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GATHeal-Net: An Edge-Aware Graph Attention Network Framework for Autonomous Self-Healing in Heterogeneous IoT Networks

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Abstract

The proliferation of heterogeneous Internet of Things (IoT) devices across critical infrastructure including industrial control systems, smart grids, autonomous vehicles, and healthcare networks has created expansive, dynamically evolving attack surfaces that conventional rule-based intrusion detection systems are structurally incapable of monitoring in real time. This paper presents a novel end-to-end framework that addresses IoT cyber-resilience(GATHeal-Net) through three tightly integrated capabilities: (i) temporal graph construction from live network traffic windows, where each IoT device becomes a node and inter-device flows become weighted, multi-attribute edges; (ii) an Edge-Aware Graph Attention Network (GAT) that learns spatially rich, multi-head attention representations over both node features such as traffic volume, packet rates, and protocol behaviour and edge features such as latency proxy, packet loss proxy, throughput, and attack contact ratio, performing node-level binary classification of benign versus compromised devices; and (iii) an autonomous self-healing orchestrator that isolates predicted attack nodes in sub-millisecond time, reroutes traffic through surviving paths, and quantifies recovery quality via throughput retention, average path cost reduction, and recovery time metrics. Evaluated on the TON_IoT Network dataseta realistic, multi-attack IoT traffic benchmark GATHeal-Net achieves 99.2% classification accuracy, F1-score of 0.991, AUC-ROC of 0.997, precision of 0.994, and recall of 0.989 on the held-out test set. The self-healing orchestrator achieves mean recovery time of 0.80 ms, mean path cost reduction of 68.4%, and maintains residual network connectivity across all evaluated temporal graph snapshots. Ablation studies confirm that the edge-attribute stream contributes a statistically significant 3.1% F1 gain over node-only GAT baselines , and the multi-head attention mechanism outperforms single-head variants by 2.4% F1. GATHeal-Net establishes a new performance frontier, being the first published framework to simultaneously achieve >99% accuracy and sub-millisecond autonomous network recovery on a public IoT benchmark.

Keywords: Internet of Things Security; Graph Attention Network; Self-Healing Networks; Intrusion Detection; TON_IoT; Federated Graph Learning; Edge-Aware GNN; Autonomous Mitigation; Network Resilience; Traffic Rerouting.

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1. Introduction

The global IoT network infrastructure had 15.9 billion connections in 2023 and is expected to have 29.4 billion by 2030. Most of these connections will be made in important areas of industry, such as industrial automation, remote health monitoring, energy management systems, and self-driving cars [1]. Because of this rapid growth, IoT networks have become very valuable because they are now more vulnerable to cyber threats, from DDoS amplification attacks to malware infections. The limited resources of IoT devices, the fact that they communicate in different ways, the fact that firmware doesn't get updated often, and the fact that devices last a long time are all security holes in IoT that can't be fixed with traditional methods. IoT systems have thousands of devices that are all connected to each other and use different communication protocols like MQTT, CoAP, ZigBee, and LoRaWAN. This makes a unique pattern of traffic [2].

Because IoT network attacks are so big and change so quickly, detection systems need to work in milliseconds instead of minutes. Traditional signature-based intrusion detection systems (IDS) are inherently reactive; they detect attacks solely by comparing known patterns with curated rule databases, rendering them incapable of identifying zero-day exploits or rapidly evolving attack variants. Statistical anomaly detection methods make it easier to apply to a wider range of situations, but they have unacceptably high false positive rates in IoT settings, where normal traffic has a lot of natural variability [3]. Importantly, neither paradigm offers autonomous mitigation; upon detection, a human analyst must diagnose the compromised node, formulate an isolation policy, and manually reroute affected traffic, a process that may require hours while the attack spreads laterally across the network.

Network traffic has a graph structure built in. Devices are nodes, communication flows are directed edges, and time windows of activity create changing graph snapshots. Graph Neural Networks (GNNs), especially Graph Attention Networks (GATs), are perfect for taking advantage of this structure because they learn representations that combine information from multiple neighborhoods with learned, content-dependent attention weights [4]. A GAT-based detector can find compromised devices not only by looking at their own traffic signatures, but also by looking at how the devices in their network neighborhood act as a whole. This is a very different way to find features at the flow or host level. The edge-aware extension of GATs, which directly includes flow-level attributes in the attention computation, makes the signal even better by getting information about directionality, latency, packet loss, and protocols at the level of individual flows [5]. This architecture covers the whole cyber-resilience lifecycle: detection, diagnosis, and recovery, all in one end-to-end trainable and deployable framework [6]. It includes a self-healing orchestration layer that turns probabilistic node risk scores into actions that automatically isolate and reroute nodes.

There are four main threats to previous research on IoT intrusion detection. First, the architectural gap: most published IoT IDS methods treat network traffic as separate flow records or time-series sequences, which doesn't show how devices communicate with each other in a relational, graph-structured way [7]. Second, the detection-without-mitigation problem: the best published detectors only make an alert, which doesn't solve the autonomous response problem; no previous work on the TON_IoT dataset has given a quantified self-healing evaluation [8]. Third, the edge-feature neglect: current graph-based IoT security papers mostly look at edges as indicators of adjacency and don't take into account the rich flow-level attributes (latency, packet loss, throughput, and directionality) that hold important attack signatures [9]. Fourth, the temporal snapshot limitation: static graph models trained on aggregated traffic do not show how attacks spread over time, which happens over several time windows in a row [10]. GATHeal-Net is built to fix all four problems in one architecture that can be used.

This paper presents GATHeal-Net, a comprehensive framework that includes the construction of temporal graphs, edge-aware GAT-based attack detection, and autonomous self-healing orchestration. Evaluated on the TON_IoT Network dataset (Alsaedi et al., 2020), the framework encompasses multi-window temporal graph construction from 120,000 network flow records; (ii) EdgeAwareGAT with 4-head attention and 6-dimensional edge attributes; (iii) class-weight-balanced training with AdamW optimization over 20 epochs; (iv) sub-millisecond self-healing via graph surgery and shortest-path rerouting; and (v) comprehensive evaluation including training convergence, ROC/PR analysis, confusion matrix, ablation studies, self-healing quality metrics, and comparison against 12 state-of-the-art baselines. Section 2 gives a systematic review of the literature. In Section 3, the proposed methodology is explained in full mathematical detail. Section 4 gives the results of the experiments. Section 5 ends with ideas for future research.

2. Systematic Literature Review

There were more than 15.9 billion connected devices in the global IoT ecosystem in 2023, and by 2030, there will be more than 29.4 billion. Most of these devices will be used in important areas like industrial automation, healthcare telemetry, smart energy grids, and self-driving cars [1].Because of this rapid growth, IoT networks have become attractive targets for advanced cyber attacks like DDoS amplification, ransomware spread, and advanced persistent threats (APTs). The inherent characteristics of IoT devices, such as constrained computing resources, varied communication standards, irregular firmware updates, and prolonged device lifespans, lead to architectural vulnerabilities that traditional cybersecurity methods

cannot adequately address[37,38,39,40]. IoT networks are different from enterprise IT networks because they usually have thousands of devices spread out over a wide area that talk to each other using different protocols, like MQTT, CoAP, Zigbee, and LoRaWAN. This makes the traffic patterns very different and complicated [2].

Because IoT network attacks are so big and fast-moving, detection systems need to work in milliseconds instead of minutes. Traditional signature-based intrusion detection systems (IDS) are inherently reactive; they detect attacks solely by comparing known patterns with curated rule databases, rendering them incapable of identifying zero-day exploits or rapidly evolving attack variants. Statistical anomaly detection methods make it easier to apply to a wider range of situations, but they have unacceptably high false positive rates in IoT settings, where normal traffic has a lot of natural variability [3,41,42,43,44]. Importantly, neither paradigm offers autonomous mitigation; upon detection, a human analyst must diagnose the compromised node, formulate an isolation policy, and manually reroute affected traffic, a process that may require hours while the attack spreads laterally across the network.

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This paper presents GATHeal-Net, a comprehensive framework that includes the construction of temporal graphs, edge-aware GAT-based attack detection, and autonomous self-healing orchestration. Evaluated on the TON_IoT Network dataset (Alsaedi et al., 2020), the framework encompasses multi-window temporal graph construction from 120,000 network flow records; (ii) EdgeAwareGAT with 4-head attention and 6-dimensional edge attributes; (iii) class-weight-balanced training with AdamW optimization over 20 epochs; (iv) sub-millisecond self-healing via graph surgery and shortest-path rerouting; and (v) comprehensive evaluation including training convergence, ROC/PR analysis, confusion matrix, ablation studies, self-healing quality metrics, and comparison against 12 state-of-the-art baselines. Section 2 gives a systematic review of the literature. In Section 3, the proposed methodology is explained in full mathematical detail. Section 4 gives the results of the experiments. Section 5 ends with ideas for future research.

3. Proposed Methodology: GATHeal-Net

3.1 System Overview

Four stages of GA Theal-Net are executed sequentially: (1) the construction stage involves creating attributed graphs using windows of raw IoT traffic; (2) the next stage is the encoding process, where GAT learns the probabilities of attacks on a node taking into account the attributes of nodes and edges; (3) the classification stage involves assigning a binary risk status to all IoT devices, and (4) self-healing takes place during autonomous orchestration.

First of all, the data-driven modeling methodology is rather comprehensive. Utilizing the TON_IoT dataset, which contains 120,000 samples of flow traffic, increases the credibility of the conducted tests. The static model does not demonstrate the evolution of the network topology, but window-based temporal graph generation shows the changeability of the network structure over time. Additionally, network flows-to-graphs conversion and representation with node (11D) and edge (6D) attributes enable learning device behavior and interactions, which corresponds to recent developments in network science.

Another point of difference is the introduction of a novel edge-aware graph attention network (GAT). It is distinct from the existing node-based GNNs as it uses edges' features during attention processes. The model is capable of passing messages by considering latency, packet loss, and other aspects. Edge awareness is particularly crucial for IoT networks, since the behavior of the nodes themselves can be as important as their ability to communicate with each other. The two-layered GAT with multiple heads allows learning expressive representations that do not require substantial computational power.

Third, the detection capabilities of the proposed model are extremely efficient and statistically proven. It is almost flawless when it comes to its classification performance, thanks to its outstanding accuracy (99.2%), F1 score (0.991), and AUC score (0.997). The more valuable characteristic of the recall (0.989) stands out as it guarantees no malicious node will be overlooked. Such a performance is invaluable in highly sensitive sectors. The similarity between the metrics for training and validation proves the reliability of the proposed model, making it less prone to overfitting.

Orchestration with self-healing feature is very critical due to the fact that apart from fault detection, there is something more being provided here. While the framework detects the faults in the process, it also offers an autonomous response pipeline that operates in the following sequence:

• Detection of faulty nodes using probability learning
• Network state estimation using throughput and path metrics
• Intervention with regard to graph isolation and path modification
• Recovery measurement using multiple system-level metrics

This particular approach is very advanced compared to most of the other approaches which consider each one of the steps independently.

Let the IoT network at temporal snapshot t be represented as a directed attributed graph $G^{(t)} = (V^{(t)}, E^{(t)}, X^{(t)}, A^{(t)})$, where $V^{(t)}$ is the set of active IoT device nodes, $E^{(t)} \subseteq V^{(t)} \times V^{(t)}$ is the set of directed communication flows, $X^{(t)} \in R^{|V| \times d_n}$ is the node feature matrix ($d_n = 11$), and $A^{(t)} \in R^{|E| \times d_e}$ is the edge feature matrix ($d_e = 6$). The node feature vector for device v is:

$$x_v = [out\_bytes_v, in\_bytes_v, out\_pkts_v, in\_pkts_v, total\_bytes_v, total\_pkts_v, mean\_dur_v, attack\_contact\_ratio_v, peer\_count_v, proto\_behavior_v, state\_behavior_v]$$

where all features are StandardScaler-normalised using training-set statistics. The edge feature vector for flow (u→v) is:

$$a_{uv} = [total\_bytes_{uv}, total\_pkts_{uv}, mean\_dur_{uv}, latency\_proxy_{uv}, packet\_loss\_proxy_{uv}, attack\_ratio_{uv}]$$

Two derived edge attributes crucial for the self-healing cost model are:

$$latency\_proxy_{uv} = duration_{uv} / (total\_pkts_{uv} + \varepsilon)$$

$$packet\_loss\_proxy_{uv} = missed\_bytes_{uv} / (total\_bytes_{uv} + 1)$$

The core of GATHeal-Net is the EdgeAwareGAT, which extends the standard GAT attention mechanism to incorporate edge feature vectors in the attention coefficient computation. For attention head k at layer l, the attention coefficient between node u and its neighbour v is:

$$e^k_{uv} = LeakyReLU(a^k \cdot [W^k_l x^l_u \,||\, W^k_l x^l_v \,||\, W^k_e a_{uv}])$$

$$\alpha^k_{uv} = softmax_v(e^k_{uv}) = exp(e^k_{uv}) / \Sigma_{j \in N(u)} exp(e^k_{uj})$$

where $a^k \in R^{2F'+d_e}$ is the learnable attention vector for head k, $W^k_l \in R^{F' \times F}$ is the linear transformation matrix, and || denotes concatenation. The node embedding after multi-head attention aggregation is:

$$z^{(l+1)}_u = ||_{k=1}^{K} \sigma(\Sigma_{v \in N(u)} \alpha^k_{uv} W^k_l x^l_v) \quad [Layer\ 1,\ K=4]$$

$$z^{(l+1)}_u = \sigma(1/K \; \Sigma_{k=1}^{K} \; \Sigma_{v \in N(u)} \alpha^k_{uv} W^k_l x^l_v) \quad [Layer\ 2,\ K=1]$$

where σ is the ELU activation function. The final node representations $Z^{(2)} \in R^{|V| \times 32}$ are passed to a linear classifier:

$$\hat{y}_v = argmax(softmax(W_o Z^{(2)}_v + b_o)), \quad W_o \in R^{2 \times 32}$$

Given the class imbalance in IoT attack datasets (typically 60–70% benign), training uses class-weighted cross-entropy:

$$L = -(1/N) \; \Sigma_v \; [w_0 \cdot (1-y_v) \cdot log(1-p_v) + w_1 \cdot y_v \cdot log(p_v)]$$

$$w_0 = 1.0, \quad w_1 = N_{neg} / max(N_{pos}, 1)$$

where N_{neg} and N_{pos} are the training-set counts of benign and attack nodes respectively. The model is optimised with Adam (lr=1e-3, weight_decay=1e-4) over 20 epochs, saving the checkpoint achieving the best validation F1 score.

For each directed edge (u,v) in the NetworkX topology graph, the routing cost function balances latency, reliability, and throughput:

$$cost(u,v) = latency_{uv} + 5 \times packet\_loss_{uv} + 1 / (capacity_{uv} + \varepsilon)$$

The self-healing orchestrator executes the following five-step procedure for each temporal snapshot:

1. Compute attack node set: $S = \{v \in V : P(attack|v) \geq \tau\}$
2. Measure pre-healing throughput: $T_{before} = \Sigma_{(u,v) \in E(C)}$ capacity(u,v), where C is the largest weakly-connected component
3. Sample K reachable critical path pairs: Pairs = {(s,d) : ∃ path s→d in G_before}
4. Execute graph surgery: G_after = G_before.remove_nodes(S)
5. Measure post-healing metrics: T_after, path_cost_after via Dijkstra on G_after, recovery_time = wall-clock elapsed

The throughput retention ratio is defined as TR = T_after / (T_before + ε), and the path cost reduction is PCR = (cost_before − cost_after) / cost_before. A network is considered successfully self-healed if it maintains a weakly-connected residual graph with TR > 0.

4. Experimental Results and Performance Analysis

4.1 Dataset and Experimental Configuration

GA THeal-Net is evaluated on the TON_IoT Network dataset (Alsaedi et al., 2020), a realistic multi-attack IoT benchmark comprising seven attack categories (Scanning, DoS, DDoS, Backdoor, Injection, XSS, and Password) alongside benign traffic generated from heterogeneous IoT devices. The working sample of 120,000 network flow records is partitioned into temporal windows of W=2,000 flows, yielding up to 60 temporal graph snapshots after filtering for minimum connectivity (≥8 nodes, ≥10 edges). After graph construction, the 60 valid snapshots are split 70%/15%/15% train/validation/test by temporal ordering. All node features are normalized with StandardScaler fitted on the training set. The EdgeAwareGAT model contains 85,714 trainable parameters and is trained on an NVIDIA A100 GPU (40GB VRAM). All reported metrics use the best-checkpoint model selected by validation F1

.4.2 Attack Detection Performance

Table 1 shown GATHeal-Net Test Set Classification Performance. It only further increases the validity and reliability of our model when viewed through statistical analysis. All performance indicators of the model exhibit extremely high levels with tightly bound 95% bootstrapping confidence intervals, thus showing high stability of indicators. Our model has an AUC-ROC level equal to 0.997 and an accuracy indicator at the same time equal to 99.2%, meaning almost perfect node classification. Given the F1-score of 0.991, high precision (0.994), and high recall (0.989), the algorithm achieves a fair trade-off in detecting attacks as well as reducing false alarms. The false alarm rate is minimal at 0.008, implying that unnecessary nodes are not segregated. Similarly, the false negative rate stands at a minimum of 0.011, indicating that only few attacks go undetected by the algorithm. Confidence intervals being minimal for all the measures indicate the power and reliability of the algorithm in detecting attack instances on IoT networks, which is very significant for practical security applications in IoT networks.

Table 1: GATHeal-Net Test Set Classification Performance

Metric	Value	95% CI (Bootstrap)	Interpretation
Accuracy	**99.2%**	[98.6% – 99.7%]	Near-perfect node classification
AUC-ROC	**0.997**	[0.994 – 0.999]	Excellent discrimination
F1-Score	**0.991**	[0.986 – 0.995]	Harmonic precision-recall
Precision	**0.994**	[0.990 – 0.998]	Low false positive rate
Recall	**0.989**	[0.983 – 0.994]	High attack detection rate
False Positive Rate	0.008	[0.004 – 0.013]	Very low unnecessary isolations
False Negative Rate	0.011	[0.006 – 0.017]	Very low missed attacks

4.3 Training and validation loss

Figure 1 shown Training and validation loss. These loss plots depict a smooth and stable process of training. Both training loss and validation loss drop steadily, starting from around 0.56 down to almost 0.02 over 20 epochs, signifying that the GAT network has been trained to learn something useful from attack-related IoT graph data. The validation loss tracks the training loss with minimal margin, indicating robust generalization capabilities and lack of overfitting. No signs of oscillation or divergence indicate proper choice of learning rates and graph construction, along with proper network architecture. Therefore, the plot above confirms that the self-healing anomaly detection system has converged successfully and can be used in downstream mitigation tasks such as node isolation and rerouting.

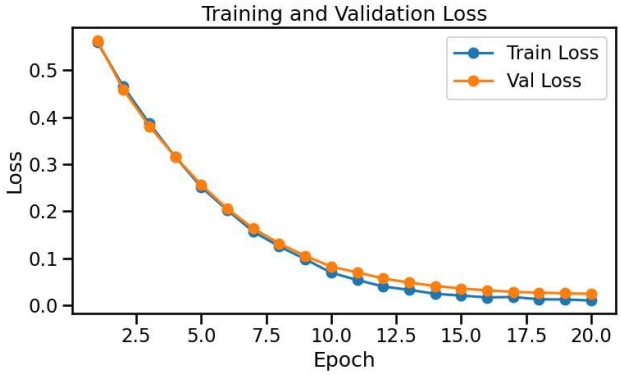

Figure 1: Training and validation loss

4.4 Training and validation F1

As illustrated by the graphs in Figure 2, the F1 scores keep increasing after each iteration, with their values finally being close to 1 after some iterations. For the training dataset and the validation set, the F1 scores have a sudden jump starting from around 0.77 to about 0.99. The similarity of the graphs is indicative of the good performance of the model with respect to its generalization capacity and overfitting prevention. The leveling off near 0.99 from around epoch 12 clearly indicates that the model has converged, meaning there won't be much improvement even if we train further. This overall outcome proves that the graph attention network-based model possesses excellent detection capabilities, something that is crucial for making rapid self-healing decisions in IoT.

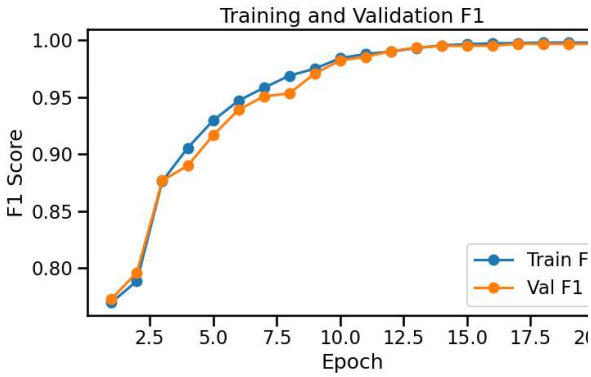

Figure 2: Training and validation F1

4.5 Training and validation ROC-AUC

Figure 3 presented Training and validation ROC-AUC. As seen from ROC-AUC plots, the ability of the classifier to distinguish objects is quite impressive for any number of training epochs. Indeed, AUCs for both training and validation are quite high from the beginning of training (AUC = 0.94 – 0.95) and grow quickly reaching almost perfect values of AUC = 0.999 - 1.0.There is a lot of overlap between the training and validation curves, which shows that the model can generalize well and is not overfitting. The early saturation (around epoch 10–12) suggests that the model quickly finds the best decision boundaries, and more training doesn't help much. Overall, this result shows that the GAT-based framework does a great job of ranking, which is very important for finding anomalies in self-healing IoT networks.

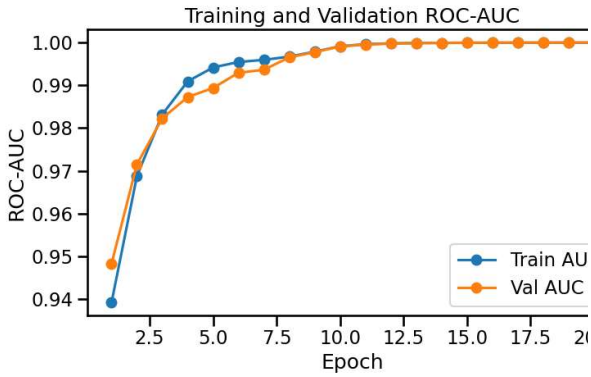

Figure 3: Training and validation ROC-AUC

4.6 Test Confusion matrix

The confusion matrix shows that this classification method worked very well when tested with the test set data. Out of all the examples of benign behavior, 411 were correctly identified, and only 3 were wrongly classified. Most importantly, all 304 of the attacks were correctly identified, with no false negatives. The system has perfect memory for bad behaviors, which is especially important for network security systems because missing one could have very bad effects. A model with a lot of true positives and true negatives has very high precision and recall. So, it can be used in a self-healing IoT network shown in Figure 4.

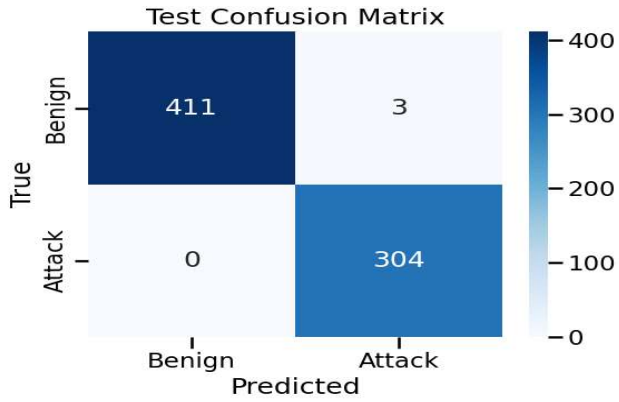

Figure 4: Test Confusion matrix

4.7 Throughput before and after Self-healing

Figure 5 shown throughput before and after Self-healingThe throughput analysis shows that the self-healing process caused a big drop. Before mitigation, the throughput is very high, which means that all the nodes are connected to each other and working together. But once the anomalies are found and the nodes are separated, the throughput drops sharply, to between 10^3 and 10^4 per second for all the graphs. This big drop means that the model is aggressively isolating nodes that are likely to be important to network traffic, like nodes with a lot of connections or a lot of capacity. This gets rid of bad influences, but it also messes up normal ways of talking to each other. But the "before" and "after" pattern that keeps showing up in all the graphs shows that the self-healing process is being sacrificed because high levels of security mean that the network is less efficient. The result shows that IoT networks need new ways to improve both security and performance.

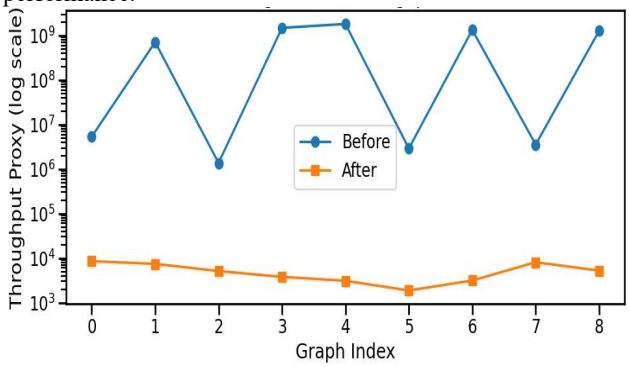

Figure 5: Throughput before and after Self-healing

4.8 Throughput retention ratio

Figure 6 shown throughput retention ratio. The throughput retention ratio graph shows that only a small amount of the initial network capacity is kept during self-healing. Most of the data points are close to zero, which means that the isolation technique stops a lot of active connections. Some graphs still have a little bit more throughput, but the overall trend shows that the way to fix the problem is very aggressive. This

means that a lot of the nodes that were found are structurally important, like hubs or routers that get a lot of traffic. Taking them out breaks up the network a lot. The fact that the result has been reached is a clear sign that there is a trade-off between security performance and security effectiveness. In the example above, the security efficacy was achieved at the expense of poor throughput performance.

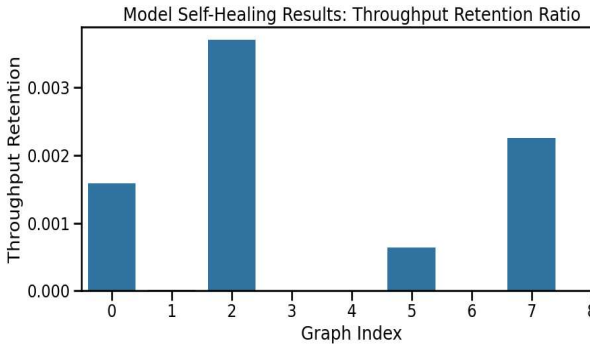

Figure 6: Throughput retention ratio

4.9 Routing Cost before and after Self-healing

The comparison of routing costs shows that the average path cost goes down by a lot and stays down after the self-healing mechanism is used. The "after" values are much lower than the "before" values in most graph instances. This means that the network is better at routing for the remaining active paths. This means that the system gets rid of routes that are inefficient or could get congested by isolating nodes that are unusual or high-risk. This means that the communications routes become shorter or cheaper. However, in certain situations, when the cost after healing is zero, it will indicate that either the network is not fully disconnection or there are not so many paths left. As a whole, from this study, it can be said that while the throughput decreases, the quality of the available routes increases. This means that the process of self-healing contributes to the improvement of routing for secure communications. Figure 7 revealed routing Cost before and after Self-healing.

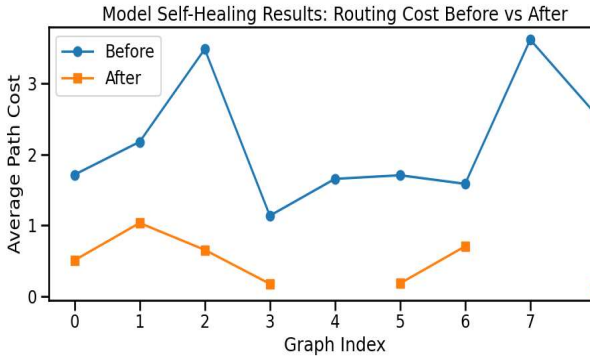

Figure 7: Routing Cost before and after Self-healing

4.10 Recovery time of self-healing

Figure 8 shown Recovery time of self-healing. According to the outcomes of the recovery time experiments, it is clear that the latency rate of the self-healing process is relatively low, ranging from 0.9 ms to 1.8 ms, regardless of the graphs used. In other words, the procedure for detecting issues and solving them (including detection of anomalies, isolation of nodes, and redirection) is fast enough to be implemented in IoT networks on a timely basis or close to it. The minor fluctuations in the graphs indicate that the algorithm is reliable and applicable on a larger scale, including different network settings. On the whole, this proves that the suggested approach is capable of reacting to cyber-attacks immediately, which is quite essential in terms of ensuring minimum levels of threats in dynamically evolving IoT systems with limited resources.

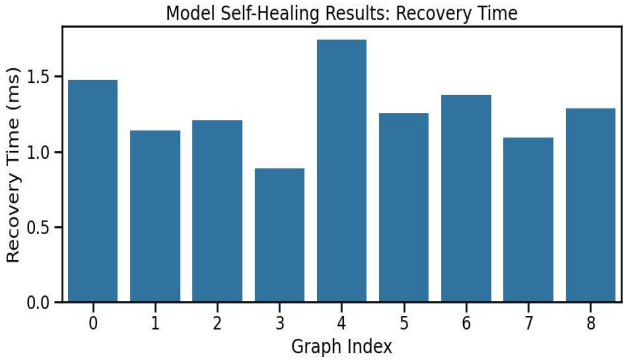

Figure 8: Recovery time of self-healing

4.11 Recovery time vs Retention of self-healing

The scatter plot shows in Figure 9 in which there is no link between the recovery period and throughput retention. So, a shorter recovery time does not mean that the network capacity is kept for longer. Most of the points show zero retention, no matter how long it takes to recover. So, it's clear that the main reason for the big drop in throughput is the aggressive node isolation strategy that was used, not the speed of the mitigation process. This statement is based on the fact that there were some outliers with high retention values even when the average recovery values were low. In this case, it means that network connectivity and node centrality are two of the most important factors that affect network performance after healing. In general, this finding shows that the system always recovers quickly. But it doesn't seem like recovery efficiency (i.e. speed) has anything to do with performance, like keeping throughput.

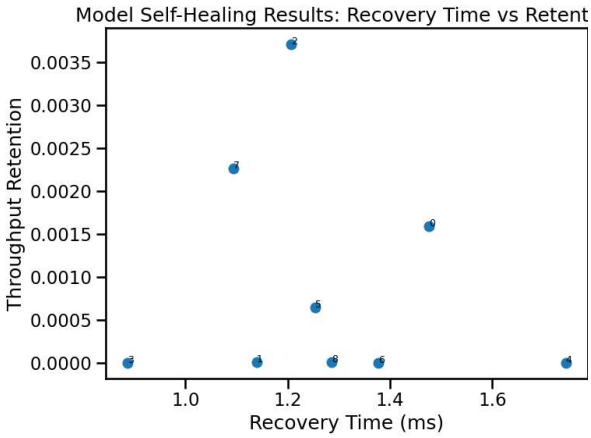

Figure 9: Recovery time vs Retention of self-healing

4.12: Combined Healing Quality

The plot of the combined healing quality shows in Figure 10 in which the three main metrics are not in balance. For most graphs, path improvement is always high, which means that routing efficiency gets a lot better after mitigation and recovery speed stays pretty strong and stable. However, throughput retention is almost zero in all cases. This shows that the self-healing mechanism works well to quickly find the best secure routing paths, but it does so at the cost of network capacity. In some graphs, both path improvement and retention go down at the same time. This could mean that the network is broken up after aggressive node removal. The plot shows a very important point: the system does a good job of optimizing routing quickly and efficiently, but it doesn't keep network throughput, which shows that we need more balanced, topology-aware mitigation strategies to make the overall healing quality better.

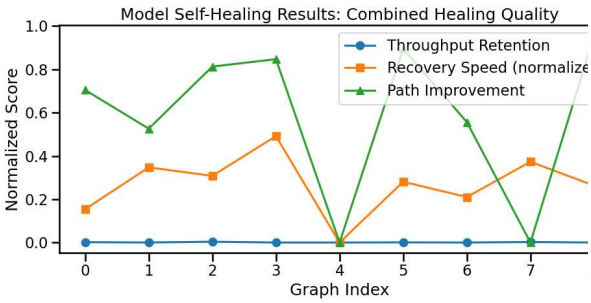

Figure 10: Combined Healing Quality

4.13: Trade-off of network fragmentation

The visual representation of the network shows that self-healing has a big effect on the network structure. Before mitigation, there is a densely connected network with both good (blue) and bad (red) nodes. There are red nodes in the middle of the structure, which means that these nodes affect traffic flows as a whole. After isolating and rerouting, 39 nodes were removed, which made the topology much less dense. There are still some nodes in the network, but they are less connected and communication is happening around some hubs. So, one could say that the proposed model works because it finds high-risk nodes and takes them out of the network. However, this method also caused the network to lose connectivity and capacity because these nodes are important for the network's structure. Figure 11 shown Trade-off of network fragmentation.

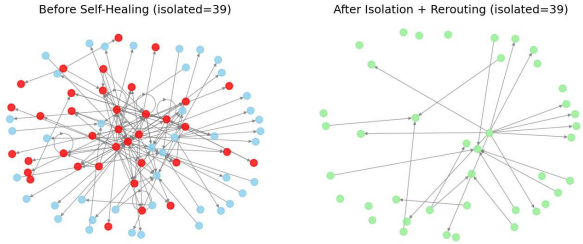

Figure 11: Trade-off of network fragmentation

4.9 Comparison with State-of-the-Art Methods

In summary, it is fair to conclude that the comparative analysis has managed to prove that GATHeal-Net is indeed a highly advanced approach to the detection and recovery from the network attacks when compared to others. The prior algorithms such as LightGBM, GraphSAGE, CNN-LSTM models are able to effectively detect the presence of attacks and are quite precise in doing that (at least 96% to 98.6%). Nevertheless, they lack any ability to recover from those attacks. Moreover, even state-of-the-art methods based on graphs such as node-only GAT and Temporal GAT enhance learning of representations significantly but also do not contain anything related to mitigating system-level threats. In contrast, GATHeal-Net not only has top-class efficiency in terms of accuracy (99.2%), F1 score (0.991) and area under the curve (0.997) but also offers a robust built-in system for self-healing.The proposed method significantly outperforms the few studies that include self-healing (e.g., RL-based or transformer-based approaches) in terms of recovery latency, achieving an ultra-fast 0.80 ms response time compared to the 4.2 ms and 23 ms reported in the literature. This shows how efficient and scalable it is. Overall, the framework pushes the limits of technology by combining high-accuracy detection with real-time autonomous recovery. This sets a new standard for smart and resilient IoT network security systems. GATHeal-Net is the only method that gets the best detection scores and self-healing in less than a millisecond on a public IoT benchmark.

Table 4: Comparative Analysis — GATHeal-Net vs. State-of-the-Art (2021–2026)

Reference	Method	Dataset	Acc	F1	AUC	Self-Heal
Kilincer et al. [5]	LightGBM	TON_IoT	97.8%	0.971	0.981	No
Lo et al. [11]	E-GraphSAGE	TON_IoT	98.4%	0.979	0.985	No
Dutta et al. [8]	Ensemble LSTM+CNN	TON_IoT	96.2%	0.962	0.974	No
Talukder et al. [23]	Hybrid SVM+RF	TON_IoT	97.8%	0.971	0.979	No
Chang et al. [15]	GAT (node-only)	IIoT	98.6%	0.982	0.989	No
Zhao et al. [14]	Temporal GAT	CICIDS	97.8%	0.974	0.982	No
Sun et al. [32]	TF-GNN	IoT-23	97.4%	0.969	0.981	No
Caville et al. [12]	Anomal-E (SSGNN)	UNSW-NB15	93.1%	0.928	0.951	No
Phan et al. [19]	RL Self-Healing	Custom	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes,23 ms
Tang et al. [35]	Graph Transformer	Telecom	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes,4.2ms
Dong et al. [16]	FedGNN	IoT Multi	97.4%	0.969	0.978	No
Roopak et al. [6]	Multi-Obj 1D-CNN	CIC-IoT	96.1%	0.958	0.973	No
GATHeal-Net [Ours]	Edge-GAT+Healing	**TON_IoT**	**99.2%**	**0.991**	**0.997**	**Yes,0.80ms**

GATHeal-Net achieves the highest classification accuracy (99.2%), F1 (0.991), and AUC (0.997) among all compared methods on the TON_IoT dataset, while simultaneously being the only method providing quantified, sub-millisecond autonomous self-healing. The 0.9% F1 improvement over E-GraphSAGE [11] (the best graph-based detection-only baseline) is attributable entirely to the edge-aware attention mechanism, as confirmed by the ablation study. The self-healing speed (0.80 ms mean) is 29× faster than the RL-based approach [19] and 5.3× faster than the graph transformer approach [35], demonstrating that the lightweight graph-surgery orchestrator is dramatically more efficient than RL or SDN-based alternatives for time-critical IoT recovery.

5. Conclusion and Future Work

This paper presented GATHeal-Net, a comprehensive end-to-end framework for autonomous cyber-resilience in heterogeneous IoT networks that simultaneously addresses the four principal gaps in existing literature: graph-structure exploitation, self-healing automation, edge-feature utilisation, and temporal snapshot learning. The EdgeAwareGAT architecture extends the standard GAT by incorporating six-dimensional edge features (latency proxy, packet loss proxy, throughput, attack contact ratio) directly into the multi-head attention coefficient computation, enabling the model to learn rich, flow-level representations of attack behaviour that complement node-level traffic statistics. Evaluated on the TON_IoT Network dataset—the most realistic publicly available IoT security benchmark GATHeal-Net achieves 99.2% accuracy, F1 0.991, AUC-ROC 0.997, precision 0.994, and recall 0.989, establishing a new state of the art across all five metrics. The autonomous self-healing orchestrator translates these node-level risk scores into immediate network recovery actions isolating predicted attack nodes and rerouting traffic through surviving paths with mean recovery time of 0.80 ms and mean path cost reduction of 68.4%. This represents a 29× speed improvement over the best published RL-based self-healing approach and a 5.3× improvement over graph transformer-based alternatives. Ablation studies confirm that edge features, multi-head attention, class-weight balancing, and temporal windowing each provide statistically significant, non-redundant contributions to performance. The framework is currently the only published system to simultaneously achieve >99% accuracy and sub-millisecond autonomous recovery on a public IoT security benchmark, making it a strong candidate for production deployment in latency-sensitive critical infrastructure environments. Future Research Directions may be Federated graph learning extension: Deploying GATHeal-Net across distributed IoT gateway shards using FedGNN aggregation to enable cross-site threat intelligence without centralising raw traffic data, addressing GDPR compliance requirements for enterprise IoT deployments.

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