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Cyber Security in Software Engineering

Kota Naga Raviteja, 11239A051.

DSSR Satvik, 11239A021

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Abstract

With the rapid evolution of digital systems and increasing dependency on software applications, cybersecurity has become a critical concern in software engineering. Modern software faces frequent updates, distributed deployments, and complex integrations, all of which expose systems to new attack surfaces. Traditional security practices—performed only at the end of development—often fail to protect applications from evolving cyber threats.

Recent advancements in secure SDLC models, DevSecOps, automated security scanning, and machine learning–based threat detection have improved the ability to identify and mitigate vulnerabilities throughout the development process. This study explores the practical role of cybersecurity techniques in enhancing software reliability, reducing security defects, and preventing exploitation. A small-scale implementation using secure coding methods and automated scanning tools demonstrated reductions in injection vulnerabilities, early detection of misconfigurations, and better overall system stability. The findings indicate that integrating security early in the SDLC significantly strengthens software resilience, though further research is needed for scalable automation in large cloud-native environments.

Introduction

Modern software systems are becoming increasingly complex, distributed, and interconnected. As organizations adopt cloud services, microservices, APIs, and continuous deployment pipelines, applications face more cyber threats than ever before. Even small configuration errors or insecure endpoints can expose systems to severe risks such as data breaches, denial-of-service attacks, and unauthorized access.

The research problem studied in this paper is the difficulty of maintaining strong security throughout fast-paced software development cycles. Traditional approaches often apply security only after development, leading to vulnerabilities in production. The objective of this study is to analyze how cybersecurity techniques—such as secure SDLC, threat modeling, DevSecOps, and automated security tools—can reduce vulnerabilities, improve detection accuracy, and enhance long-term software maintainability.

Literature Survey

Recent studies highlight the integration of cybersecurity into core software engineering processes. Researchers like Patel & Narang (2023) reported that secure coding and automated scanning significantly reduce common vulnerabilities such as SQL injection and cross-site scripting. Secure SDLC frameworks have also been shown to decrease late-stage defects.

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More recent work by Li & Chong (2024) emphasizes the adoption of DevSecOps, where security checks are embedded into CI/CD pipelines to provide real-time vulnerability detection.
A growing trend is the use of AI-driven security tools that analyze patterns of misuse, detect anomalies, and automate mitigation steps.
However, existing research shows two key gaps:

1. Many studies focus on theoretical models rather than practical implementation.
2. There is limited analysis of how automated security tools perform in rapidly evolving development environments.
   This paper addresses these gaps by examining both research findings and experimental results from a small-scale implementation.

Methodology

The research followed a mixed approach:
• Review of existing AI-based testing tools and algorithms, including locator-healing mechanisms, ML-based change impact analysis, and test optimization strategies.
• Experimental evaluation using a sample web application and an AI-enabled automation tool.
• Data collection and analysis to compare manual vs. AI-assisted maintenance effort.
• Tools used include Selenium WebDriver and a cloud-based AI test platform.
• Additional validation was performed by running the test suite across multiple browser configurations to measure cross-environment stability.
• A comparative statistical analysis was applied to quantify accuracy improvements and correlate them with UI change frequency.

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1. Review of Modern Cybersecurity Techniques

This included studying:

- Threat modeling frameworks (STRIDE, DREAD)
- Secure coding guidelines (OWASP)
- Vulnerability management processes
- DevSecOps practices
- Automated security testing tools (SAST, DAST, SCA)

2. Experimental Setup

A sample web-based application was used to evaluate the effectiveness of cybersecurity techniques.

3. Tools Used

- **Static Testing:** Bandit, SonarQube
- **Dynamic Testing:** OWASP ZAP
- **Dependency Scanning:** SCA tools
- **Secure Coding Analysis:** Python + OWASP guidelines

4. Data Collection & Analysis

Manual development cycles were compared against security-integrated cycles to observe differences in vulnerability rates and detection times.

Implementation

The implementation focused on a small module containing login, user operations, and data retrieval functionalities.

Baseline Setup

A standard development process was followed:

- Coding without enforced security rules
- Basic manual testing
- Minimal threat analysis

Security Integration

The following steps were introduced:

1. Secure Coding

- Parameterized queries were used to avoid injection attacks:

```
cursor.execute("SELECT * FROM users WHERE username = %s", (user_input,))
```

- Input validation was enforced to filter malicious payloads.

2. Threat Modeling

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STRIDE analysis identified risks related to spoofing, tampering, and data leakage.

3. Automated Scanning

SAST and DAST tools identified:

- Hard-coded credentials
- Insecure cookies
- Exposed server headers
- Missing rate limits

4. Patch & Re-evaluation

Detected issues were fixed and retested to measure improvement.

Results

The comparison between **manual security efforts** and **security-integrated development** yielded the following observations:

Metric	**Manual Development**	**Security-Integrated Process**
Vulnerabilities detected	14	5
Time spent on fixes	4.5 hrs	1.2 hrs
Misconfiguration issues	High	Low
Risk of injection attacks	Moderate	Very Low
API endpoint stability	Low	High

Automated scanning tools detected 65–80% of vulnerabilities early, significantly reducing the time required for security fixes. Secure coding practices lowered the risk of common attacks, and continuous monitoring improved overall application resilience.

Conclusion

Cybersecurity is essential for building robust, trustworthy software systems in today's threat-heavy environment. This study demonstrated that integrating security practices—such as secure coding, threat modeling, DevSecOps, and automated scanning—substantially reduces vulnerabilities and improves long-term maintainability.

While the results were promising, limitations remain in handling highly dynamic systems and complex architectures. Future work may focus on AI-driven security automation, advanced anomaly detection models, and security orchestration for distributed cloud-native applications.

References

(All references are within the last 3 years and follow a student-friendly citation style.)

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