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Research Article

Ground-State Solutions for a Class of N-Laplacian Equation with Critical Growth

Guoqing Zhang and Jing Sun

College of Science, University of Shanghai for Science and Technology, Shanghai 200093, China

Correspondence should be addressed to Guoqing Zhang, zgqw2001@sina.com.cn

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We investigate the existence of ground-state solutions for a class of N-Laplacian equation with critical growth in $\mathbb{R}^N$. Our proof is based on a suitable Trudinger-Moser inequality, Pohozaev-Pucci-Serrin identity manifold, and mountain pass lemma.

1. Introduction

Consider the following N-Laplacian equation:

$$\begin{gathered} -\Delta_N u + |u|^{N-2}u = f(u), \quad \text{in } \mathbb{R}^N, \\ u > 0, \quad \text{in } \mathbb{R}^N,\ u \in W^{1,N}\left(\mathbb{R}^N\right), \end{gathered} \tag{1.1}$$

where $N \geq 2$. $\Delta_N u = \operatorname{div}(|\nabla u|^{N-2}\nabla u)$ is the N-Laplacian, the nonlinear term $f(u)$ has critical growth.

The interest in these problems lies in that fact that the order of the Laplacian is the same as the dimension N of the underlying space. The classical case of this problem that $N = 2$, and the the problem (1.1) reduces to

$$-\Delta u + u = f(u), \quad \text{in } \mathbb{R}^2, \tag{1.2}$$

has been treated by Atkinson and Peletier [1] and Berestycki and Lions [2]. They obtained the existence of ground-state solution which the nonlinear term $f(u)$ is subcritical growth.

Alves et al. [3] extend their results to the critical growth. As $N \neq 2$, do Ó and Medeiros [4] consider the following N-Laplacian equation problem:

$$-\Delta_N u = g(u), \quad \text{in } \mathbb{R}^N, \tag{1.3}$$

where $g : \mathbb{R} \mapsto \mathbb{R}$ has a subcritical growth and obtain a mountain pass characterization of the ground-state solution for the problem (1.3). In the present paper, we will improve and complement some of the results cited above.

Assume the function $f : \mathbb{R} \mapsto \mathbb{R}$ is continuous and satisfies the following conditions:

(g_1) $\lim_{s\to 0^+}(f(s)/s|s|^{N-2}) = 0$;

(g_2) There exist constants $\alpha_0, b_1, b_2 > 0$ such that $|f(s)| \leq b_1|s|^{N-1} + b_2[\exp(\alpha_0|s|^{N/(N-1)}) - S_{N-2}(\alpha_0, s)]$, where $S_{N-2}(\alpha_0, s) = \sum_{k=0}^{N-2}(\alpha_0^k/k!)|s|^{Nk/(N-1)}$;

(g_3) There exist $\lambda > 0$ and $q > N$ such that $f(s) \geq \lambda s^{q-1}$, for every $s \geq 0$.

Remark 1.1. Condition (g_2) implies that f has a critical growth with critical exponent α_0.

Consider the energy functional $I : W^{1,N}(\mathbb{R}^N) \mapsto \mathbb{R}$

$$I(u) = \frac{1}{N}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N}\left(|\nabla u|^N + |u|^N\right)dx - \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} F(u)dx, \tag{1.4}$$

where $F(s) = \int_0^s f(t)dt$. By a ground-state solution, we mean a solution such $\omega \in W^{1,N}(\mathbb{R}^N)$ such that $I(\omega) \leq I(u)$ for every nontrivial solution u of the problem (1.1). Let $C_q > 0$ denote the best constant of Sobolev embeddings:

$$W^{1,N}\left(\mathbb{R}^N\right) \hookrightarrow L^q\left(\mathbb{R}^N\right), \tag{1.5}$$

for $q \in (N, +\infty)$, that is,

$$C_q\left[\int_{\mathbb{R}^N}|u|^q dx\right]^{N/q} \leq \int_{\mathbb{R}^N}\left(|\nabla u|^N + |u|^N\right)dx, \tag{1.6}$$

for all $u \in W^{1,N}(\mathbb{R}^N)$.

Now we state our main theorem in this paper.

Theorem 1.2. *If f satisfies (g_1), (g_2), and (g_3), with*

$$\lambda > \left(\frac{q-N}{q}\right)^{(q-N)/N} C_q^{q/N}, \tag{1.7}$$

then the problem (1.1) *possesses a nontrivial ground-state solution.*

In this paper, we complement some results [4] from subcritical case to the critical case. Furthermore, the ground-state solution to the problem (1.1) is obtained without assuming that the function

$$s \mapsto \frac{f(s)}{|s|^{N-1}} \tag{1.8}$$

is increasing for $s > 0$ (see [5]), and the so-called Ambrosetti-Rabinowitz condition: there exists $\theta > N$, such that for all $x \in \mathbb{R}^N$,

$$0 < \theta F(x,u) \leq u f(x,u). \tag{1.9}$$

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 contains some technical results which allows us to give a variational approach for our results. In Section 3, we prove our main results.

2. The Variational Framework

For $1 \leq p \leq \infty$, $L^p(\mathbb{R}^N)$ denotes the Lebesgue spaces with the norm $\|u\|_{L^p(\mathbb{R}^N)} = (\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |u|^p dx)^{1/p}$, $W^{1,p}(\mathbb{R}^N)$ denotes the Sobolev spaces with the norm $\|u\|_{W^{1,p}(\mathbb{R}^N)} = (\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} (|\nabla u|^p + |u|^p) dx)^{1/p}$. As $p = N$, we have the following version of Trudinger-Moser inequality.

Lemma 2.1 (see [6]). *If $N \geq 2$, $\alpha > 0$ and $u \in W^{1,N}(\mathbb{R}^N)$, then*

$$\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} \left[\exp\left(\alpha |u|^{N/(N-1)}\right) - S_{N-2}(\alpha, u)\right] dx < \infty. \tag{2.1}$$

Moreover, if $\|\nabla u\|^N_{L^N(\mathbb{R}^N)} \leq 1$, $\|u\|_{L^N(\mathbb{R}^N)} \leq M < \infty$ and $\alpha < \alpha_N$, then there exists a constant C, which depends only on N, M, and α, such that

$$\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} \left[\exp\left(\alpha |u|^{N/(N-1)}\right) - S_{N-2}(\alpha, u)\right] dx \leq C(N, M, \alpha), \tag{2.2}$$

where $\alpha_N = N\omega_{N-1}^{1/(N-1)}$ and $\omega^{1/(N-1)}$ is the measure of the unit sphere in $\mathbb{R}^N$.

In the sequel, since we seek positive solutions, and assume that $f(s) = 0$ for $s \leq 0$. Consider the following minimization problem:

$$\min\left\{\frac{1}{N}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |\nabla u|^N dx : \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} G(u) dx = 0\right\}, \tag{2.3}$$

where $g(s) = f(s) - s|s|^{N-2}$, $G(s) = \int_0^s g(t)dt = F(s) - (1/N)s^N$. Since the problem (1.1) is an autonomous problem, under the Schwarz symmetric process, we can minimize the problem

(2.3) on the space $W^{1,N}_{\text{rad}}(\mathbb{R}^N)$, the subspace of $W^{1,N}(\mathbb{R}^N)$ formed by radially symmetric functions. Indeed, let u^* be the Schwarz symmetrization of u, we have

$$\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} G(u^*)dx = \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} G(u)dx, \qquad \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |\nabla u^*|^N dx \leq \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |\nabla u|^N dx. \tag{2.4}$$

Hence, we can minimize the problem (2.3) on the space $W^{1,N}_{\text{rad}}(\mathbb{R}^N)$ (see [7]). Now, we defined the following notations

$$\begin{gathered} m = \inf\{I(u) : u \text{ is nontrivial solution of the problem (1.1)}\} \\ A = \inf\left\{\frac{1}{N}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |\nabla u|^N dx : \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} G(u)dx = 0\right\} \\ b = \inf_{\gamma\in\Gamma} \max_{t\in[0,1]} I(\gamma(t)), \end{gathered} \tag{2.5}$$

where $\Gamma = \{\gamma \in C([0,1], W^{1,N}_{\text{rad}}(\mathbb{R}^N)) : \gamma(0) = 0, I(\gamma(1)) < 0\}$.

We recall that Pohozaev-Pucci-Serrin identity shows that any solutions u of the problem (1.1) should satisfies the Pohozaev-Pucci-Serrin identity:

$$(N-p)\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |\nabla u|^p dx = Np\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} G(u)dx. \tag{2.6}$$

Then, as $p = N$, we have $\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} G(u)dx = 0$.

Hence, we have the Pohozaev identity manifold:

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{P} &= \left\{u \in W^{1,N}\left(\mathbb{R}^N\right) \setminus \{0\} : (N-p)\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |\nabla u|^p dx = Np\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} G(u)dx\right\} \\ &= \left\{u \in W^{1,N}\left(\mathbb{R}^N\right) \setminus \{0\} : \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} G(u)dx = 0\right\}. \end{aligned} \tag{2.7}$$

So, we have

$$A = \inf_{u\in\mathcal{P}} \frac{1}{N}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |\nabla u|^N dx, \qquad m = \inf_{u\in\tau} I(u), \tag{2.8}$$

where $\tau = \{u \in W^{1,N}(\mathbb{R}^N) \setminus \{0\} : I'(u) = 0\}$.

In what follows, we will show that A is attained, and afterwards we prove that

$$m = A = b, \tag{2.9}$$

thereby proving that the problem (1.1) has a ground-state solution.

3. The Proof of Theorem 1.2

In this section, we prove that A is attained, the equality (2.9) is satisfied. Hence the proof of Theorem 1.2 is obtained.

In the following, we consider the following minimax value:

$$c = \inf_{0 \neq v \in W^{1,N}(\mathbb{R}^N)} \max_{t \geq 0} I(tv). \tag{3.1}$$

Now, we show a sufficient condition, on a sequence $\{v_n\}$ to get a convergence like $F(v_n) \to F(v)$ in $L^1(\mathbb{R}^N)$.

Lemma 3.1. *Assume that f satisfies (g_1) and (g_2), and let $\{v_n\}$ be a sequence in $W^{1,N}_{rad}(\mathbb{R}^N)$ such that $\|\nabla v_n\|^N_{L^N(\mathbb{R}^N)} \leq 1, \|v_n\|_{L^N(\mathbb{R}^N)} \leq M < \infty$, then we have*

$$\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} F(v_n)dx \longrightarrow \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} F(v)dx, \tag{3.2}$$

where $v_n \rightharpoonup v$ in $W^{1,N}(\mathbb{R}^N)$.

Proof. Without loss of generality, we assume that there exist $v \in W^{1,N}_{\text{rad}}(\mathbb{R}^N)$ such that

$$\begin{gathered} v_n \rightharpoonup v, \quad \text{in } W^{1,N}_{\text{rad}}\left(\mathbb{R}^N\right), \\ v_n \rightharpoonup v, \quad \text{a.e. in } \mathbb{R}^{\text{N}}. \end{gathered} \tag{3.3}$$

Let v^* is the Schwarz symmetrization of v, then we have

$$\begin{gathered} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} v\left[\exp\left(\alpha_0|v|^{N/(N-1)}\right) - S_{N-2}(\alpha_0, v)\right]dx = \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} v^*\left[\exp\left(\alpha_0|v^*|^{N/(N-1)}\right) - S_{N-2}(\alpha_0, v^*)\right]dx, \\ \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |v|^N dx = \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |v^*|^N dx. \end{gathered} \tag{3.4}$$

From (g_1), we obtain that for $\epsilon > 0$, there exists $\delta > 0$, such that

$$f(s) \leq \epsilon|s|^{N-1}, \quad \text{for } |s| < \delta, \tag{3.5}$$

so, we have

$$F(s) \leq \frac{\epsilon}{N}|s|^N, \quad \text{for } |s| < \delta. \tag{3.6}$$

From (g_2), we obtain

$$F(s) \leq C_1|s|^N + C_2|s|\left[\exp\left(\alpha_0|s|^{N/(N-1)}\right) - S_{N-2}(\alpha_0, u)\right], \quad \text{for } |s| \geq \delta. \tag{3.7}$$

There two estimates yield

$$F(s) \le C_3|s|^N + C_2|s|\left[\exp\left(\alpha_0|s|^{N/(N-1)}\right) - S_{N-2}(\alpha_0, u)\right], \quad \text{for } s > 0. \tag{3.8}$$

On one hand, from Lemma 2.1, we obtain that there exists a constant C, which depends only on N, M, and α such that

$$\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} \exp\left(\alpha|v_n|^{N/(N-1)}\right) \le C. \tag{3.9}$$

When $\|\nabla v_n\|^N_{L^N(\mathbb{R}^N)} \le 1$, $\|v_n\|_{L^N(\mathbb{R}^N)} \le M < \infty$ and $\alpha < \alpha_N$. Hence, we have

$$\begin{aligned}
\int_{|x|\le r} F(v_n) &\le C_3 \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |v_n^*|^N dx + C_2 \int_{|x|\le r} |v_n^*|\left[\exp\left(\alpha_0|v_n^*|^{N/(N-1)}\right) - S_{N-2}(\alpha_0, v_n^*)\right] dx \\
&\le C_3 M^N + C_2 \int_{|x|\le r} |v_n^*| \exp\left(\alpha_0|v_n^*|^{N/(N-1)}\right) dx \\
&\le C_3 M^N + C_3 \left(\int_{|x|\le r} |v_n^*|^\mu\right)^{1/\mu} \left(\int_{|x|\le r} \exp\left(\beta\alpha_0|v_n^*|^{N/(N-1)}\right) dx\right)^{1/\beta} \\
&\le C_3 M^N + C_4 M \left(\int_{|x|\le r} \exp\left(\beta\alpha_0|v_n^*|^{N/(N-1)}\right) dx\right)^{1/\beta} \\
&\le C_5,
\end{aligned} \tag{3.10}$$

where C_i $(i = 2,3,4,5)$ are positive constants, the continuous imbedding $W^{1,N}(\mathbb{R}^N) \hookrightarrow L^\mu(\mathbb{R}^N)$, $1/\mu + 1/\beta = 1$ and $\beta\alpha_0 < \alpha_N$.

Then, by Dominated convergence theorem, we obtain

$$\int_{|x|\le r} F(v_n) dx \longrightarrow \int_{|x|\le r} F(v) dx. \tag{3.11}$$

On the other hand,

$$\begin{aligned}
\int_{|x|>r} F(v_n) dx &\le C_3 \int_{|x|>r} |v_n|^N dx + C_2 \int_{|x|>r} |v_n|\left[\exp\left(\alpha_0|v_n|^{N/(N-1)}\right) - S_{N-2}(\alpha_0, v_n)\right] dx \\
&\int_{|x|>r} |v_n|\left[\exp\left(\alpha_0|v_n|^{N/(N-1)}\right) - S_{N-2}(\alpha_0, v_n)\right] dx \\
&= \sum_{j=N-1}^{\infty} \frac{\alpha_0^j}{j!} \int_{|x|>r} |v_n| \cdot |v_n|^{Nj/(N-1)} dx \\
&= \sum_{j=N-1}^{\infty} \frac{\alpha_0^j}{j!} \int_{|x|>r} |v_n^*||v_n^*|^{Nj/(N-1)} dx,
\end{aligned} \tag{3.12}$$

where v_n^* is the Schwarz symmetrization of v_n. Notice that the estimate

$$\begin{aligned}\int_{|x|>r} \frac{1}{|x|^{1+Nj/(N-1)}} dx &= \omega_{N-1} \int_r^\infty \frac{t^{N-1}}{t^{1+Nj/(N-1)}} dt \\ &= \left(\frac{\omega_{N-1}}{Nj/(N-1) - N + 1}\right) r^{N-1-Nj/(N-1)} \\ &\leq \frac{\omega_{N-1}}{r},\end{aligned} \tag{3.13}$$

for all $j \geq N-1$, together with the Radial Lemma [4] leads to

$$\begin{aligned}&\sum_{j=N-1}^{\infty} \frac{\alpha_0^j}{j!} \int_{|x|>r} |v_n^*||v_n^*|^{Nj/(N-1)} dx \\ &\leq M\left(\frac{N}{\omega_{N-1}}\right)^{1/N} \sum_{j=N-1}^{\infty} \frac{\alpha_0^j}{j!} \left(\frac{N}{\omega_{N-1}}\right)^{j/(N-1)} M^{Nj/(N-1)} \int_{|x|>r} |x|^{-1-Nj/(N-1)}\, dx \\ &\leq \frac{C(N)}{r}.\end{aligned} \tag{3.14}$$

Thus, given $\delta > 0$, there exists $r > 0$ such that

$$\int_{|x|>r} |v_n|^N dx < \delta, \qquad \int_{|x|>r} \left[\exp\left(\alpha_0 |v_n|^{N/(N-1)}\right) - S_{N-2}(\alpha_0, v_n)\right] dx < \delta. \tag{3.15}$$

Which implies that

$$\int_{|x|>r} F(v_n) dx \leq C\delta, \qquad \int_{|x|>r} F(v) dx \leq C\delta. \tag{3.16}$$

Using the estimate

$$\left|\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} (F(v_n) - F(v)) dx\right| \leq \left|\int_{|x|\leq r} (F(v_n) - F(v)) dx\right| + \left|\int_{|x|>r} (F(v_n) - F(v)) dx\right|, \tag{3.17}$$

we get

$$\lim_{n\to\infty} \left|\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} F(v_n) - \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} F(v) dx\right| \leq C\delta, \tag{3.18}$$

Hence, we obtain that

$$\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} F(v_n) dx \longrightarrow \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} F(v) dx. \tag{3.19}$$

□

Lemma 3.2. *The numbers A and c satisfy the inequality $A \leq c$.*

Proof. For each $v \in W^{1,N}(\mathbb{R}^N) \setminus \{0\}$, since we only consider the nontrivial solutions of the problem (1.1), we divide them into two cases to consider.

Case 1. Let $v^+ = \max\{v, 0\} \neq 0$, we define the function $h : \mathbb{R} \to \mathbb{R}$ by

$$h(t) = \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} G(tv)dx = \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} \left[F(tv) - \frac{t^N v^N}{N} \right] dx. \tag{3.20}$$

By (g_1), we obtain that there exists $\delta > 0$, $0 < c_0 < 1$ such that $|s| < \delta$, and

$$\left| f(s) \right| < c_0 |s|^{N-1}. \tag{3.21}$$

Hence

$$\begin{aligned} h(t) &\leq \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} \int_0^{tv} c_0 |s|^{N-1} dx - \frac{1}{N} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} t^N v^N dx \\ &= \frac{c_0}{N} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |tv|^N dx - \frac{1}{N} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |tv|^N dx, \end{aligned} \tag{3.22}$$

we obtain that $h(t) < 0$ for t small enough. On the other hand, by (g_2), we obtain that $h(t) > 0$ for t large enough. In this way, there exists $t_0 > 0$ such that $h(t_0) = 0$, That is, $t_0 v \in \mathcal{P}$. Hence

$$A \leq \frac{1}{N} \int_{R^N} |\nabla(t_0 v)|^N dx = I(t_0 v) \leq \max_{t \geq 0} I(tv). \tag{3.23}$$

Case 2. Let $v^+ = \max\{v, 0\} = 0$, since $f(s) = 0$ for all $s < 0$, we obtain

$$\max_{t \geq 0} I(tv) = +\infty. \tag{3.24}$$

As a consequence,

$$A \leq c. \tag{3.25}$$

Combining Cases 1 and 2, we obtain that $A \leq c$. □

Lemma 3.3. *The number A defined by* (2.8) *is positive, that is, $A > 0$.*

Proof. Clearly, $A \geq 0$. Assume by contradiction that $A = 0$ and let $\{u_n\}$ be a minimizing sequence in $W^{1,N}(\mathbb{R}^N)$ to A, that is,

$$\frac{1}{N} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |\nabla u_n|^N dx \longrightarrow A = 0 \quad \text{with} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} G(u_n) dx = 0. \tag{3.26}$$

For each $\lambda_n > 0$, set $v_n(x) = u_n(x/\lambda_n)$ satisfying

$$\frac{1}{N}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |\nabla v_n|^N dx = \frac{1}{N}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |\nabla v_n|^N dx. \tag{3.27}$$

Similarly, we have

$$\begin{gathered}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} G(v_n)dx = \lambda_n^N \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} G(u_n)dx = 0,\\ \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |v_n|^N \, dx = \lambda_n^N \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |u_n|^N dx.\end{gathered} \tag{3.28}$$

We choose $\lambda_n^N = 1/\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |u_n|^N dx$, so $\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |v_n|^N dx = 1$. Then we get

$$\begin{gathered}\frac{1}{N}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |\nabla v_n|^N dx \longrightarrow A = 0,\\ \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |v_n|^N dx = 1, \qquad \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} G(v_n)dx = 0.\end{gathered} \tag{3.29}$$

In what follows, we study in the space $W_{\text{rad}}^{1,N}(\mathbb{R}^N)$. Firstly, we assume that there exists $v \in W_{\text{rad}}^{1,N}(\mathbb{R}^N)$ such that $v_n \rightharpoonup v$ in $W_{\text{rad}}^{1,N}(\mathbb{R}^N)$.

On one hand, since $(1/N)\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |\nabla v_n|^N \to A = 0$, then $\exists N_0 > 0$, for all $0 < \epsilon < 1$, when $n > N_0$, we have $\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |\nabla v_n|^N dx < \epsilon < 1$ and we also know that $\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |v_n|^N dx = 1$, so $\|v_n\|_{L^N(\mathbb{R}^N)} \le M < \infty$. From Lemma 3.1, we have

$$\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} F(v_n)dx \longrightarrow \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} F(v)dx. \tag{3.30}$$

Note that

$$\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} G(v_n)dx = \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} \left(F(v_n) - \frac{1}{N}|v_n|^N\right)dx = 0, \tag{3.31}$$

so we have

$$\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} F(v_n)dx = \frac{1}{N}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |v_n|^N dx = \frac{1}{N}. \tag{3.32}$$

Hence, we have

$$\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} F(v)dx = \frac{1}{N}. \tag{3.33}$$

It implies that $v \neq 0$. On the other hand, since $v_n \rightharpoonup v$ in $W^{1,N}_{\text{rad}}(\mathbb{R}^N)$, and the space $W^{1,N}_{\text{rad}}(\mathbb{R}^N)$ is a reflexible Banach space, we have

$$\lim_{n\to\infty} \inf \frac{1}{N} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |\nabla v_n|^N dx \geq \frac{1}{N} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |\nabla v|^N dx \geq 0. \tag{3.34}$$

Since

$$\lim_{n\to\infty} \inf \frac{1}{N} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |\nabla v_n|^N dx = A = 0, \tag{3.35}$$

we get

$$\frac{1}{N} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |\nabla v|^N dx = 0. \tag{3.36}$$

From which it follows that $v = 0$, we have an absurd. Hence, we have

$$A > 0. \tag{3.37}$$

□

Lemma 3.4. *If $\lambda > (q - N/q)^{(q-N)/N} C_q^{q/N}$, then $c < 1/N$.*

Proof. From (g_3), we have $f(s) > \lambda s^{q-1}$, for all $s \geq 0$. Now we choose $\varphi \in W^{1,N}_{\text{rad}}(\mathbb{R}^N)$ such that

$$\varphi \geq 0, \qquad \|\varphi\|_q^N = C_q^{-1}, \qquad \|\varphi\|_{W^{1,N}(\mathbb{R}^N)} = 1. \tag{3.38}$$

Hence, we have

$$\begin{aligned} c \leq \max_{t\geq 0} I(t\varphi) &= \max_{t\geq 0} \left\{ \frac{1}{N} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} \left(|\nabla(t\varphi)|^N + |t\varphi|^N \right) dx - \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} F(t\varphi) dx \right\} \\ &= \max_{t\geq 0} \left\{ \frac{t^N}{N} - \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} \int_0^{t\varphi} f(s) ds\, dx \right\} \\ &\leq \max_{t\geq 0} \left\{ \frac{t^N}{N} - \lambda \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} \int_0^{t\varphi} s^{q-1} ds\, dx \right\} \\ &= \max_{t\geq 0} \left\{ \frac{t^N}{N} - \frac{\lambda t^q}{q} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} \varphi^q dx \right\}. \end{aligned} \tag{3.39}$$

Let $K(t) = t^N/N - (\lambda t^q/q) \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} \varphi^q dx$, then $K(t)$ is continuous function, we have

$$K'(t) = t^{N-1} - \lambda t^{q-1} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} \varphi^q dx = 0. \tag{3.40}$$

By a simple calculation, when $t_0 = (1/\lambda \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} \psi^q dx)^{1/(q-N)} > 0$, we have

$$\begin{aligned}
\max_{t>0} K(t) = K(t_0) &= \frac{1}{N}\left(\frac{1}{\lambda \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} \psi^q dx}\right)^{N/(q-N)} - \left(\frac{\lambda}{q}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} \psi^q dx\right)\left(\frac{1}{\lambda \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} \psi^q dx}\right)^{q/(q-N)} \\
&= \frac{q-N}{Nq}\lambda^{-N/(q-N)} C_q^{(q/N)\cdot(N/(q-N))} \\
&< \frac{q-N}{Nq}\left(\frac{q-N}{q}\right)^{((q-N)/N)\cdot(-N/(q-N))} C_q^{(q/N)(-N/(q-N))} C_q^{q/(q-N)} \\
&= \frac{1}{N}.
\end{aligned} \tag{3.41}$$

Hence, we have

$$c < \frac{1}{N}. \tag{3.42}$$

□

Lemma 3.5. *The number A is attained, that is, there exists $u \in W_{rad}^{1,N}(\mathbb{R}^N)$ such that $A = \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |\nabla u|^N dx$ and $\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} G(u)dx = 0$.*

Proof. Let $\{u_n\}$ be a minimizing sequence in $W_{\text{rad}}^{1,N}(\mathbb{R}^N)$ for A, that is,

$$\frac{1}{N}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |\nabla u_n|^N dx \longrightarrow A \quad (n \longrightarrow \infty), \qquad \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} G(u_n)dx = 0. \tag{3.43}$$

Arguing as in Lemma 3.3, we assume that $\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |u_n|^N dx = 1$. From (3.43), Lemmas 3.3 and 3.4, we obtain

$$\lim_{n\to\infty} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |\nabla u_n|^N dx = NA \le Nc < 1. \tag{3.44}$$

From Lemma 3.1,

$$\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} F(u_n)dx \longrightarrow \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} F(u)dx, \tag{3.45}$$

where $u_n \rightharpoonup u$ in $W^{1,N}(\mathbb{R}^N)$, as $n \to \infty$.

By (3.43) and (3.45), we have

$$\begin{gathered}
\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} F(u_n)dx = \frac{1}{N}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |u_n|^N dx = \frac{1}{N}, \\
\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} F(u)dx = \frac{1}{N}.
\end{gathered} \tag{3.46}$$

It implies that

$$u \neq 0, \tag{3.47}$$

$$\frac{1}{N}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |\nabla u|^N dx \leq \lim_{n\to\infty} \inf \frac{1}{N}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |\nabla u_n|^N dx = A, \tag{3.48}$$

$$\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |u|^N dx \leq \lim_{n\to\infty} \inf \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |u_n|^N dx = 1. \tag{3.49}$$

From (3.48) and (3.49), we have

$$\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} G(u)dx = \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} F(u)dx - \frac{1}{N}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |u|^N dx = \frac{1}{N} - \frac{1}{N}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |u|^N dx \geq 0. \tag{3.50}$$

If $\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} G(u)dx \neq 0$, from (3.50), we have $\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} G(u)dx > 0$. Consider the function h defined in Lemma 3.2 relative to the function:

$$h(t) = \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} G(tu)dx. \tag{3.51}$$

We concludes that $h(t) < 0$ for t small enough. On the other hand, $h(1) = \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} G(u)dx > 0$. In this way, we obtain that there is $t_0 \in (0,1)$ such that $h(t_0) = 0$, that is,

$$\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} G(t_0 u)dx = 0. \tag{3.52}$$

Hence, from (3.48),

$$0 < \frac{1}{N}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |\nabla(t_0 u)|^N dx = \frac{1}{N} t_0^N \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |\nabla u|^N dx \leq t_0^N A < A. \tag{3.53}$$

However, from (3.52), we have $t_0 u \in \mathcal{P}$. Hence, we obtain

$$\frac{1}{N}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |\nabla(t_0 u)|^N dx \geq A. \tag{3.54}$$

Which is contradictory with (3.53).

Thus, we obtain

$$\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} G(u)dx = 0. \tag{3.55}$$

It implies $u \in \mathcal{P}$ and

$$\frac{1}{N}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |\nabla u|^N dx \geq A. \tag{3.56}$$

From (3.48) and (3.56), we obtain that

$$\frac{1}{N}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N}|\nabla u|^N dx = A, \tag{3.57}$$

with $\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} G(u)dx = 0,\ u \neq 0$.

We obtain that A is attained. □

Proof of Theorem 1.2. From Lemma 3.5, there is $u \in W^{1,N}_{\text{rad}}(\mathbb{R}^N) \setminus \{0\}$ such that

$$\frac{1}{N}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N}|\nabla u|^N dx = A, \qquad \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} G(u)dx = 0. \tag{3.58}$$

we will prove that $m = b = A$.

By Lagrange multipliers, there exists $\rho \in \mathbb{R}$, such that

$$\int_{\mathbb{R}^N}|\nabla u|^{N-2}\nabla u \nabla v dx = \rho\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} g(u)v\,dx, \tag{3.59}$$

for every $v \in W^{1,N}(\mathbb{R}^N)$.

Define the rescaled function $u_{\rho^{1/N}} = u(\rho^{-1/N}x)$, which is a nontrivial solution of (1.1) with

$$\begin{gathered}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N}\left|\nabla u_{\rho^{1/N}}\right|^N dx = \int_{\mathbb{R}^N}|\nabla u|^N dx,\\ \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} G\left(u_{\rho^{1/N}}\right)dx = \rho\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} G(u)dx = 0.\end{gathered} \tag{3.60}$$

Thus, we have

$$m \leq I\left(u_{\rho^{1/N}}\right) = \frac{1}{N}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N}\left|\nabla u_{\rho^{1/N}}\right|^N dx - \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} G\left(u_{\rho^{1/N}}\right)dx = \frac{1}{N}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N}|\nabla u|^N dx = A. \tag{3.61}$$

So, we have

$$m \leq A. \tag{3.62}$$

For each $\gamma \in \Gamma$, one has $\gamma([0,1]) \cap \mathcal{P} \neq \emptyset$ from [4]. We obtain that there exists $t_0 \in [0,1]$ such that $\gamma(t_0) \in \mathcal{P}$, that is, $\gamma(t_0)$ satisfied that $\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} G(\gamma(t_0))dx = 0$ and then

$$A \leq \frac{1}{N}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N}\left|\nabla\gamma(t_0)\right|^N dx - \frac{1}{N}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} G(\gamma(t_0))dx = I(\gamma(t_0)). \tag{3.63}$$

Hence $A \leq I(\gamma(t_0)) \leq \max_{t\in[0,1]} I(\gamma(t))$ for every $\gamma \in \Gamma$, we obtain that

$$A \leq b. \tag{3.64}$$

From (3.62) and (3.64), we obtain that $m \leq A \leq b$.

On the other hand, for every nontrivial solution $\omega \in W^{1,N}(\mathbb{R}^N)$ of the problem (1.1), there exists a path $\gamma_\omega \in \Gamma$ such that $\omega \in \gamma_\omega([0,1])$ and $\max_{t\in[0,1]} I(\gamma_\omega(t)) = I(\omega)$. Consequently, $b \le I(\omega),\ b \le m$.

In conclusion, we obtain

$$m = A = b. \tag{3.65}$$

Hence, the function $u_{\rho^{1/N}}$ is a ground-state solution of the problem (1.1). □

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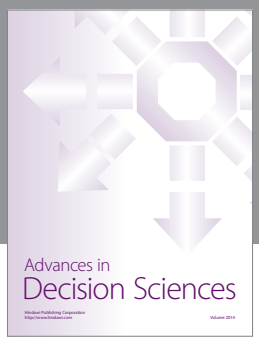

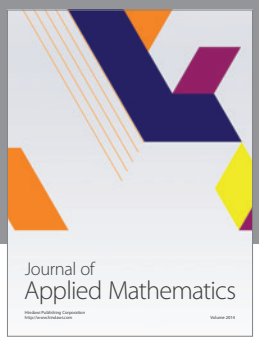

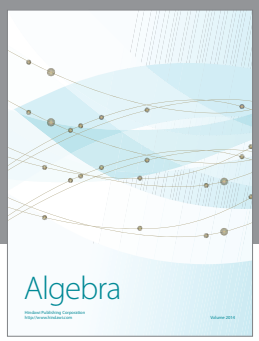

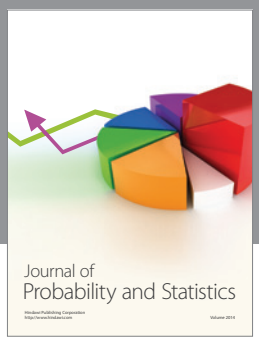

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