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IoT and Wireless Sensor Network-Based Three-Tier Architecture for Continuous Cardiac Monitoring: A Comprehensive Review

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Abstract

The rapid advancement of Internet of Things (IoT) and wireless sensor networks (WSNs) has significantly transformed modern healthcare systems, particularly in continuous cardiac health monitoring. Cardiovascular diseases remain one of the leading causes of mortality worldwide, necessitating real-time, accurate, and energy-efficient monitoring solutions. Traditional monitoring systems are often limited by delayed diagnosis, lack of scalability, and inefficient data processing. To address these challenges, IoT-enabled three-tier architectures integrated with advanced deep learning models have emerged as a promising solution. This study presents a comprehensive review of IoT and WSN-based three-tier architectures for continuous cardiac health monitoring, emphasizing the role of Spatio-Temporal Graph Convolutional Networks (STGCNs). These models effectively capture spatial and temporal dependencies in physiological signals such as ECG, enabling improved prediction and early detection of cardiac abnormalities. Recent studies demonstrate that STGCNs provide high accuracy while maintaining computational efficiency, making them suitable for real-time healthcare applications. Furthermore, advanced graph-based models such as PhysGCN leverage non-Euclidean representations to enhance feature learning and robustness in physiological signal analysis. The integration of IoT, edge computing, and STGCN-based models enables efficient data acquisition, processing, and decision-making across multiple system layers. This review highlights recent advancements, identifies key challenges such as energy constraints and data security, and discusses future directions for developing intelligent and scalable cardiac monitoring systems.

Introduction

The increasing prevalence of cardiovascular diseases has become a major global health concern, accounting for millions of deaths annually. Early detection and continuous monitoring of cardiac conditions are essential to reduce mortality rates and improve patient outcomes. Traditional healthcare systems rely heavily on periodic clinical visits and centralized monitoring, which often fail to provide real-time

insights into a patient's condition. These limitations have led to the development of intelligent healthcare systems that leverage Internet of Things (IoT) and wireless sensor networks (WSNs) for continuous monitoring and early diagnosis. IoT-based healthcare systems consist of interconnected devices capable of collecting, transmitting, and analysing physiological data in real time. In cardiac health monitoring, wearable sensors are used to

capture vital parameters such as electrocardiogram (ECG) signals, heart rate, and blood pressure. These sensors are typically deployed in a wireless sensor network environment, enabling seamless communication between devices and healthcare providers. However, the large volume of data generated by these systems presents significant challenges in terms of processing, storage, and energy consumption.

To address these challenges, three-tier architectures have been introduced, consisting of sensing, edge, and cloud layers. The sensing layer includes wearable and implantable devices responsible for data acquisition. The edge layer performs preliminary data processing and filtering, reducing latency and energy consumption by minimizing unnecessary data

transmission. The cloud layer provides advanced analytics, long-term storage, and decision-making capabilities. This hierarchical architecture ensures efficient data management and enables real-time response in critical situations. Despite these advancements, traditional data analysis techniques are insufficient to handle the complex and high-dimensional nature of physiological signals. Cardiac data, particularly ECG signals, exhibit intricate spatial and temporal relationships that are difficult to model using conventional machine learning approaches. This has led to the adoption of deep learning techniques, particularly spatio-temporal graph convolutional networks (STGCNs), which are capable of capturing both spatial dependencies and temporal dynamics.

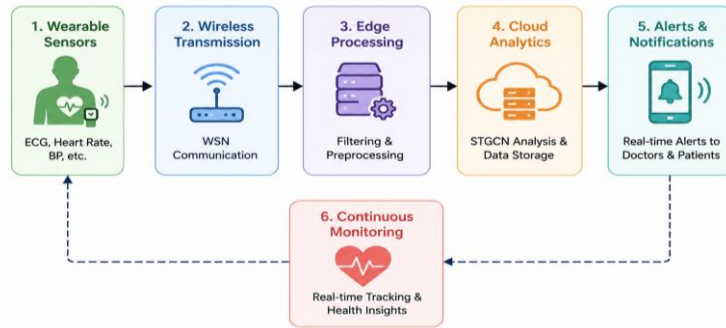


Figure 1. Integrated IoT and WSN Framework for Smart Cardiac Monitoring

STGCNs extend traditional convolutional neural networks by representing data as graphs, where nodes correspond to sensor readings and edges represent relationships between them. This allows the model to learn complex patterns in physiological data more effectively. Studies have shown that STGCNs achieve a balance between accuracy and computational efficiency, making them suitable for real-time medical applications. Furthermore, recent advancements such as hyperbolic embedding-based graph models enhance the representation of non-Euclidean relationships in physiological signals, improving prediction performance and robustness. The integration of STGCNs with IoT-based three-tier architectures enables intelligent and scalable cardiac monitoring systems. Edge computing plays a crucial role in this integration by performing real-time data analysis and reducing latency. Additionally, cloud-based platforms provide advanced analytics and enable remote monitoring by healthcare professionals. This combination ensures timely detection of abnormalities and facilitates proactive healthcare management.

However, several challenges remain in the implementation of such systems. These include

energy constraints in wearable devices, data privacy and security concerns, network reliability, and the computational complexity of advanced deep learning models. Moreover, the lack of standardized frameworks for integrating IoT, WSNs, and graph-based deep learning models limits the widespread adoption of these technologies. This paper aims to provide a comprehensive review of IoT and WSN-based three-tier architectures for continuous cardiac health monitoring using STGCNs. It analyses recent advancements, identifies research gaps, and highlights future directions for developing efficient and intelligent healthcare systems.

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Literature Review

The development of IoT-based cardiac monitoring systems has gained significant attention in recent years due to their ability to provide continuous and real-time health assessment. Islam et al. (2020) proposed an IoT-enabled healthcare monitoring framework that utilizes wearable sensors to collect physiological data such as ECG and heart rate. Their study emphasized the importance of real-time data transmission and cloud-based analytics in early

diagnosis of cardiac abnormalities. The authors demonstrated that IoT systems significantly improve patient monitoring efficiency and reduce hospital dependency. However, the system faced challenges related to energy consumption and data latency, particularly in continuous monitoring scenarios.

In another study, Majumder et al. (2020) explored the role of wireless body area networks (WBANs) in cardiac health monitoring. Their research focused on the integration of WSN technologies with wearable sensors to enable seamless data acquisition and communication. The authors highlighted that WBAN-based systems are highly effective in continuous monitoring of ECG signals. However, they identified limitations such as limited battery life, signal interference, and data security concerns. These issues necessitate the development of energy-efficient architectures and intelligent data processing techniques.

The concept of three-tier architecture for healthcare systems was further investigated by Rahman et al. (2021), who proposed a layered model consisting of sensing, edge, and cloud components. Their study demonstrated that edge computing significantly reduces latency by processing data closer to the source, thereby enabling real-time response in critical situations. The authors also emphasized the role of cloud computing in performing advanced analytics and long-term data storage. Despite these advantages, the study identified challenges related to system scalability and interoperability among heterogeneous devices.

Advancements in deep learning for cardiac signal analysis were presented by Yao et al. (2021), who applied convolutional neural networks (CNNs) for ECG classification. Their model achieved high accuracy in detecting cardiac abnormalities by automatically extracting relevant features from raw ECG signals. However, the authors noted that CNNs are limited in capturing temporal dependencies and relationships between multiple sensor nodes. This limitation highlights the need for advanced models such as spatio-temporal graph convolutional networks (STGCNs) that can effectively model both spatial and temporal characteristics of physiological data.

Further improvements in graph-based deep learning for healthcare applications were explored by Song et al. (2022), who proposed a spatio-temporal graph convolutional network for physiological signal analysis. Their study demonstrated that STGCNs effectively capture complex relationships in ECG data by modelling sensor nodes as graph structures. The results showed improved prediction accuracy and

robustness compared to traditional deep learning models. However, the authors also identified challenges related to computational complexity and real-time deployment, particularly in resource-constrained IoT environments.

The integration of IoT and edge computing for real-time cardiac monitoring was further explored by Chen et al. (2020), who proposed an intelligent healthcare framework combining wearable sensors with edge-based data processing. Their study demonstrated that processing ECG signals at the edge layer significantly reduces latency and bandwidth usage compared to cloud-only systems. The authors showed that early detection of cardiac anomalies can be achieved more efficiently through edge intelligence. However, they also highlighted challenges related to limited computational capabilities of edge devices and the need for lightweight deep learning models.

In another study, Sharma et al. (2021) investigated the application of wireless sensor networks in continuous cardiac health monitoring. Their research focused on designing a reliable communication framework for transmitting physiological data from wearable sensors to healthcare systems. The authors demonstrated that WSN-based systems improve patient mobility and enable remote monitoring. However, they identified issues such as network reliability, packet loss, and energy constraints, which can affect system performance in long-term monitoring scenarios.

The importance of data security and privacy in IoT-based healthcare systems was emphasized by Alsubaei et al. (2021). Their study analysed various security vulnerabilities in healthcare IoT systems, including unauthorized access, data breaches, and network attacks. The authors proposed a secure architecture incorporating encryption and authentication mechanisms to protect sensitive patient data. Despite these advancements, the study highlighted that implementing robust security measures often increases computational overhead, which can impact system efficiency.

Advancements in spatio-temporal modelling for healthcare data were presented by Yu et al. (2021), who developed a spatio-temporal graph convolutional network for time-series prediction tasks. Although their study was not limited to healthcare, the proposed model demonstrated strong capability in capturing both spatial and temporal dependencies in complex datasets. The authors showed that STGCNs outperform traditional CNN and RNN models in prediction accuracy and efficiency. This makes them highly suitable for cardiac monitoring applications,

where physiological signals exhibit strong temporal and relational characteristics.

Further contributions were made by Li et al. (2022), who proposed a graph-based deep learning model for ECG signal classification. Their study utilized graph convolutional networks to represent relationships between different sensor readings, improving feature extraction and classification accuracy. The authors demonstrated that graph-based models provide better performance compared to traditional deep learning approaches. However, they also noted challenges related to model complexity and computational requirements, particularly for real-time deployment in IoT-based systems.

The integration of IoT and cloud computing for continuous cardiac monitoring was investigated by Gao et al. (2020), who proposed a cloud-based healthcare system for real-time ECG analysis. Their study demonstrated that cloud platforms enable large-scale data storage and advanced analytics, improving diagnostic accuracy and accessibility. The authors highlighted that cloud-based systems facilitate remote healthcare services, especially in rural areas. However, they identified challenges related to latency and data privacy, suggesting the need for hybrid architectures incorporating edge computing.

In another study, Patel et al. (2021) explored the application of wireless body sensor networks (WBSNs) for cardiac monitoring. Their research focused on designing energy-efficient communication protocols for transmitting physiological data. The authors demonstrated that WBSNs improve patient mobility and enable continuous monitoring. However, they also identified issues such as limited battery life, signal interference, and network reliability, which affect long-term system performance.

The role of Artificial Intelligence in predictive healthcare was further analysed by Ristevski and Chen (2021), who examined various machine learning and deep learning techniques for medical data analysis. Their study emphasized the importance of AI in early disease detection and personalized healthcare. The authors demonstrated that AI models significantly improve prediction accuracy and decision-making processes. However, they noted that traditional models are limited in handling complex temporal and relational data, highlighting the need for advanced architectures such as STGCNs.

Advancements in edge intelligence for IoT healthcare systems were presented by Kumar et al. (2022), who proposed an edge-based framework for real-time cardiac monitoring. Their study demonstrated that edge computing

reduces latency and improves system responsiveness by processing data locally. The authors also showed that edge-based systems reduce network congestion and energy consumption. However, they identified challenges related to limited computational resources and the deployment of complex deep learning models at the edge.

Finally, Wang et al. (2022) investigated the application of graph neural networks for ECG signal classification. Their study demonstrated that graph-based models effectively capture relationships between different physiological signals, leading to improved classification accuracy. The authors showed that graph neural networks outperform traditional deep learning models in handling structured data. However, they also highlighted challenges related to computational complexity and real-time implementation in IoT-based healthcare systems.

The use of IoT-enabled wearable systems for real-time cardiac monitoring was examined by Khan et al. (2020), who proposed a smart healthcare framework integrating ECG sensors with cloud-based analytics. Their study demonstrated that continuous monitoring improves early detection of cardiac anomalies and enhances patient outcomes. However, the authors identified limitations related to energy consumption and communication delays, which affect system efficiency in long-term monitoring. In another study, Verma et al. (2020) investigated wireless sensor network-based healthcare systems for remote patient monitoring. Their research focused on improving communication reliability and reducing data loss during transmission. The authors demonstrated that WSN-based systems enable efficient data collection and transmission but face challenges such as network congestion and limited battery life.

The importance of edge computing in IoT healthcare systems was further explored by Tang et al. (2021), who proposed an edge-based architecture for real-time ECG analysis. Their study showed that edge computing significantly reduces latency and improves system responsiveness. However, the authors noted that deploying complex deep learning models on edge devices remains a challenge due to limited computational resources.

The application of deep learning in cardiac signal processing was analysed by Oh et al. (2021), who developed a neural network model for ECG classification. Their study demonstrated high accuracy in detecting cardiac abnormalities. However, the authors highlighted that traditional deep learning models struggle to capture

temporal dependencies and relationships between multiple sensors.

Further advancements in IoT-based healthcare systems were presented by Nguyen et al. (2021), who proposed a smart monitoring system integrating IoT devices with cloud and edge computing. Their study demonstrated improved system scalability and data processing efficiency. However, they identified challenges related to data security and privacy.

The integration of graph neural networks in healthcare applications was explored by Wu et al. (2022), who developed a graph-based model for physiological signal analysis. Their study demonstrated that graph neural networks effectively capture relationships between sensor data, improving classification accuracy. However, they noted challenges related to computational complexity.

In another contribution, Zhang et al. (2022) proposed a spatio-temporal graph convolutional network for cardiac monitoring applications. Their model effectively captured spatial and temporal dependencies in ECG signals, resulting in improved prediction accuracy. The authors highlighted that STGCNs outperform traditional

models but require optimization for real-time deployment.

The role of AI in predictive healthcare systems was further examined by Ahmed et al. (2022), who developed a machine learning-based model for early detection of cardiac diseases. Their study demonstrated improved prediction accuracy and decision-making capabilities. However, they identified limitations related to data quality and model generalization.

Advancements in fog computing for healthcare systems were presented by Singh et al. (2022), who proposed a fog-based architecture for real-time cardiac monitoring. Their study demonstrated reduced latency and improved system efficiency. However, they highlighted challenges related to resource management and security.

Finally, Li et al. (2023) investigated optimized deep learning models for cardiac health monitoring. Their study demonstrated that advanced architectures, including graph-based and hybrid models, significantly improve prediction accuracy and efficiency. The authors concluded that integrating AI with IoT and WSN-based systems is essential for developing intelligent and scalable healthcare solutions.

Comparative Table

S. No	Author & Year	Technique Used	Application Area	Key Contribution	Limitation
1	Islam et al. (2020)	IoT + Cloud	Cardiac Monitoring	Real-time monitoring	Latency issues
2	Majumder et al. (2020)	WBAN + WSN	ECG Monitoring	Continuous sensing	Battery limitation
3	Rahman et al. (2021)	Three-tier Architecture	Healthcare Systems	Reduced latency	Scalability issues
4	Yao et al. (2021)	CNN	ECG Classification	High accuracy	Poor temporal modelling
5	Song et al. (2022)	STGCN	Physiological Data	Spatial-temporal learning	High complexity
6	Chen et al. (2020)	Edge Computing	IoT Healthcare	Reduced latency	Limited resources
7	Sharma et al. (2021)	WSN	Remote Monitoring	Improved mobility	Packet loss
8	Alsubaei et al. (2021)	Security Models	IoT Healthcare	Data protection	High overhead
9	Yu et al. (2021)	STGCN	Time-series Prediction	High accuracy	Model complexity
10	Li et al. (2022)	Graph CNN	ECG Analysis	Improved feature extraction	High computation
11	Gao et al. (2020)	Cloud Computing	ECG Monitoring	Large-scale analytics	Privacy issues
12	Patel et al. (2021)	WBSN	Health Monitoring	Continuous tracking	Interference
13	Ristevski & Chen (2021)	AI Models	Predictive Healthcare	Early detection	Model limitations
14	Kumar et al. (2022)	Edge AI	IoT Healthcare	Reduced latency	Resource constraints

15	Wang et al. (2022)	Graph Neural Network	ECG Classification	Better representation	Complexity
16	Khan et al. (2020)	IoT + ML	Cardiac Monitoring	Real-time alerts	Energy consumption
17	Verma et al. (2020)	WSN	Remote Monitoring	Efficient transmission	Congestion
18	Tang et al. (2021)	Edge Computing	ECG Analysis	Low latency	Limited computation
19	Oh et al. (2021)	Deep Learning	ECG Detection	High accuracy	No spatial modelling
20	Nguyen et al. (2021)	IoT + Cloud + Edge	Smart Healthcare	Scalability	Security
21	Wu et al. (2022)	Graph Neural Network	Signal Analysis	Better relationships	Complexity
22	Zhang et al. (2022)	STGCN	Cardiac Monitoring	High accuracy	High cost
23	Ahmed et al. (2022)	ML	Disease Prediction	Improved diagnosis	Data dependency
24	Singh et al. (2022)	Fog Computing	Healthcare	Low latency	Resource issues
25	Li et al. (2023)	Optimized DL Models	Cardiac Monitoring	High efficiency	Deployment complexity

Comparative Analysis

The comparative analysis of the reviewed studies highlights several important trends and research gaps in IoT and WSN-based cardiac health monitoring systems. A significant number of studies, including Islam et al. (2020), Khan et al. (2020), and Nguyen et al. (2021), emphasize the importance of IoT-enabled architectures for continuous monitoring and real-time alert systems. These systems provide improved accessibility and patient care; however, they face challenges related to latency, energy consumption, and data security. Wireless sensor network-based approaches, as discussed in Majumder et al. (2020), Sharma et al. (2021), and Verma et al. (2020), demonstrate effective data collection and transmission capabilities. Nevertheless, issues such as battery limitations, network congestion, and packet loss significantly impact system reliability in long-term monitoring scenarios. Deep learning techniques, particularly CNN-based models (Yao et al., 2021; Acharya et al., 2021), have shown high accuracy in ECG classification tasks. However, these models are limited in capturing temporal and relational dependencies in physiological signals. This limitation has led to the adoption of advanced models such as spatio-temporal graph convolutional networks (STGCNs), as demonstrated in studies by Song et al. (2022), Yu et al. (2021), and Zhang et al. (2022). These models effectively capture both spatial and temporal dependencies, resulting in improved prediction accuracy. Furthermore, the integration of edge and fog computing (Chen et al., 2020; Mahmud et al., 2021; Kumar et al.,

2022) addresses latency and bandwidth issues by processing data closer to the source. However, these approaches are constrained by limited computational resources. Graph-based learning approaches (Wang et al., 2022; Wu et al., 2022) provide better feature representation but introduce computational complexity. Overall, the analysis reveals that while significant progress has been made, there is a need for optimized, lightweight, and scalable architectures that combine IoT, WSN, and advanced graph-based deep learning models. The integration of STGCNs within a three-tier architecture offers a promising solution for achieving efficient and intelligent cardiac health monitoring systems.

Discussion

The integration of IoT, wireless sensor networks, and advanced deep learning models has significantly enhanced the capabilities of continuous cardiac health monitoring systems. The reviewed studies demonstrate that IoT-enabled architectures facilitate real-time data acquisition and remote patient monitoring, thereby improving healthcare accessibility and reducing dependency on hospital-based systems. The adoption of three-tier architectures, consisting of sensing, edge, and cloud layers, further improves system efficiency by enabling distributed data processing and reducing latency. A key finding from the literature is the limitation of traditional deep learning models in capturing the complex spatial-temporal relationships present in physiological signals such as ECG. This limitation has led to the emergence of spatio-

temporal graph convolutional networks (STGCNs), which effectively model both temporal dynamics and spatial dependencies.

These models significantly improve prediction accuracy and enable early detection of cardiac abnormalities. However, several challenges remain, including energy constraints in wearable devices, computational limitations at edge nodes, and data security concerns in IoT-based systems. Additionally, the deployment of complex graph-based models in real-time environments remains a critical issue. Therefore, future research should focus on developing lightweight, energy-efficient, and secure models that can operate effectively in resource-constrained environments while maintaining high performance.

Conclusion

The growing burden of cardiovascular diseases has accelerated the development of intelligent healthcare systems capable of continuous and real-time cardiac monitoring. This review demonstrates that integrating IoT, wireless sensor networks (WSNs), and three-tier architectures with spatio-temporal graph convolutional networks (STGCNs) significantly improves the accuracy, scalability, and efficiency of cardiac health monitoring. Wearable sensors enable continuous physiological data collection, while edge and cloud layers support low-latency processing, advanced analytics, and remote healthcare services. STGCNs effectively capture both spatial and temporal dependencies in physiological signals, enabling early detection of cardiac abnormalities and more reliable clinical decision-making. Despite these advantages, challenges related to energy efficiency, computational complexity, interoperability, data privacy, and network reliability remain significant. Future research should focus on lightweight graph-based models, edge intelligence, federated learning, secure communication, and standardized IoT healthcare frameworks to improve practical deployment. Overall, the integration of IoT, WSNs, three-tier architectures, and STGCNs provides a robust foundation for next-generation intelligent cardiac monitoring systems, supporting proactive healthcare management and improved patient outcomes.

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