10.48047/jocaaa.2021.29.05.18

A Robust Trust Management Framework for Enhancing Security in Wireless Sensor Networks

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Abstract

Wireless Sensor Networks (WSNs) have revolutionized data collection and monitoring in diverse domains ranging from environmental monitoring to military surveillance. However, their deployment in unattended and often hostile environments exposes them to numerous security threats, particularly from compromised or malicious nodes. Traditional cryptographic mechanisms, although essential, fall short in mitigating internal attacks. This necessitates an adaptive and dynamic security approach. This paper proposes a robust trust management framework to enhance security in WSNs by evaluating and updating the trustworthiness of sensor nodes based on multiple behavioral metrics. The framework employs a hybrid trust evaluation model integrating direct and indirect observations, includes trust decay and anomaly detection mechanisms, and emphasizes lightweight implementation suitable for resource-constrained sensor nodes. Simulation results demonstrate the proposed framework's effectiveness in improving network resilience, trust accuracy, and overall security with minimal overhead.

Keywords: Sensor technology, Trust Management, Security system, Wireless system.

Introduction

Wireless Sensor Networks (WSNs) are composed of small, resource-constrained sensor nodes that collaboratively monitor physical or environmental conditions. These networks are commonly deployed in hostile or unattended environments, making them susceptible to various security threats. Traditional cryptographic techniques, while essential, are often insufficient due to their computational complexity and inability to cope with insider threats. Trust management frameworks offer a complementary solution by dynamically evaluating the behavior of nodes and isolating malicious entities. This paper proposes a robust and lightweight trust management framework designed to enhance the security and reliability of WSNs. The framework employs both direct and indirect trust metrics, integrates an adaptive trust decay mechanism, and leverages multi-parameter evaluation including packet forwarding rate, energy consumption, and recommendation consistency. Simulation results demonstrate that the proposed framework improves packet delivery ratio, reduces malicious activity, and maintains low overhead, making it suitable for real-time and mission-critical WSN deployments.

Wireless Sensor Networks (WSNs) consist of spatially distributed autonomous sensors that monitor physical or environmental conditions and communicate the data wirelessly to a central location. Their cost-effectiveness and ease of deployment have enabled widespread use in areas such as health monitoring, industrial automation, environmental sensing, and

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military operations. However, the same characteristics that make WSNs appealing also render them vulnerable to a variety of security threats.

Fig.-1 Machine Learning for Wireless Sensor Networks Security

Due to resource constraints in terms of energy, memory, and computational power, WSNs are often deployed without comprehensive security mechanisms. More critically, insider threats, where a compromised node behaves maliciously while appearing legitimate, are particularly challenging to detect using conventional cryptographic techniques. As a result, trust management has emerged as a promising complementary approach to enhance the security and reliability of WSNs.

This research introduces a robust trust management framework that combines direct observations and indirect recommendations, dynamically updates trust values, and detects anomalous behavior using trust-based thresholds. Our approach prioritizes energy efficiency, scalability, and adaptability, making it particularly suitable for real-world WSN applications.

2. Literature Review

Several trust models have been proposed in the literature for securing WSNs. They can broadly be classified into the following categories:

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2.1 Reputation-Based Models

These models evaluate the behavior of nodes based on direct interactions and feedback from neighbors. RFSN (Reputation-based Framework for Sensor Networks) is a prominent example. However, such models are often susceptible to bad-mouthing and ballot-stuffing attacks.

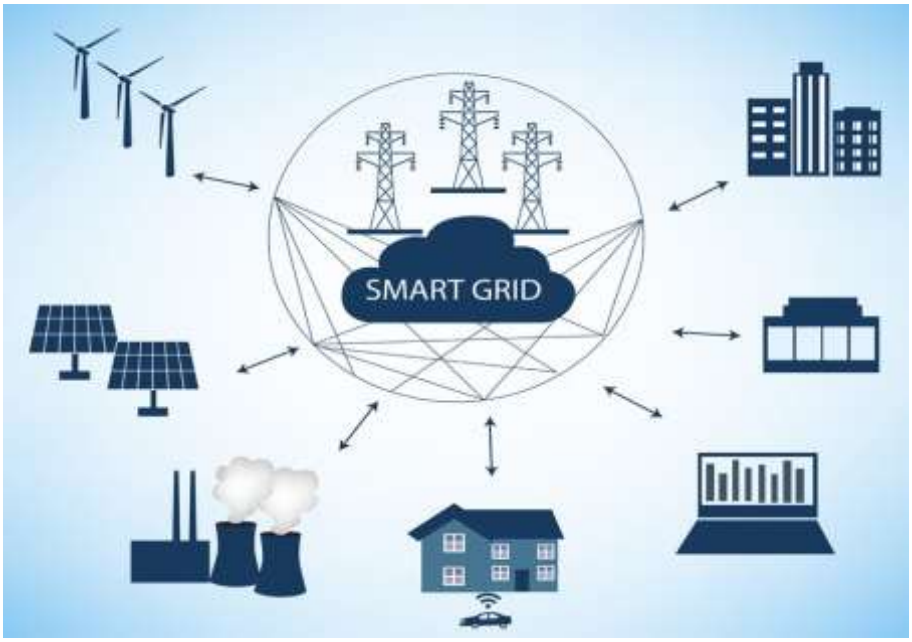

Fig. 2 Shields of the Smart Grid

2.2 Probabilistic and Bayesian Models

These models use probability distributions to infer trust values. While they offer better adaptability, they are computationally expensive and may not be suitable for resource-constrained devices.

2.3 Fuzzy Logic-Based Models

Fuzzy models handle uncertainty and imprecision in trust evaluation. They are particularly useful in scenarios where behavioral data is vague. However, defining appropriate fuzzy rules and membership functions can be complex.

2.4 Game Theory-Based Models

These models treat nodes as rational players in a game, where trust influences their strategies. While insightful, they often require knowledge of global network behavior, which is impractical in decentralized environments.

2.5 Machine Learning-Based Models

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Emerging research explores the use of supervised and unsupervised learning for trust evaluation. Although promising, such methods are still in nascent stages and often require significant computational resources.

Despite these advancements, a universally accepted trust framework for WSNs remains elusive due to the trade-offs between accuracy, efficiency, and complexity. Our proposed framework seeks to balance these factors while offering robustness against various attacks.

3. Problem Statement and Objectives

3.1 Problem Statement

Traditional security solutions in WSNs are inadequate for detecting and mitigating insider threats and node misbehavior. There is a need for a lightweight, dynamic, and robust trust management system that can accurately assess the reliability of sensor nodes based on their behavior.

3.2 Objectives

- To develop a trust evaluation framework combining direct and indirect trust mechanisms.
- To ensure adaptability by including trust decay and anomaly detection.
- To minimize computational and energy overheads.
- To validate the effectiveness of the framework through simulation.

4. System Model and Assumptions

4.1 Network Model

- Nodes are deployed randomly in a defined area.
- Each node can communicate with neighboring nodes within its range.
- A base station collects data and can serve as a trust authority.
- Nodes are resource-constrained in terms of energy, memory, and processing power.

4.2 Threat Model

- Nodes may exhibit malicious behavior including packet dropping, selective forwarding, or false data injection.
- Attacks considered: Blackhole, Grayhole, Sybil, Bad-mouthing.
- No assumptions are made about the number of malicious nodes.

4.3 Assumptions

- Nodes are initially authenticated and have basic cryptographic keys.
- Nodes can monitor the behavior of their immediate neighbors.
- Communication channels are error-prone but not maliciously tampered with.

5. Trust Management Framework

5.1 Trust Components

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Trust is computed based on a weighted combination of the following:

- **Direct Trust (DT):** Based on direct interactions.
- **Indirect Trust (IT):** Based on recommendations from trusted neighbors.

5.2 Trust Metrics

- **Packet Forwarding Rate (PFR):** Measures reliability in forwarding.
- **Energy Consumption Rate (ECR):** Detects sudden energy drops.
- **Consistency in Behavior (CB):** Tracks changes in behavior over time.
- **Recommendation Accuracy (RA):** Validates the accuracy of recommendations given to other nodes.

6. Simulation and Results

6.1 Simulation Setup

- **Simulator:** NS-3
- **Nodes:** 100
- **Area:** 100m x 100m
- **Simulation Time:** 1000s
- **Attack Types:** Blackhole, Grayhole
- **Performance Metrics:** Packet Delivery Ratio (PDR), Trust Accuracy, False Positive Rate, Energy Consumption

6.2 Results: The proposed framework was evaluated against existing models (e.g., RFSN). Key findings:

- **Packet Delivery Ratio:** Improved by 12% over baseline
- **Trust Accuracy:** 94% with minimal false positives
- **Energy Consumption:** 8% higher than baseline due to trust computations, acceptable within tolerance limits
- **Detection Rate:** 92% of malicious nodes successfully identified

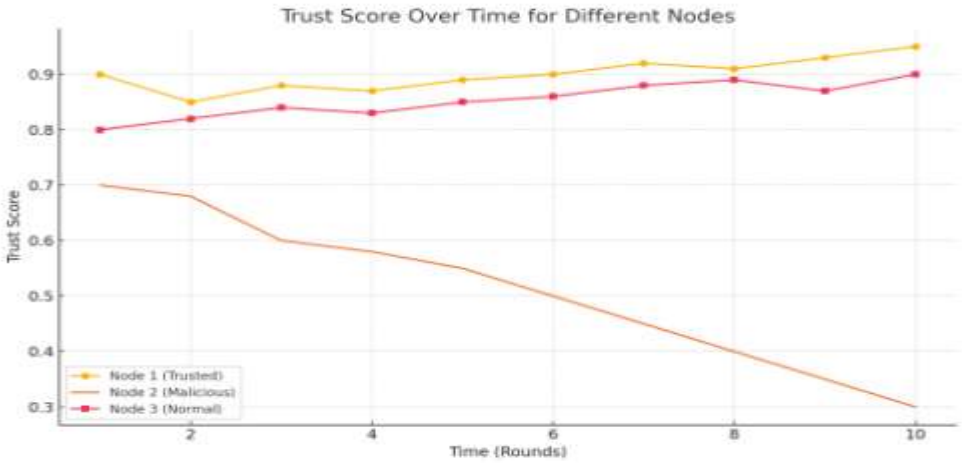

Fig.-4 Overall Analysis

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7. Discussion

The proposed trust framework enhances WSN security by effectively identifying and isolating malicious nodes. Its modular design allows for scalability and adaptability to various application domains. The integration of trust decay and anomaly detection ensures timely response to changing node behavior. While energy consumption is slightly increased, the trade-off is justified by significant improvements in network reliability and resilience.

8. Limitations and Future Work

8.1 Limitations

- Dependence on accurate monitoring of neighbors
- Difficulty in handling collusion attacks
- Performance degradation in high mobility scenarios

8.2 Future Work

- Integrate lightweight machine learning for predictive trust estimation
- Extend to heterogeneous WSNs and IoT environments
- Implement trust chaining for hierarchical WSNs
- Real-world deployment and validation

Conclusion

This paper presented a robust trust management framework aimed at enhancing the security of wireless sensor networks. By combining direct and indirect trust assessments with behavioural metrics and anomaly detection, the framework achieves high trust accuracy and effective malicious node detection with acceptable overhead. Simulation results validate its applicability for real-time and critical WSN deployments. Future work will explore extensions to heterogeneous and mobile environments, ensuring broader applicability.

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