

# Performance Analysis of CLEFIA, PICCOLO, TWINE Lightweight Block Ciphers in IoT Environment

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**Abstract** - With the rapid evolution of Internet of Things, there increased a necessity for strong data security crypto ciphers which would operate successfully in constrained device environments. So, the design of lightweight block crypto ciphers has been a very dynamic research topic in the recent years. This paper outlines the performance analysis of three generalized Feistel lightweight block crypto ciphers - CLEFIA, PICCOLO and TWINE on a STM32F401RE Microcontroller (MCU). Analysis of these crypto ciphers is evaluated by considering various benchmark parameters like energy and memory consumption, throughput, and execution time. All these metrics are tested with different key sizes provided by each crypto algorithm and on different plain text sizes of 512, 1024, 2048, 3072 Bytes. A comparative analysis of these results is performed and suitable crypto ciphers are identified for each of those parameters.

**Keywords** – IoT Security, Lightweight Cryptography, STM32F401 MCU.

## I. INTRODUCTION

As the world goes wireless and with the involvement of IoT, information security has been a very hot topic today. There are chances that our home network could be accessed just by compromising our smart-home device platforms [1]. As there is a need to provide security for these devices and to provide this security, the information which is communicated and exchanged must be encrypted using cryptographic algorithms.

Various cryptographic algorithms are present to provide encryption and they are generally classified into symmetric and asymmetric crypto algorithms. Even though asymmetric algorithms provide highest level of security [2] [23] (for example - ciphers used in digital signatures), they require more memory and computing capabilities and hence, they are not advisable to be used in the resource constrained devices.

Symmetric algorithms are simple and make use of symmetric keys to encrypt and decrypt the data. These are of two types. Stream cipher – which takes one bit/byte at a time to encrypt and decrypt, and Block cipher – which is a subset of Stream cipher which considers group of bits/bytes at a time. Based on the security needs of the target applications, Block ciphers can provide better integrity and confidentiality, as they support different keys and plaintext sizes [2].

This paper talks about three lightweight block ciphers namely PICCOLO, CLEFIA, and TWINE which belong to the Generalized lightweight Feistel Network (GFN) (which is a tradeoff between security and light weightness) [3]. In the following Section II, an Overview of these ciphers are presented

with their specifications and security. Section III describes cipher implementation on STM32F MCU. Finally, in Section IV, performance analysis and comparison of all three algorithms with respect to few important metrics are discussed and analyzed.

## II. OVERVIEW OF CLEFIA, PICCOLO, TWINE LIGHTWEIGHT BLOCK CIPHERS

In this section, security and specifications of PICCOLO, CLEFIA, TWINE block cryptographic algorithms are examined.

**PICCOLO** supports 64-bit block size with 80-bit and 128-bit key sizes. Structure of PICCOLO block cipher is given in Figure 1. Algorithm is divided into data processing part and the key scheduling part. In data processing part, 64-bit plaintext, four 16-bit whitening keys and  $2r$  16bit round keys ( $r$  is the number of rounds) are used to encrypt the plaintext. The text is decrypted in a similar fashion with only changes made to the order of round keys and whitening keys selection. In each round, output of previous stage is permuted (shuffled on words of 8bits) and given as input to the next stage.

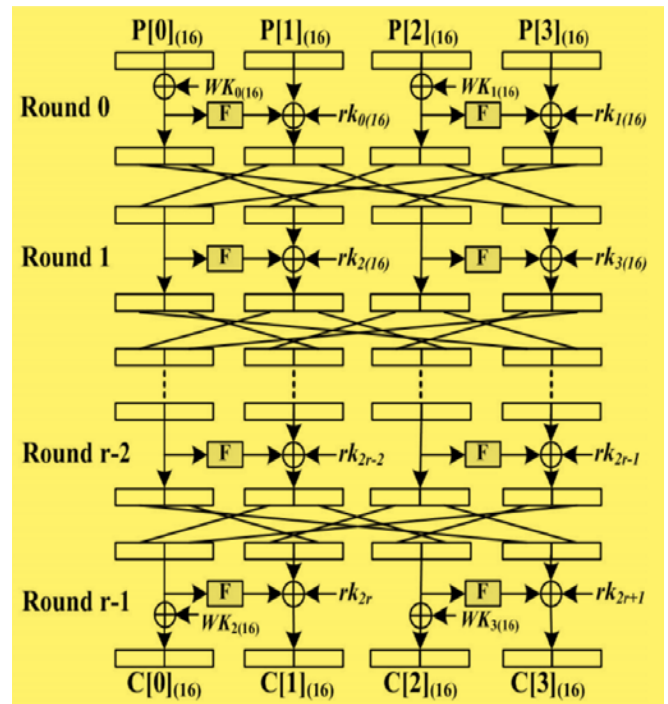


Figure 1: Structure of PICCOLO [7].

“In Key scheduling part, Input key is divided into five 16-bit sub keys for 80-bit key size and eight 16-bit sub keys for 128-bit

key size which provides four 16-bit whitening keys and 2r 16bit round keys” [7].

Full PICCOLO80 and 28-round PICCOLO128 are susceptible to biclique attacks [5], and 14-round PICCOLO80 and 21-round PICCOLO128 are susceptible to Related-key impossible diff attacks [6]. Therefore, 25 rounds for PICCOLO80 and 31 rounds for PICCOLO128 are suggested to be a sufficient security protection. Also, we make use of constants which will be XORed with round keys to overcome the self-similarity symmetry of round keys [7].

CLEFIA supports 128-bit block size with three different key sizes: 128-bit, 192-bit, 256-bits. Structure of CLEFIA is as shown in Figure 2. This algorithm is an ISO/IEC 29192-2 standard lightweight crypto cipher [10] currently available. The basic building block of this algorithm is the GFN (d, r) where d denotes the data branch and r is round. Data processing part of the CLEFIA takes four 32-bit whitening key 2r 32-bit round key and 128-bit plain text for encryption. The two F-functions are used which are simple substitution and permutation (4x4 diffusion matrix).

Key scheduling part takes input key to derive the intermediate key. CLEFIA128 uses GFN(4,12) and 60 32-bit constants, CLEFIA192 uses GFN(8,10) and 84 32-bit constants, and CLEFIA256 uses GFN(8,10) and 92 32-bit constants respectively to generate intermediate key from the input key. These intermediate keys are updated every two rounds with the DoubleSwap function. Intermediate keys are expanded with input key to derive four whitening keys and 2r round keys [13].

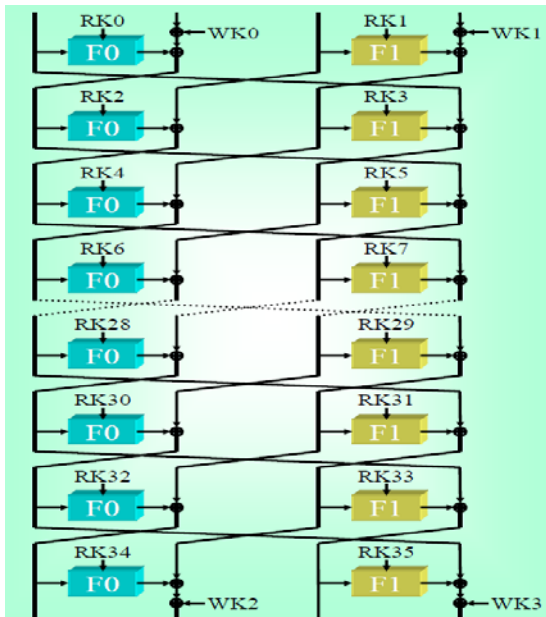


Figure 2: Structure of CLEFIA [13].

Round-12,13,14 are susceptible to integral attacks whereas round-13,14,15 suffer from improbable differential attacks [11] [12]. So, round-18,22,26 are preferable for 128,192,256-bit key sizes to provide security against these attacks. Two S-Boxes are used to overcome the byte ordering saturation attack and algebraic attacks including XSL attack. Two different diffusion

matrices are used to provide immunity against differential and linear attack [13].

TWINE uses 64-bit block size and supports two key sizes: 80-bit and 128-bits. In the data processing part of the algorithm, 64-bit plain text, 36 32-bit round keys are taken to provide a 64-bit cipher text. Round function of TWINE is very simple (Figure 3) where in each round, eight F-functions are called which does simple XORing plaintext with sub key and applying 4x4 S-Box. Permutation ( $\pi$ ) uses a more sophisticated approach to speed-up diffusion compared to CLEFIA which does simple circular shift. Here, only half of the circular shift rounds are required to diffuse to all sub blocks. Decryption in TWINE uses same S-Box, key schedule as encryption but the diffusion layer considered is the inverse of encryption [4].

In key scheduling part of TWINE, input key uses 35 6-bit constants to produce a 36 32-bit round keys. Key schedule of TWINE provides an on-the-fly operation of producing round key by sequentially updating its key state. By doing this hardware footprint reduces which conversely increase the performance. Since the round keys are updated sequentially there is no need for bit permutation or the intermediate key generation [9].

Full cipher TWINE80 and TWINE128 are susceptible to biclique attacks [8]. 23-round TWINE80 and 25-round TWINE128 suffer from zero-correlation attacks. Therefore, 36 rounds for both the key sizes are recommended which gives acceptable security enhancement [9] [20].

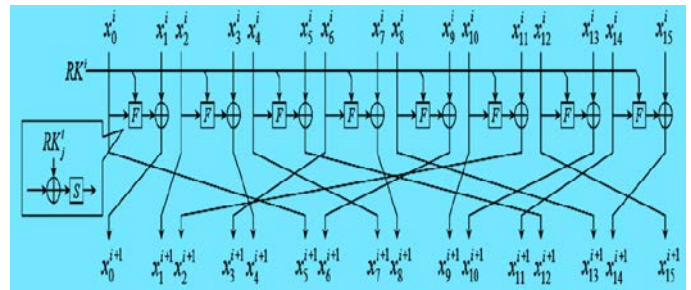


Figure 3: Round function of TWINE [4].

### III. LIGHTWEIGHT BLOCK CIPHER IMPLEMENTATION ON STM32F MCU

This section provides information on how the mentioned ciphers were implemented on STM32 (ARM Cortex M4) microcontrollers. A brief introduction regarding the platform selected, how porting of the cipher is done and the software development tool used is given next.

The platform specification considered for this project is ARM Cortex M4 which are a family of 32-bit RISC MCUs and uses ARMv7E-M architecture with 3 stage pipelining which result in an ideal average CPI (clocks per Instruction) of 1.67 [21] [22]. Due to its high-energy efficiency (with low dynamic power and integrated software controlled sleep modes), performance, and inbuilt powerful trace technologies, ARM Cortex-M4 microcontrollers have reached a high popularity in

cost sensitive embedded device requiring minimal area configuration [23].

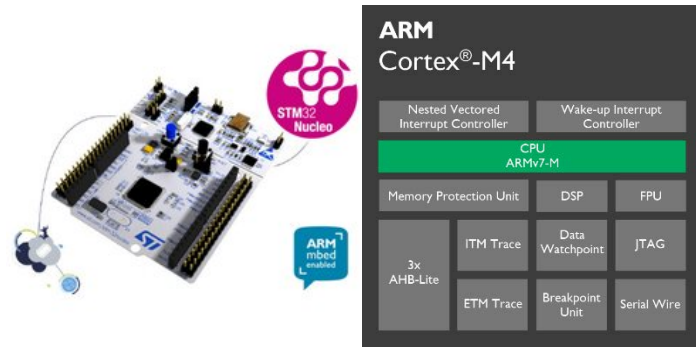


Figure 4: STM32F4 MCU and ARM Cortex-M4[23].

Since the aim of this project is to implement lightweight block ciphers in IoT environments, STM32F401RE is considered as the target platform, which is specifically designed for these environments [24] [25] and supports the specifications mentioned in Table 1 [25].

Table 1: STM32F401RE Hardware Specification.

Core	ARM 32 Cortex M4
CPU Frequency	84 MHz (84,000,000 cycles per sec)
Flash Memory	512 KBytes
SRAM	96Kbytes
Security	MPU (Memory Protection Unit)
USB Type	USB OTG FS
Supply Voltage (V) max	3.6
Supply current (per MHz)	137 (µA)

Implementations of the crypto algorithms which were written in C language were referenced [29][30], and were initially ported and tested on the MCU. These tests were not successful as the referenced codes were found incompatible with our MCU's firmware framework. These referenced codes were redesigned using embedded C++ language to shorten the size of the code, to achieve maximum performance and to implement the crypto algorithms (CLEFIA, PICCOLO, TWINE) on our MCU's hardware. The code was also modified to analyze the performance metrics like memory efficiency, energy consumption, execution time, and throughput of the crypto cipher algorithms running on the MCU. Embedded C++ language is selected to implement the code among different available programming languages like Assembly, java and others, as it provides many appealing functionalities and characteristics.

One of the most important characteristics of Embedded C++ language is that it is similar to the assembly language in terms of performance and code size. It is an efficient, fast and highly portable language [16] which is also easy to build and debug [18] [14]. Lightweight block cipher specifications with their block size and key sizes are shown in Table 2.

Online mbed compiler and Keil uVision5 is used as the IDE to implement ciphers on STM32F4 MCU. They are open source

and provides rich features of MCU environments. Online mbed compiler makes the coding portable and compiles the source code directly into binary files which can then be flashed directly on to the MCU by just click and drag [19]. Once the flash succeeds, the MCU flash drive will reload and the green light will be turned ON in the MCU. Keil uVision5 software is supported in Windows and provides a sophisticated full-scale debugger which can be used to monitor the serial port, perform data tracing and etc.

Table 2: Lightweight Block Cipher Specifications.

	Key Size	Block Size	# Rounds
CLEFIA	128 Bit	128-Bit	18
	192 Bit	128-Bit	22
	256 Bit	128-Bit	26
PICCOLO	80 Bit	64-Bit	25
	128 Bit	64-Bit	31
TWINE	80 Bit	64-Bit	36
	128 Bit	64-Bit	36

#### IV. PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS & COMPARISON

In this part of the section, we discuss a set of benchmark parameters like execution time, throughput of the encryption process, memory consumption, energy consumption which are used to calculate and determine which algorithm is best suited for IoT environments. We also provide information regarding how these are measured with respect to the STM32F4 MCU.

Speed of the operation or the execution time is one of the key metric used to evaluate the performance of the block ciphers [27]. For this, timer function is used (provided by the mbed package) which is executed before the encryption operation and stopped after it finishes. In our analysis, for each block as the plaintext size increases, key schedule is also performed and included in the execution time. The results are tabulated and analyzed as follows.

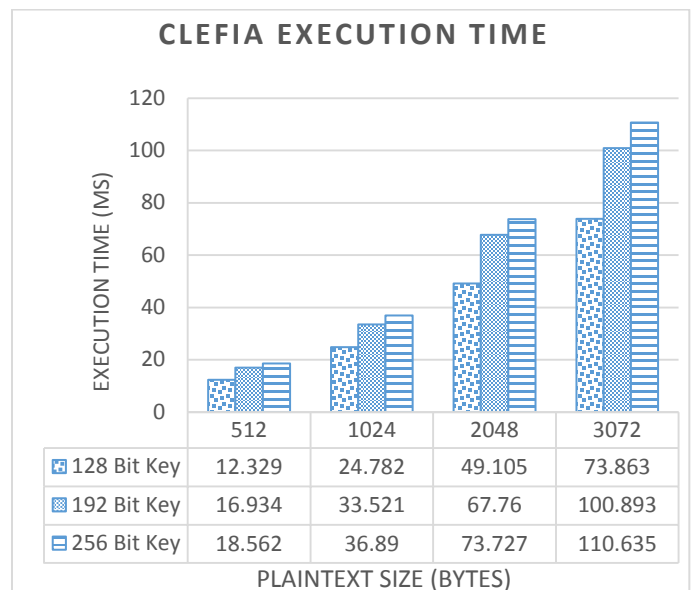


Figure 5: CLEFIA encryption execution time.

CLEFIA is executed for 128 bit, 192 bit, and 256 bit Keys for plaintexts of size 512 Bytes, 1024 Bytes, 2048 Bytes, and 3072 Bytes and the average values were calculated and tabulated as shown in Figure 5. As we see, the encryption is increasing exponentially as the plaintext size increases. This is because the block cipher uses two feistel function and two diffusion matrixes. While the decryption follows a similar procedure with only changes made to the order of round keys and whitening keys selection.

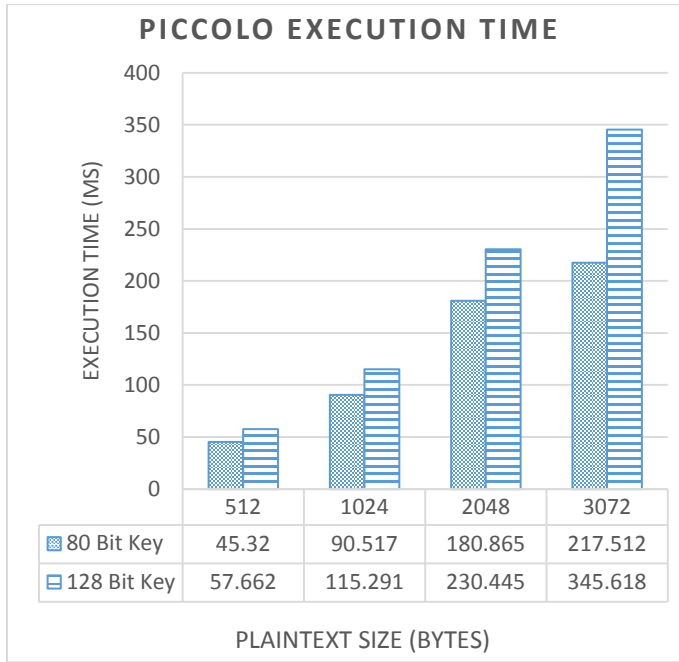


Figure 6: PICCOLO encryption execution time.

In PICCOLO, the operational time for each key size and plaintext sizes are shown in Figure 6. Here, we observe the exponential raise of encryption time as the plaintext increases but when we compare two key sizes we can see more growth in 128-bit key size.

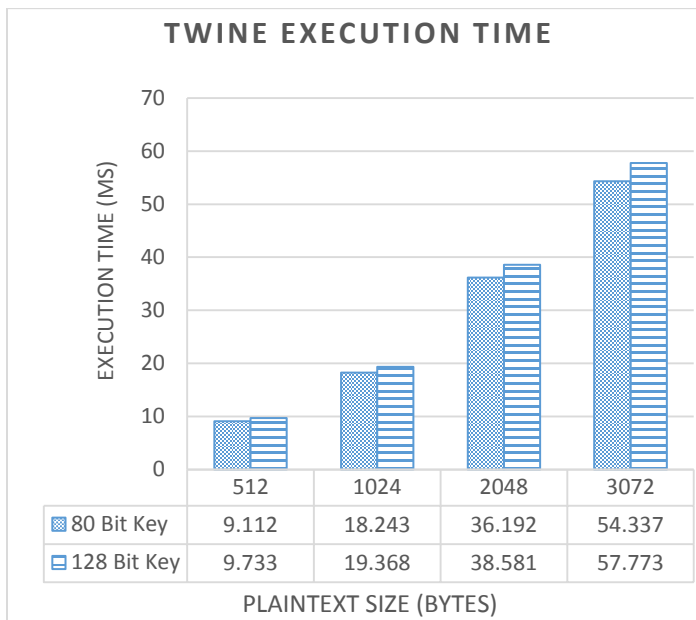


Figure 7: PICCOLO encryption execution time.

Finally, TWINE lightweight block cipher is executed and the time taken to encrypt different plaintext sizes with respect to different key sizes are observed and provided in Figure 7 from this we can infer that for both keys, plaintext encryption varies by few milliseconds. This is because both the key sizes use same SBox and feistel function to encrypt.

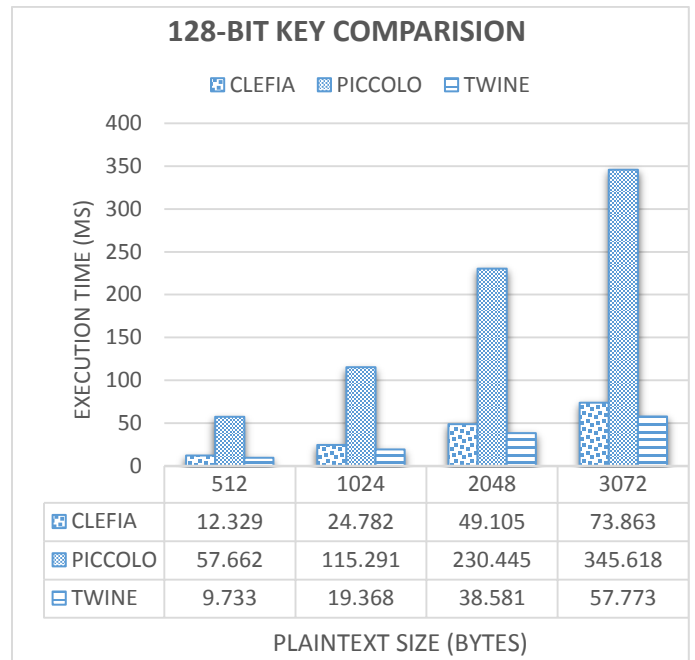


Figure 8: 128-bit key execution time comparison of ciphers.

Figure 8, provides the comparison results of all three lightweight block ciphers with respect to 128-bit key encryption. We can see that PICCOLO128 is taking more time as the number of rounds is more compared to CLEFIA (Table 2) but even though TWINE is having more number of rounds but the encryption design is just the addition and permutation of plaintext and key sizes.

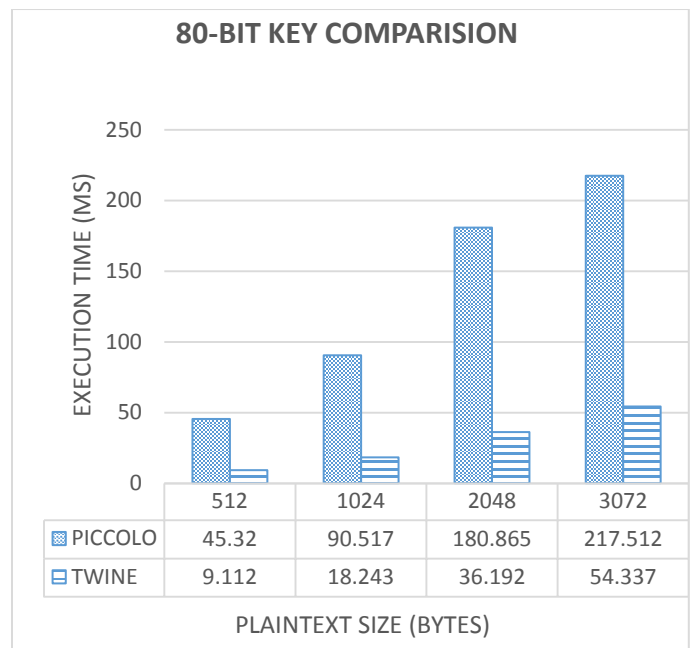


Figure 9: 80-bit key execution time comparison of ciphers.



Figure 9 provides the comparison results of PICCOLO and TWINE with respect to 80-bit key size. TWINE encryption takes minimal time compared to PICCOLO for the same reason mentioned above.

Energy consumption can be calculated in different ways [27]. In this paper, we consider one of the approach where CPUs operating voltage, average current drawn by each cycle in an encryption process is used to measure the energy consumption. For example, in the MCU that we considered, where the CPU is operating at 84MHz frequency, supply voltage of 3.6 volt, and average of 0.0115 Ampere current and if suppose 10000 clock cycles were assumed, then the energy consumed by an operation is 4.93  $\mu$ A-sec or  $\mu$  Joule. Following is the mathematical equation used to determine the consumed energy level by an encryption algorithm in this paper.

$$E = I * N * \tau * VCC$$

Where I is the average current in ampere, N is the number of clock cycles,  $\tau$  is the clock period and VCC is the supply voltage [27].

Table 3: Number of Clock Cycles for each cipher.

Algorithms	Key Sizes	Clock Cycles
CLEFIA	128-bit	3,349,261
	192-bit	4,591,406
	256-bit	5,049,170
PICCOLO	80-bit	12,349,197
	128-bit	15,719,935
TWINE	80-bit	2,463,314
	128-bit	2,621,436

Cortex M4 provides a Data Watchpoint and Trace (DWT) unit which can be used to trace and setup any benchmarks. By assuming there is a fixed energy consumption for each clock cycle we can get the total number of clock cycles executed for a function from the MCU's inbuilt register DWT\_CYCCNT by initializing as follows [26]:

```
//register addresses
volatile uint32_t *DWT_CONTROL = (uint32_t *) 0xE0001000;
volatile uint32_t *DWT_CYCCNT = (uint32_t *) 0xE0001004;
volatile uint32_t *DWT_DEMCR = (uint32_t *) 0xE000EDFC;
//enable the use of DWT
*DEMCR = *DEMCR | 0x01000000;
//reset the cycle counter
*DWT_CONTROL = 0;
//enable cycle counter
*DWT_CONTROL = *DWT_CONTROL | 1;
//some code to measure
//....
Printf ("total clock cycle: %d", *DWT_CYCCNT);
```

Table 3 provides the average clock cycles required to perform an encryption operation in each of the ciphers. Figure 10 shows the amount of energy consumed by each of the block ciphers from different key sizes in  $\mu$ Joules per bits. Figure clearly shows that PICCOLO takes more energy to compute encryption as the number of clock cycles required to execute is more when compared to other ciphers. Conversely TWINE

consumes least energy with only 1291.995  $\mu$ Joules per bit and CLEFIA on the other side burns 1650.71  $\mu$ Joules per bit when the key size of 128-bit is considered. With 80-bit key size we can see that TWINE performs exceptionally well with only 1214.065  $\mu$ Joules per bit and PICCOLO performs worst with a higher energy consumption of 6086.42  $\mu$ Joules per bit.

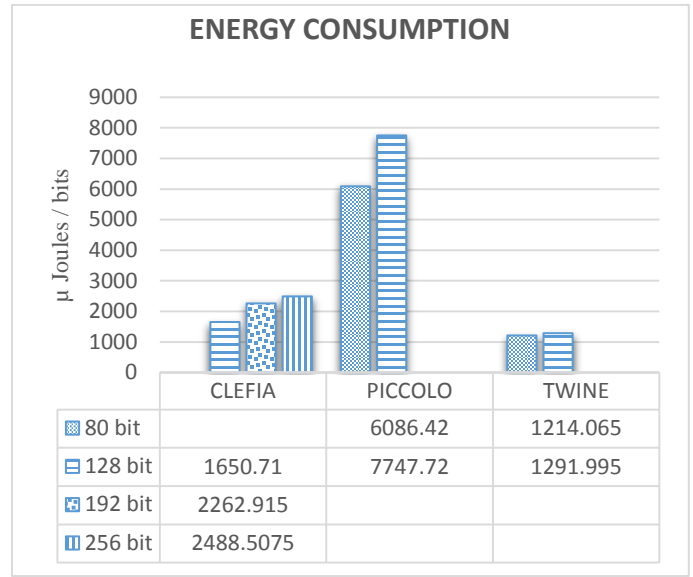


Figure 10: Energy usage comparison of ciphers.

Memory compromises of the RAM which is used to execute programs and the flash memory (ROM) which consists of programming and data flash memory, where programming flash memory contains the program code for specific application and data flash memory stores any sensing data or temporary data like the look-up tables if present [15]. Online mbed IDE provides a good GUI based memory representation which is used to compare the memory allocation [17] of the specified block ciphers. Efficient usage of memory is the key role in IoT environments as this is directly related to the operational speed and throughput of the system.

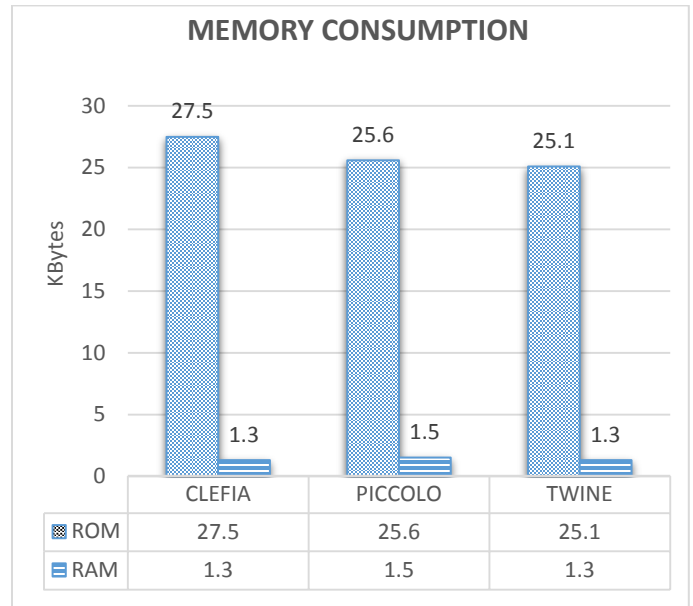


Figure 11: Memory usage comparison of ciphers.

Figure 11 gives the amount of memory needed by CLEFIA, PICCOLO and TWINE. TWINE requires little memory both in RAM and ROM as it has simple round function which does not store more lookup tables to fetch data often. But CLEFIA has less memory efficiency because it contains two different Feistel functions and two different SBox and diffusion matrix which causes more lookups to perform an encryption also since the key sizes used by the lightweight block cipher is more (128, 192, 256 bits) compared to other two block ciphers it is reasonable to accept this high memory consumption as it provides more security (more the key size higher the security) [28]. Memory efficiency of PICCOLO is good compared to CLEFIA but worst when compared with TWINE, this is because even though PICCOLO takes two SBox layers both are just substitution operation and a permutation which is done with one diffusion matrix. So, TWINE is considered as the suitable lightweight block cipher where the memory constraints are high.

Throughput is the metric used to measure amount of data a hardware system can ideally process in a given interval of time. In this paper, we calculate the throughput of each of the lightweight block ciphers to find out which stands best with respect to the resource constraint real world environment where encryption throughput becomes the key metric. To calculate the throughput, number of cycles taken by the encryption process is first calculated later this value is divided with the block size of the algorithm to get total encryption cycles per bit.

$$\text{Encryption (cycles/bit)} = \frac{\text{Number of cycles}}{\text{Block size}}$$

Since our MCU runs under 84MHz which means that there can be 84,000,000 cycles getting executed each second. So, the throughput of the encryption function of each lightweight block ciphers is calculated as follows.

$$\text{Throughput} = \frac{\text{CPU Speed}}{\text{Encryption (cycles/bit)}}$$

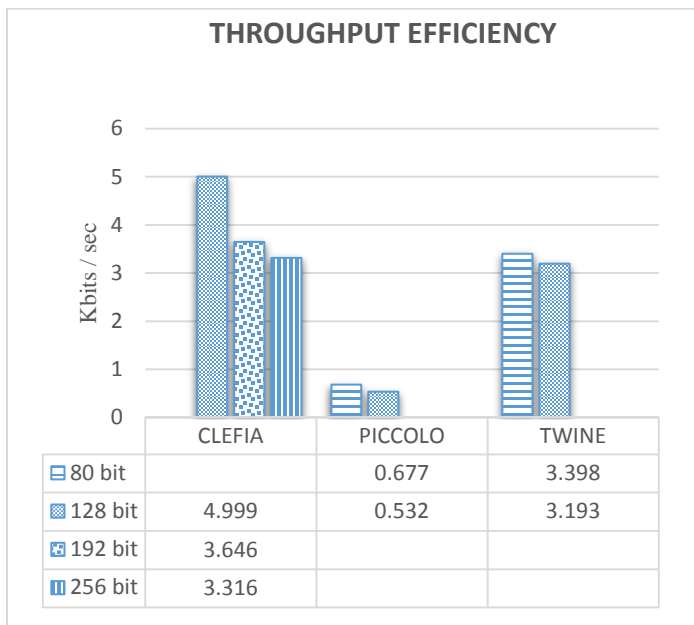


Figure 12: Throughput comparison of ciphers.

Figure 12 reprints the value calculated for each of the lightweight block ciphers. We can see that CLEFIA (128, 192, 256-bit keys) has the highest throughput with an average throughput of 4Kbps. Whereas TWINE (80, 128-bit keys) as a throughput of 4.99Kbps and PICCOLO has 0.6Kbps, this is because the number of clock cycles per bit required to perform an encryption operation in PICCOLO is more compared to other block ciphers and it is indirectly proportional to the throughput of the lightweight block ciphers.

When we compare all three block ciphers with 128-bit encryption then CLEFIA stands first with 5Kbps as the number of clock cycles per bit required to compute an encryption is less, then TWINE stands second with 3.2Kbps and last PICCOLO with a throughput of 0.5Kbps. With 80-bit key encryption we can see that PICCOLO still stands at last with 0.6Kbps when compared to TWINE with 3.4Kbps. Since, PICCOLO has the least throughput we can say that there will be more delay and more energy spent to perform an encryption with real time application in an adhoc environment and therefore this lightweight block cipher is not a suitable candidate to be selected. So, we choose CLEFIA as the best choice.

## V. CONCLUSION

Internet of things faces numerous challenges like bandwidth, security, privacy, power, scalability and many more among which privacy and security is the most important things to be considered in this environment as we cannot trust all the users in IoT. There are numerous crypto block ciphers available but due to resource constraints, lightweight cryptographic algorithms are chosen to be an ideal candidate for these environments. This papers provides a benchmark performance analysis on STM32F MCU with respect to energy consumption, throughput, execution time and memory consumption which plays an important role in choosing ideal lightweight block ciphers for resource constrained environments. When execution time or the operation time of an encryption function becomes the deciding factor for some applications like In-Vehicle devices, or the industrial control systems in an IoT environment then TWINE is the suitable candidate with key size of 80-bit, however when we consider 128-bit for more security [28] then CLEFIA turns out to be the suitable ciphers for small sized plaintext and as the size increases TWINE becomes the ideal candidate for encryption. Applications like RFID, sensor nodes, medical/healthcare devices etc. requires less memory consumption and less energy consumption so that the operational speed increases, TWINE is a best solution followed by CLEFIA which differs only by few metric units. In IoT environment, throughput matters a lot because higher the throughput lesser the delay and therefore hardware can spend less energy and later go into sleep mode which prolongs the battery power. CLEFIA is the best choice for encryption where higher throughput matters.

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