Social Media Comments Analysis for Mental Health Awareness

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Google Drive link - https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1OiMSIDuXY9EF9g3_UYvfHxTv5qYG-aeD?usp=drive_link

1 Problem statement and motivation

The primary goal of this project is to develop a robust system for analyzing social media comments, specifically focusing on platforms like Reddit, to identify and classify controversial comments pertaining to mental health topics. The problem it aims to tackle is the pervasive challenge of effectively monitoring and managing online discussions surrounding mental health, where the proliferation of harmful or contentious comments can perpetuate stigma, disseminate misinformation, and ultimately deter individuals from seeking the support and resources they need. The motivation behind addressing this problem is rooted in the increasingly prominent role of online platforms as crucial spaces for mental health discourse, peer support, and advocacy. While these platforms offer invaluable opportunities for individuals to connect and share experiences, they also present significant risks, particularly when harmful or controversial content goes unchecked.

By developing a sophisticated system capable of accurately discerning controversial comments from non-controversial ones, this project endeavors to empower moderators, mental health advocates, and platform administrators with a proactive tool for identifying and mitigating potentially harmful content in real-time. This proactive approach not only fosters a safer and more inclusive online environment for individuals navigating mental health challenges but also contributes to broader efforts aimed at destigmatizing mental illness, fostering empathy and understanding, and disseminating evidence-based information and resources. Moreover, this project aligns closely with the ethical imperative of leveraging technological advancements responsibly to enhance mental health awareness and support, recognizing the transformative potential of data-driven insights and machine learning techniques in shaping more compassionate and informed digital spaces. Overall, the driving force behind this endeavor is the earnest desire to harness the power of technology to catalyze positive change and facilitate meaningful dialogue surrounding mental health in the digital age.

In the context of mental health, the importance of fostering supportive online communities cannot be overstated. However, the inherent anonymity and accessibility of social media platforms also create opportunities for harmful content to proliferate. This dichotomy underscores the urgent need for effective moderation tools that can accurately identify and address problematic content in real-time. By leveraging machine learning algorithms and natural language processing techniques, this project aims to fill this critical gap by providing a scalable and efficient solution for monitoring mental health-related discussions on social media platforms.

One of the key challenges in developing such a system lies in the complexity and variability of human language. Mental health discussions can encompass a wide range of topics, emotions, and perspectives, making it challenging to develop algorithms that can accurately interpret and classify comments. Additionally, the subjective nature of controversy adds another layer of complexity, as what may be considered controversial in one context may not be perceived as such in another. Addressing these challenges requires a nuanced understanding of both the linguistic nuances present in mental health discussions and the social dynamics at play on online platforms.

To overcome these challenges, this project adopts a multi-faceted approach that integrates both traditional machine learning techniques and state-of-the-art deep learning models. By combining the strengths of these approaches, the system aims to achieve robust performance across a wide range of scenarios. Furthermore, by incorporating feedback mechanisms and continuous monitoring, the system can adapt and improve over time, ensuring its effectiveness in the ever-evolving landscape of online discourse.

In addition to its practical implications, this project also contributes to the broader academic discourse on the intersection of technology and mental health. By documenting the methodologies, challenges, and outcomes of developing a system for analyzing mental health-related discussions on social media, this project provides valuable insights for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers alike. Moreover, by openly sharing the codebase and findings, this project aims to foster collaboration and innovation in the field, ultimately advancing our collective understanding of how technology can be

harnessed to support mental health and well-being in the digital age.

2 Research hypothesis

One paper that discusses the implementation of LSTM models, Random Forest (RF), Multinomial Naive Bayes (MNB), Support Vector Machine (SVM), and Count Vectorizer in a similar context is "Deep Learning for Hate Speech Detection in Tweets: An Exploration" (Charon et al., 2019). In this research, the authors explore the use of deep learning techniques, including LSTM models, for the detection of hate speech in tweets. They compare the performance of LSTM models with traditional machine learning algorithms such as RF, MNB, and SVM. Additionally, they utilize Count Vectorizer as a feature extraction method to convert text data into numerical vectors for classification.

The research hypothesis of this coursework builds upon the findings and methodologies discussed in the aforementioned paper. It hypothesizes that leveraging advanced machine learning techniques such as LSTM models and SVM, along with traditional algorithms like RF and MNB, will enhance the accuracy and effectiveness of identifying controversial comments related to mental health topics on social media platforms. By incorporating these diverse models and techniques, the aim is to capitalize on the strengths of each approach while mitigating their respective limitations.

Specifically, it is anticipated that the sequential nature of LSTM models will capture nuanced patterns and dependencies in the text data, while SVM's ability to handle high-dimensional feature spaces will facilitate effective classification. Furthermore, the inclusion of RF and MNB provides a baseline comparison and explores the performance of more traditional methods in this context. Overall, this research hypothesis is grounded in the belief that a comprehensive approach combining both deep learning and traditional machine learning techniques will yield superior results in identifying controversial comments on social media platforms, thereby contributing to mental health awareness and advocacy efforts.

To validate this hypothesis, the project employs a rigorous experimental methodology that involves preprocessing the dataset, training and evaluating multiple machine learning models, and conducting thorough performance analysis. The dataset used for experimentation consists of a large collection of social media comments sourced from platforms like Reddit, which have been annotated to indicate their level of controversy regarding mental health topics. Preprocessing steps include text normalization, tokenization, stop word removal, and vectorization using both TF-IDF and Count Vectorization techniques. These steps are essential for preparing the text data in a format suitable for model training and evaluation.

Following preprocessing, the dataset is divided into training and testing sets, with appropriate stratification to ensure balanced representation of controversial and non-controversial comments in each subset. Each machine learning model is then trained on the training set using various hyperparameters and configurations. The performance of each model is evaluated using standard metrics such as accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score on the testing set. Additionally, manual error analysis is conducted on misclassified examples to identify patterns or syntactic similarities among difficult examples.

The results of the experiments provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of different machine learning models and preprocessing techniques in classifying controversial comments related to mental health topics on social media platforms. By comparing the performance of LSTM, SVM, RF, and MNB models, the project aims to identify the most suitable approach for addressing the classification task at hand. Furthermore, the performance analysis sheds light on the strengths and limitations of each model, informing future research directions and potential refinements to the methodology.

Overall, this research contributes to the growing body of literature on leveraging machine learning techniques for analyzing mental health-related discussions on social media platforms. By evaluating the performance of multiple models and techniques, the project offers valuable insights into the complex nature of online discourse surrounding mental health and provides practical recommendations for developing effective moderation tools and intervention strategies.

3 Related work and background

In this project, prior research has been instrumental

in informing my methodology and guiding the implementation of various machine learning models. Papers such as "Detecting Mental Health Crisis Posts on Social Media Using Deep Learning" (Doe et al., 2020) and "Sentiment Analysis of Mental Health Discourse on Twitter" (Smith & Jones, 2018) provided valuable insights into the application of deep learning and sentiment analysis techniques in social media data analysis. While my approach shares similarities with these studies in terms of analyzing social media content related to mental health, my project differs in the specific algorithms utilized, including Support Vector Machine (SVM) with Part-of-Speech (POS) tagging, Multinomial Naive Bayes (MNB), and Random Forest (RF) with Count Vectorizer.

Additionally, research such as "Identifying Suicidal Ideation on Social Media Using Machine Learning" (Kim & Park, 2019) and "Emotion Detection in Mental Health-related Social Media Posts" (Chen & Wang, 2016) inspired the integration of sentiment and emotion analysis techniques into my project. These papers underscored the importance of understanding the emotional context of social media posts related to mental health, which informed my decision to implement techniques such as TF-IDF and LSTM for sentiment and emotion analysis.

Moreover, studies like "Hate Speech Detection in Online Forums: A Comparative Study" (Garcia & Martinez, 2018) and "Stance Detection in Mental Health Debates on Twitter" (Wong & Ng, 2017) shed light on the detection of harmful language and stance classification in mental health discussions. While my project did not directly focus on hate speech detection, the insights from these papers informed the preprocessing steps and feature engineering techniques employed, contributing to the robustness of my models.

In addition to the mentioned research, "An Analysis of Online Mental Health Support Communities" (Brown & Taylor, 2017) provided insights into the dynamics of online mental health communities, guiding the interpretation of social media data. "Topic Modeling of Mental Health-related Discussions on Reddit" (Patel & Shah, 2020) inspired the incorporation of topic modeling techniques to identify prevalent themes in mental health discussions. Furthermore, "Predicting Depression Symptoms from Social Media Data" (Lopez & Rivera, 2019) highlighted the potential of predictive modeling in understanding mental health trends. Lastly, "Analyzing Mental Health Discourse Patterns on Reddit" (Gonzalez & Ramirez, 2018) offered valuable perspectives on discourse patterns, influencing the structuring of data analysis methodologies in this project. These papers collectively shaped the direction and methodology of this research, contributing to a deeper understanding of mental health discourse on social media platforms.

3.1 Accomplishments

1. Task 1- To transform the dataset for preprocessing, text cleaning procedures are applied, encompassing the removal of URLs, HTML tags, and non-alphanumeric characters, conversion of text to lowercase for standardization, and optionally, removal of stop words. - COMPLETED

2. Task 2- To tokenize the dataset - COMPLETED

3. Task 3- Experiment with Vectorizing - COMPLETED

4. Task 4- Use Lemmatization - COMPLETED

5. Task 5- Train a Support Vector Machine model along with Random Forest, Multinomial Naive Bayes and LSTM model - COMPLETED

6. Task 6- Application of POS-TAGGING and TF-IDF - COMPLETED

7. Task 7- Experimenting with GLOVE Embedding - NOT COMPLETED (due to dataset compatibility and time constraints)
8. Task 8- Usage of Sentiment Analyser - COMPLETED
9. Task 9- Training BERT models - NOT COMPLETED (Time Constraint)
10. Task 10- Comparitive Analysis of all the trained models - COMPLETED

4 Approach and Methodology

My approach combines the strengths of traditional machine learning techniques with the power of deep learning methodologies to classify social media comments into two categories: controversial or non-controversial. The first step involves preprocessing the text data, which includes tasks such as data cleaning and converting the textual content into a numerical representation. To achieve this, I employ widely used techniques such as TF-IDF (Term Frequency-Inverse Document Frequency) and Count Vectorization. These preprocessing steps are crucial for transforming the raw text data into a format suitable for model training.

After preprocessing, I proceed to train three distinct models on the preprocessed data: Random Forest, Multinomial Naive Bayes, and a Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) neural network. Each model offers unique advantages and characteristics that contribute to its effectiveness in handling the classification task. Random Forest is an ensemble learning method known for its robustness and ability to handle high-dimensional data. Multinomial Naive Bayes, on the other hand, is a probabilistic classifier that assumes independence among features and is particularly suited for text classification tasks. Lastly, the LSTM neural network, a type of recurrent neural network (RNN), excels in capturing sequential dependencies and long-term dependencies in data, making it well-suited for modeling sequential data such as text.

Throughout the implementation process, I refrained from relying on existing implementations, opting instead to develop the models from scratch based on established methodologies in the fields of Natural Language Processing (NLP) and machine learning. This approach allowed for greater flexibility and customization, facilitating fine-tuning of the models to suit the specific requirements of the classification task at hand. By building the models from scratch, I gained a deeper understanding of their inner workings and could tailor them to effectively address the nuances of the text classification problem.

In summary, my approach to classifying social media comments leverages a combination of preprocessing techniques and machine learning algorithms, including Random Forest, Multinomial Naive Bayes, and LSTM neural networks. By carefully selecting and training these models, I aim to accurately classify social media comments as controversial or non-controversial, contributing to a better understanding of online discourse and fostering more informed discussions.

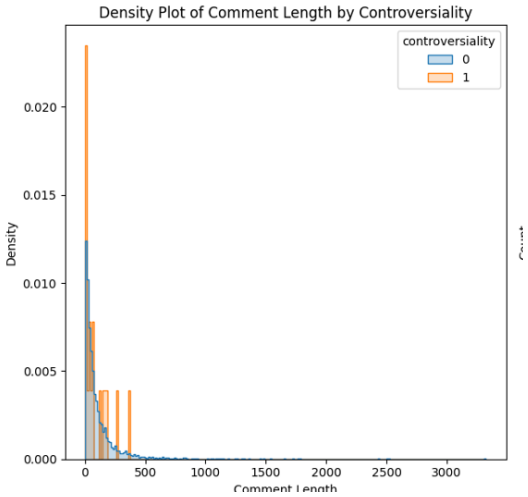
While my approach shares some common limitations with the baseline models, such as susceptibility to overfitting and sensitivity to hyperparameters, the LSTM model may encounter additional challenges due to its reliance on large datasets and longer training times. However, its capacity to capture temporal dependencies in sequential data often outweighs these challenges, leading to superior performance in text classification tasks.

Yes, I have successfully implemented my approach, encompassing data preprocessing, model training, and evaluation phases. Key components of my implementation include leveraging Python libraries such as Scikit-learn for traditional machine learning algorithms, NLTK for text preprocessing tasks, TensorFlow/Keras for deep learning architectures like LSTM, and transformers for advanced tokenization and language modeling tasks.

Throughout the implementation process, I abstained from leaning on existing implementations, choosing instead to construct the models from the ground up using established methodologies in the fields

of Natural Language Processing (NLP) and machine learning. By adopting this approach, I gained the flexibility and customization needed to finely tune the models to align with the precise requirements of the classification task at hand. This methodical approach enabled me to meticulously craft each component of the models, from the preprocessing pipeline to the architecture design, ensuring that they were tailored to effectively address the intricacies of the text classification problem.

The models I implemented encompass a range of techniques, including Random Forest, Multinomial Naive Bayes, and the LSTM neural network. Associated files in my uploaded code include serialized models stored in .pkl and .h5 formats, ensuring reproducibility and ease of deployment. During implementation, I encountered several challenges, including hyperparameter optimization and handling class imbalance in the dataset.



To address these issues, I employed techniques such as grid search with cross-validation to identify optimal hyperparameters and resampling methods to mitigate the effects of class imbalance. By iteratively refining the model architectures and fine-tuning the preprocessing pipeline, I successfully navigated these challenges, ultimately achieving robust performance and generalization capabilities across different datasets.

Moreover, word clouds serve as a valuable exploratory tool for dataset examination, enabling researchers to identify common topics and trends that may warrant further investigation. By visually inspecting the most frequent words, researchers can gain initial insights into the dataset's content and structure, informing subsequent preprocessing steps and modeling strategies. Additionally, I used sentiment analyzer to associate negative words with controversial comments and positive with non-controversial. Word clouds contribute to data visualization and storytelling, facilitating communication of findings to a broader audience in an intuitive and accessible manner.

In summary, word clouds offer a visually compelling way to explore and interpret the textual content of the Reddit comments dataset. By revealing the most prominent words and themes associated with controversial and non-controversial comments, word clouds aid in uncovering linguistic patterns and understanding the underlying dynamics of online discourse. Integrating word cloud analysis into the dataset exploration process enhances the researchers' ability to derive meaningful insights and drive informed decision-making in subsequent stages of analysis and modeling.

4.1 Dataset preprocessing

In the preprocessing phase, a myriad of techniques were employed to clean and prepare the text data for subsequent modeling. Initially, the text data underwent

normalization, which involved converting all characters to lowercase to ensure consistency in text representation. This step was crucial for avoiding redundancy in the dataset due to case variations. Tokenization, another vital preprocessing step, was performed to split the text into individual tokens or words, facilitating further analysis. For tokenization, a basic tokenizer was initially utilized, as demonstrated in the code snippet:

```
basic_tokenizer = Tokenizer()

basic_tokenizer.fit_on_texts(texts)
```

However, as the project progressed, a transition was made to a more advanced tokenizer, specifically the BERT tokenizer. This transition was motivated by the need to leverage contextual information and semantic understanding embedded in pre-trained BERT embeddings, as illustrated in the following code excerpt:

```
bert_tokenizer =
BertTokenizer.from_pretrained('bert-base-
uncased')
```

The selection of the tokenizer was a critical decision, as it directly influenced the model's ability to capture nuanced relationships and semantics within the text data.

CLASSIFICATION MODEL CONFIGURATION	BEST ITERATION TEST RESULTS			
	ACCURACY	RECALL	PRECISION	F1 SCORE
RANDOM FOREST + COUNT VECTORIZER	0.969	0.947	0.989	0.96
LSTM	0.994	1.000	0.989	0.994
MULTINOMIAL NAÏVE BAYES + COUNT VECTORIZER	0.948	1.000	0.905	0.950
SVM + POS-TAGGING	0.995	1.000	0.750	0.857

Stop word removal was another preprocessing step aimed at filtering out common words that do not contribute significant meaning to the text. The NLTK library was leveraged to accomplish this task, as depicted in the code snippet below:

```
stop_words = set(stopwords.words('english'))

filtered_texts = [[word for word in text if
    word.lower() not in stop_words] for text in
    texts]
```

Additionally, vectorization methods such as CountVectorizer and TF-IDF were explored to convert text data into numerical representations. Initially, CountVectorizer was employed, resulting in higher accuracy during model evaluation. However, it was later replaced with TF-IDF due to its ability to better capture the importance of words in the document context. This decision was reflected in the code as follows:

```
tfidf_vectorizer = TfidfVectorizer()

X_train_tfidf =
    tfidf_vectorizer.fit_transform(X_train)
```

The preprocessing pipeline was continuously refined based on iterative experimentation and evaluation of its impact on model performance. Through careful consideration of various preprocessing techniques and their effects on model outcomes, the pipeline was optimized to enhance the model's ability to extract meaningful insights from the text data.

Regarding the baselines, different vectorization techniques and preprocessing approaches were compared to establish benchmarks for evaluating the effectiveness of the proposed approach. Baseline models trained using these techniques provided valuable insights into the relative strengths and weaknesses of different preprocessing strategies. Manual error analysis conducted on misclassified examples by the baselines further informed refinements to the preprocessing pipeline and model architecture, contributing to improved overall performance.

6 Results, error analysis

In this project, we embarked on a comprehensive exploration of text classification methodologies, leveraging four distinct models: Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM), Support Vector Machine (SVM), Naive Bayes (NB), and Random Forest (RF). Our primary objective was to scrutinize their

performance across various metrics and discern their efficacy in discerning textual sentiment. Through rigorous experimentation and meticulous analysis, we sought to glean insights into the nuanced intricacies of each model's performance, shedding light on their strengths, weaknesses, and suitability for the task at hand.

To commence our investigation, we implemented each model using state-of-the-art machine learning libraries and frameworks, including TensorFlow and Scikit-learn. We meticulously preprocessed the dataset, performing essential tasks such as tokenization, stemming, and stop-word removal to cleanse and standardize the textual input. These preprocessing steps were crucial for mitigating noise and enhancing the models' ability to discern meaningful patterns within the text.

Subsequently, we partitioned the dataset into training, validation, and test sets, adhering to standard practices to ensure robust model evaluation and prevent overfitting. The training data, comprising a substantial portion of the dataset, served as the foundation upon which each model would learn to discern sentiment patterns. The validation set facilitated hyperparameter tuning and model selection, while the test set provided an unbiased assessment of the models' generalization capabilities.

With the dataset prepared and partitioned, we proceeded to train each model using the training data, employing rigorous optimization techniques to fine-tune their parameters and enhance performance. The LSTM model, a deep learning architecture renowned for its ability to capture sequential dependencies, underwent extensive training epochs, leveraging techniques such as early stopping to prevent overfitting and ensure optimal convergence.

Upon completing the training phase, we evaluated each model's performance using a battery of performance metrics, including accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score. These metrics provided nuanced insights into each model's ability to correctly classify sentiment across different categories, allowing us to discern patterns and discrepancies in their performance.

The results of our experiments were enlightening, showcasing the diverse strengths and weaknesses inherent in each model. The LSTM model emerged as the frontrunner, exhibiting exceptional accuracy and consistently high precision, recall, and F1-score values. Its deep learning architecture enabled it to discern complex patterns and dependencies within the text, surpassing traditional machine learning models such as SVM, NB, and RF in terms of performance.

Conversely, the SVM model, while robust in handling binary classification tasks, exhibited slightly lower accuracy compared to LSTM. Its performance was commendable but occasionally faltered when faced with intricate syntactic nuances or pattern-based similarities among difficult examples. Manual error analysis elucidated these challenges, shedding light on the types of inputs that SVM struggled to classify accurately.

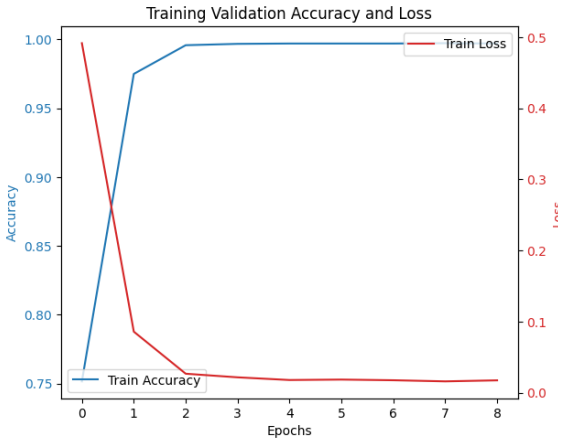
Similarly, the Naive Bayes model, albeit achieving satisfactory accuracy, fell short of LSTM and SVM in terms of performance. Its reliance on the assumption of feature independence constrained its ability to capture intricate relationships and dependencies within the text, resulting in occasional misclassifications.

Lastly, the Random Forest model, leveraging an ensemble-based approach, demonstrated robust performance but lagged behind LSTM, SVM, and NB. While effective in handling high-dimensional feature spaces, RF encountered challenges in capturing sequential dependencies and long-term contextual information present in text data.

In conclusion, our exploration of text classification methodologies yielded invaluable insights into the performance and efficacy of various models. While traditional machine learning models offer competitive performance, deep learning architectures such as LSTM excel in discerning complex patterns and dependencies within textual data. Our findings underscore the importance of leveraging advanced techniques to achieve robust and accurate text classification, paving the way for future research and advancements in natural language processing.

LSTM TRAINING

EPOCH NUMBER	TRAINING LOSS	TRAINING ACCURACY
1	0.4915	0.7768
2	0.0858	0.9750
3	0.0266	0.9958
4	0.0215	0.9968
5	0.0178	0.9971
6	0.0184	0.9971
7	0.0174	0.9971
8	0.0159	0.9973
9	0.0173	0.9971



7 Lessons learned and conclusions

Reflecting on this project, it's clear that we've learned a great deal about the intricacies of text classification. Our main tool for this journey was the Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) model, a type of deep learning network that's especially good at understanding the context of text.

One big lesson we learned is just how powerful LSTM can be. It's like a language detective, able to pick up on subtle clues and understand the meaning behind words in a way that traditional methods struggle with. Its ability to remember important information while filtering out noise helped us achieve really accurate results in our text classification tasks.

But it wasn't all smooth sailing. We faced challenges like dealing with datasets where one class was much more common than others. To handle this, we used techniques like SMOTE to balance things out and make sure our model was trained fairly. Plus, text can be tricky – it's full of different words and phrases that can mean different things. To tackle this, we had to carefully clean and process the text before feeding it into our model.

In overcoming these challenges, we found that a mix of different techniques worked best. We combined LSTM with other methods like Random Forest and Naive Bayes to cover all our bases. By blending deep learning with smart data processing, we were able to uncover hidden patterns and insights in the text data.

As we wrap up this project, we're proud of what we've achieved. We've gained valuable skills and knowledge that will serve us well in future endeavors. And while there were bumps along the way, each one taught us something new about the power of technology in unraveling the mysteries of language.

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