

Can Data Augmentation Improve Daily Mood Prediction from Wearable Data? An Empirical Study

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ABSTRACT

Mobile sensing data, approximating human behavior and physiology, can be processed by machine learning models to predict mental health symptoms. While these models are accurate in smaller samples, their generalization accuracy decreases in larger samples, potentially because it is difficult to collect enough mobile sensing and mental health outcomes data at scale to enable generalization. In this study, we hypothesized that augmenting training data with synthetic data samples could improve the generalizability of these machine learning models. We created a data augmentation system that generated synthetic mobile sensing and mental health outcomes data, and evaluated the utility of this system via the downstream machine learning task of predicting daily mood from wearable sensing data. We experimented with both simple (e.g. noise addition) and novel generative data augmentation methods, based upon conditional generative adversarial networks and multi-task learning. Our initial findings suggest that the data augmentation system generated realistic synthetic data, but did not improve mood prediction. We propose future work to validate our findings and test other methods to improve the generalizability of mental health symptom prediction models.

CCS CONCEPTS

• **Human-centered computing** → Empirical studies in ubiquitous and mobile computing; • **Applied computing** → Life and medical sciences; • **Computing methodologies** → Artificial intelligence.

KEYWORDS

Mobile Sensing; Mental Health; Deep Generative Models; Wearables; mHealth

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1 INTRODUCTION

Mobile technologies can passively collect contextual data on patient behavior and physiology to inform mental health symptom monitoring and treatment [22]. These technologies have prompted researchers to develop machine learning models that process mobile sensing data to predict symptoms of mental illness [1, 15, 24]. This prior work demonstrates the feasibility of using mobile sensing data for remote mental health assessment, providing low-burden methods to passively monitor mental health and identify individuals in need of care.

Despite this potential, it is difficult to collect mobile sensing data and mental health outcomes at scale in any single study [4], potentially contributing to the poor generalization accuracy of these machine learning models – around 60%, at best – in larger cohorts [21, 23, 33]. Prior work from other areas of machine learning [27, 30] shows that *data augmentation methods* can improve model generalizability without further data collection by generating synthetic, but realistic training samples. Synthetic data can be combined with training data to simulate a larger dataset.

To this end, we developed a data augmentation system for generating synthetic mobile sensing and mental health outcomes data. We then evaluated if this system improved the performance of machine learning models that predicted mental health symptoms. Within the augmentation system, we experimented with using common, simple data augmentation techniques (eg, noise addition), as well as more sophisticated generative modeling techniques, including a novel generative model architecture, designed specifically to model mobile sensing and mental health outcomes. Our initial findings suggest that the novel generative model was able to create realistic synthetic samples, but that the data augmentation system did not improve mental health prediction. From these experiments, we discuss opportunities for future work to further evaluate our findings and improve model generalizability.

2 RELATED WORK

Previous studies have explored various data augmentation methods, and many of these methods have been applied to predict health outcomes in longitudinal data, similar to mobile sensing data. A recent survey categorized these techniques into simple methods that directly transform data through actions like deleting, warping, or adding random noise, as well as more advanced statistical or deep learning based approaches that involve training a model to learn the underlying data distribution and generating synthetic data based upon this model [32]. These methods often draw inspiration from data augmentation techniques used for more-common machine learning tasks like image recognition [27]. For instance, [30] utilized techniques such as jittering (adding random noise) and scaling (multiplying by random noise) to improve the performance of a machine learning model that monitored Parkinson's Disease symptoms.

Recent work has experimented with more sophisticated methods, based upon generative models, for augmenting mobile sensing data. For example, Li et al. proposed a generative adversarial network (GAN) based model, called ActivityGAN, to generate synthetic accelerometer data [18]. The authors assessed the utility of the synthetic data within various human activity recognition tasks. Similarly, Haradel et al. generated synthetic ECG and EEG data using a GAN, and showed how the augmented data improved the performance of machine learning models developed to detect heart attacks and seizures [13]. While GANs may accurately generate synthetic accelerometer, ECG, or EEG data, they face challenges in generating multivariate, multimodal behavioral data due to "mode collapse", where synthetic data generated by GANs are only represent a single distribution mode [2]. This calls for novel methods to more-accurately capture the multimodal nature of mobile sensing and mental health outcomes data for realistic data generation.

To the best of our knowledge, only Yu and Sano have experimented with data augmentation methods to improve the performance of machine learning models that predict mental health symptoms using mobile sensing data [34]. The authors experimented with using simple, noise addition methods to augment wearable, smartphone, and ECG data, and then used this data to predict two self-reported mental health symptoms, observing only minimal improvements in model performance. Expanding upon this work, we aimed to evaluate if both simple and more novel generative model based data augmentation methods could improve mental health prediction model accuracy. To do this, we proposed a novel GAN architecture, specifically designed to augment multimodal behavioral and mental health outcomes data.

3 DATASET

In this work, we evaluated the data augmentation system within the example task of predicting the daily mood of medical interns. A medical internship is the first year of a U.S.-based resident physician training program, and is known to be stressful: residents take care of extremely sick patients, and are often required to work 24 hour shifts [5]. This accumulated stress has been linked to higher rates of depression among residents [12, 20]. Developing low-burden methods to help residents identify mental health symptoms may provide motivation to seek care. This motivates developing machine

learning models to predict residents' mental health, enabling timely intervention, treatment, and ideally prophylaxis of mental illness.

3.1 Data Collection Overview

Specifically, we developed models using data collected during the Intern Health Study. The Intern Health Study is a multi-site prospective study to examine relationships among behavior, mental health and well-being during a medical internship [25, 26]. Interns employed at participating residency programs throughout the United States were able to enroll in the study online. Participants who provided informed consent were mailed a Fitbit Charge 2 [9], which continuously collected minute-by-minute heart rate, sleep, and step count data. In addition, participants installed a study smartphone application to self-report daily mood. Data collection took place over a period of 13 – 14 months, from the two months prior to the start of the internship through the year-long internship. All study procedures were approved by the University of Michigan Institutional Review Board (IRB). Collected data was exclusively used for research purposes, and participants received a Fitbit device and up to US \$125 as compensation for participation.

3.2 Wearable Sensing Features

We calculated eleven daily wearable sensing features described in prior work [16, 29] from collected Fitbit data. Specifically, we approximated the daily step count, as well as the step count during the most active 10 hours of movement (M10, estimated by identifying the consecutive 10 hours each day with the most steps), and during the least active 5 hours of movement (L5). We also calculated the intraday variability, by dividing the squared difference in step count during subsequent hours by the overall variance in step count throughout an entire day [29]. High variability, M10, and low L5 signify daily rest-activity fluctuations that are important for mental health [29]. From the heart rate data, we calculated the daily average resting heart rate. We then approximated the heart rate variability (HRV), a measure of autonomic nervous response to stress [6], by inverting the heart beats per minute, giving the average time between beats, and calculating the deviation in these values. Future work can identify better methods to approximate HRV when it is not directly measured from devices. Finally, for sleep, we calculated the time spent asleep, in bed, in deep, light or REM sleep. Sleep categories (e.g. REM) are automatically estimated by the Fitbit API.

3.3 Daily Mood Prediction Task

We evaluated the data augmentation system by predicting participants' self-reported daily mood from the created wearable sensing features. Mood is an important indicator of underlying depression symptoms [17], and self-reported mood has been used as a prediction outcome in prior research using mobile sensing data to predict mental health [16, 28].

In this study, a daily mood survey was delivered to participants between 5-10PM. The survey asked participants to rate their average mood over that day from 1 (low mood) to 10 (high mood). Similar to prior work [34], we binarized self-reported mood to create a classification task. Specifically, mood scores ≥ 8 were labelled as the negative class and scores < 8 were labelled as the positive

class. We used 8 as a threshold because it allowed us to create a balanced classification problem (50% positive, 50% negative samples). Future work can evaluate the effects of data augmentation in imbalanced settings, which would make it more difficult to predict specific outcomes.

4 DATA AUGMENTATION SYSTEM

In this section, we describe the data augmentation system we developed to improve the performance of mood prediction models. An overview of this system is presented in Figure 1. The system worked by augmenting training data within a personalized cross-validation procedure from prior work [1, 31]. We used this procedure because the generalization of similar machine learning models has been poor without personalizing to individual participants [21, 23, 33]. In this approach, each participant’s data was temporally split such that the first $x\%$ of collected data was used to train data augmentation and mood prediction models, and the remaining $(100 - x)\%$ was used as validation data to report performance metrics. We experimented with $x = 20, 40, 60$, and 80 . Despite the dynamic nature of this approach, the data points used for training and validation within each split (x) remained consistent across all augmentation methods. This ensured that different augmentation techniques could be compared within each split, but different augmentation techniques should not be compared across different splits. In addition, for every augmentation method, we generated synthetic data points to match the training dataset size (ratio of real to synthetic training data is 1:1).

We tested multiple simple data augmentation methods from prior work, as well as more novel data augmentation models based upon generative adversarial networks (GAN). Augmented (combined synthetic and actual training) data trained downstream mood prediction models. The mood prediction models were extreme gradient boosting (XGBoost) models, a more regularized form of gradient boosting decision trees [8]. This model class has been used in prior work to predict mental health from mobile sensing data [3, 19, 31].

4.1 Simple Augmentation Methods

Simple data augmentation methods from [14, 34] were applied to mobile sensing features, holding the mood outcome data constant. In these methods, $x \in \mathbb{R}^m$ is a standardized feature vector (i.e. $\mu = 0, \sigma = 1$) and m is the number of features. An augmented sample is described as $x \in \mathbb{R}^m$.

4.1.1 Jittering. Jittering adds random $\epsilon \sim N(0, \sigma), \epsilon \in \mathbb{R}^m$ to the mobile sensing features (see equation 1). We experimented with $\sigma \in (0.001, 0.01, 0.1, 1.0)$.

$$x' = x + \epsilon \quad (1)$$

4.1.2 Scaling. Scaling (equation 2) changes the magnitude of all the data in the dataset by a constant factor α . We experimented with multiple $\alpha \in (0.75, 0.9, 1.1, 1.25)$.

$$x' = \alpha * x \quad (2)$$

4.1.3 Random Scaling. Random scaling multiplies each sample (equation 2) by a random $\alpha \in \mathbb{R}^m$ sampled from a Gaussian distribution $\alpha \sim N(1, \sigma)$. We experimented with $\sigma \in (0.01, 0.05, 0.1, 0.5)$.

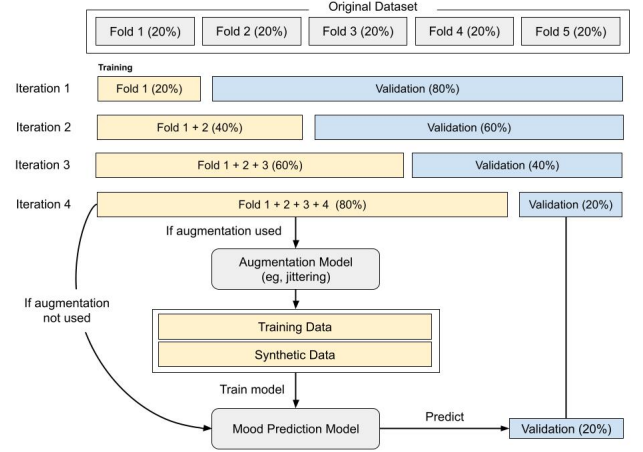


Figure 1: An overview of the data augmentation system and cross-validation procedure used in this work. We used the personalization cross-validation procedure suggested in prior work [1, 31], temporally splitting samples across individuals. For example, in “Iteration 4” the first 80% of collected data from each participant trained augmentation and mood prediction models, and models were validated using the remaining 20%.

4.2 GAN-based Augmentation Methods

We explored using GANs for data augmentation because of their demonstrated ability to generate realistic sensor data [13, 18]. We experimented with both a traditional GAN (Figure 2a), and a novel conditional GAN (CGAN) architecture developed in this work to generate multimodal, multivariate wearable sensing and mood outcomes data (Figure 2b).

4.2.1 GAN. We created a basic generative adversarial network using methods from [11]. Random noise z was sampled from a Gaussian distribution, $z \sim N(0, 1)$. The random noise was input into a fully connected neural network, G , to generate a multivariate synthetic data point $x' = G(z), x' \in \mathbb{R}^m$. This multivariate synthetic data point modeled both features and raw mood data. A discriminator fully connected neural network, D , was trained to classify whether a data point was real (x) or synthetic (x'). During model training, the generator and discriminator networks “compete”. The discriminator learns to differentiate real and synthetic data, and subsequently, the generator learns to generate more realistic synthetic data points to fool the discriminator. In our study, both the generator (12, 32, 64 nodes) and discriminator (64, 32, 1 nodes) were modeled using three layered feedforward neural networks.

4.2.2 Multi-task CGAN. Prior work shows that GAN models experience “mode collapse” in multimodal, multivariate behavioral data [2], only able to accurately model data around a single distribution mode. To counter this, we developed a novel conditional GAN (CGAN) architecture using multi-task learning [7], modeling different distribution modes as GAN prediction tasks.

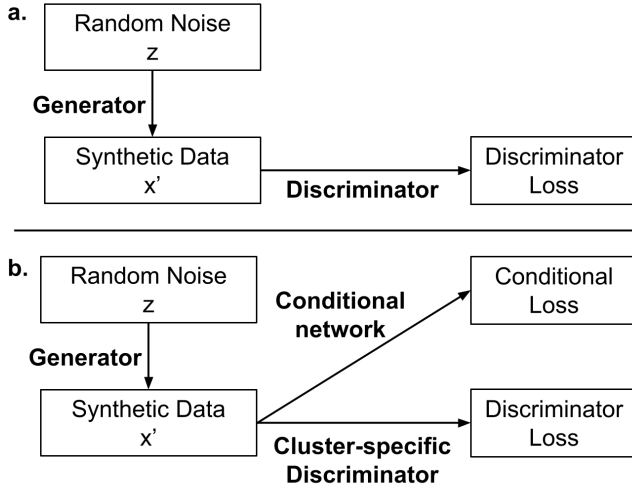


Figure 2: The (a) generative adversarial network (GAN) and (b) novel multi-task, conditional GAN model created for the data augmentation system. z is random noise drawn from a Gaussian distribution $z \sim N(0, 1)$. x' is a multivariate synthetic mobile sensing and mood data point output by the generator network.

First, we identified the number of tasks (modes) by clustering training data using K-means, varying the number of clusters, k , from 1 to 10. The optimal number of tasks (clusters) was chosen by analyzing the average within-cluster sum of squared distances between the cluster centers and each data point. We then developed a GAN model with a single generator for the entire dataset, but separate discriminators per task. In addition, the GAN had an additional conditional network and loss. The conditional network and loss was a multiclass prediction problem, predicting the specific cluster a generated data point belonged to based upon the cluster-specific discriminator. The generator was a four-layer feed-forward neural network (12, 256, 512, and 1024 nodes), and each task-specific discriminator was a five-layer feedforward neural network (1024, 1024, 512, 256, 1 nodes). The conditional network was a three layered feedforward neural network (1024, 64, final node = number of clusters).

5 RESULTS

5.1 Data Overview

71,789 samples (daily wearable sensing and mood outcomes data) were collected from 1,206 participants. The median number of samples collected per participant was 43, with an interquartile range (IQR) of 13 to 94. 50.4% of samples were binarized as low mood (self-report <8). More information on the dataset and participants can be found in Table 1.

5.2 Validating the GAN Results

We first validated that the GAN and more novel multi-task CGAN generated realistic synthetic data samples by visually inspecting real and generated data, a common practice to assess GAN model

Table 1: Dataset and Participant Overview

Method	Value
Data	
Number of samples	71,789
Number of participants	1,206
Samples per participant, Median (IQR)	43 (13 to 94)
% Samples Positive Mood Class (self-report < 8)	50.4%
Demographics	
Age, Median (IQR)	27 (26 to 28)
Female	56.0%
Male	43.6%
Unknown Sex	0.4%
White	60.8%
Asian	20.6%
Multi-racial	8.3%
Black/African American	4.3%
Latino/Hispanic	3.5%
Other	2.5%

performance [2, 10]. Histograms of four example features can be found in Figure 3. We found across all features that the GAN model did not generate realistic data, demonstrating signs of “mode collapse”, only generating samples around the mode of the distribution. The multi-task CGAN appeared to generate more-realistic synthetic data, indicating that multi-tasking and adding a conditional loss may aid in improving wearable and mood data generation.

5.3 Mood Prediction Results

We evaluated downstream mood classification performance by calculating the area under the receiver operating curve (AUROC, see Table 2). The AUROC for baseline models without any augmentation ranged from 0.5715 with 20% training data to 0.5934 with 80%. Simple data augmentation methods, using jittering, scaling, and random scaling did not drastically baseline model performance. The GAN resulted in a lower AUROC that increased from 0.5032 with 20% training data to 0.5638 at 80%. The multi-task CGAN showed a small improvement over the GAN, with AUROC increasing from 0.5233 with 20% training data to 0.5812 at 80%.

Table 2: Area under the receiver operating curve (AUROC) of the downstream mood classification models, split by the augmentation method (each row) and cross-validation split (each column).

Method	20%	40%	60%	80%
No Augmentation	0.5715	0.5822	0.5899	0.5934
Jittering	0.5727	0.5802	0.5861	0.5910
Scaling	0.5747	0.5825	0.5905	0.5952
Random Scaling	0.5739	0.5819	0.5885	0.5950
GAN	0.5032	0.5177	0.5391	0.5638
Multi-task CGAN	0.5233	0.5529	0.5734	0.5812

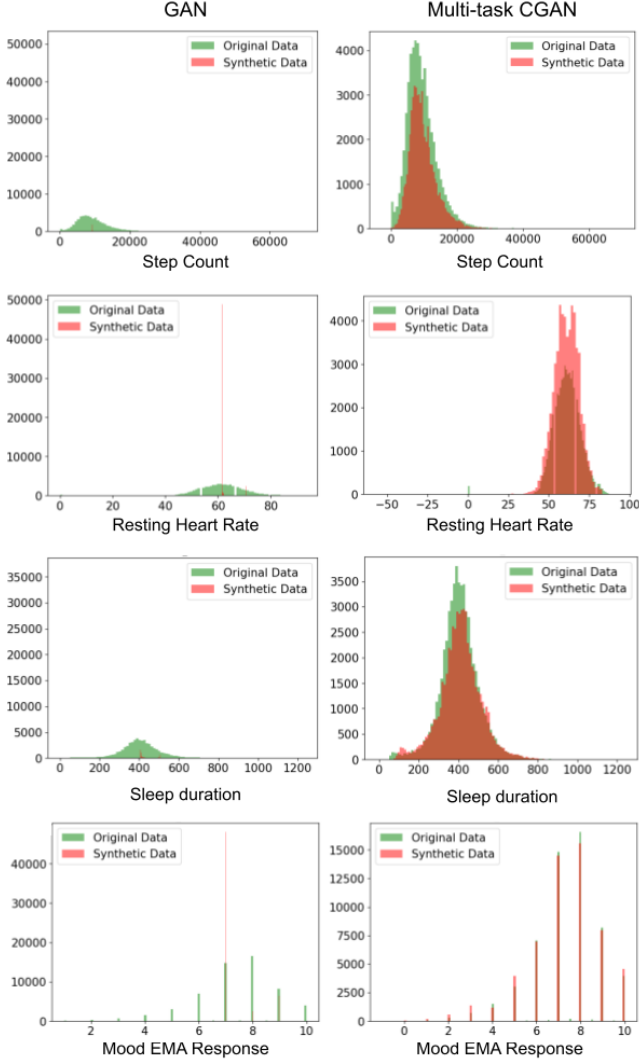


Figure 3: Example histograms for select features (x-axis label) comparing the original to the synthetic data distributions for the GAN and novel multi-task conditional GAN (CGAN).

6 DISCUSSION

In this work, we experimented with using simple and novel generative model based data augmentation methods to improve the performance of a machine learning model that classified mood using wearable sensing data. We found through visual inspection that our novel generative model, the multi-task CGAN, successfully generated realistic synthetic wearable sensing and mood data (Figure 3). Despite successfully recreating data, we found that both simple (jittering, scaling and random scaling) and generative methods did not improve mood classification (Table 2). In this discussion, we contextualize these findings with literature, and discuss opportunities for future work to further validate these results and improve model generalizability.

Our results showed that simple and deep learning based augmentation methods did not improve daily mood classification. This extends findings from prior work showing that simple data augmentation methods do not improve machine learning models predicting mental health from mobile sensing data [34]. In this work, we tested a more novel, deep learning architecture designed to generate synthetic wearable and mood data using conditional GANs and multi-task learning. Our results suggest that these GANs can generate realistic wearable sensing and mood data, but do not improve downstream mood prediction models.

These findings suggest two important insights. First, the quality of synthetic data generation affects the quality of classification performance. The multi-task CGAN appeared to generate higher quality synthetic data than the simpler GAN model, and this higher quality synthetic data improved mood prediction, relative to the simpler GAN. But, performance was still reduced compared to the simpler methods, suggesting that scaling and jittering does not drastically change the training data distribution, and does not affect mood prediction.

Second, even with realistic samples, these initial findings suggest that these data augmentation methods do not improve mood prediction. Other recent work has shown a similar poor generalization accuracy of these mental health prediction models in large samples [21, 33]. We had hoped that our cross-validation approach, which aimed to personalize models by retraining them across time with more individual-level data, would improve performance. This was not the case. Thus, the low generalization accuracy in this work suggests further complexities in modeling mental health from sensed-behaviors, across both participants and time [4].

In the future, we need to investigate why the generalization accuracy of these models is poor. Visualizing multivariate synthetic and actual data may better compare the data distributions and help us understand why the augmentation methods did not mood prediction. Further evaluating these results across different datasets, clusters (eg, different K-means starting points) cross-validation splits, generative and prediction models, and conducting ablation studies to understand the impact of specific modeling choices (eg, adding the conditional network) would help uncover if poor performance is attributed to specific methods in this work, or broader complexities modeling wearable and mental health outcomes data. For example, performance might be poor because it is difficult to model the varying relationships between behavior and mental health across individuals over time [4]. Future work could analyze if augmenting data specifically in less represented subgroups improves generalization accuracy. We look forward to discussing these challenges in the workshop.

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