

*Pacific  
Journal of  
Mathematics*

**ON STABLE SOLUTIONS OF THE BIHARMONIC PROBLEM  
WITH POLYNOMIAL GROWTH**

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Volume 270    No. 1

July 2014



## ON STABLE SOLUTIONS OF THE BIHARMONIC PROBLEM WITH POLYNOMIAL GROWTH

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We prove the nonexistence of smooth stable solutions to the biharmonic problem  $\Delta^2 u = u^p$ ,  $u > 0$  in  $\mathbb{R}^N$  for  $1 < p < \infty$  and  $N < 2(1 + x_0)$ , where  $x_0$  is the largest root of the equation

$$x^4 - \frac{32p(p+1)}{(p-1)^2}x^2 + \frac{32p(p+1)(p+3)}{(p-1)^3}x - \frac{64p(p+1)^2}{(p-1)^4} = 0.$$

In particular, as  $x_0 > 5$  when  $p > 1$ , we obtain the nonexistence of smooth stable solutions for any  $N \leq 12$  and  $p > 1$ . Moreover, we consider also the corresponding problem in the half-space  $\mathbb{R}_+^N$ , and the elliptic problem  $\Delta^2 u = \lambda(u + 1)^p$  on a bounded smooth domain  $\Omega$  with the Navier boundary conditions. We prove the regularity of the extremal solution in lower dimensions.

### 1. Introduction

Consider the biharmonic equation

$$(1-1) \quad \Delta^2 u = u^p, \quad u > 0 \quad \text{in } \mathbb{R}^N$$

where  $N \geq 5$  and  $p > 1$ . Let

$$(1-2) \quad \Lambda(\phi) := \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |\Delta \phi|^2 dx - p \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} u^{p-1} \phi^2 dx \quad \text{for all } \phi \in H^2(\mathbb{R}^N).$$

A solution  $u$  is said to be stable if  $\Lambda(\phi) \geq 0$  for any test function  $\phi \in H^2(\mathbb{R}^N)$ .

In this note, we prove the following classification result.

**Theorem 1.1.** *Let  $N \geq 5$  and  $p > 1$ . Equation (1-1) has no classical stable solution if  $N < 2 + 2x_0$ , where  $x_0$  is the largest root of the polynomial*

$$(1-3) \quad H(x) = x^4 - \frac{32p(p+1)}{(p-1)^2}x^2 + \frac{32p(p+1)(p+3)}{(p-1)^3}x - \frac{64p(p+1)^2}{(p-1)^4}.$$

Moreover, we have  $x_0 > 5$  for any  $p > 1$ . Consequently, if  $N \leq 12$ , (1-1) has no classical stable solution for all  $p > 1$ .

*MSC2010:* primary 35J91; secondary 35J30, 35J40.

*Keywords:* stable solutions, biharmonic equations, polynomial growths.

For the corresponding second-order problem,

$$(1-4) \quad \Delta u + |u|^{p-1}u = 0 \quad \text{in } \mathbb{R}^N, \quad p > 1,$$

Farina has obtained the optimal Liouville type result for all finite Morse index solutions. He proved in [Farina 2007] that a smooth finite Morse index solution to (1-4) exists if and only if  $p \geq p_{JL}$  and  $N \geq 11$ , or  $p = \frac{N+2}{N-2}$  and  $N \geq 3$ . Here  $p_{JL}$  is the so-called Joseph–Lundgren exponent; see (1.11) in [Gui et al. 1992].

The nonexistence of positive solutions to (1-1) is shown if  $p < \frac{N+4}{N-4}$ , and all entire solutions are classified if  $p = \frac{N+4}{N-4}$ ; see [Lin 1998; Wei and Xu 1999]. On the other hand, the radially symmetric solutions to (1-1) are studied in [Ferrero et al. 2009; Gazzola and Grunau 2006; Guo and Wei 2010; Karageorgis 2009]. In particular, Karageorgis [2009] proved that the radial entire solution to (1-1) is stable if and only if  $p \geq p_{JL_4}$  and  $N \geq 13$ . Here  $p_{JL_4}$  stands for the corresponding Joseph–Lundgren exponent to  $\Delta^2$ .

The general fourth-order case (1-1) is more delicate, since the integration by parts argument used by Farina cannot be adapted easily. The first nonexistence result for general stable solutions was proved by Wei and Ye [2013], who proposed we consider (1-1) as a system

$$(1-5) \quad -\Delta u = v, \quad -\Delta v = u^p \quad \text{in } \mathbb{R}^N,$$

and introduced the idea to use different test functions with  $u$  but also  $v$ . Using estimates in [Souplet 2009] they showed that for  $N \leq 8$ , (1-1) has no smooth stable solutions. For  $N \geq 9$ , using a blow-up argument, they proved that the classification holds still for  $p < N/(N-8) + \epsilon_N$  with  $\epsilon_N > 0$ , but without any explicit value of  $\epsilon_N$ . This result was improved by Wei, Xu and Yang in [Wei et al. 2013] for  $N \geq 20$  with a more explicit bound.

Using the stability of system (1-5) and an interesting iteration argument, Cowan [2013, Theorem 2] proved that there is no smooth stable solution to (1-1) if  $N < 2 + \frac{4(p+1)}{p-1}t_0$ , where

$$(1-6) \quad t_0 = \sqrt{\frac{2p}{p+1}} + \sqrt{\frac{2p}{p+1} - \sqrt{\frac{2p}{p+1}}} \quad \text{for all } p > 1.$$

In particular, if  $N \leq 10$ , (1-1) has no stable solution for any  $p > 1$ .

However, the study for radial solutions in [Karageorgis 2009] suggests the following conjecture.

**Conjecture.** A smooth stable solution to (1-1) exists if and only if  $p \geq p_{JL_4}$  and  $N \geq 13$ .

Consequently, the Liouville type result for stable solutions of (1-1) should hold true for  $N \leq 12$  with any  $p > 1$ ; that's what we prove here. More precisely, by

[Karageorgis 2009, Theorem 1], the radial entire solutions to (1-1) are unstable if and only if

$$(1-7) \quad \frac{N^2(N-4)^2}{16} < pQ_4\left(-\frac{4}{p-1}\right),$$

where  $Q_4(m) = m(m-2)(m+N-2)(m+N-4)$ . The left-hand side comes from the best constant of the Hardy–Rellich inequality (see [Rellich 1969]): Let  $N \geq 5$ ,

$$\int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |\Delta\varphi|^2 dx \geq \frac{N^2(N-4)^2}{16} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} \frac{\varphi^2}{|x|^4} dx \quad \text{for all } \varphi \in H^2(\mathbb{R}^N).$$

The right-hand side of (1-7) comes from the weak radial solution  $w(x) = |x|^{-4/(p-1)}$ . When  $p > \frac{N+4}{N-4}$ , we can check that  $w \in H^2_{\text{loc}}(\mathbb{R}^N)$  and

$$\Delta^2 w = Q_4\left(-\frac{4}{p-1}\right)w^p \quad \text{in } \mathcal{D}'(\mathbb{R}^N).$$

Since  $w^{p-1}(x) = |x|^{-4}$ , and in view of the Hardy–Rellich inequality, the condition (1-7) means just that  $w$  is not a stable solution in  $\mathbb{R}^N$ , that is, there exists  $\varphi \in H^2(\mathbb{R}^N)$  such that

$$\Lambda_w(\varphi) := \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |\Delta\varphi|^2 dx - p \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} Q_4\left(-\frac{4}{p-1}\right)w^{p-1}\varphi^2 dx < 0.$$

If we set  $N = 2 + 2x$ , a direct calculation shows that (1-7) is equivalent to  $H_{JL_4}(x) < 0$ , where

$$H_{JL_4}(x) := (x^2 - 1)^2 - \frac{32p(p+1)}{(p-1)^2}x^2 + \frac{32p(p+1)(p+3)}{(p-1)^3}x - \frac{64p(p+1)^2}{(p-1)^4}.$$

By [Gazzola and Grunau 2006], (1-7) is equivalent to  $N < 2 + 2x_1$  if  $x_1$  denotes the largest root of  $H_{JL_4}$ . Note that closeness between the fourth-order polynomials  $H_{JL_4}$  and  $H$  (in Theorem 1.1); they differ only by  $H(x) - H_{JL_4}(x) = 2x^2 - 1$ .

Furthermore, Theorem 1.1 improves the bound given in [Cowan 2013] for all  $p > 1$ . Indeed, Lemmas 2.2 and 2.4 below imply that  $x_0 > \frac{2(p+1)}{p-1}t_0$ .

Recall that to handle the equation (1-1), we prove in general that  $v = -\Delta u > 0$  in  $\mathbb{R}^N$  by studying function averages on the sphere; see [Wei and Xu 1999]. Applying the blow-up argument as in [Souplet 2009; Wei and Ye 2013], we can assume that  $u$  and  $v$  are uniformly bounded in  $\mathbb{R}^N$ . Therefore the following Souplet’s estimate [2009] holds true in  $\mathbb{R}^N$ , which was established for any *bounded* solution  $u$  of (1-1):

$$(1-8) \quad v \geq \sqrt{\frac{2}{p+1}}u^{(p+1)/2}.$$

Here we propose a new approach. Without assuming the boundedness of  $u$  or showing immediately the positivity of  $v$ , we prove first some integral estimates for

stable solutions of (1-1), which will enable us the estimate (1-8). This idea permits us to handle more general biharmonic equations: let  $N \geq 5$  and  $p > 1$ , and consider

$$(1-9) \quad \Delta^2 u = u^p, \quad u > 0 \text{ in } \Sigma \subset \mathbb{R}^N, \quad u = \Delta u = 0 \text{ on } \partial \Sigma.$$

Let  $E = H^2(\Sigma) \cap H_0^1(\Sigma)$  and

$$(1-10) \quad \Lambda_0(\phi) := \int_{\Sigma} |\Delta \phi|^2 dx - p \int_{\Sigma} u^{p-1} \phi^2 dx \quad \text{for all } \phi \in E.$$

A solution  $u$  of (1-9) is said to be *stable* if  $\Lambda_0(\phi) \geq 0$  for any  $\phi \in E$ .

**Proposition 1.2.** *Let  $u$  be a classical stable solution of (1-9) where  $\Sigma$  is one of  $\mathbb{R}^N$ , the half-space  $\Sigma = \mathbb{R}_+^N$ , or the exterior domain  $\Sigma = \mathbb{R}^N \setminus \bar{\Omega}$  or  $\mathbb{R}_+^N \setminus \bar{\Omega}$ , where  $\Omega$  is a bounded smooth domain of  $\mathbb{R}^N$ . Then the inequality (1-8) holds in  $\Sigma$ , and consequently  $v > 0$  in  $\Sigma$ .*

Using this, we obtain a Liouville type result for (1-9) in the half-space situation, which improves the result in [Wei and Ye 2013] for a wider range of  $N$ , and without assuming the boundedness of  $u$  or  $v = -\Delta u$ .

**Theorem 1.3.** *Let  $x_0$  be defined as in Theorem 1.1. If  $N < 2 + 2x_0$ , there exists no classical stable solution of (1-9) if  $\Sigma = \mathbb{R}_+^N$ .*

Our proof combines also many ideas from [Wei and Ye 2013; Cowan and Ghoussoub 2014; Cowan 2013]. Briefly, for (1-1), we apply different test functions to both equations of the system (1-5) and make use of the following inequality in [Cowan and Ghoussoub 2014] (see also [Cowan 2013; Dupaigne et al. 2013a]): if  $u$  is a stable solution of (1-1), then

$$(1-11) \quad \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} \sqrt{p} u^{(p-1)/2} \varphi^2 dx \leq \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |\nabla \varphi|^2 dx \quad \text{for all } \varphi \in C_0^1(\mathbb{R}^N).$$

This will enable us to make two estimates. From these estimates, we prove that for any stable solution  $u$  of (1-1),  $\phi \in C_0^2(\mathbb{R}^N)$  and  $s \geq 1$ ,

$$(1-12) \quad L(s) < 0 \Rightarrow \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} u^p v^{s-1} \phi^2 dx \leq C \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} v^s (|\Delta(\phi^2)| + |\nabla \phi|^2) dx.$$

Here  $L$  is a polynomial of degree 4, see (2-9) below, and the constant  $C$  depends only on  $p$  and  $s$ . Applying then the iteration argument of Cowan [2013], we show that  $u \equiv 0$  if  $N < 2 + 2x_0$ , which is a contradiction, since  $u$  is positive.

Using similar ideas, we consider the elliptic equation on bounded domains:

$$(P_\lambda) \quad \begin{cases} \Delta^2 u = \lambda(u+1)^p & \text{in a bounded smooth domain } \Omega \subset \mathbb{R}^N, N \geq 1 \\ u = \Delta u = 0 & \text{on } \partial \Omega. \end{cases}$$

It is well known (see [Berchio and Gazzola 2005; Gazzola et al. 2010]) that there exists a critical value  $\lambda^* > 0$  depending on  $p > 1$  and  $\Omega$  such that:

- If  $\lambda \in (0, \lambda^*)$ ,  $(P_\lambda)$  has a minimal and classical solution  $u_\lambda$  which is stable.
- If  $\lambda = \lambda^*$ , then  $u^* = \lim_{\lambda \rightarrow \lambda^*} u_\lambda$  is a weak solution to  $(P_{\lambda^*})$ ;  $u^*$  is called the *extremal solution*.
- No solution of  $(P_\lambda)$  exists whenever  $\lambda > \lambda^*$ .

In [Cowan et al. 2010; Wei and Ye 2013], it was proved that if  $1 < p < ((N - 8)/N)_+^{-1}$ , or equivalently  $N < 8p/(p - 1)$ , the extremal solution  $u^*$  is smooth. Recently, Cowan and Ghoussoub improved the above result by showing that  $u^*$  is smooth if  $N < 2 + 4(p + 1)/(p - 1)t_0$  with  $t_0$  in (1-6), so  $u^*$  is smooth for any  $p > 1$  when  $N \leq 10$ . Our result is this:

**Theorem 1.4.** *The extremal solution  $u^*$  is smooth if  $N < 2 + 2x_0$  with  $x_0$  given by Theorem 1.1. In particular,  $u^*$  is smooth for any  $p > 1$  if  $N \leq 12$ .*

We remark that our proof does not use the *a priori* estimate of  $v = -\Delta u$  as in [Cowan et al. 2010; Cowan and Ghoussoub 2014].

The paper is organized as follows. We prove some preliminary results and Proposition 1.2 in Section 2. The proofs of Theorems 1.1, 1.3 and 1.4 are given in Sections 3 and 4.

## 2. Preliminaries

We show first how to obtain the estimate (1-8) for stable solutions of (1-9). Our idea is to use the stability condition (1-10) to get some decay estimates for stable solutions of (1-9). In the following, we denote by  $B_r$  the ball of center 0 and radius  $r > 0$ .

**Lemma 2.1.** *Let  $u$  be a stable solution to (1-9) and set  $v = -\Delta u$ . Then*

$$(2-1) \quad \int_{\Sigma \cap B_R} (v^2 + u^{p+1}) dx \leq CR^{N-4-8/(p-1)} \quad \text{for all } R > 0.$$

*Proof.* We proceed similarly as in Step 1 of the proof for [Wei and Ye 2013, Theorem 1.1], but we do not assume here that  $v > 0$  or  $u$  is bounded in  $\Sigma$ . For any  $\xi \in C^4(\Sigma)$  satisfying  $\xi = \Delta \xi = 0$  on  $\partial \Sigma$  and  $\eta \in C_0^\infty(\mathbb{R}^N)$ , we have

$$(2-2) \quad \int_{\Sigma} (\Delta^2 \xi) \xi \eta^2 dx = \int_{\Sigma} [\Delta(\xi \eta)]^2 dx + \int_{\Sigma} [-4(\nabla \xi \cdot \nabla \eta)^2 + 2\xi \Delta \xi |\nabla \eta|^2] dx \\ + \int_{\Sigma} \xi^2 [2\nabla(\Delta \eta) \cdot \nabla \eta + (\Delta \eta)^2] dx.$$

The proof is direct as in [Wei and Ye 2013, Lemma 2.3], noticing just that in the integrations by parts, all boundary integration terms on  $\partial \Sigma$  vanish under the Navier conditions for  $\xi$ .

Let  $u$  be a solution of (1-9). Taking  $\xi = u$  in (2-2), we have

$$\begin{aligned} & \int_{\Sigma} [\Delta(u\eta)]^2 dx - \int_{\Sigma} u^{p+1} \eta^2 dx \\ &= 4 \int_{\Sigma} (\nabla u \nabla \eta)^2 dx + 2 \int_{\Sigma} uv |\nabla \eta|^2 dx - \int_{\Sigma} u^2 [2 \nabla(\Delta \eta) \cdot \nabla \eta + (\Delta \eta)^2] dx, \end{aligned}$$

where  $v = -\Delta u$ . Using  $\phi = u\eta$  in (1-10), we obtain easily

$$\begin{aligned} (2-3) \quad & \int_{\Sigma} [(\Delta(u\eta))^2 + u^{p+1} \eta^2] dx \\ & \leq C_1 \int_{\Sigma} [|\nabla u|^2 |\nabla \eta|^2 + u^2 |\nabla(\Delta \eta) \cdot \nabla \eta| + u^2 (\Delta \eta)^2] dx + C_2 \int_{\Sigma} uv |\nabla \eta|^2 dx. \end{aligned}$$

Here and below,  $C$  and  $C_i$  denote generic positive constants independent of  $u$ , which can change from one line to another. Since  $\Delta(u\eta) = 2\nabla u \cdot \nabla \eta + u\Delta\eta - v\eta$  we get from (2-3)

$$\begin{aligned} (2-4) \quad & \int_{\Sigma} [v^2 \eta^2 + u^{p+1} \eta^2] dx \\ & \leq C_1 \int_{\Sigma} [|\nabla u|^2 |\nabla \eta|^2 + u^2 |\nabla(\Delta \eta) \cdot \nabla \eta| + u^2 (\Delta \eta)^2] dx + C_2 \int_{\Sigma} uv |\nabla \eta|^2 dx. \end{aligned}$$

On the other hand, since  $u = 0$  on  $\partial\Sigma$ ,

$$\begin{aligned} 2 \int_{\Sigma} |\nabla u|^2 |\nabla \eta|^2 dx &= \int_{\Sigma} \Delta(u^2) |\nabla \eta|^2 dx + 2 \int_{\Sigma} uv |\nabla \eta|^2 dx \\ &= \int_{\Sigma} u^2 \Delta(|\nabla \eta|^2) dx + 2 \int_{\Sigma} uv |\nabla \eta|^2 dx. \end{aligned}$$

By inputting this into (2-4), we arrive at

$$\begin{aligned} (2-5) \quad & \int_{\Sigma} [v^2 \eta^2 + u^{p+1} \eta^2] dx \\ & \leq C_1 \int_{\Sigma} u^2 [|\nabla(\Delta \eta) \cdot \nabla \eta| + (\Delta \eta)^2 + |\Delta(|\nabla \eta|^2)|] dx + C_2 \int_{\Sigma} uv |\nabla \eta|^2 dx. \end{aligned}$$

If we let  $\eta = \varphi^m$  with  $m > 2$  and  $\varphi \in C_0^\infty(\mathbb{R}^N)$ ,  $\varphi \geq 0$ , it follows that

$$\begin{aligned} \int_{\Sigma} uv |\nabla \eta|^2 dx &= m^2 \int_{\Sigma} uv \varphi^{2(m-1)} |\nabla \varphi|^2 dx \\ &\leq \frac{1}{2C} \int_{\Sigma} (v\varphi^m)^2 dx + C \int_{\Sigma} u^2 \varphi^{2(m-2)} |\nabla \varphi|^4 dx. \end{aligned}$$

Now choose a cutoff function  $\varphi_0$  in  $C_0^\infty(B_2)$  satisfying  $0 \leq \varphi_0 \leq 1$  and  $\varphi_0 = 1$  for  $|x| < 1$ . Inputting the above inequality into (2-5) with  $\varphi = \varphi_0(R^{-1}x)$  for  $R > 0$  and



$\eta = \varphi^m$  with  $m = (2p + 2)/(p - 1) > 2$ , we arrive at

$$\begin{aligned}
 (2-6) \quad \int_{\Sigma} (v^2 + u^{p+1}) \varphi^{2m} dx &\leq \frac{C}{R^4} \int_{\Sigma} u^2 \varphi^{2m-4} dx \\
 &\leq \frac{C}{R^4} \left( \int_{\Sigma} u^{p+1} \varphi^{(p+1)(m-2)} dx \right)^{2/(p+1)} R^{N(p-1)/(p+1)} \\
 &= \frac{C}{R^4} \left( \int_{\Sigma} u^{p+1} \varphi^{2m} dx \right)^{2/(p+1)} R^{N(p-1)/(p+1)}.
 \end{aligned}$$

Hence

$$\int_{\Sigma} u^{p+1} \varphi^{2m} dx \leq C R^{N-4(p+1)/(p-1)}.$$

Combining with (2-6) we get (2-1), since  $\varphi^{2m} = 1$  for  $x \in B_R := \{x \in \mathbb{R}^N : |x| \leq R\}$ .  $\square$

*Proof of Proposition 1.2.* Let

$$\zeta = \beta u^{(p+1)/2} - v, \quad \text{where } \beta = \sqrt{\frac{2}{p+1}}.$$

Then a direct computation shows that  $\Delta \zeta \geq \beta^{-1} u^{(p-1)/2} \zeta$  in  $\Sigma$ . Consider  $\zeta_+ := \max(\zeta, 0)$ . For any  $R > 0$ , we have

$$\begin{aligned}
 (2-7) \quad \int_{\Sigma \cap B_R} |\nabla \zeta_+|^2 dx &= - \int_{\Sigma \cap B_R} \zeta_+ \Delta \zeta dx + \int_{\partial(\Sigma \cap B_R)} \zeta_+ \frac{\partial \zeta}{\partial \nu} d\sigma \\
 &\leq \int_{\Sigma \cap \partial B_R} \zeta_+ \frac{\partial \zeta}{\partial \nu} d\sigma.
 \end{aligned}$$

Here we used  $\zeta_+ \Delta \zeta \geq 0$  in  $\Sigma$  and  $\zeta = 0$  on  $\partial \Sigma$ . Now let  $S^{N-1}$  denote the unit sphere in  $\mathbb{R}^N$  and

$$e(r) = \int_{S^{N-1} \cap (r^{-1}\Sigma)} \zeta_+^2(r\sigma) d\sigma \quad \text{for } r > 0.$$

We remark that there exists an  $R_0 > 0$  satisfying

$$(2-8) \quad \int_{\Sigma \cap \partial B_r} \zeta_+ \frac{\partial \zeta}{\partial \nu} d\sigma = \frac{r^{N-1}}{2} e'(r) \quad \text{for all } r \geq R_0.$$

Moreover, for  $R \geq R_0$ , we deduce from (2-1) that

$$\begin{aligned}
 \int_{R_0}^R r^{N-1} e(r) dr &\leq \int_{B_R \cap \Sigma} \zeta_+^2 dx \leq C \int_{B_R \cap \Sigma} (v^2 + u^{p+1}) dx \\
 &\leq C R^{N-4-8/(p-1)} = o(R^N).
 \end{aligned}$$

This means that the function  $e$  cannot be nondecreasing at infinity, so there exists a sequence  $R_j \rightarrow \infty$  satisfying  $e'(R_j) \leq 0$ . Combining (2-7) and (2-8) with

$R = R_j \rightarrow \infty$ , we obtain

$$\int_{\Sigma} |\nabla \zeta_+|^2 dx = 0.$$

Using  $\zeta = 0$  on  $\partial\Sigma$ , we have  $\zeta_+ \equiv 0$  in  $\Sigma$ , or equivalently (1-8) holds true in  $\Sigma$ . Clearly  $v > 0$  in  $\Sigma$  by (1-8).  $\square$

In the following, we show some properties of the polynomials  $L$  and  $H$ , useful for our proofs. Let

$$(2-9) \quad L(s) = s^4 - 32 \frac{p}{p+1} s^2 + 32 \frac{p(p+3)}{(p+1)^2} s - 64 \frac{p}{(p+1)^2}, \quad s \in \mathbb{R}.$$

**Lemma 2.2.**  $L(2t_0) < 0$  and  $L$  has a unique root  $s_0$  in the interval  $(2t_0, \infty)$ .

*Proof.* Obviously

$$L(2t_0) = 16t_0^4 - 128 \frac{p}{p+1} t_0^2 + 64 \frac{p(p+3)}{(p+1)^2} t_0 - 64 \frac{p}{(p+1)^2}.$$

Since  $t_0^2/(2t_0-1) = \sqrt{2p/(p+1)}$  (see [Cowan 2013]), we have  $t_0^4 = \frac{2p}{p+1} (2t_0-1)^2$ . A direct computation yields

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{(p+1)^2 L(2t_0)}{32p} &= (p+1)(2t_0-1)^2 - 4(p+1)t_0^2 + 2(p+3)t_0 - 2 \\ &= (p-1)(1-2t_0). \end{aligned}$$

Since  $t_0 > 1$  for any  $p > 1$ , we have  $L(2t_0) < 0$ . Furthermore, for all  $p > 1$ ,  $s \geq 2t_0$ , we have

$$\begin{aligned} (p+1)L''(s) &= 12(p+1)s^2 - 64p \geq 48(p+1)t_0^2 - 64p \\ &\geq 48(p+1) \frac{2p}{p+1} - 64p = 32p > 0 \end{aligned}$$

in  $[2t_0, \infty)$ , where we used  $t_0^2 \geq 2p/(p+1)$ , which holds by (1-6). Therefore  $L$  is convex in  $[2t_0, \infty)$ . Since  $\lim_{s \rightarrow \infty} L(s) = \infty$  and  $L(2t_0) < 0$ , it's clear that  $L$  admits a unique root in  $(2t_0, \infty)$ .  $\square$

**Remark 2.3.** After the change of variable  $x = \frac{p+1}{p-1}s$ , a direct calculation gives

$$H(x) = \left( \frac{p+1}{p-1} \right)^4 L(s),$$

hence  $H(x) < 0$  if and only if  $L(s) < 0$ . Using the lemma above, we see that  $x_0 = \frac{p+1}{p-1}s_0$  is the largest root of  $H$ , and  $x_0$  is the only root of  $H$  for  $x \geq \frac{2(p+1)}{p-1}t_0$ .

**Lemma 2.4.** If  $x_0 = \frac{p+1}{p-1}s_0$  is the largest root of  $H$ , then  $x_0 > 5$  for any  $p > 1$ .

*Proof.* Since  $x_0$  is the largest root of  $H$ , to have  $x_0 > 5$  it suffices to show  $H(5) < 0$ . Let  $J(p) = (p-1)^4 H(5)$ ; then  $J(p) = -15p^4 - 1284p^3 + 4262p^2 - 3844p + 625$ . Therefore,

$$J'(p) = -60p^3 - 3852p^2 + 8524p - 3844, \quad J''(p) = -180p^2 - 7704p + 8524.$$

We see that  $J'' < 0$  in  $[2, \infty)$ . Consequently  $J'(p) < 0$  and  $J(p) < 0$  for  $p \geq 2$ . Hence  $x_0 > 5$  if  $p \geq 2$ . For  $p \in (1, 2)$ , we have  $x_0 > \frac{2(p+1)}{p-1}t_0 \geq 6t_0$ , which exceeds 5 since  $t_0 > 1$ .  $\square$

### 3. Proof of Theorems 1.1 and 1.3

We will prove only Theorem 1.1, since the proof of Theorem 1.3 is completely similar, just changing  $B_r$  to  $B_r \cap \mathbb{R}_+^N$ .

The following result generalizes [Cowan 2013, Lemma 4], which is a crucial argument for our proof. As above, the constant  $C$  always denotes a positive number which may change term by term, but does not depend on the solution  $u$ . For  $k \in \mathbb{N}$ , let  $R_k := 2^k R$  with  $R > 0$ .

**Lemma 3.1.** *Assume that  $u$  is a classical stable solution of (1-1). Then for all  $2 \leq s < s_0$ , there is  $C < \infty$  such that*

$$(3-1) \quad \int_{B_{R_k}} u^p v^{s-1} dx \leq \frac{C}{R^2} \int_{B_{R_{k+1}}} v^s dx \quad \text{for all } R > 0.$$

*Proof.* Let  $u$  be a classical stable solution of (1-1). Let  $\phi \in C_0^2(\mathbb{R}^N)$  and  $\varphi = u^{(q+1)/2}\phi$  with  $q \geq 1$ . With this  $\varphi$ , the stability inequality (1-11) gives

$$(3-2) \quad \begin{aligned} \sqrt{p} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} u^{(p-1)/2} u^{q+1} \phi^2 \\ \leq \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} u^{q+1} |\nabla \phi|^2 + \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |\nabla u^{(q+1)/2}|^2 \phi^2 + (q+1) \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} u^q \phi \nabla u \nabla \phi. \end{aligned}$$

Integrating by parts, we get

$$(3-3) \quad \begin{aligned} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |\nabla u^{\frac{q+1}{2}}|^2 \phi^2 dx &= \frac{(q+1)^2}{4} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} u^{q-1} |\nabla u|^2 \phi^2 dx \\ &= \frac{(q+1)^2}{4q} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} \phi^2 \nabla(u^q) \nabla u dx \\ &= \frac{(q+1)^2}{4q} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} u^q v \phi^2 dx - \frac{q+1}{4q} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} \nabla(u^{q+1}) \nabla(\phi^2) dx \\ &= \frac{(q+1)^2}{4q} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} u^q v \phi^2 dx + \frac{q+1}{4q} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} u^{q+1} \Delta(\phi^2) dx \end{aligned}$$

and

$$(3-4) \quad (q+1) \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} u^q \phi \nabla u \nabla \phi \, dx = \frac{1}{2} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} \nabla(u^{q+1}) \nabla(\phi^2) \, dx \\ = -\frac{1}{2} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} u^{q+1} \Delta(\phi^2) \, dx.$$

Combining (3-2)–(3-4), we conclude that

$$(3-5) \quad a_1 \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} u^{(p-1)/2} u^{q+1} \phi^2 \, dx \leq \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} u^q v \phi^2 \, dx + C \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} u^{q+1} (|\Delta(\phi^2)| + |\nabla \phi|^2) \, dx$$

where  $a_1 = (4q\sqrt{p})/(q+1)^2$ . Now choose  $\phi(x) = h(R_k^{-1}x)$ , where  $h \in C_0^\infty(B_2)$  is such that  $h \equiv 1$  in  $B_1$ . Then

$$(3-6) \quad \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} u^{(p-1)/2} u^{q+1} \phi^2 \, dx \leq \frac{1}{a_1} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} u^q v \phi^2 \, dx + \frac{C}{R^2} \int_{B_{R_{k+1}}} u^{q+1} \, dx.$$

Now, apply the stability inequality (1-11) with  $\varphi = v^{(r+1)/2} \phi$ ,  $r \geq 1$ , to obtain

$$\sqrt{p} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} u^{(p-1)/2} v^{r+1} \phi^2 \\ \leq \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} v^{r+1} |\nabla \phi|^2 + \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} |\nabla v^{(r+1)/2}|^2 \phi^2 + (r+1) \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} v^r \phi \nabla v \nabla \phi.$$

By a very similar computation (recalling that  $-\Delta v = u^p$ ), we have

$$(3-7) \quad \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} u^{(p-1)/2} v^{r+1} \phi^2 \, dx \leq \frac{1}{a_2} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} u^p v^r \phi^2 \, dx + \frac{C}{R^2} \int_{B_{R_{k+1}}} v^{r+1} \, dx$$

where  $a_2 = (4r\sqrt{p})/(r+1)^2$ .

Using (3-6) and (3-7), we get

$$(3-8) \quad I_1 + a_2^{r+1} I_2 := \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} u^{(p-1)/2} u^{q+1} \phi^2 \, dx + a_2^{r+1} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} u^{(p-1)/2} v^{r+1} \phi^2 \, dx \\ \leq \frac{1}{a_1} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} u^q v \phi^2 \, dx + a_2^r \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} u^p v^r \phi^2 \, dx \\ + \frac{C}{R^2} \int_{B_{R_{k+1}}} (u^{q+1} + v^{r+1}) \, dx.$$

Now fix

$$(3-9) \quad 2q = (p+1)r + p - 1, \quad \text{or equivalently} \quad q+1 = \frac{1}{2}(p+1)(r+1).$$

By Young's inequality, we get

$$\begin{aligned}
 & \frac{1}{a_1} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} u^q v \phi^2 dx \\
 &= \frac{1}{a_1} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} u^{(p-1)/2} u^{(p+1)/2r} v \phi^2 dx \\
 &= \frac{1}{a_1} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} u^{(p-1)/2} u^{(q+1)r/(r+1)} v \phi^2 dx \\
 &\leq \frac{r}{r+1} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} u^{(p-1)/2} u^{q+1} \phi^2 dx + \frac{1}{a_1^{r+1} (r+1)} \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} u^{(p-1)/2} v^{r+1} \phi^2 dx \\
 &= \frac{r}{r+1} I_1 + \frac{1}{a_1^{r+1} (r+1)} I_2,
 \end{aligned}$$

and similarly

$$a_2^r \int_{\mathbb{R}^N} u^p v^r \phi^2 dx \leq \frac{1}{r+1} I_1 + \frac{a_2^{r+1} r}{r+1} I_2.$$

Combining the above two inequalities and (3-8), we deduce that

$$a_2^{r+1} I_2 \leq \left( \frac{a_2^{r+1} r}{r+1} + \frac{1}{a_1^{r+1} (r+1)} \right) I_2 + \frac{C}{R^2} \int_{B_{R_{k+1}}} (u^{q+1} + v^{r+1}) dx;$$

hence

$$\frac{(a_1 a_2)^{r+1} - 1}{r+1} I_2 \leq \frac{C a_1^{r+1}}{R^2} \int_{B_{R_{k+1}}} (u^{q+1} + v^{r+1}) dx.$$

Thus, if  $a_1 a_2 > 1$ , by the choice of  $\phi$ ,

$$\int_{B_{R_k}} u^{(p-1)/2} v^{r+1} dx \leq I_2 \leq \frac{C}{R^2} \int_{B_{R_{k+1}}} (u^{q+1} + v^{r+1}) dx.$$

From (1-8) and (3-9), we get  $u^{q+1} \leq C v^{r+1}$ . Setting  $s = r + 1$ , we can conclude that if  $a_1 a_2 > 1$ ,

$$\begin{aligned}
 (3-10) \quad \int_{B_{R_k}} u^p v^{s-1} dx &\leq C_1 \int_{B_{R_k}} u^{(p-1)/2} v^s dx \leq \frac{C_2}{R^2} \int_{B_{R_{k+1}}} (u^{q+1} + v^{r+1}) dx \\
 &\leq \frac{C_3}{R^2} \int_{B_{R_{k+1}}} v^s dx.
 \end{aligned}$$

On the other hand, a simple verification shows that  $a_1 a_2 > 1$  is equivalent to  $L(s) < 0$ . By Lemma 2.2, for  $s \in [2t_0, s_0)$ , this last inequality holds. So the inequality (3-10), which is (3-1), holds for any  $2t_0 \leq s < s_0$ . On the other hand, the estimate (3-1) is valid for  $2 \leq s < 2t_0$  [Cowan 2013, Lemma 4], hence for  $2 \leq s < s_0$ .  $\square$

We can then follow the iteration process in [Cowan 2013] (see Proposition 1 or Corollary 2 there) to obtain this consequence:

**Corollary 3.2.** *Suppose  $u$  is a classical stable solution of (1-1). For all  $2 \leq \beta < \frac{N}{N-2}s_0$ , there are  $\ell \in \mathbb{N}$  and  $C < \infty$  such that*

$$\left( \int_{B_R} v^\beta dx \right)^{1/\beta} \leq CR \frac{1}{2}^{N(2/\beta-1)} \left( \int_{B_{R_{3\ell}}} v^2 dx \right)^{1/2} \quad \text{for all } R > 0.$$

Now we are in position to complete the proof of Theorem 1.1. Let  $u$  be a smooth stable solution to (1-1). Corollary 3.2 and (2-1) imply that for any  $2 \leq \beta < \frac{N}{N-2}s_0$ , there exists  $C > 0$  such that

$$\left( \int_{B_R} v^\beta dx \right)^{1/\beta} \leq CR \frac{1}{2}^{N(2/\beta-1) + \frac{1}{2}N-2-4/(p-1)} \quad \text{for all } R > 0.$$

Note that

$$\frac{1}{2}N(2/\beta-1) + \frac{1}{2}N-2 - \frac{4}{p-1} < 0 \iff N < \frac{2(p+1)}{p-1}\beta.$$

Considering the allowable range of  $\beta$  given in Corollary 3.2, if  $N < 2 + \frac{2(p+1)}{p-1}s_0$ , after sending  $R \rightarrow \infty$  we get  $\|v\|_{L^\beta(\mathbb{R}^N)} = 0$ , which is impossible since  $v$  is positive. To conclude, the equation (1-1) has no classical stable solution if  $N < 2 + 2x_0$  where  $x_0 = \frac{p+1}{p-1}s_0$ .

Moreover, by Lemma 2.4,  $x_0 > 5$  for any  $p > 1$ , which means that if  $N \leq 12$ , (1-1) has no classical stable solution for all  $p > 1$ .  $\square$

#### 4. Proof of Theorem 1.4

In this section, we consider the elliptic problem  $(P_\lambda)$ . Let  $u_\lambda$  be the minimal solution of  $(P_\lambda)$ . It is well known that  $u_\lambda$  is stable. To simplify the presentation, we erase the index  $\lambda$ . By [Cowan and Ghossoub 2014; Dupaigne et al. 2013a],

$$(4-1) \quad \sqrt{\lambda p} \int_{\Omega} (u+1)^{(p-1)/2} \varphi^2 dx \leq \int_{\Omega} |\nabla \varphi|^2 dx \quad \text{for all } \varphi \in H_0^1(\Omega).$$

Using  $\varphi = u^{(q+1)/2}$  as a test function in (3-2), by similar computation as for (3-5) in Section 3, we obtain

$$(4-2) \quad a_1 \sqrt{\lambda} \int_{\Omega} (u+1)^{(p-1)/2} u^{q+1} dx \leq \int_{\Omega} u^q v dx, \quad \text{where } a_1 = \frac{4q\sqrt{p}}{(q+1)^2}.$$

Here we do not need a cutoff function  $\phi$ , because all boundary terms appearing in the integrations by parts vanish under the Navier boundary conditions, hence the

calculations are even easier. We can use Young's inequality as for Theorem 1.1, but we show here a proof inspired by [Dupaigne et al. 2013b].

Similarly as for (3-7), using  $\varphi = v^{(r+1)/2}$  in (4-1), we have

$$(4-3) \quad a_2 \sqrt{\lambda} \int_{\Omega} (u+1)^{(p-1)/2} v^{r+1} dx \leq \int_{\Omega} \lambda (u+1)^p v^r dx, \quad \text{where } a_2 = \frac{4r\sqrt{p}}{(r+1)^2}.$$

Fix  $2q = (p+1)r + p - 1$ . Applying Hölder's inequality,

$$(4-4) \quad \begin{aligned} \int_{\Omega} u^q v dx &\leq \left( \int_{\Omega} u^{(p-1)/2} v^{r+1} dx \right)^{1/(r+1)} \left( \int_{\Omega} u^{(p-1)/2+q+1} dx \right)^{r/(r+1)} \\ &\leq \left( \int_{\Omega} (u+1)^{(p-1)/2} v^{r+1} dx \right)^{1/(r+1)} \left( \int_{\Omega} u^{(p-1)/2+q+1} dx \right)^{r/(r+1)} \end{aligned}$$

and

$$(4-5) \quad \int_{\Omega} (u+1)^p v^r dx \leq \left( \int_{\Omega} (u+1)^{(p-1)/2} v^{r+1} dx \right)^{r/(r+1)} \left( \int_{\Omega} (u+1)^{(p-1)/2+q+1} dx \right)^{1/(r+1)}.$$

Multiplying (4-2) with (4-3), using (4-4) and (4-5), we get immediately

$$(4-6) \quad \left( \int_{\Omega} (u+1)^{(p-1)/2} u^{q+1} dx \right)^{1/(r+1)} \leq \frac{1}{a_1 a_2} \left( \int_{\Omega} (u+1)^{(p-1)/2+q+1} dx \right)^{1/(r+1)}.$$

On the other hand, for any  $\varepsilon > 0$  there exists  $C_\varepsilon > 0$  such that

$$(u+1)^{(p-1)/2+q+1} \leq (1+\varepsilon)(u+1)^{(p-1)/2} u^{q+1} + C_\varepsilon \quad \text{in } \mathbb{R}_+.$$

If  $a_1 a_2 > 1$ , there exists  $\varepsilon_0 > 0$  satisfying  $1 + \varepsilon_0 < (a_1 a_2)^{r+1}$ . We deduce from (4-6) that

$$\left( 1 - \frac{1 + \varepsilon_0}{(a_1 a_2)^{r+1}} \right) \int_{\Omega} (u+1)^{(p-1)/2} u^{q+1} dx \leq C.$$

Therefore, when  $L(s) < 0$ , or equivalently when  $a_1 a_2 > 1$ , there is  $C > 0$  such that

$$\int_{\Omega} u^{(p-1)/2+q+1} dx \leq \int_{\Omega} (u+1)^{(p-1)/2} u^{q+1} dx \leq C.$$

Since  $u^* = \lim_{\lambda \rightarrow \lambda^*} u_\lambda$ , we conclude, using Lemma 2.2,

$$(4-7) \quad u^* \in L^{(p-1)/2+q+1}(\Omega) \quad \text{for all } q \text{ satisfying } \frac{2(q+1)}{p+1} = r+1 = s < s_0.$$

Furthermore, by [Gazzola et al. 2010], we know that  $u^* \in H^2(\Omega)$ . Since  $u^* \geq 0$  satisfies  $\Delta^2 u^* = \lambda^*(u^* + 1)^p \leq C(u^*)^{p-1} u^* + C$  with  $u^* = \Delta u^* = 0$  on  $\partial\Omega$ , by

standard elliptic estimate, we know that  $u^*$  is smooth if

$$\frac{N}{4} < \left( \frac{p-1}{2} + q + 1 \right) \frac{1}{p-1} = \frac{1}{2} \left( 1 + \frac{p+1}{p-1} s \right).$$

Therefore,  $u^*$  is smooth if  $N < 2 + 2x_0$ . By Lemma 2.4,  $u^*$  is smooth for any  $p > 1$  if  $N \leq 12$ .  $\square$

### Acknowledgments

Ye is partially supported by the French ANR project referenced ANR-08-BLAN-0335-01. This work was partially realized during a visit of Harrabi to the University of Lorraine, and he would like to thank the Laboratoire de Mathématiques et Applications de Metz for the kind hospitality.

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Received March 1, 2013.

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
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Volume 270 No. 1 July 2014

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0030-8730(201407)270:1;1-4