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# THE YAMABE PROBLEM ON NONCOMPACT CR MANIFOLDS

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**Let  $(M, \theta)$  be a noncompact complete strictly pseudoconvex CR manifold of real dimension  $2n + 1 \geq 3$  with positive Webster scalar curvature. We show that there exists a conformal contact form  $\tilde{\theta} = u^{2/n} \theta$  with positive constant Webster scalar curvature if the CR-Yamabe invariant  $Y(M, \theta)$  of  $(M, \theta)$  is positive and strictly less than the CR-Yamabe invariant at infinity  $\overline{Y}(M, \theta)$ .**

## 1. Introduction

Suppose that  $(M, g)$  is a compact Riemannian manifold of dimension  $n \geq 3$ . As a generalization of the uniformization theorem, the Yamabe problem is to find a metric conformal to  $g$  such that its scalar curvature is constant. This was solved by Trudinger [1968], Aubin [1976] and Schoen [1984]. The uniqueness of the solution of the Yamabe problem was studied in [Kazdan and Warner 1975; Lou 1998]. See the survey article [Lee and Parker 1987] for more about the Yamabe problem. See also [Brendle 2005; 2007; Chow 1992; Schwetlick and Struwe 2003; Ye 1994] for results related to the Yamabe flow, which is the geometric flow introduced to study the Yamabe problem.

The Yamabe problem was also studied on complete noncompact Riemannian manifolds. In this case, there is a simple counterexample such that the Yamabe problem does not have a solution (see [Jin 1988]). See also [Aviles and McOwen 1988; Bland and Kalka 1989; Große and Nardmann 2014; Kim 1997; 2000; Zhang 2003] and references therein for results related to the Yamabe problem on noncompact Riemannian manifolds. In particular, we mention the following result which is related to our main theorem. If  $(M, g)$  is a noncompact Riemannian manifold with positive scalar curvature  $R_g$ , we define

$$Y(M, g) = \inf_{u \in C_0^\infty(M)} \frac{\int_M |\nabla_g u|^2 + \frac{n-2}{4(n-1)} R_g u^2 dV_g}{\left( \int_M u^{\frac{2n}{n-2}} dV_g \right)^{\frac{n-2}{n}}}$$

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and

$$\overline{Y}(M, g) = \lim_{r \rightarrow \infty} \inf_{u \in C_0^\infty(M-B_r)} \frac{\int_{M-B_r} |\nabla_g u|^2 + \frac{n-2}{4(n-1)} R_g u^2 dV_g}{\left( \int_{M-B_r} u^{\frac{2n}{n-2}} dV_g \right)^{\frac{n-2}{n}}},$$

where  $r$  is the distance induced by the Riemannian metric  $g$  from  $x$  to a fixed point  $x_0$  in  $M$ , and  $B_r$  is the ball of radius  $r$  centered at  $x_0$ . The second author [Kim 1996] proved the following:

**Theorem 1.1.** *Suppose  $(M, g)$  is a noncompact Riemannian manifold with positive scalar curvature with  $0 < Y(M, g) < \overline{Y}(M, g)$ . Then there exists a Riemannian metric conformal to  $g$  which has positive constant scalar curvature.*

The Yamabe problem can also be formulated in the context of CR manifolds. Suppose that  $(M, \theta)$  is a compact strictly pseudoconvex CR manifold of real dimension  $2n + 1$  with a given contact form  $\theta$ . The CR Yamabe problem is to find a contact form conformal to  $\theta$  such that its Webster scalar curvature is constant. This was introduced by Jerison and Lee [1987], and was solved by them for the case when  $n \geq 2$  and  $M$  is not locally CR equivalent to the sphere  $S^{2n+1}$  in [Jerison and Lee 1987; 1988; 1989]. The remaining cases, namely when  $n = 1$  or when  $M$  is locally CR equivalent to the sphere, were studied respectively in [Gamara and Yacoub 2001] and in [Gamara 2001]. See also the recent work of Cheng, Chiu and Yang [Cheng et al. 2014] and Cheng, Malchiodi and Yang [Cheng et al. 2013] for the study of these two cases. The uniqueness of the solution of the CR Yamabe problem was studied in [Ho 2013; Jerison and Lee 1987]. On the other hand, the CR Yamabe flow, the geometric flow introduced to study the CR Yamabe problem, was studied in [Chang and Cheng 2002; Chang et al. 2010; Ho 2012; 2015].

In this paper, we study the CR Yamabe problem on noncompact manifolds. We suppose that  $(M, \theta)$  is a noncompact strictly pseudoconvex CR manifold of real dimension  $2n + 1$  such that its Webster scalar curvature  $R_\theta$  is positive. We would like to find another contact form conformal to  $\theta$  such that its Webster scalar curvature is constant. This is equivalent to finding a positive solution to the equation

$$(1-1) \quad -\Delta_\theta u + \frac{n}{2n+2} R_\theta u = qu^{1+\frac{2}{n}},$$

where  $q$  is a positive constant. We define

$$Y(M, \theta) = \inf_{u \in C_0^\infty(M)} \frac{\int_M |\nabla_\theta u|^2 + \frac{n}{2n+2} R_\theta u^2 dV_\theta}{\left( \int_M u^{2+\frac{2}{n}} dV_\theta \right)^{\frac{n}{n+1}}}$$

and

$$\overline{Y(M, \theta)} = \lim_{r \rightarrow \infty} \inf_{u \in C_0^\infty(M - B_r)} \frac{\int_{M - B_r} |\nabla_\theta u|^2 + \frac{n}{2n+2} R_\theta u^2 dV_\theta}{\left( \int_{M - B_r} u^{2+\frac{2}{n}} dV_\theta \right)^{\frac{n}{n+1}}},$$

where  $\nabla_\theta$  is the subgradient with respect to  $\theta$ ,  $dV_\theta = \theta \wedge (d\theta)^n$  is the volume form of  $\theta$ ,  $r$  is the Carnot–Carathéodory distance from  $x$  to a fixed point  $x_0 \in M$  with respect to the contact form  $\theta$ , and  $B_r$  is the ball of radius  $r$  centered at  $x_0$ . We refer readers to the book [Dragomir and Tomassini 2006] or the paper [Jerison and Lee 1987] for more about the definitions and concepts related to CR manifolds.

Note that  $\overline{Y(M, \theta)}$  is well defined. Indeed, if we let

$$f(r) = \inf_{u \in C_0^\infty(M - B_r)} \frac{\int_{M - B_r} |\nabla_\theta u|^2 + \frac{n}{2n+2} R_\theta u^2 dV_\theta}{\left( \int_{M - B_r} u^{2+\frac{2}{n}} dV_\theta \right)^{\frac{n}{n+1}}},$$

then it follows from the definition that  $f(r)$  is nondecreasing as a function of  $r$ . Since  $f(r)$  is bounded above by  $Y(S^{2n+1}, \theta_{S^{2n+1}})$ ,  $\lim_{r \rightarrow \infty} f(r)$  exists.

The following is our main theorem, which is the CR version of Theorem 1.1.

**Theorem 1.2.** *Let  $(M, \theta)$  be a noncompact strictly pseudoconvex CR manifold of real dimension  $2n + 1 \geq 3$  with positive Webster scalar curvature. Assume that*

$$0 < Y(M, \theta) < \overline{Y(M, \theta)}.$$

*Then there exists a positive solution  $u$  of (1-1). That is, the contact form  $u^{2/n}\theta$  conformal to  $\theta$  has positive constant Webster scalar curvature.*

### 2. Proof

Since we have assumed that

$$0 < Y(M, \theta) < \overline{Y(M, \theta)} (\leq Y(S^{2n+1}, \theta_{S^{2n+1}})),$$

there exists a sequence of smooth compact domains  $K_i$  such that  $Y(K_i, \theta) < \overline{Y(M, \theta)}$  with  $K_i \subset K_{i+1}$  satisfying  $\bigcup K_i = M$ . Using the work on the CR Yamabe problem in the compact case (see [Jerison and Lee 1987]) for  $2n + 1 \geq 3$ , we have a positive smooth function  $u_i$  on each  $K_i$  with

$$(2-1) \quad -\Delta_\theta u_i + \frac{n}{2n+2} R_\theta u_i = q_i u_i^{1+\frac{2}{n}} \quad \text{on } K_i,$$

$u_i = 0$  on  $\partial K_i$  and

$$(2-2) \quad \int_{K_i} u_i^{2+\frac{2}{n}} dV_\theta = 1,$$

where

$$q_i = Y(K_i, \theta) \rightarrow Y(M, \theta) \quad \text{as } i \rightarrow \infty.$$

We extend the domain of  $u_i$  by defining  $u_i = 0$  outside  $K_i$ , and we still denote its extension by  $u_i$ . Then the extension of  $u_i$  is in  $S_1^2(M, \theta)$ , the completion of  $C_0^\infty(M)$  with the norm

$$\|u\|_{S_1^2(M, \theta)}^2 = \int_M |\nabla_\theta u|^2 + \frac{n}{2n+2} R_\theta u^2 dV_\theta.$$

For sufficiently large  $i$ , let  $\tilde{K}$  and  $K'$  be fixed smooth compact subsets of  $M$  with  $\tilde{K} \subset K' \subset K_i$ . We shall show that  $\int_{\tilde{K}} u_i^{(1+b)(2+2/n)} dV_\theta$  is uniformly bounded for some positive  $b$ . The constant  $c(\epsilon)$  in the Sobolev embedding for  $u_i$  on a noncompact complete Riemannian manifold depends on the domain and does not have to be uniformly bounded (see (2-7)); therefore the Sobolev embedding is not directly applicable in (6) of [Kim 1996]. However, the Sobolev embedding holds for  $u_i \varphi$  on a fixed domain  $K'$ , where  $\varphi$  is a cutoff function supported in  $K'$ . The uniform bound of  $u_i$  in  $L_{(1+b)(2+2/n)}(\tilde{K})$  can be obtained on each compact subset  $\tilde{K}$ , by applying the same method of [Kim 1996] to  $u_i \varphi$ . The detailed proof for the CR case is provided in the following steps.

Take

$$\Omega = \{x \in K' \mid u_i(x) \geq 1\}$$

with

$$Y(K', \theta) < Y(S^{2n+1}, \theta_{S^{2n+1}}).$$

Then

$$(2-3) \quad |\Omega| = \int_\Omega dV_\theta < 1$$

by (2-2). Now let  $u_i = 1 + w_i$ . Then

$$(2-4) \quad \Omega = \{x \in K' \mid w_i(x) \geq 0\}$$

by definition, for sufficiently large  $i$ , and (2-1) is equivalent to

$$(2-5) \quad -\Delta_\theta w_i + \frac{n}{2n+2} R_\theta (1 + w_i) = q_i (1 + w_i)^{1+\frac{2}{n}} \quad \text{on } K_i.$$

Take a smooth cutoff function  $\varphi \in C_0^\infty(K')$  with  $\varphi \equiv 1$  on  $\tilde{K}$  and  $|\varphi| \leq 1$  on  $K'$ . Multiplying (2-5) by  $\varphi^{2+2b} w_i^{1+2b}$ , where  $b > 0$ , and integrating it over  $\Omega$ , we get

$$\begin{aligned}
 (2-6) \quad & q_i \int_{\Omega} \varphi^{2+2b} w_i^{1+2b} (1+w_i)^{1+\frac{2}{n}} dV_{\theta} \\
 &= - \int_{\Omega} \varphi^{2+2b} w_i^{1+2b} \Delta_{\theta} w_i dV_{\theta} + \frac{n}{2n+2} \int_{\Omega} R_{\theta} (1+w_i) \varphi^{2+2b} w_i^{1+2b} dV_{\theta} \\
 &= \int_{\Omega} \frac{1+2b}{(1+b)^2} \varphi^{2+2b} |\nabla_{\theta} (w_i^{1+b})|^2 + \frac{2}{1+b} \varphi^{1+b} w_i^{1+b} \nabla_{\theta} w_i^{1+b} \cdot \nabla_{\theta} \varphi^{1+b} dV_{\theta} \\
 &\quad + \frac{n}{2n+2} \int_{\Omega} R_{\theta} (1+w_i) w_i^{1+2b} \varphi^{2+2b} dV_{\theta} \\
 &\geq \int_{\Omega} \frac{1+2b-\epsilon_1}{(1+b)^2} \varphi^{2+2b} |\nabla_{\theta} (w_i^{1+b})|^2 - \frac{1}{\epsilon_1} |\nabla_{\theta} \varphi^{1+b}|^2 w_i^{2+2b} dV_{\theta} \\
 &\quad + \frac{n}{2n+2} \int_{\Omega} R_{\theta} (1+w_i) w_i^{1+2b} \varphi^{2+2b} dV_{\theta},
 \end{aligned}$$

where we used integration by parts, Hölder's inequality and (2-4).

We are going to estimate the terms on the right-hand side of (2-6). Applying (A-1) in the Appendix for  $\varphi w_i \in C_0^\infty(\Omega)$ , where  $\Omega \subset K_i \subset M$ , we obtain that for any given  $\epsilon > 0$ , there exists  $C(\epsilon)$ , which depends on the given domain  $\Omega$ , such that

$$\begin{aligned}
 (2-7) \quad & \left( \int_{\Omega} (\varphi^{1+b} w_i^{1+b})^{2+\frac{2}{n}} dV_{\theta} \right)^{\frac{n}{n+1}} \\
 &\leq \frac{1+\epsilon}{Y(S^{2n+1}, \theta_{S^{2n+1}})} \int_{\Omega} |\nabla_{\theta} (\varphi^{1+b} w_i^{1+b})|^2 dV_{\theta} + C(\epsilon) \int_{\Omega} (\varphi^{1+b} w_i^{1+b})^2 dV_{\theta} \\
 &\leq \frac{1+\epsilon}{Y(S^{2n+1}, \theta_{S^{2n+1}})} \int_{\Omega} (1+\epsilon_2) \varphi^{2+2b} |\nabla_{\theta} w_i^{1+b}|^2 \\
 &\quad + \frac{1}{\epsilon_2} w_i^{2+2b} |\nabla_{\theta} \varphi^{1+b}|^2 dV_{\theta} + C(\epsilon) \int_{\Omega} (\varphi^{1+b} w_i^{1+b})^2 dV_{\theta} \\
 &\leq \frac{1+\epsilon}{Y(S^{2n+1}, \theta_{S^{2n+1}})} \left( \int_{\Omega} \frac{(1+b)^2 (1+\epsilon_2)}{1+2b-\epsilon_1} \right. \\
 &\quad \times \left( q_i \varphi^{2+2b} w_i^{1+2b} (1+w_i)^{1+\frac{2}{n}} + \frac{1}{\epsilon_1} |\nabla_{\theta} \varphi^{1+b}|^2 w_i^{2+2b} \right. \\
 &\quad \left. \left. - \frac{n}{2n+2} R_{\theta} (1+w_i) w_i^{1+2b} \varphi^{2+2b} \right) \right. \\
 &\quad \left. + \frac{1}{\epsilon_2} w_i^{2+2b} |\nabla_{\theta} \varphi^{1+b}|^2 dV_{\theta} \right) \\
 &\quad + C(\epsilon) \int_{\Omega} (\varphi^{1+b} w_i^{1+b})^2 dV_{\theta},
 \end{aligned}$$

where we have used (2-6) in the last inequality. Now let  $\Omega_1 = \{x \in \Omega \mid w_i \geq 2\}$  and  $\Omega_2 = \Omega - \Omega_1$ . Let  $a = 1 + 2/n$  and  $x = 1/w_i$ . Note that if  $w_i \in \Omega_1$ , i.e.,  $w_i \geq 2$ , then  $|x| \leq \frac{1}{2}$  and

$$\begin{aligned}
 (2-8) \quad (1 + w_i)^a - w_i^a &= w_i^a \left(1 + \frac{1}{w_i}\right)^a - w_i^a \\
 &= w_i^a (1 + x)^a - w_i^a \\
 &= w_i^a \left(1 + ax + \frac{1}{2}a(a-1)x^2 + \dots - 1\right) \\
 &\leq c_1 w_i^{2/n}
 \end{aligned}$$

for some constant  $c_1$ . Using (2-8), the integral in (2-7) can be estimated as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}
 (2-9) \quad &\left(\int_{\Omega} (\varphi^{1+b} w_i^{1+b})^{2+\frac{2}{n}} dV_{\theta}\right)^{\frac{n}{n+1}} \\
 &\leq \frac{1 + \epsilon}{Y(S^{2n+1}, \theta_{S^{2n+1}})} \left(\frac{(1+b)^2(1+\epsilon_2)}{1+2b-\epsilon_1}\right. \\
 &\quad \times \left(\int_{\Omega_1} q_i \varphi^{2+2b} w_i^{2+2b+\frac{2}{n}} + C \varphi^{2+2b} w_i^{1+2b+\frac{2}{n}} dV_{\theta}\right. \\
 &\quad \left. + \int_{\Omega_2} q_i \varphi^{2+2b} w_i^{1+2b} (1+w_i)^{1+\frac{2}{n}} dV_{\theta}\right. \\
 &\quad \left. + \int_{\Omega} \frac{1}{\epsilon_1} |\nabla_{\theta} \varphi^{1+b}|^2 w_i^{2+2b}\right. \\
 &\quad \left. - \frac{n}{2n+2} R_{\theta} (1+w_i) w_i^{1+2b} \varphi^{2+2b} dV_{\theta}\right) \\
 &\quad \left. + \int_{\Omega} \frac{1}{\epsilon_2} w_i^{2+2b} |\nabla_{\theta} \varphi^{1+b}|^2 dV_{\theta}\right) \\
 &+ C(\epsilon) \int_{\Omega} (\varphi^{1+b} w_i^{1+b})^2 dV_{\theta}.
 \end{aligned}$$

By Hölder’s inequality, we have

$$\begin{aligned}
 (2-10) \quad &\int_{\Omega} \varphi^{2+2b} w_i^{2+2b+\frac{2}{n}} dV_{\theta} \\
 &\leq \left(\int_{\Omega} (\varphi^{1+b} w_i^{1+b})^{2+\frac{2}{n}} dV_{\theta}\right)^{\frac{n}{n+1}} \left(\int_{\Omega} w_i^{\frac{2}{n}(n+1)} dV_{\theta}\right)^{\frac{1}{n+1}} \\
 &\leq \left(\int_{\Omega} (\varphi^{1+b} w_i^{1+b})^{2+\frac{2}{n}} dV_{\theta}\right)^{\frac{n}{n+1}},
 \end{aligned}$$



where the last inequality follows from

$$\int_{\Omega} w_i^{2+\frac{2}{n}} dV_{\theta} \leq \int_{\Omega} u_i^{2+\frac{2}{n}} dV_{\theta} \leq 1$$

by (2-2) and the definition of  $w_i$  and  $\Omega$ . Since  $\Omega_1 \subset \Omega$ , we can combine (2-9) and (2-10) to get

$$\begin{aligned} (2-11) \quad & \left( \int_{\Omega} (\varphi^{1+b} w_i^{1+b})^{2+\frac{2}{n}} dV_{\theta} \right)^{\frac{n}{n+1}} \\ & \leq \frac{1+\epsilon}{Y(S^{2n+1}, \theta_{S^{2n+1}})} \\ & \quad \times \left( \frac{(1+b)^2(1+\epsilon_2)}{1+2b-\epsilon_1} \right. \\ & \quad \times \left( q_i \left( \int_{\Omega} (\varphi^{1+b} w_i^{1+b})^{2+\frac{2}{n}} dV_{\theta} \right)^{\frac{n}{n+1}} + C \int_{\Omega_1} \varphi^{2+2b} w_i^{1+2b+\frac{2}{n}} dV_{\theta} \right. \\ & \quad \left. + \int_{\Omega_2} q_i \varphi^{2+2b} w_i^{1+2b} (1+w_i)^{1+\frac{2}{n}} dV_{\theta} + \int_{\Omega} \frac{1}{\epsilon_1} |\nabla_{\theta} \varphi^{1+b}|^2 w_i^{2+2b} \right. \\ & \quad \left. - \frac{n}{2n+2} R_{\theta} (1+w_i) w_i^{1+2b} \varphi^{2+2b} dV_{\theta} \right) \\ & \quad \left. + \int_{\Omega} \frac{1}{\epsilon_2} w_i^{2+2b} |\nabla_{\theta} \varphi^{1+b}|^2 dV_{\theta} \right) \\ & + C(\epsilon) \int_{\Omega} (\varphi^{1+b} w_i^{1+b})^2 dV_{\theta}. \end{aligned}$$

Since  $q_i < Y(K', \theta) < \overline{Y(M, \theta)} \leq Y(S^{2n+1}, \theta_{S^{2n+1}})$ , we can take  $\epsilon, \epsilon_1, \epsilon_2$  and  $0 < b < 1/n$  sufficiently small such that

$$\frac{1+\epsilon}{Y(S^{2n+1}, \theta_{S^{2n+1}})} \frac{(1+b)^2(1+\epsilon_2)}{1+2b-\epsilon_1} q_i \leq c_0 < 1.$$

Combining this with (2-11), we obtain

$$\begin{aligned} (2-12) \quad & (1-c_0) \left( \int_{\Omega} (\varphi w_i)^{(1+b)(2+2/n)} dV_{\theta} \right)^{\frac{n}{n+1}} + C \int_{\Omega} R_{\theta} (1+w_i) w_i^{1+2b} \varphi^{2+2b} dV_{\theta} \\ & \leq C \int_{\Omega_1} w_i^{1+\frac{2}{n}+2b} \varphi^{2+2b} dV_{\theta} + C \int_{\Omega_2} w_i^{1+2b} (1+w_i)^{1+\frac{2}{n}} \varphi^{2+2b} dV_{\theta} \\ & \quad + C \int_{\Omega} (w_i^{1+b})^2 \varphi^{2+2b} dV_{\theta} + C \int_{\Omega} |\nabla_{\theta} \varphi^{1+b}|^2 w_i^{2+2b} dV_{\theta} \end{aligned}$$

Here  $C$  is a constant independent of  $i$ . We are going to estimate the terms on the right-hand side of (2-12). Since  $\Omega_2 = \Omega - \Omega_1$ , we have

$$|\Omega_2| < 1 \quad \text{and} \quad 0 \leq w_i \leq 2 \quad \text{on } \Omega_2.$$

This implies that

$$\int_{\Omega_2} w_i^{1+2b} (1+w_i)^{1+\frac{2}{n}} \varphi^{2+2b} dV_\theta \leq C$$

for some constant  $C$  independent of  $i$ . Also, since  $b < 1/n$ , we have

$$t_1 := \frac{1+b}{1+\frac{1}{n}} < 1.$$

Then it follows from Hölder's inequality that

$$\int_{\Omega} (w_i^{1+b})^2 \varphi^{2+2b} dV_\theta \leq \left( \int_{\Omega} w_i^{2+\frac{2}{n}} dV_\theta \right)^{t_1} |\Omega|^{1-t_1} \leq \left( \int_{\Omega} u_i^{2+\frac{2}{n}} dV_\theta \right)^{t_1} \leq 1,$$

where we have used (2-2), (2-3) and (2-4). On the other hand, since  $w_i \geq 2$  in  $\Omega_1$  and  $b < 1/n$ , we have

$$\int_{\Omega_1} w_i^{1+\frac{2}{n}+2b} \varphi^{2+2b} dV_\theta \leq \int_{\Omega_1} w_i^{2+\frac{2}{n}} dV_\theta \leq \int_{\Omega} u_i^{2+\frac{2}{n}} dV_\theta \leq 1,$$

where we have used (2-2). Since  $\varphi$  is a smooth fixed cutoff function, the last term of (2-12) is also bounded. Combining all these, we can conclude that the right-hand side of (2-12) is uniformly bounded. Thus, the left-hand side of (2-12) is uniformly bounded; i.e.,

$$(1-c_0) \left( \int_{\Omega} (\varphi w_i)^{(1+b)(2+2/n)} dV_\theta \right)^{\frac{n}{n+1}} + C \int_{\Omega} R_\theta (1+w_i) w_i^{1+2b} \varphi^{2+2b} dV_\theta \leq C.$$

In particular, this implies that

$$(2-13) \quad \left( \int_{\Omega} (\varphi w_i)^{(1+b)(2+2/n)} dV_\theta \right)^{\frac{n}{n+1}} \leq C_0$$

and

$$(2-14) \quad \int_{\tilde{K}} w_i^{(1+b)(2+2/n)} dV_\theta \leq C'_0$$

for some constants  $C_0$  and  $C'_0$  independent of  $i$ . Therefore,  $u_i$  is uniformly bounded in  $L_{(1+b)(2+2/n)}(\tilde{K})$  for each compact subset  $\tilde{K}$  of  $M$  and some positive  $b$ .

We can now show that  $w_i$  is  $C^{2,\alpha}$  bounded on each compact subset of  $M$  in the following way: Consider sufficiently large compact subsets  $K \subset K_0 \subset K_1 \subset K_2$

with smooth boundary satisfying  $Y(K, \theta) < Y(S^{2n+1}, \theta_{S^{2n+1}})$ . It follows from (2-14) that

$$\int_{K_2} w_i^{2+\frac{2}{n}+2\bar{b}} dV_\theta \leq C_0,$$

where  $\bar{b} = b(1 + 1/n)$  and  $C_0$  is a constant independent of  $i$ . Also, we have

$$|\Delta_\theta w_i| = \left| \frac{n}{2n+2} R_\theta(1+w_i) - q_i(1+w_i)^{1+\frac{2}{n}} \right| \leq C(1+w_i)^{1+\frac{2}{n}} \quad \text{on } K_2,$$

where  $C$  is a constant that depends only on  $K_2$  and  $\max_{K_2} R_\theta$ . Hence,  $\Delta_\theta w_i \in L^q(K_2)$ , where  $q = (2n+2+2n\bar{b})/(n+2)$ . By the regularity theory (see [Jerison and Lee 1987, Proposition 5.7(c)]), we have  $w_i \in S_2^q(K_1)$ . From the Folland–Stein embedding theorem (see [Jerison and Lee 1987, Proposition 5.5]), we have  $w_i \in L^s(K_1)$ , where

$$s = \left( 2 + \frac{2}{n} + 2\bar{b} \right) \frac{n+1}{n+1-2\bar{b}} > 2 + \frac{2}{n} + 2\bar{b}.$$

Continuing this procedure, we get  $w_i \in S_2^t(K_0)$  for all  $t > 1$ . Again by the Folland–Stein embedding theorem (see [Jerison and Lee 1987, Proposition 5.7(a–b)]), we have  $w_i^{2+2/n} \in C^\alpha(K_0)$  for some  $\alpha > 0$ . By the regularity theory again (see [Jerison and Lee 1987, Proposition 5.9(b)]), we can conclude that  $w_i \in C^{2,\alpha}(K)$ , as required.

By the definition of  $\Omega$  and since  $u_i = 1 + w_i$ , we have a uniform  $C^{2,\alpha}$  bound for  $u_i$  on each compact subset of  $M$ . Therefore, we can find a subsequence, which we still denote by  $\{u_i\}$ , that converges to some  $u$  uniformly on each compact subset by the Arzelà–Ascoli theorem.

To sum up, we have proved the following:

**Lemma 2.1.** *If  $Y(M, \theta) < \overline{Y(M, \theta)}$ , then there exists a subsequence  $\{u_i\}$  which converges to a solution  $u$  of (1-1) uniformly on each compact subset of  $M$ .*

We remark that we do not know whether  $u$  is strictly positive. Note that if  $u = 0$  at some point of  $M$ , then by applying Proposition 2.2 (stated below) to (1-1), we can conclude that  $u$  is identically equal to zero.

**Proposition 2.2.** *Suppose that  $u$  is a nonnegative function on  $M$  satisfying*

$$-\Delta_\theta u + P(x)u \geq 0,$$

where  $P(x)$  is a smooth function on  $M$ . Then for any compact set  $K$  in  $M$ , there exists a constant  $C$  such that

$$\int_K u^{2+\frac{2}{n}} dV_\theta \leq C \left( \min_K u \right) \left( \max_K u \right)^{\frac{n+2}{n}}.$$

We skip the proof of Proposition 2.2, because it is essentially the same as the proof of Proposition A.1 in [Ho 2012].

We are going to show that it is impossible for  $u$  to be identically equal to zero. First, we have the following:

**Lemma 2.3.** *As  $i \rightarrow \infty$ ,*

$$\int_M |u_i|^{2+\frac{2}{n}} dV_\theta - \int_M |u - u_i|^{2+\frac{2}{n}} dV_\theta \rightarrow \int_M |u|^{2+\frac{2}{n}} dV_\theta.$$

*Proof.* Note that

$$\begin{aligned} \int_M |u_i|^{2+\frac{2}{n}} dV_\theta - \int_M |u - u_i|^{2+\frac{2}{n}} dV_\theta &= - \int_M \int_0^1 \frac{\partial}{\partial t} |u_i - tu|^{2+\frac{2}{n}} dt dV_\theta \\ &= \left(2 + \frac{2}{n}\right) \int_M \int_0^1 u(u_i - tu) |u_i - tu|^{\frac{2}{n}} dt dV_\theta \\ &\rightarrow \left(2 + \frac{2}{n}\right) \int_M \int_0^1 u(u - tu) |u - tu|^{\frac{2}{n}} dt dV_\theta \\ &= \int_M |u|^{2+\frac{2}{n}} dV_\theta \end{aligned}$$

as  $i \rightarrow \infty$ . □

For abbreviation, we let

$$v_i = u_i - u \quad \text{and} \quad E(v) = \int_M \left( |\nabla_\theta v|^2 + \frac{n}{2n+2} R_\theta v^2 \right) dV_\theta.$$

**Lemma 2.4.** *As  $i \rightarrow \infty$ ,*

$$E(u_i) - E(v_i) \rightarrow E(u).$$

*Proof.* We compute

$$\begin{aligned} E(u_i) - E(v_i) &= E(u + v_i) - E(v_i) \\ &= E(u) + 2 \int_M \left( -\Delta_\theta u + \frac{n}{2n+2} R_\theta u \right) v_i dV_\theta \\ &\rightarrow E(u) \end{aligned}$$

as  $i \rightarrow \infty$ , since  $v_i$  tends to 0 weakly in  $S_1^2(M)$ . This proves the assertion. □

**Lemma 2.5.** *For any fixed  $B_r$ , we have*

$$E(v_i) \geq Y(M - B_r, \theta) \left( \int_{M - B_r} |v_i|^{2+\frac{2}{n}} dV_\theta \right)^{\frac{n}{n+1}} + o(1) \quad \text{as } i \rightarrow \infty.$$

*Proof.* Note that

$$\begin{aligned} E(v_i) &= \int_M \left( |\nabla_\theta v_i|^2 + \frac{n}{2n+2} R_\theta v_i^2 \right) dV_\theta \\ &= \int_{M-B_r} \left( |\nabla_\theta v_i|^2 + \frac{n}{2n+2} R_\theta v_i^2 \right) dV_\theta + \int_{B_r} \left( |\nabla_\theta v_i|^2 + \frac{n}{2n+2} R_\theta v_i^2 \right) dV_\theta \\ &\geq \int_{M-B_r} \left( |\nabla_\theta v_i|^2 + \frac{n}{2n+2} R_\theta v_i^2 \right) dV_\theta + o(1) \\ &\geq Y(M-B_r, \theta) \left( \int_{M-B_r} |v_i|^{2+\frac{2}{n}} dV_\theta \right)^{\frac{n}{n+1}} + o(1), \end{aligned}$$

where the first inequality follows from the fact that  $v_i \rightarrow 0$  uniformly on  $B_r$  by Lemma 2.1. This proves the assertion.  $\square$

Note that  $u_i \rightharpoonup u$  weakly in  $S_1^2(M, \theta)$ . Assume that

$$\int_M |u|^{2+2/n} dV_\theta = \lambda.$$

Note that if  $\lambda > 0$ , then

$$(2-15) \quad E(u) = \lambda^{\frac{n}{n+1}} E(\lambda^{-\frac{n}{2n+2}} u) \geq \lambda^{\frac{n}{n+1}} Y(M, \theta).$$

Furthermore, if  $\lambda < 1$ , then

$$(2-16) \quad E(v_i) = (1-\lambda)^{\frac{n}{n+1}} E((1-\lambda)^{-\frac{n}{2n+2}} v_i) \geq (1-\lambda)^{\frac{n}{n+1}} \overline{Y(M, \theta)} + O(1)$$

by the definition of  $\overline{Y(M, \theta)}$ .

We have the following three cases:

**Case 1.** If  $0 < \lambda < 1$ , then

$$\begin{aligned} Y(M, \theta) &= E(u_i) + o(1) \\ &= E(u) + E(v_i) + o(1) \\ &\geq \lambda^{\frac{n}{n+1}} Y(M, \theta) + (1-\lambda)^{\frac{n}{n+1}} \overline{Y(M, \theta)} + o(1) \\ &\geq (\lambda^{\frac{n}{n+1}} + (1-\lambda)^{\frac{n}{n+1}}) Y(M, \theta) + o(1), \end{aligned}$$

where the second equality follows from Lemma 2.4, the first inequality follows from (2-15) and (2-16), and the last inequality follows from the assumption that  $Y(M, \theta) < \overline{Y(M, \theta)}$ . But this is a contradiction, since

$$\lambda^t + (1-\lambda)^t > (1-\lambda + \lambda)^t = 1 \quad \text{for } 0 < \lambda < 1 \text{ and } 0 < t < 1.$$

**Case 2.** If  $\lambda = 0$ , then

$$\begin{aligned} Y(M, \theta) &= E(u_i) + o(1) \\ &= E(u) + E(v_i) + o(1) \\ &\geq E(v_i) + o(1) \\ &\geq \overline{Y(M, \theta)} + o(1), \end{aligned}$$

where the second equality follows from Lemma 2.4, and the last inequality follows from (2-16) with  $\lambda = 0$ . But this contradicts the assumption that  $Y(M, \theta) < \overline{Y(M, \theta)}$ .

**Case 3.** Therefore, we must have  $\lambda = 1$ ; i.e.,

$$\int_M |u|^{2+\frac{2}{n}} dV_\theta = 1.$$

This implies that  $u$  is not identically equal to zero. As pointed out in the remark after Lemma 2.1,  $u$  is strictly positive. Therefore, we have a positive solution  $u$  in  $S^2_1(M, \theta)$  for (1-1).

Now it follows from Theorem 5.15 in [Jerison and Lee 1987] that  $u$  is smooth. This proves Theorem 1.2.

### Appendix

We prove the following inequality related to the Folland–Stein embedding:

**Theorem A.1.** *Suppose  $K$  is a smooth compact subset in  $M$ . For any  $\epsilon > 0$ , there exists a constant  $C(\epsilon, K)$  such that*

$$\begin{aligned} \text{(A-1)} \quad Y(S^{2n+1}, \theta_{S^{2n+1}}) &\left( \int_K |\varphi|^{2+\frac{2}{n}} dV_\theta \right)^{\frac{n}{n+1}} \\ &\leq (1 + \epsilon) \int_K |\nabla_\theta \varphi|^2 dV_\theta + C(\epsilon, K) \int_K |\varphi|^2 dV_\theta \end{aligned}$$

for all  $\varphi \in S^2_1(M, \theta)$  with its compact support lying in  $K$ .

We remark that Theorem A.1 is probably well known. But we cannot find it in the literature. Therefore we provide the proof here. In particular, the Riemannian version of Theorem A.1 can be found in Theorem 2.21 of [Aubin 1998].

*Proof of Theorem A.1.* Given any  $\delta > 0$ , for any point  $p \in M$ , there exists a neighborhood  $U_p$  of  $p$  and a diffeomorphism  $f_p$  from  $U_p$  to a neighborhood of the origin of  $\mathbb{H}^n$  such that (see [Jerison and Lee 1987, Theorem 4.3])

$$\begin{aligned} \text{(A-2)} \quad (f_p)_*(dV_\theta) &= (1 + O(\delta))dV_{\mathbb{H}^n}, \\ (f_p)_*(|\nabla_\theta \varphi|^2) &= (1 + O(\delta))|\nabla_{\mathbb{H}^n}(\varphi \circ f)|^2 \end{aligned}$$

for any function  $\varphi$  in  $M$ . It follows from [Jerison and Lee 1988, Corollary C] that

$$(A-3) \quad \left( \int_{\mathbb{H}^n} |\varphi|^{2+\frac{2}{n}} dV_{\theta_{\mathbb{H}^n}} \right)^{\frac{n}{n+1}} \leq K(n, 2) \int_{\mathbb{H}^n} |\nabla_{\theta_{\mathbb{H}^n}} \varphi|^2 dV_{\theta_{\mathbb{H}^n}}$$

for any smooth function  $\varphi$  which has compact support in  $\mathbb{H}^n$ , where

$$\begin{aligned} K(n, 2) &= \frac{1}{2\pi n(n+1)} \\ &= \frac{1}{Y(S^{2n+1}, \theta_{S^{2n+1}})}. \end{aligned}$$

This implies that (A-3) is also true for  $\varphi \in S_1^2(\mathbb{H}^n, \theta_{\mathbb{H}^n})$  which is compactly supported. Combining (A-2) and (A-3), we get

$$\begin{aligned} (A-4) \quad \left( \int_{U_p} |\varphi|^{2+\frac{2}{n}} dV_{\theta} \right)^{\frac{n}{n+1}} &= \left( \int_{f_p(U_p)} |\varphi \circ f_p|^{2+\frac{2}{n}} (f_p)_*(dV_{\theta}) \right)^{\frac{n}{n+1}} \\ &\leq (1 + O(\delta)) \left( \int_{f_p(U_p)} |\varphi \circ f_p|^{2+\frac{2}{n}} dV_{\theta_{\mathbb{H}^n}} \right)^{\frac{n}{n+1}} \\ &\leq (1 + O(\delta)) K(n, 2) \int_{f_p(U_p)} |\nabla_{\theta_{\mathbb{H}^n}} (\varphi \circ f_p)|^2 dV_{\theta_{\mathbb{H}^n}} \\ &\leq (1 + O(\delta)) K(n, 2) \int_{U_p} |\nabla_{\theta} \varphi|^2 dV_{\theta} \end{aligned}$$

for any function  $\varphi$  which has compact support in  $U_p$ .

Since  $K$  is compact, there exists a finite subcovering  $\{U_{p_i}\}_{i=1}^k$ ; i.e.,

$$K = \bigcup_{i=1}^k U_{p_i}.$$

Suppose  $\{h_i\}_{i=1}^k$  is a partition of unity subordinate to  $\{U_{p_i}\}_{i=1}^k$ ; i.e., the support of  $h_i$  lies in  $U_{p_i}$ ,

$$(A-5) \quad \sum_{i=1}^k h_i = 1 \quad \text{and} \quad |\nabla_{\theta}(h_i^{1/2})| \leq H.$$

For abbreviation, we write

$$\|\varphi\|_p = \left( \int_M |\varphi|^p dV_{\theta} \right)^{\frac{1}{p}}.$$

Therefore, for any function  $\varphi$  compactly supported in  $K$ , we have

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{(A-6)} \quad & \sum_{i=1}^k \|\varphi^2 h_i\|_{\frac{n+1}{n}} \\
 &= \sum_{i=1}^k \|\varphi h_i^{1/2}\|_{2+\frac{2}{n}}^2 \\
 &\leq (1+O(\delta))K(n,2) \sum_{i=1}^k \|\nabla_\theta(\varphi h_i^{1/2})\|_2^2 \\
 &\leq (1+O(\delta))K(n,2) \sum_{i=1}^k \int (|\nabla_\theta \varphi| h_i^{1/2} + \varphi |\nabla_\theta(h_i^{1/2})|)^2 dV_\theta \\
 &\leq (1+O(\delta))K(n,2) \\
 &\quad \times \int \sum_{i=1}^k (|\nabla_\theta \varphi|^2 h_i + 2|\nabla_\theta \varphi| h_i^{1/2} |\varphi| |\nabla_\theta(h_i^{1/2})| + |\varphi|^2 |\nabla_\theta(h_i^{1/2})|^2) dV_\theta \\
 &\leq (1+O(\delta))K(n,2) (\|\nabla_\theta \varphi\|_2^2 + 2kH \|\nabla_\theta \varphi\|_2 \|\varphi\|_2 + kH \|\varphi\|_2^2),
 \end{aligned}$$

where the first inequality follows from (A-4), the last inequality follows from (A-5) and

$$\left( \sum_{i=1}^k h_i^{1/2} \right)^2 \leq k \sum_{i=1}^k h_i = k$$

by Hölder’s inequality.

For any  $\epsilon > 0$ , we can choose  $\delta$  small enough such that

$$\text{(A-7)} \quad (1+O(\delta))K(n,2) \leq K(n,2) + \frac{\epsilon}{2}.$$

Since the last expression of (A-6) is independent of  $i$ , we establish the inequality

$$\begin{aligned}
 \|\varphi\|_{2+\frac{2}{n}}^2 &= \|\varphi^2\|_{\frac{n+1}{n}} = \left\| \varphi^2 \sum_{i=1}^k h_i \right\|_{\frac{n+1}{n}} \\
 &\leq \sum_{i=1}^k \|\varphi^2 h_i\|_{\frac{n+1}{n}} \\
 &\leq (1+O(\delta))K(n,2) (\|\nabla_\theta \varphi\|_2^2 + 2kH \|\nabla_\theta \varphi\|_2 \|\varphi\|_2 + kH \|\varphi\|_2^2) \\
 &\leq \left( K(n,2) + \frac{\epsilon}{2} \right) (\|\nabla_\theta \varphi\|_2^2 + 2kH \|\nabla_\theta \varphi\|_2 \|\varphi\|_2 + kH \|\varphi\|_2^2) \\
 &\leq \left( K(n,2) + \frac{\epsilon}{2} \right) ((1+\epsilon)\|\nabla_\theta \varphi\|_2^2 + C(\epsilon, k, H)\|\varphi\|_2^2),
 \end{aligned}$$



where we have used (A-7) and Young's inequality. Here  $C(\epsilon, k, H)$  is a constant depending only on  $\epsilon$ ,  $k$  and  $H$ . This proves the assertion.  $\square$

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