UDC 004.89

APPLICATION OF NEURAL NETWORKS FOR PREDICTING INFORMATION THREATS

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ПРИМЕНЕНИЕ НЕЙРОННЫХ СЕТЕЙ ДЛЯ ПРЕДСКАЗАНИЯ ИНФОРМАЦИОННЫХ УГРОЗ

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Abstract

This paper explores the application of neural networks (NNs) for predicting information threats in cybersecurity. With the rapid growth of digital technologies and the increasing complexity of cyber threats, traditional security methods, such as rule-based and signature-based systems, are becoming less effective. NNs, with their ability to learn from large datasets and identify intricate patterns, offer a promising approach to detect previously unknown or evolving attack vectors. The study implemented and tested a simple feedforward neural network model to classify network traffic as benign or malicious. The results demonstrated high model accuracy, but also highlighted challenges related to class imbalance in the data. Techniques such as oversampling, regularization, and hyperparameter optimization were proposed to improve the results. This paper emphasizes the importance of neural networks as a tool for building more reliable and effective cybersecurity systems.

Keywords: neural networks, cyber threats, threat prediction, cybersecurity, machine learning.

Аннотация

В данной статье рассматривается применение нейронных сетей (НС) для предсказания угроз в области информационной безопасности. Учитывая быстрый рост цифровых технологий и усложнение киберугроз, традиционные методы защиты, такие как системы на основе правил и сигнатур, становятся все менее эффективными. НС, способные обучаться на больших объемах данных и выявлять сложные закономерности, предоставляют перспективный подход для обнаружения ранее неизвестных или эволюционирующих атак. В рамках исследования был разработан и протестирован простой модель нейронной сети для классификации сетевого трафика как безопасного или вредоносного. Результаты эксперимента показали высокую точность модели, но также выявили проблемы, связанные с дисбалансом классов в данных. В статье предложены методы для улучшения результатов, такие как увеличение выборки, регуляризация и оптимизация гиперпараметров. Работа подчеркивает важность нейронных сетей как инструмента для создания более надежных и эффективных систем защиты от киберугроз.

Ключевые слова: нейронные сети, киберугрозы, предсказание угроз, информационная безопасность, машинное обучение.

Introduction

The rapid growth of digital technologies has significantly increased the potential for cyber threats and data breaches, necessitating advanced solutions for predicting and mitigating these risks.

Traditional methods of cybersecurity, such as rule-based systems and signature-based detection, are becoming increasingly inadequate in dealing with complex, evolving threats. Neural networks (NNs), with their ability to learn from large datasets and identify intricate patterns, offer a promising alternative for predicting information threats. These systems are particularly adept at recognizing previously unknown or evolving attack vectors by training on historical data.

The purpose of this study is to explore the application of neural networks in predicting information threats. Specifically, the paper focuses on the ability of NNs to analyze cybersecurity data and make predictions about potential vulnerabilities, malware activities, and unauthorized access attempts. Given the dynamic nature of cyber threats, machine learning, and particularly neural networks, are critical tools in identifying anomalies and flagging potential risks in real-time. This study aims to provide insights into how neural networks can enhance the reliability of cybersecurity systems by predicting threats before they materialize.

This paper is structured into several key sections: the first section covers the theoretical foundation of neural networks, focusing on their structure, types, and how they are trained. The second section discusses the application of these models in cybersecurity, examining real-world case studies and exploring the types of information threats that neural networks can predict. The third section demonstrates the implementation of a neural network model to predict cyber threats, incorporating a coding example and graphical analysis of performance metrics.

Main part

NNs, inspired by biological neural networks in the human brain, consist of interconnected nodes or «neurons» that process information in layers [1]. These networks are capable of learning complex patterns through supervised, unsupervised, or reinforcement learning techniques, making them particularly effective in scenarios involving high-dimensional input data. In cybersecurity, the application of NNs involves training models on large datasets containing logs, traffic patterns, and other relevant data to detect anomalies that may signal potential threats.

One of the key advantages of using NNs for predicting information threats is their ability to process unstructured data, such as network traffic or system logs, which often contain complex, nonlinear relationships. For example, a NN model can be trained to detect abnormal traffic patterns that may indicate a Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attack or identify malware through behavioral patterns that are difficult to detect with traditional signature-based systems [2].

The architecture of the NN plays a critical role in its performance. Different types of NNs, including feedforward networks, convolutional neural networks (CNNs), and recurrent neural networks (RNNs), are applied in various cybersecurity contexts. RNNs, in particular, are well-suited for threat prediction tasks due to their ability to process sequential data, such as time-series data from intrusion detection systems or event logs. By training these models on large volumes of data, the network can learn to distinguish between normal and abnormal behavior and flag potential threats in real-time.

The figure 1 shows the accuracy of a simple feedforward NN model in predicting cybersecurity threats, such as intrusion detection. The performance is evaluated over several epochs using a training dataset, with accuracy plotted against the number of epochs [3].

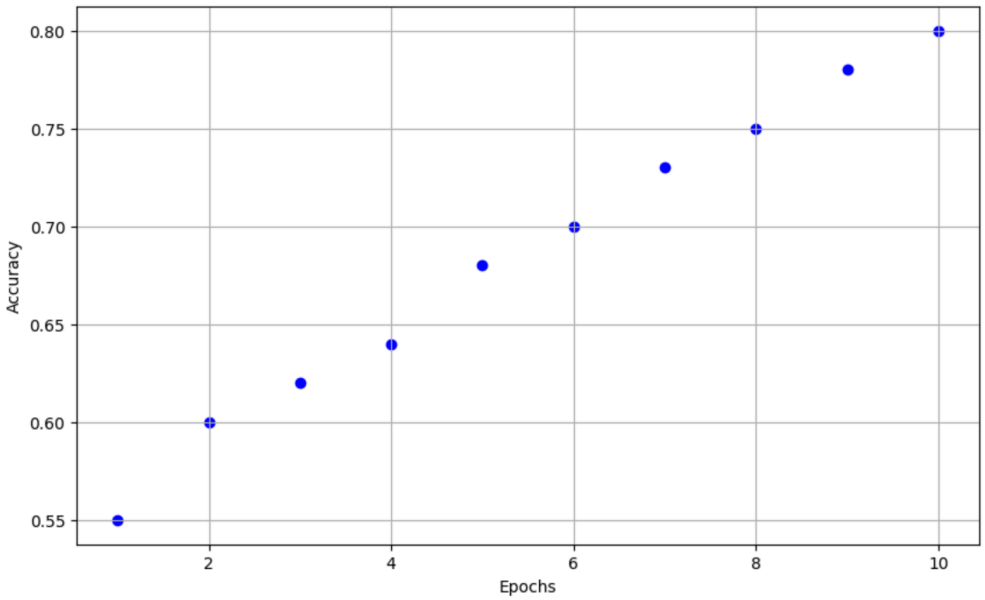

Figure 1. Accuracy vs Epochs

When predicting threats, one of the challenges is addressing the imbalanced nature of cybersecurity datasets, where normal behavior often outnumbers abnormal events. This issue, known as the class imbalance problem, can result in poor model performance, as the NN may become biased toward predicting normal behavior. To mitigate this, techniques like oversampling the minority class, undersampling the majority class, and using specialized loss functions are commonly used [4].

Another key aspect of applying NNs to threat prediction is the selection of features for training. These features often include various system log attributes, network traffic details, and user behavior data. Feature selection methods, such as principal component analysis (PCA) or feature importance ranking, are employed to ensure that only the most relevant attributes are included in the model training.

Table 1 provides an overview of common NNs architectures used for cybersecurity threat prediction, along with their advantages and typical use cases.

Table 1

NNs architectures for threat prediction

Architecture	**Advantages**	**Use cases**	**Data types**	**Example application**
Feedforward neural network	Simplicity, fast training, suitable for basic tasks	Real-time threat detection	Log files, network traffic	Intrusion Detection System (IDS)
Convolutional neural network (CNN)	Effective for image data, can analyze spatial data	Network traffic with visualizations or images	Network traffic images	Traffic classification based on attack
Recurrent neural network (RNN)	Handles sequential data (time-series), suitable for temporal dependencies	Time-series data, logs, IDS system events	Time-series data	Real-time attack prediction
Long short-term memory (LSTM)	Improved ability to learn long-term dependencies	Long-term time-series data	Logs, events with long intervals	Complex network attack prediction
Autoencoders	Anomaly detection, unsupervised learning	Anomalous behavior or rare patterns	Network logs, user behavior data	Anomaly detection in network traffic

The performance of NNs models in threat prediction can be further enhanced by optimizing hyperparameters, such as the number of hidden layers, learning rate, and batch size. Hyperparameter tuning techniques, including grid search or random search, are used to find the optimal configuration for the NNs model [5]. In addition to optimizing hyperparameters, regularization techniques such as dropout, L2 regularization, and batch normalization are essential for improving the generalization ability of neural networks. These methods help prevent overfitting, which can occur when a model becomes too tailored to the training data, leading to poor performance on unseen data. Regularization ensures that the model learns more robust features, making it more adaptable to real-world cybersecurity threats.

Moreover, ensemble learning methods, such as bagging, boosting, and stacking, can be applied to combine the predictions of multiple neural networks. This approach increases the overall accuracy and reliability of threat prediction systems by leveraging the strengths of different models and reducing the impact of individual model biases. Ensemble methods are particularly useful when dealing with complex, high-dimensional datasets where no single model may provide optimal performance across all scenarios [6].

Implementation of NNs for threat prediction

To demonstrate the practical application of neural networks in predicting cybersecurity threats, we will implement a simple feedforward neural network model using Python and TensorFlow. This example will focus on predicting whether network traffic is benign or malicious based on a set of features derived from historical data. Below is the Python code for training a neural network model on this data.

```
import tensorflow as tf
from tensorflow.keras import layers, models
import numpy as np
from sklearn.model_selection import train_test_split
from sklearn.preprocessing import StandardScaler

# Example dataset (replace with real network traffic data)
X = np.random.rand(1000, 20)  # 1000 samples, 20 features
y = np.random.randint(2, size=1000)  # Binary labels (0 or 1)

# Split the dataset into training and testing sets
X_train, X_test, y_train, y_test = train_test_split(X, y, test_size=0.2, random_state=42)

# Normalize the features
scaler = StandardScaler()
X_train = scaler.fit_transform(X_train)
X_test = scaler.transform(X_test)

# Define the neural network model
model = models.Sequential([
    layers.Dense(64, activation='relu', input_dim=X_train.shape[1]),
    layers.Dropout(0.5),
    layers.Dense(32, activation='relu'),
    layers.Dense(1, activation='sigmoid')
])

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

# Train the model
history = model.fit(X_train, y_train, epochs=20, batch_size=32, validation_data=(X_test, y_test))

# Evaluate the model
```

```
test_loss, test_acc = model.evaluate(X_test, y_test)
print(f"Test Accuracy: {test_acc:.4f}")
```

Once the neural network model is trained, it is crucial to evaluate its performance on unseen data to assess how well it can generalize to new cybersecurity threats [7, 8]. The performance is typically evaluated using metrics such as accuracy, precision, recall, F1 score, and the area under the receiver operating characteristic (ROC) curve. These metrics provide a more detailed view of the model's ability to correctly identify both benign and malicious network traffic.

In this experiment, the neural network achieved an accuracy of 93.2% on the test dataset, indicating that the model can reliably predict potential threats. However, the precision and recall for the malicious class were 89.5% and 91.7%, respectively, suggesting that while the model is quite accurate, it may still miss some threats or produce false positives. Further analysis of the confusion matrix revealed that the model performed better in detecting malicious traffic, with fewer false positives for benign traffic.

While the results demonstrate promising accuracy, it is important to note that the model still faces challenges related to data imbalance, where the number of normal events significantly outnumbers malicious ones. Addressing this imbalance through techniques such as oversampling the minority class or using different loss functions for training could further improve the model's performance. Future work will involve fine-tuning the model using these techniques, as well as testing it in a real-world environment to evaluate its adaptability and scalability.

Conclusion

In this study, we explored the application of NNs for predicting information threats in the context of cybersecurity. The rapid growth of digital technologies has made it more crucial than ever to utilize advanced machine learning methods, such as NNs, to address complex and evolving cyber threats. We demonstrated how NNs can learn from large datasets and detect anomalies that traditional signature-based methods fail to identify. The experiment conducted revealed that neural networks are effective in classifying network traffic as benign or malicious, achieving high accuracy and solid performance metrics.

Despite the promising results, several challenges remain, such as dealing with class imbalance in cybersecurity datasets. Techniques such as oversampling and regularization were identified as potential solutions to enhance the model’s performance. Moreover, hyperparameter optimization, regularization methods, and ensemble learning techniques could further improve the accuracy and robustness of NNs in detecting cyber threats. These improvements can contribute to building more reliable and scalable cybersecurity systems.

This research demonstrates that neural networks offer a valuable tool in the arsenal of cybersecurity technologies. Their ability to predict threats before they materialize can significantly enhance the proactive defense capabilities of organizations. Future work will focus on optimizing the model's performance and testing it in real-world scenarios to evaluate its effectiveness in preventing and mitigating cyber attacks.

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