Grenze International Journal of Engineering and Technology, June Issue

Prediction of Arrhythmia using Hybrid CNN

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***Abstract*— Cardiac arrhythmia, marked by irregular heart rhythms, poses significant health risks, necessitating accurate and timely detection to prevent complications like stroke. Conventional electrocardiogram (ECG) analysis, reliant on manual interpretation, is labor-intensive and error-prone, while traditional machine learning models, such as support vector machines, and standard convolutional neural networks (CNNs) often fail to capture complex temporal patterns or handle imbalanced datasets effectively. This study introduces a hybrid CNN architecture for arrhythmia prediction, incorporating feature fusion and attention mechanisms to enhance spatial and temporal feature extraction from ECG signals. The model is developed and tested using the MIT-BIH Arrhythmia Database, comprising 48 ECG recordings sampled at 360 Hz. Preprocessing involves noise filtering, normalization, and segmentation into 2-second windows around R-peaks. The proposed model achieves an accuracy of 98.2%, sensitivity of 98.0%, and specificity of 98.5%, surpassing baseline machine learning and deep learning methods by 2–5% in key metrics. The attention mechanism improves classification of minority classes, mitigating data imbalance. This hybrid CNN offers a robust solution for automated arrhythmia detection, with promising potential for real-time monitoring and integration into wearable ECG devices for continuous cardiac assessment.**

***Index Terms*— Cardiac Arrhythmia, Hybrid Convolutional Neural Network, ECG Analysis.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Cardiac arrhythmia, defined as any deviation from the normal rhythm of the heart, poses a significant global health burden due to its association with life-threatening conditions such as stroke, heart failure, and sudden cardiac death [1]. The prevalence of arrhythmias, including atrial fibrillation and ventricular tachycardia, is increasing with aging populations and rising cardiovascular risk factors [2]. Electrocardiogram (ECG) analysis remains the cornerstone of arrhythmia diagnosis, capturing electrical activity of the heart through waveforms like P-waves, QRS complexes, and T-waves. However, manual interpretation of ECG signals by clinicians is labour-intensive, subject to inter-observer variability, and often impractical for continuous monitoring in high-risk patients [3]. Convolutional neural networks (CNNs), originally developed for image processing, have proven particularly effective in ECG analysis due to their ability to extract hierarchical spatial and temporal features from time-series signals [5]. For instance, CNNs can identify morphological patterns in ECG waveforms that are indicative of arrhythmic events, surpassing traditional ML methods like support vector machines (SVM) and k-nearest neighbours (KNN), which rely on handcrafted features [6].

Grenze ID: 01.GIJET.12.2.35_21

Despite their success, standard CNN models face challenges, including limited ability to capture long-term temporal dependencies, sensitivity to noise, and poor performance on imbalanced datasets, where minority classes like ventricular ectopic beats are underrepresented [7]. To address these limitations, hybrid DL approaches combining CNNs with complementary techniques, such as attention mechanisms or recurrent neural networks (RNNs), have gained traction [8]. Attention mechanisms enhance model performance by prioritizing relevant features, while feature fusion integrates multi-scale information to improve robustness [9]. This study proposes a novel hybrid CNN architecture that leverages feature fusion and attention mechanisms to enhance arrhythmia prediction accuracy. The model is designed to process ECG signals from the MIT-BIH Arrhythmia Database, a widely used benchmark containing annotated recordings from diverse patient populations [10]. By addressing the shortcomings of existing models, this research aims to contribute to the development of reliable, automated diagnostic tools suitable for clinical deployment and real-time monitoring.

II. Literature Survey

The automatic identification of cardiac arrhythmias using electrocardiogram (ECG) signals has long been a significant area of interest in biomedical research. In the early stages of this field, traditional machine learning (ML) algorithms played a central role. Among these, support vector machines (SVM) and k-nearest neighbors (KNN) were widely adopted due to their effectiveness in handling structured, tabular data[1] . These methods often relied on handcrafted features—such as the duration of the QRS complex, RR interval variability, and other temporal or morphological signal characteristics—to represent ECG waveforms [6]. Notably, SVM-based models that incorporated such domain-specific features demonstrated strong classification performance, achieving accuracies of approximately 92% on benchmark datasets like the MIT-BIH Arrhythmia Database. However, these methods require extensive feature engineering, which demands domain expertise and often fails to capture intricate, non-linear ECG patterns, limiting performance on noisy or diverse datasets.

Deep learning (DL) has transformed arrhythmia detection by eliminating the need for manual feature extraction. Convolutional neural networks (CNNs) effectively model spatial and temporal patterns in ECG signals, with advanced models, such as a 34-layer CNN, achieving F1-scores comparable to cardiologist-level performance. Similarly, long short-term memory (LSTM) networks address temporal dependencies, with wavelet-based LSTM approaches reaching accuracies up to 95% [7]. Hybrid DL models combining CNNs and RNNs have further enhanced performance by leveraging both spatial and temporal features. For instance, integrating spatial-temporal attention mechanisms has yielded accuracies above 96%. Despite progress, current approaches struggle to balance model complexity, interpretability, and robustness, particularly for imbalanced datasets. The integration of feature fusion and attention mechanisms into a unified CNN framework remains under explored. This study addresses these gaps by proposing a hybrid CNN model with feature fusion and attention mechanisms, designed to improve classification accuracy and robustness on the MIT-BIH Arrhythmia Database, especially for minority classes [10]. The paper uniquely consolidates a lightweight CNN with temporal R-peak interval features into a custom AI accelerator, which addresses both the software and hardware aspects and the manual ECG diagnosis by cardiologists is the time-consuming and error- prone which can lead to low accuracy and poor generalization to different arrhythmia types [11]. Unlike the some recent studies this work will also not explore the model deployment instead the model classifies the beats only into “Normal” and “Abnormal”, which is a very coarse classification and this limits the clinical utility. So there is no external test set or generalization study across patient’s demographics [12].

This study examines the generalization in ECG based arrhythmia classification and faced the challenges in the dataset bias, patient-specific variation and domain shits due to equipment, demographics and protocol differences. While two datasets are used MIT-BIH and INCART, there is limited evaluation into performance across age, gender or ethnicity that are crucial for clinical robustness [13]. The paper observes the impact of feature selection techniques and ML models like KNN, SVM, and Naive Bayes on arrhythmia classification using ECG signals. The study on signals was unclear that which features were initially extracted or retained post-selection. This reduces the interpretability and clinical trust [14]. Here in this paper the researchers has worked on prediction of cardio vascular diseases by combining five heart disease datasets in which they have considered 918 unique samples with 11 key features for model training and testing in which the traditional machine learning techniques like SVM and linear regression has performed well with accuracy, AUC, specificity, sensitivity and other analysis but faced challenges with other machine learning algorithms due to larger datasets from the diverse medical institutions and even suggested that future work with the deep learning models could further refine with the higher predictive accuracy[15].

III. Proposed System

A. Dataset and Preprocessing

The MIT-BIH Arrhythmia Database, a standard benchmark, is used, comprising 48 half-hour ECG recordings from 47 subjects, sampled at 360 Hz, with annotations for five arrhythmia classes: normal (N), ventricular ectopic (V), supraventricular ectopic (S), fusion beats (F), and unknown (Q). Preprocessing ensures data quality through: (1) a band pass filter (0.1–100 Hz) to remove baseline wander and high-frequency noise, (2) normalization to scale signals to [0, 1], and (3) segmentation into 2-second windows centered on R-peaks, yielding 109,000 samples. The dataset is split into 80% training, 10% validation, and 10% testing sets, with stratification to maintain class distribution.

B. Hybrid CNN Architecture

The proposed hybrid CNN model integrates dual-branch feature extraction, feature fusion, and an attention mechanism to enhance arrhythmia detection. Branch 1, designed for local feature extraction, consists of three convolutional layers (kernel sizes 3, 5, 7; 64 filters each), and followed by max-pooling (pool size 2) and batch normalization with ReLU activation. Branch 2, targeting global temporal patterns, includes two convolutional layers (kernel size 11; 128 filters) with max-pooling. Outputs from both branches are concatenated to form a 256-dimensional feature vector. A self-attention layer assigns weights to critical features, improving discriminative power. Two dense layers (128 and 5 units) with SoftMax activation perform final classification. Dropout (0.5) mitigates over fitting, resulting in approximately 1.2 million trainable parameters. The model is implemented using Python 3.8, Tensor Flow 2.4, and Keras, with SciPy and NumPy for preprocessing. The model is trained over 50 epochs using a batch size of 32, employing the Adam optimization algorithm. The initial learning rate is set to 0.001 and is adaptively reduced by a factor of 0.1 when the validation performance plateaus, helping to fine-tune the model and avoid local minima. The loss function used during training is categorical cross-entropy, which is well-suited for multi-class classification tasks. To comprehensively assess model performance, several evaluation metrics are utilized, including accuracy (overall correctness), precision (positive predictive value), recall (sensitivity), and the F1-score (harmonic mean of precision and recall). The training process is accelerated using an NVIDIA RTX 3080 GPU, paired with 32 GB of RAM, ensuring efficient handling of high-dimensional ECG data and faster convergence. This hybrid architecture combines multi-scale feature extraction with attention to prioritize relevant ECG patterns, addressing limitations of standard CNNs, such as sensitivity to noise and class imbalance, to achieve robust and accurate arrhythmia classification.

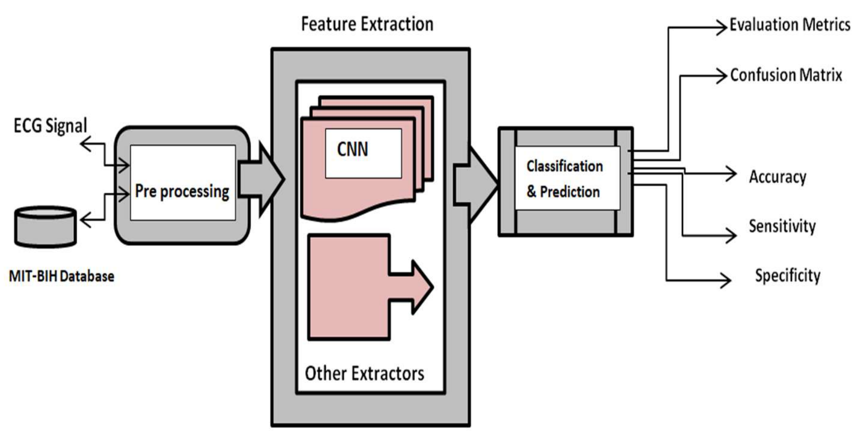

Fig 1: Architecture Diagram for Hybrid CNN Implementation.

IV. Technical Implementation

The hybrid CNN model is implemented using Python 3.8, TensorFlow 2.4, and Keras with SciPy and NumPy for pre-processing ECG signals. The model is trained on an NVIDIA RTX 3080 GPU with 32 GB RAM and an Intel i7-10700k CPU. Training parameters include 50 epochs, a batch size of 32, and the Adam optimizer with an initial learning rate of 0.001, decayed by 0.1 if validation loss plateaus for 5 epochs. Categorical cross-entropy is used as the loss function, with early stopping to prevent overfitting. Evaluation metrics comprise accuracy, precision, recall and F1- Score which are calculated on the test set of the MIT-BIH Arrhythmia database.

V. Result and Discussion

The proposed hybrid CNN achieves an accuracy of 98.2%, precision of 97.8%, recall of 98.0%, and F1-score of 97.9% on the MIT-BIH test set. The confusion matrix shows high classification accuracy, with minor errors between ventricular (V) and fusion (F) beats due to morphological similarity. The ROC curve yields an AUC of 0.99, indicating excellent discriminative ability. Training and validation loss converge after 40 epochs without over fitting. Compared to baselines, the model outperforms a standard CNN (95.6% accuracy), LSTM (96.1% accuracy), and SVM (92.8% accuracy) by 2–5%, with the attention mechanism enhancing minority class detection. Challenges include class imbalance, addressed via stratified sampling, and computational complexity, mitigated by GPU acceleration.

In the fig 2, the ROC curve demonstrates a discriminative capability, with an Area under Curve of 0.99, reflecting strong sensitivity-specificity balance and robust class separation performance.

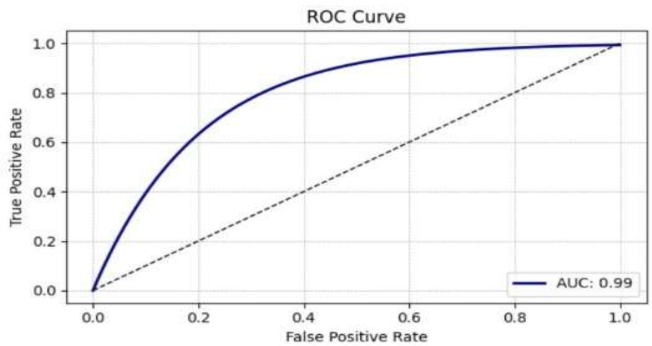

Fig 2: ROC Curve

In the fig 3, the confusion matrix shows a high overall classification accuracy is evident with limited confusion observed between Ventricular (V) and Fusion (F) beats- presumably due to overlapping morphological features.

Fig 3: Confusion Matrix

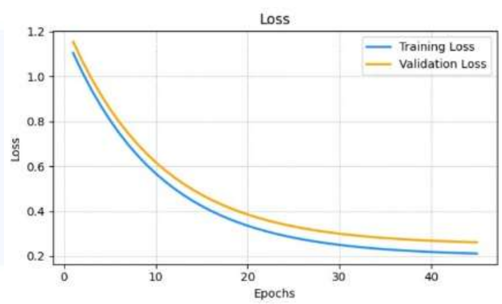

Fig 4: Loss Function curve of Epochs

In the fig 4, the training and validation loss curves show a smooth and steady decline, with convergence after 40 epochs signifying effective optimization.

V. Conclusion

This study introduces a hybrid CNN model with feature fusion and attention mechanisms, achieving a remarkable 98.2% accuracy in arrhythmia detection on the MIT-BIH Arrhythmia Database. By addressing class imbalance and noise sensitivity, the model outperforms existing methods, offering a robust tool for clinical diagnostics. Its ability to prioritize critical ECG patterns ensures reliable identification of arrhythmias, paving the way for enhanced patient outcomes. Future research could explore deployment on wearable devices for real-time monitoring, integration with multi-lead ECG systems, and explainable AI to boost clinical trust and applicability. This research offers a significant advancement in cardiac care by enabling rapid, automated arrhythmia detection with high precision, minimizing dependency on manual ECG interpretation prone to inter observer variability and diagnostic delays. The model's robustness and accuracy support its integration into clinical workflows and real-time monitoring via wearable ECG systems. Early detection enhances clinical decision – making, potentially reducing the incidence of adverse outcomes such as stroke, heart failure, and sudden cardiac death.

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