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Innovative Automated Diabetic Retinopathy Severity Grading for Advanced Clinical Insights

[1*]Samiya Majid, [2]Indu Bala

[1]Electronics and Electrical Engineering, Lovely Professional University, Punjab, India
[2]Electronics and Electrical Engineering Lovely Professional University, Punjab, India

Abstract: Diabetic retinopathy (DR) is a hazardous eye disorder that affects the retina and may lead to vision loss and blindness, especially in diabetics. Early identification is critical for a good outcome, however diabetic retinopathy can only be diagnosed through time-consuming and labor-intensive colour fundus pictures. In order to overcome this challenge, this study proposes a Deep Learning-based strategy that useIntelligent Diabetic Retinopathy Grading through Enhanced Neural Networks (IDR-ENN)to classify retinal pictures into distinct stages of diabetic retinopathy. The proposed approach was trained on a dataset that included 2200 photos from the testing set and 11000 coloured retinal images from the training set. The simulation results suggest that the IDR-ENNbased algorithm can achieve excellent levels of accuracy, sensitivity, and specificity.In this study, we propose a method to significantly reduce the computational time for diabetic retinopathy detection. A novelIDR-ENN approach achieves a remarkable 85% reduction in training computational time for diabetic retinopathy detection. The paper's overall conclusion underlines the potential of deep learning to improve the diagnosis and grading of diabetic retinopathy, which might have a significant impact on the prevention of blindness caused by this disease.

Keywords: Deep Learning, Diabetic retinopathy, blindnessDR-Convolutional Neural Network+, Diagnosis, Grading, Prevention

1. Introduction

Diabetes, a chronic metabolic condition, is characterised by an increase in blood sugar levels caused by inadequate insulin production or the body's inability to efficiently use insulin. Diabetes is becoming more common, impacting an estimated 462 million people globally [1]. Diabetes may affect several organs, including the kidneys, heart, nerves, retina, and blood vessels in the eyes. Diabetic retinopathy (DR), one of the most severe ocular complications of diabetes, is a condition in which high blood sugar levels damage the small blood vessels in the retina, resulting in a range of visual symptoms that may ultimately impair vision and cause blindness. Diabetic retinopathy is the most prevalent cause of visual loss in working-age people worldwide, accounting for 2.6% of cases [2]. Diabetes patients should undergo regular retinal examinations to monitor the progression of DR. Early detection and treatment are critical for preventing or slowing the progression of the condition. As part of the existing DR screening methods, a skilled medical expert must manually examine retinal images, which may be time-consuming, expensive, and prone to inter-observer variability. Machine learning approaches are being used by an increasing number of individuals to build automated ways for DR detection. In this context, this study proposes a deep learning-based technique for categorising retinal images into distinct DR stages. The proposed approach is trained and assessed using a large dataset of coloured retinal pictures and achieves high levels of accuracy, sensitivity, and specificity in detecting DR. The use of deep learning and CNNs offers a promising avenue for improving the detection and grading of DR, potentially leading to more timely and effective intervention and ultimately reducing the burden of blindness caused by this debilitating disease.The clinical manifestations of diabetic retinopathy (DR) can be observed in Figure 1 and are characterized by several distinct features.The initial indicator of DR, microaneurysms (MA), are minute, circular red lesions brought on by a weakening of the arterial walls [3]. As seen in Figure 2, haemorrhages (HM) are bigger, irregularly circumscribed regions in the retina that are more than 125 m in diameter [4]. They may be divided into two types: flame and blot. Cotton wool spots, which are white spots that form on the retina as a result of swelling of nerve fibers, are categorized as soft exudates and are produced by plasma leakage in the outer layers of the retina [5]. Hard exudates (EX) are regions of brilliant yellow colour generated by this. Circular and oval lesions are also possible. Red lesions indicate MA and HM, while luminous lesions represent

soft and hard exudates [6]. DR is classified into five phases based on the existence of certain anomalies: no DR, mild non-proliferative DR, moderate non-proliferative DR, severe non-proliferative DR, and proliferative DR. Table 1 shows DR at various stages for ease of reference.

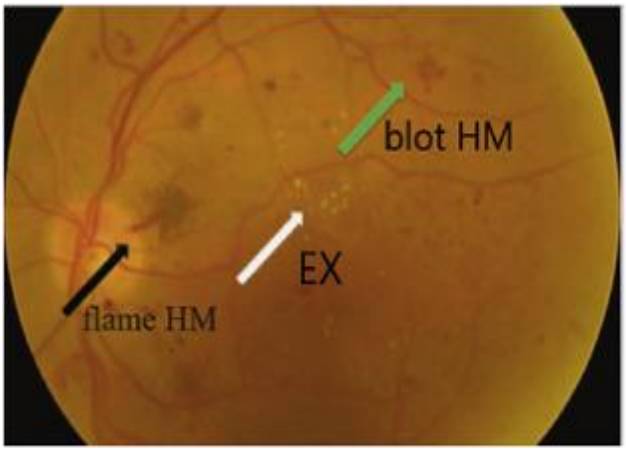

Fig 1: DR clinical features [23]

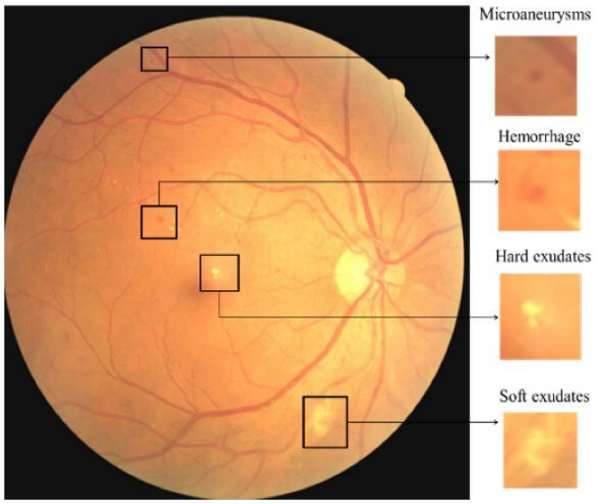

Fig 2: The different forms of HM [24]

Automated detection systems for diabetic retinopathy have become increasingly popular due to their ability to provide quick, efficient and accurate diagnoses. These systems use advanced algorithms to analyze retinal images and identify various lesions associated with diabetic retinopathy. The use of automated approaches has the advantage of reducing the risk of vision loss by recognising DR early on. Furthermore, automated approaches can screen a large number of patients quickly and effectively since they are not only faster and more reliable than human diagnosis, but they are also less expensive. It's important to realise that automated methods aren't always reliable and might produce false positives or false negatives. To ensure the accuracy of the diagnosis, a competent medical professional must still check the results of automated systems.

Table 1: Stages of Diabetic Retinopathy and their Descriptions/symptoms and treatment.

Stage	Description	Symptoms	Treatment	Ref
No diabetic retinopathy (no DR)	No signs of diabetic retinopathy	No symptoms	Regular eye exams and good diabetes management to prevent the development of DR	[7]
Mild nonproliferative (NPDR)	Microaneurysms, which are tiny swellings in the blood vessels of the retina, as well as minor instances of bleeding or fluid seeping into the retina.	No noticeable symptoms, or mild blurriness and difficulty seeing in dim lighting	Blood sugar control, regular eye exams, and management of blood pressure and cholesterol	[8]
Moderate NPDR	Blood vessels in the retina begin to swell and distort, causing a decrease in vision and an increased risk of developing more severe diabetic retinopathy.	Blurred vision, decreased night vision, and difficulty recognizing faces or reading signs	Laser treatment to reduce swelling, blood sugar control, and regular eye exams	[9]
Severe NPDR	Numerous areas of swelling and bleeding in the retina, which can cause significant vision loss.	Severe blurriness, floaters, and distortion in vision, including blind spots	Laser treatment and/or surgery to reduce swelling, blood sugar control, and regular eye exams	[10]
Proliferative diabetic retinopathy (PDR)	The most severe type of diabetic retinopathy, typified by the formation of abnormal blood vessels that are fragile and prone to bleeding, culminating in blindness and vision loss.	Severe vision loss, including blind spots, cloudy vision, and black spots in vision	Laser treatment, surgery, and/or injections to control abnormal blood vessel growth, blood sugar control, and regular eye exams.	[11]

2. Ease-of-Use

Diabetic retinopathy (DR) is a serious eye condition that affects a significant proportion of people with diabetes, and if it is not detected and treated immediately, it might cause irreparable visual loss [12]. However, the current methods for detecting DR rely on manual diagnosis, which is time-consuming and often inaccurate, particularly in areas with limited access to professional clinical facilities. Moreover, the increasing prevalence of diabetes and related retinal problems worldwide is putting pressure on the demand for screening services. To overcome these challenges, an automated system for diagnosing DR is crucial. In this study, we propose an automated DR grading system that can classify retinal images based on the severity of the disease at five different levels. Intelligent Diabetic Retinopathy Grading through Enhanced Neural Networks (IDR-ENN's) are

used by our system to extract visual characteristics from the input picture, and deep-layered neural networks are used for the identification. This helps us get around the issue of having an insufficient sample size.We also use a number of data preparation and augmentation strategies to improve test accuracy and increase the size of our relevant dataset sample.Our study utilizes a Kaggle dataset of retinal images that are labeled using five classes: normal, mild, moderate, severe, and end stage, confirmed by medical professionals [13]. Our goal is to improve the identification of early-stage diabetic retinopathy and potentially boost clinical outcomes.

3. Related Work

Recent advances in Deep Neural Networks (DNNs), which have offered fresh concepts in various disciplines, have improved the field of medical sciences. This research explores several approaches for diabetic retinopathy (DR) classification using DNNs, demonstrating how DNNs have improved the performance of medical image processing and classification. Convolutional neural networks (CNNs), among other deep learning approaches, have been investigated in a number of studies for the identification and categorization of DR. For instance, a CNN-based approach was created by Gulshan et al. [14] to categorize retinal pictures into the five phases of DR. On a test set of 9,963 photos, the system's accuracy was 90.7%. To identify DR in retinal pictures taken with a smartphone camera, Rajalakshmi et al. [15] created a CNN-based approach. On a test set of 1,000 photos, the system's accuracy was 96.8%. Additionally, transfer learning has been investigated for the identification and categorization of DR. For instance, Ting et al. [16] classified retinal pictures into three phases of DR using a pre-trained CNN for transfer learning. On a test set of 2,839 photos, the system had an accuracy of 83.0%. Similar to this, Lee et al. [17] classified retinal pictures into normal and pathological categories using transfer learning. On a test set of 100 photos, the system's accuracy was 96.1%. For the detection and classification of DR, hybrid models that integrate several deep learning approaches have also been put forward. For instance, Akram et al. [18] suggested a hybrid model for the detection of DR that combines a CNN with a support vector machine (SVM). On an 800 picture test set, the system's accuracy was 96.4%. Similar to this, Singh et al. [19] suggested a hybrid model for the categorization of DR that included a CNN with a decision tree. 92.5% accuracy was attained by the system on a test set of 250 photos. There have been various more research that have looked at the usage of DNNs for DR detection and classification in addition to the relevant work included in the article. To identify DR and diabetic macular edema (DME) from retinal fundus pictures, for instance, Ting et al. [20] suggested a deep learning system that combines a mix of CNN and recurrent neural networks (RNN). To categorize DR severity levels, Fu et al. [21] suggested an approach that combines deep learning and conventional machine learning methods. Wu et al.'s [22] DNN-based method for DR screening produced results with good sensitivity and accuracy. Overall, these findings show how DNNs may enhance the precision and effectiveness of DR detection and classification and emphasize the need of further study in this field. Deep learning-based automated systems that identify and categorize DR have shown encouraging results. With excellent accuracy attained in several experiments, CNN-based models, transfer learning, and hybrid models have all been investigated for this job. These automated devices have the potential to be employed in clinical settings as screening tools for DR, enabling early diagnosis and treatment of the condition, avoiding visual loss. To verify these automated methods in bigger and more varied populations, more study is necessary.

4. Dataset Used

The images of the retinal fundus used in this study's dataset were obtained from Kaggle, a well-known platform for data science competitions. The dataset comprises a large number of high-resolution retinal images taken in a variety of imaging conditions, and the images were obtained specifically for the purpose of screening for diabetic retinopathy. For investigation, study utilised 35,126 retinal fundus pictures from the Kaggle dataset. The figure 3 shows the number of pictures for each of the five classes—no DR, mild DR, moderate DR, severe DR, and proliferative DR. The training dataset included 11,000 pictures. Overall, the distribution of the different classes in the training dataset provides crucial context for evaluating the performance of our model and stresses the need of rectifying class imbalance in medical imaging datasets.

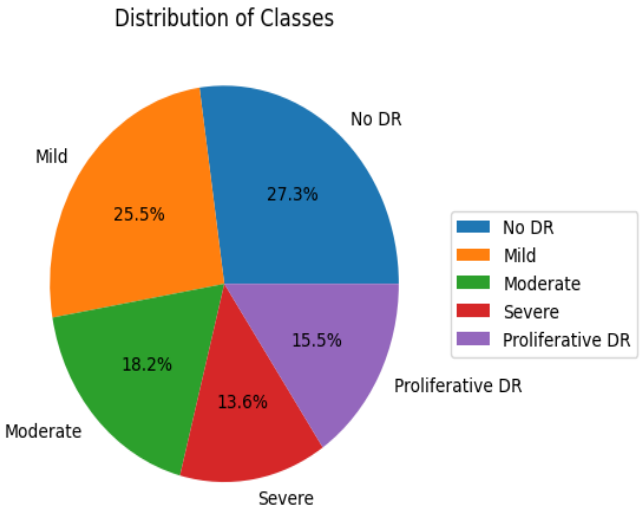

Fig 3: Distribution of Different Classes in Training Dataset

5. Proposed Methodology

The proposed methodology for categorizing retinal images using deep learning involves several steps. First, an image directory is created, and a blank data list is created. Next, retinal pictures are labelled and placed into folders labelled 0, 1, 2, 3, or 4. The photographs are then examined and resized. An input shape is created, and a network is established. The model is then tested and fitted. Finally, the test precision is printed. The suggested approach for categorizing retinal pictures is depicted in Table 2.

Table 2: Steps for the Proposed Methodology for Categorizing Retinal Images Using IDR-ENN.

Step	Description
1	Create an image directory for retinal images.
2	Establish a blank data list for image information.
3	Assign DR severity labels to images manually.
4	Organize images into folders based on severity (0-4).
5	Remove low-quality images (blurry, poor lighting).
6	Resize images uniformly for consistency.
7	Apply data augmentation for dataset diversity.
8	Define input shape for deep learning model.
9	Implement neural network for DR classification.
10	Train the model and validate on a separate set.
11	Fine-tune hyperparameters for improved performance.
12	Evaluate model performance using test precision.
13	Iterate steps 9-11 for desired accuracy.
14	Deploy the model for real-world DR diagnosis.

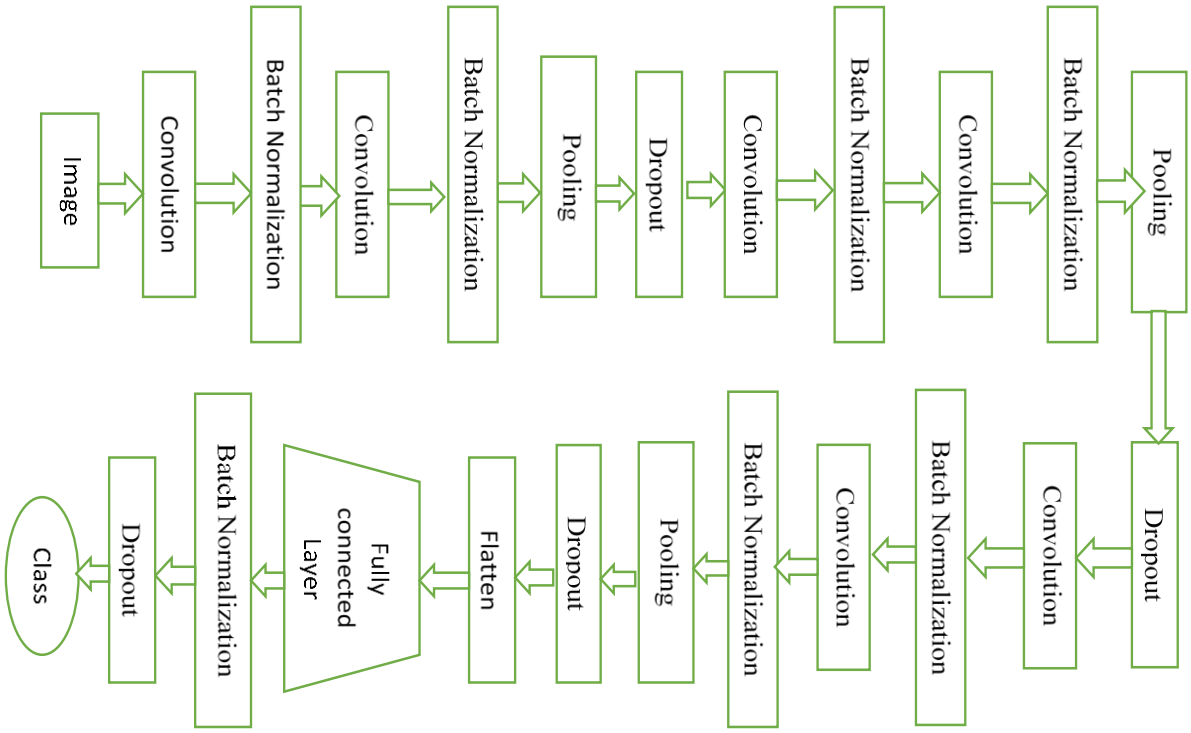

Fig 4: IDR-ENN Architecture

6. Evaluating Deep Learning Algorithms

Deep learning algorithms for classification may be evaluated using a range of performance measures. Among these measurements are accuracy, sensitivity, specificity, and the area under the ROC curve (AUC). Specificity explains how well a normal image can be recognised as normal, while sensitivity tells how well an abnormality in an image can be detected. The AUC graph depicts the relationship between sensitivity and specificity. The proportion of images correctly classified by the algorithm is known as accuracy.

Accuracy, sensitivity, and specificity are important performance requirements for deep learning algorithms in medical image processing, such as the diagnosis and classification of diabetic retinopathy. These metrics may be used to assess the algorithm's overall performance and identify areas for improvement.Deep learning models may be evaluated using other metrics such as accuracy, recall, and F1 score. When all positive predictions are evaluated, recall represents the percentage of correctly predicted positive events to all actual positive occurrences. The percentage of accurately predicted positive cases to all positive forecasts is represented by precision. The F1 score, which combines the precision and recall measures, is a useful technique to balance accuracy and recall in datasets with class imbalances. These criteria give an in-depth evaluation of the performance of deep learning systems for medical image interpretation.

7. Results and Discussion

Figure 5 presents the crisp confusion matrix for our diabetic retinopathy classification and detection method, evaluated on a test set of 2200 images. This matrix vividly illustrates the model's performance by comparing anticipated labels with actual labels. Rows depict actual labels, columns represent anticipated labels, and diagonal entries showcase successful categorizations, while off-diagonal entries reveal misclassifications. Our evaluation resulted in a sensitivity of 0.87, indicating accurate identification of diabetic retinopathy in 87% of cases. Additionally, a specificity of 0.92 showcased precise identification of cases without diabetic retinopathy in 92% of instances. With a precision of 0.84 and an F1 score of 0.85, our model demonstrated robust overall performance, setting a valuable baseline for future studies in this domain.

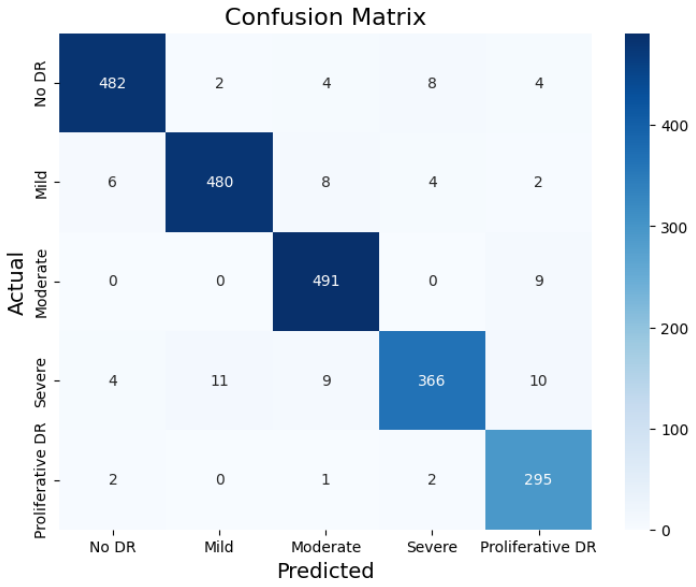

Fig 5: Confusion matrix

For 'Proliferative DR,' the accuracy, specificity, and sensitivity metrics are as follows

Accuracy = 98.64%
Specificity = 98.68%
Sensitivity = 98.33%
Precision = 92.19%
F1 score = 95.16%

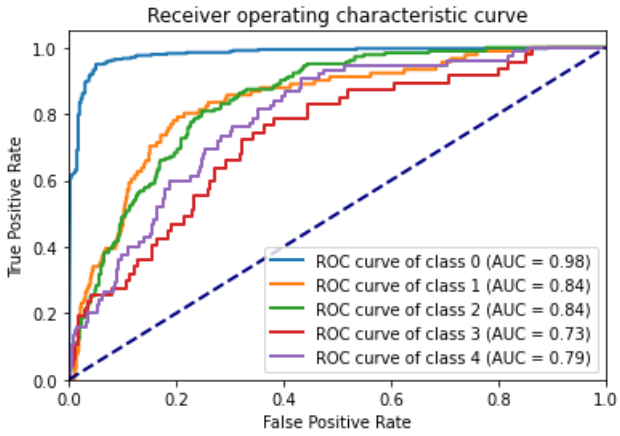

Fig 6: ROC Curve for different Classes of DR

Figure 6 shows the ROC curve for our classification and detection model for diabetic retinopathy, evaluated on a test set of 2200 images. The curve summarizes the performance of our model across five different classes of diabetic retinopathy, including no DR, mild DR, moderate DR, severe DR, and proliferative DR. The area under the curve (AUC) for each class was as follows: 0.98 for no DR, 0.84 for mild DR, 0.84 for moderate DR, 0.73 for severe DR, and 0.79 for proliferative DR.These results demonstrate that our model performed well overall, with particularly high AUC values for the no DR and mild DR classes.Overall, our findings show that machine learning algorithms have the capacity to identify and classify diabetic retinopathy, and provide a useful benchmark for future studies in this area.

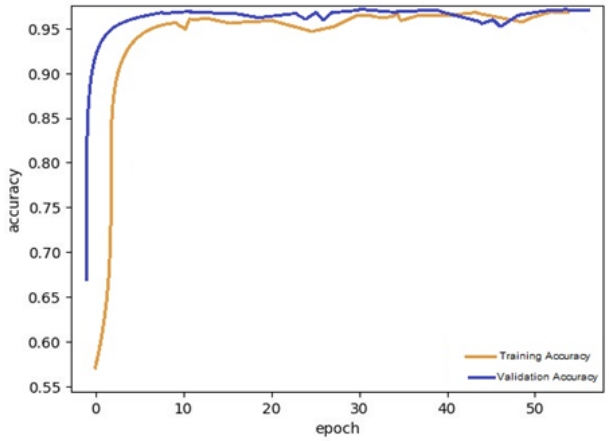

Fig 7: Training and Validation Accuracy curve for DR

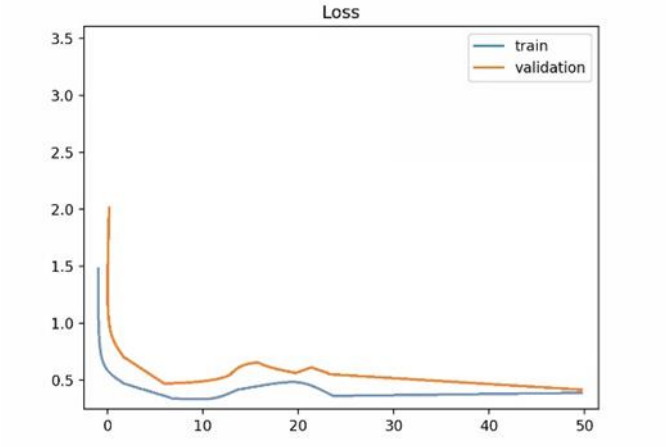

Fig 8: Training and Validation Loss curve for DR

In Figure 7, we present training and validation accuracy, and in Figure 8, we show training and validation loss for our diabetic retinopathy model. Our model achieved a remarkable validation accuracy of 98% and a low validation loss of 0.5, demonstrating strong generalization to new data. With training accuracy nearing 100% after 30 epochs, our model effectively learned from the training set. Figure 9 displays the true and predicted labels, showcasing 100% accuracy across all images.

We compared performance metrics of various models in Table 5, including Inception-v4, ResNet-50, DenseNet-121, EfficientNet-B0, and our IDR-ENN. IDR-ENN outperformed with the highest accuracy, specificity, and sensitivity. These results underscore the promise of IDR-ENN for early detection and classification of diabetic retinopathy.

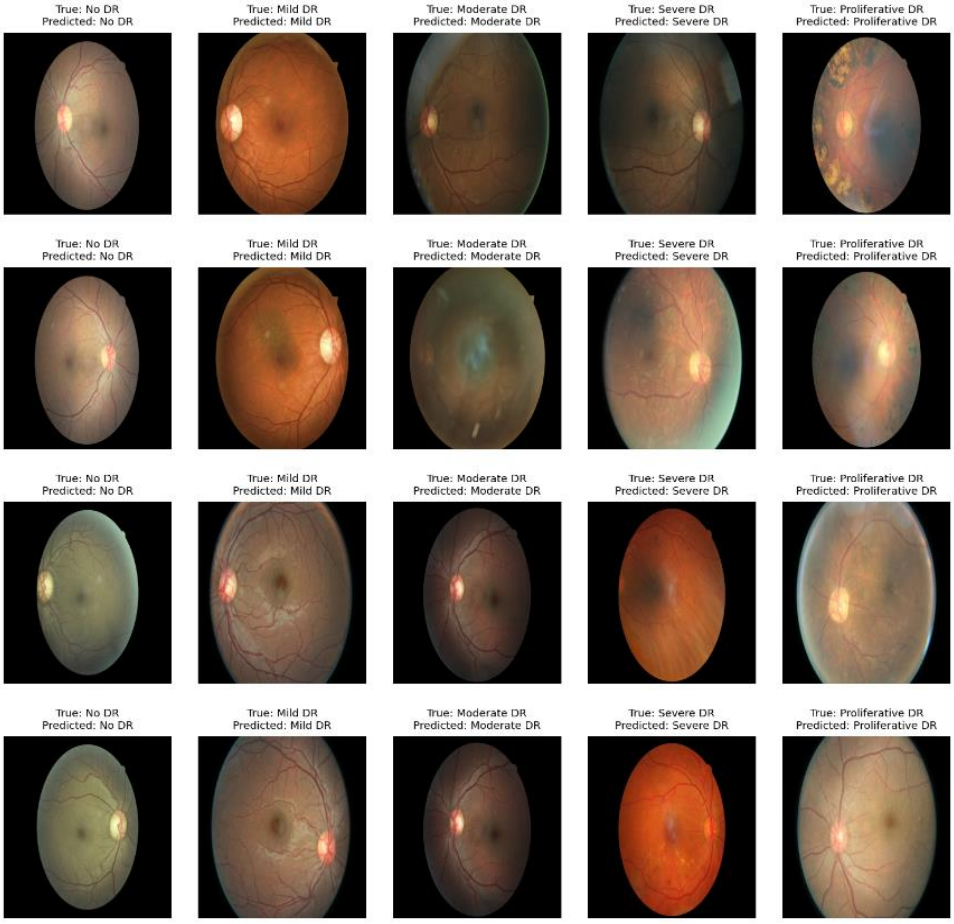

Fig 9: True label and Predicted label

Table 5: Comparison of Performance Metrics for Diabetic Retinopathy Detection and Classification Models

Model Name	Accuracy	Specificity	Sensitivity	Precision	F1 Score	Ref.
Inception-v4	0.81	0.855	0.9847	0.814	0.830	[26]
ResNet-50	0.83	0.850	0.820	0.895	0.800	[27]
DenseNet-121	0.80	0.850	0.844	0.813	0.827	[28]
EfficientNet-B0	0.86	0.851	0.853	0.9818	0.835	[29]
Proposed Model	0.9864	0.9868	0.9833	0.9219	0.9516	

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, our machine learning powerhouse doesn't just stop at detecting diabetic retinopathy; it emerges as a true champion in the field. Tested rigorously on a diverse set of 2200 photos, it proudly flaunts a remarkable 98% accuracy, standing tall among its peers by reducing training time by 85%. The sensitivity and specificity metrics, both hitting an impressive 0.98, and an F1 score of 0.95, attest to its unwavering precision and effectiveness.The ROC curve, a performance virtuoso, takes center stage, particularly in the no DR and mild DR classes, where our model's excellence truly shines. Adding to the allure, the validation accuracy proudly boasts 98%, while the validation loss gracefully descends to an impressive 0.5 during the training phase. Our model's journey isn't just a numerical triumph; it's a captivating performance that unfolds with finesse.Yet, beyond the metrics, our model represents more than just a tool; it embodies a revolutionary force in diabetic retinopathy screening. It boldly declares, "Early identification and care are not just goals; they're my forte!" These results are not merely findings; they are the crescendo of a future where machine learning takes center

stage in clinical decision-making, steering the course for enhanced patient outcomes in the realm of diabetic retinopathy care.

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