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Reliability of a Health and Safety Complaint Ergonomic Assessment Tool Developed for Improved Work Posture Assessment on the Shop Floor

Mgbemena, Chika Edith

Department of Industrial & Production Engineering, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria. <u>ce.mgbemena@unizik.edu.ng</u>

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Abstract- Strategies for minimising the rate of occurrence of awkward postures during manual handling operations have been recommended. Awkward postures, if adopted for prolonged periods, can result in Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs). Hence, manual operations need to be assessed to identify if awkward postures exist. A real-time automatic Health and Safety (H&S) compliance posture assessment tool based on 3D sensing technology has been developed to assess operators undertaking manual handling tasks. This paper presents the validation of the developed tool using a reference tool. The analysis results indicate little notable angular discrepancies in the data measured by the developed tool and the reference tool. Comparing the data measured with the two tools, it is evident that there is remarkable consistency. The tool could be useful in workplaces to assess new workstations' safety and correct workers' methods in real-time.

Keywords: Microsoft Kinect; Musculoskeletal Disorders; Awkward Postures; Ergonomics; Manual Handling

1. INTRODUCTION

Strategies for minimising awkward postures' rates during manual handling operations have been recommended and include improved workstation design, modified tool design, proper reach distances, adjustable seated and standing workstations Researchers [1]–[8]. have recommended posture assessment as a remedial measure to minimise MSD threat because effective posture assessment is important in ensuring postural comfort [9]-[11]. Existing assessment is normally carried out by observing several operations and carrying out analysis afterward. Although some improvements can be identified for the operations, this lagging assessment cannot alert operators and prevent them from adopting awkward postures in time. The real-time automatic health and safety assessment tool developed by [12] that can prompt the workers to adjust their work postures continuously is of great significance in workplaces

There are two methods by which human work postures are analysed on the shop floor – the observational technique and the instrument-based technique. The observational technique uses visual perception to evaluate the rate at which the body moves away from the neutral position. These include the Ovako Working Posture Analysis System, Rapid Upper Limb Assessment, RULA, the Quick Exposure Check, the Rapid Entire Body Assessment, REBA [13]–[18]. The tools are timeconsuming and labour-intensive [19].

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The instrument-based technique records work postures using instruments [20]. These tools often require offline data collection for posture force assessment and include the plate, photography. Direct body measurements using the goniometers, inclinometers, and 3D analysis using markers. Electromagnetic tracking system, 4D Computer tomography (4D CT) [13], [21]–[24]. Active and passive video-based systems such as the NDI and the Vicon Motion capture systems can pose great problems because they are complex and bulky [25]. The Electromagnetic tracking system, which is less bulky, is less accurate because of the magnetic field interferences caused by metallic objects on the shop floor. The Inertial systems, such as the Xsens, also have their accuracy greatly affected by metals [26]. Photographs and videos often produce an inaccurate measurement of joint angles resulting from distortions caused by camera placement issues [13].

This study is aimed at testing the developed realtime, automatic, health and safety compliance ergonomic posture assessment tool, which is based on 3D sensing and tracking technology for reliability and validity under repeatable and reproducible conditions

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

A 12-inch, 360 degrees goniometer was used in this study to measure the exact back flexion, elbow flexion, and shoulder flexion angles of the participants.

2.1. Experimentations

Testing the developed tool, an experiment was conducted to evaluate the closeness of agreement in the tool's measured data and compare the captured from the reference with data data tool (Goniometer). For all the tests, the participants were asked to perform tasks while facing the Kinect at a 2m-distance and 90° horizontal field of view from the sensor, which is placed on a tripod 1.2m above the floor [27], as depicted in Figures 1a and 2a. The back and arm postures were measured at a specified time using the developed tool, as the participants performed the assigned tasks. The Goniometer was also used to record the same angles of the participant at that posture. The measured angles include the back-flexion angle, the shoulder flexion angle, and the elbow flexion angle.

2.2. Data Processing and Statistical Analysis.

Two tests were conducted to assess the precision of measurements obtained from the developed tool compared to the goniometer measurements. These are the repeatability and reproducibility tests.

2.2.1. Repeatability Tests

While a sole participant repeatedly performed a lifting-above-head-height task, the elbow and



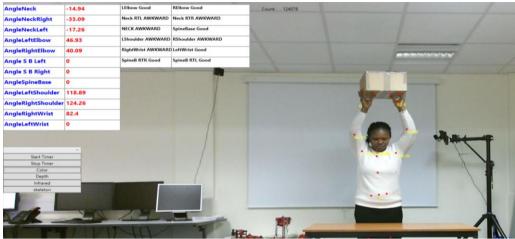
a. Experimental Setup for the repeatability test

shoulder angles were measured using the developed tool and the Goniometer. The purpose of the test was to evaluate the consistency and conformity in the data measured by the two independent tools and, consequently, the tool's reliability, when a participant's postures are assessed while wearing the same clothing to perform the same task with the same load severally at the same workstation. The experimental setup for this study is depicted in Figure 1a. The participant, shown in Figure 1b, was asked to lift a load of 0.5kg from a work table to above head height, while the elbow and shoulder flexion angles are captured at 5 seconds from the start of the lift depicted in Figure 1c. The Goniometer is then used to measure these angles simultaneously as the participant maintains the same posture. This procedure is repeated 30 times. For each capture, the Goniometer is used to measure the participant's elbow and shoulder flexion angles.

The developed tool's measurement results were compared with those of the goniometer measurement to assess the level of agreement and consistency, which helps to inform the precision of measurements obtained from the developed tool. The difference in angular measurements is statistically analysed using the mean, standard deviation, and the inter-item correlation between the two tool's measured data. The intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) was used to evaluate the tool's test-retest reliability in SPSS version 24.0. The significance level was set at p < 0.05 and the results obtained was evaluated from 0 to 0.5 =no/poor agreement/reliability, 0.5 to 0.75 =moderate agreement/reliability, 0.75 to 0.9 = goodagreement/reliability and >0.9 = excellent agreement/reliability [28]. ICC was selected because of its suitability in assessing the consistency of quantitative measurements made by different devices measuring the same quantity.



b. Participant during the repeatability test



c. Screenshot of the participant as captured by Kinect during repeatability test Figure 1. Participant during the repeatability test

2.2.2. Reproducibility Tests

The purpose of the reproducibility test conducted in this study was to evaluate the consistency and conformity in the data measured by the two independent tools. During the test, postures of different participants were assessed while wearing different clothings to perform different tasks involving different loads in different workplace locations. Sixteen different volunteers participated in the study. Some of the tasks undertaken are presented in Figure 2 and include lifting, hammering, sitting to handle, assembly tasks, and carrying the load. Figures 2a and 2b depict the experimental Setup for the assembly of electrical components and the participant performing the task, respectively. Sixteen participants were asked to perform specified tasks as their back flexion, elbow, and shoulder flexion angles were captured after 5 seconds with the developed tool and Goniometer.

Figure 2c shows one of the participants who performed the sitting to pick a task, as his left elbow posture was measured with the Goniometer. Figures 2d and 2e presents the screenshots of two participants as tracked and measured by the developed tool.

Angular discrepancies in the two tool's measured data are statistically analysed using the measured data's mean and standard deviation. The Kendall's coefficient of concordance (w) was used to evaluate the level of agreement in the data measured by the two independent tools because of its suitability and versatility in handling data measured by different raters without any regard to the nature of the data's probability distribution. The significance level was set at p < 0.05, and the results obtained were evaluated from 0 = no agreement to 1 = perfect agreement.



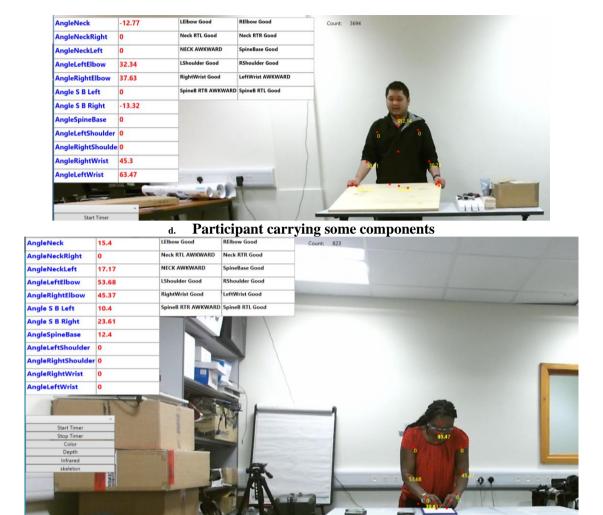
a. Experimental Setup for the reproducibility test



b. Participant during the reproducibility test



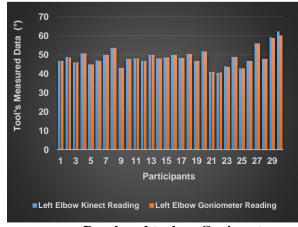
c. Measuring the Left elbow of a participant with the Goniometer



e. **Participant handling electrical components Figure 2** Screenshots of participants during reproducibility testing.

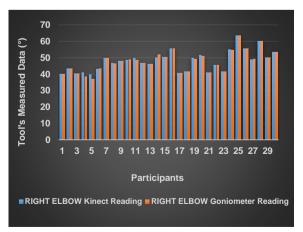
3. **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Results of Testing for Tool's Reliability The result of the repeated arm posture assessment of a sole participant, captured 30 different times with the developed tool and the Goniometer during

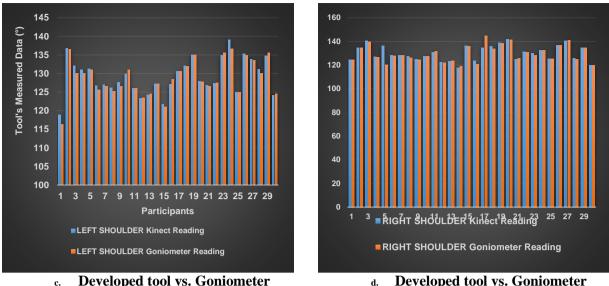


a. Developed tool vs. Goniometer measurement for left elbow flexion

a lifting task, is presented in Figure 3. Figure 3 shows, at a glance, the angular discrepancies in the data measured with the developed tool and the reference tool



b. Developed tool vs. Goniometer measurement for right elbow flexion



measurement for left shoulder flexion

d. Developed tool vs. Goniometer measurement for right shoulder flexion

Figure 3: Developed tool vs. Goniometer is measured arm posture data of a sole participant under repeatability conditions

Generally, there was excellent agreement between the measurements made by the developed tool and the Goniometer when four different arm postures were analysed in SPSS, as summarised in Table 1.

	2				
Posture	Mean (°) & S.D.	Mean (°) &	Difference in	inter-item	Average
	for new tool's	S.D. for	Mean (°) &	correlation	Measures for
	reading	Goniometer	Difference in		ICC
		reading	S.D.		
Left Elbow	48.45 & 4.72	48.34 & 4.51	0.11 & 0.21	0.997	0.998
Flexion					
Right Elbow	47.92 & 6.13	47.71 & 6.39	0.21 & 0.26	0.992	0.996
Flexion					
Left Shoulder	129.16 & 4.76	128.81 & 4.86	0.35 & 0.1	0.982	0.990
Flexion					
Right Shoulder	130.14 & 6.5	129.67 & 7.15	0.47 & 0.65	0.863	0.925
Flexion					

Table 1: Result of statistical analysis of the data measured under repeatable conditions.

**ICC = Intraclass correlation coefficient, S.D. = Standard Deviation.

** & Separates the Mean from the Standard Deviation

For left elbow flexion, an average angle of 48.45° and 48.34° with the standard deviation of 4.72 and 4.51 was measured for the 30 participants using the developed tool and the Goniometer, respectively. The apparent similarity in the average angular measurements and standard deviation indicates no notable difference in the distribution of the data measured by the developed tool and the Goniometer. The difference in measurements of 0.11° is low, indicating that discrepancies in angular measurement between the two tools are small, with a standard deviation of 0.21 indicating possible consistency in measurement. An inter-item correlation of 0.997 was obtained, showing an excellent correlation between the developed tool's measured data and the Goniometer measured data. The reliability test yielded an average ICC measure of 0.998, which indicates excellent inter-rater reliability. For right

elbow flexion, an average angle of 47.92° and 47.71° with the standard deviation of 6.13 and 6.39, was measured for the 30 participants using the developed tool and the Goniometer, respectively. The difference in the measurements was 0.21° , with a standard deviation of 0.26. Again, the obvious similarity in the average angular measurements and standard deviation indicates no notable difference in the distribution of the data measured by the developed tool and the Goniometer. The measurements' difference is low, indicating that

discrepancies in angular measurement between the two tools are small. An inter-item correlation of 0.992 was obtained, showing an excellent correlation between the developed tool's measured data and the Goniometer measured data. The reliability test yielded an average ICC measure of 0.996, which indicates excellent inter-rater reliability.

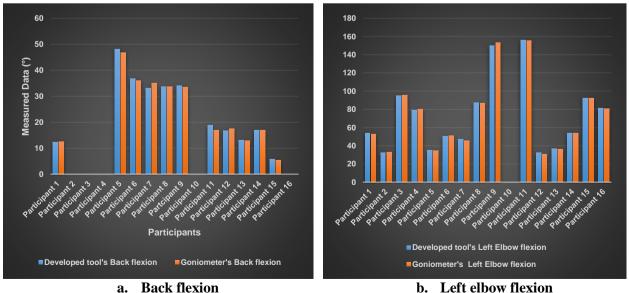
For left shoulder flexion, an average angle of 129.16° and 128.81° with the standard deviation of 4.76 and 4.86 was measured for the 30 participants using the developed tool Goniometer. The difference in the measurements was 0.35° , with a standard deviation of 0.1. The obvious similarity is that the average angular measurements and standard deviation indicate no notable difference in the distribution of the data measured by the developed tool and the Goniometer. The measurements' difference is low, indicating that discrepancies in angular measurement between the two tools are small. An inter-item correlation of 0.982 was obtained, indicating an excellent correlation between the developed tool's measured data and the Goniometer measured data. The reliability test vielded an average ICC measure of 0.990, which indicates excellent inter-rater reliability.

For right shoulder flexion, an average angle of 130.14° and 129.67° with the standard deviation of 6.5 and 7.15 was measured for the 30 participants using the developed tool and the Goniometer, respectively. The difference in the measurements was 0.47°, with a standard deviation of 0.65. The obvious similarity is that the average angular measurements and standard deviation indicate no

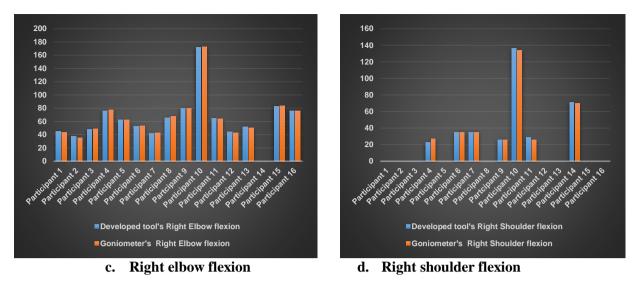
notable difference in the distribution of the data measured by the developed tool and the Goniometer. The measurements' difference is low, indicating that discrepancies in angular measurement between the two tools are small. An inter-item correlation of 0.863 was obtained, indicating a good correlation between the developed tool's measured data and the Goniometer measured data. The reliability test yielded an average ICC measurement of 0.925, which indicates excellent inter-rater reliability.

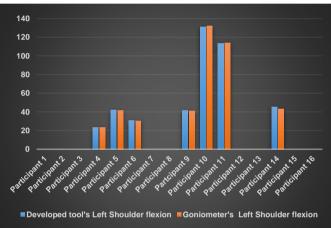
Similarly, when tested under reproducible conditions, the results obtained from the 16 volunteers that participated in the study are presented in Figure 4 and Table 2.

For back flexion, an average angle of 16.88° and 16.74°, with the standard deviation of 15.94 and 15.81, was measured for the 16 participants using the developed tool and the Goniometer, respectively. The obvious similarity is that the average angular measurements and standard deviation indicate no notable difference in the distribution of the data measured by the developed tool and the Goniometer when tested under reproducibility conditions. The difference in the measurements of 0.15° means and 0.13 S.D. is low, indicating that the two tools' angular measurement is small and consistent. Kendall's coefficient of concordance (w) of 0.989 (p = 0.013) was obtained, showing an excellent level of agreement between the developed tool's measured data and the Goniometer measured data.



b. Left elbow flexion





e. Left shoulder flexion

Figure 4: Developed tool vs. Goniometer's measured posture data of different participants under reproducibility conditions.

Posture	Mean (°) & S.D.	Mean (°) & S.D.	Difference	Kendall's	P-value
	for new tool's	for Goniometer	Mean (°) &	Coefficient of	
	measurement	measurement	Difference in	Concordance (w)	
			S.D.		
Back Flexion	16.88 & 15.94	16.74 & 15.81	0.15 & 0.13	0.989	0.013
Left Elbow	67.75 & 42.27	67.71 & 42.84	0.04 & 0.57	0.999	0.012
Flexion					
Right Elbow	62.57 & 35.73	62.52 & 36.15	0.06 & 0.42	1	0.012
Flexion					
Left Shoulder	26.70 & 41.34	26.64 & 41.55	0.06 & 0.21	1	0.012
Flexion					
Right Shoulder	22.13 & 36.70	22.00 & 36.12	0.13 & 0.57	0.993	0.013
Flexion					

** & Separates the Mean from the Standard Deviation

The left elbow flexion, an average angle of 67.75° and 67.71° , with the standard deviation of 42.27° and 42.84° , was measured for the 16 participants using the developed tool Goniometer, respectively. Despite the large spread in the measured data as indicated by the large quantity of S.D., there is an

obvious similarity in the average angular measurements and standard deviation, indicating no notable difference in the distribution of the data measured by the developed tool and the Goniometer, when tested under reproducibility conditions. The difference in the measurements of For right elbow flexion, an average angle of 62.57° and 62.52°, with the standard deviation of 35.73 and 36.15. was measured for the 16 participants using the developed tool and the Goniometer, respectively. Despite the large spread in the measured data as indicated by the large quantity of S.D., there is an obvious similarity in the average angular measurements and standard deviation, indicating no notable difference in the distribution of the data measured by the developed tool and the Goniometer, when tested under reproducibility conditions. The difference in the measurements of 0.06° mean and -0.42 S.D. is low, indicating that the angular measurement between the two tools is small and consistent. Kendall's coefficient of concordance of 1 (p = 0.012) was obtained, showing an excellent level of agreement between the developed tool's measured data and the Goniometer measured data.

Also, for left shoulder flexion, an average angle of 26.70° and 26.64°, with the standard deviation of 41.34 and 41.55, was measured for the 16 participants using the developed tool and the Goniometer, respectively. Despite the large spread in the measured data as indicated by the large quantity of S.D., there is an obvious similarity in the average angular measurements and standard deviation, indicating no notable difference in the distribution of the data measured by the developed tool and the Goniometer, when tested under reproducibility conditions. The difference in the measurements of 0.06° mean and -0.21 S.D. is low, indicating that the angular measurement between the two tools is small and consistent. Kendall's coefficient of concordance of 1 (p = 0.012) was obtained, showing an excellent level of agreement between the developed tool's measured data and the Goniometer measured data.

For right shoulder flexion, an average angle of 22.13° and 22.00° , with the standard deviation of 36.70 and 36.12, was measured for the 16 participants using the developed tool and the Goniometer, respectively. Despite the large spread in the measured data as indicated by the large quantity of S.D., there is an obvious similarity in the average angular measurements and standard deviation, indicating no notable difference in the

distribution of the data measured by the developed tool and the Goniometer, when tested under reproducibility conditions. The difference in the measurements of 0.13° means and 0.57 S.D. is low, indicating that the two tools' angular measurement is small and consistent. Kendall's coefficient of concordance of 0.993 (p = 0.013) was obtained, showing an excellent level of agreement between the developed tool's measured data and the Goniometer measured data.

Finally, the analysis results indicate little notable angular discrepancies in the data measured by the developed tool and the reference tool. Comparing the data measured with the two tools, it is obvious that there is a great consistency. This is further validated by the intraclass correlation coefficient and Kendall's coefficient of concordance values, which suggest excellent levels of agreement and consistency in the data measured by the two tools. Hence, the developed tool proved to be reliable and consistent in its measurement.

4. CONCLUSION

Several posture assessment tools have been developed, but these often require an assessment to be carried out by observing several operations and carrying out analysis afterward. A real-time automatic health and safety posture assessment tool developed by [12], [27] was tested in this study. The new tool is an automatic, portable, costeffective tool that detects and assesses work postures with real-time feedback to the workers and their employers. It consists of a Microsoft Kinect 3D motion sensor and a developed software application for retrieving posture data from the 3D motion sensor. The tool's statistical test under repeatability reproducibility and conditions. presented in this study, suggests satisfactory agreement and consistency levels in the data measured by the developed tool. Hence, the developed tool proved to be reliable and consistent in its measurement. The tool's benefit is its usefulness in the automatic real-time detection and assessment of work postures, promoting a reduction in the rate of occurrence of awkward postures and, consequently, the risk of MSDs among workers in the workplace.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest associated with this work.

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