# Survey of Experience Sampling Method in Big Data - Al Integration Perspective

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The experience sampling method is a widely used data labeling technique for studying ongoing experiences. The experience sampling method relies on participants' self-reports to collect data, which can be prone to human error and missing data. In this paper, we identify noise sources in the experience sampling method and propose solutions to improve the quality of the collected data. We also discuss how recent advances in machine learning, such as semi-supervised learning and robust training, can be applied to data generated by the experience sampling method to improve the accuracy and fairness of the results. Overall, our work provides insights into the limitations of the experience sampling method and suggests ways to enhance its effectiveness for generating high-quality data.

#### **ACM Reference Format:**

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Artificial intelligence (AI), including deep learning, has recently gained great attention. From traditional domains of computer vision, natural language processing, and speech processing, AI is now applied to human-computer interaction (HCI) domains of psychology [39], physiology [11, 51], emotion sensing [48], and digital health [40].

Since humans are primarily involved in the loop of data acquisition, labeling, and improvement, there is a higher chance of human error and bias in the data. Recent work focused on data quality, creation, management, and analysis in HCI domains to solve the issue. For example, the CHI 2022 workshop discussed how humans create, collect, manage, curate, analyze, interpret, and communicate data [50].

Data labels are often from human annotations<sup>1</sup>, therefore understanding human factors in labeling is important. The main limitation of existing literature on human factors in data labeling is that they mostly consider the data annotated/generated from crowdsourcing. For example, existing works cover data annotators [55], data annotation infrastructure [74], annotation tools [83], or end-to-end (data annotation to model generation) [8, 70] - all in the crowdsourcing context.

Although crowdsourcing has been the main line of research, the experience sampling method (ESM) also have been widely used as the human-in-the-loop data labeling in HCI-related domains as in Figure 1. Human factors of ESM are also crucial for data quality. For example, imagine building a smartphone system to predict emotions based on smartphone usage records. You must first collect the data of automatically-recorded smartphone usage logs with

<sup>1</sup>For example, 65% of machine learning papers of Twitter data utilize labels from human annotations [21].

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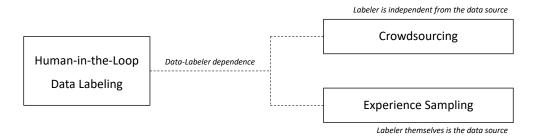


Fig. 1. Overview of human-in-the-loop data labeling dependence on the data source.

corresponding user emotions, which must be self-reported. Such self-reporting data is known to be noisy likewise [32]. However, such human factors in ESMs are underexplored.

Therefore, we focus on human factors affecting data quality in ESM data in this survey. We intensively analyze existing approaches from the cause of noisy experience sampling data to its solutions. We provide guidelines for preventing noisy labels and methods from validating and cleaning the data and improving the models.

#### 2 RELATED WORKS

### 2.1 Big Data - Al Integration

Big data - AI integration, or data-centric AI, is a research trend focusing on the data itself to improve the AI system, focusing on the data point of view in the machine learning pipeline, including data collection, data cleaning, validation, and integration, robust model training, and fairness [52, 56, 79].

Data collection in big data - AI integration is categorized as three approaches: data acquisition, data labeling, and improving existing data and models [56, 79]. If there is insufficient data, data acquisition must be the first option, including data discovery, augmentation, and generation. Data labeling includes utilizing existing labels (semi-supervised learning), manual labeling (crowdsourcing and active learning), and automatic labeling (weak supervision). Finally, improving existing data aims to improve poor-quality datasets. For example, popular benchmark datasets in ML applications still include label errors [12, 46], where high-quality small-size data could perform better than a low-quality large-size dataset [46].

The importance of data quality, including label reliability, is explored with various ML efforts [22, 35, 49, 80]. However, without partnerships with data-specific domain experts, it can be difficult for ML experts to validate the accuracy and efficacy of existing labeling operations, which can affect the performance and validation of models [70].

## 2.2 Crowdsourcing

The crowdsourcing approach distributes data labeling tasks to various digital workers and is widely used in multiple AI fields [21, 24, 30]. For example, Amazon Mechanical Turk [2] is one of the most popular platforms for connecting human workers and task requesters. As the role of human factors in crowdsourcing is critical, there is heavy literature (including surveys) in the view of big data - AI [1, 13, 15, 41, 58] and human-computer interaction [8, 21, 43, 44, 55, 70, 75].

2.2.1 Collaborative Workflow. One area of research has focused on the collaborative workflows of data scientists, ML developers, and data annotators [8, 21, 43, 44, 70]. For example, validating, cleaning, and re-labeling could improve the Manuscript submitted to ACM

performance of classification algorithms, but this requires the data scientist to have specific domain knowledge [43]. ML developers also reported challenges in understanding the (1) subjectivity and biases of those who labeled the data and (2) whether labeling was performed under the awareness of the data context [70]. Therefore, it would be essential to prevent any possible biases and errors and preprocess the crowdsourced labels with corresponding domain knowledge during the data creation step.

- 2.2.2 Data Quality. Controlling the data quality of crowdsourced data could be addressed by simple approaches such as repetitive labeling and majority voting. However, previous methods of repetitive labeling or majority voting require more budget resources. David et al. [34] provide a new crowdsourcing system to achieve reliability with minimizing the budget by an expectation-maximization (EM) algorithm. Also, identifying and filtering the low-quality labelers could achieve better labeling quality (e.g., Vox Populi [17]).
- 2.2.3 User Interaction. The interface for crowdsourcing is critical for accurate and fast labeling; designing and programming the interface has been identified as time-consuming, costly, and requiring expertise in software engineering. OneLabeler [83] is a flexible system to build data labeling tools through visual programming. Also, CrowdER [76] is the solution for generating labels of comparison of entities using pair-based and cluster-based interfaces.

Also, providing practical instructions is essential to prevent confusion and provide labeling consistency. One approach is providing guidelines before the labeling and letting labelers follow the guidelines. However, such guidelines could be incomplete and do not cover all possible scenarios [56]. Revolt [9] is a collaborative crowdsourcing platform to solve the problem, where workers vote, explain, and categorize the labeling to make post-hoc decision boundaries.

2.2.4 Organization and Workers. Finally, the human-computer interaction field focuses on organizations and workers in a crowdsourcing context. For example, the organization and infrastructure of crowdsourcing, including its potential to be seen as organized employment, has been investigated [75]. The work practices and career goals of annotators have also been studied, and challenges faced by crowd workers on platforms such as Amazon Mechanical Turk, such as a lack of career advice and limited time and financial resources, have been highlighted [55].

### 3 NOISE SOURCES IN EXPERIEMNT SAMPLING

The experience sampling method (ESM) is a widely-used data generation and labeling method for collecting individuals' ongoing experiences in human-computer interaction fields [31]. It uses two primary ways: probe-caught and self-caught [32, 63, 64]. In the probe-caught method, participants are periodically interrupted and required to respond to their ongoing experience. These interruptions can be alerts, pop-up screens, or face-to-face interactions. In the self-caught method, participants voluntarily provide reports. Both ways can be combined to improve the diversity of the data collected.

In this section, we summarize the significant noise sources in the experience sampling method (ESM), as shown in Figure 2. We begin by discussing noise sources in the experience sampling method and then examine noise sources specific to probe-caught and self-caught processes.

## 3.1 Experience Sampling Method

The primary noise sources in the experience sampling method (ESM) are self-reported data [14]. This can lead to (1) incorrect responses due to human error, (2) missing labels due to intentional or unintentional causes, and (3) response shifts.

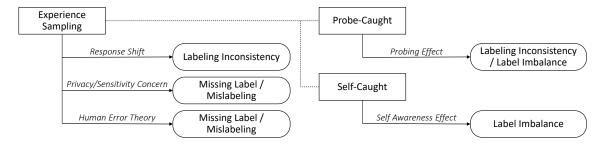


Fig. 2. Overview of labeling noise sources in experience sampling method.

Human error can result in inaccurate data. According to the human error theory [45, 47], momentary slip or lapse of attention could lead to unexpected behaviors. The theory suggests that errors are not simply the result of individual incompetence or carelessness but rather are influenced by a complex interplay of cognitive, social, and environmental factors [45]. One example could be poor instructions and guidelines, or the task is beyond the physical or mental ability of the person [37].

Response shift, which refers to changes in individuals' internal standards, values, priorities, or definitions, can occur in experience sampling studies [6]. This phenomenon is widespread in longitudinal experience sampling studies [54, 60, 68]. Response shifts can affect the validity of experience sampling studies by changing how participants report their experiences. For example, a participant may initially report feeling anxious about a particular situation. Still, after some time, they may no longer feel worried about it and instead report feeling calm. This change in self-report does not necessarily reflect a difference in the participant's actual emotional experience but rather a change in their perception of that experience.

Missing labels can occur if participants intentionally or unintentionally do not respond to the probes [14]. First, participants could suffer from frequent actions required. For example, study dropout rates are relatively high in ESM-related experiments [71]. For example, one participant from Kang et al. [32] ignored the ESM probes if the probe interrupted the primary task. Also, participants could avoid or even falsely report the response due to privacy/sensitivity concerns. For an example of daily activity data collection, one might refuse to report personal activities or even falsely report the response to hide the activity.

Participants could also be affected by the Hawthorne effect, where participants alter behaviors as they realize they are being observed. For example, participants could alter the voice conversations when they are reminded that their conversation is being recorded on smartphones [53].

The label could be biased toward time. For the daily diary case of ESM, participants could fill the response days after an event instead of immediately reporting [62]. Also, with insufficient guidelines, participants could be confused about the time window of the response, which would lead to any unknown bias towards time.

### 3.2 Probe-Caught Method

 The use of probe-caught methods in experience sampling method (ESM) has been prevalent in the field of human-computer interaction (HCI) to collect a sufficient amount of data [7, 28, 32, 33, 39, 42, 57, 77]. Providing the probe could be heuristic-based (e.g., periodic probing, random probing), event-based (e.g., smartphone app launch [57]), or rule-based (e.g., active learning [33]).

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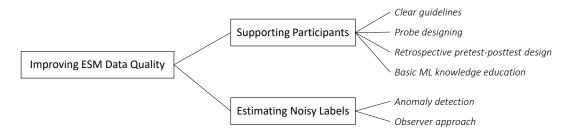


Fig. 3. Overview of methods to improve data quality.

However, using arbitrarily-invoked alerts in these methods can interrupt participants' ongoing tasks and affect their mental states. Unexpected interrupts are known to interfere with people's ongoing tasks, decrease user efficiency, and even affect users' mental states [3, 4, 29].

As a result, participants' psychophysiological responses may be affected by using probe-caught methods in ESM. For example, Kang et al. [32] reported that ESM positively or negatively affected mobile user emotions in at least 38% of emotions by analyzing 2,227 samples of mobile ESM data from 78 participants. Also, a few participants from online lecture viewing experiment [39] reported that periodic probing requests either disturbed or made to focus more.

## 3.3 Self-Caught Method

In the self-caught method of experience sampling [27, 69], data quality may be compromised due to the reliance on participants' self-reports. This can result in data imbalance and a lack of reports on specific experiences. To improve the quality of data collected using the self-caught method, researchers may need to develop strategies for encouraging more balanced reporting from participants. This could include providing clear guidelines and incentives for participants to report all relevant experiences and implementing techniques such as data under- or oversampling to balance the dataset.

## 4 IMPROVING DATA QUALITY

Data quality is an essential factor in machine learning systems. Poor data quality can hinder the accuracy of the model, as noted in [61]. Therefore, the experimenter must consider data quality throughout the process, from experiment planning to machine learning. We first define existing data quality measurement approaches in Section 4.1. Then, we provide methods to improve data quality in experience sampling data in Section 4.2 and Section 4.3 as in Figure 3.

### 4.1 Addressing Data Quality

Few works of literature consider the data quality of the experience sampling method (ESM) response. Yue et al. [82] performed an ESM experiment to ask participants to submit text-based ESM with optional photos. The authors evaluated the data quality with (1) the rate of incomplete/invalid ESM responses and (2) the measured length of the text response. As a result, photo-sharers (who submitted the optional photo to describe the ESM text response) resulted in higher data quality than non-photo-sharers.

Also, Hicks et al. [26] measures the 'participant quality' as the number of interactions and discover that power users (ESM participants whose responding device is their primary device) result in higher data quality compared to survey-only users.

## 4.2 Supporting Participants

 Data quality is primarily dependent on the participants. To reduce human errors in the experience sampling method (ESM), it is essential to provide clear guidelines for data labeling and educate annotators on their work's importance. Previous research has shown that giving detailed examples is more effective than simply explaining guidelines [8]. This can help to motivate and improve the productivity of annotators.

Designing the probing process is crucial. The probing method and interface should minimize the burden on participants by adjusting the number of questions, daily alerts, and question types [36]. In addition, the experience sampling method itself can be adjusted [19], therefore not to fatigue the participants for efficiency and consistency of annotations [8]. Customizable data collection tools [83] or gamification [72] could also improve labeling quality. In addition, making ESM tools monitorable can help managers track outliers, monitor participants, and enforce annotation guidelines [8].

To reduce response shifts (see Section 3.1), a commonly used technique is the 'retrospective pretest-posttest design' [59, 67], where participants periodically answer the questionnaire to reflect on how they were doing at the start of the study. This allows the experimenter to re-calibrate in light of changes in perspective over the study period.

Cha, Oh, and Park et al. [8] stated that data quality could vary based on human labelers' diversity and background knowledge. Therefore, to improve the data quality in ESM, we can educate basic ML knowledge to participants to enhance labeling quality as in labeling [5, 84].

## 4.3 Estimating Noisy Labelers

Unreliable participants can be detected using anomaly detection and statistical methods to improve data quality. For example, existing human-computer interaction (HCI) works used low response rates (missing data rates) to remove unreliable participants from the training/testing dataset [32, 39]. A short response time can also indicate skipping behavior [71], where the characteristics of the experiment determine the threshold.

Another approach is to use an 'observer,' who observes and labels the participant's state independently of the participant. For example, the K-EmoCon dataset [48] provides emotion labeling from experimenters and independent observers, where the observer infers the experimenter's emotion from their facial expressions. With observers, we can apply existing approaches for dealing with noisy labelers in the big data community to improve the data [16, 18, 23, 61, 65, 66, 80]. For example, cross-replication reliability (xRR) [80] could be utilized to measure the quality of crowdsourced datasets with high cultural and training variances of annotators.

## 5 IMPROVING MODEL

Although we utilize various techniques to improve data quality, the experience sampling method (ESM) cannot eliminate underlying human errors compared to crowdsourcing. Therefore, it is essential to build robust and fair models in the presence of underlying noisy data.

# 5.1 Semi-Supervised Learning

Semi-supervised learning is a deep learning technique that enables models to learn from a few labeled samples and apply that knowledge to unlabeled samples. For instance, Wampfler et al. [73] used semi-supervised learning to predict affective states based on smartphone keyboard usage. Since affective states can only be inferred through periodic probes, they used semi-supervised learning to fill the gap between a few labeled and many unlabeled samples.

### 5.2 Robust Training

There has been extensive research on training models with noisy labels [20]. Most existing methods rely on a small amount of clean data. However, it is difficult to assume that a small amount of clean data is available in the experience sampling method (ESM) because ESM samples each individual's label. Existing model training approaches could be applied if the 'observer' approach (see Section 4.3) were utilized. For instance, Xiao et al. [81] proposed a general framework for training a neural network with few clean and noisy labels by modeling the relationships between data, labels, and noise.

Addressing the issue of data imbalance, particularly in the self-caught method, could improve training performance. The survey by He and Garcia [25] provides traditional approaches for learning from imbalanced data. A common practice is to under or oversamples the data by replicating or removing data. SMOTE [10] is an alternative that oversamples the minority classes by copying and generating synthetic samples using minority examples.

#### 5.3 Fairness

Algorithmic fairness, also known as fair machine learning, has attracted significant attention due to the potential social impact of AI. The goal of fairness is to produce unbiased results concerning specific protected variables. However, suppose the experience sampling method (ESM) questionnaire contains potentially protected variable candidates. In that case, participants may provide inaccurate responses due to human error or concerns about sensitivity and privacy (see Section 3). Recent work on robust fairness in binary classification has shown the potential benefits of using noisy data from sensitive experiences [38, 78]. However, robust fairness in multi-class classification and regression remains an under-researched area.

### 6 CONCLUSION

The increasing trend toward integrating big data and AI has highlighted the importance of data quality. However, while crowdsourcing has been extensively studied, the experience sampling method has received relatively little attention regarding its potential for generating noisy data. In this paper, we identify critical noise sources in the experience sampling method and propose methods for improving the quality of the data generated. We also discuss how recent advances in machine learning, such as semi-supervised learning and robust training, can be applied to data generated by the experience sampling method to address these noise sources and improve the results' accuracy. Overall, our work provides insights into the limitations of the experience sampling method and suggests ways to enhance its effectiveness for generating high-quality data in human-computer interaction.

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