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# Anomaly detection optimization using big data and deep learning to reduce false-positive

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## Abstract

Anomaly-based Intrusion Detection System (IDS) has been a hot research topic because of its ability to detect new threats rather than only memorized signatures threats of signature-based IDS. Especially after the availability of advanced technologies that increase the number of hacking tools and increase the risk impact of an attack. The problem of any anomaly-based model is its high false-positive rate. The high false-positive rate is the reason why anomaly IDS is not commonly applied in practice. Because anomaly-based models classify an unseen pattern as a threat where it may be normal but not included in the training dataset. This type of problem is called overfitting where the model is not able to generalize. Optimizing Anomaly-based models by having a big training dataset that includes all possible normal cases may be an optimal solution but could not be applied in practice. Although we can increase the number of training samples to include much more normal cases, still we need a model that has more ability to generalize. In this research paper, we propose applying deep model instead of traditional models because it has more ability to generalize. Thus, we will obtain less false-positive by using big data and deep model. We made a comparison between machine learning and deep learning algorithms in the optimization of anomaly-based IDS by decreasing the false-positive rate. We did an experiment on the NSL-KDD benchmark and compared our results with one of the best used classifiers in traditional learning in IDS optimization. The experiment shows 10% lower false-positive by using deep learning instead of traditional learning.

**Keywords:** Intrusion detection systems (IDS), Security intelligence optimization, Unknown threats, Big data, NSL-KDD dataset, False-positive

## Introduction

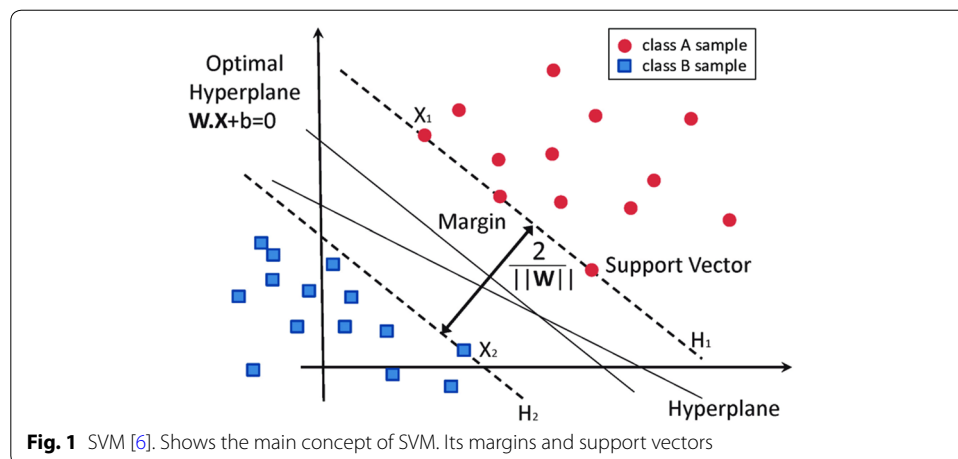
Signature-based Intrusion detection systems are not suitable anymore to be used in nowadays network environment. Because signature-based models are not able to detect new threats and unknown attacks. Due to technology improvement, the number of attacks is increasing exponentially. Statistics show that attacks number increases with a rate of 100% each year causing huge money loss, about tens of millions of dollars for ransomware attacks only. This high number of millions of new threats that are developed every day, reduces the effectiveness of signature-based IDS because it is not a practical solution to update the signatures databases every few minutes. Anomaly-based IDS can be a better alternative of signature-based IDS because it is more suitable for nowadays

challenges of new threats. Because it can detect new threats but still not practically used because of its high false-positive rate. The reason behind the high false-positive rate is that anomaly model classifies an unseen pattern that did not learn it in normal cases, as an abnormal case. The reason behind high false-positive is that the model has overfitting what means it cannot generalize. The solution may seem easy, by extending the training dataset to include all normal cases. But that still not a practical solution for a long time. Although we can add much more normal cases to datasets, we still need a model with higher ability of generalization. In this paper, we propose using deep learning with big data to solve this problem. Big data allows us to use big datasets for training to reduce the false-positive rate by including much more normal cases. And deep learning needs large datasets for training without facing the overfitting problem as it may have more ability to generalize than traditional learning models. We compare results with one of the best traditional learning used classifiers on the NSL-KDD benchmark dataset. Results show reducing false-positive to lower 10% than already used classifiers.

The paper is organized as follows, we will talk about related works in "Related Work Section". The proposed method is explained in detail in "Method Section". "Data Section" contains detailed information about used dataset. We will discuss results in "Results and Discussion Section". We will talk about conclusion and future vision in "Conclusion and Future Work Section".

**Related work**

To optimize IDS, there are two general resolving directions. First way is to collect more data. Network security data and intrusion data are hard to collect because of data privacy concerns. In addition to the challenges of labeling data, which may be time-consuming for experts to do explanations and labeling process. Second way is studying how to increase the performance on small datasets, which is very important because the insights we can get from such researches can be implemented in big data researches. This paper is considered under the second way. We propose implementing deep learning instead of traditional learning. We choose to compare our works with SVM, shown in Fig. 1. Because SVM is the most popular traditional learning model used in network security and intrusion detection systems along years even in the era of big data. SVM has received a lot of interest in IDS optimization domain because it has proved by lots



**Fig. 1** SVM [6]. Shows the main concept of SVM. Its margins and support vectors

of experiments that it is one of the best classifiers in anomaly-based intrusion detection systems [1–5]

Find Table 1 from [1], that contains research experiments that used basically SVM and optimized it by adding another model to its result or to its input.

## Method

The problem of any anomaly model is high false-positive rate, because it classifies any unseen pattern as abnormal where it may be a normal pattern but not included in the training set. Having a big training dataset that includes all possible normal cases has been considered as a theoretical idea that could not be applied in practice. Although we can increase the number of training samples to include much more normal cases, still we need a model that has more ability to generalize. We propose deep learning model instead of traditional learning as it may have more ability to generalize.

The proposed solution is to use a big data training set, but also to use a deep learning model to solve overfitting problem that occurs on the traditional learning models.

We have done many experiments [26] that we care about collective and contextual attacks. Where we chose using a deep network with type of recurrent so we can handle sequences of actions or events. We chose LSTM to deal with sequences of inputs and focus on context.

We were curious if LSTM can also achieve better results on small benchmark datasets or not. So we applied this experiment, we do not use sequences or even big data in this experiment. Only small benchmark data is used with LSTM.

## Proposed algorithm-long short term memory(LSTM)

LSTM is type of Deep Learning Recurrent Neural Network (RNN). see Fig. 2. RNN is extension of a convention feed-forward neural network. Unlike feedforward neural networks, RNN have cyclic connections making them powerful for modeling sequences. As a human no one think of each event separately. For example, when you are reading this article you read each word but you understand it in the context of this article, so that you understand the whole concept of this paper. That is the idea of RNN that has a loop to deal with input as a sequence, and that what we need to handle each event on network within its context.

LSTM is a special case of RNN that solves problems faced by the RNN model [27, 28]

1. Long term dependency problem in RNNs.
2. Vanishing Gradient & Exploding Gradient

LSTM is designed to overcome vanishing gradient descent because it avoids long-term dependency problem. To remember information for long periods of time, each common hidden node is replaced by LSTM cell. Each LSTM cell consists of three main gates such as input gate  $it$ , forget gate  $ft$ , and output gate  $ot$ . Besides  $ct$  is cell state at time  $t$ .

LSTM architecture is shown in Fig. 3, LSTM cell is shown in Fig. 4.

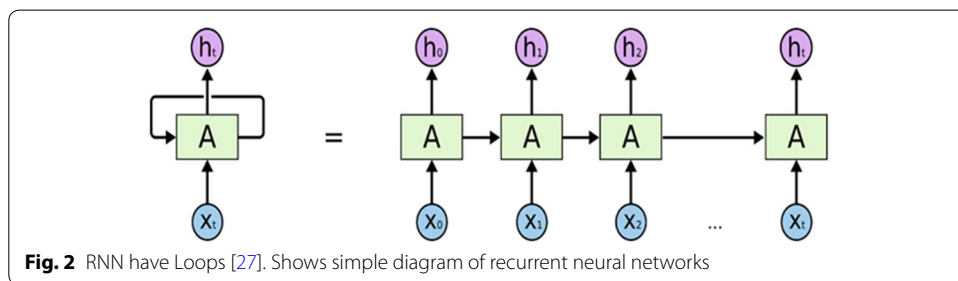
Figure 5 shows the equations to calculate the values of gates

**Table 1 Comparisons between Researches used SVM as basic Classifier**

Approach	Working idea	Dataset	Detection rate	False alarm
Unsupervised anomaly detection system [7]	Tune and optimize automatically the values of parameters without pre-defining them	From Kyoto University honeypot	–	–
Multiclass SVM [8]	Attributes are optimized using k-fold cross validation. This technique can be used to decrease the rate of False-Negatives in the IDS	Self	–	–
OC-SVM One-Class SVM [9]	Multistage OC-SVM and feature extraction represents a method to detect unknown attacks. Method is poor in second stage classifier to detection rate of unknown attacks	From Kyoto	80.00	20.94
IG-ABC-SVM Information Gain-Artificial Bee Colony [10]	A combining IG feature selection and SVM classifier in IDS model is proposed. Experiments using just two swarm intelligence algorithms	NSL-KDD	98.53	0.03
SbSVM [11]	Autonomous labeling algorithm of normal traffic (when the class distribution is not imbalanced) Not evaluated for real time case	DARPA	99	5.5
RS-ISVM- reserved set -Incremental SVM [12]	An incremental SVM training algorithms is used, hybrid with modifying kernel function U-RBF Foreseeing attacks, specifically for attacks of U2R and R2L may not tolerate but oscillation problem solved	KDD Cup 1999	89.17	4.9
SVM-GA [13]	Hybrid model by combining (GA and SVM)	KDD CUP 1999	98.33	0.50
Genetic principal Component [14]	Subset selection using GA and PCA	KDD cup 1999	99.96	0.49
SVM and NN [15]	Hybrid process Most significant performance as far as training time but time consuming and hard task to trigger	DARPA	99.87	–
N-KPCA-GA-SVM kernel principal component analysis-genetic algorithm (GA)-SVM [16]	Hybrid of KPCA, SVM and GA algorithms. Faster convergence speed. Performs higher predictive accuracy and better generalization But have complex structure and have latency for real time application	KDD CUP99	96.37	0.95
CSV-ISVM Candidate Support Vector -Incremental SVM [17]	Candidate Support Vector -Incremental SVM improves detection rate and false alarm rate	KDD Cup 1999	90.14	2.31
Hybrid approach of K-Medoids, SVM and Naïve Bayes [18]	Hybrid learning approach through a combination of K-Medoids clustering, Selecting Feature using SVM, and Naïve Bayes classifier	KDD Cup 1999	90.1	6.36

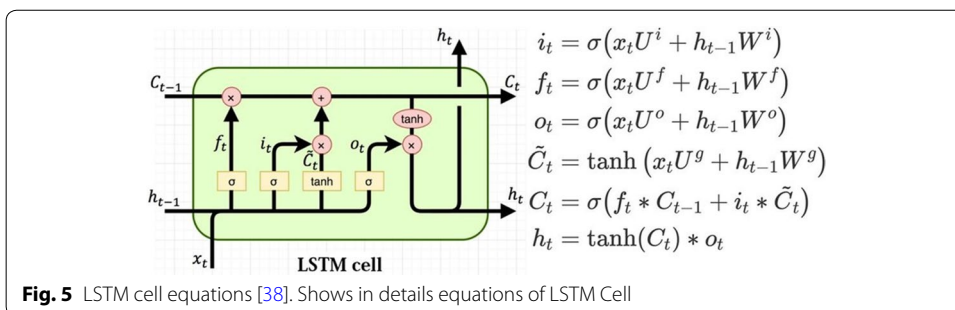
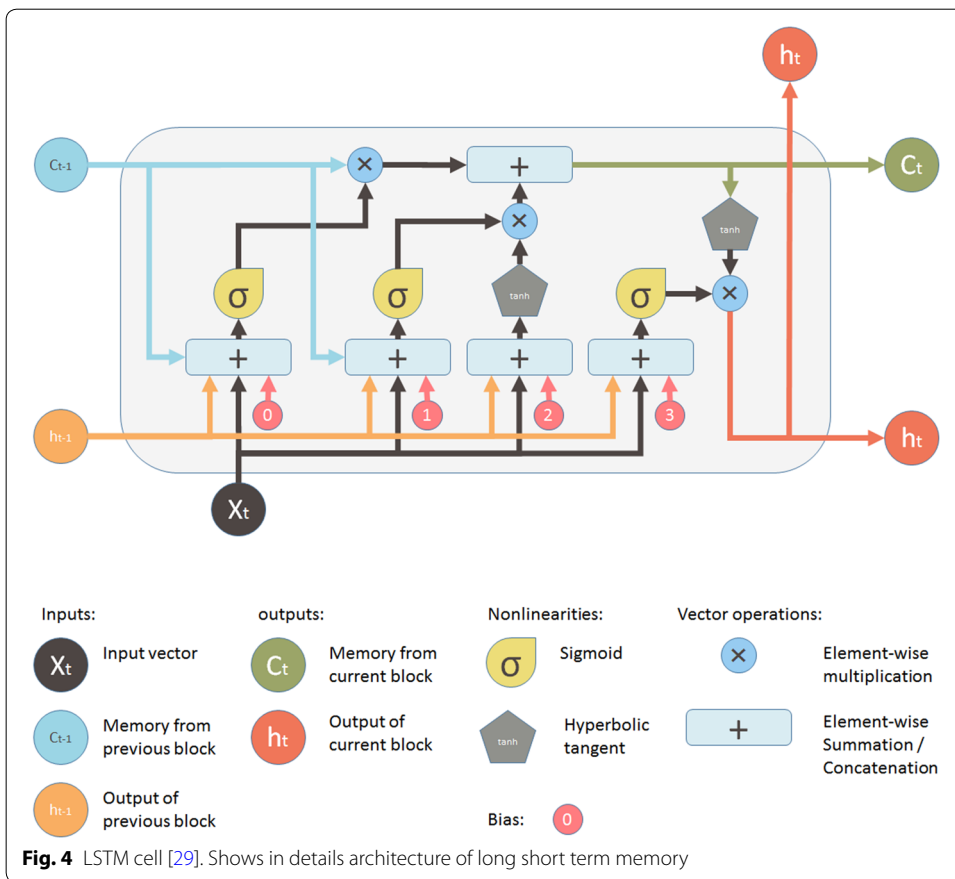
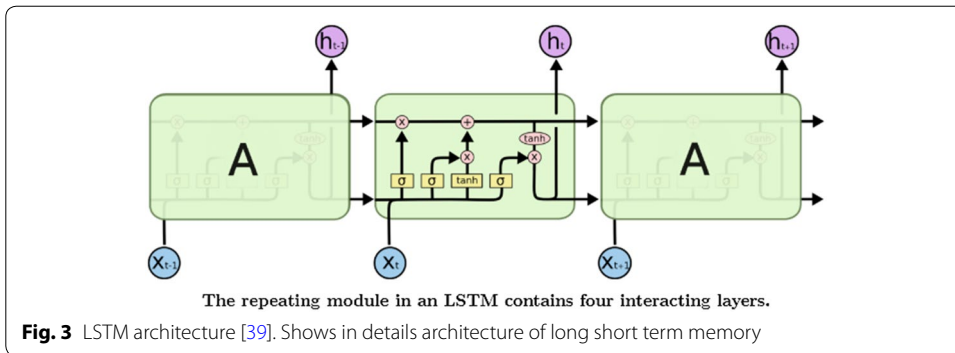
**Table 1 (continued)**

Approach	Working idea	Dataset	Detection rate	False alarm
Distance of sum-based SVM [19]	Hybrid learning method named distance sum-based support vector machine (DSSVM)	KDD Cup 1999		
SVM and GA [20]	Hybrid method consisting of GA and SVM for intrusion detection system	KDD Cup 1999	0.98	0.017
PCA and SVM [21]	Hybrid model by integrating the principal component analysis (PCA) and (SVM)	NSL-KDD	0.9655	–
SVM with GA [5]	FWP-SVM-genetic algorithm (feature selection, weight, and parameter optimization of support vector machine based on the genetic algorithm)	KDD Cup 1999	96.61	3.39
SVM for Anomaly in smart city wireless network [22]	Compare SVM and isolation forests to detect anomalies in a laboratory that reproduces a real smart city use case with heterogeneous devices, algorithms, protocols, and network configurations	smart city WSNs	85	5%-10%
SVM and RBF and [23]	SVM using Radial-basis kernel function (RBF) and a Particle Swarm Optimization algorithm to optimize the parameters of SVM	NSL-KDD	99.8	0.9
SVM and GA [24]	Hybrid classification algorithm (GSVM) based Gravitational Search Algorithm (GSA) and support vector machines (SVM) to optimize the accuracy of the SVM classifier by detecting the subset of the best values of the kernel parameters for the SVM classifier	KDD CUP 99	97.5	0.03
Support Vector Machine (SVM) Based on Wavelet Transform (WT) [25]	Support Vector Machine SVM based on Wavelet Transform(WT)	UNSW-NB15	95.92	–



**Fig. 2** RNN have Loops [27]. Shows simple diagram of recurrent neural networks

where  $x_t$ ,  $h_t$ , and  $ct$  correspond to input layer, hidden layer, and cell state at time  $t$ . Besides,  $bi$ ,  $bf$ ,  $bc$ , and  $bo$  are bias at input gate, forget gate, cell state, and output gate, respectively. Furthermore,  $\sigma$  is sigmoid function. Finally,  $W$  is denoted by weight matrix



**Table 2 Statistics about KDD training set [33]**

	Number of samples	Number of distinct samples	Possible reduction percentage
Attacks	3,925,650	262,178	93.32%
Normal	972,781	812,814	16.44%
Total	4,898,431	1,074,992	78.05%

**Table 3 Statistics about KDD testing set [33]**

	Number of samples	Number of distinct samples	Possible reduction percentage
Attacks	250,436	29,378	88.26%
Normal	60,591	47,911	20.92%
Total	311,027	77,289	75.15%

### Experiment setup

This experiment is performed on Google CoLab [30] using Keras library (Python Deep Learning library) [31]. We apply LSTM of 64 hidden nodes with Relu activation function and dropout=0.5. Using binary cross-entropy loss function. Using RMSprop optimizer. Learning rate=0.001, rho=0.9, decay=0.0.

### Data

#### KDD99

This dataset is an updated version of the DARPA98 by processing the tcpdump portion. it was constructed in 1999 by the international competition, International Knowledge Discovery and Data Mining Tools Competition. Its size is 708 MB and it contains about 5 million connections [32]. It contains different attacks such as Neptune-DoS, pod-DoS, SmurfDoS, and buffer-overflow. The benign and attack traffic are merged together in a simulated environment but it contains a large number of redundant records [33]

KDD99 is the most famous research dataset but it cannot be used for real-life applications as data is old, not real, not enough. Statistics details are provided in Table 2 and Table 3.

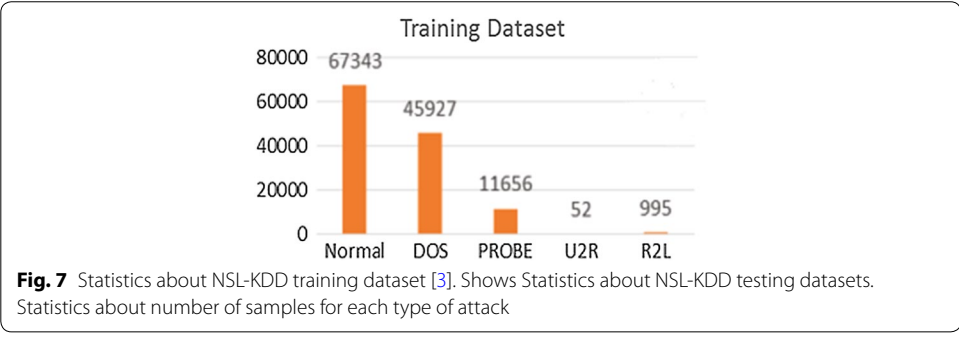
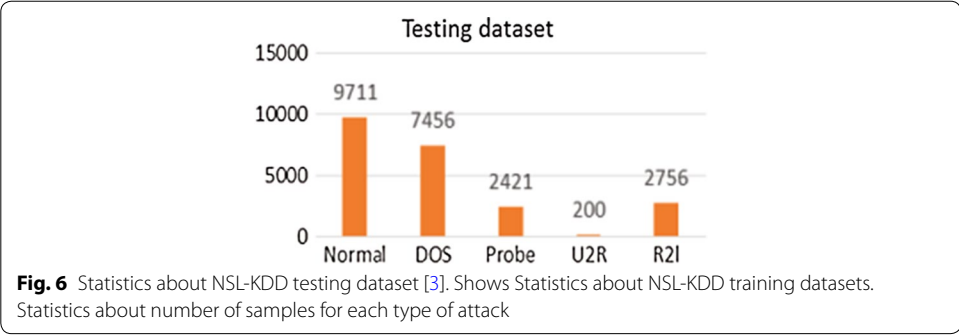
#### *Statistics about KDD training set*

#### *Statistics about KDD testing set*

#### NSL-KDD

This dataset is available online on website of Canadian Research for Intrusion detection [34]

NSL-KDD is built by resampling KDD99 to solve all its drawbacks that reduce the precision of mining algorithms on it. Resampling is done by removing duplicated samples and redundant samples. As KDD training set has 78% of duplicated samples and testing



set has 75% of duplicated samples that result to bias detection to detect attacks that have more number of samples and make it hard to learn attacks that have small number of samples but may be one most dangerous attacks, such as U2R, L2R.

**NSL\_KDD advantages**

- It does not contain redundant samples in testing samples so that solves bias problem
- It does not contain duplicate records in the test set which have better reduction rates.
- All samples for any attack type has the same percentage of its number in KDD.
- It contains 21 attacks in training dataset and 37 attacks in testing dataset so we can test the unknown attacks detection capability of a model by testing on attacks that some of them are new for the model as they were not in training set [3, 33] .

**NSL statistics**

Statistics about NSL\_KDD training and testing datasets in Figs. 6, 7.

Where x-axes represent attacks types, y-axes represent number of samples.

NSL-KDD is not biased but that does not mean that it is optimal. It has many drawbacks, but still more effective than other available datasets. At least, it will become out-of-date after few months as developing technologies and new attacks appear every day.



**Table 4** Type of attacks available in NSL-KDD [3]

Attack type	Attack name
DoS	Back, Land, Neptune, Pod, Smurf, Teardrop, Mailbomb, Proccesstable, Udpstorm, Apache2, Worm
R2L	Guess_password, Ftp_write, Imap, Phf, Multihop, Warezmaster, Xlock, Xsnoop, Snmpguess, Snmpgetattack, Httpptunnel, Sendmail, Named
U2R	Buffer_overflow, Loadmodule, Rootkit, Perl, Sqlattack, Xterm, Ps
Probe	Satan, IPswEEP, Nmap, PortswEEP, Mscan, Saint
Normal	Normal
Unknown	Unknown

F#	Feature name	F#	Feature name	F#	Feature name
F1	Duration	F15	Su attempted	F29	Same srv rate
F2	Protocol type	F16	Num root	F30	Diff srv rate
F3	Service	F17	Num file creations	F31	Srv diff host rate
F4	Flag	F18	Num shells	F32	Dst host count
F5	Source bytes	F19	Num access files	F33	Dst host srv count
F6	Destination bytes	F20	Num outbound cmds	F34	Dst host same srv rate
F7	Land	F21	Is host login	F35	Dst host diff srv rate
F8	Wrong fragment	F22	Is guest login	F36	Dst host same src port rate
F9	Urgent	F23	Count	F37	Dst host srv diff host rate
F10	Hot	F24	Srv count	F38	Dst host serror rate
F11	Number failed logins	F25	Serror rate	F39	Dst host srv serror rate
F12	Logged in	F26	Srv serror rate	F40	Dst host rerror rate
F13	Num compromised	F27	Rerror rate	F41	Dst host srv rerror rate
F14	Root shell	F28	Srv rerror rate	F42	Class label

**Fig. 8** NSL KDD features [34]. Shows features of NSL-KDD dataset

**Type of attacks available in NSL-KDD**

NSL-KDD contains 37 types of attacks that are categorized into 6 basic categories.

Categories are DoS, R2L, U2R, Probe, Normal, Unknown. Find details in Table 4.

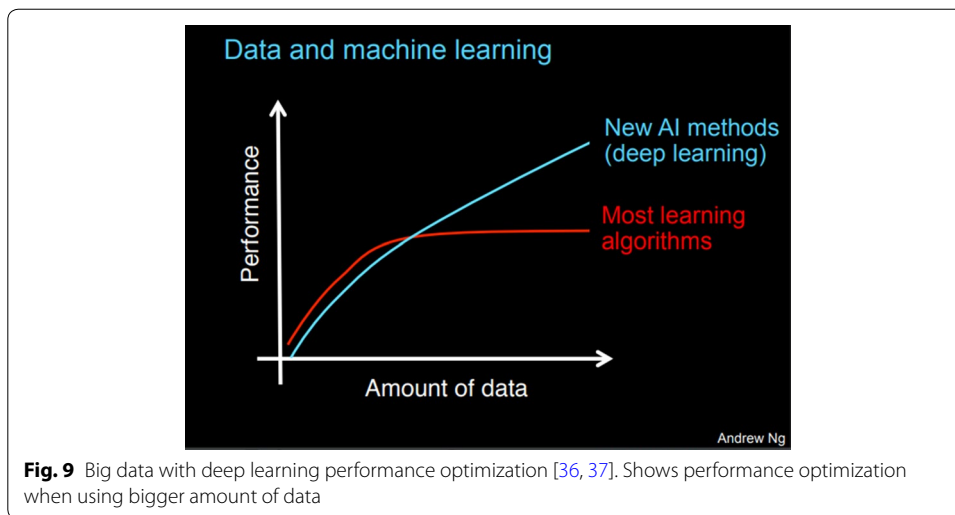
**NSL-KDD attributes**

NSL-KDD contains 41 attributes as we can find in Fig. 8 [35].

**Results and discussion**

We will not discuss that big data is better with deep learning than traditional learning. It is a fact that the most important difference between deep learning and traditional machine learning is its performance as the scale of data increases. As we can see in Fig. 9 [36].

We did not use a big dataset in this experiment. We used a small dataset as we want to compare the results of applying deep learning instead of traditional learning in anomaly-based IDS even on small dataset. Thus, we can compare optimization of generalization. We got by experiment, that accuracy increases by using deep learning



**Table 5 Comparing false-positive of Deep vs SVM on NSL-KDD Benchmark**

Methodology	False-positive FP	False negative FN	Accuracy
Deep learning (LSTM)	0.01	0.03	0.9676
SVM	0.1	0.03	0.87

model instead of traditional learning model. Moreover, false positive is getting lower by 10% less than traditional learning models. Results are shown in Table 5.

We used SVM to compare with, because it has one of the highest results among traditional learning classifiers. The result we get is higher than all previous studies we have shown in related works.

**Conclusion and future work**

Using big data analysis with deep learning in anomaly detection shows excellent combination that may be optimal solution as deep learning needs millions of samples in dataset and that what big data handle and what we need to construct big model of normal behavior that reduce false-positive rate to be better than small traditional anomaly models.

We recommend using deep learning models instead of SVM when trying to build hybrid classifiers for IDS. Because, as we see in results, deep models have more ability to generalize than traditional models. Thus, deep models achieve better results on unseen data causing less false-positive rate. We recommend using LSTM as we think it is an optimal solution in security domain because it can deal with sequences of events and context. So that it cannot only achieve better accuracy, but also can detect more various types of attacks that were not possible before. Such as, contextual and collective attacks.

**Abbreviations**

IDS: Intrusion detection system; RNN: Recurrent neural networks; LSTM: Long short term memory; FP: False-positive; DoS: Deny of service attack; R2L: Remote to user; U2R: User to root.

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**Authors' contributions**

KHJ took on the main role so she performed the literature review, conducted the experiments and wrote the manuscript. MJ and SD took on a supervisory role and oversaw the completion of the work. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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**Consent for publication**

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The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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