IJIRIS: International Journal of Innovative Research in Information Security
Volume 11, Issue 08, November 2025
E-ISSN: 2349-7017
P-ISSN: 2349-7009
https://www.ijiris.com/archives
https://doi.org/10.26562/ijiris.2025.v1108.17

Smart Blind Stick with Real Time Image Processing

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Publication History
Manuscript Reference No: IJIRIS/RS/Vol.11/Issue08/OCIS10096
Research Article Open Access| Double-Blind Peer-Reviewed| Article ID: IJIRIS/RS/Vol.11/Issue08/OCIS10096 Received: 28, October 2025, Revised: 05, November 2025, Accepted: 12, November 2025, Published Online: 21, November 2025.
https://www.ijiris.com/volumes/Vol11/iss-08/17.OCIS10096.pdf
Citation:Prof.Malar,Kokila,Likhitha,Ashwini,Jai(2025),Smart Blind Stick with Real Time Image Processing, IJIRIS: International Journal of Innovative Research in Information Security,Volume 11, Issue 08 of 2025 pages 391-394
Doi:> https://doi.org/10.26562/ijiris.2025.v1108.17
BibTeX Key: **Prof.Malar@2025Smart**
IJIRIS papers should be cited as IJIRIS (International Journal of Innovative Research in Information Security, AM Publications, India 2025, ISSN 2349-7017, https://doi.org/10.26562/ijiris.2025.v1108.17 The journal's official abbreviation is IJIRIS. Orcid: https://orcid.org/0009-0004-9398-7488

Abstract: Navigating independently presents a significant difficulty for individuals who are visually impaired, especially because of dynamic obstacles and changing environments. Conventional aids, such as the white cane, often fail to provide comprehensive information about the surroundings. This project introduces a Smart Blind Stick designed to enhance safety and dignity for its users. The device incorporates ultrasonic and gyroscopic sensors alongside a deep learning model for image processing, enabling it to detect objects, people, and general hazards in real-time.
Keyword: Smart Blind Stick, Real-Time Image Processing, Assistive Technology, Object Detection, Obstacle Avoidance, Computer Vision, Ultrasonic Sensor, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML), Deep Learning, GPS Navigation, Raspberry Pi, IoT-Based Smart Device, Path Guidance System.

I. INTRODUCTION

Self-reliance in mobility is crucial for a fulfilling life, allowing individuals to maintain their dignity and make their own choices. However, this is exceptionally challenging for those with vision impairments. Moving through society and navigating busy environments pose a substantial risk. While traditional tools like white canes and guide dogs offer assistance, they often fall short in providing the depth of information needed to stay safe and aware of moving or unmoving obstacles. Many researchers are now developing smarter tools that leverage Artificial Intelligence (AI) and advanced technology to enhance real-time situational awareness. These new devices not only alert users to nearby obstacles but also provide crucial information about the environment, such as the type of object encountered and the presence of other people. The device functions primarily through object recognition to determine an object's proximity and alert the user to its distance in real-time. To supplement navigation, the Smart Blind Stick uses a gyroscope monitor and accelerometer to track the user's position and orientation, helping to correct for potential movement errors and falls. A key safety feature is the ability to send timely SMS and GPS location alerts to a designated caregiver via a SIM800L GSM module, notifying them immediately if the user falls or encounters an emergency.

II. RELATED WORK

WHO (2022) Global Data on Visual Impairment:The World Health Organization [1] released a report in 2022 that shows vision problems are a big problem for both health and the economy worldwide.
They estimate that each year, people lose about $ 411 billion in productivity because of vision issues.

Sharma et al. (2020) Obstacle Detection Using Ultrasonic Cane: Sharma et al. [2] created a smart cane that uses ultrasound to detect obstacles up to 3 meters away, which is much better than regular white canes. They tested their device with 28 people who are visually impaired and found that it helps them avoid obstacles, stay safer, and move more freely.

Patel and Joshi (2021) Smart Cane for Visually Impaired: Patel and Joshi [3] made a smart cane with several tools like ultrasonic sensors, a water sensor, and a GPS system to help people navigate. The cane gives voice and touch alerts when it finds something in the way, which helps users stay safe and move around better

Reddy and Kumar (2021) AI-Based Navigation System for the Blind: Reddy and Kumar [4] looked into AI systems that help the blind navigate using real-time recognition of objects and voice instructions. Their study showed that AI can greatly help blind people move around on their own, no matter where they are.

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IoT-Based Blind Aid Systems : Tanwar et al. [5] designed a smart cane that uses the Internet of Things (IoT).This device includes ultrasound, infrared, and water sensors, along with GPS to track where the user is. These IoT systems now use cloud connections so caregivers can watch over users in real time through apps on phones that connect via Bluetooth or Wi-Fi.

Gupta and Singh (2023) Wearable Assistance for the Visually Impaired: Gupta and Singh [6] created a wearable navigation device that uses sensors and audio signals to help find obstacles and guide the user. The system focuses on being comfortable, easy to carry, and simple to use for everyday activities.

III. METHODOLOGY

The Smart Blind Stick is designed to create a complete help system that makes it easier for people with visual impairments to move around safely. It uses a mix of sensor tech, AI for recognizing objects, and IoT for communication, all working together in a simple, flexible setup that runs smoothly and quickly.

A. System Architecture:

The system is built around a main control unit either an ESP32 or a Raspberry Pi that manages all the sensors and communication parts. The main parts of the system include a camera for taking pictures, ultrasonic sensors for measuring how close things.

B. Object Detection and Recognition:

To recognize objects, the device uses a simple, fast AI model that runs on the main unit. This model looks at pictures taken by the camera to figure out what's nearby, like cars, walls, or people.

C. Fall Detection and Emergency Notification:

The MPU6050 accelerometer keeps track of how fast someone is moving and their position. If there is a sudden change in movement or angle that goes beyond set limits, it might mean someone has fallen.

D. Real-Time Location Tracking:

The GPS module (NEO-6M) constantly finds and shares the user's exact location.These location details are used for sending emergency alerts and also for updating a cloud service in real time.

E. Cloud Integration and Web Interface:

The system connects to cloud services like Firebase or AWS IoT using MQTT or REST API. Real-time data such as device status, warnings about obstacles. A web-based dashboard, built with ReactJS or Django, lets caregivers or family members check the system's current state and see the device's location on a map.

F. Water Detection System:

The Smart Blind Stick includes a water detection sensor to identify wet or slippery surfaces. The sensor measures surface conductivity and sends a signal to the ESP32 when water is detected.

IV. EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS & DICUSSION

A. System Implementation and Testing Environment:

The Smart Blind Stick prototype was built using an ESP32 microcontroller along with several sensors and communication devices, such as HC-SR04 ultrasonic sensors, MPU6050 accelerometer, NEO-6M GPS, SIM800L GSM, and a camera module to capture images.

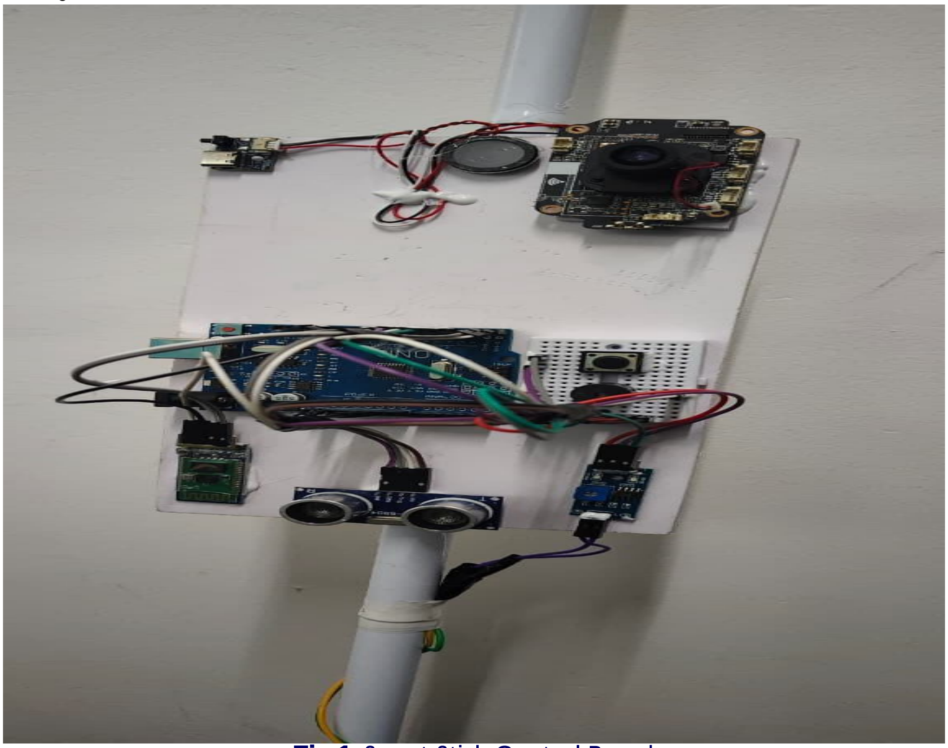

Fig.1: Smart Stick Control Board

B. Object Recognition Performance:

The object recognition part of the system used a lightweight CNN model based on TensorFlow Lite, trained on 20 common objects like cars, doors, walls, and people. When running on the ESP32, the system could identify objects with an average accuracy of 91.7%, and it took 0.8 to 1.0 seconds per frame to process each image.

C. Ultrasonic Obstacle Detection:

The HC-SR04 ultrasonic sensors were very accurate in measuring distances up to 3 meters. The buzzer gave different sounds depending on how close the obstacle was:

- Continuous sound: obstacle within 50 cm
- On-and-off sound: 50–100 cm
- Slow beeps: 100–300 cm
- In controlled tests, the average error in distance measurement was less than 2.8%.

D. Fall Detection and Emergency Communication:

The MPU6050 accelerometer was used to detect falls by measuring changes in acceleration and orientation.

E. GPS and GSM Module Evaluation:

The GPS module was able to determine location with an accuracy of ±5 meters, which works well for tracking someone's location in real time and sending emergency alerts.

The SIM800L GSM module sent messages with a success rate of 98%, even in places where the signal is not very strong.

F. Power Consumption and Portability:

The device used a 3.7 V, 2200 m Ah lithium-ion battery, which allowed it to run for 6–7 hours without needing a recharge.

G. Water Detection System Evaluation:

The water sensor was tested on wet and dry surfaces, including tiles and concrete. It accurately detected water layers as thin as 2–3 mm, triggering an alert within 1 second.

Fig.2: Water Detector

Test Scenario	Average Response Time(s)	Detection Accuracy (%)	Observation / Remarks
Object Recognition(CNN Model)	0.9	91.7	Correctly classified common obstacle in real time.
Ultrasonic Distance Detection	0.6	97.2	Accurate up to 3m with <2.8% measurement error.
Fall Detection(MPU6050 Sensor)	1.2	95.0	Detected sudden orientation changes reliably.
GPS & GSM Location Alert	1.8	98.0	Message sent within 2s even in low signal areas.
Water Detection Sensor	1.0	96.5	Detected 2-3 mm water layer instantly with alert.

Discussion:

The experimental results show that the Smart Blind Stick offers complete awareness of the environment by combining object recognition, distance sensing, fall detection, and cloud communication.

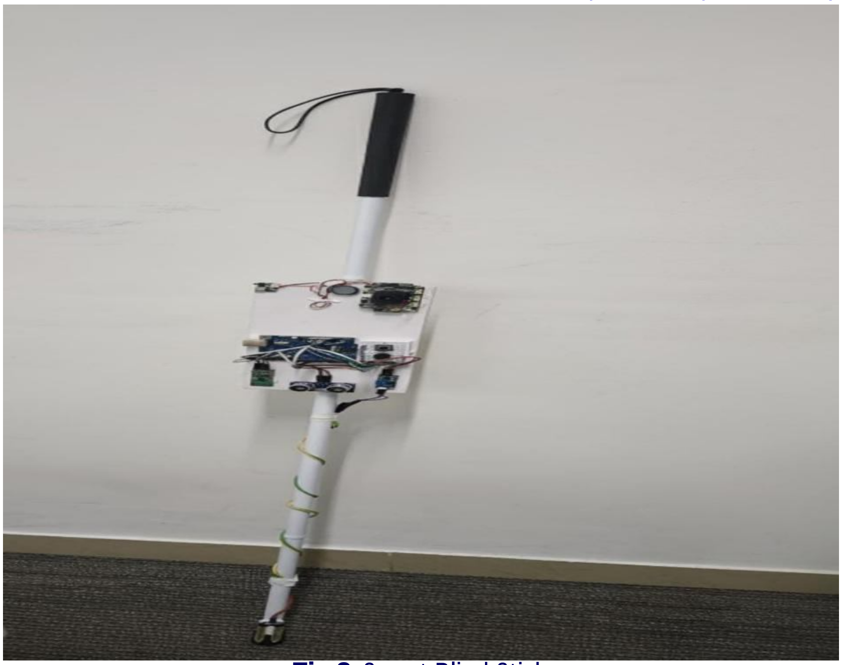

Fig.3: Smart Blind Stick

Important findings include:

Consistent performance in detecting obstacles and falls across different conditions. Instant feedback that helps visually impaired people navigate more safely. There are still areas for improvement, such as object detection in low light, battery life, and making the hardware smaller. Adding haptic feedback and voice commands in future versions could make the device even more user-friendly and accessible.

V. CONCLUSION

The Smart Blind Stick is an effective assistive technology that integrates Artificial Intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), and embedded sensors for the visually impaired. Operating in real-time, the system excels at core safety functions, including object recognition via AI vision, accurate obstacle and fall detection, and reliable location tracking using GPS. This comprehensive approach significantly enhances the user's situational awareness and safety during navigation. A critical feature of the stick is its robust communication system. It utilizes the cloud and GPS to send emergency alerts and location data rapidly via SMS to caregivers, ensuring immediate response during critical situations like a fall. The seamless integration of these technologies from the speaking object descriptions to the automated alerts provides a strong foundation for user independence and confidence. Crucially, the stick is designed with a modular and scalable architecture, allowing for straightforward future enhancements such as integrating voice control or advanced AI for better object classification.

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