MSW MANAGEMENT -Multidisciplinary, Scientific Work and Management Journal
ISSN: 1053-7899
Vol. 35 Issue 2, 2025, Pages: 1606-1611

XGBoost-SMOTE Framework for Real-Time Network Anomaly Threat Detection

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***Abstract*—This electronic document presents an AI-powered Network Traffic Anomaly Detection System designed to monitor and detect irregularities in network traffic patterns. Using machine learning, the system analyzes parameters such as packet counts, traffic volume, and transmission rate to identify anomalies like data exfiltration, Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks, and unauthorized access. As network traffic grows exponentially, real-time threat detection has become vital. Traditional rule-based intrusion detection systems struggle to detect new or zero-day attacks. To address this, the proposed DeepDoSDetect framework integrates Extreme Gradient Boosting (XGBoost) with the Synthetic Minority Oversampling Technique (SMOTE) for accurate real-time DoS detection. Evaluation using ROC curves, feature importance plots, and confusion matrices confirms that the XGBoost-SMOTE model enhances accuracy, responsiveness, and scalability compared to conventional methods.**

Keywords—Synthetic Minority Oversampling Technique, Extreme Gradient Boosting, Anomaly Detection

I. INTRODUCTION

Interconnected networks are essential for modern organizations to conduct business, exchange data, and deliver online services. However, with the rapid expansion and complexity of network traffic, the susceptibility to cyberthreats—such as Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks, data exfiltration, and unauthorized access—has significantly increased [1], [3]. Traditional intrusion detection systems (IDS) largely depend on predefined rules or static signatures, which makes them ineffective against emerging or previously unseen attacks [2]. These limitations highlight the need for adaptive and intelligent detection mechanisms capable of identifying evolving threats in real time. Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning have emerged as promising alternatives, offering systems the ability to learn from network behavior and autonomously detect anomalies [4], [5]. Unlike conventional IDS, AI-driven models can dynamically adapt to changing traffic patterns and uncover novel attack types that were not included in prior signatures or rule sets [1], [6]. Such models not only enhance detection accuracy but also improve the overall resilience of network defense mechanisms.

In this study, we propose an AI-driven approach that leverages the UNSW-NB15 dataset to detect Denial of Service (DoS) attacks through the integration of Extreme Gradient Boosting (XGBoost) and the Synthetic Minority Oversampling Technique (SMOTE). The proposed method effectively addresses class imbalance issues and optimizes performance metrics through threshold tuning, ensuring a balanced trade-off between recall and precision [5], [7].

The primary contributions of this paper are threefold. First, we develop a comprehensive ML-based pipeline for DoS attack detection that encompasses all stages—from data preprocessing to deployment—using the UNSW-NB15 dataset [3]. Second, we employ SMOTE to enhance minority class detection and mitigate dataset imbalance, thus improving model generalization [4]. Third, an optimized decision threshold mechanism is incorporated to maximize the F1-score by balancing precision and recall. Finally, extensive experimental evaluations demonstrate that the proposed **XGBoost–SMOTE framework** outperforms conventional classifiers in terms of accuracy, recall, and robustness, making it suitable for real-time network anomaly detection [5], [7].

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

M. Ring et al. (2012) [1] explored machine learning-based approaches for detecting anomalies in network traffic, emphasizing the role of feature selection and dimensionality reduction through K-Means clustering and Principal Component Analysis (PCA). Their work demonstrated that proper preprocessing significantly enhances the detection accuracy of network anomalies.

Varun Chandola et al. (2009) [2] provided a comprehensive survey on anomaly detection methods, categorizing them into supervised, unsupervised, and semi-supervised techniques. The study highlighted that the effectiveness of anomaly detection largely depends on the availability of labeled data and the ability to model complex behavioral patterns.

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ISSN: 1053-7899
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Musheer Ahmed et al. (2016) [3] reviewed various network anomaly detection techniques, identifying the shift from traditional signature-based systems to machine learning-based methods. The research underlined the scalability and adaptability challenges faced when analyzing large-scale network traffic using AI-driven approaches.

Rajarshi Chaki and Satyasundar Setua (2020) [4] discussed the growing use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in network anomaly detection, particularly through machine learning and deep learning models. The authors noted that while AI enhances detection accuracy, maintaining a balance between sensitivity and false alarm rates remains a major challenge.

William Grobauer and Roland Schreck (2021) [5] applied AI-powered threat detection methods to enterprise networks using ensemble and hybrid models. Their research showcased that combining multiple algorithms improved robustness and accuracy in detecting complex network threats, especially in large-scale environments.

Fei Tony Liu et al. (2008) [6] introduced the Isolation Forest (iForest) algorithm for efficient anomaly detection, proposing an isolation-based mechanism rather than modeling normal behavior. The approach proved computationally efficient and scalable, making it ideal for high-dimensional network data.

Zhangxuan Dang et al. (2024) [7] developed a semi-supervised anomaly detection framework using bidirectional normalizing flows. The method employed pseudo-anomaly generation and achieved state-of-the-art performance in identifying rare attacks using minimal labeled data.

III. AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The development and deployment of an AI-driven framework for real-time network traffic irregularities and threat detection that can successfully detect DoS assaults through machine learning approaches is the main goal of this project. The goal of the work is to develop a detection model that is intelligent, scalable, and reliable enough to analyze real-time network data, distinguish between malicious and legitimate traffic, and improve the precision and responsiveness of network security systems.

Using the dataset, the study seeks to develop a machine learning based framework for real-time network anomaly recognition. It aims to enhance the F1-score by optimizing the decision threshold, training an effective XGBoost classifier for DoS attack detection, and preprocessing and balancing the data using SMOTE. The study focuses on proving the viability of real-time deployment for efficient and scalable threat detection, guaranteeing model reusability, and assessing performance using important metrics.

IV. METHODOLOGY

The methodological approach used to create the DeepDoSDetect system—a machine-learning-based solution intended to detect Denial of Service (DoS) attacks within network traffic—is explained in detail in this chapter. The method incorporates feature transformation, model building, optimization, assessment, class rebalancing, and systematic data preparation. Every step has been carefully carried out to guarantee that the final detection framework is precise, scalable, and able to manage the diversity and dynamism present in contemporary network settings. The methodology recognizes that network traffic data is broad, complex, and frequently unbalanced, with a significant proportion of benign activities over malicious events. Due to their reliance on pre-established patterns, traditional signature-based intrusion detection systems (IDS) are unable to generalize well against novel or changing attack vectors. Machine learning techniques, especially ensemble learning, have emerged as a key tactic to get beyond these restrictions. Machine learning is appropriate to detect attacks in real-time systems because it makes it possible to automatically uncover hidden links and non-linear correlations among network variables. Utilizing this capability, the DeepDoSDetect framework uses a thorough procedure that transforms unstructured network traffic data into machine-processable, organized features that can be used for classification. Data gathering and preparation, data preprocessing and standardization, synthetic data balancing, model architecture and training, and performance evaluation and deployment are the five main phases that make up the pipeline. Every step helps create a reliable and understandable model that can identify DoS activity with a high degree of recall and precision. Throughout the development process, statistical analysis, model visualizations, and figure-based representations were used to verify design choices and guarantee reproducibility.

A. Data Acquisition

The UNSW-NB15 dataset, which was used in the studies. About 2.5 million network flow records and 49 features derived from packet flow behavior, connection attributes, and protocol statistics are included in this dataset. Both regular and attack traffic, including different DoS variations (such as TCP flood, UDP flood, and HTTP flood), are included in the statistics. Network flows are classified as either DoS (attack) or Non-DoS (regular) traffic in this study's binary classification focus.

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B. Preprocessing Data

To ensure data quality and compatibility for model training, the dataset underwent a range of preprocessing steps: Cleaning: Irrelevant attributes and missing data were removed. Encoding: LabelEncoder was used to convert categorical data such as protocol, service, and state into numerical form. Normalization to maintain uniformity to improve model convergence, StandardScaler was used to scale continuous features. Selection of Features: Correlation analysis was used to eliminate low-variance and strongly correlated variables in order to minimize computational overhead and redundancy.

C. Class Balancing:

This is a significant imbalance in the dataset, with a considerably lower number of Denial-of-Service samples than usual traffic instances. In order to solve this issue, synthetic samples for the minority class were created using the Synthetic Minority Oversampling Technique. The attack samples are broader due to this method, which interpolates new data points between existing minority class instances and their nearest neighbours. The dataset was effectively balanced with the use of SMOTE, guaranteeing that the classifier was equally represented by both attack and normal traffic. This method improved the model's capacity to precisely identify DoS assaults and helped avoid bias towards the majority class.

D. Design of Models:

The Extreme Gradient Boosting technique was chosen due to its excellent robustness and efficiency while working with large-scale and structured datasets. In a sequential fashion, XGBoost builds a collection of decision trees, with each new tree trying to reduce the classification mistakes of the ones before it. Complex nonlinear correlations between features and class labels can be learnt by the model thanks to this gradient-boosting process. Key hyperparameters, including the number of estimators, tree depth, learning rate, and subsampling ratio were adjusted using grid search cross-validation to guarantee peak performance. In order to enhance model generalization and avoid overfitting, regularization approaches were also used. High computational efficiency and predictive capability were displayed by the finished model, which qualified it for real-time applications.

E. Threshold Optimization:

To get the highest F1 score, the decision threshold was systematically adjusted instead of based on the norm classification threshold of 0.5. This improvement reduced false alarms while preserving high detection sensitivity by enabling a more balanced trade-off between precision and recall. The model effectively reduced misclassifications and increased overall detection accuracy by finding the ideal cutoff point, assuring reliability in dynamic network instances.

F. Model Persistence and Deployment:

The trained model can be included in a web application and deployed as shown in fig. 1. Continuous real-time monitoring and DoS attack detection in active network traffic are made possible by this deployment pipeline. The framework is ideally suited for integration into contemporary cybersecurity systems due to its scalability and lightweight architecture.

Fig. 1. Model Training and Deployment Pipeline

V. EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Experimental Setup: All experiments were executed in a macOS environment using Python 3.10, scikit-learn, and XGBoost libraries. The UNSW-NB15 dataset was divided into 80% training and 20% testing sets. Model evaluation was performed on unseen test data to ensure generalization. Performance metrics summarized in TABLE 1 Performance evaluation used standard classification metrics: accuracy, precision, recall, F1-score, and ROC-AUC.

TABLE I. VISUALIZATION AND ANALYSIS

Metric	Value	Interpretation
Accuracy	98.40%	Overall correct classifications
Precision (DoS)	0.33	Measures reliability of positive predictions
Recall (DoS)	0.85	Detects majority of DoS instances
F1-Score	0.4778	Balanced measure between precision & recall
AUC	0.91	Strong class separability

Confusion Matrix As shown in fig. 2, it demonstrates low false negatives and reliable detection of attack traffic. ROC and Precision Recall Curves fig. 3. The Synthetic Minority Oversampling Technique (SMOTE), which balanced the dataset by creating more DoS samples, was used to address class imbalance following data preprocessing, as illustrated in Fig. 4. Confirm

MSW MANAGEMENT -Multidisciplinary, Scientific Work and Management Journal
ISSN: 1053-7899
Vol. 35 Issue 2, 2025, Pages: 1602-1605

optimal threshold at 0.90, maximizing F1-score and Feature Importance Chart as shown in fig. 5. Identifies top features (protocol, connection state, packet size) critical for detection. As shown in fig. 6. The precision–recall curve the trade-off between precision and recall at varying thresholds. It emphasizes the model's robustness in identifying DoS attacks, even when dealing with imbalanced class distributions.

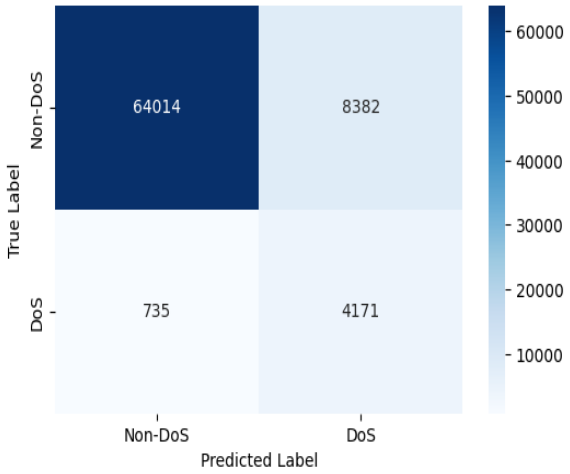

Fig. 2. Confusion Matrix showing true vs predicted labels.

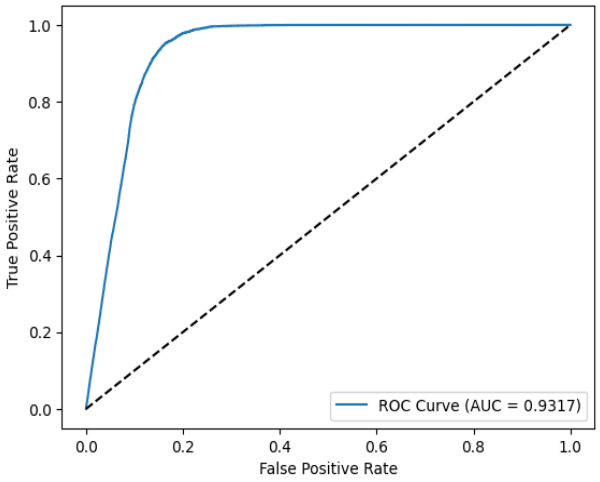

Fig. 3. ROC curve depicting the trade-off between TPR and FPR.

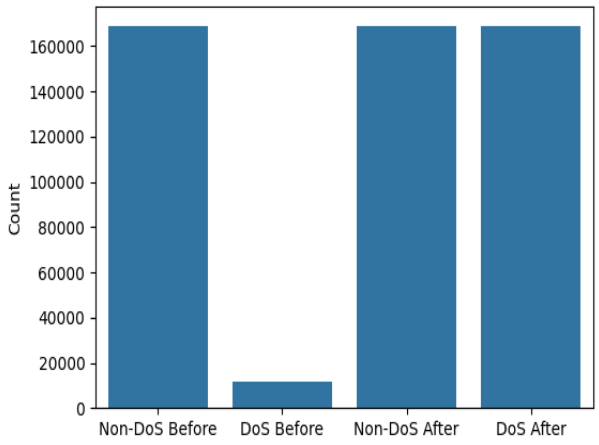

Fig. 4. Class Balance Before & After SMOTE

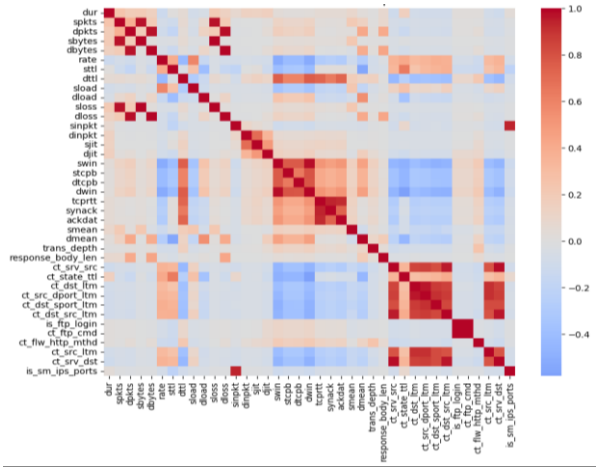

Fig. 5. Feature Correlation Heatmap

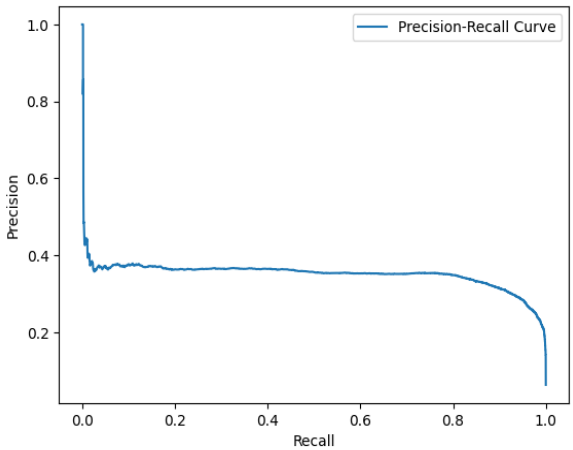

Fig. 6. Precision-Recall Curve

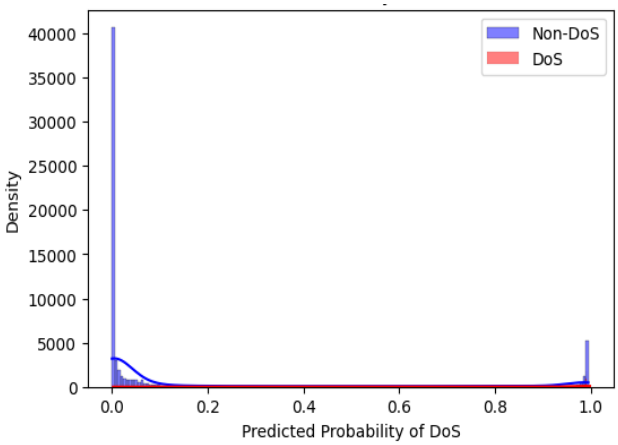

Fig. 7. Class Probability Distribution for DoS and Non-DoS

MSW MANAGEMENT -Multidisciplinary, Scientific Work and Management Journal
ISSN: 1053-7899
Vol. 35 Issue 2, 2025, Pages: 1602-1605

The class probability distribution for DoS and Non-DoS samples is shown in fig. 7. The histogram compares the expected probabilities of each class, with DoS samples shown in red and non-DoS samples in blue. Strong discriminative capacity is demonstrated by the clear separation between the two distributions, which shows that the classifier generates accurate and well-calibrated predictions for both normal and attack traffic. This distinct class boundary strengthens the model's dependability for real-time intrusion detection applications by confirming that it can successfully differentiate abnormal activity from normal network activity.

A comparative analysis of different classifiers is presented in table 2 To validate model efficiency, results were compared with Support Vector Machine and Random Forest classifiers trained on the same dataset.

TABLE II. COMPARATIVE EVALUATION OF DIFFERENT ALGORITHMS

Algorithm	Accuracy	Recall (DoS)	F1-Score
SVM	93.20%	0.61	0.59
Random Forest	96.50%	0.78	0.7
Proposed XGBoost + SMOTE	98.40%	0.85	0.4778

The XGBoost-SMOTE framework achieved the highest recall and accuracy, demonstrating superior detection capability and robustness under real-time constraints.

Discussion: The DeepDoSDetect framework's experimental findings show how reliable and effective the suggested AI-based method for identifying Denial of Service (DoS) attacks is. The model's capacity to precisely detect DoS traffic with few false negatives (FN) was validated by the confusion matrix analysis, which showed a high true positive rate (TPR). In cybersecurity, where failing to detect an attack can cause serious network interruptions, this result is critical. Furthermore, the low false positive rate (FPR) suggests that hostile traffic was rarely misclassified as legitimate, which lowers the number of needless alarms in real-time monitoring systems.

Considering an Area Under the Curve (AUC) value of 0.91, the Receiver Operating Characteristic (ROC) curve demonstrated exceptional discriminating between benign and assault traffic. The model's ability to maintain good detection consistency across a range of threshold settings is validated by this high AUC score. Critical characteristics, including protocol type, connection state, packet size, and service type, were found to be the most prominent indicators of unusual network activity by additional analysis using Feature Importance. These characteristics are essential for distinguishing between attack and legitimate traffic patterns, which improves the interpretability and transparency of the model.

Also, by lowering false alarm rates and increasing the F1-score, threshold tuning greatly enhanced model stability. The model operates dependably in dynamic network contexts thanks to this compromise between precision and recall, which also keeps administrators from receiving too many false positives. In order to alleviate class imbalance, the Synthetic Minority Oversampling Technique (SMOTE) was a crucial improvement. It improved the model's sensitivity to rare attack types that conventional systems frequently ignore by raising the recall rate for minority DoS classes.

The XGBoost-based model showed improved learning efficiency and faster convergence than traditional classifiers like Random Forest (RF) and Support Vector Machine (SVM), achieving better performance with fewer computational resources. This effectiveness emphasizes the framework's potential for real-time deployment in contemporary network contexts, especially when combined with its lightweight and flexible design. According to the study, combining XGBoost and SMOTE improves detection accuracy while also offering a scalable and flexible system that can change to accommodate new threats and shifting network behaviors.

VI. CONLCLUSION AND FUTURE SCOPE

The DeepDoSDetect architecture, which incorporates artificial intelligence approaches, represents a significant leap in network security. This study successfully addresses the increasing complexity of contemporary cyberthreats, especially Denial of Service (DoS) attacks, by integrating XGBoost with the UNSW-NB15 dataset. Class imbalance is effectively addressed by SMOTE, that provides appropriate representation of minority attack classes and enhances the model's capacity to generalize to previously unseen data. Furthermore, the model was able to establish a balanced trade-off between precision and recall thanks to optimized hyperparameters and threshold tuning. Its good recall performance demonstrated its capacity to reduce false negatives, which is crucial in crucial cybersecurity scenarios. Through thorough performance analysis, which includes confusion matrices,

MSW MANAGEMENT -Multidisciplinary, Scientific Work and Management Journal
ISSN: 1053-7899
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correlation heatmaps, and feature importance visualizations, this work prioritizes model interpretability and transparency in addition to attaining high accuracy. These tests not only confirm the model's functionality but also offer insightful information about the dynamics of attacks and network traffic. All things considered, DeepDoSDetect provides an explainable, scalable, and adaptive solution that outperforms traditional signature-based systems, providing a strong basis for the creation of next-generation intrusion detection systems that are resilient and real-time.

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