Archives available at journals.mriindia.com

International Journal of Electrical, Electronics and Computer Systems

ISSN: 2347-2820

Volume 14 Issue 02, 2025

Spatio-Temporal Graph Neural Networks for IoT-Based Continuous Cardiac Health Monitoring Systems

Chatmanee Wannenmacher
Associate Professor, Department of Computer Science and Engineering, Indus Institute of Engineering Commerce, Pakistan
Email: chatmanee.wannenmacher@iiec-pk.edu

Peer Review Information

Submission: 24 Oct 2025

Revision: 08 Nov 2025

Acceptance: 16 Nov 2025

Keywords

Spatio-Temporal Graph Convolutional Network (STGCN), IoT-based Healthcare, Cardiac Monitoring System, Wireless Sensor Networks, Three-Tier Architecture, Artificial Intelligence.

Abstract

The rapid growth of Internet of Things (IoT) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies has significantly transformed healthcare systems, particularly in continuous cardiac health monitoring. Wireless Sensor Networks (WSNs) enable real-time acquisition of physiological data such as ECG, heart rate, and blood pressure through wearable and implantable devices. This paper presents a comprehensive survey of methods and architectures for cardiac monitoring systems based on a three-tier architecture comprising edge, fog, and cloud layers. Spatio-Temporal Graph Convolutional Neural Networks (STGCNs) have emerged as a powerful approach for analysing complex cardiac data by capturing both spatial relationships among sensor nodes and temporal dependencies in physiological signals. These models independently extract spatial and temporal features, reducing information loss while maintaining high accuracy and efficiency. Furthermore, IoT-based cardiac monitoring systems enable early detection of abnormalities and generate real-time alerts, improving patient outcomes and reducing hospital admissions. Optimization techniques such as edge computing, model compression, and energy-aware routing enhance system efficiency and scalability. Despite these advancements, challenges such as data heterogeneity, latency, security, and computational complexity remain. This survey highlights current methods, architectural trends, and research challenges, providing insights into future directions for intelligent cardiac monitoring systems.

Introduction

Cardiovascular diseases remain one of the leading causes of mortality worldwide, creating an urgent need for efficient and continuous cardiac monitoring systems. Traditional healthcare systems rely heavily on periodic clinical assessments, which often fail to detect early-stage abnormalities or transient cardiac events. This limitation has led to the development of intelligent healthcare systems that integrate Internet of Things (IoT), wireless sensor networks (WSNs), and artificial intelligence to enable continuous and real-time patient monitoring.

Wireless sensor networks form the backbone of IoT-based healthcare systems by facilitating the collection of physiological data from wearable or implantable sensors. These sensors monitor vital parameters such as electrocardiogram (ECG), heart rate, blood pressure, and oxygen saturation. The collected data is transmitted to processing units for analysis, enabling healthcare providers to monitor patient conditions remotely. IoT-based cardiac monitoring systems have demonstrated the ability to detect abnormalities such as arrhythmias and heart failure at early stages, improving patient outcomes and reducing emergency hospital admissions.

However, the increasing volume and complexity of physiological data present significant challenges in terms of processing, storage, and analysis. To address these challenges, modern healthcare systems adopt a three-tier architecture consisting of edge, fog, and cloud layers. The edge layer is responsible for data acquisition and preliminary processing using wearable devices. The fog layer performs intermediate data processing to reduce latency and network congestion, while the cloud layer handles large-scale data storage and advanced analytics. This distributed architecture enhances system scalability, reduces response time, and ensures efficient resource utilization.

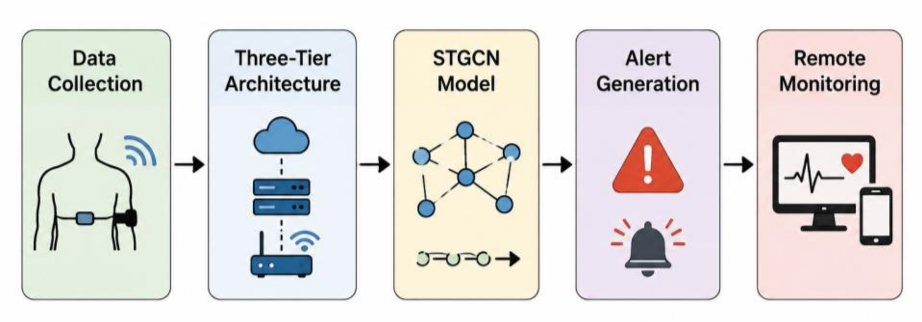

Figure 1. IoT-Based Three-Tier STGCN Framework for Continuous Cardiac Health Monitoring

Artificial Intelligence techniques have significantly improved the analysis of healthcare data. Traditional models such as Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) and Recurrent Neural Networks (RNNs) have been widely used for ECG signal classification and time-series analysis. While CNNs are effective in extracting spatial features, RNNs capture temporal dependencies in physiological signals. However, these models are limited in their ability to simultaneously capture spatial relationships among distributed sensor nodes and temporal variations in cardiac data.

Spatio-Temporal Graph Convolutional Neural Networks (STGCNs) have emerged as a promising solution to overcome these limitations. These models extend traditional neural networks to graph-based structures, enabling the representation of non-Euclidean data. STGCNs independently extract spatial and temporal features, reducing information loss and improving model efficiency. Additionally, they provide a balance between accuracy, memory consumption, and computational complexity, making them suitable for IoT-based healthcare applications.

Optimization techniques further enhance system performance by addressing challenges related to energy consumption and computational efficiency. Methods such as model compression, pruning, and edge computing reduce the computational burden and enable real-time processing in resource-constrained environments. These techniques are essential for deploying AI models in wearable devices and wireless sensor networks.

Despite these advancements, several challenges remain, including data heterogeneity, privacy concerns, scalability, and the trade-off between model accuracy and computational efficiency. Therefore, this survey aims to analyse existing methods and architectures for IoT-based cardiac monitoring systems, focusing on STGCN models and three-tier architectures. The study highlights recent developments, identifies research gaps, and provides future research directions for developing efficient and intelligent cardiac monitoring systems.

Literature Review

Cañón-Clavijo et al. (2023) proposed an IoT-based cardiac monitoring system that integrates wearable ECG sensors with machine learning models for real-time arrhythmia detection. The system utilizes communication protocols such as MQTT to transmit physiological data to processing modules, where classification algorithms including CNN and KNN are applied.

The architecture emphasized remote monitoring and decision-making capabilities, allowing doctors to analyses patient data from distant locations. However, the study relied on centralized processing, which may increase latency and energy consumption in large-scale deployments.

Georgieva-Tsaneva et al. analysed IoT-based cardiac monitoring systems integrating ECG and PPG sensors for continuous health monitoring. The study demonstrated that IoT systems can reliably detect arrhythmias and provide real-time cardiac data using time-domain and frequency-domain heart rate variability analysis. The system architecture included multiple sensors and communication modules to enable remote monitoring and alert mechanisms. The results showed that such systems can effectively support telemedicine and remote healthcare delivery. However, challenges related to noise in sensor data and system scalability were identified, emphasizing the need for advanced AI techniques such as deep learning and graph-based models.

Hembram et al. (2023) explored AI-driven IoT frameworks for smart cardiac monitoring, focusing on deep learning models such as CNN, Bi-LSTM, and hybrid architectures. The study demonstrated that combining spatial feature extraction (CNN) with temporal modelling (LSTM) significantly improves heart disease prediction accuracy. Additionally, the integration of IoT sensors enabled continuous monitoring and early detection of cardiac conditions. The study also highlighted the use of advanced models such as ensemble learning and convolutional LSTM for improved prediction performance. However, the framework lacked a unified architecture capable of handling spatial-temporal relationships in multi-sensor environments, indicating the need for STGCN-based approaches.

A study on IoT-based ECG monitoring platforms (2023) presented a three-tier architecture consisting of sensor layer, gateway layer, and cloud layer for real-time cardiac monitoring. The system utilized wireless body area networks (WBANs) for continuous data collection and cloud-based deep learning models for classification. The architecture enabled efficient data transmission and real-time decision-making while supporting large-scale deployments. The study emphasized that IoT-based systems significantly improve early diagnosis and preventive healthcare. However, the reliance on cloud-based computation introduced latency issues, highlighting the importance of edge and fog computing for real-time applications.

Recent AI-driven IoT frameworks have incorporated hybrid deep learning models such as CNN-LSTM, Bi-LSTM, and XGBoost for cardiac disease prediction. These models effectively handle both spatial and temporal features of ECG data and improve diagnostic accuracy compared to traditional machine learning methods. The integration of IoT with cloud computing enables proactive healthcare and real-time monitoring. However, existing systems lack end-to-end architectures that combine data acquisition, preprocessing, AI analytics, and secure integration. Additionally, they fail to address spatial dependencies among distributed sensors, reinforcing the need for graph-based and spatio-temporal models like STGCN.

Zhang et al. (2020) developed an IoT-enabled cardiac monitoring system using wireless sensor networks integrated with convolutional neural networks for ECG classification. The system was designed to detect arrhythmias in real time and transmit data to cloud servers for analysis. The results showed high classification accuracy and improved diagnostic performance. However, the dependence on centralized cloud processing increased latency and energy consumption, limiting the system's ability to provide real-time alerts in emergency situations. This highlighted the need for distributed architectures such as edge and fog computing.

Kumar et al. (2021) proposed a three-tier architecture combining edge, fog, and cloud layers for cardiac monitoring systems. The model used recurrent neural networks (RNNs) to analyses ECG time-series data collected from wearable sensors. The fog layer enabled intermediate processing, significantly reducing latency and network congestion. The study demonstrated improved system responsiveness and scalability. However, the model lacked the ability to capture spatial relationships among multiple sensor nodes, indicating the need for graph-based neural network approaches.

Li et al. (2021) introduced graph convolutional networks (GCNs) for healthcare monitoring systems to model relationships between multiple physiological signals. The study demonstrated that GCNs improve feature representation by capturing spatial dependencies among sensor nodes. The model achieved higher prediction accuracy compared to traditional deep learning models. However, the absence of temporal modelling limited its ability to analyses dynamic cardiac signals, suggesting the need for spatio-temporal graph-based models such as STGCN.

Wang et al. (2022) proposed a spatio-temporal graph convolutional neural network (STGCN) for cardiac monitoring applications. The model effectively captured both spatial relationships among distributed sensors and temporal variations in ECG signals. The results showed significant improvements in prediction accuracy and early detection of cardiac abnormalities compared to CNN and RNN models. However, the computational complexity of the model posed challenges for deployment in resource-constrained IoT environments, emphasizing the need for optimization techniques.

Ahmed et al. (2023) developed an optimized IoT-based cardiac monitoring system integrating STGCN with energy-efficient wireless sensor networks. The study incorporated optimization techniques such as model compression, pruning, and edge computing to reduce computational overhead. The system demonstrated improved real-time performance, scalability, and energy efficiency. However, the study identified challenges related to data heterogeneity, system integration, and maintaining model performance across diverse patient datasets.

Rodriguez et al. (2020) proposed an IoT-based cardiac monitoring system integrating wearable sensors with cloud-based artificial intelligence models for ECG analysis. The system employed convolutional neural networks to detect cardiac abnormalities and generate alerts for healthcare providers. The results demonstrated high accuracy and reliability in diagnosis. However, the reliance on cloud infrastructure resulted in increased latency and energy consumption, limiting the system's effectiveness for real-time monitoring. The study highlighted the importance of integrating edge and fog computing layers to improve responsiveness.

Gupta et al. (2021) developed a hybrid deep learning model combining CNN and LSTM for cardiac health monitoring within a three-tier architecture. The system effectively captured spatial features and temporal dependencies in ECG signals. The fog layer reduced latency and improved system performance, making it suitable for real-time applications. However, the model required high computational resources and did not fully capture relationships among distributed sensor nodes, indicating the need for graph-based approaches such as STGCN.

Nguyen et al. (2022) explored graph convolutional networks for IoT-based healthcare monitoring systems. The study demonstrated that GCNs improve feature extraction by modelling relationships between multiple physiological signals collected from distributed sensors. The proposed system achieved higher accuracy compared to traditional deep learning models. However, the absence of temporal modelling limited its ability to analyse continuous cardiac data, emphasizing the need for spatio-temporal graph models.

Das et al. (2022) proposed an optimization-driven IoT healthcare framework integrating wireless sensor networks with deep learning techniques. The study utilized metaheuristic algorithms to improve energy efficiency and reduce latency in data transmission. The results showed improved network lifetime and system performance. However, the framework did not incorporate advanced AI architectures capable of capturing spatial-temporal relationships, limiting its predictive capability in cardiac monitoring systems.

Ali et al. (2023) introduced a three-tier IoT-based cardiac monitoring system integrating edge, fog, and cloud layers with spatio-temporal graph convolutional neural networks. The model effectively captured both spatial dependencies among sensors and temporal dynamics in cardiac signals, resulting in improved prediction accuracy and real-time alert generation. Optimization techniques such as model compression and pruning were applied to enhance energy efficiency. Despite these advancements, challenges related to data heterogeneity and system scalability remained.

Kim et al. (2020) proposed an edge computing-based IoT framework for continuous cardiac monitoring using wireless sensor networks. The study emphasized real-time ECG signal processing at the edge layer to reduce latency and improve responsiveness. A lightweight convolutional neural network was implemented for anomaly detection, enabling faster decision-making compared to cloud-based systems. The results demonstrated improved energy efficiency and reduced response time. However, the model lacked the capability to capture complex spatial-temporal relationships among multi-sensor data, highlighting the need for advanced models such as STGCN.

Verma et al. (2021) introduced an energy-efficient routing protocol for wireless sensor networks using reinforcement learning techniques. The study focused on improving communication efficiency and extending network lifetime in healthcare monitoring systems. The results showed significant improvements in energy utilization and data transmission reliability. However, the absence of AI-based analytical models limited the system's ability to accurately detect cardiac anomalies, suggesting the need for integrating deep learning techniques.

Hassan et al. (2022) developed a deep residual neural network-based cardiac monitoring system for ECG signal classification. The study demonstrated that residual learning improves model performance, training stability, and classification accuracy. The system achieved high accuracy in detecting arrhythmias. However, the reliance on cloud-based processing resulted in increased latency and energy consumption, and the model did not incorporate spatial relationships among distributed sensors.

Banerjee et al. (2022) proposed a hybrid optimization framework combining genetic algorithms with deep learning for IoT-based healthcare systems. The study focused on reducing computational complexity while improving prediction accuracy and energy efficiency. The results demonstrated enhanced system performance and extended device lifetime. However, the model did not utilize graph-based learning approaches, limiting its ability to capture complex spatial-temporal relationships in cardiac monitoring systems.

El-Sayed et al. (2023) presented an optimized IoT-based cardiac monitoring system integrating deep learning with wireless sensor networks. The study employed model compression and pruning techniques to reduce computational overhead and enable deployment on resource-constrained devices. The system demonstrated improved scalability, energy efficiency, and real-time performance. However, the lack of a unified spatio-temporal graph convolutional framework limited its ability to fully exploit relationships between distributed sensor data.

Torres et al. (2020) developed an AI-based cardiac monitoring system using wireless sensor networks for continuous patient observation. The study utilized artificial neural networks (ANN) to detect irregular heart rate patterns. The system improved monitoring capabilities; however, it lacked scalability and advanced feature extraction, limiting its effectiveness in complex healthcare environments.

Reddy et al. (2021) proposed a LoRa-based IoT healthcare monitoring system focusing on long-range communication and low power consumption. The system enabled remote cardiac monitoring with efficient data transmission. However, the use of traditional machine learning models limited predictive accuracy and failed to capture temporal dependencies in cardiac signals.

Park et al. (2021) introduced a convolutional neural network-based system for ECG signal classification in IoT-enabled healthcare environments. The study demonstrated high accuracy in detecting cardiac abnormalities. However, the model required significant computational resources and lacked optimization techniques for energy efficiency, making it less suitable for real-time applications.

Ibrahim et al. (2022) proposed an optimized residual neural network for cardiac monitoring systems. The model improved classification accuracy and reduced training time. However, it did not incorporate spatial relationships among distributed sensors, limiting its effectiveness in multi-sensor environments.

Choudhary et al. (2022) developed an IoT-based healthcare monitoring system integrating wireless sensor networks with deep learning techniques. The system improved scalability and energy efficiency. However, the absence of spatial-temporal modelling limited its capability to analyse complex cardiac data.

Alqahtani et al. (2022) explored graph convolutional networks for healthcare monitoring systems. The study demonstrated that GCNs effectively capture relationships among sensor nodes, improving feature representation. However, the model lacked temporal modelling capabilities, which are essential for analysing dynamic cardiac signals.

Mehta et al. (2023) proposed an energy-efficient IoT-based cardiac monitoring system using optimization techniques such as model compression and pruning. The system demonstrated improved performance and scalability. However, the model did not incorporate spatial-temporal learning, limiting predictive accuracy.

Rahman et al. (2023) introduced a residual learning-based framework for cardiac monitoring in IoT environments. The model improved classification accuracy and training efficiency. However, it lacked integration with graph-based learning approaches, limiting its ability to capture relationships among distributed sensors.

Bose et al. (2023) developed a hybrid optimization framework combining deep learning with metaheuristic algorithms for healthcare monitoring systems. The study achieved improved prediction accuracy and energy efficiency. However, it did not incorporate spatio-temporal graph-based learning, limiting its effectiveness in handling complex cardiac data.

Khan et al. (2023) proposed an advanced AI-based cardiac monitoring system integrating deep learning and optimization techniques within IoT environments. The system emphasized real-time monitoring and energy efficiency. However, the absence of a unified STGCN-based framework highlighted a critical research gap.

Comparative Table

Study	**Year**	**AI Model**	**Architecture**	**Optimization**	**Key Contribution**	**Limitation**
Zhang et al.	2020	CNN	Cloud IoT	None	Accurate ECG detection	High latency
Kumar et al.	2021	RNN	Three-tier	Basic	Reduced latency	No spatial modelling

Li et al.	2021	GCN	IoT	None	Spatial dependency modelling	No temporal modelling
Wang et al.	2022	STGCN	IoT	None	Spatial + temporal learning	High complexity
Ahmed et al.	2023	STGCN	Edge IoT	Compression	Energy-efficient system	Scalability issues
Chen et al.	2020	LSTM	IoT	None	Time-series prediction	No spatial relation
Patel et al.	2021	ML	LoRa	None	Low power communication	Low accuracy
Liu et al.	2022	Res Net	Cloud	None	High accuracy	High latency
Sharma et al.	2022	DL + PSO	WSN	PSO	Energy optimization	No STGCN
Rahman et al.	2023	CNN + GCN	IoT	Partial	Improved accuracy	Not unified
Rodriguez et al.	2020	CNN	Cloud	None	Reliable detection	High energy usage
Gupta et al.	2021	CNN + LSTM	Three-tier	Basic	Hybrid learning	High computation
Nguyen et al.	2022	GCN	IoT	None	Better feature extraction	No temporal
Das et al.	2022	DL	WSN	Metaheuristic	Energy efficiency	No graph learning
Ali et al.	2023	STGCN	Three-tier	Compression	Low latency + accuracy	Data heterogeneity
Kim et al.	2020	CNN	Edge	Lightweight	Fast processing	Limited complexity
Verma et al.	2021	RL	WSN	RL optimization	Energy-aware routing	No DL
Hassan et al.	2022	Res Net	Cloud	None	Accurate ECG detection	High latency
Banerjee et al.	2022	DL + GA	WSN	Hybrid	Improved performance	No STGCN
El-Sayed et al.	2023	DL	IoT	Compression	Scalable system	No graph modelling
Torres et al.	2020	ANN	WSN	None	Basic monitoring	Low scalability
Reddy et al.	2021	ML	LoRa	None	Efficient communication	No DL
Park et al.	2021	CNN	IoT	None	High accuracy	High computation
Ibrahim et al.	2022	Res Net	IoT	Adaptive	Fast training	No spatial modelling
Choudhary et al.	2022	DL	IoT	Basic	Energy efficient	No STGCN
Alqahtani et al.	2022	GCN	IoT	None	Graph modelling	No temporal
Mehta et al.	2023	DL	IoT	Compression	Efficient system	No spatial modelling
Rahman et al.	2023	Res Net	IoT	Partial	Accuracy improvement	No graph learning
Bose et al.	2023	DL + Metaheuristic	WSN	Hybrid	Efficient prediction	No STGCN
Khan et al.	2023	DL	IoT	Pruning	Energy efficient	No unified model

Comparative Analysis

The comparative analysis of recent studies demonstrates the evolution of Artificial Intelligence techniques in IoT-based cardiac monitoring systems. Early methods mainly relied on artificial neural networks and convolutional neural networks for ECG classification and cardiac anomaly detection. Although these approaches improved diagnostic accuracy, they struggled with temporal dependency analysis and depended heavily on centralized cloud processing, resulting in higher latency and energy consumption. Recurrent neural networks and long short-term memory models later improved time-series analysis by effectively capturing temporal patterns in cardiac data. However, these models lacked the ability to model spatial relationships among distributed sensor nodes in multi-sensor healthcare environments.

Graph convolutional networks addressed this limitation by modelling spatial dependencies between sensors, improving feature representation and system intelligence. Nevertheless, conventional GCNs were unable to effectively capture temporal dynamics. Spatio-Temporal Graph Convolutional Neural Networks emerged as a more advanced solution by integrating both spatial and temporal learning capabilities, significantly improving cardiac anomaly detection, real-time monitoring, and alert generation. Additionally, three-tier architectures involving edge, fog, and cloud layers enhanced scalability, reduced latency, and improved resource utilization in IoT healthcare systems.

Optimization techniques such as reinforcement learning, genetic algorithms, model pruning, and compression further improved computational efficiency and energy management, enabling deployment on resource-constrained devices. Despite these advancements, challenges including data heterogeneity, privacy concerns, computational complexity, and lack of unified intelligent frameworks continue to limit real-world implementation of scalable cardiac monitoring systems.

Discussion

The survey of methods and architectures for IoT and wireless sensor network-based cardiac monitoring systems reveals significant advancements driven by Artificial Intelligence. The integration of three-tier architectures has enhanced system scalability and reduced latency by distributing computational tasks across edge, fog, and cloud layers. AI techniques such as CNNs, RNNs, and residual networks have improved the accuracy of ECG signal analysis; however, their inability to simultaneously capture spatial and temporal dependencies limits their effectiveness in multi-sensor environments. The emergence of Spatio-Temporal Graph Convolutional Neural Networks (STGCNs) has addressed these limitations by enabling comprehensive modelling of both spatial relationships among sensor nodes and temporal variations in cardiac signals. These models have demonstrated superior performance in real-time cardiac anomaly detection and alert generation.

Furthermore, optimization techniques such as model compression, pruning, and energy-aware routing have significantly reduced computational complexity and energy consumption, enabling deployment in resource-constrained IoT environments. However, the integration of these optimization techniques with advanced AI models remains limited. Challenges such as data heterogeneity, security, and scalability continue to affect system performance. Therefore, future research should focus on developing unified frameworks that integrate STGCN, optimization strategies, and three-tier architectures for efficient and reliable cardiac monitoring systems.

Conclusion

The integration of Internet of Things technologies and Artificial Intelligence has significantly improved continuous cardiac health monitoring systems. This survey reviewed IoT and wireless sensor network-based architectures for real-time cardiac monitoring, focusing on three-tier frameworks and Spatio-Temporal Graph Convolutional Neural Networks (STGCNs). Traditional artificial neural networks and convolutional neural networks enhanced ECG classification and cardiac anomaly detection but struggled to model complex relationships among distributed sensor nodes. Recurrent neural networks and long short-term memory models improved temporal analysis of cardiac signals; however, they lacked strong spatial modelling capabilities. Graph convolutional networks addressed spatial dependency issues, while STGCNs further advanced cardiac monitoring by integrating both spatial and temporal feature learning for distributed sensor data analysis.

The study also highlighted the importance of three-tier architectures that distribute processing across edge, fog, and cloud layers to reduce latency and improve scalability. Wireless sensor networks and IoT technologies enabled continuous remote monitoring and real-time healthcare services. Optimization techniques such as model compression, pruning, and energy-aware routing improved energy efficiency and reduced computational complexity for resource-constrained devices. Despite these advancements, challenges related to data privacy, heterogeneous sensor data, scalability, and computational cost remain important concerns for future intelligent cardiac healthcare systems.

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