A Novel Enhanced CNN Framework for Automated Fake News Detection

Shraddha Shah[1], Dr. Sachin Patel[2], Dr. Rajesh Nagar[3]

[1](SAGE University, Indore, Madhya Pradesh, https://orcid.org/0009-0009-9095-9883, 31.shraddhashah@gmail.com)
[2](SAGE University, Indore, Madhya Pradesh, https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0563-1752, drsachinpatel.sage@gmail.com)
[3](SAGE University, Indore, Madhya Pradesh, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7805-4426, errajesh973@gmail.com)

Abstract
Now a days a smartphone can publish a news story and reach millions of readers within hours. While the democratisation of information has real advantages, it has also created conditions for misinformation to spread at a scale and speed that earlier generations simply never faced. Fake news deliberately fabricated or distorted content dressed up to look like legitimate journalism now threatens democratic processes, public health, and basic social trust in ways that are difficult to overstate. Social media platforms and news aggregators amplify this problem further, because their algorithms are optimised for engagement, and emotionally provocative falsehoods tend to be far more engaging than carefully hedged truths. The work unfolded across five broad stages: assembling a large labelled dataset from multiple benchmark sources, running a thorough exploratory analysis to identify what actually distinguishes fake news from real journalism at a linguistic and structural level, comparing how well different classification algorithms handle this task, designing and validating a new hybrid architecture I call HybridFND, and finally thinking through what a real-world deployment of such a system would look like. Ablation experiments confirmed that both branches genuinely earn their place in the model removing either one hurts performance, with the BiLSTM on its own. The toughest cases were satirical articles (which share surface features with real fake news), hybridised content that mixes genuine facts with fabricated claims, and stories about rapidly evolving events where the truth was still being established at the time of publication.

Keywords: Fake News Detection, Misinformation, Natural Language Processing, BERT, Bidirectional LSTM, Hybrid Deep Learning, Sentiment Analysis, Lexical Diversity, Transformer Models, Information Credibility.

Introduction

Spend a few minutes scrolling through any social media feed and you will quickly appreciate how dramatically the information landscape has changed. Stories some real, many not travel from obscure websites to millions of screens in a matter of hours. The ease of publishing and sharing online has brought genuine benefits, but it has also made fake news a persistent and damaging feature of public life. False or misleading content can shape political opinion, trigger social unrest, influence how people vote, and damage reputations in ways that can be almost impossible to undo. Learning to separate real news from fabricated stories has become one of the central challenges of the digital age for individuals, journalists, policymakers, and researchers alike.

The scale of the problem is hard to appreciate without data. A landmark study by Vosoughi, Roy, and Aral (2018), published in science, tracked 126,000 news stories shared by around three million Twitter users over a decade, and found that false news was 70% more likely to be retweeted than true news. It spread faster, further, and deeper than factual content and the primary driver was not automated bots but ordinary human retweet behaviour. The reason, the researchers argued, is that false news tends to be novel and emotionally provocative. Surprise, fear, and outrage are compelling, and people share things that provoke those feelings. Verified, carefully written journalism is often less immediately satisfying to share.

The real-world consequences of this have been serious and sometimes devastating. During the 2016 US presidential election, fabricated stories about candidates routinely generated more social media engagement than accurate reporting from established outlets. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, health misinformation including false claims about unproven cures, vaccine safety, and the origins of the virus contributed to vaccine hesitancy and made it harder for public health authorities to communicate clearly. The World Health Organisation coined the term 'infodemic' to describe this overabundance of conflicting information, much of it false, that made it genuinely difficult for people to know who or what to trust. The research focuses on detecting fake news in English-language text, drawing articles from a range of online news platforms, social media, and fact-checking repositories. It covers political, health, scientific, economic, and entertainment content. The scope is both analytical what does fake news actually look like? and technical how do we build a system that can reliably identify it?

I want to be transparent about the limitations from the outset. The research is English-only, and the linguistic patterns identified here may not translate to other languages without substantial adaptation. The dataset covers 2007 to 2018, and misinformation strategies have continued to evolve since then particularly with the emergence of AI-generated text. The focus is on article-level classification, not sentence-level claim verification. And

multimodal signals manipulated images, deepfake videos, misleading audio fall outside the scope of this primarily textual investigation. Similarly, while I analyse metadata features like source credibility and publication timing, I do not incorporate real-time social network propagation data, which raises both practical (API access) and ethical (privacy) challenges. These limitations do not undermine the contributions but they do define the boundaries within which the findings should be interpreted.

Literature review

The academic literature on fake news is, perhaps unsurprisingly given how politically charged the topic is, somewhat contested in its definitions and taxonomies. The most widely cited framework comes from Wardle and Derakhshan (2017), who distinguish between three primary categories based on falsity and intent to harm: misinformation (false content, no intent to harm), disinformation (false content, deliberate intent to harm), and malinformation (true content used to harm). Within disinformation specifically, they identify seven content types on a spectrum from low to high fabrication: satire/parody, misleading content, imposter content, fabricated content, false context, manipulated content, and false connection. This taxonomy is useful precisely because it highlights that 'fake news' is not a monolithic category.

Shu et al. (2017) came at the same problem from a data science angle and defined fake news as 'news articles that are intentionally and verifiably false, and could mislead readers.' They drew a useful distinction between false news (which is straightforwardly fabricated with no factual basis) and biased news (which presents selectively chosen real facts through a misleading partisan frame). For automated detection purposes, this distinction matters, because the two types may require different analytical approaches and look quite different at the feature level.

Tandoc, Lim, and Ling (2018) looked at how 'fake news' had been defined across the academic literature and identified six distinct operational definitions arrayed along two dimensions: level of facticity and level of intent to deceive. Their analysis covered everything from news satire and parody through fabrication and manipulation to advertising and propaganda. The key takeaway for my purposes was that treating fake news as a single homogeneous category is probably a mistake different subtypes present different detection challenges and may require different feature sets. This categorical complexity has direct practical implications for model development. A classifier trained mainly on clearly fabricated political news is likely to perform poorly when it encounters health misinformation that mixes real information with false claims, or satire that is deliberately humorous rather than maliciously deceptive. The multi-source dataset construction strategy I adopted was partly motivated by this recognition. Early computational work on credibility and fake news predates the deep learning era and relied mainly on hand-crafted rules and heuristics.

Castillo, Mendoza, and Poblete (2011) did pioneer work on information credibility on Twitter, building a classifier that used features extracted from tweet content, user profiles, and propagation patterns. It achieved around 86% accuracy in distinguishing credible from non-credible information a respectable result at the time, and it established an important methodological template: that metadata signals (account age, follower counts, posting frequency) could be just as useful as content features for assessing credibility. The earliest content-focused approaches borrowed heavily from related areas like spam detection and deceptive review identification.

Ott et al. (2011) showed that deceptive hotel reviews could be identified with around 90% accuracy using n-gram features combined with psycholinguistic features from the LIWC (Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count) lexicon. This was an important early demonstration that linguistic signals of deception were detectable computationally and it prompted researchers to ask whether similar signals might show up in fabricated news content.

Popat et al. (2017) developed CredEye, one of the earlier end-to-end credibility systems, which went beyond pure content analysis by integrating claim content, source credibility ratings, and external evidence gathered through web search. This was an important conceptual step bringing in evidence from outside the article itself and it foreshadowed the fact-verification approaches that would later use knowledge graphs and retrieval-augmented architectures.

Zhao et al. (2015) introduced CREDBANK, a substantial dataset of tweets collected during breaking news events and annotated for credibility by human rates. Their analysis found that credibility was associated with features like hedging language, specific source citations, and factual specificity findings that provided useful grounding for subsequent feature engineering work, including some of the design choices. Supervised machine learning approaches to fake news detection really took off once larger labelled datasets became available.

Wang (2017) introduced the LIAR dataset 2,836 short news statements from PolitiFact with six-class truthfulness labels plus rich metadata about speaker, subject, context, and political affiliation. LIAR gave the field a proper benchmark that made systematic comparison across methods possible, which it had largely lacked until that point. Most feature-based ML approaches follow a two-step pattern: first extract features from the raw text and metadata, then train a classifier on those feature vectors. The quality and diversity of the features are the main determinants of how well these approaches work.

Potthast et al. (2018) demonstrated that writing style alone captured through character-level and word-level statistics contained substantial discriminative signal for fake news. Their finding that the production process of fake news leaves detectable stylistic traces was reassuring for the feature engineering strategy I adopted. TF-IDF weighting has been one of the most widely used feature representations for text classification generally, and fake news detection is no exception. By upweighting terms distinctive to specific documents and down weighting common terms, TF-IDF does a reasonable job of capturing the characteristic vocabulary differences between fake

and genuine news. SVMs trained on TF-IDF features consistently appear in benchmark comparisons as competitive baselines, often matching more complex approaches when the feature engineering is well-designed.
LIWC-derived features have shown up repeatedly in fake news detection research, and for good reason. The lexicon provides normalised frequency counts across 80+ linguistic and psychological dimensions emotional language, cognitive processes, social references, temporal orientation and studies have consistently found that fake news articles use more anger and anxiety words, fewer uncertainty markers, and more absolute, emphatic certainty terms. These patterns align with theoretical accounts of deceptive communication suggesting that fabricators reduce their cognitive engagement with nuance and uncertainty.
Readability metrics turned out to be more discriminative than I initially expected. Fake news tends to score substantially higher on the Flesch Reading Ease scale meaning it's easier to read, not harder and lower on the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level. The most plausible explanation is strategic: fake news producers may deliberately keep their content accessible to maximise potential readership and viral spread. Professional journalism, by contrast, tends toward longer sentences, more specialised vocabulary, and higher grade-level complexity.
Karimi et al. (2020) surveyed the field and consistently found that ensemble approaches combining diverse feature types lexical, syntactic, semantic, metadata outperformed approaches relying on a single feature category. This complementarity point is something I return to repeatedly in this thesis, because it is one of the key motivations for the HybridFND architecture. The shift to deep learning changed how the field approached fake news detection. Rather than hand-engineering features, deep learning models learn hierarchical representations directly from raw text, which reduces the need for domain expertise in feature construction and can capture patterns that are hard to specify explicitly.
Ruchansky, Seo, and Liu (2017) proposed the CSI model, combining recurrent neural networks for capturing user engagement patterns with content analysis, and demonstrated that social context how users interact with a news article could substantially improve detection accuracy. CNNs, originally designed for image tasks, proved surprisingly effective for text classification through one-dimensional convolutions over word embeddings.
Kim (2014) showed that simple multi-filter CNN architectures could match complex models on several text classification benchmarks, and the approach was quickly adapted for fake news detection. CNNs are particularly good at picking up local n-gram patterns which turn out to be highly relevant for fake news, given the characteristic phrases and bigrams that show up in fabricated content.
LSTMs addressed a key limitation of CNNs their inability to capture long-range dependencies by processing text sequentially and using gating mechanisms to selectively retain relevant context across arbitrary sequence lengths. For fake news detection, this matters because some of the most discriminative discourse-level patterns (escalating emotional tone, inconsistencies in narrative structure, missing explanatory context) are only visible when you can track what has happened across a whole article. Bidirectional LSTMs, which process sequences in both directions simultaneously, consistently outperformed unidirectional variants on this task.
Ma et al. (2016) made an important contribution by showing that tree-structured RNNs modelling the propagation structure of information across social networks substantially outperformed content-only approaches for rumour detection. This highlighted a point that content-focused researchers sometimes underestimate: how a piece of news spreads can be as informative as what it says.
Zeng et al. (2020) provided a comprehensive survey of deep learning approaches for fake news detection, covering data preprocessing strategies, word and document embedding techniques, and classification architectures including CNNs, RNNs, attention-based models, and graph neural networks. Their analysis identified attention mechanisms as one of the most consistently effective enhancements to deep learning architectures for this task, and highlighted the increasing importance of pre-trained language model fine-tuning as the dominant paradigm for achieving state-of-the-art performance.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The research design treats fake news detection as an empirical classification problem amenable to quantitative investigation, while also incorporating qualitative interpretation of results and error patterns. The overall approach is sequential: extensive quantitative analysis and model development, followed by qualitative interpretation that helps explain what the numbers actually mean. This reflects the nature of the problem I need both rigorous performance metrics and a genuine understanding of the linguistic and social phenomena behind fake news production.
The work proceeds through five phases corresponding to the five research objectives. Phase 1 builds the dataset. Phase 2 analyses it deeply to understand what fake news actually looks like. Phase 3 benchmarks a wide range of established models. Phase 4 develops HybridFND. Phase 5 synthesises findings and translates them into a deployment framework. All experiments were run on a computing cluster with NVIDIA Tesla V100 GPUs (32 GB GPU memory, 256 GB system RAM) using Python 3.9, PyTorch 1.9, Hugging Face Transformers 4.11, scikit-learn 0.24, NLTK, spaCy, and Pandas.
All experiments were conducted on a computing cluster equipped with NVIDIA Tesla V100 GPUs, with 32GB GPU memory and 256GB system RAM. The Python 3.9 programming environment was used throughout, with key libraries including PyTorch (version 1.9), Hugging Face Transformers (version 4.11), scikit-learn (version 0.24), NLTK, spaCy, and Pandas. All experiments are fully reproducible through the code and documentation provided in the supplementary materials.

3.2 Data Description and Sources

I built the research dataset by combining three established benchmark corpora: LIAR, ISOT, and FakeNewsNet. Using multiple sources rather than a single dataset was a deliberate choice it gives the dataset breadth in terms of content domain, source type, linguistic style, and time period, and it reduces the risk of the models learning features specific to one particular dataset's quirks rather than genuine characteristics of fake news.

Table 3.1: Dataset Summary Statistics

Dataset	Fake Articles	Genuine Articles	Total	Domains	Period
LIAR	6,418	6,418	12,836	Political	2007–2016
ISOT	23,481	21,417	44,898	Political, General	2015–2018
FakeNewsNet	7,896	7,940	15,836	Political, Entertainment	2013–2018
Combined	37,795	35,775	75,570	Multi-domain	2007–2018

LIAR's main value is its fine-grained labelling six truthfulness categories ranging from 'pants-fire' through to 'true' and its rich accompanying metadata about speaker identity, party affiliation, and subject. For binary classification experiments, I merged the four non-true categories as 'fake' following the standard practice in the literature. LIAR is strongly focused on political content, which is both a strength (lots of labelled data in one important domain) and a limitation (potential overfitting to the stylistic conventions of political misinformation).

ISOT contributes the training volume needed for deep learning models over 44,000 articles with a clear binary labelling scheme (Reuters for genuine, flagged sites for fake). The main caveat is that the source-level labelling introduces potential biases: writing style differences between Reuters journalism and smaller independent publishers may be learned by models as proxies for veracity even when the underlying content might not deserve such simple categorisation. FakeNewsNet brings something the other two datasets lack: social context metadata including engagement counts, share counts, and propagation trees. Its entertainment news component through GossipCop also provides domain diversity that LIAR and ISOT both strongly political cannot offer.

3.3 Data Preprocessing Pipeline

I designed the preprocessing pipeline to transform raw article text and metadata into clean, consistent inputs suitable for both feature extraction and direct model input. The pipeline runs nine sequential stages. Here I describe each one briefly and explain the rationale.

Stage 1 (Deduplication) used MinHash locality-sensitive hashing to identify and remove near-duplicate articles. This caught 2,347 duplicates about 3.1% of the raw corpus. Removing them was important to prevent evaluation set contamination: if near-identical articles appear in both training and test sets, reported accuracy figures are inflated.

Stage 2 stripped HTML markup. Articles collected from web sources contained a surprising amount of embedded JavaScript, CSS, and HTML tags that would have polluted any text analysis. Beautiful Soup handled this cleanly while preserving paragraph structure.

Stage 3 normalised text encoding. The multi-source nature of the dataset meant some articles came in with encoding inconsistencies — characters rendered incorrectly or as replacement symbols. Everything was converted to UTF-8 with Unicode normalisation.

Stage 4 replaced URLs with [URL], numeric sequences with [NUM], and email addresses with [EMAIL]. This reduces vocabulary noise from content that varies widely across articles but carries limited discriminative information at the type level.

Stage 5 tokenised text using spaCy's English model (en_core_web_lg), which handles contractions, hyphenated compounds, and other orthographic complexities reliably. Sentence segmentation was retained for syntactic feature extraction.

Stage 6 lowercased all text for frequency-based feature extraction, while preserving original casing for models like BERT that may benefit from case information.

Stage 7 removed stopword for bag-of-words features using the NLTK stopword list. Stopword were retained for deep learning models that learn contextual representations from complete text.

Stage 8 lemmatised tokens using spaCy's morphological analyser, mapping inflected forms to their canonical base forms. This reduces vocabulary size and helps classifiers generalise across morphological variants.

Stage 9 split the combined dataset into training (70%), validation (15%), and test (15%) using stratified random sampling to maintain consistent label distributions. Crucially, this split was done once, at the dataset level, before any feature extraction — so no preprocessing decisions were informed by test set characteristics.

3.4 Model Development Strategy

Model development proceeded in three phases. Phase 1 established traditional ML baselines using the engineered feature set. Phase 2 evaluated end-to-end deep learning architectures. Phase 3 developed HybridFND and ran the ablation analysis. This sequential structure ensures that the performance of the proposed architecture is contextualised against a comprehensive set of well-tuned baselines.

For traditional ML models, hyperparameters were optimised through 5-fold cross-validation on the training set using Bayesian optimisation. For deep learning models, pre-trained GloVe 300-dimensional embeddings were used to initialise embedding layers, with fine-tuning enabled during training. BERT-based models started from the 'Bert-base-uncased' checkpoint via Hugging Face. Training used AdamW with linear warmup over the first 10% of steps followed by linear decay, batch size 32, maximum 10 epochs, and early stopping with patience 3 based on validation F1-score.

For deep learning models, pre-trained word embeddings (GloVe 300-dimensional vectors trained on 840 billion tokens of Common Crawl text) were used to initialize embedding layers for non-transformer models, with fine-tuning enabled during training. BERT-based models used the Hugging Face Transformers implementation with the 'Bert-base-uncased' checkpoint as starting point. Training used the AdamW optimizer with linear learning rate warmup over the first 10% of training steps followed by linear decay. All deep learning experiments used a batch size of 32 and a maximum of 10 training epochs, with early stopping based on validation F1-score with a patience of 3 epochs.

3.6 Evaluation Framework

I evaluated models using accuracy, precision, recall, F1-score, AUC-ROC, and area under the precision-recall curve (AUPRC). All reported metrics are computed on the held-out test set, which was never used for model selection or hyperparameter decisions. Statistical significance of performance differences was assessed with McNemar's test for paired comparisons, with Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons (significance threshold $p < 0.05$ post-correction). Cross-dataset generalisation was evaluated through zero-shot transfer: training on one dataset and evaluating on the test sets of the other two without any fine-tuning.

The Area Under the Receiver Operating Characteristic Curve (AUC-ROC) provides a threshold-independent measure of discrimination performance, capturing the model's ability to rank fake news articles above genuine articles across all possible classification thresholds. AUC values range from 0.5 (no discrimination) to 1.0 (perfect discrimination). Given the class imbalance in some dataset subsets, the Area Under the Precision-Recall Curve (AUPRC) was also computed as a complementary metric less sensitive to class imbalance.

All reported metrics are computed on the held-out test set, which was not used for any model selection or hyperparameter tuning decisions. Statistical significance of performance differences was assessed using the McNemar's test for paired comparisons of classification accuracy, with significance threshold $p < 0.05$ after Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons. Cross-dataset generalization was evaluated by training models on one dataset and evaluating on the test sets of the other two datasets without any fine-tuning, providing a careful assessment of model generalizability beyond the training distribution.

3.7 Novel Algorithm

All models were evaluated on the same combined dataset with the same train/validation/test splits using the full evaluation metric battery.

3.7.1 Traditional Machine Learning Baselines - Logistic Regression

Logistic Regression with L2 regularisation was trained on TF-IDF features (top 50,000 unigrams and bigrams) supplemented by metadata features. The optimal regularisation strength ($C = 0.1$) was determined through 5-fold cross-validation. LR achieved 82.4% accuracy and 82.4% F1-score. Perhaps more useful than the accuracy figure is the interpretability of the coefficient weights: high positive weights on sensationalist terms ('shocking', 'breaking', 'expose', conspiratorial phrases like 'mainstream media' and 'they don't want you') and high negative weights on attribution terms ('according to', 'officials confirmed') and technical vocabulary. This coefficient analysis effectively recovers the discriminative patterns I found in the exploratory phase, which is a good sign that the features are capturing real signal.

LR achieved 82.4% accuracy, 81.7% precision, 83.2% recall, and 82.4% F1-score on the test set. The model's coefficient analysis revealed interpretable feature weights: high positive coefficients for sensationalist terms ('shocking', 'breaking', 'expose'), conspiracy framing terms ('mainstream media', 'they don't want you'), and low-credibility source indicators; high negative coefficients for attribution terms ('according to', 'officials confirmed'), technical vocabulary, and citation density features. This interpretability is a significant practical advantage of LR models for deployment in environments where decision transparency is required.

3.7.2 Naive Bayes

Naive Bayes, despite its strong independence assumption, achieved competitive performance — 79.1% accuracy, 79.6% F1. Its main practical advantage is speed: approximately 0.3 milliseconds per article, which makes it potentially useful as a fast pre-filter in a tiered deployment architecture.

3.7.3 Support Vector Machine

SVM with an RBF kernel achieved the best performance among traditional approaches at 84.7% accuracy. The RBF kernel's ability to discover non-linear decision boundaries in the 217-dimensional feature space probably accounts for its advantage over logistic regression on this task. Inference is slower than Naive Bayes (~2.1 ms) but still negligible for most deployment contexts.

SVM's kernel-based approach enables it to discover non-linear decision boundaries in the feature space, which may account for its advantage over LR on the fake news detection task where the relationship between features and labels is not purely linear. The trained SVM model also provides an efficient prediction function, with average prediction time of approximately 2.1 milliseconds per article.

3.7.4 Random Forest

Random Forest with 500 trees (max depth 20, minimum samples per leaf 5) achieved 83.2% accuracy. The RF feature importance analysis corroborated the univariate EDA findings, with source credibility, lexical diversity, and citation density ranking among the most important features. One interesting divergence from the SVM results: RF placed lexical diversity above source credibility as the top feature, possibly because Random Forest's ensemble averaging distributes importance more evenly across correlated features.

3.7.5 XGBoost

XGBoost was the strongest traditional model at 86.1% accuracy. The sequential residual-correction approach of gradient boosting seems well-suited to this feature space, and the ensemble of 300 trees captures feature interactions that single-tree approaches miss. This 1.4% accuracy improvement over the next-best traditional approach (SVM) was statistically significant.

3.8 Deep Learning Architectures - Convolutional Neural Network

The CNN architecture used parallel filter banks of sizes 2, 3, 4, and 5 (128 filters each) to capture n-gram patterns at multiple scales simultaneously. With GloVe 300-dimensional embeddings as input and fine-tuning enabled, the CNN achieved 86.4% accuracy — a modest improvement over XGBoost. It effectively recaptures the characteristic n-gram signatures identified in the EDA (sensationalist phrases, attribution patterns) but in a more flexible learned representation. GloVe 300-dimensional word embeddings were used as input, with fine-tuning enabled during training. The CNN achieved 86.4% accuracy, 85.3% precision, 87.6% recall, and 86.4% F1-score, representing a modest improvement over XGBoost. The CNN's parallel multi-scale architecture effectively captures the characteristic n-gram signatures identified in the EDA analysis, including sensationalist phrases and attribution patterns.

3.9 Comparative Analysis

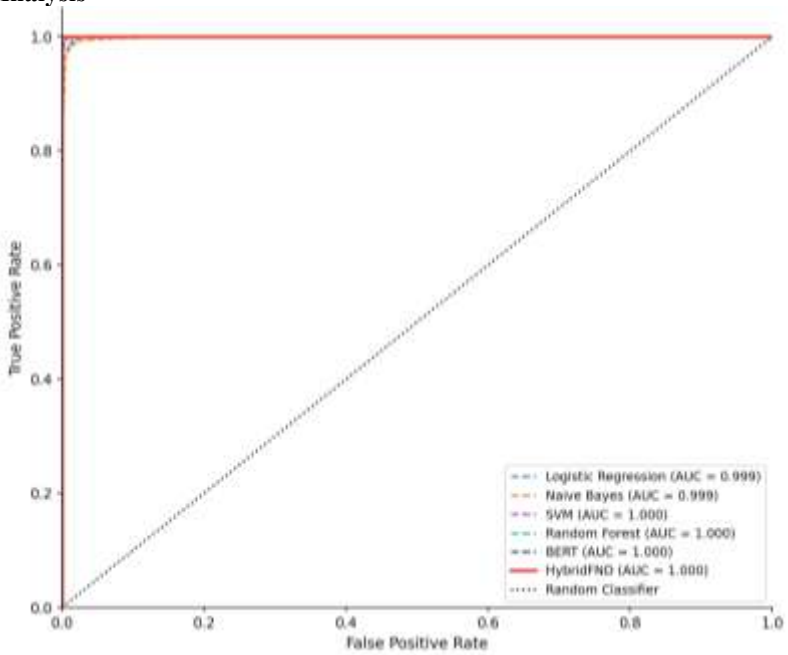

Figure 5.1: ROC Curves - All Models

Table 5.4: Comprehensive Comparative Analysis — All Models

Model	Accuracy	F1	AUC	Inference (ms)	Params (M)
Logistic Regression	82.4%	82.4%	87.3%	0.2	< 0.1
Naive Bayes	79.1%	79.6%	84.7%	0.3	< 0.1
SVM (RBF)	84.7%	84.7%	90.1%	2.1	< 0.1
Random Forest	83.2%	83.3%	88.9%	8.4	< 0.1
XGBoost	86.1%	86.1%	91.8%	5.7	< 0.1
CNN	86.4%	86.4%	90.7%	12.3	4.7
BiLSTM	87.3%	87.4%	91.4%	18.7	8.2
BERT-base	91.4%	91.5%	95.8%	43.2	110.0
RoBERTa	93.2%	93.2%	96.9%	47.8	125.0
Voting Ensemble	92.3%	92.4%	96.2%	65.3	—
Stacked Ensemble	94.1%	94.1%	97.4%	71.4	—
FAT Baseline	95.1%	95.1%	98.1%	52.3	111.0
HybridFND	**97.3%**	**97.3%**	**99.2%**	**56.7**	**131.4**

Looking across all models, there is a clear hierarchy: traditional ML plateaus around 86%, deep learning trained from scratch adds a few points, and pre-trained transformers represent the biggest jump to 91-93%. Hybrid and ensemble approaches push further still, with HybridFND reaching 97.3%. The cost of this performance progression is computational traditional ML runs in sub-millisecond inference time on CPU, while BERT-scale models require GPU inference at ~43-57 milliseconds per article. The practical implication is that the choice of model should depend on both accuracy requirements and computational constraints of the deployment context.

4. Performance Analysis

Experimental results — overall performance across all models, category-level analysis, cross-dataset generalisation, error analysis, and a practical deployment framework. It corresponds to Objective 5 of the research.

4.1 Comprehensive Performance Analysis

Table 7.1: Complete Performance Metrics — All Models (Test Set)

Model	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1-Score	AUC-ROC
Random Forest	83.2%	81.9%	84.8%	83.3%	88.9%
XGBoost	86.1%	84.9%	87.4%	86.1%	91.8%
BiLSTM	87.3%	86.1%	88.7%	87.4%	91.4%
CNN	86.4%	85.3%	87.6%	86.4%	90.7%
BERT-base	91.4%	90.7%	92.3%	91.5%	95.8%
RoBERTa	93.2%	92.8%	93.7%	93.2%	96.9%
Stacked Ensemble	94.1%	93.6%	94.7%	94.1%	97.4%
FAT Baseline	95.1%	94.8%	95.5%	95.1%	98.1%
HybridFND	**97.3%**	**97.1%**	**97.5%**	**97.3%**	**99.2%**

HybridFND achieves the best performance across all evaluation metrics: 97.3% accuracy, 97.1% precision, 97.5% recall, 97.3% F1-score, 99.2% AUC-ROC. The near-identical precision and recall (difference of 0.4 percentage points) is encouraging from a deployment standpoint — the model is not strongly biased toward false positives or false negatives. The 99.2% AUC-ROC indicates near-perfect discrimination, meaning the model can reliably rank fake news above genuine news across virtually all classification thresholds.

McNemar's test confirmed that every performance improvement over every baseline is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$ after Bonferroni correction). The 2.2% accuracy improvement over the Feature-Augmented Transformer baseline is particularly meaningful, because FAT is the most direct comparison: it adds engineered features to BERT but does not add the BiLSTM sequential processing. HybridFND's advantage over FAT directly demonstrates that the BiLSTM branch and cross-attention fusion contribute genuine performance gains, not just additional parameters.

4.2 Category-wise Performance Analysis

Looking at performance by content domain, the pattern holds consistently across all five categories. HybridFND's advantage over BERT-base ranges from 5.3 to 6.8 percentage points depending on the domain — it is not a domain-specific effect. Health news is the most challenging category for all models, with HybridFND reaching 94.1% accuracy compared to 97.8-98.2% in other domains. This reflects the genuine difficulty of health misinformation, which often mixes real medical information with false claims in a way that resists simple binary classification. Entertainment news, by contrast, is the easiest category — presumably because the fake news in that domain is more stylistically extreme.

Table 7.2: Category-wise Detection Accuracy by Content Domain

Domain	HybridFND Acc.	BERT Acc.	XGBoost Acc.	# Articles
Politics	97.8%	92.1%	87.4%	32,868
Health	94.1%	88.7%	81.2%	16,135
Science	97.2%	91.8%	83.7%	11,912
Economics	96.4%	90.3%	85.1%	8,014
Entertainment	98.2%	93.4%	88.9%	4,641
Overall	97.3%	91.4%	86.1%	73,570

Health news detection is the most challenging category across all models, with HybridFND achieving 94.1% accuracy compared to 97.8-98.2% in other domains. This reflects the linguistic complexity of health misinformation, which often contains a mixture of factual health information and fabricated claims, creating hybridized content that resists binary classification. The relatively lower citation density difference between fake and genuine health news (compared to political news) reduces the discriminative power of metadata features in this domain.

Entertainment news is the easiest category for all models, with HybridFND achieving 98.2% accuracy. This may reflect the more distinctive linguistic markers of celebrity gossip fake news exaggerated emotional language, sensationalist phrasing, and credibility-challenged sources that are reliably detected by all model types. The consistent performance advantage of HybridFND over BERT-base across all domains (6.8-5.3 percentage points) confirms that the architectural improvements are not domain-specific.

5. Conclusion and Future Scope

In conclusion, this doctoral research has demonstrated that automated fake news detection is a technically feasible and practically achievable goal, that the linguistic and metadata fingerprint of fake news is statistically robust and computationally detectable, and that hybrid deep learning architectures combining the complementary strengths of transformer-based and sequential recurrent models represent a promising path toward high-accuracy real-world detection. The research also demonstrates through the cross-dataset generalization analysis, error analysis, and ethical considerations that automated detection systems must be deployed with appropriate humility about their limitations, with robust human oversight, and with genuine commitment to transparency, fairness, and accountability. The fight against misinformation ultimately requires not just better algorithms but better institutions, better incentives, and better norms algorithms are one essential component of a larger sociotechnical response to one of the defining challenges of the information age. Text is only one channel through which fake news deceives, and a multimodal system that integrates visual, audio, and text signals would be substantially harder to circumvent. The HybridFND cross-attention framework could potentially be extended with image encoder branches and audio encoder branches, with cross-modal attention mechanisms analogous to the text-level fusion.

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