**1. Introduction**

In the past few decades, the internet has evolved from a luxury to an essential tool embedded in nearly every aspect of daily life. From social media and streaming services to online shopping, e-learning, and banking, the digital world offers unprecedented convenience. However, this technological advancement has also brought with it a shadow side; a rise in sophisticated cyber threats that prey on unsuspecting users. Among the most prevalent and dangerous of these threats is phishing.

Phishing attacks are deceptive attempts to obtain sensitive information such as usernames, passwords, and credit card details by masquerading as trustworthy entities. These attacks are typically carried out through emails, instant messages, or, more commonly today, fraudulent websites. What makes phishing especially dangerous is its simplicity and effectiveness. By the time a user realizes they've been deceived, the damage is often already done; accounts have been compromised, financial information stolen, or worse. This project seeks to mitigate that threat by introducing an intelligent, proactive tool: a Webpage Phishing Detector System, implemented as a Chrome extension that uses machine learning to detect and block phishing websites in real-time.

**1.1 The Rise of Phishing in the Digital Age**

Over the years, phishing attacks have dramatically increased in both frequency and sophistication. According to the Anti-Phishing Working Group (APWG), the fourth quarter of 2023 saw over 1.35 million unique phishing sites reported globally (APWG, 2023). These websites are not static, they are constantly being created, rebranded, and re-deployed with slight variations to evade traditional security tools. Attackers now use automated systems to spin up new phishing domains in seconds, making real-time detection more necessary than ever.

Furthermore, the global COVID-19 pandemic and the shift to remote work accelerated digital dependence, providing an ideal environment for cybercriminals to exploit users who are increasingly managing sensitive information online. Education, healthcare, banking, and even governmental operations have shifted online, extending the attack surface for cybercriminals and increasing the impact of phishing attacks on society.

**1.2 The Challenge with Traditional Solutions**

Historically, phishing detection has relied on techniques such as manually maintained blacklists, heuristic-based filters, and user reporting. While these methods can be effective to a degree, they struggle to keep up with the speed and creativity of modern cybercriminals. Blacklists, for example, are only effective after a phishing site has already been reported and analyzed by then, many users might have already been compromised. Similarly, heuristic filters can lead to false positives or negatives, failing to detect subtle yet dangerous phishing attempts.

In today’s threat landscape, where phishing websites can be created and abandoned within hours, static detection mechanisms are simply not fast or flexible enough. There is a growing need for systems that can learn from data, adapt over time, and make intelligent decisions without human intervention. This is where machine learning comes into play.

**1.3 Project Motivation**

The core motivation behind this project stems from a very real and growing problem: most internet users are not cybersecurity experts. The average person may not know how to inspect a URL, analyse SSL certificates, or spot a suspicious redirect. Expecting users to independently verify every website they visit is both unrealistic and unfair.

As a result, the burden of security must shift from the user to the system. We need solutions that are not only effective but also seamlessly integrated into the user’s browsing experience. A tool that quietly, efficiently, and accurately flags phishing attempts while allowing the user to browse freely could make a significant difference. This is the driving force behind the development of the Webpage Phishing Detector System.

**1.4 Proposed Solution: A Smart Browser Extension**

This project introduces a browser-based solution in the form of a Chrome extension that acts as a real-time phishing detector. By analysing the current webpage’s structure, URL patterns, SSL status, domain age, form data, and other relevant features, the extension can predict whether a site is safe or suspicious. The core of the system is powered by a trained machine learning model, which has been developed using a labeled dataset of both legitimate and phishing websites.

When a user visits a website, the extension extracts features and feeds them into the ML model. If the model determines that the site is likely phishing, the user is immediately alerted and encouraged to navigate away. Additionally, users have the option to report suspected phishing sites, which are added to a growing crowdsourced database that further strengthens the tool's effectiveness over time.

The goal is to create a lightweight, non-intrusive, and intelligent assistant that increases users’ digital safety without compromising their browsing experience.

**1.5 Learning Objectives and Broader Impact**

From a technical perspective, this project offers valuable experience in the intersection of cybersecurity, machine learning, and browser extension development. It demonstrates how data science can be applied to solve practical cybersecurity challenges, especially in situations that require real-time decision-making and user-centric design.

On a broader level, the project contributes to public awareness and digital safety. In many regions; including areas where access to high end security tools is limited, a simple browser extension could be a powerful line of defense. By making advanced security accessible through a user-friendly tool, this project aims to empower users to protect themselves online, regardless of their technical background.

**References**

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