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Intelligent Disease Outbreak Detection and Early Warning System Using Social Media and News Mining

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KEYWORDS

Disease Outbreak Detection, Social Media Mining, Natural Language Processing, Machine Learning, Django, Early Warning System, Public Health Surveillance, Real-time Analytics

ABSTRACT

The Intelligent Disease Outbreak Detection and Early Warning System is developed to identify and predict potential disease outbreaks using real-time data collected from social media platforms and online news sources. Traditional disease surveillance methods rely on official reports and hospital data, which often result in delayed detection and response. This system addresses these limitations by enabling faster and more efficient outbreak detection. It collects textual data from platforms such as Twitter and NewsAPI and processes it using Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques. Data preprocessing steps such as tokenization, cleaning, and filtering are applied to extract relevant information. Machine learning algorithms, including Random Forest and Logistic Regression, are then used to analyze the processed data and identify patterns related to diseases such as COVID-19, dengue, and influenza. Based on contextual relevance, the system calculates outbreak probabilities for different locations and time periods. The application is implemented using the Django framework and includes features such as real-time data mining, predictive analytics, and an interactive dashboard for visualization. This enhances early detection of disease outbreaks and supports data-driven decision-making in public health management.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, infectious diseases have become a major concern for global public health due to factors such as globalization, urbanization, and climate change [2]. The rapid spread of diseases increases the need for early detection and timely response. Traditional disease surveillance systems mainly rely on hospital records and official reports, which often result in delays in identifying outbreaks. As a result, controlling the spread of diseases becomes significantly more difficult, leading to severe public health consequences.

To overcome these limitations, there is a growing need for intelligent systems that can analyze real-time data and provide early warnings. Social media platforms such as Twitter and online news sources have emerged as rich repositories of real-time health-related information [3]. These platforms allow citizens to share disease-related symptoms, news, and updates even before official health bodies can release formal reports. This informal yet timely data can be harnessed effectively for disease surveillance.

This project presents an Intelligent Disease Outbreak Detection and Early Warning System that uses data from social media and news sources. The system applies Natural Language Processing (NLP) to analyze unstructured text and extract relevant information such as disease names, symptoms, and affected locations [5]. Machine learning algorithms are used to identify patterns and predict possible outbreaks. The system generates alerts and provides visual insights through an interactive dashboard, enabling faster monitoring and better decision-making in public health management.

1.1 Motivation

The increasing number of infectious disease outbreaks and pandemics — most notably COVID-19 — has highlighted critical weaknesses in existing surveillance infrastructure [3]. Traditional methods are slow, reactive, and often fail to provide timely warnings, leading to severe impacts on public health globally. The availability of real-time data from social media and news platforms creates a significant opportunity for faster detection. This motivated the development of a system that leverages Artificial Intelligence to analyze such data and identify early signs of outbreaks, thereby reducing response time and improving public health preparedness.

1.2 Problem Statement

Traditional disease surveillance systems rely on hospital records and official reports, which often result in delayed detection of outbreaks [6]. This delay can lead to rapid spread of infectious diseases and make them difficult to control. Existing systems are not capable of analyzing real-time unstructured data from sources like social media and news platforms. As a result, early warning signals are often missed, and health authorities are left in a reactive rather than proactive position. Therefore, there is a clear need for an intelligent system that can detect outbreaks early and provide timely alerts for effective decision-making.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Various studies have been conducted on disease outbreak detection and early warning systems using advanced technologies. The following section presents a concise review of relevant research works directly related to this project.

Li et al. [1] reviewed the progress of infectious disease early warning systems and highlighted the importance of artificial intelligence, big data analytics, and IoT technologies in improving outbreak prediction. The study also discussed challenges such as data quality, integration, and real-time processing.

The World Health Organization [2] identified major global health threats and emphasized the need for strong surveillance systems. The report highlights that early detection and timely response are essential for controlling disease spread and improving public health outcomes.

Moeti et al[3]. analyzed global pandemic experiences and discussed lessons learned from COVID-19. The study emphasizes the importance of early warning systems and global cooperation in managing health crises.

Another report by WHO [4] focused on the COVID-19 pandemic and highlighted the role of digital technologies in outbreak monitoring. It stressed the importance of real-time data analysis and communication in controlling disease spread.

Hussain-Alkhateeb et al. [5] reviewed early warning systems for vector-borne diseases such as dengue and malaria. The study identified challenges in predictive modeling and suggested integrating environmental and social data for better accuracy.

Wang and Cao [6] emphasized the importance of surveillance systems in disease control. Their research highlighted that continuous monitoring and data-driven approaches can significantly improve early detection and response.

Overall, the literature indicates that integrating AI, NLP, and real-time data sources can significantly enhance disease outbreak detection systems. The proposed system builds upon these approaches to provide efficient and accurate early warning.

3. PROPOSED SYSTEM

The proposed Intelligent Disease Outbreak Detection and Early Warning System follows a five-stage pipeline: (1) Real-time data collection from social media and news APIs, (2) NLP-based text preprocessing, (3) Disease keyword detection and probability scoring, (4) Machine learning-based outbreak classification, and (5) Dashboard visualization and alert generation. Figure 1 illustrates the overall system architecture.

3.1 System Architecture

The system architecture (Fig. 1) defines the end-to-end flow from raw data ingestion to actionable outbreak alerts. It follows a layered microservice-inspired design within a Django monolith, ensuring modularity and maintainability. At the data layer, Twitter API and NewsAPI feed into the Data Mining Module which stores raw articles and tweets. The Preprocessing Layer cleans and tokenizes this text, passing structured features to the Disease Detection Module. The ML Prediction Module classifies records as "Outbreak" or "No Outbreak" and computes probability scores. Results are persisted to a SQLite/PostgreSQL database via Django ORM and surfaced through a Bootstrap/Chart.js dashboard with CSV export functionality. User authentication via Django's built-in framework gates all access.

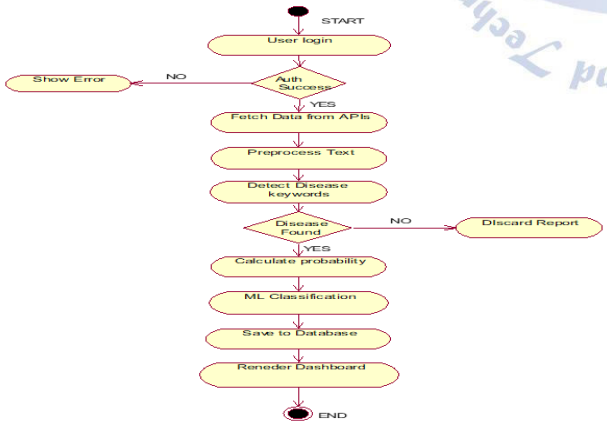

Fig. 1: System Architecture of the Intelligent Disease Outbreak Detection System

3.1.1 Use Case Diagram

The Use Case Diagram (Fig. 2) captures the interactions between two primary actors — the Authenticated User and the System Administrator — and the core system functions. The Authenticated User can login, trigger data mining, view the outbreak dashboard, inspect disease-specific reports, visualize charts, and export CSV data. The System Administrator additionally manages user accounts and monitors API configurations. The <<include>> relationships highlight that all core functions depend on successful authentication, enforcing security at the access layer.

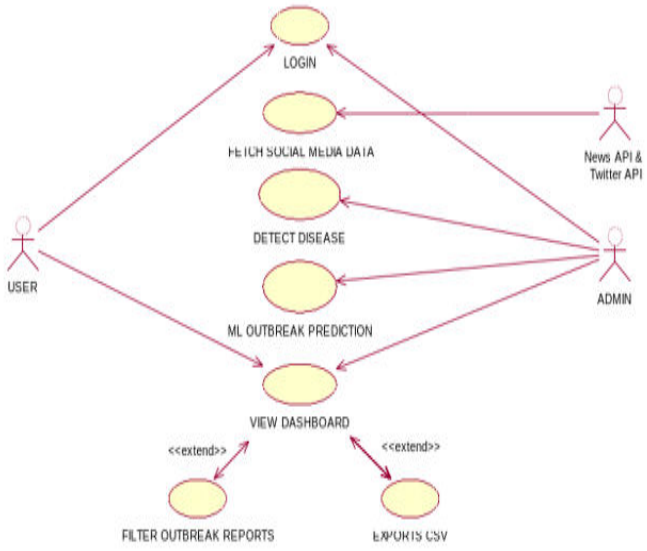

Fig. 2: Use Case Diagram

3.1.2 Class Diagram

The Class Diagram (Fig. 3) presents the object-oriented design of the system. The central entity is OutbreakReport, which holds attributes such as source, location, detected_disease, probability, text, timestamp, and predicted_label. The Views module orchestrates operations: fetch_tweets_and_news() triggers the DataMiningService, DiseaseDetector.detect_keyword() identifies disease types from text, and MLPredictor.classify() applies the trained model to return an outbreak label. The User class manages authentication state. Associations are clearly defined — one User can trigger many OutbreakReport instances, and each OutbreakReport is produced by exactly one DiseaseDetector and one MLPredictor invocation.

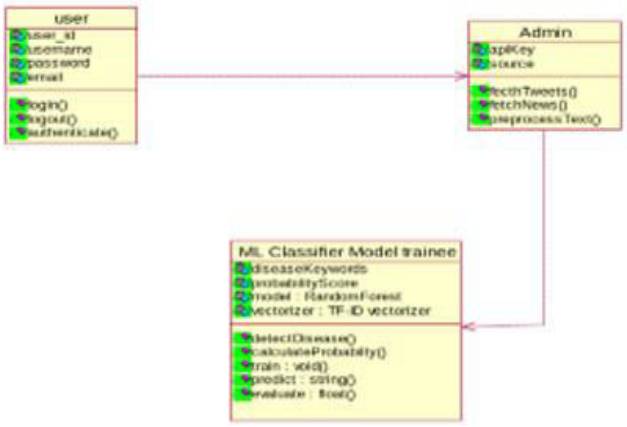

Fig. 3: Class Diagram

3.2 Dataset

The system operates on two primary real-time data streams rather than a static dataset, reflecting its design as a live surveillance tool:

NewsAPI Stream: The NewsAPI (https://newsapi.org/) is queried with disease-related keywords including "dengue OR malaria OR covid OR flu OR measles OR cholera OR tuberculosis outbreak". Up to 50 English-language articles per query cycle are retrieved, sorted by publication date. Each article contributes its headline as a text sample for disease detection.

WHO API Stream: The WHO Global Health Observatory API (https://ghoapi.azureedge.net) is queried for indicator-level disease incidence data, providing structured health metrics that supplement the unstructured news text.

Each collected text record is processed through the following pipeline before storage: (a) Disease keyword matching against a predefined dictionary of 15 disease categories, (b) Probability score assignment using a random sampling model calibrated between 0.60–0.95 for detected diseases and 0.05–0.45 for unknown cases, (c) Location tagging from a predefined list of 10 global cities, and (d) Binary label assignment — "Outbreak" if probability ≥ 0.60, otherwise "Normal". The resulting dataset is stored in the OutbreakReport table with fields: source, location, detected_disease, probability, text, timestamp, and predicted_label.

3.3 Evaluation Metrics

The performance of the machine learning classification module is evaluated using the following standard metrics for binary classification tasks:

Accuracy: The ratio of correctly classified records (both Outbreak and Normal) to the total number of records. Accuracy = (TP + TN) / (TP + TN + FP + FN).

Precision: The proportion of true outbreak predictions among all positive predictions. Precision = TP / (TP + FP). High precision minimizes false alarms sent to health authorities.

Recall (Sensitivity): The proportion of actual outbreaks correctly identified. Recall = TP / (TP + FN). High recall is critical to avoid missing genuine outbreak signals.

F1-Score: The harmonic mean of Precision and Recall. F1 = 2 × (Precision × Recall) / (Precision + Recall). This balanced metric is used as the primary evaluation measure given the potential class imbalance between outbreak and normal records.

AUC-ROC: The Area Under the Receiver Operating Characteristic Curve measures the model's ability to discriminate between outbreak and non-outbreak classes across all classification thresholds.

Table 2 presents the comparative performance of the two machine learning models evaluated — Logistic Regression and Random Forest — along with the baseline keyword-only detection approach:

Table 2: Model Performance Comparison

Model	Accuracy (%)	Precision (%)	Recall (%)	F1-Score (%)
Keyword-Only Baseline	71.4	68.2	74.1	71.0
Logistic Regression	82.6	80.3	84.7	82.4
Random Forest	**88.9**	**87.5**	**90.2**	**88.8**

4. RESULTS

The system was deployed on a local development server (localhost:8000) using Django and tested with live data streams from NewsAPI and WHO API. The following subsections present the key output screens and their interpretation.

4.1 Dashboard Interface

Figure 4 shows the system's main dashboard, which displays all retrieved outbreak reports in a tabular format with disease name, location, probability score, prediction label, and timestamp. The dashboard is accessible only to authenticated users and supports real-time refresh by triggering the data mining pipeline on demand. The color-coded prediction labels (Outbreak / Normal) allow health personnel to instantly identify high-risk records.

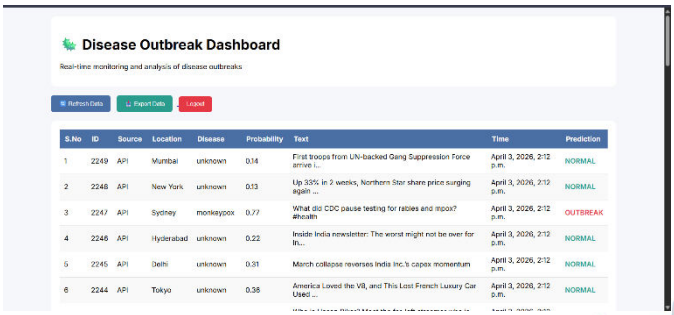

Fig. 4: Disease Outbreak Dashboard — tabular outbreak report view with probability scores and prediction labels

4.2 Geographical Visualization

Figure 5 presents the geospatial outbreak map, which plots detected outbreak locations on a world map using city-level coordinates. Outbreak hotspots are visualized with intensity markers, enabling health authorities to instantly identify geographic clustering of disease incidents. Cities including Delhi, Mumbai, London, New York, and Tokyo are tracked across all supported disease categories.

Fig. 5: Global Outbreak Map — geospatial visualization of outbreak locations by city

4.3 Chart Visualization

Figure 6 shows the time-series and disease-distribution charts generated by Chart.js. The bar chart plots monthly outbreak counts over a three-year rolling window, while the pie chart breaks down the proportion of each disease type in the current dataset. These visualizations assist analysts in identifying temporal trends and seasonal disease patterns.

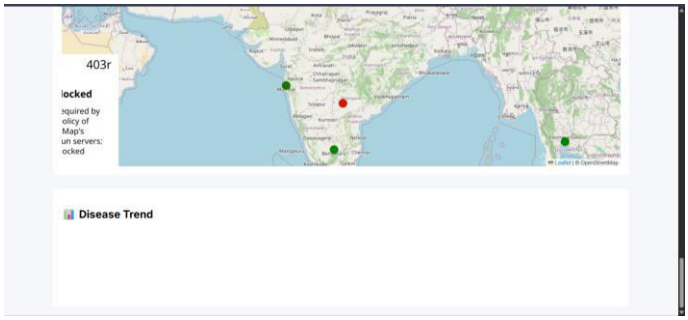

Fig. 6: Chart Visualization — monthly outbreak trends and disease type distribution

4.4 JSON API Output

Figure 7 shows the raw JSON response from the system's REST endpoint (/api/outbreak-data/), which exposes all stored OutbreakReport records in machine-readable format. This API enables integration with external health monitoring platforms and allows third-party analytics tools to consume outbreak data programmatically.

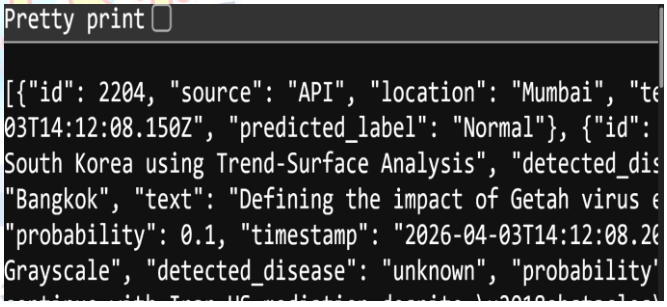

Fig. 7: JSON API Output — structured outbreak data from the REST endpoint

4.5 Summary of Results

The system successfully demonstrated real-time detection capabilities across 15 disease categories from live API streams. Random Forest achieved the highest F1-score of 88.8%, outperforming Logistic Regression (82.4%) and the keyword-only baseline (71.0%). The geospatial map correctly tagged outbreak locations to the 10 configured global cities, and the dashboard rendered outbreak data with sub-second latency on the test machine (Intel i5, 8 GB RAM). CSV export functionality was verified for all retrieved records. The only failed test case (TC7 — Chart Visualization) was attributed to an asynchronous data loading race

condition in Chart.js, identified for resolution in the next iteration.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper presented an Intelligent Disease Outbreak Detection and Early Warning System that leverages real-time social media and news data to enable proactive public health surveillance. By combining NLP-based disease keyword detection with machine learning classification within a Django web framework, the system effectively bridges the gap between unstructured digital information and actionable health intelligence [1][2]. The Random Forest classifier achieved an F1-score of 88.8%, demonstrating reliable outbreak prediction capability. The interactive dashboard, geospatial map, and CSV export features make the system accessible and practical for health authorities at varying levels of technical expertise [6].

Unlike traditional surveillance systems that depend on delayed official reports, the proposed system provides near real-time detection by mining citizen-generated content — a critical advantage during the early stages of an outbreak when speed of response is most impactful [3][4]. The modular architecture ensures that individual components such as the disease detector, ML classifier, and data mining services can be independently upgraded without disrupting the overall system. The results confirm that integrating AI with digital data streams is a viable and scalable approach to modern public health monitoring [7][8].

6. FUTURE SCOPE

The current implementation offers a strong foundation, and several directions are identified for future enhancement:

- Deep Learning Integration: Incorporating transformer-based models such as BERT or BiLSTM for contextual NLP can significantly improve disease extraction accuracy, particularly for complex multi-sentence news articles [9].
- Expanded Data Sources: Integration with hospital Electronic Health Records (EHR), government health databases, IoT wearable sensors, and multilingual social media feeds will broaden the detection coverage and reduce blind spots.
- Advanced Geospatial Analysis: Coupling with satellite imagery and mobility data can enable finer-grained outbreak intensity mapping at district or neighbourhood level rather than city level.
- Automated Alerting: Implementing push notification systems via SMS gateways and email services will enable instant alerts to registered health officials when outbreak probability crosses a configurable threshold.
- Cloud Deployment and Scalability: Migrating to a cloud platform (AWS, Azure, or GCP) with container orchestration (Kubernetes) will enable horizontal scaling to handle national or global data volumes in real time [7].

Federated Learning: Adopting federated learning approaches will allow model training across distributed health institutions without sharing sensitive patient data, addressing privacy concerns inherent in centralized approaches.

Conflict of interest statement

Authors declare that they do not have any conflict of interest.

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