



A Review on Occluded Object Detection and Deep Learning-Based Approach in Medical Imaging-Related Research

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Article history: Received 10 July 2023 Received in revised form 15 November 2023 Accepted 23 November 2023 Available online 8 December 2023</p> <p>Keywords: Occluded; occlusion; object detection; medical imaging; Deep Learning; statistical analysis</p>	<p>Medical image occlusions can arise due to several factors, including anatomical features, imaging modality, and acquisition settings. Object occlusion occurrence has a very significant effect on detection accuracy in general and in medical cases, these effects hinder proper diagnosis and treatment plans that may be fatal for the patients. Thus, precise occluded object detection is imperative. This paper aims to review the various state-of-the-art models and approaches that had been proposed for the occluded object detection. The coverage of this paper includes occluded object detection models in other applications and medical imaging, its proposed Deep Learning implementations, hybrid Deep Learning, and statistical analysis that were integrated into Deep Learning models. It is found that, in overall, more annotated medical image datasets are required to reduce overfitting occurrence, numerous Deep Learning models and its hybrid combination's applications yet to be tested of its limitations, and the extent of statistical analysis integration on Deep Learning models.</p>

1. Introduction

Occlusion occurs whenever multiple objects in an image are very close to each other and appear to merge, and it can result in the incorrect identification of the intended tracked object [1]. In some conditions, occluded objects carry few useful pixels, containing merely a few, insufficient attributes which are mostly surrounded by noise [2]. Following this prior condition, more information could be lost once the input image goes through several pre-processing steps, further affecting the object detection accuracy negatively. Fortunately, studies related to improving occluded object detection have a significant increase in the last few years.

In medical fields, accurate and fast object detection systems are very much needed as incorrect diagnosis may lead to multiple aspects of damage to the patient [3] such as:

- i. providing the wrong treatment that in worst-case scenario, may be fatal;
- ii. psychological/behavioural changes from mislabelling;
- iii. unnecessary financial burden.

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As it is today, computer-aided diagnosis is well used as a second opinion rather than being seen reliable enough to produce an accurate diagnosis. Medical imaging scanners such as angiogram, computed tomography (CT), magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), ultrasound, and positron emission tomography (PET) are some of the most reliable examples that can produce high-quality, high-definition images. With a few additional steps of high accuracy object detection and classification, computer-aided diagnosis as a second opinion may not be the case anymore [4].

Through the development of advanced imaging technologies for use in diagnosis, treatment, and research, image processing has revolutionized the medical field. Large volumes of data generated by medical imaging methods such as MRI, CAT scans, X-rays, and ultrasound, can be processed and analysed at a faster rate through image processing techniques as discussed by Vadmal *et al.*, [5]. Medical professionals can enhance and extract useful information from these images through image processing, leading to more accurate diagnosis and treatment planning. Some common applications of image processing in the medical field include tumour detection [6,7], tissue characterization [8], bone density measurement [9] and brain mapping [10]. With the ongoing advancements in technology, image processing is expected to continue playing a vital role in the medical field by improving patient care and favourable outcomes with its increasing implementation with Machine Learning methodologies.

Machine Learning and Deep Learning methodologies have had a tremendous impact on the medical imaging sector, allowing for more accurate and efficient diagnosis and treatment strategies [11]. In Machine Learning, algorithms are created with multiple layers of training to recognize features and patterns from large amounts of medical images. Deep Learning, in particular, has demonstrated great success locating and identifying irregularity in medical images [12]. Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) gained quite a traction in Deep Learning architecture used in medical imaging applications, where they can distinct specific abnormal features and patterns in images [13]. For example, CNNs have been used to detect cancerous lesions in mammograms [14], identify Alzheimer's disease from MRI scans [15], and detect lung nodules in CT scans [16]. These methods have significantly improved medical imaging, which ultimately benefits patients by enhancing diagnosis rates and treatment outcomes.

With an emphasis on medical imaging and statistical Deep Learning techniques, this paper seeks to present an abstract idea, specifically an overview of the current occluded object recognition techniques. This paper is organized as follows: Section 2-6 covers each aspect in Deep Learning occluded object detection in medical imaging and findings obtained, and Section 7 will have our own conclusion.

2. Occluded Object Detection

Occluded object detection is a strenuous task in computer vision due to the limited visibility of occluded objects. Traditional object detection methods struggle to detect partially or fully occluded objects, leading to reduced detection accuracy [17]. Recently, Deep Learning-based methods have shown promising results in addressing the challenge of occluded object detection [18,19].

Deep Learning-based methods have shown considerable growth in occluded object detection. The Faster R-CNN and its variants are popular Deep Learning-based methods for object detection that can handle occluded objects by generating region proposals and classifying them based on their features [20]. Other Deep Learning-based methods, such as single-shot detector (SSD) and You Only Look Once (YOLO), have also been used for occluded object detection with promising results [20,21].

One recent advancement in occluded object detection is the use of attention mechanisms. These mechanisms focus on the most informative regions in the image, which can help to detect occluded

objects. For example, Wei *et al.*, [22] proposed a module called De-Occlusion Attention Module (DOAM). DOAM firstly enhances the edge information of the object with edge guidance and material awareness module to enhance the material information of the object. And based on the outcomes of the two sub-modules, an attention module was created to produce an attention distribution map. With the enhanced features of the input image obtained, it improves the detection accuracy overall. The proposed module is quite useful as it is capable to be implemented on popular detectors with its plug-and-play capability, proved to increase accuracy of SSD and FCOS while outperforming several widely used attention mechanism, and the authors also contributed in providing Occluded Prohibited Items Xray (OPIXray) annotated image datasets, covering only five categories of prohibited items; folding knife, straight knife, scissor, utility knife and multi-tool knife [22]. However, it is also identified that the annotated datasets used for training and testing were already color-coded, to separate different items based on their materials. Whereas in common scenarios involving Xray images, they are initially in grayscale form and the proposed module has not been tested in said scenario. Thus, testing DOAM on medical Xray image datasets should proof useful in providing further insight of its limitations.

Another recent advancement in occluded object detection is the use of multi-scale and multi-modal information. Multi-scale information can help to detect objects of different sizes [23], while multi-modal information can leverage complementary information from different modalities [24]. Yun *et al.*, [25] proposed a multispectral fusion method that combined red, green, and blue (RGB) images and infrared (IR) images to detect occluded objects they call Infusion-Net. It aims to improve object recognition performance by intensifying object features in RGB and IR images that are rather hard to be segregated. Tests run by the author showed a significant increase across the board against other mono and multimodal models, utilizing mean average precision (mAP) values for comparison [25]. Infusion-Net seems to work really well as a pre-processing step in reducing occlusions by emphasizing edges that are identifiable in RGB-IR image. Further testing in anomaly detection in medical images could prove its viability handling images with smaller object detections.

Even with recent improvements, occluded object recognition still faces several challenges. Lack of annotated datasets for occluded object detection, especially for particular object groups, would be some of the significant issues [26]. This is evident when observing available datasets on the open-source dataset sharing platforms such as Kaggle. To train Deep Learning-based models for occluded object recognition, annotated datasets are crucial too. Deep Learning-based techniques' high computational costs present another difficulty and may prevent real-time applications from utilizing them.

3. Occluded Object Detection in Medical Imaging

Medical imaging is essential for diagnosing and treating diseases. However, occlusions are common in medical images, making it challenging to detect objects accurately. Recent advances in Deep Learning-based methods have refined occluded object detection [22,25,27]. As for in-depth processes and subprocess in medical related image processing techniques, paper review by Awang and Ibrahim [28] has it covered.

Numerous occluded object detection in medical images based on Deep Learning techniques have been developed. One recent advancement is the "Global Hungarian algorithm". The two-step recognition algorithm presented by Qian *et al.*, [29] involves threshold partitioning and morphological open operation that utilizes the advantages from the global shortest path and Hungarian algorithm. Said method was employed and tested on occluded non-fluorescent labelled microbe particles. Several scenarios were tested in that regard, resulting with it only being able to

handle two or three particles. It is good to note that the developed method was intended and applied to track these particles, meaning that it was not applied on still images to only detect occluded particles but rather real-time tracking of occluded particles [28]. With the Global Hungarian algorithm, further application and testing on real-time MRI, CT and ultrasound scans could prove beneficial on automated diagnosis studies.

Another recent advancement is the study done by Qiu *et al.*, [30]. The researchers aimed to assess the effectiveness of the fusion between CNN and YOLO version 5 (YOLOv5) algorithms for the automatic detection of steno-occlusive lesions. Their evaluation's findings demonstrated that the mixed algorithm was effective in identifying lesions with high accuracy, giving the exact anatomical location of the stenosis. Even though the study was done only using inputs from time-of-flight magnetic resonance angiography (TOF-MRA) scanner images, the proposed method showed favourable results in all three accuracy measurements – precision, recall, and mAP with intersection over union (IoU) value at 0.5 – when compared other commonly used algorithms [29]. As the author mentioned, the proposed method lacks additional inputs and assessment from other scanner types than TOF-MRA to measure its limitations. Also, experimentations of the proposed method on other medical conditions that requires MRA or any other angiography diagnosis could benefit from it as well.

Liu *et al.*, [31] proposed the Dual Fusion Mass Detector (DFMD) in his work to provide better mass detection in mammograms. The paper focuses on tackling scale variations, blurry masses with fuzzy boundaries, and occlusion issues in mammogram. DFMD utilizes Resnet50 for its Deep Learning framework integrated with Small Target Attention Module (STAM), another module that the authors introduced to enhance detection of minuscule targets capability. Results-oriented Loss (ROL) along with Incremental Positive Selection (IPS) was also presented to improve prediction results and handle mass scale variation, respectively. Experiments done by the authors against existing detection frameworks, SSD, YOLOv3-SPP, and Faster RCNN-FPN indicated DFMD to be superior in the context of mass detection. Since the proposed model consists of 3 different submodules (STAM, ROL, IPS) to handle each of the aforementioned problems in mass detection, additional studies regarding the application of the submodules on other X-ray related diagnosis seems plausible and may provide an advancement towards automated diagnosis.

Additionally, an improvement was also made on intracranial vessel occlusion (ICVO) by Becks *et al.*, [32]. The study's goal was to determine whether using CT perfusion (CTP) could enhance the capability of CT angiography (CTA) to detect ICVO in acute ischemic stroke. The test of patients' imaging data was segregated into two parts with the first to run the detection only through non-contrast CT (NCCT) and CTA, and second part to test them with NCCT, CTA with CTP. In terms of diagnostic precision evaluation, the authors utilized receiver-operating characteristic (ROC) analysis and came to conclusion that CTP could improve ICVO detection performance on CTA due to the enhancement on distal and posterior circulation vessel occlusion detection. Although this paper provides information that prone more towards combining and enhancing existing medical diagnostic systems, it also provides an insight toward the possibilities of an intelligent diagnostic system that utilizes advanced image processing and Deep Learning approaches as done by Wang *et al.*, [33] and Yang *et al.*, [34].

For the retinal vein occlusion (RVO), Xu *et al.*, [35] proposed intelligent diagnosis system to detect and classify among four categories, healthy, branch RVO (BRVO), central RVO (CRVO), and macular BRVO (MBRVO). The proposed system utilized a variant of CNN, ResNet18, in their intelligent system which was then compared to the clinical diagnoses in accuracy. The system was also tested on combinations of ResNet18 with convolutional block attention module (CBAM), squeeze and excitation network (SENet), and coordinate attention (CA). It was concluded that the combination

utilizing ResNet18+CA, is able to detect and classify RVO presence and its results were exceptionally comparable, in each of the four categories, with clinical diagnosis. Regardless of the promising results obtained from the study, the amount of available annotated data related to this study was too little for training and testing purposes that the authors were forced to apply augmentations [34]. Aside from that, there are inconsistent results on BRVO, CRVO and MBRVO implying a necessity for better model.

On a more time-sensitive context, Stib *et al.*, [36] and Meijs *et al.*, [37] both presented a Deep Learning model with the goal to speed up detection of arterial occlusions that could lead to stroke. Stib *et al.*, [36] proposed model successfully detects large vessel occlusion (LVO) while also showing no signs of model overfitting due to the test set and validation set performance having a tight match and high area under curve (AUC) values. Meanwhile, Meijs *et al.*, [37] tackled the issue by detecting intracranial anterior circulation artery occlusions and also achieved promising results with its ROC value. Both studies utilized the same Deep Learning method, CNN, but each with different input image source, multiphase CTA and 4D-CTA, respectively.

4. Deep Learning Approaches

Analysis of medical imaging has made extensive use of Deep Learning and has shown encouraging results in various operations, including segmentation, detection, classification, and generation. In recent years, numerous studies have been conducted using Deep Learning techniques to enhance its accuracy and efficiency of medical image analysis [8,38].

One popular approach is the use of CNNs, which exceeded average results in numerous medical imaging operations. Rajpurkar *et al.*, [39] introduced CheXNet, a CNN architecture based on DenseNet121 [40] with ChestX-ray14 [41] annotated image pack to accurately detect pneumonia in chest X-rays. The proposed method did manage to produce extraordinary results in detecting pneumonia and its minor symptoms by marking the object with heat maps. However, the limitation of CheXNet is the output being set in binary form (0 as absent pneumonia, 1 as present pneumonia). This means that it only learns 1 disease in a single training period, which could take a substantial amount of time and is not favourable in a medical context, and retraining is required for other disease detection. An improvement in this area could be instrumental for disease detection in X-ray images.

In addition to CNNs, attention mechanisms have also gained popularity in medical image analysis. Some of the most notable advances for CNN would be Schlemper *et al.*, [42] proposed method, Attention U-Net, a modified U-Net architecture that uses grid-based attention gates (AG), which allows attention coefficients to focus entirely on local regions. Attention U-Net gained quite a traction in various application, such as implementations by Abraham *et al.*, [43] and Nava *et al.*, [44], for its capability to maintain computational efficiency while improving performance, despite of training population and dataset variance. However, there is still a lack of study on Attention U-Net capability integrated with statistical analysis.

Recurrent neural network (RNN) is another well-known Deep Learning approach besides CNN. Despite its capability of giving precise predictions, RNN loses said advantage whenever the sequence is too long for it to handle. This issue may be resolved by using long short-term memory (LSTM). Paper by Ashir *et al.*, [45] utilized LSTM with multiple feature extraction methods to analyse each segment of diabetic retinopathy images at a higher precision in attempt to reduce false positive occurrences. The authors applied various quantization methods to improve the probability of LSTM differentiating overlapping features from the input, hence, pointing out the issue currently faced in studies related to fundus images. The differences between features to be extracted are too minute, requiring advanced pre-processing technique.

5. Hybrid Deep Learning Approach

Recent strides in Deep Learning have yielded favourable outcomes in a wide range of applications, including speech recognition, natural language processing, and image classification. However, certain complex tasks require hybrid Deep Learning models that combine multiple models to improve their performance [46]. Hybrid models have been shown to outperform single-model approaches by means of efficiency, accuracy, and generalization [47].

One popular approach is to fuse CNNs with recurrent neural networks (RNNs) to handle serial data. In a study by Zhou *et al.*, [48], CNN-RNN was implemented to generate online medical recommendation based on the extracted semantic and sequential features data. Thus, introducing their own algorithm, DP-CRNN. Similarly, Khaki *et al.*, [49] made a hybrid CNN-RNN model for crop yield prediction that leverages CNN for feature extraction, extracting weather data and soil data, and RNN for capturing the increasing trend of crop yield.

Another hybrid approach is to combine multiple CNNs with varying architectures and parameters to enhance diversity and reduce overfitting. Huang *et al.*, [40] proposed the DenseNet model, which is an exceptional model that manages to reduce the vanishing-gradient-induced accuracy decline in CNN models with large number of layers. The DenseNet manages this issue by putting the layers in blocks, called Dense Blocks, that maintains feature maps dimension as constants while filters amount between layers continues to change.

On the other hand, Bano *et al.*, [50] proposed FetNet, a fusion neural network of CNN and LSTM, identifying fetoscopic events during twin-to-twin transfusion syndrome (TTTS) treatment. The purpose of the method was to locate abnormal placental vascular anastomoses and remove them in order to control blood flow to both fetuses. FetNet outperformed previous CNN-based methods and yields better inference due to information modelling of the spatio-temporal. It was also suggested in the paper that FetNet might be able to offer a real-time solution for computer-assisted interventions during fetoscopic surgeries even though said application is yet to be tested or documented.

6. Statistical Methodologies with Deep Learning

Deep Learning has been revolutionizing the Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence advancements. However, as the models become more complex, the need for statistical approaches in Deep Learning becomes more critical [51]. Multivariate analysis, which deals with the analysis of multiple variables at once, can provide valuable insights into the relationship between variables in Deep Learning.

One of the major issues in Deep Learning is the selection of optimal hyperparameters [52]. Hyperparameters are the parameters that manages the learning process of the Deep Learning model, including the number of layers, the learning rate, and the batch size. For a sample of study that handled their hyperparameter issue, the paper by Dinakaran *et al.*, [53] has it covered. An effective way to choose hyperparameters is through Bayesian optimization, a statistical method that maximizes the expected improvement of the model. In their paper, Yin and Li [54] provided a comprehensive briefing on Bayesian optimization algorithm for Deep Learning, highlighting its advantages and practical implementation. In their usage, they managed to identify the appropriate hyperparameters to be used with their model, enhancing overall performance considerably.

Another statistical approach in Deep Learning is the use of Principal Component Analysis (PCA). PCA is an approach for minimizing the number of dimensions in large datasets. It does this by compressing a vast collection of variables into a smaller collection, with the majority of the larger set information still intact. Alkhayrat *et al.*, [55] implemented PCA with Autoencoder Neural Network

(aNN) to handle the challenges of analysing large and sparse customer data generated by telecom companies. To determine the effect of the reduction strategy on clustering performance, the authors used k-Means Clustering to compare clustering results in the original and reduced space and assess various internal measures. It was also noted that the authors combined PCA and aNN due to the latter not being able to resolve vanishing and exploding gradient, and overfitting issues, regardless of how similar both architectures are.

Any Machine Learning model has to be tested with previously unknown data in order to assess its performance. It can later be determined whether the model is either underfitting, overfitting or well-generalized, and this method is called cross-validation [56]. Islam Ayon and Milon Islam [57] in their works proposed a strategy of utilizing cross-validation on a Deep Neural Network (DNN) system for diagnosing diabetes. The DNN system was trained and tested with five-fold and ten-fold cross-validation. They concluded that the system produced encouraging results in five-fold cross-validation, with not much difference of accuracy with ten-fold. Although the acquired result indicated a minor increase in accuracy compared to other state-of-the-art works, there is still room for improvement needed to be achieved in relation to the study.

Multivariate method is a statistical-based approach to measure relevancy of each feature, and compute correlation values between features. Because it takes into account the association between features throughout the process, this enables it to deal with both irrelevant and redundant features [58]. Study done by Lee *et al.*, [59] utilized multivariate analysis in their prediction models for postoperative pneumonia with a Deep Learning computer-aided diagnosis (DL-CAD) system. It was concluded that their prediction model could assist in improving postoperative pneumonia risk classification. Multivariate has proved its adequacy in enhancing medical diagnosis systems. Nevertheless, there is still limited study done to properly diagnose occluded medical conditions with multivariate analysis.

7. Conclusions

From the literatures conducted, it is found that studies done in the fields that encompasses Deep Learning occluded object detection with statistical methodologies and medical imaging, regardless of disease types, are still in short supply. With the goal to automate every existing system or manual labours, medical imaging delineation still needs more attention. Following the assessment of a large number of research papers on occluded object detection in medical imaging-related, the following key findings were made:

- i. More analysis needs to be done on occluded object detection due to the lack of occluded data annotation, restricting better classification, very much so in the case of medical imaging;
- ii. Each Deep Learning methodologies has their own advantages of handling specific issues and by combining them, their disadvantages can be mitigated;
- iii. As proven by most studies, hybrid Deep Learning could enhance the Deep Learning performance, thus, it is recommended that additional research be done to cover more ground in hybrid approaches;
- iv. The integration of statistical analysis on Deep Learning systems proved very beneficial as it improves the learning curve of a Deep Learning architecture;
- v. Most of the proposed and developed methods still has a wide possible testing to be done to identify its limitations.

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