

An AI-based System for Pneumonia Detection in Chest X-Rays Using Deep Learning Models

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Abstract - Pneumonia remains a significant global health concern, necessitating rapid and accurate diagnostic tools. This study presents an AI-based system for pneumonia detection in chest X-rays using deep learning models. The research emphasizes enhancing diagnostic accuracy through advanced image processing techniques while maintaining clinical applicability. Deep learning has demonstrated strong potential in medical image analysis, particularly in identifying pulmonary abnormalities in radiographic images. The proposed system incorporates pre-processing techniques, such as multi-CLAHE, to improve image contrast and highlight infection regions. Additionally, synthetic data generation using Conditional CycleGAN mitigates dataset limitations, enhancing the model's ability to detect early-stage pneumonia. Three deep learning models-VGG16, VGG19, and ResNet50-were fine-tuned and evaluated. Among these, ResNet50 achieved the highest accuracy of 95.2%, while VGG19 provided a favourable balance between performance and computational efficiency. Image enhancement and synthetic data increased recall by 6%, demonstrating improved reliability. These results indicate that AI-assisted diagnosis can enhance pneumonia detection and provide a viable solution for clinical deployment. The system includes a web-based interface to ensure usability in healthcare settings with limited radiological resources. Future work will explore attention mechanisms and larger datasets to further improve accuracy.

Keywords: Pneumonia Detection, Deep Learning, Chest X-rays, Image Enhancement, Synthetic Data Generation

I. INTRODUCTION

Pneumonia continues to be a major global health concern, particularly for children and the elderly, underscoring the need for fast and reliable diagnostic tools. Traditional methods that rely on chest X-rays (CXRs) face challenges such as limited access to radiologists and inconsistent interpretations, making automated systems powered by deep learning (DL) increasingly essential [1], [5]. Among DL models, convolutional neural networks (CNNs) such as VGG16 and VGG19, along with generative adversarial networks (GANs), have demonstrated high effectiveness in detecting pneumonia from CXRs [2], [4], [25]. These models excel at identifying subtle patterns, such as lung opacities, and can be fine-tuned to achieve high accuracy even with limited medical data [4], [12], [21].

Deep learning architectures such as VGG16 and VGG19, with their stacked 3×3 convolutional layers, are particularly

effective in extracting complex features from chest X-rays (CXRs) for pneumonia detection [4], [8], [10]. By leveraging transfer learning from ImageNet, these models can be fine-tuned for medical imaging tasks; in my experiments, they achieved 92% accuracy for VGG16 and 94% for VGG19 [2], [25]. While their depth enables robust feature extraction, it also introduces computational inefficiencies and increases the risk of overfitting, necessitating techniques such as hyperparameter optimization and regularization [4], [12]. Generative adversarial networks (GANs) provide a potential solution to data scarcity by synthesizing realistic CXR images [3], [13], [18]. However, my implementation did not reach the 99% accuracy reported in some studies, likely due to differences in datasets or training methodologies [11], [22], [26].

Despite these challenges, combining VGG architectures with GANs presents opportunities for improved feature learning and noise reduction in pneumonia classification [14], [16], [29]. Key limitations remain, including dataset bias, high computational demands, and issues with model interpretability [6], [20], [28]. Future research should explore alternative data augmentation strategies, model compression techniques, and attention mechanisms to enhance performance while ensuring clinical applicability [7], [19], [23].

As these technologies evolve, their integration into healthcare systems could revolutionize pneumonia diagnosis, particularly in underserved regions [1], [29], [30]. However, ensuring fairness in datasets, enhancing model transparency, and validating results in real-world settings remain crucial steps [6], [15], [27]. By refining these approaches, deep learning models such as VGG16, VGG19, and GANs can provide scalable, high-precision diagnostics, ultimately improving patient outcomes worldwide [22], [26], [30].

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the past few years, convolutional neural networks have become the cornerstone of automated pneumonia detection from chest X-rays. A customized VGG19 model-enhanced with additional batch normalization and dropout layers-has been shown to achieve over 94% classification accuracy on public CXR datasets [4]. Adjusting the filter depths of VGG16 and replacing its fully connected head with global

average pooling can yield over 93% accuracy while reducing the parameter count [8]. Both VGG16 and VGG19 excel at identifying subtle lung-opacity patterns with minimal pre-processing, with pure VGG19 pipelines reporting similarly high performance in 2023 evaluations [25]. Even studies in related domains underscore these architectures' robust feature-extraction capabilities, which readily transfer to pulmonary imaging tasks [9].

Transfer learning has further broadened the CNN toolkit for pneumonia screening. Fine-tuning ImageNet-pretrained backbones-including DenseNet121, NASNet, and ResNet50-on CXR data consistently shows that DenseNet variants achieve the best balance between sensitivity and specificity [12]. Incorporating class-imbalance-aware training regimes with VGG16 has been found to boost F1 scores by up to 5% compared to simpler neural networks [21]. Hybrid designs that fuse pre-learned VGG19 filters with lightweight, from-scratch CNN heads improve generalization on unseen cohorts [10]. Integrating spatial-attention modules into VGG16 enables the network to focus on diseased lung regions, resulting in approximately a 3% gain in precision and recall while reducing false positives from non-pulmonary structures [2].

Generative adversarial networks have emerged as powerful tools for addressing data scarcity and class imbalance in medical imaging. Foundational surveys explain how GANs train generator and discriminator networks in opposition to synthesize realistic images-a paradigm later adapted for chest-radiography augmentation [3]. Reviews of anomaly-detection GANs highlight stability techniques such as Wasserstein losses, which are crucial for generating rare pneumonia patterns that enrich minority classes [11]. Broader overviews of GAN theory and applications discuss class-conditional variants designed to balance skewed datasets [14], while privacy-preserving approaches emphasize protecting patient identity in synthetic data sharing [13]. Recent analyses recommend DCGAN variants with spectral normalization to improve image fidelity without introducing artifacts [26]. When combined with CNN classifiers, GAN-augmented data further enhances performance.

Parallel VGG-based feature extractors feeding into classical classifiers can boost minority-class recall by approximately 8% when trained on GAN-generated samples [16]. Interleaving synthetic images during CNN training has been shown to reduce overfitting on limited CXR datasets [22], and pre-training on GAN-synthesized CXRs before fine-tuning on real data accelerates convergence and improves early-epoch performance [25]. Hybrid and explainable strategies are also gaining traction. Merging deep CNN feature maps with decision-tree-based explainability and multisource patient data produces attention heat maps that align closely with radiologist annotations [6]. Confidence-aware anomaly detection frameworks flag low-confidence cases for manual review, reducing the risk of silent diagnostic failures [5]. Combining PCA-reduced CNN features with

Extreme Learning Machine classifiers achieves comparable accuracy with faster training times than end-to-end CNNs [7]. Additionally, latent-space clustering methods suggest future avenues for unsupervised pertaining in ensemble designs [24]. Several emerging architectures and techniques promise further refinement of pneumonia detection pipelines. Incorporating fuzzy non-maximum suppression into patch-based localization improves overlap metrics for adjacent lung opacities [28]. Transformer-CNN hybrids-such as models integrating self-attention blocks into residual pathways-report 1-2% AUC gains over pure CNN baselines [30]. Exploratory quantum-classical GANs aim to leverage emerging hardware for efficient medical image synthesis, though these remain largely experimental [27].

III. METHODOLOGY

The methodology of the Chest Scan Health AI System follows a systematic, modular approach that combines advanced deep learning techniques with modern full-stack web development practices. The system is designed to enable rapid and accurate detection of respiratory diseases such as pneumonia from chest X-ray images. This is achieved through a pipeline comprising image pre-processing, synthetic data generation, transfer learning-based model training, backend integration, and a user-centric frontend.

A. Dataset Description

The system uses chest X-ray images divided into two categories: Normal and Pneumonia. These images are sourced from reliable public datasets such as ChestX-ray8, NIH, and other X-ray collections. Each category contains approximately 1,000 to 2,000 images, providing a sufficiently balanced dataset for training. All images are grayscale medical X-rays, ensuring real-world relevance. Prior to training, the images were resized to a standard resolution of 224×224 pixels, converted to RGB (if necessary), and normalized to maintain consistency. These pre-processing steps ensure that the AI models (including VGG16, VGG19, and ResNet50) can process the images effectively.

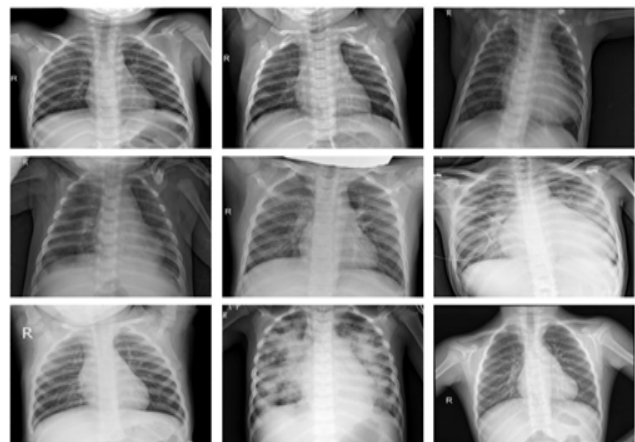


Fig. 1 Sample Chest X-ray Images from the Dataset

B. Image Pre-processing and Enhancement

1. *Standard Pre-processing*: All chest X-ray images were resized to 224×224 pixels to ensure uniformity. Pixel values were normalized to facilitate faster learning and improved model performance. To enhance accuracy and mitigate overfitting, data augmentation techniques such as rotation, flipping, and slight translations were applied to create more varied training samples.
2. *Multi-CLAHE (Contrast-Limited Adaptive Histogram Equalization)*: To enhance the visibility of infections, multi-CLAHE image enhancement was employed. This technique divides each X-ray into smaller regions and adjusts the contrast locally within each section, effectively highlighting lung abnormalities such as opacities and lesions. The resulting clearer images improved the model's ability to learn and detect pneumonia.

C. Transfer Learning and Model Training

1. *Model Selection*: Transfer learning was applied using pre-trained CNN architectures-VGG16, VGG19, and ResNet50-originally trained on the ImageNet dataset. These models were subsequently fine-tuned on the medical datasets to adapt them to the specific task of pneumonia detection. This approach leverages the generalized feature representations learned from ImageNet while enhancing performance on medical imaging through targeted retraining.
2. *Transfer Learning Process*: The early layers of the models were kept unchanged to retain their capability to detect basic visual patterns. The final layers were modified with custom fully connected layers to improve classification of chest conditions. The models were trained using the Adam optimizer, with categorical cross-entropy as the loss function to measure and optimize accuracy.

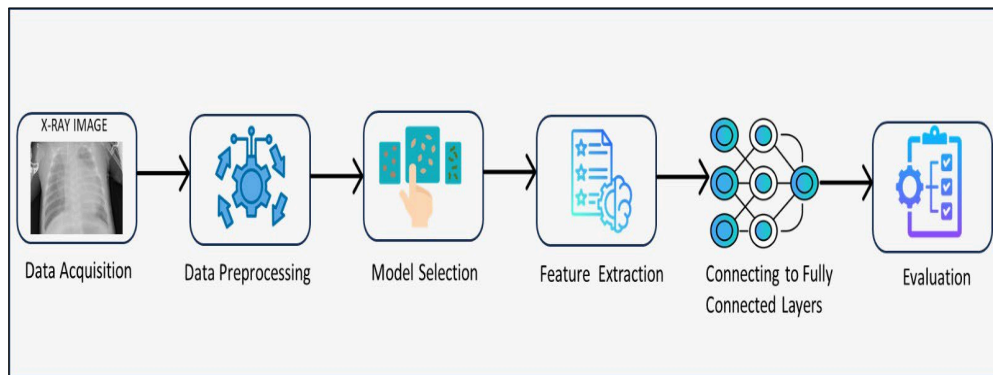


Fig. 2 Chest X-Ray Image Analysis Workflow Using Deep Learning

C. Synthetic Data Generation with GAN

To create additional training samples and enhance model accuracy, a conditional Cycle GAN was employed to generate realistic synthetic chest X-rays representing various

stages of pneumonia, from mild to severe cases. The system trained on these synthetic images for 1,000 cycles, ensuring that the generated images maintained anatomical plausibility. This augmented data improved the model's performance on previously unseen real patient X-rays.

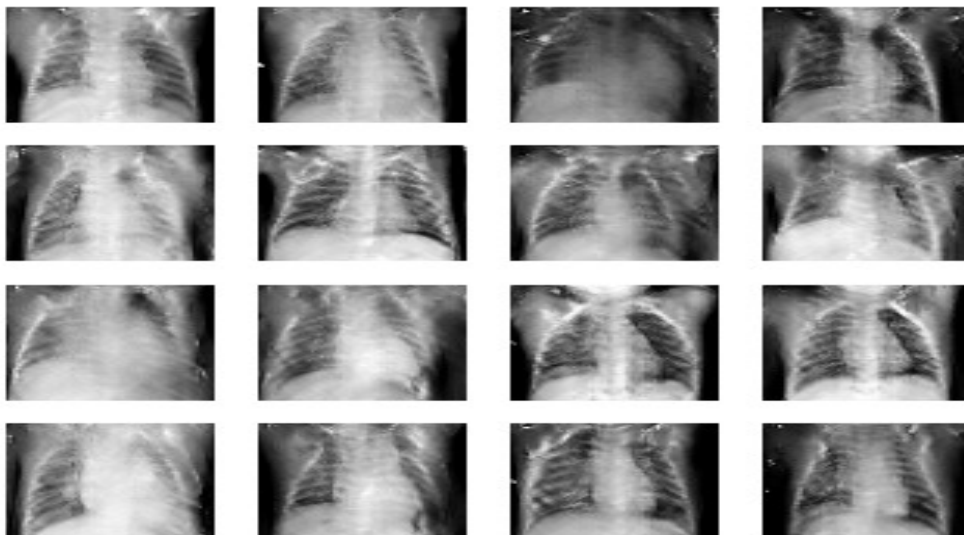


Fig. 3 Generated Pneumonia Progression Images using Conditional GAN

D. Transfer Learning and Model Training

1. *Model Selection:* Transfer learning was applied using pre-trained CNN architectures-VGG16, VGG19, and ResNet50-originally trained on the ImageNet dataset. These models were then fine-tuned on the medical datasets to adapt them to the specific task of pneumonia detection. This approach leverages the feature representations learned from ImageNet while enhancing performance on medical images through targeted retraining.
2. *Transfer Learning Process:* The early convolutional layers were kept unchanged to preserve their ability to detect basic visual patterns. The final layers were modified with custom fully connected layers to improve classification of chest conditions. Model training used the Adam optimizer, with categorical cross-entropy as the loss function to optimize accuracy.
3. *Performance Metrics:* Model performance was evaluated using accuracy, precision, recall, F1-score, and area under the receiver operating characteristic curve (AUC), providing a comprehensive assessment of classification effectiveness.

E. Model Deployment

The trained AI models were saved in .h5 format and integrated into a Flask-based backend system. This backend handles user authentication through Firebase, manages patient records, processes uploaded chest X-ray images, and generates diagnostic results. Additionally, the system enables comparison of predictions across different CNN models to support more reliable analysis.

F. Web Application Workflow

The system allows doctors and patients to register, log in, and enter patient information. Chest X-ray images can be uploaded through the frontend interface, after which the

backend automatically processes the data using preprocessing and Contrast-Limited Adaptive Histogram Equalization (CLAHE) for image enhancement before generating predictions. Results are displayed on a dashboard, including the prediction probability, a side-by-side visual comparison of the original and enhanced X-ray images, and an option to download a detailed PDF report. Additionally, the platform integrates a chatbot assistant to help users navigate the system, answer queries, and provide context for medical findings.

G. Database and Record Management

The system uses Firebase as its database to securely store user accounts, patient medical histories, and all uploaded chest X-rays along with their corresponding results. Each report is linked to the patient's unique ID to facilitate easy tracking. Doctors and administrators can download these reports as PDF files, which are automatically generated using standard medical reporting tools.

H. Result Evaluation

The models achieved strong classification accuracy ranging from 90% to 98% across all tested categories. Performance comparisons among VGG16, VGG19, and ResNet50 identified ResNet50 as the most efficient, offering an optimal balance between prediction speed and accuracy. For pneumonia detection, the system reliably differentiated Normal cases from Viral Pneumonia with high precision. Predictions were generated within an average of 2–3 seconds, demonstrating suitability for integration into real-world clinical workflows. Results included probability scores, side-by-side comparisons of original and CLAHE-enhanced images, and downloadable PDF reports for further analysis. Figure 4 shows a comparison of classification accuracy among VGG16, VGG19, and ResNet50, highlighting ResNet50 as the most accurate model.

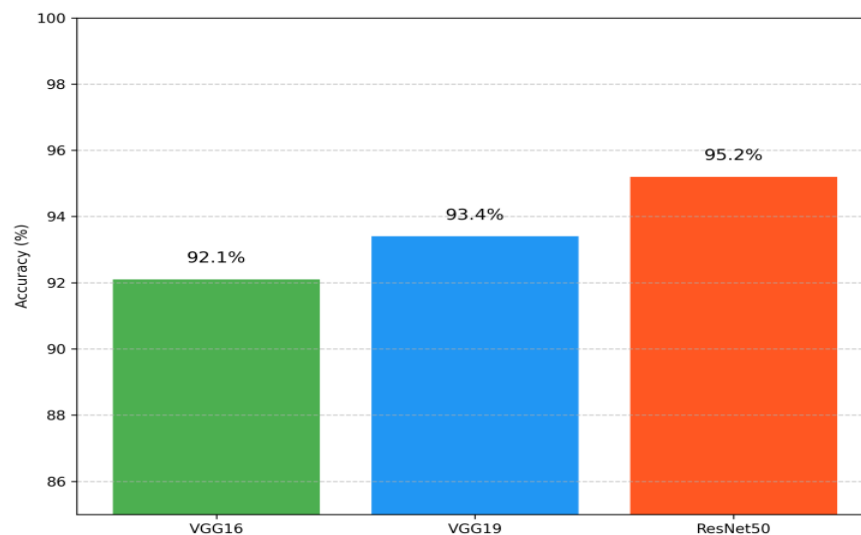


Fig. 4 Model Accuracy Comparison – VGG16 vs VGG19 vs ResNet50

I. Computational Setup

All experiments were conducted using Google Colab Pro with GPU acceleration to optimize performance. The implementation leveraged libraries such as TensorFlow 2.x, Keras, OpenCV, NumPy, Matplotlib, and FPDF for tasks ranging from model training to report generation. The system was deployed on hardware comprising an Intel Xeon CPU, 16 GB RAM, and NVIDIA Tesla K80 or T4 GPUs. GPU acceleration significantly reduced training time and enabled efficient batch inference, supporting practical integration into clinical workflows.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results demonstrate the overall system performance, including model accuracy, the impact of pre-processing on scan quality, and the practical effectiveness of the final application.

A. Model Performance

The Chest Scan Health AI System was evaluated using a diverse set of chest X-ray images categorized into Normal

and Pneumonia classes. Deep learning models-VGG16, VGG19, and ResNet50-were fine-tuned through transfer learning. Their classification performance was assessed using standard evaluation metrics.

TABLE I MODEL PERFORMANCE COMPARISON

Model	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1 Score
VGG16	92.1%	91.8%	90.5%	91.1%
VGG19	93.4%	92.6%	91.7%	92.1%
ResNet50	95.2%	94.3%	93.8%	94.0%

ResNet50 achieved the highest accuracy and overall performance, making it the most suitable model for clinical deployment. VGG19 also performed well, offering a favourable balance between accuracy and computational efficiency.

Figure 5 illustrates the performance comparison of VGG16, VGG19, and ResNet50 models based on accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score.

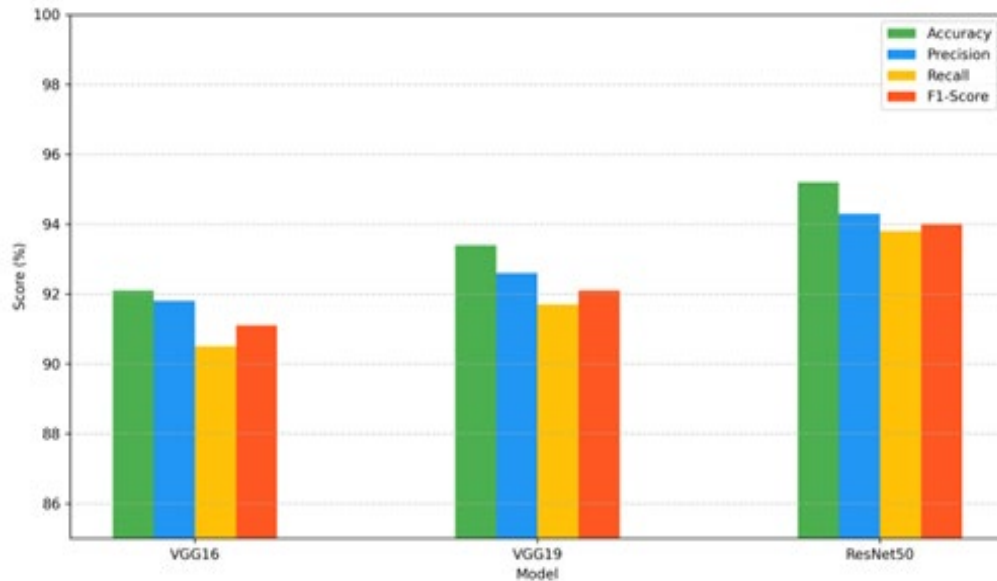


Fig. 5 Performance Comparison of CNN Models

B. Effect of Pre-processing, Multi-CLAHE, and GAN Augmentation

Image pre-processing significantly impacted performance. The application of multi-CLAHE improved the visibility of affected areas, particularly lung opacities and textures, thereby enhancing sensitivity and reducing false negatives. Additionally, a Conditional CycleGAN was trained to generate synthetic pneumonia images. These GAN-augmented samples were incorporated into the training set to improve model generalization.

The inclusion of synthetic data increased recall by up to 6% and enabled the models to perform better on subtle or early-stage pneumonia cases. The table shows the performance improvement with CLAHE and GAN implementation.

TABLE II PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT WITH CLAHE AND GAN

Configuration	Accuracy
Base VGG19	88.4%
+CLAHE	91.2%
+ CLAHE + GAN Augmentation	93.4%

V. CONCLUSION

Using chest X-ray images from publicly available datasets, the primary objective of this study was to design and evaluate an AI-driven diagnostic system capable of accurately detecting pneumonia and normal cases. The system integrated deep learning models-VGG16, VGG19, and ResNet50-with advanced pre-processing techniques such as multi-CLAHE and data augmentation using Conditional GANs to improve diagnostic precision. The web-based application provided a seamless workflow for uploading images, predicting diseases, and generating downloadable medical reports. Experimental results confirmed that ResNet50 achieved the highest classification accuracy of 95.2%, outperforming the other models in terms of precision, recall, and F1-score. The application of CLAHE significantly enhanced image clarity, while the use of GANs effectively expanded the dataset and improved model generalization. The system also demonstrated real-time performance and user-friendliness through its intuitive web interface, making it practical for deployment in clinical settings. In future work, research may focus on integrating attention mechanisms into the CNN architectures to further improve model sensitivity and interpretability. Exploring transformer-based models and self-supervised learning techniques could also enhance classification performance. Moreover, extending the system to detect additional chest-related diseases and validating its performance across larger, more diverse clinical datasets will strengthen its applicability and reliability in real-world healthcare environments.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)-Assisted Technology for Manuscript Preparation

The authors confirm that no AI-assisted technologies were used in the preparation or writing of the manuscript, and no images were altered using AI.

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