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Fractal Open Problems in Cancer Research, Medicine, Biomedicine, Clinical Sciences, and Dentistry

Ismail A Mageed,

UK President of the ISFSEA Society, UK

***Corresponding author:** Ismail A Mageed, UK President of the ISFSEA Society, UK.

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Abstract

Fractal dimension is an important concept in various fields of science and mathematics, particularly in the study of complex systems and geometrical patterns. Fractal dimension is significant in understanding complex structures, measuring Complexity. In physics, fractal dimensions are used to study various phenomena, including the distribution of galaxies in the universe, phase transitions, and patterns in chaotic systems. Understanding these dimensions helps in making predictions and understanding underlying processes. On another different note, fractal dimension can be applied in environmental studies, such as analyzing the patterns of vegetation, fractal characteristics of river networks, and the distribution of pollutants in complex ecosystems. This helps in modeling and managing natural resources more effectively. In the field of computer science and image processing, fractal dimensions are used to analyze and compress images. Fractals can describe the textures and patterns found in images, which can lead to better image compression algorithms and enhancements in image recognition technologies. Fractal analysis is employed in finance to study market behavior and stock price movements. The fractal dimension can help analyze market volatility and predict trends by capturing the complex behaviours of financial systems. In biology, fractals are used to model various structures like blood vessels, neural networks, and the branching of trees. Fractal analysis can aid in understanding biological growth patterns and pathological changes, such as tumor growth. Fractals have inspired art and architecture by introducing concepts of self-similarity and complexity. Artists and architects use fractal patterns to create visually appealing designs that resonate with natural forms and structures. Overall, the importance of fractal dimension lies in its ability to bridge disciplines, providing insights into complex systems and offering tools for better analysis and understanding of natural and artificial structures. The current exposition provides a plethora of numerous potential fractal open problems to establish a next generation research platform combing fractal oncology, fractal biomedicine, fractal medicine and fractal clinical sciences.

Keywords: Fractal Dimension, Oncology, Medicine, Biomedicine, Clinical Sciences, Dentistry.

Introduction

In 1948 Claude Shannon defined the entropy H for a discrete random variable X, as given by

$$H(X) = \sum_i p(x_i)I(x_i) = \sum_i p(x_i)ln(p(x_i)) \quad (1)$$

In this expression, the probability of *i-th event* is *p(i)*. In information theory, this entropy defines the measure of information [1, 2]. Several other entropic formalisms are available for having different approaches to the measure of information, which is present in each distribution. Here, we will discuss in a simple approach, the link between entropy and the fractal dimension. The fractal dimension is a statistical index, measuring the complexity of a given pattern, which is embedded in given spatial dimensions. It has also been characterized as a measure of the space-filling capacity of a pattern that tells how a fractal scales differently from the space it is embedded in [3-5]. The idea of a fractional approach to calculus has a long history in mathematics, but the term became popular with the works of Benoit Mandelbrot, in particular from his 1967 paper where he discussed the fractional dimensions [6, 7]. In Mandelbrot cited a previous work by Lewis Fry Richardson, who was discussing how a coastline's measured length can change with the length of the rigid stick used for measurements. In this manner, the fractal dimension of a coastline is provided by the number of rigid sticks, required to measure the coastline, and by the scale of the used stick [8]. Several formal mathematical definitions of fractal dimension exist in this framework, following formulas are given, where N stands for the number of sticks used to cover the coastline, ε is the scaling factor, and FD the fractal dimension:

$$N \propto \varepsilon^{-FD} \quad (2)$$

$$ln\,N = -FD = \frac{lnN}{ln\varepsilon} \quad (3)$$

Let us see this example. We use Google Earth satellite images and GIMP (the GNU Image Manipulation Program) to have a map and rigid sticks to repeat what Richardson considered. Here, in the Figure 1, it is shown the same approach for a part of Grand Canyon. The ruler tool of Google Earth is used to establish the reference length. In the left-upper panel, we have the rulers for 6 km, 3 km, and 1 km. To determine the fractal dimension, we choose as reference length that of 6 km. In the left- lower panel, we can see that we need about 13 rigid sticks, one-half the reference length long, to follow the rim of this part of the canyon. In the case that we used a stick, which is 1/6 long, we need 44 sticks. We can go on reducing the length of sticks.

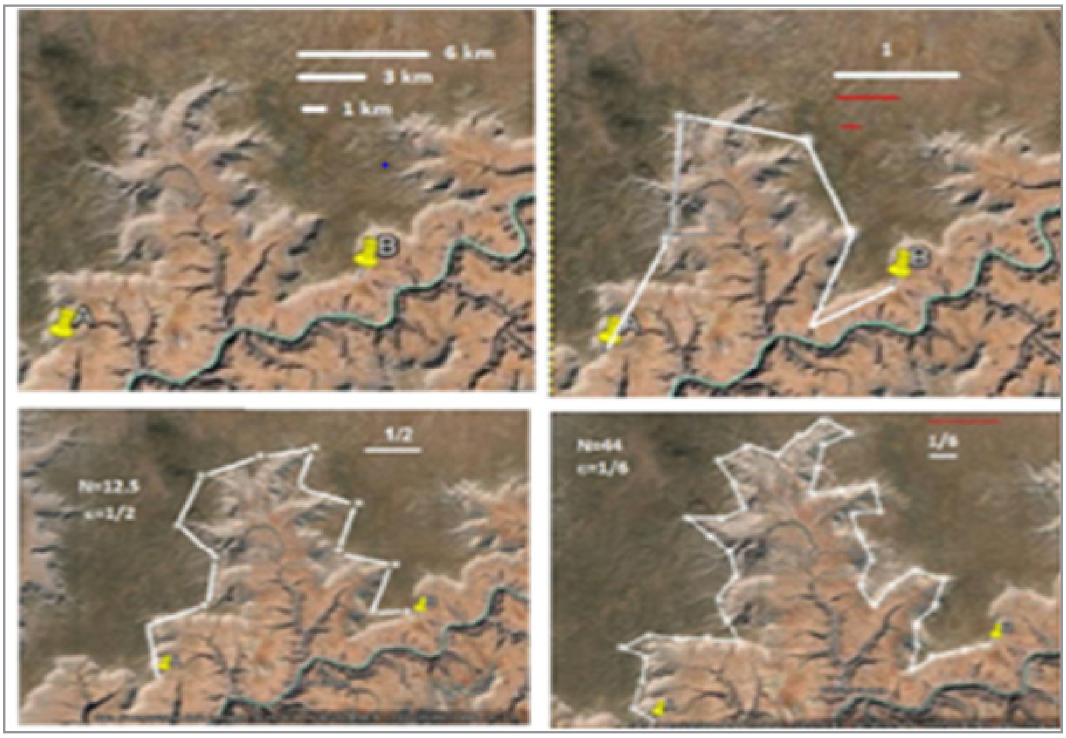

Figure 1: Google Earth Satellite images and GNU Image Manipulation Program of a part of Grand Canyon, Arizona.

The above illustrated portraits in figure 1, are based on Google Earth satellite images of a part of Grand Canyon, Arizona. Rigid sticks are created by GIMP. The ruler tool of Google Earth is used to establish the reference length. For evaluating the fractal dimension of the rim of the canyon, we choose as reference length that of 6 km. In the left-lower panel, we can see that we need about 13 rigid sticks, one-half the reference length long, to follow its rim. With a stick 1/6 long, we need 44 sticks.

N	ε	FD
13	1⁄2	3.70
44	1⁄6	2.11
119	1⁄12	1.92
405	1⁄30	1.72
871	1⁄60	1.65

Table 1

In the Table 1, considering the case of the figure 1, we give the fractal dimension of the rim. Of course, when the scaled sticks are smaller, we need more images, here not shown. The process should be further iterated, to reach the limit of smaller scales. Therefore, the fractal dimension of the rim of the canyon, defined as the boundary between flat soil and steep terrain, is a number between 1 and 2. The proposed approach illustrates an example to show the method to evaluate experimentally a fractal dimension. In the given framework, let us consider the role of probability. Each rigid stick has the same probability to be used and then sticks have a uniform distribution. In probability, the discrete uniform distribution is a probability distribution of a finite number N of values, which are equally likely to be observed; every one of N values have then the equal probability 1/N. An example of discrete uniform distribution is that we obtain by throwing a die. If the die has 6 faces, the possible values are 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6; each time the die is thrown the probability of a given score is 1/6. In figure 2 below, the significant impact of N(the number of sticks used to cover the coastline) on ε (the scaling factor) is illustrated. More interestingly, figure 3 provides strong supporting evidence of the impact of FD(fractal dimension) on ε (the scaling factor). Clearly, by looking at figure 2, we can see that the scaling factor decreases with a very heavy tailed trend by the increase of N, whereas, in figure 3, the portrayed data shows that both ε (the scaling factor) and FD(fractal dimension) are decreasing at the same time.

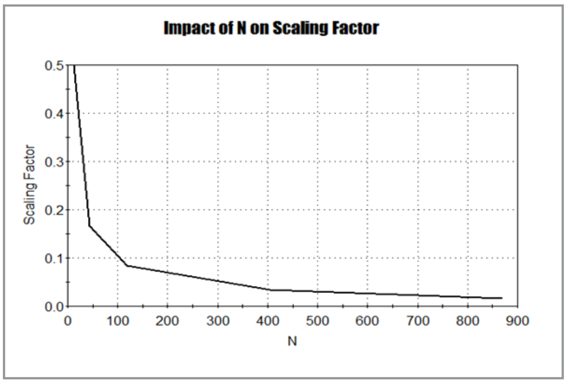

Figure 2: An Illustrative Data Portrait of how N Impacts ε

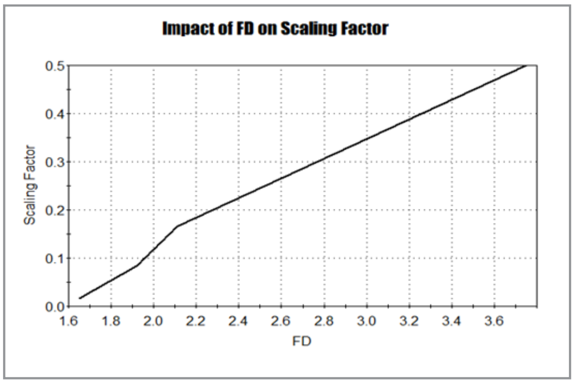

Figure 3: An Illustrative Data Portrait of how FD Impacts ε

There are Two Main Calculation Methods:

- **Box Counting Dimension:** One of the most common methods, where the fractal is covered with boxes of a certain size, and the number of boxes needed to cover the fractal is counted as the box size changes.
- **Hausdorff Dimension :** A more theoretical approach based on the concept of measuring the size of sets. The Hausdorff dimension can give more precise dimensions for certain fractal objects.

The following section presents some influential open problems in fractal oncology [9-28].

Next Generation Fractal Oncology

1. Fractal Geometry of Tumor Structures:

- How do fractal dimensions quantify the geometric complexity of different tumor types?
- Can specific fractal dimensions be correlated with tumor aggressiveness, stage, or response to treatment?

2. Vascular Networks in Tumors:

- Tumor vasculature often exhibits fractal characteristics. What are the implications of fractal dimensions of vascular networks on tumor growth and metastasis?
- Can measuring the fractal dimensions of tumor-associated blood vessels provide predictive models for treatment outcomes or survival rates?

3. Fractals in Tumor Microenvironment:

- How does the fractal nature of the tumor microenvironment (including cellular arrangement and extracellular matrix) influence cancer progression and therapy resistance?
- What fractal metrics can effectively capture changes in the microenvironment during the transition from benign to malignant states?

4. Fractal Analysis of Tumor Imaging:

- How can advancements in imaging technologies enhance the accuracy of fractal dimension calculations in tumors?
- What algorithms or methods can be developed for automated fractal analysis of tumor images to assist in diagnosis and monitoring?

5. Dynamic Evolution of Fractal Dimensions:

- How do the fractal dimensions of tumors evolve over time in response to treatment, and what can this reveal about the mechanisms of resistance?
- Can the changes in fractal dimensions be used as biomarkers for real-time monitoring of tumor behavior?

6. Fractals and Metastasis:

- In what ways can fractal dimensions elucidate the patterns of metastasis in various cancer types?
- Is there a relationship between the fractal dimension of primary tumors and the spatial distribution of metastases in distant organs?

7. Machine Learning and Fractals:

- How can machine learning techniques be integrated with fractal analysis to improve predictive models of cancer progression and treatment response?
- What features derived from fractal dimensions can enhance the accuracy of classification algorithms in cancer datasets?

8. Interplay between Fractals and Genetic Mutations:
- Can fractal analysis reveal patterns related to genetic mutations that contribute to tumorigenesis?
- Are there specific fractal signatures associated with particular genetic alterations in various cancers?

9. Fractals in Cancer Therapeutics:
- How can understanding the fractal nature of cellular responses to therapy inform the development of novel therapeutic strategies?
- Can fractal dimensions of tumor cells be used to predict their sensitivity or resistance to specific drugs?

10. Translational Research and Fractals:
- What are the challenges in translating fractal dimension analysis from basic research to clinical settings?
- How can collaborative efforts between mathematicians, biologists, and oncologists facilitate the application of fractal concepts in clinical oncology?

Exploring these open problems could lead to significant advancements in our understanding of cancer biology and therapy, potentially impacting diagnosis, treatment, and patient outcomes.

The following section presents some influential open problems in fractal medicine[29-36].

Next Generation Fractal Medicine

1. Fractal Analysis of Tumor Growth:
- Investigate how the fractal properties of tumor growth patterns can provide insights into tumor aggressiveness, metastasis potential, and treatment responses. Can different types of tumors be classified based on their fractal dimensions?

2. Fractal Dimension in Medical Imaging:
- Explore the use of fractal dimension analysis in enhancing imaging techniques (e.g., MRI, CT scans) for detecting pathologies. How can fractal dimensions improve the accuracy of automated diagnostic systems?

3. Fractals in Cardiovascular Research:
- Analyze the fractal nature of blood vessels and cardiac structures. What does the fractal dimension of vascular networks reveal about cardiovascular diseases? Is there a correlation between fractal dimensions and heart disease risk?

4. Fractal Patterns in Neuroimaging:
- Examine the role of fractal dimensions in analyzing brain imaging data (e.g., fMRI, PET scans). Can fractal measures provide diagnostic value for neurodegenerative diseases like Alzheimer's or Parkinson's?

5. Fractal Dynamics in Physiological Signals:
- Investigate the fractal properties of biological signals (e.g., ECG, EEG, heart rate variability). How does the fractal dimension correlate with various health conditions, and can it serve as a biomarker for diseases?

6. Fractal and Multiscale Analysis of Tissue Structure:
- Study the fractal characteristics of tissue architecture in various diseases (e.g., cancer, fibrosis). How do changes in fractal dimension relate to disease progression or healing?

7. Fractals in Drug Delivery Systems:
- Develop fractal-based models to optimize drug delivery systems and nanoparticles. How can the fractal dimension of drug distribution in tissues impact therapeutic efficacy?

8. Fractal Patterns in Infectious Diseases:
- Explore the fractal aspects of the spread of infectious diseases. Can fractal dimension analysis of outbreak patterns provide insights into epidemic management and prevention strategies?

9. Fractals in Genetics and Molecular Biology:
- Investigate the fractal nature of DNA and other genetic structures. What implications does fractal dimension have for understanding genetic expressions and mutations?

10. Fractal Dynamics in Metabolism and Physiology:
- Study the role of fractal dynamics in metabolic processes and physiological functions. What do fractal patterns tell us about homeostasis and adaptive responses in biological systems?

11. Fractal Geometry in Regenerative Medicine:
- Explore the role of fractal design principles in tissue engineering and regenerative medicine. How can understanding the fractal dimension of implanted scaffolds improve tissue integration and regeneration?

Here are some open problems related to fractal dimension in biomedical sciences [37- 43].

Next Generation Fractal Biomedicine

Quantifying Fractal Dimension of Brain Networks: The fractal dimension of brain networks has been shown to be associated with various neurological disorders. However, the relationship between fractal dimension and cognition is not yet fully understood. Further research is needed to investigate how changes in fractal dimension affect brain function and cognition.

Characterizing Fractality in Cancer Tumor Microenvironments: Cancer tumor microenvironments exhibit complex patterns of blood vessel formation and cellular arrangement. Researchers have used fractal analysis to study these patterns, but the relationship between fractality and cancer progression is not yet well understood.

Fractal Analysis of Heart Rate Variability in Cardiovascular Disease: Heart rate variability (HRV) is an indicator of autonomic nervous system function and has been linked to cardiovascular disease. However, the fractal properties of HRV and their implications for cardiovascular health are still not fully understood.

Developing Fractal-Based Models of Skin Cancer: Skin cancers exhibit complex patterns of growth and morphology. Fractal analysis may be used to model these patterns and predict cancer progression. However, more research is needed to develop accurate and clinically useful models.

Fractal Dimension of the Human Lung: The fractal dimension of the human lung has been studied in relation to diseases such as asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). However, the relationship between fractal dimension and lung function is still not fully understood.

Quantifying Fractality in the Human Gut Microbiome: The human gut microbiome exhibits complex patterns of bacterial arrangement and abundance. Fractal analysis may be used to study these patterns and their implications for health and disease.

Fractal Analysis of Bone Density and Osteoporosis: Bone density and osteoporosis are complex phenomena influenced by multiple factors, including age, sex, and lifestyle. However, the fractal properties of bone density and their implications for osteoporosis are still not fully understood.

Fractal Dimension of the Human Eye: The fractal dimension of the human eye has been studied in relation to diseases such as age-related macular degeneration. However, the relationship between fractal dimension and eye health is still not fully understood.

Quantifying Fractality in the Human Immune System: The human immune system exhibits complex patterns of cellular arrangement and activation. Fractal analysis may be used to study these patterns and their implications for health and disease.

Fractal-Based Models of Infectious Disease Spread: Infectious disease spread exhibits complex patterns, influenced by multiple factors, including population density, mobility, and contact rates. Fractal analysis may be used to develop more accurate models of disease spread and inform public health interventions.

Some of the open problems and challenges in applying fractal analysis to biomedical sciences include:

1. Data Quality and Availability:
   - High-quality, large-scale data are often required for fractal analysis, but such data are not always available or accessible.
2. Interpretation and Validation:
   - The results of fractal analysis must be interpreted and validated in the context of the specific biomedical problem being studied.
3. Comparison with other Methods:
   - Fractal analysis should be compared with other methods, such as machine learning and statistical analysis, to assess its performance and utility.
4. Development of new Algorithms and Techniques:
   - New algorithms and techniques, such as machine learning-based fractal analysis, are being developed to improve the efficiency and accuracy of fractal analysis.

Addressing these challenges and open problems will require collaboration between mathematicians, physicists, engineers, biologists, and clinicians to advance our understanding of fractal dimension and its applications in biomedical sciences.

Fractal dimension is a concept from fractal geometry that can provide insights into various complex systems, including those found in clinical sciences. Here are some open problems and research questions at the intersection of fractal dimension and clinical sciences [37, 44].

Next Generation Fractal Clinical Sciences

1. Fractal Analysis of Medical Imaging:
   - How can fractal dimensions be accurately quantified in medical imaging techniques such as MRI, CT scans, and ultrasound?
   - What is the relationship between fractal dimensions derived from imaging and specific pathologies, such as tumors or vascular structures?

2. Characterization of Tumor Growth:
   - Can the fractal dimension of a tumor's vascular network or cell distribution provide insights into its aggressiveness or likelihood of metastasis?
   - How do different treatment modalities (surgical, chemotherapy, radiotherapy) influence the fractal dimension of tumor morphology over time?

3. Fractal Patterns in Biological Systems:
   - What is the role of fractal patterns in the structural organization of tissues, such as the lungs (alveolar structures), brain (neural architectures), or bone (trabecular patterns)?
   - How do changes in the fractal dimension of these structures relate to disease progression or biological aging?

4. Fractal Analysis of ECG and EEG Signals:
   - Can fractal dimension be used as a reliable biomarker to differentiate between healthy and pathological heart rhythms in ECGs or brain activity patterns in EEGs?
   - What are the implications of fractal characteristics in understanding rhythmic disorders or neural degenerative diseases?

5. Fractals in Pathological Analysis:
   - How can fractal dimension be applied to quantify changes in cellular morphology in histopathological samples, and what does this tell us about cancer progression or response to therapy?
   - Is there a way to standardize fractal analysis methods across different types of tissues or disease states for clinical applicability?

6. Fractal Geometry in Epidemiology:
   - How can fractal geometry be utilized to model the spread of infectious diseases, considering the complex dynamics of human interactions and environmental factors?
   - In what ways could fractal dimensions of spatial patterns improve our understanding of the geographic spread of diseases?

7. Fractal Dimension in Physiological Signals:
   - In what ways does fractal analysis of physiological signals (like blood pressure changes over time or respiratory patterns) correlate with health outcomes?
   - How can fractal dimension metrics improve the prognostic assessment in chronic diseases such as diabetes or heart failure?

8. Integration with Machine Learning and AI:
   - How can fractal dimension be integrated into machine learning models to enhance the prediction of clinical outcomes or the classification of medical conditions?

- What challenges arise when combining fractal analysis with big data approaches in health informatics?

9. Multiscale Modeling of Health and Disease:
- How can fractal and multiscale approaches be used to understand the interplay between different biological systems in health and disease, such as the relationship between cellular, tissue, and organ-level structures?

10. Fractals and Personalization in Medicine:
- Can fractal dimensions of various biomarker patterns inform personalized medicine approaches, and what are the implications for treatment optimization?

Fractals have been increasingly applied to various fields in dentistry for analyzing complex structures and patterns. However, there are still several open problems in this area that require further research and investigation. Some of these open problems include [45-50].

Next Generation Fractal Dentistry

1. Development of fractal-based methods for predicting and analyzing the progression of periodontal disease: Fractals can be used to model the complex structure of dental plaque and gingiva, but more research is needed to determine their potential applications in predicting disease progression and evaluating the effectiveness of treatment.
2. Application of fractals in the analysis of oral microenvironment and its impact on oral health: Fractals can be used to model the complex interactions between oral bacteria, host cells, and environmental factors. Further research is needed to determine the potential applications of fractals in understanding the oral microenvironment and its impact on oral health.
3. Use of fractals for evaluating the complexity of dental restorations and implants: Fractals can be used to evaluate the complexity of dental restorations and implants, which can have implications for their durability and longevity. However, more research is needed to develop and validate fractal-based methods for evaluating the complexity of these dental devices.
4. Integration of fractal-based models with machine learning and artificial intelligence for decision support in dentistry: Fractals can be used to develop complex models of dental structures and processes. The integration of these models with machine learning and artificial intelligence can potentially lead to the development of more accurate and effective decision support systems for dentistry.
5. Development of fractal-based methods for evaluating the effects of dental materials on oral health: Fractals can be used to model the interactions between dental materials and oral tissues. Further research is needed to develop and validate fractal-based methods for evaluating the effects of dental materials on oral health.
6. Fractal analysis of tooth morphology and its potential applications in orthodontics and dental aesthetics: Fractals can be used to model the complex structure and morphology of teeth. Further research is needed to determine the potential applications of fractals in orthodontics and dental aesthetics, including the analysis of tooth shape and form.
7. Use of fractals for analyzing the spatial distribution of oral bacteria and its impact on oral health: Fractals can be used to model the complex spatial distribution of oral bacteria. Further research is needed to determine the potential applications of fractals in understanding the spatial distribution of oral bacteria and its impact on oral health.
8. Development of fractal-based methods for analyzing the effects of dental caries on tooth structure and function: Fractals can be used to model the complex structure and function of teeth. Further research is needed to develop and validate fractal-based methods for analyzing the effects of dental caries on tooth structure and function.
9. Fractal analysis of occlusion and its potential applications in prosthetic dentistry**: Fractals can be used to model the complex interactions between teeth and the occlusal environment. Further research is needed to determine the potential applications of fractals in prosthetic dentistry, including the analysis of occlusion and the selection of dental restorations.
10. Use of fractals for evaluating the durability and longevity of dental restorations and implants: Fractals can be used to model the complex structure and function of dental devices. Further research is needed to develop and validate fractal-based methods for evaluating the durability and longevity of dental restorations and implants.

These open problems represent a combination of theoretical and practical challenges in applying fractal analysis to clinical sciences, with opportunities for interdisciplinary research integrating mathematics, biology, medicine, and data science.

In a nutshell, the following are some influential open problems which concern fractal dimension as a measure of generalization.

Next Generation Fractal Dimension Theory

1. Models and Settings:
- Because of the assumptions in the theoretical results, we are therefore constrained in the following ways: (i) we only use "vanilla" SGD; (ii) we only work with a constant learning rate; (iii) we don't use batch normalisation; and (iv) we don't investigate the addition of explicit regularisation like dropout or weight decay. By expanding the analysis to include hostile initialisation scenarios and examining the relationship between double descent and PH dimension while adhering to the theoretical presumptions, we overcome this constraint. Alternative optimisation techniques and popular neural network architectural options, including batch normalisation or annealing learning rates, that are hindered by the current environment are potential avenues for future research.

2. Hyperparameter Selection:
- In addition to unusual grid values that differed between various architectures, our investigation shows a narrow range of batch sizes and learning rates. These decisions were taken to be consistent with the experiments of and to provide a fair comparison with them.
- Due to the computational expense of repeatedly training different models with different seeds, these design decisions to ensure that the models would converge within a reasonable number of iterations. These decisions may have also

contributed to the statistically significant results that were reported in their work. We would investigate a larger variety of hyperparameters for a more thorough analysis.

3. Computational Constraints:
- In our studies, calculating the loss-based PH dimension took up most of the runtime. Even though there is ongoing research in topological data analysis on the effective computation of PH, and PH continue to be computationally demanding methodologies that restrict the number of tests that may be conducted.

4. The Correlation Failure Lacked Discernible Patterns:
- One significant drawback of our research is that, despite conditioning on the network hyperparameters, we were unable to find any distinct patterns that would explain why and when the PH dimension might not correspond with the generalisation gap.
- Furthermore, even employing adversarial initialisation, we are unable to find a pattern that would explain why PH dimension measures correlate with generalisation or not.

5. Limitations in Theory:
- Although we offer thorough experimental evaluations of the connection between the generalisation gap and the PH dimension, we offer no theoretical explanations for the observed discrepancy between theory and practice.

Conclusion and Future Research Pathways

The idea of fractal dimension is crucial to many branches of mathematics and science, especially when studying intricate systems and geometrical patterns. Fractal dimension is important for assessing complexity and comprehending complicated structures. Fractal dimensions are employed in physics to investigate several phenomena, including as phase transitions, patterns in chaotic systems, and the distribution of galaxies in the universe. Comprehending these aspects facilitates forecasting and comprehension of fundamental mechanisms. On a different topic, fractal dimension can be used in environmental studies to analyse the distribution of pollutants in complex ecosystems, the fractal features of river networks, and vegetation patterns. This aids in better modelling and management of natural resources. Fractal dimensions are utilised in image processing and computer science to analyse and reduce images. By describing the textures and patterns present in photos, fractals can help improve image identification systems and image compression techniques. Finance professionals use fractal analysis to examine changes in stock prices and market behaviour. By encapsulating the intricate characteristics of financial systems, the fractal dimension can aid in trend analysis and market volatility analysis. A variety of biological structures, including blood arteries, brain networks, and tree branching, are modelled using fractals. Understanding biological growth patterns and pathological alterations, such tumour growth, can be facilitated by fractal analysis. Fractals have introduced ideas of self-similarity and complexity, which have influenced architecture and art. Fractal patterns are used by architects and artists to produce aesthetically pleasing designs that complement organic shapes and constructions. All things considered, the value of fractal dimension resides in its capacity to transcend disciplines, enabling instruments for improved analysis and comprehension of both natural and man-made structures as well as insights into intricate systems. To provide a next-generation research platform that combines fractal oncology, fractal biomedicine, fractal medicine, and fractal clinical sciences, the current exposition offers a wide range of prospective fractal open questions possible solutions to the provided open problems.

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