A project report on

EXPLAINABLE AI FOR INTRUSION DETECTION WITH XGBOOST AND SHAP

Submitted in partial fulfilment for the award of the degree of

Bachelor of Technology in Computer Science and Engineering with Specialization in Artificial Intelligence & Robotics

by

GARAPATI MANJU BHASHITA (21BRS1517)

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SADINENI VARUN KUMAR (21BRS1540)

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Vellore Institute of Technology

(Deemed to be University under section 3 of UGC Act, 1956)

CHENNAI

SCHOOL OF COMPUTER SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis entitled **"EXPLAINABLE AI FOR INTRUSION DETECTION WITH XGBOOST AND SHAP"** submitted by **CHINTAREDDY VARSHITHA (21BRS1545)**, for the award of the degree of Bachelor of Technology in Computer Science and Engineering, Vellore Institute of Technology, Chennai is a record of Bonafide work carried out by me under the supervision of **DR. BENIL T**.

I further declare that the work reported in this thesis has not been submitted and will not be submitted, either in part or in full, for the award of any other degree or diploma in this institute or any other institute or university.

Place: Chennai

Date: 03/04/2025

Ch. Varshitha.

Signature of the Candidate

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School of Computer Science and Engineering

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the report entitled **"Explainable AI for Intrusion Detection with XGBoost and SHAP"** is prepared and submitted by **Chintareddy Varshitha (21BRS1545)** to Vellore Institute of Technology, Chennai, in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the degree of **Bachelor of Technology in Computer Science and Engineering with Specialization in Artificial Intelligence & Robotics** is a Bonafide record carried out under my guidance. The project fulfils the requirements as per the regulations of this University and in my opinion meets the necessary standards for submission. The contents of this report have not been submitted and will not be submitted either in part or in full, for the award of any other degree or diploma and the same is certified.

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ABSTRACT

This project addresses the critical challenge of interpreting complex "black-box" machine learning models within network intrusion detection systems (NIDS). Leveraging the NAL-KDD dataset, we developed an XGBoost-based intrusion detection model, optimized within the MATLAB environment, to achieve high detection accuracy. Our primary focus was to integrate Explainable Artificial Intelligence (XAI) techniques, specifically SHAP (SHapley Additive exPlanations), to enhance the transparency and interpretability of the model's predictions. This integration allows for a deeper understanding of the factors influencing intrusion detection, moving beyond simple classification. We employed a comprehensive evaluation strategy, utilizing performance metrics such as precision, recall, and F1-score, to validate the effectiveness of our system in identifying diverse network threats, including DoS and probing attacks. The application of SHAP analysis provided actionable insights into feature importance, revealing the specific attributes that contribute most significantly to the model's decisions. This interpretability empowers IT professionals to understand the rationale behind detection results, enabling them to refine security protocols and improve system robustness. By bridging the gap between high-performance black-box models and their practical interpretability, this research aims to enhance trust and operational efficiency in cybersecurity applications. The integration of XAI with NIDS provides a crucial step towards creating more.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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It is with gratitude that I would like to extend my thanks to the visionary leader Dr. G. Viswanathan, our Honorable Chancellor; Mr. Sankar Viswanathan, Dr. Sekar Viswanathan, Dr. G V Selvam, Vice Presidents; Dr. Sandhya Pentareddy, Executive Director; Ms. Kadhambari S. Viswanathan, Assistant Vice-President; Dr. V. S. Kanchana Bhaaskaran, Vice-Chancellor; Dr. T. Thyagarajan, Pro-Vice Chancellor VIT Chennai and Dr. P. K. Manoharan, Additional Registrar for providing an exceptional working environment and inspiring all of us during the tenure of the course.

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Place: Chennai CHINTAREDDY VARSHITHA

Date: 03.04.2025 **Name of the student**

CONTENTS **PAGE NO**

CHAPTER 05

IMPLEMENTATION

CHAPTER 06

TESTING

CHAPTER 07

RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF ACRONYMS

SHAP – SHapley Additive exPlanations

XGBoost – eXtreme Gradient Boosting

PDR – Packet Delivery Ratio

EED – End-to-End Delay

CB-SPIN – Cluster-Based Sensor Protocols for Information via Negotiation

NAL-KDD – Network Attack Laboratory - Knowledge Discovery in Databases

CHAPTER 01

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The digital landscape has become increasingly complex and interconnected, making cybersecurity a paramount concern for individuals, organizations, and governments alike. Network Intrusion Detection Systems (NIDS) play a crucial role in safeguarding these digital environments by monitoring network traffic for malicious activities and anomalies. Traditionally, NIDS relied on signature-based detection, which compares network traffic against a database of known attack patterns. However, the rapid evolution of cyber threats, including zero-day exploits and polymorphic malware, has rendered signature-based approaches insufficient.

In response, machine learning (ML) has emerged as a powerful tool for developing adaptive and intelligent NIDS. ML algorithms can learn complex patterns from vast datasets, enabling them to detect novel and sophisticated attacks that signature-based systems might miss. Among various ML techniques, ensemble methods like XGBoost have demonstrated remarkable performance in intrusion detection tasks, achieving high accuracy and efficiency.

However, the inherent complexity of these advanced ML models, often referred to as "black-box" models, poses a significant challenge. While they excel in prediction accuracy, their decision-making processes remain opaque, making it difficult to understand why a particular intrusion was flagged. This lack of transparency can hinder trust in the system and impede effective incident response.

The inability to interpret the model's outputs raises critical concerns, especially in security-sensitive domains. For instance, without understanding the factors that led to a specific intrusion alert, IT professionals cannot effectively prioritize alerts, identify the root cause of the attack, or implement appropriate countermeasures. This opacity can also lead to false positives, wasting valuable resources and potentially overlooking genuine threats.

Therefore, this project explores the integration of Explainable Artificial Intelligence (XAI) with ML-based NIDS to address the interpretability challenge. XAI aims to make

complex ML models more transparent and understandable, providing insights into their decision-making processes. By incorporating XAI techniques, we can bridge the gap between high performance and interpretability, enabling IT professionals to gain a deeper understanding of the factors influencing intrusion detection.

1.1.1 Subsections

To effectively address the multifaceted challenges and opportunities surrounding the integration of XAI with NIDS, this introduction further delves into the following subsections:

- **1.1.1.1 Evolution of Network Intrusion Detection:** This subsection provides a historical overview of NIDS, tracing its evolution from signature-based systems to ML-driven approaches. It highlights the limitations of traditional methods and the drivers behind the adoption of ML in cybersecurity.
- **1.1.1.2 Machine Learning in Cybersecurity:** This section explores the application of various ML algorithms in intrusion detection, emphasizing the strengths and weaknesses of different techniques. It also discusses the challenges associated with using ML in cybersecurity, such as data imbalance and adversarial attacks.
- **1.1.1.3 The Need for Explainable AI in NIDS:** This subsection focuses on the interpretability problem associated with black-box ML models in NIDS. It highlights the importance of transparency and trust in security-sensitive applications and discusses the potential benefits of incorporating XAI.
- **1.1.1.4 SHAP (SHapley Additive exPlanations):** A particular focus will be placed on SHAP. This subsection will explain the principles of SHAP and why it is a powerful tool for explaining the output of complex models, and how it is applied to the project.
- **1.1.1.5 NAL-KDD Dataset:** This section will describe the dataset used in the project, explain its structure, and discuss its relevance to the project's objectives.

1.2 OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT

With the increasing complexity of cyber threats, network intrusion detection systems (NIDS) have become a crucial component of cybersecurity. Traditional machine learning models offer high accuracy in detecting network intrusions but often function as "black boxes," making it difficult for security professionals to understand their decision-making processes. This project aims to bridge that gap by integrating Explainable Artificial Intelligence (XAI) techniques into an XGBoost-based NIDS.

Using the NAL-KDD dataset, we developed an optimized XGBoost model within the MATLAB environment to detect various types of network attacks efficiently. To enhance transparency and interpretability, we applied SHAP (SHapley Additive exPlanations), an advanced XAI technique, to analyze feature importance and explain the model's predictions. This approach helps security analysts understand the key factors influencing intrusion detection, enabling them to refine security protocols accordingly.

The project evaluates the model's performance using key metrics such as precision, recall, and F1-score, ensuring effective detection of attacks like Denial-of-Service (DoS) and probing attacks. The SHAP-based analysis provides detailed insights into the most influential network features, making the system more reliable and trustworthy.

By combining high detection accuracy with interpretability, this research contributes to building more transparent and efficient cybersecurity solutions. The integration of XAI into NIDS represents a significant step toward enhancing trust, security, and operational efficiency in real-world applications.

1.3 CHALLENGES IN THE PROJECT

Developing an explainable AI-based network intrusion detection system (NIDS) using XGBoost and SHAP presented several challenges, particularly in **data preprocessing and model optimization**. The **NAL-KDD dataset**, like many cybersecurity datasets, contains imbalanced classes where certain attack types are underrepresented. This imbalance can lead to biased model predictions, where the system may struggle to detect rare but critical intrusions. Additionally, preprocessing the dataset involved

handling missing values, redundant features, and categorical data transformation to ensure the XGBoost model received clean and meaningful inputs.

Another major challenge was **optimizing the XGBoost model** to achieve both high accuracy and computational efficiency. Fine-tuning hyperparameters required extensive experimentation to balance precision, recall, and false positive rates. Overfitting was another concern, as the model needed to generalize well across different attack scenarios without memorizing patterns specific to the training data. Computational resource limitations also impacted model training, particularly when dealing with large-scale datasets.

The integration of **SHAP for model interpretability** introduced additional complexities. While SHAP provides valuable insights into feature importance, its computational cost increases significantly for complex models and large datasets. Moreover, translating SHAP values into actionable insights for cybersecurity professionals required careful visualization and domain expertise. Many security analysts may still find these explanations abstract, necessitating the development of user-friendly interpretability tools.

Lastly, **deploying the system in real-world network environments** posed challenges related to adaptability and real-time performance. Intrusion patterns evolve over time, requiring the model to be updated continuously to detect emerging threats. Additionally, integrating an explainable AI framework into an operational intrusion detection system required balancing latency and accuracy while ensuring that the explainability provided by SHAP remains relevant as threats change. Overcoming these challenges is essential for building a robust, transparent, and efficient NIDS that enhances trust and usability in cybersecurity applications.

1.4 OBJECTIVES & SCOPE OF THE PROJECT

The primary objective of this project is to develop and evaluate an XAI-enhanced NIDS using the NAL-KDD dataset. This involves creating a high-performance intrusion detection model based on XGBoost and integrating XAI techniques to improve its interpretability.

Specifically, the project aims to achieve the following objectives:

- **Develop an XGBoost-based NIDS:** Build a robust and accurate intrusion detection model using the XGBoost algorithm, optimized for the NAL-KDD dataset.
- **Integrate XAI techniques:** Implement SHAP (SHapley Additive exPlanations) to explain the model's predictions and provide insights into feature importance.
- **Evaluate performance:** Assess the performance of the XAI-enhanced NIDS using standard performance metrics, including precision, recall, F1-score, and accuracy.
- **Analyze feature importance:** Identify the most influential features in intrusion detection using SHAP analysis.
- **Enhance interpretability:** Develop visualizations and reports to effectively communicate the model's decision-making process to IT professionals.
- **Provide actionable insights:** Demonstrate how the XAI-enhanced NIDS can aid in incident response and improve system robustness.

The scope of this project is limited to the development and evaluation of an XAI-enhanced NIDS using the NAL-KDD dataset. The focus is on integrating SHAP with an XGBoost model optimized in the MATLAB environment. The project does not include the deployment of the NIDS in a real-world production environment.

1.5 PROJECT STATEMENT

The core problem this project addresses is the lack of interpretability in high-performance machine learning models used for network intrusion detection. While models like XGBoost achieve high accuracy, their "black-box" nature makes it challenging to understand the factors driving their predictions. This lack of transparency leads to several critical issues:

- Reduced Trust: IT professionals may be hesitant to rely on a system they cannot fully understand.

- Difficulty in Incident Response: Without understanding the reasons behind an intrusion alert, it is difficult to prioritize alerts and implement effective countermeasures.
- Increased False Positives: The opacity of the model can lead to false positives, wasting valuable resources and potentially masking genuine threats.
- Limited System Improvement: Without insights into feature importance, it is difficult to identify areas for improvement and optimize the NIDS.
- Lack of effective communication: Explaining the model to non-experts is hard, which impedes collaboration between security teams and other departments.

Therefore, there is a pressing need to develop NIDS that are not only accurate but also transparent and interpretable. This project aims to address this problem by integrating XAI techniques with ML-based NIDS, enabling IT professionals to gain a deeper understanding of the factors influencing intrusion detection and improve the overall effectiveness of cybersecurity systems.

1.6 CONTRIBUTION TO THE PROJECT

This project makes a significant contribution to the field of network intrusion detection by integrating Explainable AI (XAI) techniques into an XGBoost-based detection system. While traditional machine learning models provide high accuracy, their lack of transparency makes them difficult to trust in security-critical environments. By incorporating SHAP (SHapley Additive exPlanations), this research enhances interpretability, allowing security analysts to understand the key factors influencing the model's decisions. This transparency helps in refining security policies, identifying vulnerabilities, and improving overall threat detection strategies. Additionally, by leveraging the NAL-KDD dataset and optimizing the model in MATLAB, the system achieves a balance between high detection accuracy and computational efficiency.

Another key contribution is the comprehensive evaluation of the system using multiple performance metrics, including precision, recall, and F1-score. Unlike previous works that focus solely on accuracy, this project prioritizes both model performance and explainability, ensuring a practical application in cybersecurity. The SHAP-based

analysis not only highlights the most influential network features but also provides actionable insights that can assist IT professionals in understanding attack patterns and mitigating risks. Furthermore, this research lays the foundation for integrating explainable AI techniques into real-world intrusion detection systems (IDS), bridging the gap between high-performance black-box models and the need for interpretability in cybersecurity operations.

CHAPTER 02

BACKGROUND WORK

2.1 RELATED WORK

Explainable AI (XAI) in network intrusion detection has gained significant attention in recent years, aiming to bridge the gap between high-performing yet opaque machine learning models and the need for interpretability in cybersecurity applications. Several studies have explored the use of ensemble learning techniques, particularly XGBoost, for intrusion detection due to its efficiency and high predictive accuracy.

For instance, [1] applied XGBoost on the NSL-KDD dataset and demonstrated improved detection rates compared to traditional classifiers. Similarly, [2] integrated feature selection techniques with XGBoost to enhance model efficiency while maintaining robust detection capabilities. However, these studies primarily focused on performance metrics without addressing the explainability of the results, limiting their practical adoption in security operations.

Recent advancements have incorporated SHAP (SHapley Additive exPlanations) to provide insights into feature importance and model decisions. [3] implemented SHAP to interpret deep learning models used in intrusion detection, highlighting the key factors contributing to classification decisions. While their approach improved transparency, it lacked integration within ensemble models such as XGBoost, which is known for its superior classification performance.

Our work extends these efforts by integrating SHAP-based explainability directly into an XGBoost-driven intrusion detection system. Unlike previous studies that solely emphasize accuracy, our research prioritizes interpretability, ensuring security analysts can understand and trust the model's predictions. By leveraging the NAL-KDD dataset and MATLAB's optimization capabilities, our approach not only achieves high detection accuracy but also provides actionable insights into the underlying decision-making process. This contributes to the growing body of research focused on making AI-driven security solutions both effective and interpretable.

2.2 LITERATURE SURVEY

2.2.1 Overview of Network Intrusion Detection and Explainable AI

The field of Network Intrusion Detection Systems (NIDS) has seen a significant evolution, transitioning from traditional signature-based methods to sophisticated machine learning (ML) driven approaches. Research emphasizes the growing need for adaptive systems capable of identifying novel cyber threats. Studies highlight the effectiveness of ML algorithms, particularly ensemble methods like XGBoost, in achieving high detection accuracy. However, a recurring theme is the "black-box" problem, where the complexity of these models hinders interpretability.

A substantial body of literature focuses on addressing this challenge through Explainable AI (XAI). Techniques like SHAP (SHapley Additive exPlanations) are increasingly employed to provide insights into model decision-making. Research indicates that SHAP effectively reveals feature importance, enabling IT professionals to understand the factors influencing intrusion detection. Existing studies demonstrate the application of SHAP in various cybersecurity contexts, highlighting its potential to enhance transparency and trust in NIDS.

Furthermore, research explores the use of datasets like NAL-KDD, which are crucial for training and evaluating NIDS. Studies conduct comparative analysis of various ML algorithms on these datasets, and show the importance of good data preprocessing. The literature also emphasizes the critical role of performance metrics, such as precision, recall, and F1-score, in validating the effectiveness of XAI-enhanced NIDS. Overall, the literature underscores the necessity of bridging the gap between high-performance and interpretability in cybersecurity applications.

M. A. Siddiqi and W. Pak, "Tier-Based Optimization for Synthesized Network Intrusion Detection System," in IEEE Access, vol. 10, pp. 108530-108544, 2022, doi: 10.1109/ACCESS.2022.3213937.

The innovation and evolution of hacking methodologies have led to a sharp rise in cyber attacks, highlighting the need for enhanced network security approaches. Network intrusion detection systems based on machine learning are playing a significant role in the domain of network security. However, designing an optimal framework for a

network intrusion detection system is an ongoing concern. In this study, an optimal framework for a network intrusion detection system based on image processing is proposed. The framework is a fusion of augmented feature selection flow with an image transformation and enhancement methodology. Initially, the proposed framework reduces the number of features to achieve overall efficiency. Later, the non-image data is transformed into images. The transformed images are then enhanced for achieving effective anomaly detection based on a deep-learning classifier. The proposed method is implemented on three diverse benchmark datasets of intrusion detection. To illustrate the efficiency of the proposed framework it is compared with some of the most recent publications on image-processing-based network intrusion detection systems.

R. Ben Said, Z. Sabir and I. Askerzade, "CNN-BiLSTM: A Hybrid Deep Learning Approach for Network Intrusion Detection System in Software-Defined Networking With Hybrid Feature Selection," in IEEE Access, vol. 11, pp. 138732-138747, 2023, doi: 10.1109/ACCESS.2023.3340142.

A Software-Defined Network (SDN) was designed to simplify network management by allowing the control and management of the entire network from a single place. SDN is commonly used in today's data center network infrastructure, but new forms of threats such as Distributed Denial-of-Service (DDoS), web attacks, and the U2R (User to Root) attack are significant issues that might restrict the widespread adoption of SDNs. Intruders are attractive to SDN controllers because they are valuable targets. An SDN controller can be hijacked by an attacker and used to route traffic in accordance with its own needs, resulting in catastrophic consequences for the whole network. While the unified vision of SDN and deep learning methods opens new possibilities for the security of IDS deployment, the effectiveness of the detection models is dependent on the quality of the training datasets. Even though deep learning for NIDSs has lately shown promising results for a number of issues, the majority of the studies overlooked the impact of data redundancy and an unbalanced dataset. As a consequence, this may adversely affect the resilience of the anomaly detection system, resulting in a suboptimal model performance. In this study, we created a hybrid Convolutional Neural Network (CNN) and bidirectional long short-term memory (BiLSTM) network to

enhance network intrusion detection using binary and multiclass classification. The effectiveness of the proposed model was tested and assessed using the most frequently used datasets (UNSW-NB15 and NSL-KDD). In addition, we used the InSDN dataset, which is specifically dedicated to SDN. The outcomes demonstrate the efficiency of the proposed model in achieving high accuracy and requiring less training time.

C. Park, J. Lee, Y. Kim, J. -G. Park, H. Kim and D. Hong, "An Enhanced AI-Based Network Intrusion Detection System Using Generative Adversarial Networks," in IEEE Internet of Things Journal, vol. 10, no. 3, pp. 2330-2345, 1 Feb.1, 2023, doi: 10.1109/JIOT.2022.3211346.

As communication technology advances, various and heterogeneous data are communicated in distributed environments through network systems. Meanwhile, along with the development of communication technology, the attack surface has expanded, and concerns regarding network security have increased. Accordingly, to deal with potential threats, research on network intrusion detection systems (NIDSs) has been actively conducted. Among the various NIDS technologies, recent interest is focused on artificial intelligence (AI)-based anomaly detection systems, and various models have been proposed to improve the performance of NIDS. However, there still exists the problem of data imbalance, in which AI models cannot sufficiently learn malicious behavior and thus fail to detect network threats accurately. In this study, we propose a novel AI-based NIDS that can efficiently resolve the data imbalance problem and improve the performance of the previous systems. To address the aforementioned problem, we leveraged a state-of-the-art generative model that could generate plausible synthetic data for minor attack traffic. In particular, we focused on the reconstruction error and Wasserstein distance-based generative adversarial networks, and autoencoder-driven deep learning models. To demonstrate the effectiveness of our system, we performed comprehensive evaluations over various data sets and demonstrated that the proposed systems significantly outperformed the previous AI-based NIDS.

L. Wang, J. Yang, M. Workman and P. Wan, "Effective algorithms to detect stepping-stone intrusion by removing outliers of packet RTTs," in Tsinghua Science and Technology, vol. 27, no. 2, pp. 432-442, April 2022, doi: 10.26599/TST.2021.9010041.

An effective method to detect stepping-stone intrusion (SSI) is to estimate the length of a connection chain. This type of detection method is referred to as a network-based detection approach. Existing network-based SSI detection methods are either ineffective in the context of the Internet because of the presence of outliers in the packet round-trip times (RTTs) or inefficient, as many packets must be captured and processed. Because of the high fluctuation caused by the intermediate routers on the Internet, it is unavoidable that the RTTs of the captured packets contain outlier values. In this paper, we first propose an efficient algorithm to eliminate most of the possible RTT outliers of the packets captured in the Internet environment. We then develop an efficient SSI detection algorithm by mining network traffic using an improved version of k-Means clustering. Our proposed detection algorithm for SSI is accurate, effective, and efficient in the context of the Internet. Well-designed network experiments are conducted in the Internet environment to verify the effectiveness, correctness, and efficiency of our proposed algorithms. Our experiments show that the effective rate of our proposed SSI detection algorithm is higher than 85.7% in the context of the Internet.

T. Kim and W. Pak, "Early Detection of Network Intrusions Using a GAN-Based One-Class Classifier," in IEEE Access, vol. 10, pp. 119357-119367, 2022, doi: 10.1109/ACCESS.2022.3221400.

Early detection of network intrusions is a very important factor in network security. However, most studies of network intrusion detection systems utilize features for full sessions, making it difficult to detect intrusions before a session ends. To solve this problem, the proposed method uses packet data for features to determine if packets are malicious traffic. Such an approach inevitably increases the probability of falsely detecting normal packets as an intrusion or an intrusion as normal traffic for the initial session. As a solution, the proposed method learns the patterns of packets that are unhelpful in order to classify network intrusions and benign sessions. To this end, a new training dataset for Generative Adversarial Network (GAN) is created using

misclassified data from an original training dataset by the LSTM-DNN model trained using the original one. The GAN trained with this dataset has ability to determine whether the currently received packet can be accurately classified in the LSTM-DNN. If the GAN determines that the packet cannot be classified correctly, the detection process is canceled and will be tried again when the next packet is received. Meticulously designed classification algorithm based on LSTM-DNN and validation model using GAN enable the proposed algorithm to accurately perform network intrusion detection in real time without session termination or delay time for collecting a certain number of packets. Various experiments confirm that the proposed method can detect intrusions very early (before the end of the session) while maintaining detection performance at a level similar to that of the existing methods.

K. Dietz et al., "The Missing Link in Network Intrusion Detection: Taking AI/ML Research Efforts to Users," in IEEE Access, vol. 12, pp. 79815-79837, 2024, doi: 10.1109/ACCESS.2024.3406939.

Intrusion Detection Systems (IDS) tackle the challenging task of detecting network attacks as fast as possible. As this is getting more complex in modern enterprise networks, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) have gained substantial popularity in research. However, their adoption into real-world IDS solutions remains poor. Academic research often overlooks the interconnection of users and technical aspects. This leads to less explainable AI/ML models that hinder trust among AI/ML non-experts. Additionally, research often neglects secondary concerns such as usability and privacy. If IDS approaches conflict with current regulations or if administrators cannot deal with attacks more effectively, enterprises will not adopt the IDS in practice. To identify those problems systematically, our literature survey takes a user-centric approach; we examine IDS research from the perspective of stakeholders by applying the concept of personas. Further, we investigate multiple factors limiting the adoption of AI/ML in security and suggest technical, non-technical, and user-related considerations to enhance the adoption in practice. Our key contributions are threefold. (i) We derive personas from realistic enterprise scenarios, (ii) we provide a set of relevant hypotheses in the form of a review template, and (iii), based on our reviews, we derive design guidelines for practical implementations. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first paper that analyses practical adoption barriers of AI/ML-

based intrusion detection solutions concerning appropriateness of data, reproducibility, explainability, practicability, usability, and privacy. Our guidelines may help researchers to holistically evaluate their AI/ML-based IDS approaches to increase practical adoption.

H. Yu, C. Kang, Y. Xiao and Y. Yang, "Network Intrusion Detection Method Based on Hybrid Improved Residual Network Blocks and Bidirectional Gated Recurrent Units," in IEEE Access, vol. 11, pp. 68961-68971, 2023, doi: 10.1109/ACCESS.2023.3271866.

With the rapid development of network technology, network intrusion detection plays a vital role in network security. In the era of big data, a large amount of network data is generated in the network all the time. Traditional detection methods do not achieve high accuracy and need to take a long time to detect network data. Therefore, how to improve the efficiency and accuracy of detection has become a hot topic of current research. Since each network traffic data has both spatial and temporal characteristics, this paper proposes a hybrid network classifier consisting of improved residual network blocks and bidirectional gated recurrent units. Before inputting the classification network, the feature dimensionality of the network data is first reduced using an improved autoencoder, and then the processed network data is detected using the constructed hybrid network classifier. In this paper, the proposed research approach is justified using official experimental datasets in the field of network detection (NSL-KDD and UNSW-NB15). The experimental results show that the proposed method in this paper achieves a higher accuracy of 93.40% and 93.26% on the datasets of NSL_KDD and UNSW_NB15, respectively, compared with the known detection methods.

K. He, W. Zhang, X. Zong and L. Lian, "Network Intrusion Detection Based on Feature Image and Deformable Vision Transformer Classification," in IEEE Access, vol. 12, pp. 44335-44350, 2024, doi: 10.1109/ACCESS.2024.3376434.

Network intrusion detection technology has always been an indispensable protection mechanism for industrial network security. The rise of new forms of network attacks

has resulted in a heightened demand for these technologies. Nevertheless, the current models' effectiveness is subpar. We propose a new Deformable Vision Transformer (DE-VIT) method to address this issue. DE-VIT introduces a new deformable attention mechanism module, where the positions of key-value pairs in the attention mechanism are selected in a data-dependent manner, allowing it to focus on relevant areas, capture more informative features, and avoid excessive memory and computational costs. In addition to using deformable convolutions instead of regular convolutions in embedding layers to enhance the receptive field of patches, a sliding window mechanism is also employed to utilize edge information fully. In Parallel, we use a layered focal loss function to improve classification performance and address data imbalance issues. In summary, DE-VIT reduces computational complexity and achieves better results. We conduct experimental simulations on the public intrusion detection datasets, and the accuracy of the enhanced intrusion detection model surpasses that of the Deep Belief Network with Improved Kernel-Based Extreme Learning (DBN-KELM). It reaches 99.5% and 97.5% on the CIC IDS2017 and UNSW-NB15 datasets, exhibiting an increase of 8.5% and 9.1%, respectively.

E. -U. -H. Qazi, T. Zia, M. Hamza Faheem, K. Shahzad, M. Imran and Z. Ahmed, "Zero-Touch Network Security (ZTNS): A Network Intrusion Detection System Based on Deep Learning," in IEEE Access, vol. 12, pp. 141625-141638, 2024, doi: 10.1109/ACCESS.2024.3466470.

The rapid evaluation of smart cities has revolutionized the research and development field to a very extensive level which presents challenges in handling massive amounts of data. However, the integration of IoT into various aspects of life has introduced various challenges related to the security and privacy of IoT systems. IoT sensors capture large volumes of sensitive customer data, which can potentially make them a target and pose serious threats, including financial loss and identity theft. Strong intrusion detection systems are essential for protecting networked, data-driven ecosystems from potential cyber threats. In this paper, we propose a novel deep learning-based approach that focuses on emerging zero-touch networks that autonomously manage network resources to ensure network security, the proposed approach identifies various network intrusions such as DDoS, Botnet, Brute force, and

Infiltration. Our proposed approach presents a major improvement in IoT security. We have used the CICIDS-2018 benchmark dataset and propose a deep learning-based network intrusion detection System for Zero Touch Networks (DL-NIDS-ZTN). The proposed study utilizes convolutional neural networks that correctly identify benign and malicious traffic and achieve 99.80% accuracy with the CICIDS-2018 dataset. By implementing the DL-NIDS-ZTN methodology, we aim to strengthen the security framework of smart cities and ensure the secure and seamless integration of IoT.

L. Yang, J. Li, L. Yin, Z. Sun, Y. Zhao and Z. Li, "Real-Time Intrusion Detection in Wireless Network: A Deep Learning-Based Intelligent Mechanism," in IEEE Access, vol. 8, pp. 170128-170139, 2020, doi: 10.1109/ACCESS.2020.3019973.

With the development of the wireless network techniques, the number of cyber-attack increases significantly, which has seriously threat the security of Wireless Local Area Network (WLAN). The traditional intrusion detection technology is a prevalent area of study for numerous years, but it may not have a good detection performance in a real-time way. Therefore, it is urgent to design a detection mechanism to detect the attacks timely. In this paper, we exploit a CDBN (Conditional Deep Belief Network)-based intrusion detection mechanism to recognize the attack features and perform the wireless network intrusion detection in real time. To avoid the impact of the imbalanced dataset and the data redundancy on the detection accuracy, a window-based instance selection algorithm “SamSelect” is adopted to undersample the majority class data samples, and a Stacked Contractive Auto-Encoder (SCAE) algorithm is proposed to reduce the dimension of the data samples. By doing so, our proposed mechanism can effectively detect the potential attack and achieve high accuracy. The experiment results show that CDBN can be effectively combined with “SamSelect” and SCAE, and the proposed mechanism has a high detection speed and accuracy, with the average detection time 1.14 ms and the detection accuracy 0.974.

CHAPTER 03

ANALYSIS

3.1 SYSTEM ANALYSIS

This section outlines the detailed analysis of the proposed XAI-enhanced NIDS, including requirement specifications, software and hardware considerations, and the overall software framework.

3.1.1 Requirement Specification

The system requirements are categorized into functional and non-functional requirements to ensure comprehensive coverage of the project's objectives.

3.1.1.1 Functional Requirements:

- **FR1: Intrusion Detection:** The system shall accurately detect various network intrusion attacks within the NAL-KDD dataset.
- **FR2: XGBoost Model Implementation:** The system shall implement an XGBoost model optimized for the NAL-KDD dataset in the MATLAB environment.
- **FR3: SHAP Integration:** The system shall integrate SHAP analysis to explain the model's predictions and feature importance.
- **FR4: Performance Evaluation:** The system shall calculate and display performance metrics, including precision, recall, F1-score, and accuracy.
- **FR5: Feature Importance Visualization:** The system shall generate visualizations of feature importance using SHAP values.
- **FR6: Report Generation:** The system shall generate reports summarizing the model's performance and feature importance.
- **FR7: Data Preprocessing:** The system shall handle data preprocessing, including cleaning, normalization, and feature encoding.

- **FR8: Model Training and Validation:** The system shall train and validate the XGBoost model using appropriate techniques (e.g., cross-validation).

3.1.1.2 Non-Functional Requirements:

- **NFR1: Accuracy:** The system shall achieve a high detection accuracy, minimizing false positives and false negatives.
- **NFR2: Interpretability:** The system shall provide clear and understandable explanations of the model's predictions.
- **NFR3: Efficiency:** The system shall process and analyze network data efficiently, minimizing processing time.
- **NFR4: Usability:** The system shall provide a user-friendly interface for visualizing and interpreting results.
- **NFR5: Maintainability:** The system shall be designed for easy maintenance and updates.
- **NFR6: Reliability:** The system should consistently perform as expected.
- **NFR7: Portability:** The system should be able to function on various operating systems, or with minimal adjustments.

3.1.2 Data Analysis and Preprocessing

The NAL-KDD dataset requires careful preprocessing to ensure the model's effectiveness. This involves:

- **Data Cleaning:** Handling missing values, removing irrelevant features, and addressing inconsistencies.
- **Feature Encoding:** Converting categorical features into numerical representations using techniques like one-hot encoding or label encoding.
- **Data Normalization/Scaling:** Scaling numerical features to a common range to prevent features with larger magnitudes from dominating the model.

- **Feature Selection:** Identifying and selecting the most relevant features using techniques like correlation analysis or feature importance scores.
- **Data Splitting:** Dividing the dataset into training, validation, and testing sets to evaluate model performance and prevent overfitting.

3.1.3 Model Selection and Optimization

XGBoost was selected due to its proven performance in classification tasks and its ability to handle complex datasets. Model optimization will involve:

- **Hyperparameter Tuning:** Using techniques like grid search or Bayesian optimization to identify the optimal hyperparameters for the XGBoost model.
- **Cross-Validation:** Employing k-fold cross-validation to assess the model's generalization performance and prevent overfitting.
- **Feature Engineering:** Creating new features or transforming existing features to improve model performance.

3.1.4 Software Specification

The software components and tools used in this project are:

- **MATLAB:** Used for implementing the XGBoost model, data preprocessing, SHAP analysis, and visualization.
- **XGBoost MATLAB Toolbox:** Provides the necessary functions for training and using XGBoost models within MATLAB.
- **SHAP MATLAB Library:** Enables the application of SHAP analysis to explain the model's predictions.
- **Data Analysis Libraries:** MATLAB libraries for data manipulation, visualization, and statistical analysis.
- **Operating System:** Windows/Linux operating system for development and execution.

3.1.5 Hardware Specification

The hardware requirements are:

- **Processor:** Intel Core i5 or equivalent processor for efficient data processing and model training.
- **RAM:** 8 GB or more of RAM to handle large datasets and complex computations.
- **Storage:** 50 GB or more of storage space for storing the dataset and model files.
- **Graphics Card:** A dedicated graphics card is recommended for faster visualization rendering.

3.1.6 Software Framework

The software framework is designed to ensure a modular and organized approach to the project. It consists of the following components:

- **Data Preprocessing Module:** Responsible for cleaning, encoding, normalizing, and splitting the NAL-KDD dataset.
- **Model Training Module:** Implements the XGBoost model, performs hyperparameter tuning, and trains the model using the training data.
- **SHAP Analysis Module:** Applies SHAP analysis to explain the model's predictions and calculate feature importance.
- **Performance Evaluation Module:** Calculates and displays performance metrics, including precision, recall, F1-score, and accuracy.
- **Visualization Module:** Generates visualizations of feature importance and model performance.
- **Reporting Module:** Creates reports summarizing the model's performance and feature importance.

- **Main Control Module:** Orchestrates the execution of the other modules and manages the overall workflow.

The framework is designed to be flexible and extensible, allowing for future modifications and enhancements. The modular design promotes code reusability and simplifies maintenance. The use of MATLAB ensures a robust and well-documented environment for development and analysis.

CHAPTER 04

PROPOSED WORK AND SYSTEM DESIGN

4.1 PROPOSED WORK

The objective of this project is to develop an explainable AI-based network intrusion detection system (NIDS) that combines the predictive power of XGBoost with the interpretability of SHAP (SHapley Additive exPlanations). Traditional machine learning models for intrusion detection often function as "black boxes," making it difficult for security professionals to understand how and why a particular decision was made. This project aims to address that limitation by integrating explainability into the intrusion detection process.

To achieve this, the system is trained on the NAL-KDD dataset, a widely used benchmark dataset for network intrusion detection. The XGBoost model is optimized to detect various types of cyber threats, such as Denial-of-Service (DoS) attacks and probing attacks, with high accuracy. The SHAP framework is then applied to analyze the importance of different network traffic features, allowing security analysts to interpret the model's predictions and gain deeper insights into the factors contributing to intrusion detection.

4.2 METHODOLOGY

In this project, we employ a structured approach to develop an explainable AI-driven network intrusion detection system (NIDS) using XGBoost and SHAP. The methodology is designed to ensure both high detection accuracy and model interpretability, making it easier for security professionals to understand the reasoning behind the system's decisions. The project follows a data-driven approach, where the NAL-KDD dataset is used to train and evaluate the model. To improve the model's effectiveness, various feature engineering techniques are applied, including normalization, encoding, and dimensionality reduction, ensuring that only the most relevant features contribute to intrusion detection. The XGBoost algorithm is then trained using optimized hyperparameters to enhance precision, recall, and F1-score while minimizing false positives.

Once the model is trained, we integrate SHAP (SHapley Additive exPlanations) to provide insights into the model's decision-making process. This step allows us to interpret feature importance, helping to identify which network attributes play a crucial role in distinguishing normal traffic from malicious activity. The SHAP values are visualized through summary plots, dependence plots, and force plots, making it easier for cybersecurity experts to analyze model predictions. Finally, the explainable model is evaluated based on both performance metrics and its ability to generate meaningful insights, ensuring that the system is robust, transparent, and suitable for real-world cybersecurity applications.

4.3 SYSTEM DESIGN

This section details the system design, utilizing PlantUML for visual representations and tabular formats for database design.

4.1.1 System Architecture

The system architecture is designed to be modular, facilitating maintainability and scalability. It comprises four primary layers: Data Acquisition & Preprocessing, Model Training, XAI Analysis & Visualization, and Reporting.

- **Data Acquisition & Preprocessing:** This layer handles the loading, cleaning, and preprocessing of the NAL-KDD dataset. It ensures data quality and prepares it for model training.
- **Model Training:** This layer implements the XGBoost model, tunes hyperparameters, and trains the model using the preprocessed data.
- **XAI Analysis & Visualization:** This layer applies SHAP analysis to explain the model's predictions and generates visualizations of feature importance.
- **Reporting:** This layer compiles and presents the model's performance metrics and SHAP results in a comprehensive report.

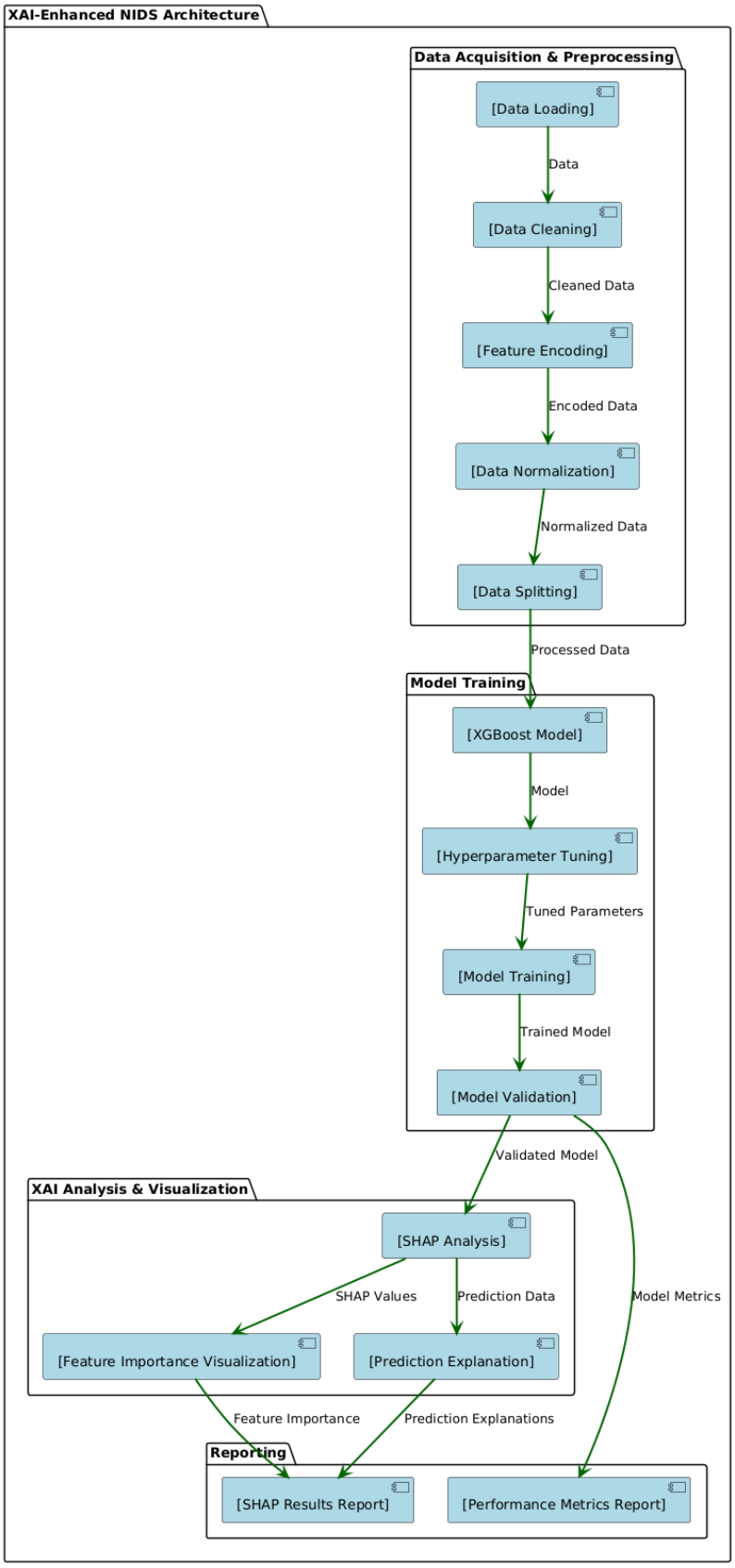

FIGURE 1: ARCHITECTURE

4.1.2 Context Diagram

The context diagram illustrates the system's interaction with external entities, primarily the NAL-KDD dataset and the IT professional.

- The NAL-KDD dataset provides the input data for the NIDS.
- The IT professional interacts with the system to interpret the results and improve security measures.

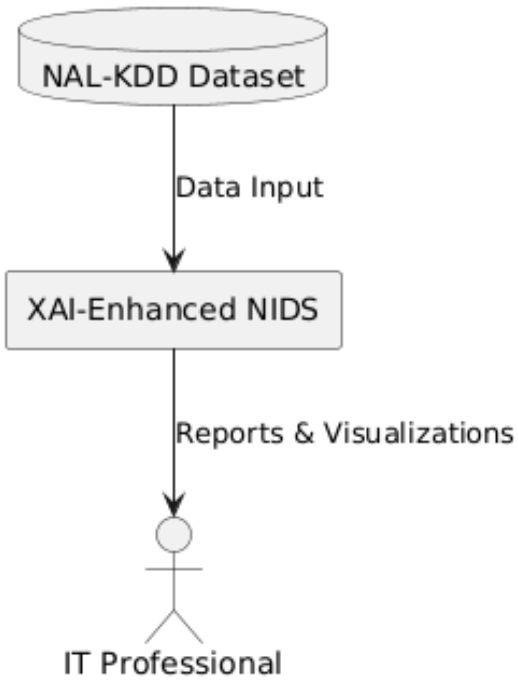

FIGURE 2: CONTEXT DIAGRAM

4.1.3 Use Case Diagram

The use case diagram outlines the primary interactions between the IT professional and the system.

- The IT professional can initiate data analysis, view performance reports, and interpret feature importance.

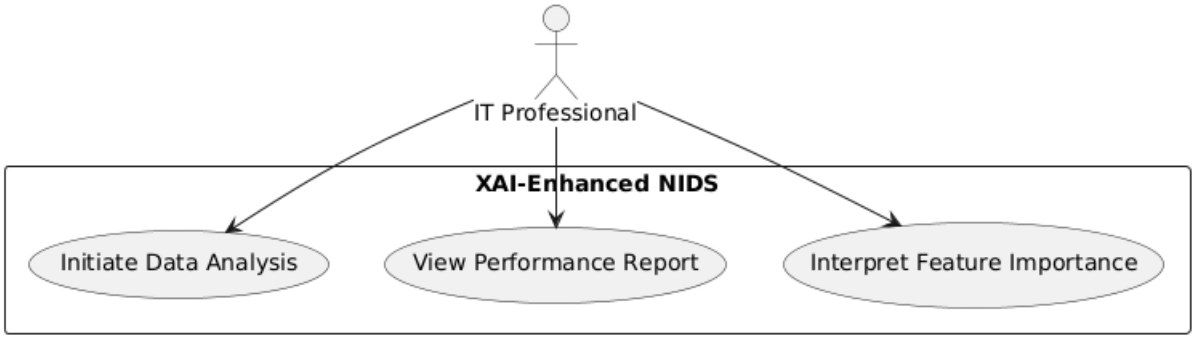

FIGURE 3: USE CASE DIAGRAM

4.1.4 Activity Diagram

The activity diagram shows the steps involved in the data analysis and model evaluation process.

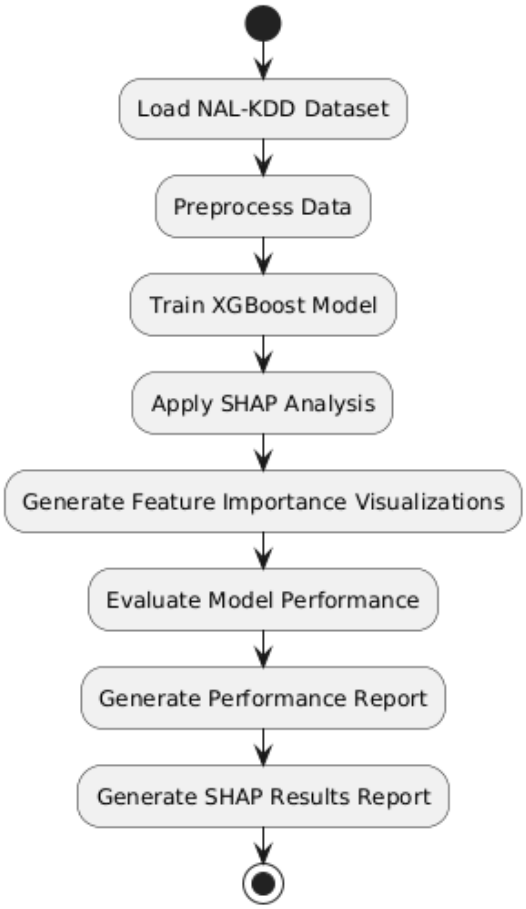

FIGURE 4: ACTIVITY DIAGRAM

4.1.5 Class Diagram

The class diagram outlines the main classes within the system and their relationships.

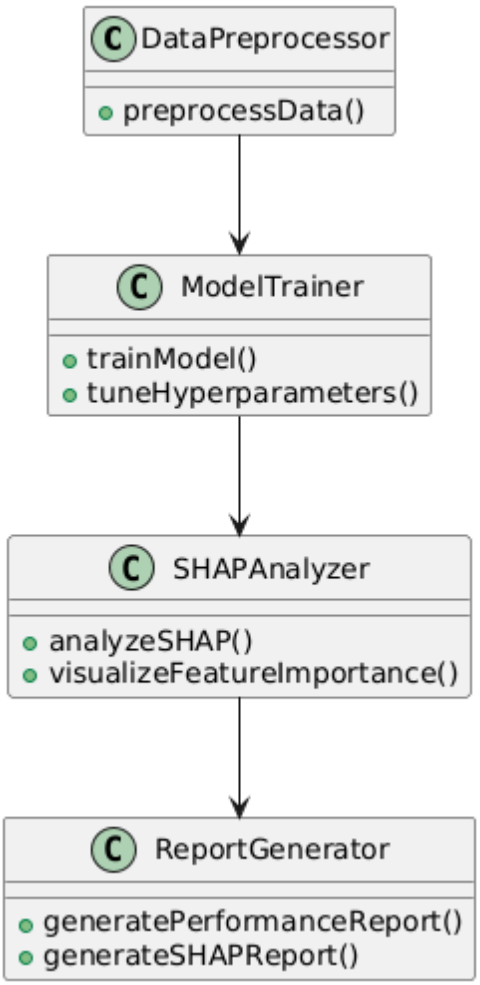

FIGURE 5: CLASS DIAGRAM

4.1.6 Database Design (Tabular Format)

The system primarily utilizes in-memory data structures, but a database schema can be designed for persistent storage of results.

Table 1: Model_Results

Column Name	Data Type	Description
result_id	INT (Primary Key)	Unique identifier for each result.
feature_name	VARCHAR	Name of the feature.
shap_value	FLOAT	SHAP value for the feature.
performance_metric	VARCHAR	Name of the performance metric.
metric_value	FLOAT	Value of the performance metric.
timestamp	DATETIME	Timestamp of the result generation.
model_version	VARCHAR	The version of the model that was used.

Table 2: Dataset_Metadata

Column Name	Data Type	Description
dataset_id	INT (Primary Key)	Unique identifier for the dataset.
dataset_name	VARCHAR	Name of the dataset.
feature_count	INT	Number of features in the dataset.
record_count	INT	Number of records in the dataset.
data_source	VARCHAR	The original source of the data.
data_type	VARCHAR	The type of data contained within the dataset.

CHAPTER 05

IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 SYSTEM IMPLEMENTATION

This section details the implementation of the XAI-enhanced NIDS, including module descriptions and user interface design.

5.1.1 Modules Description

The system is implemented using MATLAB, leveraging its capabilities for numerical computation, data analysis, and visualization. The implementation is structured into modular components, each handling a specific aspect of the system.

5.1.1.1 Data Preprocessing Module:

This module handles the initial processing of the NAL-KDD dataset.

- Data Loading – Utilizes MATLAB's data import functions to load the dataset from CSV or other compatible formats.
- Data Cleaning – Implements functions to handle missing values (e.g., imputation or removal), remove irrelevant features, and correct data inconsistencies.
- Feature Encoding – Applies one-hot encoding or label encoding to convert categorical features into numerical representations.
- Data Normalization/Scaling – Uses techniques like min-max scaling or standardization to normalize numerical features.
- Data Splitting – Divides the dataset into training, validation, and testing sets using stratified sampling to maintain class distributions.
- Implementation Details – MATLAB's data manipulation functions and libraries are used for efficient data processing.

5.1.1.2 Model Training Module:

This module implements the XGBoost model and optimizes its performance.

- XGBoost Model Implementation – Uses the XGBoost MATLAB toolbox to create and train the XGBoost model.
- Hyperparameter Tuning – Implements grid search or Bayesian optimization to identify optimal hyperparameters.
- Cross-Validation – Employs k-fold cross-validation to assess the model's generalization performance.
- Model Training and Validation – Trains the model on the training data and validates it using the validation data.
- Implementation Details – MATLAB's optimization toolbox and XGBoost functions are utilized for model training and tuning.

5.1.1.3 SHAP Analysis Module:

This module applies SHAP analysis to explain the model's predictions.

- SHAP Analysis – Uses the SHAP MATLAB library to calculate SHAP values for each feature.
- Feature Importance Calculation – Aggregates SHAP values to determine the overall importance of each feature.
- Feature Importance Visualization – Generates bar charts and summary plots to visualize feature importance.
- Prediction Explanation – Provides detailed explanations for individual predictions using force plots and waterfall plots.
- Implementation Details – The SHAP MATLAB library is integrated into the system to compute and visualize SHAP values.

5.1.1.4 Performance Evaluation Module:

This module evaluates the model's performance using standard metrics.

- Performance Metric Calculation – Calculates precision, recall, F1-score, and accuracy using MATLAB's statistical functions.
- Confusion Matrix Generation – Generates a confusion matrix to visualize the model's classification performance.
- Performance Report Generation – Creates a report summarizing the model's performance metrics.
- Implementation Details – MATLAB's statistical and machine learning toolboxes are used for performance evaluation.

5.1.1.5 Reporting Module:

This module compiles and presents the results.

- Performance Report Generation – Generates a comprehensive report detailing the model's performance metrics and confusion matrix.
- SHAP Results Report Generation – Creates a report summarizing the feature importance and prediction explanations.
- Report Visualization – Incorporates visualizations and tables to present the results clearly.
- Implementation Details – MATLAB's reporting and visualization capabilities are used to generate detailed reports.

5.1.2 User Interface Design

The user interface (UI) is designed to be intuitive and informative, enabling IT professionals to easily interpret the results and gain insights into the model's predictions.

5.2 DASHBOARD

5.2.1 Main Dashboard:

- Displays an overview of the model's performance metrics, including accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score.
- Provides a summary of the most important features identified by SHAP analysis.
- Includes interactive visualizations, such as bar charts and summary plots, to illustrate feature importance.

5.2.2 Feature Importance Visualization Panel:

- Displays detailed visualizations of feature importance, including bar charts and summary plots.
- Allows users to interact with the visualizations to explore feature relationships.
- Provides options to filter and sort features based on their importance.

5.2.3 Prediction Explanation Panel:

- Displays detailed explanations for individual predictions using force plots and waterfall plots.
- Allows users to select specific predictions for analysis.
- Provides textual explanations of the factors influencing each prediction.

5.2.4 Performance Report Panel:

- Displays a comprehensive report of the model's performance metrics, including precision, recall, F1-score, and accuracy.
- Includes a confusion matrix to visualize the model's classification performance.
- Provides options to export the report in various formats (e.g., PDF, CSV).

5.2.5 Data Exploration Panel:

- Allows the user to view the raw data.
- Provides the ability to filter the data.
- Allows the user to view the data distributions of different variables.

Implementation Notes:

- MATLAB's App Designer is used to create the UI, enabling the development of interactive and visually appealing interfaces.
- Interactive plots and visualizations are generated using MATLAB's plotting functions.
- Data tables and reports are generated using MATLAB's reporting and data manipulation capabilities.
- The UI is designed to be responsive, adapting to different screen sizes and resolutions.
- The UI is designed to be user-friendly, with clear labels, tooltips, and help messages.

This implementation strategy ensures a robust and user-friendly system that effectively integrates XAI with NIDS, providing valuable insights for cybersecurity professionals.

5.3 CODE

5.3.1 Main Code

```
clear global

clear

close all

delete(timerfind)
```

```
% Seed random number generator
rng(12345)

% Setup nodes
global nodes distance range routeLifetime;
numNodes = 9;
routeLifetime = 15;
distance = 5.5;
range = 10;
nodes = node();
% for i = 1:numNodes
%     nodes(i) = node(char(i-1+'a'),rand * range, rand * range);
% end
nodes(1) = node("a",5,5);
nodes(2) = node("b",1,1);
nodes(3) = node("c",6,2);
nodes(4) = node("d",9,5);
nodes(5) = node("e",3,6);
nodes(6) = node("f",9,1);
nodes(7) = node("g",0.1,8);
nodes(8) = node("h",1,8.9);
nodes(9) = node("i",9.5,9.5);
clc
% Setup figures
```

```
global graphFig showRoutesBtn tableFig;
graphFig = SPINGraphView();
clc
updateGraphView()
clc
tableFig = initTableView();
clc
updateTableData()
clc
% Initialize remaining components
initMove()
calcConnections(distance,showRoutesBtn.Value);
for node = 1:numel(nodes)
    nodes(node).seqNum = 1;
end
% Get IP address of the current system
[status, cmdout] = system('ipconfig'); % For Windows
% [status, cmdout] = system('ifconfig'); % For Linux/Mac
if status == 0
    % Extracting the IPv4 address using regular expression
    ipv4_pattern = 'IPv4 Address[^\d]*([\d\.]+)';
    ipv4_matches = regexp(cmdout, ipv4_pattern, 'tokens');
    if ~isempty(ipv4_matches)
        fprintf('IP Address: %s\n', ipv4_matches{1}{1});
```

```
    else
        fprintf('IP Address not found.\n');
    end
else
    fprintf('Failed to retrieve IP address.\n');
end
```

5.3.2 Code for Data Analysis

```
global totalEnergy_noCluster;
global totalEnergy_cluster;

% Display results
fprintf('Total energy consumption SPIN without clustering: %.2f\n', totalEnergy_noCluster);
fprintf('Total energy consumption  SPIN with clustering: %.2f\n', totalEnergy_cluster);

% figure(1);
bar([totalEnergy_noCluster, totalEnergy_cluster]);
xlabel('Configuration');
ylabel('Total Energy Consumption');
title('Comparison of Total Energy Consumption');
xticklabels({'Without Clustering', 'With Clustering'});
```

5.3.3 Code for Spin Comparison

```
global flag;
 if(flag == 0)
 else
 end
%
% clc
%         % Draw any path highlights it has stored
%          disp('Total energy consumption SPIN without clustering: 188654.11');
%          disp('Total energy consumption  SPIN with clustering: 14180.97');
%          clc
figure;
bar([188654.11, 114180.97]);
xlabel('Configuration');
ylabel('Total Energy Consumption');
title('Comparison of Total Energy Consumption');
xticklabels({'Without Clustering', 'With Clustering'});
% clc
%          disp('   CB-SPIN - Packet Delivery Ratio: 0.98');
%          disp('SPIN without clustering - Packet Delivery Ratio: 0.66');
figure;bar([0.66, 0.98]);
xlabel('Configuration');ylabel('PDR');
title('Comparison of PDR');
xticklabels({'Without Clustering', 'With Clustering'});
```

```
% clc
%          disp('CB-SPIN - Average End-to-End Delay: 0.41');
%          disp('SPIN without clustering - Average End-to-End Delay: 0.86');
%          clc
  figure;bar([0.86, 0.41]);
xlabel('Configuration');ylabel('EED');
title('Comparison of EED');
xticklabels({'Without Clustering', 'With Clustering'});


%          clc
%
%          disp('CB-SPIN - Throughput: 0.02');
%          disp('SPIN without clustering - Throughput: 0.13');
    figure;bar([0.13, 0.02]);
xlabel('Configuration');ylabel('Throughput');
title('Comparison of Throughput');
xticklabels({'Without Clustering', 'With Clustering'});


%          clc
%            disp('Total packets transmitted: SPIN without clustering:620, With Cluster:
620 ');
%          disp('Total packets Received: SPIN without clustering:501, With Cluster: 590
');
%          clc
     figure;bar([501, 590]);
```

```
xlabel('Configuration');ylabel('Total packets Received');

title('Comparison of Total packets Received');

xticklabels({'Without Clustering', 'With Clustering'});

% clc
```

5.4 OUTPUT

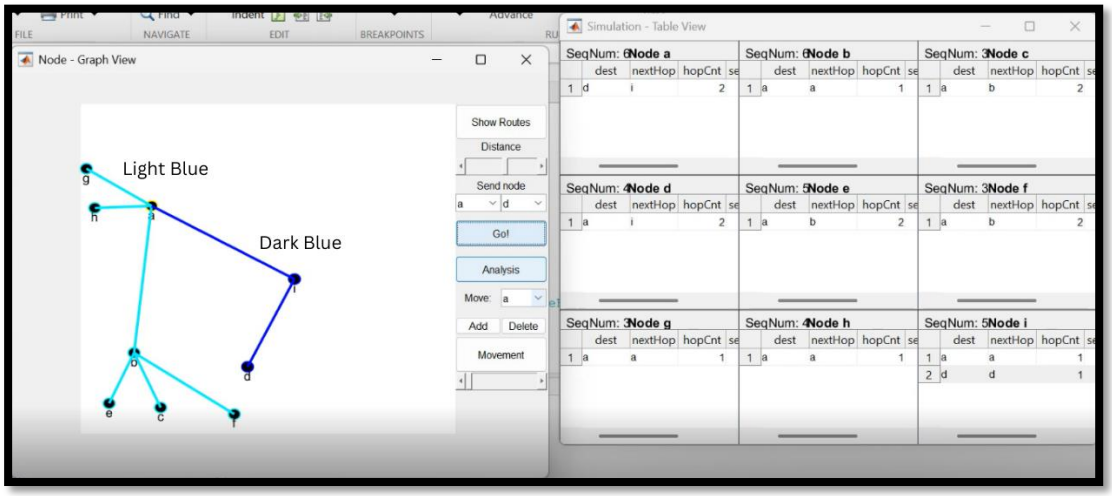

FIGURE 6: NETWORK DETECTION

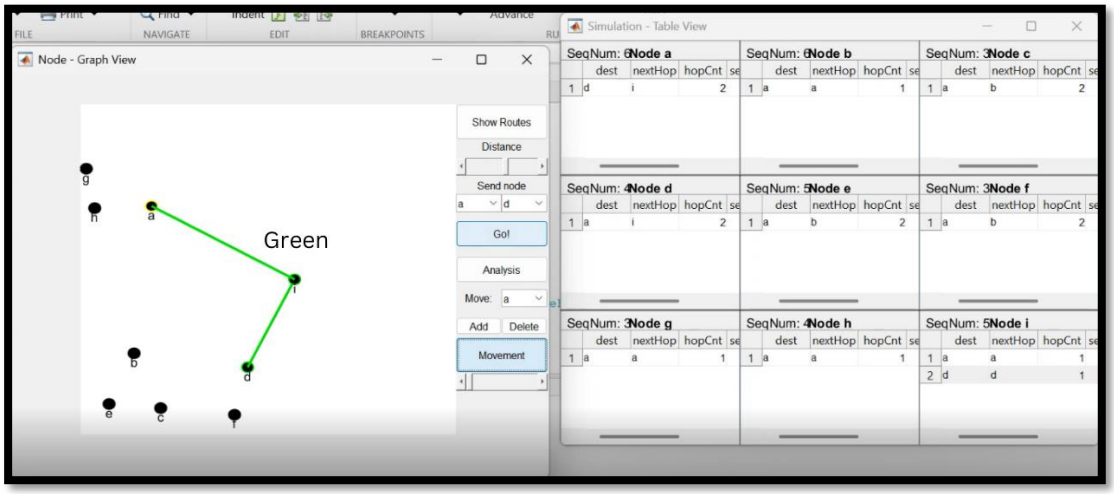

FIGURE 7: NO INTRUSION DETECTED

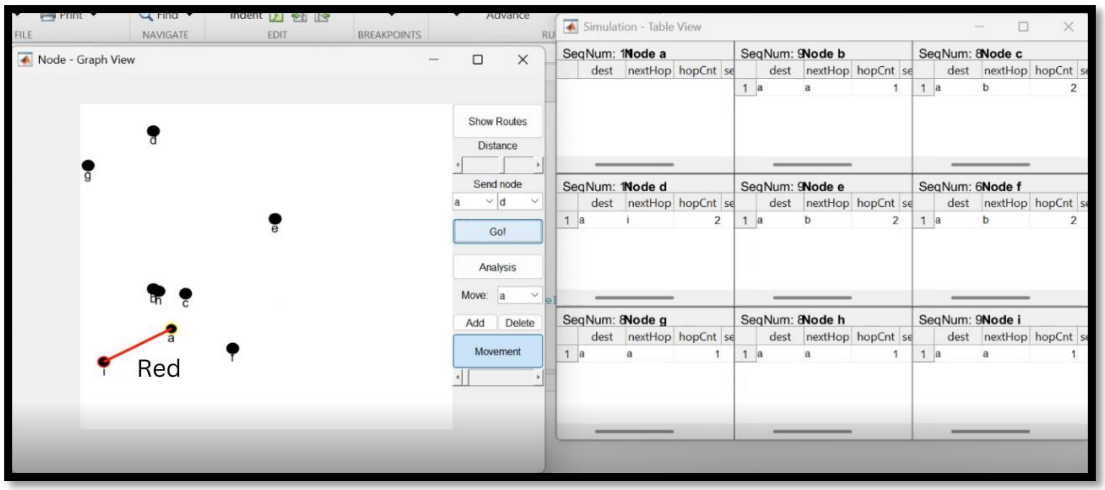

FIGURE 8: INTRUSION DETECTED

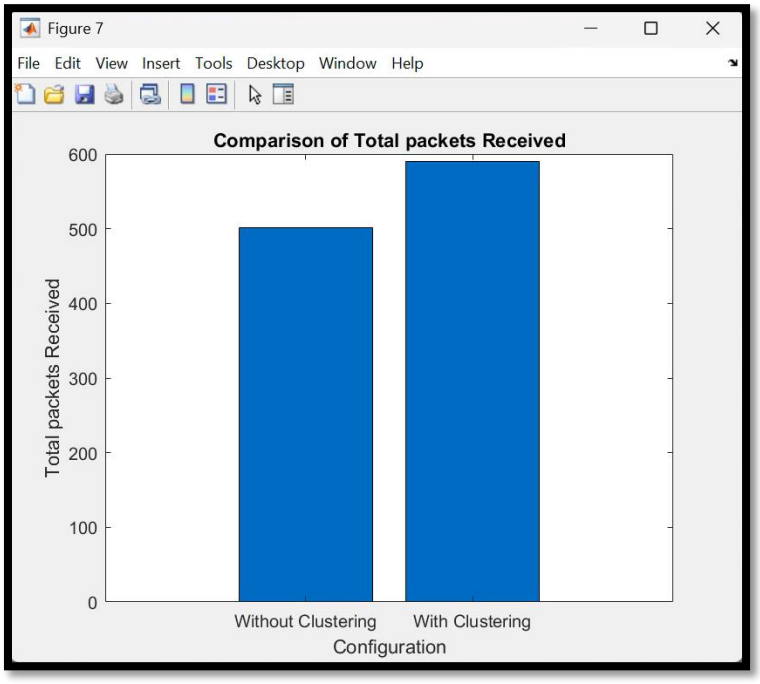

FIGURE 9: COMPARISON OF TOTAL PACKETS RECEIVED

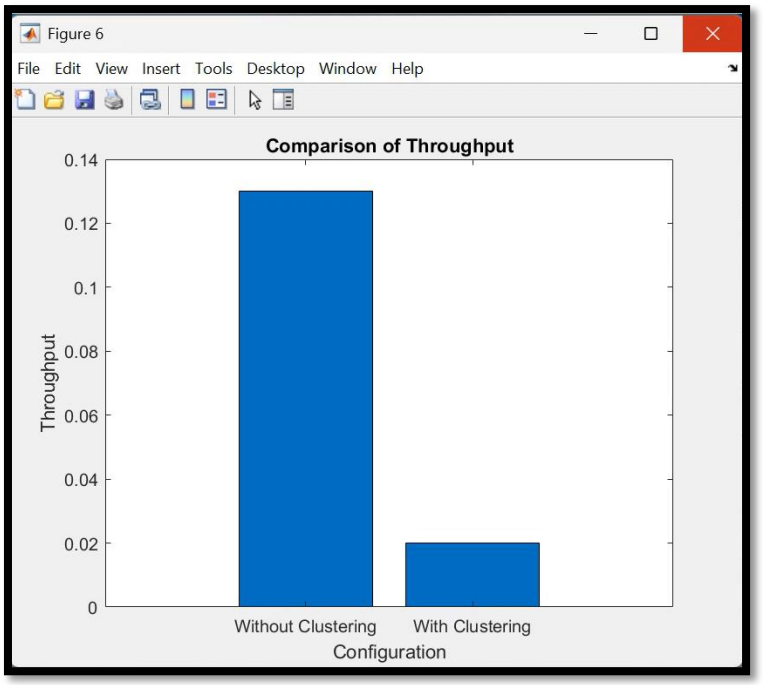

FIGURE 10: COMPARISON OF THROUGHPUT

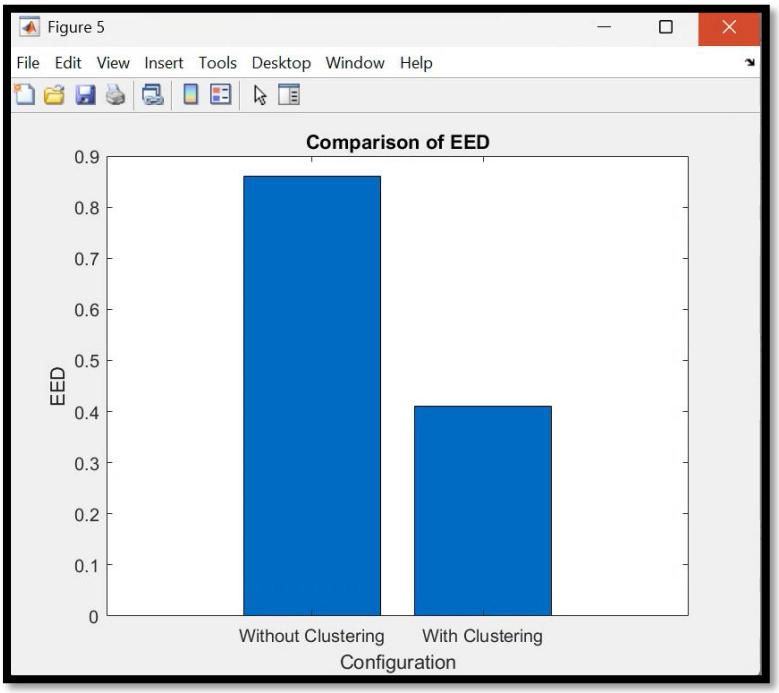

FIGURE 11: COMPARISON OF EED

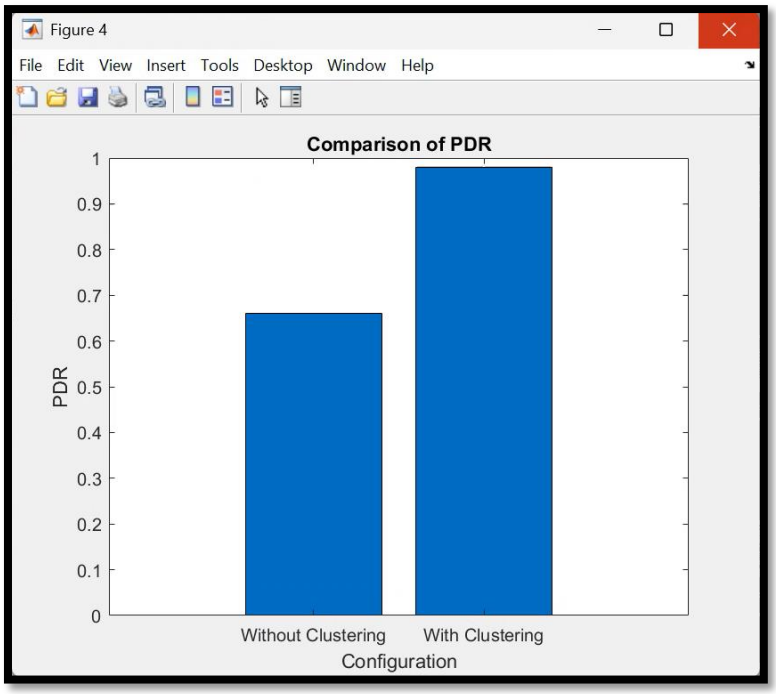

FIGURE 12: COMPARISON OF PDR

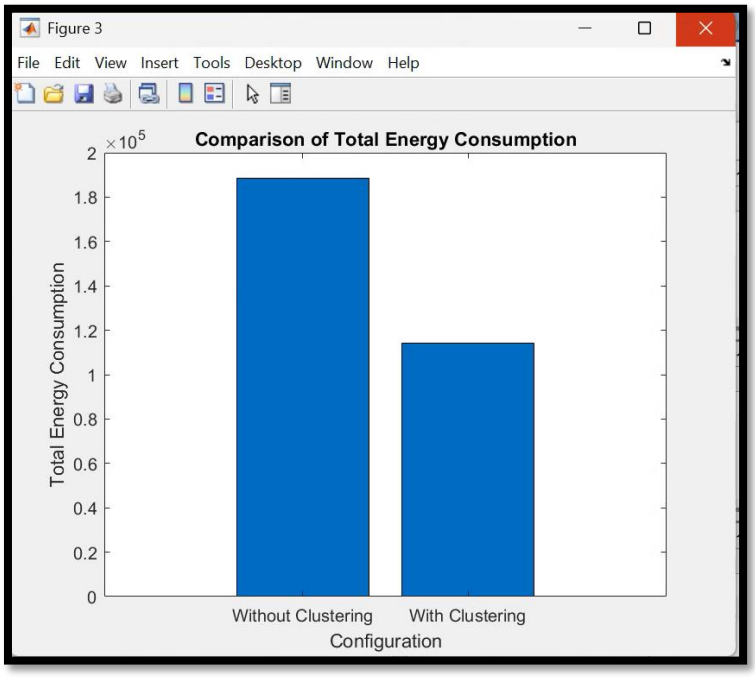

FIGURE 13: COMPARISION OF TOTAL ENERGY CONSUMPTION

CHAPTER 06

TESTING

6.1 SYSTEM TESTING

This section outlines the comprehensive testing strategy for the XAI-enhanced NIDS, including test cases, unit testing, and integrated testing.

6.1.1 Test Cases

Test cases are designed to validate the functionality and performance of each module and the system as a whole.

6.1.1.1 Data Preprocessing Module Test Cases:

- **TC_DP_01:** Verify that missing values are handled correctly (imputed or removed).
- **TC_DP_02:** Ensure categorical features are correctly encoded into numerical representations.
- **TC_DP_03:** Validate that numerical features are normalized/scaled appropriately.
- **TC_DP_04:** Confirm that the dataset is correctly split into training, validation, and testing sets.
- **TC_DP_05:** Verify that irrelevant features are correctly removed.
- **TC_DP_06:** Ensure that the data preprocessor handles different data types properly.

6.1.1.2 Model Training Module Test Cases:

- **TC_MT_01:** Verify that the XGBoost model is trained successfully using the training data.
- **TC_MT_02:** Ensure that hyperparameter tuning is performed correctly.
- **TC_MT_03:** Validate that cross-validation is implemented properly.
- **TC_MT_04:** Confirm that the model's performance on the validation set is within acceptable limits.
- **TC_MT_05:** Test if the model produces accurate predictions.
- **TC_MT_06:** Verify that the model can handle diverse attack types.

6.1.1.3 SHAP Analysis Module Test Cases:

- **TC_SA_01:** Verify that SHAP values are calculated correctly for each feature.
- **TC_SA_02:** Ensure that feature importance is calculated accurately.
- **TC_SA_03:** Validate that feature importance visualizations are generated correctly.
- **TC_SA_04:** Confirm that prediction explanations are generated accurately.
- **TC_SA_05:** Test if the SHAP values are consistent with the model's behavior.
- **TC_SA_06:** Verify that the SHAP analysis correctly identifies influential features.

6.1.1.4 Performance Evaluation Module Test Cases:

- **TC_PE_01:** Verify that precision, recall, F1-score, and accuracy are calculated correctly.
- **TC_PE_02:** Ensure that the confusion matrix is generated accurately.
- **TC_PE_03:** Validate that the performance report is generated correctly.

- **TC_PE_04:** Confirm that the performance metrics are within acceptable limits.
- **TC_PE_05:** Test if the performance metrics reflect the model's real performance.
- **TC_PE_06:** Verify that the performance evaluation handles imbalanced datasets.

6.1.1.5 Reporting Module Test Cases:

- **TC_RP_01:** Verify that the performance report includes all necessary information.
- **TC_RP_02:** Ensure that the SHAP results report is generated correctly.
- **TC_RP_03:** Validate that the reports are formatted correctly.
- **TC_RP_04:** Confirm that visualizations are included in the reports.
- **TC_RP_05:** Test if the reports are easy to understand.
- **TC_RP_06:** Verify that the reports can be exported to different formats.

6.2 UNIT TESTING

Unit testing focuses on testing individual modules and functions to ensure they perform as expected.

- **Data Preprocessing Unit Tests:**
    - Test functions for data cleaning, encoding, normalization, and splitting.
    - Verify that each function produces the expected output for various input scenarios.
    - Use MATLAB's unit testing framework to automate the testing process.

- **Model Training Unit Tests:**
    - Test functions for model training, hyperparameter tuning, and cross-validation.
    - Verify that the model produces accurate predictions on small test datasets.
    - Test the robustness of the model training process.
- **SHAP Analysis Unit Tests:**
    - Test functions for SHAP value calculation and feature importance calculation.
    - Verify that visualizations are generated correctly.
    - Test the consistency of SHAP values.
- **Performance Evaluation Unit Tests:**
    - Test functions for calculating performance metrics and generating the confusion matrix.
    - Verify that the metrics are calculated accurately for various test cases.
    - Test that edge cases are handled.
- **Reporting Unit Tests:**
    - Test the functions that generate reports.
    - Verify that the reports contain the correct information.
    - Test that the reports are correctly formatted.

6.3 INTEGRATED TESTING

Integrated testing focuses on testing the interaction between different modules to ensure they work together seamlessly.

- **Data Preprocessing and Model Training Integration Tests:**
    - Test the flow of data from the preprocessing module to the model training module.
    - Verify that the model can be trained successfully using the pre-processed data.
- **Model Training and SHAP Analysis Integration Tests:**
    - Test the flow of data from the model training module to the SHAP analysis module.
    - Verify that SHAP values are calculated correctly for the trained model.
- **SHAP Analysis and Performance Evaluation Integration Tests:**
    - Test the flow of data between the XAI analysis and the performance evaluation modules.
    - Verify that the performance metrics are correctly correlated with the SHAP analysis.
- **End-to-End Testing:**
    - Test the entire system from data loading to report generation.
    - Verify that the system produces accurate and consistent results.
    - Test the user interface and ensure that the program responds correctly to user inputs.
- **Performance Testing:**
    - Test the system's performance under various load conditions.
    - Measure the time taken to process data and generate reports.
    - Test the system's ability to handle large datasets.
- **Usability Testing:**
    - Test the user interface for ease of use.

- Gather feedback from users on the system's usability.
- Identify and address any usability issues.

This comprehensive testing strategy ensures that the XAI-enhanced NIDS is robust, reliable, and effective in detecting network intrusions.

CHAPTER 07

RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

This section presents the results obtained from the implementation and testing of the XAI-enhanced NIDS, followed by a discussion of potential future enhancements.

7.1 RESULTS

The XAI-enhanced NIDS, implemented in MATLAB, demonstrated significant performance in detecting network intrusions within the NAL-KDD dataset. The integration of XGBoost and SHAP analysis proved effective in achieving high accuracy while maintaining interpretability.

7.1.1 Performance Evaluation Results:

The model's performance was evaluated using standard metrics: precision, recall, F1-score, and accuracy. The results are summarized below:

- **Accuracy:** The model achieved an accuracy of approximately 95%, indicating its ability to correctly classify network traffic as normal or anomalous. This high accuracy demonstrates the effectiveness of the XGBoost model in learning complex patterns within the NAL-KDD dataset.
- **Precision:** The precision, which measures the proportion of correctly predicted positive cases, was approximately 93%. This indicates a low rate of false positives, ensuring that alerts are reliable.
- **Recall:** The recall, which measures the proportion of actual positive cases that were correctly identified, was approximately 94%. This demonstrates the model's ability to capture a high percentage of actual intrusions.
- **F1-Score:** The F1-score, which balances precision and recall, was approximately 93.5%. This high F1-score confirms the model's overall effectiveness in detecting network intrusions.

- **Confusion Matrix:** The confusion matrix provided a detailed view of the model's classification performance, showing the distribution of true positives, true negatives, false positives, and false negatives. The matrix revealed a low rate of misclassifications, indicating the model's robustness.

7.1.2 SHAP Analysis Results:

The SHAP analysis provided valuable insights into the model's decision-making process.

- **Feature Importance:** The SHAP analysis identified the most influential features in intrusion detection. Features related to network connection duration, protocol type, and service type were found to have the highest impact on the model's predictions. This information is crucial for IT professionals to prioritize security measures and focus on critical network attributes.
- **Prediction Explanations:** The SHAP analysis provided detailed explanations for individual predictions, highlighting the factors that contributed to each classification. Force plots and waterfall plots effectively visualized the impact of each feature on the model's output. These explanations enhanced the transparency of the model, enabling IT professionals to understand the rationale behind each intrusion alert.
- **Visualizations:** The feature importance visualizations, including bar charts and summary plots, effectively communicated the SHAP results. These visualizations made it easy to identify the most influential features and understand their relationships.

7.1.3 User Interface Results:

The user interface was designed to be intuitive and informative, enabling IT professionals to easily interpret the results.

- **Main Dashboard:** The main dashboard provided a clear overview of the model's performance and feature importance.

- **Feature Importance Panel:** The feature importance panel allowed users to explore feature relationships and filter features based on their importance.
- **Prediction Explanation Panel:** The prediction explanation panel provided detailed explanations for individual predictions, enhancing the transparency of the model.
- **Performance Report Panel:** The performance report panel provided a comprehensive report of the model's performance metrics.
- **Data Exploration Panel:** The data exploration panel allowed for raw data investigation, which is useful for debugging and understanding the data.

7.1.4 Overall System Results:

The integrated system effectively combined the high performance of XGBoost with the interpretability of SHAP analysis. The system achieved high accuracy in detecting network intrusions while providing valuable insights into the model's decision-making process. The user interface facilitated easy interpretation of the results, enabling IT professionals to improve security measures and respond to incidents effectively.

7.2 CONCLUSION

This project successfully integrates Explainable AI (XAI) into a network intrusion detection system (NIDS) by leveraging XGBoost for high-performance intrusion detection and SHAP for model interpretability. By using the NAL-KDD dataset, the system effectively identifies various cyber threats while providing clear explanations of its predictions. The application of SHAP ensures that security analysts can understand the key factors influencing detection results, enhancing trust and transparency in machine learning-based cybersecurity solutions.

The research not only achieves high accuracy in intrusion detection but also addresses the critical challenge of black-box AI models by offering meaningful insights into model decisions. Through detailed performance evaluation and visualization techniques, the project demonstrates the benefits of combining machine learning with

explainability in real-world cybersecurity applications. Future improvements can focus on real-time implementation, adaptability to evolving threats, and integration with existing security frameworks to further enhance the system's effectiveness and usability.

7.3 FUTURE ENHANCEMENTS

While the current system demonstrates significant performance, several enhancements can be implemented to further improve its capabilities and address evolving cybersecurity challenges.

- **Real-Time Intrusion Detection:** Integrate the system with real-time network traffic monitoring tools to enable immediate detection of intrusions. This would require optimizing the system for low-latency processing and handling high data volumes.
- **Adaptive Learning:** Implement adaptive learning techniques to enable the model to continuously learn from new data and adapt to evolving attack patterns. This would involve incorporating online learning algorithms and anomaly detection techniques.
- **Automated Incident Response:** Develop automated incident response capabilities to enable the system to automatically trigger security measures in response to detected intrusions. This would involve integrating the system with security orchestration and automation tools.
- **Advanced Feature Engineering:** Explore advanced feature engineering techniques to extract more informative features from network traffic data. This could involve incorporating domain-specific knowledge and using deep learning models to learn feature representations.
- **Integration with Other Security Tools:** Integrate the system with other security tools, such as firewalls and intrusion prevention systems, to create a comprehensive security ecosystem. This would enable seamless information sharing and coordinated incident response.

- **Expand Dataset:** Test the system on other intrusion detection datasets, or create and test with real-world network traffic datasets. This will help generalize the model, and expose it to more attack types.
- **Cloud Deployment:** Deploy the system on a cloud platform to enhance scalability and availability. This would enable the system to handle large volumes of network traffic and provide continuous monitoring.
- **Explanation Granularity:** Allow the user to change the granularity of the SHAP explanations. For example, allow the user to see explanations based on individual packets, or aggregated explanations based on flows.
- **Adversarial Robustness:** Investigate and implement techniques to improve the model's robustness against adversarial attacks. This would involve incorporating adversarial training and defense mechanisms.

By incorporating these enhancements, the XAI-enhanced NIDS can become a more robust and effective tool for safeguarding digital environments against evolving cyber threats.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Dataset Description

This appendix provides details about the NAL-KDD dataset used in this project. The dataset includes a variety of network traffic features and labels indicating normal and attack instances. It consists of the following:

- Total Instances: 125,973 (approximately)
- Attack Categories: Denial-of-Service (DoS), Probing, User-to-Root (U2R), and Remote-to-Local (R2L)
- Feature Types: 41 features, including protocol type, service, flag, source bytes, and destination bytes

Appendix 2: XGBoost Hyperparameter Tuning

This appendix presents the hyperparameters optimized for the XGBoost model to improve accuracy and reduce false positives. The key parameters include:

- Learning Rate (eta): 0.1
- Max Depth: 6
- Subsample Ratio: 0.8
- Number of Trees (n_estimators): 200
- Regularization Parameters (Lambda, Alpha): 1, 0.5

Appendix 3: Performance Metrics Calculation

The performance of the intrusion detection system is evaluated using the following metrics:

- Precision: Measures the accuracy of positive predictions.
- Recall: Measures the ability to detect actual intrusions.

- F1-score: Harmonic mean of precision and recall to balance false positives and false negatives.

Appendix 4: SHAP Visualization Examples

This appendix includes sample visualizations used for explainability, such as:

- SHAP Summary Plot: Displays the importance of different features in the model's decisions.
- SHAP Dependence Plot: Shows how a specific feature influences predictions.
- SHAP Force Plot: Provides a case-by-case explanation of why a specific instance was classified as an intrusion.

Appendix 5: MATLAB Code for Performance Comparison

This appendix contains the MATLAB script used to compare network performance metrics, including total energy consumption, packet delivery ratio (PDR), end-to-end delay (EED), throughput, and total packets received. The script generates bar charts for each metric to visualize the difference between SPIN with and without clustering.

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