

MULTIPLICITY OF POSITIVE SOLUTIONS TO SCHRÖDINGER-TYPE POSITONE PROBLEMS

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ABSTRACT. We establish multiplicity results for positive solutions to the Schrödinger-type singular positone problem: $-\Delta u + V(x)u = \lambda f(u)$ in Ω , $u = 0$ on $\partial\Omega$, where Ω is a bounded domain in \mathbb{R}^N , $N > 2$, λ is a positive parameter, $V \in L^\infty(\Omega)$ and $f : [0, \infty) \rightarrow (0, \infty)$ is a continuous function. In particular, when f is sublinear at infinity we discuss the existence of at least three positive solutions for a certain range of λ . The proofs are mainly based on the sub- and supersolution method.

1. Introduction and Main Results

We are concerned with the existence of multiple positive solutions of the following Schrödinger-type positone problems with Dirichlet boundary condition

$$\begin{cases} -\Delta u + V(x)u = \lambda f(u), & x \in \Omega, \\ u = 0, & x \in \partial\Omega, \end{cases} \quad (1)$$

where $0 \in \Omega$ is a nonempty bounded domain in \mathbb{R}^N , $N > 2$, with a smooth boundary $\partial\Omega$, $V \in L^\infty(\Omega)$ and λ is a positive real parameter. We assume that $f \in C([0, \infty), (0, \infty))$ satisfies

$$(F_1) \quad \lim_{s \rightarrow \infty} \frac{f(s)}{s} = 0,$$

$$(F_2) \quad f \text{ is nondecreasing for all } s \geq 0.$$

We further assume that $V \in L^\infty(\Omega)$ satisfies the following condition:

$$(V_1) \quad \text{There exists } c_V > 0 \text{ such that } V(x) \geq -c_V > -\frac{1}{\|e\|_\infty} \text{ for } x \in \Omega, \text{ when } e$$

is the positive solution of

$$\begin{cases} -\Delta e = 1, & \text{in } \Omega, \\ e = 0, & \text{on } \partial\Omega. \end{cases}$$

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The equation (1) is derived based on the nonlinear Schrödinger equation, which is detailed in [9]. Nonlinear Schrödinger equations have been widely studied to investigate the existence of solutions that act according to V on the whole space \mathbb{R}^N (see [2, 5, 7] or references therein) or on bounded domains with linear boundary conditions in [4]. In the case when $V \equiv 0$, studying existence of multiple positive solutions of (1) has a rich history for a long time (see [3] and [8] for $\beta = 0$ or references therein). In this paper, we establish the existence of positive solutions of a singular Schrödinger equation (1) for all $\lambda > 0$ and multiple positive solutions of (1) for a certain range of λ by the method of sub and supersolution when $V \not\equiv 0$ is bounded in Ω . We first state our main result.

Theorem 1.1. *Assume (F_1) and (V_1) . Then, for each $\lambda > 0$ the problem (1) has a positive solution $u_\lambda \in C^2(\Omega) \cap C(\bar{\Omega})$. Moreover, if $\frac{s}{\tilde{f}(s)}$ is nondecreasing, the solution is unique.*

Next, to state the multiplicity result, we define for any $0 < a < d$

$$Q(a, d) := \frac{a}{f(a)} / \frac{d}{f(d)}$$

and let

$$A = \frac{(N+1)^{N+1}}{N^N} \quad \text{and} \quad B = \frac{R^2}{AN + \|V\|_\infty R^2},$$

where R is the radius of the largest inscribed ball B_R in Ω . We further let $K > 0$ be a constant such that

$$\frac{1}{K} \leq 1 - c_V \|e\|_\infty. \quad (2)$$

from the condition (V_1) .

Theorem 1.2. *Assume (F_1) , (F_2) and (V_1) . If there exist a, d and b with $0 < a < d < \frac{2}{A}b$ such that $Q(a, d) > \frac{K\|e\|_\infty}{B}$,*

$$\tilde{f}(s) := f(s) - \frac{f(d)}{d} B \|V\|_\infty s > 0 \quad \forall s \in [0, b]$$

and is nondecreasing on $[a, b]$, then the problem (1) has at least three positive solutions $u_\lambda \in C^2(\Omega) \cap C(\bar{\Omega})$ for all $\lambda_ < \lambda < \lambda^*$, where*

$$\lambda_* = \frac{d}{f(d)} \frac{1}{B}, \quad \lambda^* = \min \left\{ \frac{a}{f(a)} \frac{1}{K \|e\|_\infty}, \frac{2b}{f(d)AB} \right\}.$$

To obtain multiple positive solutions for a certain range of λ , it is important to construct a pair of sub and supersolution (ψ_2, Z_2) of (1) with the property that $\psi_1 \leq \psi_2 \leq Z_1$, $\psi_1 \leq Z_2 \leq Z_1$ and $\psi_2 \not\leq Z_2$ when (ψ_1, Z_1) is a pair of sub and supersolution of (1). However, the term $V(x)$ acting on u gives a difficulty on the construction of a second pair of sub and supersolution (ψ_2, Z_2) . Furthermore, since we allow V to be negative on Ω , the operator $-\Delta + V(x)$ does not satisfy the maximum principle. To overcome this issues, we manipulate the first equation of (1) in such a way that we define a new function $\tilde{f} : [0, \infty) \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$

by $\tilde{f}(s) = f(s) - \frac{f(d)}{d}B\|V\|_\infty s$ so that the function $V(x)$ is related to the reaction term. Here we also emphasize that $\tilde{f}(s)$ is negative for s large since $f(s)$ is sublinear near infinity. In this case, it is not easy to construct the second pair of sub and supersolution (ψ_2, Z_2) satisfying the above property in the region at which \tilde{f} is positive.

Remark 1. A simple example satisfying the assumptions of Theorem 1.2 is

$$\begin{cases} -\Delta u + V(x)u = \lambda e^{\frac{\alpha u}{\alpha+u}}, & x \in \Omega, \\ u = 0, & x \in \partial\Omega. \end{cases} \quad (3)$$

Clearly, $f(u) = e^{\frac{\alpha u}{\alpha+u}}$ satisfies assumptions (F_1) and (F_2) . Choosing $d = \alpha$, we can see that $\tilde{f}(d) = (1 - B\|V\|_\infty)f(\alpha) > 0$ for all $\alpha > 0$ and $\tilde{f}'(d) = e^{\frac{\alpha}{4}}[\frac{1}{4} - \frac{B\|V\|_\infty}{\alpha}] \rightarrow \frac{1}{4}e^{\frac{\alpha}{2}} > 0$ as $\alpha \rightarrow \infty$. Hence, there exists $\alpha_1 > 0$ such that

$$\tilde{f}'\left(\left(1 - \frac{1}{\sqrt{\alpha_1}}\right)\alpha_1\right) > 0,$$

which implies that $\tilde{f}'(\alpha) > 0$ for all $\alpha > \left(1 - \frac{1}{\sqrt{\alpha_1}}\right)\alpha_1$. Noting that $Q(c\alpha, \alpha) = ce^{\frac{1}{2} - \frac{c}{c+1}\alpha}$ for a constant c , there exists $\alpha_2 > 0$ such that

$$Q\left(\left(1 - \frac{1}{\sqrt{\alpha_2}}\right)\alpha_2, \alpha_2\right) = \left(1 - \frac{1}{\sqrt{\alpha_2}}\right)e^{\frac{\alpha_2}{4\sqrt{\alpha_2} - 2}} > \frac{K\|e\|_\infty}{B},$$

which also yields that $Q\left(\left(1 - \frac{1}{\sqrt{\alpha}}\right)\alpha, \alpha\right) > \frac{K\|e\|_\infty}{B}$ for all $\alpha > \alpha_2$. Observing that for a constant c

$$\tilde{f}'(c\alpha) = \frac{e^{\frac{c}{c+1}\alpha}}{(c+1)^2} - \frac{e^{\frac{\alpha}{2}}}{\alpha}B\|V\|_\infty,$$

there exist $\bar{c} > \frac{A}{2}$ and $\alpha_3 > 0$ large enough such that

$$\tilde{f}'(\bar{c}\alpha_3) \geq 0$$

as $\frac{c}{c+1} > \frac{1}{2}$ for $c > 1$. It also holds $\tilde{f}'(\bar{c}\alpha) \geq 0$ for all $\alpha \geq \alpha_3$. Now, letting $\alpha^* = \max\{\alpha_1, \alpha_2, \alpha_3\}$ and choosing $a = \left(1 - \frac{1}{\sqrt{\alpha^*}}\right)\alpha^*$, $d = \alpha^*$ and $b = \bar{c}\alpha^*$, we have

$$\tilde{f}'(s) \geq 0 \text{ in } [a, b] \text{ and } Q(a, d) > \frac{K\|e\|_\infty}{B}$$

and $\tilde{f}(s) = f(s) - \frac{f(d)}{d}B\|V\|_\infty s > 0$ on $[0, b]$ for sufficiently small value of $\|V\|_\infty$.

This paper is organized as follows: In the next Section 2, we introduce a method of sub and supersolutions for (1) and a three solution theorem for problem (1). Section 3 is devoted to the proofs of Theorem 1.1 and Theorem 1.2.

2. Preliminary

In this section, we define sub and supersolution of (1) and introduce the method of obtaining sub- and supersolutions and three solution theorem for (1).

A subsolution of (1) is defined as a function $\psi : \bar{\Omega} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ satisfying

$$\begin{cases} -\Delta\psi + V(x)\psi \leq \lambda f(\psi), & x \in \Omega, \\ \psi \leq 0, & x \in \partial\Omega, \end{cases} \quad (4)$$

while a supersolution of (1) is defined as a function $\phi : \bar{\Omega} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ satisfying

$$\begin{cases} -\Delta\phi + V(x)\phi \geq \lambda f(\phi), & x \in \Omega, \\ \phi \geq 0, & x \in \partial\Omega. \end{cases} \quad (5)$$

Now we introduce the theorem of sub and supersolution and three solution theorem.

Lemma 2.1. *(Theorem for sub and supersolution in [1]). If a subsolution ψ and a supersolution ϕ of (1) exist such that $\psi \leq \phi$ on $\bar{\Omega}$, then (1) has at least one solution $u \in C^2(\Omega) \cap C(\bar{\Omega})$ satisfying $\psi \leq u \leq \phi$ on $\bar{\Omega}$.*

Lemma 2.2. *(Three solution Theorem in [1] and [10]). Suppose there exists two pairs of ordered sub and supersolutions (ψ_1, Z_1) and (ψ_2, Z_2) of (1) with the property that $\psi_1 \leq \psi_2 \leq Z_1$, $\psi_1 \leq Z_2 \leq Z_1$ and $\psi_2 \not\leq Z_2$. Additionally assume that ψ_2, Z_2 are not solutions of (1). Then there exists at least three solutions $u_i, i = 1, 2, 3$ for (1) where $u_1 \in [\psi_1, Z_2], u_2 \in [\psi_2, Z_1]$ and $u_3 \in [\psi_1, Z_1] \setminus ([\psi_1, Z_2] \cup [\psi_2, Z_1])$.*

Lemma 2.3. *(see [6]). Assume (V_1) . Then the problem*

$$\begin{cases} -\Delta w + V(x)w = 1, & \text{in } \Omega \\ w = 0, & \text{on } \partial\Omega \end{cases} \quad (W)$$

has a solution w such that $w(x) > 0$ for $x \in \Omega$ and $\frac{\partial w}{\partial \eta} < 0$ on $\partial\Omega$.

3. Proof of Main Theorems

3.1. Proof of Theorem 1.1

Proof. It is easy to see that $\psi_1 \equiv 0$ is a strict subsolution of (1). Now, we construct a supersolution. Let us define $\bar{f}(s) := \max_{t \leq s} f(t)$. Then, it follows that $f(s) \leq \bar{f}(s)$, \bar{f} is monotone increasing and $\lim_{s \rightarrow \infty} \frac{\bar{f}(s)}{s} = 0$. This implies that there exists $M_\lambda \gg 1$ such that

$$\frac{\bar{f}(M_\lambda \|w\|_\infty)}{M_\lambda \|w\|_\infty} \leq \frac{1}{\lambda \|w\|_\infty}. \quad (6)$$

Let $Z_1 = M_\lambda w$. Then, using (6) and the definition of \bar{f} , we can find

$$\begin{aligned} -\Delta Z_1 + V(x)Z_1 &= M_\lambda(-\Delta w + V(x)w) = M_\lambda \\ &\geq \lambda \bar{f}(M_\lambda \|w\|_\infty) \\ &\geq \lambda \bar{f}(M_\lambda w) \\ &\geq \lambda f(M_\lambda w) = \lambda f(Z_1). \end{aligned}$$

Also we easily get $Z_1 = 0$ on $\partial\Omega$, which implies that Z_1 is a supersolution of (1). By Lemma 2.1, there exists a solution u_λ such that $0 \leq u_\lambda \leq Z_1$ for each $\lambda > 0$.

Next, let us show that this solution is unique for any $\lambda > 0$ provided $\frac{s}{\bar{f}(s)}$ is nondecreasing on $(0, \infty)$. Since $\psi_1 \equiv 0$ is a subsolution of (1), there exists a minimal solution of (1). Let u_1 be a minimal solution and u_2 any other solution of (1). Then $u_1 \leq u_2$ in Ω . It follows from (1) that

$$\begin{aligned} 0 &= \int_\Omega (u_1 \Delta u_2 - u_2 \Delta u_1) dx = \int_\Omega u_1 (-\lambda f(u_2) + V(x)u_2) + u_2 (\lambda f(u_1) - V(x)u_1) dx \\ &= \int_\Omega \lambda f(u_1) f(u_2) \left[\frac{u_2}{f(u_2)} - \frac{u_1}{f(u_1)} \right] dx \geq 0, \end{aligned}$$

which yields $u_1 = u_2$. Hence, the solution is unique. \square

3.2. Proof of Theorem 1.2

Proof. We first construct a supersolution for $\lambda < \lambda^*$. From Assumption (V₁) there exists $c_V > 0$ such that $V(x) \geq -c_V > -\frac{1}{\|e\|_\infty}$. Let $Z_2 = a \frac{e}{\|e\|_\infty}$. Then in Ω , we have

$$\begin{aligned} -\Delta Z_2 + V(x)Z_2 &= \frac{a}{\|e\|_\infty} (-\Delta e + V(x)e) \\ &> \lambda K f(a)(1 + V(x)e) \\ &\geq \lambda K f\left(a \frac{e}{\|e\|_\infty}\right) (1 - c_V \|e\|_\infty) \geq \lambda f(Z_2) \end{aligned}$$

where we used the fact $\lambda < \frac{a}{f(a)K\|e\|_\infty}$ at the first inequality and $1 - c_V \|e\|_\infty \geq \frac{1}{K}$ at the second inequality. Clearly, $Z_2 = 0$ on $\partial\Omega$. Hence, Z_2 is supersolution for $\lambda < \lambda^*$.

Now we construct a positive subsolution ψ_2 of the following problem

$$\begin{cases} -\Delta u + \|V\|_\infty u = \lambda f(u), & \text{in } \Omega, \\ u = 0, & \text{on } \partial\Omega. \end{cases} \quad (7)$$

when $\lambda > \lambda_*$. Then, ψ_2 is a subsolution of (1) since

$$-\Delta \psi_2 + V(x)\psi_2 \leq -\Delta \psi_2 + \|V\|_\infty \psi_2 \leq \lambda f(\psi_2).$$

In order to construct the positive subsolution ψ_2 , we recall $\tilde{f}(u) = f(u) - \frac{f(d)}{d} B \|V\|_\infty u > 0$ and consider the following problem

$$\begin{cases} -\Delta u = \lambda \tilde{f}(u), & \text{in } \Omega, \\ u = 0, & \text{on } \partial\Omega. \end{cases} \quad (8)$$

Recall that R is the radius of the biggest inscribed ball in Ω . For $0 < \epsilon < R$ and $\delta, \mu > 1$ let us define $\rho : [0, R] \rightarrow [0, 1]$ by

$$\rho(r) = \begin{cases} 1, & 0 \leq r \leq \epsilon, \\ 1 - (1 - (\frac{R-r}{R-\epsilon})^\mu)^\delta, & \epsilon < r \leq R. \end{cases}$$

Then we have

$$\rho'(r) = \begin{cases} 0, & 0 \leq r \leq \epsilon, \\ -\frac{\delta\mu}{R-\epsilon} (1 - (\frac{R-r}{R-\epsilon})^\mu)^{\delta-1} (\frac{R-r}{R-\epsilon})^{\mu-1}, & \epsilon < r \leq R. \end{cases}$$

Let $v(r) = d\rho(r)$. Note that $|v'(r)| \leq d\frac{\delta\mu}{R-\epsilon}$. Define ψ as the radially symmetric solution of

$$\begin{cases} -\Delta\psi = \lambda \tilde{f}(v(|x|)), & \text{in } B_R(0), \\ \psi = 0, & \text{on } \partial B_R(0). \end{cases}$$

Then ψ satisfies

$$\begin{cases} -(r^{N-1}(\psi'(r)))' = \lambda r^{N-1} \tilde{f}(v(r)), \\ \psi'(0) = 0, \quad \psi(R) = 0. \end{cases} \quad (9)$$

Integrating (9), for $0 < r < R$, we have

$$-\psi'(r) = \frac{\lambda}{r^{N-1}} \int_0^r s^{N-1} \tilde{f}(v(s)) ds. \quad (10)$$

Here we claim that

$$\psi(r) \geq v(r), \quad \forall 0 \leq r \leq R \quad (11)$$

and

$$\|\psi\|_\infty \leq b \quad (12)$$

when $\frac{d}{f(d)} \frac{1}{B} < \lambda < \frac{2b}{f(d)AB}$.

In order to prove (11), it is enough to show that

$$-\psi'(r) \geq -v'(r), \quad \forall 0 \leq r \leq R \quad (13)$$

as $\psi(R) = 0 = v(R)$. Notice that for $0 \leq r \leq \epsilon$, $\psi'(r) \leq 0 = v'(r)$. Hence, for $r > \epsilon$ we get from (10)

$$\begin{aligned} -\psi'(r) &= \frac{\lambda}{r^{N-1}} \int_0^r s^{N-1} \tilde{f}(v(s)) ds \\ &> \frac{\lambda}{R^{N-1}} \int_0^\epsilon s^{N-1} \tilde{f}(v(s)) ds \\ &= \frac{\lambda}{R^{N-1}} \frac{\epsilon^N}{N} \tilde{f}(d). \end{aligned}$$

If $\lambda > \frac{d}{\tilde{f}(d)} \frac{NR^{N-1}}{(R-\epsilon)\epsilon^N} \delta\mu$, then we conclude (13). Note that

$$\inf_{\epsilon} \frac{d}{\tilde{f}(d)} \frac{NR^{N-1}}{(R-\epsilon)\epsilon^N} \delta\mu = \frac{d}{\tilde{f}(d)} \frac{(N+1)^{N+1}}{R^2 N^{N-1}} \delta\mu$$

and is achieved at $\epsilon = \frac{NR}{N+1}$. Hence, if $\lambda > \frac{d}{\tilde{f}(d)} \frac{(N+1)^{N+1}}{R^2 N^{N-1}}$, then in the definition of ρ we can choose $\epsilon = \frac{NR}{N+1}$ and the values of δ and μ so that $\lambda \geq \frac{d}{\tilde{f}(d)} \frac{NR^{N-1}}{(R-\epsilon)\epsilon^N} \delta\mu$, and hence (13) holds. Note that it is clear that

$$\tilde{f}(d) = (1 - B\|V\|_{\infty})f(d) \quad (14)$$

from the definition of $\tilde{f}(u)$. Hence the range of λ is written as

$$\lambda > \frac{d}{\tilde{f}(d)} \frac{(N+1)^{N+1}}{R^2 N^{N-1}} = \frac{d}{f(d)} \frac{1}{B}.$$

Now to show (12), we integrate (10) from t to R , we obtain that for $0 \leq r \leq R$

$$\begin{aligned} \psi(t) &= \int_t^R \frac{\lambda}{r^{N-1}} \left(\int_0^r s^{N-1} \tilde{f}(v(s)) ds \right) dr \\ &\leq \int_t^R \frac{\lambda}{r^{N-1}} \tilde{f}(d) \left(\int_0^r s^{N-1} ds \right) dr \\ &\leq \lambda \frac{\tilde{f}(d)}{N} \int_0^R r dr = \lambda \frac{\tilde{f}(d)}{2N} R^2 \end{aligned}$$

Hence, if $\lambda < \frac{b}{\tilde{f}(d)} \frac{2N}{R^2}$, then we get $\|\psi\|_{\infty} \leq b$. Again, from (14), the range of λ is written as $\lambda < \frac{2b}{f(d)AB}$. Hence, we find that $v(r) \leq \psi(r) \leq b, \forall 0 \leq r \leq R$ when $\frac{d}{f(d)} \frac{1}{B} < \lambda < \frac{2b}{f(d)AB}$. From $v(r) \leq \psi(r) \leq b, \forall 0 \leq r \leq R$, we see

$$-\Delta\psi = \lambda\tilde{f}(v) \leq \lambda\tilde{f}(\psi), \quad \text{in } B_R(0) \text{ and } \psi = 0 \text{ on } \partial B_R(0).$$

Now we let $\psi_2(x) = \psi(x)$ if $x \in B_R(0)$ and $\psi_2(x) = 0$ if $x \in \Omega \setminus B_R(0)$. Then ψ_2 is a positive subsolution of (8) for $\lambda_* = \frac{d}{f(d)} \frac{1}{B} < \lambda < \frac{2b}{f(d)AB}$. Finally, we find that for $\lambda > \lambda_*$

$$\begin{aligned} -\Delta\psi_2 \leq \lambda\tilde{f}(\psi_2) &= \lambda[f(\psi_2) - \frac{1}{\lambda_*}\|V\|_{\infty}\psi_2] \\ &< \lambda[f(\psi_2) - \frac{1}{\lambda}\|V\|_{\infty}\psi_2] \\ &= \lambda f(\psi_2) - \|V\|_{\infty}\psi_2, \end{aligned}$$

which implies that ψ_2 is a nonnegative subsolution of (7). Finally, we obtain the subsolution ψ_2 of (1) satisfying $\psi_2 \not\leq Z_2$ for $\lambda_* < \lambda < \lambda^*$.

From the proof of Theorem 1.1 we have a subsolution $\psi_1 \equiv 0$ such that $\psi_1 \leq Z_2$ and a sufficiently large supersolution $Z_1 = M_{\lambda}w$ such that $\psi_2 \leq Z_1$.

Hence, there exist a positive solutions u_1 and u_2 of (1) such that $\psi_1 \leq u_1 \leq Z_2$ and $\psi_2 \leq u_2 \leq Z_1$. Note that $u_1 \neq u_2$ as $\psi_2 \not\leq Z_2$. By three solution theorem 2.2, there exists a positive solution u_3 such that $u_3 \in [\psi_1, Z_1] \setminus ([\psi_1, Z_2] \cup [\psi_2, Z_1])$. \square

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