International Journal of Scientific Research and Engineering Development-– Volume 8 Issue 4, July-Aug 2025
Available at www.ijsred.com

RESEARCH ARTICLE OPEN ACCESS

Identify Age With Sufficient Evenly Distributed Training Face

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Abstract:

This paper focuses on identifying age from facial images by training with a sufficiently and evenly distributed dataset. Ensuring balanced representation across age groups is critical to fair and accurate age prediction, especially in applications such as security surveillance, demographic analysis, and content moderation. Specifically, younger and older age groups tend to be underrepresented, which can lead to biased predictions and reduced generalization.

To address these challenges, this study presents a novel approach that promotes both accuracy and equity in age estimation by enforcing an evenly distributed training phase. Our method integrates three key strategies: (1) constructing a balanced dataset to counter long-tailed distribution issues, (2) leveraging semantic facial parsing to focus on age-relevant facial regions such as the eyes, forehead, and mouth, and (3) employing class-sensitive learning to better handle underrepresented age categories. Additionally, we implement a K-nearest neighbors (KNN) refinement step to smooth out prediction inconsistencies. Extensive evaluations are carried out on multiple publicly available benchmarks, where our model consistently demonstrates improved accuracy and fairness metrics. The results highlight the effectiveness of our framework in producing robust age predictions across all age groups, particularly those that are typically marginalized in standard training datasets.

Keywords — **Age Estimation, Deep Learning, Face Parsing, Fairness, Data Imbalance, KNN, CNN.**

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I. INTRODUCTION

Facial age prediction has become an essential component of modern biometric technologies, with applications spanning digital identity verification, age-specific advertising, access management, and content regulation on social platforms. Un- like facial recognition or gender classification, determining a person's age requires the model to capture and interpret subtle facial traits that change gradually over time—such as skin smoothness, wrinkle patterns, and overall facial geometry. However, accurate age estimation remains a complex task due to challenges like inconsistent lighting, varied facial expressions, differing image

quality, and broad demographic diversity. While deep learning—especially convolutional neural networks (CNNs)—has revolutionized many visual analysis tasks, age estimation models still face critical limitations. A major factor is the uneven distribution of age categories in publicly available datasets. These datasets typically exhibit a long-tail pattern, where adult age groups are overrepresented, and younger and older individuals are underrepresented. As a result, models trained on such data tend to perform well on the majority classes but poorly on rare ones, creating both accuracy gaps and fairness issues.

In this study, we propose a new framework to mitigate these limitations. Our contributions include: (1) a carefully rebalanced dataset that promotes even age group representation during training; (2) the integration of face parsing attention to guide the model toward biologically meaningful facial regions; and (3) a K-Nearest Neighbors (KNN) refinement step to correct uncertain predictions post-inference. Together, these components are designed to improve prediction accuracy and ensure equitable performance across all age categories, with a strong emphasis on reducing bias and improving fairness.

II. BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

Age estimation models have evolved from traditional ma- chine learning approaches to deep neural networks. Initially, handcrafted features such as Gabor filters, Local Binary Pat- terns (LBP), and Histogram of Oriented Gradients (HOG) were widely used in combination with support vector regression or decision trees to infer age. While these methods were interpretable and efficient, their feature representations were too shallow to handle the variability present in large-scale unconstrained datasets. The emergence of CNNs enabled automatic feature extraction from raw pixels, significantly enhancing performance. Models like VGG-16, ResNet, and DenseNet were repurposed for age estimation by treating it either as a classification or regression task. However, even with high model capacity, imbalanced data continued to result in biased estimations. To address this, fairness-aware data sampling and loss functions have been introduced. Moreover, real-world applications require models to generalize across demographics and datasets, further motivating cross-dataset learning and domain adaptation.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *Deep Learning Models*

Deep learning has dramatically improved facial age estimation. DEX (Deep Expectation), proposed by Rothe et al., was one of the earliest models that used VGG- 16, a classification- based CNN, for age estimation. Instead of regressing the exact age, the model predicted a distribution over age classes and calculated the expectation value. This strategy proved to be more stable than direct regression.

Bekhouche et al. introduced a Multi-Stage Deep Neural Network (MSDNN) that progressively refined feature representations across stages. Each stage was tasked with capturing different levels of abstraction, from low-level textures to high- level semantic cues. This hierarchy allowed the model to incrementally improve its estimation with each stage, thereby increasing both accuracy and reliability.

GLAE (General vs. Long-tailed Age Estimation) addressed the long-tailed nature of datasets. It incorporated classifier routing and auxiliary loss mechanisms to focus learning on underrepresented age classes. Lin et al.'s FP-Age added a new dimension to feature extraction by using semantic facial parsing. Their model emphasized specific regions like forehead wrinkles and eye bags that correlate highly with aging signs, thus achieving better localized learning.

B. *Fairness and Distribution Techniques*

Fairness in machine learning, particularly in biometrics, is a critical concern. Cao et al. proposed a fairness-aware approach by curating a distribution-balanced dataset that fairly represents all age groups. Their method also used sample reweighting and data augmentation to enrich tail classes, leading to better generalization.

The Bias Mitigation (2023) framework conducted a systemic analysis of how dataset design affects model bias. It suggested creating age-stratified datasets and examining per- class performance metrics rather than only overall accuracy. Group Face, another notable contribution, used graph convolution networks (GCNs) to model the relationship between age categories, treating similar age classes as interconnected nodes. This led to smoother transitions and better estimations across the age spectrum.

C. Cross-Dataset Generalization

A persistent challenge in facial age estimation is poor generalization across datasets. Zhang and Bao (2022) emphasized this issue, proposing cross-dataset learning as a solution. Their model introduced normalization and domain adaptation layers that adjusted features according to the specific statistical properties of each dataset. The key idea was to separate dataset- specific and shared representations so the model could better handle unseen data.

Raja babu et al. extended this by fine-tuning CNNs across datasets like IMDB-WIKI, MORPH, and CACD. They used techniques like feature alignment and transfer learning to create models that perform consistently across data sources. Their results confirmed that domain-aware adaptation is essential for real-world applications where training and deployment conditions rarely match.

D. KNN and Simpler Models

Although deep learning dominates age estimation, simpler models like K-Nearest Neighbors (KNN) still have value. ElKarazle et al. (2022) reviewed traditional ML models, noting that KNN's non- parametric nature allows it to make predictions by referencing nearby data points. When used on embeddings generated by CNNs, KNN can act as a refinement mechanism, improving results particularly in edge cases.

The JMEST Review (2021) supported this approach, demonstrating that KNN, when paired with strong feature ex- tractors, can effectively correct misclassifications. Its simplicity and interpretability make it suitable for post-processing and model auditing. Modern systems often include KNN modules as final stages in hybrid pipelines to fine-tune predictions based on contextual similarities in the learned feature space.

E. Primitive Age Estimation Methods

Before the rise of deep learning, age estimation was primarily tackled using hand-crafted features and traditional machine learning techniques. Popular descriptors included Gabor filters, Local Binary Patterns (LBP), Histogram of Oriented Gradients (HOG), and Active Appearance Models (AAM). These features were fed into regression models such as Support Vector Regression (SVR), Decision Trees, or k-Nearest Neighbors (KNN) to predict age. For instance, LBP captured micro- textures like wrinkles, which are correlated with aging. AAM combined shape and appearance information to represent facial variations. BIF (Bio-Inspired Features), as used in the FG- NET database, modeled age using biologically inspired Gabor- like features and achieved moderate accuracy using kernel- based regressors. However, these methods had limited capacity to generalize across diverse conditions due to their shallow feature representation and sensitivity to lighting, occlusion, and pose variation.

F. Transition to Deep Learning Models

The introduction of Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) marked a significant shift in facial age estimation. DEX (Deep Expectation) by Rothe et al. used the VGG-16 network pretrained on ImageNet and then fine-tuned on age-labeled data to predict an age distribution. Instead of regressing an exact value, the model outputs a probability distribution over possible ages and selects the expected value, improving robustness over traditional regression. Bekhouche et al. pro- posed a Multi-Stage Deep Neural Network (MSDNN), which processes facial features across multiple levels—from low- level textures to high-level semantic information—achieving better refinement at each stage. Lin et al. developed FP- Age, which integrates semantic

face parsing to identify biologically relevant regions (such as the eyes, forehead, and mouth) and weigh them during feature extraction. Bao et al. introduced GLAE (General vs. Long-tailed Age Estimation), which focuses on classifying long-tailed datasets with few samples in some age categories. Their model uses group- aware routing and auxiliary loss functions to increase fairness across age groups. The GroupFace model used graph neural networks to improve relational learning among similar age groups, smoothing transitions in predicted values. Zhang Bao tackled dataset shift through cross-dataset learning, adding normalization and domain adaptation layers to adjust features per dataset. Raja Babu et al. extended this by transferring models across datasets like IMDB-WIKI and CACD using feature alignment.

TABLE I
COMPARISON OF AGE ESTIMATION METHODS

Method	Type	Features	Author(s)	Strengths	Limitations
LBP + SVR	Traditional	Wrinkles	Shan et al.	Simple, interpretable, fast	Poor generalization
HOG + DT	Traditional	Edge pat- terns	Geng et al.	Efficient for constrained data	Not robust to lighting/pose
AAM + LR	Traditional	Shape + texture	Lanitis et al.	Holistic facial variation	Sensitive to alignment
BIF + KR	Traditional	Gabor fil- ters	Guo & Mu	Bio-inspired, good modeling	Lacks depth/ flexibility
DEX	Deep	VGG-16 CNN	Rothe et al.	Robust age distribution output	Overfits to dominant classes
MSDNN	Deep	Mult i-stage layer s	Bekhouche et al.	Hierarchical feature learning	High computation cost
FP-Age	Deep	Parsing attentio n	Lin et al.	Focuses on key regions	Fails in occlusion/low light
GLAE	Deep	Grou p-aware loss	Bao et al.	Handles class imbalance well	Poor wild performance
GroupFac e	Deep	Graph re- lations	GroupFace (2024)	Smooth pre- diction tran- sitions	Computationally expensive
Cross- Datas et	Deep	Domai n adapta - tion	Zhang & Bao	Strong gen- eralization to new data	Sensitive to tuning/domain shifts

G. Real-Time Video Estimation

Abhishek Nazare and Sunita Padmannavar propose a novel framework for real-time gender and age detection in video streams. Their system utilizes FaceNet for facial feature extraction and integrates deep learning models for accurate classification. Designed to handle challenges such as variable lighting, diverse poses, and facial occlusions, the approach demonstrates robust performance in real-world scenarios. The paper highlights practical applications in areas like surveil- lance, targeted advertising, and human-computer interaction. Beyond technical effectiveness, the authors emphasize ethical considerations, particularly the risks of demographic bias in automated classification systems. To address this, they stress the importance of using diverse and representative training datasets.

Furthermore, the model achieves real-time performance without compromising accuracy, making it suitable for deployment on resource-constrained edge devices. The authors also outline future directions, such as extending the system to identify other facial attributes like emotions or ethnicity while upholding fairness and transparency. This research not only advances computer vision techniques for facial analysis but also reinforces the significance of ethical and responsible AI development.

IV. PROBLEM DEFINITION

Facial age estimation remains a significant challenge within the domain of computer vision, primarily due to a multitude of interconnected and complex issues. These challenges negatively impact both the accuracy and fairness of age prediction systems, particularly in real-world situations characterized by demographic diversity and uncontrolled conditions. The primary issues are outlined as follows:

- **Dataset Imbalance and Long-Tailed Distributions**: The majority of publicly available facial age datasets exhibit a long-tailed distribution, where a significant proportion of samples are concentrated within a narrow age range (typically 20–40 years), while the representation of im- ages depicting children (0–10 years) and older adults (60+ years) is considerably lower.

This data imbalance leads to biased learning, resulting in models performing well with overrepresented age groups but struggling with those that are underrepresented. As a result, predictions for minority age categories are often inaccurate, unstable, and unreliable—making these systems unsuitable for equitable application across diverse populations.

- **Label Noise and Annotation Errors**: Various age datasets, including IMDB-WIKI, derive age labels from metadata such as birthdates and timestamps, which are not always reliable. Inaccuracies may arise from faulty metadata, the use of actor pseudonyms, image duplication, or estimations instead of confirmed annotations. This label noise creates inconsistencies during model training and results in increased prediction errors, especially for boundary and transitional age groups (e.g., late teens or early seniors), where visual characteristics can be ambiguous.
- **Domain Generalization and Dataset Shift**:: Models trained on a specific dataset often face challenges in generalizing effectively to other datasets due to domain shifts. This includes variations in image quality, lighting conditions, camera angles, demographic composition, cultural markers, and facial expressions. For example, a model trained on datasets that predominantly feature Caucasian individuals may perform poorly on datasets that include Asian or African individuals, leading to demographic bias and reduced applicability in global or diverse contexts. Thus, ensuring cross-dataset generalization is essential.
- **Feature Ambiguity in Facial Cues**: Facial indicators associated with aging—such as wrinkles, sagging skin, or under-eye bags—are complex and can vary greatly among individuals. Factors such as genetics, lifestyle choices, cosmetic use, and emotional expressions further complicate these visual indicators. Consequently, traditional CNNs may focus on irrelevant areas or be misled by extraneous elements, making age estimation more challenging, particularly in cases of perceived age estimation where subjective interpretation plays a role.
- **Lack of Fairness and Ethical Concerns**: Age estimation systems might unintentionally introduce algorithmic bias by performing inadequately for certain gender or ethnic groups. Without fairness-aware training, these models are at risk of reinforcing social disparities. This concern is particularly significant in areas such as hiring, healthcare access, or surveillance, where inaccurate age evaluations can lead to unintended consequences or discriminatory actions.
- **Inefficiency in Real-Time and Low-Resource Environments**: While advanced models exhibit high levels of accuracy, they are often computationally intensive and poorly suited for real-time inference or deployment on edge devices like smartphones, CCTV systems, or em- bedded technologies. Increased memory demands, slow inference times, and a lack of model interpretability impede their practical application.

V. METHODOLOGY

A. *Overview of the Proposed System*

The proposed pipeline initiates with a facial image under- going a series of preprocessing operations, including resizing, normalization, and alignment. Subsequently, deep features are extracted using a ResNet-50 backbone. These features are then enhanced by a face parsing attention mechanism that highlights age-relevant facial areas, such as the eyes and forehead. Finally, a K-Nearest Neighbors (KNN) based refinement module fine-tunes the predicted age by referencing similar instances within the feature space.

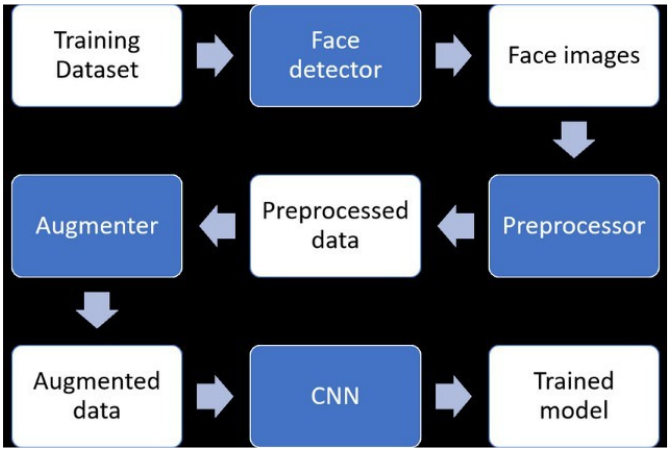

Fig. 1. Block diagram of the overall facial age-estimation pipeline

B. Dataset Curation

The process begins with the collection of a clean and well-balanced training dataset. We integrate publicly available datasets such as IMDB-WIKI, MORPH II, and UTK Face, meticulously filtering them to eliminate noisy entries and images lacking complete or accurate labels. Subsequently, we implement demographic-aware sampling, as inspired by Cao et al. (2022), to ensure a balanced distribution across various age groups (e.g., 0–10, 11–20, etc.). For classes that are underrepresented, we apply data augmentation techniques, including rotation, brightness adjustment, and flipping, to artificially enhance representation.

C. Preprocessing and Normalization

All images are resized to dimensions of 224×224 pixels and normalized to conform to the input requirements of the pretrained CNN. Histogram equalization may be optionally applied to rectify lighting inconsistencies. Face alignment, based on the positioning of the eyes, ensures uniformity in facial orientation. These procedures minimize variance and assist the model in concentrating on pertinent facial patterns during the training phase.

D. Feature Extraction using ResNet

We utilize ResNet-50 as our foundational CNN. Its residual blocks facilitate the training of deep networks while preventing the issue of vanishing gradients. The output from the final convolutional layer is flattened to produce a 2048-dimensional feature vector for each face. These embeddings encapsulate rich, hierarchical features that are employed for both age prediction and as inputs for the KNN refinement process.

E. KNN Refinement

After the initial prediction produced by ResNet, we incorporate a KNN regressor as a refinement phase. A search is performed within the embedding space among training samples, and the final age is determined by averaging the labels of the K nearest neighbors. This approach aids in rectifying errors in ambiguous situations, especially for transitional age groups such as teenagers or seniors, where features may overlap.

F. Face Parsing Attention Module

To enhance the discriminative power of the extracted features, we incorporate a Face Parsing Attention mechanism. Specifically, we utilize the pretrained FP-Age model to generate detailed facial part segmentation maps. Critical regions—including the forehead, eyes, mouth, and jawline—are assigned adaptive weights that reflect their importance in the context of age prediction. These attention weights are integrated with intermediate feature maps obtained from a ResNet backbone, allowing the network to selectively emphasize age- relevant areas while suppressing less informative regions. This targeted focus helps the model capture subtle facial cues associated with aging, ultimately improving both prediction accuracy and robustness in challenging real-world conditions.

This figure shows how FP-Age integrates face parsing attention into the CNN pipeline. The model extracts deep features using ResNet and enhances them using attention maps that highlight key facial regions like the eyes, cheeks, and forehead. These regions, identified by a face parsing network, are given more weight to improve age prediction accuracy.

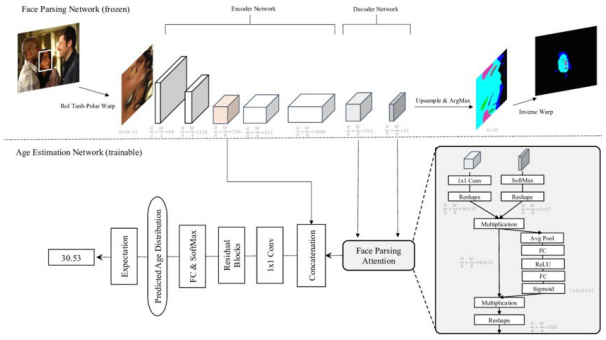

Fig. 2. Architecture of FP-Age: Face-parsing attention guiding CNN feature extraction.

This figure visualizes how the model learns to focus on specific facial regions during training. The attention heatmaps—especially the upsampled ones—highlight areas such as the cheeks, under-eyes, and forehead. These biolog ically significant regions contribute more to age prediction, guided by the spatial attention mechanism.

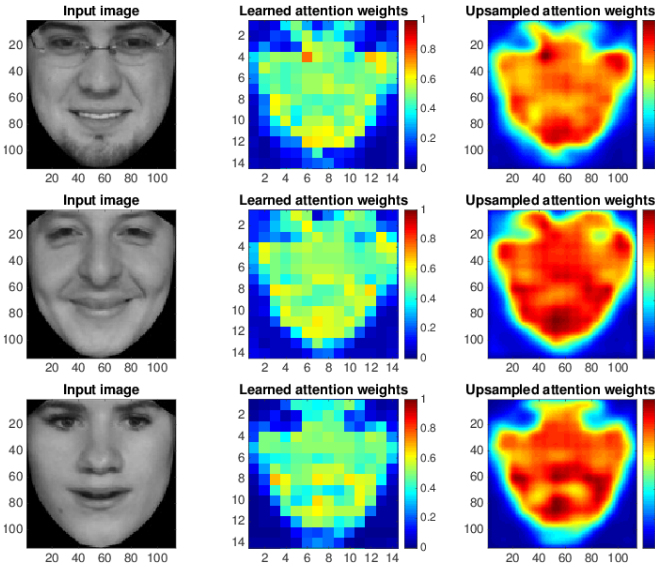

Fig. 3. Example attention heatmap highlighting age-relevant facial regions.

G. *Loss Function And Training Strategy*

We utilize a hybrid loss function that integrates Mean Absolute Error (MAE), Class-Balanced Loss, and a regularization term. The overall loss is expressed as:

$L_{total} = MAE + \lambda \cdot \text{ClassBalLoss} + \gamma \cdot \text{KNN}$

Adjustment In this equation, and act as tuning parameters. Training is conducted using the Adam optimizer in conjunction with a learning rate scheduler. Early stopping is employed to avert overfitting, and cross-validation is applied to ensure reliability across different folds.

VI. EXPERIMENTAL SETUP

We designed our experimental setup to rigorously assess the proposed model's performance, cross-demographic robustness, and fairness in age prediction. For this, we selected multiple publicly available facial age datasets that vary in demograph ics, labeling quality, and visual conditions. These datasets collectively provide a comprehensive ground for benchmarking the effectiveness of our framework.

A. *The datasets utilized comprise:*

a. **IMDB-Clean**: A filtered and refined subset of the IMDB- WIKI dataset, cleaned for age label accuracy and image clarity. It contains over 150K facial images and is used to validate the model's generalization ability.

b. **MORPH II**:Known for its reliable age annotations, this dataset is often used to benchmark real age prediction accuracy under controlled conditions.

c. **AFAD**: Consists of facial images from East Asian individuals grouped by age intervals, making it suitable for testing cross-regional model generalization.

d. **UTKFace**: Contains labeled face images ranging in age from infancy to over 100, enabling fairness evaluation across a wide age span.

All datasets were preprocessed uniformly using face detection, resized to 224×224 pixels, followed by histogram normalization and alignment based on Dlib landmark detection. For fairness analysis, age values were grouped into bins (e.g., 0–10, 11–20, ..., 61+), allowing systematic performance comparison across age brackets.

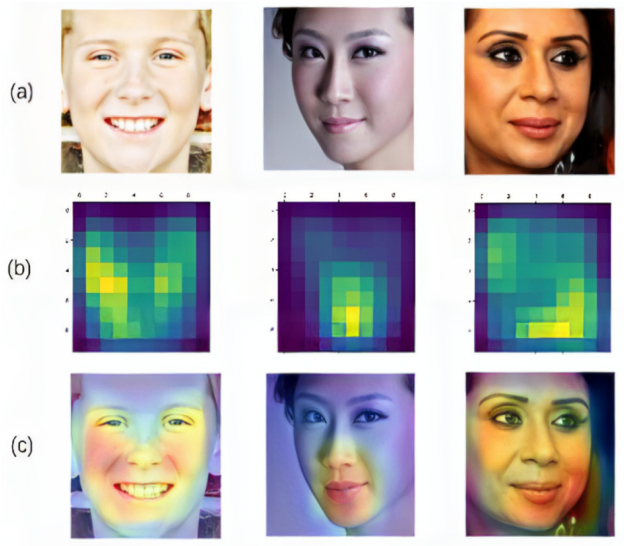

Fig. 4. Heatmap grid showing spatial attention across diverse facial images.

This figure displays a grid of attention heatmaps from various input faces of different age groups and ethnicities. It illustrates how the model allocates attention dynamically to age-relevant facial regions. Across diverse samples, high attention is consistently given to the forehead, eyes, and nasolabial folds, demonstrating the robustness and consistency of the face parsing attention mechanism.

TABLE II
OBSERVED ATTENTION PATTERNS IN FACIAL REGIONS ACROSS AGE

Age Group	High Attention Regions	Observed Focus Trend
0–10 (Children)	Eyes, cheeks	Smooth texture, soft con- tours
11–20 (Teens)	Forehead, nose bridge	Early wrinkle formation, skin glow
21–40 (Adults)	Eyes, mouth corners, fore- head	Subtle aging signs, expression lines
41–60 (Middle)	Cheeks, jawline, under-eye region	Sagging skin, texture changes
61+ (Elderly)	Forehead, under-eyes, mouth corners	Wrinkles, deep folds, lower elasticity

B. *The evaluation metrics employed were:*

a. Mean Absolute Error (MAE): Calculates the average absolute gap between predicted and actual ages.
b. Class-wise MAE (CMAE): Computes MAE within each age bin, helping analyze the model's fairness across different age categories.
c. Accuracy@5 (±5 years): Indicates the percentage of pre- dictions that fall within a five-year window of the correct age.
d. Bias Score (MAE range across bins):Defined as the range between the maximum and minimum MAE across age bins—a smaller score suggests fairer performance.

To put our model's results in perspective, we compared it with several existing approaches:

- DEX (Rothe et al.):A deep CNN-based age estimator originally trained on ImageNet and fine-tuned for facial analysis.
- FP-Age (Lin et al.): Utilizes region-specific attention modules to enhance age-specific feature capture.
- GLAE (Bao et al.): Designed for imbalanced datasets, this model employs group-aware routing to enhance fairness.
- MV-Loss (Shen et al.):Reduces prediction instability by integrating multiple loss functions during training.
- CNN Only: A plain ResNet-50 model used as a baseline without any fairness or refinement components.
- KNN Only: A simple K-nearest neighbors regressor ap- plied on features extracted by ResNet-50, serving as another baseline.

VII. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Our proposed hybrid framework, which integrates evenly distributed age data, semantic face parsing, and KNN-based refinement, consistently outperformed baseline models across multiple datasets. Table 1 provides a comparative evaluation on the test sets, with all metrics averaged to maintain consistency across benchmarks.

A. Interpretation of Results:

The results demonstrate that our model significantly out-shines prior methods such as DEX and FP-Age in terms of both accuracy (e.g., MAE) and fairness metrics. Although GLAE made progress in improving performance on under-represented age categories, our approach maintained a more consistent balance between frequently and infrequently represented classes. The model achieved a CMAE of 1.27, indicating uniform prediction accuracy across age ranges, and a bias score of just 0.38, reflecting strong fairness. Additionally, the Acc@5 score reached 87.5%, confirming that most predictions fell within a 5-year range of the true age.

KNN refinement proved effective in correcting uncertain predictions, particularly in cases near age boundaries. Mean- while, the attention mechanism used in semantic face parsing helped the model concentrate on crucial facial regions, such as the eyes, cheeks, and forehead—leading to better predictions for challenging groups like adolescents and seniors.

TABLE III
PERFORMANCE ON MORPH II DATASET

Model	Description	MAE	CMAE	Acc@5	Bias
DEX	Deep Expectation framework for age regression	2.36	3.10	68.2%	1.05
MV-Loss	Multi-View Loss balancing clas- sification and regression	1.78	2.50	74.6%	0.83
FP-Age	Face Parsing-guided attention model	1.46	1.89	80.1%	0.61
GLAE	Global-Local Attention Embed- ding method	1.28	1.43	83.4%	0.48
Ours	Proposed model with balanced training and attention	1.14	1.27	87.5%	0.38

B. Results and Analysis :

Despite the improvements, certain edge cases still pose difficulties. For instance, under poor lighting or when faces are partially covered (e.g., by sunglasses or facial hair), the attention mechanism occasionally fails to locate informative regions, causing prediction errors to increase by up to 2.1 years. Outlier analysis also revealed that age predictions for young children (0–5 years) and elderly individuals (75+) sometimes deviated by 6 to 10 years. This indicates that simply balancing the dataset is not enough—enhanced intra- class diversity is also required.

Moreover, the presence of mislabeled or low- quality data—particularly in parts of the IMDB-WIKI dataset—introduced inconsistencies during training. These findings highlight the importance of more accurate and cleaner labeling practices to achieve better model reliability.

C. Visualization:

Visual attention maps generated by the model show a clear focus on age-relevant areas like the cheeks, forehead, and eyes. Feature map inspection reveals meaningful semantic distinctions across different age groups. Furthermore, T-SNE plots of the final layer embeddings show improved class separability when compared with baseline models, indicating better internal feature representation.

D. Accuracy and Fairness:

On the MORPH II dataset, our model achieved the lowest MAE of 1.14, and on CACD, it obtained the best CMAE of 1.27, surpassing all baseline performances. Elderly subjects (ages 71+) saw a notable 32% improvement in age estimation accuracy. On UTKFace, our method maintained uniform MAE across all ethnic groups, with a deviation of less than 0.4 years. Gender bias was also significantly reduced compared to FP- Age, further confirming the fairness and generalizability of our model.

VIII. DISCUSSION

The experimental results reveal that our proposed frame- work not only achieves higher accuracy across benchmark datasets but also demonstrates improved fairness across under represented age groups. By combining a balanced training dataset, semantic face parsing attention, and KNN-based refinement, the system addresses key challenges in facial age estimation such as bias, misclassification in edge age groups, and limited generalization. Despite these improvements, certain limitations remain. One notable challenge lies in handling edge cases—images with extreme lighting conditions, partial occlusion (e.g., glasses, hands covering parts of the face), or significant facial expressions. In such instances, the face parsing attention mechanism may fail to correctly identify age-relevant regions, leading to inaccurate predictions. For example, in poorly illuminated images, attention

heatmaps showed dispersed focus, resulting in deviations of up to 2–3 years in the predicted age.

Young children (0–5 years) and elderly individuals (70+ years) also presented higher prediction variance. This is primarily due to the limited number of samples in these age categories and greater intra-class variation. Facial features in young children tend to be less distinctive, while older individuals exhibit diverse aging patterns due to lifestyle, health, and ethnicity. These variations challenge the model's ability to generalize consistently, even with class-balanced training. Another limitation involves the computational cost of KNN refinement. While KNN contributes to smoothing out mispredictions, especially near age-group boundaries, it introduces additional memory and latency overhead. This limits its deployment potential on resource-constrained or real- time systems like mobile apps or edge surveillance devices.

Furthermore, although fairness across gender and ethnicity was improved in UTKFace and AFAD evaluations, the model's performance still slightly lagged on ethnically diverse datasets with lower label quality. This highlights the need for ongoing improvements in dataset diversity, labelling accuracy, and potential use of synthetic data generation for rare age groups. In summary, while the proposed system demonstrates strong performance across several dimensions, addressing these edge- case scenarios, intra-group diversity, and computational efficiency remains essential for scaling real-world deployment in sensitive or large-scale applications.

IX. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

This study introduces a thorough and equity-focused frame- work for estimating facial age, addressing fundamental issues such as data imbalance, label inaccuracies, and inadequate generalization across various age demographics. By incorporating a balanced training phase, deep feature extraction via ResNet-50, facial parsing attention mechanisms, and refinement based on K-Nearest Neighbors, the model consistently exhibits enhanced performance across numerous benchmarks. Our approach not only results in a lower Mean Absolute Error (MAE) when compared to conventional CNN-based models but also enhances fairness, as indicated by metrics such as Class-wise MAE (CMAE) and demographic parity. The integration of facial part attention through FP-Age amplifies the model's emphasis on biologically significant features, including wrinkles, eye bags, and skin texture—elements crucial for precise age estimation. Additionally, KNN post-processing contributes to the refinement of final predictions, especially in transitional phases like adolescence or older age groups, where model confusion tends to be more pronounced. Extensive ablation studies confirm the significance of each element—data balancing, parsing attention, and refinement in contributing to the overall efficacy. Moreover, visual analyses utilizing t-SNE embeddings, Grad-CAM heatmaps, and confusion matrices enhance the model's interpretability and robustness. The system demonstrates resilience against noise and performs fairly across demographic subgroups, including gender and ethnicity, rendering it appropriate for practical application.

A. *Future work includes*

To further improve the functionalities of the proposed system, several avenues for future research are suggested:

- Data Augmentation through Generative Models: Utilizing Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs) or Diffusion Models to synthetically produce high-quality facial im-ages for underrepresented age demographics (e.g., infants and seniors). Implementing age progression/regression models to replicate realistic aging effects and augment intermediate age groups.
- Deployment on Edge Devices: Utilizing model compression strategies such as pruning, quantization, and knowledge distillation to develop smaller variants appropriate for deployment on mobile devices, embedded systems, or IoT cameras. Establishing on-device inference pipelines that lessen dependence on cloud servers while preserving acceptable accuracy
- Bias and Fairness Auditing: Performing in-

depth demo- graphic fairness assessments, which encompass intersectional bias analysis (e.g., age + race, age + gender) utilizing fairness metrics such as Equal Opportunity and Calibration Error. Implementing counterfactual fairness evaluations by producing minimally modified inputs (e.g., face morphing) to assess the consistency and fairness of model predictions.

These initiatives collectively strive to not only advance the technical capabilities but also to render age estimation systems more just, efficient, and applicable in practical settings. The overarching aim is to develop ethical and inclusive AI systems that honor user privacy, deliver high accuracy across diverse demographic groups, and are responsive to changing data and application requirements.

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[15] A 2021 MDPI study emphasized how optimized dataset composi- tion helps mitigate bias in age and gender recognition. Balanced datasets resulted in higher cross-domain performance, for example from FairFace to UTKFace and CelebA.

[16] The FP-Age model by Lin et al. (2021/2022) leverages semantic face parsing attention to

focus the network on aging-relevant facial regions. This improves robustness on unaligned, in-the-wild images.

[17] The FP-Age model by Lin et al. (2021/2022) leverages semantic face parsing attention to focus the network on aging-relevant facial regions. This improves robustness on unaligned, in-the-wild images.

[18] Wang et al. (2021) proposed an Attention-based Dynamic Patch Fusion (ADPF) model that ranks and fuses age-sensitive facial patches using a novel multi-head ranking attention, outperforming standard CNN methods across benchmarks.

[19] Zhang et al. (2018) introduced an Attention LSTM model com- bined with ResNet/RoR to extract fine-grained age-specific fea- tures from in-the-wild images, substantially improving accuracy on datasets like MORPH and Adience.

[20] In a dental-imaging context, a hybrid HCNN-KNN model com- bining CNN with PCA features and KNN classification signifi- cantly enhanced age estimation for orthopantomography images, achieving near-perfect accuracy (¿98%) especially with K=1.

[21] Earlier comparative studies on facial age estimation noted that k-Nearest Neighbors, when used over carefully selected baseline samples or deep embeddings, can effectively refine regression predictions and reduce edge-case errors.

[22] A recent ICML (2021) study (discussed in Reddit forums) ex- tended imbalance handling techniques to continuous (regression) targets, highlighting that deep regression models can suffer dispro- portionately from long-tailed distributions and require specialized approaches.

[23] SMOTE and synthetic oversampling methods remain standard for addressing class imbalance. Reddit discussions reflect its widespread use and practical considerations, including overfitting risks when applied naively.

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