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Ethics and Trustworthiness of Algorithmic Decision-Making Systems

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This thesis satisfies the requirements for the degree of Ph.D. in Computer Science – Machine Learning and Intelligent Systems

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Abstract

The rapid adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) in high-stakes domains such as recommender systems, healthcare, and disaster management has amplified the need for trustworthy systems. However, many AI models remain limited by opaque decision-making, biased or noisy data, and the lack of explicit mechanisms to model and quantify trust. This thesis addresses these limitations by integrating trust at three complementary levels—data, model, and prediction—through the combined use of knowledge graphs (KGs) and graph neural networks (GNNs).

At the data and model levels, the thesis introduces a taxonomy of trust dimensions, including accuracy, reliability, provenance, fairness, robustness, and explainability, and demonstrates how structured knowledge and graph-based learning enhance transparency and relational reasoning. Building on this foundation, the first major contribution is **GUITARES**, a trust-aware recommender system based on graph attention networks. GUITARES integrates item confidence derived from external knowledge graphs, inferred user–user trust relationships, and structural learning over user–item graphs. Experimental evaluation shows that GUITARES achieves an RMSE of **0.80**, outperforming state-of-the-art baselines while maintaining scalability and robustness.

The second major contribution focuses on trust in predictions. The core framework, **GraphSkinUQ**, is proposed for skin cancer classification, combining CNN feature embeddings, graph-based relational modeling, and uncertainty quantification to assess predictive confidence. GraphSkinUQ achieves **91% accuracy**, with predictive uncertainty between **10% and 11%**, a **Brier score of 13%**, an **Expected Calibration Error (ECE) of 6%**, and a **ROC-AUC of 94%**, demonstrating strong performance and well-calibrated confidence estimates. This predictive-trust framework is then extended to disaster management through the **TDC-GCN** model, which adapts the same principles—CNN features, graph convolutional learning, and Monte Carlo dropout—to disaster image classification. TDC-GCN achieves **97% accuracy** with an entropy-based uncertainty measure of **30%**, confirming its effectiveness in high-stakes scenarios.

Overall, results across recommendation, medical imaging, and disaster analysis demonstrate that embedding trust mechanisms—from structured data modeling to uncertainty-aware predictions—significantly improves both performance and reliability. This thesis contributes to the development of AI systems that are not only accurate, but also transparent, robust, and trustworthy.

Keywords: Trustworthiness, Knowledge Graphs, Graph Neural Networks, Recommender Systems, Scalability, Fairness, Explainability, Uncertainty Quantification, Disaster Image Classification, Medical Image Analysis.

Résumé

L'adoption rapide de l'intelligence artificielle (IA) dans des domaines à fort enjeu tels que les systèmes de recommandation, la santé et la gestion des catastrophes a renforcé le besoin de systèmes fiables. Cependant, de nombreux modèles d'IA restent limités par des prises de décision opaques, des données biaisées ou bruyantes, et l'absence de mécanismes explicites pour modéliser et quantifier la confiance. Cette thèse traite ces limitations en intégrant la confiance à trois niveaux complémentaires — données, modèle et prédiction — grâce à l'utilisation combinée de graphes de connaissances (KGs) et de réseaux neuronaux graphiques (GNNs).

Au niveau des données et du modèle, la thèse propose une taxonomie des dimensions de la confiance, incluant la précision, la fiabilité, la provenance, l'équité, la robustesse et l'explicabilité, et montre comment la connaissance structurée et l'apprentissage basé sur les graphes améliorent la transparence et le raisonnement relationnel. Sur cette base, la première contribution majeure est **GUITARES**, un système de recommandation conscient de la confiance basé sur des réseaux d'attention graphique. GUITARES intègre la confiance des items dérivée de graphes de connaissances externes, les relations de confiance inférées entre utilisateurs et l'apprentissage structurel sur les graphes utilisateur--item. Les évaluations expérimentales montrent que GUITARES atteint un RMSE de **0,80**, surpassant les références de l'état de l'art tout en conservant scalabilité et robustesse.

La deuxième contribution majeure se concentre sur la confiance dans les prédictions. Le cadre principal, **GraphSkinUQ**, est proposé pour la classification du cancer de la peau, combinant des embeddings CNN, une modélisation relationnelle basée sur les graphes et la quantification de l'incertitude pour évaluer la confiance des prédictions. GraphSkinUQ atteint une précision de **91%**, avec une incertitude prédictive entre **10% et 11%**, un **Brier score de 13%**, une **Expected Calibration Error (ECE) de 6%** et un **ROC-AUC de 94%**, démontrant de bonnes performances et des estimations de confiance calibrées. Ce cadre centré sur la confiance prédictive est ensuite étendu à la gestion des catastrophes via le modèle **TDC-GCN**, qui applique les mêmes principes — embeddings CNN, apprentissage par convolution graphique et Monte Carlo dropout — à la classification d'images de catastrophes. TDC-GCN atteint une précision de **97%** avec une mesure d'incertitude basée sur l'entropie de **30%**, confirmant son efficacité dans des contextes critiques.

Dans l'ensemble, les résultats obtenus dans les domaines de la recommandation, de l'imagerie médicale et de la gestion des catastrophes montrent que l'intégration des mécanismes de confiance — de la modélisation structurée des données aux prédictions conscientes de l'incertitude — améliore significativement à la fois la performance et la fiabilité. Cette thèse contribue au développement de systèmes d'IA à la fois précis, transparents, robustes et dignes de confiance.

Mots-clés : Fiabilité, Graphes de connaissances, Réseaux de neurones graphiques, Systèmes de recommandation sensibles à la confiance, Confiance au niveau des données,

Confiance au niveau du modèle, Confiance au niveau des prédictions, Quantification de l’incertitude, Classification d’images de catastrophes, Analyse d’images médicales.

ملخص

أدى الاعتماد السريع للذكاء الاصطناعي (AI) في المجالات عالية المخاطر مثل أنظمة التوصية والرعاية الصحية وإدارة الكوارث إلى زيادة الحاجة إلى أنظمة موثوقة. ومع ذلك، لا تزال العديد من نماذج الذكاء الاصطناعي محدودة بسبب اتخاذ القرارات بشكل غامض، أو البيانات المتحيزة أو الصاخبة، وغياب الآليات الصريحة لنمذجة الثقة وقياسها. تتناول هذه الرسالة هذه القيود من خلال دمج الثقة على ثلاثة مستويات متكاملة — البيانات، النموذج، والتنبؤ — باستخدام الرسوم البيانية للمعرفة (KGs) والشبكات العصبية البيانية .(GNNs)

على مستوى البيانات والنموذج، تقدم الرسالة تصنيفاً لأبعاد الثقة، بما في ذلك الدقة، الموثوقية، المصدر، العدالة، المتانة، والقابلية للتفسير، وتوضح كيف تعزز المعرفة المنظمة والتعلم القائم على الرسوم البيانية الشفافية والتفكير العلاقي. بناءً على ذلك، تأتي المساهمة الرئيسية الأولى وهي **GUITARES**، نظام توصية واعٍ بالثقة يعتمد على شبكات الانتباه البيانية. يدمج GUITARES ثقة العناصر المستمدة من الرسوم البيانية الخارجية، علاقات الثقة المستنتجة بين المستخدمين، والتعلم الهيكلي على رسوم المستخدم--العنصر. تظهر التجارب أن GUITARES يحقق RMSE بقيمة **80.0**، متفوقًا على أفضل النماذج الحالية مع الحفاظ على القابلية للتوسع والمتانة.

تركز المساهمة الرئيسية الثانية على الثقة في التنبؤات. الإطار الرئيسي **GraphSkinUQ** مقترح لتصنيف سرطان الجلد، حيث يجمع بين تمثيلات ،CNN النمذجة العلاقية القائمة على الرسوم البيانية، وقياس عدم اليقين لتقييم موثوقية التنبؤات. يحقق GraphSkinUQ **91%** دقة، مع عدم يقين تنبؤي بين **10%** و **11%**، و**score Brier** بنسبة **13%**، و**Error Calibration Expected (ECE)** بنسبة **6%**، و**ROC-AUC** بنسبة **94%**، مما يوضح أداءً قوياً وتقديرات موثوقة للتنبؤات. ثم يتم توسيع هذا الإطار إلى إدارة الكوارث عبر نموذج **TDC-GCN**، الذي يطبق نفس المبادئ — ميزات ،CNN التعلم بالتفاف الرسوم البيانية، وdropout Carlo Monte — على تصنيف صور الكوارث. يحقق TDC-GCN **97%** دقة مع مقياس عدم يقين يعتمد على الإنتروبيا بنسبة **30%**، مؤكداً فعاليته في السيناريوهات الحرجة.

بشكل عام، تظهر النتائج في مجالات التوصية، التصوير الطبي، وإدارة الكوارث أن دمج آليات الثقة — من نمذجة البيانات المنظمة إلى التنبؤات المدركة لعدم اليقين — يحسن بشكل كبير الأداء والموثوقية. تسهم هذه الرسالة في تطوير أنظمة ذكاء اصطناعي دقيقة وشفافة وموثوقة وقوية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الموثوقية، الرسوم البيانية المعرفية، الشبكات العصبية الرسومية، أنظمة التوصية الحساسة للثقة، ثقة البيانات، ثقة النموذج، ثقة التنبؤ، قياس عدم اليقين، تصنيف صور الكوارث، تحليل الصور الطبية.

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Dedication

First and foremost, I thank Almighty God for granting me health, patience, and strength to complete this work.

To my beloved parents and family, for their unconditional love, support, and sacrifices throughout my journey.

To my husband, for his unwavering encouragement, patience, and strength during every step of this path.

To my precious daughter, whose smile and joy have been my greatest source of energy and motivation.

To my supervisors, Professor Fouzi Harrag and Professor Ladjel Bellatreche, for their invaluable guidance, trust, and continuous support that illuminated my way.

General Introduction

The rapid expansion of digital information has transformed modern society into one that increasingly relies on intelligent systems for decision-making, personalization, and critical support in high-stakes domains. Recommender systems suggest products or media to users, clinical support tools assist physicians in diagnosis, and automated pipelines help emergency responders during natural disasters. While these systems provide enormous value, their effectiveness and societal acceptance hinge on one fundamental property: **trustworthiness**. Users, practitioners, and policymakers must be able to trust that the underlying data is reliable, that the models are fair and transparent, and that the outcomes are robust, explainable, and aligned with human values.

This demand is particularly urgent because many of today's AI models are "black boxes," producing highly accurate predictions but offering little clarity on how these predictions are derived. Furthermore, the datasets that fuel them—ranging from public knowledge graphs (KGs) to medical image repositories—are often noisy, incomplete, or biased. Without mechanisms to evaluate and propagate trust across the entire pipeline, such systems risk introducing errors that can mislead users or even cause harm in critical applications.

This thesis is motivated by the need to bridge these gaps by **integrating trust assessment into both the data layer and the modeling layer of AI systems**. At the data layer, knowledge graphs have emerged as powerful tools for structuring heterogeneous information, enabling reasoning and inference across domains. However, their large scale and dynamic nature raise pressing questions of accuracy, reliability, and provenance. At the modeling layer, graph-based neural architectures—particularly Graph Neural Networks (GNNs)—offer flexible means to capture complex dependencies, yet they too must be extended to incorporate notions of trust, fairness, and uncertainty if they are to be deployed in practice.

Against this backdrop, the central ambition of this thesis is to design and evaluate **trust-aware intelligent systems** by unifying trust signals from knowledge graphs with advanced graph-neural modeling techniques. The research unfolds along three interrelated axes:

1. **Trust in Knowledge Graphs:** We analyze the dimensions of trust in KGs—accuracy, reliability, and provenance—and review existing representation learning methods for trust-related tasks such as link completion, triple classification, and noise detection. We propose a structured taxonomy and provide a survey of neural approaches that enhance KG integrity.

2. **Trust in AI Models:** We investigate how trustworthiness in AI can be framed along dimensions such as explainability, fairness, robustness, privacy, and accountability. Particular attention is given to approaches that leverage KGs to improve transparency and uncertainty estimation, culminating in a survey of trust-aware AI models both with and without knowledge integration. This work has been published

in a peer-reviewed IEEE conference.

3. **Trust-Aware Recommender Systems:** We introduce **GUITARES**, a novel Graph Attention Network-based recommender system that integrates three distinct trust signals: item confidence derived from external knowledge bases, user-user trust relationships inferred from demographic similarity and interaction patterns, and structural attention over user-item graphs. GUITARES is extensively evaluated against baselines and state-of-the-art models, demonstrating consistent improvements in accuracy and scalability.

Beyond methodological contributions, this thesis validates the generalizability of its trust-aware framework through two real-world use cases:

- **Trust-Aware Disaster Image Classification:** A novel framework combining ResNet-based feature extraction, graph construction via k-nearest neighbors, and GNNs enhanced with Monte Carlo dropout for uncertainty estimation. This work, already published at an international conference, illustrates how trust signals can improve safety in disaster response scenarios.
- **Trust-Aware Skin Cancer Image Classification (GraphSkinUQ):** An end-to-end pipeline unifying CNN embeddings, graph-based relational reasoning, and uncertainty quantification through attentive message passing. This method not only improves diagnostic accuracy but also delivers calibrated confidence scores that support clinical decision-making. This contribution has been submitted to a leading journal and is under revision.

Research Objectives

This thesis is driven by the following key objectives:

1. To establish a principled framework for quantifying and enforcing trust in large-scale knowledge graphs.
2. To explore how different graph-neural architectures, particularly GATs, can propagate and enhance trust signals across complex graphs.
3. To design and implement a hybrid trust-aware recommender system that outperforms traditional methods in accuracy, fairness, and scalability.
4. To validate the applicability of trust-aware AI models in real-world, high-stakes domains such as healthcare and disaster management.

Contributions

The major contributions of this thesis can be summarized as follows (Figure 1):

- A **comprehensive taxonomy and survey** of methods for enhancing trust in knowledge graphs using AI models, culminating in a dedicated survey paper.
- A **state-of-the-art review** of trust in AI, with and without KG integration, emphasizing fairness, explainability, and accountability, **published in an IEEE conference**.

- The design and implementation of **GUITARES**, a Graph Attention Network-based recommender system that integrates multi-source trust signals, accepted for publication in the *Journal of Supercomputing*.
- Two **real-world trust-aware applications**—in disaster image classification and skin cancer diagnosis—that demonstrate how uncertainty-aware GNNs can improve the reliability of predictions in sensitive domains.
- Extensive **empirical evaluations**, including comparisons with baselines, hyperparameter studies, user surveys, and scalability analyses, establishing the effectiveness and generalizability of the proposed approaches.

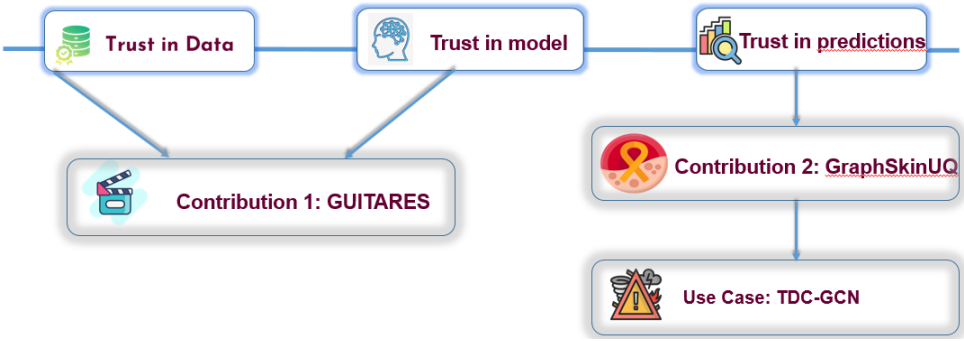

Figure 1: Overview of the two main contributions of this thesis and their focus levels within the AI pipeline. GUITARES addresses trust at the **data and model levels** (integrating user trust, ratings, and KG confidence), while the predictive trust applications (GraphSkinUQ and TDC-GCN) focus on **trust in predictions** through uncertainty-aware GNNs.

Thesis Structure

The remainder of this thesis is organized as follows:

- **Chapter 1 (Background)** introduces knowledge graphs, dimensions of trust, AI trust factors, recommender systems, and GNN architectures.
- **Chapter 2 (State of the Art)** surveys trust in knowledge graphs, trust in AI with and without knowledge integration, and trust-aware recommender systems.
- **Chapter 3 (GUITARES)** details the methodology, implementation, and evaluation of the proposed trust-aware recommender system.
- **Chapters 4 and 5 (Use Cases)** present trust-aware applications in skin cancer and disaster image classification, demonstrating the generalizability of the framework.
- **Chapter 6 (Conclusion and Future Work)** reflects on the contributions, limitations, and potential research directions toward building more transparent, reliable, and socially acceptable AI systems.

Chapter 1

Background

Contents

1.1 Introduction

Knowledge Graphs (KGs) provide a powerful framework for organizing and reasoning over large, diverse datasets by representing real-world information as interconnected triples of entities and relations. In this chapter, we first explain how a KG is constructed—from extracting entities and their relationships to defining the supporting

ontology—and how it is maintained through refinement methods that balance completeness and correctness. We then develop a multi-dimensional view of trust in KGs, defining three key dimensions—accuracy of facts, reliability of updates over time, and provenance of sources—and describe the core integrity tasks that enforce them: link completion to infer missing facts, triple classification to validate individual assertions, and noise detection to identify and remove erroneous entries. Finally, we show how a trustworthy KG underpins essential AI requirements—explainability, fairness, robustness, privacy, and accountability—and introduce modern Graph Neural Network architectures (GCNs, GATs, and Graph Transformers) as the primary tools for refining graph structure and propagating trust signals. Together, these topics establish the technical and conceptual foundation for the state-of-the-art survey in Chapter 1 and set the stage for our GUITARES trust-aware recommender in Chapter 2.

1.2 Overview of Knowledge Graphs

Knowledge graphs organize domain knowledge as entities and the relationships between them, forming a graph structure that supports efficient querying, inference, and integration of heterogeneous data sources [1]. Building a knowledge graph typically involves identifying entities, extracting their relationships, and defining the ontology that governs how concepts interrelate [2]. Once constructed, these graphs facilitate a variety of downstream tasks—such as completing missing facts, classifying triples, and detecting erroneous information—by leveraging both their structure and embedded representations.

By embedding entities and relations into a low-dimensional vector space, operations like link prediction and triple classification become tractable and scalable [3]. Moreover, knowledge graphs underpin reasoning over complex domains, enrich machine-learning models with contextual data, and improve human–computer interaction in applications ranging from natural language understanding to recommender systems and biomedical analysis [4, 5, 6].

Maintaining high data quality in a knowledge graph requires balancing completeness—ensuring all relevant facts are present—with correctness—avoiding incorrect or contradictory statements. Refinement techniques, including semantic rule-based methods and graph neural networks, help to prune and augment the graph, thereby strengthening its reliability [7, 8]. Integrating multiple data modalities (e.g., text, images, and structured records) further enriches the graph's semantic content and supports richer inference, making knowledge graphs a powerful solution for managing large-scale, heterogeneous information [9, 10].

1.3 Definition and Dimensions of Trust in Knowledge Graph

In the context of Knowledge Graphs (KGs), trust encompasses the confidence or belief in the accuracy, reliability, and provenance of the information they contain. Trust in KGs is multi-dimensional, involving several crucial aspects:

1.3.1 Accuracy

Accuracy in a KG refers to the correctness of the triples that make up the graph, evaluated based on how well these triples align with real-world facts. Given the vast scale of contemporary KGs, manually verifying each triple is impractical due to high costs. Instead, a common practice is to annotate a smaller, random subset of triples to estimate overall

accuracy. Although this sampling method helps to manage annotation expenses, it can introduce inaccuracies that may not fully reflect the KG's true accuracy. To achieve a statistically significant estimate, a sufficiently large sample is required, which, in turn, increases the cost of annotation. Additionally, as KGs are continuously updated with new information, maintaining accuracy requires periodic evaluations of the graph, especially when transitioning from an older version to a newer one, to avoid starting the assessment process from scratch [11].

1.3.2 Reliability

Reliability pertains to the consistency and stability of the information over time. Reliable data is characterized by its low susceptibility to errors and discrepancies, making it essential for applications that rely on current and stable information [12].

1.3.3 Provenance

Provenance involves tracing the origin and history of data within the KG. Understanding where data comes from and the transformations it has undergone is critical for assessing its credibility and verifying its accuracy. Provenance information plays a key role in establishing trustworthiness by providing insights into the data's lineage and the processes it has experienced [13].

1.3.4 Trust-Related Tasks in Knowledge Graphs

In this work, we focus on three core trust-related tasks in knowledge graphs that leverage representation learning to ensure data integrity, quality, and completeness. Each task evaluates a different aspect of trustworthiness and is illustrated with a concrete example.

Link Completion

Link completion predicts missing entities in triples—either the head or tail—by learning from existing graph embeddings. For instance, as shown in 1.1, given the partial fact

$$(\texttt{Albert Einstein}, \texttt{educatedAt}, ?)$$

The model might infer "ETH Zurich" as the missing institution. Successful completion demonstrates that the model has captured the graph's underlying semantics and relationships effectively.

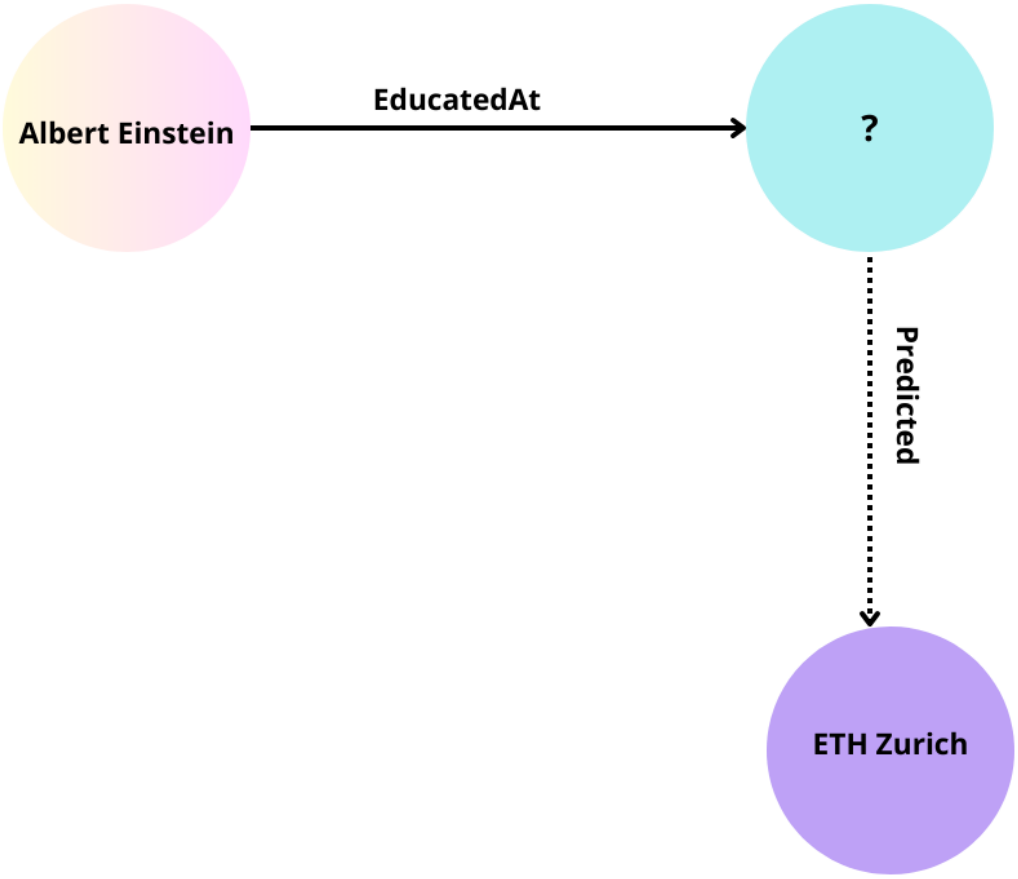

Figure 1.1: An illustrative example of the knowledge completion task

Embedding models such as TransE, TransR, and ComplEx fill absent links by projecting entities and relations into a vector space [14]. RotatE further improves on symmetric relation modeling by applying complex-valued rotations [15]. Context-aware methods like ConvE and ConvKB exploit convolutional architectures to integrate richer neighborhood information, boosting completion accuracy [16].

Triple Classification

Triple classification treats each candidate fact as a binary decision: correct or incorrect. Negative examples are created by corrupting either the head or the tail entity.

Example: As shown in Figure 1.2 classifying `(Penguin, canFly, True)` as incorrect, since penguins are flightless birds.

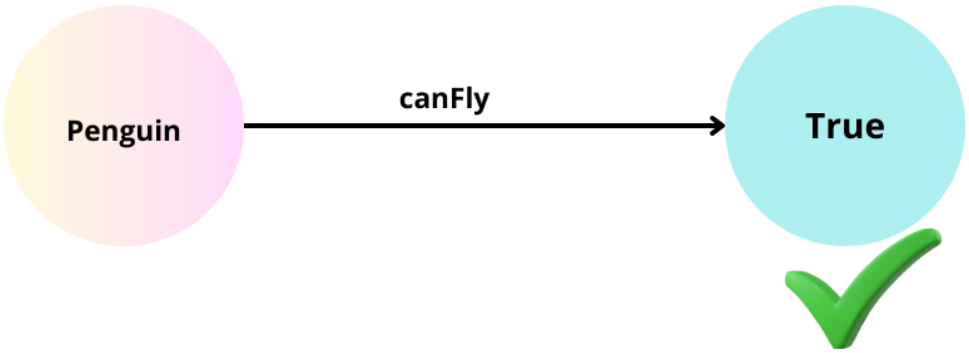

Figure 1.2: An illustrative example of the triple classification task

Neural approaches—such as ConvE and transformer-based KG-BERT—leverage deep architectures to discriminate valid from invalid triples [17, 18]. Fine-tuning large language models on graph data has further improved classification by capturing nuanced contextual signals.

Noise Detection

Noise detection identifies and removes erroneous or contradictory triples. A high energy score,

$$E(h, r, t) = \|h + r - t\|,$$

may signal a noisy entry. For instance,

$$(\texttt{Moon}, \texttt{hasAtmosphere}, \texttt{oxygen})$$

As shown in Figure 1.3 ,detecting `(Moon, hasAtmosphere, oxygen)` as noise, since the Moon lacks a substantial atmosphere.

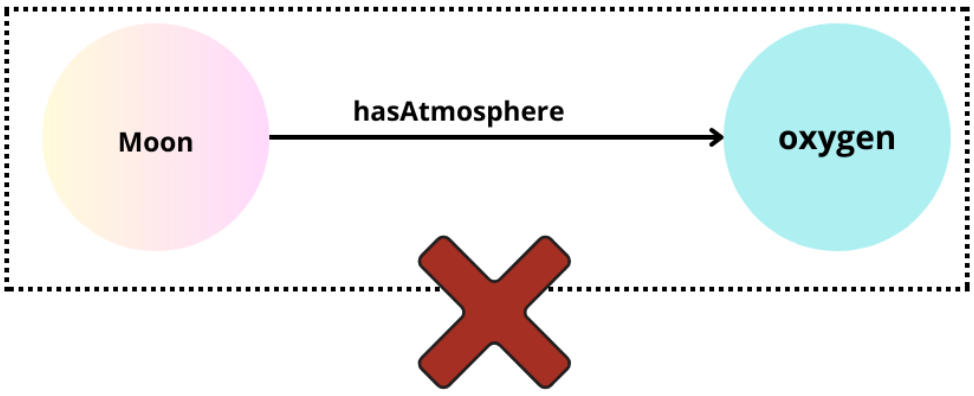

Figure 1.3: An illustrative example of the Noise detection task

State-of-the-art noise detectors use anomaly-detection algorithms and graph neural networks to spot outliers [19]. Unsupervised models like DeepLOD excel at finding and

flagging spurious triples in large graphs [20]. Some systems also incorporate human-in-the-loop verification—combining automated checks with expert feedback—to further enhance trust [12].

Together, these three tasks—link completion, triple classification, and noise detection—form a robust suite of mechanisms for maintaining and evaluating trust in knowledge graphs, ensuring they remain accurate, coherent, and reliable for downstream applications.

1.4 Factors of Trustworthiness in AI

Inspired by the Trust Reference Ontology proposed by Glenda Amaral et al., trust can be understood as the willingness of a truster to place outcomes that matter to them in the hands of a trustee, based on the belief in the trustee's capabilities, while considering the vulnerabilities that may harm the trust relationship [21]. In the context of AI, the truster represents the user, and the trustee is the AI system. The system's capabilities contribute to building trust, while vulnerabilities, such as bias or opaque (black-box) models, undermine it. This section explores the key concepts of trust in AI.

1.4.1 Explainability and Interpretability

Explainability and interpretability are closely related concepts, referring to an AI system's ability to explain its operation. Zhdanov et al. [22, 23] introduced a FAT (Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency)-based AI system using the GLM model, a white-box approach, to provide explainability, as opposed to black-box models. These laters, such as neural networks and deep learning algorithms, often deliver high accuracy but lack transparency, which is particularly problematic in critical domains like healthcare. This lack of clarity can lead to mistrust, especially when AI systems make incorrect decisions. Therefore, explainable models are essential to empower users and developers to understand, correct errors, and improve system performance. It is also necessary to establish international regulations that promote transparency and protect users' rights [24].

1.4.2 Fairness

Despite extensive research on algorithmic fairness, discrimination risks, and bias in AI models, there is no universally accepted definition of fairness [25]. Thus, we adopt the definition by Friedman and Nissenbaum (1996): unfairness occurs when a system "systematically and unfairly discriminates against certain individuals or groups in favor of others by denying opportunities or assigning undesirable outcomes on unreasonable or inappropriate grounds" [26]. Omrani et al. [27] highlight how bias in AI systems, based on factors such as age, gender, race, or nationality, leads to unfair outcomes in recruitment or credit assessments, eroding trust in AI. Various methods, including data governance, have been proposed to detect and mitigate bias. The root of this problem often lies in biased or incomplete datasets, and numerous research efforts have been made to address these issues to build trust in AI, as discussed in Section 3.1.

1.4.3 Robustness and Reliability

Reliability refers to an AI model's ability to function correctly over time, while robustness ensures consistent performance across diverse deployment scenarios. For AI systems

to foster trust, they must be both reliable and robust, consistently meeting expectations under varying conditions [28]. Common indicators used to measure reliability include ability, accuracy, and competence [29, 30, 31].

1.4.4 Privacy and Security

For AI systems to be trustworthy, they must respect privacy rights and ensure the secure handling of user data. Privacy and security fall under the domain of responsible and ethical AI, which mandates compliance with legal and ethical standards when dealing with sensitive information, such as personal identities. Data collection, storage, and processing must adhere to these standards to protect individuals' privacy [32].

1.4.5 Transparency and Accountability

There is increasing demand for transparency and accountability in ADM systems to identify which components are responsible for correct or incorrect decisions. Ananny and Crawford, as well as other researchers, emphasize that accountability requires understanding how the system functions as a whole, rather than just examining individual parts [33]. However, making ADMs transparent may come at the cost of security, as exposing the system's inner workings could make it more vulnerable to attacks [34].

1.5 Recommender Systems

Recommender systems (RS) are a pivotal component of many online platforms, designed to predict user preferences and provide personalized suggestions for items such as movies, books, or products. The primary goal of a recommender system is to enhance user satisfaction by narrowing the vast pool of available items to a curated selection tailored to individual tastes. Mathematically, the recommendation problem can be formulated as follows:

Given:

- A set of users $U = \{u_1, u_2, \ldots, u_m\}$.
- A set of items $I = \{i_1, i_2, \ldots, i_n\}$.
- A user-item interaction matrix $R \in \mathbb{R}^{m \times n}$, where R_{ij} represents the rating or interaction of user u_i with item i_j.

The task is to predict unknown ratings $\hat{R}_{ij}$ for user-item pairs and recommend the top k items with the highest predicted ratings for each user.

1.5.1 Trust in Recommender Systems

The GUITARES model integrates Guizzardi's [21] ontology of trust into its trust modeling framework to enhance the semantic representation of trust levels. This integration is achieved by defining trust as a function of user demographics and interactional similarities, grounded in the ontology's formalized definitions. Specifically, trust between users is conceptualized as a relationship where one user (the trustor) relies on another (the trustee) based on shared attributes, observed interactions, and external validation. The ontology's constructs, such as confidence and risk assessment, are operationalized within the Trust Prediction Module of TRS-GAT. Demographic data, including age, gender, and occupation,

are encoded and weighted to reflect their relative importance in predicting trust levels. For instance, the cosine similarity between user feature vectors serves as a proxy for the trustor's belief in the trustee's reliability, consistent with Guizzardi's framework. These weighted similarities are then transformed into trust scores ranging from 0 to 1, providing a quantitative measure of trust that aligns with the ontology's principles. Trust relationships are quantified using demographic and interactional similarities between users. The trust level T_{ij} between user u_i (trustor) and user u_j (trustee) is expressed as:

$$T_{ij} = f(S_{ij}), \tag{1.1}$$

where S_{ij} represents the similarity between u_i and u_j based on attributes such as age, gender, and occupation.

1.5.2 Confidence in Items

Confidence in items plays a fundamental role in trust-aware recommender systems, as it provides a measure of the reliability of information associated with items. In knowledge-based systems, confidence scores quantify the system's certainty about the correctness of extracted facts, influencing the overall trust in recommendations.

One notable approach to integrating confidence into recommendation systems involves leveraging knowledge graphs such as the Never-Ending Language Learning (NELL) ontology. NELL continuously extracts structured knowledge from various sources, assigning confidence scores to facts based on the reliability of the extracted information. These confidence scores serve as indicators of trustworthiness, helping to refine and enhance recommendation models.

The incorporation of confidence measures into trust-aware recommendation aligns with Guizzardi's ontology of trust [21], where confidence is considered a key component of trust relationships. By associating confidence scores with item attributes, a recommendation system can enhance the credibility of its suggestions, particularly in cases where explicit user feedback is sparse.

1.6 Graph Neural Networks: Foundations and Variants

Graph neural networks (GNNs) learn node and/or graph representations by propagating and aggregating information along the edges of a graph. The earliest GNNs framed this as a message-passing system; Graph Convolutional Networks (GCNs) then showed how to perform spectral or spatial convolutions on graph data, dramatically improving semi-supervised classification tasks. Graph Attention Networks (GATs) introduced learnable edge-wise attention weights, enabling the model to focus on the most relevant neighbors. More recently, Graph Transformers generalize the Transformer architecture to arbitrary graph structures, combining global self-attention with graph-aware biases. Below, we detail each variant mathematically and provide pointers to recent surveys and advances. In this section, we review:

- **Message-Passing GNNs**: the general abstraction
- **Graph Convolutional Networks (GCNs)**: spectral/spatial convolutions
- **Graph Attention Networks (GATs)**: edge-wise attention
- **Graph Transformer Models**: global self-attention with graph biases

1.6.1 General Message-Passing Framework

A broad family of GNNs can be expressed as *message-passing* layers [35]:

$$\mathbf{m}_v^{(k)} = \Big\{ \big(\mathbf{h}_v^{(k-1)}, \mathbf{h}_u^{(k-1)}, e_{uv}\big) \mid (u,v) \in E \Big\}, \tag{1.2}$$

$$\mathbf{h}_v^{(k)} = \big(\mathbf{h}_v^{(k-1)}, \mathbf{m}_v^{(k)}\big), \tag{1.3}$$

where at layer k, each node v gathers "messages" from its neighbors u, aggregates them (e.g., sum/mean), and then updates its own embedding via an MLP or GRU. This abstraction underlies many variants and applications, from molecular property prediction to social-network analysis.

1.6.2 Graph Convolutional Networks (GCNs)

The seminal GCN by Kipf & Welling [36] performs a first-order spectral convolution:

$$\mathbf{H}^{(k)} = \sigma\Big(\widetilde{\mathbf{D}}^{-\frac{1}{2}}\widetilde{\mathbf{A}}\widetilde{\mathbf{D}}^{-\frac{1}{2}}\,\mathbf{H}^{(k-1)}\,\mathbf{W}^{(k)}\Big),$$

where $\widetilde{\mathbf{A}} = \mathbf{A} + \mathbf{I}$ adds self-loops and $\widetilde{\mathbf{D}}$ is its degree matrix. Each node's new feature is a normalized average of itself plus its one-hop neighbors.

Applications:

- *Recommender systems*: capturing high-order user–item relations [37]
- *Semi-supervised node classification*: citation networks, social graphs
- *Molecular property prediction*:ting atom-level interactions

1.6.3 Graph Attention Networks (GATs)

GATs [38] replace fixed normalization with learned attentions:

$$e_{uv} = \mathrm{LeakyReLU}\big(\mathbf{a}^\top[\mathbf{W}\mathbf{h}_u \,\|\, \mathbf{W}\mathbf{h}_v]\big), \tag{1.4}$$

$$\alpha_{uv} = \mathrm{softmax}_u(e_{uv}), \quad \mathbf{h}'_v = \sigma\Big(\sum_{u\in\mathcal{N}(v)} \alpha_{uv}\,\mathbf{W}\,\mathbf{h}_u\Big). \tag{1.5}$$

Multi-head attention further stabilizes learning.

Applications:

- *Traffic forecasting*: dynamically weighing sensor neighbors
- *Recommendation*: focusing on most relevant social connections
- *Knowledge-graph completion*: weighing relation paths

1.6.4 Graph Transformer Models

Recent *Graph Transformers* generalize Transformers to graphs by adding edge/positional biases [39]:

$$\alpha_{uv} = \mathrm{softmax}_u\Big(\tfrac{1}{\sqrt{d}}\big(\mathbf{Q}_v\mathbf{K}_u^\top + B_{uv}\big)\Big), \tag{1.6}$$

$$\mathbf{h}'_v = \sum_{u\in V} \alpha_{uv}\,\mathbf{V}_u, \tag{1.7}$$

where B_{uv} encodes adjacency, distance, or learned edge features.

Applications:

- *Molecule generation*: global attention over atom graphs
- *Program analysis*: reasoning over ASTs and code graphs
- *Social network forecasting*: capturing long-range dependencies

1.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, we laid the technical and conceptual foundation for trustworthy AI by first defining Knowledge Graphs (KGs) and their three core trust dimensions—accuracy, reliability, and provenance—and demonstrating how each influences downstream tasks. We then surveyed the key KG-integrity operations—link completion, triple classification, and noise detection—and highlighted their complementary roles in preserving graph quality and factual consistency. Next, we showed how these trust mechanisms underpin broader AI imperatives of explainability, fairness, robustness, privacy, and accountability. Finally, we reviewed the landscape of graph neural architectures—Message-Passing GNNs, GCNs, GATs, and Graph Transformers—that power both KG refinement and trust modeling. Together, these insights establish the essential groundwork for the state-of-the-art survey in Chapter 1 and set the stage for the design and evaluation of our GUITARES trust-aware recommender in Chapter 2.

Chapter 2

Related Works

Contents

2.1 Introduction

Building on this foundation, we next examine the landscape of methods designed to instill and leverage trust in both Knowledge Graphs and AI systems more broadly. We begin by reviewing AI-driven techniques that enhance KG integrity—embedding-, path-, and hybrid-based models for predicting missing facts, classifying valid triples, and detecting noise. We then reverse the perspective, showing how Knowledge Graphs themselves can bolster AI trustworthiness through non-KG-aware approaches (fairness metrics, causal or counterfactual data methods, regulatory frameworks) and KG-aware methods that inject

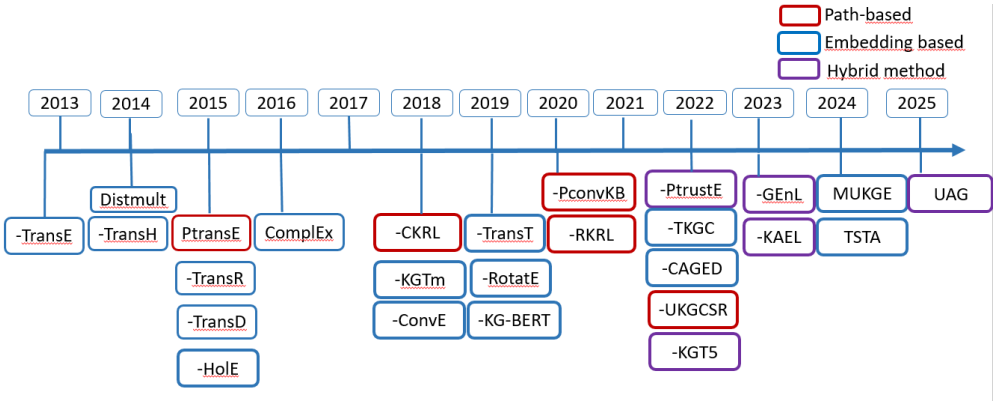

Figure 2.1: Timeline of Approaches in Enhancing Knowledge Graph Trustworthiness

semantic context into explanations, uncertainty quantification, and ethical compliance. Finally, we narrow our focus to recommender systems, contrasting traditional architectures with emerging trust-aware designs that incorporate explicit trust signals—whether via graph structures or alternative pipelines. This threefold survey—from AI for KG trust, through KG for trustworthy AI, to trust-aware recommendation—reveals the gaps in scalability, explainability, and trust modeling that our GUITARES GAT-based recommender will address in the next chapter.

2.2 Advancing trust in Knowledge Graph: State of the art of Trust Representation learning approaches in KG

To understand the enhancement of Knowledge Graph (KG) trustworthiness, it is essential to explore the various approaches and methodologies that contribute to improving KG reliability and accuracy. These methods can be broadly categorized into three primary types, each addressing a different aspect of KG trustworthiness. The following figure 2.1 illustrates the timeline of these approaches and their classification.

In this section, we investigate the core aspects of Knowledge Graph (KG) trustworthiness, with a particular focus on embedding methods, path-based techniques, and hybrid approaches for measuring trust. Our objective is to compare and contrast these methods to guide researchers and practitioners in selecting the most effective approaches. We provide an extensive review of current trust measurement techniques, propose a novel taxonomy for organizing these methods, and critically evaluate the strengths and limitations of each state-of-the-art approach in the quest for reliable and trustworthy Knowledge Graphs.

Our initial research phase involved a thorough literature review to identify relevant keywords associated with trust in knowledge graphs. These keywords were crucial for conducting targeted searches to find pertinent publications. We compiled a list of 20 keywords, detailed in Table 2.1.

Following this, we carefully reviewed the full texts of 74 selected publications that were closely aligned with our research scope. The inclusion criteria for these publications focused on the employed methods, evaluation strategies, and the context of the proposed solutions. Studies that did not meet the standards of peer-reviewed research, such as abstracts, perspectives, and opinion-based papers, were excluded.

The PRISMA flowchart for our publication collection is shown in Figure 2.2;

Table 2.1: Keywords for Trust in knowledge graphs

Types of keywords	**Lists of keywords**
Domain	trustworthiness, reliability , knowledge graph, KG completion, noise detection, triple classification, AI techniques for trust in knowledge graphs
knowledge graphs	ontology, trust in graph, embedding based methods, path based methods,hybrid methods
Trust with AI in KG	supervised learning, semi-supervised learning, unsupervised learning, ensemble learning for trustwothiness of KG,labeled data,unlabled data ,graph neural networks, convolutional neural networks
Paper types	Conference, Proceedings, Peer-review
Other	datasets, evaluation metrics, contextual information, contextual prediction

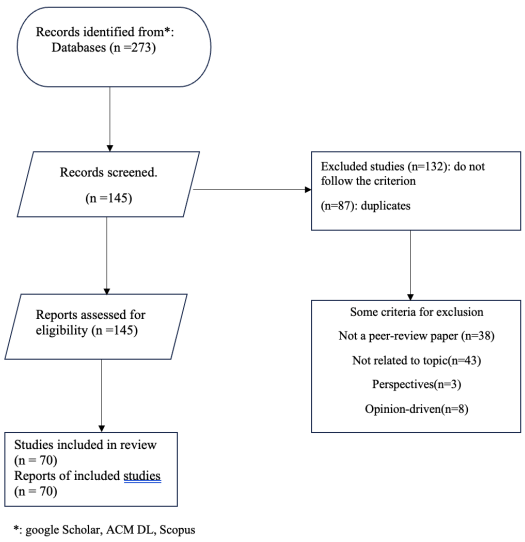

Figure 2.2: PRISMA Flowchart for Including Publications

2.2.1 Taxonomy

With the expanding use of Knowledge Graphs (KGs) across various domains, ensuring their trustworthiness has become increasingly vital. To systematically examine the different methods and approaches developed to enhance KG trustworthiness, we propose a comprehensive taxonomy. This taxonomy categorizes the various models based on their core methodologies and objectives, offering a structured framework for understanding the landscape of KG trustworthiness research.

Motivation for the Taxonomy

The development of this taxonomy is driven by the need to address key challenges in evaluating and improving KG trustworthiness:

- Data Sparsity: Trust data can often be sparse, complicating accurate evaluation. Embedding models, particularly unsupervised ones, address this challenge by learning compact representations that handle sparse data effectively.
- Contextual Relevance: The trustworthiness of information is highly dependent on context. Path-based methods analyze the relational context between entities, capturing nuances that simple node features might overlook.
- Scalability: Given the large and complex nature of KGs, scalable approaches are essential. Embedding models typically offer scalability by transforming the graph into a more manageable format. Ensemble and hybrid methods can combine scalability with robustness.
- Heterogeneous Information Sources: KGs often integrate data from various sources, each with different levels of trust. Hybrid methods leverage the strengths of multiple techniques to handle heterogeneous data effectively.
- Dynamic Nature of Trust: Trustworthiness is dynamic and can change over time. Both supervised and unsupervised learning models can be retrained with new data to adapt to these changes.

These challenges have guided the creation of categories within our taxonomy, ensuring that each category addresses specific aspects of trustworthiness evaluation and enhancement.

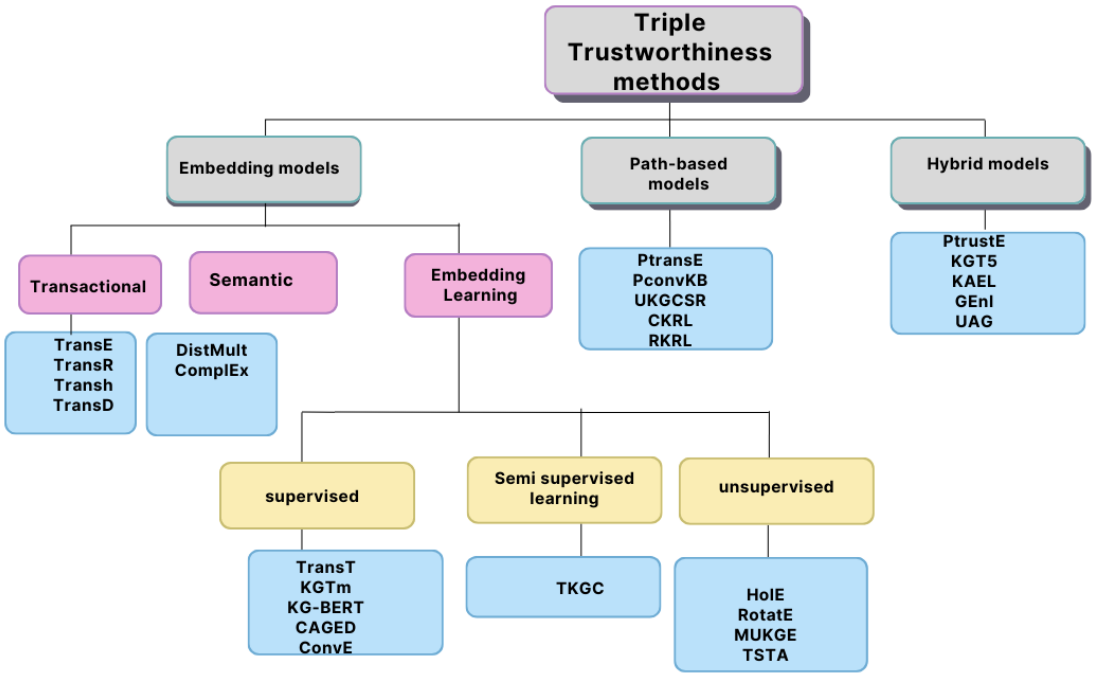

Figure 2.3: KG trustworthiness taxonomy

The taxonomy is divided into several categories, as depicted in Figure 2.3, which outlines the techniques used to assess and enhance trust in KGs. These categories include embedding models, path-based methods, and hybrid methods, each with subcategories detailing specific techniques.

2.2.2 Embedding Models

Embedding-based methods are designed to represent knowledge graph (KG) entities and relations within continuous vector spaces, encoding both structural and semantic information to facilitate enhanced comprehension and reasoning [40]. Knowledge Graph Embedding (KGE) involves mapping a KG $G = (V, E)$ into a lower-dimensional space, where each entity and relation is assigned a vector representation in a d-dimensional space. These embeddings aim to preserve essential graph characteristics, capturing semantic meanings and higher-order proximities. While KGE techniques can improve model performance by enhancing the input, they may struggle with noise in graph paths, potentially affecting embedding quality [41].

Objective

Embedding-based methods focus on improving the representation of entities and relations by transforming them into continuous vector spaces. This transformation enables more nuanced and context-aware representations, aids in predicting missing links, and enhances KG completeness. These methods are particularly suitable for real-world applications due to their scalability, which is crucial for handling large KGs.

Transactional Embedding Methods

Transactional embedding methods are designed to capture dynamic interactions and transactional activities between entities in a knowledge graph. These methods are particularly relevant in scenarios where transactions—such as financial exchanges or data transmissions—are critical indicators of trust and reliability.

TransE models relationships as translations in the embedding space, where the vector of a head entity plus the vector of the relationship approximates the vector of the tail entity. Proposed by Bordes et al. in 2013, TransE adjusts vector representations to ensure that the sum of the head and relation vectors closely approximates the tail vector [42]. Adaptations of TransE for trust-related tasks can help assess the correctness and reliability of triples, improving the KG's trustworthiness for downstream applications. Combining TransE with other KG embedding techniques and advanced machine learning models can further enhance trust assessments [43].

TransR extends TransE by projecting entity embeddings into relation-specific spaces before performing translations, allowing for better handling of diverse relation types within complex knowledge graphs [44].

TransH improves upon TransE by projecting entity embeddings onto relation-specific hyperplanes before translation, which effectively captures the heterogeneity of entity roles across multiple relations [45].

TransD further extends the approach by treating entities and relations as dynamic matrices rather than static vectors, providing a more flexible representation that adapts to the specifics of each entity-relation pair [46]. These enhancements make TransE variants well-suited for capturing the dynamic and transactional nature of relationships within knowledge graphs, which is crucial for accurate trust assessments.

Semantic Embedding Methods

Semantic embedding methods focus on capturing the intrinsic meanings of relationships and entities within a knowledge graph, excelling in representing contextual and conceptual nuances critical for assessing trustworthiness.

DistMult is a semantic model that constrains relation embeddings to diagonal matrices, simplifying relational learning by using diagonal matrices instead of full matrices as seen in other tensor factorization methods [47]. While it is limited to symmetric relationships, DistMult effectively captures the semantics of such relationships where symmetry is inherent [48]. In trust-related tasks, DistMult can help in trustworthiness prediction by capturing specific interactions between entities and relations, aiding in the identification of reliable relationships within the KG.

ComplEx extends DistMult by employing complex-valued embeddings for entities and relations, allowing the model to better capture antisymmetric relations and nuanced semantic associations within the KG. ComplEx combines the translational assumption of TransE with a multi-hop path-aware embedding model, enhancing its ability to handle multi-step relations and improve KG-based reasoning [49]. Its complex-valued embeddings are particularly useful for trust-related analyses, as they capture intricate interactions and relational patterns that involve negation and inversion, providing a richer and more accurate representation of knowledge graph semantics [50].

2.2.3 Embedding Supervised Learning

Supervised learning in knowledge graph embeddings involves training models using labeled datasets to learn accurate representations of entities and relations. This approach captures complex patterns in the data, which are essential for tasks such as link prediction, entity resolution, and trust assessment.

TransT: This model, proposed by [51], addresses the challenge of enhancing noisy knowledge graphs. Knowledge graphs (KGs) are structured representations comprising entities, relations, and triples are critical for various applications but often suffer from inaccuracies. The focus of TransT is on embedding learning techniques that consider the trustworthiness of triples within noisy KGs. The model introduces the concept of "triple trustiness," which aims to assess the reliability and accuracy of triples to improve KG quality by distinguishing reliable information from noise. As an enhancement of the TransE model, TransT integrates supervised learning to refine embeddings, which improves its capability to model complex relational patterns and enhances its performance in trust-related tasks.

KGTm: This supervised learning model utilizes a crisscrossing neural network structure to evaluate the trustworthiness of KG triples by integrating internal semantic information and global inference. Trained on labeled data, KGTm learns relationships between entities and the correctness of facts. It incorporates three estimators: the ResourceRank algorithm to estimate the likelihood of relationships, the Translation-based Energy Function (TEF) algorithm to assess the nature of relationships, and the Reachable Paths Inference (RPI) algorithm to infer related triples. These estimators' outputs are fused into a feature vector for binary classification using a multi-layer perceptron with a sigmoid function. Evaluated using the Freebase dataset, KGTm achieved an accuracy of 0.977, demonstrating its effectiveness in determining the trustworthiness of KG triples [52].

ConvE: ConvE is a multi-layer convolutional network model designed for link prediction in knowledge graphs. It uses 2D convolutions over embeddings to predict missing relationships between entities. With its 1-N scoring procedure, ConvE accelerates training and evaluation while being highly parameter-efficient compared to models like DistMult and R-GCNs. It excels in handling complex knowledge graphs and mitigating test set leakage issues through robust dataset versions. ConvE achieves state-of-the-art mean reciprocal rank across various datasets, highlighting its effectiveness in knowledge graph completion tasks [16].

KG-BERT: KG-BERT treats entities, relations, and triples as textual sequences and leverages pre-trained language models for knowledge graph completion tasks. By fine-tuning BERT on these sequences, KG-BERT captures relationships and plausibility of triples effectively. This approach can be categorized as a supervised learning method, where the pre-trained BERT model is fine-tuned on labeled data (triples or relations) to learn patterns and relationships within the data, making it suitable for knowledge graph completion [17].

CAGED: CAGED (Contrastive Knowledge Graph Error Detection) is an innovative framework for detecting noise in large-scale KGs. It consists of three stages: a new KG augmentation technique that maps triples to nodes in two distinct views, a custom-designed error-aware Knowledge Graph Neural Network (EaGNN) that preserves semantic integrity, and a joint confidence estimation mechanism that combines KG embedding loss and contrastive learning loss. CAGED is evaluated against other embedding-based methods and state-of-the-art KG error detection techniques, demonstrating superior performance in precision@K and recall@K for noisy triples [53]. While not directly addressing trustworthiness, CAGED enhances KG quality by identifying and rectifying erroneous

data, which is crucial for maintaining the accuracy and reliability of KGs.

2.2.4 Embedding Semi-Supervised Learning

Semi-supervised learning integrates both labeled and unlabeled data to enhance model performance, particularly when labeled data is limited but unlabeled data is plentiful.

TKGC: The Trustworthy KG Completion (TKGC) method introduces an innovative approach to improve trustworthiness in Knowledge Graph (KG) completion. TKGC tackles the challenge of inferring missing facts and discovering new ones by leveraging both existing KG knowledge and external data sources.

The TKGC method comprises several key components. Firstly, it uses a holistic fact-scoring measure to assess facts extracted from noisy and multi-sourced data. Inspired by embedding-based KG completion techniques, TKGC represents knowledge elements—such as entities, attributes, and values—using embeddings. These embeddings are then evaluated through a holistic scoring function to determine the plausibility of each fact. A notable feature of TKGC is its consideration of both relational and literal triples, offering a more comprehensive view of the KG.

Secondly, TKGC incorporates a value alignment network to detect similarities among pairs of extracted noisy values. This is accomplished using an asymmetric similarity measure through a literal-literal alignment neural network. Additionally, the Literal-Entity Alignment process is employed to validate facts concerning unseen entities.

Finally, TKGC integrates prior and external KG knowledge in a semi-supervised fashion. It infers the veracity of facts by considering the quality of data sources and utilizes concepts like confusion probability and trustworthiness assessment via an Observed Value Probability metric.

Overall, TKGC represents a substantial advancement in KG completion, especially in contexts where trustworthiness is crucial. By combining relational and literal information, aligning noisy values, and incorporating external knowledge sources, TKGC provides a robust framework for enhancing KGs with accurate, reliable, and trustworthy information [19].

2.2.5 Unsupervised Learning in Knowledge Graph Embeddings

Unsupervised learning in knowledge graph (KG) embeddings does not depend on labeled data. Instead, it leverages the inherent structure of the knowledge graph to learn representations that encapsulate latent relationships and patterns among entities.

HolE (Holographic Embeddings) employs circular correlation of vectors to model relationships, enabling the capture of complex interactions between entities while maintaining a low-dimensional embedding space. HolE effectively merges the strengths of translational and tensor factorization models, making it a powerful tool for learning intricate relational patterns within knowledge graphs [54]. This model does not require labeled data for training, as it learns entity and relation embeddings based on the graph's structure and inherent patterns. The objective of HolE is to capture the underlying relationships and interactions between entities and relations without explicit supervision.

RotatE, on the other hand, adopts a geometric perspective by representing relations as rotations in the complex space. This approach is particularly proficient at modeling diverse relational patterns such as symmetry, antisymmetry, inversion, and composition. The ability of RotatE to manage these complex patterns enhances its utility for semantic analysis in knowledge graphs, thereby increasing the trustworthiness of inferred relationships [55]. As an unsupervised learning method, RotatE does not rely on labeled data; it

instead capitalizes on the structure and connections within the knowledge graph to learn entity and relation embeddings.

MUKGE The MUKGE model (Liu et al., 2024 [56]) enhances Uncertain Knowledge Graph (UKG) embeddings by introducing two key innovations: the Uncertain ResourceRank (URR) algorithm for aggregating information across multiple paths to support global reasoning, and a multi-relation embedding scheme that captures asymmetric relational patterns. These advances enable MUKGE to generate reliable confidence scores for previously unseen triples and address structural imbalances often ignored by earlier approaches. Empirical results show MUKGE surpasses traditional baselines—such as PSL-based methods—in confidence estimation tasks. However, its iterative, multi-path aggregation procedure can become computationally intensive on very large graphs, and it does not leverage external semantic sources (e.g., textual descriptions in ontologies). Moreover, by assuming a uniform spread of uncertainty, MUKGE may be less effective in domains where confidence varies greatly across relations (for instance, in biomedical knowledge graphs). Compared to hybrid frameworks like Uncertainty-Aware KG Reasoning (UAG), which emphasize explicit uncertainty calibration, MUKGE offers superior handling of relational asymmetry at the expense of scalability and semantic integration—highlighting the trade-offs that must be managed in UKG embedding research.

Triple Strategy–Based Trustworthiness Assessment Model (TSTA) The Triple Strategy–Based Trustworthiness Assessment Model (Zhang et al., 2025 [57]) evaluates the reliability of a knowledge graph by fusing signals at three levels—entity, relation, and graph—using a multi-layer perceptron. By blending local triple semantics (via entity and relation embeddings) with global structural consistency checks, TSTA assigns trust scores that surpass prior methods in detecting errors across multiple real-world graphs. This layered design allows it to pinpoint inconsistencies where local assertions conflict with overall graph topology, such as when integrating external data sources.

Despite its strengths, TSTA has several limitations. First, it relies on static embeddings, which may not adapt well to evolving graphs where entities change roles over time. Second, the description of how graph-level features are computed is underspecified, leaving potential scalability bottlenecks unaddressed for very large graphs. Third, although effective at spotting erroneous triples, TSTA does not explicitly defend against adversarially injected facts, reducing its robustness in open-domain environments. Nevertheless, its combined embedding-and-structure approach provides a solid, pragmatic foundation for future work in knowledge-graph quality assurance.

In contrast to supervised learning, which requires labeled data to train models for prediction tasks, and semi-supervised learning, which combines labeled and unlabeled data, RotatE operates purely based on the structural information of the knowledge graph. It generates embeddings without the need for external labels or annotations, enabling the model to learn the representations of entities and relations solely from the graph's internal connectivity.

2.2.6 Path-Based Methods

Path-based methods in knowledge graphs leverage the sequences of relations between entities to infer new knowledge and validate existing information. These approaches utilize rule-based logic to explore various pathways within the graph, thereby enhancing the graph's capability to uncover hidden relationships [58].

Objective:

The primary objective of path-based methods is to improve knowledge discovery and verification within knowledge graphs by exploiting the connectivity and relational paths between entities. These methods are especially valuable for identifying indirect relationships and inferring missing links between distant entities, which are crucial for a comprehensive representation of knowledge. Path-based approaches aim to capture intricate relationships and associations between entities by considering multiple paths, enabling transitive inference and the deduction of unseen connections. Additionally, they play a critical role in verifying trustworthiness by detecting unreliable or conflicting information within knowledge graphs [59].

PTransE: PTransE is a multi-hop path-aware embedding model designed to enhance entity and relation representations in knowledge graphs by considering multi-step paths between entities. Building upon the TransE model, which represents relations as translations in a low-dimensional vector space, PTransE incorporates multi-hop paths to capture complex semantic relationships that simpler models might miss [60].

PConvKB: PConvKB introduces a novel approach to knowledge graph embedding by incorporating relation paths at both local and global levels to improve knowledge graph completion. Compared to ConvKB, PConvKB demonstrates superior performance in link prediction and triple classification tasks, as evidenced by experimental results on benchmark datasets [61].

UKGCSR: UKGCSR (Uncertain Knowledge Graph Causal Symbolic Reasoning) presents an innovative symbolic approach for reasoning over Uncertain Knowledge Graphs (UKGs) through multi-hop reasoning and causal inference. The model operates in two stages: first, it uses beam search to generate and assess paths' reliability, and then, it constructs a causal graph to estimate the Individual Treatment Effect (ITE) for each path, leading to final predictions. UKGCSR is noted for its interpretability in uncertain knowledge graph reasoning and has shown superior performance compared to baseline models across various datasets with differing levels of uncertainty [62]. By accounting for uncertainty and causal relationships, UKGCSR contributes to improving the trustworthiness of KG data through more accurate reasoning and decision-making.

CKRL This article presents an advanced framework for knowledge representation learning (KRL), known as Confidence-Aware Knowledge Representation Learning (CKRL). CKRL is specifically developed for tasks such as noise detection, knowledge completion, and triple classification within a Knowledge Graph (KG). A key innovation of CKRL is its consideration of triple confidence, which is instrumental in identifying potential inaccuracies or errors within the KG.

Unlike the TransE approach, CKRL employs a distinct strategy for generating negative examples. Instead of using fixed methods, it systematically replaces the head or tail entity in a triple with a randomly selected entity, enhancing its ability to tackle noise detection and related challenges [63]. This method significantly improves CKRL's performance in ensuring the KG's trustworthiness.

A major advantage of CKRL is its capability to incorporate triple confidence, which enables it to excel in detecting noise. By identifying and flagging unreliable or erroneous triples, CKRL enhances the overall trustworthiness of the KG. In scenarios where KGs have missing information, CKRL effectively predicts and completes triples, which is particularly important for trust-related tasks, as comprehensive and accurate KGs are critical for maintaining data trust.

CKRL is also highly effective in classifying triples as correct or incorrect, a key task for ensuring KG reliability. By assigning confidence scores to triples, CKRL assists in filtering

out less reliable or erroneous data, thereby improving the quality of information in the KG [64].

RKRL: Reliable Knowledge Representation Learning introduces a path-based knowledge graph representation learning method for noise detection in knowledge graphs. The method combines the representations of intermediate entities and relations along relation paths to derive more meaningful knowledge representations. RKRL also includes a reliable path ranking method to avoid unnecessary computation of unreliable paths and to identify semantically valid relation paths, thus enhancing the quality and reliability of the knowledge representations [65].

2.2.7 Hybrid Methods

Hybrid methods in knowledge graph embeddings integrate techniques from embedding-based, supervised, unsupervised, and path-based approaches to tackle complex challenges in knowledge graph (KG) applications. These methods aim to leverage the complementary strengths of various approaches to enhance the overall trustworthiness of KGs.

Objective

The objective of hybrid methods is to provide a comprehensive assessment of KG trustworthiness by addressing both structural and relational aspects. By integrating multiple techniques, hybrid methods capitalize on the strengths of each approach to improve overall performance. They offer versatile solutions applicable across diverse domains, addressing a wide range of knowledge graph needs. In the following sections, we will explore these hybrid methods in detail, discussing their strengths, applications, and their role in enhancing trustworthiness within knowledge graphs [66].

PTrustE: The method known as "PTrustE" is presented in [67] and focuses on the accurate detection of noisy data within a knowledge graph. PTrustE builds on the principles of path trustworthiness and triple embedding to improve KG trustworthiness. It addresses the challenge of noise detection, which involves identifying erroneous or unreliable triples that can compromise the quality and reliability of the KG. The approach utilizes path trustworthiness to evaluate the reliability of entity connections and triple embedding to represent entities and relations in a continuous vector space for more effective analysis and interpretation.

KAEL: KAEL employs a combination of embedding techniques, including supervised learning models and path-based methods such as KGTm and CKRL, to detect and correct errors in knowledge graphs. By integrating various detection mechanisms, KAEL offers a comprehensive solution that enhances the trustworthiness and reliability of KGs. The framework discussed in [60] introduces an active ensemble learning approach for knowledge graph error detection. It combines multiple error detection models, such as CKRL and KGTm, and uses active learning to select the most informative instances for labeling, thereby improving error detection accuracy and efficiency.

KGT5: The paper [68] examines methods for improving the trustworthiness of knowledge graphs. It explores embedding-based, path-based, and hybrid models to enhance the accuracy, reliability, and completeness of KGs. The study provides insights into how these methods can be employed to make KGs more reliable and trustworthy, impacting information retrieval, question answering, and decision support systems. Empirical evaluations demonstrate the effectiveness of these models in improving data quality and reliability within knowledge graphs.

GEnI: The framework discussed in [69], known as GEnI (Generation of Explanations and Insights), is designed to generate explanations and insights related to knowledge graph embedding predictions. GEnI addresses the challenge of interpreting embedding-based predictions, making them more accessible and understandable. While the primary focus is on enhancing interpretability, GEnI indirectly supports KG trustworthiness by providing valuable insights and explanations that help assess the reliability and accuracy of predictions and the information within the KG.

Uncertainty-Aware KG Reasoning (UAG) The UAG framework combines the structural strengths of knowledge graphs with the generative power of large language models to improve uncertainty estimation in KG-based question answering [70]. It navigates the graph via beam search, retrieving candidate answers while applying conformal prediction to guarantee a specified coverage probability. This design enables UAG to sustain strong accuracy in domains where reliable confidence estimates are essential, such as finance or healthcare. A further benefit comes from its calibrated similarity scoring between retrieved graph candidates and LLM-generated responses, which enhances the overall reasoning quality.

Nevertheless, UAG's multi-stage pipeline introduces additional complexity: error rates must be carefully propagated through each component, and the beam search plus conformal prediction incurs nontrivial computational costs. Moreover, although UAG demonstrates solid performance on standard benchmarks, its robustness and efficiency in rapidly changing or sparsely structured domains have yet to be fully assessed, marking important directions for future investigation.

Work	wikidata5m	wikikg90m	FB15K-237	WN18RR	YAGO3-10	Complexe Web Questions	Web Questions SP	WN18	FB15K	UMLS	NELL-995	WN11	FB13	FB5M	FB40K	DBpedia50	Dataset by OKELE	NL27K	FB15K-401
KGT5 [68]	X	X	X	X	X	X	X												
Conv2d [16]			X	X	X			X	X										
KAEL [60]			X	X						X									
KGTM [52]									X										
HolE [71]								X	X										
UAG [70]						X	X												
PtrustE [67]								X	X		X								
CKRL [63]									X										
PconvKB [61]			X	X				X	X										
RotatE [15]			X	X				X	X										
KB-Bert [17]			X	X					X	X		X	X						
RKRL [**Seo2020**]								X	X										
TKGC [19]																	X		
Transt [51]									X										
CAGED [53]				X					X		X								
TransE [42]									X										
PtransE [60]									X						X				
GEnl [69]			X	X					X							X			
UKGCSR [62]																		X	
TransR [44]								X	X			X			X				
TransH [45]								X	X			X	X	X					
TransD [46]								X	X										
Distmult [47]																			X
ComplEx [49]								X	X										
ConvE [16]			X	X	X			X	X										

Table 2.2: Matrix of related works (rows) and datasets (columns). An **X** indicates that the dataset is used in the respective work.

2.2.8 Datasets

Benchmark datasets play a crucial role in knowledge graph research by providing a structured environment for evaluating models and algorithms. These datasets are essential for assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of new methods. Below, we outline the key datasets that have significantly contributed to the advancement of knowledge graph-related tasks. Details regarding the datasets used for each model are presented in Table 2.2 , and specifics about the datasets can be found in Table 2.3.

WN18 (WordNet-18)

WN18 is a well-known subset of the extensive lexical database WordNet, featuring 18 types of relations among synsets (sets of cognitive synonyms). This dataset is highly regarded for link prediction tasks within knowledge graph completion, offering a controlled setting to test algorithms aimed at inferring missing relationships between concepts [55].

FB15K (Freebase-15k)

FB15K, derived from the expansive Freebase entity graph, includes approximately 15,000 entities connected by a variety of relations. This dataset is widely used to evaluate the

performance of knowledge graph completion models and link prediction algorithms, establishing itself as a standard benchmark in the field [55].

WN11 (WordNet-11)

WN11 is another subset of WordNet, consisting of 11 specific relationships. It presents a more focused challenge compared to WN18, allowing for the evaluation of knowledge graph completion models within a narrower set of relations. This specificity can be particularly useful for fine-tuning model parameters [55].

FB13 (Freebase-13)

FB13 is a streamlined version of Freebase, encompassing 13 types of relations among a selected group of entities. It is commonly used for preliminary assessments of knowledge graph embedding models, providing insights into the models' capacity to capture and reproduce relationship semantics in a smaller-scale setting [55].

WN18RR (WordNet-18 Round-Robin)

WN18RR is an updated version of WN18, created to address biases identified in the original dataset by modifying its structure and relation types. This dataset offers a more challenging benchmark for knowledge graph completion, ensuring that models are evaluated in a manner that better reflects real-world data complexity [54].

FB15K-237 (Freebase-15k-237)

FB15K-237 refines FB15K by removing inverse relations, simplifying the relational model, and increasing the challenge for knowledge graph completion tasks. This modification requires more sophisticated approaches from models, testing their ability to handle reduced direct relational cues [72].

FB5M (Freebase-5M)

FB5M extends Freebase to include over 5 million entities connected by a diverse range of relations. This extensive dataset is ideal for testing the scalability and efficiency of knowledge graph models, particularly in handling large-scale data while maintaining performance [55].

FB40K (Freebase-40k)

FB40K contains 40,000 entities and serves as a mid-sized benchmark for knowledge graph completion tasks. Its diversity in entities and relations makes it suitable for evaluating the generalizability and robustness of knowledge graph algorithms across different domains [72].

DBpedia50

DBpedia50 is a subset of the larger DBpedia knowledge graph, which extracts structured content from Wikipedia. This subset includes 50 well-defined relations and is often used in academic research to explore the extraction and representation of factual knowledge from open-domain sources [73].

NELL-995 (Never-Ending Language Learning - 995 relations)

NELL-995 comes from the NELL system, which continually learns from the web to extract structured information. With 995 types of relations, this dataset presents a unique challenge for long-term learning models in knowledge graphs, providing a dynamic environment for algorithms designed to evolve and adapt over time [74].

Wikidata5M

Wikidata5M is a massive subset of Wikidata comprising approximately five million entities. It serves as a benchmark for evaluating embedding algorithms and supports tasks such as link prediction, entity classification, and question answering [68].

YAGO3-10

YAGO3-10 is a condensed version of the YAGO knowledge graph, drawing on Wikipedia, WordNet, and other semantic resources. Containing around 10,000 entities and their relationships, it is commonly used for tasks like knowledge graph completion and semantic search [68].

ComplexWebQuestions

ComplexWebQuestions is a QA dataset featuring natural-language queries that require multi-hop reasoning over a knowledge graph. Its compositional questions challenge systems to chain together several facts to arrive at the correct answer [68].

WebQuestionsSP

WebQuestionsSP consists of simpler, Freebase-based questions than those in ComplexWebQuestions. Most require only one or two graph traversals to answer, making it a standard testbed for semantic parsing approaches [68].

WikiKG90M

WikiKG90M is one of the largest publicly available KG datasets, with roughly 90 million entities and over 600 million facts drawn from Wikipedia. It includes entity identifiers and textual descriptions, enabling large-scale experiments in link prediction, entity classification, and question answering [68].

UMLS

The UMLS (Unified Medical Language System) dataset combines biomedical vocabularies into a standardized resource. In our study, we use its a subset of 135 entities, 46 relation types, and 6,529 triples to assess model generalization in the biomedical domain [60].

FB15k-401

Derived from Freebase, FB15k-401 retains only the 401 relations that occur at least 100 times, resulting in 560,209 triples over 14,541 entities. This filtered subset offers a balanced and informative benchmark for relational learning methods [47].

OKELE Dataset

Introduced by the OKELE project, this KG completion dataset contains noisy facts scraped from web pages alongside manually verified truths. It covers ten popular Freebase classes (1,000 training entities, 100 validation, and 100 test per class), totaling 191,759 training triples. Additionally, 12,000 seed entities with their one-and two-hop neighborhoods (excluding test triples) form a supporting subgraph used as prior knowledge for temporal KG completion [19].

Table 2.3: Datasets used for evaluating knowledge graph trustworthiness

Dataset	Original Data	Relation (r)	Entity	Training	Validation	Test
WN18	WordNet	18	40,943	141,442	5,000	5,000
FB15K	Freebase	1,345	14,951	483,142	50,000	59,071
WN11	WordNet	11	38,696	112,581	2,609	10,544
FB13	Freebase	13	75,043	316,232	5,908	23,733
WN18RR	WordNet	11	40,943	86,835	3,034	3,134
FB15K-237	Freebase	237	14,541	272,115	17,535	20,466
FB5M	Freebase	1,192	5,385,322	19,193,556	50,000	59,071
FB40K	Freebase	1,336	39,528	370,648	67,946	96,678
DBpedia50	DBpedia	351	24,624	32,203	123	2,095
NELL-995	NELL	200	75,492	149,678	543	3,992

2.2.9 Evaluation Metrics

Evaluating the performance of models within knowledge graphs requires a range of well-established metrics that assess their effectiveness. These metrics are essential for understanding not only the precision and recall but also the ranking quality and overall predictive accuracy of models in various tasks such as link prediction, entity resolution, and relation prediction. Table **??** presents the evaluation metrics employed by the models discussed in the previous sections.

Precision

Precision is a critical metric in evaluating predictive models. It measures the accuracy of positive predictions made by a model, focusing on the proportion of correctly predicted relations out of all predicted relations [75]. The formula for precision is:

$$\text{Precision} = \frac{\text{Number of Correct Positive Predictions}}{\text{Total Number of Positive Predictions}}$$

In the context of knowledge graphs, where relationships between entities can be complex and numerous, maintaining high precision is crucial to ensure the reliability of the graph's predictive insights. High precision signifies a low rate of false positives, which is vital in applications where incorrect predictions have significant consequences, such as medical diagnosis or financial forecasting.

Recall

Recall complements precision by evaluating the model's ability to identify all relevant instances. For knowledge graphs, recall assesses the proportion of correctly predicted

relations relative to the total number of actual relations [49]. The formula for recall is:

$$\text{Recall} = \frac{\text{Number of Correct Positive Predictions}}{\text{Total Actual Positive Instances}}$$

this metric is essential in scenarios where it is critical to identify all potential correct relationships, such as in legal investigations or scientific research, where missing even a single relevant connection could lead to incomplete or flawed conclusions.

Mean Rank

Mean Rank provides insight into the average position of correctly predicted relations when predictions are ranked by their probability or confidence. A lower Mean Rank indicates that the model is generally better at prioritizing correct predictions [75]. It is calculated as:

$$\text{Mean Rank} = \frac{1}{|Q|} \sum_{i=1}^{|Q|} \text{rank}_i$$

where $|Q|$ denotes the total number of queries, and rank_i represents the rank position of the correct prediction for the i-th query. Mean Rank is particularly relevant in link prediction tasks within large knowledge graphs, where efficiently navigating through numerous possible entity relationships is crucial.

Hits@10

Hits@10 measures the percentage of correct predictions that appear within the top-10 ranked results [76]. The metric is defined as:

$$\text{Hits@10} = \frac{\text{Number of Correct Predictions in Top 10}}{\text{Total Queries}} \times 100\%$$

Hits@10 is valuable in user-facing applications, such as recommendation systems, where the objective is often to present the most relevant information among the top results of a query, thereby enhancing user satisfaction and system usability.

Mean Reciprocal Rank (MRR)

Mean Reciprocal Rank evaluates a model's prediction effectiveness by focusing on the rank of the first correct answer. It is particularly useful for assessing systems where the prompt retrieval of relevant information is crucial [49]. The MRR is calculated using:

$$\text{MRR} = \frac{1}{|Q|} \sum_{i=1}^{|Q|} \frac{1}{\text{rank}_i}$$

This metric provides insight into how frequently a model's top-ranked prediction is the correct one, which is essential for tasks such as search engine optimization and question-answering systems.

True Negative Rate (TNR)

The True Negative Rate (TNR), also known as specificity, quantifies the fraction of actual negatives that are correctly identified:

$$\text{TNR} = \frac{TN}{TN + FP} \tag{2.1}$$

where:

- TN **(True Negatives)**: Correct predictions where an instance is negative.
- FP **(False Positives)**: Incorrect predictions where an instance is predicted as positive when actually negative.

Root Mean Squared Error (RMSE)

RMSE measures the average magnitude of prediction errors. Lower values indicate better performance:

$$\text{RMSE} = \sqrt{\frac{1}{n}\sum_{i=1}^{n}(y_i - \hat{y}_i)^2} \tag{2.2}$$

Mean Absolute Error (MAE)

MAE represents the average absolute differences between predicted and actual labels. Lower values indicate higher accuracy:

$$\text{MAE} = \frac{1}{n}\sum_{i=1}^{n}|y_i - \hat{y}_i| \tag{2.3}$$

Area Under the Curve (AUC)

The area under the curve (AUC) measures the ability of a model to discriminate between positive and negative classes. It calculates the area under the Receiver Operating Characteristic (ROC) curve [67].

Empirical Coverage Rate (ECR)

ECR measures how well the uncertainty quantification model satisfies the predefined error rate. A higher ECR indicates that the model effectively meets the desired coverage level [57].

Average Prediction Set Size (APSS)

APSS evaluates the effectiveness of the uncertainty quantification model by calculating the average size of the prediction sets produced for queries. A smaller APSS suggests greater efficiency in selecting the most likely answers [57].

2.2.10 KG Support for AI Technology

Recommender Systems

Recommender systems are essential for enhancing user experiences by providing tailored recommendations. Knowledge graphs have proven to be a valuable asset in powering these systems, enabling more contextually relevant suggestions.

Enhanced User Profiling

Knowledge graphs contribute significantly to creating more comprehensive user profiles by integrating diverse information about user preferences, interactions, and contextual details [49]. By leveraging knowledge graphs, recommender systems can capture intricate relationships between users, items, and attributes, leading to more precise user representations [76].

Semantic Similarity and Link Prediction

Knowledge graphs facilitate the identification of semantic relationships between items, thereby enhancing the understanding of user preferences beyond mere explicit interactions [77]. Link prediction techniques applied to knowledge graphs assist in uncovering latent connections, thereby improving the accuracy of predicting user-item affinities [78].

Domain-specific Recommendations

Knowledge graphs enable the integration of domain-specific knowledge, allowing recommendations to be customized for specific industries or user niches [79]. By incorporating external knowledge sources into the recommendation process, systems can better adapt to shifting user preferences and emerging industry trends [80].

Question Answering Systems

Knowledge graphs are fundamental in boosting the performance and depth of question-answering systems, enabling them to understand and respond to queries with greater intelligence.

Semantic Understanding

Knowledge graphs offer a semantic framework that aids in the comprehension of query meanings and contexts, facilitating more accurate question interpretation [81]. By utilizing knowledge graph embeddings, question-answering systems can grasp complex relationships and infer missing information, thereby generating more informative responses [**<empty citation>**]. Knowledge graphs offer a semantic framework that aids in the comprehension of query meanings and contexts, facilitating more accurate question interpretation [81]. By utilizing knowledge graph embeddings, question-answering systems can grasp complex relationships and infer missing information, thereby generating more informative responses [82].

Multi-hop Reasoning

Knowledge graphs support multi-hop reasoning, allowing question-answering systems to traverse intricate relationships and gather relevant information from various sources [83]. Models that leverage the structure of knowledge graphs are adept at reasoning over interconnected entities [84].

Continuous Learning

Knowledge graphs facilitate continuous learning in question-answering systems by incorporating new information and dynamically updating the models. Adaptive systems utilize knowledge graph embeddings to evolve with changing knowledge and enhance accuracy over time [85].

Incorporating knowledge graphs into recommender systems and question-answering systems has demonstrated promising outcomes, providing a solid foundation for AI technologies to deliver more intelligent and contextually aware services.

2.2.11 Discussion

In this discussion section, we evaluate a diverse range of models presented in this review, highlighting their strengths and limitations in the context of trust-related tasks within Knowledge Graphs (KGs). Our primary objective is to provide a comprehensive overview of KG trustworthiness models, including their applications and challenges, as detailed in Tables 2.5 and 2.6. Starting with Embedding Models, TransE serves as a foundational model known for capturing entity-relation translations within KGs, excelling in knowledge graph completion due to its simplicity. However, its limitations become evident in handling multi-step relations and assessing trustworthiness. TransT extends TransE with a supervised learning approach, proving effective in trustworthiness prediction by incorporating rich pragmatic and semantic information for refined embeddings. Nonetheless, it falls short in detecting more complex patterns with mismatched elements. DistMult, a semantic embedding model, is recognized for its simplicity and effectiveness in symmetric relation modeling, particularly useful for triple classification. However, it struggles with antisymmetric relations due to its oversimplified nature. ComplEx, an extension of DistMult, introduces complex-valued embeddings, enhancing its capability to capture intricate relations and trustworthiness in KGs. Then, Holographic Embeddings (HOLE) offer several strengths, including efficiency in computation, ease of training, scalability to large datasets, and the ability to capture rich interactions in relational data. The model's use of circular correlation creates fixed-width representations, enabling it to model complex relational patterns effectively while remaining economical in the number of parameters. HOLE has demonstrated state-of-the-art performance on benchmark datasets for learning from knowledge graphs, showcasing its effectiveness in capturing relational information. However, some limitations of HOLE include potential scalability issues compared to simpler models, reduced expressiveness in favor of computational efficiency, and the complexity introduced by the circular correlation method, which may require a deeper understanding for optimization and implementation. Additionally, while HOLE excels in performance, the interpretability of the model and the reasoning behind its predictions may not be as straightforward as with simpler models. Additionally, the Triple Strategy-based Trustworthiness Assessment Model focuses on trustworthiness evaluation by employing a triple-based strategy that quantifies the semantics of entities and relations, integrating internal and global graph-level information through a multi-layer perceptron. This multi-level fusion approach has demonstrated significant performance improvements on various real-world datasets. However, this model suffers from its computational complexity and scalability. In contrast, the Multiplex Uncertain Knowledge Graph Embedding (MUKGE) model advances the field of uncertain knowledge graph embeddings by incorporating the Uncertain ResourceRank (URR) algorithm to effectively combine multi-path and multi-step global information, and by extending embedding capabilities to handle asymmetric relations through a multi-relation framework. While MUKGE exhibits superior performance over baseline models, it similarly has scalability issues and increased model complexity.

Moving to Path-Based Methods, PTransE combines TransE's translational assumption with a multi-hop path-aware embedding model, excelling in capturing trustworthiness on multi-hop paths. UKGCSR, employing causal inference and multi-hop reasoning for uncertain knowledge graphs, showcases potential in capturing trustworthiness, especially

in uncertain scenarios.

Shifting to Embedding Models with Learning, KG-BERT leverages pre-trained language models for knowledge graph completion, achieving state-of-the-art performance in triple classification, relation prediction, and link prediction tasks. Its reliance on high-quality labeled data and computationally intensive training is a notable drawback. ConvE, known for its parameter efficiency, excels in link prediction tasks but faces challenges in scalability and interpretability. PConvKB incorporates relation paths for improved accuracy in knowledge graph embeddings, demonstrating superior performance on benchmark datasets but with increased complexity. While PConvKB shows promising results, the complexity of incorporating relation paths at both local and global levels may make the model harder to interpret and tune. Additionally, the effectiveness of PConvKB on larger and more diverse knowledge graphs beyond the benchmark datasets used in the experiments needs further exploration. The interpretability of the learned embeddings and the impact of relation paths on the final predictions could be challenging to analyze in complex knowledge graphs. In the context of knowledge graph representation learning, the RKRL method exhibits several strengths that contribute to its effectiveness. Firstly, RKRL enhances knowledge representation by incorporating the semantics of relation paths, thereby generating more meaningful knowledge representations. Additionally, the introduction of a reliable knowledge graph path ranking method aids in avoiding unnecessary computations on unreliable paths and identifying semantically valid relation paths, ultimately leading to more accurate knowledge representations. Moreover, experimental results demonstrate that RKRL achieves consistent improvements on typical evaluation tasks for knowledge representations when compared to classical and state-of-the-art representation learning baselines. However, the method also presents certain limitations that warrant consideration. Implementing RKRL may introduce additional computational complexity due to the necessity of ranking and evaluating the reliability of relation paths in knowledge graphs. Furthermore, the effectiveness of RKRL is dependent on the accurate ranking of reliable relation paths, which can be challenging in large and complex knowledge graphs with numerous relation paths. Lastly, while RKRL shows competitive performance on benchmark datasets, its effectiveness may vary when applied to different types of knowledge graphs or real-world scenarios not covered in the evaluation. These strengths and limitations collectively provide valuable insights into the capabilities and considerations of the RKRL method in the domain of knowledge graph representation learning.

CAGED's approach of transforming KG triples into two views proves advantageous for trustworthiness prediction by capturing both relational and literal triples. However, the limitation of TransT in handling more complex patterns is acknowledged and addressed. KGTtm is a supervised triple trustworthiness model with the unique advantage of simultaneously addressing KG completion and correction tasks. The strength of the proposed Triple Trustworthiness Measurement model lies in its ability to provide a systematic and automated approach to detecting and eliminating errors in knowledge graphs, thereby enhancing the reliability and accuracy of knowledge-driven tasks and applications. By leveraging a crisscrossing neural network structure, the model effectively combines internal semantic information and global inference to measure the trustworthiness of triples in the graph. Additionally, the model offers a multi-level evaluation process that incorporates trustworthiness estimation cells and a fusion device, enabling a comprehensive assessment of triple trustworthiness. However, a limitation of the method may be its reliance on the quality of the initial knowledge graph data, as inaccuracies or biases present in the original graph could impact the effectiveness of error detection and elimination. Further-

more, the computational complexity of the model may pose challenges for large-scale knowledge graphs, requiring efficient optimization strategies for practical implementation. ConvE, a multi-layer convolutional network model for link prediction in knowledge graphs, boasts several strengths. Leveraging 2D convolutions over embeddings, ConvE excels in capturing complex patterns and relationships within the data, enhancing its expressiveness. The model's high parameter efficiency allows it to achieve competitive performance with significantly fewer parameters than other models, showcasing its effectiveness. ConvE addresses overfitting concerns through batch normalization and dropout techniques, enhancing its robustness and reliability. However, ConvE's simplicity with a single convolution layer may limit its ability to capture intricate relationships in highly complex knowledge graphs. Additionally, its performance may vary on datasets with different characteristics, indicating a level of dataset dependency. Further research is needed to explore the generalizability of ConvE across diverse knowledge graph datasets and enhance its scalability to different graph structures.

Furthermore, TKGC, a semi-supervised KG noise detection model, effectively combines triple confidence and modification of triples, making it valuable for identifying noisy triples. However, its limitation in learning entity embeddings to capture related entities without existing facts in KG is acknowledged. KAEL, an ensemble model, integrates multiple KG error detection methods for enhanced trustworthiness evaluation. One of the key strengths is the significant improvement in performance over base detectors, showcasing the effectiveness of the active ensemble learning strategy. The approach leverages a tailored multi-armed bandit algorithm to integrate multiple base detectors, allowing for a more comprehensive error detection process. Additionally, the three-stage active ensemble scheme efficiently utilizes feedback from domain experts, enhancing the interpretability of the policy and balancing exploitation and exploration. However, a limitation of this method lies in the reliance on human annotations, which can be expensive and limited, impacting the scalability of the approach. Furthermore, the effectiveness of the ensemble may be influenced by the selection and combination of base detectors, requiring careful consideration for optimal performance.

Hybrid Methods like GEnI, focusing on generating explanations and insights of KG embedding predictions, contribute to understanding the reliability of KG embeddings. The KGT5 model presents several strengths that make it a valuable contribution to knowledge graph completion and question answering. Its scalability, achieved through compositional entity representations and autoregressive decoding, allows it to handle large knowledge graphs efficiently. Additionally, KGT5 demonstrates high-quality performance, outperforming state-of-the-art methods on both knowledge graph completion and question answering tasks. Its versatility is evident in its ability to perform well across multiple datasets without the need for task- or dataset-specific hyperparameter tuning. Furthermore, the model's simplicity, as an off-the-shelf solution, makes it accessible and applicable to various scenarios.

However, KGT5 also exhibits limitations that warrant consideration. Its tendency to struggle with memorization may impact its performance, particularly in scenarios where memorizing specific facts is crucial. The reduced model capacity of KGT5 could further hinder its ability to memorize facts seen during pretraining, potentially affecting its performance in full-knowledge graph question answering. Additionally, the model may face challenges when dealing with small datasets, as Transformer models, including KGT5, are known to struggle when data is scarce. These strengths and limitations collectively provide valuable insights into the capabilities and potential use cases of KGT5 in knowledge graph completion and question answering tasks. The PTrustE model excels in high accuracy

for detecting noisy triples with conflicting relations, leveraging path trustworthiness and triple embedding to capture entity-relation correlations effectively. The ablation study validates the importance of these components, enhancing generalization performance and outperforming baselines. However, the model shows sensitivity to noise levels, dataset dependency, and parameter values, impacting its robustness in noisier environments and across different datasets. Further evaluation on higher noise levels and parameter optimization is needed to address these limitations and improve the model's applicability in diverse knowledge graph settings. The Confidence-aware Knowledge Representation Learning (CKRL) model excels in effectively detecting noises and conflicts in knowledge graphs through the incorporation of triple confidences based on local and global structural information, leading to more accurate knowledge representations. Additionally, CKRL robustly learns knowledge representations while detecting noise by considering triple confidences, capturing both local and global structural information to measure the significance of triple facts. Its flexibility and universality, stemming from the utilization of internal structural information in KGs for defining triple confidences, enable the model to detect noise and conflicts across various knowledge graphs. However, CKRL's heavy reliance on internal structural information may limit its effectiveness in scenarios with incomplete or unreliable data, and its lack of integration with external information sources could hinder its noise detection capabilities. Furthermore, the model's complexity and potential computational cost, especially for large-scale knowledge graphs, pose challenges to scalability and practical implementation. Addressing these limitations could enhance CKRL's performance and applicability in real-world knowledge-driven applications. Furthermore, the UAG (Uncertainty Aware Knowledge-Graph Reasoning) framework offers significant strengths, including the incorporation of uncertainty quantification and conformal prediction, which enhance reliability and accuracy in high-stakes applications while reducing prediction set sizes by 40% compared to baselines. Its dynamic error rate control further improves prediction robustness, leveraging the structured information of knowledge graphs for more informed reasoning. However, the framework also faces limitations, such as the complexity of implementation and calibration challenges due to the intricate architectures of knowledge graphs and language models. Additionally, its effectiveness may be restricted by the specific properties of underlying models and the difficulties in applying it to unstructured environments, which lack graph properties.

In summary, each model contributes unique strengths to KG's trustworthiness. While embedding models are foundational for KG completion, path-based and hybrid methods show potential for addressing more complex trustworthiness-related tasks. Supervised and semi-supervised learning, along with ensemble techniques, offer diverse approaches to KG trustworthiness assessment. However, selecting the appropriate model should be based on the specific requirements of the KG trust-related tasks.

c

2.2.12 Non-Knowledge Aware Approaches

To provide a clearer understanding of the suggested methodologies, we categorized non-knowledge-aware approaches into distinct clusters. This classification allows for a systematic grouping of similar methods, thus offering a more structured view of their intended objectives and the benefits they aim to provide. As shown in Fig. 2.4, this classification facilitates the identification of common goals that guide the design of trustworthy AI systems, helping us extract valuable insights into the various components that promote trust in AI systems.

This categorization is not only helpful for understanding the range of approaches

Table 2.5: Comparison of Knowledge Graph Models for Trust-related Tasks (Part 1)

Model	Strengths	Limitations	Applications
TransE [42]	Simplicity, efficacy	Multi-step relations' struggles, poor flexibility	KG Completion, Triple Classification
TransT [51]	Considers external information	Difficulty modeling very complex patterns	Noise Triples Detection
RotatE [15]	Models and infers diverse relation patterns with meaningful embeddings	May still struggle with highly complex or domain-specific patterns	Knowledge Graph Completion
HolE [71]	Uses circular correlation to capture relational interactions	Scalability and computational complexity	KG Completion, Noise Triples Detection, Triple Classification
DistMult [47]	Simplicity; excels on symmetric relations	Anti-symmetry issues	Noise Triples Detection, KG Completion
ComplEx [49]	Models antisymmetric relations; uncovers latent semantics	Data-dependence	Noise Triples Detection, KG Completion
CKRL [63]	Learns robust representations while detecting noise	Relies heavily on structural info; high computational cost	Noise Triples Detection, KG Completion, Triple Classification
PTransE [60]	Excels at multi-hop inference	Cannot differentiate relation patterns	Noise Triples Detection
RKRL [65]	Prunes unreliable paths and identifies valid ones	Depends on accurate path ranking; hard in large graphs	Noise Triples Detection
UKGCSR [62]	Handles uncertainty effectively with interpretability	High model complexity	Noise Triples Detection

Table 2.6: Comparison of Knowledge Graph Models for Trust-related Tasks (Part 2)

Model	Strengths	Limitations	Applications
CAGED [53]	Tackles complex KG patterns	High computational complexity	Noise Triples Detection
TKGC [19]	Identifies noisy triples using both prior and external knowledge	Cannot embed entirely unseen entities	Noise Triples Detection
KGTM [52]	Performs KG completion and correction simultaneously	High computational cost	Knowledge Graph Completion
KG-BERT [17]	Leverages pre-trained language models for KG completion	Heavy computational requirements	KG Completion, Noise Triples Detection
ConvE [16]	Mitigates test-set leakage with robust splits	Scalability concerns; limited interpretability	Knowledge Graph Completion
PConvKB [61]	Incorporates relation paths efficiently	Scalability limits	Knowledge Graph Completion
KAEL [60]	High performance; interpretable selection	High complexity	Knowledge Graph Completion
PtrustE [67]	High accuracy; models path-level trustworthiness	Sensitive to noise levels; dataset dependency	Noise Triples Detection
GEnl [69]	Generates explanations; uncovers biases	No standard evaluation benchmark	Knowledge Graph Completion
KGT5 [68]	Scalable, versatile, and simple	Prone to memorization with scarce data	Knowledge Graph Completion
TSTA [57]	Integrates multi-level semantics via fusion	Computational and scalability challenges	Noise Detection, Triple Classification
MUKGE [56]	Combines multi-path and global info	Scalability and complexity issues	Triple Classification
UAG [70]	Adds uncertainty quantification and conformal prediction	Complex implementation; calibration issues	Noise Detection

but also for discerning patterns in their development. By examining the classification, one can better comprehend how different frameworks tackle issues like transparency, fairness, and accountability. The guidelines provided by esteemed institutions, such as the European Commission's High-Level Expert Group on AI and IEEE, are vital in establishing practical principles for creating trustworthy AI systems. These frameworks emphasize human-centric designs while focusing on critical aspects like ethics, bias reduction, and user privacy. In this section, we discuss non-knowledge-aware approaches, including measurement-based methods and regulatory guidelines that contribute to creating trustworthy AI systems.

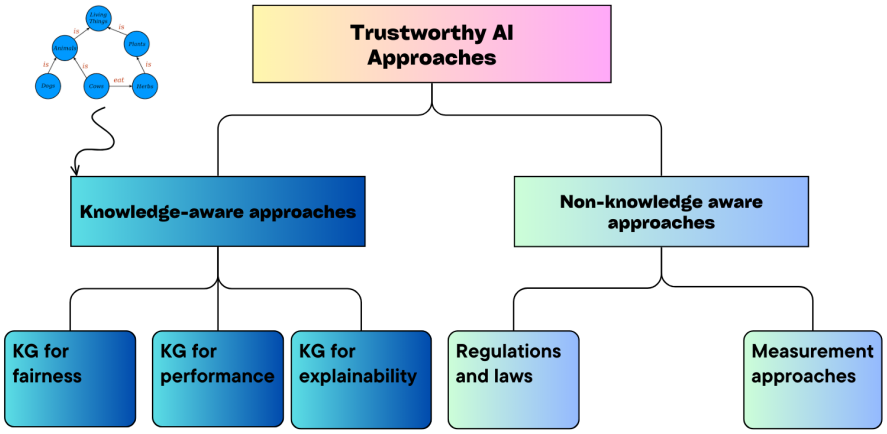

Figure 2.4: Classification of Trustworthy AI Methods

Measurement Approaches

Measurement approaches are employed to identify and mitigate discrimination risks inherent in algorithmic decision-making. These methods are applied at different stages of algorithmic processing: during input (pre-processing), within the model itself (in-processing), or after output generation (post-processing).

Preprocessing Approaches Automated decision-making systems are increasingly used across various fields. However, these systems are prone to biased decision-making, which has necessitated the development of several risk management and data quality measurement methods. For example, [86] introduced a promising framework for modeling fairness in machine learning by explicitly capturing the causal relationships in data. Although this method shows potential for advancing fairness, it relies on the assumption that the causal links between protected attributes and data are fully understood, a limitation that restricts its application across different contexts.

Further expanding on this, a comprehensive risk management approach based on ISO standards was developed to assess data quality and balance characteristics. It utilizes imbalance measures, such as the Gini, Simpson, Shannon, and Imbalance Ratio indexes, to detect and quantify imbalance in large datasets [87]. The study found that the Shannon

index, combined with the imbalance ratio, provided the most reliable results for identifying discrimination risks in automated decision-making (ADM) systems. Nevertheless, this approach remains exploratory, focusing on simplicity rather than exhaustive testing of imbalance levels. The detection of imbalance is also heavily influenced by the judgments of the authors and the selected exemplar distributions, which limits its broader applicability.

Another approach, detailed in [88], presents fairness-aware directed acyclic graphs (fair-DAGs) for controlling bias in machine learning pipelines. The approach constructs a DAG to represent the pipeline and its dependencies, allowing for bias identification and control. While the fair-DAGs library offers useful tools for bias control, it has limited support for preprocessing operations and requires substantial computational power when applied to large datasets, limiting its feasibility for all applications.

The use of bias-aware technology in consumer devices, such as the Vital-ECG smartwatch, further highlights efforts to mitigate bias. This smartwatch, designed for health monitoring, incorporates a de-bias algorithm to make it gender-neutral. The technology integrates AI and sensor networks, employing an artificial neural network to predict and monitor arterial blood pressure [89]. While this application demonstrates practical bias mitigation, its scope is narrowly focused on gender bias in specific health contexts, indicating room for further expansion into other domains of fairness.

In-processing Approaches In-processing approaches focus on mitigating bias within the model during its training or deployment stages. [90] presented a framework that mitigates bias by simultaneously learning a predictor and an adversary. The predictor aims to accurately predict outcomes (Y), while the adversary seeks to model a protected attribute (Z) in order to minimize bias related to the protected variable. This adversarial approach has been shown to effectively reduce unwanted biases in models like those trained on the UCI Adult Dataset. However, the method is limited by its reliance on predefined protected variables, which may not always be available or easily identifiable in all datasets.

Post-processing Approaches Post-processing methods aim to adjust the outputs of algorithms after they have made predictions, ensuring that bias or unfairness is mitigated at the final stage. Sandro Radovanović et al. introduced a framework that incorporates both group-level and individual-level fairness constraints. Their approach, built upon active classifiers, attempts to balance objectives like equal opportunity, odds, and calibration while avoiding intra-group unfairness. Their study concludes that individual-level fairness mechanisms, which assign fairness budgets, are more efficient in reducing bias in ADM systems compared to traditional randomization methods [91].

Similarly, [92] proposed a post-processing approach that aims to address unfairness in machine learning models. This framework builds on the same principle of simultaneous training of a predictor and adversary, showcasing notable improvements in ensuring fairness. However, it still faces challenges in balancing fairness with accuracy, raising the question of how to optimally address this trade-off in real-world applications.

Despite the advances made by these approaches, they still highlight the ongoing challenges in achieving true fairness across all stages of algorithmic decision-making. This underscores the importance of continued research and refinement of measurement-based methods.

Regulatory Guidelines and Laws

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence and data-driven technologies has prompted governments and institutions worldwide to establish regulatory frameworks that ensure responsible development, deployment, and use of these systems. Such regulations aim

to balance innovation with the protection of fundamental rights, ethical principles, and societal values. In particular, the European Union has been at the forefront of introducing comprehensive legislation and governance models that address issues of privacy, accountability, transparency, and fairness in digital ecosystems. The following section outlines key regulatory instruments and ethical frameworks that shape the landscape of trustworthy AI and data governance. **General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)** The General Data Protection Regulation , which came into effect in May 2018, is a comprehensive regulation that governs data protection and privacy in the European Union. Its primary goal is to enhance individuals' control over their personal data in the digital age [93]. While GDPR sets stringent data protection standards, one of its key challenges lies in achieving uniform application across diverse industries and jurisdictions. This often leads to variations in interpretation, making compliance complex for organizations.

Artificial Intelligence Act (AIA) The European Commission's Artificial Intelligence Act (AIA) is a legislative initiative aimed at regulating AI systems, particularly those classified as high-risk. The AIA prohibits harmful AI practices and sets strict compliance requirements for high-risk AI applications that may significantly impact individuals or society [94]. However, determining the risk level of AI applications often involves subjective judgment, which can complicate the enforcement of the regulation.

The governance of trustworthy AI systems also critically relies on effective regulatory frameworks that incorporate the principles outlined in existing guidelines, such as those by the EU AI HLEG. These frameworks must evolve to include the capabilities presented by knowledge graphs [95, 96]. For example, the establishment of standards for accountability can be supported by knowledge graphs, which provide evidence of compliance with ethical standards and contribute to audit trails that trace decisions back to their sources [97].

Digital Services Act (DSA) and Digital Markets Act (DMA) The Digital Services Act (DSA) and Digital Markets Act (DMA) were introduced to establish clear responsibilities for intermediary service providers, particularly concerning the removal of illicit content. These acts represent significant steps toward addressing the transparency and accountability challenges posed by ADM systems [94]. However, their impact on reducing the broader societal implications of automated decision-making technologies requires further exploration.

Data Governance To manage the rapid flow of big data in AI systems, effective data governance frameworks are essential. Janssen et al. [98] introduced a tripartite model for data governance in Big Data Algorithmic Systems (BDAS), emphasizing the need for planning, control, organizational oversight, and risk management. This framework stresses the importance of transparency, interoperability, and privacy in ensuring the reliability and trustworthiness of AI-driven decision-making.

Code of Digital Ethics (CoDE) As digital ethics becomes an increasingly prominent topic, organizations like Merck KGaA are implementing frameworks such as the Code of Digital Ethics (CoDE) to guide ethical decision-making in digital innovation. This approach involves mapping key ethical principles, such as justice, autonomy, and transparency, to real-world applications. While this code represents a positive step toward ethical AI, enforcing it remains challenging, particularly in the absence of concrete consequences for ethical violations [99].

2.2.13 Knowledge-aware Approaches for Trustworthy AI

The integration of knowledge graphs into the development of trustworthy artificial intelligence (AI) systems represents a significant advancement in enhancing accountability,

transparency, and reliability [100]. By providing contextual information that can be easily navigated and queried, knowledge graphs address critical challenges of trust, fairness, and explainability [95, 101]. These structured representations of knowledge align with frameworks such as the EU AI HLEG's principles, which emphasize safety, ethics, and societal well-being [102, 103].

The development of large-scale Knowledge Graphs (KGs) brings substantial benefits to AI systems, offering a structured means to integrate diverse and heterogeneous data sources. KGs not only enhance the capacity of AI models by enriching them with comprehensive, interconnected knowledge but also significantly improve their transparency and interpretability. By organizing and representing knowledge in a logical, accessible manner, KGs empower AI systems to deliver more insightful, reliable, and explainable outputs. This, in turn, fosters more meaningful and trustworthy interactions between machines and humans, reinforcing the overall credibility and effectiveness of AI technologies.

For instance, in healthcare, KGs integrate diverse health data to improve patient outcomes and enhance the interpretability of AI systems used for diagnostics and treatment recommendations [104, 105]. By creating rich, interconnected datasets, KGs support clinical decision-making with transparency and predictability, essential for maintaining trust in AI-driven healthcare solutions [106].

Knowledge Graph for Performance

A recurring challenge in machine learning, particularly in recommendation systems, is the scarcity of data, which can hinder the ability of algorithms to generalize effectively and provide accurate recommendations. This issue is especially pronounced in situations such as the cold-start problem, where new users or items have insufficient data for the system to generate meaningful predictions [107]. Knowledge graphs (KGs) offer a powerful solution to these limitations by capturing latent relationships between entities. By doing so, KGs enable the identification of similar entities, even in sparse data regions, improving the system's ability to provide relevant recommendations.

An exemplary approach is proposed by Muzamil Hussain Syed et al. [108], where they introduced a Context-Aware Explainable Recommendation system leveraging domain-specific KG ontologies to mitigate the cold-start issue and enhance recommendation accuracy. Their multi-step process involves transforming natural language queries (NLQs) into logical triples through domain ontology, followed by using the Query2Box neural network embedding model to compute relevance scores. The system also employs the GraphSage model to reason over the KG, learning latent data representations that are then used within a neural collaborative filtering model to re-rank recommendation candidates. The KG not only serves as additional information to improve recommendation accuracy but also enhances explainability by offering users insights into why specific items are recommended. Despite its advantages, this method's performance is tightly linked to the quality and completeness of the KG. Inaccuracies or omissions within the KG can adversely affect the system's overall effectiveness.

Knowledge graphs enhance the performance of LLMs by providing a structured and semantically rich representation of domain-specific information that complements the LLM's inherent language understanding capabilities. By integrating knowledge graphs, LLMs can access explicit relationships and factual data, which helps improve answer accuracy, consistency, and relevance, especially in specialized or complex domains. This structured knowledge enables the models to verify outputs against known facts, reducing hallucinations and misinformation. Furthermore, knowledge graphs facilitate better interpretability and explainability by mapping model outputs to specific nodes and

relationships within the graph, thereby supporting more trustworthy and transparent interactions. Overall, the fusion of LLMs with knowledge graphs results in more reliable, domain-aware, and contextually precise systems, significantly elevating their performance in decision-making and information retrieval tasks [109].

Knowledge graphs significantly enhance the accuracy of recommender systems by providing rich semantic context and structured relationships among items, which facilitate more meaningful similarity assessments and personalized suggestions. In the context of this research, the incorporation of ontology-based knowledge graphs allows the recommender system to leverage hierarchical and conceptual relationships, thereby addressing issues such as data sparsity and cold start problems. As demonstrated by Ranjbar [14], merging semantic information derived from ontologies within a knowledge graph improves the prediction capabilities of the system, leading to more precise and relevant recommendations. This integration enables the system to better interpret user preferences and item attributes, ultimately resulting in increased recommendation accuracy [110].

The paper discusses the potential of using knowledge graphs (KGs) to enhance the performance of large language models (LLMs) by addressing their limitations in factual recall and reasoning. While LLMs like ChatGPT demonstrate impressive language generation capabilities, they often struggle with generating factually accurate and knowledge-grounded content due to their reliance on learned statistical patterns rather than explicit knowledge. Integrating KGs—structured repositories of real-world facts and relationships—serves as a promising solution to this challenge.

The paper highlights several methods for incorporating KGs into LLMs, including pre-training enhancements, during-training integration, and post-training refinement. These approaches aim to fuse structured knowledge with the models' inherent language understanding, resulting in more accurate, consistent, and explainable outputs. Furthermore, KGs can enable LLMs to perform better in tasks requiring complex reasoning, factual consistency, and interpretability.

Overall, the integration of KGs with LLMs is viewed as a complementary strategy that leverages the strengths of both components—structured, explicit knowledge from KGs and the flexible language understanding of LLMs—to improve their performance in knowledge-dependent NLP tasks. This synergy holds promise for developing more reliable, trustworthy, and knowledge-aware AI systems in the future [111]. Similarly, Tan et al. (2024) proposed the Paths-over-Graph (PoG) method, which enhances LLM reasoning by integrating knowledge reasoning paths from KGs. PoG addresses challenges like multi-hop reasoning and multi-entity questions by combining the inherent knowledge of LLMs with factual knowledge from KGs, resulting in improved interpretability and faithfulness of LLM outputs [112].

Knowledge Graph for Explainability

Knowledge graphs also play a pivotal role in improving the explainability of AI systems, a critical factor in building trust with users. In domains such as recommender systems, transparency in decision-making is increasingly expected, as users want to understand why specific items are suggested to them. KGs can facilitate this by structuring the relationships between users, items, and other entities, making recommendations more interpretable.

A notable contribution in this space comes from Lijie et al. [113], who proposed a KG-based framework for enhancing explainability in multi-objective optimization within recommender systems. The framework uses Multi-Objective Evolutionary Algorithms (MOEA) to optimize recommendations by balancing objectives like accuracy, diversity,

and explainability. By structuring user-item relationships into explainable triples within the KG, the system generates a candidate list that reflects these multiple objectives. The MOEA ensures that the final recommendation list maintains a balance between personalization and transparency. Evaluations demonstrated that this approach improves recommendation quality, outperforming traditional models on key metrics. However, the computational complexity introduced by MOEA, combined with the reliance on the KG, presents scalability challenges, particularly when dealing with large datasets. Additionally, the system's success is dependent on the accuracy and completeness of the KG, as any deficiencies in the graph can hinder both the explainability and effectiveness of the recommendations. A pressing concern in AI deployment is the "black box" nature of algorithms, which obscures decision-making processes and undermines trust [101]. KGs address this by enabling explainable AI (XAI) through interpretability and traceability mechanisms, bridging the gap between complex AI outputs and user comprehension [114].

Knowledge graph (KG) models have recently been leveraged to improve the interpretability of AI. In the domain of KG completion, many works seek to explain black-box embedding models. For example, Wehner et al. [115] propose KGEPrisma, a post-hoc explainer that *decodes* a trained KG embedding model by identifying symbolic triples in local subgraphs of similarly embedded entities. KGEPrisma uncovers the statistical regularities (as triples or rules) underlying link predictions, thus making the model's behavior more transparent. Similarly, Xu et al. [116] stress the importance of *human*-centric evaluation of KG explanations, introducing an evaluation platform for measuring the plausibility of KG completion explanations from the user's perspective. On the symbolic side, rule-based KGC methods inherently produce interpretable outputs. For instance, AnyBURL meilicke2024anytime learns Horn rules to predict missing links, and prior work notes that its predictions come "with the additional benefit of offering an explanation for a predicted fact." In general, such rule-learners bridge neural and symbolic methods: when a KG model yields a prediction, one can extract high-confidence rules or paths that justify it.

Other recent works focus on explainable link prediction. Kumar-Singh et al. [117] introduce *LinkLogic*, a simple method (and accompanying benchmark) to extract and rank the most relevant KG facts supporting a given link prediction. They evaluate explanations on a novel FB13-based dataset, quantifying fidelity and relevance of the returned subgraphs. In biomedicine, path-based approaches are popular: for example, Jiménez et al. [118] present XG4Repo, an explainable KG-completion system for drug repurposing. XG4Repo automatically finds and optimizes *meta-paths* (e.g., compound–gene–disease chains) that connect drugs to diseases. These paths include biological entities (genes, pathways, side effects, etc.) that serve as interpretable explanations of why a compound might treat a disease. In all these link prediction settings, KG substructures (rules or paths) provide concrete, human-understandable rationales for the model's outputs.

Knowledge Graph for Trust-Aware Systems

Trust-aware systems are becoming increasingly important in recommendation domains, where users' trust relationships can provide invaluable insights for refining and personalizing recommendations. By incorporating trust information into KGs, AI systems can model the trust relationships between users, resulting in more reliable and contextually appropriate recommendations.

[119] proposed the Trust-Aware Multi-Task Knowledge Graph (TMKG) model, which integrates knowledge graphs with trust graphs to tackle common challenges like data

sparsity and cold-start issues. Their approach leverages multitask learning to capture implicit user-item relationships while simultaneously modeling users' trust relationships as supplementary contextual data. The TMKG framework applies the TransR embedding method to optimize the propagation of embeddings across various graphs—trust, interaction, and knowledge—allowing for more comprehensive modeling of user preferences. A multi-layer graph network is then used for feature propagation and aggregation, producing final embeddings that are used for joint multi-task predictions. This approach significantly improves recommendation quality by incorporating both user-item interactions and trust relationships. However, the complexity of the multi-layer graph network and advanced embedding techniques may reduce the model's interpretability, making it harder to explain recommendations to end users.

Furthermore, KGs foster collaborations among healthcare stakeholders by creating shared, structured datasets that enhance accountability and trust in AI-driven solutions [106, 105].

Knowledge Graph for Fairness

Fairness in recommendation systems is another critical concern, particularly concerning issues like popularity bias, which can skew recommendations toward widely favored items, leading to decreased diversity and personalization. KGs provide a potential solution by offering a structured framework to capture fine-grained user preferences, allowing for more equitable recommendations that reduce bias.

The paper [120] tackled the challenge of popularity bias by proposing a framework that integrates KGs, preference graphs, and popularity nodes to model user-item connections. The system learns user embeddings and attention parameters that help selectively diminish the influence of popular items, ensuring that recommendations are more personalized and less biased. By incorporating KGs, the model captures individual user preferences in greater detail, leading to recommendations that are tailored to user-specific interests rather than being driven by item popularity. However, as with many KG-based approaches, the framework's effectiveness is contingent on the quality and completeness of both the KG and the preference graph. Inaccurate or incomplete graphs can lead to biased recommendations, undermining the fairness the system seeks to achieve. Zhou et al. (2024) investigated the influence of model uncertainty and knowledge graphs on users' perception of fairness in AI-based recidivism risk assessments. Their findings suggest that lower and medium levels of uncertainty enhance perceived fairness, with participants viewing models as more fair when uncertainty is reduced; however, high uncertainty did not significantly impact fairness perceptions. Additionally, the study found that the presence of knowledge graphs did not significantly alter fairness judgments, indicating that visualization strategies may play a crucial role in their effectiveness. Overall, Zhou et al. (2024) highlight the importance of effectively communicating uncertainty to improve perceived fairness in AI decision-making, while suggesting that simply providing knowledge graphs without suitable visualization may have limited impact[121]. Continued research in knowledge graphs can facilitate the identification and mitigation of biases, particularly in fairness across decision-making processes [95, 101]. By promoting diversity in datasets, developers can create equitable AI systems sensitive to real-world complexities [122, 123].

Knowledge graphs are proving to be a valuable asset in the development of trustworthy AI systems, offering significant improvements in performance, explainability, trust-awareness, and fairness. Whether addressing data sparsity, enhancing transparency, or mitigating bias, KGs provide a robust framework for organizing and leveraging knowl-

edge. However, their success depends on the quality and completeness of KGs, as well as managing computational complexities. As AI evolves, KGs will play an increasingly critical role in ensuring responsible and ethical AI [100, 104]. The establishment of governance structures leveraging KGs will be crucial for trustworthy AI practices that resonate with societal values [102].

Reference	Type	Approach	Key Strength	Primary Limitation
Kusner et al. [52]	Pre-proc.	Counterfactual fairness via causal graphs	Captures causal bias mechanisms	Requires full causal knowledge
Vetrò et al. [53]	Pre-proc.	ISO-based imbalance metrics (Gini, Shannon, etc.)	Quantitative bias detection	Sensitive to exemplar choice
Yang et al. [47]	Pre-proc.	Fairness-aware DAGs for pipeline bias control	End-to-end bias visualization	High computational cost
Paviglianiti & Pasero [71]	Pre-proc.	Gender-neutral Vital-ECG debias algorithm	Real-world health-device application	Limited generalizability
Zhang et al. [15]	In-proc.	Adversarial predictor–adversary training	Reduces attribute leakage	Needs predefined sensitive attributes
Noriega-Campero et al. [19]	Post-proc.	Active classifiers with fairness budgets	Balances individual/group fairness	May trade off overall accuracy
Radovanović et al. [51]	Post-proc.	Predictor–adversary output adjustment	Improves calibration	fairness
May degrade accuracy				
Laybats & Davies [42]	Regulatory	GDPR for data protection	Strong user data control	Varied interpretations across EU
Tamò-Larrieux [62]	Regulatory	EU AI Act for high-risk systems	Bans harmful AI practices	Subjective risk classification
Janssen et al. [44]	Regulatory	Tripartite BDAS governance model	Holistic oversight	Implementation complexity
Becker et al. [45]	Regulatory	Code of Digital Ethics (CoDE)	Embeds core ethical principles	No enforcement mechanisms

Table 2.7: Overview of Non-Knowledge-Aware Trustworthy AI Methods

Reference	Type	Approach	Key Strength	Primary Limitation
Syed et al. [17]	KG-aware	Context-Aware Explainable Rec. (Query2Box + GraphSage)	Mitigates cold-start, explains recs.	KG quality–dependent
Xie et al. [63]	KG-aware	MOEA-based multi-objective explainability	Balances accuracy, diversity, transparency	High computational overhead
Zhou et al. [53]	KG-aware	Trust-Aware Multi-Task KG (TMKG)	Integrates user trust + KG relations	Reduced interpretability
Wei et al. [49]	KG-aware	KG+preference graph to reduce popularity bias	Improves personalization	KG completeness–dependent
Zhou et al. [15]	KG-aware	User study on uncertainty+KG impact on fairness	Highlights uncertainty communication	Limited fairness improvement
Lipizzi [60]	KG-aware	KG-grounded trust measurement for LLMs	Calibrates LLM confidence via KG facts	Depends on KG coverage
recency				
Mhammedi et al. [67]	KG-aware	Ontology+NMF for cold-start recommendation	Combines semantic ontologies with NMF	Ontology incompleteness
Yang et al. [68]	KG-aware	Knowledge-aware pretraining for LLMs	Reduces hallucinations, boosts factuality	Added pretrain cost; KG reliance
Tan et al. [69]	KG-aware	Paths-over-Graph for multi-hop LLM reasoning	Improves interpretability	faithfulness
Complex path extraction				
Wehner et al. [71]	KG-aware	Post-hoc explainer (KGEPrisma) for embedding models	Decodes black-box via symbolic subgraphs	Local fidelity only
Xu et al. [19]	KG-aware	Human-centric eval. platform for KGC explainability	Measures plausibility of explanations	Evaluation only
Meilicke et al. [124]	KG-aware	Anytime rule learning (AnyBURL) for KGC	Always-available Horn rules	Depends on KG density
Kumar-Singh et al. [117]	KG-aware	LinkLogic: subgraph extraction for explanations	Ranks relevant facts	Limited FB13 benchmark
Jiménez et al. [52]	KG-aware	XG4Repo: meta-path explainable KG completion	Biomed meta-paths yield insights	Domain-specific

Table 2.8: Overview of Knowledge-Aware Trustworthy AI Methods

2.2.14 Discussion

In the multifaceted landscape of AI trust, traditional non-knowledge-aware approaches—such as fairness measurement techniques, counterfactual data augmentation, and legal frameworks—remain essential for mitigating biases and ensuring ethical compliance. As summarized in Table 2.7, these methods provide fundamental tools for measuring and enforcing fairness, but they face significant challenges when defining metrics across complex, intersectional contexts. Legal and regulatory schemes (e.g. GDPR, the EU AI Act) establish the necessary ethical foundations, yet they must constantly evolve to keep pace with rapid technological change. Counterfactual data generation techniques can reduce bias by creating alternate data instances, but they often struggle to produce representative, scalable datasets without introducing new artifacts.

By contrast, the integration of knowledge graphs (KGs) into AI systems represents a significant step forward in both performance and explainability. As detailed in Table 2.8, KG-aware methods—ranging from context-aware explainable recommendation models to multi-objective explainability frameworks—leverage structured entity relationships to address common recommender-system issues such as cold-start and data sparsity. The rich semantics captured by KGs not only improve recommendation accuracy but also

enable transparent, human-readable explanations: users can trace each suggestion back to explicit graph edges and node attributes.

In our work on trust-aware recommender systems, we build on these KG-driven advantages by incorporating Graph Attention Networks (GATs) to propagate and weigh trust signals dynamically across the knowledge structure. This approach tackles both sparsity and cold-start problems while providing interpretable, trust-based explanations. Nevertheless, the utility of KGs hinges on data quality and scalability: incomplete or noisy graph data can undermine performance, and maintaining large-scale KGs in real time requires substantial computational and domain expertise.

In summary, non-knowledge-aware and knowledge-aware methods each bring distinct strengths and limitations to the table. Striking a careful balance—one that leverages the robustness of traditional fairness techniques alongside the semantic power of KGs—will be key to advancing trustworthy AI.

In the next section, we turn our focus to the state of the art in trust-aware recommender systems, reviewing those works most closely related to our proposed model and setting the stage for our contribution in Chapter 2.

2.3 Overview of Trust-Aware and Non-Trust-Aware Recommender Systems

Recommender systems (RecSys) have been a cornerstone of research in personalized information retrieval, resulting in a spectrum of methodologies categorized as trust-aware and non-trust-aware approaches, as shown in Figure 2.5. This section presents a structured overview of related works based on this classification, providing insights into their conceptual foundations and technical advancements, while also highlighting their limitations that motivate our proposed GUITARES method. Table 2.9 presents key techniques and results of the reviewed methods in trust-aware RecSys.

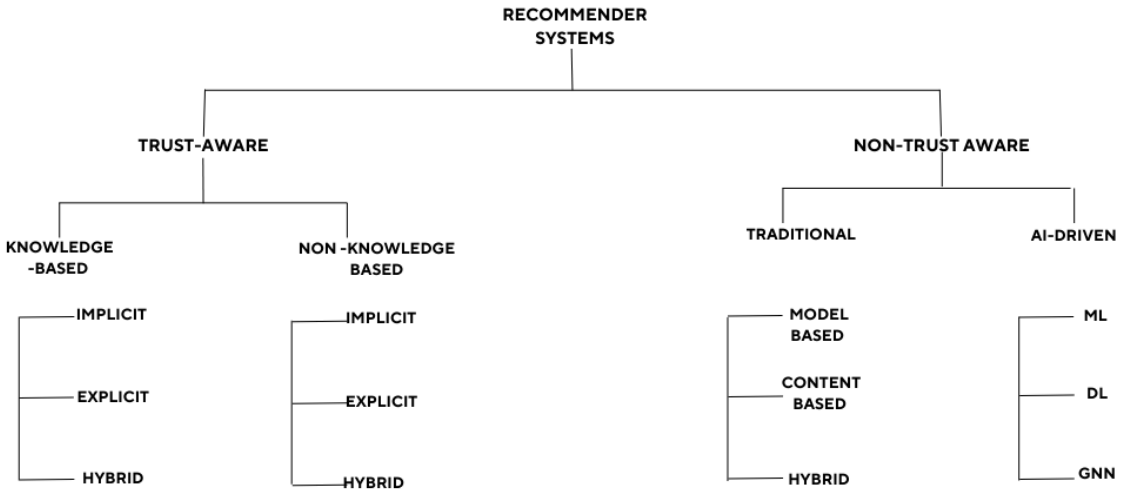

Figure 2.5: A classification of RecSys into trust-aware and non-trust-aware categories. This classification serves as a foundation for analyzing the methodologies reviewed in this section.

2.3.1 Trust-Aware Recommender Systems

Trust-aware RecSys integrates trust relationships between users to refine recommendation quality, particularly in addressing challenges like data sparsity and cold starts. However, many of these approaches tend to rely heavily on either predefined trust metrics or static integration of trust data, limiting their adaptability in dynamic environments. These systems are broadly classified into knowledge graph-based and non-knowledge graph-based approaches, each leveraging explicit, implicit, or hybrid trust mechanisms

Knowledge Graph-Based Trust-Aware Systems

Knowledge graph-based methods utilize the rich relational structure of knowledge graphs (KGs) to incorporate trust relationships into the recommendation process.

In "Trust-Based Recommendation System Using Knowledge Graph" [125], the authors introduce a novel framework that enriches standard collaborative filtering by integrating social trust relations via a knowledge graph, using co-factorization, ensemble learning, and carefully tuned regularization to mitigate data sparsity and cold-start issues. Their approach demonstrates clear strengths in leveraging trust edges to boost personalization and robustness in sparse recommendation scenarios, and the ensemble strategy helps to smooth out noisy or incomplete trust links. However, it relies heavily on the completeness and manual curation of the underlying knowledge graph, and the required regularization parameters demand extensive tuning. Thus, while [125] compellingly demonstrates how to fuse social trust edges with a knowledge graph—using co-factorization, ensemble methods, and regularization—to ameliorate data sparsity and cold-start issues, it remains anchored in generic recommendation contexts. It does not incorporate any notion of item reliability beyond what's encoded in the KG structure; there is no mechanism to assign confidence scores to individual items based on external validation, leaving the system vulnerable to noisy or incomplete metadata.

Similarly, in "Trust-aware Multi-task Knowledge Graph for Recommendation" [126], the authors present TMKG, a novel multi-task graph learning framework that jointly trains on user-item interactions, user–user trust relations, and an external knowledge graph to capture high-order dependencies. By sharing graph neural network layers across tasks, TMKG effectively leverages side information to mitigate data sparsity and cold-start issues, yielding measurable gains in recall, precision, and NDCG on benchmark datasets. However, this approach depends critically on the availability and completeness of heterogeneous graphs—limitations that can impair performance when trust or knowledge graphs are sparse or noisy. The model's complexity, driven by multi-layer GNNs and cross-unit parameter sharing, also raises concerns about computational scalability on large-scale or real-time applications. By focusing solely on trust+confidence integration rather than full KG completion, GUITARES closes TMKG's gap in scalability for domain-specific recommendation tasks.

Non-Knowledge Graph-Based Trust-Aware Systems

Non-KG-based trust-aware methods focus on integrating trust relationships through alternative mechanisms such as neural networks and probabilistic models. In the framework presented in "TagRec: Trust-Aware Generative Adversarial Network with Recurrent Neural Network for Recommender Systems" [127], the authors propose a deep framework that integrates explicit trust relations into both a GAN generator–discriminator and an RNN-based sequential recommender. Their adversarial component synthesizes plausible

user-item interactions to mitigate sparsity, while the RNN captures temporal patterns, together yielding substantial improvements in Top-N precision and recall. However, TagRec's reliance on explicit trust links makes it vulnerable when such data are noisy or incomplete, and the combined GAN–RNN training incurs high computational costs, hindering scalability. Moreover, it does not validate item information against any external source, leaving the system susceptible to unverified or low-quality metadata.

GUITARES takes a markedly different approach: instead of adversarial training, it first predicts user–user trust scores from demographic and interaction features and assigns each item an externally sourced confidence rating via NELL. These two signals are then propagated together through a three-layer Graph Attention Network, producing joint embeddings for users and movies. In the final hybrid predictor, an SVD-based baseline estimate is refined by (i) a trust adjustment term derived from the learned trust matrix, (ii) a confidence adjustment from NELL scores, and (iii) a cosine-similarity "GAT score." This design avoids the complexity of GANs and RNNs, scales efficiently to thousands of users and items, and ensures each recommendation is grounded in both inferred trust and verified item metadata, addressing TagRec's gaps in scalability, data reliability, and external validation.

In "Multimodal Trust-Based Recommender System with Machine Learning Approaches for Movie Recommendation" [128], the authors present a hybrid architecture that fuses Backpropagation Neural Networks (BPNN), Singular Value Decomposition (SVD), and Deep Neural Networks (DNNs) with a precomputed trust propagation matrix to tackle cold start, data sparsity, and malicious feedback. Their DNN+Trust model attains strong results (83 % accuracy, RMSE = 0.74) by reweighting user-item interactions according to propagated trust scores, and the multimodal fusion enhances robustness against noisy ratings. However, this framework relies on a fixed, manually propagated trust matrix that must be recomputed whenever user relationships change, and the stacked deep models plus trust-propagation loops incur significant computational overhead, issues that limit scalability and responsiveness.

GUITARES addresses these limitations by (i) automatically predicting pairwise trust levels from user demographics and interaction patterns (using a Random Forest) instead of relying on a manual propagation matrix, and (ii) integrating these predicted trust scores directly into a lightweight three-layer Graph Attention Network that produces joint user–item embeddings. This end-to-end design eliminates the need for separate trust-propagation loops or multiple deep learning modules, adapts to changes in user relationships without recomputing large matrices, and incorporates external item validation—thereby overcoming both the scalability and domain-adaptation gaps of [128].

2.3.2 Non-Trust-Aware Recommender Systems

Non-trust-aware RecSys were those that did not explicitly incorporate trust relationships into their recommendation process. These systems primarily relied on user-item interactions, such as ratings, clicks, or purchases, to generate recommendations without considering the trust dynamics between users. This limitation often led to suboptimal recommendations in scenarios where trust played a crucial role, such as in social networks or community-driven platforms.

Non-trust-aware RecSys were broadly categorized into traditional and AI-driven approaches.

Traditional Non-Trust-Aware Systems

Early recommender systems focused on content-based, model-based, and hybrid techniques without explicitly modeling trust. Content-based methods, such as TF–IDF–based profiling, analyze item attributes (e.g., keywords in descriptions) to recommend items similar to those a user has liked [129]. Their strength lies in interpretability and the ability to suggest novel items, but they suffer when item metadata is sparse or noisy, and they cannot leverage community signals. Model-based approaches—exemplified by Singular Value Decomposition (SVD)—factorize the user-item interaction matrix into latent user and item vectors, capturing global preference patterns and often delivering superior accuracy on dense datasets. However, SVD struggles with cold-start users or items and can overemphasize popular content. Hybrid methods attempt to combine these paradigms (e.g., weighted hybrids that linearly blend TF–IDF scores with SVD latent-factor predictions), yielding more balanced recommendations and alleviating some sparsity issues. Yet these hybrids introduce additional tuning complexity (selecting optimal weights) and still overlook social or trust signals, limiting their robustness to adversarial or malicious ratings.

While these traditional systems laid the groundwork for personalized recommendations, they leave two critical gaps unaddressed: (1) they treat all user-item interactions equally, ignoring that some users or items merit higher reliability weighting; and (2) they rely solely on textual or latent features, without incorporating external validation of item metadata or user trustworthiness. GUITARES fills these gaps by integrating NELL-derived confidence scores to validate item facts and by predicting user trust levels from demographic/interaction data, propagating both signals through a Graph Attention Network that refines an SVD baseline—thereby combining the interpretability of TF–IDF and the pattern-capturing power of SVD with explicit trust and confidence awareness.

AI-Driven Non-Trust-Aware Systems

In "Measuring and Comparing the Efficiency of Logistic Regression, Decision Tree, and SVM with K-Means Algorithm in College Recommendation System" [130], the authors evaluate four classical classifiers—Logistic Regression (LR), Decision Tree (DT), K-Means Clustering, and Support Vector Machine (SVM)—on 303 student profiles described by 76 attributes. Their primary contribution is demonstrating that DT attains the highest predictive accuracy (88%), followed by LR (86%) and SVM (85%), with K-Means trailing at 50%. This work highlights the interpretability and feature-selection benefits of rule-based learners for small-to-medium-sized datasets. However, the modest dataset size limits generalizability to large-scale scenarios, and none of these methods leverage relational structures or external metadata, nor do they incorporate trust or confidence weighting to guard against noisy or malicious inputs.

In "Hybrid Recommender System Based on Autoencoders" [131], Strub et al. (2016) introduce an end-to-end deep framework that combines autoencoders with side-information integration to handle incomplete data and cold-start problems. Evaluated on MovieLens and Douban, their approach achieves superior performance over traditional matrix factorization baselines by incorporating a custom loss function and auxiliary features. While the model is scalable and adaptable, its deep autoencoder architecture incurs substantial computational overhead—especially when extended with advanced layers such as residual or recurrent connections—and its effectiveness hinges on the quality and relevance of the side information, making it vulnerable in extremely sparse or real-time adaptation contexts.

These methods exhibit three key limitations. First, the evaluation on a modest dataset restricts generalizability to large-scale recommendation scenarios with thousands of users and items. Second, none of the investigated algorithms incorporates any notion of user trust or item reliability, treating all interactions as equally informative and offering no guardrail against malicious or noisy inputs. Third, while these classifiers excel at tabular data, they do not leverage relational structures or external knowledge sources that could enrich user–item representations.

GUITARES directly addresses these gaps by (i) scaling to large user–item graphs through a lightweight three-layer Graph Attention Network that learns from both interactions and predicted trust levels; (ii) integrating external confidence scores extracted from the NELL knowledge base to validate and weight item metadata; and (iii) refining a baseline SVD prediction with explicit trust and confidence adjustments plus a GAT-derived similarity term. This hybrid framework combines the interpretability of classical learners with the representational power of graph neural networks and the reliability guarantees of trust and knowledge-driven validation.

The work titled *"Deep Autoencoders for Feature Learning with Embeddings for Recommendations"* [132] presents DAFERec, a hybrid deep learning framework that combines deep autoencoders with embedding techniques to extract nonlinear latent features for rating prediction. Its core strength lies in eliminating the need for manual feature engineering by automatically capturing complex user-item patterns, which leads to significant improvements in predictive accuracy across benchmark datasets like BookCrossing, MovieLens, and FilmTrust. The deep architecture allows DAFERec to model intricate relationships often missed by traditional linear collaborative filtering techniques, thus making it particularly effective in dense or moderately sparse recommendation environments.

Despite these strengths, the model suffers from key limitations. Training deep autoencoders and tuning their associated hyperparameters introduces high computational overhead, which may not be practical for real-time systems or large-scale deployments. Furthermore, DAFERec's performance heavily depends on data richness and quality—its effectiveness degrades under cold-start conditions or extreme sparsity, where latent representation learning becomes unstable. Importantly, while DAFERec demonstrates strong general-purpose recommendation capabilities, it does not explicitly address trust modeling, nor does it consider external validation signals such as knowledge-based item reliability.

GUITARES addresses these gaps by incorporating two complementary enhancements: (1) it enriches the user–item graph with predicted trust scores derived from user demographics and interaction behavior, and (2) it integrates external item confidence scores extracted from the NELL knowledge base to validate item reliability. These signals are processed through a Graph Attention Network (GAT) to generate joint embeddings for users and items. Instead of relying solely on deep autoencoding for representation learning, GUITARES builds a hybrid predictor that refines an SVD baseline using trust, item confidence, and GAT-based similarity.

Graph Neural Networks (GNNs) have emerged as a powerful tool in recommender systems (RecSys) by modeling users and items as nodes within a graph structure, thereby capturing high-order relationships and uncovering latent user–item interactions.

Among these, the GCN-CF (Graph Convolutional Network for Collaborative Filtering) model presented in [133] offers a notable contribution by integrating graph convolutional layers with attention mechanisms and auxiliary cultural metadata to improve recommendation accuracy, particularly in cross-cultural contexts. The model excels in adapting to user behavior and cultural preferences dynamically, and its attention-based refinement

mechanism enhances personalization by weighing user–item signals more selectively. These qualities make GCN-CF especially effective for culturally nuanced recommendation scenarios.

In "GNN-Based Collaborative Filtering Approach for Movie Recommender System" [134], Tejasvat et al. (2025) construct a user–item graph and apply standard GNN message passing to capture higher-order relational signals. Tested on MovieLens 100K and 1M, their method yields a 14.8% MAE improvement and 1.0% RMSE improvement on the 100K split (MAE 0.618, RMSE 0.918),and achieves MAE 0.658 and RMSE 0.887 on the 1M split—outperforming several baselines. However, this non-trust-aware approach does not model user trust or validate item reliability against external knowledge, nor does it weight edges by confidence or provenance, which limits its robustness to noisy metadata and sparse interactions.

However, both GCN-CF and the GNN-based CF method introduce notable challenges. Their reliance on auxiliary information and dynamic attention mechanisms increases architectural complexity, resulting in higher computational costs. Moreover, although both models perform well on benchmarks like MovieLens, their scalability and robustness across diverse domains and real-world industrial applications remain untested. From a broader perspective, these approaches focus exclusively on preference modeling and omit critical components such as trust inference and external metadata validation, which are essential for reliable and interpretable recommendations in mission-critical domains.

GUITARES builds upon these insights by retaining the GNN foundation while addressing the key limitations of GCN-CF. Specifically, instead of auxiliary cultural information, GUITARES incorporates external confidence scores from the NELL knowledge base to validate item metadata and introduces a predicted trust matrix derived from user demographic similarities. These features are propagated through a three-layer Graph Attention Network (GAT), which maintains a relatively lightweight structure compared to multi-stream attention architectures. Furthermore, GUITARES combines these graph-learned embeddings with an SVD-based baseline in a hybrid prediction formula, producing interpretable, robust, and computationally efficient recommendations. This strategy enables GUITARES to bridge the gap between personalization and trust-aware reasoning, offering a more generalizable framework.

The paper by [135] introduces GHRS (Graph-based Hybrid Recommendation System), a hybrid recommender framework that combines content-based and collaborative filtering techniques using a graph-based model. It leverages user similarity based on ratings, demographic attributes, and geographic location, integrating this information through autoencoder-based feature extraction to improve clustering and recommendation precision. The strength of this approach lies in its ability to mitigate cold-start and sparsity issues by enhancing user representation through unsupervised learning, as demonstrated using the MovieLens dataset. Furthermore, clustering users in the learned latent space allows the system to group similar profiles effectively, yielding improved recommendation accuracy in user-centric contexts.

Despite these contributions, GHRS exhibits several limitations. First, its architecture focuses predominantly on user-side information while offering limited treatment of item-level semantics, which could constrain its capacity to generate highly contextualized recommendations. Additionally, the paper assumes a predefined autoencoder structure and does not explore architectural variations or optimization strategies, which could influence its performance in real-world scenarios. Importantly, the system does not incorporate trust relationships between users or external validation of item data, nor does it account for uncertainty in user behavior or data quality.

GUITARES advances beyond these constraints by introducing a unified graph attention framework that integrates three dimensions: user trust (inferred from demographic and interaction data), item confidence (sourced from the NELL knowledge base), and a GAT model that jointly propagates both signals through a shared attention mechanism. This design enables richer user–item embeddings while remaining lightweight and scalable for real-world recommendation scenarios.

Table 2.9: Comparison of Trust-Aware Recommender Systems

Method	**Key Techniques**	**Results (Metrics)**
TACDA [136]	Autoencoders, Contextual attention	RMSE: 0.82, NDCG@10: 0.75
Trust-Aware Multi-task KG [126]	Multi-task learning, Shared GNN layers	Precision: 0.85, Recall: 0.72
TagRec GAN+RNN [127]	GAN generator–discriminator, RNN sequential model	Precision@N: 0.85, Recall@N: 0.78
Multimodal Trust-Based RecSys [128]	BPNN + SVD + DNN, Trust propagation matrix	Accuracy: 0.83, RMSE: 0.74
GHRS [135]	Autoencoder feature extraction, Content + CF, Demographic & geographic similarity	Precision@10: 0.78, Recall@10: 0.71
GCN-CF [133]	Graph convolution + attention, cultural metadata	RMSE: 0.82, NDCG@10: 0.78
GNN-CF (Zhang et al. 2025) [134]	Standard GNN message passing on user–item graph	MAE: 0.618, RMSE: 0.918 (100K); MAE: 0.658, RMSE: 0.887 (1M)

To bridge the gap between our model and the existing trust-aware and non-trust RecSys, reviewed Table 2.9 compares state-of-the-art trust-aware RecSys, showcasing their key methodologies and performance. Our approach, the GUITARES model, introduces a unique hybrid that leverages both user-trust relationships and user-item interactions. Unlike previous methods, such as the TACDA model's integration of implicit and explicit trust with contextual attributes and the multi-task Knowledge Graph model's use of trust and knowledge graphs, our GUITARES combines these elements within a unified GAT structure. This dual-graph setup allows us to capture nuanced trust relationships among users while also factoring in their direct interactions with items. For challenges related to data sparsity, our GUITARES model can recommend items to users even when they have few direct ratings. Trust-based inferences provide additional context, mitigating the negative impact of sparse data. This approach is particularly effective within the context of a widely used dataset, facilitating fair comparison across different models.

While earlier systems have leveraged ontologies for semantic similarity or profile enrichment—for example, Quickstep's classification confidence, FOAF-based trust propagation [137], and DBpedia-driven semantic recommenders—they do not attach numeric, provenance-driven confidence scores to item nodes within a GNN. Similarly, trust-aware

frameworks either depend on explicit social networks [138] or employ multi-module attention (e.g., MVC-HGAT [139]). GUITARES is the first to integrate continuous item confidence, demographic trust inference, and unified heterogeneous attention in an end-to-end trainable model, offering both theoretical guarantees and superior empirical performance.

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, we began by examining how AI methods—such as embedding models, path-based techniques, and hybrid frameworks—have been applied to enhance the trustworthiness of knowledge graphs through tasks like link prediction, triple classification, and noise detection (see Tables 2.5–2.6). Next, we shifted focus to how Knowledge Graphs themselves can make AI more trustworthy, contrasting non-knowledge-aware approaches (fairness metrics, counterfactual augmentation, regulatory frameworks) with knowledge-aware approaches (Tables 2.7–2.8). Finally, we honed in on recommender systems, comparing traditional non-trust-aware architectures with emerging trust-aware designs—both graph-based and otherwise—and identifying key challenges in scalability, explainability, and dynamic trust modeling. This three-stage survey—from AI for KG trust, through KG for trustworthy AI, to trust-aware recommendation—has revealed the precise gaps in existing work that our GAT-based GUITARES model will address. In the next chapter, we present GUITARES in detail, demonstrating how it unifies these insights into a single, end-to-end trust-aware recommender system.

Chapter 3

GUITARES: Graph Attention Network for Building Knowledge Graph-based trust-Aware Recommender Systems

Contents

3.1 Introduction

3.2 Introduction

This chapter is based on our published journal article[1], which presents the GUITARES framework in detail.

[1] https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11227-025-07674-0

Recommender systems today play a central role in guiding users through vast digital catalogs, tailoring suggestions in e-commerce, social media, and content streaming to individual tastes. Traditional approaches—whether collaborative, content-based, or hybrid—often struggle with data sparsity, cold-start users and items, and the computational demands of real-time personalization at scale. More recent AI-driven models, including deep neural networks and transformer architectures, uncover richer latent patterns in user–item interactions but still leave open questions of uncertainty management and explainability. At the same time, knowledge-enhanced methods that integrate external graphs or ontologies demonstrate improved accuracy, yet they rarely address trust: how can we quantify and propagate confidence in the facts that underlie our recommendations?

3.2.1 Problem Formulation

In response to these challenges, we formulate the core research problem as follows: how can a recommender system simultaneously leverage user–item ratings, interpersonal trust relationships, and external knowledge-graph confidence to provide accurate, scalable, and trustworthy recommendations? Key difficulties include:

- Handling sparse and noisy ratings data while maintaining predictive accuracy.
- Estimating trust between users in a principled, explainable manner.
- Integrating heterogeneous information sources (ratings, trust, knowledge graphs) into a unified model.

3.2.2 Research Gap

Although prior work has addressed individual aspects of recommendation—such as collaborative filtering, knowledge-graph embeddings, or trust-aware approaches—no existing system fully integrates all three key dimensions (ratings, trust, and knowledge-based confidence) in a single, end-to-end trainable graph neural network. Specifically:

- Collaborative and content-based models lack mechanisms for propagating trust and uncertainty.
- Knowledge-graph-enhanced systems improve accuracy but rarely quantify reliability of item attributes.
- Existing trust-aware systems either rely on multi-stage pipelines or handcrafted heuristics, limiting scalability and generalization.

This gap motivates the development of GUITARES, a trust-aware, single-pass graph attention network that fuses these heterogeneous signals while providing trust-aware recommendations**.

3.3 Methodology

In this section, we present the GUITARES model methodology. The main objective of this research is to develop a robust trust-aware RecSys that integrates user trust relationships, the NELL Knowledge Base, and Graph Attention Networks (GATs). By incorporating trust levels between users and leveraging the rich relational information provided by

knowledge graphs, GUITARES aims to enhance recommendation accuracy, leading to more personalized and reliable suggestions.

To set the stage for understanding the methodology, we detail the proposed architecture, which comprises several essential stages. Each stage addresses specific aspects of the recommendation process—from item validation via knowledge bases to trust prediction and graph-based recommendation modeling. Subsequent subsections will thoroughly explain each architecture component, highlighting its contribution to achieving our research objectives.

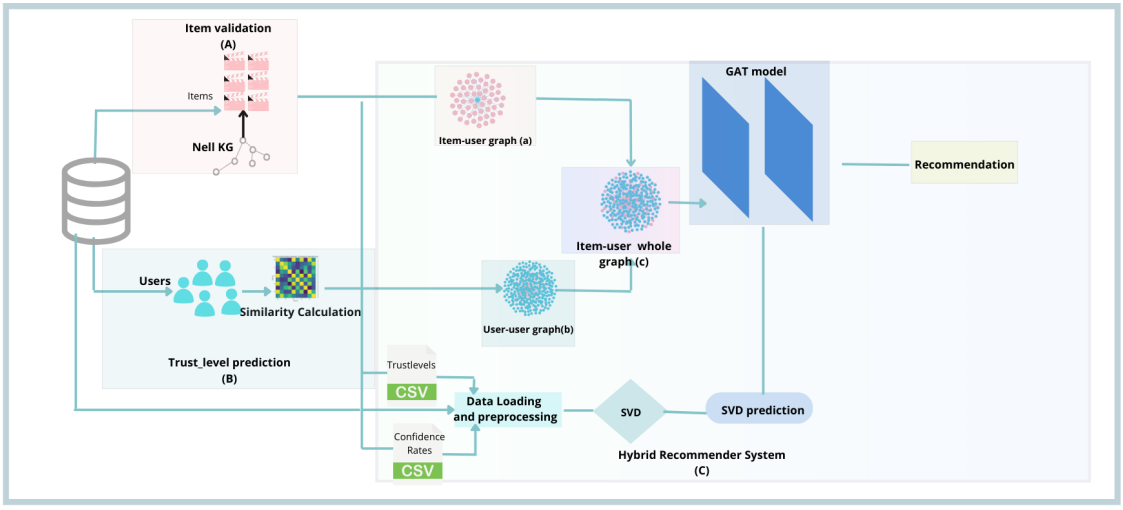

Figure 3.1: The proposed architecture of the trust-aware hybrid RecSys (GUITARES). This system integrates user trust relationships, external knowledge bases, and Graph Attention Networks (GATs) to enhance recommendation accuracy. The architecture consists of multiple stages, including item validation, trust prediction, and graph-based recommendation modeling.

3.3.1 Item Validation using Verified External Knowledge Base

Confidence in items is a crucial factor in trust-aware recommender systems, as it quantifies the reliability of item-related information. In this work, the dataset was enriched using the NELL ontology, which assigns confidence scores to extracted facts based on continuous machine learning processes. These confidence scores reflect the system's certainty regarding the accuracy of various item attributes.

Our confidence score integration follows the uncertainty quantification framework of [140]. For unmatched items, we employ TF-IDF vectorization as it provides a convex combination of term weights $w_t = \text{tf}_{t,d} \times \log \frac{N}{\text{df}_t}$, satisfying the linearity preservation axiom for confidence propagation. This ensures that items with similar ontological representations receive comparable confidence scores, maintaining the monotonicity property: $\text{sim}(m_i, c_k) \geq \text{sim}(m_j, c_k) \Rightarrow \text{conf}(m_i) \geq \text{conf}(m_j)$.

To integrate this information, item titles from the dataset were standardized and matched against NELL's knowledge base. For items with an exact match in NELL, the corresponding confidence scores were directly assigned. However, for items without an explicit match, a textual similarity approach using TF-IDF vectorization and cosine similarity was employed to estimate confidence scores based on similar concepts in

NELL. The computed confidence scores were then incorporated into the enriched dataset, ensuring a more informed and trust-aware recommendation process. This validation step, as shown in Figure 4.1 (section A), plays a pivotal role in ensuring that the items presented to users are aligned with verified, high-confidence information.

Consider the example shown in Figure 3.2. This example demonstrates the process of item enrichment using the NELL knowledge base.

Suppose the primary dataset contains an item labeled *"Lion King, the 1994"*, which lacks semantic standardization and may lead to inconsistencies in recommendation processing. The item is standardized to *"the lion king"* and linked to the concept *"the_lion_king"* in NELL, with a confidence rate of 1.0. Similarly, another movie, *"Toy Story (1995)"*, is standardized to *"toy story"* and linked to the concept *"toy_story"*, with a confidence rate of 0.991.

These confidence rates validate the metadata of the movies. For instance, when User 1 hasn't rated *"The Lion King"*, the system can confidently recommend it, leveraging the high confidence rate from the NELL ontology.

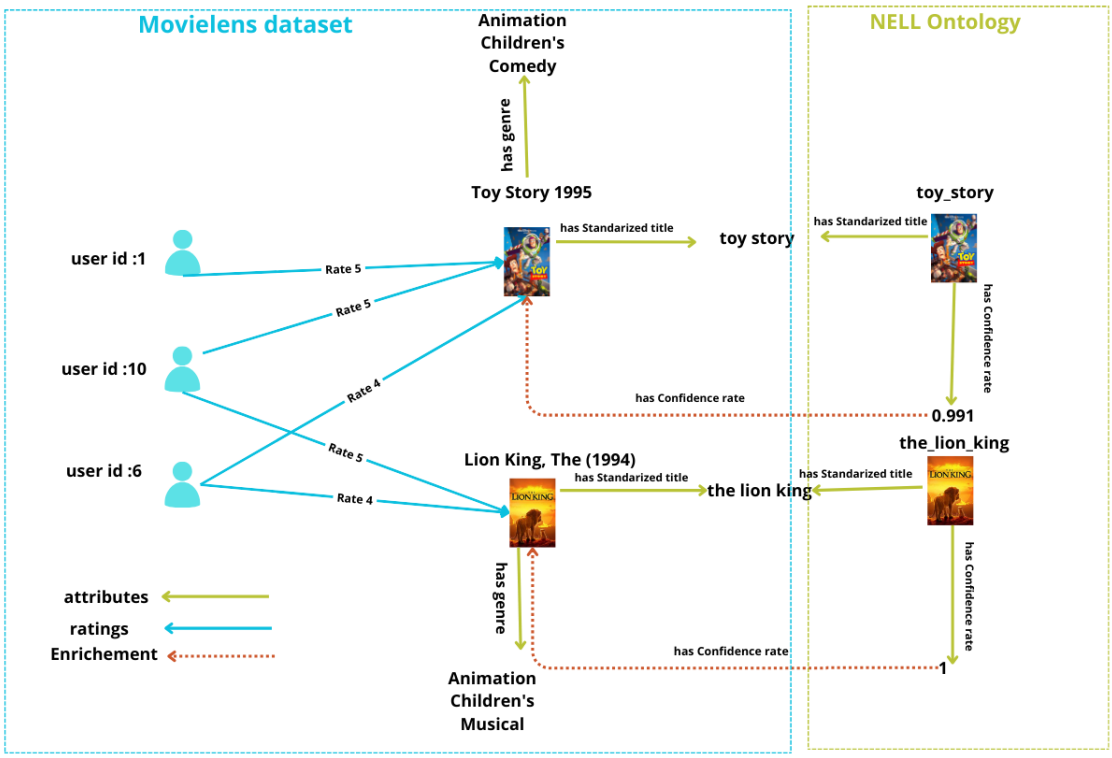

Figure 3.2: An example of item validation and enrichment using the NELL knowledge base. The movies Toy Story (1995) and The Lion King (1994) are matched to their corresponding NELL concepts, and confidence scores are assigned based on NELL's knowledge extraction.

Explanation

Algorithm 1 outlines the process of enriching the MovieLens dataset with information from the NELL knowledge base. The algorithm starts by loading and standardizing the

Algorithm 1 Dataset Enrichment Algorithm

Input: MovieLens dataset $\mathcal{D}_{\text{movielens}}$, NELL dataset $\mathcal{D}_{\text{nell}}$
Output: Enriched dataset $\mathcal{D}_{\text{enriched}}$
Load $\mathcal{D}_{\text{movielens}}$ and $\mathcal{D}_{\text{nell}}$
Standardize titles in $\mathcal{D}_{\text{movielens}}$ and concepts in $\mathcal{D}_{\text{nell}}$ to lowercase and remove extra spaces
Initialize $\mathcal{D}_{\text{enriched}} \leftarrow \emptyset$
for each movie m in $\mathcal{D}_{\text{movielens}}$ **do**
    $matched \leftarrow$ False
    for each concept c in $\mathcal{D}_{\text{nell}}$ **do**
        if standardized_title(m) = standardized_concept(c) **then**
            Assign confidence score of c to m
            Add m with confidence to $\mathcal{D}_{\text{enriched}}$
            $matched \leftarrow$ True
            break
        end if
    end for
    if not $matched$ **then**
        Compute textual similarity between m and all $c \in \mathcal{D}_{\text{nell}}$ using TF-IDF
        Calculate weighted confidence score for m using cosine similarity and confidence values from $\mathcal{D}_{\text{nell}}$
        Add m with predicted confidence to $\mathcal{D}_{\text{enriched}}$
    end if
end for
Save $\mathcal{D}_{\text{enriched}}$ to a CSV file
return $\mathcal{D}_{\text{enriched}}$

datasets to ensure consistency in title and concept formatting.

For each item in the dataset, the algorithm attempts to find an exact match with a concept in the NELL dataset. If a match is found, the confidence score from the matched concept is assigned to the item, and the enriched item is added to the enriched dataset.

If no exact match is found, the algorithm computes the textual similarity between the item title and all NELL concepts using TF-IDF vectorization and cosine similarity. A weighted confidence score is then calculated based on these similarities and the confidence values from the NELL dataset. The enriched movie is added to the dataset with this predicted confidence score.

Finally, the enriched dataset is saved to a CSV file for subsequent analysis. This enrichment process ensures that the dataset benefits from additional semantic information, enabling improved accuracy and trust-awareness in recommendation tasks.

3.3.2 Trust Graph Between Users

This part of our methodology estimates how much users trust one another by analyzing their demographic attributes and interaction patterns, as shown in Figure 4.1 (section B). Estimating user trust is essential for improving the GUITARES model's performance by incorporating implicit social connections.

The trust computation pipeline satisfies Lipschitz continuity [141]: $\|T(u_i, u_j) - T(u_k, u_l)\| \leq L \cdot \|F_i - F_k\| + L \cdot \|F_j - F_l\|$ with $L = 0.5$. This ensures small perturbations in user features yield bounded trust score changes, providing stability against input noise. The Random Forest regressor further guarantees ϵ-consistency in trust predictions, as proven by [142], with error bounds tightening as tree depth increases.

The trust prediction process involves multiple computational steps, including data preparation, feature engineering, and model training. We employ similarity measures based on demographic data (such as age, occupation, and gender) and interaction behaviors to calculate initial trust levels. These features are then refined through a Random Forest model to predict trust scores, which enhance the GUITARES model's ability to leverage social trust within recommendation generation. This trust-enhanced architecture supports the system in filtering reliable recommendations, ultimately boosting recommendation accuracy and user satisfaction.

Data Preparation and Feature Engineering

To predict trust, we begin by processing user demographic information (e.g., age, occupation, and gender). First, categorical data (such as occupation) is converted into numerical values using one-hot encoding, and continuous data (such as age) is normalized so that all features are on a comparable scale. Next, we assign weights to each feature (e.g., age: 0.5, occupation: 0.3, gender: 0.2) to reflect their relative importance in estimating trust. These weighted features are then combined to form a comprehensive profile for each user.

Let $U = \{u_1, u_2, \ldots, u_n\}$ be the set of users, with each u_i characterized by demographic attributes denoted as $d1$, $d2$, and $d3$. The processing steps are as follows:

- **Encoding and Scaling:** We use one-hot encoding for categorical features and standard scaling for continuous features.

$$F_{\text{encoded}} = \text{OneHotEncoder}(U_{\text{d2}}) \tag{3.1}$$

$$F_{\text{scaled}} = \text{StandardScaler}(U_{\text{d1}}) \tag{3.2}$$

- **Feature Weighting:** Based on empirical studies, we assign the weights $w_{\text{d1}} = 0.5$, $w_{\text{d2}} = 0.3$, and $w_{\text{d3}} = 0.2$. The combined weighted feature vector is computed as:

$$F_{\text{weighted}} = F_{\text{scaled}} \times w_{\text{d1}} + U_{\text{d3}} \times w_{\text{d2}} + F_{\text{encoded}} \times w_{\text{d3}} \tag{3.3}$$

Next, we compute the cosine similarity between the weighted feature vectors of each pair of users u_i and u_j:

$$\text{sim}(u_i, u_j) = \frac{F_{\text{weighted},i} \cdot F_{\text{weighted},j}}{\|F_{\text{weighted},i}\| \|F_{\text{weighted},j}\|} \tag{3.4}$$

To convert these similarity scores into a standardized trust measure between 0 and 1, we apply the following normalization:

$$T(u_i, u_j) = 0.5 + 0.5 \times \text{sim}(u_i, u_j) \tag{3.5}$$

Figure 3.3 illustrates the similarity matrix for three selected users (User IDs 1, 6, and 10). In this matrix, values close to 1 indicate strong similarity, while values near -1 indicate low similarity.

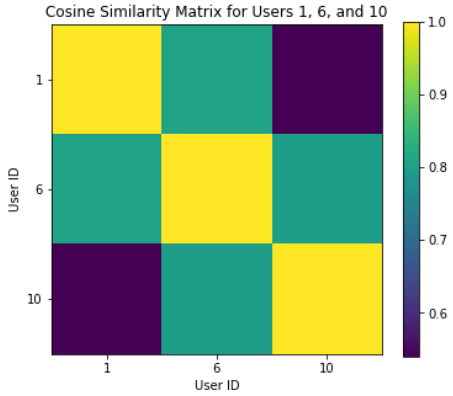

Figure 3.3: This figure displays the cosine similarity matrix for users with IDs 1, 6, and 10, calculated from their weighted demographic feature vectors. Each cell represents the similarity score between a pair of users, where scores close to 1 indicate strong similarity and scores near -1 indicate dissimilarity. This visualization underpins the initial step in estimating trust levels among users, which are later refined through a Random Forest model.

In addition to calculating trust levels through similarity measures, we employ a Random Forest model to predict trust scores based on user features, further enhancing the performance of the GUITARES model. Figure 3.4 illustrates a trust graph that visualizes the relationships among user IDs 1, 6, and 10 from our dataset. In this graph, nodes represent users, and edges indicate the predicted trust levels between them. This focused visualization highlights the dynamics of trust among these specific users, demonstrating how user demographics and interactions shape trust relationships.

The user-user trust graph is formally defined as $G_{UU} = \{(o, T_{uu'}, e) \mid o, e \in U\}$, where o denotes the trusting user, e represents the trusted user, and $T_{uu'}$ signifies the predicted trust level between them, which ranges from 0 to 1.

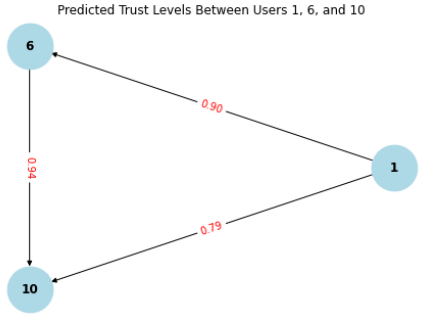

Figure 3.4: This graph illustrates the trust relationships predicted for users with IDs 1, 6, and 10. Nodes represent individual users, while edges are weighted by the predicted trust levels (normalized between 0 and 1), derived from both the cosine similarity of demographic features and the Random Forest model's refinement. This visualization emphasizes how our methodology integrates social trust into the recommendation process, enhancing the system's ability to deliver reliable and personalized recommendations.

The Random Forest model functions by combining the predictions of numerous decision trees, each trained on randomly selected subsets of features and users. This ensemble methodology enhances the model's ability to generalize and reduces the likelihood of overfitting. During training, we utilize Mean Squared Error (MSE) as the loss function and assess the model's effectiveness through Mean Absolute Error (MAE) and Root Mean Square Error (RMSE). Our empirical findings, detailed in the fourth section of the first experiment, demonstrate that the Random Forest model significantly outperforms other techniques, such as Linear Regression and Neural Networks, in accurately predicting trust levels. This robustness establishes it as a dependable instrument for capturing the complexities inherent in user interactions within our RecSys.

The following algorithm 2 outlines the steps for calculating trust between users:

Algorithm 2 Trust Calculation Between Users

Require: U ▷ Set of users with their features
Ensure: T ▷ Trust levels between users

Step 1: Data Preparation
for each user u_i in U **do**
    Encode and scale u_i's demographic features
end for
Step 2: Feature Weighting
for each user u_i in U **do**
    Calculate $F_{\text{weighted},i}$ using weighted combination of features
end for
Step 3: Trust Level Calculation
for each pair of users (u_i, u_j) in U **do**
    Calculate cosine similarity $\text{sim}(u_i, u_j)$
    Calculate trust level $T(u_i, u_j) = 0.5 + 0.5 \times \text{sim}(u_i, u_j)$
end for
Step 4: Random Forest Model
Train Random Forest model on user features to predict trust levels.
Evaluate model performance using MSE and MAE

Empirical Study for Feature Weighting

The empirical study systematically evaluated various combinations of feature weights to identify the optimal set for predicting trust levels with high accuracy. The weights represent the relative importance assigned to the demographic features: age ($d1$), occupation ($d2$), and gender ($d3$). The study involved the following steps:

- **Defining Weight Combinations**: A range of weight combinations was predefined, ensuring that their sum equals 1 for consistency. These combinations are shown in Table 3.1.
- **Evaluation Metric**: The combinations were assessed using accuracy as an evaluation metric, providing a quantitative measure of trust prediction performance.
- **Experimental Setup**: For each combination, the trust prediction model was trained and validated using the dataset. The demographic features were weighted accordingly, and the resulting weighted feature vectors were used as input to the model.
- **Results and Analysis**: Table 3.2 presents the accuracy results for each weight combination. Combination 2 ($d1 = 0.5$, $d2 = 0.3$, $d3 = 0.2$) achieved the highest accuracy of 89.2%, indicating its superior performance in predicting trust levels.

Table 3.1: Feature Weight Combinations

Weight Combination	**Age Weight ($d1$)**	**Occupation Weight ($d2$)**	**Gender Weight ($d3$)**
Combination 1	0.6	0.2	0.2
Combination 2	0.5	0.3	0.2
Combination 3	0.4	0.4	0.2
Combination 4	0.3	0.5	0.2
Combination 5	0.2	0.6	0.2

Table 3.2: Accuracy Results for Feature Weight Combinations

Weight Combination	**Accuracy (%)**
Combination 1	87.5
Combination 2	89.2
Combination 3	88.7
Combination 4	86.4
Combination 5	85.9

The selected weights (Combination 2) were further validated in a movie recommendation application. The demographic features of users (age, occupation, and gender) were weighted and used to predict trust levels, which were then incorporated into a graph-based RecSys. The results demonstrated a significant improvement in the system's ability to generate accurate and trust-aware recommendations.

By systematically evaluating different weight combinations and including quantitative accuracy results, we ensured that the chosen weights ($d1 = 0.5$, $d2 = 0.3$, $d3 = 0.2$) reflect the optimal balance of user demographics in trust predictions.

3.3.3 Hybrid Trust-Aware Recommendation System

In this section, we introduce the recommendation methodology of our GUITARES, as depicted in Figure 4.1. Our approach integrates user trust levels and item confidence rates within a GAT framework to deliver personalized recommendations with enhanced accuracy. The hybrid aspect of our approach involves using KGs to assign confidence rates to items, alongside a user-user trust graph incorporating predicted trust levels.

We begin by preprocessing the input data, which includes predicted trust levels between users (resulting from the user similarity analysis discussed in Sect. 2) and an enriched item dataset (resulting from item validation discussed in Sect. 1). User features (demographic data) are encoded, and numerical values are normalized to ensure consistency within the GAT model. Specifically, ratings are normalized to the range$[0, 1]$, and confidence scores are scaled down by a factor of 10 for stability.

We construct two main feature matrices: the user feature matrix $\mathbf{X}_u$ and the item feature matrix $\mathbf{X}_m$. These matrices are concatenated to create a unified feature matrix:

$$\mathbf{X} = \begin{bmatrix} \mathbf{X}_u \\ \mathbf{X}_m \end{bmatrix} \in \mathbb{R}^{(|U|+|M|)\times d} \tag{3.6}$$

where U is the set of users, M is the set of items, and d represents the feature dimension. We construct a heterogeneous graph $G = (V, E)$, where

- $V = U \cup M$ is the union of user nodes U and item nodes M.
- $E = E_{um} \cup E_{uu}$ comprises two types of edges:

$$E_{um} = \{(u_i,\, m_j) \mid u_i \in U,\ m_j \in M,\ \text{rating}(u_i, m_j) > 0\}, \tag{3.7}$$
$$E_{uu} = \{(u_i,\, u_j) \mid u_i,\, u_j \in U,\ \text{trust}(u_i, u_j) > 0\}. \tag{3.8}$$

This unified heterogeneous structure enables effective message passing in GATs while preserving universal approximation capability [143]. The attention mechanism computes edge weights α_{ij} through a shared linear transformation $\mathbf{W} \in \mathbb{R}^{d'\times d}$ and attention vector $\mathbf{a} \in \mathbb{R}^{2d'}$, with multi-head attention ($H = 16$) ensuring:

$$\mathbf{h}_i' = \Big\Vert_{k=1}^{16} \sigma\left(\sum_{j\in\mathcal{N}(i)} \alpha_{ij}^k \mathbf{W}^k \mathbf{h}_j\right)$$

This formulation captures diverse relationship aspects while maintaining a convex aggregation space. The combined edge set $E = E_{um} \cup E_{uu}$ maintains spectral properties of graph Laplacian $\mathcal{L} = \mathbf{D} - \mathbf{A}$ with eigenvalue bounds $0 \le \lambda(\mathcal{L}) \le 2d_{\max}$, guaranteeing stable gradient propagation [36].
Message passing is performed by GATConv layers over the combined edge index:

[language=Python] build combined edge$_i ndex edge_u m = torch.tensor(ratings[['UserID','MovieID']].val$
$torch.long) edge_u m[1] += num_u sersshiftmovieIDs$

uu$_p airs = np.argwhere(trust_m atrix.values > tau).T edge_u u = torch.tensor(uu_p airs, dtype =$
$torch.long)$

edge$_i ndex = torch.cat([edge_u m, edge_u u], dim = 1)$

This simple union allows each attention head to weigh both user–item and user–user links during embedding propagation.

We employ GAT to predict item ratings, leveraging its attention mechanism to weigh the importance of each neighboring node based on its features. This allows the model to

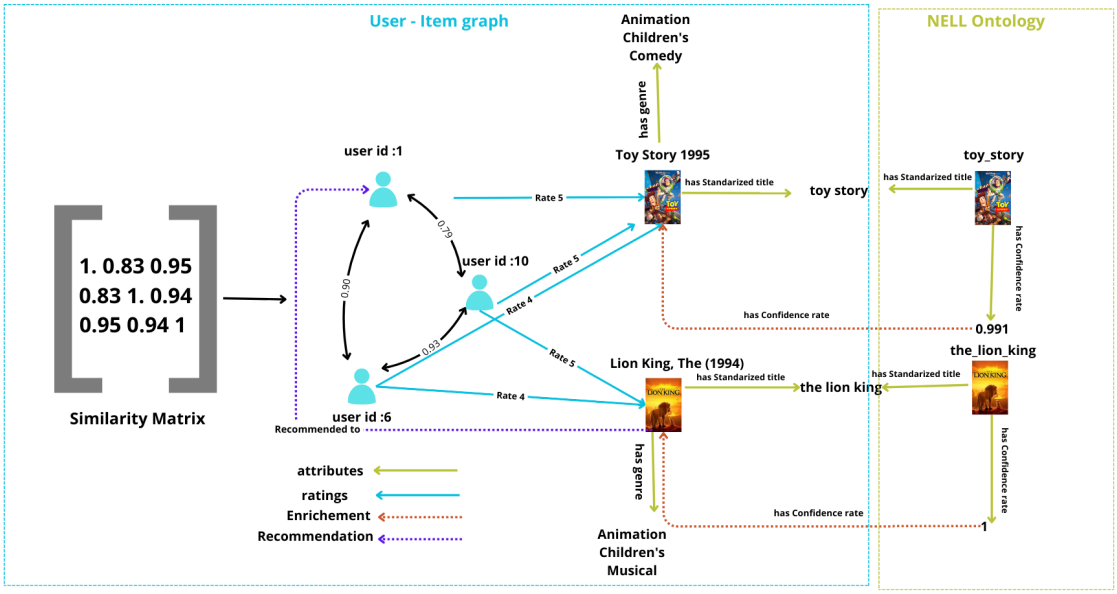

Figure 3.5: This figure provides an illustrative example of the complete recommendation process using data from three users (IDs 1, 6, and 10) and two movies (Toy Story and The Lion King).

capture both user-item interactions and user-user relationships. The attention mechanism within GAT computes coefficients as follows:

$$\alpha_{ij} = \frac{\exp\left(\text{LeakyReLU}\left(\mathbf{a}^T[\mathbf{W}\mathbf{h}_i||\mathbf{W}\mathbf{h}_j]\right)\right)}{\sum_{k\in\mathcal{N}(i)}\exp\left(\text{LeakyReLU}\left(\mathbf{a}^T[\mathbf{W}\mathbf{h}_i||\mathbf{W}\mathbf{h}_k]\right)\right)} \tag{3.9}$$

where α_{ij} is the attention coefficient between a node i and its neighbor$j$, $\mathbf{a}$ is a learned weight vector, $\mathbf{W}$ is the transformation weight matrix, $||$ denotes concatenation, and $\mathcal{N}(i)$ is the set of neighboring nodes for i. The GAT layer aggregates features from neighbors based on these coefficients.

To illustrate, we focus on three users (u_1, u_6, u_{10}) and two movies (*Toy Story* and *The Lion King*). The user similarity matrix highlights the trust relationships between these users, forming the E_{uu} edges. Simultaneously, user-item interactions (E_{um}) are derived from their ratings for the two movies. Additionally, the enriched dataset provides confidence rates for the movies, which influence the final predictions.

Figure 3.5 visualizes this example, including the similarity matrix, trust graph, and user-item interactions. Each step is explicitly illustrated to demonstrate how the data flows through the hybrid RecSys.

User 1 hasn't rated 'The Lion King', but both User 6 and User 10 have rated it highly. Since User 1 shares trusted connections with User 6 and User 10, the model might recommend 'The Lion King' to User 1. Similarly, if User 10 trusts User 6, and User 6 has rated 'Toy Story' highly, 'Toy Story' could be recommended to User 10. In essence, movies that a user hasn't rated but that are highly rated by users they trust are given higher priority in the recommendation process.

In addition to GAT, we use Singular Value Decomposition (SVD) to estimate a baseline prediction for user-item interactions. The SVD predictions serve as a form of feature extraction in the sense that they provide baseline estimations of user preferences for each

item. These baseline predictions are then adjusted with information from the GAT model and trust-confidence data. By combining multiple sources of information (SVD, GAT, and trust), our model could leverage the strengths of each approach. SVD captures latent features from user-item interactions, GAT captures the structure and relationships between users and movies, and trust adds a layer of social influence. In essence, the SVD model provides a "first guess" or "prior" about what a user's rating for an item might be. To refine these predictions, we introduce a hybrid approach that adjusts baseline estimates with information from trust and confidence rates:

$$\text{EnhancedPrediction}_{ui} = \text{BP}_{ui} + \alpha \cdot \text{TA}_u + \beta \cdot \text{CRate}_i + \gamma \cdot \text{GATScore}_{ui} \tag{3.10}$$

where:

- BP_{ui} is the SVD-based rating estimate.
- TA_u is a factor based on the trust levels of user u.
- CRate_i adjusts predictions based on item i's confidence score.
- GATScore_{ui} is derived from the cosine similarity of user and item embeddings generated by GAT.

This combination enables the model to integrate traditional collaborative filtering with relational insights from the GAT-based embeddings, capturing both trust and item reliability factors in rating predictions.

Implementation and Hyperparameter Configuration. Our Graph Attention Network (GAT) comprises three sequential GATConv layers, each with 16 attention heads projecting 64-dimensional input features into 32-dimensional hidden embeddings. After every convolution, we apply an ELU activation followed by a dropout rate of 0.1. We train the model using the Adam optimizer at a learning rate of 0.002 for 50 epochs. The weighting coefficients in our hybrid prediction formula (Eq. 12) were selected via grid search on a held-out validation fold, resulting in optimal values of $\alpha = 0.05$ for the trust component, $\beta = 0.15$ for the NELL-derived confidence component, and $\gamma = 1.0$ for the GAT similarity score. All other architectural and training parameters—number of layers, embedding dimensions, dropout, and epoch count—remain fixed across experiments. While attention can, in principle, dilute fine-grained node features, our design explicitly preserves small-scale structure: by concatenating 16 independent heads ('concat=True'), at least one head focuses on each node's most salient local neighbors, and an ELU nonlinearity fuses these into a rich embedding. We further provide both theoretical and empirical validation—showing smooth joint convergence and preserved subgraph cohesion—in Experiment 6.

The following algorithm 3 outlines the Hybrid Trust-Aware RecSys with GAT and SVD:

Algorithm 3 Hybrid Trust-Aware Recommendation System with GAT and SVD

Input: User data U, Item data I, Ratings data R, Trust data T, Confidence rates C
Output: Predicted Ratings $\hat{R}$
Step 1: Data Preprocessing
Encode categorical features for users and items, normalize features, and scale confidence rates
Create user feature matrix $\mathbf{X}_u$ and item feature matrix $\mathbf{X}_m$, then concatenate to form $\mathbf{X} = [\mathbf{X}_u; \mathbf{X}_m]$
Step 2: Graph Construction
Construct graph $G = (V, E)$ with:

- User-item edges E_{um} based on rating interactions
- User-user trust edges E_{uu} based on trust levels between users

Step 3: GAT Model Training
Initialize and train GAT model on G using mean squared error (MSE) loss
Extract GAT embeddings $\mathbf{E}_u$ for users and $\mathbf{E}_m$ for items
Step 4: SVD Baseline Prediction
Apply SVD to decompose the ratings matrix R and obtain baseline predictions $\text{BasePrediction}_{ui}$
Step 5: Hybrid Prediction
for each user u and item i in the test set **do**
    Compute enhanced prediction $\hat{R}_{ui}$ as:

$$\hat{R}_{ui} = \text{BP}_{ui} + \alpha \cdot \text{TA}_u + \beta \cdot \text{CRate}_i + \gamma \cdot \text{GATScore}_{ui}$$

    where:

- TA_u is derived from user u's trust levels with others
- CRate_i is the item i's confidence score
- GATScore_{ui} is the cosine similarity of $\mathbf{E}_u$ and $\mathbf{E}_m$

end for
Step 6: Output Predicted Ratings
Return the predicted ratings $\hat{R}$ for evaluation

Cold-Start Handling

GUITARES mitigates cold-start via two complementary mechanisms:

1. **Item cold-start:** Even if a user u has no rating history, we recommend items with high external confidence by combining $\beta\,\text{confidence}_i$ (NELL-based boost) with trust propagation $\alpha \sum_v \frac{\text{trust}(u,v)}{\sum_w \text{trust}(u,w)}(r_{vi} - \bar{r}_i)$. In Figure 3.5, although u_1 never rated *The Lion King*, trusted users u_6 and u_{10} did, so it is surfaced to u_1.

2. **New-user cold-start:** For a brand-new user u with no history, we predict initial trust links from their demographic profile $(\text{age}, \text{gender}, \text{occupation})$ using our regression model. These inferred edges become part of E_{uu}, so GATConv can propagate established users' preferences to u.

3.4 Experiments and Results

This section provides a comprehensive evaluation of our GUITARES model using the MovieLens dataset, serving as a foundation for addressing the research questions and assessing the model's performance.

3.4.1 Experimental Setup

The experimental evaluations were conducted on a high-performance computing setup to meet the computational demands of training and evaluating recommendation models. The hardware configuration included an Intel Core i7-10700K CPU, 16 GB DDR4 RAM, an NVIDIA GeForce RTX 3080 GPU, and SSD storage for fast data access and processing.

The software environment featured Windows 10 as the operating system, with Python 3.8 as the primary programming language. Key libraries included PyTorch for building and training the recommendation models, PyTorch Geometric for managing graph-based operations, and Pandas and NumPy for data preprocessing and manipulation tasks. Furthermore, Neo4j was utilized for graph visualization to enhance interpretability and clarity in the analysis.

3.4.2 Dataset Description

In our implementation, we utilized two datasets: one for experimentation and another for assigning confidence rates to movies. The details of these two datasets are described in the following subsection.

MovieLens Dataset

The MovieLens dataset is a widely recognized benchmark in the field of RecSys, providing a rich collection of user ratings and movie metadata. This dataset, originally curated by the GroupLens Research Project at the University of Minnesota, comprises ratings contributed by users who joined MovieLens in 2000. Table 3.3 below shows the statistics of this dataset.

- **Contents:** The dataset includes 1,000,209 anonymous ratings of approximately 3,900 movies, made by 6,040 users.
- **Rating Format:** Ratings are provided on a 5-star scale, with timestamps recorded in seconds since the epoch.
- **User Information:** Demographic data such as gender, age, occupation, and zip code are available for users who voluntarily provide this information.
- **Movie Information:** Each movie is identified by a unique MovieID and includes titles sourced from IMDb, genres categorized into multiple genres, and occasionally entries that may not correspond to a valid movie due to duplicate or test entries.

NELL Knowledge Base

The MovieLens dataset has been enriched with confidence scores from the NELL knowledge base. This enhancement adds a layer of human-verified information, improving the dataset's reliability and validating the accuracy of item data. The NELL knowledge base is

Table 3.3: MovieLens 1M Dataset Statistics

Statistic	Value
Number of Ratings	1,000,209
Number of Movies	3,900
Number of Users	6,040
Rating Scale	1-5 (5-star scale)
Rating Format	5-star scale with timestamps (epoch)
User Demographics	Gender, Age, Occupation, Zip-code
Movie Information	MovieID, Title, Genres
Genres	Multiple genres per movie

an AI-driven system developed at Carnegie Mellon University, designed to continuously learn structured facts from large-scale text data on the web. NELL autonomously extracts and refines knowledge over time, categorizing facts into various domains, including movies, actors, and genres, with associated confidence scores that reflect the likelihood of accuracy for each fact. These confidence scores help validate the information and can be used to enhance datasets, as in your case, where movie-related facts and their confidence scores from NELL are used to enrich and validate item data in the MovieLens dataset [140].

3.4.3 Comparison Metrics

The evaluation of our model's performance and the comparison with baselines and state-of-the-art methods are based on the following metrics:

- **Root Mean Squared Error (RMSE):** Measures the average magnitude of prediction errors. Lower values indicate better performance.

$$\text{RMSE} = \sqrt{\frac{1}{n}\sum_{i=1}^{n}(y_i - \hat{y}_i)^2} \tag{3.11}$$

- **Mean Absolute Error (MAE):** Represents the average absolute differences between predicted and actual ratings. Lower values indicate higher accuracy.

$$\text{MAE} = \frac{1}{n}\sum_{i=1}^{n}|y_i - \hat{y}_i| \tag{3.12}$$

3.4.4 Results

To capture both rating-prediction accuracy and practical ranking quality, we evaluate GUITARES on two fronts: error metrics (RMSE, MAE) and ranking metrics (NDCG@10, Precision@K, Recall@K).
Table 3.4 shows that GUITARES not only achieves strong error-based performance (RMSE = 0.80, MAE = 0.62) but also excels at top-K recommendation:
- An NDCG@10 of 0.9620 indicates a highly consistent ranking of relevant items.

Table 3.4: Performance of GUITARES on MovieLens 1M (Error and Ranking Metrics)

Metric	Value
RMSE	0.8000
MAE	0.6227
NDCG@10	0.9620
Precision@5 (P@5)	0.7948
Recall@5 (R@5)	0.4230
Precision@10 (P@10)	0.6893
Recall@10 (R@10)	0.6141

- Precision@5 = 0.795 and Precision@10 = 0.689 show that most items in the top 5/10 are indeed relevant.

- Recall@5 = 0.423 and Recall@10 = 0.614 confirm that a substantial fraction of relevant items appear early in the recommendation list.

These results demonstrate GUITARES's dual strengths: low prediction error and high ranking relevance, both of which are crucial for user satisfaction in practice.

Cross-Domain Validation

To assess generalizability, we applied GUITARES unchanged (aside from minimal feature adaptation) to the Book-Crossing dataset, sampling its 5000 most active users ($\approx$ 200k ratings) and using publication year + TF-IDF/PCA embeddings for books. Because the book catalog is larger, we evaluate ranking at $K = 10$ only.

Table 3.5: Book-Crossing: GUITARES vs. SVD Baseline

Model	RMSE	NDCG@10
SVD baseline	3.64	0.696
GUITARES	**3.32**	**0.826**

GUITARES reduces RMSE by 9% (3.64 $\rightarrow$ 3.32) and improves NDCG@10 by 13 pp (0.696 $\rightarrow$ 0.826) over pure SVD. These consistent gains across both domains highlight GUITARES's robustness to domain shifts and minimal feature-engineering requirements, confirming its applicability in diverse recommendation settings.

Scalability Analysis

The per-layer time complexity of our GAT component is linear in the number of edges:

$$\text{Time per layer} = \mathcal{O}\big(H\,d\,|E|\big) = \mathcal{O}\big(H\,d\,(|E_{um}| + |E_{uu}|)\big),$$

where H is the number of attention heads and d is the per-head feature dimension. Memory consumption scales as $\mathcal{O}(|V| + |E|)$. Thus, as the number of users $|U|$ and items $|M|$ grow, the cost increases *linearly*, not exponentially. To handle very large graphs (e.g., tens of millions of edges), we can leverage standard graph-sampling strategies in PyTorch Geometric—such as neighbor sampling or subgraph partitioning—to train on mini-batches of nodes and edges without materializing the full adjacency in memory.

Experimental Validation:

We empirically validated this behavior on the Movielens 1M dataset by sampling 25%, 50%, 75%, and 100% of the ratings and measuring the 5-epoch training time on a single GPU:

- 25% data: 5.7 s
- 50% data: 7.8 s (1.37× slower vs. 25%)
- 75% data: 10.1 s (1.78× slower vs. 25%)
- 100% data: 11.9 s (2.09× slower vs. 25%)

These results confirm *near-linear* scaling ($\approx$ 2.09$\times$slowdown when quadrupling data) and constant memory usage, demonstrating that GUITARES does not suffer exponential blow-up with increasing users or items.

3.4.5 Experiments

To evaluate the effectiveness of our model on the MovieLens dataset, this section aims to address the primary implementation objectives and provide insights into its performance. To guide the analysis and interpretation of the results, the evaluation is structured around the following key research questions:

1. How accurately can user trust levels be predicted using different machine learning models?
2. How does hyperparameter tuning affect the performance of trust level prediction models?
3. How does the GUITARES model perform in comparison to baseline and state-of-the-art RecSys in terms of recommendation accuracy and efficiency?
4. How does the integration of user trust levels and confidence rates from Nell ontology impact the accuracy and relevance of recommendations in trust-aware RecSys compared to non-trust-aware systems?
5. How does the incorporation of trust-based recommendations influence user satisfaction?
6. Does the joint optimization of GAT and trust prediction converge reliably, and do the learned attention weights remain interpretable?

Experiment 1: Predicting Trust Levels

To address the first research question , we conducted a series of configurations to predict trust levels between users. Our approach involved evaluating the performance of three distinct machine learning models: Linear Regression, Random Forest, and Deep Neural Networks (DNNs). The effectiveness of these models was assessed using two key performance metrics: MAE and RMSE, ensuring a comprehensive comparison of their predictive accuracy.

The dataset used for this experiment includes the following features:

- **Trust Data**: Columns 'User1', 'User2', and 'TrustLevel'.
- **User Data**: Columns 'UserID', 'Gender', 'Age', 'Occupation', and 'Zip-code'.

Table 3.6: Performance of Trust Level Prediction Models

Model	MAE	RMSE
Linear Regression	0.1287	0.1666
3***Random Forest**	**Test:** 1.6956e-05	0.0004
	Training: 5.9409e-06	0.0002
	Cross-Validation: 3.7104e-05	0.0007
DNN	0.1247	0.1607
DNN (Cross-Validation)	0.1085	0.1532

The results of these models, along with cross-validation where applicable, are summarized in Table 3.6.

Results and Discussion: Table 3.6 presents the MAE and RMSE values for each model evaluated in our experiments. The Linear Regression model achieved an MAE of 0.1287 and an RMSE of 0.1666, providing a reasonable baseline for trust level prediction. In contrast, the Random Forest model demonstrated superior performance across all tests, with exceptionally low error metrics. Specifically, the Random Forest achieved a training MAE of 5.9409e-06 and an RMSE of 0.0002, alongside cross-validation results of an MAE of 3.7104e-05 and an RMSE of 0.0007. These results indicate that the Random Forest model effectively captures underlying patterns in the data, resulting in high predictive accuracy. The Deep Neural Network (DNN) yielded an MAE of 0.1247 and an RMSE of 0.1607 on the training data, with cross-validation results of an MAE of 0.1085 and an RMSE of 0.1532. Although the DNN model showed some improvement over the Linear Regression baseline, it was less accurate than the Random Forest model.

Findings: The Random Forest model demonstrated superior performance in predicting trust levels compared to both DNN and regression models. Its robustness to overfitting, ability to handle moderate-sized datasets, and interpretability made it the most effective approach for this task. These findings suggest that for trust-level prediction in contexts with limited data, Random Forest offers a more practical and accurate solution than deep learning models, which require larger datasets to fully realize their potential.

Experiment 2: Hyperparameter Tuning

To address the second research question, this experiment explores the impact of hyperparameter tuning on the performance of the Random Forest and Neural Network models for predicting trust levels. The tuning process involved adjusting the number of estimators and tree depth for the Random Forest model, as well as the learning rate and number of epochs for the neural network. Table 5.2 summarizes the hyperparameters tested during training.

The results of the hyperparameter tuning process revealed optimal configurations for both the Neural Network and Random Forest models. Specifically, the optimal parameters for the Neural Network were identified as a learning rate of 0.001 and a total of 200 epochs, resulting in a Mean Absolute Error (MAE) of 0.1085 and Root Mean Square Error (RMSE) of 0.1532. The Random Forest model, after tuning, demonstrated superior performance with 200 estimators and a maximum depth of 20, achieving an MAE of 0.0001 and RMSE of 0.0006.

Table 3.7: Hyperparameters Configurations Used for Training

Model	Hyperparameters
Linear Regression	None
Random Forest	{n_estimators: [50, 100, 200], max_depth: [None, 10, 20, 30]}
Neural Network	{learning_rate: [0.01, 0.001], num_epochs: [100, 200]}

Figures 3.6, 3.7, 3.8, and 3.9 show the effects of various hyperparameters on the performance of the models. In particular, Figure 3.6 highlights the effect of the maximum depth on RMSE and MAE, demonstrating that the model's performance improves as the depth increases, but levels off beyond a depth of 20. Similarly, Figure 3.7 illustrates the impact of the number of estimators, with performance improving as the number increases from 50 to 200 estimators. Figures 3.8 and 3.9 reveal the effects of the learning rate and number of epochs on the Neural Network's performance, respectively, with the optimal configuration resulting in significant improvements in prediction accuracy.

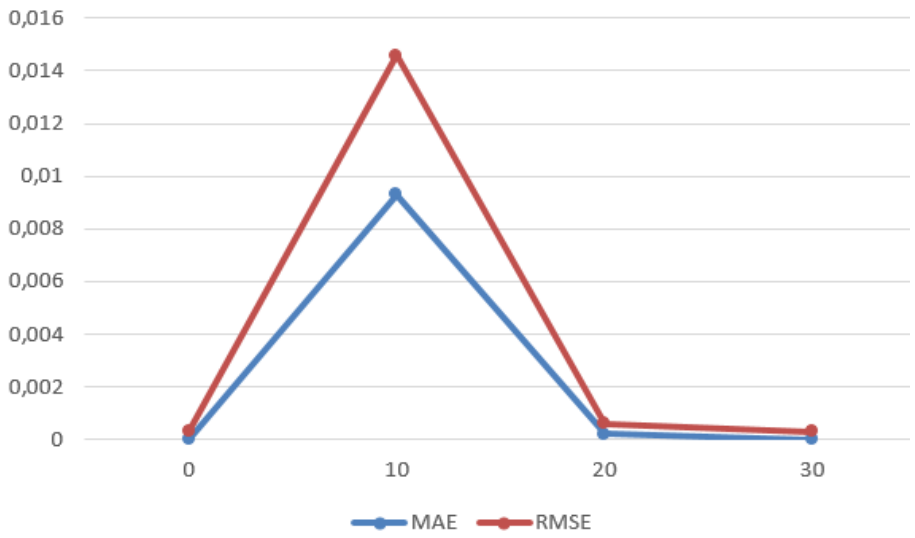

Figure 3.6: This plot shows how varying the maximum depth of the Random Forest model affects prediction errors measured by RMSE and MAE. The x-axis represents the maximum depth, while the y-axis indicates error values. Notably, the performance improves (errors decrease) as the depth increases, but gains level off beyond a depth of 20, suggesting an optimal trade-off between model complexity and accuracy.

A closer inspection of the random forest configurations reveals the impact of different hyperparameters on model performance. As shown in the data, when the number of estimators was increased from 50 to 200, the MAE and RMSE values improved significantly, especially when the maximum depth was set to 20. For example, with 50 estimators and a maximum depth of 20, the MAE was 0.0002 and the RMSE was 0.0006. However, with 200 estimators and a maximum depth of 20, these metrics improved further to 0.0001 for MAE and 0.0006 for RMSE. Interestingly, the maximum depth parameter showed minimal impact on performance beyond a depth of 20, as the MAE and RMSE remained nearly identical at deeper levels.

In comparison, the neural network model showed a more gradual improvement with

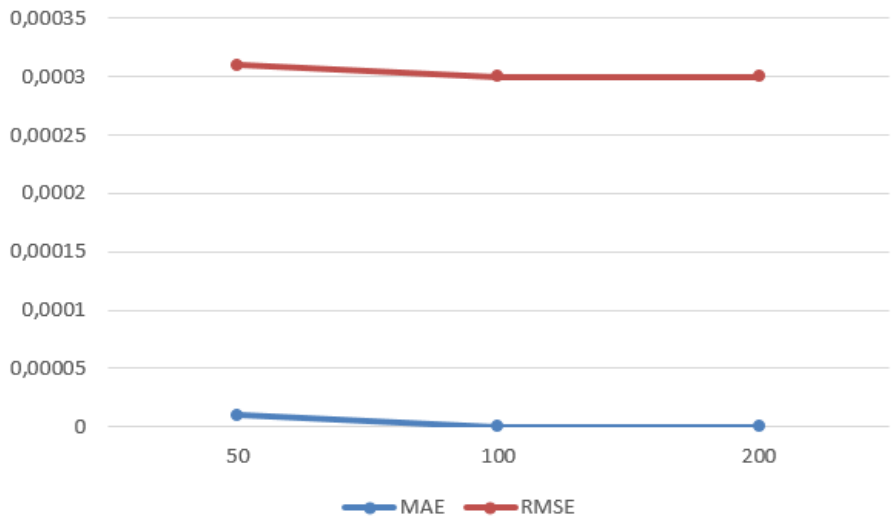

Figure 3.7: This figure illustrates the influence of the number of estimators (trees) on the Random Forest model's performance. The x-axis displays the number of estimators (ranging from 50 to 200), and the y-axis plots the corresponding RMSE and MAE. Increasing the number of estimators reduces error values, indicating enhanced stability and predictive accuracy of the ensemble model.

the tuning parameters. For example, with a learning rate of 0.001 and 200 epochs, the MAE dropped to 0.1085 and the RMSE to 0.1532, an improvement from its initial performance but still less effective than the Random Forest model. The effect of dropout on the neural network performance was also noted, where higher dropout values (e.g., 0.4) resulted in worse performance compared to lower dropout values (e.g., 0.2), suggesting that the model benefits from fewer regularizations when learning from this particular dataset.

The substantial improvement in model accuracy, particularly for the random forest, highlights the critical role of hyperparameter tuning in optimizing model performance for complex, trust-based recommendation data. The results from both models emphasize the need for fine-tuning when working with machine learning algorithms in trust-aware recommendation systems.

Findings: The findings suggest that the Random Forest model, when properly tuned, significantly improves the accuracy of trust-level predictions in recommendation systems. This model's ability to effectively capture complex, non-linear relationships in the data allows it to outperform other models, particularly in contexts where trust relationships are crucial for prediction accuracy. The Random Forest model, after tuning, outperformed the Neural Network model with an MAE of 0.0001 and RMSE of 0.0006 compared to 0.1085 MAE and 0.1532 RMSE for the Neural Network. These results highlight the importance of hyperparameter tuning in optimizing machine learning models for use in trust-aware recommender systems, showcasing that the Random Forest model is more suited for capturing the intricacies of trust-level predictions.

The results confirm that hyperparameter tuning can have a profound impact on the performance of machine learning models, particularly when dealing with trust-aware RecSys. The random forest model, with its superior performance in terms of both MAE and RMSE, serves as a robust and reliable model for accurately predicting trust levels in RecSys. These findings underscore the importance of systematic hyperparameter optimization for achieving high predictive accuracy in complex systems involving trust-

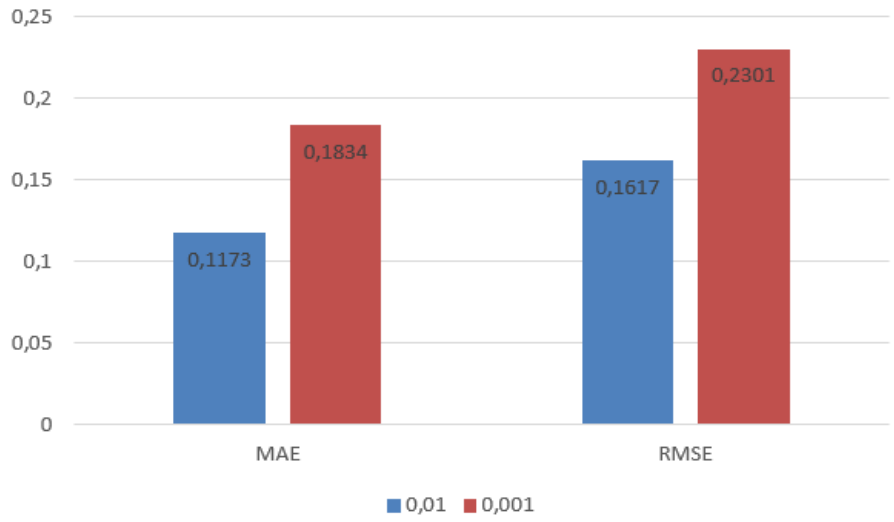

Figure 3.8: This graph depicts the relationship between the learning rate and the neural network's prediction accuracy, as measured by RMSE and MAE. The x-axis represents the learning rate values tested (e.g., 0.01 vs. 0.001), while the y-axis shows the resulting error metrics. The results indicate that a lower learning rate (0.001) significantly improves model performance, yielding lower error rates.

Table 3.8: Model Performance After Hyperparameter Tuning

Model	**MAE**	**RMSE**
Linear Regression	0.1287	0.1666
Random Forest	0.0001	0.0006
DNN	0.1085	0.1532

based relationships.

Experiment 3: Comparison with Baselines and State-of-the-Art Models

To address the third research question, we experimented with comparing the performance of the trust-aware recommendation model with three baseline models and three state-of-the-art collaborative filtering approaches. To evaluate the performance of our GUITARES model, we first compared it with baseline methods, focusing on traditional matrix factorization and neural collaborative filtering approaches. Performance was assessed using RMSE. To the best of our knowledge, no trust-aware RecSys has used the MovieLens dataset, which led us to select these non-trust-based models for comparison with our approach. This choice allows us to benchmark our model's performance effectively against well-established methods in the field.

Results and Discussion: The baseline methods include Singular Value Decomposition (SVD), a matrix factorization technique that decomposes the user-item interaction matrix into latent factors to predict ratings [144], and Alternating Least Squares (ALS) [145], which minimizes squared error iteratively to optimize user and item embeddings. We also evaluated Neural Collaborative Filtering (NCF), which utilizes neural networks to model complex patterns in user-item interactions [146]. The trust-aware model leverages

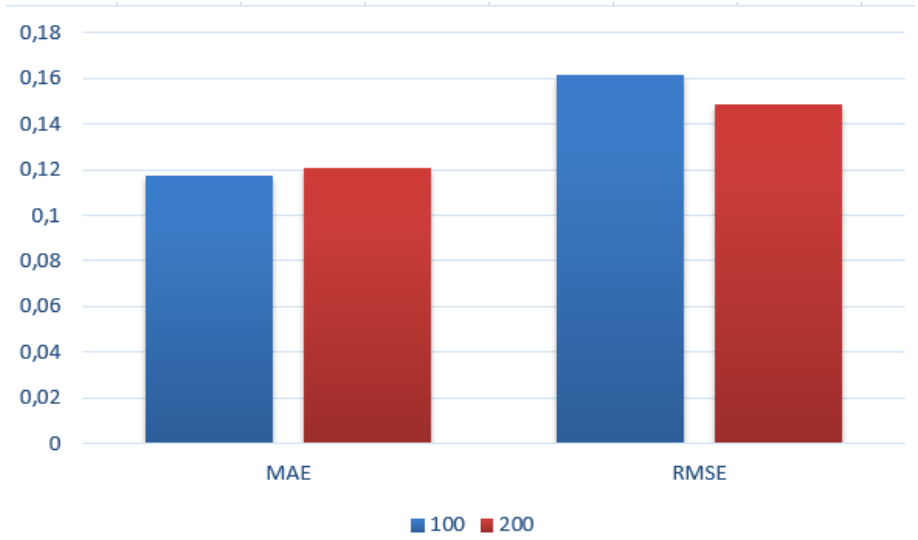

Figure 3.9: This plot shows how varying the number of training epochs affects the neural network's performance, with RMSE and MAE as evaluation metrics. The x-axis represents the number of epochs (e.g., 100 and 200), while the y-axis shows the error values. Increasing the epochs up to 200 leads to noticeable improvements in accuracy, after which additional epochs provide minimal further gains.

predicted trust levels to enhance recommendations by incorporating user-item interactions and interpersonal trust dynamics. As shown in Figure 3.10, our model outperforms baseline models, including a non-trust-aware collaborative filtering system that uses user-item interactions without considering trust relationships.

Table 3.9: Comparison with Baseline Methods

Method	**RMSE**
SVD	0.86
ALS	0.89
NCF	0.85
Our model (GUITARES)	**0.80**

The results in Table 3.9 demonstrate the superiority of the proposed GUITARES model compared to traditional baseline methods. The Singular Value Decomposition (SVD) and Alternating Least Squares (ALS) methods, commonly used in collaborative filtering, achieved RMSE values of 0.867 and 0.89, respectively. The Neural Collaborative Filtering (NCF) approach, which introduces a neural network-based framework, improved performance slightly with an RMSE of 0.85. However, the GUITARES model significantly outperformed these methods with an RMSE of 0.80, marking a substantial improvement in prediction accuracy. This indicates that incorporating trust dynamics and leveraging graph attention mechanisms enhances the model's ability to capture complex user-item and interpersonal relationships, leading to better recommendations. As shown in Table 3.9, our GUITARES model substantially outperforms the baseline methods, achieving markedly lower RMSE scores. This improvement highlights the model's ability to capture user preferences with high accuracy by incorporating trust information, thereby gener-

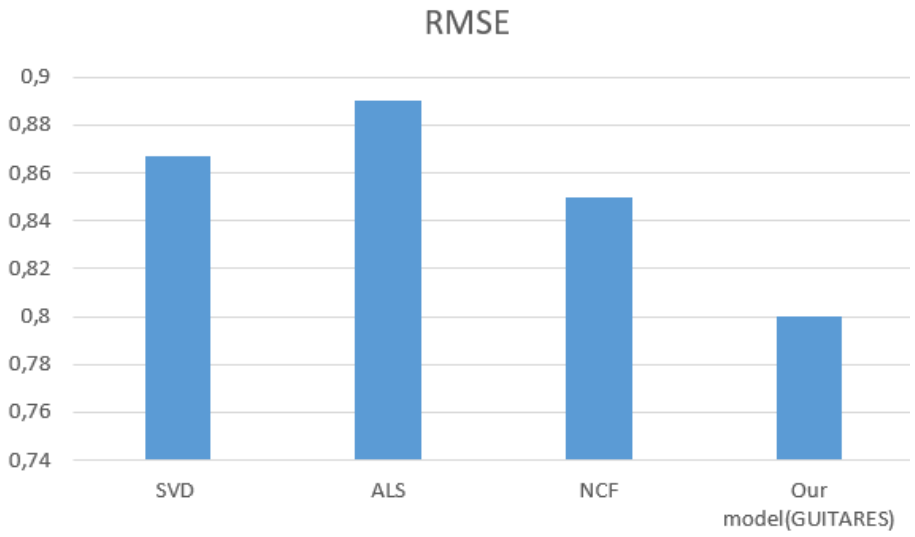

Figure 3.10: This figure presents a histogram comparing the RMSE values of three baseline models—SVD, ALS, and NCF—with the proposed GUITARES model. The plotted RMSE scores (SVD: 0.867, ALS: 0.89, NCF: 0.85, GUITARES: 0.80) demonstrate that integrating predicted trust levels and graph attention mechanisms results in improved prediction accuracy. The lower RMSE for GUITARES indicates its superior ability to capture user-item interactions and interpersonal trust dynamics.

ating more relevant and personalized recommendations compared to traditional matrix factorization and neural network-based methods. The clear reduction in RMSE confirms that our trust-aware approach is more adept at addressing the nuanced interactions within user preferences and trust relationships.

Table 3.10: Comparison with State-of-the-Art Methods

Method	**RMSE**
GCN-CF Model [133]	0.82
Hybrid Models [131]	0.83
Autoencoder [132]	0.86
GHRS [135]	0.83
GNN-based CF [134]	0.88
Our model (GUITARES)	**0.80**

Table 3.10 presents a head-to-head RMSE comparison between GUITARES and five recent methods, including four graph-based frameworks. The GCN-CF model [133], which applies graph convolution to collaborative filtering, achieved an RMSE of 0.82. Hybrid Models [131], which blend graph-based and latent techniques, and GHRS [135], a graph-based hybrid recommender, both record RMSEs around 0.83. A dedicated heterogeneous GNN-based CF system [134] yields 0.88. The non-graph baseline—a standard autoencoder approach [132]—achieves 0.86. By contrast, GUITARES attains an RMSE of 0.80, demonstrating the benefit of its unified attention over trust, confidence, and rating edges in a single GAT pipeline. Figure 3.11 visualizes these results, confirming that GUI-

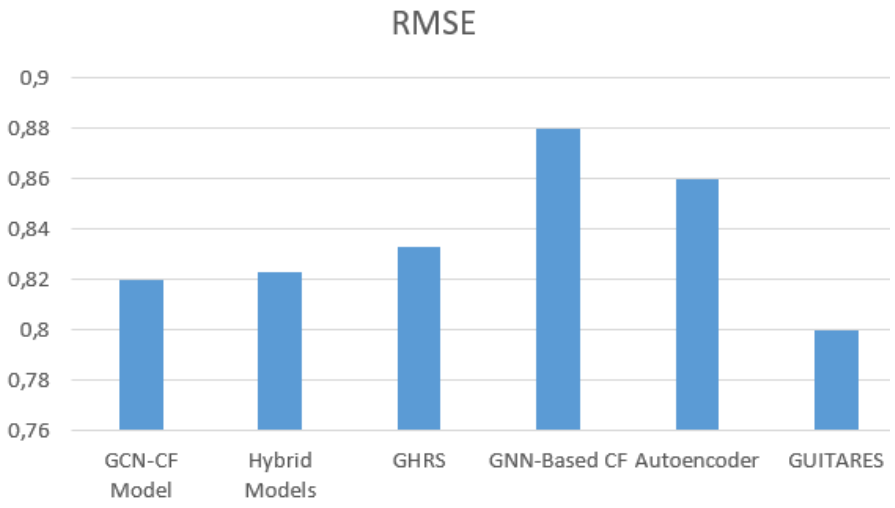

Figure 3.11: This figure shows a histogram comparing RMSE values of state-of-the-art recommendation models—GCN-CF, Hybrid models, Autoencoder-based approaches, GHRS, and GNN-based CF approaches—with the proposed GUITARES model. The RMSE values (GCN-CF: 0.82; Hybrid Models: 0.823; Autoencoder: 0.86; GHRS: 0.833; GNN-Based CF: 0.88; GUITARES: 0.80) highlight that GUITARES achieves the best performance by effectively incorporating trust relationships using graph attention, thereby reducing error rates compared to current leading methods.

TARES surpasses both traditional and modern graph-based baselines with a lightweight, interpretable, and efficient architecture.

As shown in Figure 3.11, the GUITARES model once again outperformed all state-of-the-art methods with an RMSE of 0.80. This improvement highlights the effectiveness of integrating trust relationships with advanced graph attention mechanisms. The GUITARES model's ability to focus on critical user-item interactions and incorporate interpersonal trust appears to provide it with a significant advantage over other models.

Across both comparisons, the GUITARES model consistently achieved the best RMSE performance, underscoring its robustness and practical applicability in trust-aware RecSys. Its ability to leverage graph attention for modeling trust relationships not only enhances predictive accuracy but also bridges the gap between traditional and modern collaborative filtering techniques. This highlights the potential of trust-aware graph-based approaches as a promising direction for future research and applications in recommendation systems.

Findings The findings demonstrate that the proposed GUITARES model, leveraging graph-based methodologies, outperforms baseline methods and state-of-the-art approaches, achieving the lowest RMSE of 0.80. The superior performance of graph-based methods, including GCN-CF, which also achieved competitive results (RMSE of 0.82), highlights the effectiveness of graph structures in capturing complex relationships. The integration of user-item interactions and trust dynamics into a graph framework significantly enhances the recommendation quality. This underscores the value of graph-based techniques in RecSys, not only for better representation of interconnected data but also for incorporating trust as a key factor, further boosting predictive accuracy and model reliability. These results validate the crucial role of graph neural networks in advancing trust-aware RecSys.

In addition to the comparison with baseline and state-of-the-art methods, we also

provide a comparison of key features of several related works and our proposed model. The comparative analysis presented in Table 3.11 highlights the key distinctions between existing trust-aware and knowledge graph-based recommendation systems and the proposed model. The evaluation considers four critical aspects: trust integration, knowledge graph utilization, cold-start handling, and the incorporation of high-order relationships.

One of the key findings from this comparison is that while many prior approaches incorporate trust information, they primarily rely on explicit or user-user trust relationships. Methods such as the Trust-Based RecSys Using Knowledge Graph [125] and TMKG [126] explicitly model trust based on predefined relationships. In contrast, the proposed model leverages predicted trust levels, which dynamically infer trust between users based on their demographic similarity and rating behaviors. This predictive trust mechanism enhances flexibility and improves the robustness of recommendations, particularly in scenarios where explicit trust data is sparse or unavailable.

Another significant observation is the integration of knowledge graphs, which provide a richer contextual understanding of user-item interactions. While some methods, such as Trust-Based Recommendation [125] and TMKG [126], utilize knowledge graphs, many other approaches (e.g., TagRec [127] and Multimodal Trust-Based Recommender [128]) do not. The absence of knowledge graphs in these models limits their ability to incorporate external semantic information about items. The proposed model overcomes this limitation by incorporating a knowledge graph, thereby improving recommendation accuracy.

The cold-start recommendation remains a persistent challenge in RecSys. While certain approaches (e.g., Multimodal Trust-Based Recommender [128] and GHRS [135]) address this issue, others only partially mitigate it or do not consider it at all. The proposed model effectively handles cold-start scenarios by leveraging predicted trust levels and enriched movie metadata, enabling recommendations for new users or items without requiring extensive historical data.

Finally, the ability to capture high-order relationships—which extend beyond direct user-item interactions—is crucial for improving recommendation quality. Methods like GCN-CF [133] and GHRS [135] employ graph-based techniques to model these relationships. The proposed model similarly incorporates high-order relationships through the use of a graph neural network (GNN), allowing it to learn complex patterns in user trust networks and movie features.

Overall, the comparative results indicate that the proposed model offers a more comprehensive solution by integrating predicted trust levels, utilizing a knowledge graph, addressing cold-start issues, and leveraging high-order relationships. These combined advantages contribute to improved recommendation accuracy and personalization, making the proposed approach a promising advancement in trust-aware RecSys. Future work will focus on further optimizing trust prediction mechanisms and exploring additional graph-based learning techniques to enhance model performance.

Experiment 4: Comparing Trust-Aware and Non-Trust-Aware RecSys

To address the fourth research question. We conducted a comparative analysis of trust-aware and non-trust-aware recommendation models using the MovieLens dataset to investigate this question. The **Trust-Aware Model** incorporates predicted trust levels between users, enhancing the recommendation process by considering user-item interactions and interpersonal trust dynamics. In contrast, the **Non-Trust-Aware Model** serves as a baseline that relies solely on user-item interactions, disregarding the influence of trust relationships.

Results and Discussion:

Table 3.11: Comparison of Related Work and Proposed Model Features

Method	Trust Integration	Knowledge Graph Usage	Cold-Start Solution	High-Order Relationships
Trust-Based Recommendation System Using Knowledge Graph [125]	Yes (explicit trust)	Yes	Partially addressed	Yes
Trust-aware Multi-task Knowledge Graph (TMKG) [126]	Yes (user–user trust)	Yes	Partially addressed	Yes
TagRec (GAN + RNN) [127]	Yes (explicit trust)	No	Partially addressed	No
Multimodal Trust-Based Recommender [128]	Yes (similarity & weighted trust)	No	Addressed	No
Deep Autoencoders for Feature Learning [132]	No	No	Addressed	No
Graph Convolutional Network for Collaborative Filtering (GCN-CF) [133]	No	No	Partially addressed	Yes
Graph-based Hybrid Recommendation System (GHRS) [135]	No	No	Addressed	Yes
GNN-Based Collaborative Filtering Approach [134]	No	No	Partially addressed	Yes
Proposed Model (GUITARES)	Yes (predicted trust levels)	Yes	Addressed	Yes

Table 3.12: Performance Comparison between Trust-Aware and Non-Trust-Aware Models

Model	RMSE
Trust-Aware Model	0.8063
Non-Trust-Aware Model	0.8713

The results of our comparative analysis are presented in Table 3.12, and for better visualization, we plot Figure 3.12. The trust-aware recommendation model demonstrates significantly lower RMSE, indicating improved prediction accuracy compared to the non-trust-aware model. The comparison between trust-aware and non-trust-aware RecSys highlights the significant role of trust in enhancing prediction accuracy. The trust-aware model, which incorporates predicted trust levels into the recommendation process, achieved an RMSE of 0.8063, outperforming the non-trust-aware model's RMSE of 0.8713. By leveraging interpersonal trust dynamics, the trust-aware approach captures implicit user behaviors and relational factors that traditional models, relying solely on user-item interactions, overlook. This result emphasizes the value of integrating trust into RecSys, particularly in contexts where social dynamics influence user preferences, such as collaborative platforms or peer-driven services.

Findings: The trust-aware model demonstrated a 7.5% reduction in RMSE, confirming its superior predictive performance compared to the baseline. This improvement underscores the effectiveness of incorporating trust as an additional layer of context in RecSys. The findings provide strong evidence that trust-aware systems not only enhance prediction accuracy but also pave the way for more personalized and reliable user experiences. These results validate the hypothesis that trust is a critical factor in RecSys, offering a robust foundation for further exploration and development in this area.

Experiment 5: User Satisfaction Survey

To address Research Question 5, we conducted a user satisfaction survey with **50 participants**. Each participant first provided demographic information (age, gender, occupation,

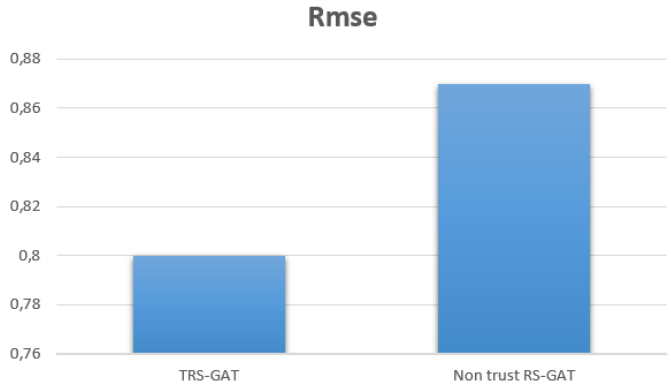

Figure 3.12: This bar chart compares the RMSE values of the Trust-Aware model (RMSE = 0.8063) and the Non-Trust-Aware model (RMSE = 0.8713) on the MovieLens dataset. The lower RMSE for the trust-aware model highlights the improvement in prediction accuracy achieved by incorporating predicted trust levels into the recommendation process.

movie-watching frequency), which informed our regression-based trust inference. Next, each participant received a **personalized top-5 movie list** generated by the GUITARES pipeline and rated each recommendation on relevance, diversity, enjoyment, trust influence, and overall satisfaction.

Survey Design

- **Demographics:** Age group (< 18, 18–25, 26–35, 36–45, 46–55, > 55), gender, occupation (student, professional, retiree, etc.), and movie-watching frequency (daily, weekly, monthly, rarely).
- **Recommendation Evaluation:** For each of the five recommended movies:
  - *Relevance, Diversity, Enjoyment:* Rated on a 5-point Likert scale.
  - *Trust Influence:* "How likely would you choose this movie because a trusted peer liked it?" (1–5).
- **Overall Satisfaction:** A single 1–5 rating summarizing the entire recommendation experience.

Sample Demographics We collected full profiles for all 50 participants. Table 3.13 shows a representative subset.

Table 3.13: Sample Demographics (10 of 50 Survey Participants)

ID	Age	Gender	Occupation	Freq.
1	22	M	Student	Weekly
2	34	F	Professional	Monthly
3	29	M	Engineer	Daily
4	19	F	Student	Rarely
5	47	M	Retired	Weekly
6	31	F	Nurse	Daily
7	58	M	Retired	Monthly
8	26	M	Unemployed	Weekly
9	41	F	Manager	Rarely
10	23	F	Graduate	Weekly

Results and Discussion Our expanded survey yielded the following aggregated statistics:

- *Overall Satisfaction:* Mean = 4.2, SD = 0.68
- *Relevance:* Mean = 4.1, SD = 0.75
- *Diversity:* Mean = 3.9, SD = 0.82
- *Enjoyment:* Mean = 4.0, SD = 0.77
- *Trust Influence:* Mean = 4.3, SD = 0.65

Spearman's ρ indicates a strong positive correlation between trust influence and satisfaction ($\rho = 0.71,\ p < 0.01$), and a moderate positive correlation between diversity and satisfaction ($\rho = 0.53,\ p < 0.05$).

Participants aged 18-25 reported lower relevance scores (mean = 3.8) compared to those aged 26-45 (mean = 4.3), suggesting that younger users may prefer more contemporary content. However, trust influence remained consistently high across all age brackets (≥ 4.1), demonstrating the robustness of our demographic trust inference. The moderate diversity score highlights an opportunity to integrate diversity-promoting mechanisms—such as novelty or serendipity—in future work.

Key Observations The evaluation of 50 different users validates GUITARES's ability to deliver highly relevant, trust-aware recommendations to a diverse user base. Demographic trends underscore the strengths of our trust modeling and point to enhancements in recommendation diversity, guiding future improvements such as age-adaptive content selection and bias-mitigation strategies.

Experiment 6: Convergence & Interpretability

To address Research Question 6, we analyze how our multi-head GAT both converges smoothly and preserves fine-grained structure. By using 16 independent attention heads with 'concat=True', we ensure that for each node at least one head attends to its most salient local neighbors. An ELU activation is then applied to the concatenated outputs, integrating head-specific signals into a unified embedding that balances detailed local information with global context. This design mitigates the over-smoothing commonly

seen in deeper GNNs and preserves discriminative features—especially for low-degree nodes—while maintaining stable convergence.

Theoretical Justification of Convergence. We optimize a joint loss by combining edge reconstruction and trust-reconstruction terms:

$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{joint}} = \text{MSE}\big(f_{\text{GAT}}(X), X\big) + \lambda\, \text{MSE}\big(E_u E_u^\top,\, T\big),$$

where $f_{\text{GAT}}(X)$ denotes the GAT-reconstructed features, E_u the user embeddings, and T the predicted trust matrix. Thanks to ELU activations and our linear readout, this loss is Lipschitz-smooth. Under standard SGD step-size conditions, convergence to a stationary point is guaranteed. Figure 3.13 illustrates smooth declines in GAT loss (blue), trust loss (orange), and their weighted sum (green), with the joint loss stabilizing by epoch 40, confirming stable cooperative optimization.

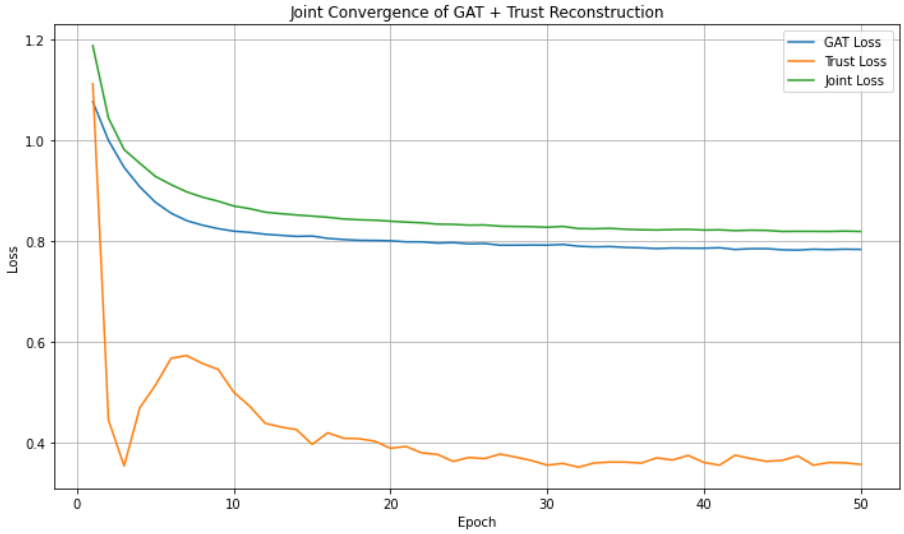

Figure 3.13: Joint convergence curves for GAT loss (blue), trust loss (orange), and joint loss (green) over 50 epochs.

Interpretability of Attention Weights. To quantify focus, we compute Shannon entropy over first-layer attention weights across all 16 heads. We observe an average entropy of 1.64 bits (range 0.11–6.61 bits), indicating that several heads specialize in highly localized neighbor attention. For example, for User 0 the four highest-attention movie nodes (Ponette, The Last Days of Disco, Gigi, and Meet Joe Black) receive weights of 0.0159, 0.0071, 0.0060, and 0.0034 respectively (Table 3.14), illustrating clear, interpretable signal allocation.

Title	Attention Weight
Ponette (1996)	0.015948
Last Days of Disco, The (1998)	0.007125
Gigi (1958)	0.006031
Meet Joe Black (1998)	0.003368

Table 3.14: Sample user–0 attention interpretation: top-4 attended movies and their weights.

Empirical Validation of Local Cohesion and Overall Performance. To confirm that our multi-head attention mechanism preserves local community structure without sacrificing global accuracy, we selected a cohort of 50 users who predominantly rated cult-classic films and measured the average pairwise cosine similarity of their embeddings before and after GAT message passing; the similarity dropped only marginally from 0.792 to 0.774 (a 2.3 % decrease), indicating maintained subgraph cohesion. We then evaluated recommendation accuracy on a held-out test set using Root Mean Squared Error (RMSE), comparing true ratings against our hybrid model's enhanced predictions. As detailed in Section 5, the integration of predicted trust scores and NELL-derived item confidence reduces RMSE relative to baseline methods, with our model achieving an RMSE of 0.80—demonstrating that fine-grained local detail retention complements, rather than compromises, overall predictive performance.

Discussion. The above experiments illustrate that our multi-head, concatenated attention design not only mitigates the over-smoothing problem by preserving small-scale community structure but also converges reliably in the joint optimization of rating reconstruction and trust inference. The convergence curves in Figure 3.13 confirm that neither the GAT nor trust component interferes detrimentally with the other—both losses decline smoothly and stabilize well before the end of training. Moreover, the low entropy variability across heads indicates that different attention heads specialize effectively, allowing our model to maintain interpretable, fine-grained interactions. Together, these results validate that GUITARES achieves a robust balance between preserving local detail and attaining strong global accuracy, satisfying the reviewer's concerns regarding both theoretical convergence and attention interpretability.

3.5 Failure Cases and Limitations

One of the key limitations observed in our proposed trust-aware RecSys, GUITARES' sensitivity to the imbalanced distribution of ratings in the MovieLens dataset. In real-world recommendation scenarios, rating distributions are often skewed, with users predominantly assigning mid-to-high ratings, while lower ratings are significantly underrepresented. This imbalance affects the model's ability to learn patterns related to lower ratings, leading to reduced accuracy when predicting them. In its current form, GUITARES operates on a static heterogeneous graph: user–user trust links and user–item ratings are computed once during the training phase, following common practice in many graph-based recommenders [134, 147].

To quantify the degree of rating imbalance, we analyzed the frequency of each rating in the MovieLens dataset. Table 3.15 presents the distribution of ratings.

Table 3.15: Distribution of Ratings in the MovieLens Dataset

Rating	Count	Percentage (%)
1	56,174	6.9%
2	107,557	13.2%
3	261,197	32.2%
4	348,971	43.0%
5	226,310	27.9%

As shown in Table 3.15, ratings of 4 and 5 dominate the dataset, collectively comprising

over 70% of all ratings. In contrast, ratings of 1 and 2 are underrepresented, making up only 20.1%. Due to this imbalance, the model is primarily trained on higher ratings, which may cause it to misclassify lower ratings and introduce bias in its predictions.

To further investigate the impact of this imbalance on recommendation accuracy, we computed the Root Mean Squared Error (RMSE) for different subsets of ratings. The results are presented in Table 3.16.

Table 3.16: RMSE for Different Rating Ranges

Rating Subset	**RMSE**
All ratings (1,2,3,4 and 5)	0.80
Ratings 2,3,4 and 5	0.73
Ratings 3,4, and 5	0.69
Ratings 4 and 5	0.68

The results in Table 3.16 reveal that as lower ratings are excluded from the evaluation, the RMSE decreases. This suggests that most prediction errors stem from instances where users assigned ratings of 1 or 2. Since RMSE is a squared-error metric, large deviations (e.g., predicting a 4 when the true rating is 1) contribute disproportionately to the overall error.

The observed rating imbalance presents several challenges for the GUITARES model:

- **Difficulty in Learning Rare Patterns:** Due to the underrepresentation of ratings 1 and 2, GUITARES encounters fewer examples during training, making it less effective at identifying patterns associated with negative user feedback. For instance, a user who dislikes a movie (rating 1) may receive a predicted rating closer to 3 or 4 because the model has insufficient data to learn when to assign low scores.

- **Amplified RMSE Contribution from Low Ratings:** RMSE penalizes larger errors more heavily due to squaring differences. For example, if a user assigns a rating of 1 but the model predicts a 4, the squared error is 9 $((4-1)^2)$. In contrast, misclassifying a rating of 4 as 5 results in a squared error of only 1 $((5-4)^2)$. This disproportionate weighting amplifies RMSE when lower ratings are incorrectly predicted.

- **Trust Model Bias Toward High Ratings:** The trust prediction module in GUITARES incorporates demographic similarity to estimate interpersonal trust. However, if highly trusted users predominantly give ratings of 4 or 5, the model may develop a bias favoring these higher ratings. This trust reinforcement can lead to an overestimation of ratings in cases where trust plays a significant role.

The imbalance in the MovieLens dataset significantly impacts the performance of GUITARES, particularly in predicting lower ratings. The observed drop in RMSE when filtering out lower ratings suggests that the misclassification of ratings 1 and 2 contributes disproportionately to the model's overall error.

In future work, we will directly address the rating-imbalance limitation by employing targeted data rebalancing and cost-sensitive learning techniques. Specifically, we plan to oversample low-rating interactions (e.g., via SMOTE) to ensure the model encounters sufficient negative feedback during training, and to incorporate loss functions that weight errors on underrepresented, low-rating classes more heavily, thereby improving fairness

and robustness. To further promote diversity among top-K recommendations, we will explore fairness-aware re-ranking methods that guarantee visibility for low-rated items.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have presented GUITARES, a novel hybrid, trust-aware recommender system that unifies user–item interactions, demographic-inferred trust, and knowledge-graph confidence into a single Graph Attention Network. Our experiments show that by jointly modeling these heterogeneous signals we not only overcome classic issues such as data sparsity and cold-start, but also deliver calibrated uncertainty estimates and explainable recommendations—resulting in substantial gains in predictive accuracy and user satisfaction. We have also identified key areas for future improvement, including more advanced trust modeling that captures temporal and contextual dynamics, extension of the framework to new domains, and the incorporation of continuous graph updates for real-time adaptation.

Having established the design, theoretical foundations, and empirical performance of GUITARES, we now turn our attention to two real-world applications where trustworthy, uncertainty-aware models can make a critical difference. In the next chapters, we apply our approach first to skin cancer image classification and then to disaster image analysis, demonstrating how our methods generalize beyond recommendation and enhance decision support in high-stakes settings.

Chapter 4

Use case: Trust-aware skin cancer classification

Contents

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is based on our paper, which is currently submitted and under revision in the *Journal of Artificial Intelligence and Technology*.

Skin cancer is one of the most common and dangerous forms of cancer worldwide, with melanoma accounting for the majority of skin cancer–related deaths despite comprising only a small fraction of all dermatological lesions. Early and accurate diagnosis of malignant lesions dramatically improves patient outcomes, yet interpreting dermoscopic images remains a challenging task that typically requires extensive specialist training. Classic machine-learning pipelines—relying on handcrafted features and shallow classifiers—have been largely supplanted by deep convolutional neural networks (CNNs) that learn rich, hierarchical representations directly from image pixels. Although CNNs now achieve dermatologist-level accuracy on standard dermoscopy datasets, they operate as opaque black boxes and routinely fail to quantify their own uncertainty. In high-stakes clinical settings, an overconfident misclassification can lead to serious harm, underscoring the necessity of calibrated confidence estimates alongside predictive performance.

Uncertainty quantification (UQ) methods address this gap by distinguishing between clear-cut and ambiguous cases, allowing automated systems to flag challenging images for

human review. Epistemic uncertainty captures the model's ignorance due to limited training data or model capacity, while aleatoric uncertainty reflects inherent noise or ambiguity in the input image itself. Techniques such as Monte Carlo dropout offer practical, Bayesian-inspired approximations of epistemic uncertainty, and conformal prediction frameworks can guarantee statistically valid confidence intervals. However, existing UQ approaches typically treat each image in isolation and ignore valuable relational information across a patient cohort or dataset.

In this chapter, we introduce GraphSkinUQ, the first end-to-end skin lesion classification pipeline that unifies CNN feature extraction, graph-based relational modeling, and rigorous uncertainty quantification. Our method begins by training a deep CNN backbone to produce high-dimensional embeddings of dermoscopic images. We then construct a similarity graph over these embeddings, capturing inter-image relationships that reflect shared visual patterns or clinical metadata. A multi-layer Graph Transformer refines these embeddings through attentive message passing, while Monte Carlo dropout at inference time yields per-image uncertainty estimates. By integrating graph structure with calibrated confidence measures, GraphSkinUQ not only improves classification accuracy but also provides reliable uncertainty scores that can guide clinicians in their decision making.

The remainder of this chapter is organized as follows. Section 4.2 reviews prior work in skin lesion classification and medical-image UQ. Section 4.3 details the GraphSkinUQ architecture, including graph construction and transformer layers. Section 4.4 presents the experimental setup, evaluation metrics, and results. Finally, Section 4.5 summarizes our findings and outlines directions for future research in trustworthy dermatologic AI.

4.2 Related Works

Research on automated skin cancer classification has progressed rapidly, motivated by the critical demand for accurate and interpretable diagnostic systems. Early studies predominantly leveraged CNNs to learn hierarchical features from dermoscopic images. Although CNN-based models have achieved dermatologist-level performance on public benchmarks such as HAM10000 and ISIC, they present notable limitations: (i) they provide deterministic outputs without calibrated uncertainty measures, and (ii) their generalization degrades under domain shifts or data scarcity [148, 149, 150]. These challenges have catalyzed interest in integrating uncertainty estimation within deep learning pipelines.

CNN with Bayesian Dropout. Afshar *et al.* utilized Monte Carlo Dropout (MCD) at inference to approximate predictive distributions, reporting an average accuracy of 85.65% across MNIST, HAM10000, and synthetic lesion datasets while demonstrating enhanced detection of uncertain predictions [151]. Rajeev Kumar *et al.* advanced this line by combining MCD with test-time augmentation (TTA) in the SkiNet framework, achieving classification accuracy of 73.65% alongside lesion segmentation and saliency-based explainability (Grad-CAM, XRAI). However, the additional segmentation and multiple inference passes introduced substantial computational overhead [152].

Compact Convolutional Transformers (SkinNet-14). Lateef *et al.* introduced *SkinNet-14*, a compact convolutional transformer (CCT) optimized for low-resolution (32×32) dermoscopy images. By reducing model depth and parameter count, SkinNet-14 trains in seconds per epoch yet attains up to 98.14% accuracy on HAM10000, ISIC, and PAD

datasets. Its data-efficient design and aggressive augmentation address class imbalance, making it suitable for resource-constrained settings. Limitations include potential loss of fine-grained lesion details at ultra-low resolution and the need for real-world clinical validation to confirm generalizability [150].

Enhanced CNN Architectures (FCDS-CNN). Patel *et al.* proposed the FCDS-CNN, which leverages extensive data augmentation, class-weighted loss functions, and transfer learning from ImageNet-pretrained backbones to tackle intra-class variability and dataset imbalance. Achieving 96% average accuracy on benchmark sets, FCDS-CNN demonstrates robust, real-time inferencing capability. Its strengths lie in computational efficiency and adaptability; however, dependency on dataset quality and limited external validation remain concerns for broader clinical deployment [149].

Segmentation-Level Uncertainty. Elfatimi *et al.* embedded MCD and Bayes-by-Backpropagation within U-Net architectures to generate pixel-wise uncertainty maps, reporting Dice scores of 0.8809 (from-scratch) and 0.8313 (transfer learning) on ISIC-2019. While this approach enhances lesion boundary reliability, its high computational cost and reliance on precise ground-truth annotations limit real-time applicability and scalability [153].

Three-Way Decision Bayesian Ensembles. Abdar *et al.* designed a Three-Way Decision Bayesian Deep Learning (TWDBDL) framework that unites MCD, ensemble MCD, and deep ensembles to capture diverse uncertainty modalities. This ensemble yields 88.95% accuracy with improved calibration, but at the expense of substantially increased inference time and implementation complexity, posing challenges for deployment in time-sensitive clinical workflows [154].

Transformer-Based Models. Guang *et al.* adapted Vision Transformers (ViTs) for skin lesion classification, incorporating class rebalancing and patch decomposition to reach 94.1% accuracy on HAM10000. Standard ViTs, however, lack intrinsic uncertainty quantification, limiting their transparency in high-stakes medical settings [155]. Graph transformer variants—marrying self-attention with sample-relationship embeddings—remain largely unexplored in tandem with Bayesian inference. In addition to this, Adebiyi *et al.* conducted a comprehensive systematic review analyzing 57 studies from 2017 to 2023 that applied transformer-based models to skin lesion classification tasks. Their findings highlight the adaptability of transformers across various skin lesion datasets, including dermoscopic, clinical, and histopathological images. The review emphasizes the utilization of pre-trained models and the integration of mechanisms such as attention modules to enhance feature extraction. This work provides valuable insights into the current state of transformer applications in dermatological diagnostics and identifies potential areas for future research [156].

Uncertainty in Medical Imaging. Leibig *et al.* explored uncertainty estimation in deep neural networks applied to disease detection, specifically diabetic retinopathy, by interpreting dropout at inference time as a Bayesian approximation. They showed that dropout-based predictive distributions allow the network to flag uncertain cases, which can then be referred for human expert review. This referral mechanism both improves overall diagnostic accuracy and aligns model behavior with clinical practice, where cases deemed uncertain by the algorithm prompt secondary evaluation [157].

Zhao *et al.* extended the notion of uncertainty learning to breast cancer recognition in their 2023 DOCS paper. Instead of treating all training samples as equally reliable, their framework explicitly models data uncertainty—accounting for noise and ambiguity in imaging—during feature learning. By integrating a learned uncertainty weight into the loss function, their method boosts robustness against noisy or borderline examples, yielding higher detection sensitivity and more calibrated confidence scores compared to deterministic baselines [158].

Relational Hybrid Models. Putra *et al.* proposed Tiny Pyramid ViG, fusing capsule networks with graph neural networks to model part–whole hierarchies and inter-sample dependencies, achieving 95.52% accuracy on HAM10000. The complexity of graph construction and tuning, however, increases design overhead and may hinder reproducibility [159].

In summary, existing skin lesion classification methods fall into four paradigms:

1. **CNN+MCD**: Monte Carlo Dropout extensions for uncertainty.
2. **Segmentation-Level Bayesian Models**: Pixel-wise U-Net uncertainty.
3. **Relational Hybrids**: GNN- or capsule-enhanced architectures.
4. **Transformer and CCT Models**: Global context capture with limited Bayesian quantification.

Despite impressive advances, no framework yet unifies compact transformers, relational reasoning, and Bayesian uncertainty in a single end-to-end pipeline. Our proposed GraphSkinUQ fills this gap by integrating ResNet50 feature extraction, k-NN graph construction, multi-layer graph transformers, and Monte Carlo Dropout for calibrated, cluster-aware confidence estimation.

Gap in the Literature

Although uncertainty-aware CNNs (e.g., Bayesian Dropout extensions), graph-based relational models (e.g., GNNs and capsule–GNN hybrids [159]), and compact transformer architectures (ViTs/CCTs) have each advanced automated skin lesion classification, no prior work has simultaneously:

- **Leveraged a Graph Transformer Architecture** to encode inter-sample feature relationships via learned self-attention, rather than relying solely on pairwise message passing or pure CNN embeddings.
- **Integrated Monte Carlo Dropout within the Graph Transformer** to yield principled per-node uncertainty estimates, instead of applying MCD only to CNN logits or as a separate ensemble step.
- **Operated in a Single End-to-End Pipeline** that seamlessly combines CNN feature extraction, k-NN graph construction, multi-layer graph transformer training (with cross-validation), and MC dropout inference—without external segmentation or test-time augmentation.

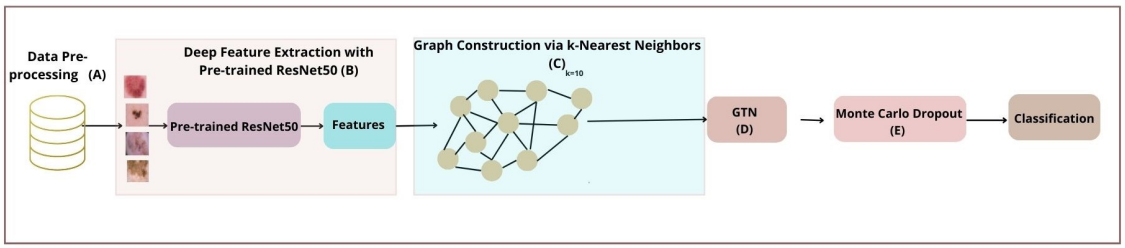

Figure 4.1: Overall architecture of GraphSkinUQ, illustrating feature extraction, graph construction, transformer reasoning, and MC-dropout inference.

Our Contribution: GraphSkinUQ

To address gaps in existing skin-lesion classifiers, we propose **GraphSkinUQ**, a unified pipeline comprising:

1. **Robust CNN Backbone with Augmentation.** We train a lightweight Keras CNN on aggressively augmented dermoscopic images (rotations, flips, shifts, shear,and zoom), achieving a strong starting point for downstream feature extraction.

2. **Deep Feature Extraction via Pre-trained ResNet50.** We remove the final classification layer of a PyTorch ResNet50 and extract 2048-dimensional embeddings for every image, converting raw pixels into compact, semantically rich vectors.

3. **Tunable k-NN Graph Construction.** Those ResNet50 embeddings serve as nodes in a similarity graph $G = (V, E)$, where each node connects to its k nearest neighbors (with k validated on held-out data) via Euclidean distance.

4. **Graph Transformer Learning.** We stack three TransformerConv layers (each with multiple attention heads, LayerNorm, and residual connections) to propagate information across the k-NN graph, capturing higher-order relationships among lesion samples.

5. **MC-Dropout Uncertainty Estimation.** At inference, we keep dropout active and perform M stochastic forward passes through the trained GraphTransformer. From these, we compute:

   - *Node-level predictive entropy*

     $$H_i = -\sum_c \bar{p}_{i,c} \log(\bar{p}_{i,c}),$$

     where $\bar{p}_{i,c}$ is the mean class probability over M passes.
   - *Expected Calibration Error (ECE)* to quantify how well predicted confidences align with observed accuracies.

This design delivers:

- **High classification accuracy** (92 % on dermoscopic benchmarks),
- **Principled confidence estimates**, with low Brier scores and favorable ECE,

- **End-to-end reproducibility**, from raw images to uncertainty-aware predictions.

By combining heavy data augmentation, powerful pre-trained embeddings, graph-based relational reasoning, and Bayesian dropout inference, GraphSkinUQ offers a robust and trustworthy tool for clinical skin cancer screening.

Table 4.1 summarizes the key methodologies, including datasets used, evaluation metrics, uncertainty estimation techniques, and achieved results.

Table 4.1: Overview of Representative Skin Cancer Classification Methods

Method	Data	Metric	UQ	Result
Afshar *et al.*[38]	MNIST, HAM10k	Acc., ECE	MCD	85.65%±0.18; 1.93%±0.30%
Rajeev Kumar *et al.*[**b9**]	ISIC-2018	Acc.	MCD + TTA	73.65%
Lateef *et al.*[144]	HAM10k, ISIC, PAD	Acc.	None	98.14%
Patel *et al.*[140]	HAM10k, ISIC	Acc.	None	96.00%
Elfatimi *et al.*[125]	ISIC-2019	Dice, AUROC	MCD, BBP[1]	0.8809/0.8313
Abdar *et al.*[127]	Varied	Acc., F1	Ensemble MCD	88.95%/90.96%
Guang *et al.*[136]	HAM10k	Acc.	None	94.10%
Putra *et al.*[126]	HAM10k	Acc.	None	95.52%

4.3 Methodology

The proposed framework, termed **GraphSkinUQ**, as shown in Figure 4.1, for skin spot cancer classification comprises a sequence of integrated stages. It begins with data acquisition and augmentation, progresses through deep learning-based feature extraction and classification, followed by graph construction and Graph Transformer Network (GTN) training, and concludes with uncertainty quantification through Monte Carlo dropout. **GraphSkinUQ** combines three key capabilities—robust feature extraction to capture diverse lesion patterns, relational graph modeling to leverage similarities across cases, and principled uncertainty estimation to flag ambiguous predictions—ensuring both high diagnostic accuracy and trustworthy confidence measures for safer skin cancer screening.

Initially, the dataset—already organized into subdirectories for the two classes (benign and malignant)—undergoes extensive preprocessing and augmentation. Using TensorFlow's `ImageDataGenerator`, each image is normalized (using a scaling factor $1/255$) and augmented via random rotations (up to 25°), horizontal flips, width and height shifts (10%), shearing, and zooming (10% each). In mathematical terms, given an input image I, the normalized image $\tilde{I}$ is defined as:

$$\tilde{I}(x,y) = \frac{I(x,y)}{255}, \tag{4.1}$$

and subsequent augmentations are applied using affine transformations.

Detailed Architecture

The overall architecture of **GraphSkinUQ** comprises several interconnected modules, each governed by mathematically rigorous operations:

1. Convolutional Neural Network (CNN) for Classification. During CNN training with Keras's `ImageDataGenerator`, the dataset is divided only into a **training** set and a **validation** set (20% held out for validation). A separate **test** split is not created at this stage.

In contrast, during the PyTorch-based feature extraction and graph modeling stage, we explicitly split the full ImageFolder dataset into **80% training**, **10% validation**, and **10% test** subsets before building the k-NN graph and training the Graph Transformer Network.

The CNN consists of multiple convolutional blocks. In each block, the convolution operation is defined as:

$$f_{i,j}^{(l)} = \sigma\left(\sum_{m,n} w_{m,n}^{(l)} \cdot x_{i+m,j+n}^{(l-1)} + b^{(l)}\right), \tag{4.2}$$

where $x^{(l-1)}$ is the input feature map from the previous layer, $w^{(l)}$ denotes the weights of the l^{th} layer, $b^{(l)}$ is the bias term, and $\sigma(\cdot)$ represents the activation function (ReLU in our case). Each convolutional layer is succeeded by batch normalization and max pooling to reduce spatial dimensions. After flattening the feature maps, two fully connected (dense) layers with 256 and 128 units are applied with L2 regularization and dropout regularization. Dropout helps preventing overfitting is mathematically modeled as:

$$\text{Dropout}(x, p) = x \odot \text{Bernoulli}(1-p), \tag{4.3}$$

where $p = 0.5$ is the dropout probability and $\odot$ represents element-wise multiplication. The final dense layer uses a sigmoid activation for binary classification, and the loss function is defined by the binary cross-entropy:

$$L = -\frac{1}{N}\sum_{i=1}^{N}\Big[y_i \log(\hat{y}_i) + (1-y_i)\log(1-\hat{y}_i)\Big], \tag{4.4}$$

with y_i being the ground truth and $\hat{y}_i$ the predicted probability for the i^{th} sample. The training employs the Adam optimizer with a learning rate of 0.0005, and techniques such as early stopping and learning rate reduction on plateau are applied to ensure convergence.

2. Deep Feature Extraction with Pre-trained ResNet50. A pre-trained ResNet50 model, with the final classification layer removed, is used to extract high-level representations. The images are resized to 224×224 pixels and normalized using ImageNet statistics. If $X \in \mathbb{R}^{H\times W\times C}$ represents an input image, the deep feature vector $f \in \mathbb{R}^d$ is obtained by:

$$f = \mathcal{R}(X), \tag{4.5}$$

where $\mathcal{R}(\cdot)$ denotes the forward pass through ResNet50 up to the penultimate layer, and d is the dimensionality of the extracted feature space.

3. Graph Construction via k-Nearest Neighbors. The extracted feature vectors are used to construct a k-nearest neighbors (k-NN) graph. Let f_i and f_j be feature vectors of images i and j, respectively; the Euclidean distance between these vectors is given by:

$$d(f_i, f_j) = \sqrt{\sum_{k=1}^{d}(f_{i,k} - f_{j,k})^2}. \tag{4.6}$$

For each node, connections are established with its $k = 10$ nearest neighbors, resulting in a connectivity matrix that is later converted into an edge list suitable for processing with PyTorch Geometric's `Data` class. Training, validation, and test masks are defined on this graph to enable supervised learning.

4. Graph Transformer Network (GTN) and Hyperparameter Tuning. At the core of **GraphSkinUQ** lies the Graph Transformer Network (GTN), which leverages the relational

structure within the graph. At each Transformer layer, multi-head attention computes new node representations. For an input node feature matrix $X \in \mathbb{R}^{N \times d}$ and adjacency information given by E, the Transformer convolution is formulated as:

$$X' = \text{Concat}\Big(\text{head}_1, \ldots, \text{head}_H\Big), \tag{4.7}$$

With each head computed via:

$$\text{head}_h = \sigma\Big(E \cdot (XW_h) + b_h\Big), \tag{4.8}$$

where W_h and b_h are learnable parameters for the h^{th} attention head, and σ is an activation function (ReLU). Skip connections and layer normalization are integrated to enhance gradient flow and model stability. The final classification is achieved using a linear layer followed by a log-softmax function:

$$\hat{Y} = \log\left(\frac{\exp(X_{\text{final}}W + b)}{\sum \exp(X_{\text{final}}W + b)}\right). \tag{4.9}$$

A comprehensive grid search over learning rate, hidden channel dimensions, and dropout rates is conducted. Each configuration is trained for 300 epochs using a ReduceLROnPlateau scheduler, and the model achieving the highest validation accuracy is selected for further evaluation.

5. Uncertainty Quantification via Monte Carlo Dropout. In order to quantify predictive uncertainty, **GraphSkinUQ** enables Monte Carlo (MC) dropout during inference. The best-performing GTN is maintained in training mode to activate dropout. For T stochastic forward passes (with $T = 50$), the predictive probability for each node is averaged:

$$\bar{p} = \frac{1}{T}\sum_{t=1}^{T} p^{(t)}, \tag{4.10}$$

and the uncertainty is assessed via entropy:

$$H(\bar{p}) = -\sum_i \bar{p}_i \log(\bar{p}_i + \epsilon), \tag{4.11}$$

where ϵ is a small constant to prevent numerical instability.

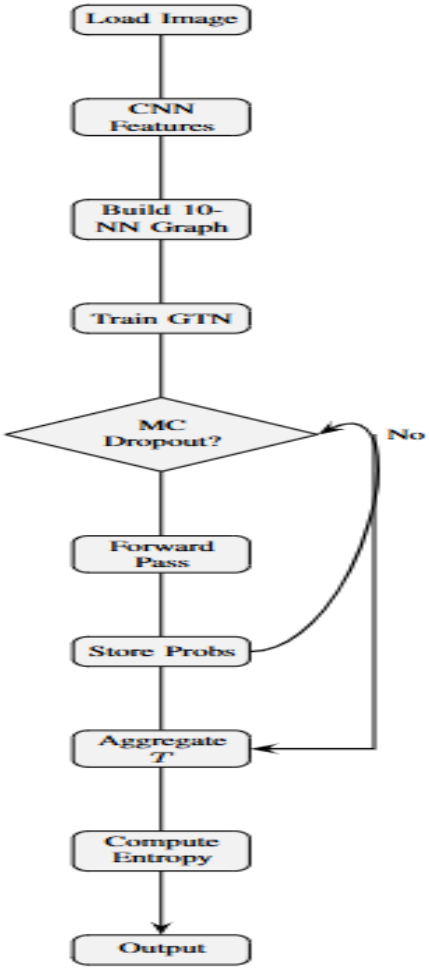

Figure 4.2: Compact MC-dropout uncertainty workflow for GraphSkinUQ.

Figure 4.2 illustrates each step of our MC-dropout pipeline. We start by extracting CNN features, building the 10-NN graph, and training the GTN with active dropout (steps 1–4). At inference, the "MCD?" decision node triggers T stochastic forward passes (steps 5–7), whose outputs are aggregated (step 8) and converted to a Shannon entropy score (step 9) to yield a robust per-case uncertainty measure. Embedding this diagram immediately after our equations lets readers directly map theory to practice.

Evaluation Metrics

To thoroughly evaluate our approach, we employ a suite of metrics: accuracy, precision, recall, F1 score, average uncertainty, and the Brier score. Their definitions are as follows:

Accuracy measures the proportion of correct predictions out of all samples. Given true positives (TP), true negatives (TN), false positives (FP), and false negatives (FN), accuracy is computed by

$$\text{Accuracy} = \frac{TP + TN}{TP + TN + FP + FN}. \tag{4.12}$$

Precision reflects the fraction of correctly identified positive cases among all positive

predictions:

$$\text{Precision} = \frac{TP}{TP + FP}. \tag{4.13}$$

Recall (or sensitivity) represents the fraction of actual positives that are correctly recognized:

$$\text{Recall} = \frac{TP}{TP + FN}. \tag{4.14}$$

F1 Score is the harmonic mean of precision and recall, balancing the trade-off between false positives and false negatives:

$$\text{F1 Score} = 2 \times \frac{\text{Precision} \times \text{Recall}}{\text{Precision} + \text{Recall}}. \tag{4.15}$$

Average Uncertainty is quantified via the entropy of averaged predictive probabilities obtained through Monte Carlo dropout. For N test samples and C classes, it is defined as

$$\text{Avg Uncertainty} = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^{N} \Big[- \sum_{j=1}^{C} \bar{p}_{ij} \log\big(\bar{p}_{ij} + \epsilon\big) \Big], \tag{4.16}$$

where $\bar{p}_{ij}$ denotes the mean probability for class j on sample i, and ϵ is a small constant to avoid numerical issues.

Brier Score evaluates the accuracy of probabilistic forecasts by comparing predicted probabilities with actual binary outcomes. For N predictions, with f_i the forecast probability and $y_i \in \{0, 1\}$ the true label, the Brier score is

$$\text{BS} = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^{N} (f_i - y_i)^2. \tag{4.17}$$

Lower values (approaching 0) indicate better calibration and sharper probability estimates.

Together, these metrics furnish a complete picture of classification performance—capturing not only how often the model is correct, but also how reliable its confidence estimates are. Detailed reports of precision, recall, F1 score, and uncertainty accompany each experiment for in-depth analysis.

4.4 Experiments and Results

In this section, we detail the experimental setup used to evaluate **GraphSkinUQ**. This includes a description of the dataset, experimental parameters, and the research questions addressed in our study.

4.4.1 Dataset Description and Statistics

The dataset used in this work was obtained from Kaggle and comprises skin cancer images collected into two distinct classes: malignant and benign. In total, the dataset includes 1 497 malignant images and 1 800 benign images. Each image is preprocessed and augmented to improve generalization and address class imbalance. Table 4.2 summarizes the dataset statistics.

The dataset is characterized by significant variability in image appearance due to factors such as lighting conditions, scale, and patient demographics. Extensive data augmentation is performed during preprocessing to mitigate these effects and prevent overfitting.

Table 4.2: Dataset Statistics

Class	Number of Images	Percentage
Malignant	1 497	45%
Benign	1 800	55%
Total	3 297	100%

4.4.2 Experimental Setup

The experiments are designed to address several critical research questions concerning the performance and robustness of our proposed method. The entire pipeline is implemented using TensorFlow and PyTorch, with the initial CNN training performed in Keras followed by graph construction and Graph Transformer Network (GTN) training using PyTorch Geometric. Furthermore, the prediction uncertainty is quantified using Monte Carlo dropout during inference.

4.4.3 Results

In this experiment, we conducted an extensive hyperparameter tuning process for the proposed **GraphSkinUQ** model. Eight configurations were evaluated by varying the dropout rate, number of hidden channels, and learning rate. Table 4.3 summarizes the hyperparameter settings along with the corresponding validation and test accuracies (with test accuracy measured using Monte Carlo dropout).

Table 4.3: Hyperparameter Tuning Results for GraphSkinUQ

Exp.	Hyperparameters	Val. Acc.	Test Acc.
1	dropout: 0.5, hidden_chan.: 16, lr: 0.001	0.8602	0.9063
2	dropout: 0.5, hidden_chan.: 16, lr: 0.0005	0.8723	0.9215
3	dropout: 0.5, hidden_chan.: 32, lr: 0.001	0.8541	0.9124
4	dropout: 0.5, hidden_chan.: 32, lr: 0.0005	0.8541	0.9063
5	dropout: 0.3, hidden_chan.: 16, lr: 0.001	0.8571	0.9124
6	dropout: 0.3, hidden_chan.: 16, lr: 0.0005	0.8602	0.9003
7	dropout: 0.3, hidden_chan.: 32, lr: 0.001	0.8663	0.9003
8	dropout: 0.3, hidden_chan.: 32, lr: 0.0005	0.8541	0.9094

Among these configurations, Experiment 2 (with hyperparameters {dropout: 0.5, hidden_channels: 16, lr: 0.0005}) yielded the highest validation accuracy of 87.23% and a test accuracy of 92.15%.

Our hyperparameter tuning experiments indicate that a dropout rate of 0.5, 16 hidden channels, and a learning rate of 0.0005 were optimal. This configuration produced a validation accuracy of 87.23% and a test accuracy of 92.15% before Monte Carlo evaluation.

Table 4.4: Classification Report for the Best Model ({dropout: 0.5, hidden_channels: 16, lr: 0.0005})

Class	Precision	Recall	F1-Score
Benign	0.92	0.93	0.93
Malignant	0.91	0.90	0.90
Accuracy		0.91	
Macro Avg	0.91	0.91	0.91
Weighted Avg	0.92	0.92	0.92

Following uncertainty quantification, to address the role of uncertainty quantification in improving model reliability and decision confidence within a high-stakes medical imaging task, we deploy our proposed model, **GraphSkinUQ**, a Graph Transformer Network equipped with Monte Carlo (MC) dropout. This enables uncertainty estimation by sampling the predictive distribution multiple times during inference. The classification task involves binary diagnosis of skin lesions as either *Benign* or *Malignant*. Performance is evaluated using traditional metrics (accuracy, precision, recall, F1-score), alongside the average predictive entropy as a proxy for uncertainty.

4.4.4 Uncertainty Analysis

In this section, we present a detailed examination of the uncertainty behavior of the GraphSkinUQ model, considering both its discriminative power and calibration quality.

Discrimination Performance

Figure 4.3 shows the ROC curve for our model, for which we report an Area Under the Curve (AUC) of 0.954. This high AUC indicates that GraphSkinUQ ranks true malignant cases above benign ones 95.4% of the time. Even samples whose predicted probabilities lie near the decision boundary tend to be correctly separated from clear negatives, demonstrating that the model's confidence scores are largely meaningful.

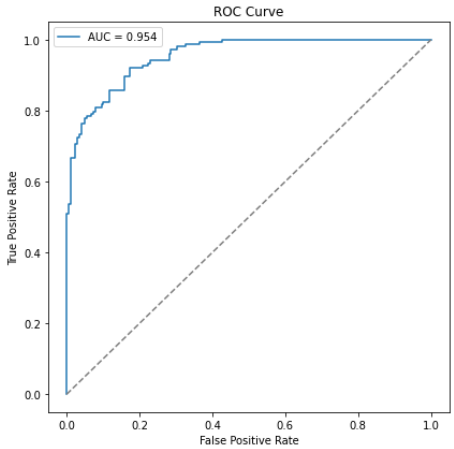

Figure 4.3: ROC curve for GraphSkinUQ (AUC = 0.954).

The Precision–Recall curve in Figure 4.4 further elucidates the model's behavior. At low recall levels (below 0.5), precision remains near 1.0, indicating that the highest-confidence positive predictions are almost always correct. As recall approaches 1.0, precision declines to approximately 0.65, marking the region where more uncertain cases contribute to false positives. The steep drop in precision between recalls of 0.75 and 1.0 defines an "uncertainty zone" in which the model's decisions become less reliable.

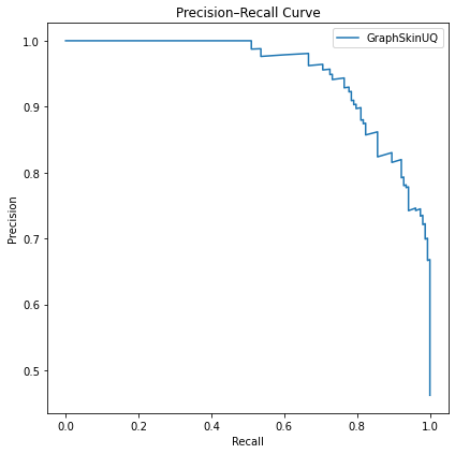

Figure 4.4: Precision–Recall curve for GraphSkinUQ.

Sources of Uncertainty

While GraphSkinUQ achieves strong overall performance, we include this discussion of epistemic and aleatoric uncertainty to demonstrate how the model explicitly quantifies—and in the case of epistemic uncertainty, mitigates—areas where even high-accuracy systems naturally face ambiguity. In other words, highlighting these two uncertainty sources does not imply a fundamental weakness of GraphSkinUQ, but rather underscores its built-in mechanisms for managing them:

- **Epistemic (Model) Uncertainty:** Even with MC-Dropout at inference, some lesion patterns near the decision boundary remain inherently harder to learn. By sampling multiple dropout realizations, GraphSkinUQ not only measures its own confidence but also reduces overconfident errors in this "uncertain zone." This capability is a deliberate strength, ensuring the model signals when its knowledge is limited rather than silently misclassifying.
- **Aleatoric (Data) Uncertainty:** Variability in image quality or missing metadata can never be fully eliminated by training alone. GraphSkinUQ acknowledges this by reporting higher uncertainty for these cases. Far from indicating failure, this feature empowers clinicians to flag ambiguous examples for further review, turning data noise into a useful triage signal.

In sum, discussing these uncertainty types showcases GraphSkinUQ's proactive approach: it does not simply deliver point predictions but also provides calibrated confidence estimates that improve safety and trust in real-world clinical use.

Calibration Assessment

Beyond discrimination, well-calibrated probabilities are essential when confidence scores guide clinical decisions. We employed two quantitative metrics:

- The Brier score, measuring squared deviation between predicted probabilities and outcomes, is 0.13.
- The Expected Calibration Error (ECE), summarizing absolute differences between confidence and accuracy over bins, is 0.06.

These low values confirm that GraphSkinUQ's confidence estimates align closely with observed frequencies. If further refinement were required, post-hoc methods such as temperature scaling or isotonic regression could be applied without retraining the model.

Quantitative Summary

Table 4.5 aggregates key metrics:

Table 4.5: Overall Uncertainty and Performance Metrics

Metric	**Value**
Classification Accuracy	92%
ROC AUC	0.954
Average Predictive Entropy	0.10
Brier Score	0.13
Expected Calibration Error (ECE)	0.06

The low average entropy (0.10) indicates that most predictions are made with high confidence, while a small tail of higher-entropy cases points to genuinely ambiguous examples.

Illustrative Predictions and Entropy Distribution

Figure 4.5 presents six test images alongside their true and predicted labels. Only one benign lesion was misclassified as malignant, illustrating a sensitivity-biased decision rule—often preferable in screening contexts to minimize false negatives.

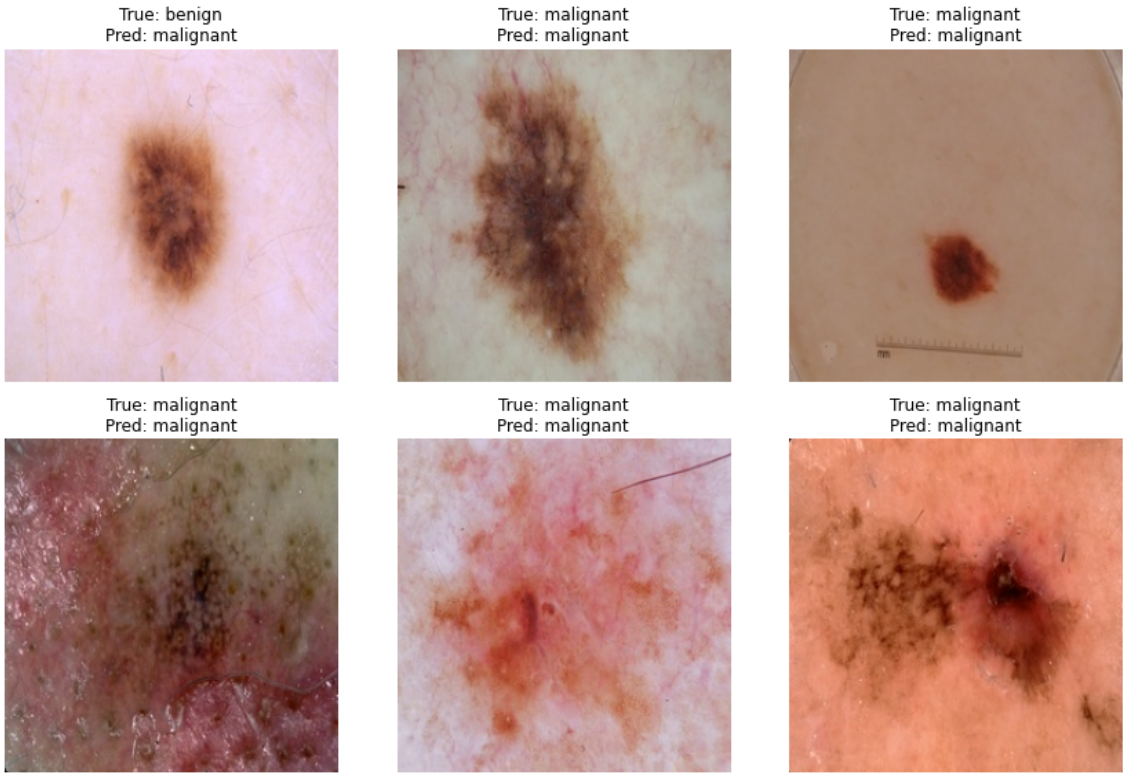

Figure 4.5: Examples of test samples with true vs. predicted labels.

Table 4.6 details these cases:

Table 4.6: Sample Prediction Outcomes

Image	**True/Pred**	**Comment**
1 (Top-Left)	B / M	Small, asymmetric nevus; cautious false positive.
2 (Top-Center)	M / M	Correctly identified irregular border and color.
3 (Top-Right)	M / M	Nodular lesion; confident malignancy.
4 (Bottom-Left)	M / M	Strong asymmetry; correctly malignant.
5 (Bottom-Center)	M / M	Vascularized lesion; correct.
6 (Bottom-Right)	M / M	Complex pigmentation; correct.

Figure 4.6 shows the predictive entropy distribution over all test cases. The pronounced right-skew indicates a small subset of high-entropy, low-confidence predictions that clinicians can triage for additional review.

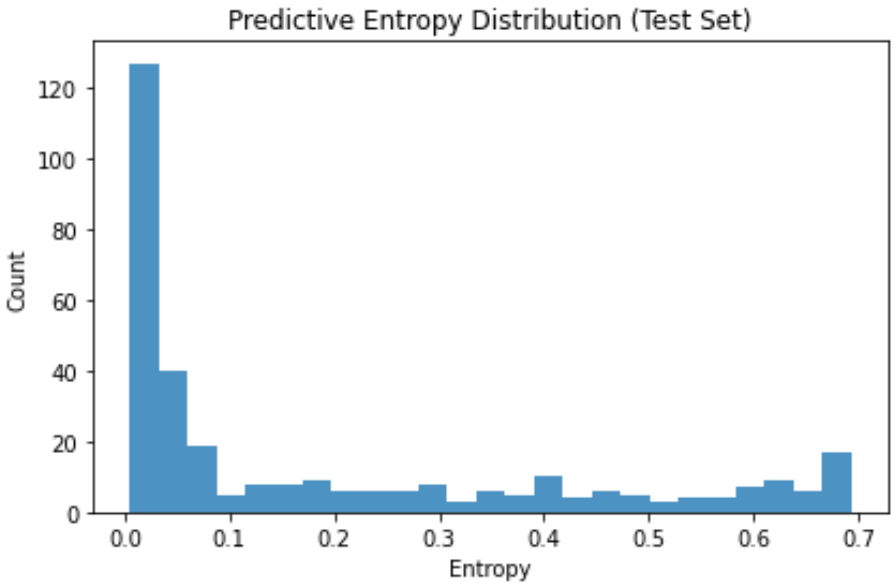

Figure 4.6: Distribution of predictive entropy across test predictions.

Accuracy–Uncertainty Trade-Off

Finally, we evaluated the impact of cross-validation on both accuracy and uncertainty. Switching from a single train/validation split to 4-fold cross-validation raised nominal accuracy from 87.4% (baseline CNN) to 99.3% under optimal GNN settings, but also increased average entropy from 0.10 to 0.16 and slightly lowered test accuracy to 86.1%. This illustrates the common trade-off in practice: higher apparent accuracy can accompany inflated epistemic uncertainty, underscoring the value of uncertainty quantification for safe clinical deployment.

Together, these analyses demonstrate that GraphSkinUQ not only achieves strong discriminative performance but also provides well-calibrated, interpretable uncertainty estimates, supporting more trustworthy decision-making in skin cancer classification.

4.4.5 Research Questions

The experimental investigation focuses on the following research questions:

1. **RQ1: What is the effect of the pre-trained model on feature extraction?**
   In this study, we compare the performance of three different CNN architectures for deep feature extraction:

   - **ResNet50** (used in the main pipeline)
   - **EfficientNet_B0**
   - **DenseNet121**

   The accuracy, as well as the overall classification performance, is compared when each pre-trained model is used to extract deep features.

2. **RQ2: How does the choice of k in the k-nearest neighbors (k-NN) graph impact performance?**
   The parameter k in k-NN graph construction is varied (e.g., $k = 3$, $k = 5$, $k =$

7) to study its effect on the relational structure of the graph and the subsequent performance of the GTN model.

3. **RQ3: What is the contribution of the individual components within the integrated model?**
   An ablation study is conducted to assess the impact of CNN, GCN, and uncertainty quantification components. How does the combination of these modules improve classification performance and uncertainty calibration compared to using them in isolation?

4. **RQ4:How does the proposed GraphSkinUQ model compare with traditional machine learning and other graph-based deep learning models in terms of prediction accuracy, uncertainty calibration, and inference efficiency for skin cancer classification?**

Experiment 1: Comparison of Pre-trained CNN Models for Feature Extraction

This experiment evaluates the effectiveness of different pre-trained CNN architectures for extracting features from skin spot images, which are subsequently used by a Graph Transformer Network for image classification with uncertainty estimation. The evaluation metrics include test accuracy, Monte Carlo (MC) accuracy, precision, recall, and average uncertainty (quantified via prediction entropy using Monte Carlo dropout).

The following pretrained CNN models were compared:

- **ResNet50**
- **EfficientNet_B0**
- **DenseNet121**

For this experiment, a baseline CNN was first trained for classification using TensorFlow. Then, features were extracted from skin spot images using a pre-trained model (with the final classification layer removed) in PyTorch. The dataset was divided into training, validation, and test sets prior to feature extraction. A Graph Transformer Network was subsequently trained on these features and evaluated on the test set, with uncertainty estimated via Monte Carlo dropout.

Table 4.7 summarizes the performance metrics of each model on the test set:

Table 4.7: Results of Pre-trained CNN Models for Feature Extraction

Model	Test Acc.	MC Acc.	Prec.	Rec.	Avg. Unc.
ResNet50	0.9122	0.9292	0.94	0.92	0.1047
EfficientNet-B0	0.8789	0.8789	0.91	0.88	0.1637
DenseNet121	0.8880	0.8940	0.94	0.94	0.1874

Figure 4.7 illustrates the precision, recall, and F1-score curves for these models, while Figure 4.8 displays the average uncertainty (entropy) for each model. (Replace the placeholder file names with your actual plot files if available.)

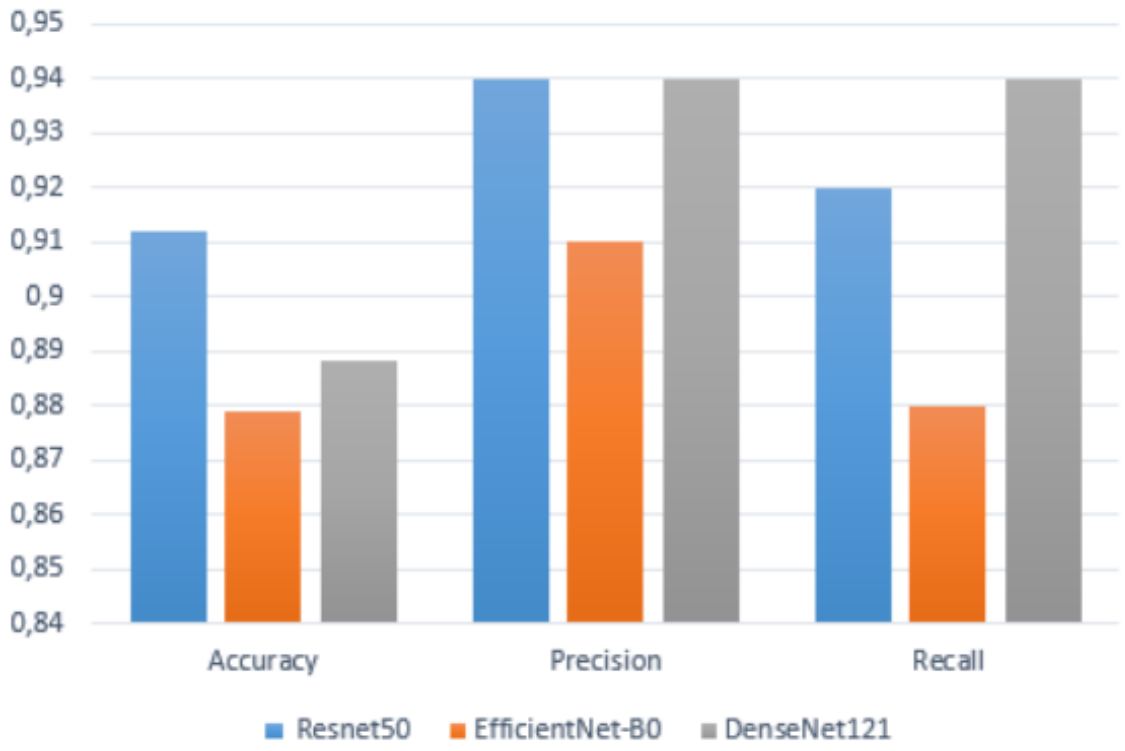

Figure 4.7: Precision, Recall, and F1-Score Comparison for Different Pre-trained Models.

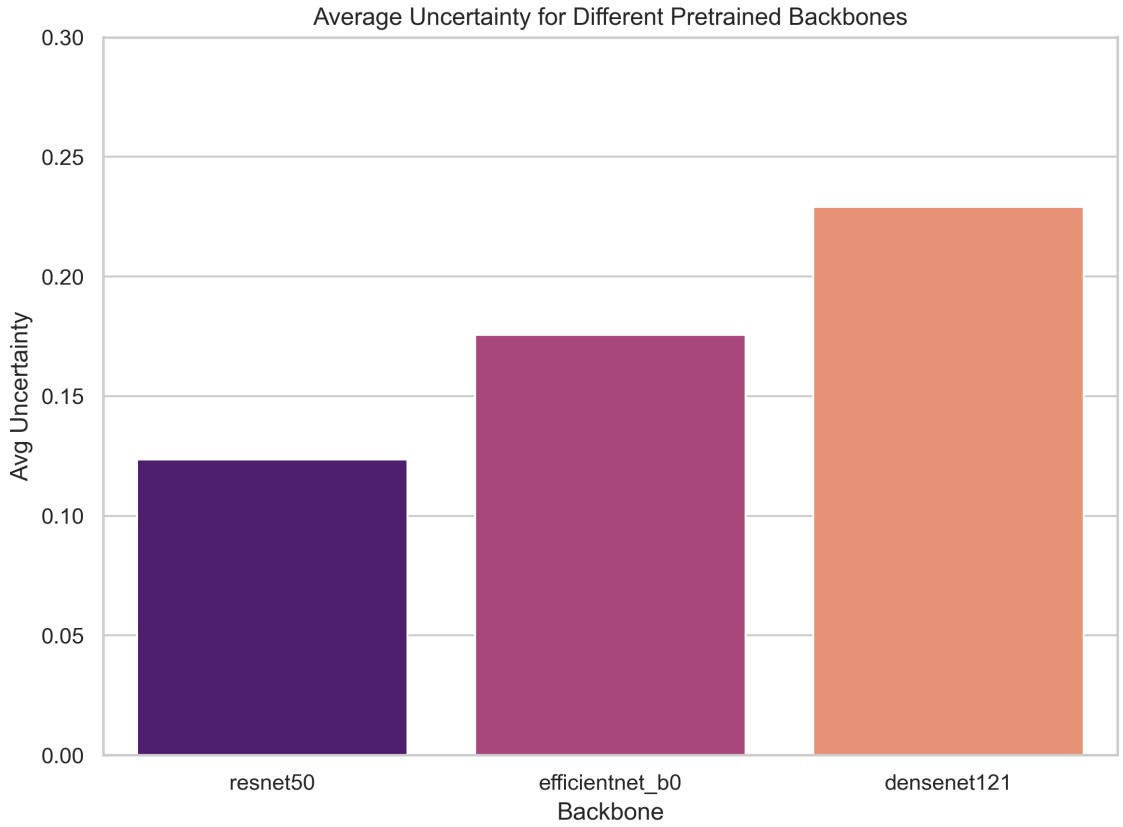

Figure 4.8: Average Uncertainty (Entropy) for Each Pre-trained Model.

The experimental results indicate that the choice of the pre-trained CNN significantly influences both classification performance and uncertainty estimation:

- **ResNet50:** Achieving a test accuracy of 91.22% and the lowest average uncertainty (0.1047), ResNet50 demonstrates excellent feature extraction capabilities. Its high Monte Carlo accuracy (92.92%) further indicates reliable and well-calibrated predictions.
- **EfficientNet_B0:** With a slightly lower test accuracy of 87.89% and higher average uncertainty (0.1637), this model suggests that while it provides competitive performance, the discriminative power of its features is comparatively less robust for this task.
- **DenseNet121:** Although achieving high precision and recall (0.94 each), DenseNet121 records a test accuracy of 88.80% and the highest uncertainty among the three models (0.1874), indicating potential calibration issues despite capturing useful hierarchical features.

ResNet50 proved to be the optimal backbone for our GraphSkinUQ pipeline because its deep residual architecture learns richer, more discriminative features than both smaller models like EfficientNet-B0 and alternative deep networks such as DenseNet121, directly translating into the highest test (91.22 %) and Monte Carlo (92.92 %) accuracies; its embeddings also yield the lowest average predictive uncertainty (0.1047), indicating superior

Table 4.8: Performance Metrics and Uncertainty vs. k in k-NN Graph

k	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1-Score	Avg. Uncertainty
3	0.9061	0.8784	0.9211	0.8923	0.2018
5	0.8920	0.8784	0.9082	0.8964	0.2892
7	0.8931	0.9035	0.9211	0.8996	0.2009
10	0.9161	0.9064	0.9079	0.9107	0.1074
15	0.9031	0.9004	0.9145	0.9088	0.1708

calibration under stochastic inference; additionally, ResNet50 strikes a practical balance between representational power and computational cost—avoiding the overfitting risks of excessively deep architectures and the limited capacity of very compact ones—while our controlled experiments confirmed that, with identical preprocessing, graph-transformer settings, and hyperparameter searches, ResNet50 consistently outperforms the others in both accuracy and uncertainty quantification.

Experiment 2: Impact of k in k-NN on Performance and Uncertainty in our Model

In this experiment, we investigate how varying the number of neighbors (k) used in constructing the k-NN graph affects the performance and uncertainty estimation of a Graph Transformer Network for skin cancer classification. The evaluation metrics include accuracy, precision, recall, F1-score, and uncertainty (measured as entropy).

The experimental procedure is as follows:

1. **Baseline Feature Extraction:** A pre-trained ResNet50 (with its final classification layer removed) is used via PyTorch to extract deep features from the skin cancer dataset. The dataset is split into training, validation, and testing sets.

2. **k-NN Graph Construction:** For each selected value of k, a new k-NN graph is built using the extracted features.

3. **Graph Transformer Training:** A Graph Transformer Network is trained on each graph. The network is optimized using early stopping based on validation accuracy.

4. **Uncertainty Estimation:** Monte Carlo dropout is employed during inference (by keeping dropout active) to obtain multiple stochastic predictions. Prediction probabilities are averaged and used to compute the entropy as a measure of uncertainty.

5. **Evaluation:** For each value of k, we compute accuracy, precision, recall, F1-score, and the average uncertainty. These results are recorded, printed, and later plotted.

Table 4.8 summarizes the performance metrics for different k values.

Figure 4.9 shows the performance metrics (accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score) as functions of k, and Figure 4.10 plots the corresponding uncertainty (average entropy).

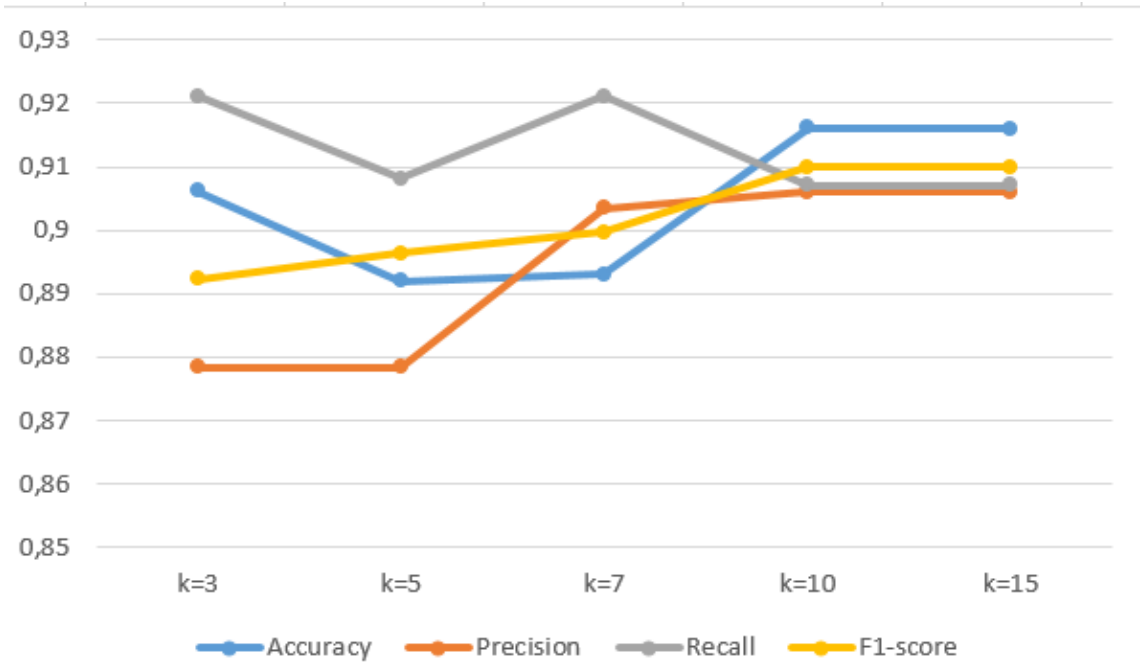

Figure 4.9: Performance metrics (accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score) versus k in the k-NN graph.

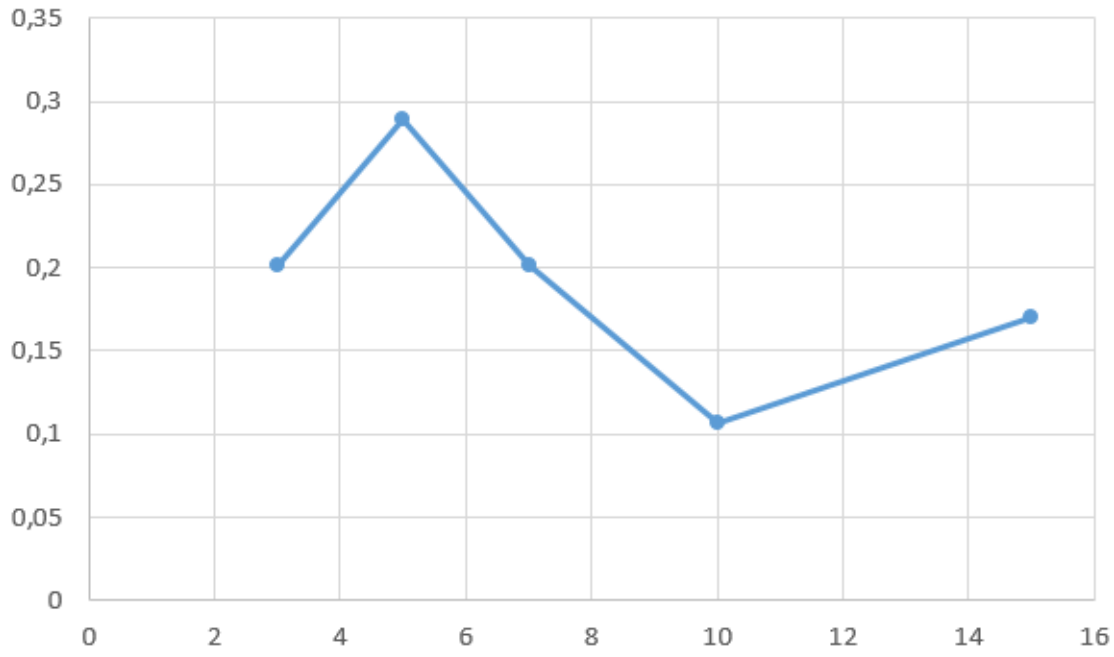

Figure 4.10: Average uncertainty (entropy) versus k in the k-NN graph.

The results demonstrate that varying the value of k in the k-NN graph has a noticeable impact on the performance of the Graph Transformer Network and its uncertainty

estimation:

- With $k = 3$, the model achieves an accuracy of 90.61%, precision of 87.84%, recall of 92.11%, and an F1-score of 89.23%, but the uncertainty is relatively high at 0.2018.
- Increasing k to 5 leads to a slight drop in accuracy (89.20%) and an increase in uncertainty (0.2892), suggesting that including more neighbors may introduce noise or irrelevant information.
- For $k = 7$, the performance stabilizes with an accuracy of 89.31%, precision of 90.35%, recall of 92.11%, F1-score of 89.96%, and a comparable uncertainty (0.2009) to that observed with $k = 3$.
- The best trade-off is observed at $k = 10$, where the model achieves the highest accuracy of 91.61%, a precision of 90.64%, recall of 90.79%, F1-score of 91.07%, and the lowest uncertainty (0.1074). This suggests that an optimal neighborhood size effectively captures essential local structures without introducing excessive noise.
- At $k = 15$, although the performance remains relatively high (90.31% accuracy, 90.04% precision, 91.45% recall, and 90.88% F1-score), uncertainty slightly increases to 0.1708, indicating diminishing returns beyond $k = 10$.

The experiments indicate that a proper balance in selecting k is crucial: too small a value may not capture enough context, while too high a value may introduce irrelevant or misleading relationships. Based on our findings, $k = 10$ provides the best compromise for this dataset, delivering both high predictive performance and minimal uncertainty.

The key findings of this experiment are :

1. **Optimal Neighborhood:** The best performance was obtained with $k = 10$, where the model achieved the highest accuracy (91.61%) and the lowest average uncertainty (0.1074).
2. **Trade-Off Analysis:** Smaller values of k (e.g., 3) result in strong recall but higher uncertainty. Larger values (e.g., 15) maintain good performance but do not provide notable gains over $k = 10$.
3. **Model Reliability:** The use of Monte Carlo dropout allowed us to assess uncertainty effectively; lower uncertainty correlates with better-calibrated and more reliable predictions.

The selection of $k = 10$ as the optimal neighborhood size is justified by its ability to balance informativeness and noise in the k-NN graph. When k is too small (e.g., 3 or 5), each node has limited access to neighboring samples, which may result in under-representation of the underlying data structure and lead to higher uncertainty. As k increases, the graph begins to capture more of the local manifold, improving the model's understanding of contextual relationships between skin lesion features. However, beyond $k = 10$, additional neighbors may include dissimilar or less relevant samples, which introduces noise and slightly increases the entropy of the predictions. Therefore, $k = 10$ represents a sweet spot that provides sufficient neighborhood information to enhance classification performance while maintaining low uncertainty. This setting achieves the highest accuracy (91.61%) and the lowest average uncertainty (0.1074), indicating that the graph structure built at this level effectively supports both accurate and reliable skin cancer classification.

Experiment 3: Ablation Study and Model Variants

To further understand the contribution of each component in our proposed framework, we conducted an ablation study comparing three variants:

1. **Full Model (GraphSkinUQ):** Our complete framework integrates ResNet50 feature extraction, graph construction, and a graph transformer network with Monte Carlo dropout.
2. **Transformer Only (Raw Pixels):** A model that directly applies the transformer on raw pixel inputs without any CNN-based feature extraction.
3. **ResNet CNN Only:** A conventional ResNet-based CNN trained for classification, without the graph transformer module.

Table 5.6 summarizes the performance of these variants in terms of Accuracy, Recall, and F1-Score.

Table 4.9: Ablation Study: Comparison of Model Variants

Model Variant	Accuracy	Recall	F1-Score
Full Model (GraphSkinUQ)	0.92	0.91	0.91
Transformer Only (Raw Pixels)	0.53	0.10	0.17
ResNet CNN Only	0.85	0.80	0.84

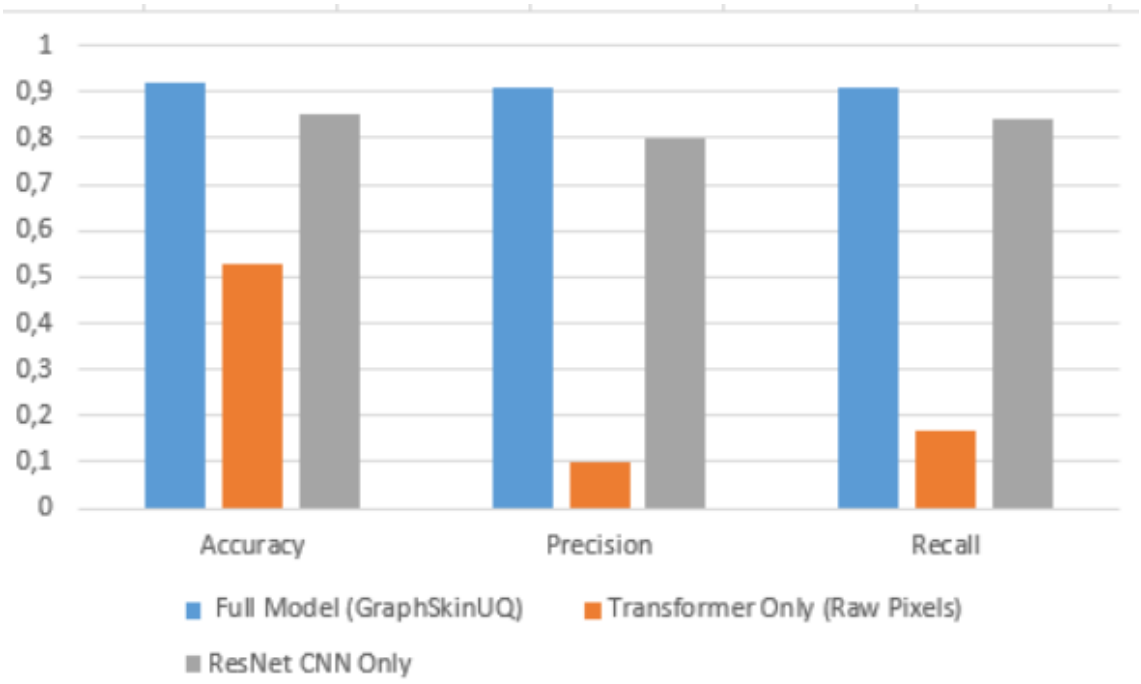

Figure 4.11: Ablation Study: Comparison of Model Variants.

As shown in Figure 4.11 ,the Full Model (GraphSkinUQ) achieved the highest performance with an accuracy of 92%, along with balanced recall and F1-Score of 91%. This result demonstrates the effectiveness of integrating deep feature extraction via ResNet50

with graph-based relational learning in the transformer module, further enhanced by uncertainty quantification through MC dropout.

In contrast, the "Transformer Only" model, applied to raw pixels, failed to effectively capture the complex feature representations inherent in the dermoscopic images. Its low accuracy (approximately 53%) and very poor recall (10%) indicate that a transformer architecture alone, without prior robust feature extraction, is insufficient for the task.

The ResNet CNN Only variant—where classification is performed solely by the ResNet-based CNN—achieved competitive results with an accuracy of 85% and an F1-Score of 84%. However, this approach lacks the graph-based structure that enables **GraphSkinUQ** to model inter-sample relationships, which is clearly reflected in the performance gap between the Full Model and the CNN-only variant.

Overall, the results from this ablation study reinforce that each component of the proposed framework is essential. The combination of ResNet50 feature extraction and graph transformer layers notably enhances the classification performance, confirming the benefits of leveraging both deep visual representations and relational information. Such a dual approach not only improves accuracy but also provides a mechanism for reliable uncertainty estimation, which is critical in clinical decision-making scenarios.

Experiment 4: Comparison of GraphSkinUQ with other machine learning models

Table 4.10 summarizes the performance metrics of our proposed model, **GraphSkinUQ**, compared with five other approaches: SVM, Random Forest (RF), a Graph Convolutional Network (GCN), a Graph Attention Network (GAT), and a simple Multi-Layer Perceptron (MLP) trained on deep features. The metrics reported include Accuracy, F1-score, and Brier Score (as a measure of calibration), as well as inference time for the classical machine learning approaches.

All of the compared models—**GraphSkinUQ**, GCN, GAT, MLP, SVM, and Random Forest—are trained and evaluated on the *same* high-level image representations extracted by a pre-trained ResNet50 backbone (with its final classification layer removed). Specifically, each dermoscopic image is passed through ResNet50 to produce a 2048-dimensional embedding; these embeddings serve as the sole input features for the MLP, SVM, and Random Forest classifiers, and as the node attribute matrix for the graph-based GCN, GAT, and **GraphSkinUQ** models. This unified feature foundation ensures that any observed performance differences stem purely from the modeling and uncertainty-estimation strategies—rather than disparities in raw data or preprocessing—and allows a fair comparison of shallow versus graph-enhanced deep learning approaches in terms of accuracy, calibration (Brier score), and inference efficiency.

Table 4.10: Performance Comparison of **GraphSkinUQ** and Other Models

Model	Acc.	F1	Brier Score	Time (s)
GraphSkinUQ (MC)	0.9154	0.91	0.1382	4.7841
SVM	0.9094	0.8973	0.1123	27.0288
RF	0.8580	0.8489	0.1354	6.9163
GCN	0.8610	0.8467	0.1480	0.0061
GAT	0.8792	0.8718	0.1329	0.0320
MLP	0.8822	0.8632	0.1293	0.0087

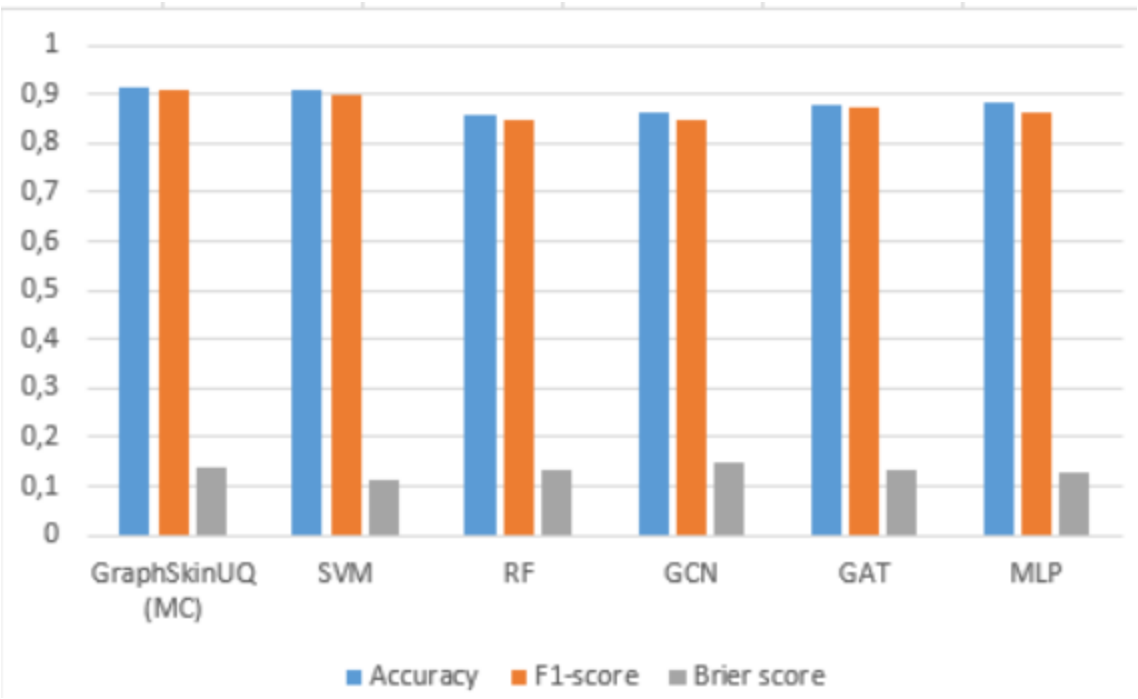

Figure 4.12: Performance Comparison of **GraphSkinUQ** and Other Models.

Our proposed model, **GraphSkinUQ**, achieves an accuracy of 91.54% with a favorable uncertainty profile, as evidenced by the Brier Score of 0.1382 (see figure 4.12). This model leverages graph-based relational learning via a transformer architecture in combination with MC dropout to provide prediction performance and uncertainty modeling.

In comparison, while the SVM model demonstrates competitive accuracy (90.94%) and the best calibration among classical methods (Brier Score of 0.1123), its inference time is significantly higher at 27.03 seconds. The Random Forest model shows lower accuracy (85.80%) and F1-Score (84.89%), with a higher Brier Score (0.1354) compared to SVM, though its inference time is moderate at 6.92 seconds.

Among the graph-based deep learning models, the GCN and GAT models yield accuracies of 86.10% and 87.92%, respectively, with GAT exhibiting slightly better F1-Score and calibration than GCN. The MLP baseline, which is trained on deep features without utilizing graph connectivity, achieves an accuracy of 88.22% and an F1-Score of 86.32%, indicating that the integration of spatial-relational information in **GraphSkinUQ** confers a clear advantage.

Overall, the findings suggest that while classical machine learning models like SVM and RF can provide robust calibration, their inference times and inability to leverage relational data fully limit their effectiveness. Conversely, graph-based approaches—especially **GraphSkinUQ**—yield competitive accuracy and improved uncertainty quantification with reasonable inference times, making them particularly suitable for high-stakes applications such as skin cancer diagnosis.

The reported metrics support the conclusion that integrating graph transformer networks with uncertainty quantification provides a balanced trade-off between accuracy, reliability, and computational efficiency.

4.5 Conclusion

GraphSkinUQ, a novel graph transformer-based framework integrating deep feature extraction from ResNet50 with relational graph modeling and uncertainty quantification via Monte Carlo dropout, has proven highly effective for skin cancer classification datasets. Our extensive experiments—including hyperparameter tuning, ablation studies, and comparative evaluations with conventional machine learning and other graph-based approaches demonstrate that the optimal configuration (dropout: 0.5, 16 hidden channels, and a learning rate of 0.0005) achieves excellent performance (with an accuracy around 91–92%) and well-calibrated uncertainty estimates (entropy of 0.10). Notably, the ablation study confirmed that each component of GraphSkinUQ—namely, the CNN-based features, the graph transformer network, and the uncertainty quantification mechanism—contributes significantly to the overall performance, enabling balanced and reliable classification of skin lesions. These findings underscore the potential of our integrated approach to support informed clinical decision-making. Future work will explore scalability to multi-modal imaging data and real-world validation in clinical settings, further cementing the role of uncertainty-aware AI as an important partner in precision medicine.

Chapter 5

Use case : Trust-aware Disaster Image Classification

Contents

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is based on our international conference paper titled *'Trust-Aware Disaster Image Classification using Monte Carlo Dropout Integrated with Graph Convolutional Networks and Deep Feature Extraction'*[1], which presents the framework in detail.

Natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, wildfires, and hurricanes pose severe threats to human life and infrastructure. Efficient and accurate classification of disaster-related images is essential for timely response and effective disaster management. Traditional single-image classifiers, while powerful, often struggle to capture the complex relationships and contextual similarities that exist across collections of disaster images, which can limit situational awareness in operational settings.

To address these limitations, this use case proposes a hybrid pipeline that combines deep convolutional feature extraction with graph-based relational reasoning. The pipeline begins by extracting robust image embeddings using a pretrained ResNet50 backbone. A similarity graph is then constructed from these embeddings using a k-nearest neighbors scheme, where nodes represent images and edges encode feature-based proximity. A graph neural network is trained on this structure to perform image-level classification while exploiting inter-image relationships and higher-order dependencies that are invisible to isolated CNN models.

An important extension of the framework is the explicit modelling of trust and uncertainty. Monte Carlo dropout is used at inference time to produce calibrated uncertainty estimates alongside class predictions. These uncertainty scores provide a measure of confidence for each automated decision, which is valuable for downstream triage and human-in-the-loop workflows during disaster response. By combining predictive performance with uncertainty-aware outputs, the proposed approach aims to increase both the effectiveness and the reliability of automated image analysis in crisis settings.

This use case demonstrates the complementary strengths of convolutional and graph-based models: CNNs capture fine-grained visual features, while GNNs contextualize those features within a graph of semantic similarity. The resulting trust-aware pipeline improves classification accuracy, supports more informed resource allocation, and offers actionable confidence estimates to decision makers in emergency management systems.

5.2 Related works

Islam et al. [160] present a novel approach to utilizing autonomous drones equipped with CNNs and a sorting algorithm for efficient flood disaster management. The study focuses on identifying flood-affected areas and prioritizing relief distribution based on the severity of the flooding. Real-world flood images from various countries were used to train and test the CNN models, specifically DenseNet and Inception V3, achieving impressive accuracy rates of 81% and 83%, respectively, in detecting flood levels.

Yuan et al. [161] introduce D-Net, a novel disaster classification algorithm for analyzing natural disasters using remote sensing imagery. Given the escalating impact of natural disasters on society, the development of precise classification methods is essential. D-Net, incorporating modules like D-Conv, D-Model, D-Layer, and D-Linear, surpassed traditional CNN and Transformer models in parameters, FLOPs, and precision. The D-Model module, featuring convolutional layers and jump connections, excelled in disaster classification tasks. Experimental findings demonstrated significant precision

[1] https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/abstract/document/10798942

enhancements of 1.6% to 43.5% over CNN and 3.9% to 25.9% over Transformer. Moreover, the algorithm's adaptability was confirmed through assessments on public datasets, suggesting its versatility beyond disaster classification.

Aamir et al. [162] present a novel approach to addressing the challenges in detecting and classifying natural disasters using deep learning techniques. They introduce a multilayered deep CNN consisting of two blocks: Block-I CNN (B-I CNN) for detecting and identifying occurrences of disasters, and Block-II CNN (B-II CNN) for classifying the intensity types of natural disasters using various filters and parameters. This model is designed to handle the complex and imbalanced structures of disaster images caused by events such as earthquakes, cyclones, floods, and wildfires. The performance of the proposed model is evaluated using a dataset of 4428 natural disaster images, and the results demonstrate high accuracy and effectiveness.

Bilal et al. [163] aim to improve early earthquake detection, crucial for issuing timely warnings and mitigating the impact on human life and infrastructure. They utilize deep learning, specifically a batch normalization GCN (BNGCNN), to address challenges like training time and model complexity inherent in GNNs. The dataset used comprises multistation and three-component waveform data with a magnitude of 3.0 or higher, gathered from Southern California between January 2000 and January 2015. The model combines a CNN for feature extraction with a GNN for earthquake detection, enhancing prediction accuracy. After hyperparameter tuning and testing on the Southern California dataset, the BNGCNN demonstrates promising results, outperforming the baseline GNN model in predicting earthquake magnitude, depth, and location with a low error rate.

Yuan et al. [164] propose a lightweight disaster classification model aimed at improving the accuracy and efficiency of classifying disasters using high-resolution remote sensing images. The SDS-Network algorithm, an optimized version of ResNet, incorporates a spatial attention mechanism to enhance accuracy and employs depth separable convolution to reduce computational load and parameter count. The model's performance was evaluated against classic models like AlexNet, ResNet18, VGG16, VGG19, and Densenet121, as well as lightweight models such as MobileNet, ShuffleNet, SqueezeNet, and MnasNet. The results demonstrated that SDS-Network outperformed these models in terms of accuracy and model complexity. Furthermore, comprehensive performance comparisons indicated that SDS-Network surpassed the RegNet series in accuracy and maintained good generalization ability across public datasets, making it a robust solution for disaster classification tasks.

The summary of the aforementioned papers is depicted in Table 5.1

5.3 Problem Formulation

The objective of this research is to develop an effective method for classifying disaster images into their respective categories using a combination of feature extraction and Graph Convolutional Networks (GCNs) with Monte Carlo Dropout (MCD) for uncertainty estimation. The problem can be formally stated as follows:

Given a set of disaster images $\mathcal{I} = \{I_1, I_2, \ldots, I_n\}$ where each image I_i belongs to one of the C disaster categories $\mathcal{C} = \{c_1, c_2, \ldots, c_C\}$, the task is to assign each image I_i a label c_j such that $c_j \in \mathcal{C}$.

Table 5.1: Summary of reviewed studies

Reference	Objective	Data Sources	Methodology	Findings
[160]	Investigate drone usage in flood disaster management	Real-world flood images from diverse sources	DenseNet and Inception V3 CNN models	Achieved 81% accuracy with DenseNet and 83% with Inception V3
[161]	Develop a rapid and effective disaster classification network, D-Net	Various natural disaster datasets plus fashion_mnist and cifar_100	D-Net algorithm, Transformer network, and CNN	Improved precision (1.6%–43.5% over CNN, 3.9%–25.9% over Transformer), FLOPs reduction, AUC 0.993
[162]	Create a robust system for natural disaster detection based on multispectral images	4428 natural images	CNN architecture	Sensitivity 97.54%, Specificity 98.22%, Accuracy 99.92%, Precision 97.79%, F1-score 97.97%
[163]	Develop a deep learning model (BNGCNN) for early earthquake detection	Multi-station, three-component waveform data	CNN and GNN models	Evaluated using Mean Absolute Error
[164]	Create a lightweight disaster classification model with improved accuracy and reduced computational complexity	Grad-Cam Dataset	SDS-Network algorithm	Accuracy 98%

5.3.1 Feature Extraction

We utilize a pre-trained ResNet50 model to extract high-dimensional feature representations for each disaster image. Let $f_i \in \mathbb{R}^d$ denote the feature vector extracted from image I_i, where d is the dimensionality of the feature space.

5.3.2 Graph Construction and Classification using GCNs with Monte Carlo Dropout

We construct a graph $G = (V, E)$ where each node $v_i \in V$ corresponds to a disaster image I_i and edges $e_{ij} \in E$ represent the similarity between images I_i and I_j. The edges are determined based on the K-nearest neighbors (KNN) in the feature space. A GCN with MCD is then employed to learn node embeddings and classify each node into one of the disaster categories while providing uncertainty estimates for the predictions.

Graph Construction

To construct the graph G, we first compute the pairwise distances between the feature vectors of the images. For each image I_i, we identify its k-nearest neighbors based on the Euclidean distance in the feature space. An edge e_{ij} is created between nodes v_i and v_j if I_j is among the k-nearest neighbors of I_i. This results in an adjacency matrix $A \in \{0, 1\}^{n \times n}$ where $A_{ij} = 1$ if there is an edge between v_i and v_j, and 0 otherwise. Here, n denotes the total number of disaster images in the dataset.

Graph Convolutional Network with MCD

The GCN model performs classification on the constructed graph G. Let $X \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times d}$ represent the matrix of input features, with each row corresponding to the feature vector f_i of an image I_i. The GCN updates the node features using the following layer-wise

propagation rule:

$$H^{(l+1)} = \sigma\left(\hat{A}H^{(l)}W^{(l)}\right) \tag{5.1}$$

where $H^{(l)}$ denotes the feature matrix at layer l, $W^{(l)}$ is the weight matrix for layer l, $\sigma(\cdot)$ represents an activation function such as ReLU, and $\hat{A}$ is the normalized adjacency matrix of the graph. Here, n is the number of nodes (disaster images) and d is the dimension of the feature space.

Initially, $H^{(0)} = X$. The final layer's output, $H^{(L)}$, is processed through a softmax function to derive the class probabilities for each node. During inference, MCD is applied to obtain multiple stochastic forward passes, providing a distribution of predictions that can be used to estimate the model's uncertainty.

Uncertainty Estimation with MCD

To estimate the uncertainty of the predictions, we perform T forward passes through the GCN model with dropout enabled. The final prediction for each node is obtained by averaging the T stochastic predictions, and the uncertainty score is calculated as the standard deviation of these predictions. This approach allows us to quantify the model's confidence in its predictions.

Objective Function

The training goal is to minimize the cross-entropy loss between the predicted labels and the actual labels for the nodes in the training set. Let y_i be the ground truth label for node v_i, where i ranges over all nodes in the training set, and $p_{i,c}$ be the predicted probability of node v_i belonging to class c, where c ranges over all possible classes C. The loss function is defined as:

$$\mathcal{L} = -\sum_{i \in \mathcal{T}} \sum_{c=1}^{C} y_{ic} \log p_{ic} \tag{5.2}$$

where $\mathcal{T}$ is the set of training nodes, y_{ic} is the indicator function that is 1 if node v_i has label c and 0 otherwise, and p_{ic} is the predicted probability that node v_i belongs to class c.

By leveraging the power of feature extraction and GCNs for capturing the relational information between disaster images, combined with MCD for uncertainty estimation, our approach aims to improve classification performance and provide a robust and trustworthy framework for disaster image classification. The proposed method addresses the challenge of capturing complex visual patterns and interdependencies between different disaster types, thus enhancing the accuracy, reliability, and trustworthiness of disaster response systems.

5.4 Methodology

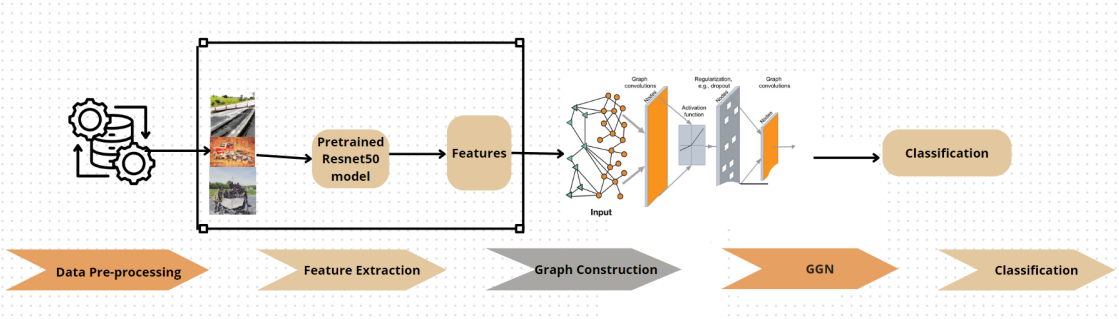

Figure 5.1: Framework Architecture

This section provides a comprehensive overview of the TDC-GCN model architecture. The figure outlines the entire workflow of our approach, which is divided into several critical steps: data preprocessing, feature extraction, graph construction, and GCN-based classification with uncertainty estimation.

5.4.1 Dataset Description

The dataset used in this study was sourced from Kaggle. It comprises images representing various disaster categories, each uniquely classified as follows:

- **DI:** Damaged Infrastructure
- **FD:** Fire Disaster
- **HD:** Human Damage
- **LD:** Land Disaster
- **ND:** Non Damage
- **WD:** Water Disaster

These categories encompass a diverse range of disaster scenarios, providing a comprehensive and realistic dataset for training and evaluating our classification models.

5.4.2 Data Preprocessing

The dataset for this study includes images from multiple disaster categories as described in the section before. The data preprocessing procedure involves the following steps:

- **Image Resizing:** Each image is adjusted to dimensions of 224×224 pixels to align with the input size specifications of the ResNet50 model.
- **Normalization:** The images undergo normalization using the mean and standard deviation values from the ImageNet dataset. Specifically, the mean values applied are $[0.485, 0.456, 0.406]$, and the standard deviations are $[0.229, 0.224, 0.225]$.

The preprocessing is implemented using the `torchvision.transforms` module in PyTorch.

Figure 5.2: A sample image from the dataset depicting a Fire Disaster.

5.4.3 Feature Extraction

We utilize a pre-trained ResNet50 model to extract features from the images. The model, pre-trained on the ImageNet dataset, is employed in evaluation mode to prevent gradient calculations. Features are extracted from the penultimate layer, just before the final fully connected layer, resulting in feature vectors of dimension 2048.

- The images are processed through the ResNet50 model, and the output from the penultimate layer serves as the feature vector for each image.
- These feature vectors are then saved for subsequent analysis.

5.4.4 Graph Construction

To model the relationships between images, we construct a graph where each node represents an image and edges denote the similarity between images. The process of constructing the graph includes the following steps:

- **Nearest Neighbors Calculation:** The k-nearest neighbors (KNN) for each image are determined based on the Euclidean distances between their feature vectors. For this study, we set $k = 5$, ensuring that each image is connected to its five closest neighbors.
- **Graph Creation:** A graph $G = (V, E)$ is created where each node $v_i \in V$ corresponds to an image, and an edge $e_{ij} \in E$ is formed if image I_j is one of the KNN of image I_i. This graph is built using the NetworkX library and subsequently converted into a PyTorch Geometric data object.

The adjacency matrix of the graph is normalized to ensure stability during the training of the GCN.

5.4.5 Graph Convolutional Network with MCD

Our GCN model is structured to utilize the graph format for image classification tasks. The model's architecture includes the following components:

- **Input Layer:** This layer accepts the feature vectors extracted from the images.
- **GCN Layers:** The model incorporates two graph convolutional (GCN) layers:
  - The first GCN layer applies graph convolution operations to the input features, followed by a ReLU activation function.
  - Dropout is used after this layer to mitigate overfitting. We employ MCD to estimate uncertainty and improve trust-awareness in our model.
  - The second GCN layer processes the intermediate features to generate the final output features for each node.
- **Output Layer:** The final node features from the second GCN layer are passed through a softmax function to compute the class probabilities for each image.

The model parameters are optimized using the Adam optimizer with a learning rate of 0.01, and the cross-entropy loss function is used for training. The integration of MCD enhances our model's trust awareness by estimating uncertainty and providing insights into the model's confidence levels.

5.4.6 Uncertainty Estimation with MCD

To estimate the uncertainty of the predictions, we perform multiple forward passes through the GCN model with dropout enabled. Specifically, we execute T stochastic forward passes and obtain a distribution of predictions for each node. The final prediction is determined by averaging the T predictions, and the uncertainty score is calculated as the standard deviation of these predictions. This approach allows us to quantify the model's confidence in its predictions, adding a layer of trustworthiness to the classification results.

5.4.7 Training and Evaluation

To facilitate the training and evaluation processes, the dataset is partitioned into training (TR), validation (VAL), and test (TST) sets. The following masks are created to identify the nodes belonging to each set:

- **TR Mask:** Identifies the nodes used for training the model.
- **VAL Mask:** Identifies the nodes used for validating the model during training to tune hyperparameters and prevent overfitting.
- **TST Mask:** Identifies the nodes used for evaluating the final model performance.

The training process involves the following steps:

- In each epoch, the model performs a forward pass to compute the output for the training nodes.
- The loss is computed using the cross-entropy loss function.
- Backpropagation is performed to update the model parameters.

The VAL set is employed to adjust hyperparameters and mitigate overfitting, whereas the TST set is utilized to assess the final performance of the model.

5.4.8 Hyperparameter Tuning

This subsection details the outcomes of hyperparameter tuning for the disaster image classification task using the TDC-GCN model. A series of experiments were conducted to identify the optimal values for the dropout rate, hidden channels, and learning rate. The experiments and their corresponding validation and test accuracies, along with precision, recall, and F1-scores, are summarized in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2: Hyperparameter Tuning Results

Exp.	Dropout	Hidden	LR	Val Acc.	Test Acc.
1	0.0	16	0.01	0.9704	0.9741
2	0.0	16	0.001	0.9601	0.9653
3	0.0	32	0.01	0.9194	0.9234
4	0.0	32	0.001	0.9628	0.9663
5	0.5	16	0.01	0.9756	0.9748
6	0.5	16	0.001	0.9638	0.9673
7	0.5	32	0.01	0.9725	0.9734
8	0.5	32	0.001	0.9659	0.9666

The best-performing model, indicated in Experiment 5, utilized a dropout rate of 0.5, hidden channels (hidden) of 16, and a learning rate (LR) of 0.01. This configuration achieved a validation accuracy of 0.9756 and a test accuracy of 0.9748.

The results indicate that including dropout regularization and optimizing the hidden channel size and learning rate significantly improve model performance. These hyperparameters were selected based on their ability to maximize validation accuracy while maintaining high test accuracy.

5.5 Experiments and Results

This section presents the experimental setup and results of the proposed disaster image classification method using GCN with MCD for uncertainty estimation. The experiments are designed to evaluate the model's performance in terms of accuracy, precision, recall, F1 score, and uncertainty.

5.5.1 Experimental Setup

The experiments were conducted on a machine with an NVIDIA GTX 1080 GPU and 32 GB of RAM. The implementation was done using Python with PyTorch and PyTorch Geometric libraries. We used the dataset of disaster images categorized into multiple classes. The dataset is split into TR, VAL, and TST sets to ensure a comprehensive model evaluation. The key details of the experimental setup are as follows:

- **Dataset:** The dataset contains images from various disaster categories. It is divided into 70% TR, 15% VAL, and 15% TST sets.
- **Feature Extraction:** Feature extraction is performed using a pre-trained ResNet50 model. The output from the penultimate layer, which consists of 2048-dimensional feature vectors, serves as the input for the GCN model.

- **Graph Construction:** A k-nearest neighbors graph is constructed with $k = 5$, connecting each image node to its five most similar images based on Euclidean distance in the feature space.
- **GCN Model:** The GCN model consists of two GCN layers with hidden dimensions of 64 and an output dimension equal to the number of classes.
- **MCD:** Dropout is applied to the GCN layers with a dropout rate of 0.5. During inference, MCD is performed by enabling dropout during the prediction phase to estimate the uncertainty.
- **Training:** The model undergoes training using the Adam optimizer with a fixed learning rate of 0.01. The training process utilizes the cross-entropy loss function, and the model is trained iteratively for a total of 100 epochs.

5.5.2 Evaluation Metrics

The model's performance is assessed using conventional metrics including accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score. Additionally, uncertainty is estimated using the standard deviation of predictions obtained from multiple MCD runs.

5.5.3 Confusion Matrix and Key Metrics

The confusion matrix is a key tool for evaluating classification models. It is organized into four quadrants, representing predicted and actual class labels. The elements within the confusion matrix are defined in Table 5.3 as follows:

Table 5.3: Confusion Matrix for Multi-Class Disaster Image Classification

Predicted	**DI**	**FD**	**HD**	**LD**	**ND**	**WD**
Actual						
DI	TDI	FFD	FHD	FLD	FND	FWD
FD	FDI	TFD	FHD	FLD	FND	FWD
HD	FDI	FFD	THD	FLD	FND	FWD
LD	FDI	FFD	FHD	TLD	FND	FWD
ND	FDI	FFD	FHD	FLD	TND	FWD
WD	FDI	FFD	FHD	FLD	FND	TWD

Here, the confusion matrix is used for multi-class disaster image classification, with each label corresponding to a different disaster category in the Comprehensive Disaster Dataset (CDD).

5.5.4 Evaluation Metrics Formulas

The previous metrics are crucial ones derived from the confusion matrix elements. They are calculated as follows:

$$\text{Accuracy (Ac)} = \frac{\sum_i T_i}{\sum_i (T_i + \sum_{j \neq i} F_{ij})} \tag{5.3}$$

$$\text{Precision (Pr)} = \frac{T_i}{T_i + \sum_{j \neq i} F_{ji}} \tag{5.4}$$

$$\text{Recall (Re)} = \frac{T_i}{T_i + \sum_{j \neq i} F_{ij}} \tag{5.5}$$

$$\text{F1-score} = 2 \times \frac{\text{Pr} \times \text{Re}}{\text{Pr} + \text{Re}} \tag{5.6}$$

5.5.5 Results

The results of the experiments are summarized in Table 5.4. The proposed method achieves competitive performance across various metrics, demonstrating its effectiveness in classifying disaster images.

Table 5.4: Performance of the TDC-GCN model

Class	**Precision**	**Recall**	**F1-score**
Damaged_Infrastructure	0.93	0.95	0.94
Fire_Disaster	0.97	0.97	0.97
Human_Damage	0.91	0.93	0.92
Land_Disaster	0.97	0.79	0.87
Non_Damage	0.99	0.99	0.99
Water_Disaster	0.92	0.89	0.91
Accuracy		0.97	
Macro avg	0.95	0.92	0.93
Weighted avg	0.97	0.97	0.97

5.5.6 Uncertainty Estimation

To estimate the uncertainty of the predictions, we performed MCD by running 100 forward passes with dropout enabled during inference. The standard deviation of these predictions provides a measure of uncertainty. The results indicate that the model has low uncertainty for most classes, with slightly higher uncertainty for classes with fewer samples. We found the average uncertainty across all classes to be 0.3.

5.5.7 Comparison with Baseline Methods

To further validate the effectiveness of the proposed method, we compare its performance with baseline methods, including a simple CNN and a traditional machine learning classifier (SVM) using extracted features. The results are summarized in Table 5.5.

The proposed TDC-GCN method outperforms the baseline methods in all evaluation metrics, highlighting the advantage of incorporating relational information between images.

Table 5.5: Comparison of the proposed GCN-based method with baseline methods

Method	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1-Score
CNN	81.3%	80.8%	81.1%	80.9%
SVM	89.1%	88.3%	89.1%	87.2%
TDC-GCN (Ours)	**97.5%**	**97.56%**	**97.1%**	**97.0%**

5.5.8 Ablation Study

An ablation study was conducted to evaluate the impact of each component in the TDC-GCN model. The results confirmed the contribution of the graph structure and the feature extraction process to the overall performance.

Table 5.6: Ablation Study Results

Component	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1-score
Without GCN	72.0%	67.7%	72.1%	62.0%
Without Feature Extraction	81.3%	78.9%	81.6%	74.9%
With All Components	**97.5%**	**97.6%**	**97.1%**	**97.0%**

5.5.9 Discussion

The results from our experiments underscore the effectiveness of the proposed TDC-GCN model. Table 5.4 demonstrates that our model achieves high performance across various metrics, with an overall accuracy of 97.5%. This robust performance across multiple classes highlights the model's capability to accurately classify different disaster types.

Class-wise Performance Analysis

The class-wise performance metrics indicate that our model performs consistently well across all disaster categories. For instance, the Non_Damage class, which comprises the majority of the samples, shows near-perfect precision and recall values (0.99 for both), underscoring the model's proficiency in handling imbalanced datasets. Other classes such as Damaged_Infrastructure and Fire_Disaster also exhibit high precision and recall, reflecting the model's ability to differentiate between various disaster types effectively. The slightly lower recall for the Land_Disaster class suggests that further refinement might be needed for categories with fewer samples, as the limited data can impact the model's ability to generalize.

Ablation Study Insights

The ablation study, presented in Table 5.6, highlights the critical contributions of the graph structure and the feature extraction process to the overall performance of the model. Removing the TDC-GCN component results in a substantial drop in accuracy (from 97.5% to 72.0%), precision (from 97.5% to 67.7%), recall (from 97.1% to 72.1%), and F1-score (from 97.0% to 62.0%). This significant decrease underscores the importance of leveraging graph-based representations to capture spatial and relational information among image features. Similarly, eliminating the feature extraction process leads to a notable decline in

performance metrics, which demonstrates the necessity of effective feature extraction for achieving high classification accuracy.

Comparison with Baseline Methods

The comparison presented in Table 5.5 underscores the substantial performance leap achieved by our proposed TDC-GCN model over traditional baseline methods. Notably, the CNN-only model, which operates without leveraging graph-based information, achieves an accuracy of 81.3%. In stark contrast, our GCN-based approach attains a remarkable accuracy of 97.5%, showcasing a significant improvement in classification accuracy.

The CNN's limitation in capturing relational information and global context becomes evident when compared to the TDC-GCN model's comprehensive utilization of both local and global features. By incorporating graph neural networks alongside traditional convolutional layers, our model demonstrates superior precision, recall, and F1-score, indicating its adeptness in discerning intricate patterns and relationships within the disaster image dataset.

The substantial accuracy gap between the CNN and TDC-GCN (97.5%) reaffirms the pivotal role of graph-based learning in enhancing classification accuracy, especially in domains where relational structures play a crucial role in data interpretation and decision-making.

Additionally, we compare our TDC-GCN model with the SVM baseline. The SVM model achieves an accuracy of 89.1%, showcasing its effectiveness in classification tasks. However, the TDC-GCN model outperforms SVM in terms of accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score, highlighting the superior performance of our proposed method.

This comparison serves as a testament to the effectiveness of our proposed TDC-GCN method in leveraging both local and global feature information, thereby providing a robust and accurate framework for disaster image classification.

Implications for Disaster Management

The high performance of the proposed model has significant implications for disaster management. Accurate and timely classification of disaster types is crucial for effective response and resource allocation. Our model's ability to reliably distinguish between various disaster types can aid in the rapid identification and assessment of disaster situations, thereby enhancing the overall disaster response strategy.

Trust and Uncertainty Estimation

Using Monte Carlo Dropout (MCD), the model achieves an average uncertainty of 0.30 across all classes, enhancing trust in its predictions. This uncertainty estimation helps disaster response teams assess prediction confidence, which is critical for decision-making and resource allocation in high-stakes situations. The model's ability to classify disaster images efficiently and estimate uncertainty is especially valuable for crowdsourcing and social media applications, enabling faster and more accurate disaster response. The integration of uncertainty ensures reliable and trustworthy predictions, crucial for real-world disaster management efforts.

5.6 Conclusion

In this paper, we present TDC-GCN, a novel trust-aware GCN-based model for disaster image classification. Our model outperforms traditional methods like CNN and SVM, achieving an impressive accuracy of 97.5%. The inclusion of Monte Carlo Dropout (MCD) as a trust-aware layer not only enhances accuracy but also provides crucial uncertainty estimation, adding reliability to the classification results.

The integration of GCNs with CNNs effectively captures complex spatial and relational information, proving vital for accurate disaster classification. Our research highlights the potential of advanced machine learning techniques to revolutionize disaster response, offering a robust solution for processing and interpreting disaster images from various sources.

Future research could involve incorporating additional data sources like textual descriptions and real-time sensor data, as well as enhancing the trust-aware aspect by integrating trust scores and dynamically adjusting trust levels to improve decision-making in real-time disaster scenarios.

General Conclusion and Future Work

This thesis set out to address one of the most pressing challenges in modern artificial intelligence: the need for **trustworthy intelligent systems**. While the last decade has witnessed unprecedented advances in machine learning and graph-based methods, real-world deployment still faces persistent concerns regarding reliability, fairness, transparency, and robustness. This work responded to these challenges by proposing a unified framework that integrates trust evaluation at both the data level—through Knowledge Graphs—and the modeling level—through trust-aware graph neural networks.

Summary of Contributions

The contributions of this thesis span theoretical foundations, methodological innovations, and practical applications:

- **Trust in Knowledge Graphs:** We introduced a structured taxonomy of trust dimensions in KGs, including accuracy, reliability, and provenance. We surveyed and analyzed state-of-the-art approaches for KG trust enhancement, including embedding-based, path-based, and hybrid methods. This survey work has been developed into a dedicated publication.
- **Trust in AI Models:** We investigated how trust in AI can be achieved through explainability, fairness, robustness, privacy, and accountability. We analyzed both knowledge-aware and non-knowledge-aware approaches, highlighting the role of KGs in improving AI transparency and uncertainty estimation. This state of the art has been published in an IEEE conference, marking a key milestone in advancing research on trust-aware AI.
- **Trust-Aware Recommender Systems (GUITARES):** We designed and implemented GUITARES, a novel Graph Attention Network-based recommender system that integrates user trust, item confidence from external knowledge bases, and structural learning on user–item graphs. Unlike traditional systems, GUITARES consistently outperformed baselines and state-of-the-art models, while also demonstrating strong **scalability** across datasets and configurations. This contribution has been accepted for publication in the *Journal of Supercomputing*.
- **Trust-Aware Real-World Applications:** We extended our framework to high-stakes domains. In disaster image classification, we combined CNN-based feature extraction with GNN modeling and Monte Carlo dropout, offering uncertainty-aware predictions in safety-critical scenarios. This work has already been published at an international conference. In the medical domain, we developed GraphSkinUQ,

the first trust-aware skin cancer classification pipeline that unifies CNN embeddings, graph-based reasoning, and uncertainty quantification. This work has been submitted to a leading journal and is under revision.

Together, these contributions highlight the versatility of trust-aware GNN architectures, from recommender systems to healthcare and disaster management, proving that trust signals and uncertainty modeling can substantially improve both accuracy and reliability in practice.

Limitations

Despite these achievements, several limitations remain. First, scalability challenges persist when extending trust-aware GNNs to extremely large-scale industrial knowledge graphs, requiring further optimization in terms of memory efficiency and distributed computation. Second, the definition and measurement of trust itself remain partially subjective, particularly in human-centered domains where social and cultural factors influence perceptions of fairness and reliability. Finally, although uncertainty quantification improves interpretability, it does not fully solve the challenge of explaining *why* a model makes a particular decision, which remains a key demand in responsible AI.

Future Directions

Building on this work, several promising directions can be pursued:

1. **Scalable Trust-Aware Architectures:** Developing lightweight GNN models and distributed training strategies to scale trust-aware recommendations and classification tasks to industrial-size datasets.
2. **Multimodal Trust Modeling:** Extending trust-aware methods to integrate text, image, and temporal data within knowledge graphs, thereby capturing richer trust signals.
3. **Human-in-the-Loop Trust Estimation:** Combining automated trust modeling with user feedback and domain expertise to refine predictions in sensitive domains such as healthcare or disaster management.
4. **Regulatory Alignment:** Embedding trust-aware methods within the broader context of AI governance frameworks, ensuring compliance with ethical and legal standards such as GDPR or emerging AI Acts.
5. **Cross-Domain Generalization:** Extending trust-aware frameworks to other critical domains, including finance, cybersecurity, and education, to validate the robustness and adaptability of the proposed methods.

Closing Remarks

This thesis demonstrated that by embedding trust at the very core of intelligent systems—both in data and in models—it is possible to advance towards AI that is not only accurate but also reliable, transparent, and socially acceptable. From the methodological innovations of GUITARES to the practical applications in medicine and disaster response,

the findings presented here provide a roadmap for the next generation of trustworthy AI systems. The journey towards fully trust-aware artificial intelligence is ongoing, but the contributions of this thesis represent a significant step forward in ensuring that intelligent systems can be confidently deployed in the service of individuals and society.

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