

# An Efficient Approach Based on Neuro-Fuzzy for Phishing Detection

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**Abstract**—In the Internet era, the online trading of various fields is growing quickly. As a result, cyber crime is increasing constantly. Phishing is a new type of crime aimed at stealing user information via these fake web pages. Most of these phishing web pages look similar to the real web pages in terms of website interface and uniform resource locator (URL) address. Many techniques have been proposed to detect phishing websites such as Blacklist-based technique, Heuristic-based technique, etc. However, the numbers of victims have been increasing due to inefficient protection technique. Neural networks and fuzzy systems can be combined to join its advantages and to cure its individual illness. This paper proposed a new neuro-fuzzy model without using rule sets for phishing detection. Specifically, the proposed technique calculates the value of heuristics from membership functions. Then, the weights are trained by neural network with adaptive learning rate. The proposed technique is evaluated with the datasets of 11,660 phishing sites and 10,000 legitimate sites. The results show that the proposed technique can detect over 99% phishing sites.

**Index Terms**—phishing, neuro-fuzzy, adaptive learning rate

## I. INTRODUCTION

With activities of phishing, it causes severe economy loss all over the world. APWG's second half report for 2010 claimed that phishing attacks grew 142% over the first half of 2010. The report also classifies the targets as comprising 37.9% payment services, 33.1% financial institutions, 6.6% classified, 4.6% gaming, 2.8% social networks, and the remainder in other categories. In 2011, 83% of Americans and 85% of Europeans regularly shopped online (Fortune Magazine, 2011). Meanwhile, phishing sites are also growing rapidly in quality and quantity. Therefore, the risk of stealing user information is extremely high. Because of these reasons, detecting phishing problem is very urgent, complex and extremely important problem in modern society. Recently, there have been many studies which against phishing based on the characteristics of site, such as URL of website, content of website, combining both the website URL and content, source code of website or screenshot of website, etc. However, each of study has its own strengths and weaknesses. There is still not a sufficient method. In this paper, a new approach is proposed to detect the phishing

sites that focuses on the features of URL (PrimaryDomain, SubDomain, PathDomain) and the ranking of site (PageRank, AlexaRank, AlexaReputation). Then, a proposed neuro-fuzzy network is a system which reduces the error and increases the performance. The proposed neuro-fuzzy model uses computational models to perform without using rule sets. The proposed solution achieved detection accuracy above 99% with low false signals.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows: Section II presents the related works. System design is shown in section III. Section IV evaluates the accuracy of the method. Finally, Section V concludes the paper and figures out the future works.

## II. RELATED WORK

The phishing detection techniques are classified into three categories such as blacklist, heuristic and machine learning. In the first approach, the phishing detection technique [1]-[4] maintains a list of phishing websites called blacklist. However, the blacklist technique is inefficient due to the rapid growth in the number of phishing sites. Therefore, the heuristic and machine learning approaches have received more attraction of researchers.

Cantina [5] presented the algorithm TF-IDF based on 27 features of webpage. This technique can detect 97% phishing sites with 6% false positives. Although this technique is efficient, the time extracting 27 features of webpage is too long to meet real time demand and some features are not necessary for improving the phishing detection accuracy. Similarly, Cantina+ [6] used machine learning techniques based on 15 features of webpage and only six of 15 features are efficient for phishing detection such as bad form, Bad action fields, Non-matching URLs, Page in top search results, Search copyright brand plus domain and Search copyright brand plus hostname. In [7], the author used the URL to detect phishing sites automatically by extracting and verifying different terms of a URL through search engine. Even though this paper proposed a new interesting technique, the detecting rate is quite low (54.3%). The technique [8] developed a content based approach to detect phishing called CANTINA which considers the Google PageRank value of a page; however, the evaluation dataset is quite small. The characteristic of the source code is used to detect phishing sites in [9].

The authors in [10] have proposed fuzzy technique based on 27 features of webpage, classified into 3 layer. Each feature has three linguistic values: low, moderate, high. The fuzzy technique has built a rule set, triangular and trapezoidal membership functions. The achieved website phishing rate of the technique is 86.2%. However, there exist many drawbacks in [10]. First, the rule sets are not objective and greatly depend on the builder. Second, the weight of each main criteria is used without any clarification. Finally, the proposed heuristics are not optimal and really effective.

The authors [11] have proposed neural network technique. The technique [11] had been built 3 layers including the input layer, the hidden layer and the output layer. The best achieved rate of the technique is 95%. However, there exist some drawbacks in [11]. First, a number of hidden nodes and activation function must be determined through experimentation. Second, the authors do not explain why using a hidden layer. Third, the value of features does not know how it is calculated. Finally, the datasets are not big enough, only 4,202 ham emails and 4,560 phishing emails.

In the previous techniques, the URL has a minor role in detecting phishing websites. In this paper, we focus on URL features and apply the neuro-fuzzy technique to detect phishing sites. Our work contributes five new aspects: i) The new heuristics have been proposed to detect phishing sites more effectively and rapidly. ii) The threshold values used in the membership functions are derived from the big data set so that the model is still equivalent for the new data set. iii) The weights of heuristic are more optimize because the weights are trained by neural network. iv) The adaptive learning rate was used to train the network, so the time of training will be getting shorter and the weights will be more efficient. v) The rule sets are not utilized. Hence, the result will be more precise and objective.

### III. SYSTEM DESIGN

#### A. Neuro-Fuzzy Network without Rule Set

Neural networks and fuzzy set theory, which are termed soft computing techniques, are tools of establishing intelligent systems. A fuzzy inference system (FIS) employing fuzzy if-then rules in acquiring knowledge from human experts can deal with imprecise and vague problems [12]. FISs have been widely used in many applications including optimization, control, and system identification. Fuzzy systems do not usually learn and adjust themselves [13], whereas a neural network (NN) has the capacity to learn from its environment, self-organize, and adapt in an interactive way. For these reasons, a neuro-fuzzy system, which is the combination of fuzzy inference system and neural network, has been introduced to produce a complete fuzzy-rule-based system [14, 15]. However, the rule sets are not objective and greatly depend on the builder, so the rule sets are not utilized in the proposed neuro-fuzzy model. Hence, the result will be more precise and objective.

#### B. URL

A URL (Uniform Resource Locator) is used to locate the resources [16]. The structure of URL is as follows:

< protocol > : // < subdomain > . < primarydomain > . < TLD > / < pathdomain >

For example, with the URL:

http://www.paypal.abc.net/login/index.html

There are six components as follows: Protocol is http, Subdomain is paypal, Primarydomain is abc, TLD is net, Domain is abc.net, Pathdomain is login/index.html

#### C. Feature of URL

Phishers usually try to make the Internet address (URL) of phishing sites look similar to legitimate sites to fool online users. They can not use the exact URL of the legitimate site, they make more spelling mistake the features of URL such as PrimaryDomain, SubDomain, PathDomain. For example, the URL www.apple.com looks similar to well known website www.apple.com, if users are not careful, they will think that they are on the "apple" site.

#### D. Feature of Domain's Ranking

It is obvious that the phishing websites are neither accessed by the users nor linked by the other websites. Therefore, the ranking of site such as PageRank, AlexaRank, AlexaReputation can also help to detect phishing sites. Phishers usually make fake-site of famous site, but the ranking of fake-site is not high. We can also use the rankings to classify whether a site is phishing site.

#### E. System Model Design

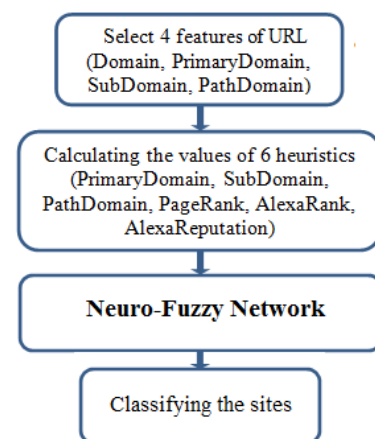


Figure 1. System model

The model can be depicted in Fig 1.

- *Phase I*—Selecting four features of URL: Four features are extracted from URL such as Domain, PrimaryDomain, SubDomain and PathDomain.
- *Phase II*—Calculating six values of the heuristics: Six values of the heuristics are calculated, six heuristics are six input node of the neuro-fuzzy network.
- *Phase III*—Neuro-fuzzy Network: The neuro-fuzzy network performs to calculate the value of the output node.

- *Phase IV*—Classifying the websites: We based on the output value of the output node to decide whether a website is a phishing website.

#### F. Neuro-Fuzzy Network Model

##### 1) The model

The neuro-fuzzy network model was designed as in Fig. 2.

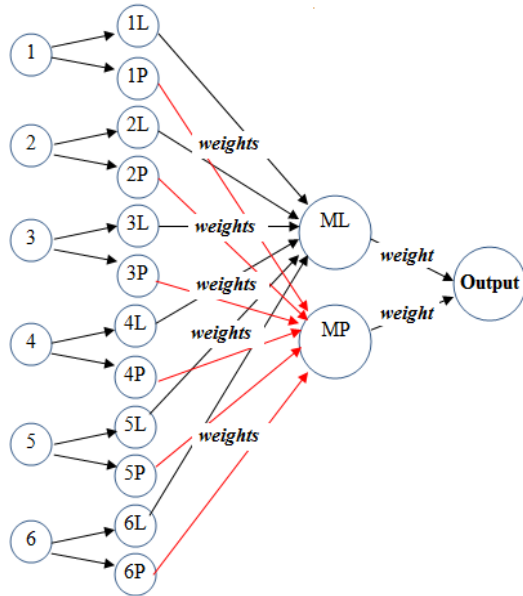


Figure 2. The neuro-fuzzy network model

The model was designed with four layers as follows:

- The first layer, called the input layer, contains six nodes that are six heuristics such as PrimaryDomain, SubDomain, PathDomain, PageRank, AlexaRank, AlexaReputation.
- The second layer has 12 nodes. The value of each node is fuzzy value and is calculated from membership functions “left sigmoid” or “right sigmoid”.
- The third layer contains two nodes which are ML and MP. ML (Mean Legitimate) is the weighted sum of nodes “L” in the second layer. MP (Mean Phishing) is the weighted sum of nodes “P” in the second layer.
- The fourth layer, called the output layer, has one output node.

The proposed neuro-fuzzy network uses sigmoid activation function, the output value of the output node range from 0 to 1. The proposed model is classified into two classes so the site is phishing if the value of the output node is less than 0.5 and the site is legitimate if the value is greater than or equal to 0.5.

##### 2) The value of six input nodes

Based on experimental results and statistics from the dataset of 11,660 phishing sites, We found that:

- The site is phishing site when the Levenshtein distance [17] between “PrimaryDomain”, “SubDomain”, “PathDomain” and the result of GOOGLE search engine spelling suggestion less than 4.

- The PageRank value varies from -1 to 10. The site is phishing site when PageRank value is low.
- The site is phishing site when the AlexaRank value is greater than 300,000.
- The site is phishing site when the AlexaReputation value less than 30.

Six values of the heuristics are calculated as follows:

- Calculating the value of heuristic “PrimaryDomain”: The algorithm is shown in Fig. 3.

```

Input: PrimaryDomain
Output: Value of heuristic “PrimaryDomain”

If PrimaryDomain is IP then value= 0; // doubt phishing
If PrimaryDomain is not IP then
    result = Suggestion_Google(PrimaryDomain);
    If result is null then
        value = 4; // no doubt phishing
    End if
    If result is not null then
        value=Levenshtein(result, PrimaryDomain);
    End if
End if

```

Figure 3. Calculating the value of the heuristic “PrimaryDomain”

- Calculating the value of heuristic “SubDomain” and “PathDomain”: The algorithm is shown in Fig 4.

```

Input: m // m is SubDomain or PathDomain
Output: Value of heuristic “m”

If SubDomain is null then value=4; // no doubt phishing
If SubDomain is not null then
    result = Suggestion_Google(m);
    If result is null then
        value = 4; // no doubt phishing
    End if
    If result is not null then
        value= Levenshtein(result, m);
    End if
End if

```

Figure 4. Calculating the value of the heuristic “SubDomain” and “PathDomain”

- Calculating the value of heuristic “PageRank”: The Google’s PageRank value can be obtained from [18]. PageRank value varies from -1 to 10.
- Calculating the value of heuristic “AlexaRank” and “AlexaReputation”: AlexaRank and AlexaReputation value can be obtained from [19].

##### 3) The value of 12 nodes in the second layer

Classifying heuristics into two linguistic labels and assigning membership functions such as left sigmoid and right sigmoid for each of the linguistic value. Each of these heuristic is classified into linguistic labels as “Phishing” and “Legitimate”. Based on experimental results and statistics from the dataset of 11,660 phishing sites, membership functions are calculated as follows:

- Membership functions for “PrimaryDomain”, “SubDomain”, “PathDomain”, “Pagerank” and “AlexaReputation”: Equation (1) and (2) are two membership functions that are built to calculate

fuzzy values and the graph of the membership functions is shown in Fig. 5.

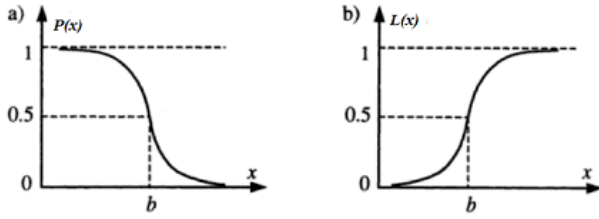


Figure 5. Graph of membership function

$$L(x) = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-(x-b)}} \quad (1)$$

$$P(x) = \frac{e^{-(x-b)}}{1 + e^{-(x-b)}} \quad (2)$$

where parameter  $b$  for "PrimaryDomain", "SubDomain", "PathDomain", "Pagerank" and "AlexaReputation" are 4, 4, 4, 6 and 20, respectively.

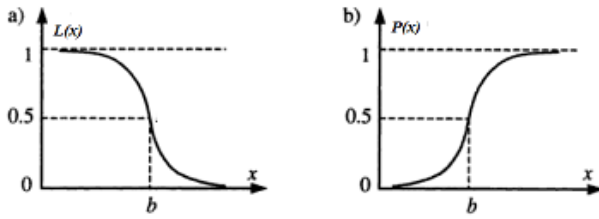


Figure 6. Graph of membership function "AlexaRank"

- Membership functions for "AlexaRank": Equation (3) and (4) are 2 membership functions built to calculate fuzzy values with parameter  $b$  of 300.000 and the graph of the membership functions is shown in Fig. 6.

$$P(x) = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-(x-b)}} \quad (3)$$

$$L(x) = \frac{e^{-(x-b)}}{1 + e^{-(x-b)}} \quad (4)$$

#### 4) Network Training Algorithm

The proposed algorithm is shown in Fig 7. The algorithm performs two phases as follows:

- The "**propagation**" phase calculates the input value, the output value of each node in the third layer and the output layer. The input value of the nodes is calculated by equation (5).

$$I_j = \sum_i W_{ij} O_i \quad (5)$$

where  $I_j$ ,  $O_i$  and  $W_{ij}$  are the input value, the output value and the weight from the  $i^{\text{th}}$  node of the previous layer to the  $j^{\text{th}}$  node of the next layer respectively.

The output value of the nodes is calculated by equation (6).

$$O_j = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-I_j}} \quad (6)$$

where  $I_j$ ,  $O_j$  are the input value, the output value of the  $j^{\text{th}}$  node respectively.

- The "**weight update**" phase calculates the error of the nodes in the third layer and the output layer, then updates the weights. The error of the output node is calculated by equation (7)

$$Err = O_o * (1 - O_o) * (T - O_o) \quad (7)$$

where  $T$ ,  $O_o$  are the real value of sample in training dataset, the output value of output node respectively.

The error of the  $j^{\text{th}}$  node in the third layer is calculated by equation (8)

$$Err_j = O_j * (1 - O_j) * \sum Err * W_j \quad (8)$$

where  $O_j$ ,  $W_j$  and  $Err$  are the output value of the  $j^{\text{th}}$  node, the weight of the connection from the  $j^{\text{th}}$  node to the output node and the error of the output node, respectively.

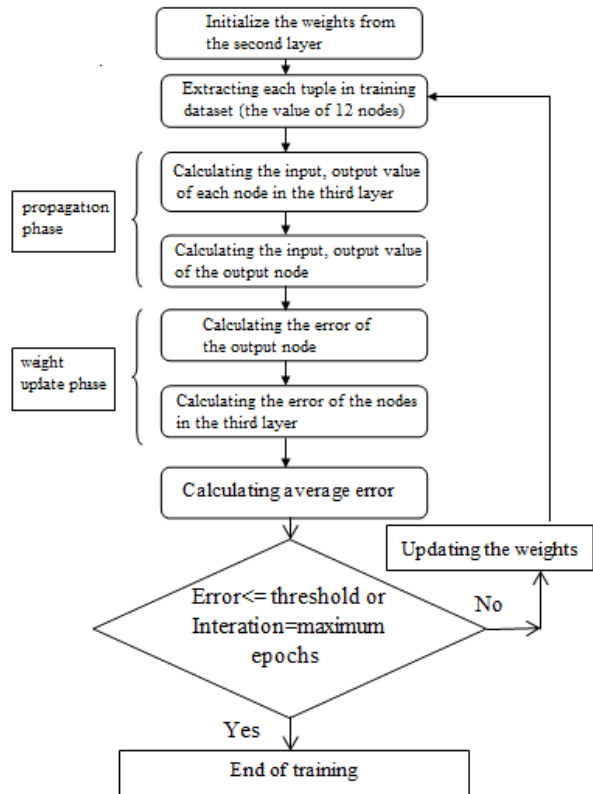


Figure 7. Network training algorithm

The weights connect from the second layer to the third layer are updated by equation (9)

$$W_{ij} = W_{ij} + R * Err_j * O_i \quad (9)$$

where  $R$ ,  $Err_j$ ,  $O_i$  are adaptive learning rate, the error of  $j^{\text{th}}$  node in the third layer and the output value of  $i^{\text{th}}$  node in the second layer, respectively.

The weights connect from the third layer to the output layer are updated by equation (10)

$$W_i = W_i + R * Err * O_i \quad (10)$$

where  $Err$ ,  $O_i$  are the error of output node and the output value of  $i^{\text{th}}$  node in the third layer, respectively.

Equation (11) was used to calculate the adaptive learning rate [20].

$$R = \frac{1}{1 + 2E^2} \quad (11)$$

where E is the error value of the current layer

#### IV. EVALUATION

We have collected 11, 660 phishing sites from PhishTank [1] and 10,000 legitimate sites from DMOZ [21]. The training dataset contains 6,660 phishing sites from PhishTank and 5,000 legitimate sites from DMOZ. We build 2 testing datasets, each of which contains 5,000 phishing sites or 5,000 legitimate sites. Experimental procedure is divided into 2 phases (Training and Testing) through PHP and MYSQL.

##### A. Training Phase

- Import Training Dataset: Training dataset is imported into MYSQL. The result is shown in the Fig. 8.
- Extracting four features of URL: Four features (Primary Domain, SubDomain, PathDomain and Domain) are extracted. The result is shown in the Fig. 9.
- Calculating the value of six input nodes: Google search engine spelling suggestions and alexa.com are used to calculate the value of the input nodes. The result is shown in the Fig. 10.
- Calculating the value of 12 nodes in the second layer: left sigmoid membership function and right sigmoid membership function are used to calculate the value of the nodes in the second layer. The result is shown in the Fig. 11.
- Network Training phase: We performed the network training with adaptive learning rate. In the training phase, the parameters are set as follows:
  - Mean error threshold value: 1%
  - Number of Epochs: 1000
  - The weights: initialize weights random values from -0.5 to 0.5

- We have trained for 5 times with training dataset. the network error convergence curve was derived as shown Fig. 12.

##### B. Testing Phase

In this phase, the proposed technique is tested with 2 testing datasets. RMSE (Root Mean Square Error) is a good measure of detecting accuracy. RMSE is calculated by (12).

$$RMSE = \sqrt{\frac{\sum (A_i - D_i)^2}{N}} \quad (12)$$

where  $D_i$  is detecting sites,  $A_i$  is actual sites and N is the number of samples in the testing dataset. Accuracy ratio is calculated as follows: Accuracy\_Ratio = 100 -RMSE. The results of the testing with adaptive learning rate will be shown in Table I. We have found that the proposed technique has the best ratio of 99.19% and the worst ratio of 98.25%.

##### C. Comparing to Technique [10]

We experimented with the technique [10] and compared to the result of our proposed technique. First, we collect 10 testing datasets, each of which contains 1,000 phishing sites or 1,000 legitimate sites. Second, we experiment the technique [10] and the results will be shown in Table II. From the obtained result and using RMSE, we have found that the technique [10] with the accuracy of 86.06%.

##### D. Comparing to Technique [11]

We experimented with the technique [11] using 8 hidden nodes and hyperbolic tangent activation function. First, we collect 2 testing datasets, each of which contains 5,000 phishing sites or 5, 000 legitimate sites. Second, we experiment the technique [11] and the results will be shown in Table III. From the obtained results, RMSE and accuracy are shown in Table IV, we have found that the technique [11] with the best accuracy of 94. 68%.

phish_id	url	phish_detail_url	submission_time	verified	verification_time
2111050	http://www.montenegrodrive.me/components/googledoc...	http://www.phishtank.com/phish_detail.php?phish_id...	2013-11-17 09:12:02	yes	2013-11-17 14:21:40
2111010	http://itunesconnect.apple.com.jooltec.com.br/upda...	http://www.phishtank.com/phish_detail.php?phish_id...	2013-11-17 09:08:17	yes	2013-11-17 13:58:52
2111001	http://kuznyanova.org.ua/deal/googledocss/googledo...	http://www.phishtank.com/phish_detail.php?phish_id...	2013-11-17 09:07:32	yes	2013-11-17 14:07:39
2110997	http://parnasseweb.tn/wp-includes/js/my.screename...	http://www.phishtank.com/phish_detail.php?phish_id...	2013-11-17 09:07:09	yes	2013-11-17 14:08:15
2110988	http://paypal.com-inc-security-account-45453612358...	http://www.phishtank.com/phish_detail.php?phish_id...	2013-11-17 09:06:17	yes	2013-11-17 14:01:12

Figure 8. MYSQL Import

phish_id	domain	primarydomain	subdomain	pathname
2111050	montenegrodrive.me	montenegrodrive		components,googledoc,index.htm
2111010	jooltec.com.br	jooltec	itunesconnect,apple,com	updates,
2111001	kuznyanova.org.ua	kuznyanova		deal,googledocss,googledocss,sss
2110997	parnaseweb.tn	parnaseweb		wp,includes.js,my.screename.aol.com,my.screename...
2110988	sorpi.fr	sorpi	paypal,com,inc,security,account	cmd,home&dispatch,2f643150d63de9bd3e4d110f71b5...

Figure 9. Selecting primarydomain, subdomain, pathdomain and domain



phish_id	primarydomain	subdomain	pathdomain	pagerank	alexarank	alexareputation
2111050	4	4	2	0	6274104	2
2111010	4	0	4	0	6274104	2
2111001	4	4	0	1	6274104	2
2110997	23	4	0	-1	160379	18
2110988	5	0	4	0	7104259	1

Figure 10. Value of six heuristics

phish_id	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6
2111050	0.00	0.00	0.88	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.12	0.00	0.00	0.00
2111010	0.00	0.98	0.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.02	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
2111001	0.00	0.00	0.98	0.99	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.02	0.01	0.00	0.00
2110997	0.00	0.00	0.98	1.00	0.00	0.88	1.00	1.00	0.02	0.00	1.00	0.12
2110988	0.27	0.98	0.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.73	0.02	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Figure 11. Fuzzy values

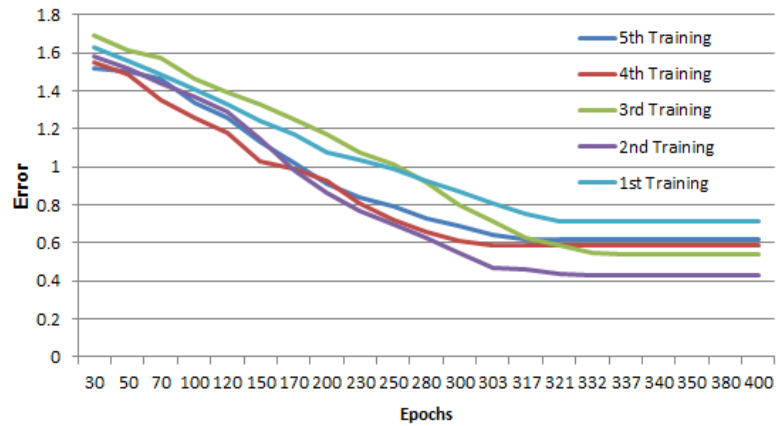


Figure 12. The curve of network error convergence with adaptive learning rate

TABLE I. RMSE AND ACCURACY WITH THE PROPOSED TECHNIQUE

Times	RMSE	Accuracy
1 <sup>st</sup>	1.44	98.56%
2 <sup>nd</sup>	0.81	99.19%
3 <sup>rd</sup>	1.75	98.25%
4 <sup>th</sup>	1.62	98.38%
5 <sup>th</sup>	1.53	98.47%

TABLE II. RESULT OF TESTING WITH TECHNIQUE [10] (1):VERY PHISY AND PHISY (2) : VERY LEGITIMATE AND LEGITIMATE (3) : SUSPICIOUS

Testing Dataset	(1)	(2)	(3)
No.1	867	82	51
No. 2	865	76	59
No. 3	847	90	63
No. 4	902	172	26
No. 5	841	109	50
No. 6	64	873	63
No. 7	50	911	39
No. 8	39	895	66
No. 9	97	871	32
No. 10	85	863	52

TABLE III. RESULT OF TESTING WITH TECHNIQUE [11]

Learning Rate	Testing dataset	Actual Sites (A <sub>i</sub> )	Detecting Sites (R <sub>i</sub> )
0.1	No.1	5,000	4,612
	No.2	5,000	4,520
0.2	No.1	5,000	4,624
	No.2	5,000	4,478
0.3	No.1	5,000	4,689
	No.2	5,000	4,735
0.4	No.1	5,000	4,456
	No.2	5,000	4,792
0.5	No.1	5,000	4,732
	No.2	5,000	4,736
0.6	No.1	5,000	4,721
	No.2	5,000	4,678
0.7	No.1	5,000	4,599
	No.2	5,000	4,725
0.8	No.1	5,000	4,772
	No.2	5,000	4,697
0.9	No.1	5,000	4,719
	No.2	5,000	4,699

TABLE IV. RMSE AND ACCURACY WITH TECHNIQUE [11]

Learning Rate	RMSE	Accuracy
0.1	8.73	91.27%
0.2	9.10	90.90%
0.3	5.78	94.22%
0.4	8.24	91.76%
0.5	5.32	94.68%
0.6	6.03	93.97%
0.7	6.88	93.12%
0.8	5.36	94.64%
0.9	5.82	94.18%

## V. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

We have proposed a new technique to detect phishing sites effectively. In the proposed technique, the system model is built to detect phishing sites by using neuro-fuzzy network and six heuristics (primarydomain, subdomain, pathdomain, pagerank, alexarank, alexareputation). The technique is experimented with the training dataset containing 11,660 sites and 2 testing datasets that each dataset contains 5,000 phishing sites or 5,000 legitimate sites. The best results show that 99.19% phishing websites are detected by using the proposed technique. The proposed technique is compared to the technique [10], technique [11] and found that it is more efficient. In the future, the proposed neuro-fuzzy model will be improved to enhance the detecting ratio. Besides, the system could be furthermore enhanced by using larger datasets and more heuristic parameters.

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