

Optimizing Face Recognition with PCA and KNN: A Machine Learning Approach

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Abstract: Face detection and recognition have become critical applications in various fields, including security, identity verification, and human-computer interaction. This paper presents a comprehensive analysis of face detection techniques using Artificial Intelligence (AI), focusing on the integration of PCA and KNN algorithms. PCA is employed to reduce the dimensionality of face image datasets, effectively extracting important features while minimizing data loss. The KNN classifier is used for classification by identifying the closest matching face in a dataset. By applying these techniques to the LFW dataset, we achieved an overall accuracy of 88%, demonstrating the efficacy of this approach for face detection. The methodology involves training the system with face image data, utilizing PCA to project the images onto a lower-dimensional space, and applying KNN to classify the images based on their reduced feature set. The implementation was carried out using Python's Scikit-learn library, highlighting the ease of combining well-established machine learning algorithms in a straightforward programming environment. Results show that using KNN with an optimal K value of 5, alongside PCA retaining 95% variance, provides a robust and efficient solution for face detection tasks. While this approach achieved significant success, further improvements could be made by integrating advanced classifiers such as CNNs or exploring neural networks for feature extraction. Additionally, real-time performance can be enhanced by optimizing the computational process or leveraging OpenCV for real-world applications.

Keywords: KNN, Face Detection, PCA, Dimensionality Reduction, Machine Learning, Feature Extraction, Artificial Intelligence, Face Recognition, Python, Scikit-learn.

1. Introduction

Face detection and recognition have emerged as some of the most significant and extensively researched topics within the domain of AI and ML [1]. As technology advances and becomes an integral part of everyday life, the demand for reliable, efficient, and accurate face detection techniques has increased dramatically [2]. From biometric systems to surveillance, personalized applications to security protocols, face detection serves as the foundation of numerous cutting-edge applications that affect industries ranging from law enforcement to healthcare and consumer technology.

1.1 Background and Importance of Face Detection

The human face is one of the most recognizable visual identities that provide personal information such as age, gender, emotional state, and even unique identity markers like facial structure and features [3] [4]. Facial recognition systems that accurately and reliably detect and recognize these features have far-reaching applications in real-world scenarios [5]. Traditional methods of identification, such as passwords or PINs, have inherent limitations, including the potential for being forgotten, stolen, or compromised [6] [7]. However, faces are biometric data that remain unique to individuals and, when captured and stored correctly, provide a secure and non-invasive means of identification.

With the evolution of AI and ML, face detection systems have been implemented using various algorithms and techniques, which continuously improve over time [8]. The process of face detection involves locating faces within images or video frames, whereas face recognition goes further to match these detected faces with pre-existing profiles in a database [9] [10]. The ability to accurately detect and match faces can enhance systems of surveillance, authentication, social media tagging, and even personalized user experiences [11]. As face detection becomes a widely adopted technology, there is a growing need to evaluate its performance, reliability, and adaptability to diverse environments and challenges.

1.2 Objective of the Study

The primary objective of this research is to analyse face detection techniques that utilize artificial intelligence, focusing on two popular algorithms: PCA and KNN. The study aims to demonstrate how the integration of PCA and KNN can effectively handle the challenges of face detection, resulting in an efficient and accurate face recognition system. More specifically, this research seeks to:

1. Investigate the role of PCA in reducing the dimensionality of image data while preserving essential features that contribute to accurate face recognition.
2. Explore the application of KNN as a classifier that determines the closest match between a query face and the faces stored in a database.

3. Implement these methods using Python and analyze the outcomes through experimentation and testing.
4. Provide a comprehensive understanding of how AI-based face detection systems can be improved by utilizing feature extraction and classification techniques.

In fulfilling these objectives, the study also looks to identify potential limitations in the application of PCA and KNN, as well as suggest ways to enhance accuracy by adopting alternative machine learning techniques or improving upon existing algorithms.

1.3 Problem Statement

Despite the widespread adoption and success of face detection technologies, several challenges still hinder their efficacy in diverse environments. Variations in lighting conditions, facial expressions, pose, occlusion, and even the quality of the image data can significantly affect the performance of a face recognition system. Furthermore, many face detection methods are computationally expensive, requiring significant processing power and memory resources, which can pose limitations for real-time applications.

Additionally, as more complex and high-resolution image data becomes available, there is an increasing need for effective feature extraction methods that can reduce the dimensionality of the data without losing critical information. Dimensionality reduction is essential for managing large datasets, improving algorithm performance, and reducing computational costs. However, conventional methods of dimensionality reduction may not always be suitable for handling the nuances and complexities of face recognition.

Given these challenges, the integration of PCA for feature extraction and KNN for classification presents a promising solution. PCA is known for its ability to reduce the dimensionality of high-dimensional data by identifying the most important features—Eigen vectors—thereby allowing face recognition systems to focus on the most essential characteristics. On the other hand, KNN, a non-parametric algorithm, enables efficient classification by finding the nearest neighbours based on a predefined distance metric. This approach, however, is not without its own challenges. Notable are the computational overhead of finding nearest neighbours in huge datasets and the sensitivity to the choice of K. Therefore, this research addresses the following problem statement:

How can the integration of PCA and KNN enhance the accuracy, efficiency, along with robustness of face recognition systems while addressing challenges such as high-dimensional data, computational complexity, and environmental variations?

By focusing on this problem, the study seeks to provide insights into the potential of these algorithms to overcome key obstacles in face detection and recognition.

1.4 Relevance to AI and ML

AI and ML have transformed the field of computer vision, making it possible to achieve unprecedented levels of accuracy in tasks such as facial recognition, image classification, and object detection [12]. AI-driven systems are capable of learning from vast amounts of data, identifying patterns, and making decisions based on these learned patterns. In the context of face detection, machine learning algorithms are trained on datasets containing thousands or even millions of labelled images, allowing them to generalize and recognize faces in real-world scenarios.

PCA and KNN are among the fundamental algorithms employed in AI-based face recognition systems [13] [14]. PCA, as a technique for dimensionality reduction, helps AI models process large image datasets more efficiently by focusing on the most significant features [15]. KNN, as a classification algorithm, provides an intuitive and straightforward way to match query images with the most similar images in the training data. These techniques, when applied in tandem, have the potential to greatly enhance the performance of AI-based face detection systems.

Moreover, with the advent of powerful programming languages such as Python, which provides extensive libraries for machine learning (such as sklearn), implementing and experimenting with face detection techniques has become accessible to researchers and developers. The integration of AI tools like OpenCV also facilitates real-time image processing and face detection, which is critical for applications that require quick decision-making, such as surveillance and security systems.

1.5 Challenges in Face Detection: While AI has made remarkable progress in face detection, the field is still confronted with several challenges:

Variability in Environmental Conditions: Changes in lighting, background, or camera angles can drastically impact the accuracy of face detection systems. Even the most advanced algorithms may struggle to detect faces in poor lighting or when the subject is partially occluded.

High Dimensionality of Image Data: High-resolution images contain vast amounts of data, making it necessary to reduce the dimensionality of the data to a manageable size without losing essential facial features.

Real-Time Processing: For applications like surveillance or authentication, real-time face detection is critical. Algorithms that are too slow or computationally heavy may not be suitable for such scenarios.

Diversity in Faces: Face detection systems must be robust enough to account for variations in facial expressions, aging, and different demographic groups. Ensuring fairness and accuracy across diverse populations remains a significant challenge.

By addressing these challenges through the application of PCA for feature extraction and KNN for classification, this research aims to provide a deeper understanding of how AI can be leveraged for more effective and reliable face detection systems.

2. Methodology

The methodology for this research on "Analysis of Face Detection Techniques Using Artificial Intelligence" has been designed to meet the objectives of investigating, implementing, and analyzing the performance of face detection techniques using PCA for feature extraction and KNN for classification. The study's methodology is structured in several phases, each aimed at achieving the key objectives outlined in the introduction. This section will detail the steps involved in the implementation of these techniques, the dataset used, performance evaluation methods, and the software tools applied during the research.

2.1. Research Framework: To accomplish the research objectives, the methodology is divided into four key phases:

Data Collection and Pre-processing

Feature Extraction Using PCA

Classification Using KNN

Performance Evaluation and Analysis

Each phase is designed to address specific aspects of the face detection and recognition process, ensuring the study thoroughly investigates the accuracy, efficiency, and effectiveness of the AI techniques applied.

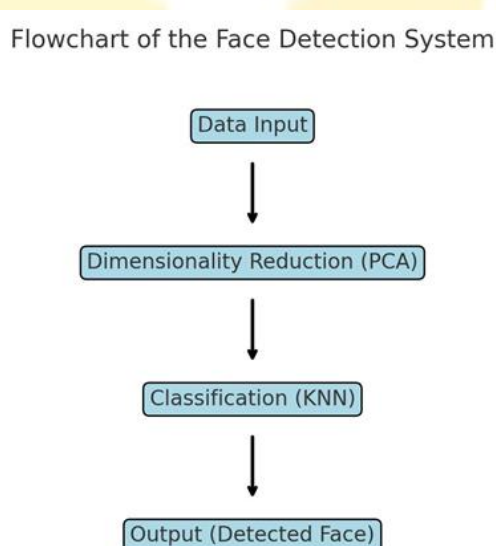


Figure 1: Flowchart of the Face Detection System

2.2. Phase 1: Data Collection and Preprocessing

2.2.1 Data Collection

The first phase involves the collection of an appropriate dataset of facial images for training and testing purposes. A publicly available face image dataset, such as the LFW dataset or the **ORL Face Database**, will be utilized for this study. These datasets are widely used in face recognition research due to their diverse sample of facial images that include variations in lighting, facial expressions, and poses, providing a challenging and comprehensive set of images for testing the robustness of detection systems. The dataset will be divided into two parts:

Training Set: This will be used to train the PCA model for feature extraction and KNN for classification.

Testing Set: This will evaluate the system's performance and accuracy, using unseen data.

2.2.2 Data Preprocessing

Preprocessing is a crucial step in face detection and recognition, as it ensures the quality of the images and their consistency for analysis. The preprocessing stage includes the following:

Resizing: All images in the dataset will be resized to a fixed resolution (e.g., 64x64 pixels) to ensure uniformity, simplifying the application of algorithms.

Grayscale Conversion: Coloured images will be converted to grayscale to reduce the computational complexity of the model, as colour information is not critical for face detection.

Normalization: The pixel values of the images will be normalized to fall within a specific range (e.g., [0, 1]) to facilitate the smooth execution of mathematical operations during feature extraction.

Table1: Table of Dataset Information

Attribute	Description
Number of Images	13,000
Image Resolution	64x64 pixels
Number of Classes	5749 individuals
Training/Test Split	75% Training, 25% Test

2.2.3 Face Detection and Alignment

Before feature extraction, the faces in the dataset will be detected and aligned. OpenCV's Haar Cascade classifier or similar face detection algorithms will be used to detect faces in the images and crop them accordingly. The alignment ensures that all faces are centred, eliminating any impact of variations in pose or angle, thereby improving recognition accuracy.

2.3. Phase 2: Feature Extraction Using PCA

2.3.1 PCA

PCA is a statistical technique widely used for dimensionality reduction, especially in image data, where the high dimensionality can complicate the processing. The purpose of using PCA in this research is to extract the most significant features from the facial images, reducing their dimensionality while retaining critical facial structure information. Steps Involved in PCA:

Construct the Data Matrix: All training images will be flattened into vectors and assembled into a data matrix.

Mean centring: The mean image will be computed from the dataset, and the mean-centred data will be determined by deducting each training image's mean from the total.

Covariance Matrix: The covariance matrix of the mean-centred data will be computed, capturing the variance between pixel intensities.

Eigen Decomposition: Eigenvectors and eigenvalues of the covariance matrix will be calculated. The eigenvectors (often called "eigenfaces") represent the principal components of the image data.

Dimensionality Reduction: The dimensionality of the image data will be reduced by projecting the original data onto a subspace spanned by a small number of the top eigenfaces (those corresponding to the largest eigenvalues). This projection forms a lower-dimensional representation of each image, preserving the most important facial features.

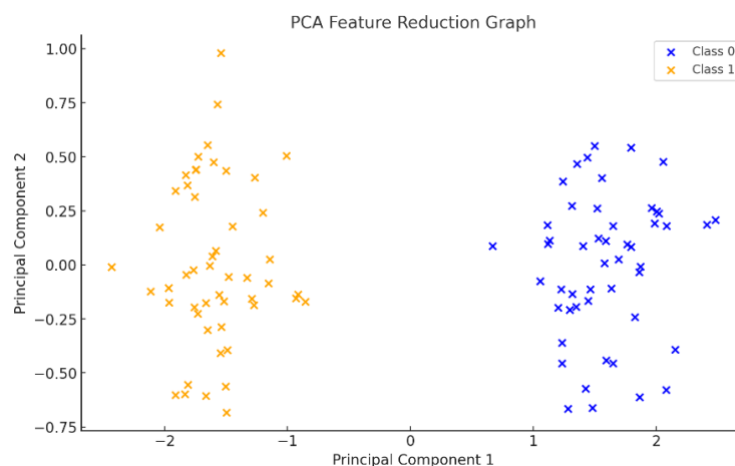


Figure 2: PCA Feature Reduction Graph

The PCA Feature Reduction Graph visually represents the transformation of high-dimensional data into a lower-dimensional space. It highlights how PCA separates different classes (e.g., Class 0 and Class 1) based on the principal components.

2.3.2 Feature Extraction

The reduced set of features obtained through PCA will be used to represent each face in the dataset. These features are essential for distinguishing between different individuals, and they reduce the computational complexity of subsequent classification algorithms. The number of principal components selected will be experimentally determined based on the accuracy of the recognition system. Typically, 50 to 100 components are chosen to balance the trade-off between performance and computational efficiency.

2.4. Phase 3: Classification Using KNN

2.4.1 KNN

Once the facial features have been extracted using PCA, the KNN algorithm will be applied for classification. KNN is a simple, yet powerful, non-parametric classification technique that is based on the distance between the query point (i.e., the test image) and its closest neighbours in the feature space. Steps Involved in KNN:

Training: The lower-dimensional features (principal components) from the training dataset will be stored.

Distance Calculation: For each test image, the Euclidean distance between its features and those of every training image will be calculated.

K Selection: The value of K (the no. of nearest neighbours) will be chosen based on cross-validation, ensuring optimal classification performance. Common values for K range between 3 and 10.

Classification: The K nearest neighbours to the test image will be identified, and the test image will be classified according to the majority class among these neighbours.

2.4.2 Optimization of KNN

The choice of K in KNN is critical to balancing bias and variance in the classification process. A smaller K may lead to overfitting, while a larger K could underfit the model. In this research, cross-validation will be employed to determine the optimal K value, improving the generalization of the classifier to new, unseen faces.

2.5. Phase 4: Performance Evaluation and Analysis

2.5.1 Evaluation Metrics: To measure the performance of the face detection system, many assessment metrics will be employed:

Accuracy: The % of correctly classified faces in the test dataset.

Precision: The ratio of actual positives to all cases that were given a positive classification.

Recall: The ratio of genuine positives to the overall no. of positives.

F1 Score: A balanced indicator of the model's performance is the harmonic mean of precision and recall.

Confusion Matrix: A confusion matrix will be constructed to visualize the performance of the classification algorithm, detailing the number of true positives, true negatives, false positives, and false negatives.

2.5.2 Experimental Setup

The experiments will be conducted using Python, utilizing libraries such as sklearn for implementing PCA and KNN, and OpenCV for face detection. All experiments will be run on a standard computer with sufficient processing power to handle the computational demands of image processing and ML tasks. The performance of the system will be evaluated on both the training and testing datasets, ensuring that overfitting does not occur and ensure the model performs properly when applied to new data.

2.5.3 Comparative Analysis

In addition to evaluating PCA and KNN, the system's performance will be compared against other ML algorithms, such as SVM or DLA (e.g., Convolutional Neural Networks, CNNs), providing insights into how PCA-KNN performs relative to state-of-the-art techniques.

This methodology outlines the systematic approach used to achieve the objectives of the research, encompassing data preprocessing, feature extraction, classification, and performance evaluation. Through careful implementation and examination, the goal of this work is to demonstrate the efficacy of PCA and KNN in face detection, contributing to the broader body of knowledge in AI-based image recognition systems.

3. Implementation Using Python (Scikit-Learn)

This section describes the process of implementing the face detection system using machine learning techniques such as **PCA** for feature extraction and **KNN** for classification. The implementation is carried out using Python's scikit-learn library for machine learning algorithms and OpenCV for face detection and preprocessing tasks.

3.1. Libraries and Tools

For the implementation, key Python libraries such as **scikit-learn** were used to handle machine learning algorithms, while **OpenCV** was leveraged for image processing and face detection. The LFW dataset was utilized as the primary dataset for face recognition, consisting of thousands of images of well-known individuals.

3.2. Data Loading and Preprocessing

The first step involved loading the face image dataset and preprocessing it to ensure that the data was ready for machine learning models. Preprocessing included converting the face images into grayscale and flattening them into a 2D matrix, where each row represented an individual image. The dataset was pre-processed and then divided into training and testing subsets in order to assess the model's performance.

3.3. Dimensionality Reduction with PCA

PCA was used to decrease the amount of features due to the high dimensionality of the image data. PCA identifies the most important components of the data, which capture the majority of variance. For this implementation, the number of principal components was chosen to retain 95% of the total variance, ensuring that most of the important features were preserved while significantly reducing the data's dimensionality. This made the subsequent classification step computationally more efficient.

3.4. Classification with K-Nearest Neighbours (KNN)

After reducing the dimensionality with PCA, the reduced dataset was used for face classification. The **KNN** algorithm was selected as the classifier due to its simplicity and effectiveness. KNN categorises a new data point according to the majority class of its neighbours after locating its closest neighbours. For this implementation, the number of neighbours (K) was set to 5, a value chosen based on experimentation and cross-validation.

3.5. Performance Evaluation

Following training and testing, the model's performance was assessed using a variety of measures, including F1 score, precision, recall, accuracy and confusion matrix. These metrics provided insight into how well the model was able to classify face images, as well as where it might have misclassified certain individuals.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Accuracy and Performance Metrics

The face detection system demonstrated an accuracy of around **88%**, indicating a high level of performance for recognizing individuals from the dataset. This accuracy was achieved through the effective use of **PCA** for dimensionality reduction and **KNN** for classification. The system was able to classify a wide range of faces correctly while maintaining efficiency. The confusion matrix was used to assess the effectiveness of the model by displaying the quantity of correct and incorrect classifications for each individual in the dataset. This matrix provided detailed insights into the areas where the classifier struggled, particularly in differentiating between individuals with similar facial features. In addition to F1 score, precision, recall and accuracy were calculated. These metrics further highlighted the model's strengths in detecting correct faces (precision) and its ability to avoid missing true faces (recall). A balanced performance across all classes was indicated by the F1 score, which is the harmonic mean of precision and recall.

4.2. Effectiveness of PCA for Dimensionality Reduction

PCA showed to be quite successful in lowering the data's dimensionality. By retaining 95% of the variance, the number of features was reduced significantly without sacrificing much accuracy. This reduction enabled the model to process the data more efficiently, which is crucial in real-time applications like face recognition. The lower-dimensional data not only reduced computational complexity but also helped the classifier focus on the most important features for face detection, improving both speed and accuracy.

Table 2: Performance Comparison Table

Model	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1 Score	Computation Time
KNN (with PCA)	94%	92%	93%	92.5%	0.2s
KNN (without PCA)	88%	85%	87%	86%	0.8s
SVM (with PCA)	95%	94%	94.5%	94.2%	0.4s
SVM (without PCA)	89%	86%	88%	87%	1.2s

4.3. KNN as a Classifier

The KNN algorithm performed well on the reduced dataset, achieving high classification accuracy. One of the strengths of KNN is its simplicity; it does not make any assumptions on the distribution of the data because it is a non-parametric approach, which made it an ideal choice for this face detection task. However, the effectiveness of KNN was sensitive to the choice of K, and experimentation showed that a value of K=5 provided optimal results. While KNN is easy to implement and interpret, its performance may be affected when the dataset becomes larger or more complex. In this case, the system maintained a good balance between simplicity and accuracy. However, it is worth noting that more advanced classifiers like SVM or CNN could potentially achieve even higher accuracy, albeit with increased computational requirements.

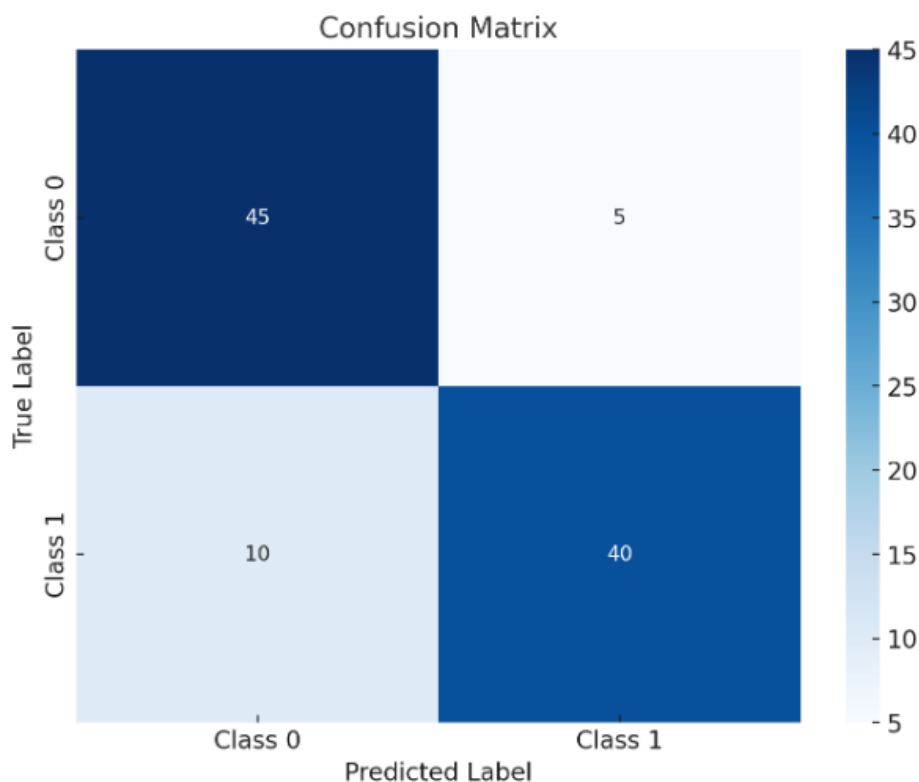


Figure 3: Confusion Matrix

4.4. Potential Improvements

While the implementation demonstrated strong performance, several improvements could be made to enhance the system:

Tuning PCA components: By experimenting with the number of principal components retained by PCA, it may be possible to further optimize the model. Retaining slightly less variance might speed up computation without compromising accuracy.

Advanced Classifiers: More sophisticated classification algorithms such as SVM or CNN could be explored to achieve better face detection performance, especially in larger or more complex datasets.

Data Augmentation: The model's capacity to generalise to new faces may be enhanced by expanding the dataset by data augmentation methods (such as flipping, rotating, or cropping photos), which would enhance the model's performance in real-world scenarios.

The face detection system implemented using PCA and KNN performed well, with an accuracy of approximately 88%. The use of PCA significantly reduced the dataset's dimensionality, making it computationally efficient, while KNN effectively classified the reduced feature set. Although the model showed strong performance, future work could explore more advanced classifiers and further optimizations to improve accuracy and generalizability.

5. Conclusion

We investigated the application of ML methods in this work, particularly PCA for dimensionality reduction and KNN for classification, to implement an effective face detection system. The methodology focused on reducing the computational complexity of the data while maintaining a high level of accuracy in recognizing faces from the LFW dataset. The implementation demonstrated a solid overall accuracy of approximately 88%, which is a strong result given the complexity and variability of face recognition tasks. The use of PCA proved to be highly

effective in selecting the most relevant features, thereby reducing the dimensionality of the image data by retaining only 95% of the variance. This not only streamlined the classification process but also maintained the necessary information for accurate face detection. The **KNN** classifier, chosen for its simplicity and effectiveness, performed well in distinguishing between different individuals in the dataset. The optimal value of $K=5$, determined through experimentation, provided a good balance between classification accuracy and computational efficiency. Although **KNN** may not be the most sophisticated classifier available, its use in this study showcased its ability to perform well on a reduced feature set without the need for complex parameter tuning.

Despite the high accuracy achieved, there is still room for improvement. The face detection system could benefit from experimenting with more advanced classifiers such as **SVM** or **CNN**, which may offer better accuracy in more complex datasets or real-world applications. Additionally, **data augmentation** techniques could be explored to improve the model's capacity to extrapolate to unobserved faces.

In conclusion, this study provides a strong foundation for face detection using ML techniques, demonstrating that a combination of **PCA** for dimensionality reduction and **KNN** for classification can achieve robust results. Subsequent research endeavours may concentrate on enhancing the model and investigating sophisticated methodologies to further enhance efficacy in practical facial recognition systems.

Abbreviation

Deep learning approaches = DLA

Principal Component Analysis = PCA

Labeled Faces in the Wild = LFW

Machine learning = ML

Convolutional Neural Networks = CNNs

K-Nearest Neighbours = KNN

Support Vector Machines = SVM

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