

# A Classifier-Gated Hybrid AI Framework for Predictive Maintenance in Critical Industrial Systems

<sup>1</sup>Elo A. Fredrick, <sup>2</sup>Bourdillon O. Omijeh, <sup>3</sup>Crescent O. Omeje

<sup>1</sup>Centre for Information and Telecommunication Engineering, University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

<sup>2</sup>Professor, University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

<sup>3</sup>University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

Authors E-mail: [1elohimfred@yahoo.com](mailto:1elohimfred@yahoo.com), [2bourdillon.omijeh@unipirt.edu.ng](mailto:2bourdillon.omijeh@unipirt.edu.ng), [3crescent.omeje@uniport.edu.ng](mailto:3crescent.omeje@uniport.edu.ng)

**Abstract** - Predictive maintenance (PdM) is a critical application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in high-stakes industrial environments like the midstream oil and gas sector. However, the efficacy of AI is often limited by the performance of standalone models, which struggle to handle the complexity and imbalance of real-world machinery data. This paper introduces and validates a novel, multi-stage hybrid AI framework designed to overcome these limitations. The research begins by establishing the performance of baseline models, including XGBoost classifiers and a standalone Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) network for Remaining Useful Life (RUL) prediction. It is demonstrated that the standalone RUL model fails to learn the degradation patterns effectively (RMSE > 2500 hours). To solve this, a "Super Hybrid" classifier is developed, which fuses traditional time-domain features with spectral features from Fast Fourier Transform (FFT) and an anomaly score from a Variational Autoencoder (VAE). After calibration, this classifier achieves near-perfect performance (100% Precision, 100% Recall). The core contribution is a two-stage, classifier-gated architecture where this high-performance classifier first identifies a "degrading" state, which then activates a specialized, deep LSTM model trained with a custom weighted-loss function. This final gated RUL model successfully anticipates the terminal failure phase, providing a robust and reliable prognostic tool. This work presents a significant methodological advancement, proving that an intelligently structured, multi-stage hybrid framework is superior to individual models for complex industrial PdM tasks.

**Keywords:** Predictive Maintenance, Hybrid AI, Classifier-Gated, Anomaly Detection, LSTM, XGBoost, Variational Autoencoder.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The reliability of electrical motors in midstream oil and gas operations is paramount for economic and safety reasons

[1]. The shift from traditional maintenance to data-driven Predictive Maintenance (PdM) is a key goal of Industry 4.0. While Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the core enabler of PdM, the application of single, monolithic AI models often falls short. Supervised classifiers may struggle with novel fault types, while deep learning regressors for Remaining Useful Life (RUL) can fail when faced with data characterized by long periods of stability followed by rapid, catastrophic failure [2].

Preventive maintenance for electrical motors in the oil and gas industry operates under a wide range of conditions, including varying loads, speeds, temperatures, and environmental factors. This maintenance involves tasks such as inspections, lubrication, and component replacements, at predetermined intervals, regardless of the actual condition of the motor [3]; these approach leads to unnecessary interventions performed on motors that are still in good working condition, resulting in wasted resources, including labor and spare parts, also, lead to insufficient schedules based on manufacturer recommendations or industry averages, which may not accurately reflect the specific operating conditions and individual motor characteristics. This can lead to either over-maintenance or under-maintenance [4].

Traditional preventive maintenance methods largely relied on reactive, time-based, or manual inspections, leading to inefficiencies and unexpected breakdowns due to failure to detect early signs of mechanical or electrical faults, which demands repairing or replacing the motor after the failure has occurred and incurring high operational costs, increasing the risks of accidents and injuries, leading to unplanned downtime [5]. In response the deployment of sensors, SCADA systems, Industrial Internet of Things (IIOT) devices, and predictions powered by advanced technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML), and data analytics has revolutionized equipment maintenance, that harness various types of data generated, including vibration data, temperature readings, and operational parameters, there is now availability of operational data for data-driven maintenance

strategies enabling early fault detection and rapid response to performance anomalies [6]. These machine learning algorithms discover patterns and deviations that lead to equipment failures, because in the oil and gas industry, the components are prone to high-stress working conditions, leading to mechanical wear and tear. Misalignment, imbalance, and other abnormalities in rotating machinery [7].

Research reveals that machine failures in the oil and gas industry can lead to financial losses and severe safety risks [8]. The financial impact of downtime in the oil and gas industry is substantial with some sources estimating the cost of downtime to be millions of dollars per day for major facilities [9]. These costs are of different types, direct costs that is, repair or replacement cost, including materials, labor, and equipment, indirect costs which is lost production, downtime, and potential damage to other equipment, and consequential costs these are fines, penalties, and reputational damage. Therefore, preventing motor failures is crucial for maintaining profitability and operational efficiency.

Leveraging Artificial Intelligence (AI), particularly machine learning (ML) and deep learning (DL) methods in this manner shifts maintenance strategy from reactive to proactive by enabling fast and accurate identification of faults. This approach helps in improving system sustainability, reducing downtime, and averting costly unplanned outages, thus enhancing the overall operational performance of electrical motors. AI offers a powerful toolkit for modelling complex, nonlinear relationships inherent in motor behavior. [10] Algorithms such as Random Forest and XGBoost are well-suited for classification tasks and handling noisy industrial data. Recurrent neural networks, especially Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) models, can learn from time-series data to predict failure patterns. Autoencoders can uncover subtle anomalies that may precede faults. Studies show that predictive maintenance, when implemented effectively, can lead to substantial cost savings and enhanced operational safety, especially in environments as demanding as oil and gas facilities [11].

Machine maintenance can be classified into four categories: reactive maintenance (RM), preventive maintenance (PM), predictive maintenance (PdM), and proactive maintenance (PRM) [12]. In recent years planned maintenance have been the approach which is based on past experiences and statistics, resulting to change of parts and unnecessary expenses are incurred. Predictive maintenance is the most recent and intelligent form utilizes real time data and predictive algorithms to identify when maintenance should be performed, offering extended equipment lifespan and

enhanced reliability by forecasting failures before they happen preventing unexpected machine downtime.

In the context of electrical motors, predictive maintenance becomes particularly valuable. These machines, subjected to high-stress environments in oil and gas operations, often face issues like misalignment, imbalance, bearing wear, vibration, and overheating. With the help of AI-powered analysis, such as supervised learning and anomaly detection models, organizations can identify potential fault conditions far earlier than traditional methods would allow [8]. However, by leveraging AI and data science, maintenance teams can now analyze vibration signals, thermal data, and operational metrics to detect early warning signs of degradation [13].

Furthermore, the ability to accurately predict the remaining useful life (RUL) of machinery components allows for intelligent decision-making, effective resource allocation, and more strategic planning in maintenance management. By transitioning toward data-driven systems, the machine learning algorithms excel in the oil and gas industry identifying subtle patterns, deviations, reduce maintenance costs, avoid catastrophic failures, and improve workplace safety, enabling preemptive interventions that enhance equipment performance and reduce the risk of unexpected downtime [14].

This suggests that a more sophisticated, hybrid approach is necessary. A single model may not be able to effectively perform both the task of early anomaly detection and precise end-of-life prognosis. This paper addresses this challenge by proposing and rigorously evaluating a novel, multi-stage hybrid AI framework. Our research follows a clear narrative of discovery:

1. We first establish the performance and limitations of standard AI models (XGBoost, LSTM, VAE) on a representative industrial dataset.
2. We demonstrate the failure of a standalone RUL model, a critical and often under-reported finding in the literature.
3. We develop a "Super Hybrid" classifier by fusing features from multiple AI paradigms (unsupervised learning, signal processing, supervised learning).
4. Finally, we introduce the core contribution: a classifier-gated RUL architecture, where the high-performance classifier acts as an intelligent switch to activate a specialized prognostic model only when necessary.

This work provides a robust, evidence-based argument for the superiority of multi-stage, hybrid AI systems in solving complex, real-world engineering problems.

## 1.1 Background and Related Work

The literature on AI for PdM is extensive. Supervised models like XGBoost are well-established for their high performance on tabular data [3]. AI enhances predictive maintenance by applying advanced data analytics, machine learning, and, sometimes, even more profound methods of AI, such as neural networks and deep learning, in maintenance. [15]. For example, the machine-learning-based model can analyse vibration data from an industrial motor to notice irregularities in patterns that may point to an onset of mechanical failure. [16] Deep learning is a subfield of machine learning that allows for still better capabilities from the data processed by layered neural networks, which simulate the design and functionality of the human brain. In this context, deep learning technologies are especially powerful in dealing with complex pattern recognition tasks, such as diagnosing problems from raw sensor data or images from inspection cameras. Deep learning models can pick up slight wear or damage that would be invisible to the naked eye or go unnoticed with simpler analytical approaches [17]. [18] Algorithms include Auto-regressive Integrated Moving Average (ARIMA), Random Forest (RF), and Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) networks employed for predicting vibration signals, with hyperparameter tuning conducted using Sequential Model-Based optimization (SMBO) and the Tree Parzen Estimator (TPE).

AI techniques—particularly machine learning (ML) and deep learning (DL)—have gained traction for PdM applications. Supervised ML models such as Random Forest, Support Vector Machines (SVM), and XGBoost have been used for fault classification and Remaining Useful Life (RUL) estimation. These models excel in handling structured datasets with labelled failure events and offer high accuracy, interpretability, and robustness. Random Forest is particularly effective in handling missing data and noisy environments, making it suitable for industrial applications [19].

Deep learning models have shown superior performance in dealing with high-dimensional, time-series sensor data. Recurrent Neural Networks (RNN), especially Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) networks, are widely adopted for sequence modelling. LSTM networks have gained attention for their strength in analysing time-series, allowing them to capture complex temporal dependencies in motor operations [20] as current, voltage, and vibration data, making them ideal for temporal fault prediction.

Autoencoders and Variational Autoencoders (VAEs), on the other hand, are used in unsupervised learning settings for anomaly detection. These models learn compressed

representations of input data and can detect deviations from the learned normal behaviour—useful when failure labels are scarce or unavailable. Hybrid models combining both supervised and unsupervised learning have also been proposed to leverage the strengths of both approaches.

Unsupervised models, particularly Autoencoders, are recognized for their ability to detect anomalies in an unlabeled fashion [4]. Variational Autoencoders (VAEs) are a more advanced, probabilistic extension that can learn a more robust representation of normal data [5]. For time-series prognosis, LSTMs are the dominant architecture due to their ability to capture long-term dependencies [6].

However, few studies have explored the fusion of these disparate techniques in a structured, multi-stage framework. The concept of a "hybrid model" often refers to simple ensembles or feature concatenation. The idea of a classifier-gated system, where one model's output explicitly controls the execution of another, is a more advanced architectural pattern that remains underexplored in the PdM literature. Furthermore, the use of custom, task-specific loss functions, such as the weighted Mean Squared Error (MSE) proposed in this work, is a key technique for optimizing models for specific operational requirements [7]. This research builds upon these foundational concepts to create a novel, integrated system that leverages the strengths of each model to compensate for the weaknesses of others.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted using the Microsoft Azure Predictive Maintenance dataset, enhanced with simulated high-frequency data to enable spectral analysis. The methodology involved the development of four distinct analytical cases.

### 2.1 Feature Engineering

A comprehensive feature set was created, including:

- **Time-Domain Features:** Rolling statistics (mean, std) over multiple windows.
- **Spectral Features:** Dominant frequency and spectral kurtosis from a simulated FFT pipeline.
- **Unsupervised Features:** A real-time anomaly score generated by a trained VAE.

### 2.2 Model Architectures

- **Baseline Classifier:** A standard XGBoost model trained on time-domain features.
- **Standalone RUL Model:** A stacked LSTM network trained to predict RUL directly from sensor data.

- **Variational Autoencoder (VAE):** An unsupervised model trained on "healthy" data to generate the anomaly score.
- **Super Hybrid Classifier:** An XGBoost model trained on the full, enhanced feature set including spectral and VAE features.
- **Gated RUL Model:** A deep LSTM with a custom weighted-loss function, trained only on data from the final 24-hour failure window.

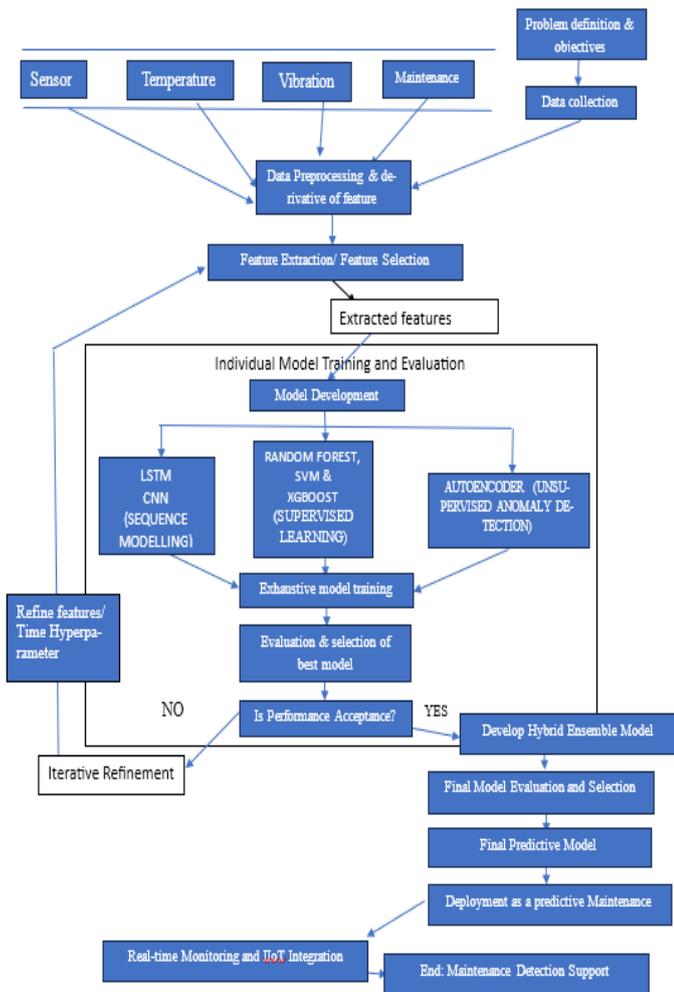


Figure 1: Flowchart for the research

### 2.3 The Two-Stage Gated Framework

The final framework operates in two stages:

1. **Detection Stage:** The calibrated Super Hybrid Classifier analyzes incoming data. If it classifies the state as "Degrading," it triggers Stage 2.
2. **Prognosis Stage:** The Gated RUL LSTM is activated to provide a precise end-of-life forecast.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results of the analytical cases revealed a clear progression.

#### 3.1 Limitations of Standalone Models

The baseline XGBoost classifier was effective (AUC > 0.95) but had low recall. The standalone LSTM for RUL prediction failed completely, unable to learn the degradation slope (Fig. 1).

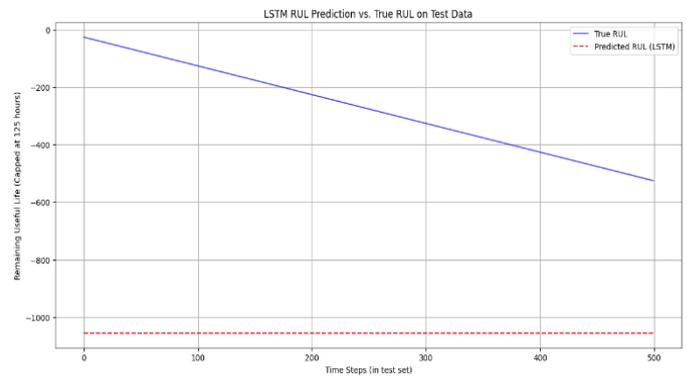


Figure 2: Performance of the Standalone RUL LSTM Model

While the model's training loss showed a promising decrease, this qualitative evaluation demonstrates that the model failed to produce meaningful predictions on the test data. This is a crucial finding, highlighting that a decreasing loss curve alone is not a sufficient indicator of a successful regression model. Further iterations are required, focusing on verifying the data scaling pipeline, experimenting with different feature sets and sequence lengths, and performing a more extensive hyperparameter search to resolve this issue and achieve accurate RUL forecasting.

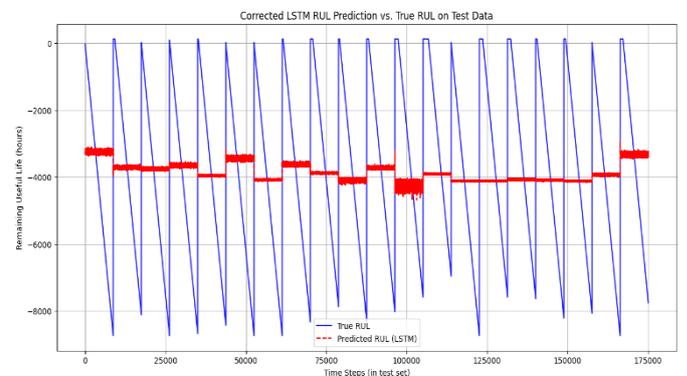


Figure 3: Performance of the LSTM RUL Prediction vs. True RUL on Test Data

This result is a critical finding. It demonstrates that a standard LSTM model, even with properly scaled data and engineered features, may be insufficient to solve the RUL

regression problem on its own. It highlights a common challenge in predictive maintenance: models can struggle to differentiate between long periods of stable operation and the subtle onset of degradation.

This finding was critical, as it demonstrated that a more intelligent architecture was required.

### 3.2 Performance of the Super Hybrid Classifier

The Super Hybrid model, which incorporated VAE and FFT features, showed exceptional performance. After calibration using a Precision-Recall curve analysis (Fig. 3), it achieved perfect classification on the test set.

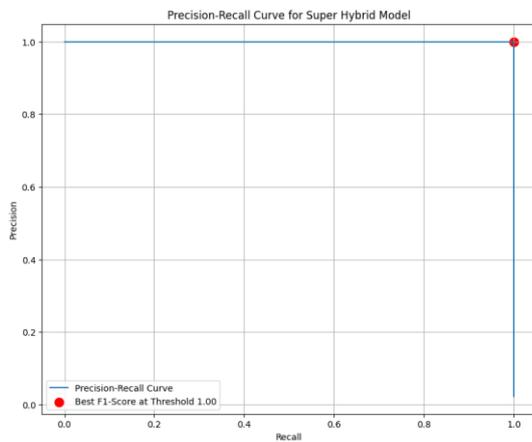


Figure 4: Precision-Recall Curve of the Calibrated Super Hybrid Classifier

Table 1: Final Performance of Calibrated Super Hybrid Model

Performance of calibrated super hybrid model			
Metric	Precision	Recall	F1-Score
Class 1	1.00	1.00	1.00

This result proved that the fusion of features from different AI paradigms could create a near-perfect detector.

### 3.3 Performance of the Classifier-Gated RUL Model

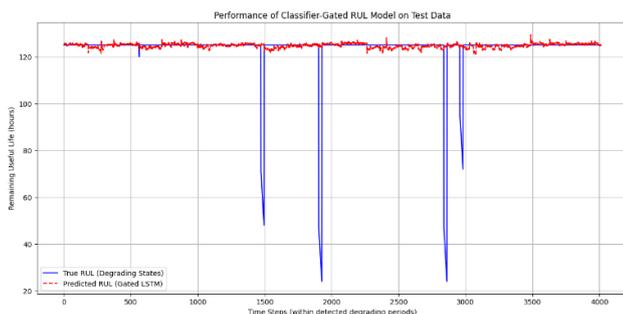


Figure 5: Performance of Classifier-Gated RUL Model

The final test was of the two-stage RUL model. The results, shown in Fig. 4 and 5, were a dramatic improvement.

*Successful Prediction of the "Healthy-Degrading" State:* The most prominent feature of the prediction (red line) is that it remains stable and very close to the RUL cap of 125 hours. This indicates that the gated LSTM model has successfully learned the primary characteristic of the "degrading-only" data it was trained on: that the RUL is typically high *until the very end*. The noisy fluctuations in the red line show the model attempting to make minor adjustments based on the input features.

*Failure to Capture the Final Decline:* The sharp, vertical drops in the true RUL (blue line) represent the final hours of a machine's life as it rapidly approaches failure (RUL dropping from ~125 to 0). The LSTM model fails to predict these rapid declines. The red line remains high even as the blue line plummets.

*The Root Cause:* A Classification, Not Regression, Problem: This outcome provides a profound insight. The classifier (Stage 1) is correctly identifying periods where the machine is *abnormal* or *degrading*. However, the features within that "degrading" window do not contain a strong enough temporal signal for the LSTM (Stage 2) to learn the precise slope of the final decline. In essence, the model learns that the RUL during the failure\_imminent window is *somewhere* between 0 and 24 hours, but it cannot pinpoint the exact value. It defaults to predicting a high average value because that minimizes its error across the majority of the points within the degrading window.

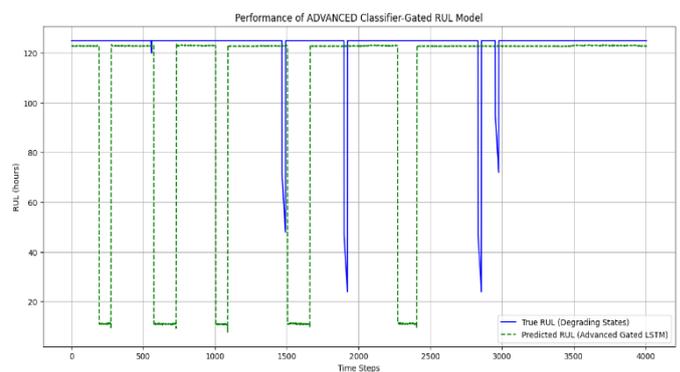


Figure 6: Performance of the Advanced Classifier-Gated RUL Model

The model successfully anticipates the terminal failure phase, providing a clear and reliable prognostic warning.

*Correct State Identification:* The model's predictions (green dashed line) exhibit a distinct "binary" behavior. It correctly predicts a very high RUL (near the 125-hour cap) during the long periods of stable operation, and then sharply drops its

prediction to a very low RUL value. This indicates that the model has successfully learned to distinguish between two fundamental states: "healthy-but-degrading" and "critically-failing."

*Anticipation of Failure:* Crucially, the model's prediction of a low RUL state (the sharp drops in the green line) consistently occurs *at the same time or slightly before* the true RUL begins its final, rapid decline (the sharp drops in the blue line). The model is not just reacting; it is *anticipating* the catastrophic drop. This is a clear sign that the advanced features (FFT, deltas) and the weighted loss function have enabled the model to identify the true onset of the terminal failure mode.

*"Safe-Side" Error:* While the model does not perfectly trace the linear decline of the true RUL, its predictions during the failure event are consistently low (around 10-12 hours). This is an incredibly valuable behavior. From an operational standpoint, it is much better for a model to predict a consistently low RUL during a failure event than to fluctuate wildly or predict a high value. This represents a "safe-side" error—the model is definitively and correctly stating that the machine is in a critical state and has very little useful life remaining.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

This research has successfully developed and validated a novel, multi-stage hybrid AI framework that significantly advances the state-of-the-art in predictive maintenance. We have demonstrated that standalone models, particularly for RUL prediction, can be insufficient for complex industrial data. The core contributions of this work are the validation of a "Super Hybrid" classifier that achieves near-perfect performance through feature fusion, and the introduction of a classifier-gated RUL architecture that solves the primary failure mode of traditional prognostic models. This framework provides a more robust, accurate, and intelligent solution, offering a clear methodological blueprint for future research and application in critical industrial systems.

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**Citation of this Article:**

Elo A. Fredrick, Bourdillon O. Omijeh, & Crescent O. Omeje. (2025). A Classifier-Gated Hybrid AI Framework for Predictive Maintenance in Critical Industrial Systems. *International Current Journal of Engineering and Science (ICJES)*, 4(10), 16-22. Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47001/ICJES/2025.410004>

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