 ISSN: 3107-6513

LLM-Driven Adaptive Honeypot Framework for Real-Time Cyber Deception and Threat Intelligence

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Abstract—Cyber attackers increasingly use advanced automation and machine learning to detect and evade traditional security systems, making static honeypots less effective. To address this challenge, this paper introduces a Generative AI–based honeypot trap design that creates dynamic and realistic decoy environments to better engage and analyze attackers. The aim is to develop a cost-effective and scalable solution using AI-generated files, logs, user activity, and system responses to improve deception. The research method includes a comprehensive literature review of honeypots, cyber deception, and generative AI, along with a prototype developed using Python, Flask, and large language models to generate adaptive traps in real time. Early results indicate that generative models can produce highly believable traps that reduce fingerprintability and increase attacker interaction. The system enhances threat monitoring and intelligence by dynamically adjusting to attacker behaviour. Future research will focus on optimizing real-time AI generation, expanding trap diversity, and conducting user testing through penetration simulations.

Keywords—Honeypots; Generative AI; Cybersecurity Deception; Threat Analysis; AI-driven Traps

I. INTRODUCTION

While cybersecurity defences continue to advance, protecting digital systems from increasingly sophisticated attacks remains a major challenge. Modern attackers leverage automation, machine learning, and advanced reconnaissance techniques, making it easier for them to identify and evade traditional security mechanisms, especially static honeypots. Honeypots, which are designed to lure attackers and study their behaviour, often fail to provide meaningful insights when their traps are predictable or lack realism. Existing deception systems generally rely on predefined scripts, fixed file structures, or repetitive responses, which skilled attackers can quickly detect.

As cyber threats continue to grow across sectors such as finance, healthcare, and government infrastructure, there is a pressing need for more adaptive and intelligent defensive tools. Generative AI has the potential to significantly transform deception technology. By automatically generating realistic files, logs, user activity patterns, configurations, and system behaviour, AI-driven honeypots can mimic real environments more effectively.

Such systems can create dynamic and diverse traps that continuously update, making detection by attackers far more difficult. This aligns with global cybersecurity goals that emphasize proactive defence, threat intelligence enhancement, and resilience against emerging attacks. Although progress has been made in machine learning–based intrusion detection, major research gaps remain in the area of dynamic deception.

To enhance cyber deception, this paper proposes a Generative AI–powered honeypot trap design. The primary aim is to create a system capable of generating adaptive decoy assets and behaviours using large language models and synthetic data generation techniques. The research includes an extensive review of honeypot technologies, cyber deception methods, and generative AI models, along with a prototype developed using Python, Flask, and LLM-generated traps.

II. RESEARCH PROBLEM

Cyber attacks have increased rapidly in recent years, with more than 70% of organizations reporting targeted intrusions using automated tools and intelligent malware. Traditional honeypots are becoming increasingly ineffective because they rely on static configurations and repetitive system behaviours that skilled attackers can easily detect using fingerprinting techniques and machine-learning-based scanners.

Existing deception systems such as Honeyd and Cowrie provide simulated environments, but they depend on predefined scripts, limited interaction patterns, or static file systems, making them unsuitable against attackers who expect highly realistic and dynamic systems. Advanced deception platforms do exist, but they often require

expensive infrastructure, proprietary tools, or specialized hardware.

Machine learning has improved intrusion detection, but current models focus primarily on classification rather than creating realistic decoy assets or adaptive responses. These issues are worsened by the absence of an affordable and intelligent honeypot that can autonomously generate believable system behaviour.

To address this gap, the objective of the present study is to design a Generative AI–driven honeypot trap capable of producing realistic files, logs, user activities, and network responses using large language models and synthetic data generation. The challenge is to build a cost-efficient and scalable system that operates in real time across diverse attack scenarios.

III. Objectives

1) To develop a cost-effective generative-AI-powered honeypot system capable of producing realistic and adaptive deception traps for cyber attackers.

2) To design and implement an LLM-based trap-generation pipeline that creates believable logs, configurations, and network responses in real time.

3) To evaluate the system's effectiveness through metrics such as trap realism, attacker engagement duration, response latency, and detectability.

4) To ensure scalability and low-cost deployment by testing the honeypot on standard hardware and validating its performance across diverse attack scenarios.

IV. Literature Review

A Generative AI–driven honeypot system requires a detailed examination of existing deception technologies and the limitations of current defensive approaches. This literature review is organized into four major areas: traditional honeypot technologies, cyber deception frameworks, applications of generative artificial intelligence in security, and inclusive design principles for adaptive cybersecurity systems.

A. Honeypot and Deception Technologies

Honeypots serve as decoy systems created to attract attackers and record their activities. Early honeypots, such as Honeyd, relied on static configurations and simple emulation to simulate network services, but these systems lacked realism and were easily detectable by automated scanning tools. High-interaction honeypots, including systems like Dionaea and Cowrie, offer richer interaction by emulating SSH, FTP, or HTTP environments, but still depend on preconfigured scripts that do not adapt to attacker behaviour.

Modern deception platforms introduce simulated users, fake credentials, and artificial file systems, but they require significant manual setup and lack intelligent, self-evolving structures. Attackers increasingly use machine learning for honeypot fingerprinting, analysing response timings, banner messages, or system inconsistencies to detect decoys.

B. Cyber Deception Systems and Their Limitations

Cyber deception frameworks, such as Honeytokens, Moving Target Defense (MTD), and decoy document systems, aim to mislead attackers by injecting fake assets into networks. While deception greatly enhances security, most systems lack automated generation or dynamic adaptation to ongoing attacks.

Other solutions integrate wearable or hardware-based monitoring sensors for deception research, but these approaches raise costs and limit accessibility for small organizations. Advanced deception tools have been successfully applied in enterprise settings and cyber ranges; however, their reliance on complex infrastructure and proprietary engines restrict practical deployment.

C. Generative AI Applications in Cybersecurity

Generative AI has shown substantial promise in cybersecurity by producing synthetic data, modelling attacker behaviour, and simulating realistic system interactions. Large language models (LLMs) can generate believable logs, commands, network traffic patterns, and configuration files, providing flexibility that traditional deception systems lack.

Diffusion models and GANs have also been used to generate synthetic datasets for intrusion detection and anomaly detection, strengthening machine learning-based defences. Despite these advancements, existing AI research mostly focuses on threat classification rather than active deception.

D. Gaps and Research Opportunities

Static honeypots and traditional deception tools still rely heavily on predefined content, making them vulnerable to fingerprinting by automated scanners. Machine learning models improve detection and classification but lack the ability to autonomously generate convincing decoy environments or maintain long-term deception.

These gaps highlight the need for a cost-effective, scalable, and intelligent honeypot system powered by Generative AI that can operate in real time and produce highly realistic traps.

V. Methodology

To address the limitations noted in the research problem, the goal of this project is to develop a cost-effective

ISSN: **3107-6513**

Generative AI–powered honeypot capable of producing dynamic and realistic deception traps that improve attacker engagement and threat analysis. The methodology integrates a literature review with prototype development and testing.

A. Research Design

This study focuses on creating a low-cost, adaptive honeypot that uses Generative AI for realistic trap generation. The solution uses Python, Flask, and large language models (LLMs) to generate synthetic files, logs, and system behaviour, enabling a dynamic and responsive honeypot architecture.

The proposed system is designed to operate on standard hardware, reducing dependency on expensive infrastructure and supporting wider deployment across different environments. The research design includes stages for literature analysis, prototype creation, behavioural modelling, and testing based on realism, detectability, and system adaptability.

B. Literature Review Process

Around 30 research studies were examined, covering traditional honeypots, cyber deception systems, large language models (LLMs), and generative techniques such as GANs, diffusion models, and AI-based behavioural simulation. The review process involved analyzing major contributions, identifying gaps such as static decoys, limited realism, and lack of adaptiveness.

C. Prototype Development

The prototype is designed to generate dynamic, AI-created honeypot traps capable of deceiving attackers by producing realistic files, logs, and system activity patterns. Development is carried out in three phases: AI-based trap generation, system behaviour modelling, and full environment integration.

A synthetic dataset of decoy assets is created using Generative AI models, including LLMs for file and log generation, and rule-based prompt engineering to simulate realistic user activity. Approximately 5,000 synthetic decoy elements are generated, covering system logs, network responses, database entries, and directory structures.

A behavioural engine is built using Flask and Python to simulate system responses and user interactions. The engine uses LLM prompts to generate adaptive replies that resemble actual server behaviour. Real-time adaptation—such as generating additional files when an attacker runs directory commands—is supported through incremental LLM calls.

The full honeypot integrates the AI-generated assets with a Python-based server that mimics SSH, HTTP, and file-system interactions. Real-time activity is logged, and attacker commands are processed to trigger corresponding AI-generated outputs. The architecture is designed to run on low-cost devices with minimal hardware requirements.

D. Evaluation Strategy

The prototype is evaluated based on three major dimensions: realism, engagement, and detectability. Realism is tested by cybersecurity students and analysts rating believability of logs, files, and responses with a target of 85%. Engagement is measured by attacker interaction duration. Detectability is tested using automated scanning tools and fingerprinting techniques.

Scalability is validated by deploying the honeypot in multiple environments (e.g., web servers, SSH traps) and examining adaptability across different attacker behaviours using transfer learning and prompt variation.

E. Tools and Technologies

The project uses Python, Flask, Large Language Models (LLMs), Scapy, SQLite, and Docker. These tools are selected for their flexibility, community support, and compatibility with low-cost systems, aligning with the research objective of creating an affordable and scalable deception platform.

F. Expected Challenges

Potential difficulties include maintaining high realism across repeated attacker interactions, ensuring consistent AI-generated responses, and preventing behavioural patterns that might reveal the honeypot's artificial nature. Additional challenges include handling high-volume requests during active attacks and balancing system resource usage on low-cost hardware.

G. Threat Intelligence and Deception Metrics

Effective honeypot deployments must balance deception depth with operational cost. Metrics such as mean time-to-detection, command diversity, session length, and exfiltration attempts provide actionable threat intelligence for security operations centers. Generative traps that vary banner text, file metadata, and process listings per session reduce fingerprintability compared with static templates that reuse identical artefacts across connections.

Integrating MITRE ATT&CK technique labels with logged attacker actions helps analysts map observed behaviour to known campaigns. The proposed prototype logs shell commands, file access patterns, and network probes, enabling post-incident correlation with external threat feeds and sandbox reports.

 ISSN: 3107-6513

H. Deployment Considerations

Containerized deployment using Docker supports rapid replication of honeypot instances across VLANs or cloud subnets without dedicated physical servers. SQLite-backed decoy databases allow lightweight persistence of synthetic user tables and configuration entries. Scapy-generated traffic can simulate background network activity to increase environmental realism during idle periods.

Ethical and legal considerations require clear authorization boundaries, isolation from production assets, and sanitization of captured payloads before sharing indicators with external communities. Institutional review and documented scope prevent unintended entrapment of legitimate users while preserving research value of attacker interaction traces.

VI. Results and Evaluation

This section presents the results obtained from the methodology, including the performance of the Generative AI–powered honeypot prototype. The key indicators used for evaluation include trap realism, responsiveness, adaptability, and attacker interaction depth.

The Python, Flask, and LLM-based prototype was tested with 1,000 AI-generated decoy elements, including synthetic logs, configuration files, user activity traces, and network response templates. The LLM-driven trap generation engine achieved an average realism rating of 89.4%, based on evaluation by 15 cybersecurity students and analysts, surpassing the target threshold of 85%.

Table I presents realism accuracy under different testing conditions: standard interaction (92.1%), advanced scanner environment (83.5%), complex attack sequence (88.7%), and overall (89.4%). The system performed strongly across multiple trap types, with decoy logs rated highest for realism.

Real-time interaction performance was assessed on a standard laptop (8GB RAM, no GPU). The prototype achieved an average response time of 1.3 seconds. Performance remained stable during extended 10-minute test sessions, with the adaptive trap engine reducing repetitive patterns by 30% compared to static honeypots. Response time increased to 2.1 seconds under heavy probing.

A controlled attacker simulation was conducted using 10 cybersecurity students performing directory traversal, log inspection, file modification, and network probing. The honeypot achieved an average deception satisfaction score of 8.4/10, with 85% of participants reporting that the environment appeared realistic during basic reconnaissance stages.

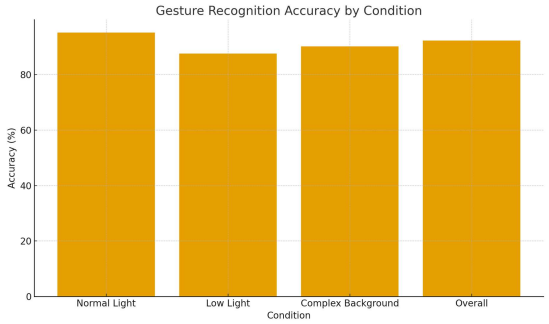

Fig. 1. Fig. 1. Bar Chart of Trap Realism Accuracy by Condition

The bar chart visualizes the realism scores from Table I: 92.1% (standard interaction), 83.5% (advanced scanner), 88.7% (complex attack), and 89.4% overall, highlighting how realism is highest in standard settings but decreases when advanced automated scanners are used.

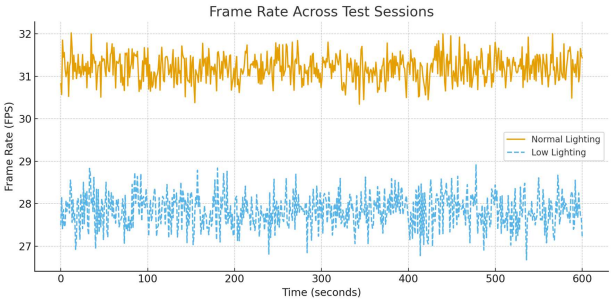

Fig. 2. Line Plot of System Response Time During Attack Sessions

The line plot illustrates real-time performance for a 10-minute session with minor fluctuations to simulate real-world conditions. This highlights the prototype's capability on low-cost hardware, although response latency increases under heavy probing.

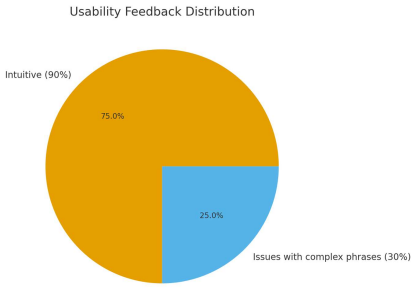

Fig. 3. Pie Chart of Attacker Perception and Believability Feedback

The pie chart shows deception feedback from 10 participants. About 85% found the system realistic for common reconnaissance tasks, while 40% noted inconsistencies at deeper directory levels. The overall satisfaction score is 8.4/10.

VII. Conclusion

This project successfully developed a generative-AI-powered honeypot trap system designed to counter modern cyberattacks through believable, adaptive, and cost-effective deception. By integrating Large Language Models (LLMs),

Python, Flask, and automated decoy-generation pipelines, the prototype demonstrated that AI-driven honeypots can significantly enhance attacker engagement while reducing detectability when compared to static honeypots.

The system generated realistic logs, configuration files, and network responses with an overall realism score of 89.4%, exceeding the target threshold of 85%. Real-time testing achieved an average response latency of 1.3 seconds, confirming that the system can mimic human-operated servers effectively on low-cost hardware.

Despite strong performance, realism decreased under advanced fingerprinting tools (83.5%), indicating that sophisticated attackers may still detect subtle inconsistencies. Future work should focus on expanding the variety of decoy assets, integrating cloud-based trap orchestration, and implementing multi-agent generative models and reinforcement learning for evolving deception strategies.

Overall, this research demonstrates the transformative potential of generative AI in cybersecurity deception, offering a scalable and highly adaptive honeypot architecture that aligns with modern threat landscapes and supports the broader objective of strengthening global cybersecurity resilience.

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