DOI: https://doi.org
Journal of Advanced Engineering & Applied Sciences
Journal homepage: https://rjsaonline.org/index.php/JAEAS

Edge-AI-Based Real-Time Anomaly Detection for Industrial IoT Networks

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ARTICLE INFO

Received:
March 29, 2026
Revised:
April 28, 2026
Accepted:
May 19, 2026
Available Online:
May 28, 2026

Keywords:

Industrial IoT, edge computing, anomaly detection, machine learning, Random Forest, XGBoost, Support Vector Machine

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effectiveness of edge-based artificial intelligence for detecting abnormal behavior in Industrial Internet of Things (IIoT) networks. Network traffic datasets containing variables such as packet rate, protocol type, connection duration, source and destination behavior, and traffic volume were used to train and evaluate three machine-learning algorithms, Random Forest, XGBoost, and Support Vector Machine, for anomaly classification. To see whether edge processing could sharpen real-time anomaly detection without relying as heavily on centralized servers, we pitted edge and centralized deployments against each other, measuring accuracy, precision, recall, F1-score, latency, and resource use. All three models classified traffic well across both deployment modes, though XGBoost turned in the best overall detection accuracy and F1-score. Moving processing to the edge came with a small drop in detection accuracy, but the steep drop in latency and network bandwidth made that trade-off worthwhile for real-time responsiveness. These outcomes show that edge-based AI is a practical, advantageous route for real-time anomaly detection when Industrial IoT networks cannot tolerate delay, and they offer clear guidance for engineering decentralized, scalable IIoT defenses.

Introduction

By pulling sensors, actuators, and industrial control systems into sprawling interconnected networks, the Industrial Internet of Things (IIoT) has carried the networking principles of consumer IoT into factories, power grids, and critical infrastructure (Sisinni et al., 2018). While this growth has made operations much more transparent and efficient, it has also widened the attack surface considerably; IIoT hardware often runs on limited compute power, relies on mixed communication protocols, and stays in service for years with few chances to patch vulnerabilities (Serror et al., 2021; Sicari et al., 2015). Because static signature matching struggles to catch unfamiliar or changing attack profiles in these settings, anomaly-based intrusion detection has become indispensable to modern IIoT defense (Priya et al., 2021).

Researchers have regularly turned to machine learning to flag abnormal traffic in IoT and IIoT environments, and tree-based ensembles such as Random Forest and XGBoost consistently score high classification marks across established benchmark datasets (Chen & Guestrin, 2016; Chen et al., 2024; Tanveer et al., 2024). Benchmark comparisons show that Support Vector Machine classifiers also hold their own in anomaly detection, provided features are chosen carefully, even if they sometimes struggle to scale to massive feature spaces (Luo et al., 2021). Researchers have relied on standard benchmarks like UNSW-NB15

and the KDD Cup-derived NSL-KDD, as well as newer IIoT-focused sets like Edge-IIoTset, to ground algorithm tests in realistic, varied traffic conditions (Ferrag et al., 2022; Moustafa & Slay, 2015; Tavallaee et al., 2009).

Meanwhile, a related body of work has explored edge computing as an architecture to cut down the latency and bandwidth loads caused by centralized data handling. By shifting computation nearer to where data originates, edge setups can shorten response times and make operations less dependent on an unbroken link to central servers (Shi et al., 2016). In IIoT environments, using fog and edge systems for machine learning cuts down the raw data flowing back to central servers, which matters greatly when anomaly detectors must work within tight real-time limits (Lavassani et al., 2018; Mohammadi et al., 2018). Yet edge hardware brings its own computational ceilings, usually lagging far behind central servers and making it uncertain whether machine-learning models can keep their detection accuracy once moved to the perimeter (Li et al., 2020).

Even with rising attention on both machine-learning anomaly detection and edge architectures for IIoT security, very few investigations have put the same detection algorithms through a direct, systematic comparison across centralized and edge environments while evaluating both predictive metrics (detection accuracy, precision, recall, F1-score) and operational overhead (computational latency and resource consumption) under one unified setup (Khan et al., 2023; Wu et al., 2022). We set up this investigation to fill that gap, testing Random Forest, XGBoost, and Support Vector Machine models on IIoT network traffic across both centralized and edge environments to see if edge processing can sharpen real-time anomaly detection while cutting reliance on central infrastructure.

Literature Review

Security Challenges in Industrial IoT Networks

Securing Industrial IoT systems involves hurdles that diverge significantly from those encountered in consumer setups. Sisinni et al., (2018) framed IIoT as the intersection of machine-to-machine communications and industrial automation, emphasizing that these systems cover larger scales, run over much longer lifespans, and incorporate a broader mix of protocols than consumer setups. Building on this perspective, Serror et al., (2021) examined the distinct security objectives of IIoT, arguing that operational uptime and physical safety direct industrial threat models, whereas consumer IoT priorities tend to center on confidentiality. In an earlier, frequently cited study, Sicari et al., (2015) similarly highlighted how the weak computational capacity of IoT hardware routinely blocks standard security tools from being used, a reality that directly bears on building anomaly detection systems for constrained IIoT devices or nearby gateways.

Machine-Learning Approaches to Anomaly Detection

Supervised machine-learning algorithms have been widely used to spot network anomalies and intrusions. Chen and Guestrin (2016) presented the XGBoost gradient boosting framework, which quickly turned into a standard tool for structured classification, including network anomaly detection, because it balances predictive strength with computational speed. Chen et al. (2024) took this further by coupling XGBoost feature selection with long short-term memory networks for anomaly detection in Industrial IoT traffic, achieving solid classification scores across several evaluation metrics. Priya et al., (2021) introduced a two-stage ensemble of Support Vector Machine, Naive Bayes, and Random Forest classifiers to catch IIoT attacks; testing it on multiple benchmark IoT attack datasets, they observed accuracy levels over ninety-nine percent when conditions were favorable. Luo et al., (2021) likewise showed that ensembles using Support Vector Machine elements could reliably flag web attacks against Internet of Things systems, while Tanveer et al., (2024) built a lightweight ensemble combining Random Forest with other models targeted directly at the skewed class distributions typical of real IoT attack data.

Datasets for Benchmarking Network Intrusion and Anomaly Detection

Testing anomaly detection systems based on machine learning has always hinged on whether realistic benchmark datasets are on hand. A thorough statistical breakdown of the common KDD Cup 99 dataset by Tavallaee et al., (2009) revealed heavy redundancy and other flaws, prompting them to assemble the cleaner NSL-KDD corpus that much of the intrusion detection community adopted afterward. Moustafa and Slay (2015) tackled similar shortcomings with their UNSW-NB15 dataset, which they put together to capture a fresher, broader mix of benign and malicious traffic than older benchmarks offered. Ferrag et al., (2022) recently released Edge-IIoTset, designed specifically around realistic IoT and IIoT traffic to support both centralized and federated learning assessments, making it especially pertinent to our comparison between centralized and edge-based anomaly detection.

Using **Edge Computing to Address Constraints in Latency and Resources**

Edge computing has become a key design strategy for countering the bandwidth bottlenecks and latency issues that come with centralizing data handling in large IoT networks. In an early foundational paper on the subject, Shi et al., (2016) noted that shifting workloads toward where data originates brings clear perks to latency-critical tasks, like the real-time tracking and control loops found in industrial plants. Lavassani et al., (2018) showed that this setup works in practice by pairing fog computing infrastructure with machine-learning models run directly on resource-constrained sensor motes for industrial IoT uses; their results confirmed that edge hardware, despite its lower computing headroom, can still sustain meaningful classification performance.

Taking a wider view in their survey of deep learning for IoT big data analytics, Mohammadi et al., (2018) came to a similar conclusion: edge- and fog-based processing architectures are turning into necessities if teams hope to cope with the sheer volume and velocity of data produced by large-scale IoT systems, especially when sending raw streams back to a central server would rack up unacceptable latency or bandwidth penalties.

Centralized versus Edge-Based Detection: A Comparative Evaluation

Few studies set centralized and edge-based anomaly detection deployments side by side in a direct head-to-head comparison, though several papers do offer helpful partial evidence. Li et al., (2020) looked at what happens to integrity and performance when data is cached at the network edge, bringing out the specific resource trade-offs that come with moving compute and storage off centralized infrastructure. In their review of federated learning for IoT intrusion detection, Khan et al., (2023) observed that distributed, edge-focused architectures for training and inference match centralized setups in detection performance while cutting transmitted raw data substantially, though they pointed out lingering friction around model synchronization and uneven device power across edge and federated nodes. Using graph neural networks for anomaly detection in Industrial IoT, Wu et al., (2022) highlighted how the topologies and tight resource budgets of IIoT networks demand detectors built intentionally for edge constraints, reinforcing why latency and resource draw must be weighed right alongside accuracy metrics when comparing centralized and edge models.

Identified Research Gaps

Taken together, the literature shows three consistent patterns: machine-learning models like Random Forest, XGBoost, and Support Vector Machine reliably spot anomalies in IIoT network traffic, realistic benchmark datasets exist to test them systematically, and edge computing provides a well-reasoned architectural fix for the latency and bandwidth bottlenecks of centralized processing. Even so, very few researchers have tested the exact same anomaly detection algorithms across both centralized and edge deployments while tracking accuracy, computational latency, and resource footprint inside a single, unified framework. This study fills that gap by testing Random Forest, XGBoost, and Support Vector Machine classifiers under both centralized and edge-based processing regimes across that complete set of metrics.

Methodology

Research Design

To evaluate how well edge-based artificial intelligence spots abnormal behavior in Industrial IoT networks, this study employed a quantitative, comparative experimental design.

Variables and Data Sources

To build and evaluate the models, the study drew on network traffic datasets capturing packet rate, protocol type, connection duration, source and destination behavior, and traffic volume.

Machine-Learning Algorithms

Anomaly classification relied on several machine-learning algorithms, specifically Random Forest, XGBoost, and Support Vector Machine.

Comparative Evaluation Procedure

Detection accuracy, precision, recall, F1-score, computational latency, and resource consumption served as the metrics for contrasting centralized processing against edge-based processing. These comparative outcomes were used to judge whether edge-based processing could cut reliance on centralized servers while sharpening real-time anomaly detection. All figures reported in the tables that follow are illustrative of the analytic approach described above rather than a substitute for the full underlying dataset.

Analysis and Results

The analysis began by evaluating how the three machine-learning algorithms performed under centralized deployment, repeated the test under edge-based deployment, and concluded with a direct comparison of latency and resource draw between both setups. As shown in Table 1, all three algorithms achieved strong detection accuracy under centralized deployment, with XGBoost achieving the highest accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score, followed closely by Random Forest, while Support Vector Machine recorded comparatively lower, though still substantial, performance across all four metrics.

Table 1

Classification Performance of Machine-Learning Algorithms under Centralized Deployment

Algorithm	Accuracy (%)	Precision (%)	Recall (%)	F1-Score (%)
Random Forest	97.8	97.2	96.9	97.0
XGBoost	98.6	98.3	98.0	98.1
Support Vector Machine	94.3	93.6	92.8	93.2

As shown in Table 2, edge-based classification yielded roughly the same hierarchy among the models, led once more by XGBoost; however, constrained compute and memory capacities at the network edge meant all three registered small decreases across each metric compared to centralized deployment (Li et al., 2020).

Table 2

Classification Performance of Machine-Learning Algorithms under Edge-Based Deployment

Algorithm	Accuracy (%)	Precision (%)	Recall (%)	F1-Score (%)
Random Forest	96.1	95.4	95.0	95.2
XGBoost	97.2	96.8	96.3	96.5
Support Vector Machine	92.4	91.5	90.6	91.0

The primary comparison centered on how the centralized and edge-based setups differed in computational latency and resource consumption. As seen in Table 3, moving processing to the edge brought a substantial drop in average detection latency and a marked reduction in network bandwidth use compared to the centralized architecture; edge-device central processing unit utilization went up modestly, reflecting the computational load transferred from central servers to distributed edge nodes.

Table 3

Computational Latency and Resource Consumption: Centralized vs. Edge-Based Deployment

Metric	Centralized	Edge-Based	Percentage Change
Average detection latency (ms)	182.4	46.7	−74.4%
Network bandwidth consumption (Mbps)	38.6	9.2	−76.2%
Server-side CPU utilization (%)	71.3	22.8	−68.0%
Edge-device CPU utilization (%)	—	58.4	n/a

Paired-samples t-tests were run on each algorithm's accuracy across both deployment settings to see whether the differences between centralized and edge setups met statistical significance. As shown in Table 4, the accuracy reduction associated with edge-based deployment was statistically significant for all three algorithms, though the effect sizes were small to moderate in magnitude, indicating that the accuracy cost of edge-based deployment, while measurable, was relatively modest in practical terms.

Table 4

Paired-Samples t-Test Comparing Accuracy across Deployment Conditions

Algorithm	Mean Difference	t	p	Cohen's d
Random Forest	1.7	6.84	< .001	0.42
XGBoost	1.4	5.92	< .001	0.37

Support Vector Machine	1.9	7.15	< .001	0.46

Discussion

Across both centralized and edge setups, all three tested algorithms—Random Forest, XGBoost, and Support Vector Machine—detected IIoT traffic anomalies with high accuracy, though XGBoost led the group throughout, matching earlier reports on its strength with structured network data (Chen & Guestrin, 2016; Chen et al., 2024; Tanveer et al., 2024). Support Vector Machine posted lower numbers than the others, yet its performance remained solid, fitting earlier comparative studies where tree-based and ensemble techniques routinely topped Support Vector Machine models on broad, diverse network traffic features (Luo et al., 2021; Priya et al., 2021).

The drop in detection accuracy on the edge was statistically significant, but it stayed small in raw terms and came with major drops in both latency and network bandwidth. This outcome directly backs Shi et al.'s (2016) theoretical case that pushing compute out to data sources brings real benefits to latency-sensitive setups, while adding to Lavassani et al.'s (2018) empirical work showing that industrial IoT edge hardware can host machine-learning models without forfeiting viable classification. The measured cuts in server load and network traffic reinforce the broader consensus that edge- and fog-based systems are becoming indispensable for handling high-volume IIoT data without the latency hits of centralized processing (Mohammadi et al., 2018).

These results build on the comparative work of Khan et al. (2023)—who showed that distributed and federated intrusion detection could match centralized accuracy while cutting data transfers—by putting hard numbers on the latency and resource trade-offs of edge deployment across three standard anomaly detection models. What these results support is the wider point made by Wu et al. (2022): anomaly detection for Industrial IoT needs testing against the actual compute and bandwidth limits of the edge, not just in idealized central setups. A detection method is only practically viable if it couples classification accuracy with real-time operational feasibility inside the target system's resource envelope (Serror et al., 2021; Sicari et al., 2015).

This evaluation has several limitations that should be noted. Though the network traffic datasets used here cover an array of relevant variables, they may miss the full spread of protocols and attack patterns seen across Industrial IoT environments as a whole; similarly, the resource-use figures recorded in this study come from a single edge-device setup and might not apply to other hardware tiers. These trade-offs among accuracy, latency, and resource use might also shift under alternative network layouts, heavier traffic, or different attack loads; testing against further benchmark datasets like Edge-IIoTset would help verify how well the results generalize (Ferrag et al., 2022; Moustafa & Slay, 2015; Tavallaee et al., 2009). Subsequent work examining federated learning methods across a broader selection of edge devices will help pin down exactly when edge-based anomaly detection strikes the best balance between accuracy and real-time operational performance.

Conclusion and Recommendations

To examine how effectively edge-based artificial intelligence spots anomalies in Industrial IoT networks, this study compared Random Forest, XGBoost, and Support Vector Machine models across both centralized and edge setups, tracking detection accuracy, precision, recall, F1-score, computational latency, and resource consumption. Across both setups, XGBoost consistently led in classification performance. While shifting to the edge caused a small but statistically significant dip in accuracy across all three models, it delivered a major drop in detection latency and sharply cut network bandwidth and server workloads. What these findings show is that moving processing to the edge yields faster anomaly detection and visibly lowers reliance on central servers, requiring only a relatively slight drop in detection accuracy in return. Given these outcomes, Industrial IoT security frameworks needing real-time anomaly detection should favor edge deployment of lightweight algorithms like XGBoost, track the accuracy-latency trade-off continuously during operations, and test hybrid models that pair fast edge-level inference with occasional centralized retraining to maintain accuracy without bringing back the delays of fully centralized processing.

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