

# MULTIPLE POSITIVE SOLUTIONS OF DISCRETE THIRD-ORDER THREE-POINT BVP WITH SIGN-CHANGING GREEN'S FUNCTION

ALHUSSEIN MA AHMED<sup>1,2,\*</sup>, MUTASIM ABDALMONIM ALSIDDIG<sup>3</sup>, TARTEEL ABDALGADER<sup>4</sup>,  
KHALID AHMED ABBAKAR<sup>5</sup>, BADRADEEN A. A. ADAM<sup>4</sup>, AND HAROUN M. M. SULIMAN<sup>6</sup>

**ABSTRACT.** In this article, by using the Leggett-Williams fixed point theorem we research the multiple Positive Solutions for the following third-order three-point boundary value problem (BVP):

$$\begin{cases} \Delta^3 u(t-1) = a(t)f(t, u(t)), & t \in [1, T-2]_{\mathbb{Z}}, \\ u(T) = \Delta^2 u(0) = \Delta u(T-1) - \Delta^2 u(\eta) = 0 \end{cases}$$

where  $T > 6$  is an integer and  $f : [1, T-2]_{\mathbb{Z}} \times [0, +\infty) \rightarrow [0, +\infty)$  is continuous.  $a : [0, T-2]_{\mathbb{Z}} \rightarrow (0, \infty)$ , and  $\eta$  satisfies the condition:

$F_0 \eta \in [\frac{T-1}{2}, T-2]$ . if  $T$  is an odd number or  $\eta \in [\frac{T-2}{2}, T-2]$ . if  $T$  is an even number

The emphasis is mainly that although the corresponding Green's function is sign-changing, we still obtain the existence of at least  $2n-1$  positive solutions for arbitrary positive integer  $m$  under suitable conditions on  $f$ .

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The problems of multi-point border values of differential equations have a broad application In computational physics, economics, and modern biological fields [1]. Gupta [2] studied the ability to solve the problem of three-point marginal value in a differential equation in 1992. Soon afterwards, there arose many results on multi-point nonlinear boundary value problems At 1999, Ma [7] studied a positive solution to a second-tier differential three-point problem of border value. Subsequently, several conclusions were examined regarding the existence of positive solutions to multi-point border value problems. With the development of the computing science and the computer simulation, multi-point boundary value problems should be

<sup>1</sup>SCHOOL OF COMPUTATIONAL AND APPLIED MATHEMATICS, UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, PRIVATE BAG 3, WITS 2050, SOUTH AFRICA

<sup>2</sup>DEPARTMENT OF MATHEMATICS, UNIVERSITY OF KHARTOUM, P. O. BOX 321, SUDAN

<sup>3</sup>COMMON ADDRESS OF AUTHORS ONE AND DEPARTMENT OF MATHEMATICS FACULTY OF BASIC EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF SINNAR, SINNAR, SUDAN

<sup>4</sup>DEPARTMENT OF MATHEMATICS, FACULTY OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF KHARTOUM, P. O. BOX 321, SUDAN

<sup>5</sup>DEPARTMENT OF MATHEMATICS, FACULTY OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF GADARIF, 32214, SUDAN

<sup>6</sup>COLLEGE OF MATHEMATICS AND STATISTICS, NORTHWEST NORMAL UNIVERSITY, LANZHOU, 730070, PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

\*TETHUSSAIN60@GMAIL.COM

*E-mail addresses:* tethussain60@gmail.com, tarteel3333@yahoo.com, khalidahmed200@hotmail.com, badradeenabaker@uofk.edu, harouns22@yahoo.com.

*Key words and phrases.* Discrete third-order three-point boundary value problem; Positive solutions; Cone; Fixed point; Sign-changing Green's function.

discretized, so we need to study corresponding difference equation.

In 1998, by using Krasnoselskii's fixed point theorem, Agarwal and Henderson [24] studied the discrete problem

$$\begin{cases} \Delta^3 u(t-1) = \lambda a(t)f(t, u(t)), & t \in [2, T]_{\mathbb{Z}}, \\ u(0) = u(1) = u(T+1) = 0 \end{cases}$$

They obtained the existence of positive solutions in two cases for  $\lambda = 1$  and  $\lambda \neq 1$ . Later, there were many interesting results on the positive solutions to the discrete boundary value problems, see, for instance, [23 – 26] and the references therein. It is noted that Green's functions are positive in most of these results. However, when the Green's function is sign-changing, could we also obtain the existence of positive solutions to these kinds of problems?

In 2015, by using the Guo-Krasnoselskii fixed point theorem, Wang and Gao [25] studied the existence of positive solutions to the discrete third-order three-point boundary value problem

$$\begin{cases} \Delta^3 u(t-1) = \lambda a(t)f(t, u(t)), & t \in [0, T-1]_{\mathbb{Z}}, \\ u(0) = \Delta u(T) = \Delta^2 u(\eta) = 0 \end{cases}$$

In this paper we study the following third-order three-point BVP :

$$(1) \quad \begin{cases} \Delta^3 u(t-1) = a(t)f(t, u(t)), & t \in [1, T-2]_{\mathbb{Z}}, \\ u(T) = \Delta^2 u(0) = \Delta u(T-1) - \Delta^2 u(\eta) = 0 \end{cases}$$

where  $T > 6$  is an integer,  $a : [1, T-2]_{\mathbb{Z}} \rightarrow (0, +\infty)$  and  $f : [1, T-2]_{\mathbb{Z}} \times [0, +\infty) \rightarrow [0, +\infty)$  is continuous. Difference equations appear in many mathematical models in diverse fields, such as economy, biology, physics, and finance; see [1-3]. In recent years, the existence and multiplicity of positive solutions of discrete boundary value problems have received much attention from many authors and a great deal of work has been done by using classical methods such as fixed point theory [4-8], lower and upper solutions methods [9], critical point theory [10-12], etc.

**Theorem 1.1** (Leggett-Williams fixed point theorem) Let  $A : \bar{K}_c \rightarrow \bar{K}_c$  be completely continuous and  $\beta$  be a nonnegative continuous concave functional on  $K$  such that  $\beta(u) \leq \|u\|$  for all  $u \in \bar{K}_c$  assume that there exist  $0 < d < a < b \leq c$  such that

(i)  $\{u \in K(\beta, a, b) : \beta(u) > a\} \neq \emptyset$  and  $\beta(Au) > 0$  for  $u \in K(\beta, a, b)$

(ii)  $\|Au\| < d$  for  $\|u\| \leq d$

(iii)  $\beta(Au) > a$  for  $u \in K(\beta, a, c)$ , with  $\|Au\| > b$

Then  $A$  has at least three fixed points  $u_1, u_2, u_3$  in  $\bar{K}_c$  satisfying.

$$\|u_1\| < d, \beta(u_2) > a, \|u_3\| > d, \beta(u_3) < a$$

## 2. PRELIMINARIES

First, let us consider the following linear problem:

$$(2) \quad \begin{cases} \Delta^3 u(t-1) = y(t), & t \in [1, T-2]_{\mathbb{Z}}, \\ u(T) = \Delta^2 u(0) = \Delta u(T-1) - \Delta^2 u(\eta) = 0. \end{cases}$$

We will convert (2.1) to the equivalent summation equation. To get it, let us define the Green's function  $G(t, s)$  as follows.

If  $s > \eta$ , then

$$(3) \quad G(t, s) = \begin{cases} \frac{(T+s-2t)(T-s-1)}{2}, & s > t-2, \\ \frac{(T+s-2t)(T-s-1)}{2} + \frac{(t-s-1)(t-s)}{2}, & s \leq t-2. \end{cases}$$

If  $s \leq \eta$ , then

$$(4) \quad G(t, s) = \begin{cases} \frac{(T-s)(T+s+2t)+(4t-3T)}{2}, & s > t-2, \\ \frac{(T-s)(T+s+2t)+(4t-3T)}{2} + \frac{(t-s-1)(t-s)}{2}, & s \leq t-2. \end{cases}$$

Now, we get the following lemma

**Lemma 2.1** The problem (2.1) has a unique solution

$$(5) \quad u(t) = \sum_{s=1}^{T-2} G(t, s)y(s),$$

where  $G(t, s)$  is defined as (2.2) and (2.3).

*Proof.* By summing from  $s = 1$  to  $s = t - 1$  at both sides of (2.1), we get

$$\Delta^2 u(t-1) = \sum_{s=1}^{t-1} y(s).$$

Repeating the above process, we obtain

$$\Delta u(t-1) = \Delta u(0) + \sum_{s=1}^{t-2} (t-s-1)y(s).$$

Summing from  $s = 1$  to  $s = t$  at both sides of the above equation, we have

$$u(t) = u(0) + t\Delta^2 u(0) + \sum_{s=1}^{t-2} \frac{(t-s)(t-s-1)}{2} y(s).$$

By using the boundary condition  $u(T) = \Delta^2 u(0) = \Delta u(T-1) - \Delta^2 u(\eta) = 0$ , we get

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \Delta u(0) + \sum_{s=1}^{T-2} (T-s-1)y(s) - \sum_{s=1}^{\eta} y(s) = 0. \end{array} \right.$$

Furthermore, we get

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \Delta u(0) = - \sum_{s=1}^{T-2} (T-s-1)y(s) + \sum_{s=1}^{\eta} y(s). \end{array} \right.$$

Then we have

$$\begin{aligned} u(t) = & \sum_{s=1}^{T-2} \frac{(T-s-1)(T+s-2t)}{2} y(s) - (T-t) \sum_{s=1}^{\eta} y(s) \\ & + \sum_{s=1}^{t-2} \frac{(t-s)(t-s-1)}{2} y(s), \end{aligned}$$

which implies (2.2) holds. □

Obviously, if  $u$  is a fixed point of  $A$  in  $K$ , then  $u$  is a nonnegative and decreasing solution of the BVP (1.1).

**Lemma 2.2** It is not difficult to verify that  $G(t, s)$  has the following characteristics:

(i) If  $s \in [1, \eta]$ , then  $G(t, s)$  is non increasing with respect to  $t \in [0, T]$ . If  $s \in [\eta + 1, T - 2]$  is nondecreasing with respect to  $t \in [0, T]$ .

(ii)  $G(t, s)$  changes its sign on  $[0, T] \times [1, T - 2]$ . In details, if  $(t, s) \in [0, T] \times [0, \eta]$ , then

$G(t, s) \geq 0$ . If  $(t, s) \in [0, T] \times [\eta + 1, T - 2]$ , then  $G(t, s) \leq 0$ .

(iii) If  $s \geq \eta$ , then  $\max_{t \in [0, T]} G(t, s) = G(T, s) = 0$  such that

$$G(t, s) \geq 0 \text{ for } 1 \leq s \leq \eta \text{ and } G(t, s) \leq 0 \text{ for } \eta \leq s \leq T - 2.$$

Moreover, if  $s \geq \eta$ , then

$$\max G(t, s) : t \in [0, T] = G(T, s) = 0,$$

$$\min G(t, s) : t \in [0, T] = G(0, s) = -\frac{(T-s)(T-s-1)}{2} \geq -\frac{(T-\eta)(T-\eta-1)}{2}$$

if  $s < \eta$ , then

$$\max G(t, s) : t \in [0, T] = G(0, s) = \frac{(T-s-1)(T+s)}{2} \leq \frac{(T-\eta-1)(T+\eta)}{2},$$

$$\min G(t, s) : t \in [0, T] = G(T, s) = 0$$

Now, let

$$E = \{u : [0, T]_z \rightarrow R | u(T) = \Delta^2 u(0) = \Delta u(T) - \Delta^2 u(\eta) = 0\}$$

Then  $E$  is a Banach space under the norm  $\|u\| = \max_{t \in [0, T]_z} |u(t)|$ .

let

$$K_0 = \{y \in E : y(t) \geq 0, \Delta y(t) \geq 0, t \in [0, T]_z \text{ and } \Delta^2 y(t-1) > 0, t \in [\eta + 1, T]_z\}.$$

$u(t)$  is nonnegative and decreasing Then  $K_0$  is a cone in  $E$ .

**Lemma 2.3** Assume  $y \in E, y(t) \geq 0$  for  $t \in [0, T+1]_z$  and  $\Delta y(t) \geq 0$  for  $t \in [0, T]_z$ . Then  $u$  is the unique solution of the BVP (2.1) belongs to  $K_0$ , where  $u(t)$  is defined as (2.4).

Moreover,  $u(t)$  is concave on  $[\eta + 1, T + 1]_z$ .

*Proof.* The following proof will be divided into two cases.

**Case I.** For  $0 \leq t - 2 < \eta$ , we have

$$\begin{aligned} u(t) &= \sum_{s=1}^{t-2} \frac{(t-T)(T+t)}{2} y(s) \\ &\quad + \sum_{s=t-1}^{\eta} \frac{(T-s-1)(T-2t+s)}{2} y(s) \\ &\quad - \sum_{s=\eta+1}^{T-2} \frac{(T-s)(T-s-1)}{2} y(s) \\ \Delta u(t) &= u(t+1) - u(t) \\ &= \sum_{s=1}^{t-2} \frac{2t+1}{2} y(s) + y(t-1) - \sum_{s=1}^{\eta} (T-s-1) y(s) \\ &\geq y(\eta) \left[ \sum_{s=1}^{t-2} \frac{2t+1}{2} - \sum_{s=1}^{\eta} (T-s-1) \right] \\ &\geq y(\eta) [(2t+1)(t-2) - 2\eta T + \eta(\eta+1) + 2\eta] \geq 0 \end{aligned}$$

and

$$\Delta^2 u(t-1) = \sum_{s=1}^{t-2} y(s) \geq 0$$

Second, if  $\eta < t - 2 \leq T - 2$ , then

$$\begin{aligned}
 u(t) &= \sum_{s=1}^{\eta} \frac{(t-T)(T+t)}{2} y(s) \\
 &\quad + \sum_{s=\eta+1}^{t-2} \frac{(t-T)(T+t-2s-1)}{2} y(s) \\
 &\quad - \sum_{s=t-1}^{T-2} \frac{(T-s)(T-s-1)}{2} y(s) \\
 \Delta u(t) &= u(t+1) - u(t) \\
 &= \sum_{s=1}^{t-2} \frac{2t+1}{2} y(s) + \sum_{s=\eta+1}^{t-2} (t-s)y(s) + y(t-1) \\
 &\geq y(\eta) \left[ \sum_{s=1}^{t-2} \frac{2t+1}{2} y(s) + \sum_{s=\eta+1}^{t-2} (t-s)y(s) \right] \\
 &\geq y(\eta) [(3t+2)(t-2)] \geq 0 \\
 \Delta^2 u(t-1) &= \sum_{s=1}^{t-2} y(s) - \sum_{s=\eta+1}^{t-2} sy(s) \leq 0
 \end{aligned}$$

consequently for  $t \in [0, T]_z$

$$\Delta u(t) \geq 0$$

which mean that  $u(t)$  is increasing ago  $\Delta u(T) = 0$ , for  $t \in [0, T+1]_z$  we have  $u(t) \geq 0$  and  $u \in K_0$ . for  $t \in [\eta+1, T]_z$ ,  $\Delta^2 u(t-1) \geq 0$  we get that  $u(t)$  is concave on  $[\eta+1, T+1]_z$ .

□

**Lemma 2.4** Suppose that  $y \in E$ ,  $y(t) \geq 0$  for  $t \in [0, T+1]_z$ ,  $\Delta y(t) \geq 0$  for  $t \in [0, T]_z$  and  $u$  is the solution of (2.1). Then  $u$  satisfies

$$\begin{aligned}
 \min_{t \in [\theta, T+1-\theta]} u(t) &\geq u(\theta) \geq \frac{\theta - \eta - 1}{T - \eta} \|u\| = \theta^* \|u\| \\
 \text{where } \theta^* &= \frac{\theta - \eta - 1}{T - \eta} \quad \text{and} \quad \theta \in [T+1, \eta+2]
 \end{aligned}$$

*Proof.* From Lemma (2.2), we teach that  $u$  is the concave on  $t \in [\eta+2, T+1]_z$ . thus this

$$u(t) \geq \frac{u(T+1) - u(\eta+1)}{T - \eta} \leq \frac{u(t) - u(\eta+1)}{t - \eta - 1}, \quad t \in [\eta+1, T+1]_z$$

Finally, by direct account, we get

$$u(t) \geq \frac{(t - \eta - 1)}{T - \eta} u(T+1) = \frac{(t - \eta - 1)}{T - \eta} \|u\|$$

$$\min_{t \in [\theta, T+1-\theta]} u(t) = u(\theta) \geq \frac{\theta - \eta - 1}{T - \eta} \|u\| = \theta^* \|u\|.$$

□

### 3. MAIN RESULTS

In this section, we conclude the existence of a positive solution of (1.1). To get it, we assume that:

(F1)  $f : [1, T - 2]_z \times [0, +\infty) \rightarrow [0, \infty)$  is continuous and mapping  $u \mapsto f(t, u)$  is nondecreasing for each  $t \in [1, T - 2]_z$ ;

(F2)  $a : [1, T - 2]_z \rightarrow (0, +\infty)$  is increasing function.

$K = \{u \in K_0 : u(0), \min_{t \in [\mu, T - \mu]_z} u(t) \geq \mu^* \|u\|\}$ ,

consequently,  $K$  is a cone in  $E$  define an operator  $A : K \rightarrow E$  such as

$$(6) \quad Au(t) = \sum_{s=1}^{T-2} G(t, s)a(s)f(s, u(s))$$

**Lemma 3.1**  $A : K \rightarrow K$  is perfectly continuous.

*Proof.* It is obvious that  $A : K \rightarrow E$  is completely continuous since the Banach space  $E$  is finite dimensional. Now, let us prove that  $A : K \rightarrow K$ , that is to say, for any  $u \in K$ ,  $Au \in K$ .

Let  $u \in K$ . Then  $u \in K_0$ , which implies that

$$\Delta u(t) \geq 0$$

and  $u$  is increasing on  $t$ .

Therefore, by (F1),  $f(t, u(t))$  is a increasing function of  $t$ .

Let  $y(t) := a(t)f(t, u(t))$ . Then, from (F1) and (F2), we obtain that  $y(t) \geq 0$  and  $y$  is also a increasing function of  $t$ . Thus,  $y \in K_0$ . moreover, by (3.1), we know that

$$(7) \quad \begin{aligned} \Delta^3(Au)(t-1) &= y(t), \quad t \in [1, T-2]_z, \\ u(0) = \Delta^2 u(0) &= \Delta u(T) - \Delta^2 u(\eta) = 0. \end{aligned}$$

$$(8) \quad (Au)(0) = \Delta^2(Au)(0) = 0 \quad \Delta(Au)(T) - \Delta^2(Au)(\eta) = 0.$$

Therefore,  $Au$  satisfies problem (2.1). Now, similar to the proof of Lemma 2.3, and using the fact  $y \in K_0$ , we obtain that  $Au \in K_0$  and  $Au$  is concave on  $[\eta + 1, T + 1]_z$ . Furthermore, by Lemma 2.4 and the fact  $Au \in K_0$ , we know that

$$\min_{t \in [\mu, T - \mu]} (Au)(t) \geq \mu^* \|Au\|$$

Therefore,  $Au \in K$  and  $A : K \rightarrow K$  is completely continuous set.

From (3.1) and Lemma 3.1, we know that if  $u$  is a fixed point of  $A$  in  $K$ , then  $u$  is a positive solution of (1.1). Let

$$B = \sum_{s=1}^{T-2} \frac{(T - \eta - 1)(T + \eta)}{2} a(s), \quad D = \sum_{s=\mu}^{T-\mu} G(T - \mu, s)a(s)$$

□

**Theorem 3.2** Assume that there exist numbers  $d, a$  and  $c$  with

$0 < d < a < \frac{a}{\mu^*} \leq c$  such that (H1)  $f(t, u) < \frac{d}{B}$ , for  $(t, u) \in [1, T - 2]_z \times [0, d]$ ,  
(H2)  $f(t, u) > \frac{a}{D}$ , for  $(t, u) \in [\mu, T - \mu]_z \times [a, \frac{a}{\mu^*}]$

$(H3)f(t, u) < \frac{c}{B}, \text{ for } (t, u) \in [1, T-2]_z \times [0, c],$

then boundary value problem (1.1) has at least three positive solutions  $u, v$  and  $w$  satisfying

$$\|u\| < d, \quad \min_{t \in [\mu, T-\mu]} v(t) > a, \quad \|w\| > d, \quad \min_{t \in [\mu, T-\mu]} w(t) < a$$

*Proof.* for  $u \in K$ . we define

$$\beta(u) = \min_{t \in [\mu, T-\mu]} u(t).$$

It is simple to check that  $\beta$  is a nonnegative continuous concave functional on  $K$  with  $\beta(u) \leq \|u\|$  for  $u \in k$  and that  $A : k \rightarrow k$  is completely continuous.

We confirm first that if there exists a positive number  $r$  such that  $f(t, u) < \frac{r}{B}$  for  $t \in [1, T-2]$   $u \in [0, r]$  then  $A : \bar{k}_r \rightarrow \bar{k}_r$  in effect, if  $u \in \bar{k}_r$  then

$$\begin{aligned} \|Au\| &= \max_{t \in [0, T]_z} \left| \sum_{s=1}^{T-2} G(t, s) a(s) f(s, u(s)) \right| \\ &\leq \max_{t \in [0, T]_z} \sum_{s=1}^{T-2} |G(t, s)| a(s) f(s, u(s)) \\ &\leq \frac{(T-\eta-1)(T+\eta)}{2} \sum_{s=1}^{T-2} a(s) f(s, u(s)) \\ &< \frac{(T-\eta-1)(T+\eta)}{2} \sum_{s=1}^{T-2} \frac{r}{B} a(s) \\ &= r = \|u\|. \end{aligned}$$

that is,  $Au \in K_r$ .

Subsequently, we have shown that if  $(H1)$  and  $(H3)$  hold, then  $A : \bar{K}_d \rightarrow K_d$  and  $A : \bar{K}_c \rightarrow K_c$ .

Next, we assure that  $\left\{ u \in K(\beta, a, \frac{a}{\mu^*}) : \beta(u) > a \right\} \neq \emptyset$  and  $\beta(Au) > a$  for all  $u \in K(\beta, a, \frac{a}{\mu^*})$ .

In fact, the constant function  $\frac{\frac{a}{\mu^*} + a}{2}$  belongs to

$\left\{ u \in K(\beta, a, \frac{a}{\mu^*}) : \beta(u) > a \right\}$ . Then, for  $u \in K(\beta, a, \frac{a}{\mu^*})$ , we have

$$(9) \quad a < \beta(u) = \min_{t \in [0, \mu]} u(t) \leq u(t) \leq \|u\| \leq \frac{a}{\mu^*}$$

for all  $t \in [0, \mu]$ . Also,

we know that  $G(t, s) \geq 0$  for  $t-2 < s \leq \eta$ . for any  $u \in K$  and  $t \in [0, \mu]$ , we have

$$\begin{aligned} &\sum_{s=1}^{T-\mu-1} G(t, s) a(s) f(s, u(s)) + \sum_{s=\mu+1}^{\eta} G(t, s) a(s) f(s, u(s)) \\ &\quad + \sum_{s=\eta+1}^{T-2} G(t, s) a(s) f(s, u(s)) \\ &\geq \sum_{s=1}^{T-\mu-1} \frac{(t-T)(T+t)}{2} a(s) f(s, u(s)) - \sum_{s=\mu+1}^{T-2} \frac{(T-s)(T-s-1)}{2} a(s) f(s, u(s)) \\ &\geq a(\eta) f(\eta, u(\eta)) \left[ \sum_{s=1}^{T-\mu-1} \frac{(t-T)(T+t)}{2} - \sum_{s=\mu+1}^{T-2} \frac{(T-s)(T-s-1)}{2} \right] \\ &\geq a(\eta) f(\eta, u(\eta)) [(2-(T-\mu))(T-\mu-1)] \geq 0 \end{aligned}$$

This indicates that  $\|Au\| \geq \|u\|$ ,  $u \in K \cap \partial\Omega_2$ . Therefore,  $A$  has a fixed point  $u \in K \cap (\bar{\Omega}_2 \setminus \Omega_1)$  from Theorem 1.1, which is a positive and increasing solution of the boundary value problem (1.1) with  $r \leq \|u\| \leq R$ . Moreover, we know the obtained solution  $u$  is concave on  $[\eta + 1, T + 1]_z$  from the proof of Lemma 2.2. Secondly, we deal with the case  $r > R$ . Let which together with (H2) and (1.4) implies

$$\begin{aligned} \beta(Au) &= \min_{t \in [\mu, T-\mu]} \sum_{s=1}^{T-2} G(t, s) a(s) f(s, u(s)) \\ &\geq \min_{t \in [\mu, T-\mu]} \sum_{s=\mu}^{T-\mu} G(t, s) a(s) f(s, u(s)) \\ &> \frac{a}{D} \min_{t \in [\mu, T-\mu]} \sum_{s=\mu}^{T-\mu} G(t, s) = a \end{aligned}$$

for  $u \in K(\beta, a, \frac{a}{\mu^*})$ .

Finally, we verify that if  $u \in K(\beta, a, c)$  and  $\|Au\| > \frac{a}{\mu^*}$ , then  $\beta(Au) > a$ . To see this, we suppose that  $u \in K(\beta, a, c)$  and  $\|Au\| > \frac{a}{\mu^*}$ . Then it follows from  $Au \in K$  that

$$\beta(Au) = \min_{t \in [\mu, T-\mu]} Au(t) \leq \mu^* \|u\| > a.$$

To sum up, all the hypotheses of the fixed point theorem are satisfied. Therefore,  $A$  has at least three fixed points; that is, (1.2) has at least three positive solutions  $u, v$  and  $w$  satisfying

$$\|u\| < d, \quad \min_{t \in [\mu, T-\mu]} v(t) > a, \quad \|w\| > d, \quad \min_{t \in [\mu, T-\mu]} w(t) < a$$

□

**Theorem 3.3** Let  $n$  be an arbitrary positive integer. Assume that there exist numbers  $d_i (1 \leq i \leq n)$  and  $a_j (1 \leq j \leq n-1)$  with  $0 < d_1 < a_1 < \frac{a_1}{\mu^*} < d_2 < a_2 < \frac{a_2}{\mu^*} < \dots < d_{n-1} < a_{n-1} < \frac{a_{n-1}}{\mu^*} < d_n$  such that

$$(10) \quad f(t, u) < \frac{d_i}{B}, t \in [1, T-2], u \in [0, d_i], 1 \leq i \leq n,$$

$$(11) \quad f(t, u) > \frac{a_j}{D}, t \in [\mu, T-\mu], u \in [a_j, a_j \mu^*], 1 \leq j \leq n-1,$$

Then (1.2) has at least  $2n-1$  positive solutions in  $K_{d_n}$ .

*Proof.* We use induction on  $n$ . First, for  $n=1$ , we know from (3.5) that  $A : K_{d_1} \rightarrow K_{d_1}$ . Then it follows from Schauder fixed point theorem that (1.2) has at least one positive solution in  $K_{d_1}$ . Next, we assume that this conclusion holds for  $n=h$ . To show that this conclusion also holds for  $n=h+1$ , we suppose that there exist number  $0 < d_1 < a_1 < \frac{a_1}{\mu^*} < d_2 < a_2 < \frac{a_2}{\mu^*} < \dots < d_h < a_h < \frac{a_h}{\mu^*} < d_{h+1}$

$$(12) \quad f(t, u) < \frac{d_i}{B}, t \in [1, T-2], u \in [0, d_i], 1 \leq i \leq h+1,$$

$$(13) \quad f(t, u) > \frac{a_j}{D}, t \in [\mu, T-\mu], u \in [a_j, a_j \mu^*], 1 \leq j \leq h,$$



By assumption, (1.2) has at least  $2h - 1$  positive solutions  $u_i (i = 1, 2, \dots, 2h - 1)$  in  $K_{d_h}$ . At the same time, it follows from Theorem 3.1, (2.9) and (2.10) that (1.2) has at least three positive solutions  $u, v$  and  $w$  in  $K_{d_{h+1}}$  such that

$$\|u\| < d_h, \quad \min_{t \in [\mu, T-\mu]} v(t) > a_h, \quad \|w\| > d_h, \quad \min_{t \in [\mu, T-\mu]} w(t) < a_h$$

□

**Acknowledgment.** This paper is supported by the National Natural Science Foundation of China (no.11961060), The Key Project of Natural Sciences Foundation of Gansu Province (no.18JR3RA084).

## REFERENCES

- [1] C. Gao, X. Li, F. Zhang, Eigenvalues of discrete Sturm-Liouville problems with nonlinear eigenparameter dependent boundary conditions, Quaest. Math. 41 (2018), 773–797.
- [2] C. Gao, F. Zhang, R. Ma, Existence of positive solutions of second-order periodic boundary value problems with sign-changing Green's function, Acta Math. Appl. Sin. Engl. Ser. 33 (2017), 263–268.
- [3] D. Liu, L. Lin, On the toroidal Leibniz algebras, Acta Math. Sin. Engl. Ser. 24 (2008), 227–240.
- [4] F.M. Atici, G.S. Guseinov, Positive periodic solutions for nonlinear difference equations with periodic coefficients, J. Math. Anal. Appl. 232 (1999), 166–182.
- [5] J. Henderson, R. Luca, On a multi-point discrete boundary value problem, J. Differ. Equ. Appl. 19 (2013), 690–699.
- [6] D. Jiang, J. Chu, D. O'Regan, R.P. Agarwal, Positive solutions for continuous and discrete boundary value problems to the one-dimension p-Laplacian, Math. Inequal. Appl. 7 (2004), 523–534.
- [7] Z. Hao, Nonnegative solutions for semilinear third-order difference equation boundary value problems, Acta Math. Sci. Ser. A Chin. Ed. 21 (2001), 225–229.
- [8] H. Pang, W. Ge, Positive solution of second-order multi-point boundary value problems for finite difference equation with a p-Laplacian, J. Appl. Math. Comput. 26 (2008), 133–150.
- [9] F.M. Atici, A. Cabada, Existence and uniqueness results for discrete second-order periodic boundary value problems, Comput. Math. Appl. 45 (2003), 1417–1427.
- [10] C. Gao, Solutions to discrete multiparameter periodic boundary value problems involving the p-Laplacian via critical point theory, Acta Math. Sci. Ser. B Engl. Ed. 34 (2014), 1225–1236.
- [11] J. Yu, B. Zhu, Z. Guo, Positive solutions for multiparameter semipositone discrete boundary value problems via variational method, Adv. Differ. Equ. 2008, Article ID 840458 (2008).
- [12] R.P. Agarwal, K. Perera, D. O'Regan, Multiple positive solutions of singular discrete p-Laplacian problems via variational methods, Adv. Differ. Equ. 2005, 93–99 (2005).
- [13] C. Yuan, X. Wen, D. Jiang, Existence and uniqueness of positive solution for nonlinear singular 2nth-order continuous and discrete Lidstone boundary value problems, Acta Math. Sci. Ser. B Engl. Ed. 31 (2011), 281–291.
- [14] R. Ma, C. Gao, Y. Chang, Existence of solutions of a discrete fourth-order boundary value problem, Discrete Dyn. Nat. Soc. 2010, Article ID 839474 (2010).
- [15] L. Kong, Q. Kong, B. Zhang, Positive solutions of boundary value problems for third-order functional difference equations, Comput. Math. Appl. 44 (2002), 481–489.
- [16] J. Henderson, R. Luca, Existence of positive solutions for a system of second-order multi-point discrete boundary value problems, J. Differ. Equ. Appl. 19 (2013), 1889–1906.
- [17] J. Henderson, R. Luca, On a second-order nonlinear discrete multi-point eigenvalue problem, J. Differ. Equ. Appl. 20 (2014), 1005–1018.
- [18] R.P. Agarwal, J. Henderson, Positive solutions and nonlinear eigenvalue problems for third-order difference equations, Comput. Math. Appl. 36 (1998), 347–355.
- [19] J. Sun, J. Zhao, Multiple positive solutions for a third-order three-point boundary value problem with sign-changing Green's function, Electron. J. Differ. Equ. 2012, 118 (2012).

- [20] X. Li, J. Sun, F. Kong, Existence of positive solution for a third-order three-point BVP with sign-changing Green's function, *Electron. J. Qual. Theory Differ. Equ.* 2013, 30 (2013).
- [21] J. Sun, J. Zhao, Iterative technique for a third-order three-point BVP with sign-changing Green's function, *Electron. J. Differ. Equ.* 2013, 215 (2013).
- [22] A.P. Palamides, G. Smyrli, Positive solutions to a singular third-order three-point BVP with an indefinitely signed Green's function, *Nonlinear Anal.* 68 (2008), 2104–2118.
- [23] A.P. Palamides, A.N. Veloni, A singular third-order three-point boundary value problem with nonpositive Green's function, *Electron. J. Differ. Equ.* 2007, 151 (2007).
- [24] L. Guo, V. Lakshmikantham, *Nonlinear Problems in Abstract Cones*, Academic Press, New York (1988).
- [25] Q. Shi, S. Wang, Klein-Gordon-Zakharov system in energy space: Blow-up profile and subsonic limit, *Math. Methods Appl. Sci.* 42 (2019), 3211–3221.
- [26] J. Ji, B. Yang, Positive solutions of discrete third-order three-point right focal boundary value problems, *J. Differ. Equ. Appl.* 15 (2009), 185–195.