

Robust Statistical Methods for Estimation, Detection and Application in Skewed Distribution: A Comprehensive Systematic Review

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ABSTRACT

1. Introduction

In applied science and technology, as in many other domains, data analysis is the cornerstone of informed decision-making [1-3]. Researchers, engineers, and professionals in these fields routinely encounter complex datasets that often defy the assumption of normality, where the data is symmetrically distributed around a central point [1-3]. Instead, they grapple with skewed data distributions characterized by pronounced asymmetry, where one tail of the distribution extends further than the other. This skewness, a ubiquitous feature of real-world data, introduces unique challenges, particularly when estimating central tendencies [4,5]. The use of the arithmetic mean is a popular [6-8] and conventional estimator [9-11]. The mean estimator are used it can be severely

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compromised when applied to skewed datasets [12,13] and leading to potentially flawed conclusions [14-17].

This systematic review embarks on exploring a diverse array of robust statistical methods that cater to the complexities of skewed data. From estimation methods to detection approaches, these methods have been developed to tackle the unique challenges presented by skewed distributions.

Skewed data distributions are pervasive, including in the applied science and technology areas. Consider, for instance, the field of environmental science, where measurements of environmental pollutants often exhibit skewed distributions due to the presence of rare, high-concentration events [18,19]. In medical research, the distribution of patient recovery times or hospitalization costs may display pronounced skewness [20-22]. The list encompasses fields such as materials science, engineering, biology, and more.

The consequences of misinterpreting skewed data in these domains can be profound. Inadequate central tendency estimations can lead to flawed risk assessments, suboptimal resource allocation, and ineffective decision-making. In the design of engineering systems, the failure to correctly estimate central tendencies in skewed datasets can result in costly over-designs or, conversely, catastrophic under-designs [23,24]. Furthermore, in healthcare, improper estimations may affect resource allocation, leading to inefficiencies and disparities in patient care [25,26].

This systematic review bridges the gap between theoretical advancements in alternative estimators for skewed data and their practical applications in applied science and technology. By presenting various methods for estimating central tendencies in skewed data, it helps academics and professionals produce accurate research outcomes and reduce errors. The paper begins by exploring the challenges of using the mean in skewed distributions, then examines various alternative estimators and their applicability in applied science and technology. Finally, it summarizes key findings and offers suggestions for future research, aiming to equip professionals with the knowledge and tools to handle skewed data effectively, resulting in more robust and reliable outcomes in applied science and technology.

2. Literature Review

The robust statistical methods for estimation, detection, and application in skewed distributions, a plethora of innovative methodologies has emerged to address the inherent challenges in dealing with non-normal data. These methodologies have been meticulously designed to enhance the accuracy, reliability, and robustness of statistical estimators when confronted with skewed data distributions, aligning closely with the overarching theme of our comprehensive systematic review. In the domain of statistical estimation concerning skewed distributions, many pioneering methodologies have materialized, each intricately devised to confront the challenges inherent in nonnormal data. Zarinkolah *et al*., [27] introduce a cost-effective estimator for the population mean in asymmetric populations. Their method employs median ranked-set sampling, effectively dividing the population into equal-sized subsets based on the ranking order in accordance with a prominent auxiliary variable. This technique is further extended with extreme ranked-set sampling, focusing on the extreme values with respect to the auxiliary variable. Simulations and real-world applications reveal that the estimator outperforms traditional methods, consistently reducing the mean square error (MSE).

On a related note, other studies have explored innovative approaches to estimation and control for skewed distributions. Liu *et a*l., [28] propose the IM-c-means clustering algorithm, specifically designed to handle clusters with skewed distributions and imbalanced data. Meanwhile, Schmoch [29] recommends replacing standard mean values with adjusted mean values, especially in bibliometric contexts where the citation distribution is skewed. These adaptations lead to a more accurate assessment, aligning more closely with the Hirsch-Index concept. Moreover, researchers have investigated various confidence intervals, bootstrap methods, and control charting techniques to enhance the accuracy and reliability of estimators for positively skewed data [30-34]. The common thread among these studies is the exploration of methodologies and approaches that better suit skewed distributions and significantly improve the reliability of estimators in various applications.

The estimator's effectiveness was showcased through simulation studies utilizing the lognormal distribution as well as real data from a chromium concentration dataset sourced from an EPA toxic waste site. The findings notably highlighted the superior performance of the proposed estimator. This suggests its potential as a valuable improvement over the upper confidence limit (UCL) estimator currently utilized by the EPA to tackle the issue of underestimation. Furthermore, Rivest [35] delves into analysing the sampling characteristics of estimators used for the mean of positive random variables. Specifically, the study investigates the application of Winsorization techniques on the highest observations within the sample. The research presents approximate as well as exact formulations for MSEs, outlines the optimal Winsorization strategies tailored to different skewed distributions, and conducts effective contrasts between Winsorized samples and means. Additionally, the study introduces an almost unbiased estimator for the MSE of the Winsorized mean, thereby expanding to the toolkit of methods designed to enhance the estimation of means in skewed data scenarios. These research endeavours collectively contribute to the development of robust and accurate techniques for handling skewed distributions, benefiting a wide range of applications and fields.

Recent research has seen a surge in innovative statistical methods designed to handle skewed data distributions effectively. For instance, Meeden [36] introduced a modified 'Polya posterior' Bayesian approach utilizing the weighted Polya distribution. This enhances coverage properties for finite population sampling with skewed populations as well as small sample sizes while simultaneously bolstering hypothesis testing concerning the mean in skewed distributions. Furthermore, studies by Mahmood *et al*., [37] have employed repetitive sampling (RS) alongside CUSUM-type statistics and the Shewhart chart (RS-SEC-TCC) to swiftly detect mean shifts ranging from small to large, addressing the challenge of average run length (ARL) bias and exhibiting robustness in the face of skewed process distributions. Their proposed RS-SEC-TCC method serves as a valuable benchmark chart for quality and industrial engineers.

Additionally, Mahmood *et al*., [38] have unveiled a combined triple exponentially weighted moving average (TEWMA) chart together with a Tukey control chart (TCC), demonstrating robustness for skewed distributions and effective detection of mean shifts in both directions. These charts outperform existing alternatives, including Tukey and Shewhart charts, particularly under repetitive schemes, making them highly suitable for applications in aerospace manufacturing. Notably, Abu-Shawiesh *et al*., [39] introduced a robust modified confidence interval that adjusts the Student's tconfidence interval relying on the decile mean as well as standard deviation, facilitating accurate estimation of the population mean in skewed distributions. Finally, Abbas *et al*., [40] proposed an NP progressive mean control chart relying on the Wilcoxon signed-rank statistic (NPPM-SR), offering robust and efficient means of detecting deviations in process locations, especially in the context of heavy-tailed and skewed distributions. Comparative evaluations with existing NP charts highlighted its efficiency under zero-state conditions, positioning it as a valuable tool for process monitoring in a variety of industrial scenarios. These advancements collectively contribute to a burgeoning array of statistical methods established to enhance the robustness as well as accuracy of mean shift detection and process control, even in the presence of challenging skewed data distributions.

The reviewed methodologies collectively contribute to the development of robust and accurate techniques for handling skewed distributions, benefitting a wide range of applications and fields. This literature review provides a foundation for our systematic review, where we will further explore these methods, their efficacy, and their implications in the context of skewed data.

3. Methodology

3.1 Identification

The systematic review for this report was conducted in three main phases. The initial phase comprised several steps. First, keywords and related terms were identified by consulting various resources such as dictionaries, thesauruses, encyclopaedias, as well as past studies. Moreover, once the relevant keywords were finalized, specific search strings were formed for the WoS as well as Scopus databases, which are outlined in Table 1. This process yielded a total of 116 papers from both databases, marking the completion of the first stage of the systematic review.

Table 1

3.2 Screening

In the initial screening phase, redundant papers were excluded. Moreover, the study's first phase dismissed eight papers, while the second phase scrutinized 50 papers based on scholars' diverse inclusion as well as exclusion criteria. The primary criterion utilized was literature, primarily research articles. This encompassed meta synthesis, systematic reviews, meta-analysis, reviews, book series, chapters, books, as well as conference proceedings that were not the most recent research. In addition, the review specifically focused on publications in English. It is crucial to emphasize that the plan targeted the past two years (2013-2023), excluding the field of social sciences. Overall, 66 publications were excluded based on specific criteria.

3.3 Eligibility

There are 42 articles produced for the eligibility phase, which is the third step. Here, the titles as well as the substantial content of every article were meticulously evaluated in ensuring that the inclusion criteria were satisfied and the papers fit within the current study and its goals. As a result, nine papers were removed as they were impure and applied science publications relying on actual data, were out of the area, or had titles that did not significantly connect to the study's purpose. Lastly, Table 2 indicates that 33 articles are accessible for examination.

Table 2 The selection criterion is searching

3.4 Data Abstraction and Analysis

This study employed an integrative analysis as a key assessment strategy to thoroughly assess as well as synthesize various research designs, including qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. The primary objective was to identify pertinent topics as well as subtopics. The initial phase involved collecting data to form the foundation for thematic development. As illustrated in Figure 1, following [40], the scholars systematically analysed compiled publications to extract assertions or materials pertinent to the study's topics. Subsequently, robust statistical methods were employed in the second stage to identify and establish significant groupings. The evolution of key topics, such as robust estimation and skewed distribution detection, stemmed from the methodology employed. Subsequently, the researchers delved deeper into each established subject, exploring associated notions, themes, as well as ideas. Collaborating with other co-researchers, themes were developed based on contextual evidence within the studies. A log was meticulously maintained throughout the data analysis process, capturing analyses, puzzles, perspectives, as well as pertinent thoughts for data interpretation. Finally, the researchers conducted a comparative analysis of the results to identify any inconsistencies within the theme development process. The researchers actively address any discrepancies in concepts by engaging in discussions among themselves. The resulting themes undergo adjustments to ensure their coherence. Expert analysis, with one specialist in public health and another in medical science, validates the identified issues. This process ensures domain validity, affirming the clarity, significance, and relevance of each sub-theme. The researcher incorporates feedback and professional assessments to refine their judgments.

Fig. 1. Flow diagram of the suggested searching study

4. Theme

This comprehensive systematic review is dedicated to exploring three central themes, as shown in Table 3.

4.1 Theme 1: Estimation and Detection Methods for Skewed Distributions

We begin by addressing the fundamental challenges posed by skewed data. Traditional methods, such as the arithmetic mean, are often ill-suited for skewed distributions. We delve into alternative estimation techniques and detection methods designed to navigate the intricacies of skewed data, offering insights into their applicability in diverse fields.

4.2 Theme 2: Statistical Methods for Skewed Data

Next, we delve into the landscape of statistical methods tailored specifically for skewed datasets. These methods go beyond conventional approaches, seeking to improve the robustness as well as the accuracy of central tendency estimation. We evaluate the effectiveness of these statistical tools and discuss their implications in the skewed data analysis context.

4.3 Theme 3: Application of Statistical Methods in Various Fields

Skewed data distributions are pervasive, finding relevance in a multitude of fields, including environmental science, medical research, engineering, biology, and more. Misinterpreting skewed data can have far-reaching consequences, affecting risk assessments, resource allocation, and decision-making in these domains. We shed light on the real-world applications of the statistical methods discussed, emphasizing the importance of sound statistical principles in making informed decisions.

Table 3

The research article's findings based on the proposed searching criterion (*Theme 1: Estimation and Detection Methods for Skewed Distribution)*

Table 4

The research article's findings based on the proposed searching criterion *(Theme 2: Statistical Methods for Skewed Data)*

Table 5

The research article's findings based on the proposed searching criterion *(Theme 3: Application of Statistical Methods in Various Fields)*

5. Discussion and Conclusion

In conclusion, this comprehensive systematic review illuminates three interconnected themes that together highlight the robustness and versatility of statistical methods. Theme 1 addresses estimation and detection methods for skewed distributions, revealing the effectiveness of various techniques in confronting challenges presented by non-normal data. Theme 2 focuses on statistical methods for skewed data, illustrating the development and application of innovative approaches that enhance the accuracy and reliability of estimators in different domains. Finally, Theme 3 explores the application of statistical methods in various fields, showcasing how these methods find utility in addressing real-world challenges and advancing domains such as climate science, clinical practice, and industrial monitoring.

The first theme underscores the importance of addressing skewness in data, highlighting the successful assessment of robust statistical methods capable of providing efficient mode estimates even in the presence of contamination. Furthermore, the findings show that these methods surpass traditional changepoint detectors and provide robust and scalable solutions for time series data analysis, such as water vapor mixing ratio profiles. The study also emphasizes the significance of the HL estimator control chart in addressing outlier properties.

Theme 2 delves into the development of statistical methods specifically tailored for skewed data. It demonstrates the feasibility of utilizing various estimation techniques and interval estimators that outperform existing alternatives, especially in the context of skewed distributions. The proposed models and innovative approaches, such as the SN distribution and modified Ft statistic, provide valuable tools for addressing challenges posed by skewed data and offer significant advantages in both theoretical and practical settings.

Lastly, Theme 3 presents the real-world applications of these statistical methods in various fields. The study showcases their utility in fields as diverse as climate science, clinical practice, and industrial monitoring, where they improve the accuracy of intensity estimation, differential expression identification, and process monitoring. The results demonstrate the robustness and accuracy of the methods, positioning them as valuable tools in addressing the complex issues encountered in practical applications.

In conclusion, this systematic review underscores the versatility and robustness of statistical methods, emphasizing their significance in addressing skewed distributions and enhancing the accuracy and reliability of estimators across diverse fields. The findings highlight the practical utility of these methods in real-world scenarios and signify their potential to contribute significantly to advancements in climate science, clinical practice, and industrial monitoring.

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