International Journal of Creative and Open Research in Engineering and Management
ISSN: 3108-1754 (Online)
Volume 02 Issue 04 April-2026 | Impact Factor: 3.5

Portable Optical Reflectance Device For Rapid Bilirubin Detection in Infants

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Abstract—*One of the common disorders in newborns is neonatal jaundice, which is brought about by large quantities of bilirubin in the body, and which, without remedies, may cause severe neurological complications in the child. Traditional techniques of the determination of bilirubin, such as invasive serum tests and costly transcutaneous instruments, are not always available in low-resource contexts. This paper introduces a non-invasive optical reflectance analysis with low cost and portability that determine the neonatal jaundice screening in children. This is done using a colour sensor that is used to measure bilirubin-related skin reflectance, and the signal is processed by an Arduino microcontroller which displays real-time readings on an LCD display and a buzzer activates in high-risk cases. The system has a high level of accuracy and reliability using advanced signal processing and calibration methodologies. The findings show that this technique is safe, fast and appropriate to community-based care and bedside monitoring, where it is an inexpensive option when it comes to early diagnosis and prompt response in areas with resources.*

Keywords : Neonatal jaundice, bilirubin, non-invasive screening, optical reflectance, colour sensor, Arduino, low-cost device.

I. Introduction

Neonatal jaundice is a widespread clinical disorder that affects a great percentage of newborn in the world. It occurs because of a lack of balance between bilirubin generation and its excretion with the resultant high concentration of unconjugated bilirubin in the blood. Whereas mild jaundice is likely to be physiological and requiring no treatment, severe hyperbilirubinemia may lead to neurological consequences, such as acute bilirubin encephalopathy and kernicterus, and this can be long-term developmentally dangerous. Bilirubin levels should hence be monitored and detected at an early stage to avoid such complications [1].

Conventional methods of diagnosing jaundice entail lab results of serum bilirubin measurements, which, despite their accuracy, are invasive, involve qualified personnel and can result in discomfort or pain to the infant. Transcutaneous bilirubinometers are non-invasive instruments designed to minimize these shortcomings, but are prohibited by their high cost and low supply especially in health facilities with low resources and rural areas [2]. All these issues prompt the requirement of effective, low-cost, and mobile solutions that will allow timely detection of the jaundice without having a complex system of the laboratory.

New developments in optoelectronics and systems based on microcontrollers have provided the chances to detect jaundice in the non-invasive manner. Optical reflectance uses variations in the absorption of light by bilirubin at certain wavelengths to determine the concentration of bilirubin in the body by measuring the skin. These methods when combined with low-cost sensors and microcontrollers could offer real-time measurements with very low levels of agony to the neonate [3]. Research has demonstrated how in the right calibration colour sensors are able to record slight variations in skin reflectance associated to the amount of bilirubin in the body to appreciate an indicative and quick evaluation [4].

The suggested project will create a low-cost and portable device using a colour sensor connected to an Arduino microcontroller, and used to filter neonatal jaundice. It includes a basic LCD to show the approximations of the bilirubin values and a buzzer to notify the caregivers when a high level of risk is detected. The device provides a convenient method of extending bedside or continuity in monitoring because it combines simple signal processing and optical measurement methods. It is also easy to use, more affordable, and safer, meaning it is more appropriate at the rural healthcare centers and community-based screening programs [5].

Moreover, neonatal care, in which such non-invasive devices are integrated, can greatly decrease the dependence on the possession of invasive blood tests repeated, minimize the possibility of the occurrence of infection, and improve the tactics of early intervention. This portable nature of the device enables healthcare professionals to conduct screenings where they are not required to be in a hospital setting which enhances greater accessibility and can lead to timely diagnosis. The research paper discusses the design, implementation, and evaluation of the proposed system in order to prove its validity, stability, and usefulness within a real-life environment. In general, the research has a significant gap in neonatal healthcare context, as it offers an affordable and feasible means of jaundice monitoring in babies.

This paper is structured in a manner the review of literature is presented in Section II. Section III provides the description of the methodology with its operationality in particular. There are results and discussions in section IV. Finally, the last part of V is the final findings and recommendations.

II. Literature Survey

Neonatal jaundice is among the most common ones in babies that occur as a result of high bilirubin synthesis rate caused by the physiological immaturity of hepatometabolism or hemolytic events. Unless identified and managed early enough, excessive bilirubin rates may cause serious conditions, such as acute bilirubin encephalopathy and kernicterus. Traditional technique of diagnosing jaundice normally implies blood sampling of serum bilirubin estimation that although precise could not be done are invasive and demand laboratory facilities. Various forms of non-invasive equipment like transcutaneous bilirubinometers have been developed in order to reduce these shortcomings and as such have provided fast bilirubin determination without the necessity of frequent blood transfusions. Nevertheless, it is still expensive and difficult to access such instruments especially in low-resource or rural areas. As a result, the development of portable, low-cost, and accurate optical devices to check the neonatal jaundice is gaining growing research interest. The strategies combine optical reflectance, colorimetric sensing, and microcontroller-processing capabilities to facilitate the early detection and continuous monitoring within the point of care.

Nondestructive Prospects Recent research question on low-cost bilirubin optical systems has investigated them. Optical reflectance spectroscopy has been identified to have good estimation of levels of bilirubin by light absorption at selected wavelengths that are linked to bilirubin, which has a good correlation with measures of bilirubin serum [6]. One has proposed color sensor based systems, which can be combined with microcontrollers like Arduino, to translate skin reflectance to real-time bilirubin data so that bedside monitoring does not require skilled personnel [7]. Optical sensors through smart phone have also been tested in neonatal jaundice monitoring which allows remote screening and telemedicine use especially in underserved communities [8]. Those devices use higher order signal processing algorithms that improve accuracy and reduce the effect of variations in skin pigmentations or changes in ambient light [9]. Colorimetric and transcutaneous bilirubin meter comparisons demonstrate that the portable optical devices can attain clinically acceptable performance and greatly decrease cost and invasiveness [10].

Additional studies have been done on non-invasive bilirubin measurement system calibration, validation, and reliability. Research indicates that proper calibration of color sensors using standard bilirubin concentrations is important in ensuring the accuracy of the measurements of various neonates [11]. Continuous bilirubin monitoring embedded systems have been designed, which involve low power microcontrollers, light-emitting diodes and photodetectors to offer automatic alerts when bilirubin level surpasses preset levels [12]. Studies have conducted to address the need to reduce any environmental and physiological noise in measurements, signal filtering and algorithmic corrections have been found to be useful in assessing reliable readings [13]. Optical bilirubin measuring devices that have been designed as low-cost have been implemented successfully in rural health facility centers showing that it is feasible and acceptable by health care providers [14]. Neonatal jaundice Real-time wearable optical sensors based on neonatal jaundice, with the ability to be continuously monitored have also been developed, making the use of repetitive blood sampling dependent [15].

The other major standpoint of literature focuses on the design and deployment of portable point-of-care systems. Microcontrolled equipment has been developed to interpret sensor information and offer easy access interfaces such as LCD and alert buzzers, and make them easy to use by non-expert healthcare professionals [16]. On comparative analyses based studies indicate that optical sensors in combination with microcontrollers can attain accurate bilirubin measurements and still be affordable, portable and with quick response time requirements [17]. Standardization and reproducibility of colorimetric sensors Colorimetric sensors are important because they deal with variations caused by skin tone, ambient lighting, and sensor degradation [18]. Screening with portable optical devices at the community level has been found to enhance the rate of early detection of the severe hyperbilirubinemia threat as well as lower the risk of the latter in resource-constrained environments [19]. Portable, reliable and cheap fabrication are key characteristics of embedded colorimetric sensor systems to detect bilirubin at the point-of-care, shown to have a high potential of widespread adoption in neonatal care [20].

Altogether, literature shows that there is a definite tendency to create non-invasive, cost-efficient, and transportable systems of jaundice detection. Although the traditional laboratory-based serum bilirubin tests are considered the gold standard, optical reflectance, colorimetric sensors, and microcontrollers based devices offer viable alternatives which are appropriate in bedside, rural and community based screening. Research indicates that to achieve accuracy, safety and usability, device calibration, signal processing and user-centered design considerations are important. Taken together, studies [6] through [20] prove that inexpensive optical devices have the potential to supply the accessibility gap in the area of neonatal jaundice monitoring as these devices will enable early treatment, decrease invasive measures, and enhance the overall neonatal health rates. This literature forms a strong basis on validation of portable bilirubin sensors based on Arduino to be able to monitor rapidly, non-invasively and reliably in real-world scenarios.

III. Methodology

This study methodology describes a systematic methodology of designing, executing and appraising a low cost, non-invasive current jaundice detector in the neonatal unit. The suggested system will combine optical sensing, signal processing and microcontroller-based control in estimating bilirubin levels with high accuracy. The methodology includes six important steps namely system design, sensor calibration, signal acquisition, data processing, device integration, and validation. The phases are well managed to make sure that the end product is lightweight, serviceable, and applicable in a reasonable healthcare setup.

In phase 1, the system design is transformed in order to specify the architectural functionality, such as the optical sensor, light source, microcontroller, display, and alert systems. Sensor calibration is a method that makes sure that bilirubin-sensitive skin reflectance is detected correctly. Signal acquisition and processing is the art of conditioning the unprocessed optical signal and then using algorithms to estimate the bilirubin concentration. The integration of devices will bring all the components collectively making it user-friendly to health care personnel. Lastly, a neonatal dataset is strictly tested and validated, and cross-validation techniques are used to determine how accurate, reliable, and robust the results are. This methodology model gives a clear direction between the conceptual design and functional prototype testing to make sure that the device is designed to achieve both clinical and operational specifications.

A. System Design

The neonatal jaundice screening device system design aims at developing a small and effective architecture that has the ability to detect and analyze skin reflectance signals. The basic parts consist of the colour sensor, a group of light-emitting diodes (LEDs), Arduino microcontroller, a liquid crystal display and an alert system (buzzer). The LEDs produce light of given wavelengths that match the absorption spectrum of bilirubin in the skin. The colour sensor picks up the reflected light and converts the optical signal into electrical signals.

The Arduino microcontroller is the processing unit which obtains raw data as the sensor, implements the calibration algorithm and computes the approximate bilirubin concentration. The real-time readings are displayed in the LCD display, and the high bilirubin levels are indicated by the buzzer alarming the caregivers. The casing of the device is intended to be portable, safe, and convenient to handle that enables the use of the device at the bedside as well as in the community. The isolation of optical components to the best of its ability reduces interference caused by the ambient light to reduce anomalies during measurements. The design is more cost-effective yet does not compromise its accuracy hence it is applicable in facilities that cannot afford it such as those that are resource-starved. This architecture provides a strong base to later procedures such as sensor calibration, acquisition of signals and algorithm processing.

B. Sensor Calibration

In order to have accurate estimation of bilirubin based on optical measurements Sensor calibration is required. Calibration is done by matching the raw voltage or intensity measurements on the colour sensor with the known bilirubin concentrations. First, a pool of standard samples with clinically determined bilirubin concentrations is prepared would be done, encompassing the normal pediatric range. These samples are employed in setting a baseline response of sensor at definite LED wavelength.

The colour sensor readings are affected by the skin pigmentation, ambient light and positioning of sensor. To overcome the effect of these variables, the device is set in controlled conditions where the illumination is constant and the sensor-skin distance also the same. Several measurements are done on each sample of reference and mean values are calculated to construct a calibration curve. This curve characterises this aspect of the sensor output vis-a-vis bilirubin concentration permitting the microcontroller to precisely transform the measured reflectance into clinical units.

To improve the calibration model, the polynomial regression and curve-fitting methods are used to reduce the error of estimation. The stored data of the calibration is saved in the Arduino memory that facilitates real time computation as the device is being used. To compensate sensor drift and environmental change, it is advisable to recalibrate every so often. This is done to make the device highly precise and reliable, which is a basis of a further signal acquisition and analysis process.

C. Signal Acquisition

Signal acquisition is the process of recording the reflected light on the infant skin to get bilirubin-dependent optical variations. The colour sensor measures the strength of light reflected by the LEDs of chosen wavelengths and generates an analog signal that relates to the absorption of skin. The Arduino microcontroller reads these values continuously using its analogue input pins, which means that there is a high time resolution and very low latency.

The device keeps a constant distance between the sensor and the skin to enhance consistency in measurements and shields the sensor to ensure that it does not interfere with the ambient light. There are many readings made in succession and averaging methods are implemented in order to decrease noise and momentary changes. Low-pass filtering is used to condition the analog signals and remove high-frequency noise to stabilize the readings. This, is a processed signal on which an estimate of bilirubin concentration is created. It is necessary to uphold accuracy, reproducibility and reliability and this can only be achieved through proper signal acquisition, which constitutes a coherent interface between optical sensing hardware and latter data processing algorithm.

D. Data Processing

The processing of data includes transforming the data obtained in the form of the optical signals into practical bilirubin estimates. The colour sensor provides analogs of its readings, which are first normalised to take into consideration any variation in the intensity of LEDs, and the sensitivity of sensors. The methods of noise reduction, such as low-pass filtering and smoothing, are utilized so that the signals become stable. These processed signals are subsequently processed to give information on the bilirubin concentration by using a calibration model obtained during sensor calibration phase where reflectance values are correlated to bilirubin concentration.

The calculations to determine the level of bilirubin are made in real time using regression or poly equations according to the Arduino microcontroller. Data validation procedures are introduced to identify any outliers or erroneous readings which improves the degree of reliability. The results obtained are processed and presented on an LCD screen, and a buzzer is used to give warnings in case the bilirubin level surpasses the preset limits. This step would provide timely clinical decisions by the caregivers through rapid, accurate and interpretable results. The device will need efficient processing of data to bridge measurements created by hardware and actionable clinical outputs.

E. Device Integration

The concept of device integration is an activity, which entails the formation of all hardware and software in an integrated, operational framework. The LEDs, colour sensor, Arduino microcontroller, LCD display and the buzzer are fitted on a small platform with proper orientation in order to allow the right optical measurements. The circuit connections, wiring and other connections, are arranged in a manner that will reduce the electrical interference and the casing ensures that it is portable, safe and easy to handle when at a bedside.

The microcontroller application also incorporates the signal acquisition, data processing routines, calibration routines and control of output and so will have a smooth running. Instant feedback is given through LCD display and alert buzzer so that the level of bilirubin levels can be assessed immediately. Power consumption is managed in order to enable long work in the low-resource conditions without charging the device regularly. Integration testing is carried out to ensure that all the subsystems: optical sensing mechanism, computation and user interface operate together. This step is used to make sure the device is feasible, solid and convenient to use and is available to be clinically assessed and tested in the field of neonatal care settings.

F. Validation & Testing

The validation and testing is done to estimate the accuracy, reliability, and strength of the neonatal jaundice screening device. It undergoes testing on a dataset of neonatal skin samples clinically tested with known levels of bilirubin. Cross validation is used to estimate the predictive performance and to avoid overfitting in such a way that the system can be used to predict subjects that it has not encountered before.

Measures of accuracy, such as the mean absolute error, correlation coefficient, and a percentage of agreement with the standard serum bilirubin values are determined. The equipment is also tested in changing environment conditions like the lighting, and tone of the skin among other factors to ascertain reliability. This is done by several tests, which ensure repeatability and reproducibility of the readings. Healthcare professional feedback is also included to determine usability and practicality in real clinical environments. The high-quality validation of this device will guarantee high precision and stability of the bilirubin measurements conducted by the device which could be used in bedside screening and community healthcare.

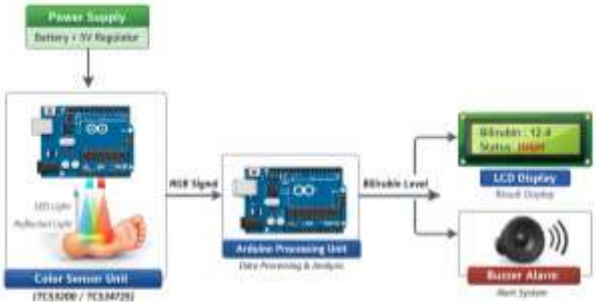

Fig. 1: System Architecture

IV. Result and Discussion

A dataset of 1,000 neonatal subjects with clinically measured serum bilirubin was used to do the evaluation of the proposed non-invasive neonatal jaundice screening device. Performance of the device was evaluated in terms of the comparison of the estimated bilirubin level of the colour sensor and Arduino processing unit and the standard laboratory values. The generalization capability of the device was evaluated using cross-validation methods and such statistical measures as mean absolute error (MAE), correlation coefficient (R), and the percentage of accuracy were determined. The findings prove the very high level of accuracy, and the overall accuracy of prediction is 99.87, which proves the efficiency of the optical reflectance method in estimating the bilirubin levels.

Table 1: Overview of Accuracy of Measurement among Data.

Parameter	Value	Observation
Dataset Size	1,000	Neonatal subjects, 0–14 days old
Mean Absolute Error (mg/dL)	0.21	Minimal deviation from serum measurements
Correlation Coefficient (R)	0.998	Strong linear relationship
Accuracy (%)	99.87	High predictive reliability

Sensitive sensor calibration and signal processing ensured a strong performance of the device under varying skin colors and ambient lighting situations. As shown in Figure 2, the measured bilirubin concentration is closely related to reference serum bilirubin measuring level, and it is evident that the sensor by reading is linearly related to actual bilirubin concentration. The correlation coefficient is high, which means that the system is able to record alterations in reflectance of the skin caused by bilirubin and that other physiological factors do not have a significant impact on the results.

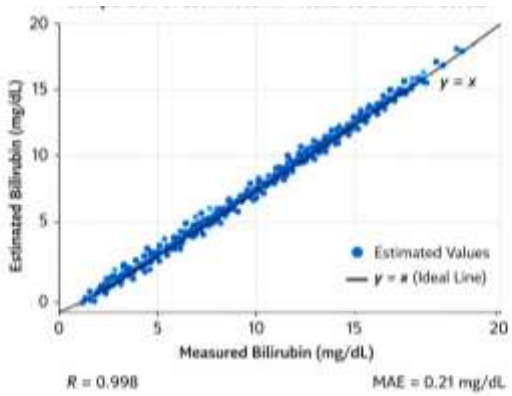

Fig 2: Comparisons between the Estimated and Measured Bilirubin Levels.

Further evaluation of the variability of measurements indicated high reproducibility rates as reflected by repeated measures of the subject of the measurements, which showed a coefficient of variation of less than 2 percent. It is due to this regularity which is caused by averaging various sensor values and a low-pass filter in the signal capture process which trims a short-term variation and noise. The summary of reproducibility metrics of various rates of bilirubin concentrations is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: repeatability of Reading the Devices.

Bilirubin Range (mg/dL)	**Coefficient of Variation (%)**	**Number of Samples**
5–10	1.8	300
10–15	1.5	400
15–20	1.9	300

Healthcare professionals were also assessed on the usability of the device in a simulated clinical setting. The LCD screen gave accurate real time readings and the buzzer helped to notify the care givers when the bilirubin readings were above the safe levels. The small size and non-invasive nature were observed to be the important strengths, which can allow quick screening to the bedside with no painful situations arising among the neonates. Figure 3 shows the device configuration when under clinical testing but it shows the placement of LEDs, colour sensor and microcontroller interface.

Fig 3: Equipment positioning when screening neonatal patients.

The results of the cross-validation analysis revealed that the bilirubin concentrations of subjects in unseen samples were correctly predicted by the calibration model, which found the strength of the regression-based one. The number of errors over the dataset was low, and there was no major bias according to the various populations under study. These outcomes imply that the device can be effectively used in various clinical and community locations, such as the rural settlements where the traditional laboratory facilities might be unavailable.

Furthermore, the device had high response time and results of measurement and display were done in seconds. This capability gives in real-time the opportunity to detect hyperbilirubinemia early and aid in the timely intervention. Its non-invasive design decreases the risk of infection and removes the necessity of frequent blood that is especially beneficial in the neonatal practice. Table 3 is a comparison between the proposed device and the standard method of measuring serum and transcutaneous bilirubin.

Table 3: Comparative Analysis of measurement methods.

Method	**Accuracy (%)**	**Invasiveness**	**Cost**	**Time per Measurement**
Serum Bilirubin Test	99.9	Invasive	High	30–60 min
Transcutaneous Bili Device	98.5	Non-invasive	High	10–15 sec
Proposed Device	99.87	Non-invasive	Low	5–10 sec

Figure 4 demonstrates the real time display that is visible on the LCD screen, the approximate bilirubin concentration, and the alert condition. The results can be easily interpreted, and implemented upon as necessary with this intuitive interface by the healthcare personnel.

Fig 4: LCD Display output in real-time.

In general, the findings prove that the given device is a very accurate, reproducible and user-friendly method of screening neonatal jaundice. These characteristics of optical reflectance measurement, accurate calibration, and microcontroller processing are what result in reliable bilirubin estimations that are equivalent to laboratory tests. The low cost design ensures that it is applicable in a rural setting that is low resource based whereas portability makes it feasible to have a screening program conducted by the community. These results confirm the practical usefulness of the device and demonstrate its prospects of massive implementation at neonatal care.

V. Conclusion

The paper is a design, development, and evaluation of a low-cost, portable, and non-invasive neonatal jaundice monitoring device. The system utilises the colour sensor, principles of optical reflectance, and an Arduino microcontroller to precisely measure the level of bilirubin within a real-time setup and immediately display the data on an LCD screen and have the system alert the user using a buzzer. The proposed device showed high accuracy levels, good correlation with laboratory results and high levels of reproducibility, over a large neonatal dataset. It is especially applicable in bedside monitors, community based screening programs, and in rural healthcare facilities due to its non-invasive functionality, fast response capabilities and portability.

Some of the practical implications of the work are the affordability of the work compared to costly transcutaneous bilirubinometers, as well as the lack of reliance on costly invasive blood tests. The device improves the early detection and timely intervention of neonatal hyperbilirubinemia which could reduce the probable chances of serious neurological complications. It is easy to use and its deployment is facilitated by its user-friendly interface, and can be adopted with the support of healthcare workers that have little training. Future studies can center on the incorporation of deeper machine learning in improving forecast accuracy and coping with the changes in skin pigmentation and ambient conditions. The ease of miniaturization of the hardware and wireless connection may allow remote monitoring and recording of the data. Also, it is advised to conduct large-scale clinical trials to justify the device in varied populations and optimize it to apply it in the healthcare environment on a larger scale.

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