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MONITORING AFFECTIVE STATES IN SMART MANUFACTURING OPERATORS WITH MULTIMODAL TOOLS

DILIP DWIVEDY[1], SHAILESH SINGH THAKUR[2], DR. SAVITA GAUTAM[3]

[1]ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, KALINGA UNIVERSITY, RAIPUR, INDIA.
e-mail:ku.dilipdwivedy@kalingauniversity.ac.in,0009-0000-5645-7104
[2]ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, KALINGA UNIVERSITY, RAIPUR, INDIA
e-mail: ku.shaileshsinghthakur@kalingauniversity.ac.in
[3]PROFESSOR, NEW DELHI INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT, NEW DELHI, INDIA.,
e-mail: savita.gautam@ndimdelhi.org, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7427-4579

Abstract

As the smart manufacturing domain evolves, human operators remain relevant but often not considered with respect to emotional and cognitive well-being. While efficient processes and automation have component technology, there has yet to see affective state monitoring as part of an operator's safety and performance system. We examined a psychological method to monitoring affective states in smart manufacturing environments using multimodal sensing tools. We examined the real-time screening of emotional and cognitive states of human operators through electroencephalography (EEG), eye-tracking, galvanic skin response (GSR), and posture sensors. With these tools, we can reveal stress, cognitive overload, fatigue, and disengagement; conditions that can invoke a direct impact on decision-making, response speed, and productivity.Built around the theories of emotional regulation and cognitive load, our research focused on how physiological responses can be inferred to describe the psychological states causing the responses. We put forth a theorized framework that combines multimodal data to constantly assess affective states of operators, which then provides the opportunity to make adaptively responsive and allow for human-centered system design. Our end goal is operator safety and performance improved through psychological awareness embedded into smart systems. This not only helps move the industrial world forward in its consideration for affective computing considerations, but advances sustainable and empathetic workplace practices in the age ofIndustry 4.0.

Keywords: Smart Manufacturing, Affective Computing, Multimodal Sensing, EEG, Eye-Tracking, Galvanic Skin Response (GSR), Cognitive Load, Emotional Regulation, Human Factors, Operator Monitoring, Stress Detection, Psychophysiology, Real-Time Assessment, Industry 4.0

I. INTRODUCTION

Smart manufacturing systems are aggressively reshaping production landscapes—via automation, cyber-physical systems, data science, etc.in the age of Industry 4.0. Even with this toolkit of poignant innovations, operators still have an important role—mainly organizational decision making, supervision, and resolution of problems. Traditionally, operators monitoring has focused on only physical safety, task completion, and productivity statistics with very little attention to internal psychological processes that alter human performance in a number of ways [1]. This is a broad gap in the current manufacturing system, real-time monitoring and/or response regarding operators' affective states of stress (remember behavioural arousal and psychological activation), cognitive overload (sometimes called cognitive fatigue, as it can stem from low situational awareness), and emotional fatigue [2] [6].

Affective computing, an interdisciplinary field comprised of psychology, computer science, and neuroscience, has beginning to provide some rich opportunities to assess operator performance, thereby beginning to close the gap between affective state and affective computing [4][11]. Affective computing can monitor and analyse physiological signals associated with emotional and cognitive processes in context in complex environments, and when designers, engineers, researchers, and developers begin to synthesize psychological thinking with operators work & operations, we will be able to support operator performance to not just advance their performance outcomes but behavioural health, ethical behaviour, settled mental health, and ultimately agency, ownership, and commitment to the work (for all those withdrawn contributors) they have and continue to accomplish [13].

Multimodal integration of EEG (electroencephalography), eye-tracking, galvanic skin response (GSR), and posture are some examples of instruments used to evaluate operators constantly, continuously, and in a non-invasive way during their work operations. This research aims to develop a real-time, multimodal monitoring framework for smart manufacturing environments, thereby enabling psychologically adaptive systems that respond to the human state not just behaviour [8].

II. AFFECTIVE STATES AND OPERATOR PERFORMANCE

2.1. Emotional Dynamics in Industrial Settings

A Psychophysiological Approach: To better understand the influence of affective states on operator performance, one needs knowledge of theory from psychology and observation from physiology. Affective statesemotional regulation (emotional management), arousal, valence (positive or negative emotional direction), and cognitive fatiguecombine significantly to produce how people sense, react to, and manage work in high demand situations like smart manufacturing [7]. Emotional regulation affects how an operator attentively focuses and maintains composure under varying levels of pressure. Higher arousal and corresponding cognitive fatigue contribute to bad judgement, and increased rates of errors in decision making.

2.2. Psychophysiological Theories Linking Mind and Body

The Cognitive Load Theory provides a foundation for exploring the interaction of task complexity and mental effort, and how those factors impact performance in environments in which cognitive resources get overwhelmed. The Transactional Model of Stress expands upon how people interpret stressors, as well as how they choose to proceed in high-pressure situations based upon the importance of perceived demands, and available coping resources [3]. The Transactional Model of Stress illustrates that challenges an individual deals with are inherently linked to both environmental conditions and an individual's internal state and vice versa [5]. Lastly, the James-Lange Theory posits that physiological (and visceral) responses precede emotional experiences; therefore, body monitoring movements might expose emotions hidden by semi-conscious resources at that time. By mapping these psychological constructs to physiological markerssuch as EEG patterns for cognitive load, GSR fluctuations for arousal, or eye-tracking metrics for attentional focuswe create a bridge between internal affective experiences and observable data. This psychophysiological perspective forms the basis for affect-aware monitoring in industrial settings [9].

III. HUMAN-IN-THE-LOOP IN INDUSTRY 4.0

3.1. Cognitive Demands of Smart Manufacturing Systems

A smart manufacturing environment, defined by myriad machines that enable real-time access to information and autonomous systems, is intended to increase efficiency and accuracy. However, as these environments are awash with technology and are more dynamic and automated than traditional settings, they also impose new cognitive and affective demands on human operators. As machines have become more intelligent and autonomous, the job of the human operator has evolved from manual execution to complex supervisory decision making and troubleshooting. In this changing environment, the mental load is likely to be elevated because operators experience a continuous demand to interpret data streams, use flexible cognitive resources to adapt to system feedback, and apply their skills in unpredictable situations, all of which increase cognitive load.

3.2. Psychological Risks in High-Tech Workspaces

The human-in-the-loop worker is not just overseeing automation - they are now working as part of human-machine teaming to achieve superior outcomes with systems and human effort. While this merging of people and technology expands the capabilities of the systems, it can also create an increased level of psychological pressure on humans - especially when weighing the consequences of real-time decisions. The interaction with such technology requires the operator to be tied to attention and incorporate flexibility to intervene in order to reorganize assignments that are changing as they unfold. The attentiveness to smart machines can rapidly lead to fatigue and emotional detachment, ultimately leading to burnout from a lack of strength resources. Unlike physical stressors, the psychological stressors we experience are typically invisible and accumulate slowly and can manifest in performance failures, safety risks, or point of no return in job satisfaction [10].

Table 1: Multimodal Sensors and Corresponding Affective State Indicators

Sensor Type	Signal Measured	Psychological Indicator	Affective State Detected
EEG	Brain wave activity	Cognitive workload, focus	Stress, mental fatigue
GSR	Skin conductance	Emotional arousal	Anxiety, excitement
Eye-Tracking	Gaze fixation, blink rate	Attention, visual engagement	Distraction, fatigue
HRV	Heart rate variability	Sympathetic/parasympathetic balance	Stress level
Posture Sensors	Body movement, orientation	Ergonomic strain, physical fatigue	Discomfort, fatigue

Table 1 useful as it balances a compact comparative overview of each sensor used in the study, the physiological signal, and the psychological (or affective) state for identification. At this point, it connects the technical components and the psychological purpose and shows readers in both engineering and psychology a clear rationale for including each tool.

Affective and cognitive among these employees need to be understood and acknowledged to help us create psychologically sustainable appropriate workplaces. Integrating affective monitoring into smart systems ensures that human contributions remain resilient, adaptive, and healthy amidst technological complexity.

IV. TECHNOLOGICAL AFFORDANCES FOR AFFECTIVE STATE DETECTION

The growth of non-invasive sensing technologies has enabled the development of multimodal systems to detect and interpret human affective states in real-time. In the smart manufacturing space, such tools could provide useful information about an operator's cognitive and emotion status, to support the operator's optimal level of performance and psychological safety. For instance, Electroencephalography (EEG) is a common neurophysiological measure which detects, monitors, and alters brain activity while an operator performs various tasks. EEG shifts in alpha asymmetry in the frontal brain have been linked to mental stress vs. mental focus, and emotional valence. EEG can directly signal cognitive load and affective involvement through shifts in neural oscillations especially in the regions of the prefrontal cortex.

Galvanic Skin Response (GSR) is a measurement of skin conductance directly linked to autonomic nervous system processes. GSR is a reliable indicator of emotional arousal and extreme peaks in GSR occur when operators experience heightened states of stress and alertness. GSR allows affective tracking in real-time as operators perform tasks, providing a moment-by-moment look at an operator's affective state. Eye-tracking technologies can provide information about an operator's visual attention, fatigue, and decision-making through measurements of fixation durations, saccade rates, and blink rate.

Heart Rate Variability (HRV) is a measure of the fluctuation of time between heart beats; an indicator of sympathetic activation associated with stress reactivity. In addition to HRV, posture sensors and motion tracking systems capture body orientation and movement behaviour to assess ergonomic stress and physical fatigue. Through a combination of these separate data streams via multimodal data fusion, a more nuanced and knowledgeable about affective states can provide timely intervention and adaptive responses from the system in smart manufacturing contexts.

V. TOWARD A FRAMEWORK FOR REAL-TIME EMOTION DETECTION

5.1. Scenario Design and Task Classification

To monitor the affective states of smart manufacturing operators, we utilize a systematic experimental design based on real-time multimodal observations [12]. The operator scenario is situated in a simulated smart factory with similar complexity and sensory-enrichment found in real-world industrial workplaces, such as operating machines continuously, human-machine interaction, and data-driven control [14]. Participants are to execute two different task categories. The first consists of repetitive routine tasks analogous to day-to-day tasks to simulate the environment; the second task category consists of a high-stress full-system failure event or work environment, where participants must perform under time-pressure to a system-level emergency. The first scenario allows to analyse the operator affective response in situational demands of daily operations; while second scenario permits to see the operator's affective responses during a more random set of intense workload demands.

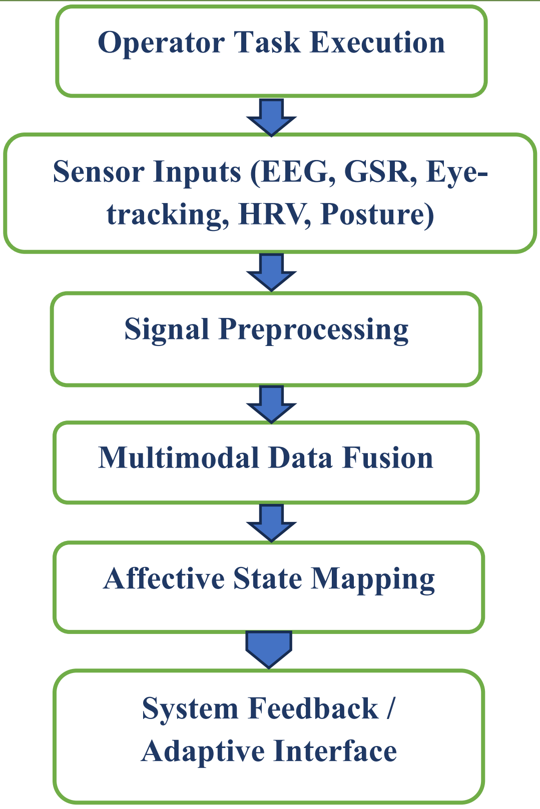

Figure 1: Framework for Real-Time Affective State Detection in Smart Manufacturing

Figure 1 represents the end-to-end process of monitoring operators' affective states using multimodal tools. At the beginning of the process is task execution in a smart manufacturing environment. The process transitions from there into the real-time collection of data using various sensors, e.g., EEG, GSR, eye-tracking, HRV, and posture. The data is then pre-processed, and the associated signals are combined using multimodal data fusion techniques. The fusion signals are mapped to task associated affective states such as stress, fatigue, or cognitive overload. Ultimately, the systems adaptive feedback responds to the affective states of the operator, which supports the operator while maintaining safety, mental health, and productivity.

5.2. Ethical Data Collection and Psychological Baselines

An affective states mapping protocol has been developed to structure the operators' cognitive, emotional and physiological responses to the task demands. During the experimental sessions, we will employ a multimodal sensor platform (e.g., EEG, GSR, eye-tracking and/or gaze control measures, heart-rate variability, posture measures) to collect continuous physiological data. All participants will be debriefed to ensure they are psychologically safe and aware of the monitor processes, given informed consent and possibility to leave the study at any time, and confidentiality kept, and everything will be as minimally invasive for the participants as possible. Prior to task execution, baseline psychological measurements are collected using validated self-report instruments such as the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) and the NASA Task Load Index (NASA-TLX). These benchmarks help interpret sensor data by providing individual affective and cognitive baselines, ensuring that real-time variations are assessed within a psychologically informed context.

VI. CONCLUSION

The future of smart manufacturing will ultimately be centered around human operators who will maintain the adaptability, safety, and efficiency of their respective systems. This paper illustrates why it is most critical to move beyond monitoring and to include real-time affective state detection metrics in the aims of human-centered design and industrial approaches. By using multimodal tools like EEG, GSR, eye-tracking, HRV, and posture, we can monitor cognitive load, emotional states, and fatigue, and be alerted to provide interventions before operators are unable to perform well and safely or when they are at risk of experiencing declines to their overall wellbeing.Human monitoring has potential benefits regardless of the application to enhance operator safety, minimize errors, and reduce accidents with accompanying boosts in mental health and continued engagement in the workplace. Understanding and responding to the psychological effort required in advanced tech environments is fundamental to designing resilient, responsive, and sympathetic industrial systems and human factors.Finally, this article emphasizes the mutual value of combining multi-disciplinary fields including engineering, psychology, neuroscience, and human-computer interaction. Future studies may want to introduce more sophisticated data fusion models, adaptive interaction systems, and affective monitoring systems in an integrated industry and or a stand-alone context. As psychological awareness is developed into the structure of smart manufacturing technologies, we will be closer to realizing systems that respect and accommodate the complex experience of the human being as citizens of an intelligent system.

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