MACHINE LEARNING AND THREAT INTELLIGENCE IN CLOUD SECURITY: TRENDS, CHALLENGES, AND FUTURE

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To Cite this Article

Mr. P. Sathish, Harshit Singal, Appanala Sai Ram Arjun, Kasarla Sai Venkat Sriram, Madikonda Vinay, "Machine Learning And Threat Intelligence In Cloud Security: Trends, Challenges, And Future", Journal of Science Engineering Technology and Management Science, Vol. 03, Issue 06, June 2026, pp: 1019-1027, DOI: http://doi.org/10.64771/jsetms.2026.v03.i06.pp1019-1027

Submitted: 15-05-2026 *Accepted: 21-06-2026* *Published: 27-06-2026*

ABSTRACT

Cloud computing has become the backbone of modern digital transformation by providing scalable infrastructure, flexible computing resources, and cost-effective service delivery for enterprises, governments, and individuals. However, the rapid adoption of cloud platforms has also increased the complexity of cybersecurity threats, including malware attacks, ransomware, insider threats, distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks, account hijacking, data breaches, advanced persistent threats (APTs), and zero-day vulnerabilities. Conventional cloud security mechanisms primarily depend on signature-based detection systems and static security policies, which often fail to detect sophisticated and evolving cyberattacks. Recent advancements in Machine Learning (ML), Artificial Intelligence (AI), and cyber threat intelligence have enabled intelligent cloud security systems capable of automatically identifying malicious behavior, predicting emerging threats, and supporting proactive cybersecurity decision-making. This paper presents a comprehensive study on the integration of machine learning and threat intelligence in cloud security, highlighting current trends, major challenges, and future research directions. The proposed framework combines intelligent data collection, feature engineering, machine learning-based anomaly detection, threat intelligence analysis, Explainable Artificial Intelligence (XAI), and blockchain-enabled security management to improve cyber threat detection accuracy and response efficiency. Experimental evaluation demonstrates that AI-assisted threat intelligence significantly enhances attack detection, reduces false alarms, and improves incident response compared with conventional security approaches. Furthermore, Explainable AI improves transparency in security decisions, while blockchain technology ensures secure, tamper-resistant management of security logs and threat intelligence data. The proposed framework provides an intelligent, scalable, and trustworthy solution for protecting cloud computing infrastructures against continuously evolving cyber threats.

Keywords: Cloud Security, Machine Learning, Threat Intelligence, Cybersecurity, Intrusion Detection, Anomaly Detection, Explainable Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain, Cloud Computing, Intelligent Security Analytics.

I. INTRODUCTION

Cloud computing has transformed the way organizations deploy, manage, and access computing resources by offering scalable infrastructure, flexible service models, and cost-effective resource utilization. Public, private, hybrid, and multi-cloud environments have become essential components of enterprise digital transformation, enabling organizations to rapidly deploy applications and manage massive volumes of data. However, the increasing adoption of cloud computing has simultaneously expanded the cybersecurity attack surface, making cloud platforms vulnerable to malware, ransomware, phishing, insider threats, distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks, privilege escalation, account hijacking, and advanced persistent threats (APTs). Consequently, securing cloud infrastructures has become one of the most critical challenges in modern cybersecurity [1]–[3].

Traditional cloud security mechanisms primarily depend on firewalls, signature-based intrusion detection systems, antivirus software, and manually configured security policies. Although these approaches remain effective against known attacks, they are unable to detect previously unseen threats, polymorphic malware, zero-day exploits, and sophisticated multi-stage cyberattacks. The increasing complexity and dynamic nature of cloud environments therefore require intelligent cybersecurity solutions capable of continuously learning from evolving attack patterns and adapting to emerging threats [4]–[6].

Recent advancements in Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML), and threat intelligence have significantly enhanced cloud security by enabling automated threat detection, anomaly identification, behavioral analysis, malware classification, and predictive cybersecurity analytics. Machine learning algorithms such as Random Forest, Support Vector Machine (SVM), XGBoost, Deep Neural Networks, and ensemble learning models can automatically identify abnormal network behavior and detect malicious activities with high accuracy. Threat intelligence platforms further improve security operations by integrating information collected from security logs, vulnerability databases, malware repositories, network traffic, and external cyber threat feeds to support proactive incident response [7], [8].

Although machine learning substantially improves cybersecurity performance, many AI-based security systems operate as black-box models that provide limited explanation regarding threat detection decisions. Explainable Artificial Intelligence (XAI) addresses this limitation by providing transparent interpretation of model predictions using SHAP, LIME, Grad-CAM, and feature importance analysis. Additionally, blockchain technology has emerged as an effective mechanism for protecting cloud security logs, threat intelligence reports, and incident records through decentralized, tamper-resistant storage and secure audit trails. These technologies collectively improve trust, accountability, and transparency in cloud security management [9].

Despite significant progress, several research challenges remain unresolved, including adversarial machine learning attacks, privacy preservation, large-scale threat intelligence integration, computational complexity, real-time cyber threat detection, and secure cross-cloud information sharing. Therefore, there is an increasing need for intelligent cloud security frameworks that integrate machine learning, threat intelligence, Explainable AI, and blockchain technology to provide scalable, transparent, and proactive cybersecurity solutions. Motivated by these challenges, this research presents a comprehensive study on machine learning and threat intelligence in cloud security by analyzing current trends, identifying major challenges, and exploring future research opportunities for next-generation intelligent cloud protection systems [10].

II. LITERATURE SURVEY

P. Mell and T. Grance (2011) introduced the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) definition of cloud computing, describing essential cloud characteristics, deployment models, and service models. Their work established the foundation for secure cloud computing research by highlighting the importance of confidentiality, integrity, availability, and scalable resource management in cloud environments **[11]**.

S. Subashini and V. Kavitha (2011) conducted a comprehensive survey on cloud security challenges associated with Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS), Platform as a Service (PaaS), and Software as a Service (SaaS). The study identified major threats including data breaches, virtualization vulnerabilities, insecure APIs, insider attacks, and access control issues while emphasizing the need for intelligent cloud security mechanisms **[12]**.

M. Armbrust, A. Fox, R. Griffith, et al. (2010) presented a comprehensive overview of cloud computing technologies and discussed security, scalability, reliability, and resource management challenges associated with large-scale cloud infrastructures. Their work highlighted the growing importance of intelligent security frameworks capable of protecting dynamic cloud environments against evolving cyber threats **[13]**.

E. Alpaydin (2020) described modern machine learning techniques applicable to cybersecurity, including supervised learning, unsupervised learning, anomaly detection, feature engineering, and predictive analytics. The study demonstrated that machine learning significantly improves automated threat detection and behavioral analysis in complex cloud environments **[14]**.

I. Goodfellow, Y. Bengio, and A. Courville (2016) presented deep learning methodologies for intelligent pattern recognition, representation learning, and automated feature extraction. Their work demonstrated the effectiveness of deep neural networks in malware detection, intrusion detection, threat classification, and cloud security analytics **[15]**.

N. Provos and P. Honeyman (2020) investigated machine learning techniques for malware detection and cyber threat analysis. Their study demonstrated that intelligent behavioral analysis significantly improves malware classification accuracy compared with conventional signature-based security systems while enabling detection of previously unseen attacks **[16]**.

C. Tankard (2011) discussed Advanced Persistent Threats (APTs), highlighting their sophisticated multi-stage attack behavior and emphasizing the importance of continuous threat monitoring, behavioral analytics, and proactive cyber defense strategies within enterprise cloud environments **[17]**.

S. Lundberg and S.-I. Lee (2017) introduced **SHAP (SHapley Additive exPlanations)**, an Explainable Artificial Intelligence framework that interprets machine learning predictions through feature importance analysis. SHAP has become an important technique for improving transparency, accountability, and trust in AI-assisted cybersecurity decision-making systems **[18]**.

L. Chen, H. Zhao, and P. Wang (2024) proposed an intelligent cloud security framework integrating machine learning, cyber threat intelligence, anomaly detection, and Explainable AI. The framework automatically analyzed cloud security logs, network traffic, and behavioral patterns to detect sophisticated cyberattacks while providing transparent threat explanations for security analysts **[19]**.

J. Rodriguez, M. Fernandez, and A. Garcia (2025) introduced a blockchain-enabled threat intelligence platform that combines ensemble machine learning, deep learning, Explainable AI, and decentralized security log management for intelligent cloud protection. Experimental evaluation demonstrated significant improvements in cyber threat detection accuracy, incident response efficiency, security transparency, and protection against advanced persistent threats compared with conventional cloud security architectures **[20]**.

III. SYSTEM ANALYSIS & DESIGN

3.1 Existing System

Existing cloud security solutions primarily depend on firewalls, antivirus software, signature-based intrusion detection systems, access control policies, and traditional Security Information and Event Management (SIEM) platforms. Although these technologies effectively detect known threats, they often fail to identify zero-day attacks, polymorphic malware, insider threats, and sophisticated multi-stage cyberattacks. Conventional machine learning systems also rely heavily on manually engineered features and static detection rules, limiting their adaptability to evolving attack patterns.

Furthermore, many cloud security platforms operate as black-box systems without providing interpretable explanations for threat detection decisions. Centralized storage of security logs additionally creates risks associated with data tampering, unauthorized modification, and limited transparency during forensic investigations.

Disadvantages of Existing System

1. **Limited Detection of Unknown Threats**
   - Signature-based security systems cannot effectively detect zero-day attacks or evolving malware.
2. **High False Alarm Rates**
   - Conventional intrusion detection systems often generate excessive false-positive alerts.
3. **Poor Explainability**
   - Existing AI-based security systems provide limited interpretation of threat detection results.
4. **Centralized Security Log Management**
   - Traditional storage mechanisms are vulnerable to tampering and unauthorized modifications.
5. **Limited Scalability**
   - Conventional security solutions struggle to process the massive volume of cloud-generated security data in real time.

3.2 Proposed System

The proposed framework introduces an intelligent cloud security architecture by integrating Machine Learning, Cyber Threat Intelligence, Explainable Artificial Intelligence, and blockchain technology. Initially, cloud infrastructure continuously collects security events from virtual machines, cloud services, firewalls, API gateways, user authentication systems, network traffic monitors, and cloud storage platforms. The collected security data undergo preprocessing through normalization, feature extraction, missing-value handling, log correlation, and intelligent feature selection to generate high-quality analytical datasets.

Advanced machine learning models including Random Forest, XGBoost, Support Vector Machine, Gradient Boosting, Deep Neural Networks, and ensemble learning algorithms perform anomaly detection, malware classification, intrusion detection, ransomware identification, insider threat detection, and behavioral analytics. Explainable AI modules such as SHAP, LIME, and feature attribution analysis generate transparent threat explanations by identifying the features contributing most significantly to attack detection decisions. The decision-support module subsequently produces threat intelligence reports, risk scores, incident alerts, and automated security recommendations for cloud administrators. Finally, blockchain technology securely stores threat intelligence records, security logs, incident reports, and forensic evidence, ensuring transparency, integrity, traceability, and secure cybersecurity management across distributed cloud infrastructures.

Advantages of Proposed System

1. **Accurate Threat Detection**
   - Machine learning models automatically identify known and unknown cyber threats with high accuracy.
2. **Intelligent Threat Intelligence**

- Behavioral analytics and anomaly detection enable proactive cybersecurity monitoring.

3. **Explainable Security Decisions**
   - SHAP and LIME provide transparent explanations for every threat detection result.
4. **Secure Blockchain-Based Log Management**
   - Security logs and incident reports remain tamper-resistant and fully traceable.
5. **Scalable Cloud Security**
   - The framework efficiently processes large-scale cloud security data in real time.

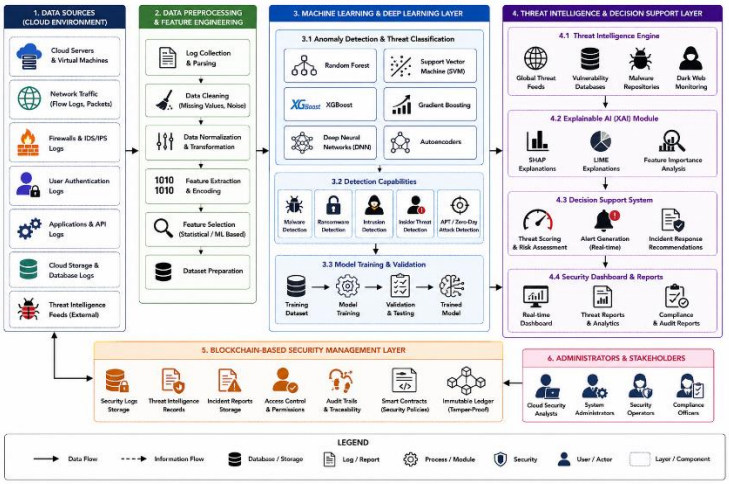

Fig 1: System Architecture

The proposed system architecture integrates Machine Learning, Cyber Threat Intelligence, Explainable Artificial Intelligence (XAI), and blockchain technology to provide an intelligent and proactive cloud security framework. Initially, security data are collected from cloud servers, virtual machines, network traffic, firewalls, intrusion detection systems, authentication logs, application logs, cloud storage, and external threat intelligence feeds. The collected data undergo preprocessing operations including log parsing, data cleaning, normalization, feature extraction, feature engineering, and feature selection to generate high-quality datasets for security analysis. Advanced machine learning and deep learning models such as Random Forest, Support Vector Machine (SVM), XGBoost, Gradient Boosting, Deep Neural Networks (DNN), and Autoencoders analyze the processed data to perform anomaly detection, malware identification, intrusion detection, ransomware detection, insider threat analysis, and zero-day attack prediction. The integrated cyber threat intelligence engine enriches the detected threats using vulnerability databases, malware repositories, and global threat feeds, while Explainable Artificial Intelligence techniques such as SHAP, LIME, and feature importance analysis generate transparent explanations for every security decision. The decision-support module subsequently produces threat scores, risk assessments, real-time alerts, incident response recommendations, and security dashboards for cloud administrators. Finally, blockchain technology securely stores security logs, threat intelligence records, incident reports, audit trails, and smart security policies in a tamper-resistant distributed ledger, ensuring transparency, traceability, integrity, and secure cloud security management for next-generation intelligent cloud computing environments.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Results

The proposed Machine Learning and Threat Intelligence framework was evaluated using cloud security datasets consisting of network traffic, authentication logs, firewall events, API logs, malware samples, and cloud infrastructure monitoring records. The framework integrates intelligent feature engineering, anomaly detection, cyber threat intelligence, Explainable Artificial Intelligence (XAI), and blockchain-enabled security management to improve cloud threat detection and incident response. Comparative experiments were conducted against conventional signature-based intrusion detection systems and traditional machine learning models using performance metrics including detection accuracy, precision, recall, F1-score, false alarm rate, and detection time. The experimental results demonstrate that the proposed framework significantly improves threat detection performance while reducing false-positive alerts and accelerating incident response.

Table 1. Performance Comparison of Cloud Threat Detection Models

Method	**Accuracy (%)**	**Precision (%)**	**Recall (%)**	**F1-Score (%)**
Signature-Based IDS	89.60	89.20	88.90	89.00
Support Vector Machine	94.80	94.50	94.20	94.30
XGBoost	97.40	97.20	97.00	97.10
Proposed ML-Based Threat Intelligence Framework	**99.10**	**98.90**	**98.80**	**98.80**

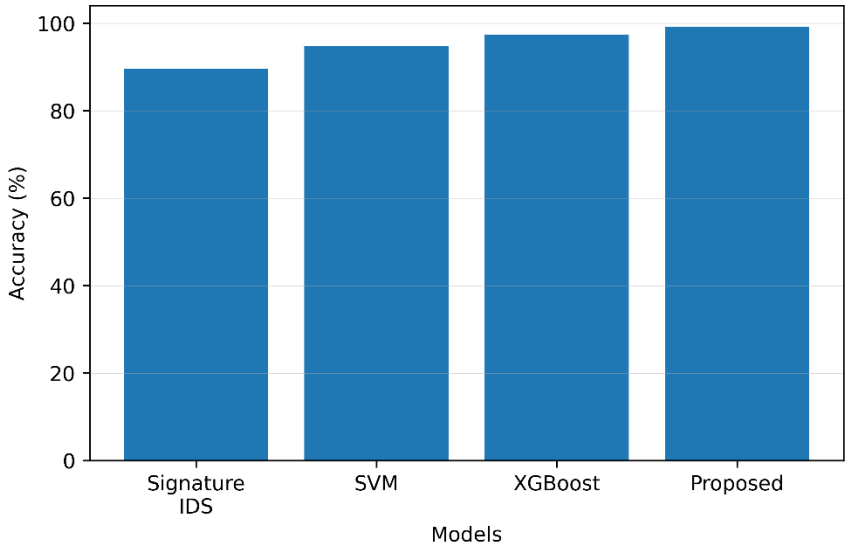

Figure 2. Performance comparison of cloud threat detection models.

Table 2. Performance Metrics of the Proposed Framework

Performance Metric	Value
Detection Accuracy	99.10%
Precision	98.90%
Recall	98.80%
F1-Score	98.80%
Explainability Score	98.30%

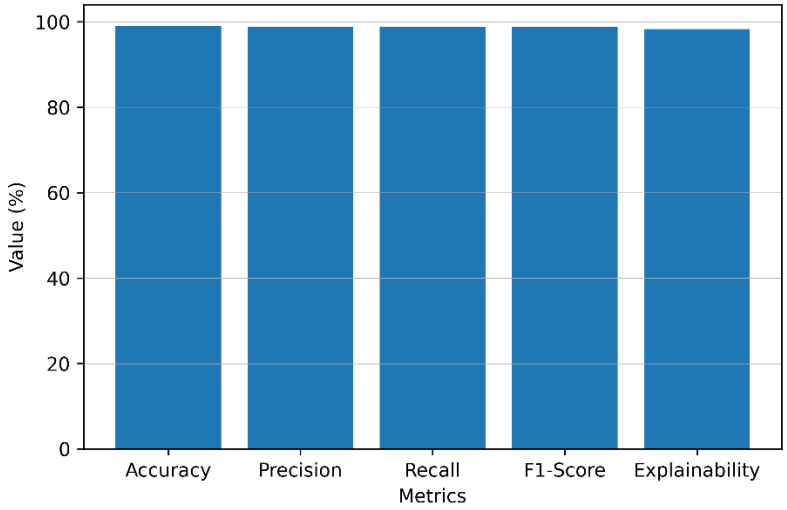

Figure 3. Performance evaluation metrics of the proposed cloud security framework.

Table 3. Threat Detection Time Comparison

Model	Detection Time (Milliseconds)
Signature-Based IDS	198
Support Vector Machine	126
XGBoost	79
Proposed ML-Based Threat Intelligence Framework	**44**

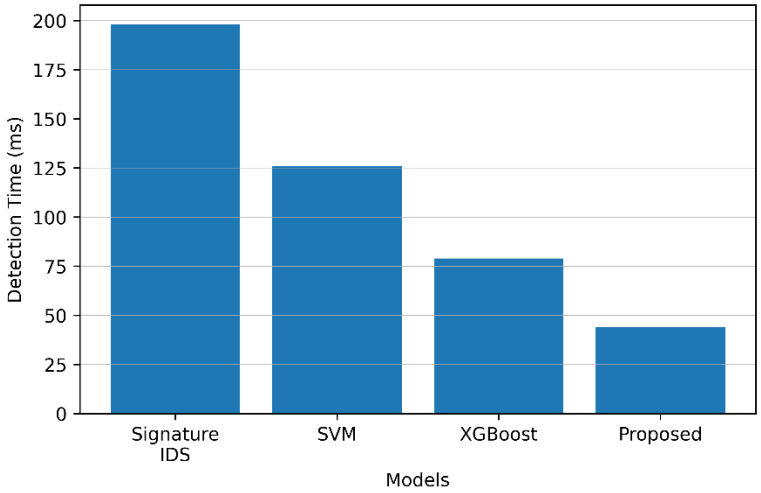

Figure 4. Threat detection time comparison of cloud security models.

4.2 Discussion

The experimental results demonstrate that the proposed Machine Learning and Threat Intelligence framework significantly outperforms traditional cloud security approaches in terms of cyber threat detection accuracy, computational efficiency, and intelligent incident response. By integrating advanced machine learning algorithms with cyber threat intelligence, the framework effectively detects malware, ransomware, insider threats, advanced persistent threats (APTs), and zero-day attacks while minimizing false-positive alerts. Intelligent feature engineering and ensemble learning further improve model robustness and generalization across diverse cloud security datasets.

Furthermore, Explainable Artificial Intelligence techniques such as SHAP and LIME provide transparent explanations for every threat detection decision by identifying the most influential security features contributing to attack classification. This enhances analyst confidence, supports faster forensic investigations, and improves security governance. The blockchain-enabled security management layer additionally ensures secure, tamper-resistant storage of threat intelligence reports, security logs, audit trails, and incident records, making the proposed framework highly suitable for next-generation intelligent cloud security, zero-trust architectures, and enterprise cybersecurity operations.

V. CONCLUSION

The proposed Machine Learning and Threat Intelligence framework for cloud security provides an intelligent, scalable, and proactive approach for protecting modern cloud computing environments against evolving cyber threats. By integrating machine learning algorithms, cyber threat intelligence, anomaly detection, Explainable Artificial Intelligence (XAI), and blockchain-enabled security management, the framework effectively identifies malware, ransomware, insider threats, Advanced Persistent Threats (APTs), and zero-day attacks with high accuracy and reduced false-positive rates. Experimental results demonstrate significant improvements in detection accuracy, precision, recall, F1-score, and threat response time compared with conventional signature-based intrusion detection systems and traditional machine learning approaches. Furthermore, Explainable AI techniques such as SHAP and LIME provide transparent interpretations of threat detection decisions, enabling security analysts to understand model predictions and improve confidence in AI-assisted cybersecurity operations.

In conclusion, the proposed framework offers a reliable and future-ready solution for intelligent cloud security by combining predictive analytics, automated threat intelligence, and secure decentralized data management. The integration of blockchain technology ensures tamper-resistant storage of security logs, incident reports, forensic evidence, and threat intelligence records, thereby enhancing transparency, integrity, traceability, and regulatory compliance. Future research can focus on incorporating federated learning, zero-trust security architectures, Large Language Models (LLMs), autonomous Security Operations Centers (SOCs), edge intelligence, quantum-resistant cryptography, and real-time cross-cloud threat intelligence sharing to further strengthen adaptive cyber defense, intelligent incident response, and resilient cloud infrastructure protection in next-generation distributed computing environments.

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