A Benchmark Study of Contrastive Learning for Arabic Social Meaning
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Abstract
Contrastive learning (CL) brought significant progress to various NLP tasks. Despite this progress, CL has not been applied to Arabic NLP to date. Nor is it clear how much benefits it could bring to particular classes of tasks such as those involved in Arabic social meaning (e.g., sentiment analysis, dialect identification, hate speech detection). In this work, we present a comprehensive benchmark study of state-of-the-art supervised CL methods on a wide array of Arabic social meaning tasks. Through extensive empirical analyses, we show that CL methods outperform vanilla finetuning on most tasks we consider. We also show that CL can be data efficient and quantify this efficiency. Overall, our work allows us to demonstrate the promise of CL methods, including in low-resource settings.

1 Introduction
Proliferation of social media resulted in unprecedented online user engagement. People around the world share their emotions, fears, hopes, opinions, etc. online on a daily basis (Farzindar and Inkpen 2015; Zhang and Abdul-Mageed 2022) on platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. Hence, these platforms offer excellent resources for social meaning tasks such as emotion recognition (Abdul-Mageed and Ungar 2017; Mohammad et al. 2018), irony detection (Van Hee et al. 2018), sarcasm detection (Bamman and Smith 2015), hate speech identification (Waseem and Hovy 2016), stance identification (Mohammad et al. 2016), among others. While the majority of previous social meaning studies were carried out on English, a fast-growing number of investigations focus on other languages. In this paper, we focus on Arabic.

Several works have been conducted on different Arabic social meaning tasks. Some of these focus on Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) (Abdul-Mageed et al., 2011, 2012), while others take Arabic dialects as their target (ElSahar and El-Beltagy 2015; Al Sallab et al., 2015). While many works have focused on sentiment analysis, e.g., (Abdul-Mageed et al., 2012; Nabil et al., 2015; ElSahar and El-Beltagy, 2015; Al Sallab et al., 2015; Al-Moslmi et al., 2018; Al-Smadi et al., 2019; Al-Ayyoub et al., 2019; Farha and Magdy, 2019) and dialect identification (Elfardy and Diab, 2013; Zaidan and Callison-Burch, 2011, 2014; Cotterell and Callison-Burch, 2014; Zhang and Abdul-Mageed, 2019; Bouamor et al., 2018; Abdul-Mageed et al., 2020b,a, 2021b), others focused on detection of user demographics such as age and gender (Zaghouani and Charfi 2018; Rangel et al. 2019), irony detection (Karoui et al. 2017; Ghanem et al. 2019), and emotion analysis (Abdul-Mageed et al. 2016; Alhuzali et al. 2018). Our interest in the current work is improving Arabic social meaning through representation learning.

In spite of recent progress in representation learning, most work in Arabic social meaning mostly focuses on finetuning language models such as AraT5 (Nagoudi et al., 2022), CamelBERT (Inoue et al., 2021), MARBERT (Abdul-Mageed et al., 2021a), QARIB (Abdelali et al., 2021), among others. In particular, Arabic social media processing has to date ignored the emerging sub-area of contrastive learning (CL) (Hadsell et al. 2006). Given a labeled dataset, CL (Khosla et al., 2020) attempts
to pull representations of the same class close to each other while pushing representations of different classes further apart (Figure 1). In this work, we investigate five different supervised contrastive learning methods in the context of Arabic social meaning. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first work that provides a comprehensive study of supervised contrastive learning on a wide range of Arabic social meanings. We show that performance of CL methods can be task-dependent. We attempt to explain this performance from the perspective of task specificity (i.e., how fine-grained the labels of a given task are). We also show that contrastive learning methods generally perform better than vanilla finetuning based on cross entropy (CE). Through an extensive experimental study, we also demonstrate that CL methods outperform CE finetuning under resource-limited constraints. Our work allows us to demonstrate the promise of CL methods in general, and in low-resource settings in particular.

To summarize, we offer the following contributions:

1. We study a comprehensive set of supervised CL methods for a wide range of Arabic social meaning tasks, including abusive language and hate speech detection, emotion and sentiment analysis, and identification of demographic attributes (e.g., age, gender).

2. We show that CL-based methods outperform generic CE-based vanilla finetuning for most of the tasks. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first work that provides an extensive study of supervised CL on Arabic social meaning.

3. We empirically find that improvements CL methods result in are task-specific and attempt to understand this finding in the context of the different tasks we consider with regard to their label granularity.

4. We demonstrate that CL methods can achieve better performance under limited data constraints, emphasizing and quantifying how well these can work for low-resource settings.

2 Related Works

2.1 Arabic Social Meaning

We use the term *social meaning* (SM) to refer to meaning arising in real-world communication in social media (Thomas, 2014; Zhang et al., 2022b). SM covers tasks such as sentiment analysis (Abdul-Mageed et al., 2012; Abu Farha et al., 2021; Saleh et al., 2022; Alali et al., 2022), emotion recognition (Alhuzali et al., 2018; Mubarak et al., 2022c; Abu Shaqra et al., 2022; Mansy et al., 2022), age and gender identification (Abdul-Mageed et al., 2020c; Abbes et al., 2020; Mubarak et al., 2022b; Mansour Khoudja et al., 2022), hate-speech and offensive language detection (Elmadany et al., 2020a; Mubarak et al., 2020, 2022a; Husain and Uzuner, 2022), and sarcasm detection (Farha and Magdy, 2020; Wafa’Q et al., 2022; Abdullah et al., 2022).

Most of the recent studies are transformers-based. They directly finetune pre-trained models such as mBERT (Devlin et al., 2018), MARBERT (Abdul-Mageed et al., 2021a), and AraT5 (Nagoudi et al., 2022) on SM datasets like (Abdul-Mageed et al., 2020c; Alshehri et al., 2020; Abuzayed and Al-Khalifa, 2021; Nessir et al., 2022), using data augmentation (Elmadany et al., 2020b), ensembling (Mansy et al., 2022; Alzub’bi et al., 2022), and multi-tasks (Abdul-Mageed et al., 2020b; Shapiro et al., 2022; AlKhhamissi and Diab, 2022). However, to the best of our knowledge, there is no published research studying CL on Arabic language understanding in general nor social meaning processing in particular.

2.2 Contrastive Learning

CL aims to learn effective embedding by pulling semantically close neighbors together while pushing apart non-neighbors (Hadsell et al., 2006). CL employs a CL-based similarity objective to learn the embedding representation in the hyperspace (Chen et al., 2017; Henderson et al., 2017). In computer vision, Chen et al. (2020a) propose a framework for contrastive learning of visual representations without specialized architectures or a memory bank. Khosla et al. (2020) shows that supervised contrastive loss can outperform CL loss on ImageNet (Russakovsky et al., 2015). In NLP, similar methods have been explored in the context of sentence representation learning (Karpukhin et al., 2020; Gillick et al., 2019; Logeswaran and Lee, 2018; Zhang et al., 2022b). Among the most notable works is Gao et al. (2021) who propose unsupervised CL framework, SimCSE, that predicts input sentence itself by augmenting it with dropout.
as noise.

Recent works have been studying CL extensively for improving both semantic text similarity (STS) and text classification tasks (Meng et al. 2021; Qu et al. 2020; Qiu et al. 2021; Janson et al. 2021). Fang et al. (2020) propose back-translation as a source of positive pair for NLU tasks. Klein and Nabi (2022) argue that feature decorrelation between high and low dropout projected representations improves STS tasks. Zhou et al. (2022) design an instance weighting method to penalize false negatives and generate noise-based negatives to guarantee the uniformity of the representation space. Su et al. (2022) propose a token-aware CL method by contrasting the token from the same sequence to improve the uniformity in the embedding space. We now formally introduce these CL methods and how we employ them in our work.

3 Methods

Given a set of training examples \( \{x_i, y_i\}_{i=1,...,N} \) and an encoder based on a pre-trained language model (PLM), \( f \) outputs contextualized token representation of \( x_i \),

\[
H = \{ h_{CLS}, h_1, h_2, ..., h_{SEP} \}
\]

Where \( H \) is the hidden representation of the final layer of the encoder.

The standard practice of finetuning PLMs passes the pooled representation \( h_{CLS} \) of \([CLS]\) to a softmax classifier to obtain the probability distribution for the set of classes \( C \) (Figure 2a).

\[
p(y_i|h_{CLS}) = \text{softmax}(W h_{CLS}); \ c \in C
\]

Where \( W \in \mathbb{R}^{d_C \times d_h} \) are trainable parameters and \( d_h \) is hidden dimension. The model is trained with the objective of minimizing cross-entropy (CE) loss,

\[
L_{CE} = -\frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^{N} \sum_{c=1}^{C} y_{i,c} \log(p(y_{i,c}|h_{iCLS}))
\]

3.1 Supervised Contrastive Loss (SCL)

The objective of supervised contrastive loss (Khosla et al. 2020) is to pull the representations of the same class close to each other while pushing the representations of different classes further apart. Following Gao et al. (2021), we adopt dropout-based data augmentation where for each representation \( h_j \), we produce an equivalent dropout-based representation \( h_j \) and consider \( h_j \) as having the same label as \( h_i \) (Figure 2b). The model attempts to minimize NTXent loss (Chen et al., 2020a). The purpose of NTXent loss is to take each in-batch representation as an anchor and minimize the distance between the anchor(\( h_i \)) and the representations from the same class (\( P_i \)) while maximizing the distance between the anchor and the representation from different classes,

\[
L_{NTX} = \sum_{i=1}^{2N} \sum_{j \in P_i} \log \frac{e^{\text{sim}(h_i,h_j)/\tau}}{\sum_{k=1}^{2N} e^{\text{sim}(h_i,h_k)/\tau}}
\]

Where \( \tau \) is used to regulate the temperature. The final loss for SCL is

\[
L_{SCL} = (1-\lambda)L_{CE} + \lambda L_{NTX}
\]

3.2 Contrastive Adversarial Training (CAT)

Instead of dropout-based augmentation, Pan et al. (2022) propose to generate adversarial examples applying fast gradient sign method (FGSM) (Goodfellow et al., 2015). Formally, FGSM attempts to maximize \( L_{CE} \) by adding a small perturbation \( r \) bounded by \( \epsilon \),

\[
\max_r L_{CE} = \arg \max_r L(f(x_i + r, y_i))
\]

s.t. \( ||r|| < \epsilon, \ \epsilon > 0 \)

Goodfellow et al. (2015) approximate the perturbation \( r \) with a linear approximation around \( x_i \) and an \( L2 \) norm constraint. However, Pan et al. (2022) propose to approximate \( r \) around the word embedding matrix \( V \in \mathbb{R}^{d_V \times d_h} \) (Figure 2c), where \( d_V \) is the vocabulary size. Hence, the adversarial perturbation is computed as,

\[
r = -\epsilon \frac{\nabla V L(f(x_i, y_i))}{||\nabla V L(f(x_i, y_i)||_2}
\]

After receiving \( x_i \), the perturbed encoder \( f^{V+r} \) outputs \([CLS]\) representation \( h_j \), which is treated as the positive pair of \( h_i \). Both \( h_i \) and \( h_j \) are passed through a non-linear projection layer and the resulting representations are used to train the model with InfoNCE loss (Oord et al., 2018).
We also study a variant of CAT where instead of perturbing the word embedding matrix $V$, we directly perturb the token representations $h_i$ (Figure 2d),

$$ r = -\epsilon \nabla h_i \mathcal{L}(f(x_i, y_i)) \left\| \nabla h_i \mathcal{L}(f(x_i, y_i)) \right\|_2 $$

Similar to CAT, we pass $h_i$ and $h_j$ through a non-linear projection layer and use the obtained representations to train the model to minimize InfoNCE loss (Eq. 9). We compute the final loss as,

$$ \mathcal{L}_{CAT} = \frac{1}{2} (\mathcal{L}_{CE} + \mathcal{L}_{CE}^{h+r}) + \lambda \mathcal{L}_{InfoNCE} $$

### 3.4 Label-aware Contrastive Loss (LCL)

Suresh and Ong (2021) propose to adapt contrastive loss for fine-grained classification tasks by incorporating inter-label relationships. The authors propose an additional weighting network (Figure 2e) to encode the inter-label relationships. First, both the encoder and the weighting network are optimised using cross-entropy loss ($\mathcal{L}_{CE}$), $\mathcal{L}_E$, and $\mathcal{L}_{we}$, respectively. The prediction probabilities obtained from the softmax layer of the weighting network are used to compute the confidence of the current sample for a given class $c$,

$$ w_{i,c} = \frac{e^{h_{i,c}}}{\sum_{k=1}^{C} e^{h_{i,k}}} $$

These weights are then used to train the model with NTXent loss.

$$ \mathcal{L}_i = \sum_{j \in P_i} \log \frac{w_{i,y_i} \cdot e^{\text{sim}(h_i, h_j)}/\tau}{\sum_{k=1}^{2N} 1_{i \neq k} w_{i,y_k} \cdot e^{\text{sim}(h_i, h_k)}/\tau} $$

$$ \mathcal{L}_f = \frac{2N}{P_i} \frac{-\mathcal{L}_i}{P_i} $$

Similar to Section 3.1, we use dropout-based data augmentation. Given a confusable sample, the weighting network will assign higher scores for
the classes that are more closely associated with the sample. Incorporating these high values back into the denominator of NTXent will steer the encoder toward finding more distinguishing patterns to differentiate between confusable samples. The final LCL loss is computed as follows:

$$L_{LCL} = (1 - \lambda)(L_E + L_w) + \lambda L_f$$  \hspace{1cm} (16)

### 3.5 Token Adversarial LCL (TLCL)

Instead of dropout-oriented representation as an augmentation, we experiment with token adversarial representation for LCL (Figure 2f) described in Section 3.3. First, we compute the adversarial representation $h_j$ using Eq. 10 and Eq. 11. Then, we compute NTXent loss (Eq. 14) for LCL to obtain the final token adversarial LCL loss, $L_{TLCL}$. We now describe our datasets.

### 4 Datasets

In this section, we present the Arabic social meaning tasks and datasets used in our study. A summary of the datasets is presented in Table 1.

#### Abusive and Adult Content.
For the abusive and adult content detection tasks, we use datasets from Mubarak et al. (2017) and Mubarak et al. (2021). These datasets consist of 1.1k and 43k tweets, respectively. For these datasets, the goal is to classify an Arabic tweet into one of the two classes in the set, i.e., \{obscene, clean\} for the abusive task, and \{adult, not-adult\} for the adult content detection task.

#### Age and Gender.
For both tasks, we use the Arab-Tweet dataset (Zaghouani and Charfi, 2018) which consists of 1.3M, 160k, 160k for the Train, Dev, and Test respectively. The dataset covers 11 Arab regions. Zaghouani and Charfi (2018) assign age group labels from the set \{under-25, 25-to-34, above-35\} and gender from the set \{male, female\}.

#### Dangerous.
We use the dangerous speech dataset from Alshehri et al. (2020). This dataset consists of 4,445 manually annotated tweets labelled as either safe or dangerous.

#### Dialect Identification:
Six datasets are used for this task: ArSarcasm$_{dia}$ (Farha and Magdy, 2020), the Arabic Online Commentary (AOC) (Zaidan and Callison-Burch, 2014), NADI-2020 (Abdul-Mageed et al., 2020a), MADAR (Bouamor et al., 2019), QADI (Abdelali et al., 2020), and Habibi (El-Haj, 2020). The dialect identification task involves three dialect classification levels: (1) Binary-level (MSA vs. DIA), (2) Region-level (4 regions), and (3) Country-level (21 countries).

#### Emotion.
For this task, we use two datasets: AraNeT$_{emo}$ and SemEval$_{emo}$. The first one is proposed by Abdul-Mageed et al. (2020c). The dataset consists of 192K tweets labeled with the eight emotion classes from the set \{anger, anticipation, disgust, fear, joy, sadness, surprise, trust\}. SemEval$_{emo}$ (Mohammad et al., 2018) consists of 5,603 tweets labeled with four emotions from the set \{anger, fear, joy, sadness\}.

#### Offensive Language and Hate Speech.
We use the dataset released by Mubarak et al. (2020) during the experiments.

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| Dataset               | Train  | Dev   | Test  | No. of Classes |
|-----------------------|--------|-------|-------|----------------|
| Abusive               | 4,677  | 584   | 585   | 3              |
| Adult                 | 33,690 | 5,000 | 5,000 | 2              |
| Age                   | 5,000  | 5,000 | 5,000 | 3              |
| AraNeT$_{emo}$        | 50,000 | 910   | 941   | 8              |
| Dangerous             | 3,474  | 615   | 663   | 2              |
| Dialect at BinaryLevel| 50,000 | 5,000 | 5,000 | 2              |
| Dialect at CountryLevel| 50,000 | 5,000 | 5,000 | 21             |
| Dialect at RegionLevel| 38,271 | 4,450 | 5,000 | 4              |
| Gender                | 50,000 | 5,000 | 5,000 | 2              |
| Hate Speech           | 6,839  | 1,000 | 2,000 | 2              |
| Irony                 | 3,621  | 403   | 805   | 2              |
| Offensive             | 6,839  | 1,000 | 2,000 | 2              |
| Sarcasm               | 7,593  | 844   | 2,110 | 2              |
| SemEval$_{emo}$       | 3,376  | 661   | 1,563 | 4              |
| Sentiment Analysis    | 49,301 | 4,443 | 4,933 | 3              |

Table 1: Statistics of datasets used in our experiments.
an offensive and hate speech shared task. This dataset consists of 10k manually annotated tweets with four tags: offensive, not-offensive, hate, not-hate.

**Irony.** We use the irony identification dataset for Arabic tweets (IDAT) developed by Ghanem et al. (2019). This dataset contains 5,030 MSA and dialectal tweets. It is labeled with ironic and non-ironic tags.

**Sarcasm.** We use the ArSarcasm dataset released by (Farha and Magdy, 2020). ArSarcasm contains 10,547 tweets. The tweets are labeled with sarcasm and not-sarcasm tags.

**Sentiment Analysis** This task includes 19 sentiment datasets. We merge the 17 datasets benchmarked by Abdul-Mageed et al. (2021a) with two new datasets: Arabizi sentiment analysis dataset (Fourati et al., 2020) and AraCust (Almuqren and Cristea, 2021), a Saudi Telecom Tweets corpus for sentiment analysis. The data contains 190k, 6.5k, 44.2k samples for Train, Dev and Test. The dataset is labeled with three tags from the set {positive, negative, neutral}.

5 Experimental Setup

We implement all the methods using MARBERT (Abdul-Mageed et al., 2021a) (UBC–NLP/MARBERT) from HuggingFace’s Transformers library (Wolf et al., 2020), as the backbone architecture. We use MARBERT as it is reported to achieve SOTA on a wide range of Arabic language understanding tasks in Abdul-Mageed et al. (2021a). Our methods, however, can be applied to any other model. We use the same hyperparameters for all the methods to ensure fair comparisons. We set the maximum sequence length to 128 and use a batch size of 16 to train the models using Adam optimizer with a learning rate $5e^{-5}$. The initial number of training epochs is set to 25 with an early stopping threshold of 5. For CL-based models, we set $\lambda$ to 0.5 and $\tau$ to 0.3. For all the experiments, we consider the checkpoint with the best macro $F_1$ score on the development sets to evaluate performance on the respective test sets. To limit GPU usage during our experiments, we normalize all datasets considered by limiting the size of Train, Dev, and Test splits to 50k, 5k, 5k samples respectively.\(^2\)

6 Results

As explained, we compare different methods on 15 different Arabic social media datasets involving binary and multiclass classification. We present performance of the methods in Table 2. Evidently, CL-based methods achieve better performance on majority of the tasks. On average, three out of five CL-based methods (LCL, SCL, and TACT) achieve better performance than CE-MARBERT. Overall, LCL achieves the best $F_1$-score averaging across all the tasks.

It is important to note that there is no unique superior method across the tasks. This shows that CL-based methods can be task-specific, depending on the nature of how they are formulated. For example, LCL performs well on multiclass datasets such as Abusive and AraNeTemo, while TLCL performs well on SemEvalemo. LCL and TLCL adopt more fine-grained representations with the incorporation of the weighting network which consequently helps them distinguish confused classes. However, for Dialect at RegionLevel, we speculate that since the labels are already fine-grained, it is more important to improve the robustness rather than inter-label relationship. Therefore, CAT achieves best performance on this task, followed by TLCL. Similarly, on binary classification tasks such as hate speech and Offensive language detection, where a subtle semantic change in meaning can alter the labels, robust methods are expected to outperform others. Therefore, adversarial methods like CAT and TACT achieve better $F_1$-score.

For most of the tasks, $F_1$-scores obtained from different CL-methods are close to each other and the vanilla SCL achieves similar average score to the other models. This proves that although task-specific formulation may help the models to improve on a certain task, the most important factor evolves around the fundamental minimax nature of contrastive learning which is minimizing the distance among the representations of the same class while maximizing the distance among the representations of the different classes.

7 Analysis

7.1 Data Efficiency

To investigate how the methods perform with limited data, we train the models under different size constraints using three datasets (one binary and we randomly pick 50k, 5k, and 5k samples respectively.

\(^2\)http://edinburghnlp.inf.ed.ac.uk/workshops/OSACT4/

\(^3\)For example, for the Age and Gender datasets, Train, Dev, and Test splits have 1.3m, 160k, and 160k, respectively. So,
Table 2: Macro F1-score of the models on Arabic social media datasets. Here, CE = Cross-Entropy; SCL = Supervised Contrastive Learning; CAT = Contrastive Adversarial Training; TACT = Token-level Adversarial Contrastive Training; LCL = Label-aware Contrastive Loss; TLCL = Token Adversarial LCL.

|                          | CE          | SCL          | CAT          | TACT         | LCL          | TLCL         |
|--------------------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Abusive                  | 77.15       | 78.09        | 76.48        | 75.69        | **78.32**    | 75.26        |
| Adult                    | 88.16       | **89.50**    | 86.54        | 89.13        | 88.85        | 89.48        |
| Age                      | 44.22       | 45.12        | 42.28        | **46.45**    | 45.90        | 43.20        |
| AraNeT<sub>emo</sub>     | 62.47       | 61.49        | 59.31        | 57.99        | 62.56        | **64.13**    |
| Dangerous                | 61.44       | 63.76        | 67.83        | 66.00        | 65.76        | **69.28**    |
| Dialect at BinaryLevel   | 85.71       | 85.63        | **86.67**    | 84.98        | 85.79        | 81.84        |
| Dialect at CountryLevel  | 32.84       | **33.63**    | 33.24        | 32.69        | 33.62        | 31.34        |
| Dialect at RegionLevel   | 65.29       | 64.78        | **65.54**    | 64.56        | 62.92        | 64.92        |
| Gender                   | 62.23       | 63.56        | 65.58        | 65.77        | **65.90**    | 65.14        |
| Hate Speech              | 80.91       | 80.00        | 71.06        | **82.62**    | 81.00        | 75.26        |
| Irony                    | **84.75**   | 84.30        | 84.72        | 84.18        | 84.29        | 83.43        |
| Offensive                | 90.43       | 89.92        | **91.37**    | 91.23        | 90.41        | 88.84        |
| Sarcasm                  | 70.67       | 71.09        | 72.09        | 74.14        | **75.32**    | 69.40        |
| <em>SemEval</em><sub>emo</sub> | 79.25       | 77.22        | 77.08        | 77.85        | **80.61**    | 78.59        |
| Sentiment Analysis       | **77.69**   | 77.32        | 76.89        | 76.68        | 75.61        | 74.82        |
| Avg.                     | 70.88       | 71.03        | 70.45        | 71.33        | **71.79**    | 70.33        |

Table 3: Model performance on varying dataset sizes. **Bold** values represent the best performance for a particular dataset and dataset size.

| Dialect-Country | Dialect-Region | AraNeT<sub>emo</sub> |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------------|
| CE              | SCL            | CAT                  |
| 10%             | 25%            | 50%                  | 100%             | 25%            | 50%                  | 100%             |
| 27.78           | 30.31          | 31.91                | 32.84            | 63.09          | 63.59                | 65.29            | 53.85           | 56.73            | 59.18            | 62.47            |
| 28.49           | **31.87**      | **32.89**            | **33.63**        | 63.08          | 63.37                | 64.78            | 54.47           | 58.35            | 58.35            | 61.49            |
| 26.57           | 30.33          | 32.71                | 33.24            | **64.32**      | **65.54**          | **65.54**        | 54.75           | 54.03            | 55.51            | 59.31            |
| TACT            | 27.63          | 29.88                | 32.04            | 32.69          | 64.8                | 64.32            | 53.27           | 59.3             | 59.18            | 57.99            |
| LCL             | 28.97          | 30.5                 | 31.78            | 33.62          | 63.72               | 64.72            | 62.92           | **55.47**        | 59.25            | 62.21            | 62.56            |
| TLCL            | 27.69          | 30.44                | 32.18            | 31.34          | 62.71               | 64.53            | 64.92           | 54.62           | 59.31            | **62.98**        | **64.13**        |

7.2 Impact of Batch Size

We study how batch size affects model performance. We consider batch sizes of 4, 8, 16 on three datasets, showing performance in Figure 3. We observe that, with only a few exceptions, performance of the models increases along with the increase of batch size. Larger batch sizes contain more samples from different classes, which helps the model to learn better via comparing these samples. Our
analysis corroborates findings of prior works such as Chen et al. (2020b), Cao et al. (2022), and Qiu et al. (2021) that propose the incorporation of a separate memory bank to hold the negative samples for comparison.

7.3 Visualization of Representations

We plot t-SNE representations of the test samples from the Abusive dataset in Figure 4. The representations are colored with true labels. We notice that CL-based methods cluster normal and abusive samples far from each other, unlike CE-MARBERT. Since CL attempts to maximize the distance between different classes, it helps the models produce more distinct clusters. Additionally, LCL and TLCL methods cluster abusive and hate classes better than other methods. Since, they capture inter-label relations, the methods identify confusable examples of abusive and hate better than other methods.

8 Limitations

An inherent limitation of CL methods is their reliance on hyperparameters. In particular, they are sensitive to batch size. Larger batch sizes usually yield better performance. Other hyperparameters like $\tau$ and $\lambda$ can also impact performance given a specific task. Lastly, the accommodation of larger batch size comes at the cost of higher computational resources.

9 Conclusion

In this work, we study various supervised contrastive learning methods for a wide range of Arabic social meaning tasks. We show that CL-based methods outperform generic cross entropy finetuning for majority of the tasks. Through empirical investigations, we find that improvements resulting from applying CL methods are task-specific. We interpret these results vis-a-vis different downstream tasks, with a special attention to the number of classes involved in each task. Finally, we demonstrate that CL methods can achieve better performance with limited training data and hence can be employed for low-resource settings.

In the future, we plan to extend our work beyond sentence classification by experimenting on...
tasks such as token-classification and question-answering. Our work stands as a comprehensive investigation of applying contrastive learning to Arabic social meaning. We hope this work will trigger further investigations of CL in Arabic NLP in general.

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