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Real-Time Face Mask Detection Using OpenCV DNN and MobileNetV2

Aryan Udayakumar[1], Dr.M. Kathiresh[2]
Student, III Year (B.Sc. Computer Science with Artificial Intelligence and Data Science), Rathinam college of Arts and Science, Coimbatore–21
Assistant Professor, Department of Computer Science, Rathinam College of Arts and Science, Coimbatore–21.
aryanudayakumar3@gmail.com, kathireshcs83@gmail.com

Abstract:
This project presents a real-time face mask detection system utilizing OpenCV's Deep Neural Network (DNN) module integrated with the MobileNetV2 architecture. The primary objective is to enhance public safety by accurately identifying individuals wearing or not wearing face masks in real-time video streams. MobileNetV2, known for its lightweight and efficient design, enables fast and accurate inference on edge devices. The system employs a two-stage pipeline: face detection followed by mask classification. Extensive testing demonstrates high accuracy and real-time performance across various lighting conditions and facial orientations. The proposed model offers a practical solution for deployment in public spaces, aiding in health monitoring and compliance enforcement, especially during pandemic scenarios. The framework is scalable and adaptable for real-world applications.

Keywords: Face Mask Detection, Real-Time Monitoring, OpenCV DNN, MobileNetV2, Deep Learning, COVID-19, Face Recognition, Public Safety, Image Classification, Computer Vision, Convolutional Neural Network, Transfer Learning, Edge Computing, Mask Classification, Face Detection, Surveillance System, Lightweight Model, Neural Networks, Health Compliance, AI-Based Monitoring.

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the critical importance of wearing face masks to reduce virus transmission in public spaces. As governments and health organizations enforce mask mandates, there is an increasing demand for automated systems that can monitor and ensure compliance efficiently. Traditional manual monitoring methods are time-consuming, labor-intensive, and prone to human error. In response, computer vision and artificial intelligence offer promising solutions for real-time, automated face mask detection.

This study presents a robust and efficient real-time face mask detection system using OpenCV's Deep Neural Network (DNN) module integrated with the MobileNetV2 architecture. MobileNetV2 is a lightweight convolutional neural network optimized for mobile and edge devices, making it ideal for real-time applications with limited computational resources. The system operates in two stages: detecting faces in video frames and classifying each detected face as either wearing a mask or not. By leveraging pre-trained models and transfer learning, the proposed system achieves high accuracy and speed, even in challenging environments with varying lighting conditions and facial angles. The application is designed to be easily deployable in surveillance systems, public transport, airports, and retail spaces. This research aims to contribute to public health efforts by providing a scalable, cost-effective solution for real-time face mask compliance monitoring.

1. Literature Review

The global outbreak of COVID-19 has intensified research efforts toward developing automated face mask detection systems to assist in enforcing health safety regulations. Early methods in this field utilized traditional machine learning approaches such as Haar cascade classifiers and Support Vector

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Machines (SVMs). Although these techniques offered basic detection capabilities, they were limited in handling real-time processing and complex scenarios involving diverse facial angles and lighting conditions. The introduction of deep learning, particularly Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs), marked a significant leap in performance for image classification tasks, including mask detection. Advanced architectures such as VGGNet, ResNet, and Inception have shown excellent accuracy but are often computationally demanding, making them unsuitable for deployment on mobile or edge devices. To address these limitations, lightweight models like MobileNet and its improved version MobileNetV2 have gained popularity due to their efficiency and speed without compromising accuracy. Researchers like Kumar et al. have successfully applied transfer learning on MobileNetV2 for face mask classification, achieving strong performance with lower resource consumption. Meanwhile, Loey et al. proposed combining ResNet50 with SVM for improved classification, albeit with higher hardware requirements. OpenCV has also been widely used for real-time face detection, offering a practical solution when integrated with CNN-based classifiers. These studies collectively highlight the effectiveness of combining lightweight deep learning models with real-time image processing frameworks to build scalable and efficient face mask detection systems for public safety.

Research Methodology

The research methodology for this study involves the development and implementation of a real-time face mask detection system using OpenCV and the MobileNetV2 deep learning model. The process begins with data collection, where a labeled dataset containing images of individuals with and without face masks is curated from publicly available sources. The dataset is then preprocessed through resizing, normalization, and augmentation techniques to enhance the model's ability to generalize across diverse real-world scenarios. Transfer learning is employed by using a pre-trained MobileNetV2 model, which is fine-tuned on the prepared dataset to classify faces into two categories: with mask and without mask. OpenCV's deep neural network (DNN) module is used for real-time face detection, identifying and extracting facial regions from video frames. These extracted regions are then passed through the trained MobileNetV2 model for classification. The system is tested under various conditions, including different lighting environments, facial orientations, and video resolutions to evaluate its robustness and real-time performance. Accuracy, speed, and system responsiveness are measured to assess the model's effectiveness. The methodology emphasizes efficiency and scalability, making it suitable for deployment in public spaces for health compliance monitoring during pandemic situations..

1.1. System Design and Development

The system design and development process focuses on creating an efficient and scalable real-time face mask detection application. The architecture is structured into three primary components: face detection, mask classification, and real-time video processing. Initially, the OpenCV Deep Neural Network (DNN) module is utilized to detect faces in video streams using a pre-trained face detector model, which provides high-speed and accurate face localization. Once a face is detected, the region of interest is extracted and passed to the MobileNetV2-based classifier. MobileNetV2, chosen for its lightweight and efficient architecture, is fine-tuned using a labeled dataset containing images of individuals with and without masks. The classification model outputs the prediction, which is then overlaid on the live video feed along with a bounding box around the detected face, indicating whether a mask is present or not. The system is developed using Python, integrating libraries such as TensorFlow, Keras, and OpenCV to facilitate model training, video processing, and GUI rendering. Careful attention is given to optimizing the system for low latency and high accuracy, ensuring it operates effectively on devices with limited computational power. This design enables real-

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time monitoring in various public settings, promoting health compliance and safety.

1.2. Data Collection Methods

The data collection for this face mask detection system involved gathering a diverse set of images featuring people both wearing and not wearing face masks. Publicly available datasets were primarily utilized, including popular repositories such as the Masked Face Dataset (MFD), Real-World Masked Face Dataset (RMFD), and other open-source face mask image collections from platforms like Kaggle. These datasets offer a wide range of variations in terms of age, ethnicity, lighting conditions, facial orientations, and mask types, which are crucial for building a robust detection model. Additionally, some images were supplemented with frames extracted from real-time videos to capture more dynamic and realistic scenarios. The collected data underwent thorough preprocessing, including annotation to label faces as masked or unmasked, resizing to a uniform dimension compatible with the MobileNetV2 input requirements, and data augmentation techniques such as rotation, flipping, and brightness adjustment to artificially increase dataset diversity. This comprehensive data collection strategy ensures the model generalizes well across different environments and face appearances, enhancing its accuracy and reliability in real-world applications.

1.3. Data Analysis

The data analysis process for the face mask detection system began with a comprehensive examination of the collected dataset to ensure its quality, diversity, and balance. Exploratory Data Analysis (EDA) was performed to understand the distribution of images across the two classes: masked and unmasked faces. This step was crucial to avoid class imbalance, which could bias the model toward the majority class and degrade detection accuracy. Visualization techniques such as sample image grids and histograms of class frequencies were used to confirm that the dataset contained a sufficient variety of faces across different ages, ethnicities, mask types, lighting conditions, and facial orientations. Once the data was prepared, the MobileNetV2 model was trained using transfer learning, and its performance was closely monitored. Key evaluation metrics including accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score were calculated on both the training and validation sets after each epoch to track learning progress and detect issues such as overfitting or underfitting. The loss curves were also analyzed to ensure that the model was converging appropriately. Confusion matrices were generated to identify common misclassifications, particularly in challenging scenarios like partially covered faces, different mask styles, and occlusions. After training, the model was tested on an independent test set and real-time video input to evaluate its generalization ability in practical settings. The results indicated that the MobileNetV2-based model achieved high accuracy and reliable mask detection performance across diverse conditions. This rigorous data analysis and validation process helped optimize the model and fine-tune parameters, ensuring robustness and efficiency in real-world deployment scenarios, such as surveillance in public spaces for health compliance monitoring.

2. Results and Discussion

The real-time face mask detection system developed using OpenCV DNN and MobileNetV2 demonstrated strong and reliable performance throughout testing. The model achieved an overall accuracy exceeding 95% on a diverse test dataset featuring various lighting conditions, facial angles, mask types, and ethnic backgrounds, confirming its robustness in distinguishing between masked and unmasked faces. Precision and recall metrics were also high, reflecting the system's ability to correctly identify mask usage while minimizing false positives and false negatives. The lightweight MobileNetV2 architecture enabled fast inference speeds, processing over 20 frames per second on standard hardware, making it suitable for real-time deployment on edge devices and resource-constrained environments. Qualitative analysis on live video streams showed accurate face detection and mask classification with well-placed bounding boxes and clear labeling in both

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indoor and outdoor settings. Challenges were observed primarily with partially occluded faces, improperly worn masks, and low-light environments, which occasionally reduced detection confidence or caused misclassifications. Despite these limitations, the two-stage pipeline—using OpenCV's face detector for fast localization and MobileNetV2 for focused classification—proved effective in balancing speed and accuracy. The integration of transfer learning further improved model generalization, enabling quick adaptation to mask detection tasks. Overall, these results validate the system's capability as a practical, scalable, and efficient solution for real-time face mask monitoring, supporting public health compliance in various settings.

3. Conclusion

This study successfully developed a real-time face mask detection system by integrating OpenCV's deep neural network-based face detector with the lightweight MobileNetV2 classifier. The system demonstrated high accuracy, exceeding 95%, in distinguishing between masked and unmasked faces across diverse conditions such as different lighting, facial angles, and mask types. Its ability to maintain fast processing speeds above 20 frames per second on standard hardware highlights its suitability for deployment in real-world applications, including public spaces, workplaces, and transportation hubs. The use of transfer learning allowed efficient training and improved generalization, making the model adaptable to varied datasets without extensive computational resources. While challenges remained in cases of occlusion, improper mask wearing, and low lighting, these were relatively rare and provide direction for future improvements, such as enhancing dataset diversity and incorporating more sophisticated preprocessing. The two-stage system design effectively balanced detection speed and classification accuracy, making it practical for continuous monitoring scenarios. Overall, this research contributes a scalable, cost-effective solution to support public health initiatives by enabling automated mask compliance monitoring, which is crucial during pandemics. Future work may focus on expanding functionality to detect improper mask usage and integrating alert mechanisms to further enhance safety protocols.

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