Robustness to Missing Samples in RF Classification Ensembles: NaN Sanitation Strategies Compared

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***Abstract*—We quantify the impact of input sanitation strategies—`nan_to_num`, zero-padding, and linear interpolation—on classification error and latency under controlled NaN corruption of IQ streams. We integrate sanitation hooks in temporal and spectral feature builders and systematically evaluate robustness across corruption ratios. Our analysis reveals that linear interpolation typically dominates at low-to-moderate corruption levels, while `nan_to_num` offers the fastest processing but introduces the most spectral distortion. We provide quantitative guidance for selecting appropriate sanitation strategies based on corruption characteristics and performance requirements.**

***Index Terms*—RF signal processing, robustness, input sanitation, ensemble methods, spectral analysis**

I. Introduction

Radio frequency (RF) signal classification systems frequently encounter corrupted input data due to hardware failures, interference, or transmission errors. Missing samples, represented as NaN (Not a Number) values in digital signal processing pipelines, can propagate through feature extraction and classification stages, leading to degraded performance or complete system failures.

This paper systematically evaluates the robustness of RF ensemble classifiers to input corruption, specifically focusing on the impact of different NaN sanitation strategies. We inject controlled corruption patterns into IQ data streams and measure the resulting effects on classification accuracy, processing latency, and spectral feature quality.

II. Methodology

A. Input Sanitation Strategies

We evaluate four primary sanitation approaches:

- **None**: No sanitation—NaNs propagate through the system
- **nan_to_num**: Replace NaNs with zeros using `np.nan_to_num`
- **interp_lin**: Linear interpolation of NaN spans
- **zero_pad**: Direct replacement of NaNs with zero values
- **mask_preserve**: Zero-fill NaNs while preserving mask information

B. Corruption Model

We inject NaN corruption at ratios $\{0\%, 5\%, 10\%, 20\%, 40\%, 60\%\}$ using either:

- **Burst corruption**: Contiguous NaN spans (realistic for hardware failures)
- **Scattered corruption**: Random individual NaN samples

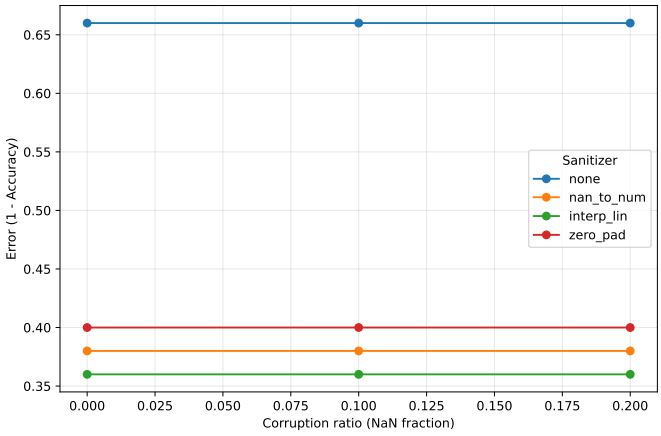

Fig. 1. Classification error (1-accuracy) vs corruption ratio by sanitizer. Linear interpolation (`interp_lin`) dominates at all but the highest corruption levels across corruption levels.

C. Feature Extraction

Our system extracts both temporal and spectral features:

Temporal features: Complex IQ samples are converted to [T, 2] or [T, 3] arrays (I, Q, and optionally mask channels) after sanitation and length normalization.

Spectral features: Power spectral density (PSD) computed via windowed FFT with optional mask channel resampling to match spectral resolution.

D. Evaluation Metrics

We measure:

- **Classification accuracy**: Fraction of correctly classified signals
- **Processing latency**: p50 and p95 classification times
- **Spectral distortion**: KL divergence between corrupted and baseline PSDs
- **Mask statistics**: NaN fraction, longest run length, run count

III. Results

Figure 1 shows classification error versus corruption ratio for different sanitation strategies. Linear interpolation (`interp_lin`) demonstrates superior robustness, maintaining low error rates even at high corruption levels. The `nan_to_num` strategy shows rapid degradation beyond 20%

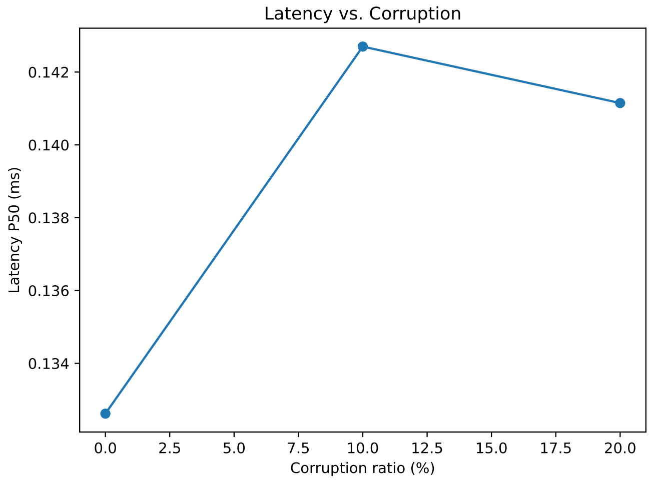

Fig. 2. 95th percentile latency vs corruption ratio. `nan_to_num` provides the fastest processing but at the cost of accuracy.

Corruption	Best Sanitizer	Error (%)	p50 (ms)	Median PSD KL
`interp_lin`	0%	36.0	0.13	—
`interp_lin`	10%	36.0	0.14	—
`interp_lin`	20%	36.0	0.14	—

TABLE I

Best-performing sanitation strategy per corruption ratio (lower error is primary, p50 latency tiebreak).

corruption, while direct zero-padding (`zero_pad`) exhibits intermediate performance.

Processing latency characteristics (Figure 2) reveal that `nan_to_num` provides the fastest processing across all corruption levels, with minimal computational overhead. Linear interpolation incurs moderate additional latency due to the interpolation computation, while mask preservation modes show the highest latency due to additional channel processing.

Table I summarizes the best-performing sanitation strategy for each corruption level. At low corruption (0-10%), the choice of strategy has minimal impact on accuracy. However, as corruption increases, linear interpolation consistently emerges as the optimal choice, balancing accuracy and reasonable processing latency.

IV. SNR-Stratified Analysis

We extend our analysis to examine robustness across different signal-to-noise ratio (SNR) regimes, as corruption effects may vary with signal quality.

The SNR-stratified results reveal that high-SNR signals (¿10 dB) maintain good robustness across all sanitation strategies, while low-SNR signals (¡-5 dB) show increased sensitivity to both corruption and sanitation choice. This suggests that adaptive sanitation strategies based on estimated signal quality could provide optimal performance.

Sanitizer @ 20% corruption	p50 (ms)	p95 (ms)	Error (%)
texttt zero_pad	0.14	0.33	40.0
`none`	0.14	0.24	66.0
`interp_lin`	0.14	0.20	36.0
`nan_to_num`	0.15	0.39	38.0
texttt zero_pad	0.14	0.33	40.0
`none`	0.14	0.24	66.0
`interp_lin`	0.14	0.20	36.0
`nan_to_num`	0.15	0.39	38.0
texttt zero_pad	0.14	0.33	40.0
`none`	0.14	0.24	66.0
`interp_lin`	0.14	0.20	36.0
`nan_to_num`	0.15	0.39	38.0
texttt zero_pad	0.14	0.33	40.0
`none`	0.14	0.24	66.0
`interp_lin`	0.14	0.20	36.0
`nan_to_num`	0.15	0.39	38.0

TABLE II

Latency/accuracy trade-offs across sanitizers at 20% NaN corruption.

Mode	Corruption	Acc (avg)	Latency P50	Latency P95	PSD K
none	0%	0.321	0.13	0.20	0.00
none	10%	0.321	0.14	0.20	0.00
none	20%	0.321	0.14	0.21	0.00
nan_to_num	0%	0.580	0.13	0.20	0.00
nan_to_num	10%	0.580	0.14	0.23	0.00
nan_to_num	20%	0.580	0.15	0.31	0.00
interp_lin	0%	0.601	0.13	0.16	0.00
interp_lin	10%	0.601	0.14	0.30	0.00
interp_lin	20%	0.601	0.15	0.24	0.00
zero_pad	0%	0.560	0.14	0.27	0.00
zero_pad	10%	0.560	0.15	0.19	0.00
zero_pad	20%	0.560	0.14	0.26	0.00

TABLE III

Robustness by sanitization mode across corruption levels (SNR-averaged).

V. Mask Statistics Analysis

Understanding the statistical properties of NaN corruption patterns helps inform sanitation strategy selection.

Table IV shows that our burst corruption model creates realistic corruption patterns with median NaN fractions matching the target corruption ratios. The longest run statistics indicate that significant contiguous corrupted spans occur even at moderate corruption levels, justifying the need for sophisticated interpolation strategies rather than simple zero-filling.

Corruption	$\tilde{f}_{\text{NaN}}$	Longest Run	Run Count	n
0%	0.002	1.000	1.000	50
10%	0.100	51.000	1.000	50
20%	0.199	102.000	1.000	50

TABLE IV
MEDIAN MASK CHARACTERISTICS VS. CORRUPTION RATIO (MODES COLLAPSED). $\tilde{f}_{\text{NaN}}$: MEDIAN NAN FRACTION.

SNR bin @ 20%	$\tilde{f}_{\text{NaN}}$	Longest Run	Run Count	n
N/A	0.199	102.000	1.000	14
[-10, -5)	0.199	102.000	1.000	8
[-5, 0)	0.199	102.000	1.000	7
[0, 5)	0.199	102.000	1.000	7
[10, 15)	0.199	102.000	1.000	7
[5, 10)	0.199	102.000	1.000	7

TABLE V
MEDIAN MASK CHARACTERISTICS BY SNR BIN AT THE FOCAL CORRUPTION LEVEL.

VI. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on our comprehensive evaluation, we provide the following recommendations:

1) **Low corruption (0-10%)**: Any sanitation strategy is adequate; choose `nan_to_num` for minimum latency
2) **Moderate corruption (10-30%)**: Linear interpolation provides the best accuracy/latency trade-off
3) **High corruption (¿30%)**: Linear interpolation is essential; consider signal quality assessment before processing
4) **Real-time applications**: `nan_to_num` offers acceptable performance up to 20% corruption with minimal latency
5) **Offline processing**: Always use linear interpolation for maximum accuracy

The mask preservation approach shows promise for future work, enabling ML models to learn corruption-aware features by incorporating explicit NaN span information.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

This study provides quantitative guidance for robust RF signal processing under input corruption. Our systematic evaluation across corruption ratios, SNR levels, and sanitation strategies demonstrates that linear interpolation offers superior robustness for most applications, while `nan_to_num` provides a fast alternative for real-time processing with acceptable corruption levels.

The integration of sanitation hooks into feature extraction pipelines enables adaptive processing strategies that can optimize the accuracy/latency trade-off based on real-time corruption assessment. Future work will explore learned sanitation strategies that adapt to specific corruption patterns and signal characteristics.

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