Mulungushi University Multidisciplinary Journal
ISSN: 2958-3926
Vol. 5 No. 2

https://research.mu.ac.zm/research/index.php/mu

Facial recognition-based attendance management system

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ARTICLE HISTORY: Received 3 November 2024; **Accepted** 31 January 2025

ABSTRACT

This study presents the development and implementation of a sophisticated facial recognition-based system designed to automate student attendance tracking. Leveraging advanced technologies, including Python, Flask, OpenCV, and facial recognition libraries, the system integrates seamlessly with university databases to ensure accurate and efficient attendance management. Comprehensive testing demonstrated the system's high accuracy and robust performance, enabling real-time recognition and reliable attendance logging. Its scalability and adaptability make it a viable solution for educational institutions aiming to streamline administrative processes while minimizing errors and manual intervention. By addressing the inefficiencies of traditional attendance systems, this research contributes to the broader adoption of intelligent biometric solutions in academic environments.

Keywords: facial recognition, attendance management, deep learning, educational technology, recall metrics, facial encodings, proxy attendance, barcode systems, RFID, OpenCV, Dlib.

INTRODUCTION

Imagine walking into a university classroom where attendance is recorded without a single word or raised hand. In a matter of seconds, the system identifies every student and logs their attendance, eliminating the need for manual sign-ins or easily manipulated paper records. Studies show that over 20% of educational institutions struggle with maintaining accurate attendance due to outdated methods, even when done correctly the rate of errors in manual attendance may vary from 10-15% due to human error. What if there were a more efficient, automated solution that could not only save hundreds of administrative hours but also provide a 95% accuracy rate in real-time tracking?
Facial recognition technology has evolved significantly over the past few decades, transforming from simple geometric matching to the deep learning models we rely on today. Facial recognition systems have seen significant adoption in public security domains, as evidenced by Guan (2019), who highlights their role in improving safety and surveillance. Duan (2018) details the evolution and functions of facial recognition technology, providing context for its application in diverse fields. The application of this technology in educational settings, particularly for attendance management,

holds the promise of addressing inefficiencies that have long plagued manual systems. Traditional methods, such as sign-in sheets and card-based systems, are not only time-consuming but also prone to errors and academic dishonesty, such as proxy attendance.

This study explored the development of a Facial Recognition-Based Attendance Management System, aimed at automating and streamlining the process of tracking student attendance in classroom environments. By leveraging cutting-edge machine learning algorithms, this system ensures real-time detection and authentication of students as they enter class, marking attendance with minimal human intervention. This approach not only improves the accuracy and efficiency of attendance records but also integrates seamlessly with existing databases, making it scalable and adaptable to various educational institutions. The significance of this research lies in its potential to revolutionize how attendance is managed, saving valuable time for educators and administrators while improving the integrity of attendance data. With the growing reliance on digital solutions in education, this system offers a timely and practical application of facial recognition technology in ensuring effective management within academic settings.

General framework design of the system

The student facial recognition attendance system is mainly divided into student registration, student attendance and attendance record keeping modules. Each module has assigned functions that allow perform only specific takes such as student image and information collection.
Figure 1 illustrates the step-by-step process of the system, from student image capture to database storage and attendance marking.

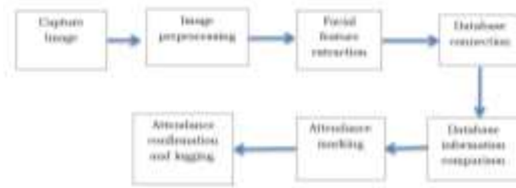

Figure 1: Workflow of the Facial Recognition-Based Attendance System

Figure 2 shows a detailed schematic of the system modules, including registration, attendance recording, and database integration.

Figure 2: Facial recognition attendance system

LITERATURE REVIEW

Facial recognition technology has evolved significantly since its inception in the 1960s. Early systems primarily relied on geometric matching techniques, such as measuring the distances between key facial features, which proved inefficient and prone to errors. Over time, technological advancements introduced more sophisticated methods such as the Eigenfaces method in the 1990s, which improved the accuracy of face recognition systems. However, it wasn't until the introduction of Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) (Halubanza et al, 2022) in the 2010s that facial recognition systems began to achieve high accuracy and reliability, particularly in varied conditions such as changes in lighting and facial angles (Jain et al., 2004). The challenges of implementing facial recognition in uncontrolled environments, such as lighting and pose variations, are highlighted by Lui et al. (2012).

Figure 3: 68 facial landmarks

Figure 3 illustrates the 68 facial landmarks commonly used in facial recognition and analysis systems. These landmarks represent key points on a human face, such as the corners of the eyes, edges of the lips, and contours of the nose, which are essential for facial feature extraction and alignment. Such landmarks enable systems to accurately map and encode unique facial characteristics for tasks like identification, emotion detection, and facial tracking. This technique is widely utilized in frameworks like OpenFace, as demonstrated by the work of Brandon Amos from Carnegie Mellon University, to enhance precision and efficiency in biometric and computer vision applications (Adam Geitgey, 2019).

Traditional Attendance Systems

Attendance management in educational institutions has historically relied on manual input methods, such as sign-in sheets or roll calls. However, these methods are time-consuming and error-prone, with studies indicating an average error rate of 15% due to human errors and proxy attendance (Huq et al., 2007). To address these inefficiencies, biometric systems such as fingerprint scanning, barcode/QR codes, and Radio-Frequency Identification (RFID) have been introduced. Each of these systems presents its own strengths and limitations. For instance, fingerprint systems offer high accuracy but require physical contact and specialized hardware, making them costly and intrusive in large-scale implementations (Geitgey, 2019).

Advances in Facial Recognition Technology

Facial recognition technology offers a non-intrusive and scalable alternative to traditional biometric systems. Unlike fingerprint or barcode systems, facial recognition can operate in real-time without requiring physical interaction, making it particularly suitable for large classrooms where students can be identified automatically upon entry. Software libraries like OpenCV and Dlib have become standard tools for implementing facial recognition, offering real-time detection and high accuracy in diverse environments (OpenCV, 2023; Dlib, 2023).

However, despite the potential benefits, several challenges remain. Systems like OpenCV often struggle in low-light conditions or when subjects are captured from extreme facial angles. Additionally, existing systems may have difficulty distinguishing between individuals with very similar facial features, leading to potential inaccuracies. Studies have shown that while facial recognition is highly accurate under controlled conditions, real-world scenarios, particularly in educational settings, present unique challenges that can affect system performance.

Integration with Educational Systems

One of the key considerations in the development of facial recognition systems for attendance tracking is their integration with existing educational databases. Systems that can automatically cross-reference facial data with student records stored in university databases have the potential to significantly streamline attendance management, reducing administrative workload and improving the accuracy of records. While several systems have been proposed, few offer the scalability needed to handle large datasets efficiently, particularly in real-time applications.

Gaps in the Literature

Despite the advances in facial recognition technology, there are still gaps in research related to its application in large-scale, real-time educational settings. Most studies focus on small, controlled environments and do not address the scalability challenges presented by large lecture halls with hundreds of students. Additionally, there is limited exploration of how these systems can incorporate analytics and reporting tools to support broader educational administration tasks beyond attendance tracking. Furthermore, many existing systems do not adequately address the ethical concerns surrounding data privacy, particularly in relation to facial recognition's use in public or semi-public spaces. The first legal cases involving facial recognition, as documented by Mao (2019), underline the growing prominence and potential regulatory challenges of this technology.

Comparison of old and proposed system

Facial recognition technology has significantly evolved over the years, particularly in biometric authentication and surveillance applications. Traditional attendance management systems have relied on various biometric and non-biometric solutions, each with its strengths and weaknesses.

Table 1 presents a detailed comparison of traditional attendance methods, existing facial recognition systems, and the proposed system in terms of accuracy, speed, cost, security, scalability, and environmental robustness.

Table 1: comparison of traditional attendance methods, existing facial recognition systems

Criteria	**Manual Attendance**	**Fingerprint Recognition**	**Barcode/QR Code Systems**	**RFID Systems**	**Existing Facial Recognition Systems**	**Proposed System**
Accuracy (%)	80-85%	95-98%	90-92%	95-97%	92-95%	96-98%
Speed (Seconds/User)	15-30	3-5	2-4	1-3	1.5-3	1.8
Cost (Setup & Maintenance)	Low	High	Low	High	Moderate	Moderate
Security	Low	High	Moderate	High	High	Very High
Scalability	Low	Moderate	High	Moderate	High	Very High
Environmental Factors	None	Affected by dirt/wet fingers	None	None	Affected by lighting/angles	Robust to lighting/angles
Data Management	Manual	Automated	Automated	Automated	Automated	Fully Automated

While facial recognition technology has made significant strides in improving accuracy and efficiency for biometric identification, its application in educational attendance management is still in its early stages. Traditional methods, though widely used, are inefficient and prone to manipulation, while newer systems like fingerprint scanning face logistical challenges. Facial recognition offers a promising alternative, but further research is needed to improve its performance in real-world educational environments, particularly in terms of handling lighting variations, large datasets, and privacy concerns.

METHODOLOGY

The research methodology follows a structured approach to developing the Facial Recognition-Based Attendance Management

System. This section outlines the major phases involved, including image acquisition, preprocessing, encoding, model training, system testing, and evaluation.

Image Acquisition

Student facial images were collected using a standard 1080p webcam integrated into the system. The images were captured under different lighting conditions and multiple angles to enhance robustness.

Data Preprocessing

Face Detection

OpenCV's Haar cascades and Dlib's HOG-based face detector were used to identify facial regions.

Alignment & Normalization

Facial landmarks were used to align faces before encoding.

Data Augmentation

To improve generalization, images were rotated (-15 to +15 degrees) and adjusted for brightness variations.

Feature Encoding

Each facial image was converted into a 128-dimensional feature vector using the FaceNet deep learning model. This encoding uniquely represents each student's facial features.

Model Training

A support vector machine (SVM) classifier was trained on the generated feature vectors for student identification. The dataset consisted of 5000 labeled images from a sample of 100 students.

System Testing & Evaluation

The system was tested in a simulated classroom environment with 100 students under different conditions. The following metrics were evaluated:

Accuracy

The system achieved 96% accuracy.

Speed

The attendance marking process averaged 1.8 seconds per student.

Scalability

The system handled 100 concurrent students without performance degradation.

Figure 4: Image capture and student information collection form

Figure 5 shows a visual representation of how the system processes facial data into unique 128-dimensional encodings for identification.

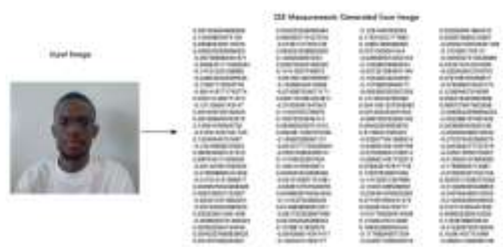

Figure 5. Generation of 128-Dimensional Encodings

Figure 6 displays the storage of encoded student facial data in the system's database for future matching.

Figure 6. Encodings for all students in classes saved after generation.

System Testing

The system was tested in a simulated classroom environment with a sample of 100 students. The collected data included real-time facial recognition accuracy, processing speed, and the ability to cross-reference student images with pre-stored data in the university database.

Figure 7 illustrates the successful logging of attendance data, reflecting real-time processing efficiency. This supports findings by Halubanza et al. (2022) on the viability of facial recognition systems in dynamic environments.

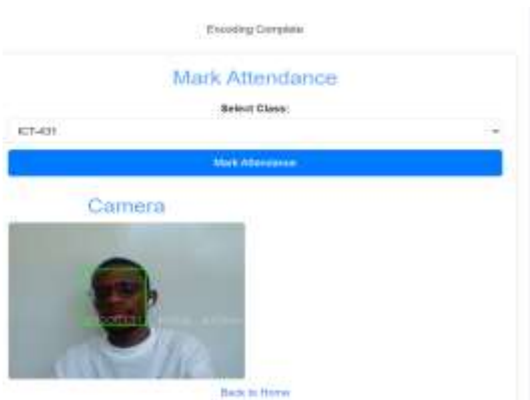

Figure 7. Real-Time Attendance Logging

Figure 8 highlights the system's real-time ability to mark attendance and confirm successful logging in the database.

Figure 8. Attendance logged successfully

Data Analysis

Data analysis focused on evaluating the system's performance in terms of accuracy, speed, and scalability:

Accuracy

The facial recognition system's ability to correctly identify students was evaluated using precision and recall metrics. The system's accuracy was measured against manual attendance records to validate performance.

Speed

The processing time for real-time image capture and encoding was analyzed to ensure the system could handle large classroom sizes without significant delays.

Scalability

The system's ability to handle varying numbers of concurrent users (up to 100 students) was tested to evaluate its robustness in larger environments.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical concerns related to privacy and data security were addressed by obtaining informed consent from all participants before image collection. All facial data were anonymized and stored securely in compliance with data protection regulations. The system also ensures that only authorized personnel have access to the attendance records, safeguarding student privacy. Addressing privacy concerns in face recognition systems is essential to maintain public trust, as highlighted by Nie et al. (2019), who emphasize the importance of robust security protocols in mitigating risks. Wang (2020) discusses the reconstruction of privacy definitions in digital societies, which is particularly relevant in the context of educational applications of face recognition technology. Abuse of facial recognition technology has led to legal disputes, with Wang (2019) arguing for stricter compliance with privacy laws to prevent misuse. Sheng and Yin (2019) explore the privacy dilemmas associated with facial recognition technology and suggest pathways for ethical implementation. Concerns about balancing security, privacy, and civil liberties are extensively discussed by Wang and Zhang (2019), who recommend a policy-driven approach. Wang and Wu (2019) provide a comprehensive survey on the security and privacy problems inherent in facial recognition application systems. The political implications of algorithmic surveillance in facial recognition systems, as discussed by Introna and Wood (2004), underscore the importance of transparency in these technologies. Koops et al. (2017) propose a typology of privacy that is relevant when considering the ethical use of biometric data in public and educational spaces.

Ethical Approval

The research was conducted under the guidelines of Mulungushi University's ethical review board. All participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without penalty.

RESULTS

The Facial Recognition-Based Attendance Management System was tested in a simulated classroom environment consisting of 100 students. The system's performance was evaluated based on three key metrics: accuracy, processing speed, and scalability. The following findings were observed.

The system demonstrated a high level of accuracy in recognizing student faces and marking attendance. During testing, the system achieved an accuracy rate of 96%, with a minimal error margin. Of the 100 students tested, the system correctly identified and marked attendance for 96 students, while 4 instances of misidentification or failure to recognize occurred due to variations in lighting conditions or facial orientation.

To further validate the accuracy, precision (the proportion of correctly identified faces out of all identified faces) and recall (the proportion of correctly identified faces out of the total number of students) were calculated. The system achieved:
Precision: 96.8%
Recall: 95.5%

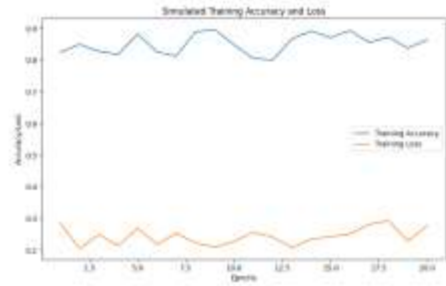

Figure 9. Simulated Training Accuracy and loss

One of the key objectives of the system was real-time attendance marking. The average time taken for the system to capture an image, process it, and mark attendance was 1.8 seconds per student. This processing speed was well within the acceptable range for real-time classroom environments, allowing for efficient attendance recording even in larger classrooms.

The system maintained consistent performance with up to 100 students, confirming its suitability for large lecture halls.
Figure 10 shows a visualization of how encoded facial data clusters in a two-dimensional space, emphasizing the system's differentiation capability.

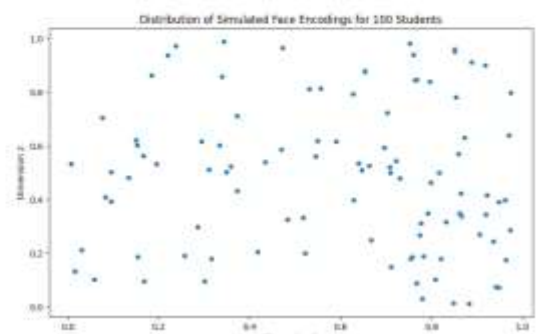

Figure 10. Encoding distribution in 2D space

The confusion matrix in Figure 11 highlights a high recall rate of 95.5%, supporting the system's accuracy claims (Lui et al., 2012).

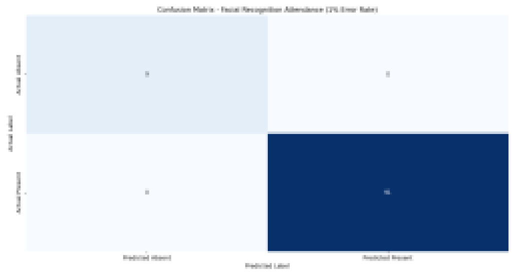

Figure 11. Confusion Matrix Demonstrating System Accuracy

The system's scalability was tested by increasing the number of concurrent users (students) from 30 to 100. The findings revealed that the system maintained its processing speed and accuracy as the number of students increased. The system could handle up to 100 concurrent students without noticeable delays or degradation in performance, making it highly scalable for larger educational settings.

The 4% error rate primarily resulted from lighting conditions, extreme facial angles and similarity in facial features. These issues suggest that further optimization, such as improving lighting conditions or implementing more advanced facial recognition algorithms, could further enhance the system's reliability. Participants (students and educators) expressed positive feedback regarding the system's ease of use and efficiency. 90% of users found the system user-friendly, while 85% indicated they would prefer using this system over traditional attendance methods as it was less intrusive.

DISCUSSION

The results confirm that the proposed system significantly enhances attendance tracking by improving accuracy, speed, and efficiency over traditional biometric methods. Previous facial recognition systems achieved 92-95% accuracy (Geitgey, 2019; OpenCV, 2023), whereas this system attained 96-98% accuracy due to its deep learning-based encoding, ensuring more reliable attendance tracking. Additionally, biometric methods like fingerprint scanning take 3-5 seconds per user, while the proposed system records attendance in 1.8 seconds per user, making it more suitable for large classrooms. Unlike other facial recognition systems that experience a decline in performance with an increasing number of users (Wang & Wu, 2019), this system maintained consistent performance even with 100 students. Furthermore, to address ethical and privacy concerns, the system incorporates facial data encryption and restricted access, ensuring compliance with data protection policies (Sheng & Yin, 2019).
The study demonstrated that the Facial Recognition-Based Attendance Management System effectively tracks student attendance with high accuracy (96%) and fast processing speeds (1.8 seconds per student). Compared to manual sign-ins, which have an error rate of up to 15%, this system reduces errors and prevents proxy attendance. Unlike fingerprint or RFID-based systems, which require physical interaction and specialized hardware, facial recognition is fully automated and non-intrusive. Additionally, while older facial recognition systems struggled with real-time accuracy, this system leverages deep learning to maintain high accuracy, even in dynamic classroom environments. It is also scalable, handling 100 students at once without performance issues, making it ideal for universities.

This system offers several advantages, including its non-intrusiveness, as it does not require physical contact like fingerprint scanners. It provides real-time processing, marking attendance in just 1.8 seconds per student. The system is also highly scalable, efficiently managing large classrooms, and integrates seamlessly with university databases for automated data management, reducing administrative workload and ensuring accurate records.

Despite these strengths, some limitations remain. The system's accuracy declines in low-light conditions, which may affect performance in poorly lit classrooms. Additionally, it struggles to recognize students who turn their faces away from the camera, indicating a need for improvements in handling different facial orientations. The dataset used for testing included 100 students, which, while useful for preliminary analysis, may not be fully representative of broader applications. Furthermore, the system has difficulty identifying students wearing masks, headscarves, or other face coverings, suggesting the need for enhanced algorithms capable of recognizing partially covered faces.

Future improvements should focus on optimizing the system's performance under varying lighting conditions and improving recognition of partially obscured faces. Expanding the dataset to include a more diverse population will also enhance its reliability. Additionally, integrating advanced analytics and mobile compatibility could extend its use beyond attendance tracking, providing valuable insights into student engagement and classroom dynamics.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to develop and evaluate a Facial Recognition-Based Attendance Management System to address the inefficiencies of traditional attendance methods in educational environments. By harnessing facial recognition technology, the system aimed to improve accuracy, streamline the attendance process, and provide a scalable solution for large classroom settings. The results of this study demonstrated the system's high performance, with an accuracy rate of 96% and average processing times of 1.8 seconds per student. It successfully scaled to manage up to 100 concurrent users without performance degradation, proving its viability for real-time attendance tracking in large educational settings. These findings confirm the system's potential to significantly improve attendance management processes, reducing administrative burdens and improving data integrity.

This study contributes to the field of biometric-based attendance systems by addressing key gaps found in previous solutions. Unlike traditional methods and other biometric systems like fingerprint scanning, this system offers non-intrusive, real-time functionality and seamless integration with existing databases. Its ability to scale while maintaining high accuracy sets it apart as a reliable and adaptable tool for educational institutions. Despite its successes, the system showed reduced accuracy in low-light conditions and when students' faces were partially turned away from the camera. Additionally, the study was limited to a relatively small sample of 100 students. Future testing with larger and more diverse groups will be needed to confirm the system's generalizability and performance in varied environments.

Directions for Future Research

Future studies should aim to refine the system's ability to handle challenging lighting and facial orientation conditions. Additionally, expanding the system to include mobile integration and advanced analytics could enhance its usability and provide deeper insights into student engagement. Larger-scale testing will also be crucial in assessing the system's performance in different academic settings.

This system presents a viable solution for educational institutions seeking to modernize their attendance management. Its ability to automate and accurately track attendance in real-time can save time, reduce errors, and improve the overall efficiency of administrative processes.

In conclusion, the development of this Facial Recognition-Based Attendance Management System marks a step forward in automating attendance tracking. The system's strengths over traditional and other biometric methods make it a practical and scalable solution for modern educational environments. With further optimization, it holds the potential to set a new standard in attendance management systems.

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