

Threshold Aggregation of Fuzzy Data Using Fuzzy Cardinalities

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Research Motivation

- Let us consider the classical problem of aggregation of individual preferences. There are many rules for such aggregation.
- In some cases, aggregation rules should be **non-compensatory**. This implies that low scores on one criterion cannot be compensated for by high scores on others.
- The so-called **threshold aggregation (TA)** rule [Aleskerov et al 2010, Aleskerov & Yakuba 2007] is one of the popular aggregation rules that has a non-compensatory property.
- In some cases, the characteristics of alternatives may be inaccurate. Then the problem of generalizing the TA rule to the case of inaccurate data is relevant.

Outline of Presentation

- Threshold Aggregation (TA) Problem with Accurate Data;
- TA Problem with Inaccurate Data;
- The procedure for Finding the Fuzzy Cardinality (FC) of a Set of Three-Grade Fuzzy Estimates;
- Comparison of FC and Ranking of Alternatives;
- Numerical Example;
- Summary and Conclusion.

TA Problem with Accurate Data

The problem of ranking alternatives of a set X of evaluated by n criteria in a **three-gradation scale** is being considered. The alternatives are represented by vectors: $\mathbf{x} = (x_1, \dots, x_n)$, where $x_i \in \{1, 2, 3\}$. It is required to find an operator $\varphi_n = \varphi : X \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ that satisfies the conditions [Aleskerov & Yakuba 2007]:

1) **Pareto-domination:**

if $\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y} \in X$ and $x_i \geq y_i \quad \forall i, \exists s : x_s > y_s$, then $\varphi(\mathbf{x}) > \varphi(\mathbf{y})$;

2) **pairwise compensability of criteria:**

if $\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y} \in X$ and $v_k(\mathbf{x}) = v_k(\mathbf{y}) \quad k = 1, 2$, then $\varphi(\mathbf{x}) = \varphi(\mathbf{y})$,

where $v_k(\mathbf{x}) = |\{i : x_i = k\}|$ is the number of estimates of k in the alternative \mathbf{x} , $k = 1, 2, 3$;

3) **threshold noncompensability:**

$\varphi(\underbrace{2, \dots, 2}_n) > \varphi(\mathbf{x}) \quad \forall \mathbf{x} \in X : \exists s : x_s = 1$;

4) **the reduction axiom:**

if $\forall \mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y} \in X \exists s : x_s = y_s$, then

$$\varphi_n(\mathbf{x}) > \varphi_n(\mathbf{y}) \Leftrightarrow \varphi_{n-1}(\mathbf{x}_{-s}) > \varphi_{n-1}(\mathbf{y}_{-s}),$$

where $\mathbf{x}_{-s} = (x_1, \dots, x_{s-1}, x_{s+1}, \dots, x_n)$.

It is shown that the **lexicographic aggregation rule** is a solution to this problem:

$$\varphi(\mathbf{x}) > \varphi(\mathbf{y}) \Leftrightarrow$$

$$v_1(\mathbf{x}) < v_1(\mathbf{y}) \text{ or}$$

$$\exists j \in \{1, 2\} : v_k(\mathbf{x}) = v_k(\mathbf{y}) \quad \forall k \leq j \text{ and } v_{k+1}(\mathbf{x}) < v_{k+1}(\mathbf{y}).$$

This problem was generalized in [\[Aleskerov et al 2010\]](#) to the case of m -gradation scales, $m \geq 3$.

TA Problem with Inaccurate Data

There are two main approaches to generalizing TA in the case of inaccurate data:

- development of axiomatics and aggregation rules based on this new axiomatics;
- finding an analogue of the cardinality vector of estimates for inaccurate data.

An analogue of the cardinality vector of estimates for inaccurate data can be found in two ways:

- finding the vector of scalar cardinalities of a set of inaccurate estimates;
- finding the inaccurate cardinality function of a set of inaccurate estimates.

The nature of inaccuracies in data can be different: interval, fuzzy, probabilistic, etc.

Bellow we will only talk about fuzzy models of data inaccuracy.

Let the alternatives be represented by n -dimensional vectors $\tilde{\mathbf{x}} = (\tilde{x}_1, \dots, \tilde{x}_n)$ of fuzzy sets. Each fuzzy set \tilde{x}_i is defined on a three-gradation base set $\{L, M, H\}$ and has a membership function $\mu_{\tilde{x}_i}$. We will represent a fuzzy set \tilde{x}_i as a vector of values of its membership function: $\tilde{x}_i = (\mu_{\tilde{x}_i}(L), \mu_{\tilde{x}_i}(M), \mu_{\tilde{x}_i}(H))$.

The first approach (let's call it **scalar** [Lepskiy 2023]) is based on calculating a certain measure of proximity $F_S(\tilde{x}_i) = \psi(d(\tilde{x}_i, S_0))$ between all fuzzy estimates \tilde{x}_i of a certain gradation $S \in \{L, M, H\}$ and the reference estimate S_0 for a given gradation.

Then the value

$$v_S(\tilde{\mathbf{x}}) = \sum_{\tilde{x}_i \in S} F_S(\tilde{x}_i), \quad S \in \{L, M, H\}$$

characterizes the cardinality of the set of fuzzy estimates of the class S .

Now I'll consider another approach, which is based on calculating the **fuzzy cardinality (FC)** of a set of fuzzy estimates of each gradation.

The procedure for Finding the FC of a Set of Three-Grade Fuzzy Estimates

Fuzzy cardinality (FC) $\widetilde{v}_S(\widetilde{\mathbf{x}})$ will be defined on the base set $\{0, \dots, n\}$ (n is the number of criteria). The FC membership function $\mu_{\widetilde{v}_S(\widetilde{\mathbf{x}})}$ of the class $S \in \{L, M, H\}$ must satisfy the following conditions:

- 1) $\mu_{\widetilde{v}_S(\widetilde{\mathbf{x}})}(k) = 1 \Leftrightarrow k = \left\lfloor \sum_{\widetilde{x} \in S_{\widetilde{\mathbf{x}}}} \mu_{\widetilde{x}}(S) \right\rfloor$, where $\lfloor \cdot \rfloor$ is rounding down, $S_{\widetilde{\mathbf{x}}}$ is a set of estimates of class S for which the maximum membership function is achieved;
- 2) $\mu_{\widetilde{v}_S(\widetilde{\mathbf{x}})}(k) = 0$, if $k < \left\lfloor \sum_{\widetilde{x} \in S_{\widetilde{\mathbf{x}}}} \mu_{\widetilde{x}}(S) \right\rfloor$.

This condition means that the cardinality of the set of estimates for a class S cannot be less than the number of estimates that obviously belong to this class.

Desirable properties of FC would also be the following.
Let Fuz is a certain degree of fuzziness of the set and

$$Fuz(\tilde{\mathbf{x}}) = (Fuz(\tilde{x}_1), \dots, Fuz(\tilde{x}_n)).$$

For $\mathbf{a} = (a_1, \dots, a_n)$ and $\mathbf{b} = (b_1, \dots, b_n)$ vectors, comparison $\mathbf{a} \geq \mathbf{b}$ means that $a_1 \geq b_1, \dots, a_n \geq b_n$.

- 3) if $Fuz(\tilde{\mathbf{x}}) \geq Fuz(\tilde{\mathbf{y}})$, then $Fuz(\tilde{v}_S(\tilde{\mathbf{x}})) \geq Fuz(\tilde{v}_S(\tilde{\mathbf{y}}))$
 $\forall S \in \{L, M, H\}$.
- 4) if $Fuz(\tilde{\mathbf{x}}) = \mathbf{0}$, then $\tilde{v}_S(\tilde{\mathbf{x}}) = v_S(\mathbf{x}) \forall S \in \{L, M, H\}$.

The last condition means that if all fuzzy estimates are non-fuzzy (i. e. $\mu_{\tilde{x}_i}(S) \in \{0, 1\} \forall S \in \{L, M, H\}$), then the FC of the vector estimate will coincide with the usual cardinality.

We will find the remaining values $\mu_{\widetilde{v}_S(\widetilde{x})}(k)$ for $k > \left\lceil \sum_{\widetilde{x} \in S_{\widetilde{x}}} \mu_{\widetilde{x}}(S) \right\rceil$ using the following **threshold rule**.

Let $S_1, S_2, S_3 \in \{L, M, H\}$ be three different classes of estimates such that $\mu_{\widetilde{x}_i}(S_1) > \mu_{\widetilde{x}_i}(S_2) \geq \mu_{\widetilde{x}_i}(S_3)$.

Then we will call the estimate \widetilde{x}_i the **1st level** estimate for the class S_1 , the **2nd level** for the class S_2 and the **3rd** for the class S_3 .

We will order all values $\mu_{\widetilde{x}_i}(S) = q_i$, $i = 1, \dots, n$ in ascending order of level numbers for a fixed class S :

$$q_{i_1}^{(1)}, \dots, q_{i_k}^{(1)}, q_{i_{k+1}}^{(2)}, \dots, q_{i_r}^{(2)}, q_{i_{r+1}}^{(3)}, \dots, q_{i_n}^{(3)}$$

(the superscript is the level number).

Then we get for the **1st level** values, according to condition 1):

$\mu_{\widetilde{v}_S}(\widetilde{x})(p_1) = 1$, where $p_1 := \lfloor q_{i_1}^{(1)} + \dots + q_{i_k}^{(1)} \rfloor$. If there are no **1st level** estimates, then we assume $p_1 = 0$.

If there are quite a lot of large **2nd level** values, then this means that the values of the FC membership function will be quite large for cardinalities greater than p_1 . For example, the following threshold procedure may be proposed.

If $p_2 = \left\lfloor \left\{ q_{i_1}^{(1)} + \dots + q_{i_k}^{(1)} \right\} + q_{i_{k+1}}^{(2)} + \dots + q_{i_r}^{(2)} \right\rfloor \geq 1$, then

$\mu_{\widetilde{v}_S}(\widetilde{x})(p_1 + 1) = \dots = \mu_{\widetilde{v}_S}(\widetilde{x})(p_1 + p_2) = m_2$, where $m_2 \in (0, 1)$. Here $\{ \}$ is the fractional part of the number.

The values of the **3rd level** are taken into account in the same way. If

$p_3 = \left\lfloor \left\{ \left\{ q_{i_1}^{(1)} + \dots + q_{i_k}^{(1)} \right\} + q_{i_{k+1}}^{(2)} + \dots + q_{i_r}^{(2)} \right\} + q_{i_{r+1}}^{(3)} + \dots + q_{i_n}^{(3)} \right\rfloor \geq 1$, then we will increase by m_3 the membership function $\mu_{\widetilde{v}_S}(\widetilde{x})$ for the

values of the argument $p_1 + 1, \dots, p_1 + p_3$, where

$0 < m_3 < \min\{m_2, 1 - m_2\}$.

Example

Let the vector $\tilde{\mathbf{x}} = (\tilde{x}_1, \dots, \tilde{x}_5)$ from 5 fuzzy estimates be given, where $\tilde{x}_i = (\mu_{\tilde{x}_i}(L), \mu_{\tilde{x}_i}(M), \mu_{\tilde{x}_i}(H))$, $i = 1, \dots, 5$ and

$$\tilde{x}_1 = (0.5, 0.6, 1), \quad \tilde{x}_2 = (0.3, 0.5, 1),$$

$$\tilde{x}_3 = (0.5, 1, 0.4), \quad \tilde{x}_4 = (1, 0.8, 0.3), \quad \tilde{x}_5 = (1, 0.5, 0.2).$$

Then we will get the following results of calculating the values of the FC membership function for each class

$$\tilde{v}_L(\tilde{\mathbf{x}}) = (0, 0, 1, m_3, 0, 0), \quad \tilde{v}_M(\tilde{\mathbf{x}}) = (0, 1, m_2, m_2, 0, 0),$$

$$\tilde{v}_H(\tilde{\mathbf{x}}) = (0, 0, 1, 0, 0, 0).$$

Here m_2, m_3 are some threshold values that satisfy the conditions $m_2 \in (0, 1)$, $0 < m_3 < \min\{m_2, 1 - m_2\}$.

Comparison of FC and Ranking of Alternatives

Let \mathcal{V}_n be the set of all FCs for n fuzzy estimates.

To apply the lexicographic rule for ranking a set of vector fuzzy alternatives $\{\tilde{\mathbf{x}}\}$ with respect to FC $\tilde{\mathbf{v}}(\tilde{\mathbf{x}}) = (\tilde{v}_L(\tilde{\mathbf{x}}), \tilde{v}_M(\tilde{\mathbf{x}}), \tilde{v}_H(\tilde{\mathbf{x}}))$, it is necessary to use some rule for ordering fuzzy sets. This can be done using some defuzzification function $F : \mathcal{V}_n \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$.

We will assume that the FCs of class S estimates are in the relation $\tilde{v}_S(\tilde{\mathbf{x}}) \prec \tilde{v}_S(\tilde{\mathbf{y}})$ for two alternatives $\tilde{\mathbf{x}}$ and $\tilde{\mathbf{y}}$ if $F(\tilde{v}_S(\tilde{\mathbf{x}})) < F(\tilde{v}_S(\tilde{\mathbf{y}}))$ and are equal $\tilde{v}_S(\tilde{\mathbf{x}}) \sim \tilde{v}_S(\tilde{\mathbf{y}})$ if $F(\tilde{v}_S(\tilde{\mathbf{x}})) = F(\tilde{v}_S(\tilde{\mathbf{y}}))$.

For example, if we use center of gravity

$$G(\tilde{v}_S(\tilde{\mathbf{x}})) = \frac{\sum_{i=0}^n i \mu_{\tilde{v}_S(\tilde{\mathbf{x}})}(i)}{\sum_{i=0}^n \mu_{\tilde{v}_S(\tilde{\mathbf{x}})}(i)}$$

as the defuzzification function, we get for the example above:

$$G(\widetilde{v}_L(\widetilde{\mathbf{x}})) = \frac{2 + 3m_3}{1 + m_3}, \quad G(\widetilde{v}_M(\widetilde{\mathbf{x}})) = \frac{1 + 5m_2}{1 + 2m_2}, \quad G(\widetilde{v}_H(\widetilde{\mathbf{x}})) = 2.$$

For any acceptable threshold values m_2 and m_3 , we have $G(\widetilde{v}_M(\widetilde{\mathbf{x}})) < G(\widetilde{v}_H(\widetilde{\mathbf{x}})) < G(\widetilde{v}_L(\widetilde{\mathbf{x}}))$. Therefore, the ranking $\widetilde{v}_M(\widetilde{\mathbf{x}}) \prec \widetilde{v}_H(\widetilde{\mathbf{x}}) \prec \widetilde{v}_L(\widetilde{\mathbf{x}})$ is correct.

Another way to compare the FC of sets of fuzzy estimates is to use the same **lexicographic rule**.

Let $\widetilde{v}_S(\widetilde{\mathbf{x}}) = (a_0, \dots, a_n)$, $\widetilde{v}_S(\widetilde{\mathbf{y}}) = (b_0, \dots, b_n)$.

Then we will assume that $\widetilde{v}_S(\widetilde{\mathbf{x}}) \prec \widetilde{v}_S(\widetilde{\mathbf{y}})$ if $a_0 < b_0$ or $\exists k \in \{0, \dots, n-1\} : a_0 = b_0, \dots, a_k = b_k, a_{k+1} < b_{k+1}$.

Otherwise, we assume that $\widetilde{v}_S(\widetilde{\mathbf{x}}) \sim \widetilde{v}_S(\widetilde{\mathbf{y}})$.

Now, the threshold aggregation rule for two alternatives $\tilde{\mathbf{x}}$ and $\tilde{\mathbf{y}}$ will be as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \varphi(\tilde{\mathbf{x}}) > \varphi(\tilde{\mathbf{y}}) &\Leftrightarrow && \widetilde{v}_L(\tilde{\mathbf{x}}) \prec \widetilde{v}_L(\tilde{\mathbf{y}}) \\ &&& \text{or } \widetilde{v}_L(\tilde{\mathbf{x}}) \sim \widetilde{v}_L(\tilde{\mathbf{y}}), \widetilde{v}_M(\tilde{\mathbf{x}}) \prec \widetilde{v}_M(\tilde{\mathbf{y}}) \\ &&& \text{or } \widetilde{v}_L(\tilde{\mathbf{x}}) \sim \widetilde{v}_L(\tilde{\mathbf{y}}), \widetilde{v}_M(\tilde{\mathbf{x}}) \sim \widetilde{v}_M(\tilde{\mathbf{y}}), \widetilde{v}_H(\tilde{\mathbf{x}}) \prec \widetilde{v}_H(\tilde{\mathbf{y}}). \end{aligned}$$

Numerical Example

Consider an example of ranking articles of conferences in the conference management system, such as EasyChair.

This system uses a septennial scoring system

$x_i \in \{-3, -2, -1, 0, 1, 2, 3\}$, corresponding to the recommendations "strong reject", "reject", "weak reject", "borderline paper", "weak accept", "accept", "strong accept". In addition, the reviewer gives an assessment on a five-fold scale (0.2 – "none", 0.4 – "low", 0.6 – "medium", 0.8 – "high", 1 – "expert") about the degree of confidence in the correctness of his decision: $\lambda_i \in \{0.2, 0.4, 0.6, 0.8, 1\}$.

Point data $\left\{ (z_i^{(k)}, \lambda_i^{(k)}) \right\}_{i=1}^5$ of $n = 5$ reviewers regarding 4 articles are presented in Table (i is the reviewer's index, k is the article's index, $k = 1, \dots, 4$).

	paper 1	paper 2	paper 3	paper 4
rev. 1	(2, 0.8)	(2, 1)	(1, 0.8)	(0, 0.6)
rev. 2	(1, 1)	(2, 0.8)	(2, 0.6)	(1, 0.4)
rev. 3	(0, 0.8)	(0, 0.6)	(-1, 0.6)	(1, 1)
rev. 4	(3, 0.4)	(-1, 0.4)	(0, 0.6)	(2, 0.2)
rev. 5	(2, 0.6)	(1, 0.6)	(1, 1)	(2, 1)

Let's transform each pair (z, λ) into a three-grade fuzzy estimate $\tilde{x} = \tilde{x}(z, \lambda) = (\mu_{\tilde{x}}(L), \mu_{\tilde{x}}(M), \mu_{\tilde{x}}(H))$ using the following blur rule:

if $z \in H = \{1, 2, 3\}$ (high estimates), then $\tilde{x} = \left(\frac{\lambda}{2z+\lambda}, \frac{\lambda}{z+\lambda}, \lambda\right)$;

if $z \in L = \{-3, -2, -1\}$ (low estimates), then $\tilde{x} = \left(\lambda, \frac{\lambda}{|z|+\lambda}, \frac{\lambda}{2|z|+\lambda}\right)$;

if $z \in M = \{0\}$ (medium estimate), then $\tilde{x} = \left(\frac{\lambda}{1+2\lambda}, \lambda, \frac{\lambda}{1+2\lambda}\right)$.

The fuzzy estimates obtained in this way are presented in Table.

	paper 1	paper 2	paper 3	paper 4
rev. 1	$(\frac{1}{6}, \frac{2}{7}, \frac{4}{5})$	$(\frac{1}{5}, \frac{1}{3}, 1)$	$(\frac{2}{7}, \frac{4}{9}, \frac{4}{5})$	$(\frac{3}{11}, \frac{3}{5}, \frac{3}{11})$
rev. 2	$(\frac{1}{3}, \frac{1}{2}, 1)$	$(\frac{1}{6}, \frac{2}{7}, \frac{4}{5})$	$(\frac{3}{23}, \frac{3}{13}, \frac{3}{5})$	$(\frac{1}{6}, \frac{2}{7}, \frac{2}{5})$
rev. 3	$(\frac{4}{13}, \frac{4}{5}, \frac{4}{13})$	$(\frac{3}{11}, \frac{3}{5}, \frac{3}{11})$	$(\frac{3}{5}, \frac{3}{8}, \frac{3}{13})$	$(\frac{1}{3}, \frac{1}{2}, 1)$
rev. 4	$(\frac{1}{16}, \frac{2}{17}, \frac{2}{5})$	$(\frac{2}{5}, \frac{2}{7}, \frac{1}{6})$	$(\frac{3}{11}, \frac{3}{5}, \frac{3}{11})$	$(\frac{1}{21}, \frac{1}{11}, \frac{1}{5})$
rev. 5	$(\frac{3}{23}, \frac{3}{13}, \frac{3}{5})$	$(\frac{3}{13}, \frac{3}{8}, \frac{3}{5})$	$(\frac{1}{3}, \frac{1}{2}, 1)$	$(\frac{1}{5}, \frac{1}{3}, 1)$
$\widetilde{v}_L^{(k)}$	$(1, m_3, 0, 0, 0, 0)$	$(1, m_3, 0, 0, 0, 0)$	$(1, m_3, 0, 0, 0, 0)$	$(1, m_3, 0, 0, 0, 0)$
$\widetilde{v}_M^{(k)}$	$(1, m_2, 0, 0, 0, 0)$	$(1, m_3, 0, 0, 0, 0)$	$(1, m_2, m_2, 0, 0, 0)$	$(1, m_2, 0, 0, 0, 0)$
$\widetilde{v}_H^{(k)}$	$(0, 0, 1, m_2, 0, 0)$	$(0, 0, 1, 0, 0, 0)$	$(0, 0, 1, 0, 0, 0)$	$(0, 0, 1, 0, 0, 0)$
$\mathbf{G}^{(k)}$	$(\frac{m_3}{1+m_3}, \frac{m_2}{1+m_2}, \frac{2+3m_2}{1+m_2})$	$(\frac{m_3}{1+m_3}, \frac{m_3}{1+m_3}, 2)$	$(\frac{m_3}{1+m_3}, \frac{3m_2}{1+2m_2}, 2)$	$(\frac{m_3}{1+m_3}, \frac{m_2}{1+m_2}, 2)$
$\mathbf{v}^{(k)}$	$(0, 1, 4)$	$(1, 1, 3)$	$(1, 1, 3)$	$(0, 1, 4)$

Using the method described above, we will find the FC of all reviewer ratings for all classes and for all articles.

We will obtain the following ranking of articles after **lexicographic** comparison of vectors $\mathbf{G}^{(k)}$, $k = 1, \dots, 4$:

$$\varphi\left(\tilde{\mathbf{x}}^{(2)}\right) > \varphi\left(\tilde{\mathbf{x}}^{(4)}\right) > \varphi\left(\tilde{\mathbf{x}}^{(1)}\right) > \varphi\left(\tilde{\mathbf{x}}^{(3)}\right).$$

The same ranking will be obtained if the cardinalities of gradations are compared lexicographically.

If we take into account only the three-grade recommendations of reviewers ($L = \{-3, -2, -1\}$, $M = \{0\}$, $H = \{1, 2, 3\}$) and do not take into account the degree of confidence, we obtain the following vectors of cardinality of assessments $\mathbf{v}^{(k)} = (v_L(\mathbf{x}^{(k)}), v_M(\mathbf{x}^{(k)}), v_H(\mathbf{x}^{(k)}))$ for each k -article. Then the ranking of these articles will be as follows:

$$\varphi(\mathbf{x}^{(1)}) = \varphi(\mathbf{x}^{(4)}) > \varphi(\mathbf{x}^{(2)}) = \varphi(\mathbf{x}^{(3)}).$$




The main difference in the results of the new and non-fuzzy approaches is the rearrangement of alternatives $\mathbf{x}^{(1)}$ and $\mathbf{x}^{(2)}$. The alternative $\mathbf{x}^{(1)}$ will be better than the $\mathbf{x}^{(2)}$ under non-blurred TA because the $\mathbf{x}^{(2)}$ has one low score, while the $\mathbf{x}^{(1)}$ has no low scores.

But a low score in the alternative $\mathbf{x}^{(2)}$ has a low degree of confidence. Therefore, it has little effect on the cardinality of low estimates under fuzzy TA.

Summary and Conclusion

- A new approach to TA and ranking of vector alternatives specified by fuzzy evaluations of criteria on a three-graded base set is proposed. This approach is based on calculating and comparing the FC of sets of estimates for each gradation for all criteria and for each alternative;
- The general properties that the FC of a set of fuzzy estimators must satisfy are discussed;
- The threshold procedure for constructing the FC of a set of fuzzy estimates is considered;
- The development of axiomatics for fuzzy threshold aggregation is one of the possible directions for future research.

References

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Thanks for you attention

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