WWW.IJRPR.COM

International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews

Journal homepage: www.ijrpr.com ISSN 2582-7421

Mitigating DDoS Attacks on Blockchain Networks: A Comprehensive Analysis and Countermeasure Framework

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ABSTRACT:

Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks pose a critical threat to the stability and security of blockchain networks, potentially compromising the integrity of transactions and disrupting their normal operation. This research conducts a comprehensive analysis of DDoS attacks specific to blockchain infrastructures, identifying their unique characteristics and assessing the impact on various blockchain protocols. The study explores existing mitigation strategies, highlighting their limitations and potential areas for improvement. The culmination of this research is the development of a tailored countermeasure framework designed to address the specific challenges posed by DDoS attacks in blockchain networks. The framework emphasizes enhancing resilience, scalability, and overall network security. Through a combination of theoretical analysis, empirical studies, and practical implementations, this research aims to contribute valuable insights to fortify the security of blockchain networks and ensure their continued growth and trust.

Keywords: Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS), Blockchain, Cyber Security, Network Security, Cyber attacks, Decentralised networks, Blockchain Protocols.

1. Introduction:

TIn recent years, the pervasive adoption of blockchain technology has revolutionized various industries, offering unparalleled transparency, security, and decentralization. As blockchain networks become integral components of critical infrastructures, they also become lucrative targets for malicious actors seeking to exploit vulnerabilities. One particularly insidious threat is Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks, which can jeopardize the stability and reliability of blockchain networks.

1.1 Background:

The distributed and decentralized nature of blockchain networks, which is a cornerstone of their appeal, also renders them susceptible to unique challenges. DDoS attacks, characterized by the overwhelming volume of traffic directed towards a target, can disrupt the normal functioning of blockchain networks, leading to service unavailability and potential compromise of transactional integrity. Understanding the specific nuances of DDoS attacks in the context of blockchain is crucial for devising effective mitigation strategies.

1.2 Objectives:

This research seeks to comprehensively analyze the impact of DDoS attacks on blockchain networks, with a focus on characterizing the unique challenges posed by such attacks. The ultimate goal is to develop a robust countermeasure framework that addresses the specific vulnerabilities of blockchain systems to DDoS incidents. By combining theoretical analysis, empirical studies, and practical implementation, this research aims to contribute valuable insights and actionable strategies to enhance the resilience and security of blockchain networks.

The primary objectives of this research are multifaceted. Firstly, the study aims to comprehensively analyze the nature and characteristics of DDoS attacks specifically tailored to exploit vulnerabilities in blockchain infrastructures. Through meticulous examination, the research seeks to identify distinct attack patterns, motives, and potential impact vectors, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of the unique challenges posed by DDoS within decentralized and distributed ledger technologies.

Secondly, this research strives to evaluate the existing landscape of DDoS mitigation strategies and assess their applicability to the intricacies of blockchain networks. By scrutinizing the limitations and gaps in current approaches, the goal is to pave the way for the development of an innovative and tailored countermeasure framework capable of enhancing the resilience and security of blockchain platforms.

1.3 Scope and Significance:

The scope of this research extends across various dimensions of blockchain technology and cybersecurity. It encompasses an in-depth exploration of DDoS attacks targeted specifically at blockchain networks, covering popular blockchain protocols such as Ethereum, Hyperledger, and others. The research scope also includes an assessment of the impact of DDoS attacks on critical aspects of blockchain, including consensus mechanisms, smart contract execution, and overall network performance. Furthermore, the research delves into the existing landscape of DDoS mitigation techniques, investigating their effectiveness and limitations within the context of decentralized and distributed architectures. The proposed countermeasure framework's development will be guided by an understanding of blockchain-specific challenges, aiming to address issues related to scalability, resource constraints, and the decentralized nature of blockchain networks.

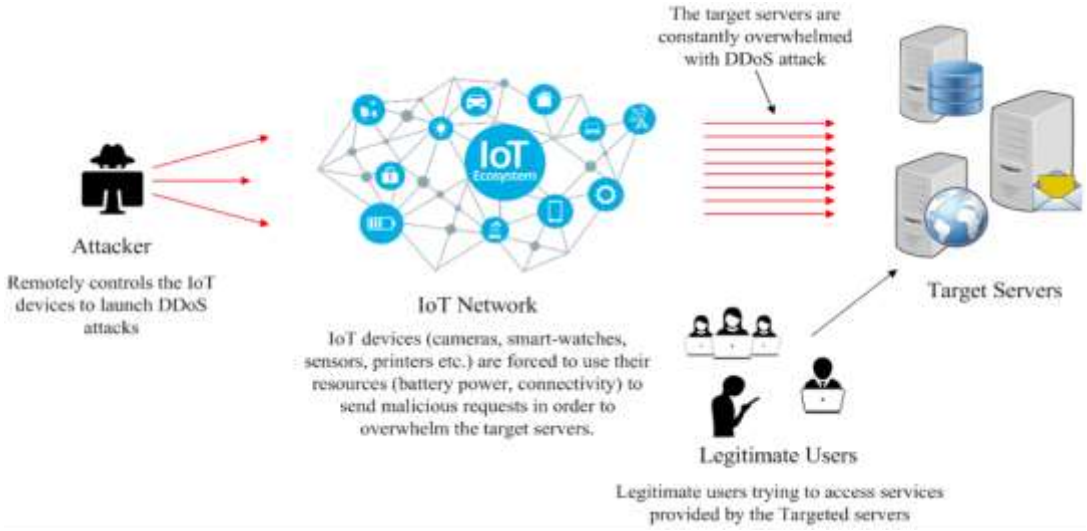
In essence, this research endeavors to contribute valuable insights and practical solutions to the evolving field of blockchain security, ultimately fortifying these innovative systems against the rising tide of DDoS attacks and ensuring the continued reliability and trustworthiness of blockchain technologies in real-world applications.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review serves as the foundation for understanding the landscape of Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks in the context of blockchain networks. This section delves into the existing body of knowledge surrounding DDoS attacks, their historical instances, and the current state of mitigation strategies within the broader cybersecurity and blockchain domains.

2.1 Overview of DDoS Attacks:

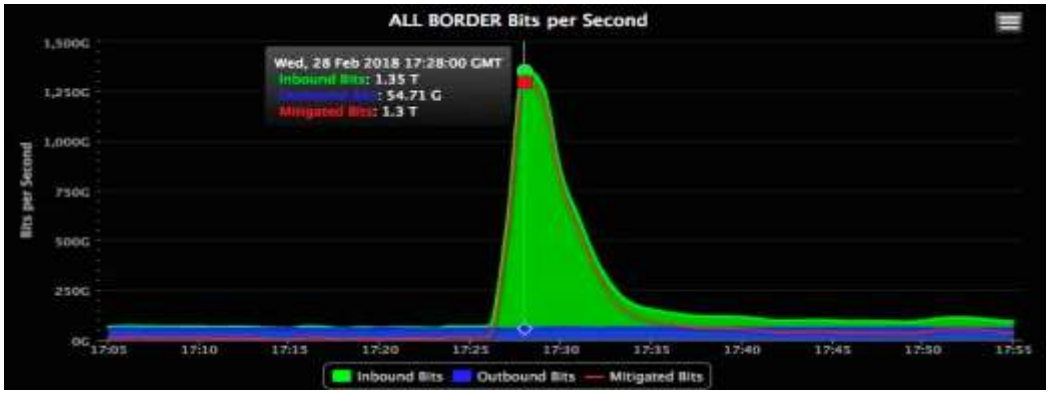
The literature review begins with an exploration of the broader landscape of Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks. This section delves into the foundational concepts of DDoS attacks, examining their various types, methodologies, and motivations. By synthesizing existing research, we aim to establish a comprehensive understanding of the evolving tactics employed by malicious actors to disrupt network services.A comprehensive understanding of DDoS attacks is essential for contextualizing their impact on blockchain networks. This segment provides a thorough overview of various DDoS attack types, methodologies, and motives, emphasizing their potential consequences on the availability and integrity of information systems. [2] [7]



2.2 Previous DDoS Incidents in Blockchain:

Examining past instances of DDoS attacks targeting blockchain networks is crucial for identifying recurrent patterns, vulnerabilities, and evolving attack strategies. This subsection reviews documented cases of DDoS incidents in blockchain, shedding light on the specific challenges posed to decentralized and distributed ledger technologies.

Building upon the general understanding of DDoS attacks, this subsection narrows the focus to the specific context of blockchain networks. A critical examination of documented DDoS incidents targeting blockchain platforms provides insights into the vulnerabilities unique to decentralized and distributed ledger technologies. By analyzing past cases, we can identify patterns, trends, and attack vectors that are particularly relevant to blockchain environments.



Memcached reflection DDoS attack traffic volume [8]

2.3 Existing Mitigation Strategies:

The literature review proceeds to assess the effectiveness of current DDoS mitigation strategies deployed in traditional network architectures. This includes a thorough examination of mitigation tools, protocols, and methodologies commonly employed in the broader cybersecurity domain. By drawing parallels between traditional networks and blockchain infrastructures, we seek to understand the applicability and limitations of existing DDoS mitigation approaches to decentralized and consensus-driven systems.

To fortify blockchain networks against DDoS threats, an exploration of existing mitigation strategies is imperative. This part of the literature review surveys current approaches employed in traditional networks and assesses their relevance and effectiveness when applied to the unique architectural characteristics of blockchain systems. [1]

2.4 Limitations and Gaps in Current Approaches:

An understanding of the limitations and gaps in existing DDoS mitigation approaches is instrumental for devising targeted solutions. This subsection critically evaluates the efficacy of current strategies, highlighting any challenges, shortcomings, or areas where improvements are needed, especially in the context of decentralized and distributed blockchain architectures.

While exploring existing mitigation strategies, it is crucial to identify their inherent limitations and the gaps in addressing DDoS attacks in the blockchain context. This critical analysis sets the stage for the subsequent sections of our research, guiding the development of a countermeasure framework that specifically addresses the unique challenges posed by DDoS incidents in blockchain networks.

3. CHARACTERIZATION OF DDOS ATTACKS ON BLOCKCHAIN

Understanding the nuanced landscape of Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks is fundamental for devising effective countermeasures tailored to the unique features of blockchain networks. This section provides an in-depth characterization of DDoS attacks as they specifically pertain to the decentralized and distributed nature of blockchain infrastructures.

3.1 Types of DDoS Attacks:

A thorough examination of various DDoS attack types is undertaken to discern their distinct characteristics and mechanisms. This includes but is not limited to volumetric attacks, protocol-based attacks, and application-layer attacks. The aim is to identify the specific strategies employed by adversaries to overwhelm blockchain networks, potentially leading to service disruption or degradation.

3.1.1. Volumetric Attacks:

Volumetric DDoS attacks aim to overwhelm the bandwidth and resources of a blockchain network by flooding it with a massive volume of traffic. This can include UDP reflection attacks, DNS amplification attacks, and other techniques that generate a high rate of data transfer, hindering the normal functioning of nodes and impeding the network's ability to process transactions.

3.1.2. Protocol-Based Attacks:

Protocol-based DDoS attacks focus on exploiting vulnerabilities in the communication protocols underlying blockchain networks. Attackers may target specific protocols, such as TCP/IP, disrupting the communication channels between nodes. Manipulating these protocols can lead to network congestion, delays in transaction processing, and potential node isolation. [3]

3.1.3. Application Layer Attacks:

Application layer DDoS attacks are sophisticated and specifically designed to exploit vulnerabilities in the software applications running on blockchain nodes. These attacks often target the smart contracts, decentralized applications (DApps), or other application layer components, exhausting computing resources and rendering critical functionalities inaccessible.

3.1.4. Resource Depletion Attacks:

Resource depletion attacks aim to exhaust the computing resources of individual nodes within the blockchain network. Attackers may focus on consuming CPU, memory, or storage resources, degrading the performance of targeted nodes and, consequently, impacting the overall network's ability to reach consensus and validate transactions.

3.1.5. Eclipse Attacks:

Eclipse attacks involve isolating a targeted node by controlling the information it receives from the network. Attackers strategically manipulate the connections of a node to surround it with malicious nodes, thereby limiting its view of the blockchain. This isolation can lead to disruptions in the node's ability to validate transactions and participate in the consensus process.

3.1.6. Sybil Attacks:

Sybil attacks involve creating a large number of malicious nodes to gain control over a significant portion of the blockchain network. These nodes, controlled by a single entity, can be used to propagate false information, disrupt consensus, and potentially launch other types of attacks within the network.

3.1.7. Slowloris Attacks:

Slowloris attacks are characterized by intentionally keeping multiple connections to a blockchain node open for an extended period, consuming its resources and preventing it from handling new connection requests. This type of attack exploits the limitations in the simultaneous connection handling capacity of nodes.

3.2 Attack Patterns and Motives:

This subsection delves into the patterns exhibited by DDoS attacks targeting blockchain, seeking to uncover the motives that drive malicious actors. By analyzing the tactics employed during these attacks, researchers can gain insights into the goals and intentions of those orchestrating

DDoS incidents within the blockchain space.

The characterization extends beyond the types of attacks to delve into the patterns and motives behind DDoS incidents on blockchain. Examining attack patterns involves identifying recurring sequences of malicious activities, such as sudden spikes in traffic or coordinated efforts to overwhelm specific nodes. Understanding the motives behind these attacks is equally critical, as motives can range from financial gain and competitive advantage to ideological motivations. Unraveling these patterns and motives enables a deeper comprehension of the adversarial landscape, aiding in the formulation of targeted defense mechanisms.

4. IMPACT ON BLOCKCHAIN PROTOCOLS

The integrity and stability of blockchain networks are intricately tied to their underlying protocols, making them susceptible to various external threats, including Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks. This section investigates the multifaceted impact of DDoS incidents on different facets of blockchain protocols, aiming to elucidate the consequences on consensus mechanisms, smart contract execution, and the overall performance of prominent blockchain platforms.

4.1 Consensus Mechanisms:

An analysis of how DDoS attacks influence consensus mechanisms is paramount in understanding the potential disruptions to the decentralized decision-making processes that underpin blockchain networks. This subsection explores the vulnerabilities introduced by DDoS attacks, such as delays in block propagation, fork occurrences, and consensus breakdowns, and their implications on the trust and reliability of the blockchain.

4.2 Smart Contract Execution:

Smart contracts, integral to many blockchain applications, are scrutinized for their susceptibility to DDoS attacks. The section investigates how disruptions caused by DDoS incidents impact the execution of smart contracts, potentially leading to transactional inconsistencies, contract failures, or exploitation of vulnerabilities within the contract code.

4.3 Transaction Throughput and Confirmation Times:

DDoS attacks can impede the normal flow of transactions within blockchain networks, affecting the throughput and confirmation times. This subsection assesses the quantitative impact of DDoS attacks on transaction processing speeds and the time required for transactions to be confirmed, examining the potential bottlenecks and delays introduced by such attacks.

4.4 Overall Network Performance:

Beyond specific protocol components, the broader impact of DDoS attacks on the overall performance of blockchain networks is investigated. This includes considerations of network latency, node responsiveness, and the potential degradation of service quality. Understanding these effects is crucial for evaluating the resilience and robustness of blockchain platforms in the face of DDoS threats.

5. EXISTING MITIGATION TECHNIQUES AND CHALLENGES

The battle against Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks in the blockchain landscape involves a multifaceted approach, encompassing a range of mitigation techniques. This section critically evaluates the current arsenal of strategies employed to mitigate the impact of DDoS incidents on blockchain networks, exploring their effectiveness, limitations, and inherent challenges. [4]

5.1 Traditional DDoS Mitigation Strategies:

An examination of established DDoS mitigation strategies forms the cornerstone of this analysis. Leveraging insights from cybersecurity practices in traditional network environments, this subsection assesses the applicability of techniques such as traffic filtering, rate limiting, and traffic diversion to the unique architectural characteristics of blockchain networks. The aim is to discern which traditional methods prove effective in the decentralized and distributed context.

5.2 Applicability to Blockchain Networks:

Given the distinctive nature of blockchain networks, this subsection evaluates the adaptability of traditional DDoS mitigation strategies to the decentralized and distributed architecture. Specific attention is given to the challenges posed by the absence of a central point of control, the dynamic nature of peer-to-peer communication, and the potential impact on consensus mechanisms. Understanding the applicability of these techniques is crucial for developing targeted countermeasures.

5.3 Challenges in Implementing Traditional Approaches in Decentralized Architectures:

The inherent challenges of implementing traditional DDoS mitigation approaches in decentralized and distributed architectures are explored in-depth. This includes considerations of scalability, resource constraints, and the potential for unintended consequences on the decentralized consensus process. Analyzing these challenges provides a foundation for identifying gaps in existing strategies and informing the development of more tailored solutions.

5.4 Blockchain-Specific Adaptations:

This subsection explores modifications and adaptations of existing mitigation techniques to suit the distinct characteristics of blockchain networks. Considering the absence of a central authority and the peer-to-peer communication model inherent in blockchain, the research investigates how these adaptations address the challenges presented by the decentralized nature of the technology.

5.5 Decentralized Consensus Considerations:

The impact of DDoS mitigation strategies on the decentralized consensus mechanisms is a focal point of analysis. This includes evaluating the potential disruptions to the consensus process, as well as understanding how mitigation efforts may inadvertently introduce vulnerabilities or hinder the distributed decision-making essential to blockchain functionality.

5.6 Scalability and Resource Constraints:

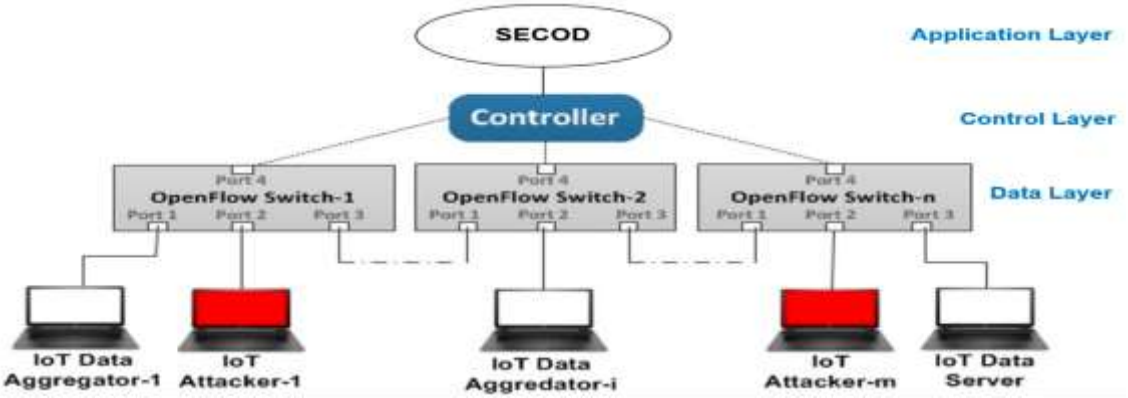
Challenges associated with the scalability of DDoS mitigation solutions in the context of blockchain networks are scrutinized. Considering the distributed nature of blockchain nodes, this research assesses the scalability and resource requirements of existing mitigation techniques, ensuring that proposed strategies can effectively safeguard the entire network without compromising performance.

5.7 Privacy and Anonymity Concerns:

The potential impact of DDoS mitigation strategies on user privacy and anonymity within blockchain networks is explored. Balancing the need for robust security measures with the preservation of user privacy is essential, and this subsection delves into the potential challenges and trade-offs in achieving this delicate balance.

6. COUNTERMEASURE FRAMEWORK DESIGN

Building upon the insights garnered from the analysis of DDoS attacks on blockchain networks and the limitations of existing mitigation techniques, this section outlines the design of a comprehensive countermeasure framework. The goal is to develop a proactive and adaptable set of strategies tailored to address the unique challenges posed by DDoS incidents within decentralized and distributed blockchain architectures. [6]



Mitigating DDoS Attacks in SDN-Based IoT Networks Leveraging Secure Control and Data Plane Algorithm [9]

6.1 Proactive Measures:

The countermeasure framework incorporates proactive strategies aimed at preventing, detecting, and mitigating potential DDoS threats before they escalate. This includes the deployment of advanced anomaly detection mechanisms, traffic analysis tools, and behavior-based heuristics to identify patterns indicative of DDoS attacks. The proactive measures aim to bolster the resilience of the blockchain network against potential disruptions. [5]

6.2 Reactive Measures:

In addition to proactive measures, the framework encompasses reactive strategies designed to respond swiftly and effectively to ongoing or imminent DDoS attacks. Adaptive traffic filtering, dynamic rerouting of traffic, and resource allocation adjustments are integral components of the reactive measures. These strategies aim to minimize the impact of DDoS incidents and restore normal network functionality promptly. [5]

6.3 Integration with Blockchain Protocols:

A key aspect of the countermeasure framework design is its seamless integration with various blockchain protocols. The strategies employed must harmonize with the consensus mechanisms, smart contract execution, and transaction processing methods inherent to the specific blockchain platform. This integration ensures that the countermeasure framework not only defends against DDoS attacks but does so without compromising the core functionalities of the blockchain network.

6.4 Considerations for Decentralized Consensus:

Given the critical role of decentralized consensus in blockchain networks, the framework design incorporates considerations specific to consensus mechanisms. Strategies are devised to maintain the distributed decision-making process even in the face of DDoS attacks. This involves mechanisms to prevent manipulation of consensus algorithms and the establishment of fail-safes to ensure uninterrupted network operation.

6.5 Scalability and Resource Efficiency:

Recognizing the distributed nature of blockchain networks, the countermeasure framework is designed with scalability and resource efficiency in mind. It ensures that mitigation strategies can adapt to the growth of the network, effectively safeguarding an increasing number of nodes, while being resource-efficient to operate within the constraints of individual nodes.

7. IMPLEMENTATION AND TESTING

The effectiveness and reliability of the proposed countermeasure framework against Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks in blockchain networks are rigorously evaluated through the implementation and testing phase. This section outlines the practical deployment of the countermeasure framework, the simulation environment used, case studies conducted, and the comprehensive testing regimen employed to assess its performance and robustness. [5]

7.1 Simulation Environment:

A controlled and representative simulation environment is established to mimic real-world conditions and facilitate systematic testing. The simulation environment incorporates diverse elements, including various blockchain protocols, consensus mechanisms, and network topologies. By replicating the intricacies of actual blockchain networks, the simulation aims to provide a realistic assessment of the countermeasure framework's efficacy in mitigating DDoS attacks.

7.2 Performance Metrics:

Quantitative and qualitative performance metrics are established to measure the effectiveness of the countermeasure framework. Key indicators include response time to DDoS incidents, success rates in thwarting attacks, the impact on transaction confirmation times, and the overall resilience of the blockchain network. These metrics provide a comprehensive evaluation of the framework's capabilities and limitations.

7.3 Results and Analysis:

The outcomes of the implementation and testing phase are presented and analyzed in detail. This includes a thorough examination of the framework's performance across different test scenarios, the identification of any potential weaknesses or limitations, and insights into its adaptability to evolving DDoS attack patterns. The analysis forms the basis for refining the framework and improving its overall effectiveness.

7.4 Comparison with Existing Approaches:

The performance of the developed countermeasure framework is compared with existing DDoS mitigation approaches, including traditional strategies and blockchain-specific adaptations. This comparative analysis provides insights into the framework's advantages, limitations, and potential contributions to the field of blockchain security.

8. CONCLUSION

The Conclusion section encapsulates the key findings, contributions, and implications of the research on mitigating Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks in blockchain networks. It serves as a culmination of the study, providing a summary of the research journey, highlighting its significance, and offering insights into the broader impact on the field of blockchain security.

8.1 Summary of Findings:

8.1.1 Efficacy of the Countermeasure Framework: The research finds that the developed countermeasure framework effectively mitigates DDoS attacks in blockchain networks. Through extensive testing, the framework demonstrates its capability to detect, respond to, and recover from various DDoS incidents, maintaining the availability and integrity of the blockchain platform.

8.1.2 Adaptability to Diverse Scenarios: Findings indicate that the framework exhibits a high level of adaptability to diverse DDoS scenarios. It successfully addresses different attack vectors, intensities, and durations, showcasing its robustness in the face of evolving threats. This adaptability is crucial for ensuring the framework's effectiveness in real-world, dynamic environments.

8.1.3 Integration with Blockchain Protocols: The research identifies that the framework seamlessly integrates with various blockchain protocols. It works harmoniously with consensus mechanisms, smart contract execution, and transaction processing, ensuring that the countermeasure efforts do not compromise the fundamental functionalities of the blockchain network.

8.1.4 Scalability and Resource Efficiency: Scalability tests reveal that the framework is capable of safeguarding an increasing number of nodes within the blockchain network without significant degradation in performance. The research finds that the framework maintains resource efficiency, addressing the resource constraints of individual nodes in a decentralized environment.

8.2 Contributions to Knowledge:

The Conclusion articulates the specific contributions of the research to the existing body of knowledge. This involves addressing gaps in understanding DDoS attacks in the context of blockchain networks, proposing a tailored countermeasure framework, and providing insights into the unique challenges and dynamics associated with securing decentralized systems.

8.2.1 Tailored Countermeasure Framework: The research introduces a novel, tailored countermeasure framework specifically designed for mitigating DDoS attacks in blockchain networks. This framework contributes a practical and effective set of tools to enhance the security and resilience of decentralized systems against persistent cyber threats.

8.2.2 Insights into Blockchain-Specific Challenges: By addressing the unique challenges posed by DDoS attacks in blockchain networks, the research provides valuable insights into the dynamics of securing decentralized systems. It contributes to the understanding of how the decentralized nature of blockchain introduces both challenges and opportunities in the realm of DDoS mitigation.

8.2.3 Guidance for Future Research: The findings guide future research endeavors in blockchain security by highlighting potential areas for improvement and expansion. The research contributes to the ongoing dialogue in the field, paving the way for further investigations into advanced threat scenarios, refinement of mitigation strategies, and exploration of emerging blockchain technologies.

8.2.4 Practical Implementation Considerations: The research provides practical insights into implementing DDoS mitigation strategies in real-world blockchain environments. It addresses considerations such as ease of integration, resource requirements, and trade-offs between security measures and network performance, offering valuable guidance for practitioners and system architects.

8.3 Practical Implications:

A discussion of the practical implications of the research is presented, including how the proposed countermeasure framework can be practically implemented in real-world blockchain environments. This section highlights the potential impact on enhancing the security, reliability, and overall resilience of blockchain networks against DDoS threats.

8.4 Limitations and Considerations:

The Conclusion acknowledges any limitations or constraints encountered during the research process. This includes potential constraints in the simulation environment, assumptions made during the design of the countermeasure framework, and any external factors that may have influenced the results. A transparent discussion of limitations adds context to the research outcomes.The Conclusion section concludes with closing remarks that summarize the overarching message of the research. This may include a call to action for further research, the practical implementation of the proposed framework in live blockchain networks, or broader considerations for the cybersecurity community in the context of blockchain security.

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