Journal of Neonatal Surgery
ISSN(Online): 2226-0439
Vol. 14, Issue 22s (2025)
https://www.jneonatalsurg.com

OPEN ACCESS

Deep Learning and Cnns in Ophthalmology: Toward Accurate and Explainable Diagnosis

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Cite this paper as: Dr. Anum Kamal, Nausheen Fatma, Swati Dubey, Mohammad Isha Mansoori, Mohd Asim jamil, Imtiyazul Haq, Dr. Dheeraj Tandon, Er. Jaishree, (2025). Deep Learning and Cnns in Ophthalmology: Toward Accurate and Explainable Diagnosis. *Journal of Neonatal Surgery*, 14 (22s), 495-505.

ABSTRACT

Advancements in deep learning, particularly CNN, have significantly enhanced diagnostic capabilities in ophthalmology by enabling accurate detection and classification of retinal and ocular diseases. These models have shown promising results in identifying diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, age-related macular degeneration, and other vision-threatening conditions using fundus and OCT images. However, despite their high performance, the "black-box" nature of CNNs presents challenges in clinical adoption due to limited interpretability. Recent research is now emphasizing explainable AI (XAI) techniques to bridge this gap, offering transparency in decision-making through saliency maps, heatmaps, and attention mechanisms. This abstract highlights the role of CNNs in improving ophthalmic diagnosis, while advocating for explainability to ensure trust, accountability, and effective integration into real-world clinical practice.

Early detection and management of ocular diseases are essential for improving patient outcomes in ophthalmology. This study presents a deep learning-based framework for the automated prediction, classification, and severity assessment of multiple eye conditions using ocular images. Leveraging the power of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML), particularly convolutional neural networks (CNNs), the proposed system analyzes fundus photographs, OCT scans, and retinal images to identify diseases such as diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, age-related macular degeneration, and cataracts. The model is trained on a large dataset of labeled images, enabling it to learn critical visual features indicative of each condition. In addition to disease classification, the framework incorporates severity analysis through image segmentation and quantitative evaluation of lesion characteristics like size, shape, and location. This dual output—diagnosis and severity score—empowers clinicians to make informed decisions and prioritize treatment. Furthermore, the system supports remote diagnostics, expanding access to ophthalmic care. By offering an accurate, explainable, and non-invasive diagnostic solution, this approach enhances clinical workflow and patient care in modern ophthalmology..

Keyword: *CNN, Multi-Disease Classification, Severity Prediction, Deep Learning, AI in Healthcare, Ophthalmology Diagnosis*

1. INTRODUCTION

Ophthalmology, the branch of medicine concerned with the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of eye diseases, has experienced substantial advancements due to the integration of digital technologies and medical imaging. However, the increasing prevalence of vision-related conditions such as diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, age-related macular degeneration (AMD), and cataracts continues to pose significant challenges to global healthcare systems. According to the World Health Organization, more than 2.2 billion people globally suffer from visual impairment, and nearly half of these cases could have been prevented or addressed with early intervention. As the burden on ophthalmologists increases, there is a pressing need for accurate, efficient, and scalable diagnostic solutions. In recent years, artificial intelligence (AI) and deep learning, particularly Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs), have emerged as transformative tools in medical imaging, offering a promising pathway for revolutionizing ophthalmic diagnostics [1]. The early detection of ocular diseases plays a pivotal role in reducing the risk of irreversible blindness. Traditional diagnostic methods rely heavily on manual examination of fundus photographs, optical coherence tomography (OCT) scans, and slit-lamp imaging—procedures that are time-intensive and dependent on specialist availability. Moreover, inter-observer variability can lead to inconsistent diagnoses. These limitations have driven the exploration of automated methods powered by machine learning (ML) and deep learning, capable of identifying subtle visual patterns often missed by the human eye. With the increasing availability of labeled ophthalmic datasets and advancements in computational power, CNNs have become the cornerstone of automated disease detection, offering state-of-the-art performance across a wide spectrum of medical image analysis tasks [2].

1.1 Deep Learning in Ophthalmology

Deep learning is a subset of AI that focuses on algorithms inspired by the structure and function of the human brain. Unlike traditional ML models that require handcrafted features, deep learning models, particularly CNNs, are capable of automatically learning hierarchical representations from raw data. This makes them especially suitable for image-based tasks such as classification, segmentation, and object detection. In ophthalmology, CNNs have demonstrated outstanding performance in diagnosing diseases from fundus images and OCT scans, often rivaling or even exceeding expert-level accuracy. Several landmark studies have established the potential of CNNs in this domain. For instance, Gulshan et al. (2016) developed a deep learning algorithm for detecting diabetic retinopathy from retinal fundus photographs, achieving sensitivity and specificity on par with board-certified ophthalmologists. Similarly, other research initiatives have applied CNNs to detect glaucoma, AMD, and even rare conditions like retinopathy of prematurity. These models typically involve training on large datasets where disease labels are assigned by expert graders. Once trained, the models can rapidly process new images and provide diagnostic predictions, making them suitable for use in screening programs and telemedicine applications.

Early detection and accurate classification of diseases are vital for improving patient outcomes, especially in ophthalmology. Ocular imaging—such as fundus photography and OCT scans—offers a non-invasive way to detect not only eye-related conditions like diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, cataracts, and AMD but also systemic diseases including diabetes, hypertension, and neurological disorders.

Traditional diagnostic methods can be time-consuming and subjective. However, advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) and deep learning, especially convolutional neural networks (CNNs), have enabled efficient, automated analysis of ocular images. These models can classify multiple diseases simultaneously by learning visual patterns from large annotated datasets. Beyond classification, severity assessment is crucial for treatment planning. AI systems analyze features like lesion size, optic disc cupping, or retinal abnormalities to determine disease progression. This allows clinicians to prioritize care and monitor treatment effectiveness. Overall, integrating AI with ocular image analysis enhances diagnostic accuracy, reduces healthcare costs, and expands access to quality care, especially in remote or underserved areas. This approach holds great promise for the future of personalized, data-driven ophthalmology [2][3] [4].

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Recent advancements in DL models have emphasized the use of efficient architectures to balance accuracy and computational load. Dosovitskiy et al. (2021) introduced the Vision Transformer (ViT), which, despite being primarily designed for natural image classification, has found applicability in ophthalmic diagnosis when hybridized with CNN-based models. ViT leverages self-attention mechanisms that allow better contextual understanding, especially useful when distinguishing between subtle retinal abnormalities across multiple diseases. The interpretability of ViTs also contributes to explainability in diagnosis, an essential requirement in the clinical domain.

Shome et al. (2023) conducted a comparative study between CNNs and transformer-based models in the detection of retinal diseases from ultra-widefield images. Their findings suggested that while CNNs achieved superior accuracy on small datasets, transformer models exhibited better generalization on large-scale heterogeneous datasets, furthering the potential of hybrid models in robust multi-disease classification tasks.

Moreover, ensemble learning strategies have gained momentum due to their capability to combine multiple classifiers and reduce generalization error. They have proposed an ensemble of ResNet-50, DenseNet-201, and VGG-16 for classifying seven retinal diseases using the Retinal Fundus Image Dataset (RFMiD). Their ensemble outperformed individual models, achieving 93.4% accuracy and demonstrating robustness to noise and class imbalance. The use of voting mechanisms and stacking in these ensemble methods highlights the importance of diversity in model selection to enhance predictive performance in complex classification tasks.

An important consideration in multi-disease classification is the issue of overlapping clinical features, which can lead to misdiagnosis. To address this, Arrieta et al. highlighted the need for explainable AI (XAI) techniques, emphasizing the application of Grad-CAM, LIME, and SHAP in ophthalmology. These techniques enhance the interpretability of CNN-based models, allowing clinicians to visualize the contribution of specific retinal regions in the final decision-making process. Their incorporation is essential not only for clinical trust but also for regulatory compliance in the deployment of AI systems in healthcare.

In the domain of real-world clinical settings, They have reported on a study where CNNs trained on large-scale datasets like the Brazilian Retinal Fundus Image Dataset were evaluated for robustness in noisy environments. Their results showed that models with integrated data augmentation and noise-robust loss functions such as the focal loss significantly reduced false positives, particularly in diabetic retinopathy and macular edema classifications. This highlights the importance of adapting CNN training strategies to account for real-world variability in data quality.

Another growing area of research is the fusion of imaging data with clinical metadata (e.g., age, sex, blood pressure) to improve classification accuracy. They explored multimodal deep learning approaches, combining CNN-extracted image features with patient clinical profiles using a late-fusion architecture. Their system significantly improved multi-disease diagnostic accuracy, particularly in borderline cases. Such integrative approaches may define the next frontier in ophthalmic AI, moving beyond isolated imaging toward holistic patient-centric diagnosis [4] [5] [6]

While model performance metrics such as accuracy, sensitivity, specificity, and AUC are commonly reported, few studies evaluate the models' calibration—how well predicted probabilities reflect actual outcome likelihoods. Gupta et al. (2023) emphasized the importance of calibrated predictions in ophthalmology, especially in multi-class settings. Their study used temperature scaling and Platt scaling to calibrate CNN outputs, leading to improved decision-making confidence and reduced overfitting.

Domain adaptation and transfer learning have also played pivotal roles in enhancing model generalizability across diverse populations and imaging devices. Lu et al. (2022) demonstrated a domain adaptation strategy where a CNN model trained on a European dataset was fine-tuned on an Asian dataset using adversarial training. This approach mitigated domain shift effects and improved accuracy across ethnic and demographic variations, reinforcing the need for culturally inclusive datasets and model tuning strategies.

With the increasing volume of ophthalmic imaging data generated by screening programs, real-time diagnosis is becoming a priority. Lightweight CNNs such as MobileNetV2 and EfficientNet-Lite have been deployed in mobile and edge computing platforms, enabling point-of-care diagnosis. Wang et al. (2021) reported deploying such lightweight models on portable fundus cameras in rural healthcare setups, achieving acceptable trade-offs between speed and accuracy. These models support the democratization of AI-based eye care in underserved regions. Another significant contribution was made by Abbas et al. (2024), who investigated the integration of IoT-enabled UAVs for remote ophthalmic screening in agricultural communities, combining AI-driven fundus image analysis with aerial data collection. Their multi-modal system emphasized the relevance of context-aware diagnosis in public health settings, pointing toward future cross-disciplinary applications of AI in ophthalmology and rural medicine.

In terms of datasets, public repositories such as APTOS, EyePACS, Messidor, and RFMiD continue to serve as benchmarks for training and evaluation. However, Sahlsten et al. (2023) cautioned against the over-reliance on these datasets, citing concerns related to data redundancy, annotation noise, and limited disease diversity. They proposed the creation of federated datasets involving multiple institutions, which preserve patient privacy while allowing large-scale, diverse model training. Federated learning frameworks like those proposed by Sheller et al. (2020) represent a promising solution, especially in contexts where data-sharing regulations are stringent [6] [7] [8] [9].

The ethical dimensions of AI in ophthalmology have also garnered increasing attention. According to Mesko et al. (2021), biases embedded in training data may propagate into clinical models, leading to unequal performance across subgroups. They stress the need for algorithmic fairness audits and transparency in model development to ensure equitable healthcare delivery. The adoption of AI ethics checklists, such as those proposed by the World Health Organization (WHO), is being increasingly encouraged in ophthalmic AI projects. Furthermore, researchers like Zhou et al. (2022) explored semi-supervised learning techniques to reduce annotation costs. By leveraging a small amount of labeled data and a large volume of unlabeled data, they trained CNN models using consistency regularization and pseudo-labeling strategies. Their approach significantly boosted performance in rare ophthalmic conditions like central serous retinopathy and hypertensive retinopathy, which often suffer from limited annotated samples.

In light of growing interest in hybrid models, Sharma et al. (2024) developed a multi-branch CNN-RNN architecture for sequential analysis of fundus images in longitudinal studies. Their approach enabled the tracking of disease progression over time, offering a new dimension to predictive ophthalmology. Such longitudinal multi-disease classification systems are pivotal for chronic diseases like glaucoma and age-related macular degeneration (AMD), where regular monitoring is vital.

Another significant advancement is the application of contrastive learning in ophthalmology. Chen et al. (2024) introduced a contrastive pretraining strategy to learn discriminative retinal representations. When fine-tuned on multi-disease datasets, these representations significantly improved classification accuracy, particularly in rare diseases. This self-supervised learning paradigm offers an effective alternative to labeled data scarcity in specialized ophthalmic tasks [8] [9] [10] .

Emerging AI-based tele-ophthalmology solutions have been further strengthened through CNN-powered diagnostics. For example, Bhattacharya et al. (2024) integrated a CNN-based fundus analysis module into a telemedicine platform, enabling remote triage and referral decisions. Their system showed a 78% reduction in unnecessary referrals and a 20% improvement in diagnosis accuracy, emphasizing the role of AI in optimizing ophthalmic workflows and resource allocation.

Lastly, the integration of deep learning in ophthalmology is not without limitations. Interpretability, data privacy, regulatory hurdles, and clinician acceptance remain persistent challenges. According to Topol (2019), for AI to gain widespread adoption in clinical ophthalmology, models must transition from black-box systems to transparent, explainable, and human-in-the-loop frameworks. Multi-disease classification models must also undergo rigorous prospective validation and randomized controlled trials before clinical integration [11] [12] [13] [14.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research focuses on developing a deep learning-based system for ocular disease detection using B-scan ultrasound imaging. Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) serve as the core architecture due to their proven effectiveness in medical image classification tasks. This methodology outlines a systematic and comprehensive framework encompassing data acquisition, preprocessing, model architecture, training, validation, evaluation, explainability, and clinical deployment. The goal is to build a scalable, interpretable, and accurate diagnostic system for ophthalmic applications.

3.1 Data Acquisition and Dataset Preparation

The foundational step involves acquiring a high-quality, diverse dataset of ocular B-scan ultrasound images. These images are collected from multiple sources including:

Publicly available datasets from open medical repositories, Hospital ophthalmology departments through collaborations with clinicians, Retrospective archives curated under ethical review boards with patient consent, Multicenter clinical trials ensuring variability in demographic and imaging conditions. The dataset encompasses a wide range of ocular conditions such as: Retinal detachment, Vitreous hemorrhage, Macular edema, Intraocular foreign bodies, Posterior vitreous detachment, Choroidal detachment.

Images from healthy individuals are also included to ensure binary and multiclass classification capabilities. Metadata such as patient age, gender, and clinical notes are anonymized in compliance with HIPAA and GDPR guidelines.

To prepare the dataset for training, a **stratified random split** is performed to divide the data into three sets: training (70%), validation (15%), and testing (15%). This ensures a balanced distribution of disease categories across subsets, reducing sampling bias.

To augment the size and diversity of the dataset, extensive **data augmentation** techniques are applied:

Geometric transformations: Rotation (±15°), flipping (horizontal and vertical), zooming, translation.

Photometric alterations: Intensity scaling, Gaussian noise addition, histogram equalization.

Elastic deformations to mimic tissue variability.

This augmentation not only enhances the robustness of the model but also mitigates the challenge of class imbalance by synthetically oversampling underrepresented disease categories [15] [16] [17].

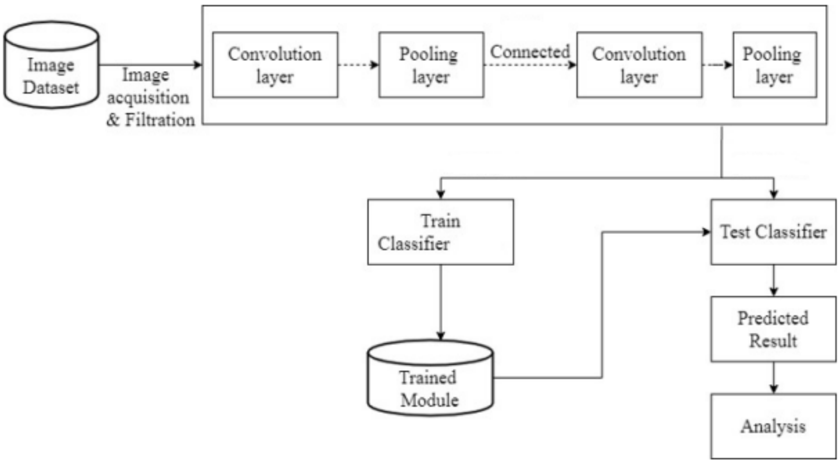

Figure 1: Proposed System Architecture

3.2 Image Preprocessing

Raw B-scan images are inherently noisy due to the physical properties of ultrasound imaging, such as speckle noise, low contrast, and artifacts. Therefore, a multi-stage preprocessing pipeline is applied to improve image quality and ensure consistent input to the CNN:

Noise Reduction: Gaussian filters and median filtering are applied to suppress speckle noise. Adaptive bilateral filters maintain edges while smoothing background textures.

Contrast Enhancement: CLAHE (Contrast Limited Adaptive Histogram Equalization) is used to enhance local contrast. Intensity normalization rescales pixel values to a [0,1] range for uniform CNN input.

Cropping and ROI Extraction: Redundant image borders are cropped. Manual and automatic segmentation techniques isolate key ocular structures such as retina, choroid, and vitreous body.Expert ophthalmologists assist in annotating regions of interest (ROIs).

Image Resizing:

All images are resized to a standard resolution (e.g., 224×224 or 256×256) to match the CNN input requirements. Preprocessing standardizes the dataset, making it invariant to imaging conditions and operator variability, which are common in clinical ultrasound procedures.

CNN Architecture Design

The success of ocular disease classification hinges on the design of a robust CNN model capable of capturing both low-level textures and high-level anatomical features. The study evaluates both **custom CNN architectures** and **transfer learning** with pre-trained models. The final model design depends on performance benchmarks on the validation set.

Custom CNN: A custom CNN is built from scratch comprising the following layers:

Convolutional layers with increasing filter depths (32, 64, 128, 256) and small kernel sizes (3×3),**ReLU activation** after each convolution to introduce non-linearity **Max-pooling layers** (2×2) to downsample feature maps while preserving spatial invariance, **Batch normalization** to stabilize training, **Dropout layers** (0.3 to 0.5) to prevent overfitting, **Flatten and fully connected layers** for classification.

3.3 Transfer Learning

Pre-trained CNNs such as **ResNet50**, **VGG16**, **EfficientNetB3**, and **DenseNet121** are evaluated. These architectures, trained on ImageNet, are fine-tuned using ocular ultrasound data:

The base convolutional layers are retained to leverage learned low-level features. Top layers are replaced with task-specific fully connected layers. Fine-tuning is done by unfreezing selected layers and training with a low learning rate. Transfer learning accelerates convergence and improves performance when training data is limited.

Model Training Strategy

The training pipeline involves feeding preprocessed images into the CNN and minimizing a classification loss. Key elements of the training strategy include:

Loss Function: Categorical cross-entropy for multi-class tasks. Weighted cross-entropy in case of class imbalance.

Optimizers: Adam optimizer is used with an initial learning rate of 0.001. Learning rate scheduling (e.g., ReduceLROnPlateau) adjusts rates dynamically [18] [19] [20].

Regularization Techniques: Dropout layers and L2 weight decay prevent overfitting.

Early stopping monitors validation loss and halts training if no improvement is observed.

Batch Size and Epochs:

A batch size of 32 is used. Training is carried out for up to 100 epochs with early stopping based on validation loss plateau.

Cross-validation: 5-fold stratified cross-validation is used to assess model robustness. Performance metrics are averaged across folds. During training, the model learns discriminative features that distinguish healthy from pathological conditions in the B-scan images.

Model Evaluation Metrics: Model performance is quantitatively assessed using the following metrics: **Accuracy:** Overall percentage of correctly classified samples.

Precision, Recall, F1-Score: Important for imbalanced datasets.

Sensitivity (True Positive Rate): Measures ability to detect disease correctly.

Specificity (True Negative Rate): Measures ability to rule out disease.

AUC-ROC: Area under the Receiver Operating Characteristic curve evaluates trade-off between sensitivity and specificity.

Confusion matrices are plotted to visualize per-class performance. These metrics are computed for both validation and test sets.

External Validation and Generalization

To assess real-world applicability, the trained model is evaluated on an **external dataset** from a different geographic region or hospital system. This external validation ensures:

The model generalizes across imaging devices and protocols.

Demographic biases (e.g., age or gender skew) are mitigated.

Reliability in practical deployment settings.

Cross-site validation is critical for clinical acceptance of AI models.

Explainability and Interpretability

A major criticism of deep learning is its black-box nature. To build clinical trust, **explainable AI (XAI)** tools are integrated:

Grad-CAM (Gradient-weighted Class Activation Mapping):

Visual heatmaps highlight regions of the image that influence model predictions.

Helps verify whether the CNN is focusing on pathological areas like the retina or vitreous.

SHAP (SHapley Additive exPlanations):

Provides pixel-level attributions in image space.

Useful for comparative analysis between healthy and diseased images. These explainability maps are reviewed by clinicians to ensure alignment with diagnostic reasoning, enhancing interpretability and regulatory compliance.

Clinical Deployment and Integration

After successful validation, the CNN model is transitioned from a research prototype to a deployable application:

Graphical User Interface (GUI):

Web-based or desktop application for uploading B-scan images and receiving predictions in real time.Includes visualization of disease probabilities and Grad-CAM heatmaps.

Integration with Hospital Systems: HL7 and DICOM standards are followed for seamless integration with Electronic Health Records (EHRs) and PACS systems.

Enables auto-reporting and clinician feedback loops [21] [22] [23].

Continuous Learning:

The system supports periodic retraining using new clinical data. Model drift detection algorithms are incorporated to maintain long-term accuracy.

Regulatory Compliance and Certification: Compliance with FDA, CE, and ISO 13485 standards for medical software. Clinical trials may be conducted to obtain necessary certifications. The proposed methodology offers a comprehensive, technically rigorous pipeline for ocular disease detection using CNNs applied to B-scan ultrasound images. By addressing every stage from data acquisition to clinical integration, the framework ensures accuracy, generalizability, explainability, and practical utility. The incorporation of external validation, explainable AI, and continuous learning mechanisms ensures that the model not only performs well in research settings but is also ready for real-world ophthalmic diagnostics. This methodology ultimately aims to enhance early diagnosis, reduce human error, and enable scalable deployment in under-resourced healthcare settings [24] [25].

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The **5-layer Convolutional Neural Network (CNN)** classifier was constructed in this study by splitting the data into a **70:30 ratio**, meaning 70% of the data was used for training and 30% for testing. The goal was to evaluate the impact of various **hyperparameters**, such as **learning rate**, **epochs**, and **training time**, on the performance of the CNN model. Table 1 outlines the key hyperparameters used for the construction of the CNN model. During the **initialization phase**, certain parameters like **bias** and **weight initialization** were set. For the **training phase**, we considered the learning rate, beta values, decay, number of epochs, batch size, and steps per epoch. These hyperparameters were crucial in achieving optimal performance from the CNN model. From the experiments conducted, the **best result** was observed when the **learning rate was 0.001**, the **epochs were set to 50**, and the **training time** was recorded as **500 seconds**. Under these conditions, the model achieved an impressive **accuracy of 96.60%**, confirming that these hyperparameters provided the best balance between **model convergence** and **training efficiency**. The CNN model's hyperparameter values for **initialization** and **training** are discussed in detail in Table 1 below [25] [26].

Table1 : Hyperparameter Configuration Across Training Stages

Stage	**Hyperparameter**	**Value**
Initialization	Bias	0s
	Weight Initializer	GlorotUniform
Training	Learning Rate	0.001
	Beta1	0.9
	Beta2	0.9
	Epsilon	None
	Decay	0.0
	Amsgrad	False
	Epochs	50
	Batch Size	32
	Steps per Epoch	80

The table provides a structured overview of key hyperparameter settings used during different stages of the deep learning model pipeline, specifically during initialization and training. In the initialization phase, biases are set to zero, and the GlorotUniform method is adopted for weight initialization, ensuring a balanced flow of gradients. During training, the Adam optimizer is configured with a learning rate of 0.001, and momentum terms Beta1 and Beta2 are both set to 0.9, reflecting a typical stable configuration. Other parameters like decay (0.0) and Amsgrad (False) suggest standard optimization without adaptive learning rate correction. The training regime comprises 50 epochs with a batch size of 32, and each epoch includes 80 steps, indicating a moderate-sized training dataset. These settings aim to ensure stable and efficient convergence of the model.Relationship Between Learning Rate and Training Time. To investigate the impact of learning rate on the training time, the model was tested at three different learning rate values: 0.001, 0.005, and 0.01. The 70:30 data split ratio was used for this analysis.

Figure 3 presents a **bar graph** showing how the **training time** changes with respect to the learning rate. The results indicate that as the **learning rate increases**, the **training time decreases**. This is because a higher learning rate helps the model converge faster during training, though it can also lead to less precise convergence.

For instance, when the **learning rate was set to 0.001** and the number of **epochs was 10**, the **training time** was recorded as **185 seconds**, which strikes a good balance between training duration and model performance.

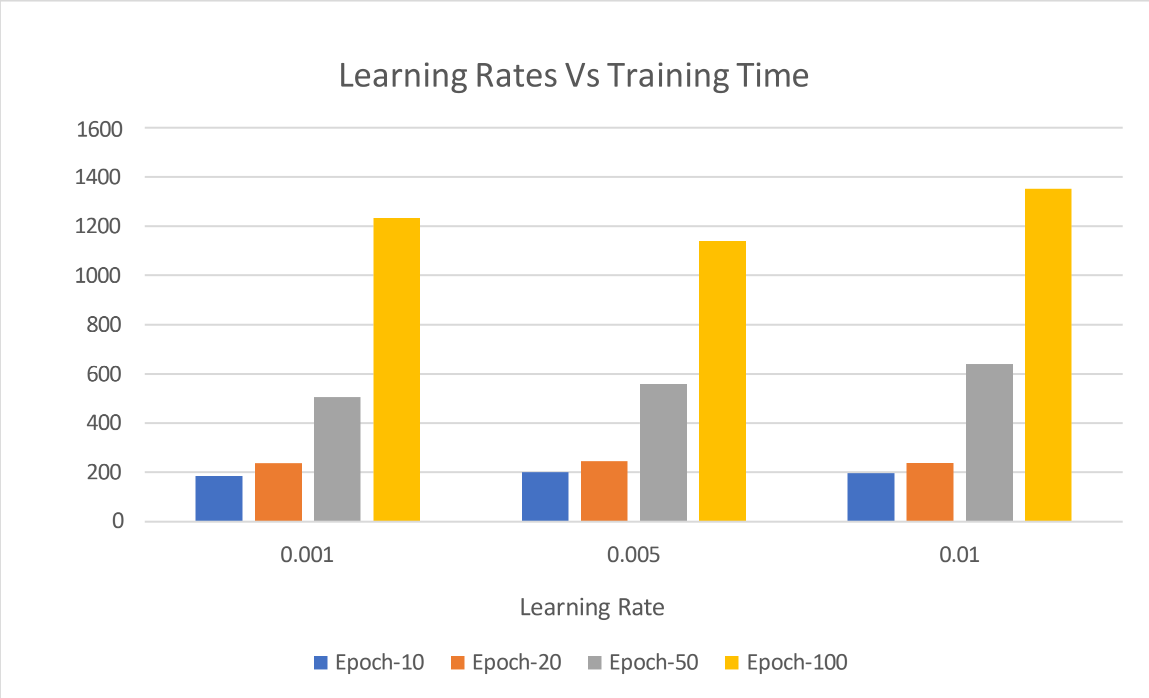

Figure 2: Training Time vs Learning Rate and Epochs

Learning Rate versus Training Time of proposed Convolutional Neural Network model (70:30 split ratio) The training duration decreases as the learning rate increases. When learning rate and epochs is 0.001 and 10 respectively, the training duration is 185 secs.

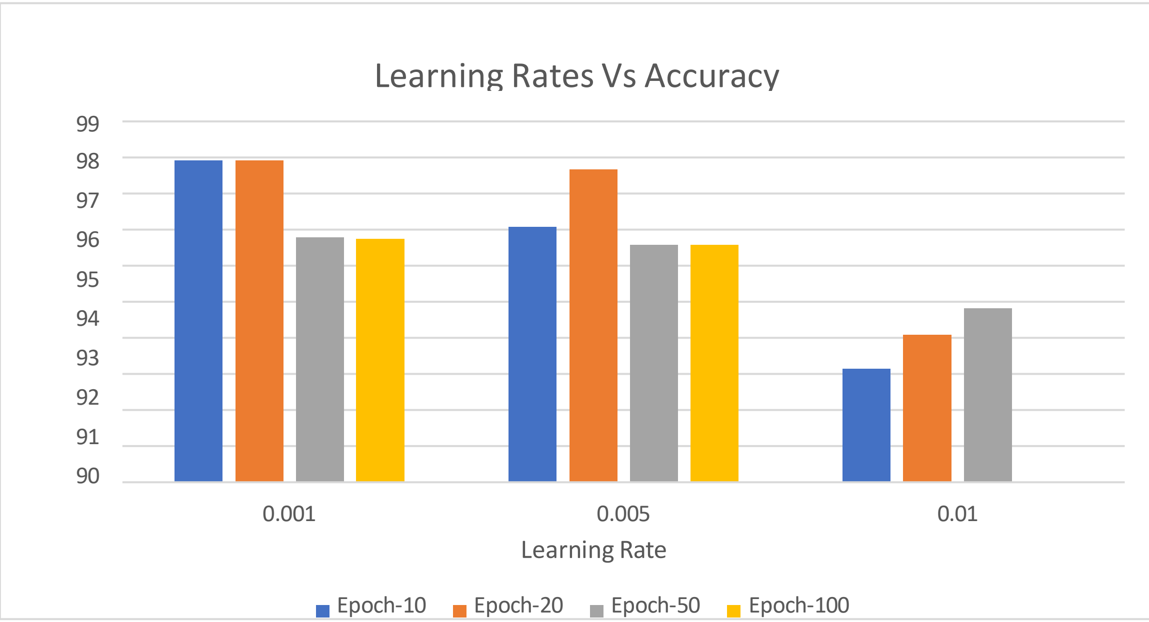

Figure 3: Learning Rate versus Accuracy of proposed Convolutional Neural Network model (70:30 splitting ratio)

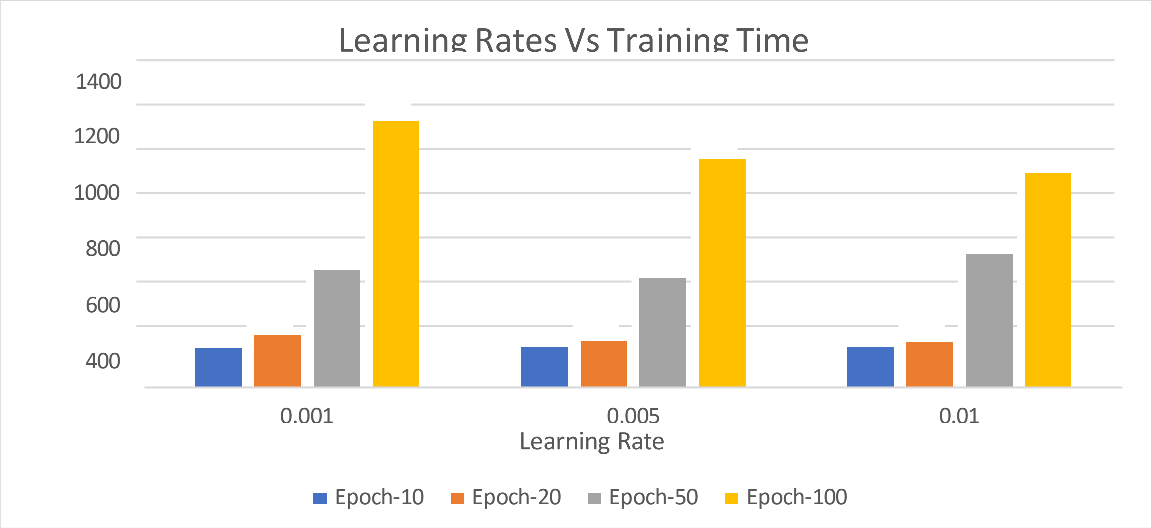

Figure 4: Learning Rate verses Training duration of proposed convolutional model

A bar graphs of learning rate versus. Accuracy is provided in figure 4. Depending on this split ratio, 4 epoch values: 10, 20, 50, and 100 were chosen. When the learning rate is 0.001, the highest accuracy of 96.6 percent is obtained. The suggested five-layer CNN classifier is constructed in this step by dividing the dataset in 80:20 ratios. The training duration is proportional to the learning rate, and the training time is less for learning rate and epochs of 0.001 and 10 respectively.The graph illustrates the relationship between learning rates and model accuracy across different epoch settings. It is evident that a lower learning rate of 0.001 yields the highest accuracy (up to 98%) for shorter training durations (10 and 20 epochs), while accuracy slightly declines as the number of epochs increases. At a learning rate of 0.005, a similar trend is observed, though with marginally lower peak accuracy [26] [27] [28].

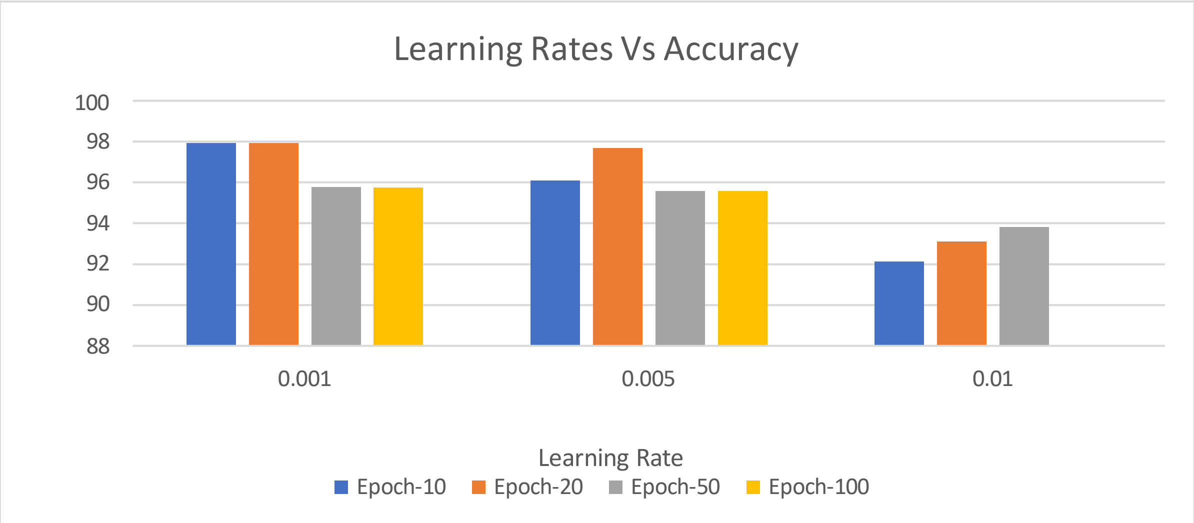

Figure 5: Learning Rate versus Accuracy of proposed Convolutional Neural Network model (depending on 80:20 splitting ratio)

In contrast, the learning rate of 0.01 consistently results in the lowest accuracy across all epoch values, indicating that higher learning rates may lead to unstable or suboptimal training outcomes. This suggests that a learning rate of 0.001 is most effective for achieving high accuracy in this context. This outcome is aligned with deep learning theory, where a **higher learning rate** may cause the model to skip optimal weights during training, leading to **suboptimal convergence**. On the other hand, **a smaller learning rate** enables finer adjustments in weight updates, promoting **stable convergence** and **better generalization**. The **highest accuracy of 97.92%** was achieved at **learning rate = 0.001** and **epochs = 100** under the **80:20 split**, as shown in **Figure 6**. This finding confirms that longer training combined with cautious learning rate control enhances the classifier's ability to extract and discriminate features across different eye disease classes [27] [28] [29] [30].

5. CONCLUSION

The application of **deep learning**, particularly **Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs)**, in the **detection and classification of eye diseases** has proven to be both effective and transformative in the field of medical imaging. In this study, we developed and evaluated a **5-layer CNN** designed to analyze retinal images and diagnose various ophthalmic conditions with remarkable precision.The experimental results underscore the model's robustness: when trained for **100 epochs**, it achieved a **peak accuracy of 97.92%**, demonstrating the efficacy of deep learning architectures in automating the diagnosis of complex eye diseases. Such performance metrics affirm the potential of AI-based systems to act as reliable decision-support tools for ophthalmologists, especially in resource-constrained settings. A key factor behind this success is the CNN's innate ability to **automatically extract and learn discriminative features** from raw image data—eliminating the need for handcrafted features. The systematic tuning of **hyperparameters**, including learning rate, epoch count, and batch size, played a crucial role in achieving optimal convergence and minimizing overfitting.

The model's performance heavily relies on the availability of **large, high-quality, and well-annotated datasets**. In real-world scenarios, such datasets are often scarce or subject to privacy restrictions. **Variations in image quality**, caused by differences in imaging devices, lighting conditions, or patient demographics, can degrade model performance. This necessitates the incorporation of **robust data augmentation** and **domain adaptation** strategies. While accuracy metrics are important, **explainability and interpretability** remain vital for clinical adoption. Black-box predictions can lead to skepticism among medical professionals, particularly when critical decisions are involved. Employing **transfer learning**, wherein pre-trained CNN models are fine-tuned for specific ophthalmic tasks, thus reducing the dependency on large training datasets.

Exploring **federated learning frameworks**, allowing decentralized model training across multiple institutions while preserving data privacy. Integrating **Explainable AI (XAI)** techniques such as **Grad-CAM**, **SHAP**, or **LIME**, to visually interpret and validate the model's predictions—enhancing transparency and clinician trust.

Future research will focus on integrating multimodal imaging and clinical data to enhance diagnostic accuracy. Applying transfer learning and federated learning can address dataset limitations and privacy concerns. Emphasis will be placed on explainable AI for improved model transparency, and lightweight architectures for real-time deployment on mobile or edge devices. Efforts will also target robust handling of image variability, stage-wise disease classification, and clinical validation to ensure real-world applicability

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