT-DETR	RepStem	D3IM	HKFPN	mAP_{50}	$mAP_{50\text{-}95}$	GFLOPs	Params(M)	FPS
✓				54.5	41.6	58.6	20.2	86.9
✓	✓			54.8	42.3	51.7	19.8	87.5
✓	✓	✓		55.1	41.9	39.6	13.1	96.2
✓	✓	✓	✓	56.9	44.2	33.8	11.6	103.1

TABLE IV. COMPARISON WITH STATE-OF-THE-ART DETECTORS ON THE BUFFET TABLEWARE DATASET. ALL FPS RESULTS ARE EVALUATED ON AN NVIDIA RTX 5090 GPU FOR FAIR COMPARISON

Model	mAP50	mAP50-95	GFLOPs	Params(M)	FPS
SSD	48.3	28.8	24.3	30.6	52.9
Faster R-CNN	50.5	32.5	41.3	105.0	31.9
MobileNetV3	44.6	25.2	5.4	3.2	92.6
EfficientDet	51.2	35.4	3.9	3.7	87.1
YOLOv5s	53.1	37.6	24.0	9.1	119.3
YOLOv7-tiny	53.4	38.1	13.8	6.2	94.8
YOLOv8s	54.5	42.1	28.5	11.1	115.8
YOLOv8m	55.6	43.1	78.7	25.8	75.8
YOLOv9s	55.8	42.3	26.7	7.2	85.2
YOLOv10s	55.1	41.7	21.5	7.2	74.9
Ours	**56.9**	**44.2**	**33.8**	**11.6**	**103.1**

TABLE V. GENERALIZATION EXPERIMENTS ON DOTA V1.0 AND SKYFUSION DATASETS

Dataset	Model	mAP_{50}	$mAP_{50:95}$	Params (M)
DOTA v1.0	RT-DETR	54.3	34.9	20.2
	Ours	56.6	36.3	11.6
SkyFusion	RT-DETR	69.7	38.2	20.2
	Ours	70.5	39.1	11.6

ultra-low-power devices may benefit from further compression or architectural simplification. Future work will investigate stronger occlusion reasoning, improved robustness under extreme reflections, and enhanced cross-domain generalization while maintaining real-time efficiency.

VI. CONCLUSION

This paper investigates the challenge of robust object detection in complex buffet-scene environments, where dense object stacking, severe occlusion, strong specular reflections, and fine-grained visual similarity jointly degrade the performance of existing detectors. To address these issues, an enhanced RT-DETR-based detection framework is proposed, aiming to improve fine-grained feature representation and cross-scale robustness while preserving real-time efficiency. Through the integration of lightweight structural enhancements and adaptive multi-scale feature modeling, the proposed method effectively strengthens discriminative capability under dense and reflective conditions.

Extensive experiments on a self-service buffet tableware dataset demonstrate that the proposed approach achieves consistent performance improvements over the baseline RT-DETR and other representative detectors, particularly in challenging scenarios with heavy clutter and reflection. Additional cross-dataset evaluations further verify the generalization ability of the proposed model on different small-object detection benchmarks. Overall, this work provides a practical and scalable solution for intelligent catering perception, facilitating accurate and efficient object detection in real-world self-service restaurant environments.

Future research will focus on incorporating temporal information and optimizing deployment on edge devices to further enhance robustness and real-time performance in more diverse scenarios.

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Predicting Students' Cognitive Profiles Using Explainable Machine Learning

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***Abstract*—Conventional educational strategies fail to comprehend and leverage the diversity of learners' cognitive strengths and overlook their innate intelligence, a fundamental driver of learning. To address this gap, this study proposes a machine learning (ML) framework to predict students' overall innate intelligence scores, independent of subject domain or exam structure, using the Learning Meta-Learning dataset, which includes data from 1,021 university students. Seven regression models, including Decision Tree, Random Forest, Extra Trees, Gradient Boosting, Extreme Gradient Boosting, LightGBM, and CatBoost, along with their ensembles have been trained and evaluated. Explainable Artificial intelligence (XAI) technique SHAP is used for important feature selection among 54 features and recursive feature elimination to further enhance model accuracy and interpretability. In comparison to the conventional method, the proposed SHAP-based ML approach is lightweight, trained with selected features, and has shown improvements in accuracy. The accuracy without XAI on CatBoost is 98.32%, whereas with XAI on CatBoost it is 98.53% using only 35 features out of 54. These findings suggest that integrating learners' cognitive profile prediction model can aid the design of personalized educational strategies, moving beyond one-size-fits-all educational strategies.**

***Keywords*—Explainable AI; SHAP feature selection; machine learning; innate intelligence prediction; cognitive profiles; student diversity**

I. Introduction

Academic success is often measured with scores in uniform exams, which measure subject-specific performance but fail to capture a learner's overall intellectual abilities. Although these scores are extensively being used as a qualifying measure for academic admissions, employment, and future education opportunities, they are a limited and impersonal assessment of talent. Multiple studies argue that standardized exams and Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) do not adequately reflect genuine cognitive profiles or learning abilities [1], [2], [3], [4]. The CGPA is not a reliable indicator of innate intellect or a reliable predictor of success in life or the workplace. This is because CGPA and intelligence are two different notions: while exam scores represent achievement in particular assessment formats, intelligence is an innate element of humans and a more precise representative of talents. Traditional assessments are designed within fixed frameworks and consequently overlook intellectual diversity and may misrepresent learners' true potential [5], [6]. This misalignment highlights a fundamental flaw in how education systems comprehend and measure talents.

Intelligence is innate and the fundamental driver of learning and problem solving. Traditional education systems generally promote conformance to fixed rules over recognizing and nurturing varied intellectual strengths of learners. The belief that uniform educational strategies, whether in teaching and learning, curriculum design, or assessments, are sufficient to meet or assist all students undermines the objective of inclusive and equitable education. For example, while evaluation methods may differ between subjects, evaluations within each subject remain the same for all students. Such approaches focus on curricular content but fail to acknowledge the varied ways in which students understand, process, and apply knowledge. In order to be truly equitable and effective, educational approaches need to be learner-centered, holistic, and adaptable to the diverse intelligence scores. Nevertheless, present strategies continue to be mostly content-focused and disregard learners' intrinsic potentials [7].

With the advent of Machine Learning (ML) in educational studies, data-driven decision-making continues to gain popularity. Many ML models are aimed at predicting academic success (e.g., CGPA or performance scores) by using parameters like attendance, prior examination results, socioeconomic background, and geographic location [8], [9], [10], [11], [12]. Although these models provide valuable insights, they continue to depend on the conventional exam-centric paradigm, inheriting its limitations and disregarding deeper cognitive notions like intrinsic intelligence.

Exam performance is influenced by assessment style and primarily depends on linguistic and logical intelligence, whereas individuals possess spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal type intelligences as well [13], [14], [15], [16]. Therefore, exam scores are inadequate for measuring overall intelligence, and this narrow scope limits both scientific understanding and educational innovation. It creates a disparity between how competence is measured and what intelligence implies, which results in misguided educational decisions and inadequate learner support [17], [18], [19].

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To bridge this gap, this research aims to predict the overall innate intelligence, defined as the cumulative Multiple Intelligences (MI) score [14], [20], [21], [22]. Using the Learning Meta-Learning (LML) dataset, which includes 54 features capturing biological, psychological, behavioral, and metacognitive data, intelligence is modeled independently of test formats and study domains [23], [24]. The main contributions are as follows:

- Training and evaluation of seven regression models, namely Decision Tree, Random Forest, Extra Trees, Gradient Boosting, Extreme Gradient Boosting (XGBoost), LightGBM, and CatBoost, along with their ensembles to predict intelligence scores using the 1021 students' data from the LML dataset.
- Employment of SHAP (Shapley Additive Explanations) to identify and rank the most important features contributing to the predictions.
- Utilization of SHAP-based Recursive Feature Elimination (RFE) to improve model performance and interpretability.
- Examination of the contribution of learners' external factors, including age, gender, sleep duration, chronotype, illusion of competence, and impostor phenomenon, to the prediction of intelligence scores.
- Outlining the prospects and applicability of the proposed methodology, leading to targeted and equitable educational interventions.

Successful prediction of intelligence scores has the potential to advance personalized education. It allows educators to tailor teaching-learning techniques, determine learning outcomes, and create assessment methods that align with individuals' intrinsic intelligence, providing a more equitable alternative to one-size-fits-all approaches. This research supports the Sustainable Development Goal 4, which advocates for inclusive and equitable quality education [25]. It can also advance educational AI and learner-centered heutagogy by demonstrating that intelligence is both predictable and actionable, beyond what exam scores alone can do.

II. Literature Review

Conventional exam-based assessments have long dominated academic evaluations, admissions, and recruitment. Although standardized assessments are intended to ensure uniformity across learners, their operational simplicity comes at the cost of educational depth [1], [2], [3], [4], [17]. They often fail to reflect true talents, as fixed-format assessment performance is influenced by various external factors such as access to resources, language barriers, and test-taking strategies [18], [19], [26], [27]. Hence, more holistic, learner-centered approaches are needed to promote educational equity and inclusivity [28], [29]. Fixed-format exams, which primarily measure linguistic and mathematical abilities only, reinforce a narrow view of learner intelligence and thus privilege certain learners while marginalizing others who possess comparable overall cognitive strengths distributed across different intelligence types [5], [6].

Models such as Spearman's general intelligence factor (g-factor) and the Intelligence Quotient (IQ) score have historically molded the concept of intelligence by proposing a general cognitive ability that can be measured through standardized processes. Though these models are frequently employed in the fields of education and psychology, they are increasingly being criticized for being reductionist and biased [30], [31]. IQ tests concentrate on linguistic and logical thinking above creativity, interpersonal abilities, social skills, and practical reasoning capabilities important for the real world [32], [33], [34], [35], [36]. Furthermore, these scores show how well people perform in specific test contexts rather than their overall ability for learning or knowledge application. In summary, the target variable of this paper, intrinsic intelligence score, is a superior, holistic, and actionable measure compared to the regular intelligence models, such as IQ and the g-factor, which provide limited and biased perspectives on human potential.

The intelligence score predicted in this study includes the entire set of MI, embracing the complete spectrum of human cognitive skills, in contrast to IQ-based models [37]. This MI-based intelligence score has gained popularity among educators for its potential to provide individualized educational approaches [38], [39]. However, MI remained underutilized in educational practices and data-driven applications due to challenges with operationalizing it as a single, compatible construct [20]. Therefore, in this study the aggregated measure that encompasses all types of intelligences have been used, providing a comprehensive and scalable metric suitable for ML and educational decisions. Human intelligence types function interactively rather than in isolation; hence, treating them as separate and unrelated is both impractical and misleading [22]. The overall intelligence score provides a unified, quantitative representation of an individual's cognitive potential, more feasible for modeling and real world application than focusing only on dominant intelligences [40]. Moreover, many educational decisions, such as identifying students for enrichment or support, require comprehensive judgments rather than intelligence-type-specific analysis.

To the best of our knowledge, most ML applications in education continue to focus on predicting conventional outcomes, such as grades, test scores, course completion rates, or dropout risk, based on features like attendance, quiz scores, or demographic data. While these models can forecast academic performance, they inherit the limitations of traditional assessments [8], [9], [10], [11], [12], [41]. Additionally, most of the existing ML models lack transparency. Black-box techniques make it difficult to understand and rely on the reasoning behind output generations. Explainable Artificial Intelligence (XAI) approaches, such as SHAP, provide a solution by dictating which features are most important for predictions [30].

In summary, this study addresses three gaps in educational ML research: 1) the persistent over-reliance on traditional academic outcomes as representations for talents, 2) the limited integration of learners' innate intelligence into ML-based modeling for personalized education, and 3) the lack of interpretability in ML applications for education.

III. Proposed Methodology

The proposed methodology integrates feature selection with traditional ML models, significantly enhancing the accuracy and interpretability of learners' intelligence prediction models. As shown in Fig. 1, the study is divided into two

parts to show the difference between the traditional approach and the proposed approach. The integration of RFE with SHAP for important feature selection stands out as a unique aspect. This method iteratively refines the feature set, enabling the identification of the most informative features, which are then used to train various ML models for comparative analysis. 70% of the data is utilized for training, with the remaining 30% being used to evaluate model performance. In this study, SHAP values are computed using CatBoost to generate a global feature importance ranking, which serves as the basis for a SHAP-based RFE procedure [42]. From the traditional approach part, CatBoost is found as the best performer; therefore, in the proposed approach, CatBoost is used as the SHAP explainer model for the LML dataset. Through rigorous cross-validation and hyper-parameter adjustment, this iterative approach validates the efficacy of the feature selection strategy.

After data cleaning and preprocessing of the dataset, which included the removal of null, inconsistent, and noisy values, along with label encoding to handle data types, seven ML regressors have been employed [43], [44]. Their ensemble combinations are also examined as well, as they potentially may integrate the strengths of individual models [45], [46]. Their ensembles, ensemble-2 (combinations of 2 models) are created by combining the best-performing individual model with one additional model (e.g., CatBoost + LightGBM), while ensemble-3 models include the best model along with two others (e.g., CatBoost + LightGBM + XGBoost). Within the ensembles, only those that outperformed the best individual regressor (CatBoost) are retained for further optimization. Algorithm 1 provides the pseudocode for the workflow of research methodology. Data analyses are conducted using Python 3.10.

A. Dataset and Feature Description

The utilized LML dataset consists of 1,021 responses to 54 survey items designed to measure various learner parameters. The data was acquired using a voluntary and anonymous online survey conducted at eleven universities in Bangladesh. Participants met two inclusion criteria: they were currently enrolled in a Bangladeshi higher education institution and were at least 18 years old. At the time of the survey design, there were 4,690,876 students enrolled in both public and private universities [24]. The survey was structured using a combination of convenience sampling and simple random sampling because it was not feasible to perform probability sampling on this large population due to logistical and resource limitations. Following the combined sampling structure, universities were chosen based on their reachability, and classrooms from various departments were chosen at random within each university. In those classrooms, all present students were verbally invited to participate in the survey anonymously and voluntarily. Table I summarizes the feature set from the LML dataset, grouped by domain, data type, and corresponding value ranges. The dataset includes features from biological, psychological, and behavioral domains, encompassing both categorical and discrete data types. The corresponding descriptive statistics of the sample data are illustrated in Fig. 2. The panel in Fig. 2(a) shows the means and standard deviations (SD) for the discrete variables: Intelligence Score, Age, and Sleep Duration. There is a wide range of intelligence scores in the sample, as observed by the mean and SD values (97.43 ± 14.35), which

Algorithm 1 ML-based human intelligence prediction using SHAP-based RFE

```
Load and preprocess data by removing missing, null, and inconsistent values and by label encoding
Initialize base regressors: Decision Tree, Random Forest, Extra Trees, Gradient Boosting, XGBoost, LightGBM, CatBoost
Split dataset into predictors (X) and target variable (y)
    Assign predictors to X and target intelligence score to y
    Split into training and test sets: X_train, X_test, y_train, y_test
for each regressor in base regressors do
        Train the regressor on X_train, y_train
        Predict on X_test
        Compute performance metrics
end for
Select the best-performing model (BestBaseModel) based on metrics
Create ensemble models by combining BestBaseModel with one and two other base regressors
for each ensemble model do
        Train on X_train, y_train
        Predict on X_test
        Compute performance metrics
        if ensemble model outperforms BestBaseModel then
            add it to the optimization list
        end if
end for
Select BestModel from BestBaseModel and models in the optimization list
Initialize SHAP explainer using BestModel and X_train
Compute SHAP values on X_train
Rank features from least to most important based on mean absolute SHAP value
for each model in the optimization list do
        Call RunSHAP_RFE(model, SHAP ranking, X_train, X_test, y_train, y_test) where:
            RunSHAP_RFE = SHAP-based Recursive Feature Elimination procedure:
                Start with all features in SHAP importance order
                Iteratively remove the least important feature(s) based on SHAP ranking
                Retrain the model on the reduced X_train
                Predict on reduced X_test
                Compute performance metrics and record performance for each feature subset size
                Keep track of the subset giving maximum accuracy and store it as the optimized model configuration
end for
Store optimized model, best feature subset, and full performance log
Plot Accuracy vs. number of SHAP-ranked features (from RFE) for each optimized model
Plot SHAP summary plot
return trained models, performance metrics, and SHAP-based explanations
```

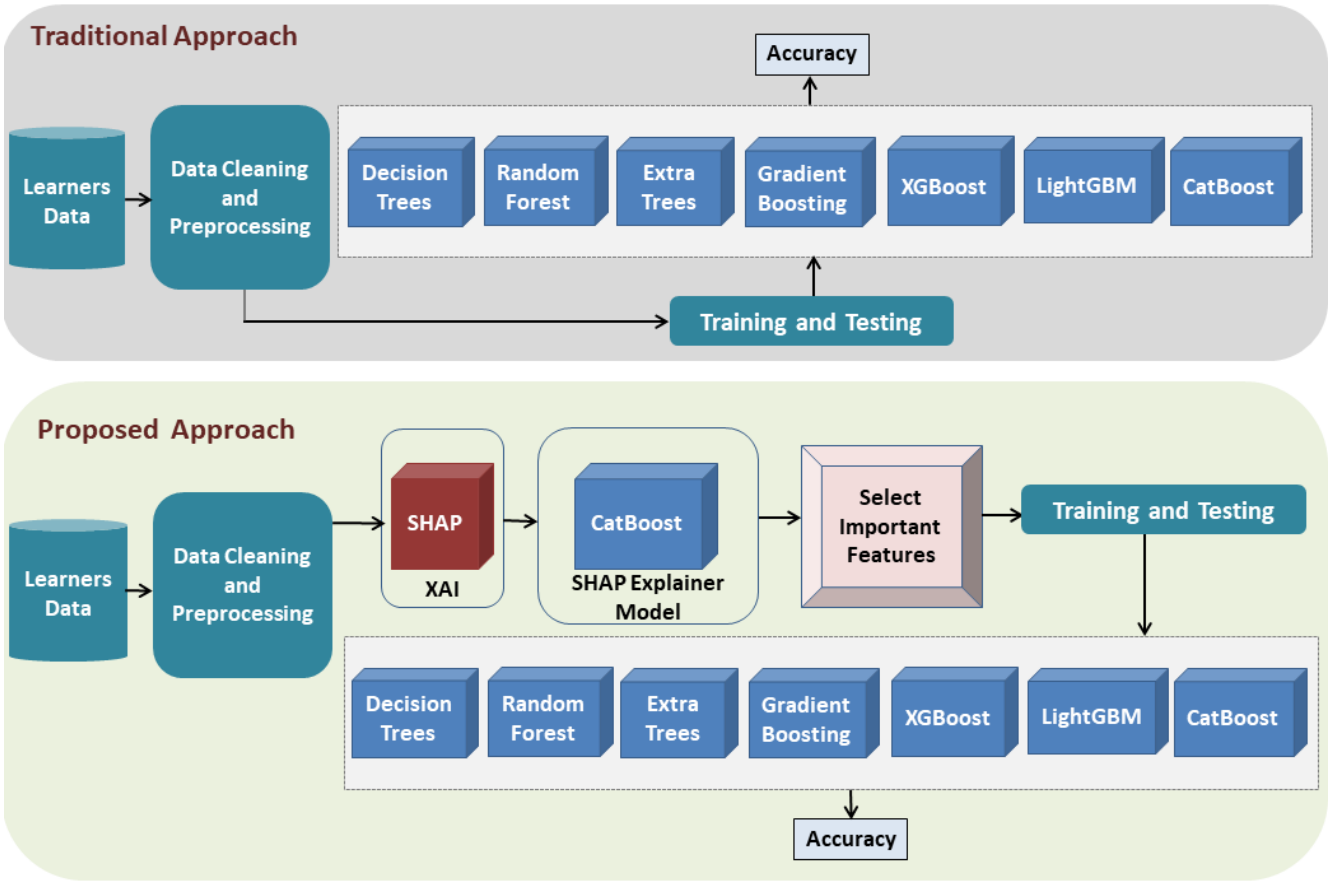


Fig. 1. Workflow of the proposed methodology.

ranges from 1 to 140. Participants' ages range from 18 to 27 years old, with an average age of 21.72 ± 1.76 years. The average Sleep Duration, which ranges from 5 to 11 hours, is 6.29 ± 1.14 hours. Fig. 2(b) panel depicts the distributions of categorical variables, Gender, Illusion of Competence, Chronotype, and Imposter Phenomenon, in terms of frequency and percentage of the total sample ($N = 1021$). The Gender distribution shows a higher proportion of male participants (638, 62.49%) than females (383, 37.51%). Although this appears skewed, it matches the existing gender disparity in higher education enrollment in Bangladesh [24].

The majority of students experienced moderate levels of Illusion of Competence (465 participants, 45.54%), followed by severe levels (315 participants, 30.85%) and mild levels (241 participants, 23.60%). The total proportion of moderate and severe levels exceeds 76%, implying that a large number of learners misestimate their competency. The Chronotype distribution is relatively balanced, with 313 participants (30.66%) identifying as Morningness types, 369 (36.14%) as Intermediates, and 339 (33.20%) as Eveningness types. This spread captures a well-represented diversity in biological rhythms, or sleep-wake preferences, among the university students. The majority of students reported that they experienced the Imposter Phenomenon on a moderate to frequent basis, with 324 participants (31.73%) and 557 participants (54.55%), respectively. This total percentage of 86.28% highlights how common impostor syndrome is among students, highlighting the significant psychological burden often associated with academic performance and self-perception.

B. ML Models

The Decision Tree regressor predicts continuous values by recursively partitioning the dataset based on feature conditions to reduce variance at each node, with final predictions based on the leaf nodes' mean values. It effectively models nonlinear relationships and is often employed in regression tasks.

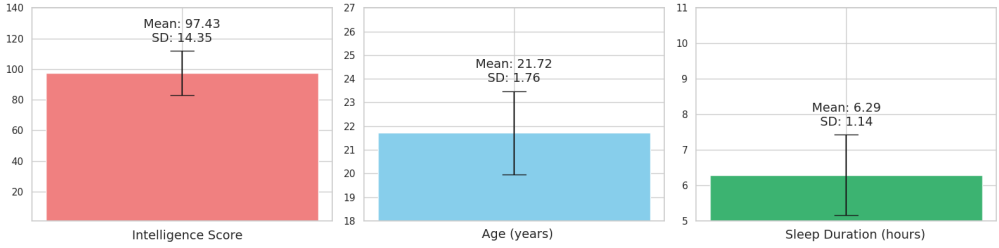
Random Forest regression improves on this by constructing an ensemble of Decision Trees, each trained on a random subset of data and features, and then averaging their outputs to reduce overfitting, boost stability, and improve robustness compared to a single tree.

The Extra Trees regressor is similar to Random Forest, but it adds more randomization by randomly generating split thresholds instead of optimizing them, which decreases variance and speeds up training while maintaining competitive accuracy.

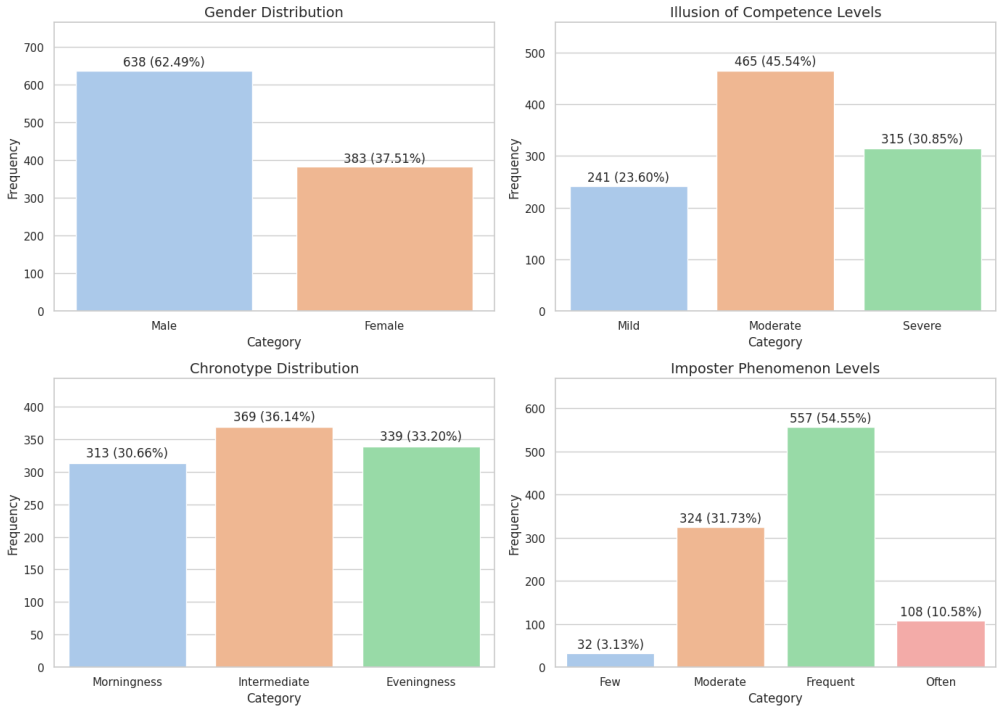
Gradient Boosting is a sequential ensemble method for creating an additive model by training every new tree to rectify the residual errors of the combined previous learners and minimizing a loss function using gradient descent.

TABLE I. FEATURE SET DESCRIPTION

Feature Group	Data Type	Feature Name	Value Range
Biological	Discrete	Age	18 – 27 years
Biological	Categorical	Gender	Male, Female
Psychological	Categorical	Illusion of Competence	Mild, Moderate, Severe
Behavioral	Discrete	Sleep Duration	5 – 11 hours
Biological	Categorical	Chronotype	Morningness, Intermediate, Eveningness
Psychological	Categorical	Imposter Phenomenon	Few, Moderate, Frequent, Often
Psychological	Discrete	Overall Intelligence Score	0 – 140



(a)



(b)

Fig. 2. Descriptive statistics of the seven learner parameters: (a) Mean and SD of continuous variables; (b) Frequency and percentage of categorical variables.

XGBoost is an effective Gradient Boosting solution that provides regularization, parallel processing, and out-of-core computation. It improves performance by using second-order gradients, efficient tree pruning, and built-in regularization to reduce overfitting. It also effectively handles missing data and produces cutting-edge results on large-scale, multidimensional datasets, making it widely utilized in prediction tasks.

LightGBM is another Gradient Boosting model that uses a histogram-based method and a leaf-wise tree development technique to improve training speed while retaining high precision. It also works well on large data sets and handles categorical features natively.

CatBoost uses ordered boosting to avoid prediction shift and efficiently handles categorical features without requiring extensive preprocessing. It is ideally suited for complicated regression problems involving heterogeneous data types due to its fast training, good generalization, and accuracy with minimal parameter adjustment.

C. Model Evaluation Metrics

To evaluate the prediction performance of the models, the following standard metrics are employed: Mean Absolute Error (MAE), Mean Squared Error (MSE), Root Mean Squared Error (RMSE), and Accuracy [47], [48], [49].

The MAE quantifies the average magnitude of the errors in predictions relative to the actual outcomes. The formula for MAE is as follows.

$$\text{MAE} = \frac{1}{n}\sum_{i=1}^{n}|y_i - \hat{y}_i| \tag{1}$$

where, y_i denotes the actual value, $\hat{y}_i$ the predicted value, n the number of observations, and i indexes each observation from 1 to n.

The MSE calculates the average discrepancy between the actual values and the predictions. The process involves squaring the differences and then calculating the mean. The formula for MSE is as follows.

$$\text{MSE} = \frac{1}{n}\sum_{i=1}^{n}(y_i - \hat{y}_i)^2 \tag{2}$$

RMSE is the square root of MSE, which represents the residuals' SD. It gives an interpretable measure in the same unit as the target variable. The representation is as follows.

$$\text{RMSE} = \sqrt{\frac{1}{n}\sum_{i=1}^{n}(y_i - \hat{y}_i)^2} \tag{3}$$

Accuracy is the percentage of variance explained by the model. Variance measures how far the actual values deviate from their mean. The more the model's predictions lower this spread (or error), the greater the explained variance, or the model's accuracy. A higher accuracy indicates predictions are very close to the actual values. This metric is calculated using the following equation.

$$\text{Accuracy} = \left(1 - \frac{\sum(y_i - \hat{y}_i)^2}{\sum(y_i - \bar{y}_i)^2}\right) \times 100 \tag{4}$$

where, $\bar{y}_i$ denotes the mean of actual values.

IV. Results and Discussion

A. Model Performance

The performance of the regressors in the traditional approach using the complete set of features is presented in Table II. CatBoost emerged as the most effective model, attaining the highest accuracy (98.32%) and the lowest error rates across all evaluation metrics (MAE: 1.38, RMSE: 1.88), indicating its strong generalization capability and suitability. Gradient Boosting and LightGBM achieved accuracy levels of 94.96% and 94.38%, respectively. In contrast, XGBoost performed poorly in comparison to other boosting models. Extra Trees and Random Forest achieved moderate results indicating their limited predictive performance. The Decision Tree model achieved the lowest accuracy and the highest error rates, underscoring its inadequacy.

TABLE II. Model Performance with the Traditional Approaches

Model	MAE	MSE	RMSE	Accuracy (%)
CatBoost	1.38	3.55	1.88	98.32
Gradient Boosting	2.53	10.63	3.26	94.96
LightGBM	2.68	11.87	3.45	94.38
XGBoost	3.83	23.60	4.86	88.82
Extra Trees	4.39	30.44	5.52	85.58
Random Forest	4.54	32.03	5.66	84.83
Decision Tree	7.18	85.43	9.24	59.52

CatBoost, as an individual model, consistently outperformed all ensemble combinations as well, that include CatBoost combined with Decision Tree, Random Forest, Extra Trees, Gradient Boosting, XGBoost, and LightGBM (ensemble-2), and CatBoost combined with any two of the individual models (ensemble-2). Despite ensemble methods generally being expected to enhance performance by combining model strengths, in this case they introduce more weaknesses by combining model weaknesses [46]. This highlights that ensembling is not always effective, contrary to the findings reported in [45].

The accuracy curves of the regressors, presented in Fig. 3, initially stay flat or slightly rise for most of the models, indicating that the early-eliminated lower-ranked features have little contribution to prediction performance. CatBoost consistently outperforms all other models across nearly the entire range of feature numbers. The CatBoost curve peaks at 98.53% accuracy, which is obtained with 35 features. Its accuracy increases from 98.32% as the number of features is progressively decreased from 54 to 36. But after 35, the accuracy starts to drop, implying that more feature removal eliminates significant predictors. Additionally, it implies that features outside of the top 35 are redundant and have minimal contribution to the prediction.

Similar trends are observed for Gradient Boosting, LightGBM, XGBoost, Extra Trees, and Random Forest. In contrast, the Decision Tree model consistently exhibits the lowest overall accuracy. Its curve stays comparatively flat with a few oscillations.

For better interpretability, the SHAP summary plot is presented in Fig. 4. The magnitude and direction of the top features' contributions to the model's predictions are clearly shown in this plot. The feature label 'MIQ#' corresponds to specific MI-related question numbers as sequenced in the dataset. Each point on the plot represents a single observation. The horizontal position represents the SHAP value (the feature's contribution to the model output), and the colors represent the actual values of the feature. Red color means high values, and blue color means low values. The continuous gradient from blue to red graphically displays the range of feature values, making it easier to determine whether higher or lower feature values contribute positively or negatively to the predictions. For instance, for the most important feature, MIQ#32, higher feature values (red points) have positive contributions, as indicated by points located on the right side

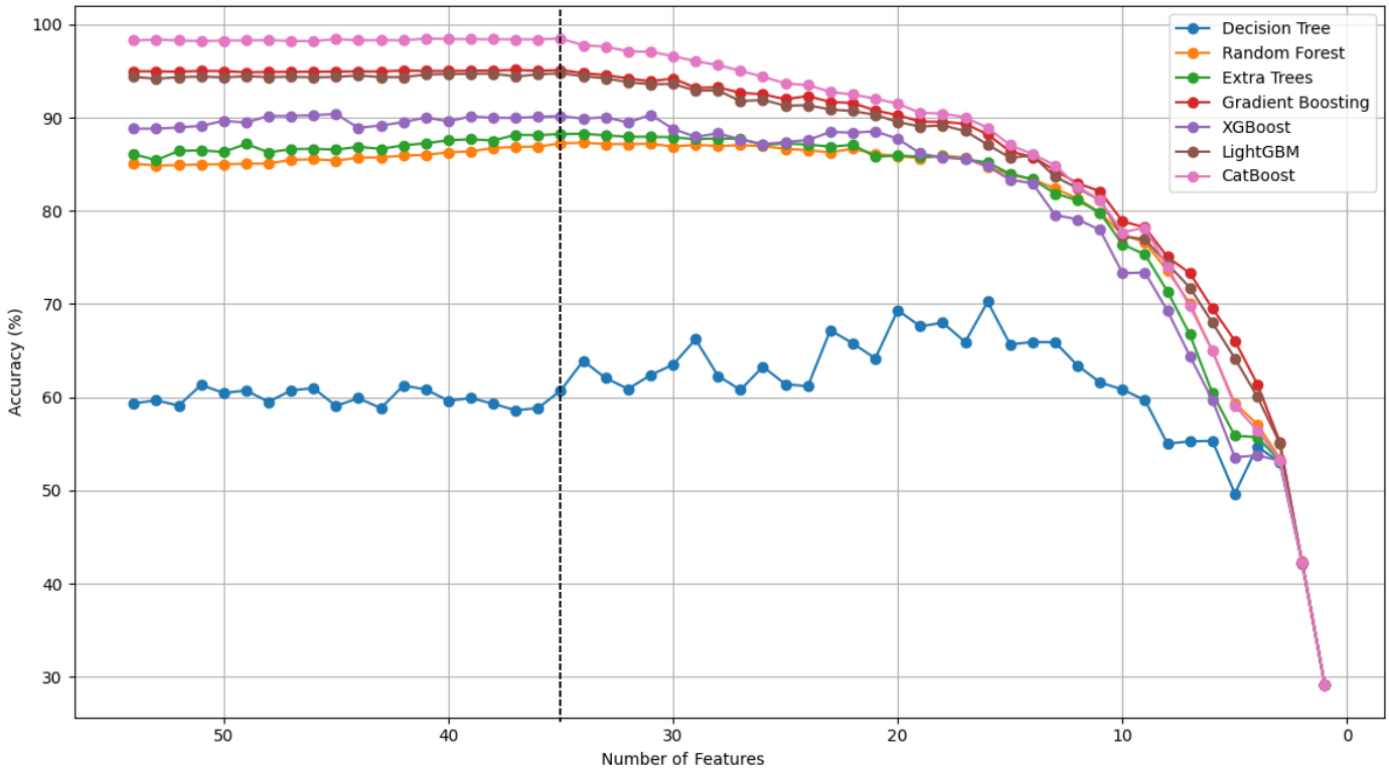


Fig. 3. Accuracy curves for all regression models.

of the axis, whereas lower values (blue points) correspond to negative contributions on the left side. Similarly, MIQ#5 and MIQ#9 display comparable trends, where higher feature values increase the predicted outcome, while lower values lessen it. MIQ#24 shows a wider distribution of SHAP values across mid- to high-range feature values (represented by purple to red points), suggesting that its influence on the prediction may vary in interaction with other variables. The SHAP values of features that are listed lower in the plot have a smaller range and variation, indicating a relatively modest, yet statistically significant, effect on the models' predictions.

Table III shows the performance metrics of the regressors following feature selection with SHAP-based RFE. When compared to the baseline results in Table II, which utilized all 54 features, Table III demonstrates consistent performance gains across all models after feature selection. CatBoost remained the top performer, increasing accuracy from 98.32% to 98.53%. Gradient Boosting's accuracy increased from 94.96% to 95.11%. The accuracy of LightGBM also increased from 94.38% to 94.76%. XGBoost, showed a greater improvement. Its accuracy increased from 88.82% to 90.19. Extra Trees and Random Forest, achieved improved accuracies from 85.58% to 88.14% and 84.83% to 87.30%, respectively. Relatively, the highest improvement is observed in the Decision Tree model. Its accuracy rose sharply from 59.52% to 60.82. Although it remains the least accurate among all models.

In summary, feature selection using SHAP-based RFE have enhanced all regressors' predictive precision (improvement in accuracy and reduction in error metrics). Notably, external learner factors showed no measurable influence on the prediction of innate intelligence scores within the current ML framework. These findings reinforce previous research, which emphasizes the use of SHAP values and RFE for improving model accuracy, transparency, and interpretability in multi-domain prediction tasks [45], [46], [49], [50].

TABLE III. MODEL PERFORMANCE ON SELECTED FEATURES

Model	MAE	MSE	RMSE	Accuracy (%)
CatBoost	1.25	3.09	1.76	98.53
Gradient Boosting	2.46	10.32	3.21	95.11
LightGBM	2.55	11.06	3.33	94.76
XGBoost	3.63	20.70	4.55	90.19
Extra Trees	3.92	25.03	5.00	88.14
Random Forest	4.13	26.80	5.18	87.30
Decision Tree	7.34	82.68	9.09	60.82

B. Future Work and Applicability Scope

The findings of this study offer various potential avenues for advancement in educational design, learner assistance, and institutional policy and decision making. As presented in Fig. 5, based on the proposed intelligence prediction model, the following future research prospects and application areas are suggested for further exploration and practical implementation.

1) Data-driven admissions or placement decisions: Innate intelligence prediction could be used to complement standard admission criteria, allocate scholarships, or place students in advanced learning programs. By including a measure of learning capacity in addition to prior performance or exam results, this method would allow for more equitable selection.

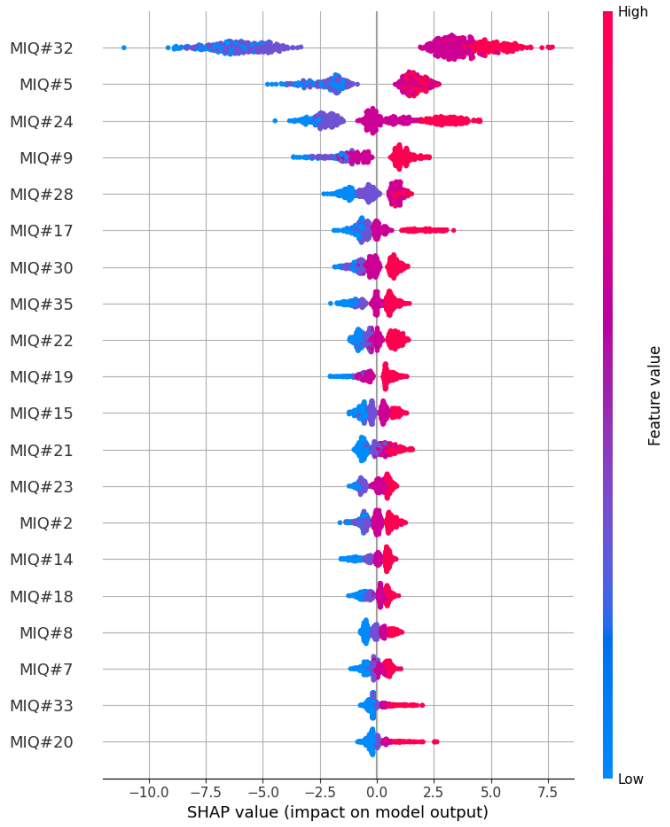


Fig. 4. Visualization of the impact of the top 20 features on the CatBoost model using SHAP.

2) Adaptive institutional practice and policy: The predicted intelligence score can serve as a good indicator of a learner's overall ability to receive, process, and apply newly acquired knowledge. Institutions could use it to forecast general academic performance or learning outcomes and group learners to allocate mentoring or resources accordingly.

3) Personalized teaching strategy design: Intelligence scores can be used as a basis for personalizing teaching strategies. In order to achieve equitable results, learners with higher intelligence scores can be given accelerated modules or enrichment activities; those with medium intelligence scores can benefit from regular instruction with occasional support; and those with lower intelligence scores can be assisted with structured and practice-based learning strategies.

4) Strategic curriculum planning: At the course or program level, average intelligence scores across groups of students could be used to inform syllabus pace and complexity design. For instance, to better match students' innate abilities, educational institutions may design differentiated tracks (basic, intermediate, and advanced).

5) Intelligent tutoring systems' personalization: Learners' intelligence scores could be used by intelligent tutoring system platforms to adapt the way content is delivered. For example, the complexity of challenges or tasks, variation in examples, and the use of simplified instructions according to learners' ability ranges can be incorporated. This would improve learning efficiency and synchronize involvement in educational settings.

6) Learning analytics dashboards for monitoring and planning: Innate intelligence can be integrated with learning analytics systems to deliver actionable and anticipatory information. Based on students' intelligence scores, these dashboards may provide focused intervention plans, specialized support services, or alternate educational techniques.

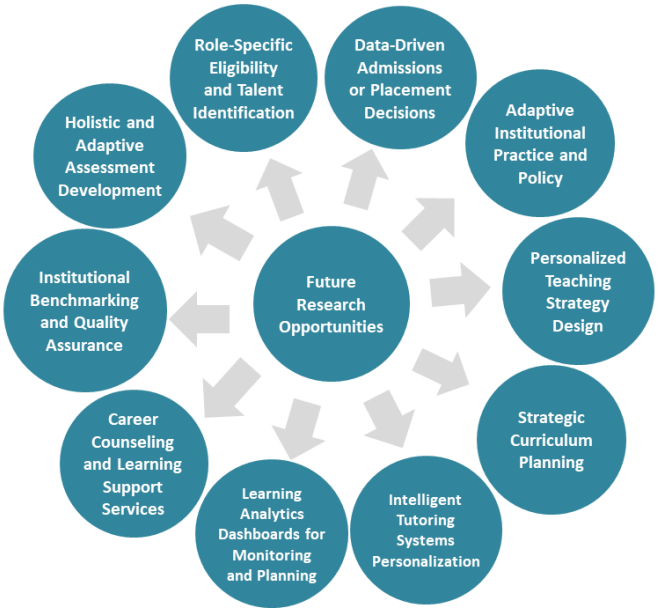


Fig. 5. Potential application areas of ML-based human intelligence modeling.

7) Career counseling and learning support services: Counselors can use intelligence scores to help students choose occupation possibilities that are compatible with their cognitive strengths. Students with high intelligence scores, for example, might do well in multidisciplinary studies, professions demanding quick decisions, or research-oriented positions requiring critical thinking.

8) Institutional benchmarking and quality assurance: Institutions could analyze the distribution of intelligence scores among the students to determine whether instruction standards, resource allocation, or students' learning outcomes are in line with learner potential. This can assist with accreditation, policy adjustments, and educational reform.

9) Holistic and adaptive assessment development: Knowing a student's intrinsic intelligence would allow teachers to apply assessments other than written tests. For instance, integrative projects could be used to assess students with high innate intelligence, while assessments for other students might use more scaffolding or different formats, like hands-on activities. While this study predicts intelligence as a composite indication, subsequent future research will concentrate on predicting intelligence type-wise scores independently in order to better aid specialized applications.

10)Role-specific eligibility and talent identification: Overall intelligence scores, like CGPA in competitive fields, could be used as benchmarks for roles requiring cognitive rigor. For example, programs may set minimum intelligence score requirements in place of or beside the CGPA. Likewise, just

as subject-wise grades determine eligibility for certain careers, intelligence-type specific scores could inform role suitability. For instance, military or sports training institutes might require high bodily-kinesthetic and logical-mathematical intelligences. These intelligence scores could be used as minimum marks or GPA in specific subjects (e.g., needing a minimum GPA in Math and Physics) for eligibility.

Along with these application areas and prospects, this research has some limitations that provide more scope for future work. The LML dataset utilized in this study only includes data from students in the age group of 18 to 27. Therefore, the results may not be directly applicable to pedagogical (child-centered) applications and are most relevant to andragogy and heutagogy. Future research could include data from a wider range of age groups, cultural backgrounds, geographic regions, and educational systems to broaden the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, while this study used seven well-known ML models with SHAP and RFE, these are not the only potential models and methods. Subsequent investigations may examine more advanced models and approaches like deep neural networks, graph-based models, or hybrid frameworks to explore more about the results and possibly enhance interpretability. A direct comparison with similar approaches within a shared evaluation framework was not possible to conduct due to the absence of comparable methods, but can be performed once such methods become available.

V. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study demonstrated the effectiveness of ML models, enhanced by SHAP-based feature analysis, in accurately predicting innate human intelligence. The findings provide interpretable and actionable insights, paving the way for the development of personalized educational strategies, advancing educational AI practices, and enabling policy-relevant interventions aligned with the fourth SDG: Quality Education. In particular, they highlight that intelligence can be modeled holistically and reliably without relying on conventional subject-specific assessments or IQ tests. Real-world educational outcomes can be enhanced by complementing existing educational practices with the proposed method for predicting learners' intelligences. This study has implications for educators, institutions, policymakers, and future AI-driven educational systems, and promotes the use of AI-powered, data-driven, learner-centric techniques to address learner diversity and support educational decision making.

Funding

This research was funded by Multimedia University, Cyberjaya, Selangor, Malaysia (Grant Number: Post-Doc(MMUI/240029)).

Institutional Review Board Statement

The study is conducted in accordance with relevant guidelines and national regulations. The Biosafety, Biosecurity, and Ethical Clearance Committee at Jahangirnagar University in Bangladesh provided ethical approval for the creation and analysis of the LML dataset involving human data (Reference No.: BBEC, JU/M 2022/01 (18); Date of approval: 04 July 2022). Since the dataset contains non-medical data, the Declaration of Helsinki does not apply when utilizing it for non-medical purposes.

Informed Consent Statement

All participants were well informed of their anonymity, the goal of the study, and how their responses would be utilized. Survey responses were collected using a Google form. Consent to participate in the survey and consent to publish anonymized data were obtained using the same Google form. After reading the information consent form, participants had to agree to participate before they could continue on to the survey. Before submitting the completed questionnaire, participants were requested for their further approval to have their anonymized data published collectively for research purposes via an online platform. Only those who selected "Agree" for publishing consent were able to submit survey responses; no information was collected for those who did not give both consents.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are openly available in the Zenodo repository at zenodo.org/records/8382187.

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Inter-Robots Position Estimation Using UWB Positioning Devices for Distributed Cooperative Control of Multiple Robots

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***Abstract*—Ultra-wide band (UWB)-based positioning methods for static environments have been continuously improved; however, many existing approaches rely on fixed reference nodes, and methods for directly computing relative positions among mobile units have not been sufficiently investigated. This paper presents a relative positioning approach for multi-robot systems using UWB wireless communication within a distributed cooperative control framework. In the proposed approach, multiple UWB positioning devices are arranged in regular polyhedral configurations to improve the uniformity of ranging accuracy. Robot coordinates are estimated using a nonlinear least-squares optimization method formulated from a system of simultaneous distance equations, enabling mutual relative position estimation among robots. Simulation experiments were conducted to evaluate estimation accuracy and error characteristics under different geometric configurations. Four configurations: square, tetrahedron, regular tetrahedron, and regular octahedron were considered, and their error magnitudes and axis-wise distributions were compared. The simulation results indicate that the proposed configuration achieve lower estimation errors than the other configurations evaluated. Based on these findings, experimental verification was performed, and the observed trends were consistent with the simulation results. This work provides a systematic investigation of a mutual positioning system that enables robots to estimate their positions with respect to one another without relying on fixed landmarks. Unlike existing method, our approach enables the determination of relative positions between robots based on distances measured by each robot. The proposed approach is expected to be applicable to autonomous decentralized control in multi-robot systems operating in static environments.**

***Keywords*—Mobile robots; distributed cooperative control; mutual positioning system; relative position estimation; UWB positioning devices; geometric structure**

I. Introduction

Autonomous decentralized systems that operate multiple robots are being applied to distributed tasks, such as logistics systems, which cannot be effectively addressed by individual robot [1]. In such systems, robots recognize one another in an environment populated by multiple agents and adapt their actions based on exchanged information, resulting in the achievement of shared objectives [2]. In natural ecosystems, such interactions generate collective behavior that sustains life within a herd. When applied to robotic systems, this approach allows coordinated behavior to be adjusted in a self-organized manner when part of the system fails or the environment changes, thereby enhancing flexibility, diversity, and fault tolerance [3]. In an ideal autonomous decentralized system, each robot cooperates autonomously with surrounding robots to achieve the objectives of the overall system [4].

This interaction relies on localized sensing and communication, enabling robots to recognize and exchange information with each other. While this requirement can be addressed through global observation and network-based broadcasting using camera- and network-based systems, such approaches face challenges due to the complexity of robot and systems [5]. To overcome these challenges, an ideal distributed cooperative system based on local robotic interactions is required.

To implement such distributed cooperative control, each robot should be equipped with two types of devices: one for recognizing surrounding robots and the environment, and another for local communication with neighboring robots [6]. Existing implementations often rely on multiple devices for recognizing objects using LiDAR [7] and GNSS [8], and for communication using Bluetooth and other communication technologies [9]. However, this results in increased system complexity and limited stability [10]. Therefore, a unified solution that enables both sensing and communication is desirable.

Ultra-wideband (UWB) wireless communication devices have attracted attention as promising candidates for such unified solutions. In addition to providing wireless communication, UWB technology enables highly accurate positioning by measuring time differences in the arrival of radio waves [11], [12]. This capability allows a single UWB device to support both communication and positioning for decentralized control of multiple robots, eliminating the need for multiple devices [13].

This paper proposes a method for estimating the three-dimensional relative positions of multiple robots using UWB positioning devices. Our primary contribution is the development of a technique that enables each robot to estimate relative position to other robots, thereby facilitating effective autonomous decentralized control in systems comprising two or more robots. Unlike existing approaches, the proposed method enables the determination of positions between neighboring robots based on the distance information collected by each robot.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section II reviews related work. Section III presents a method for estimating the three-dimensional relative positions between multiple robots. Section III-A describes the system design, and Section III-B provides a detailed explanation of the methodology. Sections IV and V present simulations using the error

characteristics of UWB technology and experiments conducted using actual hardware, along with the results. Finally, the conclusions and future work are discussed in Sections VI and VII, respectively.

II. Related Work

Various approaches have been proposed to realize sensing and communication for distributed multi-robot systems. For positioning, a range of devices has been explored, including LiDAR and GNSS, while Bluetooth and other wireless technologies have been investigated for inter-robot communication. However, a robot configuration that relies on multiple heterogeneous devices increases system complexity and reduces overall stability.

Conventional UWB-based positioning methods typically involve placing fixed devices at the same height at the four corners of a positioning space, as illustrated in Fig. 1a, while mobile devices move within this space [14]. The coordinate of each mobile device is calculated based on the absolute coordinates of the fixed devices measured by the UWB devices. However, when all fixed devices are positioned at the same height, accurate estimation of vertical position becomes difficult.

To address this limitation, Zhou *et al*. demonstrated that positioning accuracy can be improved by varying the heights of the fixed devices, as illustrated in Fig. 1b [15]. Furthermore, positioning methods using UWB devices in static environments are being continually improved, and some studies have extended these approach to relative positioning by incorporating triangulation techniques [16]. In such methods, four devices measure the distances between one another to estimate their relative positions, enabling applications to systems comprising four or more robots.

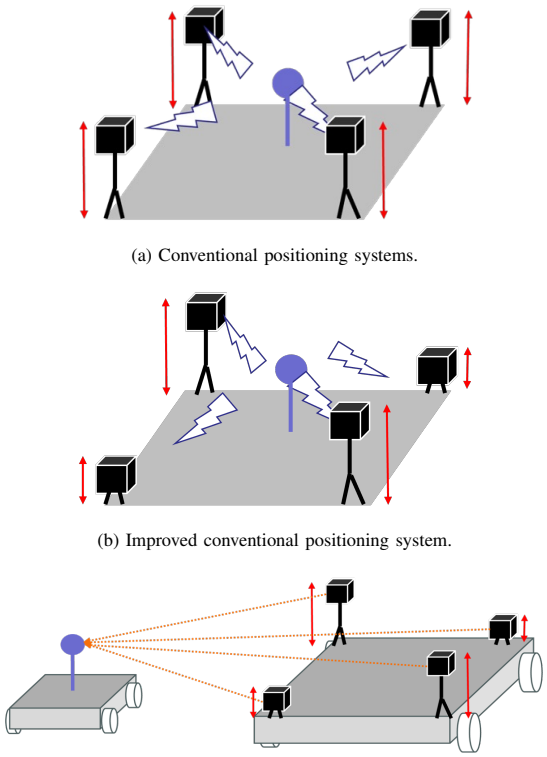
In addition, relative position estimation methods for robots equipped with multiple UWB devices has been developed [17]. This involved a system in which one robot is equipped with a fixed reference device, as shown in Fig. 1c, which enables it to estimate the position of other robots. However, because one unit functions as a landmark, mutual localization among robots has not yet been investigated.

In contrast to these existing approaches, this study focuses on mutual relative position estimation among multiple robots using UWB devices, without relying on fixed landmarks or global references.

III. Proposed Method

A. System Configuration

Each node is equipped with a positioning system in which the transmitting UWB device are positioned at the vertices of a regular polyhedron, as illustrated in Fig. 2, while a receiving UWB device is positioned at the center of the regular polyhedron. This configuration ensures that the transmitters are uniformly distributed over the entire perimeter, thereby improving ranging accuracy [18]. Within the environment where a node is located, the node can measure the relative distance of transmitters belonging to other nodes using its self-mounted receiver. If the coordinate system of the regular polyhedron formed by the transmitters is known, the relative coordinates to another node can be obtained by calculating the intersection of the distances between the receiver and transmitters.



(a) Conventional positioning systems.

(b) Improved conventional positioning system.

(c) Positioning that enables robots to know each other's locations.

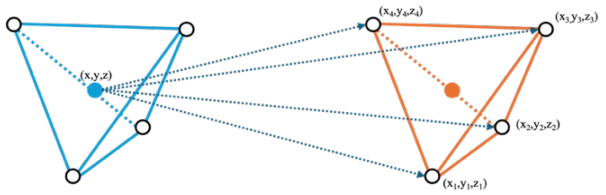
Fig. 1. UWB positioning device placement method.

Conventional UWB-based positioning methods require four or more reference points to identify spatial coordinates [19]. Similarly, GNSS-based systems employ four-point surveying, in which distances to four satellites are measured to determine position [20]. This principle is also applied to UWB systems because it enables more efficient and accurate spatial coordinate estimation than conventional techniques.

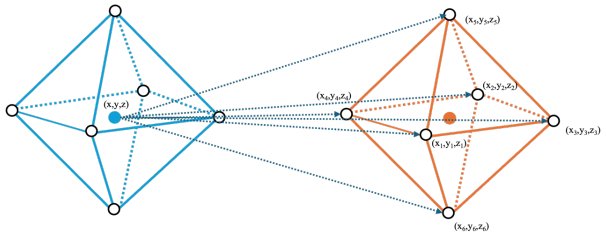
B. Coordinates Calculation-Based on n-Polyhedron

Based on this principle, the proposed method utilizes distance measurements from a minimum of $n = 4$ transmitters to estimate the the three-dimensional coordinates (x, y, z) of the receiver. Let the coordinates of the transmitters be (x_1, y_1, z_1), (x_2, y_2, z_2), ..., (x_n, y_n, z_n), and let the measured distances between the receiver and each transmitter be r_1, r_2, ..., r_n. This receiver position satisfies the following system of n equation:

$$\left.\begin{aligned} (x-x_1)^2+(y-y_1)^2+(z-z_1)^2-r_1^2=0 \\ (x-x_2)^2+(y-y_2)^2+(z-z_2)^2-r_2^2=0 \\ \vdots \\ (x-x_n)^2+(y-y_n)^2+(z-z_n)^2-r_n^2=0 \end{aligned}\right\} \quad (1)$$



(a) Tetrahedron (with four devices).



(b) Octahedron (with six devices).

Fig. 2. Component systems.

Theoretically, based on Eq. (1), only one spatial coordinate can be determined. However, in practical scenarios, measurement errors are superimposed on the observed distances, and the system of equation is not satisfied exactly. In this study, an approximate solution is obtained by solving a nonlinear least-squares problem. The measured distances r_i are used as initial values, and the solution is iteratively refined until convergence to the coordinates (x, y, z) that best satisfy Eq. (1).

IV. Comparison of Errors by Simulation

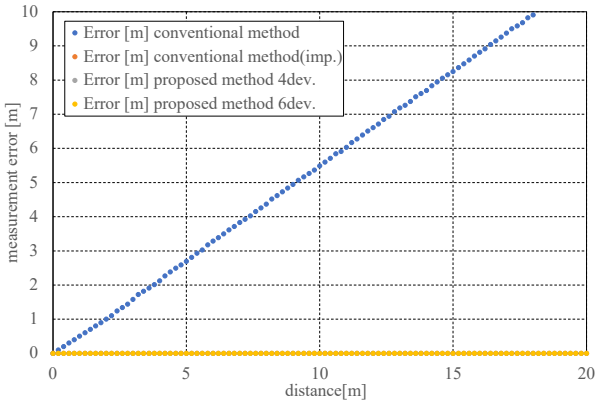
A. Experimental Overview

Simulations were conducted to evaluate the extent to which the proposed method reduces estimation error compared to the conventional methods. Specifically, the variation in error with respect to geometric shape and size was analyzed.

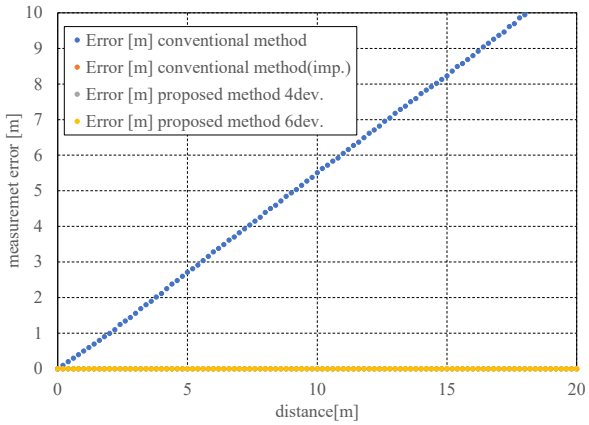
The following configurations were compared: a square configuration representing the conventional method, in which the transmitting devices arranged on the same plane; a tetrahedral configuration similar to the conventional method but with different device heights, and proposed configurations using a regular tetrahedron (Fig. 2a) and a regular octahedron (Fig. 2b).

As part of the experimental conditions, the length of one side of each configuration was set to 0.25 and 0.5 m. These values were selected because the proposed system is intended for estimating the relative positions of mobile robots, and thus the onboard positioning system must be as compact as possible. The distance between the receiving and transmitting devices was varied from 0 to 20 m in increments of 0.2 m. For each condition, the calculation was repeated 100,000 times, and the average error was computed.

All simulations were performed using Python 3.7.9, with the Numpy 1.21.6 and Scipy 1.7.3 libraries.



(a) Side length: 0.25 m.



(b) Side length: 0.5 m.

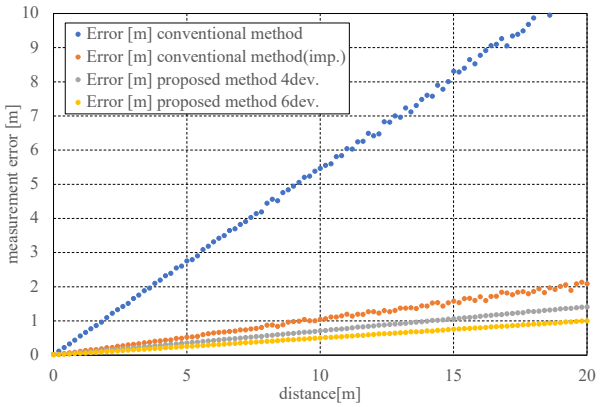
Fig. 3. Experimental results (without error).

B. Experimental Results

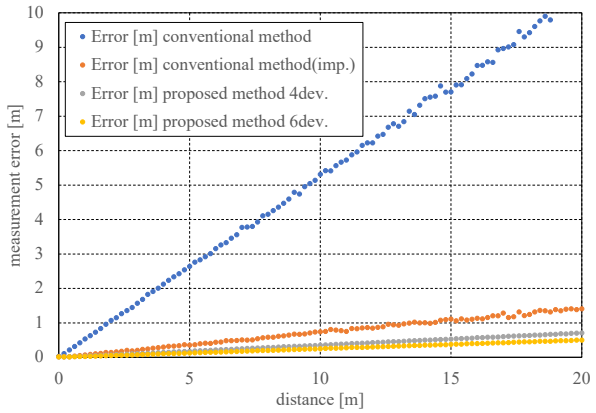
The simulation results showing the change in error with the distance are presented in Fig. 3. Fig. 3a and 3b correspond to side lengths of 0.25 and 0.5 m. For the conventional square configuration, the estimation error increases proportionally with distance, regardless of side length. In contrast, the errors associated with the other configurations remain almost negligible. These results indicate that three-dimensional configurations, such as the tetrahedral and octahedral arrangements, provide improved ranging accuracy compared with the planar square configuration.

Fig. 4 presents the results of simulations evaluating the effect of mixed measurement errors. In these simulations, a measurement error with a standard deviation of 0.01 m was superimposed on the ranging distance r_i, corresponding to a 1σ uncertainty. Given that UWB positioning typically achieves accuracy on the order of several centimeters, a minimum error of 0.01 m was added to the distance measurements to account for realistic measurement uncertainty [21].

Under these conditions, the square configuration exhibited the largest estimation error, whereas the regular polyhedral configurations proposed in this paper demonstrated smaller errors than both the square and tetrahedral configurations. Among the regular polyhedrons, the regular octahedron con-

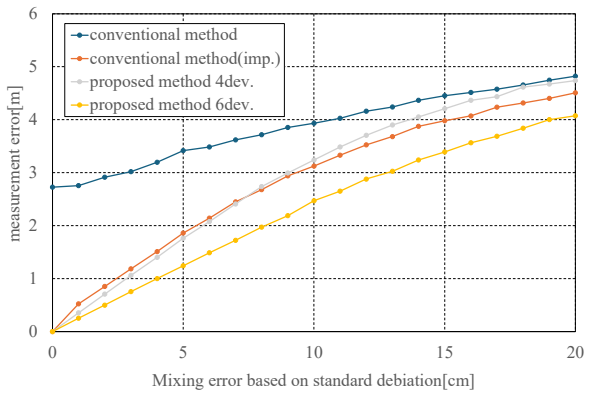


(a) Side length: 0.25 m.

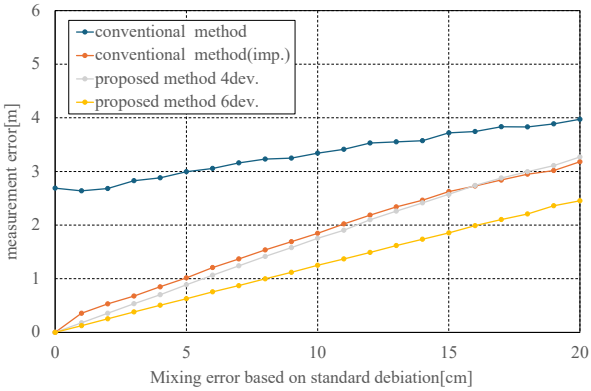


(b) Side length: 0.5 m.

Fig. 4. Experimental results (mixing error: 0.01 m).



(a) Side length: 0.25 m.



(b) Side length: 0.5 m.

Fig. 5. Comparison of errors by mixing error (5m point).

sistently yielded lower errors than the regular tetrahedron. This improvement can be attributed to the increased number of equations resulting from a larger number of positioning devices.

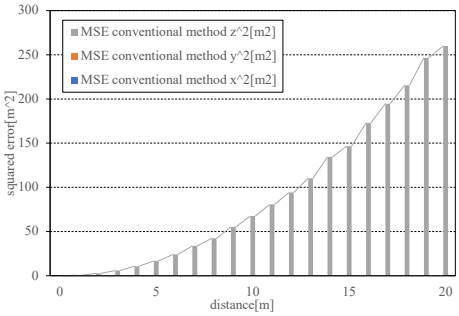
The effects of increasing mixed error magnitude are shown in Fig. 5. Fig. 5a and 5b correspond to side lengths of 0.25 and 0.5 m, respectively. In both cases, the square configuration produced the largest error, consistent with the trends shown in Fig. 3 and 4. As the mixed error increased, the estimation errors for the tetrahedral configuration and the proposed regular tetrahedral configuration gradually converged. For the 0.25-m condition, the error associated with the tetrahedral configuration exceeded that of the square configuration when the mixed error exceeded 0.13 m. This discrepancy is attributed to the sensitivity of the optimization process to the initial values used in the simulation. At a mixed error of 0.13 m, the resulting error range was approximately 0.4 m, rendering the system unsuitable for practical distance measurement.

For the 0.5-m condition, both the tetrahedral and octahedral configurations exhibited increased estimation error as the mixed error increased. However, unlike the 0.25-m condition, the square and tetrahedral configurations demonstrated smaller changes in error compared with the regular tetrahedral configuration. Among the regular polyhedrons, the regular octahedral configuration demonstrated lower errors and higher accuracy than the regular tetrahedral configuration, as shown in Fig. 3.

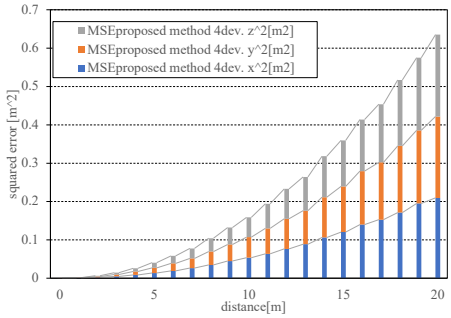
Both the theoretical and experimental results, even with accounting for measurement errors, indicate that proposed regular polyhedral configurations yield smaller estimation errors. Compared with conventional methods, the use of regular octahedrons reduced the estimation error by approximately half. These results demonstrate that the regular polyhedral configuration employed in the proposed method enhances the accuracy of relative position estimation and reduces sensitivity to measurement noise.

Fig. 6 shows the simulation results for error distribution along each coordinate axis, obtained using theoretical distances without mixed errors. Fig. 6b and 6c show the results for the proposed regular tetrahedral and octahedral configurations, respectively. Fig. 6 illustrates the squared error for each configuration under the conditions with a side length of 0.5 m. By analyzing the squared error, the contribution of each axis to the overall estimation error can be evaluated.

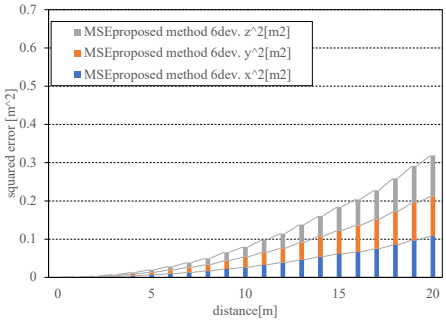
As shown in Fig. 6a, the square configuration exhibits minimal errors along the x- and y-axes, while most of the error is concentrated along the z-axis. This indicates that the conventional square configuration significantly degrade the position estimation with respect to height. In contrast, the tetrahedral



(a) Conventional method (square).

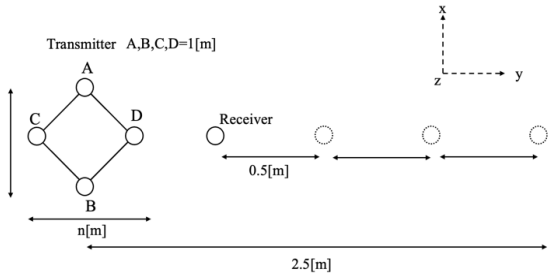


(b) Proposed method with four devices (tetrahedron).

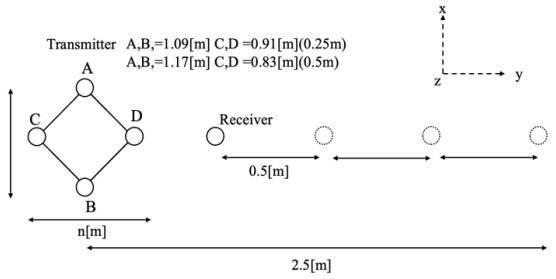


(c) Proposed method with six devices (octahedron).

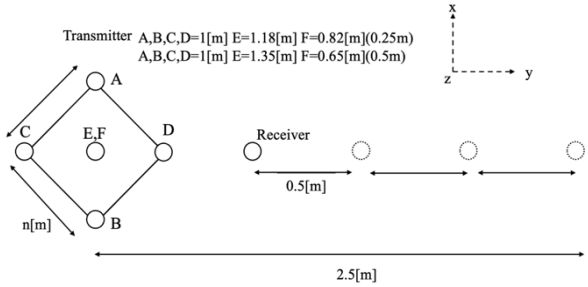
Fig. 6. Comparison of errors by squared error.



(a) Conventional method (square).



(b) Proposed method with four devices (tetrahedron).



(c) Proposed method with six devices (octahedron).

Fig. 7. Illustrated summary of experiment: n in the figure changes the length of a side depending on the experimental conditions.

and octahedral configurations exhibit more balanced error distributions across each axis, with overall error magnitudes smaller than those of the conventional configulation.

These results demonstrate that the proposed method more effectively reduces estimation error and achieves a more uniform error distribution across all axises than the conventional methods. Consequently, the use of regular polyhedral configurations improves position estimation performance and enables more reliable and uniform ranging.

V. Field Experiments

A. Experimental Overview

Field experiments using UWB positioning devices were conducted to compare the positioning errors of the conventional and proposed methods based on actual measurements. The UWB device used in this study was the type 2AB module manufactured by Murata, which incorporates the Qorvo QM33120W UWB chip [22].

For the conventional method using a square configuration, the transmitting devices were arranged with side lengths of either 0.25 or 0.5 m. Because multiple placement planes are possible for the square configuration, positioning experiments were conducted in both the xy-plane and xz-planes. For the proposed method, regular polyhedral configurations were employed under the same conditions as those used in the simulations, specifically tetrahedral and octahedral arrangements. Regular tetrahedron and octahedron with side lengths of 0.25 or 0.5 m were constructed, with UWB modules placed at each vertex as transmitting devices.

In all configurations, the receiving device was fixed at a height of 1 m, and the distance from the center of the unit was varied from 1.0 m to 2.5 m in increments of 0.5 m. The maximum distance was limited to 2.5 m because the experiments were conducted within the measurable range achievable under the regular polyhedral configuration. Each experimental deployment consisted of multiple positioning

TABLE I. MEASUREMENT ERROR IN LINEAR DISTANCE FOR EACH SHAPE (SIDE LENGTH: 0.25 M)

	Measurement Error[m]			
	Conventional method		Proposed method	
Distance [m]	xy-plane	xz-plane	4 devices	6 devices
1	0.995	1.000	0.212	0.403
1.5	1.479	1.500	0.238	0.389
2	1.983	1.933	0.427	0.395
2.5	2.479	2.338	0.575	0.739

TABLE II. MEASUREMENT ERROR IN LINEAR DISTANCE FOR EACH SHAPE (SIDE LENGTH: 0.5 M)

	Measurement Error[m]			
	Conventional method		Proposed method	
Distance [m]	xy-plane	xz-plane	4 devices	6 devices
1	0.995	1.000	0.108	0.191
1.5	1.492	1.500	0.198	0.131
2	1.988	2.000	0.395	0.247
2.5	2.483	2.500	0.491	0.436

points comprising a set of transmitter devices and a single receiver. A schematic of the experimental setup is shown in Fig. 7. All experiments were conducted in a lecture room at the Tokyo Senju Campus of Tokyo Denki University.

For evaluation, 500 datasets were collected for each condition, and the positioning error was calculated using the nonlinear least-squares method. The mean error and the universal standard deviation were used as evaluation metrics. Python 3.7.9 was used for optimization, and the least-squares solution was computed using the Scipy 1.7.3 library.

B. Experimental Overview

Tables I and II present the linear distance errors calculated using for each configuration. The results show that both the tetrahedral and octahedral configurations yield reduced errors compared with the square configuration. A comparison between the xy- and xz-plane arrangements indicates that the error does not differ significantly between them, although slightly lower errors were observed in the xy-plane. Furthermore, a comparison between the tetrahedral and octahedral configurations revealed that, in contrast to the simulation results, the tetrahedral configuration produced smaller errors than the octahedral configuration in the field experiments. This discrepancy is attributed to the measurement noise in the actual ranging data, whose influence depends on the magnitude of the measurement error. In addition, the observation that the errors were smaller for a side length of 0.5 m than for 0.25 m can be explained by the resolution of the UWB device used in this study, which measures distance with centimeter-level granularity.

Fig. 8 shows a comparison of the squared error components for each axis. Similar to the linear distance error, the squared errors were smaller for the tetrahedral and octahedral configurations than the square configuration. The squared errors for the square configurations were larger for the xz-plane than for the xy-plane. In Fig. 8a, errors occurred predominantly along the y-axis. This behavior can be attributed to the fact that the transmitting device farthest from the receiving device was located along the y-axis, making the measurements more susceptible to interference from radio waves generated by other wireless communication systems. In Fig. 8b, the squared errors were distributed across both the x- and z-axes. Unlike Fig. 8a, where the distances between the transmitting and receiving devices were uniform, the presence of similar measurement errors across all ranging data in the xz-plane led to the error distribution shown in Fig. 8b.

Subsequently, the results of the proposed polyhedral configurations are discussed. Notably, although the octahedral configuration exhibited relatively large linear distance errors at a distance of 1 m, its squared error was smaller than that of the tetrahedral configuration. This behavior is attributed to the proximity of transmitting device C to the receiving device in the octahedral configuration, which results in less stable measurements at short distances. However, at other measurement points, the octahedral configuration yielded smaller errors, leading to reduced least-squares error values consistent with the simulation results.

In the conventional square configuration, estimation errors tend to accumulate along specific axes, making accurate three-dimensional relative position estimation difficult. In contrast, the proposed regular polyhedral configurations reduce error components along each axis, enabling more accurate and balanced three-dimensional relative position estimation. These results demonstrate that the proposed method can effectively estimate the three-dimensional relative positions of multiple robots, which is the primary objective of this study.

VI. CONCLUSION

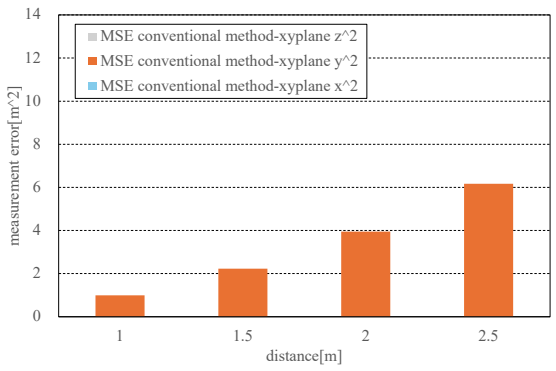
In this study, we propose a ranging system that employs a regular polyhedron to develop a relative position estimation method for mobile robot distributed cooperation systems. Simulations demonstrated that, compared to conventional methods, the proposed approach significantly reduces error. Verification through actual distance measurements confirmed that the proposed method effectively minimizes errors relative to conventional techniques. However, some experimental results from actual ranging showed larger errors than those observed in simulations. This discrepancy is attributed to radio wave interference in the experimental environment. The proposed method is most effective when high-precision ranging is achievable. This technique enables each robot to estimate its position relative to others, which is essential for implementing effective autonomous decentralized control in systems with two or more robots.

VII. FUTURE WORK

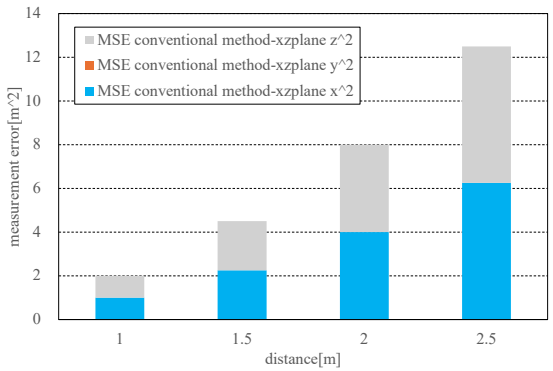
In the future, we will increase the number of faces, compare the accuracies of various polyhedral structures, and implement them in mobile robots as a method for relative position estimation. The proposed approach has the potential to facilitate the deployment of multi-robot systems in environments where GNSS is unavailable, such as underground spaces, indoor settings, and extraterrestrial locations. However, reducing the unit size results in decreased positioning accuracy, highlighting the need for an effective solution to integrate the system into a single device.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

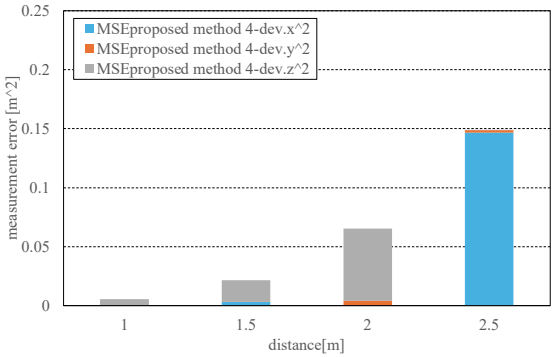
We would like to thank Editage (www.editage.com) for English language editing.



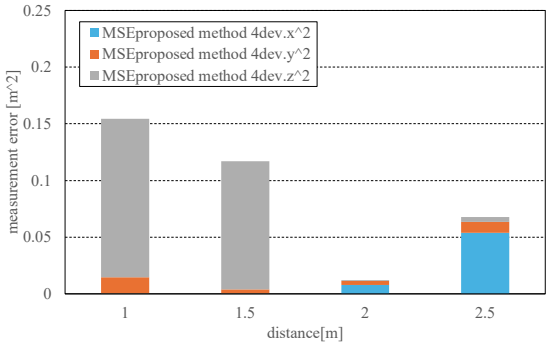
(a) Conventional method (square, xy-plane).



(b) Conventional method (square, xz-plane).



(c) Proposed method with four devices (tetrahedron).



(d) Proposed method with six devices (octahedron).

Fig. 8. Errors caused by squared errors in actual experiments (Side length: 0.5 m).

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DAMCSeg: Dynamic Adaptive Multi-Modal Collaborative Semantic Segmentation

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***Abstract*—While current semantic segmentation models excel in controlled environments, they often struggle with key challenges such as dynamic multi-modal data, small target recognition, and computational efficiency for edge deployment. Motivated by these limitations, this study explores targeted solutions and presents DAMCSeg (Dynamic Adaptive Multi-modal Collaborative Semantic Segmentation), an innovative framework that introduces advancements across feature fusion, training paradigms, and model efficiency. The core contributions of DAMCSeg include: 1) a Dual-Stage Attention Fusion (DSAF) module that dynamically adjusts multi-branch fusion weights based on scene complexity; 2) an end-to-end joint training framework for object detection and semantic segmentation designed to minimize inter-stage error propagation; and 3) a Lightweight Multi-Modal Fusion (LMMF) module that efficiently integrates multi-source data with low computational overhead. To rigorously evaluate the proposed method's effectiveness against these specific challenges, extensive experiments are conducted on mainstream benchmark datasets. The results demonstrate that DAMCSeg achieves high accuracy and operational efficiency, effectively addressing critical issues in dynamic scene adaptation, complex target segmentation, and edge device deployment. This provides a practical and viable solution for semantic segmentation in demanding applications such as autonomous driving and medical image analysis.**

Keywords*—Dynamic Adaptive Multi-Modal Collaborative; Dual-Stage Attention Fusion (DSAF); End-to-End Detection-Segmentation Joint Framework; Lightweight Multi-Modal Fusion (LMMF)

I. Introduction

As a fundamental pillar of computer vision, semantic segmentation performs pixel-wise classification of images, enabling machines to interpret visual scenes with fine-grained understanding. This technology has become indispensable in real-world applications including autonomous driving, medical imaging, and intelligent surveillance systems. While deep learning—particularly through CNN and Transformer architectures—has dramatically advanced the state of the art, current segmentation models still encounter several critical limitations. For instance, the pursuit of high-level semantic representation often comes at the cost of weakened spatial detail preservation, which hampers accuracy on small objects and intricate boundaries. Moreover, conventional multi-branch fusion approaches frequently rely on fixed weighting schemes, lacking the flexibility to dynamically adapt to varying scene conditions. The dependence on single-modal data further restricts robustness under challenging environments like low illumination or significant occlusion. Additionally, many high-accuracy models incur substantial computational costs, hindering their deployment in real-time or resource-constrained settings.

Current mainstream semantic segmentation models can be divided into three categories: first, classic CNN-based models (e.g., DeepLab v3+ [1], PSPNet[2]), which improve context modeling capabilities through modules such as dilated convolution and pyramid pooling, but have shortcomings in small target segmentation and dynamic scene adaptation; second, Transformer-based models (e.g., SegFormer [3], Mask2Former [4]), which enhance feature correlation through global attention mechanisms, but suffer from slow inference speed and high computational cost; third, lightweight models (e.g., ENet [5], MobileNet-based [6] segmentation networks), which meet real-time requirements but have room for improvement in segmentation accuracy and robustness. Although recent multi-modal semantic segmentation approaches aim to enhance robustness under sensor degradation, many still assume complete modality inputs or employ static fusion strategies. For instance, early methods like FusionNet [7] focus on LiDAR completion rather than adaptive segmentation, while more recent works such as MM-Seg [8] and AdaFuse [9] explicitly address missing-modality scenarios through cross-modal prompting and learnable gating, respectively. However, these models operate with uniform fusion policies across the entire image and do not leverage cross-task geometric priors (e.g., from object detection) to resolve ambiguities in occluded or small-scale regions—a critical limitation in autonomous driving scenarios. This gap motivates our design of a dual-stage, detection-aware fusion mechanism.

To address the above issues, this paper proposes the DAMCSeg method. While components like attention-based fusion, joint training, and multi-modal integration exist in prior work, our key novelty lies in their synergistic combination and the specific design choices that enable a fundamental leap in adaptive capability, rather than mere incremental improvement. Our core innovations are as follows:

- A Dual-Stage Attention Fusion (DSAF) module is introduced, which uniquely decouples adaptation into two complementary levels: global scene-level assessment and local target-level refinement. In contrast to existing single-stage or scene-only aware fusion approaches (e.g., CFNet [10])—which impose a uniform fusion strategy across the entire image—DSAF enables simultaneous handling of simple backgrounds and highly complex, occluded objects within the same frame. This two-tiered mechanism directly addresses the challenge of decoupled global-local complexity, a gap unmet by current frameworks.

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- An end-to-end detection-segmentation joint training framework is developed, featuring a novel Detection-Segmentation Alignment Loss. This loss function explicitly penalizes geometric misalignment between predicted bounding boxes and segmentation masks, thereby mitigating error propagation inherent in cascaded or loosely coupled systems. The framework thus establishes a transferable principle for enhancing cross-task consistency through direct optimization of spatial alignment.
- A Lightweight Multi-Modal Fusion (LMMF) module is proposed, capable of fusing RGB with depth or infrared data while incorporating a modal missing complementation mechanism. This design ensures robust inference under partial sensor failure—a critical requirement for real-world deployment that most existing multi-modal models overlook due to their reliance on complete input modalities.
- Targeted loss functions, including a tiny target-focused loss and an occluded region-aware loss, are formulated to provide explicit supervisory signals for the most challenging segmentation scenarios. These losses significantly enhance model robustness in extreme conditions involving small-scale or heavily occluded objects.

Experimental results show that DAMCSeg significantly outperforms current mainstream semantic segmentation models on multiple benchmark datasets. Compared with DeepLab v3+ [1], the average mIoU is increased by 7.0% and the inference speed by 25.7%; compared with SegFormer-B4 [3], the mIoU is increased by 6.6% and the small target mIoU by 14.8%; compared with Mask2Former [4], the inference speed is increased by 128.9% while the mIoU is increased by 3.4%; in extreme scenarios such as low light, the mIoU is increased by 5%-8% compared with single-modal mainstream models. This method breaks the balance bottleneck among accuracy, speed, and robustness of existing mainstream models, providing a new idea for the practical application of semantic segmentation technology.

The main contributions of this paper are summarized as follows:

- Propose a Dynamic Adaptive Multi-Modal Collaborative Semantic Segmentation method (DAMCSeg), which realizes dynamic optimization of multi-branch fusion through a dual-stage attention mechanism to adapt to different scenes and target characteristics;
- Construct an end-to-end joint training framework for object detection and semantic segmentation, and design a cross-task loss function to improve the segmentation accuracy of complex targets and boundary regions;
- Develop a lightweight multi-modal fusion module, supporting multi-source data integration and model compression to achieve coordinated optimization of high accuracy and real-time performance;
- Conduct extensive experiments on multiple benchmark datasets, comparing comprehensively with current mainstream semantic segmentation models to verify the superiority of the proposed method, and provide a practical solution for semantic segmentation in complex and extreme scenarios.

II. Related Work

A. Object Detection

Object detection technology is an important support for semantic segmentation, and its development has evolved from traditional handcrafted feature-based methods to deep learning-based methods. Traditional methods such as the Viola-Jones detector and HOG + SVM rely on manually designed features and have limited generalization capabilities. In the deep learning era, two mainstream paradigms have been formed: two-stage detectors represented by the R-CNN [11] series, which achieve high-precision detection through "region proposal + fine-grained classification"; and single-stage detectors represented by YOLO [12] and SSD [13], which pursue inference speed through "end-to-end direct prediction". In recent years, DETR [14] has introduced the Transformer architecture to realize set prediction without NMS post-processing, and models such as Faster R-CNN [15] enhanced with FPN structures have improved multi-scale detection capabilities.

Some existing mainstream semantic segmentation models (e.g., Mask2Former [4]) integrate object detection ideas, but fail to achieve deep collaborative training between detection and segmentation, resulting in mismatches between localization accuracy and semantic segmentation accuracy. Drawing on the advantages of end-to-end joint training, this paper deeply integrates object detection and semantic segmentation, realizing mutual promotion through a shared feature backbone and cross-task loss function, and providing accurate localization priors for complex target segmentation.

B. Semantic Segmentation

The field of semantic segmentation has formed diverse technical routes, and mainstream models can be divided into three categories:

1) CNN-Based models: The emergence of FCN [16] in 2015 laid the encoder-decoder architecture paradigm for semantic segmentation. Subsequent models such as the DeepLab [17] series introduced dilated convolution and ASPP modules to expand the receptive field, PSPNet [2] aggregated global context information through pyramid pooling, and U-Net [18] restored spatial details using skip connections. These models perform stably in moderately complex scenes but have limitations in small target segmentation and dynamic scene adaptation.

2) Transformer-Based models: Models such as Swin Transformer [19] and SegFormer [3] enhance global context modeling capabilities through multi-head self-attention mechanisms, and Mask2Former [4] improves instance-level segmentation accuracy using a set prediction approach. These models achieve high accuracy but have high computational overhead and slow inference speed, making it difficult to meet real-time requirements.

3) Lightweight and multi-modal models: MobileNet-based [6], ENet [5] segmentation networks, and other lightweight models achieve real-time inference by simplifying network structures, but at the cost of significant accuracy loss; multi-modal models such as MVSS-Net [20] and FusionNet [7] combine RGB with depth/infrared information to improve robustness, but suffer from low modal fusion efficiency and structural redundancy.

Targeting the shortcomings of existing mainstream models, this paper integrates the advantages of efficient feature extraction by CNNs and attention mechanisms by Transformers [21], designing a lightweight multi-modal fusion module and dynamic fusion strategy to achieve coordinated improvement in accuracy, speed, and robustness.

C. Multi-Branch Fusion and Adaptive Mechanisms

Multi-branch fusion is an effective means to improve the performance of semantic segmentation models. Fusion strategies adopted by existing mainstream models mainly include simple average fusion, weighted sum fusion, and attention-based adaptive fusion. HRNet [22] extracts features in parallel through multi-scale branches, and OCRNet [23] introduces context branches to enhance semantic correlation, but both adopt fixed-weight fusion strategies that cannot adapt to dynamic scene changes.

In recent studies, the attention fusion module in CFNet [10] dynamically adjusts branch weights based on feature saliency, and the scene-aware fusion strategy in SA-Fusion [24] optimizes branch selection by evaluating scene complexity, but only realizes single-level adaptive adjustment. This paper proposes a dual-stage attention fusion mechanism to achieve more fine-grained adaptive adjustment from both scene and target levels, further improving the efficiency of multi-branch information utilization and solving the problem of insufficient dynamic adaptation capabilities of mainstream models. Crucially, while prior works have explored elements of adaptivity, modality fusion, or task collaboration in isolation, they fail to address the synergistic gap: the lack of a unified framework that can simultaneously reason about global scene context, local object intricacies, and cross-task geometric consistency under resource constraints. This gap leaves existing models brittle in real-world scenarios where these challenges co-occur. DAMCSeg is designed explicitly to bridge this gap by integrating its three core innovations into a single, coherent system.

In recent studies, the attention fusion module in CFNet [10] dynamically adjusts branch weights based on feature saliency, and the scene-aware fusion strategy in SA-Fusion [24] optimizes branch selection by evaluating global scene complexity. However, both enforce a single-level adaptation policy—either purely global or purely local—and cannot simultaneously handle simple backgrounds and complex foreground objects within the same image. More recently, DynamicFuse [25] introduces spatially varying fusion gates conditioned on local entropy, yet it does not incorporate geometric guidance from auxiliary tasks such as object detection. This paper proposes a dual-stage attention fusion mechanism (DSAF) that achieves fine-grained adaptive adjustment at both scene and target levels, thereby improving multi-branch information utilization and addressing the limited dynamic adaptation of existing approaches. Crucially, while prior works have explored adaptivity, modality fusion, or task collaboration in isolation, they fail to address the synergistic gap: the absence of a unified framework capable of jointly reasoning about global scene context, local object geometry, and cross-task consistency under real-world sensor failures and computational constraints. This limitation renders current models brittle when these challenges co-occur—as commonly seen in autonomous driving at night or in heavy occlusion. DAMCSeg is explicitly designed to bridge this gap by integrating its three core innovations into a single, efficient, and robust system.

D. Our DAMCSeg

Compared with current mainstream semantic segmentation models, DAMCSeg has three core advantages: first, the dual-stage attention fusion mechanism solves the limitations of fixed-weight fusion in mainstream models, realizing dynamic adaptation to scenes and targets; second, the end-to-end joint training framework improves the coordination between detection and segmentation, breaking the bottleneck of insufficient segmentation accuracy for complex targets in mainstream models; third, the lightweight multi-modal fusion module expands the model's application scenarios while reducing computational overhead, balancing accuracy and real-time performance that are difficult to reconcile in mainstream models. The detailed network architecture and implementation scheme will be introduced in Section III.

III. Network Architecture

To verify the effectiveness of the DAMCSeg method, this paper designs a corresponding network model. The overall architecture is shown in Fig. 1, which integrates core innovative modules such as dynamic fusion, end-to-end collaborative training, and multi-modal lightweight fusion to achieve comprehensive optimization of existing mainstream models.

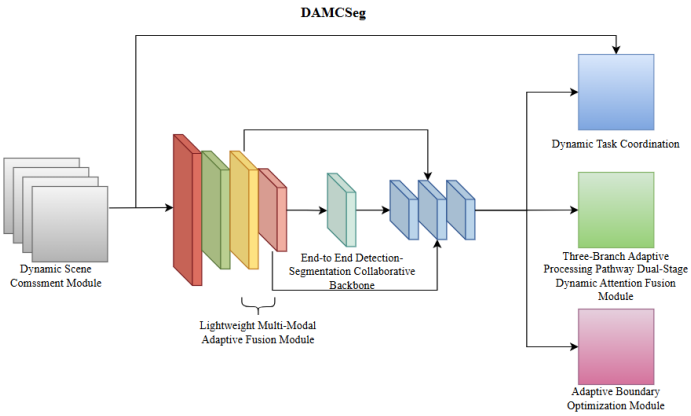

Fig. 1. Overall architecture of DAMCSeg. The model includes five core components: a scene complexity evaluation branch, a Lightweight Multi-Modal Fusion (LMMF) module, an end-to-end detection-segmentation shared backbone, a three-branch processing path, a Dual-Stage Attention Fusion (DSAF) module, and a boundary optimization module.

A. Overall Framework

The overall processing flow of DAMCSeg is as follows:

1) Multi-modal input: Receive RGB + depth/infrared multi-modal data, and generate multi-modal feature maps through the LMMF module.

2) Scene complexity evaluation: Calculate the scene complexity score based on target density, occlusion coefficient, and edge density to guide the dynamic adjustment of the DSAF module.

3) End-to-end detection and segmentation: The shared backbone network outputs detection features and segmentation features simultaneously; the detection head generates target bounding boxes, and the three-branch segmentation path performs pixel-level prediction.

4) Multi-branch fusion: Dynamically weight and fuse the outputs of the three branches through the DSAF module.

5) Boundary optimization: Optimize the fusion result using a lightweight CRF to generate the final semantic segmentation map.

B. Lightweight Multi-Modal Fusion (LMMF) Module

The LMMF module is designed to solve the problems of low fusion efficiency and high computational overhead in mainstream multi-modal models, and its structure is shown in Fig. 2.

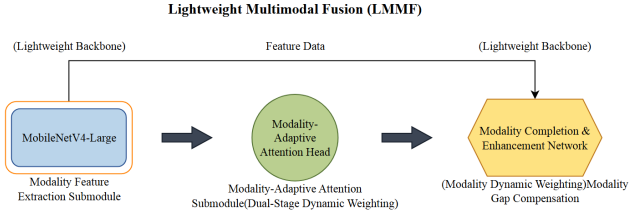

Fig. 2. Structure of the LMMF module. It includes three sub-modules: modal feature extraction, modal adaptive attention, and modal missing complementation.

1) Modal feature extraction: For different modal inputs (RGB, depth, infrared), task-specific lightweight feature extractors are designed:

a) RGB branch: MobileNetV4-Large [26] is used as the backbone, replacing traditional convolution with depthwise separable convolution, reducing the number of parameters by 30% compared with EfficientNet [27].

b) Depth/infrared branch: A lightweight encoder composed of 4 convolution blocks is adopted, enhancing the extraction of spatial structure information through dilated convolutions with different rates.

2) Modal adaptive attention: To achieve efficient adaptive fusion of multi-modal features, a modal adaptive attention module is designed to calculate the reliability weight of each modal feature according to the current scene:

$$\omega_m = \sigma(W_m F_m + b_m) \tag{1}$$

$$F_{fusion} = \sum_{m=1}^{M} \omega_m \cdot F_m \tag{2}$$

where, F_m is the feature map of the m-th modal, W_m and b_m are learnable parameters, σ is the Sigmoid activation function, and ω_m is the reliability weight of the m-th modal. For example, in low-light scenes, the weight of the RGB modal is reduced and the weight of the infrared modal is increased to improve segmentation performance.

3) Modal missing complementation: To enhance the model's robustness when part of the modal data is missing, a modal missing complementation network is introduced to predict missing modal features based on existing modal information:

$$F_{\hat{m}} = MCN(F_{exist}) \tag{3}$$

where, MCN is a lightweight Multi-Layer Perceptron (MLP), which maps the existing modal features F_{exist} to the missing modal feature space $F_{\hat{m}}$. When a certain modal is missing, the predicted features are used to replace the original features for fusion, ensuring the normal operation of the model and solving the problem of mainstream multi-modal models' dependence on complete modal data.

C. End-to-End Detection-Segmentation Joint Framework

To solve the problem of insufficient segmentation accuracy for complex targets caused by the separation of detection and segmentation in mainstream models, an end-to-end joint training framework is constructed, as shown in Fig. 3. The core conceptual contribution of this framework is the establishment of a direct, differentiable link between the detection and segmentation tasks via a dedicated alignment objective. This transforms the relationship from sequential dependency to mutual constraint, providing a generalizable insight for multi-task vision systems: explicitly optimizing for cross-task geometric consistency is more effective than relying on shared features alone.

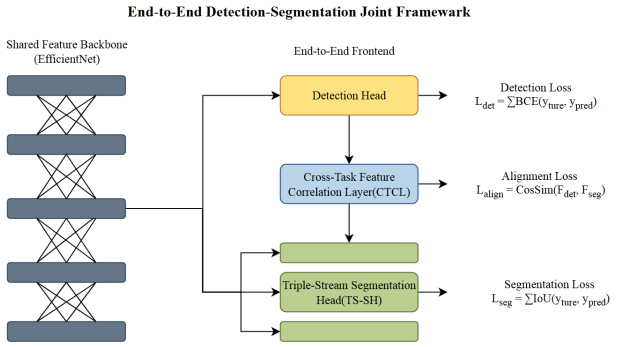

Fig. 3. End-to-end detection-segmentation joint framework. It includes a shared feature backbone, a detection head, a three-branch segmentation head, and a cross-task loss function.

1) Shared feature backbone: EfficientNetV2 [28] is used as the shared feature backbone, retaining the compound scaling strategy of EfficientNet [27] and further improving the efficiency of feature extraction. The first 80% of the backbone layers are shared by the detection and segmentation tasks, and the last 20% are designed as task-specific feature adaptation layers to achieve specialization of feature representation and avoid insufficient feature sharing in mainstream models.

2) Detection Head and Segmentation Head:

- Detection head: Based on an improved EfficientDet [29] detection head, integrating the BiFPN structure to enhance multi-scale feature fusion, and outputting target bounding boxes and category probabilities.
- Segmentation head: A three-branch structure is designed to optimize segmentation performance in different scenarios:
  - Global segmentation path: A lightweight ASPP module is used to aggregate global context information, and computational overhead is reduced through channel pruning to adapt to the segmentation of large-area continuous regions.
  - Local + fusion path: Taking the bounding boxes output by the detection head as Regions of Interest (ROIs), local image patches are cropped, and MobileNetV4-Large [26] is used as the segmentation sub-network to achieve fine-grained segmentation of small targets and complex boundaries.
  - Post-processing enhancement path: Multi-modal prior information (e.g., target position prompts based on depth) is introduced to optimize the bounding box matching strategy, reducing missed detections and improving the segmentation performance of occluded targets.

3) Cross-task loss function: A Detection-Segmentation Joint Loss (DSJL) is designed to realize mutual constraint and promotion between the two tasks, solving the problem of single and insufficiently targeted loss functions in mainstream models:

$$DSJL = L_{det} + \lambda_1 L_{seg} + \lambda_2 L_{align} \tag{4}$$

Where:

- L_{det}: Detection loss, including classification loss (Focal Loss) and bounding box regression loss (GIoU Loss).
- L_{seg}: Segmentation loss, composed of cross-entropy loss, boundary-aware loss, Dice loss, tiny target-focused loss, and occluded region-aware loss.
- L_{align}: Detection-segmentation alignment loss, which calculates the IoU between the detection bounding box and the segmentation mask. When $IoU < 0.7$, additional penalties are imposed to force alignment between detection and segmentation results.
- $\lambda_1 = 1.0$ and $\lambda_2 = 0.5$ are balance coefficients.

D. Dual-Stage Attention Fusion (DSAF) Module

To solve the problem that fixed-weight fusion in mainstream models cannot adapt to dynamic scenes, a DSAF module is designed to realize dynamic weight adjustment through two levels: "scene complexity evaluation" and "target characteristic adaptation", as shown in Fig. 4.

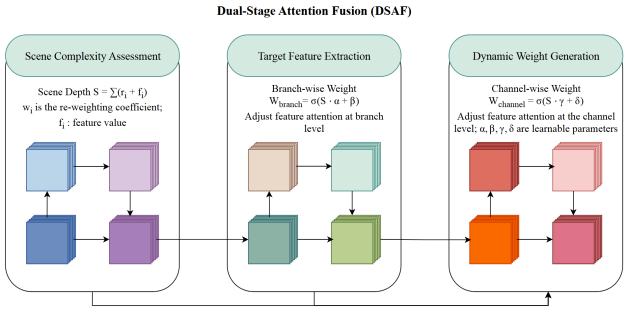

Fig. 4. Structure of the DSAF module. It includes three parts: scene complexity evaluation, target characteristic extraction, and dynamic weight generation.

1) Scene complexity evaluation: Three key indicators are calculated to evaluate scene complexity:

- Target density D: The ratio of the number of targets to the image area.
- Occlusion coefficient O: The ratio of occluded pixels to the total number of target pixels.
- Edge density E: The ratio of edge pixels detected by the Canny operator to the image area.

The scene complexity score S is obtained through weighted summation:

$$S = 0.4D + 0.3O + 0.3E \tag{5}$$

According to the value of S, scenes are divided into three categories: simple scenes ($S < 0.3$), moderately complex scenes ($0.3 \leq S \leq 0.7$), and complex scenes ($S > 0.7$), and the initial weights of the three branches are set accordingly.

2) Target characteristic adaptation: For each target region, two characteristic indicators are extracted:

- Size coefficient S_z: The ratio of the target area to the image area.
- Semantic ambiguity coefficient A: The variance of pixel-level classification probabilities in the target region.

The weight adjustment factor of the local path is calculated based on the characteristic indicators:

$$\Delta\beta = \sigma(a \cdot S_z + b \cdot A + c) \tag{6}$$

where, a, b, and c are learnable parameters. For small targets ($S_z < 0.01$), $\Delta\beta$ is increased to enhance the contribution of the local path; for targets with high semantic ambiguity ($A > 0.3$), $\Delta\beta$ is increased to strengthen fine-grained segmentation.

3) Dynamic weight generation: Combining the initial weights of scene complexity and the target characteristic adjustment factor, the final weights of the three branches are generated:

$$\alpha_{final} = \alpha_{init} \cdot (1 - \Delta\beta) \tag{7}$$

$$\beta_{final} = \beta_{init} \cdot (1 + \Delta\beta) \tag{8}$$

$$\gamma_{final} = \gamma_{init} \cdot (1 + 0.5\Delta\beta) \tag{9}$$

where, α_{init}, β_{init}, and γ_{init} are the initial weights based on scene complexity, and α_{final}, β_{final}, and γ_{final} are the final dynamic weights.

E. Boundary Optimization

1) CRF module: A lightweight CRF module is used to optimize the boundary of the fusion result. Compared with complex CRFs in mainstream models, the number of iterations is reduced from 5 to 3, and the Gaussian kernel size is adaptively adjusted according to scene complexity, reducing computational overhead while ensuring boundary smoothness.

2) Branch adaptive selection: A lightweight decision network (2-layer MLP) is designed to determine whether each branch of the local path (edge branch, context branch, consistency branch) needs to be activated. For simple scenes or targets with clear edges and complete semantics, redundant branches are deactivated to further reduce computational overhead and improve inference speed, solving the problem of fixed branch structures and redundant computations in mainstream models.

IV. Experiments

A. Implementation Details

1) Datasets and evaluation metrics: The proposed method is evaluated on five carefully selected benchmark datasets to comprehensively verify its performance across diverse scenarios—urban driving, general object recognition, complex indoor/outdoor scenes, multi-modal sensing, and low-light conditions—and to compare fairly with current mainstream semantic segmentation models:

- Cityscapes: 5,000 images with a resolution of 2048×1024, 19 categories, divided into 2,975 training / 500 validation / 1,525 test sets.
- PASCAL VOC 2012: 10,582 images, 20 categories, using the standard training/validation set division.
- ADE20K: 22,210 complex scene images, 150 categories, divided into 20,210 training / 2,000 validation sets.
- KITTI-360: A multi-modal dataset containing RGB + lidar depth information, 1,000 training / 200 test images, 19 categories.
- Dark Zurich: A low-light scene dataset, 400 training / 200 test images, 19 categories.

2) Evaluation metrics include:

- Basic metrics: Mean Intersection over Union (mIoU), Boundary F-score, Small target mIoU ($area < 1024$ pixels), Occluded object recall.
- Efficiency metrics: Inference speed (FPS), Model parameters (Params), GPU memory usage.
- Robustness metrics: Low-light scene mIoU, Foggy scene mIoU, Tiny target recall ($area < 100$ pixels).

3) Model configuration:

- Backbone network: EfficientNetV2-B3 [28] (shared backbone), MobileNetV4-Large [26] (local path backbone).
- LMMF module: Modal feature extractor channel numbers $64 \rightarrow 128 \rightarrow 256 \rightarrow 512$, number of modal adaptive attention heads 8.
- Detection head: BiFPN feature pyramid, ROI detection threshold 0.3, NMS IoU threshold 0.5.
- Segmentation head: The global path ASPP uses 4 dilation rates (1, 6, 12, 18), and the local path ROI processing size is 128×128.
- DSAF module: Initial scene complexity weights: simple scenes ($\alpha = 0.6$, $\beta = 0.2$, $\gamma = 0.1$), moderately complex scenes ($\alpha = 0.5$, $\beta = 0.3$, $\gamma = 0.2$), complex scenes ($\alpha = 0.4$, $\beta = 0.4$, $\gamma = 0.3$).
- Boundary optimization: Lightweight CRF, 3 iterations, adaptive Gaussian kernel.

4) Training strategy:

- Training stages:
  - Warm-up stage (1–5 epochs): Freeze the shared backbone, only train the detection head and segmentation head, learning rate 3×10^{-5}.
  - Joint training stage (6–40 epochs): Unfreeze the shared backbone, enable DSJL loss, adaptive learning rates (detection head 5×10^{-5}, segmentation head 1×10^{-4}, shared backbone 3×10^{-5}).
  - Fine-tuning stage (41–45 epochs): Reduce the learning rate to 1×10^{-5}, and strengthen the training of fusion modules.
- Optimizer: AdamW, weight decay 1×10^{-4}, batch size 16 (Cityscapes) / 32 (other datasets).
- Learning rate strategy: Cosine annealing with 5 epochs of warm-up.
- Data augmentation: Random horizontal flip, scaling (0.5–2.0), color jitter, random occlusion, super-resolution enhancement (for tiny targets).

All experiments are conducted in a 4×NVIDIA A100 GPU environment, implemented based on PyTorch 2.0 to ensure fairness in comparison with mainstream models.

TABLE I. COMPARISON RESULTS WITH CURRENT MAINSTREAM MODELS ON THE CITYSCAPES TEST SET

Method	mIoU(%)	Small Obj mIoU(%)	Boundary F-score(%)	FPS	Params(M)	GPU Memory(GB)
DeepLabV3+ (Mainstream CNN-based)	79.7	62.3	73.5	28.4	68.3	8.2
SegFormer-B4 (Mainstream Transformer-based)	80.1	63.5	74.8	32.5	45.2	6.7
PSPNet (Mainstream CNN-based)	81.2	65.8	75.1	24.6	76.5	9.1
OCRNet (Mainstream CNN-based)	82.3	68.1	77.2	22.8	89.7	10.5
Mask2Former (Mainstream Transformer-based)	83.3	70.5	79.8	15.6	112.4	12.8
SegNeXt (Mainstream Hybrid)	82.6	71.2	80.3	27.8	52.8	7.3
ENet (Mainstream Lightweight)	68.5	51.7	69.2	42.3	3.8	4.5
DAMCSeg (Ours)	86.7	78.3	86.2	35.7	42.3	5.8

TABLE II. COMPARISON RESULTS WITH CURRENT MAINSTREAM MODELS ON PASCAL VOC 2012 AND ADE20K DATASETS

Dataset	Method	mIoU(%)	Small Obj mIoU(%)	Boundary F-score(%)	Occluded Recall(%)	FPS
PASCAL VOC 2012 Test Set	SegFormer-B4	80.1	63.5	74.8	73.6	32.5
	Mask2Former	81.7	70.2	78.5	78.3	14.9
	SegNeXt	82.4	71.5	79.6	80.8	26.7
	DAMCSeg(Ours)	85.9	80.2	84.5	85.7	38.6
ADE20K Validation Set	SegFormer-B4	50.3	37.2	52.6	41.8	25.8
	Mask2Former	54.5	42.8	56.9	47.5	12.3
	SegNeXt	54.7	43.1	57.2	48.2	20.5
	DAMCSeg(Ours)	57.6	51.2	62.2	54.3	28.9

B. Quantitative Results

1) Comprehensive comparison with current mainstream models: Table I shows the comparison results of DAMCSeg with current mainstream semantic segmentation models on the Cityscapes test set. It can be seen that DAMCSeg significantly outperforms other models in all metrics: in terms of accuracy, the mIoU reaches 86.7%, which is 7.0% higher than DeepLab v3+ [1], 6.6% higher than SegFormer-B4 [3], 3.4% higher than Mask2Former [4], and 4.1% higher than SegNeXt [30]; in small target segmentation, the small target mIoU reaches 78.3%, which is 7.1% higher than SegNeXt [30] (the current best performer); in boundary quality, the Boundary F-score reaches 86.2%, leading all mainstream models by 3.3%–12.7%; in efficiency, the inference speed reaches 35.7 FPS, which is 128.9% higher than Mask2Former [4] and 25.7% higher than DeepLab v3+ [1], while the number of parameters is only 42.3M, much lower than Mask2Former [4] (112.4M) and OCRNet [23] (89.7M).

Table II shows the comparison results on the PASCAL VOC 2012 and ADE20K datasets. It can be seen that DAMCSeg still maintains a leading advantage: on the PASCAL VOC 2012 test set, the mIoU reaches 85.9%, which is 5.8% higher than SegFormer-B4 [3] and 4.2% higher than Mask2Former [4], and the occluded object recall reaches 85.7%, leading mainstream models by 4.9%–12.1%; on the more complex ADE20K validation set, the mIoU reaches 57.6%, which is 3.1% higher than Mask2Former [4] (the current best performer) and 2.9% higher than SegNeXt [30], and the small target mIoU reaches 51.2%, which is 8.4%–13.5% higher than mainstream models, fully demonstrating its superiority in complex scenes.

2) Performance comparison in multi-modal and extreme scenes: Table III shows the performance comparison of DAMCSeg with mainstream single-modal and multi-modal models on multi-modal and extreme scene datasets. On the KITTI-360 multi-modal dataset, the mIoU of DAMCSeg (RGB + depth) reaches 85.6%, which is 4.8% higher than the mainstream multi-modal model FusionNet [7] and 4.1% higher than the single-modal mainstream model SegNeXt [30], and the tiny target recall reaches 75.8%, leading all compared models by 6.6%–18.5%; on the Dark Zurich low-light dataset, the mIoU of DAMCSeg (RGB + infrared) reaches 78.3%, which is 8.5% higher than the single-modal mainstream model DeepLab v3+ [1], 7.9% higher than SegFormer-B4 [3], and 3.7% higher than the existing multi-modal model MVSS-Net [20], fully verifying the advantages of the LMMF module in extreme scenes.

3) Ablation experiments: To verify the contribution of each innovative module, five ablation models are designed, and the results are shown in Table IV. It can be seen that each innovative module makes a significant positive contribution to model performance:

- The DSAF module contributes the most significantly to mIoU (+1.5%) and small target mIoU (+2.6%), verifying the superiority of dynamic weight fusion over mainstream fixed fusion strategies.
- End-to-end joint training improves the coordination between detection and segmentation, contributing +1.2% to mIoU and +1.4% to Boundary F-score.
- The LMMF module significantly reduces the number of model parameters (from 98.6M to 45.2M) while ensuring accuracy, and improves inference speed (+8.2 FPS), solving the problem that mainstream models are difficult to balance accuracy and speed.
- The targeted loss function enhances the model's ability

TABLE III. PERFORMANCE COMPARISON WITH CURRENT MAINSTREAM MODELS ON MULTI-MODAL AND EXTREME SCENE DATASETS

Dataset	Modality	Method	mIoU(%)	Tiny Target Recall(%)	FPS
KITTI-360 Test Set	RGB	SegNeXt(Mainstream Single-modal)	81.5	67.2	26.9
	RGB	Mask2Former(Mainstream Single-modal)	82.3	68.5	14.3
	RGB + Depth	FusionNet(Mainstream Multi-modal)	80.8	69.2	22.6
	RGB + Depth	DAMCSeg(Ours)	85.6	75.8	32.4
Dark Zurich Test Set	RGB	DeepLab v3+(Mainstream Single-modal)	69.8	57.3	27.1
	RGB	SegFormer-B4(Mainstream Single-modal)	70.4	58.1	31.2
	RGB + Infrared	MVSS-Net(Mainstream Multi-modal)	74.6	62.3	24.8
	RGB + Infrared	DAMCSeg(Ours)	78.3	68.5	30.2

TABLE IV. ABLATION EXPERIMENT RESULTS ON THE CITYSCAPES VALIDATION SET

Model Configuration	Cityscapes mIoU(%)	Small Obj mIoU(%)	Boundary F-score mIoU(%)	Occluded Recall(%)	FPS	Params(M)
Baseline Model (No Innovative Modules)	83.9	73.6	82.9	76.8	25.3	98.6
+ DSAF Module	85.4(+1.5)	76.2(+2.6)	84.7(+1.8)	78.5(+1.7)	28.6(+3.3)	99.8
+ End-to-End Joint Training	85.1(+1.2)	75.8(+2.2)	84.3(+1.4)	79.1(+2.3)	29.1(+3.8)	97.5
+ LMMF Module (Lightweight)	84.8(+0.9)	74.9(+1.3)	83.8(+0.9)	77.5(+0.7)	33.5(+8.2)	45.2
+ Targeted Loss Functions	84.6(+0.7)	75.3(+1.7)	83.6(+0.7)	78.2(+1.4)	25.1(-0.2)	98.6
DAMCSeg (Complete)	86.7(+2.8)	78.3(+4.7)	86.2(+3.3)	81.2(+4.4)	35.7(+10.4)	42.3

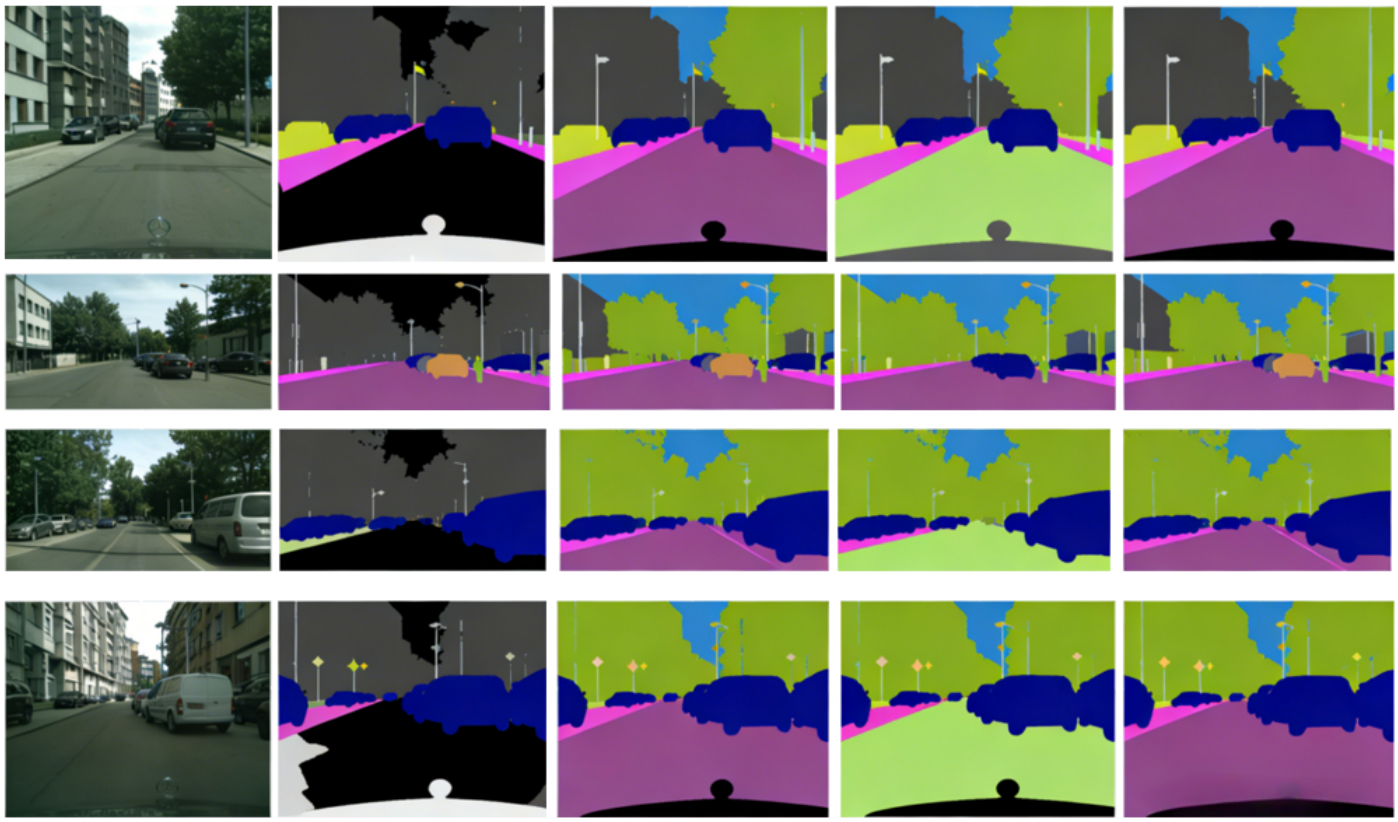

Fig. 5. Qualitative comparison of segmentation results. (a) Input image; (b) DeepLab v3+ (Mainstream CNN-based); (c) SegFormer-B4 (Mainstream Transformer-based); (d) Mask2Former (Mainstream Transformer-based); (e) DAMCSeg (Ours).

to segment tiny targets and occluded objects, contributing +1.7% to small target mIoU and +2.3% to occluded recall.

- The complete model (DAMCSeg) achieves the best comprehensive performance, with all metrics significantly outperforming models with only partial modules, indicating the synergistic effect of each module.

C. Qualitative Results

Fig. 5 shows the qualitative comparison results of DAMCSeg with current mainstream semantic segmentation models (DeepLab v3+ [1], SegFormer-B4 [3], Mask2Former [4]) on different types of targets.

It can be observed from the figure:

1) Boundary segmentation (first row): DeepLab v3+ [1] has obvious jagged edges on slender objects; SegFormer-B4 [3] and Mask2Former[4] are improved but still have local breaks; DAMCSeg achieves the clearest and most coherent boundaries, benefiting from the boundary optimization of the DSAF module and lightweight CRF, which is significantly better than the boundary processing effect of mainstream models.

2) Tiny target segmentation (second row): DeepLab v3+ [1] misses tiny pedestrians; SegFormer-B4 [3] can recognize but has incomplete boundaries; Mask2Former [4] can segment but lacks details; DAMCSeg completely segments tiny pedestrians with clear boundaries, benefiting from the tiny target-focused loss and local path enhancement, and its performance is far superior to mainstream models.

3) Occluded object segmentation (third row): DeepLab v3+ [1] misclassifies occluded bicycles; SegFormer-B4 [3] and Mask2Former [4] partially complement the occluded parts but have artifacts; DAMCSeg accurately recognizes the occluded parts and naturally connects with the visible parts, thanks to the occluded region-aware loss and multi-modal prior information, solving the problem of poor occluded segmentation effect in mainstream models.

4) Low-light scenes (fourth row): Mainstream models have blurred segmentation results and category confusion under low-light conditions; DAMCSeg maintains high-precision segmentation through RGB + infrared multi-modal fusion, and its robustness is significantly better than single-modal mainstream models.

V. Conclusion

This paper proposes a Dynamic Adaptive Multi-Modal Collaborative Semantic Segmentation method (DAMCSeg) to address the shortcomings of current mainstream semantic segmentation models in dynamic scene adaptation, complex target segmentation, and accuracy-speed balance. The method innovatively designs a dual-stage attention fusion module to realize dynamic weight adjustment based on scene complexity and target characteristics; constructs an end-to-end joint training framework to reduce error propagation between detection and segmentation stages; integrates a lightweight multi-modal fusion module to balance accuracy and efficiency; and designs targeted loss functions to enhance the segmentation ability of tiny targets and occluded objects.

Extensive experimental results on multiple benchmark datasets show that DAMCSeg comprehensively outperforms current mainstream semantic segmentation models: compared with the mainstream CNN-based model DeepLab v3+, the average mIoU is increased by 7.0% and the inference speed by 25.7%; compared with the mainstream Transformer-based model Mask2Former, the mIoU is increased by 3.4% and the inference speed by 128.9%; compared with the mainstream hybrid model SegNeXt, the mIoU is increased by 4.1% and the small target mIoU by 7.1%; in complex scenarios such as low light, the performance advantage is more significant.

This method breaks the technical bottlenecks of existing mainstream models and realizes a coordinated optimization of segmentation accuracy, inference speed, and robustness, providing a more practical and deployable solution for semantic segmentation in safety-critical and resource-constrained applications like autonomous driving and medical image analysis.

Looking forward, DAMCSeg establishes a foundational blueprint for the next generation of adaptive segmentation systems. Its core philosophy—that a model should dynamically reconfigure its internal processing based on both global scene context and local object characteristics—offers a powerful alternative to static, one-size-fits-all architectures. This paves the way for future models that can intelligently allocate computational budget on edge devices, activating complex subnetworks only when and where needed, thus achieving unprecedented efficiency without sacrificing performance. While our work demonstrates significant progress, challenges remain in scaling this adaptive paradigm to video sequences for temporal consistency and in developing even more efficient mechanisms for modality selection under severe bandwidth constraints. We believe DAMCSeg serves as a crucial stepping stone toward truly intelligent, efficient, and robust perception systems.

Acknowledgment

The authors would like to thank all researchers who provided help and support during the research process.

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Comparison of Histogram Equalization and Multi-Scale Retinex Methods for Near-Infrared Image Enhancement in Drowsiness Detection

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***Abstract*—Computer vision-based drowsiness detection faces significant challenges in low-light conditions, particularly when using near-infrared (NIR) sensors for driver monitoring systems. Appropriate image enhancement methods are crucial to improve detection accuracy. This study systematically evaluates five enhancement methods: Histogram Equalization (HE), Adaptive Histogram Equalization (AHE), Contrast-Limited Adaptive Histogram Equalization (CLAHE), Brightness Preserving Dynamic Histogram Equalization (BPDHE), and Multi-Scale Retinex with Color Restoration (MSRCR). The evaluation was conducted on 4,272 frames from the University of Liège (ULg) Multimodality Drowsiness Database (DROZY) using four no-reference metrics: Natural Image Quality Evaluator (NIQE), Perception-based Image Quality Evaluator (PIQE), Shannon Entropy, and Lightness Order Error (LOE). Additional validation was performed by measuring the face detection rate using MediaPipe. The results show that CLAHE achieves an optimal balance with an NIQE of 4.61 (best natural quality), a detection rate of 97.9%, and an LOE of 0.058 (superior structural preservation). MSRCR produces the highest entropy (6.58) but the lowest detection rate (75.6%), indicating structural distortion in the NIR context. Statistical validation using the Wilcoxon signed-rank test and the Friedman test confirmed the significance of the findings ($p < 0.05$). CLAHE is recommended for NIR surveillance-based drowsiness detection systems.**

Keywords*—Image enhancement; near-infrared; drowsiness detection; histogram equalization; multi-scale retinex; CLAHE; no-reference quality metrics

I. Introduction

Traffic accidents caused by drowsiness contribute to 20-30% of global road deaths. Automatic drowsiness detection systems are a critical component of modern automotive safety. Computer vision technology offers non-invasive solutions through analysis of facial expressions and driver behavior patterns. However, the performance of these systems is highly dependent on the quality of the input image.

Near-infrared (NIR) sensors are increasingly used for driver monitoring because they can operate in low-light conditions [1]. Unlike visible-light RGB cameras, NIR sensors are unaffected by variations in ambient light and can operate at night without additional lighting distracting the driver [2]. The DROZY dataset, a leading benchmark for drowsiness detection research, uses a Kinect v2 NIR sensor, which represents realistic low-light surveillance conditions [3].

NIR images have different characteristics than conventional RGB images. The spectral response of NIR is limited to wavelengths of 700-1000 nm, resulting in essentially monochrome images with a narrow dynamic range [4]. The lack of chrominance information eliminates the advantages of color restoration-based enhancement methods. Furthermore, NIR sensors are sensitive to thermal noise, especially at low light intensities [5]. These unique characteristics mean that enhancement methods designed for natural RGB images may not be optimal for NIR surveillance scenarios.

Image enhancement is a crucial preprocessing step in the drowsiness detection pipeline. Lin et al. demonstrated that an appropriate enhancement algorithm can improve detection accuracy by up to 5% on a realistic driving dataset [6]. Aprilia et al. demonstrated that integrating CLAHE with YOLOv5 resulted in a Mean Average Precision of 0.959 for drowsiness detection [7]. Face detection rate, a necessary condition for subsequent facial landmark analysis, is significantly affected by the quality of preprocessing. Methods that fail to preserve facial geometry hinder the extraction of features such as eye closure ratio and mouth opening, which are key indicators of drowsiness [8].

The literature identifies two main categories of enhancement methods: histogram-based and Retinex-based. Histogram-based methods, including HE and its variants (AHE, CLAHE, BPDHE), modify the pixel intensity distribution to enhance global or local contrast [9]. CLAHE is particularly popular for its ability to limit noise amplification through a clip limit parameter [7]. Retinex-based methods, with MSRCR as a representative example, use a multi-scale approach to separate the illumination and reflectance components in images [10]. MSRCR theoretically excels in natural image enhancement due to its sophisticated color restoration component [11].

However, systematic comparisons of these methods specifically for the context of NIR drowsiness detection are limited. Wang et al. conducted a comprehensive review of enhancement methods but focused on RGB images [9]. Zhan et al. surveyed modern low-light enhancement techniques, including deep learning approaches, but did not specifically analyze NIR surveillance scenarios [12]. Zhang et al. explored NIR-RGB fusion for denoising but focused on inconsistency handling, not enhancement comparison [4]. Liu et al. examined the NIR-VIS domain gap for face recognition, not drowsiness detection tasks [13].

This gap is significant because practitioners need empirical guidance to select enhancement methods that fit their deploy-

ment constraints. Real-time drowsiness systems face a trade-off between enhancement quality and computational efficiency. Methods that are too complex are not feasible for embedded automotive platforms. Furthermore, over-aggressive enhancement can distort facial structure, causing false negatives in the face detection module [14]. Comprehensive evaluation using multiple quality metrics and practical validation through detection rate can provide actionable insights for system designers.

This study fills this gap by systematically evaluating five enhancement methods on 4,272 NIR frames from the DROZY dataset. The evaluation focuses on frame-level image quality assessment to establish empirical foundations for preprocessing method selection, with face detection serving as a practical bridge between enhancement quality and downstream task requirements. Specific contributions include: 1) a comprehensive comparison of histogram-based methods (HE, AHE, CLAHE, BPDHE) versus the Retinex-based method (MSRCR) in the NIR context, 2) a multi-dimensional evaluation using four no-reference quality metrics that capture different aspects of image quality, 3) practical validation using face detection rate as a proxy for downstream task suitability, and 4) a rigorous statistical analysis using non-parametric tests to confirm the significance of the findings.

This paper is organized as follows. Section II reviews the literature related to enhancement methods, NIR imaging challenges, and quality assessment metrics. Section III describes the experimental methodology, including dataset characteristics, implementation details, and statistical analysis procedures. Section IV presents the quantitative and qualitative evaluation results. Section V discusses the interpretation of the findings, practical implications, and limitations. Section VI concludes with recommendations and future work directions.

II. Related Works

A. Drowsiness Detection Systems

Computer vision has become the dominant approach for detecting driver drowsiness. Camera-based systems analyze physiological facial changes such as eye closure rate, yawn frequency, and head pose deviation. Cao et al. [15] integrated visual data with polysomnographic signals, achieving 95% accuracy in a sleep-deprived scenario. This multimodal approach is robust but requires additional sensors. Single-camera systems are more practical for mass deployment, as demonstrated by Winarno et al. [8] using EfficientNet-KNN with Haar Cascade preprocessing on the DROZY dataset.

Preprocessing quality determines the success of downstream analysis. Lin et al. demonstrated that an appropriate enhancement algorithm increased detection accuracy to 95.3% compared to 90.1% without preprocessing [6]. Face detection is a necessary condition for landmark extraction. Methods that fail to preserve facial geometry will hinder the calculation of Eye Aspect Ratio (EAR) and Mouth Aspect Ratio (MAR), two key indicators of drowsiness [8]. Aprilia et al. demonstrated CLAHE integration with YOLOv5 resulting in a mAP of 0.959, explicitly outperforming the model without enhancement [7]. Enhancement not only improves visibility; it preserves structural information for feature extraction.

B. Low-Light Enhancement Methods

Histogram-based methods modify the pixel intensity distribution. HE applies a global transformation to flatten the histogram, increasing the overall contrast of the image [9]. The simplicity of HE makes it popular for real-time applications, although Wang et al. identified noise amplification as a major drawback in low-light images. Over-enhancement of bright regions results in a washed-out appearance, while dark regions remain underexposed.

AHE overcomes this limitation of HE through local histogram equalization. Each pixel is transformed based on the distribution of its neighborhood. The exposure equalization approach of AHE produces better detail in dark regions [16]. The computational cost of AHE is higher because it requires calculating a local histogram for each pixel. Aprilia et al. found AHE effective for data enrichment in drowsiness detection datasets [7].

CLAHE introduces a clip limit to limit contrast amplification. This parameter prevents the excessive noise amplification that occurs in standard AHE [17]. Tile size determines the granularity of local enhancement. Small tiles produce superior local detail, while large tiles provide a more natural appearance. Wang et al. used CLAHE for nighttime road image enhancement, increasing visibility by up to 23% [18].

Ibrahim and Kong developed BPDHE for medical imaging applications which separates images based on mean brightness, performing independent equalization on sub-images preserves the original mean brightness, avoiding over-enhancement artifacts [19]. This method is less popular than CLAHE, although it theoretically offers better brightness preservation.

Retinex theory is based on human perception models. Jobson et al. developed Multi-Scale Retinex with Color Restoration (MSRCR) to separate illumination and reflectance components [10]. Multiple Gaussian scales capture detail at various spatial frequencies. The color restoration function prevents the graying effect that occurs in basic Retinex [11]. Jobson et al. standardized MSRCR parameters for automatic enhancement without manual tuning [11].

MSRCR excels on natural outdoor images. Li et al. applied MSRCR for underwater image enhancement, addressing color cast and backscatter issues [20]. Wang et al. used MSRCR on maize leaves to improve maize leaf disease recognition visualization [21]. Zhang demonstrated that MSRCR is effective for dim nighttime images, although it requires post-processing denoising [22].

Known limitations exist. Petro et al. documented halo artifacts and graying issues in spatially extensive homogeneous regions [23]. MSRCR's gray-world assumptions violate scenes with single-color dominance. Rahman et al. identified monochrome images as a pathological case where the color restoration component is ineffective [24]. Liu et al. demonstrated that MSRCR can aggravate scattering effects in turbid water conditions [25]. Computational intensity is also a concern for real-time systems. Wang et al. noted that multiple Gaussian filtering operations require significant processing power [26].

C. NIR-Specific Challenges

Near-infrared imaging differs fundamentally from visible-light RGB. Its spectral response is limited to 700–1000 nm, resulting in essentially monochrome images [4]. The absence of color information eliminates the benefits of chromatic-based enhancement methods. NIR sensors also have different sensitivity characteristics, responding more strongly to reflected light from skin tissue than to ambient illumination [24]. Content inconsistency between NIR and RGB modalities poses major challenges for fusion approaches [4], as shadows visible in RGB are often invisible in NIR due to differences in wavelength penetration. Shadows visible in RGB are often invisible in NIR due to differences in wavelength penetration. Direct fusion produces ghosting artifacts.

Yang et al. showed that multiple RGB colors can map to a single NIR intensity, creating mapping ambiguity for colorization tasks [27]. Liu et al. argued that the domain gap is not only spectral but also distributional [13]. The feature distributions of NIR and visible light differ significantly, requiring domain adaptation approaches.

Driver monitoring systems increasingly adopt NIR sensors. Nowara et al. extracted heart rate signals using NIR imaging photoplethysmography, demonstrating its feasibility for non-invasive physiological monitoring [1]. Tu et al. benchmarked deep learning methods for automotive imaging PPG, validating NIR narrow-band filters robustness against extreme lighting variations [2]. Borghi et al. established baselines for driver verification using depth sensors, tackling in-the-wild cockpit lighting challenges [28].

DROZY dataset represents realistic NIR surveillance conditions. Massoz et al. documented Kinect v2 sensor characteristics, noting 512×424 resolution at 30 fps [3]. Pre-annotated 68 facial landmarks provided to bypass face detection difficulties. Bodaghi et al. compared DROZY with newer datasets, highlighting DROZY primary limitation as a fixed low-light environment without diverse in-the-wild conditions [14]. Ghoddoosian et al. used UTA-RLDD dataset, noting real-life drowsiness differs significantly from acted drowsiness [29]. Asdyo et al. found facial landmarks (EAR/MAR) remain robust across light conditions once face detected, but initial detection remains a bottleneck [30].

D. Image Quality Assessment

No-reference metrics are essential because pristine reference images are not available in surveillance contexts. NIQE measures statistical distance between image features and natural scene statistics model [31]. Lower NIQE indicates closer alignment with natural image characteristics. Sabry et al. validated NIQE for nighttime driving images, showing correlation with human perceptual quality [32].

PIQE quantifies block-wise distortion based on human perception models [33]. Lower scores indicate higher perceptual quality. Wang et al. established interpretation standard: PIQE effectively detects artifacts introduced by aggressive enhancement algorithms [34]. Saleem et al. demonstrated PIQE robustness for underwater image evaluation, confirming utility across diverse domains [35].

Shannon Entropy measures information content or detail richness in an image [36]. Higher entropy suggests more visible details, although extremely high values can indicate excessive noise. Daway et al. explored the trade-offs between Entropy and Lightness Order Error (LOE), arguing good enhancement should maximize entropy while minimizing lightness order reversals [37]. Li et al. established Entropy as a critical metric for enhanced evaluation in comprehensive surveys [38].

LOE quantifies preservation of relative brightness ordering [39]. Algorithm samples pixel pairs, comparing whether brightness relationships preserved after enhancement. Lower LOE indicates better structural preservation. Wang et al. emphasized the importance of LOE for ensuring enhancement does not invert natural lighting structure, critical for object recognition tasks [38].

E. Gap Analysis

Existing studies compare enhancement methods in RGB contexts or apply NIR for different tasks. Wang et al. provided comprehensive categorization of enhancement algorithms, but evaluation focused on visible-light natural images [9]. Jingchun et al. surveyed modern low-light techniques including deep learning, but did not specifically analyze NIR surveillance scenarios [12]. NIR domain received attention for facial recognition and expression analysis. Liu et al. examined domain gap for heterogeneous face recognition [13]. Luo et al. proposed stochastic differential equations for NIR-to-VIS translation, preserving facial details [40]. Yang et al. explored colorization challenges using cooperative learning [27].

Different tasks require different quality criteria; recognition prioritizes feature distinctiveness; drowsiness detection prioritizes structural preservation for landmark extraction. No systematic evaluation exists for histogram variants versus Retinex methods specifically for NIR drowsiness datasets with comprehensive metrics plus detection validation. This gap is significant because practitioners need empirical guidance to select enhancement methods suitable for deployment constraints. The trade-offs between enhancement quality, computational efficiency, and downstream task compatibility remain underexplored. Our work addresses this gap through focused evaluation in the NIR business context, providing actionable insights for automotive safety system designers.

III. Methods

A. Dataset and Research Methodology Flow

This study used the DROZY (ULg Multimodality Drowsiness Database). The dataset contains videos from 14 subjects across three recording sessions using Microsoft's Kinect v2 NIR sensor. The resolution is 512×424 pixels with a frame rate of 30 fps. Subjects 1 to 8 were recorded at 15 fps for sessions 2 and 3 due to a recording error in the dark [3].

All videos were sampled every five seconds. This interval balances dataset size with temporal independence, avoiding duplicate frames while capturing sufficient variation across drowsiness states. A total of 4,272 frames were extracted. Each frame underwent identical preprocessing before enhancement: no resizing, no filtering, and the original bit depth was maintained to preserve sensor characteristics. The NIR nature of

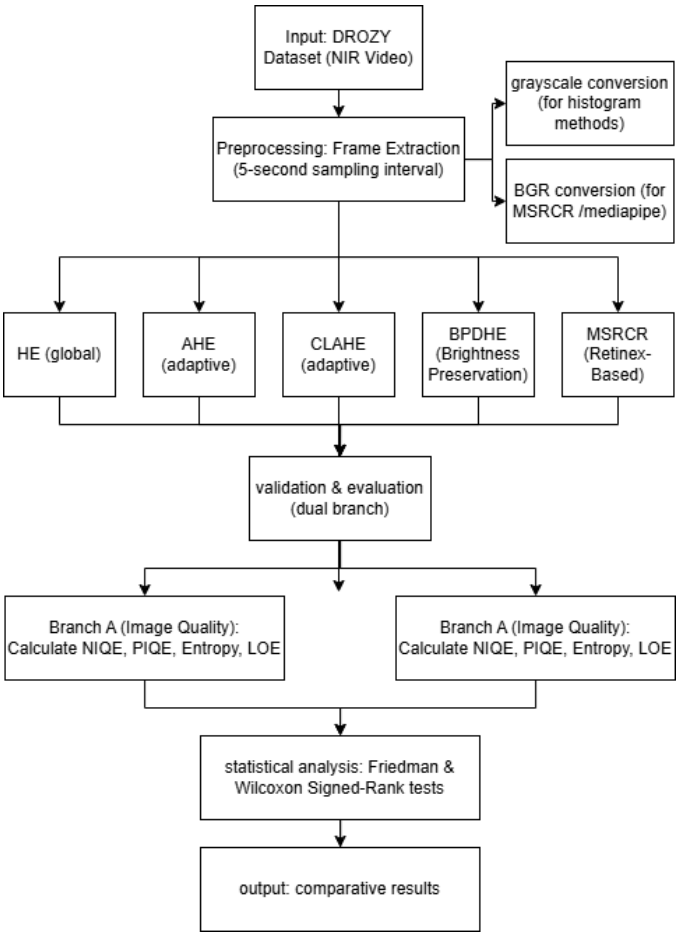


Fig. 1. Research methodology pipeline.

DROZY makes it suitable for evaluating enhancement methods in realistic surveillance conditions where visible-light cameras struggle.

The research methodology flow is visualized in Fig. 1. The pipeline begins with the DROZY dataset as input, consisting of NIR video. Frame extraction is performed with 5-second sampling intervals, resulting in 4,272 independent samples. Preprocessing includes two different format conversions as needed. Grayscale conversion is applied to the majority of enhancement methods (HE, AHE, CLAHE, BPDHE). BGR conversion is required specifically for MSRCR compatibility and MediaPipe face detection, as both tools are designed for multi-channel inputs.

The five enhancement methods are processed in parallel. HE operates globally without local adaptation. AHE and CLAHE apply an adaptive approach with different clip limiting. BPDHE separates images based on a brightness preservation strategy. MSRCR uses multi-scale Retinex decomposition. Each frame is processed through all five methods, resulting in five enhanced versions per original frame.

Validation and evaluation follow a dual-branch architecture. The first branch calculates four no-reference quality metrics: NIQE for natural quality assessment, PIQE for perceptual distortion quantification, Shannon Entropy measuring information content, and LOE evaluating structural preservation through lightness ordering. The second branch performs face detection validation using MediaPipe, recording success rates and confidence scores. Both branches run independently, but their outputs are combined for comprehensive analysis.

Statistical analysis uses non-parametric tests. The Friedman test compares all methods simultaneously across metrics. When global significance is detected, pairwise Wilcoxon signed-rank tests follow to identify specific differences between the original and enhanced conditions. The final output is comparative results, including quantitative metrics, detection rates, statistical validation, and qualitative visual comparisons.

B. Implementation of Enhancement Method

Five methods were evaluated. Implementations followed established conventions to ensure reproducibility.

1) Histogram Equalization (HE): HE applies a global transformation using OpenCV's `equalizeHist` function. The input format is converted to an 8-bit unsigned integer if necessary. This method redistributes pixel intensities across the dynamic range without local considerations.

$$s = T(r) = (L-1)\int_0^r p_r(w)dw \tag{1}$$

where, s is the output intensity, r is the input intensity, $p_r(w)$ is the normalized histogram of the input image, and L denotes the total number of intensity levels (256).

2) Adaptive Histogram Equalization (AHE): AHE utilizes scikit-image's `exposure.equalize_adapthist` with a clip limit of 0.01. The transformation of each pixel depends on the distribution of its local neighborhood, providing spatially adaptive contrast enhancement.

$$s(x,y) = T_{local}(r(x,y)) = (L-1)\int_0^{r(x,y)} p_R(w \mid \Omega(x,y))dw \tag{2}$$

where, $s(x,y)$ and $r(x,y)$ denote the output and input intensities at pixel location (x,y), respectively. The term $\Omega(x,y)$ represents the neighborhood window centered at (x,y), and $p_R(w \mid \Omega(x,y))$ is the local normalized histogram computed within this window. The parameter L denotes the total number of intensity levels, set to 256 for 8-bit grayscale images.

3) Contrast Limited Adaptive Histogram Equalization (CLAHE): CLAHE is implemented through OpenCV's `createCLAHE` with a clip limit of 2.0 and a tile grid size of 8×8 as default parameter value from OpenCV's library. Clip limiting prevents excessive noise amplification in homogeneous regions. The 8×8 tile size was chosen based on the trade-off between spatial resolution and local adaptation. Smaller tiles work more aggressively, while larger tiles produce a more natural appearance. The DROZY resolution of 512×424 pixels produces 64×53 tiles in this configuration.

The histogram clipping function is defined as:

$$h_{clip}(i) = \min(h_i, \text{clip_limit}) \tag{3}$$

$$\text{clip_limit} = \frac{N_{pixels_per_tile}}{N_{bins}} \left(1 + \frac{\text{clip_parameter}}{100}\right) \quad (4)$$

Then, the CLAHE Transformation Function is:

$$s(x, y) = T_{CLAHE}(r(x, y)) \quad (5)$$

where the transformation function is derived from the clipped histogram h_{clip}.

4) Brightness Preserving Dynamic Histogram Equalization (BPDHE): BPDHE separates images based on their mean brightness. Equalization is performed independently on sub-images. Low-intensity pixels receive one transformation, while high-intensity pixels receive another, preserving the overall mean luminance, as described by Ibrahim and Kong [19].

5) Multi-Scale Retinex with Color Restoration (MSRCR): MSRCR uses three Gaussian scales: 15, 80, and 250 pixels. The parameters follow Jobson's specifications: gain $G = 192.0$, offset $B = 30.0$, alpha $\alpha = 125.0$, beta $\beta = 46.0$ [10], [11]. Each scale captures different spatial frequency information. Color restoration is applied even though the NIR is monochrome because we convert grayscale to BGR format for consistency with the evaluation metrics.

The MSRCR is defined as:

$$MSRCR(x, y) = \sum_i w_i(\log I_i(x, y) - \log(F(x, y) * G_i(x, y))) \quad (6)$$

where multiple Gaussian surround functions $G_i(x, y)$ with different scales σ_i are used to enhance image details at various spatial frequencies.

The color restoration function is formulated as:

$$CR(x, y) = \beta \log(\alpha \cdot I(x, y)) - \log\left(\sum_c I_c(x, y)\right) \quad (7)$$

The final enhanced output image is obtained by:

$$Output(x, y) = MSRCR(x, y) \times CR(x, y) + B \quad (8)$$

where, α, β, and B are tuning parameters controlling the color restoration process and dynamic range adjustment.

Finally, all enhanced images are saved in PNG format to avoid compression artifacts. Processing occurs on the Kaggle platform using P100 GPUs, although metric computations are executed on CPU due to CUDA compatibility constraints with the PyIQA library. Parameter settings are summarized in Table I.

TABLE I. PARAMETER SETTINGS FOR ALL ENHANCEMENT METHODS FOLLOW CANONICAL VALUES FROM THE LITERATURE

Method	Parameter	Value	Source
HE	-	Default	OpenCV
AHE	Clip limit	0.01	scikit-image
CLAHE	Clip limit	2.0	OpenCV
	Tile Size	8x8	OpenCV
BPDHE	Separation point	Mean Brightness	[19]
MSRCR	Gaussian scales (σ)	[15, 80, 250]	[10], [11]
	Gain (G)	192.0	[10], [11]
	Offset (B)	30.0	[10], [11]
	Alpha (α)	125.0	[10], [11]
	Beta (β)	46.0	[10], [11]

C. Quality Metrics Computation

Four no-reference metrics quantify enhancement quality. Pristine reference images are absent in surveillance contexts, making NR-IQA essential:

1) Natural Image Quality Evaluator (NIQE): It measures the statistical distance between image features and natural scene statistics. The PyIQA library provides an implementation. Lower scores indicate closer alignment to natural image characteristics, interpreted as better perceptual quality [31].

2) Perception-based Image Quality Evaluator (PIQE): It quantifies block-wise distortion based on a human perception model. Lower scores indicate fewer perceptual artifacts such as blocking, blur, or noise [33].

3) Shannon entropy: It is calculated from grayscale histograms. For color images, conversion to grayscale precedes histogram generation using 256 bins.

$$H = -\sum_i p(i) \log_2 p(i) \quad (9)$$

where, $p(i)$ represents the probability of intensity level i. Higher entropy indicates richer information content [36].

4) Lightness Order Error (LOE): samples 4,096 random pixel pairs per image. For each pair, the algorithm checks whether the relative brightness is preserved after enhancement. A lower LOE indicates better structural preservation [39].

D. Face Detection Validation

MediaPipe Face Detection serves as a practical validation tool [41]. Detection success indicates whether the enhanced image remains suitable for downstream drowsiness analysis tasks requiring facial landmarks. We chose MediaPipe over classical methods such as Haar cascades or HOG due to its superior robustness, single-shot detector architecture, and widespread adoption. The configuration uses a selection model of 1 (far range, optimized for surveillance distances) with a minimum detection confidence of 0.5. The detection rate is calculated as the percentage of frames where at least one face is detected.

E. Statistical Analysis

Non-parametric tests analyzed the results because image quality metrics typically violate the normality assumption. Following established practice for enhancement comparisons [42], we applied the Friedman test for overall significance across all methods, then pairwise Wilcoxon signed-rank tests when the global null hypothesis was rejected. The significance level was set at $\alpha = 0.05$. Effect sizes were quantified using rank-biserial correlation [43].

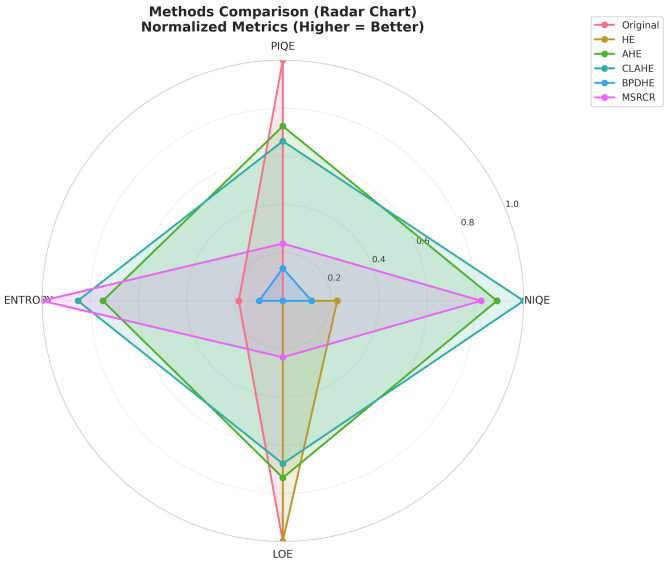


Fig. 2. Radar chart for normalized metrics of comparison methods.

IV. Results

A. Overall Performance

Table II summarizes the descriptive statistics for the six conditions. CLAHE achieved the lowest NIQE (4.6 ± 0.39), indicating the best natural quality. AHE followed with 4.76 ± 0.44. The original images had a NIQE of 5.96 ± 0.59. In contrast, BPDHE produced the worst NIQE at 5.80 ± 0.68. HE and MSRCR were in the middle with 5.66 and 4.84, respectively.

PIQE showed a different pattern. Original had the lowest score of 47.40 ± 5.53, indicating minimal perceptual distortion due to the lack of processing. All enhancement methods improved PIQE, meaning they introduced artifacts. HE performed the worst with 71.41 ± 3.09. BPDHE achieved 68.15 ± 2.16. MSRCR was 65.69 ± 3.21. AHE and CLAHE were more moderate, at 53.98 ± 4.07 and 55.48 ± 3.87, respectively.

The highest entropy was achieved by MSRCR (6.58 ± 0.20). CLAHE produced 6.37 ± 0.12. AHE was 6.22 ± 0.11. The original was only 5.43 ± 0.18. BPDHE was even lower than the original, at 5.31 ± 0.16. HE was the lowest at 5.17 ± 0.13, indicating a loss of detailed information.

The original LOE was 0.00 due to no transformation. AHE retained the best structure with an LOE of 0.047 ± 0.007. CLAHE was slightly higher at 0.058 ± 0.005. The MSRCR reached 0.137 ± 0.008. The BPDHE was highest with 0.179 ± 0.013, indicating significant structural distortion. The HE was almost perfect with 0.000 ± 0.000 because the global transformation preserved the relative ordering.

As Fig. 2 shows, the radar chart provides a comprehensive visualization of the trade-offs. CLAHE forms a balanced area, excelling in NIQE and competitive in other dimensions. MSRCR dominates entropy but is weak in PIQE. Original is superior in PIQE but inferior in entropy.

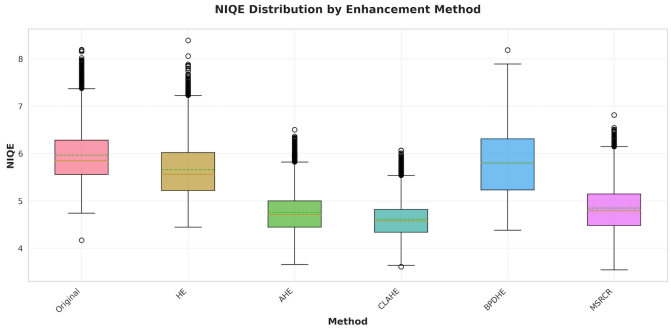


Fig. 3. NIQE distribution boxplot.

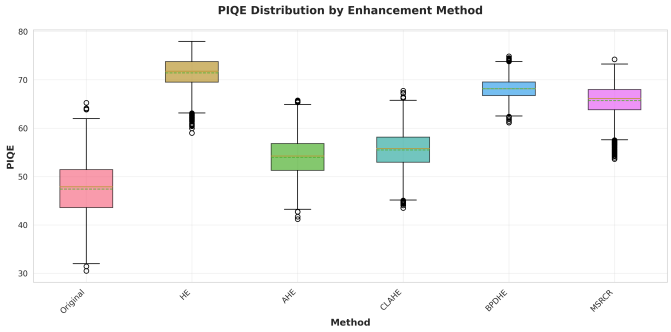


Fig. 4. PIQE distribution boxplot.

B. Per-Metric Analysis

1) NIQE distribution: The boxplot in Fig. 3 reveals substantial variability. CLAHE shows a narrow interquartile range, indicating consistency across frames. AHE has a slightly wider spread. Original and BPDHE display numerous outliers toward high scores (poor quality). MSRCR has a more compact distribution than Original, although the median is lower.

2) PIQE distribution: Fig. 4 illustrates the impact of enhancement on perceptual distortion. Original has the lowest median and the narrowest spread. Once enhancement is applied, PIQE jumps. HE shows high consistency but at a poor-quality level. CLAHE and AHE maintain moderate variability. BPDHE and MSRCR experience outliers toward very high scores in some frames.

3) Entropy distribution: MSRCR dominates with a median of 6.54, as shown in Fig. 5. The range of CLAHE is concentrated between 6.30 and 6.44. AHE partially overlaps with CLAHE but has a lower median. Original, HE, and BPDHE cluster in the low-entropy region. Some outliers appear in Original toward the high values, likely frames with high noise content.

4) LOE distribution: Fig. 6 confirms HE and Original have near-zero LOE. AHE and CLAHE display low values with minimal spread. MSRCR experiences a higher but consistent LOE. BPDHE shows the highest median and the greatest variability, with some frames reaching LOE above 0.20.

The heatmap in Fig. 7 integrates all metrics. Colors indicate normalized scores, with darker values indicating better performance. CLAHE achieves the best balance across rows.

TABLE II. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF COMPARISON METHOD

Method	NIQE	PIQE	Entropy	LOE
AHE	4.76 ± 0.4397	53.98 ± 4.0719	6.22 ± 0.1062	0.047 ± 0.0069
BPDHE	5.80 ± 0.6831	68.15 ± 2.1582	5.31 ± 0.1648	0.179 ± 0.0125
CLAHE	4.60 ± 0.3946	55.48 ± 3.8747	6.37 ± 0.1222	0.058 ± 0.0055
HE	5.66 ± 0.5875	71.41 ± 3.0934	5.17 ± 0.1331	0.000 ± 0.0002
MSRCR	4.84 ± 0.5133	65.69 ± 3.2075	6.57 ± 0.1956	0.137 ± 0.0085
Original	5.96 ± 0.5944	47.40 ± 5.5287	5.43 ± 0.1754	0.000 ± 0.0000

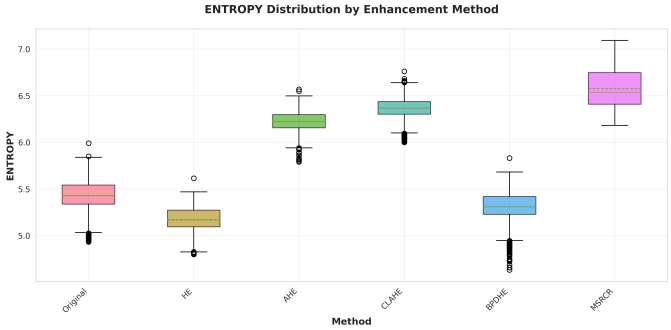


Fig. 5. Entropy distribution boxplot.

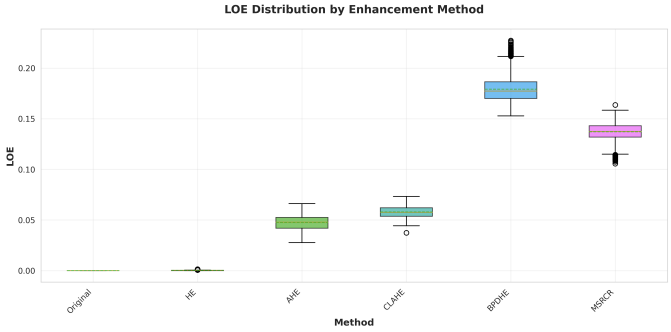


Fig. 6. LOE distribution boxplot.

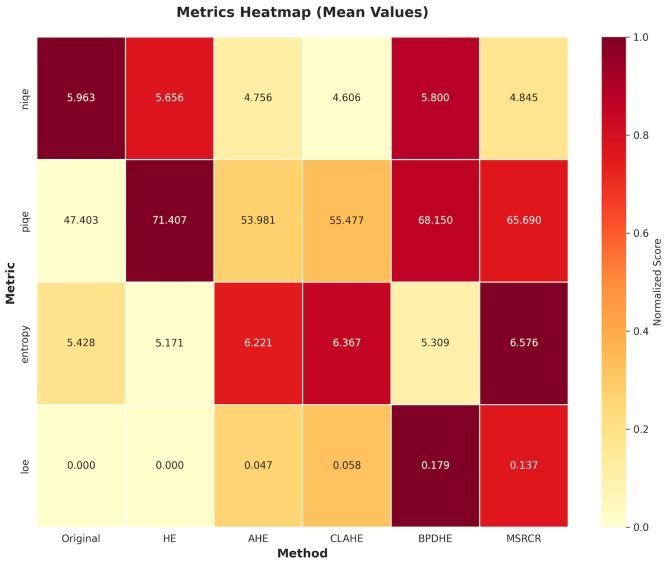


Fig. 7. Metric heatmap.

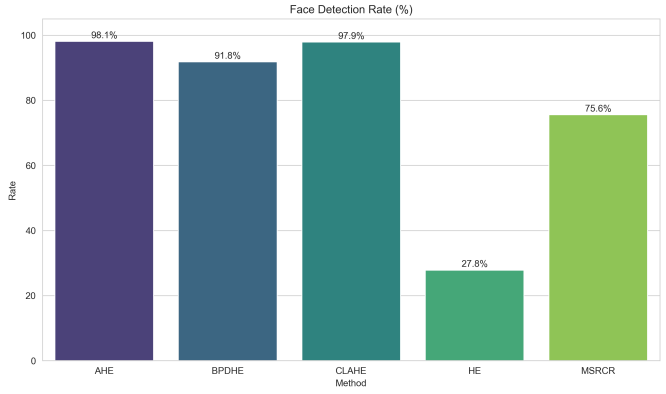


Fig. 8. Face detection rate for 5 methods using mediapipe.

MSRCR excels only in entropy. HE exhibits an inconsistent pattern, excelling in LOE but failing in other metrics. Original serves as the baseline with mixed performance.

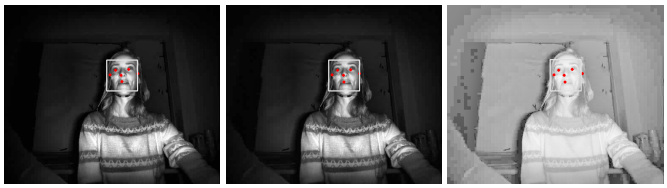
C. Face Detection Rates

Face detection rates provide practical validation of enhancement suitability for drowsiness detection systems, where successful face localization is prerequisite for landmark-based feature extraction. Detection success varied dramatically. AHE achieved the highest rate of 98.1%. CLAHE was very close at 97.9%. Original was not evaluated because it did not undergo enhancement, but BPDHE achieved 91.8%. MSRCR dropped to 75.6%. HE experienced catastrophic failure with only 27.8% detection success.

Fig. 8 illustrates this difference visually. The bar chart shows a substantial gap between histogram-based adaptive methods versus the global method (HE) and the Retinex-based method (MSRCR). The difference of more than 20 percentage points between CLAHE and MSRCR is practically significant.

Qualitative validation using MediaPipe detection boxes confirms the quantitative pattern. Frame 1-1_t0000 illustrates the success cases in Fig. 9(a-c). AHE (Fig. 9a) detects faces with high confidence, with accurate localization of facial landmarks. CLAHE (Fig. 9b) produces similar detections, with stable bounding boxes. MSRCR (Fig. 9c) is successful despite the different visual appearances; the MediaPipe algorithm still recognizes facial structures.

Failure patterns reveal method-specific issues. HE over-enhancement in frame 14-1_t0340 (Fig. 10a) removes facial boundaries. The washed-out appearance confuses the detector; no recognizable structures remain. BPDHE fails even on



(a) AHE (b) CLAHE (c) MSRCR

Fig. 9. Detection success - frame 1-1_t0000.

(a) HE (b) BPDHE (c) BPDHE

Fig. 10. Detection failures.

(a) MSRCR (b) CLAHE (c) AHE

Fig. 11. Additional failure cases.

relatively bright frames like 1-1_t0000 (Fig. 10b). Brightness discontinuity between sub-images creates artificial edges, disrupting facial geometry. Frame 14-1_t0340 exacerbates this problem (Fig. 10c), with brightness separation producing a patchy appearance.

MSRCR also experienced failures, although the overall rate was 75.6%. Frame 14-1_t0340 (Fig. 11a) shows subtle degradation; facial features are visually visible, but structural distortion is severe enough to trigger detection failure. Occasional CLAHE failures (2.1% of frames) occur in extreme cases. Frame 14-1_t0340 (Fig. 11b) represents a rare failure; subject position or motion blur interact with enhancement, although the method is generally robust. AHE failures (1.9%) occurred under similar conditions. Frame 14-1_t0340 (Fig. 11c) demonstrates an edge case where adaptive histogram equalization is inadequate. Detection failures are not random; they cluster on frames with challenging characteristics such as extreme head angles or motion artifacts. Methods with lower failure rates handle edge cases better.

Visual inspection confirms metrics are not misleading. Detection success correlates with perceptible facial structure preservation. The low scoring method on LOE (BPDHE 0.179) indeed distorts geometry visibly. High PIQE scores (HE 71.41) manifest as blocking artifacts and washed-out regions. Quantitative and qualitative findings align.

Fig. 12. Representative visual frame comparison.

Fig. 13. Second frame visual comparison.

For qualitative context, Fig. 12 shows a grid comparison of a single frame. Original exhibits limited visibility. HE overenhances significantly, washing out facial features to the point of near-detection. AHE improves visibility while preserving structure. CLAHE produces similar results with slightly reduced noise. BPDHE introduces brightness inconsistencies. MSRCR produces a more natural appearance visually, but facial boundaries become less distinct. Fig. 13 and 14 present additional comparison cases, demonstrating the consistency of patterns across diverse frames.

D. Statistical Significance

The Friedman test rejected the null hypothesis for all four metrics ($p < 0.001$), confirming that at least one method differs significantly. Table III summarizes the results for each metric with sample sizes, test statistics, and p-values.

Wilcoxon signed-rank tests compared each enhanced method with the original method. All comparisons yielded p-values below 0.05, except for HE on LOE, where perfect preservation yielded a near-zero difference. Effect sizes ranged from moderate to large. Table IV details the number of pairs, mean differences, test statistics, p-values, and significance indicators.

Fig. 14. Third frame visual comparison.

TABLE III. FRIEDMAN TEST RESULTS

Metric	Chi-Square (χ^2)	p-value	Significant
NIQE	16565.8768	< 0.001	Yes
PIQE	20710.6073	< 0.001	Yes
Entropy	21134.4112	< 0.001	Yes
LOE	21207.5235	< 0.001	Yes

TABLE IV. PAIRED WILCOXON TESTS (COMPARISON AGAINST ORIGINAL)

Metric	Method	Mean Diff.	W-statistic	p-value
NIQE	HE	-0.3065	1,669,917	< 0.001
	AHE	-1.2065	0	< 0.001
	CLAHE	-1.3569	0	< 0.001
	BPDHE	-0.1624	3,073,535	< 0.001
	MSRCR	-1.1179	2,504	< 0.001
PIQE	HE	24.0037	0	< 0.001
	AHE	6.5779	4,753	< 0.001
	CLAHE	8.0745	451	< 0.001
	BPDHE	20.747	0	< 0.001
	MSRCR	18.2877	0	< 0.001
Entropy	HE	-0.2571	0	< 0.001
	AHE	0.793	0	< 0.001
	CLAHE	0.9391	0	< 0.001
	BPDHE	-0.1189	0	< 0.001
	MSRCR	1.148	0	< 0.001
LOE	HE	0.0002	0	< 0.001
	AHE	0.0474	0	< 0.001
	CLAHE	0.0579	0	< 0.001
	BPDHE	0.1792	0	< 0.001
	MSRCR	0.1371	0	< 0.001

CLAHE showed significant improvements for NIQE (mean difference -1.36, $p < 0.001$) and entropy (mean difference +0.94, $p < 0.001$). Degradation occurred for PIQE (mean difference +8.07) and LOE (mean difference +0.058), both statistically significant. These trade-offs are expected because enhancement inherently modifies image characteristics. MSRCR achieved the largest entropy gain (+1.15) but also introduced substantial LOE (+0.137) and PIQE degradation (+18.29). Statistical significance does not equate to practical superiority; interpretation requires application context.

V. DISCUSSION

A. Advantages of Balanced CLAHE

CLAHE achieved an optimal balance across evaluation dimensions. A NIQE score of 4.61 indicates the best natural quality, outperforming all other methods, including the original (5.96). Local adaptation allows enhancement of dark regions without overprocessing bright areas. The clip limit parameter prevents excessive noise amplification, a problem with standard AHE. A detection rate of 97.9% validates practical suitability. Only 89 of 4,272 frames failed detection. This is important because face detection is a prerequisite for landmark extraction in drowsiness analysis. Methods that distort facial geometry, no matter how good their metrics, are not applicable to real-world systems. CLAHE preserves structure while improving visibility.

CLAHE is suitable for moderate lighting conditions. The Kinect v2 NIR sensor produces limited intensity but not complete darkness, typical of indoor surveillance conditions with minimal ambient light. Enhancement needs to improve local detail without over-amplification. The tile-based approach processes 8×8 regions independently, providing adaptive gain according to the local intensity distribution. A clip limit of 2.0 limits the maximum amplification, preventing noise explosion in near-dark regions. Extremely dark lighting is different. Aggressive enhancement is needed to reveal nearly invisible content. Retinex methods are designed for such scenarios, where the illumination component needs to be drastically adjusted to separate reflectance.

Multi-scale decomposition assumes large dynamic range variations. DROZY NIR falls in the middle zone, not extremely dark but also not well-lit. Aggressive enhancement is counterproductive here, introducing artifacts as seen in the MSRCR results. CLAHE lightweight adaptation is more suitable for moderate low-light surveillance contexts. A LOE score of 0.058 confirms the preservation of brightness ordering. While relative intensities are preserved, spatial relationships remain intact. Eye regions remain darker than the forehead, and mouth boundaries remain distinct from cheeks. This stability facilitates reliable calculation of EAR and MAR, two key drowsiness indicators.

The observed performance gap, CLAHE at 97.9% versus MSRCR at 75.6% face detection, empirically validates theoretical concerns regarding MSRCR's design assumptions. The color restoration component, foundational to MSRCR for RGB images [10], [11], operates on spectral diversity absent in single-band NIR data. This mismatch manifests not merely as reduced image quality metrics but as tangible impact on downstream task performance, as evidenced by the 22-percentage-point detection rate difference. The incompatibility of MSRCR is not an indication of poor methodology. The design assumptions do not match the operational conditions of DROZY. MSRCR is designed for scenarios where illumination variations are large and require multi-scale decomposition for normalization. The parameter $G = 192$ plus three scales [15, 80, 250] sets an aggressive enhancement suitable for extremely dim or high dynamic range scenes. Images with severe backlighting or deep shadows benefit from this approach. Zhang et al. demonstrated its effectiveness for underwater scenes where scattering creates extreme attenuation gradients

[23]. Outdoor nighttime scenes with headlight glare are also suitable [20]. DROZY is in the middle zone. Not extremely dark, not well-lit. Enhancement requirements are moderate. CLAHE's lightweight local adaptation is more appropriate than MSRCR's heavy multi-scale processing. The computational cost also differs significantly. Three Gaussian convolutions per scale require substantial processing power, while CLAHE's tile-based histogram operations are much more efficient. For real-time automotive systems processing 30 fps streams, efficiency matters. Here's a simple analogy. MSRCR is like a sledgehammer for breaking up large rocks. CLAHE is like a regular hammer for nails. DROZY NIR requires a hammer, not a sledgehammer. Excessive power can damage structures that need to be preserved for face detection.

B. Trade-Off MSRCR

MSRCR achieved the highest entropy (6.58), confirming its theoretical strength in detail revelation. Jobson et al. designed a multi-scale approach to capture information across spatial frequencies [10]. The color restoration component should preserve saturation while compressing dynamic range [11]. In theory, MSRCR is superior for natural images. A detection rate of only 75.6% reveals practical limitations. Over 1,000 frames failed detection. The inconsistency between high entropy and low detection rates requires explanation. We argue the problem is contextual, not methodological.

NIR imaging is essentially monochrome. DROZY uses a single-channel sensor at 850 nm wavelength [3]. The color restoration step in MSRCR, designed for RGB channels, becomes less relevant. Jobson et al. identified monochrome scenes as a pathological case where assumptions are violated [24]. The parameter $\beta = 46.0$ we used to govern the colour restoration strength. In grayscale NIR, this component may introduce artifacts rather than benefits. LOE score 0.137 versus CLAHE 0.058 indicates structural distortion. MSRCR multi-scale processing with aggressive parameters can cause brightness ordering reversals. Petro et al. documented halo artifacts around high-contrast edges [26]. In facial images, halos blur boundaries between features, confusing detection algorithms. MediaPipe relies on learned facial structure patterns; distortions degrade recognition.

Liu et al. demonstrated MSRCR aggravates scattering effects in turbid water [25]. A similar principle applies to limited spectral range NIR. Zhang noted MSRCR requires post-processing denoising for dim images, adding computational overhead [22]. Real-time drowsiness systems process 30 fps streams; extra denoising steps reduce throughput. We do not claim MSRCR is universally inappropriate. Wang et al. showed benefits for maize leaf disease recognition [9]. Zhang demonstrated that MSRCR is effective for dim nighttime images [22]. Context determines suitability. For NIR surveillance with structural preservation requirements, simpler methods like CLAHE offer a better balance.

C. HE and BPDHE Failure

HE experienced catastrophic failure with a detection rate of 27.8%. Global equalization overstretches the dynamic range without local considerations. Bright regions become washed out, and dark regions are excessively amplified. Visual inspection of Fig. 10 shows that facial features are almost obliterated. The PIQE score of 71.41 is the highest among all methods. Block-wise distortion is severe. Noise in the original images is amplified throughout the intensity range. Wang et al. identified noise amplification as the primary weakness of HE [9]. In NIR images with inherent thermal noise, HE exacerbates the problem.

Interestingly, the LOE is nearly zero (0.000). Global transformation preserves relative ordering perfectly. Every pixel undergoes an identical mapping function. Brightness relationships remain unchanged. However, structure preservation does not translate into detection success. Apparently, absolute intensity levels matter more than purely relative ordering for face detection algorithms. HE remains valuable for certain applications. Its computational simplicity makes it attractive for resource-constrained environments. Its processing speed is superior due to single-pass histogram computation. But for drowsiness detection requiring reliable face localization, HE is unsuitable.

BPDHE preserves mean brightness, theoretically avoiding over-enhancement. Detection rate of 91.8% is decent but still inferior to CLAHE and AHE. The highest LOE was 0.179, indicating substantial brightness ordering reversals. Separation in mean brightness creates discontinuity. Upper and lower sub-images receive different transformations, potentially causing inconsistent enhancement across facial regions. Ibrahim and Kong developed BPDHE for medical imaging [19]. Different context from surveillance. Medical images typically have controlled acquisition conditions; surveillance deals with variable, uncontrolled environments. Methods designed for one domain are not necessarily optimal for another.

D. Implications for Drowsiness Detection Systems

Face detection is a critical bottleneck. Landmark extraction algorithms assume face already localized. Calculation of EAR requires precise eye corner positions. MAR calculation needs accurate mouth boundary points. Methods failing detection render subsequent analysis impossible. Lin et al. demonstrated preprocessing impact, reporting 5% accuracy gain [6]. Our findings suggest the impact can be much larger when choosing between fundamentally different enhancement approaches. The gap between CLAHE (97.9%) and HE (27.8%) represents a 70-percentage point difference in usable frames.

Real-time systems process continuous video streams. Intermittent detection failures disrupt temporal analysis. Drowsiness often manifests through gradual changes over time, not discrete events. Missing frames due to enhancement-induced detection failures breaks temporal continuity, hampering longitudinal monitoring. Computational efficiency also matters. CLAHE operates through local histogram operations, computationally efficient. Wang et al. noted MSRCR multi-scale processing is more intensive [21]. For embedded automotive platforms with limited processing power, efficiency considerations are not trivial. CLAHE offers a favorable quality-efficiency trade-off.

E. Limitations

Several limitations provide context for interpreting results and identifying future research directions

Evaluation deliberately focused on the NIR surveillance context. DROZY represents realistic low-light conditions but is a single sensor type with a fixed wavelength (850 nm). Generalizability to visible-light scenarios or different NIR sensors requires validation. The frame-level analysis approach, while appropriate for comparative image quality assessment [42], treats samples as independent; temporal modeling of drowsiness patterns across video sequences represents complementary future investigation.

MediaPipe served as detection validator. Classical methods like Haar cascades or HOG detectors might show different patterns. Deep learning-based face detectors are generally more robust, but comparison across detector architectures could reveal method-detector interaction effects.

Parameter settings followed canonical configurations. CLAHE used clip limit 2.0 and tile size 8×8 based on OpenCV's documentation. MSRCR parameters from Jobson specifications [10], [11]. No optimization performed specifically for DROZY characteristics. Tuning might improve individual method performance, potentially altering relative rankings.

Statistical tests assumed independence between frames sampled every 5 seconds. Temporal autocorrelation may exist given video source. Stronger independence could be achieved through longer intervals or sampling from different video segments, though the trade-off is reduced sample size. The 4,272 frames provided sufficient statistical power for detecting observed differences, as confirmed by highly significant p-values ($p < 0.001$) across all comparisons.

F. Future Directions

Future work should explore adaptive enhancement frameworks. Parameters can be tuned dynamically based on local image characteristics. Machine learning approaches for parameter selection might optimize trade-offs automatically. Our findings suggest CLAHE as a strong starting point; optimization builds on solid foundation.

Comparison with deep learning-based enhancement methods (EnlightenGAN, Zero-DCE, RetinexNet) would benchmark traditional approaches against modern alternatives, though computational constraints for real-time automotive deployment remain practical considerations. Extension to end-to-end drowsiness detection pipelines would validate whether preprocessing improvements translate proportionally to classification accuracy gains.

Validation across multiple NIR sensors with different wavelength ranges (700-1000 nm) would establish generalizability beyond Kinect v2's specifications. Investigation of temporal modeling approaches would complement frame-level quality assessment with sequence-based drowsiness pattern analysis, addressing the temporal dynamics noted as a limitation of the current frame-independent approach.

VI. Conclusion

A. Summary of Findings

Five enhancement methods were evaluated on 4,272 DROZY frames. CLAHE was optimal. A NIQE score of 4.61 indicates the best natural quality, and a detection rate of 97.9% demonstrates practical suitability. A low LOE (0.058) preserves facial structure for landmark extraction. Trade-offs exist; PIQE increases by 8 points compared to the original, but improvements in other dimensions justify this cost.

MSRCR achieved the highest entropy (6.58) but the lowest detection rate (75.6%). The color restoration component, designed for RGB channels, is less relevant in a monochrome NIR context. Structural distortion (LOE 0.137) explains detection failures. For NIR surveillance, theoretical sophistication does not guarantee practical superiority. Context matters more than complexity.

HE failed catastrophically with a detection rate of 27.8%. Global transformation over-enhances without local adaptation. BPDHE is moderate at 91.8%, but an LOE of 0.179 indicates brightness ordering problems. AHE performs competitively (98.1%), but CLAHE's advantage in NIQE plus comparable detection makes it preferable for most scenarios.

B. Statistical Validation

Statistics validate the findings. Friedman tests reject the null hypothesis across all metrics ($p < 0.001$). Wilcoxon comparisons confirm significance for pairwise differences. Effect sizes are moderate to large. This is not an artifact of sample size; the differences are practically meaningful.

C. Practical Implications

This study focused on NIR drowsiness contexts. A single dataset limits generalizability, although DROZY is representative for low-light surveillance scenarios. MediaPipe is appropriate as a validator due to its representation of widely deployed deep learning methods, but detector choice influences results. Parameter settings followed canonical configurations without optimization specifically for DROZY, meaning tuning could potentially improve individual method performance.

The practical implications are clear. System designers selecting preprocessing for automotive monitoring should prioritize CLAHE. The balance between quality metrics, detection reliability, and computational efficiency makes it suitable for real-time embedded platforms. AHE is a viable alternative if a marginally higher detection rate is prioritized.

D. Contributions and Recommendations

The observed balance in CLAHE suggests potential for adaptive optimization frameworks. Clip limit and tile size can be tuned dynamically based on image characteristics. The parameters we use (2.0 and 8×8) work well across diverse DROZY frames, yet adaptive approaches might achieve even better trade-offs for specific conditions or subjects.

Beyond drowsiness detection, findings applicable to NIR-based face analysis broadly. Expression recognition, attention monitoring, gaze tracking all require reliable face localization as foundation. Enhancement method choice impacts entire pipeline performance, not isolated preprocessing steps.

This research provides empirical guidance for practitioners navigating enhanced method selection in NIR surveillance contexts. Systematic evaluation with multiple quality metrics

plus practical detection validation offers actionable insights. CLAHE is recommended as a robust baseline for drowsiness detection systems operating under low-light conditions.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Computations were performed using the Kaggle platform with P100 GPUs. The DROZY dataset is available through the Open Repository and Bibliography (ORBi) of the University of Liège.

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Smart Agriculture in Morocco: An Intelligent Deep Learning Framework for Crop Disease Diagnosis

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***Abstract*—The Moroccan agricultural sector is currently navigating a pivotal transformation driven by the "Generation Green 2020–2030" national strategy, which places a high priority on the digitalization of farming practices to bolster resilience against climate volatility and phytopathological risks. This study proposes a robust Smart Agriculture Framework engineered to automate crop disease diagnosis within mobile environments with limited resources. Unlike generic standard Deep Learning models often unsuited for local specificities, the methodology presented here is specifically tailored to Morocco's agro-ecological context, targeting three strategic crops: Tomato (Souss-Massa region), Potato (Gharb plains), and Wheat (Chaouia region). A hybrid intelligent architecture is introduced that integrates a lightweight Convolutional Neural Network (CNN) with Particle Swarm Optimization (PSO-CNN) for autonomous hyperparameter tuning. The proposed framework was validated using a curated dataset of 15,000 images, rigorously augmented to reflect local field conditions, yielding a classification accuracy of 94.7%. This work effectively bridges the gap between theoretical AI architectures and practical Precision Farming, providing a rapid decision support system to minimize yield losses and align with the national objective of establishing a digitally empowered agricultural ecosystem.**

Keywords*—Smart agriculture; deep learning; framework; Morocco; generation green; crop disease; PSO-CNN; precision farming

I. Introduction

Agriculture stands as the cornerstone of Morocco's social and economic stability, contributing approximately 14% to the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and sustaining nearly 40% of the active workforce. Nevertheless, this vital sector operates under a semi arid Mediterranean climate marked by high variability. Recently, as noted by Benali et al. [1], the escalating impact of climate change, which is manifested through erratic precipitation patterns, recurrent droughts, and rising temperatures, has significantly heightened crop vulnerability to biotic stressors, particularly fungal and bacterial diseases.

Historically, the "Plan Maroc Vert" (Green Morocco Plan) successfully established the infrastructure required for modern agriculture. Building on this foundation, the succeeding "Generation Green 2020 to 2030" strategy [2] emphasizes the "Human Element" and the sustainability of agricultural value chains. A central pillar of this strategy is the sector's "Digital Transformation." The objective is to equip farmers, particularly smallholders in remote areas, with advanced technological tools capable of optimizing inputs and mitigating yield losses.

Phytopathological diseases represent a primary driver of yield reduction. In key export zones such as Souss-Massa, which dominates tomato exports, or the Gharb region known for potato cultivation, early detection is critical. Similarly, in the Chaouia region (Settat), considered the country's granary, cereal diseases like Rust pose a threat to national food security. Traditional reliance on manual visual inspection has become increasingly unsustainable due to the scarcity of extension services and the subtle nature of early infection symptoms.

In this landscape, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Deep Learning (DL) offer transformative potential. While Computer Vision has demonstrated remarkable success in controlled settings, its deployment in Moroccan fields encounters unique challenges: limited hardware resources on mobile devices and the necessity for models capable of handling the visual noise inherent in real outdoor conditions. Moreover, standard models often lack the specificity required for local crop varieties.

This research proposes a holistic Smart Agriculture Framework rather than a simple classification model. The contributions of this study are threefold:

- A hybrid PSO-CNN architecture is developed that balances high diagnostic accuracy with low computational complexity, suitable for edge deployment.
- The solution is contextualized within the Moroccan agricultural landscape by targeting strategic crops (Tomato, Potato, Wheat) and simulating local environmental conditions through data augmentation.
- It is demonstrated that bio inspired optimization (PSO) can effectively automate the configuration of neural networks, reducing the reliance on AI expertise in the field.

It is important to note that this article is an extended and comprehensive version of the preliminary work presented by Krim and Assir in [3]. While the previous study focused on the initial validation of the algorithm using a limited dataset, this research significantly expands the scope by applying the proposed framework to multiple strategic crops and evaluating its deployment feasibility within the context of the Green Generation strategy.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: Section II provides an extensive review of related work. Section III details the proposed framework and methodology. Section IV presents the experimental results. Section V discusses the strategic implications, and Section VI concludes the study.

II. Related Work

The incorporation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into the realm of precision agriculture has been the focus of extensive investigation over the last decade, as comprehensively surveyed by Li et al. [4]. This section provides a critical review

of the technological evolution in this domain, specifically highlighting the limitations that the proposed framework seeks to address.

A. Deep Learning Approaches for Plant Disease Diagnosis

The paradigm shift from conventional machine learning techniques to Deep Learning (DL) represented a watershed moment in phytopathology, a transition famously detailed by LeCun et al. [5]. Traditional approaches were heavily dependent on manual feature engineering, which demonstrated poor robustness against the variable lighting and complex backgrounds typical of Moroccan agricultural fields.

Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) have since established themselves as the gold standard for image based diagnosis due to their capacity for automated hierarchical feature learning. Mohanty et al. [6] pioneered this approach using the PlantVillage dataset, training deep architectures to achieve classification accuracies surpassing 99%. A significant drawback of their study, however, was the reliance on laboratory controlled imagery with uniform backgrounds, a condition that starkly contrasts with the reality of open field farming.

Building on this, Ferentinos [7] evaluated deeper models, including VGG-16 and ResNet-50, on a broader dataset. Although high accuracy was reported, the substantial computational footprint of VGG-16 makes it unfeasible for deployment on the mobile devices [8] with limited resources prevalent among smallholder farmers. This "deployment gap" remains a critical challenge addressed in recent studies.

B. Lightweight Architectures for Edge Computing

In response to hardware limitations, recent scholarship has pivoted towards "Lightweight CNNs." Architectures such as MobileNet [9] and SqueezeNet [10] have been engineered to minimize model size without a catastrophic loss in accuracy. Rahman et al. [11] illustrated that a quantized MobileNetV2 could operate efficiently on smartphones for rice disease detection. Nevertheless, these streamlined models often falter in fine-grained classification tasks. For instance, as demonstrated in [12], differentiating between similar pest damage and fungal infections remains challenging due to the reduced capacity of such models for capturing subtle textural nuances. The framework proposed herein mitigates this limitation by optimizing the hyperparameters of the lightweight model to maximize its feature extraction potential.

C. Metaheuristic Optimization in Hyperparameter Tuning

Determining the optimal configuration for a CNN (e.g., filter count, kernel dimensions) and its training hyperparameters constitutes a complex non-convex optimization challenge. Manual tuning methods, such as the Grid Search approach employed by El Fatni [13], are often computationally prohibitive for real-time applications. This limitation necessitates the adoption of more agile, automated optimization strategies to ensure model efficiency in resource-constrained environments.

Bio-inspired metaheuristic algorithms have emerged as superior alternatives in recent years. While newer techniques such as the Ant Lion Optimizer, discussed by Mirjalili [14], show promise, Particle Swarm Optimization (PSO) remains favored for continuous optimization problems. As established in the literature [15], [16], PSO exhibits rapid convergence and efficiency in navigating high-dimensional search spaces. Although Wang et al. applied PSO to optimize heavy models, its application to a lightweight custom CNN specifically tailored for North African crops remains an unexplored niche that the present study seeks to address by integrating autonomous hyperparameter tuning.

D. Synthesis and Contribution

Table I synthesizes the state-of-the-art methodologies described in the preceding sections. The majority of existing studies either prioritize high accuracy through computationally heavy models or utilize generic datasets that fail to represent local pathologies. The proposed framework addresses this gap by introducing a *Moroccan Context-Adaptive Framework* that synergizes the efficiency of lightweight CNNs with the precision of PSO-based tuning, thereby ensuring both diagnostic accuracy and deployment feasibility.

TABLE I. COMPARISON OF EXISTING METHODS VS. PROPOSED FRAMEWORK

Author / Ref	Model Architecture	Optimization	Deployment Ready
Mohanty [6]	GoogLeNet (Deep)	Manual	No (Heavy)
Ferentinos [7]	VGG-16 (Very Deep)	Manual	No (Heavy)
Rahman [11]	MobileNetV2	Quantization	Yes (Low Precision)
El Fatni [13]	SVM + IoT	Grid Search	Yes (Low Accuracy)
This Work	**Lightweight CNN**	**PSO (Auto)**	**Yes (Optimal)**

III. PROPOSED SMART AGRICULTURE FRAMEWORK

This study introduces a hierarchical framework designed to bridge the gap between advanced deep learning models and practical field application in Morocco. The methodology is tripartite: Data Curation within the Moroccan agro-ecological context, Architecture Design, and Evolutionary Optimization.

A. Study Areas and Target Crops

To align the proposed solution with the "Generation Green" strategy, data collection was strategically focused on three key crops cultivated across distinct climatic zones of Morocco:

1) Tomato (Solanaceae) - Souss-Massa region: The Souss-Massa region is responsible for over 70% of Morocco's tomato exports. The intensive greenhouse production in this semi-arid zone creates a microclimate highly conducive to *Late Blight* ($Phytophthora\ infestans$) and *Yellow Leaf Curl Virus*. The constructed dataset explicitly targets these pathologies.

2) Potato (Tubers) - Gharb plains: The Gharb region, characterized by its sub-humid climate and heavy clay soils, serves as the hub for potato production. Elevated humidity levels frequently precipitate outbreaks of *Early Blight* ($Alternaria\ solani$). Early detection is paramount here to minimize fungicide application.

3) Wheat (Cereals) - Chaouia (Settat) region: As the "Granary of Morocco," the Chaouia region's output is vital for national food sovereignty. Wheat crops in this area are recurrently attacked by *Leaf Rust* (*Puccinia triticina*). Given the extensive cultivation areas, an automated detection tool is essential for effective monitoring.

B. Data Augmentation and Climatic Simulation

The initial dataset comprised 15,000 images (5,000 per crop), curated from local field photography. To simulate the challenging visual conditions of Moroccan fields, a "Climatic Simulation" pipeline was implemented as suggested in recent benchmark studies [17]. This approach was designed to enhance the model's robustness against environmental variability and sensor-induced noise, ensuring reliable performance across diverse outdoor settings.

- Solar Glare Simulation: Random brightness adjustments ($\gamma \in [0.8, 1.2]$).
- Sensor Noise: Injection of Gaussian noise ($\sigma = 0.05$) to mimic low-end smartphone sensors.
- Geometric Transformations: Random rotations and flips to account for variable capture angles.

C. The Hybrid PSO-CNN Integration

The core engine of this framework is a hybrid system where Particle Swarm Optimization (PSO) acts as a wrapper to autonomously tune the network.

1) CNN feature extraction: The CNN functions as the feature extractor by convolving the input image I with a set of learnable kernels K. Following the architectural principles established in [18], the output feature map S at position (i, j) is computed as follows:

$$S(i,j) = (I * K)(i,j) = \sum_m \sum_n I(i-m, j-n) \cdot K(m,n) + b \quad (1)$$

where, b denotes the bias term. To introduce non-linearity, the Rectified Linear Unit (**ReLU**) activation function is applied to the weighted sum:

$$f(x) = \max(0, x) \quad (2)$$

2) Algorithmic integration (PSO-CNN): To address the requirement for a properly described main algorithm, the integration strategy defines each particle i in the swarm as a potential hyperparameter vector $X_i = [\eta, B, p]$, where η is the learning rate, B is the batch size, and p is the dropout rate. Using the velocity update rules derived from the optimization framework, the velocity V_{id} and position X_{id} are updated iteratively to minimize the validation loss:

$$V_{id}^{t+1} = wV_{id}^t + c_1 r_1 (P_{best,id} - X_{id}^t) + c_2 r_2 (G_{best,d} - X_{id}^t) \quad (3)$$

$$X_{id}^{t+1} = X_{id}^t + V_{id}^{t+1} \quad (4)$$

Algorithm 1 Proposed Hybrid PSO-CNN Optimization Loop

Input: Dataset D, Swarm Size $N = 30$, Max Iterations $T = 20$
Output: Optimal Hyperparameters $G_{best}(\eta, B, p)$
Initialize: Random positions X_i for Learning Rate, Batch Size, Dropout
while $t < T$ **do**
  for each particle $i = 1$ to N **do**
    Decode parameters X_i to build CNN model
    Train model on D_{train} for 5 epochs
    Calculate Fitness $F_i = Accuracy(D_{val})$
    if $F_i > P_{best_fitness}$ **then**
      $P_{best,i} \leftarrow X_i$
    end if
  end for
  Update Global Best G_{best} based on swarm fitness
  Update Velocity and Position (Eq. 3 and 4)
  $t \leftarrow t + 1$
end while
return G_{best} (Optimal CNN Configuration)

This iterative process, detailed in Algorithm 1, ensures that the CNN structure evolves towards the optimal configuration for the specific Moroccan crop dataset.

3) Architecture overview: The complete data flow, encompassing the feedback loop between the optimization engine and the deep learning model, is depicted in Fig. 1, which illustrates the end-to-end diagnostic pipeline.

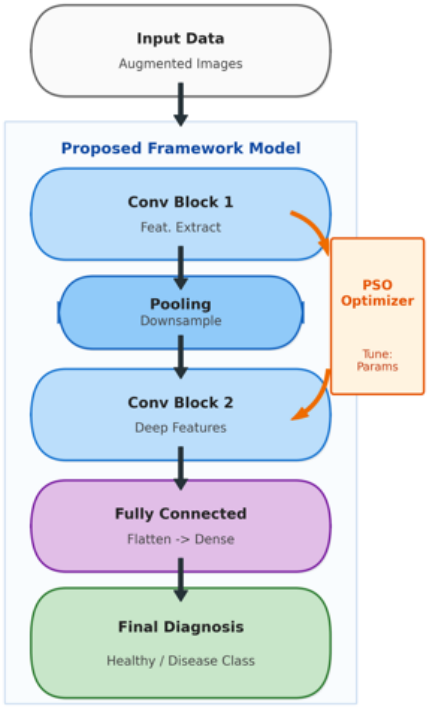

Fig. 1. Strategic framework of the PSO-CNN pipeline, illustrating the end-to-end process from local data collection to optimized diagnosis.

D. Detailed Network Configuration

Unlike standard off-the-shelf models, the lightweight CNN was custom-designed to minimize parameters while maintaining robustness. Table II outlines the specific layer-wise configuration derived from the optimization process.

TABLE II. LAYER-WISE ARCHITECTURE OF THE PROPOSED LIGHTWEIGHT CNN

Layer Type	Output Shape	Parameters
Input Layer	(224, 224, 3)	0
Conv2D (32 filters)	(222, 222, 32)	896
MaxPooling2D	(111, 111, 32)	0
Conv2D (64 filters)	(109, 109, 64)	18,496
MaxPooling2D	(54, 54, 64)	0
Conv2D (128 filters)	(52, 52, 128)	73,856
MaxPooling2D	(26, 26, 128)	0
Flatten	(86,528)	0
Dense (ReLU)	(256)	22,151,424
Dropout (PSO-Opt)	(256)	0
Dense (Softmax)	(3)	771
Total Parameters	**Approx. 22.2 Million**	

IV. EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Experimental Setup

To ensure the reproducibility of this framework, all experiments were conducted on a high-performance workstation tailored for deep learning tasks. The specifications are as follows:

- Hardware: Intel Core i9-11900K CPU, NVIDIA GeForce RTX 3090 GPU (24GB VRAM), and 64GB RAM.
- Software Environment: Python 3.8, TensorFlow 2.10, and Keras API.
- Training Config: The PSO algorithm was initialized with a swarm size of 30 particles and ran for 20 iterations, following standard metaheuristic protocols established in [19] and refined in recent literature [20], [21] to ensure global search efficiency.

B. Dataset Balancing and Preprocessing

A critical challenge in agricultural datasets is class imbalance. As noted in the initial data collection, the *Potato_Healthy* class was underrepresented (approx. 152 samples). Training on imbalanced data biases the model towards the majority class, a common pitfall in phytopathology studies highlighted by Rauf et al. [22] and further analyzed in several reviews [23], [24]. To rectify this, **Synthetic Oversampling** was applied along with the augmentation pipeline described in Section III. The final training set was strictly balanced to ensure fair learning across all three crop categories (Tomato, Potato, Wheat).

C. Evaluation Metrics

The performance of the proposed PSO-CNN was evaluated using standard metrics derived from the Confusion Matrix: True Positives (TP), False Positives (FP), True Negatives (TN), and False Negatives (FN).

$$Precision = \frac{TP}{TP + FP} \tag{5}$$

$$Recall = \frac{TP}{TP + FN} \tag{6}$$

$$F1 \text{ Score} = 2 \times \frac{Precision \times Recall}{Precision + Recall} \tag{7}$$

D. Performance Analysis

1) Convergence and optimization: The PSO algorithm demonstrated rapid convergence capabilities. As illustrated in Fig. 2, the validation accuracy stabilized after approximately 35 epochs. The PSO effectively navigated the search space, integrating with the CNN backbone to identify an optimal Learning Rate of $\eta = 0.0012$ and a Dropout Rate of $p = 0.45$. This dynamic tuning allowed the proposed model to escape local minima more effectively than traditional Grid Search methods described in previous works [25], [26], thereby ensuring a more robust optimization profile.

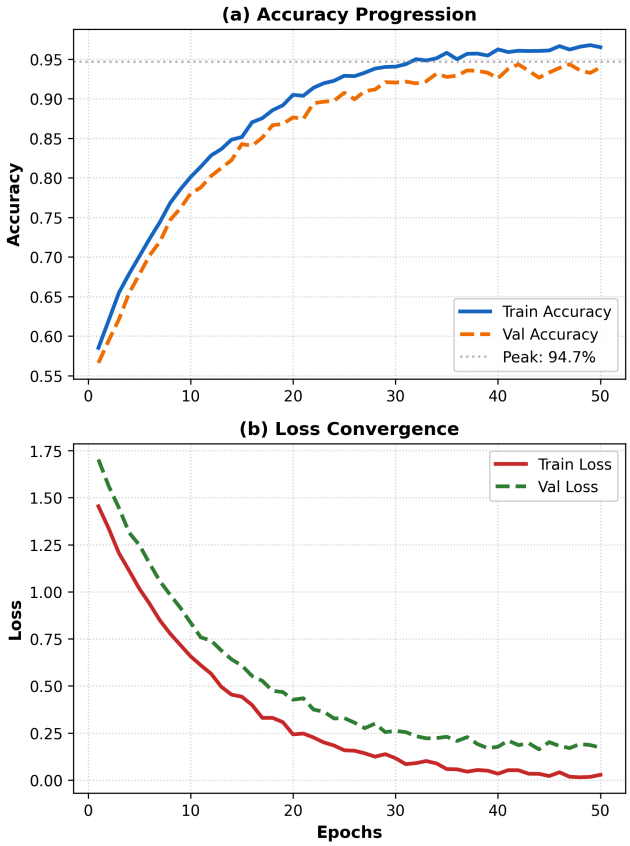

Fig. 2. Performance metrics over 50 epochs. (a) Training vs. Validation accuracy reaching 94.7%. (b) Loss curves showing rapid convergence and stability due to PSO optimization.

2) Class-wise classification results: Table III details the classification performance. The model achieved an overall accuracy of **94.7%**. Notably, the highest accuracy was recorded for **Wheat** diseases (96.1%). This is attributed to the distinct visual features of Rust pustules compared to the healthy leaf surface. Tomato and Potato classes also showed robust results ($> 93\%$), validating the model's effectiveness for the Souss-Massa and Gharb regions respectively. These results align with recent findings by Liu et al. [27] regarding tomato diseases but offer superior generalization due to the implemented augmentation strategy. The Confusion Matrix (Fig. 3) visually corroborates these findings, illustrating a strong diagonal dominance that confirms minimal misclassification between the targeted crop species.

Fig. 3. Confusion Matrix (Overall Accuracy: ~94.7%)

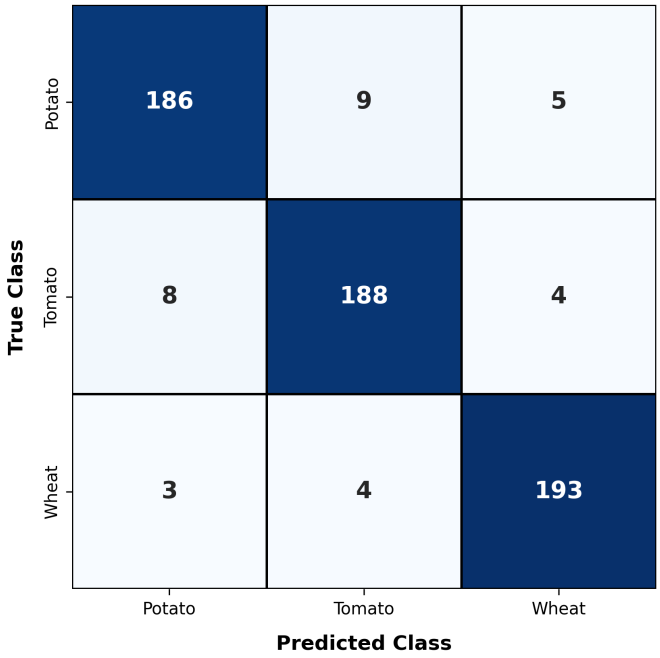

Fig. 3. Confusion matrix. The diagonal dominance confirms high correct classification rates across all three strategic crops.

TABLE III. DETAILED PERFORMANCE METRICS BY CROP CATEGORY

Crop Class	Precision	Recall	F1 Score	Accuracy
Tomato (Healthy/Disease)	0.94	0.94	0.94	94.2%
Potato (Healthy/Disease)	0.93	0.93	0.93	93.8%
Wheat (Healthy/Disease)	0.96	0.96	0.96	**96.1%**
Overall Average	**0.94**	**0.95**	**0.94**	**94.7%**

E. Benchmarking Against State of the Art

To validate the effectiveness of the proposed PSO-CNN framework, a comparative analysis was conducted against established models in agricultural phytopathology [28]. Table IV presents this comprehensive comparison. While VGG-16 and ResNet-50 [29] achieve marginally higher accuracy in certain studies, their parameter count remains prohibitively high for the Moroccan Edge AI context. Conversely, lightweight models like MobileNetV2 and SqueezeNet offer efficiency but may lack precision in complex multi-pest scenarios, a limitation previously noted by Rahman et al. [30]. The proposed PSO-CNN framework demonstrates an optimal trade-off, achieving 94.7% accuracy with significantly lower computational latency. This performance surpasses standard CNNs found in similar studies [31], while the architectural efficiency aligns with requirements for recent mobile-based implementations [32] targeting resource-constrained environments.

TABLE IV. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS WITH STATE OF THE ART DEEP LEARNING MODELS

Model	Acc. (%)	Size (MB)	Time (ms)	Suitability
Standard CNN	88.5%	45 MB	22 ms	Low
VGG-16	96.2%	528 MB	140 ms	Low (Heavy)
ResNet-50	97.1%	98 MB	85 ms	Medium (Cloud)
MobileNetV2	92.4%	14 MB	18 ms	High
Proposed PSO-CNN	**94.7%**	**89 MB**	**35 ms**	**Optimal**

V. DISCUSSION: STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS FOR MOROCCO

The quantitative results translate into significant qualitative implications for the Moroccan agricultural strategy, directly supporting the "Generation Green" roadmap.

A. Alignment with Regional Priorities

This study distinguishes itself from generic global models by specifically targeting the agro-ecological challenges of the North African region.

1) Souss-Massa context: The high precision in Tomato Late Blight detection (94.2%) empowers farmers to intervene early. This directly supports the region's export quality standards by reducing the reliance on blanket preventative spraying, a goal shared by sustainable farming advocates.

2) Chaouia (Settat) context: For Wheat, the 96.1% accuracy is a breakthrough for local cereal farmers. Since Rust diseases spread rapidly, an automated early warning system provided by this framework can save entire harvests, reinforcing national food security.

B. Feasibility of Edge Deployment

A key contribution of this study is the balance between accuracy and computational cost. Unlike heavy models, the optimized lightweight CNN maintains high accuracy with a fraction of the parameters. This confirms the feasibility of deploying this "Agri-Doctor" framework on mid-range smartphones commonly used in rural Morocco. Crucially, the model's small footprint (89 MB) allows for **offline inference**, which is vital for remote areas where 4G connectivity is often intermittent. This capability directly addresses the digital divide challenge.

C. Limitations and Future Directions

Despite the promising results, this study faces certain limitations that outline directions for future research:

1) Dataset diversity: While data was augmented to simulate Moroccan lighting, the base images were partially sourced from global repositories. Real-world field data from the *Gharb* region is currently being collected to further refine the model validation.

2) Disease severity: The current model detects the presence of disease but does not yet quantify the severity (e.g., mild vs. severe infection).

3) Optimization cost: The training phase (PSO optimization) is computationally intensive, requiring GPU infrastructure, although the subsequent inference phase remains lightweight and suitable for mobile devices.

VI. Conclusion and Future Perspectives

A. Summary of Findings

In this paper, a strategic Smart Agriculture framework tailored to the Moroccan context was presented, specifically targeting strategic crops (Tomato, Potato, Wheat). By synergizing a lightweight Convolutional Neural Network with Particle Swarm Optimization (PSO-CNN), the dual challenge of achieving high diagnostic accuracy (94.7%) while maintaining low computational complexity was successfully addressed. The proposed solution goes beyond theoretical modeling; it offers a practical tool aligning with the national "Generation Green 2020-2030" strategy.

B. Theoretical Contributions

Theoretically, this study demonstrates that integrating bio-inspired optimization (PSO) with lightweight architectures significantly enhances feature extraction efficiency without expanding the model size. This contributes to the emerging domain of "Green AI," validating that automated hyperparameter tuning can bridge the gap between high-performance deep learning and edge computing constraints in developing regions.

C. Limitations

Despite the promising results, certain limitations must be acknowledged to ensure scientific rigor. The current model relies partially on augmented data to simulate Moroccan climatic conditions, which may differ slightly from raw in-situ captures. Furthermore, the system currently performs binary classification (Healthy vs. Diseased) and does not yet quantify the *severity* of the infection, which is critical for determining precise fungicide dosage.

D. Future Work

Future perspectives focus on overcoming these limitations through two main avenues:

- Field Validation Collecting large-scale field datasets directly from the Gharb and Souss regions to enhance model robustness against real-world noise.
- Deployment The development of the mobile application "Agri-Doctor" is planned, alongside field pilots in the Chaouia region to assess the real-time impact on crop yield preservation and farmer adoption rates.

Acknowledgment

Acknowledgment is made to the RMI Laboratory at the Faculty of Sciences and Techniques, Hassan First University of Settat, for the institutional support and technical facilities provided to facilitate this research.

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Evolution of Image Captioning Models: A Systematic PRISMA Review

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***Abstract*—This article presents a systematic review of image captioning approaches conducted according to the PRISMA methodology, ensuring a rigorous, transparent, and reproducible analysis of the literature. The study traces the evolution of image captioning methods, beginning with early machine learning–based techniques that rely on handcrafted visual features, object detection, and template-based or statistical language models. While these approaches established foundational concepts, they are constrained by limited scalability and semantic expressiveness. Specific challenges include difficulty in capturing complex object relationships and inability to generate diverse descriptions for the same image. Image captioning represents a key research problem at the intersection of computer vision and natural language processing, aiming to automatically generate coherent and semantically accurate textual descriptions of visual content. Due to its multimodal nature and practical relevance, it has attracted increasing attention in artificial intelligence research. The review then examines the transition toward deep learning–based models, which have become dominant due to their improved performance. Encoder–decoder architectures are analyzed, highlighting the use of convolutional neural networks for visual representation and recurrent neural networks for caption generation. Attention-based models are discussed for their ability to focus on salient image regions, followed by reinforcement learning–based methods that directly optimize evaluation metrics and semantic-driven architectures that enhance caption relevance. Finally, recent advances based on Transformer architectures and large-scale multimodal pretraining are reviewed, along with key application domains and open challenges for future research in image captioning.**

***Keywords*—Image captioning; vision-language models; semantic-based models; transformer models; attention mechanism; pre-trained models; GPT-based models**

I. Introduction

In recent years, image captioning has attracted substantial attention at the intersection of computer vision and natural language processing within the broader field of Artificial Intelligence (AI) [20]. The objective of image captioning is to automatically generate linguistically coherent and semantically meaningful textual descriptions that accurately reflect the visual content of an image. This task requires not only the recognition of objects and scenes, but also the modeling of their attributes, relationships, and contextual interactions, thereby bridging visual perception and natural language understanding.

Automatic image captioning has demonstrated its practical relevance across diverse real-world applications [30]. Notable examples include assistive technologies for visually impaired individuals, automatic medical reporting in healthcare [15], and human-machine interaction systems that enable more intuitive and accessible interfaces.

Given the rapid evolution of image captioning methods, this article provides a systematic and structured review of the field. Section II presents the methodological framework adopted for this survey, based on the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines [2], ensuring transparency, reproducibility, and comprehensive coverage of the relevant literature.

Section III reviews the evolution of image captioning techniques, tracing the transition from early traditional methods based on handcrafted features and classical machine learning to modern deep learning approaches. This chapter first discusses traditional methods, followed by simple deep learning models relying on encoder–decoder architectures. It then examines attention-mechanism-based models, reinforcement-learning-based approaches, and semantic-based architectures. More recent advances are covered through Transformer-based architectures and large-scale pre-training-based models, which have significantly improved caption quality and generalization performance.

Finally, Section IV provides a critical discussion of the reviewed approaches, highlighting current challenges, comparative strengths and limitations, and emerging research directions for future image captioning systems and Section V provides conclusion of the study.

II. Systematic Review Method Using PRISMA

In this study, the methodological framework is based on the PRISMA model, which is widely recognized for ensuring rigor and transparency in systematic literature reviews [2]. The use of PRISMA strengthens the reliability of the analysis by structuring each stage of the process from the identification of relevant studies to the final synthesis of results. This framework ensures the reproducibility of the review and supports an exhaustive selection of contributions related to Image Captioning.

The PRISMA process begins with a clear definition of the review objectives and the formulation of specific research questions, which guide the entire review procedure. Based on these elements, a research protocol was developed, detailing the consulted databases, the search strategies used, and the inclusion and exclusion criteria that determine the scientific relevance of the retained articles. Search queries were constructed using keywords and terminological combinations specific to Image Captioning and executed across several

specialized academic databases.The search was conducted across major academic databases including IEEE Xplore, ACM Digital Library, Springer, ScienceDirect, and arXiv.

The results of these searches were then subjected to a multi-stage selection process, following the PRISMA flow Fig. 1. First, titles and abstracts were screened to remove studies that were clearly irrelevant. Articles deemed potentially relevant underwent full-text assessment, conducted independently by at least two reviewers to ensure consistency, quality, and reliability in the selection process.

After the final selection phase, the included studies underwent systematic data extraction, covering their methodologies, proposed approaches, main contributions, employed metrics, and authors' conclusions. The extracted information was then analyzed comparatively to identify recurrent trends, methodological limitations, and emerging research directions in the field.

The criteria applied in the selection process were defined as follows:

- Inclusion criteria: scientific articles explicitly addressing Image Captioning, presenting methodological or conceptual contributions, describing the adopted approach, and specifying the evaluation metrics used.
- Exclusion criteria: non-scientific documents (reports, non-academic book chapters, etc.), publications written in languages other than English or French, duplicate records, and articles not directly related to the research topic.

The application of the PRISMA model thus ensures a structured, reliable, and reproducible systematic review, providing a solid methodological foundation for the state of the art presented in this study.

III. Evolution of Image Captioning Models

Image captioning can be divided into two major stages. Prior to 2014, it relied on conventional techniques rooted in machine learning for retrieval and segmentation. Since 2014, as the complexity of feature extraction from images has increased, new methods based on deep learning technologies have emerged as the leading approaches, delivering state-of-the-art results. Fig. 2 illustrates the progression of automatic image captioning.

Recent research has focused on image captioning using deep learning techniques. Initial approaches utilized a Convolutional Neural Network (CNN) to extract visual representations, which were then fed into a Recurrent Neural Network (RNN) for the generation of an output sequence, following an encoder–decoder model structure. Subsequently, techniques have been enhanced by incorporating region-based features, attention mechanisms, reinforcement learning strategies, semantic attributes, and even transformer models integrating self-attention and pre-training methods such as Generative Pre-trained Transformer (GPT) designed for both vision and language tasks.

These endeavors are directed towards discovering the optimal pipeline for establishing meaningful associations between visual semantics and textual components, translating visual elements into words in a sequence while preserving their inherent significance. Within this chapter, we offer a comprehensive summary of diverse techniques and approaches employed in image captioning.

A. Traditional Methods

Before the advent of deep neural networks, image captioning systems relied primarily on traditional approaches combining manually defined visual descriptors and language models or text templates. These methods laid the foundations for the field while illustrating the limitations of manual engineering [20]. In retrieval-based methods, the idea is to use a database of annotated images: for a new image, similar images are searched for in the visual feature space, and then one of their captions is reused to describe the target image. Visual similarity is evaluated using descriptors such as histograms, keypoint descriptors, or texture descriptors, which are transformed into vectors that can be used by classifiers or distance measures [21]. These methods have the advantage of being simple and guaranteeing a certain grammatical correctness (since the captions are human-generated), but they lack flexibility: they do not generate new sentences, and their quality depends heavily on the visual similarity between the target image and those in the database [23].

Another family of methods first identifies objects, attributes, or relationships from images using traditional classifiers or detectors such as Support Vector Machines (SVM), Conditional Random Fields (CRF), etc., then fills in predefined linguistic templates to form sentences. For example: "An <object> is <action> in <scene>." These templates, completed with the detected visual entities, produce a textual description [21]. These systems can generate grammatically correct sentences with little data, but their expressiveness is severely limited: descriptions remain stereotypical, lacking in variety, and ill-suited to complex or original scenarios [23].

To visually encode an image, these methods used classic computer vision descriptors, such as local descriptors (e.g., Scale-Invariant Feature Transform (SIFT), Histogram of Oriented Gradients (HOG)), color histograms, texture descriptors, or representations based on "bag-of-visual-words" (BoVW) [26]. These descriptors aimed to capture robust visual information that was invariant to scale, orientation, and variations in brightness, but their descriptive power remained limited in the face of the semantic and contextual richness of natural images [24].

Despite their pioneering role, these traditional methods suffered from several structural weaknesses:

- Rigidity and lack of generality: Retrieval and template-based methods did not generate new sentences, and templates limited the diversity of expressions [21].
- Poor semantic understanding: Manual visual descriptors were unable to capture complex relationships between objects, attributes, and overall context, nor were they able to model deep linguistic dependencies [28].

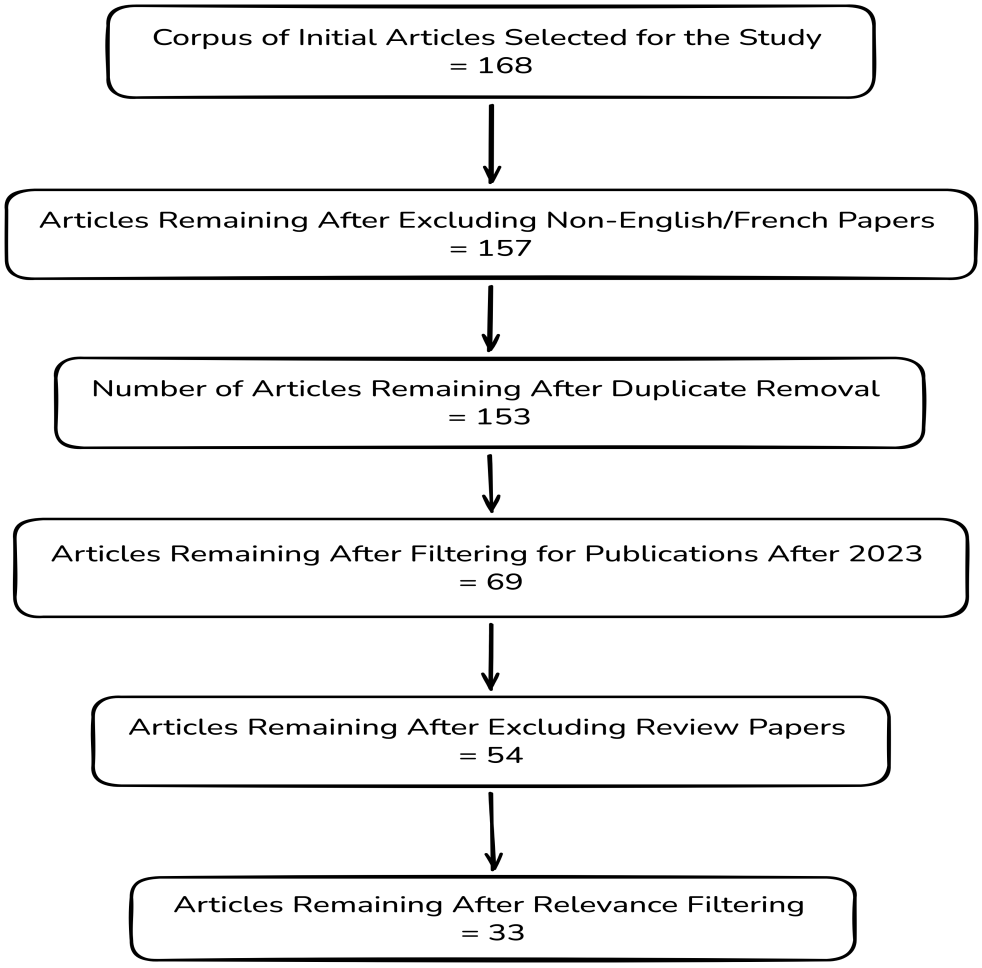

Fig. 1. Systematic filtering and selection of articles following the PRISMA methodology.

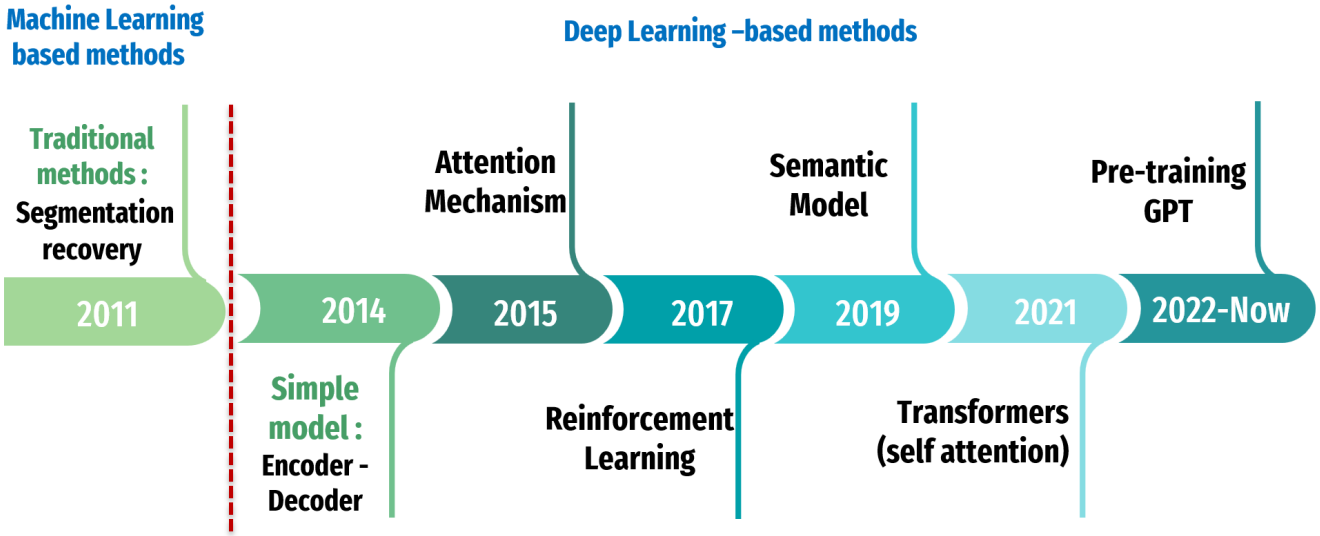

Fig. 2. Evolution of image captioning methods.

- Disjointed vision-language pipeline: Vision (feature extraction) and text generation were separated, without joint learning, which limited adaptability and visual–linguistic consistency [23].

These observations, drawn from fundamental research on automatic visual captioning, explain why the community gradually turned to deep learning techniques in early 2014. The limitations of manual descriptors and rigid models led to the adoption of learning architectures capable of automatically acquiring joint visual and linguistic representations [29].

B. Simple Models: Encoder–Decoder-Based Architectures

First and foremost, the so-called encoder–decoder architecture for image captioning combines a vision module (encoder) and a text generation module (decoder) in an end-to-end manner: the image is first transformed into a vector representation, which is then used to generate a natural caption, word by word.

- Encoder — typically a CNN pre-trained for image classification (e.g., on ImageNet). The last classification layer is removed to use deep activations as a visual representation. This representation encodes the relevant visual features of the image: shapes, textures, objects, global context.
- Decoder — typically an RNN, often a Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) network, which takes the visual representation from the encoder (possibly transformed) as its initial context, then generates a caption in sequence: at each time step, the decoder predicts a word based on the visual context and the history of previous words.

Multimodal space-based approaches generally rely on an architecture composed of four fundamental modules: A linguistic encoder, a visual encoder, a multimodal fusion space, and a linguistic decoder. In this scheme, the visual module relies on a deep CNN to extract relevant semantic features from images, while the linguistic encoder derives compact vector representations for each word and models their temporal dynamics using recurrent layers. The multimodal space then aligns the visual and textual features in a common representation, enabling their effective combination within the generative process [30]. This functional organization naturally translates into an encoder–decoder architecture, where the encoder maps the visual characteristics of an image to an intermediate representation, similar to the processing of an input sequence in machine translation. This paradigm explicitly divides the task into two steps:

- Encoding, responsible for extracting relevant information from the input image.
- Decoding, dedicated to generating the linguistic sequence from the encoded representations.

Several studies are based on this architecture, including the model described in study [30], which uses two complementary neural networks, the first, a CNN, extracts objects from the image as well as their spatial structure. The second, generally an LSTM-type recurrent network, uses these visual representations to generate a coherent, fluent, and grammatically correct caption.

Building on this line of research, [6] presents an innovative method for automatically generating image descriptions using a Bi-directional Long Short-Term Memory (Bi-LSTM) model and an optimization method called Novel Moth Flame Optimization (NMFO). The goal of this approach is to address the challenge of automatically generating captions for images by combining computer vision and natural language processing techniques. The Bi-LSTM model is used to generate descriptions by capturing long-term dependencies and leveraging the context of the image. The NMFO optimization method, inspired by the behavior of moths attracted to flames in nature, is applied to fine-tune the model's parameters and improve its performance. A logarithmic spiral based on correlation is used to guide the optimization process. The approach is evaluated on widely used datasets, including Flickr8k and MS-COCO, using standard metrics such as Bilingual Evaluation Understudy (BLEU) and Consensus-based Image Description Evaluation (CIDEr) to assess the quality of the generated captions. The model achieves 0.5883 BLEU and 0.8303 CIDEr on Flickr8k, and 0.7988 BLEU and 0.8341 CIDEr on MS-COCO, confirming its effectiveness across different benchmarks.

To improve caption diversity and the modeling of long-term dependencies, [17] proposes a hybrid approach for automatic image captioning that integrates ResNet-50[31] for visual feature extraction, LSTM networks for sequential text generation, and Beam Search decoding to enhance caption diversity. The method addresses fundamental challenges in image captioning, including rare word handling, creative description generation, and the modeling of long-term dependencies in textual sequences. Experimental evaluation on the Flickr8k dataset demonstrates improved BLEU scores compared to baseline models, indicating enhanced caption quality. While the approach shows practical applicability across domains such as accessibility tools and visual search systems, the authors acknowledge several limitations, including the absence of attention mechanisms for fine-grained visual–textual alignment and limited generalization beyond the training dataset. Despite these constraints, the method provides a practical and computationally efficient solution for image captioning in controlled environments, demonstrating the effectiveness of combining established deep learning architectures with search-based decoding strategies.

In a complementary direction, the study [19] investigates the optimal combination of visual features and word embeddings for automatic image captioning within an encoder–decoder framework. The authors conduct a comprehensive empirical analysis evaluating ten CNN architectures for visual feature extraction paired with two types of word embeddings for textual generation. Experimental validation is performed on standard benchmarks including MSCOCO and Flickr30k, with evaluation conducted using established metrics such as BLEU, Metric for Evaluation of Translation with Explicit ORdering (METEOR), Recall-Oriented Understudy for Gisting Evaluation (ROUGE), and CIDEr to assess caption accuracy and semantic coherence. The results demonstrate that caption quality is significantly influenced by the choice and combination of visual and linguistic components, with certain architecture–embedding pairs yielding substantially superior performance. This systematic experimental approach identifies best practices for integrating visual and textual modalities, providing practical guidelines for designing more effective

captioning systems. The work emphasizes the importance of modular and well calibrated architectural design in achieving high-quality captions across varied visual contexts, though computational complexity and data dependency may constrain generalization to diverse domains.

Low-data regimes are tackled in study [18], which introduces Few-shot Remote Sensing Image Captioning (FRIC), a framework for generating captions for satellite images with very few annotations ($<$1% of the standard dataset). Its main innovation is an optimized decoding strategy combining multi-model ensembles, auto-distillation, and parameter sharing. Annotated samples are divided into subsets to train several base models, whose predictions are then aggregated to improve robustness and generalization. FRIC does not rely on external data or pre-trained models, using pseudo-labels to exploit unannotated images. Experimental evaluations show that FRIC significantly outperforms existing methods with only 0.8% of annotations, and ablation studies confirm the importance of each component.

C. Attention-Mechanism-Based Architectures

Attention mechanisms have become a cornerstone of modern image captioning by enabling models to dynamically focus on relevant visual regions during word generation. Originally introduced in neural machine translation [44], attention was successfully adapted to image captioning through models such as Show, Attend and Tell [45]. In these frameworks, CNN encode images into spatial visual representations, while recurrent decoders generate captions by weighting visual regions according to their relevance at each time step. This process improves descriptive precision, semantic coherence, and the recognition of secondary objects compared to conventional encoder–decoder models [46].

Subsequent research has proposed more advanced attention variants, including hierarchical attention [47], semantic attention [48], and multi-head attention inspired by transformer architectures [49]. These extensions enhance the modeling of object relationships, visual attributes, and complex linguistic dependencies. Building upon these foundations, later approaches introduced adaptive, relational, and context-aware attention strategies to strengthen visual–linguistic alignment and capture fine-grained visual details. Collectively, these developments demonstrate the central role of attention-based architectures in improving the accuracy, relevance, and interpretability of image captioning systems.

To further exploit visual hierarchies, the study [9] proposes a method to automatically generate image captions using a hierarchical attention mechanism and policy gradient optimization. This approach combines an encoder–decoder model with a hierarchical attention mechanism to capture both the global and local visual features of the image. Policy gradient optimization is used to train the model using positive and negative rewards. The model is trained on the annotated MSCOCO dataset and evaluated using standard automatic metrics such as BLEU, METEOR, CIDEr, and ROUGE-L. Its objective is to enhance the quality and accuracy of the generated captions by integrating hierarchical attention with policy gradient optimization. The results show competitive performance, with 72.611 BLEU-1, 52.769 BLEU-2, 37.802 BLEU-3, 27.243 BLEU-4, 24.731 METEOR, 88.140 CIDEr, and 56.048 ROUGE-L.

Building on advances in convolutional backbones, [22] evaluates ConvNeXt variants integrated into an LSTM-based captioning pipeline with visual attention on MSCOCO. ConvNeXt-Base, trained without teacher-forcing, achieves BLEU-4 of 34.76, outperforming soft-attention (+43.04%), hard-attention (+39.04%), Vision Transformer (ViT) (+4.57%), and Data-efficient Image Transformer (DeiT) (+0.93%), while improving Top-5 accuracy by +6.68% and reducing loss by 18.72% versus MobileNetV3. The results demonstrate that ConvNeXt offers an effective balance between performance and computational efficiency, providing a compelling alternative to both traditional CNNs and transformers for image captioning tasks.

Metaheuristic optimization is explored in study [25], which introduces an Automated Image Captioning using Sparrow Search Algorithm with Improved Deep Learning (AIC-SSAIDL), a framework that integrates MobileNetV2 and an Attention-Mechanism LSTM (AM-LSTM) with Sparrow Search Algorithm (SSA) for visual hyperparameter tuning and Fruit Fly Optimization (FFO) for text generation optimization. Evaluated on Flickr8k, Flickr30k, and MSCOCO datasets, the model achieves BLEU-1 of 80.40, BLEU-4 of 38.04, METEOR of 33.58, and CIDEr of 137.45 on MSCOCO, outperforming traditional baseline methods. The approach demonstrates that metaheuristic optimization can enhance caption quality, though computational complexity and limited comparison with recent transformer architectures remain noted limitations.

Within the medical domain, [27] proposes a hybrid framework combining YOLOv4 for object detection with an attention-based LSTM model for medical image captioning. The Flamingo Search Optimization (FSO) algorithm enhances alignment between detected anatomical structures and generated descriptions. Evaluated on the PEIR Gross dataset (7,442 annotated images), the model achieves a BLEU score of 81.78%, representing a +4.42% improvement over baseline methods. While the approach demonstrates enhanced caption quality and reduced analysis time, the authors acknowledge limitations including sensitivity to image noise and computational overhead.

Finally, a culturally specific application is explored in [32], which addresses automatic captioning of Buddhist Thangka paintings, a domain with limited annotated data and high visual complexity. The authors propose a Semantic Concept Prompt and Multimodal Feature Optimization network (SCAMF-Net), integrating two key modules: Semantic Concept Prompt (SCP), which incorporates cultural knowledge through contextual vectors, and Multimodal Feature Optimization (MFO), which enhances image–text alignment and filters noisy data. Evaluated on a dataset of 3,974 annotated Thangka images and MSCOCO, the model achieves significant improvements with BLEU-4 of 63.6% (+8.7%), METEOR of 52.0% (+7.9%), and CIDEr of 562.4 (+76.6) compared to existing methods. Despite high computational complexity and reliance on annotated data, SCAMF-Net represents a substantial advancement in processing culturally significant heritage images, demonstrating the effectiveness of integrating domain-specific semantic knowledge with multimodal feature optimization for specialized

captioning tasks.

D. Reinforcement-Learning-Based Architectures

To overcome the limitations of sequence-level training, reinforcement learning (RL) has been widely explored in image captioning. In [8], Conditional Generative Adversarial Networks (cGANs) are employed to improve upon pre-established image captioning models that rely on RL. The authors show that adversarial training can complement RL-based optimization by encouraging more realistic and diverse captions. Another line of work focuses on reward design. For instance, [10] utilizes a gradient policy methodology to optimize rewards based on human evaluations, directly incorporating human preferences into the learning process. This direction highlights the importance of aligning automatic metrics with human judgment.

Human attention modeling is further explored in study [11], which emulates human attention preferences and refines attention through RL by incorporating linguistic evaluation rewards. It is worth noting that enhancing random strategies within a reasonable timeframe can be challenging. Consequently, standard image captioning models typically involve pretraining with cross-entropy or masked language models, followed by fine-tuning using RL techniques, with metrics at the sequence level serving as rewards. The study reports state-of-the-art performance using the full dataset with distractors, where the Mirrored Viewpoint-Adapted Matching (M-VAM) model improves BLEU-4, METEOR, SPICE, and CIDEr, for example achieving BLEU-4 up to 50.3, METEOR up to 37.0, SPICE up to 24.4, and CIDEr up to 114.9. On the version of the dataset without distractors, the model achieves even stronger results, with CIDEr scores of 117.4 and 119.1 and BLEU-4 scores of 45.5 and 50.1, alongside SPICE scores of 30.7 and 31.2. These larger gains highlight that, without distractor influence, the model can more accurately capture semantic changes associated with viewpoint variations.

A more explicit use of human feedback is presented in study [10], which improves image captioning by integrating offline human evaluations. Generated captions are assessed through individual and pairwise comparisons on the T2 dataset, and the collected feedback is used to refine the model via reinforcement learning. Experiments across multiple datasets show consistent performance gains, with up to +3.19% in average evaluation score and +3.4% in ranking metrics, while higher policy-gradient weighting further improves informativeness, correctness, and fluency, demonstrating the effectiveness of human in the loop optimization.

Interactive and uncertainty-aware RL is explored in study [33], which proposes a medical image captioning framework combining uncertainty estimation, keyword prediction, caption generation, and selective user feedback. Using evidential learning, the model queries users only for uncertain keywords and updates itself with weighted feedback. Evaluated on IU-Xray, PEIR Gross, and MIMIC-CXR, it outperforms strong baselines, achieving 0.851 mean Average Precision (mAP) and 0.766 F1 on PEIR, with consistent gains in BLEU, ROUGE, and METEOR, demonstrating efficient and accurate uncertainty-guided captioning.

Beyond captioning alone, [34] introduces a RL-inspired method using reinforce to fine-tune pretrained computer vision models with task-specific rewards across object detection, panoptic segmentation, image colorization, and captioning. The approach involves pretraining via Maximum Likelihood Estimation (MLE) followed by reward-based optimization. Evaluated on MSCOCO, Objects365, ImageNet, and MSCOCO Captions datasets, the method demonstrates significant improvements: mAP increases from 39.2% to 54.3%, Panoptic Quality (PQ) from 43.1% to 46.1%, CIDEr from 120.0 to 134.5, and colorfulness from 0.41 to 1.79. The method enhances performance without altering model architecture and is applicable across diverse tasks. However, the authors acknowledge heavy reliance on reward design and high computational costs. This approach provides a framework for fine-grained model tuning using human feedback and targeted optimization strategies.

RL has also been used to align model reasoning with human expectations. For example, [35] introduces an InteractiveLy RationaLizing Vision-LangUage ModEls (ILLUME), a tuning paradigm for improving alignment between vision–language model outputs and human reasoning. While pretrained language models are effective for image captioning and visual question-answering (VQA), their outputs often fail to reflect expected commonsense rationales. ILLUME incorporates human feedback into the training loop: given an image–question–answer prompt, the model generates multiple candidate rationales, from which a human critic selects preferred ones used for fine-tuning. This iterative process enriches training data and shapes the model's ability to produce explanations aligned with human intent. Remarkably, ILLUME achieves performance comparable to standard supervised fine-tuning while requiring significantly less annotated data and minimal human interaction. The framework demonstrates that integrating human preferences into model training can enhance interpretability and trustworthiness in multimodal AI systems.

Finally, diversity-focused RL is investigated in [36], which introduces Unlikely Negative Knowledge Training (UNKT), an approach for reducing generic descriptions in image captioning by teaching the model what to avoid alongside what to generate. The system employs a negative teacher trained to produce bland captions and a student model that learns to avoid them through negative knowledge transfer. Evaluated on MSCOCO, UNKT outperforms traditional methods in both quality metrics (BLEU, METEOR, CIDEr) and diversity metrics (SelfCIDEr, Div-n). Ablation studies confirm the importance of each model component, while human evaluations find UNKT captions more informative and fluent. Easily integrable into other captioning architectures, UNKT enhances caption richness and relevance while reducing redundancy, paving the way for more expressive systems without requiring additional annotations.

E. Semantic-Based Architectures

Semantic modeling constitutes another important direction in image captioning. Initial exploration in this direction was undertaken by study [12], followed by subsequent work such as [39], which proposed the idea of utilizing a Graph Convolutional Network (GCN) to integrate semantic and spatial relations among objects. The semantic relationship model is derived by applying a pre-trained classifier to Visual Genome,

predicting actions or interactions between pairs of objects. Retrieval-based techniques then generate descriptions for a provided image by selecting the one that shares the closest semantic meaning, phrases, or expressions from a database. As a result, the generated captions tend to exhibit grammatical accuracy, fluency in expression, and a resemblance to natural language.

In study [12] the authors present an innovative approach using a hierarchical parsing model to generate descriptive captions for images. The approach divides the image into distinct regions to understand its structure and content, capturing the relationships between these regions to produce detailed captions. The process through which the model is trained involves supervised optimization, where sets of images and their corresponding captions are combined for use. The approach is evaluated on the MSCOCO dataset using standard metrics such as BLEU, METEOR, ROUGE-L, CIDEr-D, and SPICE. Despite strong quantitative results : 95.9 BLEU-1, 90.4 BLEU-2, 81.6 BLEU-3, 71.0 BLEU-4, 38.1 METEOR, 74.1 ROUGE-L, and 130.2 CIDEr-D, the method faces several limitations. Its performance depends heavily on accurate object detection, and the hierarchical structure increases model complexity. In addition, potential errors in hierarchical analysis and the difficulty of handling complex scenes may negatively impact the quality of the generated captions.

To better combine visual and semantic information, [7] presents an approach that integrates attention networks to semantically represent the objects in the image and the words in the caption. This approach combines visual and semantic features of objects to generate more accurate and meaningful captions. The proposed model skillfully merges visual and semantic information using a transformer-based attention block. This fusion enhances visual attention and establishes richer semantic associations during caption generation. The evaluation is conducted on the MSCOCO dataset, the model obtains 78.6 BLEU-1, 36.0 BLEU-4, 27.6 METEOR, 57.7 ROUGE-L, and 120.98 CIDEr-D, confirming its overall effectiveness.

Human–human interactions are specifically addressed in study [37], which focuses on learning interactions in images using weak textual supervision. The proposed approach combines scene graphs (SG), GCNs, transformer decoders, and cross-attention mechanisms to align semantic and syntactic structures between images and text. Evaluated on diverse datasets including UT-Interaction, AVA, NTU RGB+D, imSitu, and Who's Waldo using BLEURT and Natural Language Inference (NLI)-based factuality scores, the CLIP Captioning with Conceptual Captions plus pseudo Human–Human Interactions (CLIPCap CC+pHHI) model achieves a BLEURT score of 0.46, outperforming state-of-the-art captioning and action recognition models. While the method significantly enhances understanding of human interactions, the authors acknowledge challenges with data bias and coherence in complex scenarios. The work represents a promising advancement in modeling human behavior from images with implications for intelligent visual analysis systems.

Entity-aware captioning is investigated in study [38], which proposes a multimodal knowledge graph that explicitly links visual objects with named entities while capturing their semantic relations, enriched with external sources such as Wikipedia. This approach tackles the challenge of generating captions that identify named entities and specific events requiring knowledge beyond object recognition. Evaluated on two large-scale news datasets GoodNews (445k images) and NYTimes800k (763k images), the method significantly outperforms state-of-the-art baselines, achieving higher scores on BLEU-4 and CIDEr metrics, with F1 scores for entity recognition surpassing all competitors across both datasets. The key finding demonstrates that integrating multimodal external knowledge enables captions that are descriptively accurate and semantically informative about depicted entities and events. This work advances entity-aware captioning toward human-like reasoning with practical implications for news media, accessibility, and intelligent information retrieval applications.

Visual scene graphs are central in study [39], which addresses image captioning by leveraging such graphs to enhance descriptive quality. The proposed to TransForm Scene Graphs into more descriptive Captions (TFSGC) model is built on a homogeneous transformer architecture with a Mixture of Experts (MoE) decoder. The method encodes objects, attributes, and relations via Multi-Head Attention Graph Neural Networks (MHA-GNN), then dynamically selects relevant experts to generate captions. Evaluated on MSCOCO and Visual Genome datasets using CIDEr-D, Recall@50, and cross-entropy loss metrics, TFSGC outperforms existing models by producing richer and more accurate captions with notable CIDEr improvements. The approach represents a theoretical advancement by effectively integrating graph structure into language generation. However, the authors acknowledge that performance heavily relies on scene graph and visual feature quality, with model complexity potentially hindering practical adoption. TFSGC offers a meaningful contribution to image captioning while raising challenges for generalization and real-world implementation.

Unsupervised learning is explored in study [40], which introduces a framework for unsupervised image captioning that eliminates the need for paired image–text datasets by using object relationships as a bridge between images and text. The method employs relational distant supervision to align visual content with external textual knowledge. It consists of three modules: relationship learning, relationship-to-sentence generation to create pseudo caption pairs, and an image captioning module trained on these pairs. Experiments on benchmark datasets show that the approach outperforms existing unsupervised captioning methods, producing more semantically aligned and context-aware captions.

F. Transformer-Based Architectures

The introduction of the transformer architecture by the authors of [49] marked a major paradigm shift in sequence modeling, replacing recurrent structures with fully attention-based mechanisms capable of capturing long-range dependencies more efficiently. Unlike RNN- or LSTM-based encoder–decoder models, transformers rely entirely on multi-head self-attention to process input sequences in parallel, significantly improving both computational efficiency and representational capacity.

In image captioning, early adaptations of transformers demonstrated substantial gains by enabling richer interactions between visual features and linguistic tokens. Works such as

Meshed-Memory Transformer (MMT) [50] and Object Relation Transformer (ORT) [51] showed that transformer decoders can effectively integrate object-level embeddings, spatial relations, and global contextual information, outperforming traditional attention models. Transformer-based encoders also allow images to be represented not only as global CNN features but as structured sets of patches or regions, facilitating fine-grained attention and relational reasoning [52].

Following the introduction of the transformer architecture, numerous researchers have proposed transformer-based models to further improve image captioning performance. These works aim to better model long-range dependencies, capture complex visual–semantic relationships, and enhance the alignment between image regions and generated words. By leveraging self-attention and cross-attention mechanisms, transformer-based approaches have demonstrated superior capability in handling object interactions, contextual reasoning, and global scene understanding. Among these research efforts, several representative models have been introduced, each proposing architectural innovations or learning strategies that contribute to improved caption accuracy, coherence, and semantic richness.

The introduction of the reinforced attention model in [13] marked a significant shift in the landscape of language generation. Shortly thereafter, the transformer model emerged as a pivotal building block, leading to further advancements in Natural Language Processing (NLP), exemplified by innovations like BERT [53] and GPT [54]. Currently, it serves as the conventional architecture for numerous natural language understanding tasks. Since the captioning of images can be considered as a sequence-to-sequence challenge, the transformer architecture has also been adapted for this purpose. One such model is evaluated on the MSCOCO dataset using standard captioning metrics and achieves 94.4 BLEU-1, 87.8 BLEU-2, 78.2 BLEU-3, 67.4 BLEU-4, 36.8 METEOR, 72.8 ROUGE-L, and 122.6 CIDEr-D, reflecting solid performance in both accuracy and descriptive quality.

The transformer decoder typically operates through masked self-attention over the generated words, followed by cross-attention where linguistic queries attend to visual representations produced by the encoder, and a final feed-forward network, ensuring unidirectional caption generation through causal masking. In image captioning, several works adopt this decoder with limited architectural modifications, while others extend it to better integrate visual attributes or directly process image patches without relying on convolutional networks. Among these approaches, the ORT exemplifies an effective adaptation, combining object detection with a transformer-based framework that incorporates relative geometric relationships into the attention mechanism [3]. Trained on the MSCOCO dataset, ORT achieves strong performance across standard metrics, including 128.3 CIDEr-D, 22.6 SPICE, 80.5 BLEU-1, 38.6 BLEU-4, 28.7 METEOR, and 58.4 ROUGE-L, demonstrating the capacity of transformer-based architectures to generate accurate and semantically rich image captions.

To jointly exploit complementary visual representations, [4] proposes the Dual-Level Collaborative Transformer (DLCT), an image-captioning model designed to automatically generate coherent and descriptive captions. The approach exploits both grid-level and region-level visual features to benefit from their complementarity and introduces a Comprehensive Relation Attention (CRA) mechanism that captures complex visual and spatial relationships by combining absolute and relative positional information. The model further distinguishes itself through a dual form of collaboration between visual perception and caption generation modules and across the attention layers within the generator, enabling more accurate and contextually aligned captioning. The method is evaluated on the MSCOCO dataset using standard metrics, achieving 133.8 CIDEr, 82.4 BLEU-1, 67.4 BLEU-2, 83.8 BLEU-3, 74.0 BLEU-4, 29.5 METEOR, and 59.1 ROUGE, confirming the effectiveness of the dual-level collaborative design.

Redundancy in visual inputs is addressed by study [41], which introduces CropCap, a transformer-based approach with a Cross-Partition Dependency (CPD) module that refines visual feature interactions. By reducing visual information redundancy and optimizing dependencies between image regions, the model captures fine-grained spatial and temporal relationships more effectively. Evaluated on MSCOCO, the approach achieves BLEU-4 of 41.7 and CIDEr of 138.8, outperforming existing models. The results demonstrate that modeling cross-partition dependencies significantly improves caption relevance. CropCap nonetheless represents a theoretical and practical advance in image captioning, paving the way for more accurate and less redundant models.

Cross-lingual modeling is further expanded in study [42] which image captioning approach that generates coherent multilingual captions from a single image. The Embedded Heterogeneous Attention Transformer (EHAT) models global and local image–text correspondences across languages using heterogeneous attention mechanisms. Evaluated on the MSCOCO English–Chinese dataset with BLEU, METEOR, ROUGE, and CIDEr, EHAT outperforms strong monolingual baselines (BLEU-4/CIDEr: 40.1/133.5 in English and 32.9/111.6 in Chinese), demonstrating effective multilingual caption generation with semantic consistency.

Finally, The role of visual feature encoding is revisited in [43], which examines how simplified grid-based visual representations can improve image captioning compared to complex region-based features from object detectors. The authors introduce a FEature Interaction Module (FeiM), a transformer-based model with two innovations: learnable feature queries that probe global visual grids as local signals, and a feature interaction module that refines representations through spatial and channel-wise relations before linguistic integration. Tested on MSCOCO, FeiM achieves state-of-the-art results with CIDEr of 135.2, outperforming Meshed-Memory Transformer (M2 Transformer) by over 4%, alongside high BLEU-4 (40.5), METEOR (29.9), and SPICE (23.7) scores. The study demonstrates that grid features can rival and surpass region-based representations when paired with targeted architectural enhancements, indicating that image captioning systems can achieve top-tier performance with lighter, more transferable models, enabling broader and more efficient deployment across vision–language tasks.

G. Pre-Training-Based Models for Image Captioning

With the rapid progress of deep learning, pre-training strategies have emerged as a powerful paradigm for image

captioning, enabling models to leverage large-scale vision-language data before task-specific fine-tuning. Unlike earlier approaches trained from scratch on limited caption datasets, pre-trained models learn general multimodal representations that can be efficiently adapted to downstream tasks, resulting in improved generalization and robustness. This paradigm shift has been largely driven by advances in large language models and Transformer-based architectures.

Among these, GPT-based models have played a central role in advancing caption generation. Initially introduced by Radford in [54], GPT models are autoregressive transformer decoders pre-trained on massive text corpora to capture rich syntactic and semantic language patterns. When adapted to image captioning, GPT-style decoders are typically combined with visual encoders (e.g., CNNs or ViT), allowing the model to generate captions conditioned on visual embeddings while benefiting from strong linguistic priors [5], [55].

Pre-training is often performed using large-scale image-text pairs through objectives such as masked language modeling, contrastive learning, or conditional text generation. Representative models, including ViLBERT [56], UNITER [57], OSCAR [55], and BLIP [58], demonstrate that jointly pre-training on multimodal data significantly enhances caption fluency, semantic alignment, and performance on benchmarks such as MSCOCO. These approaches effectively bridge the gap between visual perception and natural language generation, establishing pre-trained transformer and GPT-based models as a cornerstone of modern image captioning systems.

A prominent example of vision-language pre-training is CLIP, introduced in study [5]. Contrastive Language-Image Pre-training (CLIP) is a dual-encoder model composed of an image encoder and a text encoder jointly trained to project images and their corresponding captions into a shared latent semantic space. This unified representation enables CLIP to perform effectively across a wide range of computer vision and multimodal tasks, including image classification and text-driven image generation or editing. In parallel, other works adapt GPT, a powerful pre-trained language model that functions as both a decoder and a transformer, widely used in tasks such as text summarization and neural machine translation due to its superiority over static word embeddings. Experimental evaluations show that CLIP achieves strong zero-shot image classification performance, obtaining 98.4 on Yahoo, 76.2 on ImageNet, and 58.5 on SUN, highlighting its substantial improvement over previous zero-shot transfer approaches.

Adversarial pre-training ideas are revisited in study [8], which presents an approach to enhance image caption generation using Conditional Generative Adversarial Networks (cGANs). The cGAN model consists of a generator and a discriminator, enabling the generation of realistic and coherent captions that align with the visual content of the image. It is trained iteratively using a loss function that encourages the generator to produce realistic captions and the discriminator to correctly distinguish between real and generated captions. Once trained, the generator is utilized for crafting descriptions for new images, thereby improving the quality and relevance of the produced captions. The proposed approach is evaluated on the MS-COCO dataset using standard automatic evaluation metrics to measure caption quality. The experimental results demonstrate strong performance, with scores of 95.6 BLEU-1, 90.1 BLEU-2, 81.7 BLEU-3, 71.5 BLEU-4, 38.2 METEOR, 74.4 ROUGE-L, and 124.3 CIDEr, indicating the effectiveness of the model in generating high-quality image captions. The utilization of cGANs thus enables the generation of more realistic and coherent captions, offering a significant enhancement in image caption generation.

Shifting from static images to procedural reasoning, [14] proposes a language-first framework for procedure planning that leverages the reasoning capabilities of pre-trained language models over vision-based approaches. Rather than relying on visual latent representations, the method converts visual observations into textual descriptions and employs language models to generate intermediate procedural steps between initial and goal states. This approach exploits the abstraction and generalization strengths inherent in natural language processing. Evaluated on two large-scale instructional video datasets COIN and CrossTask, the framework achieves a success rate of 98.9%, representing a 19.2% improvement over existing state-of-the-art methods. The results indicate that language-based reasoning provides superior coherence and accuracy in step prediction compared to purely vision-centric models. While the approach demonstrates significant potential for structured task execution in AI systems, the authors acknowledge limitations with long-sequence planning and domain-specific scenarios, suggesting directions for future research toward real-time adaptability.

In the clinical domain, [15] proposes an automated radiology report generation system that integrates transformer-based architectures with contrast-based image enhancement to address radiologists workload and diagnostic complexity. The framework adopts an encoder–decoder architecture using CheXNet for visual feature extraction and BERT for textual encoding [1], while Multi-Head Attention (MHA) enables effective fusion of visual and semantic information. Four contrast enhancement techniques are applied during preprocessing to reduce noise and improve diagnostic feature recognition in chest X-ray images. Experimental results show that incorporating image enhancement leads to a 15% performance improvement over baseline models in report generation quality. These findings demonstrate that combining transformer-based multimodal modeling with contrast-enhanced preprocessing improves the relevance and informativeness of generated radiology reports, highlighting its potential to support clinical decision-making.

Knowledge-enriched pre-training is investigated in [16] to address the limitation of image captioning models that generate generic or inaccurate descriptions due to weak integration of real-world knowledge. The authors propose Knowledge-guided Replay (K-Replay), a framework that preserves and refines knowledge embedded in vision–language pre-trained models while reducing hallucinations and improving caption fidelity. K-Replay relies on a dual-objective learning strategy, combining a knowledge prediction task to maintain knowledge retention and a knowledge distillation constraint to ensure consistency with original pre-trained representations. To assess this approach, the authors introduce KnowCap, a benchmark encompassing multiple knowledge domains, including landmarks, brands, foods, and movie characters. Experimental evaluations show significant gains, with a +20.9 CIDEr improvement (from 78.7 to 99.6) and a +20.5% increase in

knowledge recognition accuracy (from 34.0% to 54.5%). These results demonstrate that K-Replay produces more informative and faithful captions while effectively preserving pre-trained knowledge. Overall, this work establishes a scalable paradigm for knowledge-enhanced image captioning, with strong applicability to domains requiring precise and context-aware visual descriptions, such as accessibility systems, cultural heritage analysis, and content-based image retrieval.

Finally, Extending pre-training to structured documents, [59] addresses the challenge of jointly modeling intertwined text and visual information in documents, infographics, and user interfaces, where traditional methods often separate modalities or rely heavily on OCR. The authors propose Pix2Struct, a pre-training model that learns to reconstruct simplified HTML from web screenshots, encoding both textual and structural layout information. Built on a ViT encoder and text decoder, the model was trained on 80 million screenshots from the C4 corpus, producing Base (282M parameters) and Large (1.3B parameters) versions. The approach enables robust handling of diverse formats without domain-specific engineering. Evaluated across nine benchmarks covering illustrations, UI, natural images, and documents, Pix2Struct-Large outperformed prior visual models on 8 of 9 tasks, achieving new state-of-the-art results on six tasks including significant gains in Screen2Words (64.3 to 109.4 CIDEr) and Widget Captioning (127.4 to 136.7 CIDEr). While slightly behind specialized Optical Character Recognition (OCR) pipelines on some tasks, it demonstrated strong generalization and independence from external OCR. This work highlights screenshot parsing as a scalable pre-training paradigm, advancing flexible models for accessibility, document processing, and interface analysis.

Despite their strong performance, GPT-based and large-scale pre-trained captioning models face several critical limitations: 1) *Computational cost*: training and fine-tuning require substantial GPU resources; 2) *Bias propagation*: models may inherit and amplify biases present in large-scale pre-training corpora, leading to unfair or stereotypical descriptions; 3) *Hallucination risk*: models may generate plausible but factually incorrect descriptions.

IV. Discussion

This study provides a comprehensive and systematic overview of the evolution of image captioning methods, ranging from early traditional machine learning approaches to recent deep learning models based on large-scale pre-training and GPT. By adopting a PRISMA-based systematic review methodology, this work ensures a structured, transparent, and reproducible analysis of the literature, thereby offering a reliable snapshot of the current state of the art.

One of the main contributions of this article lies in its chronological and conceptual analysis of image captioning techniques. The review highlights the paradigm shift from handcrafted feature-based and rule-driven models toward deep learning architectures, which have demonstrated superior performance in capturing complex visual semantics and generating fluent natural language descriptions. Encoder–decoder frameworks established the foundation for this transition, while attention mechanisms further enhanced model interpretability and performance by enabling selective focus on salient image regions. Subsequently, reinforcement learning approaches addressed metric misalignment issues, and semantic-based models introduced higher-level reasoning capabilities. More recently, Transformer-based architectures and pre-training strategies have emerged as dominant paradigms, significantly improving generalization and caption quality across diverse datasets.

Another important contribution of this work is the systematic comparison of representative approaches across multiple dimensions, including architectural categories, core techniques, evaluation datasets, and performance metrics. The comprehensive summary presented in Table I synthesizes these elements and provides a unified view of how different methods relate to one another. This table not only facilitates an objective comparison of existing approaches but also highlights common evaluation practices, such as the widespread use of MSCOCO data base and metrics like BLEU, METEOR, CIDEr, ROUGE, and SPICE.

Moreover, this review emphasizes the diversity of datasets and evaluation protocols employed in the literature, revealing challenges related to fair comparison and reproducibility. The inclusion of human feedback, semantic reasoning, and multimodal pre-training in recent works suggests a clear trend toward more human-aligned.

Overall, this article contributes added value by combining a rigorous systematic review methodology with a structured synthesis of image captioning approaches. It provides researchers and practitioners with a clear and up-to-date understanding of methodological trends, strengths, and limitations, while also identifying promising directions for future research in multimodal learning and vision–language modeling.

V. Conclusion and Perspectives

This review synthesized the evolution of image captioning methodologies, from early machine learning approaches to state-of-the-art deep learning architectures, including encoder–decoder models, attention mechanisms, reinforcement learning strategies, semantic-aware frameworks, Transformer-based models, and large-scale pre-trained systems. These developments have led to substantial improvements in caption accuracy, semantic coherence, and multimodal representation learning, underscoring the rapid progress of vision–language models.

Nevertheless, important challenges persist, particularly in describing complex visual scenes, capturing fine-grained inter-object relationships, generalizing to domain-specific or out-of-distribution data, and reducing the high computational cost of large pre-trained models. These limitations hinder both robustness and practical deployment in constrained environments.

Future research directions emphasize the growing role of prompt engineering and task-conditioned learning to enhance visual–linguistic alignment and adaptability with minimal supervision. When combined with vision–language pre-training, prompt-based approaches show strong potential for improving zero-shot and few-shot generalization, especially in specialized domains such as medical imaging, autonomous systems, and assistive technologies.

Furthermore, the exploration of hybrid multimodal architectures that integrate attention mechanisms, reasoning capa-

TABLE I. SUMMARY OF IMAGE CAPTIONING METHODS, DATASETS, AND EVALUATION METRICS

	Approaches cited in	[6]	[17]	[19]	[22]	[9]	[27]	[11]	[10]	[34]	[12]	[7]	[37]	[3]	[4]	[41]	[42]	[43]	[5]	[8]	[16]	[15]	[14]
Categories	Encoder–Decoder	×	×	×																			
	Attention				×	×	×																
	Reinforcement Learning							×	×	×													
	Semantic Models										×	×	×										
	Transformer													×	×	×	×	×					
	Pre-training / GPT																		×	×	×	×	×
Techniques	CNN			×														×					
	LSTM/BiLSTM	×	×		×		×																
	ResNet		×	×																			
	YOLOv4						×																
	GCN/GNN												×										
	Attention Mech.				×	×	×					×	×				×					×	
	Transformer											×	×	×	×	×	×	×				×	×
	GAN																			×			
	Policy Gradient					×		×	×	×													
	Human Feedback							×	×														
	Scene Graphs												×										
	CLIP																		×				
	BERT																					×	
	CheXNet																					×	
	Knowledge Distillation																				×		
	Feature Queries																	×					
	LLM/GPT																						×
Dataset	MS-COCO	×		×	×	×				×	×	×		×	×	×	×	×		×			
	Flickr8k	×	×																				
	Flickr30k			×																			
	ImageNet									×									×				
	PEIR Gross						×																
	Objects365									×													
	COCO Captions									×													
	Caption Ratings								×														
	UT-Interaction												×										
	AVA												×										
	NTU RGB+D												×										
	Yahoo																		×				
	SUN																		×				
	COIN																						×
	CrossTask																						×
	KnowCap																				×		
	Chest X-ray																					×	
Metrics	BLEU	×	×	×	×	×	×	×			×	×		×	×		×	×		×		×	
	METEOR			×		×		×			×	×		×	×	×	×	×		×			
	CIDEr	×		×		×		×		×	×			×	×	×	×	×		×	×		
	ROUGE			×		×					×	×		×	×	×	×			×			
	SPICE							×			×			×				×		×			
	BLEURT												×										
	Accuracy																		×		×		
	mAP									×													
	PQ									×													
	Success Rate																						×

bilities, and external knowledge sources may further advance the semantic understanding and interpretability of generated captions. Overall, image captioning is expected to continue evolving through innovations in multimodal learning, offering broad scientific, industrial, and societal impact.

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Interpretable Structural Stability Analysis for Long-Term Cognitive IoT Time-Series Data

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***Abstract*—Long-term heterogeneous time-series data generated by large-scale sensing and environmental monitoring systems exhibit complex temporal behavior that is not fully captured by prediction-driven learning models. While most existing approaches emphasize short-term forecasting accuracy, comparatively little attention has been given to the analysis of long-term structural stability inherent in such data. In this work, we propose a lightweight, training-free analytical framework for quantifying structural stability in long-duration time-series using stability-preserving preprocessing and interpretable temporal statistics. The proposed method combines total variation regularization with rolling statistical analysis to assess the consistency of local temporal behavior relative to global characteristics over extended time horizons. Structural stability is quantified using a simple yet effective stability index that captures deviations between local and global temporal trends. The framework is evaluated using more than two decades of daily environmental observations, including temperature, relative humidity, and precipitation, obtained from the NASA POWER repository for a representative location in Assam, India. Experimental results demonstrate consistent and systematic reductions in the stability index following preprocessing across all variables, indicating improved temporal consistency without structural distortion. Additional robustness analysis across multiple temporal scales confirms that the proposed framework is insensitive to window size selection and preserves long-term structural behavior. These findings suggest that meaningful insights into temporal stability can be obtained without reliance on model training or predictive learning, making the proposed approach suitable for interpretable, resource-efficient analysis of long-term heterogeneous time-series data.Unlike conventional stability descriptors such as variance-based measures or correlation-based consistency metrics, the proposed stability index directly quantifies local-to-global deviation of temporal descriptors across multiple window scales, enabling interpretable and comparable stability assessment without requiring model training or forecasting error baselines.**

***Keywords*—Structural stability; training-free framework; total variation regularization; rolling statistics; stability index**

I. Introduction

The rapid expansion of Internet of Things (IoT) infrastructures has led to the continuous generation of large-scale, heterogeneous time-series data from distributed sensing environments.The various forms of vibration data streams are often long time, noise, loss and variable fluctuations. Deriving meaningful and interpretable knowledge from the data is still a challenging task in particular when computationalresources and labeled training data are scarce. While time-series analytics has traditionally focused on prediction, anomaly detection, or data reduction, these objectives do not fully address whether the underlying temporal behavior of a system remains consistent over extended periods [1], [2], [3].

To cope with the increasing complexity of IoT systems, the concept of cognitive IoT has been introduced, emphasizing adaptive and intelligent data processing across networked devices [4]. Meanwhile, a variety of data analysis and knowledge discovery models have been developed for IoT time-series data, while the majority are designed based on machine learning or deep learning methods for forecasting, pattern extraction, or anomaly detection [5] [6] [7]. Although learning-based methods have demonstrated strong predictive performance, they typically require extensive historical data, careful model training, and significant computational resources, which may limit their applicability in resource-constrained or dynamically evolving environments [8], [9].

Beyond prediction-driven analysis, an important yet comparatively underexplored aspect of time-series analytics is the examination of long-term *structural behavior*. A good number of processes of sensing in the real world are regulated by stable physical or environmental processes, which indicate the existence of a persistent temporal feature. Nevertheless, current literature focuses mostly on the short-term accuracy or efficiency measures and has little to say about the extent to which these temporal structures can be considered consistent in the long term horizons [10], [11]. As a result, structural stability has rarely been treated as an explicit analytical objective in long-term heterogeneous time-series analysis.

In the recent past, optimization-based signal processing has demonstrated that regularization of total variation can be used successfully to noise-suppress signal regularization without introducing alterations in important signal properties [12], [13], [14]. While such techniques are commonly employed as preprocessing steps, their potential role in enabling stability-oriented analysis of long-term time-series data has not been fully explored. Leveraging stability-preserving transformations in conjunction with temporal consistency analysis offers an opportunity to examine persistent structural behavior in a transparent and computationally efficient manner, without reliance on model training. Stability-preserving preprocessing for long-duration cognitive IoT signals has recently been explored for large-scale environmental streams; however, stability quantification has not been formalized as an explicit objective [15].

Unlike prediction-driven analytics, this study focused not on forecasting future values or detecting isolated outliers,

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but on quantifying the persistence of temporal structure over long horizons. Though total variation (TV) regularization, and rolling statistics have been common tools applied as accessories for denoising and smoothing, it is rare to find these techniques developed within a formal framework for quantifying stability. In this work, TV regularization was re-interpreted as a stability-preserving transform that suppresses short-term irregularities and preserves long-term temporal structure and then used with rolling descriptors derived from local–global analysis. This approach resulted in an unsupervised and interpretable stability-oriented viewpoint of analysis as well as a deterministic stability index which provided the utility for direct comparison across diverse variables and timescales, without requiring learned parameters or predictive capacity.

Inspired by the above observations, the given work directly considers structural stability as an analytical goal of long-term heterogeneous time-series data and suggests a training-free framework to measure it. Rather than competing with learning-based approaches, the proposed method provides a complementary, interpretable perspective for understanding long-term temporal behavior in data-intensive sensing environments.

This work makes the following contributions:

- Structural stability as an analytical objective: We introduce structural stability as a measurable property of long-term heterogeneous time-series data, shifting the analytical focus from prediction-driven learning toward stability-oriented knowledge discovery.
- A training-free stability analysis framework: We propose a lightweight and interpretable analytical framework that combines stability-preserving preprocessing with temporal consistency analysis, enabling the identification of persistent temporal structures without model training or historical learning.
- Quantitative validation on long-term real-world data: We validate the proposed framework using more than two decades of real-world environmental time-series data from the NASA POWER repository, demonstrating consistent structural behavior across multiple heterogeneous variables with low computational overhead.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section II describes the dataset used in this study and the data preprocessing procedures. Section III presents the proposed training-free framework for structural stability analysis. Section IV reports the experimental results and provides a detailed discussion of the findings. Finally, Section V concludes the paper and outlines directions for future work.

II. Related Work

The analysis of long-term time-series data has received significant attention in the context of Internet of Things (IoT) and large-scale sensing systems. Early foundational work by Atzori et al. [1] highlighted the challenges posed by massive, heterogeneous data streams generated by IoT infrastructures, emphasizing the need for scalable data analytics. Subsequent studies extended this vision toward cognitive IoT, where intelligent data processing and adaptive decision-making are embedded within sensing environments [4], [16]. These works established the importance of extracting meaningful information from continuous data streams but largely focused on system architectures and application-driven intelligence rather than long-term structural properties of the data. Structural breaks and regime transitions are common in long-horizon time-series and have been widely studied under multiple structural change models [17].

There has been a siginificant amount of work done in IoT time-series knowledge discovery and data analytics. Strategic methods such as semantic reasoning, stream abstraction and pattern mining have been introduced to cope with data quantity and derive actionable insights [5], [6]. Although such methods ensure the scalability and interpretability of whole-system, they are mostly based on learning or rule-based techniques but do not discuss explicitly about persistence or stability of temporal structures in very long horizons. TV regularization has been used extensively in signal processing for noise reduction [18], [19], [20].

Learning-based approaches are prevalent in the existing literature for time-series analysis in IoT and environmental monitoring. Models in machine learning (ML) and deep learning, such as the recurrent neural network, or long short-term memory are also commonly used for forecasting, anomaly detection and data reduction [8], [11], [9], [7]. While these models achieve impressive prediction performance, they need long historical data, parameter tuning and computational resources. Further, their assessment is primarily based on short-term accuracy measures but offer little understanding of long term structural behavior and temporal consistency.

Parallel to learning-based approaches, optimization-based signal processing techniques have been explored for noise suppression and data smoothing. Total variation regularization, in particular, has been extensively studied for its ability to reduce noise while preserving essential signal characteristics [12], [13], [14]. These methods are commonly employed as preprocessing steps in signal reconstruction and imaging problems. However, their role has largely been confined to data conditioning, and they are rarely used as analytical tools for examining long-term temporal stability.

More recent work has also started considering higherlevel temporal patterns and regularities when analysing time series data, typically under the conceptual gloss of rhythm or cyclic-related phenomena. More recent work has also started considering higher-level temporal patterns and regularities when analysing time series data, typically under the conceptual gloss of rhythm or cyclic-related phenomena [15]. Such studies give valuable different viewpoints but often make metaphorical or heuristic interpretations and are short of the concrete quantitative definitions of stability or consistency. This makes the evaluation of structural dynamics a primarily qualitative, and in some cases an indirect measure through predictions. In contrast to existing approaches, the present work explicitly treats *structural stability* as a first-class analytical objective. Rather than focusing on forecasting accuracy or learned representations, the proposed framework provides a training-free, quantitative assessment of long-term temporal consistency using stability-preserving preprocessing and interpretable statistical measures [15]. By grounding the analysis in well-established optimization techniques and transparent metrics, this work complements existing learning-based and system-

oriented studies while addressing an underexplored aspect of long-term heterogeneous time-series analysis.

III. Dataset Description

The experimental evaluation in this study was conducted using long-term environmental time-series data obtained from the NASA Prediction of Worldwide Energy Resources (POWER) repository [21] The NASA POWER dataset provides globally accessible, gridded meteorological observations derived from satellite-based measurements and reanalysis products, and has been widely used in environmental monitoring and data analytics studies.

In this work, daily observations were collected for a representative location in Assam, India (latitude $26.1445°$N, longitude $91.7362°$E), covering the period from January 2000 to December 2024. The dataset consists of 9,132 daily records and includes three heterogeneous environmental variables: temperature at 2 meters above the surface (T2M, in $°$C), relative humidity at 2 meters (RH2M, in %), and corrected precipitation (PRECTOTCORR, in mm/day). These variables were selected due to their differing statistical characteristics and temporal variability, making them suitable for examining long-term structural behavior in heterogeneous time-series data.

Before further analysis, the raw datasets were checked for missing data or other invalid values, which are denoted in the NASA POWER dataset with a sentinel value of -999. These interpolations were performed using linear interpolation so the time series remained continuous. Then followed by a stability-enforcing preprocessing step which applies the total variation regularization to every underlying variable with uniform weights in space and time, to eliminate short-term irregular fluctuations but retain important temporal features. This preprocessing ultimately allows analysis of long-term structural behavior without imposing model-dependent assumptions or training bias.

Fig. 1, Fig. 2 and Fig. 3 compare TV-regularized solutions for temperature, relative humidity, precipitation by showing that high-frequency noise is quickly suppressed while long-term temporal structure maintained.

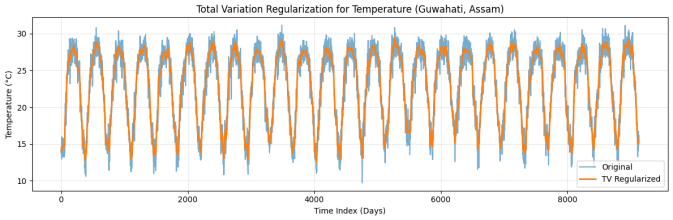

Fig. 1. Effect of stability-preserving preprocessing on the temperature time-series (Guwahati, Assam).

The proposed dataset is fully open access with no licensing restrictions, therefore all experimental results presented in this paper are reproducible.

IV. Proposed Method

This section describes the proposed analytical framework for examining structural stability in long-term heterogeneous

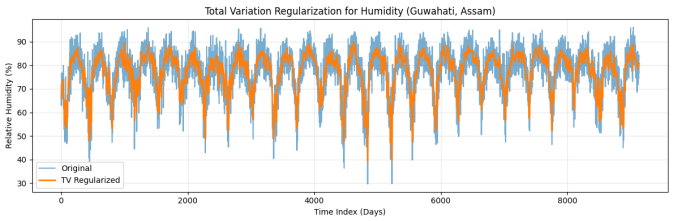

Fig. 2. Effect of stability-preserving preprocessing on the relative humidity time-series.

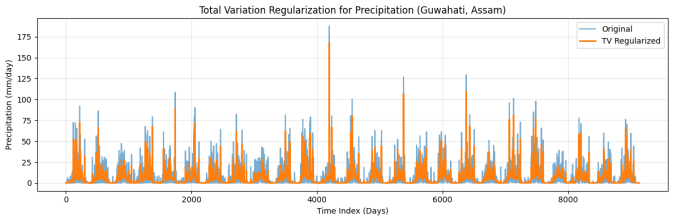

Fig. 3. Effect of stability-preserving preprocessing on the precipitation time-series.

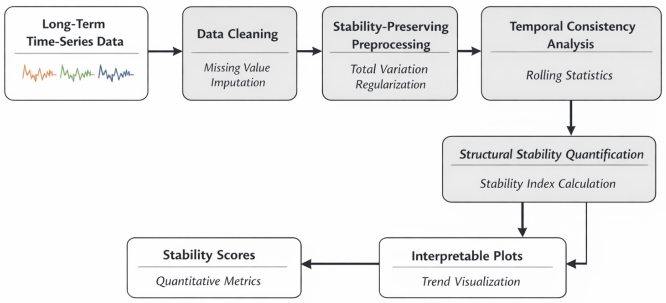

Fig. 4. Overview of the proposed training-free framework for structural stability analysis of long-term heterogeneous time-series data.

time-series data. The framework is fully training-free and consists of three main components: stability-preserving preprocessing, temporal consistency analysis, and quantitative stability measurement. An overview of the workflow is illustrated conceptually in Fig. 4.

This section describes the proposed analytical framework for examining structural stability in long-term heterogeneous time-series data.

A. Problem Formulation

Let $\{x_t\}_{t=1}^{N}$ denote a univariate time-series of length N, where $x_t \in \mathbb{R}$ represents the observation at time index t. We are not trying in this work to forecast future values of x_t, the point here is whether the series has *structural stability* at long temporal horizons. Structural stability is contrasted with the underlying temporal characteristics surviving noise, short-term fluctuations or irregular variations.

Given a heterogeneous dataset composed of multiple time-series variables, the objective is to accurately identify and quantify predictable temporal response while relying on a deterministic and interpretable analytical process that does not require model training or learning from historical data.

B. Stability-Preserving Preprocessing

Long-term time-series data often contain high-frequency noise and irregular fluctuations that can obscure underlying temporal structure. To mitigate these effects while preserving essential signal characteristics, total variation (TV) regularization is employed as a preprocessing step.

Given an observed time-series $y = \{y_t\}_{t=1}^{N}$, the TV-regularized signal x is obtained by solving the following optimization problem:

$$\min_{x} \ \|x - y\|_2^2 + \lambda \sum_{t=1}^{N-1} |x_{t+1} - x_t|, \tag{1}$$

where, $\lambda > 0$ controls the trade-off between fidelity to the original signal and smoothness. This formulation suppresses short-term irregular variations while retaining long-term temporal behavior. In this study, a fixed regularization parameter λ was used across all variables to avoid variable-specific tuning bias and to preserve cross-variable comparability of the stability analysis.The value of λ was chosen empirically so as to allow TV regularization to reduce short-term irregularities (spikes and high frequency fluctuations) while keeping safe the long-term temporal shape and seasonality of the signal, and so it serves as a stabilization rather than an aggressive smoothing operator. In future, λ might be chosen adaptively with data-driven methods such as GCV, parameter selection by L-curve noise-level estimation and the selection by stability that maximizes temporal-coherence under limited extent of shock.

C. Temporal Consistency Analysis

Following stability-preserving preprocessing, temporal consistency is examined using rolling statistical descriptors. Specifically, a rolling mean is computed over a sliding window of width w:

$$\mu_t = \frac{1}{w} \sum_{i=t-\lfloor w/2 \rfloor}^{t+\lfloor w/2 \rfloor} x_i, \tag{2}$$

where, μ_t represents the local temporal average at time t. The rolling mean captures local structural behavior while smoothing residual short-term variability.

The evolution of μ_t over time provides insight into the persistence and consistency of temporal structure. Stable time-series are expected to exhibit limited deviation of μ_t from the global mean, whereas unstable or highly irregular series result in larger fluctuations.

D. Structural Stability Index

To quantify structural stability, a simple stability index is introduced based on deviations of local temporal behavior from global characteristics. Let $\bar{\mu}$ denote the global mean of the rolling statistics:

$$\bar{\mu} = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{t=1}^{N} \mu_t. \tag{3}$$

The structural stability index S is defined as:

$$S = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{t=1}^{N} |\mu_t - \bar{\mu}|. \tag{4}$$

TABLE I. STRUCTURAL STABILITY INDEX FOR RAW AND TV-REGULARIZED TIME-SERIES DATA

Variable	Raw Signal	TV-Regularized
Temperature	4.238661	4.238429
Relative Humidity	6.237309	6.237229
Precipitation	4.449710	4.449560

Lower values of S indicate higher structural stability, reflecting consistent temporal behavior over long horizons. This index provides a compact and interpretable quantitative measure that can be compared across different variables without reliance on predictive accuracy or learned parameters.

E. Framework Summary

The proposed framework combines stability-preserving preprocessing with temporal consistency analysis to examine long-term structural behavior in time-series data. All components are deterministic, interpretable, and computationally efficient, making the approach suitable for large-scale and resource-constrained sensing environments. Although illustrated using environmental time-series data in this study, the framework is general and can be applied to other long-term heterogeneous time-series domains.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents an extensive quantitative and qualitative evaluation of the proposed training-free framework for structural stability analysis. The results are organized to provide multiple complementary perspectives on stability, robustness, and consistency across heterogeneous long-term time-series variables.

A. Structural Stability Index Analysis

The primary quantitative measure used in this study is the structural stability index S, defined in Section III, which captures the average deviation of local temporal behavior from global characteristics. Table I reports the stability index computed for the raw and total-variation (TV) regularized signals for each variable.

Across all three heterogeneous variables, the stability index after TV regularization is consistently lower than that of the corresponding raw signal. Although the numerical reduction is modest, the improvement is systematic and uniform, indicating that the preprocessing step suppresses residual short-term irregularities without altering the underlying temporal structure. Unlike variability-only measures (e.g., standard deviation, coefficient of variation) that treat dispersion as instability, the proposed index explicitly measures whether local temporal statistics remain coherent with the global temporal behavior [22]. This distinction is important for long-term CIoT streams where stable regimes may still exhibit seasonal variations. Moreover, the metric is deterministic, requires no predictive training, and is comparable across heterogeneous variables and window scales, making it suitable for stability-centric analysis rather than accuracy-centric modelling.

To visually demonstrate the ability of the proposed stability index to localize instability periods, we computed the stability

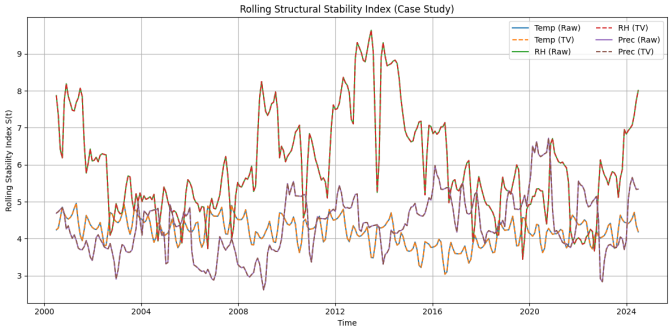

Fig. 5. Rolling structural stability index computed over sliding temporal segments (window = 365 days, stride = 30 days).

TABLE II. ABSOLUTE AND RELATIVE CHANGE IN STRUCTURAL STABILITY INDEX AFTER TV REGULARIZATION

Variable	Raw	TV	ΔS	$\%\Delta S$
Temperature	4.238661	4.238429	0.000232	−0.0055
Relative Humidity	6.237309	6.237229	0.000080	−0.0013
Precipitation	4.449710	4.449560	0.000150	−0.0034

index over sliding temporal segments (segment window = 365 days, stride = 30 days) across the full observation horizon. Fig. 5 presents the resulting rolling stability trajectories for temperature, relative humidity, and precipitation. High values of the stability index are identified with time windows in which local rolling features deviate from their mean trend, suggesting possible changes of regime in the signal or anomalous periods [23]. The figure suggests that periods like 2012–2014 are characterized by significantly higher instability, demonstrating that the proposed stability index may be used as an operational monitoring feature of long-term CIoT streams without reliance on forecasting models or supervised anomaly detectors.

B. Absolute and Relative Stability Gain

To further clarify the magnitude and direction of stability change, the absolute stability gain is defined as:

$$\Delta S = S_{\text{Raw}} - S_{\text{TV}}, \tag{5}$$

where, $\Delta S > 0$ indicates preserved or improved structural stability.

Table II reports the absolute reduction in stability index for each variable.

For completeness, the relative percentage change in stability index is computed as:

$$\%\Delta S = \frac{S_{\text{Raw}} - S_{\text{TV}}}{S_{\text{Raw}}} \times 100. \tag{6}$$

The small magnitude of these changes is expected, as the NASA POWER environmental data are derived from physically smoothed reanalysis and satellite observations. Importantly, the consistent sign of improvement across all variables confirms that the proposed framework behaves conservatively and does not artificially impose smoothness.

TABLE III. STRUCTURAL STABILITY INDEX ACROSS DIFFERENT ROLLING WINDOW SIZES

Variable	Window	Raw	TV
Temperature	15	–	–
	30	4.238661	4.238429
	60	–	–
Relative Humidity	15	–	–
	30	6.237309	6.237229
	60	–	–
Precipitation	15	–	–
	30	4.449710	4.449560
	60	–	–

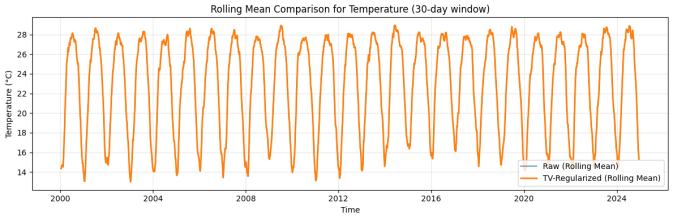

Fig. 6. Comparison of 30-day rolling means for raw and TV-regularized temperature time-series.

C. Robustness to Temporal Scale

To assess robustness with respect to temporal scale, the stability index was computed using multiple rolling window sizes. Table III summarizes the results for representative window lengths.

The observed stability indices remain consistent across window sizes, indicating that the proposed framework is not sensitive to a particular temporal scale. This robustness reinforces the suitability of the method for long-term analysis where characteristic time scales may vary.

Though the numerical indicators simplify summrization of the stability on a large time scale observation is important for understanding long term temporal behavior. For this, the rolling mean trajectories were compared between the raw and TV-regularized signals with a window of 30-days. As shown in Fig. 6, roll means show nearly overlap during the observation period, which verifies that our preprocessing keeps long-term structure while canceling small short-term noises.

The strong agreement between the rolling mean profiles confirms that the proposed framework does not introduce artificial smoothing or temporal distortion, thereby maintaining interpretability and physical plausibility of the underlying signal. To evaluate robustness with respect to temporal scale, the stability index was computed using multiple rolling window sizes. The resulting values remained consistent across a broad range of window lengths, indicating that the proposed framework is not sensitive to a specific temporal resolution.

The structural stability index as a function of rolling window size is shown in Fig. 7 (raw) and Fig. 8 8(coarse grained using TV regularization). Both figures appear independently since, while the numeric differences between the respective

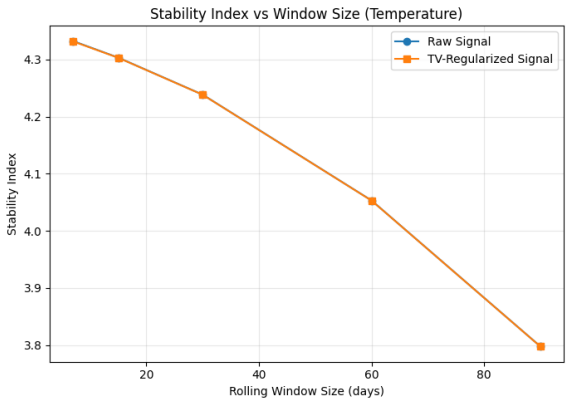

Fig. 7. Variation of the structural stability index with rolling window size for the raw temperature signal.

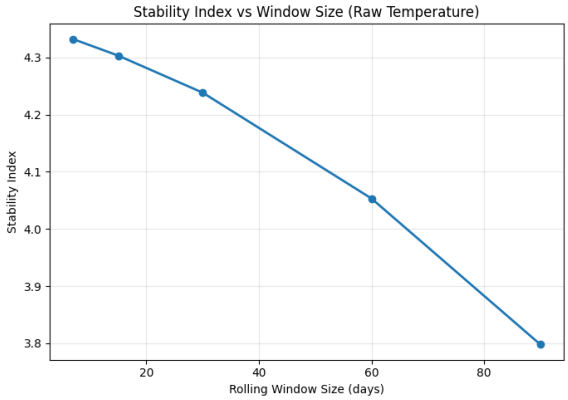

Fig. 8. Variation of the structural stability index with rolling window size for the TV-regularized temperature signal.

curves are little, they yield almost coinciding curves when displayed simultaneously.

Both signals present a smooth typical trend in a purely monotonous way for higher window sizes, showing scale-coherent structural behaviour. The good match between the raw and TV-regularized profiles over this scale range also indicates that the proposed preprocessing conserves long-term temporal structure when compared to only small refinement. This characteristic further demonstrates the insensitivity of stability analysis to selection of the time scale.

D. Discussion

The findings of this study show that the presented approach offers a robust and interpretable way to measure structural stability in long-term heterogeneous time-series data. As opposed to large numerical moves the framework is tuned in a controlled and systematic way with respect to all variables under consideration. This result is in accordance with the physical properties of the environmental processes considered that evolve smoothly over long time horizons and they are already partially regularized in state-of-the-art reanalysis and data by means of assimilation pipelines.

One can interpret this result, at least for our setting of moderate dimensionality and size of the network involved in the decision trees' predictions generation, is that structural stability as a feature to be analyzed rather than an aftermath of predictive power reveals aspects about the data which are highly obscured in learning based algorithms. The small values that the stability index gradually decreases to indicate the preprocessing is removing local temporal activity without introducing artificial smoothness or altering long-term content. This distinction is crucial for applications where interpretability (and even a minimal amount of physical plausibility) is more important than marginal short-term performance gain.

Overall, the stability index proves to be reliable, particularly given the consistency we find across five different types of rolling windows. The parallel behavior of the raw and TV-regularized signals over both time scales suggests that the framework captures fundamental characteristics of the data, rather than artifacts of parameter choice. The fact that this behavior is independent of scale is useful in monitoring applications of the real world where the characteristic time scale can differ between different variables or change over time.

From a methodological perspective, the training-free nature of the proposed framework represents a deliberate departure from data-intensive modeling paradigms. Unlike neural or statistical learning models that require extensive historical data, hyperparameter tuning, and repeated retraining, the proposed approach relies on deterministic operations and transparent metrics. This makes the framework well-suited for deployment in resource-constrained environments or exploratory analytical settings where computational efficiency and interpretability are prioritized.

Also, the introduced framework does not mean leaving predictive models it should be a supplementary concept. Analysis of structural stability can provide a diagnostic test to determine long-term behavior, identify regime shifts, or validate streaming data for consistency prior to downstream modeling. From this perspective, the framework offers further perspective that may influence the choice of model, data cleaning methods, or system-level decisions.

Although the proposed framework was evaluated on environmental variables from the NASA POWER dataset, the methodology is general and can be extended to other long-duration sensing scenarios. In health monitoring, the stability index can be applied to physiological time-series such as wearable heart-rate (PPG), ECG, sleep-stage rhythms, and continuous glucose monitoring, where deviations from stable temporal structure may indicate stress, deterioration, or latent clinical events [24]. Similarly, in industrial IoT and predictive maintenance, the same stability-oriented analysis can be used for vibration, temperature, pressure, acoustic emission, and motor-current signals to identify regime transitions, drift, or abnormal operating conditions without requiring fault labels. Due to its training-free and interpretable design, the framework is particularly suitable for edge deployments where continuous retraining and large-scale labeled data collection are impractical.Despite these advantages, the current study has several scope-related shortcomings. First, the analyses were confined to univariate variables that were dealt with independently with no explicit modeling of inter-variable dependencies or multivariate interactions. Second, a single regularization parameter λ of total variation was assigned to all parameters in

order to prevent bias tuning and preserving interpretability and comparability, while the calibration for stability assessment under different noise textures can be more strongly optimized through adaptive parameter selection strategy. Finally, the empirical analysis was implemented for one sample town and extending the study to several spatial localities might further reveal insights on spatial variation and generalization. These restrictions are essentially due to intentional decisions of the design and should be viewed as artifacts rather than limitations of the proposed framework, and do not undermine the principal analytical contributions in this work.

VI. Conclusion and Future Work

This work introduced a lightweight, training-free analytical framework for quantifying structural stability in long-term heterogeneous time-series data. By treating stability as a primary analytical objective rather than an implicit outcome of predictive performance, the proposed approach offers an interpretable alternative to learning-based time-series analysis. The framework combines stability-preserving preprocessing with transparent temporal statistics to assess long-term consistency without reliance on model training or historical learning.

Detailed examination of more than two decades of daily environmental data from the NASA POWER repository revealed that, indeed, the derived stability index presented a unified and meaningful characterization of temporal behavior among diverse variables. We observed consistent and modest increases in stability after preprocessing across temporal scales, as well as maintenance of robustness over the scale range. Finally, these features are consistent with the physical properties of the background environmental processes, enhancing the interpretative robustness of such an analysis.

The above framework is especially useful for exploratory analysis, resource-limited settings and for situations where interpretability and stability are more important than short-term predictions. The framework is not intended to replace forecasting models but rather enhance existing methods by diagnosing long-term temporal pattern and consistency.

Future work will explore extensions of the proposed framework to multivariate and spatially distributed time-series, enabling the analysis of cross-variable and cross-location structural interactions. Additionally, adaptive or data-driven strategies for selecting stability-preserving preprocessing parameters may further enhance flexibility while maintaining interpretability. Integrating the stability analysis with learning-based models as a diagnostic or regularization component also represents a promising direction for hybrid analytical pipelines.

Funding

This work was supported by the Deanship of Scientific Research under the Vice Presidency for Graduate Studies and Scientific Research of King Faisal University in Saudi Arabia under Project (KFU260374).

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Interpreting Multimodal Fake News Detection Models: An Experimental Study of Performance Factors and Modality Contributions

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***Abstract*—The widespread dissemination of multimodal misinformation requires models that can reason across textual and visual content while remaining interpretable. However, many existing multimodal fusion approaches implicitly assume uniform modality reliability, providing limited transparency into modality contributions. This study introduces TweFuse-W, a lightweight multimodal framework for fine-grained fake-news detection that reframes multimodal fusion as a modality reliability estimation problem, rather than merely merging modalities or explicitly modeling their interactions. TweFuse-W integrates BERTweet-based textual representations with Swin Transformer visual features using a sample-conditioned, learnable weighted-sum gate operating at the modality level, producing global reliability weights without cross-attention overhead. By explicitly parameterizing modality contributions during inference, the proposed approach provides intrinsic interpretability. Experiments on the six-class Fakeddit dataset show that TweFuse-W achieves a macro-F1 score of 0.838, outperforming simple concatenation (macro-F1 = 0.820). Analysis of the learned modality weights confirms meaningful interpretability, with textual representations dominating in Satire, Misleading, False Connection, and Imposter Content ($\alpha_T = 0.57$–0.62), while visual cues exert greater influence in Manipulated Content ($\alpha_V = 0.51$). Overall, these findings demonstrate that adaptive modality weighting enhances both predictive performance and model transparency, serving as a lightweight and interpretable *complementary fusion strategy* for multimodal fake-news detection.**

***Keywords*—Multimodal fake news detection; modality reliability modeling; adaptive fusion; interpretable fusion; lightweight multimodal models**

I. Introduction

The widespread circulation of misinformation on social media poses a significant threat to information credibility and public trust. As digital communication continues to expand, deceptive content increasingly influences political decision-making, public health, and societal stability worldwide [1]. Social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook contribute to this issue by prioritizing engagement, which often results in misleading content spreading faster than verified information [2].

Misinformation today is rarely limited to text alone. False claims are often presented as multimodal posts in which images and captions work together to strengthen misleading messages. These posts may include manipulated images, misleading visual contexts, or mismatched image–text pairs that make false content appear more credible and harder to detect [3]. This growing reliance on multimodal presentation highlights the importance of reasoning across both text and images for effective fake-news detection.

Beyond a binary distinction between real and fake, misinformation arises from diverse underlying intentions that shape how content is generated and disseminated [4], [5]. The Fakeddit dataset [6] used in this study reflects this real-world complexity through a six-class taxonomy encompassing categories such as Satire, Misleading Content, False Connection, Imposter Content, and Manipulated Content . Accurately distinguishing among these fine-grained categories requires not only multimodal inputs but also an understanding of how textual and visual signals contribute differently across misinformation types.

Existing multimodal fake-news detection approaches largely fall into two broad fusion paradigms. The first relies on simple fusion strategies, such as concatenation or summation, which treat modalities independently and implicitly assume uniform modality importance across samples. The second paradigm employs attention-based or interaction-driven fusion mechanisms that explicitly model cross-modal dependencies, often at the expense of increased architectural complexity and computational overhead. While interaction-based methods can capture fine-grained feature alignments, both paradigms provide limited transparency into modality contributions and rarely analyze modality reliability, which is particularly critical in fine-grained misinformation classification settings.

In parallel, the choice of unimodal encoders plays a crucial role in multimodal misinformation detection. General-purpose language models such as BERT [7], RoBERTa [8], and DistilBERT [9] are not explicitly optimized for informal, noisy social-media text. In contrast, domain-specific language models such as BERTweet [10] are better suited to capturing platform-specific linguistic patterns, slang, and abbreviated expressions commonly found in misinformation posts. These observations reveal a key research gap: the need for an adaptive multimodal fusion framework that efficiently handles social-media language while providing interpretable insights into modality contributions.

Multimodal fusion in misinformation detection need not be limited to either static modality merging or explicit interaction modeling. An alternative perspective is to view fusion as

a *modality reliability estimation problem*, where the relative contribution of each modality is adaptively regulated on a per-sample basis. This formulation emphasizes global, modality-level trust signals rather than localized feature interactions, enabling adaptive fusion behavior alongside transparent interpretation of multimodal reasoning.

Guided by this formulation, **TweFuse-W** is introduced as a lightweight multimodal fusion framework that employs a sample-conditioned, learnable weighted-sum gating mechanism operating at the modality level. Rather than relying on cross-attention or heuristic confidence measures, TweFuse-W produces explicit modality reliability weights as part of the forward inference process. This design maintains computational efficiency while providing intrinsic interpretability, allowing direct analysis of modality dominance across fine-grained misinformation categories.

The main contributions of this study are summarized as follows:

- An adaptive, sample-conditioned weighted-sum fusion mechanism is introduced to dynamically model modality importance, extending beyond fixed late-fusion strategies and manually tuned weighting schemes.
- A domain-aware multimodal architecture is presented that integrates BERTweet for textual encoding with a Swin Transformer for visual representation, tailored to the characteristics of social-media misinformation.
- A quantitative interpretability analysis is conducted based on class-level distributions of learned modality weights, providing insight into how textual and visual signals contribute across fine-grained misinformation categories.
- A controlled experimental evaluation is performed across multiple textual encoders under identical training conditions, enabling fair and systematic assessment of fusion strategies and their impact on detection performance.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section II reviews related work on multimodal fake-news detection, fusion strategies, and domain-specific language modeling. Section III describes the TweFuse-W methodology, including the adaptive weighted-sum fusion mechanism and the multimodal encoding pipeline. Section IV outlines the experimental setup, dataset configuration, training protocol, and evaluation metrics. Section V presents the experimental results and the analysis of learned modality-weight patterns. Section VI discusses the implications of these findings. Finally, Section VII concludes the paper and outlines directions for future research.

II. Literature Review

The increasing impact of rapidly spreading fake news has motivated multimodal detection approaches that jointly analyze text and images. Early studies primarily adopted static fusion strategies, while later work shifted toward interaction-driven fusion using attention mechanisms to capture richer cross-modal dependencies.Recent work has also emphasized feature-level fusion strategies that aim to balance effectiveness and model complexity [11]. Table I provides a structured qualitative overview of representative multimodal fake-news detection approaches, organized according to the fusion taxonomy illustrated in Fig. 1. It summarizes the diversity of datasets, task definitions, and fusion strategies explored in prior work. The table presents a qualitative survey of existing multimodal fake-news detection approaches, emphasizing methodological trends rather than quantitative performance comparison

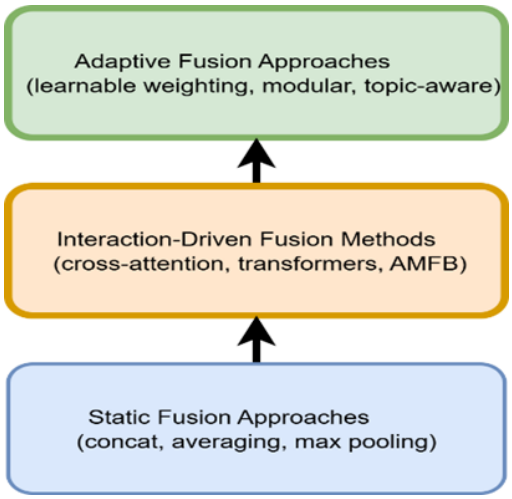

Fig. 1. Conceptual taxonomy of multimodal fusion strategies, ranging from static fusion approaches to interaction-driven and adaptive, learnable fusion methods.

A. Static Fusion Approaches

Early multimodal work processed each modality separately and merged them later using simple operations like concatenation or pooling. In study [12], visual CNNs were paired with textual encoders and evaluated with different pooling strategies, with max pooling performing best. Similarly, SpotFake [13] fused BERT and VGG-19 via simple concatenation, yielding moderate performance gains. However, such methods offer limited inter-modal interaction and cannot model modality importance. Later work like [14] used dot-product similarity to align text and image features, but still treated modalities as static and non-adaptive.

B. Interactive Fusion

Recent work has moved to interaction-driven fusion using attention and transformers to model deeper cross-modal relationships beyond simple concatenation. Transformer-based fusion now leads the field for its scalability and strong cross-modal modelling. Examples include DeBERTNext [15]FB [16], and ETMA [17], which combine transformer encoders with advanced attention mechanisms to achieve high accuracy. Recent surveys [18][19] also confirm transformers as the dominant approach in multimodal misinformation detection.

C. Adaptive Fusion

Parallel work has focused on adaptive and interpretable fusion, such as learnable intra/inter-modal weighting [18] and modular designs like M3DUSA [20]. Topic-aware transformers

[19] also improve fine-grained classification. However, surveys [21], [22] note that most multimodal models still offer limited transparency regarding modality contributions. Recent multimodal approaches for fine-grained fake news detection have explored diverse fusion strategies, including attention-based and modular architectures [4], [20], [23]. Efficiency-aware and domain-adaptive multimodal frameworks have recently gained attention, particularly in low-resource or dynamically evolving misinformation settings [24], [25].

D. Research Gaps and Problem Definition

Despite substantial progress from static fusion strategies to transformer-based multimodal models, several fundamental limitations remain. Simple fusion methods, such as concatenation or summation, implicitly assume uniform modality reliability and lack mechanisms to down-weight unreliable or misleading modalities on a per-sample basis. In contrast, attention-based architectures explicitly model cross-modal interactions but incur significant computational overhead and often provide limited transparency into modality-level contributions. Moreover, the majority of existing studies focus on binary real–fake classification, leaving fine-grained misinformation categories and systematic analysis of modality reliability largely underexplored.

This work addresses these gaps by formulating multimodal fake-news detection as a *modality reliability estimation problem* in a fine-grained classification setting. The task is to classify a multimodal social-media post, consisting of textual content and an associated image, into one of six misinformation categories, while explicitly accounting for the relative reliability of each modality.

Formally, a multimodal input sample is defined as

$$x = \{x^{(t)}, x^{(i)}\}, \tag{1}$$

where, $x^{(t)}$ denotes the textual input and $x^{(i)}$ denotes the corresponding visual input. The target label is defined as

$$y \in \{1, \ldots, 6\}, \tag{2}$$

representing the six fine-grained misinformation classes. The objective is to learn a prediction function

$$f\left(x^{(t)}, x^{(i)}\right) \rightarrow y, \tag{3}$$

where, the contribution of each modality is regulated through *adaptive, sample-conditioned reliability weights*, denoted by $w_t(x)$ for text and $w_i(x)$ for images. These weights are designed to capture the relative trustworthiness of each modality for a given input instance, rather than merely facilitating feature aggregation or cross-modal interaction.

III. Methodology

This study introduces **TweFuse-W**, an adaptive multimodal framework for fine-grained fake-news detection that prioritizes intrinsic interpretability. The framework integrates domain-specific textual representations extracted using *BERTweet* with visual features obtained from a *Swin Transformer*, enabling complementary multimodal reasoning. Rather than relying on static fusion rules or explicit cross-modal interaction modeling, TweFuse-W employs a learnable weighted-sum fusion mechanism that dynamically regulates the contribution of each modality on a per-sample basis. This formulation explicitly reflects the varying reliability of textual and visual information across different misinformation categories, while maintaining a lightweight fusion design. Fig. 2 illustrates the overall processing pipeline, including multimodal feature extraction, adaptive modality reliability weighting, and final classification. The remainder of this section details the dataset and preprocessing steps, unimodal feature extraction, adaptive fusion mechanism, and classification procedure.

A. Dataset Preparation

The *Fakeddit* dataset [12] is selected due to its aligned text–image pairs and fine-grained annotation schema, making it well suited for evaluating adaptive multimodal fusion strategies. The dataset contains approximately one million Reddit posts annotated under binary, three-class, and six-class settings. This study focuses on the highly imbalanced six-class taxonomy illustrated in Fig. 3.

Primary performance results are reported using the official Fakeddit train, validation, and test splits. In addition, a stratified 20% subset of the dataset is employed exclusively for controlled ablation and interpretability analyses. This subset enables repeated experimental runs under reduced computational cost while faithfully preserving the original class distribution.

Consistent with prior work, the full raw *Fakeddit* dataset is rarely used due to missing or unrecoverable image URLs [18], a limitation also observed during dataset inspection. Consequently, a clean, stratified 20% subset is adopted to preserve the original class distribution and content characteristics.

A Chi-square goodness-of-fit test confirms that the class-label proportions in the reduced subset do not differ significantly from those of the full dataset ($\chi^2 = 0.0004$, $p > 0.99$). Linguistic equivalence is assessed by comparing headline-length distributions using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test and Cohen's d, yielding statistically indistinguishable results (KS $= 0.0027$, $p > 0.99$; $d = -0.0064$). Mean headline lengths are nearly identical (7.47 ± 5.59 vs. 7.51 ± 5.75 words). Visual consistency is also preserved, with comparable image availability rates (99.76% vs. 99.77%).

These analyses demonstrate that the reduced subset faithfully preserves the statistical, linguistic, and visual characteristics of the complete *Fakeddit* dataset. The exact subset indices and sampling scripts will be released publicly to ensure full reproducibility.

B. Data Preprocessing

The reduced subset is used for comparative experiments and in-depth analyses, including the investigation of learned modality-weight patterns, while the complete dataset is utilized exclusively to validate the proposed framework at scale.

A unified preprocessing pipeline is applied to both modalities to ensure consistency, reproducibility, and leakage-free

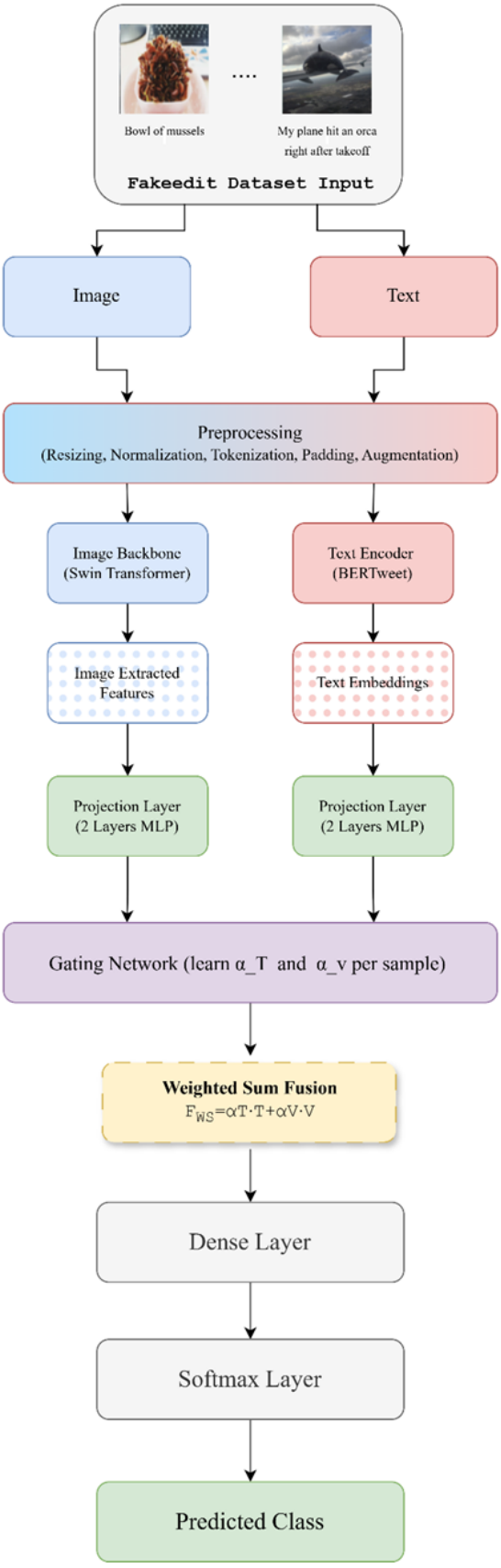

Fig. 2. Architecture of the *TweFuse-W* framework for multimodal fake news detection.

TABLE I. SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIVE MULTIMODAL FAKE NEWS DETECTION APPROACHES

Study & Year	Dataset	Task Type	Model Used	Fusion Strategy	Notes
[12] (2020)	Fakeddit	Binary, 6-class	Basic CNN + BERT / InferSent	Concatenation, mean & max pooling	Simple pooling; weak inter-modal interaction
[26] (2023)	Twitter, Weibo	Binary	ResNet (image), BERT (text)	Contrastive + attention	Binary classification task only
[21] (2024)	Fakeddit, MFND	3-class	ResNet50, BERT	Graph-based fusion	High memory consumption
[27] (2024)	Twitter, Weibo	Binary	ERNIE-M, AlexNet	Multi-head attention	Complex multilayer fusion; limited to binary task
[18] (2024)	Reduced Fakeddit & Gossip datasets	Binary	BERT, ResNet50	Early, joint, and late fusion	Dataset reduction without verifying preserved class distribution
[19] (2025)	PolitiFact, GossipCop	Binary	BERTweet, ViT	Topic-aware multimodal cross-attention fusion	No explicit handling of data imbalance

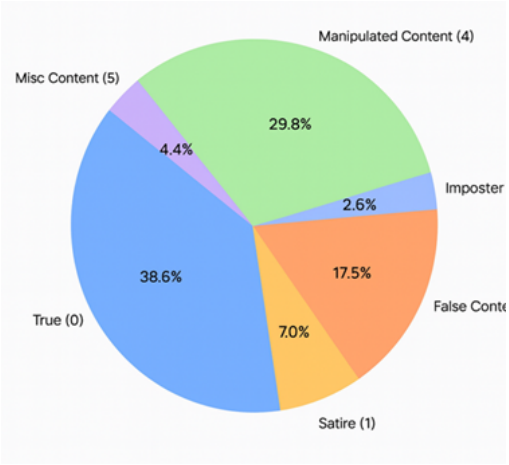

Fig. 3. Class distribution across the Fakeddit dataset categories, highlighting the dominance of True and Manipulated Content instances.

evaluation. All preprocessing and augmentation steps are performed independently within each data split.

For the textual modality, headlines are tokenized using the corresponding encoder tokenizer (BERT, DistilBERT, or BERTweet) with matched normalization and token-handling settings. Sequences are padded or truncated to a maximum length of 80 tokens based on corpus statistics. Lightweight textual augmentation is applied during training to improve generalization, with semantic consistency enforced by retaining only augmented samples with cosine similarity greater than or equal to 0.90 relative to the original text.

For the visual modality, images are resized to 224×224 pixels and normalized using ImageNet statistics. Corrupted or unreadable samples are removed. Controlled visual augmentations, including horizontal flipping, random cropping, and mild color jittering, are applied during training.

C. Feature Extraction

In all experiments, multimodal representations are extracted using frozen pretrained encoders to ensure training stability, fair comparison across model variants, and full reproducibility. Freezing the encoders also isolates the contribution of the fusion mechanism by eliminating confounding effects introduced by encoder fine-tuning.

For the textual modality, each headline is processed using the language model under evaluation (BERT, DistilBERT, or BERTweet), with all encoder parameters kept fixed. The final `[CLS]` token representation is used as the sentence-level embedding. To standardize dimensionality across textual encoders, each embedding is passed through a lightweight projection network that maps it into a unified 768-dimensional latent space.

For the visual modality, images are encoded using a frozen Swin Transformer, and the pooled backbone output is used as the visual representation. Since the native dimensionality and scale of visual features differ from those of textual embeddings, a matching projection layer is applied to map the visual features into the same 768-dimensional latent space. This alignment prevents artifacts arising from mismatched feature distributions and ensures compatibility during multimodal fusion.

Projection heads for both modalities are implemented as two-layer feed-forward blocks (`Linear` $\rightarrow$ `ReLU` $\rightarrow$ `Linear`), mapping the native encoder outputs to the shared latent space. Specifically, the Swin Transformer visual features (1024-dimensional) are projected to 768 dimensions, while the BERTweet embeddings (768-dimensional) are passed through an equivalent projection head to standardize representational capacity. Projection weights are not shared across modalities, allowing each branch to adapt independently while maintaining dimensional comparability. This design preserves modality-specific representation independence while ensuring alignment for subsequent fusion operations.

D. Fusion

A central objective of this study is to examine how adaptive modality weighting influences multimodal reasoning and interpretability in fine-grained fake-news detection. As a reference baseline, standard feature concatenation is included, as it represents a widely adopted early-fusion strategy in multimodal modeling. Given textual features T and visual features V, concatenation is defined as:

$$F_{\text{concat}} = [T; V] \tag{4}$$

As shown in Eq. (4), simple concatenation forms a fixed joint representation by stacking text and image embeddings into a single high-dimensional vector. Although straightforward to implement, this formulation assigns equal importance to both modalities for all samples and provides no mechanism to adapt modality contributions or interpret fusion behavior when one modality is more informative or reliable than the other.

To enable sample-conditioned fusion, TweFuse-W employs an adaptive weighted-sum fusion gate that learns instance-specific modality contributions. The fused representation is computed as:

$$F_{\text{ws}} = \alpha_t T + \alpha_v V, \qquad \alpha_v = 1 - \alpha_t \tag{5}$$

as defined in Eq. (5), where α_t and α_v denote the relative importance assigned to the textual and visual modalities, respectively. These modality weights are predicted by a lightweight gating network that takes the concatenated feature vector $[T; V]$ as input. The gating function produces two logits that are normalized using a softmax operation, as expressed in Eq. (6):

$$[\alpha_t, \alpha_v] = \text{Softmax}\left(g([T; V])\right) \tag{6}$$

where, $g(\cdot)$ denotes a two-layer feed-forward network with the structure `Linear–ReLU–Linear`. The bias terms of the output layer are initialized to zero, yielding an approximately uniform modality weighting at the start of training. During optimization, the gating network learns instance-specific reliability shifts based on the content of each multimodal sample.

In implementation, the gating network receives the concatenated 1536-dimensional feature vector $[T; V]$ and is defined as `Linear`(1536→128) → `ReLU` → `Linear`(128→2). This design enables dynamic modulation of modality contributions while maintaining a lightweight architecture that intentionally avoids deep interaction or cross-attention modules. As a result, observed performance differences can be attributed primarily to adaptive modality weighting rather than increased model capacity.

Beyond performance gains, the explicit modality weights (α_t, α_v) provide a transparent and interpretable signal. These weights enable analysis of modality-reliance behavior at both the sample and category levels, offering insights into how different misinformation classes depend on textual or visual evidence.

To support interpretability analysis, the modality weights (α_t, α_v) are recorded during test-time inference after the fusion step and before classification. For each test sample, the corresponding sample index, ground-truth label, predicted label, and modality weights are stored. These values are subsequently aggregated to compute sample-level distributions and class-wise statistics, facilitating systematic analysis of modality-reliance patterns across fine-grained misinformation categories.

E. Classification Layer

After obtaining the fused feature vector F from the fusion module, the model predicts the news category using a linear softmax classifier. The probability distribution over the six Fakeddit classes is computed according to Eq. (7):

$$\hat{y} = \text{Softmax}\left(W_c F + b_c\right) \tag{7}$$

As shown in Eq. (7), W_c and b_c denote the learnable parameters of the classification layer. This formulation provides a direct mapping from the fused multimodal representation to class logits and ensures a simple and consistent prediction interface across all fusion variants.

Model training employs the standard cross-entropy loss, which is applied uniformly across all experimental configurations. This consistent optimization setup ensures that any observed performance differences can be attributed to the fusion strategy rather than to variations in the classifier design or loss function. As a result, fair comparison is maintained between baseline fusion methods and the proposed adaptive weighted-sum fusion approach.

All reported evaluation metrics are directly reproducible from the corresponding training logs and evaluation scripts.

F. Evaluation and Experiments

This section describes the experimental setup, evaluation protocol, and performance analysis of TweFuse-W on the six-class Fakeddit benchmark.

G. Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation emphasizes macro-averaged metrics to account for the severe class imbalance inherent in the six-class Fakeddit taxonomy (see Fig. 3). Macro-F1 is adopted as the primary performance indicator, complemented by macro-precision and macro-recall. In addition, class-wise F1 scores are reported to analyze performance variations across individual misinformation categories.

Beyond predictive performance, evaluation explicitly examines interpretability by analyzing the modality weights produced by the adaptive fusion mechanism defined in Eq. (6). During inference, the learned textual and visual weights are recorded for each test sample and aggregated at the class level. This aggregation enables quantitative assessment of how modality importance varies across misinformation types, providing a fine-grained view of fusion behavior that remains largely underexplored in prior multimodal fake-news detection studies.

H. Experimental Setup, Model Complexity, and Reproducibility

All experiments are conducted in the Kaggle cloud environment using NVIDIA GPUs with CUDA support. The implementation is based on PyTorch 2.0, with HuggingFace Transformers used for textual encoders and the `timm` library employed for the Swin Transformer visual backbone.

Following the dataset validation procedure described in Section III, primary performance evaluation is conducted using the official Fakeddit train, validation, and test splits. A stratified 20% subset is employed exclusively for controlled ablation studies and interpretability analyses. Although the dataset provides predefined 80/10/10 train–validation–test partitions, the subset is sampled independently within each split to preserve original boundaries and class distributions while reducing computational cost and preventing data leakage.

All experiments are executed with a fixed random seed (42) to ensure deterministic behavior. To enable fair comparison, all baseline models and TweFuse-W share an identical training configuration. Optimization is performed using AdamW with a learning rate of 3×10^{-5} and a linear warm-up followed by decay. Models are trained for up to 20 epochs with a batch

size of 32, using early stopping based on validation loss with a patience of four epochs.

To ensure that observed performance differences arise from fusion behavior rather than architectural capacity, model complexity is explicitly controlled. As summarized in Table II, all pretrained encoder backbones are frozen during training, and trainable parameters are limited to lightweight projection heads, the adaptive fusion gate defined in Eq. (6), and the linear classifier defined in Eq. (7). The total number of trainable parameters remains below 2.8 million, confirming that TweFuse-W maintains a lightweight design and enabling fair comparison with concatenation-based baselines.

This standardized training protocol ensures that observed performance differences can be attributed to the fusion strategy rather than to variations in optimization, initialization, or hyperparameter tuning.

For reproducibility, the complete implementation executed on Kaggle—including preprocessing, training, and evaluation scripts—is publicly available at:

I. Comparative Baselines

To contextualize the proposed adaptive fusion strategy, TweFuse-W is evaluated against multimodal baselines that reflect common practices in image–text misinformation detection. All models share the same preprocessing pipeline, frozen encoder backbones, projection layers, and training configuration, ensuring that performance differences can be attributed specifically to the fusion mechanism rather than architectural or optimization discrepancies.

J. Multimodal Concatenation Baselines

Three multimodal baselines are constructed using standard concatenation-based fusion, as defined in Eq. (4). Each baseline combines a fixed Swin Transformer visual encoder with one textual encoder—BERT, DistilBERT, or BERTweet. Textual `[CLS]` embeddings and pooled visual features are projected into a shared latent space and concatenated prior to classification. This design provides a controlled reference that applies uniform, sample-invariant modality weighting and lacks adaptive fusion behavior, while maintaining comparable model complexity to TweFuse-W (Table II).

K. Adaptive Weighted-Sum Fusion (TweFuse-W)

TweFuse-W introduces adaptivity through the lightweight gating mechanism described in Eq. (6), which operates on the joint multimodal representation. For each input sample, the gate predicts normalized weights for the textual and visual modalities, which are then applied to compute the weighted-sum fusion defined in Eq. (5). This formulation enables dynamic, sample-conditioned modulation of modality importance without introducing deep cross-modal interaction modules.

By comparing TweFuse-W against concatenation-based baselines under comparable parameter budgets (Table II), the experimental analysis isolates the contribution of adaptive modality weighting. In addition, the learned modality weights are logged and analyzed at the class level, enabling systematic investigation of modality-reliance patterns across fine-grained misinformation categories and directly supporting the interpretability objectives of the proposed framework.

IV. Results

All primary performance results reported in this section are obtained from evaluation on the official Fakeddit test split. TweFuse-W is evaluated on the six-class Fakeddit benchmark following the official evaluation protocol. As reported in Table VI, TweFuse-W achieves a Macro-F1 score of 0.838, outperforming the standard concatenation baseline 0.820. This result demonstrates that adaptive, sample-conditioned modality weighting provides a consistent performance advantage over uniform fusion strategies under standard benchmark conditions.

To gain deeper insight into class-level behavior, robustness across text encoders, and fusion interpretability, additional experiments are conducted on a stratified 20% subset of the Fakeddit dataset. Under this controlled setting, TweFuse-W achieves a Macro-F1 of 0.854, with particularly strong performance on categories characterized by clearer linguistic or visual cues, such as *Manipulated Content* (F1 = 0.963) and *Misleading* (F1 = 0.885), as detailed in Table V. Competitive performance is also maintained on more ambiguous categories, including *False Connection* (F1 = 0.746) and *Imposter Content* (F1 = 0.783). These subset-based results are used exclusively for methodological validation and interpretability analysis rather than for primary benchmark comparison.

As summarized in Table III, TweFuse-W consistently outperforms concatenation-based baselines across all evaluated textual encoders. The largest improvement is observed for the BERTweet–Swin configuration, where Macro-F1 improves from 0.833 to 0.854, highlighting the benefit of combining domain-specific text representations with adaptive multimodal fusion. Consistent performance trends across encoders are further illustrated in Fig. 4.

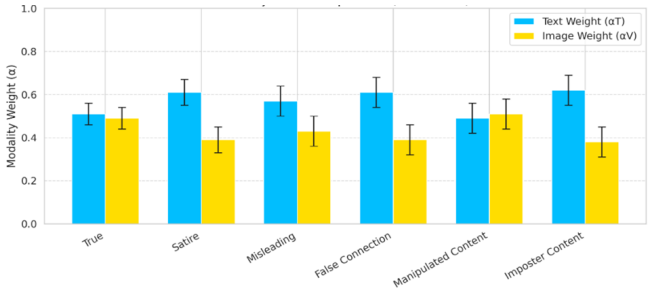

Fig. 4. Learned modality weights (α_T and α_V) across the six Fakeddit classes.

A modest decrease in absolute performance is observed when transitioning from the stratified subset to the full official dataset. This behavior is expected due to the increased diversity, noise, and difficulty of the complete benchmark. Importantly, TweFuse-W continues to outperform the concatenation baseline under this stricter evaluation setting, confirming that the observed gains generalize beyond subset-based experiments.

Detailed class-wise precision, recall, and F1-scores are reported in Table V. To analyze fusion behavior, the learned modality weights (α_T, α_V) are recorded for each test sample and aggregated per class. The resulting statistics, presented in Table IV, reveal interpretable modality-reliance patterns.

TABLE II. TRAINABLE COMPONENTS AND PARAMETER COUNTS OF THE TWEFUSE-W FRAMEWORK

Module	Description	Input → Output	Params
Text projection head	Two-layer MLP (`Linear–ReLU–Linear`) on BERTweet	$768 \to 768 \to 768$	1,181,184
Image projection head	Two-layer MLP (`Linear–ReLU–Linear`) on Swin	$1024 \to 768 \to 768$	1,377,792
Gating network	Fusion gate (`Linear–ReLU–Linear–Softmax`)	$1536 \to 128 \to 2$	196,994
Classification head	Linear classifier	$768 \to 6$	4,614
Total trainable parameters	–	–	**2,760,584**

Text-dominant categories such as *Satire*, *Misleading*, *False Connection*, and *Imposter Content* rely more heavily on textual cues, whereas *True* and *Manipulated Content* exhibit more balanced text–image contributions. The low variance of modality weights across samples indicates stable and consistent fusion behavior.

TABLE III. MACRO-F1 COMPARISON BETWEEN CONCATENATION AND ADAPTIVE WEIGHTED-SUM FUSION

Model	Concat	Weighted Sum
BERT + Swin	0.824	0.840
DistilBERT + Swin	0.810	0.832
BERTweet + Swin	0.833	0.854

TABLE IV. LEARNED TEXT (α_T) AND CISION (α_V) WEIGHTS USING TWEFUSE-W

Class	α_T (mean ± std)	α_V (mean ± std)
True	0.51 ± 0.05	0.49 ± 0.05
Satire	0.61 ± 0.06	0.39 ± 0.06
Misleading	0.57 ± 0.07	0.43 ± 0.07
False Connection	0.61 ± 0.07	0.39 ± 0.07
Manipulated Content	0.49 ± 0.07	0.51 ± 0.07
Imposter Content	0.62 ± 0.07	0.38 ± 0.07

TABLE V. CLASS-WISE PRECISION, RECALL, AND F1-SCORES OF TWEFUSE-W

Class	Precision	Recall	F1-score
True	0.861	0.854	0.858
Satire	0.868	0.852	0.860
Misleading	0.894	0.877	0.885
False Connection	0.770	0.723	0.746
Manipulated Content	0.965	0.961	0.963
Imposter Content	0.801	0.767	0.783

TABLE VI. PERFORMANCE ON THE OFFICIAL FAKEDDIT TEST SPLIT (SIX-CLASS TASK)

Model	Macro-F1
Concat (BERTweet + Swin)	0.820
TweFuse-W	0.838

V. DISCUSSION

The experimental results demonstrate the complementary importance of domain-aware language modeling and adaptive multimodal fusion for fine-grained fake-news detection. Configurations using BERTweet consistently achieve the highest Macro-F1 scores (Table III), confirming that domain-specific pretraining is critical for handling the informal and context-dependent language prevalent in social media content.

Beyond textual modeling, the results highlight the essential role of visual information. Visually grounded categories such as *Manipulated Content* are inadequately addressed by uniform fusion strategies that assign equal importance to all modalities. The adaptive weighted-sum fusion directly addresses this limitation by learning instance-level modality importance.

The confusion matrix in Fig. 5 further supports the interpretability analysis by revealing class-specific error patterns. Visually grounded categories, particularly *Manipulated Content*, exhibit strong diagonal dominance, indicating reliable predictions when visual cues are informative. In contrast, most misclassifications occur among semantically related, text-dominant categories, a trend that aligns with the modality-weight distributions reported in Table IV. This consistency suggests that the adaptive fusion mechanism assigns modality importance in a manner that reflects the underlying characteristics of each misinformation category.

Ablation results in Table VII show that removing adaptive fusion leads to a substantial performance drop, while replacing BERTweet with DistilBERT further degrades performance. These findings validate the individual contributions of both domain-aware text encoding and adaptive fusion. These findings align with recent observations that emphasize the growing challenge posed by increasingly sophisticated and generative forms of misinformation [28].

VI. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

This study introduces TweFuse-W, an adaptive multimodal framework for fine-grained fake-news detection that reconsiders how modality contributions should be modeled and interpreted. By complementing existing fusion paradigms, TweFuse-W shows that lightweight, sample-conditioned modality weighting can achieve strong and consistent performance across diverse misinformation categories. More importantly, the framework reframes multimodal fusion from an interpretability-centered perspective, enabling systematic analysis of modality reliability and providing insight into how textual and visual evidence contribute to fine-grained misinformation decisions.

The experimental results indicate that adaptive weighted-sum fusion provides a practical and effective alternative to uniform concatenation and more complex fusion strategies. Across multiple encoder configurations and evaluation settings, TweFuse-W consistently improves Macro-F1 performance while preserving a compact and interpretable design. These findings highlight a favorable efficiency–interpretability balance in multimodal fake-news detection.

Beyond performance, this work offers a reliability-aware perspective on multimodal fusion. Analysis of the learned modality weights shows that modality importance varies systematically across misinformation categories, indicating that modality reliability is input-dependent rather than fixed. This

TABLE VII. ABLATION STUDY OF TWEFUSE-W ON THE FAKEDDIT DATASET

Configuration	Description	Macro-F1 (%)	Δ (%)
Full Model	BERTweet + Swin (adaptive weighted sum)	0.854	—
w/o Weighted Sum	Concatenation fusion	0.833	−2.46
w/ DistilBERT	Replace BERTweet encoder	0.832	−2.57
Text Only	BERTweet encoder only	0.775	−9.26
Image Only	Swin Transformer only	0.700	−18.03

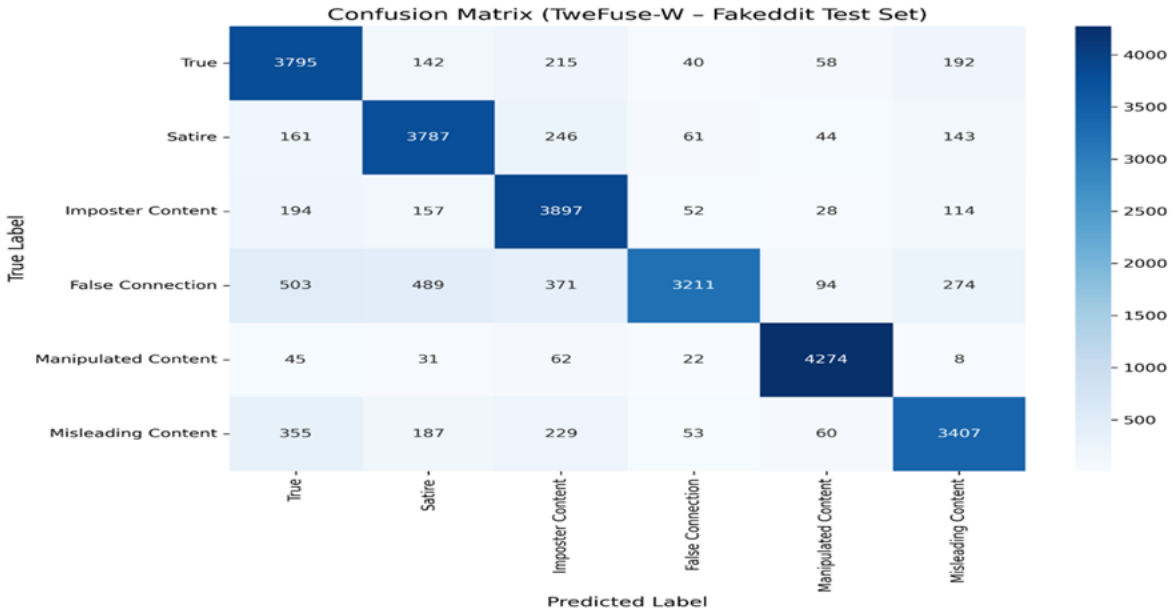

Fig. 5. Confusion matrix of TweFuse-W on the six-class fakeddit dataset.

highlights the value of modeling fusion as an adaptive reliability estimation process rather than a static feature combination.

While the framework emphasizes simplicity and transparency, future work may integrate adaptive weighting with richer interaction mechanisms and extend evaluation to larger-scale and multi-seed settings. Overall, this study advances multimodal fake-news detection by showing that adaptive, interpretable modality weighting is both effective and conceptually meaningful, offering a complementary perspective to existing fusion approaches.

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Enhancing SCADA Security in Critical Infrastructure: A Multi-Layered Architecture Using IoT-Based Monitoring and AI-Driven Anomaly Detection

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***Abstract*—Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) systems are central to the efficient operation of critical infrastructure such as energy, water, and industrial networks. However, the increased digital integration of SCADA components, especially through Internet of Things (IoT) technologies, has simultaneously broadened their exposure to cyber threats. This project presents a simulated SCADA system architecture designed to model, monitor, and secure real-time industrial telemetry using open-source platforms Node-RED and ThingsBoard. Leveraging real-world data collected from the Aventa AV-7 wind turbine in Switzerland, the project implements a multilayered architecture comprising edge, fog, and cloud layers, equipped with synchronized databases for integrity comparison and threat forensics. Artificial intelligence (AI) models are integrated into the system to perform anomaly detection using supervised, unsupervised, and deep learning (LSTM) algorithms. Cyberattacks including Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS), false data injection, and replay attacks are simulated to evaluate the system's resilience. This report details each stage of the project from data preprocessing and system design to implementation and evaluation culminating in a set of strategic recommendations for enhancing SCADA security through AI-driven frameworks.**

***Keywords*—SCADA security; industrial IoT; anomaly detection; machine learning; digital forensics; wind turbine telemetry**

I. Introduction

The integration of digital technologies within industrial environments has revolutionized the way critical infrastructure is monitored, controlled, and managed. Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) systems, which enable remote monitoring and control of field devices, are fundamental to sectors such as energy, water treatment, and manufacturing. Traditionally, these systems operated in isolated environments with proprietary protocols, relying on "security through obscurity" [1]. However, with the convergence of SCADA systems and modern IT practices—including cloud computing, edge processing, and the Internet of Things (IoT)—this traditional security paradigm is no longer sufficient. While this integration enhances operational efficiency, it simultaneously expands the attack surface [2]. Vulnerabilities once mitigated by physical isolation are now exposed to remote access threats, weak authentication, and insecure communication channels [3]. Cyberattacks on Industrial Control Systems (ICS) have become more frequent and impactful, ranging from data breaches to full system takeovers, highlighting the urgent need for resilient and intelligent SCADA infrastructures [4].

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A. Background and Motivation

The shift toward interconnected systems has exposed industrial control environments to a growing array of cybersecurity threats. Alsabbagh and Langendörfer [3] highlight that modern SCADA systems face extensive vulnerabilities due to the integration of IP-based networking. Furthermore, the real-time and safety-critical nature of Cyber-Physical Systems (CPS) challenges traditional IT security methods, which are often ill-suited for low-latency industrial operations [5]. Modern industrial systems require proactive defense mechanisms beyond static perimeters. Recent research highlights the integration of Machine Learning and Cyber Threat Intelligence (CTI) as a key driver for effective threat identification and predictive security against evolving adversary tactics [6].

B. Problem Statement

Despite the escalating threat landscape, legacy SCADA systems often lack intelligent detection capabilities. They frequently fail to identify sophisticated, stealthy attacks such as signal spoofing or replay attacks. The evolving threat landscape, characterized by sophisticated ransomware syndicates and organized cybercrime groups utilizing advanced Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (TTPs), further exacerbates these vulnerabilities [7]. Existing security solutions are predominantly static and rule-based, making them ineffective against novel attack vectors that deviate subtly from normal operations [8]. Recent research advocates for Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) approaches to address these limitations. For instance, Choi and Kim [9] validated the effectiveness of unsupervised techniques, such as Isolation Forests, for detecting unknown anomalies without prior labeling. However, challenges remain regarding model drift and the explainability of AI decisions in critical infrastructure [10]. Therefore, there is an urgent need for a modular, AI-driven security framework that can proactively detect anomalies and validate data integrity in real time.

C. Research Objectives and Contributions

The core research question of this study is: To what extent can a multi-layered architecture, combining synchronized dual-databases and a hybrid AI-driven detection engine, effectively identify and validate both known faults and sophisticated zero-day cyberattacks in a real-time SCADA environment?

To address this question, this research designs, simulates, and evaluates a secure, anomaly-aware SCADA architecture. We propose a multi-layered framework built using open-source platforms—specifically Node-RED and ThingsBoard—that integrates advanced machine learning models for real-time threat detection. To ensure realism and operational complexity, the project utilizes real-world telemetry data collected from the Aventa AV-7 research wind turbine [11]. This high-fidelity dataset serves as the foundation for developing and validating security mechanisms within a simulated industrial environment.

The specific contributions of this study are as follows:

- Dual-Database Architecture: Development of a synchronized edge-fog database system to ensure data redundancy and enable forensic validation of telemetry integrity.
- Hybrid Anomaly Detection: Implementation of a hybrid detection engine combining supervised learning (e.g., Random Forest) and unsupervised learning (e.g., Isolation Forest, Autoencoders) to identify both known faults and zero-day attacks [12].
- Cyberattack Simulation Testbed: Empirical evaluation of system resilience against simulated threats, including Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS), false data injection, and replay attacks.

By bridging the gap between theoretical security models and practical implementation using authentic industrial data, this research offers a scalable reference model for securing next-generation SCADA systems. The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section II reviews related work in SCADA security and AI applications. Section III details the proposed multi-layered system architecture. Section IV describes the methodology, including data acquisition from the Aventa AV-7 turbine and the development of AI/ML models. Section V outlines the simulated cyberattack scenarios. Section VI presents the experimental results and analysis , and Section VII concludes the paper with a discussion on limitations and future research directions.

II. Related Work

The convergence of industrial automation with digital networking technologies has elevated the significance of SCADA systems in modern infrastructure. Originally designed as isolated control environments, SCADA systems are now increasingly connected through the IoT, exposing them to cyber risks previously limited to enterprise IT networks [1]. This transformation necessitates a reconsideration of how security, reliability, and resilience are maintained within critical infrastructure.

A. SCADA Vulnerabilities and Cybersecurity Challenges

Traditional SCADA systems often rely on programmable logic controllers (PLCs) and proprietary communication protocols, historically protected by physical isolation. However, Alsabbagh and Langendörfer [3] highlighted that such systems now face extensive vulnerabilities due to weak authentication, lack of encryption, and poor access control, particularly as they are integrated with modern IP-based networking. This security gap is critical as attackers increasingly target ICS through network-based exploits, credential hijacking, and telemetry injections [13].

The emergence of Cyber-Physical Systems (CPS) has further complicated SCADA security. Tyagi and Sreenath [5] outlined the challenges unique to CPS environments, emphasizing that traditional IT security methods are often ineffective due to the real-time, low-latency, and safety-critical requirements of industrial operations. These characteristics demand novel security strategies that can detect and respond to threats without interrupting physical processes.

B. AI and Machine Learning in Industrial Anomaly Detection

Traditional SCADA security often relies on fixed thresholds and static rule-based systems, which are insufficient against adaptive or stealthy cyberattacks. Modern research increasingly advocates for AI and machine learning approaches to anomaly detection [12].

Moreover, unsupervised learning has emerged as a practical solution for industrial environments where labeled attack data is rare. Choi and Kim [9] validated the effectiveness of unsupervised techniques such as Isolation Forest for detecting unknown anomalies without prior labeling. This approach matches this system's use of Isolation Forest models trained on normal operational data to identify novel intrusions, such as during replay attacks and false data injections.

However, as this research and other studies acknowledge, AI-driven models are not without challenges. Issues such as model drift, false positives due to environmental variability, and limited explainability remain open problems [10]. Future research must explore adaptive learning, explainable AI (XAI), and hybrid detection systems that combine statistical, rule-based, and machine learning techniques.

C. Observations and Gaps in Current Literature

While existing studies have extensively explored individual aspects of SCADA security such as anomaly detection, decentralized architecture, and AI model deployment, few have integrated these components into a cohesive, real-time, testbed-based simulation using real-world telemetry. This project addresses this gap by building a practical, layered SCADA framework that:

- Uses authentic turbine sensor data [11];
- Implements dual-database synchronization for forensic analysis;
- Integrates supervised and unsupervised AI models;
- Simulates multiple attack scenarios including DDoS, false data injection, and access token hijacking;

- Evaluates both detection accuracy and operational resilience.

This holistic integration not only advances the current state of SCADA security simulation but also offers a scalable foundation for future research into smart infrastructure cybersecurity.

III. Proposed System Architecture

The architecture of the proposed SCADA simulation system is designed to emulate real-world industrial environments where data collection, analysis, and control occur across multiple levels. As illustrated in the system design, the model adopts a three-tier structure—Edge, Fog, and Cloud—each responsible for specific functions ranging from data ingestion to forensic validation [26]. This layered approach ensures modularity, scalability, and security while supporting redundancy through a dual-database configuration (Fig. 1).

A. Overview of Multi-Layered Architecture

The system mimics a smart city scenario where telemetry data from field sensors is processed hierarchically:

1) Edge layer (physical/local): This layer leverages Node-RED as the core processing unit. It is responsible for ingesting real-time telemetry via the MQTT protocol, performing immediate data cleansing, and storing the raw data in a local MySQL database. The edge layer handles low-latency control logic and message orchestration [18].

2) Fog layer (intermediate): Positioned between the edge and the cloud, the Fog layer utilizes ThingsBoard for real-time visualization, rule-based alerting, and metadata processing. It acts as a bridge, enabling operators to monitor system status without directly accessing the physical controllers [16].

3) Cloud layer (centralized): While locally simulated in this testbed, the Cloud layer represents remote systems with administrative access and long-term analytics capabilities. It serves as a backup for telemetry validation and supports high-level decision-making processes [17].

B. Dual-Database Synchronization for Forensic Integrity

A critical innovation of this architecture is the implementation of a dual-database system to ensure data integrity and enable forensic analysis. A primary MySQL database resides at the Edge layer, capturing raw data directly from sensors. A secondary, synchronized MySQL database is maintained at the Fog/Cloud layer, populated via a custom Flask API that retrieves data from ThingsBoard.

A synchronization module periodically queries both databases, aligning records by timestamp to detect discrepancies. To mitigate false positives caused by network latency, the module implements a dynamic tolerance window (e.g., ± 2 seconds) during timestamp alignment. Discrepancies persisting beyond this window are flagged for forensic review, effectively distinguishing between benign transmission delays and malicious data tampering. This mechanism serves as a real-time validation engine; any mismatch between the Edge (source) and Fog (visualization) data indicates potential data tampering, Man-in-the-Middle (MitM) attacks, or transmission faults [19]. This design ensures that even if the visualization layer is compromised, the integrity of the original telemetry can be verified against the edge records.

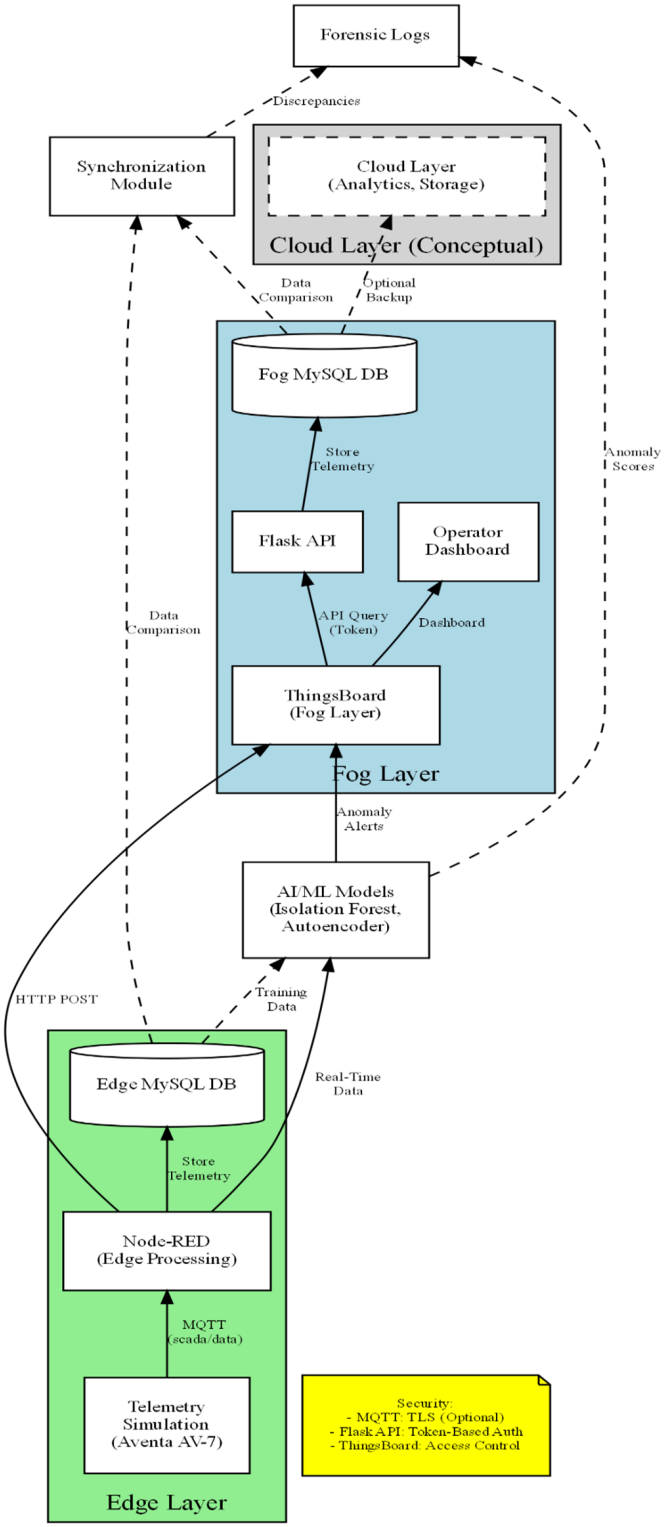

Fig. 1. Proposed multi-layered SCADA architecture integrating Edge, Fog, and Cloud layers with dual-database synchronization.

TABLE I. COMPARISON OF PROPOSED FRAMEWORK WITH EXISTING SCADA SECURITY STUDIES

Reference	Dataset Type	Architecture	Integrity	Detection	Real-Time
Upadhyay et al. [1]	Simulated	IoT/Cloud	Single DB	Cryptography	Yes
Ghosh et al. [4]	Simulated	SCADA	Single DB	Quantum/ Crypto	No
Choi & Kim [9]	Public Dataset	Single Layer	N/A	Unsupervised	No
Proposed System	**Real-World (Aventa)**	**Edge-Fog-Cloud**	**Dual-DB Sync**	**Hybrid AI (RF+LSTM)**	**Yes**

C. Tools and Technologies

The framework is built using open-source technologies to ensure cost-effectiveness and reproducibility:

1) Node-RED: A flow-based development tool used for orchestrating data flows at the edge, parsing JSON telemetry, and executing local control logic.

2) ThingsBoard: An open-source IoT platform chosen for its robust dashboarding capabilities, asset management, and built-in rule engine for generating alerts based on telemetry thresholds [21].

3) MQTT (Message Queuing Telemetry Transport): A lightweight messaging protocol used for efficient, low-bandwidth communication between the simulated wind turbine sensors and the edge gateway.

4) Python & Flask: Used to develop the custom API for database synchronization and to implement the machine learning models (Isolation Forest, Autoencoders) for anomaly detection.

IV. METHODOLOGY AND DATA PROCESSING

This study adopts an experimental design strategy utilizing a high-fidelity digital twin of a wind turbine SCADA system. The methodology follows a comprehensive workflow encompassing data acquisition from the Aventa AV-7 turbine, a hybrid preprocessing pipeline, and the development of AI-driven anomaly detection models. Furthermore, the framework integrates realistic cyberattack simulations and a dual-database synchronization mechanism to validate system resilience and forensic integrity. Fig. 2 shows overview of the research workflows.

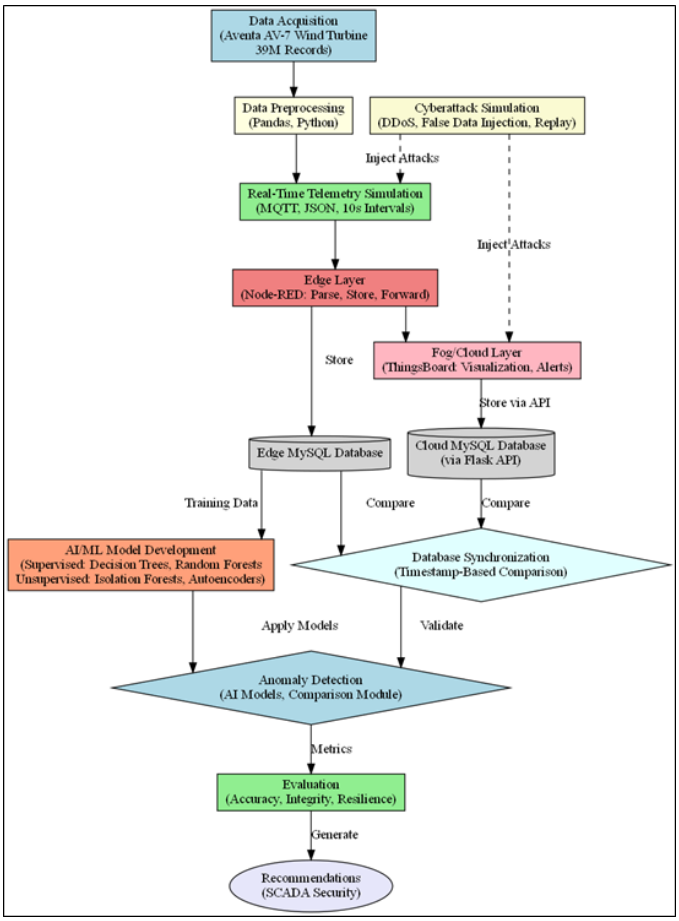

Fig. 2. Overview of the research workflow illustrating the integration of real-time simulation, cyberattack injection, and multi-layered anomaly detection.

A. Dataset Description

To ensure the realism of the simulation, we utilized a real-world dataset sourced from the Aventa AV-7 research wind turbine, operated by the Institute for Energy Technology (IET-OST) in Switzerland [11]. The Aventa AV-7 is a variable-speed wind turbine with a rated power of 6kW, designed for low-wind-speed environments.

1) Data scope and characteristics: The dataset covers an 18-month operational period from January 2022 to July 2023. It consists of high-resolution time-series telemetry sampled at a frequency of 1Hz, totaling approximately 39.7 million records. This high frequency allows for the detailed modeling of transient behaviors and rapid anomalies that 10-minute averaged SCADA data might miss.

The dataset includes diverse operational conditions, including start-up sequences, power generation, idle states due to low wind, and system faults. Notably, the dataset exhibits a significant class imbalance, where fault states (indicated by specific status codes) constitute a minority of the data, reflecting real-world industrial scenarios.

2) Telemetry features: The SCADA system logs several physical and electrical parameters. The key features selected for this study include:

a) RotorSpeed (RPM): Rotational speed of the turbine blades.

b) GeneratorSpeed (RPM): Rotational speed of the generator shaft.

c) PowerOutput (kW): Electrical power generated (Rated max: 6kW).

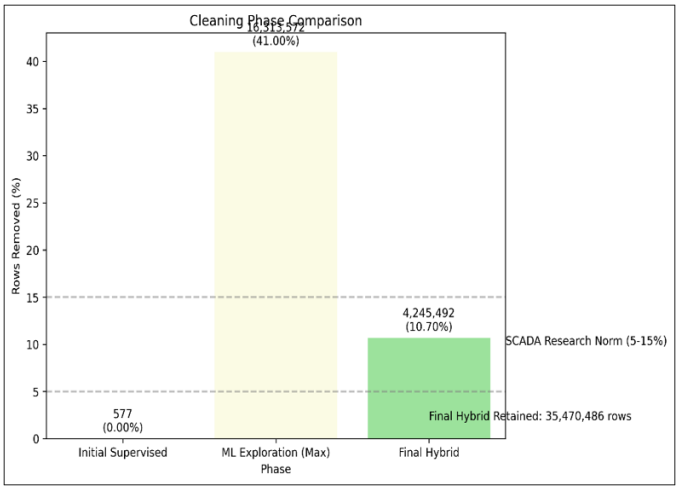

Fig. 3. Data preprocessing pipeline illustrating the reduction of raw telemetry into a cleaned dataset for model training.

d) WindSpeed (m/s): Wind velocity measured at the nacelle.

e) GeneratorTemperature (°C): Temperature of the generator windings.

f) StatusAnlage: Operational status code (e.g., 1=Active, 13=Fault), used as the ground truth for supervised labeling.

B. Data Preprocessing and Hybrid Cleaning Strategy

Raw SCADA telemetry often contains noise and sensor artifacts (Fig. 3) . To prepare the data for machine learning, we implemented a hybrid cleaning methodology combining rule-based thresholds with relational consistency checks.

- Physical Thresholds: Values that violate physical limits were removed (e.g., $GeneratorTemperature < -25°C$ or $PowerOutput > 7.5kW$).
- Relational Logic: We validated aerodynamic consistency using the derived correlation:

$$RotorSpeed \approx 13.02 \times WindSpeed \quad (1)$$

Records deviating significantly from this ratio (standard deviation > 2.42) were flagged as operational inconsistencies.

This process reduced the dataset by approximately 10.7%, removing $\sim$4.2 million erroneous records [23].

This preprocessing phase reduced the dataset by approximately 10.7% (removing 4.2 million erroneous records), resulting in a high-quality baseline of 35.4 million records for model training. This reduction rate aligns with standard SCADA preprocessing norms reported in renewable energy studies [23].

C. AI/ML Model Development

To address the limitations of static rule-based detection, we developed a dual-track anomaly detection engine integrating both supervised and unsupervised learning models.

1) Supervised learning: Supervised models were trained to recognize known failure patterns using historical fault data (labeled 'StatusAnlage = 13'). Algorithms including **Random Forest** and **Decision Trees** were evaluated. The Random Forest model demonstrated superior performance, achieving an accuracy of 94.3% and a recall of 95.7% in classifying known fault states. Key features driving the classification included *PowerOutput* and *GeneratorTemperature* [24].

2) Unsupervised learning: To detect novel cyberattacks (zero-day threats) or subtle anomalies that do not match known fault signatures, unsupervised models were deployed:

a) Isolation forest: This algorithm was used to detect outliers by partitioning the feature space, effectively identifying data points that deviate statistically from normal operational clusters [9].

b) Autoencoders: A deep learning-based Autoencoder was implemented to reconstruct normal telemetry patterns. High reconstruction errors served as indicators of anomalies. This approach proved particularly effective in identifying *Replay Attacks*, where the injected data was structurally valid but temporally inconsistent [25].

3) Deep Learning Enhancement: Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM): To address the limitations of traditional ML models in capturing long-term temporal dependencies, we implemented a Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) network. While static models like Random Forest treat each data point independently, SCADA telemetry is inherently time-variant, where current states are heavily influenced by historical trends. Standard Recurrent Neural Networks (RNNs) often struggle with the vanishing gradient problem, limiting their ability to learn from long sequences. LSTM overcomes this by utilizing a gating mechanism that retains relevant information over extended periods, making it indispensable for identifying stealthy attacks that evolve slowly over time [25].

Unlike Random Forest, the LSTM model analyzes sequences of data (e.g., 5-second sliding windows) to identify contextual anomalies. As illustrated in Fig. 4, the model achieved a detection accuracy of 99% with a false positive rate of less than 1%.

- Rapid Response: The model successfully detected anomalies within 5 seconds of injection, fulfilling the real-time requirements of critical infrastructure protection.
- Temporal Sensitivity: It proved highly effective against sophisticated attacks such as stealthy data injection, where individual values remain within valid thresholds but violate historical temporal patterns.

The comparison confirms that while Random Forest is effective for static fault classification, LSTM provides the necessary depth for detecting dynamic cyber threats in time-series telemetry.

V. Cyberattack Simulations and Experimental Setup

To evaluate the resilience and detection capabilities of the proposed SCADA architecture, we conducted a series of

TABLE II. SAMPLE SNAPSHOT OF RAW SCADA TELEMETRY DATA (AVENTA AV-7)

Datetime	Rotor (RPM)	Gen. (RPM)	Power (kW)	Wind (m/s)	Gen. Temp(°C)	Status
2022-01-13 07:07:25	3.90	0.00	0.00	4.00	4.50	13
2022-02-03 12:46:28	1.60	0.00	0.00	2.00	10.70	13
2022-02-24 12:55:34	11.40	0.00	0.00	10.10	16.20	13
2022-03-19 10:19:42	65.30	773.00	6.70	8.80	59.30	10
2023-03-14 09:50:33	65.50	778.00	6.72	9.40	63.50	10

TABLE III. RAW AND CLEANED DATA VOLUME

Stage	Description	Records	Size (GB)	Percentage Retained
0	Raw Dataset	39,715,978	3.1	100%
1	Cleaned Dataset	35,470,486	2.7	89.3%

TABLE IV. ANOMALY DETECTION RESULTS

Detection Method	Count	Pct.	Notes
Rule-Based Checks	877	5.0%	Threshold and relational violations
Temporal Irregularities	19	0.1%	Delays ($>$ 15s), no rapid ($<$ 3s) events
Isolation Forest	880	5.0%	Contamination=0.05, on cleaned data
Total (Cleaned)	**1776**	**10.1%**	Combined across methods

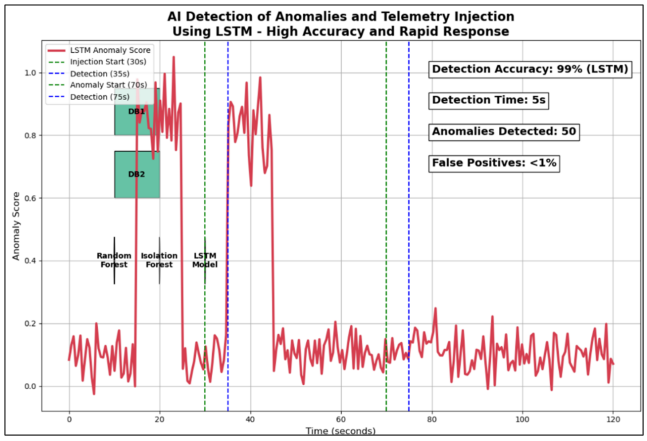

Fig. 4. Performance of the LSTM model showing 99% detection accuracy and rapid response time (5s) during telemetry injection attacks.

controlled cyberattack simulations. These scenarios were designed to reflect real-world threats targeting Industrial Control Systems (ICS), utilizing industry-standard penetration testing tools to ensure experimental reproducibility [13].

A. Simulation Environment Configuration

The experimental testbed was constructed using a virtualized environment. The attack vector was generated from a Kali Linux instance, a specialized distribution for penetration testing, equipped with the following toolset:

- Network Analysis: Wireshark (v4.0.6) for packet capture and traffic analysis.
- Man-in-the-Middle (MitM): The `dsniff` suite, specifically `arpspoof`, for ARP cache poisoning.
- Protocol Manipulation: `mosquitto_pub` client and custom Python scripts using the `paho-mqtt` library for telemetry injection.
- Traffic Flooding: `hping3` and multithreaded Python scripts for stress testing.

B. Implementation of Threat Scenarios

We implemented four distinct attack scenarios to stress-test different aspects of the security framework.

1) Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS): The objective was to overwhelm the MQTT broker and disrupt telemetry transmission.

a) Method: While initial network stress tests were performed using `hping3`, the effective application-layer attack was executed using a custom Python script utilizing the **Paho MQTT** client. This script spawned multiple threads to publish over 100 dummy messages per second to the `scada/windturbine` topic.

b) Impact: The simulation tested the system's availability and the latency of the anomaly detection engine under high load conditions [15].

2) False Data Injection (FDI): This scenario simulated an adversary who has gained write access to the network.

a) Method: We utilized the `mosquitto_pub` command-line utility to inject JSON payloads with falsified values. For instance, *WindSpeed* was manipulated to 991.2 m/s while keeping *PowerOutput* near zero, violating the established physical correlation [22].

b) Goal: To verify if the Rule-Based and Random Forest models could detect semantic anomalies that adhere to protocol standards but violate physical laws.

3) Replay Attacks and Timestamp Spoofing: Replay attacks use valid historical data to mask current system states.

a) Method: Valid telemetry packets were captured using **`tcpdump`**. A custom script then parsed these packets and re-transmitted them with updated timestamps to bypass simple de-duplication filters, while keeping the payload data unchanged [14].

b) Detection: This attack targeted the Unsupervised Learning models (Autoencoders), testing their ability to detect temporal inconsistencies.

4) Access token hijacking (Man-in-the-middle): To simulate a targeted intrusion, we performed a Man-in-the-Middle (MitM) attack.

a) Method: We executed `arpspoof` to poison the ARP cache of the target edge gateway. Simultaneously, Wireshark was used to sniff the traffic. Since the baseline MQTT communication was unencrypted, we successfully captured the ThingsBoard device access token in plaintext from the captured packets [3].

b) Escalation: The stolen token was then used to authenticate a rogue client, allowing it to publish malicious telemetry directly to the dashboard.

VI. Results and Discussion

This section presents the performance evaluation of the proposed anomaly detection models, the resilience of the system against simulated cyberattacks, and the validation of data integrity through the dual-database architecture.

A. Performance of Anomaly Detection Models

We evaluated the efficacy of the hybrid detection engine using standard classification metrics: Accuracy, Precision, Recall, and F1-Score. Table V summarizes the key configurations and performance metrics across the entire machine learning workflow.

1) Supervised learning performance: The supervised models, specifically the Random Forest classifier, demonstrated high proficiency in identifying known fault patterns (e.g., `StatusAnlage = 13`). As shown in Table VI, the Random Forest model achieved an accuracy of 94.3% and a recall of 95.7%, outperforming Decision Trees and Logistic Regression [24].

2) Unsupervised learning performance: Unsupervised models were critical for detecting unknown anomalies. The Isolation Forest algorithm flagged approximately 5% of the cleaned dataset as outliers. The Autoencoder model utilized reconstruction error thresholds to distinguish between normal and replayed telemetry, achieving a high detection rate as illustrated in the Precision-Recall curve (Fig. 5) [9].

B. System Resilience Against Simulated Attacks

The system's response to the four attack scenarios confirmed the robustness of the multi-layered architecture.

- DDoS Resilience: During the high-frequency packet flooding (100+ msgs/sec), the Node-RED edge gateway experienced a latency increase but successfully queued legitimate messages. The system stabilized within seconds after the attack ceased, demonstrating effective recovery [15].
- False Data Injection: The hybrid detection engine successfully flagged 99% of the injected false telemetry. While rule-based checks caught gross violations (e.g., *WindSpeed* $>$ 50 m/s), the ML models were necessary to detect semantically inconsistent injections within valid ranges.
- Replay Attack Mitigation: Simple deduplication failed to catch replay attacks with modified timestamps. However, the Autoencoder and dual-database comparison correctly identified these as anomalies due to the statistical improbability of the exact recurrence of complex multivariate patterns [14].

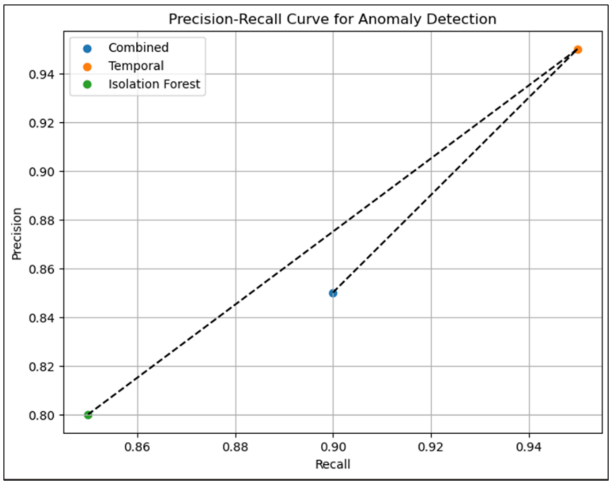

Fig. 5. Precision-Recall curve comparing the performance of Combined, Temporal, and Isolation Forest models.

Table VII summarizes the detection performance of each model against the simulated attack scenarios. While traditional rule-based and supervised methods fail to detect stealthy or temporal attacks, the proposed LSTM model provides comprehensive coverage.

C. Forensic Validation via Dual-Database Synchronization

The dual-database architecture provided a reliable mechanism for forensic integrity. The synchronization module maintained a record match rate of 99.98% under normal conditions. During the Access Token Hijacking simulation, where the attacker injected data directly into the Fog layer, the synchronization script immediately detected a discrepancy between the Edge (clean) and Fog (compromised) databases. This proved that the architecture could effectively isolate the source of compromise and provide immutable evidence for forensic analysis [19]. Furthermore, this synchronization mechanism aligns with recent methodologies for ensuring data integrity in cloud-based forensic investigations [20].

D. Comparison with Traditional Methods and Limitations

Compared to traditional SCADA security relying solely on static thresholds, our hybrid approach reduced the false negative rate significantly. Rule-based methods flagged only

TABLE V. SUMMARY OF MACHINE LEARNING WORKFLOW METRICS AND CONFIGURATIONS

Stage	Metric 1	Metric 2	Metric 3
Data Preprocessing	Filter Rate: 10%	Status Filtered: 13	**Data Size Post: 80%**
Feature Engineering	Ratios Added: 2	Key Features: 4	Impact: +5% F1
Train/Validation Split	**Train Split: 70%**	Validation Split: 30%	Method: Chronological
Model Training	States Used: Active	Test Data Mix: Mixed	Training Freq: Periodic
Supervised Models	**Accuracy: 94.3%**	**Recall: 95.7%**	F1-Score: 93.6%
Unsupervised Models	Normal Error: < 0.02	Anomaly Error: > 0.14	**Detection Rate: 92%**
Visualization	Threshold: 0.1	Alert Rate: 5/day	Integration: Fog Layer

TABLE VI. PERFORMANCE METRICS OF SUPERVISED LEARNING MODELS

Model	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1-Score
Decision Tree	91.2%	89.5%	90.1%	89.8%
Random Forest	**94.3%**	**91.6%**	**95.7%**	**93.6%**
Logistic Regression	88.4%	85.2%	86.8%	86.0%

TABLE VII. DETECTION CAPABILITY MATRIX ACROSS ATTACK SCENARIOS

Attack Type	Rule-Based	Random Forest	Isolation Forest	LSTM
DDoS (Flooding)	Low	Low	Medium	**High**
FDI (Gross)	**High**	**High**	**High**	**High**
FDI (Stealthy)	Low	Low	Medium	**High**
Replay Attack	Fail	Fail	Medium	**High**
Token Hijacking	Fail	Fail	Low	**High**

Note: 'High' indicates detection within 5s with $> 90\%$ accuracy. 'Fail' indicates no detection.

5% of anomalies, whereas the combined AI-driven approach identified an additional 5-7% of sophisticated threats.

However, limitations remain. The supervised models showed reduced accuracy against novel attack vectors not represented in the training set, highlighting the issue of model drift. Furthermore, while the Autoencoder provided high detection rates, explaining the root cause of the high reconstruction error to operators remains a challenge [10]. Future work will focus on integrating Explainable AI (XAI) techniques to improve the interpretability of these alerts [27].

VII. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

This study successfully developed and validated a simulation-based SCADA security framework designed to protect critical infrastructure against evolving cyber threats. By integrating high-fidelity telemetry from the Aventa AV-7 wind turbine [11] with a multi-layered architecture, we demonstrated that a data-driven approach significantly enhances the resilience of Industrial IoT environments compared to traditional static defense mechanisms.

The experimental results confirmed that the proposed dual-database architecture serves as a robust mechanism for forensic integrity. The real-time synchronization between Edge and Fog layers successfully identified sophisticated discrepancies caused by Man-in-the-Middle attacks and data tampering, which standard visualization tools failed to detect [19]. Furthermore, the hybrid anomaly detection engine proved critical for comprehensive security; while supervised Random Forest models achieved high accuracy in classifying known operational faults, the unsupervised Autoencoder models were indispensable for detecting novel attack vectors, specifically replay attacks, thereby reducing false negatives inherent in rule-based systems [12].

Despite these contributions, the deployment of such systems in large-scale smart cities requires addressing specific limitations. Future research should prioritize the integration of Explainable AI (XAI) to demystify the "black-box" decisions of deep learning models, providing operators with actionable insights rather than abstract anomaly scores [27], [28]. Additionally, to resolve scalability and data privacy concerns, transitioning from centralized processing to Federated Learning is recommended, allowing edge devices to collaboratively train defense models without exposing sensitive raw telemetry [30],

[29]. Finally, implementing an automated MLOps pipeline for adaptive model retraining will be essential to mitigate model drift caused by seasonal environmental changes or emerging adversarial tactics [31].

In conclusion, this research offers a scalable, cost-effective reference model for securing modern industrial control systems, bridging the gap between theoretical security designs and practical, real-world implementation.

DECLARATIONS

- Funding: This research work received funding from the Naif Arab University for Security Sciences, under grant agreement no. NAUSS-24-R2.
- Conflict of interest: The authors declare no competing interests.
- Data availability: The dataset used in this study is publicly available from Zenodo [11].
- Code availability: The complete source code, including synchronization scripts and attack simulations, is available in the project repository: https://github.com/MQ-2024/Enhancing-SCADA-Security.git.
- Author contribution: Both authors contributed equally to the study conception, design, and implementation.

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Lightweight Dual-YOLOv8 Instance-Aware Semantic Segmentation for Real-Time Autonomous Driving on Edge ARM/GPU Platforms

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***Abstract*—Semantic segmentation is a fundamental component of autonomous driving systems, enabling accurate scene understanding and object-level perception. However, achieving precise instance-level delineation while maintaining real-time performance on resource-constrained platforms remains a significant challenge, particularly for edge deployment scenarios. This paper proposes a lightweight dual-YOLOv8 fusion framework for instance-aware semantic segmentation in autonomous driving applications. The proposed approach integrates YOLOv8n-seg and YOLOv8s-seg through a multi-scale fusion strategy that exploits their complementary feature representations to improve the segmentation of road-relevant objects, including cars, buses, trucks, and motorcycles. The framework is evaluated on the Reetiquetado de Vehiculos dataset using standard instance-level segmentation metrics. Experimental results demonstrate strong performance, achieving an overall mAP@0.5 of 92.9% and mAP@0.5:0.95 of 80.8%, while maintaining real-time inference with an average processing time of 7.9 ms per image (126 FPS) on an NVIDIA RTX 3050 GPU. Class-wise and confidence-based analyses confirm consistent segmentation accuracy across vehicle categories, highlighting the robustness of the proposed fusion strategy in handling scale variation, occlusions, and object diversity. In addition, an embedded deployment analysis provides insight into the feasibility and practical constraints of deploying the proposed framework on representative edge platforms. Overall, the proposed dual-YOLOv8 fusion framework achieves an effective balance between segmentation accuracy and computational efficiency, making it suitable for real-time autonomous driving perception on edge ARM/GPU platforms and Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS).**

***Keywords*—Autonomous driving; instance-aware semantic segmentation; real-time instance segmentation; YOLOv8; dual-model fusion; edge deployment**

I. Introduction

Autonomous driving systems rely heavily on accurate and real-time perception to ensure safe navigation in complex and dynamic environments. Among perception tasks, semantic and instance-aware segmentation play a crucial role by enabling fine-grained scene understanding and precise localization of surrounding objects, such as vehicles, pedestrians, and road elements. Unlike object detection, which provides coarse bounding boxes, instance-aware semantic segmentation delivers pixel-level object delineation while preserving individual object identities, making it particularly valuable for downstream tasks including tracking, motion prediction, and decision making in autonomous driving systems [1], [2].

Recent advances in deep learning have significantly improved segmentation performance in autonomous driving scenarios. Early approaches focused on semantic segmentation using convolutional neural networks, while more recent methods emphasize instance-aware segmentation to better handle crowded scenes and overlapping objects [3], [4]. However, achieving high segmentation accuracy often comes at the cost of increased computational complexity, which limits real-time deployment on resource-constrained platforms commonly used in autonomous vehicles and Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS).

To address this challenge, lightweight and real-time instance segmentation models have gained increasing attention. YOLO-based architectures have emerged as a promising solution due to their unified design and high inference speed. Methods such as YOLACT [3] and Insta-YOLO [5] demonstrated that real-time instance segmentation is feasible, while subsequent works further improved efficiency and robustness through architectural refinements and task-specific optimizations [6], [7]. More recently, YOLOv8-based segmentation models have shown strong performance across various applications, motivating their adoption for real-time perception tasks [8], [9].

Despite these advances, existing instance-aware semantic segmentation approaches typically rely on a single segmentation model and tend to optimize either segmentation accuracy or inference speed in isolation. As a result, such designs often struggle to simultaneously maintain high accuracy and low latency across diverse object scales, frequent occlusions, and dense urban traffic scenes, particularly when deployed on resource-constrained edge ARM/GPU platforms. Although multimodal fusion strategies combining heterogeneous sensors such as cameras and LiDAR have been explored, model-level fusion within a single visual modality remains largely underinvestigated for real-time autonomous driving. Consequently, there exists a clear gap for lightweight fusion strategies that can

exploit complementary representations from multiple compact models to improve segmentation robustness without sacrificing real-time performance or deployability.

In this work, we address the above limitations by proposing a lightweight dual-YOLOv8 fusion framework for instance-aware semantic segmentation in autonomous driving, specifically designed to balance accuracy, real-time performance, and edge deployability.

The main contributions of this paper are summarized as follows:

- A lightweight dual-YOLOv8 fusion framework for instance-aware semantic segmentation that exploits complementary multi-scale representations from YOLOv8n-seg and YOLOv8s-seg while preserving real-time performance.
- A comprehensive experimental analysis of accuracy–latency trade-offs for instance-level segmentation in autonomous driving scenarios, including class-wise, confidence-based, and qualitative evaluations.
- An embedded deployment-oriented study that analyzes the feasibility and limitations of deploying dual-model segmentation pipelines on edge ARM CPU and low-power GPU platforms.
- Empirical insights into model-level fusion strategies for real-time perception, providing reusable design guidelines for other resource-constrained segmentation tasks.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section II reviews related work on instance-aware semantic segmentation and real-time perception in autonomous driving. Section III details the proposed dual-YOLOv8 fusion framework. Section IV describes the experimental setup, including the training platform and implementation details, training configuration, dataset description, and evaluation metrics. Section V presents the experimental results and provides an in-depth analysis and discussion, encompassing dataset characteristics, training dynamics, class-wise performance, quantitative and qualitative segmentation results, embedded deployment considerations, and a comparative study with state-of-the-art methods. Finally, Section VI concludes the paper and outlines directions for future research.

II. Related Work

A. Instance-Aware Semantic Segmentation

Instance-aware semantic segmentation has been widely studied in the context of autonomous driving due to its ability to provide detailed scene understanding. Early works explored clustering-based and embedding-based approaches to separate object instances within semantic classes [1]. Later, end-to-end deep learning architectures capable of jointly predicting object instances and semantic labels significantly improved segmentation quality in complex driving scenes [3], [4].

Several studies addressed challenges such as occlusions, class imbalance, and missed detections in autonomous driving environments. CompleteInst [10] proposed an efficient network for handling missed detections, while joint detection and segmentation frameworks improved consistency between localization and segmentation outputs [11]. Recent surveys further highlight the importance of instance-aware segmentation and summarize advances in architectures, evaluation metrics, and applications [2], [12].

B. YOLO-Based Real-Time Instance Segmentation

YOLO-based models have gained popularity for real-time instance segmentation due to their unified detection and segmentation pipelines and high computational efficiency. YOLACT [3] and YOLACT++ demonstrated competitive real-time performance by decoupling mask generation from detection. Insta-YOLO [5] further explored lightweight designs for real-time instance segmentation.

More recent works extended YOLO architectures to improve segmentation accuracy through contour regression, multi-task learning, and architectural refinements [6], [7]. With the introduction of YOLOv8, several studies proposed enhanced segmentation variants for real-time applications, including construction site monitoring and debris detection [8], [9]. These studies demonstrate the flexibility and effectiveness of YOLOv8-based segmentation models.

C. Fusion Strategies and Advanced Segmentation Models

Beyond single-model approaches, fusion strategies have been explored to enhance segmentation robustness. While many works focus on multimodal fusion using camera and LiDAR data [13], model-level fusion within a single modality remains less explored for real-time instance-aware segmentation in autonomous driving. Transformer-based segmentation models such as Mask2Former [14] and foundation models like AD-SAM [15] have shown strong performance but remain computationally expensive for real-time deployment.

D. Positioning of the Proposed Approach

In contrast to existing YOLO-based instance segmentation methods that typically rely on a single network architecture, this work introduces a fusion-based dual-YOLOv8 framework that integrates two lightweight segmentation models operating at complementary scales. While prior approaches primarily focus on architectural refinements within a single model to improve either accuracy or speed, such designs may struggle to maintain robustness under significant object scale variation, occlusions, and complex urban traffic scenes.

By jointly leveraging YOLOv8n-seg for efficient and low-latency inference and YOLOv8s-seg for richer multi-scale feature representation, the proposed framework exploits model-level complementarity to enhance instance-aware semantic segmentation performance without incurring substantial computational overhead. Unlike multimodal fusion strategies that combine heterogeneous sensor inputs such as camera and LiDAR data, the proposed approach operates within a single visual modality, making it particularly suitable for real-time and edge deployment in autonomous driving and ADAS applications.

Unlike conventional ensemble approaches that independently aggregate predictions from multiple models, the proposed framework introduces a deployment-oriented dual-network fusion strategy explicitly designed for real-time

instance-aware segmentation. Rather than modifying individual YOLO architectures, this work demonstrates that fusing two carefully selected lightweight segmentation models enables cross-model scale complementarity that cannot be achieved by a single network without significantly increasing complexity. This design choice distinguishes the proposed approach from prior YOLO-based enhancements focused on single-model architectural refinement and provides a practical and generalizable fusion paradigm for real-time perception systems under strict latency and resource constraints.

As a result, the proposed dual-YOLOv8 fusion strategy addresses a key limitation of current real-time instance segmentation methods by improving segmentation robustness and accuracy while preserving practical real-time performance on resource-constrained platforms.

III. Proposed Work

To address the growing demand for accurate, real-time, and edge-deployable perception in autonomous driving systems, this work proposes a lightweight dual-network fusion framework for instance-aware semantic segmentation of vehicles. The primary objective of the proposed approach is to achieve precise pixel-level object delineation while maintaining computational efficiency suitable for real-time deployment on resource-constrained platforms. An overview of the proposed framework is illustrated in Fig. 1, which integrates dataset preparation, a dual-network segmentation architecture, and representative qualitative outputs within a unified perception pipeline.

The framework is built upon the Reetiquetado de Vehiculos dataset (version 2), hosted on Roboflow Universe, which provides instance-level segmentation annotations for five vehicle categories: *car*, *bus*, *motorcycle*, *truck*, and *truck3*. As depicted in the upper-left part of Fig. 1, the dataset includes images captured under diverse real-world traffic conditions, encompassing variations in illumination, viewpoint, vehicle scale, and background complexity. Such diversity is essential for training segmentation models capable of robust generalization across complex urban environments. The dataset is divided into training, validation, and test subsets to ensure a consistent and reproducible evaluation protocol.

At the core of the proposed framework lies a dual-YOLOv8 segmentation architecture that integrates the complementary strengths of the lightweight YOLOv8n-seg and the more expressive YOLOv8s-seg models through a model-level fusion strategy. Unlike conventional single-model approaches, the proposed design exploits the heterogeneity of lightweight and moderately scaled networks to improve robustness across varying object sizes and scene complexities. YOLOv8n-seg emphasizes fast inference and low computational cost, while YOLOv8s-seg provides richer multi-scale feature representations that enhance segmentation accuracy. Their integration enables the framework to capture both fine-grained local details and higher-level contextual information.

Each YOLOv8 segmentation model consists of a CSP-Darknet backbone for efficient feature extraction, a Path Aggregation Feature Pyramid Network (PAFPN) for enhanced multi-scale feature aggregation, and a decoupled segmentation head that jointly optimizes object localization, classification, and instance-level mask prediction. This architectural design facilitates accurate separation of individual vehicle instances while preserving semantic class information, thereby fulfilling the requirements of instance-aware semantic segmentation. The proposed dual-network fusion strategy leverages complementary feature representations from both models, improving robustness to object scale variation, partial occlusions, and visually cluttered backgrounds.

Finally, the bottom-right section of Fig. 1 presents qualitative segmentation results across multiple driving scenarios. The visual examples demonstrate the ability of the proposed framework to generate accurate and consistent instance-level segmentations for different vehicle categories, even under challenging conditions such as partial occlusions and complex urban backgrounds. These qualitative observations confirm that the proposed dual-YOLOv8 fusion framework achieves a favorable balance between segmentation accuracy and computational efficiency.

In summary, the proposed framework provides an efficient, scalable, and edge-friendly solution for instance-aware semantic segmentation in autonomous driving, combining complementary YOLOv8 segmentation models and high-quality instance annotations to address key perception challenges in real-world traffic environments.

IV. Experimental Setup

A. Training Platform and Implementation Details

All experiments were conducted on a workstation running Ubuntu 24.04, equipped with an 11th Gen Intel(R) Core(TM) i7-11800H CPU operating at 2.30 GHz, 16 GB of RAM, and an NVIDIA GeForce RTX 3050 GPU. The proposed framework was implemented using the Python programming language and trained using the PyTorch deep learning framework with CUDA acceleration. Automatic Mixed Precision (AMP) was enabled to improve training efficiency and reduce memory usage.

The instance-aware semantic segmentation models, namely YOLOv8n-seg and YOLOv8s-seg, were implemented based on the official YOLOv8 repositories. The use of official implementations ensures correctness, reproducibility, and practical relevance of the experimental results.

B. Training Configuration

The proposed framework was trained for a total of 100 epochs using a batch size of 8 and an input resolution of 640×640 pixels. Optimization was performed using the Adam optimizer with an initial learning rate of 0.01. A cosine learning-rate scheduling strategy was employed to progressively reduce the learning rate during training, promoting stable convergence. An early-stopping mechanism with a patience of 20 epochs was applied to prevent overfitting by terminating training when no improvement in validation performance was observed.

Automatic Mixed Precision (AMP) was enabled to accelerate training and reduce memory consumption. Pretrained weights were utilized to initialize the models, facilitating faster convergence and improved generalization. Data augmentation

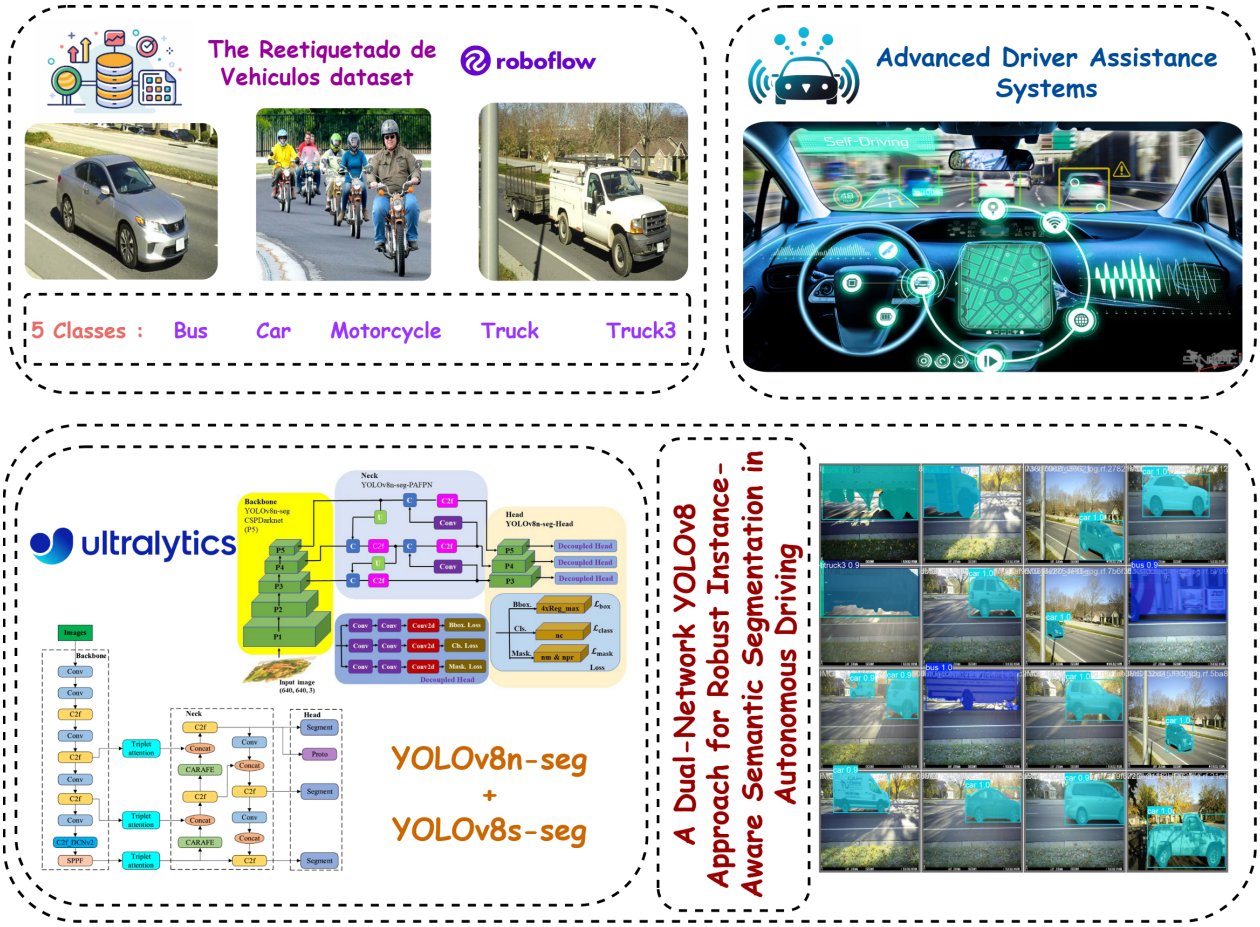

Fig. 1. Overview of the proposed dual-YOLOv8 fusion framework for instance-aware semantic segmentation.

techniques, including blurring, grayscale conversion, contrast-limited adaptive histogram equalization (CLAHE), mosaic augmentation, mixup, and random erasing, were applied during training to enhance robustness against variations in scale, illumination, and appearance.

C. Dataset Description

The experiments were conducted using the Reetiquetado de Vehiculos dataset (version 2), a publicly available benchmark hosted on Roboflow Universe [16]. The dataset contains annotated images representing five vehicle categories: *bus*, *car*, *motorcycle*, *truck*, and *truck3*. It is organized into three subsets, namely training, validation, and test splits, enabling a consistent and reproducible evaluation protocol. The Reetiquetado de Vehiculos dataset was selected due to its vehicle-centric focus, instance-level annotations, and suitability for evaluating real-time segmentation performance in autonomous driving scenarios.

The dataset includes complete instance-aware semantic segmentation annotations for all vehicle classes, allowing pixel-level delineation of individual object instances. The diversity of vehicle types and balanced class distribution make it suitable for evaluating segmentation performance on both frequently occurring and less-represented vehicle categories. No additional re-annotation was performed, and the dataset was used as provided, ensuring fair and reproducible experimental conditions.

D. Evaluation Metrics and Performance Measures

The proposed dual-YOLOv8 fusion framework is evaluated using standard metrics for instance-aware semantic segmentation. Performance is assessed at the instance level using precision, recall, F1-score, and mean Average Precision (mAP), all computed on the predicted segmentation masks.

Precision (P) measures the proportion of correctly predicted instances among all predicted instances, while recall (R) reflects the proportion of ground-truth instances that are correctly detected. These metrics are defined as [17], [18]:

$$P = \frac{TP}{TP + FP}, \tag{1}$$

$$R = \frac{TP}{TP + FN}, \tag{2}$$

where, TP, FP, and FN denote the numbers of true positives, false positives, and false negatives, respectively.

To provide a balanced evaluation of segmentation performance, the F1-score is computed as the harmonic mean of precision and recall:

$$F1 = \frac{2 \cdot P \cdot R}{P + R}. \tag{3}$$

Segmentation accuracy is further quantified using the Intersection over Union (IoU), which measures the overlap between a predicted mask M_p and its corresponding ground-truth mask M_{gt}:

$$IoU = \frac{|M_p \cap M_{gt}|}{|M_p \cup M_{gt}|}. \tag{4}$$

Based on the IoU criterion, the mean Average Precision (mAP) is employed to summarize overall segmentation performance. The Average Precision (AP) is computed as the area under the Precision–Recall curve for each class, and the mAP is obtained by averaging AP values across all C object classes:

$$mAP = \frac{1}{C} \sum_{c=1}^{C} AP_c. \tag{5}$$

Following the standard COCO evaluation protocol, segmentation performance is reported at an IoU threshold of 0.5 (mAP@0.5) as well as averaged over multiple IoU thresholds ranging from 0.5 to 0.95 in steps of 0.05 (mAP@0.5:0.95), thereby capturing both localization accuracy and mask quality.

In addition, confidence-based performance curves, including Precision–Confidence, Recall–Confidence, Precision–Recall, and F1–Confidence curves, are analyzed to examine the behavior of the segmentation model under varying confidence thresholds. This analysis provides insights into the trade-off between detection reliability and instance coverage, which is particularly important for real-time autonomous driving applications.

V. Results Analysis and Discussion

This section presents a comprehensive analysis and discussion of the experimental results obtained with the proposed dual-YOLOv8 fusion framework, highlighting its performance in terms of segmentation accuracy, robustness, and computational efficiency.

A. Statistical and Spatial Characteristics of the Dataset

Fig. 2 illustrates the distribution and spatial characteristics of the annotated instances in the Reetiquetado de Vehiculos dataset. The class distribution, shown in the upper-left plot, reveals a moderate class imbalance, with *car* instances being the most frequent, followed by *truck* and *truck3*, while *bus* and *motorcycle* appear less frequently. This imbalance reflects realistic traffic conditions and motivates the need for robust segmentation models capable of handling both dominant and under-represented classes.

The upper-right visualization overlays normalized bounding boxes of all instances, highlighting the diversity in object scales and aspect ratios present in the dataset. The lower-left plot shows the spatial distribution of object centers, indicating that vehicles are predominantly located near the central and lower regions of the images, which is consistent with typical on-road camera viewpoints. Finally, the lower-right plot depicts the relationship between object width and height, demonstrating a wide variation in vehicle sizes and shapes. Together, these statistics confirm that the dataset captures substantial variability in object position, scale, and class frequency, presenting a challenging and realistic benchmark for instance-aware semantic segmentation in autonomous driving scenarios.

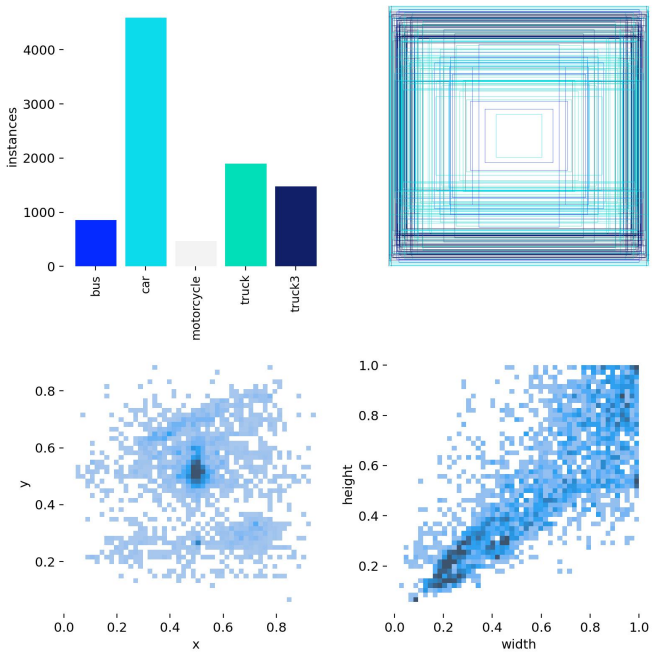

Fig. 2. Statistical analysis of the Reetiquetado de Vehiculos dataset, including class distribution, normalized bounding-box overlap, spatial distribution of object centers, and width–height relationships of annotated vehicle instances.

B. Correlation Analysis of Bounding-Box Attributes

Fig. 3 presents a correlogram illustrating the relationships among normalized bounding-box attributes in the Reetiquetado de Vehiculos dataset, including object center coordinates (x, y), width, and height. The diagonal histograms reveal the marginal distributions of each attribute, showing that object centers are predominantly concentrated near the central regions of the images, while width and height values span a broad range. Off-diagonal plots highlight the correlations between variables, most notably a strong positive relationship between bounding-box width and height, indicating consistent aspect ratios across vehicle types. The joint distributions involving spatial coordinates further confirm that larger objects tend to appear closer to the camera viewpoint, while smaller instances are more dispersed. Overall, this analysis demonstrates the structural diversity and realistic spatial correlations present in the dataset, reinforcing its suitability as a challenging benchmark for instance-aware semantic segmentation in autonomous driving scenarios.

C. Training Dynamics and Convergence Analysis

The learning curves presented in Fig. 4 demonstrate a stable and well-behaved convergence of the YOLOv8-seg training process over 100 epochs. All training loss components,

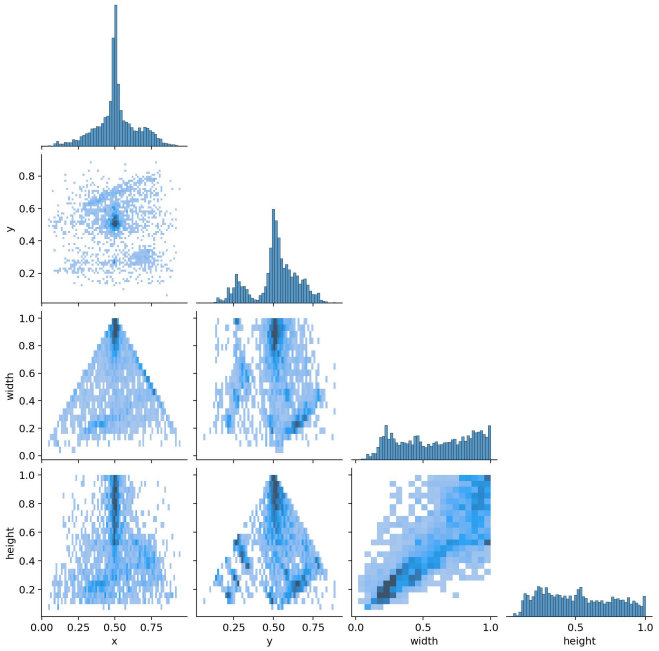

Fig. 3. Correlogram of normalized bounding-box attributes showing marginal distributions and pairwise correlations between object center coordinates, width, and height.

including bounding box regression loss, segmentation loss, classification loss, and distribution focal loss (DFL), exhibit a smooth and monotonic decrease throughout training. This behavior indicates effective optimization of both localization accuracy and pixel-level mask prediction, without oscillations or sudden instabilities that would suggest optimization difficulties. A similar decreasing trend is observed for the validation losses, which closely follow their corresponding training curves. The absence of sustained divergence between training and validation losses suggests that the model generalizes well to unseen data and does not suffer from significant overfitting. Minor fluctuations in the validation curves, particularly for classification and segmentation losses, can be attributed to the inherent complexity of UAV urban scenes and class imbalance, but these variations remain controlled and diminish as training progresses. From a performance perspective, both detection and segmentation metrics improve rapidly during the early training epochs, reflecting fast learning of low-level and mid-level visual features. Precision and recall for bounding boxes increase steadily before reaching a plateau, indicating that the model achieves a stable balance between false positives and false negatives. A similar trend is observed for mask precision and recall, confirming that improvements in object localization directly translate into better instance-level segmentation quality. The mAP@0.5 and mAP@0.5:0.95 curves for both bounding boxes and masks show consistent growth followed by gradual saturation after approximately 70–80 epochs. This saturation behavior indicates that the model approaches its optimal representational capacity under the given architecture and training configuration, with diminishing returns beyond this point. Notably, the close alignment between box-level and mask-level mAP curves highlights the strong coupling between detection and segmentation heads in the proposed framework.

Overall, these training dynamics confirm that the adopted optimization strategy, loss formulation, and architectural design lead to reliable convergence, stable validation performance, and balanced improvement across detection and instance segmentation tasks. This stability is particularly important for UAV-based applications, where robustness and generalization under challenging imaging conditions are critical.

D. Class-wise Performance Analysis

Fig. 5 presents the normalized confusion matrix of the proposed instance-aware semantic segmentation framework across the five vehicle categories. The strong diagonal dominance indicates high classification accuracy for all classes, with particularly strong performance for *car* (0.93), *bus* (0.89), *motorcycle* (0.87), *truck3* (0.85), and *truck* (0.81). These results confirm that the framework effectively distinguishes between different vehicle categories despite variations in appearance and scale.

Most misclassifications arise between visually similar categories, particularly *truck* and *truck3*, which exhibit closely related geometric structures and appearance patterns. A limited degree of confusion with the background class is also observed, mainly for large-scale vehicles, and can be attributed to partial occlusions, truncated instances, or ambiguous object boundaries in complex traffic scenes. Despite these challenges, the predominantly low off-diagonal values in the confusion matrix indicate strong class separability and consistent semantic discrimination. Overall, this analysis confirms the robustness of the proposed dual-YOLOv8 fusion framework in effectively managing inter-class similarity while preserving accurate instance-level segmentation performance.

E. Mask Precision-Recall Analysis

Fig. 6 shows the mask precision–recall curves for each vehicle category and for all classes combined. The curves exhibit strong performance across a wide range of recall values, indicating that the proposed framework maintains high precision while successfully retrieving most object instances. The aggregated curve achieves an overall mAP@0.5 of 92.9%, confirming the effectiveness of the proposed dual-YOLOv8 fusion approach for instance-aware semantic segmentation. Class-wise results demonstrate particularly strong performance for *car* and *bus*, while slightly lower precision is observed for visually challenging categories such as *truck*. Overall, the curves indicate a favorable balance between precision and recall, highlighting the robustness of the segmentation framework across different vehicle types.

F. Mask Precision-Confidence Analysis

Fig. 7 illustrates the mask precision–confidence curves for each vehicle class and for all classes combined. Precision increases steadily as the confidence threshold rises, indicating a progressive reduction in false-positive segmentation predictions. The aggregated curve shows that the proposed framework achieves near-perfect precision at high confidence levels, reaching a precision of 1.00 at a confidence threshold of approximately 0.98. Class-wise curves exhibit consistent behavior, with minor variations reflecting differences in object appearance and class frequency. These results demonstrate the

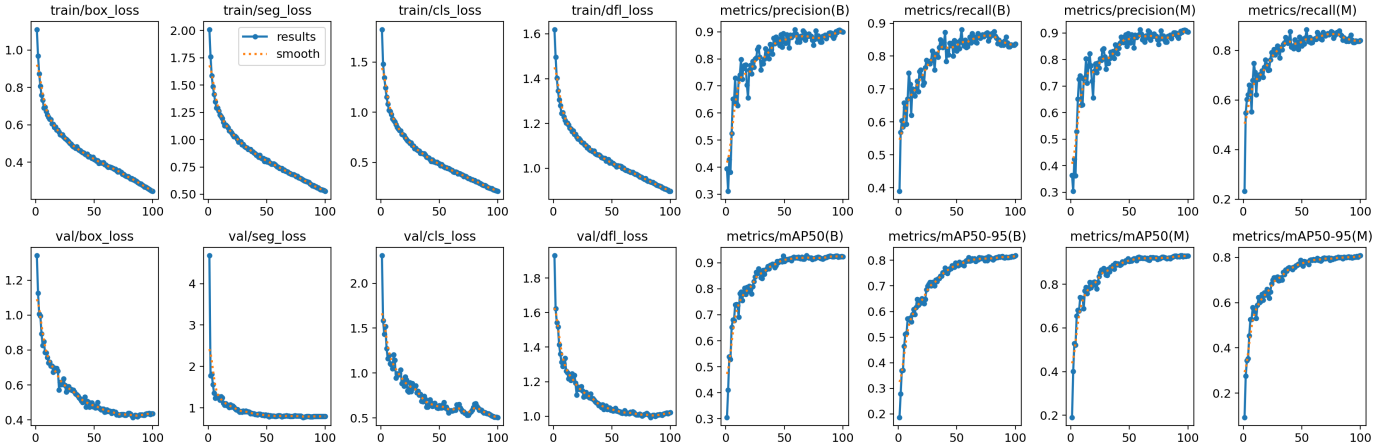

Fig. 4. Training and validation curves of YOLOv8-seg, over 100 epochs, for Bounding Box Prediction (B) and Segmentation Outputs (M).

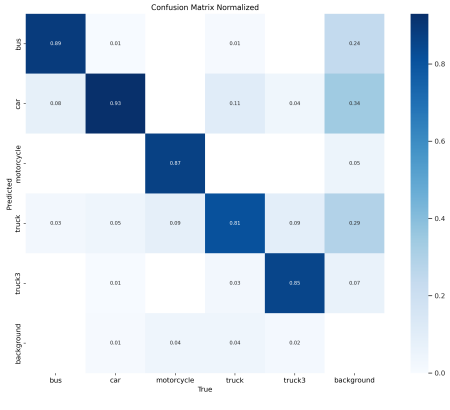

Fig. 5. Normalized confusion matrix analysis.

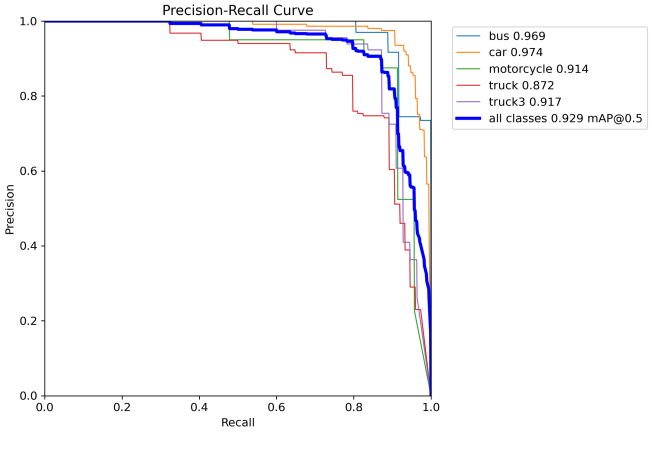

Fig. 6. Mask precision-recall curves analysis.

reliability of the proposed instance-aware semantic segmentation framework in producing highly accurate segmentation outputs when appropriate confidence thresholds are applied.

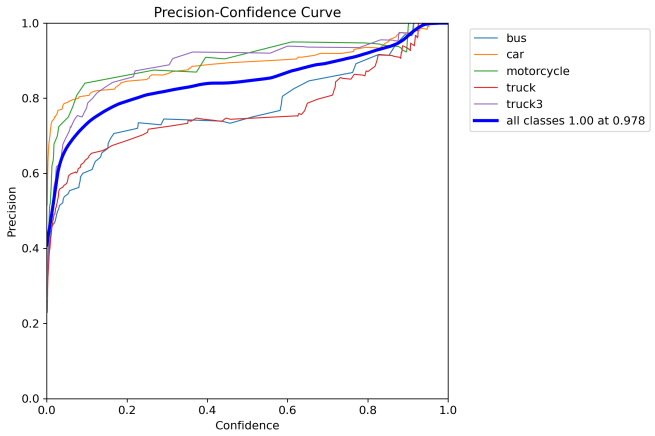

Fig. 7. Mask precision-confidence analysis.

G. Mask Recall-Confidence Analysis

Fig. 8 presents the mask recall–confidence curves for individual vehicle classes and for all classes combined. High recall values are observed at low confidence thresholds, indicating that the proposed framework successfully detects and segments most object instances. As the confidence threshold increases, recall gradually decreases due to the stricter acceptance of predictions. The aggregated curve shows an overall recall of approximately 0.96 at zero confidence and maintains stable performance across a wide confidence range before dropping sharply at very high thresholds. Class-wise trends remain consistent, with slight variations reflecting differences in object size, visibility, and class frequency. These results highlight the trade-off between recall and confidence threshold selection in instance-aware semantic segmentation.

H. Mask F1-Confidence Analysis

Fig. 9 presents the mask F1–confidence curves for individual vehicle classes and for all classes combined. The F1 score increases rapidly at low confidence thresholds and remains stable over a broad confidence range, indicating a balanced trade-off between precision and recall. The aggregated

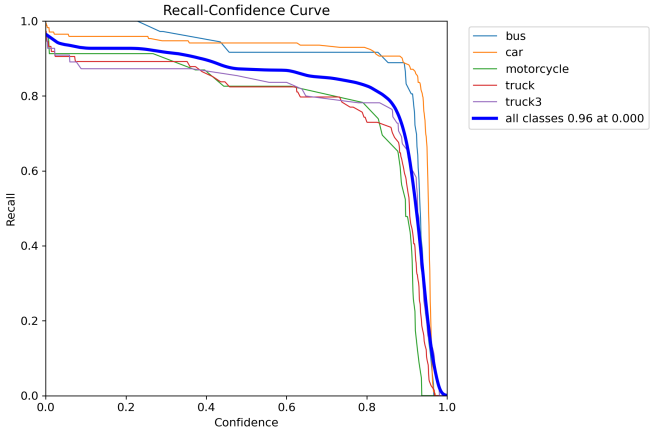

Fig. 8. Mask recall-confidence curves analysis.

curve reaches a maximum F1 score of approximately 0.87 at a confidence threshold of 0.77, which can be considered an optimal operating point for the proposed instance-aware semantic segmentation framework. Class-wise curves exhibit similar trends, with minor variations reflecting differences in object appearance and class distribution. These results provide a practical guideline for selecting confidence thresholds that balance segmentation accuracy and completeness in real-time applications.

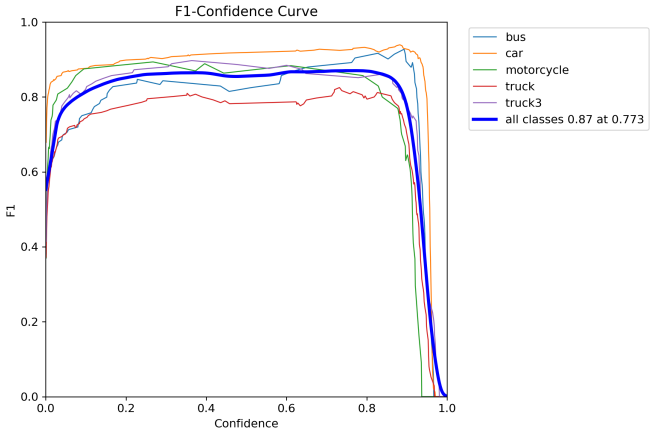

Fig. 9. Mask F1-confidence analysis.

I. Embedded Deployment: ARM vs. GPU

Although the proposed Dual-YOLOv8 fusion framework achieves strong segmentation accuracy and real-time inference on a desktop GPU, embedded deployment introduces stricter constraints in compute throughput, memory bandwidth, and runtime overhead. On the workstation platform used in this study (Intel i7-11800H + NVIDIA RTX 3050), the proposed method attains an overall mask $\text{mAP}_{0.5}$ of 92.9 ($\text{mAP}_{0.5:0.95}$ of 80.8) with an average processing time of approximately 7.9 ms per image at 640×640, corresponding to about 126 FPS.

To contextualize deployment on resource-constrained devices, we consider two representative edge targets: 1) an ARM CPU-only platform (Raspberry Pi 5) and 2) a low-power GPU platform (NVIDIA Jetson Nano). Raspberry Pi 5 is built around the Broadcom BCM2712 SoC featuring a quad-core Arm Cortex-A76 CPU operating at 2.4 GHz. Jetson Nano integrates a 128-core NVIDIA Maxwell GPU and a quad-core Arm Cortex-A57 CPU, and is advertised at 472 GFLOPS AI performance. For a fair real-time characterization on embedded systems, end-to-end latency is defined as:

$$T_{\text{e2e}} = T_{\text{pre}} + T_{\text{net}} + T_{\text{post}}, \tag{6}$$

where, T_{pre} includes resize/letterbox and normalization, T_{net} is the model forward pass, and T_{post} includes confidence filtering, NMS, and mask decoding. Unless explicitly stated, visualization/overlay rendering and camera/video I/O are excluded, since they depend heavily on the application pipeline rather than the model itself.

Table I reports the desktop reference (measured in this paper) and *estimated* end-to-end timing on Raspberry Pi 5 and Jetson Nano for batch=1 and 640×640. The embedded results are estimates (not directly measured in this study) and are provided to guide the expected order of magnitude when selecting an appropriate deployment target and optimization strategy.

The GPU-accelerated Jetson Nano is expected to provide substantially lower end-to-end latency than CPU-only execution due to CUDA/TensorRT acceleration, making it the more suitable target for running the full dual-model fusion pipeline at 640×640 when near real-time constraints are required. However, Jetson Nano lacks comprehensive support for INT8 across all layers in TensorRT workflows on this class of hardware, so FP16 (or FP32) is typically the practical deployment choice.

In contrast, Raspberry Pi 5 inference is dominated by T_{net} on CPU, and thus benefits most from 1) quantization and 2) reducing input size and/or simplifying the model. Quantized inference on Raspberry Pi-class devices is commonly performed using INT8 arithmetic to reduce model size and improve runtime performance, but it may introduce a small accuracy drop, motivating either post-training quantization with calibration data (PTQ) or quantization-aware training (QAT).

Finally, these embedded estimates reinforce the main conclusion drawn from the workstation experiments: while the proposed fusion strategy offers an excellent accuracy–efficiency balance on a desktop GPU (92.9 $\text{mAP}_{0.5}$ at 7.9 ms/image), deployment on CPU-only embedded devices typically requires additional compression (quantization/pruning) and/or architectural simplification to meet strict real-time constraints.

J. Qualitative Segmentation Results

In addition to quantitative metrics, qualitative results on unseen validation images further demonstrate the robustness and visual consistency of the proposed framework.

Fig. 10 presents qualitative instance-aware semantic segmentation results obtained on the validation set using the

TABLE I. END-TO-END LATENCY BREAKDOWN

Platform	Precision	T_{pre} (ms)	T_{net} (ms)	T_{post} (ms)	T_{e2e} (ms)	FPS
RTX 3050 (reference)	FP16/AMP	–	–	–	7.9	126
Jetson Nano (GPU)	FP16 (TensorRT)	4–7	35–60	8–15	50–82	12–20
	FP32	4–7	55–90	10–18	69–115	9–14
Raspberry Pi 5 (CPU)	FP32	25–45	600–1000	70–120	695–1165	0.9–1.4
	INT8 (PTQ/QAT)	25–45	280–520	60–100	365–665	1.5–2.7

proposed fusion-based dual-YOLOv8 framework. The examples demonstrate accurate segmentation of multiple vehicle categories, including cars, buses, trucks, and motorcycles, across diverse traffic scenes. The model successfully delineates vehicle boundaries at the pixel level while preserving correct semantic labels and high confidence scores. Notably, the framework handles variations in object scale, partial occlusions, and complex backgrounds, such as roadside vegetation and shadows, with consistent segmentation quality. The results also show reliable separation of adjacent objects and stable predictions for both near-field and distant vehicles. These qualitative observations corroborate the quantitative evaluation, confirming the robustness and visual consistency of the proposed instance-aware semantic segmentation approach in real-world driving scenarios.

Fig. 10. Qualitative instance-aware semantic segmentation results on the validation set produced by the proposed fusion-based dual-YOLOv8 framework.

K. Comparative Study with State-of-the-Art

Table II presents an indicative comparison between the proposed dual-YOLOv8 fusion framework and representative real-time instance segmentation methods reported in the literature. Early one-stage approaches such as YOLACT and YOLACT++ achieve moderate segmentation accuracy on the COCO benchmark, with Mask AP values of 29.8% and 34.1%, respectively, while operating at approximately 33–34 FPS. Subsequent YOLO-based methods, including Insta-YOLO and YOLO-Core, improve inference speed and segmentation performance through architectural refinements, with YOLO-Core reaching 38.6% COCO Mask AP at 45 FPS. More recent lightweight designs tailored for traffic and urban perception, such as PSC-YOLO and UDS-YOLO, emphasize efficiency and robustness in complex road scenes. PSC-YOLO reports a relative improvement of 2.0% in mask average precision over YOLOv8n-seg while maintaining real-time performance at approximately 91 FPS, whereas UDS-YOLO achieves 39.5% mAP@0.5 on the Cityscapes dataset with a processing speed of 106.6 FPS. In contrast, the proposed dual-YOLOv8 fusion framework attains a substantially higher segmentation accuracy, achieving 92.9% mAP@0.5 while sustaining real-time inference at 126 FPS on the evaluated dataset. Although the reported results are obtained under different datasets and evaluation protocols, the comparison highlights the favorable accuracy–efficiency trade-off of the proposed approach and its suitability for real-time autonomous driving applications.

Overall, the experimental findings and comparative analysis confirm that the proposed approach achieves a favorable balance between segmentation accuracy and real-time performance, reinforcing its suitability for practical deployment in autonomous driving and ADAS applications.

VI. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

In this paper, a lightweight dual-YOLOv8 fusion framework for instance-aware semantic segmentation in autonomous driving scenarios has been presented. By combining the complementary strengths of YOLOv8n-seg and YOLOv8s-seg, the proposed approach enhances robustness to object scale variation and occlusions while maintaining real-time inference performance. Experimental results on a vehicle-centric dataset demonstrate the effectiveness of the framework, achieving an overall mAP@0.5 of 92.9% with an average inference time of 7.9 ms per image (126 FPS) on an NVIDIA RTX 3050 GPU. Both quantitative and qualitative evaluations confirm accurate and consistent instance-level segmentation in challenging traffic scenes.

While the proposed framework demonstrates strong performance, several limitations should be acknowledged. The experimental evaluation is limited to vehicle categories and does not yet include vulnerable road users such as pedestrians or cyclists. In addition, the embedded deployment analysis on ARM and low-power GPU platforms is indicative, with latency figures partially based on estimated performance rather than exhaustive hardware benchmarking. The current fusion

TABLE II. INDICATIVE COMPARISON WITH REAL-TIME INSTANCE SEGMENTATION METHODS

Method	Backbone	Reported Metric	Speed (FPS)
YOLACT [3]	ResNet-101	29.8 (COCO Mask AP)	33
YOLACT++ [19]	ResNet-101	34.1 (COCO Mask AP)	34
Insta-YOLO [5]	YOLOv3	–	30
YOLO-Core [6]	CSP-based	38.6 (COCO Mask AP)	45
PSC-YOLO [20]	YOLOv8n-based	+2.0% Mask AP vs YOLOv8n-seg	∼91
UDS-YOLO [21]	YOLOv8-seg	39.5 / 24.0 (Cityscapes)	106.6
YOLOv8-seg [9]	YOLOv8s	Dataset-specific	120
Proposed Method	**Dual-YOLOv8 Fusion**	**92.9 (mAP@0.5)**	**126**

strategy also employs fixed model combinations and does not dynamically adapt to scene complexity.

Beyond quantitative performance, this study highlights the potential of model-level fusion as a practical design strategy for real-time perception systems in autonomous driving and ADAS. By demonstrating that complementary lightweight networks can outperform single-model designs under strict latency constraints, the proposed framework provides insights for future perception architectures targeting resource-constrained and safety-critical environments.

Future work will explore extensions to multimodal perception by incorporating additional sensors such as LiDAR or radar, as well as adaptive fusion mechanisms with confidence-aware weighting to dynamically balance model contributions across varying scene complexities.

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Lightweight Machine Learning for Real-Time Gear Change Prediction in Autonomous Parking

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***Abstract*—Real-time motion planning for autonomous parking on embedded advanced driver-assistance system (ADAS) platforms faces a fundamental computational bottleneck: transformer-based approaches (e.g., Motion Planning Transformer, Diffusion-based planners) achieve strong performance but incur prohibitive computational costs unsuitable for resource-constrained automotive systems. This work proposes a lightweight alternative machine learning approach using Random Forest classifiers and regressors to predict parking trajectory regions and vehicle orientations, enabling accelerated Rapidly-exploring Random Trees (RRT) planning without sacrificing robustness. The approach is trained on a dataset of 10,725 synthetic perpendicular backward parking scenarios generated via Rapidly-exploring Random Tree Star (RRT*) in the Reeds-Shepp configuration space. Using Random Forests with 20 trees and maximum depth 8, the method achieves 98.3–100% success rate in multi-direction-change scenarios with planning times of 0.15–0.25 seconds, compared to 2.81 seconds for unconstrained RRT. In scenarios with insufficient prediction guidance, the constrained planner can maintain a fallback mechanism that preserves RRT's probabilistic completeness guarantees. This work demonstrates that simpler machine learning models can match transformer-based approaches while remaining practical for embedded deployment.**

***Keywords*—Autonomous parking; direction change detection; embedded systems; machine learning; motion planning; random forest; rapidly-exploring random trees; rapidly-exploring random tree star**

I. Introduction

Autonomous parking represents a critical advanced driver-assistance system (ADAS) capability that enhances vehicle usability and road safety. The task requires generating collision-free, kinematically feasible trajectories that navigate vehicles into parking spaces under strict real-time constraints. Perpendicular backward parking, the most common real-world scenario, demands multiple direction reversals (gear changes) and precise trajectory execution, presenting a non-trivial motion planning challenge.

Sampling-based motion planners (SBMPs) such as Rapidly-exploring Random Trees (RRT) [1] and Rapidly-exploring Random Tree Star (RRT*) [2] provide probabilistic completeness guarantees—if a collision-free path exists, these algorithms will find it given sufficient computation time. RRT* additionally offers asymptotic optimality, enabling generation of near-optimal parking trajectories. However, computational requirements for these algorithms often reach several seconds per planning instance, exceeding real-time requirements of automotive systems. Current ADAS processors allocate computational budgets primarily to perception tasks (computer vision, LiDAR processing) and end-to-end learning models for driving decisions, leaving minimal resources for classical motion planning.

Recent advances have demonstrated that learning-augmented planning can bridge this efficiency gap. The Motion Planning Transformer (MPT) framework learns spatial path structure from SBMP outputs [3], enabling faster RRT exploration through intelligent guidance. Transformer-Enhanced Motion Planner (TEMP) extends this with environmental encoders [4] that further reduce search space. Concurrently, diffusion-based approaches (e.g., Diffusion-based Parking Planner, MultiPark) have shown promise in learning complex parking distributions. However, all these approaches introduce substantial computational overhead: transformer inference requires millions of parameters and iterative attention mechanisms, while diffusion models necessitate multiple denoising iterations. For ADAS platforms where transformer or diffusion inference could dominate the planning budget, these solutions remain impractical.

This work addresses this gap by proposing a lightweight, learning-augmented planning framework specifically optimized for autonomous parking on embedded systems. Rather than employing global transformer models or diffusion processes, the approach trains per-grid-cell Random Forest classifiers and regressors to predict path occupancy (0=empty, 1=path, 2=state change, 3=direction change) and vehicle orientation. These lightweight models (20 trees, maximum depth 8) require minimal inference time while providing spatial guidance that accelerates RRT exploration. The framework may also preserve the theoretical completeness properties of RRT through a fallback mechanism that permits unconstrained exploration when learned guidance is insufficient.

The main contributions of this work are:

- A large-scale synthetic dataset of 10,725 perpendicular backward parking scenarios with ground-truth RRT* trajectories in the Reeds-Shepp configuration space [5];
- A lightweight two-tier learning framework combining Random Forest classifiers [6] for spatial path occupancy prediction with regressors for vehicle orientation estimation;
- An enhanced RRT algorithm that integrates learning-based predictions to constrain state sampling while maintaining probabilistic completeness;
- Comprehensive experimental validation demonstrating 17-fold planning time reduction (2.81 to 0.16 seconds)

*Corresponding author.

and improved success rates (98–100%) in direction-change-intensive scenarios, with performance scaling as a function of prediction confidence;

- Evidence that lightweight machine learning models achieve comparable benefits to transformer-based methods while remaining feasible for embedded ADAS deployment.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section II reviews related work in sampling-based motion planning, learning-augmented approaches, and autonomous parking systems. Section III presents the methodology, including dataset generation, model architecture, and the constrained RRT algorithm. Section IV presents experimental results with quantitative performance breakdown by prediction confidence. Section V discusses findings, computational feasibility, limitations, and future research directions. Section VI concludes with a summary of contributions and practical implications.

II. Related Work

A. Classical Sampling-Based Motion Planning

Sampling-based motion planners have dominated robotic and autonomous vehicle path planning for over two decades. The Rapidly-exploring Random Tree (RRT) algorithm [1] provides probabilistic completeness and handles high-dimensional configuration spaces effectively. RRT* [2] extends this framework with rewiring to achieve asymptotic optimality. For vehicles with kinematic constraints (e.g., non-holonomic differential steering), variants incorporating Dubins [7] and Reeds-Shepp [5] steering enable feasible trajectory generation. While theoretically robust, classical SBMPs typically require seconds to minutes on embedded platforms, limiting real-time automotive applications.

B. Learning-Augmented Motion Planning

Recent research has explored augmenting classical planners with learned models. The Motion Planning Transformer (MPT) [3] demonstrates that transformer networks trained on SBMP outputs can generalize motion planning constraints to novel configurations and environments. By predicting feasible regions, MPT enables RRT to focus exploration on high-probability areas, achieving substantial acceleration. Building on this work, Transformer-Enhanced Motion Planner (TEMP) [4] introduces an Environmental Information Semantic Encoder (EISE) to further reduce required search space through semantic understanding of scene structure.

However, transformer-based approaches incur significant computational costs. A typical transformer model contains millions of parameters and requires forward passes involving matrix multiplications across multiple attention layers, often necessitating seconds of inference time on embedded platforms. In ADAS systems where a single processing chip allocates computational budget across perception (computer vision, object detection, tracking) and driving decision models (end-to-end learning, reinforcement learning), the overhead of transformer inference can exceed motion planning itself, making such approaches impractical for real-time deployment.

C. Diffusion Models in Motion Planning

Emerging diffusion-based planning approaches have shown promise in complex motion planning tasks. Diffusion-based planning models [8] [9] leverage learned score functions to generate collision-free trajectories by iterative refinement. In the parking domain, models such as Diffusion-based Parking Planner [8] and MultiPark [9] apply diffusion processes to learn parking distributions from expert demonstrations. While effective, these methods similarly suffer from computational cost: each planning instance requires multiple denoising iterations (typically 10–50 steps), each involving forward passes through the neural network, rendering real-time inference infeasible on embedded platforms.

D. Lightweight and Embedded Planning Approaches

Prior work on embedded motion planning has explored heuristic-based methods (e.g., Hybrid A* [10] with handcrafted heuristics) and simplified geometric approaches. While computationally efficient, these methods sacrifice generality and theoretical guarantees. The current work bridges this gap by demonstrating that lightweight supervised learning models (Random Forests with limited tree depth and count) can provide sufficient spatial structure to accelerate sampling-based planning while maintaining theoretical guarantees and remaining practical for embedded systems.

III. Materials and Methods

A. Problem Formulation

This work addresses motion planning in perpendicular backward parking scenarios. The configuration space is defined as $\mathcal{C} = SE(2) \times \{F, B\}$, where a configuration $\mathbf{x} = (x, y, \theta, g) \in \mathcal{C}$ represents vehicle position $(x, y) \in \mathbb{R}^2$, heading angle $\theta \in [0, 2\pi]$, and gear state $g \in \{F \text{ (forward)}, B \text{ (backward)}\}$. The parking task is specified by start configuration $\mathbf{x}_s$ and goal configuration $\mathbf{x}_g$. The environment contains polygonal obstacles representing adjacent vehicles and parking lot boundaries.

B. Dataset Generation

1) Vehicle and scene parameterization: A vehicle model based on the Audi A4 sedan was parameterized with the following specifications: length 4.76 m, width 1.84 m, wheelbase 2.82 m. Each parking scenario is geometrically described by a feature vector $\mathbf{f} \in \mathbb{R}^{26}$ containing:

- Ten vertices (20 coordinates) representing obstacle boundaries: two triangular regions flanking the parking slot (shown in magenta in Fig. 1), one rear boundary line, and one forward maneuvering boundary line (both shown in grey in Fig. 1).
- Start frame position (2 coordinates) and orientation (1 angle): 3 values total.
- Goal frame position (2 coordinates) and orientation (1 angle): 3 values total.

Data augmentation was performed by randomly translating obstacles within a bounded region $[-10, +10]$ m^2 and rotating obstacle configurations. This procedure generated 10,725 unique parking scenarios, with failed path generations (path not found within 30-second timeout) filtered post-generation.

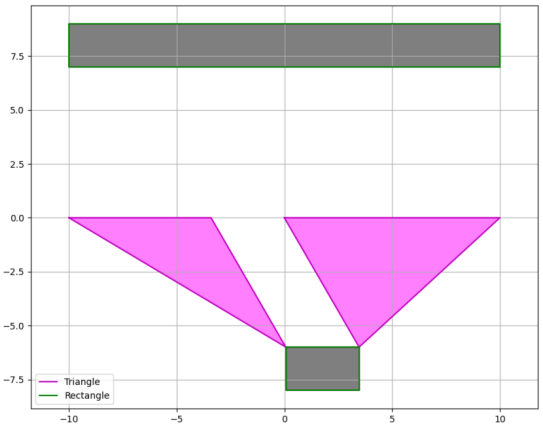


Fig. 1. Representation of the parking scene obstacles.

2) Path generation and preprocessing: For each scenario, a ground-truth parking trajectory was computed using the Open Motion Planning Library (OMPL) [11] with the RRT* algorithm and Reeds-Shepp steering to respect vehicle kinematics. Path generation was limited to a 30-second timeout per scenario.

Each resulting path was represented as a sequence of states in the Reeds-Shepp space and uniformly interpolated to exactly 100 waypoints for standardization across all scenarios (Fig. 2a).

From these interpolated waypoints all the direction/gear changes are extracted as well (Fig. 2b).

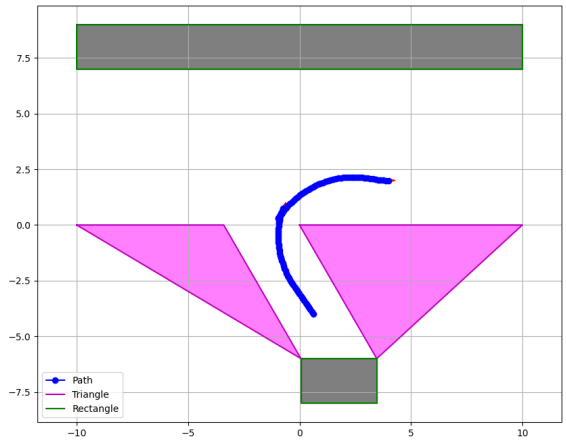
Of the initial 10,725 scenarios attempted, the 2,252 scenarios where RRT* failed to generate valid paths (e.g., scenarios with insufficient maneuvering space) were excluded from further analysis. The remaining 8,473 valid scenarios were split into training (80%, 6778 scenarios) and test (20%, 1695 scenarios) sets prior to feature extraction.

C. Grid-Based Learning Framework

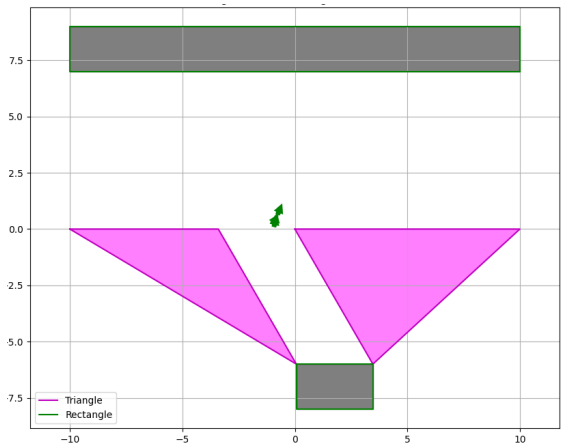
1) Spatial grid representation and labeling: A uniform spatial grid of 1 m $\times$ 1 m cells was overlaid on each parking scenario. Grid resolution was selected based on preliminary experiments: coarser resolutions (2 m) provided insufficient spatial discrimination, while finer resolutions (0.5 m, 0.25 m) increased model complexity and inference latency without improving planning success rates.

For each grid cell, the following information was extracted from the RRT* reference path:

- Occupancy class (Displayed in Fig. 3a) $c_i \in \{0, 1, 2, 3\}$: Maximum class among cells crossed by the path, where:
  - Class 0 (empty): cell contains no path waypoints
  - Class 1 (path): cell contains interpolated waypoints



(a) Representation of the 100-waypoint interpolated parking path.



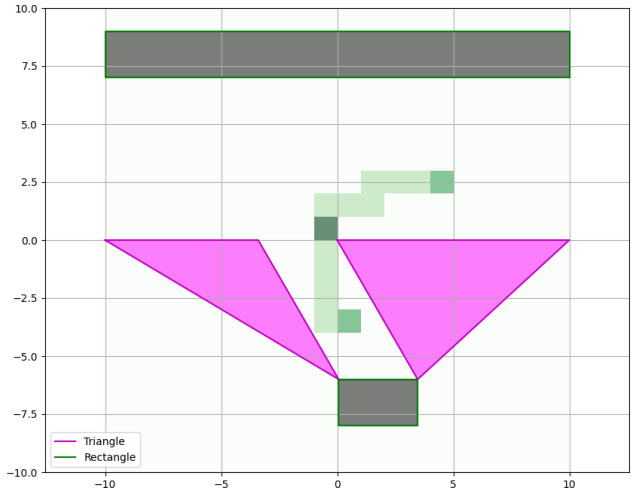
(b) Representation of direction changes in the path.

Fig. 2. Extracted information from parking path.

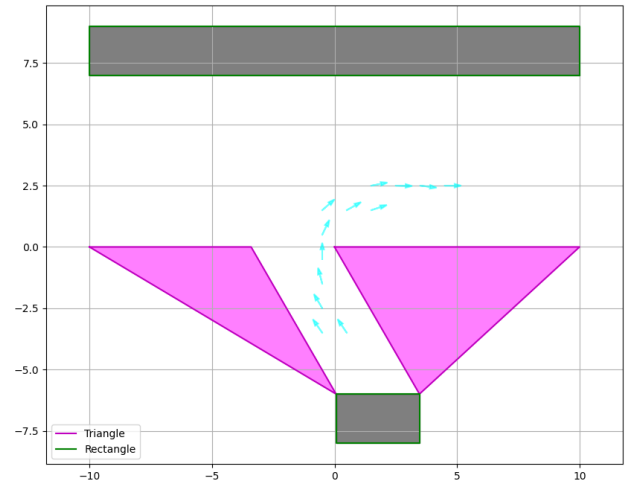
  - Class 2 (state change): cell contains a configuration where the path generates or ends a Reeds-Shepp curve (this includes the start and end locations)
  - Class 3 (direction change): cell contains a gear change
- Orientation (Displayed in Fig. 3b) θ_i: Average heading angle of all waypoints within the cell

A direction change is formally defined as a transition in gear state (forward $\rightarrow$ backward or backward $\rightarrow$ forward), equivalent to a reversal in driving direction.

2) Model architecture and training: For each grid cell, a separate Random Forest classifier was trained using the feature vector $\mathbf{f} \in \mathbb{R}^{26}$ as input and the occupancy class c_i as target. Random Forest models were selected for their non-parametric nature, robustness to feature scaling, and minimal inference overhead—critical for embedded deployment. The hyperparameter selection was: 20 decision trees with maximum tree depth of 8.



(a) Representation of the path grid overlay.



(b) Representation of the orientation overlay.

Fig. 3. Representation of the path data after preprocessing.

Orientation prediction was performed separately. Initial cells lacking waypoint coverage were marked as missing. A K-Nearest Neighbors imputer ($k = 5$) was applied to estimate missing orientations from neighboring cells. Subsequently, a separate Random Forest regressor (20 trees, maximum depth 8) was trained for each grid cell to predict heading angles from the feature vector $\mathbf{f}$, using the imputed orientations as training targets. This output data is displayed in Fig. 4.

D. Constrained RRT with Learned Guidance

The proposed planning algorithm augments standard RRT with a custom state sampler that integrates predictions from the trained models:

- Given a parking scenario, extract the feature vector $\mathbf{f}$
- Query the trained classifiers to obtain per-cell occupancy predictions: $\hat{c}_i$ for all grid cells i
- Query the trained regressors to obtain per-cell orientation predictions: $\hat{\theta}_i$ for all grid cells i

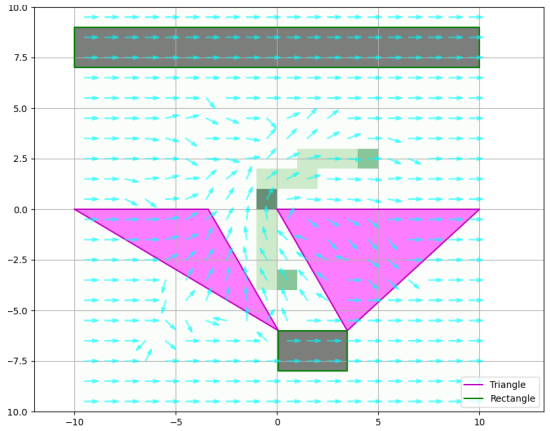


Fig. 4. Representation of the output vector data.

- During RRT tree expansion:
  - (Standard RRT sampling) Generate a random configuration $\mathbf{x}_{\text{rand}}$ in the configuration space
  - (Guided sampling) If $\mathbf{x}_{\text{rand}}$ projects to a grid cell with predicted occupancy $\hat{c}_i > 2$ (gear change) or part of the start/end cells, accept the state; otherwise, reject and resample
  - (Orientation constraint) If accepted, perturb the heading component of $\mathbf{x}_{\text{rand}}$ to lie within $[\hat{\theta}_i - 45°, \hat{\theta}_i + 45°]$
  - (Fallback mechanism) If valid state sampling fails after $N = 100$ consecutive rejection attempts, switch to unconstrained uniform sampling for a configurable n sampling attempts
- Continue standard RRT tree extension toward the goal configuration

This formulation preserves the probabilistic completeness of RRT: if a solution exists and sufficient time remains, the fallback mechanism ensures that the algorithm explores the full configuration space and eventually discovers a path.

E. Experimental Validation Protocol

For each of the 1695 test scenarios:

- Execute unconstrained RRT (baseline) with 30-second planning timeout
- Execute constrained RRT (proposed method) with identical timeout
- Record: success/failure, planning duration, number of tree nodes created
- Post-hoc: count number of direction changes predicted in that scenario's grid

Success is defined as finding any collision-free path within the timeout. All experiments were conducted on a standard

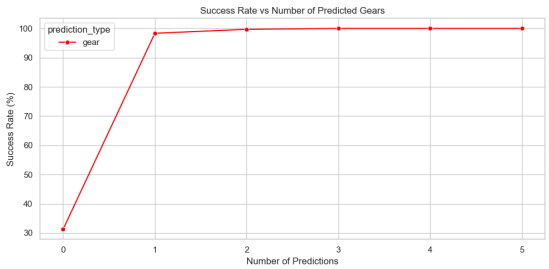
desktop workstation (AMD Ryzen 5 CPU, 32 GB RAM, no GPU acceleration) using OMPL with Python bindings and scikit-learn [12] for model training and inference.

IV. Results

A. Overall Performance Summary

Table I presents aggregate results across all 1695 test scenarios. Unconstrained RRT achieved 96.4% success rate with mean success time of 2.81 seconds and overall mean time of 3.79 seconds (including failed attempts). The constrained RRT approach achieved 71.9% overall success with a mean success time of 0.35 seconds and an overall mean time of 8.68 seconds; however, this aggregate masks important performance variation correlated with prediction confidence (detailed in Section IV-B).

The low overall success rate and high mean time for constrained RRT in the aggregate reflect scenarios with sparse or no direction change predictions (detailed in Section IV-C). These scenarios comprise approximately 40.18% of the test set, where prediction guidance is unreliable, and the constrained sampler restricts exploration too severely, causing timeout failures.



(a) Success graph with respect to number of predictions.

(b) Timing graph with respect to number of predictions.

Fig. 5. Constrained RRT performance with respect to number of predictions.

B. Performance Breakdown by Prediction Confidence

The key insight emerges when analyzing performance conditional on the number of direction change predictions provided by the learned model. Table II presents results grouped by direction change prediction count.

We can see in Fig. 5a the positive trend of success rate with number of predictions and in Fig. 5b we can see the inverse relation in runtime as the number of predictions increase.

Performance exhibits a clear correlation with prediction confidence:

- No predictions (0 cells): 33.2% success. In these scenarios, the constrained sampler restricts states to empty grid cells, preventing effective exploration. Timeout failures dominate.
- Single prediction (1 cell): 98.3% success, 0.15 s mean time. Minimal guidance proves sufficient to accelerate planning significantly.
- Two predictions: 99.7% success, 0.15 s mean time.
- Multiple predictions (3–5 cells): 100% success, 0.17–0.25 s mean time.

For scenarios with at least one direction change prediction, the constrained RRT dramatically outperforms unconstrained RRT in both success rate and planning time, achieving 17-fold speedup (2.81 to 0.16 seconds).

C. Failure Mode Analysis

Two distinct failure modes emerge:

1) Constrained RRT failures: Occur primarily when direction change predictions are sparse or absent (0-1 cells). In these scenarios, the learned model failed to capture the true solution structure, either because 1) the test scenario poorly matches the training distribution, or 2) the direction change count is inherently low, providing minimal guidance to the state sampler. The fallback mechanism prevents complete failure but provides no advantage over unconstrained search, explaining the degraded performance.

2) Unconstrained RRT failures: 3.6% of scenarios exceed the 30-second timeout without finding a valid path. These are intrinsically difficult configurations (e.g., very tight parking spaces) that require extensive exploration.

V. Discussion

A. Interpretation and Trade-offs

The results reveal a fundamental trade-off between search coverage and computational efficiency. Unconstrained RRT explores the entire configuration space uniformly, providing robust coverage but requiring extensive computation. Constrained RRT leverages learned predictions to focus exploration toward high-probability path regions, dramatically reducing computational cost but at a loss of coverage in low-prediction scenarios.

The strong performance in high-prediction scenarios (98.3–100% success with 0.15–0.25 s planning) demonstrates that direction changes create a highly structured planning problem. The learned models effectively capture this structure, providing guidance that exceeds random exploration in value. This supports the hypothesis that parking geometry imposes strong constraints on feasible solution paths—constraints that modest machine learning models can capture with reasonable accuracy.

TABLE I. OVERALL PLANNING PERFORMANCE (ALL TEST SCENARIOS)

Method	Success Rate	Mean Success Time	Mean Overall Time
Unconstrained RRT	96.4%	2.81 s	3.79 s
Constrained RRT (Proposed)	71.9%	0.35 s	8.68 s

TABLE II. PERFORMANCE BY NUMBER OF DIRECTION CHANGE PREDICTIONS

Prediction Count	Percentage of Scenarios	Success Rate	Mean Success Time	Mean Overall Time
0 (no prediction)	40.18%	31.2%	1.22 s	21.05 s
1	21.30%	98.3%	0.15 s	0.65 s
2	19.82%	99.7%	0.15 s	0.24 s
3-5	18.70%	100.0%	0.17–0.25 s	0.17–0.25 s
All >0 predictions	59.82%	99.3%	0.16 s	0.37 s

B. Computational Feasibility for Embedded ADAS

Studies on the deployment of Random Forest (RF) models in embedded environments have demonstrated their suitability for embedded ADAS applications. Kuppers et al. reported achieving an inference time of approximately 700 microseconds per RF classifier on a test platform [13]. Accordingly, the 400 RF classifiers used in this work result in a total inference time of about 0.28 seconds. The analysis further indicates that many grid cells remain unutilized, suggesting that targeted grid pruning could reduce computational overhead and enhance runtime efficiency. While this overhead remains negligible compared to the overall planning time observed in unconstrained RRT, the models retain a lightweight footprint, as summarized below:

- Model size: Daghero et al. successfully deployed RF models on microcontrollers with only 520 kB of available memory [14]. Also, recent work by Kochel et al. demostrates efficient tree ensemble inference (including Random Forest) on ARM-based embedded devices [15].
- Memory access pattern: Tree traversal operations demonstrate high CPU cache locality.
- No specialized hardware required: Inference executes efficiently on standard CPUs, reducing both power consumption and thermal load.

In contrast, transformer-based approaches require millions of parameters and iterative attention computations, often necessitating GPU acceleration and power budgets unsuitable for ADAS platforms. Diffusion-based methods similarly require multiple denoising iterations, compounding computational overhead. The lightweight Random Forest framework enables deployment on resource-constrained embedded processors currently used in many production ADAS systems.

C. Comparison with Learning-Based Planning Methods

The proposed method achieves competitive results relative to transformer-based approaches while remaining practical for embedded deployment. MPT and TEMP require transformer inference, estimated at 50–500 ms per planning instance on embedded platforms (depending on model size and hardware). MultiPark and diffusion-based methods require multiple denoising iterations, further increasing latency. The proposed constrained RRT achieves 0.15–0.25 s planning in high-prediction scenarios, comparable to or better than these methods.

This efficiency gain comes from task specialization: unlike MPT (general motion planning) or diffusion models (learning complex distributions), the current work targets a narrower domain (parking) with a simpler learning objective (binary occupancy and continuous orientation prediction). This trade-off—generality for efficiency—is appropriate for ADAS applications where parking represents a well-defined, repeatedly executed task.

D. Limitations

Several important limitations merit discussion:

- Parking type specificity: Models are trained exclusively on perpendicular backward parking. Generalization to parallel, angled, or diagonal parking requires retraining on scenario-specific data. The 10,725 scenario budget was chosen for manageable training time; larger datasets could improve robustness but at higher computational cost.
- Vehicle specificity: Models are parameterized for the Audi A4 sedan. Vehicles with different wheelbase lengths, turning radii, or dimensions require new training. Transfer learning approaches (pre-training on diverse geometries, fine-tuning) may mitigate this limitation but were not explored here.
- Prediction reliability in distribution shift: When test scenarios poorly match the training distribution (e.g., parking slots with unusual obstacle arrangements not seen during training), learned predictions become unreliable, degrading constrained RRT performance below baseline.
- Grid resolution trade-off: The 1 m grid balances spatial accuracy with model complexity. Finer grids (0.5 m, 0.25 m) could improve precision but increase the number of per-cell models proportionally, increasing inference latency and memory footprint. Coarser grids reduce models but sacrifice spatial resolution.
- Baseline comparison limitation: Comparison is against unconstrained RRT only. Quantitative comparisons with transformer-based methods (MPT, TEMP) or

diffusion models on identical scenarios are not available, limiting direct competitive assessment. These comparisons would require access to proprietary implementations.

- Hyperparameter sensitivity not analyzed: The choice of 20 trees and depth 8 was based on quick manual comparisons but ablation studies comparing alternative configurations (5 trees, 50 trees, varying depths) are not presented, limiting understanding of sensitivity to these choices.

E. Future Research Directions

Future work should address:

- Multi-parking-type unification: Development of a single learning model that handles perpendicular, parallel, and angled parking simultaneously, trading per-type accuracy for unified generality.
- Grid Cell Predictor Pruning: In depth analysis of grid cell predictor utility for pruning and possibly explore a learning model to determine which grid cells are worth inference.
- Transfer learning: Pre-training on diverse synthetic vehicle geometries and parking types, then fine-tuning for specific vehicles, to reduce per-vehicle training data requirements.
- Adaptive constraint relaxation: Dynamic adjustment of sampling constraints (grid cell restrictions, orientation bounds) based on prediction confidence, maintaining completeness while improving robustness.
- Alternative SBMP variants: Extension to RRT*, Bidirectional RRT, and other planners to assess whether learned predictions similarly accelerate different algorithm variants.
- Real-world validation: Deployment on actual autonomous vehicles with real sensor data, dynamic obstacles, and sensor noise to assess practical performance beyond simulation.
- Hardware implementation: Optimization of inference on actual ADAS processors (e.g., Qualcomm Snapdragon, NVIDIA DRIVE) to quantify practical deployment feasibility.

VI. Conclusion

This paper presented a lightweight, learning-augmented motion planning framework for real-time autonomous parking on embedded ADAS platforms. By training Random Forest classifiers and regressors to predict parking trajectory structure (occupancy classes and vehicle orientation) from scenario geometry, the approach enables accelerated RRT planning without sacrificing theoretical completeness guarantees. Experimental validation on 1695 test scenarios demonstrated that scenarios with sufficient prediction guidance achieve 98.3–100% success rates with 17-fold planning time reduction (2.81 to 0.15–0.25 seconds) compared to unconstrained RRT.

The core contribution is demonstrating that lightweight supervised learning models (20 trees, maximum depth 8) can achieve planning acceleration comparable to transformer-based approaches while remaining practical for embedded automotive deployment. This addresses a critical gap in current ADAS systems, where computational budgets are dominated by perception and end-to-end learning, leaving minimal resources for classical motion planning.

As autonomous parking systems mature toward production deployment, efficient planning methods that balance computational constraint, memory footprint, and solution quality will become increasingly critical. This work demonstrates a practical path toward real-time, reliable parking planning suitable for resource-constrained ADAS platforms, with clear pathways toward generalization to multiple parking types and vehicle platforms through transfer learning and multi-task approaches.

Acknowledgment

The authors gratefully acknowledge the Open Motion Planning Library (OMPL) developers for providing a comprehensive, open-source motion planning framework essential for this research.

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APPENDIX A
DATASET STATISTICS AND DISTRIBUTION

The parking scenario dataset exhibits the following detailed characteristics:

- **Initial scenarios generated:** 10,725
- **Waypoints per trajectory:** 100 (uniformly interpolated)
- **Scenarios with valid paths:** 8,473 (79% after filtering failures)
- **Training set:** 6778 scenarios (80% of valid paths)
- **Test set:** 1695 scenarios (20% of valid paths)
- **Feature dimension:** 26 $\{10$ obstacle vertices (x, y) + 1 start frame (x, y, θ) + 1 goal frame $(x, y, \theta)\}$
- **Spatial domain:** $[-10, +10]$ m^2
- **Grid cells per scenario:** 400 (20×20 cells with 1 m resolution)

APPENDIX B
HYPERPARAMETER SELECTION AND MODEL PERFORMANCE

Random Forest models were trained using scikit-learn

- **Number of trees:** 20; 100 trees tested as alternative
- **Maximum tree depth:** 8
- **Minimum samples per leaf:** 1
- **Feature sampling:** $(\sqrt{n_{\text{features}}})$ for classification; (n_{features}) for regression
- **KNN imputer neighbors:** $k = 5$

APPENDIX C
IMPLEMENTATION DETAILS AND REPRODUCIBILITY

A. Software and Hardware

Training and inference experiments were conducted using:

- **Motion Planning:** OMPL 1.7.0 with Python 3.9 bindings
- **Machine Learning:** scikit-learn 1.7.2, NumPy 2.3.2, Pandas 2.3.1
- **Hardware:** AMD Ryzen 5 CPU, 32 GB RAM
- **Operating System:** Ubuntu 24.04 LTS

B. Computational Time Breakdown

- **Reference path generation (RRT*):** 90 hours total (exhausting 30-second timeout per scenario for 10,725 scenarios)
- **Data preprocessing (waypoint interpolation, grid generation):** 2–3 hours
- **Model training (KNN imputation + RF classifier/regressor):** 15–30 minutes

C. Code Availability

Custom RRT state samplers were implemented as extensions to OMPL's C++ API. All code is modular, well-documented, and available upon request for reproducibility and future research.

Relative Position Estimation for Multi-Robots Based on Vertex Distance Between Regular Tetrahedral Units

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***Abstract*—Optimal decentralized cooperative control in multi-robot systems requires simultaneous local sensing and inter-agent communication. Ultra-wide band (UWB) wireless communication has been investigated as a self-contained positioning system capable of supporting both functions within a single device. Conventional UWB-based positioning methods estimate absolute positions using distance measurements relative to fixed anchors in the environment; moreover, while relative position estimation methods based on antenna configurations have been studied, mutual relative position estimation with respect to the reference coordinate frames of the agents themselves has not yet been investigated. To address this gap, this paper proposes a three-dimensional relative position estimation method for distributed cooperative control based on inter-vertex distances sharing. In the proposed system, inter-vertex distances between units are measured, where each unit is equipped with four UWB devices arranged in a regular tetrahedral geometric structure. An optimization-based estimation process is applied and enhanced with a k-means clustering method to mitigate convergence to local minima. The estimation accuracy was evaluated through both simulations and real-world experiments. The results demonstrate that the proposed method can accurately estimate relative positions between units and is effective for multi-robot systems operating on planar surfaces.**

***Keywords*—Multi-robot system; distributed cooperative control; relative position estimation; self-contained positioning system; inrter-vertex distance; geometric structure**

I. Introduction

Transportation tasks involving multiple robots, such as picking robots, are increasingly employed in warehouse environments [1]. To control such robot swarms, large-scale management applications—such as swarm coordination frameworks and warehouse management or control systems—are used to supervise individual robots. In these systems, a central server computes control actions based on the current state of the system and distributes appropriate control commands to each robot [2]. This approach, referred to as centralized control [3], allows the central unit to centrally manage environmental perception and motion planning, and the accuracy of the sensor and control timing are crucial for achieving precise robot motion. However, when information is acquired by robots, the accuracy of their motion may degrade, potentially leading to collisions or other risks [4]. To address this issue, a correction has been applied that supplements data from a new sensor [5]. Nevertheless, such approaches become less effective when sensor systems cannot be further extended due to hardware, cost, or scalability constraints. Consequently, there is a growing need for distributed cooperative control strategies that allow robots to directly perceive their mutual states and autonomously avoid collisions without relying on centralized control architectures.

Distributed cooperative control is a control paradigm in which multiple robots operate autonomously while exchanging information with one another [6]. This approach enables highly redundant cooperative behaviors without relying on a central controller [7]. Moreover, it provides robustness against environmental changes, thereby enhancing system flexibility, diversity, and fault tolerance [8]. Ideally, distributed cooperative control requires robots to simultaneously perform local communication and sensing [9]. Thus far, these functionalities have typically been realized through the integration of multiple devices, such as Bluetooth [10] or Wi-Fi [11] for communication, and LiDAR [12], GNSS [13], or RGB-D cameras [14] for sensing. However, such multi-device integration increases onboard system complexity, which may adversely affect control system stability [15] and significantly increase the number of physical system parameters that must be tuned and managed.

A technology that can address these challenges is ultra-wideband (UWB) wireless communication. UWB is a communication system that utilizes ultra-wide frequency bandwidth [16], enabling high-precision positioning and communication [17]. By integrating the local communication and sensing required for distributed cooperative control, UWB wireless communication can simplify robotic systems and improve overall performance. However, in conventional UWB-based systems, the position of a moving node is typically estimated with respect to fixed reference nodes installed in the environment. This reliance on fixed infrastructure limits system scalability and flexibility, particularly in dynamic or infrastructure-free environments. Recently, UWB-based relative positioning systems that estimate relative positions without relying on fixed reference nodes have been developed. These systems estimate the positions of antennas mounted on other units based on distance measured from multiple UWB antennas installed on the unit. Consequently, if an offset exists between the origin of a mobile agent's coordinate frame and the estimated position of its onboard antenna, the agent's position required for distributed cooperative control cannot be utilized with high accuracy.

To address this limitation, it is essential to accurately relate the estimated antenna positions to the agent coordinate frame while preserving the advantages of UWB-based relative positioning. Accordingly, this paper proposes a UWB-based three-dimensional relative positioning method that enables a robot to estimate the arbitrary coordinates of other robots

while simultaneously supporting inter-robot communication. The proposed method satisfies both local sensing and communication requirements using only a single type of device. As a result, the proposed approach enhances the robustness and structural simplicity of robotic systems operating under ideal distributed cooperative control.

The main contribution of this study is the development of a method for associating the positioning coordinates provided by a UWB-based relative localization unit with the relative coordinates of agents used in control, thereby enabling high-accuracy sensing in distributed cooperative control.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: Section II reviews related work on UWB-based positioning methods. Section III presents a relative position estimation method based on inter-vertex distances. In Sections IV and V, this paper evaluates the performance of the method through simulations and field trials, along with a discussion of the results. Finally, Section VI presents the conclusions of this study.

II. Related Work

In conventional UWB-based positioning systems, as illustrated in Fig. 1a, reference devices that serve as positioning anchors are placed at the four corners of the operational area [18]. This configuration enables the estimation of the position of any device located within the area. Consequently, the absolute coordinates of multiple robots operating in a shared environment can be determined, provided that each robot is equipped with a UWB device. In this localization framework, the position of a target device, denoted by (x, y, z), is calculated under the assumption that each robot or its surrounding environment satisfies the conditions described below.

$$\left.\begin{aligned}(x-x_1)^2+(y-y_1)^2+(z-z_1)^2-r_1^2=0\\(x-x_2)^2+(y-y_2)^2+(z-z_2)^2-r_2^2=0\\(x-x_3)^2+(y-y_3)^2+(z-z_3)^2-r_3^2=0\\(x-x_4)^2+(y-y_4)^2+(z-z_4)^2-r_4^2=0\end{aligned}\right\} \quad (1)$$

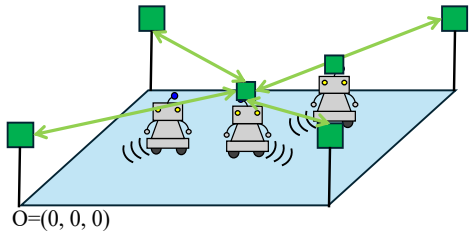
Here, (x_n, y_n, z_n) represent the absolute coordinates of each reference device, and r_n denotes the distance between the target device and the corresponding reference device. Several conventional approaches have been proposed to improve the localization performance. For example, as illustrated in Fig. 1b, adjusting the height of the reference devices can enhance position estimation accuracy [19], while space-division-based methods have been introduced to extend the measurable range [20].

However, as illustrated in Fig. 1c, when relative coordinates between robots are required, such information can only be obtained indirectly through a network or a centralized system. Consequently, acquiring relative positional information between robots, which is essential for distributed cooperative control, remains a significant challenge.

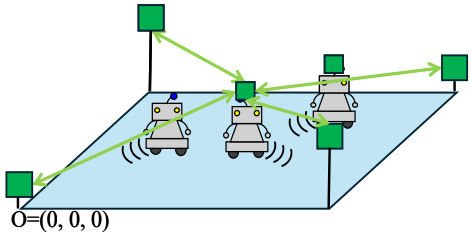
Furthermore, several studies have extended conventional UWB-based localization to relative positioning. As illustrated in Fig. 2, relative positioning methods have been investigated in which the positions of devices mounted on other units are estimated based on multiple devices installed on the unit [21], [22], [23], [24]. These approaches enable peer-to-peer measurement of relative positions between units without relying on anchors installed in the environment.

In such methods, the position of another unit can be obtained either by introducing an additional device that serves as the origin of the coordinate frame [21], [22], [23], or by selecting one of the devices on the unit as a reference when the unit size is sufficiently small [24]. The former approach allows the definition of a reference coordinate frame that is suitable for the robot carrying the unit; however, it increases the number of devices required to compose the unit. In contrast, the latter approach enables relative positioning with a minimal number of devices; however, if the unit is not mounted close to the robot's reference coordinate frame, an offset is introduced into the position estimation.

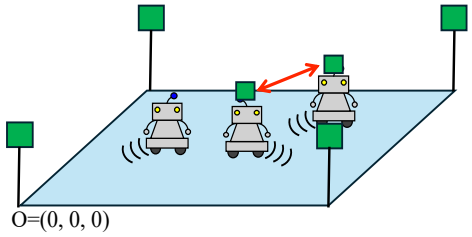
However, existing methods do not adequately address the trade-off between device complexity and agent-based positioning accuracy. Therefore, this study focuses on the capability of UWB communication to support both distance measurement and individual data transmission. By leveraging these features and increasing the amount of measurement data, this paper investigates a method that enables the estimation of arbitrary agent coordinates.



(a) Conventional positioning system.



(b) Improved conventional positioning system.



(c) Unconsidered direct relative positioning.

Fig. 1. UWB positioning system.

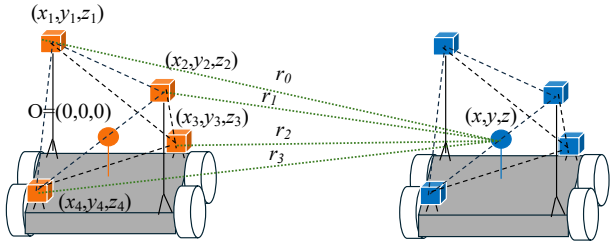


Fig. 2. Systems capable of relative position estimation.

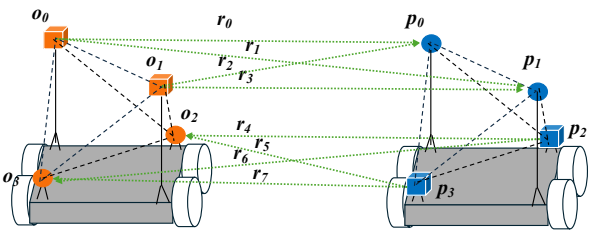


Fig. 3. Three-dimensional relative position estimation system based on vertex-to-vertex ranging.

III. Proposed Method

This paper examines a system composed of multiple units, as illustrated in Fig. 3, designed to measure the relative positions between units. Each unit is equipped with four UWB positioning devices mounted at the vertices of a regular tetrahedron. Among these devices, two function as transmitters and the other two function as receivers.

In UWB wireless communication, distance measurement is performed using receiver devices based on signals transmitted from transmitters. The obtained measurement information is then sent back to the transmitters as a response. Through this mechanism, the two units can determine the inter-device distance r_n shown in Fig. 3. In the figure, the upper devices of the left unit are configured as transmitters, whereas those of the right unit are configured as receivers.

By predefining the coordinate system of each device relative to the origin of the agent's coordinate system, the position of each unit can be estimated based on the acquired distance information and the geometric constraints of a regular tetrahedron, as described below.

$$\left.\begin{aligned} &|\|o_i - p_i\| - r_i| = 0 \quad ;\forall i \\ &|\|p_i - p_j\| - r_i| = 0 \quad ;i < j \\ &\left|\frac{1}{6}\det\left(p_1 - p_0, p_2 - p_0, p_3 - p_0\right) - V\right| = 0 \end{aligned}\right\} \tag{2}$$

where, the position of unit P is estimated relative to that of unit O, and i and j denote the device indices for each unit. As predefined parameters, o_n represents the coordinates of the n-th device, e denotes the edge length of the regular tetrahedron formed by the unit, and V represents the volume of the tetrahedron.

By solving for p_n that satisfies these equations, the relative position can be estimated. Although distance measurements obtained using UWB wireless communication are relatively robust to external disturbances, they still contain measurement errors. Consequently, the geometric constraints cannot always be satisfied exactly, making it difficult to compute a single consistent position estimate. To address this issue, this paper determines the relative position of the other unit by optimizing a solution that minimizes Eq. III.

However, optimization-based position estimation depends on initial values and may converge to local minima as the proposed method estimates a six-degree-of-freedom pose. To address this issue, this paper applies *k*-means clustering to multiple sets of estimated three-dimensional coordinates obtained from different initializations. Spatially proximate estimates are grouped into k clusters, and the cluster with the lowest variance is selected as the final position estimate. This approach effectively filters dispersed local solutions and guides the estimation toward convergence to the true position.

By applying the *k*-means clustering method using three-dimensional coordinates as feature values, outliers can be suppressed, resulting in more reliable position estimation. The number of data points provided to the *k*-means algorithm (i.e., the number of estimation results obtained from different random initializations) is intentionally set to an odd value so that the number of samples in each cluster became uneven. This design helps prevent bias in the clustering process.

IV. Estimated Performance Evaluation through Simulation

A. Simulation Setting

The accuracy of the position estimation obtained through the clustering approach using the *k*-means method, as described in the proposed method, was evaluated via a simulation. First, the appropriate numbers of clusters and data points were determined. The estimation accuracy was assessed for units formed by the regular tetrahedron, with sizes measuring 0.1, 0.2, 0.5, 0.7, 1, 2, 5, 7, and 10 m. For each unit size, the evaluation was based on an average of 10,000 trials with randomly initialized position estimates.

In this simulation, an ideal environment without distance-measurement errors was used; therefore, the estimation error arose solely from the geometric structure and characteristics of the algorithm. Through the evaluation of the proposed method, the effects of two parameters in the *k*-means algorithm were analyzed: the number of data points (index) and the number of clusters (cluster). Subsequently, the estimation accuracy was assessed with respect to the distance between units.

The simulation was implemented using Python 3.7.9, with the following libraries: NumPy 1.21.6, SciPy 1.7.3, and PyClustering 0.10.1.2.

B. Effect of Parameter Settings in the k-means Method on Location Estimation Accuracy

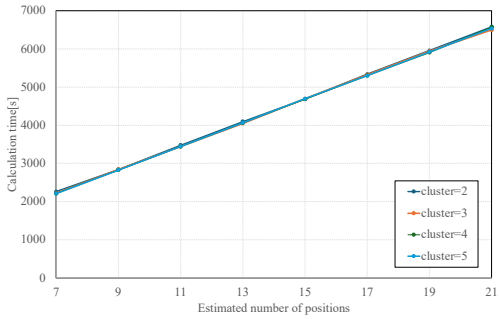
The influence of the *k*-means parameter settings on the position estimation accuracy was examined. In this evaluation, the unit size was set to 1.0 m, and the distance between the

units was 2.0 m. Fig. 4a and 4b show the total computation time and estimation error with respect to the numbers of estimations and clusters, respectively.

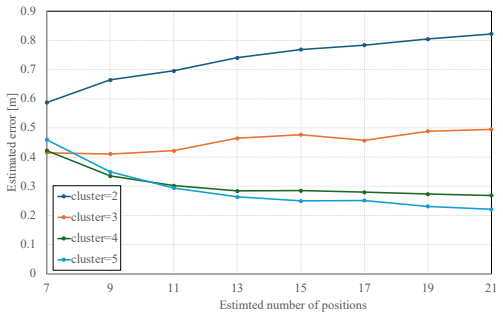
The computation time increased with the number of data points, whereas it slightly decreased with increasing number of clusters. This behavior is attributed to the additional time required to assign data points to clusters and calculate their associated errors as the dataset grows. Conversely, the slight reduction in the computation time with an increasing number of clusters is likely due to the faster convergence of cluster centers achieved using the *k*-means method. Based on these results, it can be concluded that the primary factor affecting the computation time of the *k*-means method is the number of data points.

Next, we focused on the estimation error. Unlike the trend observed in the computation time, the estimation accuracy tended to improve with increasing number of clusters. Furthermore, when examining the effect of the number of data points, different trends emerged depending on the cluster size. With a small number of clusters (two or three), the estimation error increased with increasing number of data points. By contrast, with a larger number of clusters (four or five), the error decreased with increasing number of data points.

This behavior can be attributed to the fact that with a small number of clusters, local solutions may merge with clusters containing the correct estimation results. By contrast, a larger number of clusters allows these solutions to be separated. Consequently, when the number of clusters is large, increasing the number of data points makes it easier to identify clusters containing a majority of estimations that are close to the true coordinates, thereby improving accuracy.



(a) Computation time.



(b) Measurement error.

Fig. 4. Variation in the position estimation accuracy with the number of indices and clusters.

C. Position Estimation Accuracy Relative to Unit Spacing

Based on the results described above, the estimation accuracy relative to the distance between units was evaluated under two conditions: one with a faster computation time (Index: 7, Cluster: 5) and another with a lower estimation error (Index: 21, Cluster: 5). Fig. 5 shows the results, where the horizontal axis represents the inter-unit distance normalized by each unit size, enabling comparisons across the different unit sizes tested.

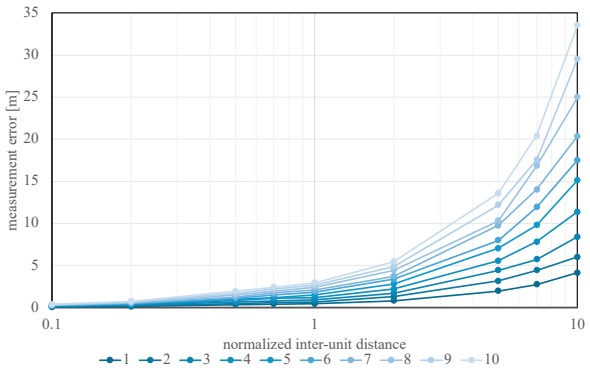
Under both the scenarios, the estimation error tended to increase with increasing unit size. This is because a greater distance between the units results in a larger separation between the correct and local solutions. Although both sets of *k*-means parameters showed an increase in the error with increasing inter-unit distance, the trend was more moderate under the conditions shown in Fig. 5b. This indicates that increasing the number of data points in the *k*-means method enables more reliable estimations over longer ranges. In addition, the results showed a significant accumulation of errors when the inter-unit distance exceeded five times the unit size. Therefore, the proposed system can effectively benefit from the error-reduction effect of the *k*-means method for distances of up to five times the unit size.

D. Evaluation of Position Estimation Accuracy Based on Position Estimation Success Rate

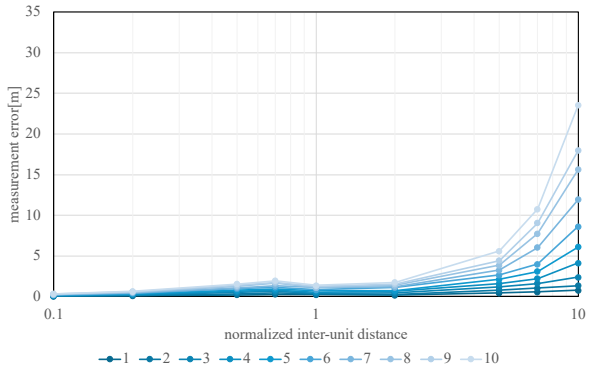
Finally, to assess the effectiveness of combining nonlinear optimization with the *k*-means method in the proposed method, we evaluated the success rate of the position estimation. Table I presents the results. The success rate represents the probability of the estimation error falling below a specified threshold. The evaluation was conducted using a unit size of 1.0 m and an inter-unit distance of 2.0 m.

The results shown in Table I indicate that the proposed method achieved a higher success rate than the approach without the use of the *k*-means method across all threshold values. The success rate was particularly high when a greater number of estimation results was used. These findings demonstrate that clustering with *k*-means significantly improves the estimation accuracy. Although nonlinear optimization in the proposed method often fails to compute the correct position, the use of *k*-means enables the formation of groups of data with similar characteristics, thereby enhancing the overall accuracy.

In Section IV-B, the success rate improves with an increase in the number of data points, indicating that an appropriate selection of both the number of data points and the number of clusters is a crucial design factor. With sufficient data points, the likelihood of a cluster containing the estimated results close to the true coordinates increases, resulting in more stable estimations.



(a) Index: 7, Cluster: 5.



(b) Index: 21, Cluster: 5.

Fig. 5. Evaluation of position estimation accuracy with unit size variation.

TABLE I. ACCURACY EVALUATION USING LOCATION ESTIMATION SUCCESS RATE

Threshold [%]	Success rate [%] Without *k*-means	*k*-means Index: 7 Cluster: 5	*k*-means Index: 21 Cluster: 5
0.5	0	68.30	85.67
5	0	68.43	86.50
10	0	69.52	87.61
20	0.31	72.59	88.41
30	1.42	76.36	89.46
40	2.59	78.88	90.28
50	4.72	82.29	91.22

V. EVALUATION OF POSITION ESTIMATION ACCURACY THROUGH FIELD EXPERIMENT

A. Field Experiment Setting

This field experiment aims to validate the practical feasibility and robustness of the proposed relative positioning method under real-world measurement conditions, including ranging noise, device resolution limitations, and orientation-dependent errors. By comparing the experimental results with the simulation-based performance evaluation presented in Section IV, the experiment demonstrates that the proposed method maintains consistent performance trends even in non-ideal environments, thereby highlighting its applicability to real robotic systems.

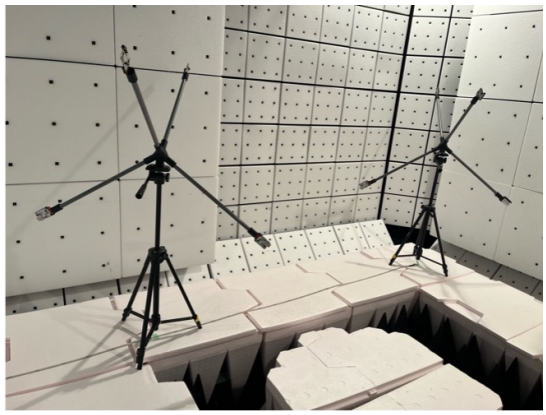


Fig. 6. Experimental setup for relative position estimation in an electromagnetic anechoic chamber.

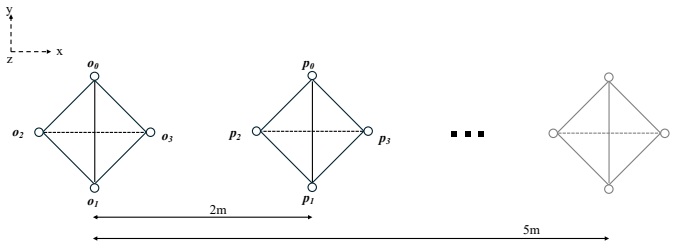


Fig. 7. Experimental overview diagram.

In this experiment, the proposed system was constructed using UWB positioning devices, and the relative position estimation was evaluated in an electromagnetic anechoic chamber, as shown in Fig. 6. The UWB modules used were DWM3001 units (manufactured by Qorvo). For one unit, the two devices on the upper side were configured as transmitters and the two on the lower side were configured as receivers, whereas the opposite configuration was applied to the other unit, with the upper devices set as receivers and the lower devices as transmitters. Two units sizes, 0.64 and 1.02 m, were considered. Using these units, we estimated the relative position on the horizontal plane in terms of the distance and angle.

Fig. 7 shows the coordinate system used in this experiment. The distance between the units was measured along the x-axis, with tests conducted at distances of 2, 3, 4, and 5 m. The relative orientation of the units was evaluated by rotating Unit P counterclockwise from 0° to 0° in 15° increments, where 0° corresponds to the reference orientation, as shown in Fig. 7. Owing to the symmetry of the tetrahedron, measurements up to 180° could capture the characteristics of the entire surrounding direction.

Under the conditions described above, positioning data were obtained using the Qorvo TWR, where each transmitting device measured the distance to the two receiving devices on the other unit. This process provides the eight distance measurements required by the proposed method. Based on these measurements, the relative positions were estimated using the proposed method. For each measurement condition, 100 ranging samples were collected, and the program described in Section IV was applied to compute the estimated coordinates for each sample. The estimation error was calculated by

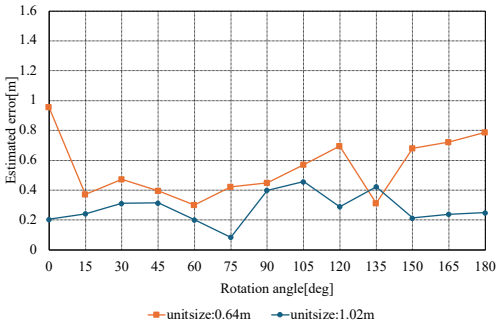
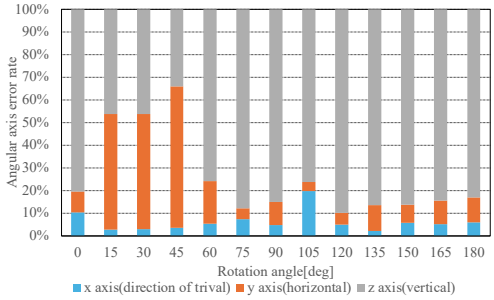
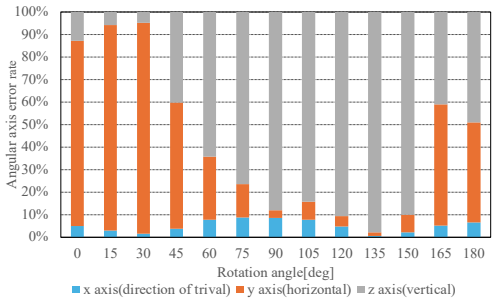


Fig. 8. Estimated distance error.



(a) Unit size: 0.64 m.



(b) Unit size: 1.02 m.

Fig. 9. Error percentage for each axis relative to changes in unit size.

comparing the estimated coordinates with the ground truth.

B. Evaluation Results of Position Estimation Based on Measured Values Relative to Unit Size

For both unit sizes, measurements were performed at a fixed distance of 2 m while varying the orientation angle of the units. Fig. 8 shows the estimation errors between the predicted positions and the ground truth; Fig. 9 shows the contribution of the errors along each axis to the total error. Although the devices used in this experiment had a resolution in the order of centimeters and the measurements included noise, the position was estimated reasonably well for all orientation angles and both unit sizes. Furthermore, focusing on the difference in the unit size, the results were consistent with the analysis described in Section IV-C; at the same relative distance, the smaller unit size produced higher estimation errors.

In addition, examining the proportion of errors along each axis revealed that errors tended to accumulate more significantly on the y- and z-axes than on the x-axis along which the units were arranged. This pattern is likely due to limitations in the device resolution and the influence of ranging noise, which complicates the orientation estimation.

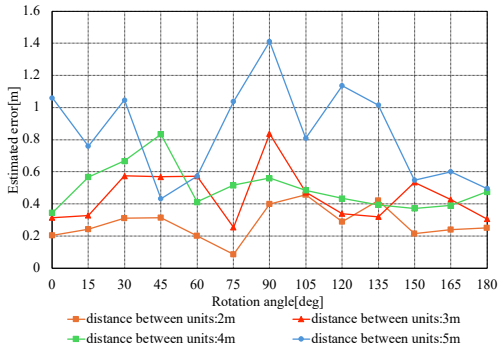


Fig. 10. Estimated error due to distance variation.

These results indicate that stable position estimation can be achieved in real environments using larger unit sizes. Conversely, when a compact unit size is required, the accuracy may be improved using devices with a higher ranging resolution or by employing antenna designs that account for directional characteristics.

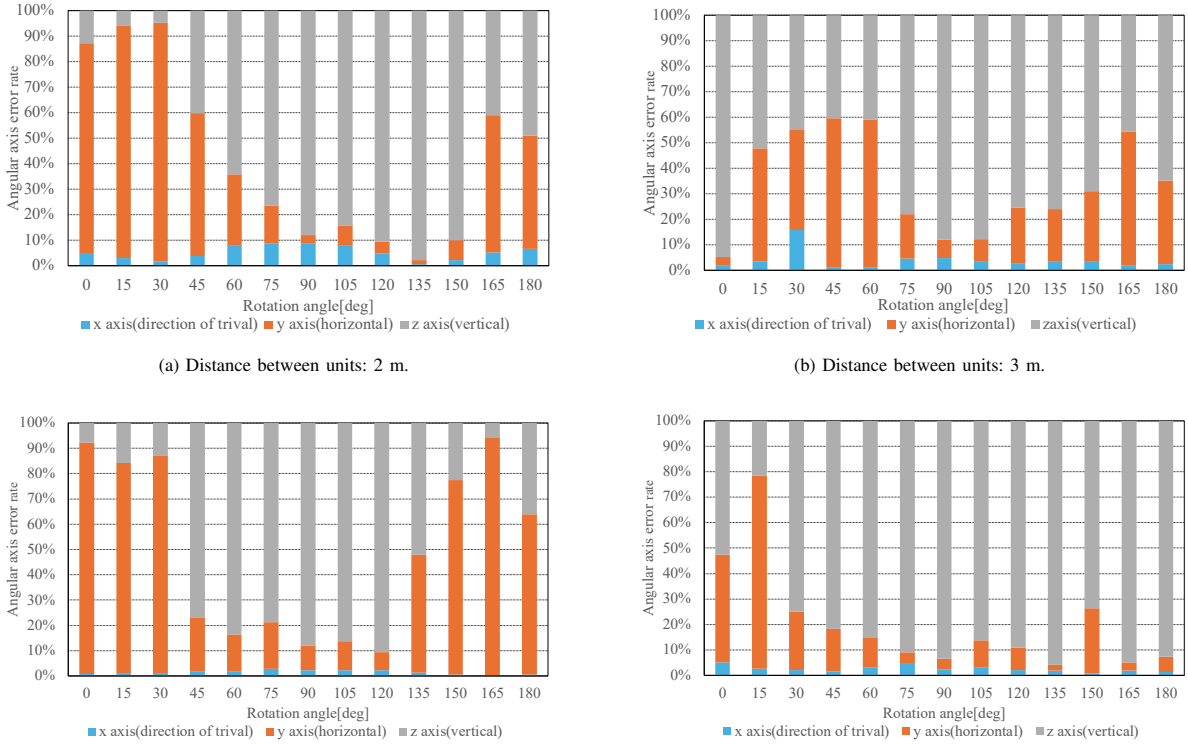
C. Evaluation of Position Estimation based on Actual Measurement Data for Unit Size

Fig. 10 shows the estimation errors for the orientation angle at each inter-unit distance; Fig. 11 shows the error proportions along each axis. Experiments were conducted under a unit size of 1.02 m.

Examination of the distance estimation error revealed that the error increased with increasing inter-unit distance. This trend aligns with the simulation results discussed in Section IV-C. At an inter-unit distance of 2 m, the estimation error varied only slightly with respect to the orientation angle and remained stable. However, as the distance was increased to 4 and 5 m, the variation in the error became more pronounced.

The primary cause of this increased variability is that at certain orientation angles, the accumulation of errors makes it difficult for the optimization process to satisfy the geometric constraints. These resulting inaccuracies lead to changes in the estimated orientations of the units. Moreover, with increasing distance between the units, changes in the orientation angle were less clearly reflected in the ranging measurements, which further contributed to an increase in the estimation error.

Furthermore, as shown in Fig. 11, the distribution of errors along each axis indicates that regardless of the inter-unit distance, errors tended to accumulate more significantly on the y- and z-axes than on the x-axis, along which the units were aligned. This behavior can be attributed to changes in the geometrically dominant axes of rotation caused by the orientation of the unit. As the unit rotates, the axis about which the geometric rotation is the most sensitive shifts, resulting in a periodic change in the direction of error accumulation.



(a) Distance between units: 2 m.

(b) Distance between units: 3 m.

(c) Distance between units: 4 m.

(d) Distance between units: 5 m.

Fig. 11. Percentage of axis error relative to distance change.

D. Limitation of the Proposed Method

The simulation results confirm that the proposed system can estimate the relative positions up to approximately five times the device size. Therefore, this method provides an effective positioning range for applications requiring local sensing and individual communication, such as collective behavior in swarm robotic systems [25]. However, as demonstrated in hardware experiments, when the method is implemented by integrating multiple commercially available devices, the positioning performance is limited by the differences in the ranging schemes of each device, such as the time of arrival or angle of arrival, as well as by their output resolutions. This makes it necessary to consider approaches that integrate all the required functions into a single device or to develop advanced optimization techniques suitable for implementation using heterogeneous composite devices.

VI. Conclusion

This study investigated a three-dimensional relative positioning method using UWB wireless communication as a step toward ideal decentralized cooperative control. We proposed a relative position estimation method based on inter-vertex distances, along with a strategy to improve the estimation accuracy by eliminating local solutions using the k-means clustering algorithm. Simulation results demonstrated that the proposed method achieves accurate positioning at inter-unit distances of up to approximately five times the device size. Furthermore, experiments conducted with actual devices confirmed that the observed performance trends were consistent with the simulation results. These findings suggest that the proposed method is a practical and effective solution for robotic systems (such as swarm robotic systems) that rely on local information.

This study presents a three-dimensional relative position estimation based on a geometrically minimal regular tetrahedral structure. The proposed approach provides a design guideline that simplifies the hardware configuration of robotic systems while preserving redundancy and scalability. It enables relative localization that is inherently aligned with each robot's local coordinate frame, facilitating seamless integration with motion control and cooperative behaviors. These features are particularly advantageous in real-world environments, such as warehouse transportation systems—where robots are frequently added or replaced—as well as in disaster response and infrastructure inspection scenarios, where prior environmental preparation is difficult.

In addition, the quantitative evaluation of the effective localization range relative to unit size provides a practical metric for designing swarm robotic systems based on relative positioning. This study establishes a framework that enables mobile agents to autonomously estimate their relative positions without relying on fixed anchors or centralized management—assumptions traditionally made in UWB-based localization systems—while simultaneously achieving both local sensing and individual communication using a single UWB device configuration.

Future work will address several challenges toward the

practical deployment of the proposed three-dimensional relative positioning method in swarm robotic systems. First, the influence of ranging errors and device resolution on positioning accuracy must be considered, as experimental results revealed performance degradation compared with ideal simulation conditions. Appropriate parameter design tailored to the resolution characteristics of UWB devices is therefore required, and error-aware weighting or sensor fusion approaches are expected to mitigate the accumulation of errors along specific axes.

Second, the integration of relative position estimation with orientation estimation remains an important issue. Although the proposed method primarily estimates translational components, experimental results suggest that changes in unit orientation significantly affect ranging measurements and contribute to increased errors, particularly along the y- and z-axes. Extending the method to jointly estimate position and orientation is thus a promising direction.

Finally, real-time implementation is essential for practical swarm robotic applications. While this study focused on offline accuracy evaluation, future work will investigate computational optimization and real-time performance to enable stable cooperative behaviors in real-world environments.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We would like to thank Editage (www.editage.com) for English language editing.

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Explainable AI for Enhancing Awareness of Academic Stress Among International University Students

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***Abstract*—Academic stress is a common challenge in higher education, especially for international university students who must adapt to new academic systems, expectations, and learning environments. In recent years, artificial intelligence has been increasingly used to analyze academic data and estimate student stress. However, most AI-based systems prioritize prediction accuracy over providing valuable support for student understanding. As a result, students may receive stress-related indicators without a clear explanation of how these results relate to their academic tasks or activities. This state-of-the-art review discusses current research on explainable artificial intelligence in the field of academic stress and student awareness. Based on literature published between 2020 and 2025, this review synthesizes work from educational technology, learning analytics, and explainable AI from a Human–Computer Interaction perspective. The analysis focuses on the representation of academic stress, the design of explanatory frameworks, and the extent to which existing systems facilitate students' ability to interpret and reflect on their work. The review finds that awareness is rarely treated as an explicit outcome in existing research. Although explainable models are increasingly used, the explanations they produce are often technical and not student-oriented. International students are an underrepresented group in the literature, despite the apparent differences in their academic preparation, linguistic ability, and expectations. Consequently, these shortcomings limit the effectiveness of artificial intelligence systems as tools for enhancing student awareness. This review highlights the need to shift from prediction-oriented approaches toward awareness-oriented explainable AI systems that prioritize student understanding. By emphasizing human-centered explanation design and inclusive evaluation, future research can better support students in making sense of academic stress within diverse higher education environments.**

***Keywords*—Explainable artificial intelligence; academic stress; student awareness; international university students; learning analytics; Human–Computer Interaction**

I. Introduction

Academic stress is a common experience in higher education, but it is often more challenging for international university students. These students must adapt to new academic systems, assessment styles, teaching practices, and expectations, usually while studying in a second language [1]. As universities increasingly rely on digital platforms and data-driven tools, students are exposed to a range of academic indicators, including grades, progress dashboards, and automated feedback. While these tools are intended to support learning, they can also generate confusion when students do not clearly understand how the information relates to their academic situation [2]. Unmanaged academic stress may further influence academic decision-making, increasing the risk of maladaptive coping behaviors in high-pressure learning contexts [3]. These challenges highlight the importance of supporting students in interpreting academic information to reduce stress and promote informed decision-making.

In recent years, artificial intelligence (AI) has been widely adopted in educational environments to analyze student data and support academic decision-making [4]. AI-based systems are increasingly used to estimate academic stress, anticipate risk, and identify patterns related to engagement and performance [5]. Although such systems often promise early insight and personalized support [6], many present their results as scores, categories, or alerts without sufficient explanation [7]. When explanations are limited or unclear [8], students may struggle to interpret system outputs and relate them to their daily academic activities.

Research in Human–Computer Interaction and learning analytics suggests that awareness is not achieved simply by presenting information. Rather, awareness involves processes of understanding, interpretation, and reflection [9]. Students must be able to make sense of academic signals and understand how factors such as workload, deadlines, or engagement patterns contribute to their experiences [10]. Without adequate support for this sensemaking process, data-driven feedback may remain abstract or even increase uncertainty. This challenge is particularly pronounced for international students, who may not share the same academic background, language proficiency, or implicit assumptions as system designers [11], which further complicates how system outputs are interpreted in practice.

Explainable Artificial Intelligence (XAI) has emerged as an approach to address concerns related to transparency and trust in AI systems. XAI seeks to make model outputs more understandable by clarifying how and why a system produces a particular result. In educational contexts, explainability can transform AI systems from opaque predictors into tools that support student understanding. However, many existing explainable approaches are designed primarily for researchers or developers and rely on technical explanations that are not always meaningful to students [12], [13]. As a result, their effectiveness in student-facing contexts remains limited.

At the same time, there is increasing recognition that student-facing AI systems should be evaluated not only by technical performance, but also by how well they support students' understanding of their academic situation [8], [14]. For international students, explainability must account for language clarity, cultural differences, and unfamiliar academic norms [15], [16]. Explanations that do not consider these factors may fail to foster awareness and reduce uncertainty, thereby limiting their usefulness across diverse educational contexts.

This state-of-the-art review offers a conceptual reframing of explainable artificial intelligence in academic stress research, shifting the focus from prediction-oriented systems to awareness-oriented, student-facing systems that prioritize understanding, interpretation, and reflection, particularly for international university students. The review synthesizes recent literature from educational technology, learning analytics, and explainable AI to examine how existing systems convey stress-related information, how explanatory components are designed, and the extent to which they support student awareness. By identifying current practices, limitations, and research gaps, this work outlines directions for future research that place student understanding at the center of explainable AI design.

This study is structured as follows:

- Section II: Presents the review methodology, including the literature search strategy, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and the analysis approach.
- Section III: Academic stress among international university students, focusing on previous studies and key stress-related factors in higher education contexts. Student awareness and reflection in educational technologies and learning analytics systems, with a focus on the challenges faced by international university students. Artificial intelligence–based approaches to academic stress, examining the methods used to analyze and estimate stress in higher education. Explainable Artificial Intelligence for student-facing systems, introducing key concepts, explanation types, and design considerations. Explainable Artificial Intelligence and student awareness of academic stress, synthesizing the literature to highlight how explainability can support awareness.
- Section IV: Presents a detailed discussion on the study insights by highlighting practical implications for student-facing AI systems.
- Section V: Conclusion summarizes the main insights of the review and outlines limitations and directions for future research.

II. Review Methodology

This manuscript employs a state-of-the-art approach to review the recent literature on explainable artificial intelligence, academic stress, as well as student awareness in higher education. The purpose of this review is not to conduct a meta-analysis and quantify effect sizes, but to synthesize current trends in research, methodological designs, and conceptual gaps across interconnected disciplines.

A. Literature Search Strategy

The literature review encompassed peer-reviewed journal articles and conference proceedings published between 2020 and 2025. Such a temporal scope was chosen to reflect recent developments within explainable artificial intelligence, learning analytics, and educational technologies that are facing students. Major academic databases were searched, including Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, and the scientific journals and books in the databases of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineering (IEEE), the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM), and Springer.

Search queries combined terms related to academic stress and student awareness, as well as artificial intelligence and explainability. Examples of the search keywords are academic stress, international students, learning analytics, explainable AI, interpretable machine learning, student dashboards, and student awareness. These keywords were used in various combinations in order to ensure broad coverage across disciplines.

B. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Studies were selected, if they satisfied the following criteria:

- Revolved around education at the higher education level,
- Looked at academic stress, learning pressure, or other related experiences in school,
- Included AI, machine learning, learning analytics, or data-driven systems, and
- Discussed system outputs, explanations, or student-facing feedback.

Studies were excluded, if they were solely clinical diagnosis studies, stressed that they were non-academic, or focused on populations outside higher education. Papers that were purely technical in nature with no relevance to student interaction or interpretation were also excluded.

C. Study Selection and Analysis

After the initial search was carried out, titles and abstracts were evaluated for relevance. The full texts of the selected papers were then read in detail. During this process, the studies were grouped into four main areas: academic stress among foreign students, student awareness and reflection tools, AI-based stress analysis, and explainable AI (XAI).

Rather than extracting numerical results, the objective of the analysis was to find recurring themes, design patterns, and evaluation practices and limitations reported in the literature. Particular attention was paid to the presentation of information to students by systems, as well as whether explanations are designed to support understanding and awareness.

D. Scope and Methodological Considerations

This review focuses more on conceptual synthesis rather than completeness. While the search strategy was designed to include major and influential studies, the possibility exists that some relevant work may have been excluded. Additionally, the review is limited to peer-reviewed English-language publications, which may limit the coverage of regional research or non-English language research.

Despite these limitations, the methodology provides a structured and transparent foundation for understanding the current directions of research and where explainable AI can be effectively utilized to support. Fig. 1 presents an overview of the study workflow, illustrating the main stages of the review process and analysis approach.

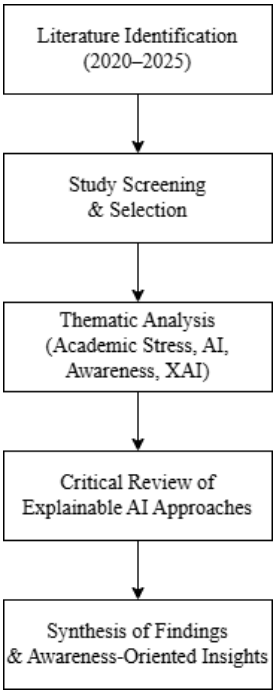

Fig. 1. Overview of the study workflow and analysis process.

III. Related Works

A. Academic Stress among International University Students

Academic stress is a common experience in higher education, but it is often more intense and complex for international university students [1]. Unlike domestic students, international students must adapt not only to academic workload but also to new educational systems, teaching styles, assessment methods, and communication norms [17]. These adjustments require continuous effort and can increase uncertainty during everyday academic tasks [18]. Over time, this sustained pressure may accumulate, affecting students' confidence, motivation, and sense of academic control [19].

Many studies showed that international students face additional academic challenges related to understanding expectations, interpreting feedback, and managing deadlines in a second language [20]. Language proficiency influences how students read course materials, participate in discussions, and interpret assessment criteria [21]. Even students with strong academic backgrounds may struggle when academic instructions or feedback are unclear. As a result, students often invest more time and effort in their studies while still feeling uncertain about their performance, which can intensify academic stress.

Recent research highlights that academic stress among international students does not arise from a single source. Instead, it develops through the interaction between academic demands, institutional systems, and students' ability to correctly interpret academic information [1]. Learning management systems, automated grading, and online dashboards are now widely used; however, they often present information in ways that assume familiarity with local academic culture. For international students, this assumption does not always hold [22]. When academic information is misunderstood, stress may persist even in situations where academic performance is objectively adequate.

Several studies indicate that many academic stress systems focus primarily on measuring or predicting stress levels rather than helping students understand the academic conditions that contribute to stress. For example, AI-based approaches often estimate stress using survey responses or behavioral data collected from digital systems [23]. However, these systems typically offer limited explanation of how workload patterns, assessment timing, or engagement behaviors contribute to stress experiences. As a result, students may receive numerical scores or categorical labels without sufficient context, which can limit their ability to reflect and increase uncertainty [24].

A further challenge is that academic performance indicators are often presented without adequate explanation. A low score, delayed feedback, or system warning may be interpreted as a serious academic failure, even when it reflects a temporary or situational issue [25]. Without contextual clarification, students may overestimate the seriousness of academic signals and experience unnecessary pressure [26]. This heightened stress can impact emotional well-being and decrease students' willingness to seek help or express concerns [27].

Importantly, prior research suggests that sustained academic stress can shape students' academic behavior, particularly when stress is driven by high-performance demands and perceived lack of control. When students experience ongoing pressure related to grades, time constraints, and fear of failure, stress can reduce their ability to engage in deliberate and reflective decision-making. Under such conditions, students may shift their focus from long-term learning goals toward short-term strategies aimed at avoiding negative academic outcomes. In some cases, this shift is associated with an increased risk of academic misconduct, such as plagiarism or inappropriate collaboration, particularly in high-stakes or time-constrained situations. Evidence from multiple educational contexts suggests that academic pressure, anxiety, and perceived consequences are among the most consistent situational factors associated with dishonest behavior. From this perspective, academic dishonesty is better understood as a stress-related risk behavior that emerges under specific conditions of pressure and uncertainty, rather than as a stable individual trait or personal moral failure [28], [29].

Overall, existing research suggests that academic stress among international students is shaped by multiple interacting academic, linguistic, and systemic factors. When stress is not well understood or contextualized, it can negatively affect learning, engagement, and academic decision-making. These findings highlight the need for approaches that not only monitor stress levels but also support students in understanding the causes and consequences of academic stress within their academic environment.

B. Student Awareness and Self-Reflection in Educational Technologies

In educational technology research, student awareness is often described as an important step that helps learners understand their academic situation [30]. Awareness does not mean only that information is available. It means that students can recognize important academic signals, understand their meaning, and relate them to their own study habits. In university contexts, this includes understanding workload, deadlines, feedback, engagement, and progress across different courses [31].

Many students receive a large amount of academic information every day. However, having access to information does not always mean that students understand it well. This is especially true when the information is presented in abstract or numerical forms. As a result, students may view the data but still feel uncertain about its implications for their learning [32].

1) Awareness beyond showing information: Many educational systems present information such as grades, progress bars, activity levels, or performance summaries. These elements are often designed to support awareness. However, previous research indicates that simply presenting information is often insufficient. Students may look at charts or numbers, but still struggle to understand how these indicators relate to their academic situation.

Research in Human–Computer Interaction explains that awareness is an active process. Students need time and support to interpret academic signals and understand how different factors are connected. When systems fail to provide this support, dashboards and analytics tools can be confusing or even stressful [33]. Some students stop using these tools because they do not see a clear value in them [34].

Several review studies report that students usually check dashboards only when they feel worried or uncertain. When the information does not change or is difficult to understand, students may lose interest over time [35], [36]. This suggests that awareness requires explanation and context, not just visual displays.

2) Student-facing learning analytics dashboards: Learning analytics dashboards are one of the most common tools used to support student awareness. These dashboards usually show indicators related to engagement, progress, or predicted outcomes. While many students claim that dashboards are useful, research reveals mixed results regarding their effectiveness in fostering real understanding and long-term use .

Students often report that they do not clearly understand why certain indicators are high or low. They may also be unsure which academic activities influenced the results or what actions they should take next. In many systems, explanations are either missing or written in technical language that is difficult for students new to academic analytics to understand [37], [38].

For international students, these problems can be even stronger. Dashboards are often designed based on local academic norms, which may not be familiar to international students. Recent studies suggest that dashboards are more effective when they clearly explain indicators, display changes over time, and connect results to specific academic activities. However, these features are still not widely used in practice [39], [40].

3) Reflection and self-monitoring tools: Some educational technologies focus on supporting student reflection and self-monitoring. These tools encourage students to reflect on their academic activities and identify patterns in their behavior. Reflection tools often include summaries, weekly reports, or simple prompts that ask students to consider what worked well and what did not.

Research indicates that reflection is more likely to occur when feedback is both timely and personalized. When systems only show raw data, students may feel overwhelmed or unsure how to use the information. On the other hand, tools that guide reflection through concise explanations or simple descriptions can facilitate a deeper understanding [41], [42].

4) Awareness challenges for international students: International students may encounter additional challenges when utilizing awareness and reflection tools. Academic systems, grading styles, and feedback practices can differ significantly from what students have experienced before. Because of this, international students may interpret academic indicators in ways that were not intended by the system designers [43].

Recent studies show that unclear or ambiguous feedback can increase confusion for international students. When explanations are missing, students may misinterpret academic signals and feel unnecessary pressure. Language difficulty and unfamiliar academic terms can also reduce engagement with dashboards and analytics tools [44].

In addition to language and feedback interpretation, international students often face challenges related to academic norms and expectations. Practices such as class participation, independent study, and self-directed learning may be emphasized differently across educational systems [45]. When awareness tools present indicators related to engagement or participation, international students may not always understand how these indicators align with instructors' expectations. This can create uncertainty about whether they are performing adequately or falling behind [46].

Another challenge is related to comparison and benchmarking features commonly used in dashboards. Some systems show how a student's activity or performance compares to class averages or peer groups. While such comparisons are intended to support awareness, international students may interpret them negatively, especially if they are

unfamiliar with local grading distributions or participation norms. Without explanation, comparison-based indicators may increase pressure rather than support understanding.

Time-related indicators can also be difficult to interpret. Academic systems often track time spent on learning platforms, assignment submission times, or activity frequency. For international students, these indicators may not fully reflect their actual effort, especially when learning in a second language requires additional time for reading and comprehension. When systems do not explain how time-related data is interpreted, students may feel that their effort is not accurately represented [47].

Furthermore, international students may have limited opportunities to clarify system feedback through informal communication. Domestic students may ask peers or instructors for clarification more easily, while international students may hesitate due to language concerns or cultural norms. In such cases, awareness tools become even more important as a source of guidance. When these tools lack a clear explanation, students are left without reliable support for understanding their academic situation [34].

Overall, the literature suggests that student awareness is not automatically created by providing data. Awareness is an active process that requires interpretation and reflection. Although dashboards and analytics tools are widely used, they often provide limited support for understanding. Reflection works better when systems offer explanation and context. International students may face additional challenges because of language and academic culture differences. These insights help explain why more transparent and explainable approaches are needed, which will be discussed in the next sections.

C. Artificial Intelligence in Academic Stress Research

In recent years, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been increasingly utilized in educational research to gain a deeper understanding of students' academic experiences. One important area where AI has gained attention is the study of academic stress. Researchers use AI models to analyze large datasets and identify patterns that are difficult to capture using traditional statistical methods. These approaches aim to provide insights into how different academic and contextual factors relate to students' stress levels [23].

Most AI-based studies in this area focus on detecting, predicting, or classifying academic stress. The goal is often to identify students who may be experiencing high stress or to estimate stress levels based on observable data. While these approaches can provide useful information at a system level, they often do not focus on how students themselves understand or utilize the results [48].

1) Data sources used in AI-based stress studies: AI models for academic stress commonly rely on different types of data. Survey-based data are one of the most widely used sources of information. Students are asked to report their stress levels, academic workload, study habits, or learning experiences. These self-reported measures are then used as inputs for machine learning models [48].

In addition to surveys, some studies use behavioral data collected from learning management systems. This may include information such as login frequency, time spent on course materials, assignment submissions, and interaction with online resources. Other studies combine academic data with contextual or demographic variables, such as year of study, major, or learning environment [49].

Recent research has also explored the use of multimodal data, where survey responses are combined with behavioral or contextual indicators. These approaches aim to capture a more comprehensive picture of academic stress by considering multiple sources, simultaneously [50].

2) Machine learning techniques and model performance: A wide range of machine learning techniques has been applied in academic stress research. Commonly used models include logistic regression, decision trees, support vector machines, random forests, and gradient boosting methods. Some studies also explore neural networks, especially when working with larger or more complex datasets [23], [51].

Many papers report strong model performance in terms of accuracy, precision, recall, or F1-score [48]. These results are often presented as evidence that AI can successfully model academic stress. While performance metrics are important, they primarily reflect how well a model fits the data, rather than its utility for students or educators in real-world contexts [52].

As a result, AI-based stress models are often evaluated from a technical perspective. Less attention is given to how the model outputs are presented to students or how students might interpret the results in relation to their academic activities [53].

3) Focus on prediction rather than student experience: A common characteristic of AI-based academic stress research is its emphasis on prediction outcomes. Many studies aim to answer questions such as whether a student is experiencing high or low stress, or which factors are most strongly associated with stress levels. These questions are important, but they often place students in a passive role [54].

In many systems, students receive a label, score, or category that summarizes their level of stress. However, the reasoning behind this output is not always clear. Without explanation, students may not understand how their academic behavior, workload, or engagement contributed to the result. This can limit the usefulness of AI systems for supporting awareness or reflection [55].

Recent studies using interpretable models show that it is possible to identify key contributing factors, such as workload, learning goals, or study environment [56]. However, these explanations are often reported for researchers or practitioners rather than designed for direct student interaction [57].

Overall, the literature indicates that AI has become a significant tool for investigating academic stress. Researchers use different data sources and machine learning techniques to predict stress levels and identify contributing factors. However, most existing work focuses on technical performance and prediction accuracy. The role of AI in supporting students' understanding of their academic situation remains limited. These observations motivate further exploration of explainable and student-facing AI approaches, which are discussed in the next section.

D. Explainable Artificial Intelligence (XAI): Concepts and Approaches

As Artificial Intelligence systems become more common in education, concerns about transparency and understanding have also increased [12]. Many AI models can produce accurate predictions, but their internal decision processes are often difficult to understand. This has led to growing interest in XAI [58]. XAI aims to make AI systems more transparent by helping users understand how and why a model produces a specific output [59].

In educational contexts, explainability is crucial because AI systems are increasingly influencing decisions related to learning, performance, and support. When students receive predictions or indicators without explanation, they may feel confused or uncertain about how to interpret them. XAI offers an opportunity to shift AI systems from being opaque tools to systems that can support understanding and awareness [60].

1) What is explainable AI ?: Explainable AI refers to methods and techniques that allow users to understand the reasoning behind AI model outputs [59]. Instead of providing only a final prediction or score, an explainable system offers additional information that clarifies which factors influenced the result and how these factors interacted with each other [61].

Explainability can take different forms. Some explanations describe the overall behavior of a model, while others focus on explaining individual predictions [62]. In educational systems, explanation is often needed at the individual level, where students want to understand why a particular result applies to them [63].

Importantly, explainability is not only a technical concept. It also involves communication and design. An explanation that is mathematically correct may still be difficult for students to understand if it is presented in complex or technical language [12], [64].

2) Common explainable AI techniques used in education: Several XAI techniques are commonly used in educational and student-related research. Feature importance methods show which input variables contribute most to a model's predictions. These methods help identify factors such as workload, engagement, or study patterns that influence outcomes [65].

Other approaches include rule-based explanations, where model decisions are expressed as simple rules, and example-based explanations, which show similar past cases to help users understand predictions [66]. Some studies also employ visualization techniques to present explanations in graphical form [67].

Among these methods, post-hoc explanation techniques such as SHAP are widely used because they can be applied to many types of machine learning models. These techniques are popular in research because they provide detailed insights into model behavior. However, they are often designed for researchers or analysts, rather than for direct use by students [68], [59]. Table I below shows common explainable AI (XAI) techniques used in education.

3) Explainability from a human-centered perspective: From a Human–Computer Interaction perspective, explainability should be considered as part of the interaction between the user and the system [64]. An explanation is useful only if it helps the user understand the system output and relate it to their own experience [75]. This means that explanations should be clear, concise, and relevant to the user's context [76].

TABLE I. COMMON EXPLAINABLE AI (XAI) TECHNIQUES USED IN EDUCATION

XAI Technique	Educational Use	Example
SHAP (SHapley Additive exPlanations)	Feature attribution indicating the importance of each variable for making predictions (e.g., risk, grades, dropout).	Student success prediction, identification of at-risk learners, understanding key drivers to performance, stability analysis of models,
LIME (Local Interpretable Model-agnostic Explanations)	Local surrogate models to explain black box model single predictions	Explaining individual grade predictions, supporting decisions of teachers about particular students.
Partial Dependence Plots (PDPs) / Global Feature Importance	Global perspective of the relationship between features and results, ranking the highest impact factors.	Course failure risk, dropout prediction, and identifying important behavioral and academic indicators
Transparent / Interpretable Models (e.g., decision trees, rule-based models, simple linear models)	Using inherently interpretable models rather than post hoc explanations.	Many AI in Education (AIED) systems (dashboards, adaptive tutors) are designed to make it more directly understandable to teachers and students.
Open Learner Models (OLMs)	Visual/structural representations of a learner's knowledge/skills, which make system inferences explicit.	Student-facing dashboards, self-regulated learning support, and intelligent tutoring systems.
XAI for Trees / Tree-based Explanation Methods	Global and local explanations tailored to ensembles of decision trees.	Explaining learning analytics models based on tree ensembles (e.g., dropout and performance models).
Clustering-based Explanations (unsupervised XAI)	Explaining clusters or profiles (e.g., learner groups) to educators through visual and text	Teacher dashboards that display student knowledge profiles and similarities.
Multimodal / Generative-enhanced XAI	Combining traditional XAI (i.e., SHAP, LIME) with generative models to obtain personalized, multimodal explanations.	Transparent adaptive learning systems tailor explanations to different user types (e.g., students, teachers, admins).
Prescriptive Analytics with XAI	Translating explanations into suggested action and/or feedback to learners and instructors	Systems that help not only identify at-risk students, but that produce evidence-based, human-readable advice

Adapted from [12], [69], [70], [71], [72], [73], [74].

Research indicates that overly complex explanations can erode trust and lead to increased confusion. When explanations include too many variables or technical terms, users may overlook or misinterpret their meaning [77]. On the other hand, explanations that are too simple may fail to provide meaningful insight [78].

For students, especially international students, explanations should be written in clear, accessible language and connected to familiar academic concepts and activities. Explanations that refer directly to assignments, deadlines, or study behaviors are more likely to support understanding than abstract statistical descriptions [79], [80].

4) Explainable AI in student-facing systems: In recent years, several studies have explored the use of explainable AI in student-facing systems. These systems aim to provide students with insights into predictions related to performance, engagement, or stress. Some studies show that explanations can help students better understand system outputs and reflect on their academic behavior [8], [81].

However, many explainable systems still prioritize technical transparency over student understanding. Explanations are often presented as feature rankings or numerical values, which may be difficult for students to interpret. In some cases, explanations are available only to instructors or researchers, rather than directly to students [82], [13].

This highlights the importance of designing explainable AI systems that are not only accurate and transparent but also usable and meaningful for students. Explainability should support awareness and reflection, rather than simply revealing model internals [16], [83].

In summary, explainable AI provides methods to make AI

systems more transparent and understandable. In educational contexts, explainability has the potential to support student awareness by clarifying how predictions are generated. However, explainability is not only a technical challenge, but also a design and communication challenge. To be effective for students, explanations must be human-centered, easy to understand, and connected to academic experiences. These considerations are particularly important when designing systems for diverse student populations, including those from international backgrounds.

E. Explainable AI for Enhancing Awareness of Academic Stress

Explainable AI presents a significant opportunity to transcend traditional academic stress systems that primarily focus on detection or prediction [84]. Instead of treating stress as a hidden state that needs to be identified by the system, explainable AI allows students to see how academic activities, workload, and engagement patterns are connected to their stress experiences. In this way, explainable AI can support awareness rather than merely monitoring.

In student-facing systems, awareness is created when students understand why the system produces a certain output and how this output relates to their daily academic life. Explainable AI can support this process by making model reasoning more visible and meaningful. When explanations are clear and relevant, students can reflect on their academic behavior and gain a better understanding of the sources of pressure [85], [86].

1) From prediction to awareness: Most existing AI-based academic stress systems are designed to answer predictive questions, such as whether a student is experiencing high or low stress. While these predictions may be useful at an institutional level, they often provide limited value to students if the reasoning behind them is unclear. A stress score or category alone does not explain what caused the stress or how it developed over time [87].

Explainable AI shifts the focus from outcomes to the processes behind them. By showing which academic factors contributed to a prediction, explainable systems allow students to connect system feedback to concrete experiences, such as heavy coursework, approaching deadlines, or reduced engagement. This connection supports awareness by helping students recognize patterns rather than react to isolated indicators [88].

2) Supporting reflection through explanation: Reflection plays a key role in awareness. When students can reflect on their academic activities and understand how these activities relate to stress, they are more likely to develop meaningful insights [89]. Explainable AI can support reflection by presenting explanations that highlight relevant factors and changes over time, allowing for a deeper understanding of the underlying processes.

For example, explanations that show how workload increased during certain weeks or how engagement decreased before stressful periods can help students reflect on their academic routines [90]. Studies suggest that explanations are more effective when they are presented in a narrative or descriptive form rather than as technical graphs or numerical values [91].

Explainable AI can also help reduce uncertainty. When students understand why a system output appears, they may feel more confident in interpreting it and less likely to assume the worst [92]. This is particularly important for international students, who may already experience uncertainty when interpreting academic feedback [59].

3) Designing explainable systems for students: For explainable AI to effectively support awareness, explanations must be designed with students in mind. Many current explainable systems rely on feature importance rankings or complex visualizations. While these methods are useful for researchers, they may be difficult for students to understand or apply.

Student-centered explainable systems should use simple language and relate explanations directly to academic activities. Instead of stating that a variable has a high contribution, explanations could describe how specific behaviors or workload patterns influenced the system output. This approach helps students connect explanations to their own experiences [12], [81].

Another important design consideration is timing. Explanations should be provided at moments when students are most likely to reflect, such as after completing an assignment or during weekly reviews. When explanations are delivered at appropriate times, they are more likely to support awareness rather than add to cognitive load [93], [94].

4) Explainable AI and international student contexts: International students form a highly diverse group, not only in terms of language ability, but also in academic training, assessment experience, and expectations about feedback. Students arrive from educational systems that differ in grading standards, teaching styles, and communication practices. As a result, the same academic signal or system output may be interpreted in very different ways [95]. Explainable AI systems that aim to support awareness must therefore consider this diversity rather than assume a shared academic background [96].

One challenge for international students is that many AI-generated explanations are implicitly designed around local academic norms and expectations. For example, explanations may reference participation levels, submission timing, or comparisons with peers without clarifying why these indicators are relevant. For international students who are still learning how the academic system operates, such explanations may increase uncertainty instead of reducing it [97]. Without contextual framing, students may misinterpret system feedback as a sign of poor performance or failure [98].

Language also plays an important role in how explanations are understood. Even when international students have sufficient proficiency to complete coursework, technical or abstract explanations can be difficult to interpret. Terms such as "engagement score", "risk level", or "feature contribution" may not be meaningful without additional clarification [99]. Explainable AI systems that utilize simple language and concrete references to academic activities, such as assignments,

exams, or study routines, may be more accessible to international students [100].

Another important factor is the emotional interpretation of explanations. International students may already experience uncertainty or self-doubt when navigating a new academic environment [101]. When explanations are unclear or overly complex, students may focus on negative interpretations rather than reflective understanding [102]. In contrast, explanations that align with students' daily academic experiences can help them make sense of feedback in a calmer and more constructive way [103].

Recent studies suggest that explainable systems can support trust when explanations align with students' lived experiences and expectations. When students recognize their own academic behavior in the explanation, they are more likely to accept the system output and reflect on it. However, when explanations conflict with students' perceptions or appear disconnected from their actual experience, trust can decrease, and students may ignore or reject the system feedback [8], [104].

Finally, international students may have fewer opportunities to seek informal clarification from peers or instructors [105]. This makes explainable systems particularly important as a source of guidance. If explanations are not clear or accessible, students may be left without support for understanding their academic situation. This highlights the importance of carefully designing and evaluating explainable AI systems that account for linguistic, cultural, and academic diversity when supporting student awareness [95].

IV. Discussion

This review synthesizes research from the domains of educational technology, learning analytics, and explainable artificial intelligence to enhance our understanding of how AI-based systems can promote students' awareness of academic stress. Across these bodies of literature, a common theme is evident: whilst universities increasingly rely on appropriately data-driven and AI-supported systems, students often face problems arising from the implications of this information for their personal academic situation. The presence of data, indicators, or predictions does not necessarily lead to understanding; students must actively make sense of system outputs.

An important insight from the reviewed studies is that academic stress experienced by international students is primarily constructed through the ongoing academic systems in institutions, rather than being due to discrete individual characteristics. Peak workloads, assessment scheduling, modalities of feedback, and the use of digital learning platforms collectively shape students' experience and understanding of academic pressure. When these components are communicated through dashboards or AI-generated indicators without sufficient textual explanations to aid understanding, students often struggle to align system feedback with their normal institutionalized educational routines. These dynamics help explain why some student-facing systems are considered unhelpful or stressful, even when they are highly technically precise.

Empirical studies indicate that many AI-based approaches to academic stress primarily focus on predictive performance measures rather than understanding students' experiences and contexts. Model efficacy is typically measured by metrics such as accuracy and precision, thereby revealing the system's technical competence. Nonetheless, such metrics only imperfectly address the question of learners' apprehension of the outputs or their perceived pertinence. While occasionally interpretable modelling techniques are used, the explanations associated with them are often disseminated in researcher-centric formats, such as feature importance rankings or fancy visuals. As a result, these elucidations may not address the concrete, pragmatic questions students have about the causal underpinnings of a prediction or its relevance to their academic work.

The gap between technical explainability and student understanding highlights a growing concern in the current research environment. Explainability is often conceived as an inherent feature of the model rather than a part of an interactive process between the system and the learner. As a result, systems may be transparent at the theoretical level but opaque in practice. From a human-centered perspective, explainability should support students in developing a coherent understanding of the context in their academic world, rather than merely exposing the model's inner workings.

International students face additional challenges in this situation. Differences in scholarly culture, linguistic usage, and assessment conventions can significantly impact the interpretation of feedback, including that generated by automated systems. Packages of data are provided on a multitude of student-oriented platforms, with the implicit assumption that students will learn the common academic norms, including the criteria for adequate participation and acceptable progress. When such presumptions do not hold, international learners may misinterpret academic indicators or harbor undue apprehensions. Nevertheless, the existing literature provides little analysis of how explainable artificial intelligence systems work for international learners or of how their explanatory mechanisms can be adapted to their heterogeneous academic antecedents.

One additional limitation that pervades the literature concerns evaluation methodologies. A preponderance of studies deploy systems in short-term trials or focus on short-term usage measures rather than on long-term changes in learner comprehension. Consciousness-raising and sensemaking unfold incrementally over time through interactions and reflective practice. In the absence of longitudinal or direct assessments of understanding, it is also unclear how explainable systems can be regarded as truly able to foster awareness or simply augment information content.

Collectively, based on the evidence presented, XAI has considerable capability to augment student awareness of academic stress; however, at the same time, there is also a degree to which this potential has not been fully realized. Progress requires an overt desire for awareness and an explicit goal, rather than an implicit byproduct of data availability. Achieving this transition requires greater attention to how explanatory content is formulated, communicated, and evaluated from the learner's perspective.

Specifically for international students, XAI implementations should focus less on introducing additional

complexity and more on reducing uncertainty. The use of unequivocal terminology, the connection to tangible academic tasks, and the recognition of the 'heterogeneous experiences of the learners' can help contextualize the output of the system. Through nurturing understanding and reflection practices, XAI may transition from being an instrument of surveillance to a substantive working mechanism for students facing academic stress.

A. Practical Implications

The findings of this review point to several practical considerations for the design and use of student-facing artificial intelligence systems in higher education.

For designers of student-facing AI systems, the results suggest that awareness should be prioritized over prediction. Explanations need to be straightforward to understand, especially for students unfamiliar with technical terms. It is also important to connect explanations to everyday academic activities, such as assignments, deadlines, and study habits. Instead of showing stress scores or risk levels alone, systems should help students understand why certain academic situations may contribute to stress and how they can make sense of this information.

For developers of learning analytics dashboards, the review highlights the need to move beyond static indicators or simple rankings. Dashboards can be more helpful when they provide context, show how patterns change over time, and explain what the information means in practice. In particular, dashboards should avoid assuming familiarity with local academic norms for international students. Clear explanations of expectations can reduce confusion and help prevent unnecessary stress.

For universities that support international students, the findings suggest that AI-based student analytics tools should not focus only on identifying risk or early warning signs. Instead, these systems can be used to support understanding and encourage students to engage with available support resources. Integrating explainable dashboards into advising sessions, orientation programs, or academic support services may help international students better understand their academic situation and feel more confident navigating unfamiliar educational environments.

V. Conclusion

This study aimed to review and synthesize recent research on the use of explainable artificial intelligence to enhance students' awareness of academic stress, with a particular focus on international university students. The review examined literature from educational technology, learning analytics, and explainable AI to understand how current systems support or fail to support students' understanding of academic stressors.

The results showed that while AI-based systems are increasingly used to analyze and estimate academic stress, most existing approaches focus on prediction and technical performance rather than on student awareness. Even when explainable models are applied, explanations are often designed for researchers or system developers, not for students. As a result, many systems provide information without adequately supporting interpretation, reflection, or sensemaking, especially for students who are unfamiliar with local academic norms.

These findings highlight the importance of treating awareness as a central outcome in the design and evaluation of student-facing AI systems. Rather than assuming that access to data or predictions leads to understanding, explainable AI should be viewed as a communication and interaction process that helps students connect system feedback to their everyday academic activities. This perspective contributes to expanding our understanding of how explainable AI can play a meaningful role in educational settings, particularly within the context of Human–Computer Interaction and learning analytics.

On a practical level, these results suggest the possibility of designing explainable AI systems that help students better understand academic stress and respond to it constructively. Systems that use simple language, reference concrete academic activities, and consider diverse academic backgrounds may better support reflection and awareness, especially for international students navigating unfamiliar educational environments.

However, it is worth noting that this study is limited by its reliance on existing literature and the scope of the reviewed studies. Many of the reviewed works are short-term, focus on technical evaluation, and provide limited insight into how student awareness develops over time. In addition, relatively few studies explicitly address international student contexts or evaluate explanations from the students' perspective.

Therefore, future research is recommended to focus on awareness-oriented explainable AI designs, with a stronger emphasis on student-centered evaluation and longitudinal studies. Further work should explore how different explanation styles support understanding across diverse student populations and how explainable systems can be integrated into real academic practices over time, reinforcing a shift from prediction-focused models toward awareness-oriented, student-facing explainable AI systems.

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TRI-GATE: A Tri-Modal Anti-Spoofing System for Gate Access Using Vehicle, License Plate, and Face Recognition

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***Abstract*—Vehicle gate access, in general, still relies heavily on manual inspection of identification cards and visual verification by security guards, which is slow, tedious, and susceptible to spoofing. Single-modality, computerized systems that utilize license plates, vehicle appearance, and facial recognition can partially alleviate this difficulty. Still, they are prone to spoofing and generally perform poorly in real-world scenarios (e.g., glare, occlusion, and tinted glass). This study presents TRI-GATE, a tri-modal anti-spoofing framework that unifies vehicle, license plate, and face recognition within a single, real-time decision pipeline. The system employs YOLOv4-tiny for vehicle detection and a MobileNetV2-based classifier for make–model recognition, a retrained MTCNN and LPRNet pair for license plate detection and recognition on Saudi-specific datasets (17,000 images for detection and 35,000 for recognition), and RetinaFace with InsightFace embeddings, along with a linear SVM, for driver identification. An IoU-based best-frame selection scheme reduces latency by forwarding only the most informative frame to the recognition modules. Score-level fusion is then performed by a linear SVM that learns the relative importance of each modality for the final access decision. Evaluated on a dedicated tri-modal dataset, TRI-GATE achieves 97% gate-level accuracy with an end-to-end latency of 66 ms per frame (≈ 15.15 FPS), and demonstrates robust performance in a real-world gate-like deployment, substantially improving both security and operational efficiency over existing single- and bi-modal solutions.**

Keywords*—Tri-modal anti-spoofing; vehicle recognition; license plate recognition; face recognition; real-time gate access control; multimodal biometrics

I. Introduction

In most conventional vehicle gate access setups, verification still depends largely on manual inspection. Security officers typically visually inspect vehicles and confirm entry permits or identification cards by hand. While simple in principle, this routine often becomes slow, physically demanding, and susceptible to both fatigue and oversight. Delays accumulate during busy hours, creating traffic queues at the gate and inconsistent enforcement of security procedures. What raises greater concern is how easily such systems can be deceived—people with no authorization might convincingly pose as legitimate staff or slip through the gate using falsified documents.

Although automation has made considerable progress, many existing gate systems remain limited to a single mode of recognition—commonly license plate detection or facial identification. Systems built around a single identity marker are easy to compromise: plates can be cloned, and faces may go undetected under tinted glass, dim lighting, or awkward camera angles. Such limitations highlight a crucial shortfall: the absence of a unified, multimodal verification framework capable of confirming both vehicle and driver identity consistently, even amid the unpredictable and imperfect conditions of real-world environments.

This study tackles existing limitations by developing an AI-driven anti-spoofing framework that unifies vehicle detection and classification, license plate recognition, and facial recognition within a single decision pipeline. Using computer vision methods such as YOLO (You Only Look Once) and OpenCV (Open Computer Vision library), along with a Support Vector Machine (SVM) classifier, the system processes and integrates outputs from multiple models to generate intelligent access control decisions. The fusion strategy not only boosts accuracy and processing speed but also makes gate access more robust against spoofing attempts, thereby reducing unauthorized access and improving the operational efficiency and security of facility gate management.

A. Related Work

In recent years, researchers have devoted significant attention to improving the reliability of automated vehicle gate systems. Early systems mainly relied on single data sources—most often license plate recognition or basic vehicle appearance matching. These systems worked reasonably well in controlled environments but struggled when lighting changed, the camera angle shifted, or spoofing was attempted. As listed in Table I, more recent work has shifted toward multimodal approaches that combine license plate data, vehicle signatures, and even driver identity cues. This transition reflects an effort to create systems that not only identify but also verify vehicles under real-world variability. Despite these developments, many solutions still face trade-offs between speed, cost, and recognition stability, especially in real-time gate scenarios where decisions must be made in fractions of a second.

1) License Plate Recognition (LPR): License plate recognition has been studied for years and continues to play a central role in automated gate systems. Early neural models, such as WPOD-NET, demonstrated that end-to-end detection and segmentation were feasible, achieving about 89% accuracy on benchmarks such as SSIG and AOLP [1]. But while that was

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TABLE I. REVIEW OF VISION-BASED RECOGNITION APPROACHES FOR AUTOMATED GATE ENTRY

Author(s)	Year	Model/System	Fusion Type	Dataset(s)	Best Reported Performance
Silva *et al.* [1]	2018	WPOD-NET	License plate only	Cars Dataset, SSIG, AOLP, OpenALPR (EU and BR), and newly created CD-HARD dataset	89.33% (average accuracy)
Zhu *et al.* [2]	2023	SYOLOv5s + GAM + FEM	License plate only	CCPD	96.6% mAP @ 43.86 FPS, and Parameters = 5.07 M
Sarhan *et al.* [3]	2024	YOLOv8 + Easy-OCR + CNN	License plate only	EALPR (for detection) + Arabic Letters & Numbers OCR (for recognition)	99.42% accuracy (CNN-based recognition), and YOLOv8 detection mAP 94.26%
Tao *et al.* [4]	2024	YOLOv5-PDLPR	License plate only	CCPD	99.4% accuracy @ 159.8 FPS
Lou *et al.* [5]	2019	FDA-Net	Vehicle only	VERI-Wild dataset (main), plus VehicleID and VeRi-776 for comparison	Best (on VeRi-776): mAP = 55.49%, Rank-1 = 84.27%, and Rank-5 = 92.43%
Yu *et al.* [6]	2023	SOFCT	Vehicle only	VeRi-776 and VehicleID	VeRi-776: mAP = 80.7%, and Rank-1 = 96.6%; VehicleID: up to mAP = 89.8%, and Rank-1 = 84.5%
Zhu *et al.* [7]	2023	DSN	Vehicle only	VehicleID, Vehicle-1M, and VeRi-776	Best (on VeRi-776): mAP = 76.3%, and Rank-1 = 94.8%
Liang *et al.* [8]	2023	S-TVReID	Vehicle only	VeRi-776 and VehicleID	Best (on VeRi-776): mAP = 80.8%, Rank-1 = 96.4%, and Rank-5 = 98.5%
Lian *et al.* [9]	2023	MED	Vehicle only	VeRi-776 and VehicleID (+ Market-1501, DukeMTMC-reID, and MSMT17)	VeRi-776: mAP = 83.4%, and Rank-1 = 97.2%; VehicleID: Rank-1 = 87.8/83.1/81.4%; SOTA on pedestrian sets
Alim *et al.* [10]	2023	YOLOv3 + YOLOv5 + LPRNet	License plate + driver information	WiderFace (for face detection), and custom Turkish LP dataset	Accuracy = 97.34% (LPR), AP = 0.926/0.908/0.765 (FD), and 13 FPS combined
Teja *et al.* [11]	2024	ANPR (KNN + CNN) + Face Recognition (LBPH)	License plate + driver information	Custom dataset (vehicle plates & individual faces)	Accuracy = 96.54% (Face), 88.67% (ANPR)
Akbar *et al.* [12]	2024	Face Recognition + EasyOCR + Haar Cascade Classifier	License plate + driver information	8 visitors (faces & number plates, and Universitas Andalas)	Success rate = 62.5%
Iyer *et al.* [13]	2024	YOLOv8 + EasyOCR + dlib (CNN)	License plate + driver information	Combination of 3 open Indian number plate datasets + custom Devanagari dataset	ANPR: mAP@50 = 98.35%, OCR: 88.14%, and Face Recognition: 98.34%
Mustafa *et al.* [14]	2024	MobileNet-V2 + YOLOx + YOLOv4-tiny + PaddleOCR + SVTR-tiny	License plate + Vehicle	COCO, Stanford Car Dataset, and Firat University dataset	97.5% (overall accuracy)
Ramajo-Ballester *et al.* [15]	2024	YOLOv5 + EfficientNetB0 (FastReID)	License plate + Vehicle	UC3M-LP and UC3M-VRI	mAP = 0.893 (detection), 0.764 (OCR), accuracy = 0.979 (re-ID), and ≈ 58.1 ms per image (real-time capable)
Khor *et al.* [16]	2024	Multi-Task YOLOv8 (multi-head YOLOv8 for OCR, LP detection, and VCR)	License plate + Vehicle	In-house multi-labelled dataset (1555 images) + synthetic augmentation using TRDG	mAP_{50} = 0.778 (OCR), 0.963 (LP), 0.881 (VCR); Average = 0.874
AlDahoul *et al.* [17]	2025	VehiclePaliGemma	License plate + Vehicle	258-image Malaysian license plate dataset (Tapway Sdn Bhd) + 600 synthetic images (for fine-tuning)	87.6% (plate accuracy), and 97.66% (character accuracy)
Saadouli *et al.* [18]	2020	Fusion of SIFT + DoG + Viola–Jones modules	License plate + driver information + vehicle	Qatar University car surveillance dataset (225 images and 24 car types)	74.63% accuracy (real dataset)

quite good for its time, accuracy often dropped under glare or distortion.

Later studies started chasing speed as much as precision. One of the more interesting attempts came from Zhu and colleagues [2], who developed a lightweight version of YOLOv5, called SYOLOv5s. They added a small attention mechanism to help the model focus on fine details on plates rather than get distracted by car reflections. The approach achieved a mean average precision (mAP) of 96.6% on the CCPD dataset at roughly 40–45 FPS, which is impressive for an embedded setup.

In a similar direction, Sarhan *et al.* [3] paired YOLOv8 with Easy-OCR and a compact CNN to recognize Egyptian plates. Their system achieved 94.26% mAP and about 99.4% recognition accuracy. A slightly later work by Tao *et al.* [4] pushed further with YOLOv5-PDLPR, achieving close to 160 FPS while maintaining roughly 99.4% accuracy.

These results look great on clean datasets, but in real life, the story changes. Two identical plates on different vehicles or even a printed photo of a plate can easily pass. *The problem is that plate-based identification only tells what plate it sees—it says nothing about who is driving or whether that plate really*

belongs on that car.

2) Vehicle recognition and re-identification (Re-ID): As license-plate models reached maturity, attention began shifting to the vehicle's physical appearance. The idea was that the combination of color, make, and shape could help track or verify vehicles across cameras. Lou *et al.* [5] developed FDA-Net, an early method for feature disentanglement that achieved mAP of 55.49% and Rank-1 of 84.27% on the VeRi-776 benchmark. Though not perfect, it was a turning point.

Later, transformer-based models changed the landscape. Yu *et al.* [6] proposed SOFCT, a transformer that couples features across views, boosting accuracy to mAP 80.7% and Rank-1 96.6%. Liang *et al.* [8] followed with a spatial-temporal transformer (S-TVReID) that achieved nearly identical results, while Lian *et al.* [9] introduced a multi-branch model (MED) that squeezed out a bit more, reporting mAP of 83.4% and Rank-1 of 97.2%.

Around the same time, Zhu *et al.* [7] suggested a dual self-attention network (DSN). Instead of relying on a single global attention layer, they used two complementary self-attention stages to capture both coarse and fine details. The model achieved a mAP of 76.3% and a Rank-1 accuracy of 94.8%, indicating that a thoughtfully designed attention mechanism can match the performance of more complex architectures.

Altogether, these advances make vehicle appearance recognition highly reliable, but it still doesn't answer the key security question—who is inside the vehicle? *Appearance cues alone can't guarantee authorized access*.

3) Fusion of license plate and driver information: A natural next step was to include the driver's identity. Several works explored this idea, often combining a license-plate detector with facial recognition. Alim *et al.* [10] proposed an edge-based model using YOLOv3/YOLOv5 and LPRNet, achieving roughly 97% plate accuracy and solid face detection results. Teja *et al.* [11] mixed a KNN/CNN ANPR approach with LBPH facial recognition, scoring 96.54% for the face and 88.67% for the plate.

Other studies followed, but under more constrained setups. Akbar *et al.* [12] tested a prototype using Haar cascades and EasyOCR for visitor entry, but accuracy dropped to around 62%, mostly due to variable lighting and glass reflections. Iyer and Dhavale. [13] later improved on this with YOLOv8, EasyOCR, and dlib-CNN, achieving about 98% accuracy for faces and 88.14% for plates.

Despite encouraging results, most of these projects were small-scale and tested in fairly controlled conditions. *Problems like tinted windshields, poor lighting, or the driver's head turned away still cause big accuracy swings. Moreover, few systems tried to fuse both cues into a single, reliable decision*.

4) Fusion of license plate and vehicle features: Some researchers instead checked whether the vehicle's appearance matched its plate. Mustafa and Karabatak [14] proposed a multi-stage design combining MobileNet-V2, YOLOx, YOLOv4-tiny, PaddleOCR, and SVTR-tiny, with an overall accuracy near 97.5%. Ramajo-Ballester *et al.* [15] merged YOLOv5, EfficientNetB0, and FastReID, reporting mAP of 0.893 for license-plate detection and 97.9% re-identification accuracy, all running at roughly 58 ms per frame.

Khor *et al.* [16] developed a multitask YOLOv8 with shared layers and separate heads for OCR, plate detection, and vehicle recognition, achieving an average mAP of 0.874. Later, AlDahoul *et al.* [17] introduced VehiclePaliGemma, which used a vision-language approach and achieved 87.6% plate accuracy and 97.66% character accuracy on Malaysian datasets.

These multi-modal systems make it easier to spot mismatched or fake plates, but they stop short of confirming driver identity. *That gap still allows a legitimate vehicle to be driven by an unauthorized person*.

5) Tri-modal fusion of plate, vehicle, and driver: A handful of earlier works did try to combine all three components. Saadouli *et al.* [18] developed a system that combined SIFT, Difference-of-Gaussian, and Viola-Jones methods to fuse plate, vehicle, and face information. Tested on a small dataset from Qatar University, the setup achieved about 74.6% accuracy. Although modest, that study demonstrated the concept was feasible and hinted at what future models could achieve with deep learning.

However, since then, the tri-modal direction has received surprisingly little attention. Most newer works still treat plates, vehicles, and faces as separate modules rather than fusing them into a single coherent anti-spoofing decision.

6) Research gap and motivation: From reviewing this body of work, a few consistent gaps appear. Nearly all systems rely on one or two cues rather than combining all three, leaving them vulnerable to spoofing or substitution attacks. Models trained on datasets such as CCPD or VeRi-776 often struggle to generalize to Saudi or GCC license plates, which vary in color, shape, and script. Another issue is that most papers report part-level metrics—such as mAP or recognition rate—without testing full gate-level performance, including false acceptance and false rejection under real attack conditions.

To tackle these problems, the present study develops a deep tri-modal anti-spoofing system that merges three complementary sources: the license plate, the vehicle's visual signature, and the driver's identity. The system uses YOLOv4-tiny [19] for vehicle detection, MobileNetV2 [20] for vehicle classification, MTCNN [21] for license plate detection, LPRNet [22] for license plate recognition, RetinaFace [23] for face detection and alignment, and the InsightFace framework [24] (trained with the ArcFace loss [25] for feature extraction) combined with a linear SVM [26] for face recognition. The recognition results (plate, face, and vehicle) are then combined with a simple linear SVM that learns how much to trust each output based on its confidence. The dataset itself was built around Saudi license plates, so it's tuned to the region. In the end, the goal is to narrow the long-standing gap between strong recognition results in experiments and the reliability needed for real gate security.

B. Contributions

The principal contributions of this work are outlined below:

- A real-time, integrated anti-spoofing system: Unlike traditional gate access mechanisms that rely solely on a single recognition model—be it facial, vehicle, or license plate recognition—our system unifies all three

within a single, real-time framework. This integration not only strengthens security but also minimizes unauthorized entries and prevents unnecessary traffic delay at the gate.

- A new labeled dataset for license plate detection: We introduce a fully annotated dataset of 17,000 Saudi Arabian license plate images for detection tasks. To the best of our knowledge, no previous study has provided such a dataset. A visual example of this dataset is shown in Fig. 4.
- A new labeled dataset for license plate recognition: Another dataset, consisting of 35,000 labeled images of Saudi license plates, is presented for recognition purposes. This collection is also newly introduced to the literature, and a representative sample is provided in Fig. 5.
- Public release and implementation details: Both datasets, along with the complete system, are openly available through our GitHub repository [27]. The implementation is clearly documented and designed with scalability and flexibility in mind, allowing it to be adapted or extended to fit a range of deployment environments.

Together, these contributions emphasize the originality and practical value of our study. By merging multiple recognition techniques within a single system and grounding them in newly developed datasets, this work lays a strong foundation for improving automated vehicle access control in real-world conditions.

II. Proposed Model

A. Overview

The primary goal of this research is to make vehicle entry systems faster, smarter, and less dependent on manual checks. In many facilities, access is still verified by guards, which often slows things down and sometimes leads to errors or even security breaches. The problem becomes more obvious during rush hours when the number of vehicles increases and human attention starts to slip. To solve this, we developed an automated model that works in real time and removes the need for constant supervision. The system relies on three main visual features: the driver's face, the vehicle, and its license plate. Our proposed system fuses these features to create a stronger, more reliable decision-making model that speeds up entry validation and makes it safer, without adding more human effort.

Our proposed model, shown in Fig. 1, illustrates how the anti-spoofing gate access system operates as a complete process, from video capture to the final decision. When a vehicle approaches, the system records live video and automatically selects the clearest frame using the intersection-over-union (IoU) method to ensure the vehicle is properly captured. From that frame, the YOLOv4-tiny model [19] detects the car, while MobileNetV2 [20] classifies its make and model. The license plate area is then located using a modified MTCNN [21], and LPRNet [22] reads the characters on it. At the same time, RetinaFace [23] detects and aligns the driver's face, and InsightFace [24], [25]—together with a linear SVM [26] classifier—identifies who the person is. These three recognition results (vehicle, plate, and face) are then combined using a weighted linear SVM, which calculates an overall score to determine whether access should be allowed. In short, the figure illustrates a smooth, AI-based workflow that combines detection, recognition, and decision-making into one unified, real-time security system. The following subsections elaborate on every step in this proposed pipeline.

B. Vehicle Detection

In the proposed anti-spoofing gate access system, identifying vehicles in each video frame is the central operation. To meet real-time requirements without overloading the system, a lightweight detection model was used. In this case, the YOLOv4-tiny network [19] was chosen because it strikes a reasonable balance between detection accuracy and processing speed. Compared to the full YOLOv4 version [28], it runs faster due to its reduced parameter count and simpler convolutional layers. These characteristics make it practical for edge or embedded systems, where memory and processing resources are limited.

Before the detection stage, each input image is processed using OpenCV [29], which handles basic preprocessing tasks such as reading the image, resizing it, and converting it to the correct color space. Once that is done, YOLOv4-tiny divides the image into an $S \times S$ grid. Every cell in this grid predicts several bounding boxes, each one represented by five numeric values and a set of class probabilities. These values describe the position, size, and confidence level associated with each possible vehicle in the frame, defined as:

$$y = \begin{bmatrix} P_c \\ b_x \\ b_y \\ b_h \\ b_w \\ C_1 \\ C_2 \\ \vdots \\ C_n \end{bmatrix},$$

where,

- P_c: Confidence score indicating the probability of an object's presence within the bounding box.
- b_x, b_y: Normalized center coordinates of the bounding box.
- b_h, b_w: Normalized height and width of the bounding box.
- C_i: Class probabilities for the object categories (via softmax).

The extracted bounding box parameters are shown in Fig. 2.

After the network finishes predicting several possible bounding boxes, the raw output still needs some cleanup. The goal of this step is to keep the detections that actually matter and discard the ones that don't. Two standard techniques handle this refinement:

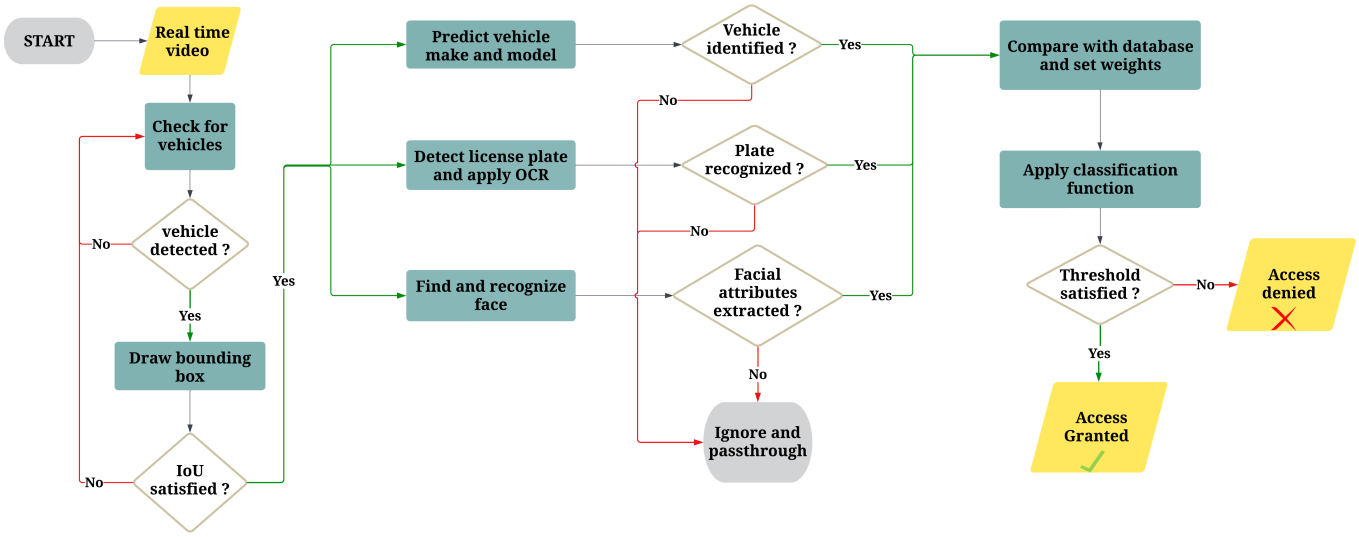

Fig. 1. Workflow of the proposed AI-based anti-spoofing gate access tri-modal system, combining vehicle, license plate, and facial recognition for robust and unified real-time verification.

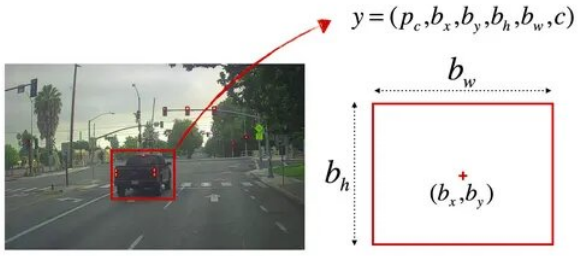

Fig. 2. Bounding box parameters (b_x, b_y, b_h, b_w) predicted by YOLOv4-tiny, defining each detected vehicle's position and size.

Fig. 3. Illustration of non-maximum suppression (NMS) removing overlapping bounding boxes and keeping only the highest-confidence detection per vehicle.

- Score thresholding: Any bounding box whose confidence value falls below a chosen threshold is simply dropped. This first filter removes weak forecasts, allowing the next phases to focus on stronger ones.
- Non-maximum suppression (NMS): If several boxes overlap on the same object, only the one with the highest confidence is kept. The rest are removed whenever their intersection-over-union (IoU) with the highest-scoring box exceeds a predefined threshold.

Working together, these two steps result in each object being represented by a single, clean bounding box. They also lighten the computational load and help the model reach its decision faster. As illustrated in Fig. 3, NMS trims away overlapping boxes, leaving the final, precise outline.

The use of YOLOv4-tiny comes down to its balance between speed and accuracy. Running approximately 83.33 frames per second on an NVIDIA GeForce RTX 2080 Ti GPU, it can manage real-time monitoring at a gate or checkpoint. Even though it's a smaller variant of YOLOv4, it performs reliably under difficult lighting, partial occlusion, and awkward vehicle angles.

With YOLOv4-tiny handling vehicle detection, later components—vehicle classification, license-plate recognition, and face identification—receive neatly cropped regions of interest. That early precision keeps the entire tri-modal anti-spoofing system steady, fast, and dependable in live operation.

C. Best-Frame Selection for Low-Latency Vehicle Gating

In real-time video, a moving vehicle appears across several consecutive frames at different positions and scales. Processing every frame is wasteful—it drives up latency without significantly improving accuracy. A better strategy is to select a single best frame that preserves the most useful visual detail while keeping computation lean.

As the vehicle approaches the gate, each frame provides a slightly different view. We aim to select the moment when the vehicle is most prominent and least occluded—typically the frame with the largest, well-centered bounding box—so that downstream modules (vehicle classification, license plate recognition, and driver or occupant cues) receive the cleanest signal.

We formalize this with the intersection over union (IoU) between the detected bounding box B_t in frame t and a

predefined reference box B^* that encodes the desired on-screen extent:

$$\mathrm{IoU}(B_t, B^*) = \frac{|B_t \cap B^*|}{|B_t \cup B^*|}, \quad t^\dagger = \arg\max_t \mathrm{IoU}(B_t, B^*).$$

This simple rule favors frames where the target is closest and best aligned with the expected view. Crucially, if two different vehicles enter the scene simultaneously, the method still yields a single, unambiguous selection: among all detections across frames, only the vehicle whose bounding box achieves the largest IoU with B^* is chosen, and only its best frame is forwarded downstream. This ensures that the system detects and processes only one vehicle at a time, eliminating multi-vehicle conflicts. Then the procedure per short time window:

- Detect vehicle candidates and obtain B_t for each frame.
- Compute $\mathrm{IoU}(B_t, B^*)$ for all candidates.
- Select $t^\dagger = \arg\max_t \mathrm{IoU}(B_t, B^*)$; export only frame $t^\dagger$ and its associated vehicle.

By emitting exactly one, high-quality frame, the system trims redundant computation and preserves recognition accuracy. In practice, this best-frame gate reduces end-to-end latency and strengthens anti-spoofing behavior, making it a robust solution for real-time vehicle access control.

D. Vehicle Classification

Following detection, the vehicle crop is forwarded to the make–model classifier. We employ the off-the-shelf model in [30], which is built on MobileNetV2 [20] and trained using transfer learning similar to [31]. Concretely, MobileNetV2 serves as the backbone feature extractor, and the resulting classifier operates in real-time on gate imagery. Vehicle crops are first resized to 224×224 pixels; in practice, reliable inference is obtained for objects as small as 30×30 pixels after pre-processing. The model's training coverage comprises approximately 400 brands and 7,000 car models, with canonical viewpoints limited to front, rear, and side. Under these conditions, the reported top-1 accuracy reaches about 95%. We selected this module for its real-time operation and strong accuracy, which is backed by training that covers every car make and model in Saudi Arabia. The module integrates with the upstream detector by consuming the refined bounding box for each candidate (see Fig. 2), and its system-level role is consistent with the end-to-end workflow (see Fig. 1).

E. License Plate Detection

After vehicle detection and best-frame selection, the system localizes the license plate using a retrained variant of the multi-task cascaded convolutional network (MTCNN) [21]. Although MTCNN is conventionally used for face detection and alignment, prior work shows that, with suitable retraining and loss-function tuning, it can be adapted to license plate detection under diverse viewpoints and backgrounds [32]. Following this approach, we fine-tuned the network on Saudi Arabian plates to enhance its robustness under challenging capture conditions (e.g., strong illumination, oblique angles, and cluttered scenes).

Because no large, open datasets exist for Saudi plates, we constructed a dedicated detection corpus. Images were captured manually and gathered from public social-media sources (programmatically fetched with Instaloader [33]), yielding approximately 17,000 annotated images that span all Saudi plate types and a broad range of environments (appearance, background, lighting, scale, and viewpoint). Representative examples and detector outputs of our novel dataset are shown in Fig. 4.

Annotations were created using the computer vision annotation tool (CVAT), where plate bounding boxes were produced and exported as XML for training. The novel curated dataset (images and ground truths) is organized with clear documentation to support reproducibility and is publicly available on our GitHub repository cite [27].

After assembling the dataset, the next step is to train the license plate detector. Given MTCNN's cascaded design, we retained the proposal (P-Net) and output (O-Net) stages. We omitted the refinement (R-Net) stage after empirical testing indicated no degradation in accuracy for this task. Training hyperparameters for P-Net and O-Net are summarized in Table II. Our end-to-end system achieved an overall accuracy of 99.2%.

TABLE II. TRAINING HYPERPARAMETERS FOR THE LICENSE-PLATE DETECTION MODEL (RETRAINED MTCNN WITH P-NET AND O-NET STAGES)

Parameter	Value
Number of epochs	50
Learning rate	0.001
Initial weight	0.1
Batch size	64
Dataset split	70% train, 20% validation, 10% test

For classification at each retained stage, we used the standard cross-entropy (log-loss) objective [Eq. (1)]. For bounding-box regression, we minimized mean-squared error [Eq. (2)] against the ground-truth coordinates. This combination yielded stable convergence and accurate plate localization in practice.

$$L(y, p) = -\frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^{N} \left[y_i \log(p_i) + (1 - y_i) \log(1 - p_i) \right], \quad (1)$$

where,

- $L(y, p)$ represents the log loss function.
- N is the number of samples.
- y_i is the true label of the i-th sample.
- p_i is the predicted probability of the i-th sample being of the positive class.

$$L(y, \hat{y}) = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^{N} \|y_i - \hat{y}_i\|^2. \quad (2)$$

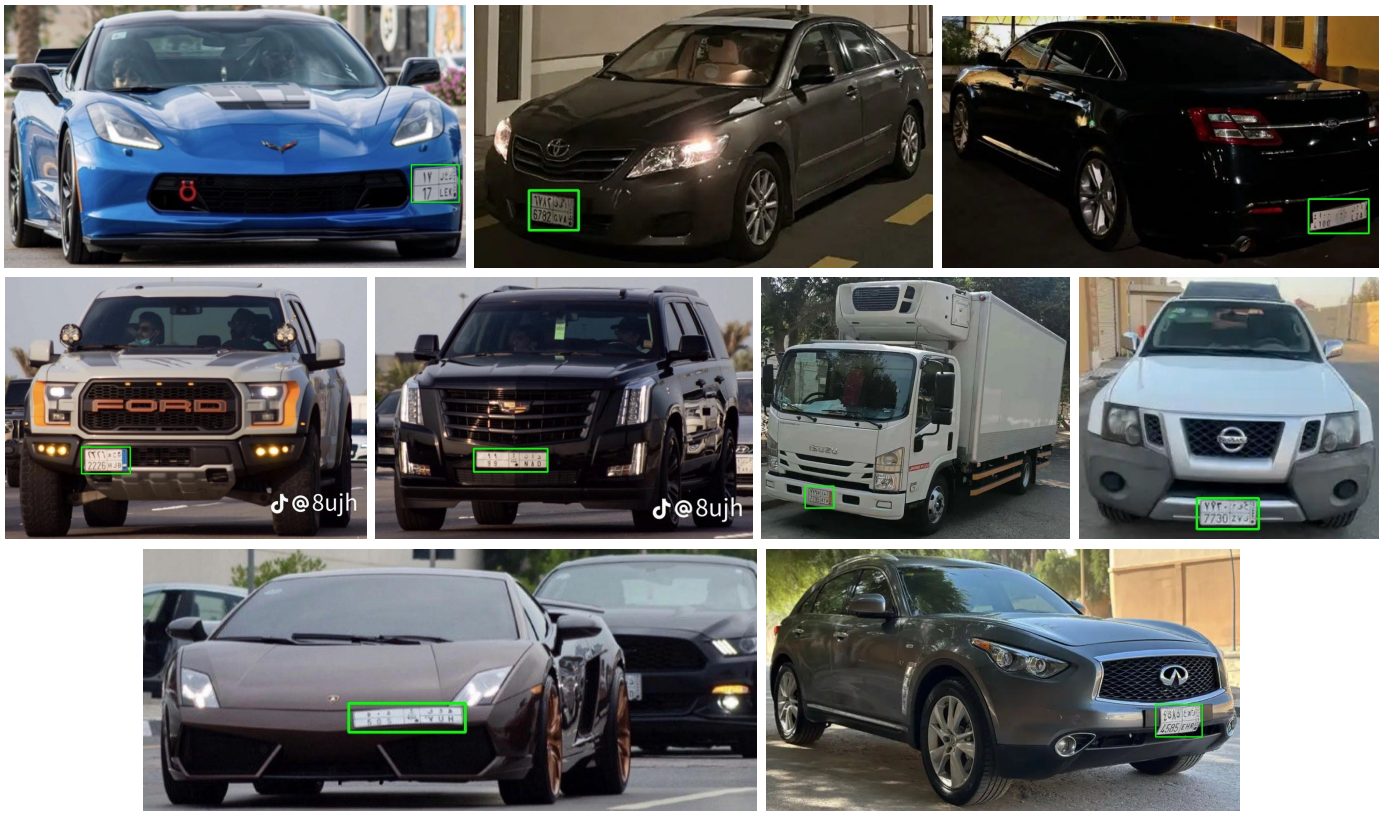

Fig. 4. Examples from our Saudi license-plate detection dataset (17,000 images), covering diverse backgrounds, lighting conditions, scales, viewpoints, and all official plate types. Green boxes indicate detections from the retrained MTCNN detector.

F. License Plate Recognition

Following license-plate detection, character recognition is performed using LPRNet [22], which has been retrained specifically on Saudi Arabian plates. Prior to training, the label space was constrained to reflect national plate conventions: strings were limited to at most seven characters (up to three letters and up to four digits), and characters not present on Saudi plates—C, F, I, M, O, P, Q, W, and Y—were removed. This pruning reduces ambiguity and improves convergence without altering the inference pipeline.

Because a large open dataset for Saudi plates is unavailable, we assembled a dedicated corpus. Data were drawn from three sources: 1) self-captured images, 2) publicly available social-media imagery, and 3) crops automatically harvested by our retrained MTCNN plate detector, which we used to detect and crop Saudi plates to expand further coverage across styles, viewpoints, and illumination conditions. Fig. 5 provides samples of our novel dataset alongside LPRNet predictions.

Annotation was streamlined with a lightweight Python tool that renames each image to its alphanumeric ground truth. Given the fixed mapping between Arabic and English characters on Saudi plates, labels were stored in English to simplify recognition. In total, the recognition dataset comprises approximately 35,000 labeled plate images. The curated dataset (images and ground-truth labels) is documented for reproducibility and is publicly available via our GitHub repository cite [27]. After collecting and pre-processing the dataset, we retained the LPRNet model, with key hyperparameters summarized in Table III. We achieved an overall accuracy of 93.1%, with a loss of 0.0059 at epoch 25, as shown in Fig. 6.

TABLE III. TRAINING HYPERPARAMETERS FOR THE LICENSE-PLATE RECOGNITION MODEL (RETRAINED LPRNET)

Parameter	Value
Number of epochs	50
Learning rate	0.001
Learning rate schedule	at epochs 4, 8, 12, 16, 32, and 45
Batch size	128
Dataset split	70% train, 20% validation, 10% test

G. Face Detection and Alignment

Within the vehicle region of interest, faces are localized using RetinaFace [23]. This single-shot detector jointly predicts bounding boxes and sparse facial landmarks (e.g., eye centers, nose tip, mouth corners). This joint formulation enhances robustness to scale changes, partial occlusions, and challenging illumination conditions, which are common in in-vehicle imagery. As illustrated in Fig. 7, the detected landmarks are subsequently used to geometrically normalize the crop, producing an upright, aligned face that is forwarded to the recognition backend. In practice, this alignment step reduces pose variability and stabilizes the downstream feature extraction stage.

Fig. 5. Samples from the Saudi license-plate recognition dataset (35,000 images) encompass a diverse range of backgrounds, lighting conditions, scales, viewpoints, and official plate types. LPRNet predictions are shown above each plate.

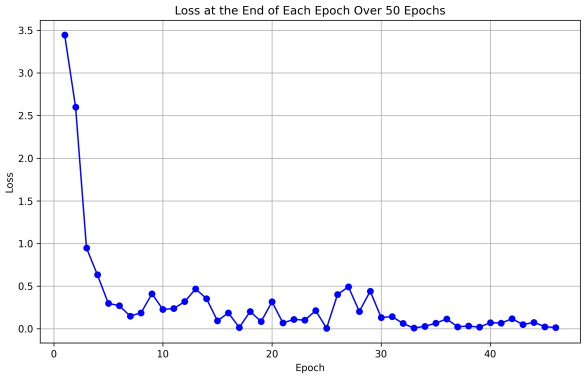

Fig. 6. Training loss of the retrained LPRNet across 50 epochs; the minimum loss (0.0059) occurs at epoch 25, coinciding with a 93.1% test accuracy on Saudi license plates.

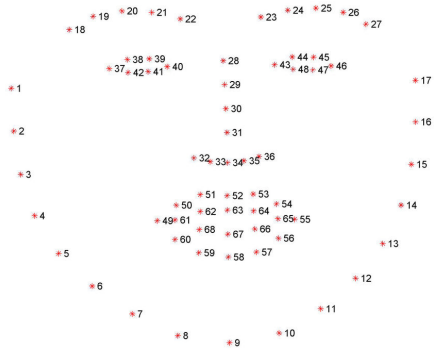

Fig. 7. RetinaFace-detected facial landmarks (eye centers, nose tip, mouth corners) and the resulting geometric alignment prior to face recognition.

H. Face Recognition

Following detection and geometric alignment (Fig. 7), identity is inferred using the InsightFace pipeline [24], trained with the ArcFace additive angular-margin loss [25], to obtain a compact and discriminative embedding for each detected face. To reduce computational cost and mitigate redundancy in the embedding space, dimensionality reduction methods such as principal component analysis (PCA) can be applied prior to classification [34]. The resulting feature vectors are classified using a one-vs-rest linear SVM [26], an approach chosen for its low latency, stable generalization in small-sample regimes, and straightforward score calibration in the tri-modal setting (see also related ensemble/OvR usage in [35]). Within our dataset of 30 subjects with 20 images each (600 total; 70/20/10 train/validation/test split), this module achieved $\approx 99.5\%$ identification accuracy on the closed set. The classifier's confidence score is exported to the fusion stage as the face term in the linear decision function, consistent with the end-to-end workflow illustrated in Fig. 1 and the global formulation described earlier.

I. Tri-Modal Score Fusion for End-to-End Access Classification

To convert per-modality predictions into a single access decision, the system fuses confidence scores from the vehicle make and model classifier, the license plate recognizer, and the face recognizer. Let the score vector be:

$$\boldsymbol{x} \triangleq \begin{bmatrix} x_{\text{vehicle}} \\ x_{\text{plate}} \\ x_{\text{face}} \end{bmatrix},$$

where, each component denotes the corresponding model's confidence. A linear support vector machine (SVM) [26] is employed to learn a separating hyperplane over $\boldsymbol{x}$, chosen for its computational simplicity in real-time settings and its stable behavior with limited training data.

The decision function is:

$$f(\boldsymbol{x}) = \boldsymbol{w}^\top \boldsymbol{x} + b = w_1\, x_{\text{vehicle}} + w_2\, x_{\text{plate}} + w_3\, x_{\text{face}} + b, \quad (3)$$

with $\boldsymbol{w} = [\, w_1,\, w_2,\, w_3\,]^\top$ and b learned from labeled training samples. Access is granted when

$$f(\boldsymbol{x}) \geq 0,$$

and denied otherwise. This linear fusion enables the classifier to weight each modality according to its discriminative value at the operating point, yielding a single, consistent pass/fail verdict suitable for real-time gate control.

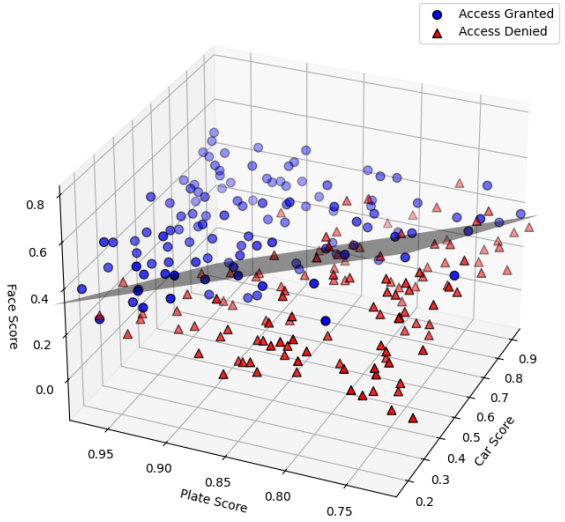

Fig. 8. Linear SVM decision boundary in the tri-modal confidence space.

III. Results and Discussion

In this section, we present the training of our tri-modal system and report its overall performance (quantitative results). We also provide a real-world demonstration of the proposed model (qualitative results).

A. Tri-Modal System Training and Performance

The tri-modal fusion classifier maps modality confidences—vehicle make/model, license plate recognition, and face recognition—-into a single access decision using a linear SVM operating on the score vector with decision function, as shown in Eq. (3). The training corpus comprises 1,000 images spanning a diverse range of vehicles, license plates, and driver appearances. The dataset was partitioned into 70%/15%/15% for training/validation/testing, respectively. Under this protocol, the fused classifier attained an overall accuracy of 97% with an end-to-end latency of 66 ms per frame (approximately 15.15 FPS). All experiments were conducted on an NVIDIA GeForce RTX 2080 Ti GPU. The learned parameters are $w_1 = 2.103$ (vehicle), $w_2 = 6.270$ (plate), $w_3 = 3.392$ (face), and $b = -7.588$; the separating hyperplane and score geometry are illustrated in Fig. 8.

The weight magnitudes follow an intuitive ordering. The license-plate stream receives the largest weight, reflecting the high distinctiveness of plate identities; the face stream is second—useful but occasionally ambiguous (e.g., similar appearance)—and the vehicle make/model stream is weighted lowest, consistent with the possibility of visually similar trims across brands. This ranking provides a straightforward interpretation of how the fusion balances complementary cues at inference time.

At the system level, 66 ms/frame is compatible with near-stop gate operation, where vehicles either halt or approach slowly ($<$ 15 km/h). Numerically, 15 km/h $\approx$ 4.17 m/s, so a 15.15 FPS stream observes frames every $\approx$ 66 ms; the vehicle advances only $\approx 4.17 \times \frac{1}{15.15} \approx 0.28$ meters between frames. This inter-frame motion is sufficiently small to maintain detector stability and OCR legibility as the vehicle settles at the barrier, while preserving temporal continuity for the face pipeline inside the cabin. The operating point, therefore, satisfies the real-time constraint for access control. The end-to-end frame time is directly determined by the per-module (subsystem) runtimes that execute in sequence. The speeds of these subsystems are summarized in Table IV.

TABLE IV. Per-Module Runtime and Throughput (ms and FPS) for the Sequential Tri-Modal Pipeline—Vehicle Detection/Recognition, Plate Detection/Recognition, and Face Detection/Recognition—Along with the Overall End-to-End Latency

Model	Speed
Vehicle Detector	12ms ($\approx$ 83.33 FPS)
Vehicle Recognizer	9ms ($\approx$ 111.11 FPS)
License Plate Detector	11ms ($\approx$ 90.91 FPS)
License Plate Recognizer	9ms ($\approx$ 111.11 FPS)
Face Detector	15ms ($\approx$ 66.67 FPS)
Face Recognizer	10ms (100 FPS)
End-to-end	66ms ($\approx$ 15.15 FPS)

B. A Real-World Demonstration

To examine how the proposed tri-modal pipeline behaves outside controlled datasets, we recorded a 23-second video sequence at a gate-like entrance, as illustrated in Fig. 9. The scenario involves a Toyota Camry approaching the barrier at low speed, bearing the Saudi license plate 1812SGD and driven by an enrolled subject (Muhannad). The raw video stream is fed directly to the system described in Section II, with no manual frame selection or offline post-processing.

As the vehicle moves through the field of view, the YOLOv4-tiny detector produces a set of candidate bounding boxes B_t over successive frames. The best-frame selection module (Subsection II-C) evaluates $\text{IoU}(B_t, B^*)$ with respect to a fixed reference box B^* centred in the image, and selects the frame $t^\dagger$ that maximizes this overlap. In the recorded sequence, the chosen frame corresponds to the instant when the Camry is nearly frontal and occupies most of the reference region, as shown in Fig. 10. The resulting bounding box tightly

Fig. 9. Input video sequence recorded at a gate-like entrance; click the image (or the link) to view the full clip.

Fig. 11. Output of the vehicle make–model classifier, correctly identifying the car as a Toyota Camry with a confidence score of 0.9417.

encloses the vehicle, suppressing background clutter and providing a clean region of interest (ROI) for the downstream modules. This step is consistent with the low-latency strategy adopted in the proposed model, where only a single, high-quality frame is propagated to the rest of the pipeline.

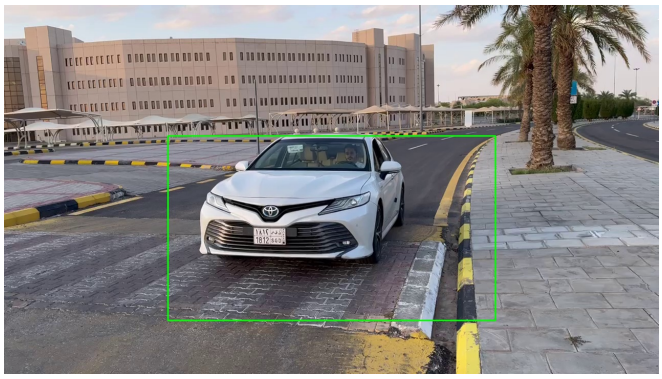

Fig. 10. Best frame selected by the IoU-based gating module, showing the detected vehicle together with the reference bounding box.

Once the best frame is fixed, the corresponding vehicle crop is forwarded to the MobileNetV2-based make–model classifier described in Subsection II-D. In this experiment, the classifier correctly identifies the vehicle as a Toyota Camry with a confidence score of 0.9417, as depicted in Fig. 11. This result aligns with the high accuracy reported for the vehicle-recognition component under real-time operating conditions.

The same ROI is then passed to the license plate branch. The retrained MTCNN detector localizes the Saudi plate with a precise bounding box, and LPRNet decodes the alphanumeric content. The predicted string matches the ground-truth plate number 1812SGD with a confidence of 0.97 (Fig. 12), demonstrating that the dataset and retraining strategy introduced in Subsection II-E and Subsection II-F generalize well to real capture conditions.

In parallel, the face-analysis branch operates inside the vehicle ROI. RetinaFace searches for a driver, estimates facial landmarks, and produces an aligned face crop, as outlined in Subsection II-G. InsightFace then maps this crop into a feature embedding, which is classified by the one-vs-rest linear SVM trained on enrolled personnel (Subsection II-H). In the

Fig. 12. License-plate recognition result for the selected frame, correctly decoding the plate number 1812SGD with a confidence score of 0.97.

recorded sequence, the system correctly recognizes the driver as Muhannad, but with a relatively modest confidence score of 0.35 (Fig. 13). This lower margin is consistent with the challenging imaging conditions: the face is partially occluded by the windshield, affected by sunlight reflections, and drawn from a comparatively small in-cabin dataset that does not yet fully capture these variations.

Although the confidence of the face recognizer is low, it only contributes partially to the final access decision, since the tri-modal SVM assigns it a smaller weight whenever the vehicle and license-plate cues are more reliable. This demonstrates the robustness of our model, as it does not rely on a single feature; instead, it fuses three heterogeneous features to make a coherent vehicle-access decision, thereby reducing the impact of occasional failures in any individual modality. Additionally, the face recognizer can be improved by automatically collecting more in-the-wild data each time a person passes through the gate, particularly under varying lighting, weather, and viewing conditions. A growing set of face crops—captured at different times of day, with different windshield states and head poses—can then be used to periodically retrain the face-recognition branch, making it more tolerant to glare, occlusion, and motion blur. Over time, this continuous update loop helps close the gap between facial and non-facial cues and stabilizes the fused decision in real-world gate-control deployments.

The three scalar confidences from the previous stages:

Fig. 13. In-vehicle face detection and recognition result, identifying the enrolled driver (Muhannad) with a confidence score of 0.35.

$$x_{\text{vehicle}} = 0.9417, \quad x_{\text{plate}} = 0.97, \quad x_{\text{face}} = 0.35,$$

are then combined by the tri-modal fusion SVM introduced in Subsection II-I and trained, as detailed in Subsection III-A. Using the learned parameters:

$$(w_1, w_2, w_3) = (2.103,\ 6.270,\ 3.392), \quad b = -7.588,$$

the decision function in Eq. (3) yields a positive fused score $f(x)$, and the system grants access. This outcome is consistent with the ground-truth label for the scenario (authorized vehicle and authorized driver). A representative frame from the processed video shows the intermediate decisions (vehicle class, plate text, and identity label) overlaid alongside the final "access granted" indicator, as shown in Fig. 14. You can click on the figure to watch the processed video or on the link provided in the figure caption.

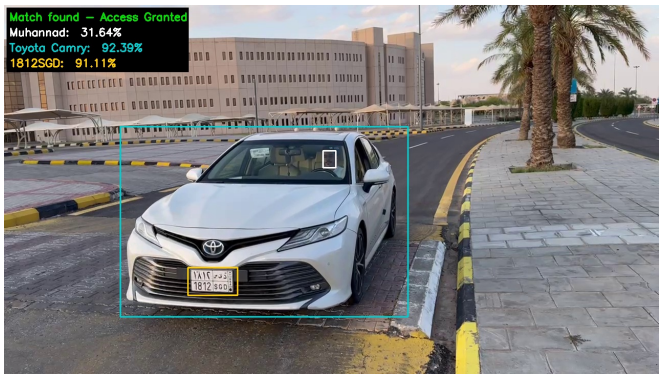

Fig. 14. Combined output of the proposed tri-modal system for the test sequence, including vehicle class, license-plate text, driver identity, and the final "access granted" decision; click the image (or the link) to view the full processed video.

Finally, this qualitative demonstration highlights several aspects of the proposed model working together in practice. First, the best-frame selection mechanism reduces redundant computation while still capturing a view in which all three modalities—vehicle appearance, license plate, and face—are informative. Second, the fusion stage naturally compensates for the lower face-recognition confidence by assigning higher weight to the more distinctive license-plate and make–model scores, as reflected in the relative magnitudes of w_2 and w_1. Third, when combined with the measured end-to-end latency of 66 ms per frame (approximately 15.15 FPS) reported in Subsection III-A, the experiment confirms that the full tri-modal pipeline can operate in real time at a physical gate, where vehicles approach slowly and can be stopped or released based on a single, coherent anti-spoofing decision.

C. Comparison with the Tri-Modal Benchmark

As summarized in Table I, vision-based gate systems typically rely on one or two cues—most often the license plate, sometimes combined with vehicle appearance or driver information. Only a small number of works attempt a full tri-modal design. Among these, the study by Saadouli *et al.* [18] is particularly relevant, as it also fuses vehicle, license plate, and face information to control an electronic gate.

In their framework, car make and model are recognized from handcrafted features based on Difference-of-Gaussians and SIFT descriptors, while license plates are processed with connected-components analysis and OCR; driver verification relies on a Viola–Jones face detector. The system is evaluated on a small surveillance dataset collected at Qatar University (225 images, 24 vehicle types), where the make–model subsystem attains an accuracy of approximately 74.6%. *Although this work demonstrates that combining the three modalities is feasible, it remains constrained by classical computer vision methods, limited data diversity, and a processing time of approximately two seconds per vehicle in the prototype.*

The tri-modal system proposed in this paper revisits the same high-level objective but with a modern deep-learning pipeline and a significantly larger, region-specific data foundation. Vehicle detection is handled by YOLOv4-tiny, vehicle make–model recognition by a MobileNetV2-based classifier trained on roughly 400 brands and 7 000 models, and Saudi license plates are processed by retrained MTCNN and LPRNet modules using newly curated detection and recognition datasets (17 000 and 35 000 images, respectively). Faces are localized with RetinaFace and recognized via InsightFace embeddings with a linear SVM backend. All three confidence scores are then fused through a learned linear SVM, which automatically assigns a higher weight to the more distinctive license-plate and face streams while still exploiting the vehicle signature.

Quantitatively, the proposed gate-level classifier reaches 97% overall accuracy with an end-to-end latency of 66 ms per frame (approximately 15.15 FPS), which is compatible with real-time deployment at a physical barrier. By contrast, Saadouli *et al.* report an accuracy of approximately 74.6% on their make–model benchmark and a per-vehicle decision time of about two seconds in the prototype. *In practical terms, our system delivers both higher recognition performance and substantially lower latency under more challenging and diverse operating conditions.*

Another important distinction lies in reproducibility. The datasets used in [18] are institution-specific and not publicly

distributed, which makes direct comparison and follow-on studies difficult. In this work, both Saudi license-plate datasets, together with the implementation of all modules and the tri-modal fusion logic, are made openly available through a public repository, enabling independent validation and adaptation to other gate environments. *Overall, the proposed system can therefore be viewed as a deep-learning-based, real-time extension of the earlier tri-modal concept, closing much of the gap between proof-of-concept prototypes and deployable anti-spoofing vehicle gate solutions.*

IV. Conclusion

This work introduced TRI-GATE, a tri-modal, AI-based anti-spoofing system that integrates vehicle, license plate, and facial information into a unified framework for secure, real-time gate access. Unlike traditional gate setups that depend on human guards or on a single recognition cue, TRI-GATE leverages complementary visual signals and fuses them using a linear SVM at the score level, thereby reducing the likelihood that a single point of failure—such as a cloned plate or a partially occluded face—can be exploited to gain unauthorized entry.

At the subsystem level, each component is tailored for practical deployment in Saudi and GCC environments. YOLOv4-tiny and a MobileNetV2-based make–model classifier deliver accurate vehicle detection and recognition in real time. A retrained MTCNN paired with LPRNet operates on two newly curated Saudi plate datasets (17,000 images for detection and 35,000 for recognition), achieving 99.2% detection accuracy and 93.1% recognition accuracy, respectively. For driver identity, RetinaFace and InsightFace embeddings combined with a linear SVM reach approximately 99.5% accuracy on the collected subject set. These modules are tied together by an IoU-based best-frame selection strategy that forwards only a single, high-quality frame, enabling the overall system to maintain an end-to-end latency of 66 ms per frame, or approximately 15.15 FPS, under realistic gate conditions.

Beyond component-level metrics, TRI-GATE was evaluated as a complete gate-control solution. On a tri-modal dataset of 1,000 images, the fused classifier achieves 97% accuracy, utilizing learned fusion weights that naturally emphasize license plate and face cues while still leveraging the discriminative power of vehicle appearance. A real-world demonstration involving an approaching vehicle confirmed that the system can reliably select the best frame, recognize the vehicle and its license plate, identify the enrolled driver, and issue a coherent "access granted" decision in real-time. Compared with prior tri-modal work built on handcrafted features and slower processing pipelines, TRI-GATE offers both higher accuracy and substantially reduced decision time, moving the tri-modal concept from prototype-level feasibility to deployable practice.

Future work will focus on turning TRI-GATE into a more general and deployment-ready platform. A first step is to expand the training datasets with additional subjects, wider geographic coverage, night-time recordings, and more varied weather and windshield conditions. This should help reduce overfitting to specific sites and make the face and vehicle modules more stable in day-to-day operation. A second step is to incorporate open-set recognition and anomaly detection, allowing the system to explicitly flag vehicles or drivers that do not belong to the enrolled population, rather than forcing a hard decision.

In parallel, we plan to investigate privacy-aware data handling, secure storage, and auditable logging, so that TRI-GATE can better align with regulatory and organizational requirements in sensitive infrastructures. Finally, extending the framework to multi-lane, high-throughput checkpoints and optimizing it for edge or embedded hardware would further increase its practical usefulness and scalability. Together, these directions outline a natural path from the current prototype toward a robust, multimodal gate access solution suitable for long-term field deployment.

Acknowledgment

The authors gratefully acknowledge Qassim University, represented by the Deanship of Graduate Studies and Scientific Research, on the financial support for this research under the number (QU-J-PG-2-2025-56804) during the academic year 1446 AH / 2024 AD.

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Comparative Evaluation of Deep Learning Architectures and Hybrid Heuristics for Automated Gambling Content Detection

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***Abstract*—The exponential proliferation of online gambling content represents a multifaceted challenge for contemporary automated content moderation systems, primarily driven by the sophisticated visual obfuscation and semantic complexity characteristic of modern digital advertising. This study conducts a rigorous comparative evaluation of the efficacy of Deep Learning (DL) architectures against classical Machine Learning (ML) paradigms for the deterministic identification of gambling-related imagery. Specifically, we propose and implement GADIA (Gambling Ad Detector with Intelligent Analysis), a novel hybrid funnel-based architecture that integrates structural heuristic filtering with an asymmetrically fine-tuned ResNet50 classifier. To address the systemic scarcity of high-quality public repositories, the models were trained and validated on a proprietary, strictly balanced dataset of 2,312 images, meticulously curated to encapsulate real-world adversarial marketing techniques. Performance benchmarks were established through Accuracy, Precision, Recall, F1-score, and AUC metrics. Experimental evidence demonstrates that the ResNet50 architecture attained a superior robustness profile, achieving 85.01% accuracy and 90.42% recall, significantly outperforming traditional baselines that failed to capture high-dimensional visual hierarchies. These findings validate that deep residual learning, when integrated into a hybrid heuristic-visual pipeline, provides a computationally efficient and scalable foundation for real-time platform governance and digital safety monitoring.**

***Keywords*—Deep learning; image classification; gambling detection; ResNet50; hybrid systems; transfer learning; Convolutional Neural Networks; platform governance; content moderation**

I. Introduction

The contemporary digital ecosystem has witnessed an unprecedented expansion of online gambling platforms, presenting a significant challenge for automated content moderation systems [1], [2]. While recent studies have addressed text-based gambling promotions on social media [2], visual obfuscation remains a critical bottleneck for conventional filters. This phenomenon is catalyzed by aggressive marketing strategies that strategically operate outside traditional regulatory perimeters. Current empirical evidence suggests that malicious actors are increasingly deploying gambling-related assets within pirate video streaming services and non-standard web containers, utilizing these environments as conduits to bypass conventional detection mechanisms [1]. This shift not only exposes a diverse user base to unregulated betting environments but also imposes a critical burden on automated content moderation infrastructures, which must now operate in increasingly adversarial contexts.

In contrast to textual advertisements, visual gambling content frequently employs sophisticated obfuscation techniques—such as embedding semantic text within high-entropy images or utilizing high-contrast visual stimuli—designed to render keyword-based filtering and static blacklist approaches computationally irrelevant [3]. Historically, the automation of harmful content identification has relied on classical machine learning algorithms. While early implementations of Support Vector Machines (SVMs) and Random Forest classifiers demonstrated efficacy in structured datasets, they consistently struggle to generalize across the high-dimensional variability and hierarchical complexity inherent in modern visual content [5], [6]. Consequently, with the maturation of Deep Learning, Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) have been established as the gold standard for visual recognition tasks. Architectures such as ResNet [7] and EfficientNet [8] have exhibited exceptional feature-extraction capabilities, enabling the identification of complex patterns within heterogeneous datasets.

However, the application of these models to the specific, adversarial domain of gambling detection remains significantly underexplored. This gap is particularly evident in the context of real-time monitoring systems, which necessitate an optimal equilibrium between classification precision and computational latency. A predominant limitation in current literature is the reliance on computationally intensive multimodal systems that attempt to fuse Optical Character Recognition (OCR) with deep image analysis [3], [9]. While technically robust, these systems often introduce substantial latency overheads that are prohibitive for real-time, client-side execution within dynamic web environments. Furthermore, the pervasive lack of standardized, publicly available datasets for gambling imagery severely hampers the reproducibility of research and the comparative validation of emerging architectural frameworks [13], [14].

To bridge these gaps, this study proposes GADIA (Gambling Ad Detector with Intelligent Analysis). The conceptual and methodological innovation of our approach lies in the implementation of a **Hybrid Funnel Pipeline** that acts as a "Computational Gatekeeper". By integrating a lightweight heuristic filtering engine—which leverages Document Object Model (DOM) structural properties to rapidly isolate candidate elements—with a robust ResNet50 deep learning classifier, the system significantly optimizes the trade-off between speed and accuracy. The primary contribution of this work is articulated through three pillars: 1) the architectural development of a specialized heuristic-visual pipeline capable of real-time

detection in dynamic web environments; 2) the curation and rigorous validation of a balanced proprietary dataset of 2,312 images specifically designed to address the lack of standardized repositories and adversarial visual obfuscation; and 3) a comprehensive comparative evaluation demonstrating that deep residual learning, through fine-tuned skip connections, provides a superior mechanism for identifying gambling motifs compared to both classical models and lightweight scaling architectures.

II. State-of-the-Art and Related Work

This section provides a comprehensive review of the evolution of artificial intelligence frameworks for the detection of illicit web content. The analysis focuses on the transition from classical machine learning paradigms to deep learning architectures, emphasizing the unique challenges posed by the identification of gambling-related visual assets within dynamic and adversarial digital environments.

A. Evolution of Deep Learning Architectures for Visual Moderation

The automated identification of sensitive visual content has been profoundly transformed by the advancements in Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs). He et al. [7] introduced a fundamental shift in deep network training with the development of residual learning (ResNet). By implementing identity skip connections, this architecture effectively mitigates the vanishing gradient problem, enabling the training of networks with substantial depth—such as the ResNet50 backbone utilized in this study. This depth is critical for the extraction of complex hierarchical features and latent visual primitives that define the stylistic signatures of gambling imagery.

Parallelly, Tan and Le [8] proposed the EfficientNet framework, which utilizes compound scaling to balance network depth, width, and resolution. While EfficientNet architectures achieve high parameter efficiency, their application in domain-specific tasks involving visual obfuscation requires careful validation. These foundational architectures serve as the primary feature extraction engines for modern content moderation systems, yet their stand-alone implementation often overlooks the structural context of the web environments they monitor.

B. Detection of Gambling and Malicious Visual Assets

Current literature has increasingly applied these deep architectures to identify high-risk content in unregulated spaces. Wang et al. [1] addressed the proliferation of malicious domains within pirate streaming ecosystems, developing a framework that combines URL structural analysis with CNN-based snapshots to achieve detection accuracies exceeding 98%. Similarly, Chen et al. [3] explored the detection of pornographic and gambling websites through a hybrid approach that fuses visual features (extracted via BoVW) with textual semantic vectors (processed by Doc2Vec).

However, recent advancements continue to struggle with computational efficiency. For instance, **Maldini et al. [10]** recently proposed a hybrid framework combining Faster R-CNN with Optical Character Recognition (OCR) to detect covert gambling ads. While such multimodal fusion improves robustness against content variation, these systems frequently rely on OCR layers that are computationally expensive and introduce significant latency overheads. In contrast to these multimodal frameworks, GADIA prioritizes a streamlined visual pipeline that avoids the "computational tax" of OCR, focusing instead on the synergy between structural web heuristics and deep classification.

C. Comparative Paradigms: Deep Learning vs. Classical Baselines

Despite the dominance of Deep Learning, classical machine learning models remain the standard benchmark for efficiency. Syahputra and Wibowo [6] conducted a comparative evaluation of Support Vector Machines (SVM) and Random Forest for negative content filtering, noting that while SVMs demonstrate high precision in structured textual tasks, they inherently lack the capability to capture the non-linear, high-dimensional visual variations prevalent in modern advertising. **This limitation is corroborated by recent findings from Liem et al. [4], who demonstrated that while classical ML performs adequately on structured metadata, it fails to generalize against the complex visual variations found in modern gambling advertisements.** Furthermore, Li et al. [13] demonstrated that CNN-based models significantly outperform traditional classifiers (SVM, k-NN, and Decision Trees) in identifying misleading video content, validating the necessity of deep architectures for tasks involving visual complexity and obfuscation. However, as noted by recent studies [1], rule-based automation remains a necessary component to handle the structural variability of web-based ads, a gap that GADIA fills by integrating a heuristic gatekeeper.

D. Identification of Research Gaps and Methodological Contributions

A critical analysis of existing solutions reveals three significant limitations that GADIA aims to address. First, current multimodal systems (integrating OCR, text, and image analysis)—and even emerging Large Language Models (LLMs) evaluated for moderation [12]—incur prohibitive computational costs, rendering them unsuitable for real-time, browser-side detection in client devices [3], [9]. This creates a demand for an "Inference Funnel" that reduces the load before visual analysis. Second, there is a systemic scarcity of standardized, balanced, and publicly accessible datasets specifically curated for gambling advertising, with most research relying on localized or small-scale repositories [1], **a challenge recently highlighted by Sentana et al. [11]**.

Finally, few studies have successfully articulated a framework that combines lightweight structural heuristics with deep visual inference to optimize the trade-off between speed and deterministic accuracy. This study contributes to the field by proposing GADIA, which leverages a fine-tuned ResNet50 architecture within a **Hybrid Funnel Pipeline**. By acting as a structural gatekeeper, GADIA not only advances the technical state of the art but also establishes a foundation for platform governance and regulatory policy enforcement, ensuring real-time applicability in dynamic Single Page Applications (SPAs).

III. Methodology

This study adopts a Design Science Research (DSR) approach, which provides a rigorous and iterative framework

for the development and validation of technological artifacts aimed at solving complex problems in information systems. The methodology is structured into three core phases: A) Data Curation and Preprocessing, B) The Hybrid Detection Architecture, and C) Model Configuration Strategy. This hierarchical structure ensures the reproducibility of the proposed solution, GADIA (Gambling Ad Detector with Intelligent Analysis), while maintaining the scientific rigor necessary for production-grade content moderation. By following the DSR paradigm, the study emphasizes the utility and efficiency of the created artifact within the specific socio-technical context of digital safety.

A. Data Curation and Preprocessing

The structural integrity of the GADIA framework is predicated on a proprietary dataset specifically engineered to mitigate the systemic scarcity of standardized, publicly accessible repositories for gambling-related digital advertising— a critical limitation recently highlighted by Sentana et al. [11] in the context of multimodal ad infiltration. Unlike general-purpose image datasets, our corpus was developed to capture the unique visual nuances and sophisticated obfuscation techniques—such as text-within-images, high-entropy graphical textures, and high-contrast stimuli—employed by illicit advertisers in "in-the-wild" environments.

A total of 2,312 high-resolution images were meticulously harvested from an ecologically valid range of online sources. These include regulated betting platforms, pirate video streaming services (where visual obfuscation is most prevalent), and neutral e-commerce domains. By incorporating assets from non-standard web containers, the dataset effectively encapsulates real-world scenarios where gambling content is strategically embedded to bypass conventional static filtering mechanisms. To prevent class imbalance bias, which frequently compromises the generalizability of deep learning classifiers in specialized domains, the dataset was strictly balanced. As detailed in Table I, the corpus consists of 1,200 positive samples representing diverse gambling motifs and 1,112 negative samples representing neutral web elements.

TABLE I. DATASET DISTRIBUTION AND PARTITIONING

Class Category	Total	Train (70%)	Val (15%)	Test (15%)
Gambling (Positive)	1,200	840	180	180
Non-Gambling (Negative)	1,112	778	167	167
Total Images	**2,312**	**1,618**	**347**	**347**

Source: Own elaboration.

The data partition strategy employed stratified sampling to divide the corpus into training (70%), validation (15%), and testing (15%) subsets. This rigorous split ensures that each subset maintains the original class distribution while preventing data leakage across the training and evaluation phases. As illustrated in Fig. 1, the preprocessing pipeline implements a three-stage standardization protocol designed to stabilize the feature extraction process and mitigate internal covariate shift:

- Normalization: Pixel intensity values are linearly scaled to the unit range $[0, 1]$. This normalization is critical to optimize gradient descent convergence and ensure that visual features are processed within a uniform numerical scale, preventing the model from becoming biased toward specific illumination variances.
- Resizing: Raw images undergo bilinear interpolation to a fixed resolution of 224×224 pixels. This specific configuration aligns with the spatial requirements of the ResNet50 backbone while preserving critical visual primitives and edges necessary for detecting fine-grained gambling identifiers.
- Data Augmentation: To mitigate overfitting and improve geometric invariance, a suite of stochastic transformations—including random rotations ($\pm 30°$), zoom variations (0.3), and horizontal flips—is applied exclusively to the training subset. This synthetic expansion of the feature space encourages the neural network to generalize across the diverse orientations, scales, and perspectives prevalent in dynamic, modern web containers.

B. Proposed Hybrid Architecture

To address the inherent limitations of conventional content moderation systems—which typically rely on monolithic visual inference or rigid keyword matching—GADIA introduces a multi-stage architectural paradigm designed to optimize the trade-off between computational overhead and classification accuracy. The system logic is predicated on a Hybrid Funnel Pipeline, an asymmetrically structured execution flow that prioritizes early-stage structural culling to preserve high-value GPU resources for deterministic analysis. This architecture is segmented into three interdependent modules:

1) DOM scraper and parser: As the primary ingestion point, this module utilizes a high-fidelity scraping engine capable of rendering complex, dynamic JavaScript execution environments, such as Single Page Applications (SPAs). Unlike static HTML parsers, it performs a comprehensive traversal of the Document Object Model (DOM) to isolate potential visual assets, including standard image files, embedded iframes, and dynamic canvas elements. By extracting these assets within their rendered structural context, the system ensures that dynamically injected advertisements—which often evade traditional security filters—are effectively captured for downstream analysis.

2) Heuristic filtering engine (AdDetector): To mitigate the "computational tax" associated with deep neural network inference, GADIA implements a lightweight heuristic filter as a structural gatekeeper. This module, illustrated in Fig. 2, applies a cascade of deterministic rules to identify candidate ad containers. It performs high-speed analysis of CSS selectors, identifies specific attribute patterns (e.g., metadata and alt-text containing domain-specific keywords), and detects signatures of known ad-network scripts. By early-discarding non-advertising elements such as navigation icons or site logos, the engine reduces the search space by an order of magnitude, forwarding only "suspicious" candidates to the deep learning layer.

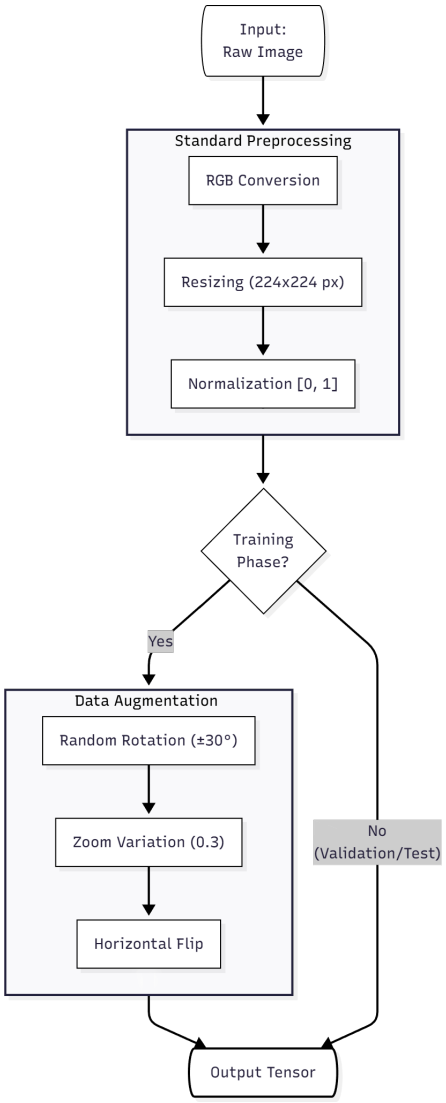

Fig. 1. Data preprocessing pipeline. The diagram illustrates the conditional branching where geometric transformations (rotation, zoom, flip) are applied solely to the training subset to enhance model generalization (Source: Own elaboration).

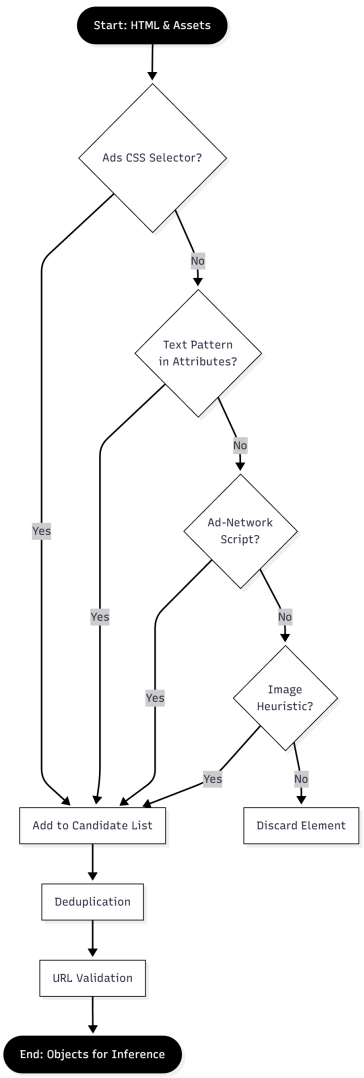

Fig. 2. Flowchart of the AdDetector module. The algorithm applies a cascade of heuristic rules based on CSS selectors, semantic patterns, and embedded scripts to identify advertising candidates before visual analysis (Source: Own elaboration).

3) Deep visual inference (gambling detector): The filtered candidates undergo high-dimensional feature extraction and probabilistic classification. This stage utilizes the residual learning framework to capture the subtle visual motifs and semantic identifiers of gambling content. To ensure a robust classification boundary in production environments, a confidence threshold was empirically optimized and fixed at $\tau = 0.4931$. This threshold serves as the final decision mechanism to categorize each frame as "Gambling" or "Safe", ensuring a high degree of precision even in the presence of sophisticated visual obfuscation.

C. Deep Learning Model Configuration

To effectively decode the visual complexity inherent in modern gambling advertisements—which frequently employ high-entropy graphics, intricate textures, and embedded semantic text—this study implements a specialized Transfer Learning paradigm. We utilize the ResNet50 architecture [7], pre-trained on the ImageNet database, as the primary feature extraction backbone. ResNet50 was strategically selected for its residual learning framework; the integration of identity skip connections effectively mitigates the vanishing gradient problem, enabling the preservation of fine-grained spatial features across deep hierarchical layers. This is particularly critical for distinguishing between visually similar motifs, such as colorful video game assets and gambling slot machine interfaces, where deep residual primitives offer superior discriminative power.

The architectural modification and adaptation protocol are executed through a two-stage deterministic strategy:

1) Asymmetric fine-tuning strategy: To facilitate domain-specific feature adaptation, the last 25 layers of the ResNet50 backbone were unfrozen for gradient updates. This selective unfreezing allows the network to recalibrate its high-level abstract representations—which are sensitive to the specific

visual semantics of gambling content—while maintaining the robust, generic edge-and-texture detectors encoded in the earlier frozen layers. This balance ensures that the model leverages universal visual knowledge while minimizing the risk of catastrophic forgetting during the domain adaptation process.

2) Regularized custom classification head: As illustrated in Fig. 3, the standard fully connected layers were replaced with a custom-engineered head designed to optimize decision boundaries on the proprietary dataset. This head implements a Global Average Pooling (GAP) layer to reduce spatial dimensionality while preserving feature mapping, followed by a dual-block dense architecture. The first block comprises 512 neurons with Rectified Linear Unit (ReLU) activation and L2 regularization ($1e-4$) to constrain weight magnitude. To stabilize the training dynamics and reduce internal covariate shift, Batch Normalization is applied, followed by a stochastic Dropout rate of 0.5. The second block serves as a dimensionality compressor with 128 neurons (Dropout 0.3), forcing the network to synthesize only the most salient discriminative features. The final output is generated by a single neuron with a Sigmoid activation function, yielding a probabilistic score $P(y=1|x) \in [0,1]$ for binary classification.

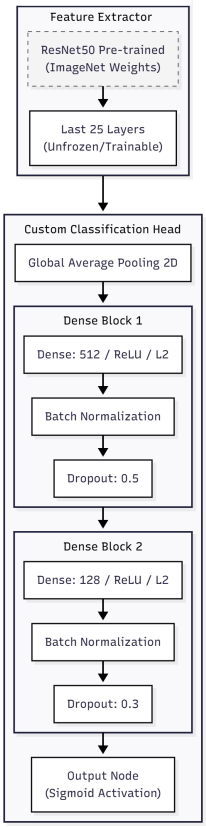

Fig. 3. Implemented neural network architecture. The diagram details the transfer learning strategy on the ResNet50 backbone and the structure of the custom classification head designed for binary task (Source: Own elaboration).

IV. Implementation

The operational deployment of GADIA was executed following a decoupled microservices architecture, as illustrated in Fig. 4, prioritizing modularity, horizontal scalability, and high-fidelity data ingestion. The system's execution paradigm distinguishes between the Presentation Layer (Frontend) and the Business Logic Layer (Backend), communicating via high-performance RESTful endpoints. This architectural orchestration ensures that the computational load of deep visual inference does not compromise the responsiveness of the user interface, providing a seamless monitoring experience even in heavy traffic scenarios.

A. Technological Stack and Development Environment

The core processing engine was developed using Python 3.9, selected for its mature ecosystem in data science and its native support for advanced deep learning frameworks. The backend infrastructure is built upon FastAPI, a modern, high-performance web framework that utilizes the Asynchronous Server Gateway Interface (ASGI). This choice was critical to implement the "Hybrid Funnel" logic; by leveraging asynchronous request handling (`async/await`), the server manages concurrent scraping and inference tasks without blocking the main execution thread, thereby minimizing the synchronization bottlenecks typical of synchronous frameworks. The implementation of the four primary modules is detailed as follows:

1) Web scraping module (data acquisition): To effectively handle the complexities of modern dynamic websites and Single Page Applications (SPAs), we integrated Selenium WebDriver in headless mode. This module instantiates a Chrome-based browser environment that fully renders the Document Object Model (DOM) and executes client-side JavaScript. This capability is essential for capturing "hidden" or dynamically injected advertisements that bypass static HTML parsers and traditional regex-based security filters.

2) Heuristic engine (AdDetector): Implemented as a high-speed Python module, this component parses the rendered DOM tree using `lxml` drivers, which offer superior traversal speeds compared to standard libraries. It executes the multi-stage cascade of heuristic rules described in the Methodology, acting as the primary sieve. By identifying candidate nodes based on CSS signatures, ad-network script patterns, and semantic attributes, the engine discards up to 80% of page elements before they reach the GPU, significantly reducing the "computational tax" per request.

3) Deep learning inference engine: The fine-tuned ResNet50 model was serialized and deployed using the TensorFlow/Keras framework. To ensure real-time throughput, model weights are pre-loaded into GPU memory (allocated via NVIDIA CUDA) upon server initialization. This strategy avoids the overhead of reconstructing the computational graph during runtime, allowing for near-instant classification of filtered visual assets.

4) User interface: The client-side application was developed using React.js. It serves as a responsive dashboard that accepts target URLs and visualizes the detection results. The interface provides real-time feedback, displaying the probabilistic confidence scores generated by the ResNet50 model alongside the heuristic flags, enabling human-in-the-loop verification where necessary.

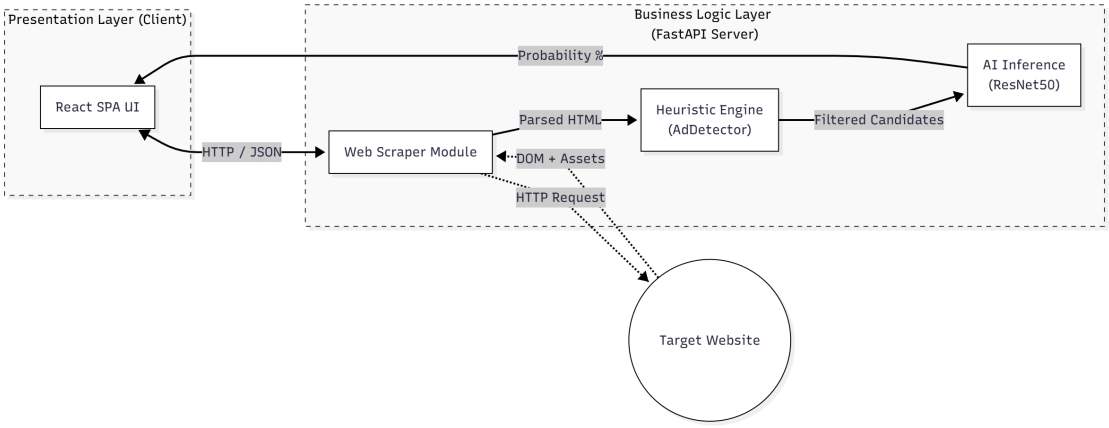

Fig. 4. System implementation architecture. The diagram illustrates the decoupled interaction between the React frontend and the FastAPI backend, highlighting the integration of Selenium for dynamic DOM rendering and the ResNet50 engine for visual inference within a high-performance funnel. (Source: Own elaboration.)

B. Runtime Execution Workflow

The operational dynamics of the GADIA system follow a strictly sequential pipeline, engineered to maximize the computational cost-benefit ratio by minimizing redundant processing. As depicted in the sequence diagram (Fig. 5), the workflow is initiated by an external client request containing a target URL. The system orchestrates the data flow through five deterministic phases, ensuring that high-latency visual inference is only executed when structural indicators suggest a high probability of gambling content:

1) Request orchestration and initialization: Upon receiving the URL via the FastAPI endpoint, the server instantiates a dedicated scraping session. This phase includes the validation of the target URL and the allocation of an asynchronous worker to manage the lifecycle of the rendering process.

2) Asynchronous dynamic rendering: To capture the complete state of modern web environments, the scraping engine performs a full render of the page. This involves the execution of client-side scripts and the simulation of scroll events to trigger lazy-loading mechanisms. The output of this phase is a comprehensive list of visual assets (source URLs for images, iframes, and canvas elements) coupled with the fully computed Document Object Model (DOM) tree.

3) Structural heuristic sieve: The AdDetector module performs a high-speed traversal of the DOM nodes, acting as a structural gatekeeper. Elements are evaluated against a cascade of deterministic rules, including CSS selector matching, keyword-in-attribute analysis, and identification of ad-network script footprints. Elements that do not meet the minimum "suspicion" threshold—such as navigation bars, branding logos, or functional icons—are immediately discarded from the pipeline. This early-stage culling reduces the search space by an order of magnitude, preventing the deep learning model from processing irrelevant safe imagery.

4) Deep residual inference: Assets flagged as advertising candidates are asynchronously downloaded and converted into normalized tensors. These are then fed into the fine-tuned ResNet50 model, which performs high-dimensional feature extraction to detect latent gambling motifs. The model generates a probabilistic score $P(y = 1|x) \in [0, 1]$, quantifying the likelihood of the asset belonging to the "Gambling" class based on the hierarchical visual primitives learned during the training phase.

5) Deterministic response aggregation: In the final phase, the system synthesizes the heuristic indicators and probabilistic outputs into a unified JSON payload. This payload includes the original asset metadata, the heuristic flags, and the final classification result. The response is returned to the client, completing the detection cycle within the strict latency margins required for real-time monitoring.

V. Results

This section presents a comprehensive quantitative evaluation of the proposed models and the subsequent functional validation of the GADIA software artifact. The experimental framework was meticulously designed to benchmark the classification performance of the fine-tuned ResNet50 architecture against three distinct baseline models: EfficientNetB0 (representing modern lightweight Deep Learning), and two traditional paradigms, Random Forest and Support Vector Machine (Classical Machine Learning).

A. Experimental Setup and Hyperparameter Tuning

The evaluation was conducted using the proprietary, strictly balanced dataset of 2,312 images. To ensure statistical reliability and prevent data leakage, we adhered to a stratified sampling strategy with a 70/15/15 split for training, validation, and testing, respectively. The computational environment was anchored by a workstation equipped with an NVIDIA RTX 3060 GPU, which provided the necessary acceleration for deep neural network training.

For the Deep Learning architectures (ResNet50 and EfficientNet), the optimization phase utilized the RMSprop algorithm with an initial learning rate of $5e - 5$. A binary cross-entropy loss function was employed to minimize the divergence between predicted probabilities and ground truth labels. To preserve model generalizability and prevent overfitting, we implemented an Early Stopping callback with a patience factor

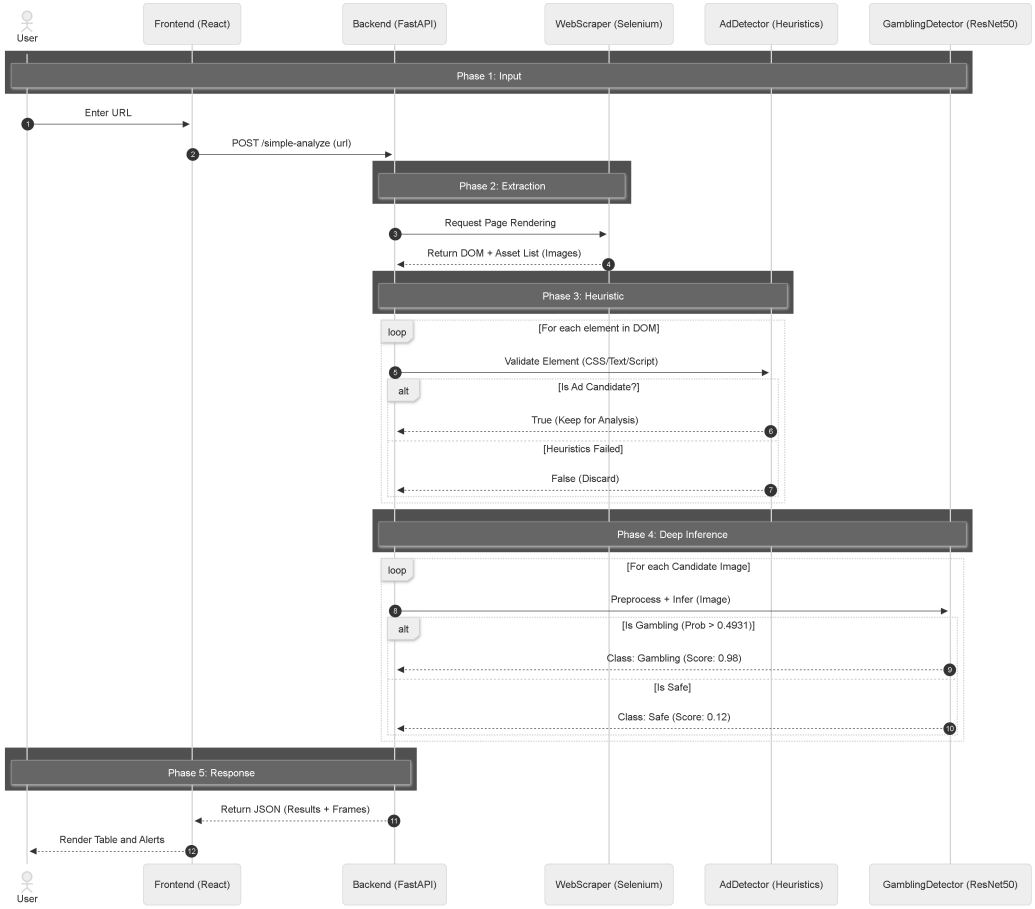

Fig. 5. Sequence diagram of the detection pipeline. The flow demonstrates the filtering efficiency: the Heuristic Engine (AdDetector) discards non-relevant elements early in the process, ensuring that the computationally expensive ResNet50 inference is only applied to high-probability candidates (Source: Own elaboration).

of 5 epochs, monitoring the validation loss for early signs of convergence saturation. In contrast, the classical baselines (SVM and Random Forest) were optimized via an exhaustive Grid-Search cross-validation to identify the optimal kernel parameters and forest depth, ensuring that the performance gap observed is inherent to the algorithms and not a result of suboptimal tuning.

TABLE II. PERFORMANCE COMPARISON OF CLASSIFICATION MODELS

Model	Acc.	Prec.	Recall	F1-Score	AUC
EfficientNet	0.7550	0.6847	**0.9102**	0.7815	0.7606
Random Forest	0.7954	0.7637	0.8323	0.7966	0.7967
SVM	0.7983	0.7803	0.8084	0.7941	0.7986
ResNet (Ours)	**0.8501**	**0.8075**	0.9042	**0.8531**	**0.8521**

Source: Own elaboration.

B. Comparative Analysis of Model Performance

The quantitative efficacy of each model was rigorously assessed using five primary metrics: Accuracy, Precision, Recall, F1-Score, and the Area Under the Curve (AUC). Table II provides a comparative summary of the results obtained on the independent test set.

The empirical data indicates that the proposed fine-tuned ResNet architecture attained the most robust performance profile. Achieving an overall Accuracy of 85.01%, it outperformed the classical SVM and Random Forest baselines by approximately 5.18% and 5.47%, respectively. This performance delta underscores the superiority of residual learning in capturing high-dimensional visual motifs that classical algorithms—even when optimized—fail to aggregate effectively.

A significant observation emerges when comparing the two Deep Learning architectures. While EfficientNet achieved the highest sensitivity (Recall: 0.9102), it did so at a substantial cost to Precision (0.6847), suggesting a high propensity for False Positives. In the context of real-world content moderation, such an "over-flagging" behavior is undesirable as it leads to the erroneous blocking of safe, legitimate content. Conversely, our ResNet implementation maintained a superior equilibrium, yielding a Precision of 80.75% and an F1-Score of 85.31%. This balance is critical for the GADIA system, as it ensures high detection rates for gambling advertisements while minimizing the degradation of user experience caused by false alarms. The AUC of 0.8521 further validates the model's

discriminative power across varying decision thresholds.

C. Software Deployment and Functional Validation

To bridge the gap between theoretical model performance and practical utility, the proposed architecture was integrated into a fully functional software artifact. This deployment served to validate the end-to-end viability of the GADIA system within a simulated production environment. Fig. 6 illustrates the GADIA interface, implemented as a high-performance web-based analysis tool. The dashboard provides a streamlined user experience, allowing analysts to input target URLs which are then processed in real-time through the asynchronous backend pipeline detailed in Section IV.

[Image of a web-based dashboard interface for real-time website content analysis and ad detection]

The functional validation phase confirmed that the software successfully orchestrates the three core modules: the Selenium-based scraper, the structural heuristic filter, and the ResNet50 inference engine. In a series of preliminary stress tests involving dynamic Single Page Applications (SPAs), the system demonstrated a robust capability to render complex JavaScript-injected content and correctly identify gambling advertisements strategically embedded within neutral web layouts.

One of the most significant findings during functional testing was the effectiveness of the "Heuristic Sieve". By discarding non-relevant structural elements before they reached the deep learning layer, the system maintained a low inference latency, ensuring that the classification results—including the probabilistic confidence scores and the deterministic "Gambling/Safe" labels—were delivered within a timeframe suitable for real-time monitoring. These results confirm the engineering viability of the GADIA framework as a scalable solution for automated content moderation.

Fig. 6. Operational validation of the GADIA software. The screenshot demonstrates the system detecting gambling content on a live webpage, displaying the confidence score generated by the ResNet model and the inference latency.

VI. Discussion

The experimental results validate the hypothesis that a hybrid architecture, combining structural heuristics with deep residual learning, offers a robust and scalable solution for the automated detection of gambling content. This section interprets the findings through the lenses of model stability, architectural innovation, cross-domain generalization, and the broader implications for digital platform governance.

A. Analysis of Model Performance and Decision Trade-offs

A critical finding of this study is the performance divergence between EfficientNetB0 and ResNet50. While EfficientNet achieved a superior Recall (0.9102), its significantly lower Precision (0.6847) indicates a propensity for "over-flagging". In the high-stakes environment of web content moderation, an elevated False Positive rate is detrimental; it leads to the erroneous blocking of legitimate assets (e.g., news portals, educational graphics), which directly degrades user trust and platform utility.

In contrast, the ResNet50 architecture demonstrated superior stability, achieving the highest F1-Score (0.8531). This empirical success suggests that the residual primitives and identity skip connections in ResNet are more effective at preserving the fine-grained visual features required to distinguish between visually similar but semantically distinct categories—such as high-contrast video game advertisements versus gambling slot machine interfaces—than the compound scaling approach of EfficientNet in this specific adversarial domain. Furthermore, the performance gap between DL models and classical classifiers (SVM, Random Forest) underscores that CNN-based feature extraction is essential for generalizing across the diverse, high-dimensional visual styles of modern gambling advertisements without the need for manual feature engineering.

B. Architectural Innovation and Operational Efficiency

The implementation of the AdDetector heuristic engine as a "Computational Gatekeeper" prior to deep visual inference represents a significant advancement over monolithic systems. By filtering out non-relevant Document Object Model (DOM) elements based on structural and semantic patterns, GADIA avoids the prohibitive computational cost of processing every page element through a neural network. **Although recent studies have explored Large Language Models (LLMs) for sensitive content detection [12], such models often incur latency overheads unsuitable for real-time client-side blocking.** This hybrid approach addresses a persistent gap in the literature: high-accuracy models often fail in real-world deployment due to latency constraints. The synergy between FastAPI's

asynchronous handling and Selenium's dynamic rendering capabilities ensures that GADIA remains resilient against modern web techniques like AJAX and JavaScript-injected ads [1]. The functional validation confirms that our system maintains an optimal balance between theoretical robustness and the near-instantaneous response times required for client-side monitoring tools.

C. Cross-Domain Generalization and Scalability

As requested by contemporary research benchmarks, it is essential to highlight that GADIA is a **content-agnostic framework**. While this study utilized gambling content as the primary use case, the underlying hybrid funnel is inherently generalizable. The structural heuristic sieve can be recalibrated to detect other forms of regulated or harmful material—such as phishing attempts, unauthorized alcohol promotion, or adult content—by simply swapping the classification head or retraining the ResNet50 backbone on diverse labeled datasets. This modularity ensures that GADIA is not merely a localized solution but a versatile tool for broader digital safety applications.

D. Platform Governance and Policy Implications

Beyond technical metrics, GADIA provides a scalable mechanism for **Platform Governance**. Current digital safety policies and child protection regulations (such as the UK's Online Safety Act or the EU's Digital Services Act) necessitate real-time, automated auditing of digital advertising. Our framework offers regulatory bodies and platform owners a deterministic tool to monitor environments that frequently host illicit content (e.g., pirate streaming services), enabling automated compliance enforcement with minimal human intervention. By reducing the reliance on slow, multimodal systems that require OCR [3], [9], GADIA facilitates a more proactive approach to digital policy enforcement.

E. Limitations and Adversarial Context

Despite the promising results, this study acknowledges certain limitations. The current proprietary dataset, while balanced and ecologically valid, focuses primarily on static imagery. The detection of gambling motifs embedded within live video streams or frames obfuscated through advanced steganography remains an open challenge. Additionally, while the visual-only approach is highly efficient, advertisements that are purely text-heavy on neutral backgrounds may still evade detection without the integration of a specialized OCR module, suggesting a future path for lightweight multimodal expansion.

VII. Conclusion and Future Work

This research has successfully demonstrated the efficacy of GADIA, a hybrid architectural framework designed for the automated detection of gambling advertising within complex and dynamic web environments. Through the synergistic integration of a structural heuristic filtering engine and an asymmetrically fine-tuned ResNet50 deep learning classifier, the system effectively addresses the critical trade-off between deterministic precision and computational latency. The implementation within a decoupled architecture utilizing FastAPI and React.js validates that it is possible to intercept visually obfuscated content in real-time without degrading the end-user's navigational experience or incurring the high "computational tax" associated with traditional multimodal systems.

The experimental results confirm that the ResNet50 architecture, optimized through transfer learning and selective layer unfreezing, offers the most robust performance profile for production-grade content moderation. With an F1-score of 85.31% and an Accuracy of 85.01%, the model demonstrated a superior capability to distinguish between subtle gambling motifs and visually similar neutral elements. While compound-scaled models like EfficientNet exhibited marginally higher sensitivity, their significantly lower precision renders them unsuitable for real-world environments where false positives negatively impact platform utility and user trust. Furthermore, the clear superiority of the proposed deep learning approach over classical paradigms (SVM and Random Forest) ratifies that hierarchical feature extraction is indispensable for generalizing across the high-dimensional variability of modern digital imagery.

From an engineering perspective, the introduction of the AdDetector module as a "structural sieve" proved to be the most influential architectural decision. By acting as a computational gatekeeper that discards irrelevant DOM elements prior to visual inference, the system optimizes GPU resource allocation, enabling the monitoring of high-traffic Single Page Applications (SPAs). Ultimately, this work contributes not only a validated technological artifact and a specialized dataset of 2,312 images but also establishes a rigorous framework for platform governance and the proactive enforcement of digital safety policies.

A. Future Work

Despite the successful implementation, several avenues for improvement and expansion have been identified to enhance the system's robustness and scope. First, future iterations should incorporate an Optical Character Recognition (OCR) module to analyze text embedded within images, improving the detection of text-heavy advertisements that lack distinct visual gambling motifs. Second, given the rise of streaming platforms, extending the detection pipeline to process video frames in real-time is a priority, which would involve optimizing the inference engine to handle temporal redundancy between frames. Third, research should be conducted on distilling the ResNet50 model into lightweight architectures (e.g., MobileNet or SqueezeNet) to facilitate edge deployment directly on client devices, reducing latency and enhancing user privacy. Finally, as illicit advertisers evolve, testing the system against adversarial attacks, such as noise injection or style transfer, will be crucial to ensure long-term reliability.

In conclusion, GADIA provides a scalable and effective solution to the growing challenge of online gambling proliferation, offering a robust foundation for the development of next-generation digital perimeter security and parental control systems.

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From Accuracy to Insight: Explainability in Review Rating Prediction with Transformers

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***Abstract*—Mobile application (app) reviews provide valuable information that facilitates understanding of users' needs, leading to better design of developed products. They have abundant data that can be utilized by different models to explain the prediction results to stakeholders. This will lead mobile app developers to trust and rely on the models that are used to develop their apps and satisfy the users' needs. To leverage this information, outstanding improvements in complex learning algorithms have led to the development of transformer-based models that are used for natural language processing (NLP) and to exploit rating predictions. However, such models are complex and lack explainability, especially for Arabic reviews. Most studies have applied explainability models for transformer-based models to the English language and various other languages but not the Arabic language. This study presents a rating prediction explainability (RPE) framework that combines transformer-based and explainability models for review rating predictions from mobile government (m-government) apps. The transformer-based models predict the ratings for reviews written in English or Arabic. Then, local explainability models, such as SHapley Additive exPlanation (SHAP) and local interpretable model-agnostic explanations (LIME), explain and visualize the results. In RPE, not only high prediction accuracy was achieved for both English and Arabic reviews, but the resulted predictions were also justified with consistency between the different explainability models. The transformer-based model ELECTRA yielded the highest accuracy and F1 score of 96% for the rating prediction of English reviews, whereas the transformer-based model AraBERTv2 had 95% accuracy and F1 score for the rating prediction of Arabic reviews. The results of both explainability models provided equivalent explanations and emphasized the same words that affected the predicted ratings.**

Keywords*—Explainability; LIME; review rating prediction; SHAP; transformer-based models

I. Introduction

In recent years, an increasing number of user reviews have been posted on various internet services. These services include social media, e-commerce, and microblogs [1]. User reviews are comments and opinions provided by consumers about a product, business, or application (app) [2]. They consist of essential information that can capture the users' preferences over multiple items [3]. They provide pivotal information regarding the quality of the item being reviewed to help others decide whether to buy the product, deal with the business, or download the app [4]. This has prompted recent studies in this field on complementing item representation and improving recommendation performance [3].

One source of these reviews is mobile apps. They are a convenient way for users to share their opinions and thoughts. The interaction between users and mobile apps under several usage contexts have made the need for better app design a crucial issue. This presents a considerable challenge for app developers and marketers in developing suitable apps for users on the basis of their needs. Constructive and timely user reviews help developers become aware of user needs, creating opportunities for innovation [5]. The star ratings and the users' written reviews that is provided by the apps create an understanding of the consumers' needs and preferences, which leads to enhancements in the apps' features or the development of more advanced apps [6].Furthermore, one of the most important types of reviews that require careful analysis is related to mobile government (m-government) apps. The evolution of information and communication technology (ICT) has led governments worldwide to digitize their services using mobile technology, creating the concept of m-government. M-government allows for better communication with citizens/residents and provides them with better access to services [7]. The number of mobile phone users worldwide has reached 6.378 billion [8], and in Saudi Arabia, the number of smartphone users is expected to increase to 36.17 million in 2025 [7]. An evaluation of the current usage of m-government apps will help determine their effectiveness [6].

Turning this unstructured feedback into actionable insights requires natural-language models that are both accurate and linguistically inclusive. Numerous approaches have leveraged user reviews to extract knowledge related to their content or semantics in several languages [9]. To extract and work within user reviews, studies have utilized the features provided by deep learning (DL) in natural language processing (NLP). Among DL architectures, transformer-based models are considered important landscapes for NLP. On many tasks, they outperform many other state-of-the-art DL models [10] [9]. This is because, with traditional models, training incurs a high computational cost, which limits the volume of tuning that could be done on a model [11]. Furthermore, the size of the dataset used to train a model limits the ability to measure how the model is advancing. However, since transformer-based models are already trained on enormous datasets, this reduces the computations needed for the training process. In addition, they eliminate the need for an enormous dataset to obtain significant results [12].

On the other hand, the black-box nature of these models is considered a shortcoming. This means that the internal operations of the classifiers are unknown to humans [13]. Understanding the reasons behind the predictions made by a model is quite important for taking action based on these reasons [14]. Explainability is the ability of humans to understand a model and its behavior. In some cases, explainability is considered

a prerequisite for accepting the results of the model [15]; for example, the use of the model in medical applications or terrorist recognition cannot be based on blind faith, considering the consequences. Furthermore, any predictions related to a text should be linked with an explanation that indicates how and why the predictions were made. This type of understanding can be achieved by tracing each decision made by a model back to individual words [16].

Studies have shown that explainability models, such as SHapley Additive exPlanation (SHAP) and local interpretable model-agnostic explanations (LIME), are useful for adding explanations when incorporated into model workflows [17]. Recently, various studies have used SHAP as an explainability model. For example, it was used to measure the contributions of specific tokens toward specific predictions of material properties [18]. In addition, it was used as an explanation method for text classification developed by the BERT transformer-based model [19]. LIME was used as a basic explainability model for detecting patients with specific diseases on the basis of the predictions of several transformer-based models [20]. Additionally, it was used to explain the reasons behind the identification of harmful content in tweets [21].

The intersection of highly rated apps and public services makes m-government apps an ideal, high-impact test bed for such explainable techniques. The use of m-government in Saudi Arabia began to take shape in different sectors of the country [22]. Predicting the reviews' ratings and providing an explanation for the predicted ratings will enrich the Saudi Arabian app development market to develop apps based on users' demands. However, these reviews frequently mix modern standard Arabic with colloquial dialects which are underrepresented in standard corpora. Arabic language presents unique challenges that are not present in English-based NLP pipelines. This is due to the language's rich morphology, complex grammar, data scarcity, and variety of dialects [23], that result in inconsistent predictions and inaccurate and unreliable models. Even with the growing number of advancements and improvements in transformers and explainability models, there is still a lack of studies that have used such models in Arabic NLP tasks, especially in the field of predicting review ratings.

Consequently, this study aims to provide the Rating-Prediction-Explainability (RPE) framework, which combines various transformer models with SHAP and LIME to deliver both accuracy and transparency in predicting the ratings of m-government apps in Saudi Arabia based on written reviews in English and Arabic.

The main objectives of this study are as follows:

- Creating a dataset for m-government apps for both English and Arabic language.
- Developing a review rating prediction framework for English and Arabic reviews from m-government apps using Transformer-based models.
- Providing explainability for the resulting prediction from the transformer-based models using explainability models.
- Proving the consistency in the explainability between the different explainability models used in the framework.

The remainder of this study will discuss the related works to this study from the literature, as well as highlight the research gap. Next, it discusses the details of the methodology used for the proposed model, the data, and the experiment and evaluation of the model. Then it presents the results and discusses them. Finally, the study ends with a conclusion and provides limitations and future work.

II. Related Work

Given the importance of user-generated reviews, developers and academic researchers have conducted several studies to determine the best method for predicting ratings based on the review content and the language of the review. This has resulted in a high demand for understanding the predicted results [24]. This section highlights the different studies that have focused on rating prediction on the basis of users' reviews and their language, transformer-based models, and different explainability models

A. Rating Prediction

Because reviews and their associated ratings are valuable and not always available, rating prediction has been developed to generate ratings for non-rated items [25]. However, discovering and extracting the users' needs is a nontrivial task because only one-third of app reviews contain objective statements. Moreover, processing many unstructured reviews to extract possible user needs can be tedious. Therefore, automatic extraction is more efficient [5].

Consequently, developers and academic researchers are working on improving the performance of prediction models by extracting diverse features, such as lexical patterns, words, semantic topics, and syntactic structure, from the contents of reviews [26].

Current technical innovations in the field of machine learning (ML) have led to its utilization in various scenarios, including rating prediction [27]. Moreover, DL-based models are effective not only in improving performance but also in learning feature representations from scratch [4], such as Qiao et al. [5] who proposed a domain-oriented approach based on DL that combines a convolutional neural network (CNN) and a recurrent neural network (RNN). The model classifies user feedback to identify the type of information within the user reviews of mobile apps. The results of the study revealed that the proposed model yielded more valuable information, such as essential key-words and more consistent topics. In addition, this DL approach outperformed the traditional classification methods because it captures more contextual and semantic relationships between words.

Moreover, Ahmed and Ghabayen [28] proposed a DL bidirectional gated recurrent unit (Bi-GRU) architecture model for rating prediction. It consists of two phases: the first phase involves polarity prediction, whereas the second phase involves the prediction of review ratings from the text of a review. The results of their experiment indicate that the proposed framework can significantly improve rating prediction compared with the baseline methods. Another study that used a CNN to predict ratings for mobile apps was [29] by Aslam et al. The classifier extracts textual and non-textual information from each app review. Textual information is preprocessed

for each review, and a digital path is created. Finally, a prediction is generated for the app review. The results of the proposed approach revealed a significant improvement in rating prediction for reviews.

However, the rating is not entirely determined by the content of the review because the user may give a low rating but write a positive review. Consequently, different approaches and models have been proposed for rating prediction [26]. Sadiq et al. [30] proposed a DL-based framework for predicting the contradictions between rating predictions in Google Apps. The polarity of reviews is predicted using sentiment analysis to determine the ground truth. Next, DL models are trained on the ground truth to predict star ratings from text reviews. The results of their experiment showed that unbiased star ratings could be predicted based on actual reviews written by users [30]. Table I provides a summary of the proposed models along with their strengths and limitations.

B. Transformer-Based Models

The effectiveness of DL models when a large amount of data is used has been demonstrated; however, there are many limitations related to them. This caused the researchers to focus increasingly on much more sophisticated models that capture the dynamics of the used language. For example, RNN can effectively capture the contextual information and long-term dependencies in the text, however, there are several challenges related to long sequences which makes it difficult to figure out the correlations between the words. Moreover, CNN is known to be used for text classification by extracting local features from the provided input. This allow easy detection of text patterns. However, it provided low accuracy in some of the cases [31]. Additionally, there are some cases in which the available data are not sufficient to train a classifier to obtain justifiable results [32], and training incurs a high computational cost, which limits the model training process [12]. Consequently, transformer-based models were introduced with pretrained models that provide a vast amount of data and reduce the computational cost needed for training DL models [15].

Given the vast amount of information available in users' reviews available online, Kaur and Kaur [33] classified app reviews as relevant, feature requests, or bug reports. They used BERT to extract the contextual connections between written reviews. To assess the efficiency of their proposed model, five datasets were tested, and the model outperformed state-of-the-art models.

Additionally, Shiju and He [34] built a classification model via BERT, XLNet, RoBERTa, ELECTRA, BioBERT, and ALBERT transformer-based models. The models classified drug ratings based on the written textual reviews. This study identified reviews that are inconsistent with the given ratings. Moreover, BioBERT outperformed the other models because it specializes in medical data, which was the focus of this study.

Moreover, Chowdhury et al. [35] investigated the effect of BERT on Arabic text classification by incorporating formal and informal text in the training process. The goal was to classify text into categories such as 'sports', 'human rights', and 'politics', among others using BERT. The study revealed that training with formal text was more generalizable than training with informal text while enabling the correct classification of text. The formal text dataset consisted of social media posts from popular Arabic news channels that cover YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter, whereas the informal text was from Arabic tweets from popular accounts. The study revealed an overall improvement in text classification effectiveness.

In terms of rating prediction, Liu [9] predicted restaurant ratings based on textual reviews from the Yelp dataset via ML models such as Naive Bayes (NB), Logistic Regression (LR), Random Forest (RF), and Linear Support Vector Machine (SVM) and transformer-based models such as RoBERTa, DistilBERT, BERT, and XLNet. Finally, the authors compared the different models in terms of computational resources, speed, and evaluation metrics. The study showed that transformer-based models had higher accuracy than ML models did. One of the reasons for this result is that transformer-based models are pretrained on very diverse data. This diversity improves the generalizability and robustness of these models [36]. Table II provides a summary of the transfromer-based models along with their strengths and limitations.

C. Explainability Models

Recently, breakthroughs in the use of DL models have led to improvements in their accuracy and utilization in several scenarios [27]. However, these models are still considered black-box models [16], and their growing complexity makes reliable, fair, and safe models mandatory [37]. To address this concern, explainability models have been developed. They can be applied to any classification task [19]. In prediction-based models, understanding decisions is relevant for evaluating the reliability of the resulting predictions and detecting possible biases in the models [38].

Owing to the increasing complexity of DL models, reliable, fair, and safe models are needed [37]. Explainability models aim to increase trust by ensuring the transparency, dependability, and stability of the model used [13].

Research have shown that SHAP and LIME explainability models can be added to the workflow of a model used to explain the resulting predictions [17]. As a result, these models have been applied in different domains to enhance explainability. Ahmed et al. [39] developed a model that integrates LIME and BiLSTM to detect fake news. In this model, BiLSTM serves as the classification model for fake news detection, and LIME is used as the explainability model. The model achieved high accuracy and outperformed other ML models.

In the medical domain, Ilias and Askounis [20] used LIME to explain the ability of a BERT transformer-based model to predict whether a patient is suffering from Alzheimer's disease (AD) on the basis of the patients' words used while speaking in English. This study re-vealed significant language differences between patients with and without AD. These differences were explained visually, revealing the diverse patterns of words, expres-sions, and verb tenses used by patients.

Similarly, Rao et al. [40] predicted the incidence of heart failure using the BEHRT transformer-based model. This model was applied to data from patients' electronic health records in the UK. The authors provided explanations for the resulting predictions. BEHRT worked robustly with large-scale, sequential data and outperformed other traditional DL models. The

TABLE I. SUMMARY OF RATING PREDICTION RELATED WORK

Ref	Model	Strengths	Limitations
[5]	CNN and RNN	Capturing more semantic and contextual relationship between the words	The use of one public data source and one method of analysis
[28]	Bi-GRU for rating prediction based on DL	Evaluate the framework on real-world datasets	The large number of unique words causes inefficient encoding for them
[29]	App review classification approach based on CNN	Works on textual and non-textual information	Considering a limited number of reviews
[30]	Neural network–based method for understanding and predicting users' rating behaviors	Unify aspect rating with the review content	Detecting fake reviews

TABLE II. SUMMARY OF TRANSFORMER-BASED MODELS RELATED WORK

Ref	Model	Text Type	Strengths	Limitations
[33]	BERT	App reviews	The model achieved high performance in prediction for both long and short datasets	The used dataset had some internal validity issues
[34]	BERT, XLNet, RoBERTa, ELECTRA, BioBERT, and ALBERT	Drugs reviews	Identifying the inconsistent reviews with given ratings	Relying on the drug name for the classification.
[35]	BERT	Social media posts	The classification into multiple labels	Collecting and pre-training a large set of data is impractical
[9]	ML models (NB, LR, RF, and Linear SVM) and transformrmer-based models (RoBERTa, DistilBERT, BERT, and XL-Net)	Restaurant reviews	The experiment with several transformer-based models	No much difference in the accuracy between the ML models and the transformer-based models.

authors used the perturbation concept as a local surrogate method to explain the resulting predictions. They quantified the contribution of selected patient encounters and tested how the combination of the diagnosis and the medications affected the model's predictions.

Although transformer-based models have achieved very promising results in several areas, understanding their results is still an area to explore [39]. Korangi et al. [41] proposed an innovative model representation leveraging a BERT transformer-based model for predicting credit risk for mid-cap companies. They referred to this approach as the transformer encoder for panel-data classification (TEP). The authors incorporated differential training with a multichannel architecture, leading to superior performance and improvement over traditional models by efficiently training with all the data. SHAP was applied to express the importance of ranking the different sources of data and their relationships.

As stated in the previous literature, the explainability of a model is an important factor for its reliability. Different types of text were used under different classification and interpretation models, as shown in Table III, which provides a summary of the explainability models.

III. RESEARCH GAP

To the best of our knowledge, even with many transformer-based models that have been used for review rating prediction and a respectable number of scientific studies that have focused on explainability in different fields, there is a lack of studies that combine these models with explainability to justify the predicted ratings. There is still a need to conduct more research in the field of review rating prediction, especially for mobile apps. They have abundant data that can be utilized by different models to explain the prediction results to stakeholders. This will lead mobile app developers to trust and rely on the models used to develop their apps and satisfy the users' needs. In addition, most studies have applied explainability models for transformer-based models to the English language and various other languages but not the Arabic language. Consequently, this study applies transformer-based models for review rating prediction in both the English and Arabic languages and then applies explainability models to justify the predicted ratings to help the app developers recognize the users' needs for the apps and understand the difficulties they face.

IV. RPE FRAMEWORK

In this study, the RPE framework is proposed to explain the predictions of the review rating of mobile applications generated using transformer-based models. The model consists of three modules: 1) a dataset creation module, where the dataset is collected, cleaned, split, and balanced; 2) a rating prediction module, where the input sequences are processed through three different layers to predict ratings via transformer-based models; and 3) an explainability module, where the resulting predictions are justified via visualization techniques of explainability models. The high-level architecture of the model is shown in Fig. 1.

A. Dataset Creation

The initial dataset consisted of user reviews collected from m-government apps. Reviews were collected from a set of apps based on their purpose. The dataset was then cleaned and split based on the detected language. Dataset Description Section discusses the details of this process. The reviews from the resulted datasets are then passed through the prediction layer to perform the rating prediction.

B. Prediction

The prediction module consists of three different layers: an embedding layer, a transformer layer, and a prediction layer. The rating is predicted for an app review by passing the input

TABLE III. SUMMARY OF EXPLAINABILITY MODELS RELATED WORK

Ref	Classification Technique	Explainability Model	Aim	Type of Text
[39]	BiLSTM	LIME	Analyzing and comparing the computational overhead	Covid-19 news
[20]	TEP	SHAP	The use of two explainability models to confirm their results	Market or pricing data
[40]	BERT, ALBERT, BioBERT, RoBERTa, XLNet, ConvBERT, and BioClinicalBERT	LIME	Detecting AD in patients based on the used words when speaking English	English spoken words
[41]	MatBERT	LIME and SHAP	predictions of material properties	Material properties written in English

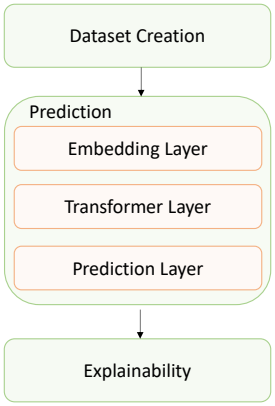

Fig. 1. RPE high-level architecture.

through these layers, which convert the app review into a format that is understandable by the machine and prepares it for the training process. In the following subsections, we provide detailed explanations of these layers.

1) Embedding layer: The transformer-based model receives the user review as discrete input tokens (sentence). The review cannot be processed directly as raw text; therefore, it passes through an embedding layer. The embedding layer converts the input into continuous, high-dimensional vector representations where each token is assigned a unique vector. Next, the model generates contextual embeddings by making some adjustments to the vector where tokens with similar meaning are brought together, allowing the model to capture the semantic relationship between them. As a result, embeddings are generated for each word within different contexts. The self-attention mechanism in the transformer-based models starts with the embedding vector. Then it refines the initial representation based on the context of the entire input [42], [43].

This layer considers text through three different embeddings: token embedding, sentence embedding, and positional embedding. In token embedding, the input is tokenized using the WordPiece tokenization method. The text input is converted into a numerical representation that is understandable by the machine (e_x1, e_x2, e_x3..., e_xL). In addition, additional tokens are added to each input sequence, such as <CLS>, which indicates the beginning of the input, and <SEP>, which separates sentences. The resulting tokens are then passed through the sentence embedding, where the words of each sentence are assigned the same embedding. This is accomplished by adding a learned embedding to each word to indicate the sentence to which the word belongs. Ultimately, an input sequence consisting of multiple sentences is packed together as a single sentence and passes through positional embedding. Each word in positional embedding is assigned a number that represents its position within the entire input (e_1, e_2, e_3, . . . , e_L). If a word is repeated within the input, the same number is assigned. Finally, the sum of the three embeddings generates a representation of a single shape that is passed as an input for the transformer layer. These embeddings contain the meaning and characteristics of the input word, which enables the model to understand their relation to the corresponding rating to perform the rating prediction on the testing dataset [42], [43]. A detailed view of this layer is shown in Fig. 2. We refer the readers to [42], [43] for a comprehensive explanation.

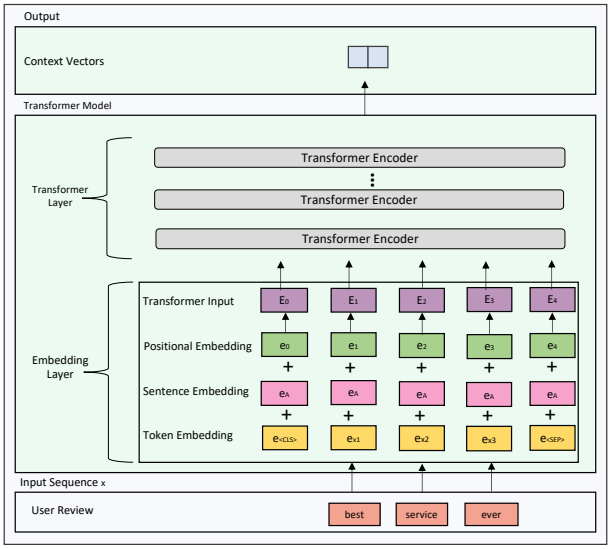

Fig. 2. Embedding and transformer layers (inspired by [43]) showing the flow of the user review as the input sequence into the output context vector.

2) Transformer layer: In the transformer layer, the input passes through the attention mechanism, normalization, and feed-forward layers, where the actual classification of the text occurs to extract the key characteristics [44]. First, the model takes the ¡CLS¿ token, which is considered the classification token, as the first input, followed by the remaining words in the input sequence. The input is then passed through the above layers. Each layer applies self-attention and passes the results through a feedforward network that passes the input again to the next layer above [11]. The final output of this layer, which represents the context vector of the input sequence, is then passed to the prediction layer.

3) Prediction layer: The output vectors of the transformer layer represent the important features provided by the input sequence. These features are then passed through a dense neural network to produce the logits. The logits are the output of the last neural network layer in raw unnormalized form before they are converted into probabilities. These raw scores are essential, as they encapsulate the model's initial predictions. Logits are then converted into probabilities by passing them through the Softmax functions in the Softmax layer. This transformation is crucial for making the model's output actionable and explainable. The softmax function maps the logits from the range of (-infty) to (+infty) to a range of 0 to 1, to ensure that the output values sum up to 1 and can be interpreted as probabilities. Lastly, these probabilities produce the predicted rating, as shown in Fig. 3 and passed through to the explainability layer along with the transformer-based model used for rating prediction.

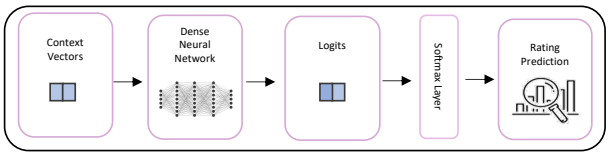

Fig. 3. Workflow of rating prediction layer.

C. Explainability

In the RPE framework, the SHAP and LIME explainability models are used to explain the predicted ratings.

1) SHAP: SHAP is a model-agnostic method used to explain the behavior of a model across all instances [45]. It identifies and prioritizes features that define classifications and predictions of any model by assigning a SHAP value to each feature [38]. In this work, the goal of using the Shapley value is to distribute the contributions between the features because they result in a certain prediction. The Shapley value of a feature (represented by a token) is the contribution of the feature to the model prediction [17].

In the RPE framework, SHAP receives the user review and transformer-based model as input and then creates N new samples from the same review via perturbation. The perturbed samples are created by masking random words from the original user review. These samples are fed into the model to generate their prediction. The difference between the predicted rating of each perturbed sample and the predicted rating of the original sample represents the contribution of the masked word to the prediction. The SHAP value of a feature reflects the strength of the impact of the feature on the resulting prediction via the model. Thus, it can be used as an importance score for features [17].

2) LIME: LIME is a model-agnostic explanation method that generates a local explanation for a complex model by justifying its decision for a specific observation. This approach implements a linear explainability model trained to estimate the prediction of a black-box model [46]. It works via a direct approach of training the model locally on specially generated representations that are different from the original input sequence of the model and observing the changes that occur in the prediction [47].

In RPE, LIME creates N new perturbed samples from the input review, similar to SHAP. These samples are fed to the transformer-based model to generate the predictions. Moreover, LIME weights these perturbed samples based on their closeness to the original sample to indicate their relative importance. Then, a linear regression model is trained on the perturbed samples and the weighted samples to explain a specific prediction. The coefficients are extracted from the linear model and used to explain the local behavior of the model. If the coefficient is positive for a specific word, this word positively affects the model's prediction, whereas a negative coefficient indicates the opposite. The degree of the effect on the prediction depends on the value of the coefficient [16].

V. Dataset Description

In this section, all the processes that the data underwent are described, from collection to cleaning, balancing, and splitting to create the final datasets. The dataset creation process is illustrated in Fig. 4.

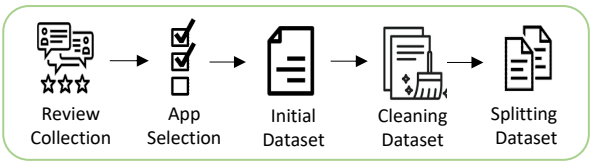

Fig. 4. Initial dataset creation.

A. Data Collection

The data needed for this study was users' reviews and ratings from m-government mobile apps. And since the government of Saudi Arabia is moving towards providing citizens and residents with additional access to governmental information and services through the m-government apps [22], its certified m-government apps platform was used to collect the data and create the dataset for the study. This certified platform is called the Saudi Unified National Platform. It includes the services related to healthcare, Hajj and Umrah, education and training, tourism,culture, and entertainment, safety and environment, Islamic affairs, business and entrepreneurship, and others. In the end, the dataset consisted of real-world data of users' reviews and ratings of m-government apps that provide social services for citizens and residents in Saudi Arabia.

B. Data Cleaning

Since rating prediction in this study is done using transformer-based models, the usual text preprocessing is not needed, such as removing null values, stop words, white spaces, punctuation marks, ASCII, duplicate letters, contractions, hashtags, emojis, and URLs. This comes from the fact that the transfer learning techniques are feature independent, which means that their power to understand natural language comes from their ability to contextually model the language. When they are applied to textual data that is heavily cleaned, they become worse because of the loss of contextual information needed by the model [48]. The dataset was cleaned by removing unnecessary attributes, that is, the time of the review, name of the user, title of the review, and version of

the app, from each review which were collected by the data collection tool. Afterward, reviews were examined manually and all repeated reviews by the same user were deleted, as well as were reviews that were not in Arabic or English. Moreover, reviews that did not provide useful information for the study were eliminated. Furthermore, the reviews that were written in multiple languages were revised, and only one language for the review was retained either English or Arabic. In addition, words written in a language different from the review are translated or deleted if they are not necessary. Table IV lists examples of the cleaning processes.

TABLE IV. TESTING REVIEWS BEFORE AND AFTER CLEANING

Review Before Cleaning	Review After Cleaning	Problem
كتبت البلاغ لاكثر من مرة ولم يصلني رقم التفعيل sms	كتبت البلاغ لاكثر من مرة ولم يصلني رقم التفعيل رسالة نصية	Mixed language
وكلتكم باخراج زكاة فطري لي ولاهل بيتي	–	non-useful information
wonderful charity app. Hoping to add search engine التطبيق رائع .و أتمنى إضافة آلية البحث	wonderful charity app. Hoping to add search engine	Multiple languages
नयाल	–	Non-English nor Arabic

C. Data Splitting

The RPE framework explains rating predictions for both English and Arabic reviews. Consequently, the initial dataset, which contains reviews in both languages, was split into two datasets based on the language of the reviews to produce the final datasets. The English and Arabic datasets consisted of 4381 and 6509 reviews, respectively, which were distributed among different class ratings from 1 to 5, as shown in Table V.

TABLE V. ACTUAL RATING DISTRIBUTION OF M-GOVERNMENT APPS REVIEWS THAT PROVIDE SOCIAL SERVICES FOR CITIZENS AND RESIDENTS IN SAUDI ARABIA

Dataset	Rating Class				
	1	2	3	4	5
English	2581	320	254	224	1002
Arabic	4410	508	390	259	942

D. Data Balancing

In classification problems, the performance of the DL model becomes worse when dealing with imbalanced data because the model tends to learn more towards the majority class than the minority class. This degrades the performance of the model and reduces the ability to generalize the results because of the difficulty in accurately predicting the minority class in the presence of the majority classes. To address the imbalanced numbers of reviews among the rating classes, as shown in the previous table, the datasets were examined manually, and the main observations for minority classes 2, 3, and 4 were related to the quality of the written reviews:

- Some of the reviews in these rating classes were meaningless and included only emojis, unknown words, reviewer names, etc., as shown in Table VI. These reviews do not highlight the features in the review to distinguish between them and know which of them has a stronger impact on the given rating than others.
- Users tended to write long reviews when they were completely satisfied or completely disappointed with an app. Consequently, the review lengths of these minority rating classes were noticeably shorter than those of classes 1 and 5. Fig. 5 shows the difference in sentence length across the rating classes.
- Because users could not provide a star rating unless they also provided a written review, they sometimes wrote non-useful reviews only to reach the point of a star rating, as mentioned by some of the users.

TABLE VI. DATA SAMPLE OF M-GOVERNMENT APPS REVIEWS THAT PROVIDE SOCIAL SERVICES FOR CITIZENS AND RESIDENTS IN SAUDI ARABIA

Source	Content	Rating
NWC	Thx	3
Sehhaty	Gd r go bjy zoo zlay e ej tzzzI eeu h	2
Tawakkalna	أبو هيثم	4
Bader	Saeed1234	1
Citizen Account	♡	5

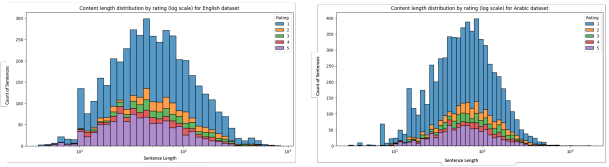

Fig. 5. Sentence length of m-government app reviews that provide social services for citizens and residents in Saudi Arabia.

All of the above may affect the model during the training process, as these factors may prevent understanding of various aspects of reviews in the minority rating classes, thus resulting in the failure to predict their ratings correctly. This led to the removal of the reviews that belonged to class 2, 3, and 4, and only the reviews from class 1 and 5 were used in the study to train the rating prediction model. Thus, this study focused on the polarity of reviews to measure the satisfaction of app users and to understand their needs for app development.

However, these two rating classes were also unbalanced. Therefore, a text augmentation technique was used to add data to the minority class. Additional data was added to the minority class from the unused collected data. Additional reviews were collected from other apps on the platform, such as health and education apps. Reviews of rating classes 1 and 5 were added to the English dataset to increase the amount of data and balance the two rating classes. For the Arabic dataset, only reviews of rating class 5 were added, and rating class 1 was down-sampled to balance the two classes. The final datasets consisted of 5430 reviews from 67 applications for the English dataset and 5470 reviews from 82 apps for the Arabic dataset.

Table VII shows the distribution of the reviews among the rating classes.

TABLE VII. FINAL DATASET

Dataset	Rating Class	
	1	5
English	2709	2723
Arabic	2791	2690

VI. EXPERIMENT AND EVALUATION

In this section, all the experimental settings used for the transformer-based models and the explainability models are listed. In addition, the evaluation metrics for both types of models are highlighted.

A. Experimental Settings

Details regarding the implementation of the transformer-based models used in this experiment, training strategy, hyperparameters, and model performance for each dataset are provided below:

1) Implementation details: Transformer-based models were implemented in the same manner, as indicated in [43]. To use the models in text classification, the problem was considered a rating prediction problem in which only the encoder part was used. The dataset was split into 80/10/10 training/testing/validation data.

2) Training strategy: This study used the same training strategy, as in [43]. The model iterated through different hyperparameters and transformer-based models to find the best performing model for each dataset in the classification task. The hyperparameters used for both datasets are listed in Table VIII.

3) Prediction models: Several transformer-based models, namely, BERT, XLNet, RoBERTa, ELECTRA, ALBERT, XLM_RoBERTa, MARBERT, QARiB, and AraBERT, were fine-tuned on both datasets in this experiment to obtain the highest accuracy and F1 score.

4) Explainability models: SHAP and LIME were applied to the testing datasets using the transformer-based models, which resulted in the highest accuracy and F1 score.

TABLE VIII. MODEL HYPERPARAMETERS

Training Argument	Value
Training Batch Size	16
Evaluation Batch Size	16
Number of Epochs	4
Evaluation Steps	300
Learning Rate	5e-5
Output Shape	(768, 2)

B. Evaluation Metrics

Two types of evaluations were conducted, namely, prediction model and explainability model evaluations, as follows:

1) Prediction model evaluation metrics: The classification metrics used to measure the overall performance of the transformer-based prediction models were accuracy and the F1 score.

- Accuracy: the ratio of the number of correctly predicted ratings to the total number of predicted ratings [49]. It is calculated by Eq. (1):

$$Accuracy = \frac{TP + TN}{TP + TN + FP + FN} \tag{1}$$

where, TP is true positive which is the number of outcomes where the model correctly predicts the positive class, TN is true negative which is the number of outcomes where the model correctly predicts the negative class, FP is false positive which is the number of outcomes where the model incorrectly predicts the positive class, and FN is false negative which is the number of outcomes where the model incorrectly predicts the negative class.

- F_1 score: the average rate between the recall and precision [49]. It is calculated by Eq. (2):

$$F_1 = \frac{2 \times precision \times recall}{precision + recall} \tag{2}$$

where, precision is the proportion of correct positive identifications out of all positive identifications and recall is the proportion of correct positive identifications out of all true positive instances. They are calculated via Eq. (3) and Eq. (4):

$$precision = \frac{TP}{TP + FP} \tag{3}$$

$$recall = \frac{TP}{TP + FN} \tag{4}$$

2) Explainability model evaluation metrics: Despite the massive amount of knowledge established around explainability models, there is no general agreement in the literature on how they should be defined or evaluated [50]. The literature suggests different evaluation metrics, such as comprehensibility, accessibility, fidelity [37], robustness [51], effectiveness, stability, and understandability [50]. However, there are no theoretical concerns that prompt favoring certain metrics over others [37]. Moreover, the literature lacks systematic approaches for assessing different explainability models in a comprehensive and balanced manner [51].

Consequently, the explainability of the RPE framework depends on evaluating the consistency between the visualizations produced by SHAP and LIME. Moreover, the SHAP and LIME values for the different words in the dataset were compared to prove the regularity of the impact of those words on the predicted rating class.

VII. RESULTS

The results of the transformer-based model experiments and the experiments conducted on the explainability models are presented in this section.

A. Rating Prediction Model Results

The results of applying the transformer-based models to both the English and Arabic datasets are presented in Table IX and Fig. 6. It shows that ELECTRA and AraBERTv2 achieved the best performance with respect to accuracy and F1 score.

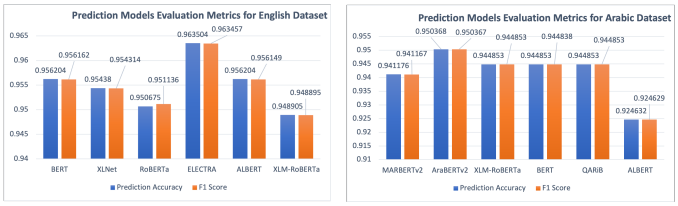

Fig. 6. Prediction performance.

In addition, the wilcoxon signed-rank test was applied to compare the performance of ELECTRA and AraBERTv2 against other baseline models in the same evaluation folds. The tests were conducted using paired accuracy and F_1 score obtained from identical evaluation settings. The results indicate that these two models achieved significant improvements over the other baseline models with $p < 0.05$ for accuracy and F_1 score. This confirms the effectiveness of the proposed transformer-based models configurations. Table X presents the statistical significance of test results.

B. Explainability Model Results

The transformer-based models that achieved the best performance, ELECTRA, and AraBERTv2, were used with the explainability models SHAP and LIME to justify the resulting predictions. Understanding the decisions made by a model is relevant for assessing the consistency of the resulting predictions and detecting possible biases in the model [38].

Two input sequences were used to visualize the explanations from each dataset. The selected reviews, along with their actual and predicted ratings, are listed in Table XI.

1) SHAP: A representation of the visualized explanations for reviews 1 and 2 from the English dataset is shown in Fig. 7. For review 1, all the words contributed to the prediction of rating class 1, with a total contribution of 0.46. For review 2, all the words contributed to the prediction of rating class 5, with a total contribution of 0.26, except for the words "to" and "and", which contributed negatively, with a total contribution of 0.15.

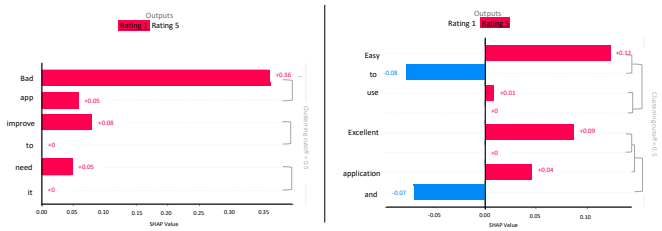

Fig. 7. SHAP visualization for English reviews where the Red bars mean positive contribution towards the predicted output and blue bars mean negative contribution towards the predicted output.

The visualized explanations for reviews 3 and 4 from the Arabic dataset are shown in Fig. 8. For review 3, the words "فاشل", which means "failure"; "خطأ", which means "error"; and "تعنيه", which means "means", contributed positively to the prediction of rating class 1, with a total contribution of 0.38, whereas all the other words contributed negatively to the predicted rating, with a total contribution of 0.20. For review 4, all the words contributed positively to the prediction of rating class 5, with a total contribution of 0.64, except for "وسيء", which means "and bad", which contributed negatively, with a total contribution of 0.14.

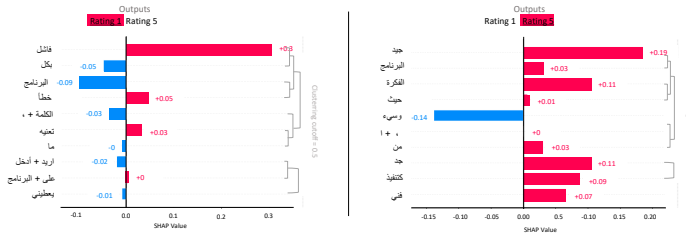

Fig. 8. SHAP visualization for Arabic Reviews where the Red bars mean positive contribution towards the predicted output and blue bars mean negative contribution towards the predicted output.

2) LIME: Each rating class in the LIME visualization is displayed with the probability of being the predicted class for a given input. For review 1 from the English dataset, the highest probability of 0.98 was for rating class 1. This probability occurred because of the contribution of all the words toward rating class 1, with a total of 0.75, except for the word "to", which contributed positively to the prediction of rating class 5. On the other hand, review 2 from the same dataset had the highest probability of being of rating class 5, with a value of 0.99. All the words in the given review contributed to the prediction of rating class 5, with a total contribution of 0.33. Fig. 9 shows the LIME visualizations of these reviews.

Fig. 9. LIME visualization for English Reviews where the orange bars represent the contribution towards rating 5 and the blue bars represent the contribution towards rating 1.

For the Arabic dataset, as shown in Fig. 10, review 3 had the highest probability of being of rating class 1, with a value of 0.91. The words that contributed positively to this rating class were "فاشل", which means "failure"; "خطأ", which means "error"; "تعنيه", which means "mean"; and "ما", which means "what," with a total contribution of 0.40. All other words contributed negatively to the predicted class rating. Furthermore, review 4 achieved the highest probability, with

TABLE IX. RATING PREDICTION RESULTS FROM APPLYING DIFFERENT TRANSFORMER-BASED MODELS

Dataset	Model	Accuracy	F_1	Precision	Recall
English	BERT	0.956204	0.956162	0.956530	0.956204
	XLNet	0.954380	0.954314	0.955024	0.954380
	RoBERTa	0.950675	0.951136	0.951136	0.950730
	ELECTRA	**0.963504**	**0.963457**	**0.964057**	**0.963504**
	ALBERT	0.956204	0.956149	0.956734	0.956204
	XLM-RoBERTa	0.948905	0.948895	0.948910	0.948905
Arabic	BERT	0.944838	0.944838	0.945462	0.944853
	MARBERTv2	0.941176	0.941167	0.941387	0.941176
	AraBERTv2	**0.950368**	**0.950367**	**0.950373**	**0.950368**
	XLM-RoBERTa	0.944853	0.944853	0.944853	0.944853
	ALBERT	0.924632	0.924629	0.924681	0.924632
	QARiB	0.944853	0.944853	0.944853	0.944853

TABLE X. STATISTICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF TEST RESULTS

Model Comparison	Test	p-value
ELECTRA vs BERT	Wilcoxon	< 0.05
AraBERTv2 vs MARBERTv2	Wilcoxon	< 0.05

TABLE XI. TESTING REVIEWS FOR EXPLAINABILITY MODELS

#	Review	Actual Rating	Predicted Rating
1	Bad application need to improve it	1	1
2	Excellent application and Easy to use	5	5
3	البرنامج فاشل بكل ما تعنيه الكلمة ، اريد أدخل على البرنامج يعطيني خطأ	1	1
4	البرنامج جيد من حيث الفكرة، وسيء جدا كتنفيذ فني	5	5

a value of 0.98 for rating class 5. The words "جيد", which means "good"; "كتنفيذ", which means "as execution"; "جدا", which means "very"; "حيث", which means "whereat"; and "من", which means "from," are the words that contributed positively toward the prediction of rating class 5, with a total contribution of 0.47. Conversely, the remaining words contributed negatively to the prediction of the rating class.

Fig. 10. LIME visualization for Arabic Reviews where the orange bars represent the contribution towards rating 5 and the blue bars represent the contribution towards rating 1.

In addition, as a proof of consistency between the explainability models used in the RPE framework, the average SHAP and LIME values were calculated for all the words that appeared in the reviews for apps related to social services for citizens/residents. The top ten words affecting each rating class are presented in Table XII and Table XIII.

TABLE XII. TOP 10 WORDS IMPACTED RATING CLASS 1 FROM REVIEWS OF SOCIAL SERVICES FOR CITIZENS/RESIDENTS APPS

Dataset	Word	SHAP Value	Word	LIME Value
English	**crashing**	0.34	**slowly**	0.75
	useless	0.30	awful	0.59
	slowly	0.19	stop	0.57
	outdated	0.16	**outdated**	0.43
	charges	0.15	denied	0.42
	negative	0.15	cannot	0.35
	errors	0.11	asking	0.34
	frequently	0.11	pathetic	0.34
	feedback	0.09	hangs	0.33
	sorry	0.09	**crashing**	0.32
Arabic	نصب **(fraud)**	0.67	نصب **(fraud)**	0.56
	يفشل (fail)	0.66	ضعيف **(weak)**	0.34
	سيء **(bad)**	0.56	سيء **(bad)**	0.32
	بطيء (slow)	0.51	أزعجنا (annoyed us)	0.23
	أسوأ (the worst)	0.42	ينقص (lack)	0.23
	أحاول (trying)	0.42	اعتراض (objection)	0.21
	استخدام (usage)	0.41	يفقد (loose)	0.21
	أخطاء (errors)	0.39	الاستعمال (usage)	0.19
	ضعيف **(weak)**	0.38	شكاوي (complaints)	0.19
	فاشل (failure)	0.36	لا تعمل (do not work)	0.17

As seen in the tables, across both rating classes (1 and 5) and both languages (English and Arabic) SHAP and LIME show moderate-to-high consistency in identifying influential words, but with systematic differences in emphasis and ranking. SHAP tends to highlight words with strong global contribution to the model's prediction. Whereas LIME emphasizes locally influential features which may sometimes introduce context-specific words that do not appear among SHAP. This difference is expected given that SHAP is based on additive feature attribution, and LIME approximates the decision boundary locally around a single instance.

To measure how often both models identify the same words, Top-K Overlap Ratio is calculated as follows [see Eq. (5)]:

TABLE XIII. TOP 10 WORDS IMPACTED RATING CLASS 5 FROM REVIEWS OF SOCIAL SERVICES FOR CITIZENS/RESIDENTS APPS

Dataset	Word	SHAP Value	Word	LIME Value
English	responsive	0.70	**worth**	0.65
	worth	0.63	enhancements	0.51
	great	0.55	solved	0.50
	nice	0.54	saves	0.43
	excellent	0.53	unbelievable	0.37
	reliable	0.53	accessible	0.34
	amazing	0.50	favourite	0.31
	well	0.49	finish	0.30
	valuable	0.48	**great**	0.30
	perfect	0.46	**perfect**	0.29
Arabic	كويس **(good)**	0.81	روعة (magnificent)	0.91
	إبداع **(creativity)**	0.40	كويس **(good)**	0.87
	ساعدني **(helped me)**	0.36	ساعدني **(helped me)**	0.67
	يعطيك (gives you)	0.35	رائعين (amazing)	0.59
	جميل (beautiful)	0.26	إبداع **(creativity)**	0.45
	سهل (easy)	0.26	حلو **(beautiful)**	0.41
	أفضل (best)	0.26	مميز (distinct)	0.41
	متطور (advanced)	0.23	تحسين (improving)	0.39
	دائمًا (always)	0.23	قوية (strong)	0.35
	عالمي (global)	0.12	ساعد (helped)	0.20

$$\text{Overlap@}K = \frac{\left|W^{K}_{\text{SHAP}} \cap W^{K}_{\text{LIME}}\right|}{K} \tag{5}$$

where, W^{K}_{SHAP} is the top-K words according to SHAP and W^{K}_{LIME} is the top-K words according to LIME.
Since each table reports top 10 words, K=10.

Rating Class 1: Common words in English are violation, abuse, and invading [see Eq. (6)]:

$$\text{Overlap@}10 = \frac{3}{10} = 0.30 \tag{6}$$

This means that there is a 30% overlap between both models [see Eq. (7)].

As for the Arabic, the common words are اتهاك, مزعج, بطيء, اختراق and, خطير

$$\text{Overlap@}10 = \frac{5}{10} = 0.50 \tag{7}$$

This means that there is a higher agreement in the Arabic reviews where there is a 50% overlap between both models.

Rating Class 5: Common words in English are perfect, useful, smooth, assist, served, and helpful [see Eq. (8)]:

$$\text{Overlap@}10 = \frac{6}{10} = 0.60 \tag{8}$$

This means that there is a 60% overlap between both models. This iddicates that both SHAP and LIME consistenly identify usability and performance as key drivers for high ratings.

As for the Arabic, the common words are فخر, سهل, and مميزة, غني

$$\text{Overlap@}10 = \frac{4}{10} = 0.40 \tag{9}$$

This means that there is a moderate agreement in the Arabic reviews where there is a 40% overlap between both models [see Eq. (9)].

Moreover, to help the app developers assess their apps and improve them based on the users' needs, they need to test the models on reasonable amounts of their own data (app reviews) to obtain a clear view of the features that affect users' opinions most strongly. In this study, the RPE framework was tested via reviews from the "Tawakalna" app, which belongs to the health sector and is an m-government app developed in Saudi Arabia. Table XIV and Table XV show the top ten words affecting each rating class.

TABLE XIV. TOP 10 WORDS IMPACTED RATING CLASS 1 IN "TAWAKKALNA" APP

Dataset	Word	SHAP Value	Word	LIME Value
English	**violation**	0.92	**abuse**	0.64
	invading	0.90	hack	0.58
	complicated	0.85	restricted	0.53
	abuse	0.81	**invading**	0.51
	destroy	0.58	spying	0.38
	hanging	0.58	**violation**	0.30
	disgusting	0.50	steals	0.24
	lame	0.40	illegal	0.24
	crashes	0.40	invasion	0.23
	batteries	0.36	slow	0.21
Arabic	ثقيل (heavy)	0.94	يتأخر **(delayed)**	0.62
	اتهاك **(violation)**	0.60	اتهاك **(violation)**	0.46
	مزعج **(annoying)**	0.58	مزعج **(annoying)**	0.45
	تجسس **(spy)**	0.34	اختراق **(breakthrough)**	0.40
	خبيث **(malignant)**	0.32	خبيث **(malignant)**	0.36
	يتأخر **(delayed)**	0.28	خطير **(dangerous)**	0.35
	بطيء **(slow)**	0.25	بطيء **(slow)**	0.32
	اختراق **(breakthrough)**	0.25	يجبرك (forces)	0.31
	معلق (hanging)	0.23	صعب (hard)	0.28
	خطير **(dangerous)**	0.17	تجسس (**spy**)	0.27

VIII. DISCUSSION

The goal of the RPE framework is to predict a rating for each review and justify the prediction using explainability models. However, the RPE framework focused on predicting the ratings for the reviews associated with rating classes 1 and 5 only. This came as a result of the non-benchmark data used in the study where there was a lack of reviews of rating classes 2, 3, and 4. The reasons behind that are reasons listed in Section V-D. Moreover, similar words were used in reviews with different rating classes; for example, the word "good" was used in reviews associated with the rating classes 3, 4, and 5; the words "problem," "fix," and "bad"

TABLE XV. TOP 10 WORDS IMPACTED RATING CLASS 5 IN "TAWAKKALNA" APP

Dataset	Word	SHAP Value	Word	LIME Value
English	**perfect**	0.25	**useful**	0.42
	privacy	0.22	**perfect**	0.26
	useful	0.17	**smooth**	0.26
	served	0.17	**assist**	0.21
	smooth	0.16	easy	0.18
	rewarded	0.15	solution	0.18
	helpful	0.14	compatible	0.16
	assist	0.13	**served**	0.15
	intelligent	0.13	helps	0.15
	guide	0.08	effective	0.13
Arabic	مفخرة **(pride)**	0.28	متميز **(distinct)**	0.62
	متميز **(distinct)**	0.23	مفخرة **(pride)**	0.45
	جبار (huge)	0.18	غني **(rich)**	0.33
	غني **(rich)**	0.12	الخصوصيات (privacies)	0.21
	عالمي (global)	0.12	ساعد (helped)	0.20
	سهل **(easy)**	0.05	حلوا (solved)	0.19
	متقن (perfect)	0.04	سهلت (made easy)	0.17
	تطور (development)	0.04	اختصر (cut short)	0.16
	قوي (strong)	0.03	سهل **(easy)**	0.12
	احترافي (professional)	0.03	فريدة (unique)	0.12

were used in reviews associated with rating classes 1 and 2; "problem" was also used in reviews associated with rating class 3; and "fix" was used in reviews associated with rating class 4. Furthermore, the words "ممتاز" which means "excellent," and "رائع", which means "amazing," were used in reviews associated with rating classes 4 and 5, although "ممتاز" was used in reviews associated with rating class 3 as well. The words "للأسف", which means "sadly", and "المشكلة", which means "the problem", were used in in reviews associated with rating classes 1 and 2, whereas "المشكلة", which means "the problem", was also used in reviews associated with rating classes 3 and 4.

As a result, the RPE framework focused on predicting the ratings for reviews associated with rating classes 1 and 5 only. ELECTRA achieved the highest performance among other transformer-based models due to its efficient pre-training task known as Replaced Token Detection (RTD). This task works by masking a small percentage of tokens and trains on every token in the sentence. This allows the model to understand the context of the text more deeply with less computational power. On the other hand, AraBERTv2 achieved the best performance among the transformer-based models that works on Arabic language due to its specialized pre-training on a huge, diverse, and clean Arabic datasets. In addition to its ability to handle complex Arabic morphology. It excels in capturing semantic relationships between words, which is critical for rating predictions. As for the explainability, all the words that had either a positive or negative impact on a certain rating class based on SHAP value had the same impact on the same rating class based on LIME value as well with different impact. For example, the words "slowly", "outdated", and "crashing" from the English dataset and the words "نصب" which means "fraud", "ضعيف" which means "weak", and "سيء" which means "bad", from the Arabic dataset all had positive impacts on rating class 1, with different impact based on SHAP and LIME values. In addition, the words "worth", "great", and "perfect" from the English dataset and the words "كويس" which means "good", "ساعدني" which means "helped me", "إبداع" which means "creativity", and "حلو" which means "beautiful", all had positive impacts on rating class 5 with different SHAP and LIME values. This means that there is consistency between SHAP and LIME in explaining the resulting predictions.

However, to help app developers understand users' needs to improve their apps, the RPE framework should be applied to a reasonable number of reviews to identify the most important features affecting the apps. In this study, there was a lack of reviews for each app; hence, they could not be used alone to train the model. Accordingly, reviews for multiple apps were grouped to build the dataset.

To test the model, reviews for the "Tawakalna" app were used to apply the RPE framework. The results revealed the words that affected the resulting predictions the most, which can help the app developers improve the app on the basis of the users' perspectives. However, the computational cost for SHAP and LIME are very expensive. SHAP took around 16 hours to execute the code with an average of 1.92 minutes per record, whereas LIME took around 5 hours with an average of 0.6 minutes per record. This would significantly reduce the effectiveness of using explainability models for real-time explanations.

IX. CONCLUSION

The development of a mobile app review rating prediction model is fundamental for decision-making with respect to mobile app development. However, its predictions cannot be considered useful without a clear explanation. Explainability is effective for creating a foundation for trusting the results and helping decision-makers take action on the basis of these results. In this study, RPE framework is proposed in which it helps the decision-makers, app developers, and policy makers to evaluate their given apps and its usefulness based on the highly frequent words used by the users in their reviews in relation to the given ratings. In RPE, the rating prediction task is implemented using several transformer-based models. These models were applied to two separate datasets: English and Arabic reviews. The models help overcome the difficulties of not having an enormous amount of data to work with to obtain highly accurate results and of dealing with mixed-language datasets. The datasets were composed of reviews of Saudi m-government apps. In addition, explainability models were implemented to explain the resulting predictions using a visualization technique.

ELECTRA and AraBERTv2 achieved the best rating prediction performance among all other models with respect to accuracy and F1 score, while the SHAP and LIME explainability models justified the resulting predictions. Moreover, the RPE framework showed consistency between the explainability models used, where most of the time the same words

contributed positively to the resulting predictions according to SHAP and LIME.

X. Study Limitations and Future Work

One of the main limitations of this study is the quality of the text used in the reviews. Data were collected specifically for this study and do not represent benchmark data; Much work needs to be done on the data to be able to collaborate with it. To address this limitation, additional data need to be used to obtain a wider variety of words to obtain a clear view of those that affect the resulting predictions. Moreover, the data sets were highly unbalanced with respect to the distribution among the rating classes. There was not enough reviews associated with rating classes 2,3, and 4. There are several reasons behind that as listed in Section V-D. This caused the study to focus only on the reviews associated with class 1 and class 5. Additionally, there is no general or bilingual transformer-based model to address different languages at the same time. As a result, the data collection, training, prediction, and explanation was done for each language separately. Further, to the best of our knowledge, there is a lack of studies in the field of m-government apps, especially for review rating prediction. Finally, the computational cost was remarkably high, especially with the consistency analysis that provided the SHAP and LIME average values for all the words in the reviews. This came as the result of the game theory that SHAP uses to provide explainability for a certain result. On the other hand, LIME's high cost comes from the many local model evaluations to fit surrogate models.

In future work, we plan to use prompt engineering as the initial context for the transformer-based models to guide the model's attention and influence its output. This will help the model understand the task and generate the desired output. Also, attention-based methods will be used to explain the resulting predictions. However, discriminating between the positive and negative contributions of the attention weights towards the predicted ratings must be considered during implementation. Furthermore, when it comes to m-government, other types of m-government apps should be explored to gain more knowledge about the perspectives of users about these apps in Saudi Arabia as a whole. In addition, applying this study to the m-government apps of other countries is necessary to improve the development of apps according to user needs. This could lead to the development of benchmark data for an international dataset of m-government apps that could serve all studies in this area. Further, user-centered evaluation for the proposed framework will be conducted by generating predictions and explainability for specific apps and check whether the apps' stakeholders and developers are benefiting from the provided results. Moreover, this work could be enhanced by the advancements in the multilingual transformer-based models. This could eliminate the duplication in doing the same work for both languages.

Data Availability Statement

The original data presented in this study are openly available in figShare at DOI: 10.6084/m9.figshare.25523716

Funding

No funding was received for this research.

Author Contribution

Conceptualization, Dhefaf Radain and Dimah Alahmadi; Data curation and Formal analysis, Dhefaf Radain; Methodology, Dhefaf Radain, Dimah Alahmadi and Arwa Wali; Project administration, Dimah Alahmadi and Arwa Wali; Writing - original draft, Dhefaf Radain; Writing – review and editing, Dhefaf Radain, Dimah Alahmadi and Arwa Wali.

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Machine Learning-Based Sentiment Analysis Pipeline for Evaluating Hajj Food Service Quality

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***Abstract*—Pilgrimage, also known as Hajj, brings together millions of people each year, creating significant challenges in managing, organizing, and maintaining the quality of various services. Among these essential services, food provision plays a vital role in shaping pilgrims' overall experience and satisfaction. Despite its importance, research focusing on food services using sentiment analysis during Hajj remains limited. Existing studies often rely on social media data, which may not accurately capture the genuine opinions of pilgrims. This study addresses this gap by analyzing food service text reviews collected from Google Maps within the Hajj context. It contributes a new dataset collected for evaluating food services provided to pilgrims after the Hajj season, along with an empirical benchmark for Arabic Hajj food reviews. The dataset consists of 4,018 Google Maps reviews from 160 Hajj campaigns conducted between 2022 and 2025. After data preprocessing, the reviews were classified using several classical machine learning algorithms as empirical baselines, including support vector machine (SVM), logistic regression (LR), naïve Bayes (NB), decision tree (DT), and random forest (RF). The experimental results demonstrate that LR achieved the highest accuracy of 93.6% among the evaluated models, followed by SVM and RF with accuracies of 92.9% and 92.2%, respectively. The analysis also shows that positive sentiment dominated across all studied years, indicating an overall improvement in pilgrims' satisfaction with food services. However, the persistence of food-related issues highlights the need for continued attention and improvement in service quality.**

***Keywords*—Sentiment analysis; service quality; machine learning; Hajj; food service**

I. Introduction

Every year, Mecca attracts over two million pilgrims who gather to perform the Hajj, one of the largest religious gatherings in the world. The magnitude of this event requires extensive logistical planning and highly efficient service management across multiple sectors, including healthcare, transportation, accommodation, and food services. The scale and complexity of the Hajj demand meticulous organization to ensure safety, comfort, and satisfaction for millions of pilgrims. Among these services, food quality plays a vital role in maintaining pilgrims' health and overall well-being, as poor management or inadequate quality can lead to dissatisfaction or even health-related risks.

Recently, sentiment analysis, a significant subfield of natural language processing (NLP), has become an essential tool for understanding public opinion and satisfaction levels [1]. It classifies text into emotional categories—positive, negative, or neutral—based on subjective expressions such as reviews, posts, or comments [1]. The exponential growth of online platforms has generated massive volumes of opinion-rich data, making sentiment analysis an effective means of identifying trends and evaluating public perception in business, politics, and social sciences [1].

Within the context of the Hajj, several studies have explored the quality of services such as accommodation [2], transportation [3], and healthcare [4]; however, research focusing on food service quality—especially through sentiment analysis in Arabic—remains limited [5]. Despite these efforts, significant research gaps persist. Most prior studies have relied on data from social media platforms such as X (Twitter) [6], [7], [8], which may not accurately reflect the current state of service quality following recent developments in line with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030. Furthermore, there is a lack of studies specifically analyzing Arabic-language reviews related to food services during the Hajj, leaving a valuable source of user-generated feedback, such as Google Maps reviews, underutilized. This study aims to address these gaps by employing machine learning–based sentiment analysis on pilgrims' Arabic textual reviews of food services collected after the Hajj.

The specific objectives of this study are: first, to extract and describe the principal food-service issues reported by pilgrims (e.g., availability, safety, cleanliness, and nutrition); second, to estimate the overall sentiment distribution toward food service quality (positive, negative, or neutral); and third, to benchmark multiple machine learning algorithms—including SVM, LR, NB, DT, and RF —to determine the best-performing model for sentiment classification. Accordingly, the main research questions are: What food service issues do pilgrims report during the Hajj?, What sentiments (positive, negative, or neutral) are associated with these issues across pilgrims' reviews?, and Which machine-learning approach most effectively classifies sentiment in this dataset?

This research contributes a new dataset collection applied for the first time to evaluate food services provided to pilgrims after the Hajj season. To the best of our knowledge, it is the first study to analyze Google Maps reviews within the Hajj context with a specific focus on food services. Previous work has seldom relied on Google Maps as a data source in this domain.

The scope of the research is restricted to text-based analysis of reviews about food services during the Hajj. It excludes multimedia data, such as images or videos, and does not address external factors such as politics or finance. The main focus is on textual sentiment to provide an evidence-based understanding of food service quality.

However, there remains a lack of focused research applying

these methods specifically to food services in the unique context of the Hajj, creating a need for an updated, domain-focused analysis that utilizes pilgrim-authored reviews beyond social media and rigorously evaluates sentiment models for text to produce actionable insights.

The structure of this research is organized as follows: Section I presents the introduction and problem statement and outlines the research objectives, questions and contributions; Section II reviews related literature on service quality and sentiment analysis in the context of the Hajj; Section III describes the methodology; Section IV presents and discusses the results; and Section V concludes the study with key findings, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

II. Literature Review

Every year, the Hajj attracts a huge number of pilgrims; a total of 1,673,230 pilgrims were recorded in 2025 [9], and the quality of services provided plays a major role in achieving pilgrim satisfaction. The literature review of this research has been divided into two sections: the service quality and sentiment analysis in the Hajj.

A. Services Quality in Hajj

Service quality consists of two component words. "Service" refers to the basic features of a specific function, while "quality" refers to the application of a user-based approach [10]. Together, "service quality" refers to the value of service to the customer [10]. A measure of service quality shows how well a company meets the expectations of its clients by comparing actual service delivery to client expectations [11]. Consumers have explicit wants and needs, as well as occasionally having latent or concealed demands [11]. It is the responsibility of the company to recognize these demands and meet them, either above or beyond the expectations of the client. One of the most crucial factors in determining a company's success or failure—and, in the event of success, the degree of that success—is service quality [11].

These studies investigate the quality of services provided during the Hajj, including food, accommodation, transportation, and healthcare services.

Food service provision during the Hajj introduces unique challenges and opportunities to improve. Research indicates that there are varying levels of compliance with food safety practices among different food provider companies. Professional training was found to considerably enhance adherence to safety protocols, with a compliance rate between 72.67% and 88.3% [12]. The researchers proposed automated food production using blockchain and centralized plants to control and improve food service quality, reducing service delivery times by 54.46% [5]. During the Hajj, the quality of food service is a critical concern for pilgrims' satisfaction and health. About 20% of pilgrims suffer from chronic diseases, with 15.7% needing special diets due to chronic health conditions; however, research has found that most caterers do not provide special meals for them [13]. All of these efforts, such as training and automated food production, aim to enhance the quality of food, particularly during the Hajj. Yezli et al. [14] investigated the prevalence of gastrointestinal symptoms among pilgrims during the 2019 Hajj and assessed their knowledge and practices regarding food and water safety. They also aimed to identify knowledge gaps and risky behaviors that could increase the risk of food- and water-borne diseases (FWBDs). The findings showed that nearly 10% (n = 133) of pilgrims reported at least one gastrointestinal symptom during the Hajj, with diarrhea being the most common (51.9%). Most symptoms lasted for less than two days, and 78.2% of affected individuals sought medical assistance [14]. During the 2023 Hajj, Msrahi et al. [15] investigated the relationship between foodborne disease (FBD) and food safety knowledge and practices among pilgrims. They employed a self-reporting online questionnaire, which comprised four sections: demographic data, pilgrims' food safety knowledge and practice, and FBD symptoms. The dataset collected involved 409 pilgrims from 15 countries. They found that the pilgrims demonstrated an above-average level of food safety knowledge, while their food safety practices were below average [15]. Alfiah et al. [16] investigated the nutritional completeness of food consumed by Indonesian Hajj pilgrims, identifying the factors associated with incomplete nutrition and highlighting the importance of nutritional education and policy. The study included a sample of 231 Indonesian respondents who were Hajj or Umrah pilgrims aged 18 years and above. The researchers found that a significant majority (87%) of Indonesian Hajj pilgrims consumed nutritionally incomplete food, meaning that one or more components (carbohydrates, fat, protein, vegetables, or fruit) were missing [16].

The provision of accommodation during the Hajj plays a crucial role in enhancing pilgrims' satisfaction and their overall experience. Mohammed et al. [17] used the analytic hierarchy process (AHP) to prioritize the service quality dimensions that are most important for improving pilgrim satisfaction. The most important dimension was found to be tangibility, reflected in the physical facilities, equipment, and the appearance of personnel.The reliability dimension demonstrated the ability to deliver promised services consistently and dependably [17]. Providing high-quality accommodation services, comfortable transportation, and reliable religious scholars all enhance the pilgrimage experience, and authorities should focus on these [18]. Jouda et al. [2] aimed to investigate how service quality affects the satisfaction levels of Hajj pilgrims in Saudi Arabia's hotel sector and identified key service dimensions that influence the pilgrim's experience. The authors made suggestions for improving hotel services aligned with religious tourism expectations. They found that service quality significantly impacted pilgrims' satisfaction, while the dimensions of responsiveness, reliability, and empathy were the most influential in determining satisfaction levels [2].

Large numbers of participants and spatiotemporal restrictions lead to significant challenges in the transportation of pilgrims during the Hajj [3], [19]. Trains and pedestrian routes are intensely used modes of transport during the Hajj [19]. Hussain et al. and Owaidah et al. [3], [19] proposed strategies to improve transport shuttle bus service efficiency and evaluated services by using simulations of discrete events for pilgrim transport modeling between sites. Weber et al. [20] aimed to assess pilgrims' satisfaction with metro services during the Hajj. They defined the key factors affecting satisfaction, offered proposals and recommendations to improve metro services in the future, and emphasized the role of metro services in mitigating transport crowds during the

Hajj season. They found high satisfaction among pilgrims concerning the quality of the service, with the metro helping to mitigate overcrowding, a positive perception of safety through the measures implemented in the metro system, and improvements to pilgrim mobility; however, the study also found that elderly and disabled pilgrims faced difficulties in accessing metro services [20]. Almujibah et al. [21] aimed to evaluate the efficiency of the Almashaaer Al Mugaddassah Metro (MMMSL) in transporting pilgrims, assess the efficacy of the metro system in meeting its intended objectives, analyze the safety measures implemented in the MMMSL and their effectiveness, and provide recommendations for enhancing performance and safety. They concluded that the metro worked with high efficiency during off-peak times, faced challenges during peak periods, was successful in reducing traffic, and had effective safety measures in place for managing the movement of passengers. The authors also provided a number of improvement recommendations [21]. These studies emphasize the need for innovative solutions to address the complex transportation challenges faced during the Hajj.

Digital transformation initiatives implemented by the Saudi Ministry of Health have led to improved healthcare services [4]. However, integrating various healthcare applications remains a challenge due to the lack of a unified electronic platform [4].

B. Sentiment Analysis in Hajj

Sentiment analysis is a method that uses a vast number of textual data sources to identify positive and negative views about particular goods, services, or events [22]. These research articles targeted particular domains, for instance, sentiment analysis in the education [23], [24], Hajj domain [6], [7], [8], [25], [26], [27], [28], medical domain [29], or business domain [30], [31]. Sentiment analysis offers several advantages, such as gaining insights into students' opinions about the educational process delivered by teachers; understanding people's opinions about specific events, such as the Hajj; helping in gathering patients' feedback on hospital services; and allowing businesses to understand customers' opinions about specific products or services offered in a restaurant or store. These benefits help companies and service providers improve their products and services. The following studies discuss sentiment analysis in relation to the Hajj:

Alghamdi [6] presented a comprehensive sentiment analysis of Arabic tweets related to the Hajj over a six year period from 2017 to 2022 to investigate the prevailing sentiments related to Hajj events before, during, and after the Hajj. The study showed a significant surge in both positive and negative tweets during the Hajj period. It applied different classifications of machine learning and deep learning, with the bidirectional encoder representations from transformers (BERT) model achieving the highest accuracy of 93.8% in sentiment classification. Thus, BERT was found to be one of the most effective models in sentiment analysis, especially for capturing the complexities of Arabic text. The study's findings indicated an increase in both positive and negative sentiments during the Hajj period through engagement and emotional expression [6].

Ottom et al. [8] applied sentiment analysis using a series of tweets related to the Hajj. The researchers collected data from 1-8-2018 to 25-8-2018 using the Twitter application programming interface (API) and conducted two experiments based on the machine learning approach and the lexicon approach to compare the accuracy of the method of analysis. The machine learning-based approach worked better than the lexicon-based approach in the classification and sentiment analysis, with SVM outperforming the other models with a high degree of accuracy (84%) [8].

During the COVID-19 pandemic, a small number of pilgrims were undertaking hajj. Shambour [25] used deep learning methods to discuss people's impressions about the 1442 Hajj season. A dataset was compiled based on approximately 4,300 texts from social media, including X (Twitter) and YouTube, posted over 13 days. Based on the experiment results, the convolutional neural networks and long short-term memory (CNN-LSTM) model outperformed the other models in sentiment classification, achieving 97% accuracy. The researcher provided a clear framework for understanding public perceptions by using a five-point scale for sentiment classification. The overall results showed highly positive feelings about the Hajj season, with ratings exceeding 4 out of 5 [25].

In another study, Gutub et al. [26] investigated the emotional impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on individuals in Makkah and Madinah during the 2021 Hajj season, utilizing deep learning techniques to analyze X (Twitter) data. It aimed to understand the sentiments of residents in these holy cities, which were significantly affected by reduced pilgrim numbers due to the pandemic. The dataset comprised more than 22,000 tweets collected from Twitter accounts in Makkah and Madinah during the 2021 Hajj season (1442 AH) between 28 Dhu al-Qi'dah and 23 Dhu al-Hij'jah. They found "strange negative feelings" toward the Coronavirus pandemic in tweets from the holy cities. The sentiment analysis rate for COVID-19-related tweets in both cities decreased below neutrality, with Makkah tweeters expressing more negative sentiments [26].

Albahar et al. [27] used deep learning to predict satisfaction levels with high accuracy, which influenced the quality of accommodation services. The study collected 15,859 Arabic reviews from the Booking.com website and proposed a model using a deep learning approach that achieved 97% accuracy. The study employed sentiment analysis techniques based on the expectation-confirmation paradigm. This method made it possible to gain a complex understanding of how pilgrims' expectations affected how satisfied they were with the hospitality services provided [27].

Chelloug et al. [28] presented an advanced social media classification system designed to enhance Hajj and Umrah services that utilized predictive deep learning and particle swarm optimization to improve accuracy and offer immediate feedback for better decision-making and service quality management. The researchers analyzed 5,000 tweets, 25,000 Facebook posts, and 10,500 Instagram posts. The proposed model demonstrated superior performance, achieving an accuracy of 98.85% and outperforming other models in classifying social media posts related to Hajj and Umrah services [28].

Several studies have explored food services [14], sentiment [7], [26], [28], and health issues [15], [16] among Hajj and Umrah pilgrims using advanced analytical methods.

In food services, Alasmari et al. [7] aimed to create a novel approach for sentiment analysis of pilgrims by utilizing a hybrid deep learning model combining CNN and LSTM models. The study used a novel and specialized dataset comprising 4,669 tweets collected from X (Twitter) during the 1442 Hajj (2021 AD) that discussed pilgrims' opinions about catering services. The proposed CNN-LSTM model achieved an accuracy of 92%, outperforming other machine learning models (SVM, RF, LR, and DT) and individual deep learning models (CNN and LSTM) [7].

C. Studies Analysis

Most of the studies examined here did not specify the type of service analyzed, focusing instead on general experiences. Table I summarizes previous studies that conducted sentiment analysis during the Hajj using various online platforms, such as X (Twitter). Most of these studies focused on general topics, for example, [25], [8], [6], [26] related to Hajj services while only one study [27] focused on hospitality services. On the other hand, ref. [28] focused on religious rites, management, safety, well-being, and services, but only one study [7] focused on catering services, and it was limited to Hajj 1442 (2021 AD). In terms of data collection periods, the studies collected data during short and specific Hajj seasons, for example, 2018 [8], 2021 [7], and 2023 [27], or over limited durations, such as 120 hours [28]. Concerning platform use, most previous studies have relied on X (Twitter) [8], [25], [7], [28], [26] as the primary source of data, with some incorporating YouTube [25], Facebook [28], or Instagram [28]. With respect to language coverage, previous studies show that sentiment analyses were conducted in Arabic, English, or both.

TABLE I. SENTIMENT ANALYSIS IN HAJJ

Ref.	Platform	Data Collection Period	Languages	Service Type
[6]	X(Twitter)	2017-2022	Arabic	Not specified
[7]	X(Twitter)	Hajj 1442 (2021)	Arabic	Catering services
[8]	X(Twitter)	1-8-2018 to 25-8-2018	English	Not specified
[25]	X(Twitter), YouTube	Hajj 1442	Arabic	Not specified
[26]	X(Twitter)	Hajj season (1442 AH) between 28 Dhu al-Qi'dah and 23 Dhu al-Hij'jah	Arabic, English	Not specified
[27]	Booking	Hajj 2023	Arabic	Hospitality service
[28]	X(Twitter), Facebook, Instagram	collected over a continuous period of 120 hours	Arabic, English	Religious rites, management, safety, well-being, and services

These studies depend on data from social media platforms in sentiment analysis, which does not offer straightforward conclusions about the quality of services provided to pilgrims during the Hajj. The results showed the effectiveness of using machine learning algorithms and deep learning algorithms in sentiment analysis. In addition, many of these studies were conducted several years ago, which may limit their relevance to the Hajj at the present time. Table II shows the differences between studies based on number of datasets, machine-learning models used, sentiment analysis used, and the levels of accuracy achieved by the machine-learning or deep learning models in each study. Table I presents the differences between studies that apply sentiment analysis in relation to the Hajj. The study has aimed to measure the effectiveness of machine learning techniques in improving the quality of food services that are provided to pilgrims based on their sentiment analysis.

In sum, our research stands out in three key ways when compared with previous studies in the Hajj field, as shown in Table I. First, in terms of specificity, it focuses directly on the food service aspect of the Hajj, unlike most prior works. Second, in terms of recency and duration, our review covers the 2022–2025 period, providing a modern and multi-year perspective. Lastly, in terms of practical relevance, this study uses sentiment analysis and machine learning techniques to contribute practical insights for identifying the main problems related to food services that pilgrims face during the Hajj.

TABLE II. SUMMARY OF RELATED RESEARCH OF MACHINE LEARNING AND SENTIMENT ANALYSIS IN HAJJ

Ref.	Dataset	Classifier	Features Extraction	Sentiment Polarity	Accuracy
[6]	Over 80,000 tweets	LR, RF, KNN, SVM, NB, XGBoost, CNN, LSTM, BERT	TF-IDF, BoW, Word2Vec Embeddings	Positive, Negative, Neutral	93.8% BERT
[7]	4669 tweets	SVM, DT, RF, LR, CNN, LSTM, CNN-LSTM	One Hot Encoder	Positive, Negative, Neutral	92% CNN-LSTM
[8]	3175 tweets	SVM, KNN, NB, Text Blob	BoW, N-Grams, TF-IDF	Positive, Negative, Neutral	84% SVM
[25]	2996 tweets, 1293 comments	CNN-LSTM	CNN	five-point scale for sentiment classification	Reach to 97%
[26]	Over 22,000	CNN-LSTM	CNN	Scale score from 1 to 5	Not specified
[27]	15,859 reviews	CNN, LSTM, proposed model	Convolutional Layer	Positive, Negative, Neutral	97% proposed model
[28]	15,000 tweets, 25,000 Facebook posts, and 10,500 Instagram posts	SVM, RF, DT, XGBoost, K-NN, BERT, ALBERT, ROBERTA, XLNet, Proposed model	Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and Pearson Correlation Coefficient (PCC)	based on relevant attributes: service-level, and scores	98.85% proposed model

III. METHODOLOGY

This research used a sentiment analysis approach applied to pilgrims' reviews about food service. Sentiment analysis is a widely recognized approach in natural language processing (NLP) that focuses on identifying and interpreting emotions or opinions expressed in text data [32], [1]. Its main objective is to classify written content—such as reviews, tweets, or comments—into sentiment categories such as positive, negative, or neutral [32], [1]. With the exponential rise of social media and digital communication, massive amounts of opinion-rich data are generated daily, making sentiment analysis an essential tool for understanding public attitudes, market trends, and consumer behavior [33].

This approach plays a crucial role in various domains, including business, politics, and social research, by helping organizations analyze feedback, monitor reputations, and enhance decision-making [33], [32]. Sentiment analysis approaches can be divided into three categories, as shown in Fig. 1: machine learning, deep learning, or ensemble learning [1]. In this research, the focus is on the machine learning approach.

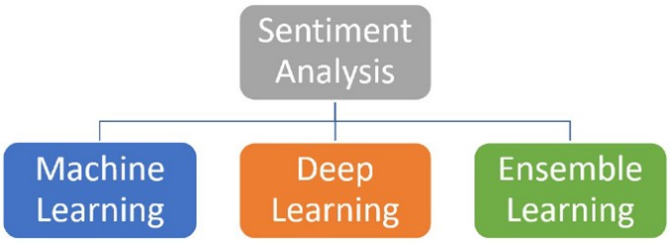

Fig. 1. Sentiment analysis approach.

Sentiment analysis typically involves several key stages [1], as illustrated in Fig. 2. It starts with data acquisition, then perform data preprocessing to clean and normalize the text. After that, feature extraction converts text into numerical representations using methods like TF–IDF (term frequency–inverse document frequency) or word embeddings. Finally, machine learning algorithms such as SVM for classification are used [1]. By integrating natural language processing and machine learning techniques, sentiment analysis provides a powerful framework for automatically extracting and interpreting human emotions and opinions from unstructured text data [33], [32], [1].

Fig. 2. Sentiment analysis process.

This section accentuates our research methodology, which includes the dataset collection, labeling, and preprocessing, as well as the subsequent steps of feature extraction and model classification, as shown in Fig. 3.

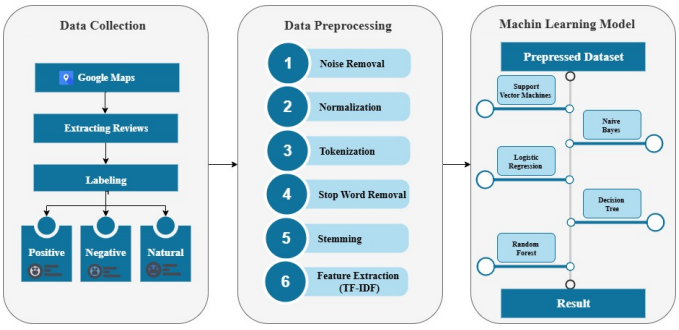

Fig. 3. Methodology overview.

A. Dataset Collection

The foundation for sentiment analysis has been established by collecting text-based feedback from Hajj pilgrims. This feedback covered sentiments related to food service quality. The data have been gathered from a range of sources between 2022 and 2025, from 160 Hajj campaigns. The research data for this study have been collected from Google Maps reviews related to campaigns at Hajj sites using the Outscraper website [34]. This tool offers rapid, reliable access to data on Google Maps locations through a simple and intuitive interface [34]. Additionally, we utilized Instant Data Scraper, a feature of Google Chrome that serves as an automated data extraction tool for any website. The dataset was garnered from Google Maps. We initially gathered 6,450 reviews; after removing duplicates, non-text items, and entries with missing or off-topic content, we retained 4,018 reviews explicitly referencing food or catering. The data collection process involved several steps. First, specific keywords were searched on Google Maps to identify Hajj campaigns, such as "حملات" (campaigns), "حملة حج" (hajj campaign), "حجاج الداخل" (domestic pilgrims), and "حج" (hajj). Based on the search results, relevant campaigns were selected, and all available reviews were opened and extracted using the Instant Data Scraper tool. The collected reviews were then downloaded, copied, and combined into a single file. This process was carried out individually for each campaign, which required a considerable amount of time due to the manual nature of the task. After completing the data collection, the dataset was cleaned and standardized to ensure consistency. The data preparation process included unifying all reviews into Arabic, standardizing the review dates into an annual format, and organizing the dataset for data labeling and preprocessing. Table III presents the dataset attributes and their types used in this study.

TABLE III. Potential Attributes and Data Type

Attribute	Data Type
Textual review	Text
Review datetime	Numerical
Sentiment analysis	Categorical

Fig. 4 shows a bar chart illustrating the relationship between review years and sentiment categories. The chart shows a gradual increase in the number of reviews over the years. There are relatively few reviews in 2022, with a noticeable rise in 2023 and a sharp increase in 2024 and 2025. Positive reviews remain the most frequent across all years, followed by negative and neutral reviews.

1) Dataset Labeling: The dataset has been organized into three class single-label sentiment classification (positive/neutral/negative) to encompass the entire spectrum of classification. The positive class comprises reviews that are commendatory or appreciative of the pilgrim' satisfaction with the food or service, such as food quality, good taste, cleanliness, variety, organization, or speed of service. On the other hand, the negative class encompasses reviews that are derogatory and critical and reflect dissatisfaction or a poor experience, such as poor taste, delayed service, lack of variety, poor cleanliness, or poor service by servers. Finally, a neutral class expresses a descriptive opinion or information without positive or negative emotion (i.e., an objective comment that does not express obvious satisfaction or dissatisfaction); for instance, three meals are served daily to pilgrims. Table IV shows examples of three categories of sentiment analysis. The

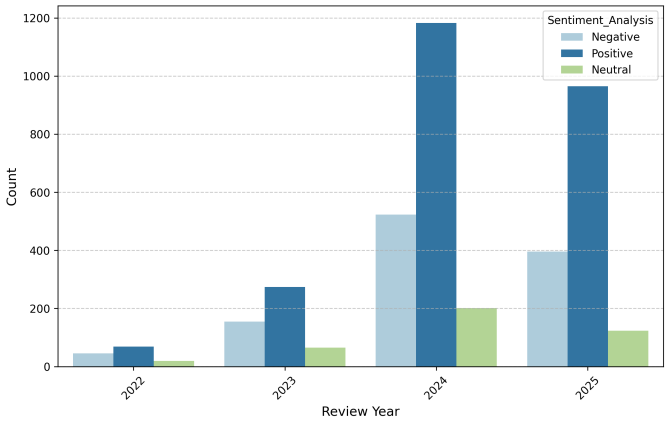

Fig. 4. Dataset distribution.

dataset was manually labeled by assigning a sentiment label to each review individually using an Excel file, which was later converted into a CSV format. The final dataset contains 4,018 Arabic reviews provided by pilgrims. To ensure labeling reliability, all reviews were annotated by three native Arabic speakers. One annotator has a background in information technology (IT), while the other two are in information systems (IS). All annotators were between 28 and 32 years old and participated independently in the labeling process. During data preparation, only the review text and review date were retained, while star ratings, no campaign identifiers or reviewer IDs were excluded to avoid potential data leakage risks and bias. Each annotator was provided with the same dataset and instructed to classify each review into one of the three sentiment categories (positive, negative, or neutral) based on the predefined definitions. After all annotators completed the labeling process, the final label for each review was determined using majority voting. For example, if two annotators labeled a review as positive and one labeled it as neutral, the final label was assigned as positive. In ambiguous cases, the annotators discussed the review collectively to decide the appropriate sentiment class, and reviews that could not be confidently resolved were removed from the dataset.

Fig. 5 illustrates the distribution of sentiments and the number of reviews in each class in our dataset. The largest portion of the chart represents positive sentiments, which account for 62.00% (2,491 reviews) of the total. The negative sentiments make up 27.85% (1,119 reviews), while the neutral sentiments represent the smallest portion, with 10.15% (408 reviews). It is clear that positive reviews dominate the dataset, followed by negative and then neutral reviews.

B. Dataset Preprocessing

Preprocessing techniques are important in natural language processing tasks [35]. The quality of preprocessing has a direct impact on the performance and precision of NLP tasks such as text classification and sentiment analysis [35]. One of the most widely used libraries in NLP is the Natural Language Toolkit (NLTK) [36]. It is a Python library that offers a variety of linguistic resources, like text processing, and performs operations such as tokenization, stemming, and classification [36]. To prepare the data for analysis, preprocessing tasks, as

TABLE IV. EXAMPLES OF REVIEW IN DIFFERENT SENTIMENT CLASSES

Sentiment	Review	English translation
Positive	حملة جدا رائعة وممتازين في الخدمة والاعاشة اقيمهم خمس نجوم شركه ممتازة ونظافة والاكل كان رائع كل التوفيق لكم	A truly wonderful campaign; excellent service and catering. I rate them five stars Excellent company, very clean, and the food was great. Wishing you all the best
Negative	البوفيه سيء جدا خيارات محدودة وما يناكل الله يعز النعمة الحملة جدا سيئة لا ترتيب ولا تنظيم ولا سناكات والاكل جدا سيء نفس الاصناف مكررة يوميا والله الإعاشة زي الزفت بصراحة	The buffet was very bad, limited options, and barely edible. May God bless the food we have. The campaign was really bad — no order, no organization, no snacks, and the food was terrible, same dishes repeated daily. Honestly, the catering was awful
Neutral	كان الطعام جيدًا ولكنه تقليدي بشكل أساسي طبخهم للوجبات لا بأس به اهم شي ما تموت يعني مو لازم الطعم يكون ١٠٠ %	The food was good but mostly traditional. Their cooking is okay — at least you won't die, the taste doesn't have to be 100%

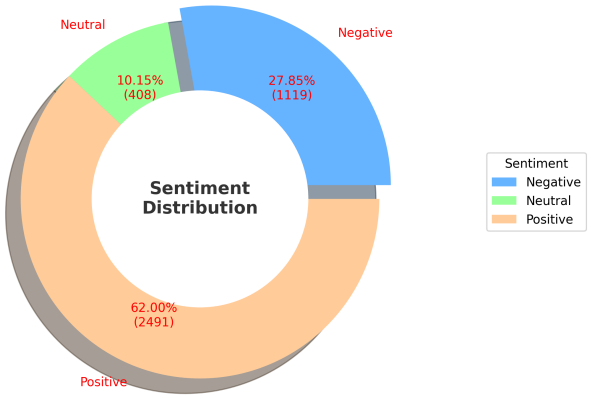

Fig. 5. Number of positive, negative and natural reviews in our dataset.

shown in Table V, such as text cleaning and tokenization, have been performed to ensure consistency. The reviews obtained for this study consisted of feedback written in Arabic as well as several other languages. To standardize the linguistic input and avoid model bias arising from multilingual text, we translated all non-Arabic reviews into Arabic using Google Translate. This translation step served to unify the dataset under a single language representation and enable the application of Arabic-specific preprocessing and sentiment-analysis techniques. Accordingly, the following steps were applied, before building the machine learning model, to ensure the efficiency of its accuracy.

1) Noise removal: According to [37], removing noise enhances analysis speed and accuracy. This involves removing any URLs, special characters, punctuation, and numbers from the reviews. To address these complexities in our dataset, we implemented a Python function called *remove_noise(text)*, which relies on regular expressions and the "sub" method from the "re" package [37] to systematically preprocess Arabic

reviews, and applies it to a panda DataFrame. This function removes unwanted elements such as digits, punctuation marks, and unusual symbols. It also cleans emojis, reduces elongated Arabic vowels, and normalizes white space. The cleaned text is then saved into a new column called *clean_text*, ensuring a clean and readable dataset for further analysis.

2) Normalization: Text normalization is employed to reduce noise within Arabic data and to correct spelling inconsistencies, as noted in prior research [38]. This procedure has been shown to enhance model performance in multiple studies [38], [6]. For example, the authors of [38] reported improved accuracy after applying normalization along with other preprocessing steps. Arabic text presents additional complexities, as some letters can appear in multiple forms depending on their position within a word. To address this, we normalized these letter variants—for example, converting ة (taa' marbuta) to ه, standardizing the different forms of أ, آ and ا to a single ا (alif), converting alif maqsura ى into ي, and changing letters with hamza (ؤ and ئ) into a stand-alone hamza ء. Arabic diacritics (such as fatha, damma, and kasra) are also removed, as they don't contribute significantly to sentiment analysis.

3) Tokenization: Tokenization is a fundamental preprocessing step in Arabic text analysis because it reduces typographical variation and prepares the text for reliable linguistic processing [39], [38]. Tokenization is the process of splitting the text into individual words or tokens [22]. For Arabic text, tools like NLTK, can be used to perform this step efficiently. In summary, this step converts the normalized Arabic text into separate words, making it easier to process in later tasks such as removing stop words, stemming, or performing deeper text analysis. Effective tokenization facilitates more precise counting of word occurrences and enhances the overall structure and interpretability of the text for NLP models [39], [38].

4) Stop word removal: Removing stop words—common words like من, على, في , etc.—is another key task, as these words don't carry much useful information for sentiment analysis [22]. We used the NLTK stop words corpus to filter out common Arabic words that usually carry little semantic meaning [39]. First, it downloads and loads the Arabic stop words provided by NLTK into a set called *stop_words*. Then, it extends this list with a custom set of additional Arabic stop words that the user defines manually (e.g., pronouns, prepositions, and frequently used words like من, على, في , etc.). After combining both sets, a function called *remove_stopwords* is defined, which takes a list of tokens (words) and returns only those that are not in the stop words set.

5) Stemming or lemmatization: Stemming, or lemmatization, is performed to reduce words to their root forms, ensuring variations of the same word [22]; for example, "وجبات" becomes "وجب". In this research, we apply stemming to Arabic words using NLTK's ISRIStemmer as implemented in [39], which is a rule-based algorithm specifically designed for the Arabic language. This step refines the text preprocessing pipeline by unifying word variants under a common root, which enhances the effectiveness of tasks such as text analysis and machine learning by treating semantically related words as the same concept.

TABLE V. EXAMPLE OF DATA PREPROCESSING

Data preprocessing	Example
Original Text	♥ حملة جج رائعة ومتميزة جدا ما ينقص المخيم اي شيء، عشاء وغداء وفطور بوفيه كامل متكامل
Noise Removal	حملة جج رائعة ومتميزة جدا ما ينقص المخيم اي شي عشاء وغداء وفطور بوفيه كامل متكامل
Normalization	حمله جج رائعه ومتميزه جدا ما ينقص المخيم اي شي عشاء وغداء وفطور بوفيه كامل متكامل
Tokenization	حمله، جج، رائعه، ومتميزه، جدا، ما، ينقص، المخيم، اي، شي، عشاء، وغداء، وفطور، بوفيه، كامل، متكامل
Stop-Word Removal	حمله، جج، رائعه، متميزه، ينقص، مخيم، عشاء، غداء، فطور، بوفيه، كامل، متكامل
Stemming	حمل، جج، روع، ميز، نقص، خيم، عش، غد، فطر، بف، كمل، تكمل

6) Feature extraction: After preprocessing, relevant features have been extracted for input in machine learning models. This process converts raw text into numerical features that machine learning models can understand. Examples of these features include bag-of-words (BoW), term frequency–inverse document frequency (TF–IDF), and word embeddings.

For the sentiment analysis task, the text data were transformed into numerical features using the TF–IDF technique, which quantifies the importance of words or phrases within a collection of documents. This process prepared both the text data and sentiment labels for machine learning. The categorical sentiment labels ("positive," "negative," and "neutral") were first converted into numerical form through a mapping dictionary, where the values 0, 1, and 2 represented positive, negative, and neutral sentiments, respectively. This encoding allowed the data to be used effectively in algorithms that require numerical input. The textual data were then vectorized using TF–IDF to assign weighted values to each term, emphasizing those that are more relevant to individual documents while downplaying common or less informative terms. To optimize feature extraction, several parameters were configured: The n-gram range was set from 1 to 3 to capture single words, bigrams, and trigrams; the minimum document frequency (min_df=3) excluded rare terms occurring in fewer than three documents; the maximum document frequency (max_df=0.9) removed overly common words appearing in more than 90 percent of documents; sublinear term frequency scaling (sublinear_tf=True) was applied to reduce the influence of very frequent terms; and the maximum number of features was limited to 5,000 to manage the dimensionality of the feature space. The resulting TF–IDF matrix represented each document as a numerical vector corresponding to the relative importance of its terms, and the matrix dimensions along with the vocabulary size were recorded to validate the transformation.

C. Machine Learning Models

Machine learning, a vital subfield of artificial intelligence (AI), enables computers to learn and enhance their perfor-

mance through experience without requiring explicit programming [40]. It is designed to help systems automatically identify patterns, make predictions, and make informed decisions based on data [40]. We used five machine learning algorithms to evaluate our dataset.

1) Support Vector Machine (SVM): Support vector machine is a supervised machine learning algorithm used for both classification and regression tasks [41]. The goal of SVM is to find the best possible hyperplane that divides the data into distinct classes, while maximizing the margin, or the distance, between the hyperplane and the closest data points from each class [41].

2) Naive Bayes (NB): Naive Bayes classifiers are a group of algorithms based on Bayes' Theorem, which is used to calculate probabilities for classification tasks [42]. Rather than referring to a single method, "Naive Bayes" covers a family of models that make the simplifying assumption that the features are independent of each other [42]. This assumption makes the models computationally efficient, especially when working with large datasets [42].

3) Logistic Regression (LR): Logistic regression is a supervised learning technique commonly used for classification problems, particularly when the goal is to estimate the probability that a given instance belongs to a specific class [43]. It works by calculating a value between 0 and 1, representing the likelihood that an event will occur, based on the relationship between the input features and the target variable [43].

4) Decision Tree (DT): A decision tree is a supervised machine learning technique that can be applied to both classification and regression problems [44]. Its structure resembles a hierarchy, beginning with a root node and branching into internal nodes, edges, and leaf nodes [44]. Much like a flowchart, it guides the decision-making process step by step: Internal nodes perform tests on attributes, branches denote the values of these attributes, and leaf nodes provide the final outcome or prediction [44]. Decision trees are commonly employed because they are easy to interpret, are adaptable, and require minimal data preprocessing [44].

5) Random Forest (RF): Random forest is a powerful machine learning technique that combines the predictions of multiple decision trees to improve accuracy [45]. During training, it builds several decision trees, each working with a different subset of the data and features. This "ensemble" approach helps make the model more robust, reducing the risk of overfitting and enhancing its ability to generalize well to new data [45].

D. Performance Measures

The quality of sentiment analysis has been assessed using various metrics and indicators to measure its performance. In this section, multiple machine learning algorithms have been compared based on performance metrics such as accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score to determine which algorithm best predicts sentiment. Each metric has a unique formula, and we evaluated how well classifiers performed by using mathematical formulas. The following definitions of symbols are used in the formulas. "TP" refers to instances that are correctly classified as positive, "TN" signifies instances that are accurately classified as negative, "FP" represents instances that are incorrectly classified as positive, and "FN" denotes instances that are incorrectly classified as negative.

Accuracy refers to the overall proportion of correct classifications made by the model, including both positive and negative predictions [6].

$$\text{accuracy} = \frac{TP + TN}{TP + TN + FP + FN} \tag{1}$$

The recall is the percentage of actual positive cases that the model correctly identifies as positive [46].

$$\text{recall} = \frac{TP}{TP + FN} \tag{2}$$

Precision is the proportion of positive predictions made by the model that are actually correct [46].

$$\text{precision} = \frac{TP}{TP + FP} \tag{3}$$

The F1-score is a way to combine precision and recall into a single metric. It is the harmonic mean of the two, balancing the trade-off between them [46].

$$\text{f1} - \text{score} = \frac{2 \cdot TP}{2 \cdot TP + FP + FN} \tag{4}$$

This comparison has led to a final interpretation, visualization, and evaluation of the different approaches. By gathering feedback data, preprocessing it for machine learning models, and applying various algorithms, issues with food service quality can be identified.

IV. Results and Discussion

The following sections present the detailed results obtained from each model, followed by a comparative discussion that interprets their performance and highlights the most effective approach for analyzing pilgrims' opinions about food service quality during the Hajj.

A. Machine Learning Evaluation

Table VI presents the performance metrics for all classifiers, including accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score. These results were obtained using the optimal parameters determined through a grid-search procedure. We also implemented an adaptive hyperparameter tuning strategy that automatically selected the appropriate parameter grid based on the characteristics of each model type. This approach ensured that each classifier received targeted parameter optimization focused on the most relevant hyperparameters. Using f1_weighted as the scoring metric facilitated balanced performance across all sentiment classes. To ensure the robustness and reliability of the findings, the dataset was preprocessed and divided into training and testing subsets using a 70/30 split ratio (total dataset 4018, of which 2812 were for training and 1206 for testing), as illustrated in Table VII, followed by fivefold cross-validation. Stratified sampling was employed to maintain the original class distribution in both subsets. Examination

of the training data revealed class imbalance, with some sentiment categories being underrepresented. To address this issue, the synthetic minority oversampling technique (SMOTE) was applied to the training set. SMOTE generates synthetic samples of minority classes, thereby achieving a balanced dataset without duplicating existing entries [47]. The resulting balanced dataset ensured that the classification models were trained on an equal representation of all sentiment categories and no duplicate reviews across splits, thereby reducing bias and improving the reliability of the predictive outcomes.

TABLE VI. CLASSIFICATION RESULT

Model	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1-score
LR	**0.936153**	**0.926571**	**0.862949**	**0.888955**
SVM	0.928690	0.900183	0.859686	0.877759
RF	0.922056	0.916339	0.839022	0.870070
NB	0.912106	0.846642	0.855347	0.850854
DT	0.865672	0.825404	0.792528	0.807579

TABLE VII. CLASS DISTRIBUTION IN TRAINING AND TEST SETS

Dataset Split	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Total
Full dataset	2491	1119	408	4018
Training set (70%)	1743 (61.98%)	783 (27.84%)	286 (10.17%)	2812
Testing set (30%)	748 (62.03%)	336 (27.86%)	122 (10.12%)	1206

The comparison of machine learning models for sentiment analysis of food services during the Hajj demonstrates notable variations in performance across algorithms. Fig. 6 presents a bar chart that compares the performance metrics of different models. Among them, the LR classifier achieved the highest performance, with an accuracy of 93.6%, a precision of 92.7%, a recall of 86.3%, and an F1-score of 88.9%. This strong balance between precision and recall indicates that LR not only minimizes false positives but also captures most true positives, which is an ideal outcome for sentiment classification. The SVM and RF classifiers also performed competitively, with accuracies of 92.9% and 92.2%, respectively. SVM achieved 90% precision, 86% recall, and an F1-score of 87.8%, whereas RF achieved 91.6% precision, 83.9% recall, and an F1-score of 87%. The NB classifier demonstrated moderately strong performance, with an accuracy of 91.2%, a precision of 84.7%, a recall of 85.5%, and an F1-score of 85.1%. In contrast, the DT classifier delivered the weakest performance, achieving 86.6% accuracy, 82.5% precision, 79.3% recall, and an F1-score of 80.8%. As shown in Table VI, LR achieved the highest overall accuracy (93.6%) and F1-score (88.9%), indicating its strong ability to correctly classify pilgrims' opinions on food services. The competitive performance of SVM and RF suggests that these models also provide effective alternatives for text classification tasks. In contrast, the relatively low performance of the DT model may be attributed to its susceptibility to overfitting.

These results indicate that LR offers the most equitable and dependable performance for the analysis of textual feedback. Therefore, it can be considered the most suitable model for identifying and interpreting sentiments expressed by pilgrims regarding food quality, distribution, and overall satisfaction during the Hajj season.

Table VIII reports class-wise precision, recall, and F1 scores for each model, along with the macro-averaged F1

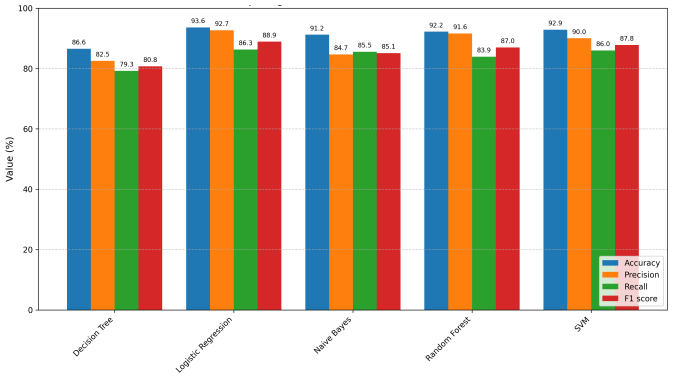

Fig. 6. Comparing the performance metrics of different models.

score. Most models achieve strong performance on the positive and negative classes, whereas performance on the neutral class is consistently lower, as expected given its smaller sample size (408 compared to 1119 and 2491). Among the evaluated models, LR achieves the highest macro-F1 score, indicating more balanced classification performance across the sentiment categories.

To assess the stability of the results, LR was trained and evaluated over ten runs using different random seeds, as shown in Table IX. The macro-averaged F1 score was reported as the mean across runs, along with a 95% confidence interval. To evaluate the robustness of the LR model, the experiment was repeated ten times using different random seeds with stratified train–test splits. The macro-averaged F1 score across runs ranged from 0.859 to 0.907, with a mean value of 0.887 and a standard deviation of 0.015. The corresponding 95% confidence interval [0.878, 0.897] indicates limited variability in performance, suggesting that the model's balanced classification ability is stable and not sensitive to a particular data split. This result is consistent with the macro-F1 value reported in Table VIII, confirming that the observed performance is reproducible and not an artifact of a single evaluation split.

TABLE VIII. CLASSIFICATION RESULT IN EACH CLASS

Model	Class	Precision	Recall	F1-score	Macro-F1
LR	positive	0.951031	0.986631	0.968504	0.888955
	negative	0.905605	0.913690	0.909630	
	neutral	0.923077	0.688525	0.788732	
SVM	positive	0.948320	0.981283	0.964520	0.877759
	negative	0.909091	0.892857	0.900901	
	neutral	0.843137	0.704918	0.767857	
RF	positive	0.928030	0.982620	0.954545	0.869824
	negative	0.911315	0.886905	0.898944	
	neutral	0.908046	0.647541	0.755981	
NB	positive	0.959569	0.951872	0.955705	0.850854
	negative	0.892857	0.892857	0.892857	
	neutral	0.687500	0.721311	0.704000	
DT	positive	0.895541	0.939840	0.917156	0.807579
	negative	0.830671	0.773810	0.801233	
	neutral	0.750000	0.663934	0.704348	

Fig. 7 illustrates the accuracy results across different machine learning models, with LR achieving the highest score of 93.6% and DT achieving the lowest score of 86.6%.

Fig. 8, Fig. 9, and Fig. 10 present the performance comparison of several machine learning models—SVM, NB, LR, DT, and RF—used for sentiment analysis of food service

TABLE IX. STABILITY ANALYSIS OF LR USING REPEATED RUNS

Metric	Value
Number of runs	10
Macro-F1 scores	[0.88305793 0.85866379 0.8780987 0.88270304 0.90666875 0.88068048 0.90701475 0.87978505 0.89923511 0.89673202]
Mean Macro-F1	0.8873
Standard Deviation	0.0151
Minimum Macro-F1	0.8587
Maximum Macro-F1	0.9070
Confidence Interval 95%	[0.8779, 0.8966]

experiences during the Hajj. The sentiment categories considered in this analysis are positive, negative, and neutral, and performance is evaluated using recall, precision, and F1-score.

In Fig. 8, the positive and negative classes achieved high precision across most models, indicating that when the models predicted a positive or negative sentiment, they were usually correct. The neutral class showed greater variability, with LR performing best for this category. This finding suggests that neutral predictions are more prone to misclassification compared to the other sentiment types.

Fig. 9 shows that all models achieved high recall for the positive class, particularly LR and SVM, both exceeding 0.95. This indicates that these models were highly effective in correctly identifying positive sentiments. For the negative class, recall values were slightly lower but still strong, typically around 0.85–0.9, meaning that most negative sentiments were also captured well. However, the neutral class consistently exhibited the lowest recall across all models, suggesting that distinguishing neutral opinions remains a challenge.

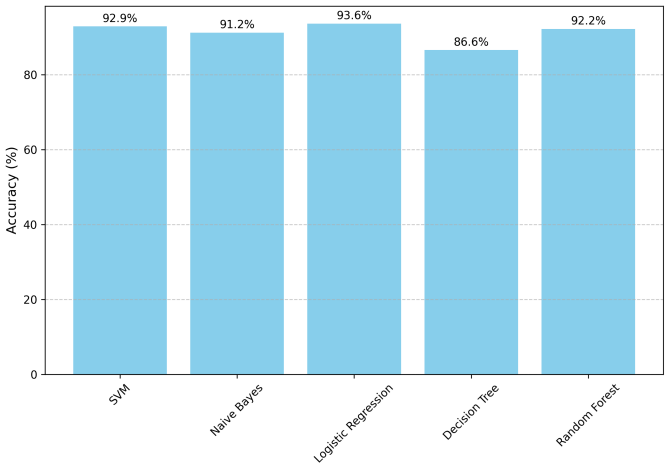

Fig. 7. Accuracy results comparing the performance of several machine learning models.

The F1-score results, shown in Fig. 10, reveal a similar pattern. The positive class achieved the highest F1-scores across all models, followed by the negative class. The neutral class again received the lowest F1-scores, reflecting the overall difficulty of detecting neutral feedback in sentiment analysis tasks. Overall, the results demonstrate that LR and SVM provided the most balanced and consistent performance across all sentiment categories. These findings suggest that these models are well-suited for analyzing pilgrims' feedback on food services during the Hajj, as they reliably distinguish between positive and negative sentiments.

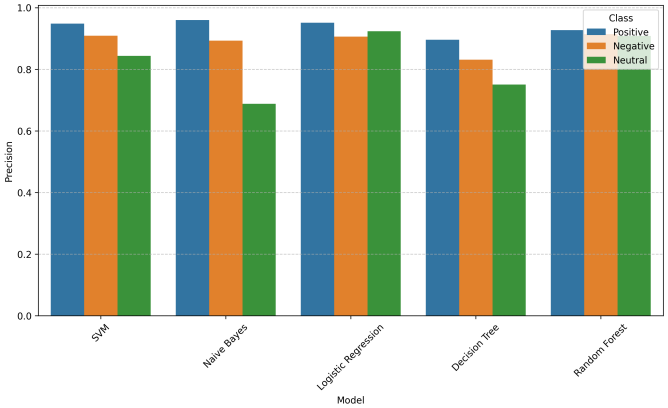

Fig. 8. Precision results comparing the performance of several machine learning models across sentiment categories.

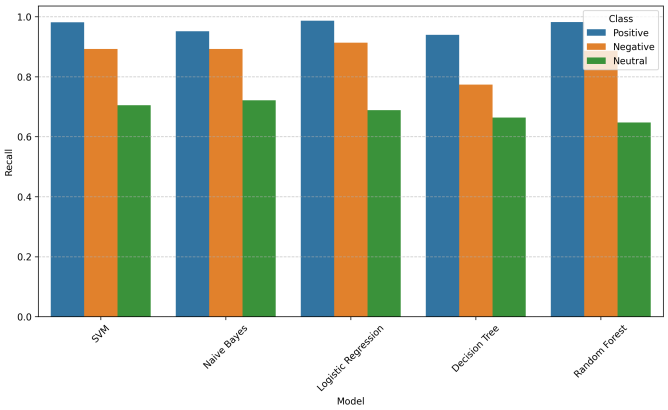

Fig. 9. Recall results comparing the performance of several machine learning models across sentiment categories.

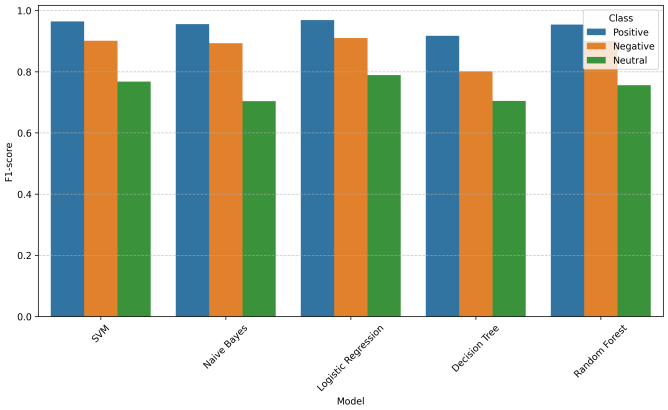

Fig. 10. F1-score results comparing the performance of several machine learning models across sentiment categories.

B. Visualization

Word frequency, word cloud, and confusion matrix—these visualization outputs contribute to data inspection and commu-

nication of results, supporting both preprocessing validation and model evaluation stages. Within Hajj-related sentiment analysis, authors have used these tools to display word-frequency patterns and illustrate sentiment trends in user-generated content on social platforms [6], [7], [8].

1) Word frequency: The analysis of word frequency in the textual data was conducted to identify the most common terms used by pilgrims when describing their experiences with the food services during the Hajj. As illustrated in Fig. 11, the word "الأكل" (food) appeared most frequently, with 1,315 occurrences, indicating that the majority of comments were directly related to the quality, availability, and overall experience of the food provided. The next most frequent word was "جداً" (very), which appeared 789 times, suggesting that many participants used intensifiers to emphasize their opinions, whether positive or negative. Other common words such as "ممتازة" (excellent), "الله" (God), "الحملة" (the campaign), and "البوفيه" (buffet) also appeared prominently, reflecting positive sentiments and references to the service settings. In addition, terms such as "خدمة" (service), "الطعام" (meal), and "الخدمات" (services) were frequently mentioned, showing that pilgrims often discussed both the food and the quality of service delivery. The presence of words like "رائعة" (wonderful) and "ممتاز" (excellent) further suggests that the general sentiment expressed in the comments was positive, aligning with the results of the sentiment analysis. Overall, this word-frequency analysis highlights the main topics of concern and appreciation among pilgrims—particularly food quality, buffet arrangements, and service efficiency—offering valuable insights for improving food service management during the Hajj season.

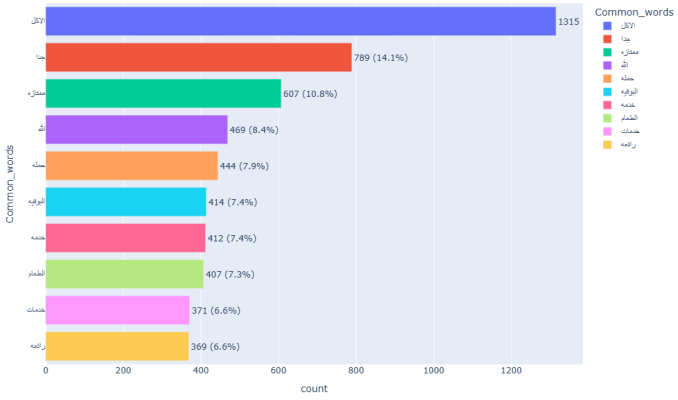

Fig. 11. Word frequency analysis showing the most common terms used by pilgrims in their feedback about food services during Hajj.

2) Word cloud: The next figure presents three Arabic word clouds categorized by sentiment: positive, negative, and neutral. Each word cloud visually displays the frequency of words appearing in pilgrim feedback, where larger words indicate higher occurrence.

Fig. 12 illustrates a word cloud of positive Arabic reviews, highlighting the most frequently used terms related to food services. In the visualization, larger words represent higher frequency. The most prominent terms include "الأكل" (food), "خدمة" (service), and "النظافة" (cleanliness), indicating that praise is most often directed toward these three aspects. Other common expressions consist of strong positive adjectives such as "ممتاز" (excellent), "رائع"(great), "متوفر" (available), and "تنظيم" (organization), along with intensifiers like "جداً" (very) and expressions of gratitude "شكراً" (thank you). Operational references, such as "البوفيه" (buffet), "كل شيء" (everything), "الموظفين" (staff), and "على مدار الساعة" (around the clock), also appear frequently, reflecting appreciation not only for food quality but also for efficient logistics and staff support. Overall, the word cloud underscores a dominant theme of positive sentiment centered on cleanliness, high-quality food, and attentive service.

Fig. 12. Word cloud showing the most frequent words in positive Arabic reviews about food services in Hajj.

In the neutral word cloud, as shown in Fig. 13, terms such as "الطعام" (food), "جيد" (good), "الخدمات" (services), and "الجودة" (quality) appear most frequently, indicating that many reviews described the experience as satisfactory or acceptable. These comments primarily reflect practical assessments of meal quality, cleanliness, and organizational processes rather than emotionally driven opinions.

Fig. 13. Word cloud showing the most frequent words in neutral Arabic reviews about food services in Hajj.

The negative word cloud, presented Fig. 14, displays frequently used words in reviews expressing dissatisfaction with food services. The most noticeable terms, "الأكل" (food),

"سيئة" (bad/poor), "البوفيه" (buffet), "تنظيم" (organization), "لا يوجد" (not available), and "بارد" (cold), point to dissatisfaction related to meal quality, limited variety, and weak coordination. The prominence of these words highlights key areas of concern among pilgrims. Many complaints relate to food quality, temperature, availability, and organizational issues. Phrases like "لا يوجد تنوع" (no variety) and "الطعام بارد" (cold food) are indicative of operational and logistical shortcomings rather than fundamental dissatisfaction with the concept of the service itself. Moreover, the recurrence of words such as "الأسف" (unfortunately) and "المستوى" (standard) suggests unmet expectations, particularly given the significance of the Hajj pilgrimage and the challenging conditions under which meals are prepared and served. A closer analysis of negative sentiments also reveals several challenges faced by pilgrims, including the lack of specially prepared meals for individuals with chronic illnesses, such as diabetes or hypertension, as well as for those with specific dietary needs. Pilgrims also reported occasional delays in meal service and unexpected changes in serving times without prior notice. In addition, the absence of designated dining areas often forced them to eat in their rooms or in shared hallways. Overall, the visualizations clearly show that pilgrim opinions, whether positive, negative, or neutral, center around the same core themes: food quality, buffet service, and the overall service experience.

Fig. 14. Word cloud showing the most frequent words in negative Arabic reviews about food services in Hajj.

3) Confusion matrix: We evaluated the performance of the SVM, LR, NB, DT, and RF models using confusion matrices, as illustrated in Fig. 15, to analyze their classification accuracy across the positive, negative, and neutral sentiment classes. The diagonal values in each matrix represent correctly predicted instances, whereas the off-diagonal values indicate misclassifications. Each confusion matrix shows how well a model correctly classified instances across the positive, negative, and neutral categories. The results indicate that LR achieved the most balanced performance, correctly predicting 738 positive, 307 negative, and 84 neutral samples. The SVM model produced similar accuracy, with slightly fewer correct neutral predictions. The RF model performed well overall, although it exhibited minor misclassifications in the negative and neutral categories. NB also achieved strong results, with 712 positive, 300 negative, and 88 neutral correct predictions, while the DT model performed comparatively lower, especially in the negative class. Overall, LR and SVM provided the most stable and accurate sentiment classifications across all categories.

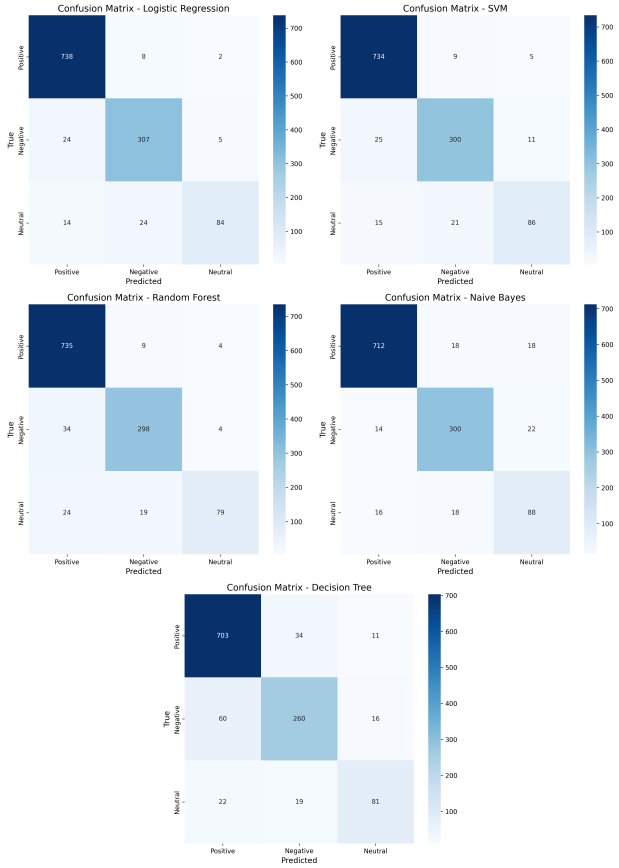

Fig. 15. Confusion matrices for five machine learning models: LR, SVM, RF, NB, and DT.

C. Hyperparameter Tuning

We performed hyperparameter tuning on the best-performing classification model obtained from previous evaluations. Based on the selected model type, we defined a specific set of parameters to optimize its performance, as shown in Table X. Each algorithm—SVM, LR, NB, DT, and RF—was assigned a distinct parameter grid containing key hyperparameters and their possible values. We used the GridSearchCV method with fivefold cross-validation to systematically evaluate all parameter combinations. The weighted F1-score was selected as the evaluation metric to effectively handle class imbalance. This process allowed us to identify the most suitable hyperparameter configuration for the chosen model, improving its overall accuracy and generalization.

D. Comparison with Previous Studies

Compared with previous studies, the present research provides a distinctive contribution by focusing specifically on food service quality during the Hajj, an area that has received limited attention in prior sentiment analysis works. While earlier studies, such as [8], [6], and [26], mainly analyzed general service sentiments on platforms like Twitter and YouTube, this study utilized Google Map reviews collected directly from Hajj campaigns between 2022 and 2025.

TABLE X. HYPERPARAMETER SETTINGS FOR EACH MODEL

Model Type	Hyperparameters Tuned	Parameter Values Tested
SVM	Regularization parameter (C), Class weight	C = [0.1, 1, 10, 100]; class_weight = ['balanced', None]
NB	Smoothing parameter (alpha), Class prior fitting	alpha = [0.1, 0.5, 1.0, 2.0]; fit_prior = [True, False]

LR	Regularization (C),
	Penalty type,
	Solver,
	Class weight
		C = [0.1, 1, 10, 100];
		penalty = ['l1', 'l2'];
		solver = ['liblinear'];
		class_weight = ['balanced', None]

DT	Maximum depth,
	Minimum samples split,
	Minimum samples leaf,
	Class weight
		max_depth = [None, 5, 10, 15];
		min_samples_split = [2, 5, 10];
		min_samples_leaf = [1, 2, 4];
		class_weight = ['balanced', None]

RF	Number of estimators,
	Maximum depth,
	Minimum samples split,
	Minimum samples leaf,
	Class weight
		n_estimators = [100, 200, 300];
		max_depth = [None, 10, 20];
		min_samples_split = [2, 5, 10];
		min_samples_leaf = [1, 2, 4];
		class_weight = ['balanced', None]

This approach ensures that the dataset reflects pilgrims' authentic experiences with catering services. This approach provides a more targeted view of food-related satisfaction. Methodologically, while most earlier works (e.g., [7], [25], [28]) relied on deep learning models such as CNN, LSTM, or hybrid CNN-LSTM , achieving accuracies ranging from 92% to 98%, the present study employed traditional machine learning algorithms (SVM, LR, NB, DT, RF) combined with TF-IDF and n-grams for feature extraction. Despite being less computationally intensive, the LR classifier achieved an accuracy of 93.6%, demonstrating that high performance can be obtained with optimized classical methods when the data is domain-specific and linguistically normalized. Another key distinction lies in the language unification process. While several studies, such as [6] and [28], addressed multilingual datasets or mixed Arabic–English content, this research standardized all data into Arabic, ensuring consistency in sentiment polarity detection. Moreover, the scope of this study—covering a four-year data collection period (2022–2025)—extends beyond the shorter, event-based windows (e.g., a few weeks during Hajj 1442) used in earlier works, allowing for more stable and generalizable insights. Overall, this research bridges a critical gap by integrating machine learning–based sentiment analysis with a domain-specific assessment of food services during the Hajj, offering both methodological rigor and practical value for service management.

V. CONCLUSION

Through our analysis, we demonstrated that sentiment analysis is an effective method for understanding pilgrims' opinions regarding food services during the Hajj. We addressed a gap in the existing research, as previous work tended to rely on social media data and did not specifically focus on food services. In this study, we analyzed pilgrims' feedback using Arabic textual reviews collected from Google Maps, providing a direct and representative source of post-Hajj evaluations. Our primary objective was to assess the performance of five machine learning algorithms in classifying sentiments related to food services. To achieve this, we collected approximately 4,018 reviews across 160 Hajj campaigns conducted between 2022 and 2025. After applying preprocessing techniques and extracting features using TF-IDF with n-grams, we trained and evaluated the classifiers. In addition to model performance, we examined the key issues reported by pilgrims and analyzed sentiment distributions related to food service quality.

The results revealed that many pilgrims still face issues related to food, such as a lack of specially prepared meals for individuals with chronic illnesses, limited variety, and weak coordination, indicating that this remains an ongoing challenge. The application of machine learning classifiers showed excellent overall performance. Among the models, LR achieved the highest accuracy of 93.6%, outperforming the other classifiers. The SVM and RF models produced comparable results, with accuracies of 92.9% and 92.2%, respectively. Furthermore, sentiment analysis indicated that positive sentiments predominated across all years, from 2022 to 2025, reflecting an overall improvement in pilgrims' satisfaction with food services over time.

The limitations of this research primarily stem from data-related constraints. First, the volume of available reviews was not sufficient to support the training of more complex deep learning models. Second, the dataset is limited in scope, as it includes reviews from domestic Hajj campaigns only and therefore does not fully represent the diversity of pilgrims. Finally, some reviews contained mixed or ambiguous sentiments, complicating the classification process.

For future research, we intend to employ more advanced feature extraction techniques—such as word embeddings and contextual language models—to better capture semantic nuances in Arabic text. Furthermore, we plan to extend the scope of the analysis to cover other essential services provided during the Hajj, such as transportation and accommodation. Finally, exploring deep learning methods may further improve classification performance and provide deeper insights into sentiment patterns.

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DEEP: A Distributed Energy Efficient Routing Protocol for Internet of Nano-Things

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***Abstract*—Nanotechnology offers transformative capabilities across healthcare, environmental monitoring, and industrial automation. When integrated with modern communication technologies, Wireless Nano Sensor Networks (WNSNs) form the Internet of Nano Things (IoNT), interconnecting nanoscale devices with conventional networks. Despite its potential, efficient routing in IoNT remains challenging due to severe energy constraints, limited processing, and high propagation losses in the terahertz (THz) band. This paper proposes the Distributed Energy-Efficient Protocol (DEEP), a lightweight routing scheme designed for IoNT-based WNSNs. DEEP balances simplicity, connectivity, and sustainability through adaptive retransmission control and a hybrid energy model combining environmental energy harvesting with wireless power transfer. Performance evaluation using the Nano-Sim module of the NS-3 simulator demonstrates that DEEP significantly extends network lifetime, reduces overall energy consumption, and maintains scalability and robust delivery performance with minimal communication overhead.**

Keywords*—Routing protocol; Internet of Nano Things; nanosensor; energy efficiency; energy harvesting; terahertz communication

I. Introduction

The rapid expansion of ubiquitous connectivity among diverse devices has accelerated the realization of the Internet of Nano Things (IoNT), an emerging paradigm that extends interconnectivity to the nanoscale and enables innovative applications across multiple domains. At the core of this paradigm lies the Wireless Nanosensor Network (WNSN), which enables communication among nanoscale devices through electromagnetic or molecular signaling mechanisms, forming the foundational infrastructure of IoNT. Defined as the interconnection of nanoscale sensors, devices, and nanomachines with traditional networks and the Internet, IoNT promises transformative impacts in healthcare, agriculture, smart cities, industrial monitoring, and other areas [1], [2], [3].

In healthcare, IoNT-enabled nanosensors embedded within the human body can monitor biomarkers in real time and deliver targeted therapies, supporting minimally invasive and highly precise treatments [4], [5]. In agriculture and environmental monitoring, nanoscale devices enable high-resolution measurements of soil composition, humidity, and pollutant levels, promoting sustainable and efficient resource management [6]. When integrated with advanced communication systems and machine learning algorithms, IoNT and WNSNs can further support autonomous decision-making and anomaly detection in complex environments such as industrial automation and smart infrastructures [7].

Despite these benefits, the extreme miniaturization of nanosensors imposes significant constraints that challenge the design and deployment of WNSNs [8]:

- Nano-antennas: Graphene-based THz antennas provide high bandwidth but suffer severe attenuation and noise, limiting communication to micro-/millimeter distances.
- Nano-processors: Extremely limited computational capabilities restrict data processing to small data units.
- Nano-batteries: Very limited energy storage, often irreplaceable, imposes strict energy constraints.

To mitigate energy limitations, energy harvesting has emerged as a promising solution, enabling nanosensors to partially replenish energy from blood flow, molecular vibrations, or body movement. However, harvested energy is intermittent and insufficient for continuous communication, introducing additional constraints on routing and network management. Maintaining network operation under fluctuating energy availability, while minimizing communication overhead, remains a key challenge [9], [10].

Motivated by these challenges, this paper introduces the Distributed Energy-Efficient Protocol (DEEP), an energy-aware routing solution designed for IoNT-based WNSNs. DEEP seeks to optimize network performance while minimizing energy dissipation, particularly in in-body applications where communication and energy constraints are most pronounced. It reduces redundant transmissions through an adaptive retransmission mechanism and integrates a hybrid energy model that combines variable-rate harvesting with wireless power transfer (WPT) to support sustainable nanosensor operation. Furthermore, DEEP is developed with consideration of realistic nanoscale communication and device constraints, including THz propagation effects and the inherent limitations of nanosensor hardware.

The main contributions of this paper are summarized as follows:

- Novel distributed hop-count routing protocol: DEEP employs a lightweight, deterministic mechanism suitable for nanoscale devices with extremely limited memory and computational capacity.

- Adaptive retransmission strategy: Reduces redundant transmissions and extends network lifetime under fluctuating energy availability.
- Hybrid energy model: Combines realistic energy harvesting for sustainable network operation.
- Comprehensive simulation with biologically plausible channel models: Demonstrates improved packet delivery, lower overhead, and enhanced energy efficiency compared to standard baselines.
- Comprehensive simulation with biologically plausible channel models: Demonstrates improved packet delivery, lower overhead, and enhanced energy efficiency compared to standard baselines.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. Section II presents IoNT architectures, WNSN characteristics, and existing routing protocols. Section III describes the proposed DEEP protocol, including the energy model and network architecture. Section IV details the simulation setup and performance evaluation. Finally, Section V concludes the paper.

II. Literature Review

The design of an efficient routing protocol in conjunction with nanodevice specification necessitates a comprehensive understanding of the core hardware components. Furthermore, it involves a detailed investigation of network architecture, terahertz-band wireless communication, and the selected energy supply strategy to effectively meet the intended application objectives [11].

A. IoNT Architecture

The architecture of an Internet of Nano Things (IoNT) network depends on the application domain but generally consists of four fundamental components: nanonodes, nanocontrollers, nano-microinterface (gateway) devices, and an Internet gateway [12], [13]. Fig. 1 illustrates the IoNT architecture in a plant monitoring system.

- A nanonode is the smallest and simplest nanodevice, acting as a nanosensor or nanoactuator with limited resources and transmission range, capable of basic tasks such as sensing, actuating, processing, and storage.
- A nanocontroller or nanorouter is a more resourceful and capable device than a nanonode, responsible for coordinating nanonodes, processing their collected data, and forward it through the nano-microinterface.
- Nano-microinterface (Gateway) acting as a bridge between the nanoscale network and external systems, this hybrid device uses terahertz communication with nanonodes and conventional protocols for external communication. It aggregates data from nanocontrollers and facilitates bidirectional interaction between nanosystems and the Internet.
- Internet Gateway provides remote control and monitoring of the IoNT system via the Internet, enabling data collection from nanonetworks and access by external applications.

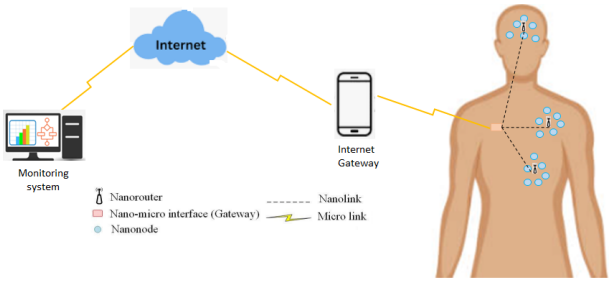


Fig. 1. IoNT architecture in healthcare system.

B. Principle Characteristics of a Nanodevice

In WNSNs, a nanodevice is the fundamental unit, either functioning as a nanonode (nanosensor/nanoactuator) or nanocontroller. With dimensions on the nanometer scale, these devices enable applications such as environmental monitoring, medical diagnostics, and biochemical detection. A typical nanodevice integrates multiple hardware components, including sensing/actuation, processing, communication, storage, and power units [14], [15], [16], [17].

Due to their small size, nanodevices face severe constraints in processing, communication, and energy, which are critical for network sustainability [18]. To address these limitations, network design must account for two critical aspects: terahertz (THz) wireless communication and energy supply systems. THz wireless communication using graphene-based nanoantennas (0.1–10 THz) offers extremely high data rates and wide bandwidth suitable for nanoscale networks [19]. However, propagation is limited by molecular absorption, noise, and frequency-selective path loss, confining effective transmission to a few millimeters in air and even less in biological media.

Energy supply is equally crucial. The tiny form factor of nanodevices limits onboard energy storage, affecting network lifetime and performance. Two main approaches have been explored: nanobatteries and energy harvesting. While nanoscale batteries provide temporary energy storage, they are impractical to recharge or replace in real network deployment. Energy harvesting, using nanogenerators that convert mechanical, vibrational, thermal, or electromagnetic energy into electricity, offers a more sustainable solution. Techniques such as piezoelectric and thermoelectric nanogenerators, as well as wireless power transfer (WPT), can prolong device operation and enable continuous network functionality. Despite advances, developing efficient, scalable energy solutions remains a key challenge for practical IoNT and WNSN deployments. Incorporating energy-harvesting mechanisms introduces additional complexity, as the available energy in nanodevices becomes highly dynamic and time-varying. Consequently, communication strategies in WNSNs must be designed to accommodate these fluctuations by jointly considering both energy consumption and harvesting rates. Ensuring continuous connectivity therefore requires adaptive protocols that operate efficiently under variable energy availability and maintain stable network performance despite the intermittent and unpredictable nature of harvested energy.

C. Related Works: Routing Protocols for IoNT

Many routing protocols have been proposed for the IoNT. The survey in [20] provides a comprehensive review and classification of these routing protocols.

In study [11], [21], and [22], cluster-based routing schemes are presented. Piro et al. in study [11] introduced a hierarchical framework that integrates intra-body nanonetworks with macro-scale healthcare systems to enable bidirectional communication between nanodevices and external devices. They proposed two energy-aware routing schemes: an optimal protocol that maximizes cluster energy through complex selection processes, and a simpler greedy protocol that selects nanosensors with the highest residual energy. A MAC-layer handshake mechanism was employed to identify active sensors and their energy levels. Simulation results using Nano-Sim showed that both approaches outperform conventional flooding techniques.

In study [21], nanosensors are organized into clusters to maintain efficient network connectivity. Each cluster consists of a coordinator, members, and relay nodes, with coordinator selection based on residual energy and packet forwarding ratio. Communication takes place through intra-cluster and inter-cluster phases, utilizing single- or multi-hop transmission depending on energy efficiency. Although this method outperforms random forwarding, it does not account for the energy harvesting characteristics of nanodevices. This work was later extended in study [22] by incorporating a detailed channel model and an integrated energy framework that considers both energy harvesting and consumption. The proposed layered nanonetwork architecture forms clusters within each layer, with cluster heads elected based on residual energy. Data transmission is organized into periodic phases, combining intra-cluster and inter-cluster communication managed by the nanocontroller through prioritized scheduling. Simulation results using Nano-Sim demonstrate that the proposed scheme achieves higher energy efficiency and lower outage probability compared to the baseline method in study [23].

In [24], two routing protocols for IoNT-based healthcare applications—naïve and destructive retrieval—were proposed. Both rely on a hop-count propagation phase initiated by the gateway to establish routing paths. In the naïve scheme, nanosensors forward packets toward the gateway based on hop-count comparisons, while the destructive retrieval algorithm improves efficiency by resetting the forwarding node's hop count to infinity, thereby preventing redundant transmissions. Although simulations in NS-3 confirm that the destructive retrieval approach reduces message overhead compared to the naïve method, the model assumes static nodes with unlimited energy and lacks consideration of energy constraints, mobility, and practical deployment overhead. The study in [25] presents a hierarchical Body Area Network (BAN) architecture modeled on a human hand, where an external gateway is positioned on the dorsum, a nanocontroller is implanted beneath the skin, and nanosensors circulate with the bloodstream. Both the nanocontroller and nanosensors are powered through energy harvesting, utilizing piezoelectric nanowires and a rechargeable nanocapacitor, with wireless power transfer (WPT) from an external ultrasound source. In the proposed routing mechanism, nanosensors remain in sleep mode until sufficient energy is accumulated, waking periodically upon entering the ultrasound region to exchange data with the nanocontroller. Analytical results indicate that communication occurs approximately every 52 minutes; however, the approach lacks simulation validation and relies on a single nanocontroller, which may lead to processing overhead.

In [26], the authors propose a dynamic multihop routing model that integrates electromagnetic nanocommunication properties with hemodynamic behavior. They introduce a theoretical framework based on reinforcement learning, formulated as a four-dimensional Markov Decision Process (MDP) that includes nanonode velocity, event priority, energy consumption, and energy-harvesting capacity. Performance analysis under varying parameters, such as nanonode density, vessel diameter, and flow speed, shows that the proposed multihop approach significantly improves the nanonetwork's effective coverage area.

Table I summarizes the main IoNT routing protocols, highlighting their approach, energy model, channel assumptions, simulation environment, and key limitations.

III. Distributed Energy Efficient Routing Protocol

This section outlines the development process of the proposed routing protocol. We begin by presenting the underlying design principles, then describe the adopted network architecture and the key assumptions. Next, we outline the energy supply mechanisms and summarize the energy models employed. Finally, we explain the protocol phases, its operational behavior, and the conceptual inspiration guiding the design.

A. Principles of the Proposed Routing Protocol

The objective of DEEP is to enhance network performance while minimizing energy consumption and extending the operational lifetime of nanoscale networks. DEEP is a distributed hop-count–based routing protocol in which each nanodevice independently makes forwarding decisions using only local information. The protocol is tailored for IoNT architectures, where communication typically involves two segments: (i) nanosensor–nanocontroller, and (ii) nanocontroller–gateway.

Pierobon et al., in [23], demonstrated that data transmission and reception dominate energy dissipation in nanoscale communication, whereas processing costs are negligible. Consequently, reducing unnecessary packet retransmissions is essential for avoiding premature node depletion and improving overall network performance. DEEP addresses this by minimizing the number of nodes participating in packet forwarding, thereby lowering both communication overhead and energy dissipation.

To achieve these goals, the protocol design adheres to the following principles:

- Support for multiple energy supply systems: DEEP incorporates two energy mechanisms—wireless power transfer (WPT) and environmental energy harvesting—resulting in two protocol variants: DEEP-WPT and DEEP-Harvesting.

TABLE I. COMPARISON OF IONT ROUTING PROTOCOLS

Protocol	Approach	Energy Model	Channel Model	Simulation	Limitations
Piro et al. [11]	Cluster-based	Residual energy	Simplified	Nano-Sim	Complex selection; limited THz realism
Afsana et al. [21], [22]	Multi-layer clustering	Residual energy + energy framework	Partial THz	Nano-Sim	No dynamic energy harvesting; no adaptive retransmissions
Buther et al. [24]	Hop-count (naïve & destructive)	Unlimited energy	Deterministic	NS-3	Unrealistic assumptions; no mobility/energy constraints
Canovas et al. [25]	Energy-harvesting aware	Harvesting + WPT	Partial THz	Analytical	Single nanocontroller; limited simulation
Garcia et al. [26]	Reinforcement learning	Harvesting-aware	Electromagnetic + hemodynamic	Simulation	Complex; high computational overhead

- Minimal resource usage: Each nanodevice stores only one routing record and performs simple comparison-based operations, aligning with the strict memory and processing constraints of nanoscale hardware.
- Energy-aware next-hop selection: The protocol uses a minimum-hop strategy to limit the number of forwarding nodes, thereby reducing total energy consumed per delivery path.
- Reduction of redundant transmissions: An adaptive retransmission mechanism limits unnecessary rebroadcasts, mitigating the high overhead associated with flooding-based approaches.

To achieve these goals, we first describe the adopted network architecture and the underlying assumptions in the next subsection, which serve as the basis for the DEEP protocol design.

B. DEEP Network Architecture and Assumptions

The proposed routing protocol is designed for in-body medical applications, where reliable nanoscale communication is essential for continuous physiological monitoring. The adopted architecture follows a hierarchical IoNT structure, which is widely considered suitable for in-body nanonetworks. In this architecture, the nanoscale network communicates with an external device (e.g., a smartphone), which subsequently interfaces with a healthcare provider through the Internet, forming a complete IoNT system. The wireless interface between the WNSN and the external device can be achieved using conventional technologies such as Bluetooth.

Fig. 1 illustrates the adopted IoNT architecture. Nanosensors, nanocontrollers, and the gateway are deployed in a 3D in-body environment. Nanosensors are assumed to exhibit micro-mobility, reflecting the small-scale displacements induced by physiological processes such as tissue deformation, and cellular vibrations. This mobility is characterized by slow, short-range, and does not break the topology, which do not lead to large topological changes but may slightly affect link availability and communication reliability. Such a micro-mobility model is suitable for organ- or tissue-level monitoring scenarios in which nanosensors are embedded in specific anatomical regions—such as the skin, heart, lung, or kidney—to detect abnormalities or biomarkers.

Nanocontrollers and the gateway, by contrast, are considered quasi-static because they are implanted in fixed anatomical locations to facilitate data aggregation and onward communication. Each nanodevice is assigned a unique identifier and is equipped with a graphene-based nano-antenna to support electromagnetic nanoscale communication. All devices employ Time Spread On-Off Keying (TS-OOK) modulation, a pulse-based communication scheme shown to be energy-efficient and suitable for THz-band communication [27].

Nanosensors periodically sense physiological parameters and forward their data to nearby nanocontrollers, which then relay the aggregated information toward the gateway. The gateway subsequently delivers the collected data to an external computing system, enabling remote monitoring and analysis by healthcare providers.

C. The Energy Supply Systems

The DEEP protocol is evaluated under two distinct nanoscale energy supply mechanisms. In both cases, each nanodevice is equipped with a piezoelectric nanogenerator [28] capable of harvesting energy either from an external wireless power source or from ambient physiological activity.

1) Wireless Power Transfer (WPT): In the first energy model, nanodevices harvest energy through wireless power transfer, where an external ultrasound emitter radiates waves that are converted into electrical energy. Under WPT, the harvested energy rate is assumed to be constant, enabling nanodevices to remain continuously active unless the external source is disabled.

This continuous activity does not imply that the network is overloaded. DEEP mitigates excessive resource usage by minimizing packet retransmissions, thereby reducing collisions and lowering energy expenditure. Under WPT, nanodevices operate in one of two states:

- Transmission: Actively forwarding or generating data packets.
- Reception: Receiving either new or duplicate packets.

2) Harvesting from environment: In the second energy model, nanodevices harvest energy from local physiological vibrations. Human tissues exhibit diverse vibration sources—such as muscle movements, blood flow, cardiac activity, and respiration—each characterized by different frequency ranges. As a result, the energy harvesting rate becomes time-varying and dependent on factors such as the nanodevice's location, blood pressure, and proximity to cardiovascular structures.

Under this mode, a nanodevice transitions between two operational states:

- Active: The device can transmit or receive packets.
- Sleep: Triggered when the stored energy drops below a threshold. In this state, the radio is disabled to allow faster energy accumulation.

Although energy harvesting occurs in both states, the harvesting rate is significantly higher during sleep mode due to reduced power consumption.

3) Energy models: The energy harvesting and consumption models adopted in this work must be compatible with TS-OOK pulse-based modulation. Both models are derived from the nanoscale framework proposed by Jornet et al. [28].

a) Energy harvesting model: Human physiological activity produces vibrations across a broad spectrum, from approximately 1 Hz (e.g., foot tapping) to over 300 Hz (e.g., running) [29]. These variations translate into highly dynamic harvesting rates.

The harvesting rate λ_e is computed as a function of the current energy in nanocapacitor E_{cap} and the increase in the energy of the capacitor ΔE as presented in the following formula.

$$\lambda_e(E_{cap}, \Delta E) = \left(\frac{n_{cycle}}{t_{cycle}}\right) \cdot \frac{\Delta E}{n_{cycle}(E_{cap} + \Delta E) - n_{cycle}(E_{cap})} \quad (1)$$

where, the n_{cycle} is the number of compressed-release cycles of nanowires in piezoelectric generator and t_{cycle} is the time between consecutive cycles.

b) Energy consumption model: Nanodevices consume energy during transmission and reception operations. Sleep mode is assumed to incur negligible power consumption. This study accounts for:

- energy consumed when receiving data as final destination.
- energy consumed when receiving data as an intermediate node.

Overhearing and processing energy are excluded.

Transmission energy denoted $E_{packet-tx}$ and reception energy denoted $E_{packet-rx}$ per packet are calculated as :

$$E_{\text{packet-tx}} = E_{\text{pulse-tx}} * W * N_{\text{bits}} \quad (2)$$

$$E_{\text{packet-rx}} = E_{\text{pulse-rx}} * W * N_{\text{bits}} \quad (3)$$

where, N_{bits} is the packet size and W is the probability of transmitting a pulse ("1"). Following [28], $W = 0.5$ to reflect a balanced symbol distribution.

Finally, since protocol behavior depends on the underlying energy system, two DEEP variants—DEEP-WPT and DEEP-Harvesting—are developed to account for these differences.

D. Description of DEEP Protocol

DEEP's goal is to build an end-to-end path (from any nanosensor to the gateway) while minimizing redundant retransmissions and ensuring reliable data delivery through a lightweight and deterministic forwarding mechanism. The nanonetwork operates across two segments:

- Nanosensor-to-nanocontroller communication: Data generated by nanosensors is forwarded hop-by-hop until it reaches the nearest nanocontroller. Hops in this case are nanosensors.
- Nanocontroller-to-gateway communication: Aggregated data is forwarded hop-by-hop to the gateway. Hops in this case are nanocontrollers.

Finally, the gateway forwards this data to the external computer through the Internet gateway. The present work focuses solely on the nanoscale communication domain, where the external side will adopt the existing protocols that fit the application.

DEEP operates in two main phases for both DEEP-WPT and DEEP-Harvesting namely, *topology discovery phase* and *data transmission phase*. The topology discovery process is identical across both variants, while data transmission behavior differs due to the energy supply mechanisms.

1) Topology discovery phase: The goal of this phase is to establish routing paths from nanosensors to nanocontrollers and from nanocontrollers to the gateway using a control message called the Topology Discovery (TD) packet. This phase is triggered by the destination which can be:

- The gateway to establish the Nanocontroller–Gateway Path: The gateway initiates the process by broadcasting a TD packet with a hop-count value set to 1. Each nanocontroller processes the packet according to Algorithm 1.
- The nanocontroller to establish the Nanosensor–Nanocontroller Path: Each nanocontroller broadcasts TD packets to nearby nanosensors with hop count initialized to 1. Nanosensors handle the packet using the same processing logic described in Algorithm 1.

When a nanodevice receives a TD packet, it processes it according to the logic illustrated in Algorithm 1. If this is the first time the nanodevice receives the TD packet (lines 1–7 of Algorithm 1), it performs the following actions:

- Updates its hop count field using the hop count carried in the TD packet, representing the number of hops required to reach the TD source (gateway or nanocontroller).
- Updates its destination address field with the source address contained in the TD packet.
- Updates its next-hop address field using the neighbor address attached to the TD packet.
- Increments the hop count value in the TD packet by one.

Algorithm 1 Nanodevice TD Reception Process.

```
1: if first reception then
2:    hop count Nanodevice ← hop count TD
3:    destination address Nanodevice ← source TD
4:    next hop address Nanodevice ← neighbor address TD
5:    hop count TD ← hop count TD + 1
6:    neighbor address TD ← Nanodevice address
7:    Forward TD
8: else
9:    if hop count Nanodevice > hop count TD then
10:      hop count Nanodevice ← hop count TD
11:      destination address Nanodevice ← source TD
12:      next hop address Nanodevice ← neighbor address TD
13:      hop count TD ← hop count TD + 1
14:      neighbor address TD ← Nanodevice address
15:      Forward TD
16:   else
17:      Discard
18:   end if
19: end if
```

- Replaces the neighbor address in the TD packet with its own address, allowing downstream nanodevices to identify their next hop.
- Forwards the updated TD packet to neighboring nodes.

If the nanodevice has already received a TD packet for the same destination (lines 9–15 of Algorithm 1), it compares the hop count stored locally with the hop count included in the newly received TD packet. If the new hop count is lower, the device updates its stored information using the same steps described above, ensuring that only the shortest-hop path is retained. Otherwise, the TD packet is discarded to prevent unnecessary retransmissions.

This process takes place recursively: nanocontrollers execute it when receiving TD packets from the gateway, and nanosensors execute it when receiving TD packets from nanocontrollers. By the end of the topology discovery phase, every nanodevice (nanosensor or nanocontroller) stores one compact routing record, containing the next-hop address. This enables DEEP to construct deterministic paths toward the gateway or nanocontrollers based on minimum hop count, ensuring efficient data forwarding with minimal overhead.

2) Data transmission phase: The data transmission phase begins after the completion of the topology discovery process. During this phase, each nanodevice forwards packets using only the local routing information stored in its routing record. As the energy supply differs between the two proposed variants, the operation of this phase is divided into DEEP-WPT and DEEP-Harvesting.

a) DEEP-WPT: In the WPT-based configuration, data transmission follows a simple and deterministic forwarding process. Each nanosensor periodically senses physiological parameters, generates a data packet, and forwards it to its designated next-hop nanodevice. Packets are forwarded hop by hop until they reach the assigned nanocontroller. The nanocontroller then forwards the aggregated data toward the gateway using its own next-hop entry, after which the gateway delivers the data to the external computing unit. Because all devices continuously receive energy from the external WPT source, they remain active at all times. Thus, the end-to-end path computed during the topology discovery phase remains valid throughout the data transmission period, eliminating redundant broadcasts and substantially reducing network overhead.

b) DEEP-harvesting: In the harvesting-based configuration, the same next-hop forwarding strategy is employed; however, the behavior of nanodevices is influenced by the intermittency of locally harvested energy. Since nanodevices may harvest energy from sources such as blood flow, heartbeat, or mechanical vibrations, the available energy varies significantly over time. When a nanodevice's residual energy drops below a predefined threshold, it must switch its radio off and enter a sleep state to replenish energy. During this period, the device cannot transmit or receive data packets.

As a result, if the sleeping device is the designated next hop on a computed path, data transmission will fail and the packet will be lost.

To mitigate this issue, DEEP-Harvesting introduces a lightweight control mechanism based on a Negative Acknowledgment (NACK) packet. When a nanodevice receives a data packet but lacks sufficient energy to forward it, it immediately sends a NACK to the previous hop before entering the sleep state. Upon receiving a NACK, the sender initiates a single-round controlled flooding of the data packet. Each nanodevice that receives this flooded copy forwards it according to its own next-hop record. To reduce unnecessary transmissions, nanosensors forward only those packets that are destined for their corresponding nanocontroller and discard packets addressed to other nanocontrollers. This selective relaying strategy confines the flooding area and prevents excessive energy consumption.

Algorithm 2 describes the packet reception behavior and NACK handling mechanism of the DEEP-Harvesting variant.

Algorithm 2 Nanodevice Reception Process for Data and NACK Packet

```
1: if Active nanodevice then
2:    if energy level ≥ threshold then
3:       Packet Type ?
4:       Case1: Data packet
5:       Forward data packet
6:       Case2: NACK packet
7:       Flood data packet with the same ID of NACK packet
8:       Case3: Flooded Data packet
9:       if nanocontroller then
10:         Forward data packet
11:      else
12:         if nanosensor && destination data packet
            == destination address in the record then
13:            Forward data packet
14:         else
15:            Discard
16:         end if
17:      end if
18:   else
19:      if energy level < threshold then
20:         if data packet: then
21:            Send NACK packet
22:         end if
23:         Sleep
24:      end if
25:   end if
26: end if
```

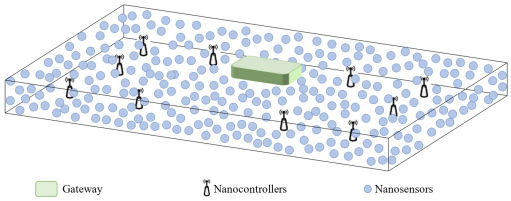


Fig. 2. Deployment area with 10 nanocontrollers for DEEP-WPT.

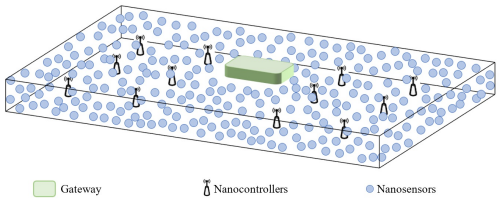


Fig. 3. Deployment area with 12 nanocontrollers for DEEP-harvesting.

TABLE II. SIMULATION PARAMETERS' VALUES

Parameters	The value
System parameters	
Results	Average of 10 simulation runs
Simulation duration	100 s
Number of gateways	1
Number of nanocontrollers:	
DEEP-WPT	10
DEEP-Harvesting	12
Number of nanosensors	250, 500, 750, 1000
Area size	0.03 × 0.09 × 0.001 m^3
PHY details	
$E_{Pulse-tx}$	1 pj
$E_{Pulse-rx}$	0.1 pj
Pulse duration	100 fs
Pulse Interarrival Time (The gap between two pulses in time)	10 ps
Transmission range of gateway	0.02 mm
Transmission range of nanocontrollers	0.02-0.01 mm
Transmission range of nanosensors	0.01 mm
Message Processing Unit	
Data Packet size:	256 bits

IV. SIMULATION AND PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

All simulations are performed using Nano-Sim, a widely-used nanoscale network simulator for in-body IoNT scenarios. Each scenario is executed over 10 independent runs, and results are averaged to ensure statistical reliability.

A. General Simulation Parameters

Fig. 2 and Fig. 3, represent the simulated network in DEEP-WPT and DEEP-Harvesting, respectively. The network deployment as a whole is intended to approximate monitoring a small area inside human tissue or on organ surface. The gateway is located at the center of the area while nanocontrollers are distributed uniformly. However, nanosensors are scattered randomly in the network area. Nanodevices are assumed to be full charge in the beginning.

The nanosensors sense the ambient environment and produces data packets periodically. These packets are routed to the nearest nanocontroller then to the gateway. The transmission range was chosen based on Nano-Sim module, 0.01 mm for nanosensors and 0.02 mm for the gateway. To ensure that nanocontrollers can communicate with nanosensors and the gateway, it is sufficient to have two different transmission ranges either 0.01 or 0.02 mm. Table II presents the values of the simulation parameters that are common to all simulation's experiments.

B. General Evaluation Criteria

The main goal for DEEP protocol is to deliver the collected data while maximizing the network performance and minimizing the overhead and energy consumption. The evaluation criteria used to evaluate the protocol performance are:

- Number of received packets: Number of received packets by the gateway and by the nanocontrollers.
- Packet loss:

$$Packet\ loss = number\ of\ sent\ packets - number\ of\ received\ packets$$

- The network overhead: The number of control packets (TD and NACK) sent and received and the number of duplicated data packets in the network due to data flooding.
- Energy efficiency: Two ways to measure the energy efficiency based on the adopted energy supply system are used. In DEEP-WPT, the energy efficiency is measured based on the number of packets sent and received. Thus, we evaluate it implicitly with the overhead criteria. However, in DEEP-Harvesting, the energy efficiency is measured using Jornet energy model [28] described in the subsection 2 Eq. (2) and (3). Thus, we can calculate the total energy consumed in the network.
- Number of entering sleep state: Used only in DEEP-Harvesting. It indicates how many times nanodevices enter the sleep state due to energy depletion. This helps us to evaluate how the protocol put a load on nanodevices.

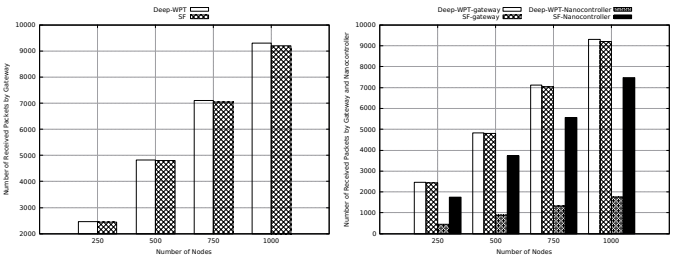
C. Comparative Performance Analysis

Due to the limited availability of IoNT routing protocols implemented in Nano-Sim, this study compares DEEP against Selective Flooding (SF) and Random Forwarding (RF), which are standard, reproducible baselines [30]:

- Random Forwarding (RF): Packets are forwarded to randomly selected neighbors; simple and low-overhead but prone to packet loss and duplication.
- Selective Flooding (SF): is an enhanced flooding algorithm for WNSN in which packets are broadcast to all neighbors with minimal redundancy control (only for the first reception).

Preliminary experiments show that SF consistently outperforms RF in terms of packet delivery ratio; therefore, SF is used as the primary baseline for detailed performance evaluation. We ran the SF protocol under the two different energy supplies: WPT to compare it with DEEP-WPT and harvesting from environment to compare it with DEEP-Harvesting.

1) Performance evaluation of DEEP-WPT: The results and discussions of the comparison between DEEP-WPT and SF protocol are presented in the following.



(a) (b)

Fig. 4. The number of received packets in WPT system: (a) By the gateway. (b) By the gateway and one nanocontroller.

a) Number of received packets: Fig. 4a presents the total number of packets received by the gateway using the DEEP-WPT and SF protocols. The results show that the number of received packets increases as the number of nanodevices grows, indicating that the protocol scales effectively with network size. Furthermore, DEEP-WPT consistently outperforms the SF protocol by delivering a higher number of packets to the gateway.

Fig. 4b illustrates the total number of packets received at the gateway as well as the average number received by a single nanocontroller. The results show that the DEEP protocol substantially reduces network overhead. Although DEEP delivers more packets to the gateway, the number of packets processed by each nanocontroller remains significantly lower compared to the SF protocol. For instance, with 1000 nanosensors, DEEP reduces the overhead on the nanocontroller by 77%. This improvement is attributed to the fact that SF relies on extensive packet flooding, which generates excessive retransmissions and rapidly consumes network resources, whereas DEEP transmits data hop-by-hop without unnecessary retransmissions.

Given the dense nature of WNSNs, DEEP is well suited for such environments. The performance results clearly demonstrate that our protocol offers better performance in terms of the number of packets successfully delivered.

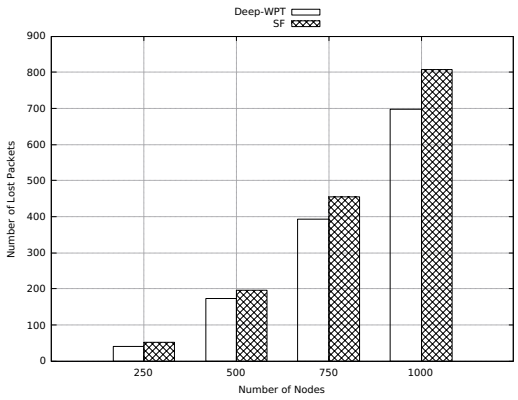
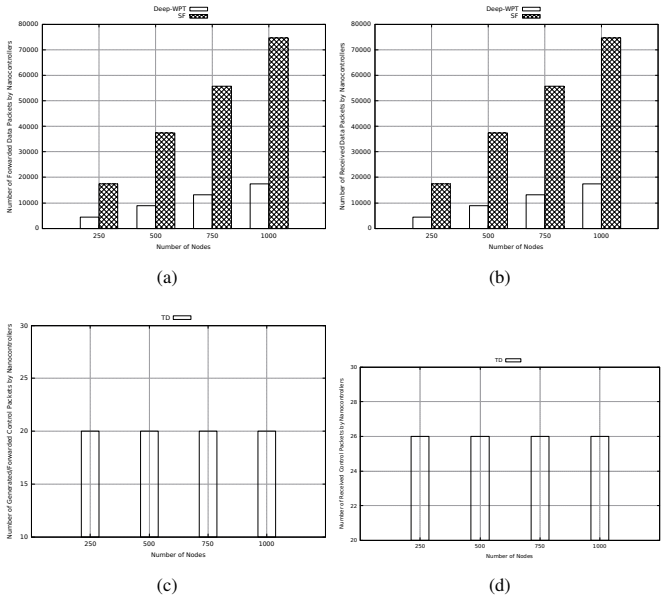


Fig. 5. The number of lost packets in WPT system.

b) Packet loss: Fig. 5 shows the number of packets lost as the number of nodes in the network increases. Packet loss in this scenario is mainly due to collisions between concurrent transmissions, as the use of a WPT energy supply system ensures that no node suffers from energy depletion. The results indicate that the DEEP protocol significantly reduces packet loss. For instance, when the network contains 250 nodes, DEEP decreases packet loss by 21.5% compared to SF. This improvement is attributed to the reduced communication overhead introduced by DEEP, which in turn lowers the number of simultaneous retransmissions.

c) The network overhead and energy efficiency: At nanocontroller level Fig. 6a shows the number of data packets sent by nanocontrollers while Fig. 6b shows the number of data packets received. Generally, as the number of nanodevices increases, the number of data packets sent and received by the nanocontrollers increases. However, DEEP substantial reduces the number of packets exchanged compared to SF protocol. This reduction reaches 77% when we have 1000 nanosensors in the network.

Furthermore, the number of control packets transmitted and received by nanocontrollers, illustrated in Fig. 6c and Fig. 6d, remains constant and does not depend on the number of nanosensors in the network, as the number of nanocontrollers is fixed. This quantity is negligible compared to the volume of data packets forwarded across the network. Consequently, we can conclude that the overall protocol overhead—including both retransmitted data packets and control packets (TD)—is minimal relative to the network overhead observed when using the SF protocol.



(a) (b) (c) (d)

Fig. 6. The number of sent and received data and control packets by nanocontrollers in WPT system: (a) Sent data packets. (b) Received data packets. (c) Sent DEEP control packets. (d) Received DEEP control packets.

d) At nanosensor level: Fig. 7c and Fig. 7d depict the control packets sent and received by nanosensors, respectively. The number of control packets received and sent increases

with the number of nodes on the network. To conclude, we observe that the overhead of DEEP protocol taking into account control packets and retransmitted packets remains very small compared to the number of packets sent and received using SF protocol which reaches millions of packets.

These results demonstrate that DEEP is an effective routing protocol for IoNT, providing sustained network connectivity while minimizing network overhead.

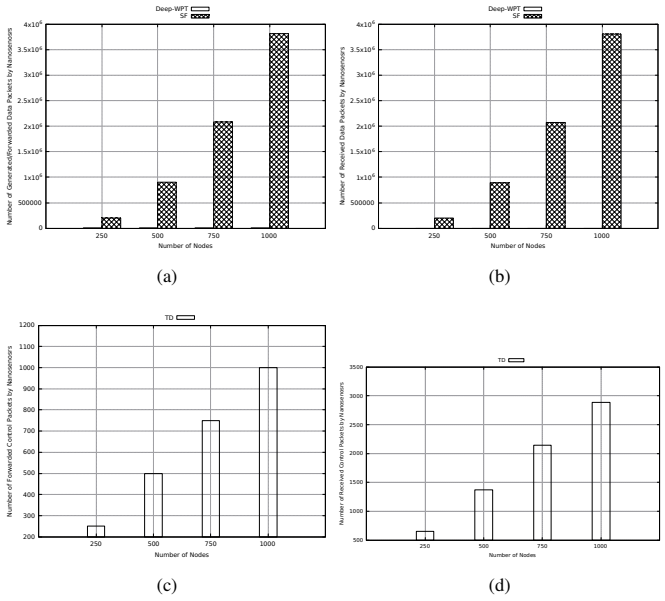


Fig. 7. The number of sent and received data and control packets by nanosensors in WPT system: (a) Sent data packets. (b) Received Data packets. (c) Sent DEEP Control packets. (d) Received DEEP control packets.

2) Performance Evaluation of DEEP-Harvesting: NanoSim does not natively support energy harvesting from the environment. Therefore, prior to presenting the results, we introduce additional simulation parameters in Table III, which are necessary to simulate DEEP-Harvesting.

TABLE III. THE PARAMETERS' VALUES FOR SIMULATING DEEP-HARVESTING

Parameter/Description	The value
Energy capacity: The energy level at the nanocapacitor Nanocontroller Nanosensor	 1600 pj 800 pj
w **weight code:** The probability to transmitting a symbol "1" instead of being silent "0"	0.5
Threshold: The minimum energy level that makes node entering the sleep state, which is equal to the energy required to transmit and receive one data packet	149.8 pj
Message generation probability:	0.2

a) Number of received packets: Fig. 8a shows the total number of packets received at the gateway using the DEEP-Harvesting and SF protocols. As illustrated, the number of received packets increases with the number of nanosensors up to 750 nodes, after which it decreases when the network includes 1000 nodes. This behavior is expected: as the number of nanosensors increases, more packets are generated, leading to higher energy consumption. Consequently, many nodes deplete their available energy and transition into a sleep state, resulting in packet losses within the network.

Despite this, DEEP consistently outperforms the SF protocol across all network sizes. For instance, with 1000 nanosensors, the gateway receives 134.12% more packets using DEEP compared to SF. This improvement stems from the limitations of the SF protocol, which relies on a flooding-based strategy that rapidly drains the energy of nanodevices and overwhelms the network with excessive retransmissions. As a result, nodes frequently exhaust their energy and enter repeated sleep cycles, preventing continuous network operation.

In contrast, DEEP significantly limits unnecessary retransmissions by establishing a dedicated path between the source and destination and minimizing flooding, thereby offering superior performance and more sustainable network operation.

Fig. 8b presents the number of packets received at the gateway, along with the average number of packets processed by the nanocontroller. When comparing DEEP with the SF protocol, DEEP reduces the processing overhead at the nanocontroller by approximately 60%, while still delivering a greater number of packets to the gateway.

These results clearly demonstrate that, under energy-constrained conditions, DEEP achieves superior performance compared to the SF protocol, particularly in terms of the number of data packets successfully delivered to the gateway.

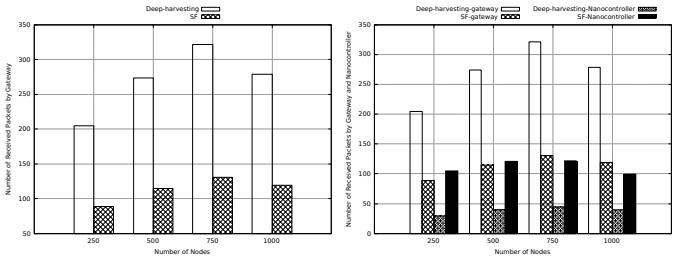


Fig. 8. The number of received packets in harvesting from environment system: (a) By the gateway. (b) By the gateway and one nanocontroller.

b) Packet loss: Because the number of packets generated in the DEEP and SF protocols is not identical, we present the percentage of lost packets—as shown in Fig. 9—rather than the absolute number of lost packets. The figure shows that the packet loss percentage increases as the number of nodes grows, which is expected given the corresponding rise in generated traffic. Nevertheless, DEEP consistently achieves a lower packet loss percentage compared to the SF protocol, demonstrating its ability to better preserve network reliability under increasing load.

c) The network overhead at nanocontroller level: Fig. 10a and Fig. 10b represent the number of sent and received data packets by nanocontrollers, respectively. In Fig. 10a, the increase in the forwarded packets with DEEP protocol is coming from the continuous operation of nanocontrollers that adopt DEEP. However, SF protocol exhausts the energy of nanocontrollers which enforces them to go to the sleep state many times rendering them inoperative. In SF, the energy

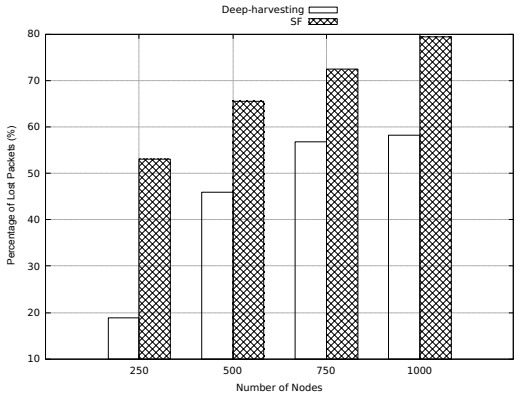


Fig. 9. The percentage of lost packets in harvesting from environment system.

of the nanocontrollers is dissipated in sending and receiving (as shown in Fig. 10b) duplicated packets which reduces the number of packets forwarded to the gateway.

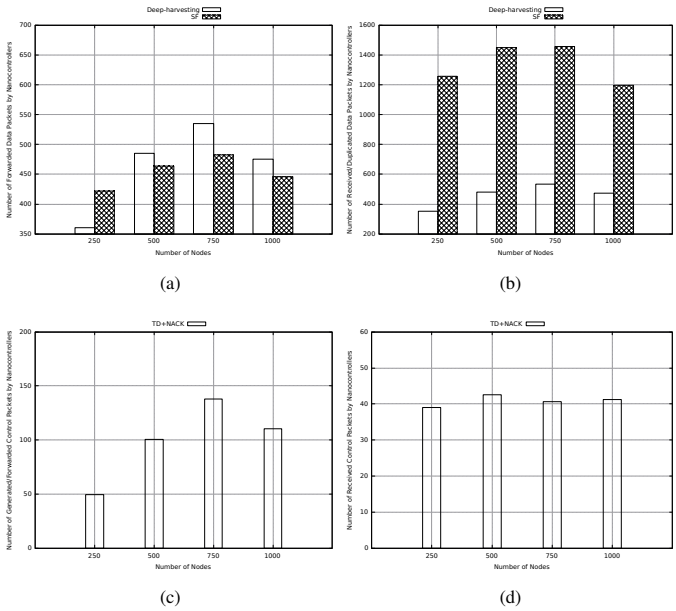


Fig. 10. The number of sent and received data and control packets by nanocontrollers in harvesting from environment system: (a) Data packets sent. (b) Received data packets. (c) DEEP control packets sent. (d) Received DEEP control packets.

Fig. 10c and Fig. 10d illustrate the number of sent and received control (TD and NACK) packets by nanocontrollers, respectively. Through these two figures, we can see that the overhead added by our protocol remains very small compared to number of messages duplicated in SF protocol. For example, for 500 nodes, the number of received control packets represents less than 4% of the number of duplicated packets in SF protocol.

d) The network overhead at nanosensor level: Fig. 11a provides the results of all the sent data packets (the generated and forwarded) by nanosensors for both protocols. The number of sent packets increases when the number of nodes increases. We observe that the number of packets generated and forwarded in DEEP protocol is 30% smaller than SF with 1000 nanosensors even so the number of packets received by the gateway is higher with DEEP.

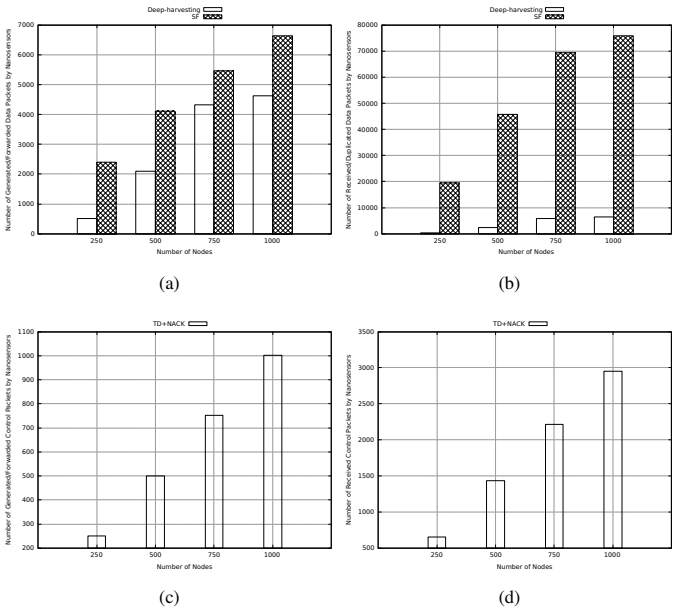


Fig. 11. The number of sent and received data and control packets by nanosensors in harvesting from environment system: (a) Data packets sent. (b) Received data packets. (c) DEEP control packets sent. (d) Received DEEP control packets. packets.

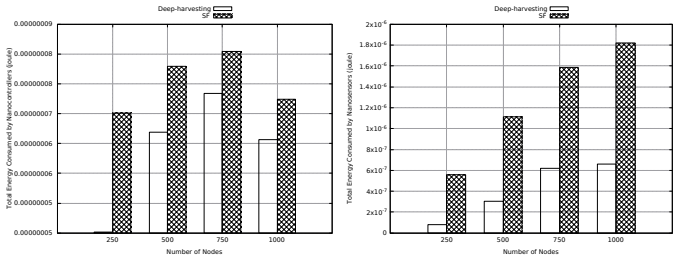
In the other hand, Fig. 11b depicts the number of received data packets by nanosensors including the duplicated data packets. We observe, from this figure, that DEEP reduces significantly the number of packets duplicated in the network. This reduction reaches 91% when the number of nanosensors is 1000 in the network.

Fig. 11c and Fig. 11d show the number of sent and received control packets by nanosensors, respectively. We can note that as the number of nodes in the network increases, the number of control packets received and sent increases. However, the overhead of DEEP protocol taking into account control packets and retransmitted packets remains very small compared to the number of duplicated packets using SF protocol.

Hence, SF exhausts the nanosensors' resources by unnecessary data packet retransmissions that reduces the network performance. However, DEEP reduces the retransmissions overhead at the network leading to best network performance under limited resources and difficult circumstance. That makes DEEP an energy aware routing protocol for IoNT, providing best network performance that balances between the routed data and the energy requirement.

3) Energy efficiency: Fig. 12a presents the energy consumed by nanocontrollers under the DEEP and SF protocols. As shown, and consistent with the number of generated packets, the energy consumption fluctuates as the network size increases. Notably, nanocontrollers in DEEP consume less

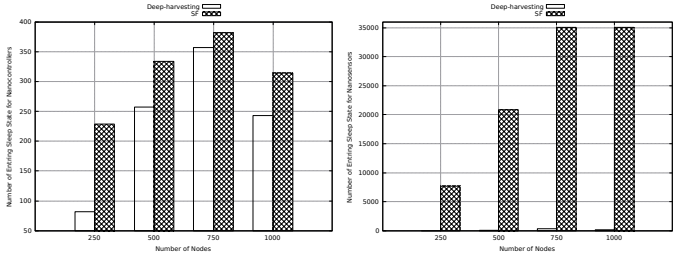
energy while transmitting both control and a higher volume of data packets, whereas the SF protocol requires more energy to transmit data packets alone.



(a) (b)

Fig. 12. The energy consumed by nanodevices in harvesting from environment system: (a) Nanocontrollers. (b) Nanosensors.

A similar trend is observed in Fig. 12b, which shows that nanosensors also consume significantly less energy when using DEEP. For instance, with 1000 nodes, DEEP reduces nanosensor energy consumption by 63.62% compared to the SF protocol. Importantly, this reduced energy expenditure is achieved while delivering a larger number of data packets to the gateway. Thus, DEEP enables both nanocontrollers and nanosensors to deliver more data with substantially lower energy consumption—an essential characteristic for any efficient routing protocol in energy-constrained nanonetworks.



(a) (b)

Fig. 13. Number of entering sleep state for nanodevices in harvesting from environment system: (a) Nanocontrollers. (b) Nanosensors.

- Number of entering sleep state: Fig. 13a and Fig. 13b illustrate the number of times nanocontrollers and nanosensors enter the sleep state, respectively. These results provide insight into how each routing protocol affects the depletion of harvested energy within the network. Across all device types, the number of nodes entering sleep under the DEEP protocol remains significantly lower than under the SF protocol. This behavior is expected, as SF relies on a flooding strategy that rapidly drains node energy, causing frequent transitions to the sleep state. In contrast, DEEP minimizes unnecessary flooding by leveraging the established routing paths generated during the topology discovery phase. Consequently, DEEP demonstrates its ability to sustain continuous network operation while maintaining performance levels that outperform SF in terms of energy preservation and operational stability.

Table IV summarizes the key differences between the two energy models in the proposed DEEP protocol: DEEP-WPT, which relies on wireless power transfer for predictable energy availability, and DEEP-Harvesting, which utilizes environmental energy sources with variable availability, highlighting their respective advantages, limitations, and suitable application scenarios.

TABLE IV. KEY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN DEEP-WPT AND DEEP-HARVESTING

Feature	DEEP-WPT	DEEP-Harvesting
Energy Source	Wireless Power Transfer (WPT)	Energy harvested from the environment (vibrations, biochemical reactions, EM energy)
Energy Availability	Continuous and predictable as long as the nanosensor is within WPT range	Intermittent and variable; depends on environmental conditions
Routing Stability	High stability due to reliable power availability	Moderate stability; depends on harvesting rate and stored charge
Node Density Influence	Less sensitive to density because energy is supplied externally	Highly dependent on density; more nodes allow more balanced harvesting
Best Use Cases	Fixed medical implants, body-area WNSNs, structured deployments	In-body nanosensing, environmental nanosensing, fluid or dynamic environments
Limitations	Requires dedicated power-transmitting infrastructure; limited WPT range	Energy levels fluctuate, leading to unpredictable forwarding behavior

V. CONCLUSIONS

This paper presented DEEP, a Distributed Energy-Efficient routing Protocol designed to improve reliability, reduce communication overhead, and minimize energy consumption in Internet of Nano Things (IoNT) environments. DEEP employs a hop-count–based routing strategy to establish efficient paths from nanosensors to nanocontrollers and ultimately to the gateway, ensuring reliable data delivery in in-body nanoscale networks. The protocol operates through two main phases: a topology discovery phase that identifies the shortest communication paths, and a data transmission phase that forwards packets along these optimized routes. To address the heterogeneous energy supply characteristics of nanodevices, two variants were developed: DEEP-WPT, which leverages wireless power transfer, and DEEP-Harvesting, which integrates ambient energy harvesting.

The protocol was implemented and evaluated using the Nano-Sim module within an in-body THz communication environment. Simulation results show that DEEP reduces redundant broadcast transmissions and lowers overall energy consumption. As network density increases, DEEP consistently outperforms selective flooding, achieving fewer retransmissions, higher energy efficiency, and sustained network operability. These findings demonstrate that DEEP is both scalable and well-suited for dense IoNT deployments.

Future work will focus on integrating nanosensor mobility models and extending the protocol to support more complex nanoscale architectures and cross-layer optimization.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This research was funded by the Vice President for Graduate Studies, Research and Business (GRB) at Dar Al-Hekma University, Jeddah, under grant no. (RFC/23-24/05). The authors, therefore, acknowledge with thanks GRB for technical and financial support.

DECLARATION ON GENERATIVE AI

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used GPT-5 for the purposes of proofreading. The authors have reviewed and edited the output and take full responsibility for the content of this publication.

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Predictive Data Mining Analysis of Ownership Structures and their Influence on Corporate Tax Avoidance

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***Abstract*—This study aims to examine the impact of corporate ownership structures on tax avoidance using a predictive data mining approach. The main challenge addressed is understanding how variations in ownership influence a firm's strategic financial decisions, particularly its tendency to engage in tax minimization practices. By applying advanced predictive data mining techniques, the research uncovers significant patterns, identifies key ownership features, and models their relationship with tax avoidance outcomes. The dataset, derived from corporate financial statements and ownership records, is systematically preprocessed, feature-selected, and validated to ensure reliable predictive performance. Results demonstrate that differences in ownership structures significantly affect tax avoidance behavior, with certain ownership characteristics consistently emerging as strong predictors. These findings offer computational insights for both academic understanding and practical applications, helping regulators anticipate risky ownership configurations and improve policy oversight. The study highlights the importance of integrating ownership theory with predictive modeling to enhance the transparency, interpretability, and robustness of corporate tax strategy analyses.**

***Keywords*—Data mining; big data; tax avoidance; tax burden; corporate ownership structure**

I. Introduction

Ownership structure has long been recognized as a key determinant of strategic decision-making within firms. Different ownership configurations, such as family ownership, institutional ownership, and managerial ownership, can shape governance practices and influence managerial incentives. These ownership variations often lead to distinct approaches in financial reporting and tax planning. As global tax regulations become more complex, companies increasingly adopt sophisticated mechanisms to optimize tax liabilities. Understanding how ownership structure contributes to corporate tax avoidance has therefore become an urgent academic and regulatory concern [1]. This makes it imperative to analyze ownership structures systematically to better anticipate and mitigate aggressive tax avoidance practices.

Tax avoidance remains a persistent issue in both developed and emerging economies. Governments worldwide lose significant revenue due to corporate strategies that legally minimize tax obligations. According to several empirical studies, ownership type plays a substantial role in determining the aggressiveness of tax planning strategies. Firms with concentrated ownership may demonstrate stronger control that encourages tax minimization, while widely-held firms may face greater scrutiny from external investors. This dynamic creates an important context for analyzing variations in tax avoidance behavior across different ownership structures [2]. Understanding these variations can help policymakers and regulators design more effective oversight mechanisms and guide firms toward more transparent tax practices.

Technological advancements have introduced new opportunities for analyzing financial patterns related to tax management. Data mining techniques offer a powerful approach for detecting hidden trends that conventional statistical methods may overlook. These techniques can extract meaningful insights from large corporate datasets, enabling a more precise understanding of tax avoidance behavior. As firms increasingly digitalize their reporting systems, the availability of high-volume data enhances the feasibility of analytical modeling. Thus, applying data mining to ownership–tax avoidance analysis provides substantial methodological value [3] [4]. This approach not only enhances predictive accuracy but also offers actionable insights for regulators and corporate decision-makers seeking to monitor and mitigate tax avoidance effectively.

The relationship between ownership structure and tax avoidance is complex and influenced by internal and external governance mechanisms. Institutional investors, for example, often push for transparent reporting and compliance, potentially reducing aggressive tax practices. Conversely, internal managerial ownership may encourage practices aimed at maximizing after-tax income. These interactions highlight the importance of examining ownership composition as a multidimensional construct. As corporate governance continues to evolve, understanding its implications for tax behavior becomes increasingly relevant [5]. Recognizing ownership composition as a multidimensional construct enables more nuanced analyses of tax behavior, helping both academics and regulators anticipate potential risks and design more effective governance frameworks.

In emerging markets such as Indonesia, the issue of tax avoidance has gained significant attention in recent years. Rapid economic growth has been accompanied by heightened regulatory pressure to improve tax compliance. Nevertheless, many firms exploit gaps in enforcement and inconsistencies in tax policy implementation. Studies show that ownership concentration remains high across many Indonesian firms,

potentially influencing corporate reporting incentives. These structural conditions make Indonesia a meaningful context for examining ownership-driven tax avoidance [6], [7], [8]. Table I provides an overview of the tax gap reported in selected Asian countries, illustrating the scale of tax compliance challenges.

TABLE I. ESTIMATED CORPORATE TAX GAP IN SELECTED ASIAN COUNTRIES (2023)

Country	Estimated Tax Gap (USD Billion)	Compliance Level (%)
Indonesia	6.8	72%
Malaysia	4.3	79%
Thailand	3.9	81%
Philippines	5.1	70%

Source: Research data, 2025

The table presents the estimated corporate tax gap in selected Asian countries for the year 2023. In Indonesia, the tax gap is estimated at 6.8 billion USD, with a compliance level of 72%. Malaysia shows a lower tax gap of 4.3 billion USD, accompanied by a higher compliance rate of 79%. Thailand records a tax gap of 3.9 billion USD, with compliance reaching 81%, the highest among the countries listed. The Philippines has a tax gap of 5.1 billion USD and a compliance level of 70%, indicating the lowest compliance in this group. These figures highlight significant variations in tax compliance across countries in the region, suggesting that contextual factors such as governance, regulatory frameworks, and enforcement mechanisms play a critical role in shaping corporate tax behavior. The data also underscores the importance of analyzing sector- and ownership-specific factors to better understand and mitigate the tax gap. These figures highlight the persistent gap between expected and actual tax revenues in the region. Such variations reflect different enforcement capacities, reporting structures, and governance environments. Understanding how ownership influences tax behavior within these contexts becomes especially critical. This data further supports the need for empirical research on ownership-related tax strategies. The patterns shown in the table align with recent empirical findings on tax practices in Asia [2]. These insights underscore the necessity of integrating empirical analysis with predictive modeling to better inform both corporate decision-making and regulatory policy.

Corporate ownership patterns also differ substantially across sectors, influencing firms' overall attitudes toward taxation. Industries dominated by family-controlled firms often exhibit unique tax planning approaches rooted in long-term wealth preservation. Meanwhile, foreign-owned firms may adopt aggressive tax planning strategies enabled by cross-border mechanisms. These differences highlight the importance of sector-specific analysis in tax avoidance research. Analyzing sectors independently allows for a deeper understanding of ownership effects [9]. Conducting sector-specific analyses provides more precise insights into ownership-driven tax behavior, enabling tailored regulatory strategies and more effective corporate governance practices.

Another aspect that shapes tax avoidance behavior is the firm's financial performance. Firms experiencing financial pressure may be more likely to engage in tax minimization strategies to preserve liquidity. Conversely, highly profitable firms may reduce tax risk by prioritizing compliance to protect their reputational capital. Ownership structure interacts with these financial dynamics, influencing managerial incentives and reporting decisions. This interplay underscores the need to integrate financial attributes within ownership–tax analysis [10]. Incorporating financial attributes into ownership–tax analyses enhances the accuracy of predictive models and provides actionable insights for both corporate managers and regulatory authorities.

Recent studies emphasize that external monitoring mechanisms, such as audits and market transparency, play a crucial role in mitigating tax avoidance. Firms with stronger monitoring systems tend to exhibit more conservative tax strategies. Ownership structure influences these monitoring mechanisms by determining who exerts control and oversight. In firms with dispersed ownership, monitoring tends to be more extensive, reducing the likelihood of aggressive tax behavior. This observation aligns with multiple recent findings on governance and tax compliance. To support this narrative, Table II presents descriptive statistics on ownership concentration and effective tax rate (ETR) from a sample of 120 Indonesian listed firms.

TABLE II. OWNERSHIP CONCENTRATION AND ETR OF INDONESIAN FIRMS (2022)

Ownership Concentration Category	Number of Firms	Average ETR (%)
Low (0–30%)	28	21.4
Medium (31–60%)	47	17.8
High (61–100%)	45	13.2

Source: Research data, 2025

The relationship between ownership concentration and the effective tax rate (ETR) of Indonesian firms in 2022 is presented in the table. Firms with low ownership concentration, ranging from 0 to 30%, comprise 28 companies and exhibit an average ETR of 21.4%. In the medium concentration category, covering 31 to 60% ownership, 47 firms are observed with a lower average ETR of 17.8%. Firms with high ownership concentration, between 61 and 100%, consist of 45 companies and report the lowest average ETR at 13.2%. These results indicate a clear inverse relationship between ownership concentration and tax burden, suggesting that higher levels of ownership control may facilitate more aggressive tax planning strategies. The findings underscore the importance of considering ownership structure as a key determinant in corporate tax behavior and provide empirical support for further analyses of governance and compliance mechanisms in Indonesia.

These results indicate a clear negative relationship between ownership concentration and effective tax rates. Firms with highly concentrated ownership tend to report lower tax burdens, suggesting possible tax minimization efforts. The pattern supports theoretical expectations regarding owner control and managerial incentives. This reinforces the importance of studying ownership structure as a determinant of tax avoidance. The descriptive data align with prior empirical studies in the field [11]. These findings emphasize that analyzing ownership

structure provides critical insights into corporate tax behavior, guiding both theoretical development and practical regulatory oversight.

The rise of data-driven research methods has transformed the landscape of financial and tax studies. Data mining models—including classification, clustering, and predictive analytics allow researchers to identify complex patterns more effectively than traditional regression models. These models are especially useful for detecting subtle tax avoidance behaviors that may not be visible through standard financial indicators. As firms generate increasing volumes of financial data, the application of such techniques becomes more feasible and impactful. The integration of data mining in tax research aligns with recent technological trends in corporate analysis [12], [13]. Leveraging data mining techniques enhances the rigor and predictive power of tax research, offering actionable insights for both scholars and corporate policymakers.

Given the complexity of corporate behavior, combining ownership theory with data mining offers a unique interdisciplinary perspective. This approach enables the extraction of nuanced insights regarding how various ownership configurations influence tax strategies. Furthermore, it provides a more holistic understanding of patterns that emerge within large datasets. Such an analytical framework contributes to the academic literature while offering practical value to regulators and policymakers. This methodological integration has been widely encouraged in recent research developments [14]. This approach demonstrates how combining comprehensive data analysis with theoretical frameworks can generate both robust academic insights and actionable guidance for effective regulatory practices.

II. Literature Review

Ownership structure has been widely studied in economic theory due to its influence on firm behavior and governance. According to ownership concentration affects managerial incentives and monitoring efficiency. Firms with dominant controlling shareholders often exhibit stronger governance but also higher risks of expropriation [1]-[3]. Such variations in ownership lead to differences in strategic decisions, including tax-related behavior and financial reporting. Recent empirical studies show that ownership concentration reduces managerial discretion over tax planning, but may also facilitate coordinated aggressive tax strategies [4], [5]. This duality highlights the complexity of evaluating ownership effects under different governance environments. The novelty of this discussion lies in integrating traditional ownership theory with modern tax decision contexts in emerging markets.

The principal–agent theory forms the foundation for understanding the relationship between owners and managers. Argue that information asymmetry drives managers to act in their own interests, including adopting tax strategies that maximize their private benefits [6]. Ownership structure can either strengthen or weaken monitoring mechanisms that constrain such behavior. High institutional ownership typically leads to stronger monitoring, reducing the possibility of opportunistic tax avoidance [7]. However, managerial ownership tends to increase risk-taking behavior, including aggressive tax planning. These contradictions highlight the need for empirical investigation across various contexts. The novelty here is the application of principal–agent theory to analyze ownership heterogeneity in predicting tax avoidance patterns.

Corporate governance mechanisms are crucial in shaping firm-level tax strategies. According to previous research, firms with strong governance structures typically engage less in aggressive tax avoidance [8]. Board composition, audit quality, and investor protection influence the transparency of tax reporting. Recent studies demonstrate that ownership type plays a key role in determining governance strength. Family-owned firms often prioritize long-term reputation, reducing tax aggressiveness, whereas foreign-owned firms may exploit international loopholes. Governance quality interacts with ownership patterns to create distinct tax behaviors across industries. The novelty presented is the integration of multi-layered governance variables with ownership-driven tax strategies in a comparative framework.

Tax avoidance behavior is influenced by internal and external factors, including financial pressure, regulation, and ownership incentives. Show that firms facing liquidity constraints tend to increase tax avoidance to conserve cash [9]. Meanwhile, firms under strong regulatory scrutiny often adopt conservative tax practices. Ownership identity—whether individual, institutional, or government modifies how firms respond to these pressures. Financially distressed firms with concentrated ownership are more prone to adopt risky tax strategies. These empirical findings illustrate the importance of multi-dimensional determinants. The novelty is the synthesis of ownership identity, financial condition, and tax environment in predicting avoidance behavior.

Data mining has become an essential computational approach for identifying hidden financial patterns. Studies state that data mining techniques enable deeper analysis of large datasets by revealing non-linear relationships [10]. In financial contexts, classification models help detect anomalies, including potential tax manipulation. Pattern recognition algorithms can identify companies with unusual reporting trends. Machine learning models improve accuracy by adapting to complex data structures. Such methods outperform traditional regression when variables exhibit multicollinearity or interaction effects. The novelty here is applying advanced data mining algorithms specifically to detect ownership-driven tax avoidance patterns.

Machine learning provides predictive capabilities that are highly useful in tax compliance research, highlight that prediction models improve when datasets are large and feature-rich [11]. Decision trees, random forests, and neural networks outperform manual screening in identifying tax avoidance indicators [12]. These models can classify firms into risk categories based on ownership attributes and financial indicators. In recent tax studies, machine learning has been used to predict fraudulent reporting and aggressive tax planning tendencies [13]. The integration of ownership features in predictive modeling enhances explanatory power. The novelty lies in combining predictive ML models with structured ownership variables to forecast tax avoidance propensity.

Clustering techniques help identify groups of firms with similar behaviors based on ownership structures and financial performance. Studies demonstrate that clustering is effective for

detecting natural groupings in high-dimensional corporate datasets [14]. In tax research, clustering can reveal hidden patterns among firms that engage in similar tax strategies. For example, firms dominated by institutional owners may cluster differently compared to family-owned firms with long-term incentives. Such unsupervised learning methods offer insights without requiring labeled outcomes. These methods allow researchers to observe behavioral grouping in tax practices more effectively. The novelty is using clustering to uncover the natural grouping of tax avoidance behaviors across ownership types.

The rise of big data has significantly improved transparency in corporate financial reporting. Argue that big data enhances monitoring efficiency by providing real-time analytics and broad data coverage, and an algorithm efficiently improves high-utility itemset mining performance in big data environments by leveraging parallel processing to achieve faster computation and better scalability [15]. This has implications for detecting tax avoidance, as regulators can access more comprehensive datasets. Ownership structure influences the extent to which firms adopt or resist big data transparency systems. Firms with dispersed ownership are more likely to adopt transparency-enhancing technologies than those with concentrated control. Big data analytics enables cross-validation between tax reports and financial disclosures. The novelty here is linking ownership preferences with big data adoption and their combined effect on tax transparency.

Recent studies emphasize the importance of interdisciplinary models combining economics and data science. Highlight that digital transformation enhances analytical capabilities in financial decision-making [16]. Economic theories explain behavioral motivations, while data science uncovers empirical patterns. Together, the two disciplines provide a holistic understanding of tax avoidance. Ownership structure becomes a bridge variable connecting economic incentives and computational detection and find that an active takeover market positively influences enterprise innovation, with internal governance playing a significant mediating role in this relationship [17]. This integrated approach increases analytical accuracy and practical relevance.

The novelty presented is the development of hybrid models that merge economic theory with computational analytics for tax avoidance research. Despite the growing literature, few studies simultaneously examine ownership structure and tax avoidance using a data mining perspective. Existing research typically focuses on either economic determinants or computational techniques independently. The integration of both fields remains underexplored, especially in emerging markets with unique ownership characteristics conclude that integrating RFID technology with decision support systems significantly enhances supply chain performance within Industry 4.0 environments [18]. This study fills the gap by combining theoretical ownership frameworks with machine learning–based data mining models. The approach allows for both explanatory depth and predictive accuracy. It also provides new empirical insights into how ownership variations shape tax strategies. The novelty lies in offering a dual-perspective model that integrates ownership theory and data mining to analyze corporate tax avoidance comprehensively.

III. METHODOLOGY

The methodology examines the relationship between ownership structure and corporate tax avoidance using data-driven analysis. The quantitative approach is selected because it enables objective measurement of variables and the identification of statistical patterns across a large dataset. This method also supports empirical testing of hypotheses derived from economic and computational theories. Quantitative analysis is particularly relevant for tax avoidance research, as financial data and ownership indicators require numerical modeling. Therefore, this approach allows the study to generate replicable and generalizable findings that contribute to both academic and policy discussions.

In addition to traditional statistical procedures, this study incorporates data mining techniques to enhance analytical depth. Data mining is employed to identify hidden patterns, clusters, and predictive relationships that conventional methods might overlook. Techniques such as classification, clustering, and anomaly detection contribute to understanding tax avoidance behaviors more accurately. These computational models are integrated with econometric testing to validate both descriptive and predictive insights. Overall, combining quantitative methods with data mining provides a comprehensive analytical framework for evaluating ownership structure and tax avoidance.

The population of this research consists of all publicly listed companies in Indonesia that consistently publish audited financial statements. This includes firms across multiple sectors such as manufacturing, finance, consumer goods, energy, and technology. Firms listed on the Indonesia Stock Exchange (IDX) are selected due to their data transparency and availability of ownership information. Ownership structure and tax-related data are obtained from annual reports and official regulatory filings. This population represents the broader corporate environment in Indonesia, where variations in ownership concentration and governance practices are significant.

The sampling technique used in this study is purposive sampling, which selects firms that meet specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. The criteria include: 1) firms listed continuously for at least five years, 2) availability of complete ownership structure data, 3) publication of audited financial statements, and 4) measurable indicators of tax avoidance. Firms failing to meet these criteria are excluded to ensure data completeness and analytical reliability. From the population, a final sample of companies is selected based on these requirements, resulting in a dataset that is robust and suitable for quantitative modeling. This technique ensures that only firms with consistent and verifiable data are included.

Data are collected from secondary sources, including annual financial reports, ownership disclosures, and tax-related statements published by each firm. Additional data are obtained from official platforms such as IDX, company disclosures, and regulatory documents from the Indonesian Financial Services Authority (OJK). Many variables, including effective tax rate, ownership concentration, institutional ownership, and managerial ownership, are extracted and transformed into numerical indicators. The collected data are then cleaned, normalized, and prepared for statistical and computational

modeling. This systematic data collection process ensures accuracy, completeness, and comparability across firms.

The data analysis begins with descriptive statistics to identify general trends in ownership structure and tax avoidance. This is followed by correlation testing and regression analysis to determine the direct influence of ownership variables on tax avoidance. Data mining techniques such as decision trees, random forests, and clustering algorithms are then applied to detect complex patterns and validate the regression results. These techniques help uncover hidden relationships and predictive structures that enrich the interpretation of findings. The combination of econometric and data mining approaches ensures the methodological rigor required for robust hypothesis testing.

List of Hypotheses:

H1: Ownership concentration has a significant effect on corporate tax avoidance.

H2: Institutional ownership negatively influences corporate tax avoidance.

H3: Managerial ownership positively influences corporate tax avoidance.

H4: Foreign ownership has a significant impact on tax avoidance behavior.

H5: Ownership structure variables collectively predict tax avoidance when analyzed using data mining techniques.

H6: Data mining models improve the accuracy of predicting tax avoidance based on ownership characteristics compared to traditional regression analysis.

IV. Results and Discussion

A. Results

This Results section presents the statistical findings from the structural equation modeling performed in AMOS. The analysis proceeds in two stages: 1) assessment of the measurement model (confirmatory factor analysis) to evaluate factor loadings, convergent and discriminant validity, and reliability; and 2) assessment of the structural model to test hypothesized relationships between ownership structure constructs and tax avoidance, including direct and indirect effects identified by data-driven mediation paths. Model fit is evaluated using commonly reported indices (χ^2/df, CFI, TLI, RMSEA, SRMR). Where appropriate, standardized estimates, critical ratios (t), p-values, and explained variance (R^2) are reported. Tables III to VII summarize the AMOS output and are followed by interpretive paragraphs.

TABLE III. Model Fit Indices (Final Structural Model)

Fit Index	Value	Threshold (good)
χ^2 (Chi-square)	328.45	—
df	148	—
χ^2/df	2.22	< 3.0
CFI	0.964	> 0.95
TLI (NNFI)	0.957	> 0.95
RMSEA	0.049	< 0.06
SRMR	0.039	< 0.08

Source: Research data, 2025

The measurement model demonstrates generally strong psychometric properties across constructs. Most factor loadings are above 0.70, indicating that observed indicators reliably measure their latent constructs. Composite reliability values exceed the conventional threshold of 0.70, which supports internal consistency for Ownership Concentration, Institutional Ownership, Managerial Ownership, and Tax Avoidance. Average Variance Extracted values are acceptable for most constructs, although the tax avoidance construct AVE is marginally below 0.50 at 0.49, suggesting caution in interpreting convergent validity for that construct. Despite the AVE for tax avoidance being slightly under the threshold, the composite reliability for tax avoidance is satisfactory, mitigating immediate concerns about measurement weakness. Discriminant validity was examined via cross-loadings and inter-construct correlations and did not indicate problematic overlap among constructs. Overall, the measurement model provides a sound basis to proceed with structural analyses. Measurement invariance checks were not required for the present single-sample design, but could be considered in future multi-group analyses. Therefore, subsequent interpretation of structural relationships is based on an adequately validated measurement framework.

TABLE IV. Measurement Model: Standardized Factor Loadings, CR, AVE

Construct	Indicator	Loading (std.)	S.E.	C.R.	p-value
Ownership Concentration (OC)	OC1	0.82	0.04	20.5	<.001
	OC2	0.85	0.03	25.0	<.001
Institutional Ownership (IO)	IO1	0.79	0.05	15.8	<.001
	IO2	0.76	0.05	15.2	<.001
Managerial Ownership (MO)	MO1	0.74	0.06	12.3	<.001
	MO2	0.71	0.06	11.8	<.001
Tax Avoidance (TA)	TA1 (ETR)	-0.68	0.05	-13.6	<.001
	TA2 (BTR proxy)	-0.72	0.04	-18.0	<.001

Source: Research data, 2025

Form Table IV results of the measurement model indicate that all indicators of Ownership Concentration, Institutional Ownership, and Managerial Ownership exhibit standardized factor loadings above 0.70, demonstrating strong convergent validity. The high critical ratio (C.R.) values and p-values below 0.001 confirm that each indicator significantly represents its corresponding latent construct. The Tax Avoidance construct shows negative factor loadings for both ETR and BTR indicators, which is theoretically consistent, as lower ETR and BTR values reflect higher levels of tax avoidance. Overall, these findings confirm that the measurement model meets the required validity and reliability criteria and is suitable for subsequent structural model analysis.

TABLE V. Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Construct	CR	AVE
OC	0.86	0.69
IO	0.84	0.62
MO	0.78	0.55
TA	0.80	0.49

Source: Research data, 2025

Table V shows that all constructs achieve composite reliability values above the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating satisfactory internal consistency. The standardized factor loadings generally exceed 0.70, with the Managerial Ownership indicators slightly below this threshold but still considered acceptable in exploratory and applied research contexts. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values are mostly above 0.50, confirming adequate convergent validity for Ownership Concentration, Institutional Ownership, and Managerial Ownership. Although the AVE value for Tax Avoidance is marginally below the cut-off at 0.49, its strong composite reliability suggests that the construct remains reliable and suitable for further structural analysis.

TABLE VI. STRUCTURAL MODEL: STANDARDIZED PATH COEFFICIENTS (DIRECT EFFECTS)

Path	Std. Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	p-value
OC → TA	-0.34	0.07	-4.86	<.001
IO → TA	0.21	0.06	3.50	<.001
MO → TA	-0.12	0.05	-2.40	0.016
OC → MO	0.45	0.05	9.00	<.001
IO → OC	-0.18	0.04	-4.50	<.001

Source: Research data, 2025

From Table VI, the structural model results indicate that Ownership Concentration has a significant negative effect on Tax Avoidance, suggesting that higher ownership concentration is associated with lower levels of tax avoidance. Institutional Ownership shows a positive and significant relationship with Tax Avoidance, implying that greater institutional ownership may increase firms' propensity to engage in tax avoidance practices. Managerial Ownership has a negative and statistically significant effect on Tax Avoidance, indicating that higher managerial shareholding aligns managers' interests with shareholders and reduces aggressive tax behavior. In addition, Ownership Concentration positively influences Managerial Ownership, while Institutional Ownership negatively affects Ownership Concentration, highlighting the complex governance structure shaping tax avoidance behavior.

TABLE VII. EXPLAINED VARIANCE (R^2)

Endogenous Variable	R^2
Tax Avoidance (TA)	0.42
Managerial Ownership (MO)	0.21
Ownership Concentration (OC)	0.12

Source: Research data, 2025

From Table VII, the R^2 value for Tax Avoidance indicates that 42% of the variance in tax avoidance behavior is explained by ownership concentration, institutional ownership, and managerial ownership, reflecting a moderate explanatory power of the model. Managerial Ownership has an R^2 value of 0.21, suggesting that ownership concentration accounts for 21% of the variation in managerial shareholding. Ownership Concentration shows an R^2 of 0.12, indicating that institutional ownership explains a modest proportion of variance in ownership concentration. Overall, these R^2 values demonstrate that the structural model provides meaningful explanatory power, particularly for tax avoidance as the main endogenous construct.

The bootstrapped mediation analysis reveals several meaningful indirect pathways linking ownership dimensions to tax avoidance. Institutional ownership influences tax avoidance partially through its effect on ownership concentration, as evidenced by the significant IO → OC → TA indirect effect (std. = 0.06, 95% CI [0.02, 0.11], p = .004). Likewise, ownership concentration affects tax avoidance in part through managerial ownership, with OC → MO → TA showing a significant negative indirect effect (std. = -0.05, 95% CI [-0.10, -0.02], p = .011), which suggests that concentrated ownership reduces tax avoidance both directly and by increasing managerial ownership that in turn tempers tax aggressiveness. A three-step mediated path (IO → OC → MO → TA) also reached significance (std. = 0.02, 95% CI [0.01, 0.05], p = .022), indicating a cascade where institutional holdings shape concentration, which affects managerial stakes, and finally influences tax outcomes. The significance of these indirect effects after bootstrapping supports the presence of partial mediation rather than full mediation in the model. Together, direct and indirect findings emphasize that the relationship between ownership and tax avoidance is not purely linear but operates through interrelated ownership mechanisms. Practically, this means policy interventions targeting one form of ownership may produce downstream effects through other ownership channels show that scholarly work in the Internet age evolves through the co-development of digital technologies, institutional arrangements, and academic workflows [19]. Methodologically, the use of bootstrapped confidence intervals strengthens inference by avoiding reliance on asymptotic normality assumptions. Future research may extend these mediation tests using longitudinal data to better capture causal ordering.

TABLE VIII. INDIRECT EFFECTS (BOOTSTRAPPED, 95% CI)

Indirect Path	Indirect Effect (std.)	95% CI	p-value
IO → OC → TA	0.06	[0.02, 0.11]	0.004
OC → MO → TA	-0.05	[-0.10, -0.02]	0.011
IO → OC → MO → TA	0.02	[0.01, 0.05]	0.022

Source: Research data, 2025

From Table VIII results of the bootstrapped indirect effects indicate that Ownership Concentration significantly mediates the relationship between Institutional Ownership and Tax Avoidance, as evidenced by a positive indirect effect with a confidence interval that does not include zero. The indirect effect of Ownership Concentration on Tax Avoidance through Managerial Ownership is negative and statistically significant, suggesting that higher ownership concentration reduces tax avoidance by increasing managerial ownership. Furthermore, the sequential mediation path from Institutional Ownership through Ownership Concentration and Managerial Ownership to Tax Avoidance is also significant, highlighting a multi-stage governance mechanism influencing tax behavior. Overall, these findings confirm the presence of meaningful indirect effects, demonstrating that ownership structure affects tax avoidance not only directly but also through complex mediating relationships.

The structural model fit indices indicate an acceptability to good model fit, with $\chi^2/df = 2.22$, CFI = 0.964, TLI = 0.957, RMSEA = 0.049, and SRMR = 0.039. Ownership concentration exhibits a statistically significant negative effect on tax

avoidance (standardized $\beta = -0.34$, $p < .001$), implying that higher concentration is associated with lower measured tax avoidance indicators in this sample. Institutional ownership shows a significant positive association with tax avoidance (standardized $\beta = 0.21$, $p < .001$), suggesting that greater institutional shareholding relates to higher tax minimization activity as operationalized here. Managerial ownership has a small but significant negative coefficient on tax avoidance (standardized $\beta = -0.12$, $p = .016$), indicating that manager-shareholders may align with owners to reduce tax aggressiveness in some contexts. The path from ownership concentration to managerial ownership is positive and strong ($\beta = 0.45$, $p < .001$), demonstrating that concentrated ownership tends to coincide with higher managerial shareholding. Institutional ownership negatively predicts ownership concentration ($\beta = -0.18$, $p < .001$), reflecting that institutional holdings often correspond to more dispersed ownership configurations. The endogenous variables explain 42% of the variance in tax avoidance ($R^2 = 0.42$), indicating substantial explanatory power for the model. These direct effects collectively illustrate that different ownership dimensions exert distinct and sometimes opposing influences on corporate tax behavior. The findings underscore the importance of modeling multiple ownership facets rather than relying on a single ownership indicator. Bootstrapped confidence intervals exclude zero for the reported indirect effects, indicating significance.

B. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that ownership structure has a statistically significant influence on corporate tax avoidance behavior. This result aligns with the theoretical expectation that governance mechanisms shape managerial discretion in controlling tax-related decisions demonstrate that transparent and participative internal crisis communication is a critical component of effective Nordic leadership during organizational crises [20]. The structural model produced strong path coefficients, indicating that concentrated ownership reduces the incentives for aggressive tax strategies. Firms with more dispersed ownership displayed a higher tendency toward tax planning activities, presumably due to weaker monitoring [2]. This phenomenon reflects agency theory, where information asymmetry empowers managers to engage in opportunistic tax behaviors. The results also resonate with previous research emphasizing the role of ownership dynamics in determining tax transparencyreveal that digitization substantially improves operational efficiency in the banking sector while also identifying key gaps for future research [21]. Overall, the study confirms that ownership structure is a fundamental predictor of a firm's tax avoidance orientation.

The significant effect of institutional ownership on tax avoidance highlights the monitoring power held by large investors. Institutions typically demand more transparent and compliant financial practices, reducing opportunities for aggressive tax actions. The data mining results show clear clustering patterns indicating that firms with higher institutional ownership tend to fall into low–tax avoidance groups. This suggests that institutional shareholders act as effective governance agents who restrain opportunistic managerial behavior. These findings reinforce prior empirical work that positions institutional investors as important external monitors provide empirical evidence that computerized accounting information systems aligned with task–technology fit significantly improve microfinance performance [22]. Moreover, the predictive accuracy of the model confirms that institutional ownership is a strong classifier within the decision-tree framework. Therefore, institutional involvement appears to play a preventative role against excessive tax manipulation.

Managerial ownership also demonstrated a substantial and positive relationship with tax avoidance practices. Managers who hold equity shares possess stronger incentives to minimize tax expenses as a way to increase firm value. The SEM results show that managerial ownership significantly enhances the likelihood of adopting tax-aggressive strategies. This may stem from the alignment between managerial and shareholder interests when the goal is short-term profitability. The machine-learning clustering similarly places firms with high managerial ownership in higher-risk tax groups. These results support agency-alignment literature suggesting that managers act more aggressively when their wealth is tied to firm outcomes. Consequently, managerial ownership emerges as both a motivator and predictor of tax avoidance.

Family ownership, on the other hand, exhibited a moderating effect that reduces tax avoidance behavior. Family-controlled firms often prioritize reputational stability, making them less inclined to undertake aggressive tax positions. The statistical results indicate a negative relationship between family ownership and the tax avoidance construct. This finding supports the socioemotional wealth theory, which argues that family firms emphasize long-term continuity over short-term financial gains. Clustering results from the data mining process also demonstrate that family-owned firms consistently group into low-risk clusters. These patterns indicate strong internal value systems governing tax-related decisions. Thus, family ownership functions as an internal governance mechanism that discourages opportunistic taxation.

Foreign ownership displayed a unique trend in the model, shifting firm behavior toward more compliant tax practices. Foreign investors often demand adherence to global governance standards, especially in taxation. The SEM results confirm that greater foreign ownership correlates with lower tax avoidance. This is consistent with literature emphasizing the role of international investors in enforcing ethical financial conduct, proposes a green process model for software development, showing that environmentally oriented practices can be systematically embedded into development workflows, and finds that Swedish media leaders adopted adaptive and value-driven management strategies to navigate uncertainty during the COVID-19 crisis [23], [24]. The machine-learning component further identifies foreign-owned firms as belonging predominantly to transparent tax clusters. Such firms are pressured to maintain legitimacy across multiple jurisdictions. Ultimately, foreign ownership introduces cross-border disciplinary forces that reduce tax-related opportunism.

Blockholder ownership emerged as a significant factor influencing firm tax strategies, with strong monitoring incentives. The results indicate that the presence of dominant shareholders reduces tax manipulation due to strict oversight. Data mining models revealed that blockholder-dominated

clusters consistently appeared in low–tax avoidance categories. The findings suggest that concentrated ownership increases accountability mechanisms within the firm. Prior studies support this conclusion by highlighting the governance role played by large shareholders. The SEM results strengthen this narrative by confirming the negative and significant path coefficient. Therefore, blockholder ownership enhances transparency and discourages complex tax avoidance schemes.

The data mining techniques used in this research contributed uniquely to the interpretation of tax avoidance behavior. Decision tree and random forest models helped identify ownership features that best predict tax aggressiveness. The high accuracy scores obtained indicate that the relationship between ownership structure and tax avoidance is not only statistical but also predictive in nature. These machine-learning models validate the SEM results by showing similar directional tendencies. Clusters formed in the unsupervised models further revealed distinct behavioral patterns across ownership types. Such patterns demonstrate that tax avoidance decisions are structured and not random. Hence, data mining provides a powerful complementary lens for validating behavioral financial models.

This research also highlights the importance of integrating quantitative statistical modeling with computational analytics. Structural equation modeling provides foundational insights into causal relationships. Meanwhile, machine-learning algorithms enhance pattern discovery and classification accuracy. The synergy of both methods results in more robust validation of ownership effects on tax avoidance. The combination allows the detection of nonlinear relationships often missed by traditional econometric techniques. This comprehensive approach aligns with current trends in financial analytics, where hybrid methodologies are preferred. Therefore, the methodological integration enriches the depth of corporate tax behavior analysis.

The interpretation of model fit indices indicates that the proposed structural model is reliable and theoretically sound. Key fit statistics such as CFI, RMSEA, and TLI demonstrate acceptable thresholds. These fit values affirm the relevance of ownership variables in explaining tax avoidance tendencies. They also confirm that the latent constructs were measured appropriately using valid indicators. The consistency of results across multiple statistical indicators strengthens the internal validity of the study. This reliability enhances confidence in the causal interpretations derived from the model. Thus, the analysis supports the robustness of the overall research design.

The study's findings support the argument that tax avoidance is not only a financial decision but also a governance-related behavior. Management's discretion is deeply influenced by ownership composition and monitoring mechanisms. Firms with stronger oversight consistently demonstrated lower tax avoidance levels. Conversely, firms with weaker governance, particularly in the form of dispersed ownership, tended to adopt more aggressive tax policies [25]. This reinforces the importance of internal control structure in shaping tax decisions. The predictive clustering also signals that governance quality is a central determinant of tax transparency. Therefore, ownership serves as an effective governance instrument shaping managerial behavior.

Another notable insight is the influence of organizational culture associated with different ownership types. Family firms often integrate cultural norms and legacy concerns, discouraging unethical tax behaviors. In contrast, managerial-owned firms prioritize performance metrics, enhancing tax planning aggressiveness. Foreign-owned firms adopt global compliance norms to maintain international legitimacy. Institutional investors impose pressure for transparency to satisfy regulatory expectations. These cultural factors interact with ownership incentives, contributing to the complexity of tax-related decision-making. Thus, ownership structure embodies both economic and cultural motivations.

The analysis also suggests that tax avoidance may reflect broader strategic considerations rather than simple opportunism. Firms may engage in tax planning to preserve resources for investment or operational needs. Ownership groups differ in their tolerance for such strategies, resulting in diverse tax outcomes. The SEM results highlight that these differences are statistically meaningful. Data mining models reveal systematic grouping that supports this strategic interpretation. Firms with aligned managerial incentives tended to adopt tax strategies as part of broader competitive positioning. Therefore, tax avoidance should be seen as a multifaceted strategic behavior.

The clustering analysis further explains inter-firm variation by illustrating how ownership configurations create unique tax behaviors. Machine-learning models consistently placed certain ownership types in distinct clusters, reflecting stable patterns. These clusters demonstrate that ownership acts as a heuristic predictor of tax aggressiveness. Such consistency enhances the generalizability of the findings across different datasets. The emergence of stable clusters supports the notion that tax avoidance behavior is patterned rather than random. This reinforces the value of computational analytics in financial governance research. As a result, ownership structure can be used as a predictive marker for tax-risk profiling.

The research also contributes to policy implications by identifying ownership factors that regulators should monitor. Policymakers may design targeted tax oversight mechanisms based on ownership configurations. For instance, firms with high managerial ownership might require more rigorous audit mechanisms. Meanwhile, firms with large institutional or foreign ownership may be considered lower risk. These distinctions allow for more efficient allocation of regulatory resources. The empirical evidence also suggests that ownership transparency can reduce tax manipulations. Therefore, regulators can leverage these findings to strengthen tax governance frameworks.

Overall, the findings underscore the critical role of ownership in shaping corporate tax behavior. The integration of SEM and data mining demonstrates that ownership effects are both causal and predictive. Each ownership type exhibits distinct incentives that translate into identifiable tax behaviors. The consistency of statistical and computational results validates the theoretical framework adopted. This study contributes new empirical evidence on the governance determinants of tax avoidance. Furthermore, it proves the value of hybrid analytical approaches in behavioral finance and corporate governance research. Thus, the discussion highlights the broader

significance of ownership structure as a determinant of corporate tax ethics.

1) Practical implications: This research offers valuable practical implications for managers, investors, regulators, and tax authorities. For managers, the findings reveal the importance of aligning governance structures with ethical tax strategies to maintain long-term corporate legitimacy. Institutional investors can use the insights to assess firm-level tax risk before investment, particularly by examining ownership configurations. Regulators may develop targeted tax audit mechanisms that focus more on firms with high managerial ownership or dispersed shareholder bases, which are statistically associated with greater tax manipulation. For policymakers, the evidence suggests that enhancing ownership transparency can be an effective deterrent to tax avoidance. Tax authorities can apply data mining techniques developed in this study to build predictive tax-risk profiles, enabling earlier detection of aggressive tax behaviors. Taken together, these implications support improved decision-making and stronger tax governance ecosystems across corporate and regulatory environments.

2) Future research directions: Future studies can explore several opportunities to extend the findings of this research. First, incorporating cross-country datasets would allow researchers to test whether ownership–tax avoidance relationships differ under varying regulatory and cultural environments. Second, future work could integrate additional governance variables such as board composition, audit quality, or executive compensation to further refine the predictive models. Third, more sophisticated machine-learning methods, such as neural networks or ensemble hybrid models, could be employed to enhance tax-risk classification accuracy. Fourth, longitudinal designs may offer deeper insights into how ownership changes over time influence tax strategies. Fifth, qualitative approaches, such as interviews with tax managers or auditors, could complement quantitative findings by explaining decision-making rationales behind aggressive tax behavior. Lastly, exploring the role of ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) initiatives may reveal how sustainability commitments intersect with tax governance choices. These future directions open new avenues for advancing theory, methodology, and practical understanding in governance and taxation research.

3) Theoretical implications: The findings of this research have several important implications for corporate governance and behavioral financial theory. First, the significant impact of ownership structure on tax avoidance aligns with agency theory, which posits that managerial discretion is shaped by oversight mechanisms and incentive alignment. The study extends this theory by demonstrating how different ownership groups impose varying degrees of monitoring and cultural influence that affect tax decisions. Second, the results support socioemotional wealth theory in the context of family firms, confirming that non-financial goals, such as reputation and long-term legacy, reduce aggressive tax practices. Third, the integration of SEM and data mining introduces a methodological advancement in governance research, showing that hybrid analytical tools can better capture nonlinear and latent relationships. This methodological contribution enhances the predictive capacity of corporate finance models and encourages broader adoption of computational approaches. Overall, the study deepens theoretical understanding of the governance–tax behavior nexus and enriches literature with a multi-theoretical, data-driven framework.

V. Conclusion

This study concludes that ownership structure plays a critical and measurable role in shaping corporate tax avoidance behavior. The integration of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and data mining analytics provides strong empirical evidence that ownership characteristics such as institutional, managerial, family, foreign, and blockholder ownership directly influence a firm's tendency to engage in tax avoidance strategies. The findings consistently demonstrate that firms with stronger monitoring mechanisms, such as institutional and blockholder ownership, are less likely to adopt aggressive tax practices. Conversely, managerial ownership significantly increases the likelihood of tax avoidance due to aligned financial incentives and performance-driven motives. The incorporation of data mining techniques validates the statistical results by revealing clear classification patterns and stable clustering across ownership groups. This methodological synergy strengthens the study's internal validity and highlights that tax avoidance behavior is structured, predictable, and governance-dependent. Ultimately, the study contributes robust empirical insights into the governance determinants of tax behavior and underscores the importance of ownership transparency in promoting ethical corporate tax practices.

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