Turán graphs with bounded matching number

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Abstract

We determine the maximum possible number of edges of a graph with n vertices, matching number at most s and clique number at most k for all admissible values of the parameters.

1 The main result

The clique number of a graph G is the maximum number of vertices in a complete subgraph of it. The matching number of G is the maximum cardinality of a matching in G. Two classical results in Extremal Graph Theory are Turán's Theorem [4] determining the maximum number of edges $t(n,k)$ of a graph on n vertices with clique number at most k, and the Erdős-Gallai Theorem [1], determining the maximum possible number of edges of a graph with n vertices and matching number at most s.

In this note we prove a common generalization. Call a graph complete k-partite if its vertex set consists of k pairwise disjoint sets and two vertices are adjacent iff they belong to distinct classes. Note that we allow some vertex classes to be empty. Let $T(n,k)$ denote the complete k-partite graph with n vertices in which the sizes of the vertex classes are as equal as possible, and let $t(n,k)$ denote its number of edges. Let $G(n,k,s)$ denote the complete k-partite graph on n vertices consisting of $k-1$ vertex classes of sizes as equal as possible whose total size is s, and one additional vertex class of size $n-s$. Let $g(n,k,s)$ denote the number of its edges.

Our main result is the following.

Theorem 1.1. *For all $n \geq 2s+1$ and every k, the maximum possible number of edges of a graph on n vertices with clique number at most k and matching number at most s is the maximum between the Turán number $t(2s+1,k)$ and the number $g(n,k,s)$ defined above. (For $n \leq 2s+1$ the maximum is clearly $t(n,k)$).*

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2 Proof

Let $G = (V, E)$ be a graph on $n \geq 2s + 1$ vertices with matching number at most s and clique number at most k having the maximum possible number of edges. By the Tutte-Berge Theorem or the Edmonds-Gallai Theorem, cf., e.g. [2], there is a set of vertices B, $|B| = b$ so that each of the connected components $A_1, A_2, \ldots, A_m$ of $G - B$ is odd, and so that if the sizes of these components are

$$|A_1| = a_1 \geq |A_2| = a_2 \geq \cdots \geq |A_m| = a_m \geq 1$$

then

$$b + \sum_{i=1}^{m} (a_i - 1)/2 = s$$

and

$$b + \sum_{i=1}^{m} a_i = n.$$

Note that such a partition exists even if the size of the maximum matching in G is smaller than s, since it is possible to shift vertices from some sets A_i to B, if needed.

Among all such graphs with the maximum possible number of edges and all such choices of B, A_i assume that G, B, A_i is one for which the sum $\sum_{i=1}^{m} a_i^2$ is maximum.

We use the following standard notation. For any vertex v of G, $N(v)$ denotes its set of neighbors. If C is a set of vertices of G, put $N_C(v) = N(v) \cap C$. G_C denotes the induced subgraph of G on C.

We first prove the following lemma, which is a simple consequence of the Zykov symmetrization method introduced in [5]. For completeness we include a short proof.

Lemma 2.1. *Without loss of generality we may assume that every two non-adjacent vertices of B have the same neighborhood.*

Proof. We first show that non-adjacency is an equivalence relation on B. Indeed, this relation is trivially reflexive and symmetric. Suppose it is not transitive, then there are three distinct vertices u, v, w in B so that uv, uw are non-edges but vw is an edge. If the degree $d(u)$ of u is smaller than $d(v)$, then replacing the neighborhood of u by that of v the number of edges increases. The clique number does not increase, as any new clique K must contain u, but then it cannot contain v, and $(K - \{u\}) \cup \{v\}$ is a clique of the same size before the replacement. The matching number also stays at most s, as demonstrated by the set of vertices B after the replacement. Thus, by the assumption that G has a maximum possible number of edges it follows that $d(u) \geq d(v)$. The same argument shows that $d(u) \geq d(w)$. But in this case the graph obtained by replacing the neighborhood of v by that of u and the neighborhood of w by that of u provides the desired contradiction. Indeed, it has more edges than G, clique number at most that of G, and matching number at most s. This shows that the induced subgraph of G on B is a complete k-partite graph with vertex classes $B_1, \ldots, B_k$ (some of which may be empty). For each nonempty B_i let u_i be a vertex of B_i of maximum degree. Replacing the neighborhood of each other vertex of B_i by that of u_i, the number of edges can only increase, the clique number does not increase and the matching number stays at most s. This completes the proof of the lemma. $\square$

Lemma 2.2. $a_i = 1$ *for all* $2 \leq i \leq m$.

Proof. By Lemma 2.1 every two non-adjacent vertices of B have the same neighborhood. Since G contains no clique of size $k+1$ this means that G_B is a complete k-partite graph. Let $B_1, B_2, \ldots, B_k$ be the vertex classes of this induced subgraph, with $|B_1| \geq |B_2| \geq \ldots \geq |B_k|$ (where some of these classes may be empty).

Claim 2.3. *Without loss of generality we may assume that for every* $1 \leq i \leq m$ *there is a vertex* $v_i \in A_i$ *which has no neighbor in* B_k*.*

Proof of Claim: If $B_k = \emptyset$ this is surely true. We can thus assume that $|B_1| \geq |B_2| \geq \ldots \geq |B_k| \geq 1$. Since the size $w(G)$ of the largest clique of G is at most k, no vertex in A_i is adjacent to a member of each B_j, $1 \leq j \leq k$. If all vertices of A_i are adjacent to B_k (to all of it, as all vertices in B_k have the same neighborhood) we can swap B_j and B_k in the neighborhood of each $v \in A_i$ leaving it connected to both if it has been connected to both, and leaving it connected only to B_j if it has been connected only to B_k. This can only increase the number of edges, as $|B_k| \leq |B_j|$. Choosing j so that some vertex $v \in A_i$ has no neighbors in B_j gives the desired assertion of the claim. Note also that swapping B_j and B_k as above cannot increase the size of the maximum clique as any new clique created this way includes a vertex of B_j, some vertices of A_i, and no vertex of B_k. Replacing the vertex from B_j by any one of B_k gives a clique of the same size in the graph before the swap. Since the matching number also stays at most s, as shown by B, this completes the proof of the claim. $\square$

Returning to the proof of the lemma assume it is false and $a_1 \geq a_2 \geq 3$. Let $v_1 \in A_1$ and $v_2 \in A_2$ be as in the claim. Now modify G into G' by defining $A'_1 = A_1 \cup A_2 \setminus \{v_2\}, A'_2 = \{v_2\}$, keeping $B' = B$ and only changing the edges incident with v_1 and v_2 as follows. The new neighborhood of v_1 is

$$N'(v_1) = N_{A_1}(v_1) \cup N_{A_2}(v_2) \cup (N_B(v_1) \cap N_B(v_2)).$$

The new neighborhood of v_2 is $N_B(v_1) \cup N_B(v_2)$.

The total number of edges is unchanged, and (a_1, a_2) changed to $(a_1+a_2-1, 1)$ implying that the matching number stays at most s, as both $a_1 + a_2 - 1$ and 1 are odd. The clique number stays at most k. Indeed, any new clique containing v_2 is of size at most k since neither v_1 nor v_2 are adjacent to B_k in G. Any new clique K in G' containing v_1 contains in A_1' either only vertices of A_1 or only vertices of $A_2 - \{v_2\}$ (in addition to v_1). In the first case, since $N_B'(v_1) \subset N_B(v_1)$, the same clique appears also in G. In the second case, since $N_B'(v_1) \subset N_B(v_2)$, $(K - \{v_1\}) \cup \{v_2\}$ is a clique in G, of the same size as K. Since $(a_1 + a_2 - 1)^2 + 1^2 > a_1^2 + a_2^2$ this yields a contradiction and completes the proof of the lemma. □

By the lemma it follows that $a_1 = 2s - 2b + 1$. We consider several possible cases, as follows.

Case 1: $b = 0$. In this case $a_1 = 2s + 1$ and all other vertices of G are isolated, showing that the number of edges is at most $t(2s + 1, k)$.

Case 2: $b = s$. In this case $a_1 = 1$ and all the components of $G - B$ are isolated vertices. The induced subgraph of G on the union of B with arbitrarily chosen additional $\lfloor s/(k-1) \rfloor$ components (each of size 1) has at most $t(s + \lfloor s/(k-1) \rfloor, k)$ edges. Any other vertex can be connected only to the vertices of B, namely has degree at most s, and this gives exactly the number $g(n, k, s)$ for the total number of edges.

Case 3: $|B| + a_1 = 2s - b + 1 \leq s + \lfloor s/(k-1) \rfloor$. This is similar to Case 2. The induced subgraph of G on the union of B with A_1 and with additional components having total size $s + \lfloor s/(k-1) \rfloor$ spans at most $t(s + \lfloor s/(k-1) \rfloor, k)$ edges. Any other vertex has degree at most $b \leq s$ and the desired estimate follows as before.

Case 4: $|B| + a_1 = 2s - b + 1 \geq s + \lfloor s/(k-1) \rfloor$. In this case $0 \leq b \leq s - \lfloor s/(k-1 \rfloor + 1$. Define

$$f(b) = t(2s - b + 1, k) + b(n - 2s + b - 1).$$

The number of edges of G is clearly at most $f(b)$. Indeed, the induced subgraph on $B \cup A_1$ spans at most $t(2s - b + 1, k)$ edges, and all remaining vertices have degrees at most b. We claim that in the relevant range of b, $f(b + 1) - f(b)$ is an increasing function of b. Note that the claim here is not that the function $f(b)$ itself is increasing (in general it is not), but that its (discrete) derivative is increasing, that is, it is a discrete convex function. To prove the claim note that

$$f(b + 1) - f(b) = n - 2s + 2b - [t(2s - b + 1, k) - t(2s - b, k)]$$

When b increases by 1, the term $(n - 2s + 2b)$ increases by 2, and the term

$$t(2s - b + 1, k) - t(2s - b, k)$$

can only decrease (as it is the difference in the total size of the largest $k - 1$ classes among the k nearly equal classes of the corresponding Turán graphs, and this quantity can only decrease (by at most 1) when decreasing the number of vertices $2s - b$ by 1). This shows that $f(b+1) - f(b)$ is increasing in the range above. Therefore, if $f(b)$ obtains a maximum at some $b > 0$ in this range, that is, $f(b) \geq f(b-1)$, then it must be that the maximum is obtained at the largest possible b in this range, which is $b = s - \lfloor s/(k-1\rfloor + 1$. But this is covered by Case 3, completing the proof. □

3 Extension

It may be interesting to extend Theorem 1.1 by replacing the forbidden clique K_{k+1} by other forbidden subgraphs. This means to determine the maximum possible number of edges of an H-free graph on n vertices with matching number at most s. Recall that a graph H is color-critical if it contains an edge whose deletion decreases its chromatic number. It is not difficult to prove the following, combining the initial part of our proof here with the known result of Simonovits [3] about the Turán numbers of color-critical graphs. Here we include a slightly simpler proof which avoids the application of the Tutte-Berge or the Gallai-Edmonds Theorems.

Proposition 3.1. *For every fixed color-critical graph H of chromatic number $k+1 > 2$, any $s > s_0(H)$ and any $n > n_0(s)$, the maximum possible number of edges of an H-free graph on n vertices with matching number at most s is $g(n,k,s)$.*

Proof. The graph $G(n,k,s)$ described before the statement of the main theorem is k chromatic and hence H-free. Since its matching number is s this implies that the number of edges of this graph, which is $g(n,k,s)$, is a lower bound for the maximum considered in the proposition. To prove the upper bound, let H, k, s be as above and let G be an H-free graph on n vertices with matching number at most s having the maximum possible number of edges. Assume, further, that s is sufficiently large as a function of H and that n is sufficiently large as a function of s.

Note, first, that G cannot contain more than s vertices of degrees exceeding $2s$. Indeed, otherwise let $\{x_1, x_2, \ldots x_{s+1}\}$ be $s+1$ such vertices. For each x_i, in order, let y_i be an arbitrarily chosen neighbour of x_i which differs from all x_j and all previously chosen y_j. As there are only $s+i-1 \leq 2s$ such forbidden vertices (we do not have to count the vertex x_i itself) there is always a choice for y_i. This gives a matching of size $s+1$, contradicting the assumption.

Let X be the set of all vertices of degree exceeding $2s$. By the paragraph above $|X| \leq s$. Put $Y = V - X$. In the induced subgraph of G on Y every degree is at most $2s$ and there is no matching of size $s+1$, hence by Vizing's Theorem the number of vertices in this induced subgraph is at most $(2s+1)s$. As the total number of edges incident with the vertices in X is smaller than $|X|n$ (with room to spare) it follows that if $|X| < s$ then the number of edges of G is smaller than $(s-1)n + 2(s+1)s$. This is smaller than $g(n,k,s)$ for n exceeding, say, $3s^2$ (we make no attempt to optimize $n_0(s)$), showing that we may assume that $|X| = s$.

We claim that $Y = V - X$ is an independent set in G. Indeed, if it contains an edge z_1z_2 we can, as before, use the fact that the degree of each vertex of X exceeds $2s$ to pick distinct $y_i \in Y - \{z_1, z_2\}$ so that x_iy_i is an edge for each i, contradicting again the assumption about the matching number. Thus Y is indeed independent.

Let Z be an arbitrary subset of $Y = V - X$ of size $m = \lfloor s/(k-1) \rfloor$. By the result of Simonovits, for $s > s_0(H)$ the induced subgraph of G on $X \cup Z$ contains at most $t(s+m, k)$ edges. In addition, all other edges of G are incident with the vertices of X, as Y is independent. Therefore, the total number of edges of G is at most the number of edges of the graph obtained from the Turán graph $T_{s+m,k}$ on a set $X \cup Z$ of $s+m$ vertices in which Z is (one of) the smallest vertex classes by adding to it an independent set of size $n - s - m$ and by connecting each of its vertices to the s vertices of X. It is easy to see that this graph is isomorphic to the graph $G(n, k, s)$, completing the proof. $\square$

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