World Journal of Advanced Engineering Technology and Sciences

eISSN: 2582-8266

Cross Ref DOI: 10.30574/wjaets

Journal homepage: https://wjaets.com/

(Review Article)

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Smart assistive stick for visually impaired people

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World Journal of Advanced Engineering Technology and Sciences, 2025, 14(02), 110-116

Publication history: Received on 29 December 2025; revised on 04 February 2025; accepted on 07 February 2025

Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.30574/wjaets.2025.14.2.0044

Abstract

The "Smart Assistive Stick for Visually Impaired People" uses sophisticated real-time object identification and audio feedback to improve mobility and safety for those with visual impairments. The YOLO (You Only Look Once) object detection method is used by the system to quickly identify and recognize nearby obstacles. The stick's incorporation of an aural feedback mechanism enhances navigation in a variety of contexts by providing the user with vital environmental information.

This study examines the state of assistive technology, identifies gaps in current solutions, and presents our system's innovative method of fusing real-time aural help with computer vision. Along with suggested fixes to improve system reliability, major issues like accuracy under various lighting circumstances and real-time processing constraints are discussed. Additionally, this evaluation assesses how well the system performs in real-world situations and investigates its possibilities for further development, such as better item detection models, sensor integration, and wider applications in smart environments. With this project, we hope to make a contribution to the expanding field of assistive technologies by giving people with visual impairments a safer navigation aid that is easier to use and more effective.

Keywords: Yolo algorithm; Real-time audio feedback; Mobility aid; Computer vision; Obstacle detection; Assistive technology; visually impaired navigation

1. Introduction

Our social connections, stress-reaction mechanisms, and decision-making are all impacted by mental health. It consists of our feelings, ideas, and deeds. Mental health is crucial at every stage of life, including early childhood and adolescence.

Even though stress can occasionally be uplifting and even helpful, prolonged or extreme stress can be detrimental to our physical and mental health. Stress and mental health are related to every part of our life. Our mental health can have a big impact on how we manage stress, and vice versa. Our mental health can affect how we perceive and react to situations. Developing appropriate coping mechanisms is crucial for preserving mental well-being and successfully handling stress.

Suicide is the fourth most common cause of death for those between the ages of 15 and 29.[24] According to studies, our stress levels and mental tiredness can be measured using a variety of deep learning and machine learning techniques. EEG signals have been used in the majority of methods for diagnosing and forecasting mental health. Signals from electroencephalography, or EEG, record the electrical activity of the brain. EEG data offers important information on how the brain works. For people with severe movement limitations, this technology offers enormous promise because it will enable them to operate gadgets and interact with their environment solely through brain activity. With

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a focus on different models and approaches, this paper offers a comprehensive review of studies on the use of Brain-Computer Interface (BCI) technology for mental tiredness detection.

2. Literature Survey

- In this paper the proposed methodology utilizes Raspberry-Pi 4B, Camera, Ultrasonic sensor and Arduino mounted on the stick of the individual. individual. We take pictures of the scene and afterwards pre-process these pictures with the help of Viola Jones and TensorFlow Object Detection algorithm. The said techniques are used to detect objects. We also used an ultrasonic sensor mounted on a servomotor to measure the distance between the blind person and obstacles. The presented research utilizes simple calculations for its execution, and detects the obstructions with a notably high efficiency.
- In this paper blind and visually impaired people face different challenges when navigating indoors and outdoors. In this context, we suggest developing an obstacle detection system based on a modified YOLO v5 neural network architecture. The suggested system is capable of recognizing and locating a set of landmark indoor and outdoor objects that are extremely useful for Blind and Visually Impaired (BVI) navigation aids. Training and evaluation experiments were conducted using two datasets: the IODR dataset for indoor object detection and the MS COCO dataset for outdoor object detection. We used several optimization strategies, such as model width scaling, quantization, and channel pruning, to guarantee that the suggested work is implemented in embedded devices in a lightweight manner. The proposed system was successful in achieving results that were extremely competitive in terms of processing time as well as the precision of obstacle detection.

3. Related works

3.1. Object Detection and the YOLO Algorithm

- Research: Farhadi, A., & Redmon, J. (2018). YOLOv3: A Small Step Forward.
- Goal: To increase the speed and accuracy of real-time object identification, YOLOv3 was created as an improvement over previous iterations.
- Key Contributions: YOLOv3 is unique because of its quick processing speed, which makes it perfect for applications that need to make decisions in real time. To identify objects in pictures and videos, it makes use of

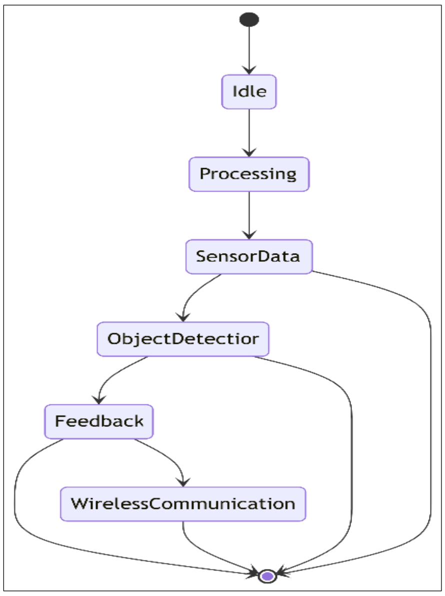

Figure 1 System Architecture of Smart Assistive Stick for Visually Impaired People

3.2. Ultrasonic Sensor-Based Guide Cane Systems

- Study: Bai, Y., & Lian, S. (2017). Smart Guide `Cane System Using Ultrasonic Sensors.
- Objective: The paper presents the development of a guide cane that uses ultrasonic sensors to detect obstacles and provide feedback to the user.

- Key Contributions: The research showcases how low-cost ultrasonic sensors can be used for precise, real-time obstacle detection. The system provides feedback through vibration to guide visually impaired individuals.
- Impact: Provides valuable insights into the practicality and accuracy of ultrasonic sensors for obstacle detection, reinforcing your decision to use them in your project.

3.3. LIDAR and Vision-Based Obstacle Detection

- Study: Yang, Z. et al. (2020). LIDAR and Vision-based Obstacle Detection System.
- Objective: This paper examines the use of LIDAR combined with computer vision techniques for obstacle detection.
- Key Contributions: LIDAR provides highly accurate, long-range detection, while computer vision adds the ability to identify and classify different types of obstacles. The integration of both enhances detection accuracy and responsiveness.
- Impact: Enhances the range of obstacle detection, allowing for better navigation in environments where obstacles may not be easily detected by ultrasonic sensors alone.

3.4. Comparative Study of Obstacle Detection Sensors

- Study: Gupta, A. et al. (2016). Comparative Study of Sensors for Obstacle Detection.
- Objective: The study compares different types of sensors, including ultrasonic, LIDAR, and infrared sensors, used for obstacle detection in assistive devices.
- Key Contributions: The study highlights the advantages and limitations of each sensor type. Ultrasonic sensors are praised for affordability, while LIDAR offers better accuracy at higher costs.
- Impact: Helps in designing a cost-effective yet accurate system by balancing different sensor types to meet the user's needs.

4. System overview

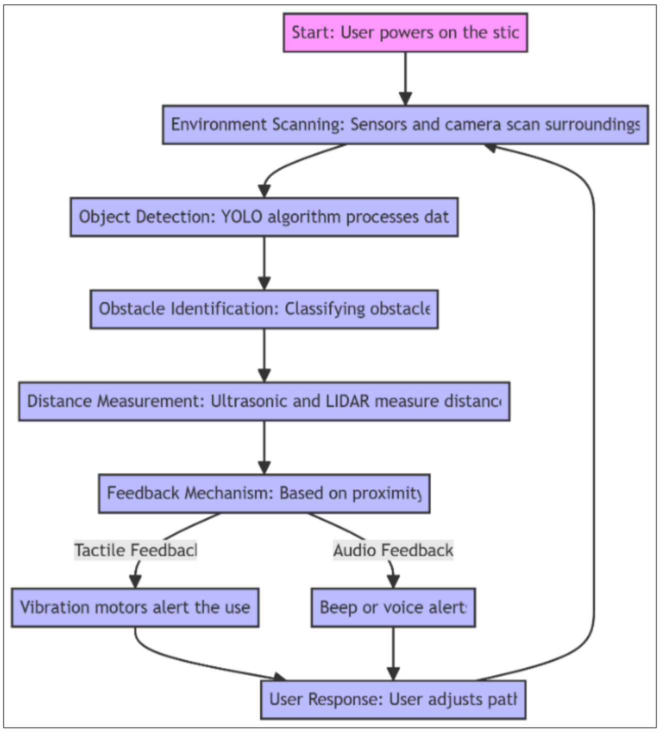

Figure 2 Operational Workflow of the Smart Assistive Stick for Visually Impaired People

The Smart Assistive Stick is an innovative mobility aid designed to enhance the independence and safety of visually impaired individuals. By integrating advanced sensor technologies, a microcontroller, and intelligent algorithms, this system provides real-time obstacle detection and feedback, empowering users to navigate their environment with confidence.

At the heart of the system are various sensors, including ultrasonic sensors that measure the distance to nearby objects. These sensors emit ultrasonic waves and calculate distances based on the time it takes for the sound waves to return. This enables the detection of obstacles in the user's path.

The ESP32 microcontroller serves as the central processing unit of the Smart Assistive Stick. It manages data from the sensors, runs algorithms for obstacle detection, and coordinates the various feedback mechanisms.

To facilitate user interaction and enhance navigation safety, the system incorporates feedback mechanisms. Vibration motors provide tactile feedback; when an obstacle is detected, the motors vibrate at varying intensities to indicate the distance and proximity of the obstacle. Additionally, an audio feedback system delivers auditory cues, such as beeps or voice alerts, to inform the user about detected obstacles and navigation instructions.

Powering the entire system is a battery, which is selected to ensure sufficient energy for extended use while maintaining a lightweight design. The proper choice of battery is crucial for the device's efficiency and practicality.

In conclusion, the Smart Assistive Stick integrates cutting-edge technologies to empower visually impaired individuals, significantly improving their independence and safety in everyday life. By providing real-time obstacle detection and user-friendly feedback systems, it serves as a vital tool for enhancing mobility and confidence in navigating various environments.

5. Technologies and methods used

The Smart Assistive Stick employs a combination of advanced technologies and methods to create an effective mobility aid for visually impaired individuals. Below is an overview of the key technologies and methods used in the project:

5.1. Sensor Technologies

- Ultrasonic Sensors: These sensors emit ultrasonic waves and measure the time taken for the waves to reflect back from obstacles. They provide distance measurements, enabling the detection of objects in the stick's path. This technology is effective for short-range obstacle detection.
- LIDAR (Light Detection and Ranging): LIDAR technology utilizes laser beams to measure distances accurately and create a detailed 3D map of the environment. This is especially useful for detecting smaller or more distant obstacles, enhancing the overall perception of the surroundings.
- Camera Module: A camera is integrated to capture real-time video feeds of the environment. It works in conjunction with object detection algorithms to identify obstacles and other relevant features in the user's surroundings.

5.2. Microcontroller

- ESP32: The ESP32 microcontroller serves as the core processing unit for the Smart Assistive Stick. It manages data from the various sensors, executes algorithms for object detection, and coordinates the feedback mechanisms. The ESP32 is chosen for its
- low power consumption, processing capabilities, and built-in Wi-Fi/Bluetooth features, enabling wireless communication.

5.3. Object Detection Algorithms

YOLO (You Only Look Once): The YOLO algorithm is utilized for real-time object detection. It analyzes the camera feed to identify and categorize objects within the environment quickly. YOLO is known for its speed and accuracy, making it ideal for applications where immediate feedback is crucial for user safety.

Machine Learning Techniques: Additional machine learning algorithms can be employed to improve object recognition capabilities, allowing the system to adapt to different environments and enhance accuracy over time.

5.4. Feedback Mechanisms

- Vibration Motors: The assistive stick is equipped with vibration motors that provide tactile feedback to the user. When an obstacle is detected, the motors vibrate, indicating the proximity and distance of the obstacle.
- Audio Feedback System: An audio output system delivers auditory cues, such as beeps or voice instructions, to inform users about detected obstacles and suggested navigation paths.

6. Evaluation

Evaluating the effectiveness of the Smart Assistive Stick for visually impaired individuals involves a comprehensive assessment of its performance, usability, and impact on users' mobility and independence. The evaluation can be categorized into several key areas.

Performance Evaluation focuses on two main aspects: object detection accuracy and obstacle detection range. The accuracy of the YOLO algorithm in identifying and classifying objects is tested using predefined datasets and real-time scenarios.

User Testing and Feedback is crucial to understanding the Smart Assistive Stick's usability in real-world conditions. Trials are conducted with visually impaired individuals who navigate various environments, such as indoors, outdoors, and crowded spaces, using the device.

In Functional Testing, the device's battery life is measured under typical usage conditions to ensure prolonged use without frequent recharging. This assessment includes recording total operational hours before the battery requires recharging and noting charging time.

Finally, the Impact on User Mobility and Independence is measured through mobility assessments that track changes in user mobility and confidence levels before and after using the Smart Assistive Stick. Metrics include speed of navigation, frequency of collisions or near misses, and overall navigation efficiency in various environments.

6.1. Applications

- **Urban Navigation**: The Smart Assistive Stick can facilitate safer navigation in urban environments, helping users avoid obstacles, detect street curbs, and identify pedestrian crossings. This capability can empower users to explore their surroundings with greater confidence and independence.
- **Indoor Navigation**: In addition to outdoor environments, the device can be adapted for indoor navigation within complex spaces such as shopping malls, museums, or public buildings
- **Social Interaction**: The device can support social interactions by providing users with information about nearby people and objects, which may help them engage more effectively in social situations
- **Healthcare Monitoring**: The integration of health monitoring features, such as fall detection or vital sign monitoring, can be an important application of the Smart Assistive Stick..
- **Personalized Feedback**: By using machine learning algorithms, the device can adapt its feedback mechanisms to suit individual user preferences

6.2. Future scope

- **Enhanced Sensor Fusion**: Future developments could focus on improving sensor fusion techniques, combining data from multiple sensors (ultrasonic, LIDAR, and cameras) for better environmental understanding
- **AI and Machine Learning**: Implementing advanced AI and machine learning algorithms can improve the stick's adaptability and predictive capabilities. For example, the device could learn from user behaviors and environmental changes, allowing it to optimize its feedback and navigation assistance.
- **Community and Social Network Features**: Developing community-oriented features, such as connecting users with local support groups or resources, can foster a sense of community and provide users with valuable information about accessible services and events in their area.
- **Environmental Adaptability Enhancements**: Continued research into sensor technology can lead to improved performance in challenging environments, such as extreme weather conditions or low-light situations. Enhanced adaptability can ensure reliable operation under various circumstances.
- **User Training and Education**: Providing training programs and resources for users on how to effectively utilize the Smart Assistive Stick can enhance its adoption and effectiveness.

7. Challenges and solutions

The development and implementation of the Smart Assistive Stick for visually impaired individuals face several challenges that need to be addressed to ensure its effectiveness, reliability, and user acceptance. Below are some key challenges along with potential solutions:

7.1. Sensor Limitations

- Challenge: Different environmental conditions, such as lighting and weather, can affect the performance of sensors (e.g., ultrasonic, LIDAR) used in the assistive stick
- Solution: Integrating multiple sensor types can enhance reliability. A hybrid approach that combines ultrasonic, LIDAR, and camera-based sensors can provide better adaptability across various environments

7.2. User Adaptation

- Challenge: Users may face difficulties in adapting to new technologies, especially older adults who might be less familiar with advanced assistive devices.
- Solution: Providing comprehensive training and support resources is crucial. Workshops, instructional videos, and one-on-one training sessions can help users become comfortable with the device.

7.3. Power Consumption

- Challenge: Continuous operation of sensors and microcontrollers can lead to rapid battery depletion, limiting the usability of the Smart Assistive Stick.
- Solution: Optimizing power management techniques can extend battery life. This includes using energy-efficient components, implementing sleep modes for sensors when not in use, and exploring solar charging options

7.4. Safety and Reliability

- Challenge: The device must be reliable and safe to prevent accidents. Any malfunction or false detection could lead to dangerous situations for users.
- Solution: Implementing robust testing protocols during development can help identify and rectify potential issues. Regular maintenance checks and software updates can ensure that the device operates reliably over time.

7.5. Cost and Accessibility

- Challenge: The cost of the Smart Assistive Stick may be prohibitive for some users, particularly in low-income communities.
- Solution: Exploring partnerships with non-profit organizations and government agencies can facilitate funding and subsidies for users in need.

8. Conclusion

The Smart Assistive Stick for visually impaired individuals embodies a transformative approach to mobility and independence. This innovative device leverages cutting-edge technologies, such as real-time object detection algorithms like YOLO and advanced sensor systems including ultrasonic and LIDAR, to significantly enhance the navigation capabilities of users.

Looking ahead, the future scope of the Smart Assistive Stick is promising. Continuous user feedback will drive ongoing improvements, ensuring the device remains aligned with the evolving needs of visually impaired individuals. Exploring advanced technologies—such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, and smart home integrations—opens avenues for enhancing the device's capabilities.

In conclusion, the Smart Assistive Stick stands as a beacon of innovation, bridging the gap between technology and the pressing needs of visually impaired individuals. By fostering independence, enhancing navigation safety, and promoting inclusivity, this project contributes to a vision of a more accessible society

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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