
CLASSIFICATION VIA QUANTUM MACHINE LEARNING

Sánchez Rolando

School of Physical Sciences and Nanotechnology
Yachay Tech University
Urcuquí - Ecuador.
rolando.sanchez@yachaytech.edu.ec

Mowbray Duncan

School of Physical Sciences and Nanotechnology
Yachay Tech University
Urcuquí - Ecuador.
duncan.mowbray@yachaytech.edu.ec

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ABSTRACT

Classification is a key component across scientific, technological and industrial domains, from biomedical diagnostics and computational materials science to finance, climate modeling, and sociology. However, classical machine learning (ML) approaches often face limitations in computational efficiency, especially for high-dimensional and complex datasets, where quantum computing has been proposed as a promising breakthrough. Quantum machine learning (QML) aims to harness this power, with algorithms like the Harrow-Hassidim-Lloyd (HHL) solver and Shor's algorithm demonstrating exponential speedups in specialized cases. In this mini-review, we explore the state of the art of quantum classification algorithms, focusing on quantum support vector machines (QSVMs) and Quantum Neural Networks (QNNs), their implementations using the Qiskit software framework and their performance. By critically evaluating their advantages and limitations, we aim to answer the question: *Can QML surpass classical methods, or do hardware limitations, decoherence, and scalability barriers constrain its potential?* Finally, we will highlight some advancements needed to realize quantum-enhanced classification in practical applications.

Keywords Machine Learning · Quantum Mechanics · Quantum Machine Learning · Classification

1 Introduction

Classification is a cornerstone of modern science and technology, regardless of whether it is for scientific purposes. Its wide-ranging applications include finance [1], climate modelling [2], medical diagnostics [3], computational materials science [4], sociology [5] and human behaviour itself [6]. Data is categorized into distinct groups to generate precise predictive models through classification. Typically, these issues are grouped into two primary categories: binary classification and multi-class classification. The binary classification process entails dividing data into two categories, such as identifying spam versus non-spam emails or differentiating between cancerous and non-cancerous tissues in medical diagnosis. In contrast, multi-classification encompasses additional categories, such as identifying skin lesion types associated with cancerous conditions [7].

ML is a branch of computer science focused on identifying patterns in data attributes to make predictions about previously unseen inputs. It involves creating algorithms that enable computers to learn from data and make decisions autonomously, without being explicitly programmed for specific tasks. These algorithms are generally categorized into three main types: supervised, unsupervised, and reinforcement learning [8].

Supervised learning relies on a labeled training dataset, where input-output relationships are clearly defined, allowing the algorithm to learn and classify new data based on these examples. Unsupervised learning, on the other hand, aims to uncover hidden structures, clusters, or groupings within unlabeled data [9]. In both cases, the core task is pattern classification, which involves assigning new input data to predefined categories or classes. Reinforcement learning, which mimics aspects of human learning, operates within a framework of rules and objectives. Here, the algorithm receives rewards or penalties based on the actions it takes to achieve a goal. Rewards reinforce successful strategies,

while penalties prompt adjustments to improve decision-making. While reinforcement learning is a powerful approach, this work will not focus on it.

However, a significant challenge in ML is the computational time and storage required, especially when dealing with large datasets. Additionally, training these models is time-intensive as the main challenges lie in the problem of finding the right parameters that lead to an optimal solution. To address these limitations, researchers have turned to quantum computing as a promising alternative. Quantum methods have the potential to significantly reduce both storage requirements and computational time, offering a new direction for overcoming the constraints of classical approaches [10].

Over the last decades, scientists have applied quantum computing in diverse areas such as cryptography [11] and communication [12]. This growing interest stems from the remarkable capabilities in solving complex problems. For example, factorization through Shor’s algorithm [13] and searching unstructured databases using Grover’s algorithm [14]. The most noticeable advantage of quantum computing is the ability of manipulate quantum states in superposition in order to speed up computational tasks in terms of complexity, as these operations would be executed on many states at the same time. In a formal way, quantum computers surpass classical ones by using qubits, which exist in an exponentially larger space, $\mathbb{SU}(2^n)$, compared to classical bits in Boolean space, $\mathbb{B}^{\otimes n}$. While an n -bit classical register holds one n -digit binary string, a quantum register of the same size can represent all possible strings simultaneously, offering an exponential advantage [15]. Then, quantum algorithms are developed such that the modified quantum state has a high amplitude for states representing solutions for a given problem. However, while quantum supremacy has been demonstrated for specific problems [16], achieving it in data science remains uncertain, even theoretically. Nonetheless, this is a key objective in QML.

Usually, QML tasks can be categorized into four approaches, as shown in Fig. 1, where CC tasks refers to classical computers using quantum computing inspired algorithms to process classical data, such as recommendation system algorithms [17]. CQ refers to processing classical data using QML algorithms [18]. QC setting asks how classical learning techniques may help in quantum tasks and this is an active area of investigation, with classical machine learning algorithms used in many areas in the quantum computing, such as qubit characterization [19], control [20] and readout[21]. Finally, QQ, a field remaining in its early stages, involves the processing of quantum data with quantum machine learning algorithms, for instance, analyzing molecular ground state energy directly in quantum computers using QML to optimize processes.

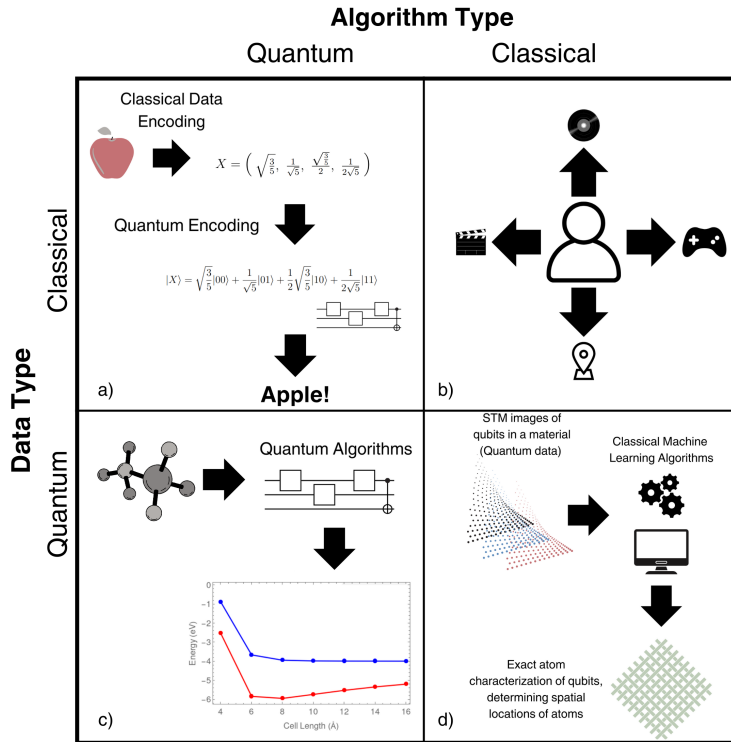


Figure 1: QML tasks from different perspectives. a) QC. b) CC. c) QQ. d) CQ.

There are numerous academic contributions on ML tasks using quantum computing. There are proposals to develop entire quantum algorithms to solve pattern recognition [22, 23]. On the other hand, some authors explored running ML classification algorithms in a quantum computer expecting lower execution times [24, 25]. Some other experts have tried to develop versions of quantum neural networks for classification to help in different fields [26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31]. Although interest in the field is rapidly increasing, a complete theoretical framework for quantum learning—understanding how quantum information can fundamentally be used for intelligent computing—is still in its early stages of development. In the area of QML, the short-term objective is to demonstrate quantum advantage over classical approaches in a data science context. To reach this improvement, it’s essential to remain open to the types of applications that could gain the most from QML, which might include problems that are naturally quantum in nature. Additionally, it’s important to study how QML techniques perform as problem sizes grow, including factors like trainability (such as how gradients scale) and prediction accuracy.

While prior surveys and reviews [32, 33, 34, 35] establish foundational QML principles, and empirical studies benchmark isolated algorithms, this work uniquely focuses on classification tasks. We evaluate whether quantum classification algorithms can overcome the limitations of classical ML or if they remain hindered by hardware constraints and theoretical challenges. We structure our review as follows: **Section 2** provides an in-depth analysis of quantum classification algorithms, including Quantum k-nearest neighbours Quantum Neural Networks, Quantum Support Vector Machines, and Quantum-enhanced Decision Trees (Figure 2). **Section 3** discusses key barriers such as noise, scalability, and error correction. Finally, **Section 4** concludes with a forward-looking perspective on the feasibility of quantum advantage in real-world classification tasks.

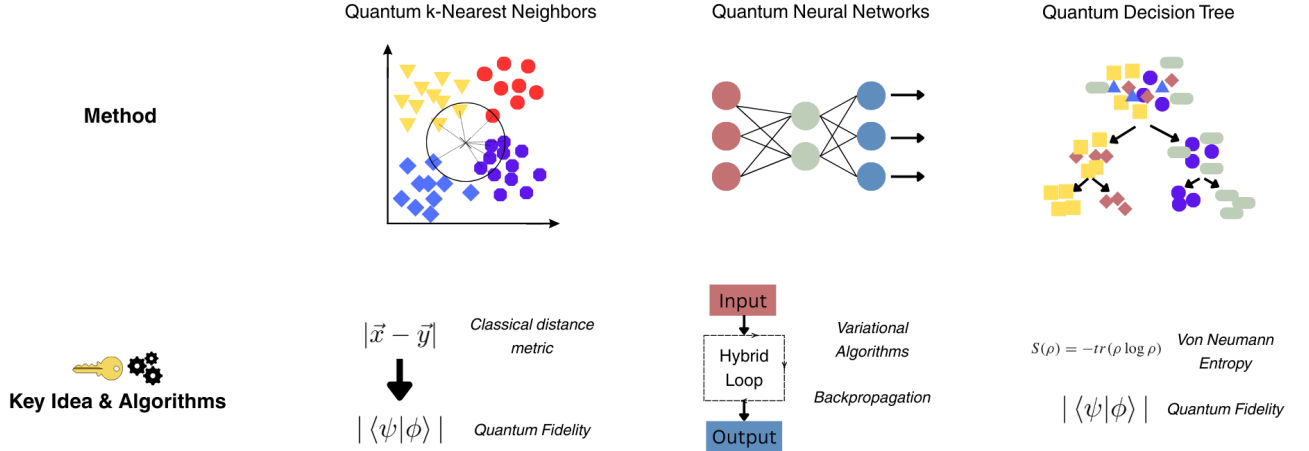


Figure 2: Overview of quantum machine learning classification methods

2 Quantum Classification Algorithms

2.1 Quantum k-nearest neighbours

The classical k-nearest neighbours algorithm assigns a class to an unclassified object by comparing its vector \vec{v} to previously classified training samples. This is done using a distance metric, typically Euclidean or Hamming distance, to identify the k-nearest neighbours in the multidimensional space. The steps of the algorithm can be summarized as follows:

1. Choose a distance metric and compute the distance between the unclassified object vector \vec{v} and each training sample.
2. Identify the k training samples closest to \vec{v} based on the chosen metric.
3. Assign the class with the highest frequency among the k nearest samples to the object \vec{v} .

This approach relies on the assumption that objects close to each other in the multidimensional space share similar properties. Now, the most expensive step in these algorithms is determining the distance between the test sample and

the train states and by the aforementioned properties of quantum computing, this task is a good instance to use QML. Translating this concept into a quantum framework requires redefining distance metrics in quantum terms and consider the fidelity or overlap $|\langle x|y\rangle|$ as a measure of similarity between states.

Then, building on the data representation proposed by Lloyd et al. [36], as shown in Eq. 1, to evaluate the distance from a given $\vec{x} \in \mathbb{R}^N$ to the centroid of a given set V_j , \vec{y}_j , one can calculate the inner product of the state $|\psi\rangle = \frac{\sqrt{2}}{2}(|0, x\rangle + |1, y_j\rangle)$, constructed for the system qubits and an adjoined ancilla, with the state $|\phi\rangle = \frac{\sqrt{Z}}{Z}(|\vec{x}| |0\rangle - |\vec{y}_j| |1\rangle)$, where $Z = |\vec{x}|^2 + |\vec{y}_j|^2$ ensures normalization. This leads to the identity in Eq. 2, which provides a way to compute the distance between the vectors.

$$|x\rangle = |x|^{-\frac{1}{2}} \vec{x} \quad (1)$$

$$|\vec{x} - \vec{y}|^2 = Z |\langle \psi | \phi \rangle|^2 \quad (2)$$

The overlap $|\langle \psi | \phi \rangle|^2$ in Eq. 2 can be physically retrieved using a routine known as the swap test [37] show in Figure 3, performing a projection on the ancilla alone. The probability of measuring the initial state $|\xi\rangle = |x, y_j, 0_{anc}\rangle$ in this test is given by Eq. 3, where the overlap appears explicitly.

$$P(|\xi\rangle) = \frac{1 + |\langle \psi | \phi \rangle|^2}{2} \quad (3)$$

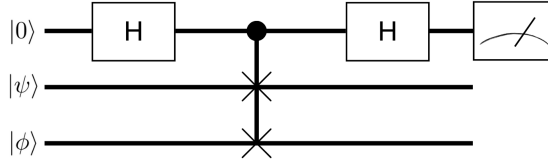


Figure 3: Swap Circuit

The authors argue that this quantum method, including the construction of quantum states, achieves greater efficiency than the classical polynomial runtime while preserving quantum coherence during the state creation. Using these principles, a quantum version of the nearest centroid algorithm can be constructed. Here, \vec{x} represents the sample to be classified, and $\vec{y}_j = \frac{\sum_p \vec{v}_j^p}{N_j}$ is the centroid of the given class V_j .

Quantum Neural Networks (QNNs)

Classical neural networks (NNs) are computational models inspired by biological neurons, processing input data through layered architectures of interconnected nodes to produce a desired classification output. As illustrated in Fig. 4, these models adjust their parameters via backpropagation to minimize a predefined loss function, optimizing their predictive performance through iterative training. On the other hand, QNNs are a specialized subclass of variational quantum algorithms, implemented using parameterized quantum circuits. These circuits employ tunable unitary rotation gates and entangling operations to perform numerical tasks such as optimization, approximation, and classification [38].

The operational workflow of a common QNN involves the stages shown in Fig. 4. First, classical input data is encoded into a quantum state using a feature map [39], initializing the qubit register. Next, a variational circuit transforms this initial encoded quantum state across multiple layers. The final quantum state is then measured by evaluating the expectation value of a Hamiltonian operator, typically represented by Pauli gates [28]. These quantum measurements are decoded into classical outputs, which are used to compute the loss function. The variational parameters are optimized to minimize this loss, analogous to classical training but within a quantum computational framework. This hybrid structure positions QNNs at the intersection of classical deep learning and parameterized quantum circuits, offering potential advantages in certain machine learning tasks while remaining subject to ongoing research and design refinements. [40].

Now, the previously described QNN structure is usually modified to match the specific needs of the problem. For instance, the feature map can be done in different ways like basis encoding, amplitude encoding, product encoding, angle encoding, etc. In a similar way, the variational quantum algorithm will be designed according to the problem and there are several ways to do it [41]. It has been demonstrated that Quantum Neural Networks (QNNs), implemented

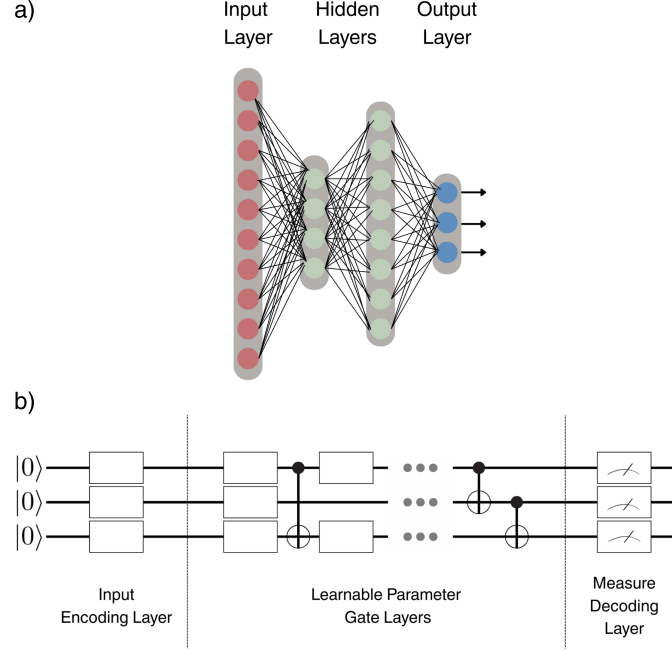


Figure 4: a) Main components of classical neural networks. b) Components in proposed QNN

as variational quantum circuits with classical optimizers for tuning the parameters, can outperform NNs on relatively small datasets, despite their significantly lower complexity and fewer parameters [42]. For instance, QNNs achieved an average accuracy improvement of 7% over classical NNs in experiments, even with orders of magnitude fewer parameters. These advantages were also noticed in medical image classification [7, 43]. However, these advantages were observed under the constraints of current noisy intermediate-scale quantum (NISQ) hardware, which limits problem sizes due to qubit counts and error rates. As quantum hardware advances, it is expected that QNNs will scale to larger problem sizes, though challenges such as error mitigation, circuit depth limitations, and optimal entanglement strategies must first be addressed.

Quantum Support Vector Machines (QSVMs)

In progress...

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