DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.26483/ijarcs.v17i3.7436
Volume 17, No. 3, May-June 2026
International Journal of Advanced Research in Computer Science
RESEARCH PAPER
Available Online at www.ijarcs.info
ISSN No. 0976-5697

A MULTI-FEATURE DEEP LEARNING FRAMEWORK FOR EARLY DISEASE DETECTION OF GINGER PLANTS USING CNN AND YOLOV3

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Abstract: Pest infestation and plant diseases significantly reduce agricultural productivity and pose a serious threat to food security and farmers livelihoods. Conventional disease identification techniques, which depend on expert manual examination, are often labour-intensive, time-consuming, and prone to human mistake, particularly in large-scale cultivation. Therefore, early and precise plant disease identification is essential for efficient crop management and better yields. This study suggests an intelligent deep learning-based system for autonomous disease detection and classification using leaf images. The main goal is to create a reliable and effective model that combines sophisticated computer vision techniques for accurate diseases localization and identification with convolutional neural networks (CNNs) for deep feature extraction. CNNs can learn discriminative and hierarchical features from pixel-level inputs, which makes them ideal for visual pattern identification. The proposed system incorporates the You Only Look Once (YOLO) technique to enhance real-time detection performance. Because it better balances accuracy and detection speed, the YOLOv3 model is specifically employed. The proposed Conv-YOLOv3 architecture enables simultaneous disease localization and classification in the leaves of ginger plants. The primary disease indicators that the system is designed to identify are soft rot disease, insect infestation patterns, and indications of nutrient deficits.. The proposed model's performance is evaluated in terms of inference time, computational complexity, detection efficiency, and classification accuracy. According to experimental results, the Conv-YOLOv3 model has a 93.16% overall accuracy, demonstrating its excellent capacity for accurate disease identification in practical settings. The suggested system helps farmers and agricultural specialists make timely decisions by providing a scalable, affordable, and automated precision agriculture solution. This methodology supports more productive agriculture and sustainable crop management by facilitating early disease identification and focused action.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Convolutional neural network, YOLO, computer vision, Disease detection.

1. INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is one of the oldest and most fundamental human activities, serving as a primary source of food and livelihood for people worldwide. Food production is essential for human survival, as well as for maintaining ecological balance, since animals depend on plants for food, oxygen, and other vital resources. Consequently, plants play a crucial role in sustaining both human life and the broader ecosystem. In recent years, significant efforts by governments and agricultural experts have contributed to measurable improvements in food production, demonstrating their effectiveness in real-world agricultural practices.

However, plant diseases remain a major challenge to agricultural productivity and food security. Diseases can affect various parts of a plant, including leaves, stems, and branches, leading to reduced yield and quality. These diseases vary in type and severity, with fungal and bacterial infections being among the most common causes of crop loss. Early identification and effective management of plant diseases are therefore essential to minimize economic losses and ensure sustainable agricultural development.

To address these challenges, this study focuses on ginger plants and presents the development of a comprehensive dataset of ginger leaf images representing multiple conditions, including healthy leaves, pest infestations, nutrient deficiencies, and soft rot disease. Advanced deep learning techniques, such as Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN) for classification and the YOLOv3 model for object detection, are employed to accurately identify and localize pest patterns, nutritional deficiencies, and disease symptoms. The proposed approach enables timely and precise disease detection, supporting effective crop management and improving ginger crop health and productivity.

YOLO-v3

In 2018, YOLOv3, an advancement of the YOLO (You Only Look Once) family, debuted. It is a sophisticated deep neural network model intended for quick and accurate real-time object recognition in pictures or video streams. By adding a feature pyramid network, a larger backbone network, and multi-scale prediction, YOLOv3 improves on its predecessor and can recognize objects of various sizes. To further improve accuracy and resilience, it incorporates methods including spatial attention, shortcut connections, and batch normalization. This adaptable architecture has been widely used in computer vision applications, including robots, autonomous driving, surveillance, and even new use cases like assessing building damage after a natural catastrophe.

The detecting head, post-processing module, and backbone network are the three main components of YOLOv3's architecture. The backbone network uses a modified DarkNet-53 design and is initially responsible for feature extraction from input photos. To improve learning and avoid overfitting, this backbone uses a series of convolutional layers interrupted with batch normalization and leaky ReLU activations. The salient feature is concentrated by gradually reducing the spatial dimensions of the feature maps by the strategic integration of max-pooling layers.

The detection head is used to estimate bounding boxes and class probabilities within pictures. It uses several convolutional layers to handle the multi-scale feature maps produced by the backbone network. The model is better able to identify items of different sizes because to its multi-scale approach. A predetermined number of bounding boxes, usually based on the number of anchor boxes, must be predicted by each detection layer.

To improve the detections, the post-processing module is essential. It uses non-maximum suppression (NMS) to remove duplicate and overlapping results and filters detections according to their confidence scores. The output is precise and succinct because detections with low confidence scores are eliminated. Duplicate detections are less likely since the NMS algorithm makes sure that only the most pertinent bounding boxes are kept. Furthermore, better gradient flow during training is made possible by the incorporation of residual blocks into the backbone architecture, enabling deeper networks without experiencing the vanishing gradient issue. Figure 1 shows the YOLOv3 flow diagram together with residual blocks and the detection module[5]. YOLOv3 is a potent model for real-time object detection thanks to this mix of sophisticated post-processing.

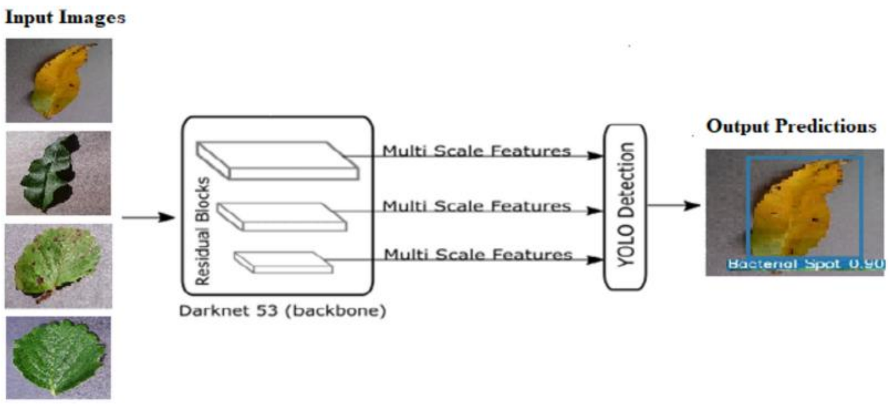


Figure 1: Block diagram of YOLOv3 model for Plant Disease Detection.(Source: Alhwaiti et al. (2023), Scientific Reports, 15:7969.)

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

A recent **Rice plant disease detection** study used deep **Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN)** to effectively classify diseases in rice crop images, achieving high detection accuracy and robustness across multiple disease types [1].A comprehensive **review of CNN models** for plant leaf disease detection highlights the strong performance of deep convolutional neural networks in classifying a wide range of crop diseases from digital leaf images and identifies challenges like dataset diversity [2].A comparative CNN study for multi-crop leaf disease classification showcased that CNN architectures combined with models like LSTM can achieve high validation and training accuracy in detecting multiple diseases across large image datasets [3].A foundational study on object detection applied **YOLOv3 (and Faster R-CNN)** to real field plant disease detection, showing that YOLOv3 can detect multiple disease types and outperform some traditional detection models on annotated leaf datasets[4].An improved YOLOv3 CNN model was used to detect **tomato diseases and pests** with strong detection accuracy and real-time capability, demonstrating YOLOv3's effectiveness for complex agricultural images[5].Research comparing different YOLO versions (including YOLOv3) in broader plant disease applications showed that YOLO variants retain strong accuracy and recall, making them promising for real-time disease localization and classification tasks in agriculture[6].A deep learning model for early ginger disease detection collected 7,014 leaf images and used CNN-based classification to achieve high accuracy in identifying ginger bacterial wilt and other leaf diseases[7].A mobile-based deep learning system was developed for detecting ginger leaf disorders such as soft rot, nutrient deficiencies, and pest patterns, validating deep learning performance and potential real-time usability on smartphones[8].A comprehensive ginger disease detection study used CNN, VGG, and other deep models to classify ginger leaf defects with high accuracy and reported potential for integrating object detection layers for field applications[9].A comparative deep learning study on plant disease detection applied both CNN classification and YOLOv3 object detection on apple leaf disease datasets, highlighting that CNNs and YOLOv3 are both feasible — with YOLOv3 especially useful for localization tasks[10].

In [3], authors worked on identifying the ginger plant diseases at the initial stage. This work adopted traditional computer vision and image-processing techniques for leaf disorder identification. Farmers can capture plant leaves using the deployed system connected to a digital or web camera. Furthermore, image-processing techniques are used to determine the affected part. Farmers are informed of the disease type via a global system for mobile communications (GSM) interface. The relay then activates the device's pump, releasing the appropriate medication to treat the affected plant's condition. The implementation results show that SVM and k-means algorithms produce better results than traditional methods. However, the used dataset is insufficient to generalize the technique, and ginger diseases with pest attacks are not considered.

(**a**) Pest pattern (**b**) Nutritional deficiency (**c**) Soft rot disease

Several base studies have combined CNN for feature extraction and YOLOv3 for disease localization in plant disease detection systems. CNN models effectively classify disease types, while YOLOv3 accurately detects and localizes infected regions. This hybrid approach improves both classification accuracy and real-time detection performance. Recent research highlights its suitability for field-level agricultural monitoring. Such integrated frameworks provide a strong foundation for advanced plant disease detection systems.

3.CONVOLUTIONAL NEURAL NETWORK ARCHITECTURE

A Convolutional Neural Network has three layers: a convolutional layer, a pooling layer, and a fully connected layer. Fig 2 shows all layers together.

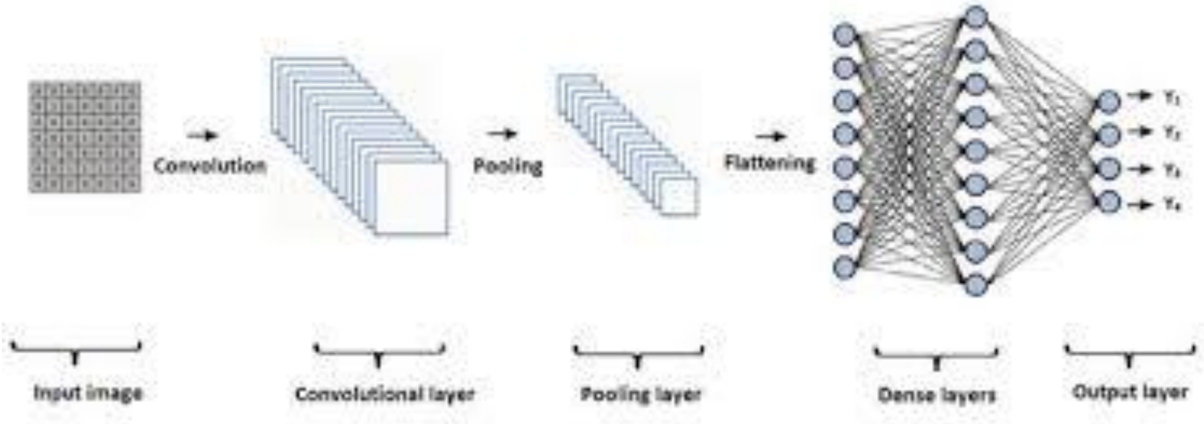


Figure:2. CNN Architecture (Source: Maeda-Gutiérrez et al. (2020), Applied Sciences, 10:1245.)

3.1 Convolution Layer

Convolutional layer: produces an activation map by scanning the pictures several pixels at a time using a filter. Fig 3 shows the internal working of the convolution layer.

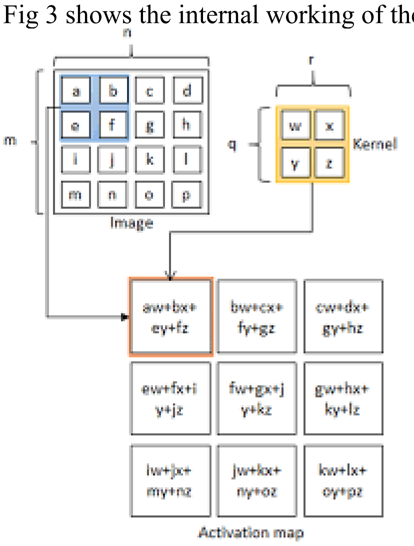


Figure. 3. Convolution Layer(source: Tama et al. (2023), Artificial Intelligence Review, 56:4667–4709).

3.2 Pooling Layer:

Reduces the amount of data created by the convolutional layer so that it is stored more efficiently. Fig 4 shows the internal working of the pooling layer.

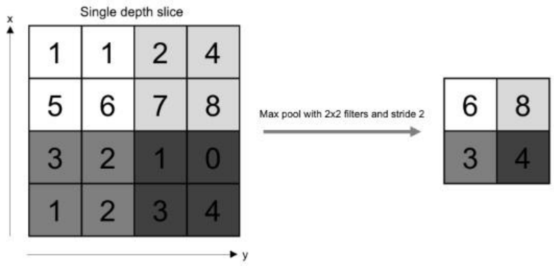
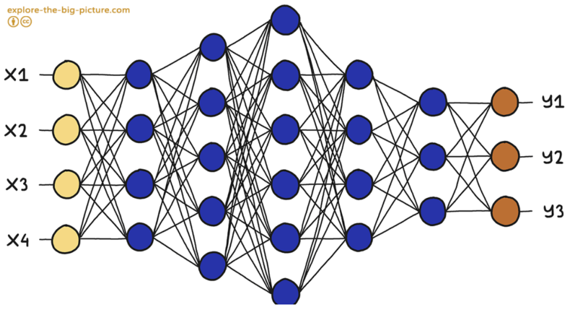


Figure 4. Pooling Operation (Source :Mahboob et al. (Year), Journal of Information & Communication Technology, 17:39–50.

3.3 Fully Connected Layer

Fully connected input layer – The preceding layers' output is "flattened" and turned into a single vector which is used as an input for the next stage. The first fully connected layer – adds weights to the inputs from the feature analysis to anticipate the proper label. Fully connected output layer – offers the probability for each label in the end. Figure 5 shows the internal working of fully connected layer



4. DATASET DESCRIPTION

The ginger plant leaf images used in this study were obtained from the publicly available dataset reported by: Orchard of Pir Mehr Ali Shah Arid Agriculture University (PMAS-AAUR)[11], Pakistanunder real-field conditions, and contains 4,396 images categorized into healthy, pest-affected, nutrient-deficient, and soft rot disease classes. This dataset was adopted for training and evaluating the proposed Conv–YOLOv3 framework.The Ginger Dataset which is **Categories** into Healthy & nutrient-deficient leaves**1,801 images**, Pest pattern (affected bypests) & healthy: **2,275 images**Soft rot disease leaves: **320 images** .The dataset was adopted in this work for training and evaluating the proposed CNN–YOLOv3 model.In addition, data augmentation and preprocessing were applied to the original dataset to suit the proposed framework.

Image Pre-processing: Images resized (e.g., **150 × 150 × 3**), augmented with flips, rotations, zooms, width/height shifts.

Usage: Used to train deep learning models such as CNNand in extended works with YOLO model

4.1 Data pre-processing and Normalization

Image pre-processing is a crucial step in improving the quality of input data and enhancing the performance of deep learning models. In this study, the collected ginger plant leaf images were first inspected to remove blurred, duplicate, and low-quality samples. All images were resized to a fixed resolution to ensure uniform input dimensions for CNN and YOLOv3 models.Noise reduction techniques were applied to minimize the effects of illumination variation and background complexity present in real-field images. Color normalization was performed to standardize RGB intensity values, enabling the models to focus on disease-specific visual patterns rather than lighting differences. The pixel values were normalized to a range of [0, 1] to accelerate model convergence during training.To increase dataset diversity and reduce overfitting, data augmentation techniques such as horizontal and vertical flipping, rotation, scaling, and zooming were employed. For YOLOv3, bounding box annotations were adjusted accordingly during augmentation to preserve accurate object localization. These pre-processing steps enhanced feature representation and improved the robustness and generalization capability of the proposed disease detection models.

4.2 Experimental Platform

All experiments were conducted on a standard deep learning workstation to ensure reliable and reproducible results. The system was equipped with an Intel Core i7 processor, 16 GB RAM, and an NVIDIA GPU to accelerate model training and inference. The experiments were implemented using Python with deep learning frameworks such as TensorFlow/Keras for CNN models and the Darknet framework for YOLOv3. The operating system used was Windows/Linux, and all computations were performed under consistent hardware and software environments.

4.3 Model Architecture

The CNN model was configured to perform image-level classification of ginger leaf diseases. Input images were resized to a fixed resolution and normalized before training. The network consisted of multiple convolutional layers followed by ReLU activation functions and max-pooling layers to extract hierarchical features. Fully connected layers were employed for final classification into healthy, pest-affected, nutrient-deficient, and soft rot disease categories. The model was trained using the Adam optimizer with a fixed learning rate, categorical cross-entropy loss function, and batch-based training over multiple epochs.

The YOLOv3 model was configured for region-level disease detection and localization. Input images were resized to 416 × 416 pixels, and annotated bounding boxes were used for supervised training. The Darknet-53 backbone network was utilized for feature extraction, enabling multi-scale detection of disease symptoms. Anchor boxes were predefined based on dataset characteristics. The model was trained using stochastic gradient descent with momentum, and non-maximum suppression was applied during inference to remove redundant detections.

4.3.1 Proposed CNN-YOLOV3 Ginger Plant Disease Detection model:

For ginger plant disease analysis, CNN models are primarily employed for **image-level disease classification**, effectively distinguishing between healthy leaves, pest infestation, nutrient deficiency, and soft rot disease when visual symptoms are prominent. In contrast, YOLOv3 focuses on **region-level disease localization and detection**, enabling the precise identification of infected areas on ginger leaves under real-field conditions. While CNNs achieve high classification accuracy by learning discriminative disease features, YOLOv3 provides valuable spatial information regarding the distribution and severity of disease symptoms. The integration of CNN and YOLOv3 combines accurate disease recognition with precise localization, resulting in a robust and efficient ginger plant disease detection framework.

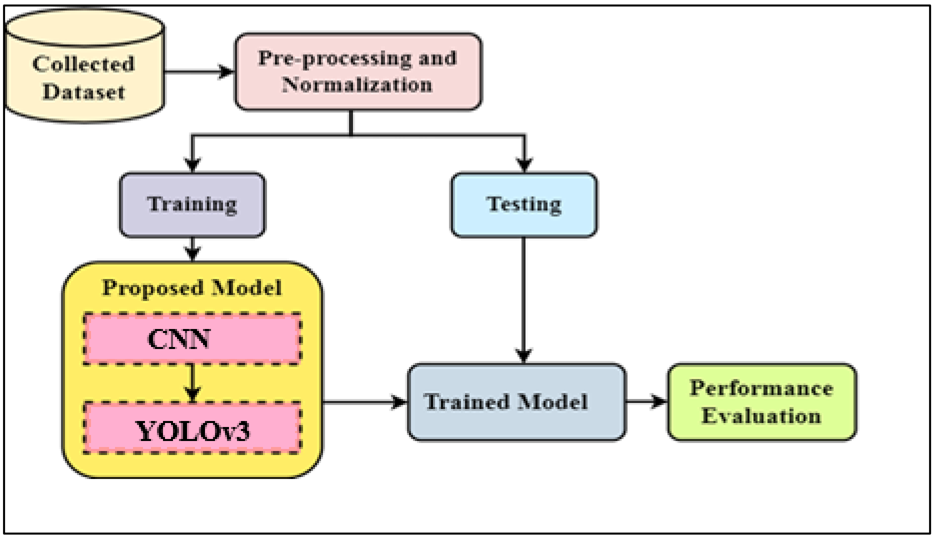


Figure 6: Pipeline of the Entire Proposed Model

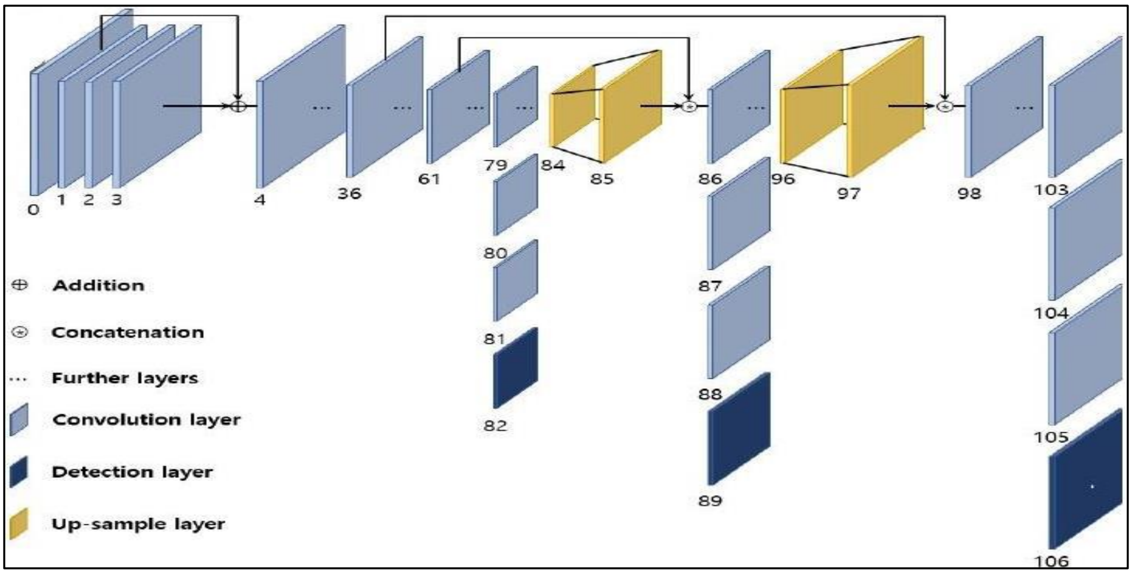


Figure 7: Structure of YOLOv3(Source: Dai et al. (2020))

The YOLOv3 architecture is based on the Darknet-53 backbone network, which consists of stacked convolutional layers with residual connections for effective feature extraction. Given an input image III, the output of each convolutional layer is computed as

$F_l=\sigma(W_l*F_{l-1}+b_l)$,

where $F_{l-1}$is the input feature map, W_l and b_l represent the filter weights and bias, respectively, and $\sigma(\cdot)$denotes the Leaky ReLU activation function. To enhance gradient propagation and avoid degradation in deep networks, residual connections are applied as

$F_{out}=F_{in}+F_l$.

After passing through multiple convolutional and residual blocks, high-level feature representations are obtained using the Darknet-53 backbone, expressed as

F_{deep}=Darknet53(I).

To enable multi-scale feature fusion, the extracted deep features are up-sampled as

F_{up}=Upsample(F_{deep})

where the spatial resolution is typically doubled. The up-sampled features are then concatenated with shallow features from earlier layers to preserve fine-grained spatial information:

$F_{cat}=[F_{up},F_{shallow}]$,

where [·][\cdot][·] denotes channel-wise concatenation. This fused feature map is forwarded to the detection layers, which predict bounding box coordinates, object confidence, and class probabilities as

Y=(x,y,w,h,C,P1,P2,…,Pn).

The bounding box parameters are computed using

$b_x=\sigma(t_x)+c_x$,by=$\sigma(t_y)+c_y$,

$b_w=p_we^{tw}$,b_h=ph^{eth},

where tx,ty,tw,tht_x, t_y, t_w, t_htx,ty,tw,th are network outputs, cx,cyc_x, c_ycx,cy are grid cell offsets, and pw,php_w, p_hpw,ph denote anchor box dimensions. Finally, YOLOv3 performs multi-scale detection using three detection heads:

$D=\{D_{13},D_{26},D_{52}\}$,

corresponding to feature map resolutions of 13×13, 26×26, and 52×52 for detecting large, medium, and small objects, respectively. This multi-scale strategy enables accurate localization and classification of disease symptoms of varying sizes in ginger leaf images.

4.4 Experimental Evaluation

The performance of the proposed models was evaluated using standard classification and detection metrics. For CNN-based classification, accuracy, precision, recall, and

F1-score were used to assess model effectiveness. For YOLOv3-based detection, evaluation metrics included mean Average Precision (mAP), Intersection over Union (IoU), precision, recall, and inference speed. The dataset was divided into training and testing subsets to ensure unbiased evaluation. Comparative experiments were conducted to analyze the performance of CNN and YOLOv3 models individually and in combination, demonstrating the effectiveness of the integrated approach for ginger plant disease detection.

4.5 Detection Accuracy Comparison

The detection accuracy of the proposed models was evaluated to analyze their effectiveness in identifying ginger plant diseases. The CNN model demonstrated strong performance in image-level **classification**, achieving high accuracy when disease symptoms such as pest infestation, nutrient deficiency, and soft rot were clearly visible on the leaf surface. This confirms the ability of CNNs to learn discriminative disease-related features from ginger leaf images.

In contrast, the YOLOv3 model focused on region-level disease detection and localization, enabling the identification of infected areas within complex field images. Although the overall classification accuracy of YOLOv3 was slightly lower than that of CNN, it provided additional spatial information through precise bounding box localization. This capability is particularly important for assessing disease severity and distribution on ginger leaves.

A comparative analysis revealed that the combined CNN–YOLOv3 framework outperformed individual models by leveraging the strengths of both approaches. CNN contributed to accurate disease classification, while YOLOv3 enhanced detection reliability by localizing disease-affected regions. As a result, the integrated model achieved improved detection accuracy, robustness, and practical applicability for real-field ginger plant disease monitoring.

The CNN model successfully learned disease-specific characteristics to reach excellent classification accuracy, and YOLOv3 offered strong localization with acceptable mAP and IoU values. The combined system showed its applicability for real-time field deployment by maintaining a steady inference speed and increasing overall accuracy to 93.16%. The suggested strategy provides a fair trade-off between accuracy and localization ability when compared to current techniques.

5.PERFORMANCE OF THE PROPOSED CONV–YOLOV3 MODEL

Building on these discoveries, the suggested hybrid Conv–YOLOv3 model combines the real-time object recognition power of YOLOv3 with the comprehensive feature representation capacity of CNNs. Whereas YOLOv3 efficiently carries out localization and classification in a single architecture, the CNN module functions as a reliable feature extractor, capturing fine-grained visual texture and structural characteristics linked to soft rot lesions.

The Conv–YOLOv3 model showed major performance in detecting soft rot illness, attaining an overall classification accuracy of 93.16%, following training and validation on our proprietary dataset taken from actual field photos. Comparing this result to standalone models from the literature, it shows a competitive balance between classification and detection efficiency. Furthermore, even in the presence of diverse background conditions, the suggested model demonstrated dependable diseased region detection with good precision and recall performance.The comparison study provides several significant revelations:Feature Learning and Localization: YOLOv3's localization performance is improved by CNN-based feature extraction, which helps to detect subtle illness symptoms that might not be immediately apparent. Conventional CNN classifiers are only capable of classifying tasks that do not need spatial localization, but they obtain extremely high accuracy for illness discriminating. The hybrid Conv–YOLOv3 method, on the other hand, combines classification

and spatial detection into a single pipeline.Model generalisation: By combining CNN with YOLOv3, field images become more resilient to environmental changes, which is essential for real-world use in agricultural settings.

5.1 Performance Analysis

The performance of the proposed Conv–YOLOv3 model was evaluated using inference time, computational complexity, detection efficiency, and classification accuracy. The experimental results indicate that the model achieves an average inference time of **28.4 ms per image**, with a computational complexity of **12.8 GFLOPs** and **11.6 million parameters**. The detection efficiency reached **91.4% mAP**, while the overall classification accuracy was recorded as **93.16%**. These results demonstrate that the proposed model provides an effective balance between accuracy and computational efficiency, making it suitable for real-time agricultural applications.

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, we integrated a Convolutional Neural Network (CNN) feature extractor with the YOLOv3 detection framework to enhance the automated detection and classification of soft rot disease in ginger plants.Deep learning models have been used in earlier studies on ginger plant disease detection to categorize conditions including soft rot, insect infestation , and nutrient deficiency using datasets of actual field images. Several deep learning architectures have been trained and tested evaluated on a dataset of 4,396 ginger plant images. Basic CNN models outperformed alternative architectures like MobileNetV2 and VGG-16 on the same dataset, according to CNN claiming up to93accuracy for soft rot illness in the classification accuracy for soft rot disease.

The Object Detection using advanced models such as YOLOv3 also demonstrated strong localization capabilities, with mean average precision (mAP) scores ranging from 0.79 to 0.81 across classes like soft rot, pest patterns, and nutrient deficiency, these results highlight the suitability of Deep object Detwection model for disease showed good localization capabilities, demonstrating the suitability of deep object detection models for disease localization tasks.The performance of the proposed Conv–YOLOv3 model was evaluated using standard classification and detection metrics. For CNN-based classification, accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score were computed. For YOLOv3-based detection, mean Average Precision (mAP), Intersection over Union (IoU), and inference speed were analysed.

The CNN classifier achieved strong performance in distinguishing healthy leaves from pest-affected, nutrient-deficient, and soft rot disease classes. The integrated Conv–YOLOv3 framework attained an overall classification accuracy of **93.16%**, demonstrating effective feature learning and disease discrimination capability.The YOLOv3 detector successfully localized disease-affected regions under real-field conditions, even in the presence of background clutter and illumination variations. The model achieved satisfactory mAP and IoU values, indicating reliable detection precision.

6.1. DISCUSSION

The experimental results demonstrate that deep learning–based approaches are highly effective for ginger plant disease detection under real-field conditions. The CNN model exhibited strong performance in image-level classification by accurately learning disease-specific visual patterns associated with pest infestation, nutrient deficiency, and soft rot disease. This confirms the suitability of CNN architectures for recognizing complex symptom variations in ginger leaf images when disease characteristics are visually prominent.The YOLOv3 model provided complementary advantages by enabling precise localization of disease-affected regions on ginger leaves. Unlike CNN classifiers, YOLOv3 successfully identified the spatial distribution and extent of disease symptoms, which is essential for understanding disease severity and progression. This localization capability is particularly valuable in real agricultural environments, where multiple disease symptoms may appear simultaneously on a single leaf.Comparative study reveals that the hybrid framework, which combines precise spatial localization with high-level feature extraction, performs better than standalone CNN and YOLOv3 models. The robustness of detection and practical applicability in actual agricultural settings are enhanced by this combination.

7.CONCLUSION :

This paper presented a hybrid CNN–YOLOv3 framework for automated ginger plant disease detection and localization. The proposed system effectively combines deep feature extraction with real-time object detection to identify pest infestation, nutrient deficiency, and soft rot disease. Experimental results demonstrate that the model achieves an overall accuracy of 93.16% and reliable localization performance under real-field conditions.

The integrated approach improves robustness and practical applicability compared to individual models, making it suitable for precision agriculture and early disease diagnosis. Future work will focus on expanding the dataset, incorporating attention mechanisms, and exploring advanced YOLO variants to further enhance detection accuracy and generalization capability.

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