LAUTECH Journal of Engineering and Technology 19 (3) 2025: 169-179

10.36108/laujet/5202.91.0361

Development of a Machine Learning-Based Cyber Threat Intelligence Dashboard System for Strategic Operations Centre

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Article Info

Article history:

Received: May 7, 2025
Revised: June 22, 2025
Accepted: June 28, 2025

Keywords:

Cybersecurity,
Dashboard,
Threat Intelligence,
Machine Learning,
Operations Centre

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ABSTRACT

Cyber Threat Intelligence (CTI) has become an essential element in the toolkit of Cybersecurity experts. In recent years, the significance of CTI has grown exponentially due to the increasing sophistication and frequency of cyber attacks. The incorporation of machine learning methodologies into CTI systems represents a substantial advancement in the domain. Conventional rule-based systems frequently fall short in identifying emerging threats and adjusting to the swiftly evolving strategies employed by cybercriminals. This paper presents a systematic appraisal of CTI dashboard systems that incorporate machine learning techniques to enhance strategic cybersecurity operations, which provide a user-friendly platform for real-time threat detection, analysis, and visualisation. At the core of this study is the utilisation of Gradient Boosting Trees (GBT) as the primary machine learning algorithm for threat detection and classification. The research only focused on the detection, analysis, and presentation of threat intelligence, leaving the specific response strategies at the discretion of the organisation implementing the system. The CTI dashboard system, which is the result of this work, showed strong performance, with a precision of 99.6%, a recall of 99.5%, and an F1-score of 99.97%. The system also showed an average response time of 3 minutes and 12 seconds, demonstrating its effectiveness in delivering timely and accurate threat intelligence.

INTRODUCTION

Cybersecurity has undergone a profound evolution in recent years, driven by the growing complexity and prevalence of cyber threats. The digital era has brought about unparalleled connectivity and technological progress; however, it has simultaneously rendered both individuals and organisations vulnerable to a wide array of cyber risks. The advent of big data has further amplified the potential of CTI systems. Nassar and Kamal (2021) noted that the sheer volume, velocity, and variety of data generated in modern networks provide both challenges and opportunities. While processing this data manually is unfeasible, machine learning models can sift through vast datasets to extract meaningful insights and detect subtle indicators of compromise. The true value of CTI lies not just in data collection and analysis, but in its presentation and actionability. Karlsson *et al.* (2021) emphasised the importance of intuitive dashboards that can distil complex threat data into comprehensible visualisations and actionable intelligence. Such dashboards enable stakeholders across an organisation, from security analysts to C-suite executives, to grasp the current threat landscape and make informed decisions rapidly. The development of CTI systems that leverage machine learning and provide user-friendly interfaces represents a convergence of multiple technological domains. Montasari et al. (2021) observe that the development of CTI using machine learning requires expertise in data science, cybersecurity, software engineering, and user experience design. This multidisciplinary approach is essential to create systems that are not only technically robust but also practical and accessible to end-users.

Panwar et al. (2022) proposed ThreatHawk, a threat intelligence platform designed to assist organisations in efficiently managing and analysing vast amounts of cybersecurity threat intelligence data. The platform automates the classification of threat intelligence based on severity, type, and origin. Evaluated with accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score metrics, ThreatHawk achieved an average accuracy of 92%, with precision, recall, and F1-score all above 90%. The study highlights its capability to provide valuable insights that improve security infrastructure and threat preparedness, while recommending further research to generalise findings and enhance features.

Nova (2022) emphasised the critical role of CTI in securing sustainable smart cities, focusing on three aspects: practical applications integrating CTI with security systems for data-driven roadmaps; the levels of CTI - tactical, operational, and strategic intelligence; and the CTI lifecycle, including requirement definition, data collection, processing, analysis, dissemination, and feedback. This lifecycle ensures relevant data is transformed into actionable insights and communicated effectively, enabling proactive defence and resilience, although the study did not address implementation challenges.

Several studies focused on automation and operational integration of CTI. Leite et al. (2022) presented a method to map Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (TTPs) from CTI reports to network incidents, creating attack patterns for threat identification. This automation frees security analysts to focus on other tasks and shows reliable results with malware samples. Leite et al. (2023) further advanced this by automating CTI report generation from Network Intrusion Detection System alerts, providing visualisations and allowing manual validation. Their approach matched existing reports and uncovered additional TTPs, enhancing threat awareness and reducing analyst workload.

Ramirez et al. (2022) studied CTI integration into incident response workflows, revealing challenges in data integration, information sharing, and incident prioritisation, and underscoring the need for better coordination. Kim and Park (2022) demonstrated that dashboards providing relevant contextual information improve situational awareness and decision-making in threat analysis, highlighting the importance of user interface design in CTI systems.

On CTI sharing and collaboration, Dunnett et al. (2022) proposed CTI sharing as a key solution to mitigate security risks in the Metaverse, including identity theft and network attacks. The study recommended user-centric CTI sharing models to expand information flows between users and organisations, enhancing security in virtual environments. Chen et al. (2022) compared threat intelligence sharing platforms using quantitative and qualitative methods, identifying strengths and weaknesses and providing design recommendations. Smith (2022) investigated privacy concerns in CTI dashboards, emphasizing the necessity of transparent policies, secure data handling, and user control over sharing sensitive information.

Addressing the broader context of CTI practice, Ainslie et al. (2023) analysed organisational CTI programs and the roles of practitioners, exploring how technology transforms traditional intelligence practices and how organisational decisions influence CTI sharing. Kayode-Ajala (2023) examined CTI's benefits and challenges within financial institutions, noting advantages such as real-time threat awareness and improved response but also barriers like information overload, system integration issues, cost, and lack of skilled personnel.

In managing and analysing growing CTI data volumes, Amaro et al. (2022) proposed an eight-step methodological framework including data ingestion, filtering, sharing, and timeline visualisation to provide context and improve vulnerability mitigation. This structured approach is supported by a tool assisting analysts in data analysis and timeline creation.

Innovative approaches using AI and machine learning have also emerged. Sufi (2023) generated a CTI index from social media data across multiple languages, using AI and Natural Language Processing to detect anomalies and explain root causes in cyber threats at the country level. The study validated daily threat indices and highlighted potential for improving cyber preparedness, while noting the need for scalability research. Ampel et al. (2024) introduced the Deep Learning Transfer Exploit Labeller (DTL-EL), leveraging deep transfer learning and self-attention mechanisms to improve exploit labelling accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score, thereby enhancing cyber threat mitigation capabilities. Ge and Wang (2024) developed SeqMask, a multi-instance learning model for extracting TTPs from CTI data, achieving high F1-scores and expert validation, though dependent on key keywords for optimal performance.

METHODOLOGY

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for the CTI Dashboard System includes some important components that serve as the foundation for the system's development and implementation. Figure 1 illustrates this framework, which consists of data collection, data preprocessing, dashboard system requirements, dashboard system design, dashboard development, system testing and evaluation. The framework shows a visual representation of the overarching structure of this research, serving as a roadmap for the development of the CTI dashboard.

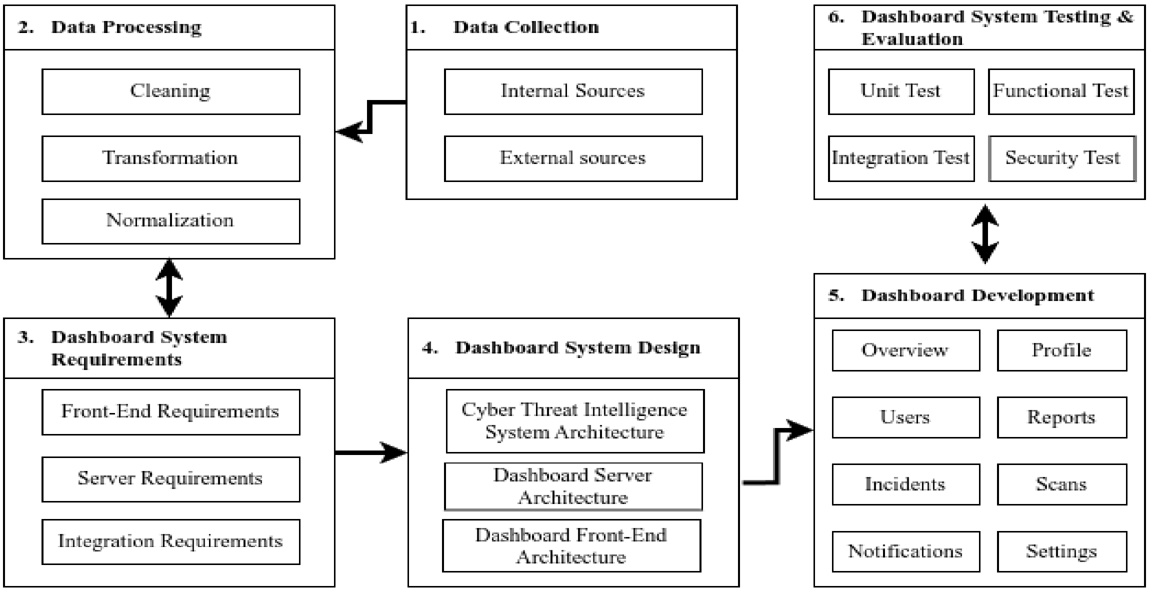


Figure 1 Conceptual Design for the CTI System

Data Collection: In this study, the data collection stage involved obtaining comprehensive network traffic data from the Nigerian Computer Emergency Response Team (ngCERT). The dataset includes an extensive set of network flow features such as packet counts, packet lengths, temporal measures, TCP flag counts, throughput metrics, and session behaviour indicators. Internal data sources included firewall and intrusion detection system logs, with external threat intelligence integrated from sources such as the Malware Information Sharing Platform (MISP), AlienVault OTX, and known vulnerability databases such as the National Vulnerability Database (NVD) and CVE Details. This labelled multi-source dataset forms the basis of efficient cyber threat detection and allows for dynamic information presentation in the CTI dashboard.

Data Preprocessing: After data collection, a structured preprocessing pipeline was employed to secure data quality, consistency, and readiness for machine learning analysis. Raw network flow data was subjected to label mapping to group records into benign and DDoS attack classes, and irrelevant attack types were discarded. Duplicate records were detected and removed to avoid redundancy. Columns with sero variance were removed to exclude non-informative features. Missing and infinite values were addressed by converting infinities to NaNs and imputing missing values as seros. The dataset was also shuffled to randomise sample order, making model training more robust. The whole preprocessing process was carried out in Python, using pandas and numpy libraries, and automated through scheduled scripts to keep the data updated for ongoing integration with the CTI dashboard.

Dashboard System Requirements: The development of the CTI dashboard system was systematically informed by well-specified functional and technical requirements mapped to the broader project goals and user expectations. The frontend was designed to offer a fully responsive interface with the ability to convey real-time cyber threat intelligence through concise, interactive, and user-friendly visualisations. Backend infrastructure was crafted to achieve high scalability, strict data security controls, and fine-tuned computational performance to effectively handle changing data volumes. Integration protocols were stringently defined to provide secure and stable connectivity to heterogeneous internal and external data repositories, implement strong user authentication controls—namely OAuth2—and support real-time consumption of threat intelligence feeds from standardised API interfaces.

Dashboard System Design: The dashboard system was designed using a modular design paradigm to achieve maintainability, scalability, and extensibility. The backend was developed using the FastAPI framework, which is defined by a set of strictly defined RESTful API endpoints enabling functionalities such as data fetching, user authentication and authorisation, and generation of detailed reports. Gradient Boosting Trees algorithm was incorporated into the backend to analyse incoming cybersecurity threat intelligence data. This model processes multiple features extracted from CTI inputs to classify threats by severity and origin. The model's outputs are exposed via dedicated API endpoints, allowing frontend components to retrieve prioritised threat insights efficiently and enhance the dashboard's real-time threat assessment capabilities. The frontend interface was built using React JS, based on a component-based architecture to build reusable and composable UI components for important views such as threat overviews, user profile management, vulnerability scan representations, and alert notification systems. The communication between frontend and backend modules was formally defined using the OpenAPI specification, thus providing explicit interface contracts enabling robust integration, automated testing, and prospective system improvements.

Dashboard Development: The dashboard was built on an incremental, test-driven methodology to achieve high software quality. It has a real-time interface displaying prominent threat metrics, such as prevailing threats, incident rates, and current alerts, to provide situational awareness. User management entails secure registration, role-based access control, and customizable profiles. Automated report generation creates exportable PDFs that summarise threat activity and mitigation strategies. OpenVAS platform integration provides the ability to visualise vulnerability scan results, exposing vulnerable assets. The alert system provides real-time alerts for new or high-severity threats, with adjustable thresholds for prioritising responses. An administrative panel offers control of data sources, alert rules, and user permissions for flexibility and security compliance. This holistic approach resulted in a scalable and robust CTI dashboard that was customised for cybersecurity analysts' requirements.

Dashboard Testing and Evaluation: A Systematic testing protocol was utilised to secure the reliability, functionality, and security of the CTI dashboard. Backend unit tests and API integration reached more than 80% code coverage, verifying core functionality. Functional testing, performed through Selenium, replicated cross-browser and multi-device user interactions to assert interface consistency. Integration testing assured proper data exchange between frontend and backend systems. Security tests using OWASP ZAP detected and remediated common vulnerabilities such as injection flaws and authentication weaknesses. Iterative refinement of usability and performance was informed by feedback from pilot users who are cybersecurity analysts before deployment.

Dataset

The data collection process for this work is centred on acquiring and preparing high-quality data for both training the machine learning model and populating the dashboard. The dataset provides a comprehensive collection of data for detecting, diagnosing and mitigating cyber threats using network traffic data, textual content and entity relationships. It is used for training machine learning models to identify various types of cyber threats, understand their underlying patterns, and recommend appropriate solutions. The dataset also analyses the relationships between entities, threat actors and attack patterns to gain insights into emerging cyber threats and their propagation mechanisms. For this research, the dataset was obtained from the Nigerian Computer Emergency Response Team (ngCERT). The data includes network traffic features, textual content, entity IDs, and relationships between entities, diagnosis information, and proposed solutions for detected cyber threats.

Algorithm

The machine learning algorithm used in this work is the Gradient Boosting Trees.

Algorithm:

1. Initial model with a constant value:

$$F_o(x) = arg_{\daleth} \min \sum_{i=1}^{n} L(\mathcal{Y}_i , \daleth) \qquad (1)$$

2. For m = 1 to N:

   i. Compute so-called pseudo-residuals:

$$r_{im} = -\left[\frac{\partial \mathrm{L}(y_i,F(x_i}{\partial \mathrm{F}(x_i)}\right]_{F(x)=F_{m-1}(x)} \qquad (2)$$

$$for\ i\ = 1, \dots , n$$

ii. Fit a base learner (or a weak learner, e.g. tree) closed under scaling to pseudo-residuals

iii. Compute multiplier $\daleth_m(x)$ by solving the following one-dimensional optimisation problem:

$$\daleth_m = arg_{\daleth} \min \sum_{i=1}^{n} L(y_i, F_{m-1}(x_i) + \daleth h_m(x_i)) \quad (3)$$

iv. Update the model:

$$F_m(x) = F_{m-1}(x) + \daleth_m h_m(x) \quad (4)$$

3. Output

$$F_M(x) \quad (5)$$

Design Process

The design process for the CTI dashboard system followed Agile modified structured approach to ensure the development of a functional and user-friendly solution. This Agile design process is iterative, allowing for continuous refinement of the system throughout its development. The goal is to create a CTI dashboard system that effectively meets user needs and provides valuable insights for strategic cybersecurity operations. The process is presented in Figure 2.

Establishing Design Requirements: The initial stage involves gathering and analysing user needs and system requirements. This includes understanding the specific CTI needs of strategic operations and identifying key features that the dashboard should incorporate.

Technology Stack Selection: Based on the established requirements, appropriate technologies were selected for each component of the system. This includes choosing FastAPI for the back-end, ReactJS for the front-end and scikit-learn for the machine learning model delevelopment.

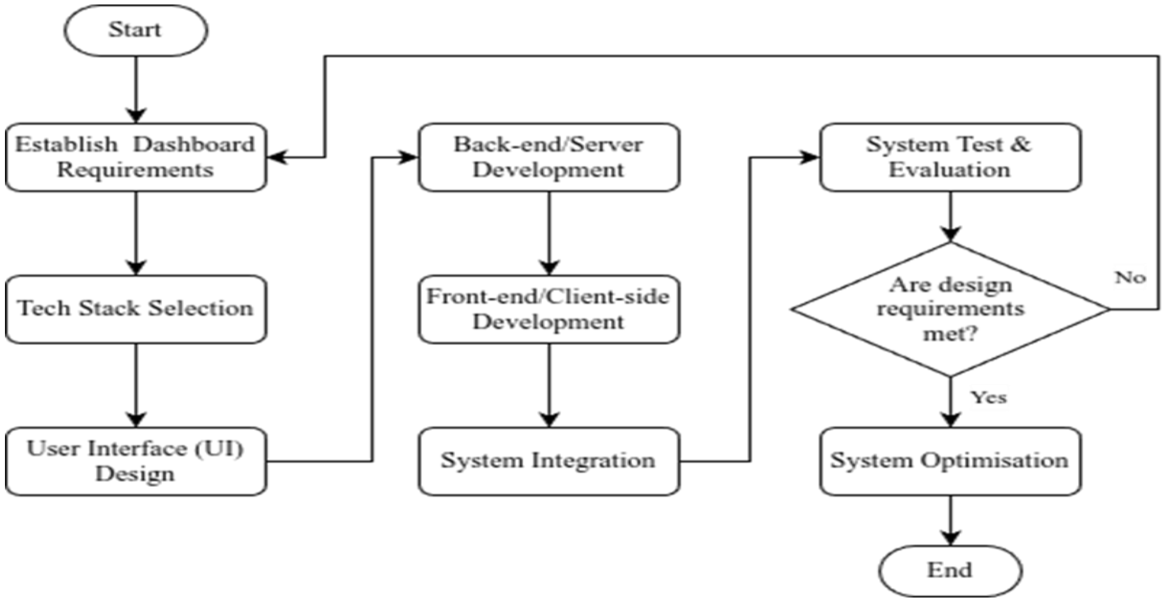

Start
Establish Dashboard Requirements
Tech Stack Selection
User Interface (UI) Design
Back-end/Server Development
Front-end/Client-side Development
System Integration
System Test & Evaluation
Are design requirements met?
No
Yes
System Optimisation
End

Figure 2 OC Dashboard Design Process

User Interface Design: The User Interface (UI) design focuses on creating an intuitive and efficient interface for the dashboard. In this stage, wireframes and mockups were created after considering factors such as data visualisation, user workflow, and accessibility.

Server Development: The backend server is developed using the FastAPI framework. This stage includes setting up the server architecture, designing API endpoints, and implementing the necessary logic for data processing and model integration.

Front-End Development: The ReactJS framework is used to build the frontend of the dashboard. This involves implementing the UI designs, creating interactive components, and establishing connections with the back-end API.

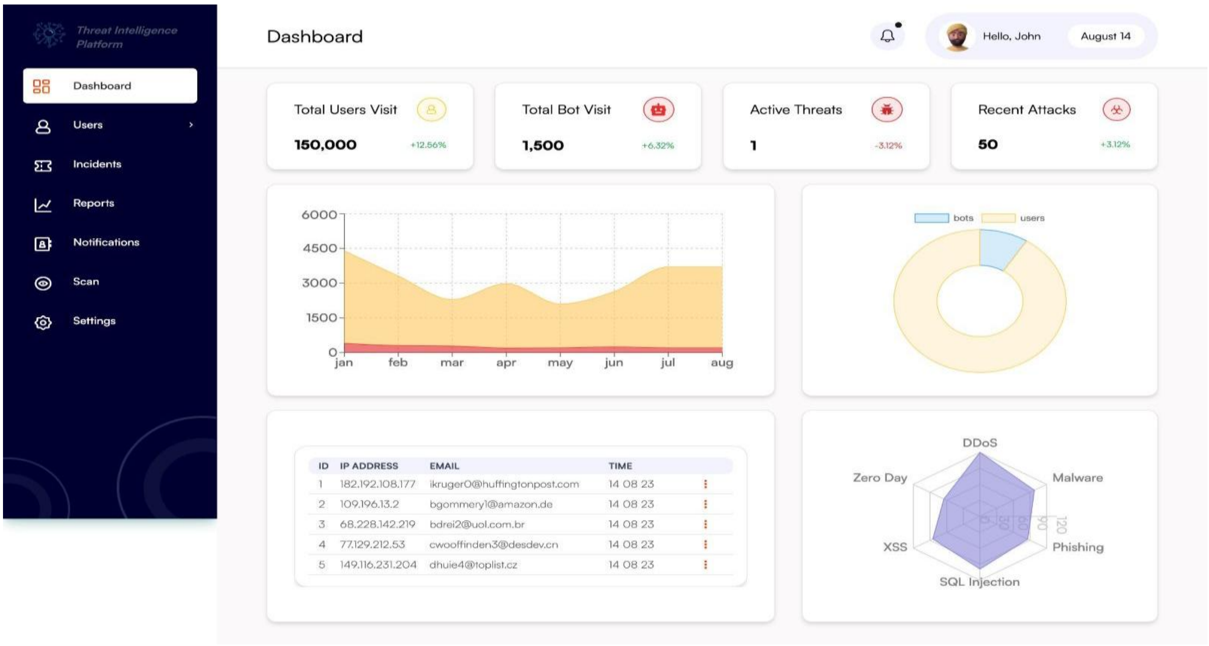
System Integration: The frontend, backend, and machine learning models are integrated into a cohesive system. This stage ensures smooth data flow between all components and resolves any integration issues.

System Testing and Evaluation: Rigorous testing is conducted to verify the functionality, performance, and security of the entire system. This includes unit testing, integration testing, and user acceptance testing.

System Optimisation: Based on the testing results and user feedback, the system undergoes optimisation. This may involve refining the machine learning model, improving back-end performance, or enhancing the user interface.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 3 depicts the CTI front-end development output. The dashboard provides up-to-the-minute insights into ongoing cyber threats, attacks, and suspicious activities. It actively monitors various sources such as network traffic, logs, user behaviours, and external threat feeds to detect abnormal patterns or signs of compromise in real-time. By instantly identifying unauthorised access attempts, unusual behaviours, or anomalous traffic, the dashboard helps in preventing data breaches and minimising downtime. The attribute also aids in proactive threat detection. It can trigger alerts or notifications whenever predefined security thresholds are breached, allowing SOC managers to take immediate actions to mitigate potential risks.



Total Users Visit 150,000 +12.56%

Total Bot Visit 1,500 +6.32%

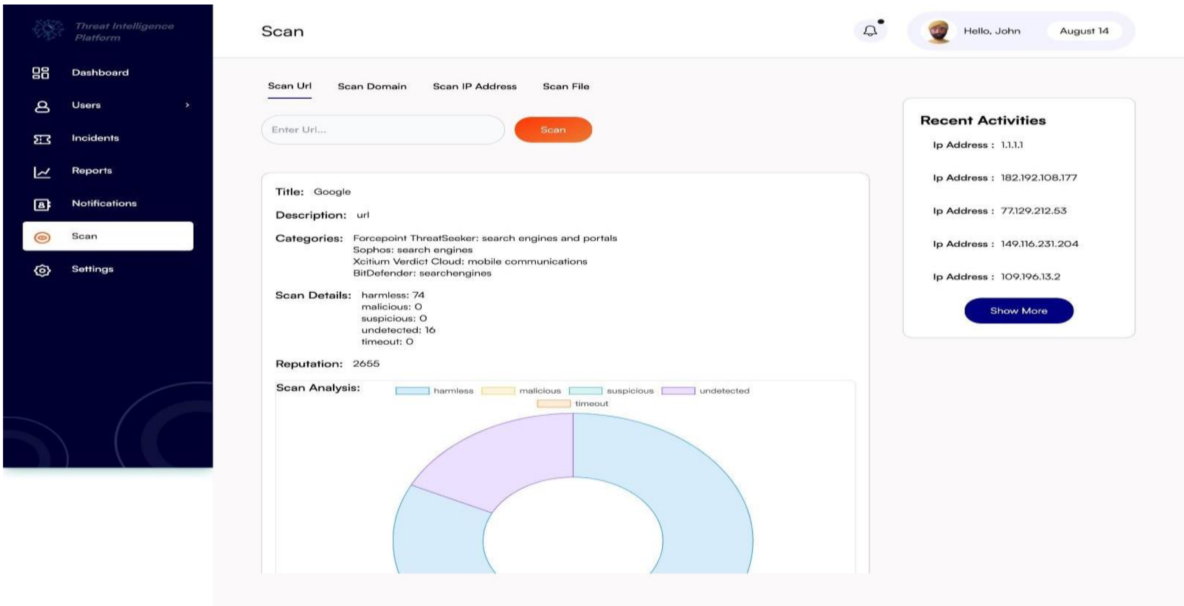
Active Threats 1 -3.12%

Recent Attacks 50 +3.12%

ID	IP ADDRESS	EMAIL	TIME
1	182.192.108.177	ikruger0@huffingtonpost.com	14 08 23
2	109.196.13.2	bgommery1@amazon.de	14 08 23
3	68.228.142.219	bdrei2@uol.com.br	14 08 23
4	77.129.212.53	cwooffinden3@desdev.cn	14 08 23
5	149.116.231.204	dhuie4@toplist.cz	14 08 23

Figure 3 Front-end CTI Dashboard Output

Similarly, Figure 4 presents the scan screen interface of the CTI dashboard, which facilitates vulnerability assessments across various input types, including URLs, domains, IP addresses, and files. Once initiated, the scan generates a structured report containing the scan title, descriptive summary, and detailed technical findings such as identified vulnerabilities, severity levels, and potential impacts.



Title: Google

Description: url

Categories: Forcepoint ThreatSeeker: search engines and portals
Sophos: search engines
Xcitium Verdict Cloud: mobile communications
BitDefender: searchengines

Scan Details: harmless: 74
malicious: 0
suspicious: 0
undetected: 16
timeout: 0

Reputation: 2655

Scan Analysis: harmless, malicious, suspicious, undetected, timeout

Recent Activities

Ip Address : 1.1.1.1

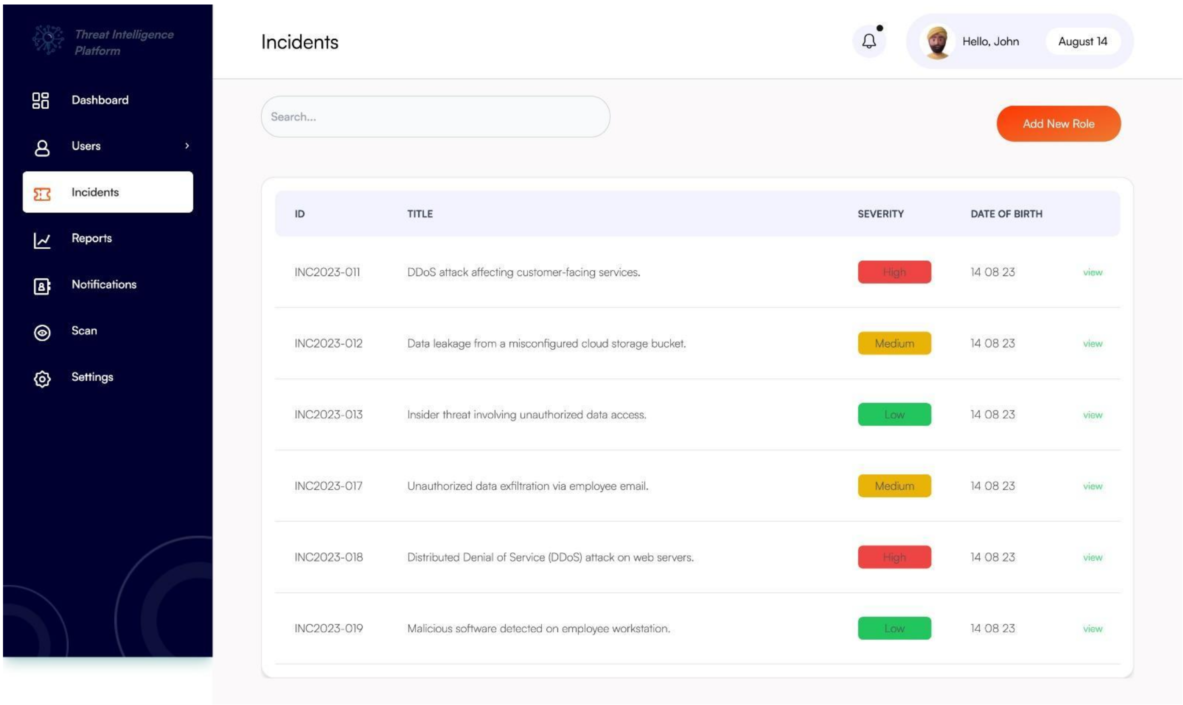
Ip Address : 182.192.108.177

Ip Address : 77.129.212.53

Ip Address : 149.116.231.204

Ip Address : 109.196.13.2

Figure 4 CTI Scan Screen Output



ID	TITLE	SEVERITY	DATE OF BIRTH	
INC2023-011	DDoS attack affecting customer-facing services.	High	14 08 23	view
INC2023-012	Data leakage from a misconfigured cloud storage bucket.	Medium	14 08 23	view
INC2023-013	Insider threat involving unauthorized data access.	Low	14 08 23	view
INC2023-017	Unauthorized data exfiltration via employee email.	Medium	14 08 23	view
INC2023-018	Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attack on web servers.	High	14 08 23	view
INC2023-019	Malicious software detected on employee workstation.	Low	14 08 23	view

Figure 5 CTI Incident Management Output Page

The interface enhances clarity by integrating a visual summary of results, typically through charts or status indicators that allow analysts to quickly interpret the security posture of the scanned asset. This visual layer complements the detailed report, supporting both immediate risk assessment and deeper analysis. Figure 5 also shows the incident management interface, which provides comprehensive details of the threat incidents. The incident management attribute of the CTI front-end encompasses capabilities to detect, alert, assets, and respond to security incidents. It facilitates real-time monitoring to swiftly identify breaches, generates alerts for prompt response, and aids in categorising and prioritising incidents. It also offers a visual representation of incident data, supports collaborative response coordination, facilitates digital forensics and investigation, guides in remediation, and enables post-incident analysis for improving future incident response strategies, ultimately enhancing the dashboard's role in maintaining website security and minimising potential risks.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The concept of CTI dashboard systems has been under focus over the years and has evolved with different definitions by researchers. Different attributes have been built for a clear view of CTI dashboard systems and their aspects. The system has been decomposed into several sub-attributes, which are hypothetical constructs to define the success of the system. This paper has charted research works, published articles and views of CTI experts to describe threat intelligence models and various concepts of CTI dashboard systems.

This study holds several significant benefits for the field of threat intelligence and Strategic Operations Centre (SOC) managers. Firstly, the research will contribute to the identification of the key challenges in existing threat intelligence tools and dashboards, enabling a better understanding of the areas that need improvement. Secondly, the designed user-centric CTI dashboard system will provide operators with actionable insights, allowing them to make informed decisions and respond effectively to threats. This will enhance the overall security posture of SOCs and mitigate potential risks. Operators will benefit from the study as it will provide them with a user-friendly and intuitive tool that streamlines their threat analysis process. Additionally, organisations that rely on websites for their operations will benefit from the enhanced security measures enabled by the dashboard. Ultimately, the study will contribute to improved website security and reduced vulnerabilities, benefiting both SOC managers and organisations. The work will be beneficial for both students and researchers who are working in the field of cyber intelligence and other cybersecurity fields. For future work, it is recommended that more in-depth research on CTI dashboard systems using other advanced machine learning algorithms should be embraced. It is expected that with more complex feature selections and robust datasets, better improvement is feasible.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author would like to thank Navy Captain/Prof IR Saidu and Prof JK Alhassan for their invaluable guidance, constant support and insightful advice. Additionally, special appreciation goes to Assoc Prof PO Odion, Assoc Prof ME Irhubhude, Dr AE Evwiekpaefe, Dr DT Chinyio, Dr MM Lawal and Dr IR Tebepah for their constructive feedback throughout this work.

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