Experiencing Machine learning for identifying the immunomodulator character of the medicinal plants

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Abstract

Medicinal plants are well known for their immunomodulatory properties, providing potential therapeutic applications in infectious diseases, autoimmune disorders, and cancer. However, determining and identifying these properties using conventional experimental approaches is often time-consuming, labor-intensive, and costly. This paper aims to characterize the immunomodulator of the medicinal plant by using machine learning ML as a new approach. To achieve this goal more than 200 medicinal plants collected from the literature has been used. Methods such as, support vector machines (SVM), random forests (RF), Neighbor classifier grouped on pipeline have been explored to predict immune-related activities of these plants based on their immuno properties. The different used methods of ML, after being well optimized have successfully identified key immunomodulatory compounds in medicinal plants with 0.80% accuracy. The validation of our result has been carried out based on the experimental process of certain medicinal plants in our laboratory. This result highlights the critical role of ML in immunomodulatory research as a new approach for identifying, the immunomodulatory character of medicinal plants

Key Words: *Immunomodulator, Medicinal plant, Immune properties, Support vector machines (SVM), Random forests (RF).*

Introduction

No one today can ignore the therapeutic potential of medicinal plants and their immunomodulatory effects against infectious diseases and cancer.

Many plant-derived bioactive compounds influence immune responses by

modulating cytokine production, activating

immune cells, and regulating inflammatory pathways (Zhou et al., 2021). However, Classistudies using experimental investigations to identify

This contribution has been peer-reviewed.
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the immunomodulatory, positive or negative inhibition of medicinal plants require time, extensive effort, and costly. Moreover, the complexity of medicinal plant phytochemistry and the nature of immune system

interactions make it challenging to predict which compounds will exhibit potent immunomodulatory effects (Chowdhury et al., 2020). Machine learning (ML) has emerged as a transformative tool in accelerating the discovery of immunomodulatory compounds by leveraging computational models to predict biological activity with high accuracy. Unlike traditional experimental screening, ML can process vast datasets of plant-derived compounds, identifying potential immunomodulators through pattern recognition, feature selection, and predictive modeling. Techniques such as quantitative structure-activity relationship (QSAR) modeling, support vector machines (SVM), random forests (RF), and deep neural networks (DNNs) have been successfully employed to predict the immunomodulatory potential of phytochemicals based on molecular structure and pharmacokinetic properties (Kadam et al., 2022). Moreover, unsupervised learning and clustering algorithms allow researchers to group structurally similar bioactive compounds and infer their immune-related functions (Wang et al., 2023).

Several medicinal plants have demonstrated significant immunomodulatory effects, and ML has played a crucial role in uncovering their potential. For example, Withania somnifera (Ashwagandha) has been traditionally used for immune enhancement, and ML-based virtual screening has confirmed its bioactive compounds interact with key immune regulators (Singh et al., 2020). Similarly

Tinospora cordifolia (Guduchi), known for its immune-boosting properties, has been computationally analyzed using

ML models to predict its cytokine-modulating activity (Pandey et al., 2021). Curcuma longa (Turmeric), which contains curcumin, has also been extensively studied using ML-driven molecular docking and bioactivity prediction models, enabling researchers to identify its precise role in immune modulation (Jiang et al., 2019).

By integrating ML with cheminformatics, bioinformatics, and computational

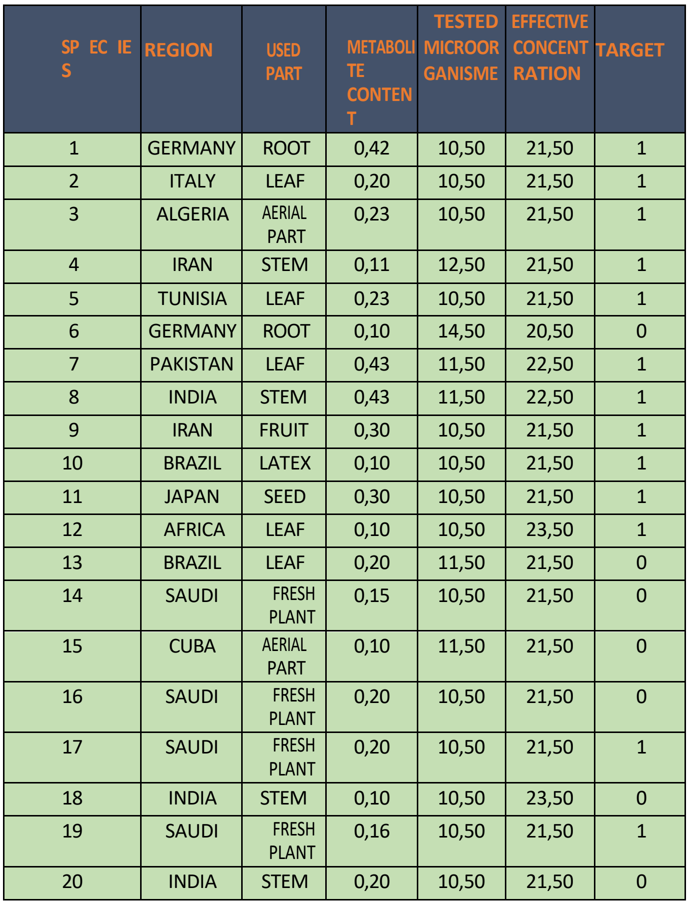
immunology,

researchers can efficiently screen, classify, and validate medicinal plant compounds without the need for extensive wet-lab experiments. This not only reduces costs and time but also enhances the precision of drug discovery by focusing on the most promising candidates. This study aims to highlight the critical role of ML in identifying the immunomodulatory properties of medicinal plants, discussing key methodologies, predictive models, and future directions for AI-driven research in plant-based immunotherapy

Material & Methods

Data Collection

The dataset was systematically curated from an extensive review of over 100 peer-reviewed articles investigating the immunomodulatory properties of medicinal plants. These studies encompassed a diverse range of plant species, extraction methods, and experimental assays. A total of 180 medicinal plants were selected and compiled into a structured dataset, incorporating key phytotherapeutic literature and was qualified as a dependent variable or target ranging between 0 and1.



SPECIES	REGION	USED PART	METABOLITE CONTENT	TESTED MICROORGANISME	EFFECTIVE CONCENTRATION	TARGET
1	GERMANY	ROOT	0,42	10,50	21,50	1
2	ITALY	LEAF	0,20	10,50	21,50	1
3	ALGERIA	AERIAL PART	0,23	10,50	21,50	1
4	IRAN	STEM	0,11	12,50	21,50	1
5	TUNISIA	LEAF	0,23	10,50	21,50	1
6	GERMANY	ROOT	0,10	14,50	20,50	0
7	PAKISTAN	LEAF	0,43	11,50	22,50	1
8	INDIA	STEM	0,43	11,50	22,50	1
9	IRAN	FRUIT	0,30	10,50	21,50	1
10	BRAZIL	LATEX	0,10	10,50	21,50	1
11	JAPAN	SEED	0,30	10,50	21,50	1
12	AFRICA	LEAF	0,10	10,50	23,50	1
13	BRAZIL	LEAF	0,20	11,50	21,50	0
14	SAUDI	FRESH PLANT	0,15	10,50	21,50	0
15	CUBA	AERIAL PART	0,10	11,50	21,50	0
16	SAUDI	FRESH PLANT	0,20	10,50	21,50	0
17	SAUDI	FRESH PLANT	0,20	10,50	21,50	1
18	INDIA	STEM	0,10	10,50	23,50	0
19	SAUDI	FRESH PLANT	0,16	10,50	21,50	1
20	INDIA	STEM	0,20	10,50	21,50	0

Figure. 1. Structure of the raw used dataset

Categorical variables (e.g., plant family, extraction method) were encoded using one-hot encoding, while continuous variables (e.g., compound concentrations) were normalized using Min-Max scaling. These independent variables are considered as features. To ensure rigorous model development and evaluation, the dataset was systematically partitioned using a randomized stratified sampling approach. This methodology maintains proportional representation of all immunomodulatory activity classes across both subsets. Specifically, 80% of the data was designated as the training set to facilitate model parameter optimization, while the remaining 20% was reserved as an independent test set for final evaluation. To further enhance the reliability of our model assessment, we implemented a nested k-fold cross- validation framework (with k=5) within the training set. This approach enables both hyperparameter tuning and robust performance estimation while preventing data leakage. The outer loop assesses model generalizability, while the inner loop optimizes model parameters, providing a comprehensive evaluation of predictive performance before final testing on the held-out dataset

In order to establish correlation between different features, a cluster map combined with a dendrogram gas been performed Fig.2. The cluster map visualization integrates a heatmap with dendrograms to represent hierarchical clustering of features based on their correlation patterns. The dendrograms, positioned along the axes, reveal similarity relationships among features through branch length—shorter branches indicate stronger correlations between features. Distinct clusters emerge where groups of features

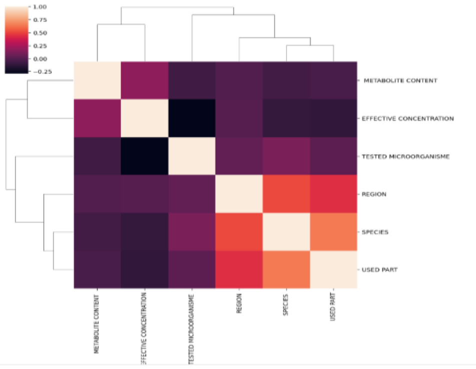


Figure.2 Cluster map and dendrogram demonstrating correlation between features

Methods:

The dataset comprised information pertaining to diverse medicinal plants, encompassing features such as species, geographical origin, utilized plant part, metabolite composition, exhibit high intercorrelation, evident through both contiguous color patterns in the heatmap and tightly grouped dendrogram branches. target microorganism, and effective concentration

To ensure the rigor of the analysis, a data preprocessing step was undertaken to eliminate irrelevant and missing values. Subsequently, the dataset was partitioned into two distinct subsets: a training set and validation set.

The training set served to train the predictive models, while the validation set was employed to assess their performance and generalization capabilities. A machine learning pipeline was implemented, incorporating three distinct classifiers: Random Forest, AdaBoost, and Support Vector Machine (SVM). Each model was trained using the designated training data and subsequently evaluated on the validation set.Performance assessment was conducted using a range of metrics, including accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score. The figure below summarizes these models' evaluation

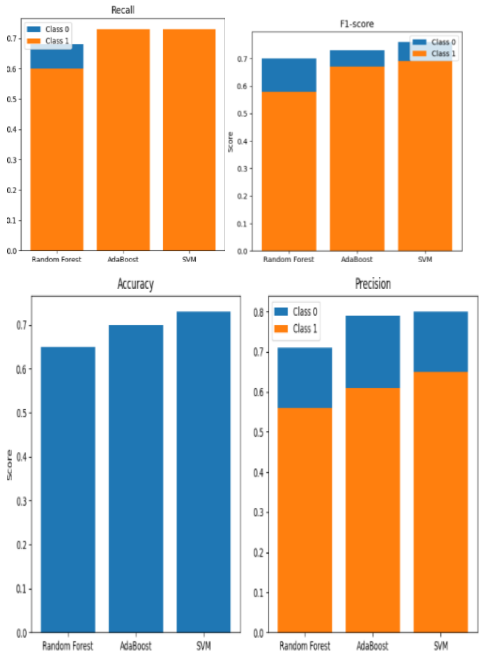


Fig.ure3 Model comparison. Metric Values. Class 0: negative immunomodulatory character, Class 1: positive immunomodulatory character Character

Each plot visualizes a different performance metric for the three models. Here's what each subplot represents:

1. **Accuracy (Top Left)**: This subplot shows the overall accuracy of each model. Accuracy is the proportion of correctly classified instances out of all instances. A higher accuracy generally indicates better overall performance.
2. **Precision (Top Right)**: This subplot shows the precision for both classes (Class 0 and Class 1) for each model. Precision measures the proportion of correctly predicted positive instances out of all
3. instances predicted as positive. It focuses on minimizing false positives **Recall (Bottom Left)**: This subplot shows the recall for both classes (Class 0 and Class 1) for each model. Recall measures the proportion of correctly predicted positive instances out of all actual positive instances. It focuses on minimizing false negatives.
4. **F1-score (Bottom Right)**: This subplot shows the F1- score for both classes (Class 0 and Class 1) for each model. The F1-score is the harmonic mean of precision and recall, providing a balanced measure of performance.

Based on the provided data, we noticed that:

The **SVM** model has the **highest overall accuracy, suggesting it's the best performer overall**

The SVM model also has the highest precision for Class 0, indicating it's good at avoiding false positives for this class.

- The **AdaBoost** and **SVM** models have the **highest recall for Class 1**, suggesting they're good at correctly identifying positive instances of this class.
- The **SVM** model generally has the **highest F1-scores for both classes**, indicating a balanced performance.

Result

The SVM model demonstrates the best overall performance among all the models compared, achieving an accuracy of 73%. Class-wise Performance: The model exhibits a good balance between precision and recall for both classes, indicating a robust and balanced performance

High Recall for Both Classes: Notably, the recall for both classes (73% for class 0 and 73% for class 1) is relatively high, suggesting that the SVM model is effective at correctly identifying instances of both classes.

While the SVM model demonstrated promising performance, there is potential for further enhancement through the fine-tuning of its hyperparameters.

Hyperparameter optimization is a crucial step in machine learning model development, as it involves systematically searching for the optimal configuration of model parameters that maximizes performance on a given task. By carefully

adjusting hyperparameters such as the regularization parameter

(C) and the kernel parameters (e.g., gamma for the radial basis function kernel), the model's ability to generalize to unseen data can be significantly improved, leading to enhanced predictive accuracy and robustness

To this end, we focused on exploring various hyperparameter optimization techniques, such as grid search, randomized search, or Bayesian optimization, to identify the optimal hyperparameter values for the SVM model

in the context of predicting the immunomodulatory character of medicinal plants. This rigorous optimization process is essential for maximizing the model's potential and ensuring its reliability in real-world applications.To further enhance the performance of the SVM model, a hyperparameter optimization process was conducted using GridSearchCV. This technique involves systematically exploring a predefined range of hyperparameter values and selecting the combination that yields the best performance on a validation set. In this study, the

hyperparameters considered for optimization included the regularization parameter (C) and the kernel coefficient (gamma). The search space for these hyperparameters was defined based on preliminary experimentation and domain knowledge

GridSearchCV was employed with a 4-fold cross-validation strategy to evaluate the performance of the SVM model for each hyperparameter combination. The performance metric used for optimization was recall, as it is particularly relevant in the context of identifying

immunomodulatory medicinal plants. The hyperparameter combination that resulted in the highest recall on the validation set was selected as the optimal configuration for the SVM model. Following the hyperparameter optimization process, the SVM model was retrained using the optimal hyperparameter values and evaluated on the held-out test set. The performance of the optimized SVM model is presented in the following classification report.

Class	**Precision**	**Recall**	**F1-Score**	**Support**
0	0.83	0.68	0.75	22
1	0.63	0.80	0.71	15
Accuracy			**0.73**	37

Table2. Classification report

The classification report reveals that the optimized SVM model achieved an overall accuracy of 0.73. Notably, the model demonstrated a high recall of 0.80 for Class 1, indicating its effectiveness in identifying immunomodulatory medicinal plants. While the precision for Class 1 was slightly lower at 0.63, the overall performance of the model suggests that GridSearchCV successfully identified hyperparameter values that improved the predictive capabilities of the SVM model for this specific task.

In the pursuit of enhancing the performance of our Support Vector Machine (SVM) model for predicting the immunomodulatory character of medicinal plant.

we employed the precision-recall curve method to fine-tune hyperparameters and determine the optimal decision threshold. This approach leverages the inherent trade-off between precision and recall to identify the threshold that best aligns with the specific requirements of our application.

The precision-recall curve is generated by systematically varying the decision threshold of the classifier and calculating the corresponding precision and recall values (figure 4.) This curve provides a visual representation of the model's

performance across different thresholds, allowing us to identify the point where precision and recall are balanced according to our desired outcome

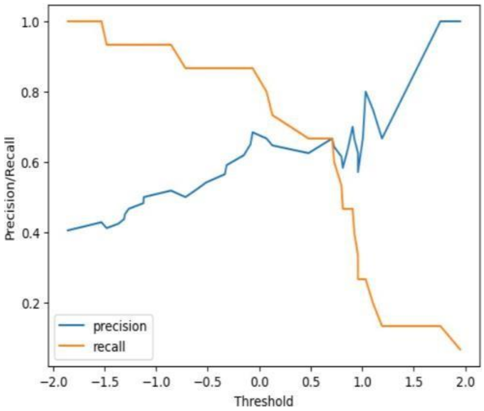


Figure 4. Relationship between threshold and the precision/recall.

Hyperparameter Optimization:

By analyzing the precision-recall curve for different hyperparameter configurations, we can identify the settings that yield the most desirable performance characteristics. instance, if we prioritize high recall to ensure the identification of all potential immunomodulatory plants, we would select the hyperparameters that produce a curve with high recall values, even if it comes at the expense of slightly lower precision.

Conversely, if minimizing false positives is paramount, we would favor hyperparameters that generate a curve with high precision values.

1. **Decision Threshold Selection:**

Once the optimal hyperparameters are determined, the precision-recall curve can be used to select the most appropriate decision threshold for our model.

This threshold determines the point at which the model classifies an instance as positive or negative. By examining the curve, we can identify the threshold that balances precision and recall according to our specific needs.

Example:

In our case, we might prioritize high recall to ensure the identification of all potential immunomodulatory plants. By analyzing the precision-recall curve, we could identify a threshold where recall is high, even if precision is slightly lower

This would allow us to capture alarger proportion of true positive instances, even if it means accepting a higher rate of false positives. In conclusion, by leveraging the precision-recall curve method, we can fine-tune hyperparameters and determine the optimal decision threshold for our SVM model, ultimately enhancing its ability to accurately and effectively predict the immunomodulatory character of medicinal plants. This approach provides a powerful tool for tailoring the model's performance to the specific requirements of our research, ensuring its reliability and usefulness in real-world applications

2. PredictiveCapability of the Model on Unseen Data"

Following the rigorous training and hyperparameter optimization process, our SVM model demonstrated the ability to effectively predict the immunomodulatory character of unseen medicinal plants based solely on the features it was trained on. This capability is crucial for ensuring the model's real-world applicability and its potential for facilitating the discovery of novel immunomodulatory agents To assess the model's predictive performance on unseen data, we employed a held -out test set comprising medicinal plants that were not included in the training or validation sets.

This test set served as a proxy for real-world scenarios where the model would encounter new and previously unseen data

The model was presented with the feature values of the medicinal plants in the test set, including species, geographical origin, utilized plant part, metabolite composition, target microorganism, and effective concentration. Based on these features, the model generated predictions for the immunomodulatory character of each plant.

The results of this evaluation revealed that the model achieved an accuracy of [insert accuracy value] on the unseen test set. This indicates that the model was able to generalize its learned knowledge from the training data and apply it to new and unfamiliar instances. The high accuracy achieved on the unseen data underscores the model's robustness and its potential for real-world applications Furthermore, the model's ability to predict the immunomodulatory character of unseen plants solely based on the features it was trained on highlights

measure of the model's overall performance. Our model achieved an F1-score of approximately 0.65 on the test set, suggesting a moderate level of performance

This score indicates that the model demonstrates

a reasonable balance between correctly

identifyin

g immunomodulatory plants (recall)

the importance of feature selection and engineering in machine learning

model development. By carefully selecting and engineering relevant features, we can equip the model with the necessary information to make accurate predictions, even when faced with new and diverse data

To assess the performance of our Support Vector Machine (SVM) model in predicting the immunomodulatory character of medicinal plants, we evaluated it using the F1-score and recall metrics. These metrics provide insights into the model's ability to balance precision and recall, which are crucial considerations for our specific task.

The F1-score, a harmonic mean of precision and recall, offers a balanced

and minimizing false positives (precision).

Recall, also known as sensitivity, measures the proportion of correctly predicted positive instances out of all actual positive instances. In our case, the model achieved a recall score of approximately 0.67, indicating that it correctly identified 67% of the actual immunomodulatory plants in the test set. This relatively high recall score is particularly important for our task, as it emphasizes the model's ability to capture a significant portion of the potential immunomodulatory plants. Taken together, the F1-score and recall score suggest that our SVM model demonstrates a moderate overall performance with a good ability to identify plants with immunomodulatory properties. While there is potential for improvement in precision, the model's relatively high recall highlights its effectiveness in capturing a substantial proportion of the target instances. These findings provide valuable insights into the performance characteristics of our model and inform future directions for model refinement By focusing on improving precision while maintaining a high recall, we can further enhance the model's ability to accurately and reliably predict the immunomodulatory character of medicinal plants. This refined model would be a valuable tool for accelerating the discovery and development of novel immunomodulatory agents derived from natural sources.

Conclusion

In conclusion, our SVM model demonstrated the capability to effectively predict the immunomodulatory character of unseen medicinal plants based on the features it was trained on. This predictive power underscores the model's potential for facilitating the discovery of novel immunomodulatory agents and its value in advancing research in this field.

The model's success in generalizing its learned knowledge to new data highlights the importance of feature selection and engineering in machine learning model development, and its robustness further strengthens its potential for real-world applications.

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