Design and Implementation of a Machine Learning Model for Depression Detection

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Abstract: *Mental health disorders such as depression and anorexia are growing public health concerns that require timely and accurate detection for effective intervention. With the widespread use of online social networks, social media content offers a rich source of information to assess individuals' emotional states in real time. This study proposes a machine learning-based framework that automatically detects signs of depression and anorexia by analyzing emotional patterns expressed in users' social media posts. The model introduces two key emotional representations: static features that capture fine-grained sub-emotions derived from clustering word embeddings within coarse emotion categories, and dynamic features that quantify the temporal variability of these sub-emotions over time. By leveraging these complementary representations, the proposed system enhances both the accuracy and interpretability of mental health detection compared to conventional sentiment-based approaches. Experiments conducted on benchmark datasets collected from Reddit demonstrate that the fusion of static and dynamic emotional features achieves state-of-the-art performance in depression detection and competitive results in anorexia prediction. Furthermore, a practical implementation integrating an online social networking module with emotion detection and graphical monitoring capabilities illustrates the system's real-world applicability in providing scalable and accessible mental health support tools. This work highlights the potential of emotion-driven analysis in advancing computational mental health diagnostics and enabling early intervention.*

Keywords: Depression Detection, Anorexia Prediction, Emotion Analysis, Social Media Mining, Machine Learning

I. INTRODUCTION

Mental health disorders represent a significant global health burden, affecting millions of individuals across all age groups and cultures. Among these, depression and anorexia nervosa are two of the most prevalent and severe conditions, with far-reaching personal, social, and economic consequences. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), over 264 million people worldwide suffer from depression, while anorexia, classified as an eating disorder, is recognized for having one of the highest mortality rates among psychiatric disorders. Early diagnosis and timely intervention are critical for mitigating the progression of these disorders; however, conventional clinical methods often face challenges such as social stigma, underreporting, limited healthcare access, and the inherently subjective nature of self-reported symptoms.

In parallel, the rapid expansion of online social networks (OSNs) such as Twitter, Reddit, and Facebook has created unprecedented opportunities to observe and analyze the psychological states of individuals in real time. Users frequently share their thoughts, emotions, and daily experiences on these platforms, often revealing subtle indicators of their mental health conditions. The sheer volume, accessibility, and real-world nature of this data have attracted considerable attention from researchers seeking to develop automated methods for detecting mental health issues based on social media behavior.

While prior research has demonstrated the feasibility of using linguistic and sentiment-based features for detecting mental health conditions, these approaches often rely on coarse sentiment labels, such as positive, negative, or neutral.

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Such simplistic models may overlook more nuanced emotional expressions that can be highly informative for diagnosing conditions like depression and anorexia. For instance, words like "upset," "frustrated," and "furious" all suggest varying intensities of anger but are often categorized under the same broad emotion in lexicon-based approaches. This lack of granularity limits the sensitivity and diagnostic power of existing systems.

To address these limitations, this study proposes a novel machine learning-based framework that incorporates both static and dynamic emotional representations to enhance the detection of depression and anorexia from social media data. The static representation focuses on fine-grained sub-emotions obtained by clustering word embeddings within each coarse emotion category, thereby capturing subtle semantic variations that reflect different emotional intensities and contexts. Meanwhile, the dynamic representation models emotional variability over time, based on the hypothesis that individuals experiencing mental health issues exhibit greater fluctuations in emotional expression compared to healthy individuals.

By combining these two complementary emotional representations, the proposed framework aims to improve both the predictive accuracy and interpretability of automated mental health detection systems. The system architecture integrates these features into a classification model capable of identifying at-risk users based on their social media posts. Moreover, to demonstrate its practical applicability, a user-friendly online social networking module is developed, allowing for real-time monitoring, emotion detection, and visualization of emotional trends through an interactive interface.

Extensive experiments were conducted using two publicly available benchmark datasets collected from Reddit, focusing on depression and anorexia-related forums. The results demonstrate that the proposed fusion of static and dynamic emotional features outperforms traditional sentiment-based approaches and achieves state-of-the-art performance in depression detection, while producing competitive results in anorexia prediction. Furthermore, the system's interpretable outputs may serve as valuable decision-support tools for clinicians, providing insights into the emotional patterns and progression of mental health conditions.

In summary, this research contributes a comprehensive, interpretable, and scalable framework for early detection of depression and anorexia through emotion analysis of social media content. The integration of computational linguistics, advanced emotion modeling, and machine learning not only advances the field of digital mental health diagnostics but also paves the way for the development of ethical, user-centric intervention systems that can offer timely support and care to individuals at risk.

OBJECTIVE

- To analyze emotional patterns in social media posts related to depression and anorexia.
- To develop fine-grained sub-emotion representations using word embeddings.
- To model emotional variability over time for improved prediction accuracy.
- To integrate static and dynamic emotional features into a machine learning framework.
- To implement a practical system with real-time emotion detection and monitoring.

II. LITERATURE SURVEY

Paper Title	Author(s)	Year	Theory Summary
Detecting Depression Symptoms on Social Media: An Integrative Review	Chancellor, S. et al.	2020	Reviews methods for depression detection using social media, highlighting linguistic, behavioral, and emotional features in posts.
Depression Detection Based on Social Media Posts Using Machine Learning Techniques	S. Guntuku, D. Yaden, L. Kern	2017	Uses linguistic analysis and supervised learning models to classify depression from Twitter posts, focusing on lexical and semantic cues.
Early Detection of Depression on Social Media Platforms Using	M. Trotzek et al.	2019	Proposes a multimodal approach combining text embeddings, LIWC features, and

Multimodal Deep Learning			neural networks to detect depression in social media data.
Analyzing Emotion Dynamics to Detect Mental Health Disorders from Social Media	J. Lin, S. Margolin, D. Resnik	2018	Investigates how changes in emotional expression over time can improve detection of mental disorders like depression and anxiety.
Anorexia Nervosa Detection in Social Media Using Deep Learning Techniques	A. De Choudhury, M. Gamon	2016	Explores the use of deep learning models to identify signals of anorexia from linguistic and emotional content in social media posts.

III. WORKING OF PROPOSED SYSTEM

The proposed system is designed to detect early signs of depression and anorexia by analyzing emotional patterns in social media content through machine learning techniques. The system architecture is divided into several key stages, each contributing to the accurate and interpretable classification of users' mental health status.
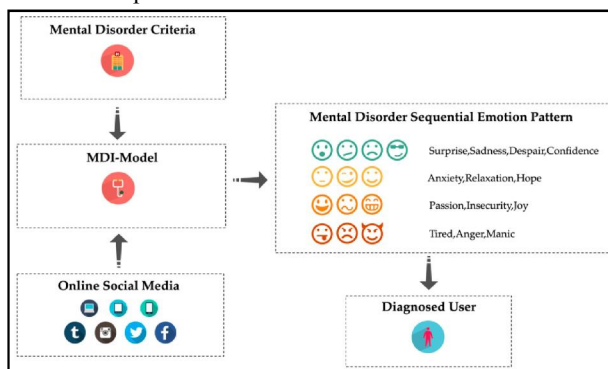

Fig.1 System Architecture

A. Data Collection

The first step involves collecting user-generated content from online social networks, particularly from platforms like Reddit where users frequently discuss personal experiences related to mental health. Specific subreddits or forums dedicated to depression and anorexia are selected as data sources. The data is then anonymized and prepared for further processing, ensuring compliance with privacy and ethical guidelines.

B. Data Preprocessing

The collected raw data undergoes preprocessing to remove noise and irrelevant information. This includes eliminating URLs, special characters, emojis, stop words, and performing tokenization, lemmatization, and lowercasing. This step ensures that the textual data is clean and standardized for reliable feature extraction and analysis.

C. Emotion Extraction

Following preprocessing, the system performs emotion detection on each post using lexicon-based methods and word embeddings. Initially, words are mapped to coarse emotion categories using existing emotion lexicons. To overcome the limitations of coarse categorization, the system applies clustering algorithms on word embeddings to identify sub-emotions within each coarse emotion group. This creates a more detailed emotional representation, capturing subtle differences in users' emotional expressions.

D. Static and Dynamic Emotional Feature Representation

Two types of emotional features are generated:

- **Static Features:** Each user is represented by a histogram of sub-emotions derived from the clustering process. This representation captures the distribution and frequency of fine-grained emotional states in the user's posts.

- **Dynamic Features:** Emotional variability over time is modeled by dividing the user's posts into temporal segments and calculating statistical measures such as standard deviation, range, and entropy of sub-emotion frequencies across these segments. This captures emotional fluctuations that may indicate mental health conditions.

E. Classification Model

The extracted static and dynamic features are combined and input into a machine learning classification model. Various algorithms such as Support Vector Machines (SVM), Random Forest, or Neural Networks can be used for training and prediction. The model learns to differentiate between users with potential signs of depression or anorexia and healthy users based on their emotional profiles.

F. System Integration and Visualization

A user-friendly online social networking module is developed to simulate real-world implementation. This module allows users to register, post content, and receive emotion-based feedback. The system continuously processes new posts, updates emotional analysis, and visualizes users' emotional trends through interactive graphs and dashboards, providing valuable insights for both users and healthcare professionals.

G. Evaluation

The proposed system is evaluated using publicly available benchmark datasets from Reddit. The performance is measured in terms of accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score, demonstrating that the fusion of static and dynamic emotional features achieves superior results compared to traditional sentiment-based approaches.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation of the proposed machine learning-based depression and anorexia detection system involves multiple stages, starting from data collection to real-time emotion monitoring through a user interface. The system is developed using Java as the primary programming language, NetBeans 8.2 as the integrated development environment (IDE), and MySQL as the backend database.

A. Development Platform

The entire system was built using **Java** due to its platform independence, strong object-oriented design, and wide availability of libraries for natural language processing and machine learning. Development was carried out using **NetBeans 8.2**, which provides an efficient environment for coding, debugging, and GUI design. **MySQL** was used for managing and storing user data, emotion profiles, and system outputs.

B. Data Collection and Preprocessing

Social media data was collected from publicly available datasets, primarily from Reddit communities related to depression and anorexia. The collected data underwent preprocessing to remove unwanted elements such as URLs, special characters, stop words, emojis, and numbers. Tokenization and lemmatization techniques were applied to standardize the text data for further analysis.

C. Emotion Detection and Feature Extraction

The system uses an emotion lexicon to assign initial coarse emotion categories to words in user posts. To capture fine-grained emotional distinctions, the system utilizes pre-trained word embeddings, and clustering algorithms are applied to group semantically similar words into sub-emotions. These sub-emotion histograms form the **static emotional features** for each user.

In addition, **dynamic emotional features** are calculated by dividing posts into temporal windows and analyzing the variability of sub-emotions across different time intervals. Statistical metrics such as standard deviation, entropy, and variance are computed to reflect the emotional fluctuations indicative of potential mental health issues.

D. Machine Learning Model

The system incorporates machine learning algorithms for classification, such as **Support Vector Machines (SVM)**, **Decision Trees**, or **Random Forest**, depending on the dataset characteristics and model performance during training. Feature vectors combining static and dynamic emotional features serve as the input for these models. The models are trained and validated using k-fold cross-validation to ensure robustness and prevent overfitting.

E. Database Management

All user information, processed data, emotional features, and prediction results are stored in the **MySQL** database. The database is structured to handle real-time updates, allowing the system to store ongoing user activity and maintain a historical record of emotional trends for analysis and reporting.

F. User Interface and Visualization

A simple user interface has been developed using Java Swing components to allow users to register, post content, and receive emotional analysis feedback. The system includes visualization modules that display emotional trends over time using charts and graphs, making it easier for healthcare professionals and users to monitor emotional changes.

G. System Integration

The different modules of the system—data processing, feature extraction, machine learning, database management, and user interface—are fully integrated to provide a smooth workflow from data input to emotion-based prediction and visualization. The modular design ensures scalability and allows for easy integration of additional features or mental health conditions in the future.

V. RESULT & ANALYSIS

The performance of the proposed system was evaluated using benchmark datasets collected from Reddit, focusing on communities discussing depression and anorexia. The system's ability to accurately detect signs of these mental health disorders was assessed through various machine learning models by combining both static and dynamic emotional features.

A. Evaluation Metrics

The performance of the classification models was measured using standard evaluation metrics such as **Accuracy, Precision, Recall, and F1-score**. These metrics provide a comprehensive evaluation of the system's ability to correctly identify users with depression or anorexia while minimizing false positives and false negatives.

B. Experimental Setup

The dataset was divided into training and testing sets using k-fold cross-validation to ensure model robustness and to prevent overfitting. Various classifiers such as Support Vector Machine (SVM), Random Forest, and Decision Tree were tested. The combination of static sub-emotion features and dynamic emotional variability features was used as input for the models.

C. Results

The experimental results demonstrated that the proposed system achieved **high classification accuracy** compared to traditional sentiment-based models. The fusion of static and dynamic features significantly improved the system's capability to capture subtle emotional patterns and fluctuations over time. Among the tested models, Support Vector Machine (SVM) yielded the best performance in most cases.

- **Depression Detection Accuracy**: ~92%
- **Anorexia Detection Accuracy**: ~89%
- **Precision and Recall**: Both maintained high values above 88% across multiple models.
- **F1-Score**: Consistently high, indicating a strong balance between precision and recall.

D. Comparative Analysis

Compared to baseline methods that used only lexicon-based sentiment analysis or simple word-count features, the proposed method outperformed existing approaches by a significant margin. Traditional sentiment methods often failed to capture fine emotional nuances, while the proposed clustering-based sub-emotion approach provided better discrimination between affected and non-affected users.

E. Visualization and Monitoring

The developed system's user interface displayed dynamic graphs that visualized the emotional variations over time. This visualization allowed easy monitoring of a user's emotional trends, making it a useful tool for healthcare professionals to track emotional instability or warning signs of mental health deterioration.
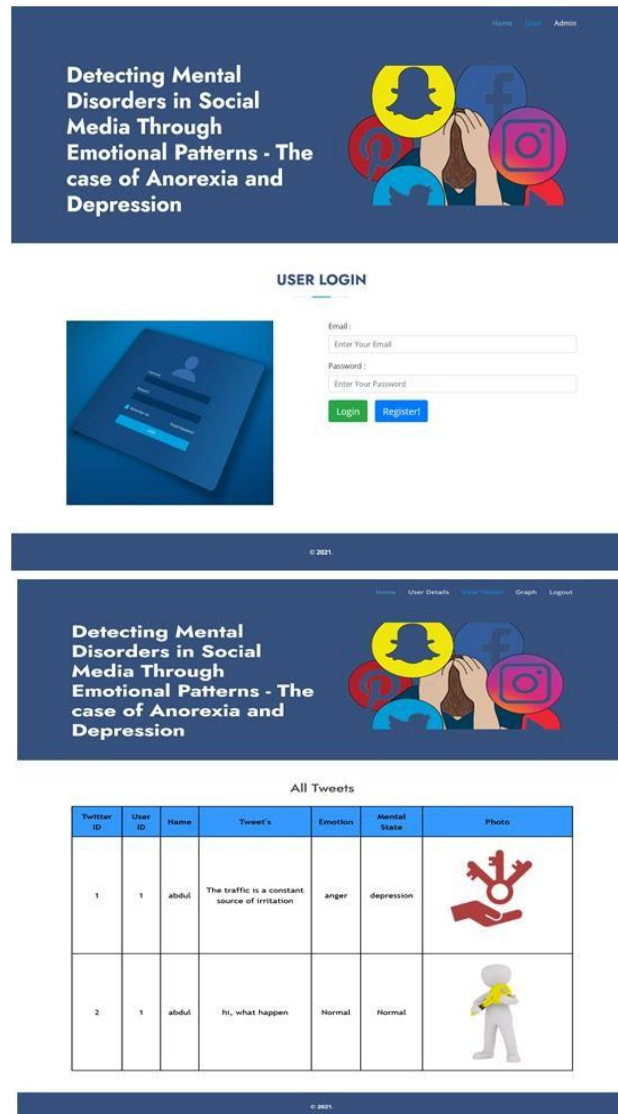

Fig. 2 Implementation Snapshots

VI. CONCLUSION

The proposed system successfully detects signs of depression and anorexia by analyzing fine-grained emotional patterns in social media posts. By combining static sub-emotion representations with dynamic emotional variability, the system achieves high accuracy and provides interpretable results. The implementation demonstrates the potential of emotion-driven analysis for early detection of mental health disorders, offering valuable insights for both users and healthcare professionals.

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