Secret Key Extraction using Keyloggers

Anu B Prashanth
Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning
Sri Siddhartha Institute of Technology
Tumkur, India

Savitha C
Assistant Professor
Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning
Sri Siddhartha Institute of Technology
Tumkur, India

Moulya N M
Computer Science and Engineering
Sri Siddhartha Institute of Technology
Tumkur, India

Abstract:- The application of keylogger technology for secret key extraction within a message-sending system is presented with practical example of its implementation in real-world scenarios. Keyloggers, designed to capture keystrokes, are repurposed to intercept cryptographic key input during the process of message encryption and decryption. By deploying keyloggers in a controlled environment, the sensitive cryptographic keys can be extracted from user interactions with the messaging application. The integration of keylogger tools with the messaging system includes technical details of their deployment and the methodologies used to capture and analyze keystrokes associated with cryptographic operations.

Keywords:- *Encryption, Decryption, Cryptographic Keys, Secret Key Extraction, Keyloggers.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Recent advancements in cybersecurity have led to the exploration of various techniques for securing message transmissions [1], [2]. Among these, keylogging techniques have gained attention due to their ability to extract encryption keys during the transmission of sensitive information [3]. Keyloggers, typically regarded as malicious tools, have been utilized to intercept user input at various levels, such as keystrokes or clipboard content, posing significant security risks [4]. As cyber threats continue to evolve, keyloggers have become increasingly sophisticated, capable of bypassing traditional security measures and remaining undetected within compromised systems [5].

However, while keyloggers are traditionally viewed as threats [6], there is potential for their application in cryptographic key extraction within a controlled environment for securing message-sending systems. This novel perspective on keyloggers can present both risks and opportunities in enhancing encryption techniques [7]. By repurposing keylogger technology in a secure and controlled setting, researchers can explore new methods for testing and reinforcing the robustness of cryptographic protocols. This approach, although unconventional, could lead to the development of more resilient encryption algorithms that are better equipped to withstand advanced cyber threats. Prior studies [8] have focused on mitigating the effects of keyloggers through various defensive measures, such as sandboxing, advanced detection algorithms, and behavioral analysis tools designed to identify and neutralize keylogger activity [9]. Additionally, the integration of machine learning and artificial intelligence into cybersecurity frameworks has shown promise in improving the detection and prevention of keylogger-based attacks. Little research, however, has been conducted on leveraging these techniques in a beneficial manner, particularly within the context of secure communication [10]. By re-examining keyloggers through this innovative lens, there is potential to not only enhance current cryptographic practices but also to discover new strategies for protecting sensitive information in increasingly hostile cyber environments.

In today's digital world, protecting cryptographic keys is crucial for secure communication. However, even strong security measures can be undermined by sophisticated cyber threats. One such threat is keyloggers—malicious software that secretly records what users type. While often used for spying, keyloggers can also be used to steal cryptographic keys, which are essential for encrypting and decrypting messages.

The application of Keylogger technology is used for extracting secret keys within a message-sending system. By intercepting keystrokes associated with cryptographic operations, keyloggers can compromise the integrity of secure communications. A practical exploration of this threat, detailing how keyloggers can be integrated into a messaging environment to extract cryptographic keys. this aim to shed light on the vulnerabilities posed by keylogger-based attacks and offer insights into fortifying cryptographic systems against such threats.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Cryptographic keys are vital for secure communication, and the Diffie-Hellman key exchange protocol is a cornerstone of this security, enabling two parties to share a secret key over an insecure channel. However, the rise of keyloggers—malicious software that records keystrokes—poses a significant threat to key security by potentially capturing these sensitive inputs during the key exchange process. The Diffie-Hellman protocol allows for secure key sharing using modular arithmetic and prime numbers, with its security relying on the difficulty of the discrete logarithm problem [11]. Research has affirmed its effectiveness against direct attacks [12], but its reliance on secure key inputs makes it vulnerable to interception by keyloggers [13].

Keyloggers capture keystrokes, including cryptographic keys, thus threatening the confidentiality of encryption systems [14]. Studies have shown that keyloggers can compromise security by intercepting keys during encryption and decryption processes [15]. This capability highlights the need for effective defenses against such attacks. Integrating keyloggers with the Diffie-Hellman protocol can expose the secret key if keyloggers capture the key exchange inputs [16]. Research has shown that keyloggers can exploit vulnerabilities in this process, emphasizing the need for enhanced security measures [17]. To combat keylogger threats, strategies such as using secure input methods and advanced detection technologies are recommended [18][19]. Future research should focus on developing cryptographic protocols resistant to keylogger attacks and utilizing AI for improved detection [20]. Keyloggers present a significant threat to the Diffie-Hellman key exchange protocol by potentially capturing secret keys. Addressing this requires a combination of secure input practices, advanced detection, and ongoing research into more resilient cryptographic techniques.

III. METHODOLOGY

The keylogger methodology aims to extract the secret key from a message-sending system that utilizes the Diffie-Hellman Key Exchange algorithm. Keyloggers, traditionally seen as malicious software, are repurposed in this context to capture crucial cryptographic information within a secure and controlled environment. The keylogger is deployed on both systems involved in the communication process. It is programmed to monitor and record input data related to the key exchange. This includes the private keys generated by the two parties, the public keys derived from those private keys, and the subsequent keystrokes associated with the computation of the shared secret key. During the Diffie-Hellman Key Exchange, each party generates a private key and uses it to compute a corresponding public key. These public keys are exchanged between the two parties, who then use them to calculate a shared secret key. The keylogger captures these critical keystrokes and computations, allowing it to reconstruct the secret key. Operating in a controlled environment, the keylogger extracts the secret key without compromising the system's security. The extracted key is verified against the expected output of the Diffie-Hellman process to ensure accuracy. This methodology highlights the novel use of keyloggers for legitimate cryptographic purposes, providing an additional layer of verification and security within the message-sending system. The methodology involves integrating keyloggers into a message-sending system that uses the Diffie-Hellman Key Exchange (DHKE) algorithm to secure its communication. The goal is to extract the secret key that is generated during the key exchange process using a keylogger deployed in a controlled environment. The keylogger serves as a tool to capture critical information from the system, specifically the inputs related to the generation and sharing of the Diffie-Hellman keys.

The Diffie-Hellman Key Exchange (DHKE) protocol to facilitate secure communication within our message-sending system. The Diffie-Hellman algorithm, introduced by Whitfield Diffie and Martin Hellman in 1976, enables two parties to establish a shared secret key over a public and potentially insecure communication channel. This shared key is then used for encrypting and decrypting messages, ensuring confidentiality. It allows two parties to securely generate a shared secret key over an insecure communication channel by relying on modular arithmetic and the difficulty of solving the discrete logarithm problem. Initially, both parties agree on two public parameters: a large prime number p and a base g, which can be shared openly. Each party then selects a private key—Alice chooses a private key a and Bob chooses a private key b—both of which remain confidential. Using their private keys, each party calculates their public key, where Alice computes $A=g^a \bmod p$ and Bob computes $B=g^b \bmod p$. They then exchange their public keys. Upon receiving Bob's public key B, Alice computes the shared secret as $S=B^a \bmod p$ and Bob, using Alice's public key A, computes the same shared secret $S=A^b \bmod p$. Both parties now share the same secret key S, which can be used for secure communication. The security of the algorithm lies in the fact that, while the public keys A and B are exchanged, it is computationally infeasible to determine the private keys a or b from the public keys, ensuring that the shared secret remains secure.

➢ *Setup of the Diffie-Hellman Key Exchange*

The message-sending system employs the Diffie-Hellman Key Exchange protocol to securely generate and exchange encryption keys between two parties (Party A and Party B) over an insecure communication channel. Both parties agree upon two public parameters:

- A large prime number ppp
- A base g (a primitive root modulo p)
- Each party generates a private key:
- Party A generates a private key a,
- Party B generates a private key b.

From these private keys, the corresponding public keys are derived:

- Party A computes $A=g^a \bmod p$,
- Party B computes $B=g^b \bmod p$.

- These public keys are then exchanged between the parties.

➢ *Keylogger Deployment*

A keylogger is deployed on both systems (Party A and Party B) to monitor and record keystrokes and other input data. The keylogger operates in a controlled and secure environment to capture the following critical pieces of information:

The private keys *a* and *b* are generated and are used as inputs, The exchanged public keys *A* and *B*,

Any subsequent keystrokes or data related to the calculation of the shared secret.The keylogger captures all user input during the key exchange process including the private and public keys used in the computation. The keylogger is programmed to filter out irrelevant data and focuses only on the key generation and exchange inputs.

➢ *Extraction of the Secret Key*

Once the public keys are exchanged, each party computes the shared secret key:

- Party A calculates $K_a=B^a \bmod p$
- Party B calculates $K_b=A^b \bmod p$

Because the shared secret keys are identical, this key is used for encrypting and decrypting messages between the two parties. The keylogger captures the critical keystrokes and operations involved in this calculation.

Using the data logged by the keylogger, the secret key can be extracted. Since the keylogger has already captured the private keys *a* and *b*, along with the exchanged public keys, it can directly compute the shared secret key using the same calculations as the Diffie-Hellman protocol. This effectively allows the keylogger to extract the secret key without needing to break the encryption or intercept the key exchange through traditional means.

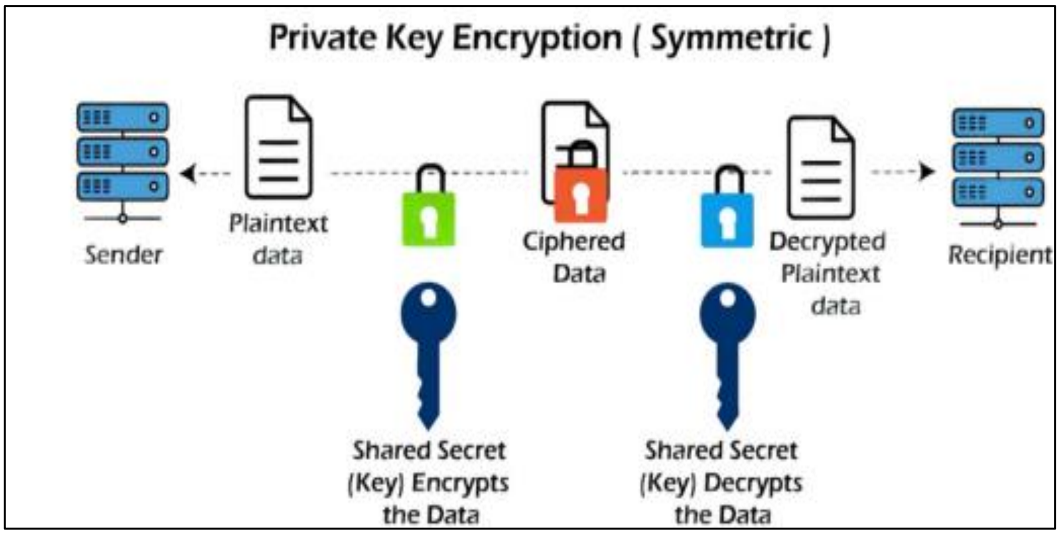

Private Key Encryption (Symmetric)
Sender
Plaintext data
Ciphered Data
Decrypted Plaintext data
Recipient
Shared Secret (Key) Encrypts the Data
Shared Secret (Key) Decrypts the Data

Fig 1: Dataflow Diagram

This diagram represents the data flow in a Private Key Encryption (Symmetric) system, showcasing the process from plaintext data generation to the secure transmission and decryption of that data.

➢ *Sender:*

The process begins with the sender, who prepares the plaintext data that needs to be transmitted securely to the recipient.

➢ *Plaintext Data:*

The plaintext data represents the original, unencrypted information that is understandable without any decryption.

➢ *Encryption Process:*

The plaintext data is then encrypted using a shared secret key. This key is known only to both the sender and the recipient. The encryption process transforms the plaintext data into ciphered data, which is secure and unreadable to unauthorized parties.

➢ *Ciphered Data:*

The encrypted output is known as ciphered data. This data is now protected against unauthorized access as it can only be decrypted by someone with the correct secret key.

➢ *Transmission:*

The ciphered data is then transmitted over the network to the recipient. During transmission, the data remains secure due to the encryption.

➢ *Decryption Process:*

Upon receiving the ciphered data, the recipient uses the shared secret key to decrypt the data. This process converts the ciphered data back into its original plaintext form.

➢ *Decrypted Plaintext Data:*

The decrypted data is now back in its original form, as it was before encryption, allowing the recipient to understand and utilize the information.

➢ *Recipient:*
Finally, the recipient, who possesses the shared secret key, successfully retrieves and understands the original plaintext data.

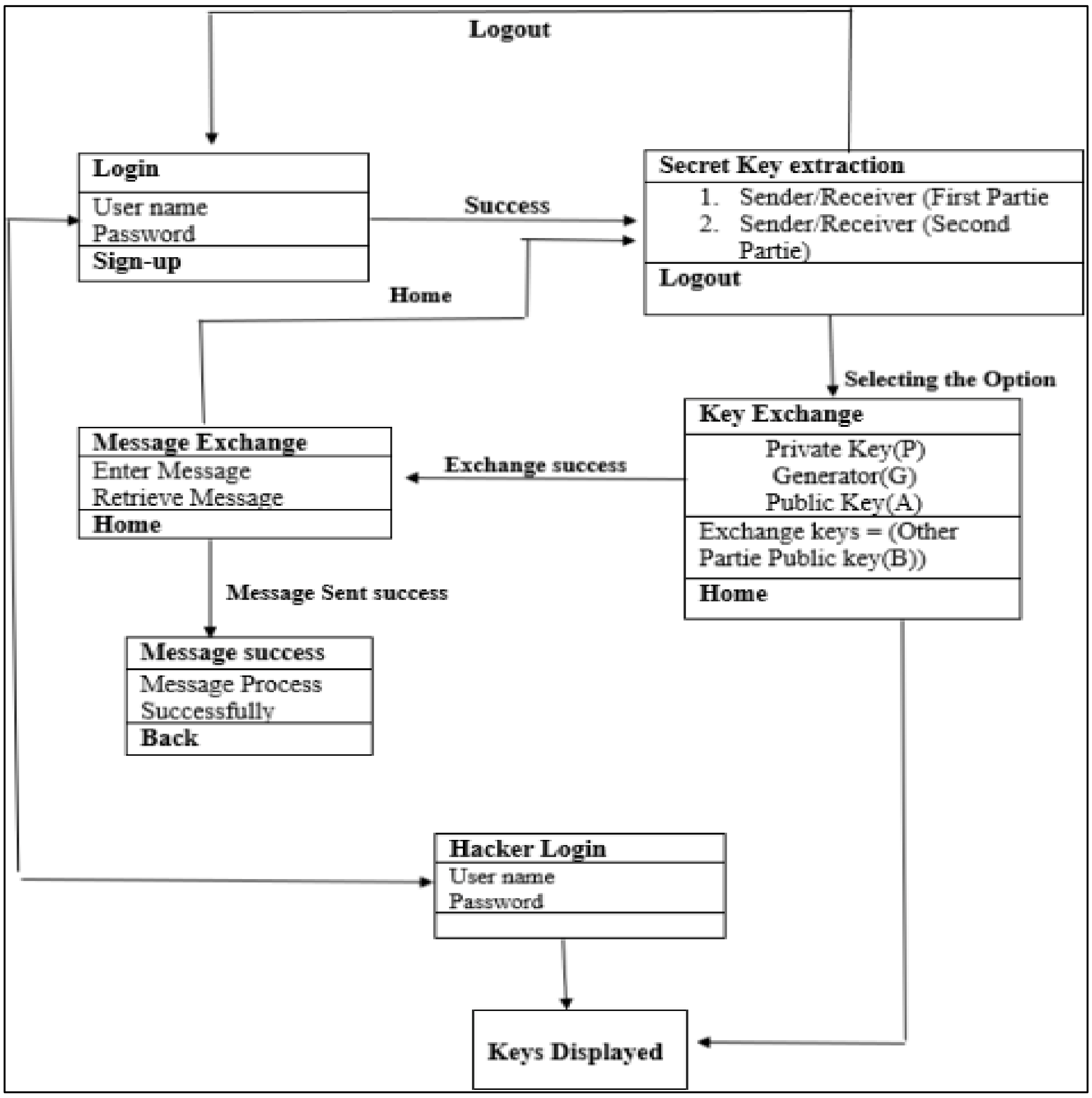


Fig 2: Workflow Diagram

The diagram outlines a secure message exchange process that includes key generation, key exchange, and the subsequent secure communication between parties.

➢ *User Login and Registration:*
The process begins with the user logging in with their username and password. If the user is new, they have the option to sign up.

➢ *Secret Key Extraction:*
Upon successful login, users proceed to extract the secret key. This step involves both the sender and receiver (first and second parties) generating and sharing necessary keys.

➢ *Key Exchange:*
In this step, users generate a private key (P), a generator (G), and a public key (A). They exchange their public keys with the other party to establish a secure communication channel. This key exchange is crucial for ensuring that only the intended parties can decrypt the messages.

➢ *Message Exchange:*
After the successful key exchange, users can enter and retrieve messages securely. The messages are processed and sent using the established cryptographic keys, ensuring confidentiality and integrity.

➢ *Message Success:*
A confirmation is provided once the message is successfully processed and sent.

➢ *Logout:*
Users can log out after completing their activities to maintain security.

➢ *Hacker Login (Unauthorized Access):*

The diagram also depicts a potential security threat where a hacker attempts to log in using stolen credentials. If successful, the keys associated with the communication are displayed, highlighting a security vulnerability if proper precautions are not taken.

IV. RESULTS

The results of this study demonstrates that although the Diffie-Hellman key exchange algorithm provides a mathematically secure method for establishing a shared secret key over an insecure channel, its implementation is vulnerable to endpoint attacks such as keyloggers. By capturing keystrokes on one of the communicating parties' devices, an attacker can gain access to sensitive information, including the private key used in the key exchange. This effectively compromises the security of the system, as the attacker can derive the shared secret key and, in turn, decrypt any encrypted communication between the two parties.

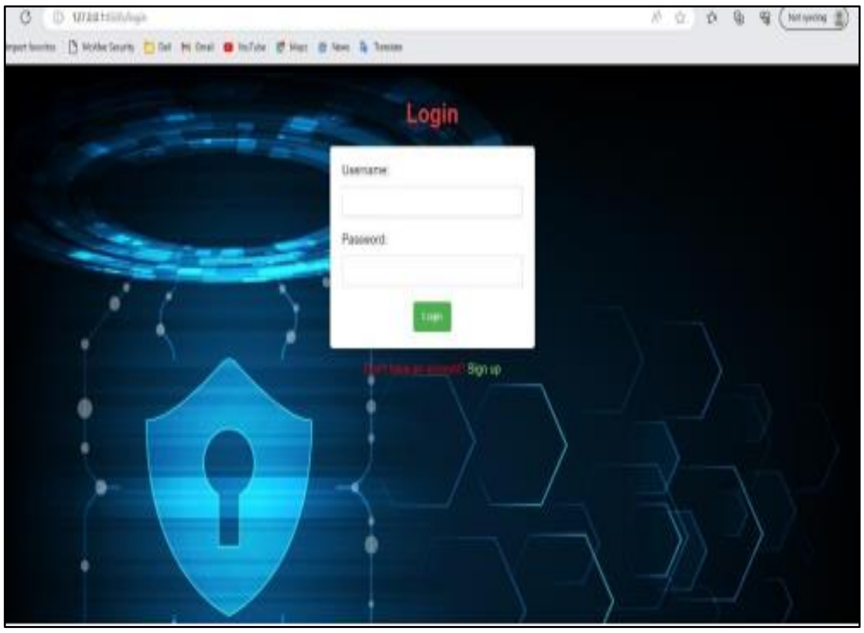


Fig 3: Login

The login page allows users to enter their credentials and securely log into their accounts. The sign-up page enables new users to create an account by providing necessary information, such as username and password, while implementing validation checks for data accuracy as shown in fig 3.

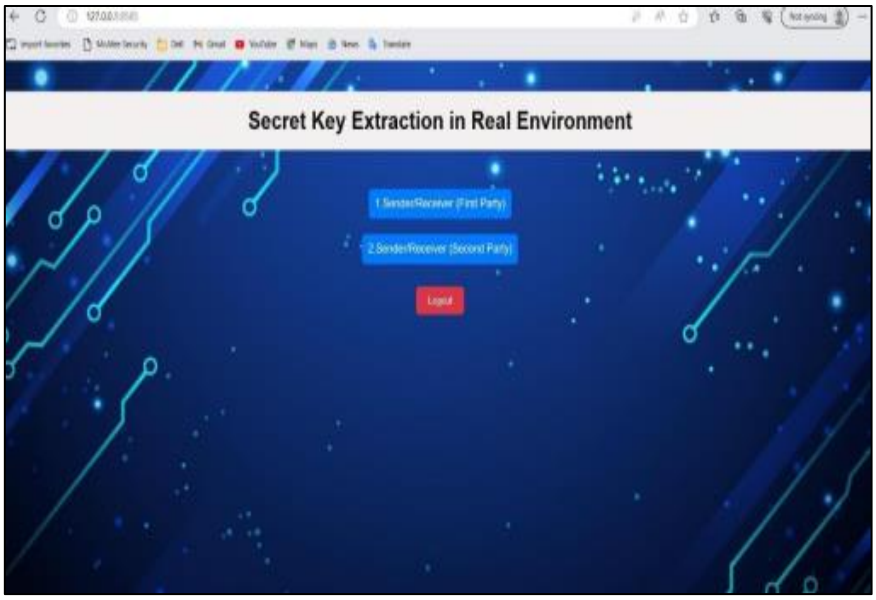
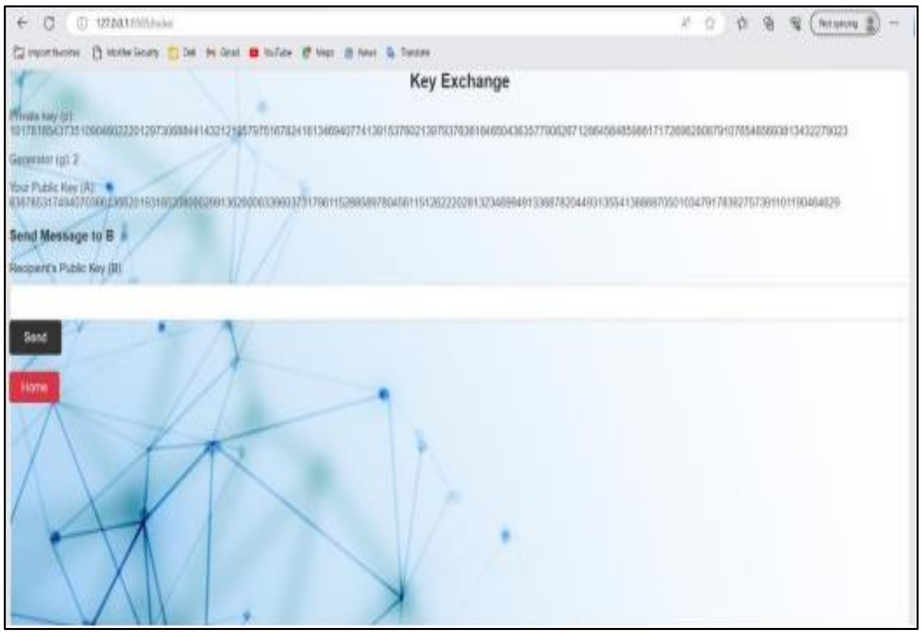

Secret Key Extraction in Real Environment
1.Sender/Receiver (First Party)
2.Sender/Receiver (Second Party)
Logout

Fig 4: Home

Options for sending messages from one party to another party and can also logout from the menu page using the logout option as shown in fig 4.



Key Exchange

Private key (p):
[illegible]

Generator (g): 2

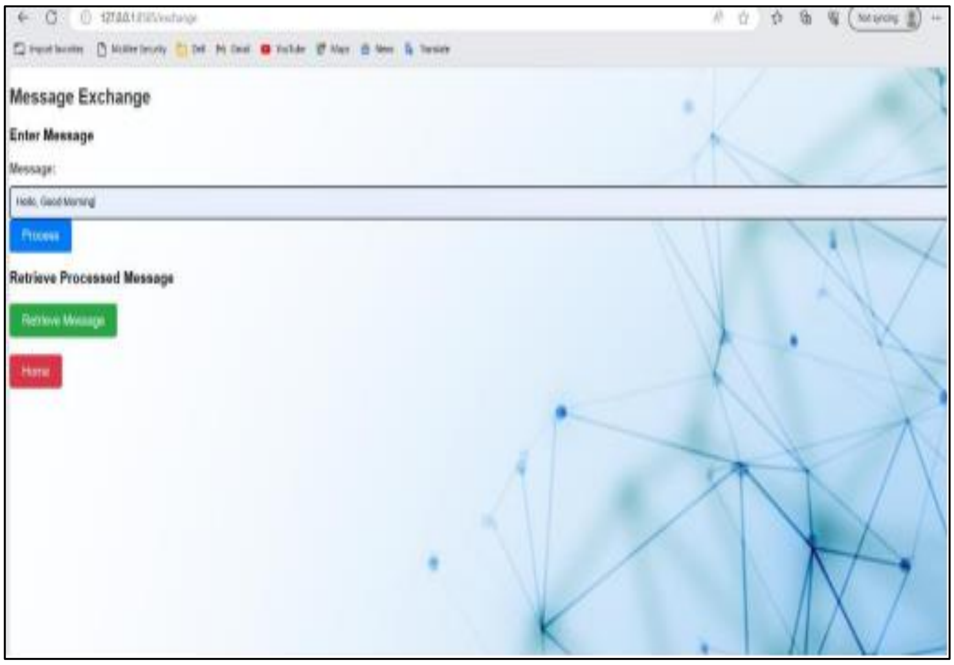
Your Public Key (A):
[illegible]

Send Message to B

Recipient's Public Key (B)

Fig 5: Key -Exchange

Prime number and the Generator will generate the key as shown in fig 5 and the public key of the party that is selected, and copy that and then add that to another party.



Message Exchange

Enter Message

Message:

Hello, Good Morning

Retrieve Processed Message

Fig 6: Message Exchange

Message to the party whose public key has been previously entered and we can check for messages in the retrieve message option as shown in fig 6.

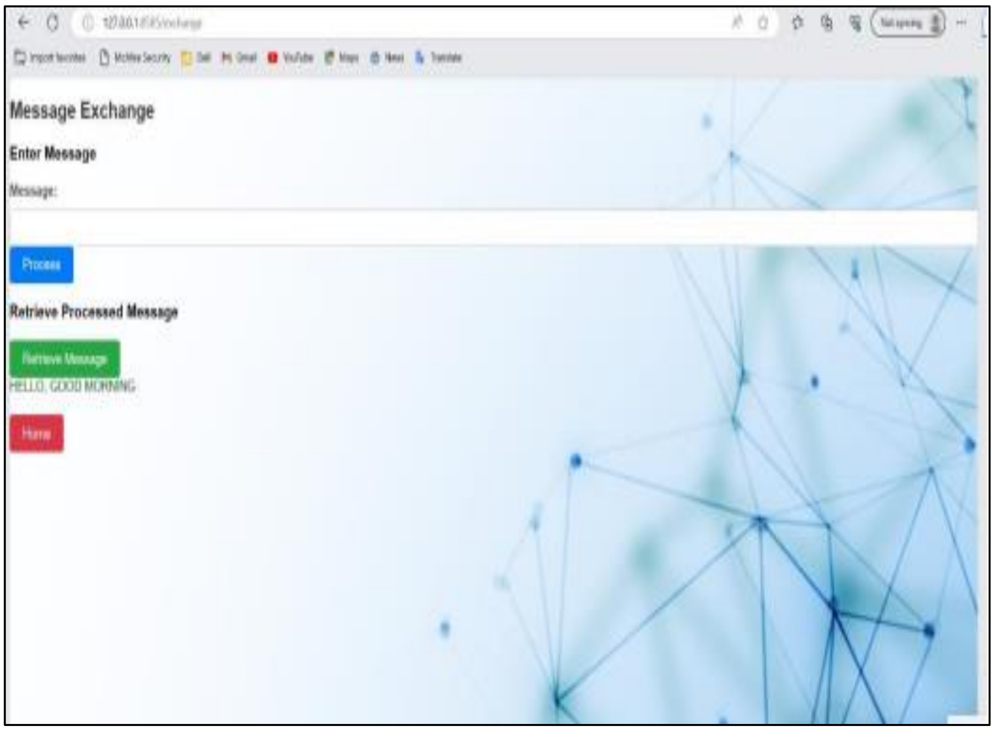


Fig 7: Message Retrieval

Messages sent by one party can be retrieved by another party as shown in fig 7.

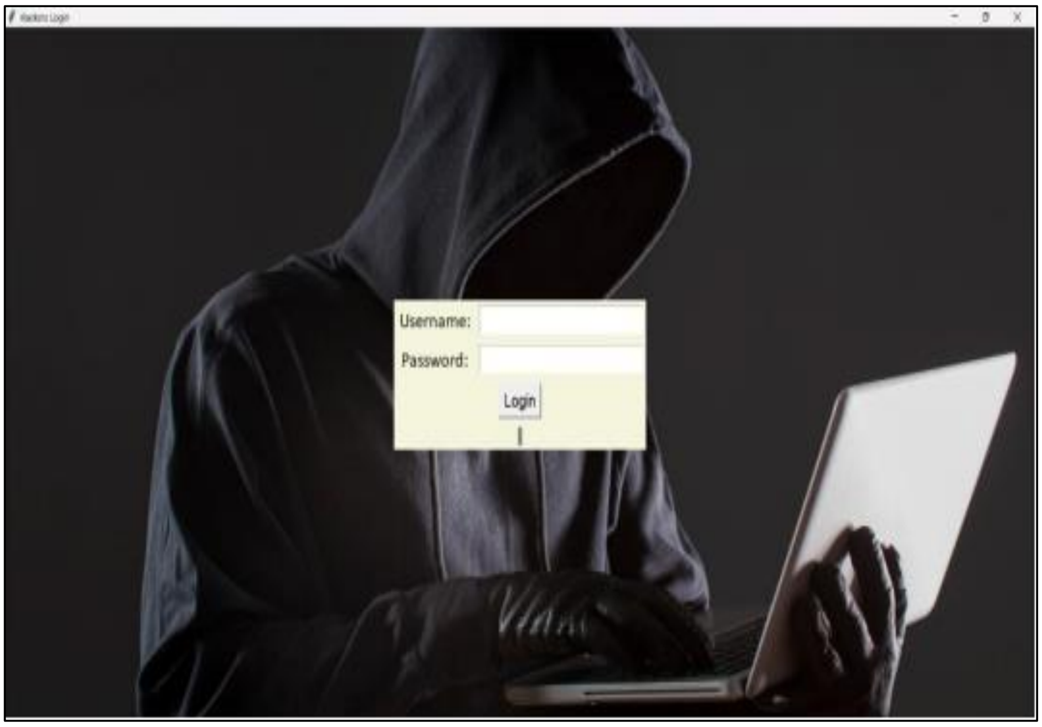


Fig 8: Keylogger

The keylogger uses this credential to extract a secret key as shown in fig 8.

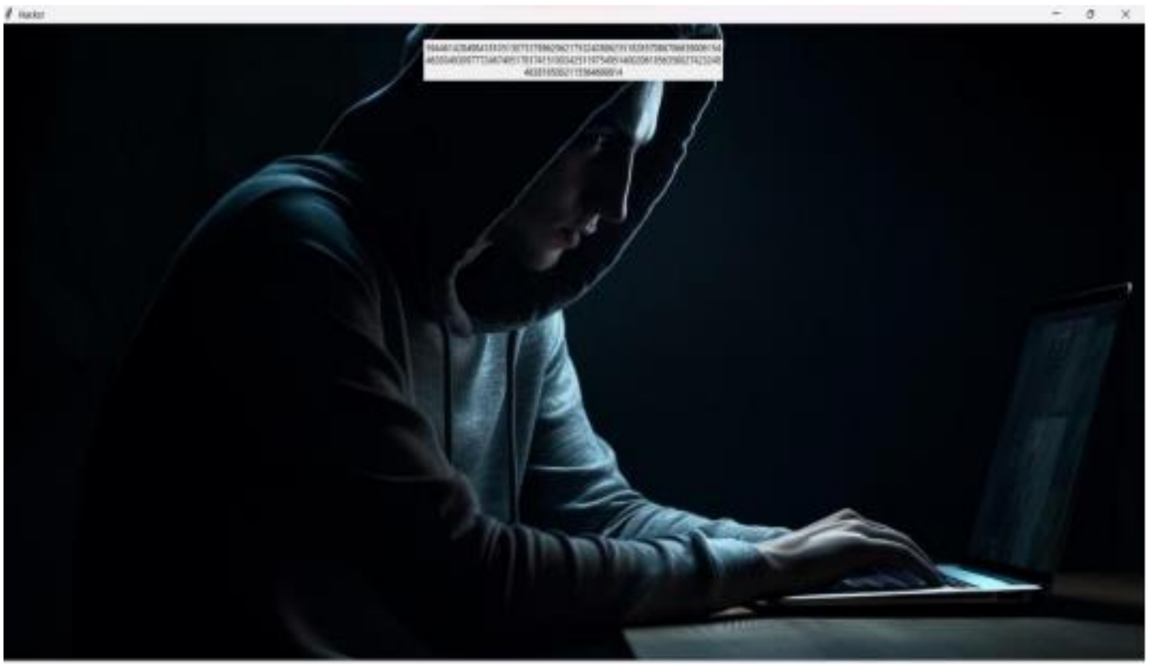

[illegible]

Fig 9: Keylogger Extracted the Secret Key Using Keyloggers

The exposure to keyloggers is a significant weakness in the practical implementation of the Diffie-Hellman key exchange. Although the cryptographic algorithm remains unbroken, the attack vector presented by keyloggers presents a clear and present danger to secure communications.

V. CONCLUSION

In the ever-evolving landscape of cybersecurity, the safeguarding of cryptographic keys remains a paramount concern. The Diffie-Hellman key exchange protocol, a foundational component of modern cryptographic practices, facilitates secure communication by allowing two parties to agree on a shared secret key over an unsecured channel. Despite its robustness and widespread adoption, the protocol cannot be implemented to all forms of attack. The study explored a critical vulnerability in the Diffie-Hellman protocol, namely the threat posed by keyloggers—malicious tools designed to capture keystrokes and potentially compromise cryptographic keys. Keyloggers, once primarily used for benign purposes such as user behavior monitoring, have evolved into sophisticated threats capable of intercepting sensitive information, including cryptographic keys used in the Diffie-Hellman protocol. By capturing keystrokes during the key exchange process, keyloggers can undermine the security guarantees provided by Diffie-Hellman, exposing secret keys to unauthorized parties and thereby jeopardizing the confidentiality of encrypted communications.

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