

Chapter 14

Development of a Voice and Gesture Controlled Personal Assistant Robot for Old and Disabled People in Namibia

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ABSTRACT

The aging population and individuals with disabilities in Namibia face various challenges in their daily lives that require innovative solutions to improve their quality of life. This study focuses on the development of a Voice and Gesture Controlled Personal Assistant (VGCPA), which is designed to enhance the quality of life of elderly and disabled individuals. The VGCPA system utilizes Arduino-based hardware and advanced Voice and Gesture recognition technologies to facilitate hands-free interaction. The primary aim of this research is to assess the feasibility, usability, and effectiveness of the VGCPA in assisting users with daily tasks and providing a more accessible computing experience. The research involves the design, develop-

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ment, and testing of the VGCPA, followed by an evaluation of user experiences and outcomes. The findings suggest that the VGCPA has great potential as an innovative assistive technology solution for the target demographic, with potential applications in healthcare, accessibility, and home automation.

INTRODUCTION

Namibia, located in the southwestern corner of Africa, is currently experiencing a significant demographic shift. This shift is characterized by a growing elderly population (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2022), which presents unique challenges. As the physical abilities of the elderly decline, they increasingly rely on external assistance for their daily activities (Smith et al., 2021). To address these challenges and improve the quality of life and independence of Namibia's elderly residents, the integration of assistive technology is becoming a critical necessity. While assistive technology has been rapidly advancing on a global scale, Namibia has been facing limitations in implementing such innovations, mainly due to economic constraints and technological accessibility barriers (Jones & Mwenda, 2020). To address the specific needs of Namibia's elderly population, solutions must be effective, affordable, and culturally sensitive. This study aims to fill this gap by introducing a transformative solution: a Voice and Gesture-Controlled Personal Assistant Robot. This technological marvel utilizes the capabilities of Arduino Uno R3, sensors, and motors to create a versatile and accessible platform specifically tailored to the unique socio-cultural context of Namibia.

This research project focuses on developing a technologically advanced yet affordable robot that will cater to the elderly and disabled population of Namibia. The robot's central processing unit is an Arduino Uno R3 microcontroller, which has been selected for its flexibility and extensive developer community, making it an ideal choice for this project. The Arduino Uno acts as the robot's brain, coordinating a smooth interaction between sensors and motors, giving the robot life.

The decision to use the Arduino Uno, which is an open-source microcontroller, aligns perfectly with the project's objectives. Its adaptability and the support provided by a strong developer community make it an excellent choice. This compact yet powerful device can execute complex algorithms, making seamless interactions possible with users through voice and gesture commands.

The robot is equipped with an ultrasonic sensor that accurately measures distances using sound waves. This sensor enables the robot to perceive its surroundings with precision, which helps it navigate safely and detect obstacles in its path.

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