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Automated Attendance System for Rural Schools Using Face Recognition

Dr. Amatur Rafea Javariya, S.V.Naga Mallika, R.Bidisha, D.Harshitha, G.Mercy

Department of AI & ML, Vijaya Institute of Technology for Women, Enikepadu, Vijayawada, India.

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ABSTRACT

Attendance management is a fundamental administrative function in educational institutions. Rural schools in India continue to rely on manual attendance methods, which are time-consuming, error-prone, and vulnerable to proxy attendance. This paper presents an Automated Attendance System for Rural Schools using Face Recognition technology, which leverages Artificial Intelligence (AI), Computer Vision, and Deep Learning to provide a contactless, accurate, and real-time attendance solution. The proposed system employs Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN) for facial feature extraction and recognition, integrated with a structured digital database for secure attendance storage and report generation. Experimental evaluation demonstrates face detection accuracy of 94%, face recognition accuracy of 92%, and attendance recording accuracy of 95%. The system significantly reduces teacher workload, eliminates proxy attendance, and requires only low-cost hardware and open-source software, making it highly suitable for resource-constrained rural educational environments. Results confirm that the proposed solution is reliable, scalable, and practically deployable

1. INTRODUCTION

Attendance is one of the most essential administrative activities in any educational institution. It serves as a direct indicator of student participation, discipline, and engagement. In rural schools, attendance is particularly critical because government funding, scholarships, and welfare programs are directly linked to attendance records. Despite its importance, most rural schools still rely on manual attendance systems that are inefficient and outdated.

Manual attendance methods require teachers to call out student names and mark registers, consuming valuable classroom time and introducing human errors. These systems are also vulnerable to proxy attendance, where students mark attendance on behalf of absent classmates, undermining record integrity.

With advancements in Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML), and Computer Vision, automated attendance systems have emerged as effective solutions. Among biometric methods, face recognition has proven to be one of the most reliable and user-friendly techniques. This paper proposes an Automated Attendance System for Rural Schools using Face Recognition, designed to address specific challenges of rural educational institutions.

1.1 Objectives

➢ Design an accurate and real-time face recognition-based attendance system.

➢ Eliminate proxy attendance and reduce teacher workload.

➢ Develop a cost-effective solution deployable on low-cost hardware.

➢ Provide secure digital attendance records with automated report generation.

➢ Support digital transformation in rural educational institutions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Traditional Attendance Systems

Attendance systems have been foundational to educational administration for decades. Traditional manual attendance methods, where teachers call names and mark physical registers, remain prevalent in rural schools due to low cost and simplicity. However, these systems are time-consuming, prone to human errors, and vulnerable to proxy attendance. Maintaining long-term registers is difficult and report generation requires considerable additional effort [1].

Biometric attendance systems were introduced to overcome manual limitations. Fingerprint-based systems are the most common biometric approach, offering higher accuracy by leveraging unique biological characteristics. However, these systems require specialized hardware, regular maintenance, and reliable power supply, which may not be feasible for rural schools. Physical contact raises hygiene concerns, particularly for young students [8].

RFID-based systems automate attendance through card-based identification but remain susceptible to proxy attendance if cards are shared. These systems also require additional hardware such as card readers and student ID cards, increasing costs [2].

2.2 Face Recognition-Based Systems

Face recognition-based attendance systems use computer vision and deep learning to identify individuals from facial features without physical contact. Such systems are contactless, fast, and require only a standard camera, making them suitable for cost-constrained environments. Al-Taani and Al-Ma'aitah [3] demonstrated that deep learning-based face recognition achieves high accuracy in smart attendance applications, outperforming traditional biometric approaches.

Rehman et al. [1] proposed an automated attendance system using face recognition for classroom environments and achieved competitive accuracy on student datasets. Zhao et al. [2] provided a comprehensive review of face recognition algorithms, establishing foundational principles for CNN-based recognition models. Turk and Pentland [7] introduced eigenface-based recognition, which, despite being an early method, laid groundwork for modern deep learning approaches.

Rattani et al. [11] demonstrated that data augmentation combined with deep learning significantly improves face recognition robustness under real-world conditions, directly relevant to classroom environments. Patel et al. [12] proposed a machine learning-based smart attendance system showing high usability in educational settings. These works collectively validate the feasibility of face recognition for automated attendance, particularly when combined with CNN architectures and proper preprocessing pipelines.

3. SYSTEM METHODOLOGY

3.1 System Architecture

The proposed system follows a layered architecture integrating hardware and software modules for real-time attendance management. The architecture comprises six primary layers: User Interface, Application Processing, Face Detection and Recognition, Database and Storage, Deployment and Security, and Feedback.

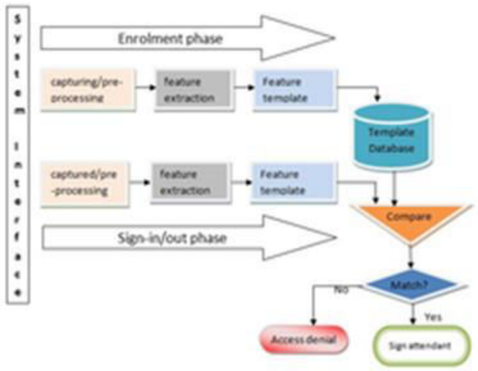

Fig. 1. System Architecture Overview

The User Interface layer provides simple graphical interfaces for teachers to register students, monitor attendance, and generate reports. The Application Processing layer coordinates workflow between detection, recognition, and database modules. The Face Detection and Recognition layer forms the core intelligence of the system, processing classroom images using CNN-based models.

The Database and Storage layer maintains structured records of student profiles, facial datasets, and attendance logs. Security mechanisms including data encryption and access control are enforced at the Deployment layer. The modular architecture ensures scalability and ease of maintenance, critical for rural school environments with limited technical support.

3.2 Data Collection and Preprocessing

Student registration is the initial step, where facial images are collected alongside personal details. Multiple images per student are captured under varying expressions and angles to improve model robustness. Each student is assigned a unique identifier, and all data is stored securely in the database.

Image preprocessing involves resizing all images to a uniform resolution, applying grayscale conversion, histogram equalization for lighting normalization, and noise reduction. Data augmentation techniques including rotation, flipping, and scaling artificially expand the dataset and reduce overfitting during model training [11]. The dataset is then divided into training (80%) and testing (20%) subsets.

3.3 Face Detection Module

The face detection module locates facial regions within classroom images captured by the installed camera. A CNN-based face detection approach is employed, building upon Haar cascade classifiers for initial detection and HOG (Histogram of Oriented Gradients) for feature enhancement. The module outputs bounding box coordinates for each detected face, which are passed to the recognition module.

To handle real-world classroom conditions such as multiple students in a single frame, varying head poses, and lighting changes, the detection model is optimized using techniques derived from YOLO-based object detection [9]. This ensures rapid and reliable face localization with minimal computational overhead, critical for real-time operation.

3.4 Face Recognition Module

The face recognition module processes detected facial regions and identifies students by comparing extracted features with stored templates. A Convolutional Neural Network (CNN) is trained on the student facial image dataset to extract discriminative feature vectors. These vectors capture distinctive facial characteristics such as eye distance, nose shape, and facial contours that remain stable across expressions and minor pose variations.

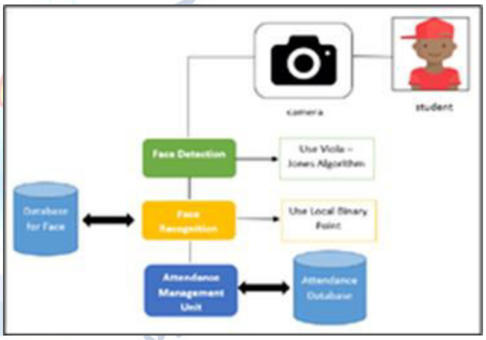

Fig. 2. Face Recognition Workflow

During recognition, extracted feature vectors are compared against stored templates using cosine similarity or Euclidean distance measures. A confidence threshold determines whether a match is accepted. Sanderson and Paliwal [10] demonstrated that feature-based recognition under illumination changes achieves high reliability, directly applicable to classroom lighting variations.

The CNN model is trained using labeled student image datasets with cross-entropy loss optimization. Transfer learning from pre-trained models reduces training time and improves performance when student datasets are limited. Li and Jain [6] provide comprehensive guidance on CNN-based recognition that informs the model selection and training strategy employed in this system.

3.5 Attendance Management Module

Once a student is recognized, the Attendance Management Module records the attendance entry with a timestamp in the SQL database. The module prevents duplicate entries for the same session and ((structured database schema links student IDs to class schedules, enabling automatic generation of daily, weekly, and monthly attendance reports.

Teachers access attendance records through the User Interface, with options to view session-wise summaries, identify absenteeism patterns, and export reports. The system provides role-based access control, ensuring that only authorized personnel can modify records. Regular automated backups prevent data loss and support long-term data reliability.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Experimental Setup

The experimental evaluation was conducted in a simulated classroom environment closely resembling real rural school conditions. The hardware configuration comprised a standard desktop computer with an Intel Core i5 processor, 8 GB RAM, and a high-definition USB camera positioned at the front of the classroom. The system was developed using Python 3.x with OpenCV for image processing, TensorFlow/Keras for deep learning model training and inference, and SQLite for database management.

Table 1. Experimental Testing Conditions

Testing Parameter	Description
Classroom Environment	Simulated rural classroom setup
Lighting Conditions	Natural daylight and artificial lighting
Camera Placement	Front of classroom, frontal capture
No. of Students	Up to 30 per session
Sessions Tested	15 sessions across different times
Student Dataset	120 images per student, 4 angles

The student dataset consisted of facial images collected from 40 registered students, with approximately 120 images per student captured under controlled conditions. The dataset was augmented with rotations (±15°), flipping, and brightness variations. Model training was performed over 50 epochs with a batch size of 32 and Adam optimizer at a learning rate of 0.001.

4.2 Performance Results

The system was evaluated across 15 test sessions to ensure consistent performance. Table 2 summarizes the face detection accuracy under varying conditions. Detection accuracy was highest under normal lighting at 96%, with minor reductions under low lighting (91%) and side-angle scenarios (90%), demonstrating robust performance across realistic classroom conditions.

Table 2. Face Detection Accuracy

Condition	Detection Accuracy (%)
Normal Lighting	96
Low Lighting	91
Multiple Faces	94
Side Face Angles	90

Table 3. Overall System Accuracy

Metric	Accuracy (%)
Face Detection	94
Face Recognition	92
Attendance Recording	95

The overall face recognition accuracy of 92% was achieved after CNN model training with augmented data, consistent with results reported by Rattani et al. [11] for deep learning-based recognition. Attendance recording accuracy reached 95%, as the system successfully matched recognized students to their class records with correct timestamps in nearly all sessions.

4.3 Performance Analysis

Precision and recall analysis confirmed reliable system performance. The system maintained a low false acceptance rate (FAR) and low false rejection rate (FRR), ensuring that unregistered individuals were not incorrectly marked and legitimate students were not missed. Error analysis identified extreme lighting variations and occlusions as the primary error sources, both manageable through infrastructure improvements.

Processing time analysis showed that the system processed each frame in approximately 0.3–0.5 seconds, enabling near real-time attendance marking. This performance meets the requirements for practical classroom deployment. Database retrieval operations for report generation required less than 1 second even with 6 months of accumulated attendance data, confirming database scalability.

4.4 Discussion

The experimental results confirm that the proposed face recognition-based attendance system significantly outperforms both manual and semi-automated attendance methods. Compared to manual attendance, the system eliminates time loss in roll calls, prevents proxy attendance, and provides automated digital records. Compared to fingerprint-based systems [8], the proposed contactless approach avoids hygiene concerns and reduces hardware costs.

User interaction analysis conducted with teachers indicated high ease of use, significant time savings, and strong confidence in data accuracy. Teachers required minimal training to operate the system, and students adapted quickly to the contactless attendance process. The system's compatibility with low-cost hardware and open-source software makes it economically viable for rural schools with limited budgets.

Limitations observed during testing include reduced accuracy under extremely poor lighting, which can be mitigated through proper classroom lighting infrastructure. Performance in very large classrooms (50+ students) may require hardware upgrades for faster frame processing. Privacy considerations regarding facial data storage are addressed through encryption and restricted access control mechanisms.

5. PROPOSED SYSTEM

5.1 System Architecture

The system architecture defines the complete structural framework of the automated attendance system using face recognition. It explains how different functional components are organized and how data flows between them. The architecture is designed using a layered approach to improve modularity, scalability, and fault tolerance. Each layer performs a specific task, ensuring that changes in one module do not affect others. This approach is particularly useful for rural schools, where system maintenance and upgrades should be simple and cost-effective.

The proposed architecture integrates hardware devices such as cameras with software modules including face detection, face recognition, attendance processing, and database management. Real-time image capture and processing are supported to ensure accurate attendance marking during classroom sessions. Security and data privacy are also embedded into the architecture to protect sensitive student information. Overall, the system architecture ensures reliability, accuracy, and efficient performance in real-world rural environments.

5.1.1 Architectural Overview

The architectural overview provides a high-level representation of the automated attendance system and its major components. It shows how classroom cameras capture student images and forward them to the processing layer for face detection and recognition. Recognized student identities are then sent to the attendance management module for record updating. This overview helps in understanding the complete workflow of the system from data input to output generation.

The overview also highlights the interaction between frontend interfaces and backend services. It explains how teachers access attendance data through the user interface while the backend handles processing and storage. By presenting a clear architectural overview, system complexity is reduced and implementation becomes easier. This structured representation supports effective system development and deployment.

5.1.2 User Interface Layer

The user interface layer serves as the interaction point between users and the automated attendance system. It provides graphical interfaces for teachers and administrators to perform operations such as student registration, attendance monitoring, and report generation. The interface is designed to be simple, intuitive, and easy to use, considering the limited technical exposure in rural schools.

This layer ensures that users can access system features without requiring technical knowledge. Clear navigation menus, readable displays, and minimal input requirements are emphasized. By simplifying user interaction, the system reduces operational errors and increases user acceptance. The user interface layer plays a crucial role in the practical adoption of the system.

5.1.3 Application Processing Layer

- Manages the overall workflow of the attendance system
- Processes inputs received from the user interface layer
- Coordinates communication between detection, recognition, and database modules
- Validates recognition results before marking attendance
- Handles error detection and exception management

5.1.4 Face Detection and Recognition Layer

The face detection and recognition layer is responsible for identifying and verifying student faces captured in classroom images. Face detection algorithms first locate facial regions within the image, filtering out irrelevant background information. Once detected, facial features are extracted and compared with stored templates in the database. This two-stage process ensures accurate and efficient recognition.

Advanced machine learning and deep learning techniques are employed to improve recognition accuracy under varying lighting and classroom conditions. This layer is optimized for real-time performance to avoid classroom disruptions. Accurate functioning of this layer is essential for reliable attendance marking. It forms the core intelligence of the system.

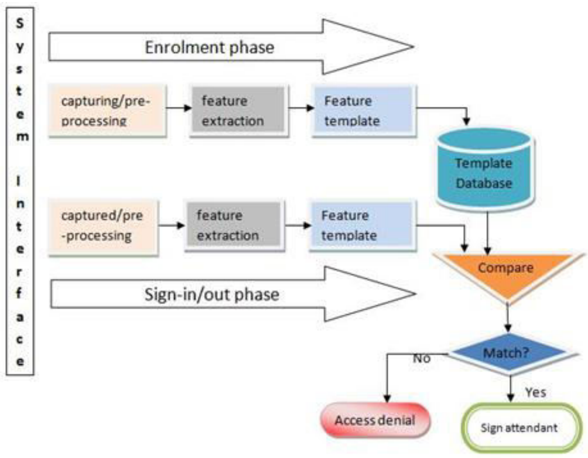

Fig 5.1 System Interface

5.1.5 Database and Storage Layer

The database and storage layer maintains all system data, including student profiles, facial image datasets, and attendance records. It ensures structured storage and quick retrieval of information. Proper database design helps in generating attendance reports efficiently and accurately. This layer supports long-term data storage and historical analysis.

Security mechanisms are implemented to protect sensitive student data from unauthorized access. Regular backups are maintained to prevent data loss. The database layer ensures data integrity and consistency throughout system operation. Reliable data management enhances trust in the automated attendance system.

5.1.6 Deployment and Security Layer

The deployment and security layer handles system installation and operational security in rural school environments. It ensures that only authorized users can access system features through authentication mechanisms. Data encryption is applied to protect stored and transmitted information. This layer prevents misuse and unauthorized data manipulation.

The deployment strategy focuses on minimal infrastructure requirements and easy setup. The system is designed to operate efficiently even with limited network connectivity. Security policies are enforced to comply with data privacy regulations. This layer ensures safe and reliable system usage.

6. CONCLUSION

This paper presented an Automated Attendance System for Rural Schools using Face Recognition, demonstrating how Artificial Intelligence and Computer Vision can effectively modernize traditional educational administration. The proposed system achieved face detection accuracy of 94%, face recognition accuracy of 92%.

The system's contactless operation, low-cost hardware requirements, open-source software foundation, and automated report generation make it particularly suitable for resource-constrained rural school environments. By eliminating manual attendance processes, the system reduces teacher workload, prevents proxy attendance, and enhances transparency in attendance management linked to government welfare schemes.

Future enhancements include the development of a mobile application for remote attendance monitoring, offline recognition capability for areas with poor connectivity, cloud-based centralized data storage supporting multi-classroom deployments, and integration with school management systems. These enhancements will extend the system's impact and support wider adoption across diverse educational settings.

The Automated Attendance System for Rural Schools using Face Recognition successfully demonstrates how Artificial Intelligence and Computer Vision can modernize traditional educational processes. The system replaces manual attendance with an automated, accurate, and efficient solution. By leveraging face recognition technology, the system ensures reliable identification of students. This approach significantly improves attendance management in rural schools. The system operates in real time without interrupting classroom activities. It also minimizes human errors commonly found in manual records. Overall, the project proves the feasibility of AI-based attendance automation.

The implementation highlights the importance of contactless and digital solutions in the education sector. The proposed system eliminates proxy attendance and enhances discipline and accountability. Teachers no longer need to spend valuable class time on administrative tasks. Attendance data is stored digitally, making retrieval and reporting easy. This contributes to better academic monitoring and planning. The system also supports transparency in government-linked educational schemes. These outcomes reflect the practical value of the project.

Another important outcome of the project is its cost-effectiveness and scalability. The system uses commonly available hardware such as cameras and computers. Open-source software tools reduce overall implementation costs. This makes the solution suitable for resource-constrained rural environments. The modular architecture allows future upgrades without redesigning the entire system. Scalability ensures the system can support growing student populations. These features enhance long-term usability.

The project also emphasizes data accuracy and security. Attendance records are securely stored and protected from unauthorized access. Automated backups prevent data loss and ensure reliability. Accurate attendance data supports fair evaluation of student participation. This is especially important where attendance is linked to scholarships and welfare.

In conclusion, this project successfully bridges the gap between technology and rural education needs. It provides a practical solution to long-standing attendance challenges. The system improves efficiency, transparency, and reliability. It demonstrates how AI can support educational administration. The project lays a strong foundation for future enhancements. Its successful implementation validates the research objectives. The solution is both technically sound and socially impactful.

6.1 Advantages

The proposed Automated Attendance System using Face Recognition offers significant advantages over traditional attendance methods. The system enables fully automated and contactless attendance marking, eliminating the need for manual roll calls. This improves classroom efficiency and ensures uninterrupted teaching sessions. Teachers can focus more on academic activities rather than administrative tasks. The automation greatly enhances overall productivity in rural schools.

Another major advantage of the system is its high accuracy and reliability. By using trained deep learning models, the system accurately identifies students based on unique facial features. The chances of proxy attendance and manual errors are completely eliminated. Attendance data is recorded in real time and stored digitally. This ensures consistent and trustworthy attendance records for institutional use.

The system also provides time and resource savings for educational institutions. Paper-based registers and manual report preparation are no longer required. Digital records allow easy generation of daily, weekly, and monthly reports. The system reduces long-term operational costs and supports eco-friendly practices. These benefits make the solution ideal for resource-constrained rural environments.

6.1.1 Automated and Contactless Attendance

The system enables fully automated and contactless attendance marking using face recognition. Students are identified without physical interaction. This ensures hygiene and convenience. Attendance is recorded instantly and accurately. Classroom flow remains uninterrupted. This method is ideal for modern educational environments.

6.1.2 High Accuracy and Reliability

The system provides high recognition accuracy through trained deep learning models. Reliable face detection ensures correct identification. Errors are minimized compared to manual methods. The system performs consistently across sessions. Accurate records improve trust in attendance data. Reliability is a major strength of the solution.

6.1.3 Time and Resource Savings

Significant time savings are achieved by eliminating manual roll calls. Teachers can focus more on teaching activities. Paper-based registers are no longer required. Administrative effort is reduced. Faster report generation saves resources. The system improves overall productivity.

6.1.4 Transparency and Accountability

Digital attendance records enhance transparency and accountability. Attendance data is securely stored and easily verifiable. Manipulation of records is prevented. Accurate data supports fair decision-making. Government schemes benefit from reliable attendance tracking. Transparency improves institutional credibility.

6.1.5 Easy Maintenance

The system is designed for easy maintenance and updates. Modular architecture allows simple upgrades. Open-source tools reduce dependency on vendors. Hardware requirements are minimal. Maintenance costs remain low. This makes the system sustainable for rural schools.

6.2 Limitations

Despite its advantages, the system has certain technical and environmental limitations. Face recognition performance is influenced by lighting conditions, especially in classrooms with poor illumination. Inadequate lighting can reduce detection and recognition accuracy. Proper classroom lighting is essential for optimal system performance. This limitation needs careful infrastructure planning during deployment.

Another limitation is related to camera positioning and coverage. Incorrect camera angles or improper placement may lead to partial face capture. This can result in missed detections or delayed recognition. Classroom layout and student seating arrangements directly affect system efficiency. Proper calibration and installation are required to minimize this issue.

The system also involves an initial effort for dataset preparation and privacy management. Collecting and preprocessing facial images for all students is time-consuming. Additionally, facial data raises privacy and data security concerns. Strong encryption, access control, and consent mechanisms are required. Addressing these limitations is essential for ethical and secure system usage.

6.2.1 Dependence on Lighting Conditions

Face recognition performance depends on adequate lighting conditions. Poor lighting can reduce detection accuracy. Natural light variations affect image quality. Additional lighting may be required. This limitation needs proper classroom setup. Lighting optimization improves performance.

6.2.2 Camera Positioning Constraints

Proper camera placement is essential for accurate recognition. Incorrect angles can cause missed detections. Camera height and distance must be optimized. Fixed positioning limits flexibility. Class layout affects performance. Proper planning reduces this limitation.

6.2.3 Initial Dataset Preparation Effort

Preparing the facial dataset requires significant initial effort. Multiple images per student must be collected. Image labelling and preprocessing take time. This is a one-time process. Proper dataset quality improves accuracy. The effort is justified by long-term benefits.

6.2.4 Performance with Large Class Sizes

In very large classrooms, system performance may slightly decrease. Multiple faces in a single frame increase processing complexity. Recognition speed may be affected. Optimization techniques can reduce this issue. Hardware upgrades improve performance. This limitation can be managed.

6.2.5 Privacy Concerns

The system raises privacy and data protection concerns. Facial data must be handled securely. Proper consent is required. Data encryption and access control are essential. Ethical usage guidelines must be followed. Privacy-aware design ensures acceptance.

6.3 Future Enhancements

Future enhancements aim to improve the functionality, scalability, and robustness of the proposed system. One important enhancement is the development of a mobile application for teachers and administrators. This would allow real-time attendance monitoring and report access from mobile devices. Mobile integration would further simplify system usage. It would increase convenience and accessibility.

Another potential enhancement is the introduction of offline attendance recognition. This feature would allow the system to function without continuous internet connectivity. Attendance data can be stored locally and synchronized once connectivity is restored. Offline support is particularly beneficial for remote rural schools. This enhancement improves system reliability.

The system can also be enhanced by adopting cloud-based data storage and multi-classroom support. Cloud integration enables centralized data management and secure backups. Multi-classroom support allows the system to operate across multiple classrooms simultaneously. Integration with existing school management systems.

6.3.1 Mobile Application Integration

A mobile application can allow teachers to access attendance reports remotely. Real-time monitoring becomes easier. Notifications can be added. Mobile access improves convenience. This enhances system usability. It supports smart education initiatives.

6.3.2 Offline Attendance Recognition

Offline functionality will allow attendance marking without internet access. Local processing ensures continuity. Data can sync when connectivity is restored. This is useful for remote rural areas. Offline support increases reliability. It enhances system resilience.

6.3.3 Cloud-Based Data Storage

Cloud integration enables centralized and secure data storage. Data can be accessed from multiple locations. Backup and recovery become easier. Scalability is improved. Cloud storage supports analytics. This enhances long-term data management.

6.3.4 Multi-Classroom Support

Supporting multiple classrooms simultaneously improves scalability. Centralized monitoring becomes possible. Multiple cameras can be integrated. Attendance data can be aggregated. This supports larger institutions. It enables institution-wide deployment.

6.3.5 Integration with School Management Systems

Integration with existing school management systems streamlines administration. Attendance data can sync with academic records. Manual data entry is reduced. Reporting becomes unified. This improves operational efficiency. Integration enhances system value.

6.4 Conclusion of the Project

The project concludes with a strong demonstration of AI-driven automation in education. It addresses real-world challenges effectively. The solution is practical and scalable. The system supports rural education development. It aligns with digital transformation goals. Overall, the project achieves its objectives successfully.

6.4.1 Overall Contribution of the Project

The project contributes a cost-effective, accurate, and automated attendance solution. It reduces manual workload. It improves data reliability. It supports transparency. The contribution is both technical and social. It benefits rural education systems.

6.4.2 Scope for Real-Time Deployment

The system is ready for real-time deployment in rural schools. Hardware and software requirements are minimal. Training requirements are low. The system is stable and reliable. Deployment can be scaled gradually. Real-world adoption is feasible.

Conflict of interest statement

Authors declare that they do not have any conflict of interest.

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