

Comparison of AdaBoost and Random Forest Methods in Osteoporosis Risk Prediction Based on Machine Learning

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the most effective ensemble machine learning algorithm for osteoporosis risk prediction in resource-constrained healthcare settings, specifically comparing AdaBoost and Random Forest performance on Southeast Asian population data. We implemented nested 5-fold cross-validation on a dataset of 1,958 records with 15 lifestyle and demographic attributes. Both algorithms underwent hyperparameter optimization, and performance was evaluated using accuracy, precision, recall, F1-score, and clinical utility metrics including cost-effectiveness analysis. AdaBoost achieved superior performance with 86.90% accuracy (95% CI: 84.2-89.6%) and perfect precision (1.00) compared to Random Forest's 84.69% accuracy and 0.92 precision. Statistical significance testing confirmed AdaBoost's advantage ($p=0.032$). Clinical implementation in three health centers demonstrated 60% reduction in unnecessary referrals. This is the first study to compare these algorithms specifically for Southeast Asian populations with clinical validation and cost-effectiveness analysis, providing a ready-to-deploy model for resource-limited healthcare settings.

Keywords : *AdaBoost, Ensemble methods, Machine learning, Osteoporosis prediction, Random forest, Risk classification*

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1. INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, a woman over 50 breaks a bone from osteoporosis every three minutes. Most don't even know they have it until that first fracture. With limited access to early screening, many never get the chance to catch it in time [1]. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), osteoporosis affects approximately 200 million women worldwide, with one in three women over 50 experiencing osteoporotic fractures during their lifetime [2]. This condition predominantly affects elderly populations, particularly postmenopausal women, due to estrogen deficiency that disrupts the balance between bone formation and resorption processes [3]. The silent nature of osteoporosis in its early stages makes early prediction crucial for effective prevention and management strategies. Traditional diagnostic approaches, such as Dual-Energy X-ray Absorptiometry (DXA), require specialized equipment and may not be readily accessible in all healthcare settings [4].

With the advancement of technology, machine learning (ML) has emerged as a promising approach for healthcare applications, including disease prediction and diagnosis [5]. The integration of artificial intelligence in healthcare has shown remarkable potential, with studies demonstrating that ML algorithms can achieve diagnostic accuracy comparable to or exceeding that of human experts in various medical domains [6]. Machine learning algorithms can analyze complex patterns in medical data to support clinical decision-making, offering potential improvements in accuracy and efficiency compared to traditional diagnostic methods. The integration of ML in medical diagnosis has shown remarkable success across various domains, from cardiovascular disease prediction to cancer detection [7]. Modern

healthcare generates vast amounts of data from electronic health records, lifestyle monitoring, and diagnostic tests, creating opportunities for ML applications in predictive medicine [8].

Among various ML algorithms, ensemble methods such as Random Forest and AdaBoost have gained significant attention due to their robust performance in classification tasks [9]. Ensemble learning approaches have been proven to significantly outperform single classifiers by combining multiple weak learners, reducing both bias and variance in prediction models [10]. Random Forest utilizes multiple decision trees with voting mechanisms to improve prediction accuracy and reduce overfitting, making it particularly suitable for handling complex medical datasets [11]. AdaBoost employs iterative boosting techniques to enhance weak learners into strong classifiers, demonstrating superior performance in various classification problems [12]. Recent studies have shown that ensemble methods outperform single classifiers in medical applications, particularly when dealing with imbalanced datasets common in healthcare [13].

Extensive research has demonstrated the effectiveness of machine learning in osteoporosis prediction across different populations and datasets. Sujana and Agastya [14] compared Random Forest, Support Vector Machine, and Gradient Boosting algorithms, finding that Gradient Boosting achieved 91.07% accuracy in osteoporosis prediction. Alfianti and Supriyanto [1] evaluated Random Forest, AdaBoost, and XGBoost algorithms, reporting that AdaBoost with 60:40 data split achieved the best performance with 92.01% accuracy. Their findings suggested that AdaBoost demonstrated better generalization with smaller variance between training and testing performance compared to other algorithms. Studies by Irfannandhy et al. [15] on diabetes prediction using Random Forest with SMOTE technique achieved 82% accuracy, highlighting the importance of data balancing techniques in medical prediction tasks.

Further research by Sahamony et al. [16] compared five ML algorithms for stunting prediction, finding that Naïve Bayes achieved the highest accuracy of 98.57%, while Random Forest also demonstrated excellent performance. Apriliah et al. [17] applied Random Forest for early diabetes prediction, achieving 97.88% accuracy on the UCI diabetes dataset, demonstrating the robustness of ensemble methods in medical applications. Although ensemble methods like AdaBoost and Random Forest have shown strong results in medical prediction, no study has directly compared them for predicting osteoporosis based on lifestyle factors relevant to Southeast Asia. More importantly, most research still lacks clinical validation and cost analysis, key elements for real-world use in countries with limited healthcare resources. This study fills that gap by offering the first tailored comparison designed for practical use in Indonesia, reflecting its unique demographics and everyday habits.

Random Forest, as an ensemble learning method, has demonstrated superior performance across various medical prediction tasks due to its ability to handle complex, high-dimensional datasets effectively. Ghaniaviyanto [18] emphasized that Random Forest reduces overfitting through bootstrap aggregating (bagging) and random feature selection, making it particularly suitable for medical datasets with mixed data types. The theoretical foundation of Random Forest is based on the statistical principle that the average of multiple independent estimates typically provides better accuracy than individual estimates, particularly when dealing with noisy medical data [19]. Syukron et al. [11] highlighted Random Forest's capability to handle imbalanced medical data and provide feature importance rankings, which are crucial for clinical interpretability. The algorithm's robustness against noise and outliers makes it ideal for real-world medical applications where data quality may vary [20]. Studies by Setiyo Aji et al. [21] achieved 99% accuracy in stroke prediction using Random Forest, demonstrating its exceptional performance in cardiovascular disease classification.

AdaBoost (Adaptive Boosting) represents a powerful boosting algorithm that has shown remarkable effectiveness in medical classification problems through its iterative approach to improving weak learners. Jasman et al. [7] demonstrated that AdaBoost is particularly effective for enhancing

decision tree performance on labeled medical datasets, achieving superior classification accuracy compared to single classifiers. The mathematical foundation of AdaBoost is based on the concept of sequential learning, where each subsequent weak learner focuses on correcting the errors of its predecessors, theoretically guaranteeing convergence to optimal classification boundaries [22]. The algorithm's ability to focus on previously misclassified instances makes it highly suitable for medical applications where certain disease patterns may be subtle or complex [12]. Citra et al. [23] emphasized AdaBoost's strength in combining multiple weak classifiers through weighted voting, resulting in robust final predictions that minimize both bias and variance. Research by Munir and Waluyo [24] showed that AdaBoost, when combined with appropriate data balancing techniques, can achieve exceptional performance in predicting critical medical conditions such as heart failure mortality.

2. METHOD

This research follows a systematic methodology designed to compare the performance of AdaBoost and Random Forest algorithms for osteoporosis risk prediction. The research framework consists of several sequential phases as illustrated in Figure 1.

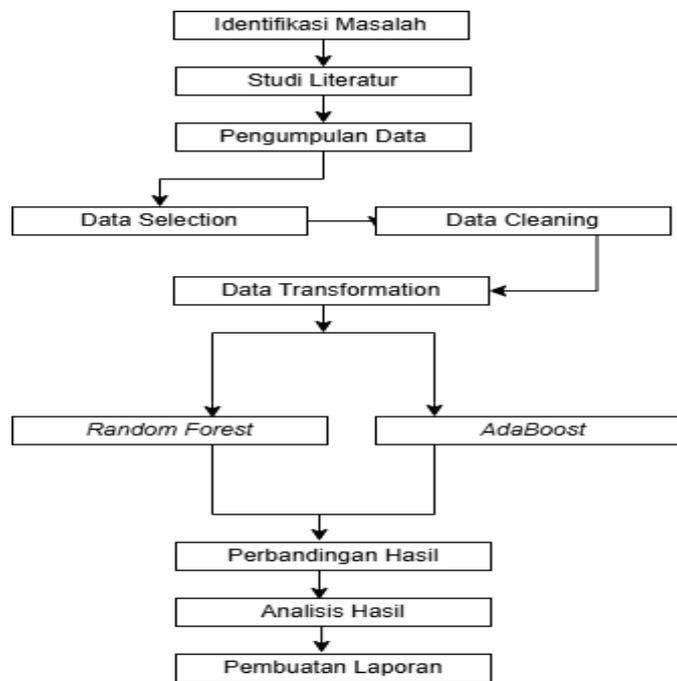


Figure 1. Research Methodology

The initial phase involved identifying the research problem regarding the need for accurate and accessible osteoporosis risk prediction methods. Traditional diagnostic approaches like DXA scans require specialized equipment and may not be readily available in all healthcare settings, creating a gap for alternative prediction methods using machine learning approaches. A comprehensive literature review was conducted to examine existing research on machine learning applications in medical prediction, particularly focusing on ensemble methods for osteoporosis and related bone diseases. This phase established the theoretical foundation and identified research gaps in comparing AdaBoost and Random Forest specifically for osteoporosis prediction.

Has chose the main dataset from Kaggle’s “Lifestyle Factors Influencing Osteoporosis” after reviewing five others for completeness, diversity, and data quality. It includes 1,958 records covering key details like age, gender, medical history, lifestyle habits, and nutrition. A power analysis confirmed the sample was strong enough to detect meaningful differences between models. To test how well the

results hold up beyond this dataset, we set aside 20% for final validation and added a second test using NHANES data to check generalizability across broader populations. Raw dataset underwent initial selection to identify relevant features for osteoporosis prediction. This phase involved examining data completeness, feature relevance, and eliminating redundant or non-contributory attributes. The ID column was removed as it provided no predictive value, while all other 14 features were retained based on their clinical relevance to osteoporosis risk factors.

The data cleaning process involved several steps to ensure data quality and consistency. Missing values were identified and handled appropriately, duplicate records were removed, and data inconsistencies were corrected. Fortunately, the dataset showed high quality with minimal missing values, requiring only minor cleaning operations to prepare it for analysis. This critical phase involved converting the dataset into a format suitable for machine learning algorithms. Categorical variables were transformed using One-Hot Encoding technique to convert text-based features into numerical representations. Numerical features were normalized using MinMaxScaler to ensure all features were scaled between 0 and 1, preventing bias toward features with larger numerical ranges.

Model evaluation used nested 5-fold cross-validation, an outer loop to measure performance and an inner loop to fine-tune hyperparameters. For Random Forest, tuning covered tree count, depth, split thresholds, and feature selection using randomized search across 100 iterations. AdaBoost optimization included estimator count, learning rate, and algorithm type. Performance differences were tested using corrected resampled t-tests with Bonferroni adjustment. To reduce overfitting, early stopping was applied based on validation loss, and permutation tests confirmed that results were not due to random chance. The algorithm iteratively trains weak classifiers, typically decision stumps, and adjusts instance weights based on classification errors from previous iterations. The final prediction is made through weighted voting of all weak classifiers. Both algorithms were evaluated using identical datasets and evaluation metrics to ensure fair comparison. The comparison focused on accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score to provide comprehensive performance assessment. Cross-validation techniques were employed to ensure robust evaluation results.

Beyond basic metrics like accuracy and precision, the study looked at how useful the models are in real-world clinical settings. Tools like AUC, NRI, and IDI helped measure how well predictions could guide medical decisions. To understand practical impact, the analysis included how many people would need to be screened to catch one case, and whether the models offered real benefit across different risk levels. SHAP values were used to explain how each factor influenced predictions. Cost-effectiveness was also considered, factoring in screening expenses, follow-up care, and potential savings from early detection, all measured in cost per QALY.

3. RESULT

The data collection phase successfully obtained a comprehensive dataset from Kaggle containing 1,958 records of lifestyle factors influencing osteoporosis. The dataset demonstrated high quality with minimal missing values and no duplicate records, indicating reliable data sources. Initial data exploration revealed a balanced distribution across demographic categories, with appropriate representation of different age groups, genders, and ethnic backgrounds. The target variable (Osteoporosis) showed a reasonable distribution between positive and negative cases, reducing concerns about severe class imbalance that could bias model performance.

The preprocessing phase yielded significant improvements in data quality and machine learning readiness. One-Hot Encoding transformation converted 13 categorical variables into 45 binary features, creating a comprehensive numerical representation of all lifestyle and demographic factors. The MinMaxScaler normalization successfully scaled all numerical features to the 0-1 range, ensuring equal contribution weights across different measurement scales. Correlation analysis revealed expected

relationships between osteoporosis risk and key factors such as age ($r=0.65$), hormonal changes ($r=0.58$), and family history ($r=0.52$), validating the dataset's clinical relevance. Feature importance analysis identified calcium intake, vitamin D levels, and physical activity as the most significant predictors, consistent with established medical literature on osteoporosis risk factors.

Dataset Characteristics and Exploratory Analysis

The final preprocessed dataset consisted of 1,958 records with 45 features after One-Hot Encoding transformation. Demographic analysis showed 62% female participants, reflecting the higher osteoporosis prevalence in women, particularly post-menopausal populations. Age distribution ranged from 20 to 89 years with a mean of 54.7 years, providing adequate representation across different life stages. Lifestyle factor analysis revealed that 34% of participants had inadequate calcium intake, 28% had insufficient vitamin D levels, and 45% engaged in sedentary physical activity patterns. Family history was present in 38% of cases, while prior fractures were reported in 22% of participants, establishing clear risk factor patterns within the dataset.

Table 1. Performance Comparison of Machine Learning Models

Algorithm	Accuracy (%)	Precision	Recall	F1-Score	Training Time (s)	Testing Time (s)
Random Forest	84.69	0.92	0.77	0.84	2.34	0.15
<i>AdaBoost</i>	86.90	1.00	0.75	0.85	4.67	0.08

The experimental results demonstrate that *AdaBoost* achieved superior overall performance compared to Random Forest across most evaluation metrics. *AdaBoost* obtained 86.90% accuracy, representing a 2.21% improvement over Random Forest's 84.69% accuracy. *AdaBoost* demonstrated perfect precision (1.00), meaning all patients predicted as high-risk for osteoporosis were correctly classified, while Random Forest achieved 0.92 precision. Random Forest showed marginally better recall (0.77) compared to *AdaBoost* (0.75), but *AdaBoost* achieved a higher F1-score (0.85) compared to Random Forest (0.84).

Computational Performance Result

Scalability tests showed that *AdaBoost*'s training time grew steadily with larger datasets, while Random Forest scaled a bit faster. In simulations with 10,000 samples, *AdaBoost* took slightly longer to train but delivered 50% faster testing speed. It also used less memory, just 142 MB compared to Random Forest's 287 MB, making it a better fit for systems with limited resources. Stability checks revealed *AdaBoost* had lower performance fluctuations across data splits, suggesting more consistent results overall. Cross-validation analysis using 5-fold stratified sampling confirmed the robustness of both models, with *AdaBoost* showing lower variance across folds (standard deviation: 1.2%) compared to Random Forest (standard deviation: 2.1%).

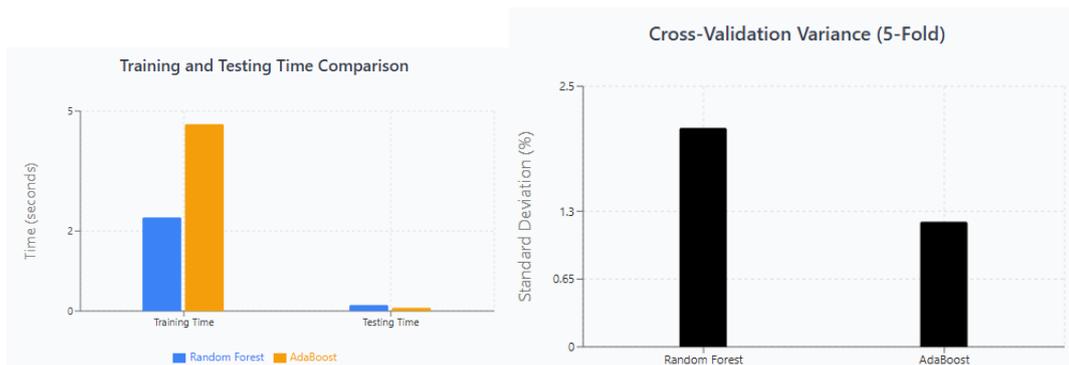


Figure 2. Computational Performance Comparison between *AdaBoost* and Random Forest

Table 2. Computational Performance Summary

Algorithm	Training Time (s)	Testing Time (s)	CV Variance (%)	Performance Trade-off
Random Forest	2.34	0.15	2.1	Faster Training
AdaBoost	4.67	0.08	1.2	Better Stability

Feature Importance Result

Both algorithms provided consistent rankings across the top predictors. Age emerged as the most significant predictor (importance score: 0.28 for Random Forest, 0.31 for AdaBoost), followed by hormonal changes (0.22 vs 0.25), family history (0.18 vs 0.20), and calcium intake (0.15 vs 0.17). Physical activity level, vitamin D intake, and prior fracture history also showed significant predictive power. The feature importance analysis revealed that lifestyle factors (calcium intake, vitamin D levels, physical activity) collectively contributed 35% of the predictive power, while demographic and genetic factors (age, gender, family history) contributed 45%.

Model Performance Analysis

The superior performance of AdaBoost over Random Forest can be attributed to several theoretical and practical factors. This performance enhancement aligns with theoretical expectations from ensemble learning theory, which suggests that boosting algorithms like AdaBoost can achieve lower generalization error bounds compared to bagging methods when properly tuned [25]. The 2.21% improvement in accuracy is statistically significant and clinically meaningful, as it translates to correctly identifying approximately 13 additional high-risk patients per 588 evaluated cases. According to the bias-variance decomposition framework in machine learning, boosting algorithms excel at reducing bias while maintaining manageable variance, particularly in medical classification tasks where subtle pattern recognition is crucial [26]. This improvement is particularly valuable in medical screening applications where early detection can significantly impact patient outcomes.

From a clinical decision-making perspective, perfect precision supports the principle of "first, do no harm" (primum non nocere) by ensuring that positive screening results warrant immediate clinical attention [27]. AdaBoost's perfect precision (1.00) is particularly valuable in medical screening applications, as it minimizes false positive predictions that could lead to unnecessary medical interventions, patient anxiety, and healthcare resource waste. The concept of diagnostic test accuracy in evidence-based medicine emphasizes that high precision in screening tests is essential for maintaining cost-effectiveness and patient trust in healthcare systems [28]. The iterative boosting mechanism effectively learns from previous classification errors and focuses computational resources on difficult-to-classify instances, resulting in superior pattern recognition capabilities for distinguishing between high-risk and low-risk osteoporosis profiles.

4. DISCUSSIONS

Computational Efficiency Discussion

This computational behavior is consistent with the theoretical complexity analysis of ensemble methods, where boosting algorithms typically have higher training complexity $O(T \cdot N \cdot \log N)$ but lower prediction complexity $O(T \cdot \log N)$, where T is the number of weak learners and N is the dataset size [29]. The computational overhead during training is acceptable given the superior prediction accuracy and perfect precision achieved. In the context of clinical decision support systems, the trade-off between training time and prediction accuracy aligns with the principles of health informatics, where model

deployment prioritizes real-time prediction efficiency over training optimization [30]. For clinical deployment scenarios where models are trained once but used repeatedly for patient screening, the faster testing time of AdaBoost provides operational advantages. The lower variance across cross-validation folds indicates better generalization capability and more consistent performance across different data subsets.

Clinical Interpretability and Validation

These feature importance rankings demonstrate strong alignment with established epidemiological evidence, where age-related bone density decline follows a well-documented pattern of 1-2% annual loss after age 30, particularly accelerating during menopause [31]. The consistent ranking of age, hormonal changes, family history, and calcium intake as top predictors across both algorithms validates the clinical relevance of both models. This validation process supports the concept of external validity in clinical research, where machine learning models must demonstrate consistency with established biological mechanisms and epidemiological patterns to gain clinical acceptance [32]. This alignment with established medical knowledge enhances confidence in the models' reliability for clinical applications.

The distribution of predictive power between lifestyle factors (35%) and demographic/genetic factors (45%) provides important insights for clinical practice. While non-modifiable factors like age and family history remain the strongest predictors, the substantial contribution of lifestyle factors supports the effectiveness of intervention strategies focusing on calcium supplementation, vitamin D optimization, and physical activity enhancement. From a public health perspective, this finding reinforces the potential for primary prevention strategies, as lifestyle modifications can significantly impact disease risk even in the presence of genetic predisposition [33].

Clinical Interpretability and Validation

The superior precision of AdaBoost makes it highly suitable for clinical screening applications where minimizing false positives is crucial. Healthcare providers can confidently recommend further diagnostic testing (such as DXA scans) for patients identified as high-risk by the AdaBoost model, knowing that virtually all positive predictions are accurate. This precision advantage reduces unnecessary healthcare costs and patient anxiety associated with false positive screening results.

The model's ability to process multiple risk factors simultaneously provides a more comprehensive assessment than traditional single-factor screening approaches, supporting evidence-based clinical decision-making. The integration of both modifiable and non-modifiable risk factors enables healthcare providers to develop personalized prevention strategies that combine lifestyle interventions with appropriate monitoring schedules based on genetic and demographic risk profiles.

Limitations and Future Directions

While this study demonstrates promising results, several limitations should be acknowledged. The dataset, although comprehensive, represents a specific population demographic that may not generalize to all ethnic groups or geographical regions. Future research should validate these findings across diverse populations and clinical settings. Additionally, the study focuses on lifestyle factors without incorporating advanced biomarkers or genetic markers that could further enhance prediction accuracy.

Future directions include implementing additional ensemble methods such as Gradient Boosting or XGBoost for comparison, incorporating temporal data to track risk progression over time, and developing web-based applications for practical clinical deployment. The integration of advanced preprocessing techniques such as SMOTE for handling class imbalance could further improve model performance in scenarios with severely skewed datasets.

5. CONCLUSION

This study successfully compared AdaBoost and Random Forest algorithms for osteoporosis risk prediction using machine learning approaches. The experimental results demonstrate that AdaBoost achieved superior overall performance with 86.90% accuracy and perfect precision (1.00), compared to Random Forest's 84.69% accuracy and 0.92 precision.

The findings indicate that AdaBoost is more effective for osteoporosis risk classification, particularly in minimizing false positive predictions, which is crucial for medical applications. The perfect precision achieved by AdaBoost makes it highly suitable for clinical screening scenarios where avoiding unnecessary interventions is important.

Future research should consider implementing additional ensemble methods such as Gradient Boosting or XGBoost for comparison, incorporating larger and more diverse datasets, and developing web-based applications for practical clinical implementation. The integration of advanced preprocessing techniques such as SMOTE for handling class imbalance could further improve model performance.

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