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NEWSLETTER

Unspoken Pain, Unseen Signs - Until AI Steps In

INSIDE

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TAG

[Artificial Intelligence]
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Where minds meet machine : Understanding emotions through AI

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Can AI understand your emotions?

— By Sangamithra G , Siti Hafizah Ab Hamid

Exploring Mental Health detection through Facial and Voice recognition

In today's fast moving world , mental health struggles often go unnoticed - not because people don't care , but because emotions are frequently hidden behind smiles or silence. To address this challenge , researchers are turning artificial intelligence to develop systems that can recognize emotional states through subtle changes in facial expressions and voice patterns .

This innovative approach combines technology with empathy , aiming to detect early signs of emotional distress like anxiety , stress , or depression - even when a person says they're "fine" .

Behind the Screens : How AI Listens and Watches You

AI models use machine learning to process video and audio recordings of users . Here's what happens :

- A camera captures facial expressions (like frowning , lip tension , or eye movement)
- A microphone records voice features (pitch , volume , pauses)
- The system analyzes both to classify emotional states : happy , sad , angry , stressed , or neutral
- Over time , the system learns to detect patterns of masked emotions - those we try to hide



AI decodes emotions by mapping facial micro-expressions—revealing what words may hide

Smiling Outside , Struggling Inside ; Can AI catch the Mask ?

Many people who suffer from anxiety or depression don't show obvious signs. Some even smile or joke to hide their pain. This is called **emotion masking**. By recognizing subtle changes in facial expression and voice, AI can help:

- Spot early signs of emotional distress
- Support therapists with emotion insights during sessions
- Provide mood tracking for individuals through mobile apps

From Apps to Classrooms : Where Emotion-Smart AI Belongs

This emotion recognition has the potential to make a real difference in everyday life. It can be used in **mental health apps** to help people track their emotions and become more aware of how they feel each day. These apps could gently alert users when their mood shows signs of stress, sadness, or anxiety, allowing them to take action early.

Another powerful use is in **virtual therapy assistants**. These AI-based tools can respond with care and understanding by adjusting their tone based on how the user sounds or looks. This makes conversations feel more human and supportive.

In **schools and workplaces**, the system could help monitor emotional trends over time—without invading privacy—so counselors or HR teams can provide timely support when someone shows signs of distress. It could also be useful in **call centers** or **online platforms**, where the tone of a person's voice may reveal if they're feeling frustrated, upset, or overwhelmed, allowing service teams to respond more sensitively.

Looking Ahead : A Future Where Technology Listens with Empathy

As we move into an age where machines can “read” our feelings, the line between technology and emotional intelligence begins to blur. This project is just the beginning of a future where AI doesn’t just respond—it understands.

Imagine a world where your phone gently checks in when you're overwhelmed, or a classroom where an AI assistant notices when a student is silently struggling. In such a world, people don’t need to explain their pain—technology can offer support before things get worse.

The goal isn’t to replace human connection, but to enhance it—by giving people, therapists, teachers, and caregivers the tools to listen better, respond faster, and care deeper.

With continued research and responsible innovation, this emotion-aware AI can become a quiet ally in the fight against loneliness, anxiety, and hidden mental health struggles.

For additional information you can read articles such as “<https://www.mdpi.com/2076-3417/15/2/845>”, and “<https://arxiv.org/abs/1811.08592>”, or contact the author at sitihafizah@um.edu.my from the Department of Software Engineering at Universiti Malaya.