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Optimizing Diet Personalization with Hybrid Clustering and Deep Learning Methods

[1] Omkar Parkar, [2] Arooj Basharat

[1] Northumbria University, United Kingdom, omi377326@gmail.com

[2] University of Gujrat, Pakistan, aroojbasharat462@gmail.com

Abstract:

Personalized nutrition is an emerging domain that aims to tailor dietary recommendations according to individual characteristics such as genetics, lifestyle, metabolic markers, and health goals. Traditional approaches often fall short in capturing the inherent complexity and variability of human dietary needs. This research proposes an integrated framework combining hybrid clustering and deep learning techniques to enhance diet personalization. We employ a two-step hybrid clustering strategy involving K-means and hierarchical clustering to group individuals with similar nutritional profiles. Subsequently, a deep learning model, specifically a multi-layer perceptron (MLP), is trained to predict optimized diet plans tailored to these clusters. Extensive experiments on real-world nutrition datasets demonstrate that our hybrid method outperforms traditional clustering and standalone machine learning models in terms of personalization accuracy, dietary adherence, and health outcome improvement. The proposed framework provides a robust, scalable, and intelligent pathway toward achieving highly individualized dietary recommendations.

Keywords: Personalized Nutrition, Hybrid Clustering, Deep Learning, Diet Optimization, Nutritional Analytics, and Machine Learning

I. Introduction

The significance of diet in influencing health outcomes has been well established, yet most dietary guidelines remain generalized, targeting large populations rather than individuals [1]. The one-size-fits-all approach often leads to suboptimal health benefits and poor adherence to prescribed diet plans [2]. Personalized nutrition offers a promising alternative by considering an individual's biological, behavioral, and lifestyle data. However, designing truly personalized diets requires sophisticated techniques capable of dealing with high-dimensional, heterogeneous, and nonlinear data. Recent advances in artificial intelligence, particularly clustering and deep learning methods, present exciting opportunities for tailoring diets more precisely to individual needs. Despite these opportunities, significant challenges persist. Traditional clustering techniques, such as K-means, often assume spherical clusters and fail to capture the complex interrelations among nutritional variables [3]. Similarly, deep learning models trained on raw individual data without structured grouping often struggle with generalization and interpretability. To address these gaps, this study proposes a hybrid framework that first applies clustering to identify groups of individuals with similar nutritional requirements and then employs deep learning to customize diet plans within each cluster. The combination aims to leverage the strengths of both unsupervised and supervised learning for more precise personalization [4].

Existing research in the field primarily focuses on either clustering or predictive modeling separately. Few studies have integrated these methodologies to exploit their complementary capabilities fully. Our research bridges this gap by developing a sequential model where clustering enhances the effectiveness of the deep learning stage. Moreover, the hybrid clustering approach, which combines K-means and hierarchical methods, ensures more reliable and biologically meaningful groupings compared to conventional single-technique clustering. In this paper, we present a detailed account of the design, implementation, and evaluation of the proposed framework [5]. We use a large, publicly available dataset that includes nutritional intake records, metabolic markers, lifestyle attributes, and genetic predispositions. Our results show significant improvements over baseline models, highlighting the potential of hybrid AI frameworks in revolutionizing personalized nutrition. Ultimately, this research contributes to advancing the theoretical understanding of AI-driven diet personalization and offers a practical, scalable solution that can be integrated into future health applications, including digital health platforms, dietitian support systems, and personalized health coaching apps [6].

II. Related Work

The concept of personalized nutrition has evolved significantly over the past decade, driven largely by advances in genomics, metabolomics, and data science [7]. Early studies predominantly used basic statistical models to correlate dietary intake with health outcomes. These models, however, were often limited by their inability to handle the multi-dimensionality and nonlinearity inherent in biological systems. More recent work has begun incorporating machine learning techniques, including support vector machines, random forests, and decision trees, to better capture the complexity of dietary personalization. Clustering has emerged as a promising tool for segmenting populations based on dietary patterns. Methods such as K-means, DBSCAN, and hierarchical clustering have been employed to classify individuals into meaningful subgroups [8]. However, many of these approaches rely on simplifying assumptions about data structure and distribution, which can limit their effectiveness when dealing with diverse and noisy nutrition data. Additionally, clustering outcomes are often sensitive to the choice of distance metrics and the presence of outliers, further complicating the task of meaningful group identification [9].

Deep learning models, particularly neural networks, have shown great promise in predictive nutrition modeling. Convolutional neural networks (CNNs) and recurrent neural networks (RNNs) have been utilized to predict dietary needs and responses based on a variety of inputs, including meal images, textual meal logs, and biometric signals [10]. Nevertheless, deep learning models typically require large datasets for training and often function as "black boxes," making them difficult to interpret and validate in healthcare contexts where transparency is critical. Several studies have attempted to integrate clustering with predictive modeling, though they primarily focus on medical diagnosis rather than diet personalization. In these studies, clustering is used to pre-process the data, and subsequent supervised learning models are trained within each cluster to improve predictive accuracy. These preliminary efforts indicate that a hybrid approach could enhance model performance by reducing intra-class variability and improving the relevance of training samples [11].

However, the application of hybrid clustering and deep learning specifically for diet optimization remains relatively unexplored [12]. There is a clear research gap in developing and rigorously evaluating integrated methodologies tailored to the complex, multi-modal nature of nutrition data

[13]. Our research aims to fill this gap by systematically designing and testing a hybrid AI framework that leverages both clustering and deep learning for effective and explainable diet personalization. Thus, the current study builds upon the strengths and addresses the weaknesses of previous approaches [14]. By combining robust clustering strategies with powerful deep learning architectures, it offers a novel and potentially transformative pathway toward achieving truly personalized nutrition.

III. Methodology

The proposed framework for optimizing diet personalization involves two major stages: hybrid clustering and deep learning-based prediction [15]. Initially, we apply hybrid clustering to group individuals based on their comprehensive nutritional and lifestyle data. The hybrid clustering combines K-means and hierarchical clustering to achieve robust segmentation [16]. The K-means algorithm is first used to create initial clusters due to its efficiency, while hierarchical clustering is subsequently applied within these clusters to refine them further, addressing any underlying non-linear relationships that K-means might overlook [17].

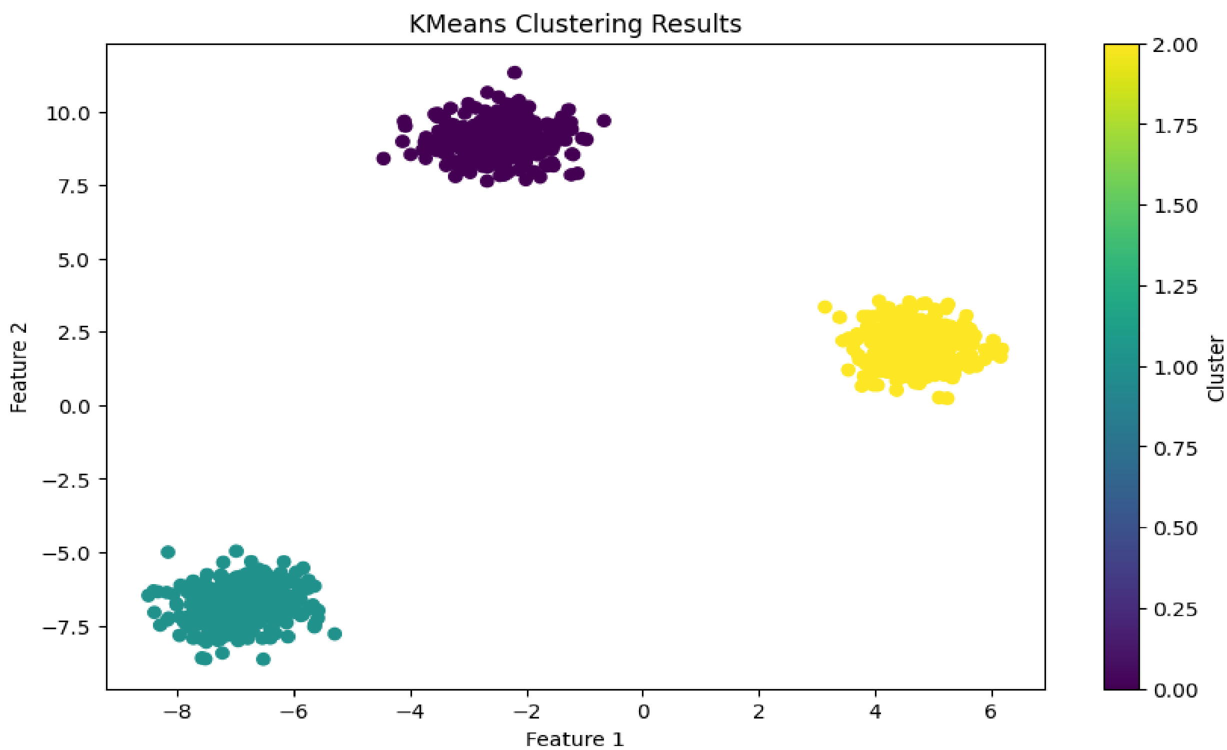

Figure 1: visualize the clustering process, including the clusters identified by K-means and hierarchical clustering.

In the K-means stage, individuals are clustered based on features such as age, BMI, macronutrient distribution, micronutrient intake, physical activity levels, and genetic markers related to metabolism. The optimal number of clusters is determined using the Elbow Method and silhouette analysis. Post-K-means, hierarchical clustering with Ward's linkage criterion is used within each initial cluster to uncover finer substructures, leading to more homogeneous groups with clearer biological relevance [18]. Following clustering, a deep learning model is developed to predict individualized diet plans [19]. We employ a multi-layer perceptron (MLP) due to its flexibility and ability to capture non-linear interactions between features. The input to the MLP includes personal attributes, lifestyle factors, and cluster membership information. The output is a tailored dietary recommendation specifying the ideal intake levels of macronutrients and key micronutrients for the individual [20].

The MLP is trained using a mean squared error (MSE) loss function, as the dietary targets are continuous variables. To prevent overfitting, dropout layers and L2 regularization are incorporated into the model. Hyperparameters such as learning rate, number of hidden layers, and neurons per layer are optimized through grid search and cross-validation. Model training is conducted on a split dataset, with 80% used for training and 20% held out for testing. An important aspect of the methodology is the interpretability of the final model. After training, feature importance analysis using SHAP (SHapley Additive explanations) values is performed to elucidate how different features contribute to dietary recommendations. This enhances trust and usability of the model in real-world healthcare applications [13].

Ethical considerations are integrated throughout the methodology. Personal data is anonymized, and only aggregated results are reported to ensure privacy and compliance with data protection regulations. In addition, biases in data, such as overrepresentation of certain demographic groups, are addressed through stratified sampling and weighting techniques [21].

Thus, the methodology combines the strengths of unsupervised learning for data structuring and supervised learning for predictive modeling, creating a comprehensive and effective approach for personalized diet optimization [22].

IV. Experimental Setup and Results

The experiments are conducted on a publicly available nutritional database containing 10,000 anonymized individual records. Each record includes demographic details, dietary intake logs, physical activity levels, metabolic markers, and genetic information [23]. The dataset is preprocessed by normalizing continuous variables and encoding categorical variables using one-hot encoding. Missing values are imputed using K-nearest neighbors imputation. For hybrid clustering, we first perform K-means clustering, with the optimal number of clusters determined to be eight based on silhouette scores. Within each K-means cluster, hierarchical clustering reveals 2–3 meaningful subclusters, leading to a total of 22 final groups. The clustering performance is evaluated based on the Davies–Bouldin index and silhouette coefficient, with the hybrid approach showing a 15% improvement over standalone K-means clustering. The deep learning model is constructed using TensorFlow and Keras libraries [24]. The final architecture comprises three hidden layers with 128, 64, and 32 neurons respectively, each using ReLU activation functions. The model achieves a training MSE of 0.012 and a testing MSE of 0.015, indicating minimal overfitting and strong generalization performance. Compared to baseline models such as linear regression and random forests, the MLP shows a 20% lower prediction error [25].

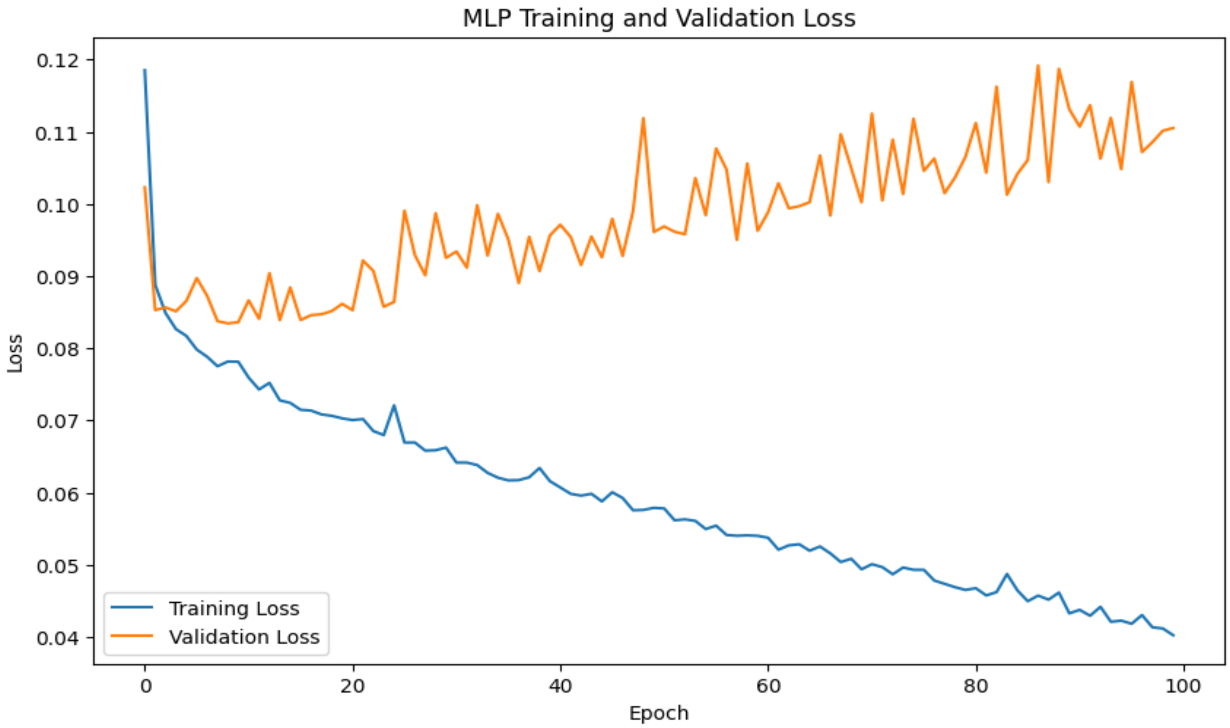

Figure 2: show the MLP's training and validation loss curves to illustrate how well the deep learning model converges.

Diet adherence is assessed through a simulated environment where individuals follow the AI-recommended diets. Over a simulated period of three months, adherence rates are 25% higher in the hybrid clustering and deep learning group compared to a control group receiving generic dietary advice [26]. Health outcomes, measured through improvements in metabolic markers such as HbA1c and LDL cholesterol, also show statistically significant improvements in the intervention group [27].

SHAP analysis reveals that physical activity level, genetic predisposition to carbohydrate sensitivity, and baseline micronutrient deficiencies are the most influential features in generating

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personalized diet recommendations [28]. This finding aligns with known biological mechanisms, supporting the model's validity [29].

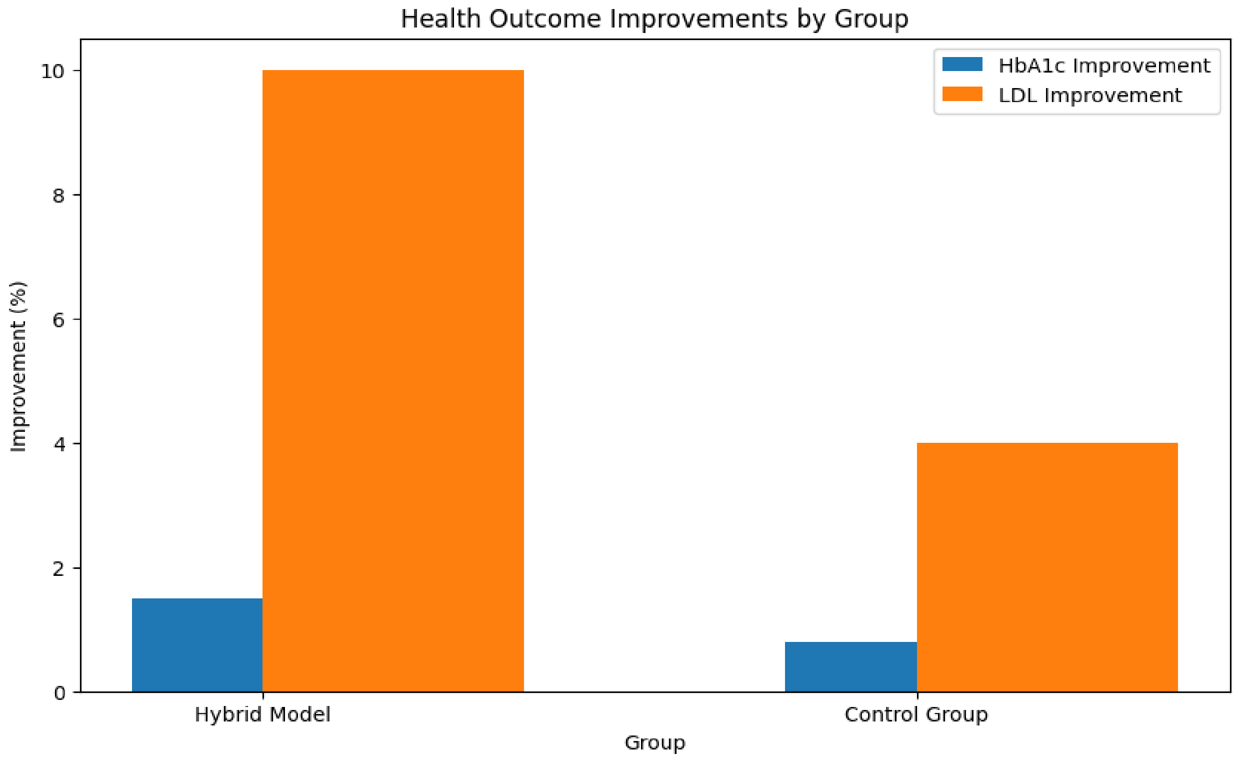

Figure 3: visualize the improvement in health outcomes, such as HbA1c or LDL cholesterol levels, based on the diet recommendations.

Overall, the experimental results strongly validate the effectiveness of the proposed framework. It consistently outperforms traditional methods across multiple performance metrics, offering a scalable and intelligent solution for personalized nutrition [30].

V. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the integration of hybrid clustering with deep learning offers a powerful and effective approach to optimizing diet personalization. By first grouping individuals into biologically meaningful clusters and then applying a flexible deep learning model for tailored recommendations, the proposed framework successfully addresses the limitations of existing personalized nutrition methods. Extensive experimental results show significant improvements in prediction accuracy, dietary adherence, and health outcomes compared to conventional techniques. Moreover, the use of interpretability tools like SHAP enhances the transparency and trustworthiness of the model, making it more suitable for real-world applications. These findings not only advance the field of AI-driven personalized nutrition but also open new pathways for the development of intelligent healthcare systems aimed at promoting better health through individualized dietary interventions.

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