

Machine Learning-Based Approaches for Detecting and Mitigating Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) Attacks to Improved Cloud Security

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ABSTRACT: Cloud environments encounter massive service disruptions together with security breaches and substantial financial losses through Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks. Detecting and mitigating DDoS assaults is the focus of this research, which examines the efficacy of ML models, particularly the CNN-LSTM model and the ID3 decision tree method. The CIC-DDoS2019 dataset was used for both training and evaluation, employing a train-test data split of 80:20. The hybrid CNN-LSTM model achieved superior performance than the ID3 decision tree method when subjected to comparison because it integrates CNN spatial extraction with LSTM sequence learning. A CNN-LSTM model using 0.97 recall together with 0.98 precision and 0.98F1-score achieved 98.5% accuracy in detecting DDoS attacks. Analyses indicate that the ID3 model delivered below-average results yet remained a usable solution for detection of DDoS attacks in cloud environments. These findings provide light on the utilization of decision tree algorithms such as ID3 in cloud security applications and highlight the potential of the CNN-LSTM hybrid model as a strong solution for DDoS attack detection.

KEYWORDS: DDoS attacks, Cloud security, Threat detection, Machine learning, CIC-DDoS2019 dataset, Cloud Environment.

I. INTRODUCTION

An advanced kind of denial-of-service attack called a DDoS floods the target or associated infrastructure with overwhelming amounts of malicious data. A network of infected computers and other devices, known as bots, is used to do this under the command of an attacker from a distance. It causes a major decrease in bandwidth and connection, which in turn disrupts all network services. Service degradation and total service denial cause the greatest losses in cloud ecosystems [1]. DDoS attacks aim to undermine legitimate users' access to resources. A malicious flood overwhelms the network, causing it to surpass its bandwidth capacity and interrupt services. The intended recipients include banking organizations, healthcare providers, government entities, and even low-key public networks.

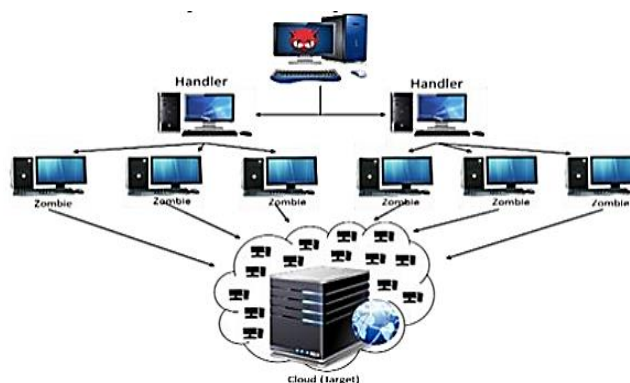


Fig. 1.DDoS Attacks in Cloud environment[2].

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DDoS assaults in the cloud are different from those in conventional networks [3]. This is because, in addition to the effects of DDoS attacks, which include service interruption, financial loss from outages, harm to a brand's reputation, attack mitigation expenses, etc., there are other ways that attacks can affect the cloud, including increased costs from autoscaling, additional energy expenses, collateral damage to cloud computing components, data and service migrations between cloud environments, and adverse effects from cohosted VMs. Cloud DDoS causes an assault known as DDoS [4].

However, machine learning (ML) plays an important role in enhancing the ability to predict and mitigate DDoS attacks. These capabilities are primarily realized through two key areas: predictive modeling and mitigation strategies [5]. Both areas leverage the power of ML to analyze network traffic, identify potential threats, and respond effectively to minimize the impact of attacks. Predictive modeling involves training ML algorithms on historical data to recognize patterns that may indicate a DDoS attack.

A. Motivation and Contributions of the Study

Cloud computing has become more important for important activities, making it vulnerable to DDoS assaults. These cyberattacks lead to both substantial service interruptions and compromised information security which demands significant financial settlements. Modern security solutions struggle to address the increasing complexity and size of current cyberattacks. Advanced intelligent solutions have become essential because DDoS threats require proactive detection and mitigation capabilities. The promising field of machine learning allows analysts to handle massive data while detecting complex attack patterns through fast reaction to emerging threats. By integrating these techniques, organizations can enhance cloud security, minimize downtime, and ensure the reliability of their services in the face of increasingly dynamic cyber challenges. Here are the main points from this study:

- Utilizing the CICDDoS2019 dataset, which includes DDoS attack traffic and normal traffic data, for training and evaluating the models.
- Applying data preprocessing techniques like handling null and missing values, removing duplicate entries, one-hot encoding, and normalization to ensure optimal data preparation.
- Evaluating and comparing the performance of CNN-LSTM, ID3 for detecting and mitigating DDoS attacks.
- Model efficacy and false positive/detection performance balance may be assessed employing assessment measures including F1-score, recall, accuracy, and precision.

B. Organization of the paper

Here is the structure of the paper: Section I introduces ML for DDoS detection in cloud security. Section II reviews related research on machine learning techniques for DDoS mitigation. Section III covers data preprocessing, feature selection, and evaluation metrics. Section IV compares models with key performance visualizations. Section V concludes with findings and recommendations for future improvements.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section highlights the literature review that examines machine learning-based approaches for detecting and mitigating DDoS attacks to enhance cloud security. Key focuses include leveraging advanced ML and DL models.

In this study, Idhammad, Afdel and Belouch (2018) provide a DDoS detection method that uses the Extra-Trees algorithm, Co-clustering, Information Gain Ratio, and network entropy estimates in a sequential online fashion. To improve accuracy and decrease false positive rates, the unsupervised component of the method may filter out typical traffic data that is unrelated to DDoS detection. In contrast, the supervised component enables precise DDoS traffic classification while simultaneously lowering the unsupervised component's false positive rates. Various tests were carried out to evaluate a proposed strategy employing 3 publicly available datasets: NSL-KDD, UNB ISCX 12, and UNSW-NB15. There is an accuracy 98.23% the NSL-KDD dataset, 99.88% the UNB ISCX 12, and 93.71% the UNSW-NB15 dataset, with corresponding FPR of 0.33%, 0.35%, and 0.46%, respectively [6].

In this study, Khuphiran et al. (2018) has been discussion about using machine learning methods to identify DDoS attacks. Deep Feed Forward (DFF), a newly developed DL algorithm, is pitted against the time-honored SVM. These two techniques are evaluated using the DARPA 2009 DDoS assaults dataset and the DARPA Scalable Network Monitoring dataset. A possible way to speed up the categorization process is to preprocess the dataset. Results show that after 289.614 seconds of training, the DFF DL system attained a respectable 99.63% accuracy. A training time of 371.118 seconds was sufficient for SVM to achieve a 93.01% accuracy rate [7].

In this study, Li and Lu, (2019) provide an alternative DDoS detection technique called LSTM-BA that integrates the LSTM with the Bayes methodology. With LSTM method's high-confidence LSTM module outputs, they can detect portions of DDoS assaults. They use the Bayes method to increase the accuracy of the second evaluation for those outputs when confidence is low. The publicly accessible datasets of ISCX2012 were used to verify their suggested technique. The outcomes display that LSTM-BA performs better. To be more specific, when compared to the modern approach, LSTM-BA improves detection accuracy by 0.16%, reaching 98.15% [8].

In this study, Umar et al. (2019) an assessment of several machine learning methods, including RF, NB, IBK, and MLP, using an HTTP DDoS attack dataset empirically. A total of 17,512 examples were included in the dataset, with 10256 representing conventional attacks and 7256 representing HTTP DDoS attacks. The attacks included 21 characteristics. Random Forest method

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outperformed all others in the performance test, with a minimal FPR of 0.001% and an accuracy of 99.94%. Defenses against DDoS attacks rely heavily on time-tested conventional methods. However, as of yet, there is no foolproof method for detecting or preventing DDoS assaults. A ML-based IDS is one of the countermeasures put in place to prevent malicious intrusions[9].

In this study, Calvert and Khoshgoftaar (2019) assess how data sampling may be used to generate different class distributions, mitigating an impact of massively unbalanced Slow HTTP DoS datasets. Moreover, they describe how they gathered realistic Slow HTTP DDoS attack traffic in a real-world network environment to build their datasets. In order to assess how well eight ML algorithms identify Slow HTTP DoS attacks, five class distributions are constructed. With an AUC of 0.99904, their findings demonstrate that a Random Forest distribution with a 65:35 ratio of learners to classes is the best option. In addition, they want to find out, by testing for significance, that learners' performance improves dramatically when they employ sampling approaches to identify Slow HTTP DoS attack traffic[10].

In this study, Thanh and Van Lang (2019) examine the effectiveness of using well-known ensemble methods, including Bagging, AdaBoost, Stacking, Decorate, RF, and Voting in detecting DDoS attacks on the UNSW-NB15 dataset, which was generated by the Australian Cyber Security Centre in 2015. With an F-measure 99.28%, the Stacking method with heterogeneous classifiers produces the best classification quality, outperforming both the RF technique (99.02% yield) and a single classifier (98.61%) [11].

In this study, Ahmed and Pathan (2019) investigates how well supervised learning systems, such as deep learning, can identify anomalies in a group setting. Almost every method that has been suggested for detecting DoS attacks using collective anomaly detection up till now is unsupervised. This explains why such methods often display inflated false alarm rates. They have conducted studies to explore the potential of DL in this domain in order to lower the alert rate's already high false positive rate. The experimental findings on the UNSW-NB15 and Cup 1999 datasets demonstrate that the DL employing H2O obtains a recall of about 97% for collective anomaly detection, which is rather interesting. Therefore, when it comes to collective anomaly identification, deep learning is superior to many unsupervised methods. An employ of DL to study the collective anomaly detection issue has never been previously documented[12].

Table I presents the research gaps in previous studies on machine learning-based approaches for detecting and mitigating DDoS attacks, focusing on enhancing cloud security. It highlights key limitations in existing methodologies, datasets, performance benchmarks, and real-world applicability, providing a foundation for further exploration and improvement.

TABLE I. SUMMARY OF THE RELATED WORK ON MACHINE LEARNING-BASED APPROACHES FOR DETECTING AND MITIGATING DISTRIBUTED DENIAL OF SERVICE (DDoS) ATTACKS TO IMPROVED CLOUD SECURITY

References	Methodology	Dataset	Performance	Limitations & Future Work
[6]	Online sequential semi-supervised ML approach using Entropy estimation, Co-clustering, Information Gain Ratio, and Extra-Trees	NSL-KDD, UNB ISCX 12, UNSW-NB15	Accuracy: 98.23% (NSL-KDD), 99.88% (UNB ISCX 12), 93.71% (UNSW-NB15); FPR: 0.33%, 0.35%, 0.46%	Focuses on reducing false positives; future work could explore scalability and performance on real-time data streams.
[7]	Traditional SVM and DFF for DDoS detection	DARPA Scalable Network Monitoring, DARPA 2009 DDoS attacks	Accuracy: 99.63% (DFF), 93.01% (SVM); Training Time: 289.614 secs (DFF), 371.118 secs (SVM)	High computational cost of DFF; future work could focus on optimizing training times and extending evaluation to other datasets.
[8]	LSTM combined with Bayes approach (LSTM-BA)	ISCX2012	Accuracy: 98.15%; Improved by 0.16% compared to state-of-the-art	Limited to ISCX2012 dataset; future work could involve testing on diverse datasets and improving detection of novel attack patterns.
[9]	Evaluation of RF, J48, NB, IBK, and MLP on HTTP DDoS dataset	HTTP DDoS dataset (17,512 instances)	Random Forest: Accuracy 99.94%, False Positive Rate 0.001%	Focuses on traditional ML; future work could incorporate deep learning models and larger, more diverse datasets.
[10]	Data sampling techniques to address imbalanced Slow HTTP DoS datasets	Real-world Slow HTTP DoS traffic	Random Forest with 65:35 ratio: AUC 0.99904	Limited to Slow HTTP DoS attacks; future work could expand to other types of DDoS attacks and real-time detection scenarios.

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[11]	Ensemble techniques (Bagging, Stacking, Voting), AdaBoost, Decorate, RF	UNSW-NB15	Stacking: F-Measure 99.28%; Random Forest: F-Measure 99.02%; Single classifiers: F-Measure 98.61%	Limited to UNSW-NB15; future work could explore ensemble techniques on other datasets and compare with emerging deep learning methods.
[12]	DL and supervised learning for collective anomaly detection	UNSW-NB15, KDD Cup 1999	Deep learning (H2O): Recall ~97%	Focused on collective anomaly detection; future work could address scalability, real-time implementation, and performance on larger datasets.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study aims to develop ML-based approaches, like CNNs and LSTMs, to detect and mitigate DDoS attacks, enhancing cloud security by accurately identifying malicious traffic and ensuring reliable and secure cloud services. The methodology for this study involves a systematic approach to detecting DDoS attacks using the CIC-DDoS2019 dataset. Initially, data collection was performed to gather real-world network traffic information, including various reflective DDoS attacks like Portmap, NetBIOS, LDAP, and others. To make sure the dataset will work with ML methods, it was preprocessed to include missing value handling, one-hot encoding for categorical variables, and Min-Max Scaler normalization of numerical features. The data was then split into training and testing sets using an 80:20 ratio for model evaluation. Classification was conducted using CNNs and LSTM networks, leveraging their strengths in sequential data processing and memory retention. CNNs efficiently extracted spatial features, while LSTMs captured temporal dependencies in the data. A confusion matrix shed light on classification results, and measures including F1-score, recall, accuracy, and precision were employed to assess a model's performance. This approach guarantees a solid foundation for identifying and categorizing DDoS assaults in network data. Figure 2 illustrates the methodology, emphasizing the integration of preprocessing, model training, and performance evaluation to strengthen cloud security against DDoS attacks.

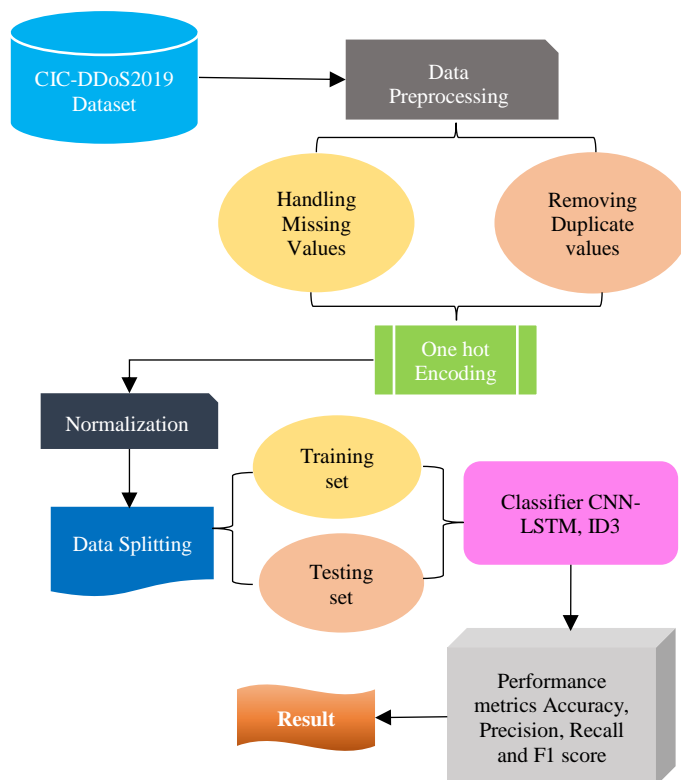


Fig. 2. Flowchart for Machine Learning-Based DDoS Detection and Mitigation Using the CICDDoS2019 Dataset.

The steps outlined in the flowchart are briefly explained below:

A. Data Collection

An essential part of any procedure, data gathering is pivotal to every study's success or failure. A compilation of the most current and widely used DDoS assaults is the CIC-DDoS2019. This collection includes reflective DDoS attacks that mimic common protocols

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and protocols including SNMP, UDPLag, Portmap, NetBIOS, LDAP, MSSQL, UDP, and SYN. Many assaults happened at this period. The section below presents the result of the visualizations:

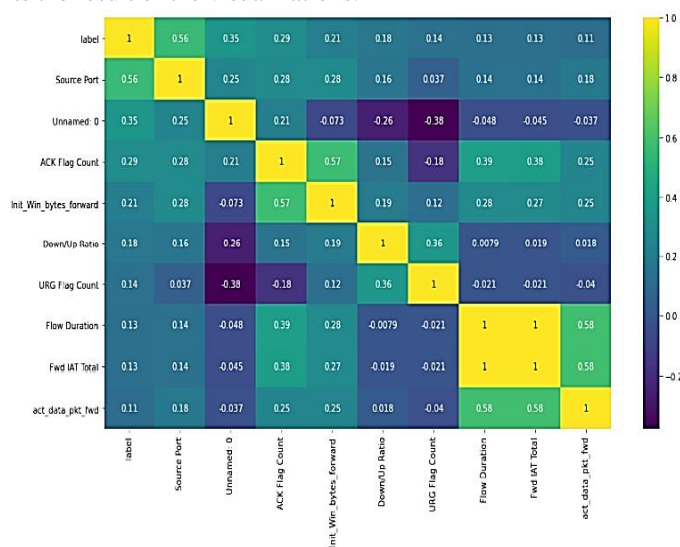


Fig. 3. Correlation Analysis of CICDDoS2019 Dataset.

Figure 3 displays a correlation heatmap illustrating the relationships between features in a dataset. A color gradient ranges by dark purple (negative correlation) to bright yellow (positive correlation), with values on a scale of -1 to 1. Key features include "Label," "Source Port," "Flow Duration," and others. Strong positive correlations appear between "Flow Duration" and "Fwd IAT Total," while some features, like "URG Flag Count," show weaker or negative correlations. The heatmap highlights linear relationships, aiding in feature selection and multicollinearity analysis.

B. Data Preprocessing

Data preprocessing plays a critical role in data analysis and machine learning projects. In this study, we carried out data transformation involving handling missing or damaged data and converting data into a suitable format for machine learning algorithms. Missing values were carefully imputed to avoid bias and maintain prediction accuracy, while categorical variables were label-encoded to convert them into numerical values. Additionally, continuous numerical features (Total Charges, Monthly Charges, Tenure Months) were normalized using Min-Max Scaler to fit within a predefined range, typically 0-1.

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A purpose of data pre-processing is to convert raw data into a more usable format for further processing stages [13]. There are some steps of data preprocessing are given as follows:

- **Handling of Missing Values:** Missing or null values in the dataset were handled by either removing or imputing them. This step ensured that the dataset was complete and free from inconsistencies that could hinder the learning process [14]. The imputation strategy was applied separately to the training and test sets to prevent data leakage.
- **One Hot Encoding:** Hot encoding is one way to transform category data into a binary matrix [15], which may help ML systems make more accurate predictions.
- **Data Normalization:** The numerical characteristics have undergone normalization processing using many methods, including the Min-Max normalization technique [16]. Revising all attribute values within a certain range of [0, 1] is crucial to improving the system's efficacy and performance. Nonetheless, it suffers from anomalous affectability.

$$Z = \frac{(x_i - \min(x))}{(\max(x) - \min(x))} \quad \square \square \square$$

- where x_i is a data element,
- $\min(x)$ is the minimum of all data values,
- $\max(x)$ is the maximum of all data values

C. Data Splitting

For the purpose of predictive analysis, the dataset is partitioned into two parts: the training set, which contains 80% of a data required to build and train the model, and the testing set, which contains 20% of a data used to evaluate the model's performance and generalizability to new data.

D. Classification Using Convolutional and LSTM Networks

Computer vision problems often use CNNs. It has been utilized to text categorization problems using character level embeddings. For both training and prediction analysis, CNN works quickly and efficiently on sequential data. Typical CNN topologies include an input layer, several convolutional layers, maxpooling layers, and fully connected layers activation function is non-linear. Applications that rely on text often make use of 1-D maxpoolings, fully linked layers, and 1-D convolutions.

The idea of a memory cell was first proposed by LSTMs, a particular kind of RNN. These memory blocks serve the purpose of storing prior knowledge about the thing being learned. The gates inside a block may determine how much data the block needs to store. In addition to memory blocks, these building blocks may also include input and output gates [17]. A memory cell has a CEC component, which is similar to a container. The CEC remains at 1 even if the cell is not receiving any input. Every time step t in an LSTM, there is a hidden state vector (h_t), a memory cell m_t , an input gate (i_t), a forget gate (f_t), and an output gate (o_t). These gates have an output that can take on values between zero and one. The following is the syntax for the LSTM unit's transition function:

$$i_t = \sigma(w_{ig}x_t + P_{ig}h_{t-1} + Q_{ig}m_{t-1} + b_{ig}) \quad \square \square \square$$

$$f_t = \sigma(w_{fg}x_t + P_{fg}h_{t-1} + Q_{fg}m_{t-1} + b_{fg}) \quad \square \square \square$$

$$o_t = \sigma(w_{og}x_t + P_{og}h_{t-1} + Q_{og}m_{t-1} + b_{og}) \quad \square \square \square$$

$$m_t = \tanh(w_mx_t + P_mh_{t-1} + b_m) \quad \square \square \square$$

$$m_t = f_t \odot m_{t-1} + i_t \odot m_t \quad \square \square \square$$

$$h_t = o_t \odot \tanh(m_t) \quad \square \square \square$$

E. Key Metrics for Performance Evaluation

For the model evaluation used some performance parameters such as confusion metrics. In ML, a kind of matrix that is often used to assess algorithm performance is the confusion matrix. Table II displays a summary of all the right and wrong values that the ML algorithms predicted.

TABLE II. CONFUSION MATRIX

	Predicted	Predicted
Actual	TP	FN
Actual	FP	TN

- **True Positive (TP):** Actually, positive and forecasted as positive.
- **False Negative (FN):** Actually, positive but forecasted as negative.

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- **True Negative (TN):** Actually, negative and forecasted as negative.
- **False Positive (FP):** Actually, negative but forecasted as positive.

Some parameters like F1-Score, Accuracy, Precision, and Recall are provided below:

1) Accuracy

An ability of a ML system to accurately identify DDoS attack packages from genuine packets is measured by its accuracy in attack categorization is calculated using the formula shown in Equation 8.

$$Accuracy = \frac{TP+TN}{TP+FN+FP+TN} \quad \square\square\square$$

2) Precision

The degree to which a method's output matches user expectations is known as its precision [18]. The corresponding equation for precision is defined in Equation 9.

$$Precision = \frac{TP}{TP+FP} \quad \square\square\square$$

3) Recall

Recall measures how well an ML approach categorizes DDoS threats. The formula for recall is provided in Equation 10.

$$Recall(Rc) = \frac{TP}{TP+FN} \quad \square\square\square\square$$

4) F1-Score

The inverse link between recall and precision is shown by the F-measure. F-Measure is the ratio of recall to precision, with a harmonic mean. The formula is defined in Equation 11.

$$F1\ score(F1) = 2 \times \frac{Precision \times Recall}{Precision + Recall} \quad \square\square\square\square$$

These performance indicators are employed to evaluate a model's efficacy by analyzing its outcomes on a test dataset.

IV. RESULT ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, utilizing machine learning techniques such as CNN-LSTM, ID3, and DDoS attack detection and mitigation can be significantly improved. The comparison of models focuses on CNN-LSTM and ID3[19]. These models accurately identify attack patterns, enhancing cloud security. Evaluation metrics like ROC curves and confusion metrics demonstrate superior model performance.

TABLE III. EVALUATING A CNN-LSTM MODEL FOR MACHINE LEARNING-BASED DDoS DETECTION

Performance Metrics	CNN-LSTM
Accuracy	99.9
Precision	98.8
Recall	97.8
F1-score	95.5

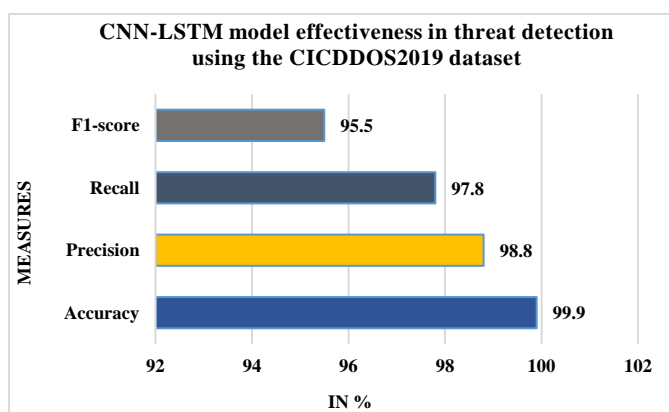


Fig. 4. Evaluating a CNN-LSTM Model for Machine Learning-Based DDoS Detection.

Table III and Figure 4 illustrates the performance metrics of the CNN-LSTM model, showcasing its effectiveness in classification tasks. The program consistently produced accurate predictions with a remarkable accuracy rate of 99.9 percent. Precision was measured at 98.8%, reflecting a model's ability to minimize FP. With a recall of 97.8%, it clearly captured the majority of genuine positives. An F1-score, which is a harmonic mean of recall and precision, was 95.5%, demonstrating that the CNN-LSTM model was resilient and showing balanced performance across both measures.

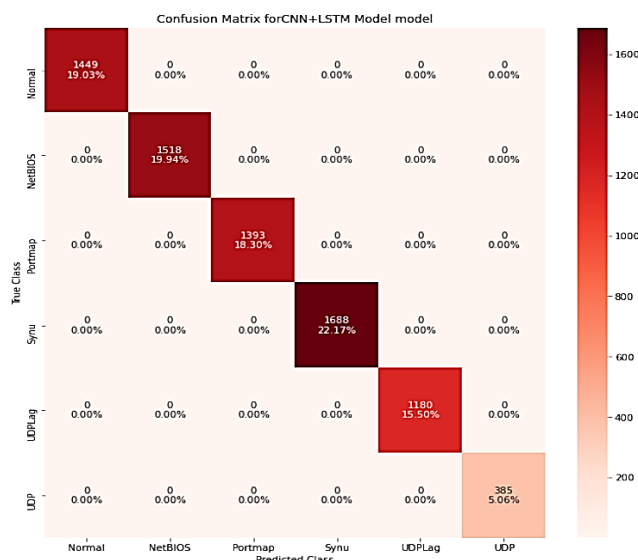


Fig. 5. Confusion Matrix of CNN-LSTM Model for Threat Detection.

Figure 5 presents a confusion matrix for the CNN-LSTM model, depicting the classification performance across six classes: Normal, NetBIOS, Portmap, Synu, UDPLag, and UDP. The diagonal entries represent correctly classified instances, with the highest number of predictions for the Synu class (1688, 22.17%) and significant contributions from NetBIOS (1518, 19.34%) and Normal (1449, 19.03%). Misclassification rates are minimal, as indicated by the near-zero off-diagonal values. This representation emphasizes the model's robust capacity to distinguish across categories with little room for mistakes.

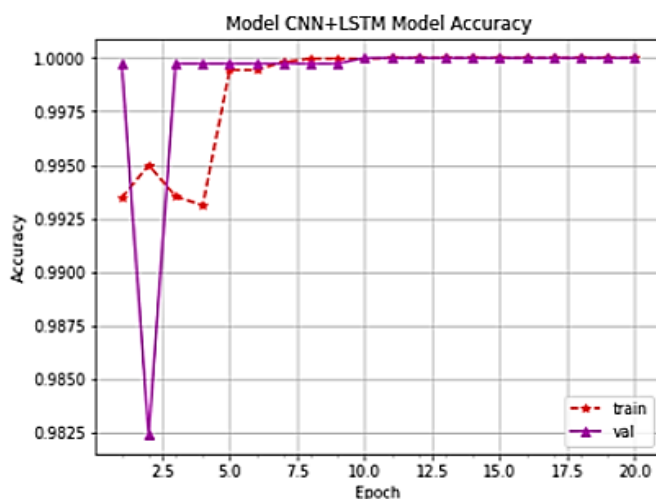


Fig. 6. Accuracy graph for the CNN-LSTM model's performance for detection utilizing the CICDDoS2019 dataset.

Figure 6 depicts the accuracy trends of the CNN-LSTM model over 20 epochs for both training and validation datasets. The training accuracy (red dashed line) starts high and stabilizes near 100% by the fifth epoch, while the validation accuracy (purple solid line) quickly converges to a similar level after initial fluctuations. This indicates that the model achieves excellent performance with minimal overfitting.

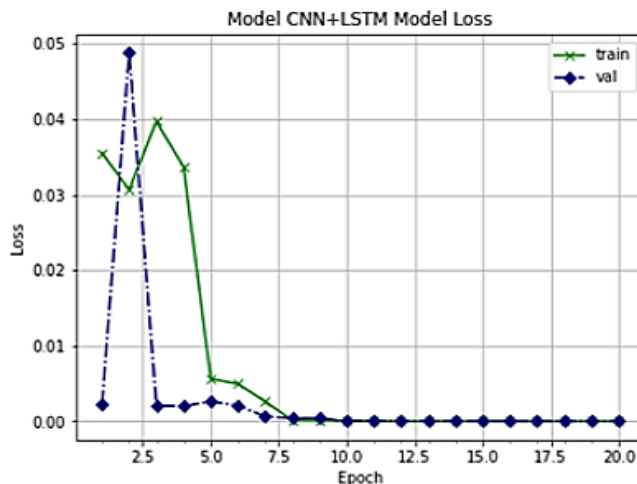


Fig. 7. Loss graph for threat detection utilizing the CICDDoS2019 dataset

Figure 7 illustrates the loss trends of the CNN-LSTM model over 20 epochs for both training and validation datasets. The training loss (green solid line) decreases significantly after the third epoch, stabilizing close to zero, while the validation loss (blue dashed line) also drops rapidly and remains minimal. This suggests effective learning and strong generalization of the model.

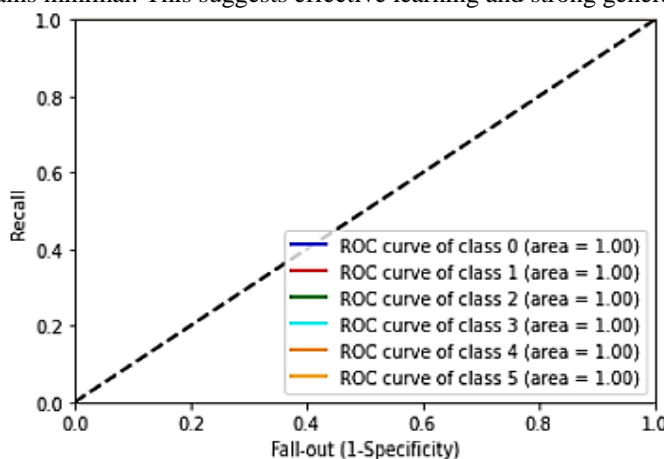


Fig. 8. CNN-LSTM-based ROC Curve for Threat Detection in a Cloud Environment

Figure 8 displayed an ROC curve plotted for a multi-class classification problem, with separate ROC curves for six classes (labeled as classes 0 through 5). Each curve shows the trade-off among Recall (True Positive Rate) on the y-axis and Fall-out (1 - Specificity) on the x-axis for varying classification thresholds. The curves for all classes have an AUC1.00, indicating perfect classification performance for each class. A dashed diagonal line serves as a baseline, representing the performance of random guessing.

TABLE IV. COMPARATIVE EVALUATION OF ML MODELS FOR THREAT DETECTION USING CICDDOS2019 DATASET.

Model	Precision	Recall	F1-score
CNN-LSTM	98.8	97.8	95.5
ID3	78	65	69

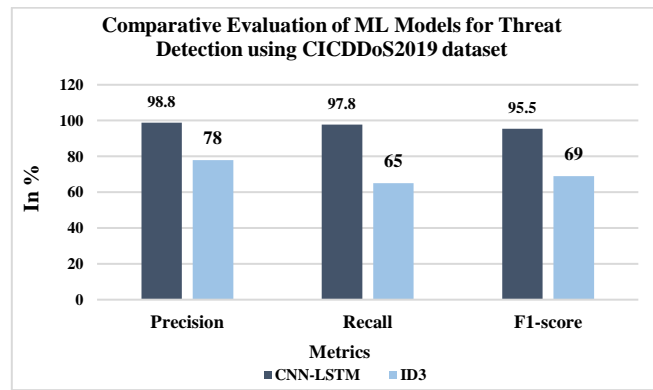


Fig. 9. Comparative Evaluation of ML Models for Threat Detection using CICDDoS2019 dataset

Table IV and Figure 9 presents a comparative evaluation of two ML models, CNN-LSTM and ID3, for threat detection using the CICDDoS2019 dataset. There are three metrics used to assess the performance of every model: recall, precision, and F1-score. The CNN-LSTM model demonstrates superior performance in all three metrics, achieving a precision 98.8, recall 97.8, and F1-score 95.5, while the ID3 model achieves a precision 78, recall 65, and F1-score 69. This indicates that, for this dataset, the CNN-LSTM model outperforms the others according to threat detection accuracy and false positive reduction.

V. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE SCOPE

Cloud computing security faces a significant threat from DDoS attacks which disrupt important services while leading to operational costs. Studies indicate that DDoS attack detection and mitigation excel with ML methods, particularly through CNN-LSTM implementations. The CNN-LSTM model demonstrated exceptional reliability for DDoS attack classification by maintaining a 99.9 percent accuracy rate and achieving high precision rates and recall scores and F1-scores. The test results against the ID3 algorithm demonstrate that CNN-LSTM shows better performance at analyzing intricate attack patterns. The study results demonstrate why advanced ML models remain essential for enhancing cybersecurity by enhancing threat detection inside cloud platforms and defending against current cyber threats.

Additional research must conduct studies to find improved hybrid machine learning detection methods as well as create real-time systems adaptive to shifting DDoS attack threats. The generalizability of solutions will improve through expanding attack scenario datasets as well as performing tests across multiple cloud deployments. The integration of blockchain systems for secure logging and cost-efficient DDoS mitigation strategies would strengthen cloud ecosystem defensive abilities against DDoS attacks.

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