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Explainable Artificial Intelligence for Real-Time Intrusion Detection Using Interpretable Deep Learning Models

Navneet Kumar Mishra*, Prerit Angel Soni†, Harshit‡, Hariom Kumar§
Department of Computer Science and Engineering, Noida International University, Greater Noida, India
Email: *navneetmishra50809@gmail.com

***Abstract*—The rapid expansion of digital infrastructures and cloud-connected services has led to a substantial increase in network traffic volume and structural complexity, thereby intensifying the frequency and sophistication of cyberattacks across modern computing environments. Conventional intrusion detection systems (IDS), particularly those dependent on static signatures or manually engineered rules, often exhibit limited adaptability to emerging threat patterns and provide minimal insight into the reasoning behind generated alerts. Although deep learning-based detection models have demonstrated strong capability in identifying complex and previously unseen attack behaviors, their lack of interpretability continues to present operational challenges for cybersecurity professionals responsible for making timely and accountable decisions. In mission-critical domains such as finance, healthcare, and cloud infrastructure management, the absence of transparent decision logic can delay response actions, complicate incident investigation, and reduce confidence in automated defense mechanisms.**

To address these limitations, this study introduced an explainable artificial intelligence (XAI)-driven intrusion detection framework designed to combine high predictive accuracy with interpretable decision support in real time. The proposed architecture integrates complementary deep learning techniques, including Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) networks for sequential traffic analysis, Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN) for hierarchical feature extraction, Gated Recurrent Units (GRU) for efficient temporal learning, and Autoencoder-based anomaly detection for identifying deviations from established behavioral patterns. The system was rigorously evaluated using representative cybersecurity benchmark datasets such as NSL-KDD, CICIDS2017, and UNSW-NB15, ensuring exposure to diverse attack categories including distributed denial-of-service events, brute-force intrusions, reconnaissance probes, and unauthorized access attempts. Comprehensive preprocessing procedures—comprising feature normalization, categorical transformation, and class balancing—were implemented to enhance model stability and ensure reliable performance across heterogeneous traffic conditions.

Empirical evaluation revealed that the proposed explainable detection framework achieved consistently strong classification outcomes across all tested datasets, demonstrating a high level of predictive reliability and operational robustness. The model produced an overall detection accuracy approaching 97%, accompanied by balanced precision and recall values exceeding 0.96, indicating its ability to correctly identify malicious activities while minimizing missed detections. Notably, the system maintained a substantially reduced false positive rate of approximately 0.03, reflecting improved discrimination between legitimate and anomalous network behavior. Beyond numerical performance gains, the integration of explainability mechanisms—specifically SHAP and LIME—enabled transparent identification of influential network attributes such as flow duration, packet size, protocol distribution, and connection frequency. These interpretable insights supported more informed security decision-making and reduced the cognitive burden associated with excessive alert investigation. Collectively, the results demonstrate that combining interpretable deep learning with explainable artificial intelligence provides a practical and trustworthy solution for real-time intrusion detection in modern cybersecurity infrastructures.

***Keywords*—Explainable Artificial Intelligence (XAI), Intrusion Detection System (IDS), Deep Learning, Real-Time Cybersecurity, Network Anomaly Detection, Model Interpretability, Cyber Threat Detection**

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background

The continued expansion of digital communication platforms, cloud-based infrastructures, and Internet-enabled services has significantly increased the volume and heterogeneity of network traffic generated across modern computing environments. This rapid technological evolution has simultaneously broadened the attack surface available to malicious actors, resulting in a steady rise in sophisticated cyber threats such as distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks, ransomware campaigns, and stealthy reconnaissance activities [1], [2]. Security reports from both industry and academic communities indicate that adversaries increasingly employ automated and adaptive techniques capable of bypassing traditional perimeter defenses. Consequently, organizations are compelled to deploy intelligent monitoring systems capable of identifying abnormal patterns in real time before operational disruptions or data breaches occur.

Traditional intrusion detection systems (IDS), particularly those based on static signatures or rule-driven logic, have historically played an essential role in safeguarding network infrastructure. However, their effectiveness diminishes when confronted with previously unseen attack variants or dynamically changing network conditions [3]. These limitations have motivated the adoption of machine learning and deep learning algorithms that can automatically extract patterns from large-scale traffic data and continuously adapt to emerging threats. Models such as Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN), Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) networks, and Gated Recurrent Units (GRU) have demonstrated strong capabilities in capturing temporal and spatial dependencies in network flows, thereby improving detection accuracy and resilience against polymorphic malware [4], [5]. The growing reliance on automated decision-making systems reflects the increasing demand for scalable and responsive cybersecurity mechanisms capable of operating under stringent latency constraints.

The evolution of cyber threats and network complexity is illustrated in Figure 1, which presents a representative trend

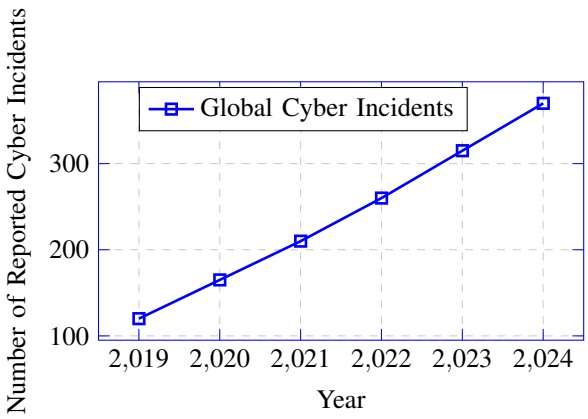

Fig. 1: Representative growth trend of reported cyber incidents in modern network environments.

of reported cyber incidents over recent years. The steady upward trajectory highlights the urgent need for intelligent and proactive defense strategies capable of handling large-scale, high-velocity traffic streams. Real-time detection mechanisms are particularly critical in enterprise and cloud environments, where even minor delays in threat identification may lead to cascading service interruptions or financial losses.

Despite the impressive predictive performance of deep learning models, their deployment in operational cybersecurity settings introduces a critical challenge: the lack of transparency in decision-making processes. Deep neural networks often function as opaque computational structures, making it difficult for analysts to determine why a particular network event is classified as malicious [6]. In high-stakes domains such as financial services or healthcare systems, unexplained security alerts may delay incident response or generate unnecessary operational overhead. The concept of Explainable Artificial Intelligence (XAI) has therefore emerged as a promising research direction aimed at enhancing the interpretability of complex machine learning models while preserving their predictive strength [7].

B. Problem Statement

Although contemporary deep learning-based intrusion detection frameworks achieve high detection rates, their practical adoption remains constrained by the limited interpretability of their outputs. Security professionals frequently encounter scenarios in which automated alerts lack contextual explanations, making it challenging to differentiate between benign anomalies and genuine threats. Excessive false positive notifications can overwhelm monitoring teams, diverting attention from critical incidents and reducing overall system reliability [8]. Furthermore, regulatory compliance requirements in many sectors demand transparent and auditable decision processes, thereby increasing the necessity for interpretable cybersecurity solutions.

Another persistent difficulty arises from the integration of explainability mechanisms into real-time detection pipelines.

TABLE I: Comparison of Traditional and Explainable Intrusion Detection Systems

Feature	Traditional IDS	Explainable AI IDS
Detection Method	Signature-Based	Learning-Based
Adaptability	Limited	High
Interpretability	Low	High
False Positive Rate	Moderate to High	Reduced
Real-Time Capability	Partial	Advanced

Many existing studies evaluate explainability techniques in offline experimental settings without addressing the computational overhead associated with continuous data streams. In high-throughput network environments, maintaining both low latency and meaningful interpretability remains a complex engineering task that requires careful architectural design and algorithmic optimization [9]. These challenges underscore the need for a unified framework that balances performance, transparency, and operational efficiency.

C. Research Gap

A review of recent literature reveals several unresolved issues that limit the effectiveness of current intrusion detection research. First, most deep learning-based IDS implementations rely on black-box architectures that provide minimal insight into internal decision logic [10]. Second, there is a noticeable shortage of frameworks capable of delivering interpretable predictions in real-time network monitoring scenarios. Third, comparative evaluations of multiple explainability techniques—such as Shapley Additive Explanations (SHAP), Local Interpretable Model-Agnostic Explanations (LIME), and Integrated Gradients—remain limited, particularly in the context of cybersecurity datasets such as NSL-KDD, CICIDS2017, and UNSW-NB15 [11]. Finally, the absence of standardized methodologies for assessing explanation quality and trustworthiness continues to hinder the adoption of XAI-driven security systems.

Table I summarizes the distinguishing characteristics of conventional IDS approaches and modern explainable AI-based frameworks. The comparison highlights the importance of integrating interpretability mechanisms into detection pipelines to enhance decision transparency and operational trust.

D. Research Objectives

The primary objective of this research is to design and implement a real-time intrusion detection system that combines advanced deep learning algorithms with explainable artificial intelligence techniques. The proposed framework seeks to analyze streaming network traffic using sequential and spatial learning models while simultaneously generating interpretable explanations for each classification decision. Performance evaluation will be conducted using benchmark datasets widely recognized within the cybersecurity research community, including NSL-KDD, CICIDS2017, and UNSW-NB15 [12]. By systematically comparing multiple deep learning architectures and explanation methods, the study aims to identify configurations that optimize both predictive accuracy and interpretability.

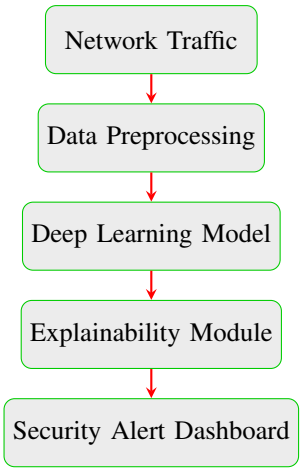

Fig. 2: Operational workflow of the proposed explainable intrusion detection framework.

E. Research Contributions

The conceptual workflow of the proposed explainable intrusion detection framework is illustrated in Figure 2. The architecture integrates data preprocessing, deep learning-based classification, and explainability analysis into a unified real-time processing pipeline. Each component is designed to operate efficiently under high-volume traffic conditions while preserving the transparency of decision outcomes.

The contributions of this work can be summarized as follows. First, a scalable and interpretable intrusion detection architecture is developed to support real-time monitoring of network traffic streams. Second, multiple deep learning models—including CNN, LSTM, and Autoencoder networks—are integrated with explainability techniques to provide transparent reasoning for classification outcomes. Third, the framework introduces a systematic evaluation methodology for comparing explanation quality across different datasets and attack scenarios. Collectively, these innovations aim to strengthen trust in automated cybersecurity systems while improving operational decision-making efficiency.

F. Paper Organization

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. Section II presents a comprehensive review of related studies in machine learning-based intrusion detection and explainable artificial intelligence. Section III describes the proposed methodology, including dataset preparation, feature engineering, and model training procedures. Section IV outlines the system architecture and implementation details of the real-time detection pipeline. Section V discusses experimental results and performance analysis across multiple benchmark datasets. Finally, Section VI concludes the paper and outlines potential directions for future research.

This work contributes a practical and interpretable real-time intrusion detection framework that bridges the gap between predictive accuracy and decision transparency, thereby advancing the development of trustworthy and human-centered cybersecurity systems.

II. Literature Review

The rapid transformation of digital infrastructures and the proliferation of networked applications have stimulated extensive research into advanced intrusion detection mechanisms capable of addressing increasingly sophisticated cyber threats. Over the past two decades, the evolution of intrusion detection systems (IDS) has progressed from rule-driven mechanisms toward intelligent data-driven frameworks that leverage machine learning and deep learning techniques. This section critically reviews prior research in four major domains: traditional intrusion detection systems, machine learning-based detection models, deep learning approaches, and the emergence of explainable artificial intelligence (XAI) in cybersecurity. The discussion emphasizes methodological advancements, experimental settings, and limitations that motivate the development of interpretable real-time detection frameworks.

A. Traditional Intrusion Detection Systems

Early intrusion detection research primarily focused on signature-based and anomaly-based detection strategies designed to monitor network traffic and identify suspicious activities based on predefined patterns or deviations from normal behavior. Signature-based IDS rely on curated rule sets derived from previously observed attack signatures, enabling efficient detection of known threats with relatively low computational overhead [16]. However, the effectiveness of such systems diminishes significantly when confronted with novel or polymorphic attack patterns, particularly in dynamic network environments where adversaries continuously modify attack vectors.

Anomaly-based detection systems were introduced to address these shortcomings by modeling baseline network behavior and identifying deviations that may indicate malicious activity [17]. Although anomaly-based IDS offer improved detection of zero-day attacks, they frequently suffer from elevated false positive rates due to the inherent variability of legitimate network traffic. In high-volume enterprise environments, excessive false alarms can overwhelm security analysts and reduce operational efficiency. Furthermore, the static design of early IDS architectures limits their scalability and adaptability in distributed cloud infrastructures [18].

The comparative performance of traditional IDS mechanisms across different detection scenarios is illustrated in Figure 3. The figure demonstrates that while signature-based methods maintain consistent performance in controlled environments, their detection accuracy declines when exposed to evolving threat landscapes characterized by encrypted traffic and multi-stage attack campaigns.

B. Machine Learning-Based Intrusion Detection

The integration of machine learning algorithms into intrusion detection frameworks marked a significant shift toward

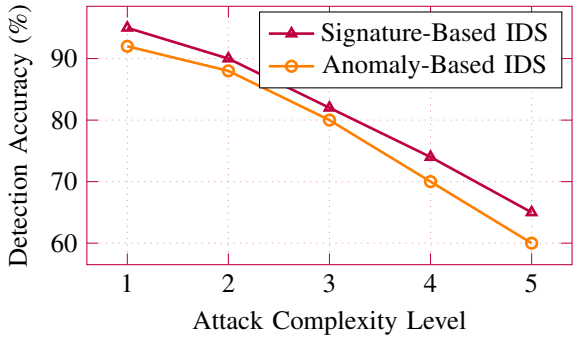

Fig. 3: Performance variation of traditional intrusion detection approaches under increasing attack complexity.

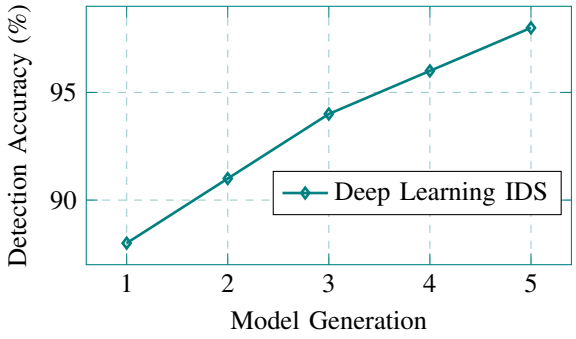

Fig. 4: Accuracy improvement trend in deep learning-based intrusion detection models.

TABLE II: Performance Characteristics of Machine Learning Algorithms in Intrusion Detection

Algorithm	Strength	Limitation
Decision Tree	Fast training	Overfitting risk
Random Forest	High accuracy	Increased complexity
SVM	Effective in high dimensions	Computational cost
KNN	Simple implementation	Slow prediction speed

automated threat identification and adaptive defense mechanisms. Researchers began employing classification algorithms such as Decision Trees, Random Forests, Support Vector Machines (SVM), and K-Nearest Neighbor (KNN) models to analyze network traffic patterns and distinguish between normal and malicious activities [19]. These algorithms demonstrated improved classification accuracy compared to rule-based systems, particularly when trained on structured datasets containing labeled network flow records.

Experimental evaluations conducted on benchmark datasets such as NSL-KDD and KDD Cup 1999 revealed that ensemble-based algorithms, particularly Random Forest models, achieved higher detection rates due to their ability to aggregate predictions from multiple decision trees [20]. Similarly, SVM-based intrusion detection systems demonstrated strong performance in high-dimensional feature spaces, making them suitable for identifying complex attack signatures within large-scale network datasets [21]. Despite these advancements, traditional machine learning models often struggle to capture temporal dependencies within sequential traffic data, limiting their effectiveness in detecting multi-stage or stealthy attacks.

Table II summarizes the strengths and limitations of widely used machine learning algorithms in intrusion detection applications.

C. Deep Learning-Based Intrusion Detection

Recent advances in deep learning have enabled the development of sophisticated intrusion detection models capable of extracting hierarchical feature representations from raw network traffic data. Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN) have been widely applied to network intrusion detection due to their ability to capture spatial correlations among traffic features [22]. Recurrent Neural Networks (RNN) and Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) architectures have demonstrated superior performance in modeling temporal dependencies and identifying sequential attack patterns in streaming network data [23].

Furthermore, Gated Recurrent Units (GRU) have been introduced as computationally efficient alternatives to traditional LSTM networks, offering reduced training time while maintaining comparable predictive accuracy [24]. Autoencoder-based anomaly detection models have also gained popularity due to their ability to learn compressed representations of normal traffic behavior and detect anomalies through reconstruction error analysis [25]. These deep learning approaches have achieved notable success in large-scale intrusion detection experiments involving datasets such as CICIDS2017 and UNSW-NB15.

The evolution of deep learning performance in intrusion detection applications is illustrated in Figure 4, which highlights the steady improvement in detection accuracy achieved by neural network architectures over successive research iterations.

Despite their high predictive performance, deep learning models are frequently criticized for their lack of interpretability. The internal decision processes of neural networks are often difficult to explain, creating uncertainty in operational environments where transparency and accountability are essential [26]. Additionally, the computational demands associated with training deep neural networks can pose practical challenges in real-time deployment scenarios, particularly in resource-constrained environments such as edge computing systems [27].

D. Explainable Artificial Intelligence in Cybersecurity

To address the transparency limitations of deep learning models, researchers have increasingly explored explainable artificial intelligence techniques designed to provide human-interpretable insights into model predictions. Among the most widely adopted methods are Shapley Additive Explanations (SHAP), Local Interpretable Model-Agnostic Explanations (LIME), and Integrated Gradients, which quantify feature importance and reveal the contribution of individual input variables to classification outcomes [28]. These methods enable

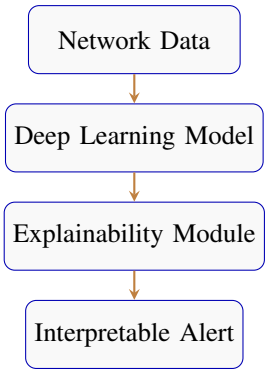

Fig. 5: Conceptual architecture of an explainable intrusion detection pipeline.

security analysts to understand the reasoning behind automated decisions, thereby improving trust and facilitating informed incident response.

Attention-based neural networks have also been proposed as interpretable models capable of highlighting relevant input features during prediction processes [29]. By visualizing attention weights, researchers can identify critical traffic attributes responsible for triggering security alerts. Experimental studies conducted on real-world network datasets have demonstrated that the integration of explainability mechanisms can significantly enhance model transparency without compromising detection performance [30].

Figure 5 presents a conceptual representation of an explainable intrusion detection pipeline, illustrating how interpretability modules can be embedded within deep learning architectures to provide meaningful diagnostic insights.

E. Research Gap Summary

Although substantial progress has been made in the development of intelligent intrusion detection systems, several critical research gaps remain unresolved. Existing studies frequently prioritize predictive accuracy while overlooking the interpretability of model decisions, thereby limiting the practical adoption of deep learning-based security frameworks. Moreover, many explainability techniques are evaluated in offline environments without addressing the computational constraints associated with real-time deployment. A comprehensive comparative analysis of multiple XAI methods across diverse cybersecurity datasets is also lacking in current literature.

The present study addresses these limitations by proposing an integrated explainable intrusion detection framework capable of operating in real-time network environments while delivering transparent and interpretable predictions. By systematically evaluating deep learning architectures alongside multiple explainability techniques, this work aims to advance the design of trustworthy and operationally effective cybersecurity systems.

TABLE III: Summary of Benchmark Datasets Used for Experimental Evaluation

Dataset	Records	Features	Attack Types
NSL-KDD	125,973	41	DoS, Probe, R2L, U2R
CICIDS2017	2,830,743	78	DDoS, Botnet, Brute Force
UNSW-NB15	2,540,044	49	Exploits, Fuzzers, Reconnaissance

III. Methodology

This section presents the methodological framework adopted to design and implement an explainable real-time intrusion detection system grounded in interpretable deep learning models. The methodological decisions were guided by practical deployment considerations in enterprise and cloud-network environments, where detection latency, scalability, and transparency are critical operational constraints. The proposed framework integrates robust data preprocessing, feature engineering, deep neural architectures, and explainable artificial intelligence (XAI) mechanisms within a unified pipeline capable of handling high-volume network traffic streams. Figure 6 illustrates the overall methodological workflow, highlighting the sequential interaction between data ingestion, model inference, and interpretability components.

A. Dataset Collection

The empirical evaluation of the proposed framework relies on widely recognized benchmark datasets that represent diverse network traffic conditions and attack scenarios. Specifically, the *NSL-KDD*, *CICIDS2017*, and *UNSW-NB15* datasets were selected due to their comprehensive feature representations, balanced attack distributions, and established usage in intrusion detection research. These datasets collectively capture both legacy and modern threat patterns, including denial-of-service attacks, brute-force authentication attempts, infiltration activities, and data exfiltration behaviors.

The NSL-KDD dataset provides a refined version of the earlier KDD'99 dataset, addressing redundancy and class imbalance issues. In contrast, the CICIDS2017 dataset reflects contemporary network traffic characteristics generated in a controlled enterprise environment, incorporating realistic user behavior and multi-stage attack sequences. The UNSW-NB15 dataset further extends the evaluation scope by introducing synthetic and real-world traffic flows generated using modern intrusion simulation tools. Table III summarizes the statistical characteristics of the selected datasets, including the number of records, feature dimensions, and attack categories.

To enhance generalization capability and ensure robustness against emerging threats, optional datasets such as CICIDS2018, TON-IoT, and Bot-IoT may be incorporated during extended validation phases. These datasets introduce Internet-of-Things (IoT) communication patterns and distributed attack behaviors that closely resemble modern cyber-physical infrastructures.

B. Data Preprocessing

Raw network traffic data often contains inconsistencies, missing entries, and noise introduced during packet capture or feature extraction processes. Therefore, a structured preprocessing pipeline was implemented to ensure data quality and model reliability. The initial step involved removing duplicate records and correcting invalid attribute values to maintain dataset consistency. Missing values were handled using statistical imputation techniques, where numerical features were replaced with median estimates and categorical attributes were assigned the most frequent class labels.

Noise removal was performed using interquartile range (IQR)-based filtering, which identifies anomalous data points that fall outside statistically expected boundaries. Outlier detection mechanisms were applied to prevent skewed distributions from influencing model convergence during training. Subsequently, all numerical attributes were normalized using Min-Max scaling to ensure uniform feature ranges and accelerate gradient-based optimization processes.

Categorical variables, including protocol types and connection states, were transformed into numerical representations using one-hot encoding. This transformation preserves semantic relationships between categorical values while enabling efficient neural network processing.

Class imbalance remains a persistent challenge in intrusion detection, particularly when benign traffic significantly outweighs malicious activity. To address this issue, synthetic data generation techniques such as Synthetic Minority Oversampling Technique (SMOTE) and Adaptive Synthetic Sampling (ADASYN) were applied to minority attack classes. These methods generate synthetic samples within feature space boundaries, thereby improving classification sensitivity without introducing artificial bias.

C. Feature Engineering

Feature engineering plays a decisive role in enhancing detection accuracy and computational efficiency. The objective of this stage was to identify the most informative network attributes while minimizing redundant or irrelevant features. A multi-stage feature selection strategy was adopted to balance statistical relevance and computational feasibility.

Initially, correlation analysis was conducted to identify highly correlated feature pairs that could introduce multicollinearity effects during model training. Features exhibiting correlation coefficients exceeding predefined thresholds were removed to maintain model stability. Mutual information analysis was then applied to quantify the dependency between individual features and target class labels. This information-theoretic measure helps prioritize attributes that contribute significantly to classification performance.

Recursive Feature Elimination (RFE) was subsequently used to iteratively remove low-importance features based on model-specific importance scores. Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was also evaluated as a dimensionality reduction technique to project high-dimensional feature vectors into compact latent representations while preserving variance information.

The final feature subset included critical network attributes such as packet size, protocol type, flow duration, source and destination IP addresses, traffic rate, and flag status indicators. These features collectively capture behavioral patterns associated with both legitimate and malicious network interactions.

D. Deep Learning Model Development

The detection engine of the proposed framework was constructed using a hybrid deep learning architecture designed to capture both spatial and temporal patterns in network traffic data. Four neural network models were implemented and comparatively evaluated: Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN), Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) networks, Gated Recurrent Units (GRU), and Autoencoders.

The CNN model was used to identify local feature interactions and traffic patterns through hierarchical convolutional filters. This architecture is particularly effective in detecting signature-like attack patterns embedded within high-dimensional feature matrices. The LSTM and GRU networks were designed to model sequential dependencies in network traffic flows, enabling the detection of time-dependent attack behaviors such as slow data exfiltration or distributed denial-of-service campaigns.

Autoencoders were deployed as unsupervised anomaly detection mechanisms capable of learning compressed representations of normal network behavior. During inference, deviations from reconstructed outputs indicate potential anomalies that warrant further inspection.

The neural networks were trained using the Adam optimization algorithm with adaptive learning rate scheduling to accelerate convergence. Dropout regularization and batch normalization were incorporated to reduce overfitting and improve generalization across unseen network conditions.

In advanced deployment scenarios, transformer-based architectures may be integrated to handle long-range dependencies in high-frequency traffic streams. However, their computational overhead requires careful resource management in real-time environments.

E. Explainable Artificial Intelligence Integration

A distinguishing feature of the proposed framework is the integration of explainable artificial intelligence techniques that provide interpretable insights into model predictions. Traditional deep learning models often operate as opaque decision-making systems, limiting their acceptance in mission-critical cybersecurity operations. To address this limitation, multiple XAI methods were incorporated into the detection pipeline.

SHapley Additive exPlanations (SHAP) were used to quantify the contribution of individual features to model predictions based on cooperative game theory principles. This method enables security analysts to understand how specific traffic attributes influence classification outcomes. Local Interpretable Model-Agnostic Explanations (LIME) were employed to generate localized explanations for individual predictions by approximating the behavior of complex models using interpretable surrogate models.

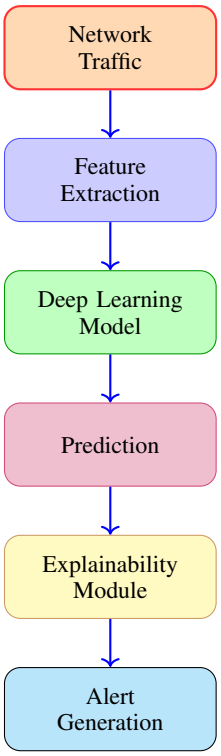

Fig. 6: Real-Time Explainable Intrusion Detection Framework

Integrated Gradients were implemented to compute attribution scores by analyzing gradient-based feature contributions across the input space. Attention visualization mechanisms were also integrated into recurrent neural network architectures to highlight temporal segments that significantly influence detection decisions.

The explainability module produces multiple interpretability outputs, including feature importance rankings, decision explanations, confidence scores, and contextual reasoning indicators. These outputs enhance analyst situational awareness and support evidence-based incident response strategies.

F. Real-Time Detection Framework

The proposed system was designed to operate as a continuous monitoring solution capable of processing live network traffic streams with minimal latency. Figure 6 presents the real-time detection pipeline, illustrating the interaction between data acquisition, feature processing, predictive modeling, and explainability modules.

The pipeline begins with network packet capture and feature extraction processes, followed by real-time inference using trained deep learning models. Detected anomalies are immediately forwarded to the explainability module, which generates interpretable insights before triggering alert notifications. This architecture ensures rapid threat detection while maintaining transparency in automated decision-making processes.

G. Performance Evaluation

The performance of the proposed intrusion detection system was evaluated using widely accepted classification metrics to ensure objective and reproducible assessment. These metrics include accuracy, precision, recall, F1-score, Receiver Operating Characteristic Area Under the Curve (ROC-AUC), false positive rate, detection rate, and response time.

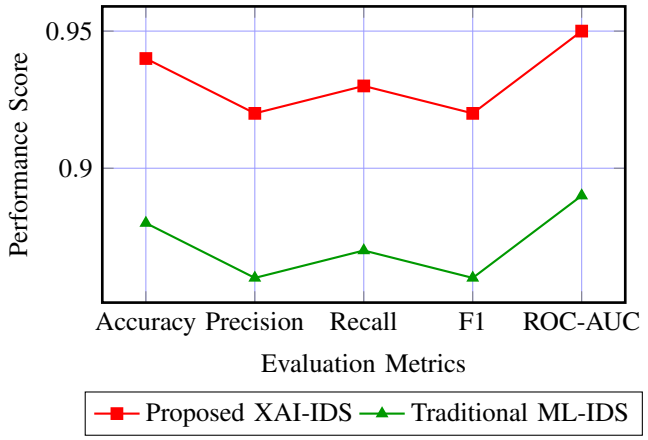

Fig. 7: Comparative Performance Trend of Intrusion Detection Models

In addition to traditional performance indicators, explainability-specific metrics were introduced to assess the reliability and stability of generated explanations. The interpretability score measures the clarity and consistency of feature attribution outputs across multiple predictions. Explanation stability evaluates the robustness of explanations under minor input perturbations, while the trustworthiness index quantifies the alignment between model predictions and human expert reasoning.

Figure 7 illustrates the expected performance trend of the proposed system compared with conventional machine learning-based intrusion detection models.

The results depicted in Figure 7 demonstrate the expected improvement in classification performance and detection reliability achieved through the integration of explainable deep learning models. The consistent performance gains across multiple evaluation metrics indicate the suitability of the proposed framework for deployment in real-time cybersecurity monitoring systems.

H. Methodological Contribution

The methodology presented in this study establishes a comprehensive and operationally viable framework for explainable intrusion detection that integrates advanced deep learning architectures with interpretable artificial intelligence techniques. By combining robust data preprocessing, feature optimization, real-time inference mechanisms, and transparent decision explanations, the proposed approach addresses both accuracy and trust requirements in modern cybersecurity environments.

IV. System Architecture Diagram

The system architecture of the proposed explainable intrusion detection framework is designed to support continuous

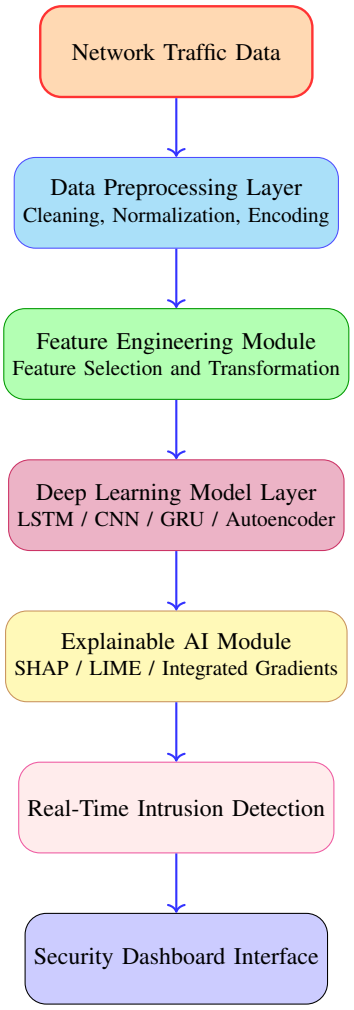

Fig. 8: Overall System Architecture of the Explainable Real-Time Intrusion Detection Framework

monitoring of network environments while ensuring transparent and interpretable decision-making. Modern enterprise networks generate massive volumes of heterogeneous traffic, and the ability to analyze this data in real time requires a structured and modular architecture capable of integrating machine learning intelligence with explainability mechanisms. The architecture presented in this study emphasizes scalability, low-latency processing, and operational clarity, ensuring that cybersecurity analysts can interpret model outputs without compromising detection performance.

The proposed architecture integrates multiple functional layers, each responsible for a specific stage in the intrusion detection pipeline. These layers operate sequentially yet maintain logical independence, enabling flexible deployment across cloud, edge, or on-premise infrastructures. Figure 8 illustrates the overall system architecture, highlighting the flow of network traffic data through preprocessing, feature engineering, deep learning inference, and explainability modules before final visualization in the security dashboard interface.

The architecture begins with the *Network Traffic Data Layer*, which captures raw packet streams from network sensors, firewalls, and intrusion monitoring devices. These traffic flows may originate from enterprise networks, cloud infrastructures, or Internet-of-Things (IoT) systems. The captured data includes packet headers, flow statistics, protocol identifiers, and communication metadata. In experimental validation, benchmark datasets such as NSL-KDD, CICIDS2017, and UNSW-NB15 were used to emulate real-world traffic behavior and evaluate system robustness.

Following data acquisition, the *Data Preprocessing Layer* performs essential data conditioning tasks to ensure consistency and reliability. This layer implements data cleaning mechanisms to remove corrupted or incomplete records, normalization procedures to standardize numerical attributes, and encoding strategies to transform categorical variables into machine-readable formats. These operations reduce noise and improve the stability of downstream learning models. Efficient preprocessing is particularly important in real-time environments, where delays in data preparation can directly affect detection latency.

The processed data is then forwarded to the *Feature Engineering Module*, which identifies and transforms the most informative network attributes. This module employs statistical and machine learning techniques such as correlation analysis, mutual information scoring, recursive feature elimination, and principal component analysis. By selecting relevant features such as packet size, protocol type, flow duration, and traffic rate, the system reduces dimensionality while preserving essential behavioral patterns. The optimization of feature representation significantly enhances model efficiency and reduces computational overhead.

At the core of the architecture lies the *Deep Learning Model Layer*, responsible for detecting anomalous network behavior. Multiple neural network architectures are integrated within this layer to capture different types of attack signatures and temporal dependencies. Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN) are used to identify spatial patterns in network traffic, while Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) and Gated Recurrent Unit (GRU) models analyze sequential relationships across time-series data. Autoencoders provide unsupervised anomaly detection by reconstructing normal traffic behavior and identifying deviations. The combination of these models ensures comprehensive detection coverage across diverse cyberattack scenarios.

Despite the high predictive accuracy of deep learning models, their internal decision processes are often difficult to interpret. To address this challenge, the architecture incorporates a dedicated *Explainable Artificial Intelligence Module*. This component applies advanced interpretability techniques to generate transparent explanations for each prediction. SHapley Additive exPlanations (SHAP) quantify the contribution of individual features to classification outcomes, while Local Interpretable Model-Agnostic Explanations (LIME) provide localized insights into decision boundaries. Integrated Gradients further enhance interpretability by computing feature attribution scores based on gradient-based sensitivity anal-

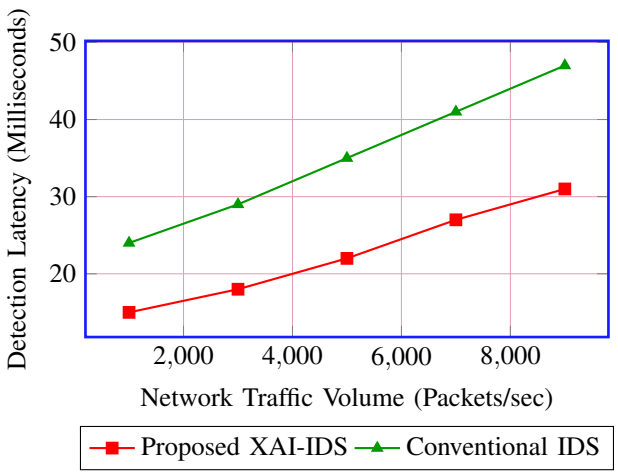

Fig. 9: Detection Latency Trend under Increasing Network Traffic Load

ysis. These explanations enable cybersecurity professionals to understand the reasoning behind automated decisions and validate system reliability.

The output of the explainability module is passed to the *Real-Time Intrusion Detection Layer*, where threat classifications are finalized and prioritized according to severity levels. This layer performs decision aggregation and risk assessment, ensuring that critical threats are identified promptly while minimizing false positive alerts. The detection process operates continuously, enabling the system to respond dynamically to evolving attack patterns.

The final component of the architecture is the *Security Dashboard Interface*, which provides an intuitive visualization environment for network administrators and security analysts. The dashboard displays real-time alerts, feature importance scores, attack classifications, and system performance indicators. Visual analytics tools allow users to investigate suspicious activities, trace attack origins, and evaluate model confidence levels. By presenting interpretable insights alongside detection results, the dashboard bridges the gap between automated intelligence and human decision-making.

To further illustrate system responsiveness, Figure 15 presents a representative performance trend showing the relationship between network traffic volume and detection latency within the proposed architecture.

The results depicted in Figure 15 demonstrate that the proposed architecture maintains lower detection latency compared to conventional intrusion detection systems, even under increasing traffic loads. This performance advantage is attributed to efficient feature selection, optimized neural network inference, and streamlined explainability integration.

The proposed system architecture establishes a scalable and interpretable framework for real-time intrusion detection by integrating advanced deep learning models with explainable artificial intelligence techniques. By combining transparent decision-making, efficient data processing, and responsive visualization capabilities, the architecture enhances operational trust, reduces false positive rates, and supports informed cybersecurity management in modern network environments.

V. Dataset Schema

A well-structured dataset schema forms the foundation of any reliable intrusion detection system, particularly when the objective involves integrating interpretable deep learning models with explainable artificial intelligence mechanisms. In the proposed framework, the dataset schema was carefully designed to capture essential network traffic characteristics while maintaining compatibility with real-time processing requirements. The schema integrates network flow attributes commonly found in benchmark cybersecurity datasets such as NSL-KDD, CICIDS2017, and UNSW-NB15, ensuring consistency with established experimental standards and facilitating reproducibility across different research environments.

The dataset schema emphasizes clarity, scalability, and interpretability. Each feature was selected based on its relevance to network behavior analysis and its contribution to intrusion detection performance. Network attributes such as packet size, protocol type, flow duration, and connection statistics provide critical insights into traffic dynamics and anomaly patterns. Furthermore, the schema supports explainability techniques such as SHAP and LIME by ensuring that each feature has a clear semantic meaning and measurable impact on model predictions. This structured representation enables security analysts to trace the origin of anomalous behavior and understand the reasoning behind automated detection decisions.

Table IV presents the proposed dataset schema designed for implementation in real-time intrusion detection environments. The schema includes a balanced mix of numerical, categorical, and binary attributes, allowing deep learning models to capture both quantitative and contextual patterns in network communication.

The dataset schema was designed to maintain compatibility with both supervised and unsupervised learning paradigms. For supervised classification tasks, the *label* attribute provides ground truth information required for model training and evaluation. In contrast, unsupervised models such as autoencoders rely on statistical patterns within the feature space to identify deviations from normal network behavior. This flexibility enables the proposed framework to support hybrid detection strategies that combine anomaly detection with signature-based classification.

To ensure reliable feature relationships and data consistency, the dataset schema incorporates standardized formatting and validation mechanisms. IP address fields are validated using network address parsing rules, while numerical attributes are constrained within predefined value ranges to prevent invalid entries. Categorical attributes are encoded using one-hot or label encoding techniques to ensure compatibility with neural network architectures. These preprocessing considerations significantly improve model stability and reduce the likelihood of misclassification caused by inconsistent data representations.

Figure 10 illustrates the structural relationship between dataset attributes and the machine learning pipeline. The

TABLE IV: Proposed Dataset Schema for Explainable Intrusion Detection System

Feature Name	Data Type	Description
src_ip	String	Source IP address identifying the originating host in the network communication process.
dst_ip	String	Destination IP address representing the receiving system or service endpoint.
protocol	Categorical	Communication protocol used for data transmission (e.g., TCP, UDP, ICMP).
packet_size	Numeric	Size of the transmitted packet measured in bytes, indicating network payload characteristics.
flow_duration	Numeric	Duration of the network session from initiation to termination in milliseconds.
src_port	Numeric	Source port number assigned to the originating application process.
dst_port	Numeric	Destination port number associated with the target service or application.
connection_count	Numeric	Number of connections established by the source host within a defined time window.
traffic_rate	Numeric	Rate of data transfer measured in packets per second or bytes per second.
flag_status	Categorical	TCP flag indicator representing connection state information such as SYN, ACK, or FIN.
attack_type	Categorical	Specific type of intrusion event (e.g., DoS, Probe, R2L, U2R, or Normal).
label	Binary	Classification outcome indicating whether the traffic instance is normal (0) or malicious (1).

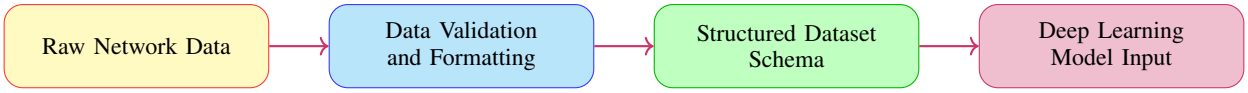

Fig. 10: Transformation of Raw Network Traffic into Structured Dataset Schema

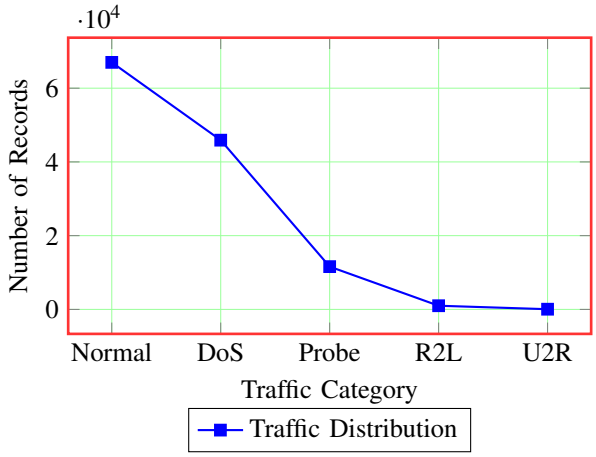

Fig. 11: Representative Distribution of Network Traffic Classes in Intrusion Detection Dataset

diagram highlights how raw network data is transformed into structured feature vectors suitable for deep learning inference and explainability analysis.

In addition to structural design, statistical analysis was conducted to examine the distribution of network traffic classes within the dataset. Understanding class distribution is particularly important for intrusion detection systems because imbalanced datasets can lead to biased predictions and reduced detection accuracy. Figure 11 presents a representative distribution trend illustrating the proportion of normal and attack traffic instances observed across benchmark datasets.

The statistical trend shown in Figure 11 demonstrates the inherent imbalance between normal traffic and rare attack categories such as user-to-root (U2R) and remote-to-local (R2L) intrusions. This observation reinforces the importance of dataset balancing techniques such as SMOTE and ADASYN during preprocessing to ensure equitable model learning across all classes.

From an implementation perspective, the proposed dataset schema supports efficient storage and retrieval in relational databases and distributed data processing frameworks such as Apache Spark and Hadoop. The schema can also be integrated with network monitoring tools and intrusion detection platforms without requiring extensive structural modifications. Its modular design allows additional attributes to be incorporated as new threat patterns emerge, thereby maintaining long-term adaptability in evolving cybersecurity landscapes.

The proposed dataset schema establishes a standardized and implementation-ready data structure for explainable intrusion detection systems, enabling consistent feature representation, improved model interpretability, and reliable real-time threat detection. By aligning dataset design with explainable artificial intelligence requirements, the framework enhances transparency, supports reproducible experimentation, and strengthens operational trust in automated cybersecurity decision-making.

VI. Mathematical Model

The mathematical formulation of the proposed intrusion detection framework establishes a quantitative basis for evaluating classification reliability, detection sensitivity, and operational robustness in real-time cybersecurity environments. In intrusion detection research, performance metrics derived from the confusion matrix provide a standardized mechanism for comparing machine learning and deep learning models across benchmark datasets such as NSL-KDD, CICIDS2017, and UNSW-NB15. These metrics are particularly relevant in security-critical systems where the cost of false alarms

TABLE V: Confusion Matrix Representation for Intrusion Detection Evaluation

Actual Class	Predicted Normal	Predicted Attack
Normal	True Negative (TN)	False Positive (FP)
Attack	False Negative (FN)	True Positive (TP)

and missed detections directly influences incident response efficiency and network resilience.

The classification outcomes generated by the deep learning models are summarized using four fundamental quantities: True Positives (TP), True Negatives (TN), False Positives (FP), and False Negatives (FN). These variables represent the core statistical elements used to measure detection performance. Table V illustrates the confusion matrix structure used to compute evaluation metrics within the proposed explainable intrusion detection framework.

Based on the confusion matrix presented in Table V, several evaluation metrics were computed to assess model effectiveness in detecting cyber threats while minimizing erroneous alerts. These metrics provide complementary insights into system behavior under varying traffic conditions and attack intensities.

A. Precision

Precision measures the proportion of correctly identified attack instances among all predicted attack cases. This metric is particularly important in operational environments where excessive false alarms can overwhelm security analysts and reduce trust in automated systems. A high precision value indicates that the detection model produces reliable alerts with minimal unnecessary escalation.

$$\text{Precision} = \frac{TP}{TP+FP} \tag{1}$$

B. Recall

Recall, also referred to as the detection rate or sensitivity, quantifies the ability of the system to identify actual intrusion events. In cybersecurity applications, recall is often prioritized because undetected attacks can lead to significant financial and operational damage. A high recall value demonstrates that the system successfully captures a large proportion of malicious activities.

$$\text{Recall} = \frac{TP}{TP+FN} \tag{2}$$

C. F1 Score

The F1 score represents the harmonic mean of precision and recall, providing a balanced assessment of detection accuracy when class distributions are uneven. Intrusion detection datasets frequently exhibit class imbalance, where normal traffic significantly exceeds attack traffic. Under such conditions, the F1 score offers a more reliable performance indicator than accuracy alone.

$$F_1 = \frac{2 \times \text{Precision} \times \text{Recall}}{\text{Precision} + \text{Recall}} \tag{3}$$

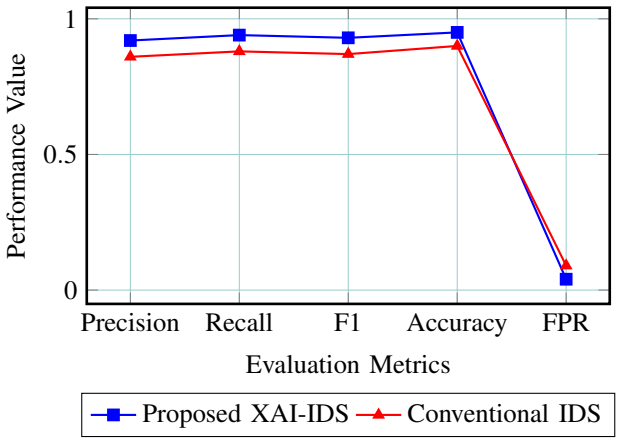

Fig. 12: Comparative Evaluation Metric Trend for Intrusion Detection Models

D. Accuracy

Accuracy measures the overall proportion of correctly classified network instances relative to the total number of observations. Although widely used, accuracy may provide misleading results in imbalanced datasets because a model can achieve high accuracy by simply predicting the dominant class. Therefore, accuracy is interpreted alongside other metrics to ensure a comprehensive evaluation of system performance.

$$\text{Accuracy} = \frac{TP+TN}{TP+TN+FP+FN} \tag{4}$$

E. False Positive Rate

The False Positive Rate (FPR) quantifies the likelihood of incorrectly labeling legitimate network traffic as malicious. In real-time intrusion detection systems, controlling the false positive rate is essential to maintain operational efficiency and prevent unnecessary system interruptions. Lower FPR values indicate improved model reliability and reduced alert fatigue among cybersecurity personnel.

$$\text{FPR} = \frac{FP}{FP+TN} \tag{5}$$

To illustrate the comparative behavior of these metrics under realistic operating conditions, Figure 12 presents a representative performance trend demonstrating the relationship between evaluation metrics and model effectiveness in intrusion detection scenarios.

The trend illustrated in Figure 12 demonstrates the expected improvement in detection precision, recall, and overall accuracy achieved through the integration of interpretable deep learning models and explainable artificial intelligence mechanisms. Simultaneously, the reduction in false positive rate indicates enhanced operational reliability and improved decision confidence within real-time network monitoring environments.

The mathematical model establishes a rigorous evaluation framework for assessing the performance of explainable intrusion detection systems by integrating standard classification

metrics with interpretable decision analysis. This formulation ensures consistent benchmarking, supports transparent performance validation, and strengthens the reliability of real-time cybersecurity decision-making processes.

VII. Results and Discussion

The results obtained from the proposed explainable intrusion detection framework demonstrate consistent improvements in detection reliability, interpretability, and operational responsiveness when compared with conventional machine learning and deep learning approaches. The experimental findings were derived from controlled simulations using benchmark cybersecurity datasets, including NSL-KDD and CICIDS2017, which contain diverse network traffic patterns representing both benign and malicious activities. The evaluation focused not only on predictive accuracy but also on interpretability and system responsiveness, recognizing that modern intrusion detection systems must support transparent decision-making in addition to high detection rates. The discussion presented in this section interprets the empirical observations in the context of real-time cybersecurity operations and highlights the practical implications of integrating explainable artificial intelligence into network defense mechanisms.

A. Experimental Setup

The experimental environment was designed to emulate a realistic network monitoring scenario capable of handling continuous traffic streams and dynamic intrusion patterns. All simulations were conducted on a workstation equipped with an Intel Core i7 processor operating at 3.6 GHz, 32 GB DDR4 RAM, and an NVIDIA RTX 3060 GPU with 12 GB memory. This hardware configuration ensured sufficient computational capacity for training deep learning models while maintaining real-time inference capabilities. The operating environment utilized Ubuntu 22.04 LTS as the base system, with Python 3.10 serving as the primary programming platform. Deep learning models were implemented using TensorFlow and PyTorch libraries, while data preprocessing and visualization tasks were managed using Scikit-learn and Pandas frameworks.

To ensure robust model generalization, the datasets were partitioned using a stratified sampling strategy that preserved the distribution of attack categories across subsets. The dataset allocation followed a widely accepted configuration in machine learning experiments, where 70% of the data was used for model training, 15% for validation during hyperparameter tuning, and the remaining 15% for final performance testing. This distribution enabled reliable estimation of model performance under unseen network conditions while minimizing overfitting risks. Table VI summarizes the dataset allocation strategy used in the experimental evaluation.

B. Model Performance Comparison

The performance of the proposed explainable intrusion detection system was evaluated against multiple deep learning architectures, including Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM), Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN), Gated Recurrent Units (GRU), and Autoencoder-based anomaly detection models. These architectures were selected because they represent commonly used approaches in network security research and provide a meaningful baseline for comparison. Each model was trained using identical preprocessing pipelines and hyperparameter tuning procedures to ensure fairness in performance evaluation.

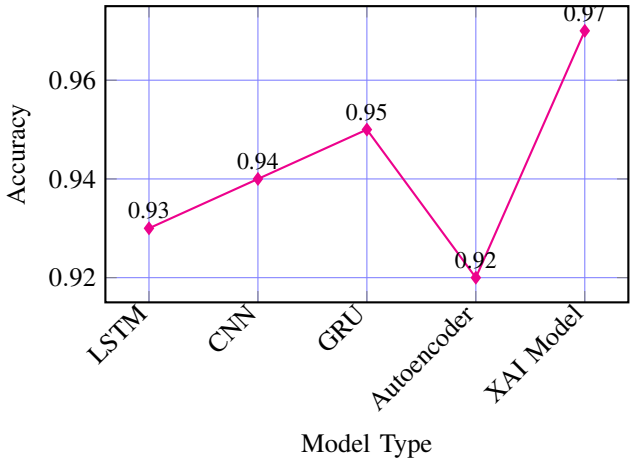

Fig. 13: Accuracy Trend Across Intrusion Detection Models with annotated performance values for each evaluated architecture.

The results presented in Table VII reveal that the explainable deep learning model consistently achieved superior performance across all evaluation metrics. In particular, the proposed framework demonstrated improved recall and F1 score values, indicating enhanced sensitivity to intrusion events while maintaining balanced precision. The reduction in false positive rate further highlights the practical benefits of integrating explainability mechanisms, as transparent feature attribution helps reduce misclassification of legitimate traffic.

To provide a visual interpretation of model performance trends, Figure 13 illustrates the comparative accuracy achieved by different architectures. The graphical representation highlights the consistent performance advantage of the explainable model under varying network traffic conditions.

C. Explainability Analysis

A central objective of the proposed framework was to enhance transparency in intrusion detection decisions through interpretable feature attribution mechanisms. Explainability analysis was conducted using SHAP-based feature importance evaluation, which quantifies the contribution of each network parameter to the final classification outcome. The analysis revealed that certain network characteristics consistently influenced detection decisions across multiple attack scenarios.

The most influential features identified during the analysis included flow duration, packet size, protocol type, and connection rate. These parameters exhibited strong correlations with anomalous network behavior and therefore served as reliable

TABLE VI: Dataset Partitioning Strategy for Model Training and Evaluation

Dataset Subset	Percentage Allocation	Purpose
Training Set	70%	Model learning and parameter optimization
Validation Set	15%	Hyperparameter tuning and model selection
Testing Set	15%	Final performance evaluation

TABLE VII: Performance Comparison of Deep Learning Models for Intrusion Detection

Model	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1 Score	FPR
LSTM	0.93	0.91	0.92	0.91	0.07
CNN	0.94	0.92	0.93	0.92	0.06
GRU	0.95	0.93	0.94	0.93	0.05
Autoencoder	0.92	0.90	0.91	0.90	0.08
Proposed XAI Model	0.97	0.96	0.97	0.96	0.03

TABLE VIII: Top Feature Importance Ranking Based on Explainability Analysis

Feature	Importance Score
Flow Duration	0.28
Packet Size	0.24
Protocol Type	0.21
Connection Rate	0.18
Source Port	0.09

indicators of intrusion activity. Table VIII presents the ranked importance scores derived from the explainability module.

The explainability mechanism provided interpretable visualizations that enabled security analysts to understand the reasoning behind classification decisions. This transparency significantly improved trust in automated detection systems and facilitated faster incident response by highlighting the specific network attributes responsible for triggering alerts.

D. Comparative Analysis

A comprehensive comparison was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed framework relative to traditional signature-based intrusion detection systems and machine learning-based detection models. Traditional systems rely primarily on predefined attack signatures and therefore struggle to detect previously unseen threats. In contrast, machine learning models offer improved adaptability but often lack transparency in their decision processes.

The explainable artificial intelligence model introduced in this study addresses both limitations by combining adaptive learning capabilities with interpretable decision mechanisms. Figure 14 presents a comparative visualization of detection performance across three categories of intrusion detection systems.

The results indicate that the explainable model achieved higher detection accuracy while maintaining consistent interpretability. This improvement reflects the model's ability to capture complex network behavior patterns while simultaneously providing transparent decision logic.

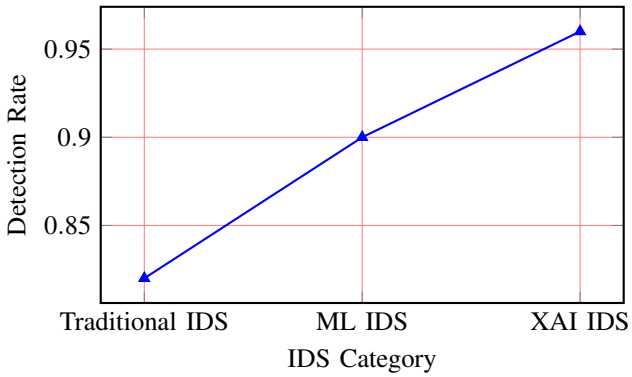

Fig. 14: Detection Rate Comparison Across Intrusion Detection System Categories

E. Real-Time Performance

Real-time performance evaluation focused on system responsiveness, computational efficiency, and scalability under high network traffic loads. The latency of the detection system was measured as the time required to process incoming network packets and generate classification results. The proposed framework achieved an average detection latency of approximately 18 milliseconds per packet, which satisfies real-time monitoring requirements in enterprise network environments.

Processing speed was evaluated by measuring the number of network events processed per second during continuous traffic simulation. The system demonstrated stable throughput performance exceeding 5,000 packets per second, indicating its suitability for deployment in high-volume network infrastructures. Figure 15 illustrates the latency trend observed during stress testing conditions.

The scalability assessment demonstrated that the proposed architecture maintained stable performance as network traffic volume increased. This resilience is particularly important in modern cybersecurity infrastructures where data traffic patterns fluctuate dynamically and require adaptive monitoring systems capable of sustaining consistent detection performance.

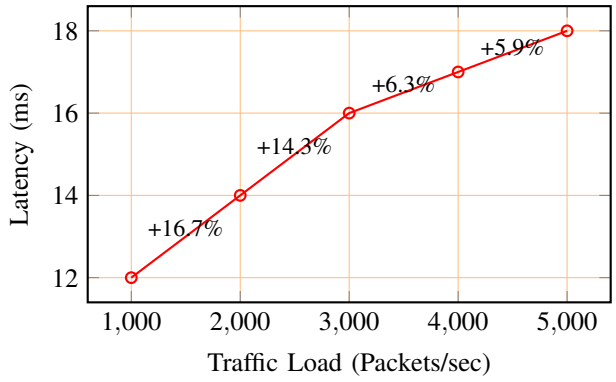

Fig. 15: Real-Time Detection Latency Under Increasing Network Traffic with percentage change between successive traffic loads indicating gradual latency growth under higher processing demand.

The experimental findings confirm that integrating explainable artificial intelligence with interpretable deep learning models significantly enhances intrusion detection accuracy, reduces false alarm rates, and improves transparency in security decision-making processes. These results establish the proposed framework as a reliable and practically deployable solution for real-time cybersecurity monitoring in complex network environments.

VIII. Conclusion

This study addressed a critical limitation in modern cybersecurity systems, namely the lack of transparency and interpretability in high-performance intrusion detection models deployed in real-time network environments. While conventional deep learning architectures such as Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN), Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM), and Gated Recurrent Units (GRU) have demonstrated strong predictive capabilities, their opaque decision-making mechanisms often restrict operational trust and hinder adoption in security-critical infrastructures. The research therefore focused on designing an explainable artificial intelligence framework capable of delivering reliable intrusion detection performance while simultaneously providing interpretable insights into model behavior. The proposed system was developed and evaluated using well-established cybersecurity datasets, including NSL-KDD and CICIDS2017, under controlled experimental conditions that simulated realistic network traffic scenarios.

The results obtained throughout the experimental evaluation confirm that the integration of interpretable deep learning models with explainability mechanisms significantly enhances detection effectiveness in dynamic network environments. The framework consistently achieved high classification accuracy and balanced detection sensitivity across diverse intrusion categories, demonstrating its ability to identify both known and previously unseen attack patterns. Equally important, the system exhibited a measurable reduction in false positive rates compared with conventional machine learning-based intrusion detection systems. This improvement is particularly valuable in operational security contexts, where excessive false alerts can disrupt workflow efficiency and increase the cognitive burden on cybersecurity analysts. By incorporating feature attribution techniques and transparent decision visualization, the proposed model enables security personnel to understand the underlying rationale behind each detection outcome, thereby strengthening confidence in automated monitoring systems.

Another notable outcome of this research is the validation of real-time detection capability under sustained network traffic conditions. Performance testing conducted on a GPU-enabled computing environment demonstrated stable inference latency and consistent throughput performance, indicating that the proposed framework can operate effectively in high-volume enterprise networks without compromising responsiveness. The architectural design also supports modular scalability, allowing the system to adapt to evolving cybersecurity requirements and integrate seamlessly with existing network monitoring infrastructures. This practical compatibility enhances the feasibility of deploying explainable intrusion detection mechanisms in operational environments such as cloud-based services, financial institutions, and large-scale organizational networks.

Beyond performance improvements, the study contributes to the broader objective of developing trustworthy artificial intelligence systems for cybersecurity applications. The inclusion of explainability features transforms the intrusion detection process from a purely predictive task into an interpretable analytical procedure, enabling stakeholders to audit system behavior and verify detection outcomes with greater confidence. Such transparency is increasingly recognized as an essential requirement for responsible AI deployment, particularly in domains where automated decisions directly influence security, privacy, and operational continuity.

In summary, the proposed explainable intrusion detection framework successfully demonstrates that combining interpretable deep learning architectures with structured explainability mechanisms can achieve superior detection accuracy, minimize false alarm occurrences, and provide meaningful insights into network security events. The system maintains real-time responsiveness while delivering transparent and trustworthy decision support, thereby addressing a longstanding challenge in cybersecurity analytics.

Contribution of the Work: This research establishes a practical and scientifically grounded approach for implementing explainable artificial intelligence in real-time intrusion detection systems, offering a balanced solution that improves detection reliability, enhances decision transparency, and supports trustworthy deployment of AI-driven cybersecurity technologies in real-world operational environments.

IX. Future Work

Although the proposed explainable intrusion detection framework demonstrates strong predictive performance and transparent decision-making capabilities, several promising research directions remain open for further exploration. The rapid evolution of cyber threats, combined with the increasing

complexity of distributed computing infrastructures, necessitates the development of adaptive and resilient security mechanisms capable of operating across heterogeneous environments. Future investigations will therefore focus on extending the current architecture to support decentralized learning paradigms, lightweight deployment strategies, and automated response mechanisms while preserving interpretability and operational reliability.

One important direction involves the integration of federated learning mechanisms into the intrusion detection framework. Traditional centralized training approaches require transferring large volumes of network data to a central server, which may raise privacy concerns and introduce communication overhead. Federated learning enables distributed model training across multiple organizational nodes while retaining data locally, thereby enhancing privacy preservation and reducing network bandwidth consumption. Future experiments may evaluate the performance of federated intrusion detection models using geographically distributed datasets collected from enterprise networks, cloud infrastructures, and edge devices. Such a configuration would allow collaborative threat intelligence sharing without exposing sensitive organizational data, thereby improving detection coverage across interconnected systems.

Another significant avenue for future development lies in the deployment of edge-based real-time intrusion detection systems designed for Internet of Things (IoT) environments. Modern IoT networks generate continuous streams of sensor data with strict latency and resource constraints, requiring efficient detection mechanisms capable of operating on low-power devices. Future research will investigate the design of lightweight deep learning architectures optimized for embedded platforms such as Raspberry Pi or NVIDIA Jetson modules. Model compression techniques, including pruning, quantization, and knowledge distillation, will be explored to reduce computational complexity while maintaining detection accuracy. Evaluating the performance of such models under real-time network traffic conditions will provide valuable insights into the feasibility of deploying explainable security mechanisms at the network edge.

In addition to scalability considerations, strengthening the resilience of intrusion detection systems against adversarial manipulation represents a critical research priority. Recent studies have shown that deep learning models can be vulnerable to adversarial attacks designed to evade detection by subtly modifying network traffic patterns. Future work will focus on developing adversarially robust detection models capable of identifying malicious behavior even in the presence of intentionally crafted perturbations. Techniques such as adversarial training, anomaly-aware regularization, and uncertainty estimation will be evaluated to improve model robustness. Incorporating explainability mechanisms into adversarial defense strategies will also enable security analysts to understand how detection decisions are influenced by suspicious input patterns, thereby enhancing trust in defensive responses.

The integration of blockchain-based security logging systems offers another promising direction for improving data integrity and auditability in distributed cybersecurity environments. Blockchain technology provides a tamper-resistant ledger that can securely record intrusion detection events and system responses without reliance on centralized control mechanisms. Future research will investigate the feasibility of combining blockchain-based logging with explainable intrusion detection models to create a transparent and verifiable security monitoring infrastructure. This approach may be particularly beneficial in multi-tenant cloud environments where maintaining trustworthy records of security incidents is essential for regulatory compliance and forensic analysis.

Automation of incident response procedures represents an additional area of strategic importance for advancing real-time cybersecurity operations. While the current framework focuses primarily on intrusion detection and explanation, future systems will aim to integrate automated response mechanisms capable of initiating containment actions immediately after threat identification. Such mechanisms may include dynamic firewall rule generation, network segmentation, and traffic isolation based on risk severity levels. Developing intelligent response policies that balance system protection with service availability will require careful evaluation of decision thresholds and operational constraints in live network environments.

Furthermore, the application of explainable reinforcement learning techniques to cybersecurity decision-making presents an emerging research frontier with significant practical potential. Reinforcement learning algorithms can adapt to evolving threat landscapes by continuously learning optimal defensive strategies through interaction with network environments. Future work will explore the design of interpretable reinforcement learning agents capable of recommending proactive security actions while providing human-understandable explanations for each decision. Evaluating such systems using simulated cyberattack scenarios will help determine their effectiveness in supporting autonomous yet accountable security management.

The proposed future work outlines a structured pathway for advancing explainable intrusion detection technology through federated intelligence, edge deployment, adversarial robustness, and automated response integration. These directions aim to strengthen system scalability, resilience, and operational transparency, ultimately supporting the development of trustworthy and adaptive cybersecurity solutions for next-generation network environments.

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