

IMPROVED FUNNEL-GSEA USING ADAPTIVE ELASTIC-NET
PENALIZATION METHOD TO IDENTIFY SIGNIFICANT GENE SETS

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved mother, father, and siblings, who give me love, strength, and helps. To my beloved friends especially my supervisors and AIBIG member, thank you so much for all support and help.

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ABSTRACT

Gene set enrichment analysis (GSEA) is one of the methods in functional class scoring (FCS) categories for gene set analysis. GSEA is a popular method that was developed to identify, analyse and interpret set of genes or pathways from high-throughput transcriptomics experiments which are significantly enriched to help further analysis by biologist researchers. Many methods have been developed to enhance the original procedure of the GSEA. One of the evolutions of the GSEA method is the use of the elastic-net to reduce the effect of overlapping that reduces the statistical power and instability of the inference at the level of the gene set. However, elastic-net has limitations as it is inconsistent and bias in estimation. Thus, an ADaptive ELastic-NET in GSEA (ADELNET-GSEA) with an adaptive elastic-net was proposed to achieve a better result in identifying more gene sets that are informative and significant. The key part of the adaptive elastic-net is the weight parameter. It enables the adaptive elastic-net to perform different amounts of shrinkage to the different variables. Consequently, the ADELNET-GSEA is also consistent and unbiased in estimation. This research utilized the real dataset of Influenza A H3N2 time-course gene expression. It was found that the ADELNET-GSEA outperformed the previous GSEA method by identifying higher numbers of informative and significant gene sets to the immune response to human influenza infection. ADELNET-GSEA was able to identify the new gene sets, which were Spliceosome and Ubiquitin Mediated Proteolysis gene sets, related to the immune response for influenza. These findings have been validated through a word search strategy proven by previous researchers. Based on this result, this research brings benefits to the biological context validation and able to clarify the reliability of the improved method in identifying the significant gene sets.

ABSTRAK

Analisis pengayaan set gen (GSEA) adalah salah satu kaedah dalam kategori pemarkahan kelas kefungsiian (FCS) untuk analisis set gen. GSEA adalah kaedah yang dikenali yang dibangunkan untuk mengenal pasti, menganalisis dan mentafsirkan kumpulan gen atau laluan dari eksperimen transkripomik hasil yang tinggi yang diperkaya secara signifikan untuk membantu analisis lebih lanjut oleh penyelidik biologi. Banyak kaedah telah dibangunkan untuk meningkatkan prosedur asal GSEA. Salah satu evolusi kaedah GSEA adalah penggunaan jaring elastik untuk mengurangkan kesan pertindihan yang mengurangkan kekuatan statistik dan ketidakstabilan inferens pada tahap kumpulan gen. Walau bagaimanapun, jaring elastik mempunyai batasan kerana ia tidak konsisten dan berat sebelah dalam perkiraan. Oleh itu, ADaptive ELastic-NET di GSEA (ADELNET-GSEA) dengan jaring elastik adaptif dicadangkan untuk mencapai hasil yang lebih baik dalam mengenal pasti lebih banyak kumpulan gen yang bermaklumat dan signifikan. Bahagian utama dari jaring elastik adaptif adalah parameter berat. Ini membolehkan jaring elastik adaptif untuk melakukan penyusutan jumlah yang berbeza terhadap pemboleh ubah yang berbeza. Oleh itu, ADELNET-GSEA juga konsisten dan tidak berat sebelah dalam perkiraan. Penyelidikan ini menggunakan kumpulan data sebenar ekspresi gen kursus masa Influenza A H3N2. Didapati bahawa ADELNET-GSEA mengungguli kaedah GSEA sebelumnya dengan mengenal pasti bilangan set gen yang berinformasi dan signifikan terhadap tindak balas imun terhadap jangkitan influenza manusia. ADELNET-GSEA dapat mengenal pasti kumpulan gen baru, yang terdiri daripada kumpulan gen *Spliceosome* dan *Ubiquitin Mediated Proteolysis* yang berkaitan dengan tindak balas imun terhadap influenza. Penemuan ini telah disahkan melalui strategi pencarian kata yang dibuktikan oleh penyelidik sebelumnya. Berdasarkan keputusan ini, penyelidikan ini membawa manfaat kepada pengesahan konteks biologi dan dapat menjelaskan kebolehpercayaan kaedah yang ditambah baik dalam mengenal pasti kumpulan gen yang signifikan.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

GSEA	-	Gene Set Enrichment Analysis
RNA-seq	-	Ribonucleic Acid Sequence
DNA	-	Deoxyribonucleic acid
SGA	-	Single Gene Analysis
GSA	-	Gene Set Analysis
IGA	-	Individual Gene Analysis
ORA	-	Over-Representation Analysis
FCS	-	Functional Class Scoring
PT	-	Pathway Topology
MSigDB	-	Molecular Signatures Database
KEGG	-	Kyoto Encyclopaedia of Genes and Genomes
PAGE	-	Parametric Analysis of Gene set Enrichment
GAGE	-	Generally Applicable Gene-set Enrichment
CAMERA	-	Correlation Adjusted Mean Rank
FUNNEL-	-	Functional Elastic-net regression in Gene Set Enrichment
GSEA		Analysis
FPCA	-	Functional Principal Component Analysis
LASSO	-	Least Absolute Shrinkage and Selection Operator
SCAD	-	Smoothly Clipped Absolute Deviation
ADELNET-	-	Adaptive Elastic-net in Gene Set Enrichment Analysis
GSEA		
GEO	-	Gene Expression Omnibus
C	-	Cytosine
A	-	Adenine
G	-	Guanine
T	-	Thymine
RNA	-	Ribonucleic Acid
tRNA	-	Transfer Ribonucleic Acid
rRNA	-	Ribosomal Ribonucleic Acid
mRNA	-	Messenger Ribonucleic Acid

GO	-	Gene Ontology
EA	-	Enrichment Analysis
maSigFun	-	Microarray Significant Functional
NP	-	Nonparametric Test Statistic
TcGSA	-	Time-course Gene Set Analysis
LLCT	-	Longitudinal Linear Combination Test
SAM-GS	-	Significance Analysis of Microarray to Gene-Set Analysis
QuSAGE	-	Quantitative Set Analysis of Gene Expression
FDR	-	False Discovery Rate
ES	-	Enrichment Score
MES	-	Maximum Enrichment Score
SAM	-	Significance Analysis of Microarray
VIF	-	Variance Inflation Factor
MWU	-	Mann-Whitney U test
FN	-	False Negative
FP	-	False Positive
ROC	-	Receiver Operating Characteristic
Adaptive	-	Adaptive Least Absolute Shrinkage and Selection Operator
LASSO		
Elastic	-	Elastic Smoothly Clipped Absolute Deviation
SCAD		
MSA-Enet	-	Multi-step Adaptive Elastic-net
GCV	-	Generalized Cross Validation
AIC	-	Akaike Information Criterion
BIC	-	Bayesian Information Criterion
PMID	-	PubMed Unique Identifiers
pdf	-	Portable Document Format
RAM	-	Random-access Memory
FWER	-	Familywise Error Rate
IQR	-	Inter-quantile Range
FDA	-	Functional Data Analysis
PCA	-	Principal Component Analysis
EVs	-	Extracellular Vesicle

IAVs	-	Influenza A Viruses
DCs	-	Dendritic Cells
HAI	-	Hemagglutination Antibody Inhibition
PML	-	Promyelocytic Leukaemia Protein

LIST OF SYMBOLS

ϵ	-	Random noise
y	-	Respond vector
X	-	Gene matrix
β^*	-	Vector
F_i	-	F-statistic or F-value
RSS_i^0	-	Residual sum of squares under the null hypotheses
RSS_i^1	-	Residual sum of squares under alternative hypotheses
$\hat{\mu}_i$	-	Mean expression of the temporal sample
$\hat{\xi}_{il}$	-	Principal Component Score
$\hat{\phi}_l^k(t)$	-	the l th eigen-function that obtain from FPCA method
\hat{a}_i	-	Weight parameter in adaptive elastic-net
λ	-	Tuning parameter

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

Over of the last few decades, the field of molecular biology has targeted and focused on studying biological systems at the molecular level which provided richer information. Then the comprehension of the genes and their function has been assisted by microarray experiments (Tusher *et al.*, 2001; Beadling and Smith, 2002; Xie *et al.*, 2007; Nan *et al.*, 2012; Mathur *et al.*, 2018). Across several of the clinical condition and experimental, RNA-seq and DNA microarray has made simultaneous expression level profiling of thousands of genes that can be widely accessible by researchers.

Microarray data was used in many areas such as cancer classification in order to build the powerful classifier, cancer diagnosis, providing more comprehensive understanding for complex disease, discovering and finding the hidden taxonomies (Piatetsky-Shapiro and Tamayo, 2003), data normalization (Quackenbush, 2002), identify biomarkers (Takamiya *et al.*, 2021) and other. One of the objectives of microarray analysis is to identify the constant differential expression pattern between two classes of samples. However, it needs to go through a critical data preparation step in biological function analyses as shown in Figure 1.1 to get microarray data. Such experiments generate a very large number of data that lead to difficult analyses, especially without great gene annotation.

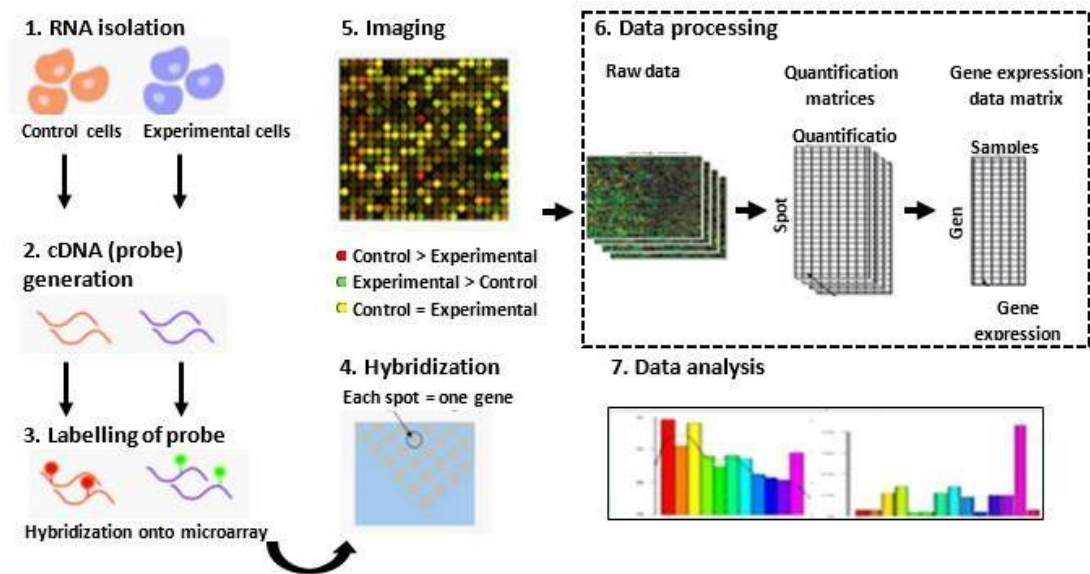


Figure 1.1 Overview of the microarray data preparation step

Another kind of microarray data is time-course gene expression data that also known as time-series data has gained more popularity in interpretation studies in recent years (Zhang *et al.*, 2011; Wu and Wu, 2013; Hejblum *et al.*, 2015; Khodayari Moez *et al.*, 2019). The time-course gene expression data is different from microarray data that usually use before. In which, it is the static experiment that captures only the expression value. Meanwhile, the time-course gene expression data capture the expression value over several time points in a given biological process. This enables the specialists and biologists to study the gene expression pattern over time points in order to monitor the dynamic behaviors of the genes (L. Wang *et al.*, 2007; Wu and Wu, 2013). Microarray advancements have made it conceivable to measure the gene expression values of all the genes.

In order to obtain significant outcomes, it is important to interpret these data sets accurately. Various inferential and statistical methods have been developed and available to extract useful information and detecting significant genes from these data sets in the past decade. For example, ErmineJ (Lee *et al.*, 2005), DAVID (Dennis *et al.*, 2003), and GeneMerge (Castillo-Davis and Hartl, 2003). Then for single time-course gene analysis is maSigPro (Conesa *et al.*, 2006), ANOVA based method model (Park *et al.*, 2003), and EDGE (Storey *et al.*, 2005). All these methods are known as single gene analysis (SGA) or individual gene analysis (IGA) (Nam and Kim, 2008).

It discovers differently expressed genes by evaluating every single gene. However, a usual microarray data has a dimensional limitation, where this data has a large number of genes and a frequently a small number of samples. This causes the interpretation expression level profile to remain a key challenge.

Thus, the concept of this area moved from the differential expression of single or individual genes to sets of biologically related genes, known as gene set analysis (GSA). This area divides into groups of analyses, which are network-based analysis and pathway-based analysis. The term “pathway-based analysis” has been used widely in the literature (Green and Karp, 2006; Khatri *et al.*, 2012) and is also known as gene set analysis. However, the term “gene set” is used in this thesis. Gene sets or pathways are ordinarily grouped by genes that share some of the basic or common biological properties such as having a common function, same metabolic pathway, or existence of the binding motif. Figure 1.2 shows the difference between single gene analysis and gene set analysis.

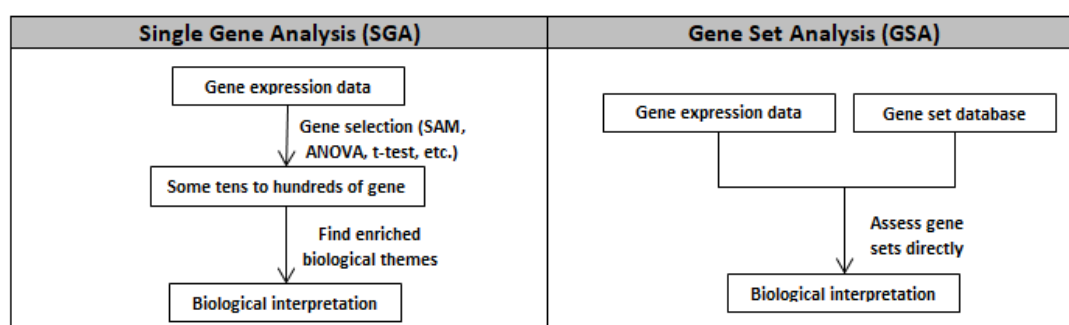


Figure 1.2 The comparison of single gene analysis (SGA) and the gene-set analysis strategy (GSA)

There are three generations of gene set or pathway analysis that have been described by Khatri *et al.*, (2012). These generations are different from each other based on their step and strategy. First generation is over-representation analysis (ORA) that follows the following strategy. Firstly, from the whole gene expression, it creates the list of input by using specific criteria or thresholds. After that, for every gene set, the inputs of genes that are part of the gene sets are counted. This procedure is repeated for a proper context list of genes. Finally, each gene set is tested for under or over-

representation in the list of input genes. Chi-square, hypergeometric and binomial distribution are common tests have used. The second generation is functional class scoring (FCS). This generation has three main steps. Firstly, a gene-level statistic is computed from the differential expression of individual genes by statistic tests such as Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic (Mootha *et al.*, 2003; Subramanian *et al.*, 2005), ANOVA (Al-Shahrour *et al.*, 2005), FPCA (Ramsay, 2005), Q-statistic (Goeman *et al.*, 2004) and Z-score (Kim and Volsky, 2005). Secondly, the gene-level statistic for all genes in gene sets is accumulated into a single gene set-level statistic. The gene set-level statistic that is commonly used is maxmean statistic (Efron and Tibshirani, 2007) and Wilcoxon rank-sum (Barry *et al.*, 2005). Finally, assessing the significant gene set from gene set-level statistics. The last generation is pathway topology (PT) which has the same step as the FCS method. However, this generation uses additional information such as genes interaction and pathway topology to compute gene-level statistics. In this research, FCS generation and method are used.

Gene set analysis has gained popularity and become the first option to interpret gene expression and protein in recent years because of its advantages. Firstly, gene set analysis has reduced the complexity of analysis by gathering the long list of individual genes into a smaller set of related genes. Secondly, it can have more explanatory power compared to individual gene analysis (Glazko and Emmert-Streib, 2009). Thirdly, it is successful to interpret the gene expression in terms of the molecular pathway, biological function, and genomic function (Zhang *et al.*, 2011). In addition, gene set analysis had emerged widely in microarray analysis due to the large number of open databases which can easily access the high-quality gene set or pathway datasets (Yaari *et al.*, 2013; Zhang *et al.*, 2017). The example of open databases is Molecular signatures database (MSigDB) (Liberzon *et al.*, 2011), Kyoto Encyclopaedia of Genes and Genomes (KEGG) (Kanehisa and Goto, 2000), Reactome (Croft *et al.*, 2010), BioCarta (Nishimura, 2001), and Pathway Interaction Database (Schaefer *et al.*, 2008). These databases are growing exponentially that enabling further opportunities for reveal new functional gene sets (Ideker *et al.*, 2002; Segal *et al.*, 2003; Sharan *et al.*, 2005; Chen and Yuan, 2006).

Due to these advantages, gene set analysis has turned into a well-known research area and numerous strategies have been developed to enhance the original Gene set Enrichment analysis (GSEA) procedure by Mootha *et al.*, (2003) and Subramanian *et al.*, (2005) to identify informative gene sets to related biological condition. For example, Parametric Analysis of Gene set Enrichment (PAGE) (Kim and Volsky, 2005), was used the normal distribution in statistical inference that reduces the computation effect compare to using permutation step. Besides, a Generally Applicable Gene-set Enrichment (GAGE) (Luo *et al.*, 2009) was used a two-sample t-test, adjust for the different microarray experiment designs, and separate the experimental gene set and canonical pathway to successfully apply for different sample sizes, profiling techniques, and experimental designs of microarray dataset. Correlation Adjusted Mean Rank gene set test (CAMERA) and its extension (Wu and Smyth, 2012; Yaari *et al.*, 2013) incorporate the adjustment of the inter-gene correlation to increase the false discoveries of numerous differential expression tests and gene-set test considerably. Lastly, Functional Elastic-net regression in Gene Set Enrichment Analysis (FUNNEL-GSEA) (Zhang *et al.*, 2017; Meng *et al.*, 2018) uses for time-course gene expression based on FPCA and use the elastic-net as the weight method or penalized method to decompose the overlapping effect that reduces the statistical power and instability of the inference at the level of the gene set.

The penalized method is the alternative or advance method for gene selection that is crucial for discovering the knowledge with high-dimensional data (Fan and Li, 2006). The penalized method could greatly improve the performance of the fitted model and gene-set analysis method. Thus, many statisticians have attempted to propose several penalization methods and strategies such as LASSO, adaptive LASSO, SCAD, elastic net, and adaptive elastic net to perform model selection and estimation simultaneously. Penalization methods shrink down to zero the coefficient of genes or markers that a have little apparent impact (Ayers and Cordell, 2010) on the phenotype of interest. Through the utilization of the penalization method, it can be discovering the subset of genes that are most associated with the phenotype of interest. Furthermore, penalization methods are able to handle the impacts of the multicollinearity, overfitting issues (Zakariya Yahya Algamal and Lee, 2015), and the effect of the overlapping (Zhang *et al.*, 2017). However, it keeps challenging to choose

the better and suitable penalized method to implement in the gene set analysis method to achieve the better result in identify a significant gene set.

1.2 Problem Background

Microarray data analysis has been broadly utilized by researchers to enhance the biological interpretation and understanding of the analysis outcome. The conceptual on the differential expression of single or individual genes shift to sets of biologically related genes and known as gene set analysis (GSA) or pathway analysis. Integration of pathway data and information into the microarray data has enhanced the interpretation and analysis for achievement in microarray analysis.

However, most of the pathway definitions were discovered in the public database are usually curated from numerous studies of cultured cells and domain experts (Adriaens *et al.*, 2008) that obtain under different experimental conditions. Therefore, these gene sets or pathways are not context-specific and there is incredible overlap in these gene sets. The overweight for overlap of the important genes that shares by numerous sets can cause an increase the hypothesis test dependency, encourage type I error (false positive), reduce the power of statistical and instability of inferences at the gene set level (Qiu *et al.*, 2005; Qiu and Yakovlev, 2006, 2007; Gordon *et al.*, 2007; Zhang *et al.*, 2017). Figure 1.3 shows the example of the overlapping gene in the gene set. The red color presents the overlapping gene. One of the examples for overlap gene is G4 that be assigned to the gene set one, two, and three. However, the exact activation for the G4 in the context of influenza viral infection might not be inferred by all the gene sets that can activate that gene.

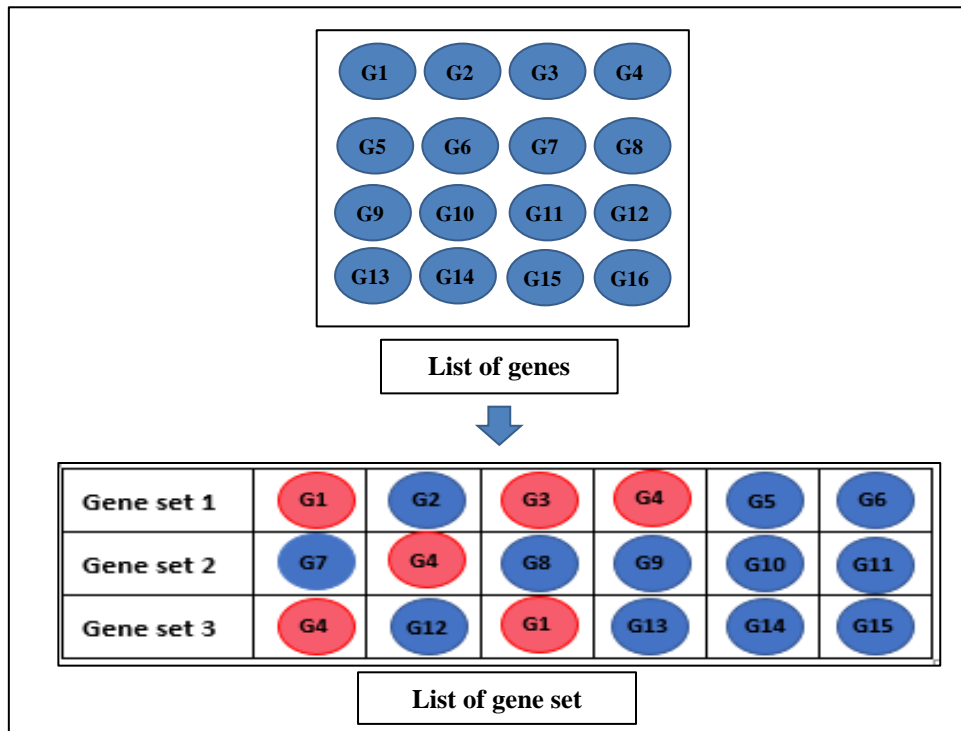


Figure 1.3 Overlapping gene between the gene sets.

The penalized method is the alternative or advance method for the gene selection to help to reduce the overlapping effect for improving the performance gene set enrichment analysis in identifying the significant gene set. The elastic-net is one of the penalization methods that has been implemented in the FUNNEL-GSEA method. However, the elastic-net penalization method has some limitations. The elastic-net is lacked the oracle property due to the bias estimation same as LASSO even though it outperforms LASSO (Zou and Zhang, 2009; Zeng and Xie, 2014; Zakariya Y Algamal and Lee, 2015; Zakariya Yahya Algamal and Lee, 2015). Consequently, the elastic-net is inconsistent in estimation.

1.3 Problem Statement

Since the gene set analysis dataset consists of overlapping gene causes curated from numerous studies of the expert domain, the penalization method is required to reduce the overlapping effect to improve the performance of gene set enrichment analysis in identifying the significant gene set. The penalization methods are able to discover the subset of marks that are most associated with the disease or phenotype. The previous penalization method regularizes the entire variable coefficient in the gene set equally. As the result, the estimation can be biased for the large coefficient since the heavy shrinkage is imposed on a large coefficient.

1.4 Research aim

The aim of this research is to propose an improved gene set enrichment analysis method to better identifying the significant gene set from the time-course gene expression dataset for further analysis and examination through biological context validation by word search.

1.5 Objectives

The objectives of this research are specified as follows:

- a) To propose an improved FUNNEL-GSEA method with integrating adaptive weight parameter in elastic-net penalization method to reduce overlapping effect for better identification of significant gene sets.
- b) To discover the significant gene sets to immune response to human influenza infection for Influenza A H3N2 disease.

- c) To propose a new validation approach through biological context validation by word search.

1.6 Research Scopes

The scopes of this research are as follow:

- a) This research uses Rstudio software to run the source code and R programming language has been used.
- b) The dataset of time-course gene expression going to be used in this research is Human influenza infection by influenza A H3N2 or Wisconsin virus that has been downloaded from Gene Expression Omnibus (GEO) repository website with GSE52428 series number.
- c) CP: KEGG biological pathway is used as gene set data that has been downloaded from MSigDB database.
- d) The research used the “gene set” or group of genes terms to refer as a pathway.
- e) The performance measurements used in this research are F-value and p-value
- f) The biological context validations by word search are used to validate the significant gene sets to justify the relationship between the gene set and the immune response.

1.7 Significance of the Research

The significance of this research is that the improved method able to better in identifying and more numbers significant gene sets that related to the immune response. It can help researchers and biologists to further study and analyze the significant gene sets for the production of products such as vaccines. Furthermore, the proposed weight parameter in adaptive elastic-net has the ability to produce consistent estimation in penalizing the coefficient of variable and able to reduce the overlapping effect in gene set data that usually affects the performance of methods. Besides, the usage of the time-course gene expression dataset allows for a better interpretation of temporal information and the dynamic behaviors of the gene. Finally, the improved method can be utilized in other biological areas related to human genomes for better interpretation and analysis.

1.8 Thesis Outline

This thesis is arranged into five chapters as follow:

Chapter 1: This chapter presents a detailed explanation of the research domain. This chapter helps to understand the general biological information that relates to this research. It contains the overview of the research domain, problem background, problem statement, research aim, objectives, research scopes, significance of this research, and thesis outline.

Chapter 2: This chapter reviews the revolution and trend from previous researchers that related to gene set enrichment analysis and penalization method.

Chapter 3: This chapter explains the research methodology in detail. It consists of the research framework and research materials such as time-course gene expression datasets and gene set or pathway data. Additionally, this chapter discusses the

fundamental software and hardware requirement as well as the performance measurement for the evaluation process.

Chapter 4: This chapter describes the differences between the original FUNNEL-GSEA method from the previous researcher and the improved method. Furthermore, dataset pre-processing is also included in this chapter. This chapter also presents the design and development of the improved method, an improved ADaptive ELastic-NET in Gene Set Enrichment Analysis (ADELNET-GSEA) to identify more numbers of informative gene sets that related to immune response. Then, the result of the improved method and comparison with other methods is presented and discussed. Lastly, will be performed the biological context validation by word search.

Chapter 5: This chapter concludes by emphasizing the achievement of research and recommendations for the future direction of the present research.

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