

College of Engineering
Department of Systems Engineering

Interim Report

**Structural health monitoring for civil infrastructure using artificial intelligence
and digital twin**

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents	1
1. Background.....	2
2. Literature	3
2.1. Global Methods in SHM	3
2.1.1. Data-Driven Methods	3
2.1.2. Physics model-based methods	4
2.1.3. Hybrid Techniques	4
2.2. Local Methods in SHM.....	5
2.2.1. Non-Destructive Testing Techniques.....	5
2.2.2. Enhancing Local Methods with Deep Learning	5
3. Problem Statement	5
4. Proposed methodology	6
4.1. Data from DT bridge model.....	6
4.2. 1-D CNN and LSTM	8
5. Preliminary results.....	11
5.1. 1-D CNN and LSTM trained by using DT models	12
5.2. model structure optimization	14
6. Next steps.....	14
6.1. Data sampling.....	14
6.2. Structure optimization	15
6.3. Model Comparison	15
Reference	16

The report is expected to be in about 20 pages.

1. Background

Structural Health Monitoring (SHM) has emerged as a pivotal domain within civil engineering, aimed at the early detection of structural defects, real-time monitoring of infrastructure conditions, and the assessment of structural safety. With the aging of infrastructure and increasing environmental challenges, SHM systems are indispensable for ensuring the operational integrity of critical assets, such as bridges, buildings, and dams. By leveraging data collected from a variety of sensors, SHM systems continuously or periodically assess structural conditions, ensuring resilience against external forces and supporting long-term functionality. The integration of advanced monitoring technologies provides a comprehensive view of structural health, offering a reliable foundation for condition-based maintenance strategies^[1]. Civil infrastructure, including bridges, dams, and tunnels, represents critical assets that underpin societal functioning. However, these structures are constantly subjected to dynamic loads, environmental stressors, and natural aging processes, which contribute to progressive deterioration^[12]. Structural degradation, if undetected, can compromise safety, disrupt operations, and increase the risk of catastrophic failures. Traditional maintenance practices, such as periodic visual inspections and scheduled repairs, have inherent limitations due to their inability to detect concealed damage, high costs, and susceptibility to human error. SHM systems address these challenges by providing continuous, real-time monitoring, ensuring structural integrity, and enhancing maintenance strategies^{[34][35][36]}.

One of the critical advantages of SHM lies in its ability to detect early signs of damage, thereby reducing the likelihood of catastrophic failures and extending the lifespan of infrastructure^[2]. By collecting real-time data from sensors such as accelerometers, strain gauges, and displacement transducers, SHM systems continuously monitor a structure's behavior and compare it to baseline conditions. Significant deviations from baseline behavior trigger alarms, enabling early diagnosis and preventive maintenance. This proactive approach optimizes maintenance schedules, minimizes operational downtime, and lowers repair costs. Moreover, SHM aligns with sustainability goals by reducing the need for frequent physical inspections and lowering the overall environmental impact of infrastructure maintenance. These systems conserve resources by minimizing physical assessments while providing accurate and reliable data. Additionally, SHM systems play a critical role in ensuring the safety of infrastructure during extreme conditions, such as earthquakes, floods, or high winds, where real-time monitoring is essential for protecting both the structure and its users.

Despite its advantages, traditional SHM methods face several challenges that limit their effectiveness. One major challenge is the vast volume of data generated by modern SHM systems^[5]. The extensive sensor networks embedded in structures produce immense datasets, which require efficient processing and analysis to identify potential damage. Traditional techniques often struggle with handling such large datasets and rely heavily on manual intervention, introducing delays, errors, and inefficiencies^[3]. Moreover, current SHM systems frequently encounter difficulties in real-time data analysis, hampering timely damage detection and diagnosis. Another critical challenge lies in the complexity and variability of structural behaviors. Structures exhibit unique dynamic responses influenced by factors such as environmental conditions and loading scenarios, making it difficult to detect anomalies without in-depth knowledge of these variables^[5]. Additionally, in some cases, SHM systems still require manual inspections to validate automated analysis results, adding further complexity and cost to the maintenance process.

To overcome these challenges, the integration of Digital Twin (DT) technology into SHM represents a transformative advancement. A DT is a virtual replica of a physical asset that evolves alongside its real-world counterpart by integrating real-time sensor data and simulations^[3]. In SHM, DTs enhance monitoring capabilities by merging data-driven insights with physics-based models, offering a comprehensive and dynamic representation of structural behavior. During the design phase, DTs enable virtual simulations to predict structural performance under various conditions, facilitating optimal designs prior to construction. In the operational phase, DTs continuously assimilate real-time data from embedded sensors, enabling real-time monitoring, fault diagnosis, and predictive maintenance. This approach not only improves structural reliability and safety but also reduces the frequency of physical inspections, resulting in more cost-effective maintenance. Furthermore, the application of deep learning has the potential to revolutionize SHM by providing sophisticated data analysis techniques capable of handling large datasets and detecting complex patterns in structural behavior^[9]. Traditional methods, which often rely on statistical models and rule-based algorithms, struggle to identify subtle or evolving damage. In contrast, deep learning techniques, including Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs), Recurrent Neural Networks (RNNs), and Transformer-based models, excel in time-series analysis. These models can effectively learn temporal patterns associated with structural changes, enabling automated anomaly detection in real time^[10].

2. Literature

SHM methodologies are broadly categorized into Global Methods and Local Methods, each offering distinct approaches tailored to specific monitoring needs. Recent technological advancements, particularly in DT and deep learning, have considerably augmented both categories, enabling enhanced precision and efficiency in monitoring capabilities^[1].

2.1. Global Methods in SHM

Global SHM methods aim to detect changes in a structure's overall behavior by analyzing its dynamic characteristics, such as natural frequencies, damping ratios, and mode shapes. These vibration-based techniques utilize data collected from sensors that monitor the structural response to external forces, effectively identifying damage that impacts structural integrity. These methods are typically categorized into data-driven approaches, physics-based models, and hybrid techniques. The advent of DT technology has transformed global SHM by enabling real-time simulations that continuously update using sensor data. When integrated with advanced deep learning models, such as Transformers, DTs enhance the system's ability to process time-series data for detecting anomalies and predicting potential failures^{[2][3][4]}.

2.1.1. Data-Driven Methods

Statistical and machine learning techniques play a key role in identifying patterns and anomalies in collected SHM data. Methods such as Principal Component Analysis (PCA), Support Vector Machines (SVMs), and neural networks are widely used to process vibration data for damage detection. Deep learning models, including CNNs, Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) networks, and Transformers, have significantly advanced data-driven SHM methods. These models excel at extracting hierarchical features and capturing long-range dependencies in structural vibration data, enabling efficient processing of large datasets and real-time damage identification^{[1][7][13]}. For examples, Wang and Cha^[17]

proposed an unsupervised learning approach using acceleration signals from a laboratory-scale 3D steel bridge. They normalized the response signal vectors and applied Continuous Wavelet Transformation (CWT) and Fast Fourier Transformation (FFT). The transformed data were processed by a two-dimensional (2D) CNN autoencoder to extract key features, while One-Class Support Vector Machines (OC-SVMs) served as novelty detectors for each sensor, helping locate loose-bolt damage based on the highest novelty rates. Similarly, Abdeljaber et al.^[13] developed a damage detection framework utilizing output-only acceleration data. They created training datasets for various simulated damage scenarios, such as loose bolts, and trained individual CNNs for each case. The resulting Probability of Damage (PoD) indicator achieved high accuracy with an average error of 0.54% across different damage scenarios. However, practical applications face challenges due to large data requirements for varied damage permutations, as highlighted by Abdeljaber et al.^[14]. To address this, a simplified approach was proposed^[15], requiring only two damage states—undamaged and fully damaged—though this method provided only a general assessment of structural conditions. Despite the advancements in deep learning-based SHM, current methodologies still struggle to achieve full automation. Replicating human perception through vibration- or vision-based deep learning algorithms remains a significant challenge^[18].

2.1.2. Physics model-based methods

Accurate mathematical models are essential for post-processing measured data to predict damage location and severity. Commonly used models include finite difference methods (FDM), finite element methods (FEM), spectral finite element methods (SFEM), and boundary element methods (BEM)^[19]. Among these, Finite Element Models (FEMs) are particularly prevalent for simulating the mechanical behavior of structures under various loading conditions^{[11][12][37][38][39][40]}. In SHM studies, a critical aspect of using FEM is the precise modeling of damage, such as cracks. Researchers have developed diverse techniques to simulate defects within the FEM framework. For example, Powar and Ganguli^[22] used FEM to model matrix cracks in composite beams, which facilitated the assessment of the performance of a rotating helicopter blade. Similarly, Yang et al.^[23] applied FEM to study Lamb wave propagation in composite plates, demonstrating its effectiveness in wave-based damage detection. Crack parameters were also successfully extracted in a study utilizing FEM analysis^[20]. Moreover, a novel method employing the Heaviside function was introduced for crack modeling within the FEM framework, offering an innovative approach to damage representation^[21].

2.1.3. Hybrid Techniques

The integration of data-driven models with physics-based approaches has gained significant traction, as hybrid methods enhance the robustness and accuracy of damage detection. These approaches combine simulation outputs with real-time sensor data to improve predictive performance. For example, FEM-based models can generate baseline predictions, while deep learning algorithms refine these predictions using feedback from sensors. Lin et al.^[16] explored the application of a CNN trained on simulated FEM data of a simply supported beam, considering both noisy and noise-free environments. Their study demonstrated that critical structural features, such as response frequency bands, vibration modes, and their interactions, could be effectively captured by the CNN using sensor data. Additionally, a novel framework called DeepSHM was developed, leveraging data augmentation of sensor signal responses obtained from FEM simulations. This framework provides a generalized methodology by feeding augmented data into a CNN for training, enabling the extraction of neural weights^[24].

2.2. Local Methods in SHM

Local SHM methods focus on specific components or areas of a structure to identify and evaluate damage. These techniques often involve detailed assessments or Non-Destructive Testing (NDT) methods to detect localized issues, such as cracks, corrosion, or material degradation. Unlike global SHM methods, local approaches are highly targeted, frequently leveraging insights from global analyses to pinpoint potential damage zones. DT technology enhances local SHM by providing precise simulations of localized damage. DTs utilize real-time data integrated with multi-physics finite element models (FEM) to analyze stress, strain, and displacement in critical areas. For instance, a DT can simulate interactions between piezoelectric sensors and the structure to identify micro-cracks in real time^[13]. By combining DT technology with deep learning, local SHM methods gain improved interpretability and accuracy, supporting targeted repair strategies and reducing inspection expenses.

2.2.1. Non-Destructive Testing Techniques

Traditional NDT techniques, such as ultrasonic testing and thermography, are integral to local SHM^{[41][42][43][44][45]}. Ultrasonic Testin uses high-frequency sound waves to identify subsurface defects like cracks and voids. Ultrasonic guided waves (UGWs) are widely applied in health prognosis through various probing techniques, including contact, semi-contact, and non-contact approaches. In the contact method, acoustic sensors—often bonded to or embedded within structural surfaces—are employed to excite and detect acoustic waves^[25]. These sensors are crafted from materials responsive to electrical or magnetic stimuli, generating strain upon excitation. Common transducer materials include piezoelectric polymers (PVDF), piezoelectric ceramics (PZT), electrostrictive ceramics (PMN), and magnetostrictive materials (Terfenol-D). Thermograph employs infrared imaging to detect temperature variations that indicate structural damage. Miao et al.^[26] introduced an innovative electromagnetic thermography approach for subsurface defect detection. By leveraging radiation parameters and the thermophysical properties of the medium, this method demonstrated superior performance in identifying natural subsurface cracks.

2.2.2. Enhancing Local Methods with Deep Learning

Deep learning has significantly enhanced the efficiency and precision of local SHM methods. CNNs are widely used to process image-based NDT data, such as radiographic or thermographic images, enabling automated defect classification. Transformer-based Models excel in capturing contextual relationships within complex datasets, further improving the accuracy of defect identification and localization. By reducing the dependence on manual inspections, these advancements enhance the scalability of local SHM techniques. For example, Ali and Cha^[27] developed a method combining passive thermography with a Deep Inception Neural Network (DINN) to identify and localize internal defects in steel bridge components. Arbaoui et al.^[28] applied CNN architectures, including AlexNet and ResNet50, to detect cracks in concrete structures by integrating ultrasonic testing with multiresolution analysis. Han et al.^[29] proposed a 2D CNN model to detect crack signals in concrete structures using acoustic emission data.

3. Problem Statement

While DT technology holds great promise for SHM, challenges like environmental noise, measurement errors, and computational constraints limit its accuracy and real-time applicability. Effective models are needed to process complex datasets and address these limitations. This project aims to develop a high-performance hybrid machine-learning model for bridge health monitoring, leveraging DT-generated data. By integrating 1-D CNN and LSTM architectures and employing techniques like Bayesian optimization, the model seeks to enhance damage detection accuracy, address overfitting, and enable cost-effective, proactive maintenance strategies.

4. Proposed methodology

In this project, a large set of numerical models mimicking real bridge structures were created using DT technology. These models were then used to train a hybrid CNN-LSTM model. A portion of the simulated data was employed to fine-tune the model through Bayesian Optimization, optimizing the hyperparameters. The remaining data was used to assess the model's performance. The implementation process is shown in Fig. 1.

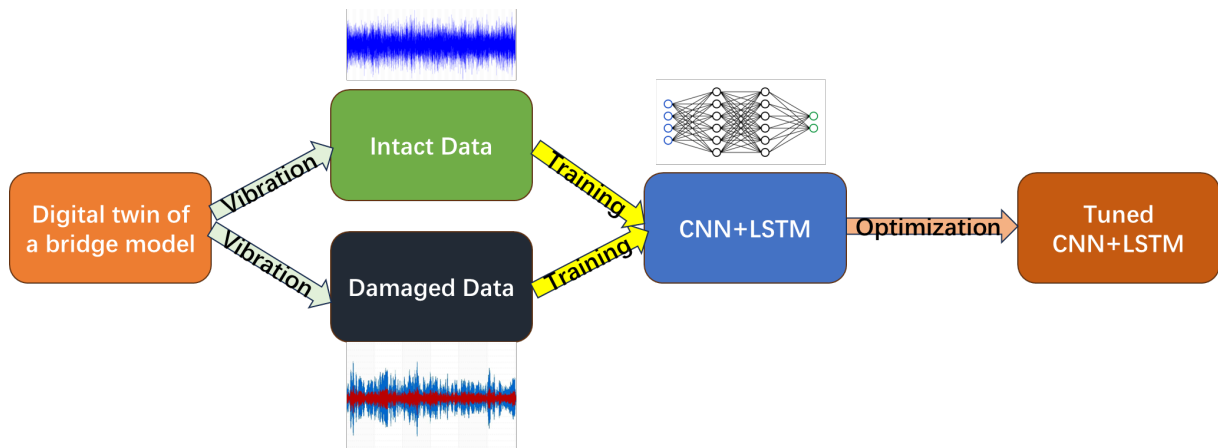


Fig. 1. Overview of method implementation.

4.1. Data from DT bridge model

In this project, two numerical bridge models—one healthy and one damaged—were established using DT technology. The dimensions of the models are as follows: length = 2.4 m, width = 0.3 m, and height = 0.3 m. The modeling parameters for these numerical bridge models are provided in Table 1. The four random factors used in the numerical modeling were set as follows (based on the ABAQUS platform, SIMULIA Inc., Providence, RI, USA):

1. The numerical models were randomly scaled by $\pm 15\%$ from a physical bridge model, as outlined in^[10].
2. A 1000 N excitation force was applied through random amplitude curves along the y-axis. The excitation point was randomly selected from one of the 32 points in the healthy truss model (green points in Fig. 2) and 34 points in the damaged truss model (green points in Fig. 3).

3. The random excitation forces were generated using the "randbetween" function in Excel, with a total of 34 values applied to nodes in both models.
4. The excitation force was applied for 4 seconds on each node, and acceleration data in the x, y, and z directions were collected. The time step for data collection was 0.002 seconds, resulting in 2001 data points for each node.

Fig. 2 and Fig. 3 show the locations of the sampling points in the numerical models: 32 points in the healthy model and 34 in the damaged model. However, after visualizing the collected data, I observed that some data points might mislead the model's prediction results. I manually removed these points, and further work will be needed to identify and remove other misleading data. This will be discussed in the Next Steps section.

For the healthy model, 27 nodes were selected as useful data points. When a random excitation force was applied to a node, I collected the vibration signals from all 27 nodes. After applying the excitation force to all 27 nodes, I collected a total of 27x27 sets of healthy data, with each set having a size of (2001, 3), where 2001 is the number of time steps and 3 represents the vibration signals in the x, y, and z directions. Similarly, for the damaged model, flat steel bars were damaged between nodes 20 and 24. I selected the same 27 points, resulting in 27x27 sets of damaged data, each with a size of (2001, 3). Thus, my dataset size is (2x27x27, 2001, 3).

Table 1. The modeling parameters by ABAQUS.

Elastic modulus	Poisson's ratio	Mass density	Modal damping ratio	Meshed with
210 GPa	0.3	7,8000 kg/m ³	0.03	Beam elements (B31 type)

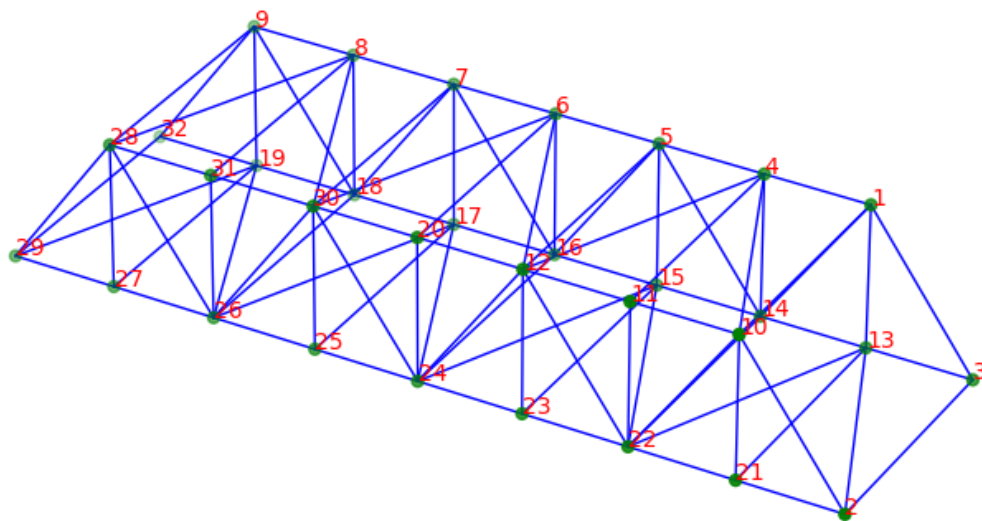


Fig. 2. Layout of the health truss model.

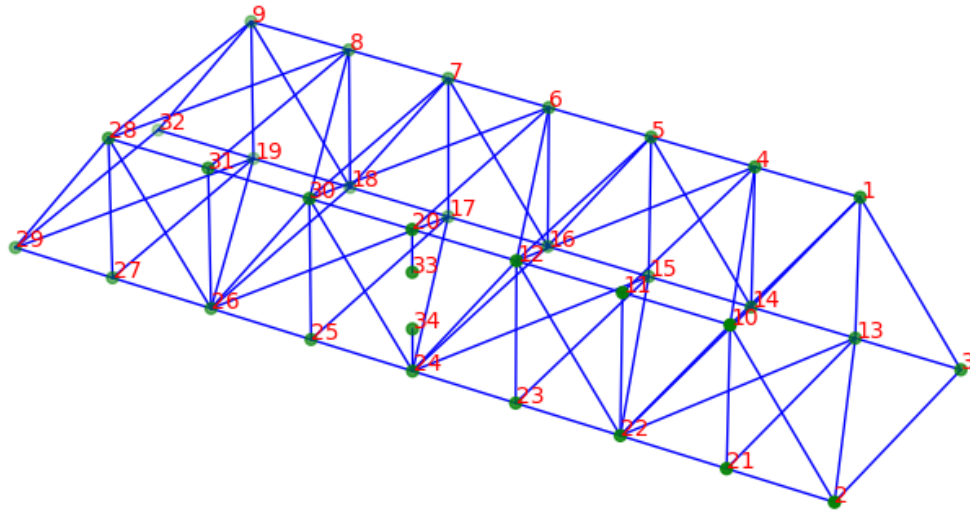


Fig. 3. Layout of the damaged truss model.

4.2. 1-D CNN and LSTM

One-Dimensional Convolutional Neural Networks (1D CNNs) are a specialized form of traditional 2D CNNs, designed for processing sequential or one-dimensional data. A key advantage of 1D CNNs is their computational efficiency, with a complexity of $O(NK)$ compared to $O(N^2K^2)$ for 2D CNNs of equivalent dimensions^[30]. Typically, 1D CNNs use more compact architectures, featuring 1-2 hidden layers and fewer than 10K parameters, in contrast to 2D CNNs, which often require millions of parameters. The structure of a 1D CNN is shown in Fig. 4. This streamlined design makes 1D CNNs particularly suitable for real-time applications and resource-constrained environments, as they can be trained and deployed on standard CPUs without the need for specialized hardware like GPU farms. Their applications extend across various fields, including signal processing, sensor data analysis, time series forecasting, and mobile computing. The combination of reduced computational requirements, simpler implementation, and effective performance makes 1D CNNs ideal for mobile devices, IoT applications, and other scenarios that require processing efficiency and real-time performance^[31].

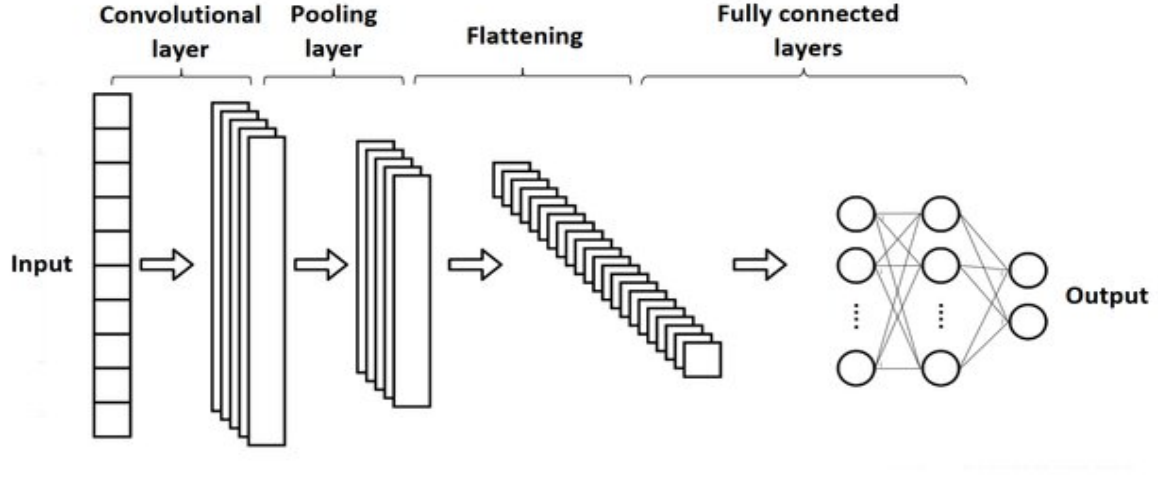


Fig. 4. The structure of 1-D CNN^[32].

CNN architecture is based on two primary components: convolution and pooling layers. In a 1D CNN, the convolution operation for single-channel data can be mathematically represented as:^[33]

$$F(i) = \sum_{n=1}^{\vartheta_k} S(i+n)K(n)$$

This operation involves the filter sliding across the input signal, computing the sum of element-wise multiplications between the filter coefficients and the corresponding input values at each position. For multi-channel data, the convolution operation is applied simultaneously across all channels, with the results being aggregated. The movement of the filter across the input is controlled by the stride parameter, which defines the step size between consecutive filter positions. Following the convolution layer, a pooling layer is generally applied to reduce the dimensionality of the feature maps while retaining important information. Max pooling is a common approach, which halves the feature map size by selecting the maximum value within each pooling window. To introduce non-linearity, activation functions like the Rectified Linear Unit (ReLU) are used. ReLU is effective due to its computational efficiency and its ability to mitigate the vanishing gradient problem. The ReLU function is defined as:

$$ReLU(x) = \max(0, x)$$

where x is the input value.

LSTM networks are built around specialized memory units called cells. Each cell manages both a cell state and a hidden state, which propagate through the network. The cell state serves as the main information pathway, allowing data to flow with minimal modification through controlled gates. The structure of the LSTM used in this study is shown in Fig. 5.

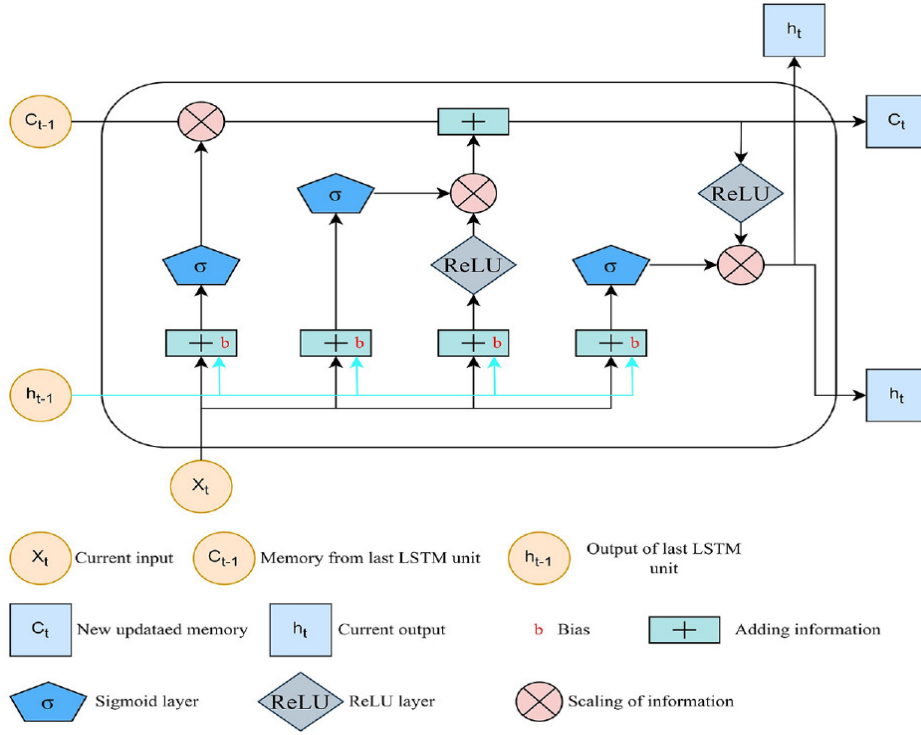


Fig. 5. The structure of LSTM^[32].

LSTM operation involves three main phases: First, the forget gate:

$$f_t = \sigma(W_f[h_{t-1}, X_t] + b_f)$$

determines which information should be discarded from the previous state. The second phase is the memory update, which combines an input gate:

$$i_t = \sigma(W_i[h_{t-1}, X_t] + b_i)$$

with candidate values:

$$N_t = ReLU(W_n[h_{t-1}, X_t] + b_n)$$

to update the cell state:

$$C_t = C_{t-1}f_t + N_ti_t$$

The final phase generates the cell's output via the output gate:

$$O_t = \sigma(W_o[h_{t-1}, X_t] + b_o)$$

and the final computation:

$$h_t = O_t * ReLU(C_t)$$

While traditional LSTMs typically use the tanh activation function, this architecture utilizes ReLU, which provides advantages such as improved handling of long-term dependencies, reduced vanishing gradient issues, faster convergence during training, and lower computational overhead. These benefits ultimately enhance the network's performance in sequential data processing tasks.

In this project, the 1-D CNN-LSTM model was used to classify the damage scenarios of the bridge model. The structure of the 1-D CNN-LSTM network, as shown in Fig. 6, consisted of four convolutional layers, two pooling layers, two LSTM layers, and one fully connected layer. The collected vibration signals (acceleration) served as input to the 1-D CNN-LSTM, while the damage scenarios of the bridge models were used as the output (with the intact structure labeled as 0 and the damaged structures labeled as 1).

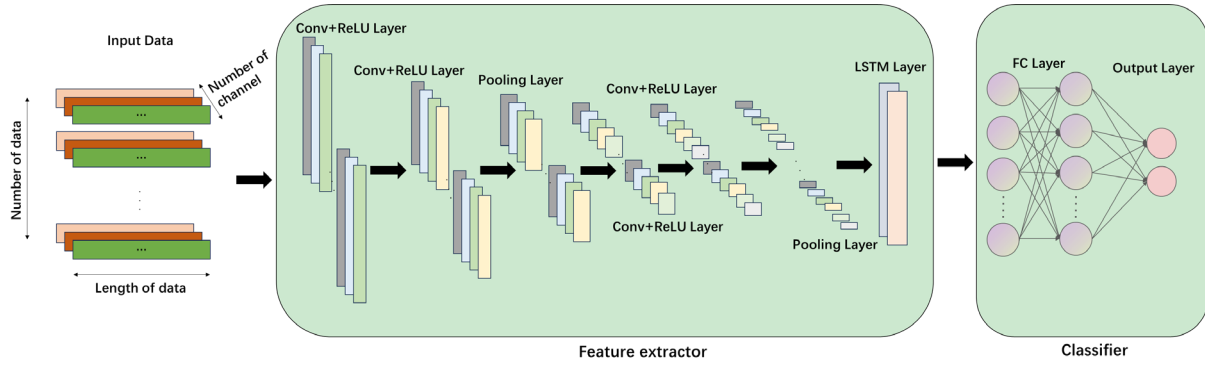


Fig. 6 Structure of the deep learning model.

The optimal architecture of the network was determined using Bayesian optimization. The Tree-structured Parzen Estimators (TPE), a robust hyperparameter optimization technique within the sequential model-based optimization (SMBO) framework, was employed to identify the most effective network configuration. Unlike conventional methods that directly model $P(y|x)$, TPE builds a probabilistic model by estimating $P(x|y)$ and $P(y)$, where x represents the hyperparameters and y denotes the objective function value. The algorithm divides the observed performance metrics into two probability densities: $l(x)$ for superior performances below a threshold y^* (determined by the γ -quantile of observations) and $g(x)$ for inferior performances. This relationship can be expressed as:

$$P(x|y) = \begin{cases} l(x), & \text{for } y < y^* \\ g(x), & \text{for } y \geq y^* \end{cases}$$

The optimization process maximizes the Expected Improvement (EI), defined as:

$$EI(x) = \frac{\gamma l(x) - g(x)(1 - \gamma)}{\gamma l(x) + g(x)(1 - \gamma)}$$

where γ represents the proportion of observations in $l(x)$. Both probability densities are modeled using Gaussian kernel density estimation, allowing for efficient handling of diverse hyperparameter types. The hierarchical structure and computational efficiency of this methodology made it particularly suitable for optimizing the network's architecture, with the final configuration chosen based on the minimum validation error.

5. Preliminary results

This section presents the preliminary detection results of the proposed method, divided into two parts: (1) the pre-trained CNN, developed using DT models (numerical models) with strong compatibility, and (2) the application of the Bayesian optimization algorithm to identify the most suitable model structure.

5.1. 1-D CNN and LSTM trained by using DT models

Initially, the training samples obtained from the numerical models described in Section 3.1 (generated using DT technology) were used to train the 1-D CNN and LSTM. When using only the Y-axis vibration data, the training and validation processes (including accuracy and loss values) are shown in Fig. 7. The best model achieved a validation loss of 0.0052 and 100% accuracy. The confusion matrix for the testing samples is displayed in Fig. 8, where the testing loss was reduced to 0.0271, and the accuracy reached 98.97%. These results indicate that the model performs very well when using the Y-axis vibration data alone.

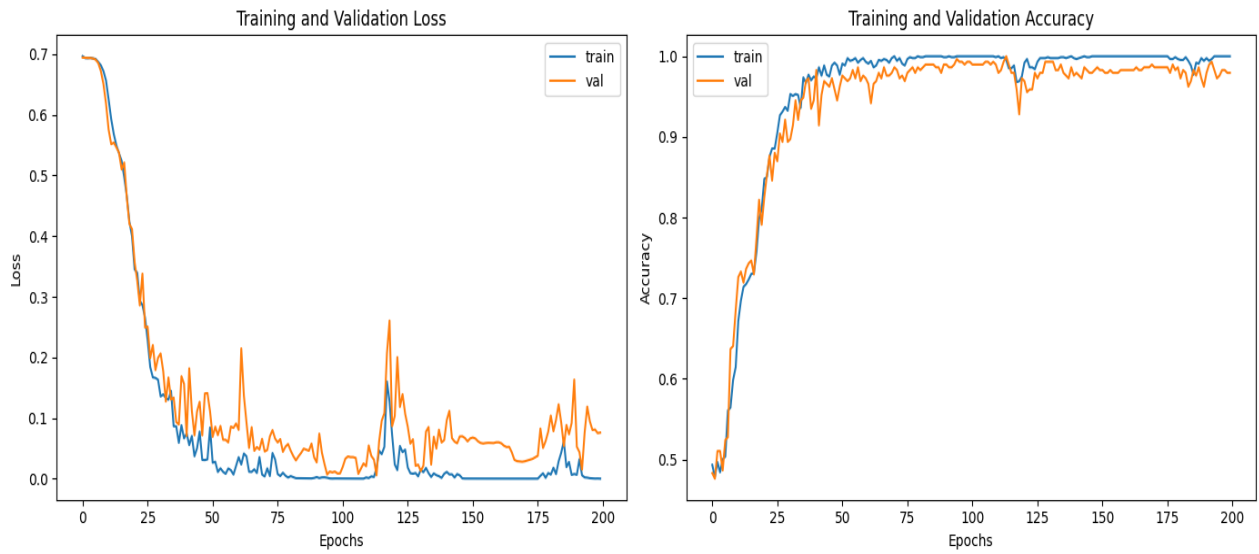


Fig. 7. Training and validation process for the Y-axis vibration signal.

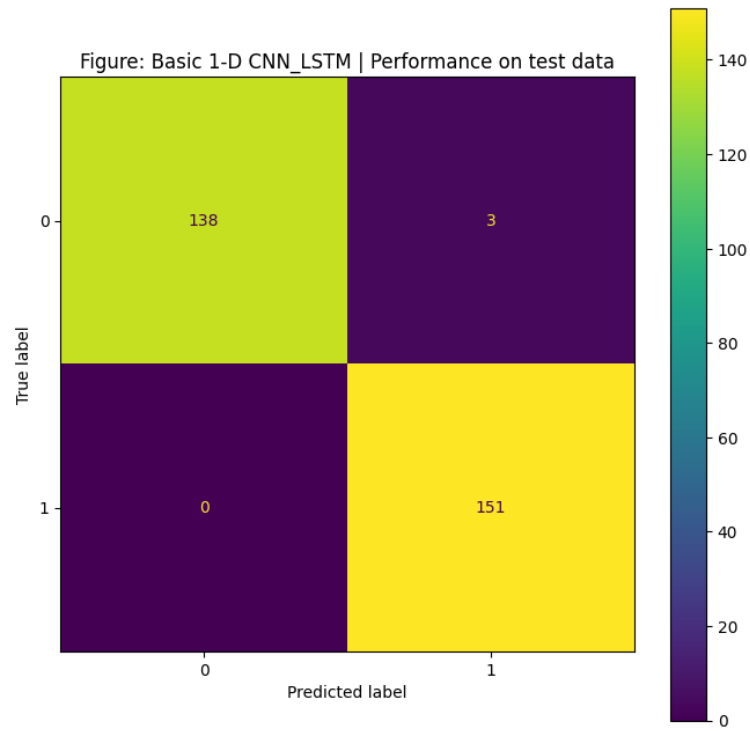


Fig. 8. Confusion matrix of the testing data for the Y-axis vibration signal.

Additionally, the model was trained using all three axes of vibration data (X, Y, and Z). The training and validation results (accuracy and loss values) are shown in Fig. 9. The best model achieved a validation loss of 0.5583 and accuracy of 79.11%. The confusion matrix for the testing data is shown in Fig. 10, where the testing loss was 0.5652 and accuracy reached 81.51%. These results suggest that the model is overfitting, and modifications to the model structure are necessary.

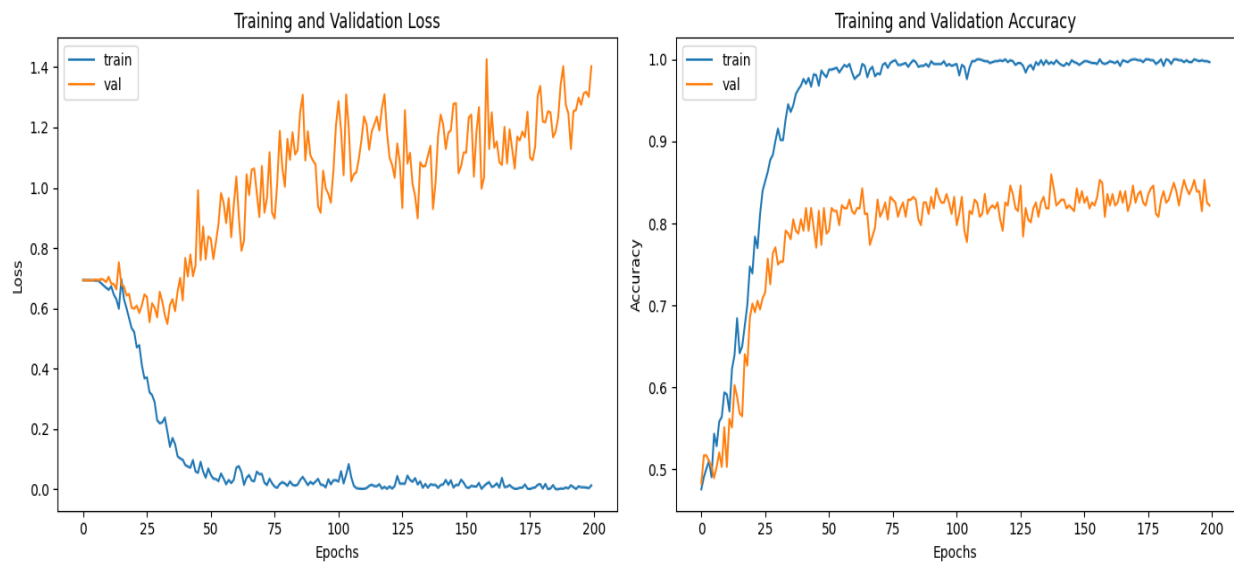


Fig. 9. Training and validation process for all three axis vibration signals.

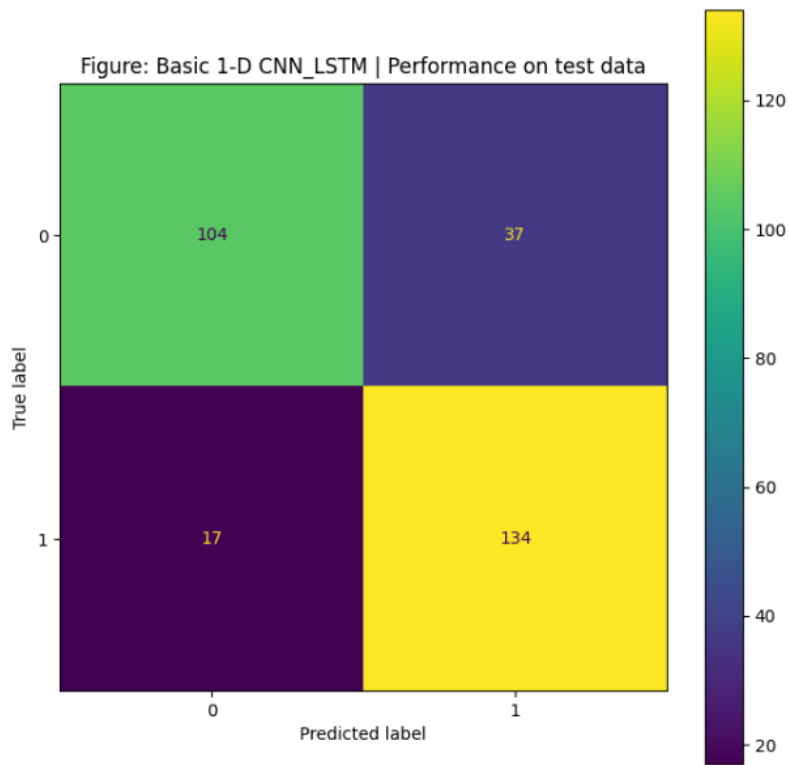


Fig. 10. Confusion matrix of the testing data for all three axis vibration signals.

5.2. model structure optimization

Based on the Fig. 9 above, the training and validation process for all three-axis vibration signals shows signs of overfitting. Since Bayesian optimization updates the best weights based on the lowest validation loss, the model structure does not perform well due to this overfitting. Therefore, future work is required to address the overfitting issue and further optimize the model structure.

6. Next steps

6.1. Data sampling

In this project, 27 sampling points were initially selected for each numerical bridge model to collect vibration data for health monitoring. However, it may not be necessary to gather acceleration signals from all the sampling points. Redundant data collection can result in higher sampling costs, both in terms of time and resources. Additionally, manually selecting and combining these sampling points is a time-consuming and impractical task, especially when working with large-scale structures. Given these challenges, optimizing the sampling process becomes crucial to ensure that the collected data is both sufficient and cost-effective.

To address this issue, the Bayesian optimization algorithm will be employed to determine the optimal locations and number of sampling points for the model. This algorithm will help identify the most informative points, reducing the number of data collection points while still maintaining high accuracy in the classification of damage scenarios. By using Bayesian optimization, I can efficiently explore the vast space of possible combinations of sampling points, leveraging past observations to identify the

best configuration. This method not only minimizes the data collection cost but also enhances the overall performance and reliability of the monitoring system.

6.2. Structure optimization

As discussed in Section 4.1, the current model is experiencing overfitting, which hampers its ability to generalize to new, unseen data. Overfitting occurs when the model becomes too complex and fits too closely to the training data, capturing noise or random fluctuations rather than the underlying patterns. This leads to poor performance on the testing data, as the model struggles to make accurate predictions on unseen samples.

To resolve this issue, specific techniques will be applied to reduce overfitting. These techniques may include regularization methods, such as L1 or L2 regularization, dropout layers, or reducing the complexity of the model by limiting the number of layers or neurons in the network. Furthermore, cross-validation will be employed to evaluate the model's performance on different subsets of the data, ensuring that the model is not overly fitted to any particular portion of the dataset.

Once the overfitting issue is addressed, the next step will be to optimize the model's hyperparameters. Hyperparameter optimization is critical for improving model performance, as it involves tuning the settings that govern the learning process, such as the learning rate, batch size, and the number of hidden layers. Advanced optimization techniques, such as grid search or random search, can be used to identify the hyperparameter values that lead to the best performance on validation data. By fine-tuning the model's hyperparameters, I aim to achieve a more accurate, efficient, and robust model for bridge health monitoring.

6.3. Model Comparison

To further enhance the model's performance, alternative pretrained models or different machine learning approaches will be explored. Pretrained models, which have been trained on large datasets and can be fine-tuned for specific tasks, may offer a better starting point for classification tasks compared to training a model from scratch. These models have the advantage of leveraging prior knowledge learned from similar problems, potentially improving generalization and reducing training time.

In addition to pretrained models, other machine learning approaches, such as support vector machines, decision trees, or ensemble methods, will also be considered to assess whether they could yield better results for solving this classification problem. By comparing the performance of different models, I can determine the most effective approach for predicting damage scenarios in bridge structures and ensure that the selected model offers the best trade-off between accuracy, computational efficiency, and ease of deployment.

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