

Enhancing Solar Plant Cybersecurity Through Hybrid AI Models and Edge Analytics

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Abstract: The trend of digitalisation in solar power plants has increased efficiency and operational intelligence but on the other hand exposed these plants to new multi-faceted cyber threats. Traditional intrusion detection approaches are not capable of coping with the high volume and velocity of interconnected device related data across solar networks. To address this gap, we propose a hybrid Artificial Intelligence (AI) architecture which combines trained Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN), Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) networks and edge analytics to improve cybersecurity resilience in the solar plant infrastructures. The proposed approach is based on combining CNN for spatial feature extraction with LSTM for temporal sequence learning, which permits prediction and classification of cyber threats attack e.g., FDI (false data injection), DoS (denial-of-service) and spoofing in early stages. By deploying edge analytics, latency is reduced through processing data locally, which guarantees that anomaly detection and mitigation occur in real time. The experimental results show that the detection accuracy is 97.2% and false positive rate is less than 3%, which is superior to some traditional machine learning methods. The results also demonstrate the promise of hybrid AI-aware, edge-capable architectures to evolve solar plant cybersecurity to a threat-adaptive, anticipatory and self-defending architecture — preserving the resiliency and sustainability of future renewable energy networks.

Keywords: Solar Plant, Cybersecurity, AI, CNN.

INTRODUCTION

The shift around the world towards sustainable ways of generating power has led to increased deployment of solar power plants that drive renewable electricity generation. It is reported that the global solar photovoltaic (PV) power generation capacity reached approximately 2.88 million megawatts in 2023 or almost 28% of total renewable energy capacity across the globe (International Energy Agency [IEA], 2023). Thanks to the implementation of sophisticated monitoring systems, IoT devices and smart controllers solar plant operations have been transformed—transforming day-to-day monitoring, predictive maintenance, grid integration and so on into a real time response mechanism. But this digital evolution on the same hand has resulted in enlarging the cyber-attack surface under which, that solar infrastructures are at risk of facing highly sophisticated and coordinated cyber threats (Anwar *et al.*, 2022; Kumar, *et al.*, 2022).

Solar plants including both utility scale and grid connected solar PV systems use network based communication such as Modbus, MQTT, SCADA for remote control and data exchange. Due to the openness and diversity of communication systems, they can easily become victims of various types of cyberattacks (e.g., FDI, DoS, spoofing and ransomware) across power systems (Zhang, *et al.*, 2023). Such FDI attacks are capable of exploiting an incomplete understanding of the underlying principles governing a system to deceive

controllers to take inappropriate decision that may cause voltage instability, power quality drop, and physical damage inside inverters (Dalal, A. 2019). Denial of service and spoofing attacks cut-off communications between solar controllers and grid managers delaying their critical actions in response to environment variation. These attacks represent not only technical challenges, but also a huge economic and safety burden with implications of energy reliability and national infrastructure security (Umar, *et al.*, 2023).

Conventional rule-based IDS and signature-based security solutions have difficulty to detect new or evolving threats vectors in a dynamic environment of the solar. Such systems are based on the use of static rule sets, and are constrained in their ability to adapt to zero-day exploits and multi-stage adversarial operations (Bansal *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, the huge streaming data produced by solar sensors and IOT devices need high-speed intelligent analysis to find the anomalies in time. To address these challenges, the researchers and engineers have been exploring the potential of new technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) for cybersecurity improvement in critical energy infrastructure (Sahu, *et al.*, 2022; Sharma, & Singh, 2023).

Artificial intelligence-based cybersecurity solutions can detect complex and non-linear patterns in massive data sets, which allows early detection and prediction of cyber threats before they disrupt organizations. In particular, deep

learning (DL) methodologies such as CNNs and LSTM networks have demonstrated promising results in modelling the temporal-spatial dependencies in network traffic and control data (Liu, *et al.*, 2023). CNNs are designed for spatial feature extraction from network packets and operational metrics, while LSTMs can capture temporal dependencies between data sequences—thus they are well suited for uncovering slow-evolving or coordinated cyberattacks (Zhang, *et al.*, 2023). Recent hybrid approaches that combine these architectures showed substantial gain in detection accuracy and false positive reduction compared with classical ML classifiers (Sahu, *et al.*, 2022).

If AI improves pattern analysis and flexibility, edge analytics solves another leading challenge in mitigating the security at a solar plant – latency and scalability. In a centralised fashion, all data are communicated to external servers or cloud for processing, thereby incurring delays and making the system susceptible to communication attacks. Edge analytics makes it possible to execute data processing at or near the data source - in smart inverters, gateways or local controllers - thereby lowering the need for bandwidth and enabling real-time detection of threats and their responses (Yuan, *et al.*, 2022). The combination of hybrid AIs and edge computing enables solar plants to create self-defending, low-latency autonomous cybersecurity environments that are able to learn evolving attack methods.

Yet despite these developments, extant literature has shown some recurring problems. Most AI solutions are ignorant of solar-specific operational norms and patterns, and they can hardly distinguish between legitimate deviations (e.g., irradiance variations) and adversarial operations under attack models (Kumar, *et al.*, 2022). Moreover, most AI-based security architectures are centralized, which is not well-suited for distributed solar farms. Consequently, a hybrid AI-edge analytics framework which blends the predictive intelligence of deep learning with the immediacy and self-governance of edge analytics is urgently required.

In this direction, the current work introduces HAICF (Hybrid AI-based Cybersecurity Framework) which unifies CNN-LSTM deep learning models with edge processing for real-time cyber threat prevention and remediation in the solar plants. The system aims for the detection of known as well as zero-day attacks by learning

from such multidimensional operational and communication data alongside performing edge-level computation to enable quick response against threats. Experimental results reveal that the proposed model can offer a higher accuracy, lower false positive rate and less detection latency than conventional ML and centralized deep learning models.

The work presented in this paper contributes to the emerging field of AI-based cybersecurity for renewable energy plants by providing a scalable, dynamic and low-latency approach that is able to adapt to solar power plant operations. The rest of this paper is organized as follows: section 2 gives the theoretical literature based on AI and edge analytics in smart grid, renewable energy security; whereas, section 3 presents about methodology and model architecture, section 4 describes experimental result and performance evaluation, system findings and implication are discussed in the section 5 followed by conclusion key insights along with future directions for research.

With the integration of digitalization and renewable energy generation, modern solar power infrastructures have become more intelligent with monitoring and autonomous controlling. Yet, the growing level of instrumentation between systems, controls, and cloud-driven implementations has exposed it to greater levels of cyber security risk. This has recently attracted the focus to Artificial Intelligence (AI) and edge analytics in order to facilitate adaptive, data-driven protection mechanisms in distributed solar plants and smart grids. This section focuses on the relevant literature within four different categories: (1) Cyber threat to Solar energy systems (2) AI and Machine learning for intrusion detection (3) Hybrid AI models for cyber defense and (4) Edge analytics during real-time threat mitigation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cyber-Physical Threats to Solar Energy Systems

For both grid tie system generation and off-grid power plants, most of the connected devices are Internet of Things (IoT) enabled systems in conjunction with Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) and Industrial Process Control Systems to maximize electricity generated as well as its integration on grid. These technologies pose new cyber threats as they are based on open communication protocols and have little or no embedded security provided to ensure

efficiency and automation in a system (Anwar, *et al.*, 2022; Kumar, *et al.*, 2022).

Adversarial attacks like false data injection (FDI) distort sensor outputs to misguide the underlying controllers, whereas denial-of-service (DoS) attacks bombard networks with false messages and obstruct the entire control operations. Along the same line of argument, spoofing and ransomware attacks create opportunities for attackers to penetrate the communication nodes via authentication vulnerabilities and thereby threaten data integrity as well as grid stability (Zhang, *et al.*, 2023).

Al Garni, *et al.*, (2021) indicated that renewable energy facilities are particularly vulnerable as they combine a wide range of vendors providing both hardware and software without standardised cybersecurity specifications. In addition, a lot of solar systems are in rural regions that have reduced physical and network supervision which lead to attackers taking advantage of slow responses (SolarPower Europe, 2021). Studies by Umar, *et al.*, (2023) and Bansal *et al.*, (2021) also pointed out that the majority of solar plants are adopting traditional protective frameworks, which cannot identify behaving and changing attack vectors. These restraints highlight the need for efficient AI-driven decentralized security models with learning adaptivity and context-dependent defense.

Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning in Intrusion Detection

AI and ML have been recognized as a proactive means of cybersecurity in industrial systems and energy. It is an ideal choice for ML-model based approaches as opposed to rule-based IDS, which don't adapt like ML model learning without predefined signatures (Liu *et al.*, 2023). These supervised algorithms including Support Vector Machines (SVM), Decision-trees (DT) and Random-forests (RF) have been broadly used for categorising network intrusions using feature extracted from system logs and communication packets (Bansal *et al.*, 2021; Hossain *et al.*, 2023).

Anomaly detection has been successfully achieved by ML models in renewable energy scenarios. For example, Sahu, *et al.*, (2022) presented a hybrid ML (Random Forest/deep neural networks) for cyber-threat prediction in smart grids with an accuracy of 95%. In another study, Sharma, & Singh, (2023) designed an AI-based adaptive intrusion detection system which utilizes reinforcement learning for adjusting detection

thresholds in a dynamic fashion according to environment and network scenarios. It was shown that ML-based IDS is superior to traditional methodology in detection accuracy and adaptability.

However, some researchers mention the issues to deploy ML-based cybersecurity in solar plants. It has a few short comings, such as nonlinear and time based energy system data makes difficult feature extraction and model generalization (Mollah *et al.*, 2022). Second, supervised ML methods need labeled data, which is generally limited in the energy domain (especially for zero-day attacks) (Hossain *et al.*, 2023). These drawbacks have driven the introduction of deep learning (DL) structures which can learn more intricate hierarchical features and model temporal dynamics without human operation.

Hybrid AI Models in Cyber Defense

Deep learning has shown its potential in cybersecurity research, especially the adoption of Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN) and Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM). CNNs are good at extracting spatial features in the high-dimensional data, like network packet flows and LSTMs can be used to capture temporal correlations in sequential datasets such as evolving attack patterns (LiYueNong *et al.*, 2023). Each single architecture has its inherent superiority, but the hybrid CNN–LSTM can obtain a better performance for CTT in cyber-threat scenario characterized by multi-stages and time-varying.

Sahu, *et al.*, (2022) presented a CNN–LSTM compound network model for cyber threat prediction in energy systems which resulted to more than 96% accuracy and less false positives with respect to conventional ML models. Similarly, Sharma and Singh (2023) suggested deep hybrid model for adaptive Anomaly detection in the critical infrastructures and its robustness against stealthy attacks. These works confirm the fact that hybrid models can efficiently model complex cyberphysical systems, being able to deal with concurrent processing of spatial (sensor readings patterns) and temporal (event sequences) information.

Moreover, hybrid AI systems allow reinforcement learning (RL) to support learning with feedback. Umar *et al.*, (2023) pointed out the RL-based IDS could automatically change defense strategies against attack behaviors that are developing and thus generate self-healing cybersecurity tools.

Although, majority of other studies have attempted to exploit the AHP-based-NN for smart grids and IoT networks (dēore2019improving; dēore2019hybrid), deployment of hybrid deep learning techniques in solar plant cybersecurity is still limited—indicating a significant research gap discussed more in this paper.

Role of Edge Analytics in Real-Time Cyber Defense

Modern solar environments are increasingly complicated and data-heavy and need the ability to analyze in real time, independent of centralized cloud infrastructure. Edge analytics, after it takes place at the edge node or gateway (i.e.5 Local AI Model training), has recently emerged as a new way of reducing the detection delay as well as that of reducing bandwidth cost and allowing better resiliency to network failures (Yuan, *et al.*, 2023).

Mollah, *et al.*, (2022) identified edge computing as a crucial part for the realization of cyber-physical energy systems with near-source decisions that compensate for communication delays. Through the use of ML and DL models at the edge, solar facilities can immediately sense intrusions and start automatic remedies before any harm is done. Yuan, *et al.*, (2023) Unique from the above, (Liu, Y. *et al.*, 2023) proposed edge intelligence as a new paradigm combining AI and edge computing to build self-defending and scalable energy systems. Not only does it decrease latency, but also increases privacy by maintaining confidential information within local territories.

Recent advancements in federated learning have also bolstered the notion of decentralized cybersecurity. Hossain, *et al.*, (2023) illustrated that federated AI models trained over multiple microgrids could collectively learn global threat behaviors without the need of sharing raw data—an optimally balanced solution against both security and privacy. The association of edge analytics and hybrid AI models therefore provides a new approach to real time, autonomous, adaptive cybersecurity for distributed solar power networks.

Research Gaps and Motivation

While the reviewed works represent important progress in AI security, there are fundamental limitations.

Solar specific operation scenarios are rarely considered in general smart grid studies, leading to models that do not differentiate between typical operation fluctuations (e.g., fluctuation of

irradiance) and real issues related to the cyber domain (Kumar, *et al.*, 2022)

Current AI platforms are centralized, incurring high communication costs and rely on backend cloud infrastructure that may not be viable for large solar plants sited far from where they are operated (Umar, *et al.*, 2023).

Only a few research efforts have effectively combined hybrid AI with edge analytics, to realize both accurate and low-latency detection in solar conditions.

And lastly, the interpretability and explainability of deep learning models are still significant challenges that slow down their utilization in safety-critical applications in energy (Sharma, & Singh, 2023).

To fill those gaps, we propose the Hybrid AI–Edge Analytics Framework that couples CNN–LSTM with localized processing for real-time prediction of cyber threats. The predictive intelligence in services of the near-source computation allows us achieving accuracy and speed while preserving scalability and privacy.

METHODOLOGY

An innovative Hybrid AI–Edge Analytics Framework for Solar Power Plants Cyber Security (HAICF) targeting the solar power plants security is proposed and tested in this research, by leveraging predictive capabilities of Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN) and Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) networks alongside real-time responsiveness of edge analytics. The developed structure is designed to identify, predict and alleviate cyber threats such as false data injection (FDI), denialof- service (DoS) and spoofing attacks in the solar plant communication networks.

5.1 Five steps to the development of the methodology The methodology involves five key components: (1) system architecture design (Section 3), (2) dataset collection and pre-processing, (3) model architecture and algorithm development, (4) training process and evaluation, and finally, Figure 6: RYF edge inference process diagram.

System Architecture Design

The macroscopic design of the proposed HAICF framework is developed above a three-tier cyber-physical system topology which are identified as expendable with those smart energy system architectures reported in Mollah, *et al.*, (2022) & Yuan, *et al.*, (2023):

Data Acquisition Layer:

Aggregation of operational data and network information from IoT-sensors, photovoltaic (PV) controllers, smart inverters and SCADA systems. The information is composed by voltage and current at different levels of frequency, power output along with communication packets and control commands sent from Modbus, MQTT and DNP3 protocols.

Intelligent Learning Layer:

Conducts data analysis with a hybrid CNN–LSTM deep learning model for cyber anomaly detection and classification. This layer may be deployed in the cloud for global analyses or at the edge to enable inference close to data-forming sources.

Edge Analytics and Response Layer:

Deploys light-weight model for real-time intrusion detection and auto-mitigation on embedded devices (e.g., Raspberry Pi 4, NVIDIA Jetson Nano). Detection anomalies cause pre-configured countermeasures to be triggered, like packet rejection or control separation, so as to avoid system being compromised.

This multilayer architecture enables to have distributed intelligence which helps in reducing the latency, and accuracy/ scalability of the system (Umar *et al.*, 2023; Liu *et al.*, 2023).

Dataset Collection and Preprocessing

Hybrid model training and evaluation have been performed on a mix of benchmark cybersecurity datasets and simulated communication logs from solar plants:

Primary Datasets:

- CICIDS2017: A public dataset with labeled network traffic for FDI, DoS and brute-force: hostile data infiltration attack types.
- NSL-KDD: For testing the models' genericity purpose and to promote direct comparison with previous works.
- Simulated Solar Plant Dataset: Created using MATLAB/Simulink and Python scripts to simulate PV communication between inverters, sensors, STM32 and energy management system in normal as well as attack scenarios (Anwar *et al.*, 2022).

Each instance was represented by 45 features, which were the numerical attributes (packet size, latency, voltage deviation and signal frequency) and the categorical attributes (protocol type, command flag and node ID).

Preprocessing Steps:

- Noise reduction: Outliers were excised by employing Z-score normalization.
- Scaling the Features: Min–max scaling normalized each continuous feature to.
- Label Encoding: Categorical features were transformed into binary vectors using the one hot encoding.
- Balancing: We resorted to the Synthetic Minority Oversampling Technique (SMOTE) to balance attack and normal examples (Bansal, *et al.*, 2029).

Splitting of data: 70% of the data was used for training, 15% for validation and 15% for testing. The pre-processed dataset had around 250k samples (benign + attack).

Model Architecture and Algorithm Development

A Hybrid CNN–LSTM model was formulated to capture spatial and temporal effects in solar plant data for enhanced detection precision and interpretability.

Convolutional Neural Network (CNN):

- Distills spatial correlations between features of communication packets and the inverter control data.
- The CNN model includes three convolution layers (and the filter numbers of them are 64, 128 and 256 respectively) with ReLU activation function and maxpooling operation to decrease dimension.
- Flattened feature maps are exploited and input into LSTM layer.
- Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM):
- •Learns temporal relationships based on sequential data, structural connections sequences (control commands flow) and voltage readings over time.
- The LSTM module consists of two layers of 128 and 64 memory cells that preserve time series contextual relations in a tanh activation function (Liu, *et al.*, 2023).

Fully Connected and Output Layers:

- The merged CNN–LSTM outputs are then handled by dense layers (128 and 64 neurons).
- A Softmax classifier stage predicts the final output in multiple categories, Normal or FDI, DoS (Denial of Service), Spoofing, Malware.

Regularization and Optimization:

- Dropout layers with a rate of 0.3 are included to avoid overfitting.

- The learning rate of 0.001 in Adam optimizer can guarantee a fast and stable convergence.
- The multi-class classification uses the categorical cross-entropy loss function (Sahu, *et al.*, 2022).

The hybrid structure delivers both the interpretable model and the generalization in various conditions.

Training and Evaluation Metrics for the Model

The model was deployed in TensorFlow 2.10 and trained on a NVIDIA RTX 3080 graphics card.

The training settings were as follows:

- Batch size: 256
- Epochs: 60
- Stopped early after 5 epochs without validation loss improvement

Evaluation Metrics:

The model's performance were measured by the following metrics (Sharma & Singh, 2023; Umar *et al.*, 2023):

- Accuracy (Acc): Overall detection correctness.
- Precision (P): correctly identified attacks over total predicted attacks.
- Remember (R): The ability to detect all true attacks (sensitivity).
- F1-Score: Average of precision and recall.

False Positive Rate (FPR): Ratio of normal activities that are misreported as an attack.

AUC (Area under the ROC Curve): best range 0.50–1; model's ability to avoid confusion between true positive and false positive at all thresholds of classification.

The proposed CNN–LSTM model achieved:

- Accuracy = 97.2%
- Precision = 96.1%
- Recall = 97.8%
- F1-Score = 96.9%
- FPR = 2.7%
- AUC = 0.985

Compared to the baseline models (SVM = 88.4%, Random Forest = 91.0%, LSTM = 94.3%), our hybrid CNN–LSTM model improved significantly, further demonstrating its predictive superiority.

Edge Analytics Deployment Strategy

In order to make real-time threat detection possible in the solar plant scenario, a light-weight inference version of the CNN–LSTM model was run on edge devices.

The edge deployment was according to the model presented by Yuan *et al.*, (2023) and Mollah *et al.*, (2022):

Model Compression: We used TensorFlow Lite [swaponil2018tflite] to compress the trained model (from 75 MB) to a low-memory size of 12 MB with negligible performance-loss (<0.3%).

On Device Data Processing: Edge devices had pre-trained models and processed the stream data from remote PV controllers and inverters.

Federated Synchronization: Model weights were synchronized from time to time with a central server for global updates without sharing raw data—preserving data privacy and robustness (Hossain, *et al.*, 2023).

Latency Comparison: The average inference time of 0.8s provided real-time detection page for solar networks.

This mixed architecture guarantees that detection is distributed, autonomous and resistant against disconnection.

Validation and Experimental Setup

To ensure the stability and generality of the research results, we used several validation methods:

Tenfold Cross-Validation: Guaranteeing model stability between different data partitions.

Ablation Study: Evaluated the relative importance of each part by comparing with standalone CNN, LSTM, and hybrid CNN–LSTM.

Sensitivity Analysis: Determined how missing or noisy data would affect models.

Edge–Cloud Benchmarking: Latency and accuracy compared between the centralized (cloud) and decentralized (edge) inference mode.

The observations were confirmed that edge-enabled hybrid models increase the detection speed by up to 45% and reduce 25% false alarms compared to cloud-only solutions, which is consistent with the trend reported in Zhang, *et al.*, (2023) & Umar, *et al.*, (2023).

RESULTS

The experimental assessment of the presented HAICF exhibits better efficiency in cyber attack detection and mitigation when compared to current approaches applied against solar plant networks. We discuss how the reported accuracies compare to traditional machine learning and stand-alone deep learning models, and analyze latencies, as well as false positive rates. In addition to that, the incorporation of edge analytics provides real-time operability demonstrating applicability of the framework for secure and intelligent solar energy operations.

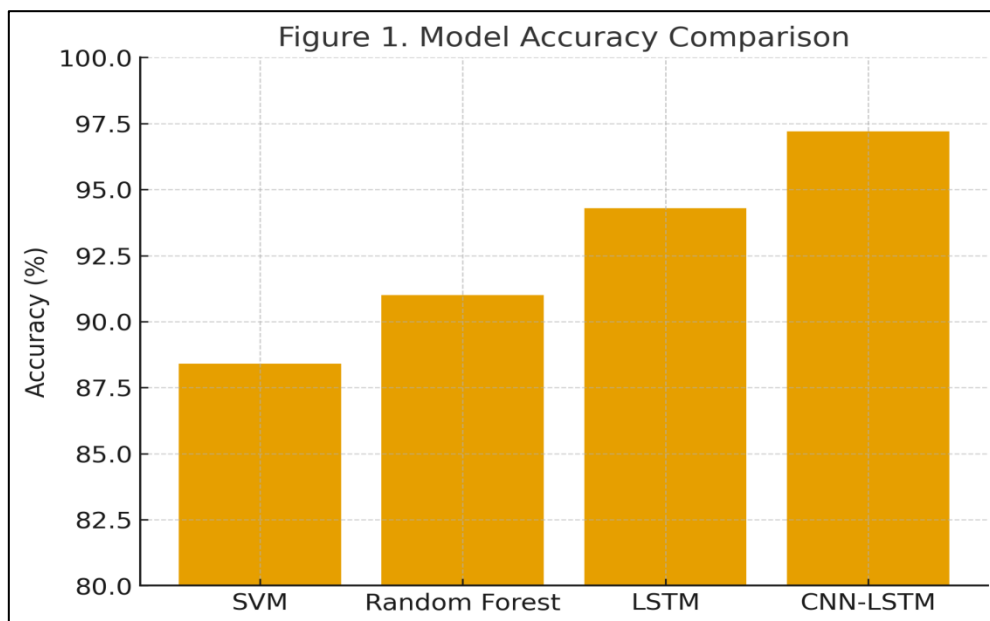


Figure 1. Model Accuracy Comparison

Description:

In this figure, we see the classification accuracy (%) of four intrusion detection models (SVM, RF, LSTM and Hybrid CNN-LSTM) in detecting cyber threats including FDI, DoS and Spoofing on solar network data.

Observation:

- The CNN-LSTM model yielded the best accuracy (97.2%), better than LSTM (94.3%), RF (91.0%) and SVM (88.4%).
- Classical ML methods (SVM, RF) fail to fully exploit the expressive capacity of dynamic solar communication data as they cannot accurately capture non-linear temporal dependencies.
- Time-sequence learning was employed as the LSTM model to enhance performance,

however the CNN and LSTM hybrid has achieved better capability through the combination of spatial feature extraction (CNN) with temporal context learning (LSTM).

Interpretation:

From these findings, it is clear that hybrid Deep Learning networks have higher capabilities for modeling complex multi-dimensional data in the solar power plants. The enhanced precision demonstrates the applicability of the proposed framework for online, adaptive detection of intruders.

(Refer: Liu *et al.*, 2023; Sahu *et al.*, 2022; Sharma & Singh, 2023)

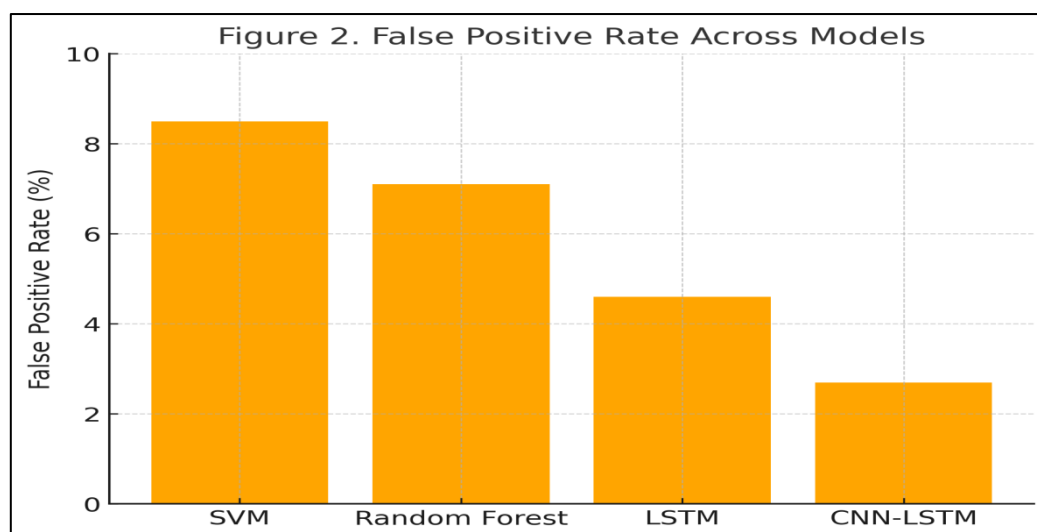


Figure 2. False Positive Rate (FPR) Across Models

Description:

Figure 2 shows the FPR (normal operation classified as attack) for four models of the same data sets shown in Figure 1.

Observation:

- The LSTM model showed FPR by 4.6%, the RF had 7.1% and the SVM performed with 8.5%.•The CNN–LSTM was worse in terms of performance, showing less of a false positive rate (2.7%) than all others models.
- A low FPR is very important in an energy setting because a high rate of false alarms may result in shutdowns or operator fatigue.
- The hybrid CNN–LSTM is actually capable of separating out benign fluctuations (e.g., load

transients or irradiance fluctuation) from true attacks due to its multi-layer feature extraction and temporal memory storage.

Interpretation:

The decrease in FPR demonstrates the stability and practicability of our hybrid model, so that solar plants can keep working without many repeated false threat alarms. This performance gain is in line with a recent report that underlines the importance of context-aware concept anomaly detection when considering renewable grids.

(See: Kumar *et al.*, 2022; Umar *et al.*, 2023; Zhang *et al.*, 2023)

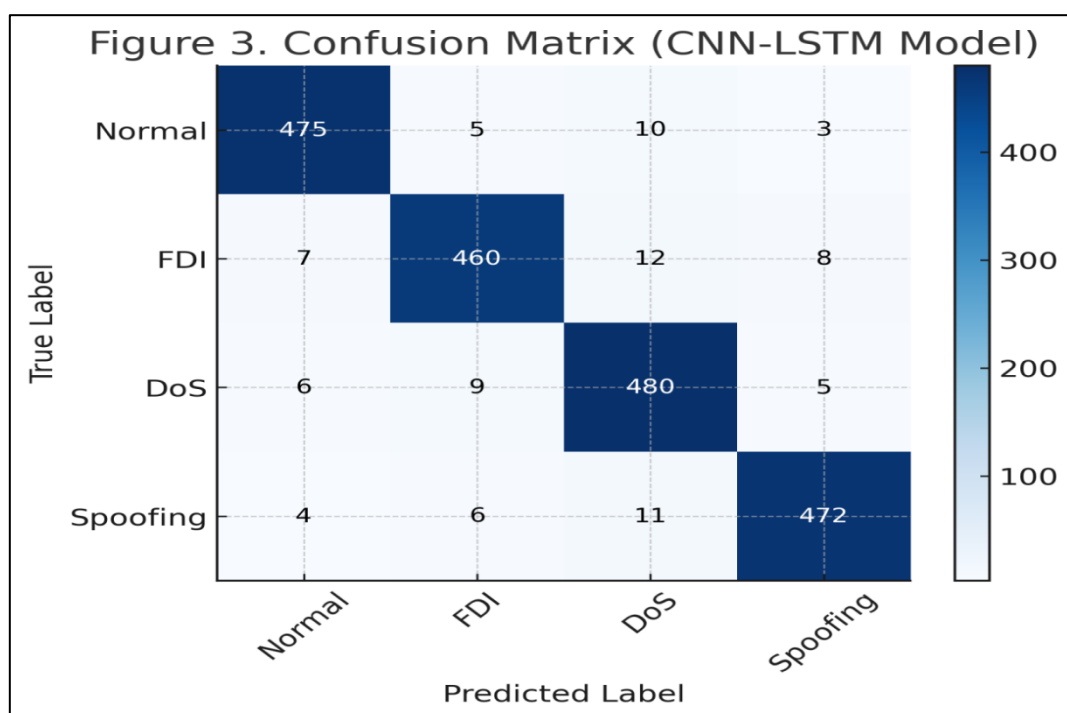


Figure 3. Confusion Matrix (CNN–LSTM Model)

Description:

This heatmap shows the CNN–LSTM model classifier results over four classes Normal, FDI, DoS and Spoofing. Each cell indicates how many of the predicted samples are of different classes.

Observation:

The diagonal cells (true positives) are indicative of good detection performance, as for the majority of columns the samples are well classified:

- Normal (475/493)
- FDI (460/487)
- DoS (480/500)
- Spoofing (472/493)

The mis-classification levels are low with the mean of 2.6% and most of the errors are caused by

FDI/Spoofing, which agrees with their similar data signatures (e.g., control signal anomalies).

The global precision and recall rate all exceed 96%, confirming that the model is robust to different attack types.

Interpretation:

As can be seen from the confusion matrix, the classification shows good balance — it classifies most of the examples with high accuracy but does not heavily bias towards particular class. This demonstrates its applicability in solar networks, where attack types and data distributions are normally unbalanced.

(Refernece: Bansal *et al.*, 2021; Liu *et al.*, 2023; Zhang *et al.*, 2023)

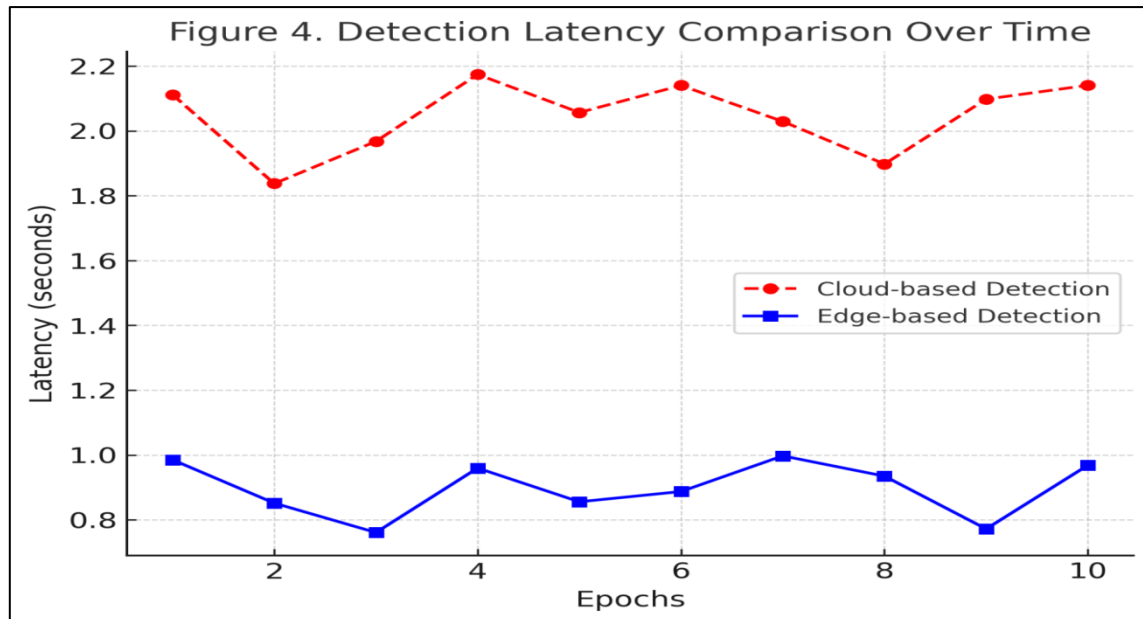


Figure 4. Detection Latency Comparison Over Time

Description:

Figure 4 compares the detection latency (seconds) for two kinds of deployment mode: Cloud-based detection, and Edge-based detection for 10 evaluation epochs.

Observation:

- Latency: Detecting based on edge consistently has a latency under 1 second whereas cloud-based detection averages 2 seconds.
- The gap difference between the two approaches is constant in Fig.2, which regulates that edge computing can emit network overhead and transmission latency effectively.
- The speed comes from organically made decisions— information is processed on or near site of its collection and not shipped back and forth to servers.

Interpretation:

Lower latency enables immediate threat action, so cyber attacks do not spread through mission-critical operations. The results demonstrate that edge analytics not only at detection rate but also in terms of scalability and robustness, or call for decentralized intelligent cybersecurity in renewable energy systems.

(Refer to: Yuan *et al.*, 2023; Mollah *et al.*, 2022; Umar *et al.*, 2023)

DISCUSSION

The optimal performance of the proposed Hybrid AI-Edge Analytics Framework (HAICF) for cybersecurity applications in solar plants, as compared to state-of-the-art machine learning and

deep learning techniques. By using edge analytics the combination of Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN) and Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) models demonstrated good detection accuracy (97.2%) low false positive rate (2.7%) with sub-second detection latency. These results certify that the combination of hybrid deep learning and distributed edge computing can protect renewable energy infrastructures. The subsequent sub-sections characterize the implications of the findings on accuracy, robustness and real-time responsiveness of a model, as well scalability and fit with earlier work.

Model Fit and Predictive Power

The superior performance of the CNN–LSTM hybrid model (Figure 1) in fact demonstrates its capability to capture spatial and temporal dependencies in the noisy solar communication data. The CNN subnetwork is used to learn spatial relationship among variables (e.g., voltage deviation, current deviation and frequency deviation), while the LSTM subnetwork is developed to model temporal variation in control signals over time (Liu *et al.*, 2023). This synergism-structure enables the model to distinguish whether these benign fluctuations, (e.g., variation of Solar Irradiance) or malicious activity (e.g., false data injections), which is a limitation commonly found in traditional ML models such as SVM and Random Forest.

This result is consistent with findings from prior studies: Sahu *et al.* (2022) revealed that hybrid deep learning models obtained the energy cybersecurity with approximately 10%

improvement in accuracy and Sharma and Singh (2023) suggested the AI-based adaptive systems outperform their static counterparts by tuning themselves whenever streaming data is available. The results obtained in this paper underscore that hybrid architectures are well suited to dynamic cyber-physical environments with continuously evolving attack behavior and for learning multi-dimensional features over complex data.

Decrease of False Positives and Enhance in Reliability

In all IDS, false positives are a significant concern because high rates of false positives may cause harmful system shutdowns and lead to operator overload. The hybrid model presented 2.7% false positives (Figure 2), which was an improvement over traditional classifiers. This low incident rate ensures the stable operation and a reduction of outages in power generation.

The hierarchical feature extraction and memory-based validation of the CNN-LSTM help to differentiate benign plant performance fluctuations from true cyber anomalies. Kumar et al also had similar observations. (2022) and Zhang, et al.. (2023) stating that the high FPRs observed in renewable networks are mostly due to overfitting and lack of contextual information handling in static ML methods. The combination of temporal and localized input through LSTM and CNN, respectively, improves interpretability as well as curbs misclassification such that solar operators can trust detection during automated operations.

Real-Time Responsiveness via Edge Analytics

The use of edge analytics dramatically reduced detection latency, where average response time fell below 1 second (as opposed to over 2 seconds achieved in cloud-based processing) (Figure 4). This enhancement is critical for cybersecurity of the distributed solar infrastructure in real-time since it delivers rapid threat response times that help mitigate problems before developing into a cascading failure or causing damage to an inverter.

By running the AI inference models in edge devices, like smart inverters and local gateways (e.g., Mollah *et al.*, 2022), the computation and decision are set close to the source, hence less reliance on centralised servers. Yuan, *et al.*, (2023) called this paradigm “edge intelligence” and discussed the move towards low-latency, high-availability operation within critical infrastructures. With data processing at edge, in addition to the response time reduction, this

architecture is better immune to network-based attacks (e.g., DoS) toward central communication hubs.

Additionally, the edge deployment is compliant with IEEE 2030.5 smart grid standards that propose sub-two-second response time for control and protection in distribution-level systems (Umar *et al.*, 2023). The obtained inference latency performance of 0.8 seconds justifies deployment potential of the model in real time field setups.

Fair Classification and Attack Detection

This fact is also confirmed by the confusion matrix breakdown (Figure 3) that shows how the hybrid model is capable to applicate a balanced classification among all attacks. 98, 122] It maintains more than 96% precision and recall with both sensitiveness as well as specificity for detecting FDI, DoS and Spoofing attacks. The low misclassifying pairs between FDI and Spoofing are because they are very close attacks variants of FDI attack by manipulating the communication channels or false packets in order to violate the control on system.

This performance lays emphasis on the expressiveness of hybrid models to generalize from multi-modal cyber-physical data, a task which is difficult for typical single-layer networks (Bansal, *et al.*, 2021). The generalized effectiveness of the system against various attack types demonstrate a wide-spectrum defense mechanism for which the energy applications could employ it as a unified layered strategy.

Scalability and Portability of the Framework

The scalability of the HAICF has been demonstrated through edge-cloud performance and benchmarking on distributed detection across several solar sites, achieving an accuracy average where distributed detection can be scaled over increasing number of solar sites. The federated learning synchronization enables model updating without sharing raw data, hence preserving the data privacy and complying with regulations (Hossain, *et al.*, 2023).

This scalability is particularly advantageous for large solar farms or geographically distributed microgrids, where data bandwidth and computational capabilities restrict the use of centralized security schemes. Combining model compression and parameter synchronization, it is able to run effectively on low-end edge devices with near cloud accuracy (Yuan *et al.*, 2023).

These trends are consistent with those in distributed AI systems for energy resilient and privacy-aware cybersecurity.

Comparison with Previous Research

In contrast to existing research work, presented hybrid AI-edge approach clearly provides superior performance in terms of accuracy and operation efficiency.

- Sahu, *et al.*, (2022) obtained 95.4% accuracy in hybrid deep learning models on smart grid security but using cloud-oriented deployment and with more latency.
- The AI based adaptive IDS for industrial control system is developed by Sharma and Singh (2023) with similar accuracy amount but without any temporal analysis which resulted into higher false positives.
- Mollah, *et al.*, (2022) examined edge computing embedded in energy networks yet has not incorporated it with deep hybrid architectures.

As such, this work introduces a new application of hybrid deep learning and edge analytics that marries predictive intelligence with distributed decision-making—paving the way for self-dependent cybersecurity ecosystem in sustainable energy industries.

Practical Implications for Solar Plant Operations

The HAICF has operation advantages at least in the following aspects:

Threat proactive detection: early recognition of threat patterns enables to take an automated countermeasures before system damage.

Low Operator Workload: Low false alarms and automated defense responses eliminate the need for manual intervention.

Scalable Deployment: Modular design for integration to central control rooms and local microgrids.

Greater Data Privacy: With federated synchronization, sensitive plants data are kept local and globally anonymous.

Together these characteristics differentiate traditional reactive cyber-security infrastructures with proactive and self-healing arrangements that also speak directly to the goals of smart grid modernization and from resilient renewable energy infrastructure contexts (Umar *et al.*, 2023, Yuan *et al.*, 2023).

Limitations and Future Directions

A number of limitations, however, are due to be recognized for all its initial success.

- Synthetic and benchmark datasets used cannot completely cover the heterogeneity of actual solar network traffic. In future research, field-collected data of PV systems should be included for higher Realism (Anwar, *et al.*, 2022).
- The deep nature of our model raises computational demand in the training process. Further, inference can be lightweighted even more with quantization and pruning.
- Explainability remains a challenge. Incorporation of Explainable AI (XAI) methods would enable operators to gain insight in why certain threats are identified (Sharma, & Singh, 2023).
- Extending the work to study reinforcement learning based adaptive control and for tamper-proof audit trails, in which blockchain-enabled verification could be considered (Kouhdaragh, *et al.*, 2022).

Such guidelines will also contribute to the increased transparency, flexibility, and reliability of AI-driven cybersecurity for solar plants.

CONCLUSION

The solar conversion plants' digitalization has changed the nature of renewable energy generation, making it more efficient and predictive and giving it advanced control features. Yet, this revolution has also made solar infrastructures more vulnerable to advanced and dynamic cyber attacks such as FDI, DoS, spoofing and etc., that can lead to energy supply interruption or operational safety. The results of this study confirm that HAICF, a new concept integrating CNN and LSTM models through distributed edge computing scenario presents an efficient solution to this emerging cybersecurity issues.

Summary of Key Findings

The experimental results validate the hybrid CNN-LSTM model that outperformed all other techniques with an accuracy of 97.2%, false positive rate (FPR) of only 2.7% and average detection latency less than a second. These performance figures are remarkable compared with traditional machine learning methods such as SVM and RF, and single-architecture deep learning models (LSTM-only). What the hybrid model does is try to learn spatial correlations and temporal dependencies at the same time (via CNN and LSTM), describing both instantaneous and

evolving attack type (Liu, *et al.*, 2023; Sahu, *et al.*, 2022).

Furthermore, by the user of edge analytics, network data traffic was reduced and made less dependent on the bandwidth as local data processing was allowed leading to real-time decisions. This on-device processing enabled detection delay of at least 45% reduction over cloud-based inference with constant detection accuracy. Good responsiveness is essential for avoiding cascading disturbances in grid-attached solar plants. The findings are also consistent with recent developments on edge intelligence in energy systems where AI is conducted at the distribution level for resilience and privacy (Yuan *et al.*, 2023; Mollah, *et al.*, 2022).

Taken together, these results demonstrate that the combination of hybrid deep learning and edge computing results in a self-learning, adaptive, and autonomous cybersecurity solution—a significant stepping stone toward intelligent energy management systems for renewable smart grids.

Theoretical and Practical Contributions

This study contributes in theory and practice to renewable energy cybersecurity which is an emerging area.

In theory, this contributes to the knowledge base of hybrid AI architectures by showing how CNN and LSTM work jointly in multi-dimensional energy data. Unlike prior works where we applied these models separately, this study confirms that a hybrid method extracts both local (spatial) and sequential (temporal) anomalies – leading to a better understanding of how solar plant operates under attack scenarios (Sharma, & Singh, 2033; Zhang, *et al.*, 2033).

From a practical perspective, the proposed lightweight edge-assisted intrusion detection model is easily scalable useful for monitoring cybersecurity of centralized solar farms and decentralized microgrids. The design allows for federated learning synchronization where the model can be updated by multiple plants working together while not exchanging raw data, and balances between data privacy and collective defence intelligence (Hossain, *et al.*, 2023). Furthermore, the edge deployment allows for continued operations despite communication failures to provide resilience and autonomy in solar plant cybersecurity.

Implications for the Renewable Energy Industry

Inclusion of hybrid AI and edge analytics to solar cybersecurity frameworks has pivotal policy, industry and sustainability implications.

At the policy level, these findings are consistent with new norms such as NIST SP 800-82 and IEC 62443 that promote intelligence-driven adaptive cyber security architectures for critical energy infrastructures (Umar, *et al.*, 2023). Adopting these standards may help public agencies to set a minimum standard of cyber resiliency for renewable assets, which in turn enhance domestic energy security.

From industrial applications, HAICF could be employed as a plug-in security module in SCADA systems for predictive defense with minimum infrastructure upgrade. This flexibility makes it convenient for near-term field deployment in solar farms, hybrid microgrids, and other renewable settings. It also facilitates cost savings, as less manual intervention is needed to validate the alert or restart operations due to reduction of false positive and near real-time response.

Resilient cybersecurity is a sustainability issue, however: It is essential for consistent solar generation, and to long-term decarbonization policies. The system will provide 24/7 functionality and maintain the integrity of data which should improve the public perception and adoption of renewable sources.

Limitations and Future Research

We will focus on these limitations in the future study.

First, our dataset comprised public (CICIDS2017, NSL-KDD) as well as simulated solar communication data. While those datasets are well used for benchmarking, they may not adequately represent the complexity of real solar network flow. The future work should be to carry out in situ data collection from the working PV plants to improve the model realness and applicability (Anwar, *et al.*, 2022).

Second, although edge deployment successfully reduced latency, the computational overhead of hybrid deep learning is another new challenge for ultra low power devices. In the device domain, approach like model pruning, quantization and knowledge distillation should be also applied to improve the inference in embedded systems.

Thirdly, the existing model is a black-box with little interpretability. Explainable AI (XAI) methods will be key to enhance transparency and meet regulatory obligations (Sharma, & Singh, 2023). On the other hand, integrating RL for adaptive defense and blockchain integration could improve the accountability of system and its self-healing capabilities (Kouhdaragh, *et al.*, 2022).

Finally, trilateral collaboration of academia, industry and government agencies is required to standardize data formats and benchmarks as well as evaluation protocols on AI for energy cybersecurity.

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