Demand Re-registration for PCS Database Restoration

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Abstract

In this paper, we propose a new VLR failure recovery scheme called demand re-registration for *Personal Communications Services (PCS)*. In this scheme, the VLR broadcasts a re-registration request to all MSs after the VLR failure. When an MS receives the re-registration request, it sends a registration message to the VLR to recover the location record. We study the performance of demand re-registration by investigating how effectively the re-registration can recover the location record for an MS before the first MS call termination occurs. Our results indicate that demand re-registration can effectively recover from VLR failure.

1 Introduction

In a PCS network, mobility databases such as *Home Location Register* (HLR) and *Visitor Location Register* (VLR) are utilized to support mobility management for *Mobile Stations* (MSs) [10, 4, 7].

If the location databases fail, the location information loss or corruption will seriously degrade the service offered to the subscribers. Thus, fault tolerance of location databases becomes an important issue for PCS network management [5, 1, 6].

When a VLR fails, the location record of an MS is automatically restored by one of the three events: MS registration, MS call origination, and MS call termination. If the first event is an MS call termination, then expensive paging operations to all LAs are required. Thus, it is desirable to recover the location record by a registration operation before other events occur.

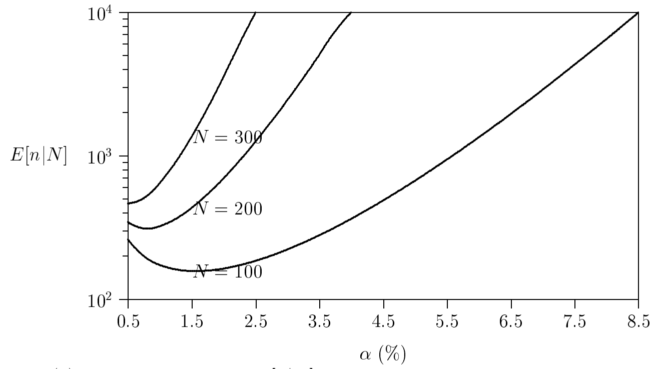
In *periodic re-registration* [5], the GSM system may ask the MSs to periodically re-register with the VLR. With periodic location updating, there is a better chance that, after a VLR failure, the location information is recovered by the periodic location confirmation before the arrival of the first call termination. Thus, expensive MS search operation is avoided. The selection of the frequency for location re-registration was studied in [6].

This paper proposes a new VLR failure recovery scheme called demand re-registration. In this scheme, the VLR broadcasts a re-registration request to all MSs after the VLR failure. The cost of this single broadcast message is inexpensive and can be ignored. When an MS receives the re-registration request (following a procedure similar to call termination paging), it sends a registration message to the VLR to recover the location record. Since all MSs will re-register after receiving the broadcasting request, traffic jam (and thus collisions) may occur. If a collision occurs, then the involved MSs must re-send the re-registration messages. We study here the performance of the demand re-registration scheme by investigating how effectively the re-registration can recover the location record for an MS before the first MS call termination occurs.

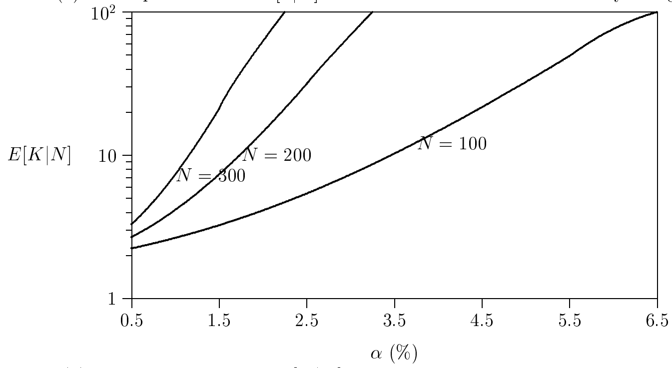
2 Demand Re-registration

This section describes several measures of the demand re-registration scheme, when there are N MSs in the VLR:

- $E[n|N]$: the expected number of the elapsed timeslots before an MS has successfully re-registered; this measure indicates the elapsed time between the VLR failure and when demand re-registration is successfully performed for the MS.
- $E[K|N]$: the number of re-tries until an MS has successfully re-registered



(a) The expected numer $E[n|N]$ of timeslots until an MS successfully re-registers



(b) The expected number $E[K|N]$ of re-tries until an MS successfully re-registers

Figure 1: The expected numbers $E[n|N]$ and $E[K|N]$

- θ_d: the demand re-registration's contribution of saving expensive paging operation; the details will follow

2.1 Derivations for $E[n|N]$ and $E[K|N]$

Consider the behavior of an MS x after a VLR failure. To initiate the failure restoration procedure, the VLR broadcasts the re-registration request. When the MS receives this request, it waits for an exponential period τ_1 before it sends out the re-registration message. This delay is used to reduce the probability of repeated collisions when more than one MS tries to send re-registration at the same time (just like the exponential backup retry strategy used in slotted ALOHA Network).

In existing TDMA-based mobile systems such as GSM, message delivery through the radio interface is performed in timeslots. Thus, τ_1 can be represented by a geometric distribution, where the MS may issue a re-registration message at a timeslot with probability α. The selection of the parameter α can be determined at the time the VLR sends the re-registration request.

Suppose that on the average, there are N MSs in the VLR area. MS x successfully sends a re-registration message if it attempts to do so (with probability α) and the remaining $N-1$ MSs do not attempt to re-register (with probability $(1-\alpha)^{N-1}$). Let $p(n|N)$ be the probability that x successfully sends the re-registration message at the nth timeslot. Let $q(n,k|N)$ be the probability that k MSs (excluding x) have successfully sent the re-registration messages up to timeslot n; i.e., the MS x has not completed the re-registration procedure up to timeslot n, and k MSs will not send re-registration messages again.

Omitting the proof,

$$p(n|N) = \sum_{j=0}^{\min(n,N)-1} q(n-1,j|N)\alpha(1-\alpha)^{N-j-1} \quad (1)$$

$$\begin{aligned} q(n,k|N) &= \quad (2)\\ &= q(n-1,k-1|N)\left[\binom{N-k}{1}\alpha(1-\alpha)^{N-k}\right] \\ &+ q(n-1,k|N)\left[1-\binom{N-k}{1}\alpha(1-\alpha)^{N-k-1}\right] \end{aligned}$$

where the second term in equation (3) may or may exist, depending on the case whether k or $k-1$ MSs re-registered up to timeslot $n-1$.

Figure 1 plots the expected number $E[n|N] = \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} np(n|N)$ of timeslots until an MS has successfully re-registered. The figure shows that $E[n|N]$ increases as N increases. This result is intuitive: if the number N of MSs in the VLR area is large, more collisions will occur before a specific MS has successfully re-registered. Another observation is that, as α increases, $E[n|N]$ first decreases and then increases. A small α implies that an MS will wait for a long time before it re-issues a re-registration message. Thus, as α increases, the re-try frequency increases, and $E[n|N]$ decreases. However, after some threshold value, a large α implies that more MSs will compete for the same timeslots and, thus, the number of re-collisions increases. Eventually, $E[n|N]$ increases as α becomes large. Let $E[K|N]$ be the number of re-tries until an MS has successfully re-registered (including the last successful try). Since the number of timeslots between two consecutive re-tries of an MS is $1/\alpha$ (the mean of the geometric distribution), $E[K|N]$ can be expressed as follows (Figure 1 (b) plots $E[K|N]$ against α):

$$E[K|N] = \frac{E[n|N]}{(1/\alpha)} + 1 = \alpha E[n|N] + 1 \quad (3)$$

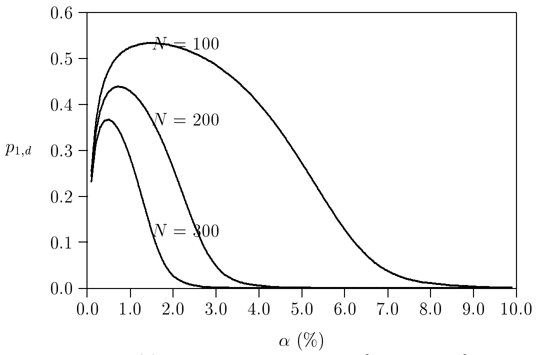
2.2 Effectiveness of the Scheme

Assuming that the normal registrations of an MS form a Poisson process, the period between the VLR failure and the next registration has an exponential distribution. Since the events in a mobile system occur at timeslots, this period can be represented by a geometric distribution with probabilities γ_1. Similarly, if the call originations and call terminations are Poisson processes, then the times for the first call origination and the first call termination can be represented by geometric distributions with probabilities γ_2 and β, respectively. For our purpose, we aggregate the normal registration traffic and the call origination traffic to form a geometric distribution with probability $\gamma = \gamma_1 + \gamma_2$. The values of N, γ, β can be obtained from OA&M [8] of a mobile system. Suppose that after a VLR failure, the MS re-registration occurs at time τ_1, the first MS normal registration or call origination occurs at time τ_2, and the first MS call termination occurs at time τ_3. Then the expensive paging operation for the MS call termination can be avoided if $\min(\tau_1, \tau_2) < \tau_3$. Note that if $\tau_2 < \tau_3$ is always true, then the expensive paging operation can be saved without demand re-registration. In other words, demand re-registration is not *effective* in this case. On the other hand, demand re-registration is *effective* if $\tau_1 < \tau_3 \le \tau_2$, and the contribution (of saving expensive paging operation) of demand re-registration can be defined as:

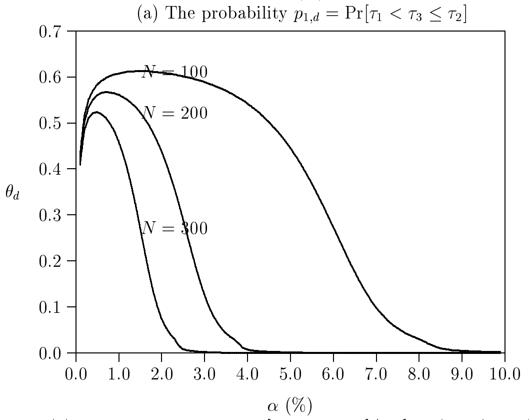
$$\theta_d = \frac{p_{1,d}}{p_{2,d}} = \frac{\Pr[\tau_1 < \tau_3 \le \tau_2]}{\Pr[\min(\tau_1, \tau_2) < \tau_3]} \quad , \quad \text{where} \qquad (4)$$

$$\begin{aligned} p_{1,d} &= \Pr[\tau_1 < \tau_3 \le \tau_2] \cdots \\ &= \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} p(n|N) \left[\frac{\beta(1-\beta)^n(1-\gamma)^n}{\beta+\gamma-\beta\gamma} \right] \quad \text{and} \qquad (5) \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} p_{2,d} &= \Pr[\min(\tau_1, \tau_2) < \tau_3] \cdots \\ &= 1 - \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} p(n|N) \left\{ \frac{\beta[1-(1-\beta)^n(1-\gamma)^n]}{\beta+\gamma-\beta\gamma} \right\} \qquad (6) \end{aligned}$$



(a) The probability $p_{1,d} = \Pr[\tau_1 < \tau_3 \le \tau_2]$



(b) The probability $\theta_d = \Pr[\tau_1 < \tau_3 \le \tau_2] / \Pr[\min(\tau_1, \tau_2) < \tau_3]$

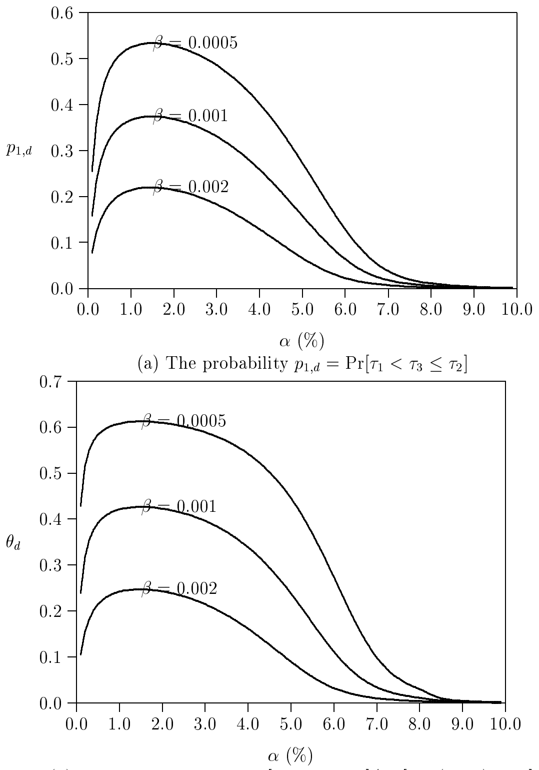
Figure 2: The effect of N on θ_d ($\beta = 0.0005, \gamma = 0.001$)

3 Performance of Demand Re-registration

Based on (5), (6) and (4), we illustrate the effect of demand re-registration. We made the following observations:

Observation 1. Effect of α: Figures 2 – 4 indicate that both $p_{1,d}$ and θ_d first increase and then decrease as α (the probability that an MS issues re-registration at a timeslot) increases. When α is very small, an MS does not issue/re-issue a re-registration message until a long waiting period has elapsed. It is likely that a normal registration, call origination, or call termination occurs before a successful demand re-registration operation is performed, which results in poor θ_d performance. This situation is improved as α increases. For a large α, increasing α implies a large number of re-try, which results in many collisions and thus poor θ_d performance. In other words, when α is large, θ_d decreases as α increases.

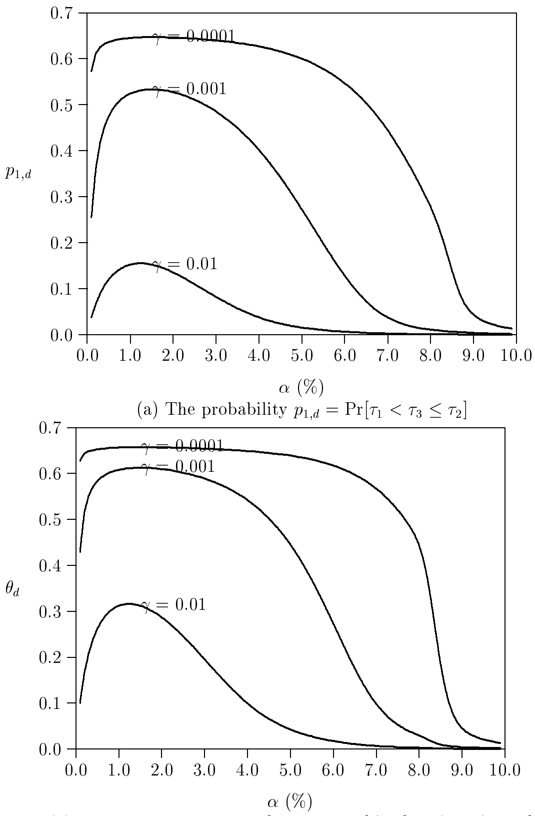
Observation 2. Effect of N: Figure 2 plots the effect of N on $p_{1,d}$ and θ_d. It is clear that the advantage of demand re-registration becomes insignificant as N increases. The number of MSs in a typical VLR is on the order of 10^4. In such a case, re-collisions of re-registrations may be significant. A simple approach can be used to limit the number of MSs (N) that need to re-register. The idea is to keep a backup of the VLR in a non-volatile storage. When the VLR is in normal operation, we may count the number of MSs



(a) The probability $p_{1,d} = \Pr[\tau_1 < \tau_3 \leq \tau_2]$

(b) The probability $\theta_d = \Pr[\tau_1 < \tau_3 \leq \tau_2] / \Pr[\min(\tau_1, \tau_2) < \tau_3]$

Figure 3: The effect of β on θ_d ($N = 100, \gamma = 0.001$)



(a) The probability $p_{1,d} = \Pr[\tau_1 < \tau_3 \leq \tau_2]$

(b) The probability $\theta_d = \Pr[\tau_1 < \tau_3 \leq \tau_2] / \Pr[\min(\tau_1, \tau_2) < \tau_3]$

Figure 4: The effect of γ on θ_d ($N = 100, \beta = 0.5\gamma$)

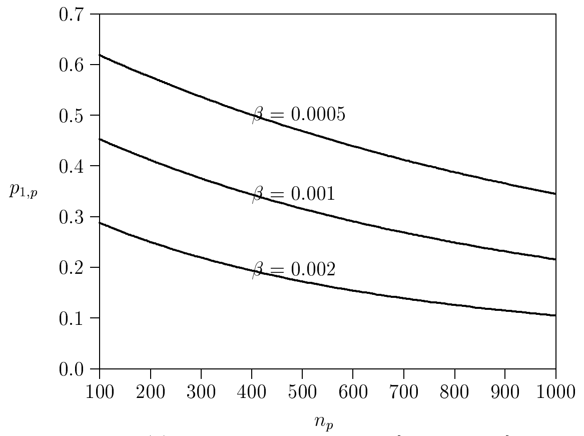
entering the VLR. When the count is larger than N, these N new records are check-pointed into the backup. Suppose that a VLR failure occurs at time t_f, and that the last checkpointing occurs at time $t_c \leq t_f$. Then after a VLR failure, most MS records can be restored from the backup. The backup keeps correct locations for MSs entering the VLR before time t_c. The missing information is of those MSs entering the VLR during $(t_c, t_f]$. Thus, when the VLR broadcasts the re-registration request, the timestamp t_c can be included in the broadcast message and only MSs entering the VLR after t_c will re-register. It is clear that the number of re-registering MSs is limited to N.

Observation 3. Effects of β and γ: Since β represents the rate of call termination, it is clear that θ_d decreases as β increases (see Figure 3). The parameter γ equals to the combined rates of normal registrations and call originations. It is apparent that when γ is large, the first MS event after VLR failure is less likely to be a call termination, and the effectiveness of demand re-registration becomes remote. Thus, Figure 4 shows that θ_d increases as γ decreases.

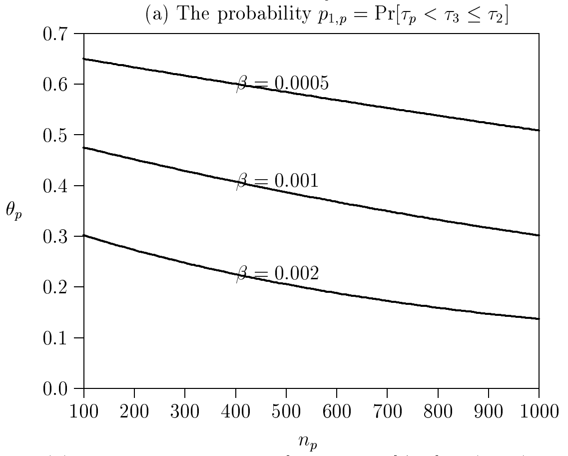
4 Demand Re-registration vs Periodic Re-registration

Periodic re-registration has been studied in [5] where τ_2 (the period between the VLR failure and the next normal registration or the call origination) and τ_3 (the period between the VLR failure and the next call termination) are represented by continuous distributions. Furthermore, the number of the (expensive) call deliveries during the period between VLR failure and the recovery of the MS's VLR record was derived in [5], and is out of the scope of this paper. In order to compare periodic re-registration with demand re-registration in this paper, τ_2 and τ_3 are represented by geometric distributions with probabilities γ and β, respectively.

In periodic re-registration, an MS re-registers for every n_p timeslots. Let τ_p be the period between the VLR failure and the next periodic re-registration (measured in timeslots). From [5], τ_p is uniformly distributed in $[1, n_p]$. Similarly to the derivations of $p_{1,d}$ (see (5)) and $p_{2,d}$ (see (6)) for demand re-registration, we derive these probabilities for periodic



(a) The probability $p_{1,p} = \Pr[\tau_p < \tau_3 \le \tau_2]$



(b) The probability $\theta_p = \Pr[\tau_p < \tau_3 \le \tau_2] / \Pr[\min(\tau_p, \tau_2) < \tau_3]$

Figure 5: The Periodic Re-registration Performance ($\gamma = 0.001$)

re-registration as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} p_{1,p} &= \Pr[\tau_p < \tau_3 \le \tau_2] \cdots \\ &= \frac{\beta(1-\beta)(1-\gamma)[1-(1-\beta)^{n_p}(1-\gamma)^{n_p}]}{n_p(\beta+\gamma-\beta\gamma)^2} \end{aligned} \tag{7}$$

and

$$\begin{aligned} p_{2,p} &= \Pr[\min(\tau_p, \tau_2) < \tau_3] \cdots \\ &= 1 - \left[\frac{\beta}{n_p(\beta+\gamma-\beta\gamma)}\right] \\ &\times \left\{ n_p - \frac{(1-\beta)(1-\gamma)[1-(1-\beta)^{n_p}(1-\gamma)^{n_p}]}{\beta+\gamma-\beta\gamma} \right\} \end{aligned} \tag{8}$$

Let θ_p be the periodic re-registration's contribution of saving expensive paging operation, then

$$\theta_p = \frac{p_{1,p}}{p_{2,p}}$$

Based on (7), (9), and (4), Figure 5 plots $p_{1,p}$ and θ_p against β and n_p. It is trivial that good θ_p performance is expected if the frequency of periodic re-registration is high (i.e., n_p is small). The figure also indicates that just like demand re-registration, θ_p decreases as β increases.

Let T_F be the interval between two VLR failures. Suppose that the size of the VLR (the average number of MSs in the VLR) is M. We utilize the checkpointing mechanism described in **Observation 2**, so that the number of the re-registering MSs is limited to N. If we assume that the arrivals of MS into the VLR form a Poisson process with rate λ, then the period T_c between two checkpoints has an Erlang distribution with mean

$$E[T_c] = \frac{N}{\lambda} \, . \tag{9}$$

Let C_1 be the cost of storing a VLR record into the backup of the VLR database, C_2 be the cost of radio access for a registration operation, and C_3 be the cost of a registration. Since the registration operation consists of accessing the radio channel (with cost C_2) and then update to the VLR database (with cost C_1), it is reasonable to assume that $C_3 = C_1 + C_2$ The net cost C_d of demand re-registration for every VLR failure (the net cost of all operations performed during T_F, which are required to support demand re-registration) is

$$\begin{aligned} C_d \quad &\le \quad C_d^* = \left(\frac{E[T_F]}{E[T_c]}\right) N C_1 \\ &+ M C_1 + N[(E[K|N]-1)C_2 + C_3] \qquad (10) \\ &= (E[T_F]\lambda + M + N) C_1 + N E[K|N] C_2 \qquad (11) \end{aligned}$$

Using (9), (10) is re-written as (11). Equation (10) consists of three components:

- During T_F, we expect $E[T_F]/E[T_c]$ checkpointing operations. Every operation writes N VLR records into the backup (with cost NC_1).
- After the VLR failure, M VLR records are restored from the backup to the VLR database (with cost MC_1).
- Finally, no more than N MSs are asked to re-register. Every of these MSs re-tries $E[K|N]-1$ times (with cost $(E[K|N]-1)C_2$) before it has successfully re-registered (with cost $C_3 = C_1 + C_2$).

Similarly, the net cost C_p of periodic re-registration is

$$C_p = M\left(\frac{E[T_F]}{n_p}\right) C_3 = \left(\frac{M E[T_F]}{n_p}\right)(C_1 + C_2) \tag{12}$$

From (11) and (12), it is clear that demand re-registration outperforms periodic re-registration if α

is appropriately selected and if M is sufficiently larger than N. For example, assume that $\gamma = 0.001, \beta = 0.0005$. Suppose that $N = 100$ and $\alpha = 0.014$ are selected in demand re-registration. From Figure 2 (b), $\theta_d = 0.612$. From Figure 1 (b), $E[K|N] = 3.251$. To achieve the same θ_p performance (i.e., $\theta_p = 0.612$), $n_d = 330$ should be selected in periodic re-registration (see Figure 5 (b)). Suppose that the typical size of a VLR is $M = 10000$, and we assume that there are 1000 call deliveries to an MS between two VLR failures (this assumption favors periodic re-registration; the VLR failures should be much less frequent in reality), and $E[T_F] = 1000/\gamma = 1,000,000$. Furthermore, assume that $\lambda = 1000\gamma$. In other words, if an MS receives a call every hour, then there are 1000 MSs entering the VLR per hour. This assumption implies a large MS traffic, which favors periodic re-registration. From the above assumptions and from (11) and (12), we have

$$\begin{aligned} C_d \leq C_d^* &= 1,010,100C_1 + 225.1C_2 << C_p \\ &= 30,300,000(C_1 + C_2) \end{aligned} \tag{13}$$

It is clear that demand re-registration outperforms periodic re-registration.

5 Conclusion

This paper proposed a new VLR failure recovery scheme called *demand re-registration*. We studied the performance of the demand re-registration scheme by investigating how effectively the re-registration can recover the location record for an MS before the first MS call termination occurs. Let θ_d be our scheme's contribution of saving the expensive paging operation. Our study demonstrated that demand re-registration may effectively recover VLR failure and the following results were observed:

- θ_d first increase and then decrease as α (the probability that an MS issues re-registration at a timeslot) increases.
- The advantage of demand re-registration becomes insignificant as N (the number of MSs that need to re-register) increases. In this paper, we proposed a simple approach to limit the number N of MS.
- θ_d decreases as β (the arrival rate of call termination) increases.
- θ_d increases as γ (the arrival rate of normal registration and call origination) decreases.

We have also compared demand re-registration with periodic re-registration. The results indicated that demand re-registration outperforms periodic re-registration.

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