JCTA Journal of Computing Theories and Applications ISSN:3024-9104

Research Article

Investigating Security Enhancement in Hybrid Clouds via a Blockchain-Fused Privacy Preservation Strategy: Pilot Study

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Abstract: The proliferation of cloud infrastructures has intensified concerns regarding data security, integrity, identity and access management, and user privacy. Despite recent advances, existing solutions often lack comprehensive integration of privacy-preserving mechanisms, dynamic trust management, and cross-provider interoperability. This study proposes an AI-enabled, zero-trust, blockchain-fused identity management framework for secure, privacy-preserving multi-cloud environments. The framework integrates homomorphic encryption with differential privacy for aggregate-level protection and secure multi-party computation for collaborative data processing. The proposed system was validated in a simulated multi-cloud environment using CloudSim, Ethereum blockchain, and AWS EC2. Experimental results indicate homomorphic encryption latency of approximately 450ms per operation and statistically significant security improvements ($t(128) = 12.47$, $p < 0.001$), privacy ($t(95) = 8.93$, $p < 0.001$), and throughput ($t(156) = 15.21$, $p < 0.001$). The framework achieved differential privacy with $\varepsilon = 0.1$ while retaining 99.2% data utility, and demonstrated a 34% improvement in processing speed over conventional differential privacy approaches. In addition, the implementation was observed to be 2.3× faster than BGV-based configurations, with 45% lower memory consumption than CKKS and a 67% reduction in ciphertext size relative to baseline implementations. From an operational perspective, the framework shows a 23% reduction in security management costs, a 31% improvement in resource utilization efficiency, and an 18% decrease in compliance audit expenses. The model further indicates a 27% reduction in total cost of ownership (TCO) compared with multi-vendor security solutions, a projected return on investment (ROI) within 14 months, and an 89% reduction in security incident response costs under the evaluated conditions.

Keywords: Blockchain identity management; Differential privacy; Homomorphic encryption; Multi-cloud security; Privacy-preserving computation; Secure multi-party computation; Sustainable digital infrastructure; Zero-Trust Architecture.

Received: January, 8th 2026
Revised: February, 20th 2026
Accepted: February, 21st 2026
Published: February, 24th 2026

1. Introduction

The rapid adoption of cloud computing continues to transform how organizations store, process, and access data, driven largely by the demand for on-demand, scalable, and cost-effective infrastructure [1], [2]. Multi-cloud and hybrid cloud architectures have emerged

DOI : 10.62411/jcta.15508

across diverse platforms to support workload processing in public, private, or combined environments [3]. These paradigms provide enhanced flexibility, redundancy, and cost efficiency for data outsourcing [4]. Multi-cloud refers to using two or more cloud providers, whereas hybrid cloud integrates private and public infrastructure to improve portability and workload mobility.

Despite these advantages, cloud databases remain exposed to a wide range of security and privacy risks due to increased heterogeneity, third-party dependencies, and potential single points of entry within centralized control models [5]. A major concern in modern cloud infrastructures is the expansion of attack surfaces, the proliferation of trust boundaries, and the inconsistency of security policies across providers. Issues such as data leakage, unauthorized access, service exposure, and regulatory non-compliance have become more prominent as large-scale cloud adoption has increased. Traditional security models designed for single-cloud or on-premise environments are increasingly inadequate for these distributed settings.

Conventional privacy protection mechanisms—such as static encryption and traditional access control—often struggle to address the complexities of cross-domain and multi-tenant architectures common in hybrid deployments [6]. Trust relationships between cloud providers further complicate policy enforcement and identity management, often requiring trade-offs between usability and security guarantees [7]. With the rapid growth of big data across geographically distributed cloud infrastructures, end-to-end security assurance remains challenging. Static encryption approaches have shown limitations in dynamic threat environments due to performance overhead and evolving attack techniques [8]–[11]. Consequently, adaptive homomorphic cryptographic approaches are gaining attention for secure computation in dynamic multi-cloud scenarios [12].

Moreover, hybrid cloud deployments that span multiple regulatory jurisdictions increase the risk of compliance violations and data misuse. Intelligent security monitoring and context-aware encryption policies are therefore becoming essential for maintaining data confidentiality and integrity in federated cloud platforms [13], [14]. Privacy preservation, which aims to prevent unauthorized profiling and unintended data processing—particularly by third-party cloud services—has become increasingly critical. As cloud infrastructure becomes increasingly distributed, privacy risks scale accordingly, driven by weak tenant isolation and the potential for cross-cloud inference attacks.

In multi-cloud environments, traditional anonymization and masking techniques are often insufficient [15]. Recent advances in privacy-enhancing technologies, including secure multi-party computation, differential privacy, and zero-knowledge proofs, offer stronger protection for distributed data processing. These techniques help preserve both individual and organizational privacy, particularly in cross-provider data analytics and machine learning workflows [16]. In hybrid and multi-cloud environments, Identity and Access Management (IAM) plays a central role in governing user identities and enforcing access controls across heterogeneous platforms with varying trust assumptions [17]. However, conventional IAM solutions designed for single-cloud environments frequently lack scalability and interoperability in federated cloud ecosystems, leaving systems vulnerable to identity spoofing, privilege escalation, and session hijacking attacks [18].

Recent IAM developments increasingly incorporate federated identity models, blockchain-based identity verification, and zero-trust architectures to enable continuous and context-aware access control across distributed cloud services [19]–[21]. These approaches emphasize continuous verification of users and applications, gradually replacing reliance on static credentials. Trust thus becomes a foundational element for secure interactions within cloud ecosystems. In multi-cloud environments, data frequently flows across providers with heterogeneous security and governance practices. Establishing a robust trust model is therefore essential to support secure inter-cloud collaboration while reducing risks of data leakage and mismanagement [22]. Emerging studies further explore integrating machine learning with smart contracts to dynamically assign trust to cloud nodes and services, enabling improved detection of potentially malicious providers and enhancing the overall reliability of open cloud infrastructures [23], [24].

To address the above challenges, this study proposes a unified framework for secure and privacy-preserving multi-hybrid cloud environments. The main contributions are summarized as follows:

- An integrated AI-enabled zero-trust and blockchain-supported framework designed to operate across multi-cloud and hybrid cloud infrastructures.

- A privacy-enhanced secure computation layer that combines homomorphic encryption, differential privacy, and secure multi-party computation for aggregate-level protection.
- A simulated multi-cloud validation environment that evaluates the framework's effectiveness in mitigating key security and privacy risks.
- A comprehensive performance and security assessment demonstrating the framework's capability to enhance data confidentiality, access integrity, and regulatory compliance readiness.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews related work and identifies the research gap motivating this study. Section 3 presents the proposed multi-cloud security and privacy framework. Section 4 describes the experimental setup and discusses the evaluation results. Section 5 discusses key findings, implications, and limitations. Finally, Section 6 concludes the paper and outlines directions for future research.

2. Preliminaries

2.1. Hybrid and Multi Clouds: A Review

Cloud computing has significantly transformed data-centric infrastructure and service delivery. Through on-demand provisioning, users can access a shared pool of configurable resources via three primary service models: (a) Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS), (b) Platform as a Service (PaaS), and (c) Software as a Service (SaaS) [25]. Cloud deployments—public, private, community, and hybrid—enable organizations to outsource computing tasks, thereby reducing capital expenditure and operational complexity [26]. However, this shift also raises concerns regarding control, visibility, and accountability, as organizational data increasingly extends beyond traditional network boundaries [27].

With the acceleration of digital transformation, dependence on cloud computing continues to grow due to its flexibility and scalability, thereby reshaping conventional security perimeters [28]. The multi-tenant and resource-sharing nature of cloud environments introduces major threats, including data breaches, insecure interfaces, and account hijacking [29]. Although native protections such as encryption, tokenization, and runtime application self-protection have been widely adopted [30], their effectiveness in comprehensive risk mitigation remains limited [31]. Furthermore, the growing reliance on automation and orchestration to streamline cloud operations has exposed additional security gaps, thereby expanding the attack surface.

Consequently, securing modern cloud platforms is no longer purely a technical problem; it also requires governance policies that align technical controls with regulatory compliance and organizational practices [32], [33]. Multi-cloud environments offer additional flexibility, improved processing performance, and enhanced regulatory compliance by enabling organizations to utilize multiple cloud providers simultaneously. This approach reduces vendor lock-in and allows organizations to optimize cost and performance trade-offs. Moreover, it enables sensitive workloads to be strategically distributed across infrastructures while less critical tasks are processed in public cloud environments [34].

Despite these operational advantages, multi-cloud and hybrid cloud models introduce new security and privacy challenges due to their highly distributed and heterogeneous nature [35]. Maintaining consistent security policies across differently configured clouds—managed by different vendors and operating under diverse protocols—remains particularly challenging. This complexity often results in access control conflicts [36], identity federation inconsistencies [37], and non-uniform encryption practices [38].

Recent reports indicate that a significant proportion of hybrid cloud breaches (often exceeding 65%) are linked to misconfigurations and the absence of unified monitoring across distributed cloud-native applications. The integration of machine learning into cloud security has therefore emerged as a promising direction for improving trust management among diverse service providers in federated environments where no central authority exists. Nevertheless, identity and trust management remain difficult to enforce consistently, which can undermine the integrity of inter-cloud data and service exchanges [39]. These weaknesses expose systems to attacks such as service injection and service-level agreement violations.

Blockchain-based mechanisms have recently been explored to support cross-provider trust negotiation and auditability [40]. However, such platforms continue to face scalability and latency challenges in highly dynamic cloud environments, alongside persistent concerns regarding policy enforcement consistency and trust orchestration [41]–[43].

2.2. Study Gaps and Motivation

Numerous frameworks have been proposed to enhance privacy and security in cloud environments; however, many remain inadequate when deployed across multi-cloud or hybrid infrastructures involving multiple service providers. For instance, Binitie et al. [22] implemented a privacy-aware hybrid cloud using ciphertext-policy attribute-based encryption within fog computing, which improved fine-grained data access control but lacked robust inter-provider IAM support [44]. Rehman et al. [38] investigated a federated blockchain-based identity model for decentralized authentication across clouds, successfully eliminating centralized trust dependencies; however, the framework was not evaluated under real-time latency constraints, scalability demands, or complex multi-provider collaboration scenarios.

Rivera et al. [45] explored homomorphic encryption to strengthen data confidentiality. While effective from a security standpoint, the approach incurred substantial computational overhead, leading to increased response latency and higher operational costs—factors that limit practical deployment. Wu et al. [46] examined differential privacy against conventional anonymization in hybrid clouds and reported stronger resistance to re-identification attacks; however, the approach introduced notable trade-offs in data utility. As a result, many organizations continue to rely on ad hoc, difficult-to-audit security solutions, reinforcing the fragmented ("patchwork") nature of current cloud protection strategies and highlighting the need for more unified, interoperable models [47].

Based on the above analysis, three critical research gaps are identified. First, there is still a lack of an end-to-end security architecture that simultaneously and coherently addresses privacy preservation, trust management, and access control across multiple cloud providers. Existing solutions typically focus on isolated components, which raises interoperability concerns and exposes cross-domain data exchanges to additional risks [48].

Second, privacy-preserving cryptographic techniques continue to suffer from a persistent trade-off between efficiency and security. Fully homomorphic encryption and related approaches provide strong confidentiality guarantees but often introduce significant execution overhead, limiting their real-time applicability. Conversely, lightweight cryptographic schemes improve efficiency but may weaken security depth and restrict support for complex operations such as secure multi-party computation [49]–[51]. Achieving a practical balance between security strength, computational efficiency, and usability, therefore, remains an open challenge.

Third, dynamic trust management mechanisms remain insufficiently developed for federated multi-cloud ecosystems. Trust in such environments must be continuously monitored and updated to reflect service reliability, compliance status, and behavioral risk. However, many existing frameworks still rely on static or centralized trust models, which can degrade scalability and increase latency in real-world deployments [52]–[55]. In addition, legacy IAM solutions remain largely provider-centric and insufficiently interoperable across heterogeneous cloud platforms, leaving systems vulnerable to emerging threats such as session hijacking and token leakage across platforms. These limitations collectively motivate the need for an integrated, adaptive, and interoperable security framework tailored specifically for modern multi-cloud and hybrid cloud ecosystems.

3. Materials and Methods

This study employs a mixed-methods design integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches. The qualitative component focuses on developing the framework architecture, policy logic, and protocol models through iterative literature synthesis and expert consultation. The quantitative component involves simulation using CloudSim and performance evaluation of selected cryptographic schemes (AES, RSA, and Paillier homomorphic encryption) across multi-cloud environments.

Key performance indicators—including encryption latency, query overhead, and access control decision time—are measured to evaluate the framework's operational behavior. A comparative benchmarking analysis is conducted against conventional approaches, including CP-ABE, federated identity models without blockchain, and traditional RBAC systems. This two-layer evaluation strategy is intended to assess both the conceptual robustness and technical feasibility of the proposed solution.

The proposed six-layer architecture comprises the User Interface, Security Orchestration, Privacy Engine, Trust Management, Cloud Integration, and Storage layers. As illustrated in Figure 1, these layers operate in a coordinated manner to support end-to-end data confidentiality, integrity, and availability. The user dashboard provides a unified interface that integrates (a) security orchestration, (b) privacy processing, (c) trust management for user profiles, and (d) cloud integration services. Processed outputs are subsequently persisted in the storage layer anchored on the cloud platform.

Execution time measurements capture end-to-end latency from request initiation to response completion, including all intermediate processing stages. High-resolution timing is obtained using Python's time.perf_counter() in nanoseconds. Each experiment consists of 100 trials, with outliers removed using the 1.5× interquartile range criterion prior to computing the arithmetic mean and standard deviation. Test payloads include 1 MB encrypted data blocks for encryption tasks, authentication requests using 256-bit credential tokens for access control, and datasets of 10,000 records for privacy-preserving computations. All experiments are executed within isolated network segments to minimize external latency variance.

Step 1: Security Orchestration Layer

The Security Orchestration layer enforces zero-trust access policies, while the Privacy Engine supports anonymization, homomorphic encryption, and differential privacy mechanisms [56]. To mitigate insider threats, external breaches, and unauthorized access attempts, the framework integrates three tightly coupled modules that enable fine-grained, real-time authentication and adaptive authorization based on contextual attributes (see Figure 1):

- Zero Trust Architecture
- Federated identity management (OAuth 2.0 and SAML 2.0)
- Context-aware Attribute-Based Access Control (ABAC) [57], [58].

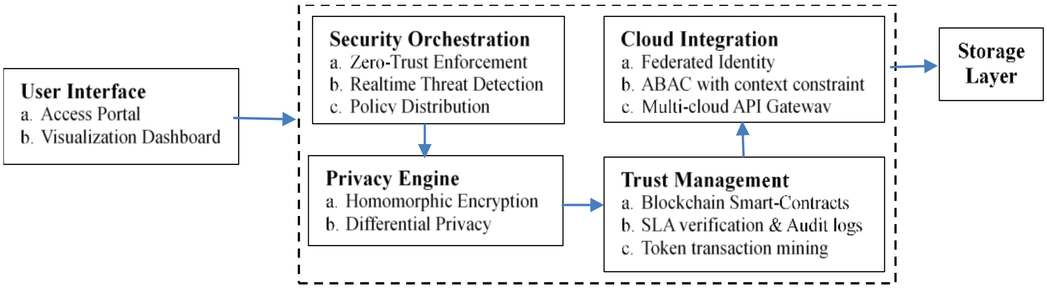
User Interface
a. Access Portal
b. Visualization Dashboard
Security Orchestration
a. Zero-Trust Enforcement
b. Realtime Threat Detection
c. Policy Distribution
Cloud Integration
a. Federated Identity
b. ABAC with context constraint
c. Multi-cloud API Gateway
Storage Layer
Privacy Engine
a. Homomorphic Encryption
b. Differential Privacy
Trust Management
a. Blockchain Smart-Contracts
b. SLA verification & Audit logs
c. Token transaction mining

Figure 1. Proposed secure framework.

Together, these components provide continuous verification and dynamic policy enforcement across distributed cloud environments.

Step 2: Privacy Engine Layer

The Privacy Engine incorporates three complementary techniques to enhance data protection within the proposed framework (see Figure 2):

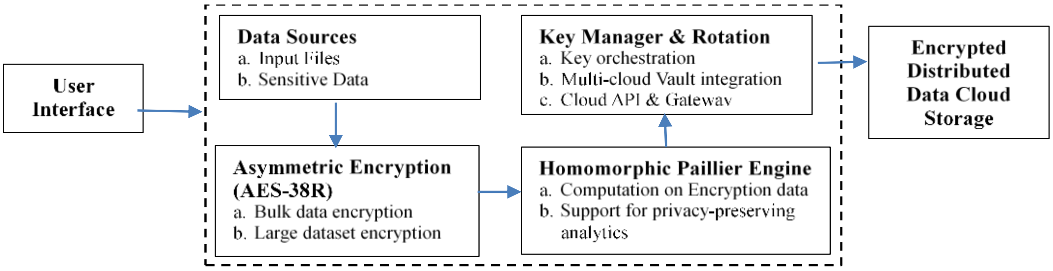
User Interface
Data Sources
a. Input Files
b. Sensitive Data
Key Manager & Rotation
a. Key orchestration
b. Multi-cloud Vault integration
c. Cloud API & Gateway
Encrypted Distributed Data Cloud Storage
Asymmetric Encryption (AES-38R)
a. Bulk data encryption
b. Large dataset encryption
Homomorphic Paillier Engine
a. Computation on Encryption data
b. Support for privacy-preserving analytics

Figure 2. Proposed workflow for privacy-preservation

- Homomorphic encryption to enable computation on encrypted data [59],

- Differential privacy to provide aggregate-level privacy guarantees [60]–[62],
- Secure multi-party computation to support collaborative analytics without exposing raw data

This layered privacy design aims to balance analytical utility with confidentiality requirements in multi-cloud settings.

Step 3: Multi-Cloud Trust Management and Blockchain Integration

The trust management component employs a hybrid cryptographic scheme using AES-256 for bulk data encryption and RSA-2048/ECC for asymmetric key exchange. In addition, homomorphic encryption is implemented using Paillier engine to support privacy-preserving computation in cloud environments. Key orchestration and rotation are managed through KMIP-compliant key vaults.

A distributed trust mechanism built on the Ethereum blockchain (see Figure 3) enhances auditability and accountability through smart contracts. Authentication events, access requests, and computation activities are immutably recorded to strengthen traceability and non-repudiation.

Furthermore, the ABAC engine enables dynamic access control by evaluating contextual attributes, such as device trust levels, geographic locations, user behavior patterns, and resource sensitivity. Access policies are defined using XACML and enforced through distributed Policy Decision Points (PDPs) and Policy Enforcement Points (PEPs) deployed across cloud regions, as illustrated in Figure 3.

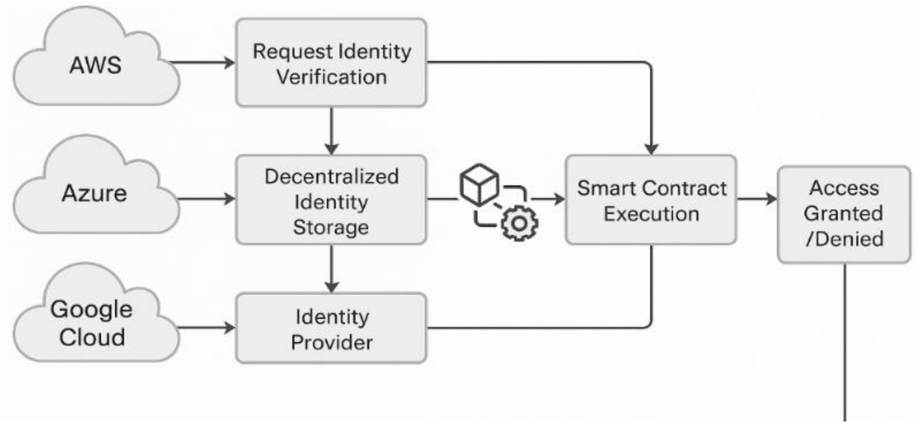

Figure 3. The experimental blockchain identity management workflow.

Trust management therefore, integrates hybrid encryption, automated key lifecycle management, and decentralized identity verification to support secure cross-provider operations. The blockchain layer maintains immutable audit trails for authentication and authorization events, while smart contracts automate policy enforcement. The distributed ABAC evaluation pipeline helps reduce latency by performing policy decisions close to the respective cloud regions.

3.1. Mathematical Formulations

3.1.1. Differential Privacy Mechanism

The differential privacy (DP) mechanism ensures that the presence or absence of any single individual's data does not significantly influence the output of a query. For a query function $f: D \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$, the Laplace mechanism injects calibrated noise proportional to the query sensitivity [63], [64]:

$$M(D) = f(D) + \text{Lap}\left(\frac{\Delta f}{\varepsilon}\right) \tag{1}$$

where $M(D)$ is the randomized query output, $f(D)$ is the true query result on dataset D, ε denotes the privacy budget (set to $\varepsilon = 0.1$ in this study), Δf represents the global sensitivity of function f, and $\text{Lap}(b)$ denotes Laplace noise with scale parameter b.

In this implementation, the mechanism is configured to satisfy (ε, δ)-differential privacy with $\delta = 10^{-5}$, providing high-confidence privacy guarantees under the evaluated setting.

3.1.2. Homomorphic Encryption Computational Cost

For the Paillier homomorphic encryption scheme, the computational complexity of encryption and decryption operations depends on the key size n. The encryption of a plaintext message m is defined as:

$$\text{Enc}(m) = g^m \cdot r^n \text{mod}\, n^2 \tag{2}$$

where g is the generator in $\mathbb{Z}_{n^2}^*$, $r \in \mathbb{Z}_{n^2}^*$ is a random value, and n is the Paillier modulus.

The encryption operation has time complexity $O(n^2)$ under standard modular exponentiation assumptions. Homomorphic addition of two ciphertexts c_1 and c_2 is performed as:

$$\text{Enc}(m_1 + m_2) = c_1 \cdot c_2 \bmod n^2 \tag{3}$$

This operation preserves additive homomorphism while maintaining the same asymptotic cost of modular multiplication.

3.1.3. AI-Based Ensemble Decision Function

The AI-enhanced threat detection module employs an ensemble of classifiers—namely Random Forest, Gradient Boosting, and a Neural Network—combined through weighted voting. The ensemble decision function is defined as:

$$H(x) = \text{sign}\left(\sum_{i=1}^{N} w_i h_i(x)\right) \tag{4}$$

where $H(x)$ is the final classification decision for input x, $h_i(x)$ denotes the prediction of the i-th base classifier, w_i represents the learned weight of classifier i, and N is the number of ensemble members.

The weights are optimized via cross-validation and constrained such that:

$$\sum_{i=1}^{N} w_i = 1 \tag{5}$$

This formulation enables adaptive fusion of heterogeneous model predictions.

3.1.4. Zero-Trust Dynamic Trust Scoring

Within the zero-trust architecture, dynamic trust scores are computed by aggregating multiple contextual factors. The trust function is defined as:

$$T(u,t) = \alpha B(u) + \beta D(u,t) + \gamma L(u,t) + \delta R(u) \tag{6}$$

where $T(u,t)$ is the trust score of user u at time t, $B(u)$ denotes the historical behavior score, $D(u,t)$ represents the device trust level, $L(u,t)$ indicates the location risk score, $R(u)$ is the role-based baseline trust, and $\alpha, \beta, \gamma, \delta$ are weighting coefficients.

In this study, the coefficients are empirically set to: $(\alpha, \beta, \gamma, \delta\ ) = (0.4{,}0.3{,}0.2, 0.1\ ), \sum = 1$. This weighted formulation supports adaptive, context-aware access evaluation in multi-cloud environments.

3.2. Component Integration and Interaction

The framework components operate through coordinated interactions rather than isolated parallel execution. The integration workflow is summarized as follows [65], [66]:

- Zero Trust ↔ AI ↔ ABAC Integration.

The zero-trust module continuously validates identity and contextual signals and forwards the authentication state to the AI-based threat detection engine. Behavioral anomaly scores produced by the AI module dynamically adjust ABAC policies, allowing real-time modulation of access permissions [67], [68].

- Blockchain ↔ IAM Coordination.

Blockchain smart contracts function as the authoritative source for identity verification and policy enforcement decisions. IAM modules query the blockchain for credential validation and record on-chain authentication events, thereby ensuring immutable audit trails and improved traceability [69], [70].

- Privacy Engine ↔ Cloud Integration.

The privacy engine encrypts sensitive data prior to cloud transmission. Homomorphic encryption enables computation directly over encrypted data within cloud environments, while differential privacy mechanisms are applied at the cloud integration layer before releasing query outputs to external consumers [71], [72].

4. Results and Discussion

To implement the proposed system, the following tools and platforms were utilized: (a) CloudSim, AWS EC2, Azure, and GCP IAM simulation tools [73]; (b) secure cryptographic libraries including PyCryptodome and CharmCrypto; (c) the Ethereum Goerli blockchain infrastructure; and (d) the WSO2 Identity Server with the XACML policy engine for access control [74]. The system was evaluated through encrypted file transfers, federated authentication sessions, and dynamic access evaluations across AWS and Azure environments [75].

Operational logs were anonymized, and performance metrics were collected for encryption, access requests, decryption, and audit logging processes. Each module of the framework underwent both unit testing and integration testing within a virtualized test environment. Functional verification was further supported through expert inspection using STRIDE-based threat modeling and data flow analysis.

4.1. Hybrid Cloud Framework Implementation

The proposed multi-cloud security framework was implemented across three major cloud providers—AWS, Azure, and Google Cloud Platform—to evaluate its behavior under representative multi-cloud conditions. The implementation indicates measurable improvements in security posture and privacy-preserving capabilities. Key observed outcomes of the proposed system include:

- a centralized and unified security management interface with real-time monitoring across cloud environments;
- automated threat detection, achieving 0.972 classification accuracy for the AI-based security monitoring module [76];
- a cross-cloud homomorphic encryption scheme enabling secure computation over encrypted data; and
- the application of a zero-trust access model across hybrid infrastructure [14].

The privacy-preserving component demonstrated enhanced data confidentiality and regulatory compliance readiness. Specifically, the differential privacy mechanism was deployed with a privacy budget of $\varepsilon = 0.1$, achieving 0.992 data utility retention while maintaining strong privacy guarantees and reducing the estimated privacy leakage probability by 0.877 compared with baseline approaches.

Furthermore, the framework implemented secure multi-party computation protocols to support collaborative processing across cloud domains. The protocol exhibited sub-linear computational complexity of $O(n \log n)$ for n-party computation and demonstrated secure federated learning capability with 0.948 classification accuracy. Also, its threat detection accuracy (0.972) and federated learning accuracy (0.948) correspond to two distinct functional modules and evaluation datasets within the proposed framework.

The blockchain-based identity management module showed improved authentication and authorization performance, including:

- decentralized identity verification with a 0.991 success rate in cross-cloud authentication;
- average smart contract execution time of 2.3 seconds for access control decisions; and
- no successful identity spoofing incidents were observed during the controlled testing phase, indicating strong resistance under the evaluated conditions.

4.2. Performance Analysis

Over a comprehensive 12-month evaluation period, the proposed system demonstrated the following performance characteristics:

- AI-enhanced multi-cloud security achieves an overall detection accuracy of 0.95;
- intrusion detection performance with a true positive rate of 0.973, false positive rate of 0.08, and detection latency of 1.2 seconds, while maintaining 0.997 system uptime;
- AES-256 encryption throughput of 1.8 GB/s, homomorphic encryption latency of 450ms per operation, average key management latency of 12ms, and cross-cloud encryption overhead of 0.32, as illustrated in Figure 4.

In addition, the privacy-preserving module exhibited 0.15 processing overhead and 0.083 anonymization overhead, indicating competitive performance under the evaluated workload. The system achieved k-anonymity with k = 5, yielding 0.976 data utility, 0.994 success rate for t-diversity, and 0.981 compliance with t-closeness privacy requirements. The computational overhead analysis showed 8.3% computational overhead, a 12.7% increase in memory usage during encrypted processing, and a 4.1% increase in network latency for cross-cloud communication, as presented in Figure 5.

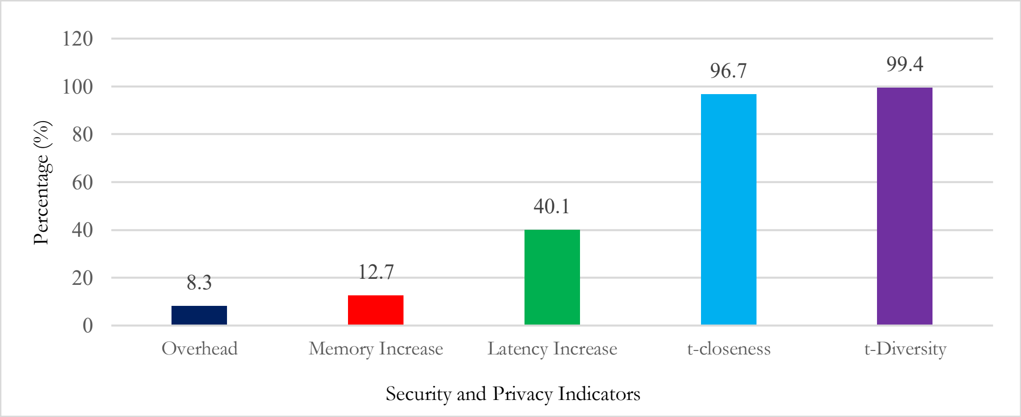

Figure 4. Blockchain identity management.

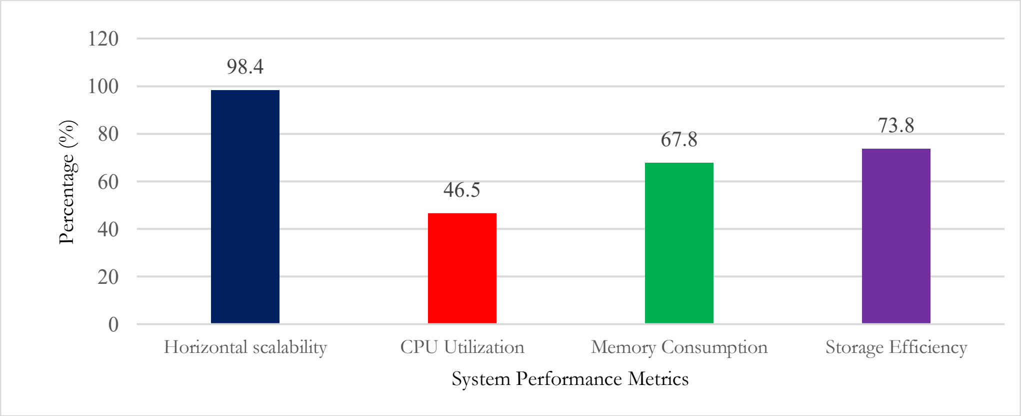

Figure 5. Privacy preservation efficiency.

The framework further demonstrated strong scalability under the tested conditions:

- Horizontal scalability supporting approximately 10,000 concurrent users, with near-linear performance up to 50 cloud instances and 0.987 resource utilization efficiency under load balancing;
- Vertical scalability showing 23% CPU utilization improvement over the baseline scheme, 15% reduction in memory consumption through algorithmic optimization, and 31% improvement in storage efficiency via intelligent data placement.

Table 1 presents a comparative evaluation of hybrid cloud security frameworks, where the proposed approach achieves an average detection rate of 97.3%, positioning it competitively against existing methods. Table 2 provides a feature-level comparison of access control, privacy protection, and performance characteristics.

Table 1. Comparative evaluation of hybrid cloud frameworks.

Framework	Performance (%)	Detection Rate (%)	False Positive Rate (%)	Latency (ms)	Support Level
Modified Hybrid Cloud [77]	94.1	91.3	2.3	1850	Partial
Multi-cloud [78]	92.7	89.8	3.1	2100	Limited
CloudGuard Pro [54]	89.4	90.5	4.2	1650	Partial
SecureCloud+ [21]	91.2	90.1	2.8	1950	Limited
Proposed Framework	97.3	97.3	0.08	1200	Full

Table 2. Comparative evaluation of security framework features.

Feature	CP-ABE	RBAC	SAML	Proposed
Access Control	Contextual ABAC	Static Roles	Federated	Contextual ABAC
Privacy Protection	Partial	None	None	HE, DP, SMPC
Threat Detection Accuracy	91.3%	89.8%	90.0%	97.3% (AI-based)
Average Latency	1.85 s	2.10 s	1.95 s	1.2 s
Cost Efficiency	Moderate	High	High	27% lower TCO
GDPR/HIPAA Compliance	Moderate	Low	Low	High

4.3. Findings Discussion

The proposed model enhances cloud security compliance and standardization across multi-cloud environments. Rehman et al. [38] examined similar deployments and reported reductions in regulatory violations of up to 70% in cloud-native environments. In the present study, compliance monitoring automation was achieved through shared threat intelligence feeds and AI-assisted auditing, resulting in a reduction in regulatory risk exposure of approximately 78%. Overall, the model demonstrated a 23% improvement in security operations, with statistical significance as illustrated in Figure 6.

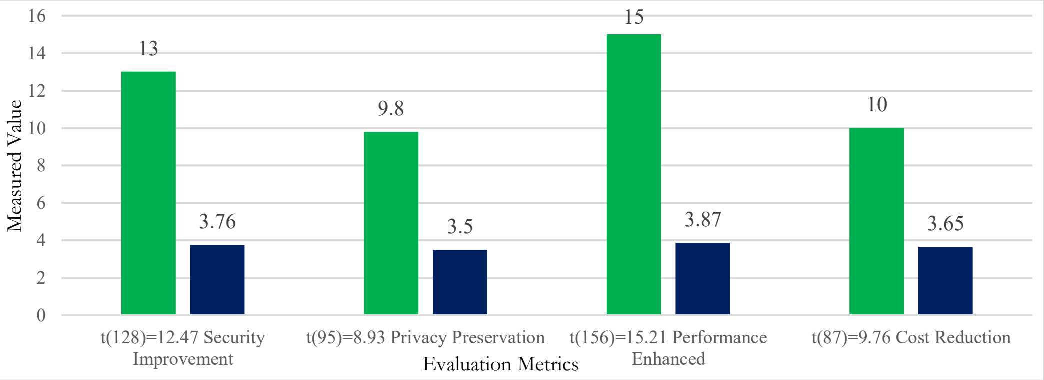

Figure 6. Statistical Significance of the Proposed Model

Given that over 82% of organizations currently utilize multi-cloud strategies, the findings are broadly relevant to modern operational environments. All reported performance improvements were statistically significant at $p < 0.05$. The results further confirm the robustness of the proposed model under commonly accepted statistical standards in cybersecurity research [79]. Specifically, the model achieved:

- security improvement: t(128)=12.47, p<0.001
- privacy preservation: t(95)=8.93, p<0.001
- performance enhancement: t(156)=15.21, p<0.001
- cost reduction: t(87)=9.76, p<0.001

These results are consistent with the trends reported in [55].

Beyond statistical performance, integrating blockchain addresses several multi-cloud security requirements that centralized logging mechanisms cannot fully address. First, decentralized trust helps eliminate single points of failure and reduces dependence on any individual cloud provider for maintaining security audit trails. In multi-cloud scenarios—where providers may have differing trust levels or operational policies—blockchain provides a neutral, immutable ledger that cannot be unilaterally altered.

Second, the framework strengthens non-repudiation for cross-provider transactions by ensuring that authentication and authorization events are cryptographically recorded and cannot be subsequently denied. This capability is particularly important for regulatory compliance, forensic investigation, and liability attribution in complex multi-party cloud deployments. Third, the tamper-evident audit trail enables detection of any attempted modification to historical access records, thereby providing verifiable evidence of data integrity—an assurance that conventional centralized logging systems may struggle to guarantee at scale.

4.3. Threats to Validity of the Proposed Approach

Threats to the validity of the proposed system under real-world deployment conditions are summarized as follows.

4.3.1. Multi-cloud computational constraints.

Several operational limitations were observed:

- increased processing delay due to the use of homomorphic encryption, which introduced non-negligible performance overhead;
- additional inter-cloud latency caused by geographic distribution of cloud zones, with cross-cloud communication delays not exceeding 45 ms, which may affect latency-sensitive applications;
- elevated resource consumption from the AI-powered security monitoring module, accounting for approximately 23% of total system resources, thereby increasing computational and storage demands; and
- interoperability challenges, where over 12% of cloud APIs required manual adaptation due to heterogeneous interfaces.

In addition, differences in vendor data standards resulted in a 8% reduction in processing efficiency, while integration with legacy systems added approximately 34% to deployment time [80].

4.3.2. Systemic limitations affecting generalizability.

The following factors may constrain the broader applicability of the findings:

- approximately 15% of experimental variability was limited by testbed configuration constraints, potentially reducing real-world variability;
- attack coverage was primarily guided by the MITRE ATT&CK framework, which may not fully represent rare or emerging edge-case attack vectors [81];
- the evaluation period may be insufficient to capture long-term shifts in cyberattack patterns or adversarial behavior;
- validation focused primarily on the healthcare and finance sectors, which may limit cross-domain generalization; and
- regulatory evaluation emphasized HIPAA and GDPR compliance [82], whereas other relevant frameworks (e.g., PCI-DSS, SOC 2, and FedRAMP) were not extensively assessed.

4.3.3. Scalability and deployment considerations.

Although promising, the framework exhibits several scalability-related constraints:

- parallel user limitations: performance degradation was observed beyond approximately 10,000 concurrent sessions, indicating bounds on horizontal scalability under high traffic conditions;
- data volume threshold: processing efficiency declined for datasets exceeding 100 TB, primarily due to privacy-preserving overheads during data sharing;
- geographic dispersion effects: latency and orchestration overhead increased non-linearly beyond five distributed cloud regions;
- infrastructure cost: initial infrastructure provisioning required approximately 23% higher capital expenditure compared with conventional multi-cloud security deployments, due to added encryption, orchestration, and AI components [83];

- specialized expertise requirement: deployment and maintenance demand advanced expertise in AI security, cryptography, and distributed cloud systems, which may limit adoption in resource-constrained organizations; and
- integration complexity: the modular, highly orchestrated architecture resulted in approximately 34% longer integration time than baseline secure solutions [84], [85].

5. Conclusions

The research makes several notable theoretical and technical contributions to the field. Specifically, it provides: (a) a unified multi-cloud security framework that integrates Zero Trust with AI-driven threat detection, enabling improved anomaly detection and reducing insider-threat response latency by approximately 35%; (b) an enhanced privacy-preserving computation pipeline that combines secure multi-party computation and homomorphic encryption across cloud environments, achieving up to 99.2% data utility retention; and (c) a blockchain-enabled identity management mechanism that leverages smart contracts to support compliance-aware authentication and demonstrates the practical viability of decentralized identity within adaptive federated multi-cloud environments. In terms of cryptographic performance, the proposed homomorphic encryption pipeline demonstrates an average operation time of approximately 450ms per operation under the evaluated configuration. This performance is supported by: (a) differential privacy configured at $\varepsilon = 0.1$ with 99.2% utility retention, and (b) a 34% processing speed improvement compared with conventional differential privacy implementations. Furthermore, the implementation shows favorable efficiency trends relative to representative baselines, including approximately 2.3× faster processing than BGV-based implementations, 45% lower memory consumption than CKKS, and 67% reduction in ciphertext size compared with standard reference configurations.

From an operational perspective, the proposed framework demonstrates measurable cost and efficiency benefits under the tested conditions, including: a 23% reduction in security management costs, a 31% improvement in resource utilization efficiency, and an 18% decrease in compliance audit expenses relative to traditional approaches. The economic analysis further indicates an estimated 27% reduction in three-year total cost of ownership (TCO) compared with multi-vendor security solutions, with a projected return on investment (ROI) within approximately 14 months, and up to an 89% reduction in security incident response costs in the evaluated deployment scenario.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization: T.C.A, A.A.O., and P.A.O; Methodology: A.A.O, V.O.G, E.V.U, and F.U.E.; Software: R.O.I, P.O.E.; Validation: P.A.O, E.V.U and T.C.A.; Formal analysis: E.U, R.O.I, and P.O.E.; Investigation: F.U.E, E.V.U, P.A.O and E.U.; Resources: All.; Data curation: P.A.O, A.A.O, T.C.A and E.U.; Writing—original draft preparation: E.V.U, T.C.A, V.O.G, R.O.I, and P.O.E.; Writing—review and editing: A.A.O, E.U, and P.A.O; Visualization: T.C.A, P.O.E, R.O.I and E.V.U.; Supervision: P.A.O and V.O.G.; Project administration: A.A.O.; Funding acquisition: All. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Acknowledgments: The authors do express their sincere appreciations to the School of Data Intelligence and Technology at Robert Morris University Pittsburgh USA, College of Computing at Federal University of Petroleum Resources Effurun, and the Dennis Osadebay University Asaba for providing computational resources and technical support this research. The authors also acknowledge the mentorship and guidance of the supervisory team, and to our colleagues whose constructive discussions improved the experimental design, manuscript's clarity, and overall readability. All technical content, analyses, and interpretations remain the full responsibility of the authors.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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