Hindawi Publishing Corporation
Abstract and Applied Analysis
Volume 2014, Article ID 539639, 10 pages
http://dx.doi.org/10.1155/2014/539639

Research Article

Existence of Nontrivial Solutions for Periodic Schrödinger Equations with New Nonlinearities

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Received 13 April 2014; Accepted 29 May 2014; Published 15 June 2014

Academic Editor: Mihai Mihăilescu

We study the Schrödinger equation: $-\Delta u + V(x)u + f(x,u) = 0,\ u \in H^1(\mathbb{R}^N)$, where V is 1-periodic and f is 1-periodic in the x-variables; 0 is in a gap of the spectrum of the operator $-\Delta + V$. We prove that, under some new assumptions for f, this equation has a nontrivial solution. Our assumptions for the nonlinearity f are very weak and greatly different from the known assumptions in the literature.

1. Introduction and Statement of Results

In this paper, we consider the following Schrödinger equation:

$$-\Delta u + V(x)u + f(x,u) = 0, \quad u \in H^1(\mathbb{R}^N), \tag{1}$$

where $N \geq 1$. For V and f, we assume the following.

($\mathbf{v}$) $V \in C(\mathbb{R}^N)$ is 1-periodic in x_j for $j = 1, \ldots, N$, 0 is in a spectral gap $(-\mu_{-1}, \mu_1)$ of $-\Delta + V$, and $-\mu_{-1}$ and μ_1 lie in the essential spectrum of $-\Delta + V$.

Denote

$$\mu_0 := \min\{\mu_{-1}, \mu_1\}. \tag{2}$$

($\mathbf{f_1}$) $f \in C(\mathbb{R}^N \times \mathbb{R})$ is 1-periodic in x_j for $j = 1, \ldots, N$. And there exist constants $C > 0$ and $2 < p < 2^*$ such that

$$|f(x,t)| \leq C\left(1 + |t|^{p-1}\right), \quad \forall (x,t) \in \mathbb{R}^N \times \mathbb{R}, \tag{3}$$

where

$$2^* := \begin{cases} \dfrac{2N}{(N-2)}, & N \geq 3 \\ \infty, & N = 1, 2. \end{cases} \tag{4}$$

($\mathbf{f_2}$) The limit $\lim_{t\to 0} f(x,t)/t = 0$ holds uniformly for $x \in \mathbb{R}^N$. And there exists $D > 0$ such that

$$\inf_{x\in\mathbb{R}^N, |t|\geq D} \frac{f(x,t)}{t} > \max_{\mathbb{R}^N} V_-, \tag{5}$$

where $V_\pm(x) = \max\{\pm V(x), 0\}$, $\forall x \in \mathbb{R}^N$.

($\mathbf{f_3}$) For any $(x,t) \in \mathbb{R}^N \times \mathbb{R}$, $\widetilde{F}(x,t) \geq 0$, where

$$\widetilde{F}(x,t) := \frac{1}{2} t f(x,t) - F(x,t), \qquad F(x,t) = \int_0^t f(x,s)\,ds. \tag{6}$$

($\mathbf{f_4}$) There exist $0 < \kappa < D$ and $\nu \in (0, \mu_0)$ such that, for every $(x,t) \in \mathbb{R}^N \times \mathbb{R}$ with $|t| < \kappa$,

$$|f(x,t)| \leq \nu |t| \tag{7}$$

and, for every $(x,t) \in \mathbb{R}^N \times \mathbb{R}$ with $\kappa \leq |t| \leq D$,

$$\widetilde{F}(x,t) > 0. \tag{8}$$

Remark 1. By the definitions of F and $\widetilde{F}$, it is easy to verify that, for all $(x,t) \in \mathbb{R}^N \times (\mathbb{R} \setminus \{0\})$,

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial t}\left(\frac{F(x,t)}{t^2}\right) = \frac{2\widetilde{F}(x,t)}{t^3}. \tag{9}$$

Together with $f(x,t) = o(t)$ as $|t| \to 0$ and $(\mathbf{f_3})$, this implies that

$$F(x,t) \geq 0 \quad \forall (x,t) \in \mathbb{R}^N \times \mathbb{R}. \tag{10}$$

Remark 2. There are many functions satisfying $(\mathbf{f_1})$–$(\mathbf{f_4})$. We give several examples here.

Example 1. $D = 1 + \mu_0/2 + e^{1+\max_{\mathbb{R}^N} V_-}$, $\kappa = 1 + \mu_0/2$, $\nu = \mu_0/2$, and

$$f(x,t) = \begin{cases} 0, & |t| \leq 1, \\ t \ln |t|, & |t| > 1. \end{cases} \tag{11}$$

Example 2. $D = 3 + \mu_0/2 + 2\max_{\mathbb{R}^N} V_-$, $\kappa = 3/2$, $\nu = \mu_0/2$, and

$$f(x,t) = \begin{cases} 0, & |t| \leq 1, \\ D(t-1), & t > 1, \\ D(t+1), & t < -1. \end{cases} \tag{12}$$

Example 3. $D = \mu_0/2 + e^{1+\max_{\mathbb{R}^N} V_-}$, $\kappa = \nu = \mu_0/2$, and $f(x,t) = t\ln(1+|t|)$.

A solution u of (1) is called nontrivial if $u \not\equiv 0$. Our main results are as follows.

Theorem 3. *Suppose* $(\mathbf{v})$ *and* $(\mathbf{f_1})$–$(\mathbf{f_4})$ *are satisfied. Then* (1) *has a nontrivial solution.*

Note that

$(\mathbf{f_2'})$ the limits $\lim_{t\to 0} f(x,t)/t = 0$ and $\lim_{|t|\to\infty}(f(x,t)/t) = +\infty$ hold uniformly for $x \in \mathbb{R}^N$.

Implying $(\mathbf{f_2})$, we have the following corollary.

Corollary 4. *Suppose* $(\mathbf{v})$, $(\mathbf{f_1})$, $(\mathbf{f_2'})$, $(\mathbf{f_3})$, *and* $(\mathbf{f_4})$ *are satisfied. Then* (1) *has a nontrivial solution.*

It is easy to verify that the condition

$(\mathbf{f_4'})$ $\widetilde{F}(x,t) > 0$, for every $(x,t) \in \mathbb{R}^N \times \mathbb{R}$.

And the assumption that $f(x,t)/t \to 0$ as $t \to 0$ uniformly for $x \in \mathbb{R}^N$ imply $(\mathbf{f_3})$ and $(\mathbf{f_4})$. Therefore, we have the following corollary.

Corollary 5. *Suppose* $(\mathbf{v})$, $(\mathbf{f_1})$, $(\mathbf{f_2})$, *and* $(\mathbf{f_4'})$ *are satisfied. Then* (1) *has a nontrivial solution.*

Semilinear Schrödinger equations with periodic coefficients have attracted much attention in recent years due to its numerous applications. One can see [1–24] and the references therein. In [2], the authors used the dual variational method to obtain a nontrivial solution of (1) with $f(x,t) = \pm W(x)|t|^{p-2}t$, where W is an asymptotically periodic function. In [20], Troestler and Willem firstly obtained nontrivial solutions for (1) with f being a C^1 function satisfying the Ambrosetti-Rabinowitz condition:

(AR) there exists $\alpha > 2$ such that, for every $u \neq 0$, $0 < \alpha G(x,u) \leq g(x,u)u$, where $g(x,u) = -f(x,u)$, $G(x,u) = -F(x,u)$, and

$$\left|\frac{\partial f(x,u)}{\partial u}\right| \leq C\left(|u|^{p-2} + |u|^{q-2}\right) \tag{13}$$

with $2 < p < q < 2^*$. Then, in [9], Kryszewski and Szulkin developed some infinite-dimensional linking theorems. Using these theorems, they improved Troestler and Willem's results and obtained nontrivial solutions for (1) with f only satisfying $(\mathbf{f_1})$ and the (AR) condition. These generalized linking theorems were also used by Li and Szulkin to obtain nontrivial solution for (1) under some asymptotically linear assumptions for f (see [11]). In [13] (see also [14]), existence of nontrivial solutions for (1) under $(\mathbf{f_1})$ and the (AR) condition was also obtained by Pankov and Pflüger through approximating (1) by a sequence of equations defined in bounded domains. In the celebrated paper [17], Schechter and Zou combined a generalized linking theorem with the monotonicity methods of Jeanjean (see [8]). They obtained a nontrivial solution of (1) when f exhibits the critical growth. A similar approach was applied by Szulkin and Zou to obtain homoclinic orbits of asymptotically linear Hamiltonian systems (see [19]). Moreover, in [5] (see also [6]), Ding and Lee obtained nontrivial solutions for (1) under some new superlinear assumptions on f different from the classical (AR) conditions.

Our assumptions on f are very weak and greatly different from the assumptions mentioned above. In fact, our assumptions $(\mathbf{f_1})$–$(\mathbf{f_4})$ do not involve the properties of f at infinity. It may be asymptotically linear growth at infinity, that is, $\limsup_{|t|\to\infty}(f(x,t)/t) < +\infty$, or superlinear growth at infinity as well, that is, $\liminf_{|t|\to\infty}(f(x,t)/t) = +\infty$. Moreover, the assumptions $(\mathbf{f_1})$–$(\mathbf{f_4})$ allow $f(x,t) \equiv 0$ in a neighborhood of $t = 0$ (see Remark 2).

In this paper, we use the generalized linking theorem for a class of parameter-dependent functionals (see [17, Theorem 2.1] or Proposition 8 in the present paper) to obtain a sequence of approximate solutions for (1). Then, we prove that these approximate solutions are bounded in $L^\infty(\mathbb{R}^N)$ and $H^1(\mathbb{R}^N)$ (see Lemmas 13 and 14). Finally, using the concentration-compactness principle, we obtain a nontrivial solution of (1).

Notation. $B_r(a)$ denotes the open ball of radius r and center a. For a Banach space E, we denote the dual space of E by E' and denote strong and weak convergence in E by $\to$ and $\rightharpoonup$, respectively. For $\varphi \in C^1(E;\mathbb{R})$, we denote the Fréchet derivative of φ at u by $\varphi'(u)$. The Gateaux derivative of φ is denoted by $\langle \varphi'(u), v\rangle$, $\forall u, v \in E$. $L^p(\mathbb{R}^N)$ denotes the standard L^p space $(1 \leq p \leq \infty)$, and $H^1(\mathbb{R}^N)$ denotes

the standard Sobolev space with norm $\|u\|_{H^1} = (\int_{\mathbb{R}^N}(|\nabla u|^2 + u^2)dx)^{1/2}$. We use $O(h)$, $o(h)$ to mean $|O(h)| \leq C|h|$, $o(h)/|h| \to 0$.

2. Existence of Approximate Solutions for (1)

Under the assumptions (**v**), ($\mathbf{f_1}$), and ($\mathbf{f_2}$), the functional

$$\Phi(u) = \frac{1}{2}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N}|\nabla u|^2 dx + \frac{1}{2}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} V(x)u^2 dx + \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} F(x,u)\,dx \tag{14}$$

is of class C^1 on $X := H^1(\mathbb{R}^N)$, and the critical points of Φ are weak solutions of (1).

There is a standard variational setting for the quadratic form $\int_{\mathbb{R}^N}(|\nabla u|^2 + V(x)u^2)dx$. For the reader's convenience, we state it here. One can consult [5] or [6] for more details.

Assume that (**v**) holds, and let $S = -\Delta + V$ be the self-adjoint operator acting on $L^2(\mathbb{R}^N)$ with domain $D(S) = H^2(\mathbb{R}^N)$. By virtue of (**v**), we have the orthogonal decomposition

$$L^2 = L^2\left(\mathbb{R}^N\right) = L^+ + L^- \tag{15}$$

such that S is negative (resp., positive) in L^- (resp., in L^+). As in [5, Section 2] (see also [6, Chapter 6.2]), let $X = D(|S|^{1/2})$ be equipped with the inner product

$$(u,v) = \left(|S|^{1/2}u, |S|^{1/2}v\right)_{L^2} \tag{16}$$

and norm $\|u\| = \||S|^{1/2}u\|_{L^2}$, where $(\cdot,\cdot)_{L^2}$ denotes the inner product of L^2. From (**v**),

$$X = H^1\left(\mathbb{R}^N\right) \tag{17}$$

with equivalent norms. Therefore, X continuously embeds in $L^q(\mathbb{R}^N)$ for all $2 \leq q \leq 2N/(N-2)$ if $N \geq 3$ and for all $q \geq 2$ if $N = 1, 2$. In addition, we have the decomposition

$$X = X^+ + X^-, \tag{18}$$

where $X^\pm = X \cap L^\pm$ is orthogonal with respect to both $(\cdot,\cdot)_{L^2}$ and $(\cdot,\cdot)$. Therefore, for every $u \in X$, there is a unique decomposition

$$u = u^+ + u^-, \quad u^\pm \in X^\pm \tag{19}$$

with $(u^+, u^-) = 0$ and

$$\int_{\mathbb{R}^N}|\nabla u|^2 dx + \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} V(x)u^2 dx = \|u^+\|^2 - \|u^-\|^2, \quad u \in X. \tag{20}$$

Moreover,

$$\mu_{-1}\|u^-\|_{L^2}^2 \leq \|u^-\|^2, \quad \forall u \in X, \tag{21}$$

$$\mu_1\|u^+\|_{L^2}^2 \leq \|u^+\|^2, \quad \forall u \in X. \tag{22}$$

The functional Φ defined by (14) can be rewritten as

$$\Phi(u) = \frac{1}{2}\left(\|u^+\|^2 - \|u^-\|^2\right) + \psi(u), \tag{23}$$

where

$$\psi(u) = \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} F(x,u)\,dx. \tag{24}$$

The above variational setting for the functional (14) is standard. One can consult [5] or [6] for more details.

Let $\{e_k^\pm\}$ be the total orthonormal sequence in $X^\pm$. Let $P : X \to X^-$, $Q : X \to X^+$ be the orthogonal projections. We define

$$|||u||| = \max\left\{\|Pu\|, \sum_{k=1}^{\infty}\frac{1}{2^{k+1}}\left|(Qu, e_k^+)\right|\right\} \tag{25}$$

on X. The topology generated by $|||\cdot|||$ is denoted by τ, and all topological notation related to it will include this symbol.

Lemma 6. *Suppose that* (**v**) *holds. Then*

(**a**) $\max_{\mathbb{R}^N} V_- \geq \mu_{-1}$, *where* μ_{-1} *is defined in* (**v**);

(**b**) *for any* $C > \mu_{-1}$, *there exists* $u_0 \in X^-$ *with* $\|u_0\| = 1$ *such that* $C\|u_0\|_{L^2} > 1$.

Proof. (**a**) We apply an indirect argument, and assume by contradiction that

$$\max_{\mathbb{R}^N} V_- < \mu_{-1}. \tag{26}$$

From assumption (**v**), $-\mu_{-1}$ is in the essential spectrum of the operator (with domain $D(L) = H^2(\mathbb{R}^N)$):

$$L = -\Delta + V : L^2\left(\mathbb{R}^N\right) \longrightarrow L^2\left(\mathbb{R}^N\right). \tag{27}$$

Then, by Weyl's criterion (see, e.g., [25, Theorem VII.12] or [26, Theorem 7.2]), there exists a sequence $\{u_n\} \subset H^2(\mathbb{R}^N)$ with the properties that $\|u_n\|_{L^2} = 1$, $\forall n$ and $\|-\Delta u_n + Vu_n + \mu_{-1}u_n\|_{L^2} \to 0$.

Since $\mu_{-1} > \max_{\mathbb{R}^N} V_-$, we deduce that $-V_-(x) + \mu_{-1} > 0$ for all $x \in \mathbb{R}^N$. Together with the facts that V is a continuous periodic function and $V = V_+ - V_-$, this implies

$$\inf_{x\in\mathbb{R}^N}\left(V(x) + \mu_{-1}\right) > 0. \tag{28}$$

It follows that there exists a constant $C' > 0$ such that

$$\int_{\mathbb{R}^N}\left(|\nabla u|^2 + \left(V(x) + \mu_{-1}\right)u^2\right)dx \geq C'\|u\|^2, \quad \forall u \in X. \tag{29}$$

Note that

$$\int_{\mathbb{R}^N}\left(-\Delta u_n + V(x)u_n + \mu_{-1}u_n\right)u_n dx = \int_{\mathbb{R}^N}\left(|\nabla u_n|^2 + \left(V(x) + \mu_{-1}\right)u_n^2\right)dx. \tag{30}$$

Together with (29) and the fact that $\|-\Delta u_n + Vu_n + \mu_{-1}u_n\|_{L^2} \to 0$ and $\|u_n\|_{L^2} = 1$, this implies $\|u_n\| \to 0$. It contradicts $\|u_n\|_{L^2} = 1$, $\forall n$. Therefore, $\max_{\mathbb{R}^N} V_- \geq \mu_{-1}$.

(**b**) It suffices to prove that

$$\mu_{-1} = C_- := \inf\left\{\|u\|^2 \mid u \in X^-, \|u\|_{L^2} = 1\right\}. \tag{31}$$

From (21), we deduce that $\mu_{-1} \le C_-$. From assumption (**v**), $-\mu_{-1}$ is in the essential spectrum of L. By Weyl's criterion, there exists $\{u_n\} \subset H^2(\mathbb{R}^N)$ such that $\|u_n\|_{L^2} = 1$ and $\|-\Delta u_n + Vu_n + \mu_{-1}u_n\|_{L^2} \to 0$. Multiplying $-\Delta u_n + Vu_n + \mu_{-1}u_n$ by u_n^+ and then integrating it into $\mathbb{R}^N$, by (20) and (22), we get that

$$\begin{aligned}(\mu_1 + \mu_{-1})\|u_n^+\|_{L^2}^2 &\le \int_{\mathbb{R}^N}\left(|\nabla u_n^+|^2 + V(x)(u_n^+)^2 + \mu_{-1}(u_n^+)^2\right)dx \\ &= \int_{\mathbb{R}^N}(-\Delta u_n + V(x)u_n + \mu_{-1}u_n)u_n^+ dx \longrightarrow 0.\end{aligned} \tag{32}$$

It follows that $\|u_n^-\|_{L^2} \to 1$. Multiplying $-\Delta u_n + Vu_n + \mu_{-1}u_n$ by u_n^- and then integrating it into $\mathbb{R}^N$, we get that

$$\begin{aligned}-\|u_n^-\|^2 + \mu_{-1}\|u_n^-\|_{L^2}^2 &= \int_{\mathbb{R}^N}\left(|\nabla u_n^-|^2 + V(x)(u_n^-)^2 + \mu_{-1}(u_n^-)^2\right)dx \\ &= \int_{\mathbb{R}^N}(-\Delta u_n + Vu_n + \mu_{-1}u_n)u_n^- dx \longrightarrow 0.\end{aligned} \tag{33}$$

It implies that $\mu_{-1} \ge C_-$. This together with $\mu_{-1} \le C_-$ implies $\mu_{-1} = C_-$. □

Let $R > r > 0$ and

$$A := \inf_{x\in\mathbb{R}^N, |t|\ge D}\frac{f(x,t)}{t}. \tag{34}$$

From assumption (5), we have $A > \max_{\mathbb{R}^N} V_-$. Together with the result (**a**) of Lemma 6, this implies that $(1/2)(A + \mu_{-1}) > \mu_{-1}$. Choose

$$\gamma \in \left(\mu_{-1}, \frac{(A+\mu_{-1})}{2}\right). \tag{35}$$

Then by the result (**b**) of Lemma 6, there exists $u_0 \in X^-$ with $\|u_0\| = 1$ such that

$$\gamma\|u_0\|_{L^2} > 1. \tag{36}$$

Set

$$\begin{aligned}N &= \{u \in X^- \mid \|u\| = r\}, \\ M &= \{u \in X^+ \oplus \mathbb{R}^+u_0 \mid \|u\| \le R\}.\end{aligned} \tag{37}$$

Then, M is a submanifold of $X^+ \oplus \mathbb{R}^+u_0$ with boundary

$$\begin{aligned}\partial M = &\{u \in X^- \mid \|u\| \le R\} \\ &\cup \{u^- + tu_0 \mid u^- \in X^-, t > 0, \|u^- + tu_0\| = R\}.\end{aligned} \tag{38}$$

Definition 7. Let $\phi \in C^1(X;\mathbb{R})$. A sequence $\{u_n\} \subset X$ is called a Palais-Smale sequence at level c ($(PS)_c$-sequence for short) for ϕ, if $\phi(u_n) \to c$ and $\|\phi'(u_n)\|_{X'} \to 0$ as $n \to \infty$.

The following proposition is proved in [17] (see [17, Theorem 2.1]).

Proposition 8. *Let $0 < K < 1$. The family of C^1-functional $\{H_\lambda\}$ has the form*

$$H_\lambda(u) = \lambda I(u) - J(u), \quad u \in X, \ \lambda \in [K,1]. \tag{39}$$

Assume

(a) $J(u) \ge 0$, $\forall u \in X$;

(b) $|I(u)| + J(u) \to +\infty$ *as* $\|u\| \to +\infty$;

(c) *for all $\lambda \in [K,1]$, H_λ is τ-sequentially upper semicontinuous; that is, if $|||u_n - u||| \to 0$, then*

$$\limsup_{n\to\infty} H_\lambda(u_n) \le H_\lambda(u), \tag{40}$$

and H_λ' is weakly sequentially continuous. Moreover, H_λ maps bounded sets to bounded sets;

(d) *there exist $u_0 \in X^- \setminus \{0\}$ with $\|u_0\| = 1$ and $R > r > 0$ such that, for all $\lambda \in [K,1]$,*

$$\inf_N H_\lambda > \sup_{\partial M} H_\lambda. \tag{41}$$

Then there exists $E \subset [K,1]$ such that the Lebesgue measure of $[K,1] \setminus E$ is zero and, for every $\lambda \in E$, there exist c_λ and a bounded $(PS)_{c_\lambda}$-sequence for H_λ, where c_λ satisfies

$$\sup_M H_\lambda \ge c_\lambda \ge \inf_N H_\lambda. \tag{42}$$

For $0 < K < 1$ and $\lambda \in [K,1]$, let

$$\begin{aligned}\Psi_\lambda(u) = &\frac{\lambda}{2}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} V_-(x)u^2 dx \\ &-\left(\frac{1}{2}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N}\left(|\nabla u|^2 + V_+(x)u^2\right)dx + \psi(u)\right), \quad u \in X.\end{aligned} \tag{43}$$

Then

$$\Psi_1 = -\Phi \tag{44}$$

and it is easy to verify that a critical point u of Ψ_λ is a weak solution of

$$-\Delta u + V_\lambda(x)u + f(x,u) = 0, \quad u \in X, \tag{45}$$

where

$$V_\lambda = V_+ - \lambda V_-. \tag{46}$$

Lemma 9. *Suppose that* (**v**) *and* ($\mathbf{f_1}$)–($\mathbf{f_3}$) *hold. Then, there exist $0 < K_* < 1$ and $E \subset [K_*,1]$ such that the Lebesgue measure of $[K_*,1] \setminus E$ is zero and, for every $\lambda \in E$, there exist c_λ and a bounded $(PS)_{c_\lambda}$-sequence for Ψ_λ, where c_λ satisfies*

$$+\infty > \sup_{\lambda\in E} c_\lambda \ge \inf_{\lambda\in E} c_\lambda > 0. \tag{47}$$

Proof. For $u \in X$, let

$$I(u) = \frac{1}{2}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} V_-(x)u^2dx,$$
$$J(u) = \frac{1}{2}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N}\left(|\nabla u|^2 + V_+(x)u^2\right)dx + \psi(u). \tag{48}$$

Then, I and J satisfy assumptions (a) and (b) in Proposition 8, and, by (43), $\Psi_\lambda(u) = \lambda I(u) - J(u)$.

From (43) and (20), for any $u \in X$ and $\lambda \in [K, 1]$, we have

$$\begin{aligned}\Psi_\lambda(u) &= \frac{\lambda-1}{2}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} V_-(x)u^2dx \\ &\quad - \left(\frac{1}{2}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N}\left(|\nabla u|^2 + V(x)u^2\right)dx + \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} F(x,u)\,dx\right) \\ &= \frac{1}{2}\|u^-\|^2 - \frac{1}{2}\|u^+\|^2 \\ &\quad - \frac{1-\lambda}{2}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} V_-(x)u^2dx - \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} F(x,u)\,dx.\end{aligned} \tag{49}$$

Let $u_* \in X$ and $\{u_n\} \subset X$ be such that $|||u_n - u_*||| \to 0$. It follows that $u_n^- \to u_*^-$, $u_n^+ \rightharpoonup u_*^+$, and $u_n \rightharpoonup u_*$. In addition, up to a subsequence, we can assume that $u_n \to u_*$ a.e. in $\mathbb{R}^N$. Then, we have

$$\|u_n^-\|^2 \longrightarrow \|u_*^-\|^2, \tag{50}$$

$$\begin{aligned}&\liminf_{n\to\infty}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} V_-(x)u_n^2dx \\ &\quad \geq \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} V_-(x)u_*^2dx \quad (\text{by Fatou's lemma}), \\ &\liminf_{n\to\infty}\|u_n^+\|^2 \geq \|u_*^+\|^2.\end{aligned} \tag{51}$$

By Remark 1, $F(x,t) \geq 0$ for all x and t. This together with Fatou's lemma implies

$$\liminf_{n\to\infty}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} F(x,u_n)\,dx \geq \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} F(x,u_*)\,dx. \tag{52}$$

Then, by (49), we obtain

$$\limsup_{n\to\infty}\Psi_\lambda(u_n) \leq \Psi_\lambda(u_*). \tag{53}$$

This implies that Ψ_λ is τ-sequentially upper semicontinuous.

If $u_n \rightharpoonup u_*$ in X, then, for any fixed $\varphi \in X$, as $n \to \infty$,

$$\begin{aligned}&\left\langle -\Psi_\lambda'(u_n), \varphi\right\rangle \\ &\quad = \int_{\mathbb{R}^N}\left(\nabla u_n\nabla\varphi + V_\lambda u_n\varphi\right)dx + \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} f(x,u_n)\varphi dx \\ &\quad \longrightarrow \int_{\mathbb{R}^N}\left(\nabla u_*\nabla\varphi + V_\lambda u_*\varphi\right)dx + \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} f(x,u_*)\varphi dx \\ &\quad = \left\langle -\Psi_\lambda'(u_*), \varphi\right\rangle.\end{aligned} \tag{54}$$

This implies that Ψ_λ' is weakly sequentially continuous. Moreover, it is easy to see that Ψ_λ maps bounded sets to bounded sets. Therefore, Ψ_λ satisfies assumption (c) in Proposition 8.

Finally, we will verify assumption (d) in Proposition 8 for Ψ_λ.

From assumption ($\mathbf{f_1}$) and $f(x,t)/t \to 0$ as $t \to 0$ uniformly for $x \in \mathbb{R}^N$, we deduce that, for any $\epsilon > 0$, there exists $C_\epsilon > 0$ such that

$$F(x,t) \leq \epsilon t^2 + C_\epsilon|t|^p, \quad \forall (x,t) \in \mathbb{R}^N \times \mathbb{R}. \tag{55}$$

From (49) and (55), we have, for $u \in N$,

$$\begin{aligned}\Psi_\lambda(u) &\geq \frac{1}{2}\|u\|^2 - \frac{1-\lambda}{2}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} V_-(x)u^2dx \\ &\quad - \epsilon\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} u^2dx - C_\epsilon\int_{\mathbb{R}^N}|u|^pdx.\end{aligned} \tag{56}$$

Then by the Sobolev inequality $\|u\|_{L^p(\mathbb{R}^N)} \leq C\|u\|$ and $\|u\|_{L^2} \leq C\|u\|$ (by (21) and (22)), we deduce that there exists a constant $C > 0$ such that

$$\begin{aligned}\Psi_\lambda(u) &\geq \frac{1}{2}\|u\|^2 - C(1-\lambda)\max_{\mathbb{R}^N} V_-(x)\|u\|^2 \\ &\quad - \epsilon C\|u\|^2 - CC_\epsilon\|u\|^p.\end{aligned} \tag{57}$$

Choose $0 < K_* < 1$ and $\epsilon > 0$ such that $C(1-K_*)\max_{\mathbb{R}^N} V_-(x) < 1/4$ and $C_\epsilon = 1/8$. Then, for every $\lambda \in [K_*, 1]$, we have

$$\Psi_\lambda(u) \geq \frac{1}{8}\|u\|^2 - CC_\epsilon\|u\|^p. \tag{58}$$

Let $r > 0$ be such that $r^{p-2}CC_\epsilon = 1/16$ and $\beta = r^2/16$. Then, from (58), we deduce that, for $N = \{u \in X^- \mid \|u\| = r\}$,

$$\inf_N \Psi_\lambda \geq \beta, \quad \forall\lambda \in [K_*, 1]. \tag{59}$$

We will prove that $\sup_{K_*\leq\lambda\leq 1}\Psi_\lambda(u) \to -\infty$ as $\|u\| \to \infty$ and $u \in X^+ \oplus \mathbb{R}^+u_0$. Arguing indirectly, assume that, for some sequences $\lambda_n \in [K_*, 1]$ and $u_n \in X^+ \oplus \mathbb{R}^+u_0$ with $\|u_n\| \to +\infty$, there is $\mathscr{L} > 0$ such that $\Psi_{\lambda_n}(u_n) \geq -\mathscr{L}$ for all n. Then, setting $w_n = u_n/\|u_n\|$, we have $\|w_n\| = 1$, and, up to a subsequence, $w_n \rightharpoonup w$, $w_n^- \to w^- \in X^-$ and $w_n^+ \rightharpoonup w^+ \in X^+$.

First, we consider the case $w \neq 0$. Dividing both sides of (49) by $\|u_n\|^2$, we get that

$$\begin{aligned}-\frac{\mathscr{L}}{\|u_n\|^2} &\leq \frac{\Psi_{\lambda_n}(u_n)}{\|u_n\|^2} \\ &= \frac{1}{2}\|w_n^-\|^2 - \frac{1}{2}\|w_n^+\|^2 \\ &\quad - \frac{1-\lambda_n}{2}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} V_-(x)w_n^2dx - \int_{\mathbb{R}^N}\frac{F(x,u_n)}{\|u_n\|^2}dx.\end{aligned} \tag{60}$$

From (5) and the result (**a**) of Lemma 6, we deduce that

$$\liminf_{|t|\to\infty}\frac{F(x,t)}{t^2} \geq \frac{A}{2} > \frac{1}{2}\max_{\mathbb{R}^N} V_- \geq \frac{1}{2}\mu_{-1}, \tag{61}$$

where A is defined by (34). Note that, for $x \in \{x \in \mathbb{R}^N \mid w \neq 0\}$, we have $|u_n(x)| \to +\infty$. This implies that, when n is large enough,

$$\int_{\{x\in\mathbb{R}^N|w\neq 0\}} \frac{F(x,u_n)}{u_n^2} w_n^2 dx \geq \frac{A+\mu_{-1}}{4} \int_{\{x\in\mathbb{R}^N|w\neq 0\}} w_n^2 dx. \tag{62}$$

By (10), we have, when n is large enough,

$$\begin{aligned}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} \frac{F(x,u_n)}{\|u_n\|^2} dx &= \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} \frac{F(x,u_n)}{u_n^2} w_n^2 dx \\ &\geq \int_{\{x\in\mathbb{R}^N|w\neq 0\}} \frac{F(x,u_n)}{u_n^2} w_n^2 dx.\end{aligned} \tag{63}$$

Combining the above two inequalities yields

$$\begin{aligned}&\liminf_{n\to\infty}\left(\frac{1}{2}\|w_n^-\|^2 - \frac{1}{2}\|w_n^+\|^2 \right.\\ &\qquad \left. - \frac{1-\lambda_n}{2}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} V_-(x) w_n^2 dx - \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} \frac{F(x,u_n)}{\|u_n\|^2} dx\right)\\ &\leq \liminf_{n\to\infty}\left(\frac{1}{2}\|w_n^-\|^2 - \frac{1}{2}\|w_n^+\|^2 \right.\\ &\qquad \left. - \frac{A+\mu_{-1}}{4}\int_{\{x\in\mathbb{R}^N|w\neq 0\}} w_n^2 dx\right)\\ &\leq \frac{1}{2}\|w^-\|^2 - \frac{1}{2}\|w^+\|^2 - \frac{A+\mu_{-1}}{4}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} w^2 dx\\ &\leq \frac{1}{2}\|w^-\|^2 - \frac{1}{2}\|w^+\|^2 - \frac{A+\mu_{-1}}{4}\|w^-\|_{L^2}^2.\end{aligned} \tag{64}$$

We used the inequalities

$$\begin{aligned}\lim_{n\to\infty}\|w_n^-\|^2 &= \|w^-\|^2,\\ \liminf_{n\to\infty}\|w_n^+\|^2 &\geq \|w^+\|^2,\\ \liminf_{n\to\infty}\int_{\{x\in\mathbb{R}^N|w\neq 0\}} w_n^2 dx &\geq \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} w^2 dx\end{aligned} \tag{65}$$

in the second inequality of (64).

Since $w^- = tu_0$ for some $t \in \mathbb{R}$, by (36), we get that

$$\frac{A+\mu_{-1}}{4}\|w^-\|_{L^2}^2 \geq \frac{A+\mu_{-1}}{4\gamma}\|w^-\|^2. \tag{66}$$

Note that, by the choice of γ (see (35)), we have $((A+\mu_{-1})/4\gamma) > 1/2$. Then by (64) and the fact that $w \neq 0$, we have that

$$\begin{aligned}&\liminf_{n\to\infty}\left(\frac{1}{2}\|w_n^-\|^2 - \frac{1}{2}\|w_n^+\|^2 \right.\\ &\qquad \left. - \frac{1-\lambda_n}{2}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} V_-(x) w_n^2 dx - \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} \frac{F(x,u_n)}{\|u_n\|^2} dx\right)\\ &\leq -\left(\frac{A+\mu_{-1}}{4\gamma} - \frac{1}{2}\right)\|w^-\|^2 - \frac{1}{2}\|w^+\|^2 < 0.\end{aligned} \tag{67}$$

It contradicts (60), since $-\mathscr{L}/\|u_n\|^2 \to 0$ as $n \to \infty$.

Second, we consider the case $w = 0$. In this case, $\lim_{n\to\infty}\|w_n^-\| = 0$. It follows that

$$\liminf_{n\to\infty}\|w_n^+\| \geq 1, \tag{68}$$

since $\|w_n\| = 1$ and $w_n = w_n^+ + w_n^-$. Therefore, the right hand side of (60) is less than $-1/4$ when n is large enough. However, as $n \to \infty$, the left hand side of (60) converges to zero. It induces a contradiction.

Therefore, there exists $R > r$ such that

$$\sup_{\lambda\in[K_*,1]}\sup_{\partial M}\Psi_\lambda \leq 0. \tag{69}$$

This implies that Ψ_λ satisfies assumption (d) in Proposition 8 if $\lambda \in [K_*, 1]$. Finally, it is easy to see that

$$\sup_{\lambda\in[K_*,1]}\sup_{M}\Psi_\lambda < +\infty. \tag{70}$$

Then, the results of this lemma follow immediately from Proposition 8. □

Lemma 10. *Suppose that* (**v**) *and* ($\mathbf{f_1}$)–($\mathbf{f_3}$) *are satisfied. Let* $\lambda \in [K_*, 1]$ *be fixed, where* K_* *is the constant in Lemma 9. If* $\{v_n\}$ *is a bounded* $(PS)_c$*-sequence for* Ψ_λ *with* $c \neq 0$*, then, for every* $n \in \mathbb{N}$*, there exists* $a_n \in \mathbb{Z}^N$ *such that, up to a subsequence,* $u_n := v_n(\cdot + a_n)$ *satisfies*

$$u_n \rightharpoonup u_\lambda \neq 0, \quad \Psi_\lambda(u_\lambda) \leq c, \quad \Psi_\lambda'(u_\lambda) = 0. \tag{71}$$

Proof. The proof of this lemma is inspired by the proof of Lemma 3.7 in [19]. Because $\{v_n\}$ is a bounded sequence in X, up to a subsequence, either

(a) $\lim_{n\to\infty}\sup_{y\in\mathbb{R}^N}\int_{B_1(y)}|v_n|^2 dx = 0$ or

(b) there exist $\varrho > 0$ and $a_n \in \mathbb{Z}^N$ such that $\int_{B_1(a_n)}|v_n|^2 dx \geq \varrho$.

If (a) occurs, using the Lions lemma (see, e.g., [21, Lemma 1.21]), a similar argument as for the proof of [19, Lemma 3.6] shows that

$$\lim_{n\to\infty}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} F(x,v_n)\,dx = 0, \qquad \lim_{n\to\infty}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} f(x,v_n)\,v_n^\pm dx = 0. \tag{72}$$

It follows that

$$\lim_{n\to\infty}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N}\left(2F\left(x,v_n\right)-f\left(x,v_n\right)v_n\right)dx=0. \tag{73}$$

On the other hand, as $\{v_n\}$ is a $(PS)_c$-sequence of Ψ_λ, we have $\langle\Psi'_\lambda(v_n),v_n\rangle\to 0$ and $\Psi_\lambda(v_n)\to c\neq 0$. It follows that

$$\begin{aligned}&\int_{\mathbb{R}^N}\left(f\left(x,v_n\right)v_n-2F\left(x,v_n\right)\right)dx\\&\quad=2\Psi_\lambda\left(v_n\right)-\left\langle\Psi'_\lambda\left(v_n\right),v_n\right\rangle\longrightarrow 2c\neq 0,\quad n\longrightarrow\infty.\end{aligned} \tag{74}$$

This contradicts (73). Therefore, case (a) cannot occur.

If case (b) occurs, let $u_n=v_n(\cdot+a_n)$. For every n,

$$\int_{B_1(0)}\left|u_n\right|^2dx\geq\varrho. \tag{75}$$

Because V and $F(x,t)$ are 1-periodic in every x_j, $\{u_n\}$ is still bounded in X,

$$\lim_{n\to\infty}\Psi_\lambda\left(u_n\right)\leq c,\quad \Psi'_\lambda\left(u_n\right)\rightharpoonup 0,\quad n\longrightarrow\infty. \tag{76}$$

Up to a subsequence, we assume that $u_n\rightharpoonup u_\lambda$ in X as $n\to\infty$. Since $u_n\to u_\lambda$ in $L^2_{\mathrm{loc}}(\mathbb{R}^N)$, it follows from (75) that $u_\lambda\neq 0$. Recall that $\Psi'_\lambda(u_n)$ is weakly sequentially continuous. Therefore, $\Psi'_\lambda(u_n)\rightharpoonup\Psi'_\lambda(u_\lambda)$ and, by (76), $\Psi'_\lambda(u_\lambda)=0$.

Finally, by $(\mathbf{f_3})$ and Fatou's lemma

$$\begin{aligned}c&=\lim_{n\to\infty}\left(\Psi_\lambda\left(u_n\right)-\frac{1}{2}\left\langle\Psi'_\lambda\left(u_n\right),u_n\right\rangle\right)\\&=\lim_{n\to\infty}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N}\widetilde{F}\left(x,u_n\right)\geq\int_{\mathbb{R}^N}\widetilde{F}\left(x,u_\lambda\right)=\Psi_\lambda\left(u_\lambda\right).\end{aligned} \tag{77}$$

□

Lemma 11. *There exist $0<K_{**}<1$ and $\eta>0$ such that, for any $\lambda\in[K_{**},1]$, if $u\neq 0$ satisfies $\Psi'_\lambda(u)=0$, then $\|u\|\geq\eta$.*

Proof. We adapt the arguments of Yang [23, p. 2626] and Liu [12, Lemma 2.2]. Note that, by $(\mathbf{f_1})$ and $(\mathbf{f_2})$, for any $\epsilon>0$, there exists $C_\epsilon>0$ such that

$$\left|f\left(x,t\right)\right|\leq\epsilon\left|t\right|+C_\epsilon\left|t\right|^{p-1}. \tag{78}$$

Let $u\neq 0$ be a critical point of Ψ_λ. Then u is a solution of

$$-\Delta u+V_\lambda u+f\left(x,u\right)=0,\quad u\in X. \tag{79}$$

Multiplying both sides of this equation by $u^\pm$, respectively, and then integrating into $\mathbb{R}^N$, we get that

$$\begin{aligned}0&=\pm\left\|u^\pm\right\|^2+(1-\lambda)\int_{\mathbb{R}^N}V_-\left(x\right)u_nu^\pm dx\\&\quad+\int_{\mathbb{R}^N}f\left(x,u\right)u^\pm dx.\end{aligned} \tag{80}$$

It follows that

$$\begin{aligned}\left\|u^\pm\right\|^2&=\mp(1-\lambda)\int_{\mathbb{R}^N}V_-\left(x\right)uu^\pm dx\mp\int_{\mathbb{R}^N}f\left(x,u\right)u^\pm dx\\&\leq(1-\lambda)\sup_{\mathbb{R}^N}V_-\int_{\mathbb{R}^N}|u|\cdot\left|u^\pm\right|dx\\&\quad+\epsilon\int_{\mathbb{R}^N}|u|\cdot\left|u^\pm\right|dx+C_\epsilon\int_{\mathbb{R}^N}|u|^{p-1}\left|u^\pm\right|dx\\&\leq C_1\left((1-\lambda)+\epsilon\right)\|u\|\cdot\left\|u^\pm\right\|+C_2\|u\|^{p-1}\left\|u^\pm\right\|,\end{aligned} \tag{81}$$

where C_1 and C_2 are positive constants related to the Sobolev inequalities and $\sup_{\mathbb{R}^N}V_-$. From the above two inequalities, we obtain

$$\|u\|^2=\left\|u^+\right\|^2+\left\|u^-\right\|^2\leq 2C_1\left((1-\lambda)+\epsilon\right)\|u\|^2+2C_2\|u\|^p. \tag{82}$$

Because $p>2$, this implies that $\|u\|\geq\eta$ for some $\eta>0$ if $\epsilon>0$ and $1-K_{**}>0$ are small enough and $\lambda\in[K_{**},1]$. The desired result follows. □

Let $K=\max\{K_*,K_{**}\}$, where K_* and K_{**} are the constants that appeared in Lemmas 9 and 11, respectively. Combining Lemmas 9–11, we obtain the following lemma.

Lemma 12. *Suppose $(\mathbf{v})$ and $(\mathbf{f_1})$–$(\mathbf{f_3})$ are satisfied. Then, there exist $\eta>0$, $\{\lambda_n\}\subset[K,1]$, and $\{u_n\}\subset X$ such that $\lambda_n\to 1$,*

$$\sup_n\Psi_{\lambda_n}\left(u_n\right)<+\infty,\quad\left\|u_n\right\|\geq\eta,\quad\Psi'_{\lambda_n}\left(u_n\right)=0. \tag{83}$$

3. A Priori Bound of Approximate Solutions and Proof of the Main Theorem

In this section, we give a priori bound for the sequence of approximate solutions $\{u_n\}$ obtained in Lemma 12. We then give the proofs of Theorem 3.

Lemma 13. *Suppose $(\mathbf{v})$ and $(\mathbf{f_1})$–$(\mathbf{f_3})$ are satisfied. Let $\{u_n\}$ be the sequence obtained in Lemma 12. Then, $\{u_n\}\subset L^\infty(\mathbb{R}^N)$ and*

$$\sup_n\left\|u_n\right\|_{L^\infty(\mathbb{R}^N)}\leq D. \tag{84}$$

Proof. From $\Psi'_{\lambda_n}(u_n)=0$, we deduce that u_n is a weak solution of (45) with $\lambda=\lambda_n$; that is,

$$-\Delta u_n+V_{\lambda_n}\left(x\right)u_n+f\left(x,u_n\right)=0\quad\text{in }\mathbb{R}^N. \tag{85}$$

By assumption $(\mathbf{f_1})$ and the bootstrap argument of elliptic equations, we deduce that $u_n\in L^\infty(\mathbb{R}^N)$.

Multiplying both sides of (85) by $v_n=(u_n-D)^+:=\max\{u_n-D,0\}$ and integrating into $\mathbb{R}^N$, we get that

$$\int_{\mathbb{R}^N}\left|\nabla v_n\right|^2dx+\int_{u_n\geq D}\left(V_{\lambda_n}\left(x\right)u_n+f\left(x,u_n\right)\right)v_ndx=0. \tag{86}$$

Recall that $V_{\lambda_n} = V_+ - \lambda_n V_-$ and $\lambda_n \le 1$. Then by (5), we get that

$$\begin{aligned}&\int_{u_n\ge D}\left(V_{\lambda_n}(x)u_n + f(x,u_n)\right)v_n dx\\&\quad= \int_{u_n\ge D}\left(V_{\lambda_n}(x) + \frac{f(x,u_n)}{u_n}\right)u_n v_n dx \ge 0.\end{aligned} \tag{87}$$

This together with (86) yields $v_n = 0$. It follows that $u_n(x) \le D$ on $\mathbb{R}^N$.

Similarly, multiplying both sides of (85) by $w_n = (u_n + D)^- := \max\{-(u_n+D), 0\}$ and integrating into $\mathbb{R}^N$, we can get that $u_n \ge -D$ on $\mathbb{R}^N$. Therefore, for all n, $\|u_n\|_{L^\infty(\mathbb{R}^N)} \le D$. □

Lemma 14. *Suppose that* (**v**), ($\mathbf{f_1}$), ($\mathbf{f_2}$), ($\mathbf{f_3}$), *and* ($\mathbf{f_4}$) *are satisfied. Let* $\{u_n\}$ *be the sequence obtained in Lemma 12. Then*

$$0 < \inf_n \|u_n\| \le \sup_n \|u_n\| < +\infty. \tag{88}$$

Proof. As $\Psi'_{\lambda_n}(u_n) = 0$ and $u_n \ne 0$, Lemma 11 implies that $\inf_n \|u_n\| > 0$.

To prove $\sup_n \|u_n\| < +\infty$, we apply an indirect argument and assume by contradiction that $\|u_n\| \to +\infty$.

Since $\Psi'_{\lambda_n}(u_n) = 0$, by (81), we get that

$$\begin{aligned}\|u_n^\pm\|^2 &= \mp(1-\lambda_n)\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} V_-(x)u_n u_n^\pm dx \mp \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} f(x,u_n)u_n^\pm dx\\&= \mp\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} f(x,u_n)u_n^\pm dx + (1-\lambda_n)O\left(\|u_n\|^2\right).\end{aligned} \tag{89}$$

It follows that

$$\begin{aligned}&\|u_n\|^2 + \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} f(x,u_n)(u_n^+ - u_n^-)dx\\&\quad= \|u_n^+\|^2 + \|u_n^-\|^2\\&\qquad+ \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} f(x,u_n)(u_n^+ - u_n^-)dx\\&\quad= (1-\lambda_n)O\left(\|u_n\|^2\right).\end{aligned} \tag{90}$$

Set $w_n = u_n/\|u_n\|$. Then, by (90),

$$\begin{aligned}&\|u_n\|^2\left(1 + \int_{\mathbb{R}^N}\frac{f(x,u_n)}{u_n}(w_n^+ - w_n^-)w_n dx\right)\\&\quad= (1-\lambda_n)O\left(\|u_n\|^2\right).\end{aligned} \tag{91}$$

Then, by $\lambda_n \to 1$ as $n \to \infty$, we have that

$$\int_{\mathbb{R}^N}\frac{f(x,u_n)}{u_n}(w_n^+ - w_n^-)w_n dx \longrightarrow -1, \quad n \longrightarrow \infty. \tag{92}$$

From Lemma 12,

$$C_0 := \sup_n \Psi_{\lambda_n}(u_n) < +\infty. \tag{93}$$

Then, by $\Psi'_{\lambda_n}(u_n) = 0$, we obtain

$$2C_0 \ge 2\Psi_{\lambda_n}(u_n) - \left\langle \Psi'_{\lambda_n}(u_n), u_n\right\rangle = 2\int_{\mathbb{R}^N}\widetilde{F}(x,u_n)dx. \tag{94}$$

From ($\mathbf{f_3}$), we have

$$2C_0 \ge 2\int_{\mathbb{R}^N}\widetilde{F}(x,u_n)dx \ge 2\int_{\{x|D\ge|u_n(x)|\ge\kappa\}}\widetilde{F}(x,u_n)dx, \tag{95}$$

where κ is the constant in ($\mathbf{f_4}$). As the continuous function $\widetilde{F}$ is 1-periodic in every x_j variable, we deduce from (8) that there exists a constant $C' > 0$ such that

$$\begin{aligned}&\widetilde{F}(x,t) \ge C't^2,\\&\quad\text{for every } (x,t) \in \mathbb{R}^N\times\mathbb{R} \text{ with } \kappa \le |t| \le D.\end{aligned} \tag{96}$$

Combining (95) and (96) leads to

$$C_0 \ge C'\int_{\{x|D\ge|u_n(x)|\ge\kappa\}} u_n^2 dx. \tag{97}$$

Dividing both sides of this inequality by $\|u_n\|^2$ and sending $n \to \infty$, we obtain

$$\lim_{n\to\infty}\int_{\{x|D\ge|u_n(x)|\ge\kappa\}} w_n^2 dx = 0. \tag{98}$$

From (7), (21), and (22), we have that

$$\begin{aligned}&\int_{\{x||u_n(x)|<\kappa\}}\left|\frac{f(x,u_n)}{u_n}(w_n^+ - w_n^-)w_n\right|dx\\&\quad\le \nu\int_{\{x||u_n(x)|<\kappa\}}\left|(w_n^+ - w_n^-)w_n\right|dx\\&\quad\le \nu\int_{\mathbb{R}^N}\left|(w_n^+ - w_n^-)w_n\right|dx\\&\quad\le \nu\|w_n\|_{L^2}^2 \le \frac{\nu}{\mu_0}\|w_n\|^2 = \frac{\nu}{\mu_0} < 1,\end{aligned} \tag{99}$$

where μ_0 is the constant defined in (**v**).

Since $f \in C(\mathbb{R}^N\times\mathbb{R})$ and $\lim_{t\to 0} f(x,t)/t = 0$, we deduce that there exists $C > 0$ such that, for every $(x,t) \in \mathbb{R}^N\times\mathbb{R}$ with $|t| \le D$,

$$\left|f(x,t)\right| \le C|t|. \tag{100}$$

This together with (98) gives

$$\begin{aligned}&\int_{\{x|D\ge|u_n(x)|\ge\kappa\}}\left|\frac{f(x,u_n)}{u_n}(w_n^+ - w_n^-)w_n\right|dx\\&\quad\le C\int_{\{x|D\ge|u_n(x)|\ge\kappa\}}\left|(w_n^+ - w_n^-)w_n\right|dx\\&\quad\le C\|w_n^+ - w_n^-\|_{L^2}\left(\int_{\{x|D\ge|u_n(x)|\ge\kappa\}} w_n^2 dx\right)^{1/2}\\&\quad\le 2C\|w_n\|_{L^2}\left(\int_{\{x|D\ge|u_n(x)|\ge\kappa\}} w_n^2 dx\right)^{1/2} \longrightarrow 0, \quad n \longrightarrow \infty.\end{aligned} \tag{101}$$

Combining (99) and (101) yields

$$\begin{aligned}
&\limsup_{n\to\infty}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N}\left|\frac{f(x,u_n)}{u_n}(w_n^+-w_n^-)w_n\right|dx\\
&\le\limsup_{n\to\infty}\int_{\{x||u_n(x)|<\kappa\}}\left|\frac{f(x,u_n)}{u_n}(w_n^+-w_n^-)w_n\right|dx\\
&\quad+\limsup_{n\to\infty}\int_{\{x|D\ge|u_n(x)|\ge\kappa\}}\left|\frac{f(x,u_n)}{u_n}(w_n^+-w_n^-)w_n\right|dx<1.
\end{aligned}\tag{102}$$

This contradicts (92). Therefore, $\{u_n\}$ is bounded in X. □

Proof of Theorem 3. Let $\{u_n\}$ be the sequence obtained in Lemma 12. From Lemma 14, $\{u_n\}$ is bounded in X. Therefore, up to a subsequence, either

(a) $\lim_{n\to\infty}\sup_{y\in\mathbb{R}^N}\int_{B_1(y)}|u_n|^2dx=0$ or

(b) there exist $\varrho>0$ and $y_n\in\mathbb{Z}^N$ such that $\int_{B_1(y_n)}|u_n|^2dx\ge\varrho$.

According to (72), if case (a) occurs,

$$\lim_{n\to\infty}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N}f(x,u_n)u_n^{\pm}dx=0.\tag{103}$$

Then, by (81) and $\lambda_n\to1$, we have

$$\begin{aligned}
\|u_n^{\pm}\|^2&=\mp(1-\lambda_n)\int_{\mathbb{R}^N}V_-(x)u_nu_n^{\pm}dx\\
&\quad\mp\int_{\mathbb{R}^N}f(x,u_n)u_n^{\pm}dx\\
&\le C(1-\lambda_n)\|u_n\|_{L^2}^2+\left|\int_{\mathbb{R}^N}f(x,u_n)u_n^{\pm}dx\right|\longrightarrow0.
\end{aligned}\tag{104}$$

This contradicts $\inf_n\|u_n\|>0$ (see (88)). Therefore, case (a) cannot occur. As case (b) therefore occurs, $w_n=u_n(\cdot+y_n)$ satisfies $w_n\rightharpoonup u_0\ne0$. From (14) and (43), we have that

$$\Psi_\lambda(u)=-\Phi(u)+\frac{\lambda-1}{2}\int_{\mathbb{R}^N}V_-u^2dx,\quad\forall u\in X.\tag{105}$$

It follows that

$$\left\langle\Psi_\lambda'(u),\varphi\right\rangle=-\left\langle\Phi'(u),\varphi\right\rangle+(\lambda-1)\int_{\mathbb{R}^N}V_-u\varphi dx,\quad\forall u,\varphi\in X.\tag{106}$$

By $\Psi_{\lambda_n}'(u_n)=0$ (see Lemma 12), we have $\Psi'_{\lambda_n}(w_n)=0$. From (106), we have that, for any $\varphi\in X$,

$$\begin{aligned}
\left\langle\Psi'_{\lambda_n}(w_n),\varphi\right\rangle&=-\left\langle\Phi'(w_n),\varphi\right\rangle+(\lambda_n-1)\\
&\quad\times\int_{\mathbb{R}^N}V_-(x)w_n\varphi dx.
\end{aligned}\tag{107}$$

Together with $\Psi_{\lambda_n}'(w_n)=0$ and $\lambda_n\to1$, this yields

$$\left\langle\Phi'(w_n),\varphi\right\rangle\longrightarrow0,\quad\forall\varphi\in X.\tag{108}$$

Finally, by $w_n\rightharpoonup u_0\ne0$ and the weakly sequential continuity of Φ', we have that $\Phi'(u_0)=0$. Therefore, u_0 is a nontrivial solution of (1). This completes the proof. □

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of this paper.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank the anonymous referees for their comments and suggestions on the paper. Shaowei Chen was supported by Science Foundation of Huaqiao University and Promotion Program for Young and Middle-Aged Teacher in Science and Technology Research of Huaqiao University (ZQN-PY119).

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