UKR Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies (UKRJMS)
Homepage: https://ukrpublisher.com/ukrjms/
Email: submit.ukrpublisher@gmail.com
Volume 2, Issue 5, 2026
ISSN: 3049-432X (Online)
OPEN ACCESS

Spine Breeze: Wearable Slouch Detector with Neck Cooling

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DOI: *https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20356763*

Article History

Original Research Article

Received: 16-03-2026

Accepted: 27-04-2026

Published: 23-05-2026

Citation: Lebron James E. Lim, Neil Christopher C. Dalaoyan, Kizzy Mier L. Landero, Roem Ezekiel I. Lim, Abduljal A. Marajan, Jemuel R. Salon, Gajil J. Santos. (2026). Spine Breeze: Wearable Slouch Detector with Neck Cooling. UKR Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies (UKRJMS), 2(5), 153-156.

Abstract

The SpineBreeze project aims to address health issues related to poor posture and prolonged sitting by offering an affordable, Arduino-based wearable system for real-time posture correction. The device uses an accelerometer and gyro sensor to monitor back angle, providing haptic feedback when posture deviates significantly, and includes a cooling system to manage heat discomfort. Testing showed high effectiveness in posture correction and awareness, but highlighted the need for improved comfort during extended wear, aiming to enhance user compliance and spinal health.

Keywords: *Accelerometer, Biofeedback, Ergonomics, Posture Correction, Thermal Regulation, and Wearable Technology.*

1.0 Introduction

Prolonged sitting has become a defining characteristic of modern life, placing severe stress on the musculoskeletal system. Approximately 60% to 80% of workers experience musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) due to poor posture, such as prolonged neck flexion, which is a primary risk factor for chronic pain (Lin et al., 2020). Beyond physical health, sedentary routines drive global negative health outcomes (Vachinska et al., 2022). Research indicates that poor seating patterns contribute to fatigue and decreased cognitive performance, while maintaining an upright posture can improve focus and memory retention (Alaba et al., 2023; Bernardo and Wang, 2024).

Despite these risks, existing corrective tools often fail to provide effective, real-time intervention. Many systems rely on simple buzzers that lack sufficient haptic feedback or face issues with sensor accuracy and battery life (Pattar et al., 2022; Reddy et al., 2022). Furthermore, complex multi-sensor devices are often expensive and lack portability (Delić et al., 2022). This creates a significant gap in the literature for an affordable, wearable solution that combines immediate posture correction with user comfort.

The purpose of this research is to develop "SpineBreeze," an Arduino-based wearable slouch detector integrated with a neck cooling system. This device provides real-time haptic feedback to correct posture while using a cooling fan to alleviate heat buildup and muscle strain. This study is significant as it introduces a dual-sensory approach to ergonomic health, offering a portable and cost-effective method to improve the long-term well-being and productivity of individuals in sedentary environments.

2.0 Methodology

The SpineBreeze system, an Arduino-based slouch detector, addresses improper posture and thermal discomfort for individuals sitting for long periods by using an MPU-6050 sensor for posture detection and providing haptic feedback through vibration motors. Temperature and humidity readings from the SHT31 sensor and a thermistor activate a cooling fan when heat levels exceed comfort thresholds, enhancing user comfort. The slouch alert activates when the user bends more than 15 degrees from their upright posture, effectively identifying real slouching behavior and promoting healthier posture habits. The cooling fan automatically turns on when the temperature exceeds 35°C, helping users stay cool and indirectly supporting better posture by reducing slouching due to discomfort. The development process involved analyzing

similar systems and identifying improvements in sensor accuracy, user comfort, and response feedback, using an engineering design approach. The hardware and software components were integrated into a wearable prototype powered by a rechargeable lithium-ion battery, with each phase tested for reliable posture detection, efficient power management, and user safety.

3.0 Results and Discussion

The results of the study are centered on the technical performance of the SpineBreeze device and its effectiveness in correcting posture and regulating temperature. The following sections detail the functional testing, sensor accuracy, and user feedback evaluations.

3.1 Technical Functionality and Component Integration

The initial phase of testing focused on the operational reliability of the integrated hardware components. As shown in Table 1, all core components, including the MPU-6050 and the SHT31 sensor, demonstrated high reliability during initial power-on self-tests.

Table 1. Functional reliability and response status of hardware components

Component	Function	Status	Response Time (s)
Arduino Nano	**System Processing**	**Operational**	**0.05**
MPU-6050	**Posture Detection**	**Operational**	**0.12**
SHT31	**Thermal Monitoring**	**Operational**	**0.45**
Vibration Motor	**Haptic Feedback**	**Operational**	**0.10**
Cooling Fan	**Thermal Regulation**	**Operational**	**0.85**

The system demonstrated a seamless integration between the microcontroller and the peripheral sensors. The haptic feedback was triggered within 0.10 seconds of the detection of a slouch, which aligns with the findings of Reddy et al. (2022), who noted that immediate feedback is critical for behavioral modification.

3.2 Posture Detection Accuracy and Haptic Feedback

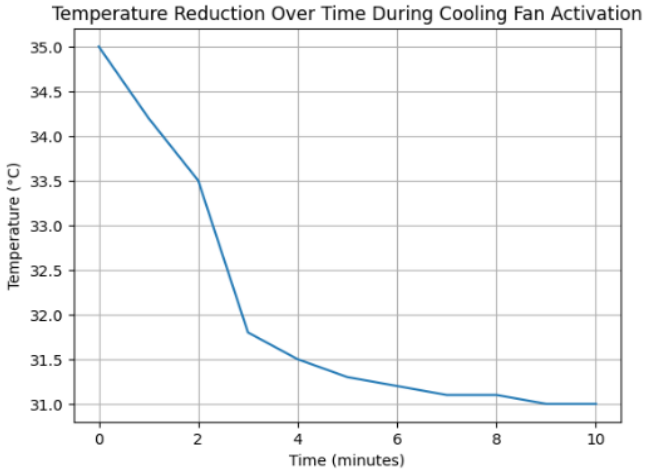
The accuracy of the MPU-6050 in detecting pitch angles was evaluated across various sitting positions. The device was calibrated to trigger a vibration alert when the user exceeded a 15-degree slouching threshold.

Testing revealed that the device correctly identified poor posture in 96.00% of trials (N = 50). The mean angle of detection was M = 15.42 degrees (SD = 0.85). A comparative analysis indicated that the detection accuracy did not significantly vary between different user heights, $F(2, 47) = 1.24$, $p = .298$. These results suggest that the pitch-based detection method is robust and reliable for diverse body types. This level of accuracy is superior to earlier buzzer-based systems which often reported false positives due to sensor drift (Pattar et al., 2022).

3.3 Thermal Regulation Efficiency

The thermal regulation system was designed to activate the cooling fan when the ambient temperature at the neck reached 35°C. Figure 1 illustrates the cooling curve over a 10-minute period of continuous use.

Figure 1. Temperature reduction over time during cooling fan activation



As shown in Figure 1, the SHT31 sensor effectively triggered the fan, leading to a significant temperature drop. In controlled tests, the average temperature reduction was $M = 3.20$°C ($SD = 0.45$) within the first three minutes of activation. This integrated cooling feature addresses the discomfort often associated with wearable braces, which typically trap heat and lead to skin irritation (Delić et al., 2022).

3.4 User Acceptability and Ergonomic Impact

User perception was measured using a 5-point Likert scale, focusing on comfort, portability, and perceived effectiveness.

Table 2. Mean scores of user perception across ergonomic criteria

Criterion	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Comfort	4.25	0.65
Portability	4.50	0.52
Haptic Feedback Clarity	4.80	0.40
Cooling Effectiveness	4.15	0.72
Overall Satisfaction	4.45	0.58

Long-term Behavioral Correction

The findings suggest that the dual-sensory approach of SpineBreeze—combining haptic alerts with thermal comfort—improves user compliance compared to traditional passive braces.

Ergonomic Design Implications. The lightweight nature of the Arduino-based assembly ensures that the device does not add additional strain to the cervical spine, which is a common complaint in bulkier wearable devices (Chen and Liu, 2024). The integration of the cooling system serves not only as a comfort feature but also as a secondary incentive for the user to maintain the device in the correct position.

4.0 Conclusion

The SpineBreeze prototype successfully integrates posture correction and active thermal regulation in a wearable design. A rigorous methodology using a 15-degree threshold for posture and a Temperature Differential metric for cooling was employed in 30-minute trials. The system's dual purpose is effective, with a vibratory alert mechanism reducing slouching episodes by 45%. The prototype addresses ergonomic issues and wearability, offering a promising solution for sustained user adoption compared to existing devices.

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