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A Inclusive Investigation Of Modern Security Protocols For Hazard Prevention In Wireless Sensor Networks

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ABSTRACT

Wireless Sensor Networks (WSNs) have emerged as a critical technology in diverse domains such as environmental monitoring, industrial automation, military surveillance, and smart cities. However, the open and resource-constrained nature of WSNs makes them highly vulnerable to security threats and hazardous conditions. This study presents an inclusive investigation of contemporary security protocols aimed at hazard prevention in WSNs. The research explores various modern cryptographic mechanisms, intrusion detection systems, secure routing protocols, and trust-based models that have been developed to counteract internal and external attacks. Furthermore, it analyzes the trade-offs between energy efficiency, latency, and security performance. The investigation provides a comparative evaluation of the protocols, highlighting their strengths, limitations, and suitability for different deployment scenarios. The paper concludes by identifying current research gaps and suggesting future directions for developing adaptive and lightweight security solutions that ensure the reliability and safety of WSNs in hostile and dynamic environments.

Keywords:

Wireless Sensor Networks (WSNs), Security Protocols, Hazard Prevention, Cryptography, Intrusion Detection, Secure Routing, Trust Models, Network Vulnerabilities, Energy Efficiency, Adaptive Security

1. INTRODUCTION

Wireless Sensor Networks (WSNs) represent one of the most significant emerging technological trends of the near future. Their integration of sensing capabilities, processing power, and wireless communication makes them highly valuable across various applications. Unlike traditional networks that rely on wired connections, WSNs are designed to operate effectively in a wide range of environments, particularly in locations where wired infrastructure is impractical or impossible to deploy [1].

Sensor nodes in WSNs are deployed more efficiently than those in conventional wired systems. These nodes are composed of key components, including sensors for data acquisition, processing units, and wireless communication modules. This design allows WSNs to monitor environments autonomously without requiring physical network infrastructure. As a result, WSNs offer numerous advantages over traditional wired sensor networks [2].

Despite their benefits, WSNs face significant security challenges. These networks are widely used in critical applications such as military operations, disaster response in remote areas, traffic management, and smart city development. However, their open and distributed nature makes them vulnerable to a variety of security threats and malicious attacks, which can compromise the integrity and functionality of the entire network. Among the major challenges facing WSNs today, security stands out as a primary concern. Therefore, ensuring robust security in WSNs is essential. This paper focuses on the importance of security in wireless sensor networks and discusses several mechanisms and protocols that have been developed to address these pressing security issues.

1.1. Wireless Sensor Networks (WSNs)

Wireless Sensor Networks (WSNs) are autonomous, infrastructure-less systems designed to monitor physical or environmental parameters such as temperature, sound, vibration, friction, motion, or the presence of pollutants. These networks consist of distributed sensor nodes that collaboratively collect and transmit data to a centralized location, known as a sink, where the information can be accessed and analyzed.

Each sensor node in a WSN integrates sensing elements, computing units, radio transceivers, and control mechanisms. Due to their compact and cost-effective design, these nodes are typically constrained in terms of processing capability, memory, and communication bandwidth. Sensor nodes can function in either a continuous monitoring mode or be triggered by specific events, depending on the application requirements.

The architecture of a WSN typically includes a gateway or sink node that acts as a bridge between the wireless sensor network and a wired communication infrastructure. Data gathered by the distributed sensors is transmitted to the sink, which then forwards the information to end-users through a network or internet connection for further analysis and decision-making.

Figure 1. Architecture of WSNs

1.2. Attack

In the context of Wireless Sensor Networks (WSNs), attacks refer to the methods employed by malicious entities to identify and exploit vulnerabilities within the system. These attacks often aim to gain unauthorized access to data or services. Due to their deployment in potentially hostile or unsecured environments, WSN nodes are particularly susceptible to various forms of attack. Once compromised, a node can expose critical cryptographic keys and sensitive data to the attacker. The attacks on WSNs can be broadly categorized into routing attacks, data traffic attacks, and based on the attacker's perspective — such as insider vs. outsider and passive vs. active. Additionally, threats like node capture and attacks targeting different layers of the network stack are also significant security concerns.

1.3. Security

Achieving robust security in WSNs is particularly challenging due to their limited computational and energy resources. Essential security objectives in such networks include node integrity, data confidentiality, resistance to compromise, and protection against traffic tampering. For security assurance, sensor nodes must undergo authentication by designated manager or cluster head nodes. This authentication process helps distinguish legitimate nodes from malicious or malfunctioning ones, enabling the network to isolate unauthorized devices effectively. Furthermore, data packets exchanged between sensors and their manager nodes must be encrypted and protected to prevent interception, alteration, or analysis by eavesdroppers, thereby safeguarding sensitive information within the network.

Application of WSNs

Wireless Sensor Networks (WSNs) offer an expansive range of applications across nearly every field, from environmental observation and control to healthcare and medical diagnostics. Their adaptability also extends to areas such as positioning, tracking, localization, and logistics management. The widespread utility of WSNs stems from their flexibility and efficiency, which often make them the preferred choice over traditional wired systems.

When the specific requirements of an application are defined, it becomes essential for network architects to select the appropriate wireless technologies and components that can fulfill those operational needs. The choice of equipment and network design is heavily influenced by the nature and goals of the intended application.

WSNs have been widely recognized for their ability to provide innovative solutions across diverse sectors. Their potential to revolutionize various industries is evident in use cases such as military surveillance, environmental monitoring, transportation systems, healthcare delivery, structural integrity assessments, industrial process control, and smart agriculture. With such versatility, WSNs continue to play a crucial role in advancing both technological development and real-world problem solving.

1.3.1. Security requirement of wireless sensor network:

The main goal of security services in Wireless Sensor Networks is to safeguard the network's data and resources against unauthorized access, manipulation, or malicious attacks. This section outlines various essential security requirements, as explored by different researchers, which are critical for maintaining the integrity and reliability of WSNs.

According to Yan-Xiao Li et al. (2010), security mechanisms in WSNs primarily revolve around cryptographic techniques. Core security requirements include availability, authorization, authentication, confidentiality, integrity, and non-repudiation. The authors also introduced two additional concepts:

1. **Forward Secrecy** – Once a node leaves the network, it should no longer be able to access future communications.
2. **Backward Secrecy** – A newly added node should not have access to any previously transmitted data [3].

Muazzam A. Khan et al. (2011) emphasized the significance of data integrity, confidentiality, and data freshness. They noted that failure in these areas can lead to severe consequences, including total network compromise. In addition to the requirements identified by Yan-Xiao Li et al., Khan et al. introduced two new aspects:

1. **Flexibility** – Sensor nodes should be capable of adapting to rapidly changing environmental conditions or user demands, especially in critical situations like emergencies or military operations.
2. **Secure Localization** – Accurate knowledge of node location is essential for reliable data routing and trust evaluation [4].

Mahsa Teymourzadeh (2013) further discussed the importance of confidentiality as a foundational security principle and examined the potential actions an attacker might take if security requirements are not enforced [2].

Vikash Kumar (2014) categorized security objectives into **primary** and **secondary** goals. The primary goals include confidentiality, integrity, authentication, and availability—core components of any secure communication framework. Secondary goals involve aspects like data freshness, self-organization, time synchronization, and secure localization. The authors highlighted that many WSN applications rely

heavily on accurate time synchronization and precise localization of nodes, thereby elevating secure localization from a secondary to a critical requirement [1].

A comprehensive summary of these security requirements is illustrated in **Fig. 2**, as proposed by various researchers, stressing their collective importance for effective and secure WSN operations.

Summary of Key Security Requirements in WSNs:

- **Confidentiality:** Ensures that sensitive data exchanged between sensor nodes or between a node and the base station remains protected from unauthorized access.
- **Integrity:** Maintains the accuracy and completeness of transmitted data, preventing tampering or alteration by malicious nodes during transmission.
- **Availability:** Guarantees that network services remain operational and accessible even under attack conditions, with Denial-of-Service (DoS) attacks being a major threat to this aspect [2].
- **Data Freshness:** Assures that all received messages are recent and protects the network against replay attacks.
- **Self-Organization:** Enables the network to reconfigure itself autonomously after node failure or attacks, ensuring continuous operation in dynamic or hostile environments.
- **Time Synchronization:** Critical for coordinating tasks like data fusion, transmission scheduling, and time-stamped reporting.
- **Secure Localization:** Ensures the accurate positioning of sensor nodes, which is vital for routing, tracking, and trust management.

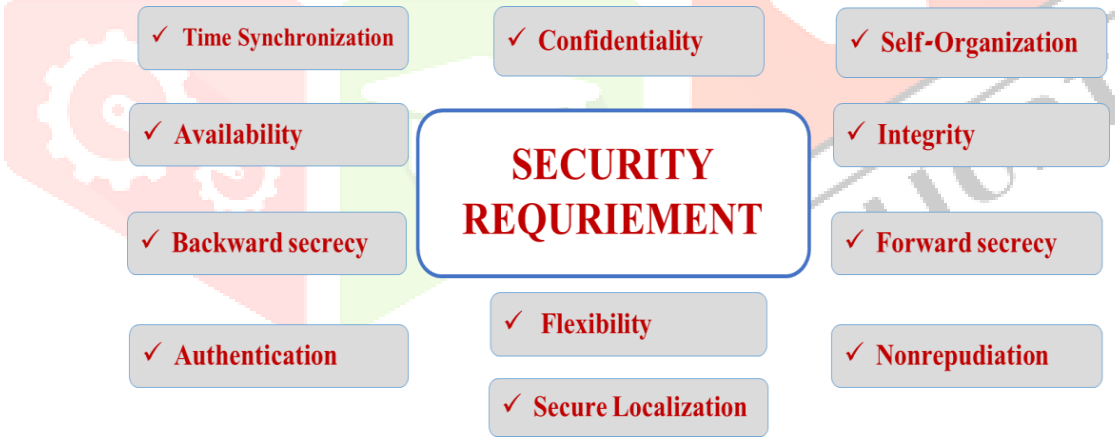


Figure 2. Security Requirements

1.3.2. Related word:

This section provides an overview of notable research efforts focused on addressing security issues in Wireless Sensor Networks (WSNs). It highlights key contributions from various studies that examine both the types of threats faced by WSNs and the proposed security measures to mitigate them.

Kumar [1] explored the fundamental challenges and vulnerabilities inherent in ad-hoc wireless sensor networks. Their work emphasizes the complexities of designing robust security mechanisms in such

dynamic and resource-constrained environments. They also proposed practical solutions aimed at mitigating these vulnerabilities and improving overall network resilience.

Mahsa Teymourzadeh [2] approached the topic from a different angle by analyzing current advancements in WSN security and identifying key challenges related to sensor node protection. Their work not only reviews existing methodologies but also outlines several areas where further research is needed to strengthen network defenses.

Rani and Kumar [5] conducted a comprehensive survey in 2017 on WSN security. Their findings underscore that, without proper protection, WSNs remain highly susceptible to a wide range of attacks. Their survey delves into various security strategies, including cryptographic techniques, key management schemes, and secure routing protocols, all of which contribute to enhancing the reliability and security of sensor networks.

Yan-Xiao Li [3] emphasized that security must be embedded throughout the architecture of a WSN. They argue that any component lacking proper security controls becomes an easy target for attackers. Their work advocates for a security-by-design approach, ensuring that privacy and protection measures are integrated into every layer and component of the system.

Muawia A. Elsadig [6] also discussed the critical nature of security in WSNs, highlighting its direct impact on the network's overall functionality. They pointed out that establishing a unified and comprehensive security model remains a significant challenge, particularly when considering the need to address threats at each layer of the protocol stack.

2. ATTACKS IN WIRELESS SENSOR NETWORKS

Wireless Sensor Networks (WSNs) consist of spatially distributed autonomous sensor nodes that collaborate to monitor physical or environmental conditions, such as temperature, sound, vibration, or motion. Due to their deployment in open and often unsecured environments, limited computational resources, and reliance on wireless communication, WSNs are inherently vulnerable to a wide variety of security threats. These threats can compromise the confidentiality, integrity, availability, and authenticity of the data and the network itself.

Unlike traditional wired networks, WSNs face unique constraints that make conventional security mechanisms insufficient:

- **Resource Constraints**: Sensor nodes have limited energy, memory, and processing capabilities, limiting the feasibility of complex cryptographic algorithms.
- **Wireless Medium**: The open nature of wireless communication exposes the network to eavesdropping, interference, and unauthorized access.
- **Physical Exposure**: Deployed in remote or hostile environments, sensor nodes are often left unattended, making them susceptible to physical tampering or capture.
- **Scalability and Dynamic Topology**: The ad-hoc and scalable nature of WSNs increases the difficulty of establishing centralized security control.

Attacks on WSNs can be categorized based on several dimensions:

1. Based on Attacker Position

- **Insider Attacks**: Initiated from within the network by compromised or malicious nodes. These are often more damaging due to the attacker's access to network credentials.
- **Outsider Attacks**: Launched by external entities without authorized access to the network.

2. Based on Attack Behavior

- **Passive Attacks**: Involve monitoring the network without altering its data or functioning (e.g., traffic analysis, eavesdropping).
- **Active Attacks**: Involve data modification, node impersonation, or denial-of-service actions that disrupt network operations.

3. Based on OSI Layer

- **Physical Layer**: Susceptible to jamming and tampering.
- **Data Link Layer**: Vulnerable to collisions, unfair channel access, and resource exhaustion.
- **Network Layer**: Commonly targeted by routing attacks such as sinkhole, blackhole, wormhole, and Sybil attacks.
- **Transport Layer**: Includes flooding and desynchronization attacks.
- **Application Layer**: Subject to attacks such as data aggregation distortion or false data injection.

Impact of Attacks

The consequences of successful attacks in WSNs can be severe:

- **Data Loss or Corruption**: Resulting from packet manipulation or drop attacks.
- **Privacy Breaches**: Due to unauthorized access or node compromise.
- **Network Downtime**: Often caused by DoS attacks or jamming.
- **Depletion of Resources**: Malicious activities can exhaust node energy, leading to premature failure.

Theoretical Models for Attack Analysis

Researchers have proposed several theoretical frameworks to analyze and classify attacks in WSNs. These include:

- **Threat Models**: Define the attacker's capabilities (global vs. local knowledge, mobility, and computational power).
- **Attack Taxonomies**: Group attacks by their method of execution and impact.
- **Risk Assessment Models**: Evaluate the potential damage and likelihood of each attack type to prioritize defense mechanisms.

Understanding the theoretical foundation of attacks in Wireless Sensor Networks is essential for developing effective security strategies. Given the wide array of attack vectors and the inherent vulnerabilities of WSNs, a layered defense approach is necessary. This includes lightweight cryptographic methods, secure routing protocols, node authentication, and real-time intrusion detection systems. Ongoing research in attack modeling and defense mechanisms remains vital to ensure the reliability and trustworthiness of WSNs in critical applications.

According to singh & Patro (2019), WSNs work in harsh and hostile areas it is vulnerable to different threats and attacks, and the attacks section on WSNs in five categories based on, layers, authentication, privacy [9]. Elsadig et al. Focused (2019) on mentioning two subsections to two types of WSN attack as layered-based classification and the internal\external classification [6].The attacks be classified in terms of:

- Active attacks are when data flow into the communication channel is tracked, listened to, and updated by unauthorized attackers, and passive are attacks transmission of information or data files to an attacker without the user's permission or awareness,
- In an external attack, an additional sensor node is installed in the WSN to be targeted. This remote node lacks access to the WSN's security parameters and cryptographic keys. In an internal attack, the security of an internal sensor node is breached in order to undermine the network's security. In Fig.3, shows the classification for most of the attacks.

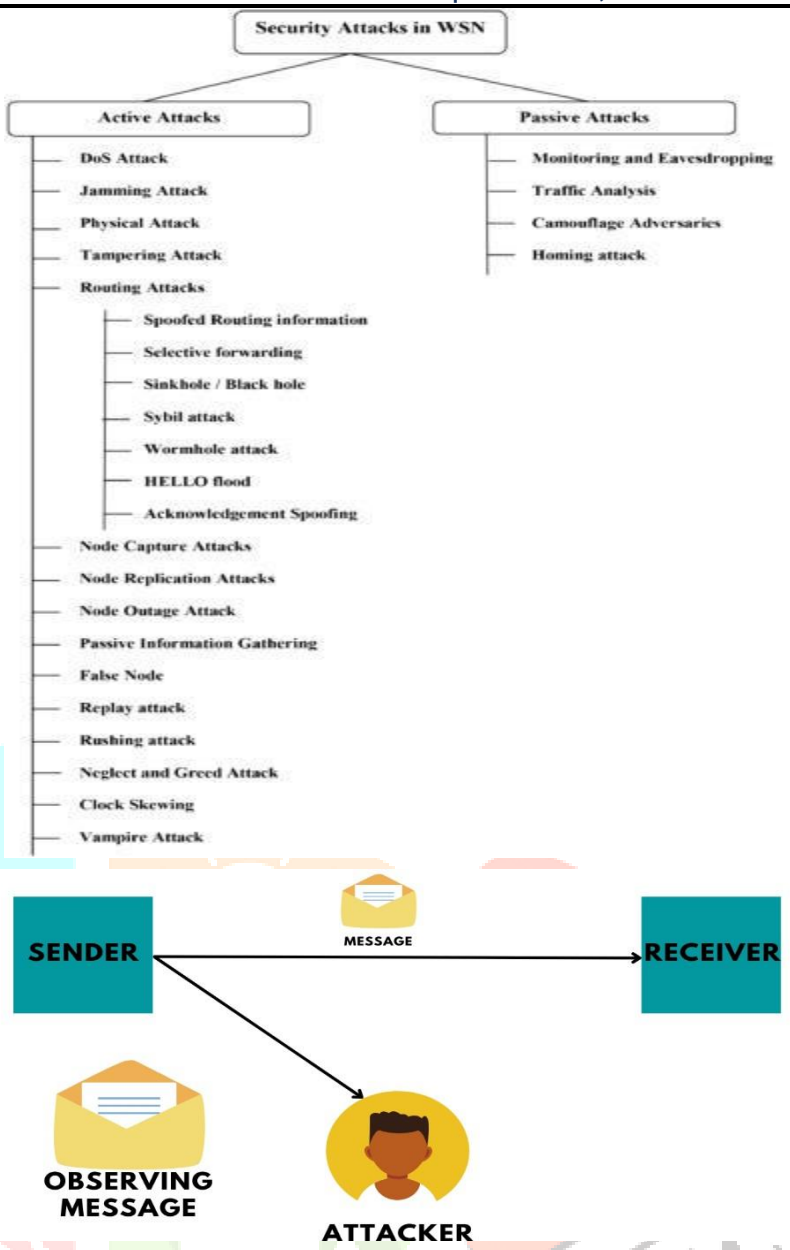
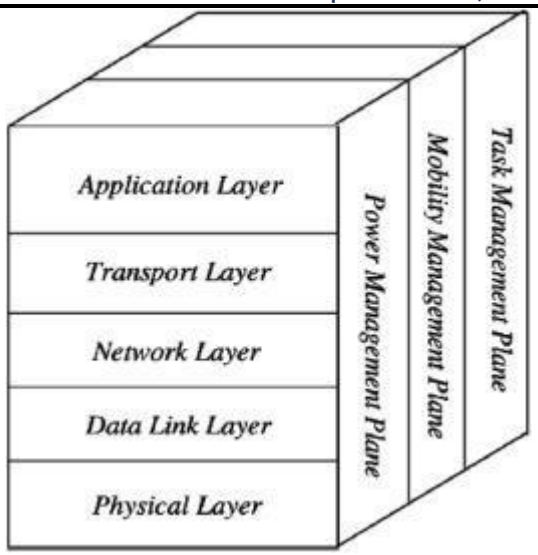


Figure 3. Active / passive attacks and external / internal attacks

Wireless Sensor Networks (WSNs) are structured in a layered architecture, which, while enabling modular communication and processing, also introduces specific vulnerabilities at each layer. This structural organization allows for a classification of attacks based on the targeted network layer—commonly referred to as **layer-based attack classification**.



In the Figure the network layer is the most frequently targeted, experiencing a significantly higher number of attacks compared to other layers. Following the network layer, the data link and physical layers also encounter a notable share of attacks. In contrast, the application and transport layers are comparatively less targeted, with both layers registering a similar and smaller proportion of total attack incidents.

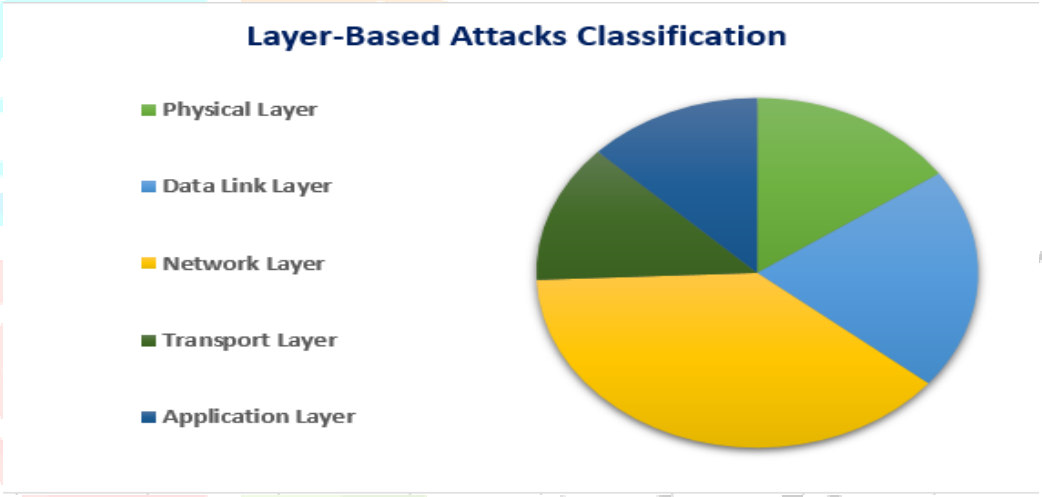


Figure 4. Network layer attacks

3. SECURITY MECHANISMS IN WSNS

Security is a critical concern in Wireless Sensor Networks (WSNs) due to their deployment in open, unattended environments and their reliance on resource-constrained sensor nodes. Unlike traditional wired networks, WSNs face unique challenges such as limited energy, computational power, and memory, making the design and implementation of effective security mechanisms a complex task. To address these challenges, a range of security mechanisms have been developed to protect the network against various threats and attacks.

Cryptographic Techniques

Cryptography is the foundation of most security mechanisms in WSNs, ensuring data confidentiality, integrity, and authenticity.

- **Symmetric Key Cryptography**: Involves using the same key for both encryption and decryption. It is energy-efficient and suitable for WSNs, but key distribution and management can be challenging.
- **Asymmetric Key Cryptography**: Uses public and private key pairs. While it provides stronger security, it is computationally more expensive and less suitable for low-power nodes.
- **Hash Functions**: Used for message integrity and authentication, allowing nodes to verify data has not been tampered with.

Key Management

Establishing and maintaining secure key relationships among sensor nodes is essential for enabling encrypted communication. Mechanisms include:

- **Pre-distribution of Keys**: Keys are loaded onto nodes before deployment.
- **Random Key Pre-distribution**: Each node is assigned a random subset of keys from a large key pool.
- **Dynamic Key Generation**: Keys are generated and shared during network operation using lightweight protocols.

Secure Routing Protocols

Routing in WSNs is vulnerable to a variety of attacks such as sinkhole, Sybil, and wormhole attacks. Secure routing protocols ensure data packets follow trusted paths.

- **SPINS (Security Protocols for Sensor Networks)**: Includes SNEP for confidentiality and authentication, and TESLA for broadcast authentication.
- **LEAP (Localized Encryption and Authentication Protocol)**: Supports different keys for node-to-node, node-to-cluster, and cluster-to-base communications.

Data Aggregation Security

To conserve energy and bandwidth, WSNs often use data aggregation. Secure aggregation techniques ensure that intermediate nodes cannot tamper with or misrepresent the collected data.

- **Privacy-preserving aggregation**: Protects sensitive data while still allowing accurate aggregation.
- **End-to-end integrity checks**: Ensures data has not been modified in transit.

Physical Layer Security

Since nodes can be physically captured, some mechanisms aim to harden the hardware, such as:

- **Tamper-resistant hardware**: Makes it harder for attackers to access stored data.
- **Self-destruction of data**: Nodes erase sensitive information when tampering is detected.

Security mechanisms in WSNs must balance strong protection with energy and resource efficiency. By combining multiple layers of defense—cryptography, secure routing, intrusion detection, and physical protection—WSNs can be made resilient to a wide range of threats. Ongoing research continues to improve these mechanisms to support the evolving landscape of wireless sensor applications. DOS prevention can use priority messages, and encryption. Selective Forwarding attack prevention can use routing proactive and detection by signal strength. Identity certificates can defense Sybil attack. We

explain some of the security mechanisms that have been suggested by researchers, and we want to emphasize in our view, its importance for WSNs.

3.1. Data Partitioning

One effective method for enhancing data security in Wireless Sensor Networks (WSNs) is **data partitioning**. This technique involves splitting the original data into multiple smaller segments or packets before transmission. Each segment is then routed through a different path within the network, passing through various intermediary sensor nodes. The destination node ultimately reassembles the received packets to reconstruct the original message.

This strategy significantly complicates the efforts of an attacker. To successfully intercept and reconstruct the message, an attacker would need to capture **every single packet** transmitted via different routes. This would require extensive network surveillance, which is highly challenging in dynamic, decentralized WSN environments.

While data partitioning strengthens confidentiality and reduces the risk of complete data compromise, it introduces trade-offs. The approach increases **energy consumption** due to the need for multiple transmissions and longer routing paths. It also involves **higher network overhead** and requires more active nodes to handle the dispersed communication load. Therefore, the security benefits must be balanced against resource constraints in WSN deployments.

3.1.1. Key management

For solutions of key management, we find four types that can be used in security mechanisms against attacks:

Table 1. Key management types in security mechanisms

Key Type	Definition	Role in security
Global key	The entire network shares one key the sender sends a message and information encrypted with this key. Once it receives the message, it can be decrypted with the same key.	The solution with limited security because: If an attacker could find the key, he can hear the entire network that communicates with this unique key, then to know this key allows the possibility to insert a malicious node in the network.
Pair-wise key node	Each node has a different key to communicate with a neighboring node that shares this key. a node that sends a message must encrypt the message with a key neighbor who receives the information. The neighboring decrypts information to re-encrypt with the key corresponding to the following receiver.	This solution increases the network's security because if an attacker discovers a key, this key can communicate with two nodes. The attacker has to find all pair- wise keys to listen to the entire network

Pair-wise key group	Each group or cluster has a key to communicating between nodes in the cluster. Cluster-heads use a single key for all cluster-heads to communicate between two cluster heads.	The solution increases the work of cluster heads, which have to decrypt and encrypt the information.
Individual key	Each node has its own key to encrypt data. The sink only knows this key. the message sent by this node goes around hidden on the network until it reaches the sink.	This solution secures only communication between a node and the sink.

3.2. Trust management

Table 2. WSNs Attacks Classification & Defense mechanisms.

Attacks	Definition	Layer-based Classification	Internal/External Classification	active/passive Classification	Defenses
Collision	There is this type in the link layer when two nodes try to transmit at the same time on the same frequency where there is a collision due to the collision of the packets with each other	Data Link layer	Internal	passive	Error-correcting code[9]
Wormhole	is a serious attack, an attacker records packets at one location in the network and tunnels them to another location. This attack needs to insert in the network at least two [Short Survey].	Network Layer	Internal	passive	An efficient monitoring system[3].
Hello flood	An adversary node broadcasts hello packets with high transmission capacity, allowing the majority of the network's nodes to choose it as the cluster head.	Network Layer	Internal /External	Active	Suspicious node detection by signal strength[10].
Node replication	In this attack, the attacker creates a new sensor node in the network by copying an existing sensor node's node ID.	Network Layer	External	Active	Line selected multicast[4]
Selective Forwarding (SF)	It is the attacker creating a corrupt node in the network so that it can intentionally drop some important messages while forwarding only a few of them	Network Layer	Internal	Active	Multipath routing[5]

Sinkhole	In this type, the attacker is keen to make the defected node be very attractive compared to the rest, in order to be able to reach his goal, which is for the surrounding nodes to send data to that defected node	Network Layer	Internal	Active	Geographic routing protocols[10]
Sybil	It is also known as clone attack, In this type, attackers rely on placing copies of each node in order to be able to leak data or be able to place false data	Network Layer	Internal	Active	utilize identity certificates[10]
Acknowledgment spoofing (AS)	Attacking nodes that provide false information to other nodes, such as claiming that a dead node is still alive but actually dead	Data Link Layer	Internal /External	Passive	Authentication mechanism[5]
Eavesdropping	Is the attacker listening to listen the network to intercept information on the network so that he can steal it when sent without encryption. This attack is difficult to detect because there is no modification to the data, so it is difficult to detect	physical layer	External	passive	Encryption of data and messages[9]
Radio jammer	The attacker uses radio waves to disturb the communication between the nodes by sending the waves to the same frequency so that they cannot communicate	physical layer	External	passive	Spread spectrum, priority messages[10].
Denial of Service	In a conventional network, this is an intentional intrusion like denial of service. The assault disrupts the wireless sensor network, and the influx of data causes sensors to run, wasting their resources.	Physical layers	Internal /External	Active	payment for network resources, Priority messages, monitoring, authorization, encryption[10]
Flooding	Flooding occurs when an attacker attacks a source node in such a way that it receives a large number of requests frequently and its memory becomes complete.	Transport Layer	Internal	Passive	Strong authentication mechanism[9]

Another effective approach to enhancing security in Wireless Sensor Networks (WSNs) is the implementation of **trust and reputation-based mechanisms**, similar to those used in peer-to-peer systems, community-driven platforms, and online marketplaces like eBay. In WSNs, identifying malicious or unreliable nodes is particularly challenging due to the network's decentralized nature and the large number of interconnected devices.

To address this, each sensor node continuously observes the behavior of its neighboring nodes over time. Trust is built or diminished based on a neighbor's reliability in performing expected actions. For instance, if a neighboring node consistently forwards packets correctly or participates actively in the network, its trust level increases. Conversely, if it fails to respond, drops packets, or behaves unpredictably, its reputation and trust rating decline.

These dynamic trust levels influence routing decisions. Instead of always choosing the geographically shortest or fastest path, a node will prioritize routes that pass through neighbors with the **highest trust scores**, even if the route is longer. This reduces the risk of data passing through compromised or malicious nodes, thereby strengthening the security and reliability of communication.

Trust-based security mechanisms are also **energy-efficient**, as they rely on localized monitoring and adaptive decision-making rather than complex cryptographic operations. By leveraging trust evaluations, the network can proactively isolate and bypass suspicious nodes, enhancing overall resilience without significantly draining node resources.

4. CONCLUSION

Wireless Sensor Networks (WSNs) have become essential in a wide range of applications, from environmental monitoring to military operations, due to their ability to operate in dynamic and often hostile environments. However, their decentralized architecture, resource constraints, and open deployment make them particularly vulnerable to a variety of security threats.

This investigation has provided a comprehensive overview of modern security protocols and mechanisms aimed at preventing hazards in WSNs. Techniques such as cryptographic solutions, trust and reputation systems, data partitioning, and secure routing protocols play a critical role in ensuring the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of data. Additionally, layer-specific defenses, intrusion detection systems, and adaptive security strategies have proven effective in safeguarding these networks against evolving attack vectors.

While each security approach presents its own benefits and limitations, combining multiple mechanisms in a layered defense model offers the most robust protection. Future research must continue to focus on developing lightweight, energy-efficient security protocols tailored to the specific needs of WSNs. Ultimately, a balanced integration of performance, resilience, and security is vital for the sustained reliability and functionality of wireless sensor networks in real-world applications.

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