

COMPLEXITY OF PROJECTED GRADIENT METHODS FOR STRONGLY CONVEX OPTIMIZATION WITH HÖLDER CONTINUOUS GRADIENT TERMS*

XIAOJUN CHEN[†], C. T. KELLEY[‡], AND LEI WANG[§]

Abstract. This paper studies the complexity of projected gradient descent methods for a class of strongly convex constrained optimization problems where the objective function is expressed as a summation of m component functions, each possessing a gradient that is Hölder continuous with an exponent $\alpha_i \in (0, 1]$. Under this formulation, the gradient of the objective function may fail to be globally Hölder continuous, thereby rendering existing complexity results inapplicable to this class of problems. Our theoretical analysis reveals that, in this setting, the complexity of projected gradient methods is determined by $\hat{\alpha} = \min_{i \in \{1, \dots, m\}} \alpha_i$. We first prove that, with an appropriately fixed stepsize, the complexity bound for finding an approximate minimizer with a distance to the true minimizer less than ε is $O(\log(\varepsilon^{-1})\varepsilon^{2(\hat{\alpha}-1)/(1+\hat{\alpha})})$, which extends the well-known complexity result for $\hat{\alpha} = 1$. Next we show that the complexity bound can be improved to $O(\log(\varepsilon^{-1})\varepsilon^{2(\hat{\alpha}-1)/(1+3\hat{\alpha})})$ if the stepsize is updated by the universal scheme. We illustrate our complexity results by numerical examples arising from elliptic equations with a non-Lipschitz term.

Key words. projected gradient descent, complexity, Hölder continuity

MSC codes. 90C25, 65L05, 65Y20

1. Introduction. Given a closed and convex set $\Omega \subseteq \mathbb{R}^n$, this paper considers the following optimization problem,

$$(1.1) \quad \min_{\mathbf{u} \in \Omega} f(\mathbf{u}) := \frac{1}{m} \sum_{i=1}^m f_i(\mathbf{u}),$$

where the objective function $f : \mathbb{R}^n \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ satisfies the following blanket assumption.

ASSUMPTION 1.1.

(i) The function f is μ -strongly convex with a parameter $\mu > 0$ on Ω , that is,

$$f(\mathbf{u}) \geq f(\mathbf{v}) + \langle \nabla f(\mathbf{v}), \mathbf{u} - \mathbf{v} \rangle + \frac{\mu}{2} \|\mathbf{u} - \mathbf{v}\|^2,$$

for all $\mathbf{u}, \mathbf{v} \in \Omega$.

(ii) For each $i \in [m] := \{1, 2, \dots, m\}$, the function $f_i : \mathbb{R}^n \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ is continuously differentiable and the gradient ∇f_i is (globally) Hölder continuous with an exponent $\alpha_i \in (0, 1]$ on Ω , namely, there exists a constant $L_i > 0$ such that

$$(1.2) \quad \|\nabla f_i(\mathbf{u}) - \nabla f_i(\mathbf{v})\| \leq L_i \|\mathbf{u} - \mathbf{v}\|^{\alpha_i},$$

for all $\mathbf{u}, \mathbf{v} \in \Omega$.

*Submitted to the editors 15 January, 2026.

Funding: We would like to acknowledge support for this project from RGC grant JLFS/P-501/24 for the CAS AMSS-PolyU Joint Laboratory in Applied Mathematics and Hong Kong Research Grant Council project PolyU15300024.

[†]Department of Applied Mathematics, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong, China (maxjchen@polyu.edu.hk).

[‡]Department of Mathematics, Box 8205, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC 27695-8205, USA (Tim.Kelley@ncsu.edu).

[§]Department of Applied Mathematics, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong, China (lei2wang@polyu.edu.hk).

Here, $\|\cdot\|$ is the ℓ_2 norm and $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle$ is the inner product on \mathbb{R}^n . We also denote by $\mathbf{u}^* \in \Omega$ and $f^* = f(\mathbf{u}^*)$ the global minimizer and the optimal value of problem (1.1), respectively.

Suppose that each ∇f_i is Lipschitz continuous, which corresponds to condition (1.2) with $\alpha_i = 1$ for all $\mathbf{u}, \mathbf{v} \in \Omega$. Then ∇f is also Lipschitz continuous and the associated Lipschitz constant is $L = \sum_{i=1}^m L_i/m$. Let $\Pi_\Omega(\cdot)$ be the projection operator onto the set Ω . It is well known that the classical projected gradient descent method

$$(1.3) \quad \mathbf{u}_{k+1} = \Pi_\Omega(\mathbf{u}_k - \tau \nabla f(\mathbf{u}_k)),$$

with any initial point $\mathbf{u}_0 \in \mathbb{R}^n$ and the stepsize $\tau \in (0, 2/(\mu + L)]$, achieves a linear rate of convergence [11, Theorem 2.2.14] as follows,

$$\|\mathbf{u}_k - \mathbf{u}^*\| \leq (1 - \mu\tau)^k \|\mathbf{u}_0 - \mathbf{u}^*\|.$$

Therefore, for a given $\varepsilon > 0$, method (1.3) is guaranteed to find a point $\mathbf{u}_k \in \Omega$ satisfying $\|\mathbf{u}_k - \mathbf{u}^*\| \leq \varepsilon$ after at most $O(\log(\varepsilon^{-1}))$ iterations. Unfortunately, this analysis fails if there exists at least one index $i \in [m]$ such that $\alpha_i < 1$. We explain the failure of the convergence of method (1.3) to \mathbf{u}^* by the following example.

Example 1.2. [6, Example 1] Consider the following univariate optimization problem on $\Omega = \mathbb{R}$,

$$(1.4) \quad \min_{x \in \mathbb{R}} f(x) = \frac{1}{2}x^2 + \frac{2}{3}|x|^{3/2},$$

which is a special instance of problem (1.1) with $f_1(x) = x^2/2$ and $f_2(x) = 2|x|^{3/2}/3$. It is easy to see that the global minimizer is $x^* = 0$. Method (1.3) with the fixed stepsize $\tau > 0$ starting from $x_0 \neq 0$ proceeds as follows,

$$x_{k+1} = x_k - \tau \nabla f(x_k) = (1 - \tau)x_k - \tau \text{sign}(x_k) |x_k|^{1/2},$$

where $\text{sign}(x) = 1$ if $x > 0$, 0 if $x = 0$, and -1 otherwise. A straightforward verification reveals that

$$|x_{k+1}|^2 - |x_k|^2 = -\tau(2 - \tau)|x_k|^2 - 2\tau(1 - \tau)|x_k|^{3/2} + \tau^2|x_k|.$$

It is evident that, when $|x_k|$ is sufficiently small, the last term in the right-hand side becomes dominant, resulting in that $|x_{k+1}|^2 - |x_k|^2 \geq 0$. Therefore, the distance to the global minimizer ceases to decrease once it achieves a certain level.

Moreover, in [6] we show that ∇f is locally, but not globally, Hölder continuous. In fact, from

$$|\nabla f(|h|) - \nabla f(0)| = |h| + |h|^{1/2} = \left(|h|^{1-\alpha} + |h|^{1/2-\alpha}\right) |h|^\alpha,$$

we can obtain that, $|h|^{1-\alpha} \rightarrow \infty$ when $\alpha \in (0, 1)$ and $|h| \rightarrow \infty$, while $|h|^{1/2-\alpha} \rightarrow \infty$ when $\alpha = 1$ and $|h| \rightarrow 0$. Therefore, ∇f cannot be globally Hölder continuous for all $\alpha \in (0, 1]$.

On the other hand, problem (1.4) satisfies all the conditions in Assumption 1.1. It is clear that f is strongly convex. In addition, we have

$$|\nabla f_1(x) - \nabla f_1(y)| = |x - y|,$$

70 and

$$71 \quad |\nabla f_2(x) - \nabla f_2(y)| = \left| \text{sign}(x) |x|^{1/2} - \text{sign}(y) |y|^{1/2} \right| \leq \sqrt{2} |x - y|^{1/2},$$

72 for all $x, y \in \mathbb{R}$.

73 This simple example demonstrates that, in problem (1.1), a function f expressed
74 as a sum of component functions f_i , each endowed with a Hölder continuous gradient,
75 may itself fail to possess a Hölder continuous gradient. This phenomenon, initially
76 observed in our previous work [6], was later revisited and further highlighted by
77 Nesterov (see [12, Example 1]).

78 Since ∇f may not be globally Hölder continuous, most existing complexity results
79 are inapplicable to problem (1.1). For the special case where $m = 1$, namely, ∇f is
80 globally Hölder continuous with an exponent $\alpha \in (0, 1]$, Devolder et al. [7] presented
81 the following bound for method (1.3),

$$82 \quad f(\hat{\mathbf{u}}_N) - f(\mathbf{u}^*) \leq K(N) := \frac{L_\alpha \|\mathbf{u}_0 - \mathbf{u}^*\|^{1+\alpha}}{1+\alpha} \left(\frac{2}{N} \right)^{\frac{1+\alpha}{2}},$$

83 where L_α is the Hölder constant and $\hat{\mathbf{u}}_N = \sum_{k=1}^N \mathbf{u}_k / N$. In the strongly convex case,
84 (51) in [7] comes to

$$85 \quad \|\hat{\mathbf{u}}_N - \mathbf{u}^*\|^2 \leq \frac{2}{\mu} K(N),$$

86 which implies that finding an N average of iterations $\hat{\mathbf{u}}_N$ satisfying $\|\hat{\mathbf{u}}_N - \mathbf{u}^*\| \leq \varepsilon$
87 requires $O(\varepsilon^{-4/(1+\alpha)})$ iterations.

88 The contribution of this paper is to provide new complexity results of the pro-
89 jected gradient descent methods for problem (1.1), which are dictated by the param-
90 eter $\hat{\alpha} = \min_{i \in [m]} \alpha_i \in (0, 1]$. We first show that, with an appropriately fixed stepsize,
91 the complexity bound for finding an iterate with a distance to the global minimizer
92 less than ε is $O(\log(\varepsilon^{-1}) \varepsilon^{2(\hat{\alpha}-1)/(1+\hat{\alpha})})$, which extends the well-known complexity re-
93 sult for $\hat{\alpha} = 1$. Next, we demonstrate that this complexity bound can be improved
94 to $O(\log(\varepsilon^{-1}) \varepsilon^{2(\hat{\alpha}-1)/(1+3\hat{\alpha})})$ if the stepsize is updated at each iteration using the
95 universal scheme. Even in the special case where $m = 1$, our complexity bound is
96 at least $O(\varepsilon^{-1})$ lower than (51) in [7]. For example, when $\hat{\alpha} = 1/2$, our bound is
97 $O(\log(\varepsilon^{-1}) \varepsilon^{-2/5})$ but (51) in [7] is $O(\varepsilon^{-8/3})$.

98 Our study is motivated by elliptic equations with a non-Lipschitz term [3, 14],
99 complementarity problems [1, 13], and optimization problems with an ℓ_p -norm ($1 <$
100 $p < 2$) regularization term [2, 5]. We illustrate our complexity results by two numerical
101 examples arising from elliptic equations with a non-Lipschitz term in section 5, after
102 we present complexity of projected gradient methods with fixed stepsizes and updated
103 stepsizes in sections 2 to 4, respectively.

104 2. Vanilla Projected Gradient Descent Method with a Fixed Stepsize.

105 In this section, we attempt to employ the vanilla projected gradient descent method
106 (1.3) with a fixed stepsize to solve problem (1.1), whose complexity bound is also
107 provided. Example 1.2 illustrates that the projected gradient descent method (1.3)
108 with a fixed stepsize will experience stagnation before reaching the global minimizer.

109 To obtain an approximate solution to problem (1.1), it is necessary to choose
110 a sufficiently small stepsize τ in the projected gradient descent method (1.3), the

111 magnitude of which depends on the desired level of accuracy. Let $M > 0$ be a
 112 constant defined as

$$113 \quad (2.1) \quad M = \max_{i \in [m]} \left\{ \left[\frac{2(1 - \alpha_i)}{\mu(1 + \alpha_i)} \right]^{(1 - \alpha_i)/(1 + \alpha_i)} L_i^{2/(1 + \alpha_i)} \right\},$$

114 with the convention $0^0 = 1$. We select a specific stepsize $\tau = \varepsilon^{2(1 - \hat{\alpha})/(1 + \hat{\alpha})}/M$ in
 115 the projected gradient descent method, whose complete framework is presented in
 116 Algorithm 1. Two sequences $\{\mathbf{v}_k\}$ and $\{\mathbf{u}_k\}$ are maintained in Algorithm 1, where
 117 \mathbf{v}_k is generated by the projected gradient descent method and \mathbf{u}_k corresponds to the
 118 iterate achieving the smallest objective function value among the first k iterations.

Algorithm 1: Projected Gradient Descent Method (PGDM).

Input: $\varepsilon > 0$.

Initialize $\mathbf{u}_0 = \mathbf{v}_0 \in \Omega$.

Choose the stepsize $\tau = \varepsilon^{2(1 - \hat{\alpha})/(1 + \hat{\alpha})}/M$.

for $k = 0, 1, 2, \dots$ **do**

 Compute

$$\mathbf{v}_{k+1} = \Pi_{\Omega}(\mathbf{v}_k - \tau \nabla f(\mathbf{v}_k)).$$

 Set

$$\mathbf{u}_{k+1} = \begin{cases} \mathbf{v}_{k+1}, & \text{if } f(\mathbf{v}_{k+1}) \leq f(\mathbf{u}_k), \\ \mathbf{u}_k, & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

Output: \mathbf{u}_{k+1} .

119 Our subsequent analysis is based on the inexact oracle [7] derived from the Hölder
 120 continuity condition of gradients, which is generalized to problem (1.1) and demon-
 121 strated in the following proposition.

122 **PROPOSITION 2.1.** *Let $\delta > 0$ and*

$$123 \quad \rho \geq \max_{i \in [m]} \left\{ \left[\frac{1 - \alpha_i}{(1 + \alpha_i)\delta} \right]^{(1 - \alpha_i)/(1 + \alpha_i)} L_i^{2/(1 + \alpha_i)} \right\}.$$

124 *Then for all $\mathbf{u}, \mathbf{v} \in \Omega$, we have*

$$125 \quad f(\mathbf{v}) \leq f(\mathbf{u}) + \langle \nabla f(\mathbf{u}), \mathbf{v} - \mathbf{u} \rangle + \frac{\rho}{2} \|\mathbf{v} - \mathbf{u}\|^2 + \frac{\delta}{2}.$$

126 *Proof.* Since ∇f_i is Hölder continuous with an exponent α_i , we can obtain from
 127 [15, Lemma 1] that

$$128 \quad f_i(\mathbf{v}) \leq f_i(\mathbf{u}) + \langle \nabla f_i(\mathbf{u}), \mathbf{v} - \mathbf{u} \rangle + \frac{L_i}{1 + \alpha_i} \|\mathbf{v} - \mathbf{u}\|^{1 + \alpha_i},$$

129 for all $\mathbf{u}, \mathbf{v} \in \Omega$. Then, for each i , it follows from [10, Lemma 2] that

$$130 \quad f_i(\mathbf{v}) \leq f_i(\mathbf{u}) + \langle \nabla f_i(\mathbf{u}), \mathbf{v} - \mathbf{u} \rangle + \frac{\rho}{2} \|\mathbf{v} - \mathbf{u}\|^2 + \frac{\delta}{2}.$$

Summing the above relationship over $i \in [m]$, we immediately arrive at the assertion of this proposition. The proof is completed. \square

Now, we are able to derive the complexity bound of Algorithm 1 in the following theorem.

THEOREM 2.2. *Let $\varepsilon \in (0, 1)$ be a sufficiently small constant. Then after at most*

$$O\left(\log\left(\frac{M^{(1+\hat{\alpha})/4}}{\varepsilon}\right)\frac{M}{\varepsilon^{2(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+\hat{\alpha})}}\right)$$

iterations, Algorithm 1 will find an iterate $\mathbf{u}_k \in \Omega$ satisfying $\|\mathbf{u}_k - \mathbf{u}^\| \leq \varepsilon$.*

Proof. In view of Proposition 2.1, we take

$$\rho = \frac{1}{\tau} = \frac{M}{\varepsilon^{2(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+\hat{\alpha})}} \geq \max_{i \in [m]} \left\{ \left[\frac{2(1-\alpha_i)}{\mu(1+\alpha_i)\varepsilon^2} \right]^{(1-\alpha_i)/(1+\alpha_i)} L_i^{2/(1+\alpha_i)} \right\}.$$

Then it holds that

$$f(\mathbf{v}_{k+1}) \leq f(\mathbf{v}_k) + \langle \nabla f(\mathbf{v}_k), \mathbf{v}_{k+1} - \mathbf{v}_k \rangle + \frac{1}{2\tau} \|\mathbf{v}_{k+1} - \mathbf{v}_k\|^2 + \frac{\mu\varepsilon^2}{4},$$

which, after a suitable rearrangement, can be equivalently written as

$$(2.2) \quad \langle \nabla f(\mathbf{v}_k), \mathbf{v}_k - \mathbf{v}_{k+1} \rangle \leq f(\mathbf{v}_k) - f(\mathbf{v}_{k+1}) + \frac{\mu\varepsilon^2}{4} + \frac{1}{2\tau} \|\mathbf{v}_{k+1} - \mathbf{v}_k\|^2.$$

Recall that $f^* = f(\mathbf{u}^*)$. By virtue of the strong convexity of f , we can obtain that

$$(2.3) \quad \langle \nabla f(\mathbf{v}_k), \mathbf{u}^* - \mathbf{v}_k \rangle \leq f^* - f(\mathbf{v}_k) - \frac{\mu}{2} \|\mathbf{v}_k - \mathbf{u}^*\|^2.$$

The optimality condition of the projection problem defining \mathbf{v}_{k+1} yields that

$$\langle \mathbf{v}_{k+1} - \mathbf{v}_k + \tau \nabla f(\mathbf{v}_k), \mathbf{u} - \mathbf{v}_{k+1} \rangle \geq 0,$$

for all $\mathbf{u} \in \Omega$. Upon taking $\mathbf{u} = \mathbf{u}^*$, we have

$$\begin{aligned} \langle \mathbf{v}_{k+1} - \mathbf{v}_k, \mathbf{v}_{k+1} - \mathbf{u}^* \rangle &\leq \tau \langle \nabla f(\mathbf{v}_k), \mathbf{u}^* - \mathbf{v}_{k+1} \rangle \\ &= \tau \langle \nabla f(\mathbf{v}_k), \mathbf{u}^* - \mathbf{v}_k \rangle + \tau \langle \nabla f(\mathbf{v}_k), \mathbf{v}_k - \mathbf{v}_{k+1} \rangle, \end{aligned}$$

which together with (2.2) and (2.3) implies that

$$\begin{aligned} \langle \mathbf{v}_{k+1} - \mathbf{v}_k, \mathbf{v}_{k+1} - \mathbf{u}^* \rangle &\leq \tau \left(f^* - f(\mathbf{v}_{k+1}) + \frac{\mu\varepsilon^2}{4} \right) - \frac{\mu\tau}{2} \|\mathbf{v}_k - \mathbf{u}^*\|^2 \\ &\quad + \frac{1}{2} \|\mathbf{v}_{k+1} - \mathbf{v}_k\|^2. \end{aligned}$$

Moreover, it can be readily verified that

$$\begin{aligned} \|\mathbf{v}_{k+1} - \mathbf{u}^*\|^2 &= \|\mathbf{v}_{k+1} - \mathbf{v}_k + \mathbf{v}_k - \mathbf{u}^*\|^2 \\ &= \|\mathbf{v}_k - \mathbf{u}^*\|^2 + 2 \langle \mathbf{v}_{k+1} - \mathbf{v}_k, \mathbf{v}_k - \mathbf{u}^* \rangle + \|\mathbf{v}_{k+1} - \mathbf{v}_k\|^2 \\ &= \|\mathbf{v}_k - \mathbf{u}^*\|^2 + 2 \langle \mathbf{v}_{k+1} - \mathbf{v}_k, \mathbf{v}_{k+1} - \mathbf{u}^* \rangle - \|\mathbf{v}_{k+1} - \mathbf{v}_k\|^2. \end{aligned}$$

Collecting the above two relationships together, we arrive at

$$\|\mathbf{v}_{k+1} - \mathbf{u}^*\|^2 \leq (1 - \mu\tau) \|\mathbf{v}_k - \mathbf{u}^*\|^2 + 2\tau \left(f^* - f(\mathbf{v}_{k+1}) + \frac{\mu\varepsilon^2}{4} \right).$$

From the construction of \mathbf{u}_k in Algorithm 1, it then follows that $f(\mathbf{v}_l) \geq f(\mathbf{u}_k)$ for all $l \in \{1, 2, \dots, k\}$. Let $C_k = \sum_{l=1}^k (1 - \mu\tau)^{l-1}$ be a constant. Applying the above relationship recursively for k times leads to that

$$\begin{aligned} \|\mathbf{v}_k - \mathbf{u}^*\|^2 &\leq (1 - \mu\tau)^k \|\mathbf{u}_0 - \mathbf{u}^*\|^2 + 2\tau \sum_{l=1}^k (1 - \mu\tau)^{l-1} \left(f^* - f(\mathbf{v}_l) + \frac{\mu\varepsilon^2}{4} \right) \\ &\leq (1 - \mu\tau)^k \|\mathbf{u}_0 - \mathbf{u}^*\|^2 + 2\tau \left(f^* - f(\mathbf{u}_k) + \frac{\mu\varepsilon^2}{4} \right) C_k, \end{aligned}$$

which together with $\|\mathbf{v}_k - \mathbf{u}^*\| \geq 0$ and $C_k \geq 1$ implies that

$$f(\mathbf{u}_k) - f^* \leq \frac{(1 - \mu\tau)^k}{2\tau C_k} \|\mathbf{u}_0 - \mathbf{u}^*\|^2 + \frac{\mu\varepsilon^2}{4} \leq \frac{(1 - \mu\tau)^k}{2\tau} \|\mathbf{u}_0 - \mathbf{u}^*\|^2 + \frac{\mu\varepsilon^2}{4}.$$

According to the strong convexity of f and the optimality condition of problem (1.1), we have

$$(2.5) \quad f(\mathbf{u}_k) - f^* \geq \langle \nabla f(\mathbf{u}^*), \mathbf{u}_k - \mathbf{u}^* \rangle + \frac{\mu}{2} \|\mathbf{u}_k - \mathbf{u}^*\|^2 \geq \frac{\mu}{2} \|\mathbf{u}_k - \mathbf{u}^*\|^2.$$

Hence, it holds that

$$\begin{aligned} \|\mathbf{u}_k - \mathbf{u}^*\|^2 &\leq \frac{2}{\mu} (f(\mathbf{u}_k) - f^*) \leq \frac{(1 - \mu\tau)^k}{\mu\tau} \|\mathbf{u}_0 - \mathbf{u}^*\|^2 + \frac{\varepsilon^2}{2} \\ &\leq \frac{M \|\mathbf{u}_0 - \mathbf{u}^*\|^2}{\mu\varepsilon^{2(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+\hat{\alpha})}} \left(1 - \frac{\mu}{M} \varepsilon^{2(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+\hat{\alpha})} \right)^k + \frac{\varepsilon^2}{2}. \end{aligned}$$

We denote by K_ε^* the smallest iteration number k such that $\|\mathbf{u}_k - \mathbf{u}^*\| \leq \varepsilon$. Then solving the inequality $M \|\mathbf{u}_0 - \mathbf{u}^*\|^2 \varepsilon^{-2(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+\hat{\alpha})} (1 - \mu\varepsilon^{2(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+\hat{\alpha})}/M)^k / \mu \leq \varepsilon^2/2$ indicates that

$$\begin{aligned} K_\varepsilon^* &\leq \frac{4 \log((2M \|\mathbf{u}_0 - \mathbf{u}^*\|^2 / \mu)^{(1+\hat{\alpha})/4} / \varepsilon)}{-\log(1 - \mu\varepsilon^{2(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+\hat{\alpha})}/M)(1 + \hat{\alpha})} \\ &\leq \frac{4M \log((2M \|\mathbf{u}_0 - \mathbf{u}^*\|^2 / \mu)^{(1+\hat{\alpha})/4} / \varepsilon)}{\mu(1 + \hat{\alpha})\varepsilon^{2(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+\hat{\alpha})}}. \end{aligned}$$

The proof is completed. \square

Theorem 2.2 demonstrates that the iteration complexity of Algorithm 1 with a fixed stepsize is $O(\log(\varepsilon^{-1})\varepsilon^{2(\hat{\alpha}-1)/(1+\hat{\alpha})})$ for problem (1.1). This complexity result generalizes the classical linear convergence when $\hat{\alpha} = 1$, which highlights the performance degradation incurred by non-Lipschitz gradients.

3. Universal Primal Gradient Method. The fixed stepsize τ chosen in Algorithm 1 depends on the parameters α_i and L_i for all $i \in [m]$, which are often unknown and hard to estimate in practice. To address this issue, we adopt the universal primal gradient method (UPGM) proposed by Nesterov [10] to solve problem (1.1). This

Algorithm 2: Universal Primal Gradient Method (UPGM).**Input:** $\varepsilon > 0$.Initialize $\mathbf{u}_0 = \mathbf{v}_0 \in \Omega$ and $\rho_0 > 0$.**for** $k = 0, 1, 2, \dots$ **do** **for** $j_k = 0, 1, 2, \dots$ **do**

Compute

$$\mathbf{v}_{k+1} = \Pi_{\Omega} \left(\mathbf{v}_k - \frac{1}{2^{j_k} \rho_k} \nabla f(\mathbf{v}_k) \right).$$

If \mathbf{v}_{k+1} satisfies the following line-search condition,

$$(3.1) \quad \begin{aligned} f(\mathbf{v}_{k+1}) &\leq f(\mathbf{v}_k) + \langle \nabla f(\mathbf{v}_k), \mathbf{v}_{k+1} - \mathbf{v}_k \rangle \\ &\quad + \frac{2^{j_k} \rho_k}{2} \|\mathbf{v}_{k+1} - \mathbf{v}_k\|^2 + \frac{\mu \varepsilon^2}{4}, \end{aligned}$$

then break.Update $\rho_{k+1} = 2^{j_k} \rho_k$.

Set

$$\mathbf{u}_{k+1} = \begin{cases} \mathbf{v}_{k+1}, & \text{if } f(\mathbf{v}_{k+1}) \leq f(\mathbf{u}_k), \\ \mathbf{u}_k, & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

Output: \mathbf{u}_{k+1} .

180 method incorporates a line-search procedure to adaptively determine the stepsize at
 181 each iteration, and its overall framework is outlined in Algorithm 2.

182 Next, we establish the iteration complexity of Algorithm 2, which remains on the
 183 same order as that of the projected gradient descent method with a fixed stepsize.

184 **THEOREM 3.1.** *Let $\varepsilon \in (0, 1)$ be a sufficiently small constant. Then after at most*

$$185 \quad O \left(\log \left(\frac{M^{(1+\hat{\alpha})/4}}{\varepsilon} \right) \frac{M}{\varepsilon^{2(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+\hat{\alpha})}} \right)$$

186 iterations, Algorithm 2 will attain an iterate $\mathbf{u}_k \in \Omega$ satisfying that $\|\mathbf{u}_k - \mathbf{u}^*\| \leq \varepsilon$.

187 *Proof.* Obviously, there exists $j_k \in \mathbb{N}$ such that

$$188 \quad 2^{j_k} \rho_k \geq \max_{i \in [m]} \left\{ \left[\frac{2(1-\alpha_i)}{\mu(1+\alpha_i)\varepsilon^2} \right]^{(1-\alpha_i)/(1+\alpha_i)} L_i^{2/(1+\alpha_i)} \right\}.$$

189 By invoking the results of Proposition 2.1, we know that condition (3.1) is satisfied.

190 Hence, the line-search step in Algorithm 2 can be terminated after a finite number of
 191 trials and the required number of trials j_k satisfies

$$192 \quad (3.2) \quad 2^{j_k} \rho_k \leq 2 \max_{i \in [m]} \left\{ \left[\frac{2(1-\alpha_i)}{\mu(1+\alpha_i)\varepsilon^2} \right]^{(1-\alpha_i)/(1+\alpha_i)} L_i^{2/(1+\alpha_i)} \right\} \leq \frac{2M}{\varepsilon^{2(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+\hat{\alpha})}},$$

193 where $M > 0$ is a constant defined in (2.1). Moreover, the line-search condition (3.1)

directly yields that

$$(3.3) \quad \langle \nabla f(\mathbf{v}_k), \mathbf{v}_k - \mathbf{v}_{k+1} \rangle \leq f(\mathbf{v}_k) - f(\mathbf{v}_{k+1}) + \frac{2^{j_k} \rho_k}{2} \|\mathbf{v}_{k+1} - \mathbf{v}_k\|^2 + \frac{\mu \varepsilon^2}{4}.$$

According to the optimality condition of the projection problem defining \mathbf{v}_{k+1} , we have

$$\left\langle \mathbf{v}_{k+1} - \mathbf{v}_k + \frac{1}{2^{j_k} \rho_k} \nabla f(\mathbf{v}_k), \mathbf{u}^* - \mathbf{v}_{k+1} \right\rangle \geq 0,$$

which further implies that

$$\begin{aligned} \langle \mathbf{v}_{k+1} - \mathbf{v}_k, \mathbf{v}_{k+1} - \mathbf{u}^* \rangle &\leq \frac{1}{2^{j_k} \rho_k} \langle \nabla f(\mathbf{v}_k), \mathbf{u}^* - \mathbf{v}_{k+1} \rangle \\ &\leq \frac{1}{2^{j_k} \rho_k} \langle \nabla f(\mathbf{v}_k), \mathbf{u}^* - \mathbf{v}_k \rangle + \frac{1}{2^{j_k} \rho_k} \langle \nabla f(\mathbf{v}_k), \mathbf{v}_k - \mathbf{v}_{k+1} \rangle. \end{aligned}$$

Substituting (2.3) and (3.3) into the above relationship leads to that

$$\begin{aligned} \langle \mathbf{v}_{k+1} - \mathbf{v}_k, \mathbf{v}_{k+1} - \mathbf{u}^* \rangle &\leq \frac{1}{2^{j_k} \rho_k} \left(f^* - f(\mathbf{v}_{k+1}) + \frac{\mu \varepsilon^2}{4} \right) \\ &\quad + \frac{1}{2} \|\mathbf{v}_{k+1} - \mathbf{v}_k\|^2 - \frac{\mu}{2^{j_k+1} \rho_k} \|\mathbf{v}_k - \mathbf{u}^*\|^2, \end{aligned}$$

Thus, it follows from relationship (2.4) that

$$\begin{aligned} \|\mathbf{v}_{k+1} - \mathbf{u}^*\|^2 &\leq \left(1 - \frac{\mu}{2^{j_k} \rho_k} \right) \|\mathbf{v}_k - \mathbf{u}^*\|^2 + \frac{2}{2^{j_k} \rho_k} \left(f^* - f(\mathbf{v}_{k+1}) + \frac{\mu \varepsilon^2}{4} \right) \\ &\leq \left(1 - \frac{\mu \varepsilon^{2(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+\hat{\alpha})}}{2M} \right) \|\mathbf{v}_k - \mathbf{u}^*\|^2 + \frac{2}{\rho_0} \left(f^* - f(\mathbf{v}_{k+1}) + \frac{\mu \varepsilon^2}{4} \right), \end{aligned}$$

where the last inequality comes from (3.2) and $2^{j_k} \rho_k \geq \rho_0$. The remaining part of the proof follows the same line of reasoning as that of Theorem 2.2 and is therefore omitted here for the sake of brevity. \square

We end this section by estimating the total number of line-search steps required by Algorithm 2.

COROLLARY 3.2. *Let $\varepsilon \in (0, 1)$ be a sufficiently small constant. Then Algorithm 2 requires at most*

$$O \left(\log \left(\frac{M^{(1+\hat{\alpha})/4}}{\varepsilon} \right) \frac{M}{\varepsilon^{2(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+\hat{\alpha})}} \right)$$

line-search steps for the generated sequence $\{\mathbf{u}_k\}$ to satisfy $\|\mathbf{u}_k - \mathbf{u}^\| \leq \varepsilon$.*

Proof. Let N_k be the total number of line-search steps after k iterations in Algorithm 2. From the update rule $\rho_{k+1} = 2^{j_k} \rho_k$, we can obtain that $j_k = \log \rho_{k+1} - \log \rho_k$. Then a straightforward verification reveals that

$$(3.4) \quad N_k = \sum_{l=0}^k (j_l + 1) = k + 1 + \log \rho_{k+1} - \log \rho_0,$$

218 which together with relationship (3.2) implies that

$$\begin{aligned}
 219 \quad N_k &\leq k + 1 + \log \left(\frac{2M}{\varepsilon^{2(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+\hat{\alpha})}} \right) - \log \rho_0 \\
 &\leq k + \frac{2(1-\hat{\alpha})}{1+\hat{\alpha}} \log \left(\frac{1}{\varepsilon} \right) + \log \left(\frac{2M}{\rho_0} \right) + 1.
 \end{aligned}$$

220 By invoking the results of Theorem 3.1, we conclude that Algorithm 2 requires at
 221 most $O(\log(\varepsilon^{-1})\varepsilon^{2(\hat{\alpha}-1)/(1+\hat{\alpha})})$ line-search steps, which completes the proof. \square

222 At each iteration of Algorithm 2, we evaluate both the function value and the
 223 gradient at \mathbf{v}_k . In addition, an extra function evaluation at \mathbf{v}_{k+1,j_k} is involved during
 224 each line-search step. Therefore, Theorem 3.1 and Corollary 3.2 together reveal that
 225 the total number of function and gradient evaluations required by Algorithm 2 is
 226 $O(\log(\varepsilon^{-1})\varepsilon^{2(\hat{\alpha}-1)/(1+\hat{\alpha})})$.

227 **4. Universal Fast Gradient Method.** To obtain a sharper complexity bound,
 228 we devise, in this section, a universal fast gradient method (UFGM) tailored to prob-
 229 lem (1.1). The proposed scheme, summarized in Algorithm 3, exhibits slight but
 230 essential differences from the algorithm introduced by Nesterov [10] to exploit the
 231 strong convexity of the objective function.

232 The following lemma illustrates that the line-search process in (4.4) is well-defined,
 233 which is guaranteed to terminate in a finite number of trials.

234 **LEMMA 4.1.** *There exists an integer $j_k \in \mathbb{N}$ such that the line-search condition*
 235 *(4.4) is satisfied in Algorithm 3.*

236 *Proof.* It follows from the definition of η_k and $\nu_k \leq 1$ that

$$237 \quad \eta_k = \frac{\nu_k}{1 + \nu_k} \geq \frac{\nu_k}{2}, \quad \text{and} \quad \frac{\mu}{\nu_k^2} = 2^{j_k} \rho_k.$$

238 Recall that $\hat{\alpha} = \min_{i \in [m]} \alpha_i \in (0, 1]$. Then we have

$$\begin{aligned}
 \frac{\mu}{\nu_k^2} \eta_k^{(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+\hat{\alpha})} &\geq \frac{2^{j_k} \rho_k}{2^{(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+\hat{\alpha})}} \nu_k^{(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+\hat{\alpha})} \\
 &= \frac{2^{j_k} \rho_k}{2^{(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+\hat{\alpha})}} \left[\frac{\mu}{2^{j_k} \rho_k} \right]^{(1-\hat{\alpha})/(2(1+\hat{\alpha}))} \\
 &= \frac{\mu^{(1-\hat{\alpha})/(2(1+\hat{\alpha}))}}{2^{(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+\hat{\alpha})}} [2^{j_k} \rho_k]^{(1+3\hat{\alpha})/(2(1+\hat{\alpha}))},
 \end{aligned}$$

240 where the first equality comes from the definition of ν_k . Now it is clear that

$$241 \quad \frac{\mu}{\nu_k^2} \eta_k^{(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+\hat{\alpha})} \rightarrow \infty,$$

242 as $j_k \rightarrow \infty$. Thus, there exists $j_k \in \mathbb{N}$ such that

$$243 \quad (4.6) \quad \frac{\mu}{\nu_k^2} \eta_k^{(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+\hat{\alpha})} \geq \max_{i \in [m]} \left\{ \left[\frac{2(1-\alpha_i)}{\mu(1+\alpha_i)\varepsilon^2} \right]^{(1-\alpha_i)/(1+\alpha_i)} L_i^{2/(1+\alpha_i)} \right\},$$

Algorithm 3: Universal Fast Gradient Method (UFGM).**Input:** $\varepsilon > 0$.Initialize $\mathbf{u}_0 = \mathbf{w}_0 \in \Omega$ and $\rho_0 \geq \mu$.**for** $k = 0, 1, 2, \dots$ **do** **for** $j_k = 0, 1, 2, \dots$ **do** Set $\nu_k = \sqrt{\mu/(2^{j_k} \rho_k)}$ and $\eta_k = \nu_k/(1 + \nu_k)$.

Compute

$$(4.1) \quad \mathbf{v}_k = (1 - \eta_k)\mathbf{u}_k + \eta_k \Pi_\Omega(\mathbf{w}_k),$$

and

$$(4.2) \quad \mathbf{z}_k = \Pi_\Omega \left(\Pi_\Omega(\mathbf{w}_k) - \frac{\nu_k}{\mu} \nabla f(\mathbf{v}_k) \right).$$

Set

$$(4.3) \quad \mathbf{u}_{k+1} = (1 - \eta_k)\mathbf{u}_k + \eta_k \mathbf{z}_k.$$

If \mathbf{u}_{k+1} satisfies the following line-search condition,

$$(4.4) \quad \begin{aligned} f(\mathbf{u}_{k+1}) &\leq f(\mathbf{v}_k) + \langle \nabla f(\mathbf{v}_k), \mathbf{u}_{k+1} - \mathbf{v}_k \rangle \\ &\quad + \frac{\mu}{2\nu_k^2} \|\mathbf{u}_{k+1} - \mathbf{v}_k\|^2 + \frac{\eta_k \mu \varepsilon^2}{4}, \end{aligned}$$

then break. Set $\rho_{k+1} = 2^{j_k} \rho_k$ and update \mathbf{w}_{k+1} by

$$(4.5) \quad \mathbf{w}_{k+1} = (1 - \eta_k)\mathbf{w}_k + \eta_k \mathbf{v}_k - \frac{\eta_k}{\mu} \nabla f(\mathbf{v}_k).$$

Output: \mathbf{u}_{k+1} .

244 which further implies that

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{\mu}{\nu_k^2} &\geq \frac{1}{\eta_k^{(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+\hat{\alpha})}} \max_{i \in [m]} \left\{ \left[\frac{2(1 - \alpha_i)}{\mu(1 + \alpha_i)\varepsilon^2} \right]^{(1-\alpha_i)/(1+\alpha_i)} L_i^{2/(1+\alpha_i)} \right\} \\ &\geq \max_{i \in [m]} \left\{ \left[\frac{2(1 - \alpha_i)}{\eta_k \mu(1 + \alpha_i)\varepsilon^2} \right]^{(1-\alpha_i)/(1+\alpha_i)} L_i^{2/(1+\alpha_i)} \right\}. \end{aligned}$$

246 As a direct consequence of Proposition 2.1, we can proceed to show that the line-search
 247 condition (4.4) is satisfied, which completes the proof. \square

248 *Remark 4.2.* When the parameters of problem (1.1) are fully specified, Algo-
 249 rithm 3 may alternatively be implemented with a fixed stepsize. Recall that $M > 0$
 250 is a constant defined in (2.1). By invoking the result of Lemma 4.1, we can fix

$$251 \quad \nu_k = 2 \left[\frac{\mu}{4M} \right]^{(1+\hat{\alpha})/(1+3\hat{\alpha})} \varepsilon^{2(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+3\hat{\alpha})},$$

252 and dispense with the parameter ρ_k and the line-search procedure in (4.4). Under

this choice, Algorithm 3 continues to enjoy the same iteration complexity established later.

We now introduce the estimating sequences associated with Algorithm 3, which play a crucial role in our subsequent analysis.

LEMMA 4.3. *Let $\{\sigma_k\}$ be a sequence of positive constants defined recursively by*

$$(4.7) \quad \sigma_{k+1} = (1 + \nu_k)\sigma_k,$$

with $\sigma_0 = 1$. And let $\{\phi_k\}$ be a sequence of functions defined recursively by

$$(4.8) \quad \begin{aligned} \phi_{k+1}(\mathbf{u}) &= \phi_k(\mathbf{u}) - \nu_k \sigma_k f^* + \nu_k \sigma_k f(\mathbf{v}_k) + \nu_k \sigma_k \langle \nabla f(\mathbf{v}_k), \mathbf{u} - \mathbf{v}_k \rangle \\ &\quad + \frac{\nu_k \sigma_k \mu}{2} \|\mathbf{u} - \mathbf{v}_k\|^2, \end{aligned}$$

with $\phi_0(\mathbf{u}) = c_0 + \sigma_0 \mu \|\mathbf{u} - \mathbf{w}_0\|^2 / 2$ for $c_0 = f(\mathbf{u}_0) - f^* - \mu \varepsilon^2 / 4$ and $\mathbf{w}_0 \in \Omega$. Then, for all $k \in \mathbb{N}$, the function ϕ_k preserves the following canonical form,

$$(4.9) \quad \phi_k(\mathbf{u}) = c_k + \frac{\sigma_k \mu}{2} \|\mathbf{u} - \mathbf{w}_k\|^2,$$

where $\{c_k\}$ is a sequence of real numbers and $\{\mathbf{w}_k\}$ is defined recursively by (4.5).

Proof. We first prove that $\nabla^2 \phi_k = \sigma_k \mu I$ for all $k \in \mathbb{N}$ by induction. It is evident that $\nabla^2 \phi_0 = \sigma_0 \mu I$. Now we assume that $\nabla^2 \phi_k = \sigma_k \mu I$ for some k . Then relationships (4.7) and (4.8) imply that

$$\nabla^2 \phi_{k+1} = \nabla^2 \phi_k + \nu_k \sigma_k \mu I = \sigma_k \mu I + \nu_k \sigma_k \mu I = \sigma_{k+1} \mu I.$$

Thus, we know that $\nabla^2 \phi_k = \sigma_k \mu I$ for all $k \in \mathbb{N}$, which, in turn, justifies the canonical form of ϕ_k in (4.9).

Next, by combining two relationships (4.8) and (4.9) together, we can obtain that

$$\begin{aligned} \phi_{k+1}(\mathbf{u}) &= c_k + \frac{\sigma_k \mu}{2} \|\mathbf{u} - \mathbf{w}_k\|^2 - \nu_k \sigma_k f^* + \nu_k \sigma_k f(\mathbf{v}_k) \\ &\quad + \nu_k \sigma_k \langle \nabla f(\mathbf{v}_k), \mathbf{u} - \mathbf{v}_k \rangle + \frac{\nu_k \sigma_k \mu}{2} \|\mathbf{u} - \mathbf{v}_k\|^2. \end{aligned}$$

Since \mathbf{w}_{k+1} is a global minimizer of ϕ_{k+1} over \mathbb{R}^n , the first-order optimality condition yields that

$$\begin{aligned} 0 &= \nabla \phi_{k+1}(\mathbf{w}_{k+1}) = \sigma_k \mu (\mathbf{w}_{k+1} - \mathbf{w}_k) + \nu_k \sigma_k \nabla f(\mathbf{v}_k) + \nu_k \sigma_k \mu (\mathbf{w}_{k+1} - \mathbf{v}_k) \\ &= (1 + \nu_k) \sigma_k \mu \mathbf{w}_{k+1} - \sigma_k \mu \mathbf{w}_k - \nu_k \sigma_k \mu \mathbf{v}_k + \nu_k \sigma_k \nabla f(\mathbf{v}_k), \end{aligned}$$

from which the closed-form expression of \mathbf{w}_{k+1} in (4.5) can be derived. The proof is completed. \square

The following lemma characterizes the relationship between the objective function of problem (1.1) and the estimating sequences.

LEMMA 4.4. *Let σ_k and $\{\phi_k\}$ be the sequences defined in Lemma 4.3. Then we have*

$$(4.10) \quad \phi_k(\mathbf{u}) \leq \sigma_k (f(\mathbf{u}) - f^*) + \phi_0(\mathbf{u}),$$

for all $\mathbf{u} \in \Omega$ and $k \in \mathbb{N}$.

284 *Proof.* We prove that $\{\phi_k\}$ and $\{\sigma_k\}$ satisfy relationship (4.10) by induction. It
 285 is obvious that (4.10) holds for $k = 0$ since $f(\mathbf{u}) \geq f^*$ for any $\mathbf{u} \in \Omega$. Now we assume
 286 that (4.10) holds for some $k \in \mathbb{N}$. It follows from the strong convexity of f that

$$287 \quad f(\mathbf{u}) \geq f(\mathbf{v}_k) + \langle \nabla f(\mathbf{v}_k), \mathbf{u} - \mathbf{v}_k \rangle + \frac{\mu}{2} \|\mathbf{u} - \mathbf{v}_k\|^2,$$

288 for all $\mathbf{u} \in \Omega$. Then substituting the above relationship into (4.8) leads to that

$$\begin{aligned} \phi_{k+1}(\mathbf{u}) &\leq \phi_k(\mathbf{u}) - \nu_k \sigma_k f^* + \nu_k \sigma_k f(\mathbf{u}) \\ 289 \quad &\leq \sigma_k (f(\mathbf{u}) - f^*) + \phi_0(\mathbf{u}) + \nu_k \sigma_k (f(\mathbf{u}) - f^*) \\ &= \sigma_{k+1} (f(\mathbf{u}) - f^*) + \phi_0(\mathbf{u}), \end{aligned}$$

290 which indicates that (4.10) also holds for $k + 1$. We complete the proof. \square

291 Next, we proceed to show that the function value error of Algorithm 3 is controlled
 292 by the estimating sequences.

293 **PROPOSITION 4.5.** *Let $\{\sigma_k\}$ and $\{\phi_k\}$ be the sequences defined in Lemma 4.3.*
 294 *Then the sequence $\{\mathbf{u}_k\}$ generated by Algorithm 3 satisfies*

$$295 \quad (4.11) \quad f(\mathbf{u}_k) - f^* \leq \frac{1}{\sigma_k} \phi_0(\mathbf{u}^*) + \frac{\mu \varepsilon^2}{4},$$

296 for all $k \in \mathbb{N}$.

297 *Proof.* Let $\phi_k^* := \min_{\mathbf{u} \in \Omega} \phi_k(\mathbf{u})$. We first prove by induction that

$$298 \quad (4.12) \quad \sigma_k \left(f(\mathbf{u}_k) - f^* - \frac{\mu \varepsilon^2}{4} \right) \leq \phi_k^*,$$

299 for any $k \in \mathbb{N}$. It is clear that (4.12) holds for $k = 0$ since $\sigma_0 = 1$ and $\phi_0^* = \phi_0(\mathbf{w}_0) =$
 300 $f(\mathbf{u}_0) - f^* - \mu \varepsilon^2/4$. Now we assume that (4.12) holds for some $k \in \mathbb{N}$ and investigate
 301 the situation for $k + 1$.

302 From the canonical form (4.9), it follows that ϕ_k is a strongly convex function
 303 and $\Pi_\Omega(\mathbf{w}_k) = \arg \min_{\mathbf{u} \in \Omega} \phi_k(\mathbf{u})$. By invoking the result of [11, Corollary 2.2.1], we
 304 have

$$\begin{aligned} \phi_k(\mathbf{u}) &\geq \phi_k^* + \frac{\sigma_k \mu}{2} \|\mathbf{u} - \Pi_\Omega(\mathbf{w}_k)\|^2 \\ 305 \quad &\geq \sigma_k \left(f(\mathbf{u}_k) - f^* - \frac{\mu \varepsilon^2}{4} \right) + \frac{\sigma_k \mu}{2} \|\mathbf{u} - \Pi_\Omega(\mathbf{w}_k)\|^2, \end{aligned}$$

306 for all $\mathbf{u} \in \Omega$. Then relationship (4.8) yields that

$$\begin{aligned} \phi_{k+1}(\mathbf{u}) &\geq \sigma_k \left(f(\mathbf{u}_k) - f^* - \frac{\mu \varepsilon^2}{4} \right) + \frac{\sigma_k \mu}{2} \|\mathbf{u} - \Pi_\Omega(\mathbf{w}_k)\|^2 - \nu_k \sigma_k f^* \\ &\quad + \nu_k \sigma_k f(\mathbf{v}_k) + \nu_k \sigma_k \langle \nabla f(\mathbf{v}_k), \mathbf{u} - \mathbf{v}_k \rangle + \frac{\nu_k \sigma_k \mu}{2} \|\mathbf{u} - \mathbf{v}_k\|^2 \\ &\geq \sigma_{k+1} (f(\mathbf{v}_k) - f^*) - \frac{\sigma_k \mu \varepsilon^2}{4} + \langle \nabla f(\mathbf{v}_k), \sigma_k \mathbf{u}_k - \sigma_{k+1} \mathbf{v}_k \rangle \\ 307 \quad &\quad + \nu_k \sigma_k \langle \nabla f(\mathbf{v}_k), \mathbf{u} \rangle + \frac{\sigma_k \mu}{2} \|\mathbf{u} - \Pi_\Omega(\mathbf{w}_k)\|^2 \\ &= \sigma_{k+1} (f(\mathbf{v}_k) - f^*) - \frac{\sigma_k \mu \varepsilon^2}{4} + \nu_k \sigma_k \langle \nabla f(\mathbf{v}_k), \mathbf{u} - \Pi_\Omega(\mathbf{w}_k) \rangle \\ &\quad + \frac{\sigma_k \mu}{2} \|\mathbf{u} - \Pi_\Omega(\mathbf{w}_k)\|^2, \end{aligned}$$

where the second inequality comes from the strong convexity of f and (4.7), and the last equality holds due to the definition of \mathbf{v}_k in (4.1). According to the definition of \mathbf{z}_k in (4.2), we can obtain that

$$\begin{aligned}
& \nu_k \sigma_k \langle \nabla f(\mathbf{v}_k), \mathbf{u} - \Pi_\Omega(\mathbf{w}_k) \rangle + \frac{\sigma_k \mu}{2} \|\mathbf{u} - \Pi_\Omega(\mathbf{w}_k)\|^2 \\
&= \frac{\sigma_k \mu}{2} \left\| \mathbf{u} - \left(\Pi_\Omega(\mathbf{w}_k) - \frac{\nu_k}{\mu} \nabla f(\mathbf{v}_k) \right) \right\|^2 - \frac{\nu_k^2 \sigma_k}{2\mu} \|\nabla f(\mathbf{v}_k)\|^2 \\
&\geq \frac{\sigma_k \mu}{2} \left\| \mathbf{z}_k - \left(\Pi_\Omega(\mathbf{w}_k) - \frac{\nu_k}{\mu} \nabla f(\mathbf{v}_k) \right) \right\|^2 - \frac{\nu_k^2 \sigma_k}{2\mu} \|\nabla f(\mathbf{v}_k)\|^2 \\
&= \nu_k \sigma_k \langle \nabla f(\mathbf{v}_k), \mathbf{z}_k - \Pi_\Omega(\mathbf{w}_k) \rangle + \frac{\sigma_k \mu}{2} \|\mathbf{z}_k - \Pi_\Omega(\mathbf{w}_k)\|^2.
\end{aligned}$$

As a result, it holds that

$$\begin{aligned}
(4.13) \quad \phi_{k+1}(\mathbf{u}) &\geq \sigma_{k+1} (f(\mathbf{v}_k) - f^*) - \frac{\sigma_k \mu \varepsilon^2}{4} + \nu_k \sigma_k \langle \nabla f(\mathbf{v}_k), \mathbf{z}_k - \Pi_\Omega(\mathbf{w}_k) \rangle \\
&\quad + \frac{\sigma_k \mu}{2} \|\mathbf{z}_k - \Pi_\Omega(\mathbf{w}_k)\|^2,
\end{aligned}$$

for all $\mathbf{u} \in \Omega$. From the definitions of \mathbf{v}_k and \mathbf{u}_{k+1} in (4.1) and (4.3), it can be derived that $\mathbf{z}_k - \Pi_\Omega(\mathbf{w}_k) = (\mathbf{u}_{k+1} - \mathbf{v}_k)/\eta_k$. Substituting this relationship into (4.13) and taking $\mathbf{u} = \Pi_\Omega(\mathbf{w}_{k+1})$, we arrive at

$$\frac{\phi_{k+1}^*}{\sigma_{k+1}} \geq f(\mathbf{v}_k) - f^* + \langle \nabla f(\mathbf{v}_k), \mathbf{u}_{k+1} - \mathbf{v}_k \rangle + \frac{\mu}{2\nu_k^2} \|\mathbf{u}_{k+1} - \mathbf{v}_k\|^2 - \frac{(1 - \eta_k)\mu\varepsilon^2}{4},$$

which together with the line-search condition (4.4) implies that

$$\frac{\phi_{k+1}^*}{\sigma_{k+1}} \geq f(\mathbf{u}_{k+1}) - f^* - \frac{\eta_k \mu \varepsilon^2}{4} - \frac{(1 - \eta_k)\mu\varepsilon^2}{4} = f(\mathbf{u}_{k+1}) - f^* - \frac{\mu\varepsilon^2}{4}.$$

Therefore, relationship (4.12) also holds for $k+1$.

Finally, by collecting two relationships (4.10) and (4.12) together, we can obtain that

$$\begin{aligned}
\sigma_k \left(f(\mathbf{u}_k) - f^* - \frac{\mu\varepsilon^2}{4} \right) &\leq \min_{\mathbf{u} \in \Omega} \phi_k(\mathbf{u}) \leq \min_{\mathbf{u} \in \Omega} \{ \sigma_k (f(\mathbf{u}) - f^*) + \phi_0(\mathbf{u}) \} \\
&\leq \sigma_k (f(\mathbf{u}^*) - f^*) + \phi_0(\mathbf{u}^*) \\
&= \phi_0(\mathbf{u}^*),
\end{aligned}$$

which completes the proof. \square

With the above preparatory results in place, we are now in a position to establish the iteration complexity of Algorithm 3, as articulated in the theorem below.

THEOREM 4.6. *Let $\varepsilon \in (0, 1)$ be a sufficiently small constant. Then after at most*

$$O \left(\log \left(\frac{1}{\varepsilon} \right) \frac{M^{(1+\hat{\alpha})/(1+3\hat{\alpha})}}{\varepsilon^{2(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+3\hat{\alpha})}} \right)$$

iterations, Algorithm 3 will reach an iterate \mathbf{u}_k satisfying $\|\mathbf{u}_k - \mathbf{u}^\| \leq \varepsilon$.*

Proof. In view of relationship (4.6), the number of line-search steps j_k in (4.4) satisfies

$$\frac{\mu}{\nu_k^2} \eta_k^{(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+\hat{\alpha})} \leq 2 \max_{i \in [m]} \left\{ \left[\frac{2(1-\alpha_i)}{\mu(1+\alpha_i)\varepsilon^2} \right]^{(1-\alpha_i)/(1+\alpha_i)} L_i^{2/(1+\alpha_i)} \right\} \leq \frac{2M}{\varepsilon^{2(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+\hat{\alpha})}},$$

where $M > 0$ is a constant defined in (2.1). Since $\eta_k = \nu_k/(1+\nu_k) \geq \nu_k/2$, we arrive at

$$(4.14) \quad \frac{\nu_k^2}{\mu} \geq \frac{\varepsilon^{2(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+\hat{\alpha})}}{2M} \eta_k^{(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+\hat{\alpha})} \geq \frac{\varepsilon^{2(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+\hat{\alpha})}}{2^{2/(1+\hat{\alpha})}M} \nu_k^{(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+\hat{\alpha})}.$$

Let $\omega > 0$ be a constant defined as

$$\omega = \frac{1}{2^{2/(1+3\hat{\alpha})}} \left[\frac{\mu}{M} \right]^{(1+\hat{\alpha})/(1+3\hat{\alpha})}.$$

Then it follows from relationship (4.14) that

$$(4.15) \quad \nu_k \geq \omega \varepsilon^{2(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+3\hat{\alpha})},$$

which further infers that

$$\sigma_{k+1} = (1 + \nu_k) \sigma_k \geq \left(1 + \omega \varepsilon^{2(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+3\hat{\alpha})} \right) \sigma_k.$$

Applying the above inequality for k times recursively yields that

$$\sigma_k \geq \left(1 + \omega \varepsilon^{2(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+3\hat{\alpha})} \right)^k.$$

As a direct consequence of (2.5) and (4.11), we can show that

$$\begin{aligned} \|\mathbf{u}_k - \mathbf{u}^*\|^2 &\leq \frac{2}{\mu} (f(\mathbf{u}_k) - f^*) \leq \frac{2}{\mu} \left(\frac{1}{\sigma_k} \phi_0(\mathbf{u}^*) + \frac{\mu \varepsilon^2}{4} \right) \\ &\leq \chi \left(1 + \omega \varepsilon^{2(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+3\hat{\alpha})} \right)^{-k} + \frac{\varepsilon^2}{2}, \end{aligned}$$

where $\chi = 2(f(\mathbf{u}_0) - f^*)/\mu + \|\mathbf{u}_0 - \mathbf{u}^*\|^2 > 0$ is a constant. Let K_ε^* be the smallest iteration number k such that $\|\mathbf{u}_k - \mathbf{u}^*\| \leq \varepsilon$. By solving the inequality $\chi(1 + \omega \varepsilon^{2(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+3\hat{\alpha})})^{-k} \leq \varepsilon^2/2$, we have

$$K_\varepsilon^* \leq \log \left(\frac{\sqrt{2\chi}}{\varepsilon} \right) \frac{2}{\log(1 + \omega \varepsilon^{2(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+3\hat{\alpha})})} \leq \log \left(\frac{\sqrt{2\chi}}{\varepsilon} \right) \frac{4}{\omega \varepsilon^{2(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+3\hat{\alpha})}}.$$

The proof is completed. \square

The complexity bound established in Theorem 4.6 is markedly lower than those presented in Theorems 2.2 and 3.1, thereby highlighting the acceleration effect attained by Algorithm 3. Finally, we demonstrate that the number of line-search steps required by Algorithm 3 is also $O(\log(\varepsilon^{-1})\varepsilon^{2(\hat{\alpha}-1)/(1+3\hat{\alpha})})$.

COROLLARY 4.7. *Let $\varepsilon \in (0, 1)$ be a sufficiently small constant. Then, to achieve an iterate \mathbf{u}_k satisfying $\|\mathbf{u}_k - \mathbf{u}^*\| \leq \varepsilon$, Algorithm 3 requires at most*

$$O \left(\log \left(\frac{1}{\varepsilon} \right) \frac{M^{(1+\hat{\alpha})/(1+3\hat{\alpha})}}{\varepsilon^{2(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+3\hat{\alpha})}} \right)$$

line-search steps.

Proof. It follows from relationship (4.14) that

$$\rho_{k+1} = 2^{j_k} \rho_k = \frac{\mu}{\nu_k^2} \leq \frac{2^{2/(1+\hat{\alpha})} M}{\varepsilon^{2(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+\hat{\alpha})}} \left[\frac{1}{\nu_k} \right]^{(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+\hat{\alpha})},$$

which together with (4.15) implies that

$$\rho_{k+1} \leq \frac{2^{2/(1+\hat{\alpha})} M}{\varepsilon^{2(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+\hat{\alpha})}} \left[\frac{1}{\omega \varepsilon^{2(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+3\hat{\alpha})}} \right]^{(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+\hat{\alpha})} = \frac{2^{2/(1+\hat{\alpha})} M}{\omega^{(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+\hat{\alpha})} \varepsilon^{4(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+3\hat{\alpha})}}.$$

Let N_k be the total number of line-search steps after k iterations in Algorithm 3. In view of (3.4), we have

$$\begin{aligned} N_k &\leq k + 1 + \log \left(\frac{2^{2/(1+\hat{\alpha})} M}{\omega^{(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+\hat{\alpha})} \varepsilon^{4(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+3\hat{\alpha})}} \right) - \log \rho_0 \\ &\leq k + \frac{4(1-\hat{\alpha})}{1+3\hat{\alpha}} \log \left(\frac{1}{\varepsilon} \right) + \log \left(\frac{2^{2/(1+\hat{\alpha})} M}{\omega^{(1-\hat{\alpha})/(1+\hat{\alpha})} \rho_0} \right) + 1. \end{aligned}$$

Consequently, Theorem 4.6 indicates that the total number of line-search steps in Algorithm 3 is at most $O(\log(\varepsilon^{-1}) \varepsilon^{2(\hat{\alpha}-1)/(1+3\hat{\alpha})})$, which completes the proof. \square

Remark 4.8. By an analogous argument, we can also prove that Algorithm 3 requires at most $O(\log(\varepsilon^{-1}) \varepsilon^{(\hat{\alpha}-1)/(1+3\hat{\alpha})})$ iterations to generate an iterate \mathbf{u}_k such that $f(\mathbf{u}_k) - f^* \leq \varepsilon$ for problem (1.1). Very recently, Doikov [8] has shown that, in the case $m = 2$, where f_1 is a convex function with a Hölder continuous gradient and $f_2(\mathbf{u}) = \|\mathbf{u}\|^2$, the lower complexity bound for first-order methods is precisely $O(\log(\varepsilon^{-1}) \varepsilon^{(\hat{\alpha}-1)/(1+3\hat{\alpha})})$ in terms of function value accuracy. This finding confirms that Algorithm 3 achieves the optimal iteration complexity.

5. Numerical Experiments. Preliminary numerical results are presented in this section to provide additional insights into the performance guarantees of the algorithms proposed in this paper. We aim to elucidate that the final error attained by the algorithm is influenced by both the stepsize and the Hölder exponent. The numerical experiments are conducted using Julia [4] (version 1.12) on an Apple Macintosh Mini with an M2 processor, 8 performance cores, and 32GB of memory. We have placed the Julia codes in the GitHub repository (https://github.com/ctkelly/Grad_Des_CKW.jl) with instructions for reproducing the figures. In this section, we set the spatial mesh width as $h = 2^{-4}$ for the discretization of partial differential equations (PDEs). Then the dimension of the discretized problem is $n = (h^{-1} - 1)^2$.

5.1. Two-dimensional PDE with a non-Lipschitz term. Hölder continuous gradients arise naturally in PDEs involving non-Lipschitz nonlinearity [3, 14]. In this subsection, we introduce a numerical example from [3]. This problem is to solve the following two-dimensional PDE,

$$(5.1) \quad \mathcal{F}(u) = -\Delta u + \gamma u_+^\alpha = 0,$$

where $\alpha \in (0, 1)$, $\gamma > 0$ is a constant and $u_+ = \max\{u, 0\}$. Discretizing (5.1) with the standard five point difference scheme [9] leads to the following nonlinear system,

$$(5.2) \quad \mathbf{F}(\mathbf{u}) = \mathbf{A}\mathbf{u} + \gamma \mathbf{u}_+^\alpha - \mathbf{b} = 0,$$

where $\mathbf{A} \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times n}$ is the discretization of $-\Delta$ with zero boundary conditions, $\mathbf{b} \in \mathbb{R}^n$ encodes the boundary conditions, and $\mathbf{u}_+^\alpha = \max\{\mathbf{u}, 0\}^\alpha$ is understood as a component-wise operation.

We now modify the above problem to enable direct computation of errors in the iterations. To this end, we follow [13, Example 4.4] and take as the exact solution the function

$$u^*(x, y) = \left(\frac{3r-1}{2} \right)^2 \max \left\{ 0, r - \frac{1}{3} \right\},$$

where $r = \sqrt{x^2 + y^2}$. We enforce the following boundary conditions,

$$u(x, 1) = u^*(x, 1), u(x, 0) = u^*(x, 0), u(1, y) = u^*(1, y), u(0, y) = u^*(0, y),$$

for $0 < x, y < 1$. And these conditions are encoded into \mathbf{b} . Then our modified equation is

$$(5.3) \quad \mathbf{F}(\mathbf{u}) - \mathbf{c}^* = 0,$$

where $\mathbf{c}^* = \mathbf{F}(\mathbf{u}^*)$. The nonlinear system (5.3) corresponds to the optimality condition of the following problem,

$$(5.4) \quad \min_{\mathbf{u} \in \mathbb{R}^n} f(\mathbf{u}) = \frac{1}{2} \mathbf{u}^\top \mathbf{A} \mathbf{u} + \frac{\gamma}{1+\alpha} \mathbf{e}^\top \mathbf{u}_+^{1+\alpha} - (\mathbf{b} + \mathbf{c}^*)^\top \mathbf{u},$$

where $\mathbf{e} \in \mathbb{R}^n$ is the vector of all ones.

The optimization model (5.4) is a special instance of problem (1.1) with $\Omega = \mathbb{R}^n$, $m = 2$,

$$f_1(\mathbf{u}) = \mathbf{u}^\top \mathbf{A} \mathbf{u} - 2(\mathbf{b} + \mathbf{c}^*)^\top \mathbf{u}, \quad \text{and} \quad f_2(\mathbf{u}) = \frac{2\gamma}{1+\alpha} \mathbf{e}^\top \mathbf{u}_+^{1+\alpha}.$$

It is clear that, ∇f_1 is Lipschitz continuous with the corresponding Lipschitz constant $L_1 = 2 \|\mathbf{A}\|$, and ∇f_2 is Hölder continuous with the Hölder exponent α and $L_2 = 2\gamma$ from

$$\|\nabla f_2(\mathbf{u}) - \nabla f_2(\mathbf{v})\| = 2\gamma \|\mathbf{u}_+^\alpha - \mathbf{v}_+^\alpha\| \leq 2\gamma \|\mathbf{u} - \mathbf{v}\|^\alpha,$$

for all $\mathbf{u}, \mathbf{v} \in \mathbb{R}^n$. Moreover, the function $f = (f_1 + f_2)/2$ is $\lambda(\mathbf{A})$ -strongly convex, where $\lambda(\mathbf{A})$ is the smallest eigenvalue of the symmetric positive definite matrix \mathbf{A} . Let \mathbf{u}^* be the vector obtained by evaluating u^* at the interior grid points. Then \mathbf{u}^* serves as the unique global minimizer of problem (5.4).

In the subsequent experiments, we use the solution of $\mathbf{A} \mathbf{u}_0 = \mathbf{b}$ as the initial iterate. This is the discretization of Laplace's equation with the boundary conditions. In this way, we ensure that the entire iteration satisfies the boundary conditions.

5.1.1. Numerical results of Algorithm 1. In the first experiment, we scrutinize the performance of Algorithm 1 under different stepsizes for problem (5.4) with $\alpha = 0.5$ and $\gamma = 0.5$. Specifically, Algorithm 1 is tested for stepsizes of the form $\tau = \tau_0 h^2$, where τ_0 is taken from the set $\{0.2, 0.1, 0.05, 0.01\}$. The corresponding numerical results, presented in Figure 1(a), illustrate the decay of the distance between the iterates and the global minimizer over iterations. It can be observed that a larger stepsize facilitates a more rapid descent in the iterations.

In the second experiment, we vary the Hölder exponent α over the values in $\{0.1, 0.2, 0.5, 0.8\}$, while fixing $\tau_0 = 0.01$. Figure 1(b) similarly tracks the decay of the distance to the global minimizer over iterations. It is evident that, as the value of α decreases, the final error attained by Algorithm 1 increases under the same stepsize. Therefore, the associated optimization problems become increasingly ill-conditioned and thus more challenging to solve for smaller values of α . These findings offer empirical support for our theoretical analysis.

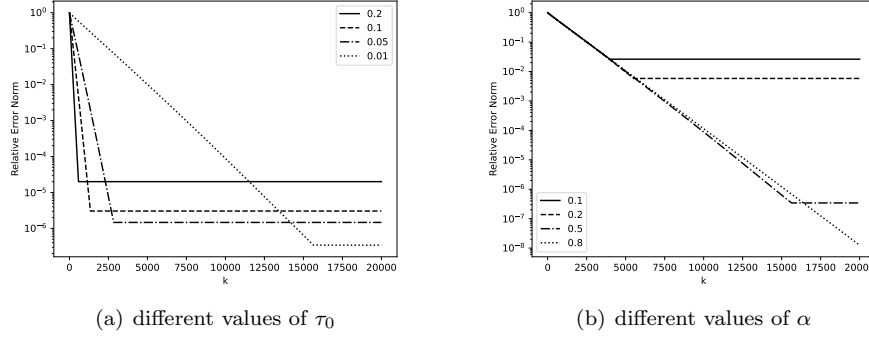


FIG. 1. Numerical performance of Algorithm 1 for problem (5.4).

5.1.2. Numerical results of Algorithm 2. We repeat the study in subsection 5.1.1 for Algorithm 2 by varying the values of the Hölder exponent α . We set $\varepsilon = 10^{-6}$ and $\mu = 2\pi^2$ in Algorithm 2, which is a lower estimate for the smallest eigenvalue of \mathbf{A} . The stepsize is initialized to $0.1h^2$ in the line-search procedure. The corresponding numerical results are depicted in Figure 2. Comparing Figure 2 to ?? shows the benefits of the line-search procedure in Algorithm 2, which does not need to manually adjust the value of τ_0 to converge for a given value of ε .

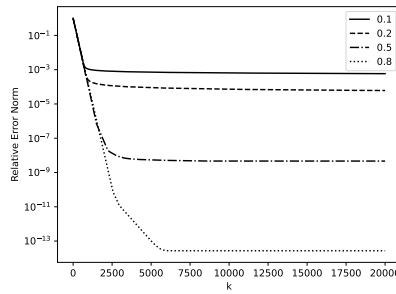


FIG. 2. Numerical performance of Algorithm 2 for problem (5.4) with different values of α .

5.1.3. Numerical results of Algorithm 3. We report the numerical performance of Algorithm 3 on two experiments. Guided by the observation in Remark 4.2, we test Algorithm 3 with a fixed stepsize $\nu = \tau_0 h^2$. In the first example, we use the values for τ_0 from Figure 1. In this way we can directly compare the performance of Algorithm 3 with that of Algorithm 1. The corresponding results, shown in Figure 3,

are poor. The reason for this is that we are not exploiting the ability of Algorithm 3 to use larger stepsizes. In the second example, we consider larger values for τ_0 in Figure 4(a) and set $\tau_0 = 20$ in Figure 4(b). The convergence is much better in all cases. The hardest case ($\alpha = 0.1$) has very irregular convergence in the terminal phase of iterations.

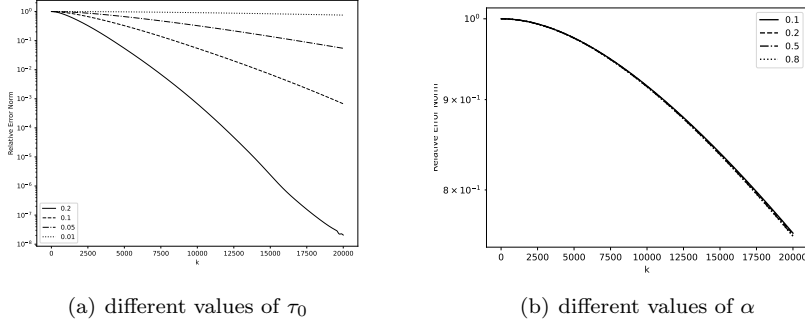


FIG. 3. Numerical performance of Algorithm 3 for problem (5.4) with smaller stepsizes.

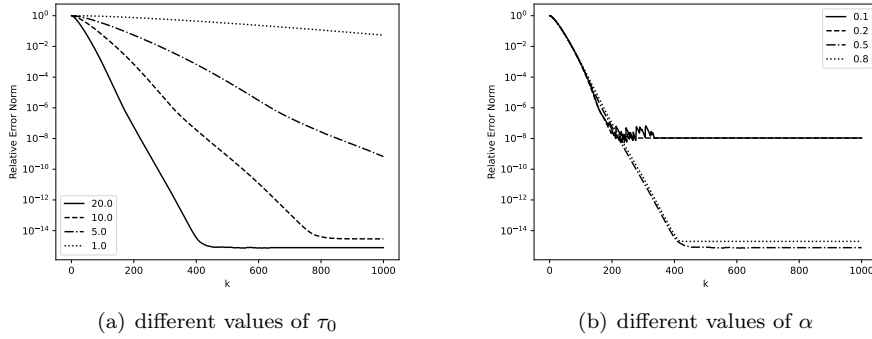


FIG. 4. Numerical performance of Algorithm 3 for problem (5.4) with larger stepsizes.

5.2. Semi-linear elliptic problem with a constraint. We consider a second numerical example motivated by a semi-linear elliptic problem with a constraint on the solution in a certain set [14]. Let

$$(5.5) \quad \mathcal{H}(u) = -\Delta u + \delta |u|^\alpha \text{sign}(u) - |u|^{p-1}u,$$

on $D = (0, 1)^2$ with the boundary condition $u(x, y) = 0.5 - \sin(x)\sin(y)$ on ∂D . Here, $\alpha \in (0, 1)$, $p > 1$, and $\delta > p/\alpha$ are three constants. We consider the variational inequality that is to find $u^* \in [-1, 1]$ such that

$$\mathcal{H}(u^*)(u - u^*) \geq 0,$$

for any $u \in [-1, 1]$. This problem is equivalent to the following nonlinear equation,

$$(5.6) \quad 0 = \mathcal{F}(u) := \begin{cases} \mathcal{H}(u), & \text{if } u - \mathcal{H}(u) \in [-1, 1], \\ u - 1, & \text{if } u - \mathcal{H}(u) \geq 1, \\ u + 1, & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

By discretizing (5.5) with the standard five point difference scheme [9], problem (5.6) leads to the following system of nonlinear equations,

$$(5.7) \quad 0 = \mathbf{F}(\mathbf{u}) := \frac{1}{\theta} \left(\mathbf{u} - \Pi_{\mathbf{U}} \left(\mathbf{u} - \theta \left(\mathbf{A}\mathbf{u} + \delta |\mathbf{u}|^\alpha \text{sign}(\mathbf{u}) - |\mathbf{u}|^{p-1} \mathbf{u} - \mathbf{b} \right) \right) \right),$$

where $\mathbf{U} = [-1, 1]^n$, $\theta > 0$ is a constant, $\mathbf{A} \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times n}$ is a symmetric positive definite matrix, and $\mathbf{b} \in \mathbb{R}^n$ encodes the boundary conditions. Note that (5.7) is the optimality condition of the following problem,

$$(5.8) \quad \min_{\mathbf{u} \in \mathbf{U}} f(\mathbf{u}) := \frac{1}{2} \mathbf{u}^\top \mathbf{A} \mathbf{u} + \frac{\delta}{1 + \alpha} \mathbf{e}^\top |\mathbf{u}|^{1+\alpha} - \frac{1}{1 + p} \mathbf{e}^\top |\mathbf{u}|^{1+p} - \mathbf{b}^\top \mathbf{u}.$$

The Hessian matrix of f at \mathbf{u} with $\mathbf{u}_i \neq 0$ ($i = 1, \dots, n$) has the form

$$\nabla^2 f(\mathbf{u}) = \mathbf{A} + \delta \alpha \text{Diag}(|\mathbf{u}|^{\alpha-1}) - p \text{Diag}(|\mathbf{u}|^{p-1}),$$

Since $\delta > p/\alpha$, $\nabla^2 f(\mathbf{u})$ is symmetric positive definite for any $\mathbf{u} \in \mathbf{U}$ with $\mathbf{u}_i \neq 0$ ($i = 1, \dots, n$). Hence, the function f is μ -strongly convex in \mathbf{U} with $\mu = \lambda(\mathbf{A})$ and the system (5.7) has a unique solution in \mathbf{U} . The optimization model (5.8) is a special instance of problem (1.1) with $\Omega = \mathbf{U}$, $m = 2$,

$$f_1(\mathbf{u}) = \mathbf{u}^\top \mathbf{A} \mathbf{u} - 2\mathbf{b}^\top \mathbf{u} - \frac{2}{1 + p} \mathbf{e}^\top |\mathbf{u}|^{1+p}, \text{ and } f_2(\mathbf{u}) = \frac{2\delta}{1 + \alpha} \mathbf{e}^\top |\mathbf{u}|^{1+\alpha}.$$

It is clear that Assumption 1.1 (ii) holds with $\alpha_1 = 1$, $L_1 = 2 \|\mathbf{A}\| + 2p$, $\alpha_2 = \alpha$, and $L_2 = 2\delta\alpha$.

In this example, we do not have an analytic solution and we only plot the residual norm $\|\mathbf{F}(\mathbf{u})\|$ with θ being the stepsize. We compare the performance of Algorithm 1 and Algorithm 3 on problem (5.8) with $p = 1.5$ and $\delta = 20$. The stepsizes of Algorithm 1 and Algorithm 3 are set to $0.1h^2$ and $20h^2$, respectively. Figure 5 illustrates the performance of two algorithms for different values of α . Similar as the case in subsection 5.1, problems where the exponent α for the non-Lipschitz term in the gradients is small are difficult. In particular, one cannot drive the residual to a small value. For larger values of α , both algorithms demonstrate strong performance. Furthermore, Algorithm 3 exhibits a faster convergence rate, benefiting from the use of a larger stepsize.

6. Conclusion. In this paper, we consider a class of strongly convex constrained optimization problems of the form (1.1). Example 1.2 shows that although each component function f_i of the objective function f admits a Hölder continuous gradient with an component $\alpha_i \in (0, 1]$, the gradient of f is not necessarily Hölder continuous. To establish the iteration complexity of the projected gradient descent methods for this class of problems, we use the parameter $\hat{\alpha} = \min_{i \in [m]} \alpha_i$ to determine the complexity bound. Algorithm 1 is a new version of projected gradient method for problem (1.1) with an appropriately fixed stepsize. Theorem 2.2 shows that Algorithm 1

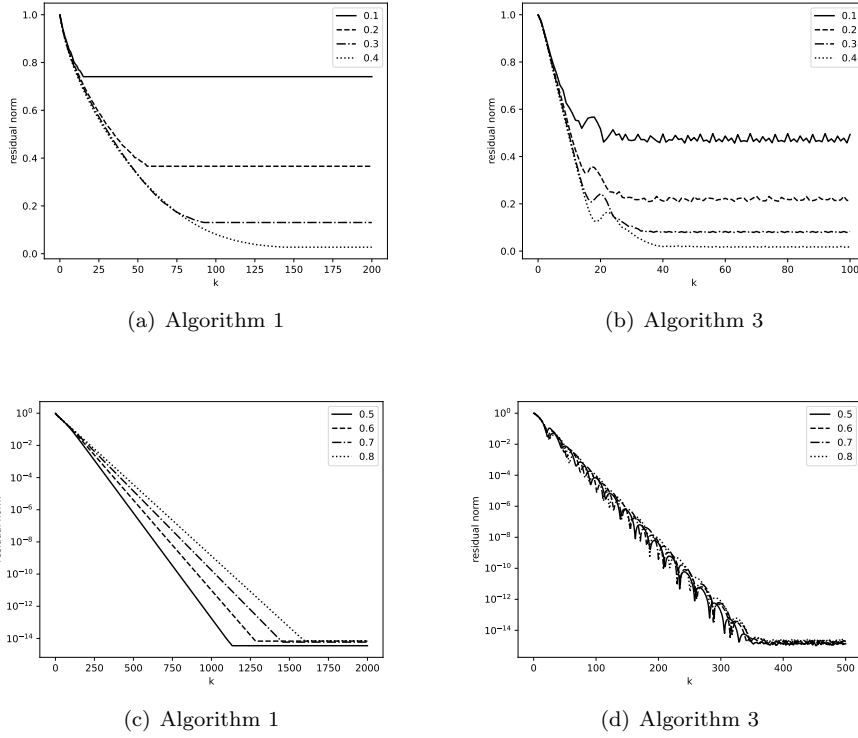


FIG. 5. Numerical performance of Algorithm 1 and Algorithm 3 for problem (5.8) with different values of α .

can find an iterate in the feasible set Ω with a distance to the global minimizer less than ε at most $O(\log(\varepsilon^{-1})\varepsilon^{2(\hat{\alpha}-1)/(1+\hat{\alpha})})$ iterations. This recovers the classical complexity result when $\hat{\alpha} = 1$ and reveals the additional difficulty imposed by the weaker smoothness of the objective function for $\hat{\alpha} < 1$. Algorithm 2 is a modification of Algorithm 1 for problems where the parameters α_i and L_i are difficult to estimate for the stepsize. In Algorithm 3, the stepsize is updated by the universal scheme at each iteration, which improves the complexity bound to $O(\log(\varepsilon^{-1})\varepsilon^{2(\hat{\alpha}-1)/(1+3\hat{\alpha})})$. Numerical experiments are conducted to validate our theoretical findings, demonstrating the expected behavior of projected gradient descent methods under different stepsizes and Hölder exponents. These results offer new insights into the performance guarantees of the classic projected gradient descent methods for a broader class of optimization problems with non-Lipschitz gradients.

REFERENCES

- [1] G. ALEFELD AND X. CHEN, *A regularized projection method for complementarity problems with non-Lipschitzian functions*, Math. Comput., 77 (2008), pp. 379–395.
- [2] J.-C. BARITAUX, K. HASSLER, AND M. UNSER, *An efficient numerical method for general L_p regularization in fluorescence molecular tomography*, IEEE Trans. Med. Imaging, 29 (2010), pp. 1075–1087.
- [3] J. W. BARRETT AND R. M. SHANAHAN, *Finite element approximation of a model reaction-diffusion problem with a non-Lipschitz nonlinearity*, Numer. Math., 59 (1991), pp. 217–

242.

- [4] J. BEZANSON, A. EDELMAN, S. KARPINSKI, AND V. B. SHAH, *Julia: A fresh approach to numerical computing*, SIAM Rev., 59 (2017), pp. 65–98.
- [5] L. S. BORGES, F. S. V. BAZÁN, AND L. BEDIN, *A projection-based algorithm for ℓ_2 - ℓ_p Tikhonov regularization*, Math. Methods Appl. Sci., 41 (2018), pp. 5919–5938.
- [6] X. CHEN, C. T. KELLEY, AND L. WANG, *A new complexity result for strongly convex optimization with locally α -Hölder continuous gradients*, arXiv:2505.03506v1, (2025).
- [7] O. DEVOLDER, F. GLINEUR, AND Y. NESTEROV, *First-order methods of smooth convex optimization with inexact oracle*, Math. Program., 146 (2014), pp. 37–75.
- [8] N. DOIKOV, *Lower complexity bounds for minimizing regularized functions*, Optim. Lett., (2025), pp. 1–20.
- [9] R. J. LEVEQUE, *Finite Difference Methods for Ordinary and Partial Differential Equations: Steady-State and Time-Dependent Problems*, Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics, 2007.
- [10] Y. NESTEROV, *Universal gradient methods for convex optimization problems*, Math. Program., 152 (2015), pp. 381–404.
- [11] Y. NESTEROV, *Lectures on Convex Optimization*, Springer, 2018.
- [12] Y. NESTEROV, *Universal complexity bounds for universal gradient methods in nonlinear optimization*, arXiv:2509.20902, (2025).
- [13] X. QU, W. BIAN, AND X. CHEN, *An extra gradient Anderson-accelerated algorithm for pseudomonotone variational inequalities*, Math. Comput., (2025).
- [14] M. TANG, *Uniqueness of bound states to $\Delta u - u + |u|^{p-1}u = 0$ in \mathbb{R}^n , $n \geq 3$* , Invent. Math., (2025), pp. 1–47.
- [15] M. YASHTINI, *On the global convergence rate of the gradient descent method for functions with Hölder continuous gradients*, Optim. Lett., 10 (2016), pp. 1361–1370.