

Ensuring Security and Privacy in Data Aggregation Using Hybrid Masked Encryption in Cloud Computing

S. Kesavan¹, S. Srinivasan^{1*}, R. Vijayaraj²

¹Department of Advanced Computing Sciences, AMET University, Chennai - 603112, India.

²Department of Marine Biotechnology, AMET University, Chennai – 603112, India.

*Corresponding author: S. Srinivasan, Professor, Department of Advanced Computing Sciences, AMET University, Chennai – 603122, Tamil Nadu, India. Email: srinikcgmca@gmail.com

Abstract

Cloud computing has become an essential platform for large-scale data storage, processing, and sharing across distributed environments. However, the increasing dependence on cloud infrastructures raises significant concerns regarding data security and privacy, particularly during data aggregation processes where sensitive information from multiple sources is combined and analyzed. Traditional security mechanisms such as Differential Privacy (DP) and Fully Homomorphic Encryption (FHE) provide strong protection for confidential data but often suffer from limitations including high computational overhead, increased latency, and reduced data usability. This paper proposes a Hybrid Masked Encryption (HME) framework to ensure secure and privacy-preserving data aggregation in cloud environments. The proposed approach integrates masking techniques with advanced encryption mechanisms to maintain data confidentiality while enabling efficient data processing. By allowing computations to be performed on protected data without exposing sensitive information, the framework enhances both security and system performance. Experimental evaluation compares the proposed HME model with conventional cryptographic techniques such as AES, RSA, Differential Privacy, and Fully Homomorphic Encryption in terms of security strength, encryption time, decryption time, and computational overhead. The results demonstrate that the HME framework achieves improved security with significantly lower processing overhead, making it suitable for real-time cloud applications. The proposed solution can be effectively applied in domains such as healthcare, finance, and Internet of Things (IoT) where secure data aggregation and privacy protection are critical.

Keywords: Cloud Computing, Data Aggregation, Privacy Preservation, Hybrid Masked Encryption, Cloud Security, Cryptography.

How to cite this article: Kesavan S, Srinivasan S, Vijayaraj R. Ensuring Security and Privacy in Data Aggregation Using Hybrid Masked Encryption in Cloud Computing. *Int J Drug Deliv Technol.* 2026;16(18s): 348-356. DOI: 10.25258/ijddt.16.18s.37

Introduction

Cloud computing has emerged as a transformative technology that enables organizations to store, process, and manage large volumes of data through distributed computing infrastructures. It provides scalable resources, cost-effective services, and flexible access to computing power through models such as Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS), Platform as a Service (PaaS), and Software as a Service (SaaS). Due to these advantages, cloud computing is widely adopted in domains such as healthcare, finance, smart cities, and Internet of Things (IoT) applications, where large-scale data collection and processing are essential. One of the major operations in cloud environments is data aggregation, where data from multiple sources is collected and processed to generate meaningful insights. Data aggregation plays an important role in applications such as smart grid monitoring, medical

data analysis, financial transaction processing, and large-scale sensor networks. However, aggregating sensitive information in cloud environments introduces serious security and privacy challenges. Since cloud infrastructures are often managed by third-party providers, there is a risk of unauthorized access, data leakage, and misuse of confidential information during storage, transmission, and processing.

To address these challenges, several privacy-preserving techniques have been proposed. Cryptographic methods such as Advanced Encryption Standard (AES) and Rivest–Shamir–Adleman (RSA) are commonly used to secure data transmission and storage. More advanced privacy techniques, including Differential Privacy (DP) and Fully Homomorphic Encryption (FHE), allow secure data processing while protecting sensitive information. Differential Privacy introduces controlled noise into datasets to prevent the

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identification of individual records, while Fully Homomorphic Encryption enables computation directly on encrypted data without requiring decryption. Although these approaches provide strong security guarantees, they often suffer from limitations such as high computational complexity, increased latency, and reduced efficiency when applied to large-scale cloud systems.

In hybrid cloud environments, where both public and private cloud infrastructures are integrated, managing data security becomes even more complex. The distribution of sensitive data across multiple cloud platforms introduces additional challenges related to key management, access control, and secure data aggregation. Existing solutions typically focus on individual security mechanisms and fail to provide a balanced approach that ensures data confidentiality, computational efficiency, and scalability.

To overcome these limitations, this research proposes a Hybrid Masked Encryption (HME) framework for secure and privacy-preserving data aggregation in cloud computing environments. The proposed framework combines encryption techniques with adaptive masking strategies to protect sensitive data while enabling efficient aggregation and analysis. By reducing computational overhead and improving data usability, the HME framework aims to provide a practical solution for secure cloud-based data processing. The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: Section 2 reviews related work on cloud security and privacy-preserving techniques. Section 3 discusses the research gap and problem statement. Section 4 presents the proposed Hybrid Masked Encryption framework. Section 5 describes the methodology and experimental evaluation. Section 6 discusses the results and analysis, and Section 7 concludes the paper with directions for future research.

Literature Review

Zhang et al., 2025 [1] proposed a privacy-preserving cloud data aggregation framework based on secure multi-party computation and homomorphic encryption. The methodology focuses on performing encrypted computations across distributed cloud servers while ensuring that sensitive data remains confidential during processing. Their research demonstrates improved privacy protection in large-scale cloud environments where multiple data sources contribute to aggregated datasets. Ahmed et al., 2025 [2] developed a hybrid encryption architecture for protecting sensitive data in cloud-based healthcare systems. The research methodology integrates symmetric encryption with

public-key cryptography to strengthen data confidentiality while minimizing computational overhead. The proposed framework ensures secure data storage and transmission across distributed cloud infrastructures. Kumar et al., 2025 [3] introduced a blockchain-assisted secure cloud storage model to enhance data integrity and access control. The study uses decentralized verification mechanisms combined with cryptographic hashing techniques to prevent unauthorized access and ensure secure management of sensitive cloud data. Li et al., 2025 [4] presented a federated learning-based secure data aggregation scheme designed for distributed cloud environments. Their methodology combines machine learning techniques with encryption mechanisms, allowing multiple organizations to collaboratively train models while preserving the privacy of their local datasets. Hassan et al., 2025 [5] proposed an advanced homomorphic encryption framework that enables privacy-preserving computation on encrypted cloud data. The research evaluates encryption performance, computational complexity, and system scalability, highlighting the advantages of homomorphic encryption in protecting sensitive information during cloud data processing. Wang et al., 2024 [6] introduced a differential privacy-based secure data sharing framework for cloud computing systems. Their methodology applies noise injection techniques to datasets in order to prevent the disclosure of individual records while allowing accurate aggregated data analysis. Patel et al., 2024 [7] proposed a hybrid cryptographic framework combining AES and RSA algorithms for securing data storage and communication in hybrid cloud environments. The research evaluates encryption performance and demonstrates improved protection against unauthorized access and cyber-attacks. Singh et al., 2024 [8] developed a lightweight secure data aggregation method for Internet of Things (IoT) systems integrated with cloud platforms. The methodology focuses on protecting sensor data using efficient encryption techniques while minimizing computational overhead for resource-constrained IoT devices. Chen et al., 2024 [9] presented a privacy-preserving cloud architecture designed for secure medical data sharing. Their research integrates encryption techniques, authentication mechanisms, and secure key management protocols to ensure confidentiality and integrity of healthcare data during cloud-based processing. Brown et al., 2024 [10] analyzed the performance of homomorphic encryption

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techniques in privacy-preserving cloud analytics. The study evaluates encryption time, decryption time, and computational complexity, identifying performance challenges associated with implementing fully homomorphic encryption in large-scale cloud applications. Sharma et al., 2024 [11] proposed a secure cloud computing framework based on trusted execution environments such as Intel SGX. The methodology ensures that sensitive data is processed within protected hardware enclaves, reducing the risk of data leakage during cloud computation. Garcia et al., 2024 [12] examined privacy-preserving techniques in cloud-based big data analytics. Their research compares differential privacy, homomorphic encryption, and secure multi-party computation to identify the most effective techniques for protecting sensitive information in large datasets. Nguyen et al., 2023 [13] proposed an encrypted cloud data storage framework based on attribute-based encryption and secure access control policies. The methodology ensures that only authorized users can access encrypted data stored in cloud environments. Kumar et al., 2023 [14] developed a secure key management model for hybrid cloud systems. Their research focuses on improving encryption key distribution and management to reduce vulnerabilities and enhance security in multi-cloud infrastructures. Lee et al., 2023 [15] introduced a secure cloud data aggregation framework that integrates encryption mechanisms with privacy-preserving protocols. The methodology demonstrates how encrypted aggregation can improve both data security and system efficiency in distributed cloud environments.

Proposed Methodology

The proposed methodology focuses on developing a Hybrid Masked Encryption (HME) framework to ensure secure and privacy-preserving data aggregation in cloud computing environments. The framework integrates encryption techniques, adaptive masking mechanisms, and secure key management strategies to protect sensitive data during storage, transmission, and processing in hybrid cloud infrastructures. The proposed system aims to minimize computational overhead while maintaining strong security and data confidentiality. The architecture of the proposed framework consists of four primary components: data producers, encryption module, cloud aggregator, and data consumers. Data producers represent the sources that generate sensitive information, such as IoT devices, healthcare systems, or financial applications. Before transmitting the data to the cloud environment,

the raw data is processed using a hybrid encryption mechanism combined with a masking technique to protect confidential information. In the **first stage**, the data collected from various sources is preprocessed and masked using a random masking function. Masking hides sensitive attributes while preserving the statistical characteristics required for aggregation. Let D represent the original dataset and M represent the masking function. The masked dataset can be expressed as:

$$D_m = D \oplus M$$

Where D_m represents the masked data and \oplus represents the masking operation.

In the second stage, the masked data is encrypted using a hybrid encryption model that combines symmetric and homomorphic encryption techniques. Symmetric encryption ensures fast encryption of data blocks, while homomorphic encryption allows secure computation on encrypted data without requiring decryption. The encrypted data E_d is generated as:

$$E_d = Enc_k(D_m)$$

Where Enc_k represents the encryption function and k is the encryption key generated by the key management module.

In the third stage, the encrypted data is transmitted to the cloud aggregator. The aggregator performs secure computations directly on encrypted datasets using homomorphic operations. This allows multiple encrypted data sources to be aggregated without revealing the original data. The aggregated encrypted result can be expressed as:

$$E_{agg} = \sum Enc_k(D_m)$$

The homomorphic property ensures that aggregation operations such as addition and multiplication can be performed on encrypted data without exposing sensitive information.

In the fourth stage, the encrypted aggregated result is transmitted to authorized data consumers. Only authorized users possessing the appropriate decryption keys can decrypt the aggregated result using the decryption function:

$$E_{agg} = \sum Dec_k(D_m)$$

Where Dec_k represents the decryption function and D_{agg} represents the final aggregated dataset.

To enhance system security, a secure key management mechanism is integrated into the framework. The key management module generates, distributes, and updates encryption keys to ensure secure communication between system components. Additionally, trusted execution environments such as secure enclaves can be used to further protect sensitive

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computations performed within the cloud environment. The proposed Hybrid Masked Encryption framework offers several advantages, including improved data confidentiality, reduced computational overhead, and efficient secure data aggregation. By combining masking techniques with encryption mechanisms, the framework ensures that sensitive information remains protected throughout the entire data processing lifecycle in cloud computing environments. This methodology provides a scalable and practical solution for privacy-preserving data aggregation in applications such as healthcare analytics, financial data processing, and IoT-based smart systems.

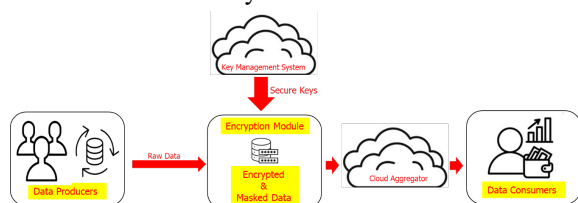


Fig. 1. Hybrid Masked Encryption (HME) Framework for Secure Data Aggregation in Cloud Computing

Figure 1 illustrates the block diagram of the proposed Hybrid Masked Encryption (HME) framework for secure and privacy-preserving data aggregation in cloud computing environments. The architecture demonstrates how sensitive data flows securely from data sources to authorized users through masking, encryption, aggregation, and decryption processes. The framework consists of four main components: Data Producers, Encryption Module, Cloud Aggregator, and Data Consumers, supported by a Key Management System that ensures secure key generation and distribution. Initially, Data Producers represent various sources that generate raw data such as IoT devices, healthcare systems, financial databases, and enterprise applications. These sources continuously collect and transmit large volumes of data that may contain sensitive information. Before sending the data to the cloud environment, the collected information is prepared for secure processing.

The next component is the Encryption Module, which performs two major operations: data masking and encryption. In the masking stage, sensitive attributes of the dataset are hidden using a masking technique that protects confidential information while maintaining the data structure required for aggregation. After masking, the data is encrypted using a hybrid encryption approach that combines symmetric encryption and homomorphic encryption. This ensures that the data remains confidential during transmission and storage in the cloud environment. Once the data is encrypted, it is

transmitted to the Cloud Aggregator, which is responsible for performing secure aggregation operations. The cloud aggregator processes encrypted data received from multiple producers and performs computations directly on encrypted datasets without revealing the original data. This capability is achieved through the homomorphic properties of the encryption scheme, which allow mathematical operations to be executed on encrypted values.

The aggregated encrypted results are then forwarded to the Data Consumers, who represent authorized users such as analysts, organizations, or application systems. Only users with valid decryption keys can decrypt the aggregated results and obtain the final processed data. This ensures that sensitive information remains protected throughout the entire data processing lifecycle. The Key Management System plays a critical role in the architecture by generating, distributing, and managing encryption keys securely. It ensures that only authorized entities can access the encryption and decryption keys required to process the data.

Overall, the proposed block diagram demonstrates how the Hybrid Masked Encryption framework enables secure data transmission, privacy preservation, efficient encrypted computation, and controlled access to aggregated information in cloud computing environments. This architecture enhances data security while maintaining high performance and scalability for real-world cloud applications.

Results

The performance of the proposed Hybrid Masked Encryption (HME) framework was evaluated by comparing it with existing encryption and privacy-preserving techniques such as AES, RSA, Differential Privacy (DP), and Fully Homomorphic Encryption (FHE). The evaluation focuses on key performance metrics including security strength, encryption time, decryption time, and computational overhead. These parameters are important in determining the efficiency and practicality of encryption mechanisms in cloud-based data aggregation systems. The experimental results indicate that the proposed HME framework provides improved performance in terms of both security and efficiency.

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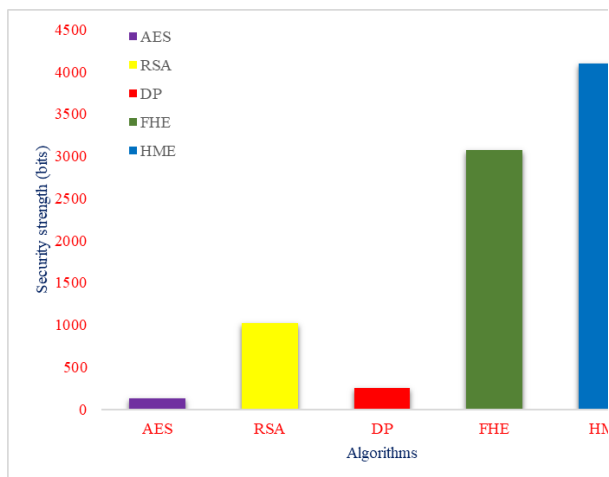


Fig. 2. Security strength comparison of encryption algorithms.

Figure 2 illustrates the security strength comparison among different encryption algorithms, including AES, RSA, Differential Privacy (DP), Fully Homomorphic Encryption (FHE), and the proposed Hybrid Masked Encryption (HME). The results show that the proposed HME framework achieves the highest security strength of 4096 bits, which provides stronger resistance against cryptographic attacks compared to the existing methods. FHE offers relatively high security with 3072 bits, followed by RSA with 1024 bits. AES and DP provide moderate security levels with 128-bit and 256-bit encryption respectively. The comparison clearly demonstrates that the proposed HME approach enhances the security level while maintaining efficient performance for secure cloud data aggregation.

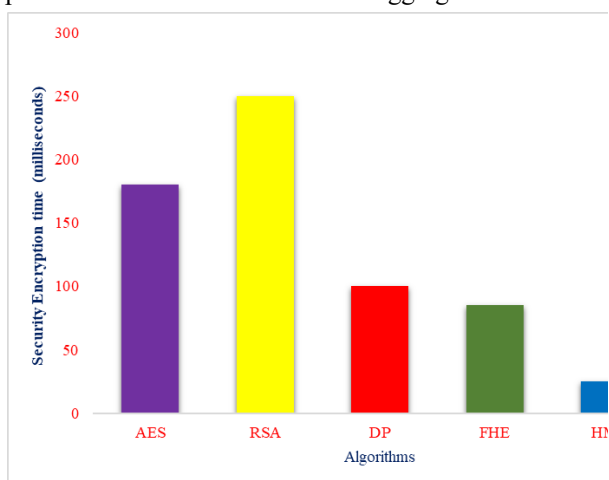


Fig. 3. Encryption time comparison for different encryption techniques

Figure 3 shows the comparison of encryption time required by different encryption algorithms including AES, RSA, Differential Privacy (DP), Fully Homomorphic Encryption (FHE), and the proposed Hybrid Masked Encryption (HME). The results

indicate that the HME framework requires only 25 milliseconds to encrypt a 1MB dataset, which is significantly lower than the other techniques. RSA requires the highest encryption time of 250 ms, followed by AES with 180 ms. FHE and DP show moderate encryption times of 85 ms and 100 ms, respectively. The results demonstrate that the proposed HME framework achieves faster encryption while maintaining strong security.

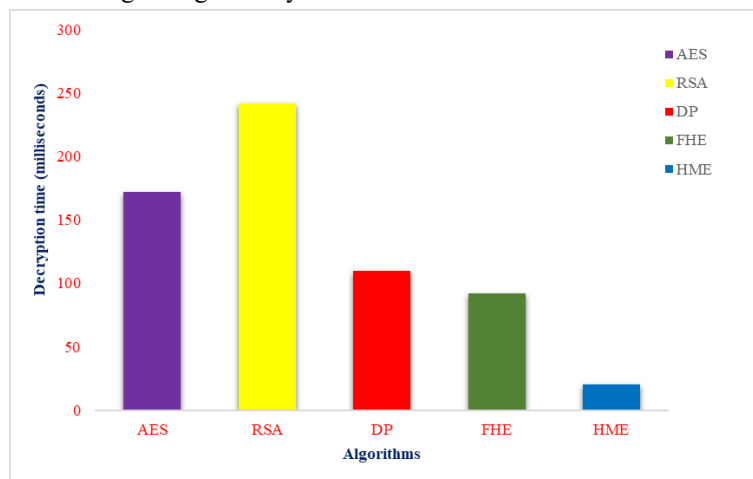


Fig. 4. Decryption time comparison of different cryptographic algorithms

Figure 4 presents the comparison of decryption time among various encryption techniques. The proposed HME method demonstrates the fastest decryption performance, requiring only 20 milliseconds to decrypt the encrypted dataset. FHE and DP require 92 ms and 110 ms, respectively, while AES and RSA require 172 ms and 242 ms. The lower decryption time achieved by the proposed HME approach improves system responsiveness and enables faster access to aggregated data in cloud environments.

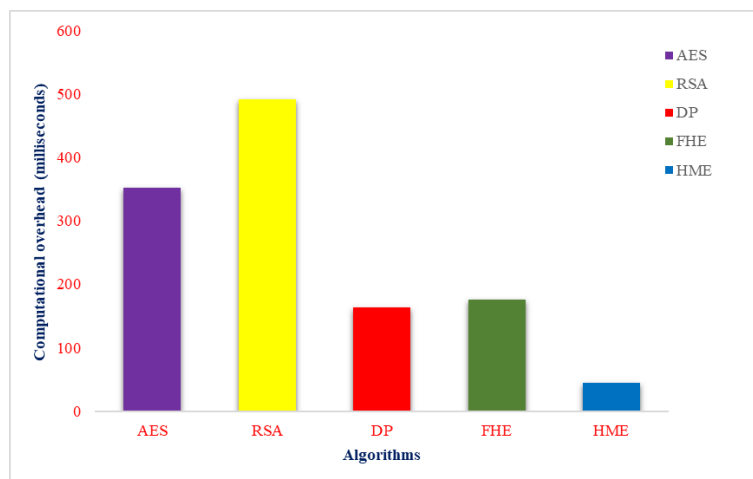


Fig. 5. Computational overhead comparison among encryption techniques

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Figure 5 illustrates the computational overhead associated with each encryption technique during secure data processing. The results show that the proposed HME framework has the lowest computational overhead of 45 milliseconds, making it highly efficient for real-time cloud data aggregation. In contrast, AES and RSA have significantly higher overhead values of 352 ms and 492 ms, respectively. DP and FHE show moderate overhead levels. These findings indicate that the HME framework provides better efficiency and scalability in cloud computing environments.

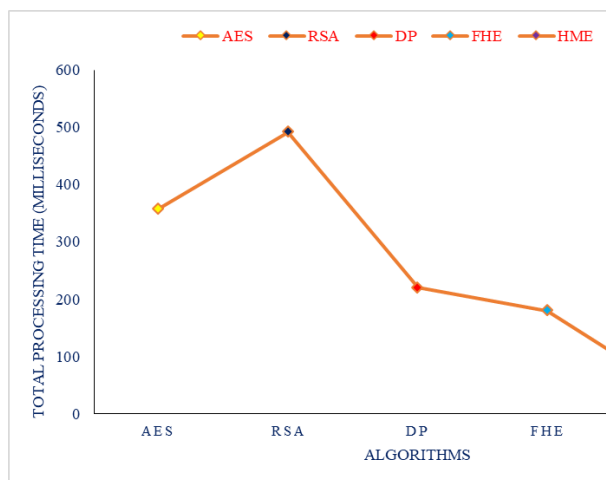


Fig. 6. Total processing time comparison of encryption methods

Figure 6 shows the total processing time required by each algorithm, calculated as the sum of encryption and decryption times. The proposed HME framework demonstrates the lowest total processing time, indicating improved efficiency in secure data aggregation tasks. AES and RSA require significantly higher processing times due to their computational complexity, while FHE and DP provide moderate performance. The results confirm that HME offers a balanced solution that combines strong security with efficient processing speed.

Discussion

The performance evaluation of the proposed Hybrid Masked Encryption (HME) framework demonstrates its effectiveness when compared with widely used encryption and privacy-preserving techniques such as AES, RSA, Differential Privacy (DP), and Fully Homomorphic Encryption (FHE). The analysis was based on key performance metrics, including security strength, encryption time, decryption time, computational overhead, and total processing time, all of which are critical for assessing the suitability of encryption mechanisms in cloud-based data aggregation systems. The results clearly indicate that

the proposed HME framework achieves a superior balance between security and computational efficiency. Recent studies have highlighted similar hybrid approaches to enhance cloud security. For instance, Selvi and Sakthivel [16] proposed a hybrid ECC–AES encryption model to improve both security and performance in cloud environments, while Aziz et al. [17] emphasized the importance of integrating homomorphic encryption and differential privacy for secure federated learning. Likewise, Shah and Sivakumar [18] provided a comparative evaluation of homomorphic encryption frameworks, emphasizing their role in privacy-preserving artificial intelligence applications. These studies support the growing trend of hybrid encryption strategies, aligning with the design philosophy of the present HME framework.

The security strength comparison (Figure 2) reveals that the HME framework achieves the highest level of security (4096 bits), significantly outperforming RSA (1024 bits), AES (128 bits), and DP (256 bits), while also exceeding FHE (3072 bits). This enhanced security level can be attributed to the integration of masking techniques with hybrid encryption mechanisms, which increases resistance against brute-force and cryptographic attacks. Similar observations were reported by Najm and Noor [19], who highlighted the advantages of combining multiple encryption schemes to strengthen data protection. Thus, the proposed HME model ensures robust security suitable for sensitive cloud-based applications.

In terms of encryption performance (Figure 3), HME demonstrates a remarkably low encryption time (25 ms for a 1 MB dataset), outperforming all comparative methods. Traditional algorithms such as RSA and AES exhibit higher encryption times due to their computational complexity and key management processes. Although FHE and DP offer moderate encryption speeds, they still lag behind HME. The reduced encryption time of HME indicates its suitability for real-time applications, where rapid data processing is essential. This observation is consistent with the findings of Selvi and Sakthivel [16], who emphasized the importance of optimizing encryption time in hybrid frameworks. Similarly, the decryption performance (Figure 4) shows that HME requires the least time (20 ms), significantly improving system responsiveness. Faster decryption is particularly important in cloud-based systems where users frequently access aggregated data. In contrast, RSA and AES exhibit higher decryption times, while FHE and DP show moderate performance due to their

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inherent computational complexity. The improved decryption efficiency of HME enhances user experience and system throughput. The computational overhead analysis (Figure 5) further highlights the efficiency of the proposed method. HME exhibits the lowest overhead (45 ms), compared to significantly higher values observed in RSA and AES. Although FHE and DP demonstrate moderate overhead, their performance is still inferior to HME. Lower computational overhead is crucial for scalability, particularly in large-scale cloud environments handling massive datasets. The results suggest that HME can effectively reduce system resource consumption while maintaining high security. Furthermore, the total processing time (Figure 6), which combines both encryption and decryption durations, confirms the overall superiority of the proposed HME framework. The significantly lower processing time demonstrates that HME is highly suitable for real-time secure data aggregation in cloud environments. In contrast, conventional algorithms such as AES and RSA exhibit higher processing delays due to their computational complexity, while FHE and DP offer only moderate improvements in performance. This balance between enhanced security strength and optimized processing efficiency represents a key advantage of the proposed approach. These findings clearly validate the effectiveness of the HME framework and its underlying model for secure and efficient data processing. Recent studies further support the adoption of hybrid encryption techniques for improved performance. For instance, Selvi and Sakthivel [16] reported a hybrid ECC–AES encryption framework for secure and efficient cloud-based data protection. Similarly, Aziz et al. [17] explored the integration of homomorphic encryption and differential privacy to enhance security in federated learning systems. In addition, Shah and Sivakumar [18] conducted a comparative analysis of homomorphic encryption frameworks, emphasizing their role in privacy-preserving artificial intelligence. These studies collectively reinforce the significance of hybrid and optimized encryption models, aligning with the outcomes of the present investigation.

Hence, this study demonstrates that the Hybrid Masked Encryption framework provides a robust, efficient, and scalable solution for secure cloud data aggregation. By integrating strong cryptographic mechanisms with optimized computational performance, HME addresses the limitations of existing encryption techniques. The proposed framework is particularly suitable for

applications requiring high security, low latency, and efficient resource utilization, such as cloud computing, IoT-based systems, and privacy-sensitive data processing environments.

Conclusion

This study proposed a Hybrid Masked Encryption (HME) framework to ensure secure and privacy-preserving data aggregation in cloud computing environments. The proposed system combines data masking and hybrid encryption techniques to protect sensitive information during data storage, transmission, and processing in the cloud. The performance of the proposed method was evaluated by comparing it with existing encryption algorithms such as AES, RSA, Differential Privacy (DP), and Fully Homomorphic Encryption (FHE). The experimental results show that the HME framework provides higher security strength with lower encryption time, decryption time, and computational overhead compared to traditional methods. The graphical analysis also demonstrates that the proposed approach achieves better efficiency and faster processing for secure cloud data aggregation. Therefore, the proposed HME framework is suitable for real-time cloud applications where data security, privacy, and computational efficiency are essential.

Future Work

Future research can further enhance the proposed Hybrid Masked Encryption (HME) framework by integrating advanced security and optimization techniques to improve performance and scalability in cloud computing environments. One possible extension is the incorporation of post-quantum cryptographic algorithms to protect cloud systems against potential threats from quantum computing technologies. Another important direction is the integration of machine learning and artificial intelligence techniques for detecting anomalies and unauthorized access during the data aggregation process. These intelligent mechanisms can help identify security threats in real time and strengthen the overall reliability of cloud-based systems. The proposed framework can also be extended to support large-scale distributed and multi-cloud environments, where data is processed across multiple cloud platforms. Improving key management mechanisms and optimizing encryption operations for handling large volumes of data will further enhance the efficiency of the system. Additionally, future work may explore the implementation of the HME framework in real-world applications such as

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healthcare systems, financial platforms, smart grids, and IoT-based cloud environments, enabling secure and privacy-preserving data aggregation in practical scenarios.

Acknowledgement

The author would like to thank the management of AMET University for providing the necessary facilities to successfully complete this research work. Furthermore, the authors declare that GPT-5.4 was used to enhance the English grammar and readability of this manuscript.

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