

Robust-CPI: A Double Robust Approach to improve Variable Selection

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Inria



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- Motivation

2 Robust-CPI

- Literature review
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- Double Robustness

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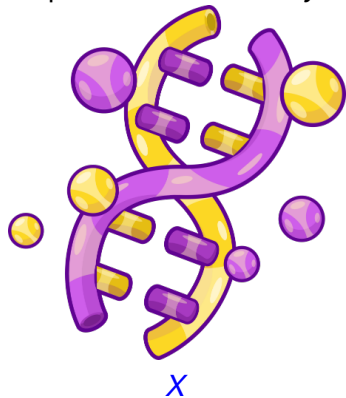
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Motivation: Intrinsic Variable Importance

How can we define / learn the importance of each covariate X^j with respect to an outcome y ?

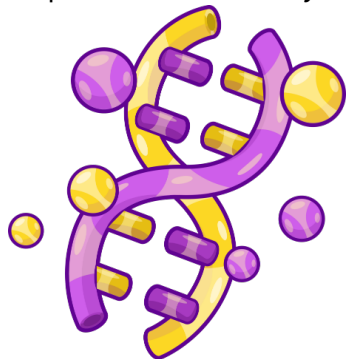


💡 Try to study their relationship using a ML model:

$$\hat{m} \in \underset{f \in \mathcal{F}}{\operatorname{argmin}} \hat{\mathbb{E}} [\mathcal{L}(f(X), y)]. \quad (1)$$

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Problematic: Model misspecification

Goals for a VI measure:

- 🚩 statistically valid
- 🚩 model-agnostic
- 🚩 computationally feasible

Main challenges:

- ⚠️ non-linearity
- ⚠️ high-dimensionality
- ⚠️ correlation

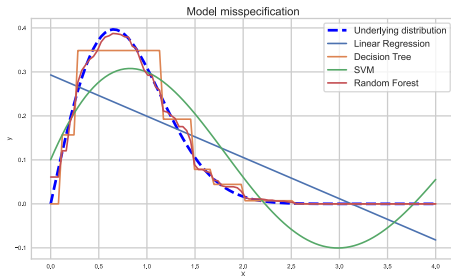


Figure 1: Interpreting the underlying distribution with simple models may be misleading. We need a **model-agnostic** measure.

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- The importance of j , $\psi(j, P_0)$, is usually obtained by:

Predictability
using the covariate j

VS

Predictability
without the covariate j

- Approaches to measure the predictability without j (Covert et al. (2021) JMLR):
 - **Removal-based:** Refit a model \hat{m}_{-j} to regress y given X^{-j} .
 - **Permutation-based:** Modify X^j and predict with \hat{m} .

Standard approaches

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 **Goal:** the Generalized Total Sobol Index

$$\psi_{\text{TSI}}(j, P_0) = \mathbb{E} \left[\mathcal{L}(y, m_{-j}(X^{-j})) - \mathcal{L}(y, m(X)) \right]$$

(Williamson et al. (2021) Biometrics, Williamson et al. (2021) JASA, Bénard et al. (2022) Biometrika, Verdinelli et al. (2023) Statistical Science).

- **Leave One Covariate Out(LOCO):**

$$\hat{\psi}_{\text{LOCO}}(j, P_0) = \frac{1}{n_{\text{test}}} \sum_i \mathcal{L}(y_i, \hat{m}_{-j}(x_i^{-j})) - \mathcal{L}(y_i, \hat{m}(x_i)). \quad (2)$$

- ✓ It estimates an interpretable quantity ($\psi_{\text{TSI}}(j, P_0)$).
- ✓ Type-I error control ([Williamson et al. \(2021\) JASA](#)).
- ✗ In practice: unstable and computational intensive.

- **Leave One Covariate Out(LOCO):**

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- **Permutation Feature Importance(PFI):**

$$\hat{\psi}_{\text{PFI}}(j, P_0) = \frac{1}{n_{\text{test}}} \sum_{i=1}^{n_{\text{test}}} \mathcal{L}(y_i, \hat{m}(x_i^{(j)})) - \mathcal{L}(y_i, \hat{m}(x_i)). \quad (3)$$

where the j -th covariate is **permuted**.

- ✓ Fast (no need to retrain \hat{m}).
- ✗ Extrapolation bias ([Chamma et al. \(2023\) NeurIPS](#)).
- ✗ Not interesting theoretically ([Bénard et al \(2022\) Biometrika](#)).
- 💡 Instead of breaking the relationship of X^j with X^{-j} and y , we only need to break it with y !

- **Leave One Covariate Out(LOCO):**

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where the j -th covariate is **permuted**.

- **Conditional Permutation Importance(CPI):**

$$\hat{\psi}_{\text{CPI}}(j, P_0) = \frac{1}{n_{\text{test}}} \sum_{i=1}^{n_{\text{test}}} \mathcal{L}(y_i, \hat{m}(\tilde{x}_i^{(j)})) - \mathcal{L}(y_i, \hat{m}(x_i)), \quad (4)$$

where the j -th covariate is **conditionally permuted**.

- ✓ Fast and stable with type-I error([Chamma et al. \(2023\) NeurIPS](#))
- ✗ Not an interesting theoretical quantity.

Robust-CPI: a new Total Sobol Index estimate

🚩 **Goal:** $\psi_{\text{TSI}}(j, P_0) = \mathbb{E} [\mathcal{L}(y, m_{-j}(X^{-j})) - \mathcal{L}(y, m(X))]$.

💡 We can use the Tower's property:

$$m_{-j}(X^{-j}) = \mathbb{E} [y | X^{-j}] \quad (5)$$

$$= \mathbb{E} [\mathbb{E}[y | X] | X^{-j}] \quad (6)$$

$$= \mathbb{E} [m(X) | X^{-j}] \quad (7)$$

$$= \mathbb{E} [m(\tilde{X}^{(j)}) | X^{-j}]. \quad (8)$$

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💡 $m_{-j}(X^{-j}) = \mathbb{E} [m(\tilde{X}^{(j)}) | X^{-j}]$.

- Generate n_{cal} conditionally independent samples/ observation.
- **Robust-CPI:**

$$\hat{\psi}_{\text{Robust-CPI}}(j, P_0) = \frac{1}{n_{\text{test}}} \sum_{i=1}^{n_{\text{test}}} \mathcal{L} \left(y_i, \frac{1}{n_{\text{cal}}} \sum_{l=1}^{n_{\text{cal}}} \hat{m}(\tilde{x}_{i,l}^{(j)}) \right) - \mathcal{L}(y_i, \hat{m}(x_i)). \quad (5)$$

- ✓ It is **consistent**, **fast**, and **stable**.
- ✓ It links removal with permutation-based approaches.

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- ✓ It is **consistent**, **fast**, and **stable**.
- ✓ It links removal with permutation-based approaches.
- If $\mathcal{L} = \ell^2$, fixing n_{cal} , then

$$\hat{\psi}_{\text{Robust-CPI}}(j, P_0) \xrightarrow{n_{\text{train}}, n_{\text{test}} \rightarrow \infty} (1 + 1/n_{\text{cal}}) \psi_{\text{TSI}}(j, P_0).$$

- To detect a null covariate $j \in \mathcal{H}_0$, it is sufficient to either have a good estimate of \hat{m} or a good **conditional sampler**:
 - If $\hat{m} \approx m \in \mathcal{F}_{-j} := \{f, f(u) = f(v) \text{ for } u_{-j} = v_{-j}\}$, then $m(\tilde{X}^{(j)}) = m(X)$ and

$$\mathbb{E} \left[\mathcal{L}(y, m(\tilde{X}^{(j)})) | \mathcal{D}_{\text{train}} \right] - \mathbb{E} \left[\mathcal{L}(y, m(X)) | \mathcal{D}_{\text{train}} \right] \approx 0.$$

- If $\tilde{X}^{(j)} \approx \tilde{X}^{(j)}$, then $\tilde{X}^{(j)} \stackrel{\text{i.i.d.}}{\sim} X$ and $\tilde{X}^{(j)j} \perp\!\!\!\perp y | X^{-j}$ so

$$\mathbb{E} \left[\mathcal{L}(y, \hat{m}(\tilde{X}^{(j)})) | \mathcal{D}_{\text{train}} \right] - \mathbb{E} \left[\mathcal{L}(y, \hat{m}(X)) | \mathcal{D}_{\text{train}} \right] \approx 0.$$

Improving variable selection: double robustness

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Proposition 1

Assuming $y = X\beta + \varepsilon$ with X Gaussian, then

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbb{E} [\hat{\psi}_{\text{LOCO}}(j, P_0)] &= \psi_{\text{TSI}}(j, P_0) + O(1/n_{\text{train}}), \\ \mathbb{E} [\hat{\psi}_{\text{Robust-CPI}}(j, P_0)] &= \psi_{\text{TSI}}(j, P_0) + O(1/n_{\text{train}}^2). \end{aligned}$$

Double robustness in practice

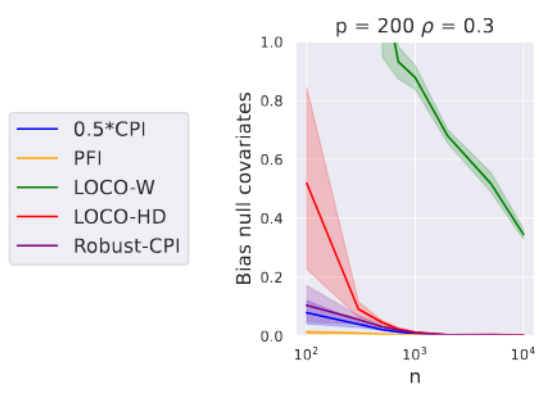


Figure 2: ψ_{TSI} estimation bias in linear setting with random $0.2 * \rho$ signal and $X \sim \mathcal{N}(0, \Sigma)$ where $\Sigma_{i,j} = \rho^{|i-j|}$.

Double robustness in practice

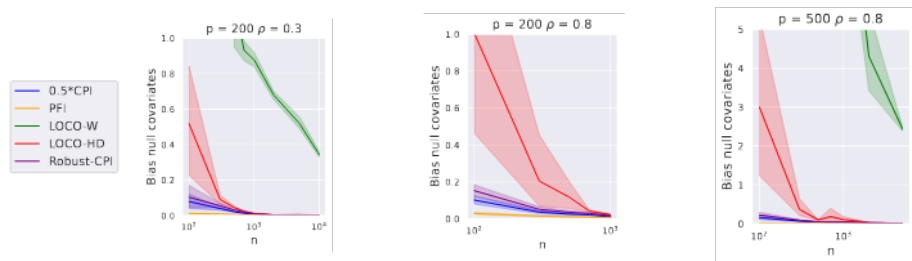


Figure 2: ψ_{TSI} estimation bias in linear setting with random $0.2 * p$ signal and $X \sim \mathcal{N}(0, \Sigma)$ where $\Sigma_{i,j} = \rho^{|i-j|}$.

Double robustness in practice

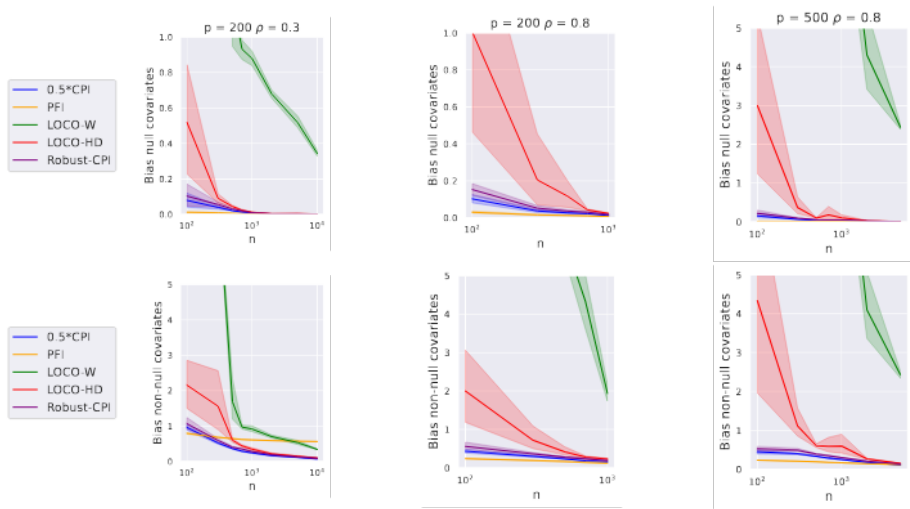


Figure 2: ψ_{TSE} estimation bias in linear setting with random $0.2 * \rho$ signal and $X \sim \mathcal{N}(0, \Sigma)$ where $\Sigma_{i,j} = \rho^{|i-j|}$.

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Conclusion

- ✓ Robust-CPI provides a **general** and **consistent** VIM.
- ✓ A simple, valid, and fast conditional sampler exists.
- ✓ It is **fast**: it remains a permutation-based approach!
- ✓ If $\mathcal{L} = \ell^2$, it **corrects the CPI bias** to estimate ψ_{TSI} .
- ✓ It leverages CPI's **double robustness**:
To detect j null, a good \hat{m} or a good **conditional sampler** suffices.

Methods	LOCO	PFI	CPI	Robust-CPI
Fast	X	✓	✓	✓
No extrapolation	✓	X	✓	✓
Interpretable	✓	X	X	✓
Double Robustness	X	X	✓	✓
Type-I error control	✓	X	✓	?

Thank You, Questions?

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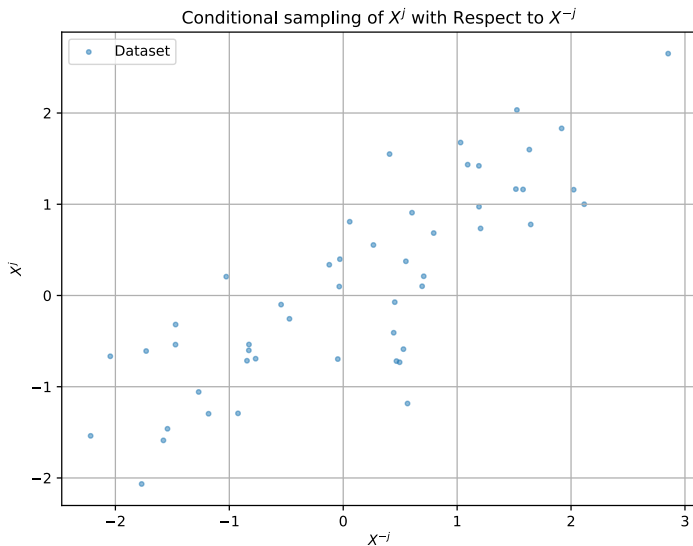
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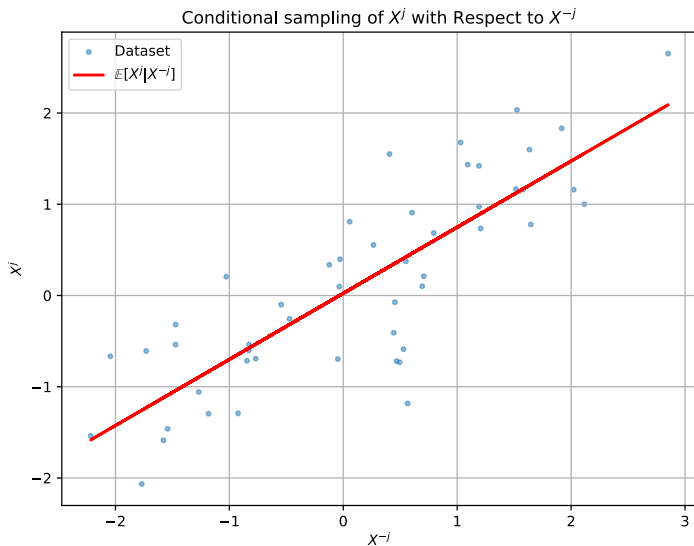
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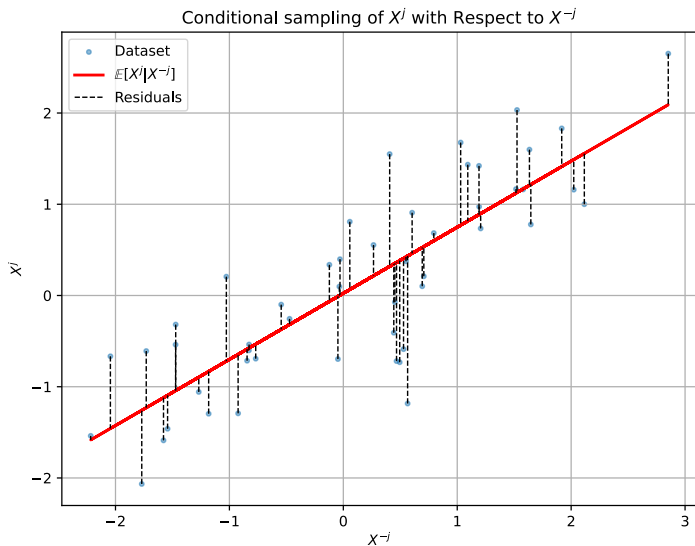
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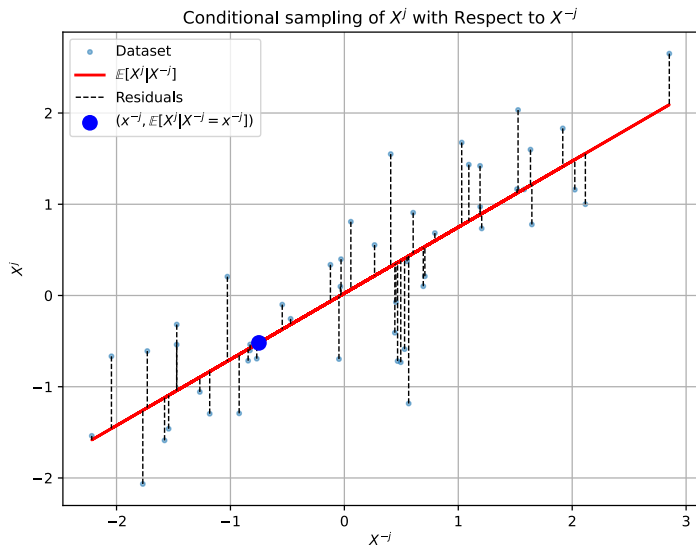
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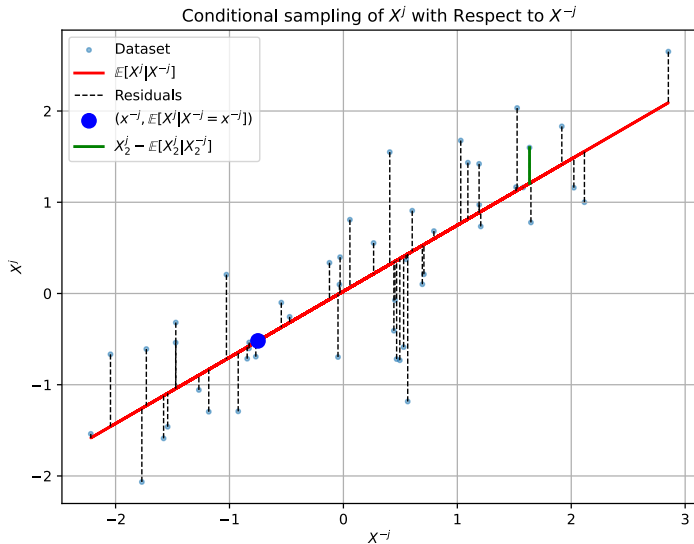
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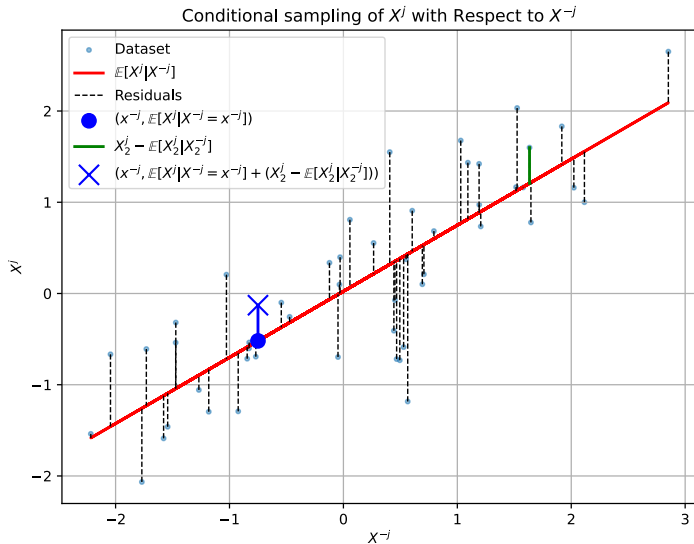
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An idea to permute conditionally on X^{-j}



Validity of the conditional sampling

- In practice, we need to train a regressor \hat{v}_{-j} of X^j on X^{-j} . Then, for an x , we predict $\hat{v}_{-j}(x^{-j})$ and add a permuted residual ($x'^j - \hat{v}_{-j}(x'^j)$).

Assumption 1

$$X^j = v_{-j}(X^{-j}) + \varepsilon \text{ with } \varepsilon \perp\!\!\!\perp X^{-j}.$$

Lemma 2 (Internship contribution)

Under Assumption 1 and assuming the consistency of \hat{v}_{-j} , the conditional step of the CPI, presented in [Chamma et al.\(2023\) NeurIPS](#), is valid.

Double robustness using complex models

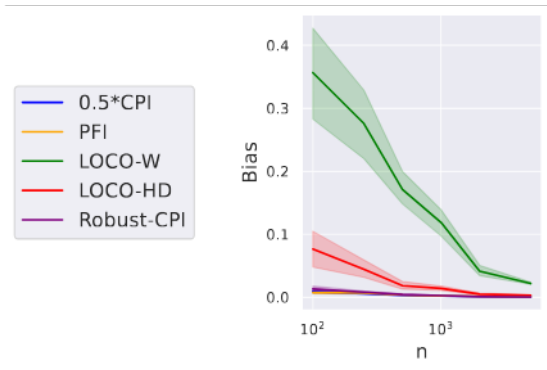


Figure 3: Bias on estimating ψ_{TSI} for null covariates with $y = X_1 X_2 \mathbb{1}_{X_3 > 0} + 2X_4 X_5 \mathbb{1}_{X_3 < 0}$, $p = 50$ and $\rho = 0.6$ using super-learner.

Effect of n-cal

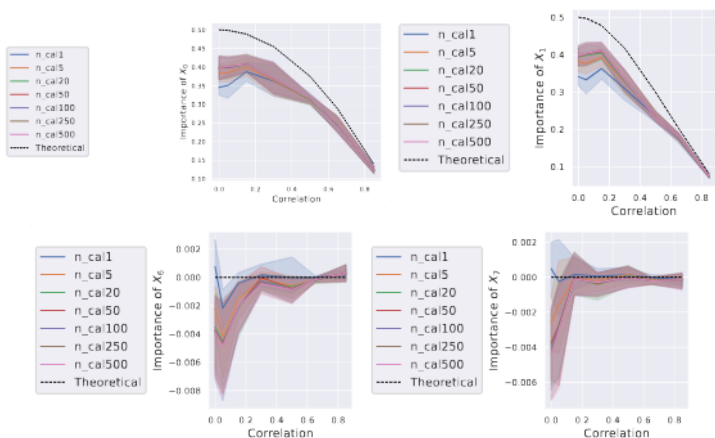


Figure 4: Bias of different $\text{Robust-CPI}(n_{cal})$ on estimating ψ_{TSI} for X_1, X_2 on the top and X_6, X_7 on the bottom, with $y = X_1 X_2 \mathbb{1}_{X_3 > 0} + 2X_4 X_5 \mathbb{1}_{X_3 < 0}$, $\rho = 50$ and $n = 5000$ using super-learner.