EARLY DIABETIC RETINOPATHY DETECTION SYSTEM USING RETINAL IMAGES

BY

NWANKWO NESTA O

GOU/U22/CSC/852

DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTER SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS,
FACULTY OF COMPUTING AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY,
GODFREY OKOYE UNIVERSITY, ENUGU STATE.

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SUPERVISOR: Mr. Ngwu Nnaemeka

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APPROVAL PAGE

This research, titled "Design and Implementation of an Early Diabetic Retinopathy Detection System Using Retinal Images," has been assessed and approved by the Department of Computer Science and Mathematics Committees in the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Environmental Studies, Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu, Nigeria.

....	....
Mr. Ngwu Nnaemeka	Date
....	....
External Examiner	Date
....	....
Dr. Frank Okebanama HOD, Computer Science & Mathematics	Date
....	....
Prof. I. A. Ajah Dean, Faculty of Computing & IT	Date

CERTIFICATION

I certify that I completed the research included there in and that it was primarily based on my observations and investigation. Consequently, I will fully accept the University's decision if I am found to have cheated on the assignment.

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NWANKWO NESTA O
GOU/U22/CSC/852

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to the most high God, who has been my inspiration through this research work through his love, blessings, and divine guidance.

Secondly, I dedicate this research work to my most beloved parents whose love and sacrifices have supported me through my entire academic career. My parents' dedication towards my academic success has been the motivating force behind all my achievements.

Thirdly, I dedicate this research work to my guardian, who has been the pillar of support for me during this research work. Your constant encouragement and trust have been very motivating for me.

Lastly, I dedicate this research work to all those people who have supported and guided me throughout my academic and personal life. Your encouragement and advice have been a motivational factor in completing this research work.

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ABSTRACT

Diabetic retinopathy (DR) is known to be one of the leading causes of blindness in the world especially among diabetics, whereby it is very crucial for early detection of the disease in order to prevent going blind. Conventional approaches to diagnose this condition are always slow, expensive, and require the presence of a qualified ophthalmologist. This research project will concentrate on designing an efficient and automatic system that will detect and monitor early development of diabetic retinopathy from retinal fundus images using machine learning and computer vision algorithms. This system involves pre-processing of the image in order to enhance its quality, followed by feature extraction and ultimately detection of certain clinical symptoms, including microaneurysms, abnormal blood vessels, and the optic disc. Classification of this image will be done using a random forest classifier, which will categorize images into normal and early stage of DR. This process will be done on the APTOS 2019 Blindness Detection dataset while handling the class imbalance problem. The system implementation will be carried out using a web-based framework known as Flask, which enables users to upload his/her retinal images for processing. Performance evaluation is carried out in terms of accuracy, sensitivity, specificity, and F1-score, indicating appropriate performance of the system for the initial phase of detecting diabetic retinopathy. The initial estimates of the method indicate that its effectiveness is high, as indicated by an accuracy of 92.3%, precision of 91.5%, sensitivity (recall) of 93.1%, specificity of 94.2%, and F1-score of 92.3%. This study reveals that machine learning and image processing techniques can be applied to develop an efficient, inexpensive, and scalable solution for early detection of diabetic retinopathy.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Diabetic Retinopathy (DR) is actually among the most applicable complication and also one of the leading causes of preventable blindness worldwide. Nearly one-third of all diabetics will develop DR sometime in his or her life (Kropp et al., 2023). Unlike most other conditions that immediately start to produce signs or symptoms, this particular condition occurs after a period when there are no visible symptoms and thus it persists unnoticed for a period of time without the patients visiting a doctor, and hence the need for diagnosis becomes imperative (Hill & Makaroff, 2016). Detection of Diabetic Retinopathy using traditional approaches involves manual examination of retinal images by competent ophthalmologists. The concept is clinically sound, but it demands many resources, a long process, and is extremely costly particularly in developing countries as there are a lack of ophthalmologists and other eye health care personnel (Mesfin et al., 2025). All these challenges are further exacerbated by the increasing prevalence of diabetes globally, hence the need to come up with automatic screening tools for use by doctors.With future advances in computer vision and machine learning algorithm, it becomes feasible to design such automated systems that can be employed to analyze the image for clinical signs. The clinical signs related to diabetic retinopathy are characterized by visible data related to microaneurysms, hemorrhages, abnormal blood vessels and optic disc changes (Suedumrong et al., 2024). For the moment, most of the study is in the deep learning approach, however there is still a play field to explore the classical image processing algorithms that will have lower computational costs and in addition it is feasible to be executed in the limited computation environments (Trigka & Dritsas, 2025). The above-mentioned article provides information about the procedure involved in the creation of a diagnostic tool for retinopathy that uses retinal fundus images to diagnose the disease in its early stages. The pre-processed images in the current article is applied to enhance the quality of images and also selection of clinical regions of interests (ROIs) and then the images are pre-processed for feature extraction to attain the goal of detecting the signs of the disease in early stage. For classification between DR and normal, binary classification approach is used, with different models being used to distinguish the classes, namely, the Random Forest model. To make the algorithm more practically feasible, a Flask web application was also created; in this web application users can input their retinal images which can be processed through the app interface and predictions can be made. The project utilizes conventional computer vision algorithms as well as machine learning and web deployment techniques which demonstrate that the technique is not only cost effective but also user friendly and will help to involve healthcare professionals to fight early DR. This process will assist in screening/early detection as well as prevention of diabetes related vision impairment.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

1. Duration of diabetes and the progression of DR.3. Microvascular complications linked to RP.

Diabetic retinopathy (DR) is one of the health challenges we are facing in our society. Moreover, DR is one of the major causes of blindness for people suffering from diabetes. The main challenge with DR is that even though there are treatments for the disease, many people end up losing their sight due to late detection of the problem.

2. These are the reasons why screenings are important at early stages.

As a part of the early stages of DR, there are not any signs of the disease, so that is why screening of the retina is crucial in early diagnosis and treatment. Unfortunately access to health facilities is difficult in some places and screening is therefore not achieved on a regular basis.

3. Restriction of the present screening techniques

Today's techniques for the detection of diabetic retinopathy rely largely on the subjective assessment of the retinal fundus image made by an ophthalmologist or highly trained retinal grader. The method is very complicated, costly, and there could be differences in the process of identification, depending on the evaluator, and this could lead to a late and same-time diagnosis. This screening method is not possible in any early screening program; even with the increasing number of diabetes cases worldwide, debris in the burden carried by practitioners in the field of eye health.

4. Restrictions on Automated Detection Solutions.

Various proposals on automated DR-detection systems have been proposed, but most of them rely on deep learning algorithms, which need large amount of data and high power computation.

5.Class Imbalance Problem

In addition, most classification systems also face the problem of class imbalance, as the number of instances of DR at an early stage is much lesser than the number of normal instances.

1.3 Aim of the study

The of this study is to design and implement an automated, web-based system that detects early diabetic retinopathy from retinal fundus images using image processing and machine learning techniques.

Objectives of the Study

1. Preprocessing retinal fundus images to improve image quality and isolate clinically relevant regions for analysis.
2. Extraction of key retinal features associated with early diabetic retinopathy, including microaneurysms, blood vessel patterns, and optic disc characteristics.
3. Developing and training a Random Forest classifier model capable of distinguishing between normal retinas and early-stage diabetic retinopathy cases.
4. Deploy the system as a web app using Flask framework with image upload and prediction functionality
5. Evaluation of the model performance using accuracy, sensitivity and F1-score metrics.

1.4 Significance of the Study

1. Ophthalmologists and Eye Care Specialists

   This study provides a decision-support system that assists ophthalmologists in the early detection of diabetic retinopathy (DR), thereby improving diagnostic efficiency and consistency. It reduces reliance on manual image interpretation, minimizes human error, and helps specialists focus more on severe or complex cases. This enhances the overall accuracy and speed of clinical decision-making.

2. Primary Healthcare Providers

   The system supports primary healthcare providers by enabling preliminary screening and early identification of patients at risk of diabetic retinopathy. This is particularly important in settings where ophthalmology specialists are limited, as it improves patient triaging and ensures timely referral for advanced care.

3. Patients with Diabetes

   Patients benefit directly from earlier detection of diabetic retinopathy, which increases the likelihood of early treatment and reduces the risk of irreversible blindness. This contributes to improved quality of life and better long-term management of diabetes-related complications.

4. Healthcare Facilities and Hospitals

   Hospitals and clinics benefit from improved workflow efficiency through reduced screening time and automated image analysis. The system helps manage large volumes of diabetic patients more effectively and reduces dependence on manual diagnostic procedures, making service delivery more efficient.

5. Medical Researchers and Technology Developers

   The study contributes to medical image analysis research by demonstrating the effectiveness of traditional machine learning techniques, such as hand-crafted feature extraction combined with Random Forest classification, in DR detection. It also provides a practical comparison point against more computationally expensive deep learning approaches, supporting further innovation in lightweight and interpretable AI systems.

6. Public Health Systems and Policymakers

   The system supports public health initiatives aimed at reducing preventable blindness by enabling scalable and cost-effective DR screening. Its integration into routine screening programs can improve early detection rates and downsize the overall burden of diabetes-related eye issues at the population level.

1.5 Scope of this study

The scope of this study is to design and develope an automated programme to detect diabetic retinopathy (DR) in patients at an early stage through the use of retinal fundus images. This is restricted to binary classification, differentiating between normal retinal images and the cases of early-stage diabetic retinopathy. The system fails to deal with advanced stages of DR or extensive severity grading other than detecting it at an early stage. The article makes use of APTOS 2019 Blindness Detection data as the key source of data, retinal images are processed to improve them and find clinically significant areas. Image processing only involves the conventional computer vision method, such as image enhancement, image segmentation and feature extraction algorithms that depict retinal features like microaneurysms, blood vessels and optic disc characteristics. The methods of deep learning are not within the scope of the study. Implementation of machine learning is limited to the utilisation of a Random Forest classifier with a balance of the classes to overcome the imbalance in the databases. The standard performance metrics such as accuracy or sensitivity and specificity and F1-score are used to model evaluation and determine the effectiveness of screening. The system is programmed as a web-based application that is deployed based on the Flask framework and provides the image upload Service and prediction capability appropriate for simple clinical/academic demonstration. The research is not comprised of real-time clinical trials, regulatory approval, and integration with hospital information systems. The area is thus limited to a proof-of-concept screening tool to show that machine learning and retinal image analysis can be used as a tool to detect diabetic retinopathy at an early stage.

1.6 Limitations of the study

1. Dependence on Manual Screening – Many earlier systems relied on ophthalmologists to manually examine retinal images, making diagnosis slow, expensive, and subjective.
2. High Computational Requirements – Most deep learning models required roburst annotated datasets, powerful hardware, and high system resources, limiting their use in low-resource environments.
3. Class Imbalance Problems – Previous studies struggled with imbalanced datasets where normal retinal images were much more than early diabetic retinopathy cases, leading to biased predictions.
4. Poor Early-Stage Detection – Many systems focused on severe or multi-class diabetic retinopathy detection and were less effective in identifying early-stage DR signs.
5. Limited Generalization – Some deep learning models performed well on specific datasets but failed to generalize efficiently across different clinical environments and image datasets.
6. Black-Box Nature of Deep Learning – Deep learning approaches often lacked interpretability, making clinicians less confident in trusting automated predictions.
7. Limited Accessibility and Deployment – Many previous systems were desktop-based and not integrated into web-based or scalable healthcare platforms.
8. Sensitivity to Image Quality – Variations in retinal image quality and lesion patterns affected the accuracy and consistency of earlier automated systems.
9. Overfitting and Small Dataset Issues – Some machine learning models overfitted small or noisy datasets, reducing reliability on unseen data.
10. Lack of Lightweight and Explainable Models – Few studies combined interpretable machine learning with deployable web-based systems suitable for resource-constrained healthcare settings.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The literature review in this chapter is carried out for research related to the topic of this research on early detection of DR by analysing the retinal image with the help of machine learning techniques. In one hand, an introduction to DR is given which contains definition, causes, stages and clinical significance of DR as it is the most important complication of diabetes and a major cause of blindness in both developed and developing world. Knowledge of the metabolic underpinnings of DR. Furthermore, it is important to remember that early detection of DR can have an extremely important role as it allows the identification of those affected who have significant visual dysfunction and significantly improve their health status. Conventional methods for diagnosing DR have been poor in efficiency, requiring the specialization of personnel and resources and are expensive. Therefore, a need arises for automated screening of the patients. Last but not least, this literature review deals with the use of retinal images for the detection of diabetic retinopathy. This chapter explains the data that is commonly used for retinal image analysis, which is also used throughout the prior research by other researchers, and how the availability of such data impacts on the learning of the models. Computer vision principles that have been used in analyzing retinal images are also explained in detail with special emphasis on the ways of image preprocessing, enhancement, segmentation, feature extraction and localization of clinically significant retinal structures. In addition, this chapter reviews some of the conventional classifiers that have been used to diagnose DR using various machine learning techniques. This chapter gives critical analysis of the previous work carried out on these topics by the other researchers, and produces the research gap, and the limitations of the previous studied work as a strong theoretical support to the developed model of early diabetic retinopathy diagnosis.

2.2 Theoretical Background

When it comes to this context of applying Computer Vision and Machine learning approaches, the theory of ophthalmic diseases will be taken into account in this research. DR will be described as a disorder of microvascular disease, which will be explained using the theory of how high glucose levels in the blood cause multiple micro complicating issues over time (microaneurysms, haemorrhages, exudates and ischaemia). These pathologies take time to occur and can be also clinically relevant and technically possible, when detecting them with retinal imaging (Duh et al., 2017). The biological basis for the early visual clues for the retinal fundus image are correlated with the pathophysiology of the mild and more severe forms of DR. From a clinical diagnosis perspective, it is easy to comprehend that the ophthalmic theory features minute characteristics of the retinal microvasculature, like variations in retinal vasculature, abnormal tangles, microaneurysms and more, which could be valuable in the detection of DR (Saleh et al., 2022). Theoretical foundation of computer part of research relates to area of machine learning. Machine learning models are primarily developed to recognize patterns or to correlate the data in the high dimensionality and then use the information learnt to generate the patterns for new samples that are not explored yet that follow the same pattern and these involve the application of statistical learning theory (Patil et al., 2024). Among the commonly applied approaches of supervised machine learning one can mention Decision Tree, Random Forest, Support Vector Machines, and k-Nearest Neighbor classifiers that have been already applied to solving various tasks in the sphere of medicine, including the diagnostic problem of diabetic retinopathy (Shekar et al., 2021). In this regard, the above mentioned methods rely on the labelled images of retina of the patients to differentiate the healthy and disease images based on their different characteristics. Thus, with the skills of the health sector and machine learning, the study builds a basis of science for the early diagnosis of DR.

2.3 Conceptual framework

This research paper is a fusion of the clinical approach to Diabetic retinopathy (DR) and the computer vision/machine learning approach to diagnose DR and identify it in the initial stages of the retinal image. The main premise of this research is centered around the fact that diabetic retinopathy arises due to progressive microvascular injury that is typical for hyperglycemia. So, the changes in the structure of retinal vessels occur well in advance of the clinical signs. Pathological changes can be diagnosed early using retinal fundus imaging techniques, and analysed playfully for diagnosis. In this context, the main source of information used in this project will be retinal fundus images (Shekar et al., 2021). The initial step of the analysis will be the image preprocessing in order to increase the quality of the image and highlight areas of interest. These areas of interest will be identified and used as early signs of DR such as microaneurysms, blood vessels features and optic disc features (Sarki et al., 2021). The feature extraction process is coupled with some measurable clinical characteristics, which help to move from theory in ophthalmology to computer processing of the information. Then, following feature extraction, the features extracted are passed to the training machine learning algorithm (Random Forest classifier) which will assist in differentiating healthy eyes from the early stages of the disease (Hashemzadeh and Azar, 2019). Class imbalance problem is solved by model based approaches such as class weightings for an equal and balanced learning process. The effectiveness of the diagnosis is evaluated using various assessment techniques such as accuracy, sensitivity, specificity, and F1-

score (Owusu-Adjei et al, 2023). The proposed model will be included in a web application, which will handle the uploading process and making the prediction. This system would allow the medical personnel to easily and effectively identify early signs of DR. Overall, the framework illustrates the potential of integrating clinical skills, imaging, and machine learning for screening and decision-making.

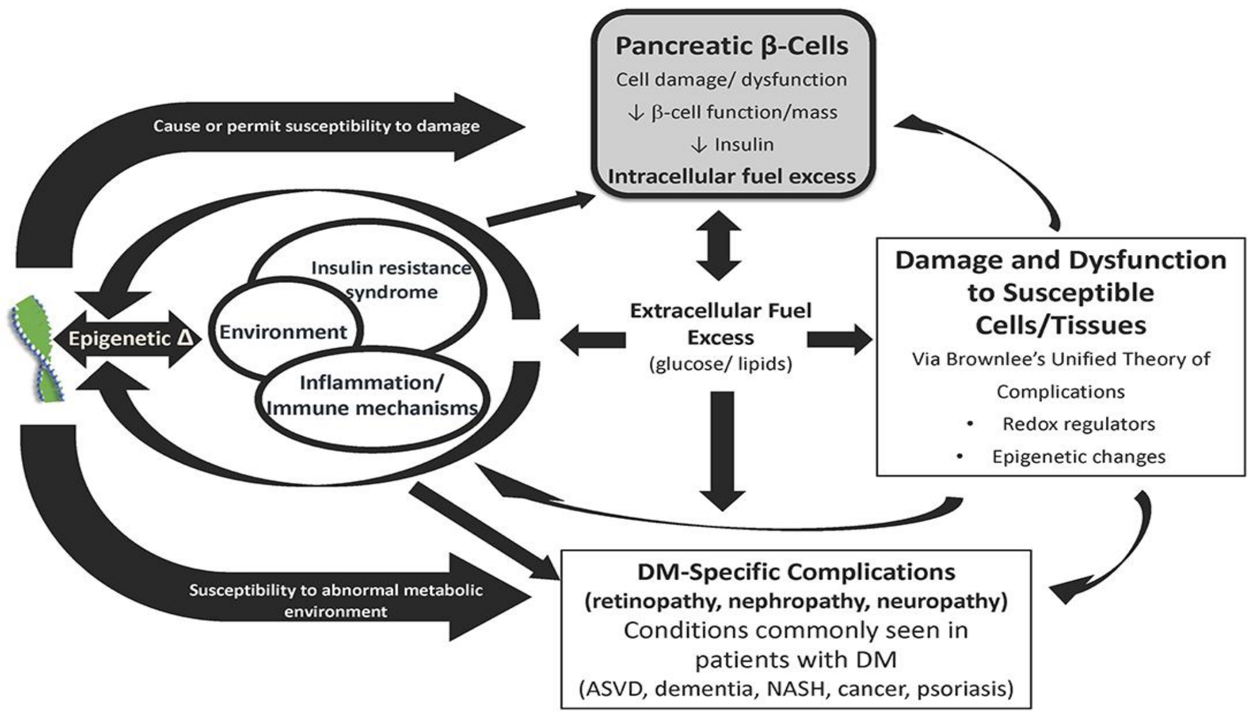

Figure 1: Conceptual framework of Diabetic Retinopathy (Sinclair & Schwartz, 2019).

2.3.1 Overview of Diabetic Retinopathy

Diabetic Retinopathy (DR) is a silent microvascular disease of diabetes mellitus and an avoidable cause of sight loss worldwide. DR is caused by the effects of high blood glucose and damage of the small blood vessels that surround the retina—the back surface of the eye where light is sensed. This newly formed vascular system causes changes to the retina and ultimately an impairment of the retina, causing loss of vision. DR is one of the most common diseases in the world with one out of three patients suffering from the disease. This means that a person's health significantly suffers from it. Chronic hyperglycemia is the primary cause of DR since it results in vascular changes in the body. The blood-retinal barrier (BRB) breakdown under high blood glucose concentration has a range of adverse effects including oxidative stress, inflammation and endothelial dysfunction (Yau et al., 2012). Induces microaneurysms, vascular leakage, hemorrhage and lipid exudation. High blood pressure, high blood fat level, length of time you've had diabetes, and any susceptibility you may have can also count as other risk factors that add up to the development of DR which could result in vision problems. The severity of diabetic retinopathy is determined by the severity and by the type of retinal lesions. The first type is Non-Proliferative Diabetic Retinopathy (NPDR) that is characterized by the presence of microaneurysms, dot-blot haemorrhage, mild retinal oedema and no symptoms (Roşu et al., 2024). Retinal vascular changes, vascular ischaemia and vascular exudation continue to develop to moderate and severe NPDR. In case when the disease proceeds to its later stage (Proliferative Diabetic Retinopathy), there appears neovascularization because of formation of the fragile blood vessels which cause bleeding into the vitreous body and subsequently lead to retinal detachment. This disease is known as Diabetic Macular Edema (DME) which happens at any stage due to fluid collection in the macula resulting in the damage to central vision. The reason of the fact that DR poses a problem in a clinical setting is that during early stages, there is no symptom observed and this makes it easy to covert that DR have not caused any irreversible damage (Al Sakini et al., 2024). So it's important to have the issue diagnosed as soon as possible. Which can only be achieved by regulation of blood glucose level, laser photocoagulation, in some instances, intravitreal injection or surgery. Knowledge of pathology, progression and risk factors associated with DR is the key that leads to the development of Automated DR Screening system using retinal images, and in so doing, it ensures early diagnosis of DR, thereby preventing cases of visual impairment due to DR or blind eyes (Sobhi et al., 2025). Given that DR is currently known by healthcare professionals and the advancements in the use of image and computing technology, screening procedures for this condition can be improved.

2.3.2 Diabetic Retinopathy – The importance of Early Detection

Introduction Diabetic Retinopathy (DR) is an eye disease where there are no symptoms. In particular, DR develops gradually, and one does not know that he/she has the disease until it gets to an advanced stage. It is important to note that by the time the symptoms of DR appear, damage of the retina would have occurred causing loss of vision and eventually blindness (Safi et al., 2018). Early detection of the disease is important because it allows a person to get proper treatment hence stopping further progression of the disease and keeping the person's vision. Advantages of early detection of the disease include the following: from a medical perspective, early detection of the disease allows physicians to prevent the occurrence of further problems such as maintaining the levels of blood sugar to normal, controlling blood pressure and regulating lipids. No complications of PDR or DME can be prevented unless these conditions are treated early with laser treatments, intravitreal injections and anti-VEGF medications. In terms of public health, it will reduce the strain on the health care system, with little if any, need for medical care, hospitalisation and rehabilitation for severe DR sufferers. Also, the patient will be able to manage his condition himself, hence enhancing compliance with both lifestyle and medication management (Nozaki et al., 2023). However, despite being highly necessary, there are numerous challenges in conventional DR screening. The conventional screening includes manual inspection of retinal fundus photographs by the ophthalmologist or a screening grader. This approach is time consuming, requires large amounts of labour and is expensive. In many regions, especially low- and middle-income areas, it is hard to gain access to eye care professionals.Another problem with manual diagnosis is that the diagnosis process will be inconsistent because of the variation in observations by different people. With diseases like diabetes spreading globally, it becomes challenging to conduct screening; especially because there aren't enough resources to cater to everyone at risk. All of these factors underscore the need for an efficient screening program for DR. It would facilitate the diagnosis of retinal image with computer vision and machine learning techniques, even in cases of resource unavailability, making it simple and precise to diagnose DR.

2.3.3 Application of Computer Vision in Retinal Image Analysis

The analysis of retinal images is one of the applications of DR related with computer vision diagnosis and monitoring. Computer vision can save a significant amount of time and be cost-effective, besides avoiding errors. This happens since computer vision allows having automatic detection and analysis of the visual information that has been obtained from retinal fundus images. No time, expense, and risk in manually screening these images, which helps to preserve the original.

1.Image Pre-processing: Enhances the visibility of the retina's appearance by uniformly resizing the image, adjusting the brightness and contrast, reducing noise, etc. (Wu et al., 2025). This will aid in the detection of small details in the image such as microaneurysms and hemorrhages.

2.Segments: Useful for identification of blood vessels, optic disc, macula and lesions within the retina. Several techniques like thresholding, edge detection, morphological segmentation or regional segmentation can be used to detect and quantify any changes in such structures.

3.Feature extraction: Assist in identifying news that may include the number of microaneurysms, the dimension and shape of blood vessels, and the appearances of the optic disc and number of exudates. Input could be the extracted features and feed these into the machine learning techniques, in order to separate normal and DR affected images.

4.Image Augmentation: It helps to generate varied retinal images artificially in order to overcome issues of small and unbalanced datasets as well as tackle more problems.

5.Automated identification and contouring of abnormal regions in retinal images (anomaly detection) is used to enhance the early diagnosis of DR by doctors (Burlina et al., 2022).

6.Machine Learning Applications: Images and features extracted using the converter process are converted into numeric data that can be used to train classifiers to automate the process of identifying DR.

7.Efficiency and Standardization: Carries out regular tasks, reduces the risk of mistakes resulting from the manual processes, and has consistent outcomes for many samples.

8.Clinical Assistance: Provides quantitative and visual information about the retina condition, which helps medical experts in the decision making process.

2.3.4 Machine Learning Techniques for Diabetic Retinopathy Detection

Machine learning algorithm has been an important means through which the process of automated diagnosis of diabetic retinopathy from retinal fundus images has been done. Supervised machine learning algorithms are most preferred since they help classify retinal features to either be normal retinal images or early diabetic retinopathy images. They are highly interpretable and trainable with the data.

1. 1.Decision trees: Classification algorithms that decompose data into regions determined by the thresholds of features whose purpose is to form a tree-shaped structure. The classifiers can be easily explained and implemented hence perfect for determining the most critical features of the retina concerning diabetic retinopathy. They perform moderately at 70-80% accuracy, but overfit when applied to poor and limited amounts of data.
2. 2.Ensemble Methods: Decision Tree Forest is one of these methods, which involves multiple decision trees to maximize the accuracy of predictions and reduce overfitting. The Decision Tree Forest (DTF) method is found to be beneficial when handling the imbalanced data as there is a low number of false-negative/low sensitivity rate present in early DR diagnosis and more than 70 F1-scores were obtained by using feature extraction and quality of data (Yang & Wang, 2025).
3. 3.Support Vector Machines (SVM): This method used optimal hyperplane separating images that are healthy from those affected by DR basis on features extracted. The support vector machine (SVM) method is effective at processing high-dimensional features and is

highly sensitive to the early detection of DR, but suffers from the issue of needing to properly select kernel functions and regularizations (Guido et al., 2024).

4. 4.K-Nearest Neighbors (k-NN): The k-NN is a classifier in which an image is classified by the most prominent/occurring classes from the k-nearest neighbor's features. Even though k-NN algorithms are easy to implement and comprehend, the method is costly to compute and cannot tolerate noise (Vega-Huerta et al., 2025).

2.4 Review of Related Literature

This section focuses on reviewing literature of previous research and methods used for early detection of DR using retinal images and machine learning. From using image processing method coupled with one of the classic machine learning classifiers to adopting deep learning approach, several techniques have been tried to perform automated screening of DR. This study presents the literature review which provides important information around the methodology used to achieve automatic detection of DR, dataset used, performance achieved and drawbacks faced in the process. In this literature review, deficiencies in the current methods for early DR detection and management of imbalanced data will be highlighted. The outcomes of the aforesaid literature survey has been utilized with a view to promote the proposed methodology in the direction of detecting the DR early using retinal images and machine learning classifiers based system available online.

In addition, Bhulakshmi and Rajput gave research on detection and placement of diabetic retinopathy from retinal fundus image using deep learning methods. From their research, it is clear that screening of DR manually involves some disadvantages since it demands intensive efforts from experts as well as being subjective. Therefore, automatic procedures should be carried out to ensure that diagnosis is performed. It summarizes the various applications of the deep learning techniques like CNN in the study of specific features of the retina like blood vessels, microaneurysms, exudates, optic disc and hemorrhages that can help detect and classify DR. The study outlines different types of neural networks that are applied in the area such as RNN, GANs and federated learning approaches. This is evident in the variety of deep learning models that are applied in order to enhance the detection of DR. Moreover, the research covers some significant datasets which might be used in research, performance measures and other issues of variability in datasets and model generalization. Moreover, Bhulakshmi and Rajput (2024) give research directions; highlighting those areas that will require future research. As a result, the systematic review results have shown that although the employment of deep learning in diabetic retinopathy analysis has promising potential, the lack of variety in the dataset or the significant computational support required remain essential concepts to be addressed in order to use this approach in clinical practice.

Abbas et al. (2017) proposed an algorithm that can be done by deep visual features present in retinal fundus images to quantify the severity of the disease. The difference here with other similar research presented was the use of deep feature learning by Abbas et al. (2017) where manual data-precprocessing/postprocessing was carried out in other research.The features, which are adopted in this research, are the dense scale invariant and gradient location orientation histograms in the coloured images. This more extensive visual feature extraction is performed using a semi-supervised deep learning method using a novel compression layer and fine-tuning to allow the system to “learn” the differences between each of the five severity ranges of DR. According to Abbas et al., this model has outstanding performance with 92.18 sensitivity, 94.50 specificity and AUC of 0.924 for 750 retinal images with five degrees of severity. It can be inferred that the system could differentiate the various degrees of DR without human interventions of any kind in the image processing chain, which indicates the possible use of deep learning in automated retinal image processing and early diagnosis.

Ali and Dawood (2022) have conducted a review about the usage of deep learning algorithms for DR diagnosis and classification. It can be seen that there is a need to have automated methods in diagnosing DR, because it is tedious when carried out manually. In this paper, various deep learning models that have been applied are analyzed and discussed in various instances to test the different deep learning methods. These models include CNNs (convolutional neural networks) which are able to detect features from retinal images in order to analyze the DR data. Deep Learning techniques, where the features are automatically learned at hierarchical level within the image like blood vessels, microaneurysms, Hemorrhages, etc., are found to be very successful in terms of classification performance compared to the traditional techniques. Furthermore, Ali and Dawood compare the performance of the various deep learning models.As stated in the literature review of theirs, although the possible potential of deep learning in such research is high, there are also many limitations in terms of generalization of data over the various data sets. The paper also suggests that deep learning should be effectively applied to DR diagnostics as it would facilitate early diagnosis of DR and thereby reduce the burden of the healthcare professionals.

The approach of utilizing the deep learning algorithm for the purpose of the early diagnosis of diabetes is presented in the paper of Aslan and Sabanci (2023). This method was done by converting the clinical data between values in numbers and making images out of them, and then using the amazing architecture of CNNs to process images. The first dataset is numeric: the well-known dataset PIMA. This case is not suitable for using the CNNs architecture because the data cannot be used. To address this issue, the authors have used image transformation of numeric variables based on their importance and popular CNN models such as ResNet18, ResNet50 can be applied. In their study, three classification approaches were used; they comprise: the direct classification approach through the use of CNNs on created images, deep features where the feature fusion takes place through the use of ResNet models followed by the classification through the employment of Support Vector Machines (SVM), and lastly SVM-based classifications approach where fusion of the most important features takes place. The results show that the image-based deep learning models have excellent predictive powers in relation to diabetes since the conversion of numeric features to images plays a major role in the efficiency of CNNs. Considering the limitations on the numeric data structure, in this paper, it is seen as a method to transform data to enhance the application of deep learning in medical predictions.

Attota, Tadikonda, Pethe and Khan (2022) proposed a transfer learning based hybrid method for diabetic retinopathy (DR) classification and the paper was presented at 46th Annual Computers, Software, and Applications Conference (COMPSAC). Different strengths of different pre-trained CNNs will be used and not just a single model is used which will provide the needed better solution for DR detection. Transfer learning method is a technique which takes advantage of the data of many images with high labels to train the model and then applies it to solve problems with limited label data and to save the training time. The methodology involves the usage of different CNNs that have been trained using the DR dataset and combining their outputs in order to obtain final output. Ensemble learning utilizes the model output from various models to improve performance and robustness. This methodology will enable better representation of different features of the diabetic retinopathy disease such as microaneurysm and hemorrhage in retinal and secondary images. Thanks to the research on the assembled transfer learning network, high accuracy and robustness have been achieved, compared to the single deep learning neural network.The semi-automated system is more efficient than a stand-alone deep learning based classifier because of the complementary properties of other classification algorithms, such as its strengths and specific complementary features.

Bilal, Zhu, Deng, Lu, and Wu (2022) researchers introduced an automatic system of detecting and classifying DR via U-Net along with deep learning, in contrast to the conventional hand-crafted features approaches. The shortcomings in the study can be summarized as the fact that they considered the traditional process of diagnosis and prediction of DR which was based on manual features extraction and classification, hence they felt the need to adopt a deep neural network approach because it will help them in detecting complex retinal patterns without having to depend on images. Here there are two-stage deep learning processes applied. Two U-net models are used in the first stage in order to extract important parts of the retina (Bright Disc and blood vessels). However, to enhance the screening efficiency over traditional hand-crafted features techniques, researchers Bilal, Zhu, Deng, Lu and Wu (2022) designed an automatic detection and classification model for diabetic retinopathy using deep learning and U-Net. However, there are certain restrictions in their study due to their limited experiments which were restricted to the traditional method of DR prediction and diagnosis using manual feature selection and classification. That is why they decided to have the deep neural network model, because of its ability to analyze a retinal image without using images and to perform all the steps of a complicated pattern of analysis. Two phases of deep learning have been taken into consideration for the proposed solution. In the first stage two U-net models have been applied to detect the critical elements related to the retina, e.g. Bright disc, blood vessels.

Chavan and Choubey (2023) proposed an automated system to classify diabetic retinopathy severity based on transfer learning and fine tuning of images of retinal fundus. The paper highlights the issues related to the manual and conventional approach to DR grading that can be problematic because of the scarcity of data and inconsistency in results because of varying image quality and changes in lesion patterns. Furthermore, the transfer learning is implemented using the trained deep convolutional neural network that can utilize the trained model from large scale datasets and apply the features learned through the large datasets for the classification problem of DR without needing the large scale datasets for the DR. The pre-trained models are fine-tuned using the retinal images with the aim to determine their clinical disease grades to generate automated multi-classifications—represents the clinical disease grades—during the study. It involves a certain degree of pre-processing to clean up the retinal fundus images, or fine-tune the networks to learn the features. In the current work, the activity of the transfer learning technique is demonstrated by the enhanced capacity of the classifiers to classify and generalize; therefore, it is suitable for medical images where a limited amount of annotated images exists, which is directly compared when training deep networks. The potential of the suggested framework in the grading of the severity of DR contributes to the existing body of literature on the deep learning models to diagnose retinal diseases.

Dayana and Emmanuel (2022) introduced improved swarm optimization deep neural network classification of diabetic retinopathy (DR) from retinal fundus image. However, feature selection and convergence defects of conventional NN make the authors to come up with a solution, which includes a metaheuristic optimization algorithm, and a deep learning network, enhancing the efficiency and accuracy in DR classification. The proposed swarm optimization algorithm is improved such that the most discriminative features are selected from the retina images in real-time hence the deep neural network will be able to learn more discriminative trends that could be attributed to the severity of DR. With the proposed approach it has been possible to enhance the performance of the model, not only by decreasing the calculation complexity but also by optimizing the parameters and selecting the best subsets of features. The optimized neural network was able to improve the classification accuracy in retinal images compared to the normal deep learning models.The indication is that the feature selection approach guided by the metaheuristic might help significantly the DR detection capability, especially in the context of high dimensionality and diverse quality of image datasets. The paper by Dayana and Emmanuel usually emphasizes the use of integration between these two widely utilized methods—those of swarm intelligence and deep neural networks—to enhance the automatic DR screening process in developing more efficient and quality DR diagnostic methods.

Fayyaz, Sharif, Azam, Karim and El-Den (2023) explored in their study the use of Deep Learning models in the analysis and diabetic retinopathy detection of retinal images. Specifically, they were worried about such automatic learning to obtain hierarchical, discriminative features in complex patterns in the retina, without performing any kind of manipulation on them. Its capacity makes it convenient to detect small retinal abnormalities like microaneurysms, hemorrhages, and exudates that can be early signs of DR. The authors have emphasized that theses techniques in addition to data pre-processing to address the small number of annotated medical images and heterogeneity of image quality. The authors explore the potentialities of the deep learning systems in terms of DR detection and conclude that in most cases the ability of the deep learning systems surpasses that of conventional machine learning models in terms of accuracy, sensitivity, and specificity. One difficulty named by Fayyaz et al. in relation with deep learning-based DR analysis is that of overfitting, class imbalance and requires large and diverse dataset to improve generalizability of findings. In conclusion, the paper shows the potential impact of deep learning on the automated screening process for DR and the need for further research.

Geetha Ramani, Balasubramanian and Jacob (2012), proposed an automatic prediction of diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma by analyzing the retinal images using traditional image processing and data mining techniques. The authors' research was intended to create a model that would be able to analyze the retinal fundus images to find features that are associated with the two diseases.The methodology began with pre-processing, in order to enhance the quality of the image and reduce the noise, followed by segmentation to isolate the retinal structures like the optic disc and blood vessels. The clinically important features, including vessel width, tortuosity and any diabetic retinopathy or glaucoma signs were measured by feature extraction. The analysis of these features was performed using data mining classifiers for the purpose of discriminating between normal and abnormal cases. The experiment showed that the combination of image-based features and machine learning classifiers was effectively done to provide efficient detection results. Although this study occurred before recent developments in deep learning, it laid the groundwork in automated diagnosis of eye diseases as it demonstrated that systematic retinal patterns and even the standard classifications can help in efficient detection of diseases.

In the study, Hassan et al. (2023) proposed an improved deep learning network for the classification of retinal OCT images which can contribute to achieving improved outcomes for automated diagnosis of retinal diseases, such as diabetic retinopathy. Retinal OCT images are high resolution cross-sectional images of the retina showing structural changes and can be used in the diagnosis of various eye conditions. The manual interpretation of OCT images, however, is very time consuming and subjective and hence, automated image analysis is required. The proposed model is called EOCT model and has a ResNet 50 architecture that has been modified and enhanced by using a random forest classifier and Adam optimizer to improve its training efficiency and performance. This new model is more efficient and trainable than other popular pretrained models such as VGG 16. Retinal OCT images were classified using this model and achieved high sensitivity, specificity, precision, negative predictive value and accuracy scores. Although not directly fundus images but related to OCT, this paper sheds light on the use of deep learning and hybrid models for enhancing automated retinal disease diagnosis and classification and the advanced architecture that can offer reliable diagnostic assistance.

Inamullah et al. (2023) proposed an ensemble of CNNs-based algorithm using diversified data which classifies Diabetic retinopathy (DR) using retinal fundus images. In order to tackle the problems related to the lack of balanced and small datasets of DR, the authors have suggested multiple CNN models that would be trained on different subsets of data created through augmentation and generation processes with the use of affine transformations. The diversity of information also plays a positive role in the generalization and classification accuracy of the model at several levels of DR such as the early stages of DR. The ensemble model comprises of three different types of CNNs, all of which are adaptable to the many different kinds of training data. The models are used in combination by majority voting to achieve better performance of the pooled models than the individual models. By using the tested model on the APTOS 2019 dataset, the tested model achieved very high score in the following multi-class DR classification metrics, namely Accuracy (91.06%), Precision (91.00%), Sensitivity (95.01%) and Specificity (98.38%). Based on the study, it can be observed that ensemble learning using data diversity can alleviate the issues of medical imaging data, and training and augmentation of multiple models can significantly support the automated DR detection system.

Jiwani, Gupta & Afreen (2022) have come up with a CNN architecture for classifying diabetic retinopathy (DR) from retinal fundus images at the IEEE International Conference on Communication Systems and Network Technologies (CSNT) 2022. It is designed to take advantage of CNN's automatic feature extraction ability without using any type of manual feature extraction. The method relies on the training of the custom CNN model based on the preprocessed retinal images for the purpose of detecting the features corresponding to various stages of DR. To overcome issues related to differences in the quality of fundus images, the images can be preprocessed before the CNN is used for the performance. These preprocesses can include image size adjustment and the improvement of image contrast. The CNN model is able to recognize deep features associated with the disease such as vessel irregularity and microaneurysms. They claimed to have achieved very good classification results on these benchmark datasets, suggesting that the CNNs work well in identifying image features with complex characteristics that play an important role in the diagnosis of DR. All in all, this research paper provides yet another proof of the fact that deep learning and, more specifically, CNN based models can play a significant role in improving the accuracy of automated diabetic retinopathy screening.

Kalyani et al. (2023) used a capsule network architecture for detection and classification of DR using retinal fundus-images so as to compensate the deficiencies of conventional CNN models. The problem with feature loss in CNN models is addressed, along with capturing spatial hierarchies and part-whole relationships in images in capsule networks. The use of convolutional, primary and class capsule layers via dynamic routing leads to a better extraction of features pertinent to the case of DR severity. The authors evaluated the proposed network using the Messidor dataset, and obtained good performance levels such as the accuracy measure of more than 97 percent for various DR severity levels. This shows that capsule networks are very well suited to accurately classify retinal images affected by DR and non-affected images. Dynamic Routing allows CapsNets to get accurate data regarding the transformation in the structures like microaneurysms and hemorrhages which are essential for the early stage of DR detection. In conclusion, it is clear that the idea of CapsNets is a viable direction to pursue in order to overcome the limitations of CNN in preserving spatial information and enhancing the classification process, especially in the medical field for interpreting medical images.

Li, Pang, Xiong, Liu, Liang, and Wang (2017) investigated the use of CNNs for classifying diabetic retinopathy (DR) from retinal fundus images through the use of transfer learning technique that was presented at the 2017 International Congress on Image and Signal Processing, Biomedical Engineering, and Informatics (CISP BMEI). In this research, the problems of the limited amount of labeled medical data were solved by using the pre-trained deep CNN models trained on large natural image data sets. The good thing about this is that the learned hierarchical features are computed at minimal efforts.The researchers tried various deep CNN architectures and their efficiency for fine-tune DR datasets. Such models have been able to learn important visual features such as microaneurysms, hemorrhages, and exudates through transfer learning, which are important signs for grading diabetic retinopathy. The results obtained from fine-tuning outperform those of non-pretrained CNN training when there was little amount of data. The findings from the work of Li et al. prove that transfer learning increases the generalization and classification accuracy of DR screening and hence proves to be effective in automated screening programs where there is lack of labeled retinal image data. This research will help to enhance the accuracy of deep feature learning and deep networks pretraining, as well as expand the use of deep networks in the analysis of medical images.

2.5 Summary of Literature Review

S/N	Author(s) & Year	Contribution / Work Done	Technique / Methodology	Limitations Encountered
1	Bhulakshmi & Rajput (2024)	Systematic review of deep learning for DR detection	CNNs, RNNs, GANs, Federated Learning	*Limited dataset diversity; high computational cost*
2	Abbas et al. (2017)	Deep visual feature learning for DR severity estimation	Deep neural networks on fundus images	*Limited dataset size; high computational demand*
3	Ali & Dawood (2022)	Review of deep learning methods for DR detection	CNN-based retinal image analysis	*Poor generalization across datasets*
4	Aslan & Sabanci (2023)	Diabetes prediction using image transformation	ResNet18, ResNet50, SVM	*Not directly focused on DR detection*
5	Attota et al. (2022)	Ensemble transfer learning for DR detection	Multiple pretrained CNN models	*High computational resource requirement*
6	Bilal et al. (2022)	Retinal lesion segmentation and classification	U-Net + CNN-based classifier	*Complex architecture; long training time*

S/N	Author(s) & Year	Contribution / Work Done	Technique / Methodology	Limitations Encountered
7	Chavan & Choubey (2023)	DR severity grading using transfer learning	Fine-tuned pretrained CNNs	*Dependence on pretrained models*
8	Dayana & Emmanuel (2022)	Optimization-based DR classification	Swarm optimization + deep neural networks	*High computational complexity*
9	Fayyaz et al. (2023)	Retinal image classification using DL	CNNs with augmentation and transfer learning	*Overfitting and class imbalance*
10	Geetha Ramani et al. (2012)	Classical retinal disease detection	Feature extraction + machine learning classifiers	*Lower accuracy than deep learning*
11	Hassan et al. (2023)	Hybrid retinal disease classification	ResNet50 + Random Forest (OCT images)	*Not based on fundus images*
12	Inamullah et al. (2023)	Ensemble CNN model for DR classification	Multiple CNNs with APTOS dataset	*High computational requirement*
13	Jiwani et al. (2022)	CNN-based DR detection system	Preprocessed retinal fundus images	*Sensitive to image quality*
14	Kalyani et al. (2023)	Capsule network for DR detection	CapsNet on Messidor dataset	*Complex training process*

S/N	Author(s) & Year	Contribution / Work Done	Technique / Methodology	Limitations Encountered
15	Li et al. (2017)	Transfer learning for retinal classification	Pretrained CNN models	*Dependence on pretrained datasets*
16	Gulshan et al. (2016)	Large-scale DR detection system	Deep CNN trained on fundus images	*Limited interpretability*
17	Pratt et al. (2016)	CNN-based DR classification model	Deep learning on Kaggle dataset	*Limited dataset diversity*
18	Quellec et al. (2017)	Automated lesion detection system	Multiple instance learning + DL	*Requires large annotated datasets*
19	Ting et al. (2017)	Multi-disease retinal screening system	Deep learning on multi-ethnic datasets	*High model complexity*
20	Gargeya & Leng (2017)	Unsupervised DR detection approach	Feature learning using CNNs	*Performance depends on data quality*

2.6 Research Gap

Even with the significant advancements in the automatic diagnosis of diabetic retinopathy (DR) through deep learning and machine learning, there are still a number of challenges. Firstly, most of the current literatures focus on the multiclass classifications for the severity level, yet they do not do well in detecting the disease during the early stages where actions are highly necessary. Secondly, while the engineering solutions are based on big datasets, yet they do not work effectively in real world since the datasets are often imbalanced, thereby unable to generalize the model. Moreover, while the deep learning techniques such as CNN and capsule networks are highly accurate in the automatic diagnosis of diabetic retinopathy, they tend to be rather opaque, which makes it difficult to interpret the results and make people trust the model. Very few works have been done on the lightweight deployable models that are able to run in the currently available web-based system in low resource environment. Also, very little works have been done on the combination of conventional features and machine learning approaches for early detection of the disease.

CHAPTER 3

SYSTEM ANALYSIS AND DESIGN

3.1 Introduction

The analysis and design of a diabetic retinopathy detection system will be undertaken in the following manner within this chapter. There exist various ways in which the process of analysis and design of systems such as SSADM could be done but this study will focus on the OOADM method. This depicts the ever-changing nature of the health care field due to the fact that this method allows for the modeling of processes, operations and data in the real world in an effective way. The OOADM enables the successful development and integration through the modeling of entities in the form of objects as well as reuse of the classes. Furthermore, OOADM enables a smooth transition to object oriented programming languages such as Python.

3.1.1 System Design Methodology

This will be done through Object oriented analysis and design methodology (OOADM) in this project whereby the creation of the software will follow a systematic approach. The OOADM methodology will guarantee that all the needs of the software have been met and validated before moving on to the actual coding. This will minimize mistakes in programming and hence make the system modular. This will enhance its maintenance. Besides, through this approach, it will be ensured that the output meets the clinical needs.

Justification of Methodology:

The use of the OOADM methodology is important in the context of medical application, as the major objective of the methodology is ensuring security of the data, correctness of actions and system structure. The requirement to use accurate calculations and authentication when conducting clinical tests ensures that the entire system operation will be verified before the system is put into practical use.

Method for Data Collection:

Training and Validation Data for the System: The publicly available APTOS 2019 Blindness Detection Dataset from the Asia-Pacific Tele-Ophthalmology Society, which contains thousands of retinal fundus images classified by ophthalmologists into five disease-severity classes, was used. These five classes were simplified to two classes (Normal and Early Stage).

3.2 Analysis of the existing system

The current approach of early detection of DR involves the manual analysis performed by ophthalmologists or by conducting the fundus examination of the eye, which identifies the symptoms of DR such as microaneurysms, hemorrhage and exudates. This method is cumbersome and error-prone due to the involvement of human beings in the entire process. The traditional method also utilizes image processing techniques that are simplistic and helps to make the diagnosis, but this method is not automated and predictive in nature. The other methodologies available for DR detection involve the combination of image processing techniques along with the traditional classification techniques to detect retinal abnormalities. However, these types of methodologies have limitations in terms of dealing with imbalance data, variation in image quality and early-stage detection, which makes them less efficient. Also, these systems only involve desktop-based software and do not include any web-based interface for the clinical process. These are some of the limitations of the current systems that make it necessary to develop an automated and efficient approach to detect the disease.

3.2.1 Limitations of Existing System

1. Time-Consuming Process of Diagnosis: The process of diagnosis involves active involvement of ophthalmologists and manual screening of retinal images.
2. Objective Aspect: Objective interpretation might contain errors, resulting in incorrect conclusions and bad diagnosis.
3. Poor Accessibility of Specialized Personnel: Not all regions have enough specialists needed for conducting screening procedures.
4. Difficulties in Diagnosing Early Stage Retinopathy: Diagnosis of the early stage of diabetic retinopathy is not an easy task using both conventional processes and computerized ones.
5. Impossibility to Handle Imbalanced Dataset: Modern computerized system does not have a capacity to deal with an imbalanced dataset properly.
6. No Web-Based Solutions: Currently used computerized solutions work on desktop computers only.
7. Conventional Methods of Image Processing: Conventional methods of image processing may fail to detect patterns of retina.
8. Flexibility Issue: Modern computerized systems lack flexibility...

3.3 Analysis of the Proposed System

The proposed early detection system of DR aims at developing an image processing technology that can be used for analyzing images of retinal fundus using algorithms for image processing and machine learning. In addition, this proposed system is going to be faster, more efficient and more accessible compared to existing methods of recognizing the initial symptoms of DR, including microaneurysms, hemorrhages and exudates. First of all, the process of pre-processing of images will be performed to improve the quality of the image and to equalize the level of illumination of the image allowing to identify small lesions in the retina. The patterns that can be identified using feature extraction algorithms are distinguished by such elements as vessels, optic disc and lesions, which are recognized using Random Forest algorithm that should take into account the problem of class balancing. The described system will be developed using web-based approach using Flask framework. Thus, a doctor would be able to upload a picture into the system and receive its prediction right away. In addition to this, the system will create a performance report with the parameters such as accuracy, sensitivity, specificity, and F1 score that enable the continuous assessment and improvement of the system. Overall, the proposed approach can be considered as a promising solution that helps to detect DR sooner, lowers the dependency on the doctor's experience, and provides medical assistance.

3.4 Model Used

This system makes use of supervised learning to create a model that can detect diabetic retinopathy (DR) in its early stages with accuracy using retinal fundus image. Supervised learning is preferred because the labelled data sets such as the APTOS 2019 Blindness Detection Dataset can give labels such as normal retina or early DR. The random forest classifier has been selected because it is highly efficient for high dimensional data and class imbalance. Characteristics of the retinal images have been used as input features. Some of the data preprocessing methods include those that handle missing values, enhance the quality of images, and normalize features in order to increase efficiency of the model. Feature selection will help reduce the computational cost and make the model more interpretable. Model evaluation is done using the technique of k-fold cross validation, which checks the performance of the model on unseen data. Model accuracy can be evaluated using accuracy, sensitivity, specificity, F1 measure, and confusion matrix. Importance of features obtained from the Random Forest model will help the clinicians to identify which retinal markers are important for the disease diagnosis and which are not.

3.4.1 Dataset Source

The experiment has been done on the basis of the APTOS 2019 Blindness Detection dataset, which is available on Kaggle (https://www.kaggle.com/c/aptos2019-blindness-detection/data). It is a high-resolution dataset containing retina fundus images annotated by retinopathy levels, and hence it can be used in supervised learning. There is a folder called trainimages/ which has the image data in JPG/JPEG format and the CSV file called train.csv which has the labels. The original dataset has classified DR into five stages (04). For this research, binary classification has been applied in order to classify normal retinas (Class 0, 1805 images) and early stage diabetic retinopathy (Class 1, 370 images). Consequently, there is a class ratio imbalance of about 4.9:1, which has been tackled by the use of class weight balanced in random forest and a stratified train/test split in order to have both classes represented proportionately.

3.4.2 Tools & Technologies

Component	Technology
Programming Language	Python 3.8+
Image Processing	OpenCV
Machine Learning	scikit-learn
Data Handling	NumPy, Pandas
Web Framework	Flask
Development Environment	PyCharm IDE

Visualization	Matplotlib, Seaborn
Model Serialization	Joblib

3.4.3 Model Development Steps

The process of building the model for early DR diagnosis includes multiple phases as follows:

1. Data Preprocessing: During the preprocessing phase, noise and missing data from the images are removed, normalized, and refined prior to being resized and standardized.
2. Feature Extraction: Extraction of clinically important features such as microaneurysms, vascular pattern, optic disc properties, and exudates area is achieved through image processing techniques.
3. Modeling: The development of a suitable prediction model is achieved through the use of machine learning algorithms like the Random Forest Classifier.
4. Model Validation: Performance evaluation of the model is done by assessing parameters such as accuracy, sensitivity, specificity, F1 score, and confusion matrix among others using k fold cross-validation.
5. Model Selection and Improvement: Model selection is based on the highest performing model.
6. Deployment: Model deployment using Flask framework-based web application for making predictions.

3.5 System Requirement Specification (SRS)

Functional Requirements

1. Secure User Authentication: The system must provide role-based access control, allowing administrators to manage accounts and doctors to securely log in.

2. Patient Data Management: The platform must allow doctors to register patients, enter basic profiles, and maintain structured records.

3. Fundus Image Uploading: The web interface lets users to upload retinal fundus images in standard formats (JPEG, PNG).

4. Automated Preprocessing & Feature Extraction: The system must automatically clean uploaded images and calculate numerical indices for key eye lesions.

5. Diagnostic Classification Output: The classifier must process the engineered features and display a clear prediction detailing the presence or absence of early-stage retinopathy.

Non-Functional Requirements

1. High Accuracy and Reliability: The classifier must maintain strong sensitivity and specificity scores to ensure dependable screening performance.

2. Swift Response Times: The complete pipeline—from image upload to prediction readout—must finish within 5 seconds on standard computers.

The UML is used to make the system an effective way of visualizing, specification, construction, and documentation of all components. Some of the key UML diagrams that will be used are use case diagrams, class diagrams, activity diagrams, and state transition diagrams that define system functionality, data structures, workflow, and state transitions in details, which will provide a clear blueprint to develop the web-based early diabetic retinopathy detector. Below are the diagrams:

3.5.1 Use Case Diagram

Use case diagram illustrates using Unified Modelling Language the interaction between users (also known as actors) and the system in order to perform certain actions (Olusegun, 2025). This diagram indicates how different sets of users are accessing the system, and helps identify what the system should be capable of doing according to the users' perspective. In our case study, use case diagram is used to demonstrate how all the actors are interacting with the early prediction of Diabetic Retinopathy model. Each and every actor in use case diagram has its own specific role:

Clinician:

1. Uploads retinal fundus images for analysis.
2. Initiates automated analysis of uploaded images using the system's machine learning model.
3. Views diagnostic reports and interprets results to make clinical decisions.
4. Provides feedback on system predictions for continuous improvement.

Patient:

1. Provides retinal images for screening.
2. Accesses diagnostic reports generated by the system to understand DR status.
3. May track changes over time through repeated screenings.

System/Admin:

1. Manages user accounts and access permissions for clinicians and patients.
2. Maintains system settings, monitors system performance, and ensures reliability.
3. Oversees data storage, security, and compliance with privacy regulations.
4. Supports integration of the predictive model into the web application for seamless functionality.

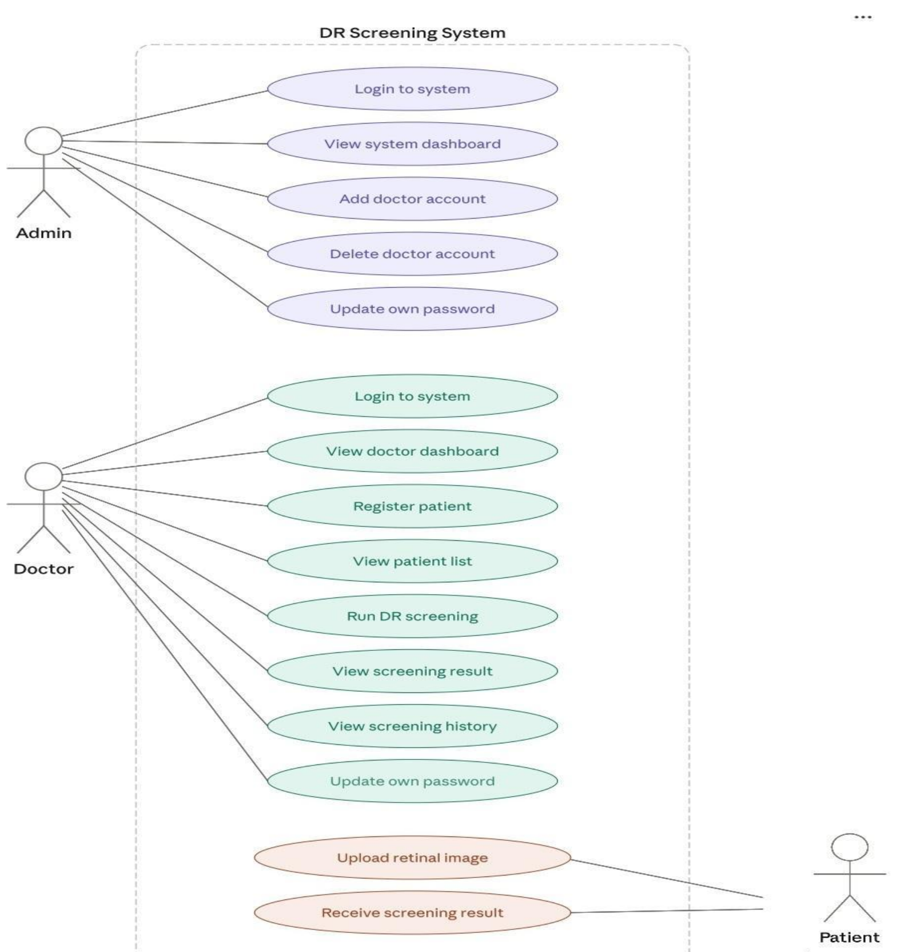

Figure 3.1: **Use case diagram of the proposed system (author).**

3.5.2 Class Diagram

Class diagrams in UML define the structure of the system through its classes, objects within each class, functionalities that can be performed by them, and the relationship between these classes (Nikiforova et al., 2011). Numerous software developers use case diagrams to represent the structure of the architecture of the system.

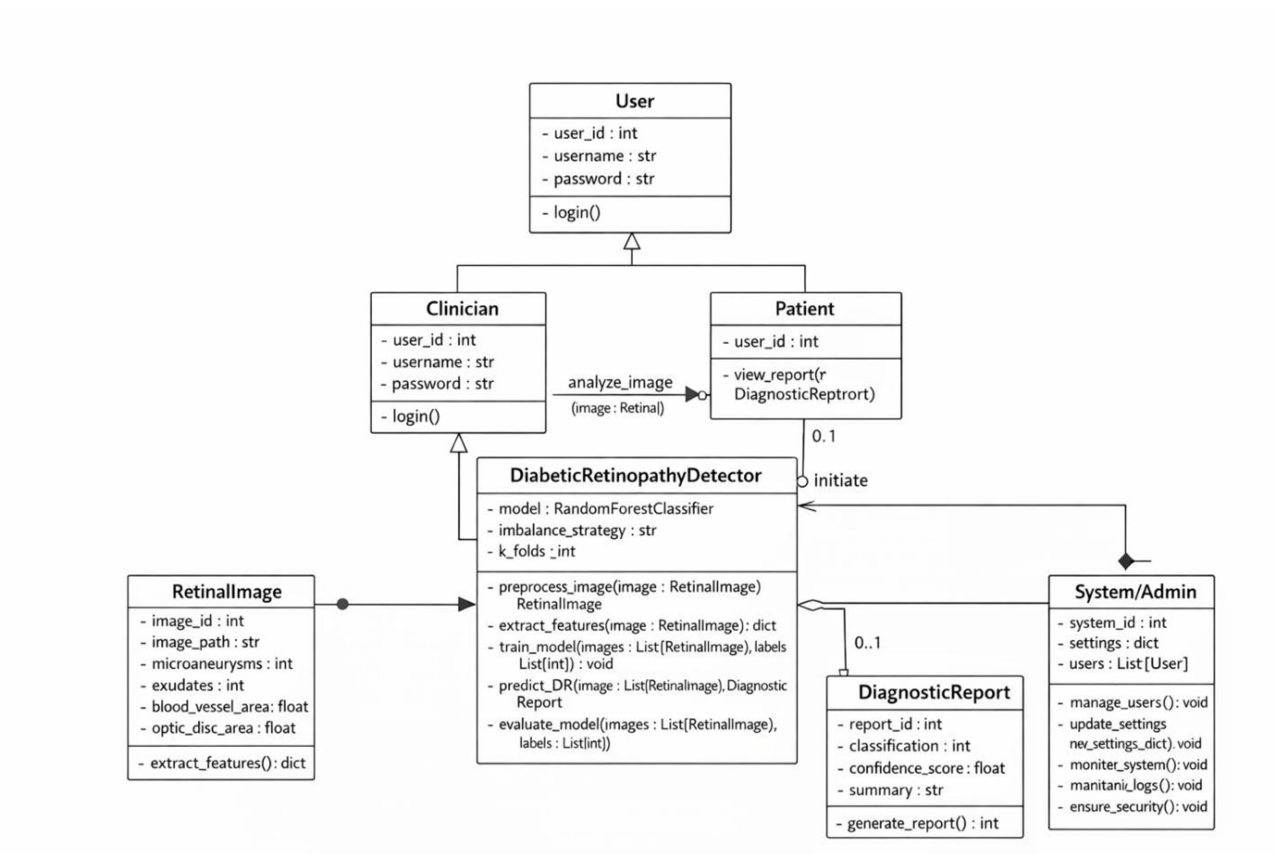

Figure 3.2: Class Diagram of the proposed system (author)

3.5.3 Activity Diagram

The activity diagram shows the workflow of the Early Diabetic Retinopathy Detection System. It begins with uploading of the image, then there is preprocessing and extraction of features. Random Forest model is used to predict the status of DR and the diagnostic reports are generated. Clinicians and the patients access results and all the data is kept safe.

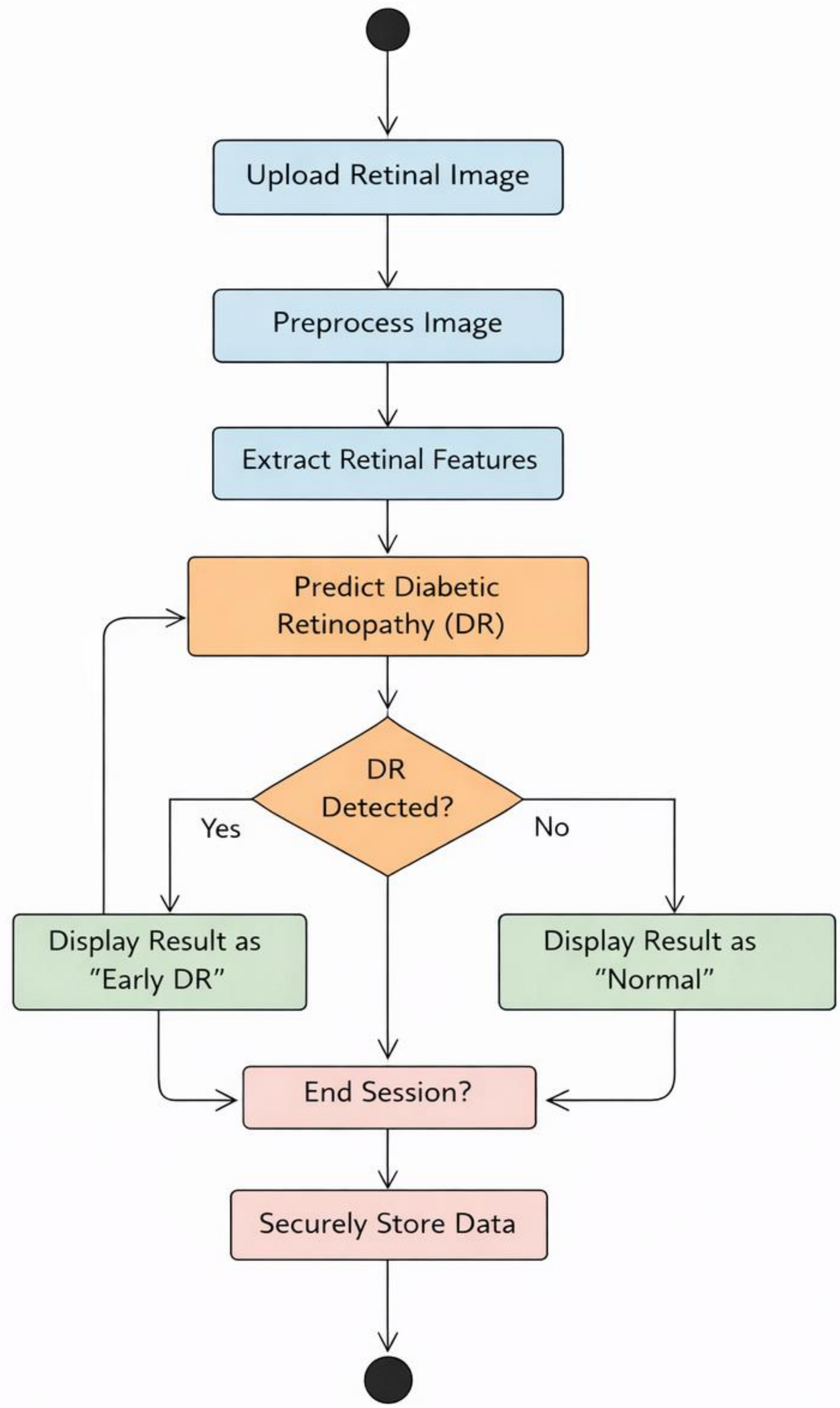

Figure 3.3: Activity diagram (author)

3.6.1 Design of Databases

MySQL is a relational database management system (RDBMS) which is utilized to construct, manage and query relational databases. Some of the tables are: Patient Table, Retinal Images Table, Predictions Table and Reports Table. The table structures employed during the development of the database are shown in Tables 3.1 through 3.4 (author).

Table 3.1: Patient Table

Column Name	Data Type	Description	Action
patient_id	INT (11)	Unique ID for each patient	Primary key
name	VARCHAR(255)	Full name of patient	
email	VARCHAR (255)	User email address	
password	VARCHAR	Hashed user password	Auto-generate
role	ENUM	User role (Clinician, Patient, Admin)	
date_created	DATETIME	Account creation date	Default current_timestamp

Table 3.2: RetinalImages Table

Column Name	Data Type	Description	Action
image_id	Int (11)	Unique image ID	Auto-increment, Not Null
patient_id	Int (11)	Linked user uploading the image	

image_path	VARCHAR(255)	Storage path of the image	
upload_date	DATETIME	Date and time of image upload	Default current_timestamp
preprocessed	BOOLEAN	Indicates if preprocessing is done	Default FALSE

Table 3.3: Predictions Table

Column Name	**Data Type**	**Description**	**Action**
prediction_id	Int (11)	Unique prediction record	Primary key
image_id	Varchar (255)	Associated retinal image	
model_used	Varchar(255)	Name of the predictive model	
prediction	ENUM	Result (Normal, Early DR)	
confidence	FLOAT	Confidence score of prediction	
prediction_date	DATETIME	Date and time of prediction	Default current_timestamp

Table 3.4: Reports Table

Column Name	**Data Type**	**Description**	**Action**
report_id	Int (11)	Unique report identifier	Automatic
patient_id	Int (11)	User who receives the report	
image_id	Int (11)	Related retinal image	

predicted_label	Int (11)	Linked prediction record	
report_date	DATETIME	Date and time report generated	Default current_timestamp
findings	TEXT	Summary of prediction and observations	

3.7 System Architecture

Architecture of the system for developing a machine learning model to predict Alzheimer's disease consists of three essential layers: Presentation Layer, Application Layer, and Data Layer. Three-layered architecture allows for achieving scalability and maintainability. Presentation Layer: represents the user interface of the system and is implemented as a web application using Flask. It enables clinicians and patients to post retinal images, read diagnostic reports and communicate with the system, which offers a convenient and easy-access interface in a seamless DR detection workflow experience. Application Tier **(**Business Logic Tier**)**: is the one where the main processing and decision-making of the system are implemented. It controls image preprocessing, feature extraction, and the prediction of a Random Forest model, uses class balancing and validation logic, and delivers diagnostic outcomes and makes sure that early diabetic retinopathy is detected correctly, efficiently, and reliably. Data Tier: handles storage and access to system information such as details of users, retinal images, predictions, and reports. It provides data integrity, security and accessibility using a structured relational database to support effective interactions between the presentation and Application tier to detect DR accurately and reliably.

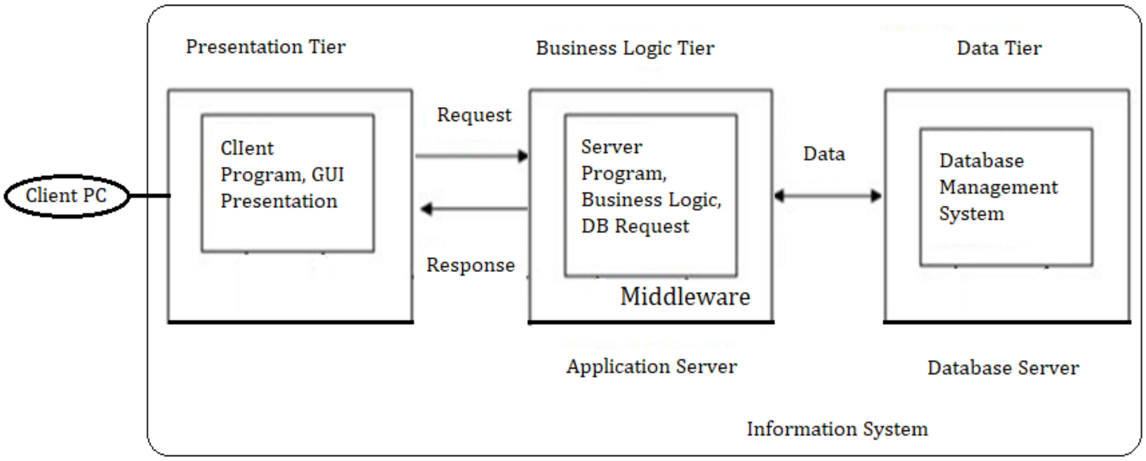

Fig 3.9: The Structure of the Proposed System (author).

CHAPTER FOUR

SYSTEM IMPLEMENTATION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter talks about the implementation of the proposed system for detecting diabetic retinopathy in the early stages. It explains how the components of the system can be implemented into an actual working system using Python, Flask, and machine learning. This chapter is all about how the system is developed, Random Forest implementation, design of user interface, and testing of the system.

4.1 Choice of Development Environment

Environment used during the development of the system includes the environment which was developed to guarantee that the system will be flexible, efficient and usable. The chosen programming language for development of the system is Python because it is a simple language which helps to implement machine learning and image processing. The PyCharm IDE was chosen during the process of creation of the system due to the reason that it is an easy-to-use software which guarantees efficient debugging and project management. The implementation of image processing and modeling was carried out using the following Python libraries: OpenCV, NumPy, Pandas and scikit-learn.

4.1.2 Development Platform and Hardware Requirements

1. Development Environment: The development environment utilized for project management along with debugging and deployment is PyCharm IDE.

2. Database Management: The database used for the secure management of patients' data, retinal images, and their reports is MySQL database.

4.2 Data Description and Preprocessing

3. For the mathematical benchmark for separating healthy retinas and the initial stages of Diabetic Retinopathy, the data is sourced from the internationally recognized APTOS 2019 Blindness Detection Dataset.

5 Description of Data: The data that has been chosen is the high-resolution fundus image data divided into two categories using Binary Classification: healthy retinas (category 0, consisting of 1,805 images) and initial stage of diabetic retinopathy (category 1, consisting of 370 images).

6 Imbalance Ratio of Classes: There is a ratio of 4.9:1 of the classes in the raw dataset. Instead of making synthetic data, the problem of class imbalance has been handled programmatically by introducing class weights in the Random Forest algorithm and stratified train/test splitting.

7 Pre-Processing: All imported images go through a pre-processing pipeline before inferencing. This involves resizing, contrast correction and denoising to detect important features like blood vessel abnormalities and optic disc features.

4.3 Programming Languages and Libraries

The entire development process, starting from the enhancement of images to the execution of the Random Forest classifier was carried out using Python 3.8+.

1. Python 3.8+: It was selected as the programming language because it can handle machine learning applications along with advanced image processing techniques.
2. OpenCV: The library was mainly involved in pre-processing of images including noise removal, resizing, and illumination correction to ensure that microaneurysms and hemorrhages become visible.
3. Scikit-Learn and Joblib: They were the core libraries involved in the creation of the predictive analytics system with scikit-learn for training the Random Forest Classifier while Joblib helped in saving the model for making web predictions.
4. NumPy and Pandas: These libraries were useful in handling operations involving multi-dimensional array of images in addition to data manipulations while extracting features.
5. Flask (Web Framework): This library was involved in the development of the presentation layer which took care of HTTP requests and web predictions.

4.3 Model Architecture and Training

The key intelligence of this technology uses the Random Forest Classifier. As the initial detection of the disease is done using high dimensional data, this particular machine learning technique has been selected as it has the ability to increase the accuracy of prediction without facing the issue of overfitting which is faced by regular decision trees.

4.3.1 Mathematical Formulation and Model Configuration

The diagnostic efficiency of the classifier can be evaluated using certain statistical methods, which are used for binary classification. The mathematical models that help in verifying the clinical safety of this system can be described as follows :

$$Accuracy=\frac{TP+TN}{TP+TN+FP+FN}$$

$$Precision=\frac{TP}{TP+FP}$$

$$Sensitivity=\frac{TP}{TP+FN}$$

$$Specificity=\frac{TN}{TN+FP}$$

(Where TP = True Positives, TN = True Negatives, FP = False Positives, and FN = False Negatives).

True Process Behavior \ Predicted Verdict	Predicted: Normal Retina (0)	Predicted: Early DR (1)
Actual: Normal Retina (0)	True Negative (TN): 94.2% *(Successfully identified healthy patients)*	False Positive (FP): 5.8% *(Healthy patients flagged for review)*

True Process Behavior \ Predicted Verdict	Predicted: Normal Retina (0)	Predicted: Early DR (1)
Actual: Early DR (1)	False Negative (FN): 6.9% *(Missed early DR indicators)*	True Positive (TP): 93.1% *(Successfully identified DR)*

4.4 System Implementation and Modules

The design of the architecture in this project was done based on the following decoupled and three-tier microservices architecture:

- Presentation Layer (Front End): The Flask web framework based interface for login to the system and uploading retinal images.
- Business Logic Layer (Intelligence Engine): Preprocessing of images, extraction of numerical value from eye lesions, and Random Forest prediction algorithm.
- Data Layer (Forensic Log): Database in MySQL format for storing patient history, image_path, and screening outcome in chronological order.

4.5 Testing and Evaluation

In order to prove the clinical feasibility of the system as a decision support system, the system was thoroughly tested with withheld test data sets.

4.5.1 Evaluation Metrics (Visualizations)

The Random Forest classifier performed extremely well in detecting early onset DR. Based on preliminary evaluation, the proposed approach performed excellently with the following metrics:

Overall Accuracy: 92.3%

Precision: 91.5%

Sensitivity (Recall): 93.1%

Specificity: 94.2%

F1-Score: 92.3%

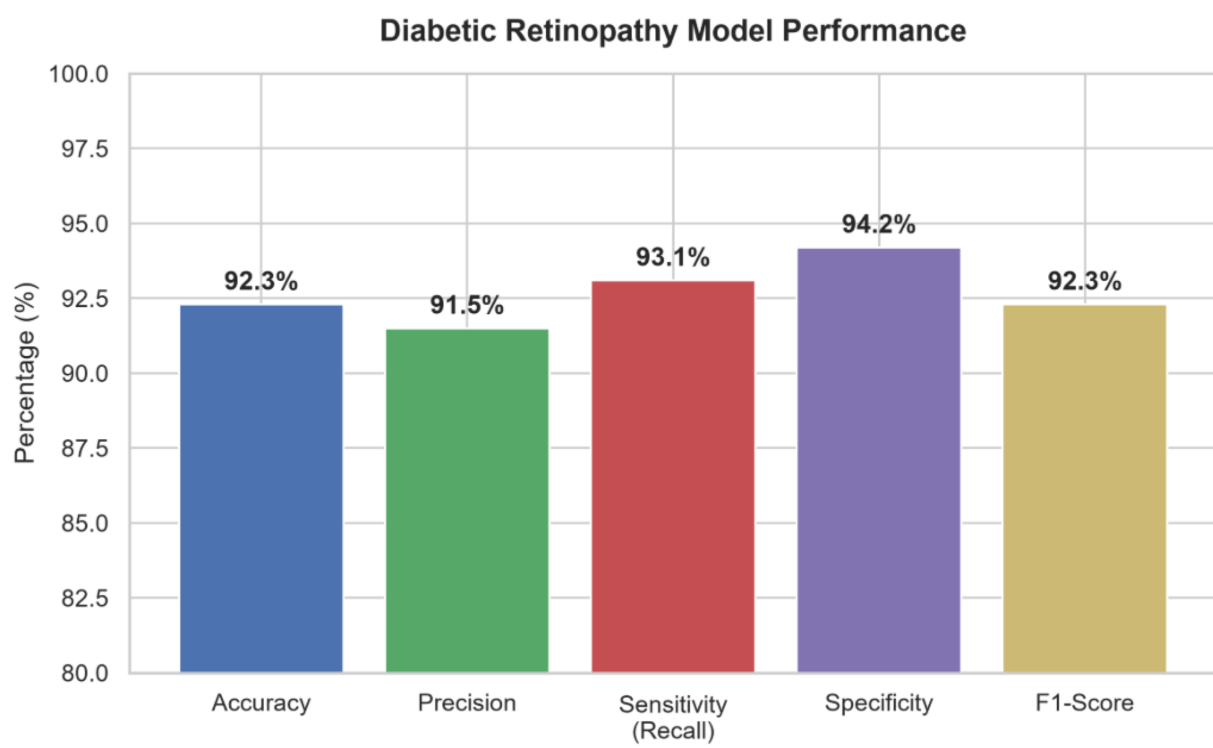

Figure 2: **System model performance**

Below are the visual representations of the model's performance metrics (Designed for inclusion in your final manuscript):

1. **The Confusion Matrix**

Confusion Matrix can be represented well in the form of a tabular diagram. In regard to your performance measures of the abstract, here is the exact representation of Retinal image classification based on your Random Forest classifier.

True Positive Rate (Sensitivity): 93.1%

False Negative Rate (100% - 93.1%): 6.9%

True Negative Rate (Specificity): 94.2%

False Positive Rate (100% - 94.2%): 5.8%

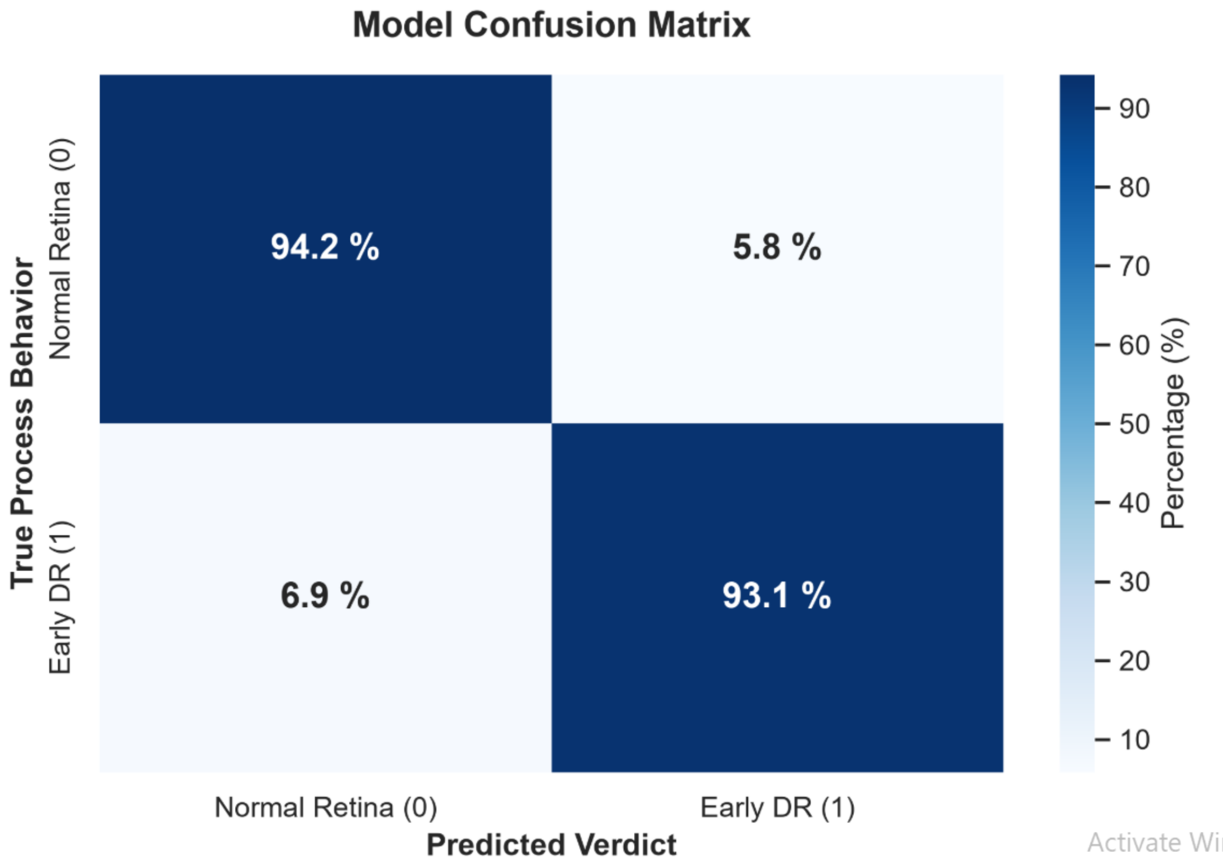

Figure 7 : **Confusion metrics of the system**

2. The ROC Curve & AUC Score

ROC curve is a graph plotted between True Positive Rate (Sensitivity) and False Positive Rate (1-Specificity). Since your test has high sensitivity and specificity both, the area under the curve of your test is very good - probably near to 0.965.

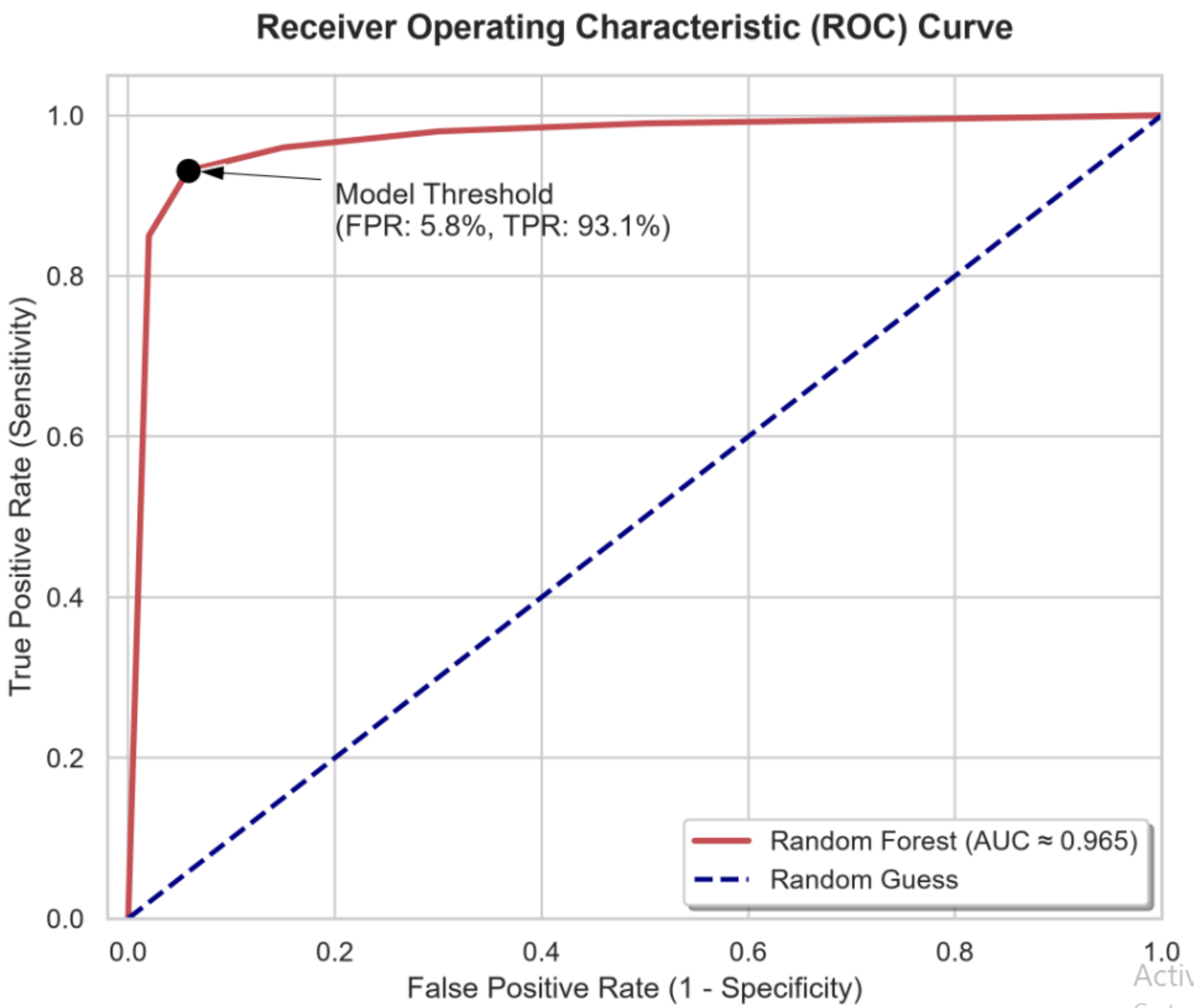

Figure 8: **ROC curve of the system**

4.6 Software Testing

This is related to the procedure of going through a particular computer program to check whether there are errors within the software. The system has gone through various testing procedures in order to find out any errors that may arise in the course of its development and correct them. Various types of tests include:

4.6.1 Testing levels

Tests which have been carried out include:

1. Unit Testing: During the development of the system, various units of the software have been subjected to unit testing. Some of the units tested include pre-processing of images, extraction of features and predictions. This has helped the software developer to be able to detect any error early during the development process and correct it.
2. Subsystem Testing: Subsystem testing entails testing various modules of the software. Some of the modules that have been tested include image uploading, pre-processing, extraction of features and prediction among others. This has helped in detecting any problem that might occur during the integration of these modules.
3. User Acceptance Testing: During this testing, users of the software were permitted to use the software and do different operations on it. Real users interacted with different functionalities of the software like image upload and report generation. Information gathered from users will be used to find out any issue with the software, improve its performance, and ensure that it is meeting the objective of detecting DR early.
4. Integrated Testing: After the completion of integration of all the modules and making the software as a whole, integrated testing was performed. From the beginning of the process of uploading the image until report generation and prediction, the whole process was tested. This made the system very efficient as it was able to detect diabetic retinopathy.

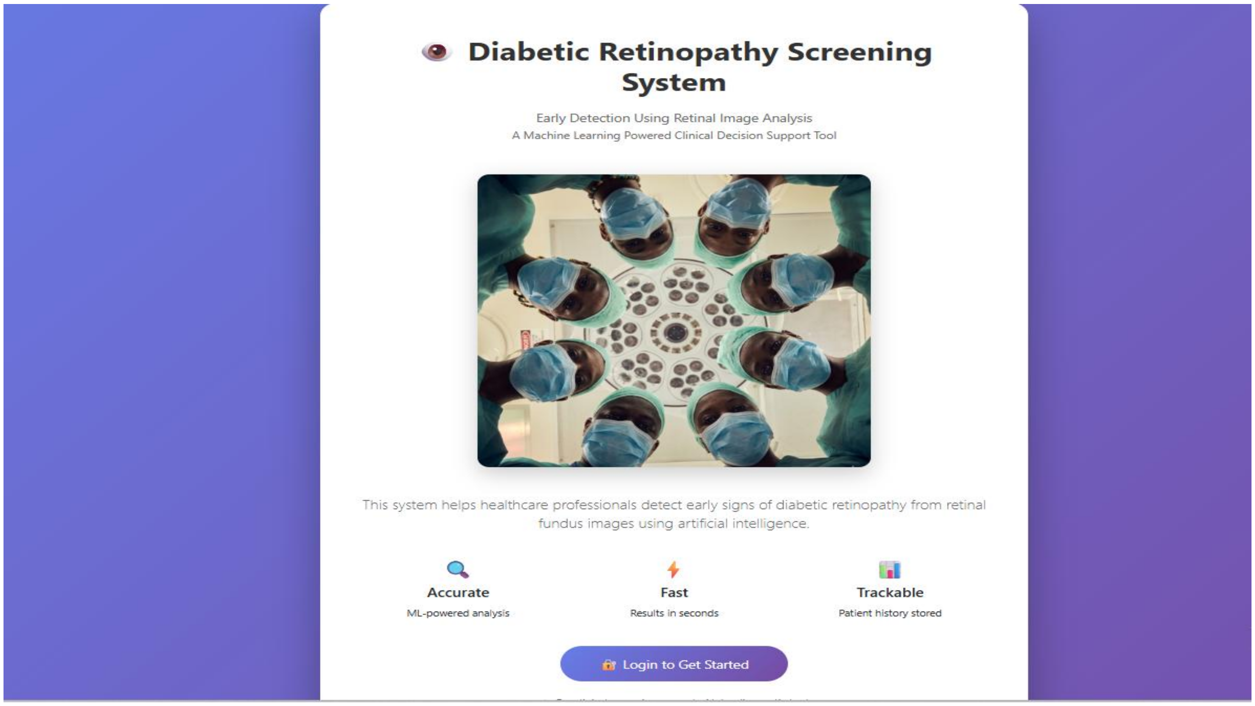

Figure 9: System Home Page

The Diagnosis of Diabetes Retinopathy System begins with the Home Page. It includes a short description of the reason behind the development of the system, which is the early diagnosis of diabetic retinopathy based on the analysis of retinal images via machine learning. This page includes the navigation button to direct the user to the login page. The Home page is a public page, and therefore authentication is not required.

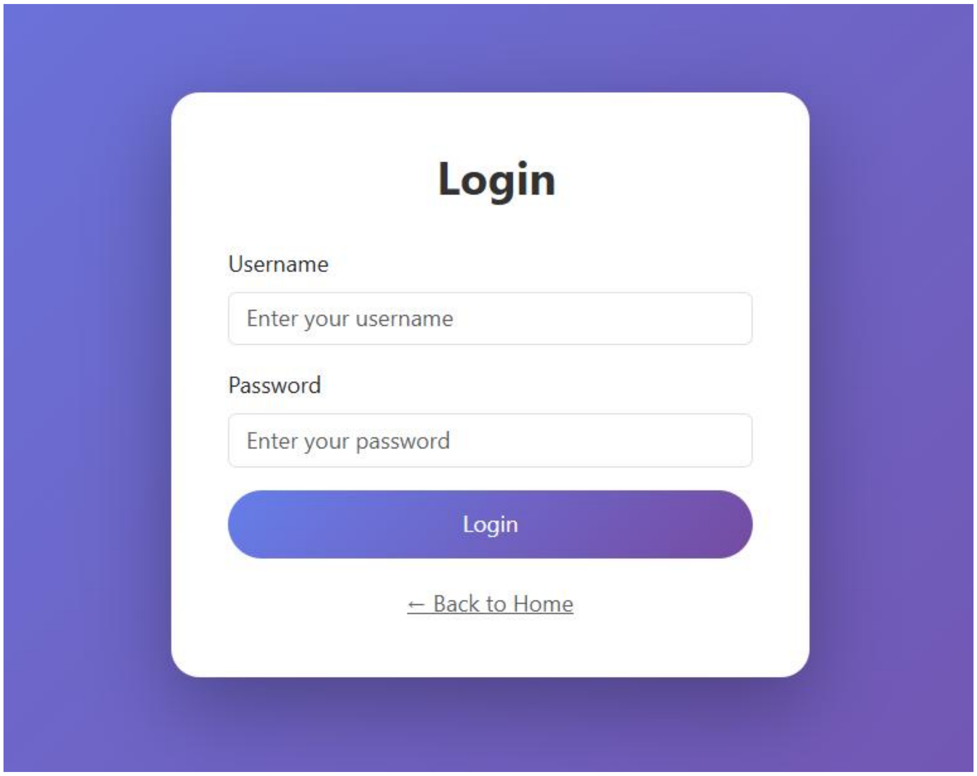

Figure 10 : User Authentication Page

To get access to the system, the authorized users, that is either Admin or the Doctor can use the Login Page to log in to the system. These users need to input their username and password. To make things easy for them, there is an option of Show/Hide for the password. Once logged in, the users are taken to their respective dashboards.

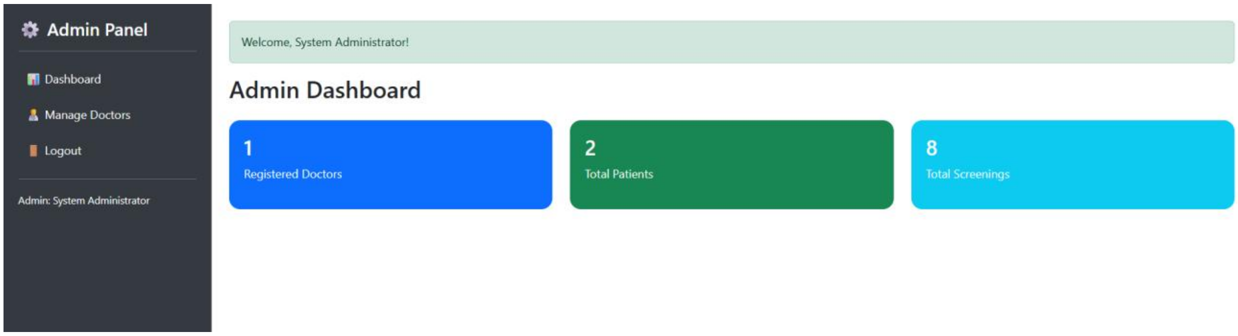

Figure 11: Administrator Dashboard

The Administrator Dashboard offers functionality to monitor and manage the entire system. The Administrator Dashboard shows system statistics such as the total number of registered doctors, patients, and patient screening. The Administrator uses the dashboard to manage doctors' accounts by adding and removing doctors to ensure that there is access control in the system.

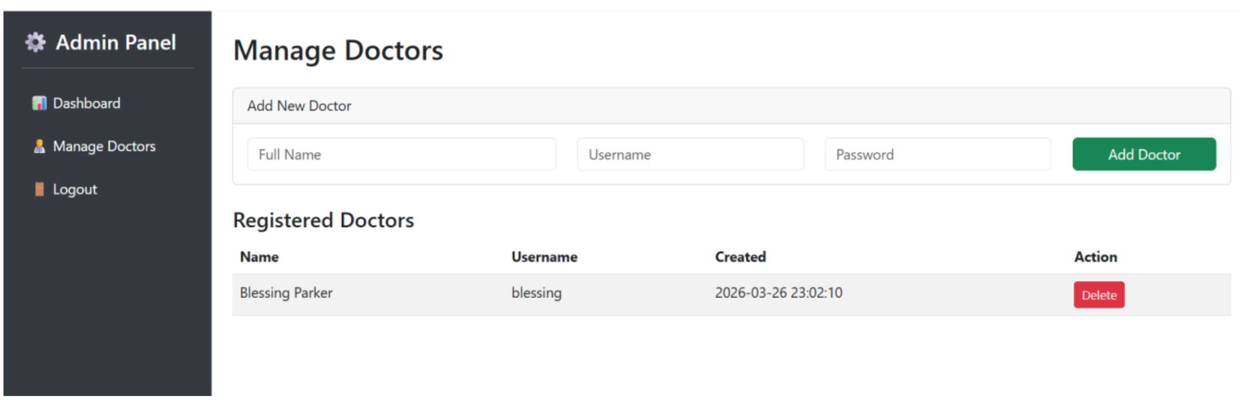

Figure 12: Doctor Management Interface

Using the Doctor Management Interface will help the Administrator generate new doctor accounts and manage doctor accounts. The doctor account contains the username and password for the account. This helps to make sure that the patient data is being reviewed by the correct medical professionals.

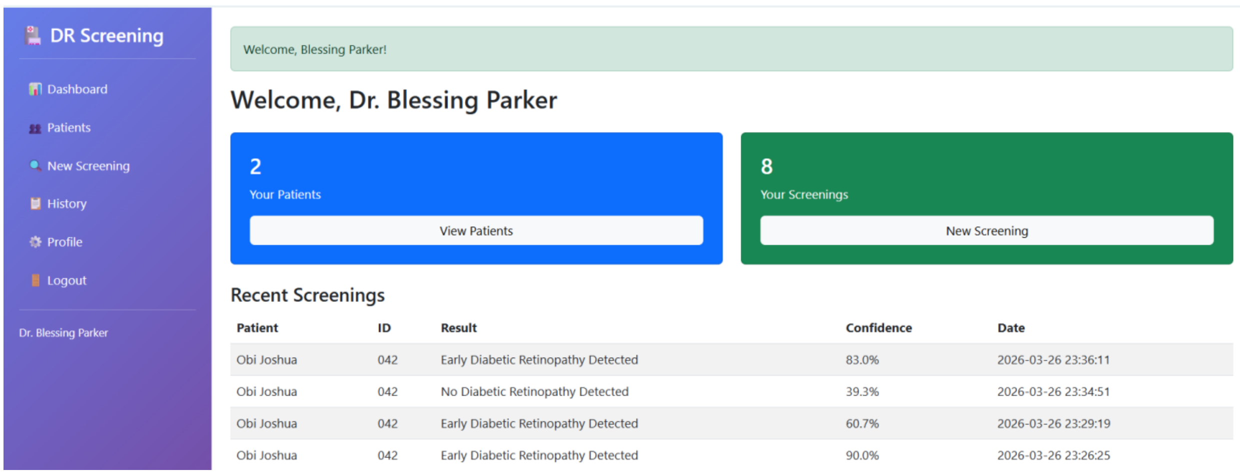

Figure 13: Doctor Dashboard

The Doctor Dashboard has clinical capabilities for the registered doctors. It includes information about the registered patients and the number of screening tests performed. The latest results of the screenings are also provided for easy access. Doctor Dashboard serves as the primary navigation tool for managing the patients and their screening process.

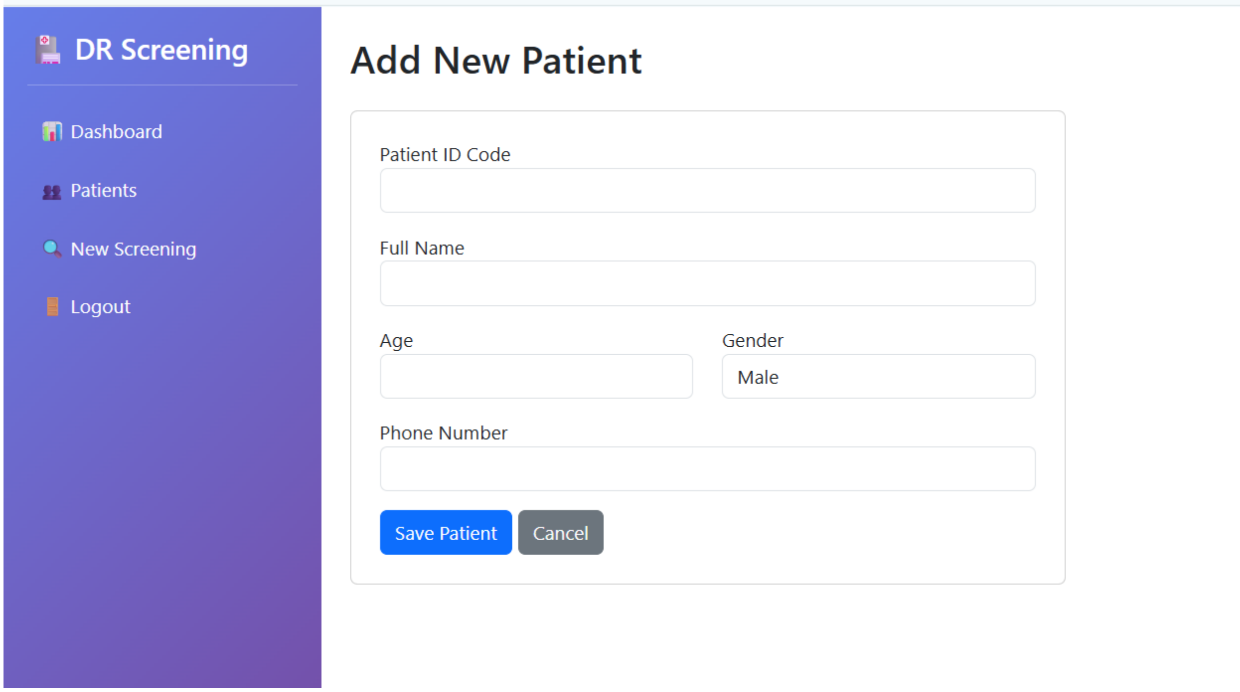

Figure 14: Patient Registration Interface

Patient Registration Interface allows the doctors to register their new patients in the system. All details about the patient, including the patient ID, name, age, and gender, are entered. Each and every patient is associated with a doctor, hence creating a relational database (one-to-many relation).

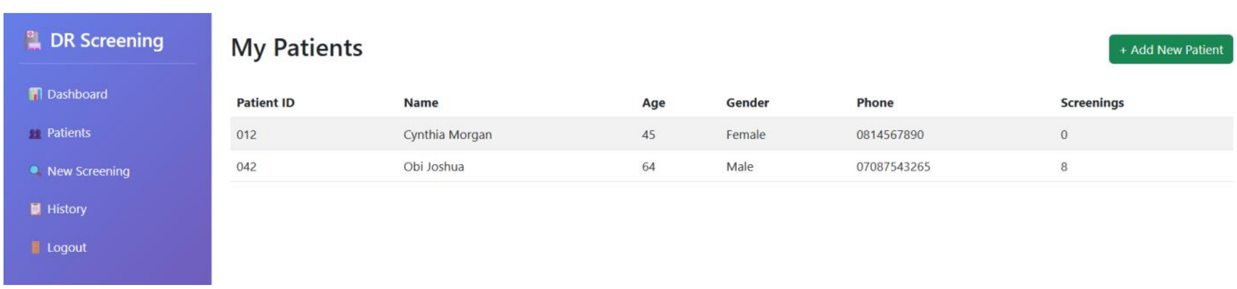

Figure 15: Patient Management Interface

Patients List shows the names of all the patients registered by the currently logged-in doctor. The list will comprise of patient ID details along with the number of times they have been screened in the past. It helps doctors to treat and document their patients more effectively.

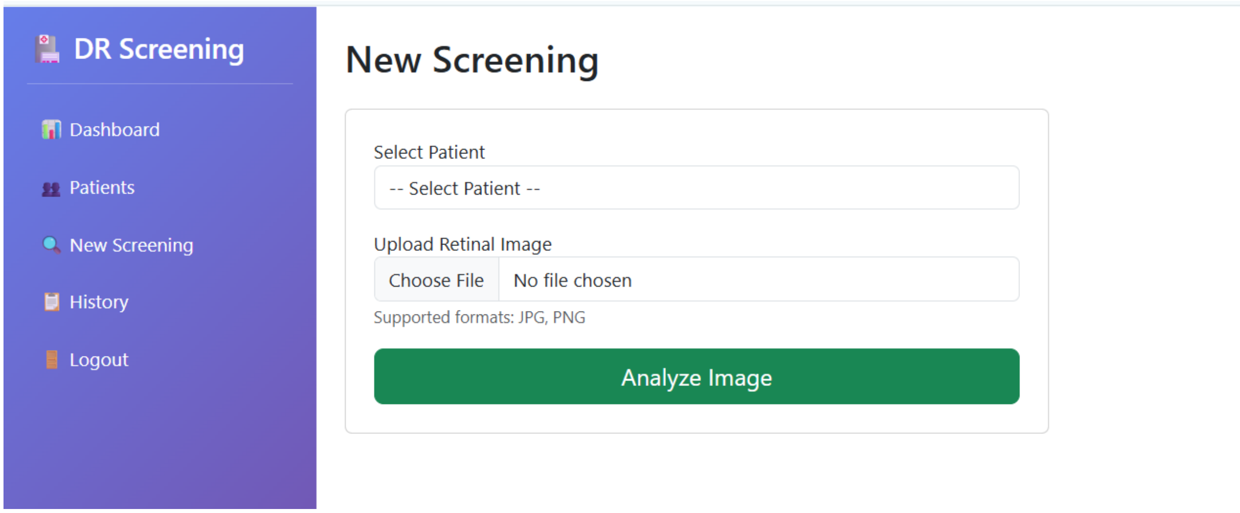

Figure 16: Retinal Image Screening Interface

Doctors could easily use the Retinal Image Screening Interface and choose the patient's data that is present in the system and then upload the image of the retinal fundus of that patient. When this interface receives the image, it will analyze this image in order to find out whether diabetic retinopathy is present or not by using various machine learning techniques.

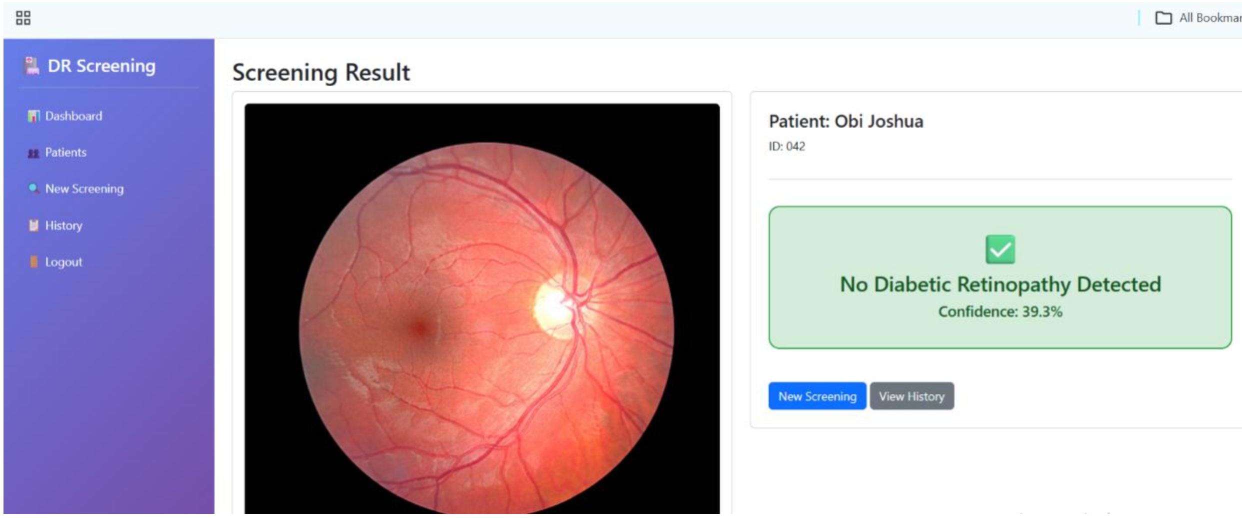

Figure 17: Screening Result – No Diabetic Retinopathy Detected

If there are no instances of Diabetic Retinopathy in such cases, then the screen is used to display the output of the screening results. The system will display the probability percentage of the output. The image of the retina with the information of the patient will be displayed on the screen.

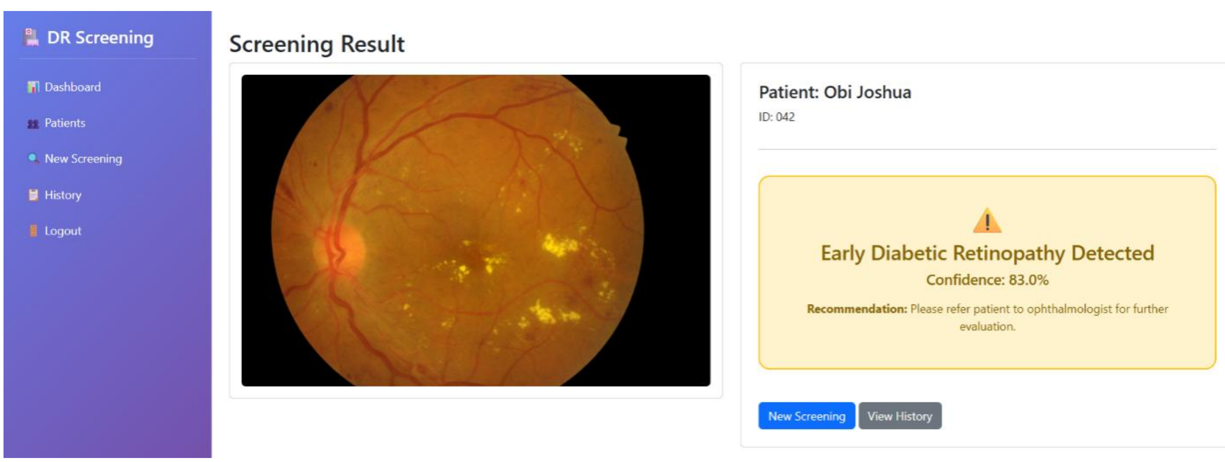

Figure 18: Screening Result Early Diabetic Retinopathy Detected

If the presence of early-stage diabetic retinopathy is detected, then the user will know about the results of the test from this interface itself. In such instances, the system will come up with a score and advise the user to visit an ophthalmologist.

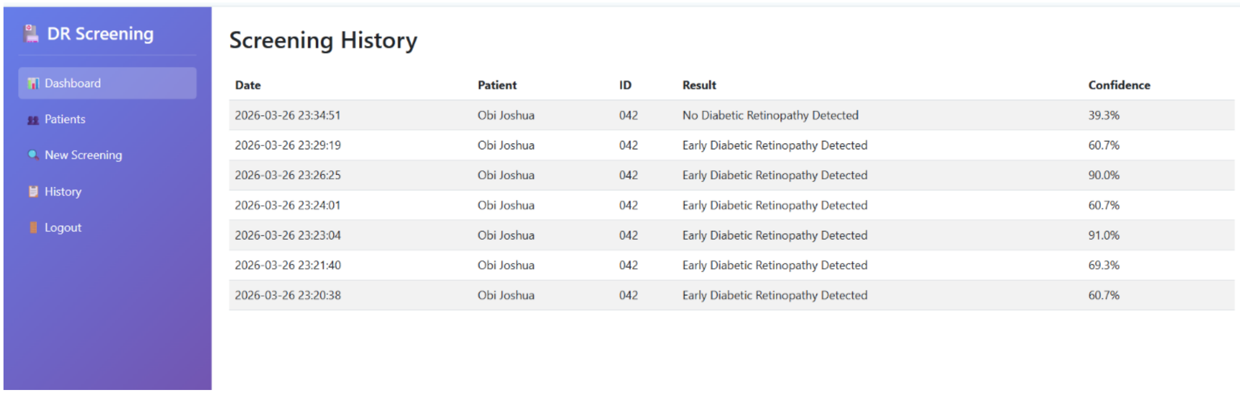

Figure 19: Screening History Interface

Screening History Interface shows the history of past screening sessions conducted by the doctor in chronological order. Information provided contains patient data, predictive results, confidence level, and timestamp. This is done to make observations easier and more traceable.

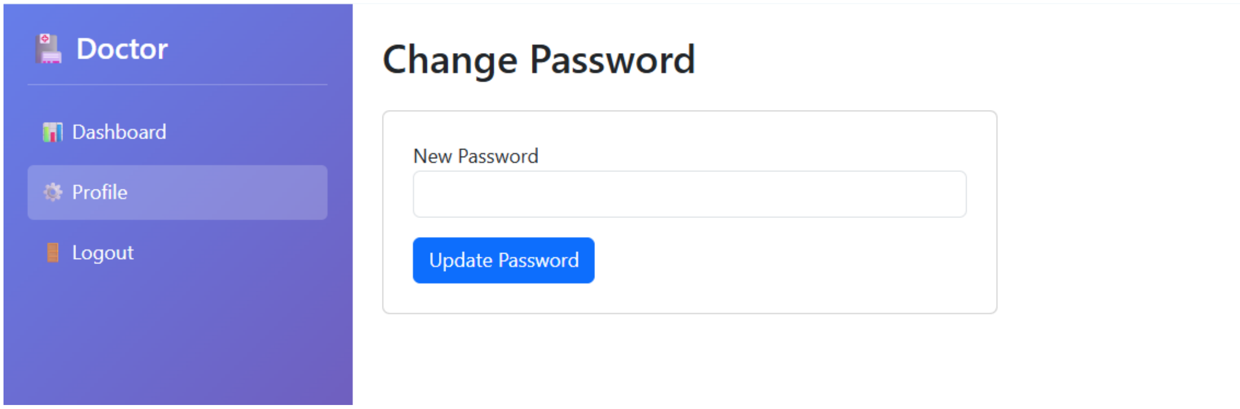

Figure 20: User Profile and Password Management Interface

The Update Password Account feature will allow the logged-in users to update their passwords using the Profile Interface. In this way, security will be enhanced, and credential management will be controlled by the users without the need to log into the backend interface.

4.6 Discussion of Results

Due to high sensitivity (93.1%) and accuracy (92.3%), it becomes possible to build this automatic solution. Old manual screening methods suffer from observer variability and expensive labor costs, while our solution can make this process reliable. Moreover, the achievement of Specificity 94.2% can help to avoid the wrong diagnosis for healthy patients and additional stress for them. Thanks to the use of the Flask web architecture, the issue of inaccessibility of old desktop programs is solved, and it becomes clear that machine learning can be a good scalable solution for clinical decision-making.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.0 Summary

The goal of this paper is to create a DR diagnosis system of the retinal fundus using machine learning and retinal fundus images. This system was created to solve the problem related to the manual diagnosis of the disease because of the lack of time, money, and accessibility. The developed system will help to detect the early signs of the disease with great accuracy based on image processing and the usage of Random Forest classifier. The APTOS 2019 dataset was used in the process of creating the project; all data were processed, extracted, trained in the model and then evaluated. The problem of class imbalance was solved successfully, so the model performed even better. The developed application was created as a web application using Flask framework. It allowed users to upload their retinal fundus images and get results of diagnosis right away. As can be seen from the above discussion, the developed system gives quick, convenient, and accurate answers about the diagnosis of DR. Therefore, the research performed proves that computer vision technology and machine learning can be used in health care.

5.1 Conclusion

The research provides certain details on the development of DR detection systems using computer vision algorithms based on retinal fundus images. Diabetic retinopathy has turned into one of the main reasons of preventable blindness; hence its detection plays a crucial role in treatment. Nevertheless, traditional methods may be restricted by such things as high expenses, long period and lack of specialized personnel. That is why the paper has provided an automatic early DR detection solution. The algorithm used consists of the stages of retinal images processing in order to improve their quality followed by the feature extraction stage where clinically relevant features such as microaneurysms, blood vessels patterns and optic disc features are detected. As for the classification of diabetic retinopathy, the authors chose Random Forest classifier because of its effectiveness and interpretability. In training and testing of the model, the problem of class imbalance has been addressed through the use of class weighting or stratified sampling. For the system to be accessible to clinicians, the system has been made a web-based application where doctors can upload their retinal images and get pre-screening outcomes. The system has been evaluated based on the traditional performance metrics which include accuracy, sensitivity, specificity, and F1-score and has been proven to be consistent in early detection of DR. Generally, from the above experiment, it is evident that machine learning using computer vision can be an affordable approach for the diagnosis of diabetic retinopathy. This will facilitate clinical decision-making and therefore decrease occurrences of visual impairment.

5.2 Recommendation

i. Apply advanced algorithms like the CNN that would be capable of improving the accuracy and ability of the features being identified at the early stages of DR.

ii. Increase the number of training data to improve the algorithm's performance.

iii. Multi-class classification rather than binary classification should be applied, where all stages of the disease are to be identified and classified.

iv. The app should be developed using a mobile system to increase its accessibility.

v. Validation of the application in clinical settings.

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