

# The modular product and existential closure II

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## Abstract

In this article we study the modular graph product,  $\diamond$ , that is known to preserve the property of being 3-existentially closed (i.e., 3-e.c.). We produce new families of 3-e.c. graphs  $G\diamond H$  such that neither  $G$  nor  $H$  is required to be 3-e.c. Assuming that  $G$  is weakly 3-existentially closed with certain adjacency properties, we find the sufficient conditions on the adjacency properties of  $H$  such that  $G\diamond H$  is 3-e.c. The graph  $G$  can have as few as four vertices, and it is settled in this article that  $H$  can have as few as 24 vertices. These altogether present an improvement in comparison to when at least one of  $G$  or  $H$  were required to be 3-e.c.

## 1 Introduction

A graph  $G$  with vertex set  $V(G)$  is said to be  $n$ -existentially closed, or  $n$ -e.c., if for each  $S \subset V(G)$  with  $|S| = n$  and each subset  $T$  of  $S$ , there exists some vertex  $x \in V(G) \setminus S$  that is adjacent to each vertex in  $T$  but to none of the vertices in  $S \setminus T$ . Although the property is straightforward to define, it is not easy to find  $n$ -e.c. graphs. Since the property was introduced in 1963 [11], only a handful of classes of finite graphs have been shown to be  $n$ -e.c. for arbitrary (but fixed) values of  $n$ . The countably infinite random graph is known to be  $n$ -e.c. for every positive integer  $n$  [11].

Sufficiently large Paley graphs were the first families that were discovered to contain  $n$ -e.c. members for every  $n$  [6]. Since then, the search for  $n$ -e.c. graphs has led to a few families of such graphs. Cameron and Stark [9] have presented a family of strongly regular  $n$ -e.c. graphs. Also, Hadamard matrices and combinatorial structures such as affine planes, resolvable designs, Steiner triple systems, balanced

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incomplete block designs, and infinite combinatorial designs have been used to construct  $n$ -e.c. graphs [4, 5, 13, 15, 16, 17].

Even for  $n = 3$ , it is not easy to find explicit examples of  $n$ -e.c. graphs. Every 3-e.c. graph has at least 24 vertices and examples of 3-e.c. graphs of order 28 have been found [7, 14]. New 3-e.c. graphs of order  $16m^2$  were constructed from Hadamard matrices of order  $4m$  with odd  $m > 1$  [8]. Baker et al. presented new 3-e.c. graphs arising from affine planes [3]. Most recently, another construction of 3-e.c. graphs of order at least  $p^d$  for prime  $p \geq 7$  and  $d \geq 5$  was presented [19]. Also, the only two Steiner triple systems with 3-e.c. block intersection graphs were identified [10, 13].

Binary graph operations can be used to construct more examples of 3-e.c. graphs. Bonato and Cameron examined several common binary graph operations to see which operations preserve the  $n$ -e.c. property for  $n \geq 1$ . Although a few of the operations are 2-e.c. preserving, only the symmetric difference of two 3-e.c. graphs is a 3-e.c. graph [7]. Baker et al. subsequently introduced another graph construction which is 3-e.c. preserving [3].

In [18], the operation introduced in [3] was formulated as the non-commutative modular graph product denoted by  $\diamond$ , and the necessary and sufficient conditions were found for the graph  $G \diamond H$  to be 3-e.c., given that  $H$  is a 3-e.c. graph. This operation then was used to construct new classes of 3-e.c. graphs of the form  $G \diamond H$  when  $G$  is not necessarily 3-e.c. and can have as few as four vertices. In this present article, we will use the modular graph product as described in [18] to construct new 3-e.c. graphs such that none of the graphs  $G$  and  $H$  used to construct the 3-e.c. graph  $G \diamond H$  is necessarily 3-e.c. Assuming that  $G$  is a weakly 3-existentially closed graph with prescribed adjacency properties, we find exactly what adjacencies are required for  $H$  such that  $G \diamond H$  is 3-e.c.; such graphs are called pseudo 3-existentially closed. The graph  $G$  can have as few as four vertices and  $H$  can be as small as  $18 \leq |V(H)| \leq 24$ .

## 2 Terminology and Preliminary Results

We will use the same terminology as was used in [18] which we review briefly here. We define the modular product of two graphs  $G$  and  $H$ ,  $G \diamond H$ , to be the graph with vertex set  $V(G) \times V(H)$  in which two vertices  $(x, u)$  and  $(y, v)$  are adjacent if

- (a)  $xy \in E(G)$  and  $uv \in E(H)$ , or
- (b)  $xy \notin E(G)$  and  $uv \notin E(H)$ .

Unless stated otherwise, we shall assume that  $G$  has a loop at each vertex. When describing  $G \diamond H$ , for each vertex  $x \in V(G)$  let  $H_x$  be the subgraph of  $G \diamond H$  that is isomorphic to  $H$  and consists of all vertices  $(x, u)$  where  $u \in V(H)$ . Since the vertices of  $H_x$  can be considered to be indexed by  $x \in V(G)$ , we will use  $u_x$  to denote the vertex  $(x, u)$ . Two vertices  $u_x \in H_x$  and  $v_y \in H_y$  will be said to be congruent if  $u = v$ ; otherwise they are incongruent.

Baker et al. showed that the modular product produces a 3-e.c. graph if applied on two 3-existentially closed graphs.

**Theorem 2.1** [3] *If the graphs  $G$  and  $H$  are both 3-e.c., then the graph  $G \diamond H$  is also 3-e.c.*

For a graph  $G$ , given a set  $S \subset V(G)$  and a subset  $T$  of  $S$ , we say a vertex  $x \in V(G) \setminus S$  is a  $T$ -solution with respect to  $S$  if  $x$  is adjacent to every vertex in  $T$  and to none in  $S \setminus T$ . The graph  $G$  is then  $n$ -e.c. if for any  $n$ -set  $S \subset V(G)$  there is a  $T$ -solution for each  $T \in P(S)$  where  $P(S)$  denotes the power set of  $S$ .

A graph  $G$  is said to be weakly  $n$ -existentially closed, or  $n$ -w.e.c., if for any  $n$ -set  $S \subset V(G)$  and any  $T \subseteq S$ , there exists a vertex in  $V(G)$  that is adjacent to each vertex in  $T$  and to no vertex in  $S \setminus T$ , or there exists a vertex in  $V(G)$  that is adjacent to each vertex in  $S \setminus T$  and to no vertex in  $T$  [18]. The following characterisation theorem enables the construction of new families of 3-e.c. graphs using the modular product applied on a 3-e.c. graph and a 3-w.e.c. graph:

**Theorem 2.2** [18] *Let  $G$  be a graph with  $|V(G)| \geq 4$  and with loops at every vertex of  $V(G)$  and let  $H$  be a 3-e.c. graph. The graph  $G$  is 3-w.e.c. if and only if  $G \diamond H$  is 3-e.c.*

For a graph  $G$  and a vertex  $x \in V(G)$  we define  $N(x) = \{y \in V(G) \mid xy \in E(G)\}$  and  $N[x] = N(x) \cup \{x\}$ , and for a set  $X$  of vertices we let  $N(X) = \bigcup_{x \in X} N(x)$ ,  $N'(X) = \bigcap_{x \in X} N(x)$ ,  $N[X] = \bigcup_{x \in X} N[x]$ , and  $N'[X] = \bigcap_{x \in X} N[x]$ . It is clear that if  $G$  has a loop at each vertex, then  $N[x] = N(x)$ . To avoid confusion, we may use  $N_G$  to show that the neighbourhood is in graph  $G$ . By  $G[X]$  we mean the subgraph of  $G$  induced by the set  $X \subset V(G)$ . With these notations, a graph  $G$  is 3-w.e.c. if for every 3-subset  $A \subset V(G)$ , the following hold:

- (1)  $N'[A] \neq \emptyset$  or  $V(G) \setminus N[A] \neq \emptyset$ , and
- (2) for every vertex  $t \in A$ ,  $N[t] \setminus N[A \setminus \{t\}] \neq \emptyset$  or  $N'[A \setminus \{t\}] \setminus N[t] \neq \emptyset$ .

In the next section, we apply the modular product to produce a 3-e.c. graph while none of the graphs in the operation is necessarily 3-e.c.; one of the graphs is 3-w.e.c.

### 3 New Families of 3-existentially Closed Graphs

We begin this section by introducing some new terminology. We call a graph  $H$  pseudo  $n$ -existentially closed, or  $n$ -p.e.c., if for any  $n$ -subset  $Y \subset V(H)$  the following hold:

- Ⓐ  $V(H) \setminus N[Y] \neq \emptyset$ ,
- Ⓑ  $N'(Y) \neq \emptyset$ , and
- Ⓒ for every vertex  $r \in Y$ ,  $N(r) \setminus N[Y \setminus \{r\}] \neq \emptyset$ .

In this article we focus on the 3-p.e.c. property. Note that the notation p.e.c. has previously been used by Andrzejczak and Gordinowicz to denote a concept called perturbed existential closure [2].

**Lemma 3.1** *If  $H$  is a 3-p.e.c. graph, then  $H$  has no isolated and no universal vertices.*

**Proof** Let  $u \in V(H)$ . By  $\textcircled{A}$  there is a vertex non-adjacent to  $u$  and by  $\textcircled{B}$  there is a vertex adjacent to  $u$ . ■

The following theorem ensures that we can construct a 3-e.c. graph by applying the modular product on a 3-w.e.c. graph and a 3-p.e.c. graph.

**Theorem 3.1** *For two graphs  $G$  and  $H$ ,  $G \diamond H$  is 3-e.c. if  $H$  is a 3-p.e.c. graph and  $G$  is a 3-w.e.c. graph such that for each set of three vertices  $X = \{x, y, z\} \subset V(G)$ :*

- ①  $N'[X] \neq \emptyset$ , and
- ② for every vertex  $t \in X$ ,  $N'[X \setminus \{t\}] \setminus N[t] \neq \emptyset$ .

**Proof** Note that neither  $G$  nor  $H$  have an isolated or a universal vertex. To show that  $G \diamond H$  is 3-e.c., for an arbitrary 3-set  $S = \{u_x, v_y, w_z\} \subset V(G \diamond H)$  we find a  $T$ -solution for each  $T \in P(S)$ . Let  $X = \{x, y, z\} \subset V(G)$  and  $Y = \{u, v, w\} \subset V(H)$ ; hence  $1 \leq |X|, |Y| \leq 3$ . We consider the three possible values of  $|X|$  in separate cases. When considering  $|X| \in \{2, 3\}$ , there are two scenarios: either  $S$  includes some congruent vertices, or the vertices of  $S$  are all incongruent.

**Case 1.** If  $|X| = 1$ , say  $X = \{x\}$ , by  $\textcircled{A}$  if  $r \in V(H) \setminus N[Y]$ , then  $r_x$  is an  $\emptyset$ -solution and by  $\textcircled{B}$  if  $r \in N'(Y)$ , then  $r_x$  is an  $S$ -solution. Let  $a \in V(G)$  be a vertex non-adjacent to  $x$ . By  $\textcircled{C}$  if  $s \in N(u) \setminus N[Y \setminus \{u\}]$ , then  $s_x$  is a  $\{u_x\}$ -solution and  $s_a$  is a  $\{v_x, w_x\}$ -solution. Similarly we can find  $T$ -solutions for  $T \in \{\{v_x\}, \{u_x, w_x\}, \{w_x\}, \{u_x, v_x\}\}$ .

**Case 2.** Suppose that  $|X| = 2$  and  $S = \{u_x, v_y, w_y\}$ .

**Case 2.a.** First assume that the vertices of  $S$  are incongruent. For  $T \in \{\emptyset, S\}$ , by  $\textcircled{1}$  if  $a \in N'[X]$ , then by  $\textcircled{A}$  if  $s \in V(H) \setminus N[Y]$ , then  $s_a$  is an  $\emptyset$ -solution, and by  $\textcircled{B}$  if  $s \in N'(Y)$ , then  $s_a$  an  $S$ -solution. By  $\textcircled{C}$ , if  $s \in N(u) \setminus N[\{v, w\}]$  then  $s_a$  is a  $\{u_x\}$ -solution, and if  $s \in N(v) \setminus N[\{u, w\}]$  then  $s_a$  is a  $\{v_y\}$ -solution, and if  $s \in N(w) \setminus N[\{u, v\}]$  then  $s_a$  is a  $\{w_y\}$ -solution. Also, by  $\textcircled{2}$  if  $a \in N[y] \setminus N[x]$  and if by  $\textcircled{C}$   $s \in N(v) \setminus N[\{u, w\}]$ , then  $s_a$  is a  $\{u_x, v_y\}$ -solution. Similarly we can find a  $\{u_x, w_y\}$ -solution. To find a  $\{v_y, w_y\}$ -solution, note that by  $\textcircled{2}$  if  $a \in N'[x] \setminus N[y]$  and by  $\textcircled{A}$  if  $s \in V(H) \setminus N[Y]$ , then  $s_a$  is such a solution.

**Case 2.b.** If  $S = \{u_x, u_y, w_y\}$  such that  $u_x$  and  $u_y$  are congruent, then similar to the Case 2.a. we can find a  $T$ -solution for  $T \in \{\emptyset, S\}$ . By  $\textcircled{2}$  if  $a \in N[x] \setminus N[y]$ , then by  $\textcircled{A}$  if  $s \in V(H) \setminus N[Y]$ , then  $s_a$  is a  $\{u_y, w_y\}$ -solution and by  $\textcircled{B}$  if  $s \in N'(Y)$ , then  $s_a$  is a  $\{u_x\}$ -solution. Also, by  $\textcircled{C}$  if  $s \in N(u) \setminus N[w]$ , then  $s_a$  is a  $\{u_x, w_y\}$ -solution. By  $\textcircled{C}$  if  $s \in N(w) \setminus N[u]$ , then  $s_a$  is a  $\{u_y\}$ -solution. Also, by  $\textcircled{1}$  if  $a \in N'[X]$  and

by  $\textcircled{C}$  if  $s \in N(u) \setminus N[w]$ , then  $s_a$  is a  $\{u_x, u_y\}$ -solution, and if  $s \in N(w) \setminus N[u]$  by  $\textcircled{C}$ , then  $s_a$  is a  $\{w_y\}$ -solution.

**Case 3.** Suppose that  $|X| = 3$  and  $S = \{u_x, v_y, w_z\}$  consists of three vertices (possibly congruent) of  $G \diamond H$ . By  $\textcircled{1}$  and  $\textcircled{2}$ , let  $a, b \in V(G)$  be two vertices such that  $a \in N'[X]$  and  $b \in N'[\{y, z\}] \setminus N[x]$ . By  $\textcircled{A}$  if  $s \in V(H) \setminus N[Y]$ , then  $s_a$  is an  $\emptyset$ -solution, and by  $\textcircled{B}$  if  $s \in N'(Y)$ , then  $s_a$  is an  $S$ -solution. By  $\textcircled{A}$  if  $s \in V(H) \setminus N[Y]$ , then  $s_b$  is a  $\{u_x\}$ -solution and by  $\textcircled{B}$  if  $s \in N'(Y)$  then  $s_b$  is a  $\{v_y, w_z\}$ -solution. By a similar argument we can find  $T$ -solutions for  $T \in \{\{v_y\}, \{u_x, w_z\}, \{w_z\}, \{u_x, v_y\}\}$ .

Since  $s \notin Y$ , the proposed solutions are in  $V(G \diamond H) \setminus S$ , and so  $G \diamond H$  is proved to be 3-e.c. ■

**Remark.** If  $H$  is a graph that satisfies  $\textcircled{A}$ ,  $\textcircled{B}$  and  $\textcircled{C}$ , then its complement  $\overline{H}$  is a graph for which for any 3-set  $Y$  of vertices,  $\textcircled{A}$  and  $\textcircled{B}$  are satisfied and also “for every  $r \in Y$ ,  $N'_{\overline{H}}(Y \setminus \{r\}) \setminus N_{\overline{H}}[r] \neq \emptyset$ ”. Since  $\overline{G \diamond H} = G \diamond \overline{H}$ , then Theorem 3.1 still holds if we replace  $\textcircled{C}$  by  $\textcircled{C}'$  below.

$\textcircled{C}'$  for every vertex  $r \in Y$ ,  $N'_{\overline{H}}(Y \setminus \{r\}) \setminus N[r] \neq \emptyset$ .

**Remark.** Note that  $C_4$  satisfies  $\textcircled{1}$  and  $\textcircled{2}$ . So, it remains to find a graph satisfying properties  $\textcircled{A}$ ,  $\textcircled{B}$  and  $\textcircled{C}$ ; such a graph has at least eight vertices.

### 4 Minimum Order Pseudo 3-existentially Closed Graphs

In this section we will find a lower bound on the minimum order of a 3-p.e.c. graph  $H$ . A graph  $G$  is said to have property  $P(m, n, k)$ ,  $G \in \mathcal{G}(m, n, k)$ , if for any set of  $m + n$  distinct vertices there are at least  $k$  vertices each of which is adjacent to  $m$  first vertices but not adjacent to any of the latter  $n$  vertices [1]. For example  $C_\ell \in \mathcal{G}(1, 1, 1)$  for any  $\ell \geq 5$ . Exoo and Harary studied the class of  $\mathcal{G}(1, n, 1)$  and established that the Petersen graph is the smallest member of  $\mathcal{G}(1, 2, 1)$  and any other graph in  $\mathcal{G}(1, 2, 1)$  has at least 12 vertices [12]. Obviously, a 3-p.e.c. graph  $H$  is contained in  $\mathcal{G}(1, 2, 1)$  and it is easy to see that the Petersen graph is not 3-p.e.c. As a result, any graph that is 3-p.e.c. must have at least 12 vertices.

For an arbitrary vertex  $u \in V(H)$ , we let  $N_u = H[N(u)]$  and  $N'_u = H[N^c(u)]$  where  $N^c(u) = V(H) \setminus N[u]$ . Theorems 4.1 and 4.2 below give lower bounds on  $|V(N_u)|$  and  $|V(N'_u)|$  which will give a lower bound on the order of a 3-p.e.c. graph. First we start with  $N_u$ .

**Lemma 4.1** *Let  $H$  be a 3-p.e.c. graph and  $u \in V(H)$ . The graph  $N_u = H[N(u)]$  is connected and for every pair of vertices  $v$  and  $w$  of  $N_u$  there are two additional vertices  $p, q \in V(N_u)$  such that:*

(I)  $p$  is adjacent to both  $v$  and  $w$ , and

(II)  $q$  is adjacent to neither  $v$  nor  $w$ .

**Proof** Consider the 3-set  $S = \{u, v, w\}$  in  $H$ . By  $\mathbb{B}$ , there is a vertex  $p$  adjacent to all the vertices in  $S$  ( $p \in V(N_u)$ ), and by  $\mathbb{C}$ , there is vertex  $q$  that is adjacent to  $u$  and is not adjacent to  $v$  or  $w$  ( $q \in V(N_u)$ ). In order to show that  $N_u$  is connected, note that every two vertices of  $N_u$  are adjacent, or by (I) there is a path of length two that connects them. ■

**Corollary 4.1** *If  $G$  is a graph such that  $|V(G)| \geq 4$  and for any pair of vertices  $v, w \in V(G)$  there are two additional vertices  $p, q \in V(G)$  such that the adjacency properties (I) and (II) hold, then:*

- (i)  $G$  is of diameter at most two (and so connected),
- (ii)  $G$  has no universal vertices,
- (iii) every vertex and edge of  $G$  is contained on some triangle,
- (iv)  $\overline{G}$  is a graph such that for any pair of vertices  $v, w \in V(\overline{G})$  there are two additional vertices  $p$  and  $q$  such that the adjacency properties (I) and (II) hold.
- (v) if  $x \in V(G)$ , then  $|N(x)| \geq 2$  and  $|N^c(x)| \geq 2$  (hence  $|V(G)| \geq 5$ ), and

**Lemma 4.2** *If  $G$  is a graph such that for any pair of vertices  $v, w \in V(G)$  there are two additional vertices  $p$  and  $q$  such that the adjacency properties (I) and (II) hold, then  $\delta(G) \geq 3$  and  $\Delta(G) \leq |V(G)| - 4$ .*

**Proof** (By contradiction.) Let  $x \in V(G)$  with  $\deg_G(x) = 2$ . The vertex  $x$  is on some triangle; say  $xyz$ . Since  $|V(G)| \geq 5$ , we have  $|V(G) \setminus \{x, y, z\}| \geq 2$ . The distance between  $x$  and each vertex in  $V(G) \setminus \{x, y, z\}$  is two. Hence, one of  $y$  or  $z$ , say  $y$ , is adjacent to at least  $\lceil \frac{|V(G)|-3}{2} \rceil$  of the vertices in  $V(G) \setminus \{x, y, z\}$  and  $z$  is adjacent to the rest of the vertices in  $V(G) \setminus \{x, y, z\}$  (in other words  $V(G) \setminus \{x, y, z\} \subset N(y) \cup N(z)$ ). This means that there is no vertex that is adjacent to neither  $y$  nor  $z$  which is a contradiction and therefore  $\delta(G) \geq 3$ .

Now we prove that  $\Delta(G) \leq |V(G)| - 4$ . For  $x \in V(G)$ , by Corollary 4.1 (iv) we have  $\deg_{\overline{G}}(x) \geq 3$ . Knowing that  $\deg_G(x) + \deg_{\overline{G}}(x) = |V(G)| - 1$ , we conclude that  $\deg_G(x) \leq |V(G)| - 4$ . ■

**Corollary 4.2** *If  $G$  is a graph such that for any pair of vertices  $v, w \in V(G)$  there are two additional vertices  $p$  and  $q$  such that the adjacency properties (I) and (II) hold, then  $|V(G)| \geq 7$ .*

Now we are ready to get the following theorem:

**Theorem 4.1** *If  $G$  is the smallest graph that for any pair of vertices  $v, w \in V(G)$  there are two additional vertices  $p$  and  $q$  such that the adjacency properties (I) and (II) hold, then  $|V(G)| = 9$ .*

**Proof** Every 2-e.c. graph has at least nine vertices (the Paley graph on nine vertices is, up to isomorphism, the smallest 2-e.c. graph [7]), and it satisfies the conditions of the theorem. So  $7 \leq |V(G)| \leq 9$  by Corollary 4.2. Now we exclude the cases  $|V(G)| \in \{7, 8\}$ .

**Case  $|V(G)| = 7$ :** Let  $x \in V(G)$ . By Lemma 4.2,  $\deg_G(x) = 3$  and  $G$  is 3-regular. This is a contradiction as the number of odd vertices must be even.

**Case  $|V(G)| = 8$ :** Let  $x \in V(G)$ . By Lemma 4.2,  $\deg_G(x) \in \{3, 4\}$ , and so  $G$  is 3-regular, 4-regular or has vertices of both degrees 3 and 4. We first show that  $G$  cannot be regular.

Suppose that  $G$  is 3-regular. Let  $x \in V(G)$  and assume that  $N(x) = \{y, z, t\}$ . Since there is a vertex that is adjacent to both  $x$  and  $y$ , there is a vertex adjacent to both  $x$  and  $z$ , and there is a vertex adjacent to both  $x$  and  $t$ , the only possibility is that without loss of generality, we assume that  $\{yz, yt\} \subset E(G)$ . Since  $G$  is 3-regular,  $N(y) = \{x, z, t\}$ . Now,  $|V(G) \setminus \{x, y, z, t\}| = 4$  and  $d_G(x, i) = 2$  for each  $i \in V(G) \setminus \{x, y, z, t\}$  by Corollary 4.1 (i). This implies that  $\deg_G(z) \geq 4$  or  $\deg_G(t) \geq 4$ . This is a contradiction as  $G$  is supposed to be 3-regular. Since  $G$  cannot be 3-regular,  $G$  cannot be 4-regular either (by Corollary 4.1 (iv)).

Now we show that  $G$  cannot be a graph having vertices of both degrees 3 and 4. To the contrary, assume that  $G$  has vertices of degrees 3 and 4, and let  $a$  be a vertex of degree 3 and  $N(a) = \{b, c, d\}$ . By Corollary 4.1 (iii), the edge  $ab$  is on some triangle, without loss of generality, say  $abc$ . Similarly, the edge  $ad$  is also on some triangle, say  $adc$  (without loss of generality). By (II), there is a vertex adjacent to neither  $b$  nor  $c$ . This must be a fifth vertex  $e$ . Since there is a path of length two that joins  $e$  to  $a$ ,  $e$  must be adjacent to  $d$ . Now since the edge  $ed$  is on a triangle and  $e$  is not adjacent to any of  $a, b$  or  $c$ , this must be  $def$  for a sixth vertex  $f$ . The vertex  $d$  now has the maximum possible degree 4. Letting  $g$  be the seventh vertex, we must have that  $g$  is adjacent to  $b$  or  $c$  to have a path of length two to  $a$ .

As the first case, assume that  $g$  is adjacent to  $c$ . By (II), there is a vertex adjacent to neither  $c$  nor  $e$ ; this must be the last vertex  $h$ . Since  $d$  and  $c$  both have the maximum possible degree 4, we must have that  $h$  is adjacent to  $b$  in order to get the path of length two to  $a$  guaranteed by (I). Now note that  $h$  is not adjacent to any of  $a, c, d$  or  $e$ . As  $h$  has degree (at least) three, it must be adjacent to  $b, f$  and  $g$ . But now there is no vertex adjacent to neither  $d$  nor  $h$ , contradicting (II).

The only other case is when  $g$  is adjacent to  $b$ . By (II), there is a vertex adjacent to neither  $b$  nor  $e$ . This must be the last vertex  $h$  which must now be adjacent to  $c$  to get a path of length two to  $a$ . Now, as  $h$  is not adjacent to any of  $a, b, d$  or  $e$ , it must be adjacent to  $c, f$  and  $g$  as it has degree at least 3. Now there is no vertex which is adjacent to neither  $d$  nor  $g$ , contradicting (II).

So, the smallest graph satisfying (I) and (II) has nine vertices. ■

By Lemma 4.1 and Theorem 4.1, it follows that:

**Corollary 4.3**  $|V(N_u)| \geq 9$ .

Now we proceed to find a lower bound on the order of the graph  $N'_u$ .

**Lemma 4.3** *If  $G$  is a 3-p.e.c. graph and  $u \in V(G)$ , then  $N'_u = H[N^c(u)]$  has the property that for each pair of vertices  $v, w \in V(N'_u)$ , there are three more vertices  $p, q, r \in V(N'_u)$  such that:*

(I')  $p$  is adjacent to  $v$  and not adjacent to  $w$ ,

(II')  $q$  is adjacent to  $w$  and not adjacent to  $v$ ,

(III')  $r$  is adjacent to neither  $v$  nor  $w$ .

**Proof** Similar to the proof of Lemma 4.1. ■

**Corollary 4.4** *If  $G$  is a graph such that for any pair of vertices  $v$  and  $w$  there are three vertices  $p, q$  and  $r$  such that (I'), (II') and (III') hold, then:*

(i')  $G$  has no isolated or universal vertices,

(ii') if  $u \in V(G)$ , then  $|N(u)| \geq 2$  and  $|N^c(u)| \geq 3$  (hence  $|V(G)| \geq 6$ ).

**Theorem 4.2** *If  $G$  is the smallest graph such that for any pair of vertices  $v$  and  $w$  there are three vertices  $p, q$  and  $r$  such that (I'), (II') and (III') hold, then  $|V(G)| = 7$ .*

**Proof** By Corollary 4.4 (ii'),  $|V(G)| \geq 6$  and if  $|V(G)| = 6$ , then  $G$  is 2-regular and hence  $G \in \{C_6, C_3 \cup C_3\}$ . But, none of these graphs satisfy properties (I'), (II') and (III'). It can be easily seen that  $C_7$  is a graph in which for any pair of vertices  $v$  and  $w$  there are three vertices  $p, q$  and  $r$  such that (I'), (II') and (III') hold. ■

By Lemma 4.3 and Theorem 4.2, it follows that:

**Corollary 4.5**  $|V(N'_u)| \geq 7$ .

**Corollary 4.6** *A 3-p.e.c. graph has at least 18 vertices.*

**Proof** Suppose  $H$  is a 3-p.e.c. graph and  $u \in V(H)$ . By Corollaries 4.3 and 4.5,  $|N(u)| \geq 9$  and  $|N^c(u)| \geq 7$ . So,  $|V(H)| \geq 17$ . Consider a 3-p.e.c. graph  $H$  on 17 vertices. Since  $|N(u)| = 9$  and  $|N^c(u)| = 7$ ,  $H$  must be a 9-regular graph on 17 vertices which is impossible. So,  $|V(H)| \geq 18$ . ■

Note that any 3-e.c. graph is also 3-p.e.c., and observe that the smallest 3-e.c. graph has between 24 and 28 vertices [7, 14]. The graph in Figure 1 is a 3-p.e.c. graph on 24 vertices which is found by a computer search among the strongly regular graphs with at least 18 and at most 27 vertices; the adjacency list of this graph is given in Appendix A. Consequently, the smallest 3-p.e.c. graph has order between 18 and 24.

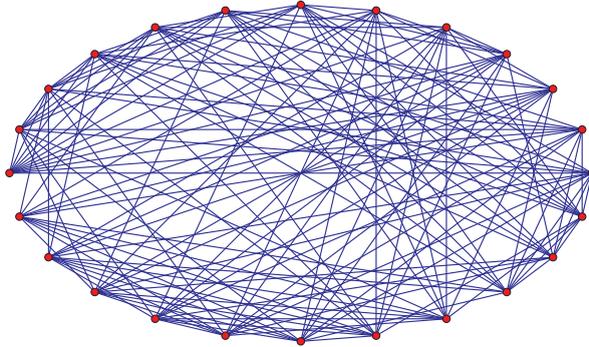


Figure 1: An example of a 3-p.e.c. graph on 24 vertices.

## 5 Discussion

In the statement of Theorem 3.1, we have considered a special class of 3-w.e.c. graphs, i.e., those that satisfy the conditions of the statement of the theorem. One may consider the other classes of 3-w.e.c. graphs  $G$  and determine the sufficient adjacency properties of  $H$  such that  $G \diamond H$  is 3-e.c.

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## Appendix: Adjacency List of a 3-p.e.c. Graph

Here is the adjacency list of the 3-p.e.c. graph presented in Figure 1.

- 1 : 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13
- 2 : 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 16, 22, 23, 24
- 3 : 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 17, 22, 23, 24
- 4 : 1, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 18, 19, 22, 23, 24
- 5 : 1, 2, 3, 8, 11, 14, 15, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22
- 6 : 1, 2, 3, 10, 12, 14, 15, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23
- 7 : 1, 2, 3, 9, 13, 14, 15, 18, 19, 20, 21, 24
- 8 : 1, 2, 4, 5, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 22
- 9 : 1, 2, 4, 7, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 23

10 : 1, 2, 4, 6, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 24  
 11 : 1, 3, 4, 5, 10, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 21, 24  
 12 : 1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 21, 23  
 13 : 1, 3, 4, 7, 9, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 21, 22  
 14 : 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 17, 19, 20  
 15 : 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 18, 21  
 16 : 2, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 21, 22, 23, 24  
 17 : 3, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 20, 22, 23, 24  
 18 : 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 15, 19, 22, 23, 24  
 19 : 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 14, 18, 22, 23, 24  
 20 : 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 14, 17, 21, 22, 23, 24  
 21 : 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 20, 22, 23, 24  
 22 : 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21  
 23 : 2, 3, 4, 6, 9, 12, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21  
 24 : 2, 3, 4, 7, 10, 11, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21

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