



RESEARCH ARTICLE

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A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF MACHINE LEARNING AND DEEP LEARNING APPLICATIONS IN CYBERSECURITY: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

Cybersecurity is increasingly becoming a critical concern as the complexity and frequency of cyber-attacks continue to rise. Machine learning (ML) and deep learning (DL) have emerged as powerful tools to enhance cybersecurity systems, offering dynamic capabilities in real-time threat detection, anomaly detection, and intrusion prevention. This article (45) presents a systematic review of the applications of ML and DL in cybersecurity, adhering to the PRISMA guidelines. The review covers several key domains, including network security, cloud security, and Internet of Things (IoT) security, highlighting how ML/DL models like convolutional neural networks (CNNs) and recurrent neural networks (RNNs) outperform traditional rule-based systems. It also addresses challenges such as adversarial attacks, data privacy concerns, and the computational resource demands of DL models. Current solutions like adversarial training, federated learning, and model optimization techniques are examined for their potential to mitigate these issues. The findings suggest that while ML/DL technologies hold great promise, further research and innovation are necessary to overcome the inherent challenges, ensuring that these systems can be deployed effectively and securely in real-world environments.

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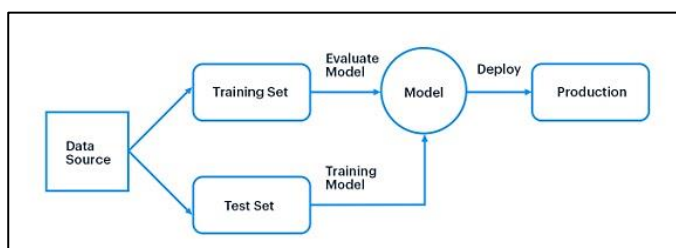
Cybersecurity, Machine Learning, Deep Learning, Adversarial Attacks, Anomaly Detection, Cloud Security, IoT Security, PRISMA



## 1 Introduction

In recent years, cybersecurity has become a critical area of concern due to the increasing frequency and complexity of cyber-attacks, which target both public and private sectors. The traditional security approaches, which often rely on rule-based systems and signature detection, are proving insufficient against sophisticated and evolving threats (Albulayhi et al., 2022). Cybercriminals are increasingly utilizing advanced techniques such as polymorphic malware, ransomware, and distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks to bypass conventional defenses (Das & Morris, 2017). Consequently, the integration of machine learning (ML) and deep learning (DL) into cybersecurity frameworks has emerged as a promising solution. These AI-driven technologies offer dynamic capabilities for anomaly

**Figure 1: A Generic Machine Learning Workflow (Securityhq.com)**



detection, threat identification, and real-time response, making them essential tools for the future of cybersecurity (Xin et al., 2018).

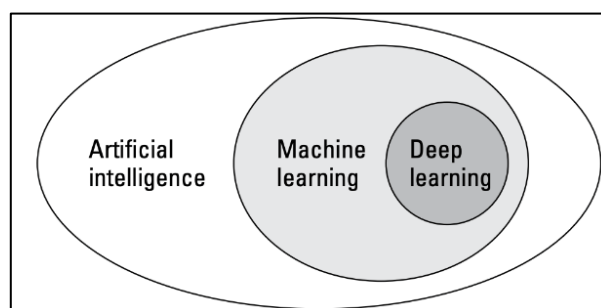
Machine learning, as a subfield of artificial intelligence, has demonstrated its ability to adapt to and learn from data, which allows it to detect unknown threats that traditional systems might overlook (Dasgupta et al., 2020). The capacity of ML algorithms to process large datasets and identify patterns has proven particularly effective in areas such as malware detection and intrusion detection systems (IDS) (Yu et al., 2021). Supervised learning, unsupervised learning, and reinforcement learning are the most commonly used ML techniques in cybersecurity applications (Yan et al., 2022). Supervised learning involves training the system on labeled datasets, enabling it to classify new threats based on past experiences. Conversely, unsupervised learning can identify previously unknown threats by clustering anomalous activities (Xin et al., 2018). Reinforcement learning, while less common in

cybersecurity, is gaining traction for its ability to make decisions and optimize security policies in real-time (Sharma et al., 2023).

Deep learning, a subset of machine learning, offers even more advanced capabilities by employing artificial neural networks that simulate the way the human brain processes information. DL is particularly useful in processing vast amounts of unstructured data, such as images, videos, and network traffic logs, which are critical in identifying complex cybersecurity threats (Das & Morris, 2017). Deep neural networks (DNN), convolutional neural networks (CNN), and recurrent neural networks (RNN) are the most frequently utilized DL models in cybersecurity contexts. These models excel in detecting zero-day attacks, malware obfuscation techniques, and advanced persistent threats (APTs), which are often missed by conventional methods (Yan et al., 2022). For instance, RNNs have shown promise in predicting attack sequences and patterns based on historical data, enabling proactive defense mechanisms (Aslan & Yilmaz, 2021).

While ML and DL have brought significant advancements to cybersecurity, their integration comes with certain challenges. One of the main issues is the adversarial nature of cybersecurity, where attackers continuously evolve their techniques to evade detection. Adversarial attacks, where attackers deliberately manipulate input data to fool ML/DL models, pose a significant threat to AI-driven security systems (Meidan et al., 2020). Another challenge is the lack of labeled data for training supervised learning models, especially for new and emerging threats. Additionally, ML/DL models require extensive computational resources and may suffer from overfitting when dealing with high-dimensional data (Omer et al., 2023; Shamim, 2022).

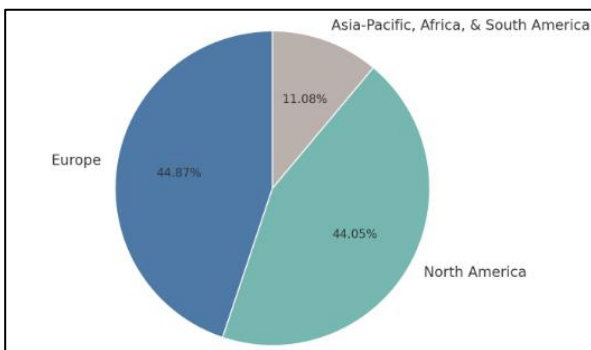
**Figure 2: Deep learning a subset of Artificial Intelligence**



Despite these obstacles, the ongoing research in adversarial machine learning and data augmentation techniques is gradually addressing these challenges, offering hope for more robust and resilient systems in the future (Singh, 2015). Several studies underscore the importance of interdisciplinary approaches in modern network security, combining insights from fields such as computer science, data science, and even psychology (Clifton & Laber, 2020; Karim et al., 2023). The success of ML and DL in cybersecurity hinges on collaborative efforts that span these diverse fields, leading to more comprehensive and adaptive security solutions. Moreover, as the Internet of Things (IoT) and cloud computing become integral parts of modern infrastructure, the need for scalable and efficient AI-

cyber threats. This review aims to explore the various ML and DL techniques that have been implemented in areas such as malware detection, intrusion detection systems (IDS), and anomaly detection, while also evaluating their effectiveness in real-world scenarios. Additionally, the review seeks to identify the key challenges associated with the integration of these technologies, including adversarial attacks, data privacy issues, and computational resource constraints. By synthesizing findings from interdisciplinary research, this review intends to highlight potential future directions and innovations that can enhance the adaptability and robustness of AI-driven cybersecurity solutions. The ultimate goal is to inform cybersecurity professionals and researchers about the current state of AI applications in this domain and provide insights into how these technologies can be leveraged to protect against increasingly sophisticated cyber-attacks.

Figure 3: Global Machine Learning Market Share

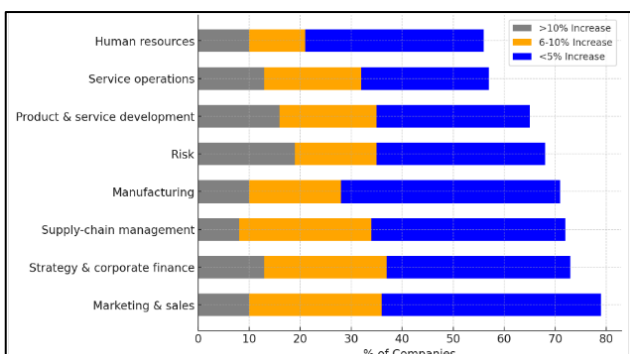


driven cybersecurity systems is more pressing than ever (El Houda et al., 2021).

This paper, therefore, presents a comprehensive review of current ML and DL applications in cybersecurity, focusing on their potential and the challenges they face in the evolving threat landscape.

The objective of this review is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the current applications of machine learning (ML) and deep learning (DL) in the field of cybersecurity, identifying both the strengths and limitations of these technologies in mitigating modern

Figure 4: Average Revenue Increase from AI Adoption



## 2 Literature Review

The integration of machine learning (ML) and deep learning (DL) in cybersecurity has garnered significant attention over the past decade, as these technologies offer advanced capabilities in detecting, predicting, and mitigating cyber threats. This section reviews the current state of research on ML and DL applications in cybersecurity, focusing on the methodologies employed, their effectiveness, and the challenges associated with their implementation. Numerous studies have explored various machine learning algorithms, including supervised, unsupervised, and reinforcement learning, as well as deep learning models such as convolutional neural networks (CNN) and recurrent neural networks (RNN), for threat detection, malware classification, and intrusion prevention. Additionally, this review examines how different fields, such as network security, cloud infrastructure, and the Internet of Things (IoT), have benefitted from AI-driven security solutions. The following sections delve into the key applications, challenges, and future research directions identified in the existing literature, offering a synthesized view of how ML and DL are transforming modern cybersecurity frameworks.

### 2.1 Machine Learning in Cybersecurity

Machine learning (ML) has emerged as a pivotal technology in cybersecurity, offering sophisticated solutions to combat increasingly complex and dynamic

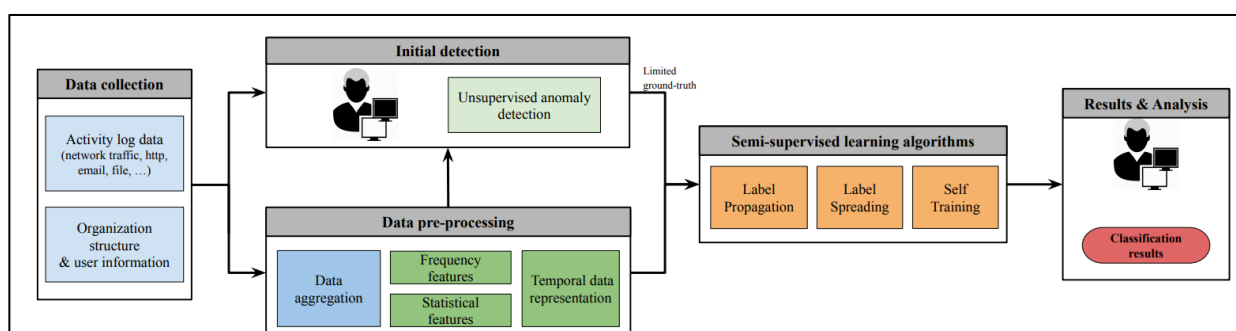
cyber threats. Traditional rule-based systems are often insufficient in detecting novel attacks, especially as cybercriminals continually evolve their tactics. In contrast, ML algorithms, capable of learning from data and identifying patterns, provide a robust mechanism for proactive threat detection and mitigation (Belavagi & Muniyal, 2016). The deployment of ML in cybersecurity spans several key areas, including malware detection, intrusion detection, and anomaly detection. Among the various ML techniques, supervised learning, which relies on labeled datasets to train models, has been widely utilized to enhance the accuracy and speed of threat detection. This section reviews the current state of supervised learning applications in cybersecurity, focusing on key algorithms such as decision trees, random forests, and support vector machines (SVMs), and their role in improving cybersecurity frameworks.

### 2.1.1 Supervised Learning for Threat Detection

Supervised learning has become a cornerstone in cybersecurity due to its ability to learn from labeled datasets and accurately classify threats. Algorithms such as decision trees, random forests, and support vector machines (SVMs) have demonstrated their effectiveness in both malware classification and anomaly detection (Kasongo & Sun, 2020). Decision trees are particularly valuable for their ease of interpretation and their ability to handle large datasets, while random forests, which are an ensemble of decision trees, provide increased accuracy and resilience against overfitting (Ahmed et al., 2024; Islam & Apu, 2024b; Nahar et al., 2024). SVMs, another powerful algorithm, have been applied to detect anomalies within network traffic, helping to identify potential attacks by distinguishing between normal and malicious activity (Jim et al., 2024; Abdur et al., 2024).

In recent years, hybrid approaches combining supervised learning with unsupervised methods have shown promise in further improving the accuracy and robustness of cybersecurity models, especially in environments with complex and evolving threat patterns (Islam, 2024; Islam & Apu, 2024a). Supervised learning models have proven especially effective in malware detection, where identifying new and sophisticated malware variants is critical. Studies have shown that algorithms such as random forests and SVMs can classify different types of malware by analyzing behavioral features extracted from system logs and network data (Ahmed et al., 2024). Random forests, with their ability to process large datasets and prevent overfitting, have been particularly successful in classifying polymorphic malware, which often evades traditional signature-based detection systems (Salehi et al., 2020). Additionally, supervised learning techniques have been instrumental in detecting ransomware, a type of malware that encrypts user data and demands a ransom for its release. Researchers have employed decision trees and SVMs to analyze file access patterns and other behaviors associated with ransomware, achieving high detection rates (Sharma & Dash, 2023). In intrusion detection systems (IDS), supervised learning models have been widely used to identify both external and internal threats. For instance, decision trees and random forests have been applied to detect distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks, which flood networks with traffic to disrupt services (Das & Morris, 2017). Similarly, these models have been effective in identifying insider threats, where authorized individuals attempt to compromise systems from within (El Houada et al., 2021). SVMs, with their ability to detect anomalies in network traffic, have been employed to identify unauthorized access and other

**Figure 5: Overview of the Supervised Learning for Threat Detection**





suspicious activities, improving the overall security posture of organizations (Elsayed et al., 2023). The growing sophistication of these supervised learning models continues to enhance the effectiveness of IDS, enabling real-time detection and prevention of cyber threats.

### 2.1.2 Unsupervised Learning for Anomaly Detection

Unsupervised learning plays a critical role in cybersecurity, particularly in the detection of unknown or novel threats, where labeled datasets may be unavailable or limited. Among the most widely used unsupervised learning techniques in cybersecurity are clustering algorithms, such as k-means, DBSCAN, and hierarchical clustering, which can group similar data points together based on their features (Das & Morris, 2017). These clustering methods are particularly effective in identifying anomalies, which often represent potential security threats. In network traffic analysis, unsupervised learning is used to detect unusual patterns of activity that may signal an impending attack (Elsayed et al., 2023; Shamim, 2022). For instance, k-means clustering can classify normal and abnormal network traffic by grouping similar network flows, while DBSCAN is particularly useful for identifying outliers, which may correspond to rare or emerging threats (Berman et al., 2019). These clustering techniques have been successfully applied in detecting insider threats, zero-day attacks, and distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks, all of which are difficult to detect using traditional, rule-based approaches (Mughaid et al., 2022).

Unsupervised learning is also crucial in the detection of zero-day attacks, where the lack of prior knowledge makes it impossible to rely on signature-based methods. In such cases, anomaly detection systems use clustering

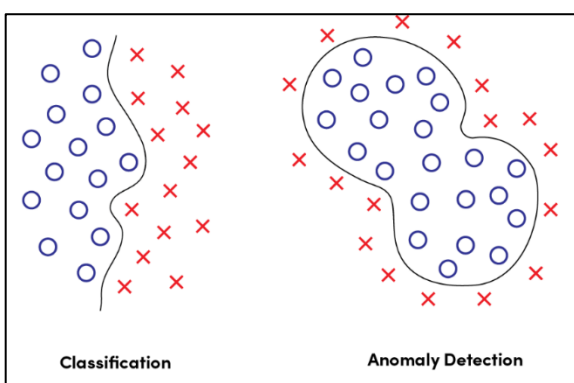
and other unsupervised methods to identify deviations from normal network behavior (Handa et al., 2019). For instance, (Caston et al., 2021) demonstrated the use of unsupervised learning for identifying zero-day attacks in network traffic by detecting anomalies based on deviations from established traffic patterns. Additionally, clustering algorithms like DBSCAN and self-organizing maps (SOMs) have been used to pinpoint rare, unusual events within vast amounts of network data, facilitating early detection of previously unknown threats (Caston et al., 2021; Mughaid et al., 2022). These methods have been particularly effective in detecting advanced persistent threats (APTs), which typically involve long-term infiltration and stealthy exfiltration of sensitive information. Moreover, unsupervised learning models do not require large amounts of labeled data, making them suitable for use in dynamic and constantly evolving cybersecurity environments where new threats regularly emerge (Sewak et al., 2022).

### 2.1.3 Reinforcement Learning in Security Systems

Reinforcement learning (RL) has gained prominence in cybersecurity for its ability to adaptively optimize security policies in real-time. Unlike supervised and unsupervised learning, RL involves an agent that learns through interactions with its environment by receiving feedback in the form of rewards or penalties, making it particularly useful for dynamic and evolving cybersecurity landscapes (Sharma & Dash, 2023). RL is ideal for applications where security policies must be continuously adjusted based on the current threat environment. For instance, RL algorithms have been employed to automate the tuning of intrusion detection systems (IDS), enabling real-time threat response by learning which network traffic patterns signify malicious behavior (Das & Morris, 2017). Through this adaptive learning process, RL models can optimize security measures like firewall settings, access control policies, and resource allocation, making security systems more resilient against a wide range of cyber threats, including zero-day attacks and advanced persistent threats (APT) (Handa et al., 2019).

Moreover, RL has proven to be highly effective in dynamic threat response and intrusion prevention. In these systems, RL agents can assess ongoing cyber threats and adjust defense strategies accordingly, offering a proactive rather than reactive approach to cybersecurity (El Houda et al., 2021). For example, RL

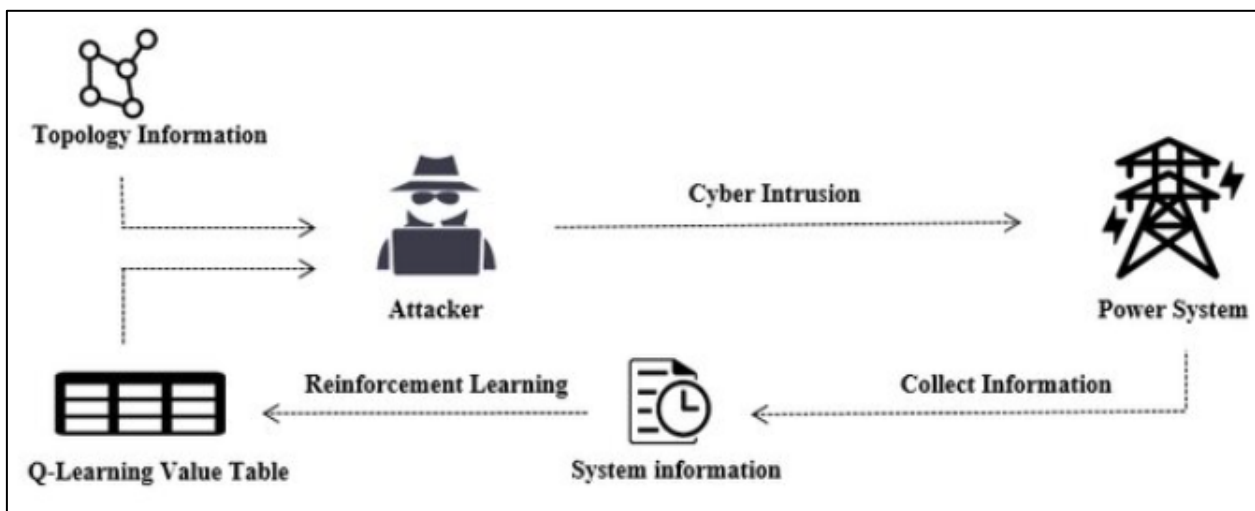
Figure 6: Unsupervised Learning for Anomaly Detection



has been applied in environments where it learns to counter DDoS attacks by optimizing traffic routing and resource allocation to mitigate service disruptions (Camacho et al., 2019). Another critical application of RL is in cyber deception, where RL-based models are used to create adaptive honeypots—decoy systems designed to lure and trap attackers—by learning how attackers interact with the system and adjusting the honeypot configuration to maximize the capture of malicious activity (Rjoub et al., 2023). Additionally,

RL-driven dynamic network defense strategies allow systems to autonomously alter their configurations to counter ongoing attacks, thus making it harder for attackers to exploit vulnerabilities (Li et al., 2021). These real-time adjustments, guided by reinforcement learning, have shown to significantly enhance the robustness of security frameworks, particularly in complex and high-stakes environments such as critical infrastructure and cloud computing networks (Handa et al., 2019).

*Figure 7: Overview of the reinforcement learning -based attack process (Source: Konstantinou, 2019)*



## 2.2 Deep Learning in Cybersecurity

### 2.2.1 Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN)

Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs), a specialized class of deep learning models, have shown significant promise in cybersecurity, particularly in tasks involving image and network traffic analysis for malware detection. Originally designed for image recognition, CNNs excel at identifying patterns and features in data, making them highly effective for analyzing network traffic and identifying anomalies indicative of cyber threats (Sharma & Dash, 2023). In malware detection, CNNs are frequently employed to analyze network traffic logs, which can be visualized as image-like data, allowing the network to detect malicious patterns that are otherwise difficult to identify through traditional methods (El Houda et al., 2021). One prominent application of CNNs in this domain is in the classification of malicious network traffic and malware families based on their behavior and signatures (Yuan

et al., 2018). By training CNNs on datasets consisting of both benign and malicious samples, researchers have successfully demonstrated the ability of these networks to detect previously unknown malware variants and zero-day attacks, outperforming conventional signature-based detection systems (Ye et al., 2017). Numerous studies highlight how CNNs have significantly improved detection accuracy across various cybersecurity applications. For instance, CNNs have been employed to analyze static features of executable files and network traffic flows, achieving high detection rates for polymorphic and metamorphic malware (Dushyant et al., 2022). In the realm of intrusion detection, CNNs have proven capable of accurately identifying network intrusions by analyzing packet-level data and identifying subtle patterns that differentiate normal traffic from anomalous behavior (Kasongo & Sun, 2020). Additionally, CNNs have been effectively used in ransomware detection, where their ability to analyze file access patterns and identify

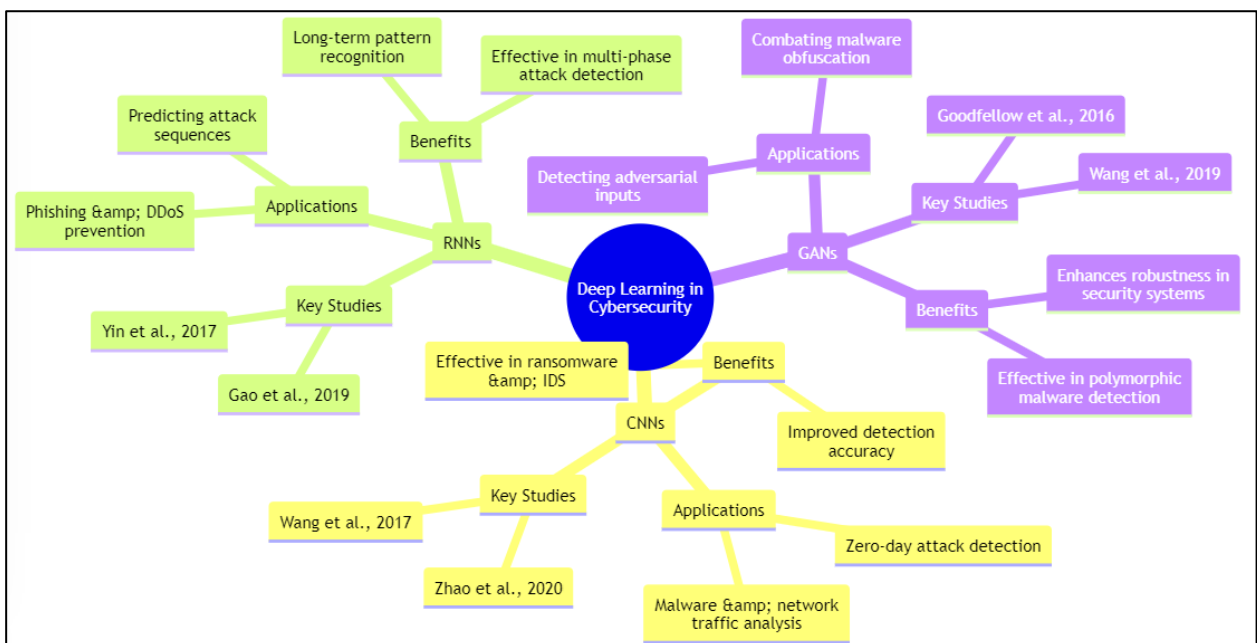
encryption behaviors has led to a significant reduction in false positives compared to traditional methods (Ogundokun et al., 2021). Studies by Das and Morris (2017) further demonstrate the application of CNNs in detecting advanced persistent threats (APTs), where the model’s ability to learn from sequential patterns in network traffic improves the early identification of slow, stealthy attacks. These examples illustrate the growing importance of CNNs in enhancing the accuracy and efficiency of cybersecurity systems.

### 2.2.2 Recurrent Neural Networks (RNN)

Recurrent Neural Networks (RNNs) have emerged as a powerful tool in cybersecurity, particularly for their ability to predict attack sequences and detect intrusion attempts. Unlike traditional feedforward neural networks, RNNs are designed to process sequential data, making them ideal for tasks that require an understanding of temporal dependencies, such as analyzing network traffic logs or detecting patterns of malicious activity over time (Ogundokun et al., 2021). The strength of RNNs lies in their ability to "remember" past inputs through internal memory, enabling them to detect patterns in the evolving behavior of cyberattacks, such as phishing attempts or distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks (Aslan et al., 2023). For example, by analyzing sequences of system logs or user behavior data, RNNs can predict future attack attempts and alert security systems in advance (Abomhara &

Køien, 2015). These models have been particularly useful in detecting slow and stealthy threats like advanced persistent threats (APTs), which typically unfold over a long period of time and evade traditional signature-based detection systems (Sun et al., 2023). RNNs are highly effective in recognizing long-term patterns, which is crucial for identifying attacks that unfold over extended periods or involve multiple stages. Their effectiveness in long-term pattern recognition makes RNNs particularly well-suited for analyzing continuous streams of network traffic, where they can detect anomalies and suspicious behaviors that might indicate a multi-phase attack (El-Kassabi et al., 2023). Studies have shown that RNNs can outperform traditional machine learning models like support vector machines (SVMs) and decision trees in detecting these complex threats due to their ability to capture temporal dependencies in data (Sewak et al., 2022). For example, in intrusion detection systems (IDS), RNNs can analyze sequences of network packets to identify abnormal traffic patterns, even when the malicious behavior is interspersed with legitimate activity (Ogundokun et al., 2021). Additionally, RNN variants such as long short-term memory (LSTM) networks have been employed to improve the detection of malware that uses obfuscation techniques, achieving higher accuracy rates by recognizing sequential patterns that would otherwise be missed by static analysis methods (Sharma & Dash, 2023). Overall, the application of RNNs in

Figure 8: Key Applications of Deep Learning Models in Cybersecurity



cybersecurity has demonstrated significant improvements in the detection and prevention of advanced cyber threats.

### 2.2.3 Generative Adversarial Networks (GAN)

Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs), initially introduced by O Gundokun et al., (2021), have become an influential tool in cybersecurity, particularly in detecting adversarial attacks and obfuscation techniques. GANs consist of two neural networks, a generator and a discriminator, that work against each other to improve their performance. In cybersecurity, this architecture is often applied to model complex attack vectors and detect adversarial inputs designed to deceive machine learning models (Namvar et al., 2016). The generator creates synthetic data, such as adversarial inputs or obfuscated malware samples, while the discriminator works to distinguish between real and fake data. By training the discriminator to detect even subtle manipulations in input data, GANs enhance the ability of security systems to identify adversarial attacks, where malicious actors modify inputs to evade detection. This dynamic interaction allows GANs to anticipate and counterattack adversarial techniques more effectively than traditional defense mechanisms, which are often reactive rather than proactive (Shaukat et al., 2020).

GANs have also demonstrated considerable success in combating obfuscation techniques, where attackers disguise malware or malicious activities to avoid detection by security systems. These obfuscation techniques can range from simple methods, such as encryption and polymorphism, to more sophisticated strategies like code transformation and data manipulation. GANs have been employed to generate and detect these obfuscated samples by creating a wide range of malicious inputs, which are then used to train machine learning models to recognize previously unseen variants of malware. This approach improves the robustness of intrusion detection systems (IDS) and malware classifiers, as GANs can simulate complex obfuscation methods that might not be present in existing datasets (Sun et al., 2023). For example, studies have shown that GAN-enhanced security systems achieve higher detection rates of polymorphic malware by learning the adversarial patterns used to evade traditional static and dynamic analysis tools (Kim &

Kang, 2022). The ability of GANs to generate a continuous stream of novel adversarial examples makes them a powerful addition to cybersecurity frameworks, providing a more resilient defense against the evolving landscape of cyber threats.

## 2.3 Challenges in ML/DL-Based Cybersecurity Solutions

While machine learning (ML) and deep learning (DL) have shown great promise in enhancing cybersecurity systems, their integration into security frameworks is not without significant challenges. As cyber threats become more sophisticated, ML/DL models themselves are vulnerable to exploitation and manipulation by adversaries. In addition to adversarial attacks, concerns related to data privacy, the security of sensitive information used for model training, and the high computational demands of deep learning models present critical obstacles to their widespread adoption in cybersecurity. These challenges require innovative strategies and approaches to ensure that ML/DL-based systems remain secure, efficient, and scalable in real-world deployments. This section explores the key challenges associated with ML/DL in cybersecurity, focusing on adversarial attacks, data privacy and security, and computational resource constraints.

### 2.3.1 Adversarial Attacks

Adversarial attacks pose a significant challenge to machine learning (ML) and deep learning (DL)-based cybersecurity solutions. Attackers manipulate inputs to deceive ML/DL models by subtly altering the data in ways that are often imperceptible to humans but can lead to incorrect model predictions (Sharma & Dash, 2023). For example, by slightly modifying network traffic patterns or malware signatures, attackers can evade detection systems that rely on ML/DL models, making traditional detection techniques less effective (Sewak et al., 2022). These adversarial inputs can be crafted using techniques like gradient-based optimization, where attackers exploit the weaknesses in model architectures to generate adversarial samples designed to fool the models (Shaukat et al., 2020). As cybersecurity systems increasingly incorporate ML and DL for threat detection, the risk of adversarial attacks continues to grow, making it crucial to develop more robust defense mechanisms. Several strategies have been proposed to mitigate adversarial attacks, including



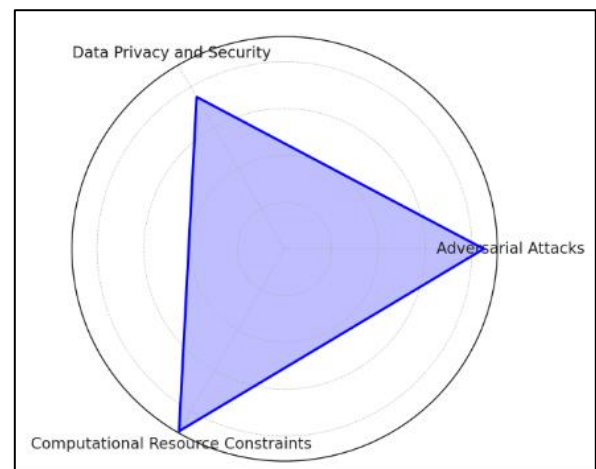
adversarial training, model hardening, and defensive distillation. Adversarial training involves incorporating adversarial examples into the training process, allowing the model to learn to recognize and defend against such inputs (Sun et al., 2023). Model hardening techniques, such as using robust architectures and introducing randomness in predictions, have also been employed to reduce the vulnerability of models to adversarial attacks (El-Kassabi et al., 2023). Additionally, defensive distillation, a technique that transforms the original model into a more resilient version, has shown promise in improving resistance to adversarial manipulations by smoothing the model's decision boundaries (Kim & Kang, 2022). Despite these advancements, adversarial attacks remain a persistent challenge, requiring ongoing research and innovation in defensive strategies.

### 2.3.2 Data Privacy and Security

Another significant challenge in ML/DL-based cybersecurity systems is ensuring data privacy and security, particularly when using sensitive data for model training. Large-scale datasets used to train ML/DL models often contain sensitive information, such as personal identifiers, financial records, or confidential business data, raising concerns about data breaches and unauthorized access (Ogundokun et al., 2021). In cybersecurity, these datasets can be exploited by attackers to expose vulnerabilities or compromise system integrity. Additionally, sharing data between organizations for training purposes increases the risk of data leakage, necessitating the implementation of robust privacy-preserving techniques (Sharma & Dash, 2023). The need to balance model performance with data privacy has become a key issue in deploying ML/DL-based security solutions in real-world environments.

Solutions like data anonymization, homomorphic encryption, and federated learning have emerged to address data privacy concerns in ML/DL models. Data anonymization techniques remove personally identifiable information from datasets, ensuring that sensitive data cannot be linked back to specific individuals (Sewak et al., 2022). Homomorphic encryption allows computations to be performed on encrypted data, enabling model training without exposing the underlying sensitive information (Acar et al., 2018). Federated learning is another promising solution that enables multiple parties to collaboratively train models without sharing raw data, as only model updates, rather than data, are exchanged (Sharma &

Figure 9: key challenges in ML/DL-based cybersecurity solutions



Dash, 2023). These techniques offer significant potential to enhance privacy and security in ML/DL-based cybersecurity applications while maintaining the effectiveness of the models.

### 2.3.3 Computational Resource Constraints

The computational resources required to train and deploy deep learning models present a substantial challenge in ML/DL-based cybersecurity solutions. Training DL models, particularly those involving large neural networks, is computationally intensive and often requires access to specialized hardware such as Graphics Processing Units (GPUs) or Tensor Processing Units (TPUs) (Abomhara & Kjøien, 2015). This demand for high-performance computing resources not only increases the cost of deploying ML/DL models but also limits their scalability in real-time cybersecurity environments where rapid threat detection is essential (El-Kassabi et al., 2023). Furthermore, the training process for DL models can be time-consuming, making it difficult to adapt quickly to new or evolving cyber threats.

To improve the efficiency and scalability of ML/DL models in cybersecurity, several strategies have been proposed. Model compression techniques, such as pruning and quantization, reduce the size and complexity of neural networks, making them more resource-efficient without significantly compromising accuracy (Sewak et al., 2022). Additionally, distributed training frameworks allow models to be trained across multiple machines, speeding up the training process and making it more feasible to deploy large models in real-time environments (Näsi et al., 2015). Transfer learning, which leverages pre-trained models and fine-tunes them

for specific tasks, is another approach that reduces computational demands by avoiding the need for full retraining from scratch (Sewak et al., 2022). These strategies are crucial for making ML/DL models more practical and scalable for real-world cybersecurity applications, where quick responses to threats are essential.

## 2.4 Applications Across Different Domains

### 2.4.1 Network Security

The use of machine learning (ML) and deep learning (DL) in network security has gained significant traction due to their ability to monitor real-time network traffic and detect anomalies. ML/DL models can analyze vast amounts of network data to identify patterns associated with malicious activities, such as distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks, phishing attempts, and unauthorized access (Li & Liu, 2021). These models have been particularly effective in intrusion detection systems (IDS), where they classify network traffic into benign or malicious categories. Supervised learning algorithms like support vector machines (SVMs) and decision trees have traditionally been used for anomaly detection, but DL models such as convolutional neural networks (CNNs) and recurrent neural networks (RNNs) have demonstrated superior performance in identifying complex patterns over time. For instance, DL models can detect zero-day attacks by recognizing deviations from normal network behavior, which static rule-based systems might miss (Ozkan-Okay et al., 2024). This ability to monitor and analyze network traffic in real time makes ML/DL an indispensable tool in modern network security frameworks.

### 2.4.2 Cloud Security

As organizations increasingly migrate to cloud infrastructure, the need for robust security solutions has grown. AI-driven technologies, particularly ML and DL, are being integrated into cloud security to enhance infrastructure protection and prevent data breaches. One of the main advantages of using ML/DL in cloud security is their ability to provide automated, adaptive defense mechanisms, which are critical in a dynamic cloud environment. For example, anomaly detection algorithms can continuously monitor cloud activity and flag suspicious behaviors, such as unauthorized access or abnormal data movement, in real time. Additionally,

deep learning models can be used for encryption management and to detect insider threats, which are often difficult to identify using traditional security methods (Abomhara & Kjøien, 2015). The scalability of ML/DL models also makes them ideal for large cloud environments, where the volume of data is too high for manual monitoring or conventional rule-based systems. Despite these benefits, cloud security remains challenging due to the need for ensuring data privacy, requiring continuous advancements in AI-driven security solutions.

### 2.4.3 IoT Security

Securing Internet of Things (IoT) devices presents unique challenges due to the decentralized nature and limited computational resources of these devices. The large-scale deployment of IoT devices across industries makes them an attractive target for cyberattacks, particularly those involving distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks and data breaches. ML techniques, including lightweight models, have been employed to enhance IoT security by detecting anomalies in device behavior or network traffic. For example, k-means clustering and other unsupervised learning techniques have been used to identify abnormal traffic patterns that may signal an IoT device has been compromised. Moreover, DL models, such as convolutional neural networks (CNNs) and long short-term memory (LSTM) networks, have been applied to address more complex IoT security issues, including intrusion detection and botnet activity (Shaukat et al., 2020). However, the implementation of ML/DL in IoT security is limited by the resource constraints of IoT devices, which often lack the computational power to run sophisticated models locally. This has led to the exploration of edge computing and federated learning as potential solutions to enhance security without overburdening IoT devices.

## 3 Method

The methodology for this study follows a systematic approach, adhering to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines. The first step involved defining clear research questions to guide the systematic review. These questions focused on the application of machine learning (ML) and deep learning (DL) in cybersecurity,

addressing topics such as the effectiveness of ML/DL models in various domains, the challenges associated with their use, and the emerging trends in this field.

### 3.1.1 Eligibility Criteria:

To ensure the relevance and quality of the studies included, eligibility criteria were established. Peer-reviewed articles, conference papers, and relevant reports published within the last ten years were selected. Only studies focusing on the application of ML and DL in cybersecurity were considered. Studies involving other aspects of artificial intelligence without specific relevance to cybersecurity were excluded. The selection was limited to papers written in English.

### 3.1.2 Database Search Strategy:

A comprehensive literature search was conducted across multiple electronic databases, including IEEE Xplore, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, and Google Scholar. Keywords and search strings were used to identify relevant studies, such as "machine learning in cybersecurity," "deep learning for anomaly detection," "AI-driven network security," and "adversarial attacks on ML models."

### 3.1.3 Study Selection:

Following the database search, all identified studies were imported into a reference management tool. Duplicates were removed, and the remaining studies were screened based on their titles and abstracts. Full-text articles of potentially relevant studies were then retrieved and assessed against the predefined eligibility criteria. The PRISMA flow diagram was used to document the study selection process, including the number of studies screened, excluded, and included in the final review.

### 3.1.4 Data Extraction:

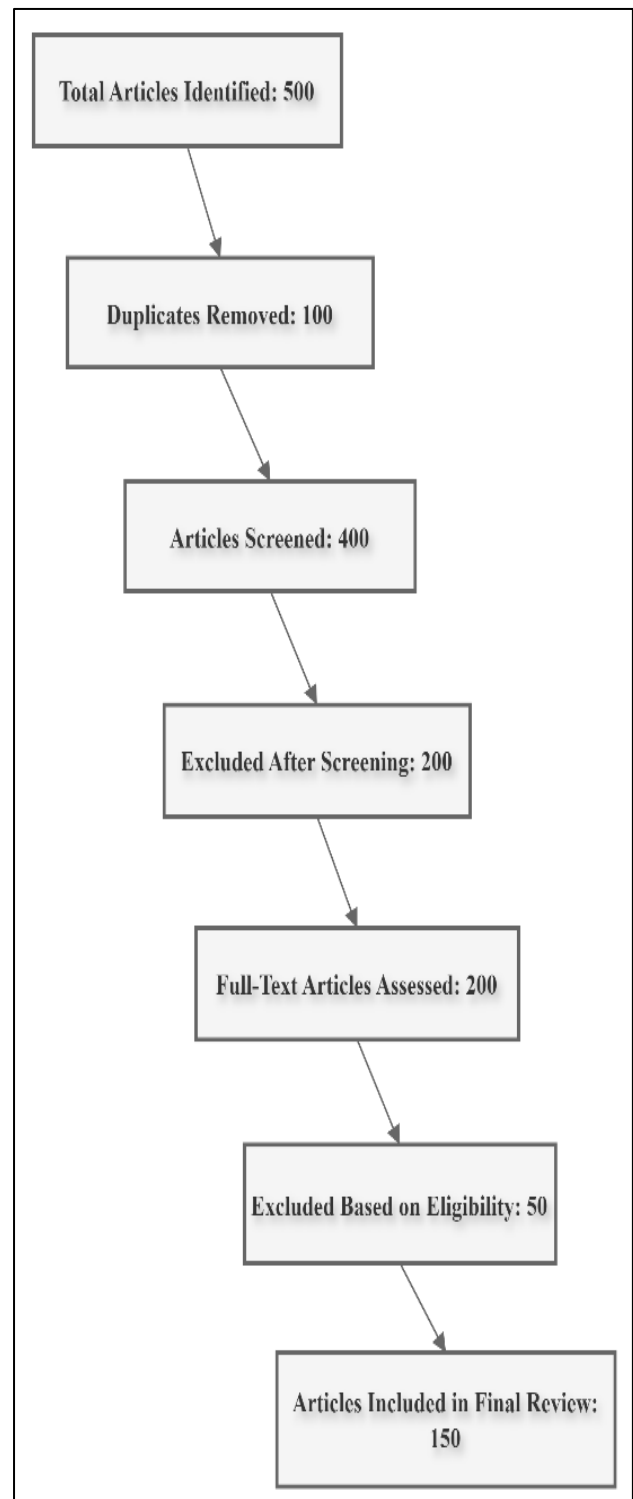
Data from the selected studies were extracted using a predefined data extraction form. Key information such as study objectives, methodology, ML/DL models used, application areas, results, and limitations were systematically recorded. This step ensured consistency in the extraction process and provided a basis for synthesizing the findings.

### 3.1.5 Synthesis of Results:

The final step involved synthesizing the data extracted from the included studies. A narrative synthesis was conducted to summarize the key findings, focusing on

the effectiveness of ML/DL models in cybersecurity applications, the challenges encountered, and potential future directions. Where applicable, meta-analysis techniques were considered to aggregate quantitative results and evaluate the overall impact of ML/DL solutions in cybersecurity.

Figure 10: Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines



## 4 Findings

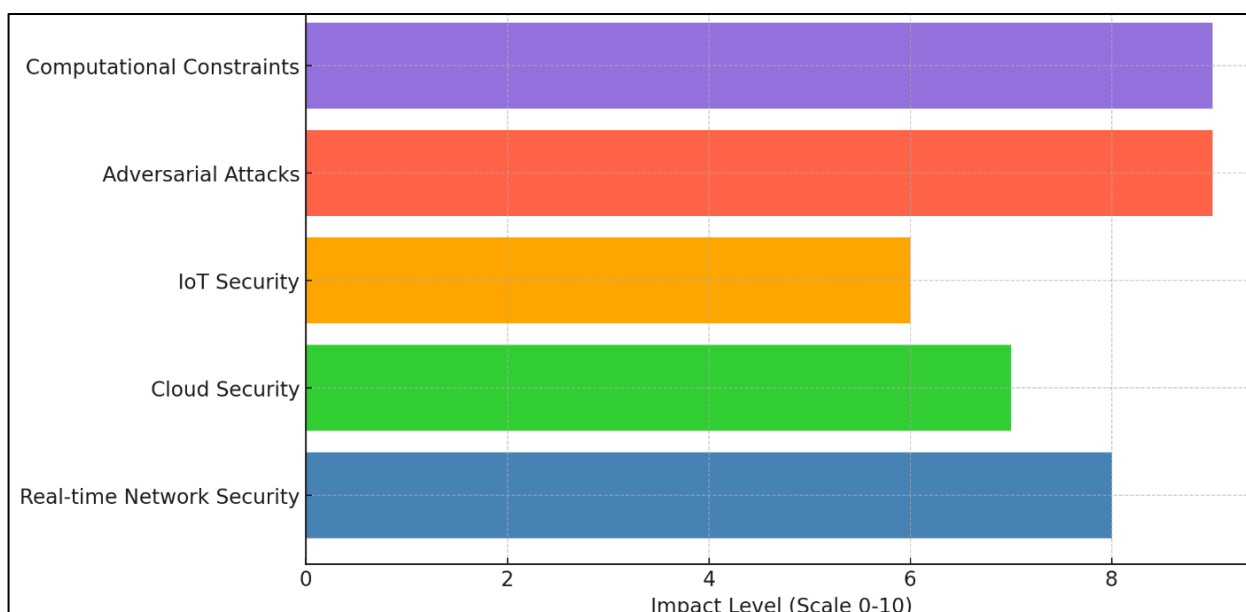
The findings from this systematic review highlight the significant role that machine learning (ML) and deep learning (DL) have played in advancing cybersecurity solutions across various domains. The analysis revealed that both ML and DL models are increasingly being integrated into cybersecurity frameworks to address complex and evolving threats. In particular, deep learning models, such as convolutional neural networks (CNNs) and recurrent neural networks (RNNs), have proven highly effective in real-time network traffic analysis and malware detection. These models outperform traditional rule-based systems by learning complex patterns in data, enabling faster and more accurate identification of threats. Supervised learning models, such as support vector machines (SVMs) and decision trees, also play a key role, particularly in intrusion detection systems (IDS), where they classify network traffic and detect anomalies. These findings suggest that ML/DL technologies are well-suited to dynamic and high-velocity environments like network security.

In cloud security, the review found that AI-driven solutions offer significant benefits in terms of scalability, automation, and real-time threat detection. Several studies highlighted the effectiveness of ML/DL models in detecting unauthorized access, abnormal data

movement, and insider threats within cloud infrastructure. The ability of these models to continuously monitor and analyze large volumes of cloud data in real time has helped organizations mitigate potential data breaches and security incidents. Additionally, AI-enhanced encryption management tools using DL models have provided robust defenses against common cloud-based vulnerabilities. However, the findings also indicated ongoing challenges in cloud security, particularly around ensuring data privacy and security when using large-scale datasets for model training. These concerns have prompted further research into privacy-preserving techniques like federated learning and data anonymization.

The review also identified unique challenges and solutions related to securing Internet of Things (IoT) devices, where ML/DL models have been successfully applied. Given the resource constraints and decentralized nature of IoT devices, lightweight ML algorithms such as k-means clustering and decision trees have been utilized for anomaly detection. More advanced DL models, like long short-term memory (LSTM) networks, have been applied to tackle more complex security issues, including intrusion detection and detecting botnet activity. The findings showed that ML/DL models are essential in identifying abnormal behaviors or traffic patterns in IoT networks, which can signal potential security breaches. However, the

**Figure 11: Impact of ML/DL Solutions in Cybersecurity Based on Findings**





resource limitations of IoT devices present ongoing challenges, prompting the need for further research into scalable solutions like edge computing and federated learning to support real-time threat detection without overburdening IoT devices.

Another key finding from the review is the growing concern over adversarial attacks in ML/DL-based security systems. Several studies demonstrated how attackers can manipulate input data to fool ML/DL models, bypassing detection mechanisms in systems such as intrusion detection and malware classification. These adversarial inputs, often imperceptible to human observers, pose significant risks to the integrity of AI-driven security systems. Current strategies to mitigate these attacks include adversarial training, defensive distillation, and model hardening techniques. The findings indicate that while these mitigation strategies show promise, adversarial attacks remain an ongoing threat, and further research is needed to improve the robustness and resilience of ML/DL models in cybersecurity. Lastly, the review uncovered several challenges related to the computational resource demands of deep learning models, particularly in real-time deployments. Deep learning models like CNNs and RNNs require significant computational power to train and operate, limiting their scalability in resource-constrained environments. The findings suggest that techniques such as model compression, pruning, and distributed training can help reduce the computational burden and make DL models more practical for widespread use in cybersecurity applications. Additionally, transfer learning, which involves leveraging pre-trained models and fine-tuning them for specific cybersecurity tasks, was highlighted as a strategy to reduce training time and computational costs. These solutions are crucial for the broader adoption of ML/DL-based cybersecurity systems, especially in environments requiring rapid, real-time threat detection.

## 5 Discussion

The findings of this systematic review reveal a wide array of significant applications of machine learning (ML) and deep learning (DL) in enhancing cybersecurity measures across various domains. ML/DL technologies have increasingly demonstrated their ability to adapt to complex and evolving cyber threats, surpassing traditional security measures in

speed and accuracy. One of the most notable findings is the effectiveness of DL models like convolutional neural networks (CNNs) and recurrent neural networks (RNNs) in real-time threat detection. These models are highly efficient in analyzing vast amounts of network traffic and identifying subtle patterns of malicious activity, such as phishing attacks, malware propagation, and distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks (El-Kassabi et al., 2023; Kim & Kang, 2022; Sewak et al., 2022). Supervised learning algorithms, particularly decision trees and support vector machines (SVMs), are also prominent in intrusion detection systems (IDS), offering robust classification of network traffic and detection of anomalies. This suggests that both ML and DL are indispensable for the continuous monitoring and rapid detection required in modern cybersecurity infrastructures.

Cloud security has emerged as another critical area where AI-driven solutions are proving vital. The review identified that ML/DL models are increasingly being deployed to enhance the security of cloud environments by automating the detection of data breaches, insider threats, and abnormal data movement. Studies highlight the potential of deep learning in encrypting and securing cloud infrastructures while improving the scalability and adaptability of security systems (Li & Liu, 2021; Shaukat et al., 2020; Sun et al., 2023). These models offer continuous monitoring and threat detection capabilities, identifying security issues such as unauthorized access or unusual patterns of data use. However, challenges persist, particularly around the use of sensitive data for model training. The findings underscore a growing need for privacy-preserving techniques, such as federated learning and homomorphic encryption, which can enable AI-driven security in the cloud while minimizing risks to data privacy and confidentiality.

Securing Internet of Things (IoT) devices has been another significant finding, with ML/DL models being increasingly applied to protect these resource-constrained devices. IoT devices often operate in decentralized environments, making them more vulnerable to cyber-attacks such as botnets and malware infiltration. The review found that lightweight machine learning algorithms, like k-means clustering and decision trees, are effectively used to detect anomalies in IoT networks (Kasongo & Sun, 2020; Ogundokun et al., 2021; Sewak et al., 2022). More complex DL

models, such as long short-term memory (LSTM) networks, are deployed for sophisticated tasks like detecting botnet activities and preventing distributed attacks. Despite these advances, resource limitations of IoT devices present ongoing challenges in implementing real-time ML/DL-based solutions. Edge computing and federated learning are highlighted as potential solutions to address these constraints, allowing more efficient distribution of computational resources while still enabling rapid and accurate detection of threats in IoT ecosystems.

A significant concern identified in this review is the vulnerability of ML/DL models to adversarial attacks. These attacks manipulate input data in subtle ways that cause ML/DL models to make incorrect predictions, effectively bypassing security systems such as malware detection or intrusion detection systems (IDS) (Aslan et al., 2023; Ozkan-Okay et al., 2024). The review uncovered that adversarial examples can be generated to evade detection mechanisms, representing a substantial threat to the integrity of AI-driven security frameworks. Mitigating strategies, such as adversarial training, defensive distillation, and the implementation of robust architectures, have shown potential in defending against such attacks. However, the findings suggest that adversarial attacks remain a pressing issue and that more advanced defensive strategies are needed to enhance the resilience of ML/DL-based security systems, particularly in high-risk environments such as financial institutions and critical infrastructure.

Finally, the review highlighted the challenges associated with the high computational resource demands of deep learning models, which can hinder their scalability in real-world applications. DL models such as CNNs and RNNs require extensive computational power, both for training and real-time deployment, making them impractical for certain environments where resources are limited (Sewak et al., 2022). The findings underscore the need for optimization techniques such as model pruning, quantization, and the use of distributed training systems to reduce the computational burden and improve the scalability of DL models (El-Kassabi et al., 2023; Sewak et al., 2022). Additionally, transfer learning, where pre-trained models are fine-tuned for specific cybersecurity tasks, was found to be an effective strategy for reducing training time and computational

costs while maintaining high accuracy. These strategies are essential for enabling the practical implementation of DL-based security measures in environments requiring rapid response times, such as in the detection of zero-day attacks.

## 6 Conclusion

This systematic review highlights the transformative potential of machine learning (ML) and deep learning (DL) in advancing cybersecurity across various domains, including network, cloud, and IoT security. These technologies have proven to be effective in real-time threat detection, anomaly identification, and the classification of complex cyber-attacks, such as malware and distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks. However, despite their strengths, ML/DL models face significant challenges, including vulnerability to adversarial attacks, data privacy concerns during model training, and high computational demands, particularly in resource-constrained environments like IoT devices. The ongoing research into techniques such as adversarial training, data anonymization, federated learning, and model optimization (e.g., pruning, quantization, and distributed training) offers promising solutions to these challenges. Moreover, the scalability of these models, especially through the use of transfer learning and edge computing, will be crucial in ensuring that AI-driven cybersecurity systems can be efficiently deployed in real-world environments. To fully harness the potential of ML/DL in cybersecurity, continued innovation is necessary to enhance the resilience, privacy, and computational efficiency of these models, enabling them to adapt to the ever-evolving landscape of cyber threats.

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