



Local mountain-pass for a class of elliptic problems in \mathbb{R}^N involving critical growth

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1. Introduction

In this paper we shall be concerned with the existence and the concentration behavior of positive bound-state solutions (solutions with bounded energy) for the problem

$$-\varepsilon^2 \Delta u + V(z)u = f(u) + u^{2^*-1}, \quad \text{in } \mathbb{R}^N,$$

$$u \in C^2(\mathbb{R}^N) \cap H^1(\mathbb{R}^N), \quad u(z) > 0 \quad \text{for all } z \in \mathbb{R}^N, \quad (P_\varepsilon)$$

where $\varepsilon > 0$; $2^* = 2N/(N-2)$, $N \geq 3$, is the critical Sobolev exponent; $V: \mathbb{R}^N \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ is a locally Hölder continuous function satisfying

$$V(z) \geq \alpha > 0 \quad \text{for all } z \in \mathbb{R}^N, \quad (V_*)$$

and

$$\inf_{\Omega} V < \inf_{\partial\Omega} V \quad (V_{**})$$

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for some bounded domain $\Omega \subset \mathbb{R}^N$; and the nonlinearity $f : \mathbb{R}_+ \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ is locally Lipschitz and such that

- (f₁) $f(s) = o_1(s)$ near the origin;
- (f₂) there are $q_1, q_2 \in (1, 2^* - 1)$, $\lambda > 0$ such that

$$f(s) \geq \lambda s^{q_1} \quad \text{for all } s > 0 \text{ and } \lim_{s \rightarrow \infty} \frac{f(s)}{s^{q_2}} = 0$$

- (when $N = 3$, we need $q_1 > 2$, otherwise we require a sufficiently large λ);
- (f₃) for some $\theta \in (2, q_2 + 1)$ we have

$$0 < \theta F(s) \leq f(s)s \quad \text{for all } s > 0,$$

where $F(s) = \int_0^s f(t) dt$;

- (f₄) the function $f(s)/s$ is increasing for $s > 0$.

Since we are interested in positive solutions, we define $f(s) = 0$ for $s < 0$.
Let us state our main result:

Theorem 1. *Suppose that the potential V satisfies (V_*) – (V_{**}) and f satisfies (f_1) – (f_4) . Then there is an $\varepsilon_0 > 0$ such that problem (P_ε) possesses a positive bound state solution u_ε , for all $0 < \varepsilon < \varepsilon_0$. Moreover, u_ε possesses at most one local (hence global) maximum z_ε in \mathbb{R}^N , which is inside Ω , such that*

$$\lim_{\varepsilon \rightarrow 0^+} V(z_\varepsilon) = V_0 = \inf_{\Omega} V.$$

Besides, there are C and ζ , positive constants such that

$$u_\varepsilon(x) \leq C \exp\left(-\zeta \left| \frac{x - z_\varepsilon}{\varepsilon} \right| \right) \quad \text{for all } x \in \mathbb{R}^N.$$

We would like to remark that this kind of equation in (P_ε) arises from the problem of obtaining standing waves solutions of the nonlinear Schrödinger equation

$$i\varepsilon \frac{\partial \psi}{\partial t} = -\varepsilon^2 \Delta \psi + (V(z) + E)\psi - |\psi|^{-1} h(|\psi|)\psi \quad \text{in } \mathbb{R}^N \tag{S_\varepsilon}$$

where $h(s) = f(s) + s^{2^*-1}$. A standing wave solution to problem (S_ε) is one in the form $\psi(x, t) = \exp(-i\varepsilon^{-1}Et)u(x)$. In this case u is a solution of (P_ε) .

Some recent works have treated this problem in the subcritical case and we cite a couple of them.

Floer and Weinstein [7] have studied the problem (S_ε) in the case $N = 1$, $h(s) = s^3$ and bounded potentials with nondegenerate critical point. They show that for small ε , this problem has a solution which concentrates around each nondegenerate point (see also [18] for a related work).

Roughly speaking, in this work, concentration behavior around the origin of a function means that it has the form $\psi(\varepsilon x)$ where ψ is a C^2 function with exponential decay.

Under the potential condition

$$\inf_{z \in \mathbb{R}^N} V < \liminf_{|z| \rightarrow \infty} V(z), \tag{1}$$

Rabinowitz [14] has proved the existence of positive ground-state solutions (solutions with minimal energy) for (P_ε) , in the case where $h(s)$ behaves like s^p , $1 < p < 2^* - 1$, for small ε . The remaining concentration behavior result in this subcritical case was obtained by Wang [17].

Alves and Souto in [2] have established existence and concentration behavior of ground-state solutions when the nonlinearity has the critical form $h(s) = \lambda s^q + s^{2^*-1}$, $1 < q < 2^* - 1$, under condition (1).

In the very interesting article [5], del Pino and Felmer have obtained the complete treatment (existence and concentration behavior of solutions) with the potential under conditions (V_*) and (V_{**}) . They have obtained bound-state solutions but not ground-state solutions, and this is reasonable, because some problems under condition (V_{**}) do not admit any ground-state solution (see, for example, Theorem 4 of [2]). From this reason we cannot look for minimax critical points of the energy functional $J_\varepsilon : E \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$,

$$J_\varepsilon(u) = \frac{1}{2} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} (\varepsilon^2 |\nabla u|^2 + V(z)u^2) dz - \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} F(u_+) dz - \frac{1}{2^*} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} u_+^{2^*} dz$$

(where $u^+ = \max\{u, 0\}$), defined on the Hilbert space

$$E = \left\{ u \in H^1(\mathbb{R}^N) : \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} V(z)u^2 dz < \infty \right\},$$

associated to (P_ε) .

A way to solve this problem is to modify the nonlinearity into one more convenient in order to apply the mountain-pass theorem. Namely, we will consider the following Carathéodory function:

$$g(z, s) = \begin{cases} \chi_\Omega(f(s) + s^{2^*-1}) + \chi_D \tilde{f}(s) & \text{if } s \geq 0, \\ 0 & \text{if } s < 0, \end{cases}$$

where

$$\tilde{f}(s) = \begin{cases} f(s) + s^{2^*-1} & \text{if } s \leq a, \\ \frac{\alpha s}{k} & \text{if } s > a, \end{cases}$$

$k > \theta(\theta - 2)^{-1} > 1$, $a > 0$ is such that $f(a) + a^{2^*-1} = k^{-1}\alpha a$, $D = \mathbb{R}^N \setminus \bar{\Omega}$ and χ_A denotes the characteristic function of subset A of \mathbb{R}^N . Similar modified nonlinearity has been used by del Pino and Felmer in [5] to study the subcritical case.

We have organized the paper as follows. In the second section, using the mountain-pass theorem, we shall prove that the functional associated to the modified problem possesses a critical point. In the following section we shall prove Theorem 1 by a couple of lemmas which show that for small ε this critical point of the modified functional has a concentration behavior and it is also critical point of functional J_ε .

2. The modified functional

In this section we will consider the energy functional $J : E \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^N$ given by

$$J(u) = \frac{1}{2} \|u\|^2 - \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} G(z, u) \, dz,$$

where

$$\|u\|^2 = \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} (|\nabla u|^2 + V(z)u^2) \, dz.$$

Here $G(z, s) = \chi_\Omega(F(s) + \frac{1}{2^*} s^{2^*}) + \chi_D \tilde{F}(s)$ and $\tilde{F}(s) = \int_0^s \tilde{f}(t) \, dt$.

Notice that, using (f_1) – (f_4) , it is easy to check that

(g_1) $g(z, s) = f(s) + s^{2^*-1} = o(s)$, near the origin, uniformly in $z \in \mathbb{R}^N$;

(g_2) $g(z, s) \leq f(s) + s^{2^*-1}$ for all $s > 0$, $z \in \mathbb{R}^N$;

(g_3) $0 < \theta G(z, s) \leq g(z, s)s$, for all $z \in \Omega$, $s > 0$ or $z \in D$ and $s \leq a$;

and

$$0 \leq 2G(z, s) \leq g(z, s)s \leq \frac{1}{k} V(z)s^2 \quad \text{for all } z \in D, \, s > 0,$$

(g_4) the function $s^{-1}g(z, s)$ is increasing in $s > 0$ for each z fixed.

Lemma 2. *J has the mountain-pass geometry.*

Proof. Let η be a nonzero function in $C_0^\infty(\Omega)$, such that $\eta \geq 0$. Then for all $t > 0$

$$J(t\eta) \leq \frac{t^2}{2} \|\eta\|^2 - \frac{t^{2^*}}{2^*} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} \eta^{2^*} \, dz.$$

Of course, $J(t\eta) \rightarrow -\infty$ as $t \rightarrow \infty$. As the usual way, from (g_2) $J(u) = \frac{1}{2} \|u\|^2 + o(\|u\|)$, near origin. This completes the proof. \square

Now in view of Lemma 2, we can apply a version of the mountain-pass theorem without *(P.S.)* condition (see [11]) to obtain a sequence $\{u_n\}$ such that

$$J(u_n) = c + o_n(1) \quad \text{and} \quad |J'(u_n)| = o_n(1), \tag{2}$$

where c is the minimax level of functional J given by

$$0 < c = \inf_{g \in \Gamma} \max_{0 \leq t \leq 1} J(g(t)), \tag{3}$$

where $\Gamma = \{g \in C^0([0, 1]; E) : \text{such that } g(0) = 0 \text{ and } J(g(1)) \leq 0\}$. Throughout this work $o_n(1)$ denotes a sequence converging to zero as $n \rightarrow \infty$.

Remark 1. As in [5,6], we shall use the equivalent characterization of c more adequate to our purpose, given by

$$c = \inf_{v \in E \setminus \{0\}} \max_{t \geq 0} J(tv).$$

Furthermore, it is easy to check that for each non-negative $v \in E - \{0\}$ there is a unique $t_0 = t_0(v)$ such that

$$J(t_0v) = \max_{t \geq 0} J(tv).$$

We denote by S the best Sobolev constant for the embedding $D^{1,2}(\mathbb{R}^N) \hookrightarrow L^{2^*}(\mathbb{R}^N)$.

Lemma 3. *There is a $v \in E \setminus \{0\}$ such that*

$$\max_{t > 0} J(tv) < \frac{1}{N} S^{N/2},$$

therefore we have this estimate for the minimax level (3) of J :

$$c < \frac{1}{N} S^{N/2}.$$

Proof. For each $h > 0$, consider the function

$$\psi_h(z) = \frac{[N(N - 2)h]^{(N-2)/4}}{(h + |z|^2)^{(N-2)/2}}.$$

We recall that ψ_h satisfies the problem

$$\begin{aligned} -\Delta u &= u^{2^*-1}, \quad \mathbb{R}^N, \\ u(z) &> 0, \quad \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |\nabla u|^2 \, dz < \infty \end{aligned}$$

and

$$\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |\nabla \psi_h|^2 \, dz = \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} \psi_h^{2^*} \, dz = S^{N/2}$$

(see [16]). Now, consider $v_h(z) = (\varphi \psi_h(z) / \|\varphi \psi_h\|_{L^{2^*}})$ where $\varphi \in C_0^\infty(\mathbb{R}^N)$, $0 \leq \varphi(z) \leq 1$ and

$$\varphi(z) = \begin{cases} 1, & z \in B_1, \\ 0, & z \notin B_2, \end{cases}$$

where $B_1 \subset B_2 \subset \subset \Omega$ are concentric balls of radius ρ and 2ρ , respectively. From condition (f_2) we have

$$J(tv_h) \leq \frac{t^2}{2} \int_{B_2} (|\nabla v_h|^2 + \|V\|_{L^\infty(\Omega)} v_h^2) \, dz - \frac{\lambda t^{q_1+1}}{q_1 + 1} \int_{B_2} v_h^{q_1+1} \, dz - \frac{t^{2^*}}{2^*}. \tag{4}$$

Using the same arguments explored in [12], there exists $h > 0$ such that

$$\max_{t \geq 0} \left\{ \int_{B_2} \left[\frac{t^2}{2} (|\nabla v_h|^2 + \|V\|_{L^\infty(\Omega)} v_h^2) - \frac{\lambda t^{q_1+1}}{q_1 + 1} v_h^{q_1+1} \right] \, dz - \frac{t^{2^*}}{2^*} \right\} < \frac{1}{N} S^{N/2}. \tag{5}$$

Therefore, from (4) and (5) we have that

$$\max_{t \geq 0} J(tv_h) < \frac{1}{N} S^{N/2}$$

and the proof of the lemma is complete. \square

Lemma 4. Every sequence $\{u_n\}$ satisfying (2) is bounded in E .

Proof. To check this, observe that using (g_3) we have

$$\begin{aligned}
 J(u_n) - \frac{1}{\theta} J'(u_n) &= \left(\frac{1}{2} - \frac{1}{\theta}\right) \|u_n\|^2 + \frac{1}{\theta} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} [u_n g(z, u_n) - \theta G(z, u_n)] \, dz \\
 &\geq \left(\frac{1}{2} - \frac{1}{\theta}\right) \|u_n\|^2 + \frac{1}{\theta} \int_D [u_n g(z, u_n) - \theta G(z, u_n)] \, dz \\
 &\geq \left(\frac{1}{2} - \frac{1}{\theta}\right) \|u_n\|^2 + \left(\frac{2-\theta}{\theta}\right) \int_D G(z, u_n) \, dz \\
 &\geq \left(\frac{1}{2} - \frac{1}{\theta}\right) \|u_n\|^2 + \left(\frac{2-\theta}{2k\theta}\right) \int_D V(z) u_n^2 \, dz \\
 &= \left(\frac{\theta-2}{2\theta}\right) \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} \left[|\nabla u_n|^2 + \left(1 - \frac{1}{k}\right) V(z) u_n^2 \right] \, dz. \tag{6}
 \end{aligned}$$

Applying (2) in inequality (6) we have the upper bound of $\|u_n\|$. \square

Lemma 5. There is a sequence $\{z_n\} \subset \mathbb{R}^N$ and $R > 0, \beta > 0$ such that

$$\int_{B_R(z_n)} u_n^2 \, dz \geq \beta.$$

Proof. Suppose by contradiction that the lemma does not hold. Then by Lion’s result (see [10] or [4]) it follows that

$$\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |u_n|^q \, dz = o_n(1), \quad \text{as } n \rightarrow \infty \quad \text{for all } 2 < q < 2^*$$

and then

$$\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} F(u_n) \, dz = \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} u_n f(u_n) \, dz = o_n(1).$$

This implies that

$$\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} G(z, u_n) \, dz \leq \frac{1}{2^*} \int_{\Omega \cup \{u_n \leq a\}} (u_n^+)^{2^*} \, dz + \frac{\alpha}{2k} \int_{D \cap \{u_n > a\}} u_n^2 \, dz + o_n(1) \tag{7}$$

and

$$\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} u_n g(z, u_n) \, dz = \int_{\Omega \cup \{u_n \leq a\}} (u_n^+)^{2^*} \, dz + \frac{\alpha}{k} \int_{D \cap \{u_n > a\}} u_n^2 \, dz + o_n(1). \tag{8}$$

From equality (8) and $J'(u_n) \cdot u_n = o_n(1)$, we conclude that

$$\|u_n\|^2 - \frac{\alpha}{k} \int_{D \cap \{u_n > a\}} u_n^2 \, dz + o_n(1) = \int_{\Omega \cup \{u_n \leq a\}} (u_n^+)^{2^*} \, dz. \tag{9}$$

Let $\ell \geq 0$ be such that

$$\|u_n\|^2 - \frac{\alpha}{k} \int_{D \cap \{u_n > a\}} u_n^2 \, dz \rightarrow \ell.$$

It is easy to check that $\ell > 0$, otherwise we have $u_n \rightarrow 0$ which contradicts $c > 0$. From (9)

$$\int_{\Omega \cup \{u_n \leq a\}} (u_n^+)^{2^*} \, dz \rightarrow \ell.$$

From inequality (7) and $J(u_n) = c + o_n(1)$ we have

$$\ell \leq Nc \tag{10}$$

and hence $\ell > 0$. Now, using the definition of the constant S , we have

$$\|u_n\|^2 - \frac{\alpha}{k} \int_{D \cap \{u_n > a\}} u_n^2 \, dz \geq S \left(\int_{\Omega \cup \{u_n \leq a\}} u_n^{2^*} \, dz \right)^{2/2^*}.$$

Taking the limit in the above inequality, as $n \rightarrow \infty$, we achieve that

$$\ell \geq S\ell^{2/2^*},$$

which, together with (10), implies

$$c \geq \frac{1}{N} S^{N/2},$$

which contradicts Lemma 3. \square

Lemma 6. *The sequence $\{z_n\}$ is bounded in \mathbb{R}^N .*

Proof. For each $\rho > 0$ consider a differentiable function ψ_ρ such that

$$\psi_\rho(z) = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if } |z| \leq \rho, \\ 1 & \text{if } |z| \geq 2\rho \end{cases}$$

and $|\nabla \psi_\rho(z)| \leq C\rho^{-1}$, for all $z \in \mathbb{R}^N$. Use $J'(u_n)(\psi_\rho u_n) = o_n(1)$ to obtain

$$\begin{aligned} \alpha \left(1 - \frac{1}{k}\right) \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} u_n^2 \psi_\rho &\leq \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} \left[|\nabla u_n|^2 + \left(V(z) - \frac{\alpha}{k}\right) u_n^2 \right] \psi_\rho \, dz \\ &= - \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} u_n \nabla \psi_\rho \nabla u_n \, dz \\ &\quad + \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} \left[g(z, u_n) u_n - \frac{\alpha}{k} u_n^2 \right] \psi_\rho \, dz + o_n(1). \end{aligned}$$

If ρ is large enough, we have $\Omega \subset B_\rho(0)$. Furthermore, from (g_3) we get

$$\alpha \left(1 - \frac{1}{k}\right) \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} u_n^2 \psi_\rho \, dz \leq \frac{C}{\rho} \|u_n\|_{H^1}^2 + o_n(1). \tag{11}$$

The inequality (11) completes the proof. \square

Using standard arguments, up to subsequence, we may assume that there is $u \in H$ such that

$$u_n \rightharpoonup u \text{ in } H, \quad u_n \rightarrow u \text{ in } L^q_{\text{loc}}(\mathbb{R}^N) \quad \text{and} \quad u_n(x) \rightarrow u(x) \quad \text{a.e. in } \mathbb{R}^N.$$

From Lemmas 5 and 6, u is nontrivial and using the weak convergence of u_n we can see that u is a critical point of J . Finally, from Remark 1, (g_3) and Fatou’s lemma

$$\begin{aligned} c &\leq J(u) = J(u) - \frac{1}{2}J'(u)u \\ &= \frac{1}{2} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} [ug(z, u) - 2G(z, u)] \, dz \\ &\leq \liminf_n \left\{ \frac{1}{2} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} [u_n g(z, u_n) - 2G(z, u_n)] \, dz \right\} \\ &= \liminf_n \left\{ J(u_n) - \frac{1}{2}J'(u_n)u_n \right\} = c \end{aligned}$$

and then u is a solution with minimal energy $J(u) = c$.

We have proved up this moment the following result:

Proposition 7. *For all $\varepsilon > 0$, there is a positive critical point $u_\varepsilon \in E$ associated to the functional*

$$J_\varepsilon(u) = \frac{1}{2} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} (\varepsilon^2 |\nabla u|^2 + V(z)u^2 \, dz) - \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} G(z, u) \, dz$$

at the level

$$c_\varepsilon = \inf_{v \in E \setminus \{0\}} \max_{t \geq 0} J_\varepsilon(tv).$$

3. Proof of Theorem 1

In order to proof Theorem 1, let us fix some notations. First we suppose, without loss of generality that $\partial\Omega$ is smooth and $0 \in \Omega$. Furthermore,

$$V(0) = V_0 = \inf_{\Omega} V.$$

We will denote by $I_0 : H^1(\mathbb{R}^N) \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ the functional given by

$$I_0(u) = \frac{1}{2} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} (|\nabla u|^2 + V_0 u^2) \, dx - \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} \left[F(u) + \frac{1}{2^*} (u^+)^{2^*} \right] \, dx,$$

associated to the autonomous problem

$$-\Delta u + V_0 u = f(u) + |u|^{2^*-2} u, \quad \text{in } \mathbb{R}^N. \tag{12}$$

It is known that under assumptions (f_1) – (f_4) , (12) possesses a ground-state solution ω at the level

$$c_0 = I_0(\omega) = \inf_{v \in H^1 \setminus \{0\}} \max_{t \geq 0} I_0(tv) \tag{13}$$

(see [1] for instance). Furthermore,

$$c_0 < \frac{1}{N} S^{N/2}.$$

Remark 2. The dependence of the mountain-pass level c_0 on the potential V_0 is continuous and increasing (see [14]).

From a result due to Gidas et al. [8], any solution of problem (12) must be spherically symmetric about some point in \mathbb{R}^N and $\partial u/\partial r < 0$ for all $r > 0$, where r is the radial coordinate.

Let I_ε denote the energy functional

$$I_\varepsilon(u) = \frac{1}{2} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} (|\nabla u|^2 + V(\varepsilon x)u^2) dx - \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} G(\varepsilon x, u) dx,$$

defined in

$$E_\varepsilon = \left\{ u \in H^1(\mathbb{R}^N) : \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} V(\varepsilon x)u^2 dx < \infty \right\},$$

associated to the problem

$$-\Delta u + V(\varepsilon x)u = g(\varepsilon x, u) \quad \text{in } \mathbb{R}^N. \tag{MP_\varepsilon}$$

From Proposition 7, the family of nonnegative functions

$$v_\varepsilon(x) = u_\varepsilon(z) = u_\varepsilon(\varepsilon x), \quad z = \varepsilon x$$

is such that each v_ε is a critical point of I_ε at the level

$$b_\varepsilon = I_\varepsilon(v_\varepsilon) = \inf_{v \in E_\varepsilon \setminus \{0\}} \max_{t \geq 0} I_\varepsilon(tv).$$

It is easy to check that $b_\varepsilon = \varepsilon^{-N} c_\varepsilon$. Furthermore, from Lemma 3, for each $\varepsilon > 0$ we have

$$b_\varepsilon < \frac{1}{N} S^{N/2}. \tag{14}$$

Moreover,

Lemma 8. $\limsup_{\varepsilon \rightarrow 0} b_\varepsilon \leq c_0$, the mountain-pass minimax level of I_0 .

Proof. Fix ω defined in (13) and consider $\omega_\varepsilon(x) = \varphi(\varepsilon x)\omega(x)$, where φ is the function defined in Lemma 3. Here we assume that $B_1 = B_\rho(0)$, $B_2 = B_{2\rho}(0) \subset \Omega$. It is easy to see that $\omega_\varepsilon \rightarrow \omega$ in $H^1(\mathbb{R}^N)$, $I_0(\omega_\varepsilon) \rightarrow I_0(\omega)$, as $\varepsilon \rightarrow 0^+$, and the support of ω_ε is in $\Omega_\varepsilon = \{x \in \mathbb{R}^N; \varepsilon x \in \Omega\}$. By definition of b_ε we have

$$\begin{aligned} b_\varepsilon &\leq \max_{t > 0} I_\varepsilon(t\omega_\varepsilon) = I_\varepsilon(t_\varepsilon\omega_\varepsilon) \\ &= \frac{t_\varepsilon^2}{2} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} [|\nabla \omega_\varepsilon|^2 + V(\varepsilon x)\omega_\varepsilon^2] dx - \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} \left[F(t_\varepsilon\omega_\varepsilon) + \frac{t_\varepsilon^{2^*}}{2^*} \omega_\varepsilon^{2^*} \right] dx, \end{aligned} \tag{15}$$

for some $t_\varepsilon > 0$. It is easy to verify that $t_\varepsilon \rightarrow 1$ as $\varepsilon \rightarrow 0^+$. On the other hand,

$$I_\varepsilon(t_\varepsilon \omega_\varepsilon) = I_0(t_\varepsilon \omega_\varepsilon) + \frac{t_\varepsilon^2}{2} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} (V(\varepsilon x) - V_0) \omega_\varepsilon^2 \, dx. \tag{16}$$

Since $V(\varepsilon x)$ is bounded on the support of ω_ε , by the Lebesgue Dominated Convergence Theorem and (15) and (16), we conclude the proof. \square

Notice that $I_\varepsilon(v_\varepsilon) \leq c_0 + o_\varepsilon(1)$, where $o_\varepsilon(1)$ goes to zero as $\varepsilon \rightarrow 0$. From (V_*) and (g_2) , we have

$$I_\varepsilon(u) \geq \bar{I}(u) \doteq \frac{1}{2} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} (|\nabla u|^2 + au^2) \, dx - \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} \left[F(u) + \frac{1}{2^*} (u^+)^{2^*} \right] \, dx.$$

Hence, b_ε is bounded from below by $\bar{c} > 0$, the minimax level of functional \bar{I} .

Now, using similar arguments as of Lemma 5, we have the following result.

Lemma 9. *There are $\varepsilon_0 > 0$, a family $\{y_\varepsilon\}_{\{0 < \varepsilon \leq \varepsilon_0\}} \subset \mathbb{R}^N$ and positive constants R, β such that*

$$\int_{B_R(y_\varepsilon)} v_\varepsilon^2 \, dx \geq \beta, \quad \text{for all } 0 < \varepsilon \leq \varepsilon_0.$$

Lemma 10. *$\varepsilon y_\varepsilon$ is bounded in \mathbb{R}^N . Moreover, $\text{dist}(\varepsilon y_\varepsilon, \Omega) \leq \varepsilon R$*

Proof. For $\delta > 0$, we define $K_\delta = \{x \in \mathbb{R}^N : \text{dist}(x, \Omega) \leq \delta\}$. We set $\phi_\varepsilon(x) = \phi(\varepsilon x)$, where $\phi \in C^\infty(\mathbb{R}^N, [0, 1])$ is such that

$$\phi(x) = \begin{cases} 1, & x \notin K_\delta, \\ 0, & x \in \Omega \end{cases}$$

and $|\nabla \phi| \leq C\delta^{-1}$. Taking $v_\varepsilon \phi_\varepsilon$ as test function, using property (g_3) and the fact that the support of ϕ_ε does not intercept Ω_ε , we obtain

$$\begin{aligned} \alpha \left(1 - \frac{1}{k}\right) \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} v_\varepsilon^2 \phi_\varepsilon \, dx &\leq \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} \left[|\nabla v_\varepsilon|^2 + \left(V(\varepsilon x) - \frac{\alpha}{k}\right) v_\varepsilon^2 \right] \phi_\varepsilon \, dx \\ &= - \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} v_\varepsilon \nabla \phi_\varepsilon \nabla v_\varepsilon \, dx + \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} \left[v_\varepsilon \tilde{f}(v_\varepsilon) - \frac{\alpha}{k} v_\varepsilon^2 \right] \phi_\varepsilon \, dx \\ &\leq - \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} v_\varepsilon \nabla \phi_\varepsilon \nabla v_\varepsilon \, dx. \end{aligned}$$

So we have

$$\alpha \left(1 - \frac{1}{k}\right) \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} v_\varepsilon^2 \phi_\varepsilon \, dx \leq C\delta^{-1} \varepsilon \|v_\varepsilon\|_{H^1}^2. \tag{17}$$

If for some sequence $\varepsilon_n \searrow 0$ we have

$$B_R(y_{\varepsilon_n}) \cap \{x \in \mathbb{R}^N; \varepsilon_n x \in K_\delta\} = \emptyset \tag{18}$$

then

$$\alpha \left(1 - \frac{1}{k}\right) \int_{B_R(y_{\varepsilon_n})} v_{\varepsilon_n}^2 \, dx \leq C\delta^{-1} \varepsilon_n \|v_{\varepsilon_n}\|_{H^1}^2,$$

which contradicts Lemma 9. Thus (18) does not hold, that is, for all ε there is an x such that $\varepsilon x \in K_\delta$ and $|x - y_\varepsilon| \leq R$. It is easy to verify that this implies $\text{dist}(\varepsilon y_\varepsilon, \Omega) \leq \varepsilon R + \delta$. From this fact we conclude the proof. \square

From Lemma 10 we can suppose that the family $\{y_\varepsilon\}$, defined in Lemma 9, can be taken such that $\varepsilon y_\varepsilon \in \Omega$ for all $\varepsilon \in (0, \varepsilon_0]$. Indeed, if not, we replace y_ε by $\varepsilon^{-1}x_\varepsilon$, where x_ε comes from Lemma 10, so that $|\varepsilon y_\varepsilon - x_\varepsilon| \leq \varepsilon R$. Observing that $|y_\varepsilon - (x_\varepsilon/\varepsilon)| \leq R$, we can replace R by $2R$ in Lemma 9.

Let us consider the following subset of \mathbb{R}^N :

$$E_\varepsilon = \{x \in \mathbb{R}^N : v_\varepsilon(x) \geq a \text{ and } \varepsilon x \notin \Omega\}.$$

Observe that, in fact, we want to show that E_ε is empty if ε is small. Let F_ε be the following translation of E_ε :

$$F_\varepsilon = \{x \in \mathbb{R}^N : v_\varepsilon(x + y_\varepsilon) \geq a \text{ and } \varepsilon x + \varepsilon y_\varepsilon \notin \Omega\}.$$

It is easy to see that $|E_\varepsilon| = |F_\varepsilon|$ ($|A|$ indicates the Lebesgue measure of the subset A).

Lemma 11. *The following limits hold:*

- (i) $\lim_{\varepsilon \rightarrow 0} V(\varepsilon y_\varepsilon) = V_0$;
- (ii) $\lim_{\varepsilon \rightarrow 0} b_\varepsilon = c_0$;
- (iii) $\lim_{\varepsilon \rightarrow 0} |E_\varepsilon| = 0$.

Proof. If $\varepsilon_n \searrow 0$ and $y_n = y_{\varepsilon_n}$, are such that $\varepsilon_n y_n \rightarrow x_0$, we must prove that $V(x_0) = V_0$. We already know that $x_0 \in \Omega$, that is, $V(x_0) \geq V_0$. Let us set $v_n(x) = v_{\varepsilon_n}(x)$, $\omega_n(x) = v_{\varepsilon_n}(x + y_n)$, $E_n = E_{\varepsilon_n}$ and $F_n = F_{\varepsilon_n}$. From Lemma 9 we have

$$\int_{B_R(0)} \omega_n^2 \, dx \geq \beta > 0, \quad \text{for all } n,$$

$$-\Delta \omega_n + V(\varepsilon_n x + \varepsilon_n y_n) \omega_n = g(\varepsilon_n x + \varepsilon_n y_n, \omega_n) \quad \text{in } \mathbb{R}^N$$

and $\|\omega_n\|_{H^1} = \|v_n\|_{H^1}$ is bounded. Let $\omega \in H^1(\mathbb{R}^N)$ such that $\omega_n \rightharpoonup \omega$ in $H^1(\mathbb{R}^N)$. We have $\omega \geq 0$, $\omega \neq 0$ and

$$-\Delta \omega + V(x_0) \omega = \chi(x)[f(\omega) + \omega^{2^*-1}] + (1 - \chi(x))\tilde{f}(\omega) = \tilde{g}(x, \omega) \quad \text{in } \mathbb{R}^N, \tag{19}$$

where $\chi(x) = \lim_n \chi_\Omega(\varepsilon_n x + \varepsilon_n y_n)$ almost everywhere in \mathbb{R}^N . It is easy to verify that if $x_0 \in \Omega$ we have $\chi(x) = 1$ for all $x \in \mathbb{R}^N$ and therefore ω is a solution of the problem

$$-\Delta \omega + V(x_0) \omega = f(\omega) + \omega^{2^*-1} \quad \text{in } \mathbb{R}^N. \tag{20}$$

On the other hand, if $x_0 \in \partial\Omega$, without loss of generality, we may suppose that the outer normal vector ν in x_0 is $(1, 0, \dots, 0)$. Let $P = \{x \in \mathbb{R}^N : x_1 < 0\}$. Observe that on P , $\chi \equiv 1$. In fact, for each $x \in P$,

$$\varepsilon_n x + \varepsilon_n y_n \in \Omega, \quad \text{for all large } n.$$

Then in both cases, $\tilde{g}(x, s) = f(s) + s^{2^* - 1}$ for all $x \in P$. This implies that the functional energy \tilde{I} associated to problem (19) has the same minimax level \tilde{c} of the functional \tilde{I}_{x_0} associated to problem (20). In effect, for all $u \in H^1(\mathbb{R}^N)$ we have $\tilde{I}_{x_0}(u) \leq \tilde{I}(u)$ and then $C_{x_0} \leq \tilde{c}$ (where C_{x_0} is the minimax level of \tilde{I}_{x_0}). On the other hand $\tilde{I}_{x_0}(u) = \tilde{I}(u)$, for all u with support inside P .

From the autonomous case (see Remark 2) theory, $c_0 \leq \tilde{I}(\omega)$. It is easy to check, from Fatou’s Lemma and Lemma 8, that

$$\begin{aligned}
 c_0 &\leq \tilde{I}(\omega) = \frac{1}{2} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} [\omega \tilde{g}(x, \omega) - 2\tilde{G}(x, \omega)] dx \\
 &\leq \liminf_{n \rightarrow \infty} \left\{ \frac{1}{2} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N \setminus F_n} [\omega_n g(\varepsilon_n x + \varepsilon_n y_n, \omega_n) - 2G(\varepsilon_n x + \varepsilon_n y_n, \omega_n)] dx \right\} \\
 &\leq \liminf_{n \rightarrow \infty} \left\{ \frac{1}{2} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N \setminus E_n} [v_n g(\varepsilon_n x, v_n) - 2G(\varepsilon_n x, v_n)] dx \right\} \\
 &= \liminf_{n \rightarrow \infty} \left\{ I_{\varepsilon_n}(v_{\varepsilon_n}) - \frac{1}{2} I'_{\varepsilon_n}(v_{\varepsilon_n}) v_{\varepsilon_n} \right\} \leq c_0,
 \end{aligned} \tag{21}$$

where \tilde{G} denotes the primitive of \tilde{g} . Thus, (ii) follows from (21).

Suppose that limit (i) does not hold, that is $V(x_0) > V_0$. It comes from Remark 2,

$$c_0 < \tilde{c} \leq \tilde{I}(\omega) = c_0$$

which is a contradiction, then $V(x_0) = V_0$. To show the part (iii) we have from (21) that

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{1}{2} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N \setminus E_n} [v_n g(\varepsilon_n x, v_n) - 2G(\varepsilon_n x, v_n)] dx = c_0. \tag{22}$$

The same approach used in the whole \mathbb{R}^N instead of $\mathbb{R}^N \setminus E_n$ in inequality (21) also shows that

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{1}{2} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} [v_n g(\varepsilon_n x, v_n) - 2G(\varepsilon_n x, v_n)] dx = c_0. \tag{23}$$

Since (22) and (23) hold, we have

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{1}{2} \int_{E_n} [v_n g(\varepsilon_n x, v_n) - 2G(\varepsilon_n x, v_n)] dx = 0.$$

But, from definition of \tilde{F} we have

$$\int_{E_n} [v_n g(\varepsilon_n x, v_n) - 2G(\varepsilon_n x, v_n)] dx = \left[\frac{\alpha}{k} a^2 - 2F(a) - 2 \frac{a^{2^*}}{2^*} \right] |E_n| \geq 0$$

and this implies the limit (iii). \square

From the proof of Lemma 11, ω_n converges in the weak sense to a ω that is a solution of problem (12) satisfying $I_0(\omega) = c_0$, that is, ω is a ground state solution of

(12). From that proof we also have that $b_{\varepsilon_n} \rightarrow c_0$ and that $g(\varepsilon_n x + \varepsilon_n y_n, s)$ converges uniformly over compacts to $f(s) + s^{2^* - 1}$. Moreover, from (g_3)

$$\int_{F_\varepsilon} \omega_\varepsilon g(\varepsilon x + \varepsilon y_\varepsilon, \omega_\varepsilon) \, dx \leq \frac{\alpha}{k} \int_{F_\varepsilon} \omega_\varepsilon^2 \, dx \leq \frac{\alpha}{k} \|\omega_\varepsilon\|_{L^{2^*}}^2 |F_\varepsilon|^{(2^* - 2)/2^*} = o_\varepsilon(1). \tag{24}$$

In the same way we have

$$\int_{F_\varepsilon} G(\varepsilon x + \varepsilon y_\varepsilon, \omega_\varepsilon) \, dx = o_\varepsilon(1). \tag{25}$$

Also from (22) and the definition of g we have

$$\begin{aligned} 2c_0 + o_n(1) &= \int_{\mathbb{R}^N \setminus F_n} [\omega_n g(\varepsilon_n x + \varepsilon_n y_n, \omega_n) - 2G(\varepsilon_n x + \varepsilon_n y_n, \omega_n)] \, dx \\ &= \int_{\mathbb{R}^N \setminus F_n} [\omega_n f(\omega_n) - 2F(\omega_n)] \, dx + \left(1 - \frac{2}{2^*}\right) \int_{\mathbb{R}^N \setminus F_n} \omega_n^{2^*} \, dx, \end{aligned}$$

which implies that

$$\int_{\mathbb{R}^N \setminus F_n} \omega_n^{2^*} \, dx \rightarrow \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} \omega^{2^*} \, dx, \tag{26}$$

and

$$\int_{\mathbb{R}^N \setminus F_n} [\omega_n f(\omega_n) - 2F(\omega_n)] \, dx \rightarrow \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} [\omega f(\omega) - 2F(\omega)] \, dx.$$

From limit (26) we have proved the following result.

Lemma 12. $\omega_\varepsilon \chi_{\mathbb{R}^N \setminus F_\varepsilon}$ converges to ω in $L^{2^*}(\mathbb{R}^N)$.

In order to prove the concentration of the solution, we state the following two fundamental propositions. The first one is an adequate version of a result due to Brezis and Kato [3] (see also [15] for the details).

Proposition 13. Let $v \in H_0^1(\Lambda)$, $\Lambda \subset \mathbb{R}^N$ open, satisfying

$$-\Delta v + (b(x) - q(x))v = \tilde{f}(x, v) \quad \text{in } \Lambda,$$

where $\tilde{f}: \Lambda \times \mathbb{R} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}_+$ is a Carathéodory function such that

$$0 \leq \tilde{f}(x, s) \leq C_{\tilde{f}}(s^r + s), \quad \text{for all } s > 0, x \in \Lambda,$$

$b \in C(\Lambda, [0, +\infty))$, $q \in L^{N/2}(\Lambda)$, $1 < r < (N + 2)/(N - 2)$. Then $v \in L^p(\Lambda)$ for all $2 \leq p < \infty$, and there is a positive constant C_p depending on p , q and $C_{\tilde{f}}$ such that

$$\|v\|_{L^p(\Lambda)} \leq C_p \|v\|_{H^1(\Lambda)}.$$

Moreover, the dependence on q of C_p can be given uniformly on Cauchy sequences q_k in $L^{N/2}$.

The next proposition is a very particular version of Theorem 8.17 in [9].

Proposition 14. *Suppose that $t > N$, $\tilde{g} \in L^{t/2}(\Lambda)$ and $u \in H^1(\Lambda)$ satisfies in the weak sense*

$$-\Delta u \leq \tilde{g}(x) \quad \text{in } \Omega$$

where Λ is an open subset of \mathbb{R}^N . Then for any ball $B_{2R}(y) \subset \Lambda$,

$$\sup_{B_R(y)} u \leq C(\|u^+\|_{L^2(B_{2R}(y))} + \|\tilde{g}\|_{L^{t/2}(B_{2R}(y))})$$

where C depends on N, t and R .

From Lemma 12, the sequence $\omega_n^{2^*-2}$ is a Cauchy sequence in $L^{N/2}$. Using Proposition 13, with $q(x) = \omega_n^{2^*-2} \chi_{\Omega}(\varepsilon_n x + \varepsilon_n y_n) \in L^{N/2}$; $b(x) = V(\varepsilon_n x + \varepsilon_n y_n)$ and $\tilde{f}(x, s) = g(\varepsilon_n x + \varepsilon_n y_n, s) - \omega_n^{2^*-1} \chi_{\Omega}(\varepsilon_n x + \varepsilon_n y_n)$, we have $\omega_n \in L^t$ for all $t \geq 2$ and

$$\|\omega_n\|_{L^t} \leq C_t \|\omega_n\|_{H^1} \tag{27}$$

where C_t does not depend on n .

Still from Lemma 12,

$$\lim_{R \rightarrow \infty} \int_{|x| \geq R} \omega_n^2 dx + \int_{|x| \geq R} \omega_n^{2^*} dx = 0 \quad \text{uniformly on } n. \tag{28}$$

We will apply Proposition 14 to the following inequality:

$$-\Delta \omega_n \leq \tilde{g}_n(x) = g(\varepsilon_n x + \varepsilon_n y_n, \omega_n) \quad \text{in } \mathbb{R}^N. \tag{29}$$

Combining (27) with the fact that $\|\omega_n\|_{H^1}$ bounded, we have a $t > N$ such that $\|\tilde{g}_n\|_{L^t} \leq C$, for all n . Using Proposition 14 in inequality (29), for all $y \in \mathbb{R}^N$

$$\sup_{B_1(y)} \omega_n \leq C(\|\omega_n\|_{L^2(B_2(y))} + \|\tilde{g}_n\|_{L^t(B_2(y))}), \tag{30}$$

which implies an uniform bound for $\|\omega_n\|_{L^\infty}$ and consequently, we have an uniform bound for $\|\omega_\varepsilon\|_{L^\infty}$ for $0 < \varepsilon < \varepsilon_0$. Moreover, combining the limit (28) with inequality (30) we reach

$$\lim_{|x| \rightarrow \infty} \omega_n(x) = 0 \quad \text{uniformly on } n \tag{31}$$

and we have for $\omega_\varepsilon(x) = v_\varepsilon(x + y_\varepsilon)$

$$\lim_{|x| \rightarrow \infty} \omega_\varepsilon(x) = 0 \quad \text{uniformly on } \varepsilon \in (0, \varepsilon_0]. \tag{32}$$

From limit (32) there is a $\rho > 0$ such that $\omega_\varepsilon(x) \leq a$ for all $|x| \geq \rho$ for all n , that is

$$-\Delta \omega_\varepsilon + V(\varepsilon x + \varepsilon y_\varepsilon) \omega_\varepsilon = f(\omega_\varepsilon) + \omega_\varepsilon^{2^*-1} \quad \text{in } |x| \geq \rho.$$

On the other hand, if $|x| \leq \rho$, $g(\varepsilon x + \varepsilon y_\varepsilon, s) = f(s) + s^{2^*-1}$ when $\Omega_\varepsilon \supset B_\rho(0)$, then

$$-\Delta \omega_\varepsilon + V(\varepsilon x + \varepsilon y_\varepsilon) \omega_\varepsilon = f(\omega_\varepsilon) + \omega_\varepsilon^{2^*-1} \quad \text{in } \mathbb{R}^N$$

for all $\varepsilon \in (0, \varepsilon_0]$.

Notice that, up this moment, we have obtained the existence of solutions u_ε for problem (P_ε) . In order to prove the concentration behavior of these solutions, we shall prove:

Lemma 15. *If ε_0 is sufficiently small ω_ε possesses at most one local (hence global) maximum $x_\varepsilon \in \mathbb{R}^N$.*

Proof. If y_1 is a local maximum of ω_n we must have

$$\lambda \omega_n(y_1)^{q_1-1} + \omega_n(y_1)^{2^*-2} \geq \alpha. \tag{33}$$

From limit (32), it is sufficient to consider the problem in a fixed ball $B_R(0)$ of \mathbb{R}^N .

Since $\|\omega_n\|_{L^\infty}$ is uniformly bounded, elliptic regularity theory implies that ω_n converges in $C^2_{loc}(\mathbb{R}^N)$ to ω . Let $x_n \in B_R(0)$ a global maximum of ω_n . The translation of ω_n , $\bar{\omega}_n(x) = \omega_n(x + x_n)$, attains its global maximum at the origin. Proceeding with $\bar{\omega}_n$ as we have proceeded with ω_n , it is easy to see that $\bar{\omega}_n$ converges to ω in $C^2_{loc}(\mathbb{R}^N)$. Now, by Lemma 4.2 in [13], if n is sufficient large, $\bar{\omega}_n$ possesses no critical points other than the origin. \square

At this moment we can consider the sequence $\{y_\varepsilon\}$ in Lemma 11, as the sequence of global maximum points of v_ε . For ε sufficiently small, u_ε attains its global maximum at an unique $z_\varepsilon \in \mathbb{R}^N$ which must satisfy

$$u_\varepsilon(z_\varepsilon) = v_\varepsilon(y_\varepsilon), \quad \varepsilon y_\varepsilon = z_\varepsilon. \tag{34}$$

Then from Lemma 11

$$\lim_{\varepsilon \rightarrow 0} V(z_\varepsilon) = V_0.$$

Finally ω_ε has an exponential decay:

Lemma 16. *There are $C > 0$ and $\zeta > 0$ such that*

$$\omega_\varepsilon(x) \leq Ce^{-\zeta|x|} \quad \text{for all } x \in \mathbb{R}^N.$$

Proof. From limit (31) and (f_1) there is a $R_0 > 0$ such that

$$f(\omega_\varepsilon(x)) + \omega_\varepsilon(x)^{2^*-1} \leq \frac{V_0}{2} \omega_\varepsilon(x) \quad \text{for all } |x| \geq R_0. \tag{35}$$

Fix $\varphi(x) = Me^{-\zeta|x|}$ with $\zeta^2 < V_0/2$ and $Me^{-\zeta R_0} \geq \omega_\varepsilon(x)$ for all $|x| = R_0$. It is easy to verify that

$$\Delta \varphi \leq \zeta^2 \varphi \quad \text{for all } x \neq 0. \tag{36}$$

Define $\varphi_\varepsilon = \varphi - \omega_\varepsilon$. Using (35) and (36) we have

$$-\Delta \varphi_\varepsilon + \frac{V_0}{2} \varphi_\varepsilon \geq 0 \quad \text{in } |x| \geq R_0,$$

$$\varphi_\varepsilon \geq 0 \quad \text{on } |x| = R_0,$$

$$\lim_{|x| \rightarrow \infty} \varphi_\varepsilon(x) = 0.$$

The classical maximum principle implies that $\varphi_\varepsilon \geq 0$ in $|x| \geq R_0$ and we conclude

$$\omega_\varepsilon(x) \leq Me^{-\zeta|x|}, \quad \text{for all } |x| \geq R_0 \text{ and } \varepsilon \in (0, \varepsilon_0].$$

The proof is complete. \square

Using (34) and Lemma 16, we have

$$\begin{aligned} u_\varepsilon(x) &= v_\varepsilon(\varepsilon) = \omega_\varepsilon(\varepsilon x - y_\varepsilon) = \omega_\varepsilon(\varepsilon x - \varepsilon z_\varepsilon) \\ &\leq C \exp\left(-\zeta \left| \frac{x - z_\varepsilon}{\varepsilon} \right| \right) \quad \text{for all } x \in \mathbb{R}^N. \end{aligned}$$

We have completed the proof of Theorem 1.

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