Bone Fracture Detection

Giuglan Cătălin-Ionuț
Faculty of Automatic Control and Computer Science
UNSTPB
Bucharest, Romania
catalingiuglan@yahoo.com

Brutaru-Mihăilișca Bogdan-Alexandru
Faculty of Automatic Control and Computer Science
UNSTPB
Bucharest, Romania
brutaru.m.bogdan.a@gmail.com

***Abstract*—Bone fracture detection in X-ray images remains a critical yet challenging task due to variations in anatomy, image quality, and subtle fracture patterns. Traditional image processing methods, although useful, are limited by noise sensitivity and manual feature extraction. Recent advancements in deep learning, including convolutional neural networks (CNNs) and YOLO-based object detection models, have shown significant improvements in accuracy, real-time performance, and multi-category fracture classification. This paper reviews key works in the field, from classical methods to state-of-the-art approaches, highlighting progress, persistent challenges, and potential future directions for automated fracture detection systems.**

I. Introduction

Bone fracture detection in X-ray images remains a critical yet challenging task due to variations in anatomy, image quality, and subtle fracture patterns. Accurate diagnosis is essential for timely treatment and preventing complications such as malunion, nonunion, or long-term disability. Manual interpretation of radiographs can be time-consuming and prone to human error, particularly for subtle fractures or complex anatomical regions. These challenges highlight the need for automated approaches that can support clinicians in making faster and more reliable decisions.

In recent years, deep learning approaches, particularly convolutional neural networks (CNNs) and YOLO-based object detection models, have demonstrated remarkable improvements in accuracy, robustness, and speed. These models can automatically extract hierarchical image features, handle multi-category classification tasks, and operate in near real-time, making them suitable for clinical applications and mobile diagnostic systems. Integrating AI into medical imaging workflows promises to reduce diagnostic errors and improve efficiency and accessibility, especially in resource-constrained settings.

This paper reviews key works in the field, from classical image processing to modern deep learning and YOLO-based approaches, analyzing their contributions, limitations, and areas for future improvement, providing a comprehensive overview of automated bone fracture detection.

II. Background

Bone fractures are among the most common orthopedic injuries, and accurate detection is crucial for effective treatment. X-ray imaging remains the standard diagnostic tool due to its wide availability and relatively low cost [12], but interpreting radiographs can be time-consuming and prone to human error, especially for subtle or complex fractures [8]. Misdiagnosis or delayed detection can lead to complications, prolonged recovery, and increased healthcare costs.

Traditional image processing techniques, such as edge detection, Gaussian filtering, and segmentation, were initially applied to automate fracture detection [12], [13]. These methods, along with classical classifiers like SVM and KNN, provided a foundation for early automated approaches [13], [14], but they were sensitive to noise, contrast variations, and anatomical differences, and often required manual feature extraction. To improve validty, hybrid approaches combining multiple classifiers through voting schemes were also explored [13], [15].

The emergence of artificial intelligence, particularly deep learning, enabled a paradigm shift in fracture detection. Early CNN-based models, such as those using LeNet and AlexNet architectures, demonstrated the ability to automatically extract hierarchical features from X-ray images, achieving higher accuracy and generalization than traditional methods [9], [14]. However, these models required significant computational resources and large datasets.

Subsequent work applied transfer learning and pre-trained networks, including ResNet50 and MobileNet, to reduce training time while maintaining high performance [10], [15]. Data augmentation techniques, such as rotation, flipping, and scaling, were commonly employed to expand limited medical datasets and mitigate overfitting [3], [10], [15]. Hybrid methods were also revisited, combining CNNs with classical techniques or multiple deep models to improve detection hardiness [5], [13].

Despite these advancements, challenges remain in achieving real-time detection, handling diverse fracture types, and integrating AI models into practical clinical workflows [4], [6], [11]. These issues underscore the need for further improvements in dataset diversity, multi-category classification, and efficient model architectures, which motivated the development of more advanced detection pipelines [1], [2], [7].

III. Domain Advancements

The field of automated bone fracture detection has evolved from traditional image processing to sophisticated deep learning and object detection models. Early studies [12]–[14] established the groundwork, using segmentation, edge detection, and simple classifiers to detect fractures. Use of multiple strategies and classifier voting were introduced to enhance robustness and reduce misclassification errors [5], [13].

CNNs marked a major milestone, with architectures such as LeNet and AlexNet enabling automated feature extraction and improved accuracy over classical methods [9], [14]. These early models demonstrated the potential of deep learning to handle the large variety of fractures in X-ray images, although their computational requirements were high and datasets limited.

To overcome these limitations, researchers adopted transfer learning with pre-trained networks like ResNet50 and MobileNet [10], [15], combined with data augmentation strategies [3], [10], [15], which expanded dataset diversity and improved model generalization. Python-based frameworks enabled flexible experimentation with these techniques [3].

Object detection models, especially the YOLO series, became increasingly more popular for real-time fracture detection. Studies using YOLOv8 and YOLOv8s demonstrated high detection accuracy, multi-category classification, and robustness to image noise and anatomical differences [6], [7], [11]. These models outperformed classical CNNs in both speed and precision, making them suitable for clinical and mobile applications [6], [7], [11]. Evaluation of YOLO variants further highlighted the importance of optimizing model parameters and architectures for bone fracture detection [5].

Hybrid approaches integrating CNN feature extraction with YOLO-based pipelines have been explored to maximize performance [5], [13]. Additionally, classical image processing methods remain relevant for pre-processing, segmentation, and feature enhancement steps in these pipelines [8], [14].

Overall, the progression from manual image processing [12]–[14] to CNN-based models [1], [3], [9], [10], [15] and state-of-the-art YOLO pipelines [4]–[7], [11] reflects the field's trajectory toward automated, efficient, and clinically viable fracture detection systems. These advancements have substantially improved accuracy, multi-category classification, and the potential for real-time deployment in healthcare settings.

IV. Future Works

Despite significant progress in automated bone fracture detection, several challenges remain. One key limitation is the lack of availability and diversity of medical datasets. Many studies rely on relatively small X-ray collections, which can limit model generalization across diverse patient populations and rare fracture types. Expanding datasets through multi-institutional collaborations or combining X-ray with CT and MRI images could enhance robustness and clinical applicability [3], [10], [15].

Multi-category classification and fine-grained fracture recognition remain challenging. While YOLO-based models and CNNs have shown strong performance for binary or basic multi-class classification, accurately distinguishing subtle fracture subtypes under varying imaging conditions and anatomical differences is difficult [6], [7], [11]. Future work could explore multiple architectures, attention-based networks, or transformer models to capture nuanced patterns [1], [2].

Integrating AI models into real-time clinical workflows is still limited. Although lightweight CNNs such as MobileNet and YOLOv8 demonstrate potential for deployment on portable devices, further research is needed for seamless integration with clinical imaging pipelines, PACS systems, and automated reporting tools [10], [11], [15]. It is important to make the system fast, easy to understand, and reliable so that doctors feel confident using it [6], [7], [11].

Computational efficiency is still an important concern. Some CNN architectures and multiple-model approaches need a lot of GPU power, which can make it hard to use them in clinics with limited resources. Future work could focus on creating lightweight models, using techniques like network optimization to keep high accuracy while reducing computational needs.

Finally, building end-to-end systems that include preprocessing, data augmentation, detection, classification, and visualization could improve overall performance [5], [7]. These systems could also continuously learn from new clinical data, allowing them to adapt to different imaging protocols and patient populations.

V. Our Contribution

In this work, we aim to develop a straightforward yet effective automated bone fracture detection system. Accurate and efficient detection can assist doctors, reduce diagnostic errors, and accelerate treatment. While state-of-the-art deep learning models demonstrate strong performance, many existing methods are complex, computationally demanding, or require large datasets, which can be a barrier for small-scale experimentation or rapid prototyping.

Building on recent advances in CNNs, YOLOv8, and pre-trained models such as ResNet50 and MobileNet [6], [7], [10], [11], [15], we propose a modular and lightweight approach that integrates several key components:

- Using YOLOv8 for automated fracture detection, benefiting from its accuracy and speed [6], [7], [11].
- Applying basic data augmentation and preprocessing (rotation, flipping, normalization) to improve model performance on limited datasets [3], [10], [15].
- Evaluating the model on multiple fracture categories (simplified to 2–3 main types) using standard metrics such as accuracy and F1-score [6], [7], [11]. While these metrics provide a clear quantitative measure of performance, they do not fully capture potential challenges in real-world clinical settings, such as image noise, rare fracture types, or variations in imaging devices.
- Implementing a lightweight workflow suitable for small-scale experiments [1], [2], [4], [5].

Dataset

For this project, we plan to use the publicly available *Bone Fracture Detection* dataset from Kaggle [16], which is specifically designed for training algorithms in fracture identification. The dataset includes hundreds of labeled X-ray images divided into fracture and non-fracture categories, already formatted for YOLO-based object detection, making it easy to use for our project.

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