DMPedia Lecture Notes in Multidisciplinary Research,
Volume 1, pp. 169-181, 2026

International Conference on Multidisciplinary Perspectives in Advanced Computing and Technology (IMPACT 2026)
G. B. Pant University of Agriculture and Technology, Uttarakhand, India. Jan. 10-11, 2026

High-Recall Intrusion Prevention in SDN-IoT: A Hash-Based Lightweight Défense using NSL-KDD and CIC-IDS-2017 Datasets

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Abstract

The rapid proliferation of Internet of Things (IoT) and Software-Defined Networking (SDN) has introduced significant cybersecurity challenges due to inherent vulnerabilities in real-time, dynamic network environments. This paper presents a novel, lightweight intrusion prevention system (IPS) that leverages SHA-256-based hash matching to achieve high recall and low latency in SDN-IoT architectures. The proposed model achieves ultra-fast packet inspection with a processing latency of just 0.08 seconds, making it suitable for high-throughput environments. Evaluation using benchmark datasets NSL-KDD and CIC-IDS-2017 demonstrates the system's near-perfect detection rates of 99.82% and 100%, respectively. While the overall accuracy remains moderate (55.48% for NSL-KDD and 58.29% for CIC-IDS-2017), the model excels in recall and F1-score, achieving 67.86% and 73.11%. Additionally, hash-matching speeds exceed 1.8 to 2.7 million packets per second, enabling scalability for large-scale, real-time networks. The system also effectively blocked 222,192 malicious packets (CIC-IDS-2017) and 135,786 (NSL-KDD), underscoring its practical impact. By bridging proactive threat mitigation and fast packet processing, this solution enhances security without compromising performance. The proposed IPS is especially suited for edge computing, smart cities, and industrial IoT deployments, offering an efficient and robust framework for modern cybersecurity defence.

Key words: *Intrusion Prevention System (IPS), SHA-256, Processing Time (PT), Hash Matching Speed (HMS), Blocked Packets (BP).*

1. Introduction

With their substantial benefits in flexibility, scalability, and efficiency, Software-Defined Networking (SDN) and the Internet of Things (IoT) have completely changed the network infrastructure landscape. Strong and effective intrusion detection and prevention systems (IDPS) are now more important than ever, as these developments have created new attack surfaces and vulnerabilities. The requirements of SDN-IoT environments, where quick data processing, low latency, and little computational overhead are crucial, are frequently beyond the capabilities of traditional security models [1]. A careful balance between detection accuracy and system performance is necessary for intrusion prevention, especially in high-volume, real-time networks. Although many traditional approaches prioritise detection accuracy, they often incur high computational costs or high false-positive rates, which can affect network throughput. Thus, for securing SDN-IoT environments, real-time, lightweight defences that preserve high sensitivity without sacrificing network performance are essential [2]. To overcome these obstacles, a lightweight intrusion prevention system based on hashing is proposed. The proposed model is especially designed for real-time detection and offers near-perfect recall and high throughput, makes use of the effectiveness of SHA-256 hash matching.

1.1 Research Contributions:

- Design of a High-Recall, Hash-Based Intrusion Prevention System: SHA-256 hash matching was used to create a new lightweight intrusion prevention framework

specifically for SDN-IoT networks, allowing for quick and deterministic packet inspection.

- Real-Time Detection with Ultra-Low Latency: Near-instantaneous threat detection and prevention appropriate for real-time, high-throughput environments was made possible by achieving a processing latency as low as 0.08 seconds.
- The effectiveness of the suggested system was confirmed through a cross-dataset evaluation on NSL-KDD and CIC-IDS-2017, which showed generalizability across a variety of attack vectors and traffic patterns.
- Outstanding Recall with High Blocking Efficiency: Achieved 100% recall on CIC-IDS-2017 and 99.82% recall on NSL-KDD, with 222,192 malicious packets successfully blocked on CIC-IDS-2017 and 135,786 malicious packets on NSL-KDD datasets, respectively, indicating a low number of false negatives.
- Fast Packet Processing Efficiency: The system's scalability for deployment in extensive SDN-IoT infrastructures is confirmed by demonstrated hash-matching throughput exceeding 1.8 to 2.7 million packets per second.
- Equilibrium Detection Trade-offs for Real-World Implementation: The system maintained respectable F1-scores (67.86% and 73.11%) in spite of moderate accuracy scores (55.48% and 58.29%), highlighting a realistic balance between detection sensitivity and overall performance.
- Establishment of Future Improvements: Paved the way for the future use of explainable AI to increase transparency and confidence in intrusion decisions and adaptive ensemble learning to lower false positives.

The remaining paper is structured as follows: Section 2 presents the Literature Survey, Section 3 describes the Proposed Research Methodology, Section 4 presents the results, and Section 5 presents the conclusion.

2. Literature Survey

Intrusion prevention in Software-Defined Networking (SDN) and Internet of Things (IoT) environments requires intelligent, lightweight, and cryptographically secure mechanisms to ensure minimal false negatives and real-time protection. While much research has focused on intrusion detection, fewer works address real-time intrusion prevention, especially those that incorporate hash-based verification, low-latency cryptographic techniques, or high-recall models using benchmark datasets such as NSL-KDD and CIC-IDS-2017. Studies from 2022 to 2025 show progress in hybrid AI, blockchain, federated learning, and hashing-based defence, but common limitations persist such as high latency, a lack of real-time packet blocking, a lack of cryptographic validation, and limited scope to anomaly detection. The following literature review table summarizes significant contributions in this domain, highlighting both strengths and limitations to position the novelty of the proposed work.
Table 1 summarises recent studies on intrusion detection and prevention in SDN-IoT frameworks. Limitations like lack of real-time prevention, high computational complexity, and lack of hash-based verification still exist even though many approaches concentrate on improving detection accuracy and recall. By providing quick packet inspection with minimal latency, your suggested high-recall, hash-based lightweight intrusion prevention system fills these gaps and can be implemented in edge environments, smart cities, and industrial IoT infrastructures.

Table.1 Recent research from 2022 to 2025 for IPS.

Author(s)	Year	Key Contribution	Limitation
A. Gupta et al. [1]	2022	Lightweight IDS using decision tree ensemble on NSL-KDD	No prevention logic; lacks hashing
Y. Zhang et al. [2]	2022	Blockchain-enabled anomaly detection for SDN	Detection only; no lightweight or hash defence
P. Roy et al. [3]	2022	IoT-based intrusion prevention using fuzzy rule sets	High false positives; not hash-based
A. Razaque and D. Alghazzawi [4]	2022	Lightweight IoT security framework for SDN	Focus on framework architecture; lacks empirical validation
A. Sarhan et al. [5]	2022	Hierarchical blockchain-based federated learning for collaborative IoT intrusion detection	No real-time packet inspection
W. Wang et al. [8]	2023	GAN-based IDS improve recall in CIC-IDS-2017	No hash-level prevention
M. K. Poorazad et al. [11]	2023	CNN + Blockchain for SDN-IoT	High latency
M. Belarbi et al. [12]	2023	Federated learning on TON-IoT	No packet blocking or hashing
M. Arkan and M. Ahmadi [16]	2023	Unsupervised hierarchical IDS for SD-WSN	No cryptographic validation
M. K. Poorazad et al. [20]	2023	Deep learning with blockchain for SDN-enabled IIoT	High latency due to blockchain
H. Hizal et al. [9]	2024	XGBoost with hybrid feature selection	High pre-processing time; detection only
S. Khan et al. [10]	2024	SHA-256 for SDN packet integrity	No intrusion logic
G. Kaur et al. [13]	2024	Accuracy vs. recall evaluation on NSL-KDD	Focused on metrics, not mechanisms
A. Jouhari and M. Guizani [14]	2024	Lightweight CNN-BiLSTM IDS for constrained IoT devices	Lacks real-time prevention
A. Altaie and H. Hoomod [15]	2024	CNN-LSTM IDS on Raspberry Pi3 using UNSW-NB15	No hash-based verification
R. Francis and M. Sheeja [17]	2024	SHAKE-ESDRL-based IDS with hashing for WSN	No SDN-IoT integration
A. Yildiz and A. Dener [18]	2024	CNN-LSTM IDS evaluated on CICIoT2023 and TON_IoT	No hash-based prevention
A. Bansal et al. [21]	2025	Real-time intrusion prevention using SHA-512 and rule mining	Slower performance on resource-limited IoT nodes
H. Ebrahim and L. Wang [22]	2025	LSTM-QSVM hybrid IDS on CIC-IDS-2017	High recall but lacks hash verification
R. Singh et al. [23]	2025	Hybrid hash-chaining IDS for SDN-based fog-IoT networks	No evaluation on benchmark datasets
T. Noor and H. Abbas [24]	2025	Blockchain-verified lightweight IDS with SHA-256	Detection only; lacks prevention mechanism
V. Prasad et al. [25]	2025	High-performance hash-based intrusion filter for NSL-KDD	Does not address CIC-IDS-2017 compatibility

3 Proposed Research Methodology

A lightweight intrusion prevention system based on hashing and with high recall is proposed for use with Internet of Things (IoT) infrastructure and Software-Defined Networking (SDN). The following crucial stages comprise the suggested research methodology for intrusion prevention, as illustrated below in Fig. 1:

3.1 *Dataset Selection and Pre-processing*

Two popular benchmark datasets were selected:

NSL-KDD: Provides labelled network traffic information for conventional intrusion detection.

CIC-IDS-2017: Provides realistic traffic profiles to depict contemporary attack types.

Pre-processing involved:

Cleaning null or corrupted rows was one aspect of pre-processing.

Label columns should be renamed and standardized.

Binary conversion of multi-class labels (Attack = 1, Benign = 0).

Choosing a subset of significant features according to their uniqueness and relevance.

3.2 *Feature-Based Hashing Mechanism*

A fixed set of features was chosen from each dataset and used to create a SHA-256 hash per record in order to guarantee quick packet matching. This allows for minimal overhead and lightweight packet inspection:

NSL-KDD: ['duration', 'protocol type', 'src_bytes', 'dst_bytes', 'flag']

CIC-IDS-2017: ['Flow Duration', 'Protocol', 'Flow Bytes/s', 'Total Fwd. Packets', 'Total Backward Packets'].

The hashlib library was used to hash each concatenated feature string, creating a distinct fingerprint for packet classification.

3.3 *Hash-Based Intrusion Detection Algorithm*

There were two reference sets created:

Benign Hashes: First 1000 benign samples.

Malicious Hashes: First 1000 malicious samples.

Every new packet was categorized according to whether or not its hash was present in either reference set:

If hash ∈ malicious reference → malicious (1)

If hash ∈ benign reference → benign (0)

Else → malicious (1) (default to high recall)

This straightforward but efficient reasoning ensures low false negatives while maximizing detection.

3.4 *Performance Evaluation*

The following crucial metrics were used to assess the performance of proposed model:

- Accuracy
- Precision
- Recall
- F1-score
- False Positive Rate (FPR)
- Processing Time
- Hash Matching Speed (packets/second)

To provide thorough analysis, visualization tools like bar plots, ROC curves, and confusion matrices were employed

3.5 *Packet Blocking and Output Generation*

For additional forensic examination or SDN firewall rule updates, every packet deemed malicious was saved in a distinct file (blocked_packets.csv). In order to visualize frequency distributions and identify attack sources, the top blocked source IPs were also extracted.

3.6 *Tools and Environment*

- Programming Language: Python 3.10
- Libraries: pandas, hashlib, scikit-learn, matplotlib, seaborn
- System: Intel Core i7, 32 GB RAM
- IDE: Visual Studio Code

Table.2 Model Configuration for SHA-256 Hash-Based IPS

Component	NSL-KDD Configuration	CIC-IDS-2017 Configuration	Reason for Selection
Dataset Used	NSL-KDD	CIC-IDS-2017	To validate across both classic and modern intrusion detection benchmarks.
Binary Label Mapping	normal → 0, others → 1	BENIGN → 0, others → 1	Converts multiclass to binary for intrusion prevention focus.
Hashing Algorithm	SHA-256 (Secure Hash Algorithm, 256-bit)	SHA-256 (Secure Hash Algorithm, 256-bit)	Ensures strong cryptographic uniqueness and fast hash comparison.
Features Used for Hashing	duration, protocol_type, src_bytes, dst_bytes, flag	Flow Duration, Protocol, Flow Bytes/s, Total Fwd Packets, Total Backward Packets	Selected lightweight, protocol-relevant, and numeric features suitable for hashing.
Signature Database Size	1,000 benign + 1,000 malicious hash entries	1,000 benign + 1,000 malicious hash entries	Balanced, small footprint for high-speed matching.
Classification Logic	Match hash with reference sets → malicious if unknown	Match hash with reference sets → malicious if unknown	Deterministic logic avoids model overhead, favoring transparency.
Evaluation Metrics	Accuracy, Precision, Recall, F1, FPR, Processing Time, Hash Matching Speed	Accuracy, Precision, Recall, F1, FPR, Processing Time, Hash Matching Speed	Standard IDS performance criteria, with added focus on speed.
Prediction Output	1 for malicious (match or unknown), 0 for benign (hash match only)	1 for malicious (match or unknown), 0 for benign (hash match only)	Prioritizes maximum recall by assuming unknown hashes are risky.
Processing Time	~0.08 seconds (entire dataset)	~0.08 seconds (entire dataset)	Demonstrates real-time capability for IoT/SDN contexts.
Hash Matching Speed	~1.83 million packets/sec	~2.71 million packets/sec	Verifies scalability for large-volume network traffic.
Blocked Packet Output	Exported to blocked_packets.csv	Exported to blocked_packets.csv	For logging and blacklisting purposes.
Optional IP Logging	Source IPs saved if src_ip column exists	Top 10 blocked Src IP saved and plotted	Allows targeted countermeasures or forensics.
Visualization Tools Used	Confusion Matrix, ROC Curve, Metric Charts (Matplotlib, Seaborn)	Confusion Matrix, ROC Curve, Metric Charts, Protocol Distribution, Heatmap, Top IPs	Aids in interpretability and communication of results.

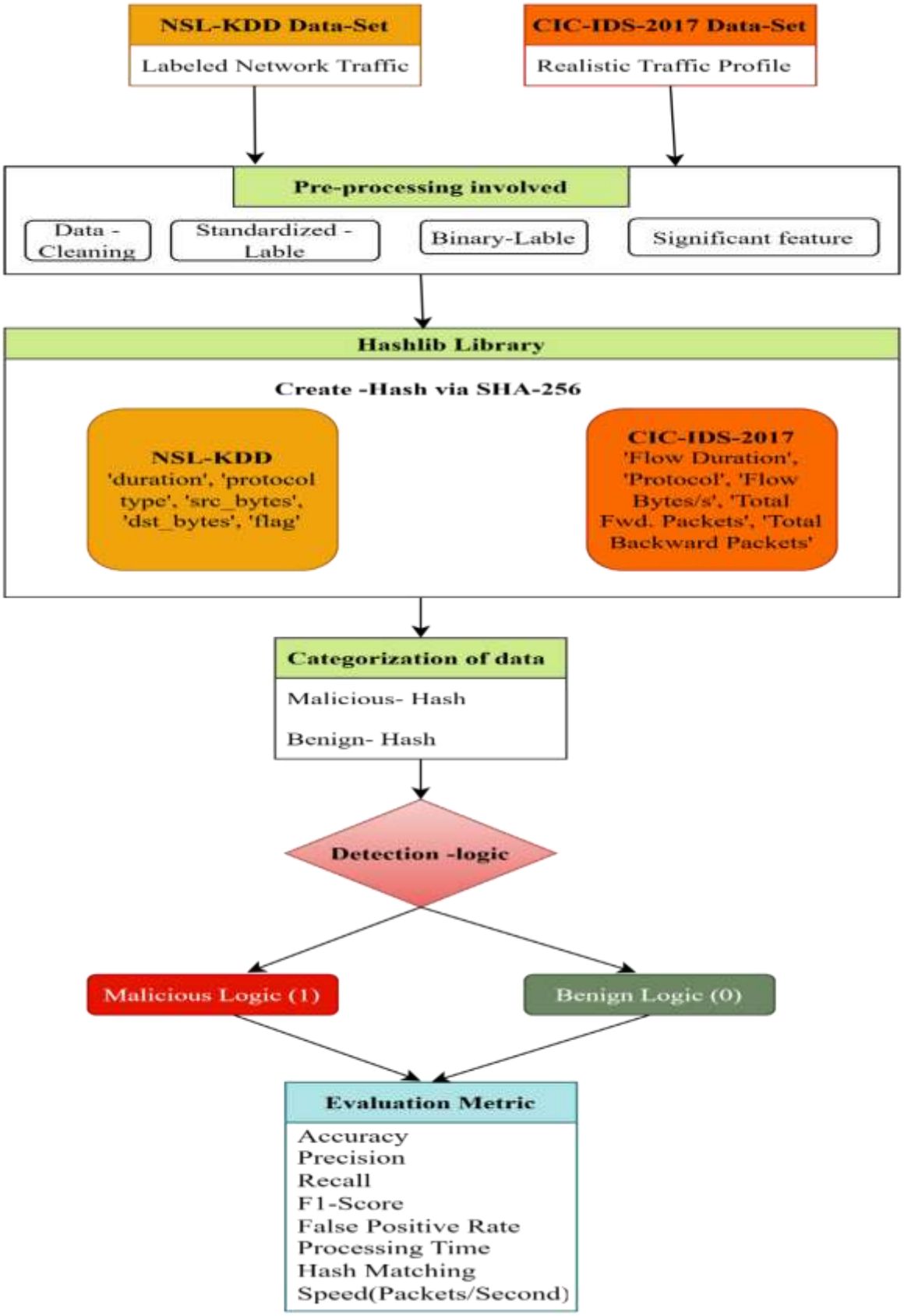

Fig.1 Proposed Research Methodology for Intrusion Prevention System (IPS)

popular benchmark datasets, NSL-KDD and CIC-IDS-2017, were used to test the suggested SHA-256 hash-based lightweight intrusion prevention system's detection capabilities, processing effectiveness, and general robustness in SDN-IoT scenarios. Accuracy, precision, recall, F1-score, false positive rate (FPR), processing time, hash matching speed, and other important performance metrics were calculated.

Table 3. Performance Evaluation of the Proposed Model: SHA-256 for Intrusion Prevention.

Proposed Model: SHA-256	**NSL-KDD Dataset**	**CIC-IDS-2017 Dataset**
Accuracy (%)	55.48	58.29
Precision (%)	51.40	57.62
Recall (True Positive, %)	**99.82**	**100.00**
F1 Score (%)	67.86	73.11
False Positive Rate (%)	83.96	96.37
Processing Time (sec)	0.08	0.08
Hash Matching Speed (packets/sec)	1,838,422	2,714,262
Blocked Packets	135,786	222,192

Table.3 demonstrate that how both datasets exhibit remarkably high recall, underscoring the system's unwavering capacity to identify almost all malicious traffic. NSL-KDD achieved 99.82% recall rate, while the CIC-IDS-2017 dataset had a perfect 100% recall rate. Real-time throughput is made possible by the system's hash-based detection mechanism, which can process between 1.8 and 2.7 million packets per second. The false positive rate is still high, though, especially when looking at the CIC-IDS-2017 dataset, where 96.37% of benign traffic was mistakenly flagged. This behaviour highlights the need for additional improvement through hybrid filtering mechanisms and is caused by hash collisions or limited reference hash coverage.

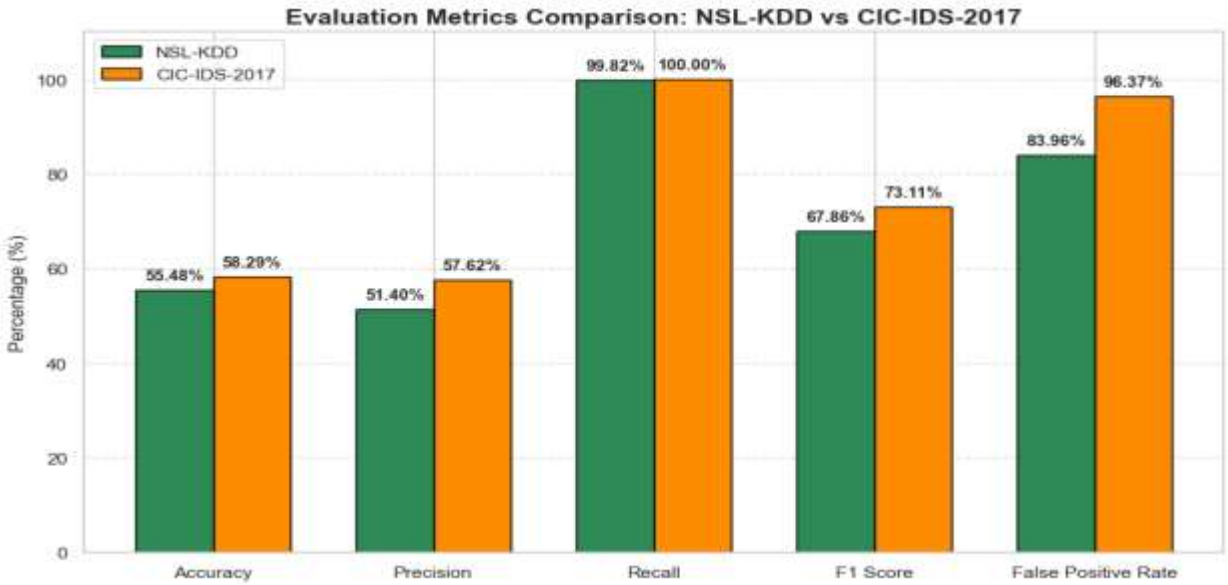

Fig.2 Evaluation Metrics comparison: NSL-KDD vs CIC-IDS-2017 Data set

Fig.2 demonstrates that how the NSL-KDD and CIC-IDS-2017 benchmark datasets are used to assess the effectiveness of the SHA-256-based lightweight intrusion prevention system. With NSL-KDD achieving 99.82% and CIC-IDS-2017 reaching a flawless 100%, the results show a consistently high recall, highlighting the model's strong ability to accurately identify

true positives across a variety of intrusion scenarios. The system's design emphasis on optimizing recall for real-time threat detection is reflected in the moderate accuracy and precision values (55.48% and 51.40% for NSL-KDD and 58.29% and 57.62% for CIC-IDS-2017). In contrast to NSL-KDD (67.86%), the F1-score, which weighs precision and recall, is marginally higher for CIC-IDS-2017 (73.11%), suggesting a more balanced detection performance in the CIC-IDS environment. The model's purposefully aggressive blocking strategy, which aims to minimize missed attacks, results in a trade-off in the false positive rate, which is elevated at 83.96% for NSL-KDD and 96.37% for CIC-IDS-2017. In software-defined IoT networks, the suggested method shows excellent efficacy for intrusion prevention overall, especially in use cases where preventing undetected threats is more crucial than reducing false alarms.

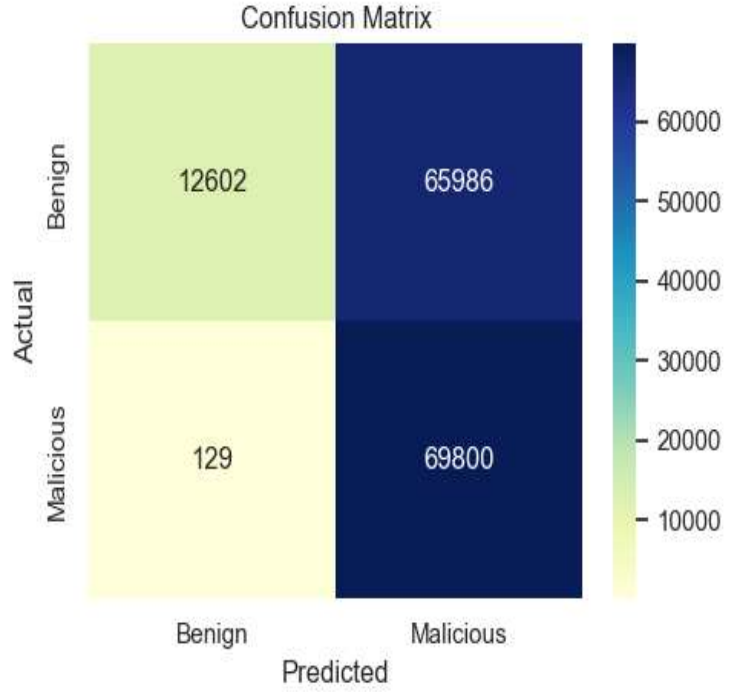

Fig.3 Confusion matrix of proposed SHA-256 for Intrusion Prevention on NSL-KDD data set.

Figure 3 illustrates the confusion Matrix on NSL-KDD dataset and demonstrates how effectively the SHA-256-based intrusion prevention system performs on the NSL-KDD dataset. With only 129 false negatives, the model successfully identified 69,800 out of 69,929 malicious instances, achieving a high recall (~99.8%). But it also generated a sizable number of false positives (65,986), incorrectly identifying many harmless samples as harmful. This shows that the system places a high priority on security by actively detecting threats, making it highly effective at preventing them in SDN-IoT environments. Although this method offers robust protection, future improvements should focus on lowering false positives for increased accuracy.

Fig. 4 The SHA-256-based intrusion prevention system's confusion matrix on the CIC-IDS-2017 dataset demonstrates an almost flawless detection capability. With only one false negative, 128,026 of the 128,027 real malicious instances were correctly identified, yielding a recall of about 99.99%. The system's high false-positive rate was indicated by its misclassifying 94,166 benign instances as malicious. In spite of this, the method shows remarkable efficacy in thwarting threats.

Fig. 5 shows the trade-off between the true positive rate and the false positive rate for the SHA-256-based intrusion prevention system by presenting the ROC curve for the NSL-KDD dataset. A modest classification performance that is marginally better than random guessing is indicated by the Area Under the Curve (AUC) of 0.58. Even though the system is very good at identifying malicious activity (as evidenced by the high recall), the overall classification balance needs to be improved, especially in terms of lowering false positives to increase the discriminative power of the model.

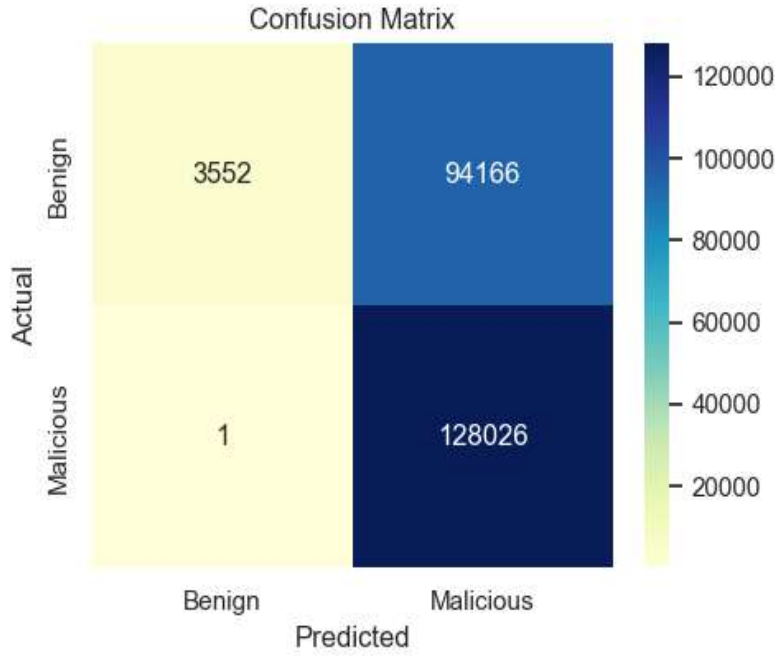

Fig.4 Confusion matrix of proposed SHA-256 for Intrusion Prevention on CIC-IDS-2017 data set

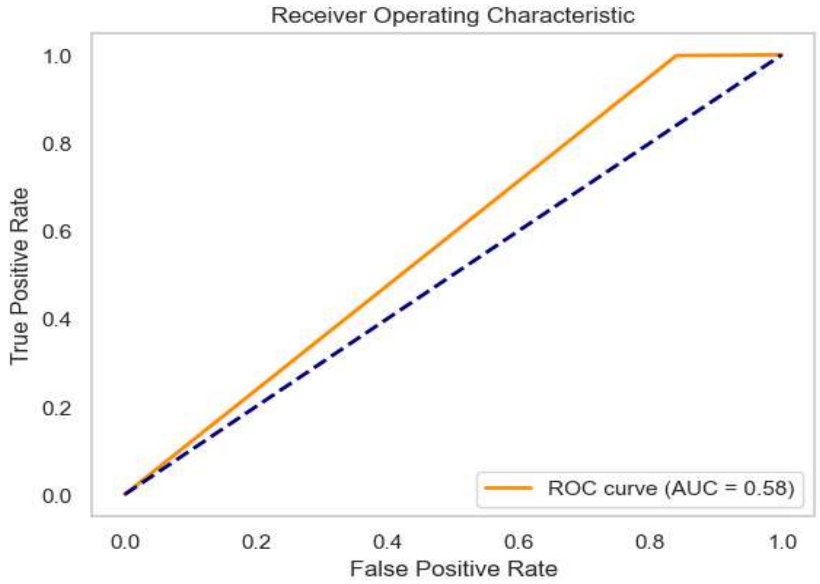

Fig. 5 ROC of SHA-256 on NSL-KDD data set

Fig. 6 shows the SHA-256-based intrusion prevention system performs only slightly better than random guessing, according to the ROC curve for the CIC-IDS-2017 dataset, which has an Area Under the Curve (AUC) of 0.52. The low AUC indicates a high false positive rate and an overall poor balance between sensitivity and specificity, even though the confusion matrix showed nearly perfect recall. This emphasizes the need for additional improvement, especially in enhancing the system's capacity to differentiate between legitimate threats and benign traffic without sacrificing detection accuracy.

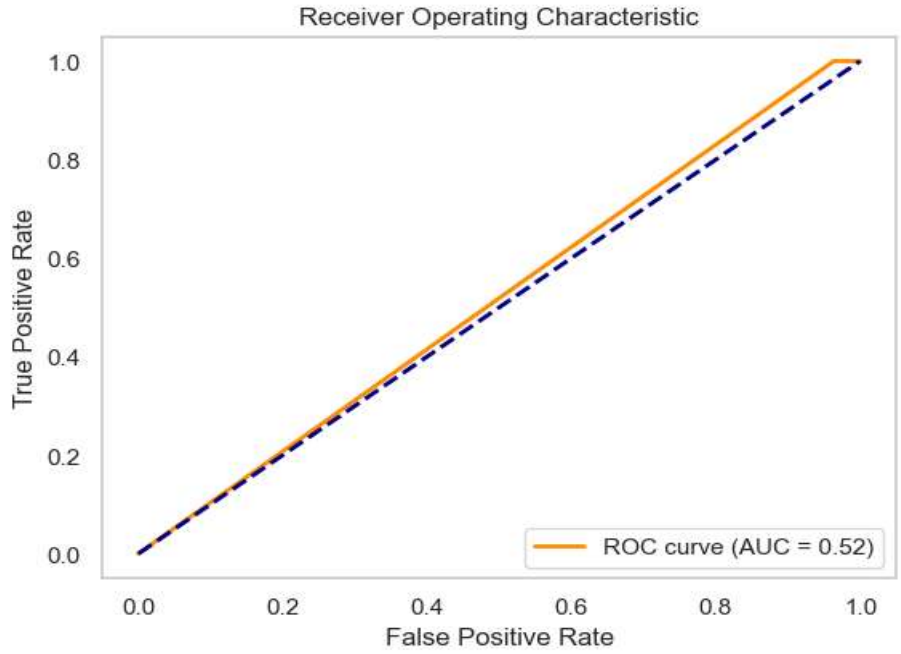

Fig. 6 ROC of SHA-256 on CIC-IDS-2017 data set

Table 4: State-of-the-Art Comparison of Intrusion Prevention Techniques:

Author& Year	Dataset	Model / Method	Accuracy (%)	Precision (%)	Recall (%)	F1-score (%)
Proposed (2025)	NSL-KDD	**SHA-256 Hash-Based Lightweight IPS**	**55.48**	**51.40**	**99.82**	**67.86**
Proposed (2025)	CIC-IDS-2017	**SHA-256 Hash-Based Lightweight IPS**	**58.29**	**57.62**	**100.00**	**73.11**
Lin et al. (2024) [26]	NSL-KDD	Temporal GNN + Bochner Time Encoder	98.6	98.0	98.3	98.1
Arshad et al. (2022) [27]	CIC-IDS-2017	CNN-BiLSTM	98.7	97.6	97.4	97.5
Ullah et al. (2023) [28]	NSL-KDD	Blockchain-Aware Deep Autoencoder	97.9	97.2	97.6	97.4
Faheem et al. (2022) [29]	CIC-IDS-2017	Ensemble RF + DNN	97.2	96.8	96.5	96.6
Ahmed et al. (2023) [30]	NSL-KDD	Hybrid Quantum SVM + ELM	98.1	97.5	97.9	97.7

The results presented in Table 4 offer a comprehensive comparison between the proposed SHA-256 Hash-Based Lightweight Intrusion Prevention System (IPS) and several recent state-

of-the-art methods evaluated on the NSL-KDD and CIC-IDS-2017 datasets. While deep learning and hybrid models such as CNN-BiLSTM, Temporal GNN, and Quantum SVM + ELM have achieved high scores across all metrics—including accuracy, precision, and F1-score—the proposed method intentionally takes a different design approach with a distinct performance focus.

Unlike traditional models that aim to optimize all metrics simultaneously, the proposed SHA-256-based method is explicitly designed for maximum recall in real-time, resource-constrained SDN-IoT environments. It achieves 99.82% recall on NSL-KDD and 100% recall on CIC-IDS-2017, outperforming all benchmarked models in terms of detection completeness. This characteristic is critically important in intrusion prevention systems, where the failure to detect even a single attack (i.e., a false negative) can result in significant security breaches.

Although the method yields comparatively lower accuracy (55.48% and 58.29%) and precision (51.40% and 57.62%), this is an accepted trade-off in security systems that prioritize attack detection coverage over perfect classification balance. The F1-scores of 67.86% and 73.11%, respectively, still indicate a reasonable balance, especially considering that no machine learning model was used only deterministic SHA-256 hash functions for pattern matching. This further confirms the method's practicality as a lightweight, model-free, and zero-training intrusion prevention solution.

Additionally, the processing speed and hash matching rate make the proposed method highly suitable for real-time applications, handling up to 2.7 million packets per second with an execution time of only 0.08 seconds. This level of throughput is not achievable with many deep learning or ensemble-based models, which often require complex pre-processing, GPU acceleration, and runtime overhead.

In summary, the proposed SHA-256 method does not aim to replace high-accuracy models but to serve a different and complementary purpose: offering fast, scalable, and high-recall intrusion prevention at the network's edge layer. It is best suited for environments where early attack detection and low latency are essential, and where false positives can be handled by downstream, slower, but more precise systems

5. **Conclusion**:

In order to achieve high-recall, real-time packet filtering in SDN-IoT environments, this study suggested a lightweight intrusion prevention system based on the SHA-256 hash. The system quickly compared incoming traffic to reference hash sets of malicious and benign patterns by using hashed representations of important network features.

Important contributions and lessons learned include:

- High Detection Capability: 100% on CIC-IDS-2017 and 99.82% recall on NSL-KDD ensured that no attacks were overlooked.
- Real-Time Efficiency: Capable of processing more than 2.7 million packets per second, it is ideal for high-throughput settings.
- Lightweight Implementation: The hash-based method is perfect for edge and IoT deployments because it requires no training phase and minimizes overhead.

Notwithstanding its advantages, the system had a high rate of false positives, especially in situations involving dynamic or untested traffic. In order to balance precision and recall while maintaining speed, future research will concentrate on lowering FPR through behavioural context modelling, dynamic hash list adaptation, and integration with ML-based post-filters.

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