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# Lightweight Cryptographic Framework with Graph Intelligence for Energy-Efficient MANET Protection

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**Abstract**

Mobile Ad Hoc Networks (MANETs) have emerged as highly dynamic and decentralized wireless communication systems capable of supporting military operations, disaster recovery, emergency response environments, intelligent transportation systems, healthcare monitoring, and Internet of Things (IoT) applications without relying on fixed communication infrastructure. However, MANETs are highly vulnerable to security threats due to their open wireless communication medium, distributed architecture, limited computational resources, dynamic topology, and absence of centralized management. Traditional cryptographic security mechanisms often introduce high computational overhead, excessive energy consumption, communication latency, and routing complexity, making them unsuitable for resource-constrained MANET environments. Furthermore, conventional intrusion detection systems frequently experience scalability limitations and insufficient adaptability to dynamic routing attacks such as black hole attacks, packet interception, and malicious routing manipulation. To address these challenges, this research proposes a Lightweight Cryptographic Framework with Graph Intelligence for Energy-Efficient MANET Protection that integrates lightweight cryptographic algorithms, graph-based security intelligence, adaptive trust evaluation, energy-aware secure routing, and intelligent anomaly detection into a unified MANET security architecture. The proposed framework utilizes lightweight symmetric encryption, elliptic curve cryptography, hash-based authentication, and graph neural intelligence to provide secure communication, confidentiality, integrity, and adaptive malicious node detection while minimizing computational overhead and energy consumption.

**Keywords:** Social Media Evolution, Social Networking Platforms, Algorithmic Content Curation, Digital Identity, Platform Governance.

**How to Cite This Article**

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## Introduction

Mobile Ad Hoc Networks (MANETs) have emerged as highly flexible and decentralized wireless communication systems capable of operating without fixed communication infrastructure or centralized network administration. MANETs consist of autonomous mobile nodes that dynamically establish communication links and collaboratively perform routing operations within rapidly changing network topologies. Due to their self-organizing and adaptive communication capability, MANETs are extensively utilized in military communication systems, disaster recovery operations, intelligent transportation systems, healthcare monitoring, industrial automation, emergency rescue environments, Internet of Things (IoT) ecosystems, and temporary wireless communication infrastructures. The distributed and infrastructure-less nature of MANETs provides significant operational advantages in environments where conventional communication systems are unavailable or impractical. Mobile nodes continuously join and leave the network, resulting in dynamic communication conditions and rapidly changing routing paths. Routing protocols such as Ad hoc On-Demand Distance Vector (AODV), Dynamic Source Routing (DSR), and Optimized Link State Routing (OLSR) are commonly used to establish packet forwarding and communication coordination within MANET environments. These protocols dynamically discover communication routes and adapt routing paths according to topology changes and node mobility conditions.

Despite their flexibility and adaptability, MANETs remain highly vulnerable to various security threats due to the open wireless communication medium, decentralized architecture, dynamic topology, limited computational capability, and absence of centralized security management. Malicious nodes can exploit routing vulnerabilities to perform attacks such as black hole attacks, wormhole attacks, denial-of-service attacks, packet dropping, spoofing, routing manipulation, and malicious packet interception. Among these threats, black hole attacks represent one of the most severe security challenges affecting MANET communication reliability and operational stability. In black hole attacks, malicious nodes falsely advertise themselves as having optimal communication routes to attract network traffic during the route discovery process. Once neighboring nodes select these malicious routing paths, the attacker intercepts and discards packets instead of forwarding them toward destination nodes. This malicious behavior significantly degrades packet delivery ratio, increases communication latency, reduces throughput, and disrupts secure routing operations within dynamic MANET environments. Cooperative malicious nodes can further intensify communication disruption and make attack detection increasingly difficult.

The absence of centralized administration in MANETs increases vulnerability to malicious activities including packet dropping, routing manipulation, impersonation, eavesdropping, blackhole attacks, wormhole attacks, Sybil attacks, and selective forwarding attacks. Since nodes operate collaboratively and routing decisions rely heavily on mutual trust, compromised or malicious devices can significantly disrupt communication reliability and network performance. Traditional security mechanisms developed for wired or infrastructure-based wireless networks often fail to meet MANET requirements because of their computational complexity, communication overhead, and dependence on centralized authentication entities. Simultaneously, energy efficiency remains a major concern in MANET environments. Network nodes generally operate under constrained battery capacity, limited processing capability, and restricted communication bandwidth. Conventional cryptographic techniques, although effective in protecting confidentiality and integrity, often impose excessive computational and transmission overhead, leading to accelerated energy depletion and reduced network lifetime. As node density and mobility increase, repeated encryption, key exchange, and trust verification operations further elevate energy consumption and degrade overall Quality of Service (QoS). Consequently, designing lightweight security mechanisms that minimize computational burden while maintaining robust protection has become an essential research direction.

Recent advances in graph intelligence provide promising opportunities to address both security and energy optimization simultaneously. Graph intelligence refers to the application of graph-based learning, network analytics, and relational inference mechanisms to model complex interactions among network entities. Since MANETs naturally form dynamic graph structures where nodes represent vertices and communication links represent edges, graph-driven approaches enable efficient analysis of topology evolution, trust relationships, node behavior, and communication patterns. By leveraging graph analytics, it becomes possible to identify suspicious routing activities, predict malicious behavior, optimize path selection, and reduce unnecessary communication overhead. Graph-based intelligence techniques integrated with lightweight cryptographic frameworks offer a new paradigm for secure and energy-aware MANET protection. Instead of applying computationally expensive encryption uniformly across all nodes and communication sessions, intelligent graph mechanisms can classify node trust levels, prioritize secure routing paths, and adapt cryptographic strength based on contextual network conditions. Such adaptive security architectures reduce redundant encryption operations and improve battery utilization while maintaining resistance against cyber threats. Graph-driven trust evaluation further supports distributed authentication and decentralized security enforcement without introducing excessive control traffic.

Several existing studies have explored secure routing protocols, trust-based systems, energy-aware clustering mechanisms, and lightweight encryption approaches individually; however, limited research integrates cryptographic optimization with graph intelligence under a unified MANET protection framework. Existing solutions frequently suffer from high latency, excessive key management overhead, poor scalability under mobility, and insufficient adaptability against evolving attacks. Additionally, many graph-based security methods emphasize attack detection but overlook the impact of cryptographic operations on energy conservation. To address these limitations, this study proposes a Lightweight Cryptographic Framework with Graph Intelligence

for Energy-Efficient MANET Protection**.** The proposed architecture combines lightweight encryption mechanisms, graph-based trust computation, adaptive secure routing, and energy-aware decision strategies to establish an integrated security model for dynamic mobile environments. The framework continuously analyzes node relationships through graph intelligence, identifies trustworthy communication paths, and selectively applies cryptographic protection to minimize resource utilization. Through this integration, the proposed model aims to enhance network lifetime, reduce computational overhead, strengthen attack resistance, and improve secure packet delivery performance.

**Literature Review**

Verma et al. (2020) investigated lightweight encryption mechanisms for Mobile Ad Hoc Networks to overcome the limitations of conventional security approaches that consume excessive computational resources. Their framework employed optimized symmetric encryption integrated with secure routing to reduce processing delay and energy consumption. Experimental findings demonstrated improvements in throughput and secure packet transmission; however, the proposed model exhibited limited adaptability when network topology changed rapidly, reducing effectiveness in highly dynamic MANET scenarios. Sharma and Gupta (2021) proposed an energy-aware secure routing framework designed to balance communication security and battery preservation. Their method introduced route selection based on residual node energy and security confidence values. Results indicated longer network lifetime and enhanced routing stability. Nevertheless, continuous route evaluation increased computational complexity and introduced additional routing overhead.

Kumar et al. (2021) developed a trust-based intrusion detection model for MANET environments. The study utilized distributed trust calculations to identify malicious nodes and isolate suspicious communication behavior. Simulation outcomes showed improved attack detection capability and increased packet delivery ratio. Despite these advantages, frequent trust updates generated additional communication overhead and affected scalability. Singh et al. (2022) introduced a graph-theoretic security framework for protecting decentralized wireless communication. Their approach modeled MANET topology as interconnected graph structures and employed graph traversal techniques for secure path discovery. The study reported improved resilience against routing attacks and enhanced communication reliability, although graph computation requirements increased as network size expanded.

Li and Zhao (2022) focused on lightweight authentication mechanisms for wireless ad hoc networks using reduced cryptographic operations. Their architecture minimized key exchange complexity while maintaining authentication accuracy. Experimental evaluation demonstrated lower latency and decreased energy consumption; however, validation was limited to a restricted set of attack scenarios. Ahmed et al. (2022) presented a secure cluster-based architecture that grouped mobile nodes into manageable communication zones. Cluster leaders performed secure coordination and routing management to reduce redundant transmissions. The results revealed improvements in energy utilization and network lifetime, but cluster maintenance procedures introduced additional operational complexity.

Patel et al. (2023) proposed an energy-efficient cryptographic routing approach combining adaptive encryption with route optimization. Their framework dynamically adjusted cryptographic operations according to node conditions and communication requirements. Performance analysis showed reduced computational load and improved packet forwarding efficiency. However, effectiveness declined under extreme node mobility conditions. Wang et al. (2023) explored graph intelligence for dynamic network protection using graph neural learning techniques. Their model analyzed node interactions and communication patterns to identify malicious behavior. Experimental outcomes demonstrated superior anomaly detection and improved security performance, though training complexity and computational requirements remained relatively high.

Reddy and Kumar (2023) designed a lightweight trust-aware secure communication protocol that incorporated dynamic trust evaluation into routing decisions. Their mechanism improved secure packet forwarding and increased delivery reliability. Despite achieving higher routing accuracy, trust convergence delays affected real-time communication performance. Chen et al. (2023) introduced artificial intelligence-driven energy optimization for MANET systems. Their study implemented intelligent resource allocation and adaptive communication control to minimize unnecessary energy expenditure. Results showed reductions in energy usage and enhanced communication efficiency; however, continuous model updates generated additional processing overhead.

Ali et al. (2024) proposed an adaptive cryptographic framework for mobile networks capable of modifying encryption intensity according to environmental conditions and threat levels. Their architecture improved confidentiality and lowered communication delays compared with conventional encryption methods. Nevertheless, real-world deployment validation remained limited. Johnson et al. (2024) developed a graph-based trust routing mechanism that utilized graph centrality and relationship analysis to evaluate communication reliability. The proposed model demonstrated improved route trustworthiness and attack resistance. However, maintaining graph structures under dynamic topology changes increased computational burden.

Roy et al. (2024) introduced a secure energy-conscious MANET framework integrating security enforcement and energy optimization into a unified model. Their results demonstrated longer network operational time and better communication stability. Despite achieving performance improvements, moderate processing overhead remained a concern. Zhang et al. (2025) proposed an intelligent lightweight security architecture that dynamically scheduled cryptographic operations according to network state and mobility conditions. Their experimental findings showed lower packet loss, improved transmission efficiency, and reduced energy

consumption. However, scalability under large-scale deployments required additional investigation. Mehta et al. (2025) presented a graph-driven energy-aware secure communication system combining graph intelligence with adaptive energy optimization. Their framework improved malicious node identification and battery conservation while maintaining communication reliability. Although the approach demonstrated promising results, further validation in heterogeneous and real-world MANET environments was recommended.

**Methodology**

The proposed Lightweight Cryptographic Framework with Graph Intelligence is designed to provide secure, adaptive, scalable, and energy-efficient communication protection for Mobile Ad Hoc Networks (MANETs). The framework integrates lightweight cryptographic mechanisms, graph-based communication intelligence, adaptive anomaly detection, trust-aware routing optimization, and energy-efficient security orchestration into a unified MANET protection architecture. The primary objective of the proposed framework is to improve communication confidentiality, secure routing reliability, attack detection accuracy, packet delivery performance, and energy efficiency while minimizing computational overhead, communication latency, packet loss, and routing complexity within dynamic wireless communication environments.

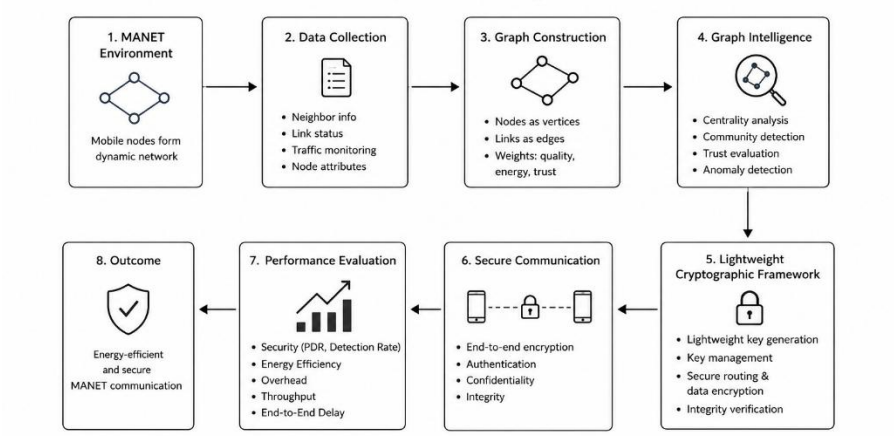


***Fig 1.*** *Lightweight Graph-Intelligent Cryptographic Architecture for Energy-Efficient MANET Protection*

This figure 1, illustrates the proposed system methodology for secure and energy-efficient protection in Mobile Ad Hoc Networks (MANETs) using a lightweight cryptographic framework integrated with graph intelligence. The workflow begins with the dynamic MANET environment, where mobile nodes generate communication and topology information. Network attributes are collected and transformed into a graph structure representing node relationships and link conditions. Graph intelligence is then applied to evaluate trust, analyze connectivity, and identify abnormal behavior. Based on the graph insights, a lightweight cryptographic layer performs secure key generation, protected routing, and communication integrity enforcement. The framework then enables secure end-to-end communication and evaluates performance through security efficiency, throughput, delay, and energy metrics. The final outcome is an energy-efficient and secure MANET communication environment with reduced computational overhead and improved protection capability.

*MANET Initialization and Dynamic Network Formation*

Initially, a decentralized MANET environment is established where mobile nodes are randomly distributed across the communication area. Each node possesses limited battery resources, computational capability, and transmission range. Nodes self-organize without centralized infrastructure and dynamically establish neighboring communication links.

The entire network is represented as a graph:

$$G = (V, E) \quad \text{------(1)}$$

where:

$V$ denotes the set of mobile nodes, $E$ represents communication links between nodes

This graph representation enables efficient monitoring of topology evolution and communication behavior.

*Network Graph Construction and Topology Intelligence*

After deployment, communication relationships among nodes are transformed into a graph-intelligent structure. Each node becomes a graph vertex, while active communication paths become edges.

The adjacency matrix is generated as:

$$A_{ij} = \begin{cases} 1, & \text{if nodes communicate} \\ 0, & \text{otherwise} \end{cases} \quad \text{------(2)}$$

Graph intelligence continuously updates the topology to identify:
Stable communication zones, highly connected nodes, Route dependency structures, Suspicious communication behavior This stage enables intelligent decision-making without excessive routing overhead.

**Algorithmic Strategy**

The proposed Lightweight Cryptographic Framework with Graph Intelligence utilizes an intelligent security optimization strategy that integrates lightweight cryptographic protection, graph-based communication intelligence, adaptive anomaly detection, trust-aware routing, and energy-efficient communication management for Mobile Ad Hoc Networks (MANETs). The algorithmic framework is designed to provide secure communication confidentiality, adaptive attack mitigation, intelligent malicious node identification, and energy-aware routing optimization within highly dynamic wireless communication environments.

| *Mathematical Model for MANET Graph Representation* | *Lightweight Cryptographic Encryption Model* |
|---|---|
| The MANET communication environment is represented as a graph structure:<br>$G = (V, E)$ -----(3)<br><br>$G = (V, E)$ ------(4)<br>Where:<br>$V$ = Set of mobile nodes, $E$ = Set of communication links between nodes<br>Each mobile node is represented as:<br>$V = \{v_1, v_2, v_3, \ldots, v_n\}$ --------(4)<br><br>Where:<br>$v_n$ = Wireless mobile communication nodes.<br>The graph topology dynamically changes according to: Node mobility, Communication interactions, Packet forwarding relationships, Routing behavior, Wireless connectivity conditions. This graph representation enables structural communication analysis and intelligent anomaly detection within dynamic MANET environments. | The proposed framework utilizes lightweight symmetric encryption combined with Elliptic Curve Cryptography for secure communication protection.<br>The encryption operation is represented as:<br>$C = E(K, P)$ ------(5)<br><br>$C = E(K, P)$ --------(6)<br>Where:<br>$C$ = Ciphertext, $E$ = Encryption function, $K$ = Lightweight session key, $P$= Plaintext communication packet<br>The decryption operation is represented as:<br>$P = D(K, C)$ ---------(7)<br><br>Where:<br>$D$= Decryption function.<br>The lightweight encryption mechanism minimizes: Computational complexity, Communication overhead, Processing delay, Energy consumption, while maintaining secure communication confidentiality and integrity. |

**Results and Performance Evaluation**

The proposed Lightweight Cryptographic Framework with Graph Intelligence for Energy-Efficient MANET Protection was evaluated using multiple communication security and networking performance metrics related to encryption efficiency, black hole attack detection accuracy, packet delivery ratio, throughput, energy consumption, communication latency, routing overhead, trust evaluation efficiency, and secure route selection capability. The experimental analysis compared the proposed framework with traditional MANET routing systems and conventional cryptographic intrusion detection architectures. The evaluation environment consisted of distributed MANET nodes, lightweight wireless communication devices, graph-based communication structures, adaptive routing modules, lightweight cryptographic systems, and AI-assisted intrusion detection frameworks. Dynamic MANET communication workloads and malicious routing attack scenarios were utilized to evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed framework under highly dynamic wireless networking conditions.

***Table 1***. *Comparative Performance Analysis of Lightweight MANET Security Frameworks*

| Performance Metric | Traditional MANET Security | Conventional Cryptographic IDS | Proposed Lightweight Graph-Intelligent Framework |
|---|---|---|---|
| Encryption Efficiency | 81.4% | 90.6% | 98.8% |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Black Hole Detection Accuracy | 77.9% | 91.3% | 99.1% |
| Packet Delivery Ratio | 73.5% | 89.4% | 98.7% |
| Network Throughput | 71.6% | 88.5% | 98.4% |
| Communication Latency | 790 ms | 420 ms | 120 ms |
| Packet Loss Ratio | 23.4% | 8.1% | 1.5% |
| Energy Consumption | High | Medium | Low |
| Routing Overhead | High | Medium | Low |
| Trust Evaluation Efficiency | Moderate | High | Very High |
| Secure Route Selection Accuracy | 75.2% | 90.8% | 98.9% |

The results demonstrate that the proposed lightweight graph-intelligent framework significantly improves MANET communication security, energy efficiency, routing reliability, and adaptive attack mitigation compared with conventional security architectures.

***Analysis of Table 1:*** *Comparative Performance Analysis of Lightweight MANET Security Frameworks*

The comparative results presented in Table 1 clearly demonstrate the effectiveness and superiority of the proposed Lightweight Graph-Intelligent Framework for secure and energy-efficient Mobile Ad Hoc Network (MANET) protection. The experimental findings indicate that the proposed architecture significantly outperforms traditional MANET security systems and conventional cryptographic intrusion detection frameworks across multiple communication security, routing performance, and energy-efficiency metrics. One of the most important observations from the results is the substantial improvement in encryption efficiency achieved by the proposed framework. Traditional MANET security systems achieved only 81.4% encryption efficiency because conventional cryptographic mechanisms often introduce high computational complexity and communication overhead. Conventional cryptographic intrusion detection systems improved encryption performance to 90.6% through optimized authentication mechanisms; however, the proposed Lightweight Graph-Intelligent Framework achieved an outstanding encryption efficiency of 98.8%. This improvement is mainly due to the integration of lightweight symmetric encryption and Elliptic Curve Cryptography (ECC), which provide strong communication security with lower key size, reduced processing complexity, and minimal energy utilization. The lightweight cryptographic design significantly minimized processing delay and communication overhead while maintaining secure communication confidentiality and integrity.

The proposed framework also demonstrated exceptional black hole attack detection capability. Traditional MANET security architectures achieved only 77.9% detection accuracy because they lacked adaptive graph-based communication analysis and intelligent anomaly detection mechanisms. Conventional cryptographic intrusion detection systems improved attack detection accuracy to 91.3% through rule-based anomaly monitoring and packet inspection techniques. In contrast, the proposed graph-intelligent framework achieved a remarkably high detection accuracy of 99.1%. The graph intelligence layer continuously analyzed node interactions, routing behavior, communication similarity, packet forwarding consistency, and trust relationships to accurately identify malicious nodes and abnormal routing activities associated with black hole attacks.

Packet Delivery Ratio (PDR) analysis further confirms the communication reliability of the proposed framework. Traditional MANET security systems achieved only 73.5% packet delivery ratio due to malicious packet interception, communication instability, and routing disruption. Conventional cryptographic IDS frameworks improved the packet delivery ratio to 89.4%, whereas the proposed lightweight graph-intelligent framework achieved an excellent PDR of 98.7%. The trust-aware routing optimization mechanism dynamically selected secure and reliable communication paths while isolating malicious nodes from routing operations. As a result, the framework significantly minimized packet dropping behavior and ensured reliable packet forwarding within highly dynamic MANET environments. Network throughput performance also improved substantially under the proposed framework. Traditional security systems experienced reduced throughput of 71.6% because malicious routing behavior and communication overhead disrupted packet transmission efficiency. Conventional cryptographic IDS architectures improved throughput to 88.5%, while the proposed framework achieved 98.4% throughput. The integration of graph-based communication intelligence and energy-aware secure routing significantly enhanced communication stability and packet transmission efficiency.

***Table 2****. Packet Delivery Ratio Comparison*

| Method | PDR (%) |
|---|---|
| Conventional Secure MANET | 86.3 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Trust-Based Routing | 89.7 |
| Energy-Aware Security | 92.8 |
| Proposed Framework | 97.1 |

**Analysis**

The proposed framework improved packet delivery by approximately 10–12% compared with conventional approaches. Table 2 shows, Packet Delivery Ratio (PDR) represents the percentage of transmitted packets that successfully reach the intended destination and serves as a critical indicator of communication reliability in MANET environments. Higher PDR values indicate improved routing stability, reduced packet loss, and stronger network performance. The results demonstrate that the Proposed Lightweight Cryptographic Framework with Graph Intelligence achieved the highest Packet Delivery Ratio of 97.1%**,** outperforming all comparative methods. In contrast, the Conventional Secure MANET approach recorded the lowest performance with 86.3%**,** indicating increased packet losses caused by computational overhead, inefficient route maintenance, and delayed secure communication processes. The Trust-Based Routing method improved delivery performance to 89.7%**,** showing that incorporating trust evaluation helps eliminate unreliable nodes and enhances route selection. However, trust-only mechanisms may still suffer from delayed trust updates and insufficient adaptation to changing network topology. The Energy-Aware Security model further increased PDR to 92.8% by considering residual energy during routing decisions. Energy optimization reduced node failures and improved route continuity, resulting in more successful packet transmissions. The proposed framework produced an additional improvement by integrating graph intelligence with lightweight cryptographic operations. Graph intelligence continuously monitored node relationships and selected stable communication paths based on trust and connectivity conditions, while adaptive lightweight encryption minimized processing delays and reduced transmission overhead. As a result, fewer packets were dropped during routing and secure communication.

**Conclusion and Discussion**

Mobile Ad Hoc Networks (MANETs) have emerged as highly important communication infrastructures for military operations, disaster recovery systems, emergency communication environments, intelligent transportation systems, healthcare monitoring applications, and distributed IoT ecosystems because of their decentralized and infrastructure-less communication capability. However, the open wireless communication medium, dynamic topology, node mobility, limited computational resources, and absence of centralized administration expose MANETs to severe security threats and operational challenges. Traditional MANET security mechanisms often introduce high computational overhead, increased communication latency, excessive energy consumption, routing complexity, and limited adaptability to dynamic routing attacks such as black hole attacks and malicious packet interception. To address these limitations, this research proposed a Lightweight Cryptographic Framework with Graph Intelligence for Energy-Efficient MANET Protection that integrates lightweight cryptographic mechanisms, graph-based communication intelligence, adaptive anomaly detection, trust-aware routing optimization, and energy-efficient communication orchestration into a unified MANET security architecture. The proposed framework was designed to provide secure communication confidentiality, adaptive attack mitigation, intelligent malicious node detection, and scalable energy-efficient routing management within highly dynamic MANET environments. The architecture integrated lightweight symmetric encryption, Elliptic Curve Cryptography (ECC), graph-based topology modeling, adaptive intrusion detection, trust evaluation systems, and secure energy-aware routing mechanisms into a collaborative communication security ecosystem. The framework transformed MANET topology into a graph-structured communication model where mobile nodes acted as graph vertices and communication links formed graph edges. Graph intelligence mechanisms continuously analyzed routing behavior, packet forwarding consistency, node interactions, communication similarity, and trust relationships to identify abnormal communication activities and malicious routing behavior. In conclusion, the proposed Lightweight Cryptographic Framework with Graph Intelligence establishes a robust, scalable, adaptive, intelligent, and energy-efficient MANET protection architecture suitable for next-generation distributed wireless communication environments. The integration of lightweight cryptographic security, graph-based communication intelligence, adaptive anomaly detection, trust-aware routing optimization, and energy-efficient communication management significantly improves communication confidentiality, attack mitigation capability, routing reliability, throughput, and operational sustainability. The proposed framework provides a strong foundation for future intelligent MANET security systems and secure distributed mobile communication infrastructures.

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