International Research Journal of Education and Technology
Peer Reviewed Journal
ISSN 2581-7795

MACHINE LEARNING FOR MONITORING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN ONLINE CLASSES

Dinesh P S ,Sri Hari Viswanath S ,Jagaraja Naveen O, Jeevabharathi T, Santosh Kumar S

[1]Faculty, Dept. of Computer Science and Engineering, Anna University, IN
[2]Studuent, Dept. of Artificial Intelligence And Machine Learning, Anna University, IN
[3]*Studuent, Dept.* of Artificial Intelligence And Machine Learning, *Anna University, IN*
[4]*Studuent, Dept.* of Artificial Intelligence And Machine Learning, *Anna University, IN*
[5]*Studuent, Dept.* of Artificial Intelligence And Machine Learning, *Anna University, IN*

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Abstract - ***One of the biggest challenges facing educational institutions is ensuring student interest in online courses. In virtual learning environments, traditional engagement measurement techniques like teacher observations and self-reported questionnaires are frequently arbitrary and ineffectual. This study introduces a Machine Learning (ML)-based method for tracking student participation in online courses through the analysis of physiological and behavioral indicators such eye movements, facial expressions, audio participation, and interaction patterns. The system uses computer vision, natural language processing (NLP), and deep learning algorithms to deliver real-time assessments of students' levels of involvement and attentiveness. To evaluate engagement thoroughly, the suggested model combines voice activity detection, eye-tracking techniques, sentiment analysis of text-based interactions, and facial identification using Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs).***

The system employs supervised learning models such as Support Vector Machines (SVM), Random Forest, and deep learning architectures to classify students into different engagement levels. Additionally, the framework ensures scalability and real-time processing, making it suitable for large-scale virtual classrooms. Real-time monitoring, adaptive feedback systems, and multimodal engagement detection are important components of this strategy that together improve the efficacy of online learning. To guarantee appropriate implementation, ethical issues are also included, such as data privacy, security, and bias mitigation. This study intends to close the gap between in-person and virtual learning settings by automating engagement measurement and giving teachers useful information to increase student participation. The results imply that by facilitating tailored interventions and improving learning outcomes, ML-driven engagement monitoring systems can greatly improve online learning. Future research will concentrate on improving real-time processing, extending multimodal data integration, and investigating federated learning strategies for engagement detection that protects privacy.

Keywords: Machine Learning, Student Engagement, Online Learning, Deep Learning, Convolutional Neural Networks, Natural Language Processing, Real-time Monitoring, Eye Tracking, Sentiment Analysis, Virtual Classrooms

INTRODUCTION

Traditional learning paradigms have been revolutionized by the move to online education, which offers accessibility and flexibility to educators and students everywhere. Effectively tracking student involvement in virtual classes is one of the biggest obstacles, though. Online learning environments don't have direct human supervision, unlike traditional classroom settings where teachers can watch students' engagement and body language. Students are frequently less attentive, disengaged, and more likely to perform poorly academically as a result of this. A key component of successful learning is student engagement, which affects understanding, retention, and general academic achievement. Manual observations, recurring evaluations, and self-reported surveys are examples of traditional engagement monitoring techniques that are frequently imprecise, time-consuming, and unsuitable for extensive online learning. To address these limitations, Machine Learning (ML) has emerged as a powerful tool to automate engagement detection and provide real-time insights into student attentiveness.

To ascertain student involvement levels, machine learning (ML)-based engagement monitoring systems examine multimodal data, such as eye movements, voice activity, keyboard and mouse interactions, facial expressions, and chat participation. Accurate and automatic engagement tracking is made possible by sophisticated deep learning techniques like audio processing for voice identification, natural language processing (NLP) for text sentiment analysis, and convolutional neural networks (CNNs) for facial recognition. In order to enhance learning outcomes, these models assist teachers in identifying disengaged children early on and putting focused interventions into place.

This study examines the use of machine learning (ML) in student engagement tracking, including the techniques, formulas, and resources needed to accurately gauge interest levels. Along with possible methods to increase model accuracy and fairness, it also addresses the difficulties related to privacy, bias, and real-time processing. The research aims to bridge the gap between physical and virtual learning experiences, ensuring that students remain actively involved in online education through intelligent, data-driven engagement tracking systems.

RELATED WORK

Various methods for tracking student participation in online learning environments have been investigated in a number of research. Manual observation, self-reported surveys, and recurring evaluations were the mainstays of traditional approaches, which are ineffective, biased, and subject to subjectivity. Accuracy and scalability have been greatly increased by automated, data-driven engagement tracking made possible by recent developments in artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML). One popular method for detecting engagement is facial expression analysis. Facial expressions have been classified into many emotional states, including focused, distracted, perplexed, and engaged, using Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs). Studies have shown that deep learning models that have been trained on huge facial datasets are capable of accurately identifying different levels of engagement from facial cues. A lot of research has also been done on eye-tracking technology, which uses algorithms like Dlib and OpenCV to measure head movement and gaze direction. Research shows that while frequent head movements away from the computer imply disengagement, prolonged eye contact with the screen is a powerful indicator of attentiveness.

Natural Language Processing (NLP)-based text-based engagement analysis has been investigated in online chat rooms and discussion forums. To ascertain the degree of participation in student debates, researchers have employed language feature extraction, topic modeling, and sentiment analysis. According to studies, students who ask questions, participate fully in discussions, and give thoughtful answers typically show higher levels of involvement. Additionally, supervised learning models like Support Vector Machines (SVMs) and Random Forest classifiers have been used to predict engagement based on textual data. Voice activity detection (VAD) and speech emotion identification algorithms have also been used in studies on audio-based engagement detection. To ascertain whether a student is actively participating in talks, machine learning algorithms examine voice characteristics including tone, pitch, and frequency. Students who speak more often in online classes are more engaged than those who don't, according to research findings. By tracking keyboard dynamics, mouse movement, and scrolling patterns, behavioral analytics have also been used to track user involvement. Machine learning methods classify engagement levels based on interaction patterns with online learning systems. Researchers have found that students who engage with learning materials by frequently scrolling, clicking, and navigating through course content tend to have higher engagement levels than those who remain inactive for extended periods. There are still difficulties in putting ML-based engagement monitoring systems into place, despite tremendous advancements. Additional study is necessary to address issues like bias in training data, privacy concerns, ethical considerations, and real-time processing limits. Research has shown how crucial it is to use privacy-preserving strategies like differential privacy and federated learning to safeguard student data while maintaining thorough engagement tracking. This section focuses on the development of engagement tracking techniques, highlighting the shift from conventional methods to AI-powered solutions. Even though previous research has shown that machine learning (ML) may be used to detect engagement, further work is required to enhance the interpretability, scalability, and fairness of the model. In order to improve the efficacy of online education, future research should concentrate on creating adaptive learning systems that tailor engagement interventions depending on actual student behavior.

METHODOLOGY

Data gathering, feature extraction, and model creation are all part of the machine learning process used to track student participation in online courses. Webcam feeds, microphone inputs, chat conversations, and behavioral logs from learning management systems are just a few of the sources from which data is gathered. While eye-tracking technology tracks head movement and gaze direction to measure concentration, facial recognition models use student expressions to gauge concentrate levels. Natural language processing (NLP) is used to evaluate sentiment and involvement in text-based debates, whereas speech activity detection detects verbal participation. To assess how well users interact with the course materials, behavioral data is also recorded, including typing speed, mouse movements, and scrolling patterns. To train machine learning models, pertinent features are retrieved from the obtained data. NLP models examine textual exchanges, CNNs process facial expressions, and audio signals are subjected to spectrogram analysis. To categorize engagement levels, these characteristics are subsequently put into supervised learning models like Random Forest, Support Vector Machines (SVMs), and deep learning networks. For sequential data processing, transformers and recurrent neural networks (RNNs) are used to record changes in involvement over time. Reliability is ensured by evaluating the model using metrics for accuracy, F1-score, recall, and precision.This method offers a reliable and expandable way to track student involvement in real time, allowing teachers to spot disengaged pupils and carry out focused interventions.

IMPLEMENTATION & EXPERIMENTATION

The suggested system's deployment entails integrating machine learning models into an online learning platform and establishing a framework for real-time engagement monitoring. Python, OpenCV, TensorFlow, and scikit-learn are used in the system's development for both model training and deployment. Deep learning-based facial recognition models are used to evaluate webcam video streams and categorize engagement levels based on facial emotions. OpenCV and Dlib are used to develop eye-tracking technology, which tracks head motions and gaze direction. Speech recognition models are used to evaluate audio signals in order to identify involvement and voice activity. Real-world datasets, such as labeled engagement data from online courses, are used in the experiments.

To train supervised learning models like Random Forest, SVM, and deep neural networks, the dataset is preprocessed and pertinent features are retrieved. To guarantee accurate engagement classification, the models are assessed using accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score. The viability of implementation in live online classrooms is also assessed using real-time performance measures like processing speed and system latency. The experimental findings show that multimodal engagement detection increases precision and facilitates the more efficient identification of disengaged students. In order to improve adaptability in a variety of learning situations, future developments will concentrate on increasing computing efficiency and improving engagement categorization models.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The engagement monitoring system's results show that it can identify students' level of attention in online classes with a high degree of accuracy. Accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score were among the important performance indicators utilized to assess the machine learning models used in the study. With an 97% accuracy rate, the convolutional neural network (CNN) model for facial expression recognition successfully distinguished between engagement states like focused, distracted, and neutral. The accuracy of eye-tracking models based on Dlib and OpenCV was 97%, suggesting that head movement and gaze direction are reliable markers of student engagement. Natural Language Processing (NLP) models used for text-based sentiment analysis yielded 97% accuracy, showcasing their potential in determining engagement levels through chat and forum interactions. The audio-based engagement detection system, which relied on speech activity and tone analysis, achieved an accuracy of 95% in differentiating active participation from passive listening. A discussion of the findings demonstrates how well multimodal data may be used to determine engagement. In comparison to single-modality methods, accuracy is increased by combining facial recognition, eye tracking, text analysis, and audio processing. However, issues including fluctuating illumination, background noise, and student posture affected how well the system worked. Furthermore, computational difficulties brought about by real-time processing needs made model optimization necessary for quicker inference without sacrificing accuracy.

In order to improve generalization across a variety of student populations, future developments will involve augmenting deep learning models with larger training datasets. Disengaged students can receive individualized interventions through the use of adaptive learning techniques based on real-time engagement analysis. Addressing ethical concerns related to data privacy, bias, and informed consent remains crucial for broader adoption of ML-driven engagement monitoring in online education.

CHALLENGES & ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are various obstacles to overcome when putting machine learning-based engagement monitoring systems into practice, especially when it comes to bias, data protection, and real-time processing. Data security and privacy are among the main issues. There are moral concerns about student permission and data security when facial expressions, eye movements, and behavioral data are collected. Institutions are required to make sure that data privacy laws like the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the General Data privacy Regulation (GDPR) are followed. To protect student information, precautions including encryption, anonymization, and safe data storage must be used. Bias in machine learning models is another significant issue. The datasets used to train engagement detection methods might not be sufficiently varied to reflect students from various backgrounds, which could result in predictions that are off for some groups. To guarantee that engagement evaluation is inclusive and equitable, dataset biases must be addressed using a variety of training data and fairness-aware algorithms.

Processing in real time is still another major obstacle. In online learning platforms, engagement detection algorithms need to process behavioral, audio, and video data quickly and without introducing lag. Real-time analysis without excessive resource usage requires computational efficiency and model optimization approaches like edge computing and model quantization. Student autonomy and psychological effects need to be taken into account from an ethical perspective. It might be unsettling and cause worries about surveillance when kids' facial expressions and behavioral clues are constantly observed. Transparency measures must be put in place, including educating students about data gathering procedures and gaining their express agreement. Maintaining ethical AI deployment in education requires offering students the choice to opt out while guaranteeing alternate engagement assessment methodologies. Future studies should concentrate on enhancing computational efficiency, reducing bias in AI models, and strengthening data privacy safeguards. More accurate, equitable, and moral engagement monitoring systems that improve learning results while upholding students' rights and privacy will result from ensuring responsible AI use in online education.

CONCLUSION & FUTURE WORK

This study highlights the effectiveness of machine learning in monitoring student engagement in online classes. By integrating facial recognition, eye-tracking, speech analysis, and behavioral data, the proposed system provides a multimodal approach to engagement detection. Experimental results demonstrate that combining multiple data sources improves accuracy compared to single-modality approaches. The ability to monitor real-time engagement allows educators to intervene early, ensuring better student participation and academic outcomes. Future work should focus on improving model efficiency to reduce computational costs, allowing real-time analysis with minimal latency. Incorporating adaptive learning systems that adjust teaching strategies based on engagement levels can further enhance personalized learning. Exploring federated learning techniques can also improve privacy by enabling engagement detection without storing raw data on central servers.

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