iJRASET
International Journal For Research in
Applied Science and Engineering Technology

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR RESEARCH
IN APPLIED SCIENCE & ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY

Volume: 14 **Issue:** IV **Month of publication:** April 2026

DOI: https://doi.org/10.22214/ijraset.2026.80086

Smart Blind Stick for Visually Impaired People

Rahul Main[1], Omkar Chavan[2], Amogh Kumbhar[3], Mrs. Hetal Amrutia[4]
Department of Computer Engineering, NewHorizon Institute of Technology and Management, Thane, Maharashtra, India

Abstract: The Visual impairment significantly limits independent mobility and navigation for millions worldwide. Conventional aids like the white cane lack intelligent sensing, real-time positioning, and emergency communication, falling short of safe and autonomous navigation demands. In response, a smart navigation system is presented that leverages ultrasonic sensors for obstacle detection, a GPS module for location tracking, and a dedicated microcontroller for data processing, delivering instantaneous haptic and audio feedback for effective collision avoidance. The proposed system is designed with an emphasis on affordability, portability, and ease of use. An IoT-based communication framework enables automatic emergency alerts and geolocation sharing with designated caregivers when required. The system effectively bridges the functional gap left by conventional assistive devices, offering a scalable and low-cost solution for improving mobility, spatial confidence, and overall independence among visually impaired individuals.

Keywords: Assistive technology, visual impairment, ultrasonic sensing, GPS navigation, IoT, haptic feedback, obstacledetection.

I. INTRODUCTION

Independent mobility remains one of the biggest challenges faced by visually impaired individuals in their daily lives. Moving safely incrowded streets, public places, and unfamiliar environments can be difficult without reliable assistance. Traditional mobility aids provide only limited support and cannot warn users about distant or sudden obstacles. This situation creates a strong need for intelligent and affordable assistive devices that can improve safety, confidence, and independence while helping visually impaired people navigate their surroundings more effectively. Although the traditional white cane has long served as the primary mobility aid, it relies solely on tactile feedback and is limited in detecting elevated, distant, or fast-approaching obstacles. With advancements in microelectronics, IoT, and embedded systems, there is strong potential to develop intelligent assistive devices that integrate features like obstacle detection, location tracking, and emergency alerts into a compact solution. The ESP32-based smart blind stick improves safety using obstacle detection and fall detection. It provides real-time audio feedback to guide the user. It is a cost-effective solution that also sends emergency alerts with location via Blynk, ensuring better mobility and security.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the years, various assistive technologies have been developed to support visually impaired individuals in navigating their surroundings safely and independently. The traditional white cane has been widely used due to its simplicity and low cost; however, it provides only limited tactile feedback and requires continuous manual effort from the user. It is not capable of detecting obstacles at a distance or providing alerts in emergency situations. To improve upon these limitations, smart walking sticks have been introduced that incorporate sensors such as ultrasonic sensors for obstacle detection. These systems are capable of identifying objects within a certain range and providing alerts through audio or vibration, thereby enhancing user awareness. While such solutions improve safety to some extent, they are generally limited to basic obstacle detection and do not address critical scenarios such as fall detection or emergency communication. Further advancements in this field have led to the integration of microcontrollers and wireless communication technologies, enabling real-time data processing and transmission. These systems allow information such as user status and environmental conditions to be monitored remotely, offering an additional layer of safety. However, many of these designs depend on external devices such as smartphones or have limitations in terms of connectivity, reliability, and response time.

Recent developments focus on combining multiple functionalities, including GPS-based location tracking, fall detection using motion sensors, and IoT-based communication platforms. These integrated systems aim to provide a more comprehensive solution by not only assisting in navigation but also ensuring user safety during emergencies. Despite these improvements, challenges such as high cost, system complexity, limited battery life, and accuracy issues in certain environments still remain.

Therefore, there is a growing need for a cost-effective, reliable, and easy-to-use assistive device that integrates multiple features into a single compact system.

The proposed smart blind stick addresses these challenges by combining obstacle detection, fall detection, GPS tracking, and IoT-based alert mechanisms, thereby improving safety, mobility, and independence for visually impaired individuals.

III. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Visually impaired individuals face significant risks due to undetected obstacles and accidental falls, often lacking immediate means to seek assistance when alone. Traditional white canes provide limited tactile feedback and do not support emergency communication. Moreover, existing smart assistive devices are often expensive, bulky, or lack essential features such as real-time alerts and connectivity. These limitations reduce user independence and increase safety risks, highlighting the need for an efficient, affordable, and intelligent navigation solution.

IV. PROPOSED SYSTEM

1) System Overview:The proposed system is an ESP32-based smart blind stick developed to enhance the safety, mobility, and independence of visually impaired individuals. The system integrates multiple technologies such as obstacle detection, fall detection, GPS tracking, audio feedback, and IoT-based communication into a single compact and efficient assistive device. The ESP32 microcontroller serves as the core processing unit of the system. It is responsible for collecting data from all connected sensors, processing the information in real time, and triggering appropriate responses based on the detected conditions. The system is designed to operate continuously, ensuring that the user receives timely alerts and guidance while navigating different environments. The smart blind stick not only assists in detecting obstacles but also enhances user safety by identifying fall events and providing immediate emergency alerts. Additionally, the integration of GPS and IoT technology allows caregivers to remotely monitor the user's location and status through the Blynk platform. The system is designed with a focus on affordability, portability, and ease of use, making it suitable for real-world applications.
2) Working:The working of the system is based on continuous monitoring and real-time data processing. Once the system is powered on, the ESP32 microcontroller initializes all connected components, including the ultrasonic sensor, MPU6050 module, GPS module, and DF Mini Player audio module. The ultrasonic sensor continuously measures the distance between the user and nearby obstacles. If an object is detected within a predefined threshold distance (approximately 50 cm), the system immediately triggers an audio alert to warn the user, enabling safe navigation and collision avoidance. The MPU6050 accelerometer and gyroscope module continuously monitor motion parameters such as acceleration and orientation. If a sudden change in acceleration exceeding the defined threshold (e.g., 2.3g) is detected, the system identifies it as a fall event. In such cases, an emergency alert is generated, and the system prepares to notify caregivers. Simultaneously, the Neo-6M GPS module continuously retrieves real-time latitude and longitude coordinates. These coordinates are transmitted to the Blynk IoT platform through the ESP32 using Wi-Fi connectivity. This allows caregivers to track the user's location and respond quickly in case of emergencies. A priority-based alert mechanism is implemented within the system, where fall detection is given higher priority over obstacle detection. This ensures that critical situations are handled immediately without confusion. The entire system operates in a continuous loop, updating sensor readings, processing data, and sending alerts in real time to maintain high responsiveness and reliability.

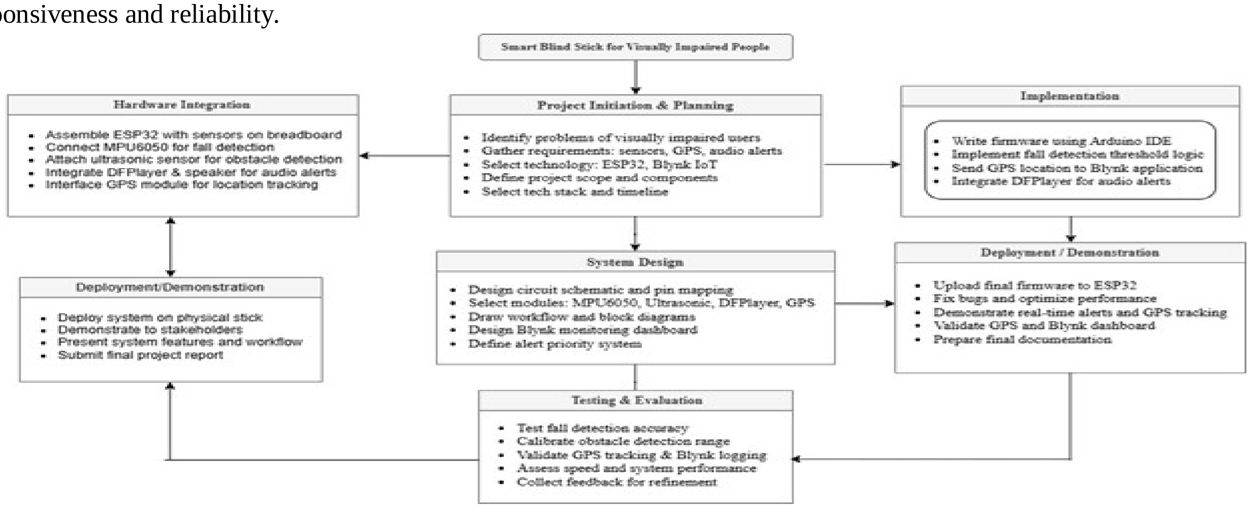

Figure 4.2.1: Methodology

ISSN: 2321-9653; IC Value: 45.98; SJ Impact Factor: 7.538
Volume 14 Issue IV Apr 2026- Available at www.ijraset.com

3) Tools& Technologies:

Layer	Components
Microcontroller	ESP32 (Dual-core, WI-FI enabled)
Obstacle Detection	HC-SR04 Ultrasonic Sensor
Fall Detection	MPU6050 Accelerometer / Gyroscope (IMU)
GPS Tracking	Neo-6M GPS Module
Audio Feedback	DF Mini Player MP3 Module
Communication Protocol	12C (MPU6050), UART (GPS, DFPlayer)
IOT Platform	Blynk IoT (Push Notification, Dashboard)
Network Connectivity	WI-FI (ESP32 Built-in)
Programming IDE	Arduino IDE
Programming Language	C++ (Arduino Framework)
Power Supply	Li-ion Rechargeable Battery

Table 1: Tools and Technologies

4) System Design:The system design is based on the integration of multiple hardware modules with the ESP32 microcontroller to achieve a unified and efficient assistive solution. Each component in the system performs a specific function, contributing to the overall operation of the smart blind stick. The ultrasonic sensor is used for obstacle detection by measuring the distance between the stick and nearby objects. The MPU6050 module is responsible for detecting falls by monitoring acceleration and motion patterns. The GPS module provides real-time location tracking, enabling the system to determine the user's position accurately. The DF Mini Player module is used to generate audio alerts, providing voice-based feedback to the user for both obstacle detection and fall events. This ensures that the user can receive important information without relying on visual cues. The ESP32 microcontroller processes all sensor data and coordinates the system's response based on predefined conditions. The system communicates with the Blynk IoT platform through Wi-Fi connectivity. Sensor data, GPS location, and system status are transmitted to the Blynk dashboard, where caregivers can monitor the user in real time. In case of emergency events such as falls, the system sends immediate notifications along with location details. The overall system follows a modular architecture, ensuring flexibility, scalability, and ease of maintenance. Each module operates independently while contributing to the overall functionality, resulting in a reliable, responsive, and user-friendly assistive device.

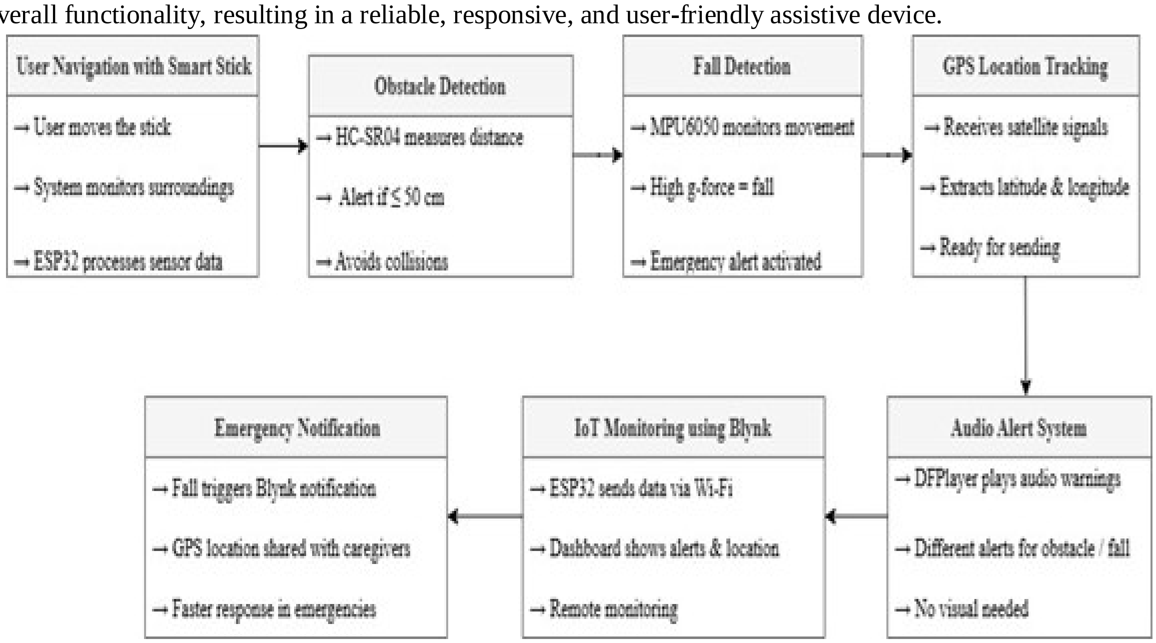

Figure 4.4.1: System Workflow

V. IMPLEMENTATION

The Smart Blind Stick system is implemented by integrating multiple hardware components with the ESP32 microcontroller to achieve real-time sensing, processing, and communication. The ESP32 acts as the central processing unit, continuously receiving data from all connected modules and executing appropriate actions based on predefined conditions. The hardware setup includes an HC-SR04 ultrasonic sensor for obstacle detection, an MPU6050 accelerometer and gyroscope for fall detection, a Neo-6M GPS module for real-time location tracking, and a DFMini Player module for audio feedback. These components are connected to the ESP32 using suitable communication protocols such as digital I/O, I2C, and UART. The system is powered using a rechargeable battery, making the device portable and suitable for real-world usage. The circuit connections of the system are illustrated in Figure 4.1.

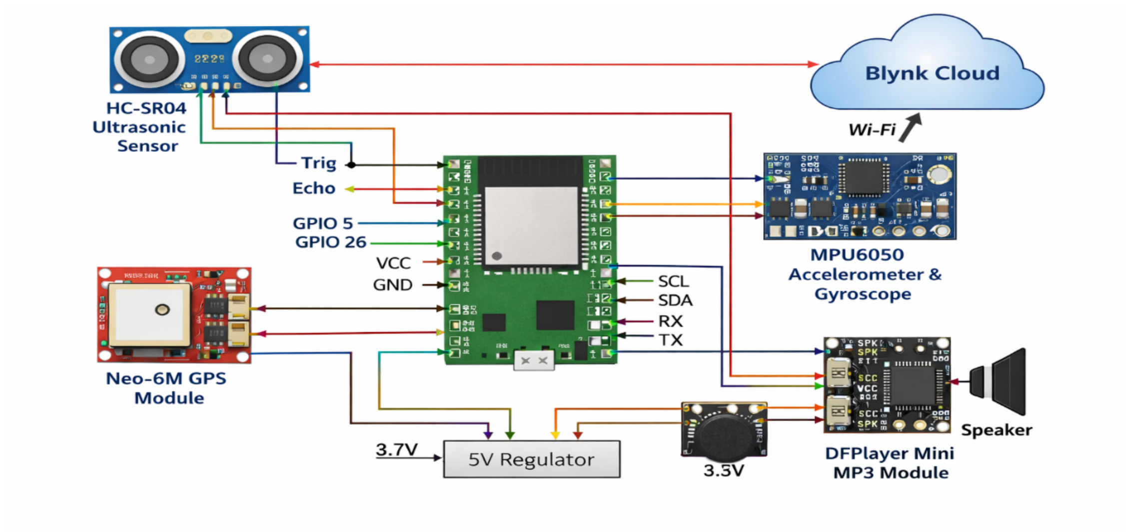

Figure 5.1: Circuit Diagram of Smart Blind Stick System

As shown in Figure 4.1, the ultrasonic sensor is connected to the ESP32 to continuously measure the distance between the user and nearby obstacles. When an object is detected within a predefined threshold distance, the ESP32 processes this data and triggers an audio alert through the DFMini Player module. The MPU6050 sensor is interfaced using the I2C protocol and is used to monitor acceleration and motion. When the detected acceleration exceeds the threshold value, the system identifies it as a fall event and activates the emergency alert mechanism. The GPS module is connected via UART communication and provides real-time latitude and longitude coordinates. These coordinates are processed by the ESP32 and transmitted to the Blynk IoT platform through Wi-Fi connectivity. The DFMini Player module is used to play pre-recorded audio messages, providing clear voice alerts to the user for both obstacle detection and fall events. On the software side, the system is developed using Arduino IDE with C/C++ programming. The firmware is designed to continuously read sensor data, process inputs, and execute decision-making logic in real time. The ESP32 connects to a Wi-Fi network and communicates with the Blynk IoT platform to send data and notifications. The Blynk platform provides a mobile dashboard that displays real-time GPS location and system status. In case of a fall event, an immediate notification is sent to caregivers along with the user’s location, enabling quick response in emergency situations. The system is tested under different conditions to verify the functionality of all modules, including obstacle detection, fall detection, GPS tracking, and IoT communication. Calibration is performed to improve accuracy and minimize false alerts. The final prototype is compact, reliable, and capable of providing real-time assistance, making it an effective solution for improving the safety and mobility of visually impaired individuals.

VI. RESULT ANALYSIS

The Smart Blind Stick system was successfully developed and tested to evaluate its performance in real-time conditions. The system integrates hardware components and IoT-based monitoring to provide enhanced safety and navigation assistance for visually impaired individuals. The hardware implementation of the smart blind stick is shown in Figure 5.1 (a) and Figure 5.1 (b). The prototype integrates the ESP32 microcontroller, ultrasonic sensor, MPU6050 module, GPS module, and DF MiniPlayer audio system into a compact and portable design. The device is lightweight and user-friendly, making it suitable for practical use.

International Journal for Research in Applied Science & Engineering Technology (IJRASET)
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Volume 14 Issue IV Apr 2026- Available at www.ijraset.com

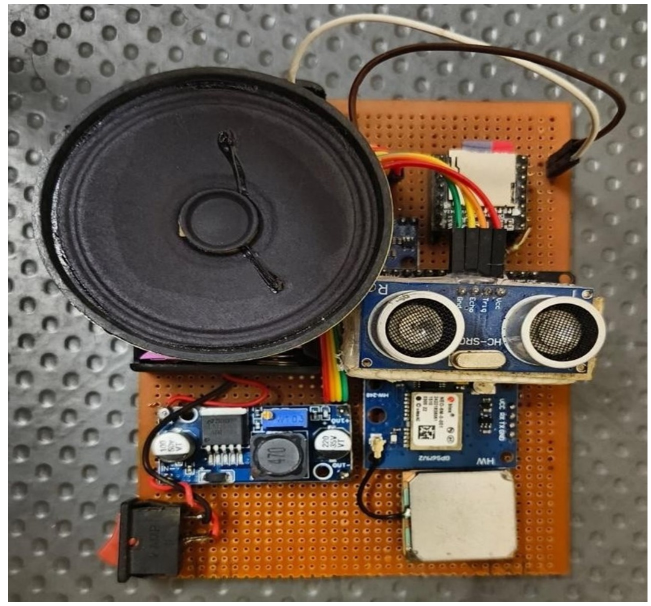
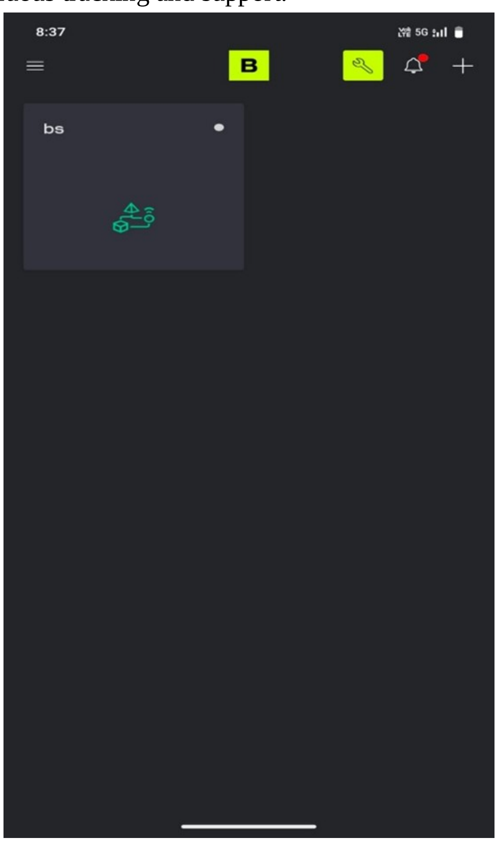


Figure 6.1(a): Smart Blind Stick Prototype

Figure 6.1(b): Assembled Hardware

The Blynk IoT dashboard interface is illustrated in Figure 5.2 (a) and Figure 5.2 (b). The dashboard displays real-time data such as system status and GPS location of the user. It enables caregivers to monitor the user remotely through a mobile application, ensuring continuous tracking and support.



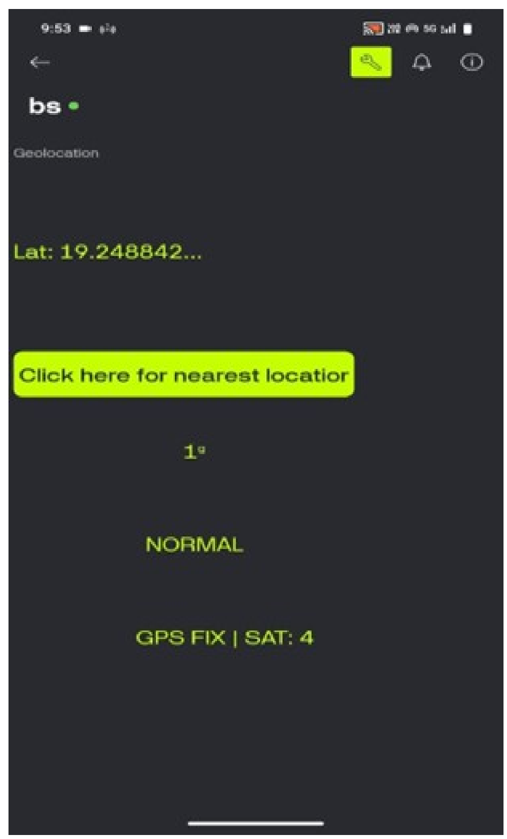


Figure 6.2(a): Blynk IoT Dashboard& System Status

Figure 6.2(b): GPS Tracking

The notification system is shown in Figure 5.3 (a) and Figure 5.3 (b), where emergency alerts are generated during critical events such as fall detection. The system sends instant notifications along with location details, allowing caregivers to respond quickly in emergency situations.

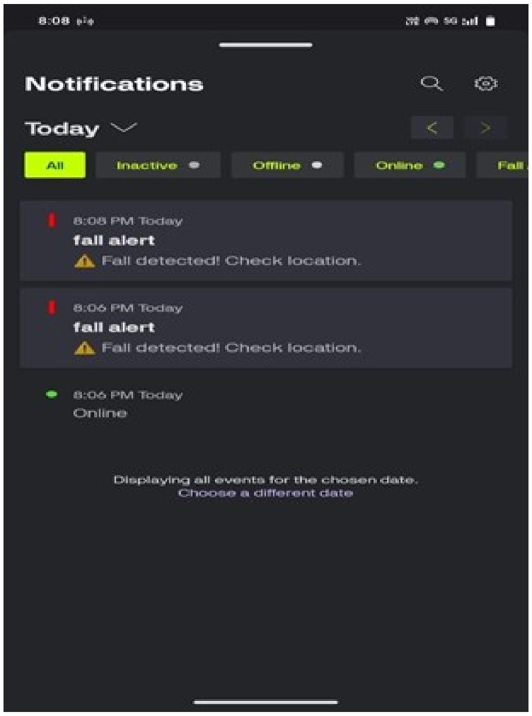


Figure 6.3(a): Blynk Notification Alerts (Fall Alert)

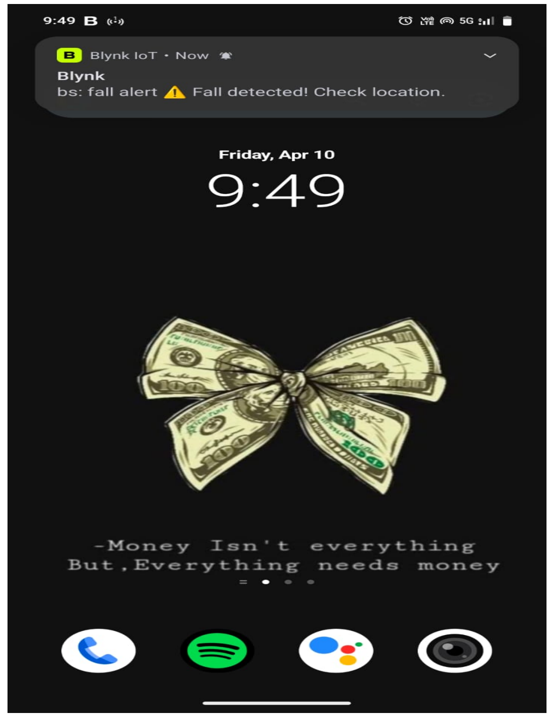


Figure 6.3(b): Emergency Notification

The system demonstrated reliable performance across all functionalities. The ultrasonic sensor effectively detected obstacles within the defined range and provided timely audio alerts. The MPU6050 sensor successfully identified fall events based on sudden changes in acceleration. The GPS module provided accurate location data in outdoor environments, which was successfully transmitted to the Blynk platform. The communication between the ESP32 and Blynk IoT platform was stable, ensuring real-time data transmission and notification delivery with minimal delay. The audio feedback system improved user awareness and helped in safe navigation. However, slight variations in GPS accuracy were observed in indoor environments due to weak satellite signals. Despite this limitation, the overall system performance was efficient and reliable.

The results indicate that the proposed system is a practical, cost-effective, and efficient solution for improving the safety, mobility, and independence of visually impaired individuals.

The performance of the proposed Smart Blind Stick system was evaluated based on key parameters including detection accuracy, system responsiveness, connectivity, and battery efficiency. The obstacle detection module demonstrated reliable performance during testing, accurately identifying nearby obstacles within the predefined range and providing timely audio alerts. The fall detection system, implemented using the MPU6050 sensor, successfully detected sudden changes in motion and triggered emergency alerts. However, occasional false triggers were observed during rapid manual movements, indicating scope for further calibration and optimization. The audio alert system functioned effectively in all test scenarios, consistently delivering correct voice outputs for both obstacle detection and fall events. This ensured that the user received clear and immediate feedback without relying on visual cues. The IoT communication module using the Blynk platform maintained stable connectivity throughout testing. The system was able to transmit real-time data and notifications to caregivers, enabling remote monitoring and quick response during emergency situations. In terms of responsiveness, the system exhibited minimal delay in processing sensor inputs and generating alerts. Obstacle warnings were delivered almost instantly, while emergency notifications were transmitted to the caregiver within a short duration, depending on network conditions. The system also demonstrated efficient power utilization, achieving an operational battery life suitable for extended use.

The use of a rechargeable Li-ion battery ensures portability and practical usability in daily life. Overall, the evaluation results indicate that the system provides reliable performance, fast response, stable connectivity, and effective user assistance. Minor improvements can be made in reducing false triggers and enhancing performance under varying environmental conditions.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

The Smart Blind Stick system developed in this work provides an efficient, reliable, and user-friendly solution to assist visually impaired individuals in navigating their surroundings safely. By integrating multiple technologies such as obstacle detection, fall detection, GPS tracking, and IoT-based communication, the system enhances both safety and independence. The ultrasonic sensor effectively detects nearby obstacles and provides timely audio alerts, helping users avoid collisions. The MPU6050 sensor accurately identifies fall events based on sudden changes in motion, ensuring that emergency situations are recognized promptly. The GPS module enables real-time location tracking, while the Blynk IoT platform facilitates remote monitoring and instant notification to caregivers during critical events. The system demonstrated stable performance during testing, with minimal delay in response and reliable communication between hardware components and the IoT platform. The audio feedback mechanism improves user awareness, making navigation easier and more intuitive. Additionally, the compact design and cost-effective implementation make the device suitable for practical, real-world applications. Overall, the proposed system successfully addresses the limitations of traditional assistive devices by combining sensing, processing, and communication technologies into a single integrated solution. It significantly improves the safety, mobility, and confidence of visually impaired individuals, contributing to a better quality of life.

VIII. FUTURE SCOPE

The proposed Smart Blind Stick system can be further enhanced by incorporating advanced sensing and intelligent technologies to improve its performance and functionality. One major improvement can be the integration of LiDAR sensors, which provide highly accurate and precise obstacle detection compared to traditional ultrasonic sensors. This would enable better distance measurement and improved performance in complex environments. Additionally, a camera module can be integrated with Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) algorithms to analyse visual data in real time. This would allow the system to perform object recognition and classification, enabling the user to identify specific objects such as vehicles, stairs, or pedestrians. Such capabilities would significantly enhance situational awareness and navigation support. Further improvements can include the addition of voice assistant features for interactive communication, enhanced GPS accuracy for better location tracking, and improved battery efficiency for longer usage. Integration with mobile applications and cloud-based systems can also provide better monitoring, data storage, and accessibility. These advancements can transform the system into a more intelligent, adaptive, and user-friendly assistive device, offering greater independence and safety for visually impaired individuals in future developments.

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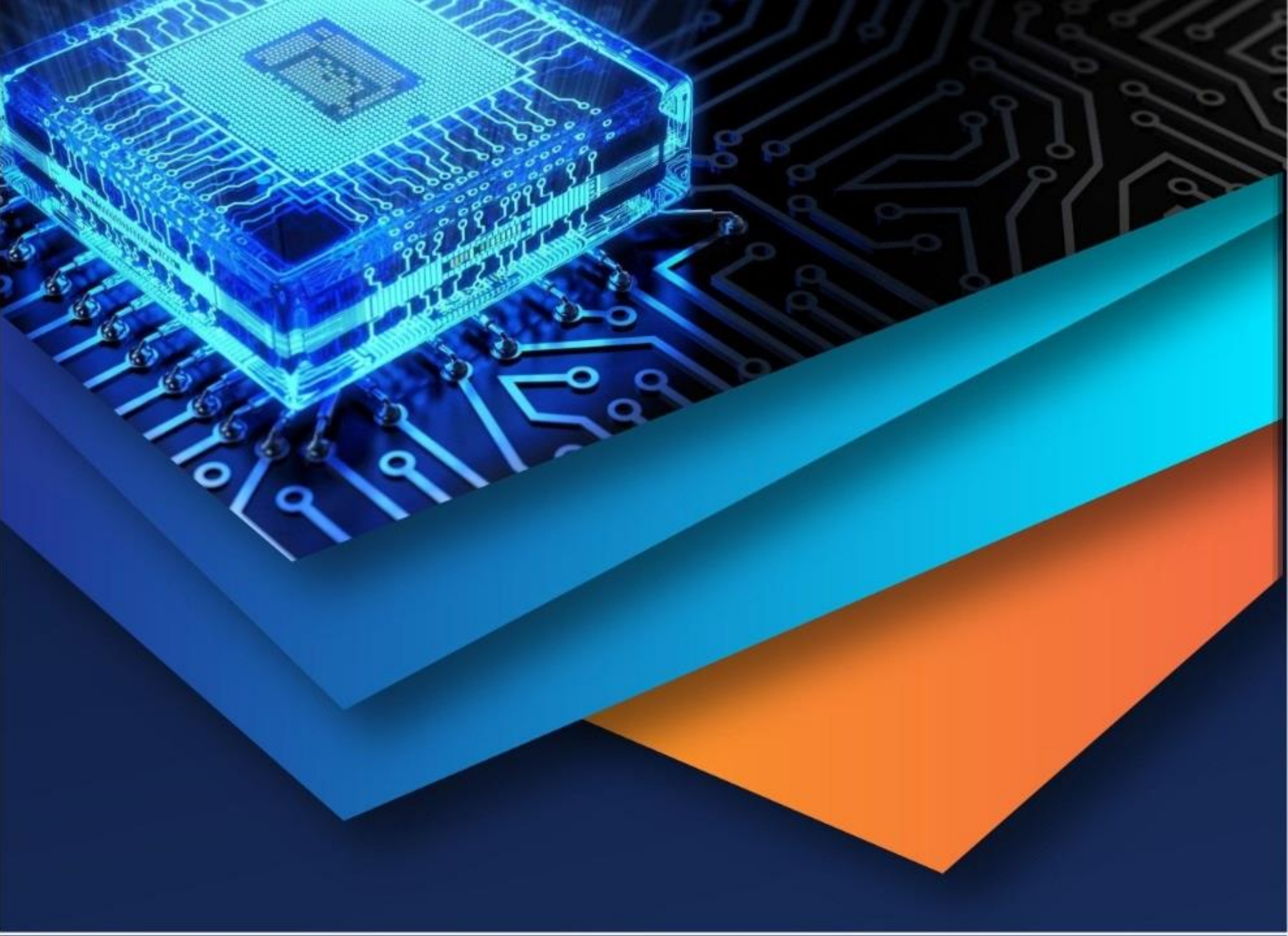

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