Examining Interpretability of Machine Learning-based Models for Diabetes Prediction using LIME Explainable AI Technique

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Submitted May 2025, in partial fulfilment of the conditions for the award of the degree of **BSc Computer Science**

# Abstract

Diabetes is a chronic disease characterised by the pancreas producing insufficient insulin or the body’s inability to utilise produced insulin effectively. The imbalance, as a result, causes a disruption in the blood sugar’s regulation – potentially leading to severe complications affecting the nervous systems and blood vessels. The prevalence of pre-diabetes (hyperglycaemia) is rising, the latest National Diabetes Audit reporting 3,615,330 individuals registered with a GP as having pre-diabetes in 2023 – an 18% increase from 2022 [1].

This study seeks to bridge the gap between traditional diagnostic methods and modern artificial intelligence (AI) techniques by developing a web and mobile application that integrates Explainable AI (XAI) frameworks with machine learning (ML) models. Specifically, it evaluates the performance of three models – Logistic Regression (LR), Random Forest (RF), and Gradient Boosting (GBM)– in conjunction with the LIME XAI framework.

The aim is to identify the most effective ML-XAI combination for delivering accurate, interpretable, and actionable diabetes diagnosis predictions. By fostering transparency and trust in AI driven healthcare solutions, the findings contribute to improving the usability and readability of AI assisted diabetes diagnosis.

**Keywords:** Machine Learning, Explainable AI, Diabetes, Hyperglycaemia, logistic regression, random forest, gradient boosting, LIME

# Acknowledgements

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List of Abbreviations

AI Artificial Intelligence

ML Machine Learning

XAI Explainable Artificial Intelligence

LR Logistic Regression

RF Random Forest

GBM Gradient Boosting Model

LIME Local Interpretable Model-Agnostic Explanations

FPG Fasting plasma glucose

WHO World Health Organisation

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

The World Health Organisation describes diabetes as a chronic disease where the pancreas does not produce enough insulin, or the body is unable to effectively use any insulin that is being produced. As insulin regulates the body’s blood sugar levels, when not controlled, it can lead to serious damage to various bodily systems including the nervous and blood vessels [2]. For both Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes, the condition’s long-term implications means that the condition’s risks can often be significantly mitigated. While there is no real methods of prevention, there are ways in which to adjust and manage one’s lifestyle in order to prevent and avoid premature death.

Despite advances in medical science, diabetes remains undiagnosed and undertreated. According to the World Health Organisation, around 830 million people have diabetes – with over half not receiving treatment or diagnosis [2]. This highlights a critical gap in global healthcare systems, especially in low-resource settings where [access to healthcare is more limited and the impacts of missed diagnosis an limited access to healthcare is more fatal to those affected]

## 1.2 Motivation

Diabetes alone is a prevalent condition most people face, however only a small percentage of the population is often aware of their underlying condition and fewer still manage to live a less detrimental lifestyle as a result. This lack of knowledge and understanding of your own health conditions is prevalent in less developed countries and can often be a leading cause of death [back up with figures]. A condition that can often be managed through small shifts and changes in one’s lifestyle, diet and environment is something that ought to have accessible diagnosis available to patients. Creating an application that allows for people input their medical data safely and securely to provide several predictions in which to help them understand further steps is a useful and somewhat mandatory tool to help bridge the current gap in global healthcare systems. Especially those which are less developed and thereby offer less support and treatment.

## 1.3 Research Aims and Objectives

This study aims to bridge the gap between traditional diagnostic approaches and modern AI techniques by implementing a web and mobile application that leverages XAI frameworks alongside ML modes. By doing so, it seeks to improve the accessibility, interpretability and effectiveness of diabetes diagnosis to contribute to better health outcomes and a more proactive approach to[something] . fostering awareness to the diabetes and teaching ways in which people can proactively manage their health. Furthermore, addressing the strengths and limitations of XAI frameworks, the study contributes towards the development of more transparent, patient-centred and accessible healthcare.

# Chapter 2: Background and Literature Review

## 2.1 Background of Diabetes and Diagnosis

The rapid increase in the prevalence of diabetes has made early detection, diagnosis and management crucial to benefit the lives of individuals affected by the condition. As a leading cause of morbidity and morality (Figure 1) due to the association with serious complications. The ability to provide early, accessible diagnosis is a further step taken in order to improve millions of lives worldwide.

A graph showing the number of patients with diabetes

Description automatically generated

Figure - Global death rate from diabetes mellitus per 100,000 population (1980-2021) demonstrating a consistent upward trend in mortality over 4 decades [3]

### 2.1.1 Traditional Diagnosis Methods

Traditionally, diabetes diagnosis involves clinical testing, requiring blood to be drawn by doctors, from patients, and tested in a medical lab. Fasting plasma glucose (FPG) is a preferred method by doctors, given it’s easy, convenient and minimal costs compared to other tests [reference from draft]. Working by measuring the levels of glucose in the blood after fasting for 8 hours, WHO defines that 7.0 mmol/L or less is normal and a level of 7 mmol/L or higher on two separate FPG tests as indicative of diabetes [2].

While effective in the diagnosis of diabetes, the traditional methods are not without their limitations. With a lack of consensus on the consistent standards and criteria for diagnosis - for example WHO and ADA offering different glucose thresholds, the need to fast, reliance on laboratory infrastructure, the possibility of delayed results and false diagnosis. There are clear areas for improvement in order to help provide more accessible diagnosis for patients and allow professionals to aid people more effectively. Recent advancements in technology and data science have opened new pathways for diabetes diagnosis and prediction.

### 2.1.2 Machine Learning and Diabetes Diagnosis

ML techniques enable the analysis of larger datasets in order to identify patterns and correlations that may not be immediately apparent.

## 2.2 Literature Review

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