IJARCCE ISSN (O) 2278-1021, ISSN (P) 2319-5940



International Journal of Advanced Research in Computer and Communication Engineering

Impact Factor 8.471 ⁜ Peer-reviewed & Refereed journal ⁜ Vol. 15, Issue 11, November 2026

DOI: 10.17148/IJARCCE.2026.151122

A Comparative Study of Machine Learning Algorithms for Network Intrusion Detection

Akash jain[1], Dr. Pradeep Yadav[2]

Research Scholar, ITM Group of Institutions, Gwalior (M.P) India[1]

Professor & Head, Department of Computer Science and Engineering (CSE), ITM Group of Institutions, Gwalior (M.P) India[2]

Abstract: The increasing sophistication of cyberattacks poses critical challenges to modern network infrastructure security. Traditional signature-based intrusion detection systems (IDS) are becoming obsolete against zero-day exploits, polymorphic malware, and advanced persistent threats (APTs). This paper presents a comparative study of machine learning (ML) algorithms for network intrusion detection, evaluating Random Forest (RF), Gradient Boosting (GB), and Logistic Regression (LR) on both binary (normal vs. attack) and multiclass classification of nine traffic categories: Normal, Denial-of-Service (DoS), Probe, Remote-to-Local (R2L), User-to-Root (U2R), Botnet, Brute Force, SQL Injection, and Cross-Site Scripting (XSS). Experiments use a synthetic, NSL-KDD-inspired dataset of 4,506 labeled network traffic samples with 35 engineered features, evaluated with a stratified 80/20 hold-out split and five-fold stratified cross-validation. All three algorithms achieve 100% accuracy in binary classification, while Random Forest achieves 90.91% accuracy and a weighted F1-score of 0.9114 in multiclass classification. Per-class analysis shows that the web-application attacks (Brute Force, XSS, and SQL Injection) are the hardest to separate at the network-flow level. Feature importance analysis shows that behavioral indicators such as num_compromised, src_bytes, num_file_creations, and num_failed_logins are the strongest predictors of malicious activity. The results are compared with figures reported in the literature, and the study discusses the practical trade-offs among accuracy, interpretability, and computational cost when selecting an algorithm for deployment.

Keywords: Network Intrusion Detection, Machine Learning, Comparative Study, Random Forest, Gradient Boosting, Logistic Regression, Network Traffic Classification, Anomaly Detection, Feature Engineering, Cybersecurity

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of digital infrastructure has simultaneously amplified the attack surface available to malicious actors. According to the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), cybercrime costs are projected to exceed $10.5 trillion annually by 2025, representing the greatest transfer of economic wealth in history [1]. Traditional rule-based and signature-driven intrusion detection systems (IDS), while foundational, are inherently reactive — they can only identify threats that match pre-defined patterns and are rendered ineffective against novel, polymorphic, or obfuscated attack vectors [2].

Machine learning offers a paradigm shift in cybersecurity defense by enabling systems to learn behavioral patterns from data and generalize to previously unseen threats. Unlike static rule engines, ML models continuously adapt to evolving attack landscapes through feature learning and statistical inference. The integration of supervised learning for known-threat classification, unsupervised learning for anomaly detection, and reinforcement learning for adaptive response policies represents a holistic advancement over legacy IDS architectures [3].

The central challenge in deploying ML-based IDS solutions lies in the trade-off between detection accuracy and false positive rates. A highly sensitive model may flag benign traffic as malicious, disrupting operations, while an overly permissive model may miss subtle intrusions. Feature engineering, class imbalance handling, and model interpretability further complicate production deployments [4]. Additionally, real-world network traffic exhibits temporal dependencies, high dimensionality, and concept drift — phenomena that demand specialized preprocessing and online learning capabilities [5].

This paper makes the following primary contributions:

- A novel 35-feature dataset schema inspired by NSL-KDD and CICIDS2017, augmented with geo-anomaly, IP reputation scoring, payload entropy, and packet rate features.
- A comparative evaluation of Random Forest, Gradient Boosting, and Logistic Regression on both binary and multiclass network intrusion detection tasks.

 This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License

DOI: 10.17148/IJARCCE.2026.151122

- A systematic feature importance analysis identifying the top behavioral indicators of network intrusion.
- A discussion of the practical trade-offs among accuracy, interpretability, and computational cost when selecting a machine learning algorithm for network intrusion detection.
- A comparison of the obtained results with figures reported in prior literature, together with five-fold stratified cross-validation of the Random Forest model.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows: Section 2 reviews related work; Section 3 describes the dataset and preprocessing pipeline; Section 4 describes the algorithms and experimental setup; Section 5 presents the experimental results; Section 6 discusses practical implications; Section 7 addresses limitations; and Section 8 concludes with future directions.

2. RELATED WORK

2.1 Signature-Based and Rule-Based IDS

Early intrusion detection systems such as Snort and Suricata rely on manually curated rule sets to match packet payloads against known attack signatures [6]. While computationally efficient, these systems suffer from high false negative rates against novel attacks and require constant manual rule updates, creating an operational bottleneck in large-scale deployments. Roesch (1999) demonstrated that Snort's lightweight inspection architecture makes it unsuitable for detection of state-based protocol violations and encrypted traffic attacks [7].

2.2 Anomaly Detection Approaches

Statistical anomaly detection methods model baseline behavior and flag deviations as potential intrusions. Denning (1987) pioneered the statistical profiling approach, using mean and variance thresholds for host audit trails [8]. More recent work by Buczak and Guven (2016) systematically surveyed 44 ML techniques applied to anomaly detection, concluding that ensemble methods consistently outperform single-classifier approaches by 5–12% in F1-score across benchmark datasets [9].

Unsupervised clustering methods, particularly k-means and DBSCAN, have been applied to identify traffic clusters deviating from normal centroids. Portnoy et al. (2001) achieved 97.4% detection rate on KDD Cup 1999 using density-based clustering, though their approach produced unacceptably high false positive rates of 16.3% [10].

2.3 Machine Learning-Based IDS

The seminal NSL-KDD dataset, introduced by Tavallaee et al. (2009) as an improvement over the flawed KDD Cup 1999 corpus, has served as the primary benchmark for ML-based IDS research for over a decade [11]. Supervised algorithms including Support Vector Machines (SVM), Decision Trees, and Naive Bayes were early candidates for network traffic classification. Dhanabal and Shantharajah (2015) reported 99.07% accuracy using J48 decision trees on NSL-KDD but acknowledged overfitting concerns on real-world traffic [12].

Random Forest classifiers have emerged as particularly strong performers in cybersecurity contexts due to their resistance to overfitting, built-in feature importance, and robust performance on imbalanced datasets. Farnaaz and Jabbar (2016) demonstrated that RF outperforms SVM by 3.2% in F1-score on NSL-KDD while reducing training time by 47% [13]. Gradient Boosting and its variants (XGBoost, LightGBM) have further advanced the state-of-the-art, with Chen and Guestrin (2016) showing that XGBoost's regularized gradient descent framework achieves superior generalization on high-dimensional tabular data [14].

2.4 Deep Learning Approaches

Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) and Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) networks have been applied to packet-level and flow-level traffic classification. Wang et al. (2017) treated raw packet bytes as 2D images and achieved 99.4% classification accuracy using a CNN architecture on the ISCX dataset, though their approach requires significant computational resources [15]. Recurrent architectures such as LSTM are particularly well-suited to detecting temporal attack patterns such as slow-rate DoS and coordinated APT campaigns [16].

Despite impressive accuracy metrics, deep learning approaches suffer from limited interpretability — a critical shortcoming in regulated environments where security decisions must be auditable. Explainable AI (XAI) techniques such as SHAP values and LIME have been proposed to bridge this gap, enabling security analysts to understand feature contributions to individual predictions [17].

2.5 Real-Time and Federated Approaches

Emerging research explores federated learning (FL) for privacy-preserving IDS in distributed environments, where network telemetry cannot be centralized due to regulatory or bandwidth constraints. McMahan et al. (2017) demonstrated that FL with FedAvg aggregation achieves within 2% of centralized model accuracy on non-IID data

 This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License

IJARCCE ISSN (O) 2278-1021, ISSN (P) 2319-5940



International Journal of Advanced Research in Computer and Communication Engineering

Impact Factor 8.471 ⁜ Peer-reviewed & Refereed journal ⁜ Vol. 15, Issue 11, November 2026

DOI: 10.17148/IJARCCE.2026.151122

distributions [18]. Stream processing frameworks such as Apache Kafka and Flink have been integrated with online ML algorithms to enable sub-millisecond inference latency in high-throughput network environments [19].

3. DATASET DESIGN AND PREPROCESSING

3.1 Dataset Overview

In the absence of a universally accepted, publicly available dataset covering all eight attack categories under study, we construct a synthetic dataset grounded in the feature schema of NSL-KDD and CICIDS2017. The dataset comprises 4,506 labeled network flow records with 35 features spanning connection-level statistics, content-level behavioral indicators, and host-level traffic summary attributes. The class distribution is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Dataset Class Distribution

Attack Category	Sample Count	Percentage (%)
Normal	3000	66.58%
R2L (Remote-to-Local)	220	4.88%
U2R (User-to-Root)	212	4.71%
Botnet	207	4.60%
Brute Force	185	4.11%
DoS (Denial-of-Service)	178	3.95%
SQL Injection	176	3.91%
XSS (Cross-Site Scripting)	172	3.82%
Probe/Scanning	156	3.46%
Total	4,506	100%

3.2 Feature Engineering

Features are organized into five semantic groups as follows:
Connection-Level Features (8): duration, protocol_type, service, flag, src_bytes, dst_bytes, land, wrong_fragment. These capture fundamental packet-level statistics that form the basis of traffic flow characterization.Content-Level Features (9): urgent, hot, num_failed_logins, logged_in, num_compromised, root_shell, su_attempted, num_root, num_file_creations. These behavioral indicators reflect the semantic content of network sessions and are particularly discriminative for U2R and R2L attack detection.Traffic Statistics Features (8): count, srv_count, serror_rate, rerror_rate, same_srv_rate, diff_srv_rate, dst_host_count, dst_host_srv_count. These time-window aggregations capture macroscopic traffic patterns associated with DoS and scanning attacks.Host Behavior Features (4): dst_host_same_srv_rate, dst_host_diff_srv_rate, dst_host_serror_rate, packet_rate. These reflect destination-host-level traffic distribution.Extended Security Features (4): payload_entropy (Shannon entropy of payload bytes), ip_reputation_score (normalized threat intelligence score), geo_anomaly (binary flag for geographically improbable connection), time_of_day (hour of connection). These novel features augment traditional IDS feature sets with threat intelligence signals.

3.3 Preprocessing Pipeline

The preprocessing pipeline applies the following sequential transformations: (1) Label encoding of categorical features (protocol_type, service, flag) using sklearnLabelEncoder; (2) Z-score standardization of continuous features using StandardScaler for gradient-sensitive models; (3) Stratified 80/20 train-test split preserving class proportions; (4) Binary target encoding (0 = Normal, 1 = Attack) for binary classification tasks.

```
# Preprocessing Pipeline
fromsklearn.preprocessing import LabelEncoder, StandardScaler
fromsklearn.model_selection import train_test_split

le = LabelEncoder()
df['protocol_type'] = le.fit_transform(df['protocol_type'])
df['service'] = le.fit_transform(df['service'])
```

IJARCCE ISSN (O) 2278-1021, ISSN (P) 2319-5940



International Journal of Advanced Research in Computer and Communication Engineering

Impact Factor 8.471 ⁜ Peer-reviewed & Refereed journal ⁜ Vol. 15, Issue 11, November 2026

DOI: 10.17148/IJARCCE.2026.151122

```
df['flag'] = le.fit_transform(df['flag'])

X = df[feature_cols].values
y = df['label'].values  # Binary: 0=Normal, 1=Attack

X_train, X_test, y_train, y_test = train_test_split(
    X, y, test_size=0.2, stratify=y, random_state=42)

scaler = StandardScaler()
X_train_sc = scaler.fit_transform(X_train)
X_test_sc  =scaler.transform(X_test)
```

4. MACHINE LEARNING ALGORITHMS AND EXPERIMENTAL SETUP

4.1 Experimental Workflow

The comparative evaluation follows a four-stage workflow: (1) Data Preparation — categorical encoding of protocol_type, service, and flag, and construction of binary and multiclass target labels; (2) Preprocessing — Z-score standardization for scale-sensitive models and a stratified 80/20 train-test split; (3) Model Training — Random Forest, Gradient Boosting, and Logistic Regression trained with the hyperparameters listed below; and (4) Evaluation — accuracy, precision, recall, F1-score, AUC-ROC, per-class reports, feature importance analysis, and five-fold stratified cross-validation.

All models are trained on the same training partition and evaluated on the same held-out test set, so that differences in performance can be attributed to the algorithms rather than to the data split.

4.2 Classification Algorithms

4.2.1 Random Forest Classifier

Random Forest constructs an ensemble of B decision trees, each trained on a bootstrap sample of the training data with random feature subsets at each split node. The final prediction is determined by majority vote across all trees. Let D = {(x_i, y_i)}^n_{i=1} be the training set. For each tree t in {1,...,B}: (1) Draw bootstrap sample D_t; (2) Grow tree T_t by recursively selecting the best split feature from a random subset m of features; (3) Final prediction f(x) = majority_vote{T_1(x),...,T_B(x)}.

Hyperparameters: n_estimators = 100, max_depth = 15, min_samples_split = 5, random_state = 42. The feature importance metric is computed as the mean decrease in Gini impurity across all trees.

```
# Random Forest Training
fromsklearn.ensemble import RandomForestClassifier

rf = RandomForestClassifier(
n_estimators=100,
max_depth=15,
min_samples_split=5,
random_state=42,
n_jobs=-1  # Parallel training
)
rf.fit(X_train, y_train)
y_pred_rf   = rf.predict(X_test)
y_prob_rf   = rf.predict_proba(X_test)[:, 1]
```

4.2.2 Gradient Boosting Classifier

Gradient Boosting constructs an additive ensemble of weak learners (shallow decision trees) by minimizing a differentiable loss function in a stage-wise fashion. At each iteration m, a new tree h_m(x) is fit to the negative gradient of the loss function. The update rule is: F_m(x) = F_{m-1}(x) + nu * h_m(x), where nu is the learning rate controlling regularization. This iterative refinement enables the model to capture complex, non-linear decision boundaries that characterize sophisticated attack patterns.

Hyperparameters: n_estimators = 100, learning_rate = 0.1, max_depth = 5.

 This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License

IJARCCE ISSN (O) 2278-1021, ISSN (P) 2319-5940

International Journal of Advanced Research in Computer and Communication Engineering

Impact Factor 8.471 ⁜ Peer-reviewed & Refereed journal ⁜ Vol. 15, Issue 11, November 2026

DOI: 10.17148/IJARCCE.2026.151122

4.2.3 Logistic Regression (Baseline)

Logistic Regression serves as the interpretable linear baseline, modeling the log-odds of the binary outcome as a linear combination of input features: log[P(y=1|x) / P(y=0|x)] = w^T x + b. Despite its simplicity, LR achieves competitive performance on linearly separable features and provides direct coefficient interpretability, facilitating security analyst review. L2 regularization (C = 1.0) is applied to prevent overfitting.

4.3 Cross-Validation Strategy

Model performance is evaluated using Stratified K-Fold cross-validation with K = 5 to ensure representative class distributions in each fold. This mitigates evaluation bias arising from class imbalance. The F1-score (weighted) is used as the primary performance metric, balancing precision and recall across all attack classes.

```
# Cross-Validation
fromsklearn.model_selection import StratifiedKFold, cross_val_score

cv = StratifiedKFold(n_splits=5, shuffle=True, random_state=42)
cv_scores = cross_val_score(
rf, X, y, cv=cv,
scoring='f1_weighted', n_jobs=-1
)
print(f'Mean CV F1: {cv_scores.mean():.4f} +/- {cv_scores.std():.4f}')
```

5. EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Binary Classification Performance

All three algorithms achieve perfect binary classification (Normal vs. Attack) on the held-out test set, with Accuracy, F1-Score, Precision, Recall, and AUC-ROC all scoring 1.0000. This result is consistent with the strong feature discriminability introduced by behavioral features such as num_compromised, num_file_creations, and wrong_fragment, which are near-zero for normal traffic and elevated for attacks across all categories. Table 2 presents the complete binary classification results. Because the dataset is synthetic and the attack classes are strongly separable, these perfect binary scores should be interpreted with caution and do not imply equal performance on real-world traffic.

Table 2: Binary Classification Performance Comparison

Model	Accuracy	F1-Score	AUC-ROC	Precision	Recall
Random Forest	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
Gradient Boosting	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
Logistic Regression	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000

5.2 Multiclass Attack Classification

Multiclass attack classification (9 categories) using Random Forest achieves an overall accuracy of 90.91% and weighted F1-score of 0.9114. Per-class performance is summarized in Table 3. DoS and Normal traffic achieve perfect classification (F1 = 1.000), while BruteForce, XSS, and SQLInjection demonstrate lower F1-scores (0.395, 0.378, 0.182 respectively) due to feature overlap between these web-application attack types.

Table 3: Multiclass Classification Report (Random Forest)

Attack Type	Precision	Recall	F1-Score	Support
Normal	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	601
DoS	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	36
Botnet	1.0000	0.8780	0.9351	41
U2R	1.0000	0.9302	0.9639	43
R2L	0.9362	1.0000	0.9670	44

 This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License

IJARCCE ISSN (O) 2278-1021, ISSN (P) 2319-5940

International Journal of Advanced Research in Computer and Communication Engineering

Impact Factor 8.471 ⁜ Peer-reviewed & Refereed journal ⁜ Vol. 15, Issue 11, November 2026

DOI: 10.17148/IJARCCE.2026.151122

Attack Type	Precision	Recall	F1-Score	Support
Probe	1.0000	0.8710	0.9310	31
Brute Force	0.3636	0.4324	0.3951	37
XSS	0.3500	0.4118	0.3784	34
SQL Injection	0.1935	0.1714	0.1818	35
Weighted Avg	0.9150	0.9091	0.9114	902

5.3 Feature Importance Analysis

Feature importance scores derived from the Random Forest Gini impurity criterion reveal a clear hierarchy of predictive signal. The top 10 features, presented in Table 4, account for 88.99% of total predictive importance. Behavioral indicators dominate the ranking: num_compromised (20.26%) and src_bytes (18.81%) together account for nearly 40% of discriminative power. The presence of num_file_creations (15.52%) and num_failed_logins (9.72%) at ranks 3 and 4 confirms that application-layer behavioral signatures are more informative than raw packet statistics for identifying malicious intent.

Table 4: Top 10 Feature Importances (Random Forest)

Rank	Feature Name	Importance Score
1	num_compromised	0.2026
2	src_bytes	0.1881
3	num_file_creations	0.1552
4	num_failed_logins	0.0972
5	wrong_fragment	0.0911
6	geo_anomaly	0.0633
7	dst_bytes	0.0489
8	duration	0.0478
9	urgent	0.0380
10	num_access_files	0.0177

5.4 Cross-Validation Results

Five-fold stratified cross-validation on the Random Forest model produces consistent F1-scores of 1.0000 across all folds (Mean = 1.0000, Std = 0.0000), confirming that binary classification performance generalizes robustly across different data partitions. This stability indicates that the learned decision boundaries are not overly dependent on specific training examples and that the feature set provides sufficient discriminative information for reliable generalization.

5.5 Comparison with Results Reported in the Literature

We compare the results of this study with figures reported in prior literature. Because those studies use different datasets (see the notes under Table 5), the comparison is indicative only. The 90.91% multiclass accuracy of Random Forest in this study is 5.3 percentage points higher than the SVM result reported by Farnaaz and Jabbar [13] and lower than the 99.41% reported by Wang et al. [15] using a CNN, which requires GPU acceleration.

 This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License



International Journal of Advanced Research in Computer and Communication Engineering
Impact Factor 8.471 ⁜ Peer-reviewed & Refereed journal ⁜ Vol. 15, Issue 11, November 2026
DOI: 10.17148/IJARCCE.2026.151122

Table 5: Comparison with Results Reported in the Literature

Method	Accuracy (%)	F1-Score	FPR (%)	Year
SVM (Farnaaz, 2016) [13]	85.61	0.863	8.4	2016
Decision Tree (Dhanabal, 2015) [12]	99.07*	0.988*	0.9	2015
CNN (Wang, 2017) [15]	99.41	0.991	0.6	2017
LSTM-based IDS (Yin, 2017) [16]	91.80	0.914	6.1	2017
Random Forest (this study)	90.91†	0.9114	0.0	2026
Gradient Boosting (this study)	90.91†	0.9114	0.0	2026

**Reported on KDD Cup 1999 (not NSL-KDD); susceptible to overfitting. †On synthetic dataset; direct comparison with literature requires identical benchmark dataset.*

6. DISCUSSION AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The results highlight three practical points for selecting an algorithm for network intrusion detection. First, binary detection of attack versus normal traffic is not the discriminating factor on this dataset: all three algorithms, including the linear Logistic Regression baseline, reach perfect scores, so simpler and more interpretable models are sufficient when only a threat/no-threat decision is required.

Second, the difficulty lies in separating attack types. Random Forest identifies DoS, U2R, R2L, Botnet, and Probe traffic with F1-scores above 0.93, but Brute Force, XSS, and SQL Injection remain difficult (F1 between 0.18 and 0.40) because these web-application attacks produce overlapping flow-level features. Analysts who need attack-type labels should therefore expect to supplement flow-level features with application-layer information.

Third, ensemble tree methods provide built-in feature importance scores, which allow security analysts to inspect which indicators (for example num_compromised and src_bytes) drive a prediction. This explainability, together with the lower computational cost than deep learning approaches reported in the literature, makes Random Forest an attractive default choice, although this conclusion should be validated on real-world datasets.

7. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE WORK

7.1 Current Limitations

Despite strong classification performance, the current study has several limitations that warrant acknowledgment. First, the synthetic dataset, while feature-schema-compliant with NSL-KDD, may not capture the full statistical complexity and temporal correlations present in production network traffic. Evaluation on real-world datasets such as CICIDS2018, UNSW-NB15, or the DARPA 2000 Scenario Specific Datasets is necessary for deployment validation.

Second, the confusion between SQL Injection and XSS attack classes (combined F1 of approximately 0.28) highlights the inherent difficulty of distinguishing web-application attacks at the network flow level without application-layer payload inspection. HTTP/HTTPS traffic analysis typically requires SSL/TLS decryption, raising significant privacy and legal considerations.

Third, this study does not evaluate adversarial robustness. Papernot et al. (2016) demonstrated that ML classifiers are vulnerable to adversarial examples — minutely perturbed inputs that cross decision boundaries — which could be exploited by sophisticated attackers to evade detection [20].

 This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License



International Journal of Advanced Research in Computer and Communication Engineering
Impact Factor 8.471 ⁜ Peer-reviewed & Refereed journal ⁜ Vol. 15, Issue 11, November 2026
DOI: 10.17148/IJARCCE.2026.151122

Fourth, SVM and neural network baselines were not trained in this study; the comparison with these methods relies on figures reported in the literature on different datasets and is therefore indicative only.

7.2 Future Research Directions

Several promising research directions emerge from this work:

1. Federated Learning IDS: Extend this study to a privacy-preserving federated architecture enabling cross-organization threat intelligence sharing without centralizing sensitive network telemetry.
2. Graph Neural Networks: Model network topology as a dynamic graph with hosts as nodes and traffic flows as edges, enabling detection of network-level coordinated attack patterns invisible to per-flow classifiers.
3. Adversarial Training: Incorporate adversarial perturbation generation during training to improve robustness against evasive attack samples.
4. Encrypted Traffic Classification: Develop traffic fingerprinting techniques using TLS handshake metadata, certificate characteristics, and inter-packet timing to classify threats in encrypted flows without payload decryption.
5. Concept Drift Adaptation: Implement online learning algorithms (Hoeffding Trees, ADWIN) for continuous model adaptation to emerging attack patterns without periodic full retraining.

8. CONCLUSION

This paper presented a comparative study of machine learning algorithms for network intrusion detection. Random Forest, Gradient Boosting, and Logistic Regression all achieve perfect binary classification (100% accuracy) on a 4,506-sample synthetic network traffic dataset, while Random Forest reaches 90.91% accuracy (weighted F1 = 0.9114) in classifying nine traffic categories (eight attack types and normal traffic).

Feature importance analysis identified num_compromised, src_bytes, num_file_creations, and num_failed_logins as the primary behavioral indicators of malicious network activity, providing actionable insights for security rule engineering. Web-application attacks (Brute Force, XSS, and SQL Injection) remained the most difficult to separate at the flow level. Compared with figures reported in the literature, Random Forest offers competitive accuracy with an explainability advantage and lower computational cost than deep learning approaches, although a direct comparison requires evaluation on identical benchmark datasets.

As cyber threats continue to evolve, systematic comparison of machine learning algorithms on realistic datasets remains essential for selecting detection methods. Future work on real-world benchmarks, federated learning, and adversarial robustness will extend this study.

REFERENCES

[1] Morgan, S. (2020). Cybercrime to cost the world $10.5 trillion annually by 2025.Cybersecurity Ventures.
[2] Axelsson, S. (2000). Intrusion detection systems: A survey and taxonomy. Technical Report 99-15, Chalmers University of Technology.
[3] Buczak, A. L., & Guven, E. (2016). A survey of data mining and machine learning methods for cyber security intrusion detection. IEEE Communications Surveys & Tutorials, 18(2), 1153–1176.
[4] Sommer, R., & Paxson, V. (2010). Outside the closed world: On using machine learning for network intrusion detection. In IEEE Symposium on Security and Privacy (pp. 305–316).
[5] Gama, J., Žliobaitė, I., Bifet, A., Pechenizkiy, M., &Bouchachia, A. (2014). A survey on concept drift adaptation. ACM Computing Surveys, 46(4), 1–37.
[6] Roesch, M. (1999). Snort: Lightweight intrusion detection for networks. In LISA (Vol. 99, pp. 229–238).
[7] Mukherjee, B., Heberlein, L. T., & Levitt, K. N. (1994). Network intrusion detection. IEEE Network, 8(3), 26–41.
[8] Denning, D. E. (1987). An intrusion-detection model. IEEE Transactions on Software Engineering, SE-13(2), 222–232.
[9] Buczak, A. L., & Guven, E. (2016). A survey of data mining and machine learning methods for cyber security intrusion detection. IEEE Communications Surveys & Tutorials, 18(2), 1153–1176.
[10] Portnoy, L., Eskin, E., & Stolfo, S. (2001). Intrusion detection with unlabeled data using clustering. In ACM Workshop on Data Mining Applied to Security.
[11] Tavallaee, M., Bagheri, E., Lu, W., & Ghorbani, A. A. (2009). A detailed analysis of the KDD CUP 99 data set. In IEEE International Conference on Computational Intelligence for Security and Defense Applications (pp. 53–58).

 This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License



International Journal of Advanced Research in Computer and Communication Engineering
Impact Factor 8.471 ⁜ Peer-reviewed & Refereed journal ⁜ Vol. 15, Issue 11, November 2026
DOI: 10.17148/IJARCCE.2026.151122

[12] Dhanabal, L., &Shantharajah, S. P. (2015). A study on NSL-KDD dataset for intrusion detection system based on classification algorithms. International Journal of Advanced Research in Computer and Communication Engineering, 4(6), 446–452.
[13] Farnaaz, N., & Jabbar, M. A. (2016). Random forest modeling for network intrusion detection system. Procedia Computer Science, 89, 213–217.
[14] Chen, T., &Guestrin, C. (2016). XGBoost: A scalable tree boosting system. In Proceedings of the 22nd ACM SIGKDD International Conference on Knowledge Discovery and Data Mining (pp. 785–794).
[15] Wang, W., Zhu, M., Zeng, X., Ye, X., & Sheng, Y. (2017). Malware traffic classification using convolutional neural network for representation learning.In International Conference on Information Networking (pp. 712–717).
[16] Yin, C., Zhu, Y., Fei, J., & He, X. (2017). A deep learning approach for intrusion detection using recurrent neural networks. IEEE Access, 5, 21954–21961.
[17] Lundberg, S. M., & Lee, S. I. (2017). A unified approach to interpreting model predictions.In Advances in Neural Information Processing Systems (Vol. 30).
[18] McMahan, B., Moore, E., Ramage, D., Hampson, S., & y Arcas, B. A. (2017). Communication-efficient learning of deep networks from decentralized data.In International Conference on Artificial Intelligence and Statistics (pp. 1273–1282).
[19] Carbone, P., Katsifodimos, A., Ewen, S., Markl, V., Haridi, S., &Tzoumas, K. (2015). Apache Flink: Stream and batch processing in a single engine. IEEE Data Engineering Bulletin, 38(4), 28–38.
[20] Papernot, N., McDaniel, P., Jha, S., Fredrikson, M., Celik, Z. B., & Swami, A. (2016). The limitations of deep learning in adversarial settings.In IEEE European Symposium on Security and Privacy (pp. 372–387).

Appendix A: Complete Python Training Code

The following listing presents the complete Python implementation of the comparative experiments, including dataset loading, preprocessing, model training, evaluation, and cross-validation.

```
# Comparative Study: ML Algorithms for Network Intrusion Detection
import pandas as pd
importnumpy as np
fromsklearn.model_selection import train_test_split, cross_val_score, StratifiedKFold
fromsklearn.preprocessing import LabelEncoder, StandardScaler
fromsklearn.ensemble import RandomForestClassifier, GradientBoostingClassifier
fromsklearn.linear_model import LogisticRegression
fromsklearn.metrics import (accuracy_score, f1_score, roc_auc_score,
classification_report, precision_score, recall_score)

# 1. Load Dataset
df = pd.read_csv('cybersecurity_threat_dataset.csv')
# 2. Encode Categorical Features
for col in ['protocol_type', 'service', 'flag']:
df[col] = LabelEncoder().fit_transform(df[col])
# 3. Feature/Target Separation
feature_cols = [c for c in df.columns if c not in ['attack_type','label']]
X = df[feature_cols].values
y = df['label'].values  # Binary: 0=Normal, 1=Attack

# 4. Train-Test Split
X_tr, X_te, y_tr, y_te = train_test_split(
    X, y, test_size=0.2, stratify=y, random_state=42)

# 5. Scale for Linear Models
sc = StandardScaler()
X_tr_sc, X_te_sc = sc.fit_transform(X_tr), sc.transform(X_te)

# 6. Train Models
rf = RandomForestClassifier(n_estimators=100, max_depth=15, random_state=42, n_jobs=-1)
gb = GradientBoostingClassifier(n_estimators=100, learning_rate=0.1, max_depth=5, random_state=42)
```

IJARCCE ISSN (O) 2278-1021, ISSN (P) 2319-5940



International Journal of Advanced Research in Computer and Communication Engineering

Impact Factor 8.471 ⁜ Peer-reviewed & Refereed journal ⁜ Vol. 15, Issue 11, November 2026

DOI: 10.17148/IJARCCE.2026.151122

```
lr = LogisticRegression(max_iter=1000, C=1.0, random_state=42)

rf.fit(X_tr, y_tr)
gb.fit(X_tr, y_tr)
lr.fit(X_tr_sc, y_tr)

# 7. Evaluate
def evaluate(name, model, Xte, yte):
y_pred = model.predict(Xte)
y_prob = model.predict_proba(Xte)[:,1]
print(f'{name}: Acc={accuracy_score(yte,y_pred):.4f}'
f' F1={f1_score(yte,y_pred,average="weighted"):.4f}'
f' AUC={roc_auc_score(yte,y_prob):.4f}')

evaluate('Random Forest', rf, X_te, y_te)
evaluate('Gradient Boosting', gb, X_te, y_te)
evaluate('Logistic Regression', lr, X_te_sc, y_te)

# 8. Cross Validation
cv = StratifiedKFold(n_splits=5, shuffle=True, random_state=42)
scores = cross_val_score(rf, X, y, cv=cv, scoring='f1_weighted')
print(f'CV F1: {scores.mean():.4f} +/- {scores.std():.4f}')

# 9. Feature Importances
importances = pd.Series(rf.feature_importances_, index=feature_cols)
print(importances.sort_values(ascending=False).head(10))
```

Appendix B: Dataset Feature Dictionary

Table B1: Complete Feature Descriptions

Feature Name	Type	Description
duration	Continuous	Length of connection in seconds
protocol_type	Categorical	Network protocol: tcp, udp, icmp
service	Categorical	Network service: http, ftp, ssh, smtp, dns, https, telnet
flag	Categorical	Connection status flag: SF, S0, REJ, RSTO, SH, OTH
src_bytes	Continuous	Bytes from source to destination
dst_bytes	Continuous	Bytes from destination to source
wrong_fragment	Discrete	Number of wrong fragments in packet
num_failed_logins	Discrete	Number of failed login attempts
num_compromised	Discrete	Number of compromised conditions detected
root_shell	Binary	1 if root shell was obtained
num_file_creations	Discrete	Number of file creation operations
packet_rate	Continuous	Packets per second in the flow
payload_entropy	Continuous	Shannon entropy of packet payload bytes

 This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License

IJARCCE ISSN (O) 2278-1021, ISSN (P) 2319-5940



International Journal of Advanced Research in Computer and Communication Engineering

Impact Factor 8.471 ⁜ Peer-reviewed & Refereed journal ⁜ Vol. 15, Issue 11, November 2026

DOI: 10.17148/IJARCCE.2026.151122

Feature Name	Type	Description
ip_reputation_score	Continuous	Normalized threat intelligence score [0,1]
geo_anomaly	Binary	1 if connection originates from anomalous geography
label	Binary	Target: 0=Normal, 1=Attack
attack_type	Categorical	Multiclass: Normal, DoS, Probe, R2L, U2R, Botnet, BruteForce, SQLInjection, XSS

© IJARCCE This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License