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# Universal scaling behavior and Hawkes process of videos' views on Bilibili.com

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Online videos have become the most popular method to obtain information for the public in recent years, such as TikTok and YouTube, and regional sites like Bilibili and Douyin. Compared with its growing influence, the analysis of user behavior on video sites is still less investigated. Herein, we fetch the video data from Bilibili.com and analyze the video views, comments, and other behaviors on the website. We found that the description model based on the Hawkes process can accurately predict the video views, which suggests that on the Bilibili website, the self-incentive mechanism of information cascade diffusion plays a decisive role in online views. Meanwhile, we also found that the view increment of the videos during the same period of time conforms to the general power-law distribution.

## KEYWORDS

temporal social networks, Hawkes process, scaling behavior, Danmaku, Bilibili.com

## 1 Introduction

The online video platform, as an emerging tool for accessing information, has drawn significant attention from the commercial industry to scientific communities. However, it is still challenging to predict which videos or information will become popular in the near future. The basis for determining future popular videos is the future popularity of the video, which is usually measured by the number of times the video is played within a limited period of time. Therefore, video popularity prediction has become the key to discovering future popular videos. The goal of video popularity prediction is to predict the number of times a video will be played in the future based on the data available before or in the early stages of release [1–4]. Predicting the number of videos played in the future can not only help discover future popular videos but also directly help optimize strategies for online video services. [5] Shows a typical case of an optimizing service strategy using video popularity prediction. The researchers updated the caching strategy based on the predicted future views of the video. Compared with the LFU-/LRU-based caching strategy used in the previous online video service system, this strategy has significantly improved the caching efficiency.

TABLE 1 User and video metadata.

Field	Meaning
Send date	Uploading date
Tag	Tags
Duration	Duration
ID	ID number
Rank score	Official ranking score
Pub date	Upload date
Author	Author ID
Review	Comments
Mid	Message ID
Play	View counts
Pic	With picture or not
Description	Subjective description by uploader
Video review	Danmaku
Favorites	Number of likes
Arcurl	URL address
Bvid	Bilibili.com ID
Title	Title

In addition to the continuous pursuit of higher performance, video popularity prediction research also needs to consider the practicability of the model. Herein, our goal is to solve a series of problems in video popularity prediction research and contribute to the better application of this technology in online video services.

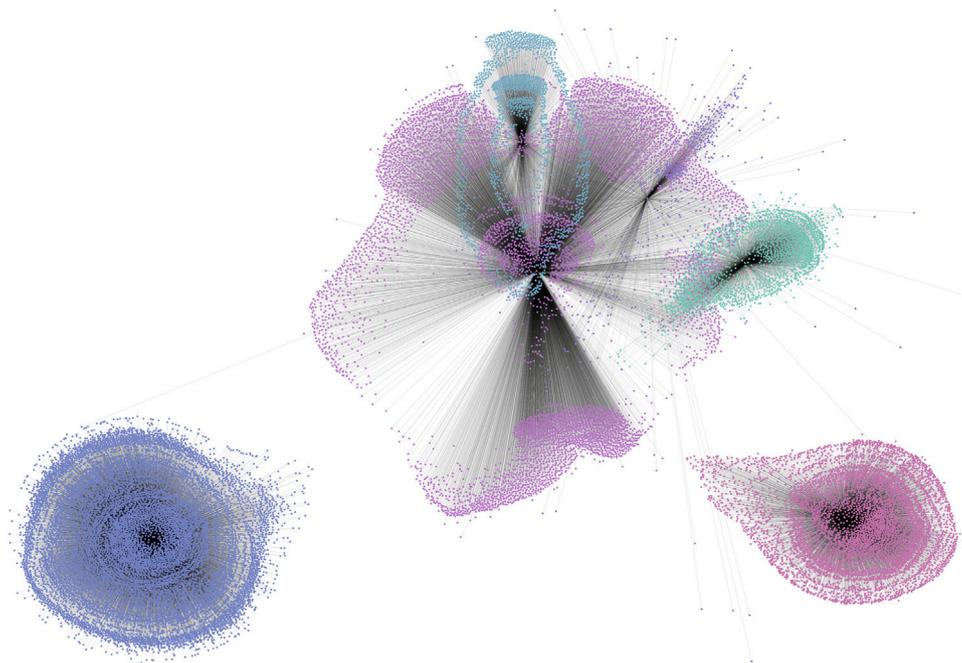
The related research on video popularity prediction started more than 10 years ago, and the first video popularity prediction model was formally proposed in 2010 [6]. Existing video popularity prediction models can be roughly divided into three main categories according to the types of tasks they target, data usage, and modeling methods for video popularity: prediction models based on mapping of popularity values; prediction models based on popularity time series; and the cold start prediction model. The prediction model based on the heat value mapping is the earliest proposed video heat prediction model. This type of model is generally implemented by modeling the distribution of the cumulative number of future video views with respect to the cumulative number of early video views using a mathematical function [6–8]. Subsequent proposed models of this type also use features partially extracted from the meta-information of the video [9–11]. With the introduction of multimodal features, the modeling methods of models based on heat value mapping have gradually become diversified, and both regression models and neural networks have been used to build such models. At the beginning of the research on video popularity prediction, the prediction model based on the popularity value mapping was effective in the popularity prediction task in the early stage of video service development. However, social information has a very limited impact on the number of videos played at that time. The early view number of a video can effectively reflect the viewing

tendency of the user group toward the video. However, compared with the later proposed prediction model based on the popularity time series, the model based on the popularity value mapping lacks the sufficient ability to identify the trend of the number of videos played because it regards the number of videos played as a single cumulative value. However, this type of model has lower complexity and data requirements than the other two models, so it is easier to be used and deployed in online video service systems.

The second type of model regards the number of videos played as a sequence related to the video survival time and achieves prediction by modeling the correlation between the sequence of early video views and future views [12–14]. Time-series-based forecasting models usually assume that the number of videos played in different time periods early in their release is of different importance for inferring their future video views [15]. By modeling the sequence of video views, more information about the dynamics of early video views is utilized by the prediction model, so that the second type of model has better prediction performance than the other two types of models. Furthermore, since the second type of model treats the number of videos played as a sequence about the video survival time, it is possible to introduce more features sensitive to the video survival time. These features have been proven by existing research to be effective in helping models predict the possible burst of video views in future video viewing data [16–20]. In recent years, with the integration of social networks and online video services, time-series-based prediction models have also begun to extract multimodal features from diversified information, including social information, to cope with the impact of social information on video views [21–25]. The introduction of multimodal features, including social features, not only improves the performance of prediction models based on popularity time series but also makes such models increasingly complex, causing them to gradually lose their practicability in the video service environment. In today's online video service systems, in most cases, only the most basic prediction models based on popularity time series such as MLR and ARMA are still used.

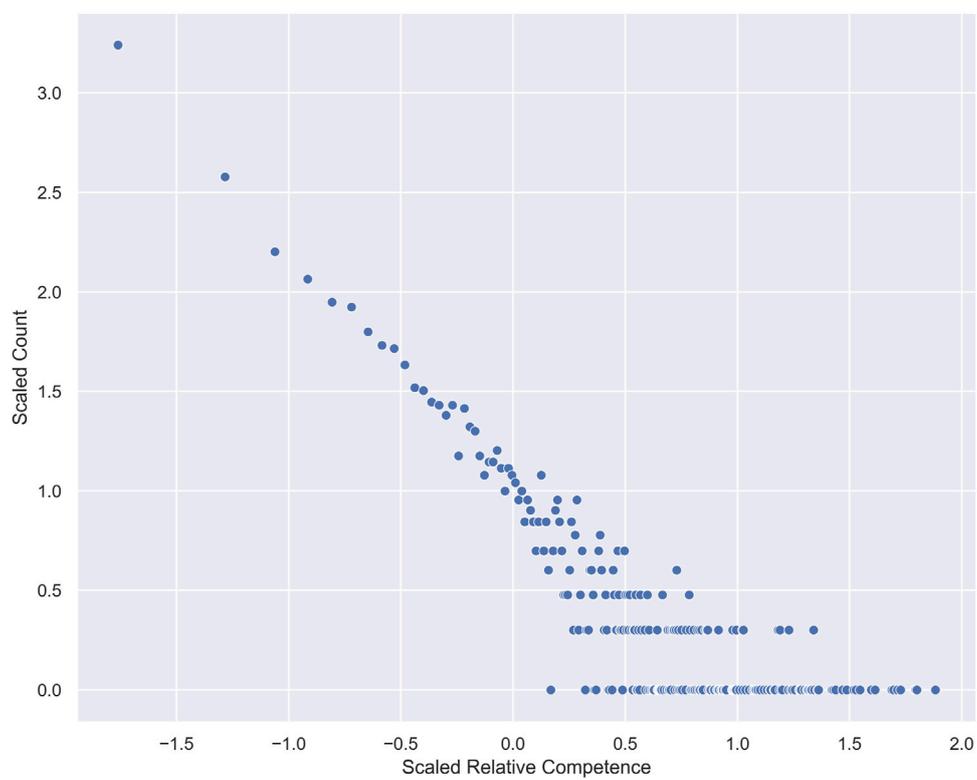
On the other hand, Hawkes proposed a self/mutual-exciting process in his study [26]. The main characteristic of non-Markovian (with memory) self-exciting point processes is that the occurrence of any historical event affects the probability of future events for a long time and may lead to critical emergencies. The Hawkes process is an example of this. The standard linear self-excited Hawkes point process is a first-order non-Markovian stochastic model of intermittent explosive dynamics. The nonlinear Hawkes process is introduced to better describe the excitation (positive feedback) and inhibition (negative feedback) effects between events. The theoretical findings of [27] implied that the nonlinear Hawkes process has an asymptotically universal Zipf's law in the case of a mark distribution with zero mean.

In this study, we collect a new dataset containing various temporal data from openly accessible data from Bilibili.com. We propose that combined with the Danmaku data, the model based on the Hawkes process [28] can be used to evaluate the popularity of a video on Bilibili.com. In addition, the normalized popularity follows a power-law distribution, suggesting that it has a close



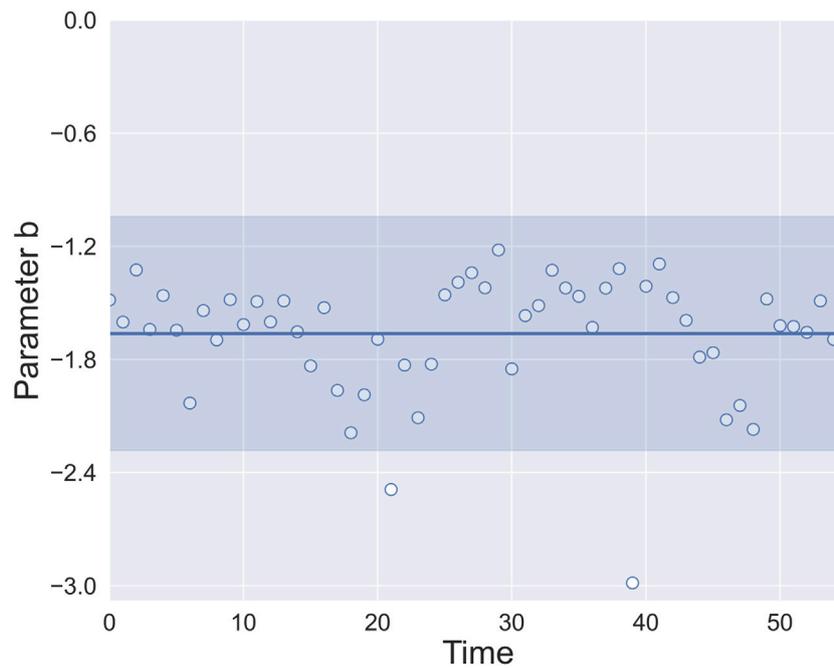
**FIGURE 1**

Clustering of a video–tag network. Each dot represents a video, and each color represents a unique tag cluster labeled by the uploader. The length represents the distance from the cluster center in the SVD space. The figures show there exist topics that are very distant from each other, and the topics have a wide diversity through the video–tag network. The random selection of videos by uploaders in general does not produce biases of the video content.



**FIGURE 2**

Power-law distribution of relative competence. The horizontal and vertical axes are scaled by logarithms.



**FIGURE 3**  
 Power-law exponents of users' competence at different times. Parameter b is the exponents obtained by the previous power-law fitting. The solid line indicates the average of the power-law exponents, and the shaded area indicates the standard deviation of the power-law exponents. The data show parameter b is consistently around 1.5, disregarding the timestamps. This shows that relative competence exhibits a universal scaling behavior.

relationship with the self-exciting Hawkes process on the online video platform.

## 2 Materials and methods

### 2.1 Dataset description

We obtained the following datasets from the official website of Bilibili.Com.

#### 2.1.1 User and video metadata

The dataset includes 224,672 uploaders, 1,425,882 videos, and 308,385 tags. The time span is from 2021.12 to 2022.2. There are a total of 1,425,882 records from the knowledge section of the Bilibili.com video website. There are 1,209,370 videos with tags, and the rest are videos without tags. Each record includes the following 17 fields, shown in Table 1.

#### 2.1.2 Video views and Danmaku temporal data

This dataset is obtained from randomly selected 10,000 uploaders with more than 10,000 followers on the Bilibili website and the data of their latest released 50 videos. Videos that are too old will be replaced because uploaders will constantly publish new videos. The dataset starts from 2022.5.1 and ends at 2022.5.8 collects

the number of videos played and the number of Danmaku of these videos every 3 hours, with a total of 56 timesteps. The data in each time step contain data from roughly 500,000 videos. The dataset is publicly available at <https://github.com/luciidream/Universal-Scaling-behaviour-and-Hawkes-process-of-videos-views-on-Bilibili.com.git>.

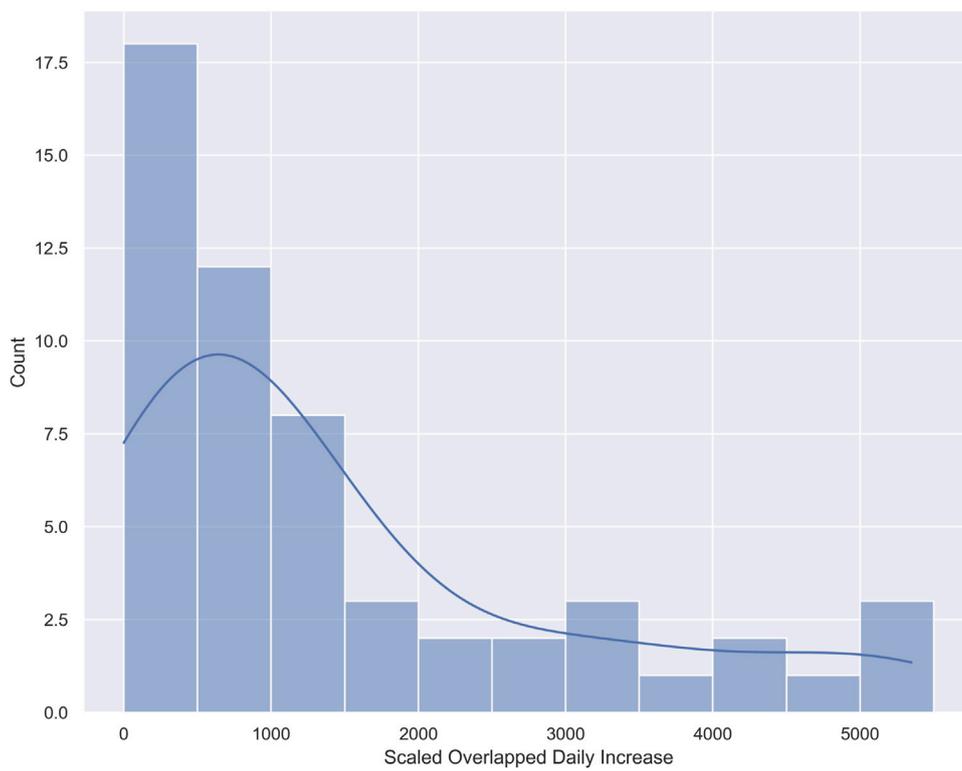
### 2.2 Hawkes process

The Hawkes process is a self-exciting point process [26, 29]. The process has arrivals at times  $0 < t_{-1} < t_{-2} < t_{-3} < \dots$  where the probability function of an arrival within  $[t, t + dt)$ :

$$\lambda_i dt = \left( \mu(t) + \sum_{t_i: t_i < t} \phi(t - t_i) \right) dt.$$

The function  $\mu$  is the intensity of the underlying Poisson process. At time  $t_1$ , the first arrival occurs and then the intensity becomes  $\mu(t) + \phi(t - t_1)$ , and at the time  $t_2$  of the second arrival, the intensity becomes  $\mu(t) + \phi(t - t_1) + \phi(t - t_2)$ ... and so on [26].

During the time interval  $(t_j, t_{j+1})$ , the process represents the set of  $j + 1$  independent processes with intensities  $\mu(t), \phi(t - t_1), \dots, \phi(t - t_j)$ . The arrivals in the process whose



**FIGURE 4** View counts of videos daily increase. The blue line is the indication line from a log-normal fitting. This is in accordance with the work of [31].

intensity is  $\phi(t - t_j)$  are the descendants of the arrival at time  $t_k$ . The integral  $\int_0^\infty \phi(t) dt$  is the average number of descendants of each arrival and is called the branching ratio. We consider the similar model used in [26], which regards the intensity function  $\phi$  as a power-law decay over time.

$$\phi_m(\tau) = \kappa m^\beta (r + c)^{-(1+\theta)}, \tau \in \mathbb{R}^+,$$

where  $\kappa, \beta, c$ , and  $\theta$  are the parameters that can be obtained from numerical fitting. In [28], parameter  $\kappa$  is the scaling factor that describes video quality, and  $m$  is the relative influence of the uploader.  $\beta$  measures the nonlinearity between the number of followers and popularity.  $c > 0$  is the cutoff parameter that keeps  $\phi$  bounded if  $\tau$  is small. Finally, the exponents of the power-law distribution are given by  $1 + \theta$ .

### 3 Results

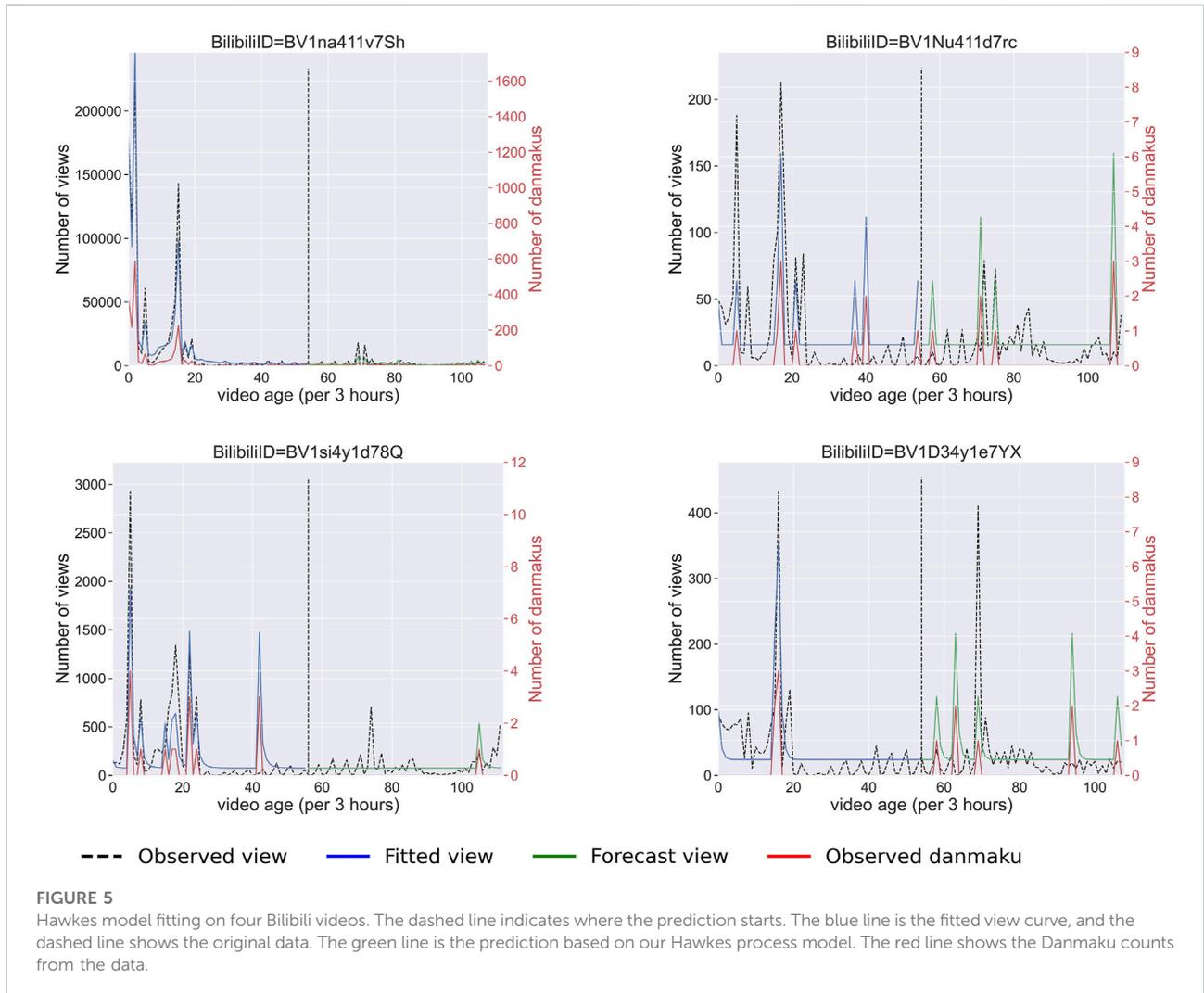
#### 3.1 Tag clustering

In addition to the video label of the first section of the data, the corresponding one-hot vector of each video is obtained according to the label of each video. Then, all the vectors are combined to obtain a high-order matrix. We then perform

singular value decomposition (SVD) on the matrix to reduce dimensionality and use the low-dimensional matrix to cluster videos. Connecting videos of the same class to the center point of the class constitutes a video network, as shown in Figure 1. As our videos are collected randomly from uploaders who have more than 10,000 followers, the figure is used to show the diversity of the topics and human tags and to validate that our data collection is of little bias referring to the topics or tags. The results indicate that there exist several clusters of topics of the videos we collected, and the dataset covers a broad range of topics and tags.

#### 3.2 Uploader’s relative competence

We select uploaders who have released new videos in the same period and calculate the ratio of the growth of each person’s latest video at each moment to the total growth at that moment so as to express the influence of the uploader’s work relative to the works of other uploaders. This parameter shows the relative degree of attraction of uploaders toward the whole audience. The relative competitiveness of all creators is fitted according to the power-law distribution, and it is found that the relative competitiveness of the creators approximately obeys the power-law distribution [30], as shown in Figure 2.



We also estimate the power-law exponents, and surprisingly, the exponents through different times are all around 1.5, showing a universal scaling behavior, as illustrated in Figure 3. This result has been validated by statistical stability analysis.

Furthermore, using the video used in the previous section, we normalize the view counts recorded at each moment of each video, summing over the data of all videos and shifting the data to eliminate negative values and obtaining the average variation of the video views. This reveals the average daily views of each video and the mean field view pattern of the videos during their life span, as shown in Figure 4. For simplicity, the curve is well-fitted by a log-normal function, which is in accordance with the suggestion from [31].

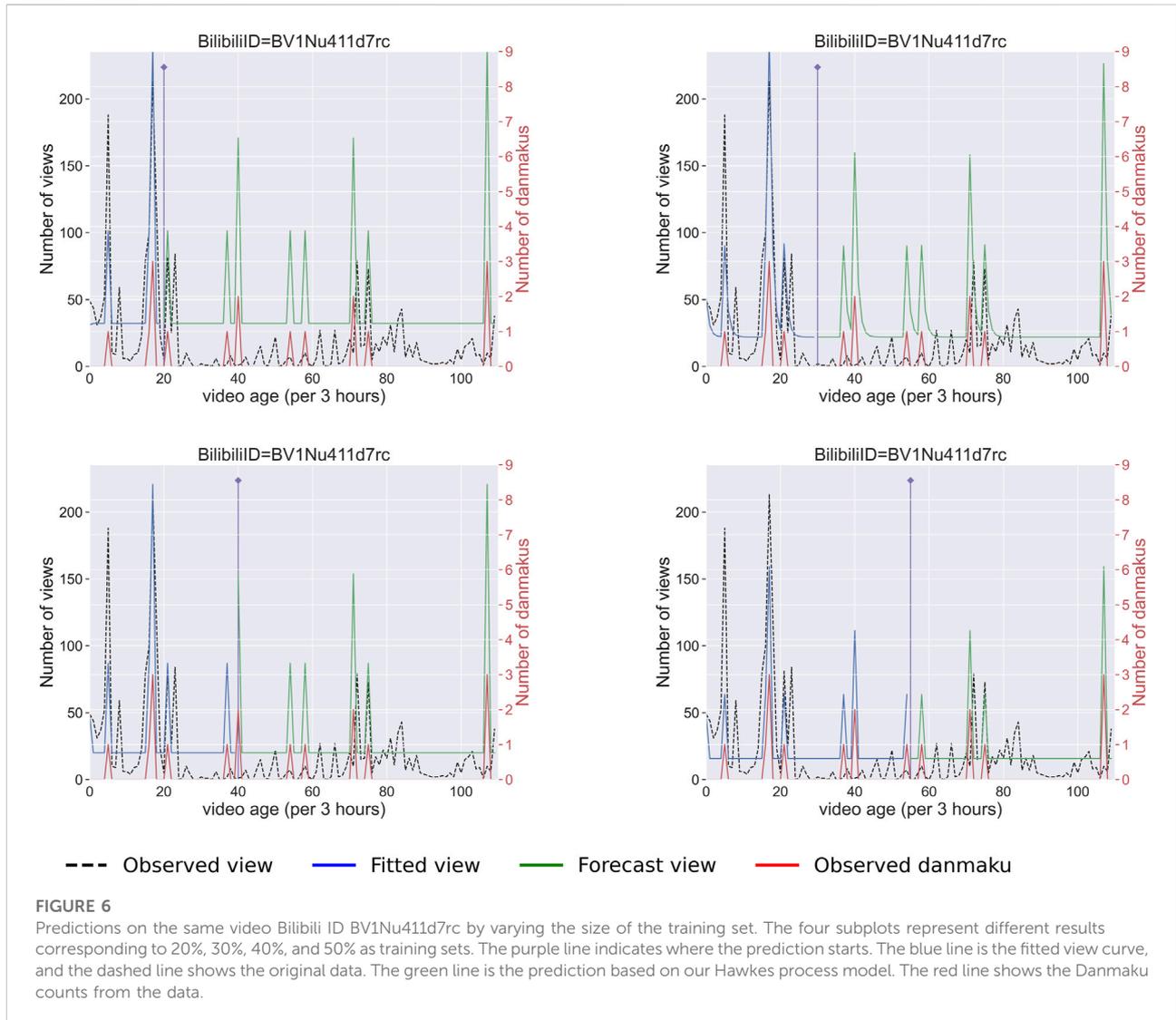
### 3.3 Hawkes process model

From the previous introduction of the model, a point process model based on the Hawkes process is used to predict video

views. Compared with feature-based prediction methods, the counting process does not require complex feature engineering and additional training, so it can be easily applied to real-time systems. The results show that, with the Danmaku data from the temporal dataset, our model can predict the popularity precisely even in the far future. The results are shown in Figures 5, 6.

Figure 5 shows the Hawkes model results of four randomly picked videos that are representative of the wellness of fitting. The videos have very different fundamental statistics and thus explain our method is general. The dashed line is the separation line of data used to train the model and obtain parameters and the test data that are used for evaluation of the results. The results show that our model can accurately predict the location of peaks in the video views in the far future, but the accuracy of the intensity of the peak varies from video to video.

Figure 6 shows the results of the Hawkes model fitting on the same video by varying the size of the training set. The four subplots represent the results using 20%, 30%, 40%, and 50% of



the time span as training sets, respectively. The results indicate that the predicted position of peaks by our method is resilient with different sizes of training sets. Also, the predicted intensity can improve with a larger training set.

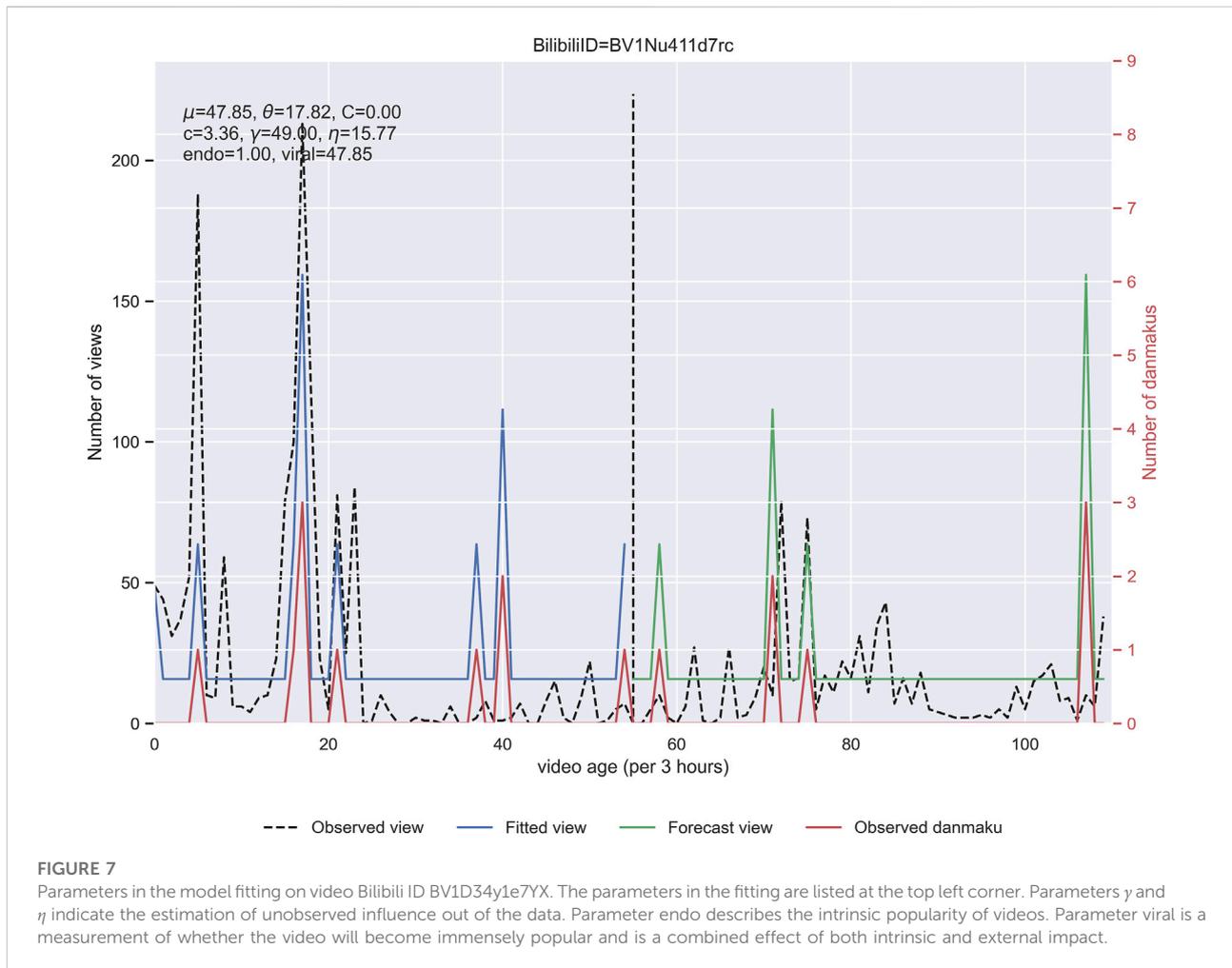
It is worthwhile to mention that by adopting the model from [28], the parameters obtained from the fitting are not stable, as shown in Figure 7, suggesting the correlation of the six parameters. Further investigation can be conducted in this direction to clarify how these parameters influence each other.

## 4 Discussion

In this study, our results show that the view counts of online videos on Bilibili.com are significantly determined by the point processes, such as the Hawkes process. The relative view counts

during a given time span among all videos (namely, the uploaders' relative competence) follow a universal scaling behavior. The video view model based on the Hawkes process effectively realizes the simultaneous prediction of video views. On one hand, it is conducive to the accurate placement of advertisements and improves commercial service quality, and on the other hand, by analyzing the results, it can provide decision support for content management or provide a basis for network storage optimization or expansion, low network storage utilization, and avoid problems such as large capacity redundancy caused by expansion, thereby reducing operating costs and producing practical application value.

Sornette et al. [27] studied the relationship between the universal power-law distribution and the nonlinear Hawkes process and proved that the Hawkes process can form the power-law distribution of events through theoretical analysis. This effect is



also observed in our data, where the video views at different times and the relative competence indicators of uploaders also form a power-law distribution with a relatively stable power-law behavior. Sornette's theory states that the Hawkes process resembles a nonlinear self-excited process, in which the properties arise from a complex interaction between a multiplicative process, memory, and endogeneity or reflexivity. The Hawkes model fitting results show that in our context, a video's current views and its historical view counts, as well as the number of Danmaku comments, have a nonlinear mutualistic interacting process. The specific dynamics of the process is complex and awaits further study.

In summary, we collected a new set of data, which recorded the video view data on Bilibili.com, including the temporal records of video views, the number of Danmaku comments, and the metadata of uploaders and videos. The social networks formed by these data will help further explore the complex interaction between videos, users, and Danmaku comments. It also helps develop new models and verify existing theories, which contribute to the knowledge of understanding social interactions and networks. The Hawkes model

analysis of the time-series data shows that there exists a Hawkes process with memory characteristics with the video views on Bilibili.com, and at the same time, the consistent power-law distribution characteristics are observed in many data statistics. This connection can be enlightened by the related theory by Sornette et al. Despite the analytical analysis that is specifically based on three assumptions, the general explanation of how the Hawkes process can produce power-law distribution suggests the possibility of a direct causal relationship, irrespective of the theoretical assumptions made in [27]. In the near future, a more general model can be developed to further clarify the phenomena with this newly collected dataset.

## Data availability statement

The dataset is publicly available at <https://github.com/luciidream/Universal-Scaling-behaviour-and-Hawkes-process-of-videos-views-on-Bilibili.com.git>.

## Author contributions

YK designed the research; HD and JD collected the data; JD, YH, and JS analyzed the data; HD and JD performed the visualization; all authors wrote the manuscript.

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## Conflict of interest

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