**INTRODUCTION**

In the recent decades, cloud-based storage service has attracted considerable attention from both academia and industries. It may be widely used in many Internet-based commercial applications (e.g., Apple iCould) due to its long-list benefits including access flexibility and free of local data management. Increasing number of individuals and companies nowadays prefer to outsource their data to remote cloud in such a way that they may reduce the cost of upgrading their local data management facilities/devices. However, the worry of security breach over outsourced data may be one of the main obstacles hindering Internet users from widely using cloud-based storage service. In many practical applications, outsourced data may need to be further shared with others. For example, a Dropbox user Alice may share photos with her friends. Without using data encryption, prior to sharing the photos, Alice needs to generate a sharing link and further share the link with friends. Although guaranteeing some level of access control over unauthorized users (e.g., those are not Alice’s friends), the sharing link may be visible within the Dropbox administration level (e.g., administrator could reach the link).

Since the cloud (which is deployed in an open network) is not be fully trusted, it is generally recommended to encrypt the data prior to being uploaded to the cloud to ensure data security and privacy. One of the corresponding solutions is to directly employ an encryption technique (e.g., AES) on the outsourced data before uploading to cloud, so that only specified cloud user (with valid decryption key) can gain access to the data via valid decryption.

To prevent shared photos being accessed by the “insiders” of the system, a straightforward way is to designate the group of authorized data users prior to encrypting the data. In some cases, nonetheless, Alice may have no idea about who the photo receivers/users are going to be. It is possible that Alice only has knowledge of attributes w.r.t. photo receivers. In this case, traditional public key encryption (e.g., Paillier Encryption), which requires the encryptor to know who the data receiver is in advance, cannot be leveraged. Providing policy-based encryption mechanism over the outsourced photos is therefore desirable, so that Alice makes use of the mechanism to define access policy over the encrypted photos to guarantee only a group of authorized users is able to access the photos.

In a cloud-based storage service, there exists a common attack that is well-known as resource-exhaustion attack. Since a (public) cloud may not have any control over download request (namely, a service user may send unlimited numbers of download request to cloud server), a malicious service user may launch the denial-of-service (DoS)/distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks to consume the resource of cloud storage service server so that the cloud service could not be able to respond honest users’ service requests. As a result, in the “pay-as-you-go” model, economic aspects could be disrupted due to higher resource usage. The costs of cloud service users will rise dramatically as the attacks scale up. This has been known as Economic Denial of Sustainability (EDoS) attack, which targets to the cloud adopter’s economic resources. Apart from economic loss, unlimited download itself could open a window for network attackers to observe the encrypted download data that may lead to some potential information leakage (e.g., file size). Therefore, an effective control over download request for outsourced (encrypted) data is also needed.