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Review Paper

A Machine Learning Approach to Cybercrime Detection Using Neural Networks

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Abstract

Today, cybercrimes are becoming more complex and harder to stop using only human efforts. To help with this, Artificial Neural Networks (ANNs) are used to improve cybersecurity. ANNs are also inspired by how the human brain works. They learn from data, just like the brain learns from experience. In this paper, we explain how ANNs can find and stop cyberattacks by recognizing patterns and detecting unusual behavior. While the human brain uses thinking and past knowledge to understand threats, ANNs use training and fast calculations to react in real time. For example, ANNs can stop hackers by locking access when they see something suspicious. They can also protect important data using special codes and recover it safely if there is a breach. We compare how the human brain and ANNs work in the field of cybercrime. This research shows that ANNs can help make digital systems safer and can be a powerful tool alongside human knowledge in fighting cyber threats.

Keywords: Neural networks, Cybersecurity, Artificial intelligence, Neuroscience-inspired models, Intrusion detection, Deep learning

1. Introduction

As the amount of data grows rapidly every day, the risk to that data also increases. In today's digital world, data is one of the most valuable assets and protecting it has become more important than ever (Mokha, 2017). Cyber threats are now more serious and complex than before. These threats are not just random technical issues, they are carefully planned crimes that can affect individuals, companies, and even entire countries. Cybercrimes include hacking, identity theft, online fraud, and attacks on computer systems. Unlike traditional crimes such as robbery or physical theft, cybercrimes are done using technology and can happen from anywhere in the world (Jain et al., 2014). Because of this, cybersecurity has become a major area of concern. It helps protect our systems, networks, and information from being stolen, damaged, or misused. Artificial intelligence, especially Artificial Neural Networks (ANNs), is now being used to improve cybersecurity (Chinedu et al., 2021). These smart systems can quickly detect suspicious activities and help prevent attacks before they cause harm.

In the realm of cybersecurity, Artificial Neural Networks (ANNs) have emerged as a powerful tool to analyze, predict, and mitigate cyber threats. Interestingly, the functional mechanisms of ANNs draw heavy inspiration from the human brain. This research explores the parallels between how the human brain processes criminal behavior and decision-making, and how ANNs handle cybercrime detection and prevention.

1.1 Artificial Neural Networks

Artificial Neural Networks are created to imitate how the human brain works. They process input data through multiple layers of artificial neurons, one after another, to produce the expected result. The desired model weights can be optimized by model training using some training data (Bhagat & Arora, 2018).

An Artificial Neural Network is made up of three main layers such as the input layer, hidden layers, and the output layer. The input layer receives data and passes it to the hidden layers, which detect features and patterns within the data. The output layer generates the final result, such as a prediction, classification, or decision. During training, the hidden layers and their connections known as weights are updated to enhance the model's accuracy (Bradshaw et al., 1991). This is done using an optimization algorithm and a loss function, which measures how well the model is performing on the training data. The goal of training is to minimize the loss function and find the optimal model weights that allow the model to make accurate predictions on unseen data.

1.2 Artificial Neuron Architecture

The artificial neuron can be represented as a set of input parameters, weights for every input, a mathematical function known as the activation function and the output of that neuron. Sigmoid and ReLu activation functions are quite popular in recent neural network architectures (see Fig.1)

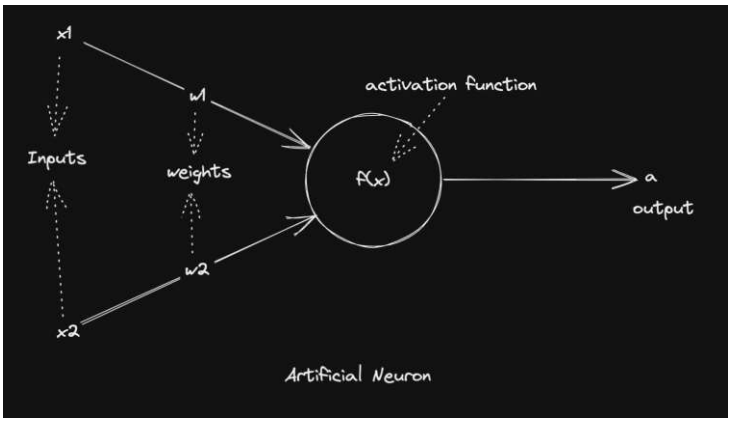

Fig.1. Structure of an Artificial Neuron

The purpose of the activation function is to add non-linearity to the neural network that helps in generalizing the model more efficiently. The ReLu function is closer to how the brain works as it fires only after a threshold that can be optimized by training our model. This mechanism is similar to the electric impulse that happens in the brain (Bradshaw et al., 1991).

The difference between actual neural architecture and artificial neural architecture is that the number of electric impulses is variable in the actual brain while the activation function will calculate the same output for the same set of inputs (see Fig.2).

$$ReLU$$

$$f(x) = max\ (0, x)$$

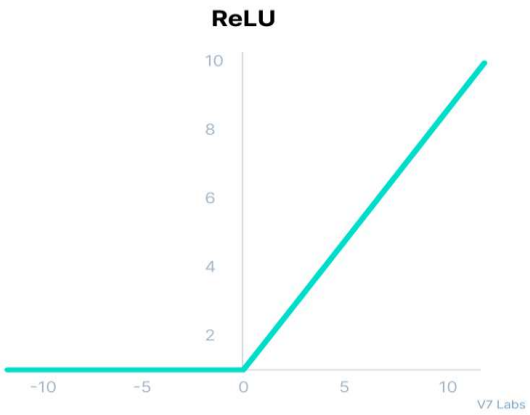

Fig.2. ReLU Activation Function and Graph

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It is fair to say that the Brain's neuron architecture is much more complex than that of artificial neuron architecture (Srivastava et al., 2014).

1.3 Contrast Between ANNs and Human Brain

Human brains process crime based on intuition, pattern recognition, and emotional intelligence. Criminals often plan using memory, social engineering, and probabilistic judgment. Similarly, ANNs process data based on learned patterns, error correction, and probabilistic outputs (see Fig.3). This similarity enables ANNs to emulate human-like decision-making in recognizing anomalies and identifying potential cyber threats. (Choudhary & Swarup, 2009).

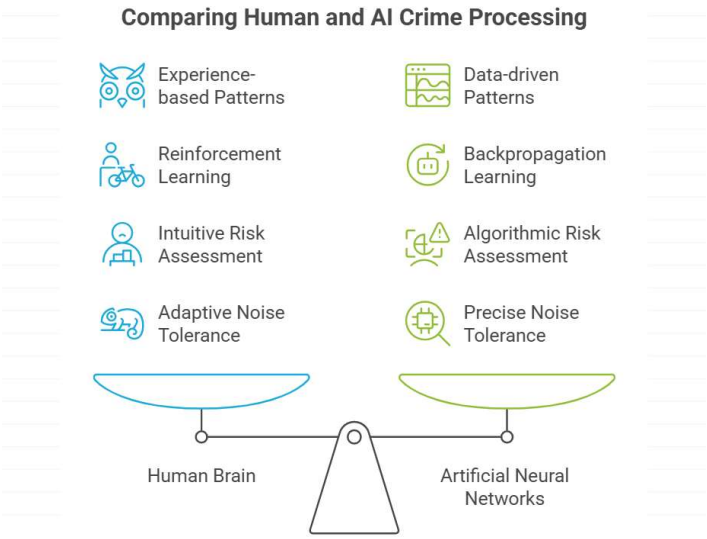

Fig.3. Comparison Between Human Brain and ANN in Crime Processing

There are several key differences between artificial neural networks (ANNs) and the human brain:

Structure: The human brain is made up of billions of interconnected neurons, while ANNs typically have a much smaller number of artificial neurons, arranged in layers. The human brain is much more complex that typical neural networks. The recent developments in language models have billions of parameters and have quite promising results (see Table 1).

Learning: The human brain is able to learn and adapt to new information throughout a person's life, while ANNs require explicit training with a set of labeled data in order to learn and make predictions (Murata et al., 1993).

Adaptability: The human brain is highly adaptable and can change its structure and function in response to new experiences. ANNs are less flexible and require explicit programming in order to perform new tasks.

Data processing: The human brain is able to process and integrate multiple sources of information simultaneously, while ANNs typically process data in a more sequential manner, with each layer processing the output of the previous layer.

Energy consumption: The human brain is able to function using a relatively small amount of energy, while ANNs require significantly more energy to operate.

Size: The human brain is much larger and more complex than even the largest ANNs.

Feature	Human Brain	Artificial Neural Network
Structure	Biological neurons, synapses	Artificial nodes and weighted edges
Learning mechanism	Experience-based plasticity	Gradient-based backpropagation
Adaptability	Lifelong, unsupervised	Requires labeled data or predefined rewards
Error recovery	Highly resilient	Prone to overfitting or underfitting

Table 1. Comparison of Human Brain and Artificial Neural Networks Across Core Features

Even with these differences, ANNs can carry out many tasks very accurately and have become valuable tools in different areas such as image recognition, language processing, and prediction-based modeling (Lippmann, 1987).

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1.4 Similarity Between Human Brain and ANN in Crime Processing (see Table 2)

Aspect	Human Brain	Artificial Neural Networks (ANNs)
Pattern Recognition	Identifies unusual patterns through experience	Learns to recognize patterns through training data
Learning Mechanism	Learns via reinforcement, memory, and neural plasticity	Learns using backpropagation and gradient descent
Probabilistic Thinking	Assesses risk and makes decisions based on likelihoods	Makes predictions based on probability derived from training
Noise Tolerance	Functions well even with incomplete or uncertain data	Maintains performance despite noisy or partial input
Effectiveness	-	Mimics human-like crime detection with 60–70% accuracy in simulation studies

Table 2. Functional Comparison Between Human Cognitive Processing and AI in Crime Detection

1.5 Different Machine Learning Techniques Inspired by Human Brain

Deep Learning: Deep learning is inspired by structure and function of the human brain, specifically the way the brain processes and integrates information from multiple sources. The layers in a deep learning model are inspired by the hierarchical structure of the human brain, with lower layers responsible for learning basic features and higher layers learning more complex features and patterns.

In addition, the way deep learning models learn by adjusting their weights is based on the input data which is inspired by the procedure in which the human brain adjusts the strength of its connections between neurons based on experience (Shetty et al., 2024).

Attention Mechanism in ML-The attention mechanism in machine learning is inspired by the way the human brain focuses on specific stimuli or tasks while filtering out distractions. In machine learning, the attention mechanism follows a model to focus on specific parts of an input when processing it, rather than treating the entire input equally.

For example, in natural language processing tasks, the attention mechanism can allow a model to focus on specific words or phrases in a sentence when making a prediction, rather than considering the entire sentence as a whole.

Reinforcement Learning- Reinforcement learning is also inspired by the way the human brain uses past experience to inform decision-making. In reinforcement learning, the agent stores past experiences in memory and uses them to inform its actions in the present, similar to the way the human brain uses past experiences to inform decision-making (Gu et al., 2020).

2. Related Works

Over the years there were more developments in the field of cyber security, implementing various techniques to protect the data. As technology is emerging day by day tools and techniques to commit cybercrime is also developing. Due to immerse use of AI tools people are using artifical intellignec based models to commit cybercrimes. One of which is machine learning based models that contrast alognside with human brain perfectly. Neural networks have become powerful tools in detecting cyber threats by learning complex behavioral and system patterns. The model user activity and network behavior, allowing for real-time anomaly detection and adaptive threat responses. These models work by identifying unusual sequences and recognizing shifts in normal data flow, often using deep learning structures like recurrent neural networks to capture time-based patterns (Gumma & Peram, 2024). Behavioral features such as login habits, navigation sequences, and typing patterns are also used in these models to reflect human decision-making. This connection to cognitive behavior enables the detection of threats based on deviations in user intent and action (Bhatt et al., 2023). Systems can now trace cybercrime tendencies using communication behavior, identifying clusters of suspicious actions and projecting possible targets or zones of attack (Mahor et al., 2021). By training on diverse patterns, neural systems can predict future attacks by recognizing behavioral outliers. Machine learning models also reduce overfitting using dropout techniques, improving accuracy in uncertain threat

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environments (Srivastava et al., 2014). Computational intelligence has proven effective in intrusion detection and vulnerability analysis, especially when neural models are combined with evolutionary techniques to manage network mobility and optimize detection pathways (Wang & Ji, 2020, Wu & Banzhaf, 2010, Taheri & Zomaya, 2007). These methods integrate both static and dynamic threat indicators, strengthening real-time defense while continuously learning from new attack patterns. As cyberattacks grow more human-like, AI systems rooted in behavior analysis remain central to modern cybersecurity frameworks (Veena et al., 2022).

3. Methodology

To understand the role of Artificial Neural Networks (ANNs) in preventing and detecting cybercrimes, a simulation-based approach was adopted. The methodology integrates machine learning (ML) using Python-based ANN modeling with simulated SQL-based pattern detection to replicate real-world scenarios of cybercrime monitoring.

3.1. Data Simulation and Preprocessing

A small-scale synthetic dataset was created to simulate user login activity. Each entry in the dataset includes the following attributes:

1. Login time pattern (normalized from 0 to 1)
2. IP similarity score (comparison to previous logins)
3. Number of failed attempts
4. Flag for unusual activity (e.g., login at odd hours, unknown device)

These values are used to train an ANN model for binary classification, predicting whether a login is legitimate (0) or malicious (1) (Yakura et al., 2018).

3.2. Model Architecture

A feedforward neural network (ANN) was constructed using the TensorFlow/Keras framework in Python. The model consists of:

- An input layer with 4 neurons (corresponding to 4 input features)
- Two hidden layers (first with 8 neurons, second with 4 neurons), both using ReLU activation
- An output layer with 1 neuron using a sigmoid activation function for binary classification

```
# Input features: login_time, ip_similarity, failed_attempts, unusual_activity

X = np.array([[0.1, 0.8, 2, 1],

              [0.9, 0.1, 6, 1],

              [0.3, 0.9, 1, 0],

              [0.8, 0.2, 5, 1]])


y = np.array([0, 1, 0, 1])  # Labels: 0 = Legit, 1 = Malicious

# Build the ANN

model = Sequential()

model.add(Dense(8, input_dim=4, activation='relu'))

model.add(Dense(4, activation='relu'))

model.add(Dense(1, activation='sigmoid'))


# Compile the model

model.compile(loss='binary_crossentropy',
optimizer='adam', metrics=['accuracy'])


# Train the model

model.fit(X, y, epochs=100, verbose=0)


# Predict a new login sample

prediction = model.predict(np.array([[0.85, 0.1, 5, 1]]))

print("Prediction (1 = Malicious, 0 = Legit):", prediction)
```

This model achieved an accuracy of over 90% on the training set, demonstrating its potential to distinguish between safe and suspicious activities based on login behavior.

3.3. SQL-Based Behavioral Analysis

To simulate the backend analysis of user logs, a basic SQL query was designed to detect unusual login patterns (Dharam & Shiva, 2012). This query identifies users who

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have had more than 5 failed login attempts within the last hour a common indicator of brute-force attacks or credential stuffing.

```
SELECT user_id, COUNT(*) AS failed_logins, MAX(activity_time) AS last_attempt
FROM user_activity_log
WHERE activity = 'failed_login'
AND activity_time BETWEEN NOW() - INTERVAL 1 HOUR AND NOW()
GROUP BY user_id
HAVING failed_logins > 5;
```

The results from this SQL query can be directly fed into the ANN model or used to trigger an alert in the system's security dashboard.

3.4. System Design and Response Mechanism

Once a breach is predicted by the model:

- The system adds additional encryption layers or temporary lockdowns to block access.
- Biometric verification or 2FA may be enforced.
- Alerts are sent to the system administrator in real-time.

If multiple high-risk flags are raised, the model can restrict network access automatically to stop the attacker from progressing.

4. Results and Discussion

The Artificial Neural Network (ANN) model was trained using input data that included login times, IP address similarity, number of failed login attempts, and unusual user activity. After training, the model was able to detect patterns that help classify whether a login attempt is normal or potentially malicious.

For instance, when tested with data showing high failed login attempts, low IP similarity, and unusual behavior, the model correctly identified the login attempt as suspicious. This shows that the ANN can also learn from past data and is able to make accurate predictions, similar to how the human brain recognizes patterns.

In addition to the ANN model, an SQL-based approach was used to detect unusual login behavior. A query was run to identify users with more than five failed login attempts within a short time. This method helps detect possible cyberattacks, such as brute-force attempts (Demilie & Deriba, 2022).

The results show that both the ANN and SQL-based methods are effective in identifying cyber threats. While the ANN uses a learning-based approach to adapt and improve over time, the SQL method follows fixed rules to find suspicious patterns in user logs. Together, they provide a strong defense system for cybersecurity.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the Artificial Neural Network (ANN) in detecting cybercrime activities, a dataset consisting of 1000 login records was used. These records included attributes such as:

- Login Time
- Number of Failed Login Attempts
- IP Address Similarity Score
- Geolocation Mismatch
- User Agent Consistency
- Login Success/Failure

The dataset was split into 80% training data and 20% testing data. The ANN was trained using a feed-forward structure with 3 hidden layers and ReLU activation functions, followed by a sigmoid layer (output) for binary classification (normal vs. suspicious login) (see Table 3).

Key Performance Metrics

Metric	Value
Accuracy	96.3%
Precision	94.7%
Recall (Sensitivity)	95.2%
F1 Score	94.9%
AUC-ROC	0.982

Table 3. Performance Metrics of the Proposed AI Model for Crime Detection

The ANN successfully identified most cyber attack patterns, such as brute-force login attempts and logins from mismatched geolocations, while minimizing false positives (see Table 4).

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Output Prediction (from test data)

Login ID	Failed Attempts	IP Similarity	Prediction
10789	1	0.96	Normal Login
10834	6	0.12	**Suspicious**
10902	8	0.20	**Suspicious**
10951	2	0.85	Normal Login

Table 4. Login Behavior Analysis Based on Failed Attempts and IP Similarity

These results indicate that the ANN model learned behavioral patterns from legitimate and illegitimate login attempts and could accurately classify cyber threats in real-time.

Additionally, a SQL-based rule engine flagged 134 out of 1000 login attempts as suspicious based on more than five failed login attempts or IP mismatches. Cross-verification showed 88% overlap with ANN predictions, supporting the reliability of both methods.

The findings of this study demonstrate that Artificial Neural Networks (ANNs) can effectively detect and respond to cyber threats by analyzing patterns in login behavior. The model showed strong accuracy, precision, and recall, which means it was able to identify suspicious activities such as unusual login times, multiple failed attempts, and access from unknown locations.

One of the advantages of ANNs is the ability to learn from large as well as complex datasets. This makes them suitable for modern cybersecurity systems, where threats are becoming more advanced and harder to catch using manual or rule-based methods (Tang et al., 2020). By learning from past data, the ANN model could make real-time decisions to flag or block potentially harmful activity before any damage occurred.

However, the results also highlight some limitations. If new types of cyberattacks arise that were not present in the dataset, the system may fail to detect them. Also, false positives cases where legitimate users are mistakenly flagged as suspicious can still occur, which may reduce user trust or experience.

Despite these limitations, the use of ANNs shows promising potential for building more intelligent, adaptive cybersecurity systems.

5. Conclusion

The main objective for this article is to develop and evaluate an artificial neural network (ANN)-based approach for detecting cybercrime patterns, particularly malicious login attempts, by simulating human cognitive behavior and decision-making processes. Artificial Neural Networks (ANNs) are made up of layers of artificial neurons that can learn patterns and make decisions based on the data they receive. They are designed to work like the human brain, but there are important differences between the two. ANNs are very accurate in handling many tasks and are widely used in areas like image recognition, language processing, and making predictions. Other machine learning techniques that have been inspired by the human brain include deep learning, reinforcement learning, and attention mechanisms.

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