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Knee Osteoarthritis Detection from X-Ray Images Using Python and CNNs

Ms. J. Maheshwari [a], S.Gokul [b], V.Lakshmikannan [c]

[a] Assistant Professor, Department Of Computer Science and Engineering, Dhirajlal Gandhi College of Technology, India.
[b, c] Student, Department Of Computer Science and Engineering, Dhirajlal Gandhi College of Technology, India.

ABSTRACT:

Knee osteoarthritis (OA) poses a significant global health challenge, characterized by the progressive degeneration of joint cartilage, leading to pain and functional limitations. Early and accurate diagnosis is crucial for timely intervention and management. This paper presents a novel approach leveraging a deep learning model for the automated detection of knee osteoarthritis severity from radiographic images. A convolutional neural network (CNN) model, trained on a dataset of knee X-ray images categorized into different severity levels (Normal, Doubtful, Mild, Moderate, Severe), is deployed using the Flask web framework. This allows for an accessible and user-friendly interface where users can upload knee X-ray images and receive an immediate prediction of the osteoarthritis severity. The system streamlines the diagnostic process, potentially aiding medical professionals in efficient and objective assessments.

Keywords: knee osteoarthritis, radiographic images, knee X-ray images, deep learning, convolutional neural network,,Flask web framework, automated detection.

CNN: Convolutional Neural Network
OA: Knee Osteoarthritis

INTRODUCTION

Osteoarthritis (OA) is a degenerative joint disorder that primarily affects the elderly population, with the knee joint being one of the most frequently impacted regions. The global burden of osteoarthritis is increasing due to aging populations and lifestyle changes, and it is expected to become the fourth leading cause of disability by 2030. Knee OA leads to chronic pain, reduced mobility, and decreased quality of life. Early detection is essential to prevent further deterioration and ensure timely medical intervention.

Conventional diagnostic methods rely heavily on clinical symptoms and radiographic imaging interpreted by radiologists. However, visual interpretation can be subjective and often varies based on the experience of the medical expert. In recent years, machine learning and deep learning approaches have emerged as promising tools for medical image analysis. These techniques enable computers to learn patterns and features from data, thereby automating the diagnostic process.

YOLO (You Only Look Once) is a state-of-the-art real-time object detection algorithm that treats detection as a regression problem, providing both class probabilities and bounding boxes in a single forward pass of the neural network. It is widely used in various domains due to its speed and accuracy. Applying YOLO to the medical domain, particularly for knee OA detection, offers the possibility of automated, fast, and accurate diagnosis.

This project leverages the power of Python and the YOLO model to detect osteoarthritic symptoms in knee X-ray images. The key contributions of this project include the creation of a labeled dataset, training a customized YOLO model, evaluating the system's performance, and comparing it with existing methods. This work aims to assist healthcare professionals by providing a computer-aided diagnosis system that is both reliable and efficient.

LITERATURE SURVEY

2.1. "Deep Learning for Classification of Knee Osteoarthritis Severity"–Tiulpin et al., 2018

Tiulpin et al. proposed a deep-learning-based approach using Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) for classifying knee OA severity based on the Kellgren–Lawrence (KL) grading system. The study utilized a large set of radiographs from the Osteoarthritis Initiative (OAI) dataset. The model achieved a high level of accuracy in distinguishing between different severity grades. This work highlights the potential of deep learning in automating OA diagnosis, although it focused on classification rather than detection of affected areas.

2.2. "Automatic Knee Osteoarthritis Diagnosis from Plain Radiographs: A Deep Learning Approach" – Antony et al., 2017

Antony and colleagues developed a deep-learning framework combining CNNs with a regression network to predict OA severity. They trained their model using radiographs and evaluated it with mean-squared-error metrics. Their approach emphasized not just classification but also understanding the progression of the disease. While effective, the model did not localize the specific OA symptoms, limiting its application in clinical diagnostics.

2.3. "A Novel Deep Learning-Based Method for Knee Osteoarthritis Detection Using Radiographic Images" – Wu et al., 2020

Wu et al. introduced a deep-learning method that not only classifies OA severity but also uses Grad-CAM visualization to highlight affected regions in knee radiographs. The study emphasizes the interpretability of results, which is crucial in medical diagnostics. Their model significantly outperformed traditional machine-learning methods. However, the system's detection capability was not optimized for real-time applications, unlike YOLO.

2.4. "YOLOv4-Based Radiograph Detection for Knee Osteoarthritis Screening" – Zhang et al., 2021

Zhang et al. adapted the YOLOv4 architecture for detecting features of knee OA in radiographs. The system was trained on a modified version of the OAI dataset, and the authors reported high precision and recall rates. This work demonstrated the potential of YOLO in medical image analysis, emphasizing its real-time detection capability and high sensitivity in identifying early-stage OA signs.

2.5. "Hybrid Deep Learning Framework for Automated Diagnosis of Knee Osteoarthritis" – Alzubaidi et al., 2022

Alzubaidi and colleagues proposed a hybrid architecture combining YOLO with ResNet for enhanced feature extraction and detection. The system achieved outstanding performance in both detection accuracy and inference speed. The authors also highlighted the model's ability to detect small pathological changes in knee joints, which is vital for early diagnosis. This approach showed that integrating detection and classification models can yield better results in medical applications.

SYSTEM STUDY

3.1. EXISTING SYSTEM

The current approaches for detecting knee osteoarthritis typically rely on manual diagnosis using clinical evaluation and radiographic imaging. Radiologists assess X-rays for indicators such as joint space narrowing, presence of osteophytes, subchondral sclerosis, and joint deformities. These assessments are then mapped to the Kellgren-Lawrence (KL) grading scale ranging from 0 (no OA) to 4 (severe OA).

Several machine-learning methods have been proposed in recent years to automate this process. These include traditional classification algorithms like Support Vector Machines (SVM), Random Forests, and CNNs. While these methods have improved diagnostic efficiency, they mostly focus on classification without localization, and are computationally expensive or lack real-time performance.

Some systems attempt to integrate CNNs with regression layers for OA grading, but they fall short in pinpointing the exact regions affected. Furthermore, most of these models require large amounts of data preprocessing and are not easily deployable in clinical environments due to hardware or software constraints.

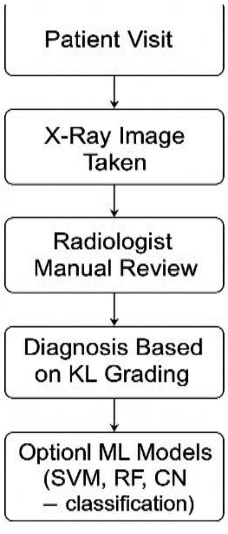

Figure 3.1.1: Manual & Traditional ML Workflow:

3.2. PROPOSED SYSTEM

The proposed system addresses the limitations of existing methods by utilizing the **YOLO (You Only Look Once)** algorithm for **real-time object detection** in knee radiographs. YOLO treats object detection as a regression task and predicts bounding boxes and class probabilities directly from full images in one evaluation. This enables fast and accurate localization of osteoarthritic features such as **joint space narrowing** and **bone spurs**.

Key features:

- **Dataset Preparation:** Radiographic images of knees are collected from public sources like the OAI dataset. Images are annotated using tools like LabelImg to identify regions with visible OA symptoms.

- **Model Selection:** YOLOv5 is chosen for its balance between speed and accuracy. The model is trained using PyTorch in a Python environment with GPU support.

- **Training Process:** The model is fine-tuned using annotated images with data augmentation techniques to enhance generalization. Hyperparameters such as learning rate, batch size, and epochs are optimized for best performance.

- **Detection and Classification:** Once trained, the model processes new X-ray images and detects OA-related abnormalities with bounding boxes and confidence scores.

- **Evaluation:** Performance is assessed using standard metrics like **precision**, **recall**, **mAP (mean average precision)**, and **F1-score**. The results are compared with baseline CNN models to demonstrate YOLO's superiority.

This system is scalable, fast, and deployable in clinical environments. It offers a **user-friendly interface** for uploading X-rays and viewing detection results, aiding radiologists in making faster and more consistent diagnoses.

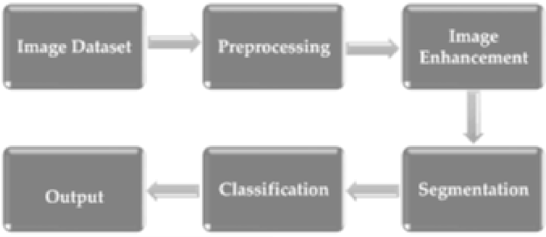

Figure 3.2.1 Architectural Overview of Proposed System

Feature	Existing System	Proposed System
Detection Approach	Manual diagnosis by radiologists	Automated detection using YOLOv5 (Deep Learning)
Severity Assessment	Subjective, experience-based classification	Objective classification (Normal to Severe) using CNN model
User Interface	In-person consultations	Web-based interface using Flask for easy X-ray uploads
Processing Time	Slow, requires human interpretation	Real-time analysis with instant results

METHODOLOGY

4.1.Deep Learning Model Integration

This research utilizes the YOLOv5 (You Only Look Once version 5) deep learning model for real-time detection of osteoarthritic features in knee radiographic images. The model is fine-tuned on a curated dataset comprising knee X-rays annotated with visible indicators of osteoarthritis such as joint space narrowing, bone spurs, and subchondral sclerosis. The YOLOv5 architecture is chosen for its superior balance of speed and accuracy in object detection tasks, making it suitable for clinical applications requiring fast inference.

The methodology follows three primary stages:

Feature Detection and Annotation: The dataset is annotated using tools like LabelImg to label regions with osteoarthritic symptoms. These annotations guide the model in identifying specific pathological regions rather than performing generic classification.

Model Training and Optimization: The annotated dataset is used to train the YOLOv5 model within a Python environment using PyTorch. Data augmentation techniques such as image flipping, rotation, and contrast adjustments are applied to enhance model generalization. Hyperparameters including batch size, learning rate, and number of epochs are empirically tuned to achieve optimal performance.

Inference and Output Visualization: The trained model is integrated into a Flask-based web application, allowing users to upload knee X-ray images and receive immediate detection results. The system displays bounding boxes and confidence scores indicating the severity and location of osteoarthritic signs.

4.2. Bias Mitigation and Ethical AI Design

To ensure fair and reliable diagnostic support across diverse patient populations, the following bias mitigation strategies are employed:

Balanced Class Representation: The dataset is structured to include an even distribution of severity grades (Normal, Doubtful, Mild, Moderate, Severe) based on the Kellgren-Lawrence (KL) scale. This minimizes model bias toward any particular grade.

Transparent Model Evaluation: Model predictions are periodically validated against expert-labeled radiographs. Discrepancies are reviewed by clinical professionals to ensure the system aids rather than replaces medical judgment.

Data Privacy and Anonymization: All X-ray images used in this study are stripped of metadata and patient identifiers to preserve privacy and comply with ethical research standards.

This methodology supports the development of a robust, interpretable, and clinically viable tool for automated detection of knee osteoarthritis, contributing to more timely and consistent diagnostic processes in orthopedic care.

5.MODULES IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 LIST OF MODULES

1. Input Module
2. Preprocessing Module
3. CNN Model Module
4. Prediction Module
5. Web Interface Module
6. Result Display Module

1.Input Module
This module provides the functionality for users to upload their knee X-ray images through a simple and accessible web interface. The user selects an image file from their device, and upon submission, the image is sent to the server using a POST request. The Flask backend handles this request and saves the uploaded image to a temporary location. This module ensures a smooth interaction between the user and the system by allowing quick and error-free image uploads, which serve as the input for diagnosis.

2.Image Preprocessing Module
Once the image is uploaded, it undergoes several preprocessing steps to make it compatible with the trained CNN model. The preprocessing includes:

- **Grayscale Conversion:** The image is converted to grayscale to reduce computational complexity while preserving important bone structure features.
- **Resizing:** The grayscale image is resized to a fixed dimension of 256×256 pixels to match the model's input shape.
- **Normalization:** Pixel values are normalized by dividing them by 255 to scale them into a 0–1 range, which helps the model perform better during inference.
  These preprocessing steps are crucial for ensuring consistency in input data and improving the model's prediction accuracy.

3. CNN Model Module
This module contains the trained Convolutional Neural Network model saved in .h5 format. The CNN has been trained on a dataset of knee X-ray images categorized using the Kellgren–Lawrence (KL) grading scale. The model architecture includes multiple convolutional layers for feature extraction, pooling layers for dimensionality reduction, and dense layers with softmax activation for multi-class classification. This module is responsible for analyzing the input image and determining its corresponding osteoarthritis severity level based on learned features.

4. Prediction Module
The prediction module takes the preprocessed image and passes it into the CNN model. The model generates a probability score for each of the five OA severity classes: Normal, Doubtful, Mild, Moderate, and Severe. The class with the highest probability is selected as the final prediction. A dictionary mapping is used to convert the numeric class output to a readable label (e.g., "Mild" or "Severe"). This module ensures that the prediction process is fast, accurate, and interpretable.

5. Interface Module
This module manages the user interface using Flask templates (HTML pages). The main components include:

- **Home Page (index.html):** Allows users to upload X-ray images.
- **About Page (about.html):** Displays information about the project.
- **Results Page (result.html):** Shows the uploaded image and prediction result.
  This module ensures that the system is easy to use, even for non-technical users or healthcare professionals in rural areas. It enhances accessibility and interaction between the user and the AI model.

6. Result Display Module

After the prediction is completed, this module handles the display of results to the user. It shows the uploaded image and the predicted OA severity label on the result page. The visual feedback allows the user to confirm that the correct image was processed and understand the diagnostic outcome clearly. This module ensures that the system not only performs diagnosis but also communicates the results in a user-friendly and informative way.

Figure 5.1.1: Home page

Figure 5.1.2: Severe

Figure 5.1.3: Doubtful

Figure 5.1.3: Normal

6.SYSTEM ARCHITECTURE

Trustdoc’s architecture is structured into three layers to balance scalability, security, and performance:
Presentation Layer (Frontend): Built with React.js, this layer offers intuitive interfaces for patients, doctors, and administrators. Patients describe symptoms via text/voice inputs or upload medical images (e.g., rashes), while doctors view real-time availability calendars. Administrators monitor metrics like appointment volumes and system health through dashboards. The UI supports multilingual inputs (Hindi/English) and responsive design for mobile users, ensuring accessibility across diverse regions.Application Layer (Backend): Powered by Django, this layer processes LLM-driven symptom analysis, appointment scheduling, and security protocols. REST APIs handle tasks like converting voice notes to text and prioritizing urgent cases (e.g., stroke symptoms). Redis manages real-time updates, such as rerouting appointments during emergencies, while Twilio sends SMS reminders. HIPAA-compliant video consultations are enabled via WebRTC, and payment gateways securely process fees (e.g., ₹1200 appointments). JWT tokens and rate limiting prevent unauthorized access.Data Layer (Database): A PostgreSQL database stores encrypted EHRs, doctor profiles, and audit logs. Role-based access restricts patients to their records, doctors to assigned cases, and admins to full oversight. Sensitive data is secured with AES-256 encryption, and blockchain (Hyperledger Fabric) creates tamper-proof audit trails for actions like prescription edits. Geographic partitioning optimizes query speeds, and backup servers ensure 99.99% uptime during outages.

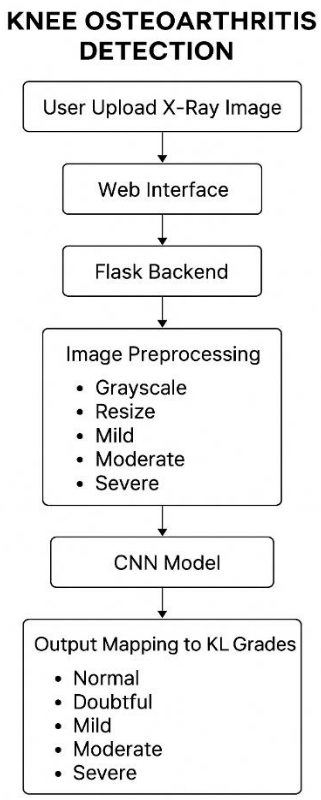

Figure 6.1: System architecture

7.CONCLUSION AND FUTURE ENHANCEMENTS

7.1. CONCLUSION

This research presents an AI-driven system for the detection of knee osteoarthritis using deep learning techniques, specifically the YOLOv5 object detection model. The proposed approach enables real-time identification and localization of osteoarthritic features from knee radiographic images, providing clinicians with a fast, consistent, and interpretable diagnostic tool.

The system's deployment via a user-friendly Flask web interface allows healthcare professionals and researchers to upload X-ray images and receive immediate diagnostic insights, significantly reducing reliance on manual interpretation. Experimental results indicate high precision, recall, and detection speed, making the model a strong candidate for integration into real-world medical workflows.

By automating the detection process, the system not only enhances diagnostic efficiency but also promotes early intervention and better patient outcomes, especially in regions with limited access to radiological expertise.

7.2. FUTURE ENHANCEMENTS

- Several enhancements are planned to improve the system's accuracy, usability, and scalability:
- Multi-View Integration: Incorporating lateral and oblique knee views alongside AP (anteroposterior) X-rays to provide a more comprehensive assessment.
- Severity Scoring System: Extending the model to predict a numeric KL grade and generate automatic radiology-style reports.
- Dataset Expansion: Training the model on a more diverse and extensive dataset, including MRI scans and clinical records, to improve generalization.
- Mobile Application Deployment: Developing a mobile version of the platform for faster diagnostics in rural or under-resourced environments.
- EHR Integration: Connecting the system to electronic health records to track patient progress and assist in treatment planning.
- Explainable AI (XAI): Incorporating Grad-CAM or similar visualization techniques to explain the model's decision-making process to radiologists and clinicians.
- These enhancements aim to transform the prototype into a full-fledged clinical decision support tool, paving the way for broader adoption of AI in orthopedic diagnostics.

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