

AI and IoT Enabled Sleep Stage Classification

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Abstract: Sleep is a key aspect affecting health, cognitive functionality, and human psychology on all occasions. Therefore, on the one hand, sleep greatly impacts the quality of life, while on the other hand poor health and/or psychology often deteriorate the quality of sleep. Moving beyond the golden standard for sleep studies, i.e. polysomnography, and building on the current state of the art in wearables, this paper aims to propose a deep learning approach that focuses on sleep stage classification, introducing the timeseries related information input to the classification. In this respect, smartwatch sensor measurements are used and a series of methods have been tested. The proposed approach constitutes a preliminary work on sleep stage classification introducing a novel approach of feature engineering incorporating the time-related information concerning the transition of the sleep stages via a Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) encoding of the accelerometer data from smartwatches. The obtained results are compared with the outcomes of existing related approaches on the same open dataset as previously published. The respective evaluation exhibits promising findings and shortcomings compared to previous approaches and polysomnography analysis correspondingly. In addition, the choice of appropriate evaluation metrics has emerged, since traditional classification metrics such as accuracy, are not appropriate to capture the real performance in terms of the transition of the stages sequence in the resulted hypnograms.

1 INTRODUCTION

Sleep habits and sleep patterns are associated with brain functionality and structure. Sleep is intrinsically related to well-being, mental, and physical health as highlighted in (Tahmasian et al., 2020). There is a vicious circle in place where poor sleep can lead to increased risk of poor health, and poor health can make it harder to sleep or severely limit its quality. It is well established that sleep disturbances/disorders are often among the first signs of distress (Anderson and Bradley, 2013), where common mental health problems such as anxiety and depression (Dinges et al., 1997) can often underpin sleep problems (Oh et al., 2019).

Currently, the golden standard in sleep monitoring and analysis is polysomnography (PSG), the most reliable and comprehensive method for diagnosing

sleep disorders that provides trustful insights on the user-subject sleep analysis (Rundo and Downey III, 2019). PSG requires in-laboratory overnight multi-channel and video recording of sleep under a trained technician supervision. Thus, PSG is a time consuming and labor intensive procedure, especially for the meta-analysis of the recorded multisource signals as well as in money. In addition, PSG is limited to sleep data of a single night, is obstructive and in the vast majority of the cases stressful for the people undergoing this procedure. Furthermore, it is well documented that apart from the inherent variability among nights of sleep, the intrusive nature of the PSG data acquisition affects the analysis outcome (Herbst et al., 2010), usually in an unknown and unexplored manner.

As an alternative to the gold standard the PSG monitoring, wearables have been proven to be able to provide a feasible and promising approach (Kwon et al., 2021) mainly due to their lower cost, reasonable accuracy and ability to measure sleep in the wild (without medical supervision) for long periods of time

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(accumulation of big data), while limiting the inconvenience caused by the PSG setup. As a result, there is a growing interest of researchers on the clinical sleep domain concerning the potential of employing Consumer Sleep Technologies (CST) (Kwon et al., 2021). This is further strengthened by the fact that the number of available devices claiming to track and define sleep-related metrics (Khosla et al., 2018) is growing fast. Nevertheless, there are limited validation data available regarding the evaluation of their performance in terms of sleep stage classification accuracy and conformity to the PSG studies. Moreover, validation studies typically demonstrate sensitivity of about 90%, but exhibit sensitivity that varies in the range of 20% to 80% (De Zambotti et al., 2019; de Zambotti et al., 2020; Goldstein, 2020). It is thus obvious that further work is needed to investigate the potential use, performance and limitations of wearables in terms of their efficient and reliable application in sleep research. The aim of this study is to extend the current state of the art in wearable-based sleep monitoring employing AI towards enhancing the achieved performance and accuracy of sleep stages identification as well as other sleep metrics such as sleep phases duration, awakenings etc. More specifically, this paper focuses mainly in feature engineering on two of the sensor measurements acquired by smartwatches, namely heart rate and accelerometer signals in tandem with novel classification model development vs. currently state-of-the-art.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows: Section II presents a brief background on related work. Then, Section III describes the data used herein, and Section IV the methodology for the developed workflow and assumptions made. Section V holds the results, accompanied by the relative discussion, while Section VI concludes the work and sets pointers to future work.

2 RELATED WORK

During the last 40 years, the use of wrist-worn actigraphy and/or watch-like devices sensitive to motion, have been investigated for their capabilities in distinguishing between sleep from wake. The approaches that have been developed, have reported performances on the basis of two levels of analysis. The first is the epoch level, i.e. the ability of a device to correctly classify each sleep epoch (typically 30 secs), while the second accounts for the night level, i.e. the ability of the device to summarize the entire night of sleep and the corresponding quantifications of sleep stages. Actigraphy as the first and most employed

data acquisition for detecting sleep, exhibits high sensitivity, between 0.87 to 0.99, while the corresponding specificity is pretty low, between 0.28 to 0.67, as reported in (Van De Water et al., 2011). Several approaches, such as Sadeh (Sadeh, 1989), Cole-Kripke (Cole et al., 1992), and UCSD algorithm (Jean-Louis et al., 2001) among others have been proposed throughout the years, but their low specificity drove the research of alternative unobstructive techniques of PSG towards devices that are able to provide additional signal like heart rate, oxygen saturation among others. Currently, the consumer generation of wearable devices claim to measure sleep are using multisensory data acquisition, typically microelectromechanical systems (MEMS) accelerometers and photoplethysmography (PPG) (Fonseca et al., 2017; Goldstone et al., 2018). On top of the aforementioned rapid sensor advancements, machine learning techniques that employ the offered capabilities (computing power, memory) to the analysis of novel input data are well-suited for the prediction of sleep metrics. Thus, it is apparent that the algorithms developed for the existing actigraphy are most likely to be outperformed, since multimodal signals convey more information. One such study is (Walch et al., 2019), where the authors have reported good classification metrics using a variety of algorithms and input features. The work presented here is a follow up to this paper (Walch et al., 2019), introducing the information of time dependence among of sequential 30secs epochs of the signal. This time dependent information serves as the input for the classification, performed via Long Short Term Memory (LSTM) (Hochreiter and Schmidhuber, 1997) feature extraction from accelerometer data fused with the aligned heart rate signal.

3 SLEEP MONITORING DATASET USED

Although the importance of a “good night’s sleep” is unquestionable in everyday life, the available state of the art still remains limited especially in terms of evaluation towards PSG recordings. Nevertheless, there are a few notable efforts appear that aim to bridge this gap, but the difficulty of introducing such big-scale, datasets remain unresolved. This is further intensified considering the amount of data that is paired with both actigraphy and polysomnography. To the best of our knowledge only (Walch et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2018b; Chen et al., 2015) are open source and targeted to the scientific community available through (Goldberger et al., e 13) and (Redline et al., 2014).

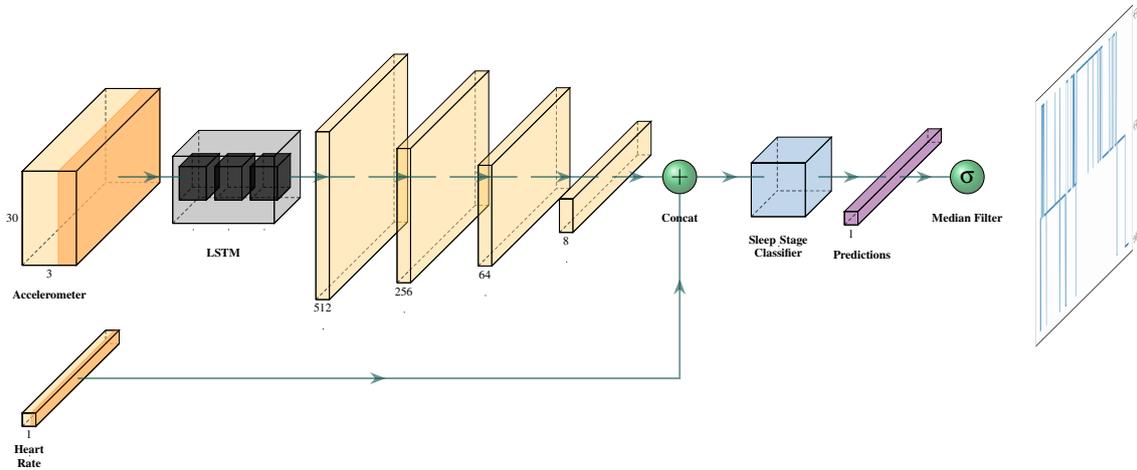


Figure 1: Architecture of the proposed sleep stage classifier leading to the classified hypnogram.

As presented in (Walch et al., 2019), Apple Watch dataset is a study of 31 individuals that had been monitored using Apple Watches. More specifically, the heart rate, daily steps and motion had been collected for each patient. The sampling intervals are not consistent for every metric and therefore further processing needed to take place, in order for the data to be aligned and refer to the same time slots.

Each sample consists of the three Cartesian dimensions (x, y, z) with a sample rate of approximately 50 Hz, accompanied by heart rate monitoring. Even though the heart rate sampling frequency is varying, the sample intervals tend to be shorter than 10 seconds. Since sleep stage labels are provided for a constant 30 seconds interval (Walch et al., 2019), the employed methodology tackles the specific interval. It should be highlighted that the 30 seconds window is also the preferred interval of choice for the medical personnel of the sleep clinics for their analysis. These consistent timestamps are used to properly align both the heart and the accelerometer data. Although, information for patients health (chronic diseases, etc.), we chose not to include this information since it would increase the class imbalance between samples. Afterwards, sleep stages classification is independent from the health status; only the overall hypnogram is related to the physical health of the person under study.

To this end, as far as the alignment concerns, the authors of the aforementioned publication provide a processing utility that aligns the PSG timestamps of the data and extracts features that can be directly fed into machine learning models (Walch et al., 2019). The proposed approach in this paper is largely inspired by the tools presented in (Walch et al., 2019) and integrates alternative data processing and knowledge extraction techniques. As mentioned in (Walch et al., 2019), the MEMS metric (te Lindert

and Van Someren, 2013) is used to narrow down the high sampling rate of the accelerometer.

The initial experiments conducted are based on the aforementioned features and employ all models presented in (Walch et al., 2019). Finally, it is highlighted that the LSTM model has been employed for feature extraction from the accelerometer sensor of the device, as discussed in detail in Section 5.2.

4 PROPOSED APPROACH

In this section, the developed and adopted methods for data transformation, along with the classification algorithms and pipeline, are discussed in detail. First, the data and their respective annotations have undergone a remapping, in terms of classes, due to the heavy imbalance among the class distribution (Table 1). Specifically, some of the original classes are largely outnumbered ($-1, 0, 1, 4$), and thus merging them in a rational way on the basis of the respective sleep stage resemblance has been performed. This resulted in wider classes, transforming the problem to be solved into a three classes Wake/NREM/REM classification problem. After the new classes were formed, samples from classes that exceeding a percentage threshold were eliminated, in an attempt to further balance the distributions among the samples in terms of the classification labels.

Table 1: Distribution amongst classes.

	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
Default	438	2358	1761	12585	3303	356	5690
merge(-1, 0)	-	2796	1761	12585	3303	356	5690
3 classes	-	2796	17649	6046	-	-	-
3 classes*	-	2796	11715	6046	-	-	-

*: Adjusted distribution.

These numbers correspond to a 30secs window epoch, as in (Walch et al., 2019).

Under this classification reformulation, the accelerometer data time stamps were used as reference for the alignment of both heart rate signal and PSG sleep stages annotations. For the experiments performed to simulate the results from (Walch et al., 2019), the described metric is applied before any alignment, thus reducing the “accelerometer feature” into a sample for every 15 seconds period. Other experiments did not make use of this metric, instead median subsampling was utilized to narrow down the sampling rate to 1 sample per second. The latter enables a deeper level of functionality since it allows for far more experimentation in the time domain.

The proposed methodology presented herein, consists of investigating **two** different approaches in order to determine the more efficient one in terms of encapsulating the most informative aspects of the sleep classification problem complexity. Specifically, according to the simplest concept, each sample epoch is treated as having no dependencies to the others. This approach serves as a performance baseline for future developments reference. It is evident that its simplistic approach to the labyrinthine of sleep classification problem, does not take into account neither the “personalized profile” of individual patients nor the time signature; i.e. the prior and post- information inter-correlation of the sleep stages.

The second, more complex, method is built upon the time inherent property of the accelerometer, where a deep learning model is introduced to capture patterns hidden in the time domain. This model consists of an LSTM and 4 fully connected layers (Fig. 1). To be more specific, first and foremost an LSTM model of 3 layers followed by a hidden layer with a size of 512 dimensions, is initiated. This part is responsible for predicting the sleep stage having as input the three accelerometer parameters (the three dimensions). Once the data have been propagated through the LSTM model, a series of fully connected layers attempt to narrow down the overall number of dimensions, effectively functioning as a dimensionality reduction algorithm. The final layer scales down the information to 8 dimensions, which is then concatenated with the heart rate signal for that given interval. This final vector is fed into a final fully connected layer that is responsible for inferring the Sleep Stage.

In order to suppress any delta function type outcome, a smoothing post processing step has been applied on the resulted hypnogram so as to filter any inconsistent classification outcome. For this, a median filter of kernel size of 3 was applied on the resulting prediction labels for the entire timeseries (hypnogram). Finally, for the evaluation of the proposed approach against the reported performance in (Walch

et al., 2019), Logistic Regression (LR), Support Vector Machine (SVM) and a Fully Connected model have been considered.

5 RESULTS

5.1 Concept I: Individual Samples

In the first evaluation concept as described earlier, each sample is treated as independent of the others, resulting in a pool of all the different samples. Each time, one sample is propagated through the network. As already stated, the accelerometer signal consists of 50 samples at the 3-dimensional Cartesian space (x, y, z) per second, while heart rate by 1 sample per 10 seconds. Also, the annotations were provided by a sample rate of 30 seconds, an epoch. The two different data pre-processing approaches adopted herein (please refer to the Methods Section) have been used. The first, the aggregation approach, is denoted with (●) in Table 2 and implements the corresponding aggregation method as it has been described in (Walch et al., 2019). This approach combines the accelerometer data in a 15 seconds time window; i.e. 750 accelerometer samples are encoded in one single metric. The second approach, proposed herein, aggregates the accelerometer data within a time window of 1 second utilizing median down-sampling. The advantages posed by the latter approach towards the former are that is more easily understood, more informative and it is less time-consuming during the training phase.

At this point, it should be mentioned that the concept of using individual samples as input data to the classification models, is not applicable to the proposed classification workflow since the latter requires input batches of time-series signal and not individual samples.

The resulting outputs for the aforementioned LR, SVM, and NN models (Table II), show that NN coupled with the first aggregation approach is more efficient in terms of accuracy and precision, while LR performs equally well. The classification metric values reported here in terms of Wake/NREM/REM classification of samples when cross-checked with the related confusion matrices (not shown due to space limitations) reveal that the correct classifications mainly refer to either the classification of the NREM class (the dominant class, Table I) or Wake (Fig. 2b, where Fig. 2a shows the ground truth hypnogram). Thus, as it will be shown later, the resulting output of a subject’s hypnogram disregards, showing the inability of the models to capture and illustrate the hypnogram’s structure, the main objective of sleep analy-

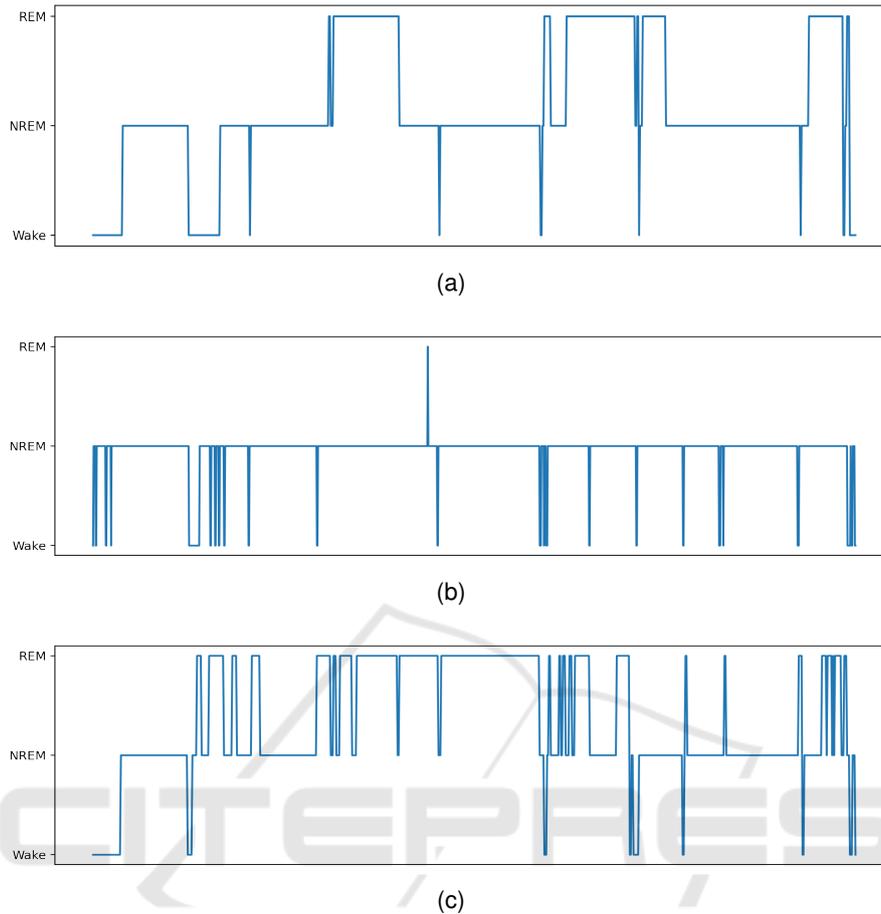


Figure 2: Patient's Sleep Stages (a) Ground truth sleep stages along time (hypnogram), (b) reconstructed using the best individual sampling model, (c) reconstructed using the proposed timeseries model.

sis. Rather, they reflect the distribution of the underlying sleep classes in the dataset, which is also the real distribution of the stages during sleep. Finally, it should be stated that concerning the results reported in (Walch et al., 2019) and the relevance to those reported here, fixed thresholds have been assigned for the Wake (0.3) and REM (0.35) classes. Further, no validation of the resulting hypnograms has been performed.

Table 2: Concept 1 Classification Results.

<i>Model</i>	<i>Accuracy</i>	<i>Precision*</i>	<i>Recall*</i>	<i>CK</i>
LR [•]	64.46	47.11	64.46	0.0875
SVM [•]	29.07	35.84	29.07	0.0360
NN [•]	66.62	48.81	66.62	0.1726
LR	63.26	40.03	63.26	0.0001
SVM	16.97	57.90	16.97	0.0584
NN	49.02	52.79	49.02	-0.093

*Weighted, [•](x, y, z) is aggregated into a single metric.

5.2 Concept II: Timeseries

The second concept considered herein builds on the previous (Section 5.1) extended by the inclusion of the time domain information into learning. Thus, the number of samples being fed to the network is increased in tandem with the introduction of the proposed time-specific deep learning model, LSTM (Fig. 1). To this end 2 samples, each accounting for 15 seconds in length aggregated samples ([•] in Table 3) are fed into the classification modules at each propagation, representing a 30 seconds data frame. Apparently, in the case of 1-second sampling, 30 samples are fed simultaneously. The corresponding results for all the considered classification models herein are presented in Table 3. As can be inferred by the results, it is not obvious that the proposed scheme poses any advantage over the other classification model although it presents a similar performance. In a second, more holistic comparison, the hypnogram output of the proposed approach (Fig. 2), compared to the ground

truth (PSG) and the best performing model (according to the reported metrics), the advantages are now revealed. The sleep structure, i.e. the ordered sequence of the sleep stages along time, is much better captured and reflected by the proposed methodology, something that is also supported by the related confusion matrices (not shown due to length restrictions).

This finding is very crucial in sleep assessment studies since sleep analysis (sleep quality and sleep disorder manifestation) is made upon the investigation of sleep stages’ chronological order and not solely based on the correct classification of stages regardless of the time of their incidence. Sleep stages onset and offset, duration and the time sleep stages sequence are of crucial importance. The proposed workflow is thus performing better in terms of outlining and revealing the real hypnogram structure than other models (with the same concept of timeseries data input adopted). Apparently, incorporating the underlying time information enables more efficient capturing of the “hidden” pattern, i.e. the stages’ sequence. One way to assess the concurrence and agreement of the predicted hypnogram to the ground truth is using the Cohen’s kappa (CK) (McHugh, 2012). CK is considered a robust measure agreement metric that also takes into account the possibility of the agreement occurring by chance.

From Table 3 it is more than obvious that methods (LR, SVM and NNs) exhibiting higher accuracy have near to zero CK values, while the proposed approach exhibits a value of 0.21, leading to the conclusion that it provides more valuable information and increased reliability than the other models, in terms of sleep metrics that matter the most.

Table 3: Concept 2 Classification Results.

Model	Accuracy	Precision*	Recall*	CK
LR•	64.39	46.65	64.39	0.1094
SVM•	65.37	47.35	65.37	0.1490
NN•	64.95	47.05	64.95	0.1180
LR	63.38	52.94	63.38	0.0257
SVM	63.26	40.01	63.26	0.0
NN	63.02	45.14	63.02	0.0158
DeepSleepLSTM	57.54	62.29	57.54	0.2127

*Weighted, •: (x, y, z) is aggregated into a single metric.

6 CONCLUSION & FUTURE PLANS

Herein, a preliminary work on sleep stage classification is presented, introducing a novel approach of feature engineering to incorporate time related information of stages’ transition during sleep via LSTM encoding of accelerometer data. The results support the

advantages of the proposed methodology over existing approaches. Thus, although the performance metrics of the presented model seem equivalent to others, the prediction of sleep stages’ transition has been shown to be more closely related to the ground truth, i.e. PSG-based annotations. There are several factors that limit the performance mainly addressed to: the data size, their high imbalance degree and the inherent lower sensitivity of wearable sensors in comparison to PSG recording and monitoring. Another issue that has been emerged is the appropriate evaluation metrics that should be considered, since it is apparent from this study, that due to the nature of the data, common metrics are inappropriate. It is crucial to understand and employ adequate, and not misleading metrics, exhibiting the agreement of the output structure and stage transition sequence in the hypnograms to the golden standards, i.e. the sleep clinic experts’ annotations based on PSG recordings.

Towards the advancement of the presented performance, the future undergoing plans involve the inclusion to the research, additional signals like breathing rate, SpO2 levels and heart rate variability (HRV), that has been recently reported as highly informative for sleep analysis and towards reliable wearable based sleep assessment in (Lujan et al., 2021). Those signals are available by the current wearable device technology. So, the first development of the current work involves the incorporation of as many of this information to enhance the decision making process. In addition, much larger datasets are going to be employed, such as the MESA dataset (Zhang et al., 2018a). Furthermore, experimentation with the models size, accelerometer feature extraction and the modification towards encompassing state of the art architectures (i.e. Transformers) is another under investigation aspect of the ongoing research.

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