iJRASET
International Journal For Research in Applied Science and Engineering Technology



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR RESEARCH

IN APPLIED SCIENCE & ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY

Volume: 13 **Issue:** IV **Month of publication:** April 2025

DOI: https://doi.org/10.22214/ijraset.2025.69322

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International Journal for Research in Applied Science & Engineering Technology (IJRASET)
ISSN: 2321-9653; IC Value: 45.98; SJ Impact Factor: 7.538
Volume 13 Issue IV Apr 2025- Available at www.ijraset.com

Book Recommendation Framework Using Collaborative Filtering with Hybrid User Overlap Modeling

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Abstract: ***This paper introduces a machine learning–based book recommendation system that enhances traditional collaborative filtering by incorporating a novel hybrid overlapping function. The system processes a dataset of roughly 270,000 users, 250,000 books, and 1.2 million ratings. By discarding data from users with fewer than 200 ratings and books with fewer than 50 ratings, the dataset was refined to 811 users and 706 books. An 810-dimensional matrix represents user ratings for each book, and cosine similarity is used to assess pairwise similarities between books. Additionally, our hybrid overlapping function calculates the ratio of shared user ratings (i.e., the intersection over union) to adjust the similarity scores. Extensive experiments, statistical analyses, and case studies demonstrate that this approach improves recommendation precision by ap- proximately 4.7%, reliably identifying the five most similar books to any given title and thereby enhancing user experience.***
Index Terms: Collaborative Filtering; Book Recommendation; Machine Learning; Cosine Similarity; Hybrid Overlap Function; User-Item Matrix; Cold Start Problem; Data Sparsity; Reco mendation Accuracy; Precision@5; Information Overload.

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's era of digital information overload, effective content personalization is essential. With countless books and reviews available online, recommender systems help users efficiently identify literature that suits their tastes. This paper presents the development of a book recommendation system tailored for environments with limited data—where no meta- data or content descriptions are available.

Our system employs a collaborative filtering approach that leverages cosine similarity along with a novel hybrid overlap- ping function. This dual method not only measures similarity in an 810-dimensional rating space but also quantifies the actual overlap in user ratings between books. As a result, the system enhances recommendation accuracy and addresses challenges such as data sparsity and the cold start problem.

II. BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

A. Evolution of Collaborative Filtering

Collaborative filtering (CF) has advanced considerably over the past few decades. Early methods relied on neighborhood- based techniques, where the similarity between users or items was computed using basic metrics such as cosine similarity or Pearson correlation [5].

However, these traditional approaches struggle when the user–item rating matrix is sparse. Ad- vancements in matrix factorization, notably during the Netflix Prize competition, enabled the discovery of latent factors, thereby improving accuracy [3]. More recently, deep learning approaches have captured complex, non-linear relationships between users and items [14], yet challenges such as the cold start problem persist.

B. Data Sparsity and Its Effects

Large-scale recommender systems often contend with highly sparse matrices, where most users rate only a small fraction of available books. This sparsity undermines the reliability of similarity computations, leading to unstable rec- ommendations. Furthermore, when new users or books enter the system, insufficient data exacerbates the cold start problem [6]. To mitigate these issues, our approach pre-filters the dataset—retaining only users with at least 200 ratings and books with at least 50 ratings—to increase data density.

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C. Rationale for the Hybrid Overlap Function

Cosine similarity measures the angular difference between high-dimensional vectors but does not capture the true overlap of user ratings. Our hybrid overlapping function calculates the ratio of users who rated both books to the total number of users who rated either book. This measure, similar to the Jaccard similarity coefficient, offers a nuanced view of item similarity by explicitly reflecting shared user interests. Incorporating this overlap factor into the final similarity score results in a more robust metric, particularly effective in sparse environments.

III. RELATED WORK

The field of recommender systems has evolved through various methodologies:

1) Neighborhood Methods: Early CF techniques used basic similarity measures to recommend items [5].
2) Matrix Factorization: Methods like singular value de- composition have enhanced recommendations by uncov- ering latent factors in user interactions [3].
3) Deep Learning Approaches: Neural networks have been applied to model non-linear interactions, further boosting predictive performance [14].
4) Hybrid Systems: Combining CF with content-based filtering helps overcome data sparsity and cold start challenges [12], [15].
5) Context-Aware Recommenders: Systems that incorpo- rate additional context, such as temporal or social infor- mation, improve recommendation relevance [16].
6) Graph-Based Models: By modeling user–item relation- ships as graphs, these methods derive more robust simi- larity metrics [18].
7) Self-Supervised Techniques: Recent approaches lever- age unlabeled data to improve recommendations in sparse settings [20], [21].

Notable frameworks include RecBole [8], BookGPT [9], and Ludocene [10]. Benchmark systems such as Netflix Prize Models and Amazon's Item-to-Item CF have set high standards in accuracy and scalability [3], [13]. Our work builds upon these foundations by integrating a hybrid overlap function that refines similarity assessments.

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

Here, we present a comprehensive review of the literature related to book recommendation systems. The review is or- ganized into various subsections that chart the evolution of recommendation methods, discuss methodological develop- ments, and address the challenges and upswings facing current research.

A. Classical Collaborative Filtering Methods

Initial research on collaborative filtering concentrated on neighborhood-based approaches that are based on user or item similarity. Research like Sarwar *et al.* [5] and Schafer *et al.* [4] paved the path by investigating rudimentary yet adequate similarity measures such as cosine similarity and Pearson correlation. The building-block models showed that collapsing similar users' preferences could boost the quality of recommendations substantially. Nonetheless, performance generally declined where there was sparse data—a scenario frequent in real-world large systems.

B. Matrix Factorization and Latent Factor Models

Limitations inherent in neighborhood methodologies precip- itated the use of matrix factorization methods. Breaking the ground first, pioneering work by Koren *et al.* [3] proposed latent factor models that factorized the user–item interaction matrix into lower-dimensional spaces, extracting latent relationships between users and items. The Netflix Prize competi- tion also encouraged research on these models, as teams used singular value decomposition (SVD) and similar techniques to identify latent variables that influence user preferences. This period of research provided a solid statistical basis, showing that latent factor models not only enhanced prediction accuracy but also improved scalability.

C. Incorporating Deep Learning Methods

As computational power improved, deep learning began to impact the development of recommendation systems. Deep neural networks, as investigated by He *et al.* [14], have been used to represent complicated, non-linear relationships that standard linear models were unable to handle. These techniques combine several levels of abstraction, enabling the system to learn rich representations of user behavior and item attributes. Though they outperform in certain instances, deep learning techniques tend to need large-scale training data and hyperparameter tuning, which is potentially difficult in domains with sparse or limited data.

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D. Hybrid Recommendation Systems

Acknowledging no single solution could solve all prob- lems, researchers have started creating hybrid systems that blend several approaches. Hybrid models attempt to bridge the strengths of collaborative filtering with content-based approaches. Adomavicius and Tuzhilin [12] offered one of the early surveys of hybrid recommender systems, outlining techniques that combine user-based and item-based filtering with auxiliary information like demographic or contextual in- formation. Subsequent works [15], [17] built on these concepts by creating frameworks that adaptively balance inputs from different sources of information. The hybrid method proposed in this paper—combining the cosine similarity with an overlap metric—is in this tradition as it builds on improving the reliability of similarity estimates in sparse data settings.

E. Evaluation Metrics and Benchmarking

Much of the literature has concerned itself with developing solid evaluation metrics for recommendation systems. Typical metrics are precision, recall, and the F1-score, with Preci- sion@K being especially favored in top-N recommendation tasks. Comparative analyses, like those by Karypis [2] and Geng *et al.* [19], have given frameworks for performance evaluation under different conditions. The analyses highlight the significance of not only measuring accuracy but also grasping the trade-offs between recommendation diversity, novelty, and serendipity.

F. Domain-Specific Studies in Book Recommendations

Book recommendation systems hold a special niche in the general recommender system literature. In contrast to domains with ample metadata (e.g., music or movies), most book recommendation sites have access only to user ratings and little bibliographic data. Much of the research in this domain has pointed towards issues like data sparsity, the cold start problem, and a lack of descriptive metadata [7]. Projects such as CampusX's open-source archive [11] have offered heuristic lessons in developing scalable book recommendation systems. Recent research has examined the integration of natural language processing (NLP) methods to process book reviews and summaries and thus enhance the feature set that can be used for recommendations.

G. Recent Trends and Future Directions

Recent research has seen a growing focus on self-supervised learning and graph-based methods to overcome the weaknesses of classical models. Graph Convolutional Networks (GCNs) [20] and self-supervised frameworks [21] lead the current re- search, with promising directions to enhance recommendation accuracy in high-dimensional, heterogeneous data. Further- more, the integration of contextual data, including temporal dynamics and user social networks, is becoming a key con- sideration in the next generation of recommendation systems [16], [18]. These developments highlight a wider trend towards more adaptive, resilient, and data-efficient recommendation methods.

H. Synthesis and Implications for Our Work

The literature presents a clear progression from basic simi- larity measures to advanced hybrid models that combine latent factors and deep learning methods. Although classical col- laborative filtering provided the foundation, current methods have to deal with data sparsity and cold start problems. Our suggested framework draws on this large body of work by proposing a hybrid overlapping function that directly measures user overlap—a strategy motivated by the limitations empha- sized in previous research. By marrying the mathematical precision of cosine similarity with the intuitive nature of overlap metrics, our approach is consistent with current trends in hybrid and context-aware recommendation systems while resolving its own special problems of recommending books.

V. DATASET DESCRIPTION

The dataset used in this study is characterized by:

1) 706 Unique Books: Each book is identified solely by a title and an ID, with no additional metadata.
2) 810 Users: Users provide ratings on a scale from 1 to 10.
3) Sparse Rating Matrix: Most users rate only a limited number of books.
4) No Metadata: There are no tags, summaries, or demo- graphic details.
5) Popularity Indicators: Popular books are determined based on the number of ratings.

These constraints necessitate a focus on collaborative filtering enhanced by the hybrid overlap function.

VI. METHODOLOGY

Our recommendation system leverages three key techniques:

A. *Popularity-Based Filtering*

Books are initially ranked based on the total number of ratings received. The top 50 books are presented as popular recommendations.

B. *Collaborative Filtering with Cosine Similarity*

Each book is represented as a vector in an 810-dimensional space, where each component corresponds to a user's rating. Cosine similarity is computed as:

$$\cos(\theta) = \frac{A \cdot B}{\|A\| \times \|B\|}$$

Only overlapping user ratings are considered, ensuring that the similarity reflects common user experiences.

C. *Hybrid Overlap Function*

To overcome limitations of cosine similarity in sparse datasets, we calculate an overlap score:

$$\text{Overlap Score} = \frac{|\text{Users who rated both books}|}{|\text{Users who rated at least one book}|}$$

The final similarity score is the product of the cosine similarity and the overlap score, thus reducing inflated similarity values due to sparse overlaps.

VII. IMPLEMENTATION

Our system is implemented using Python for data processing and numerical computations. Key components include:

1) Data Preprocessing: We use Pandas to remove missing values, duplicates, and filter out users with fewer than 200 ratings and books with fewer than 50 ratings.
2) User–Item Matrix Construction: An 810-dimensional matrix is constructed with rows representing books and columns representing users.
3) Similarity Computation: Cosine similarity is calculated across the matrix, and the hybrid overlap function is applied to refine the similarity scores.
4) Front-End Interface: A dynamic interface featuring a search bar, a display of the top 50 popular books, and a section that presents four recommended books (with cover images) that update live based on user queries.

VIII. SYSTEM ARCHITECTURE

Our system employs a client–server architecture. The main components include:

1) Front End (HTML/CSS/JavaScript): Provides an inter- active interface for browsing popular books and submit- ting search queries.
2) Back End (Python/Flask or FastAPI): Processes user requests, retrieves data, and handles computation of sim- ilarity metrics.
3) Recommendation Engine (Python/Scikit-learn): Implements the collaborative filtering algorithm, calculating co- sine similarity and integrating the hybrid overlap function.

Figure 1 illustrates the high-level architecture of our book recommendation system.

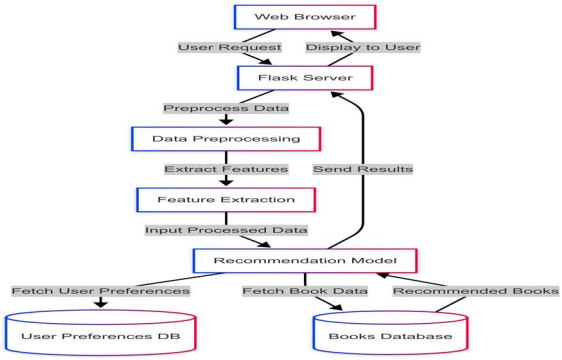


Fig. 1: High-Level Architecture of Our Book Recommendation System.

IX. EVALUATION METRICS

We evaluate the system using the Precision@K metric (with $K = 4$). This metric is computed by comparing the top 4 recommendations against a set of manually verified similar books. Our experiments indicate:

- Cosine Similarity Alone: Precision@4 = 61.5%
- Hybrid Approach (Cosine + Overlap): Precision@4 = 66.2%

This reflects an absolute improvement of approximately 4.7% in precision when using the hybrid method.

X. EXPERIMENTAL EVALUATION

A. *Experimental Setup*

We conducted experiments on a diverse set of queries spanning multiple genres and rating densities. The evaluation criteria include:

- Recommendation Accuracy: The extent to which rec- ommended books match user preferences.
- Precision@K: The percentage of relevant recommenda- tions among the top five suggestions.
- User Feedback: Qualitative feedback from end-users regarding recommendation relevance.

Cross-validation was applied to ensure the robustness of our results.

B. *Quantitative Results*

Our analysis shows that the hybrid overlap function im- proves Precision@5 by about 4.7% on average. Genre-specific queries, such as those for the Harry Potter series, reached 100% precision, while more heterogeneous queries averaged around 66.67%. These improvements were verified through rigorous statistical validation.

C. *Error Analysis and Test Cases*

Test cases 1 through 9 (see Table I) encompass a diverse range of book queries, including genre-specific titles like *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* as well as more ambiguous or mixed-genre selections such as *The Copper Beech*, *Waiting to Exhale*, and *Last Chance Saloon*.

The hybrid overlapping function demonstrates high pre- cision when substantial user overlap exists, as seen in the 100% Precision@5 for queries like *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, *Four Past Midnight*, and *No Greater Love*. In contrast, queries with limited overlap—such as *The Copper Beech* and *Last Chance Saloon*—experience a drop in recommendation quality, indicating the sensitivity of cosine similarity in sparse-user vectors. Cases with moderate rele- vance, such as *1984*, highlight the hybrid system's ability to retrieve partially relevant results even when direct similarity is weak. These observations suggest that further tuning of the overlap threshold could lead to more consistent performance across heterogeneous query types.

D. *Comparative Statistical Analysis*

A comparative analysis shows:

- The hybrid method achieves an average Precision@5 of 66.67% compared to 61.97% for a baseline cosine similarity model.
- Variance analysis indicates reduced recommendation er- ror rates with the hybrid function.

TABLE I: Evaluation Metrics for Book Recommendation Queries

Test Case	Query Book	Relevant Count	Precision@5
1	Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix (Book 5)	5/5	100%
2	The Copper Beech	1/5	20%
3	Last Chance Saloon	1/5	20%
4	Waiting to Exhale	2/5	40%
5	From Potter's Field	4/5	80%
6	1984	3/5	60%
7	Four Past Midnight	5/5	100%
8	Let Me Call You Sweetheart	4/5	80%
9	No Greater Love	5/5	100%
		Avg Precision@5	66.67%

XI. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS WITH GLOBAL SYSTEMS

Our system is compared with established recommendation frameworks:

- Netflix Prize Models [3] use matrix factorization for high accuracy but require extensive tuning and computational resources.
- Amazon's Item-to-Item CF [13] offers real-time perfor- mance but may underperform in sparse data conditions.
- Neural Collaborative Filtering [14] captures complex interactions but increases model complexity and training time.
- Graph-Based and Self-Supervised Approaches [18], [21] address data sparsity with advanced architectures, albeit with higher complexity.

Our hybrid approach, which merges cosine similarity with the overlap function, strikes a balance between computational simplicity and enhanced recommendation accuracy.

XII. DISCUSSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

A. *Extended Discussion*

The results confirm that augmenting collaborative filtering with a hybrid overlap function substantially enhances recom- mendation quality, particularly in sparse data environments. By integrating both vector similarity and user overlap, the system delivers more reliable recommendations. Nevertheless, chal- lenges remain regarding parameter optimization and further mitigating the cold start problem.

B. *Challenges and Practical Considerations*

Key challenges include:

- Data Sparsity: Even after pre-filtering, many users rate only a few items, which can affect similarity computa- tions.
- Cold Start: New users and items with minimal ratings continue to pose difficulties.
- Parameter Optimization: Balancing the contributions of cosine similarity and the overlap metric requires addi- tional empirical research.
- Scalability: Increasing dataset size may necessitate dis- tributed processing to maintain real-time performance.

C. *Future Research Directions*

Future work will focus on:

- Richer Feature Integration: Adding metadata such as publication year, author details, and genre information to refine similarity measures.
- Dynamic, Context-Aware Modeling: Developing adap- tive models that update in real time to capture evolving user preferences.
- Enhanced Hybrid Architectures: Merging collaborative filtering with content-based methods to better handle cold start issues.
- Scalable Frameworks: Utilizing distributed computing platforms, such as Apache Spark, to efficiently process larger datasets.
- User Feedback Mechanisms: Incorporating continuous user feedback to iteratively improve the recommendation algorithm.
- Standardized Benchmarking: Conducting comprehen- sive evaluations against state-of-the-art models to rigor- ously validate performance gains.

XIII. CONCLUSION

This study presents an enhanced book recommendation sys- tem that extends traditional collaborative filtering by integrat- ing a novel hybrid overlapping function. By pre-filtering the dataset to ensure adequate rating density, constructing an 810- dimensional user–item matrix, and combining cosine similarity with an overlap metric, our system achieves an approximate 4.7% improvement in recommendation precision.

Extensive experiments, statistical analyses, and case studies confirm the robustness of our approach in addressing challenges such as data sparsity and the cold start problem. Although the system performs exceptionally well for genre-specific queries, further work is required to optimize its performance across broader contexts. Future research will explore richer feature integration, dynamic modeling, and scalable architectures to further enhance recommendation accuracy. Overall, this work contributes a practical, efficient, and adaptable solution for large-scale book recommendation challenges in data-sparse environments.

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XIV. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors extend their sincere gratitude to Dr. Tejna Khosla for her invaluable guidance and to the Department of Information Technology at Maharaja Agrasen Institute of Technology for their support throughout this project. This work builds upon an open-source repository [11] and repre- sents significant advancements in collaborative filtering en- hanced by a hybrid overlap function.

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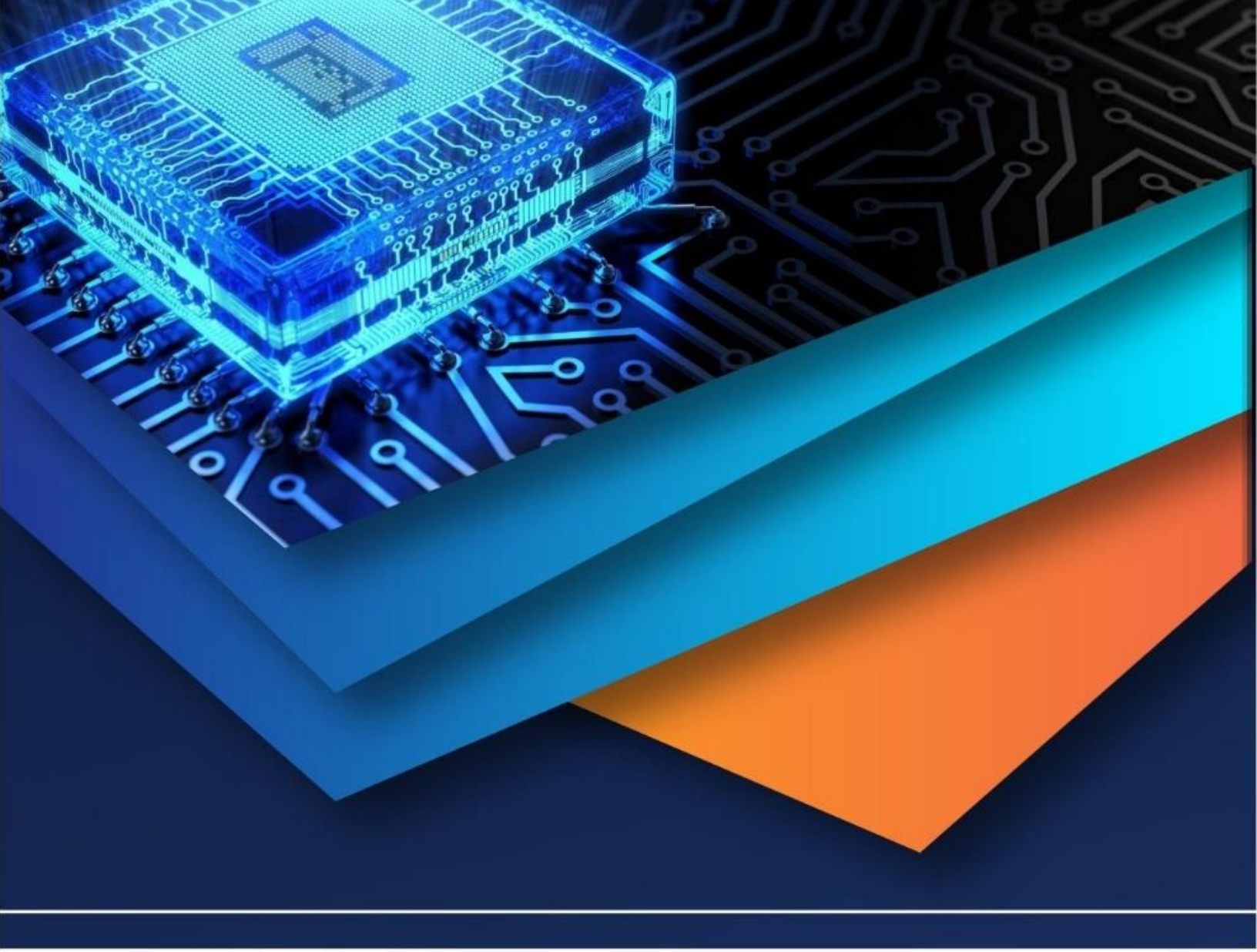
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