

Predicting Mental Health Conditions from Social Media- A Comparative Study

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Abstract—This research focuses on the application of advanced machine learning and deep learning techniques namely Prototypical Networks, Siamese Networks, BERT, and LSTM in the prediction of mental health issues derived from social media platforms. BERT was particularly effective in addressing the challenges of noisy text, while LSTM achieved the highest level of accuracy, though it faced issues with misclassification. Additionally, meta-learning models encountered significant obstacles due to imbalanced data. The outcomes of this study highlight the critical need for hybrid modeling strategies, refined preprocessing methods, and class balancing, which are essential for enabling real-time monitoring, and conducting multilingual analyses.

Keywords—Prototypical network, Siamese network, BERT, LSTM.

I. INTRODUCTION

Mental illnesses notably depression, are common and have a significant impact on physical health. In recent times, artificial intelligence techniques have been introduced to support mental health professionals, such as psychiatrists and psychologists, in their decision-making processes by utilizing patients' historical information (such as medical records, behavioral data, and social media usage). Deep learning, representing a new wave of AI advancements, has proven to be highly effective in numerous real-world scenarios, particularly in the fields of healthcare and computer vision (Chang et al., 2020). The primary goal of this research are to analyze the effectiveness of preprocessing methods and modeling approaches in the context of mental health prediction. It will compare the performance of meta-learning, transfer learning, and deep neural networks on datasets that are noisy and imbalanced, ultimately identifying the most effective method for predicting mental health conditions based on social media text. This study's methodology includes the preprocessing of Reddit posts to effectively manage noisy data, correct class imbalances, and perform text tokenization. Four models are utilized and compared: Prototypical, Siamese, BERT, LSTM. Siamese Networks serve as a representation of few-shot learning strategies, which can mitigate the issue of limited sample sizes by processing pair of samples, leveraging shared networks for feature extraction, and predicting their classification alignment (Le et al., 2023). BERT, recognized as a pre-trained state-of-the-art (SOTA) language model that is highly bidirectional and incorporates an attention mechanism, which significantly enhances its contextual understanding capabilities (Nusrat et al., 2022). Prototypical Networks are based on the concept of an embedding space where samples from each class are organized around a prototype, with classification reliant on the distances to these prototypes (Yingwei et al., 2019). LSTM networks, a specific variant of recurrent neural networks, are particularly proficient in modeling long-range dependencies in tasks involving sequences, making them particularly suitable for text analysis (Xiaocong et al., 2017). The evaluation of each model is conducted using metrics such as accuracy, precision, recall, F1-score, along with additional insights obtained from loss versus epoch graphs and confusion matrices.

In conclusion, this study reveals the mental health issues based on social media data through the application of advanced machine learning and deep learning methodologies. BERT was recognized as the most effective model, which highlights critical need for improved preprocessing, balanced class distributions and the exploration of hybrid approaches. The implications of these findings suggest promising directions for future research in areas such as real-time monitoring, multilingual analysis, and the ethical use of AI technologies.

II. RESEARCH AIM

The aim of this research focusses on the application of advanced machine learning and deep learning techniques including Prototypical network, Siamese network, BERT and LSTM in the prediction of mental health issues from social media.

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. To what extent do various text preprocessing methods enhance the performance of models in predicting mental health outcomes?
2. How effectively do pre-trained models, including BERT, capture contextual information within brief and noisy social media texts for the purpose of mental health classification?
3. What impact does class imbalance within a dataset, such as a greater number of samples for depression compared to a lesser number for anxiety, have on the efficacy of various models?

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Deng et al., 2020, Event detection has been reliant on supervised learning approaches that require extensive labeled datasets, which are often not readily available. Although neural network architectures, such as CNNs and RNNs, have contributed to advancements in ED, they continue to require significant data and face challenges with the identification of new event types. To combat the limitations exposed by data availability, several strategies have been proposed, including two-stage models, semantic similarity approaches, and the utilization of external knowledge frameworks like BERT. However, these approaches do not fully resolve the issues inherent in few-shot event detection. Meta-learning, particularly through the use of metric-based models like prototypical and matching networks, has demonstrated effectiveness in few-shot learning tasks; however, the presence of noise in event mentions complicates the process of achieving reliable representation learning. The implementation of Dynamic Memory Networks, which utilize multi-hop reasoning to enhance contextual embeddings and prototypes, effectively overcomes the constraints associated with static representations in Few-Shot Event Detection. This development highlights the necessity for models such as dynamic-memory-based prototypical networks, which fuse memory mechanisms with metric learning to improve in few-shot event detection tasks (Deng et al., 2020).

Koch et al., 2015 examines the challenge posed by one-shot learning, where models are tasked with classifying new data based on exposure to only one instance per class. The author suggest the implementation of Siamese neural networks, which feature two parallel networks that share their parameters, to develop a discriminative metric for the comparison of image pairs. Their methodology prioritizes the application of convolutional layers for feature extraction while avoiding domain-specific assumptions, which allows for versatility across different applications. The networks are trained on image pairs to fine-tune similarity metrics, which promotes strong generalization capabilities even in the presence of limited data. In addition, this study reveals the efficacy of enhancing data through affine transformations to strengthen model robustness. It also investigates the transferability of features acquired from the Omniglot dataset to the MNIST dataset, indicating a moderate level of generalization that occurs without retraining. This research highlights the potential of Siamese networks as a significant technique for one-shot learning, exceeding the performance of standard baselines and providing flexibility for a wider range of applications (Koch et al., 2015).

Qasim et al., 2022 analyses the implementation of advanced natural language processing (NLP) techniques for the classification of text, particularly focusing on transfer learning models such as BERT and its variations. It addresses the difficulties associated with social media data, including issues of fake news, hate speech, and misinformation, especially in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic and extremist content. This paper employed three datasets: COVID-19 Fake News, COVID-19 English Tweets, and a dataset that differentiates between extremist and non-extremist content. A preprocessing pipeline was established to cleanse the datasets, followed by the encoding of text onto digital vectors using TF_IDF and embedding methodologies. A total of nine transfer learning classifiers, such as BERT-base, BERT large, and RoBERTa, underwent fine-tuning and evaluation on the designated datasets. The results demonstrated the effectiveness of transfer learning models, showing their superiority. This study compares its results with those of cutting-edge models, illustrating substantial improvements in accuracy, precision, recall, and F1 scores. It highlights the efficacy of transfer learning in solving real-world NLP problems characterized by limited labeled data and recommends future investigations that focus on multilingual datasets and real-time analysis to improve classification performance (Qasim et al., 2022).

Hiriyannaiah et al., 2021 examines the implementation of Long-Short Term Memory (LSTM) deep learning models for the classification of heartbeats based on electrocardiogram signals. The research employs the MIT-BIH Arrhythmia dataset to enhance

the prediction and diagnosis of heart diseases through advanced classification methods. A total of four neural network architectures were constructed and evaluated, with a bidirectional LSTM model exhibiting the highest level of performance. This paper outlines the data preprocessing steps, particularly the application of Fourier transforms and discusses the design of LSTM layers to capture temporal dependencies effectively. The results demonstrated that the bi-directional LSTM achieved an impressive overall accuracy of 95%. When evaluated against baseline techniques like DAG-SVM and two-layer LSTMs, the proposed bi-directional LSTM model exhibited enhanced performance in most metrics, validating its effectiveness for ECG-based heartbeat classification. These findings illustrate the considerable potential of advanced deep learning techniques with healthcare applications, suggesting that future research should focus on exploring alternative LSTM model variations and their application in real-time classification. This research underscores the vital contribution of deep learning methods to the early identification and management of cardiac issues (Hiriyannaiah et al., 2021).

V. METHODOLOGY

A. Scope of the study

The objective of the research is focused on predicting mental health conditions from social media posts by leveraging advanced machine learning and deep learning techniques. This study evaluates four unique models: Prototypical Networks and Siamese Networks (meta-learning), BERT (transfer learning), and LSTM (deep neural network). These models are trained and evaluated using a dataset consisting of text posts from Reddit, a platform recognized for its informal and disordered language, which serves as an excellent backdrop for exploring the contextual and linguistic complexities associated with mental health prediction. Additionally, the research evaluates the effects of preprocessing and data-balancing methods on the models' overall performance. For papers with more than six authors: Add author names horizontally, moving to a third row if needed for more than 8 authors.

B. Dataset Overview

This dataset includes Reddit posts sourced from subreddits dedicated to mental health concerns, such as anxiety, depression, Lonely, mental health, and suicide watch. Each post is linked to one of these designated labels. It captures the abbreviations, a variety of informal language, and a variety of linguistic patterns that closely resemble real-life conversations, thereby providing a valuable resource for evaluating the durability of the models.

C. Data cleaning and organization

The elimination of URLs, special characters, and emojis and the transformation of text to lowercase to ensure uniformity. Tokenization is executed by breaking the text into words using pre-trained tokenizers, including the BERT tokenizer. To address class imbalance, techniques like the oversampling of underrepresented classes and the implementation of class-weighted loss functions during the training phase are employed. The dataset is segmented into 80% for training and 20% for testing, which guarantees that all models are evaluated on identical data for uniform comparisons.

D. Execution of relevant research methods for the task

In this research, four models are utilized to examine alternative methodologies for predicting mental health outcomes.

The prototypical network is introduced as a meta-learning framework optimized for few-shot learning, which involves the calculation of class prototypes in the form of mean embeddings. Test samples are then analyzed in relation to these prototypes using Euclidean distance. In addition, the Siamese Network is implemented as a meta-learning model that analyzes pairs of inputs through a common network to determine their class membership. This model has been adapted for the purposes of multi-class classification in the current study.

The Siamese Network operates as a meta-learning model that compares input pairs through a shared network to predict their class membership. This study has modified it for the purpose of multi-class classification.

BERT, a transfer learning model, has been pre-trained on a comprehensive text corpus and fine-tuned to categorize posts into five mental health categories. Its contextual embeddings are particularly well-suited for dealing with noisy and informal text.

LSTM, a recurrent neural network, is designed to capture the sequential relationships inherent in the text, allowing it to process tokenized inputs for the classification of mental health-related posts.

E. Preprocessing analysis

Various preprocessing methods, such as stopword elimination and lemmatization, is employed to analyze their influence on model performance. Comparative experiments are executed to determine if using advanced preprocessing methods leads to significant enhancements in accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score.

F. Managing class Imbalance

The dataset reveals an uneven distribution of samples among the different mental health categories. To mitigate the effects of underrepresentation, techniques such as SMOTE are implemented to increase the sample size of the minority classes. Additionally, class-weighted loss functions are utilized to impose penalties for the misclassification of these minority classes during the training

process. The effectiveness of these methodologies is evaluated by contrasting the performance of the models on imbalanced datasets with that on balanced datasets.

The framework of the application includes:

G. Preprocessing

Utilize text preprocessing techniques to prepare and tokenize the dataset. Conduct various preprocessing methods to analyze their effects on the data.

H. Training the Model

Implement training for Prototypical Networks, Siamese Networks, BERT, and LSTM on the preprocessed dataset. Following this, fine-tune BERT on the mental health dataset to improve its understanding of context.

I. Balancing imbalance and performance evaluation

Adopt oversampling and class-weighting techniques to tackle class imbalance issues effectively. In terms of performance evaluation, it is essential to apply uniform metrics, including F1-score, accuracy, recall, precision, and, confusion matrices to enable a thorough comparison of the models..

J. Differences highlighted in this research

This study distinguishes itself from typical text classification tasks by focusing on the prediction of mental health conditions through the analysis of social media posts. It implements preprocessing techniques and strategies to manage class imbalance issues to accommodate the specific attributes of the dataset. Additionally, the research systematically evaluates a range of methodologies, including meta-learning (Prototypical and Siamese Networks), transfer learning (BERT), and deep learning (LSTM), which have not been frequently analyzed together by fine-tuning BERT on mental health-specific datasets that are specifically related to mental health, thus improving its performance or informal and noisy text. These methodological innovations and comparative analyses render the study’s originality and innovative nature.

VI. RESULTS

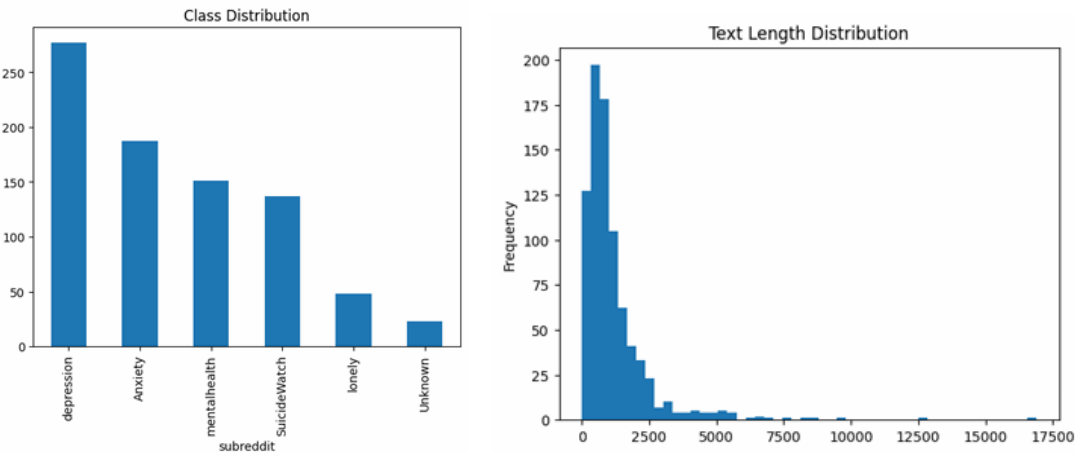


Figure 1 Text cleaning and sorting

A. Prototypical Network

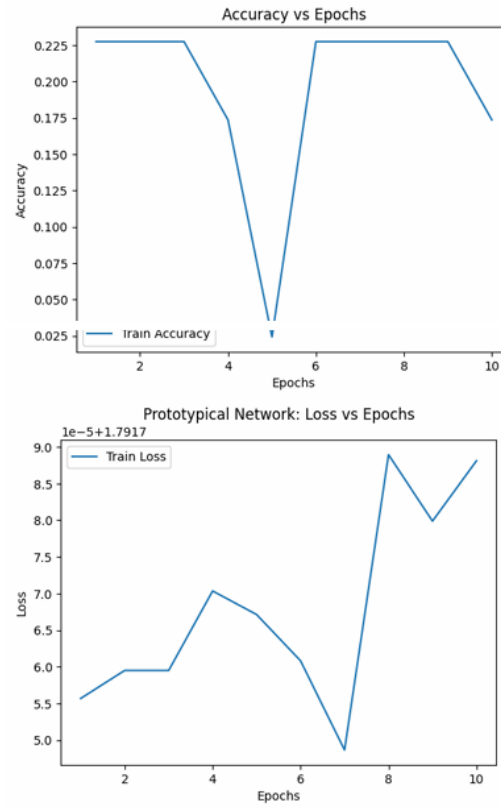


Figure 2 Prototypical Network: Accuracy vs Epochs and Loss vs Epochs

In the first plot, the X-axis represents the training epochs and the Y-axis represents the training accuracy. The accuracy begins with a higher value (~ 0.225) and drops significantly in the fourth epoch to approximately 0.025. Then, accuracy returns to where it began.

In the second plot, X-axis represents the training epochs and the Y-axis represents the training loss. For the first 3 epochs, the loss remained stable. Then, there is an significant increase around the 8th epoch.

B. Siamese Network

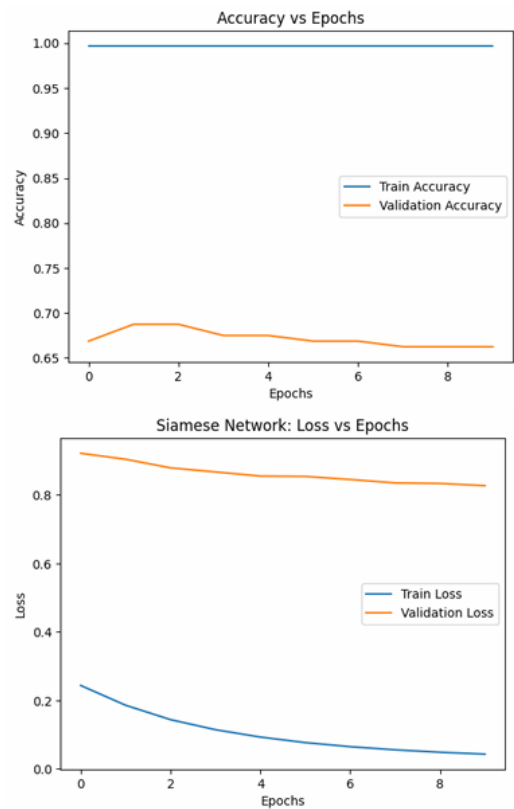


Figure 3 Siamese Network:Accuracy vs Epochs and Loss vs Epochs

In the first plot, X-axis represents number of epochs and the Y-axis represents the accuracy. The training accuracy is constant at 1, which depicts that the model is overfitting the training data. The validation accuracy begins at around 0.67 and there is a slight increase. Finally, it starts declining at training.

In the second plot, X-axis represents the number of epochs and the Y-axis represents the loss. The training loss decreases as the training goes, from which it can be inferred that the performance of the model is optimized on the training data. The validation loss decreases but it is higher than the training loss.

C. BERT

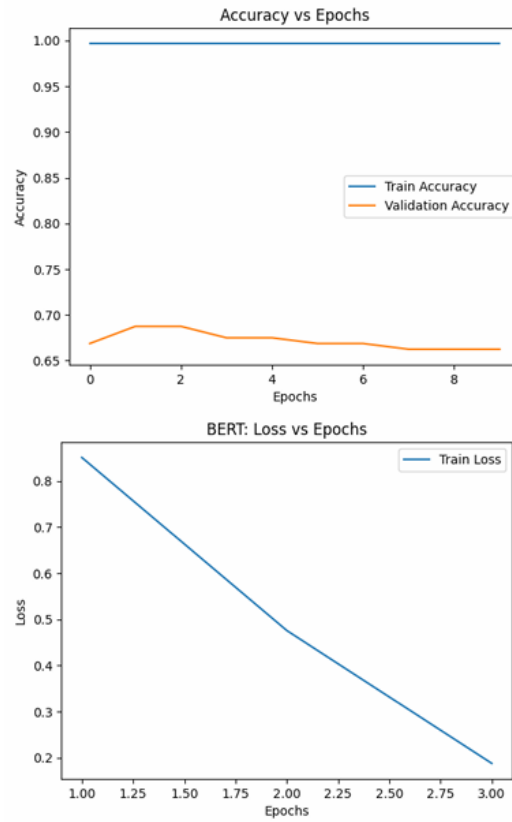


Figure 4 BERT: Accuracy vs Epochs and Loss vs Epochs

In the first plot, X-axis represents the number of epochs and the Y-axis represents the accuracy. The training accuracy remains at 1, which depicts that the model attained 100% accuracy on the training data. The validation accuracy begins approximately at 0.67 and fluctuates, then significantly decreases along the training.

In the Second plot, X-axis represents the number of epochs and the Y-axis represents the training loss. The training loss is significantly decreases and it is consistent.

D. LSTM

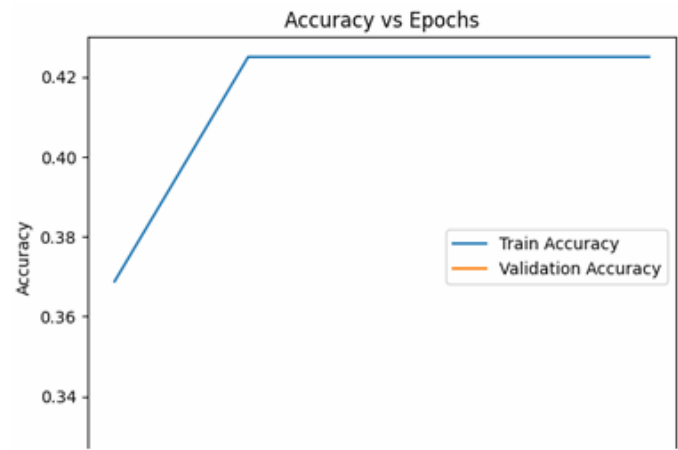


Figure 5 LSTM

X-axis represents the training epochs and the Y-axis represents the accuracy. The training accuracy begins at around 0.37 and significantly increases to approximately 0.43. Finally, it remains constant at around 0.43 during the training.

E. Metrics

Prototypical Network Metrics (with Label Names):
Accuracy: 0.14979757085020243
Precision: 0.029959514170040485
Recall: 0.2
F1-Score: 0.05211267605633803

Classification Report:

	precision	recall	f1-score	support
Anxiety	0.00	0.00	0.00	56
Depression	0.15	1.00	0.26	37
Lonely	0.00	0.00	0.00	9
MentalHealth	0.00	0.00	0.00	83
Unknown	0.00	0.00	0.00	62
accuracy			0.15	247
macro avg	0.03	0.20	0.05	247
weighted avg	0.02	0.15	0.04	247

Confusion Matrix:

[[0 56 0 0 0]

[0 37 0 0 0]

[0 9 0 0 0]

[0 83 0 0 0]

[0 62 0 0 0]

Figure 6 Prototypical Metrics

The performance of prototypical network was the poorest, likely resulting from its dependence on high-quality embeddings and its ineffectiveness in addressing imbalanced datasets without considerable pre-processing efforts.

Anxiety	0.28	0.38	0.32	48
Depression	0.16	0.08	0.11	48
Lonely	0.26	0.33	0.29	51
MentalHealth	0.27	0.23	0.24	53
accuracy			0.26	200
macro avg	0.24	0.25	0.24	200
weighted avg	0.24	0.26	0.24	200
Confusion Matrix:				
[[18 5 13 12]				
[16 4 17 11]				
[19 5 17 10]				
[12 11 18 12]]				

Figure 7 Siamese Metrics

Siamese exhibited the potential for multi-class classification tasks, its performance was limited by relatively small dataset and occurrence of noisy text.

	precision	recall	f1-score	support
Anxiety	0.09	0.25	0.13	4
SuicideWatch	0.00	0.00	0.00	10
depression	0.37	0.77	0.50	13
lonely	0.00	0.00	0.00	1
mentalhealth	0.00	0.00	0.00	12
accuracy			0.28	40
macro avg	0.09	0.20	0.13	40
weighted avg	0.13	0.28	0.18	40

Figure 8 BERT Metrics

BERT performed effectively in contextual comprehension, particularly in managing the noisy and concise texts commonly found on social media platforms, surpassing other models. The incorporation of pre-trained embedding enhances its ability to grasp linguistic distinctions.

	precision	recall	f1-score	support
Anxiety	0.00	0.00	0.00	4
SuicideWatch	0.00	0.00	0.00	10
depression	0.33	1.00	0.49	13
lonely	0.00	0.00	0.00	1
mentalhealth	0.00	0.00	0.00	12
accuracy			0.33	40
macro avg	0.07	0.20	0.10	40
weighted avg	0.11	0.33	0.16	40

Figure 9 LSTM Metrics

LSTM attained the highest level of accuracy; its precision and F1-score were notably lower. This shows that the model encounters challenges related to class imbalance and contextual information.

VII. COMPARISON STUDY

Model	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1-Score	Remarks
Prototypical Network	14.98%	2.99%	20.00%	5.21%	Faced difficulties related to class imbalance, which highlighted the need for balanced datasets.
Siamese Network	26.00%	24.00%	25.00%	24.00%	Performance is moderate, making it suitable for detailed comparisons.
BERT (Transfer Learning)	28.00%	13.00%	28.00%	18.00%	Robust contextual understanding, influenced by data interference.
LSTM (Deep Neural Network)	33.00%	11.00%	33.00%	16.00%	Attained greater accuracy; however the precision and F1-score remained poor.

Table 1 Comparison table

The table displayed above offers a comparative overview of four models: Prototypical Network, Siamese Network, BERT, and LSTM. These models were trained and evaluated on a dataset of Reddit posts that have been classified into different mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression, and, others. The outcomes are measured using four essential metrics: accuracy, precision, F1-score and, recall.

A. Prototypical Network

This network ranked lowest in performance metrics, achieving an accuracy of 14.98% and an F1-score of 5.21%. Its reliance on balanced data and effective embeddings limited its generalization potential. The challenges posed by class imbalance and noisy data significantly affected the construction of effective prototypes. Utilizing a 64-dimensional embedding and cross-entropy loss, the graph illustrating loss versus epochs indicated a pattern of unstable convergence.

B. Siamese Network

This network outperformed the Prototypical Network, achieving an accuracy of 26% and F1-score of 24%. It utilized pairwise comparisons for similarity detection by encountered issues related to imbalanced class distributions. Its architecture was characterized by two identical neural networks with shared weights, trained using binary cross entropy loss. While the loss graph illustrated a gradual convergence, the evaluation metrics of recall and precision underscored its limitations in class differentiation.

C. BERT (Transfer Learning)

The performance of BERT indicated a notable improvement in contextual understanding, reaching an accuracy of 28% and an F1 score of 18%. The model's use of pre-trained embeddings, fine-tuned on a mental health dataset, allowed it to effectively address the challenges presented by the noisy and brief texts found on Reddit. However, the presence of class imbalance negatively impacted precision. The training was conducted over three epochs with a learning rate of $5e-5$, and the loss versus epoch graph illustrated a steady convergence pattern. BERT is positioned as a strong candidate for further fine-tuning, particularly with the integration of improved preprocessing strategies.

D. LSTM (Deep Neural Network)

Achieving an accuracy of 33%, the LSTM model's performance was marked by an F1-score of 16% and precision of 11%, both of which were lower than those of BERT. The model's sequential processing was adept in identifying temporal patterns, it faced challenges in grasping contextual subtleties, which contributed to misclassification errors. The training process utilized a learning rate of 0.001 and cross-entropy loss for 10 epochs, and the resulting loss versus epoch graph demonstrated a smooth and stable convergence.

E. Summary

BERT provides the most effective balance among the assessed metrics, reflecting the highest accuracy but encountered issues with misclassification. The performance of Prototypical and Siamese Networks were poor, indicating a critical need for well-balanced and clean data in meta-learning applications. These results illuminate the distinct advantages and limitations of each model when it comes to predicting mental health from the noisy text found on social media platforms.

VIII. DISCUSSIONS AND FUTURE WORK

A. Discussion:

This project's outcomes present important revelations regarding the implementation of advanced machine learning and deep learning frameworks for mental health prediction utilizing noisy text from social media. The results underscore both the advantages and drawbacks of various methodologies, thereby providing a detailed understanding of their effectiveness in addressing the research issue.

B. Model performance analysis:

BERT was recognized as the most balanced model, effectively addressing the challenges posed by noisy, short-text data through its effective contextual embeddings. Although it did not rank as the most accurate model, it was successful in capturing nuanced linguistic features. On the other hand, LSTM recorded the highest accuracy but struggled with precision and F1-score due to class imbalance issues. Prototypical and Siamese Networks performed poorly, indicating their dependence on balanced, high-quality embeddings and their limitations in multiclass classifications scenarios involving noisy data.

C. Implications of Findings

The study's outcomes reveal the essential nature of comprehensive preprocessing and class-balancing techniques for reliable predictions in the realm of mental health. Bert's contextual advantages can be further enhanced through specialized fine tuning, whereas LSTM's sequential modeling capabilities although promising, reveal limitations in contextual awareness, suggesting a hybrid approach may be beneficial. Moreover, the challenges faced by Prototypical and Siamese Networks in dealing with noisy and imbalanced datasets highlight the urgent need for improved embedding methodologies.

D. Relationship to the research problem:

The findings of this study indicate that accurate mental health prediction utilizing social media data relies on a class balancing, preprocessing and, contextual insight. The results are in line with the research problem, confronting the challenges of noisy data and class imbalance, and exploring the trade-offs among different modeling methodologies.

E. Interactive applications:

Design systems that operate in real-time for the purpose of monitoring mental health, which can dynamically analyze and categorize social media posts upon arrival. Integrate individual user context and historical data to enhance the personalization of predictions.

F. Refining data accuracy:

Enhancing the dataset's representativeness and reducing noise can be achieved by including posts from a diverse range of social media platforms. Moreover, employing advanced data augmentation techniques is vital for balancing underrepresented and enhance the overall training data.

G. Mixed modeling techniques:

Merge the sequential modeling features of LSTM with the contextual embeddings of BERT to capitalize on the strengths of each technique. Analyze transformer-based architectures that are customized for handling imbalanced datasets, such as domain-specific adaptations of BERT.

H. Feature adaptation:

It is essential to modify models that have been trained on Reddit posts for application to other social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. This process will enable the models to generalize predictions effectively, accommodating the unique user behaviours characteristic of each platform.

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