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Federated detection of open charge point protocol 1.6 cyberattacks

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Abstract

The ongoing electrification of the transportation sector requires the deployment of multiple Electric Vehicle (EV) charging stations across multiple locations. However, the EV charging stations introduce significant cyber-physical and privacy risks, given the presence of vulnerable communication protocols, such as the Open Charge Point Protocol (OCPP). Meanwhile, the Federated Learning (FL) paradigm showcases a novel approach for improved intrusion detection results that utilize multiple sources of Internet of Things data, while respecting the confidentiality of private information. This paper proposes an FL-based intrusion detection system, which leverages OCPP 1.6 network flows to detect OCPP 1.6 cyberattacks. The evaluation results showcase high detection performance of the proposed FL-based solution.

Keywords: Anomaly detection, cybersecurity, Open Charge Point Protocol 1.6, Federated Learning



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1. INTRODUCTION

Electric Vehicles (EVs) are a driving force towards the electrification of the transportation sector, contributing to the reduction of the environmental footprint and towards achieving the sustainability goals. In this context, the European Union (EU) plans to ban new non-electric cars starting from the year 2035. At the same time, the deployment of EV Charging Stations (EVCs) increases in order to ensure seamless experience for EV users and reduce the range anxiety^[1]. The EV charging is associated with numerous services, including management of the EVCs, handling and billing of charging transactions, metering, roaming of EV charging services as well as communication with the power grid and the Distribution/Transmission System Operators (DSOs/TSOs).

To realize properly integrated and interoperable EV charging services, a number of protocols and standards are in force. For example, International Standards Organization (ISO) / International Electro-technical Commission (IEC) 15118 is proposed for defining the Vehicle-to-Grid interface for bi-directional charging/discharging of EVs, smart charging and plug & charge. Roaming between Charging Station Operators (CSO) and e-mobility service providers is accomplished by the Open Charge Point Interface (OCPI) standard, whereas grid operators can interact with the CSOs through demand response protocols, e.g., the Open Automated Demand Response (openADR).

While many of the above-mentioned standards and protocols are optional or their development is on-going, a fundamental interaction within the EV charging ecosystem is the one between EVCs and the EV Charging Station Management System (EVCSMS) (operated by the CSO), through the Open Charge Point Protocol (OCPP). OCPP is an open standard, maintained by the Open Charge Alliance (OCA), for the vendor-neutral remote management and monitoring of EVCs. Common operations of OCPP include the authorization and management of transactions and the maintenance of the EVCs (e.g., firmware upgrades and system logs monitoring). Currently, version 1.6 of OCPP is the most widely deployed version of the protocol; it is supported by the majority of EVCS and EVCSMS manufacturers as well as the one that is fully certified by the OCA.

Despite its significance, OCPP is associated with notable cybersecurity concerns. For example, Alcaraz *et al.*^[2] assess the security features of OCPP, potential vulnerabilities and threat scenarios resulting from the protocol design and characteristics. The authors investigate the implementation and feasibility of various threats, including False Data Injections (FDI), Man-in-The-Middle (MiTM), impersonation, data tampering, fraud / energy theft, and Denial of Service (DoS), by developing a virtual infrastructure based on multiple Virtual Machines (VMs) to replicate the EVCs and the OCPP server. For the identified threats, the authors explain how they could be materialized as well as corresponding mitigation measures. The authors extend this analysis for the newest version of the standard, OCPP 2.0.1, in^[3]. A detailed security assessment of the EV charging ecosystem is performed by Kaur *et al.*^[4]. The authors discuss the attack vector and threat models for multiple protocols used in the EV charging domain, including ISO-15118, OCPP, OCPI and openADR. For OCPP, six relevant threat models are identified. In particular, a MiTM is an imminent threat, in which a potential attacker can be placed between the EVCSMS and the EVCS in order to intercept unencrypted OCPP traffic. A DoS attack is also feasible by introducing a fuzzer, as highlighted in OCPPStorm^[5], by injecting malformed or unexpected inputs in the OCPP communication, causing unexpected behavior, system dysfunction, crashes and operational instability. A botnet attack is also feasible, by utilizing multiple compromised EVCS that target the EVCSMS or other assets of the EV charging network through malware spreading. Finally, through impersonation, an attacker could intercept and replay sensitive data that is used for authenticating EVCS and authorizing charging transactions. In this way, a malicious actor could impersonate a legitimate EVCS by using its unique ID or initiate charging transaction by using the user ID of another legitimate user.

Considering the critical security issues with respect to OCPP, an open challenge remains the dynamic detection of potential threats and cyberattacks. In this paper, we focus our attention on detecting potential cyberattacks against OCPP 1.6, by adopting the Federated Learning (FL) approach for analyzing OCPP-based network flows.

FL is a distributed Artificial Intelligence (AI) system, in which multiple entities train their local AI model and contribute to the training of a global AI model^[6]. Compared to the conventional approach of a single and central AI model, the FL paradigm is characterized by enhanced performance as well as for respecting data privacy and data access rights. Considering the private and sensitive data that could be transferred or elicited by analyzing OCPP traffic (e.g., EV user identity, charging locations, behavioral patterns), the FL architecture is a suitable solution for privacy-aware security analysis and threat detection, benefiting from the contribution of multiple clients realized as multiple EV charging hubs.

Based on the aforementioned remarks, the contribution of this paper is summarized as follows:

- We describe four OCPP cyberattacks and provide insights with respect to their implementation and observations that can be leveraged for their detection.
- We develop the *OCPPFlowMeter*, a flow-based network analysis tool that generates network flows with OCPP 1.6 features, enabling the detection of attacks covering not only the network and transmission layers but also the OCPP 1.6 application layer.
- We propose an FL-based IDS architecture that can be applied to monitor the OCPP 1.6 traffic of multiple EVCSs, grouped as EV charging hubs at multiple locations. The evaluation results showcase high detection accuracy, ranging from 98.49% to 99.21%, obtained by comparing the results of six FL aggregation methods.
- As a result of this work, we have developed and published the *Federated OCPP 1.6 Intrusion Detection Dataset*^[7], which can also be found on Zenodo¹. This dataset includes network traffic samples and the respective flow statistics of the four OCPP 1.6 cyberattacks developed in this paper.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows. Section 1.1 discusses the existing works on FL-based intrusion detection and detection of OCPP threats, Section 2 presents the proposed adoption of FL on the EV charging infrastructure, the OCPP cyberattacks that we consider in this work, and the proposed FL-based IDS. Section 3 presents the evaluation results; Section 4 discusses the results and potential next steps for future research directions and improvements, and section 5 concludes this work by providing the key takeaways.

1.1 Related work

This section discusses the related work with respect to (a) FL adoption in the context of cybersecurity; and (b) existing methods for detecting OCPP cyberattacks.

1.1.1 FL for cybersecurity

Mothukuri *et al.*^[8] propose a privacy-focused FL approach for Internet of Things (IoT). Each IoT device trains a Gate Recurrent Unit (GRU) model using its local data, and sends the parameters to a central FL server that aggregates them and sends the updated weights to each IoT device. As a result, the accuracy of each model increases, while the data of each IoT device remains private. The authors evaluate the performance of their solution by using a public dataset based on Modbus TCP, which is processed by *CICFlowMeter* to extract the features that the AI models can use to classify the attacks. According to the evaluation results, the proposed FL approach achieves 90.2% accuracy, showcasing 4.1% improvement on accuracy compared to the non FL approach.

In^[9], Rashid *et al.* introduce a dynamic weighted aggregation federated learning (DAFL), a new aggregation technique that implements dynamic filtering and weighting strategies for local models. The proposed method improves the performance of conventional FL-based IDS in terms of communication overhead, while maintaining high detection accuracy and preserving data privacy.

¹<https://zenodo.org/records/14887131>

In^[10], Idrissi *et al.* propose the Federated Anomaly-Based Network Intrusion Detection System (Fed-ANIDS), which employs auto-encoders and FL in a distributed manner. The proposed architecture further employs two aggregation methods, FedProx and FedAvg. The proposed system is evaluated using numerous public datasets, namely the USTC-TFC2016, CIC-IDS2017, and CSE-CIC-IDS2018 datasets, which use an updated version of CICFlowMeter that improves the construction of network flows. The proposed solution is also compared with Generative Adversarial Network (GAN) models, and the results indicated a better detection performance, in terms of higher accuracy and fewer false alarms. In addition, the results showcased that FedProx delivered better results than FedAvg.

Karunamurthy *et al.*^[11] introduce a deep learning FL-based IDS for IoT environments. In the proposed architecture, the local models in the remote IoT environments leverage Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) with different parameter settings. Furthermore, an optimal feature selection model resides on the federated aggregation server, based on the Chimp optimization method. Inspired by the behavior of chimps in their natural environment, the feature selection model applies a fitness function to select the most optimal features, which are given as input to the deep learning classifier. The proposed model is evaluated on an MQTT protocol dataset, which includes five different attacks. The proposed method achieves 93.3% recall, 94% F1 score and 95.5% accuracy.

Finally, Radoglou-Grammatikis *et al.*^[12] present a multimodal FL-based IDS, called AI4FIDS, which is able to analyze four different data types, namely system logs, operational data, network flow statistics, and visual representations, in order to detect potential anomalies or indication of cyberattacks in the critical infrastructure. Combining the multiple detection methods, AI4FIDS includes a majority voting and a weighted majority method aggregate the predictions of the multiple underlying models in order to generate a single, combined prediction.

1.1.2 Detection of OCPP cyberattacks

Moreover, several works have been identified, which describe OCPP threats and try to address their detection. In more detail, Morosan *et al.*^[13] propose a Back-Propagation Neural Network (BPNN) that is able to classify EVCSs between the normal and faulted states, based on the OCPP 1.5-J traffic they generate. The three-layered neural network was able to determine a faulty EVCS based a) on the similarity of consecutive pairs of request-response, and b) the OCPP message type from the server. In a similar approach in^[14], Kabir *et al.* propose a BPNN utilized by the EVCSMS to analyze the OCPP requests and detect potential malicious attempts of coordinated switching attacks, i.e., charging/discharging and back again within a very short time period.

Girdhar *et al.*^[15] aim to predict and mitigate cyberattacks against EVCSs; therefore, they propose a cybersecurity framework that predicts and mitigates potential cyberattacks. In particular, the authors employ the STRIDE threat modeling to predict potential vulnerabilities and attack vectors on EVCSs, then a weighted attack defense tree is developed to analyze the adversary's objectives and create attack scenarios. A Hidden Markov Model is proposed in order to predict the possible attack paths, while a Partially Observable Monte-Carlo Planning (POMCP) algorithm ensures that the attacker is directed toward the predicted paths, ensuring that mitigation actions are timely placed to reduce the impact of the attack. While the proposed method can predict the attacker's behavior in multi-step attack scenarios, the problem on how to classify the individual behavior as malicious is not addressed.

Elkashlan *et al.*^[16] utilize the IoT-23 dataset in order to demonstrate the detection of cyberattacks against EVCSs. The authors employ various machine learning algorithms to detect malicious traffic that could be associated with threats against EVCSs, including Command and Control server communication, DDoS attacks, traces of the Okiru botnet, and samples of a horizontal port scan. The authors discussed the features of the dataset and removed those that presented weak correlation, hence choosing 14 out of 21 features. The authors

get results in terms of Precision, Accuracy, Recall and F-1 scores, by comparing four classifiers: The Naive Bayes, the J48 classifier, the attribute-select classifier, and the filtered classifier. However, the proposed methodology did not address EVCS-specific attacks, while the authors highlight the necessity of building a dedicated dataset for EVCSs.

The `DataTransfer` operation of OCPP is utilized by some works in order to implement custom security logic, extending the capabilities of OCPP 1.6. In particular, Rubio *et al.*^[17] aim to ensure the confidentiality and integrity of the energy values exchanged during charging transactions, by using `DataTransfer` messages to enable the EVCSMS to exchange secrets with the EVCS. After exchanging secrets, different cryptographic mechanisms can be applied to securely exchange energy values through `meterValue` and `meterStop` messages. Kim *et al.*^[18] also utilize `DataTransfer` to provide security services, in particular, for implementing a rollback mechanism on the EVCSs, thus mitigating the impact of potential threats such as replay attacks, maliciously modified requests and unauthorized activities.

Benfarhat *et al.*^[19] leverage deep learning and propose a temporal convolutional network (TCN) in order to classify up to 17 different cyberattacks against the ISO-15118 and OCPP protocols, as they are introduced in the CICEVSE2024 dataset^[20]. According to the authors, the proposed model provides benefits in terms of representing temporal dependencies and spatial characteristics, thus being able to detect complex patterns. The authors evaluate their solution by measuring accuracy, precision, recall and F1-score metrics, while comparing the results with CNN, DNN, RNN and LSTM models as well as a hybrid CNN-DNN-LSTM model. Three experiments are conducted, while considering two classes, five classes and 17 classes, respectively. In the binary and 5-class classification experiments, all metrics reach 100%. On the contrary, when considering 17 classes, the TCN achieves 93% in all metrics. Despite the large number of classes considered by the authors, it is noteworthy that the attacks considered exhibit common attack vectors of the network and transport layer, such as network scanning with the nmap tool and TCP/UDP flooding variants, which are already addressed by other solutions considering IoT-based DDoS attack detection^[21].

Rahman *et al.*^[22] evaluate a hybrid architecture of CNN and LSTM networks to detect the attacks of the CICEVSE2024 dataset. To enhance the detection performance as well as to increase the understanding of the dataset and attack patterns, the authors apply the SHAP explainability method to obtain results on the features that contributed mostly on the detection outcomes. It is worth mentioning that the selected features are related solely to transport-layer characteristics, such as the average packet inter-arrival time in network flows. The evaluation results indicate high performance, achieving accuracy, precision, recall and F1 score at 97.5% and Area Under Curve (AUC) at 98.5%.

Finally, Purohit *et al.*^[23] propose an FL-based IDS for detecting cyberattacks against the EVCS infrastructure. Similar to^[19] and^[22], the authors utilize the CICEVSE2024 dataset in order to evaluate the performance of their solution, achieving an accuracy of around 97% and superior F1-score compared to centralized AI-based IDS that use the CICEVSE2024 dataset.

Summarizing, multiple works have been identified that aim to develop AI-based solutions for detecting attacks in IoT and EVCS setups. However, it is noteworthy that most of the existing work^[16,19,20,22,23] employs a similar methodology of detecting OCPP attacks by analyzing network flow features stemming from the network and transport layers of the TCP/IP stack, for example those generated by `CICFlowMeter`^[24] and `NFStream`². However, this approach is not sufficient for detecting threats that rely on application-layer characteristics, while the network and transport layers remain agnostic. Moreover, the threat model considered by the aforementioned

²<https://www.nfstream.org/>

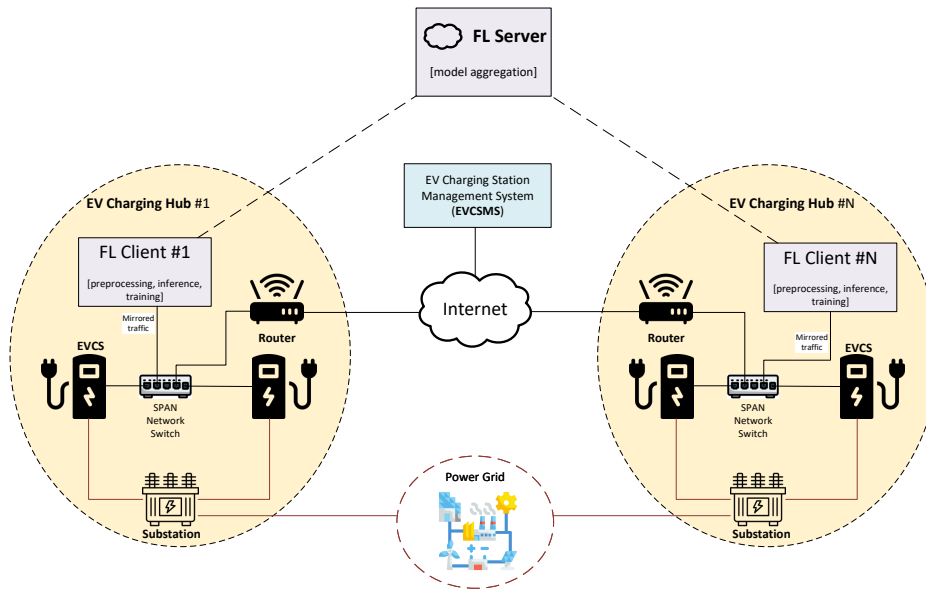


Figure 1. The FL-based IDS architecture applied on the EV charging infrastructure. Used icons from: <https://www.flaticon.com/>.

works and the CICEVSE2024 dataset focus mostly on common IoT threats rather than on OCPP-specific attack scenarios.

2. METHODS

2.1 Case study

In this work, we introduce a novel approach for detecting OCPP cyberattacks, by applying the FL architecture on the EV charging infrastructure and detecting potential threats by generating and analyzing network flows with OCPP-related features. Figure 1 depicts the proposed solution applied on the EV charging infrastructure. The system under study consists of multiple locations, where multiple EV charging stations are deployed and serve EV users. EVCSs in the same location form an EV charging hub, which could correspond to a shopping mall or an airport parking area. Each EV charging hub is connected to the interconnected power grid through a distribution substation. In each EV charging hub, Internet connectivity is provided by a gateway router, necessary for interconnecting the EVCSs with the EVCSMS. Owned by the CSO, the EVCSMS controls the EVCSs through the OCPP 1.6 protocol. Finally, on each EV charging hub, an FL client is deployed, which is connected to the FL server. The FL client receives the raw network traffic from the EV charging hub, containing OCPP traffic traces of the EVCSs, and analyses the traffic for potential cyberattacks. The local models residing on the FL clients are updated by the centralized FL server, by considering the updates coming from all the EV charging hubs.

2.2. OCPP 1.6 cyberattacks

According to the works relevant to OCPP threats mentioned in Section 1, we have considered the implementation of four cyberattacks grouped into two categories, namely Flooding attacks and FDI attacks. Under the FDI category, we consider: (a) Charging Profile Manipulation; (b) Denial of Charge, while for the Flooding attacks, we consider: (c) Unauthorized Access; and (d) Heartbeat Flood. These attacks are summarized and illustrated in Figure 2.

The main difference between the two categories is that the flooding attacks rely on overwhelming the target

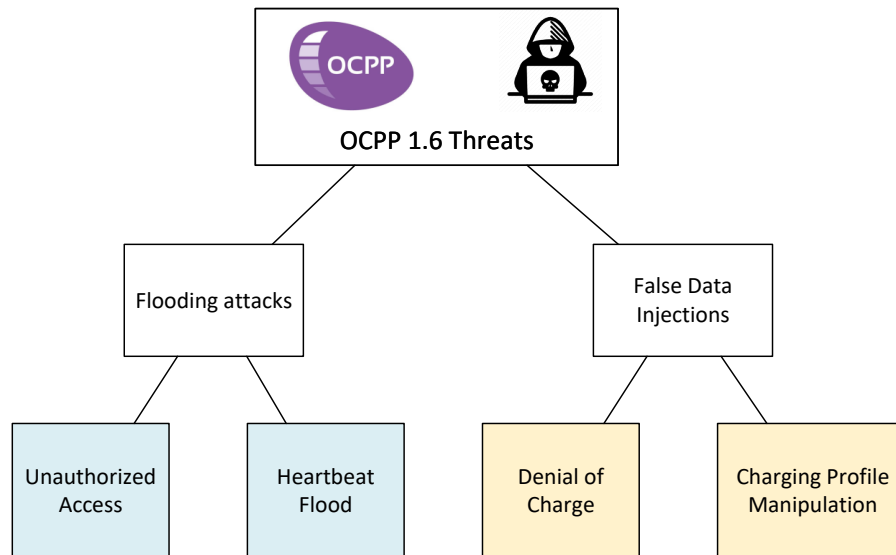


Figure 2. The OCPP cyberattacks considered in this work.

with application-layer network packets, which the target is unable to properly handle. Depending on possible implementation flaws or weaknesses from the side of the target, these attacks may cause exhaustion of computing resources and unavailability of services. On the contrary, the FDIs depend on the fact that the OCPP 1.6 packets are transmitted unencrypted and unsigned. Based on this fact, a malicious insider places themselves between the EVCSMS and the EVCSs through Address Resolution Protocol (ARP) cache poisoning in order to alter the OCPP 1.6 messages being transmitted. The consequences vary, depending on the modification carried out by the adversary. The FDIs considered in this work cause either denial of service or lead to cyber-physical consequences.

The cyberattacks are described in more detail in the next subsections. For each cyberattack, we describe: (1) the *normal operation*, i.e., the respective flow of operations based on the OCPP 1.6 standard; (2) the *threat(s)* that we identify based on potential flaws or weaknesses of the normal operation; (3) the *cyberattack*, which describes how we materialize the threat; and (4) *observations* of the cyberattack in terms of traces or abnormal behavior that could be considered for detecting the cyberattack.

2.2.1 Charging profile manipulation

Normal operation: The `SetChargingProfile.req` message is an OCPP 1.6 operation that is used by the EVCSMS to install charging profiles to EVCSs. A charging profile describes the amount of power or current that an EVCS is allowed to deliver per time interval. According to the OCPP 1.6 specification, this operation can be issued either in the context of a charging transaction (i.e., at the start or during the transaction) or outside the context of a transaction, as a separate message^[25]. The `SetChargingProfile.req` message includes a `csChargingProfiles` object, which defines the charging schedule. Multiple time intervals are defined as separate items inside the `chargingSchedulePeriod` list. The example provided in Figure 3 describes a `SetChargingProfile.req` that installs a charging profile, which instructs connector 1 of an EVCS to draw at most 15A on 2024-05-12, from 13:51:54 to 15:51:54.

As a powerful and flexible operation, `SetChargingProfile.req` is used to implement smart charging scenarios and apply complex charging patterns to EVCSs. Moreover, it can also be leveraged by system op-

```

{
  "connectorId": 1,
  "csChargingProfiles": {
    "chargingProfileId": 1,
    "transactionId": null,
    "stackLevel": 1,
    "chargingProfilePurpose": "TxDefaultProfile",
    "chargingProfileKind": "Absolute",
    "validFrom": "2024-05-12T13:51:54.037000Z",
    "validTo": "2024-05-12T15:51:54.037000Z",
    "chargingSchedule": {
      "duration": 86400,
      "schedulingUnit": "A",
      "chargingSchedulePeriod": {
        "startPeriod": 0,
        "limit": 15,
        "numberPhases": 3
      }
    }
  }
}

```

Figure 3. Example of a SetChargingProfile.req message.

erators (i.e., DSOs and TSOs), in combination with openADR^[26], for ancillary services, e.g., to reduce peak demands or to avoid a predicted load surge^[27].

Threat: Given its criticality for the above-mentioned reasons, an erroneous or maliciously altered charging profile could have significant cyber-physical impact to the power grid. For example, a CSO may have introduced charging profiles as a safety measure to avoid overloading and stressing of legacy electrical infrastructure, including old electric cables or unmaintained transformers. In that case, false charging profiles may lead to stressing of the electrical infrastructure and potential malfunctions. More sophisticated attacks are also possible, e.g., a coordinated oscillatory load attack that could manipulate the load following an on/off pattern, causing system frequency fluctuations that can threaten the grid stability^[27].

Cyberattack: The Charging Profile Manipulation attack we consider in this work assumes that a cyberattacker performs MiTM, through ARP poisoning, followed by FDI that modifies the SetChargingProfile.req messages being transmitted from the EVCSMS to the EVCSs. For each incoming SetChargingProfile.req message, the attacker replaces the value of the limit attribute of all chargingSchedulePeriod objects with a higher number. As a result, the affected EVCS is able to draw more power than originally configured by the CSO.

Observation: The Charging Profile Manipulation FDI could be detected by inspecting the limit values of the transmitted charging profiles. Based on the characteristics of the EV charging infrastructure and the targeted EVCS, there are reasonable values that are expected to be set in this field. By profiling this attribute and getting the baseline from benign traffic, it would be possible for a CSO to detect an abnormal charging profile.

2.2.2 Denial of charge

Normal operation: Figure 4 describes the procedure to remotely start a transaction and the authorization process before starting a charging session. To start a charging transaction, the EV user through the mobile app will trigger EVCSMS to send a RemoteStartTransaction.req message. If the AuthorizeRemoteTxRequests configuration variable is activated on the EVCS, the EVCS will try to authorize the identity of the EV user (idTag) via an Authorize.req message. Assuming that the presented identity is valid, the EVCS will receive a positive Authorize.conf response and will start the transaction procedure by sending a StartTransaction.req message. The EVCS will start providing power upon receiving a StartTransaction.

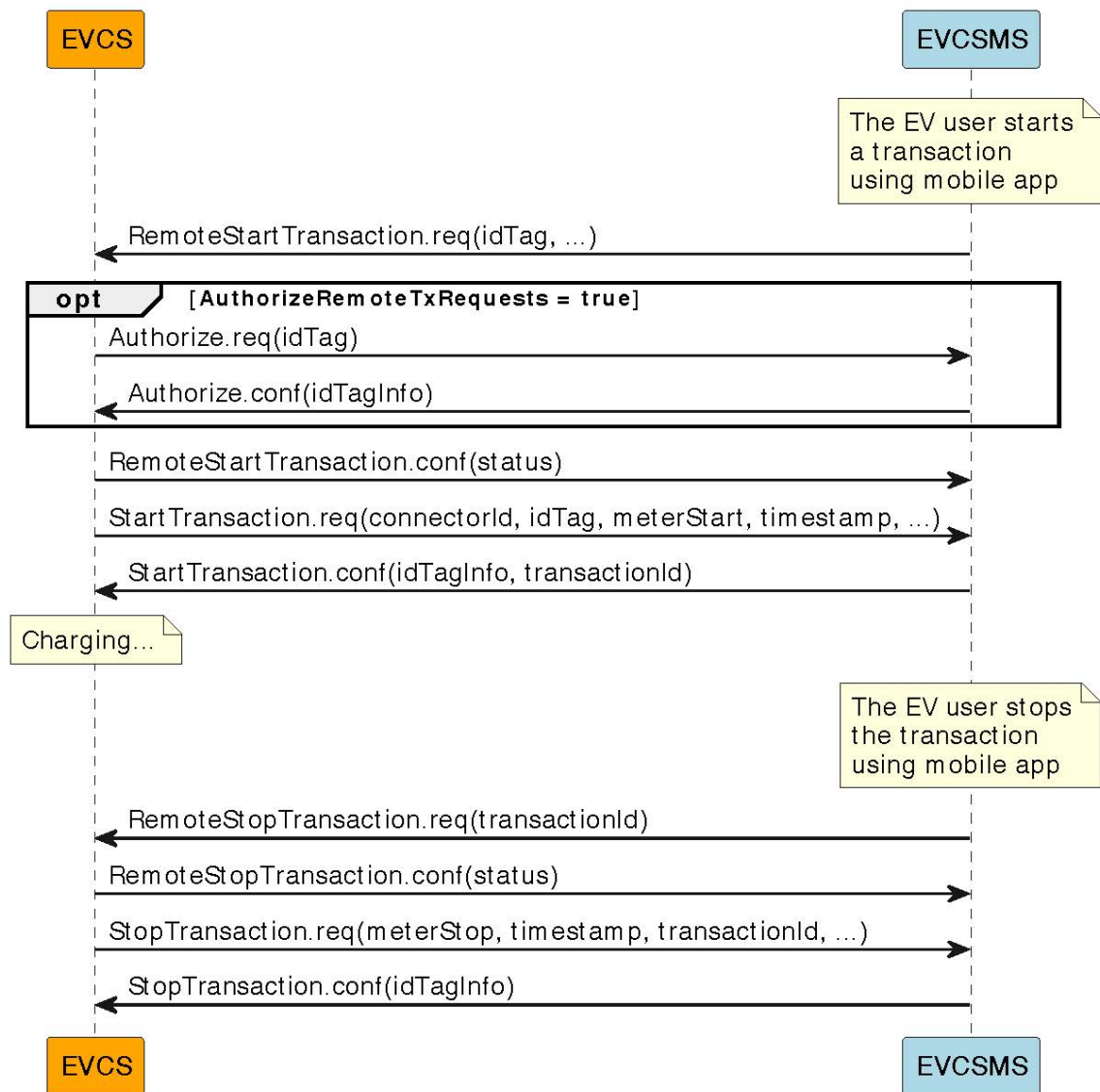


Figure 4. The authorization of charging transactions in OCPP 1.6.

`conf` with `idTagInfo.status = Accepted` from the EVCSMS. Similarly, the transaction can be stopped by the EV user by triggering a `RemoteStopTransaction.req` message^[25].

Threat: By observing the authorization procedure, a denial of service (in particular, a denial of charge) situation could happen if the authentication information, which is private information, is tampered with. In particular, if the `idTag` information is altered during transmission, this will lead to failure of authorization, thus preventing the EVCS from starting the charging transaction.

Cyberattack: We consider a denial of charge attack, in which a cyberattacker performs MiTM, through ARP poisoning, followed by FDI that replaces the `idTag` info included in any `RemoteStartTransaction` message with a random value. If `AuthorizeRemoteTxRequests` on the EVCS is enabled, the EVCS will send an `Authorize.req` message with the `idTag` injected by the attacker, leading to an `Authorize.conf` response with `idTagInfo.status = Invalid`. If `AuthorizeRemoteTxRequests` is not enabled on the EVCS, the authorization will still fail, since the EVCSMS will send a `StartTransaction.conf`

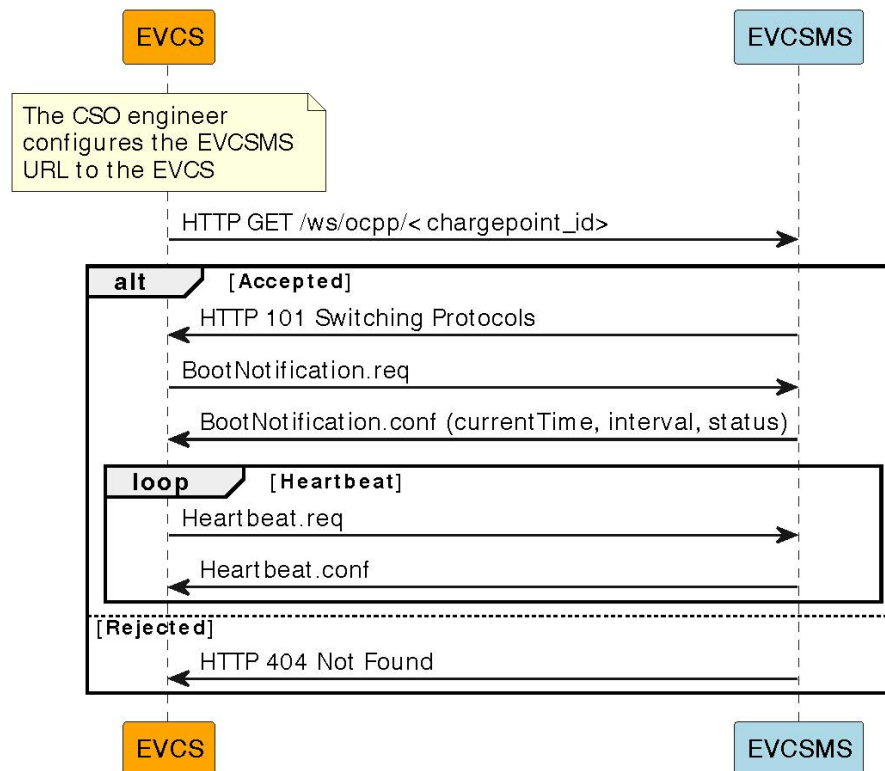


Figure 5. The establishment of an OCPP 1.6-J session over WebSocket.

with `idTagInfo.status = Invalid`.

Observation: Considering that the CSO prefers to minimize the messages transmitted from/to the EVCS, it is reasonable to assume that, normally, an EVCSMS will never send a `RemoteStartTransaction.req` with an invalid `idTag`, since the EVCSMS has already the capacity to validate an `idTag` in the first place. Hence, observing a `RemoteStartTransaction.req` followed by a `StartTransaction.conf` or an `Authorize.conf` message with `idTagInfo.status = Invalid`, would be an indication of a malformed `RemoteStartTransaction.req`.

2.2.3 Heartbeat flood

Normal operation: Figure 5 depicts an overview of the procedure for establishing an OCPP 1.6 session over WebSocket (OCPP 1.6-J) between an EVCS and the EVCSMS^[28]. The procedure is initiated by the CSO engineer, which configures the EVCS through an out-of-band management method, usually via Bluetooth and a dedicated mobile app provided by the EVCS manufacturer. The engineer specifies the Unique Resource Identifier (URL) that the EVCS must use to register to the EVCSMS. Upon applying this configuration, the EVCS sends a HyperText Transport Protocol (HTTP) GET request, incorporating the unique ID of the EVCS at the end of the URL as well as the appropriate HTTP headers that request session upgrade to WebSocket. If the EVCSMS accepts the EVCSMS, it will send an HTTP 101 Switching Protocols response, which signals the EVCS to immediately start sending OCPP 1.6-J messages, starting with the `BootNotification.req`. Depending on the value of the `HeartbeatInterval` configuration variable of the EVCS and the `interval` parameter of the `BootNotification.conf` response of the EVCSMS (which can override the `HeartbeatInterval`), the EVCS sends periodic `Heartbeat.req` messages to the EVCSMS in order to get the current date and time from the EVCSMS. Moreover, this message is useful for the EVCSMS to ensure that the EVCS is still online.

Threat: While the Heartbeat interval can be indicated by the EVCSMS via the `BootNotification.conf` response, right after the OCPP 1.6-J session establishment, a malicious or misconfigured EVCS might not respect this interval, thus sending very frequent Heartbeat messages. Alternatively, in a MiTM situation, an attacker could modify the `interval` attribute of the `BootNotification.conf` messages, thus forcing the EVCSs to send very frequent Heartbeat messages. Regardless of the method, the high volume of Heartbeat messages may threaten the availability of the EVCSMS.

Cyberattack: In this attack scenario, we assume that the attacker deploys a botnet of multiple virtual EVCSs, which concurrently attempt to establish OCPP 1.6-J sessions with the targeted EVCSMS. Assuming that the EVCSMS is not configured to authorize each EVCS or that the bots use valid IDs, all connections are accepted. After this step, the bots flood the EVCSMS with `Heartbeat.req` messages, leading to resource exhaustion and service unavailability for the EVCSMS. For example, such flooding could lead to reaching maximum database connections internally in the EVCSMS, causing unavailability of other critical services provided by the EVCSMS. Moreover, the computing resources could be overutilized (including Central Processing Unit (CPU) cycles and network bandwidth), leading to overall system performance degradation.

Observation: In contrast to the FDI attacks, someone could notice the traces of this attack also at the Transmission Control Protocol (TCP) / Internet Protocol (IP) layer. In particular, an unusually high number of packets will be noticed per TCP session. Moreover, at the application layer, the CSO would notice an unusually high number of Heartbeat messages per EVCS.

2.2.4 Unauthorized access

Normal operation: As an alternative flow depicted in Figure 5, and according to the OCPP 1.6-J specification [28], if an EVCS session establishment attempt is not accepted, then the EVCSMS should reply with an "HTTP 404 - Not Found" response.

Threat: If the EVCSMS does not apply any throttling policy, an overwhelming amount of connection attempts may cause exhaustion of computing resources and degradation of system performance. Moreover, an attacker could perform an enumeration attack by trying to "guess" valid EVCS IDs.

Cyberattack: Similarly to the Heartbeat Flood attack, in this attack scenario we assume that the attacker deploys a botnet of multiple virtual EVCSs, which concurrently attempt to establish OCPP 1.6-J sessions with the targeted EVCSMS. However, in this variation of the attack, the targeted EVCSMS is appropriately configured in order to reject connection attempts from unknown EVCSs. Hence, the EVCS responds to each bot with an HTTP 404 message, leading to wastage of computing resources and possible performance degradation due to over-utilization of computing and network resources.

Observation: At the TCP/IP layer, this attack would generate an unusually high number of short-lived TCP sessions finished by TCP packets having the FIN flag activated. Moreover, at the application layer, this attack would generate an unusually high number of HTTP 404 messages, clearly indicating failed connection attempts from WebSocket clients.

2.3. Federated learning intrusion detection system

Figure 6 depicts the architecture and implementation details of the proposed FL-based IDS, which is composed of the following components: (a) the Network Traffic Capturing Module; (b) the Network Flow Extraction Module; (c) the Local Prediction Engine; and (d) the Response Module. In summary, the FL client receives network traffic from the EV charging infrastructure and generates a security event for each abnormal network flow. Finally, the security events are delivered to the preferred Security Information and Event Management (SIEM) system.

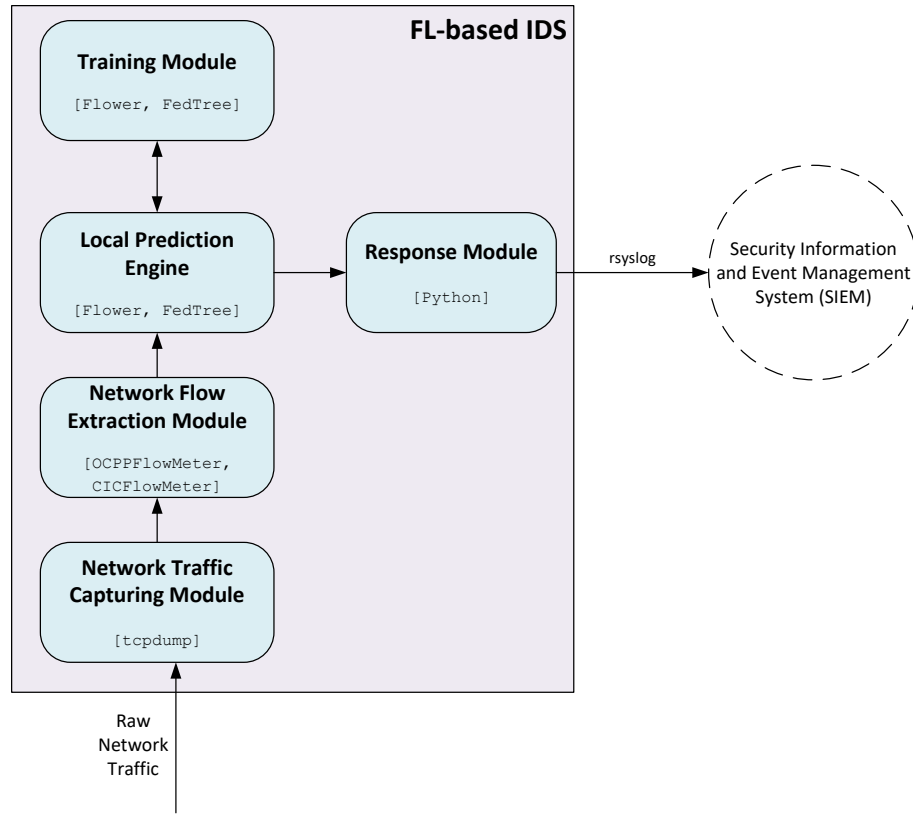


Figure 6. The architecture of the FL-based IDS.

2.3.1 Network traffic capturing module

First, the Network Traffic Capturing Module is responsible for capturing the network traffic data, using a Switched Port Analyzer (SPAN) (i.e., port mirroring) of the local network switch. SPAN allows the FL-based IDS to monitor and capture the traffic data passing through specific ports of the network switch, where the EVCs are connected. In the context of SPAN, the monitoring source and destination ports should be defined. Next, all incoming and outgoing traffic data from the monitoring sources are copied/mirrored to the destination port. Next, the Network Traffic Capturing Module uses `tcpdump` in order to capture the mirrored network traffic data.

2.3.2. Network flow extraction module

The Network Flow Extraction Module is composed of a set of flow statistics/features generators that receive the network traffic data (i.e., PCAP file) from the previous module and produces bi-directional flow statistics/features. For this purpose, we use two flow generators, namely (a) the `CICFlowMeter`^[24] tool; (b) the `OCPPFlowMeter`.

OCPPFlowMeter: It is a custom tool, introduced in this work, that generates additional flow statistics focusing on the OCPP 1.6 protocol characteristics. The complete list of the `OCPPFlowMeter` features can be found in Table 1. Compared to `CICFlowMeter`, which provides statistics only for the IP and TCP network layers, `OCPPFlowMeter` can effectively be used to detect both flooding and FDI attacks. Some of the features of the `OCPPFlowMeter` are influenced by the cyberattack observation described for each cyberattack in Section 2.2. Adopting the `CICFlowMeter` approach, the `OCPPFlowMeter` groups packets based on

a pre-defined flow timeout of 120 seconds, and calculates statistics by parsing the payload of the OCPP 1.6 messages and the WebSocket and HTTP headers.

2.3.3. Local prediction engine

Upon completing the FL process, each participating client obtains a local copy of the final global model from the server, during the final FL round. This model is then independently deployed on the client's infrastructure (e.g., devices, on-premise servers, virtual machines, or cloud-based systems) to perform real-time inference. As such, the Local Prediction Engine consists of a set of federated detection models that are generated by the Training Module. As input, it receives the flow statistics/features from the previous module and applies the corresponding federated detection models. The Local Prediction Engine model is trained with TCP/IP flow statistics/features from `CICFlowMeter` and OCPP 1.6 statistics from the `OCPPFlowMeter`. In case of a detected cyberattack, the Response Module generates the corresponding security event.

2.3.4. Response module

Based on the detection results, the Response Module is responsible for generating the corresponding security events. The security event is delivered to the configured SIEM using the `rsyslog` protocol.

2.3.5. Training module

The Training Module consists of two components: (a) Federated Server (Fed Server) and (b) Federated Client(s) (Fed Clients). On the one hand, the Federated Server is responsible for coordinating the FL process and managing the communication between the Federated Clients. It aggregates the locally trained models from the Federated Clients and updates the global model. It also handles the management of resources and data privacy. On the other hand, a Federated Client is responsible for training the AI models on the local data and communicating the trained models to the Federated Server. It also handles the pre-processing and post-processing of the data and the management of the local resources. It is placed on the EV charging hubs to enable the use of the local data for training the models and to ensure the privacy and security of the EV charging data. For the implementation of the Training Module, `Flower` and `FedTree` were utilized. Moreover, various aggregation techniques were investigated, such as `FedAvg` [29], `FedProx` [30], `FedAdam` [31], `FedAdagrad` [31], `FedYogi` [31] and `FedTree` [32]. Although detailed descriptions of these techniques are available in their respective references, we outline their main characteristics below. `FedAvg` is the standard FL aggregation strategy. It works by averaging the model weights from the clients after each local training round and updating the global model accordingly. `FedProx` extends `FedAvg` by adding a proximal term in the local objective to limit the deviation of local models from the global model. It is suitable for handling non-independent and identically distributed (non-iid) data among clients. Moreover, `FedAdam` applies adaptive learning rates by using first and second moment estimates of gradients, `FedAdagrad` adjusts learning rates based on historical information, and `FedYogi` maintains stable model updates by controlling the growth of second-moment estimates. These methods focus on providing training stability. Finally, `FedTree` is designed for decision tree-based models.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Experiment setup

[Figure 7](#) depicts the experimental infrastructure utilized to test and evaluate the proposed solution. In this setup, we implemented the FL-based system model of Section 2.1 by replicating two EV charging hubs. The first hub consists of real EV charging stations, namely a Terra Alternating Current (AC) 22kW wallbox type 2 (TAC-W22-T-0) and a Terra 54 Direct Current (DC) 50 kW Fast Charger, both manufactured by ABB. The first hub is provided by the e-mobility laboratory of the Public Power Corporation (PPC) Innovation Hub³.

³<https://innovationhub.dei.gr/en/services/testing/other/e-mobility-laboratory/>

Table 1. Features of the OCPPFlowMeter

Network Layer	#	Feature	Description
TCP/IP	1	flow_id	Unique ID of the flow
	2	src_ip	Source IP of the flow
	3	dst_ip	Destination IP of the flow
	4	src_port	Source TCP port
	5	dst_port	Destination TCP port
	6	total_flow_packets	Total number of packets contained within the flow
	7	total_fw_packets	Total flow packets in the forward direction
	8	total_bw_packets	Total flow packets in the backward direction
	9	flow_duration	Flow duration in seconds
	10	flow_down_up_ratio	The fraction between the packets in the backward direction and the packets in the forward direction
	11	flow_total_SYN_flag	The total number of the TCP SYN packets
	12	flow_total_RST_flag	The total number of the TCP RST packets
	13	flow_total_PSH_flag	The total number of the TCP PSH packets
	14	flow_total_ACK_flag	The total number of the TCP ACK packets
	15	flow_total_URG_flag	The total number of the TCP URG packets
	16	flow_total_CWE_flag	The total number of the TCP CWE packets
	17	flow_total_ECE_flag	The total number of the TCP ECE packets
	18	flow_total_FIN_flag	The total number of the TCP FIN packets
	19	flow_start_timestamp	The timestamp of the flow. It is defined with the first relevant packet.
	20	flow_end_timestamp	The timestamp of the last packet of the flow
HTTP	21	flow_total_http_get_packets	The total number of HTTP GET packets
	22	flow_total_http_2xx_packets	The total number of HTTP 2XX success messages
	23	flow_total_http_4xx_packets	The total number of HTTP 4XX client error messages
	24	flow_total_http_5xx_packets	The total number of HTTP 5XX server error messages
WebSocket	25	flow_websocket_packets_per_second	The number of WebSocket packets per second
	26	fw_websocket_packets_per_second	The number of WebSocket packets per second in the forward direction
	27	bw_websocket_packets_per_second	The number of WebSocket packets per second in the backward direction
	28	flow_websocket_bytes_per_second	The sum of WebSocket payload lengths per second
	29	fw_websocket_bytes_per_second	The sum of WebSocket payload lengths per second in the forward direction
	30	bw_websocket_bytes_per_second	The sum of WebSocket payload lengths per second in the backward direction
	31	flow_total_websocket_ping_packets	The total number of the WebSocket ping packets (opcode 0x9)
	32	flow_total_websocket_pong_packets	The total number of the WebSocket pong packets (opcode 0xA)
	33	flow_total_websocket_close_packets	The total number of the WebSocket close packets (opcode 0x8)
	34	flow_total_websocket_data_messages	The total number of the WebSocket data frames (opcode 0x1 or 0x2)
OCPP 1.6	35	flow_total_ocpp16_heartbeat_packets	The total number of the OCPP 1.6 Heartbeat messages
	36	flow_total_ocpp16_resetHard_packets	The total number of the OCPP 1.6 HardReset messages
	37	flow_total_ocpp16_resetSoft_packets	The total number of the OCPP 1.6 SoftReset messages
	38	flow_total_ocpp16_unlockconnector_packets	The total number of the OCPP 1.6 UnlockConnector messages
	39	flow_total_ocpp16_starttransaction_packets	The total number of the OCPP 1.6 StartTransaction messages
	40	flow_total_ocpp16_remotestarttransaction_packets	The total number of the OCPP 1.6 RemoteStartTransaction messages
	41	flow_total_ocpp16_authorize_not_accepted_packets	The total number of Authorize.conf messages containing an "Invalid", "Blocked" or "Expired" AuthorizationStatus
	42	flow_total_ocpp16_setchargingprofile_packets	The total number of the OCPP 1.6 SetChargingProfile messages
	43	flow_avg_ocpp16_setchargingprofile_limit	Average number of the "limit" value of SetChargingProfile messages
	44	flow_max_ocpp16_setchargingprofile_limit	Maximum value of the "limit" value of SetChargingProfile messages
	45	flow_min_ocpp16_setchargingprofile_limit	Minimum value of the "limit" value of SetChargingProfile messages
	46	flow_avg_ocpp16_setchargingprofile_minchargingrate	Average number of the "minChargingRate" attribute of SetChargingProfile messages
	47	flow_min_ocpp16_setchargingprofile_minchargingrate	Minimum value of the "minChargingRate" attribute of SetChargingProfile messages
	48	flow_max_ocpp16_setchargingprofile_minchargingrate	Maximum value of the "minChargingRate" attribute of SetChargingProfile messages
	49	flow_total_ocpp16_metervalues	The total number of meterValues messages
	50	flow_min_ocpp16_metervalues_soc	The minimum value of State of Charge attribute of the meterValues messages
	51	flow_max_ocpp16_metervalues_soc	The maximum value of State of Charge attribute of the meterValues messages
	52	flow_avg_ocpp16_metervalues_wh_diff	The average of the difference between the "Energy.Active.Import.Register" attributes of consecutive meterValues messages
	53	flow_max_ocpp16_metervalues_wh_diff	The maximum difference between the "Energy.Active.Import.Register" attributes of consecutive meterValues messages
	54	flow_min_ocpp16_metervalues_wh_diff	The minimum difference between the "Energy.Active.Import.Register" attributes of consecutive meterValues messages
Other	55	label	String that describes the classification result of the flow. It can be normal, unlabelled, or denote a specific cyberattack.

The second EV charging hub is composed of multiple virtual EV charging stations, which are simulated using the e-mobility charging stations simulator by SAP⁴. Both hubs are managed by an EVCSMS, which is provided by the SteVe⁵ open-source software. On both locations, the attacker utilizes custom scripts written in Python in order to implement the cyberattacks described in Section 2.2.

For implementing the FDI attacks, the Ettercap⁶ tool is employed to conduct ARP poisoning. This procedure aims to poison the ARP cache of the EVCSs by giving the false information that the attacker's machine is the default gateway that the EVCSs need to route their packets to in order to reach the EVCSMS. Next, the appropriate iptables rules are inserted into the attacker's machine, in order to redirect incoming traffic from the EVCS to a NetFilter queue, allowing access and further manipulation of the packet via external software. Then, the NetFilterQueue⁷ library is utilized by the attacker in order to access the content of the NetFilter queue and manipulate the packets. For the manipulation process, the attacker utilizes the scapy library. Finally, the packet is sent back to the network for its original destination.

⁴<https://github.com/sap/e-mobility-charging-stations-simulator>

⁵<https://github.com/steve-community/steve>

⁶<https://www.ettercap-project.org/>

⁷<https://github.com/oremanj/python-netfilterqueue>

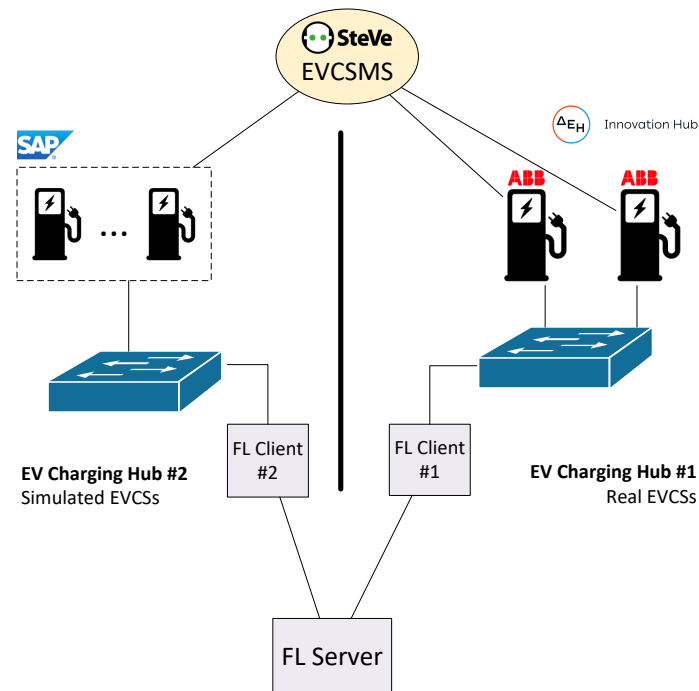


Figure 7. The Experimental setup.

Table 2. Detection capabilities and relevant features of CICFlowMeter and OCPPFlowMeter

OCPP cyberattack	CICFlowMeter	OCPPFlowMeter	Relevant OCPPFlowMeter features
Charging profile manipulation	✗	✓	<code>flow_max_ocpp16_setchargingprofile_limit</code>
Denial of charge	✗	✓	<code>flow_total_ocpp16_starttransaction_packets</code> , <code>flow_total_ocpp16_authorize_not_accepted_packets</code> , <code>flow_total_ocpp16_remotestarttransaction_packets</code>
Heartbeat flood	✓	✓	<code>src_ip,dst_ip,total_flow_packets</code> , <code>total_fw_packets,total_bw_packets,flow_total_PSH_flag</code> , <code>flow_total_ACK_flag,flow_total_websocket_data_messages</code> , <code>flow_total_ocpp16_heartbeat_packets</code>
EVCS session establishment flood	✓	✓	<code>flow_total_FIN_flag,flow_total_http_4xx_packets</code> , <code>flow_total_http_get_packets</code>

For the flooding attacks, the attacker utilizes the multiprocessing package of Python to spawn multiple processes that act as separate EVCS bots. Then, each bot launches multiple processing threads, each thread representing an EVCS. Each thread uses the `websockets` Python library to initiate a WebSocket session with the target EVCSMS. If the connection fails, the thread tries again by randomly changing the EVCS ID. If the connection is accepted, the EVCS thread sends a `BootNotification.req` and then subsequent `Heartbeat.req` messages, each 1 second or more frequently.

The evaluation results were calculated by using the data of both the `CICFlowMeter` and the `OCPPFlowMeter`. As discussed in Section 2.3, the `OCPPFlowMeter` focuses on the OCPP features for generating network flows, enabling the detection of more attacks against OCPP. Table 2 summarizes the capabilities of each network flow module with respect to the attacks implemented in the evaluation as well as the most prominent `OCPPFlowMeter` features for each attack.

Finally, the overall dataset consists of 4,415 samples, with each sample corresponding to a network flow. The dataset consists of four attack classes, as described above, and one normal, indicating benign traffic. Moreover,

the dataset is balanced, meaning that all classes are represented by an equal number of samples. We consider that three clients participate in the FL, with the dataset evenly divided among them to ensure each client receives an equal number of labels. Each client then splits its local dataset into training, validation, and test sets, using a ratio of 0.6, 0.1, and 0.3, respectively. Regarding the FL training setting, the local model of each FL client is a neural network consisting of 3 fully connected hidden layers with 128 neurons and ReLU activation. The training consisted of 40 rounds with a batch size of 32 and learning rate equal to 0.001.

3.2 Detection results

Before analyzing the detection performance of the proposed FL-based IDS, the relevant evaluation metrics are introduced first. On the one hand, True Positives (TP) denotes the number of correct classifications with respect to the presence of the attacks. Similarly, True Negatives (TN) indicates the number of correct classifications regarding the normal network flows. On the other hand, False Negatives (FN) and False Positives (FP) imply mistaken classifications related to the attacks. Therefore, based on the aforementioned terms, the following evaluation metrics are used:

$$Accuracy = \frac{TP + TN}{TP + TN + FP + FN} \quad (1)$$

$$TPR = \frac{TP}{TP + FN} \quad (2)$$

$$FPR = \frac{FP}{FP + TN} \quad (3)$$

$$F1 = \frac{2 \times TP}{2 \times TP + FP + FN} \quad (4)$$

Table 3 and Table 4 summarize the evaluation results of the proposed FL-based IDS, for the two network flow extraction modules, by trying six different aggregation methods: (a) FedAvg, (b) FedProx, (c) FedAdam, (d) FedAdagrad, (e) FedYogi, and (f) FedTree.

Based on the evaluation results for the CICFlowMeter module, FedProx achieves the best performance where $Accuracy = 99.18\%$, $TPR = 99.18\%$, $FPR = 0.16\%$ and $F1 = 99.36\%$. On the contrary, the worst performance is calculated by FedAdagrad and FedTree where $Accuracy = 98.26\%$, $TPR = 98.26\%$, $FPR = 0.21\%$ and $F1 = 99.18\%$.

For the OCPPFlowMeter module, FedAvg, FedProx and FedTree achieve the best performance where $Accuracy = 99.21\%$, $TPR = 99.21\%$, $FPR = 0.20\%$ and $F1 = 99.21\%$. On the contrary, the worst performance is calculated by FedAdagrad where $Accuracy = 79.78\%$, $TPR = 79.78\%$, $FPR = 5.05\%$ and $F1 = 72.87\%$.

Finally, for both CICFlowMeter and OCPPFlowMeter, we evaluate the performance of the centralized method, which represents a scenario where all data are collected at a single node that performs the model training. Naturally, the centralized method serves as an upper performance bound. However, it is evident that FL achieves nearly the same performance as the centralized approach, while also inherently ensuring privacy, a capability the centralized method lacks.

Table 3. Evaluation results of the proposed FL architecture with various aggregation methods - CICFlowMeter

Strategy	Accuracy	TPR	FPR	F1
FedAvg	99.36%	99.36%	0.23%	99.08%
FedProx	99.18%	99.18%	0.16%	99.36%
FedAdam	99.18%	99.18%	0.21%	99.18%
FedAdagrad	98.26%	98.26%	0.21%	99.18%
FedYogi	99.45%	99.45%	0.44%	98.25%
FedTree	98.26%	98.26%	0.21%	99.18%
Centralized	99.52%	99.52%	0.15%	99.52%

Table 4. Evaluation results of the proposed FL architecture with various aggregation methods - OCPPFlowMeter

Strategy	Accuracy	TPR	FPR	F1
FedAvg	99.21%	99.21%	0.20%	99.21%
FedProx	99.21%	99.21%	0.20%	99.21%
FedAdam	99.14%	99.14%	2.15%	99.14%
FedAdagrad	98.49%	98.49%	4.05%	98.37%
FedYogi	99.07%	99.07%	0.23%	98.07%
FedTree	99.21%	99.21%	0.20%	99.21%
Centralized	99.66%	99.66%	0.08%	99.66%

4. DISCUSSION

In this paper, an FL-based IDS is presented, which aims to detect cyberattacks against the EV charging infrastructure based on the OCPP 1.6. The proposed system realizes multiple FL clients on multiple EV charging hubs, which analyze the local OCPP 1.6 network traffic in terms of network flows and contribute to the training of a global AI model. Moreover, the FL client integrates the OCPPFlowMeter, a new tool for network flows that generates network flow statistics relevant to OCPP 1.6, thus assisting in the detection of both flooding and FDI attacks.

An experimental setup was described, based on both simulated and real EV charging stations, showcasing high detection performance. By comparing the results from six FL aggregation methods, it is concluded that the FedProx, FedAvg and FedTree provided better results, especially in terms of FPR and F1 score.

However, it should be noted that a cyberattack is detected only by assuming that the detector is able to capture the relevant malicious activity. If the attacker is able to avoid the packet capture, or if the attacker leverages adversarial AI techniques to evade the detection from the AI models, then the attack may remain undetectable. In these cases, an attack could be detected by observing the state of the system, i.e., the symptoms of a potential attack. Moreover, while OCPP 1.6 is considered dominant in the market at the time of writing, future versions of OCPP (e.g., OCPP 2.0.1) may require the revision of the OCPPFlowMeter tool to ensure support. In addition, the proposed FL architecture assumes that each EV charging hub is equipped with a host machine and network switch with port mirroring capabilities, thus requiring additional investments from the end user. Finally, concerning the computational requirements of training the AI models, the employed models do not result in a resource-intensive task, since they can be considered as lightweight.

Considering the aforementioned remarks, as future work, we plan to extend our detection method by working on the following points: (a) detecting an attack not only by its traces, but also by assessing the system status and performance Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that would indicate the potential impact of a cyberattack, (b) strengthening the resilience of our AI models against adversarial attacks, (c) extending our threat analysis and the OCPPFlowMeter tool to OCPP 2.0.1.

5. CONCLUSION

In the present work, we study the detection of cyberattacks against OCPP 1.6 by introducing an FL-based IDS. The literature review identified several IDS solutions. Some of the existing IDS adopt the FL paradigm while

others focus on applying deep learning models that are trained in a centralized manner. Moreover, the solutions that detect threats against the EVCS infrastructure, mainly utilize centrally trained models, while their detection methodology rely on analyzing the network and transport layer attributes of network flows. Furthermore, the threat model considered by these solutions focuses on generic network threats that are applicable to multiple IoT domains rather than application-specific threat scenarios.

Considering the aforementioned remarks, we developed a privacy-preserving FL-based anomaly detection method which relies on network flow features, generated by *OCPPFlowMeter*, that consider not only network and transport layer characteristics, but also features related to the underlying application protocols of WebSocket, HTTP and OCPP. To assess our methodology, we described four cyberattacks against OCPP, with two of them being detectable only by observing OCPP-specific features. The AI-based analysis of those features enables the detection of all four attacks, compared to the conventional analysis of *CICFlowMeter* features. Finally, a comparative analysis of six FL aggregation methods is presented, which are compared to the centralized training approach that serves as the upper performance bound, indicating that our FL-based method achieves nearly the same performance while retaining the benefit of data confidentiality.

DECLARATIONS

Authors' contributions

Made substantial contributions to conception and design of the study and performed data analysis and interpretation: Dalamagkas, C.; Radoglou-Grammatikis, P.; Bouzinis, P.; Papadopoulos, I.; Lagkas, T.; Argiriou, V.; Sarigiannidis, P.

Performed data acquisition and provided administrative, technical, and material support: Dalamagkas, C.; Radoglou-Grammatikis, P.; Papadopoulos, I.; Goudos, S.; Margounakis, D.; Fountoukidis, E.

Availability of data and materials

The data producing the results of this work are published on Zenodo⁸ and IEEE Dataport⁹, titled as *Federated OCPP 1.6 Intrusion Detection Dataset*.

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Conflicts of interest

Bouzinis, P. is from Metamind Innovations IKE. Papadopoulos, I.; is from Public Power Corporation S.A. Dimitrios Margounakis and Eleftherios Fountoukidis are from SIDROCO Holdings Ltd., while the other authors have declared that they have no conflicts of interest.

Ethical approval and consent to participate

Not applicable.

Consent for publication

Not applicable.

⁸<https://zenodo.org/records/14887131>

⁹<https://ieee-dataport.org/documents/federated-ocpp-16-intrusion-detection-dataset>

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