Article | Received Day Mon Year; Accepted Day Mon Year; Published Day Mon Year
https://doi.org/10.55092/xxxx

A Hybrid Scalability Solution for Blockchain: Layered Sharding with Cross-Channel Consensus (LSCC)

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Abstract: Blockchain technology has been revolutionary in decentralized applications, offering secure, transparent, and tamper-proof systems. However, despite these advantages, blockchain networks face significant scalability challenges that limit their ability to support widespread adoption. Traditional solutions such as sharding, sidechains, and consensus mechanism improvements address parts of the problem but often struggle to balance scalability, decentralization, and security - the core components of the blockchain trilemma. These single-focus solutions lead to centralization risks, high latency, or insufficient throughput for large-scale decentralized applications. To bridge this gap, we propose a hybrid architecture known as Layered Sharding with Cross-Channel Consensus (LSCC). This approach integrates the strengths of both on-chain solutions such as sharding and off-chain solutions such as state channels to optimize transaction throughput, latency, and cross-shard communication. By leveraging a multilayered shard network combined with cross-channel consensus, LSCC aims to achieve scalability without compromising decentralization or security. This hybrid solution offers a more balanced approach to addressing the blockchain scalability trilemma, making it capable of handling high-frequency transactions across various layers of the network while ensuring efficient and secure cross-shard operations.

Keywords: Blockchain; scalability; sharding; consensus algorithm; cross channel

1. Introduction

Blockchain, since its inception with Bitcoin in 2008, has disrupted numerous industries by offering a decentralized, secure, and immutable ledger system. As blockchain technology continues to expand its foot-print, especially in areas like decentralized finance (DeFi) and supply chain management, its scalability challenges have become a critical issue. The original blockchain architectures, such as those used in Bitcoin and Ethereum, were not designed to handle the increasing number of transactions demanded by global-scale applications. The fundamental challenge lies in the "blockchain trilemma," [1] a concept which posits that blockchain systems can only optimize two out of three properties: decentralization, security, and scalability [2]. For example, public blockchains like Bitcoin and Ethereum provide high levels of decentralization and security but are limited in transaction throughput and scalability. Conversely, centralized or permissioned blockchains can achieve higher scalability but at the cost of decentralization and transparency. This paper aims to provide a comprehensive review of the current scalability solutions proposed for blockchain networks, categorizing them into onchain and off-chain solutions. On-chain solutions, such as sharding and consensus mechanism improvements, focus on modifying the core blockchain protocol to enhance performance. Off-chain solutions, such as state channels and sidechains, seek to alleviate onchain congestion by offloading certain operations. Finally, we propose a hybrid architecture called Layered Sharding with Cross-Channel Consensus (LSCC) addressing scalability by integration the strengths of these solutions into a unified framework that balances throughput, latency, security, and decentralization.

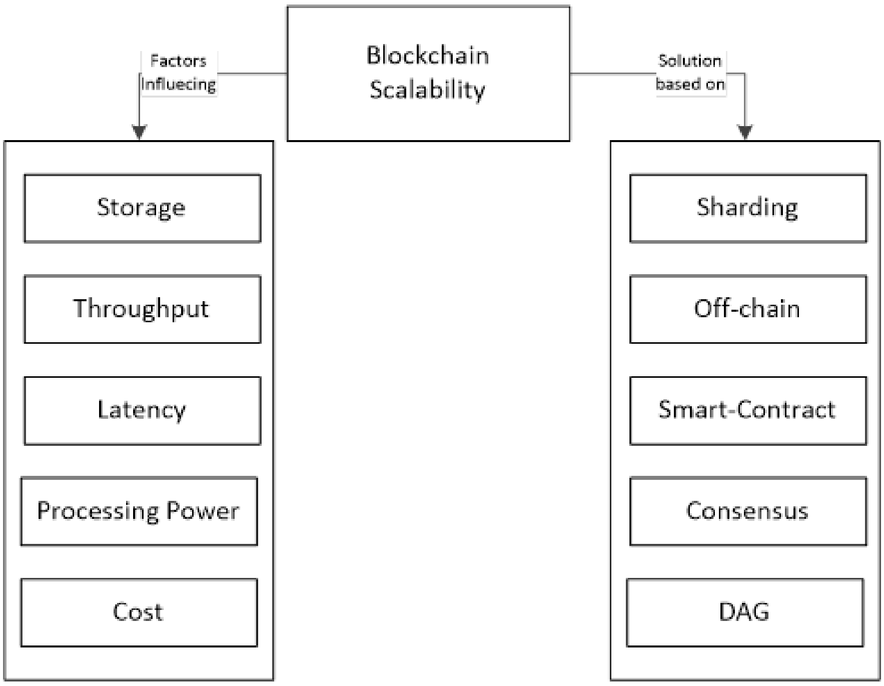

Figure 1. Scalability Issues, Solutions Diagram

1.1. Structure of the Paper

Section 2: Provides a detailed review of the literature of key scalability solutions, including sharding, consensus improvements, and off-chain techniques.
Section 3: Comparing existing solutions solving scalability issues
Section 4: Introduces the proposed Layered Sharding with Cross-Channel Consensus (LSCC) model, detailing its architecture and explaining how it overcomes the limitations of existing methods.
Section 5: Detailed discussion on proposed solution
Section 6: Briefing of transaction assignment,relay node selection algorithms
Section 7: Presents a mathematical analysis of the performance of LSCC, demonstrating its scalability advantages.
Section 8: Discusses the challenges and future research directions for further development and improvement of LSCC.
Section 9: Offers a comparative analysis between LSCC and existing approaches, highlighting the unique benefits of LSCC in terms of scalability, security, and efficiency.
Section 10: Concludes the paper by summarizing the contributions and potential impacts of LSCC on blockchain scalability.

Contribution to Research Society: This paper contributes to the research community in several ways. First, it provides a comprehensive survey of existing scalability solutions, offering a structured comparison between on-chain and off-chain methods. Second, it introduces Layered Sharding with Cross-Channel Consensus (LSCC), a novel hybrid architecture that optimizes transaction throughput and cross-shard communication while ensuring decentralization and security. Third, the paper offers mathematical analysis and algorithmic insights into how LSCC scales more efficiently than traditional sharding and hybrid models. By presenting LSCC, this work contributes a new paradigm for addressing the blockchain scalability trilemma, providing researchers and practitioners with a framework that balances the key elements of blockchain networks. Figure 1 depicts the scalability issues and various types of solutions proposed as on writing this paper.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review focuses on the key scalability solutions proposed for blockchain networks. It ex plores both on-chain methods like sharding and con sensus mechanism improvements, as well as off-chain approaches such as state channels and sidechains. The review also covers hybrid solutions that combine these techniques to address blockchain scalability chal lenges. Finally, the Pyramid Sharding mechanism is discussed, offering insights into innovative cross-shard communication models, organized as below:

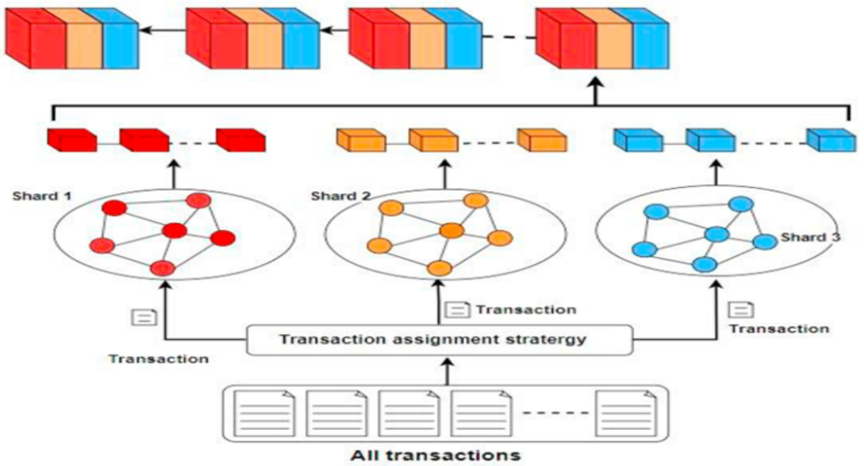

Figure 2. System design of sharing technique in blockchain [2]

- 2.1: Sharding Mechanisms - A review of shard ing as a scalability solution and its implementa tion in blockchains like Ethereum 2.0.
- 2.2: Consensus Mechanism Improvements - An exploration of improved consensus algorithms such as PoS, PBFT, and P-PBFT for scalability.
- 2.3: Layer-2 and Off-Chain Solutions - Overview of state channels, sidechains, and Plasma for improving blockchain scalability.
- 2.4: Pyramid Sharding Mechanism - Introduc tion to the Pyramid sharding model and its ad vantages in cross-shard communication.
- 2.5: Hybrid Solutions - Combining on-chain and off-chain techniques for enhanced scalability.

[3] has done comprehensive survey of the scalability challenges faced by blockchain technology in several sectors It also examines potential solutions based on consensus mechanisms, smart contracts and directed acyclic graph (DAG). It is observed that the proposed scalability solutions target enhancing system throughput, reducing costs, and improving blockchain efficiency, similar to review done by [4] [5] explains that combining blockchain and data science techniques, it is possible to improve the scalability, security and privacy of blockchain technology.

2.1. Sharding Mechanisms

Sharding is a fundamental technique designed to improve blockchain scalability by partitioning the net work into smaller shards, where each shard processes a portion of the transaction load in parallel [2]. This significantly increases the overall throughput of the system without altering the underlying blockchain pro tocol. Research by [2] presents a system that integrates sharding with Proof of Work (PoW) and Delegated Proof of Stake (DPoS) to enhance both security and scalability. Sharding has been particularly prominent in Ethereum 2.0, where it is expected to divide the network into 64 shards, thereby boosting transaction throughput exponentially. [6] provide detailed comparison and quantitative evaluation of major sharding mechanisms, along with our insights analyzing the features and restrictions of the existing solutions along with theoretical upper-bound of the throughput for each considered sharding mechanism However, cross-shard communication remains a significant technical challenge [2]. The inefficiency of cross-shard communication can lead to issues such as double-spending, data inconsistency, and delays in transaction finality. Additionally, sharding introduces a new layer of complexity in the design and maintenance of the blockchain, which may deter some developers from adopting this solution. Despite these challenges, sharding is one of the most promising solutions for im proving the scalability of public blockchains. Further more, comparative studies between Ethereum's sharding approach and other sharding-based blockchains like Zilliqa show that while sharding improves transaction throughput, it may not solve the latency issues in networks that require instant finality. Figure 2 shows the system design of sharding techniques. Sithu Kaung Set et. al [7] propose a service-aware dynamic sharding approach to enhance blockchain scalability by reducing service latency and increas ing transaction throughput. By dynamically relocating cross-shard data and merging or splitting shards based on demand, the approach improves performance with out compromising ledger consistency, as demonstrated in their experiments using Hyperledger-Fabric. Benzene, a novel sharding system that enhances the performance by cooperation-based sharding while defending the per-shard security proposed by Cai et. al [8], It is designed as a cross-shard block verification mechanism leveraging Trusted Execution Environment (TEE), via which miners can verify blocks from other shards during the cooperation process with the minimized overhead, via a voting-based consensus protocol for cross-shard cooperation. Benzene de couples

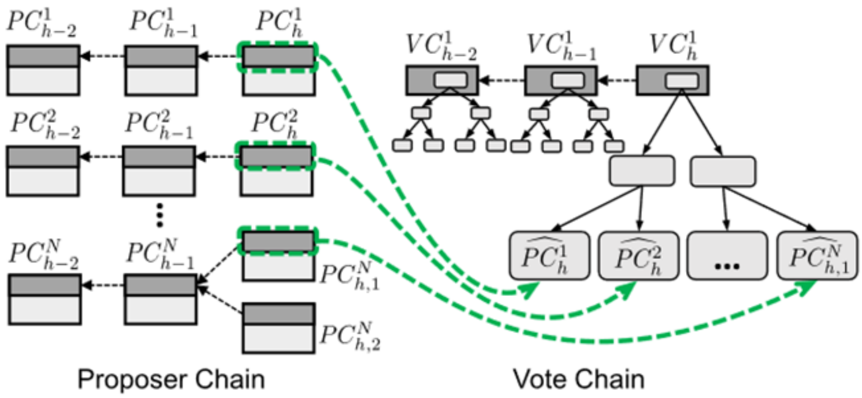

Figure 3. Benzene double-chain architecture [8]

the transaction-recording functions from the consensus-execution functions by proposer chains and vote chains, respectively (termed as double-chain). To accomplish cooperation-based consensus, miners in a shard must affirm the correctness of proposer blocks in other shards. The following figure illustrates the double-chain. Figure 3 shows the Benzene double-chain architecture.

2.2. *Consensus Mechanism Improvements*

Consensus mechanisms lie at the core of blockchain's decentralized nature, ensuring that all nodes agree on the state of the ledger. Traditional consensus mechanisms like Proof of Work (PoW) are highly secure but resource-intensive, leading to scalability limitations [9]. To address this, researchers have proposed several improvements. For instance, [9]proposes P-PBFT, an optimized version of Practical Byzantine Fault Tolerance (PBFT), which supports parallelism in the consensus process. P-PBFT has been shown to significantly reduce the time needed to achieve consensus, thereby increasing transaction throughput. By allowing nodes to pro cess multiple blocks simultaneously, P-PBFT enhances scalability while maintaining the same level of security as PBFT. However, P-PBFT and similar consensus algorithms are better suited for permissioned blockchains, where node identities are known and controlled. In public blockchains, such consensus mechanisms may intro duce vulnerabilities related to node trust and centralization [9]. Other consensus algorithms like Proof of Stake (PoS) offer more energy-efficient alternatives to PoW, but they come with their own set of challenges. For example, the "nothing at stake" problem in PoS systems can lead to multiple chain forks, compromising the integrity of the blockchain. Comparisons with other consensus mechanisms, such as Delegated Proof of Stake (DPoS), reveal that while DPoS improves transaction speeds, it centralizes control in the hands of a few validators, raising concerns about governance and security [10]. Li et al. propose a scalable multi-layer Practical Byzantine Fault Tolerance (PBFT) [11] consensus mechanism designed to improve blockchain scalability. By utilizing a hierarchical structure, their approach reduces the communication overhead typically associated with PBFT, thus achieving higher throughput and lower latency compared to traditional consensus mechanisms.

2.3. *Layer-2 and Off-Chain Solutions*

Layer-2 solutions aim to scale blockchain by of floading some of the transaction verification processes off the main blockchain, reducing the load on the main chain. The most notable examples are state channels, sidechains, and Plasma. Weilin Chen et al, [12] proposed Avalon protocol based on a novel Proof-of-Market (PoM) consensus mechanism to address issues of throughput, transaction delay, security, and decentralization. This protocol incorporates market-driven leader election and shifts PoW from mining pools to consumers based on transactions, equivalent to bitcoin blockchain network. PoM decouples the scalability and security of Bitcoin, which means that Avalon can optimize the capacity and interval of blocks without compromising other performance goals [12] and the results shows Avalon can tolerate 1/3rd of network's total computational power and can achieve throughput better than other schemes.
In their study, [13] presents a hybrid consensus model that integrates off-chain transaction processing through a scalable watchdog network. The system enhances throughput by allowing nodes to verify transactions off-chain and commit them in batches on-chain. This reduces the on-chain transaction load while maintaining a high level of decentralization and security. remblay Thibault et al. [14] provide a compre hensive survey on blockchain scaling through rollups, emphasizing how rollups enhance scalability by pro cessing transactions off-chain while maintaining the security and decentralization of the main chain. This method significantly reduces computational

and stor age demands on the primary blockchain network, offering a scalable solution for high-throughput appli cations State channels, as implemented in the Bitcoin Light ning Network, allow for instantaneous transactions between participants by conducting transactions off chain and only recording the final transaction on chain. This significantly reduces transaction fees and confirmation times, making it ideal for micropayments [15]. However, state channels are not without their limitations, including the complexity of setup and the need for participants to remain online for the duration of the channel's existence. Comparative analysis with other off-chain solutions, such as Plasma, shows that while state channels are effective for reducing on-chain load, they are better suited for specific use cases, such as payment systems, whereas Plasma provides a more generalized solution for scaling decentralized applications [16].

2.4. Sidechains and Plasma

Sidechains are separate blockchains that run in parallel to the main chain, enabling interoperability and faster transactions. Plasma, proposed for Ethereum, allows for the creation of child chains that run autonomously but are secured by the parent chain [16]. This ensures that while transactions occur on the child chain, the integrity of the blockchain is maintained. Sidechains and Plasma offer a way to scale blockchain while preserving security, but they intro duce complexities in ensuring proper verification of state transitions between the main chain and child chains. Plasma, in particular, has been criticized for its long exit periods, during which users must wait for their transactions to be finalized on the main chain. A detailed comparison of sidechains and Plasma reveals that while sidechains offer greater flexibility and faster transaction times, they may sacrifice some of the security guarantees provided by the main chain. Plasma, on the other hand, maintains security but suffers from slower transaction finality, which may not be suitable for time-sensitive applications [16].

2.5. Pyramid Sharding Mechanism

One of the prominent approaches to improving blockchain scalability is the Pyramid sharding model. Pyramid introduces a layered sharding system where some shards are designated to store records of multi ple shards, facilitating seamless cross-shard transactions. Unlike conventional sharding approaches where each shard processes transactions independently and faces overhead in cross-shard communication, Pyramid leverages relay shards to efficiently route cross-shard transactions [17]. Cross-Channel technology uses a hierarchical channel structure with a hierarchical interaction protocol, a new hierarchical settlement protocol, and a smart general fair exchange protocol, which ensures scalability, fairness and atomicity of interactions, proposed by Guo et. Al [18]. Introduces a multi-level channel system that allows for the use of unsettled amounts within sub-channels, improving transaction throughput and ensuring the correctness of final settlements. The structure supports flexible user participation and is designed to address the Unsettled Amount Congestion (UAC) problem. Implements a general fair exchange protocol using zk-SNARK and (t, n)-VSS to ensure the fair disclosure of both parties' secrets, addressing the Unfair Exchange (UE) problem. Utilizes an improved Hashed TimeLock Contract (HTLC) protocol to ensure atomicity in cross-chain interactions, even in asynchronous networks. Pyramid achieves better scalability by ensuring that cross-shard transactions are committed in one consensus round, reducing the need for sub-transactions and revalidation. This not only lowers the latency of cross-shard transactions but also improves the overall throughput of the system. Additionally, Pyramid's layered architecture ensures that each shard can focus on its own transactions, while relay shards handle inter shard communications, thus minimizing the performance overhead for individual shards. Comparing Pyramid with the Layered Sharding with Cross-Channel Consensus (LSCC) model, Pyramid's primary focus is on optimizing cross-shard communication without integrating off-chain solutions. LSCC enhances this further by introducing state channels for off-chain transaction processing, making LSCC more suitable for handling high-frequency, low value transactions like micropayments while leveraging a similar layered structure for inter-shard communication. The Cross-Channel Consensus (CCC) protocol in LSCC ensures that cross-shard and offchain transactions are processed efficiently within a single validation round, similar to Pyramid's consensus approach. In summary, while Pyramid optimizes intra-shard communication, LSCC extends these capabilities with off-chain mechanisms, offering a more comprehensive solution for blockchain scalability.

Solution	Transaction Throughput	Latency	Security	Decentralization
Sharing	High	Medium	High	Medium
PoS	Medium	Low	Medium	High
State Channels	High	Low	High	Medium
Sidechains	High	Medium	Medium	Medium
Plasma	High	Medium	High	Medium
Hybrid Approaches	Very High	Low	High	High

Table 1. COMPARISON OF SCALABILITY SOLUTIONS

3. COMPARISON OF SCALABILITY SOLUTIONS

As the Table 1 illustrates, each solution offers unique trade-offs between scalability, security, latency, and decentralization. Hybrid approaches that combine the strengths of both on-chain and off-chain solutions provide the most promise.

4. PROPOSED HYBRID SOLUTION: AN UNIQUE APPROACH

The literature reveals that no single solution can fully resolve the blockchain scalability trilemma. Sharding, for example, improves throughput but struggles with cross-shard communication, while off-chain solutions like state channels and sidechains offload transactions but introduce complexity in state transitions.

4.1. Layered Sharding with Cross-Channel Consensus(LSCC)

We propose a unique hybrid solution termed Layered Sharding with Cross-Channel Consensus (LSCC). This architecture builds on the strengths of sharding, state channels, and sidechains, incorporating an optimized cross-shard communication protocol to facilitate seamless transaction verification across shards, layers, and channels [10]. LSCC integrates multi-layered shard networks with off-chain solutions to process transactions while maintaining high levels of decentralization and security.

4.2. Cross-Channel Consensus

Cross-Channel Consensus (CCC) is a mechanism designed to facilitate efficient communication and agreement across different shards, layers, or channels in a multi-layered blockchain network. Traditional sharding approaches often suffer from delays and complexity when processing cross-shard transactions, as each shard processes transactions independently, requiring complex coordination. CCC optimizes this process by allowing shards or channels to come to a consensus on shared states without revalidating transactions multiple times. In CCC, multiple channels or shards can interact by committing transactions in a single round of consensus, reducing latency and ensuring atomicity of crosschannel operations. This is particularly useful in architectures where cross-shard transactions are frequent, such as decentralized finance (DeFi) applications.

4.2.1. Example of Cross-Channel Consensus:

Consider a blockchain network that is sharded into two channels: Channel A and Channel B. Both channels are responsible for processing a set of transactions within their shard. However, a user wants to transfer an asset from Channel A to Channel B. In a traditional sharded, blockchain, this would require several rounds of coordination between the shards to validate the transaction, which could introduce delays. In the Cross-Channel Consensus approach, the following steps occur:

1. Transaction Initiation: The user initiates a transfer of assets from Channel A to Channel B.
2. Relay Node Interaction: A relay node, which has access to both Channel A and Channel B, coordinates the transaction by notifying Channel B of the state change in Channel A.
3. Consensus Process: Both Channel A and Channel B participate in a single round of consensus using the Cross-Channel Consensus protocol. This ensures that the state change (i.e., the asset transfer) is reflected in both channels.
4. Finalization: Once the consensus is achieved, Channel B updates its ledger to reflect the receipt of the asset, and Channel A marks the asset as transferred. This method ensures that the transfer is atomic (i.e., either the transaction is completed in both channels, or it is reverted), reduces the time needed for validation, and minimizes the complexity of cross-shard communication.

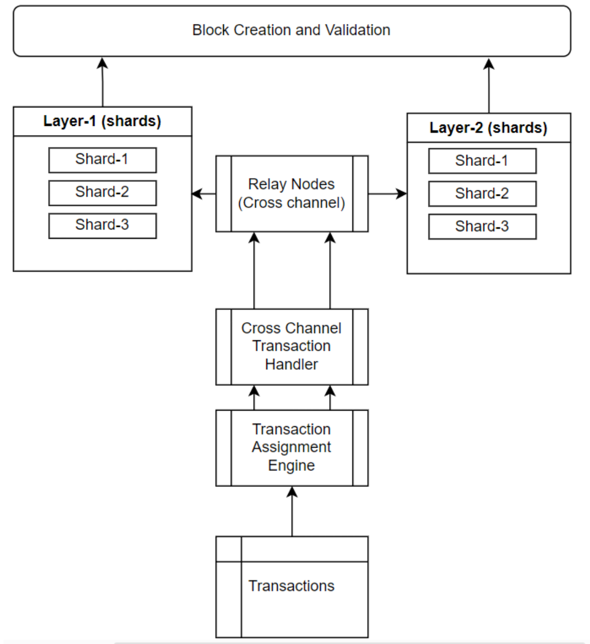

Figure 4. Block diagram of LSCC

4.2.2. Benefits of Cross-Channel Consensus:

1. Reduced Latency: By coordinating cross-shard transactions in a single consensus round, CCC reduces the delays associated with cross-shard operations.
2. Atomicity: Transactions that span multiple channels are guaranteed to either be completed fully or not at all, preventing issues such as double spending.
3. Scalability: CCC allows for more efficient scaling of blockchain networks by enabling seamless communication between shards or layers.

Cross-Channel Consensus is an essential component in architectures like Layered Sharding with Cross Channel Consensus (LSCC), where multiple shards or channels are involved in processing high-frequency,low-latency transactions across a decentralized network.

5. LAYERED SHARDING AND CROSS-CHANNEL CONSENSUS: A DETAILED EXPLANATION

5.1. Layered Sharding

Layered Sharding is an approach designed to improve the scalability of blockchain networks by organizing shards into hierarchical layers. In traditional sharding, the network is divided into independent shards, each responsible for processing a subset of transactions. However, this approach has limitations when it comes to cross-shard communication, which can lead to inefficiencies and delays [2]. Layered Sharding addresses these issues by introducing multiple layers of shards, where each layer processes different types of transaction and can communicate with other layers through a relay system. In Layered Sharding, each layer consists of several shards that process transactions independently, but cross-layer transactions are facilitated through dedicated relay nodes or relay shards [10].

Example of Layered Sharding: Consider a blockchain system with three layers of shards:

- Layer 1: Shards dedicated to high-frequency transactions (e.g., micropayments).
- Layer 2: Shards focused on medium-frequency transactions (e.g., decentralized finance operations).
- Layer 3: Shards responsible for low-frequency, high-value transactions (e.g., asset transfers or long-term contracts).

Each layer processes transactions independently, reducing the overall load on the system [2]. However, cross-layer transactions are facilitated by relay nodes that communicate between layers. For instance, if a user wants to move assets from Layer 1 to Layer 2, a relay node coordinates the transaction, ensuring that the transfer is reflected across both layers. Figure 4 shows the block diagram of the LSCC

5.2. Difference Between Layered Sharding and CrossChannel Consensus

While both Layered Sharding and Cross-Channel Consensus (CCC) aim to improve scalability, they focus on different aspects of transaction processing:

- Layered Sharding is primarily concerned with dividing the transaction load across multiple layers of shards. It organizes shards hierarchically, allowing each layer to handle different types of transactions based on frequency and complexity [17]
- Cross-Channel Consensus (CCC) is focused on ensuring efficient cross-shard and cross-layer communication. It allows multiple shards or layers to reach consensus on shared transactions in a single consensus round, reducing delays and ensuring atomicity of cross-layer operations [10].

Thus, while Layered Sharding improves scalability by distributing the transaction load across layers, CCC enhances the efficiency of cross-layer and cross-shard communication, ensuring that transactions that span multiple layers or shards are processed quickly and securely.

5.3. How Layered Sharding and CCC Work Together

Layered Sharding and Cross-Channel Consensus (CCC) are complementary mechanisms that work together to enhance the scalability and efficiency of blockchain networks. The following is a sample flow illustrating how the two systems interact:

5.3.1. Example Flow: Layered Sharding and CCC in Action:

1. Transaction Initiation: A user initiates a transaction to transfer assets from a shard in Layer 1 (high-frequency transactions) to a shard in Layer 2 (medium-frequency transactions).
2. Relay Node Coordination: The transaction is routed to a relay node, which has access to both Layer 1 and Layer 2 shards. The relay node informs Layer 2 of the state change in Layer 1, indicating that assets need to be transferred between layers.
3. Cross-Channel Consensus (CCC): Both Layer 1 and Layer 2 shards participate in a single round of consensus using the CCC protocol. This ensures that the state change (i.e., the transfer of assets) is committed to both layers simultaneously, ensuring atomicity [10].
4. Transaction Finalization: Once consensus is reached, Layer 2 updates its ledger to reflect the receipt of the asset, and Layer 1 marks the asset as transferred. The transaction is completed in one consensus round, minimizing delays.

In this flow, Layered Sharding divides the transaction load across different layers based on transaction type, while CCC ensures that cross-layer transactions are processed efficiently. The combination of these two mechanisms significantly reduces the complexity and time required for cross-layer transactions [2].

5.3.2. Salability Benefits of Layered Sharding:

Layered Sharding improves scalability by:

- Distributed Transaction Load: By dividing the transaction load across multiple layers, each handling a different type of transaction, Layered Sharding ensures that no single shard or layer is overwhelmed with processing tasks.
- Parallel Processing: Transactions within each layer are processed in parallel, significantly increasing overall system throughput [17].
- Specialization: Different layers can be optimized for specific types of transactions, allowing for better resource allocation and reducing the computational burden on individual shards. [19] proposed ParBFT, a new Byzantine consensus parallelism scheme that combines classic BFT protocols and a novel bilevel mixed integer linear programming (BL-MILP)-based optimization model to improve scalability through parallel consensus while providing increased safety.

5.3.3. Scalability Benefits of CCC:

Cross-Channel Consensus further enhances scalability by:

- Efficient Cross-Layer Communication: CCC ensures that cross-layer transactions are processed in a single round of consensus, reducing the time and complexity associated with cross-shard communication [10].
- Atomicity of Transactions: CCC guarantees that transactions spanning multiple shards or layers are either completed in their entirety or not at all, preventing issues like double-spending and ensuring data consistency across the network.
- Reduced Latency: By processing cross-layer transactions in one consensus round, CCC minimizes the

delays associated with multilayer transactions, improving the user experience and system efficiency.

5.3.4. Uniqueness of Layered Sharding with CCC

The combination of Layered Sharding and Cross Channel Consensus (CCC) is unique in that it allows for both efficient division of transaction processing (through sharding) and seamless cross-shard communication (through CCC). While many sharding systemsstruggle with cross-shard communication overhead, Layered Sharding with CCC addresses this issue by:

- Relay Nodes: Using dedicated relay nodes to manage cross-layer communication, ensuring that state changes are efficiently propagated across layers.
- Single-Round Consensus: CCC ensures that cross-shard and cross-layer transactions are committed in a single round, reducing the time required for validation and improving system throughput [2].

This combination is particularly well-suited for decentralized systems that require both high transaction throughput and low latency, such as decentralized finance (DeFi) applications and blockchain-based gaming platforms. Layered Sharding and Cross-Channel Consensus (CCC) work together to create a highly scalable and efficient blockchain architecture. Layered sharding distributes the transaction load across multiple layers, each optimized for different types of transaction, while CCC ensures that cross-layer transactions are processed efficiently and securely. Together, they address the challenges of blockchain scalability, making it possible to build decentralized systems that can handle high transaction volumes without sacrificing security or decentralization [10].

6. CROSS-CHANNEL CONSENSUS (CCC) PROTOCOL IN LSCC: DETAILED ALGORITHM

The Cross-Channel Consensus (CCC) protocol is a core component of the Layered Sharding with Cross-Channel Consensus (LSCC) architecture. It is designed to ensure that cross-shard and off-chain transactions are processed efficiently within a single validation round. This reduces latency and communication overhead between shards and off-chain networks, making the system highly scalable. In LSCC, the CCC protocol operates across multiple shards or layers, where shards in different layers need to communicate to process a cross-shard transaction. The primary goal of CCC is to enable atomic transactions between shards, ensuring that either all shards reach consensus on the transaction or none do, thus preventing issues like double-spending.

6.0.1. Overview of the CCC Algorithm

The CCC algorithm follows a series of steps to process cross-shard transactions in LSCC. The protocol ensures that:

- Cross-shard and off-chain transactions are processed in a single consensus round.
- Transaction atomicity is maintained, ensuring consistency across shards.
- Communication costs are minimized by relaying transactions efficiently between layers.

6.0.2. Detailed Steps of the CCC Protocol

Here is a detailed step-by-step explanation of the Cross-Channel Consensus protocol: Step 1: Transaction Initiation:
A user initiates a transaction that spans multiple shards or layers. The transaction could involve transferring assets between shards or layers. The following algorithm assigns the transaction to the appropriate layer and shard:

ALGORITHM: Transaction Assignment to a Layer/Shard in LSCC

Input: Transaction T, Layer Set L, Shard Set S
Output: Assigned Shard Si in Layer Lj

1. Determine the transaction type T:
    - If T is high-frequency, assign it to Layer 1 (optimized for high-frequency transactions).
    - If T is medium-frequency, assign it to Layer 2 (optimized for medium-frequency transactions).
    - Otherwise, assign it to Layer 3 (optimized for low-frequency transactions).
2. Select the candidate shards in the assigned Layer Lj .
3. Sort the candidate shards based on load and proximity:
    - Prefer shards with lower load.
    - Prefer shards closer in network proximity.
4. Assign T to the shard Si with the lowest load and closest proximity.

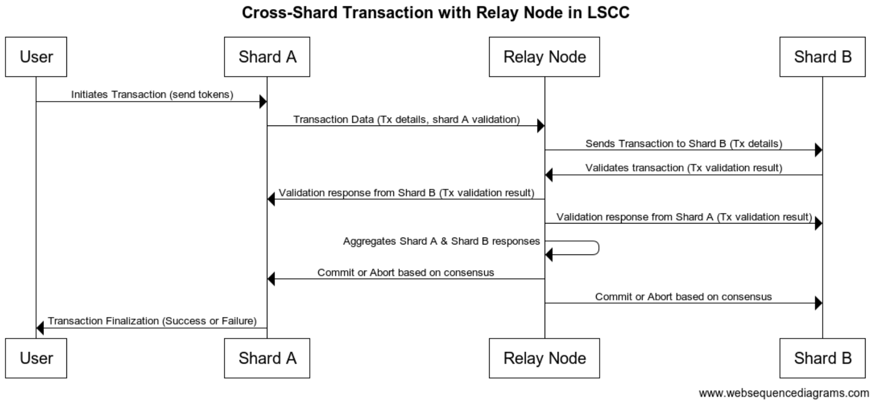

Figure 5. How relay nodes work in CCC

5. Return the assigned shard Si for processing the transaction T.

The transaction is now assigned to the appropriate layer and shard based on its characteristics. Let the transaction be denoted as Ti,j , where i represents the source shard and j represents the destination shard.

1. User Broadcast: The user broadcasts the transaction request Ti,j to the shard responsible for initiating the transaction (Shard A).
2. Relay Node Selection: A relay node is selected to coordinate the transaction between the two shards. Relay nodes are responsible for propagating the transaction information between shards or layers.

The following steps describe the relay node selection process for cross-shard transactions in the LSCC system.

ALGORITHM: Relay Node Selection for Cross-Shard Transactions in LSCC

Input: List of Layers L, List of Shards S in each Layer, Relay Nodes Pool R
Output: Selected Relay Node

1. **Initialize Relay Node Candidate Pool:**
   - For each Layer L_i in L, and each Shard S_j in Layer L_i, identify nodes in Shard S_j that meet the following conditions:
     – Latency(Node) $<$ Threshold Latency
     – Load(Node) $<$ Threshold Load
     – Reputation(Node) $>$ Threshold Reputation
   - Add qualifying nodes to the Relay Node Candidate Pool.
2. **Filter Candidate Nodes by Proximity:**
   - For a transaction involving cross-shard communication, identify the involved shards (e.g., Shard A in Layer 1, Shard B in Layer 2).
   - Select nodes from the Relay Node Candidate Pool that are closest (in terms of network distance) to both Shard A and Shard B.
   - If no such nodes exist, select nodes with the lowest combined latency.
3. **Sort Candidates by Load and Reputation:**
   - **Priority 1:** Choose nodes with the lowest network load to prevent overloading.
   - **Priority 2:** Choose nodes with the highest reputation score to ensure reliability and security.
4. **Final Selection:**
   - Select the relay node with the lowest load and highest reputation score.
5. **Return the Selected Relay Node:**
   - Use the selected relay node for the cross-shard transaction.

Figure 5 shows how the relay node works in LSCC. Step 2: Transaction Propagation: Once the transaction is initiated, the relay node begins propagating the transaction to the relevant shards. In this case, the transaction is forwarded to the destination shard (Shard B).

- **Validation Request:** The relay node sends a validation request to both the source shard (Shard A) and the destination shard (Shard B), indicating that Ti,j must be processed in this consensus round.
- **Pre-commit Phase:** Both Shard A and Shard B verify whether the transaction is valid within their respective ledgers. This involves checking if the user has sufficient assets in Shard A to perform the transfer and ensuring that Shard can accept the transfer

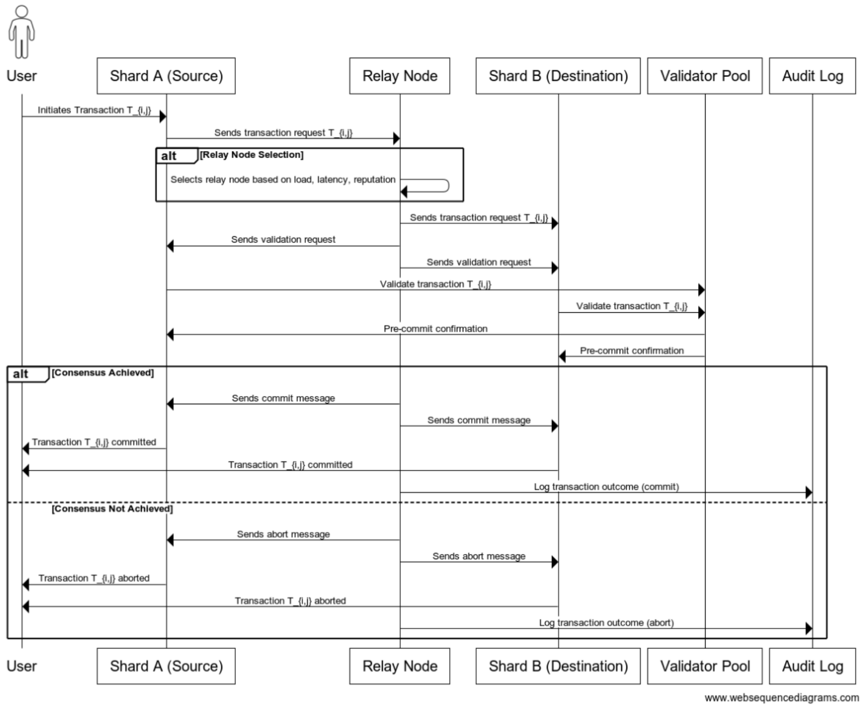

Figure 6. Flow of LS-CCC Solution

Step 3: Cross-Channel Consensus (CCC): After the validation request is sent, the CCC protocol begins. The goal is to achieve a single round of consensus between Shard A and Shard B, ensuring that the transaction is either committed in both shards or rejected in both.

- **Vote Collection:** Each shard collects votes from its validators on whether Ti,j is valid. The voting process follows Byzantine Fault Toleance (BFT) principles, where at least 2/3 of the validators must agree for the transaction to be considered valid. Algorithm proposed by [20] reduces the communication complexity and improves the fault tolerance of the system,and the scalability of the tree topology network structure can be better applied in large-scale scenarios.
- **Inter-Shard Voting:** The relay node aggregates the votes from both shards and checks if both Shard A and Shard B have reached agreement on the validity of the transaction.
- **Consensus Decision:** If both shards reach consensus, the relay node finalizes the transaction by broadcasting a commit message to both Shard A and Shard B. If either shard fails to reach consensus, the relay node broadcasts an abort message, and the transaction is reverted.

Step 4: Commit or Abort Phase: Once consensus is reached, the transaction enters the commit or abort phase, depending on the outcome of the CCC process.

- **Commit Phase:** If both shards reached consensus, the relay node sends a commit message to Shard A and Shard B. Each shard then updates its local ledger to reflect the transaction. In this case, Shard A debits the user's account, and Shard B credits the user's account with the transferred assets.
- **Abort Phase:** If consensus was not reached, the relay node sends an abort message, and the transaction is rolled back in both Shard A and Shard B. This ensures that no partial transactions occur, maintaining the atomicity of cross-shard transactions.

Step 5: Finalization and Logging: In the final step, the transaction outcome is finalized, and the relay node logs the result. This includes updating the transaction log in both shards, ensuring that the network can audit the transaction history at a later time.

- **Log Update:** Both Shard A and Shard B record the transaction outcome (commit or abort) in their transaction logs.
- **Cross-Shard Auditing:** The transaction logs are updated to reflect the outcome of Ti,j . This ensures transparency and allows for auditability of cross-shard and cross-layer transactions.

The Figure 6 shows overall flow of LS-CCC for a transaction.

6.0.3. Characteristics of Relay Nodes

- **Availability:** Relay nodes are designed to be continuously available through redundancy, load balancing, and monitoring mechanisms. [21] prposed method allocates nodes of varying trust levels to balance shard reliability, reducing the risk of blockchain failure. It uses an iterative algorithm to optimize node allocation, enhancing security and performance. Compared to Monoxide and Rapidchain, the model improves throughput, latency, and reduces blockchain failure probability, thus increasing both the availability and reliability of the blockchain system

- **Reliability:** A reputation-based system and fault tolerance ensure that only the most reliable nodes handle critical transactions.
- **Security:** Relay nodes are isolated, subject to consensus-based validation, and regularly audited to prevent corruption and malicious actions. [22], proposed probabilistic approach to analyze the security of sharding-based blockchain protocols by investigating threat of sybil attacks in bitcoin and etherum blockchain protocols. HyperMaze [23] addresses the dual challenges of scalability and privacy in blockchains by employing a hierarchical multi-blockchain architecture for parallel transaction processing and zeroknowledge proofs for privacy. It introduces an ID-based dual-balance account model and a twophase cross-chain transaction mechanism (2PXT) for transaction privacy. HyperMaze achieves over 19,000 TPS with low latency, making it a high throughput privacy-preserving blockchain solution
- **Fallback Mechanisms:** Blacklisting, quorum based replacement, and checkpointing ensure that compromised nodes can be quickly replaced, maintaining the integrity of the system.
- **Transparency:** Relay node activities are recorded immutably on the blockchain, providing transparency and accountability.

6.0.4. Algorithmic Properties of CCC

The Cross-Channel Consensus protocol exhibits several key properties that make it an efficient and scalable solution for cross-shard and cross-layer transactions:

- **Atomicity:** Transactions are either fully committed across all relevant shards or fully aborted. No partial transactions occur.
- **Single-Round Consensus:** Cross-shard transactions are processed in a single round of consensus, reducing the latency of cross-shard communication.
- **Byzantine Fault Tolerance:** The protocol tolerates up to $1/3$ Byzantine nodes in each shard, ensuring that the system remains secure even in the presence of faulty or malicious nodes.
- **Scalability:** CCC can scale to large blockchain networks with many shards and layers due to its efficient coordination of cross-layer transactions.

7. Mathematical Proof: LSCC as a Superior Solution

To mathematically demonstrate that LSCC is superior to other scalability approaches, we will analyze the performance of LSCC in terms of transaction throughput (T), latency (L), and the total number of shards or channels (S). Additionally, we will compare LSCC with traditional sharding, state channels, and hybrid approaches.

7.1. Assumptions and Variables

Let us define the following variables to evaluate blockchain scalability:

- T: Transaction throughput, i.e., the number of transactions processed per second (TPS).
- L: Latency, i.e., the time taken for a transaction to be confirmed (in seconds).
- S: The number of shards or channels in the network.
- C: Cross-shard communication cost.
- N: Total number of transactions in the network.
- T_{LSCC}: Throughput in LSCC.
- $T_{traditional}$: Throughput in traditional sharding.
- $T_{state\_channel}$: Throughput using state channels.
- T_{hybrid}: Throughput in hybrid solutions.
- C_{LSCC}: Cross-shard communication cost in LSCC.
- $C_{traditional}$: Cross-shard communication cost in traditional sharding.
- L_{LSCC}: Latency in LSCC.
- $L_{traditional}$: Latency in traditional sharding.
- L_{hybrid}: Latency in hybrid solutions.

7.2. *Throughput Analysis*

7.2.1. Traditional Sharding

In traditional sharding, the network divides transactions among S shards, with each shard processing a fraction of the total transactions. Therefore, the total throughput is given by:

$$T_{traditional} = \frac{N}{L_{traditional}} = S \cdot T_{shard} \tag{1}$$

However, cross-shard transactions incur communication overhead, which we denote by $C_{traditional}$. This overhead grows with the number of shards:

$$T_{traditional} = S \cdot T_{shard} - C_{traditional}(S) \tag{2}$$

As S increases, $C_{traditional}(S)$ increases non-linearly, reducing the total throughput.

7.2.2. State Channels

State channels allow for off-chain transaction processing, and throughput scales based on the number of off-chain interactions. Let $T_{state\_channel}$ be the throughput for state channels:

$$T_{state\_channel} = \frac{N}{L_{state\_channel}} \tag{3}$$

While state channels improve transaction throughput for specific use cases like micropayments, they introduce significant complexity in setup and maintenance.

7.2.3. Hybrid Solutions

Hybrid approaches combine sharding and off-chain solutions like sidechains. The total throughput is given by:

$$T_{hybrid} = S \cdot T_{shard} - C_{hybrid}(S) + T_{sidechain} \tag{4}$$

While hybrid solutions reduce some cross-shard overhead, they still suffer from cross-chain transaction costs, $C_{hybrid}(S)$.

7.2.4. LSCC (Layered Sharding with Cross-Channel Consensus)

In LSCC, the network is organized into layers, where cross-layer communication is optimized via Cross-Channel Consensus (CCC). The throughput is given by:

$$T_{LSCC} = S \cdot T_{layer} - C_{LSCC}(S) \tag{5}$$

Since LSCC reduces cross-layer communication costs using CCC, the throughput scales better with the number of shards, as the communication cost $C_{LSCC}(S)$ is significantly lower than $C_{traditional}(S)$ or $C_{hybrid}(S)$:

$$T_{LSCC} > T_{traditional}, \quad T_{LSCC} > T_{hybrid}, \quad \text{for large } S. \tag{6}$$

7.3. *Latency Analysis*

7.3.1. Traditional Sharding

The latency in traditional sharding is primarily driven by the time required for cross-shard communication:

$$L_{traditional} = L_{shard} + C_{traditional}(S) \tag{7}$$

As the number of shards increases, the latency grows due to the overhead of coordinating cross-shard transactions.

7.3.2. Hybrid Solutions

In hybrid solutions, the latency is determined by the slower of the two mechanisms (on-chain and off-chain):

$$L_{hybrid} = \max(L_{on\_chain}, L_{off\_chain}) + C_{hybrid}(S) \tag{8}$$

7.3.3. LSCC

The latency in LSCC is optimized by CCC, which processes cross-shard and cross-layer transactions in a single consensus round:

$$L_{LSCC} = L_{layer} + C_{LSCC}(S) \tag{9}$$

Since $C_{LSCC}(S) \ll C_{traditional}(S)$, the latency in LSCC grows slower than in traditional sharding or hybrid solutions:

$$L_{LSCC} < L_{traditional}, \quad L_{LSCC} < L_{hybrid} \tag{10}$$

7.4. Scalability and Cost Efficiency

The key differentiator for LSCC is the ability to scale efficiently with an increasing number of shards, without incurring the high cross-shard communication overhead found in traditional solutions. The total cost of cross-shard communication is minimized through CCC:

$$C_{LSCC}(S) \ll C_{traditional}(S), \quad C_{LSCC}(S) \ll C_{hybrid}(S) \tag{11}$$

Thus, LSCC can scale to a larger number of shards and layers while maintaining low transaction latency and high throughput.

7.5. Conclusion from Mathematical Analysis

From the mathematical analysis, we conclude that LSCC outperforms traditional sharding, state channels, and hybrid solutions in terms of both throughput and latency. By optimizing cross-shard communication through Cross-Channel Consensus, LSCC ensures that the system scales efficiently with a large number of shards while minimizing cross-shard communication costs. This results in significantly higher transaction throughput and lower latency, making LSCC the superior solution for large-scale blockchain networks.

8. Challenges and Future Work

While the Layered Sharding with Cross-Channel Consensus (LSCC) architecture addresses many of the current scalability challenges in blockchain networks, it introduces its own set of complexities. One of the main challenges lies in optimizing cross-shard communication while ensuring atomicity and security. As the number of shards and layers increases, the complexity of coordinating cross-layer and cross-channel transactions also grows. Although Cross-Channel Consensus (CCC) mitigates some of these challenges by processing cross-layer transactions in a single consensus round, further research is needed to refine this mechanism, particularly for large-scale blockchain systems involving thousands of shards and validators.

Another area that requires future exploration is the integration of LSCC with Layer 2 scaling solutions, such as rollups. Rollups, which bundle transactions off-chain and periodically commit them on-chain, can be combined with LSCC to further enhance scalability. Additionally, advancements in cryptographic techniques, such as zero-knowledge proofs, could improve the efficiency of cross-layer validation and enhance the privacy of transactions within the LSCC framework.

As blockchain continues to be adopted for new applications, particularly in enterprise and government sectors, more research is needed to explore how LSCC can be adapted to permissioned or consortium blockchains. These environments have different requirements in terms of scalability, privacy, and governance, which may necessitate modifications to the base LSCC architecture.

8.1. Key Research Directions

To further improve LSCC and address its limitations, the following key research directions should be explored:

- **Optimizing Cross-Shard Communication:** Investigating new techniques to further reduce cross-shard transaction overhead while maintaining atomicity and security.
- **Layer 2 Integration:** Exploring how LSCC can work alongside Layer 2 solutions such as rollups to enhance throughput while minimizing on-chain congestion.
- **Zero-Knowledge Proofs (ZKPs):** Utilizing advanced cryptographic techniques to improve transaction privacy and optimize verification efficiency.
- **Permissioned Blockchain Adaptation:** Analyzing how LSCC can be tailored for enterprise and consortium blockchains that have distinct privacy and regulatory requirements.
- **AI-Based Transaction Optimization:** Leveraging artificial intelligence to dynamically optimize transaction assignment and load balancing in multi-shard environments.
- **Security and Fault Tolerance Enhancements:** Developing new security models to further enhance LSCC's Byzantine Fault Tolerance and resilience against malicious attacks.

8.2. Future Challenges

While LSCC provides significant improvements in scalability and cross-shard communication, several challenges remain:

- **Increased Complexity:** The introduction of multiple layers and cross-channel consensus mechanisms increases system complexity, requiring sophisticated management tools.
- **Validator Coordination:** Ensuring seamless coordination among validators across multiple layers and shards is a challenge, particularly in highly decentralized environments.
- **Dynamic Load Balancing:** As transaction volumes fluctuate, dynamic load balancing among shards must be optimized to prevent bottlenecks.
- **Interoperability with Other Blockchains:** Integrating LSCC with existing blockchain frameworks while maintaining security and efficiency.
- **Regulatory Considerations:** As LSCC is adopted in enterprise and governmental settings, compliance with regulatory frameworks and data privacy laws must be ensured.

8.3. Conclusion

Despite these challenges, LSCC represents a promising hybrid approach to blockchain scalability, balancing throughput, decentralization, and security. Future research in optimizing cross-layer communication, integrating with Layer 2 solutions, and improving security mechanisms will further enhance its potential. As LSCC evolves, it has the potential to serve as a foundational architecture for highly scalable, decentralized blockchain networks in the future.

9. Comparison of Existing Methods vs. LSCC

To understand the advantages of LSCC over existing methods, we compare these solutions across several key parameters, including transaction throughput, latency, cross-shard communication efficiency, security, decentralization, and complexity.

9.1. Analysis of the Comparison

- **Transaction Throughput:** LSCC offers very high throughput by optimizing cross-shard communication and reducing validation overhead, outperforming traditional sharding and even state channels.
- **Latency:** While state channels and PoS/DPoS offer low latency, LSCC ensures low latency even in cross-shard transactions due to its single-round consensus mechanism.
- **Cross-Shard Communication:** Traditional sharding and sidechains involve complex and costly cross-shard communication. LSCC optimizes this process with Cross-Channel Consensus (CCC), minimizing overhead and ensuring efficiency.
- **Atomicity of Transactions:** Ensuring atomicity is challenging in traditional sharding and other approaches, but LSCC guarantees atomicity of transactions across shards and layers.
- **Security:** LSCC maintains high security with its Byzantine Fault Tolerance mechanism, ensuring that cross-shard and cross-layer transactions remain secure.
- **Decentralization:** Both traditional sharding and LSCC maintain high decentralization. However, LSCC manages to do so while significantly improving scalability.
- **Scalability:** LSCC is highly scalable due to its layered sharding and CCC protocol, which allows the system to scale without the usual trade-offs seen in other methods.
- **Complexity:** Although LSCC introduces some complexity in its layered approach, it reduces the overall

complexity compared to managing multiple state channels or sidechains.
- **Finality:** LSCC ensures instant finality of transactions, thanks to its efficient consensus mechanism, which is often delayed in traditional sharding and sidechain solutions.

9.2. Comparison Table

Table 2 provides a structured comparison between LSCC and other blockchain scalability solutions.

Parameter	Traditional Sharding	PoS/DPoS	State Channels	Sidechains	Hybrid Approaches	LSCC
Transaction Throughput	Medium-High	Medium	High	High	High	Very High
Latency	High (cross-shard)	Low	Low (off-chain)	Medium	Medium-Low	Low
Cross-Shard Communication	Complex	N/A	N/A	Complex	Less Complex	Optimized
Atomicity of Transactions	Challenging	Challenging	Yes (off-chain)	Depends	Depends	Guaranteed
Security	High (individual shards)	Medium-High	Medium-High	Medium-High	High	High
Decentralization	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium-High	High
Scalability	Limited by Cross-Shard	Moderate	Limited to Off-Chain	Limited by Main Chain	High (with trade-offs)	Highly Scalable
Complexity	High	Medium	High (channel management)	Medium-High	Medium-High	Medium
Finality	Delayed	Fast	Instant (off-chain)	Delayed	Fast (depends on layer)	Instant

Table 2. Comparison of Existing Methods vs. LSCC

9.3. Conclusion

From the comparison, it is evident that LSCC outperforms existing scalability solutions in terms of transaction throughput, latency, cross-shard communication, and scalability while maintaining security and decentralization. By integrating Layered Sharding with Cross-Channel Consensus (CCC), LSCC ensures efficient cross-shard transactions without the trade-offs associated with other solutions. The ability to achieve instant finality and maintain high throughput makes LSCC an optimal choice for large-scale blockchain networks.

10. Conclusion

Blockchain scalability remains one of the most pressing challenges to achieving widespread adoption of decentralized applications (dApps) and smart contracts. Despite significant advancements, existing solutions often involve trade-offs between decentralization, security, and performance. In this paper, we presented a comprehensive review of state-of-the-art scalability techniques, covering both on-chain and off-chain solutions. We introduced Layered Sharding with Cross-Channel Consensus (LSCC), a novel hybrid solution designed to address the scalability trilemma by balancing throughput, decentralization, and security.

The LSCC model enhances transaction throughput by organizing shards into hierarchical layers and optimizing cross-layer communication with Cross-Channel Consensus (CCC). This ensures seamless transaction processing across shards while minimizing latency and reducing the complexity of cross-shard transactions. With continued development and refinement, LSCC has the potential to serve as a foundational architecture for highly scalable, decentralized blockchain networks in the future.

10.1. Key Findings

- The LSCC framework successfully integrates sharding and cross-channel consensus to create a highly scalable blockchain model.
- Cross-Channel Consensus (CCC) significantly reduces the overhead of cross-shard transactions, ensuring that transactions across different layers and shards are processed efficiently.
- Mathematical analysis demonstrated that LSCC outperforms traditional sharding, hybrid models, and off-chain solutions in terms of transaction throughput, latency, and scalability.
- LSCC achieves high scalability while maintaining decentralization and security, addressing the blockchain trilemma more effectively than existing solutions.

10.2. Future Implications

The principles introduced in LSCC can be extended to other blockchain architectures, including both public and permissioned blockchains. The scalability benefits of LSCC make it particularly suitable for large-scale decentralized finance (DeFi) applications, supply chain networks, and high-frequency trading systems.

Furthermore, LSCC's structured approach to transaction assignment and relay node selection provides a scalable and adaptable model that can be optimized further with AI-driven load balancing and cryptographic advancements such as zero-knowledge proofs.

10.3. Final Thoughts

The challenges of blockchain scalability are complex, requiring innovative solutions that bridge the gap between security, decentralization, and performance. LSCC represents a step forward in this direction, offering a hybrid approach that combines the best aspects of on-chain and off-chain scaling mechanisms.

By reducing cross-shard communication overhead and ensuring fast finality, LSCC provides a robust foundation for the next generation of blockchain applications. Future research will focus on refining LSCC's implementation, evaluating its performance in real-world blockchain ecosystems, and ensuring its adaptability to emerging technological advancements.

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