

The degree and codegree threshold for linear triangle covering in 3-graphs

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Abstract

Given two k -uniform hypergraphs F and G , we say that G has an F -covering if every vertex in G is contained in a copy of F . For $1 \leq i \leq k-1$, let $c_i(n, F)$ be the least integer such that every n -vertex k -uniform hypergraph G with $\delta_i(G) > c_i(n, F)$ has an F -covering. The covering problem has been systematically studied by Falgas-Ravry and Zhao [Codegree thresholds for covering 3-uniform hypergraphs, SIAM J. Discrete Math., 2016]. In 2021, Falgas-Ravry, Markström, and Zhao [Triangle-degrees in graphs and tetrahedron coverings in 3-graphs, Combinatorics, Probability and Computing, 2021] asymptotically determined $c_1(n, F)$ when F is the generalized triangle. In this note, we give the exact value of $c_2(n, F)$ and asymptotically determine $c_1(n, F)$ when F is the linear triangle C_6^3 , where C_6^3 is the 3-uniform hypergraph with vertex set $\{v_1, v_2, v_3, v_4, v_5, v_6\}$ and edge set $\{v_1v_2v_3, v_3v_4v_5, v_5v_6v_1\}$.

Mathematics Subject Classifications: 05C35, 05C07, 05C65

1 Introduction

Given a positive integer $k \geq 2$, a k -uniform hypergraph (or a k -graph) $G = (V, E)$ consists of a vertex set $V = V(G)$ and an edge set $E = E(G) \subset \binom{V}{k}$, where $\binom{V}{k}$ denotes the set of all k -element subsets of V . We write graph for 2-graph for short. Let $G = (V, E)$ be a k -graph. For any $S \subseteq V(G)$, let $N_G(S) = \{T \subseteq V(G) \setminus S : T \cup S \in E(G)\}$ and the degree $d_G(S) = |N_G(S)|$. For $1 \leq i \leq k-1$, the *minimum i -degree* of G , denoted by $\delta_i(G)$, is the minimum of $d_G(S)$ over all $S \in \binom{V(G)}{i}$. We also call $\delta_{k-1}(G)$ the minimum codegree of G and $\delta_1(G)$ the minimum vertex-degree of G . The *link graph* of a vertex x in V , denoted by G_x , is a $(k-1)$ -graph $G_x = (V(G) \setminus \{x\}, N_G(x))$.

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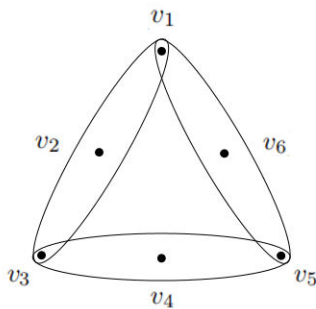


Figure 1: C_6^3

Given a k -graph F , we say a k -graph G has an F -covering if each vertex of G is contained in a subgraph of G isomorphic to F . For $1 \leq i \leq k-1$, define

$$c_i(n, F) = \max\{\delta_i(G) : G \text{ is a } k\text{-graph on } n \text{ vertices with no } F\text{-covering}\}.$$

For graphs F , in the concluding remarks [10], the authors noted that the covering problem is essentially equivalent to the Turán problem, and Falgas-Ravry and Zhao gave a roughly proof of $c_1(n, F) = \left(\frac{\chi(F)-2}{\chi(F)-1} + o(1)\right)n$ in [3], where $\chi(F)$ is the chromatic number of F . The authors in [3] also initiated the study of the covering problem in 3-graphs, and determined the exact value of $c_2(n, K_4^3)$ (where K_r^3 denotes the complete 3-graph on $r \geq 3$ vertices) for $n > 98$ and gave bounds on $c_2(n, F)$ which are apart by at most 2 in the cases where F is K_4^{3-} (K_4^3 with one edge removed, also called a *generalized triangle*), $K_5^{3?}$, and the tight cycle C_5^3 on 5 vertices. Yu, et al [9] showed that $c_2(n, K_4^{3-}) = \lfloor \frac{n}{3} \rfloor$, and $c_2(n, K_5^{3-}) = \lfloor \frac{2n-2}{3} \rfloor$. Last year, Falgas-Ravry, Markström, and Zhao [2] gave close to optimal bounds of $c_1(n, K_4^{(3)})$ and asymptotically determined $c_1(n, K_4^{(3)-})$. There are some other related results in literature, for example in [4, 5].

A *linear triangle* C_6^3 based on the triple $v_1v_3v_5$ is a 3-graph with vertex set $\{v_1, v_2, v_3, v_4, v_5, v_6\}$ and edge set $\{v_1v_2v_3, v_3v_4v_5, v_5v_6v_1\}$ (as shown in Fig.1). Gao and Han showed in [6] that, when $n \in 6\mathbb{Z}$ is sufficiently large, and H is a 3-graph on n vertices with $\delta_2(H) \geq n/3$, then H has a C_6^3 -covering such that every vertex H is covered by exactly one C_6^3 (also called a C_6^3 -factor or a perfect C_6^3 -tiling). In this article, we determine the exact value of $c_2(n, C_6^3)$ and an asymptotic optimal value of $c_1(n, C_6^3)$. The main results are listed as follows.

Theorem 1. For $n \geq 6$, $c_2(n, C_6^3) = 1$.

Theorem 2. For $n \geq 6$, $\frac{3-2\sqrt{2}}{4}n^2 - n < c_1(n, C_6^3) < \frac{3-2\sqrt{2}}{4}n^2 + 3n^{\frac{3}{2}}$.

The rest of the article is arranged as follows. In Section 2, we construct extremal graphs with minimum codegree one that have no C_6^3 -covering, and minimum degree greater than $\frac{3-2\sqrt{2}}{4}n^2 - n$ that have no C_6^3 -covering, respectively. The proofs of Theorems 1 and 2 are given in Sections 3 and 4, respectively.

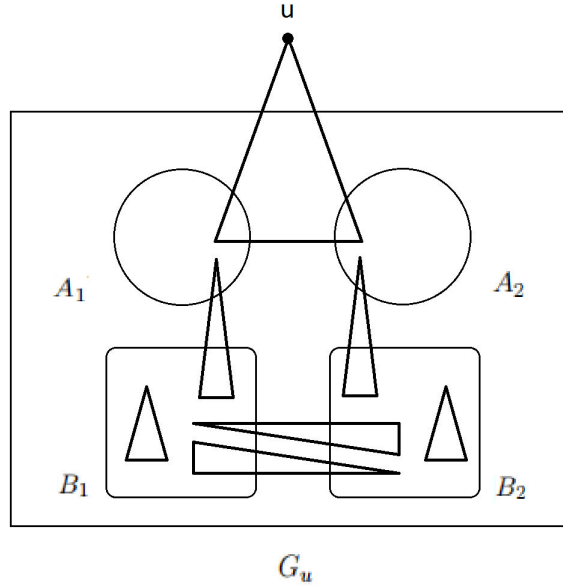


Figure 2: Construction 2

2 Constructions

We introduce two constructions involving our result. For two families of sets $\mathcal{A}$ and $\mathcal{B}$, define $\mathcal{A} \vee \mathcal{B} = \{A \cup B : A \in \mathcal{A} \text{ and } B \in \mathcal{B}\}$.

Construction 1: Let $G_1 = (V_1, E_1)$ be a 3-graph with $V_1 = \{x\} \cup V'$ and

$$E_1 = \{\{x\}\} \vee \binom{V'}{2}.$$

The following observation can be checked directly.

Observation 3. $\delta_2(G_1) = 1$ and G_1 has no C_6^3 -covering (Indeed, the vertex x is not covered in any copy of C_6^3).

Construction 2: Let $G_2 = (V_2, E_2)$ be a 3-graph with $V_2 = \{u\} \cup A_1 \cup A_2 \cup B_1 \cup B_2$, and

$$E_2 = \left(\{\{u\}\} \vee \binom{A_1}{1} \vee \binom{A_2}{1} \right) \cup \left(\binom{A_1}{1} \vee \binom{B_1}{2} \right) \cup \left(\binom{A_2}{1} \vee \binom{B_2}{2} \right) \cup \binom{B_1 \cup B_2}{3},$$

where $||A_1| - |A_2|| \leq 1$, $|B_1| = |B_2| = \lfloor (1 - \frac{\sqrt{2}}{2})n \rfloor$.

Observation 4. $\delta_1(G_2) > \frac{3-2\sqrt{2}}{4}n^2 - n$ and G_2 has no C_6^3 covering u .

Proof. It is easy to observe that G_2 has no C_6^3 covering u . Let $b = |B_1| = |B_2| = \lfloor (1 - \frac{\sqrt{2}}{2})n \rfloor$ and $a = \frac{n-1-2b}{2} \geq \frac{(\sqrt{2}-1)n-1}{2}$. Without loss of generality, assume $|A_1| = \lfloor a \rfloor$

and $|A_2| = \lceil a \rceil$. Now let us calculate $\delta_1(G_2)$. When $n \leq 23$, we have $\frac{3-2\sqrt{2}}{4}n^2 - n < 0$. So we may suppose $n \geq 24$. Therefore, $b \geq 2$. We have $|A_1| + |A_2| = n - 1 - 2b$. Choose $v \in V(G_2)$.

If $v = u$, then

$$d_{G_2}(v) = \lfloor a \rfloor \cdot \lceil a \rceil \geq a^2 - \frac{1}{4} \geq \frac{3-2\sqrt{2}}{4}n^2 - \frac{(\sqrt{2}-1)n}{2} > \frac{3-2\sqrt{2}}{4}n^2 - n.$$

If $v \in A_1 \cup A_2$, then

$$d_{G_2}(v) \geq \lfloor a \rfloor + \binom{b}{2} \geq \frac{(\sqrt{2}-1)n-3}{2} + \frac{(\frac{2-\sqrt{2}}{2}n-1)(\frac{2-\sqrt{2}}{2}n-2)}{2} > \frac{3-2\sqrt{2}}{4}n^2 - n.$$

If $v \in B_1 \cup B_2$, then

$$d_{G_2}(v) \geq (b-1) \cdot \lfloor a \rfloor + \binom{2b-1}{2} \geq \lfloor a \rfloor + \binom{b}{2} > \frac{3-2\sqrt{2}}{4}n^2 - n.$$

Therefore, $\delta(G_2) > \frac{3-2\sqrt{2}}{4}n^2 - n$. □

3 Proof of Theorem 1

We first introduce a lemma, which is of great importance to our proof. Let P_k (resp. C_k) denote a path (resp. a cycle) with k vertices.

Lemma 5. *Let G be a 3-graph with $\delta_2(G) \geq 2$ and $v \in V(G)$. If v is not covered by any C_6^3 , then G_v must be P_5 -free and $2P_3$ -free.*

Proof. Indeed, let us first suppose that G_v contains a $2P_3$, say, $w_1u_1w_2$ and $w_3u_2w_4$. Since $\delta_2(G) \geq 2$, there exists a vertex $x \neq v$, $u_1u_2x \in E(G)$. Since $\{w_1, u_1, w_2\} \cap \{w_3, u_2, w_4\} = \emptyset$, we may assume without loss of generality that w_2 and w_3 are different from x . Then the subgraph induced by $\{v, w_2, u_1, x, u_2, w_3\}$ contains a C_6^3 based on v , u_1 and u_2 . This gives the conclusion that G_v does not contain a $2P_3$.

Now suppose that G_v contains a P_5 , say, $w_1u_1wu_2w_2$. Then similarly, there exists a vertex $x \neq v$, $u_1u_2x \in E(G)$. If $x \notin \{w_1, w_2\}$, then the subgraph induced by $\{v, w_1, u_1, x, u_2, w_3\}$ contains a C_6^3 based on v , u_1 and u_2 . If $x \in \{w_1, w_2\}$, without loss of generality, assume $x = w_1$, then the subgraph induced by $\{v, w, u_1, w_1, u_2, w_2\}$ contains a C_6^3 based on v , u_1 and u_2 . This gives the conclusion that G_v is P_5 -free. □

Now we are ready to finish the proof of Theorem 1.

Proof of Theorem 1. Suppose to the contrary that there is a 3-graph G with $\delta_2(G) \geq 2$ and a vertex $v \in V(G)$ that is not covered by C_6^3 . Since $\delta_2(G) \geq 2$, we have $\delta(G_v) \geq 2$.

By Lemma 5, G_v is P_5 -free and $2P_3$ -free. Therefore, the longest path in G_v must be P_4 or P_3 (otherwise, G_v must be a matching, which contradicts the fact that $\delta(G_v) \geq 2$).

Note that every component of G_v contains a cycle since $\delta(G_v) \geq 2$. If the longest path is P_3 in G_v , then every component of G_v must be a K_3 . Since $|V(G_v)| \geq 5$, we have $G_v \cong tK_3$ for some $t \geq 2$. However, this contradicts the fact that G_v is $2P_3$ -free.

Now suppose the longest path is P_4 in G_v . Consider the component H that contains $P_4 = u_1w_1w_2u_2$. Since P_4 is a longest path and $d_H(u_1) \geq 2$ and $d_H(u_2) \geq 2$, it can be easily checked that $C_4 \subseteq H$, and thus, $V(H) = V(P_4)$ (otherwise, H contains a P_5 , a contradiction). Since $|V(G_v)| \geq n - 1 \geq 5$, G_v has at least another component H' . Because every component of G_v contains a cycle, we have $|V(H')| \geq 3$, a contradiction to the fact that G_v is $2P_3$ -free. $\square$

4 Proof of Theorem 2

We need the fundamental result in extremal graph theory due to Turán [8].

Theorem 6 (Turán, 1941). *Let $r \geq 2$ and $T_{n,r}$ be the Turán graph. If G is a graph on n vertices containing no K_{r+1} as a subgraph, then $e(G) \leq e(T_{n,r})$.*

Now we give the proof of Theorem 2.

Proof of Theorem 2: The lower bound of $c_1(n, C_6^3)$ is a direct corollary of Observation 4. Therefore, it is sufficient to show that every 3-graph G on n vertices with $\delta_1(G) \geq \frac{3-2\sqrt{2}}{4}n^2 + 3n^{\frac{3}{2}}$ has a C_6^3 -covering.

Suppose to the contrary that there is a 3-graph G on n vertices with $\delta_1(G) \geq \frac{3-2\sqrt{2}}{4}n^2 + 3n^{\frac{3}{2}}$ and a vertex $u \in V(G)$ that is not contained in a copy of C_6^3 . Recall that the link graph G_u is the graph with vertex set $V' = V \setminus \{u\}$ and edge set $E = \{vw : uvw \in E(G)\}$. Denote M_0 as the set of components isomorphic to K_2 of G_u and let I_0 be the set of components isomorphic to K_1 in G_u . For any $v \in V(G_u)$, let $M(v)$ denote the set of components isomorphic to K_2 in $G_u - \{v\} - V(M_0)$, and let $I(v)$ denote the set of components isomorphic to K_1 in $G_u - \{v\} - I_0$. Note that $M_0 \cap M(v) = \emptyset$ and $I_0 \cap I(v) = \emptyset$ by the definitions.

Claim 7. *Let v be a vertex in G_u with $d_{G_u}(v) \geq 4$. Then*

$$E(G_v - u) \subseteq M_0 \cup M(v) \cup \binom{I_0 \cup I(v)}{2}.$$

Proof. Choose $v_1v_2 \in E(G_v - u)$. If $v_1v_2 \notin M_0 \cup M(v) \cup \binom{I_0 \cup I(v)}{2}$, then there is at least one of v_1, v_2 , say v_1 , that is not in $I_0 \cup I(v)$.

If $v_1 \in V(M_0) \cup V(M(v))$, since $v_1v_2 \notin M_0 \cup M(v)$, there exists v'_1 different from v_2 , such that $v_1v'_1 \in M_0 \cup M(v)$. According to $d_{G_u}(v) \geq 4$, there exists v' different from v_1, v'_1 and v_2 , such that $vv' \in E(G_u)$. In this case, uv'_1v_1, v_1v_2v and $vv'u$ form a C_6^3 based on u, v_1 and v covering u , a contradiction. Otherwise, $v_1 \notin I_0 \cup I(v) \cup V(M_0) \cup V(M(v))$. Then $d_{G_u}(v_1) \geq 2$. Thus there exists v''_1 different from v_2 such that $v_1v''_1 \in E(G_u)$. Since $d_{G_u}(v) \geq 4$, there exists v'' different from v_1, v''_1 and v_2 , such that $vv'' \in E(G_u)$. Again

we have a copy of C_6^3 formed $uv_1''v_1$, v_1v_2v and $vv''u$ based on u , v_1 and v covering u , a contradiction.

This finishes the proof of our claim. □

Now, define a vertex $v \in V(G_u)$ to be a *good* vertex if $|I(v)| < n^{\frac{1}{2}}$; a *bad* vertex, otherwise. For a good vertex v , a vertex w in G_v is called a *private* vertex of v if $w \in I_0 \cup I(v)$ and $d_{G_v-u}(w) \geq 2$. Let $X(v)$ denote the set of all private vertices of v , i. e.

$$X(v) = \{w \in V(G_v) : w \in I_0 \cup I(v) \text{ and } d_{G_v-u}(w) \geq 2\}.$$

For a good vertex v with $d_{G_u}(v) \geq 4$, let $x = |X(v)|$ and let $J(v) = (I_0 \cup I(v)) \setminus X(v)$. Denote $H = G_v - u$. By Claim 7, we have

$$d_G(v) \leq d_{G_u}(v) + |M_0| + |M(v)| + \left| E(H) \cap \binom{I_0 \cup I(v)}{2} \right|.$$

By the definition of $X(v)$, $d_H(w) \leq 1$ for any $w \in J(v)$. Thus $\left| E(H) \cap \binom{I_0 \cup I(v)}{2} \right| \leq \sum_{w \in J(v)} d_H(w) + \binom{|X(v)|}{2} \leq |I_0| + |I(v)| - x + \binom{x}{2}$. Clearly, $d_{G_u}(v) \leq n$ and $|M_0| + |M(v)| \leq \frac{n-1-|I_0|-|I(v)|}{2}$. Therefore,

$$d_{G_u}(v) < 2n + \binom{x}{2}.$$

Note that

$$\frac{3-2\sqrt{2}}{4}n^2 + 3n^{\frac{3}{2}} \leq \delta_1(G) \leq d_G(v) < 2n + \binom{x}{2}.$$

Therefore, we have

$$|X(v)| = x \geq \frac{1 + \sqrt{(2-\sqrt{2})^2n^2 + 24n^{\frac{3}{2}} - 12n + 1}}{2} \geq \left(1 - \frac{\sqrt{2}}{2}\right)n + n^{\frac{1}{2}}. \quad (1)$$

Now, let us compute the number of edges of G_u . Define a *bad edge* in G_u as an edge that is adjacent to at least one bad vertex, and a *good edge* if its two ends are good. Let E_1 denote the set of bad edges in G_u , let E_2 be the set of good edges with one end of degree at most 3, and let E_3 denote the remaining edges in G_u . Then $|E(G_u)| = |E_1| + |E_2| + |E_3|$. By the definition of E_2 , we have $|E_2| \leq 3n$. Note that $I(v_1) \cap I(v_2) = \emptyset$ for different vertices $v_1, v_2 \in V(G_u)$. Since $|I(v)| \geq n^{\frac{1}{2}}$ for a bad vertex $v \in V(G_u)$, the number of the bad vertices is at most $n/n^{\frac{1}{2}} = n^{\frac{1}{2}}$. Therefore, they will contribute at most $n^{\frac{3}{2}}$ edges. That is, $|E_1| \leq n^{\frac{3}{2}}$. Since $n \geq 6$, and

$$n^{\frac{3}{2}} + 3n + |E_3| = |E_1| + |E_2| + |E_3| = d_1(u) \geq \delta_1(G) \geq \frac{3-2\sqrt{2}}{4}n^2 + 3n^{\frac{3}{2}}, \quad (2)$$

we have $E_3 \neq \emptyset$.

Claim 8. For any $e = v_1v_2 \in E_3$, $X(v_1) \cap X(v_2) = \emptyset$.

Proof. Suppose to the contrary that there exists $w \in X(v_1) \cap X(v_2)$. Since $d_{G_{v_i}-u}(w) \geq 2$ for $i = 1, 2$, there are two different vertices y_1, y_2 with $y_1w \in E(G_{v_1}-u)$ and $y_2w \in E(G_{v_2}-u)$. Therefore, v_1y_1w , wy_2v_2 and v_2uv_1 form a copy of C_6^3 based on v_1 , w and v_2 , a contradiction. $\square$

Let $e = v_1v_2 \in E_3$ and $x_i = |X(v_i)|$ for $i = 1, 2$. By (1) and Claim 8, we have

$$2 \left(1 - \frac{\sqrt{2}}{2} \right) n + 2n^{\frac{1}{2}} \leq x_1 + x_2 = |X(v_1) \cup X(v_2)| \leq |I_0 \cup I(v_1) \cup I(v_2)| < |I_0| + 2n^{\frac{1}{2}}, \quad (3)$$

the last inequality holds since $|I(v)| < n^{\frac{1}{2}}$ for any good vertex $v \in V(G_u)$. Therefore, $|I_0| > 2(1 - \frac{\sqrt{2}}{2})n$.

If $G_u[E_3] := G_u \cap E_3$ contains no K_3 , then, by Theorem 6 and (3),

$$|E_3| \leq e(T_{n-1-|I_0|,2}) \leq \frac{(n-1-|I_0|)^2}{4} < \frac{((\sqrt{2}-1)n-1)^2}{4}.$$

Therefore, by (2),

$$d_1(u) = |E(G_u)| = \sum_{i=1}^3 |E_i| < \frac{((\sqrt{2}-1)n-1)^2}{4} + 3n + n^{\frac{3}{2}} \leq \frac{3-2\sqrt{2}}{4}n^2 + 3n^{\frac{3}{2}},$$

a contradiction.

Now assume $G_u[E_3]$ contains a copy of K_3 , say $v_1v_2v_3$. Let $x_i = |X(v_i)|$ for $i = 1, 2, 3$. Again by (1) and Claim 8, we have

$$3 \left(1 - \frac{\sqrt{2}}{2} \right) n + 3n^{\frac{1}{2}} \leq x_1 + x_2 + x_3 \leq |I_0 \cup I(v_1) \cup I(v_2) \cup I(v_3)| < |I_0| + 3n^{\frac{1}{2}}.$$

Therefore, $|I_0| > 3(1 - \frac{\sqrt{2}}{2})n$. Thus we have

$$d_1(u) = |E(G_u)| \leq \binom{n-1-|I_0|}{2} < \binom{\frac{3\sqrt{2}-4}{2}n-1}{2} < \frac{3-2\sqrt{2}}{4}n^2 + 3n^{\frac{3}{2}},$$

a contradiction.

This completes the proof of Theorem 2. $\square$

5 Discussion and Remarks

In this note, we show that $\frac{3-2\sqrt{2}}{4}n^2 - n < c_1(n, C_6^3) < \frac{3-2\sqrt{2}}{4}n^2 + 3n^{\frac{3}{2}}$ for $n \geq 6$ gave an optimal extremal construction (see Construction 2) with minimum degree greater than $\frac{3-2\sqrt{2}}{4}n^2 - n$. It will be interesting to show that $c_1(n, C_6^3) = \frac{3-2\sqrt{2}}{4}n^2 - O(n)$, we leave this as a problem.

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