Mahmoud Nazzal

Ph.D. in Computer Engineering Specializing in AI Security and Applications

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GitHub: https://github.com/mahmoudkanazzal

G Google Scholar : https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=ygjUJnYAAAAJ

Address: 410B-FMH, NJIT, Newark, NJ 07102, USA

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Currently: Security, robustness, and applicability of Graph Neural Networks (GNNs) and Large Language Models (LLMs)

- Adversarial robustness of GNNs and LLMs in novel areas
- Prompt optimization and engineering
- Real-world applications of LLMs and GNNs in:
 - > Secure and functional source code generation
 - > Hardware design automation
 - > Transportation system analytics

- > Internet security
- > Deepfake detection

Past interests: Machine learning (ML) for communications (Physical layer security, Channel estimation, and spectrum sensing)

Professional Experience

Starting 2025

Assistant Professor (Tenure Track), OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY, DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTER SCIENCE, Norfolk, VA, USA

• Tenure-track faculty appointment beginning Fall 2025

2021-2025

Research Assistant / Teaching Assistant, New Jersey Institute of Technology, Newark, NJ, USA

- Conducted research on LLM and GNN security and applications
- Collaborated with industry partner (TelAI) on legal document analysis
- Lectured undergraduate courses in computer engineering

2019-2021

Lecturer, ABU DHABI VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING INSTITUTE, Abu Dhabi, UAE

- Taught undergraduate courses in electrical engineering
- Supervised student projects and provided mentorship

2017-2019

Researcher, ISTANBUL MEDIPOL UNIVERSITY, Istanbul, Turkey

• Conducted research on machine learning for wireless communication technologies

2016-2017

Lecturer, IZMIR UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS, IZMIR, Turkey

- Taught courses in electrical engineering
- Supervised graduation projects

2009-2016

Research and Teaching Assistant, Eastern Mediterranean University, Famagusta, Cyprus

- Supervised laboratory sessions for undergraduate students
- Taught courses in electrical and electronic engineering

EDUCATION

2025

Ph.D. in Computer Engineering, New Jersey Institute of Technology, Newark, NJ, USA

2021

- GPA: 4.00/4.00
- Dissertation: Adversarial Robustness in Advanced Sequential and Relational Machine Learning Models Integrating Graph Neural Networks and Large Language Models
- Supervisors: Prof. Abdallah Khreishah and Dr. Issa Khalil

2010

M.Sc. in Electrical and Electronic Engineering, EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN UNIVERSITY, Cyprus

2009

• GPA: 3.77/4.00

• Thesis: Color Demosaicing for Digital Camera Images

2009

B.Sc. in Electrical Engineering, BIRZEIT UNIVERSITY, Ramallah, West Bank

2004

• Final-year project: Power Factor Correction Using a Three-Phase Converter

RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION SUMMARY

- Over 12 journal papers and 22 conference papers
- 1 book chapter
- 8 US and EU patents
- 560+ Citations

SELECTED AWARDS AND HONORS

May 2025	Hashimoto Prize (\$5000), NJIT, NEWARK, NJ, USA Awarded for outstanding scholarship and research potential in Electrical and Computer Engineering
Oct. 2024	ACM Conference on Computer and Communications Security (CCS 2024), SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH, USA Student Travel Grant to attend the conference
Jun. 2023	33rd Great Lakes Symposium on VLSI (GLSVLSI), KNOXVILLE, TN, USA Best Paper Award (2nd place). See award details here
Nov. 2022	ECE PhD Stories Contest, NJIT, NEWARK, NJ, USA 3rd Prize
2021 - 2022	New Jersey Institute of Technology, Newark, NJ, USA Ross Fellowship
2022 - 2024	New Jersey Institute of Technology, Newark, NJ, USA Teaching Assistantship and Research Assistantship
Jun. 2021	Signal Processing and Communications Applications Conference (SIU 2021), ISTANBUL, Turkey Best Paper Award (3rd place). See award details here
Oct. 2020	Turkish Patent and Trademark Office, Ankara, Turkey 5th Place, Second University Patent Competition
2017 - 2019	The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK), ANKARA, Turkey TUBITAK 2221 Fellowship
2009-2010	Eastern Mediterranean University, FAMAGUSTA, Cyprus Research Assistantship
2008 - 2009	Jerusalem District Electricity Company (JDECO), RAMALLAH, West Bank B.Sc. Graduation Project Fund, Amount \$2,000

NOTABLE PUBLICATIONS

Conference Papers (C)

- [C22] M. Nazzal, I. Khalil, A. Khreishah, and N.H. Phan, "PromSec: Prompt Optimization for Secure Generation of Functional Source Code with Large Language Models (LLMs)", 31st ACM Conference on Computer and Communications Security (CCS 2024), Salt Lake City, U.S.A, UT, Oct. 2024, [Covered by a US Provisional Patent.]
- [C21] M. Nazzal, I. Khalil, A. Khreishah, N.H. Phan, and Y. Ma, "Multi-Instance Adversarial Attack on GNN-Based Malicious Domain Detection", 45th IEEE Symposium on Security and Privacy (IEEE S&P 2024), San Francisco, CA, USA, May 2024. ☐ [Presentation Video]
- [C20] A. Al-Barwaw, M. Nazzal, I. Khalil, A. Khreishah, and N.H. Phan, "ViGText: Deepfake Image Detection with Vision-Language Model Explanations and Graph Neural Networks", *Accepted to appear in the 33rd Network and Distributed System Security* (NDSS 2026), San Diego, CA, USA, Feb 2026.
- [C19] M. Nazzal*, K. Nguyen*, D. Vungarala*, R. Zand, H. Phan, A. Khreishah, and S. Angizi, "FedChip: Federated LLM for Artificial Intelligence Accelerator Chip Design," Accepted to appear in *IEEE International Conference on LLM-Aided Design (ICLAD)*, Stanford University, Stanford, CA, Jun. 2025 (*Equal contribution).
- [C18] D. Vungarala*, M. Nazzal*, M. Morsali, C. Zhang, A. Ghosh, A. Khreishah, and S. Angizi, "SA-DS: A Dataset for Large Language Model-Driven AI Accelerator Design Generation," Accepted to appear in 58th IEEE International Symposium on Circuits and Systems (IEEE ISCAS), London, UK, May 2025 (*Equal contribution)
- [C17] T.K. Ton, N. Nguyen, M. Nazzal, A. Khreishah, C. Borcea, N.H. Phan, R. Jin, I. Khalil, and Y. Shen, "Demo: SGCode: A Flexible Prompt-Optimizing System for Secure Generation of Code", 31st ACM Conference on Computer and Communications Security (CCS 2024), Salt Lake City, UT, U.S.A, Oct. 2024.

[C16] M. Morsali, M. Nazzal, A. Khreishah, and S. Angizi, "IMA-GNN: In-Memory Acceleration of Centralized and Decentralized Graph Neural Networks at the Edge", 33rd edition of Great Lakes Symposium on VLSI (GLSVLSI), Knoxville, TN, USA, Jun. 2023. [Best Paper Award]

Journal Papers (J)

[J12] **M. Nazzal**, A. Khreishah, J. Lee, S. Angizi, A. Al-Fuqaha, and M. Guizani, "Semi-decentralized Inference in Heterogeneous Graph Neural Networks for Traffic Demand Forecasting: An Edge-Computing Approach", *IEEE Transactions on Vehicular Technology*, Jan. 2024.

Patents (P)

[P8] M. Nazzal, I. Khalil, A. Khreishah, and N.H. Phan, "Method and System for Prompt Optimization for Secure Generation of Functional Source Code with Large Language Models", *US Patent*, Patent Application No.: US63/561,573, Washington, D.C., USA, Filing date: Mar. 5, 2024.

Book Chapters (BC)

[BC1] M. Nazzal, M. A. Aygul, and H. Arslan, *Channel Modeling for 5G and Beyond*, In: H. Arslan, E. Basar, *Flexible and Cognitive Radio Access Technologies for 5G and Beyond*, Telecommunications Series, Institution of Engineering and Technology, ISBN-13: 978-1-83953-079-1, p. 342, 2020.

RECENT JOURNAL PAPERS (ML SECURITY)

- [J11] I. Alsmadi, K. Ahmad, M. Nazzal, F. Alam, A. Al-Fuqaha, A. Khreishah, and A. Algosaibi. "Adversarial NLP for social network applications: Attacks, defenses, and research directions". *IEEE Transactions on Computational Social Systems*, vol. 10, no. 6, pp. 3089-3108, Nov. 2022.
- [J10] N. Aljaafari, M. Nazzal, A. Sawalmeh, A. Khreishah, M. Anan, A. Algosaibi, M. Alnaeem, A. Aldalbahi, A. Alhumam, and C. P. Vizcarra, "Investigating the Factors Impacting Adversarial Attack and Defense Performances in Federated Learning", *IEEE Transactions on Engineering Management*, vol. 71, pp. 12542-12555, May 2022.
- [J9] I. Alsmadi, N. Aljaafari, **M. Nazzal**, S. Alhamed, A. Sawalmeh, C. P. Vizcarra, A. Khreishah, M. Anan, A. Algosaibi, M. Alnaeem, A. Aldalbahi, and A. Alhumam, "Adversarial Machine Learning in Text Processing: A Literature Survey", *IEEE Access*, vol. 10, pp. 17043-17077, Jan. 2022.
- [J8] H. M. Furqan, M. A. Aygül, **M. Nazzal**, and H. Arslan, "Primary User Emulation and Jamming Attack Detection in Cognitive Radio via Sparse Coding", *EURASIP Journal on Wireless Communications and Networking*, no. 1, pp. 1-9, Apr. 2020.

Journal Papers (ML and Signal Processing)

- [J7] M. Aygül, M. Nazzal, and H. Arslan, "Sparsifying dictionary learning for beamspace channel representation and estimation in millimeter-wave massive MIMO", *IEEE Access*, vol. 11, pp. 98436-98451, Sep. 2023.
- [J6] S. Shao, **M. Nazzal**, A. Khreishah, and M. Ayyash, "Self-optimizing Data Offloading in Mobile Heterogeneous Radio-Optical Networks: A Deep Reinforcement Learning Approach", *IEEE Network Magazine*, vol. 36, no. 2, pp. 100-106, May 2022.
- [J5] A. Alenezi, M. Nazzal, A. Sawalmeh, A. Khreishah, S. Shao, and M. Almutiry, "Machine Learning Regression-based RETRO-VLP for Real-time and Stabilized Indoor Positioning", *Cluster Computing*, Vol. 27, pp. 299–311, Dec. 2022.
- [J4] M. A. Aygül, M. Nazzal, and H. Arslan, "Using OMP and SD Algorithms Together in mm-Wave mMIMO Channel Estimation", Signal, Image and Video Processing, Springer, vol. 16, pp. 1205–1213, Jan. 2022.
- [J3] M. A. Aygül, M. Nazzal, M. İ. Sağlam, D. B. da Costa, H. F. Ates, and H. Arslan, "Efficient Spectrum Occupancy Prediction Exploiting Multidimensional Correlations through Composite 2D-LSTM Models", *Sensors-Special Issue Al-Enabled Cognitive Radio Networks*, vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 135-153, Dec. 2020
- [J2] **M. Nazzal**, A. R. Ekti, A. Gorcin, and H. Arslan, "Exploiting sparsity recovery for compressive spectrum sensing: A machine learning approach", *IEEE Access*, vol. 7, pp. 126098-126110, Apr. 2019.
- [J1] M. Nazzal, F. Yeganli, and H. Ozkaramanli, "A strategy for residual component-based multiple structured dictionary learning", *IEEE Signal Processing Letters*, vol. 22, no. 11, pp. 2059-2063, Nov. 2015.

Conference Papers (Security, ML, Signal Processing)

- [C15] M. Nazzal, N. Aljaafari, A. Sawalmeh, A. Khreishah, M. Anan, A. Algosaibi, M. Alnaeem, A. Aldalbahi, A. Alhumam, C. P. Vizcarra, and S. Alhamed, "Genetic Algorithm-Based Dynamic Backdoor Attack on Federated Learning-Based Network Traffic Classification", 8th International Conference on Fog and Mobile Edge Computing (FMEC 2023), Tartu, Estonia, Sep. 18-20, 2023.
- [C14] M. A. Aygül, M. Nazzal, and H. Arslan, "Estimating Multi-Dimensional Sparsity Level for Spectrum Sensing", 2023 IEEE Wireless Communications and Networking Conference (WCNC 2023), Glasgow, Scotland, UK, Mar. 2023.
- [C13] M. A. Aygül, H. M. Furqan, M. Nazzal, and H. Arslan, "Deep Learning-Assisted Detection of PUEA and Jamming Attacks in Cognitive Radio Systems", 2020 IEEE 92nd Vehicular Technology Conference: VTC2020-Fall, Victoria, BC, Canada, Oct. 2020.
- [C12] M. Nazzal, A. Sawalmeh, S. Shao, M. Anan, A. Khreishah, and A. Alanazi, "Retro-VLP: Towards Single Light Source-based Real-time Indoor Positioning", *International Conference on Information and Communication Systems (ICICS 2022)*, Irbid-Jordan, Jun. 2022.
- [C11] M. Nazzal, M. A. Aygül, and H. Arslan, "Estimation and Exploitation of Multidimensional Sparsity for MIMO-OFDM Channel Estimation", 2022 IEEE Wireless Communications and Networking Conference (WCNC 2022), Austin, TX, USA, Apr. 2022.

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- [C10] M. A. Aygül, M. Nazzal, and H. Arslan, "Deep RL-Based Spectrum Occupancy Prediction Exploiting Time and Frequency Correlations", 2022 IEEE Wireless Communications and Networking Conference (WCNC 2022), Austin, TX, USA, Apr. 2022.
- [C9] M. Nazzal, M. A. Aygül, and H. Arslan, "Sparse Coding with Enhanced Atom Selection for FDD Massive MIMO Channel Estimation", 2021 IEEE 94th Vehicular Technology Conference: VTC2021-Fall, Norman, OK, USA, Sep. 2021.
- [C8] M. A. Aygül, M. Nazzal, and H. Arslan, "Using OMP and SD Algorithms Together in Millimeter Wave Massive MIMO Channel Estimation", Signal Processing and Communications Applications Conference (SIU 2021), Istanbul, Turkey, Jun. 2021. [Best Paper Award]
- [C7] M. A. Aygül, **M. Nazzal**, and H. Arslan, "Deep Learning-Based Optimal RIS Interaction Exploiting Previously Sampled Channel Correlations", 2021 IEEE Wireless Communications and Networking Conference (WCNC 2021), Nanjing, China, Mar. 2021.
- [C6] M. A. Aygül, M. Nazzal, A. R. Ekti, A. Gorcin, D. B. da Costa, H. F. Ates, and H. Arslan, "Spectrum Occupancy Prediction Exploiting Time and Frequency Correlations Through 2D-LSTM", 2020 IEEE 91st Vehicular Technology Conference: VTC2020-Spring, Antwerp, Belgium, May 2020.
- [C5] M. Nazzal, O. Hasekioğlu, A. R. Ekti, A. Gorcin, and H. Arslan, "Compressed spectrum sensing using sparse recovery convergence patterns through machine learning classification", *IEEE International Symposium on Personal, Indoor and Mobile Radio Communications (PIMRC 2019)*, Istanbul, Turkey, Sep. 2019.
- [C4] M. Nazzal, M. A. Aygül, A. Görçin, and H. Arslan, "Dictionary learning-based beamspace channel estimation in millimeter-wave massive MIMO systems with a lens antenna array", the International Wireless Communications & Mobile Computing Conference (IWCMC 2019), Tangier, Morocco, Jun. 2019.
- [C3] M. Nazzal, M. A. Aygül, A. Görçin, and H. Arslan, "Sparse Coding for transform domain-based sparse OFDM channel estimation", Signal Processing and Communications Applications Conference (SIU 2019), Sivas, Turkey, Apr. 2019.
- [C2] M. Nazzal, H. M. Furqan, and H. Arslan, "FDD massive MIMO channel estimation by sparse coding over AoA/AoD cluster dictionaries", *IEEE International Symposium on Personal, Indoor and Mobile Radio Communications (PIMRC 2018)*, Bologna, Italy, Sep. 2018.
- [C1] H. M. Furqan, M. Nazzal, and H. Arslan, "Iterative tap pursuit for channel shortening equalizer design", 7th International Conference on Computer and Communication Engineering (ICCCE 2018), pp. 416-420, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Sep. 2018.

PATENT DISCLOSURES

- [P8] M. Nazzal, I. Khalil, A. Khreishah, and N.H. Phan, "Method and System for Prompt Optimization for Secure Generation of Functional Source Code with Large Language Models", *US Patent*, Patent Application No.: US63/561,573, Washington, D.C., USA, Filing date: Mar. 5, 2024.
- [P7] M. A. Aygül, H. M. Furqan, **M. Nazzal**, and H. Arslan, "Primary User Emulation / Signal Jamming Attack Detection Method", *US Patent*, Patent No.: US12177005B2, Washington, D.C., USA, Publication date: Dec. 24, 2024.
- [P6] M. A. Aygül, M. Nazzal, and H. Arslan, "Learning-Based Spectrum Occupancy Prediction Exploiting Multi-Dimensional Correlation", US Patent Application, Patent No.: US20230388809A1, Washington, D.C., USA, Publication date: Nov. 30, 2023.
- [P5] M. A. Aygül, **M. Nazzal**, and H. Arslan, "Learning-Based Spectrum Occupancy Prediction Using Multidimensional Correlation", *Korean Patent Application*, Patent No.: KR20230079436A, Seoul, South Korea, Publication date: Jun. 7, 2023.
- [P4] M. A. Aygül, H. M. Furqan, M. Nazzal, and H. Arslan, "Primary User Emulation / Signal Jamming Attack Detection Method", *European Patent*, Patent No.: EP4082135A4, Munich, Germany, Publication date: Dec. 13, 2023.
- [P3] M. A. Aygül, **M. Nazzal**, and H. Arslan, "Learning-Based Spectrum Occupancy Prediction Exploiting Multi-Dimensional Correlation", *European Patent*, Patent No.: EP3989626A1, Munich, Germany, Publication date: Apr. 27, 2022.
- [P2] M. A. Aygül, M. Nazzal, and H. Arslan, "Learning-Based Spectrum Occupancy Prediction Exploiting Multi-Dimensional Correlation", World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), Patent No.: WO2022084096A1, Geneva, Switzerland, Publication date: Apr. 28, 2022.
- [P1] M. A. Aygül, H. M. Furqan, **M. Nazzal**, and H. Arslan, "Primary User Emulation / Signal Jamming Attack Detection Method", *World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)*, Patent No.: WO2021133312A1, Geneva, Switzerland, Publication date: Jul. 1, 2021.

SEMINARS AND PRESENTATIONS

- [S4] M. Nazzal, I. Khalil, A. Khreishah, and N.H. Phan, "PromSec: Prompt Optimization for Secure Generation of Functional Source Code with Large Language Models (LLMs)," 31st ACM Conference on Computer and Communications Security (CCS 2024), Salt Lake City, U.S.A, USA, UT, Oct. 2024. Covered by a US Provisional Patent. (In person)
- [S3] M. Nazzal, I. Khalil, A. Khreishah, N.H. Phan, and Y. Ma, "Multi-Instance Adversarial Attack on GNN-Based Malicious Domain Detection," 45th IEEE Symposium on Security and Privacy (IEEE S&P 2024), San Francisco, CA, USA, May 2024. ▶ [Presentation Video]. (In person)
- [S2] M. Nazzal, N. Aljaafari, A. Sawalmeh, A. Khreishah, M. Anan, A. Algosaibi, M. Alnaeem, A. Aldalbahi, A. Alhumam, C. P. Vizcarra, and S. Alhamed, "Genetic Algorithm-Based Dynamic Backdoor Attack on Federated Learning-Based Network Traffic Classification," 8th International Conference on Fog and Mobile Edge Computing (FMEC 2023), Tartu, Estonia, Sep. 18-20, 2023. (Online)
- [S1] Presenter at the IEEE 802.11™ Wireless Local Area Networks standard meetings. Represented Istanbul Medipol University and Vestel Group, contributing to cognitive radio in Nov. 2020. (Online)

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TECHNICAL SKILLS

Pytorch, TensorFlow, Scikit-learn, PyG, DGL Al Programming Environments

> Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG), Vector Databases, Semantic Search LLM-Related Skills

MATLAB, Python, C/C++, Java **Programming Languages**

High-performance computing (HPC) utilizing Slurm Wulver for CPU/GPU nodes and parallel **Cluster Computing Infrastructure**

storage management, Hadoop, Apache Spark for data processing and analytics

Embedded Systems Micro-controllers, Arduino

Technical Software Simulink, OrCAD, AutoCAD, LabVIEW

Scientific and Professional Skills Professional and Scientific Reporting, Grant Proposal Writing, Class Management in Interna-

tional English-Speaking Environments

MS Windows, MS Office, Linux, ETEX Computer Literacy

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

May 2024

New Jersey Institute of Technology, NEWARK, NJ, USA

Sep. 2022

Lecturer, Courses Taught:

Microprocessors

> Course evaluation: 3.29/4.00

• Computer Architecture and Organization

> Course evaluation : Fall 3.69/4.00, Spring 3.24/4.00

Jul. 2021

Institute of Applied Technology, ABU DHABI, UAE

Aug. 2019

Lecturer, Courses Taught:

Robotics

Circuit Analysis

• Engineering Communications

Graduation Project

Jun. 2017

Izmir University of Economics, IZMIR, Turkey

Sep. 2016

Lecturer, Courses Taught:

Graduation Project

• Java Programming

• Electric Circuits

• Digital Electronics

• Computer Organization and Architecture

Jun. 2016

Eastern Mediterranean University, FAMAGUSTA, Cyprus

Sep. 2015

Lecturer, Courses Taught:

• Introduction to Logic Design

• Computer Architecture and Organization

• C/C++ Programming

• Electric Circuits

Sep. 2015

Eastern Mediterranean University, FAMAGUSTA, Cyprus

Oct. 2009

Teaching Assistant, supervised laboratory sessions and conducted tutorials for the courses:

- Digital Signal Processing
- Introduction to Logic Design
- Introduction to Programming
- Signals and Systems

MENTORING EXPERIENCE

2023 Faculty Advisor, NJIT Undergraduate Summer Research and Innovation Symposium (Provost URI SUMMER RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP), Newark, NJ, USA

2022 Mentored summer interns Youssef Kanani and Pulami Basu, whose works were published in the NJIT annual conference proceedings.

Faculty Advisor, NJIT Undergraduate Summer Research and Innovation Symposium (Provost URI 2022 SUMMER RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP), Newark, NJ, USA

2021 Mentored summer intern Oscar Mahecha-Benitez whose work was published in the NJIT annual conference proceedings.

Professional Development and Certificates

- Participant, Virtual Excite the Dream Program, Old Dominion University, Sep. 2024.
- Faculty Certificate in Smart Learning, A Certified Online Faculty from Hamdan Bin Mohammed Smart University, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, March 2020.

Professional Affiliations

- The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE)
- Association for Computing Machinery (ACM)

EDITING AND REFEREE SERVICE

- IEEE/ACM Transactions on Networking
- IEEE Transactions on Signal Processing
- IEEE Transactions on Wireless Communications
- IEEE Wireless Communications Letters
- IEEE Access

RELEVANT COURSES

- Deep Learning on Graphs
- Statistical Machine Learning and Pattern Recognition
- · Optimization Theory
- Optimization for Communication Networks
- Neural Networks
- Computational Intelligence
- Probability Theory
- Digital Image Processing

LANGUAGES

• Arabic : Native proficiency

• English: Fluent

• Turkish: Intermediate proficiency