

# Existence of solutions for a class of Kirchhoff-type equations with indefinite potential

Linlian Xiao<sup>1</sup> , Jiaqian Yuan<sup>1</sup> , Jian Zhou<sup>1,\*</sup>  and Yunshun Wu<sup>1</sup> 

1. School of Mathematical Sciences, Guizhou Normal University, Guiyang, 550025, China

\*Corresponding author

## Abstract

This study explores the existence of solutions to the following Kirchhoff-type problem

$$\begin{cases} -(a + b \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} |\nabla u|^2 dx) \Delta u + V(x)u = f(x, u), & \text{in } \mathbb{R}^3, \\ u \in H^1(\mathbb{R}^3), \end{cases}$$

where  $a$  and  $b$  are positive constants, and the potential  $V(x)$  is continuous and indefinite in sign. With suitable assumptions on  $V(x)$  and  $f$ , we establish the existence of solutions using the Symmetric Mountain Pass Theorem.

**Keywords:** Kirchhoff-type equations,  $(C)_c$ -condition, Symmetric Mountain Pass Theorem

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## 1 Introduction and main result

This study explores the existence of solutions to the following Kirchhoff-type problem

$$\begin{cases} -(a + b \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} |\nabla u|^2 dx) \Delta u + V(x)u = f(x, u), & \text{in } \mathbb{R}^3, \\ u \in H^1(\mathbb{R}^3), \end{cases} \quad (1)$$

where  $a$  and  $b$  are positive constants, and the potential  $V(x)$  is continuous and indefinite in sign. The nonlinear term  $\int_{\mathbb{R}^3} |\nabla u|^2 dx$  appears in (1), which implies that (1) is not a pointwise identity. This has resulted in certain mathematical challenges, rendering this research especially intriguing. (1) possesses a fascinating physical background. When  $V(x) = 0$ , and a bounded domain  $\Omega \subset \mathbb{R}^N$  is substituted  $\mathbb{R}^3$ , then we obtain the following nonlocal Kirchhoff-type problem

$$\begin{cases} -(a + b \int_{\Omega} |\nabla u|^2 dx) \Delta u = f(x, u), & \text{in } \Omega, \\ u = 0, & \text{on } \partial\Omega. \end{cases} \quad (2)$$

**Contact:** Linlian Xiao  [xiaolinlian123@163.com](mailto:xiaolinlian123@163.com); Jiaqian Yuan  [yuanjiaqian421@163.com](mailto:yuanjiaqian421@163.com); Jian Zhou  [zhoujiandepict@163.com](mailto:zhoujiandepict@163.com); Yunshun Wu  [wuyunshun1979@163.com](mailto:wuyunshun1979@163.com)

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The problem (2) is regard to the stationary analogue of the equation

$$u_{tt} - \left( a + b \int_{\Omega} |\nabla u|^2 dx \right) \Delta u = f(x, u), \tag{3}$$

which was presented by Kirchhoff in [1], and (3) extends the classical D'Alembert wave equation, applied to the free vibration of elastic strings. Since Lions introduced an abstract framework for problem (3) in [2], it has garnered increasing attention. For the background on the physics and mathematics of this problem, see [3,4,5].

In recent years, there has been a great deal of researches on the Schrödinger-Kirchhoff equations, numerous papers have made different assumptions about  $V(x)$  and  $f$ , refer to [6-23]. In [6-15], the potential  $V(x)$  is assumed to be positive definite. In [6], Wu used a Symmetric Mountain Theorem obtained nontrivial and high energy solutions for equations similar to (1) in  $\mathbb{R}^N$ . In [12], by applying Ekeland's variational principle and the Mountain Pass Theorem, Cheng obtained a large number of nontrivial solutions for the nonhomogeneous Schrödinger Kirchhoff type problem in  $\mathbb{R}^N$ . The indefiniteness of the potential  $V(x)$  has been discussed in [16-23]. In [18], Chen and Wu got a nontrivial solution and an unbounded sequence of solutions for the problem (1) in  $\mathbb{R}^N$  via the Morse Theory and the Fountain Theorem. In [22], using the Local Linking Theorem and Clark's Theorem, Jiang and Liu obtained the existence of multiple solutions for problem (1).

Set  $F(x, u) = \int_0^u f(x, s) ds$ ,  $V^\pm(x) = \max\{\pm V(x), 0\}$ , then  $V(x) = V^+(x) - V^-(x)$ . Before stating our main result, we make the following assumptions:

- (V<sub>1</sub>)  $V(x) \in C(\mathbb{R}^3, \mathbb{R})$ ,  $V(x)$  is bounded from below, and there is  $M > 0$  such that the set  $\{x \in \mathbb{R}^3 | V^+(x) < M\}$  is nonempty and has finite measure.
- (V<sub>2</sub>) There is a constant  $\tau_0 > 1$  such that

$$\tau_1 := \inf_{u \in H^1(\mathbb{R}^3) \setminus \{0\}} \frac{\int_{\mathbb{R}^3} (a |\nabla u|^2 + V^+ u^2) dx}{\int_{\mathbb{R}^3} V^- u^2 dx} \geq \tau_0.$$

- (f<sub>1</sub>)  $f \in C^1(\mathbb{R}^3, \mathbb{R})$ , and there are constants  $q \in (2, 6)$  and  $c > 0$  such that

$$|f(x, u)| \leq c(1 + |u|^{q-1}), \quad \forall (x, u) \in \mathbb{R}^3 \times \mathbb{R}.$$

- (f<sub>2</sub>)  $f(x, u) = o(u)$  as  $u \rightarrow 0$  uniformly in  $x \in \mathbb{R}^3$ , and is 4-superlinear at infinity,

$$\lim_{|u| \rightarrow \infty} \frac{F(x, u)}{u^4} = +\infty.$$

- (f<sub>3</sub>) There exist  $a_0, b_0 > 0$  and  $\theta \in (0, \theta_*)$  such that

$$0 < \left( 4 + \frac{1}{a_0 |u|^\theta + b_0} \right) F(x, u) \leq u f(x, u), \quad \text{for } x \in \mathbb{R}^3 \text{ and } u \neq 0,$$

where  $\theta_* := \min\{q', 5q' - 6\}$ ,  $\frac{1}{q} + \frac{1}{q'} = 1$ .

- (f<sub>4</sub>)  $\lim_{|x| \rightarrow \infty} \sup_{|u| \leq l} \frac{|f(x, u)|}{|u|} = 0$  for every  $l > 0$ .

We are now prepared to present the main result of this paper:

**Theorem 1.1.** *Under assumptions (V<sub>1</sub>), (V<sub>2</sub>) and (f<sub>1</sub>)-(f<sub>4</sub>), if  $f(x, u)$  is odd in  $u$ , then problem (1) has infinitely many solutions.*

## 2 Preliminaries

We work in the Hilbert space

$$E := \left\{ u \in H^1(\mathbb{R}^3) : \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} V^+(x) |u|^2 dx < +\infty \right\},$$

and define the inner product

$$\langle u, w \rangle = \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} (a \nabla u \nabla w + V^+(x) u w) dx, \quad \forall u, w \in E,$$

with the norm

$$\|u\| = \langle u, u \rangle^{1/2}, \quad \forall u \in E.$$

The problem (1) possesses a variational structure, thus a weak solution to problem (1) is a critical point of the following functional  $\Psi : E \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$

$$\Psi(u) = \frac{1}{2} \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} (a |\nabla u|^2 + V(x) u^2) dx + \frac{b}{4} \left( \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} |\nabla u|^2 dx \right)^2 - \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} F(x, u) dx. \quad (4)$$

Then under assumptions  $(V_1)$ ,  $(f_1)$  and  $(f_2)$ , the functional  $\Psi \in C^1(E, \mathbb{R})$  and for any  $u, w \in E$ ,

$$\langle \Psi'(u), w \rangle = \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} (a \nabla u \nabla w + V(x) u w) dx + b \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} |\nabla u|^2 dx \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} \nabla u \nabla w dx - \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} f(x, u) w dx. \quad (5)$$

For any  $t \in [2, 6]$ , since the continuous embedding  $E \hookrightarrow L^t(\mathbb{R}^3)$ , there exists a constant  $\zeta_t > 0$  such that

$$|u|_t \leq \zeta_t \|u\|, \quad \forall u \in E. \quad (6)$$

Furthermore, it follows from  $(V_2)$  that

$$\|u\| \geq \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} (a |\nabla u|^2 + V |u|^2) dx \geq \frac{\tau_0 - 1}{\tau_0} \|u\|. \quad (7)$$

We use the following Symmetric Mountain Pass Theorem to prove theorem 1.1.

**Theorem 2.1.** ([24]) *Let  $X$  be an infinite dimensional Banach space,  $X = Y \oplus Z$ , where  $Y$  is finite dimensional. If  $I \in C^1(X, \mathbb{R})$  satisfies  $(C)_c$ -condition for all  $c > 0$ , and*

- (i<sub>1</sub>)  $I(0) = 0, I(-u) = I(u), \forall u \in X$ ;
- (i<sub>2</sub>) *there exist constants  $\alpha, \rho > 0$ , such that  $I|_{\partial B_\rho \cap Z} \geq \alpha$ ;*
- (i<sub>3</sub>) *for any finite dimensional subspace  $\tilde{X} \subset X$ , there is  $R = R(\tilde{X}) > 0$ , such that  $I(u) \leq 0$  on  $\tilde{X} \setminus B_R$ ;*  
*then  $I$  possesses an unbounded sequence of critical values.*

**Definition 2.2.** ([25]) *Let  $E$  be a Banach space, and  $\Phi \in C^1(E, \mathbb{R})$ . For given  $c \in \mathbb{R}$ , a sequence  $\{u_n\} \subset E$  is called a Cerami sequence of  $\Phi$  at a level  $c$  (shortly,  $(C)_c$  sequence) if*

$$\Phi(u_n) \rightarrow c, \quad (1 + \|u_n\|) \|\Phi'(u_n)\| \rightarrow 0. \quad (8)$$

We say that  $\Phi$  satisfies the Cerami condition at level  $c$  (shortly,  $(C)_c$ -condition) if every  $(C)_c$  sequence of  $\Phi$  contains a convergent subsequence. If  $\Phi$  satisfies  $(C)_c$ -condition for every  $c \in \mathbb{R}$ , then we say that  $\Phi$  satisfies the Cerami condition..

### 3 Proof of main results

In this section, we will first prove that the functional  $\Psi$  satisfies  $(C)_c$ -condition, subsequently show the  $\Psi$  satisfies  $(i_2)$  and  $(i_3)$  of Theorem 2.1, and finally, demonstrate problem (1) has infinitely many solutions.

**Lemma 3.1.** *Suppose that  $(V_1)$  and  $(f_1)$ - $(f_3)$  are satisfied and  $c \in \mathbb{R}$ . Then any  $(C)_c$  sequence of  $\Psi$  is bounded.*

*Proof.* From  $(f_3)$ , we know that

$$uf(x, u) - 4F(x, u) \geq \frac{1}{4a_0 |u|^\theta + 4b_0 + 1} uf(x, u) > 0, \quad \forall u \neq 0, x \in \mathbb{R}^3.$$

Let  $\{u_n\}$  be a  $(C)_c$  sequence of  $\Psi$ . Set  $\Omega_n := \{x \in \mathbb{R}^3 : |u_n(x)| < 1\}$  and  $\Omega_n^c := \mathbb{R}^3 \setminus \Omega_n$ . Then there exist two constants  $c_0, c_1 > 0$  such that

$$4a_0 |u_n|^\theta + 4b_0 + 1 \leq 1/c_0, \quad \forall x \in \Omega_n,$$

and

$$4a_0 |u_n|^\theta + 4b_0 + 1 \leq |u_n|^\theta / c_1, \quad \forall x \in \Omega_n^c.$$

For large  $n$ , there exists  $M_1 > 0$ , such that

$$\begin{aligned} M_1 &\geq 4\Psi(u_n) - \langle \Psi'(u_n), u_n \rangle \\ &\geq \frac{\tau_0 - 1}{\tau_0} \|u_n\|^2 + \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} (u_n f(x, u_n) - 4F(x, u_n)) dx \\ &\geq \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} (u_n f(x, u_n) - 4F(x, u_n)) dx \\ &\geq \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} \frac{u_n f(x, u_n)}{4a_0 |u_n|^\theta + 4b_0 + 1} dx \\ &\geq c_0 \int_{\Omega_n} u_n f(x, u_n) dx + c_1 \int_{\Omega_n^c} |u_n|^{-\theta} u_n f(x, u_n) dx. \end{aligned} \tag{9}$$

Note that  $\theta < 5q' - 6$  by  $(f_3)$ . We have

$$\frac{1}{q'} < \frac{6}{5q'} < \frac{6}{6 + \theta} \quad \text{and} \quad \frac{2}{2 + \theta} < \frac{6}{6 + \theta}.$$

Then we can chose a constant  $s \in (0, 1)$  such that

$$\max \left\{ \frac{6}{5q'}, \frac{2}{2 + \theta} \right\} \leq s \leq \frac{6}{6 + \theta}. \tag{10}$$

Let  $r := s/(1 - s) > 0$ , then  $\frac{1}{s} + \frac{1}{-r} = 1$ . By (9) and the inverse Hölder inequality we have

$$\begin{aligned} M_1 &\geq c_0 \int_{\Omega_n} u_n f(x, u_n) dx + c_1 \int_{\Omega_n^c} |u_n|^{-\theta} u_n f(x, u_n) dx \\ &\geq c_0 \int_{\Omega_n} u_n f(x, u_n) \\ &\quad + c_1 \left( \int_{\Omega_n^c} (u_n f(x, u_n))^s dx \right)^{1/s} \left( \int_{\Omega_n^c} |u_n|^{\theta r} dx \right)^{1/(-r)} \\ &\geq c_0 \int_{\Omega_n} u_n f(x, u_n) dx + c_1 \frac{\left( \int_{\Omega_n^c} (u_n f(x, u_n))^s dx \right)^{1/s}}{|u_n|_{\theta r}^\theta}. \end{aligned} \tag{11}$$

By  $(f_1)$  and  $(f_2)$  we have

$$|f(x, u)|^{q's} \leq \left( c_2 |u|^{(q-1)(q'-1)} |f(x, u)| \right)^s = c_3 (uf(x, u))^s, \quad \forall |u| \geq 1,$$

$$|f(x, u)|^2 \leq c_4 |u| |f(x, u)| = c_4 uf(x, u), \quad \forall |u| < 1.$$

Then by (11), we have

$$\left( \int_{\Omega_n^c} |f(x, u_n)|^{q's} dx \right)^{1/q's} \leq c_5 |u_n|_{\theta r}^{\theta/q'}, \quad (12)$$

$$\left( \int_{\Omega_n} |f(x, u_n)|^2 dx \right)^{1/2} \leq c_6. \quad (13)$$

Taking into account (10), we can easily detect that  $q's > 1$ ,  $\theta r \in [2, 6]$  and  $(q's)' \in (2, 6]$ , where  $(q's)' = q's / (q's - 1)$ . Consequently, by (12) and (13), for  $n$  large enough,

$$\begin{aligned} \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} (a|\nabla u_n|^2 + V(x)u_n^2) dx &= \langle \Psi'(u_n), u_n \rangle - b \left( \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} |\nabla u_n|^2 dx \right)^2 + \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} f(x, u_n)u_n dx \\ &\leq \|u_n\| + \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} f(x, u_n)u_n dx \\ &\leq \|u_n\| + \left( \int_{\Omega_n} |f(x, u_n)|^2 dx \right)^{1/2} |u_n|_2 \\ &\quad + \left( \int_{\Omega_n^c} |f(x, u_n)|^{q's} dx \right)^{1/q's} |u_n|_{(q's)'} \\ &\leq \|u_n\| + c_6 |u_n|_2 + c_5 |u_n|_{\theta r}^{\theta/q'} |u_n|_{(q's)'} \\ &\leq c_7 \|u_n\| + c_8 \|u_n\| \|u_n\|^{\theta/q'}, \end{aligned}$$

where  $c_7, c_8 > 0$  are some constants.

Therefore by (7) and constants  $c_9, c_{10} > 0$ , we have

$$\|u_n\| \leq c_9 + c_{10} \|u_n\|^{\theta/q'},$$

where  $\theta < q'$ . Then it is easy to verify that  $\{u_n\}$  is bounded.  $\square$

**Lemma 3.2.** Suppose that  $(V_1)$  and  $(f_1)$ - $(f_4)$  are satisfied and  $c \in \mathbb{R}$ . Then  $\Psi$  satisfies  $(C)_c$ -condition.

*Proof.* Let  $\{u_n\} \subset E$  be any bounded  $(C)_c$  sequence of  $\Psi$ . Then, passing to a subsequence, we may assume that  $u_n \rightharpoonup u$  in  $E$ .

Note that, by (5)

$$\begin{aligned} \langle \Psi'(u_n), u_n - u \rangle &= \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} (a|\nabla u_n|^2 + V^+ u_n^2) dx - \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} (a\nabla u_n \nabla u + V^+ u_n u) dx \\ &\quad - \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} V^- u_n^2 dx + \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} V^- u_n u dx - \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} f(x, u_n)(u_n - u) dx. \\ &\quad + b \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} |\nabla u_n|^2 dx \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} \nabla u_n \nabla (u_n - u) dx \\ &= \langle u_n, u_n - u \rangle - b \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} |\nabla u_n|^2 dx \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} \nabla u_n \nabla (u - u_n) dx \\ &\quad - \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} V^- u_n (u_n - u) dx - \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} f(x, u_n)(u_n - u) dx, \end{aligned}$$

we have

$$\begin{aligned} 0 &\leq \limsup_{n \rightarrow \infty} (\|u_n\|^2 - \|u\|^2) = \limsup_{n \rightarrow \infty} \langle u_n, u_n - u \rangle \\ &= \limsup_{n \rightarrow \infty} [\langle \Psi'(u_n), u_n - u \rangle + \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} V^- u_n (u_n - u) dx \\ &\quad + b \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} |\nabla u_n|^2 dx \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} \nabla u_n \nabla (u - u_n) dx + \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} f(x, u_n)(u_n - u) dx]. \end{aligned} \tag{14}$$

From (8)

$$\langle \Psi'(u_n), u_n - u \rangle \rightarrow 0, \text{ as } n \rightarrow \infty. \tag{15}$$

Moreover, through the boundedness of  $\{u_n\}$  and  $u_n \rightharpoonup u$  in  $E$ , we have

$$b \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} |\nabla u_n|^2 dx \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} \nabla u_n \nabla (u - u_n) dx \rightarrow 0, \text{ as } n \rightarrow \infty. \tag{16}$$

According to the definition of  $V^-(x)$  and  $(V_1)$ , there is  $V^- \in L^\infty(\mathbb{R}^3)$ . Furthermore, by  $(V_1)$  that  $\{V^+ = 0\}$  has finite measure, that is to say  $\text{meas}\{V^-(x) > 0\} < +\infty$ . Since  $u_n \rightharpoonup u$  in  $E$ , then  $u_n \rightarrow u$  in  $L^t_{loc}(\mathbb{R}^3)$ ,  $t \in [2, 6)$ , we have

$$\begin{aligned} \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} V^- u_n (u_n - u) dx &\leq \|V^-\|_\infty \int_W |u_n| |u_n - u| dx \\ &\leq \|V^-\|_\infty \left( \int_W |u_n|^2 dx \right)^{1/2} \left( \int_W |u_n - u|^2 dx \right)^{1/2} \rightarrow 0, \text{ as } n \rightarrow \infty. \end{aligned} \tag{17}$$

where  $W := \text{supp}V^-$ .

Next, let  $\varepsilon > 0$ , for  $l \geq 1$ , by  $(f_1)$  and Hölder inequality that

$$\begin{aligned} \int_{|u_n| \geq l} f(x, u_n)(u_n - u) dx &\leq 2cl^{q-6} \int_{|u_n| \geq l} |u_n|^5 |u_n - u| dx \\ &\leq 2cl^{q-6} |u_n|_6^5 |u_n - u|_6, \end{aligned}$$

since  $q < 6$ , we may fix  $l$  as large enough, then

$$\int_{|u_n| \geq l} f(x, u_n)(u_n - u) dx \leq \frac{\varepsilon}{3} \tag{18}$$

for all  $n$ . And, from  $(f_4)$  there is  $L > 0$  such that

$$\int_{|u_n| \leq l, |x| \geq L} f(x, u_n)(u_n - u) dx \leq |u_n|_2 |u_n - u|_2 \sup_{|u_n| \leq l, |x| \geq L} \frac{|f(x, u_n)|}{|u_n|} \leq \frac{\varepsilon}{3} \tag{19}$$

for all  $n$ . For  $\varepsilon > 0$ , according to  $(f_1)$  and  $(f_2)$ , there is  $C_\varepsilon > 0$  such that

$$|f(x, u)| \leq \varepsilon |u| + C_\varepsilon |u|^{q-1}, \tag{20}$$

and

$$|F(x, u)| \leq \frac{\varepsilon}{2} |u|^2 + \frac{C_\varepsilon}{q} |u|^q, \tag{21}$$

where  $2 < q < 6$ . Since  $u_n \rightarrow u$  in  $L^t(B_L(0))$  for  $t \in [2, 6)$ , using (20) we have

$$\begin{aligned} &\int_{|u_n| \leq l, |x| \leq L} f(x, u_n)(u_n - u) dx \\ &\leq (\varepsilon + C_\varepsilon) \int_{|u_n| \leq l, |x| \leq L} (|u_n| + |u_n|^{q-1}) |u_n - u| dx \\ &\leq (\varepsilon + C_\varepsilon) |u_n|_2 |u_n - u|_{L^2(B_L(0))} + (\varepsilon + C_\varepsilon) |u_n|_q^{q-1} |u_n - u|_{L^q(B_L(0))} \\ &\leq \frac{\varepsilon}{3} \end{aligned} \tag{22}$$

for  $n$  large enough. Combining (18), (19), (22), since  $\varepsilon$  is arbitrary, we conclude that

$$\int_{\mathbb{R}^3} f(x, u_n)(u_n - u)dx \rightarrow 0, \text{ as } n \rightarrow \infty. \tag{23}$$

Therefore, by (14)-(17) and (23), we obtain  $\|u_n\| \rightarrow \|u\|$ . Thus,  $u_n \rightarrow u$  in  $E$ . □

**Proof of Theorem 1.1**

Let  $\{e_i\}$  is a total orthonormal basis of  $E$  and define  $X_i = \mathbb{R}e_i$ ,

$$Y_m = \bigoplus_{i=1}^m X_i, \quad Z_m = \bigoplus_{i=m+1}^{\infty} X_i, \quad m \in \mathbb{Z}.$$

*Proof.* Obviously,  $\Psi(0) = 0$  and  $\Psi$  is even due to  $f$  is odd, we will verify that  $\Psi$  satisfies the remain conditions of Theorem 2.1.

Firstly, we can check that  $\Psi$  satisfies  $(i_2)$ . By (7) and (21) with  $0 < \varepsilon \leq \frac{\tau_0 - 1}{2\tau_0\zeta_2^2}$ , we have

$$\begin{aligned} \Psi(u) &\geq \frac{\tau_0 - 1}{2\tau_0} \|u\|^2 - \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} F(x, u)dx \\ &\geq \frac{\tau_0 - 1}{2\tau_0} \|u\|^2 - \frac{\varepsilon}{2} |u|_2^2 - \frac{C_\varepsilon}{q} |u|_q^q \\ &\geq \frac{1}{2} \left( \frac{\tau_0 - 1}{\tau_0} - \varepsilon\zeta_2^2 \right) \|u\|^2 - \frac{C_\varepsilon}{q} \zeta_q^q \|u\|^q \\ &\geq \frac{1}{4} \frac{\tau_0 - 1}{\tau_0} \|u\|^2 - \frac{C_\varepsilon}{q} \zeta_q^q \|u\|^q, \quad \forall u \in \partial B_\rho, \end{aligned}$$

where  $B_\rho = \{u \in E : \|u\| < \rho\}$ . Hence,

$$\Psi|_{\partial B_\rho \cap Z_k} \geq \frac{1}{4} \frac{\tau_0 - 1}{\tau_0} \rho^2 - \frac{C_\varepsilon}{q} \zeta_q^q \rho^q := \alpha > 0$$

for  $\rho$  small enough.

Secondly, we verify that  $\Psi$  satisfies  $(i_3)$ , for any finite dimensional subspace  $\hat{E} \subset E$ , there exists a positive integral number  $k$  such that  $\hat{E} \subset E_k$ . Because all norms in finite-dimensional spaces are equivalent, there exists a constant  $b_1 > 0$  such that

$$|u|_4 \geq b_1 \|u\|, \quad \forall u \in E_k.$$

Based on  $(f_1)$  and  $(f_2)$ , we deduce that for any  $M_2 > \frac{b}{4b_1^4}$ , there exists a constant  $C(M_2) > 0$  such that

$$F(x, u) \geq M_2 |u|^4 - C(M_2) |u|^2, \quad \forall (x, u) \in \mathbb{R}^3 \times \mathbb{R}.$$

Therefore

$$\begin{aligned} \Psi(u) &\leq \frac{1}{2} \|u\|^2 + \frac{b}{4} \|u\|^4 - M_2 |u|_4^4 + C(M_2) |u|_2^2 \\ &\leq \frac{1}{2} \|u\|^2 + \frac{b}{4} \|u\|^4 - M_2 b_1^4 \|u\|^4 + C(M_2) \zeta_2^2 \|u\|^2 \\ &= \left( \frac{1}{2} + C(M_2) \zeta_2^2 \right) \|u\|^2 - \left( M_2 b_1^4 - \frac{b}{4} \right) \|u\|^4, \quad \forall u \in E_k. \end{aligned}$$

Hence, there exists a sufficiently large  $R = R(\hat{E}) > 0$  such that  $\Psi(u) \leq 0$  holds on  $\hat{E} \setminus B_R$ .

Based on Lemmas 3.1 and 3.2, it follows that  $\Psi$  satisfies  $(C)_c$ -condition, according to Theorem 2.1, problem (1) has infinitely many solutions. □

## 4 Conclusions

In this paper, we obtain the existence of solutions to a class of Kirchhoff-type equations with indefinite potential. Due to the potential  $V(x)$  is continuous and indefinite in sign and the appearance of nonlinear term  $\int_{\mathbb{R}^3} |\nabla u|^2 dx$ , which lead to two difficulties, namely, verifying the linking constructure and the boundedness of Cerami sequence of  $\Psi$ . In order to overcome these difficulties, we utilize the methods of Chen [25] and Sun [26] (They are different from our research) to obtain the existence of infinitely many solutions to a class of Kirchhoff-type equations.

## 5 Declarations

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### Competing Interests

The authors state that they have no conflicts of interest.

### Ethical Approval

Not applicable.

### Authors's Contributions

Linlian Xiao writes and revises this paper, Jiaqian Yuan checks this paper, Jian Zhou and Yunshun Wu provide suggestions for revisions on this paper.

### Availability Data and Materials

Not applicable.

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