E-ISSN: 2664-8784
P-ISSN: 2664-8776
IJRE 2025; SP-7(2): 37-40

www.engineeringpaper.net
Received: 16-04-2025
Accepted: 17-05-2025

Shruti Bhalla
CSE, DPG STM, Gurugram, Haryana, India

Correspondence
Shruti Bhalla
CSE, DPG STM, Gurugram, Haryana, India

Two-Days National Conference on Multidisciplinary Approaches for Innovation and Sustainability: Global solution for contemporary Challenges-NCMIS (DPG Degree College: 17th-18th 2025)

A comprehensive review of criminal face recognition using deep learning: Advances, challenges, and ethical implications

Shruti Bhalla

DOI: https://www.doi.org/10.33545/26648776.2025.v7.i2a.89

Abstract
This review paper comprehensively examines the evolution and current state of criminal face recognition technologies driven by artificial intelligence and deep learning. It traces the transition from traditional image processing techniques to modern convolutional neural network (CNN) architectures that have significantly enhanced the accuracy and efficiency of facial recognition systems. We explore various methodologies such as Siamese networks and triplet loss frameworks are critically analysed for their effectiveness in learning robust face embeddings, which are crucial for distinguishing individuals under diverse conditions including varied lighting, occlusions, and non-frontal poses in this investigation. The integration of these advanced techniques into law enforcement applications ranging from real-time surveillance and database matching to post-incident forensic investigations is explored in detail. Furthermore, the review discusses inherent challenges such as dataset biases, adversarial vulnerabilities, and the ethical and privacy implications of deploying such technologies. The potential benefits of multi-modal biometric integration are also considered as a promising avenue for improving system resilience and accuracy. This paper identifies gaps in current research and outlines future directions aimed at developing more robust, fair, and ethically responsible criminal face recognition systems.

Keywords: Criminal face recognition, deep learning, convolutional neural networks, ethical implications

1. Introduction

Crime is a persistent challenge faced by societies across the world. As populations grow and urbanization accelerates, criminal activities have become more dynamic, organized, and difficult to predict. Governments, law enforcement agencies, and researchers are constantly seeking innovative solutions to investigate crimes, detect patterns, and forecast future criminal events with the aim of creating safer societies. Traditional crime analysis methods largely reliant on human interpretation and manual investigative techniques have become inadequate in dealing with the volume, velocity, and variety of crime-related data in the digital age. The exponential growth in the availability of crime-related data, driven by advancements in data collection tools, surveillance systems, and digital record-keeping, offers unprecedented opportunities to explore crime trends at scale. However, the complexity and multidimensional nature of this data present significant analytical challenges. In this context, data mining and machine learning techniques have emerged as powerful tools capable of processing large datasets, uncovering hidden relationships, and making intelligent predictions based on historical and real-time inputs. The field of data mining which involves extracting meaningful information from large datasets using algorithms has been widely applied in various sectors such as healthcare, finance, and marketing. In recent years, it has been increasingly adopted in the domain of crime analytics. Through applying classification, clustering, association rule mining, and predictive modelling, researchers and practitioners can gain deeper insights into the dynamics of crime, identify high-risk areas or individuals, and assist in the proactive deployment of law enforcement resources. The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) and deep learning has revolutionized facial recognition systems, particularly in the domain of criminal identification and surveillance. This review paper presents a comprehensive examination of the evolution of criminal face recognition technologies, highlighting the shift from traditional image processing techniques to the adoption of sophisticated deep learning architectures. Central to this transformation are convolutional neural networks (CNNs), Siamese networks, and triplet loss frameworks, which have significantly improved the ability of systems to extract and learn robust face embeddings. These methodologies offer enhanced accuracy in recognizing individuals under varied conditions such as poor lighting, occlusions, and non-frontal poses. The integration of AI-powered facial recognition into law enforcement has led to applications in real-time monitoring, suspect identification, forensic analysis, and post-incident investigations. However, the deployment of such technologies also raises critical concerns around data bias, adversarial attacks, and privacy infringement.

2. Significance of the Study

The ability to predict crime has far-reaching implications. Accurate forecasting allows law enforcement agencies to allocate resources more effectively, plan patrol routes strategically, and engage in community policing with greater awareness of potential threats. Moreover, understanding the spatial, temporal, and sociological variables that correlate with different types of crime can help policy makers implement targeted intervention programs. This contributes to deterrence, enhances public safety, and fosters trust in governance. This study proposes the design of a comprehensive framework for investigating, detecting, and predicting crimes using data mining techniques. The framework aims to incorporate various methodologies ranging from classical statistical models to state-of-the-art machine learning and spatio-temporal analysis methods to process crime datasets, detect patterns, and forecast potential criminal activities. This multidisciplinary approach not only addresses the computational aspects of crime prediction but also considers sociological, geographical, and behavioural dimensions. The relevance of this research lies in its applicability to real-world problems: combating increasing urban crime, optimizing police operations, understanding offender behaviour, and developing technology-driven law enforcement strategies. It also lays the foundation for future research in intelligent surveillance systems, criminal profiling, and AI-assisted judiciary analytics.

Related Reviews and Findings

Table 1: Comparative Review of Crime Prediction Studies Using Data Mining and Machine Learning Techniques (2011–2025)

Author & Year	Objective	Data Source	Methodology	Findings
Yu *et al*. (2011)[1]	Predict crimes using location and time data.	Police department records, Northeastern US	Classification methods, temporal-spatial pattern analysis	Effective crime hotspot prediction using spatial-temporal data.
Hussain *et al*. (2012) [2]	Analyze violent behavior using data mining methods.	Simulated crime datasets	Simulation modeling and data mining	Helped identify violent activity features for detection.
Zubi *et al*. (2013) [3]	Cluster and associate crime traits in Libyan data.	Libyan police records	Apriori, K-Means, Excel, WEKA	Identified suspect patterns and criminal links effectively.
Saltos & Cocea (2017) [4]	Forecast anti-social behavior using open police data.	UK police data (600,000+ records)	Regression, decision trees, instance-based learning	Decision tree (M5P) best predicted crime frequency.
Kumar & Nagpal (2019) [5]	Predict perpetrators from incident-level crime data.	Crime incident records	Naive Bayes classification	Successfully identified likely suspects and crime trends.
AteÅŸ *et al*. (2020)	Framework using ML/DM for decision-making in crime.	Big data crime sources	Conceptual framework, ML, DL integration	Provided new insights into crime mining applications.
Yang *et al*. (2020)	Predict crimes using urban zones and past data.	Cincinnati crime & VIIRS nightlight imagery	Spatio-temporal Cokriging	Improved hotspot prediction using geospatial features.
Yu *et al*. (2020) [7]	Incorporate offender movement to improve predictions.	ZG city crime, police movement logs	ST-Cokriging with movement data	Offender mobility improved short-term crime prediction.
Zahran *et al*. (2021) [9]	Compare classifiers for crime prediction accuracy.	Chicago, LA, Egypt, USA (Zabatak.com)	NB, KNN, RF, LR, SVM, etc.	Random Forest gave highest accuracy across datasets.
Sivapriya *et al*. (2023) [10]	Predict local crimes using crime statistics and data mining.	India's National Crime Records Bureau	Machine learning techniques: Linear Regression, Decision Trees, Neural Networks	Anticipated high-crime locations; improved criminal case classification and proceedings.
Wu *et al*. (2023) [11]	Predict crime patterns using machine learning in YD County.	YD County crime data (2012-2015)	Bayesian Networks, Random Trees, Neural Networks	Random Trees outperformed others; identified key crime variables and patterns.
Qin *et al*. (2025) [12]	Develop spatiotemporal crime prediction model using LSTM and GRU.	Four real-world crime datasets	LGSTime model integrating LSTM, GRU, Multi-head Sparse Self-attention	Achieved optimal performance; improved prediction accuracy over CNN models.
Yang (2023) [13]	Predict future crimes in criminal networks using text data.	Real-world criminal network datasets	TransCrimeNet: Transformer-based model leveraging BERT and graph embeddings	Outperformed previous models by 12.7% in F1 score; combined textual and graph-based features.
UK Ministry of Justice (2025)	Predict serious violent crimes using personal data analysis.	Police and probation services data	Algorithmic analysis of personal data from convicted individuals	Aimed to enhance public safety; raised concerns about potential biases and data privacy.

3. Literature Insights

3.1 Crime as a Patterned Phenomenon

Though crime is traditionally seen as unpredictable, recent literature challenges this notion by demonstrating recurring patterns in criminal activities. Yu *et al*. (2011) argue that crime does not occur entirely at random; rather, it exhibits spatial and temporal regularities. Their study, in collaboration with a US police department, utilizes classification models to identify "hotspots" and predict the emergence of crime based on historical datasets. This research emphasizes the importance of temporal and geographical attributes in crime forecasting.

3.2 Criminology and Data-Driven Techniques

Criminology the study of crime and criminal behaviour has evolved from a sociological perspective to embrace computational methodologies. Hussain *et al*. (2012) [2] assert that data mining is particularly well-suited for crime analysis due to the extensive datasets and complex interdependencies among crime variables. Their simulation model for analysing violent criminal behaviour exemplifies the potential of algorithmic techniques to replicate years of human investigative experience in digital form.

3.3 Pattern Detection and Behavioural Clustering
Zubi and Mahmmud (2013) [3] explored the application of A-priori algorithms and K-Means clustering in the analysis of Libyan national crime data. Their approach supports the identification of patterns, trends, and associations between criminal acts and offenders, thus aiding in suspect identification and network analysis. The importance of preprocessing techniques such as data cleaning, handling missing values, and resolving inconsistencies is highlighted to ensure the reliability of outcomes.

3.4 Open Data and Predictive Modelling
Saltos and Cocea (2017) [4] harnessed open data from the UK police system and employed regression and decision tree models to forecast anti-social behaviour crimes. With over 600,000 records analyzed, their results demonstrated the feasibility of using M5P algorithms to make accurate predictions, proving that data-driven crime analysis can be implemented using publicly accessible datasets.

3.5 Bayesian and Probabilistic Methods
Kumar and Nagpal (2019) [5] proposed a solution using the Naïve Bayes classifier to predict perpetrators based on crime type, location, and suspect relationships. Their model integrates real-world incident-level data with known suspect information to infer likely offenders. This probabilistic approach underlines the importance of integrating historical knowledge into modern predictive systems.

3.6 Conceptual Integration of Technologies
Ateş *et al*. (2020) [6] advocate for a broader framework that combines big data, machine learning, and deep learning to enhance crime analysis. Their research outlines the different procedural categories in crime data mining highlighting classification, regression, clustering, and association rule mining as foundational tasks and presents a conceptual model for implementation in national security frameworks.

3.7 Spatio-Temporal Modelling
Yang *et al*. (2020) and Yu *et al*. (2020) [7] introduced **spatio-temporal Cokriging models**, integrating historical crime records with urban transitional zone data to improve the granularity of crime prediction. These models not only consider the frequency and type of crimes but also the mobility of offenders, showing how geographical and behavioural dimensions can be merged for superior predictions.

3.8 Comparative Algorithm Analysis
Zahran *et al*. (2021) [9] performed an extensive evaluation of various classification algorithms including KNN, Decision Tree, Random Forest, Logistic Regression, and SVM across multiple global crime datasets. Their findings consistently ranked Random Forest as the top performer in terms of predictive accuracy, especially in high-dimensional, multi-feature environments like those found in the Egypt and Chicago datasets.

4. Proposed Methodology

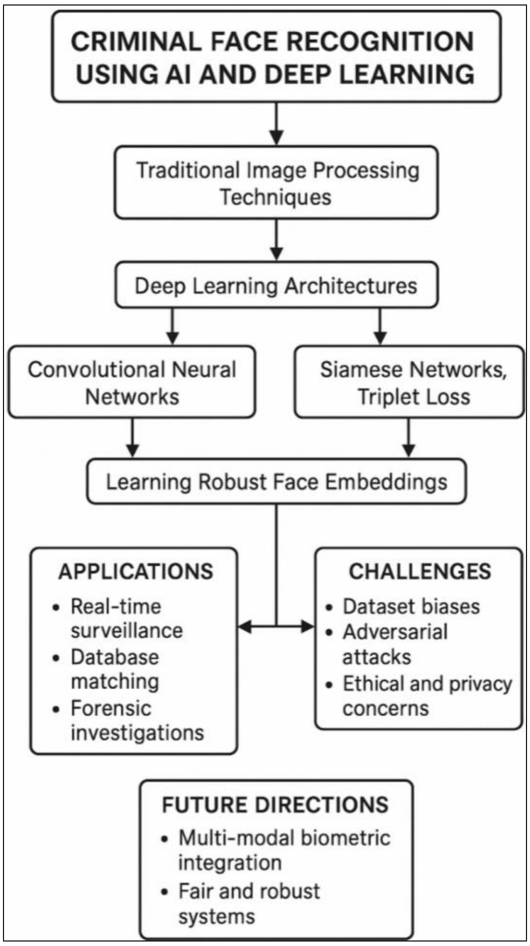

Fig 1: Conceptual Framework of Criminal Face Recognition Using AI and Deep Learning Techniques

This proposed methodology uses modern deep learning techniques to recognize criminal faces more accurately. It starts by preparing and improving the input images, then moves beyond traditional image methods to use powerful models like CNNs, Siamese networks, and triplet loss. These models are trained to learn strong and reliable face features, even when faces are shown in different angles, lighting, or with partial cover. These features are then used to match faces in real-time surveillance, criminal databases, or forensic investigations. The method also considers problems like unfair datasets or hacking risks and aims to build future systems that are fair and secure.

5. Conclusion
The development of a data-driven framework for crime investigation, detection, and prediction is a vital step toward modernizing law enforcement strategies. Through the use of data mining techniques ranging from classical algorithms like Naïve Bayes and Decision Trees to advanced models like spatio-temporal Cokriging and neural networks this study illustrates the significant potential of predictive analytics in combating crime. Through analysing diverse datasets from regions such as the US, UK, India, and Egypt, the proposed framework demonstrates adaptability and accuracy in identifying crime trends and high-risk zones.

The integration of spatial, temporal, and behavioural variables enhances the contextual understanding of criminal activities, enabling more informed decision-making. Moreover, the inclusion of real-time offender mobility data showcases the dynamic applicability of the system in live scenarios. This research lays the groundwork for future innovations in AI-assisted policing, policy-making, and intelligent surveillance, ultimately contributing to safer, smarter, and more responsive criminal justice systems.

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