


pyPLNmodels: A Python package to analyse multivariate high-dimensional count data

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Summary

High dimensional count data are hard to analyse as is, and normalization must be performed but standard normalization does not fit to the characteristics of count data. The Poisson LogNormal(PLN) ([Aitchison & Ho, 1989](#)) and PLN-PCA ([Chiquet et al., 2018](#)) are two-sided models allowing both suitable normalization and analysis of multivariate count data. Each model is implemented in the pyPLNmodels package introduced here. Possible fields of applications include

- Ecology: for n sites and p species, the counts represents the number of individuals of each species in each site. The PLN models aims to understand the correlation between species, specifically to establish potential dependencies, competitive interactions, and predatory dynamics. Additionally, the PLN models seek to explain the impact of covariates (when available), such as temperature, altitude, and other relevant factors, on the observed abundances.
- Genomics: for n cells and p genes, the counts represents the number of times a gene is expressed in each cell. The objective is to estimate the correlation between genes and reduce the number of variables.

The models can deal with offsets when needed. The main functionalities of the pyPLNmodels package are

- Normalize count data to obtain more valuable data
- Analyse the significance of each variable and their correlation
- Perform regression when covariates are available
- Reduce the number of variables with the PLN-PCA model
- Visualize the normalized data

To illustrate the main model's interest, we display below a visualization of the first two principal components when Principal Component Analysis (PCA) is performed with the PLN-PCA model (on the left) and standard PCA on the log normalized data (on the right). The data considered is the scMARK benchmark ([Diaz-Mejia, 2021](#)) described in the benchmark section. We kept 1000 samples for illustration purposes.

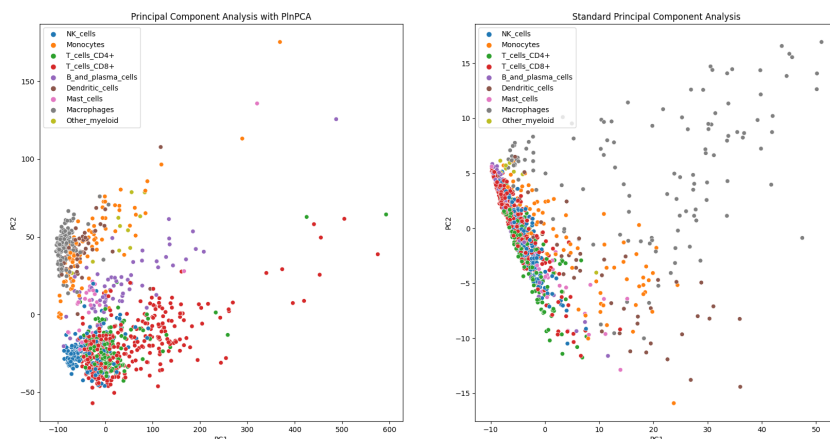


Figure 1: PLN-PCA (left) and standard PCA (right).

Statement of need

While the R-package `PLNmodels` (Chiquet et al., 2021) implements PLN models, the python package `pyPLNmodels` based on Pytorch (Paszke et al., 2019) has been built to handle large datasets of count data, such as scRNA (single-cell Ribonucleic acid) data. Real-world scRNA datasets typically involves thousands of cells ($n \approx 20000$) with thousand of genes ($p \approx 20000$), resulting in a matrix of size $\approx 20000 \times 20000$. The package has GPU support for a better scalability.

The `statsmodels` (Seabold & Perktold, 2010) python package allows to deal with count data thanks to the Generalized Linear Models `PoissonBayesMixedGLM` and `BinomialBayesMixedGLM` classes. We stand out from this package by allowing covariance between variables and performing Principal Component Analysis adequate to count data.

Benchmark

We fit PLN and PLN-PCA models with the `pyPLNmodels` package on the scMARK dataset, a benchmark for scRNA (single-cell Ribonucleic acid) data with $n = 19998$ samples (cells) and 14059 features (gene expression). We plot below the running times required to fit such models when the number of variables (i.e. genes) grows. We used 60 Principal Components when fitting the PLN-PCA model. A tolerance must be set as stopping criterion when fitting each model. The running time required with the default tolerance is plot in solid line and a dotted line is plot with a relaxed tolerance. Note that the default tolerance ensures the model parameters have reached convergence but the relaxed one gives satisfying model parameters, while being much faster.

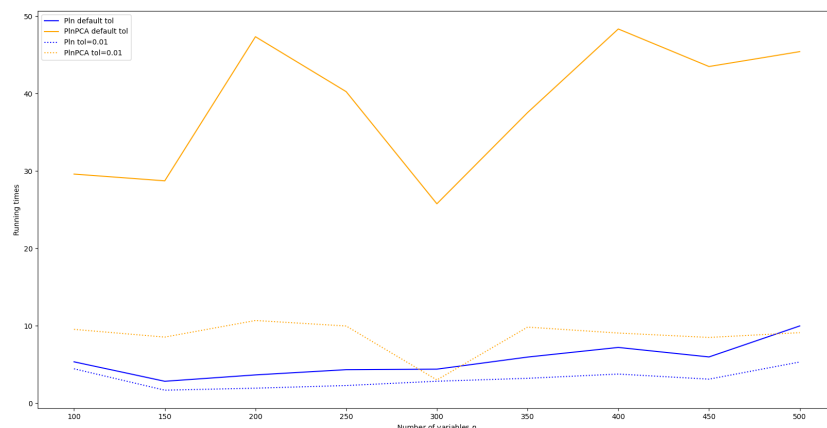


Figure 2: Running time analysis on the scMARK benchmark.

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