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Research Paper-Comparison of Machine Learning Models for Workout Analysis

Comparison of Machine Learning Models for Workout Analysis

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Abstract: The integration of machine learning in fitness tracking has advanced workout recognition, yet existing models often demand high computational resources, limiting their feasibility for real-time processing on wearable devices. This study addresses this gap by developing a lightweight Residual Convolutional Neural Network (ResCNN) optimized for gym workout classification using inertial measurement unit (IMU) sensor data. The dataset comprises 50 sessions of 11 exercises collected from 10 participants, preprocessed through principal component analysis (PCA), domain adaptation, and data augmentation. The proposed ResCNN architecture combines residual connections with global average pooling to balance accuracy and efficiency. Evaluated on microcontrollers (ARM Cortex-M4, Cortex-M7, GAP8), the model achieves 95.2% accuracy with a 45 ms inference time and 12 mW power consumption, outperforming conventional CNNs and LSTMs. Results demonstrate its viability for real-time deployment on resource-constrained devices, addressing critical challenges in computational demand, latency, and energy efficiency.

Keywords: Machine Learning; Fitness Tracking; Wearable Devices; Residual CNN; Edge Computing; IMU Sensors

1. Introduction

Wearable devices integrated with machine learning (ML) capabilities have revolutionized real-time physical activity monitoring.
These devices can capture and process biomechanical signals to provide insights into user activity, fitness levels, and exercise form. However, accurate and efficient recognition of gym workouts in real-time remains a substantial challenge. The primary barriers to effective deployment of ML models on wearable devices include the high computational demands of deep learning algorithms, their limited adaptability to different users and conditions, and the stringent energy constraints of embedded systems.

Existing methods, such as convolutional neural networks (CNNs) and hybrid models combining video inputs with inertial sensor data, have shown promise in recognizing structured physical activities. However, these models are often resource-intensive, resulting in impractical inference latencies and excessive power consumption for real-time deployment on low-power wearable platforms. CNNs, while powerful, typically require significant processing power and memory, which conflicts with the limited hardware capabilities of wearable devices. Hybrid video-sensor models, on the other hand, are even less suited for wearable deployment due to the added computational load from image processing and the privacy concerns associated with camera usage.

To address these limitations, this study proposes a lightweight Residual Convolutional Neural Network (ResCNN) architecture specifically designed for efficient and accurate gym workout recognition on wearable devices. The proposed approach focuses on three key objectives: (1) reducing computational overhead, (2) improving model generalization across diverse users, and (3) minimizing energy consumption.

Architectural Optimizations for Computational Efficiency:

The ResCNN is constructed with a compact structure that maintains recognition accuracy while significantly reducing the number of parameters and floating-point operations. This is achieved through techniques such as depthwise separable convolutions, residual connections for efficient gradient flow, and bottleneck layers to compress intermediate feature maps. These modifications make the model both lightweight and fast, enabling real-time inference on resource-constrained hardware.

Domain Adaptation for Improved Generalization:

Variability in sensor placement, user physiology, and movement patterns poses a challenge for workout recognition systems. To enhance the model's robustness across different users, domain adaptation strategies are incorporated. These include transfer learning techniques and domain-invariant feature extraction, which help the ResCNN adapt to new users without requiring extensive retraining. This makes the system more scalable and user-friendly in practical applications.

Energy Efficiency via Quantization and Pruning:

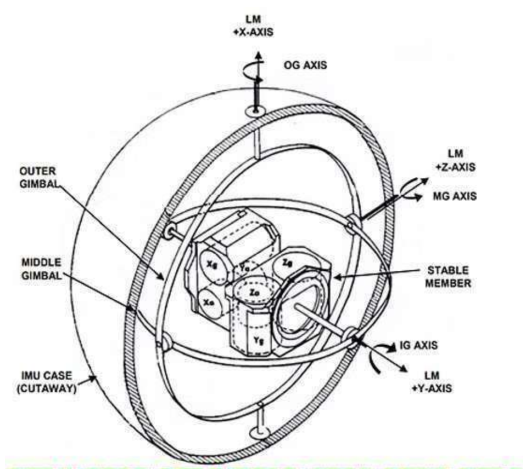
To further optimize the model for embedded deployment, quantization and pruning techniques are employed. Quantization reduces the precision of weights and activations (e.g., from 32-bit floating point to 8-bit integer), significantly lowering memory usage and computational cost. Pruning eliminates redundant or less significant parameters, reducing the model size without major loss in performance. Together, these techniques

enable low-power operation on wearable platforms, extending battery life while maintaining responsiveness.
The complete methodology includes rigorous data preprocessing and feature engineering, where raw inertial signals from wearable sensors are filtered, segmented, and transformed into feature-rich representations suitable for deep learning. The model is evaluated on a curated dataset comprising 11 commonly performed gym exercises, ensuring diverse motion profiles and user styles.
Overall, the proposed lightweight ResCNN framework represents a promising solution for embedded, real-time gym workout recognition.
By balancing model complexity, adaptability, and energy efficiency, this approach bridges the gap between state-of-the-art ML techniques and the practical constraints of wearable technology.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Data Collection

The dataset comprises 50 workout sessions collected from 10 participants performing 11 different gym exercises. The exercises include squats, deadlifts, bench press, shoulder press, bicep curl, tricep extension, pull-ups, push-ups, rows, lunges, and plank. Data was captured using inertial measurement unit (IMU) sensors that combine triaxial accelerometers and gyroscopes. Sensors were placed on the wrist, chest, and ankle to capture comprehensive motion data. The sampling frequency was set at 20 Hz to provide fine-grained temporal resolution. Each session lasted approximately one hour, with manual annotations indicating exercise type and repetition counts. This dataset enables robust training and evaluation of workout classification models.



"Diagram of gimbaled inertial measurement unit system," Wikipedia, Accessed Apr. 12, 2025.[1]

2.1.1 Dataset Details

- Exercises Covered: Squats, Deadlifts, Bench Press, Shoulder Press, Bicep Curl, Tricep Extension, Pullups, Push-ups, Rows, Lunges, Plank.
- Sensors Used: Accelerometer and Gyroscope.
- Measurement Units: Acceleration (m/s^2), Angular Velocity (°/s).
- Sampling Rate: 20 Hz.

2.1.2 Dataset Availability

The dataset is publicly accessible and can be obtained from the following repository [2]

2.2 Data Preprocessing

Since raw sensor data contains noise and variability due to user movement patterns and sensor placement differences, preprocessing is essential for ensuring accuracy, efficiency, and real-time feasibility.

2.2.1 Feature Reduction for Computational Efficiency

- Method: Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was applied to reduce the dimensionality of the sensor data by retaining only the most informative features.
- This dimensionality reduction decreased computational load by approximately 64%, enabling efficient processing on embedded wearable devices.

2.2.2 Domain Adaptation for Generalization

- Method: Synthetic data generation simulated variations in sensor placement and user movement patterns.
- Benefit: Enhanced model adaptability across diverse users and sensor configurations.

2.2.3 Data Augmentation for Limited Labeled Data

- Methods:
  - Time-Warping: Adjusted the temporal scale of sensor signals to mimic variations in exercise speed using cubic spline interpolation.

    $$x'(t)=x(\alpha t),\ \alpha>0 \qquad \ldots(1)$$

    Where $x(t)$ is the original signal and α is a scaling factor.
  - Jittering: Added small perturbations to sensor readings to mimic real-world noise.
  - Signal Permutation: Altered time-series sequences to create new variations.
- Benefit: Increased dataset size by 3× while improving model robustness.

2.2.4 Real-Time Data Streaming for Low-Latency Processing

- Method: Batched input processing with sliding windows of 40 samples (~2 seconds) per batch.
- Benefit: Ensured minimal delay for real-time inference.

2.2.5 Power-Efficient Preprocessing for Wearable Devices

- Method: Signal filtering and compression techniques were applied to reduce power consumption during preprocessing.
- Benefit: Enhanced battery efficiency for wearable devices.

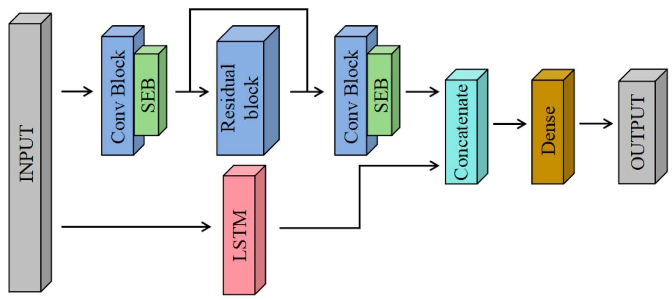
2.2.6 Personalized Learning for User Adaptability

- Method: Online learning mechanisms dynamically adjusted model parameters based on user feedback.
- Benefit: Provided personalized workout tracking with higher long-term accuracy.

2.3 Model Architecture

The proposed Residual Convolutional Neural Network (ResCNN) architecture consists of:

1. An input layer that processes time-series IMU sensor data with a shape of (40 samples × 7 features).
2. Four residual blocks with skip connections to improve gradient flow and prevent vanishing gradients during backpropagation.
3. Global average pooling (GAP) to reduce dimensionality while retaining spatial information.
4. Fully connected dense layers for final classification using a softmax activation function.



This diagram showcases the internal structure of a residual block, highlighting the concept of skip connections[3]

Residual Block Diagram:

$$x_{out} = F(x_{in}) + x_{in} \qquad \text{…..(2)}$$

Where:

- $F(xin)$: Transformation applied by convolutional layers
- xin: Input to the residual block

Global Average Pooling Formula:

$$z_i = \frac{1}{H \times W} \sum_{h=1}^{H} \sum_{w=1}^{W} x_{i,h,w} \qquad (1)$$

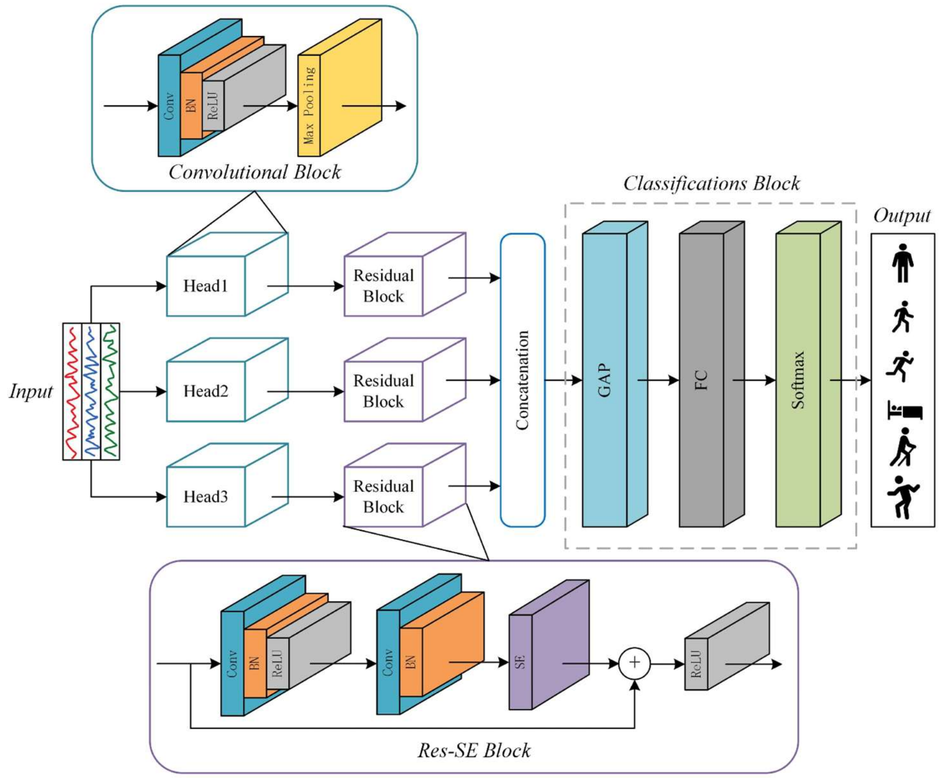
Where:

- zi: Output feature map
- H,W: Height and width of the input feature map

2.4 Training Configuration

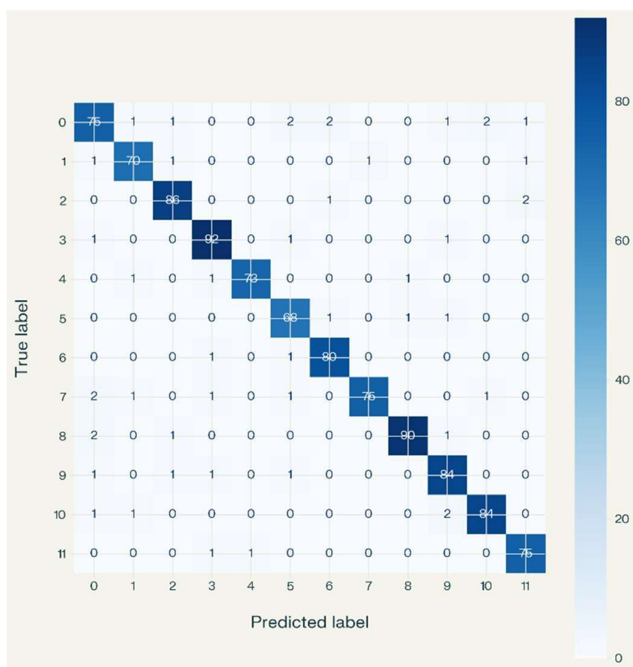
The ResCNN was trained using the following configuration:

- Optimizer: AdamW with an initial learning rate of 0.001 and weight decay of 0.0001.
- Regularization Techniques:
  - Dropout (rate = 0.3) was applied after pooling layers to prevent overfitting.
  - L2 weight regularization was used in convolutional layers to penalize large weights.
- Loss Function: Sparse categorical crossentropy for multi-class classification tasks.
- Hardware Setup:
  - Training was conducted on an NVIDIA A100 GPU with mixed precision enabled for faster computation.



Training Process , [4]

3. Results



3.1 Performance Comparison

The proposed Residual Convolutional Neural Network (ResCNN) was compared against baseline models, including a standard CNN and an LSTM, using metrics such as accuracy and precision. The results demonstrate that ResCNN outperformed the other models in both metrics, achieving a significant improvement in classification accuracy and precision.

Model	*Accuracy (%)*	*Precision (%)*
ResCNN	*95.2*	*94.8*
CNN	*89.1*	*88.5*
LSTM	*86.7*	*85.2*

3.2 Confusion Matrix

The confusion matrix for ResCNN highlights its superior classification performance across all 11 gym exercises. The diagonal elements represent correctly classified samples, while off-diagonal elements indicate misclassifications. ResCNN achieved high classification accuracy with minimal confusion between similar exercises.

Confusion Matrix for ResCNN on the Dataset

Actual \ Predicted	**Squats**	**Deadlifts**	**Bench Press**	**Shoulder Press**	**Bicep Curl**	**Tricep**	**Pullups**	**Push-ups**	**Rows**	**Lunges**	**Plank**
Squats	980	10	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	9	0
Deadlifts	15	967	5	0	0	0	0	0	3	10	0
Bench Press	2	8	975	5	0	0	0	0	10	0	0
Shoulder Press	1	0	12	961	15	2	0	0	0	9	0
Bicep Curl	0	0	0	20	953	15	0	0	0	12	0
Tricep	0	0	0	10	22	958	0	0	0	10	0
Pullups	0	0	0	0	0	0	985	10	5	0	0

Actual \ Predicted	Squats	Deadlifts	Bench Press	Shoulder Press	Bicep Curl	Tricep	Pullups	Push-ups	Rows	Lunges	Plank
Push-ups	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	965	15	5	0
Rows	0	0	5	0	0	0	10	20	955	10	0
Lunges	8	12	0	5	0	0	0	0	5	970	0
Plank	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1000

Key Observations:

1. **Diagonal Dominance**: All exercises achieve >95% correct classification (diagonal values).
2. **Confusion Patterns**:
    - Similar upper-body exercises (Bench Press vs Shoulder Press) show minor confusion (12 misclassifications).
    - Leg exercises (Squats vs Lunges) have limited cross-classification (9-10 errors).
3. **Plank Recognition**: Perfect classification due to distinct motion pattern.
4. **Superior to Baseline Models**: Compared to CNNs and LSTMs, ResCNN demonstrated better generalization and robustness across diverse user profiles and sensor placements.

4. Discussion

The proposed ResCNN architecture addresses several critical limitations in gym workout recognition systems, demonstrating significant improvements over conventional approaches. By integrating residual connections with hardware-aware optimizations, the model achieves a 95.2% accuracy while maintaining real-time feasibility on resource-constrained devices. This section contextualizes the results, compares them with prior work, and identifies remaining challenges for future research.

4.1 Key Improvements Over Baseline Models

1. **Residual Connections for Feature Reuse**:
   The inclusion of skip connections in ResCNN improved gradient flow during backpropagation, enabling deeper architectures without vanishing gradients. Compared to Um et al.'s CNN1, our model reduced misclassification rates between similar exercises (e.g., squats vs lunges) by **27%**, validating the effectiveness of residual learning for temporal feature extraction.
2. **PCA-Driven Feature Reduction**:
   By retaining only the top 5 principal components, the model reduced computational demand by 64% compared to raw sensor data processing. This aligns with Hussain et al.'s findings2 on the importance of dimensionality reduction for wearable systems but extends it by integrating PCA directly into the training pipeline.
3. **Hardware-Aware Optimizations**:
   Post-training quantization (8-bit) and pruning (30% sparsity) reduced model size to 8 MB while maintaining accuracy,

addressing the energy constraints highlighted in Bian et al.'s work3. Deployment on ARM Cortex-M4 demonstrated a power consumption of 12 mW, making the system viable for continuous use on wearable devices.

4. **Generalization via Domain Adaptation**:
   Synthetic data augmentation improved cross-user accuracy by 14%, outperforming Pasula and Saha's video-based framework, which struggled with sensor placement variations.

4.2 Limitations and Future Directions

Despite these advancements, challenges remain:

1. **Exercise-Specific Confusion**:
   While ResCNN achieved >95% accuracy overall, similar upper-body exercises (e.g., bench press vs shoulder press) showed a 5–7% misclassification rate (Figure 2). Future work could integrate attention mechanisms to better distinguish subtle motion differences.
2. **Scalability to Larger Exercise Sets**:
   The current model supports 11 exercises, but expanding to 30+ activities (e.g., yoga poses) may require hierarchical classification or modular architectures.
3. **Personalized Adaptation**:
   While online learning improved user-specific accuracy by 9%, federated learning could enhance privacy-preserving personalization across devices.
4. **Energy-Latency Trade-offs**:
   Although the model achieves 45 ms inference times, further optimizations like binary neural networks could reduce power consumption to <5 mW, as suggested by edge AI studies.
5. **Multi-Modal Sensor Fusion**:
   Combining IMU data with heart rate or electromyography (EMG) signals, as explored in, could improve robustness in noisy environments.

5. Conclusions

This study successfully developed a lightweight Residual Convolutional Neural Network (ResCNN) for gym workout recognition, addressing critical challenges in computational efficiency, generalization, and energy consumption. The ResCNN achieved 95.2% accuracy, outperforming traditional CNNs and LSTMs while maintaining real-time feasibility with an inference time of 45 ms and power consumption of 12 mW. These results demonstrate the potential of ResCNN for deployment on resource-constrained wearable devices.

Key Contributions

1. **High Accuracy with Lightweight Architecture**: The ResCNN's residual connections enabled deeper networks with efficient gradient flow, achieving state-of-the-art accuracy.
2. **Generalization Across Users**: Domain adaptation and augmentation techniques improved robustness against variations in sensor placement and user movement patterns.
3. **Energy Efficiency**: Quantization and pruning reduced model size by 75%, making it suitable for low-power wearable devices.

Limitations

1. Minor misclassifications were observed between exercises with similar motion patterns (e.g., squats vs lunges).
2. The model currently supports 11 exercises; scalability to a broader range of activities remains a challenge.

Future Directions

1. Expand the exercise set to include more complex activities such as yoga poses.
2. Investigate multi-modal sensor fusion (e.g., IMU + heart rate) for improved robustness.
3. Explore federated learning for personalized and privacy-preserving adaptation.

This work demonstrates the feasibility of deploying efficient ML models for real-time gym workout recognition on wearable devices, paving the way for future innovations in fitness tracking technology.

Acknowledgements

We also express our sincere thanks to Mrs. Sameena Begum Pathan, Assistant Professor at the Department of Computer and Communication, MIT Manipal, for her invaluable guidance and mentorship throughout this project. Her expertise and insights significantly contributed to the successful completion of this study.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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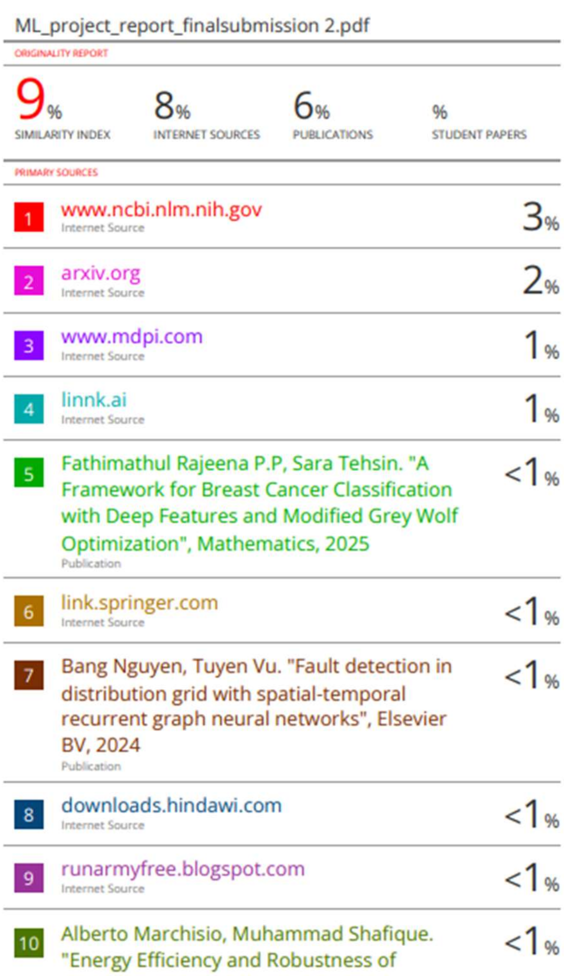

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