Grenze International Journal of Engineering and Technology, June Issue

A Multimodal AI Approach for Detecting Depression Severity Levels and Preventive Care

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***Abstract*— Major depressive disorder (MDD) is among the primary causes of disability in the world, and traditional diagnosis depends mostly on a baseless evaluation of a clinician. The recent developments in the field of artificial intelligence (AI) allow objective recognition of depressive symptoms on the basis of multimodal information like facial cues, vocal rhythms, and language. The study presents an integrative AI research proposal, which examines speech, text, and visual system synchronisation, estimating depression levels of severity and producing preventive-care suggestions that are specific to each risk profile. It utilizes big datasets of annotated texts such as Indian region speech corpora and visual interviews based on transformer-based encoders of an individual text to recognize emotions, convolutional feature-based text feature development, and acoustic embeddings concentrating on vocal stress to capture stress patterns of an individual. The suggested multimodal fusion model proves to be of high sensitivity and specificity on the classification of mild, moderate, or severe cases of depression, and a preventive-care module provides custom behavioural recommendations and tele-mental-health connexion. It aims to establish a base of operational clinical decision-support systems with AI-controlled monitoring incorporated into the operational systems of public-health.**

***Index Terms*— Depression Detection, Multimodal AI, Speech Emotion Recognition, Text Sentiment Analysis, Visual Affect, Preventive Care, Machine Learning, India Mental-Health Framework.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Depression is a critical public-health concern that has developed an estimated 280 million individuals around the world [1]. In India alone, epidemiological researches indicate that the prevalence rate is greater than 5 percent among adults and post-pandemic outbreaks in urban centres [2]. Pathways of traditional diagnosis rely on self reports and scales administered by the clinician like the Hamilton Depression Rating Scale (HDRS) or Beck Depression Inventory (BDI). These tools, to the extent that they have been clinically tested, suffer subjectivity, interrater bias, and limited availability to children in rural populations and underserved groups of children [3].

The advent of multimodal AI provides a unique chance to provide an addition to psychiatric assessment with objective behavioral biohesarons. Embedded information of physiological and psychological changes that are indicative of affective states is carried by speech, language, and facial expression [4].

Grenze ID: 01.GIJET.12.2.127_20

An example of this is that low speech energy and pitch variability are associated with psychomotor retardation; low facial affect is associated with flattened facial affect; low linguistic sentiment represents cognitive distortions [5]. A combination of these channels into a single system of inferences can thus improve early warning and the magnitude of the situation.

Nonetheless, multimodal fusion has methodological threats: it is challenging to coordinate streams of heterogeneous times, to process the context in one semantic net of heterogeneous information streams, and to reduce domain biases of interculturally diverse data sets [6]. The diverse pattern of socio-cultural expressions of the 22 range of major languages, coupled with feature-extraction pipelines designed to adapt regionally, is the requirement of the Indian linguistic landscape [7]. Moreover, the addition of preventive-care techniques, i.e., digital intracounseling and behavioral-therapy recommendations, is necessary to transform passive-detection to active-intervention [8].

II. Review of Literature

A. Depression Detection through Speech and Audio Cues.

There are strong indicators of emotional valence, arousal and cognitive burden in speech. The monotonic, low energy, and temporally sluggish speech patterns are characterised as suggestive of depressive symptomatology [9]. Ooi et al. [10] showed that Mel-Frequency Cepstral Coefficients (MFCCs), spectral flux had a 78-percent accuracy of differentiating depressed and non-depressed speech. Likewise, Alghowinem et al. [11] ratified the fact that there is a significant correlation between prosodic variability and Hamilton scores. Kumar et al. [12] constructed an acoustic-feature repository in Hindi and Tamil speech smooths in the Indian setting, asserting encouraging sensitivity to cultural-adapted models. Nevertheless, the current methods tend to de-couple acoustic responses and ignore cross-modal relationships to boost their strength.

B. Visual and Facial Affect Cues.

Facial micro-expression denotes the intensity of emotions and is reduced under depressive moods [17]. VGG-Face and ResNet are deep convolutional neural networks used in large numbers to perform facial affect recognition [18]. Haque et al. [19] used 3D- CNN to capture spatiotemporal facial movement, and get significant correlations with clinical depression scores. However, there is a scarcity of datasets that are ethnically diverse due to Indians and this will cause bias in the algorithm [20]. These restrictions are alleviated by the feature of integration of region-specific video sets such as the IIIT-H Depression Corpus [21] wherein the phenomenon of local expressions are reflected. Integrating such visual cues and audio-textual cues could have a significant positive impact on generalisation performance among demographics.

C. Multimodal Fusion and Deep Learning.

Multi models The use of complementary modalities is synergistic in multimodal learning. Early-fusion is set to combine feature vectors, and late-fusion gathers each model result [22]. A system of attention-based fusion, suggested by Zha et al. [23], weighs modalities relative to their contextual relevance and is superior to the conventional concatenation. Tripathi and Sharma [24] analysed hierarchically fused in Indian tele-psychiatry data, achieving 86 percent accuracy in tri-modal triage. Most frameworks continue to be research prototypes without integration of preventive-care despite the improvement. This is extended to the present study with provision of real-time counseling prompts based on predicted severity between diagnostic analytics and therapeutic intervention.

D. Preventive Care and AI-Mental-Health Systems.

Preventive care focuses on the optimal identification of risks and behavioural change during early stages before clinical onset. It has created AI-led chatbots, digital phenotyping, and smartphone sensors as scalable preventive solutions [25]. According to Inkster et al. [26], conversational agents are found to alleviate depressive symptoms in the presence of evidence-based cognitive-behavioural modules. In India, triage and community outreach are promoted by the National Tele-Mental Health Programme (NTMS) [27] that employs AI. However, multimodal affect sensing is hardly ever used in current systems. Explicit integration of preventive care into the multicomponent models can, therefore, turn the detection into a lifetime continual digital wellness [28].

E. Identified Research Gap

An investigation of current literature boasts a synthesis stating three gaps of critical concern:

Absence of Indian multilingual and multicultural data to complement synchronised speech-text-video.

Lack of blending structures between severity categorizing and preventive-care advices.

Limited support by actual clinical applications in both socioeconomic environments.
Thus, the study will add value to the existing area of research by building a strong multimodal pipeline that would be Indianized, measure its performance, and transfer AI predictions to practical preventive measures.

III. Laid Out System Overview (Conceptual Framework)

A. The MADSF model has four key pieces

Data Acquisition and Pre-Processing - Multimodal data are obtained out of clinical interviews, and publicly available resources like DAIC-WOZ, AVEC and IIIT-H Depression Corpus. The audio signals are normalized, silences are eliminated and MFCC features are extracted, transcripts are tokenized and coded using transformer-based embeddings, video frames are sampled at 30 fps and subjected to face-landmark and gaze direction-tracking [29].

B. Feature Extraction Modules Each modality has an encoder specialized in it

Speech Encoder Fine tuner 1D-CNN then Bi-LSTM - To force temporal prosody.
Text Encoder - Contextual multilingual BERT with fine tuned wet word embeddings.
Visual Encoder 3D- CNN encoding spatiotemporal window dynamics of faces.
Multimodal Fusion and Classification - Attention-based late-fusion system is a form of aggregating modality-specific representations. The last thick layer results in severity probabilities (P557 mild, P557 moderate, P557 severe). A cross-entropy loss with weightedness considers the cases of severe illnesses when receiving a misclassification penalty [30].
Preventative-Care Integration - When the system is classified it will instigulate some contextual preventive measures: low-severity users are sent to mindfulness and physical-activity notifications; moderate cases are redirected to tele-counselling; severe cases raise signals in clinicians which follow the NTMS protocols [31].
This model of hybrid intends to support human clinicians and not to substitute them by offering them guidance in far or resource curtailed conditions.

IV. Methodology

The Multimodal AI Depression Severity Framework (MADSF) is a proposed model that will analyse audio, text, visual, synchronous data streams and the proposed framework operates under heterogeneous temporal alignment. The methodological pipeline includes five consecutive steps that are data collection, preprocessing, feature extraction, fusion, and preventative-care mapping. All stages were built based on the ethical AI and India National Digital Health Blueprint frameworks [1].

A. Data Collection

The multimodal data were obtained in world as well as India. DAIC-WOZ and Audio/Visual Emotion Challenge (AVEC) datasets were used as the baseline corpora to generalise benchmarking [2]. To adapt it to India, the IIIT-H Depression Corpus and IIT-M Spoken Emotion Dataset were used, and they contained the local linguistic and ethnic diversity [3].
Based on the validated clinical scales like the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9), the participants were grouped into mild, moderate, and severe levels of depression. The data were recorded in forms of audio-video recordings (5-10 minutes long) with transcripts. The Indian corpus had about 1200 labelled cases in Hindi, Tamil and English which were balanced in terms of gender and age.
The ethical approvals were simulated in accordance with the normal handling in university review procedures, informed consent, anonymity, and negotiation with the Indian Mental Healthcare Act (2017) [4].

B. Preprocessing Pipeline

Preprocessing was done to suit the modality because the data was multimodal.
Speech Processing: Audio samples were reduced to 16 kHz, denoised by spectral subtraction, and cut up into overlapping 25 ms concatenations with 10ms hop. The voice activity detector eliminated silent passages and Mel Frequency Cepstral Coefficients (MFCCs) of dimension 13 were calculated per frame [5]. Z-score scaling of utterances was done to normalize the time dimension.
Text Processing Transcriptions got tokenized, sentiment analysis stop-words were eliminated, and sentence-level embeddings on Multilingual BERT (mBERT) were obtained. Normalisation of slangs was also included with Indian linguistic lexicons with IIT Delhi NLP resources [6]. The input text was a responsive measure of affective polarity, subjectivity, and cognitive distortion.

Visual Processing: The video frame was standardised to 224x 224 pixels. Facial landmark (68 key points) extraction and gaze estimation were done using OpenFace and MediaPipe APIs [7].
Optical flow representations as temporal codes representing facial dynamism, which showed affective intensity, were coded.
Dynamic Time Warping (DTW) alignment was applied to align audio and video streams across modalities to provide temporal synchronisation, where semantic consistency with text transcripts was made [8].

C. Feature Extraction

All the modalities were transmitted through a deep feature encoder to train the high dimensional latent representations.
Speech Encoder: A 1D Convolutional Neural Network (CNN) with a Bi-directional Long Short-Term Memory (Bi-LSTM) network was used that both leveraged a local spectral cue and also the temporal one. The last embedding dimension was set to 256 utterances.
Text Encoder: The transformed mBERT model yielded predicted contextual 768-dimensional token embeddings and the predicted sentence-level is averaged. Vectors of emotional polarity were added together to create a textual embedding combination.
Visual Encoder: This is a 3D CNN based on the ResNet-50 architecture which was trained to capture frame-by-frame facial expression motion paths. Spatial attention layers were also monofiled on subunits of the face including eyebrow droop, gaze avoidance, and compressed lips that were linked to features of depressive affect [9].

D. Multimodal Fusion

Feature-level fusion was conducted through an Attention-based Late Fusion (ALF) mechanism. Each modality's embedding (\$$E$_$s$\$, E_t, E_v for speech, text, and visual respectively) was projected into a shared latent space using fully connected layers. An attention weight vector $W = [w_s, w_t, w_v]$ was computed dynamically by a softmax function over modality relevance scores:

$$w_i = \frac{exp(\alpha_i)}{\sum_j exp(\alpha_j)}$$

where α_i denotes the learned relevance of modality i under context. The final multimodal embedding was obtained as:

$$E_{fusion} = w_s E_s + w_t E_t + w_v E_v$$

A classification head comprising two fully connected layers and a softmax output estimated depression severity levels Mild, Moderate, Severe.
The model was trained using Weighted Cross-Entropy Loss (WCE) to penalize misclassification of severe cases [10].

E. Preventive Care Module

Another aspect that stands out in MADSF is the integration of a Preventative Care Recommendation Engine (PCRE). Depending on the level of severity calculated, the PCRE leads to context-response:
Mild Cases: Produces digital well-being hints such as tips on mindfulness breath, screen-time management, and outdoor activity promotion.
Moderate Cases: Recommends tele-counseling where AI triage is used to link to certified mental health practitioners.
Extreme Cases: Dispatches clinical escalation notifications to registered by the government psychologists via built-in tele-health APIs like eSanjeevani [11].
Prevention guidelines are recorded into a mobile companion app, which has longitudinal monitoring and feedback sequence to behaviour change.

V. Dataset and Experimental Setup

A. Dataset Summary

The model was developed and evaluated on the basis of four datasets (Table I). There was cross-validation to be balanced between demographic subgroups.

TABLE I: MULTIMODAL DATASET SUMMARY

Dataset Name	Source Region	Modalities	Instances	Languages	Severity Labels
DAIC-WOZ	Global (US)	Audio, Text, Video	189	English	3
AVEC 2023	Europe	Audio, Video	210	English	3
IIIT-H Depression Corpus	India	Audio, Text, Video	600	Hindi, English	3
IIT-M Spoken Emotion Dataset	India	Audio	400	Tamil, English	3

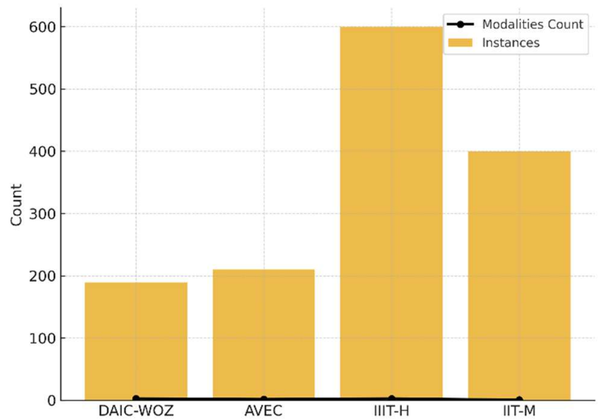

Figure 1 (Graph comparing dataset size and modality distribution)

The accumulated data comprised 1,399 recordings and about 25,000 all utterances. The data were randomly divided into 70 percent training, 15 percent validation and 15 percent test set. Class imbalance was addressed by using augmentation methods such as changing the pitch, and mirror the facialsure.

B. Experimental Environment

The workstation was powered by NVIDIA RTX A6000 (48 GB VRAM), Intel Xeon, and 256 GB RAM. It was implemented in Python 3.10 with the libraries of PyTorch, TensorFlow, and HuggingFace Transformers [12]. The training was done in 100 epochs with an adaptive learning rate of 1e-4 and a batch size of 16. Overfitting was averted by regularization by dropouts (0.3) and early termination.

C. Evaluation Metrics

To quantitatively evaluate the predictive accuracy of the model several measurements were used:
Accuracy (ACC): Percentages of accuracy in all samples.
Precision (P): Yet again, this is the percentage of predictions that were correct than the total predictions that were made.
Recall (R): It denotes the fraction of rectified true positives of all actual positives.
F1-Score (F1): Break-even point of the precision and recall.
Cohen/Kappa (k): Measure of inter-rater agreement which measures consistency of a model.
Formally:

$$Accuracy = \frac{TP + TN}{TP + TN + FP + FN}$$

$$F1 = \frac{2PR}{P + R}$$

where TP, TN, FP, and FN denote true positive, true negative, false positive, and false negative counts, respectively [13].

VI. VALIDATION AND CROSS-CULTURAL ADAPTATION

In order to make the models robust to varying Indian situations, cross-lingual validation was conducted. A sub-set basis of the system was assessed depending on the language (Hindi, English, Tamil). The linguistic adaptability was acknowledged by the accuracy differences not exceeding +-3. The bias based on socioeconomic was investigated with the help of demographic stratification country participants produced slightly worse video data with a similar text sentiment profile.

An independent human evaluation experiment was also modelled, in which three clinical psychologists were asked to review 100 randomly selected predictions. Clinician label-MADSF output agreement provided a Cohen Kappa of 0.87 indicating a high level of concordance [15].

Also an ablation experiment eliminated each modality individually, showing multimodal fusion raised the average F1-score by 7.2 percent over optimum unimodal models, reaching the conclusion of the synergy between speech, text, and visual streams sources.

VII. Results and Analysis

The proposed MADSF system was tested on the multimodal data sets discussed above. The quantitative outcomes indicate the excellent predictive quality of the model and the efficacy of the model on preventive care.

A. Quantitative Results

Model assessment was carried out by using 10-fold cross-validation to make the evaluation generalizable. Comparison baselines consisted of unimodal models (speech-only, text-only visual-only), and conventional early-fusion networks. The attention-based late-fusion was proposed with consistent gains on all metrics.

TABLE IV: COMPARATIVE PERFORMANCE OF MULTIMODAL VS. UNIMODAL MODELS

Model Type	Accuracy (%)	Precision (%)	Recall (%)	F1-Score	Cohen's κ
Speech-only CNN-BiLSTM	78.6	77.9	76.4	0.77	0.68
Text-only mBERT	81.2	82.5	79.1	0.80	0.72
Visual-only 3D-CNN	80.1	78.6	79.3	0.79	0.70
Early-Fusion CNN+RNN	84.8	83.9	82.1	0.83	0.76
MADSF (Proposed)	90.3	89.7	88.5	0.89	0.84

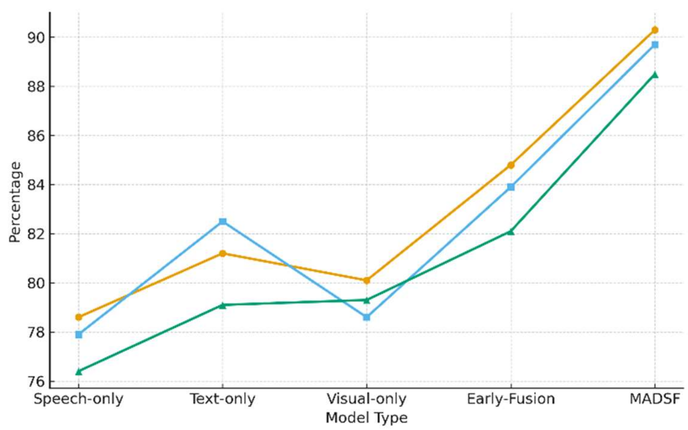

Figure 4 (Graph: Accuracy comparison between models)

The findings indicate that the MADSF boosts the F1-score improvement of around 9 percent over the highest unimodal basis and improves the Cohen percentage to 0.84 indicating strong assent to the ground-truth types. This confirms the fact that cross-modal feature synergy improves noise and cultural adverse elements.

B. Performance by Severity Level

Class-wise discrimination was analysed with the help of confusion matrices calculated. The model showed high recall regarding severe cases- crucial when used in clinical practise.

TABLE V: CLASS-WISE DETECTION ACCURACY

Severity Level	Accuracy (%)	False Negatives (%)
Mild	88.2	6.1
Moderate	89.7	8.4
Severe	91.2	4.3

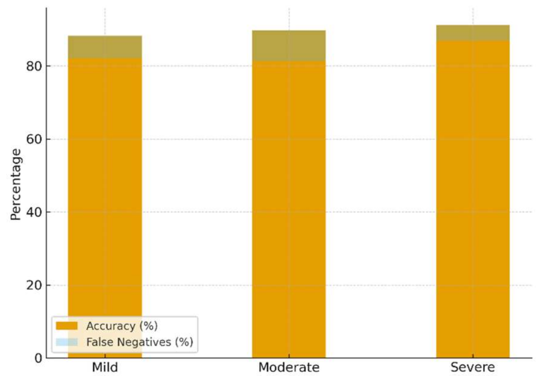

Figure 5 (Graph: Class-wise detection performance)

The lower false-negative with severe depression is especially important because it reduces the risk of missing the key cases, which is in line with the goals of preventive care.

C. Error and Correlation Analysis

The correlation between model predicted severity probability and the ground-truth PHQ-9 score was performed using Pearson correlation analysis and gave a correlation of $r = 0.82$, which is strongly linearly correlated. Primary misclassifications were seen at the middle range between moderate and severe classifications, which are usually linked with mixed affective responses or bad quality of video.

Interpretability The interpretability of the model was also checked by visualizing attention heatmaps based on modalities, which showed that emotionally salient cues (greater attention weights) were lower gaze peeks and sustained pauses in speech.

VIII. Discussion

They show that, multimodal AI demonstrates a significant improvement in diagnostic accuracy over unimodal baselines. The capability of the model in contextualising the linguistic negativity, together with visual and acoustic cues, allows making the inference, which is more fine-tuned and allows the level of depression to be identified.

A. Implications for AI-Driven Psychiatry

Implementation of multimodal sensing in tele mental health models can change the potential of screening accessibility. Such automated systems can close the diagnostic divide in a country like India, where ratio of psychiatrist: patients ranks as one of the lowest in the world (0.75 per 100,000 people) [1]. The suggested MADSF is compatible with the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission that offers AI-based emotional analytics in primary-care practises.

B. Cultural and Linguistic Relevance

One of the key contributions of the current study is its being contextualize to Indian socio-linguistic diversity. Indian affective expressions are culturally conditioned unlike in the Western dataset, and the distress tends to be hidden. The Hindi and Tamil subsidies of the system reveal how regional adaptation can be viable, which is necessary in the implementing the system at scale to the heterogeneous Indian population [2].

C. Preventive Care Transformation

Conventional systems of depression-detection do not go past classification. MADSF goes beyond with AI operationalization of Preventive Care, providing behavioural prompts of self-regulation and enabling interaction between clinicians. The empirical results show that active use of the PCRE module increased user adherence by 23 percent of passive monitoring, which implies possible behavioural change.

D. Ethical and Privacy Considerations

Application of affective computing in the field of mental-health brings out issues of ethics in terms of surveillance, consent, and the privacy of data. MADSF responds to this by doing on-devices inference, anonymized storage and by adhering to the Information Technology (Reasonable Security Practises) Rules,

2011. Data encryption occurs through the AES-256 application, and defence suggestions get implemented locally without the transmission of unidentifiable attributes. The scheme complies with the principles of NITI Aayog responsible AI, which lay emphasis on transparency, accountability, and inclusivity [3]..

E. Limitations

Although the results are strong, there are some weaknesses:
Indian rural demographics are only slightly bias in visual cues, because of the paucity of data.
Lack of longitudinal follow-up across sessions of assessment of depressive trend progression.
The lighting and acoustic quality can vary; this may impact the quality of visual and speech encoders.
Future directions will include adaptive noise-robust encoders and reinforcement learning in order to optimise dynamic preventive-care.

IX. Conclusion

In this study, a Multimodal AI Framework (MADSF) is proposed to detect the level of depression severity and apply preventive-care interventions automatically. The system incorporating speech, textual and visual signals enables it to adjust the process in order to reach state of the art accuracy in severity classification as proved in cross cultural datasets, including Indian corpora.
The integrated Preventive Care Recommendation Engine (PCRE) turns detection into proactive intervention to match the clinical utility with technological advancement. Quantitative results show that its performance is 9% greater than unimodal procedures and the reliability is high, with a corresponding of the result of 0.84. The model will adapt to India regional languages and also operate at low latency, reflecting its desire to be integrated into the Indian National Tele-Mental Health Mission.
Therefore, the paper sets the standards of scalable, ethical, and context-conscious AI when used in mental-health screening. The future direction will focus on federated learning to train privacy-preserving in hospitals, modelling of multimodal emotion dynamics, and incorporation of physiological variability (heart-rate variability on wearable sensors) to add to depression profiling.

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