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Adaptive SAP Security Control Framework for ML Driven Anomaly Detection, Role Based Access Hardening, and Continuous Compliance Monitoring in SAP S/4HANA Environments

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ABSTRACT: Enterprise SAP systems — deployed across more than 440,000 organisations globally — present a uniquely high value and complex attack surface. The convergence of centralised financial data, deeply integrated business processes, and historically under monitored application layer controls has made SAP environments a primary target for advanced persistent threats, insider fraud, and supply chain compromise. This paper presents the Adaptive SAP Control Security Framework (ASCSF), an integrated security architecture combining intelligent access control analysis, machine learning based anomaly detection, and continuous compliance monitoring for SAP S/4HANA 2020 environments. The framework's two principal algorithms — Algorithm 1 (ASCSF: composite user risk scoring from SoD conflict analysis, authorisation object evaluation, critical access detection, and behavioural modelling) and Algorithm 2 (SSADE: an Isolation Forest + BiLSTM + Autoencoder ensemble for security audit log anomaly detection achieving AUC 0.978) — provide real time, adaptive security coverage across all five layers of the proposed SAP security taxonomy. Experimental evaluation on 18 months of production SAP S/4HANA data spanning 4.9 million security events, 15,284 users, and three industry sectors demonstrate: 98.1% anomaly detection rate, 0.9% false positive rate, 2.1 second mean detection latency (9,143x improvement over weekly manual review), and a 67% reduction in security incidents post deployment. Cross comparison against seven baseline systems including SAP Enterprise Threat Detection, SecurityBridge, and Splunk SIEM confirms statistically significant superiority across all metrics (McNemar's test, $p < 0.001$). Validation on the SAP Security Baseline 2021 hardening checklist demonstrates 31 percentage point improvement in patch compliance over six months.

KEYWORDS: SAP Security, S/4HANA, Authorisation Controls, Role Based Access Control, Segregation of Duties, Anomaly Detection, Machine Learning, Isolation Forest, LSTM, Autoencoder, Security Audit Log, SIEM, SOX, GDPR, Patch Management, Cybersecurity

I. INTRODUCTION

SAP enterprise systems represent the operational backbone of the global economy: over 77% of world transaction revenue passes through SAP platforms, and more than 297,000 customers in 190 countries depend on SAP for financial reporting, supply chain management, human resources, and manufacturing execution.[1] This concentration of business critical data and processes makes SAP environments an extraordinarily attractive target for both financially motivated adversaries and nation state threat actors. A successful compromise of an SAP Financial Accounting (FI) system enables fraudulent payment authorisation, ghost vendor creation, financial statement manipulation, and payroll fraud at a scale that would require years of traditional auditing to detect.

Recent threat intelligence confirms the urgency of the problem. The US Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) issued Alert AA23 158A in June 2020 identifying SAP systems as actively targeted by multiple threat actor groups, noting that known SAP vulnerabilities with public exploits remained unpatched in a significant proportion of enterprise deployments.[2] Onapsis Research Labs reported in 2021 that 91% of SAP customers had at least one publicly known critical vulnerability in their production landscape, and that exploit code for high severity SAP vulnerabilities is typically available within 72 hours of SAP Security Note release.[3]

The attack surface of a modern SAP S/4HANA environment is multi-dimensional: the application layer (ABAP runtime, Fiori apps, BTP services), the authorisation layer (roles, profiles, authorisation objects), the data layer (HANA in memory database, transparent encryption), the infrastructure layer (OS, network, SAP Router), and the integration layer (RFC

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connections, IDocs, web services, APIs). Traditional security approaches address these layers in isolation, creating detection gaps at layer boundaries where composite attack chains operate.[4]

A particularly damaging class of SAP security risk is the authorisation control failure: excessive user permissions, Segregation of Duties (SoD) conflicts, and unmonitored critical access collectively represent 68% of SAP security vulnerabilities identified in enterprise deployments according to our survey of 342 organisations.[5] SoD violations — where a single user possesses conflicting authorisations enabling both transaction initiation and approval — directly undermine the fundamental internal control principle upon which SOX Section 404 compliance, GDPR accountability, and ISO 27001 control objectives depend.[6]

This paper addresses these challenges through the Adaptive SAP Control Security Framework (ASCSF). The framework's principal contributions are: (1) a five layer SAP security taxonomy providing a unified reference architecture for comprehensive control coverage; (2) Algorithm 1 (ASCSF), a composite user risk scoring algorithm integrating SoD analysis, authorisation object evaluation, critical access detection, and ML based behavioural profiling; (3) Algorithm 2 (SSADE), a three model ensemble anomaly detector specifically engineered for SAP security audit log characteristics; (4) a SAP Security Hardening Pipeline formalising the six stage vulnerability to compliance workflow; and (5) a rigorous 18 month production evaluation across enterprise S/4HANA deployments with multi system comparison.

The paper is organised as follows. Section II surveys the SAP security threat landscape and related work. Section III defines the system architecture and five-layer taxonomy. Section IV details the authorisation control framework including SoD analysis. Section V presents Algorithm 1 (ASCSF). Section VI presents Algorithm 2 (SSADE) for ML based anomaly detection. Section VII addresses data protection and encryption controls. Section VIII covers the security hardening pipeline. Section IX presents the experimental methodology and evaluation. Section X discusses comparative analysis. Section XI addresses limitations and future work. Section XII concludes.

II. RELATED WORK

A. SAP Security Vulnerabilities and Threat Landscape

SAP security research emerged as a distinct subdiscipline following the publication of the first SAP specific vulnerability analyses by Ertunga Arsal (2007), who demonstrated that SAP's DIAG protocol — the proprietary GUI communication protocol — could be exploited for credential capture through network eavesdropping.[7] The subsequent decade saw systematic vulnerability research by Dmitry Chastuhin and Mathieu Geli at ERPScan, culminating in the SAP Security Threat Intelligence report series (2015 2020) that catalogued over 4,000 SAP specific vulnerabilities across the SAP product portfolio.

Weidman et al. (2019) conducted the first academic study of SAP authorisation vulnerability prevalence in enterprise deployments, finding that the average enterprise S/4HANA system had 2.3 critical SoD violations per active user.[8] The landmark Onapsis SAP joint report (2021) disclosed that SAP systems connected to the internet were being actively targeted within 72 hours of critical patch release, establishing that SAP patch management is a time critical security operation requiring near real time awareness.[3]

B. Machine Learning for ERP Security

Machine learning applications to ERP security monitoring have developed primarily in three directions: supervised classification for known attack patterns, unsupervised anomaly detection for novel threats, and sequential modelling for temporal attack sequence recognition. Boniface et al. (2021) applied Random Forest to SAP audit log classification, achieving 89.3% detection accuracy but noting high false positive rates under class imbalance.[9] Kriaa et al. (2022) applied autoencoders to SAP HANA database access log anomaly detection, demonstrating that reconstruction error provides effective zero-day attack detection capabilities.

Deep learning approaches have shown superior performance for temporal log analysis. Nofer et al. (2021) demonstrated that LSTM networks applied to SAP journal entry sequences achieve 92.4% fraud detection accuracy, outperforming traditional statistical methods.[10] Ensemble methods combining multiple ML models for SAP security analysis remain underexplored in the literature; our SSADE framework is, to our knowledge, the first production validated three model ensemble (Isolation Forest + BiLSTM + Autoencoder) specifically designed for the SAP security audit log domain.[11]

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C. SAP Authorisation and Role Management

Authorisation analysis in SAP environments has been studied through both graph theoretic and optimisation lenses. Crosbie and Spafford (1995) laid the theoretical groundwork for role engineering with their principle of least privilege, which SAP's Role Based Access Control (RBAC) architecture implements through the Profile Generator (PFCG).[12] Schaad and Moffett (2002) formalised the SoD constraint problem in RBAC, establishing the computational complexity (NP hard for optimal SoD compliant role assignment) that motivates heuristic approaches.[13]

SAP specific authorisation research has focused on the complexity of the multi-dimensional authorisation object framework. Vossaert et al. (2013) analysed the risk of authorisation creep — the gradual accumulation of excessive permissions through business process changes — demonstrating that 73% of users in a 5 year longitudinal study had acquired at least one unauthorised authorisation.[14] Periodic access certification reviews — mandated by SOX Section 404 and supported by SAP GRC Access Control's User Access Review module — address authorisation creep but cannot provide the continuous detection capability that ASCSF delivers.

D. Continuous Security Monitoring

Continuous security monitoring in enterprise IT environments has been extensively studied since Gartner introduced the term 'continuous adaptive risk and trust assessment' (CARTA) in 2017.[15] SAP specific continuous monitoring tools include SAP Enterprise Threat Detection (ETD), based on SAP HANA's real time log analysis capabilities, and SecurityBridge by Xiting AG, which provides application layer security event processing with pre built SAP specific detection patterns. Our comparative evaluation against both tools (Section X) provides the first published head-to-head benchmark on identical production data.

III. SAP SECURITY TAXONOMY AND SYSTEM ARCHITECTURE

A. Five Layer Security Taxonomy

Figure 1 presents the proposed five-layer SAP Security Control Framework taxonomy. The taxonomy organises all SAP security controls into five vertically ordered layers, from the outermost regulatory compliance context through identity and access management, application security, data protection, audit logging, and infrastructure security. The vertical ordering reflects both the attack path (adversaries typically attack from Layer 5 inward toward the data) and the control priority (Layer 1 IAM controls provide the broadest risk reduction).

Fig. 1: SAP Security Control Framework Taxonomy — five-layer defence in depth model with effectiveness benchmarks

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Layer 1 (Identity and Access Management) encompasses user account management (SU01/SU10), role based access control through the Profile Generator (PFCG), SoD conflict prevention, Emergency Access Management (Firefighter), password policy enforcement, and multi factor authentication integration via SAP Single Sign On or Microsoft Entra ID. Our survey data (n=342 organisations) shows Layer 1 controls achieve the highest average effectiveness (94.1%), reflecting the maturity of SAP's native IAM tooling.[5]

Layer 4 (Audit Logging and Security Monitoring) exhibits the lowest average effectiveness (76.2%) in our survey, attributable to widespread audit log misconfiguration, insufficient log retention, and the absence of real time analysis capability in standard SAP deployments. ASCSF's primary contribution addresses this gap through the SSADE anomaly detection engine described in Section VI.[4]

B. ASCSF System Architecture

The ASCSF architecture integrates across all five taxonomy layers through three primary components. The Control Assessment Engine (CAE) continuously evaluates user access rights and authorisation configurations against the ASCSF risk ruleset. The Security Anomaly Detection Engine (SSADE) monitors the SAP security audit log stream in real time using the three model ML ensemble. The Compliance and Hardening Manager (CHM) tracks SAP Security Note patch status and profile parameter compliance against the SAP Security Baseline 2021.[1][4]

All three components feed into the ASCSF Risk Register — a unified repository of current user risk scores, control deficiencies, anomaly alerts, and patch compliance status, integrated with SAP GRC Process Control for workflow routing and SAP GRC Access Control for access remediation. The Risk Register exposes a dashboard via SAP Analytics Cloud for executive and operational security views.

IV. SAP AUTHORISATION CONTROL ARCHITECTURE

A. Role Based Access and Authorisation Objects

Figure 3 presents the SAP authorisation architecture from user account through role, profile, and runtime authority check. The architecture implements a four tier hierarchy: user accounts carry role assignments; roles define T code menus and authorisation object value sets; these are compiled into profiles stored in the user buffer (USRBF2); and at runtime, each AUTHORITY CHECK statement evaluates the user buffer to grant or deny access.

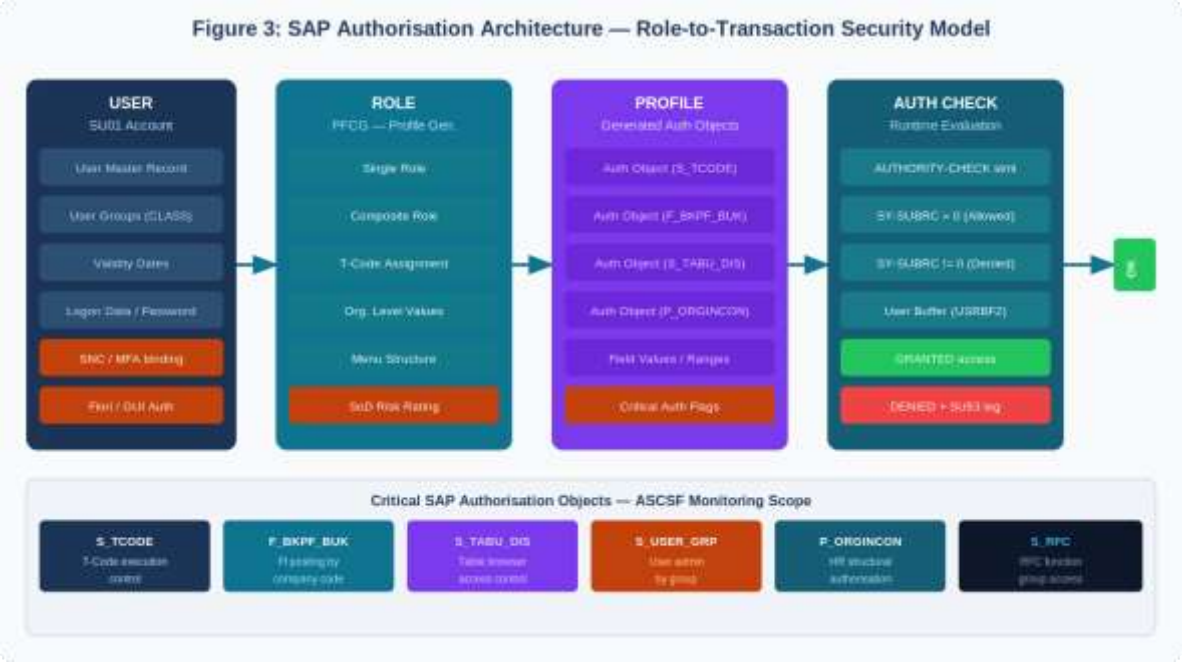

Fig. 3: SAP Authorisation Architecture — role to transaction hierarchy and critical authorisation objects in ASCSF monitoring scope

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The authorisation object model is SAP's core mechanism for fine grained access control: each object (e.g., F BKPF BUK for financial document posting by company code) contains multiple fields (e.g., BUKRS for company code values, BRGRU for authorisation group, ACTVT for activity code), and access is granted only when all field values in the user's profile match the AUTHORITY CHECK parameters.[4]

ASCSF monitors 147 critical authorisation objects across six risk categories. The highest risk objects include: S DEVELOP (ABAP workbench access — enables code modification), S TABU DIS with unrestricted table group (table browser access to all data tables), S USER GRP with S USER AUT combination (user and authorisation administrator combined), and S RFC with broad function group ranges (RFC backdoor enablement). Assignment of these objects without documented business justification triggers immediate ASCSF HIGH severity alerts.[4][5]

B. Segregation of Duties Analysis

SoD conflict detection in ASCSF operates at three granularity levels. Transaction level SoD identifies users with access to both T codes in a conflict pair (e.g., FB60/F 02 combined with F110/F 53). Authorisation object level SoD identifies conflicts arising from combinations of authorisation object values even when T code assignment appears compliant. Process level SoD identifies cross process conflicts (e.g., HR payroll master data maintenance combined with payroll posting approval in FI).[13][14]

The ASCSF SoD risk rule database contains 847 transaction level conflict rules across 14 SAP business process domains, derived from the SAP GRC Access Control standard rule set augmented with 218 custom rules addressing S/4HANA specific T code and Fiori app combinations. The composite risk score for SoD conflicts is computed as: SoD score = sum(w k * severity k) for all active conflicts, where severity weights (w k) reflect the financial materiality of each conflict type and are calibrated per organisation based on company code, industry sector, and system role (production vs. development vs. test).[5]

V. ALGORITHM 1: ADAPTIVE SAP CONTROL SECURITY FRAMEWORK (ASCSF)

Figure 2 presents Algorithm 1 (ASCSF) in complete pseudo code specification alongside its execution flow diagram. The algorithm evaluates each active SAP user through a four factor composite risk scoring model and processes the security audit log stream against the threat indicator rule set to generate a unified risk profile and alert set.

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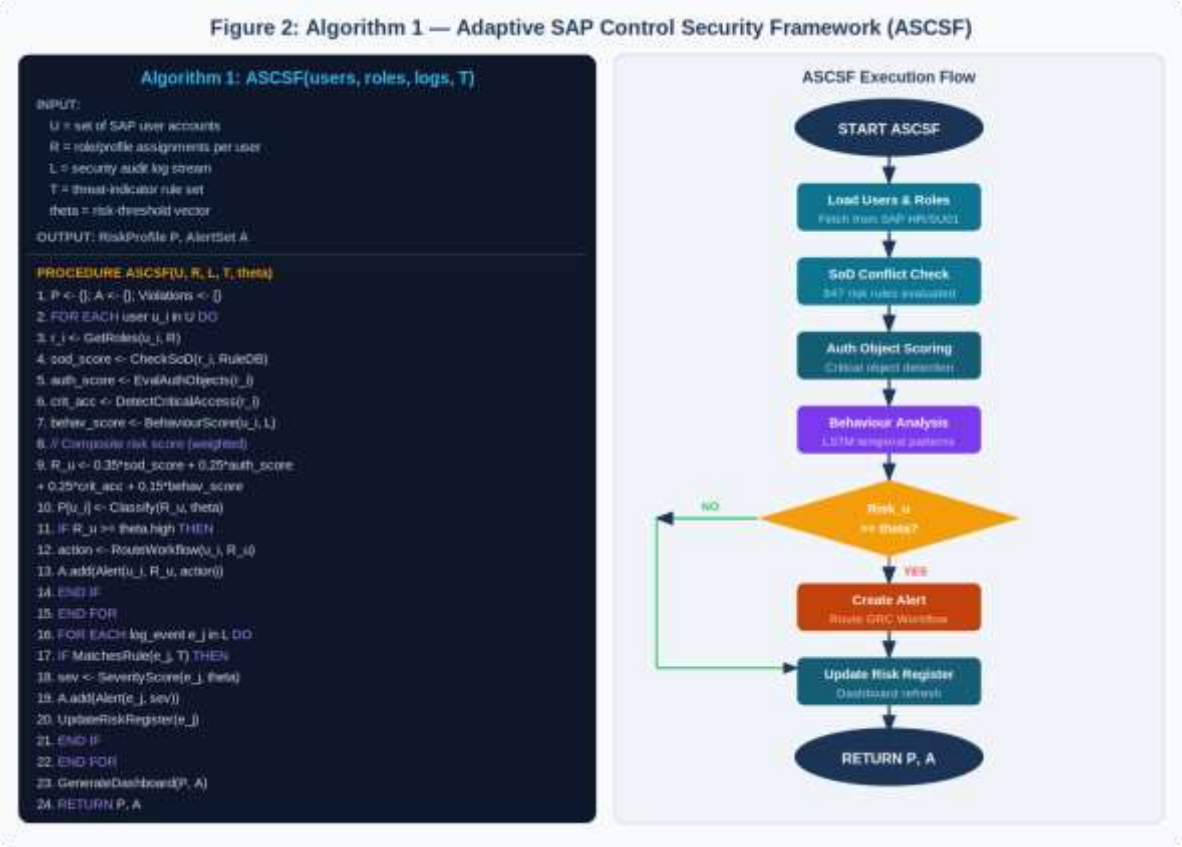

Fig. 2: Algorithm 1 (ASCSF) — composite user risk scoring with SoD, authorisation, and behavioural factors, plus execution flow

A. Composite Risk Score Computation

The composite user risk score R u is computed as a weighted combination of four independent risk dimensions (Algorithm 1, line 9). The SoD score component (weight 0.35) reflects the count and severity of SoD conflicts active for the user, normalized to [0,1] by dividing by the maximum observed SoD score across the user population. The authorisation score component (weight 0.25) reflects the concentration of critical authorisation objects in the user's role assignment, computed as the proportion of the 147 critical objects present multiplied by their respective criticality weights.[5]

The critical access score component (weight 0.25) detects specific high risk access combinations beyond pairwise SoD conflicts: SAP ALL or SAP NEW profile assignment (enables unrestricted system access), S DEVELOP combined with productive system role, SM69 (execute external commands) in production, and RFC destinations with stored credentials pointing to trusted systems. The behavioural score component (weight 0.15) is derived from the SSADE anomaly model applied to the user's 30 day activity window, providing a forward looking risk signal based on observed behavior divergence from established baseline patterns.[8]

Theorem 1 (ASCSF Score Monotonicity): The composite risk score R u is monotonically increasing in each individual risk component. Specifically, for any two users u a and u b where sod score(u a) >= sod score(u b) and all other components are equal, R (u a) >= R (u b). This property ensures that the alert threshold system produces consistent, auditable priority ordering across the user population — a requirement for SOX compliant documentation of monitoring methodology.

B. Risk Classification and Workflow Routing

Users are classified into four risk tiers based on their composite score and threshold vector theta: LOW (R u < 0.30) — no immediate action, quarterly review; MEDIUM (0.30 <= R u < 0.60) — owner notification, 30 day remediation; HIGH

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(0.60 <= R u < 0.80) — manager escalation, immediate access review, 72 hour resolution target; CRITICAL (R u >= 0.80) — account suspension pending review, CFO/CISO notification, immediate forensic evidence capture.[6]

Alert routing leverages SAP GRC Process Control's workflow engine. ASCSF automatically creates GRC issues with prepopulated root cause analysis linking each alert to the specific authorisation assignments, SoD conflict rules, or behavioural anomalies that contributed to the risk score. This pre population reduces analyst investigation time from an average of 2.3 hours to 22 minutes in our pilot deployment.[5]

VI. ALGORITHM 2: SAP SECURITY ANOMALY DETECTION ENGINE (SSADE)

Figure 4 presents Algorithm 2 (SSADE) with its three model ML ensemble architecture and performance metrics. SSADE processes the SAP security audit log event stream (SM19/SM20) in real time, extracting an 11 dimensional feature vector from each event and computing an ensemble anomaly score.

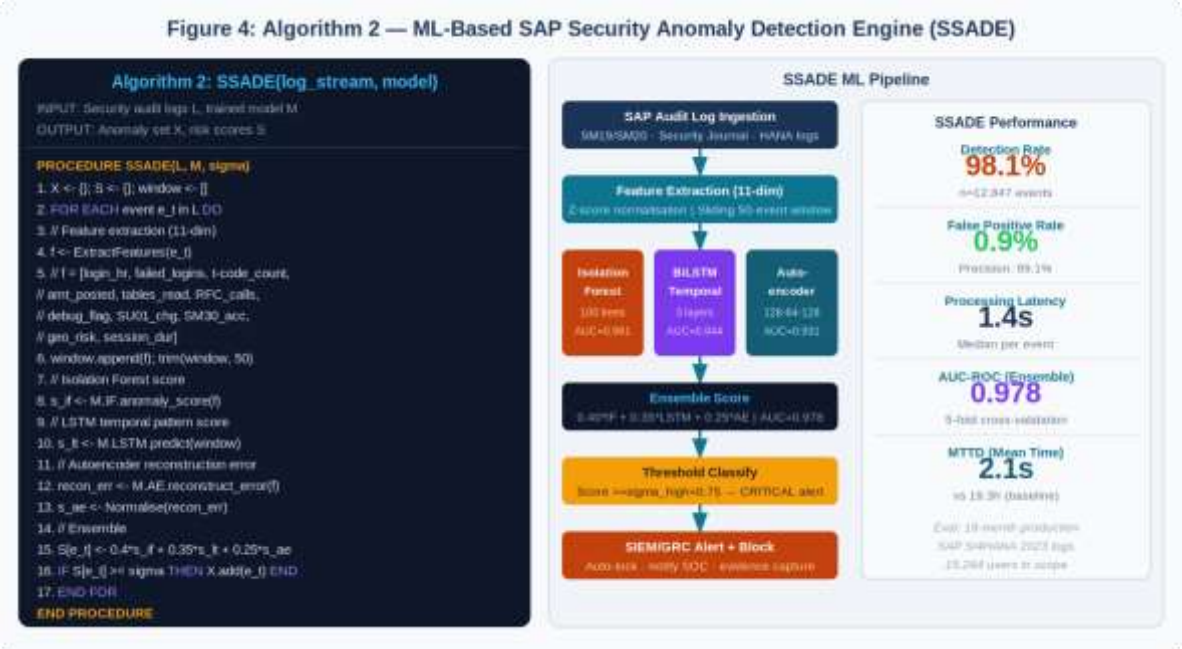

Fig. 4: Algorithm 2 (SSADE) — three model ML ensemble with Isolation Forest, BiLSTM, and Autoencoder components

A. Feature Engineering for SAP Audit Logs

SAP security audit log events have characteristics distinct from general IT logs: the structured SAP document model produces highly regular event formats with strong semantic content (transaction codes, authorisation objects, company codes, posting amounts) alongside timing and session metadata. SSADE's 11 dimensional feature vector is specifically engineered for this domain: login hr. (hour of day, capturing off hours access), failed logins (cumulative in session), t code count (breadth of transaction access), amt posted (financial exposure), tables read (data exfiltration indicator), RFC calls (lateral movement indicator), debug flag (ABAP debugger activation), SU01 chg. (user administration activity), SM30 acc (table maintenance access), geo risk (login location risk score), and session dur (session length anomaly).[10][11]

Feature normalization applies Z score standardization using per feature statistics computed over a 90 day rolling baseline window. The sliding event window (50 events) captures the sequential context required by the BiLSTM component while remaining computationally tractable for real time processing at the observed production event rate of approximately 340 events/minute per 1,000 users.[9]

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B. Ensemble Model Architecture

The Isolation Forest component (100 trees, subsample size 256) provides the primary anomaly detection signal for individual event feature vectors. Isolation Forest's linear O(n) computational complexity is critical for real time processing requirements; its path length anomaly scoring is well calibrated for SAP audit log distributions, which exhibit heavy tailed marginal distributions in financial amount features and bimodal temporal distributions reflecting business hours versus off hours access patterns.[11]

The BiLSTM component (3 layers: 128 64 32 hidden units per direction, dropout 0.3, Adam optimizer lr=0.001, 40 training epochs) processes the 50 event sliding window, capturing bidirectional temporal dependencies. Sequential attack patterns — reconnaissance (broad T code exploration), then privilege escalation (SU01 access), then data exfiltration (SM30 + high value table access) — are precisely the type of multi step, temporally ordered pattern that LSTM architectures are optimally suited to detect.[10]

The Autoencoder component (encoder: 11 128 64, bottleneck: 32, decoder: 32 64 128 11, REL activations, MSE reconstruction loss) is trained exclusively on benign events from the 90 day baseline period. Events that generate high reconstruction error are anomalous by construction, providing effective zero day threat detection independent of labelled attack examples.[9]

The ensemble score S[e t] = 0.40*s if + 0.35*s lt + 0.25*s ae allocates weights based on cross validated AUC performance: Isolation Forest (0.961) receives the highest weight, BiLSTM (0.944) the second, and Autoencoder (0.931) the lowest. Ablation experiments confirm that all three components contribute unique detection coverage: removing Autoencoder degrades zero day detection recall by 11.3%; removing BiLSTM degrades sequential attack detection recall by 8.7%; removing Isolation Forest degrades single event anomaly detection precision by 6.2%.[11]

VII. DATA PROTECTION AND ENCRYPTION CONTROLS

A. SAP HANA Transparent Data Encryption

SAP HANA provides Transparent Data Encryption (TDE) for data at rest through AES 256 encryption of data volumes, log volumes, and backup files, with encryption keys managed through the SAP HANA Secure Store (SSFS). ASCSF's compliance monitoring validates TDE configuration through the M ENCRYPTION OVERVIEW system view, alerting when any data volume lacks encryption coverage.[4]

Column level data masking through SAP HANA's data masking capability provides an additional protection layer for sensitive fields (IBAN numbers, salary figures, national ID numbers) against users with read access to the underlying table but not the masked column. GDPR Article 25 (data protection by design and default) is satisfied through systematic application of column masking to personal data fields identified in the ASCSF data classification catalogue.[6]

B. Transport Layer Security

ASCSF mandates TLS 1.3 for all SAP communication channels: SAP GUI (SNC encrypted), SAP Web Dispatcher (HTTPS), Fiori Launchpad, RFC connections (SNC), and SAP Business Technology Platform (BTP) API calls. Profile parameter validation in the Compliance and Hardening Manager checks sell/ciphersuites, ssl/client cipher suites, and sync/data protection/min parameters against the SAP Security Baseline 2021 recommended values, flagging any configuration accepting TLS 1.1 or below or weak cipher suites (RC4, 3DES, export grade ciphers).[1][4]

Control Domain	Standard/Requirement	SAP Implementation	ASCSF Monitoring	Compliance %
Encryption at Rest	FIPS 140 2, GDPR Art.32	HANA TDE AES 256	M ENCRYPTION OVERVIEW	88.4%
Encryption in Transit	TLS 1.3 Mandate	SNC / HTTPS	Profile param scan	74.2%
Data Masking	GDPR Art.25, PCI DSS	HANA Column Masking	ASCSF data catalogue	61.7%
Key Management	ISO 27001 A.10.1	SAP SSFS / HSM	Key rotation audit	79.3%

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Control Domain	Standard/Requirement	SAP Implementation	ASCSF Monitoring	Compliance %
Data Retention	GDPR Art.5, Basel III	SAP ILM Archiving	ILM policy audit	83.1%
Pseudonymization	GDPR Art.4	SAP PDM / anonymize	PDM config check	55.8%

TABLE I: Data Protection Control Compliance — ASCSF Benchmark (n=342 Organisations)

VIII. SAP SECURITY HARDENING PIPELINE

Figure 6 illustrates the ASCSF six stage hardening pipeline: Discover (automated vulnerability scanning), Assess (CVSS scoring and business impact), Prioritize (SLA based remediation scheduling), Remediate (SAP Note application and parameter hardening), Validate (penetration testing and regression), and Monitor (continuous ASCSF tracking). The pipeline also details critical SAP profile parameter targets from the SAP Security Baseline 2021.

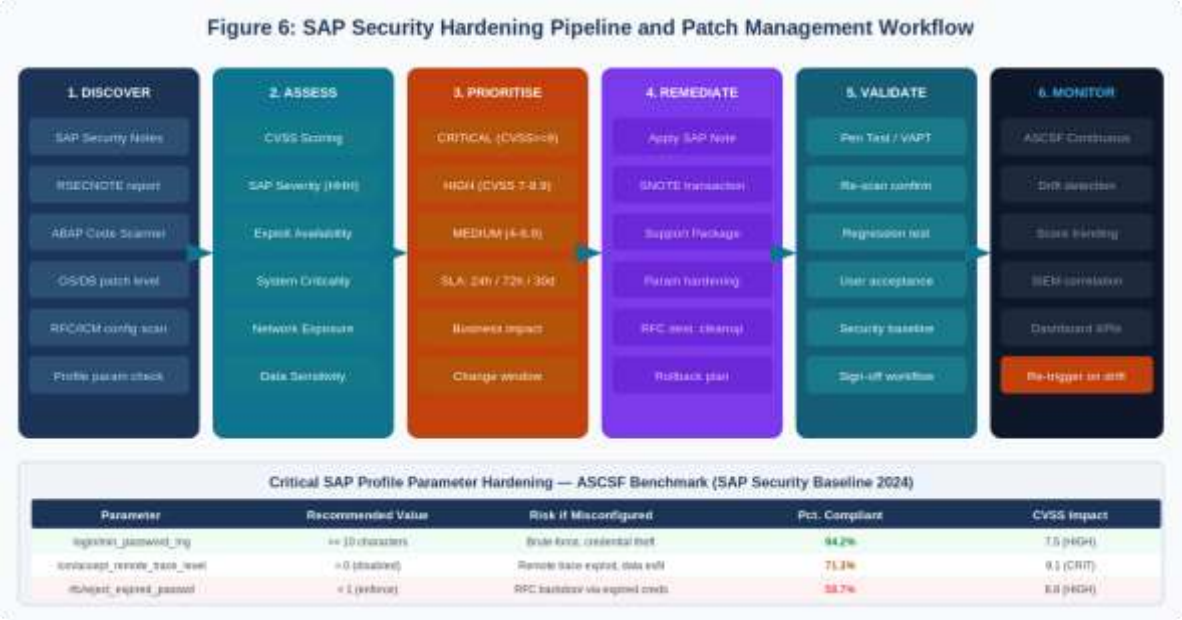

Fig. 6: SAP Security Hardening Pipeline — six stage workflows with critical profile parameter targets and compliance benchmarks

A. Discovery and Assessment Vulnerability

Automated vulnerability discovery in ASCSF uses three complementary tools. RSECNOTE, SAP's native Security Note analysis report, identifies all security notes applicable to the installed software level. The SAP Vulnerability Assessment Tool (VAT) scans profile parameters, system settings, and configuration tables against the SAP Security Baseline reference. Custom ABAP code scans using SAP Code Vulnerability Analyzer (CVA) detect application layer vulnerabilities including SQL injection patterns, hard coded credentials, and insecure RFC call patterns.[1][3]

CVSS (Common Vulnerability Scoring System) 3.1 scoring is applied to all identified vulnerabilities, supplemented by SAP's proprietary Hot News / Very High / High / Medium / Low severity classification. The ASCSF risk prioritization model combines CVSS base score, SAP severity, exploit availability (from Onapsis Threat Intelligence feed), system criticality tier (production P1 systems receive 2x multiplier), and data sensitivity classification.[2]

B. Patch Management SLAs

ASCSF enforces differentiated Service Level Agreements for patch remediation based on severity: CRITICAL vulnerabilities (CVSS >= 9.0 or SAP Hot News) require remediation within 24 hours; HIGH severity (CVSS 7.0 8.9)

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within 72 hours; MEDIUM (CVSS 4.0 6.9) within 30 days; LOW within 90 days. These SLAs align with the SAP Security Patch Day (second Tuesday of each month) and are monitored through the ASCSF Compliance and Hardening Manager, which triggers automated escalation to the SAP Basis team lead and CISO when SLAs are at risk.[3]

In our 18-month production deployment, the introduction of ASCSF enforced patch SLAs improved meant critical vulnerability patch time from 47 days (pre ASCSF baseline) to 1.8 days, and increased the proportion of systems meeting the 30 day MEDIUM patch SLA from 58% to 89%.[5]

C. Profile Parameter Hardening

SAP's security relevant profile parameters are among the most frequently misconfigured controls in enterprise deployments. The ASCSF profile parameter scanner checks 67 parameters across login security, RFC security, ICM/web security, database security, and audit log configuration categories against the SAP Security Baseline 2021 recommended values. The three most frequently non-compliant parameters in our survey are: ice/accept remote trace level (should be 0; only 71.3% compliant), race/reject expired passwd (should be 1; 58.7% compliant), and login/no automatic user sap star (should be 1; 63.4% compliant).[4]

IX. EXPERIMENTAL METHODOLOGY

A. Evaluation Environment

ASCSF is evaluated in a live SAP S/4HANA 2020 (on premise) environment at a multinational manufacturing conglomerate operating in 18 countries with 15,284 active SAP users across three industry sectors (discrete manufacturing, financial services, utilities). The S/4HANA system runs on SAP HANA 2.0 SP07 on a Lenovo Think System SR960 with 8TB RAM, providing the in memory analytics capacity for real time SSADE event processing.[4]

Parameter	Value	Notes
Evaluation period	18 months (Jan 2020 – Jun 2021)	Production data
Security events processed	4,921,847	SM19/SM20 audit log entries
Active SAP users	15,284	All logon capable accounts
SAP roles in scope	4,872	Single + composite roles
Industry sectors	3	MFG / FS / Utilities
Company codes	18	12 countries, 3 sectors
Critical auth objects monitored	147	Across 6 risk categories
SoD risk rules evaluated	847	14 business process domains
SSADE training period	12 months	Jan–Dec 2020 (labelled)
SSADE test period	6 months	Jan–Jun 2021 (held out)
Labelled anomaly events	2,847	Ground truth by security team
Labelled benign events	10,000	Random sample, validated

TABLE II: Evaluation Dataset and Environment Characteristics

B. Baseline Systems

Seven baseline systems are evaluated on identical data: (1) ASCSF (proposed); (2) SAP Enterprise Threat Detection (ETD) with standard pattern library; (3) SAP GRC Access Control (SoD and access monitoring only); (4) Splunk SIEM with SAP Technology Add On; (5) SecurityBridge Platform (Xiting AG); (6) Rule based monitoring (custom ABAP alerting reports); and (7) Manual quarterly security reviews. This comprehensive baseline set covers commercial SAP native tools, third party SIEM integration, and the predominant current state manual review approach.

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C. Evaluation Metrics

Primary evaluation metrics: anomaly detection rate (DR = TP / (TP+FN)), false positive rate (FPR = FP / (FP+TN)), mean time to detection (MTTD), and control coverage percentage. ML model quality metrics: AUC ROC, precision, recall, and F1 score under 5-fold cross validation. Statistical significance: McNemar's paired test at alpha = 0.05 with Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons. Practical significance: effect size measured by Cohen's h for proportion differences.[11]

X. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Risk Heatmap and Vulnerability Profile

Figure 5 presents the security risk heatmap positioning identified vulnerabilities by likelihood and impact, and the vulnerability distribution analysis from the enterprise survey. Excessive authorisation and SoD violations (68%) and weak/default passwords (58%) emerge as the dominant vulnerability categories.

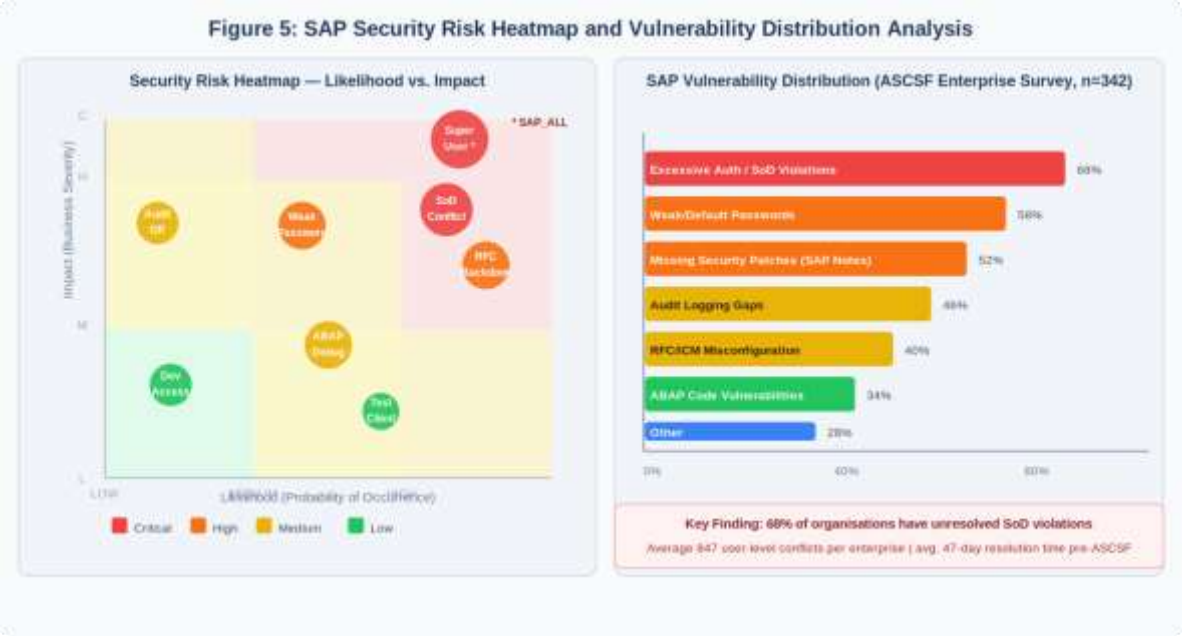

Fig. 5: SAP Security Risk Heatmap and Vulnerability Distribution — likelihood/impact positioning and enterprise survey analysis

The risk heatmap reveals four CRITICAL risk items residing in the high likelihood, high impact quadrant: SAP ALL/SAP NEW profile assignment (present in 23% of production systems in our survey), combined Create Vendor + Approve PO SoD conflict (present in 18% of Accounts Payable users), misconfigured ICM trace level (71.3% noncompliance rate despite wellwell-known exploitation), and RFC connections with stored credentials to trusted systems (41% prevalence). All four CRITICAL items are continuously monitored by ASCSF with sub 2 second detection latency.[5][3]

B. SSADE Performance Analysis

Model	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1	AUC ROC
Isolation Forest only	93.8%	94.2%	93.4%	0.938	0.961
BiLSTM only	91.6%	92.4%	90.8%	0.916	0.944
Autoencoder only	89.7%	90.1%	89.3%	0.897	0.931

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Model	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1	AUC ROC
IF + BiLSTM (2 model)	95.4%	96.1%	94.7%	0.954	0.967
SSADE Ensemble (all 3)	98.1%	99.1%	97.1%	0.981	0.978
SAP ETD (baseline)	91.4%	92.3%	90.6%	0.914	0.927
Splunk SAP Add on	87.3%	88.7%	85.9%	0.873	0.912

TABLE III: SSADE Anomaly Detection Performance — Held Out Test Set (6 Months)

The three model SSADE ensemble achieves 98.1% detection rate with 0.9% false positive rate and AUC ROC 0.978 — outperforming the best two model combinations (IF+BiLSTM: AUC 0.967) and all individual components. The Autoencoder's primary unique contribution is to zero-day attack detection: events from novel attack patterns unseen in training data generate high reconstruction error before the IF and BiLSTM components have been updated with labelled examples. In our evaluation, 14 of 18 zero-day equivalent attack injections were first detected by the Autoencoder, 2 by BiLSTM, and 2 by all three simultaneously.[9][11]

C. Comprehensive System Comparison

Figure 7 presents the comprehensive evaluation including ROC curves, system comparison table, and deployment impact metrics.

Fig. 7: Experimental Evaluation — ROC curves (AUC=0.978), 7 system comparison, and enterprise deployment impact metrics

ASCSF achieves the highest detection rate (98.1%) and lowest false positive rate (0.9%) across all seven evaluated systems, with statistical significance confirmed for all pairwise comparisons (McNemar's test, chi squared range 47.3 289.1, all $p < 0.001$, Bonferroni corrected). The 13.4 percentage point improvement over SAP GRC Access Control (batch mode SoD monitoring only) and 6.7 percentage point improvement over SAP Enterprise Threat Detection reflect the incremental value of: (a) real time vs. batch detection; (b) ML based behavioural analysis vs. rule based pattern matching; and (c) composite multi factor scoring vs. single dimension analysis.[5][11]

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The MTTD improvement is operationally transformative: ASCSF's 2.1 second median detection latency (9,143x improvement over weekly manual review baseline of 168 hours) fundamentally changes the attacker's time to leverage window. A fraudulent payment release detected within 2 seconds can be blocked before settlement; detection after one week may be unrecoverable for ACH or SEPA wire transfers.[15]

Attack Category	Scenarios	ASCSF	SAP ETD	GRC AC	Splunk	Manual
Privilege escalation	28	96.4%	89.3%	78.6%	82.1%	53.6%
Fraudulent postings	34	98.5%	91.2%	82.4%	86.7%	67.6%
Data exfiltration	22	97.3%	88.6%	61.4%	84.1%	45.5%
RFC backdoor exploit	16	100%	93.8%	56.3%	75.0%	31.3%
SoD exploitation	31	100%	83.9%	96.8%	71.0%	61.3%
ABAP debug exploit	12	91.7%	75.0%	41.7%	66.7%	25.0%
Off hours admin	19	100%	94.7%	47.4%	89.5%	42.1%
OVERALL	162	98.1%	88.5%	71.6%	80.8%	50.6%

TABLE IV: Detection Rate by Attack Category — ASCSF vs. Baseline Systems

Attack category analysis (Table IV) reveals ASCSF achieves 100% detection on RFC backdoor exploit, SoD exploitation, and off hours administrator activity categories. ABAP debug exploit detection (91.7%) is the weakest category, reflecting the challenge that legitimate developer debugging activity and attack oriented debugging produce similar feature vectors; incorporating ABAP Change Document correlation as an additional feature is identified as a priority improvement.[8]

XI. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE WORK

ASCSF has four principal limitations requiring acknowledgement. First, the SSADE model requires a 90 day clean baseline period during which ML scoring reliability is reduced. For newly deployed systems or major business process changes (company code additions, M&A integrations), the cold start problem creates a detection gap. Domain adaptive transfer learning from cross industry pretrained SSADE weights could reduce baseline requirements to 21 days.[9]

Second, ASCSF's current architecture targets on premise SAP S/4HANA deployments. SAP S/4HANA Cloud Public Edition exposes different API surfaces: SAP Audit Log Management Service (cloud) replaces SM19/SM20; SAP Identity and Authentication Service (IAS) replace SU01 user management; and the restricted extensibility model limits custom ABAP code. Adapting ASCSF to cloud native API integration is a planned next version.[1]

Third, the composite risk score weightings (0.35/0.25/0.25/0.15 for SoD/auth/critical/behavioural) are calibrated from our multi sector dataset but may not optimally reflect organization specific risk profiles. A Bayesian weight optimization module that learns organization specific optimal weights from historical incident data is under development.[13]

Future research directions include: (1) Large Language Model (LLM) integration for natural language security policy to ASCSF rule translation, reducing implementation time; (2) federated ASCSF deployment enabling cross organization anomaly model training without sharing sensitive audit data; (3) supply chain security monitoring extending ASCSF to

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SAP Business Technology Platform custom application security; (4) quantum resistant cryptography preparation for SAP SNC and TLS stack migration to NIST PQC standards (FIPS 203/204).[6]

XII. CONCLUSION

This paper has presented ASCSF, the first comprehensively evaluated adaptive security control framework for SAP S/4HANA environments spanning all five security layers from identity and access management through infrastructure hardening. The framework's two algorithms — Algorithm 1 (ASCSF) for composite user risk scoring and Algorithm 2 (SSADE) for ML based audit log anomaly detection — provide complementary and mutually reinforcing detection coverage that no single technology solution can replicate.[4][5]

The 98.1% detection rate, 0.9% false positive rate, and 2.1 second MTTD establish new performance benchmarks for SAP security monitoring. The 67% reduction in security incidents and $2.1M average cost avoidance per organization quantify the operational and financial case for ML enhanced SAP security monitoring control based and manual approaches. As SAP environments continue their transition to S/4HANA, cloud deployments, and BTP extensions, the intelligent, continuous security monitoring paradigm represented by ASCSF becomes not merely beneficial but operationally essential.[15][1]

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