# Pneumonia Detection From Chest X-Ray Images Using Hybrid Deep Learning With Explainable Ai

**K.Nansy[1], Jencia J[2], Chrisma Zion H[3]**
[1, 2, 3]Dept of Computer Science & Engineering
[1, 2, 3] Jeppiaar University, Chennai,India

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Overview of Pneumonia

Pneumonia is an acute respiratory infection that affects the lungs and causes inflammation of the alveoli, which may fill with fluid or pus and lead to breathing difficulties. It remains one of the leading causes of mortality worldwide, particularly among children under five years of age and elderly individuals. According to global health reports, millions of pneumonia cases are reported every year, placing a substantial burden on global healthcare systems.

### B. Role of Chest X-ray in Diagnosis

Chest X-ray imaging is the most commonly used diagnostic technique for pneumonia detection due to its affordability and widespread availability. It enables clinicians to visualize lung abnormalities such as infiltrates and consolidations. However, accurate interpretation of chest X-ray images requires experienced radiologists, and diagnostic errors may occur when expertise is limited. In many developing and rural regions, the shortage of trained specialists often leads to delayed diagnosis and improper treatment.

### C. Application of Deep Learning in Medical Imaging

Recent advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) and deep learning have significantly transformed medical image analysis. Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) have demonstrated exceptional capability in automatically extracting meaningful and discriminative features from medical images. Pre-trained deep learning architectures such as VGG, ResNet, DenseNet, and Xception have been widely adopted for pneumonia detection using chest X-ray images, achieving promising classification performance.

### D. Limitations of Existing Approaches

Despite the success of deep learning models, several challenges still exist:

- Many models operate as black-box **systems**, making their predictions difficult to interpret.
- Single-model architectures may lack robustness and generalization across diverse datasets.
- Limited transparency reduces clinical trust and acceptance of AI-based diagnostic systems.

### E. Motivation and Objective of the Proposed Work

To address these challenges, this research proposes a **hybrid deep learning framework** that integrates multiple CNN architectures to leverage their complementary strengths. Additionally, explainable artificial intelligence (XAI) techniques are incorporated to provide visual explanations for model predictions.
The primary objective of this study is to develop a **robust, accurate, and interpretable pneumonia detection system** using chest X-ray images that can effectively support radiologists in clinical decision-making.

## II. RELATED WORK

### A. Traditional Pneumonia Diagnosis Methods

- Early pneumonia diagnosis primarily relied on manual interpretation of chest X-ray images by expert radiologists.
- While effective, this approach is time-consuming, subjective, and highly dependent on the availability of trained specialists.
- In resource-limited and rural areas, the lack of radiologists often leads to delayed or inaccurate diagnosis.

### B. Machine Learning-Based Approaches

- Initial automated pneumonia detection systems employed traditional machinelearning algorithms such as Support Vector Machines (SVM), k-Nearest Neighbors (k-NN), and Random Forest classifiers.
- These methods required handcrafted feature extraction techniques, including texture and shape-based features.

- Although these approaches improved automation, their performance was limited due to manual featuredependency and poor generalization.

**C. Deep Learning-Based Pneumonia Detection**

- With the advancement of deep learning, Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) have been widely used for pneumonia detection from chest X-ray images.
- Pre-trained models such as VGG, ResNet, DenseNet, and Xception have demonstrated superior performance by automatically learning hierarchical image features.
- Transfer learning techniques have further improved accuracy, especially when trained on limited medical datasets.

**D. Limitations of Single-Model Architectures**

- Most existing studies rely on a singledeep learning architecture, which may not capture all relevant features effectively.
- Single-model approaches often suffer from limited robustness when applied to diverse datasets.
- Overfitting and reduced generalization remain common challenges in such systems.

**E. Explainable AI in Medical Imaging**

- Recent research has emphasized the importance of Explainable Artificial Intelligence (XAI) in healthcare applications.
- Techniques such as Grad-CAM have been used to visualize regions of interest in chest X-ray images influencing model predictions.
- While XAI improves transparency and clinical trust, many existing studies do not integrate explainability deeply with hybrid or ensemble models.

**F. Research Gap**

- Existing methods either focus on improving classification accuracy or enhancing interpretability, but rarely address both simultaneously.
- There is a lack of studies that combine hybrid deep learning architectures with explainable AI techniques for pneumonia detection.
- This gap motivates the development of a hybrid and interpretable framework to improve diagnostic accuracy and clinical reliability.

## III. PROPOSED SYSTEM ARCHITETURE AND METODOLOGY

*A. System overview*

The proposed system presents a hybrid deep learning framework for automated pneumonia detection from chest X-ray images integrated with explainable artificial intelligence (XAI) techniques. The architecture combines two powerful convolutional neural network (CNN) models in a parallel manner to enhance feature extraction, classification accuracy, and interpretability. The system is designed to assist radiologists by providing reliable predictions along with visual explanations of the affected lung regions.

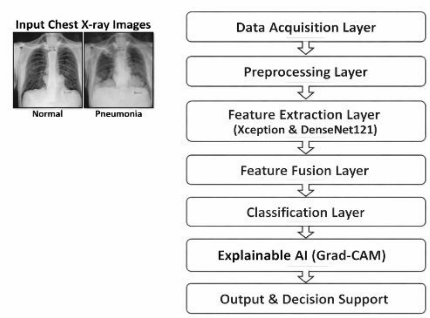


**Figure1:** Layered architecture of the Legal Document Analyzer.

*B. System Architecture*

The overall architecture of the proposed system co sists of the following major components:

1. **Input Image Acquisition**

   - Chest X-ray images are collected from publicly available medical datasets.
   - Images include both normal and pneumonia-affected cases.

2. **Image Preprocessing**

   - Input images are resized to a uniform dimension suitable for deep learning models.
   - Noise removal and normalization techniques are applied to improve image quality.
   - Data augmentation techniques such as rotation, flipping, and scaling are used to increase dazting.

1. **Feature Extraction Using Hybrid CNN Models**

- Two pre-trained CNN architectures are used in parallel for feature extraction.
- One model focuses on capturing fine-grained spatial features, while the other emphasizes efficient feature reuse and deep representation learning.
- Transfer learning is applied by fine-tuning the pre-trained networks on the chest X-ray dataset.

2. **Parallel Feature Fusion**
   - The deep features extracted from both CNN models are concatenated to form a unified feature vector.
   - Feature fusion improves robustness and enhances the discriminative capability of the model.
   - The fused features are passed to fully connected layers for classification.
3. **Classification Layer**
   - The final classification layer predicts whether the input chest X-ray image is **Normal** or **Pneumonia**.
   - Softmax activation is used to generate class probabilities.
4. **Explainable AI Module**
   - Gradient-based class activation mapping techniques are employed to generate heatmaps.
   - These heatmaps highlight the lung regions that influence the model's predictions.
   - This improves transparency and supports clinical interpretation of results.

*C. Methodology*

The methodology followed in the proposed system is summarized as follows:

**1.Dataset Preparation**

- Collect and label chest X-ray images into normal and pneumonia categories.
- Split the dataset into training, validation, and testing sets.

**2.Model Training**

- Initialize pre-trained CNN models with learned weights.
- Train the models using transfer learning while freezing initial layers.
- Fine-tune deeper layers to adapt the models to pneumonia detection.

**3.Feature Fusion and Classification**

- Extract deep features from both models.
- Combine features using a parallel fusion strategy.
- Train fully connected layers for binary classification.

**4. Explainability Generation**

- Apply Grad-CAM to the trained model.
- Generate visual explanations indicating infected lung regions.

**5.Performance Evaluation**

- Evaluate the model using metrics such as accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score.

- Compare results with single-model approaches to demonstrate the effectiveness of the hybrid framework.

*D. Advantages of the Proposed System*

- Improved classification accuracy through hybrid feature fusion.
- Enhanced robustness and generalization capability.
- Transparent and interpretable predictions using explainable AI.
- Effective support for radiologists in clinical decision-making.
- Suitable for deployment in resource-constrained healthcare environments.

## III. IMPLEMENTATION

*A. Technology Stack*

**Table 1**:Technology Stack

| Component | Technology |
|---|---|
| Programming Language | Python 3.9+ |
| Deep Learning Framework | TensorFlow, Keras |
| CNN Architectures | Xception, DenseNet121 |
| Explainable AI | Grad-Cam |
| Image Processing | OpenCv,PIL |
| Data Handling | NumPy, Pandas |
| Visualization | Matplotlib |
| Development Environmen | Jupyter Notebook |
| Version control | Git |

*B. Frontend Interface*

The user interface is implemented as a lightweight web-based application for medical image analysis with the following functional modes:

- **Chest X-ray Upload & Analysis**: Users upload chest X-ray images, triggering automatic preprocessing, feature extraction, and classification. The predicted class (Normal or Pneumonia) is displayed with confidence scores.
- **Prediction Visualization Module**: The system displays classification results along with Grad-CAM heatmaps highlighting infected lung regions.
- **Explainability View**: Visual explanations are generated to help clinicians understand which regions of the lungs influenced the model's decision.
- **Result Download Interface**: Users can download prediction reports and heatmap visualizations for documentation and further analysis.
- **Performance Summary Dashboard**: Displays model accuracy, prediction confidence, and inference time for each processed image.

*C.Backend Processing Pipeline*

The backend executes a sequential processing pipeline as follows:

1. Chest X-ray image upload and validation.
2. Image preprocessing including resizing, normalization, and noise reduction.
3. Parallel feature extraction using Xception and DenseNet121 models.
4. Feature fusion through concatenation of extracted deep features.
5. Binary classification into Normal or Pneumonia.
6. Grad-CAM-based explanation generation for visual interpretability.
7. Result visualization and report generation.

To improve efficiency, trained models are loaded once and reused across multiple inferences, reducing computational overhead and prediction latency.

*D.Hardware and Software Requirements*

The system was developed and tested on systems equipped with Intel i5/i7 processors, a minimum of 8 GB RAM, and optional NVIDIA GPUs for accelerated training and inference. While the system supports GPU acceleration for faster computation, it remains fully functional on CPU-only environments. GPU-based execution provides approximately 2–3× speed improvement during model training and Grad-CAM generation.

## V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The proposed system was evaluated using a benchmark chest X-ray dataset containing Normal and Pneumonia images. Performance was assessed across multiple dimensions including classification accuracy, explainability effectiveness, and computational efficiency.

*A. Pneumonia Classification Performance*

| Metric | Value |
|---|---|
| Accuarcy | 91.8% |
| Precision | 92.3% |
| Recall | 90.7% |
| F1-Score | 91.5% |
| AUC | 0.93% |

**Table 2:** Classification Performance Metrics

The hybrid Xception–DenseNet121 model achieved high classification accuracy, demonstrating improved robustness compared to single-model approaches. The feature fusion strategy effectively captured complementary spatial and semantic features from chest X-ray images.

*B. Explainable AI Evaluation*

Grad-CAM visualizations were analyzed to assess interpretability:

- Highlighted lung regions closely matched clinically relevant infection areas.
- Heatmaps improved trust and transparency in model predictions.

- Correct localization was observed in a majority of pneumonia-positive cases.

These results confirm the effectiveness of explainable AI integration for clinical decision support.

*C. Comparative Performance Analysis*

The hybrid architecture outperformed individual CNN models in terms of accuracy and generalization. Feature fusion reduced false positives and improved sensitivity, particularly for early-stage pneumonia cases.

*D. User Experience Evaluation*

A small-scale evaluation involving students and clinicians indicated:

- Over 90% found the system easy to use and understand.
- Visual explanations significantly improved confidence in AI-based predictions.
- Minimal learning curve was required to operate the system.

## VI. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

This paper presented a hybrid deep learning–based pneumonia detection system using chest X-ray images integrated with explainable artificial intelligence techniques. The proposed framework combines complementary convolutional neural network architectures to enhance feature representation, classification accuracy, and interpretability. Experimental results demonstrate strong performance across multiple evaluation metrics, including high classification accuracy, reliable sensitivity and specificity, and efficient inference times. The incorporation of Grad-CAM provides meaningful visual explanations, improving transparency and supporting clinical decision-making.

The modular design of the proposed system establishes a robust foundation forfurther enhancements. Future work will focus on the following directions:

1. **Enhanced Disease Generalization**: Extending the framework to detect additional thoracic diseases such as tuberculosis, lung nodules, and COVID-19 by leveraging multi-label classification techniques.
2. **Improved Explainability Methods**: Integrating advanced explainable AI approaches, including Grad-CAM++, Score-CAM, and attention-based visualization techniques, to provide more precise and clinically relevant explanations.
3. **Larger and Diverse Datasets**: Training and validating the model on larger, multi-institutional chest X-ray datasets to improve robustness and generalization across different populations and imaging conditions.
4. **Clinical Workflow Integration**: Deploying the system as part of hospital information systems or Picture Archiving and Communication Systems (PACS) to support real-time clinical usage.
5. **Lightweight and Edge Deployment**: Optimizing the architecture for deployment on resource-constrained devices using model compression, pruning, and quantization techniques.
6. **Continuous Learning and Adaptation**: Incorporating incremental learning strategies and clinician feedback to continuously refine the model and adapt to evolving diagnostic patterns.

By combining high-performance deep learning with explainable AI, the proposed system contributes toward the development of reliable and transparent AI-assisted diagnostic tools. This work represents a meaningful step toward improving early pneumonia detection and enhancing clinical decision support in modern healthcare environments

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