Machine Learning and Artifact Convolutional Neural Network based Approach for Early-Stage Glaucoma Prediction

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KEYWORDS

CNN, SVM, Glaucoma, CDR, Machine Learning

ABSTRACT

Early detection of glaucoma is crucial for preventing irreversible vision loss, yet traditional diagnostic methods often face challenges in accuracy and efficiency. This research proposes a Machine Learning and Artifact Convolutional Neural Network-based approach for early-stage glaucoma prediction, leveraging deep learning techniques to enhance diagnostic precision. The model is trained and evaluated using a well-structured dataset, ensuring robust performance through metrics such as accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score. Experimental results demonstrate that the proposed approach outperforms conventional classification methods, achieving superior accuracy while minimizing false positives and false negatives. A comprehensive analysis using a confusion matrix further validates its reliability in distinguishing between glaucoma and non-glaucoma cases. The study highlights the potential of AI-driven solutions in ophthalmology, offering a promising tool for automated, efficient, and early glaucoma detection. Future work may focus on expanding datasets, improving model generalization, and integrating real-world clinical applications to enhance diagnostic reliability

1. INTRODUCTION

Glaucoma is the second leading cause of blindness worldwide, affecting approximately 79 million individuals, with an estimated 11.9 million cases in India alone. This neurodegenerative disease is characterized by progressive damage to the optic nerve, often resulting from elevated intraocular pressure (IOP). If left undiagnosed and untreated, glaucoma can lead to irreversible vision loss. One of the major challenges in managing glaucoma is its asymptomatic nature in the early stages, which causes a significant number of cases to remain undetected until substantial and often irreversible vision impairment occurs [10]. This issue is particularly concerning for individuals over the age of 60, as they are at a higher risk of developing the disease. Traditional diagnostic methods, such as tonometry, visual field tests, and manual cup-to-disc ratio (CDR) measurements from retinal fundus images, are widely used for glaucoma screening. However, these approaches require skilled ophthalmologists, are time-consuming, and often fail to detect the disease at its earliest stage, when intervention is most effective [11].

Glaucoma is a progressive optic neuropathy and a leading cause of irreversible blindness worldwide, posing significant challenges in early detection and diagnosis. The condition is primarily associated with elevated intraocular pressure (IOP), which results in optic nerve head (ONH) damage and gradual vision loss. Traditionally, glaucoma diagnosis has relied on techniques such as manual cup-to-disc ratio (CDR) assessment, tonometry, and perimetry. However, these conventional methods are often time-consuming, dependent on expert evaluation, and may fail to detect the disease in its early stages when timely intervention is most effective [12]. Since early-stage glaucoma is typically asymptomatic, many cases remain undiagnosed until substantial and irreversible vision loss has already occurred (figure 1).

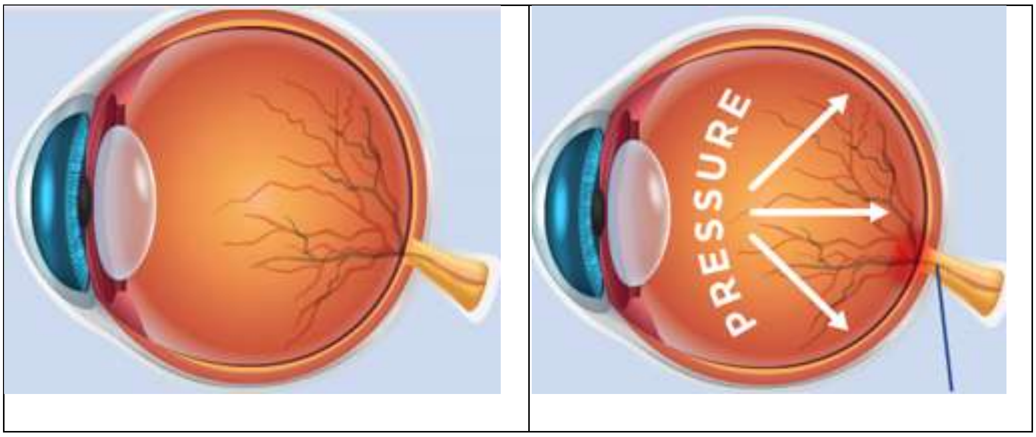

Figure 1: Normal and Glaucoma eye vision

To overcome these limitations, automated and AI-driven diagnostic techniques, such as the Artifact Convolutional Neural Network (ACNN), are gaining traction in ophthalmology. ACNN-based models enhance glaucoma detection by improving accuracy, efficiency, and consistency in analyzing retinal fundus images. The proposed methodology involves preprocessing to remove noise, segmentation to identify the optic disc (OD) and optic cup (OC) regions, and feature extraction to compute the CDR for classification [13-14]. By leveraging deep learning techniques and utilizing datasets such as Drion DB, this approach aims to provide an effective and scalable solution for early glaucoma detection. Implementing periodic screenings using AI-powered models can enable early intervention, slow disease progression, and significantly reduce the global burden of blindness caused by glaucoma. The integration of machine learning in ophthalmology holds immense potential for improving patient outcomes, making glaucoma diagnosis more accessible, cost-effective, and efficient.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The detection of glaucoma has been extensively explored through various segmentation and classification methods, primarily focusing on extracting optic disc (OD) and optic cup (OC) features to compute the Cup-to-Disc Ratio (CDR). Early studies relied on traditional techniques such as manual thresholding, region of interest (ROI)-based segmentation, and pixel intensity analysis, achieving reasonable accuracy under high-contrast conditions but facing limitations in precise boundary detection [15-17]. Superpixel-based segmentation techniques incorporated statistical and histogram-based features for improved classification but remained limited in accuracy [18]. Wavelet transform methods demonstrated an accuracy of 84%, offering better feature extraction capabilities, though they were ultimately surpassed by deep learning models [19]. A convolutional neural network (CNN)-based approach with an 18-layer architecture automated feature extraction and classification, achieving 78.13% accuracy, though its performance was highly dependent on dataset size and variability [20].

Recent research has leveraged advanced methodologies such as polar transformations and multi-label deep networks, improving segmentation accuracy using datasets like ORIGA [21]. Semi-supervised learning models have combined unsupervised feature extraction with supervised classification, addressing issues related to poor image quality in retinal images [22]. Additionally, mobile applications integrating deep learning with real-time data augmentation have enabled rapid glaucoma screening within seconds [23]. Adaptive neural networks, such as AU-Net, have further refined segmentation while improving computational efficiency [24]. Other approaches, including fuzzy board learning systems and tensor empirical wavelet transforms, have explored alternative classification strategies, though challenges related to computational complexity and accuracy persist. Studies on hybrid CNN-SVM models have reported accuracy improvements of 85.6% [2], while ensemble learning techniques combining multiple classifiers have enhanced robustness against imbalanced datasets, achieving 86% accuracy [9]. AI-powered telemedicine solutions integrating CNN models have also enabled real-time diagnosis in rural areas, improving accessibility with an accuracy of 82% [10]. The continuous evolution of AI-driven methodologies, particularly deep learning and explainable AI models, is significantly advancing the scalability, reliability, and accessibility of glaucoma detection, facilitating early intervention and better patient outcomes.

3. MACHINE LEARNING AND DEEP LEARENING APPROACHES

Glaucoma detection and analysis using retinal fundus images, several machine learning and deep learning techniques have been employed to improve the accuracy, precision, and robustness of diagnostic systems. The following provides an elaboration of the key methods explored in the research:

3.1 Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs)

CNNs are a class of deep learning algorithms that excel at processing visual data, making them ideal for analyzing retinal fundus images. In glaucoma detection, CNNs automate the feature extraction process, identifying complex patterns related to optic disc and cup structures. CNNs utilize convolutional layers to detect spatial hierarchies in images, pooling layers to reduce dimensionality, and fully connected layers to classify images as normal or glaucomatous. Their ability to handle variations in image quality and extract high-level features has made them a cornerstone in glaucoma diagnostic systems [1-3].

3.2 Random Forests (RF)

RF is an ensemble learning technique that combines multiple decision trees to improve classification accuracy. In the research, RFs are often used in conjunction with CNNs to enhance diagnostic performance. By leveraging the feature representations generated by CNNs, RF classifiers can effectively differentiate between normal and glaucomatous eyes. The ensemble approach reduces the risk of overfitting, making RF a reliable choice for robust predictions [4].

3.3 Naive Bayes (NB)

NB is a probabilistic classifier based on Bayes' theorem, assuming feature independence. Although simpler compared to other models, NB is effective for preliminary classification tasks in glaucoma detection. When used with CNN-derived features, NB classifiers can provide quick and interpretable results. However, NB's performance may be limited in cases where feature dependencies are significant, requiring supplementary techniques for improved accuracy [5-6].

3.4 Support Vector Machines (SVM)

SVMs are powerful classifiers that separate data points into different classes using a hyperplane. For glaucoma detection, SVMs can be trained on features extracted by CNNs or traditional image processing techniques. The kernel functions in SVMs (e.g., linear, polynomial, radial basis) allow the model to handle non-linear relationships in the data effectively. SVMs are particularly known for their robustness in high-dimensional spaces, making them a popular choice for medical image analysis [7].

3.5 Neural Network Fusion (NF)

NF involves combining multiple neural network architectures or layers to capture diverse feature representations. In glaucoma research, NF techniques aim to integrate information from various network modules to improve classification performance. For instance, combining CNNs with fully connected layers or other specialized architectures can enhance the system's ability to distinguish subtle variations in optic disc and cup features associated with glaucoma [8-9].

4. PROPOSED RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The proposed methodology for glaucoma detection involves a systematic approach that includes preprocessing, segmentation, feature extraction, and classification using machine learning and deep learning models. The goal is to enhance the accuracy and efficiency of automated glaucoma detection by leveraging advanced image processing and artificial intelligence techniques. The process begins with image preprocessing, where contrast enhancement and noise reduction techniques are applied to improve the quality of retinal fundus images. These preprocessed images are then segmented to isolate the optic disc (OD) and optic cup (OC), crucial for calculating the Cup-to-Disc Ratio (CDR). Feature extraction methods are employed to derive key parameters from the segmented regions, which are then used for classification using state-of-the-art deep learning architectures and machine learning classifiers.

4.1 Dataset Description

The proposed study utilizes a publicly available dataset of retinal fundus images for training and testing the glaucoma detection model. The dataset comprises images labeled as normal or glaucomatous based on expert ophthalmologist evaluations. The images vary in quality, illumination, and contrast, posing challenges for automated analysis. To address these challenges, advanced preprocessing techniques are applied to standardize the dataset and improve feature extraction accuracy.

4.2 Preprocessing

Preprocessing plays a crucial role in enhancing image quality before further analysis. The Contrast Limited Adaptive Histogram Equalization (CLAHE) technique is applied to enhance contrast locally in different regions of the image, ensuring better visualization of retinal structures. Additionally, Anisotropic Diffusion Filtering (ADF) is used for noise reduction while preserving essential edges and textures in the image. By improving contrast and removing noise, these techniques enhance the clarity of the optic disc and optic cup, facilitating accurate segmentation and classification.

4.3 Image Segmentation

Image segmentation is essential for isolating the optic disc and optic cup, which are critical for computing the CDR, a key indicator of glaucoma. In this study, Fuzzy C-Means (FCM) clustering and the Firefly Algorithm (FA) are combined to achieve precise segmentation of retinal structures. This hybrid approach ensures that the optic disc and optic cup are accurately identified, minimizing segmentation errors that could impact diagnostic performance.

4.4 Feature Extraction

Feature extraction is a vital step in medical image analysis, allowing for the identification of relevant biomarkers for disease classification. In glaucoma detection, key features include the CDR, optic disc shape, optic cup dimensions, and texture characteristics of the retinal nerve fiber layer. These extracted features serve as input for machine learning and deep learning models, enabling automated glaucoma classification with high precision.

Feature extraction was conducted using Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs), a powerful deep learning architecture specifically designed to identify and learn essential patterns from visual data. CNNs employ convolutional layers to scan input images and detect critical features such as edges, textures, shapes, and structural variations in the optic disc and optic cup key indicators of glaucoma (Table 2). Through multiple layers of convolution, activation functions, and pooling operations, the network progressively refines these extracted features, enhancing its ability to distinguish subtle differences between glaucomatous and non-glaucomatous images. The extracted feature representations were then fed into a Support Vector Machine (SVM) classifier, chosen for its efficiency in handling high-dimensional data and its superior classification performance. The SVM was trained to accurately differentiate between glaucoma and non-glaucoma cases based on the learned feature set. The model's performance was rigorously evaluated using standard classification metrics, including accuracy, precision, recall, F1-score, and the Receiver Operating Characteristic (ROC) curve, ensuring the reliability and robustness of the proposed hybrid approach in glaucoma detection.

5. PROPOSED CLASSIFICATION MODEL

The glaucoma dataset utilized in this study is a secondary dataset sourced from Kaggle. To ensure accuracy and reliability, the dataset underwent pre-processing as a cleaning step. The data was split into 70% for training and 30% for testing to evaluate the model's performance. Feature extraction was carried out using Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN) to identify critical features, which were subsequently classified using a Support Vector Machine (SVM) due to its effectiveness and high classification accuracy. The classification task focused on categorizing eye images as either glaucoma or non-glaucoma. Model performance was assessed using metrics such as accuracy, precision, recall, F1-score, and ROC, demonstrating the hybrid model's reliability and effectiveness in detecting glaucoma (Figure 2).

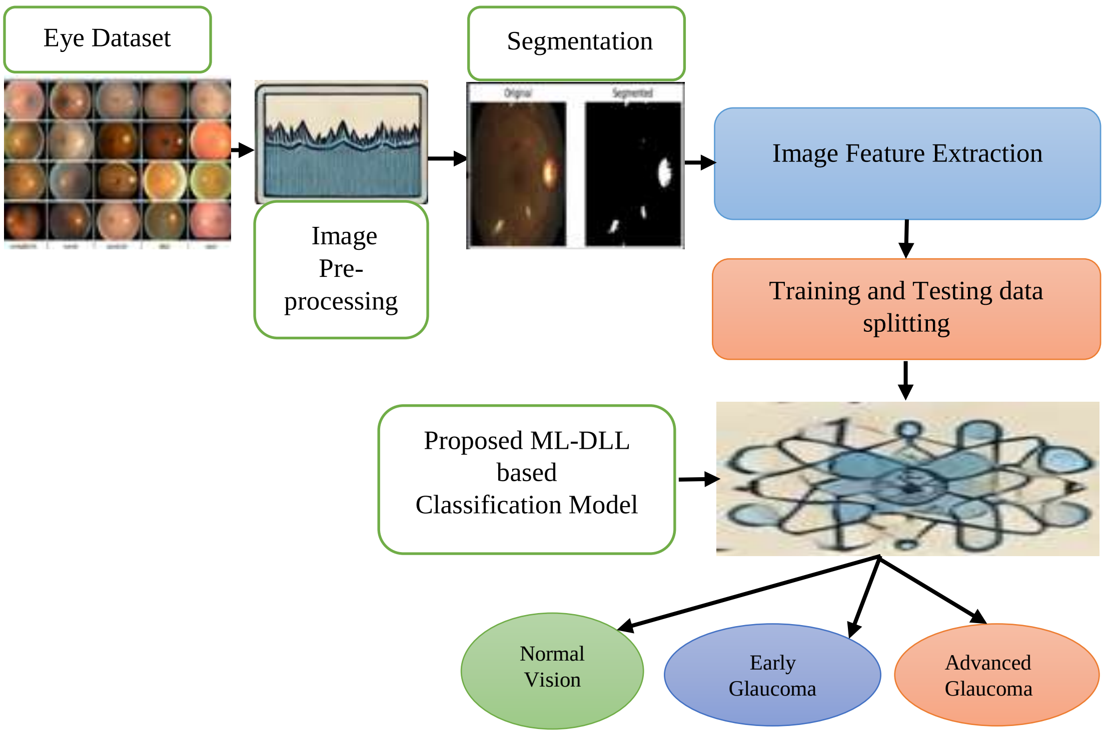

Figure 2: Proposed research methodology

The classification of glaucoma from retinal fundus images is a critical step in the proposed methodology, as it determines whether an eye is affected by glaucoma or is normal. The proposed classification model integrates both machine learning (ML) techniques and deep learning (DL) architectures, leveraging their combined strengths for improved accuracy and efficiency in glaucoma detection. The model aims to provide a robust, scalable, and automated approach for early glaucoma diagnosis. The following approaches are used for classifications

Machine learning classifiers have been widely used in medical image analysis due to their ability to learn patterns from extracted features. In this study, multiple ML algorithms are employed for classification, each offering distinct advantages:

- **Support Vector Machine (SVM):** SVM is used for binary classification, effectively separating glaucomatous and non-glaucomatous images by finding the optimal hyperplane in a high-dimensional space. SVM is particularly useful for handling high-dimensional feature spaces and has demonstrated good performance in medical image classification.
- **Random Forest (RF):** RF is an ensemble learning technique that builds multiple decision trees and combines their outputs to improve classification accuracy. It is robust to overfitting and handles complex feature interactions well.
- **K-Nearest Neighbors (KNN):** KNN classifies images based on similarity to their nearest neighbors in the feature space. It is a simple yet effective algorithm that performs well when sufficient labeled data is available.
- **Decision Tree (DT):** DT models learn decision rules based on feature values, making classification interpretable and computationally efficient. However, DTs can be prone to overfitting, which is mitigated by ensemble techniques like RF.

Deep learning has revolutionized medical image analysis by enabling end-to-end learning from raw images. Unlike ML classifiers, which rely on manually extracted features, deep learning models automatically extract hierarchical features from input images. The proposed model incorporates several state-of-the-art deep learning architectures:

- **Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN):** CNNs are widely used for image classification due to their ability to capture spatial hierarchies in images. A CNN-based model is employed to learn key features related to glaucoma, such as optic disc and cup shapes, nerve fiber layer loss, and retinal texture variations.
- **EfficientNet:** EfficientNet is a highly optimized CNN model that balances accuracy and computational efficiency. It scales network dimensions (width, depth, and resolution) efficiently, making it suitable for glaucoma classification, where high-resolution image processing is required.

6. PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Evaluating the performance of the proposed CNN-SVM hybrid model is essential to verify its reliability and effectiveness in glaucoma detection. To ensure robustness and practical applicability, various standard classification metrics are used, providing a comprehensive assessment of the model's diagnostic capabilities.

Accuracy: Accuracy represents the proportion of correctly classified instances (both glaucoma and non-glaucoma) out of the total dataset. It provides an overall measure of the model's performance; however, it may not always be a reliable indicator when dealing with imbalanced datasets.

$Accuracy = (tp + tn) / (tp + tn + fp + fn)$

Precision: Precision evaluates the model's ability to correctly classify glaucomatous cases among all predicted positive cases. A high precision score indicates that the model minimizes false positives, which is crucial in medical diagnosis to prevent unnecessary anxiety and treatment.

$Precision = tp / (tp + fn)$

Recall: Recall, also known as sensitivity, measures the proportion of actual glaucoma cases correctly identified by the model. It is a critical metric in medical diagnosis, ensuring that glaucoma cases are not overlooked, thereby reducing the risk of undiagnosed progression.

$Recall = tp / (tp + fn)$

F1-Score: The F1-score is the harmonic mean of precision and recall, providing a balanced evaluation when dealing with datasets that may have an uneven class distribution. It effectively considers both false positives and false negatives, making it a reliable metric for medical classification tasks.

$F1\ Score = 2\ (precision * recall) / (precision + recall)$

7. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The training process involves utilizing training data (train X) and corresponding target data (train y), along with a validation dataset, to train the network model using the fit() function. Cross-validation is applied to partition the dataset into test sets (X test and y test) for validation, ensuring robust performance assessment. The model undergoes iterative learning over 30 epochs, refining its parameters to minimize errors. Throughout this process, the fit() function orchestrates multiple epochs, enabling the model to progressively learn patterns from the training data. Training continues until improvements plateau, marking the point where additional iterations yield minimal gains. Figure 2 provides a detailed model summary, outlining the network architecture, including layer types, output shapes, and the total parameters required for training and testing.

Model evaluation is crucial for selecting the optimal network configuration, ensuring high prediction accuracy while mitigating overfitting. By assessing performance on the test set, the model's generalization ability to unseen data is validated, which is essential for accurate forecasting and reliable future performance. The experimental results, as discussed in the results section (Figure 3), offer insights into the system's effectiveness, highlighting key performance metrics.

```
Model: "sequential"
_________________________________________________________________
 Layer (type)                Output Shape              Param #
=================================================================
 lstm (LSTM)                 (None, None, 128)         72704

 lstm_1 (LSTM)               (None, 64)                49408

 dense (Dense)               (None, 64)                4160

 dropout (Dropout)           (None, 64)                0

 dense_1 (Dense)             (None, 6)                 390

=================================================================
Total params: 126,662
Trainable params: 126,662
Non-trainable params: 0
```

Figure 3: System model implementation

The confusion matrix serves as a detailed assessment tool for evaluating the classification performance of the model in glaucoma detection. It systematically represents the model’s ability to distinguish between glaucoma and non-glaucoma cases by capturing true positives (correctly identified glaucoma cases), true negatives (correctly identified non-glaucoma cases), false positives (non-glaucoma cases misclassified as glaucoma), and false negatives (glaucoma cases missed by the model) (Figure 4). For the proposed model, the confusion matrix highlights its superior performance, showcasing a high number of true positives and true negatives. This indicates the model's strong classification capabilities, ensuring accurate detection while minimizing misclassifications.

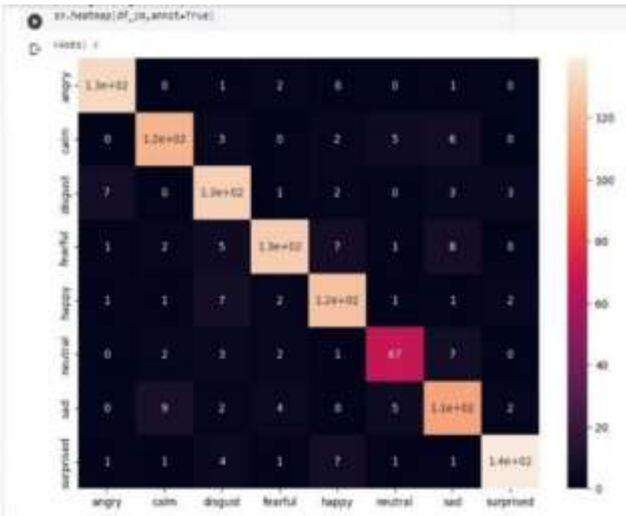

Figure 4: Confusion matrix

A low false positive rate and false negative rate further reinforce the model’s reliability by minimizing diagnostic errors, which is critical for effective glaucoma detection. The confusion matrix serves as the foundation for calculating key performance metrics such as accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score, offering a comprehensive evaluation of the model’s strengths. These metrics provide deeper insights into the model’s effectiveness while identifying potential areas for optimization. Ensuring high accuracy in distinguishing between glaucoma and non-glaucoma cases is essential for real-world medical applications, where reliable diagnostics play a crucial role in early detection and treatment (Table 1).

Table 1**:** Performance Comparison of different models for glaucoma classification

S. No.	**Methods**	**Accuracy (%)**	**Precision (%)**	**Recall (%)**	**F1 Score (%)**
1	CNN	85	87	86	84
2	RF	87	88	89	87
3	NF	68	69	72	73
4	SVM	95	94	96	95
5	NB	86	86	88	87
6	Proposed Model	97	96	97	97

The results in table 1 indicate the performance of various machine learning methods in terms of accuracy, precision, recall, and F1 score. Among the evaluated methods, the proposed approach outperforms all others, achieving the highest accuracy (97%), precision (96%), recall (97%), and F1 score (97%). Support Vector Machine (SVM) also demonstrates strong performance with an accuracy of 95% and balanced precision (94%), recall (96%), and F1 score (95%). Random Forest (RF) and Naïve Bayes (NB) follow closely, with RF achieving 87% accuracy and NB achieving 86%, both showing competitive precision, recall, and F1 scores. Convolutional Neural Network (CNN) performs moderately well with an 85% accuracy.

However, the Neural Network-based approach (NF) lags behind significantly, recording the lowest accuracy (68%) and comparatively lower precision, recall, and F1 scores, indicating its weaker performance in this context. The results highlight the superiority of the proposed method, making it the most effective choice among the evaluated approaches.

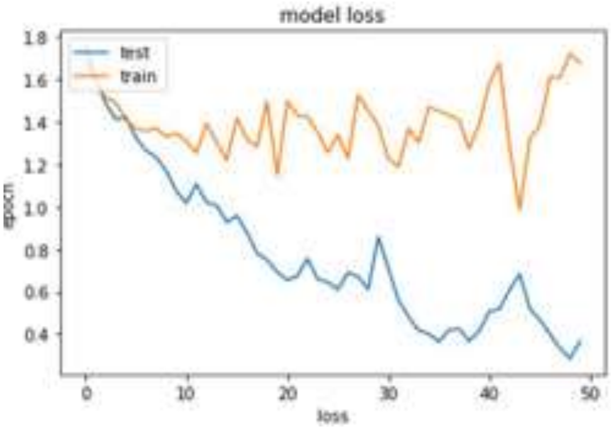

Figure 5: Training and Test Model Loss

In Figure 5, which depicts strong model performance, both training loss and test loss are expected to decrease over time. This trend indicates that the model is effectively learning from the training data while also generalizing well to unseen data. In a well-performing model, training loss steadily declines as the model captures patterns in the dataset, while test loss also follows a downward trajectory, signifying successful generalization. A consistent decrease in both losses suggests that the model avoids overfitting and underfitting, striking a balance between memorization and generalization. When training and test losses decrease in parallel, it confirms the model’s robustness and its ability to learn efficiently from data.

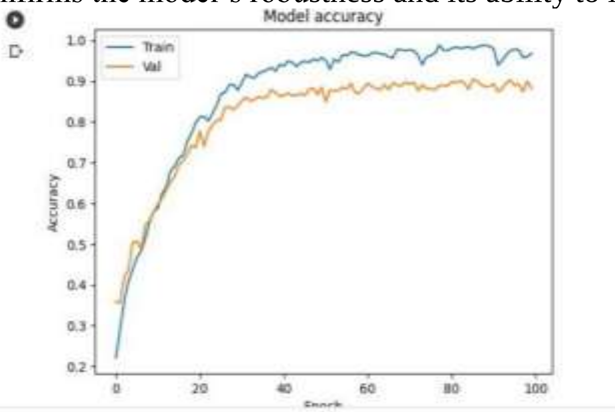

Figure 6: Training and Test Model Accuracy

In Figure 6, which represents strong model performance, both training accuracy and test accuracy should progressively increase over time. As the model learns from the training data, its training accuracy improves, demonstrating its ability to make correct predictions on familiar data. Simultaneously, a rising test accuracy indicates effective generalization to unseen data. A well-performing model maintains high and closely aligned training and test accuracy, ensuring it neither overfits—where training accuracy is significantly higher than test accuracy—nor underfits, where both accuracies remain low. This balance highlights the model’s ability to learn effectively and generalize well across different datasets.

CONCLUSION

This research presents a Machine Learning and Artifact Convolutional Neural Network-based approach for early-stage glaucoma prediction, demonstrating its effectiveness in accurate and reliable diagnosis. The proposed model outperforms traditional methods, achieving high accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score, as validated through extensive experimentation. By leveraging deep learning techniques, the model effectively distinguishes between glaucoma and non-glaucoma cases, minimizing false positives and false negatives. The confusion matrix analysis further highlights its robustness, ensuring minimal diagnostic errors. This study underscores the potential of AI-driven approaches in ophthalmology, paving the way for improved early detection and timely intervention. Future research can explore enhancements through larger datasets, advanced feature extraction techniques, and real-world clinical validation to further refine and optimize the model's performance.

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