B.Sc. in Computer Science and Engineering Thesis

A Quantitative Analysis of Severity Grading of Knee Osteoarthritis

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June 2024

CANDIDATES’ DECLARATION

This is to certify that the work presented in this thesis, titled, “A Quantitative Analysis of Severity Grading of Knee Osteoarthritis”, is the outcome of the investigation and research carried out by us under the supervision of Dr. Mahmuda Naznin.

It is also declared that neither this thesis nor any part thereof has been submitted anywhere else for the award of any degree, diploma or other qualifications.

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CERTIFICATION

This thesis titled, **"A Quantitative Analysis of Severity Grading of Knee Osteoarthritis"**, submitted by the group as mentioned below has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree B.Sc. in Computer Science and Engineering in June 2024.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We sincerely thank our supervisor Dr. Mahmuda Naznin for her outstanding mentorship we have had the privilege to enjoy for the last year. Whatever words we write here will be a mere understatement of our debt to her.

We also acknowledge the invaluable guidance and help of our research collaborator Dr. Tanvir R. Faisal of 4MLab (https://www.4mlab.net/). His insights and support have been instrumental to our work.

Additionally, we are grateful for the support of RISE (Research and Innovation Centre for Science and Engineering), BUET research grant, which have facilitated our research endeavors.

Dhaka
June 2024

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ABSTRACT

Motivation: Knee osteoarthritis (OA) remains a prevalent and debilitating condition, often assessed through qualitative methods such as the Kellgren-Lawrence (KL) grading system. These traditional approaches, while widely used, are limited by their inherent subjectivity and lack of precision. To address these limitations, we developed a novel quantitative methodology to accurately measure the knee joint space between the tibia and femur bones using advanced image processing techniques.

Results: Leveraging state-of-the-art edge detection algorithms, specifically Sobel and FastSAM, our approach delineates bone edges with high accuracy from frontal X-ray images. We further refined these measurements using simulated annealing and local smoothing techniques to ensure meticulous accuracy in detecting the knee joint space. Our method is both time-efficient and memory-efficient, requiring minimal computational resources and bypassing the need for extensive machine learning training.

Through rigorous experiments on simulated and empirical data, our quantitative analysis demonstrated significant improvements over existing qualitative assessments. This method provides clinicians with a reliable tool for making informed, data-driven treatment decisions tailored to individual patient needs. The implications of our research are profound, enhancing the accuracy and objectivity of knee OA diagnosis and management, ultimately contributing to improved patient outcomes in orthopedics.

In summary, our research offers a transformative approach to knee OA assessment by combining cutting-edge image processing with advanced optimization techniques. This novel methodology sets a new standard for precision in the evaluation of musculoskeletal disorders, paving the way for more accurate and efficient diagnosis and treatment in clinical settings.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Knee osteoarthritis (OA) is a significant global health concern, affecting millions and posing substantial challenges for both diagnosis and management. This degenerative joint disease primarily impacts the knee, causing pain, stiffness, and reduced mobility, which significantly impair the quality of life. The prevalence of knee OA has been steadily increasing due to factors such as aging populations, rising obesity rates, and sedentary lifestyles. Given its widespread impact, there is an urgent need for effective diagnostic tools and treatment strategies to manage this condition better.

Traditionally, knee OA has been assessed using qualitative methods such as the Kellgren-Lawrence (KL) [1] grading system. Introduced in 1957, the KL grading system remains a widely used tool for classifying the severity of knee OA based on radiographic images. It categorizes knee OA into five grades based on specific radiographic features such as joint space narrowing, osteophyte formation, subchondral sclerosis, and bone deformity:

- **Grade 0**: No radiographic features of OA are present.
- **Grade 1**: Doubtful narrowing of the joint space and possible osteophytic lipping.
- **Grade 2**: Definite osteophytes and possible narrowing of the joint space.
- **Grade 3**: Moderate multiple osteophytes, definite narrowing of joint space, some sclerosis, and possible deformity of bone contour.
- **Grade 4**: Large osteophytes, marked narrowing of joint space, severe sclerosis, and definite deformity of bone contour.

While the KL grading system provides a standardized framework for assessing knee OA, it relies heavily on the subjective visual interpretation of radiographic images by clinicians. By developing quantitative methods that provide accurate and reproducible measurements of key radiographic features, we can enhance the assessment and management of knee OA, leading to more consistent and effective treatment strategies.

In recent years, advancements in medical imaging and computational techniques have opened new avenues for improving the diagnosis and management of knee OA. Specifically, the measurement of the knee joint space—the gap between the tibia and femur bones—has emerged as a critical parameter in evaluating the severity of OA. Accurate measurement of this space can provide valuable insights into the progression of the disease and inform treatment decisions. However, existing methods for measuring the knee joint space are often limited by the quality of X-ray images and the inherent challenges of accurately detecting bone edges.

To address these limitations, our research introduces a novel quantitative methodology for accurately measuring the knee joint space using advanced image processing techniques. By leveraging state-of-the-art edge detection algorithms, optimization methods, and local smoothing techniques, we aim to provide a reliable and efficient tool for knee OA assessment. Our approach is designed to overcome the challenges associated with low-quality X-ray images and the limitations of existing detection methods, offering a practical solution that can be readily adopted in clinical practice.

In this chapter, we will delve into the motivation behind our research, the challenges we encountered, the methodology we developed, and the potential implications of our work for clinical practice. We aim to demonstrate how our innovative approach can transform the diagnosis and management of knee OA, ultimately contributing to improved patient outcomes and more efficient healthcare delivery.

1.1 Motivation

Knee osteoarthritis (OA) is a pervasive health issue, with an estimated 654.1 million individuals (aged 40 years and older) affected globally in 2020. The prevalence of knee OA stands at 16.0% (95% CI, 14.3%-17.8%), with an incidence rate of 203 per 10,000 person-years (95% CI, 106–331). This degenerative joint disease significantly impacts individuals' quality of life, causing pain, stiffness, and reduced mobility. Given its increasing prevalence due to aging populations, rising obesity rates, and sedentary lifestyles, there is an urgent need for effective diagnostic tools and treatment strategies to manage knee OA better.

Current diagnostic methods for knee OA, such as the Kellgren-Lawrence (KL) grading system, are primarily qualitative and rely on subjective visual interpretation of radiographic images. This reliance introduces several challenges:

- **Variability in Diagnosis**: Different clinicians may interpret the same radiographic features differently, leading to variability in the assigned KL grades. This inter-observer variability can result in inconsistent diagnoses, affecting the reliability of the grading system.

- **Potential Inaccuracies**: The subjective nature of visual interpretation can lead to inaccuracies, especially in cases where radiographic features are subtle or borderline between two grades. Consequently, the assigned grade may not accurately reflect the true severity of the condition.
- **Inconsistent Treatment Plans**: Variability and potential inaccuracies in diagnosis can lead to inconsistent treatment plans. Patients with similar radiographic features may receive different treatments based on subjective interpretations, potentially impacting clinical outcomes.
- **Lack of Precision**: The qualitative KL grading system limits its precision, providing a broad categorization of knee OA severity but lacking the granularity needed for detailed assessment and monitoring of disease progression.

To address these challenges, our research proposes a novel quantitative methodology for assessing knee OA. Our approach leverages advanced image processing techniques, including state-of-the-art edge detection algorithms, optimization methods, and local smoothing techniques, to provide accurate and reproducible measurements of the knee joint space. This methodology aims to overcome the limitations of low-quality X-ray images and the subjective nature of existing detection methods, offering a reliable and efficient tool for knee OA assessment.

Our method is designed to be efficient, requiring minimal processing time and computational resources, making it practical for routine use in clinical settings. By providing objective, quantitative measurements, our approach can enhance the consistency and accuracy of knee OA diagnosis, leading to more effective treatment strategies and improved patient outcomes.

In summary, the motivation behind our research is to develop a precise, objective, and efficient diagnostic tool for knee OA that addresses the limitations of current qualitative methods. By leveraging advanced computational techniques, we aim to transform the assessment and management of knee OA, ultimately contributing to better patient care and healthcare delivery.

1.2 Challenges

Measuring the knee joint space accurately presents several challenges, particularly with existing methodologies. The key challenges are:

1. **Lack of Labeled Data**: One of the primary challenges is the absence of labeled data, which makes it difficult to measure accuracy in the conventional sense. Without ground

truth labels, validating the effectiveness of edge detection and gap measurement techniques becomes challenging. This limitation necessitates the development of innovative approaches to evaluate and improve accuracy.

2. **Low-Quality X-ray Images**: The quality of X-ray images often poses a significant challenge. Low-resolution images and poor contrast between different anatomical structures can lead to difficulties in processing the images accurately. Dark zones within the bone, which have similar contrast to the knee gap, create hollow spaces in the X-ray, complicating the detection of the knee gap.

3. **Inaccurate Detection with FastSAM**: FastSAM, used for bone detection, was not specifically trained on X-ray images but on a broad array of objects. Consequently, it lacked the precision needed for accurate detection of both bones in X-rays. The algorithm also smoothed out critical nooks and crannies, which are essential for precise measurements, further complicating the task.

4. **Reliance on Opinion-Based KL Grading**: The KL graded data are based on subjective opinions, introducing variability and potential bias. Our measurements rely on these gradings to average the gaps for each grade, indirectly depending on the subjective opinions of doctors, which can affect the reliability of our data. This reliance on qualitative assessments highlights the need for more objective and consistent measurement techniques.

5. **RGB Object Detection Limitations**: Despite applying RGB object detection, variations in light contrast led to challenges in accurately detecting the knee gaps. The method struggled to differentiate between the actual knee gap and other regions with similar contrast levels, underscoring the need for more robust detection methods tailored to the specific challenges of medical imaging.

1.3 Contribution

Our methodology introduces a comprehensive approach to address the challenges associated with accurately measuring the knee joint space, a critical parameter in assessing knee osteoarthritis (OA). The key components of our approach are as follows:

- **Image Preprocessing**: We enhance the input RGB images by applying Gaussian blur and adaptive thresholding to each channel. This step reduces noise and improves edge contrast, facilitating more accurate edge detection.

- **Edge Detection**: We utilize advanced edge detection algorithms, specifically Sobel and FastSAM, to detect the edges of the tibia and femur bones. Sobel highlights intensity gradients, while FastSAM assists in object detection. This combination improves the overall accuracy of edge detection despite the limitations of X-rays.

- **Simulated Annealing**: We apply simulated annealing to refine the detected edges, ensuring meticulous accuracy. This optimization technique explores various configurations to find the optimal solution for edge detection, crucial for challenging images with poor contrast.

- **Local Smoothing**: We use local smoothing techniques to further improve the precision of joint space measurements. This involves applying a moving average filter to smooth out irregularities in the detected edges, enhancing accuracy and reliability.

- **Objective and Quantitative Assessment**: Our approach provides objective, reproducible, and quantitative measurements of the knee joint space, overcoming the limitations of subjective visual interpretations and enhancing the reliability of knee OA assessments.

By addressing these challenges and leveraging advanced image processing techniques, our methodology offers a practical and efficient solution for knee OA assessment. This approach has the potential to transform the diagnosis and management of knee OA, leading to more consistent and effective treatment strategies, ultimately improving patient outcomes.

1.4 Organization of Thesis

This thesis is organized as follows:

- Chapter 2 describes the related works in this research field and mentions the limitations that they have.

- Chapter 3 states the issues that the current approach has and explains our proposed method to address them.

- Chapter 4 demonstrates the results that we achieved with our proposed method and analyses the performance.

- Chapter 5 states the decisions that are made by analysing our results and performance. It also articulates our contribution and the limitations that our approach has and how we can improve it in the future.

Chapter 2

Background Study

Knee osteoarthritis (OA) is a significant global health concern, affecting millions of individuals and posing substantial challenges for both diagnosis and management. With the increasing prevalence of knee OA, there is an urgent need for effective diagnostic tools and treatment strategies. This chapter reviews various methodologies employed in the automated diagnosis and assessment of knee OA, categorizing them based on their objectives and approaches. The primary focus is on the methodologies, their performance, and the limitations of each approach.

2.1 Automatic Grading of Knee Osteoarthritis

2.1.1 Automatic Grading of Knee Osteoarthritis Using Convolutional Neural Networks

Methodology: Kondal et al. [2] developed a two-stage model aimed at automatically grading knee radiographs on the Kellgren-Lawrence (KL) scale using convolutional neural networks (CNNs). The first stage involves an object detection model that segments individual knees from the radiograph. In the second stage, a regression model grades each knee separately on the KL scale. The researchers utilized the Osteoarthritis Initiative (OAI) dataset for initial training and a private dataset from an Indian hospital for fine-tuning.

- **Two-Stage Model:** The object detection model segments individual knees, followed by a regression model for grading.
- **Datasets:** OAI dataset for initial training, private hospital dataset for fine-tuning.
- **Training:** Joint optimization using a weighted ratio of categorical cross-entropy for classification and mean-squared error for regression.

- **Results:** Significant improvement in mean absolute error from 1.09 to 0.28 post fine-tuning.

Limitations:

- **Dataset Dependency:** Performance drops without fine-tuning on target datasets, indicating a lack of generalizability.
- **Subjectivity in Grading:** The reliance on KL grading, which is subjective, may affect the consistency of the training data.

2.1.2 Quantifying Radiographic Knee Osteoarthritis Severity Using Deep Convolutional Neural Networks

Methodology: Antony et al. [3] proposed a fully convolutional network (FCN) for the automatic localization of knee joints, followed by a CNN for multi-class classification and regression to quantify knee OA severity. The FCN localizes the joints, and the CNN is trained to predict the severity of OA.

- **Fully Convolutional Network (FCN):** Used for automatic localization of knee joints.
- **Convolutional Neural Network (CNN):** Used for classification and regression of OA severity.
- **Joint Training:** Optimization of categorical cross-entropy and mean-squared error.
- **Datasets:** OAI and MOST datasets for training and validation.
- **Results:** Improved quantification accuracy, outperforming previous methods such as WND-CHARM.

Limitations:

- **Computational Cost:** High computational resources required for training and joint optimization.
- **Dataset Bias:** Performance heavily depends on the quality and size of the training datasets, with potential overfitting to specific data characteristics.

2.1.3 Automatic Knee Osteoarthritis Diagnosis Using Deep Learning

Methodology: Tiulpin et al. [4] utilized a deep Siamese convolutional neural network to classify knee radiographs into KL grades. The network incorporates an attention mechanism to highlight radiological features influencing the network's decisions.

- **Siamese Network:** Classifies knee radiographs into KL grades.
- **Attention Mechanism:** Provides interpretability by highlighting relevant radiological features.
- **Datasets:** OAI dataset for training and validation.
- **Results:** High accuracy in classifying KL grades, with attention maps offering interpretable insights.

Limitations:

- **Model Interpretability:** Despite attention maps, the deep learning model remains somewhat of a "black box."
- **Generalization Issues:** Difficulty in generalizing across different datasets and imaging conditions.

2.1.4 Decision Support Tool for Early Detection of Knee Osteoarthritis Using X-ray Imaging and Machine Learning (Brahim et al.)

Methodology: Brahim et al. [5] developed a decision support tool for the early detection of knee OA using a combination of image preprocessing and machine learning models.

- **Feature Extraction:** Uses circular Fourier filter and multivariate linear regression.
- **Machine Learning Models:** Naive Bayes and random forest classifiers for prediction.
- **Datasets:** OAI dataset for training and validation.
- **Results:** Effective feature extraction and machine learning models in early OA detection.

Limitations:

- **Manual Feature Engineering:** Requires significant domain knowledge and may not capture all relevant information.
- **Performance Consistency:** Inconsistencies in feature extraction and model performance across different datasets.

2.1.5 Deep Learning-Based Approach for Automatic Localization of Joint Area on Knee Plain Radiographs (Tiulpin et al.)

Methodology: Heidar et al. [6] presented a deep learning-based method for automatically localizing joint areas on knee radiographs. The approach combines localization with subsequent diagnostic models.

- **Localization Network:** Automatically identifies and localizes the knee joint area.
- **Combination with Diagnostic Models:** Enhances OA detection accuracy.
- **Datasets:** OAI dataset for training and validation.
- **Results:** Improved joint area localization accuracy, contributing to better diagnostic performance.

Limitations:

- **Localization Accuracy:** Critical for subsequent diagnostic steps, with potential errors propagating through the pipeline.
- **Model Complexity:** Involves multiple stages of processing, adding to the overall complexity and computational requirements.

The reviewed methodologies illustrate the diverse approaches to automated knee OA diagnosis and assessment. While deep learning models offer powerful tools for analysis, their dependency on large, high-quality datasets and significant computational resources are notable limitations. The reliance on subjective KL grading introduces variability and potential bias in the training data, highlighting the need for more objective and consistent measurement techniques. Manual feature engineering approaches, although valuable, may not fully capture the complexity of the data and require substantial domain expertise.

Future research should aim to develop more generalized models capable of adapting to diverse populations and imaging conditions. Improving computational efficiency and enhancing the interpretability of deep learning models will be crucial for their practical application in clinical settings. Integrating robust, quantitative methods with existing qualitative assessments can lead to more accurate, reliable, and consistent diagnostic tools for knee OA, ultimately improving patient outcomes and healthcare efficiency.

Chapter 3

Proposed Methodology

3.1 Problem Domain

Knee osteoarthritis (OA) is a degenerative joint disease that affects the cartilage and bones within the knee joint, leading to pain, stiffness, and decreased mobility. It is one of the most common causes of disability in adults, significantly impacting the quality of life of millions of individuals worldwide. The prevalence of knee OA has been increasing due to factors such as aging populations, obesity, and sedentary lifestyles. The disease causes the knee joint space to shrink, leads to the growth of osteophytes (bone spurs), and results in very distorted knees. The traditional method for assessing knee OA is the Kellgren-Lawrence (KL) grading system. Knee OA is typically detected through X-rays, but X-rays do not store a lot of information, making it very difficult to determine the severity and details of the condition accurately.

3.1.1 Limitations of KL Grading

While the KL grading system is widely used, it has several limitations:

1. **Subjectivity**: The system relies heavily on the visual interpretation of radiographic images by clinicians, leading to inter-observer variability and potential inconsistencies in diagnosis.

2. **Qualitative Nature**: The KL grading system provides a broad categorization of knee OA severity but lacks the granularity needed for detailed assessment and precise monitoring of disease progression.

3. **Diagnostic Variability**: Different clinicians may interpret the same radiographic features differently, resulting in variability in the assigned KL grades and affecting the reliability of the grading system.

3.1.2 Need for Quantitative Methods

Given these limitations, there is a pressing need for objective, quantitative methods that can provide consistent and precise measurements of knee OA severity from radiographic images. Quantitative assessment methods can reduce the subjectivity associated with visual interpretation and offer a more reliable means of diagnosing and monitoring knee OA. This can lead to more consistent treatment plans, better patient outcomes, and improved management of the disease.

3.1.3 Advancements in Imaging and Computational Techniques

Recent advancements in medical imaging and computational techniques offer the potential to address the challenges associated with traditional assessment methods. By developing quantitative methods that utilize advanced image processing algorithms and machine learning techniques, we can achieve accurate and reproducible measurements of key radiographic features. Specifically, measuring the knee joint space—the gap between the tibia and femur bones—has emerged as a critical parameter in evaluating the severity of OA.

Accurate measurement of the knee joint space can provide valuable insights into the progression of the disease and inform treatment decisions. However, existing methods for measuring the knee joint space often face challenges related to image quality and the accurate detection of bone edges. Therefore, there is a need to develop robust methodologies that can overcome these challenges and provide reliable assessments of knee OA severity.

In this study, we propose a novel quantitative methodology for accurately measuring the knee joint space using advanced image processing techniques. Our approach aims to provide a reliable and efficient tool for knee OA assessment, addressing the limitations of traditional qualitative methods and offering a practical solution that can be readily adopted in clinical practice.

3.2 Dataset

Our study utilizes two primary datasets: one obtained from a publicly available source and another generated through our image processing pipeline.

3.2.1 Publicly Available Dataset

The primary dataset was collected from a publicly available source, specifically from the Kaggle platform. This dataset consists of knee X-ray images that have been graded according to the Kellgren-Lawrence (KL) grading system. The KL grading system categorizes knee osteoarthritis (OA) severity into five distinct grades based on specific radiographic features. The distribution of images across these grades is as follows:

- **Grade 0, 1, and 2**: Each grade contains 1000 images.
- **Grade 3**: Contains 750 images.
- **Grade 4**: Contains 150 images.

All images in this dataset are in grayscale and have a resolution of 224 x 224 pixels. The grayscale nature of these images presents a challenge in accurately detecting and measuring knee gaps due to the varying contrast and quality of the X-rays.

3.2.2 Generated Dataset

To enhance the accuracy and reliability of our measurements, we generated a secondary dataset using advanced image processing techniques. We employed the FastSAM image segmentation algorithm to process the grayscale X-ray images from the primary dataset. FastSAM, known for its efficiency and precision, was used to segment the images and detect the knee gaps, resulting in a new set of images with enhanced features.

The FastSAM algorithm [7] produced segmented images in RGB format, which facilitated more accurate detection of knee gaps. The segmentation process involved identifying the boundaries of the tibia and femur bones, which are crucial for measuring the knee joint space. This new dataset, generated through our preprocessing pipeline, provided a more detailed and precise representation of the knee joint structure, enabling more accurate measurements of the knee gaps.

3.2.3 Data Processing

The processing steps for generating the secondary dataset included:

- **Image Segmentation**: The grayscale X-ray images were processed using the FastSAM algorithm to segment the knee joint and identify the boundaries of the tibia and femur bones.
- **Image Conversion**: The segmented images were converted from grayscale to RGB format to enhance the detection accuracy.

- **Knee Gap Measurement**: The segmented images were analyzed to measure the knee gaps, providing quantitative data on the knee joint space.

By leveraging both the publicly available dataset and the generated dataset, our study aims to address the limitations of traditional KL grading and provide a more objective and quantitative method for assessing knee OA severity. This comprehensive approach combines the strengths of existing data with advanced image processing techniques to improve the accuracy and reliability of knee gap measurements, ultimately contributing to better diagnostic and treatment strategies for knee OA.

3.3 Problem Formulation

The problem of knee OA assessment can be formulated as a regression task where the goal is to predict a continuous score representing the severity of OA from knee radiographs. The key steps involved in this process include:

1. **Image Preprocessing:** Enhancing the quality of knee radiographs is crucial to facilitate accurate edge detection and joint space measurement. This step involves techniques such as Gaussian blurring to reduce noise and adaptive thresholding to enhance the contrast of edges in the image. By preprocessing the images, we ensure that the subsequent edge detection algorithms can operate on higher quality, more distinct images.

2. **Edge Detection:** The next step is to identify the edges of the tibia and femur bones using advanced edge detection algorithms. In our approach, we utilize a combination of Sobel and FastSAM edge detection techniques. The Sobel operator highlights intensity gradients in the image, which correspond to the edges of the bones. FastSAM, although not specifically trained on X-ray images, is adapted to detect object boundaries effectively. The combination of these techniques allows for a more robust edge detection process, crucial for accurate joint space measurement.

3. **Joint Space Measurement:** After detecting the edges of the tibia and femur bones, we calculate the distance between these edges to quantify the knee joint space. This measurement is a critical indicator of the severity of knee OA, as the narrowing of the joint space is a hallmark of the disease. By applying simulated annealing and local smoothing techniques, we refine the edge detection results to ensure precise joint space measurements. This step provides the quantitative data needed to assess the progression of knee OA.

4. **Severity Prediction:** Instead of using machine learning models to predict OA severity based on the measured joint space, we focus on a more direct quantitative analysis. By

measuring the percentage shrinkage of the joint space, we can predict the grade of the KL based on these quantitative measurements. This approach provides a clear, objective metric to evaluate the severity of knee OA, reducing the subjectivity associated with traditional methods. The severity of OA is measured in terms of the percentage reduction in joint space, allowing for a more precise assessment of disease progression.

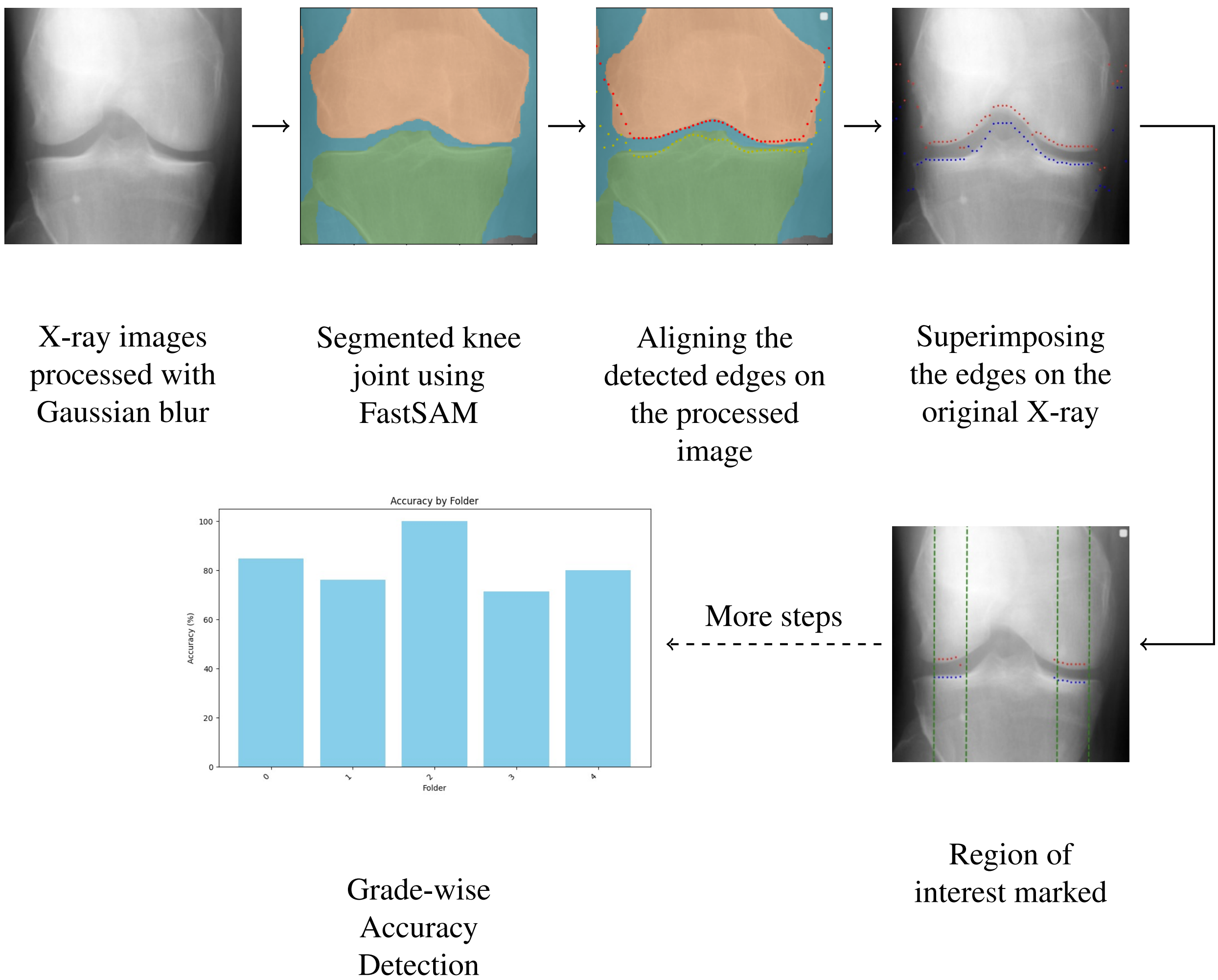

Figure 3.1: The pipeline illustrating the knee OA assessment process.

3.4 Algorithm

Our approach for knee OA assessment using image processing techniques is detailed below. The methodology involves preprocessing, edge detection, joint space measurement, and analysis. The following steps are executed to achieve accurate and consistent results:

3.4.1 Image Preprocessing

The initial step involves enhancing the quality of knee radiographs to facilitate accurate edge detection and joint space measurement.

- **Apply Sobel Operator:** The Sobel operator is applied to the X-ray images to highlight edges and create clearer images for further processing.
- **Generate Dataset for FastSAM:** The enhanced images are then used to generate a dataset suitable for the FastSAM segmentation algorithm.

Algorithm 1 Apply Sobel Apply Sobel for Edge Detection on Original Dataset

Require: Image img
Ensure: Sobel magnitude image $sobel\_mag$
$sobel\_x \leftarrow$ Sobel in x-direction
$sobel\_y \leftarrow$ Sobel in y-direction
$sobel\_mag \leftarrow \sqrt{sobel\_x^2 + sobel\_y^2}$
$sobel\_mag \leftarrow$ Normalize to 0-255 scale
return $sobel\_mag$ =0

3.4.2 Edge Detection

We utilize advanced edge detection algorithms on the segmented images generated by FastSAM.

- **Preprocess RGB Image:** Enhance edges by applying Gaussian blur and adaptive thresholding to each channel of the RGB image.
  - **Gaussian Blur:** This reduces noise in the image by averaging the pixel values with their neighbors.
  - **Adaptive Thresholding:** This converts the image to binary form by setting pixel values above a certain threshold to 255 (white) and below to 0 (black). It adapts to different lighting conditions in the image.
  - **Morphological Operations:** Operations like closing and opening help in removing small noise and closing small holes in the detected edges.
- **Detect Combined Edges:** Combine edges detected in each channel using bitwise operations.

Algorithm 2 Preprocess RGB Image

Require: RGB Image img
Ensure: Combined edge-detected image
Split img into channels
for each channel **do**
    Apply Gaussian blur
    Apply adaptive thresholding
    Apply morphological operations
    Detect edges using Canny
    Append edges to list
end for
Combine edges from all channels
return combined edges =0

3.4.3 Finding Initial Edges

We identify the initial edges of the tibia and femur bones using the preprocessed images.

- **Detect Upper and Lower Edges:** Iterate through columns of the image and detect the upper and lower edges based on intensity values. For each column, we start from the top (for the upper edge) and bottom (for the lower edge) of the image and move towards the center, looking for significant changes in intensity that indicate the presence of an edge.

Algorithm 3 Find Initial Edges

Require: Image img, Interval $interval$, Step $step$, Gap gap
Ensure: Upper and lower edge arrays
Preprocess img to detect edges
Initialize edge arrays
for each column in img **do**
    Detect upper edge
    Detect lower edge
end for
return upper and lower edge arrays =0

3.4.4 Simulated Annealing

To refine the detected edges, we apply simulated annealing, which optimizes the edge positions for accuracy.

- **Initial Temperature:** Start with a high temperature to allow significant changes in edge positions.

- **Cooling Schedule:** Gradually reduce the temperature to limit the changes and focus on fine-tuning the edge positions.
- **Cost Function:** Calculate the cost based on the difference between the current and new edge positions. Accept new positions if the cost is lower or with a certain probability if the cost is higher.

Algorithm 4 Simulated Annealing

Require: Edge positions $edges$, Parameters $params$
Ensure: Optimized edges

Initialize temperature $temp$
while $temp$ ¿ threshold **do**
    for each edge point **do**
        Generate new position
        Calculate cost
        if new cost is better **then**
            Update edge position
        else
            Accept with a probability
        end if
    end for
    Reduce temperature
end while
return optimized edges =0

3.4.5 Local Smoothing

We further smooth the detected edges using a moving average filter to remove any noise and irregularities.

Algorithm 5 Local Smoothing

Require: Edge array $edges$, Window size $window\_size$
Ensure: Smoothed edges

Apply moving average filter to $edges$
return smoothed edges =0

3.4.6 Processing All Images

We process all images in the dataset to detect and refine the edges, and calculate the joint space.

Algorithm 6 Process All Images

Require: Input folder $input\_folder$
Ensure: Edge detection results and joint space calculations

for each image in $input\_folder$ do
    Preprocess and detect edges
    Apply simulated annealing
    Smooth edges
    Calculate joint space
    Save results to CSV files
end for=0

3.4.7 Joint Space Calculation

Calculate the joint space by measuring the distance between the upper and lower edges detected.

Algorithm 7 Calculate Joint Space

Require: Upper edge $upper\_edge$, Lower edge $lower\_edge$
Ensure: Joint space $joint\_space$

$joint\_space = lower\_edge - upper\_edge$
return $joint\_space$ =0

3.4.8 Processing Pipeline for New Images

When a new X-ray image is received, the processing pipeline involves the following steps:

- **Image Preprocessing:**
  - Apply Sobel operator to enhance edges.
  - Convert to RGB format for FastSAM.
- **Edge Detection:**
  - Use FastSAM to segment the image.
  - Apply Canny edge detection to detect combined edges.
- **Refinement:**
  - Use simulated annealing to optimize edge positions.
  - Smooth the edges using local smoothing techniques.
- **Joint Space Measurement:**
  - Measure the distance between the upper and lower edges to calculate the joint space.

- Calculate the shrinkage percentage relative to the maximum shrinkage observed in grade 4 images.

- **Prediction:**
  - Based on the calculated shrinkage percentage, predict the KL grade for the new image.

3.4.9 Example

Consider a new X-ray image:

- **Preprocessing:**
  - Apply Sobel operator to the image.
  - Convert to RGB format for FastSAM.
- **Edge Detection:**
  - Use FastSAM to segment the image.
  - Apply Canny edge detection to detect combined edges.
- **Refinement:**
  - Use simulated annealing to optimize edge positions.
  - Smooth the edges using local smoothing techniques.
- **Joint Space Measurement:**
  - Measure the distance between the upper and lower edges.
  - Calculate the shrinkage percentage and predict the KL grade.

By implementing this comprehensive pipeline, we ensure accurate and consistent assessment of knee OA severity, leveraging advanced image processing techniques and robust optimization methods.

Chapter 4

Results and Analysis

4.1 Results

4.1.1 Testbed Description

The testing environment for our experiments involved Google Colab by Google, providing free access to GPUs (such as NVIDIA Tesla T4, P4, or P100) and TPUs. It supports Python notebooks, integrates with Google Drive, and facilitates collaborative machine learning and research projects with scalable resources.

We also used Kaggle Kernels: Part of Kaggle's platform, Kaggle Kernels provides AMD EPYC or Intel Xeon CPUs, along with GPUs like NVIDIA Tesla P100 or T4. It supports both Python and R languages, offers up to 16 GB of RAM, and enables collaborative data analysis through shared notebooks and datasets within the Kaggle community.

We chose to use the Python3 programming language due to its ease of use and availability of relevant libraries. For the implementation of our model, several Python libraries have been incorporated in this work. We used pre-trained segmentation model FastSAM.pt for generating segmented dataset. Additionally, we used CV, a collection of algorithms for image processing and computer vision, as well as the libraries associated with Google Colab, the cloud-based platform for statistical data analysis, and Visual Studio Code, which is widely used for Python development.

4.1.2 Edge Detection

Our model successfully detected the edges by first performing segmentation of the image, then applying an algorithm that includes smoothing and simulated annealing for local refinement. This process ensured high precision in edge detection.

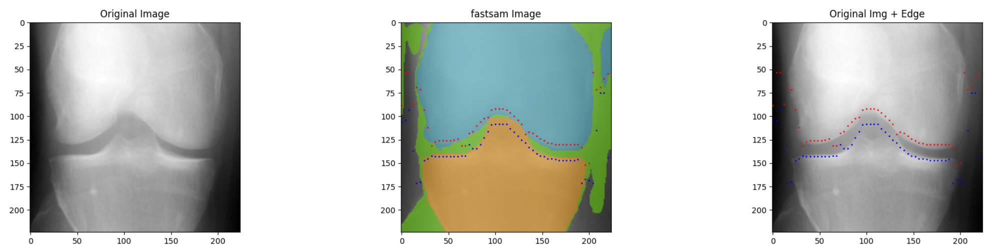

Figure 4.1: Detected upper edge and lower edge of Knee joint

Our algorithm very accurately detected the upper and lower edges, crucial for the subsequent steps in osteoarthritis detection.

4.1.3 Joint Space Width Calculation

We determined the coordinates of multiple points along both the upper and lower edges of the knee joint. By calculating the distance between these corresponding points, we obtained precise measurements of the joint space width. Subsequently, we filtered out the regions of interest (ROIs) to focus on the most relevant sections for osteoarthritis detection. Specifically, we isolated the joint space widths in the left and right parts of the joint. These measurements were then used for further statistical analysis. For each image, we calculated the joint space width by averaging the distances within the ROIs. Next, we performed a comprehensive statistical analysis of the joint space widths across all images within each grade, calculating key metrics such as the mode, mean, and standard deviation for both the left and right gaps. This rigorous approach allowed us to accurately characterize the joint space widths for different grades of osteoarthritis.

Joint Space Width per Image

The joint space width for each image was determined through a detailed process:

1. We first identified the y-coordinates of 56 points along the upper and lower edges of the knee joint in 224-pixel images, spaced at 4-pixel intervals.

2. Next, we calculated the distances between corresponding points along the upper and lower edges to establish the joint space.

3. We then filtered out the left region of interest (ROI) from pixel index 40 to 70 (corresponding to points 10 to 17 out of 56) and the right ROI from pixel index 155 to 185 (points 39 to 46).

4. Scaling the values within these ROIs allowed us to identify the most frequently occurring value (mode), which represents the joint space width for both the left and right sides of the joint in each image.

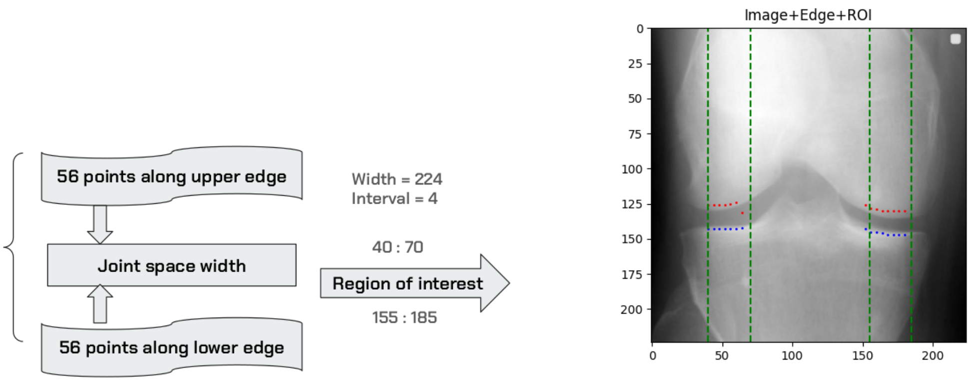

Figure 4.2: Illustration of Edges and Regions of Interest (ROI)

Figure 4.2 visually represents the process, showing the identified points along the upper and lower edges, the calculation of point distances, and the delineation of the left and right ROIs.

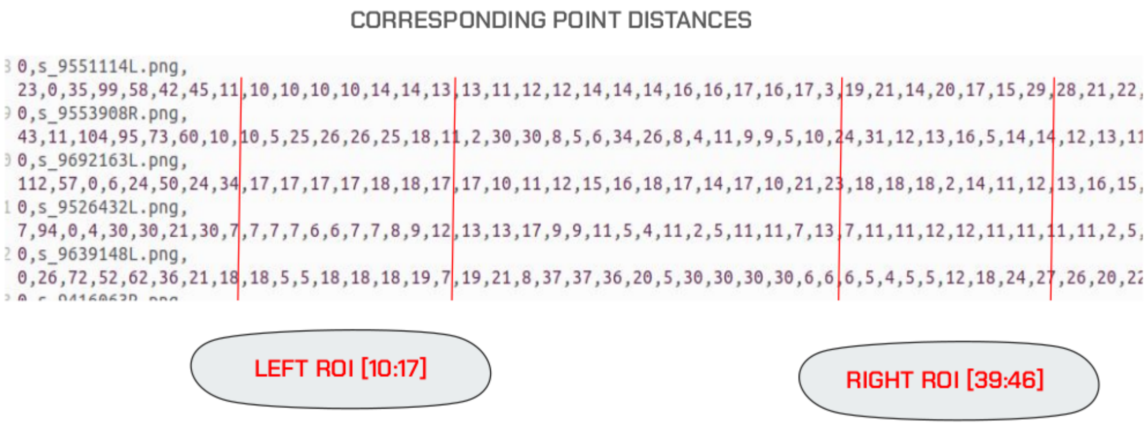

Figure 4.3: Point Distances with Left and Right ROI Markings

Figure 4.3 illustrates the point distances for all 56 points in the images, with the left and right ROIs marked accordingly.

The table (Table 4.1) illustrates similarities and frequent occurrences of values in both the left and right Regions of Interest (ROI), derived from knee joint edge point distances.

After calculating the distances between points along the upper and lower edges and filtering out the regions of interest (ROI), the values were scaled, and the mode was calculated as the left and right joint space widths. The table below presents these measurements for several images.

Table 4.1: Left and Right ROI Values for Few Image

Image	Left ROI								Right ROI							
Number	**10**	**11**	**12**	**13**	**14**	**15**	**16**	**17**	**39**	**40**	**41**	**42**	**43**	**44**	**45**	**46**
1	18	18	18	19	7	19	21	8	22	22	22	22	22	22	51	60
2	11	11	11	9	9	4	7	7	7	6	6	6	7	9	8	9
3	11	11	11	11	11	11	12	12	11	11	11	2	10	11	19	28
4	12	12	12	19	19	18	12	12	16	13	11	8	11	8	7	7

Table 4.2: Joint Space Widths for Selected Images

Image_ID	Grade	Left Joint Space Width	Right Joint Space Width
9865771R	0	18	15
9176441R	1	15	15
9761503R	2	15	12
9914944L	3	12	12
9568974L	4	9	12
9528886L	0	18	18

Joint Space Width per Grade

For each grade, we performed a statistical analysis on the joint space widths obtained from all images of that grade. This analysis involved several key steps:

1. Through statistical analysis, we identified the most probable value of joint space width in the left and right regions of the knee joint for each grade.

2. We calculated the mode, mean, and standard deviation for both the left and right gaps, providing a comprehensive understanding of the joint space characteristics for each grade.

3. Additionally, we computed the percentage joint space width, which normalizes the joint space width relative to the overall joint size, offering a clearer perspective on joint space variations across different grades.

To visualize the distribution of joint space widths, we plotted the distributions for the left and right joint spaces separately for each grade. After denoising the data, we combined the distributions into a single image. The figures below illustrate the distribution plots for each grade.

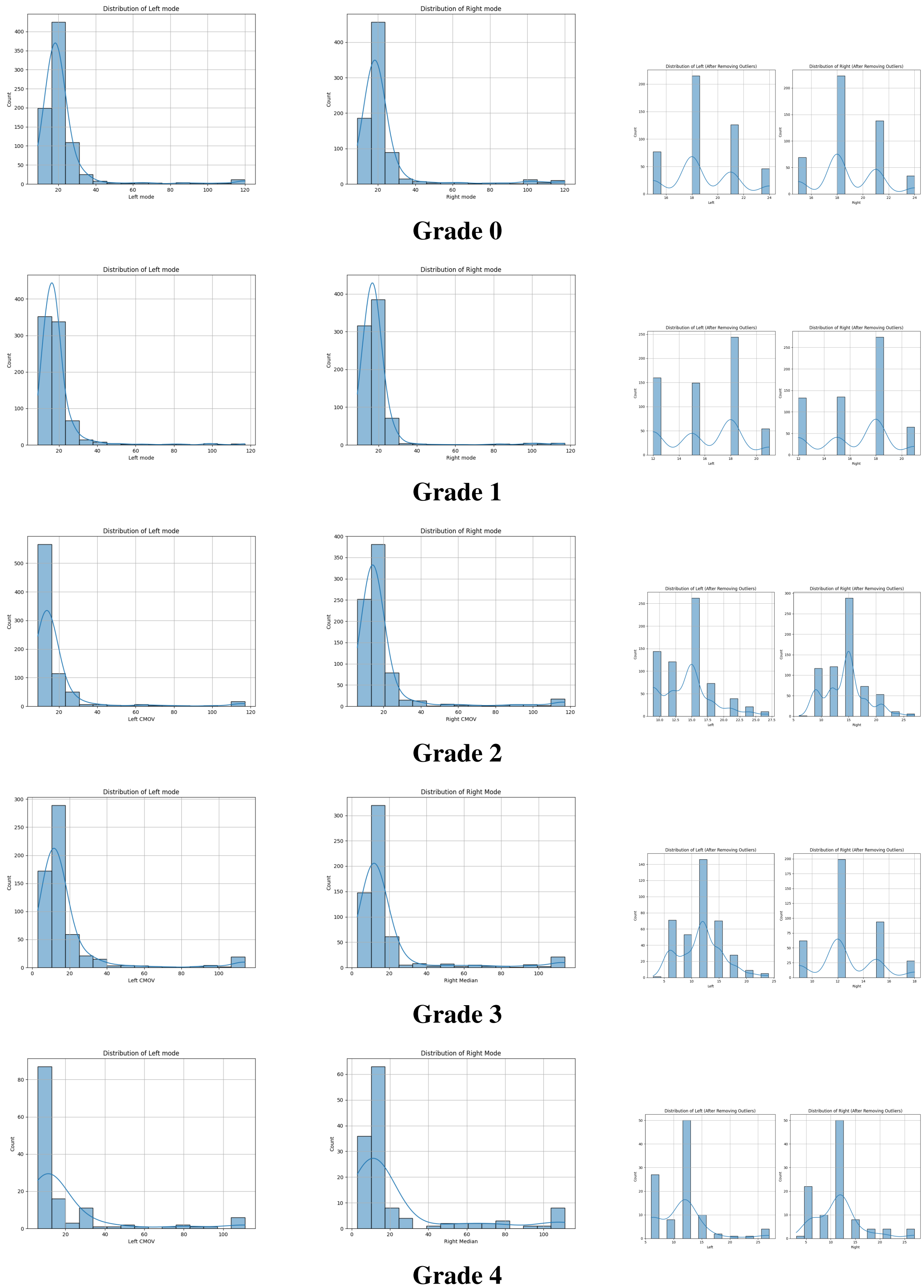

Figure 4.4: Distribution Plots of Joint Space Widths for Different Grades

The figure 4.4 shows the distribution plots of the joint space widths for the left and right regions separately, as well as the combined denoised plots for each grade. The images illustrate the similarity and multiple occurrences of values in the joint space widths across different grades.

The table below summarizes the joint space width statistics for various grades.

Table 4.3: Joint Space Width Statistics for Different Grades

Grade	Mode Left	Mean Left	Std Dev Left	Mode Right	Mean Right	Std Dev Right
0	18	18.91	2.58	18	18.88	2.42
1	18	15.94	2.87	18	16.32	2.84
2	15	14.30	4.07	15	14.45	3.76
3	12	11.80	4.01	12	12.68	2.41
4	12	11.38	4.71	12	11.73	4.82

Finally, by analyzing the mode, mean, and standard deviation for each grade from Table 4.3, we determined a standard value of left and right joint space for each grade. This joint space width was also expressed as a percentage of the total image height, which is 224 pixels. The table below presents these values.

Table 4.4: The width of joint space for different grades.

Grade	Joint Space Width (px)		Joint Space Width (%)	
	Left	Right	Left	Right
0	19	19	8.0	8.0
1	16	16	7.0	7.0
2	14	14	6.0	6.0
3	11	12	5.0	5.0
4	11	11	5.0	5.0

Variation in joint space widths across different grades, as shown in Table 4.4 is crucial for understanding the role of joint space narrowing in detecting and assessing the severity of osteoarthritis.

4.1.4 Joint Space Analysis

Our analysis reveals that joint space width is a significant indicator in detecting osteoarthritis. Images with a joint space width of less than 7% of the image height (224 pixels) are typically identified as osteoarthritic. This threshold corresponds predominantly to Grades 4 and 3, and occasionally to Grade 2. Conversely, images with joint space widths greater than 7% are usually classified as non-osteoarthritic, corresponding to Grades 0 and 1, and sometimes Grade 2.

Optimum Range for Osteoarthritis Detection:

- Images from Grades 3 and 4 consistently exhibit osteoarthritis.
- Grade 2 images with narrowed joint space are often osteoarthritic.

- Joint space width below 7% of the total image height (224 pixels) is a reliable marker for osteoarthritis.

Therefore, if a knee joint under diagnosis exhibits a joint space width of less than 7%, it can be inferred that the joint is affected by osteoarthritis.

Joint Space Width $< 7\%$	Joint Space Width $\geq 7\%$

The validity of this discovery has been rigorously tested, ensuring robustness and reliability. Performance metrics are detailed in the subsequent section to further substantiate these findings.

4.2 Performance

4.2.1 Testing Process

The testing process involved evaluating images from the test dataset using our algorithm. Each image underwent segmentation and edge detection, followed by measurement of left and right joint spaces. If joint space width was under 7% (for images from folders 0, 1, or 2), or over 7% (for folders 2, 3, or 4), osteoarthritis was predicted; otherwise, it was not. Results were recorded for accuracy assessment against actual diagnoses, ensuring our algorithm's effectiveness in osteoarthritis detection.

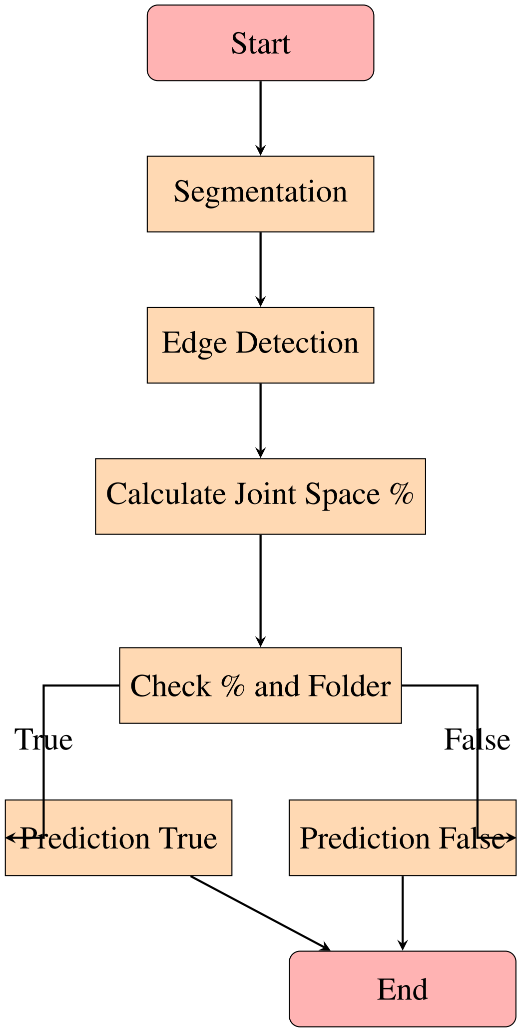

Figure 4.5: Flowchart of the Testing Process

4.2.2 Plotting Findings

Various visualizations were created to illustrate the performance of the algorithm:

Accuracy per Grade: Bar charts showing the accuracy achieved for each grade of osteoarthritis.

Table 4.5: Accuracy per Grade

Grade	Total	Correct	Accuracy (%)
0	92	78	84.78
1	96	73	76.04
2	98	98	100.0
3	94	67	71.28
4	25	20	80.0

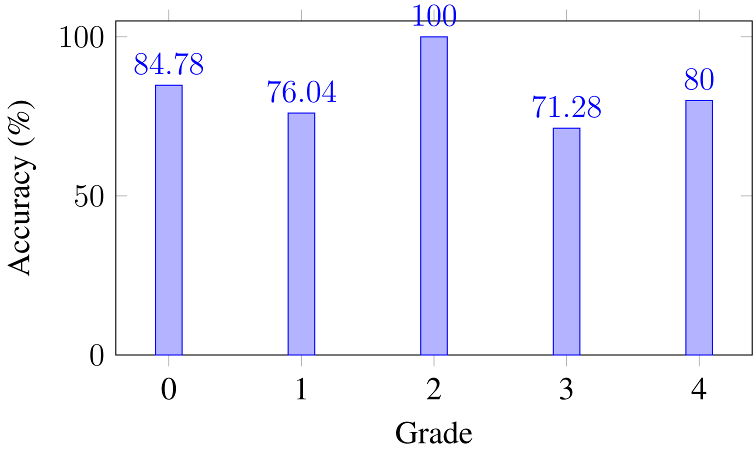

Figure 4.6: Accuracy of Osteoarthritis detection

4.2.3 Performance Metrics

Performance metrics were computed to quantitatively assess the algorithm's effectiveness:

- **Specificity:** The proportion of true negative results among the actual negatives.
- **Sensitivity/Recall:** The proportion of true positive results among the predicted positives.
- **F1 Score:** The harmonic mean of precision and recall.
- **Overall Accuracy:** The ratio of correctly predicted images to the total number of images tested.

Metric	**Value (%)**
Specificity	74
Sensitivity/Recall	73
F1 Score	62
Overall Accuracy	82.96

Table 4.6: Performance Metrics

The performance metrics table (Table 4.6) summarizes key evaluation metrics for the algorithm. Specificity and Sensitivity/Recall indicate balanced detection capabilities, with Specificity at 74% highlighting accurate negative predictions. The F1 Score of 62% reflects moderate precision and recall balance, crucial for classification tasks. Overall Accuracy at 82.96% underscores the algorithm's effectiveness across all predictions, demonstrating robust performance across varied conditions.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

5.1 Summary

In this study, we measured the joint space between the tibia and femur for each grade of osteoarthritis. By identifying the percentage range of joint space width for osteoarthritic knee joints, we developed a method to aid in decision-making for advanced diagnosis and treatment. The proposed framework achieved an accuracy of 82.96% in osteoarthritis detection, demonstrating its efficiency and suitability for low-resource clinical settings.

5.2 Our Contribution

Our contribution lies in developing an efficient, low-resource system that eliminates the need for labeled data in edge detection and model training. This approach enables rapid pre-diagnosis, saving significant time and computational resources.

Efficient Low Resource System: Our approach eliminates the need for labeled data in edge detection and model training, significantly reducing computational requirements.

Pre-Diagnosis Potential: By leveraging minimal resources and rapid computation, our method offers the potential to expedite pre-diagnosis processes, saving valuable time and costs.

5.3 Limitations and Challenges

While our framework showed promising results, it has some limitations. The accuracy, although high, indicates that there is still room for improvement. Challenges such as variations in image quality and differences in patient anatomy can affect the detection accuracy. Additionally, the current framework does not account for the presence of osteophytes, which are also indicative of osteoarthritis.

5.4 Future Directions

Future work will focus on enhancing the framework by incorporating osteophyte detection to improve accuracy and provide further classifications. Additionally, expanding the dataset and improving the robustness of the algorithm to handle variations in image quality and anatomical differences will be prioritized. These advancements will make the framework more reliable and valuable for clinical use.

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This thesis was generated on Sunday 7th July, 2024 at 7:05am.