

### **Research Article**

## **Regularity Result for Quasilinear Elliptic Systems with Super Quadratic Natural Growth Condition**

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We consider boundary regularity for weak solutions of second-order quasilinear elliptic systems under natural growth condition with super quadratic growth and obtain a general criterion for a weak solution to be regular in the neighborhood of a given boundary point. Combined with existing results on interior partial regularity, this result yields an upper bound on the Hausdorff dimension of the singular set at the boundary.

#### 1. Introduction

This paper considers boundary regularity for weak solutions of quasilinear elliptic systems

$$-D_{\alpha}\left(A_{ij}^{\alpha\beta}\left(x,u\right)D_{\beta}u^{j}\right) = B_{i}\left(x,u,Du\right), \quad x \in \Omega, \quad (1)$$

where  $\Omega$  is a bounded domain in  $\mathbb{R}^n$  with boundary of class  $C^1$ ,  $n \geq 2$  and u takes value in  $\mathbb{R}^N$ , N > 1. Each  $A_{ij}^{\alpha\beta}$  maps  $\Omega \times \mathbb{R}^N$  into  $\mathbb{R}$ , and each  $B_i$  maps  $\Omega \times \mathbb{R}^N \times \mathbb{R}^{nN}$  into  $\mathbb{R}$ . A partial regularity theory of (1) must have a priori existence weak solutions. Here we assume that weak solutions exist and consider partial regularity of weak solutions directly. We further impose certain structural conditions on  $A_{ij}^{\alpha\beta}$  and  $B_i$  with m > 2 as follows.

(H1) There exists L > 0 such that

$$A_{ij}^{\alpha\beta}(x,\xi)(\nu,\widetilde{\nu}) \le L \left(1 + \left|\xi\right|^2\right)^{(m-2)/2} |\nu| |\widetilde{\nu}|$$
  
for all  $(x,\xi) \in \overline{\Omega} \times \mathbb{R}^N, \ \nu, \ \widetilde{\nu} \in \mathbb{R}^{nN}.$  (2)

(H2)  $A_{ij}^{\alpha\beta}(x,\xi)$  is uniformly strongly elliptic; that is, for some  $\lambda > 0$  we have

$$A_{ij}^{\alpha\beta}(x,\xi)(\nu,\nu) \ge \lambda \left(1 + \left|\xi\right|^2\right)^{(m-2)/2} |\nu|^2$$
  
for all  $(x,\xi) \in \overline{\Omega} \times \mathbb{R}^N, \ \nu \in \mathbb{R}^{nN}.$  (3)

(H3) Assume that  $A_{ij}^{\alpha\beta} \in C^0(\Omega \times \mathbb{R}^N, \mathbb{R}^{nN})$  and further that  $A_{ij}^{\alpha\beta}$  is uniformly continuous on sets of the form  $\overline{\Omega} \times \{\xi : |\xi| \le M\}$ , for any fixed M,  $0 < M < \infty$ .

(H4) (Natural growth condition). There exist constants a and b, with a possibly depending on M > 0, such that

$$\left|B_{i}\left(x,\xi,\nu\right)\right| \le a\left(M\right)\left|\nu\right|^{m} + b \tag{4}$$

for all  $x \in \overline{\Omega}$ ,  $\xi \in \mathbb{R}^N$  with  $|\xi| \leq M$  and  $\nu \in \mathbb{R}^{nN}$ .

Further hypothesis (H3) deduces, writing  $\omega(\cdot)$  for  $\omega(M, \cdot)$ , the existence of a monotone nondecreasing concave function  $\omega : [0, \infty) \rightarrow [0, \infty)$  with  $\omega(0) = 0$ , continuous at 0, such that

$$\left|A_{ij}^{\alpha\beta}(x,u) - A_{ij}^{\alpha\beta}(y,v)\right| \le \omega \left(\left|x - y\right|^m + \left|u - v\right|^m\right), \quad (5)$$

for all  $x, y \in \overline{\Omega}$ ,  $u, v \in \mathbb{R}^N$  with  $|u|, |v| \le M$  [1].

(H5) There exist *s* with s > n and a function  $g \in H^{1,s}(\Omega, \mathbb{R}^N)$ , such that

$$u|_{\partial\Omega} = g|_{\partial\Omega}.$$
 (6)

Note that we trivially have  $g \in H^{1,2}(\Omega, \mathbb{R}^N)$ . Further, by the Sobolev embedding theorem we have  $g \in C^{0,\kappa}(\Omega, \mathbb{R}^N)$  for any  $\kappa \in [0, 1 - (n/s)]$ . If  $g|_{\partial\Omega} \equiv 0$ , we will take  $g \equiv 0$  on  $\Omega$ .

If the domain we consider is an upper half unit ball  $B^+$ , the boundary condition becomes as follows.

(H5)' There exist s with s > n and a function  $g \in H^{1,s}(B^+, \mathbb{R}^N)$ , such that

$$u|_D = g|_D. \tag{7}$$

Here we write  $B_{\rho}(x_0) = \{x \in \mathbb{R}^n : |x - x_0| < \rho\}$ , and further  $B_{\rho} = B_{\rho}(0), B = B_1$ . Similarly we denote upper half balls as follows: for  $x_0 \in \mathbb{R}^{n-1} \times \{0\}$ , we write  $B_{\rho}^+(x_0)$  for  $\{x \in \mathbb{R}^n : x_n > 0, |x - x_0| < \rho\}$  and set  $B_{\rho}^+ = B_{\rho}^+(0), B^+ = B_1^+$ . For  $x_0 \in \mathbb{R}^{n-1} \times \{0\}$  we further write  $D_{\rho}(x_0)$  for  $\{x \in \mathbb{R}^n : x_n = 0, |x - x_0| < \rho\}$  and set  $D_{\rho} = D_{\rho}(0), D = D_1$ .

*Definition 1.* By a weak solution of (1) one means a vector valued function  $u \in W^{1,m}(\overline{\Omega}, \mathbb{R}^N) \cap L^{\infty}(\overline{\Omega}, \mathbb{R}^N)$  such that

$$\int_{\Omega} A_{ij}^{\alpha\beta}(x,u) \left( D_{\beta} u^{j}, D_{\alpha} \varphi^{i} \right) dx = \int_{\Omega} B_{i}(x,u,Du) \cdot \varphi^{i} dx$$
(8)

holds for all test-functions  $\varphi \in C_0^{\infty}(\overline{\Omega}, \mathbb{R}^N)$  and, by approximation, for all  $\varphi \in W_0^{1,m}(\overline{\Omega}, \mathbb{R}^N) \cap L^{\infty}(\overline{\Omega}, \mathbb{R}^N)$ .

Under such assumptions, even the boundary data is smooth, one cannot expect full regularity of (1) at the boundary [2]. Then, our goal is to establish partial boundary regularity.

After the partial regularity results of the type in this paper were proved by Giusti and Miranda in [3], there are some previous partial regularity results for quasilinear systems. For example, regularity up to boundary for nonlinear and quasilinear systems [4–6] has been studied by Arkhipova. Wiegner [7] established boundary regularity for systems in diagonal form first, and the proof was generalized and extended by Hildebrandt and Widman [8]. Jost and Meier [9] deduced full regularity in a neighborhood of the boundary for minima of functionals with the form  $\int_{\Omega} A(x, u)|Du|^2 dx$ . Furthermore, Duzaar et al. obtained the boundary Hausdorff dimension on the singular sets of solutions to even more general systems in [10, 11] recently. Further discussion for regularity theory can be seen in [12, 13] and their references.

Inspired by [14], in this paper, we would establish boundary regularity for quasilinear systems under natural growth condition by the method of A-harmonic approximation.

The technique of A-harmonic approximation [15–17] is a natural extension of the harmonic approximation technique, which originated from Simon's proof of Allard's [18]  $\varepsilon$ -regularity theorem. In this context, using the A-harmonic approximation technique, we obtain the following regularity results.

**Theorem 2.** Consider a bounded domain  $\Omega$  in  $\mathbb{R}^N$ , with boundary of class  $\mathbb{C}^1$ . Let u be a bounded weak solution of (1) satisfying the boundary condition (H5), and  $||u||_{L^{\infty}} \leq M < \infty$  with  $2a(M)M < \lambda$ , where the structure conditions (H1)– (H3) hold for  $A_{ij}^{\alpha\beta}$  and (H4) holds for  $B_i$ . Consider a fixed  $\gamma \in (0, \sigma]$ . Then there exist positive  $\mathbb{R}_1$  and  $\varepsilon_0$  (depending only on  $n, N, \lambda, L, b, M, a(M), \omega(\cdot), m, and \gamma$ ) with the property that

$$\int_{B_{R}(x_{0})\cap\Omega} \left| u - u_{x_{0},R}' \right|^{2} dx + \left\| g \right\|_{H^{1,s}}^{2} R^{2(1-(n/s))} + R^{2} \le \varepsilon_{0}^{2} \quad (9)$$

for some  $R \in (0, R_1]$  for a given  $x_0 \in \partial \Omega$  implies  $u \in C^{0,\gamma}(\overline{B}_{R/2}(x_0) \cap \overline{\Omega}, R^N)$ .

Note in particular that the boundary condition (H5) means that  $u'_{x_0,R}$  makes sense: in fact, we have  $u'_{x_0,R} = g'_{x_0,R}$ . For  $\nu \in L^1(\partial\Omega)$ ,  $x_0 \in \partial\Omega$ , we set  $\nu'_{x_0,R} = \int_{\partial\Omega \cap \overline{B}_R(x_0)} \nu dH^{n-1}$ . In particular, for  $\nu \in L^1(D_\rho(x_0))$ ,  $x_0 \in D$ , we write  $\nu'_{x_0,\rho} = \int_{D_\rho(x_0)} \nu dH^{n-1}$ .

Combining this result with the analogous interior [19] and a standard covering argument allows us to obtain the following bound on the size of the singular set.

**Corollary 3.** Under the assumptions of Theorem 2 the singular set of the weak solution u has (n - 2)-dimensional Hausdorff measure zero in  $\overline{\Omega}$ .

If the domain of the main step in proving Theorem 2 is a half ball, the result then is the following.

**Theorem 4.** Consider a bounded weak solution of (1) on the upper half unit ball  $B^+$  which satisfies the boundary condition (H5)' and  $||u||_{L^{\infty}} \leq M < \infty$  with  $2a(M)M < \lambda$ , where the structure conditions (H1)–(H3) hold for  $A_{ij}^{\alpha\beta}$  and (H4) holds for  $B_i$ . Then there exist positive  $R_0$  and  $\varepsilon_0$  (depending only on  $n, N, \lambda, L, b, M, a(M), M, \omega(\cdot), m, and \gamma$ ) with the property that

$$\int_{B_{R}^{+}(x_{0})} \left| u - u_{x_{0},R}^{\prime} \right|^{2} dx + \left\| g \right\|_{H^{1,s}}^{2} R^{2(1-(n/s))} + R^{2} \le \varepsilon_{0}^{2}, \quad (10)$$

for some  $R \in (0, R_0]$  for a given  $x_0 \in D$ , implies that there holds:  $u \in C^{0,\sigma}(\overline{B}^+_{R/2}(x_0), R^N)$ .

Note that analogous to the above, the boundary condition (H5)' ensures that  $u'_{x_0,R}$  exists, and we have indeed  $u'_{x_0,R} = g'_{x_0,R}$ .

#### 2. The A-Harmonic Approximation Technique

In this section we present the A-harmonic approximation lemma [14] and some standard results due to Companato [20].

**Lemma 5** (A-harmonic approximation lemma). Consider fixed positive  $\lambda$  and L, and  $n, N \in N$  with  $n \ge 2$ . Then for any given  $\varepsilon > 0$  there exists  $\delta = \delta(n, N, \lambda, L, \varepsilon) \in (0, 1]$  with the following property: for any  $A \in Bil(\mathbb{R}^{nN})$  satisfying

$$A(\nu,\nu) \ge \lambda |\nu|^2 \quad \text{for all } \nu \in \mathbb{R}^{nN},$$

$$|A(\nu,\overline{\nu})| \le L |\nu| |\overline{\nu}| \quad \text{for all } \nu, \overline{\nu} \in \mathbb{R}^{nN}$$
(11)

for any  $w \in H^{1,2}(B^+_{\rho}(x_0), \mathbb{R}^N)$  (for some  $\rho > 0, x_0 \in \mathbb{R}^n$ ) satisfying

$$\rho^{2-n} \int_{B^+_{\rho}(x_0)} |Dw|^2 dx \le 1,$$

$$\rho^{2-n} \int_{B^+_{\rho}(x_0)} A(Dw, D\varphi) dx \bigg| \le \delta \rho \sup_{B^+_{\rho}(x_0)} |D\varphi|, \qquad (12)$$

$$w|_{D_{\rho}(x_0)} = 0$$

for all  $\varphi \in C_0^1(B_{\rho}^+(x_0), \mathbb{R}^N)$ , there exists an A-harmonic function

$$v \in \widetilde{H} = \left\{ \widetilde{w} \in H^{1,2} \left( B_{\rho}^{+} \left( x_{0} \right), R^{N} \right) \right.$$

$$\left. \left. \left| \rho^{2-n} \int_{B_{\rho}^{+} \left( x_{0} \right)} \left| D\widetilde{w} \right|^{2} dx \leq 1, \widetilde{w} \right|_{D_{\rho} \left( x_{0} \right)} \equiv 0 \right\}$$

$$(13)$$

with

$$\rho^{-n} \int_{B^+_{\rho}(x_0)} |v - w|^2 \, dx \le \varepsilon. \tag{14}$$

Next we recall a slight modification of a characterization of Hölder continuous functions originally due to Campanato [21].

**Lemma 6.** Consider  $n \in N$ ,  $n \ge 2$ , and  $x_0 \in \mathbb{R}^{n-1} \times \{0\}$ . Suppose that there are positive constants  $\kappa$  and  $\alpha$ , with  $\alpha \in (0,1]$  such that, for some  $\nu \in L^2(B_{6R}^+(x_0))$ , there holds the following:

$$\inf_{\mu \in R} \left\{ \rho^{-n} \int_{B_{\rho}^{+}(y)} \left| \nu - \mu \right|^{2} dx \right\} \leq \kappa^{2} \left( \frac{\rho}{R} \right)^{2\alpha}, \tag{15}$$

for all  $y \in D_{2R}(x_0)$  and  $\rho \le 4R$ ; and

$$\inf_{\mu \in R} \rho^{-n} \left\{ \int_{B_{\rho}(y)} |\nu - \mu|^2 \, dx \right\} \le \kappa^2 \left(\frac{\rho}{R}\right)^{2\alpha}, \tag{16}$$

for all  $y \in B_{2R}^+(x_0)$  and  $B_{\rho}(y) \subset B_{2R}^+(x_0)$ .

Then there exists a Hölder continuous representative of the  $L^2$ -class of v on  $\overline{B}_{R}^+(x_0)$ , and for this representative  $\overline{v}$  there holds

$$\left|\overline{\nu}\left(x\right) - \overline{\nu}\left(z\right)\right| \le C_{\kappa} \left(\frac{|x-z|}{R}\right)^{\alpha},\tag{17}$$

for all  $x, z \in \overline{B}_R^+(x_0)$ , for a constant  $C_{\kappa}$  depending only on n and  $\alpha$ .

We close this section by a standard estimate for the solutions to homogeneous second-order elliptic systems with constant coefficients [20].

**Lemma 7.** Consider fixed positive  $\lambda$  and L, and  $n, N \in N$  with  $n \geq 2$ . Then there exists  $C_0$  depending only on  $n, N, \lambda$ , and L (without loss of generality we take  $C_0 \geq 1$ ) such that, for  $A \in \text{Bil}(\mathbb{R}^{nN})$  satisfying (11), any A-harmonic function h on  $B_{\rho}^+(x_0)$  with  $h|_{D_0(x_0)} \equiv 0$  satisfies

$$\rho^{2} \sup_{B^{+}_{\rho/2}(x_{0})} |Dh|^{2} \leq C_{0} \rho^{2-n} \int_{B^{+}_{\rho}(x_{0})} |Dh|^{2} dx.$$
(18)

#### 3. The Caccioppoli Inequality

In this section we would prove a suitable Caccioppoli inequality. First of all we recall two useful inequalities. The first is the Sobolev embedding theorem which yields the existence of a constant  $C_s$  depending only on *s*, *n*, and *N* such that for  $x_0 \in D$ ,  $\rho \leq 1 - |x_0|$  there holds

$$\sup_{B_{\rho}^{+}(x_{0})} \left| g - g_{x_{0},\rho}' \right| \le C_{s} \rho^{1-(n/s)} \left\| g \right\|_{H^{1,s}(B_{\rho}^{+}(x_{0}),R^{N})}.$$
 (19)

Obviously, the inequality remains true if we replace  $\|g\|_{H^{1,s}(B^+_{\rho}(x_0),\mathbb{R}^N)}$  by  $\|g\|_{H^{1,s}(B^+,\mathbb{R}^N)}$ , which we will henceforth abbreviate simply as  $\|g\|_{H^{1,s}}$ .

Next we note that the Poincaré inequality in this setting for  $x_0 \in D$ ,  $\rho \le 1 - |x_0|$  yields

$$\int_{B_{\rho}^{+}(x_{0})} \left| g - g_{x_{0},\rho} \right|^{m} dx \le C_{p} \rho^{m} \int_{B_{\rho}^{+}(x_{0})} \left| Dg \right|^{m} dx, \qquad (20)$$

for a constant  $C_p$  which depends only on n.

Finally, we fix an exponent  $\sigma \in (0, 1)$  as follows: if  $g \equiv 0$ ,  $\sigma$  can be chosen arbitrarily (but henceforth fixed); otherwise we take  $\sigma$  fixed in (0, 1 - (n/s)).

Then we establish an appropriate inequality for Caccioppoli.

**Theorem 8** (Caccioppoli's inequality). Let  $u \in W^{1,m}(\overline{\Omega}, \mathbb{R}^N) \cap L^{\infty}(\overline{\Omega}, \mathbb{R}^N)$  with  $\|u\|_{L^{\infty}} \leq M < \infty$  and  $2a(M)M < \lambda$  be a weak solution of systems (1) under assumption conditions (H1)–(H5). Then there exists  $\rho_0(L, M, a(M), s, \|g\|_{H^{1,s}}) > 0$  such that, for all  $B^+_{\rho}(x_0) \subset B^+$ , with  $x_0 \in D^+$ ,  $0 < \rho < \mathbb{R} < \rho_0$ , there holds

$$\int_{B_{\rho/2}^{+}(x_{0})} |Du|^{2} dx \leq C_{1} \int_{B_{\rho}^{+}(x_{0})} \frac{\left|u\left(x\right) - u_{x_{0},R}'\right|^{2}}{\rho^{2}} dx + C_{2} \alpha_{n} \rho^{n} + C_{3} (\alpha_{n} \rho^{n})^{1-(2/s)} \|g\|_{H^{1,s}}^{2},$$
(21)

where  $C_1$  depends only on  $\lambda$ , L, and M and  $C_3$  depends on these quantities, and in addition to  $C_p$ ,  $C_2$  depends on  $\lambda$ , L, M, a, b, and  $\|g\|_{L^{\infty}(B,\mathbb{R}^N)}$ .

*Proof.* Consider a cutoff function  $\eta \in C_0^{\infty}(B_{\rho/2}^+(x_0))$ , satisfying  $0 \le \eta \le 1$ ,  $\eta \equiv 0$  on  $B_{\rho/2}^+(x_0)$  and  $|\nabla \eta| < 4/\rho$ . Then the function  $(u - g)\eta^2$  is in  $W_0^{1,m}(B_{\rho/2}^+(x_0, \mathbb{R}^N))$  and thus can be taken as a test-function.

Using (H1), (H4), (H5), and Young's inequality and noting that  $2a(M)M < \lambda$ , we can get from (8) with  $\varepsilon$  positive but arbitrary (to be fixed later)

$$\begin{split} &\int_{B_{p}^{+}(x_{0})} A_{ij}^{\alpha\beta} (\cdot, u) \left( D_{\beta} u^{j}, D_{\alpha} u^{i} \right) \eta^{2} dx \\ &\leq L \int_{B_{p}^{+}(x_{0})} \left( 1 + |u|^{2} \right)^{(m-2)/2} |Dg| |Du| \eta^{2} dx \\ &\quad + 2L \int_{B_{p}^{+}(x_{0})} \left( 1 + |u|^{2} \right)^{(m-2)/2} |D\eta| |Du| \eta |u - g| dx \\ &\quad + a \int_{B_{p}^{+}(x_{0})} |Du|^{m} |u - g| \eta^{2} dx + b \int_{B_{p}^{+}(x_{0})} |u - g| \eta^{2} dx \\ &\leq \varepsilon \int_{B_{p}^{+}(x_{0})} \left( 1 + |u|^{2} \right)^{(m-2)/2} |Du|^{2} \eta^{2} dx \\ &\quad + a \sup_{B_{p}^{+}(x_{0})} \left| u - u_{x_{0},p}' \right| \int_{B_{p}^{+}(x_{0})} |Du|^{m} \eta^{2} dx \\ &\quad + a \sup_{B_{p}^{+}(x_{0})} \left| g - g_{x_{0,p}'}' \right| \int_{B_{p}^{+}(x_{0})} |Du|^{m} \eta^{2} dx \\ &\quad + \frac{L^{2}}{2\varepsilon} \int_{B_{p}^{+}(x_{0})} \left( 1 + |u|^{2} \right)^{(m-2)/2} |Dg|^{2} \eta^{2} dx \\ &\quad + \frac{4L^{2}}{\varepsilon} \int_{B_{p}^{+}(x_{0})} \left( 1 + |u|^{2} \right)^{(m-2)/2} |D\eta|^{2} \left| g - g_{x_{0,p}'}' \right|^{2} dx \\ &\quad + \frac{4L^{2}}{\varepsilon} \int_{B_{p}^{+}(x_{0})} \left( 1 + |u|^{2} \right)^{(m-2)/2} |D\eta|^{2} \left| g - g_{x_{0,p}'}' \right|^{2} dx \\ &\quad + \frac{1}{\varepsilon^{2}} b^{2} \int_{B_{p}^{+}(x_{0})} \beta^{2} \eta^{2} dx + \frac{1}{\varepsilon^{2}} \int_{B_{p}^{+}(x_{0})} |u - u_{x_{0,p}'}' |^{2} dx \\ &\quad + \frac{1}{\varepsilon^{2}} \int_{B_{p}^{+}(x_{0})} \left| g - g_{x_{0,p}'}' \right|^{2} dx \\ &\quad + \frac{1}{\varepsilon^{2}} b^{2} \int_{B_{p}^{+}(x_{0})} \left| g - g_{x_{0,p}'}' \right|^{2} dx \\ &\quad + \frac{1}{\varepsilon^{2}} b^{2} \int_{B_{p}^{+}(x_{0})} \left| g - g_{x_{0,p}'}' \right|^{2} dx \\ &\quad + \frac{1}{\varepsilon^{2}} c \int_{B_{p}^{+}(x_{0})} \left| (1 + |u|^{2})^{(m-2)/2} |Du|^{2} \eta^{2} dx \\ &\quad + a \left( M + ||g||_{L^{\infty}(B^{+},\mathbb{R}^{N})} \right) \int_{B_{p}^{+}(x_{0})} |Du|^{m} \eta^{2} dx \\ &\quad + \frac{64L^{2}}{\varepsilon} + \frac{1}{\varepsilon} \int_{B_{p}^{+}(x_{0})} \left( 1 + |u|^{2} \right)^{(m-2)/2} \frac{1}{\rho^{2}} \left| u - u_{x_{0,p}'}' \right|^{2} dx \\ &\quad + \frac{\varepsilon^{2}}{4} b^{2} \eta^{2} \alpha_{n} \rho^{n+2} \\ &\quad + \left( \frac{L^{2}}{2\varepsilon} + \frac{64L^{2}C_{p}}{2\varepsilon} + \frac{4C_{p}}{\varepsilon} \right) \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{split} & \cdot \int_{B_{\rho}^{+}(x_{0})} \left(1+|u|^{2}\right)^{(m-2)/2} |Dg|^{2} \eta^{2} dx \\ & \leq \varepsilon \int_{B_{\rho}^{+}(x_{0})} \left(1+|u|^{2}\right)^{(m-2)/2} |Dg|^{2} \eta^{2} dx \\ & + a \left(M+\|g\|_{L^{\infty}(B^{+},R^{N})}\right) C \left(\|u\|_{W^{1,m}(B_{\rho}^{+}(x_{0}))}\right) \alpha_{n} \rho^{n} \\ & + \frac{64L^{2}+1}{\varepsilon} \int_{B_{\rho}^{+}(x_{0})} \left(1+|u|^{2}\right)^{(m-2)/2} \left(\frac{u-u_{x_{0},\rho}'}{\rho}\right)^{2} dx \\ & + \frac{\varepsilon}{4} b^{2} \eta^{2} \alpha_{n} \rho^{n+2} \\ & + \left(1+M^{2}\right)^{(m-2)/2} \left(\frac{L^{2}}{2\varepsilon} + \frac{64L^{2}C_{p}}{2\varepsilon} + \frac{4C_{p}}{\varepsilon}\right) \\ & \cdot \int_{B_{\rho}^{+}(x_{0})} |Dg|^{2} \eta^{2} dx. \end{split}$$

$$(22)$$

Using (H2), (19), and (20), we thus have

$$\begin{aligned} (\lambda - \varepsilon) \int_{B_{\rho}^{+}(x_{0})} |Du|^{2} \eta^{2} dx \\ &\leq (\lambda - \varepsilon) \int_{B_{\rho}^{+}(x_{0})} \left(1 + |u|^{2}\right)^{(m-2)/2} |Du|^{2} \eta^{2} dx \\ &\leq \frac{64L^{2} + 1}{\varepsilon} \int_{B_{\rho}^{+}(x_{0})} \left(1 + |u|^{2}\right)^{(m-2)/2} \frac{1}{\rho^{2}} |u - u_{x_{0}}'|^{2} dx \\ &+ C \left(a, M, \|g\|_{L^{\infty}(B^{+}, \mathbb{R}^{N})}, \|u\|_{W^{1,m}(B_{\rho}^{+}(x_{0}))}, b\right) \alpha_{n} \rho^{n} \\ &+ \left(L, C_{p}, M\right) \int_{B_{\rho}^{+}(x_{0})} |Dg|^{2} dx \\ &\leq \frac{64L^{2} + 1}{\varepsilon} \left(1 + M^{2}\right)^{(m-2)/2} \int_{B_{\rho}^{+}(x_{0})} \frac{1}{\rho^{2}} |u - u_{x_{0}}'|^{2} dx \\ &+ C \left(a, M, \|g\|_{L^{\infty}(B^{+}, \mathbb{R}^{N})}, \|u\|_{W^{1,m}(B_{\rho}^{+}(x_{0}))}, b\right) \alpha_{n} \rho^{n} \\ &+ \left(L, C_{p}, M\right) \left(\alpha_{n} \rho^{n}\right)^{1 - (2/s)} \|g\|_{H^{1,s}}^{2}. \end{aligned}$$

Thus, we fix  $\varepsilon$  small enough to yield the desired inequality.  $\Box$ 

#### 4. The Proof of the Main Theorem

In this section we proceed to the proof of the partial regularity result.

**Lemma 9.** Consider  $u \in W^{1,m}(\overline{\Omega}, \mathbb{R}^N) \cap L^{\infty}(\overline{\Omega}, \mathbb{R}^N)$  to be a weak solution of (1),  $x_0 \in D$  and  $y \in D_R(x_0), D_\rho(y) \subset D_R(x_0)$ , for  $R < 1 - |x_0|$ , and  $\varphi \in C_0^{\infty}(B^+_{\rho/2}(y), \mathbb{R}^N)$  with  $\sup_{B^+_{\rho}(y)} |D\varphi| \leq 1$ . We have

$$\left(\frac{\rho}{2}\right)^{2-n} \int_{B_{\rho/2}^{+}(y)} A_{ij}^{\alpha\beta}\left(y, u_{y,\rho}^{+}\right) \left(D_{\beta}u^{j}, D_{\alpha}\varphi^{i}\right) dx$$

$$\leq C_{4} \sqrt{I}\left(\sqrt{I} + \omega\left(I\right)\right) \rho \sup_{B_{\rho/2}^{+}(x_{0})} \left|D\varphi\right|.$$

$$(24)$$

Here and hereafter, we define

$$I(z,r) = \int_{B_{r}^{+}(z)} \left| u - u_{z,r}' \right|^{2} dx + \left\| g \right\|_{H^{1,s}}^{2} r^{2(1-(n/s))} + r^{2}, \quad (25)$$

for  $z \in D$ ,  $r \in (0, 1 - |z|)$ .

Proof. Using (8) we have

$$\begin{split} \int_{B_{\rho/2}^{+}(y)} A_{ij}^{\alpha\beta} \left( y, u_{y,\rho}^{\prime} \right) \left( D_{\beta} u^{j}, D_{\alpha} \varphi^{i} \right) dx \\ &\leq \left[ a \int_{B_{\rho/2}^{+}(y)} |Du|^{m} dx + 2^{-n-1} \alpha_{n} b \rho^{n} \right] \cdot \rho \sup_{B_{\rho/2}^{+}(y)} |D\varphi| \\ &+ \int_{B_{\rho/2}^{+}(y)} \left| A_{ij}^{\alpha\beta} \left( y, u_{y,\rho}^{\prime} \right) - A_{ij}^{\alpha\beta} \left( x, u \right) \right| \\ &\cdot |Du| dx \sup_{B_{\rho/2}^{+}(y)} |D\varphi| \,. \end{split}$$

$$(26)$$

Applying in turn Young's inequality, (H3), the Caccioppoli inequality (Theorem 8), and Jensen's inequality, we calculate from (26)

$$\begin{split} &\int_{B^{+}_{\rho/2}(y)} A^{\alpha\beta}_{ij}\left(y,u'_{y,\rho}\right) \left(D_{\beta}u^{j}, D_{\alpha}\varphi^{i}\right) dx \\ &\leq \left[a\int_{B^{+}_{\rho/2}(y)} |Du|^{m} dx + 2^{-n-1}\alpha_{n}b\rho^{n}\right] \cdot \rho \\ &\quad + \left[\int_{B^{+}_{\rho/2}(y)} \left|A^{\alpha\beta}_{ij}\left(y,u'_{y,\rho}\right) - A^{\alpha\beta}_{ij}\left(x,u\right)\right|^{1/2} dx\right]^{1/2} \\ &\quad \cdot \left[\int_{B^{+}_{\rho/2}(y)} |Du|^{2} dx\right]^{1/2} \end{split}$$

$$\leq \frac{\alpha_{n}\rho^{n-1}}{2} \left\{ \left( a \oint_{B_{\rho}^{+}(y)} |Du|^{m}x + 2^{-n}b \right) \rho^{2} \right\} \\ + \alpha_{n}\rho^{n-1}\omega \left( \rho^{m} + M^{m-2} \oint_{B_{\rho}^{+}(y)} \left| u - u'_{y,\rho} \right|^{2} dx \right) \\ \cdot \left\{ C_{1} \oint_{B_{\rho}^{+}(y)} \left| u - u'_{y,\rho} \right|^{2} dx + C_{3} \left\| g \right\|_{H^{1,s}}^{2}\rho^{2(1-(n/s))} \right. \\ \left. + C_{2}\rho^{2} \right\}^{1/2} \\ \leq \frac{\alpha_{n}\rho^{n-1}}{2}C_{5}I + \frac{\alpha_{n}\rho^{n-1}}{2}C_{6}\omega \left( I \right) \sqrt{I} \\ \leq C_{7}\alpha_{n}\rho^{n-1} \left( I + \omega \left( I \right) \sqrt{I} \right),$$

$$(27)$$

where  $C_5 = a \|u\|_{W^{1,m}} + b$ ,  $C_6 = \max\{\sqrt{C_1}, \sqrt{C_2}, \sqrt{C_3}\}$ , and  $C_7 = (1/2)(C_5 + C_6)$ , for  $z \in D$ ,  $r \in (0, 1 - |z|)$ . We introduce the notation

$$I(z,r) = \int_{B_{r}^{+}(z)} \left| u - u'_{z,r} \right|^{2} dz + \left\| g \right\|_{H^{1,s}}^{2} r^{2(1-(n/s))} + r^{2}$$
(28)

and further write *I* for  $I(y, \rho)$ . For arbitrary  $\varphi \in C_0^{\infty}(\Omega, \mathbb{R}^N)$  we thus have, by rescalling,

$$\int_{B_{\rho/2}^{+}(y)} A_{ij}^{\alpha\beta}\left(y, u_{y,\rho}'\right) \left(D_{\beta}u^{j}, D_{\alpha}\varphi^{i}\right) dx$$

$$\leq C_{7}\alpha_{n}\rho^{n-1}\sqrt{I}\left(\sqrt{I}+\omega\left(I\right)\right).$$
(29)

Multiplying (29) through by  $(\rho/2)^{2-n}$  yields

$$\left| \left( \frac{\rho}{2} \right)^{2-n} \int_{B_{\rho/2}^{+}(y)} A_{ij}^{\alpha\beta} \left( y, u_{y,\rho}^{\prime} \right) \left( D_{\beta} u^{j}, D_{\alpha} \varphi^{i} \right) dx \right| \\
\leq C_{4} \sqrt{I} \left( \sqrt{I} + \omega \left( I \right) \right) \rho \sup_{B_{\rho/2}^{+}(x_{0})} \left| D\varphi \right|,$$
(30)

for 
$$C_4$$
 defined by  $C_4 = 2^{n-3} \alpha_n C_7$ .

**Lemma 10.** Consider u satisfying the conditions of Theorem 2 and  $\sigma$  fixed; then we can find  $\delta$  and  $s_0$  together, with positive constants  $C_8$  such that the smallness conditions:  $0 < \omega(s_0) \le \delta/2$  and  $I(x_0, R) \le C_8^{-1} \min \{\delta^2/4, s_0\}$  together, imply the growth condition

$$I(y,\theta\rho) \le \theta^{2\sigma} I(y,\rho). \tag{31}$$

*Proof.* We now set w = u - g, using in turn (H1), Young's inequality, and Hölder's inequality. We have from (30)

$$\left| \left( \frac{\rho}{2} \right)^{2-n} \int_{B_{\rho/2}^{+}(y)} A_{ij}^{\alpha\beta} \left( y, u_{y,\rho}^{\prime} \right) \left( D_{\beta} w^{j}, D_{\alpha} \varphi^{i} \right) dx \right|$$

$$\leq \left| \left( \frac{\rho}{2} \right)^{2-n} \int_{B_{\rho/2}^{+}(y)} A_{ij}^{\alpha\beta} \left( y, u_{y,\rho}^{\prime} \right) \left( D_{\beta} u^{j}, D_{\alpha} \varphi^{i} \right) dx \right|$$

$$+ \left| \left( \frac{\rho}{2} \right)^{2-n} \int_{B_{\rho/2}^{+}(y)} A_{ij}^{\alpha\beta} \left( y, u_{y,\rho}^{\prime} \right) \left( D_{\beta} g^{j}, D_{\alpha} \varphi^{i} \right) dx \right|$$

$$\leq C_{9} \sqrt{I} \left[ \sqrt{I} + \omega \left( I \right) \right] \rho \sup_{B_{\rho/2}^{+}(x_{0})} \left| D\varphi \right|,$$
(32)

for  $C_9 = \max \{C_4, (\alpha_n/2)^{1-(n/s)}\}.$ 

We now set  $v = w/\gamma$ , for  $\gamma = C_9 \sqrt{I}$ . From (32) we then have

$$\left| \left( \frac{\rho}{2} \right)^{2-n} \int_{B_{\rho/2}^{+}(y)} A_{ij}^{\alpha\beta} \left( y, u_{y,\rho}^{\prime} \right) \left( D_{\beta} v^{j}, D_{\alpha} \varphi^{i} \right) dx \right|$$

$$\leq \left( \sqrt{I} + \omega \left( I \right) \right) \rho \sup_{B_{\rho/2}^{+}(x_{0})} \left| D\varphi \right|,$$
(33)

and from (32) we observe from the definition of  $C_9$  (recalling also the definition of  $\gamma$ )

$$\left(\frac{\rho}{2}\right)^{2-n} \int_{B^+_{\rho/2}(y)} |D\nu|^2 \, dx < 1. \tag{34}$$

Further we note

$$\nu|_{D_{\rho}(y)} = \frac{1}{\gamma} w|_{D_{\rho}(y)} = \frac{1}{\gamma} (u - g)|_{D_{\rho}(y)} \equiv 0.$$
(35)

For  $\varepsilon > 0$  we take  $\delta = \delta(n, N, \lambda, L, \varepsilon)$  to be the corresponding  $\delta$  from the A-harmonic approximation lemma. Suppose that we could ensure that the smallness condition

$$\sqrt{I} + \omega\left(I\right) \le \delta \tag{36}$$

holds. Then in view of (33), (34), and (35) we would be able to apply Lemma 5 to conclude the existence of a function  $h \in H^{1,2}(B^+_{\rho/2}(y), \mathbb{R}^N)$  which is  $A^{\alpha\beta}_{ij}(y, u'_{y,\rho})$ -harmonic, with  $h|_{D_{\rho/2}(y)} \equiv 0$  such that

$$\left(\frac{\rho}{2}\right)^{2-n} \int_{B^{+}_{\rho/2}(y)} |Dh|^2 \, dx \le 1,\tag{37}$$

$$\left(\frac{\rho}{2}\right)^{-n} \int_{B_{\rho/2}^+(y)} |v-h|^2 \, dx \le \varepsilon. \tag{38}$$

For  $\theta \in (0, 1/4]$  arbitrary (to be fixed later), we have from the Campanato theorem, noting (37) and recalling also that h(y) = 0,

$$\sup_{B_{\theta\rho}^{+}(y)} |h|^{2} \le \theta^{2} \rho^{2} \sup_{B_{\rho/4}^{+}(y)} |Dh|^{2} \le 4C_{0}\theta^{2}.$$
 (39)

Using (38) and (39) we observe

$$\begin{aligned} \left(\theta\rho\right)^{-n} \int_{B_{\theta\rho}^{+}(y)} |v|^{2} dx \\ &\leq 2(\theta\rho)^{-n} \left[ \int_{B_{\theta\rho}^{+}(y)} |v-h|^{2} dx + \int_{B_{\theta\rho}^{+}(y)} |h|^{2} dx \right] \\ &\leq 2(\theta\rho)^{-n} \left[ \left(\frac{\rho}{2}\right)^{n} \varepsilon + \frac{1}{2} \alpha_{n}(\theta\rho)^{n} \sup_{B_{\theta\rho}^{+}(y)} |h|^{2} \right] \\ &\leq 2^{1-n} \theta^{-n} \varepsilon + 4 \alpha_{n} C_{0} \theta^{2}, \end{aligned}$$

$$(40)$$

and, hence, on multiplying this through by  $\gamma^2$ , we obtain the estimate

$$\left(\theta\rho\right)^{-n}\int_{B^+_{\theta\rho}(y)}|w|^2dx \le C_9^2\left(2^{1-n}\theta^{-n}\varepsilon + 4\alpha_nC_0\theta^2\right)I.$$
 (41)

For the time being, we restrict to the case that g does not vanish identically. Recalling that w = u - g, using in turn Poincaré's, Sobolev's, and then Hölder's inequalities, and noting also that  $u'_{y,\theta\rho} = g'_{y,\theta\rho}$ , thus from (41) we get

$$\begin{aligned} \left(\theta\rho\right)^{-n} \int_{B_{\theta\rho}^{+}(y)} \left|u - u_{y,\theta\rho}'\right|^{2} dx \\ &\leq 2(\theta\rho)^{-n} \left[\int_{B_{\theta\rho}^{+}(y)} \left|u - g\right|^{2} dx + \int_{B_{\theta\rho}^{+}(y)} \left|g - g_{y,\theta\rho}'\right|^{2} dx\right] \\ &\leq 2C_{9}^{2} \left(2^{1-n}\theta^{-n}\varepsilon + 4\alpha_{n}C_{0}\theta^{2}\right) I \\ &+ 2C_{p}(\theta\rho)^{2-n} \left[\frac{1}{2}\alpha_{n}(\theta\rho)^{n}\right]^{1-(2/s)} \left\|g\right\|_{H^{1,s}}^{2} \\ &\leq C_{10} \left(\theta^{-n}\varepsilon + \theta^{2}\right) I + C_{10}\theta^{2(1-(n/s))} I, \end{aligned}$$

$$(42)$$

for  $C_{10} = \max \{8\alpha_n C_0 C_9^2, 2^{2/s} C_p \alpha_n^{1-(2/s)}\}$ , and provided  $\varepsilon = \theta^{n+2}$ , we have

$$(\theta\rho)^{-n} \int_{B_{\theta\rho}^{+}(y)} \left| u - u_{y,\theta\rho}' \right|^2 dx \le 3C_{10} \theta^{2(1-(n/s))} I.$$
(43)

Note that fix  $\varepsilon = \theta^{n+2}$ , which is also fixed  $\delta$ . Since  $\rho \le 1$ , we see from the definition of *I* 

$$\|g\|_{H^{1,s}}^{2}(\theta\rho)^{2(1-(n/s))} \le \theta^{2(1-(n/s))}I,$$
(44)

and further

$$\left(\theta\rho\right)^2 \le \theta^2 I. \tag{45}$$

Combining these estimates with (43), we can get

$$I(y,\theta\rho) \le 3(C_{10}+1)\theta^{2(1-(n/s))}I.$$
(46)

Choose  $\theta \in (0, 1/4]$  sufficiently small that there holds:  $3(C_{10} + 1)\theta^{2(1-(n/s))} \le \theta^{2\sigma}$ . We can see from (46)

$$I(y,\theta\rho) \le \theta^{2\sigma} I. \tag{47}$$

We now choose  $s_0 > 0$  such that  $0 < \omega(s_0) < (\delta/2)$  and define  $C_8$  by

$$C_8 = \max\left\{2^{n-1}, 2C_9^2 + 1, 2C_s^2 + 1\right\}.$$
 (48)

Suppose that we have

$$I(x_0, R) \le C_8^{-1} \min\left\{\frac{\delta^2}{4}, s_0\right\},$$
 (49)

for some  $R \in (0, R_0]$ , where  $R_0 = \min\{\sqrt{2s_0}, 1 - |x_0|\}$ .

For any  $y \in D_{R/2}(x_0)$  we use the Sobolev inequality to calculate

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{\alpha_{n}R^{n}}{2^{n+1}} |u'_{x_{0},R} - u'_{y,R/2}|^{2} \\ &= \int_{B^{+}_{R/2}} |u'_{x_{0},R} - u'_{y,R/2}|^{2} dx = \int_{B^{+}_{R/2}} |g'_{x_{0},R} - g'_{y,R/2}|^{2} dx \\ &\leq 2 \int_{B^{+}_{R/2}} |g - g'_{x_{0},R}|^{2} dx + 2 \int_{B^{+}_{R/2}} |g - g'_{y,R/2}|^{2} dx \\ &\leq 2\alpha_{n}C_{s}^{2} \|g\|_{H^{1,s}}^{2} R^{n+2(1-(n/s))}. \end{aligned}$$
(50)

Then we can calculate

$$I\left(y,\frac{1}{2}R\right) \leq 2^{n-1} \int_{B_{R/2}^{+}(y)} \left|u - u_{x_{0},R}'\right|^{2} dx + \left(2C_{s}^{2}+1\right) \left\|g\right\|_{H^{1,s}}^{2} R^{2(1-(n/s))} + \frac{1}{4}R^{2} \leq C_{8}I\left(x_{0},R\right).$$
(51)

Then we have

$$\sqrt{I\left(y,\frac{1}{2}R\right)} + \omega\left(I\left(y,\frac{1}{2}R\right)\right)$$

$$\leq \sqrt{C_8I(x_0,R)} + \sqrt{\omega(C_8I(x_0,R))}$$

$$\leq \frac{1}{2}\delta + \omega(s_0) \leq \delta,$$
(52)

which means that the condition (49) is sufficient to guarantee the smallness condition (37) for  $\rho = R/2$ , for all  $y \in D_{R/2}(x_0)$ . We can thus conclude that (46) holds in this situation. From (46) we thus have

$$\sqrt{I\left(y,\frac{\theta\rho}{2}\right)} + \sqrt{\omega\left(I\left(y,\frac{\theta\rho}{2}\right)\right)} \\
\leq \sqrt{I\left(y,\frac{1}{2}R\right)} + \sqrt{\omega\left(I\left(y,\frac{1}{2}R\right)\right)} \leq \delta,$$
(53)

meaning that we can apply (46) on  $B^+_{\theta \rho/2}(y)$  as well, yielding

$$I\left(y,\frac{\theta^2 R}{2}\right) \le \theta^{4\sigma} I\left(y,\frac{R}{2}\right),\tag{54}$$

and inductively

$$I\left(y,\frac{\theta^{k}R}{2}\right) \le \theta^{2k\sigma}I\left(y,\frac{R}{2}\right).$$
(55)

The next step is to go from a discrete to a continuous version of the decay estimate. Given  $\rho \in (0, R/2]$ , we can find  $k \in N_0$  such that  $\theta^{k+1}R/2 < \rho \leq \theta^k R/2$ . Firstly we use the Sobolev inequality, to see

$$\begin{aligned} \int_{B_{\rho}^{+}(y)} \left| u_{y,\rho}' - u_{y,\theta^{k}R/2}' \right|^{2} dx \\ &\leq 2\alpha_{n} \left( \frac{1}{2\theta^{k}R} \right)^{n} C_{s}^{2} \|g\|_{H^{1,s}}^{2} \left( \frac{1}{2\theta^{k}R} \right)^{2(1-(n/s))}, \end{aligned}$$
(56)

which allows us to deduce

$$\begin{split} &\int_{B_{\rho}^{+}(y)} \left| u - u_{y,\rho}^{\prime} \right|^{2} dx \\ &\leq 2 \int_{B_{\rho}^{+}(y)} \left| u - u_{y,\theta^{k}R/2^{\prime}} \right|^{2} dx \\ &\quad + 4\alpha_{n} \Big( \frac{1}{2\theta^{k}R} \Big)^{n} C_{s}^{2} \|g\|_{H^{1,s}}^{2} \Big( \frac{1}{2\theta^{k}R} \Big)^{2(1-(n/s))}, \end{split}$$
(57)

and, hence,

$$I(y,\rho) \le C_{11}I\left(y,\frac{\theta^k R}{2}\right),\tag{58}$$

for  $C_{11} = 8\theta^{-n}C_s^2 + 1$ . Combining this with (55) and (51), we have

$$I(y, \rho)$$

$$\leq C_{11}\theta^{2k\sigma}I\left(y,\frac{R}{2}\right) \leq C_8C_{11}\theta^{-2\sigma}\left(\frac{2\rho}{R}\right)^{2\sigma}I\left(x_0,R\right)$$
(59)  
$$\leq C_8C_{11}\left(\frac{2}{\theta}\right)I\left(x_0,R\right)\left(\frac{\rho}{R}\right)^{2\sigma},$$

and more particularly

$$\inf_{\mu \in \mathbb{R}^{N}} \int_{B_{\rho}^{+}(y)} |u - \mu|^{2} dx \leq C_{12} I(x_{0}, R) \left(\frac{\rho}{R}\right)^{2\sigma}, \tag{60}$$

for  $C_{12} = C_8 C_{11} (2/\theta)^{2\sigma}$ . Recall that this estimate is valid for all  $y \in D$  and  $\rho$  with  $D_{\rho}(y) \subset D_{R/2}(x_0)$ ; assume only the condition (49) on  $I(x_0, R)$ . This yields after replacing Rwith 6R the boundary estimate (15) which requires to apply Lemma 6.

Combining the boundary and interior estimates [19] we can derive the desired result. As the argument for combining the boundary and interior regularity results is relatively standard, we omit it. Hence we can apply Lemma 6 and conclude the desired Hölder continuity.

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