

# **Efects of screen size and visual presentation on visual fatigue based on regional brain wave activity**

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# **Abstract**

Advances in information technologies have resulted in people spending increasing amounts of time staring at electronic screens. Long-term use of computers, mobile phones, and tablets can cause eye soreness and fatigue, but can also cause more serious conditions including myopia, cataracts, and glaucoma. This study assesses changes in brain wave activity detected by eight electrodes targeting diferent brain regions to identify and assess the brain wave patterns in the regions associated with visual fatigue under various visual presentation methods. Furthermore, linear discriminant analysis and Min–Max scaling techniques are applied to develop a visual fatigue assessment model to quantify visual fatigue. Finally, experiments are run to assess the impact of screen size (smartphone, tablet, computer) and visual presentation mode (2D, 3D, AR, VR) on visual fatigue. This study fnds that (1) the brain wave features which infuence the reaction to 2D and 3D imaging are the delta and theta waves at the prefrontal Fp1 and Fp2 poles. When viewing AR images, the alpha bands at the O1 and O2 poles of the occipital lobe show a relatively clear impact, while the delta and theta waves at the C3 pole in the left center area are associated with VR images; (2) larger screens cause greater visual fatigue, indicating that excessive visual stimulation will increase visual loading and thus produce greater visual fatigue; (3) the results show that VR can cause quite severe visual fatigue, along with motion sickness passed on sensory mismatch. Therefore, it is recommended to avoid viewing experiences that are inconsistent with the brain's physiological experience, such as walking while viewing a mobile phone, or reading in a moving car. The proposed visual fatigue assessment model provides easy and objective quantifcation of visual fatigue indicators, contributing to the reduction of risk for eye injury and disease.

**Keywords** Visual fatigue · EEG · Linear discriminant analysis · Visual presentation · Three dimensional  $(3D) \cdot$  Virtual reality

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### **1 Introduction**

Given the high prevalence of Internet applications and mobile devices, people are surrounded by screens of diferent sizes, and computers and smartphones are integral to both work and leisure life. Looking at digital screens for extended periods can cause eyes to feel sore and tired, but can also result in dizziness, headache, and nausea, and can also contribute to eye diseases including myopia, cataracts, and glaucoma. In recent years, digital imaging technologies have advanced far beyond simple 2D renderings, with three-dimensional (3D) display technologies, 3D movies, and other visualization modes gradually becoming integrated into daily life. Technologies such as augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) are widely used in education and entertainment applications, and are used to allow consumers to view cars, houses, and other potential purchases from a distance but still with a sense of presence. However, few studies have examined the impact of such technology usage on visual fatigue, and the potential efects of long-term use on human eye comfort remain unclear. Therefore, it is increasingly important to understand the impact of these digital imaging methods on eye fatigue.

Moreover, most people will ignore eye fatigue until the condition begins to seriously impact daily life, thus losing the opportunity for early intervention and treatment. Thus, an objective assessment tool for the real-time detection and evaluation of eye fatigue is needed. However, most previous research on visual fatigue detection have depended on questionnaires and scales, which cannot directly or quickly measure degree of visual fatigue, making it impossible to provide immediate detection and feedback. Such approaches are also easily biased by subjective perception and individual experience, thus leading to accuracy problems [\[1–](#page-18-0)[3\]](#page-18-1). The electroencephalogram (EEG) can directly display brain wave states, and EEG response in the visual areas of the brain can be measured to identify eye fatigue. Thus, changes in brain wave characteristics can be used to evaluate eye fatigue  $[4-7]$  $[4-7]$  $[4-7]$ .

This study combines the Butterworth flter (BF), fast Fourier transform (FFT), linear discriminant analysis (LDS), and Min–Max scaling techniques to develop a model for assessing visual fatigue based on EEG signals. Visual fatigue is quantifed and expressed numerically before being classifed as mild, moderate, or severe. The real-time detection and evaluation of eye fatigue could be used to trigger prompts and reminders to modify screen usage behavior, thus potentially efectively reducing the incidence of resulting your eyes get tired from intense use conditions. In addition, in order to understand the impact of screen size and visualization type on eyes, experimental scenarios are designed with diferent screen sizes (mobile phones and computers) and visualization types (2D, 3D, AR and VR), combined with a conventional visual fatigue questionnaire to observe the impact of screen size and presentation mode on visual fatigue. Research results can provide insight into the varying efect of screen size and visualization type, thus facilitating appropriate adjustment and self-protection to prevent excessive strain and reduce the risk of serious eye damage.

#### **2 Literature review**

### **2.1 Visual fatigue**

Visual fatigue is caused by improper extended eye use (such as close-up or excessive viewing behavior), or external environmental stimuli (such as ficking or insuffcient lighting, or inability to fx on the visual target). Short-term eye fatigue can cause sore or dry eyes, poor focus, blurred vision, image persistence, eye redness, or increased eye secretions. Long-term fatigue can cause objects to become unrecognizable at close range, or incorrect color recognition, and can even cause signifcant physical and mental conditions that can lead to eye damage including glaucoma, cataracts, dry eye, cornea whitening, and refractive distortion.

Visual display terminals (VDTs) generally refer to monitors found in computers, mobile phones, and tablet computers. VDT syndrome is caused by overuse of such monitors and causes discomfort to the eyes and other parts of the body. Decreased vision and dry eye can also lead to poor posture, causing soreness in the shoulders, back, and neck, and can also contribute to loss of appetite, anxiety, and depression [\[8](#page-18-4), [9](#page-18-5)]. Studies have found that prolonged use of electronic screens is an important cause of visual fatigue, and may contribute to false myopia and other vision-related problems  $[10-12]$  $[10-12]$ .

Previous research has found that factors such as viewing distance, font size, background color, screen brightness, ambient brightness, contrast, usage time, and binocular parallax in 3D stereo images can cause users to experience symptoms of visual fatigue and discomfort [\[13](#page-18-8)[–17](#page-18-9)].

#### **2.2 Relationship between brain waves and visual fatigue**

Electroencephalographic (EEG) signals refect changes in the current generated by cells in the cerebral cortex, indicating synaptic activity of brain neurons and thus the state of the brain [[18\]](#page-18-10). The cerebral cortex can be divided into three functional areas: sensory, motor, and cognitive [\[19](#page-18-11), [20](#page-18-12)], where the cortical areas receive and process sensory information, including the visual cortex of the occipital lobe, the auditory cortex of the temporal lobe, and the primary somatosensory cortex of the postcentral gyrus of the parietal lobe which receives tactile information from the various parts of the body [[20,](#page-18-12) [21\]](#page-19-0).

Although visual fatigue cannot be directly measured, previous research indicates that visual fatigue is refected by EEG signals, and changes in degree of fatigue are also refected in the intensity of brain wave band activity. Chen et al. [\[6](#page-18-13)] found that viewing 3D screens is prone to causing visual fatigue, and is associated with signifcant changes in the relative energy in the  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ , and  $\delta$  bands. They also found that the level of visual fatigue is clearly associated with changes in brain wave activity in the frontal lobe. Chen et al. [[7\]](#page-18-3) established a 3D visual fatigue assessment model by calculating the gravity frequency and power spectral entropy of brain waves at the left forehead electrode point (Fp1). Kim and Lee [[22\]](#page-19-1) also found 3D visual fatigue affects EEG activity in the beta band  $(14–25 \text{ Hz})$ . Park et al. [\[23](#page-19-2)] found that watching 3D movies was more likely to cause visual fatigue than 2D movies, and found that alpha wave activity was higher in the frontal lobe (i.e., F3 and F4 poles).

### **2.3 Related works**

Previous visual fatigue assessment has mostly been conducted using scales, with degree of fatigue determined in terms of the subjective perception of the subject [[3\]](#page-18-1). A subjective visual fatigue scale developed by [\[1](#page-18-0)] has been widely used in studies on visual fatigue. Later research explored the impact of additional factors on eye fatigue, such as visual stress, eye pain, body pain, and image blurring [[24\]](#page-19-3). Previous studies have also suggested that critical fash fusion frequency (CFF), blink frequency, eye movement, and spatial frequency adaptability can be used as objective indicators of visual fatigue [[14,](#page-18-14) [25,](#page-19-4) [26\]](#page-19-5).

Some more recent studies have noted that visual fatigue is related to the  $\delta$ ,  $\theta$ ,  $\alpha$ , and  $\beta$  brain wave bands [\[6](#page-18-13)]. Event-related potential (ERP) [\[27](#page-19-6)] or steady-state visual evoked potential (SSVEP) [[28\]](#page-19-7) explore the efects of diferent brain regions and the intensity of EEG activity on visual fatigue. Studies using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to evaluate visual fatigue found that excessive visual stimulus will increase the neuronal activity of the frontal eye fields [\[5](#page-18-15), [29\]](#page-19-8). Previous studies have also explored the relationship between heart rate variability (HRV) and visual fatigue [\[7](#page-18-3), [30](#page-19-9)]. Furthermore, heart–brain synchronization, heartbeat evoked potential (HEP), and brain wave event-related potential (ERP) have been used to assess visual fatigue resulting from viewing of 3D images [[23\]](#page-19-2).

#### **3 Methods**

#### **3.1 Linear discriminant analysis**

Linear discriminant analysis (LDA) combines statistics and machine learning to identify linear combinations of categorical features. In addition to being used for classifcation [[31\]](#page-19-10), it is also used for dimension reduction [[32\]](#page-19-11). LDA projects labeled samples from *n*-dimensional samples to a smaller subspace *k* (where  $k \leq n-1$ ), while maintaining class-discriminatory information, to fnd an optimized objective function  $J(W)$  according to the Fisher criterion, that is, to find a projection matrix composed of a set of optimal diference vectors, to fnd the largest ratio of betweenclass and within-class scatter. The objective function is defned as follows.

<span id="page-3-0"></span>
$$
J(W) = \arg\max_{w} \frac{W^{\mathrm{T}} S_b W}{W^{\mathrm{T}} S_w W},\tag{1}
$$

where  $S_b$  is the degree of dispersion among the taxonomic groups, and  $S_w$  is the degree of aggregation within the groups, which are defned as follows:

$$
S_b = \sum_{i=1}^{C} \frac{N_i}{N} (\mu_i - \mu) (\mu_i - \mu)^{\mathrm{T}} \quad S_w = \sum_{i=1}^{C} \sum_{j=1}^{N_i} \frac{1}{N} (x_j^i - \mu) (x_j^i - \mu)^{\mathrm{T}}, \tag{2}
$$

where *C* represents the number of categories, *N* is the total number of data samples,  $N_i$  is the number of data for the *i*th category,  $\mu$  is the average value matrix for all data,  $\mu_i$  is the average matrix of the *i*th category data, and  $x_j^i$  is the *j*th sample of the *i*th category.

$$
\mu_i = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{j=1}^{N_i} x_j^i \quad \mu = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^{C} \sum_{j=1}^{N_i} x_j^i.
$$
 (3)

From Eq. ([1\)](#page-3-0), we see that *W* is the eigenvector matrix of  $S_w^{-1}S_b$ , where the optimal projection direction is obtained by solving the matrix characteristic problem of the following equation:

<span id="page-4-0"></span>
$$
S_w^{-1} S_b W = \lambda W, \tag{4}
$$

where  $\lambda$  is the Lagrange multiplier.

After obtaining *W*, a discriminant function can be established by the equation  $y = W<sup>T</sup>x$  as follows:

$$
y = w_0 + w_1 x_1 + w_2 x_2 + \dots + w_i x_i + \dots + w_n x_n,
$$
 (5)

where *y* is the discriminant score,  $x_i$  is features or variables, and  $w_i$  is discriminant weight. The discriminant score of the observed value can be obtained using the discriminant function, and can then be classifed appropriately.

#### **3.2 Min–Max scaling**

The data used for analysis sufer from inconsistent variable ranges. To process data in diferent ranges, feature scaling can be used to normalize the self-variables or to uniformize their data range. The Min–Max scaling method rescales data from diferent ranges to a fixed range or interval, usually  $[0, 1]$  or  $[-1, 1]$  using the following formula:

$$
x' = \frac{x - \min(x)}{\max(x) - \min(x)},
$$
 (6)

where  $x$  is the original value and  $x'$  is the normalized value.

### **4 Experiment**

#### **4.1 Participants**

Four experimental scenarios were designed, one each for 2D, 3D, AR, and VR. After explaining the experimental process, 30 subjects provided informed consent and met the following criteria: vision over 0.8, right-handed, and without color recognition disability or other eye diseases.

In the 2D experiment, the subject's watched a 110-min-long animated movie on a smartphone, a tablet computer, and a desktop computer, with respective screen sizes of 5, 9, and 19 inches. All viewings took place at a similarly suitable distance. The 18 subjects (9 men and 9 women) were randomly divided into three experimental groups of 6 (3 men and 3 women). Subjects were aged 18–27 years with a mean age of 20.6 years (SD 2.35). In the 3D experiment, ten subjects [5 men and 5 women, aged 18–24 with an average age of 20.1 years (SD1.91)] played the 3D game "Minecraft" on a 19-inch computer screen. In the VR experiment, eight subjects [4 men and 4 women, aged 19–25 with a mean age of 21.25 years (SD 2.12)] played the VR version of Minecraft using an Oculus Rift virtual reality headset. The game was run on the Microsoft Xbox One platform, using an Xbox One Wireless Gamepad. In the AR experiment, 12 subjects [6 men and 6 women, aged 19–25 years with an average age of 22 years (SD 20.9)] played an AR shooting game, in which the embedded camera of a smartphone (5″ screen) and a tablet computer (9″ screen) is used to view virtual environment overlayed on the physical environment. Table [1](#page-5-0) summarizes demographic data for all participants.

#### **4.2 Experimental procedure**

This study examines the impact of diferent visualization modes (2D, 3D, AR and VR) and screen sizes (smartphone, tablet, and computer) on visual fatigue. Participants either watched videos or playing games in seven experimental scenarios: 2D mobile

Visual stimulus	2D		3D	3D	3D	3D	3D	3D
Variables			Frequency Percent Frequency Percent Frequency Percent Frequency					Percent
Gender								
Male	9	50	5	50	6	50	$\overline{4}$	50
Female	9	50	5	50	6	50	$\overline{4}$	50
Age								
$10 - 19$	8	44.44	6	60	$\mathbf{1}$	8.33	1	12.5
$20 - 29$	10	55.56	$\overline{4}$	40	11	91.67	7	87.5
Education								
Jr. High school	9	50	6	60	5	41.67	$\overline{4}$	50
High school	3	16.67	1	10	3	25.00	$\overline{c}$	25
College	3	16.67	$\overline{2}$	20	$\overline{4}$	33.33	$\overline{2}$	25
Graduate school	3	16.67	1	10	5	41.67	3	37.5
Sightedness								
< 300	9	50	6	60	5	41.67	$\overline{4}$	50
300-600	6	33.33	3	30	$\overline{2}$	16.67	1	12.5
>600	3	16.67	1	10	6	50	4	50

<span id="page-5-0"></span>**Table 1** Frequency distribution of demographic variables and some background of subjects

video, 2D tablet video, 2D computer video, 3D computer game, AR mobile game, AR tablet game, and VR computer game. Brain wave data were collected by EEG, and participants also completed a visual fatigue questionnaire and a three-dimensional visual fatigue questionnaire [\[1,](#page-18-0) [24\]](#page-19-3). EEG recordings and questionnaires were administered to the experimental groups both before and after the visual stimulus to assess the diferent visual fatigue impacts of the various stimuli and viewing conditions. To avoid interference, for all four experimental scenarios, all participants were seated independently in a quiet room. The 2D experiment lasted 110 min, while the 3D, AR, and VR experiments lasted 1 h without interruption. Participants were told they could stop the experiment at any time if they began to feel dizzy or nauseous.

The experimental design is divided into two parts: (1) the combined efect of different visual stimuli and screen size on visual fatigue and (2) the efect of screen size on visual fatigue. However, the study is subject to certain limitations imposed by the experimental equipment and EEG instruments. For example, the camera operation of AR and VR games needs to be matched with body movement. Nevertheless, the experimental design controls the impact of other environmental factors as much as possible. The experimental process was designed with reference to previous studies [\[7,](#page-18-3) [33\]](#page-19-12). Before the experiment, EEG measurements were taken of each participant for fve minutes with their eyes continuously shut. Participants also completed a visual fatigue questionnaire to collect basic participant information and a baseline value for visual fatigue. Then, the various experimental groups either watched videos or played games. To prevent excessive eye fatigue, participants were verbally asked every 10 min if they were able to continue without interrupting the experiment [[34,](#page-19-13) [35](#page-19-14)]. After the experiment, participants were again subjected to fve minutes of EEG recording, and two questionnaires were completed to identify changes in visual fatigue before and after the experiment. EEG data were continuously collected from the 2D and 3D groups, but this was not feasible for the AR and VR groups due to interference from the visualization equipment and/or regular head shaking during game play. Figure [1](#page-7-0) shows the experimental process.

# **4.3 Data collection**

# **4.3.1 Brain–computer interfaces**

As shown in Fig. [2](#page-7-1), this study uses the BR8 PLUS eight-channel electroencephalogram instrument produced by Brain Rhythm Inc, applied to electrode points are Fp1, Fp2, Fz, C3, C4, Pz, O1, and O2. As shown in Fig. [3](#page-8-0), the reference electrode and the circuit grounding system are connected to the left and right earlobes to measure the EEG signal. The measurement frequency range is 0.12–125 Hz, and the sampling frequency is 1000 Hz.

# **4.3.2 Visual fatigue measurement questionnaire**

To demonstrate that brain waves can efectively refect degree of visual fatigue, an energy-based indicator for measuring the degree of visual fatigue is needed.



EEG-based visual fatigue index, Visual fatigue measurement questionnaire

Paired-Samples t-test, Covariance analysis (ANCOVA), Post hoc tests

<span id="page-7-1"></span>**Fig. 2** BR8 PLUS EEG device



Therefore, a visual fatigue questionnaire [\[1\]](#page-18-0) was used to collect the participants' subjective feelings of visual fatigue. The visual fatigue questionnaire has six questions with a 10-point Likert scale:  $(1)$  "I have difficulty seeing";  $(2)$  "I have a strange feeling around the eyes"; (3) "My eyes feel tied"; (4) "I feel numb"; (5) "I have a headache"; (6) "I feel dizzy looking at the screen." The results of the six questions are summed to produce a subjective visual fatigue score.

<span id="page-7-0"></span>**Fig. 1** Experimental process

<span id="page-8-0"></span>

3D visual stimulation can cause visual fatigue due to stereoscopic perception [[36,](#page-19-15) [37](#page-19-16)], which is also featured in the visual presentation of AR and VR [\[38](#page-19-17), [39](#page-19-18)]. Stereoscopic perception easily leads to visual fatigue, along with physical symptoms including headache, nausea, and dizziness [[40\]](#page-19-19). A three-dimensional visual fatigue questionnaire [\[24](#page-19-3)] was used to evaluate visual fatigue and physical discomfort caused by 3D visual stimuli. This questionnaire uses a fve-point scale to score 29 questions that assess four independent factors: visual stress (VS) (15 items), eye pain (EP) (10 items), body pain (BP) (4 items), and image blurring factor (IBF) (3 items) (Table [2](#page-9-0)).

# **4.4 A visual fatigue assessment model**

# **4.4.1 EEG signal processing and features**

A Butterworth flter was used to flter out the frequency bands vulnerable to interference, while retaining the required brain wave frequency band  $(0.5–30 \text{ Hz})$  [\[41](#page-19-20)]. Fast Fourier transform is used to convert the time-domain brain wave signal into the frequency domain, which is used to extract the  $\delta$  (0.5–4 Hz),  $\theta$  (4–8 Hz),  $\alpha$  (8–13 Hz), and *β* (13–30 Hz) brain wave bands. Electroencephalogram data were divided into 10 s samples [\[42](#page-19-21)] to observe changes in EEG signal values. This study took the average values of all signals in four frequency bands at eight electrode points (Fp1, Fp2, Fz, C3, C4, Pz, O1, and O2) [\[6](#page-18-13), [43](#page-20-0), [44](#page-20-1)], for a total of 32 brain wave features.

# **4.4.2 Feature selection**

This study collects brain wave data in response to diferent visual presentations (2D, 3D, AR, VR) and then categorizes eye fatigue as mild, moderate, and severe. ANOVA analysis is performed to identify important brain wave characteristics that <span id="page-9-0"></span>**Table 2** Three-dimensional visual fatigue questionnaire



can distinguish diferent degrees of visual fatigue. The analysis results in the 3D group showed that the delta and theta waves of the prefrontal (Fp1 and Fp2) were significantly different  $(p<0.001)$ , and past studies have also shown that 3D visual fatigue is associated with the prefrontal lobe, The frontal, central, and occipital regions had signifcant efects, with the frontal lobe being the most signifcant [[7\]](#page-18-3). The analysis results of the 2D group found that their signifcant characteristics were similar to those of the 3D group: delta  $(p<0.001)$  and theta  $(p<0.01)$  of the prefrontal lobe (Fp1 and Fp2) showed little diference in the visual fatigue characteristics of the 2D and 3D groups. In the AR group, the delta and theta bands of the prefrontal lobe (Fp1 and Fp2) did not reach a level of signifcance, but the alpha band  $(p<0.05)$  of the occipital lobe (O1 and O2) did, indicating that viewing AR images had diferent brain stimulation efects than those found with 2D and 3D. However,

the VR group showed a significant difference between the delta  $(p < 0.001)$  and theta  $(p<0.05)$  bands in the left central area (C3), which differs significantly from the other three visual presentation methods.

#### **4.4.3 Visual fatigue assessment model**

Brain wave analysis found similar brain wave patterns for 2D and 3D stimulation, while AR and VR stimulated different brain regions and bands. Therefore, this study used signifcantly diferent brain wave characteristics to develop three models for visual fatigue assessment.

Linear discriminant analysis was used to map the sample points of the abovementioned multi-dimensional brain wave features onto a single-dimensional axis, and a discriminant function was established to calculate the discriminant score corresponding to this axis, that is, the  $y_i$  value which is the degree of visual fatigue. Equation ([5\)](#page-4-0) is a discriminant function established by 2D and 3D brain wave characteristics and experimental data.

$$
y = 0.2174444 \times Fp1. \text{Delta} - 0.04513436 \times Fp1. \text{Theta} + 0.08868069
$$
  
× Fp2. \text{Delta} + 0.01824845 × Fp2. \text{Theta}. (5)

To assess the degree and significance of the value of  $y_i$  in the entire sample data, all sample points must be assigned to the same scaling range through normalization. This study uses Min–Max scaling methods to rescale all values to  $[0-1]$  [\[45](#page-20-2)]. To determine the distribution of all values, the discriminant scores of all sample points need to be calculated to obtain the maximum and minimum values.

For example, in subject *a*m EEG feature values for Fp1.Delta, Fp1.Theta, Fp2. Delta, and Fp2.Theta are respectively 9.112610565, 2.122571031, 10.18418902, 2.201798311. Thus, Eq.  $(5)$  $(5)$  calculates that  $y_a$  as 6.2011, and calculates the difference scores of all sample points to obtain the maximum value (8.396579) and the minimum value  $(-0.014483)$ .

$$
y_a = 0.2174444 \times Fp1.Delta - 0.04513436 \times Fp1.Theta + 0.08868069 \times Fp2.Delta + 0.01824845 \times Fp2.Theta = 0.2174444 \times 9.112610565 - 0.04513436 \times 2.122571031 + 0.08868069 \times 10.18418902 + 0.01824845 \times 2.201798311 = 2.829005257.
$$

The visual fatigue assessment index  $V_a$  is obtained by Min–Max scaling methods, and is then multiplied by 100. Therefore, the visual fatigue degree of *subject a* is estimated to be about 33.8065.

$$
V_{\rm a} = \frac{y_a - (-0.014483)}{8.396579 - (-0.014483)} \times 100
$$
  
= 
$$
\frac{2.829005257 - (-0.014483)}{8.396579 - (-0.014483)} \times 100 \approx 33.8065.
$$

### **4.4.4 Efectiveness evaluation of visual fatigue model**

In the 2D and 3D experiments, the brain wave data of 10 subjects were selected from the original training data set, and the experimental data were divided into four segments based on the viewing time of each participant. Brain wave data before and after the experiment were divided into six stages. Under normal circumstances, visual fatigue increases with the length of viewing [[12\]](#page-18-7). The average degree of visual fatigue at each stage of the experiment is calculated and plotted in Fig. [4](#page-11-0)a using the proposed brain wave-based evaluation model. It can be seen that 8 out of the 10 participants show a continuous increase in eye fatigue. The dashed lines in diferent colors represent the data for each subject, and the solid black line is the average trend of all data. Using the same experimental procedure, the brain wave data of 5 additional participants were collected for testing (all male, mean age 20.4 years

<span id="page-11-0"></span>



<span id="page-12-0"></span>

<span id="page-12-1"></span>old, SD 1.516575), with the results shown in Fig. [4b](#page-11-0). It can be seen that 4 of the 5 participants experienced continuously increasing eye fatigue. For the AR and VR experiments, only brain wave data before and after the experiment were collected, and Figs. [5](#page-12-0) and [6](#page-12-1) show the degree of visual fatigue increased signifcantly over these two stages. Of the 12 VR game participants, 11 experienced increased fatigue, with those playing 8-bit VR games showing increasing fatigue. The trend shown in the above results is similar to the results of the visual fatigue questionnaire, indicating the proposed evaluation model is reliable and accurate for assessing visual fatigue, and thus can be used as an auxiliary tool for visual fatigue detection.

# **5 Analysis and results**

# **5.1 Efects of visualization type on visual fatigue**

This study uses visual fatigue questionnaire scores [[1\]](#page-18-0) and brain wave data as indicators for assessing visual fatigue. It then explores the impact of visualization mode (2D, 3D, AR, VR) and screen size (smartphones, tablets, and computer screens) on visual fatigue in diferent experimental scenarios. For changes in the degree of visual fatigue, paired-samples t test was used to detect whether the visual fatigue score and the brain wave index before and after the experiment reached a degree of signifcance. Table [3](#page-13-0) shows that the results of 2D movies, 3D games, AR games, and VR games are consistent, and most of the brain wave evaluation indicators and scale scores have significant differences  $(p < 0.01)$ , with the average degree of postexperiment visual fatigue signifcantly higher than prior to the experiment, indicating that eye fatigue indeed increases with viewing time using the tested visualization methods. The diference between the average value of the brain wave evaluation index and the scale score shows that the diference between the 3D group and the VR group is higher than that of other visual presentation methods (2D, VR). VR games produce greater visual fatigue than 3D games, which may indicate that type of visual stimulus has a signifcant efect on degree of visual fatigue. The average value of the brain wave evaluation index for AR game play also showed an increase, but it did not reach the level of statistical signifcance.

Group	Pre-test		Post-test		Mean difference	$\tau$	$p$ value
	Mean	<b>SD</b> SD Mean					
Visual fatigue score							
2D smartphone video	8.00	2.098	24.50	9.418	$-16,500$	$-4.834$	$0.005**$
2D tablet video	9.17	6.824	24.33	9.873	$-15.167$	$-5.641$	$0.002**$
2D computer video	11.50	7.176	37.50	13.795	$-26,000$	$-5.577$	$0.003**$
3D computer game	12.80	10.799	33.90	10.640	$-21.100$	$-5.576$	$0.000***$
AR smartphone game	8.50	5.206	17.50	6.317	$-9,000$	$-5.730$	$0.002**$
AR tablet game	6.83	1.329	28.00	11.730	$-21.167$	$-4.836$	$0.005**$
VR computer game	6.88	1.356	33.25	10.607	$-26.375$	$-6.970$	$0.000***$
EEG-based visual fatigue index							
2D smartphone video	47.307	11.111	66.281	9.459	$-18.974$	$-6.166$	$0.002**$
2D tablet video	51.550	18.098	74.926	16.580	$-23.375$	$-3.120$	$0.026*$
2D computer video	55.873	12.102	86.945	8.626	$-31.072$	$-4.885$	$0.005**$
3D computer game	46.335	16.599	78.828	11.842	$-32.493$	$-9.189$	$0.000***$
AR smartphone game	40.808	21.746	58.289	25.646	$-17.482$	$-1.322$	0.244
AR tablet game	23.576	16.053	50.338	15.917	$-26.762$	$-3.715$	$0.014*$
VR computer game	47.442	27.787	84.442	10.768	$-36.980$	$-3.656$	$0.008**$

<span id="page-13-0"></span>**Table 3** Visual fatigue before and after experimental exposure to diferent visual stimuli

*p* < 0.05\*, *p* < 0.01\*\*, *p* < 0.001\*\*\*





<span id="page-14-0"></span>*p* < 0.05\*, *p* < 0.01\*\*, *p* < 0.001\*\*\*

#### **5.2 Physical discomfort caused by visual fatigue**

The 3D visual fatigue questionnaire is used to explore the efect of visual fatigue on physical discomfort, using the paired-samples t test to identify signifcant diferences in the four visual fatigue symptom scores before and after the experiment. The results summarized in Table [4](#page-14-0) show signifcant diferences between the 2D and 3D AR and VR visualizations for the four different physical symptoms  $(p<0.05)$ , especially in terms of visual stress and eye pain  $(p<0.01)$ . For AR game play, the body pain dimension is found to be very significant  $(p<0.001)$ . A detailed comparison of the various questions related to body pain shows signifcant diferences between "shoulder stifness" and "neck stifness" (*p*=0.001). In the 3D and VR groups, the average value of the "dizziness" response was high, and subjects were more likely to stop the experiment because of dizziness or headache, possibly due to 3D motion sickness caused by stereoscopic discomfort.

#### **5.3 Comparison of physical discomfort caused by visual fatigue**

The 2D video-watching group is also assessed in terms of the impact of diferent screen sizes (smartphones, tablets and computer screens) on visual fatigue, using the visual fatigue questionnaire score and brain wave assessment indicators, followed by covariance analysis (ANCOVA). The covariates are set as the pre-experimental data to prevent infuence from inconsistent initial visual fatigue values for each participant, and to reduce the infuence caused by individual diferences and experiment time. Levene's test was used to test the homogeneity of the variation number. The test results were  $p=0.289$  (scale score) and  $p=0.507$  (EEG index). Table [5](#page-15-0) shows that the efect of screen size on visual fatigue reached a level of signifcance. Using Tukey post hoc tests analysis, although the subjective scale scores were not signifcant, smartphone and computer screens showed signifcant diferences in terms of brain wave evaluation indicators  $(p=0.022)$ . Observing the difference of the adjusted mean, we can see that the visual fatigue of the computer screen group

Groups	Mean	SD.	Adjusted mean	<b>SE</b>	F	<i>p</i> value
Visual fatigue score						
2D smartphone video	24.50	9.418	26.286	3.844	5.258	$0.012*$
2D tablet video	24.33	9.873	24.780	3.794		
2D computer video	37.50	13.795	35.268	3.874		
EEG-based visual fatigue index						
2D smartphone video	66.281	9.459	67.710	4.790	4.084	$0.028*$
2D tablet video	74.926	16.580	74.934	4.705		
2D computer video	86.945	8.626	85.507	4.791		

<span id="page-15-0"></span>**Table 5** Visual fatigue as a function of screen size

 $p < 0.05*$ 

(85.507) is higher than that of the other two groups (67.710, 74.934), and screen size has a closely positive correlation with the degree of visual fatigue.

#### **5.4 Discussion**

#### **5.4.1 Brain wave characteristics**

In this study, diferent brain presentation areas and features were identifed for different visual presentation methods. Among them, 2D and 3D have similar features, which are the delta and theta bands of the frontal lobe (Fp1 and Fp2). 2D is different from 3D, but is the alpha band of the occipital lobe (O1 and O2). It may be because AR's visual stimulation and use experience are diferent from 2 and 3D. The visual stimulation comes from the presentation of virtual objects in the real world. Appears, so it causes diferences in AR brain wave characteristics. Finally, an important brain wave feature of VR is the left and right sulcus brain gyrus (C3). It can be found that the efect of VR on the brain is completely diferent from other visual presentation methods. Past research shows that some people will experience "VR motion sickness" (Cybersickness) [\[46](#page-20-3), [47](#page-20-4)], and the parietal lobe, occipital lobe, and motor areas are related to motion sickness [\[48](#page-20-5)[–50](#page-20-6)], and the motor areas are located in the cerebral gyrus area (C3 and C4) before and after the sulcus. They are responsible for part of the movement and somatosensory functions, probably due to the vision of VR. Stimulation can cause the brain to misunderstand that body move-ments differ from visual reception, causing sensory mismatches [\[51](#page-20-7)[–53](#page-20-8)].

#### **5.5 Diferent visualization modes**

Among the diferent visualization modes tested, 3D and VR viewing resulted in greater visual fatigue than 2D and AR. Most people are highly accustomed to passive viewing of 2D visualizations, while AR visualizations are more dynamic and integrated into the user's physical response, and the resulting greater visual processing requirements may lead to greater fatigue. Likewise, the misalignment of 3D and VR vision and stereoscopic phenomenon imposes signifcant brain's visual processing requirements and thus contributes to feelings of fatigue.

Experimental results show the use of VR can cause a type of motion sickness, called simulator sickness or cybersickness. Symptoms include nausea, eye fatigue, and dizziness [[54,](#page-20-9) [55](#page-20-10)]. The most widely accepted reason for motion sickness is sensory mismatch, which occurs when the brain's sensory input is inconsistent with expectations or predictions generated by previous experience, and the severity of motion sickness depends on the degree of sensory mismatch [[51–](#page-20-7)[53,](#page-20-8) [56\]](#page-20-11).

However, nowadays, many people often view their mobile phone screens while walking or in moving cars, exposing them to similar sensory mismatch due to the contrast of the static visual input and the tactile sense of movement, and can thus result in similar feelings of discomfort. Although this study fnds that smaller screens produce visual fatigue, incorrect screen usage can also be quite harmful to the eyes, and further research is needed. In addition, AR is prone to cause shoulder and neck soreness. AR applications require users to hold actively point the camera of their mobile device to interact with the application content, moving and rotating the device to access diferent viewpoints, and continuous extended usage can contribute to neck and shoulder fatigue.

#### **5.6 Diferent screen sizes**

This study explores the efects of diferent screen sizes on visual fatigue from watching 2D videos. Computer screens (15 inches) result in greater visual fatigue than smartphones or tablet computer screens, and the degree of fatigue is found to increase with screen size. Past research has suggested that smaller screens are more taxing on the eyes  $[11, 57]$  $[11, 57]$  $[11, 57]$  $[11, 57]$  $[11, 57]$ , but those studies focused on the impact of text size on reading speed. The present research experiment focuses on viewing of videos, which is less taxing than text reading, which may account for this discrepancy, and future studies should examine the impact of various visual stimuli on visual fatigue.

# **6 Conclusions**

The main contributions of this study are as follows: (1) brain waves measurements and questionnaire responses were used to assess the impact of extended 2D, 3D, AR and VR visual stimulation on eye fatigue, using ANOVA analysis to identify brain regions and features that refect the impact of the various visualization modes, providing a useful reference for continuing research on factors contributing to visual fatigue. (2) A brain wave-based visual fatigue assessment model is developed based on diferent brain wave characteristics, and the degree of visual fatigue is quantifed in a fxed range, providing a more objective alternative to questionnaires for assessing visual fatigue. This can assist clinicians in making diagnosis, and also help users adjust their screen usage behaviors to protect against excessive use and reduce the risk of eye injury. (3) The efects of diferent screen sizes and visualization modes on visual fatigue are discussed, providing new insight. Experimental results show that screen size is positively related to degree of visual fatigue, and that 3D and VR viewing place considerable strain on the eyes, brain, and other parts of the body. Thus, users of these technologies should carefully monitor their discomfort level and duration of use, and minimize additional body movement while viewing. In addition, the research results provide some suggestions to protect the eyes of the public. Users try not to watch the screen when the body is shaking (such as watching a mobile phone while walking or using transportation). Try to avoid watching movies or games with 3D or VR visual rendering technology. The larger the screen size, the greater the distance between the eyes and the screen.

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# **Afliations**

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