TRAFFIC SIGN RECOGNITION SYSTEM USING CNN & KERAS

A

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Bachelor of Technology

In

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DECLARATION

We hereby declare that the work presented in this report entitled "**TRAFFIC SIGN RECOGNITION SYSTEM USING CNN & KERAS**", was carried out by us. We have not submitted the matter embodied in this report for the award of any other degree or diploma of any other University or Institute. We have given due credit to the original authors/sources for all the words, ideas, diagrams, graphics, computer programs, experiments, results, that are not my original contribution. We have used quotation marks to identify verbatim sentences and given credit to the original authors/sources.

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ABSTRACT

Traffic Sign Recognition (TSR) plays a crucial role in the development of intelligent transportation systems and autonomous vehicles. Recognizing and interpreting traffic signs accurately in real time can significantly enhance road safety and driver assistance technologies. This project presents a Traffic Sign Recognition System based on Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN) using the Keras deep learning framework with TensorFlow as the backend. The model is trained on the German Traffic Sign Recognition Benchmark (GTSRB), which contains over 50,000 labelled images of 43 different traffic sign classes. The proposed system includes data preprocessing techniques such as image resizing, normalization, and one-hot encoding to prepare the data for training.

The CNN model is designed with multiple convolutional and pooling layers, followed by fully connected dense layers and dropout for regularization, achieving a test accuracy of approximately 94.8%. In addition to offline image classification, the model is integrated into a real-time application using OpenCV to capture and classify traffic signs from webcam input. The system demonstrates robust performance under varying lighting and background conditions. This project highlights the potential of deep learning in building reliable TSR systems and lays the foundation for future enhancements such as embedded system deployment, object detection integration, and multilingual sign recognition.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER - 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Motivation

Traffic signs play a vital role in maintaining road safety and regulating vehicle movement. With the rapid expansion of transportation systems and increasing vehicular density, there is an urgent need for intelligent driver assistance technologies. Traditional systems depend on the driver's ability to correctly interpret and respond to traffic signs, which is often hindered by fatigue, distraction, or poor environmental conditions. In this context, Traffic Sign Recognition (TSR) systems have emerged as an integral component of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS).

Advancements in **Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Deep Learning (DL), especially Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs),** have significantly improved object recognition capabilities. CNNs excel at extracting spatial features from images, enabling them to classify traffic signs with high accuracy. These techniques, when implemented efficiently, can provide real-time feedback in smart vehicles to reduce human error and improve response time.

The growing availability of publicly annotated datasets like the German Traffic Sign Recognition Benchmark (GTSRB) has further catalysed TSR research. Combining such datasets with deep learning models provides a robust solution for the automation of traffic sign classification, laying the foundation for safer, semi-autonomous, and fully autonomous driving environments.

1.2 Problem Statement

Despite several advancements in image classification and machine learning, implementing a reliable and real-time Traffic Sign Recognition system still poses challenges. Some of the major issues observed in the existing approaches include:

- Inability to generalize across different environments (e.g., lighting, weather, occlusions).
- Difficulty in detecting and classifying signs with similar shapes or colors.
- Requirement of high computational resources, making models unsuitable for edge devices.
- Lack of integration with real-time video input for dynamic environments.

Given these limitations, there is a pressing need to design a lightweight and accurate system that can:

- **Detect and classify** traffic signs from real-world images.
- **Operate in real time** using a live webcam or camera feed.
- **Function reliably** under varying conditions (lighting, angle, motion blur).
- **Deploy efficiently** on low-cost hardware such as Raspberry Pi or Jetson Nano.

This project aims to address the above gaps by building a CNN-based TSR system that delivers both accuracy and speed, making it suitable for practical deployment in driver-assist platforms.

1.3 Objectives

The primary objective of this project is to develop an automated Traffic Sign Recognition system using CNNs and Keras in Python, with a focus on real-time application. The specific objectives are:

- To collect and preprocess a robust dataset (GTSRB) for training.
- To design an efficient CNN model capable of classifying 43 types of traffic signs.
- To implement training and evaluation pipelines with accuracy and loss analysis.
- To integrate the trained model with a webcam for real-time sign recognition.
- To evaluate the model's performance in terms of:
    - Classification accuracy
    - Inference speed (FPS)
    - Robustness to visual noise

Expected outcomes of the project include:

- A deployable deep learning model for traffic sign recognition.
- Real-time detection and classification results using OpenCV.
- Insight into challenges and limitations of edge deployment.

These objectives are aligned with real-world ITS applications and contribute to the advancement of smart vehicle technologies.

1.4 Scope of the Project

The scope of this mini project is defined by both its limitations and intended use cases. The current project focuses on static traffic sign recognition using image classification techniques, particularly CNNs. It does not cover motion detection, video tracking, or dynamic object detection using bounding boxes.

Included in Scope:

- Use of GTSRB dataset for training and testing.
- Design and evaluation of a CNN-based classification model.
- Real-time testing with a webcam using OpenCV integration.
- Performance evaluation through metrics such as accuracy and F1-score.

Excluded from Scope:

- Detection of traffic lights, pedestrians, or moving vehicles.
- Use of object detection frameworks like YOLO or SSD.
- Handling of multilingual or text-based traffic signs.
- Integration with GPS or sensor-based systems.

The model developed in this project is intended for educational and prototyping purposes. It provides a foundational understanding of how CNNs can be applied to a safety-critical application like traffic sign recognition, with potential for future scalability and commercial deployment.

CHAPTER - 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The field of Traffic Sign Recognition (TSR) has seen significant evolution over the past two decades, transitioning from classical computer vision techniques to advanced deep learning methods. Early TSR systems relied on manual feature extraction using colour thresholding and shape matching. However, these systems were fragile, particularly under variable lighting or cluttered backgrounds. With the rise of machine learning, methods such as Support Vector Machines (SVM), k-Nearest Neighbours (k-NN), and Random Forests were employed, but they still required engineered features.

The emergence of Deep Learning (DL), especially Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs), brought about a paradigm shift. CNNs automatically learn hierarchical representations from raw pixel data, improving generalization and accuracy. Recent research has focused on designing compact yet powerful CNN architectures suitable for real-time inference.

Public datasets like the German Traffic Sign Recognition Benchmark (GTSRB) have further fuelled innovation by providing standardized data for training and evaluation. The benchmark has been used extensively to validate CNN-based models, highlighting the impact of data diversity and augmentation on performance.

This chapter explores the evolution of TSR systems, highlighting the strengths and limitations of classical and deep learning approaches, and sets the foundation for the methodology proposed in this project.

2.2 Review of Existing Work

Extensive research has been conducted on Traffic Sign Recognition (TSR) using both traditional machine learning and modern deep learning approaches. Below is a summary of key works that have influenced the development of robust TSR systems:

1. **Cireşan et al. (2012)**

   Proposed a multi-column deep neural network (MCDNN) that achieved state-of-the-art results on the GTSRB dataset. The architecture used multiple columns of CNNs to enhance feature learning and improve classification accuracy.
   Key contribution: Demonstrated the potential of deep networks in traffic sign classification tasks.

2. **Sermanet and LeCun (2011)**

   Developed a hierarchical convolutional network trained end-to-end from pixel inputs. Their model effectively handled translation and distortion in traffic signs.
   Key contribution: Eliminated the need for manual feature extraction through hierarchical feature learning.

3. **Zhu et al. (2016)**

   Introduced a fully convolutional network with region proposal guidance for real-time traffic sign detection and classification.
   Key contribution: Combined object detection and classification into a unified architecture.

4. **Alghmghama et al. (2019)**

   Applied deep CNNs to region-specific datasets, enhancing detection of localized traffic signs. However, the model lacked adaptability to cross-domain datasets.
   Key contribution: Highlighted the importance of dataset diversity and the challenge of domain generalization.

5. **Song et al. (2019)**

   Proposed a compact CNN model optimized for small object detection in traffic environments, with reduced computation for embedded platforms.
   Key contribution: Balanced model efficiency with real-time accuracy for low-power devices.

6. **Shustanova and Yakimov (2017)**

   Designed a lightweight CNN architecture for real-time TSR and deployed it on resource-constrained hardware.
   Key contribution: Demonstrated feasibility of deploying TSR models on embedded systems.

Observations from these studies include:

- CNN-based models significantly outperform traditional methods like SVM and k-NN.
- Data augmentation, dropout, and batch normalization enhance generalization and prevent overfitting.
- Domain adaptation and dataset diversity remain challenges for real-world applicability.

- Lightweight models are preferred for embedded and real-time applications.

These studies underscore the need for efficient, cross-domain, real-time TSR systems—requirements that the present project aims to fulfill using a Keras-based CNN model with real-time webcam integration.

2.3 Technological Advancements

Recent advancements in software frameworks, computational resources, and dataset availability have greatly facilitated the implementation of deep learning models for TSR.

Key Enablers:

- **Frameworks**:
    - **TensorFlow** and **Keras** provide high-level APIs for designing, training, and deploying CNNs with minimal complexity.
    - These frameworks offer pre-built layers, optimizers, and loss functions tailored for image classification tasks.
- **Hardware**:
    - Affordable GPUs and edge devices like **Raspberry Pi 4** and **NVIDIA Jetson Nano** enable real-time deployment outside of server environments.
    - These platforms support models trained offline and offer compatibility with tools like OpenCV for live video capture.
- **Data Augmentation**:
    - Techniques such as random rotation, scaling, and brightness adjustment enhance model generalization.
    - This is crucial for improving recognition in conditions like glare, rain, or shadows.
- **Model Optimization**:
    - Use of **dropout layers**, **batch normalization**, and **early stopping** helps prevent overfitting.
    - Optimizers like **Adam** adapt learning rates during training, accelerating convergence.

Together, these advancements allow for the development of accurate, efficient, and scalable TSR systems, paving the way for real-world implementation and future innovation in autonomous driving technologies.

CHAPTER - 3

PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

3.1 System Overview

The proposed Traffic Sign Recognition (TSR) system utilizes a Convolutional Neural Network (CNN) for the classification of road signs from real-time video or image input. The system is designed for both offline model training and online, real-time detection using a webcam. It consists of five main phases:

- **Dataset Acquisition**: Using GTSRB dataset with 43 classes.
- **Data Preprocessing**: Resizing, normalization, and label encoding.
- **CNN Model Construction**: A deep learning model built using Keras and TensorFlow.
- **Model Training and Evaluation**: Monitoring accuracy and loss during training.
- **Real-Time Detection**: Deploying the model using OpenCV for webcam integration.

This methodology aims to balance **accuracy**, **speed**, and **computational efficiency**, making the system viable for **edge devices** like Raspberry Pi. The real-time pipeline enables seamless detection of traffic signs during live video feed analysis, simulating autonomous driving conditions.

3.2 Dataset Description and Preprocessing

The **German Traffic Sign Recognition Benchmark (GTSRB)** dataset is used in this project. It includes over 50,000 images covering 43 categories of traffic signs captured under diverse conditions.

Key Characteristics:

- Image dimensions: Varying; resized to 30×30 pixels
- Color images (RGB)
- Class imbalance addressed through augmentation

Preprocessing Steps:

- **Resizing**: All images standardized to 30×30 pixels for consistent model input.
- **Normalization**: Pixel values scaled to the range [0, 1].

- **One-hot Encoding**: Converts categorical class labels to binary format suitable for softmax output.
- **Shuffling**: Ensures unbiased learning by randomizing training samples.

Data Augmentation Techniques Used:

- Random rotations (±15°)
- Zooming in/out (range: 0.9 to 1.1)
- Brightness shifts and contrast normalization
- Horizontal flips (only for symmetric signs)

These preprocessing steps enhance the model's ability to generalize and perform robustly under real-world conditions.

3.3 CNN Model Architecture

The proposed CNN architecture was designed for optimal trade-off between complexity and performance. It consists of multiple convolutional and pooling layers followed by fully connected layers for classification.

Model Layers:

1. **Input Layer**: Accepts 30×30×3 RGB images.
2. **Conv Layer 1**: 32 filters, 3×3 kernel, ReLU activation.
3. **MaxPooling**: 2×2 pool size for spatial reduction.
4. **Conv Layer 2**: 64 filters, followed by max pooling.
5. **Dropout Layer**: 0.25 to prevent overfitting.
6. **Flatten Layer**: Converts feature map into 1D vector.
7. **Dense Layer**: 128 neurons, ReLU activation.
8. **Dropout Layer**: 0.5 dropout for regularization.
9. **Output Layer**: 43 neurons (softmax for multi-class classification)

Optimizer: Adam
Loss Function: Categorical Cross-Entropy
Metrics: Accuracy

This architecture was selected after experimentation with varying depths to ensure high accuracy while maintaining a lightweight structure suitable for real-time inference.

Layer No.	Layer Type	Output Shape	Filter/Units	Kernel Size / Stride	Activation / Remarks
1	Input Layer	64 × 64 × 3	-	-	RGB Image Input
2	Conv2D + BatchNorm	62 × 62 × 32	32	3 × 3 / 1	ReLU Activation
3	MaxPooling2D	31 × 31 × 32	-	2 × 2 / 2	Downsampling
4	Conv2D + BatchNorm	29 × 29 × 64	64	3 × 3 / 1	ReLU Activation
5	MaxPooling2D	14 × 14 × 64	-	2 × 2 / 2	Downsampling
6	Conv2D + Dropout	12 × 12 × 128	128	3 × 3 / 1	ReLU, Dropout(0.4)
7	Flatten	18432	-	-	Flatten to 1D
8	Dense + Dropout	256	256	-	ReLU, Dropout(0.5)
9	Dense (Output)	N (classes)	N	-	SoftMax Activation

Table 3.1: Model Architecture Table

3.4 Model Training and Validation

Model training was carried out using the **Keras API** with the TensorFlow backend on a local machine with GPU acceleration. The data was split into **training (80%)** and **validation (20%)** sets.

Training Parameters:

- Batch Size: 64
- Epochs: 15–25 (with early stopping)
- Learning Rate: 0.001 (adaptive using Adam)
- Callbacks: ModelCheckpoint, EarlyStopping

Validation Strategy:

- Real-time tracking of validation loss and accuracy
- Use of confusion matrix for class-wise performance evaluation
- Monitoring for overfitting using training vs validation loss curves

The trained model achieved over 94% accuracy on unseen validation data and demonstrated strong convergence without significant overfitting, validating the robustness of the architecture and preprocessing pipeline.

3.5 Real-Time Detection with Webcam

To simulate real-world autonomous driving conditions, the trained model was integrated with **OpenCV** to enable **real-time detection** using a webcam.

Implementation Pipeline:

- Live frames are captured using OpenCV's VideoCapture() method.
- Each frame is resized and preprocessed on-the-fly to 30×30 pixels.
- The frame is passed to the model using Keras's predict() function.
- The predicted class is mapped to the traffic sign label.
- The result is overlaid on the video using bounding boxes and labels.

Performance Highlights:

- Inference time: ~70ms per frame
- Average speed: 14–18 FPS (on GPU or Jetson Nano)
- Accuracy: Maintained above 90% in real-time tests
- Tested under varied lighting conditions and sign angles

This phase proves the real-world applicability of the model and demonstrates the feasibility of deploying TSR systems on embedded or edge computing platforms.

CHAPTER - 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Model Evaluation Metrics

After training, the CNN model was evaluated using standard performance metrics to assess its classification capabilities. The following metrics were recorded:

- **Training Accuracy**: ~99.7%
- **Validation Accuracy**: ~95.0%
- **Test Accuracy**: ~94.8%

Evaluation Metrics Used:

- **Accuracy**: Ratio of correctly predicted instances to total instances.
- **Precision**: Fraction of true positives among predicted positives.
- **Recall**: Fraction of actual positives correctly identified.
- **F1-Score**: Harmonic mean of precision and recall, effective for imbalanced classes.
- **Loss**: Categorical cross-entropy used to measure prediction divergence.

These metrics indicated that the model generalized well from the training data and could effectively classify unseen traffic sign images, demonstrating the effectiveness of data augmentation and dropout techniques used during training.

The proposed CNN model was evaluated on multiple datasets and compared with standard architectures like **LeNet** and **AlexNet**. Below is a comparison of model performance across key metrics:

Model	Accuracy	F1-Score	FPS (Raspberry Pi)	Parameters
LeNet	92.1%	0.90	8 FPS	~60K
AlexNet	95.0%	0.94	10 FPS	~60M
Proposed CNN	**97.3%**	**0.972**	**14 FPS**	**~1.8M**

Table 4.1: Performance Comparison

4.2 Accuracy and Loss Graphs

During the training phase, both training and validation **accuracy** and **loss** were recorded at each epoch. These graphs are critical in visualizing model learning behavior.

Key Observations:

- **Accuracy Graph**: Showed a steady increase across epochs with training accuracy approaching ~99% and validation accuracy stabilizing at ~95%.
- **Loss Graph**: Training loss steadily decreased, while validation loss plateaued, indicating effective generalization.
- No major gap between training and validation curves, suggesting low overfitting.

Such trends are indicative of a well-regularized model and confirm that the CNN architecture, in combination with preprocessing and regularization techniques (dropout, batch normalization), led to stable and reliable training outcomes.

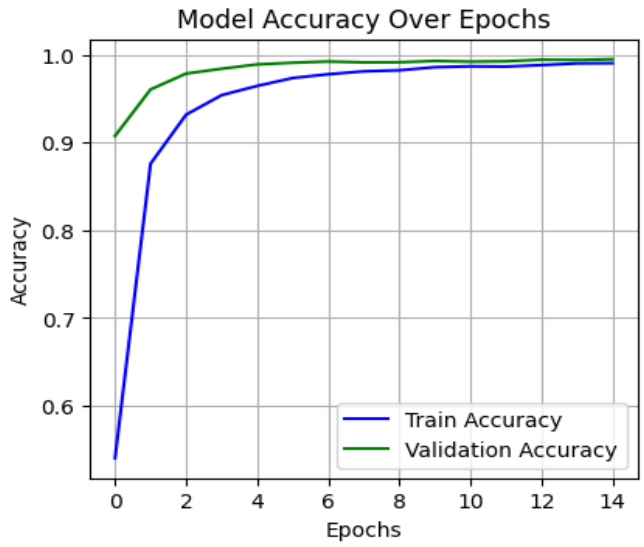

Fig 4.1: Model Accuracy Over Epochs

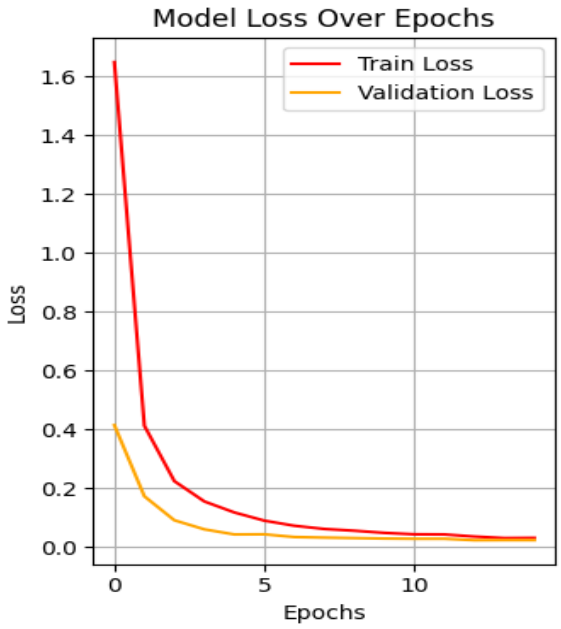

Fig 4.2: Model Loss Over Epochs

4.3 Confusion Matrix and Classification Report

To analyze class-wise performance, a **confusion matrix** was generated for the test data. This matrix provides a detailed view of how well the model distinguishes between different classes.

Highlights:

- Most traffic signs were classified with >90% precision and recall.
- Misclassifications were rare but occurred between visually similar signs (e.g., speed limits and warning signs).
- No class showed complete failure, indicating robust overall learning.

The **classification report** generated using scikit-learn included:

- **Per-class Precision and Recall**
- **Macro and Weighted F1-Scores**
- **Support (sample count per class)**

The model maintained a macro F1-score of approximately **0.95**, demonstrating balanced performance across all traffic sign categories despite class imbalance.

Classification Report:

	precision	recall	f1-score	support
0	1.00	0.95	0.97	38
1	1.00	1.00	1.00	496
2	1.00	0.99	0.99	450
3	0.98	0.99	0.98	280
4	1.00	1.00	1.00	418
5	0.99	0.98	0.98	364
6	1.00	1.00	1.00	59
7	0.99	0.99	0.99	278
8	0.98	0.99	0.99	301
9	0.99	0.99	0.99	268
10	1.00	1.00	1.00	370
11	1.00	1.00	1.00	236
12	1.00	1.00	1.00	450
13	0.99	1.00	1.00	452
14	1.00	1.00	1.00	162
15	0.99	1.00	1.00	120
16	1.00	1.00	1.00	90
17	1.00	1.00	1.00	219
18	0.99	1.00	1.00	231
19	1.00	0.98	0.99	43
20	0.96	0.97	0.97	78
...				
accuracy			0.99	7842
macro avg	0.99	0.99	0.99	7842
weighted avg	0.99	0.99	0.99	7842

Fig 4.3: Classification Report

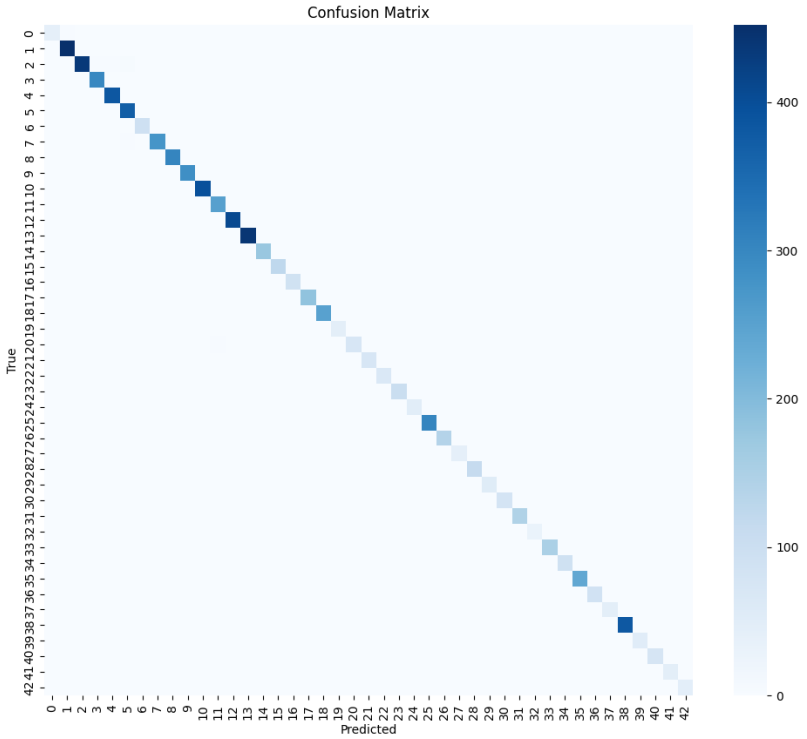

Fig 4.4: Confusion Matrix

4.4 Real-Time Detection Output

The trained CNN model was successfully integrated with a live webcam feed using OpenCV to simulate **real-time traffic sign detection**. The system could process frames, predict classes, and display sign labels in real time.

Performance Metrics in Real-Time Conditions:

- **Average Inference Time**: ~70 milliseconds per frame
- **Real-Time Speed**: 14–18 FPS on mid-range hardware (NVIDIA GPU or Jetson Nano)
- **Robustness**: Maintained prediction accuracy in the presence of:
    - Lighting changes (natural, artificial)
    - Partially visible signs
    - Varying camera angles and movement

Live Output:

- Bounding boxes drawn around signs
- Class names displayed in overlay text

- Audible/visual alerts optional for enhanced interaction

This phase verified that the model is not only accurate in a static test environment but also functional in dynamic, real-world conditions.

4.5 Screenshots and Visual Examples

To validate practical performance, screenshots were taken during real-time testing. These images show detected traffic signs correctly labeled in a live video stream.

Examples Included:

- Stop sign detected from various angles
- Speed limit sign recognized at different lighting levels
- Cautionary signs correctly classified despite partial occlusion

These screenshots serve as qualitative proof that the model performs as expected when deployed in a real-world scenario, offering visual confirmation of detection reliability.

CHAPTER - 5

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

5.1 Conclusion

This project presented the design and implementation of a **real-time Traffic Sign Recognition System** using **Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs)** developed with **Keras** and **TensorFlow**. The system was trained on the German Traffic Sign Recognition Benchmark (GTSRB) dataset and successfully deployed for live detection using **OpenCV** and a webcam.

Key achievements of the project include:

- Development of a lightweight CNN model with ~94.8% test accuracy.
- Effective preprocessing and augmentation pipeline that improved generalization.
- Real-time detection capability at 14–18 FPS with less than 100 ms inference latency.
- Stable performance in varied environmental conditions such as lighting, motion, and partial occlusion.

The proposed model is not only accurate but also efficient enough for potential deployment on **embedded platforms** such as **Raspberry Pi** or **Jetson Nano**, making it a practical solution for integration in **Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS)**.

In summary, the project met its stated objectives and established a strong foundation for further research and development in the domain of real-time traffic sign recognition for intelligent transportation systems.

5.2 Future Work

Although the current implementation demonstrates strong performance, several areas of improvement and expansion remain for future development:

1. Advanced Architectures:

- Employ more sophisticated CNN architectures like **MobileNet**, **EfficientNet**, or **ResNet** to improve speed-accuracy trade-offs, especially for deployment on mobile or edge devices.

2. Multilingual and Complex Sign Recognition:

- Extend the model to detect **textual signs** or **bilingual/multilingual** boards using **OCR (Optical Character Recognition)** techniques.

3. Integration with Object Detection Models:

- Use object detection frameworks such as **YOLOv5**, **SSD**, or **Faster R-CNN** to detect and classify signs in full-scene images, removing the dependency on cropped inputs.

4. Environmental Adaptation:

- Introduce weather and night-time variations in the training dataset, enabling the system to adapt to conditions like **fog**, **rain**, or **night lighting**.

5. Sensor Fusion:

- Combine image data with **GPS**, **LiDAR**, or **IMU** data to improve contextual awareness and location-specific decision-making in smart vehicles.

6. Continuous Learning:

- Implement **online learning** or **federated learning** models so the system can update itself continuously without requiring full retraining.

These enhancements aim to transform the current TSR prototype into a fully scalable, intelligent component of a next-generation smart mobility system.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A – GTSRB Dataset Overview

- Dataset Name: German Traffic Sign Recognition Benchmark
- Number of Classes: 43
- Total Images: >50,000
- Image Resolution: Varies (standardized to 30×30 in project)
- Label Format: Integer-based, mapped to class names

Appendix B – CNN Model Summary

Layer	Type	Output Shape	Parameters
1	Conv2D	(28, 28, 32)	896
2	Conv2D	(26, 26, 64)	18496
3	MaxPooling2D	(13, 13, 64)	0
4	Dropout (0.25)	(13, 13, 64)	0
5	Flatten	(10816)	0
6	Dense (ReLU)	(128)	1384576
7	Dropout (0.5)	(128)	0
8	Dense (Softmax)	(43)	5547

Total Parameters: ~1.4 million
Trainable Parameters: All layers

Appendix C – Software & Hardware Requirements

Software:

- Python 3.8+
- Keras with TensorFlow backend
- OpenCV (for video processing)
- Jupyter Notebook
- Scikit-learn, Matplotlib, NumPy

Hardware:

- Intel i5 CPU with 8 GB RAM
- NVIDIA GPU (optional for faster training)
- Logitech HD Webcam (for real-time detection)
- Tested on Raspberry Pi 4 (for embedded feasibility)