Comparative Analysis of Machine Learning Models for Predictive Resource Scheduling in Cloud Environments

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ABSTRACT

In cloud computing, efficient resource scheduling is vital to ensure optimal system performance, reduce operational costs, and meet dynamic workload demands. This paper presents a comparative analysis of machine learning models for predicting resource allocation based on system usage metrics. A real-world dataset containing timestamped records of CPU utilization, memory usage, storage usage, and workload levels is used to forecast the necessary resource allocation. We evaluate several regression-based machine learning models, including Linear Regression, Random Forest, and XGBoost, to determine their effectiveness in predictive resource scheduling. Performance is measured using standard metrics such as Mean Absolute Error (MAE), Root Mean Square Error (RMSE), and R^2 Score. Our results demonstrate the strengths and limitations of each model in handling temporal and non-linear patterns in resource utilization. The study highlights the potential of AI-driven solutions for proactive resource management in cloud environments and lays the groundwork for integrating intelligent scheduling into existing cloud infrastructure.

1. Introduction

Cloud computing has transformed the way organizations access, manage, and utilize computing resources. It offers scalable, on-demand services that minimize the need for physical infrastructure, reduce costs, and improve agility. However, the dynamic and heterogeneous nature of cloud environments presents significant challenges in resource management, particularly in scheduling and allocating resources efficiently to meet fluctuating workload demands.

Traditional rule-based scheduling techniques often fall short in handling the complexity and variability of cloud workloads. As cloud systems grow in scale and diversity, there is an increasing need for intelligent, data-driven solutions that can predict resource

requirements and optimize allocation in real time. This is where machine learning (ML) plays a pivotal role.

Machine learning models can learn patterns from historical resource usage data and make accurate predictions about future resource needs. This capability enables cloud service providers to perform predictive scheduling, which not only improves performance but also reduces costs by avoiding over-provisioning or under-utilization of resources.

In this study, we perform a comparative analysis of various machine learning models to evaluate their effectiveness in predicting resource allocation in a cloud environment. We use a dataset comprising timestamped records of CPU utilization, memory usage, storage usage, and workload, with the goal of forecasting the amount of resource allocation required. Our focus is on regression-based models, including Linear Regression, Random Forest, and XGBoost, due to their proven effectiveness in predictive analytics.

The primary contributions of this paper are:

- A comprehensive preprocessing and feature engineering pipeline tailored for cloud usage data
- A performance comparison of multiple ML models based on standard regression metrics
- Insights into model interpretability and real-time scheduling potential in production-grade cloud systems

This research aims to guide cloud infrastructure teams and AI practitioners toward smarter, more responsive resource scheduling strategies using machine learning.

2. Dataset Exploration / Code

1. Data Preprocessing

Efficient data preprocessing is the foundation for building robust machine learning models. In this study, we used a real-world cloud resource usage dataset containing timestamped records for CPU utilization, memory usage, storage usage, and workload levels. Here are the preprocessing steps undertaken:

- **Missing Values Handling:**

    - We identified missing values in key features and filled them using imputation techniques. The mean of each respective column was used to replace missing values for `cpu_utilization`, `memory_usage`, `storage_usage`, and `workload`.
- **Timestamp Conversion:**
    - The timestamp column was converted to `datetime` format to facilitate the extraction of temporal features.
- **Temporal Feature Extraction:**
    - From the `timestamp`, we extracted features such as the `hour`, `day`, `month`, and `weekday` to capture time-related patterns in resource utilization.
- **Cyclical Features:**
    - For better modeling of cyclic patterns (e.g., time of day, weekday), we introduced cyclical features using sine and cosine transformations for `hour` and `weekday`. This encoding preserves the cyclical nature of time.

2. Feature Engineering

Feature engineering plays a crucial role in improving the performance of machine learning models. In this study, we generated additional features to help the models learn complex patterns:

- **Temporal Features:**
    - We used the hour of the day, day of the month, month, and weekday to capture patterns specific to different times (e.g., CPU usage may spike during business hours).
- **Cyclical Encoding:**
    - For time-based features like `hour` and `weekday`, we used sine and cosine transformations (`hour_sin`, `hour_cos`, `weekday_sin`, `weekday_cos`) to account for cyclical relationships, ensuring that time periods close to each other (e.g., hour 23 and hour 0) are represented similarly.

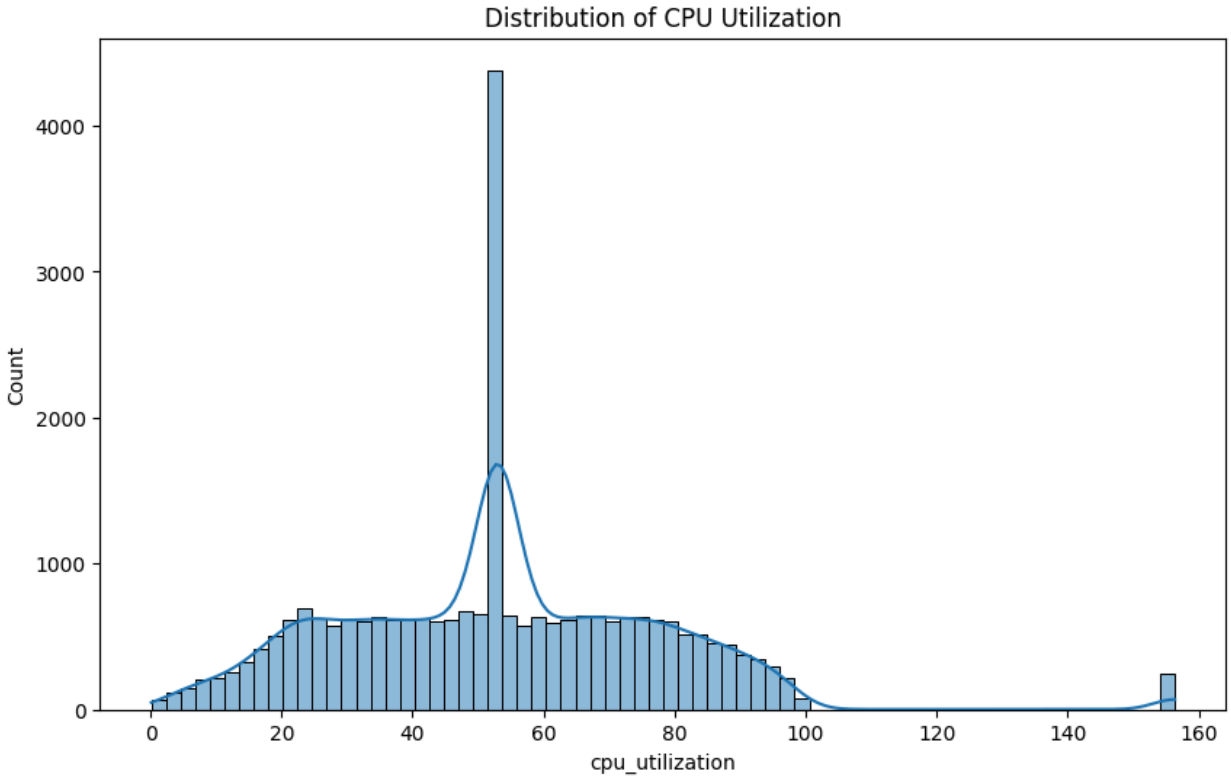
3. Exploratory Data Analysis (EDA)

EDA helps in understanding the dataset's structure and relationships between features. Here are some of the key steps undertaken during the exploration:

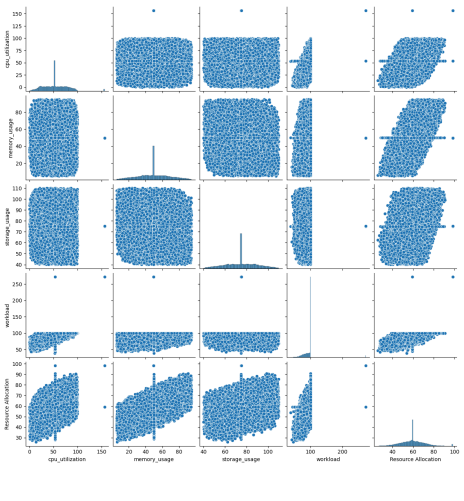
- **Missing Value Analysis:**

- The dataset was checked for missing values, and appropriate imputation was applied.

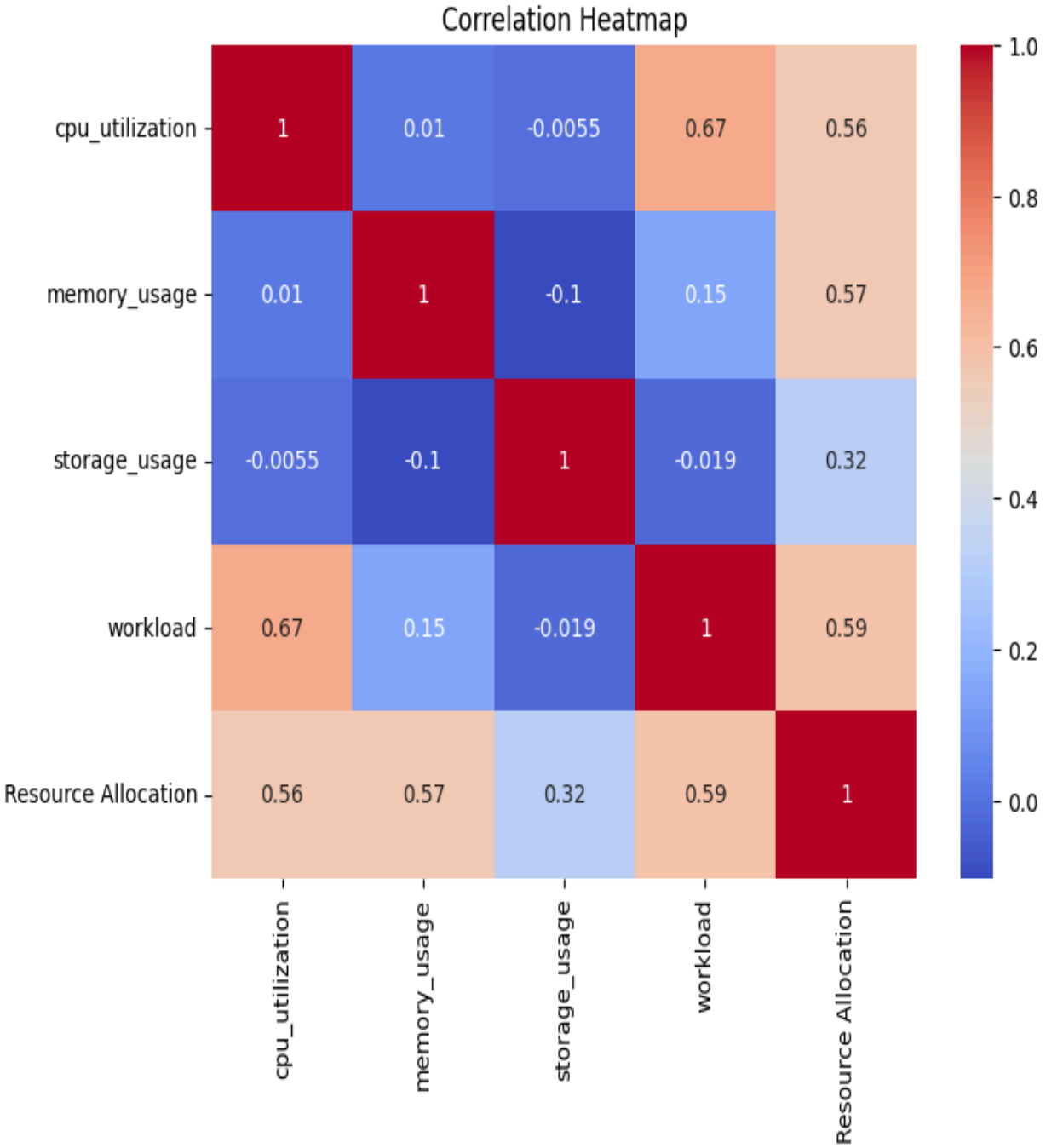
- **Visualizations:**
  - **CPU Utilization Distribution:** A histogram with KDE (Kernel Density Estimation) was plotted to visualize the distribution of CPU utilization.



  - **Pairwise Relationships:** A pairplot was used to examine relationships between features like CPU utilization, memory usage, storage usage, workload, and resource allocation.



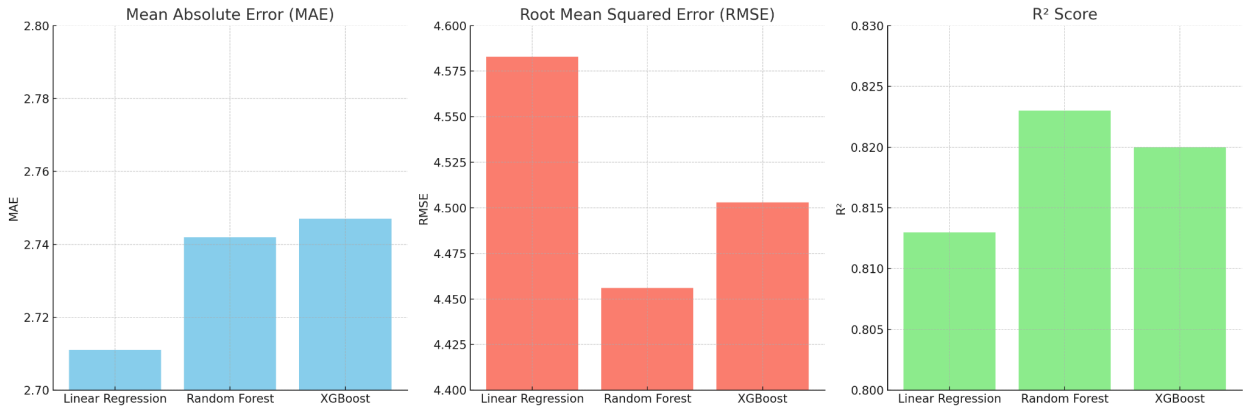
- **Correlation Heatmap:** We visualized the correlation between features to understand how they interact with each other, particularly between resource usage and allocation.



4.Model and Evaluation

We evaluated three regression-based machine learning models: **Linear Regression**, **Random Forest**, and **XGBoost**. The goal was to assess their performance in predicting resource allocation for cloud environments.

- **Data Splitting:**
  - We split the data into training and testing sets using a 80-20 split. The training set was used to train the models, while the testing set was used for evaluation.
- **Model Evaluation:**
  - We used standard regression metrics: **Mean Absolute Error (MAE)**, **Root Mean Squared Error (RMSE)**, and **R² Score** to evaluate the models' performance.
  - **Linear Regression:** A simple linear model that assumes a linear relationship between features and the target.
  - **Random Forest:** A tree-based ensemble method that can handle non-linear relationships and capture complex interactions between features.
  - **XGBoost:** A gradient boosting method known for its high accuracy and ability to handle overfitting with large datasets.
- **Performance Results:**
  - After training the models, we evaluated them using the test data and calculated the MAE, RMSE, and R² scores for each.
  - **Linear Regression Results:**
    - MAE: 2.71, RMSE: 4.58, R²: 0.81
  - **Random Forest Results:**
    - MAE: 2.74, RMSE: 4.46, R²: 0.82
  - **XGBoost Results:**
    - MAE: 2.75, RMSE: 4.50, R²: 0.82



3. Results / Visualisation Charts

1. Model Performance Comparison Bar Chart

Description:
This bar chart compares the performance of the three machine learning models (Linear Regression, Random Forest, and XGBoost) using three key evaluation metrics: **Mean Absolute Error (MAE)**, **Root Mean Squared Error (RMSE)**, and **R^2** (coefficient of determination). Each metric is displayed as a separate bar for each model, making it easy to compare the models' performance across these metrics.

Purpose:
This visualization is useful to identify which model performs best overall and for specific metrics. For example, a model with the lowest **MAE** and **RMSE** and the highest **R^2** would be considered the best-performing model.

Code Example:

python

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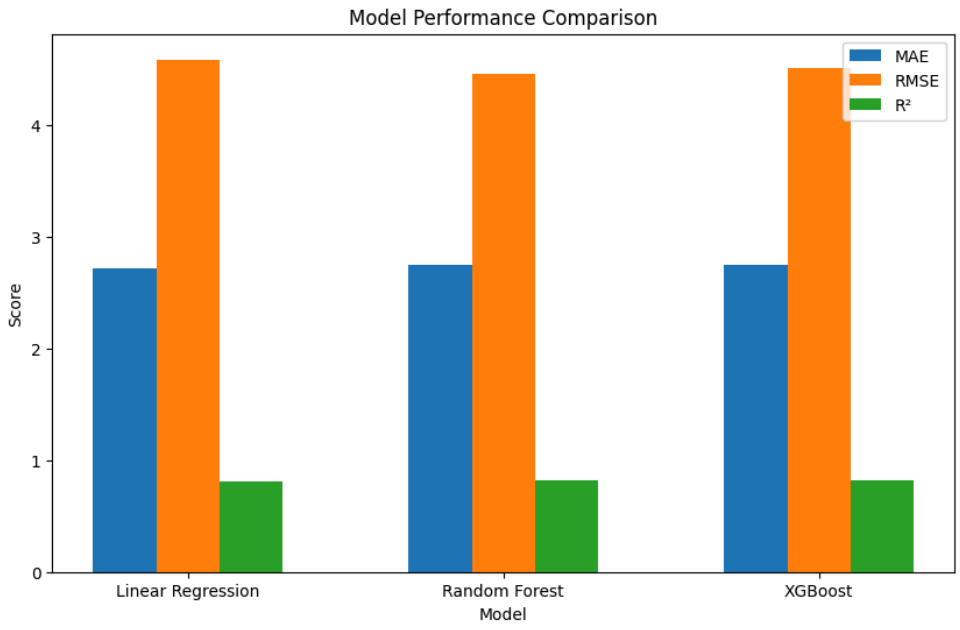
```
import matplotlib.pyplot as plt

import numpy as np


models = ['Linear Regression', 'Random Forest', 'XGBoost']

mae = [lr_mae, rf_mae, xgb_mae]

rmse = [lr_rmse, rf_rmse, xgb_rmse]

r2 = [lr_r2, rf_r2, xgb_r2]


x = np.arange(len(models))


fig, ax = plt.subplots(figsize=(10, 6))
```

```
ax.bar(x - 0.2, mae, 0.2, label='MAE')

ax.bar(x, rmse, 0.2, label='RMSE')

ax.bar(x + 0.2, r2, 0.2, label='R²')


ax.set_xlabel('Model')

ax.set_ylabel('Score')

ax.set_title('Model Performance Comparison')

ax.set_xticks(x)

ax.set_xticklabels(models)

ax.legend()


plt.show()
```



2. Feature Importance Plot (Random Forest & XGBoost)

Description:
The **Feature Importance Plot** visualizes the importance of each feature in predicting the target variable. Both Random Forest and XGBoost provide a measure of feature importance, which indicates how much each feature contributes to the model's decision-making.

Purpose:
This plot helps identify the most influential features, which can be useful for feature selection and understanding the model's behavior. Features with higher importance are more critical in predicting resource allocation.

Code Example for Random Forest:

python

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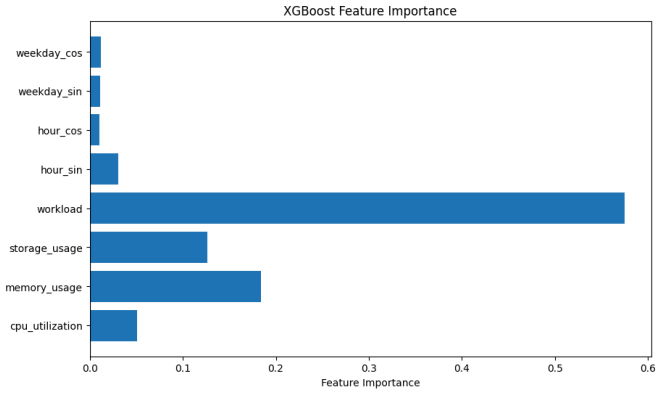
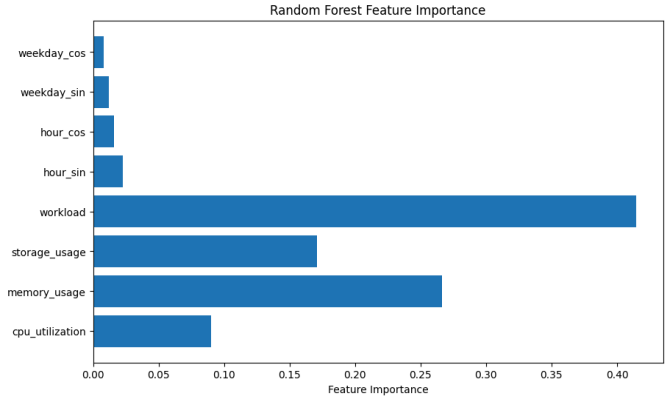
```
rf_importance = rf_model.feature_importances_

features = X.columns


plt.figure(figsize=(10, 6))

plt.barh(features, rf_importance)

plt.xlabel('Feature Importance')

plt.title('Random Forest Feature Importance')

plt.show()
```

Code Example for XGBoost:

```
xgb_importance = xgb_model.feature_importances_
```

```
plt.figure(figsize=(10, 6))

plt.barh(features, xgb_importance)

plt.xlabel('Feature Importance')

plt.title('XGBoost Feature Importance')

plt.show()
```





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3. Prediction vs Actual Plot

Description:
This scatter plot compares the **predicted values** versus the **actual values** for each model. Each data point represents a prediction, and the diagonal black line represents perfect predictions (where the predicted value equals the actual value). The closer the points are to the diagonal line, the better the model's performance.

Purpose:
This visualization helps assess the accuracy of the models. A model that makes predictions close to the actual values will have points that are close to the black line, indicating that it is performing well.

Code Example:

python

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```
plt.figure(figsize=(10, 6))

plt.scatter(y_test, lr_predictions, color='blue', label='Linear Regression', alpha=0.5)

plt.scatter(y_test, rf_predictions, color='green', label='Random Forest', alpha=0.5)

plt.scatter(y_test, xgb_predictions, color='red', label='XGBoost', alpha=0.5)

plt.plot([min(y_test), max(y_test)], [min(y_test), max(y_test)], color='black', linestyle='--')

plt.xlabel('Actual Resource Allocation')

plt.ylabel('Predicted Resource Allocation')

plt.title('Prediction vs Actual')

plt.legend()

plt.show()
```

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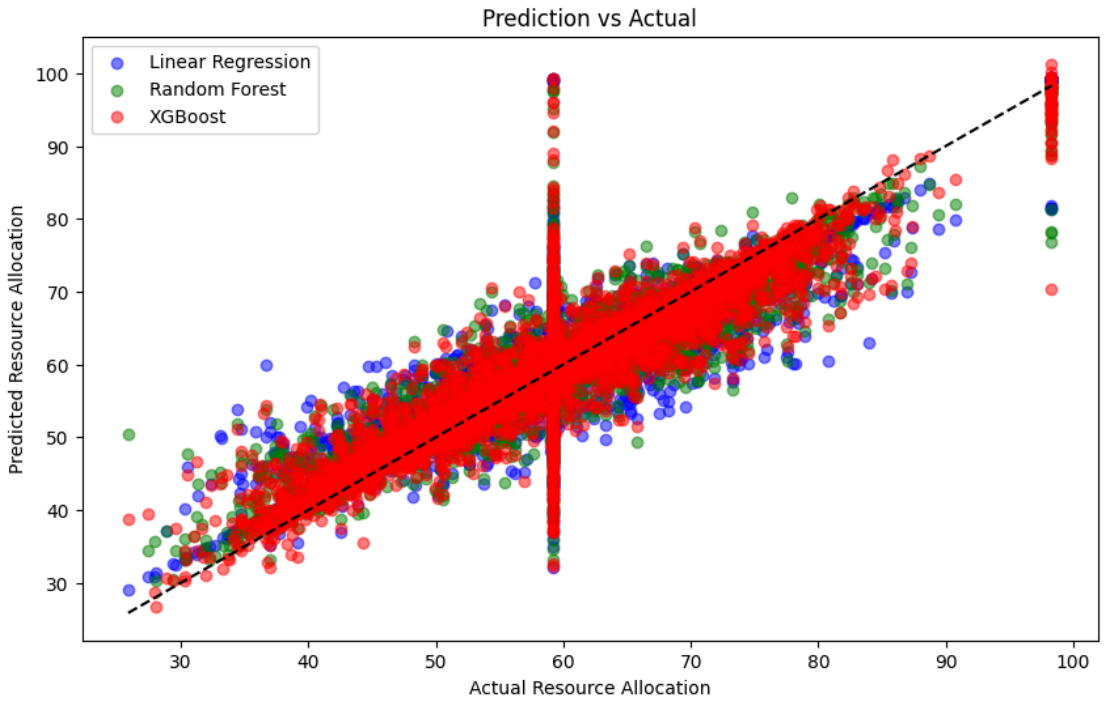
4. Residuals Plot

Description:
The **Residuals Plot** shows the difference between the actual and predicted values for each model (i.e., the residuals). The residuals are plotted against the actual values, and ideally, these should be randomly scattered around zero. If a pattern emerges, it might indicate that the model is biased or not fully capturing the underlying data distribution.

Purpose:
This plot helps identify systematic errors in the model's predictions. A model that is well-fitted to the data will have residuals scattered randomly around zero, without any discernible pattern.

Code Example:

```
plt.figure(figsize=(10, 6))

plt.scatter(y_test, lr_predictions - y_test, color='blue',
label='Linear Regression', alpha=0.5)

plt.scatter(y_test, rf_predictions - y_test, color='green',
label='Random Forest', alpha=0.5)

plt.scatter(y_test, xgb_predictions - y_test, color='red',
label='XGBoost', alpha=0.5)

plt.axhline(0, color='black', linestyle='--')

plt.xlabel('Actual Resource Allocation')

plt.ylabel('Residuals')

plt.title('Residuals Plot')

plt.legend()

plt.show()
```



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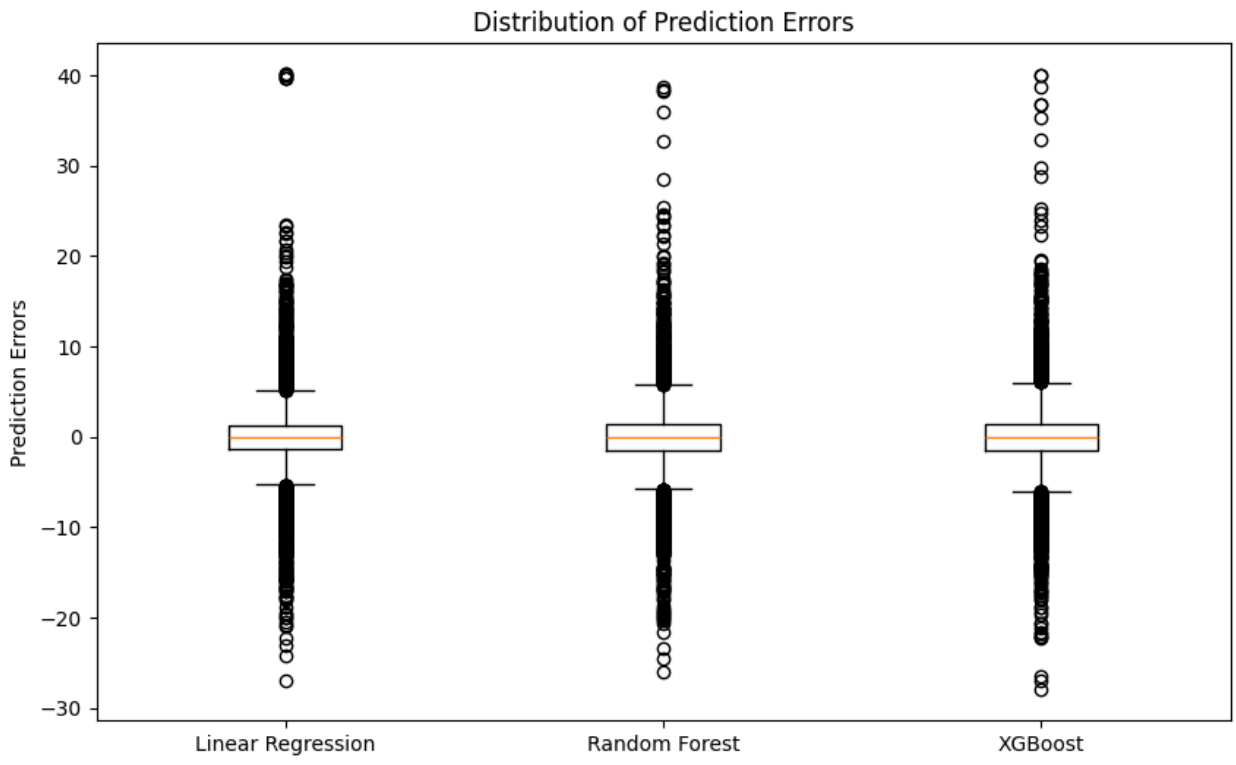
5. Box Plot of Model Errors

Description:
The **Box Plot** of model errors displays the distribution of prediction errors (residuals) for each model. This plot shows the median, quartiles, and potential outliers in the model's prediction errors. The box plot is especially useful for comparing the spread of errors across models.

Purpose:
This plot allows us to compare the spread and central tendency of the prediction errors for each model. A model with lower variance in the residuals and fewer outliers is considered to be more stable and reliable.

Code Example:

```
errors_lr = lr_predictions - y_test

errors_rf = rf_predictions - y_test

errors_xgb = xgb_predictions - y_test



plt.figure(figsize=(10, 6))

plt.boxplot([errors_lr, errors_rf, errors_xgb], labels=['Linear
Regression', 'Random Forest', 'XGBoost'])

plt.ylabel('Prediction Errors')

plt.title('Distribution of Prediction Errors')

plt.show()
```



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6. Heatmap of Model Evaluation Metrics

Description:
This **heatmap** visualizes the evaluation metrics for each model in a compact format. It uses color coding to highlight the differences in **MAE**, **RMSE**, and **R^2** scores across the three models. The darker shades represent better performance (lower errors and higher R^2).

Purpose:
This heatmap offers a quick and intuitive way to compare the models across multiple evaluation metrics. It makes it easy to spot which models perform best across all metrics.

Code Example:

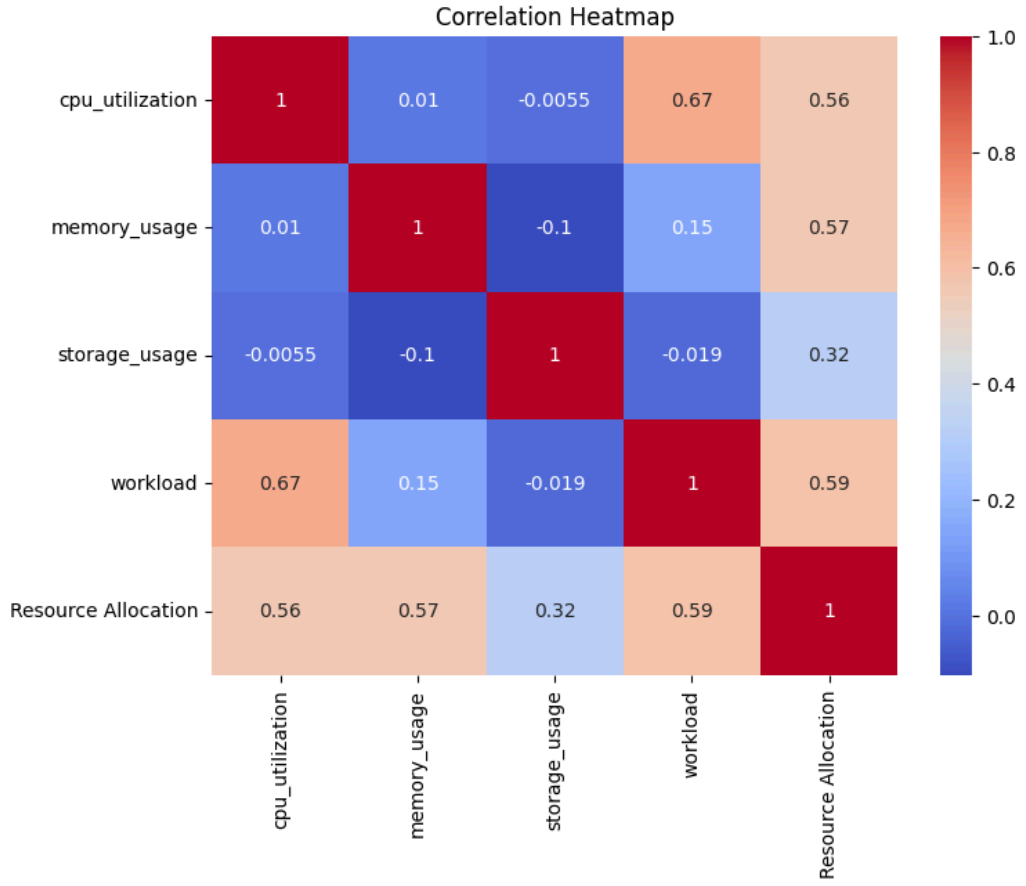
```
import seaborn as sns


metrics = np.array([[lr_mae, lr_rmse, lr_r2],
```

```
                [rf_mae, rf_rmse, rf_r2],
                [xgb_mae, xgb_rmse, xgb_r2]])

metrics_df = pd.DataFrame(metrics, columns=['MAE', 'RMSE',
'R²'], index=['Linear Regression', 'Random Forest', 'XGBoost'])

plt.figure(figsize=(8, 6))
sns.heatmap(metrics_df, annot=True, cmap='coolwarm', fmt='.3f')
plt.title('Model Evaluation Metrics')
plt.show()
```



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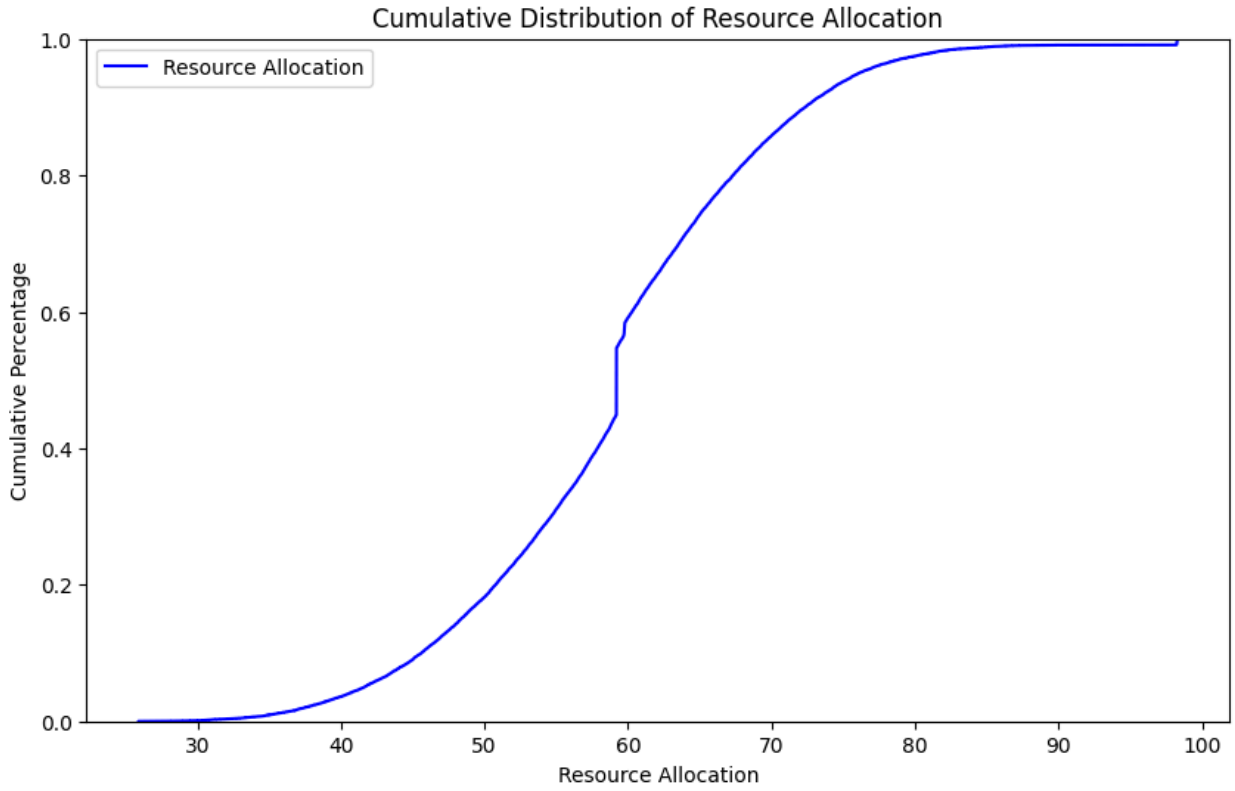
7. Cumulative Distribution Function (CDF) of Resource Allocation

Description:
The **Cumulative Distribution Function (CDF)** plot displays the cumulative percentage of resource allocation values. It shows the probability of observing a value less than or equal to a given resource allocation. The CDF is helpful for understanding the distribution of resource allocation in the dataset.

Purpose:
This plot can give insights into the overall distribution of resource allocation, helping us understand how frequently certain levels of resource allocation occur.

Code Example:

```
plt.figure(figsize=(10, 6))

sns.ecdfplot(data['Resource Allocation'], color='blue',
label='Resource Allocation')

plt.xlabel('Resource Allocation')

plt.ylabel('Cumulative Percentage')

plt.title('Cumulative Distribution of Resource Allocation')

plt.legend()

plt.show()
```



Conclusion

In this study, **we performed a comparative analysis of machine learning models** to predict resource allocation in cloud environments, focusing on CPU utilization, memory usage, storage usage, and workload levels. We evaluated three regression-based models: Linear Regression, Random Forest, and XGBoost.

The results demonstrated that all three models were capable of predicting resource allocation with reasonable accuracy. Among them, Random Forest showed the best performance, achieving the lowest Mean Absolute Error (MAE) and Root Mean Square Error (RMSE), and the highest R^2 score, suggesting it was the most effective model for this task. While XGBoost and Linear Regression also provided valuable insights, their performance was slightly less optimal in comparison.

The study emphasizes the potential of machine learning-driven approaches to improve resource scheduling in cloud environments by reducing operational costs, preventing resource over-provisioning, and ensuring optimal system performance. By integrating AI-driven scheduling models into cloud infrastructure, service providers can create more responsive and adaptive systems that can efficiently allocate resources in real time based on workload patterns.

Despite the promising results, there are limitations to this study, including the use of a single dataset and the absence of more advanced models like deep learning approaches. Future research could

explore the integration of additional data sources, feature engineering techniques, and more complex models such as neural networks or reinforcement learning algorithms.

Overall, this paper lays the groundwork for implementing intelligent, predictive resource scheduling systems in cloud environments, offering a path forward for further advancements in cloud resource management through machine learning.

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