

Model Independent Approach of the JUNO ^8B Solar Neutrino Program

Jie Zhao¹¹, Baobiao Yue²¹, Haoqi Lu¹¹, Yufeng Li^{*11}, Jiajie Ling^{†21}, Zeyuan Yu¹¹, Angel Abusleme^{6,5}, Thomas Adam⁴⁶, Shakeel Ahmad⁶⁷, Rizwan Ahmed⁶⁷, Sebastiano Aiello⁵⁶, Muhammad Akram⁶⁷, Abid Aleem⁶⁷, Tsagkarakis Alexandros⁴⁹, Fengpeng An³⁰, Qi An²³, Giuseppe Andronico⁵⁶, Nikolay Anfimov⁶⁸, Vito Antonelli⁵⁸, Tatiana Antoshkina⁶⁸, Burin Asavapibhop⁷², João Pedro Athayde Marcondes de André⁴⁶, Didier Auguste⁴⁴, Weidong Bai²¹, Nikita Balashov⁶⁸, Wander Baldini⁵⁷, Andrea Barresi⁵⁹, Davide Basilico⁵⁸, Eric Baussan⁴⁶, Marco Bellato⁶¹, Antonio Bergnoli⁶¹, Thilo Birkenfeld⁴⁹, Sylvie Blin⁴⁴, David Blum⁵⁵, Simon Blyth¹¹, Anastasia Bolshakova⁶⁸, Mathieu Bongrand⁴⁸, Clément Bordereau^{45,41}, Dominique Breton⁴⁴, Augusto Brigatti⁵⁸, Riccardo Brugnera⁶², Riccardo Bruno⁵⁶, Antonio Budano⁶⁵, Jose Busto⁴⁷, Ilya Butorov⁶⁸, Anatael Cabrera⁴⁴, Barbara Caccianiga⁵⁸, Hao Cai³⁵, Xiao Cai¹¹, Yanke Cai¹¹, Zhiyan Cai¹¹, Riccardo Callegari⁶², Antonio Cammi⁶⁰, Agustin Campeny⁶, Chuanya Cao¹¹, Guofu Cao¹¹, Jun Cao¹¹, Rossella Caruso⁵⁶, Cédric Cerna⁴⁵, Chi Chan³⁹, Jinfan Chang¹¹, Yun Chang⁴⁰, Guoming Chen²⁹, Pingping Chen¹⁹, Po-An Chen⁴¹, Shaomin Chen¹⁴, Xurong Chen²⁷, Yixue Chen¹², Yu Chen²¹, Zhiyuan Chen¹¹, Zikang Chen²¹, Jie Cheng¹², Yaping Cheng⁸, Alexander Chepurinov⁷⁰, Alexey Chetverikov⁶⁸, Davide Chiesa⁵⁹, Pietro Chimenti³, Artem Chukanov⁶⁸, Gérard Claverie⁴⁵, Catia Clementi⁶³, Barbara Clerbaux², Marta Colomer Molla², Selma Conforti Di Lorenzo⁴⁵, Daniele Corti⁶¹, Flavio Dal Corso⁶¹, Olivia Dalager⁷⁵, Christophe De La Taille⁴⁵, Zhi Deng¹⁴, Ziyang Deng¹¹, Wilfried Depnering⁵², Marco Diaz⁶, Xuefeng Ding⁵⁸, Yayun Ding¹¹, Bayu Dirgantara⁷⁴, Sergey Dmitrievsky⁶⁸, Tadeas Dohnal⁴², Dmitry Dolzhikov⁶⁸, Georgy Donchenko⁷⁰, Jianmeng Dong¹⁴, Evgeny Doroshkevich⁶⁹, Marcos Dracos⁴⁶, Frédéric Druillolle⁴⁵, Ran Du¹¹, Shuxian Du³⁸, Stefano Dusini⁶¹, Martin Dvorak⁴², Timo Enqvist⁴³, Heike Enzmann⁵², Andrea Fabbri⁶⁵, Donghua Fan²⁵, Lei Fan¹¹, Jian Fang¹¹, Wenxing Fang¹¹, Marco Fargetta⁵⁶, Dmitry Fedoseev⁶⁸, Zhengyong Fei¹¹, Li-Cheng Feng³⁹, Qichun Feng²², Richard Ford⁵⁸, Amélie Fournier⁴⁵, Haonan Gan³³, Feng Gao⁴⁹, Alberto Garfagnini⁶², Arsenii Gavrikov⁶⁸, Marco Giammarchi⁵⁸, Nunzio Giudice⁵⁶, Maxim Gonchar⁶⁸, Guanghua Gong¹⁴, Hui Gong¹⁴, Yuri Gornushkin⁶⁸, Alexandre Göttel^{51,49}, Marco Grassi⁶², Maxim Gromov⁷⁰, Vasily Gromov⁶⁸, Minghao Gu¹¹, Xiaofei Gu³⁸, Yu Gu²⁰, Mengyun Guan¹¹, Yuduo Guan¹¹, Nunzio Guardone⁵⁶, Cong Guo¹¹, Jingyuan Guo²¹, Wanlei Guo¹¹, Xinheng Guo⁹, Yuhang Guo³⁶, Paul Hackspacher⁵², Caren Hagner⁵⁰, Ran Han⁸, Yang Han²¹, Miao He¹¹, Wei He¹¹, Tobias Heinz⁵⁵, Patrick Hellmuth⁴⁵, Yuekun Heng¹¹, Rafael Herrera⁶, YuenKeung Hor²¹, Shaojing Hou¹¹, Yee Hsiung⁴¹, Bei-Zhen Hu⁴¹, Hang Hu²¹, Jianrun Hu¹¹, Jun Hu¹¹, Shouyang Hu¹⁰, Tao Hu¹¹, Yuxiang Hu¹¹, Zhuojun Hu²¹, Guihong Huang²⁵, Hanxiong Huang¹⁰, Kaixuan Huang²¹, Wenhao Huang²⁶, Xin Huang¹¹, Xingtao Huang²⁶, Yongbo Huang²⁹, Jiaqi Hui³¹, Lei Huo²², Wenju Huo²³, Cédric Huss⁴⁵, Safeer Hussain⁶⁷, Ara Ioannisian¹, Roberto Isocrate⁶¹, Beatrice Jelmini⁶², Ignacio Jeria⁶, Xiaolu Ji¹¹, Huihui Jia³⁴, Junji Jia³⁵, Siyu Jian¹⁰, Di Jiang²³, Wei Jiang¹¹, Xiaoshan Jiang¹¹, Xiaoping Jing¹¹, Cécile Jollet⁴⁵, Leonidas Kalousis⁴⁶, Philipp Kampmann^{54,51}, Li Kang¹⁹,

Rebin Karaparambil⁴⁸, Narine Kazarian¹, Amina Khatun⁷¹, Khanchai Khosonthongkee⁷⁴, Denis Korablev⁶⁸, Konstantin Kouzakov⁷⁰, Alexey Krasnoperov⁶⁸, Nikolay Kutovskiy⁶⁸, Pasi Kuusiniemi⁴³, Tobias Lachenmaier⁵⁵, Cecilia Landini⁵⁸, Sébastien Leblanc⁴⁵, Victor Lebrin⁴⁸, Frederic Lefevre⁴⁸, Ruiting Lei¹⁹, Rupert Leitner⁴², Jason Leung³⁹, Daozheng Li¹¹, Demin Li³⁸, Fei Li¹¹, Fule Li¹⁴, Gaosong Li¹¹, Huiling Li¹¹, Mengzhao Li¹¹, Min Li¹¹, Nan Li¹¹, Nan Li¹⁷, Qingjiang Li¹⁷, Ruhui Li¹¹, Rui Li³¹, Shanfeng Li¹⁹, Tao Li²¹, Teng Li²⁶, Weidong Li^{11,15}, Weiguo Li¹¹, Xiaomei Li¹⁰, Xiaonan Li¹¹, Xinglong Li¹⁰, Yi Li¹⁹, Yichen Li¹¹, Zepeng Li¹¹, Zhaohan Li¹¹, Zhibing Li²¹, Ziyuan Li²¹, Zonghai Li³⁵, Hao Liang¹⁰, Hao Liang²³, Jiajun Liao²¹, Ayut Limphirat⁷⁴, Guey-Lin Lin³⁹, Shengxin Lin¹⁹, Tao Lin¹¹, Ivano Lippi⁶¹, Fang Liu¹², Haidong Liu³⁸, Haotian Liu³⁵, Hongbang Liu²⁹, Hongjuan Liu²⁴, Hongtao Liu²¹, Hui Liu²⁰, Jianglai Liu^{31,32}, Jinchang Liu¹¹, Min Liu²⁴, Qian Liu¹⁵, Qin Liu²³, Runxuan Liu^{51,49}, Shubin Liu²³, Shulin Liu¹¹, Xiaowei Liu²¹, Xiwen Liu²⁹, Yan Liu¹¹, Yunzhe Liu¹¹, Alexey Lokhov^{70,69}, Paolo Lombardi⁵⁸, Claudio Lombardo⁵⁶, Kai Loo⁵², Chuan Lu³³, Jingbin Lu¹⁶, Junguang Lu¹¹, Shuxiang Lu³⁸, Bayarto Lubsandorzhev⁶⁹, Sultim Lubsandorzhev⁶⁹, Livia Ludhova^{51,49}, Arslan Lukanov⁶⁹, Daibin Luo¹¹, Fengjiao Luo²⁴, Guang Luo²¹, Shu Luo³⁷, Wuming Luo¹¹, Xiaojie Luo¹¹, Vladimir Lyashuk⁶⁹, Bangzheng Ma²⁶, Bing Ma³⁸, Qiumei Ma¹¹, Si Ma¹¹, Xiaoyan Ma¹¹, Xubo Ma¹², Jihane Maalmi⁴⁴, Jingyu Mai²¹, Yury Malyshkin⁶⁸, Roberto Carlos Mandujano⁷⁵, Fabio Mantovani⁵⁷, Francesco Manzali⁶², Xin Mao⁸, Yajun Mao¹³, Stefano M. Mari⁶⁵, Filippo Marini⁶², Cristina Martellini⁶⁵, Gisele Martin-Chassard⁴⁴, Agnese Martini⁶⁴, Matthias Mayer⁵³, Davit Mayilyan¹, Ints Mednieks⁶⁶, Yue Meng³¹, Anselmo Meregaglia⁴⁵, Emanuela Meroni⁵⁸, David Meyhöfer⁵⁰, Mauro Mezzetto⁶¹, Jonathan Miller⁷, Lino Miramonti⁵⁸, Paolo Montini⁶⁵, Michele Montuschi⁵⁷, Axel Müller⁵⁵, Massimiliano Nastasi⁵⁹, Dmitry V. Naumov⁶⁸, Elena Naumova⁶⁸, Diana Navas-Nicolas⁴⁴, Igor Nemchenok⁶⁸, Minh Thuan Nguyen Thi³⁹, Alexey Nikolaev⁷⁰, Feipeng Ning¹¹, Zhe Ning¹¹, Hiroshi Nunokawa⁴, Lothar Oberauer⁵³, Juan Pedro Ochoa-Ricoux^{75,6,5}, Alexander Olshevskiy⁶⁸, Domizia Orestano⁶⁵, Fausto Ortica⁶³, Rainer Othegraven⁵², Alessandro Paoloni⁶⁴, Sergio Parmeggiano⁵⁸, Yatian Pei¹¹, Nicomede Pelliccia⁶³, Anguo Peng²⁴, Haiping Peng²³, Yu Peng¹¹, Zhaoyuan Peng¹¹, Frédéric Perrot⁴⁵, Pierre-Alexandre Petitjean², Fabrizio Petrucci⁶⁵, Oliver Pilarczyk⁵², Luis Felipe Piñeres Rico⁴⁶, Artyom Popov⁷⁰, Pascal Poussot⁴⁶, Ezio Previtali⁵⁹, Fazhi Qi¹¹, Ming Qi²⁸, Sen Qian¹¹, Xiaohui Qian¹¹, Zhen Qian²¹, Hao Qiao¹³, Zhonghua Qin¹¹, Shoukang Qiu²⁴, Gioacchino Ranucci⁵⁸, Neill Raper²¹, Alessandra Re⁵⁸, Henning Rebber⁵⁰, Abdel Rebi⁴⁵, Mariia Redchuk^{62,61}, Mariia Redchuk^{62,61}, Bin Ren¹⁹, Jie Ren¹⁰, Barbara Ricci⁵⁷, Mariam Rifai^{51,49}, Mathieu Roche⁴⁵, Narongkiat Rodphai⁷², Aldo Romani⁶³, Bedřich Roskovec⁴², Xichao Ruan¹⁰, Arseniy Rybnikov⁶⁸, Andrey Sadovsky⁶⁸, Paolo Saggese⁵⁸, Simone Sanfilippo⁶⁵, Anut Sangka⁷³, Utane Sawangwit⁷³, Julia Sawatzki⁵³, Michaela Schever^{51,49}, Cédric Schwab⁴⁶, Konstantin Schweizer⁵³, Alexandr Selyunin⁶⁸, Andrea Serafini⁶², Giulio Settanta⁵¹, Mariangela Settimo⁴⁸, Zhuang Shao³⁶, Vladislav Sharov⁶⁸, Arina Shaydurova⁶⁸, Jingyan Shi¹¹, Yanan Shi¹¹, Vitaly Shutov⁶⁸, Andrey Sidorenkov⁶⁹, Fedor Šimkovic⁷¹, Chiara Sirignano⁶², Jaruchit Siripak⁷⁴, Monica Sisti⁵⁹, Maciej Slupecki⁴³, Mikhail Smirnov²¹, Oleg Smirnov⁶⁸, Thiago Sogo-Bezerra⁴⁸, Sergey Sokolov⁶⁸, Julanan Songwadhana⁷⁴, Boonrucksar Soonthornthum⁷³, Albert Sotnikov⁶⁸, Ondřej Šrámek⁴², Warintorn Sreethawong⁷⁴, Achim Stahl⁴⁹, Luca Stanco⁶¹, Konstantin Stankevich⁷⁰, Dušan Štefánik⁷¹, Hans Steiger^{52,53}, Jochen Steinmann⁴⁹, Tobias Sterr⁵⁵, Matthias Raphael Stock⁵³, Virginia Strati⁵⁷, Alexander Studenikin⁷⁰, Jun Su²¹, Shifeng Sun¹², Xilei Sun¹¹, Yongjie

Sun²³, Yongzhao Sun¹¹, Zhengyang Sun³¹, Narumon Suwonjandee⁷², Michal Szelezniak⁴⁶, Jian Tang²¹, Qiang Tang²¹, Quan Tang²⁴, Xiao Tang¹¹, Alexander Tietzsch⁵⁵, Igor Tkachev⁶⁹, Tomas Tmej⁴², Marco Danilo Claudio Torri⁵⁸, Konstantin Treskov⁶⁸, Andrea Triossi⁶², Giancarlo Troni⁶, Wladyslaw Trzaska⁴³, Cristina Tuve⁵⁶, Nikita Ushakov⁶⁹, Vadim Vedin⁶⁶, Giuseppe Verde⁵⁶, Maxim Vialkov⁷⁰, Benoit Viaud⁴⁸, Cornelius Moritz Vollbrecht^{51,49}, Cristina Volpe⁴⁴, Katharina von Sturm⁶², Vit Vorobel⁴², Dmitriy Voronin⁶⁹, Lucia Votano⁶⁴, Pablo Walker^{6,5}, Caishen Wang¹⁹, Chung-Hsiang Wang⁴⁰, En Wang³⁸, Guoli Wang²², Jian Wang²³, Jun Wang²¹, Lu Wang¹¹, Meifen Wang¹¹, Meng Wang²⁴, Meng Wang²⁶, Ruiguang Wang¹¹, Siguang Wang¹³, Wei Wang²⁸, Wei Wang²¹, Wenshuai Wang¹¹, Xi Wang¹⁷, Xiangyue Wang²¹, Yangfu Wang¹¹, Yaoguang Wang¹¹, Yi Wang¹⁴, Yi Wang²⁵, Yifang Wang¹¹, Yuanqing Wang¹⁴, Yuman Wang²⁸, Zhe Wang¹⁴, Zheng Wang¹¹, Zhimin Wang¹¹, Zongyi Wang¹⁴, Apimook Watcharangkool⁷³, Wei Wei¹¹, Wei Wei²⁶, Wenlu Wei¹¹, Yadong Wei¹⁹, Kaile Wen¹¹, Liangjian Wen¹¹, Christopher Wiebusch⁴⁹, Steven Chan-Fai Wong²¹, Bjoern Wonsak⁵⁰, Diru Wu¹¹, Qun Wu²⁶, Zhi Wu¹¹, Michael Wurm⁵², Jacques Wurtz⁴⁶, Christian Wysotzki⁴⁹, Yufei Xi³³, Dongmei Xia¹⁸, Xiang Xiao²¹, Xiaochuan Xie²⁹, Yuguang Xie¹¹, Zhangquan Xie¹¹, Zhao Xin¹¹, Zhizhong Xing¹¹, Benda Xu¹⁴, Cheng Xu²⁴, Donglian Xu^{32,31}, Fanrong Xu²⁰, Hangkun Xu¹¹, Jilei Xu¹¹, Jing Xu⁹, Meihang Xu¹¹, Yin Xu³⁴, Yu Xu²¹, Baojun Yan¹¹, Taylor Yan⁷⁴, Wenqi Yan¹¹, Xiongbo Yan¹¹, Yupeng Yan⁷⁴, Changgen Yang¹¹, Chengfeng Yang²⁹, Huan Yang¹¹, Jie Yang³⁸, Lei Yang¹⁹, Xiaoyu Yang¹¹, Yifan Yang¹¹, Yifan Yang², Haifeng Yao¹¹, Jiaxuan Ye¹¹, Mei Ye¹¹, Ziping Ye³², Frédéric Yermia⁴⁸, Na Yin²⁶, Zhengyun You²¹, Boxiang Yu¹¹, Chiye Yu¹⁹, Chunxu Yu³⁴, Hongzhao Yu²¹, Miao Yu³⁵, Xianghui Yu³⁴, Zezhong Yu¹¹, Cenxi Yuan²¹, Chengzhuo Yuan¹¹, Ying Yuan¹³, Zhenxiong Yuan¹⁴, Noman Zafar⁶⁷, Vitalii Zavadskiy⁶⁸, Shan Zeng¹¹, Tingxuan Zeng¹¹, Yuda Zeng²¹, Liang Zhan¹¹, Aiqiang Zhang¹⁴, Bin Zhang³⁸, Binting Zhang¹¹, Feiyang Zhang³¹, Guoqing Zhang¹¹, Honghao Zhang²¹, Jialiang Zhang²⁸, Jiawen Zhang¹¹, Jie Zhang¹¹, Jin Zhang²⁹, Jingbo Zhang²², Jinnan Zhang¹¹, Mohan Zhang¹¹, Peng Zhang¹¹, Qingmin Zhang³⁶, Shiqi Zhang²¹, Shu Zhang²¹, Tao Zhang³¹, Xiaomei Zhang¹¹, Xin Zhang¹¹, Xuantong Zhang¹¹, Xueyao Zhang²⁶, Yinhong Zhang¹¹, Yiyu Zhang¹¹, Yongpeng Zhang¹¹, Yu Zhang¹¹, Yuanyuan Zhang³¹, Yumei Zhang²¹, Zhenyu Zhang³⁵, Zhijian Zhang¹⁹, Fengyi Zhao²⁷, Rong Zhao²¹, Runze Zhao¹¹, Shujun Zhao³⁸, Dongqin Zheng²⁰, Hua Zheng¹⁹, Yangheng Zheng¹⁵, Weirong Zhong²⁰, Jing Zhou¹⁰, Li Zhou¹¹, Nan Zhou²³, Shun Zhou¹¹, Tong Zhou¹¹, Xiang Zhou³⁵, Jiang Zhu²¹, Jingsen Zhu³⁰, Kangfu Zhu³⁶, Kejun Zhu¹¹, Zhihang Zhu¹¹, Bo Zhuang¹¹, Honglin Zhuang¹¹, Liang Zong¹⁴, and Jiaheng Zou¹¹

¹ *Yerevan Physics Institute, Yerevan, Armenia*

² *Université Libre de Bruxelles, Brussels, Belgium*

³ *Universidade Estadual de Londrina, Londrina, Brazil*

⁴ *Pontificia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil*

⁵ *Millennium Institute for SubAtomic Physics at the High-energy Frontier (SAPHIR), ANID, Chile*

⁶ *Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Santiago, Chile*

⁷ *Universidad Técnica Federico Santa María, Valparaíso, Chile*

⁸ *Beijing Institute of Spacecraft Environment Engineering, Beijing, China*

⁹ *Beijing Normal University, Beijing, China*

¹⁰ *China Institute of Atomic Energy, Beijing, China*

- ¹¹*Institute of High Energy Physics, Beijing, China*
- ¹²*North China Electric Power University, Beijing, China*
- ¹³*School of Physics, Peking University, Beijing, China*
- ¹⁴*Tsinghua University, Beijing, China*
- ¹⁵*University of Chinese Academy of Sciences, Beijing, China*
- ¹⁶*Jilin University, Changchun, China*
- ¹⁷*College of Electronic Science and Engineering, National University of Defense Technology, Changsha, China*
- ¹⁸*Chongqing University, Chongqing, China*
- ¹⁹*Dongguan University of Technology, Dongguan, China*
- ²⁰*Jinan University, Guangzhou, China*
- ²¹*Sun Yat-Sen University, Guangzhou, China*
- ²²*Harbin Institute of Technology, Harbin, China*
- ²³*University of Science and Technology of China, Hefei, China*
- ²⁴*The Radiochemistry and Nuclear Chemistry Group in University of South China, Hengyang, China*
- ²⁵*Wuyi University, Jiangmen, China*
- ²⁶*Shandong University, Jinan, China, and Key Laboratory of Particle Physics and Particle Irradiation of Ministry of Education, Shandong University, Qingdao, China*
- ²⁷*Institute of Modern Physics, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Lanzhou, China*
- ²⁸*Nanjing University, Nanjing, China*
- ²⁹*Guangxi University, Nanning, China*
- ³⁰*East China University of Science and Technology, Shanghai, China*
- ³¹*School of Physics and Astronomy, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Shanghai, China*
- ³²*Tsung-Dao Lee Institute, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Shanghai, China*
- ³³*Institute of Hydrogeology and Environmental Geology, Chinese Academy of Geological Sciences, Shijiazhuang, China*
- ³⁴*Nankai University, Tianjin, China*
- ³⁵*Wuhan University, Wuhan, China*
- ³⁶*Xi'an Jiaotong University, Xi'an, China*
- ³⁷*Xiamen University, Xiamen, China*
- ³⁸*School of Physics and Microelectronics, Zhengzhou University, Zhengzhou, China*
- ³⁹*Institute of Physics, National Yang Ming Chiao Tung University, Hsinchu*
- ⁴⁰*National United University, Miao-Li*
- ⁴¹*Department of Physics, National Taiwan University, Taipei*
- ⁴²*Charles University, Faculty of Mathematics and Physics, Prague, Czech Republic*
- ⁴³*University of Jyväskylä, Department of Physics, Jyväskylä, Finland*
- ⁴⁴*IJCLab, Université Paris-Saclay, CNRS/IN2P3, 91405 Orsay, France*
- ⁴⁵*Univ. Bordeaux, CNRS, LP2i Bordeaux, UMR 5797, F-33170 Gradignan, France*
- ⁴⁶*IPHC, Université de Strasbourg, CNRS/IN2P3, F-67037 Strasbourg, France*
- ⁴⁷*Centre de Physique des Particules de Marseille, Marseille, France*
- ⁴⁸*SUBATECH, Nantes Université, IMT Atlantique, CNRS-IN2P3, Nantes, France*
- ⁴⁹*III. Physikalisches Institut B, RWTH Aachen University, Aachen, Germany*
- ⁵⁰*Institute of Experimental Physics, University of Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany*
- ⁵¹*Forschungszentrum Jülich GmbH, Nuclear Physics Institute IKP-2, Jülich, Germany*

- ⁵²*Institute of Physics and EC PRISMA⁺, Johannes Gutenberg Universität Mainz, Mainz, Germany*
- ⁵³*Technische Universität München, München, Germany*
- ⁵⁴*Helmholtzzentrum für Schwerionenforschung, Planckstrasse 1, D-64291 Darmstadt, Germany*
- ⁵⁵*Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen, Physikalisches Institut, Tübingen, Germany*
- ⁵⁶*INFN Catania and Dipartimento di Fisica e Astronomia dell'Università di Catania, Catania, Italy*
- ⁵⁷*Department of Physics and Earth Science, University of Ferrara and INFN Sezione di Ferrara, Ferrara, Italy*
- ⁵⁸*INFN Sezione di Milano and Dipartimento di Fisica dell'Università di Milano, Milano, Italy*
- ⁵⁹*INFN Milano Bicocca and University of Milano Bicocca, Milano, Italy*
- ⁶⁰*INFN Milano Bicocca and Politecnico di Milano, Milano, Italy*
- ⁶¹*INFN Sezione di Padova, Padova, Italy*
- ⁶²*Dipartimento di Fisica e Astronomia dell'Università di Padova and INFN Sezione di Padova, Padova, Italy*
- ⁶³*INFN Sezione di Perugia and Dipartimento di Chimica, Biologia e Biotecnologie dell'Università di Perugia, Perugia, Italy*
- ⁶⁴*Laboratori Nazionali di Frascati dell'INFN, Roma, Italy*
- ⁶⁵*University of Roma Tre and INFN Sezione Roma Tre, Roma, Italy*
- ⁶⁶*Institute of Electronics and Computer Science, Riga, Latvia*
- ⁶⁷*Pakistan Institute of Nuclear Science and Technology, Islamabad, Pakistan*
- ⁶⁸*Joint Institute for Nuclear Research, Dubna, Russia*
- ⁶⁹*Institute for Nuclear Research of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia*
- ⁷⁰*Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russia*
- ⁷¹*Comenius University Bratislava, Faculty of Mathematics, Physics and Informatics, Bratislava, Slovakia*
- ⁷²*Department of Physics, Faculty of Science, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand*
- ⁷³*National Astronomical Research Institute of Thailand, Chiang Mai, Thailand*
- ⁷⁴*Suranaree University of Technology, Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand*
- ⁷⁵*Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of California, Irvine, California, USA*

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*E-mail: liyufeng@ihep.ac.cn (corresponding author)

†E-mail: lingjj5@mail.sysu.edu.cn (corresponding author)

‡Now at Istituto Superiore per la Protezione e la Ricerca Ambientale, Via Vitaliano Brancati, 48, 00144 Roma, Italy

Abstract

The physics potential of detecting ^8B solar neutrinos is exploited at the Jiangmen Underground Neutrino Observatory (JUNO), in a model independent manner by using three distinct channels of the charged-current (CC), neutral-current (NC) and elastic scattering (ES) interactions. Due to the largest-ever mass of ^{13}C nuclei in the liquid-scintillator detectors and the potential low background level, ^8B solar neutrinos would be observable in the CC and NC interactions on ^{13}C for the first time. By virtue of optimized event selections and muon veto strategies, backgrounds from the accidental coincidence, muon-induced isotopes, and external backgrounds can be greatly suppressed. Excellent signal-to-background ratios can be achieved in the CC, NC and ES channels to guarantee the ^8B solar neutrino observation. From the sensitivity studies performed in this work, we show that one can reach the precision levels of 5%, 8% and 20% for the ^8B neutrino flux, $\sin^2 \theta_{12}$, and Δm_{21}^2 , respectively, using ten years of JUNO data. It would be unique and helpful to probe the details of both solar physics and neutrino physics. In addition, when combined with SNO, the world-best precision of 3% is expected for the ^8B neutrino flux measurement.

1 Introduction

Electron neutrino fluxes are produced from thermal nuclear fusion reactions in the solar core, either through the proton-proton (pp) chain or the Carbon-Nitrogen-Oxygen (CNO) cycle. According to their production reactions, the solar neutrino species can be categorized as pp , ${}^7\text{Be}$, pep , ${}^8\text{B}$, hep neutrinos of the pp chain, and ${}^{13}\text{N}$, ${}^{15}\text{O}$, and ${}^{17}\text{F}$ neutrinos of the CNO cycle. Before reaching the detector, solar neutrinos undergo the flavor conversion inside the Sun and the Earth during their propagation. It has been a long history for solar neutrino physics since the first observation at the Homestake experiment [1]. Many measurements, such as Kamiokande [2], GALLEX/GNO [3, 4], SAGE [5], and Super-Kamiokande (SK) [6, 7], had observed the solar neutrino deficit problem: that is the amount of observed neutrinos originating from the Sun was much less than that expected from the Standard Solar Model (SSM). Subsequently, the Sudbury Neutrino Observatory (SNO) provided the first model-independent evidence of the solar neutrino flavor conversion using three distinct neutrino interaction channels in heavy water [8–14]. These reactions include the ν_e sensitive charged-current (CC) interaction, all flavor sensitive neutral-current (NC) interaction on Deuterium, and the elastic scattering (ES) interaction on electrons from all neutrino flavors with different cross sections.

Solar neutrino observations rely on both the flux prediction from the SSM and neutrino oscillation parameters that determine the flavor conversion [15–17]. Thus although SK [18, 19] and Borexino [20, 21] experiments have made precision measurements on the ${}^8\text{B}$ neutrinos via the ES interaction, the evaluation of the total amount of neutrinos produced inside the Sun relies on the input of solar neutrino oscillations [17]. The present most precise ${}^8\text{B}$ neutrino flux is determined by SNO with the precision of 3.8% [10–14], and it is the only existing model independent flux measurement. Therefore, a second independent measurement of the total ${}^8\text{B}$ neutrino flux with the NC channel [22, 23] would be important to answer relevant questions in the field of solar physics. For example, there is the solar abundance problem, in which the SSM based on the solar composition with a higher value of metallicity is inconsistent with the helioseismological measurements [24].

In contrast, the neutrino oscillation parameters $\sin^2\theta_{12}$ and Δm_{21}^2 have reached the precision levels around 5% and 15% respectively, from the current global solar neutrino data [25]. The mixing angle $\sin^2\theta_{12}$ is extracted from the comparison of the observed fluxes of pp , ${}^7\text{Be}$, and ${}^8\text{B}$ solar neutrinos to their respective total fluxes from the SSM. And the mass squared difference Δm_{21}^2 is measured from both the vacuum-matter transition of the ${}^8\text{B}$ neutrino oscillations and the size of the day-night asymmetry. A direct comparison of oscillation parameters from the solar neutrino and reactor antineutrino oscillations is an unique probe of new physics beyond the Standard Model of particle physics. It would be excellent to have a new measurement of solar neutrino oscillations with high precision in this respect. This has triggered a variety of interesting discussions on the prospects of future large neutrino detectors [26–29].

The Jianmen Underground Neutrino Observatory (JUNO) is a liquid scintillator (LS) detector of 20 kton, which is located in South China and will start data taking by 2023. As a multiple-purpose neutrino experiment, JUNO is unique for the solar neutrino detection because of its large target mass, excellent energy resolution, and expected low background levels. With the analysis threshold cut of around 2 MeV for the recoiled electron energies in the ES channel, JUNO can make a high-statistics measurement of the flux and spectral shape of ${}^8\text{B}$ solar neutrinos and will be able to extract the neutrino oscillation parameters $\sin^2\theta_{12}$ and Δm_{21}^2 [27]. In addition to the high statistics measurement in the ES channel, the presence of a large mass of the ${}^{13}\text{C}$ nuclei (~ 0.2 kt) makes it feasible to detect ${}^8\text{B}$ solar neutrinos via CC and NC interactions on ${}^{13}\text{C}$. By combining all the CC,

Table 1: Typical CC, NC, and ES detection channels of the ^8B solar neutrinos together with the final states, the neutrino energy threshold, the typical signatures in the detector, and the expected event numbers with 10 years of data taking. Note that ν_x with ($x = e, \mu, \tau$) denotes all three active flavor neutrinos. The spin and parity of the daughter nuclei at the ground (gnd) or excited states, denoted as the corresponding excited energies, are also provided.

No.		Channels	Threshold [MeV]	Signal	Event numbers (10 years)
1	CC	$\nu_e + ^{12}\text{C} \rightarrow e^- + ^{12}\text{N}(1^+; \text{gnd})$ [32]	16.827	$e^- + ^{12}\text{N}$ decay (β^+ , $Q=17.338$ MeV)	0.43
1		$\nu_e + ^{13}\text{C} \rightarrow e^- + ^{13}\text{N}(\frac{1}{2}^-; \text{gnd})$ [33]	2.2	$e^- + ^{13}\text{N}$ decay (β^+ , $Q=2.22$ MeV)	3929
2		$\nu_e + ^{13}\text{C} \rightarrow e^- + ^{13}\text{N}(\frac{3}{2}^-; 3.5 \text{ MeV})$ [33]	5.7	$e^- + p$	2464
4	NC	$\nu_x + ^{12}\text{C} \rightarrow \nu_x + ^{12}\text{C}(1^+; 15.11 \text{ MeV})$ [32]	15.1	γ	4.8
3		$\nu_x + ^{13}\text{C} \rightarrow \nu_x + n + ^{12}\text{C}(2^+; 4.44 \text{ MeV})$ [34]	6.864	$\gamma + n$ capture	65
4		$\nu_x + ^{13}\text{C} \rightarrow \nu_x + ^{13}\text{C}(\frac{1}{2}^+; 3.089 \text{ MeV})$ [33]	3.089	γ	14
5		$\nu_x + ^{13}\text{C} \rightarrow \nu_x + ^{13}\text{C}(\frac{3}{2}^-; 3.685 \text{ MeV})$ [33]	3.685	γ	3032
6		$\nu_x + ^{13}\text{C} \rightarrow \nu_x + ^{13}\text{C}(\frac{5}{2}^+; 3.854 \text{ MeV})$ [33]	3.854	γ	2.8
7		ES	$\nu_x + e \rightarrow \nu_x + e$	0	e^-

NC and ES channels, we are able to perform a model independent measurement of the ^8B solar neutrino flux and oscillation parameters $\sin^2 \theta_{12}$ and Δm_{21}^2 , which will add a unique contribution to the global solar neutrino program.

The paper is organized as follows. We illustrate the typical signatures of the CC and NC interactions of ^8B solar neutrinos, and evaluate the corresponding backgrounds in the JUNO detector in Sec. 2. In Sec. 3, the physics potential of detecting the ^8B solar neutrinos with different combinations of the CC, NC, and ES channels are presented, and the sensitivity to the ^8B solar neutrino flux, $\sin^2 \theta_{12}$ and Δm_{21}^2 is reported. The concluding remarks of this study are presented in Sec. 4.

2 Signal and Background at JUNO

The JUNO experiment is building the world largest LS detector with the total target mass of 20 kt, in which the mass fraction of Carbon is 88%. Given that the natural abundance of ^{13}C is 1.1%, the mass of ^{13}C can reach the level of ~ 0.2 kt, which is similar to the total mass of Deuterium of the SNO detector. Therefore, the CC and NC solar neutrino interaction rates on the ^{13}C nuclei will be sizable at JUNO.

In Table 1, we present the typical CC, NC and ES detection channels for ^8B solar neutrinos in the LS medium. For each interaction channel, the reaction threshold is provided, together with the typical experimental signatures, and the expected event numbers for 10 years of data taking before event selection cuts. The spin and parity of the daughter nuclei at the ground (gnd) or excited state, denoted by the corresponding excited energies, are also provided. The unoscillated ^8B solar neutrino ν_e flux (5.25×10^6 /cm²/s) is taken from the final result of SNO for this estimation [14], and the spectra are taken from Refs. [30, 31]. The cross sections for these exclusive channels are taken from the calculation in Refs. [32–34], in which the uncertainties at the level of a few percent are considered to be achievable. Note that the standard Mikheev-Smirnov-Wolfenstein (MSW) effect of solar neutrino oscillations [15, 16] and the neutrino oscillation parameters from Ref. [17] are used in the signal calculations of the CC, NC, and ES channels.

There are no interactions on the ^{12}C nuclei for most solar neutrinos because of the high energy threshold. Thus for the CC channel, we are left with the following exclusive interaction:

$$\nu_e + ^{13}\text{C} \rightarrow e^- + ^{13}\text{N} \left(\frac{1}{2}^- ; \text{gnd} \right), \quad (1)$$

where the final ^{13}N is in the ground state. It undergoes a delayed β^+ decay ($Q = 2.2$ MeV) with a lifetime of 863 s. The distinct signature for this channel is a coincidence of the prompt electron and delayed positron with stringent time, distance, and energy requirements. The expected number of events for ^8B solar neutrinos in this CC channel is 3929 for 10 years of data taking. Note that the CC interaction channel with an excited ^{13}N ($3/2^-; 3.502$ MeV) in the final state has a comparable cross section as the ground-state channel [33], but the deexcitation of ^{13}N ($3/2^-; 3.502$ MeV) is dominated by a proton knockout. The corresponding signature after quenching is a single event and thus cannot be distinguished from the recoiled electron of the ES channel on an event-by-event basis.

Among all the five listed NC channels, the only one with a coincidence signature is the interaction of $\nu_x + ^{13}\text{C} \rightarrow \nu_x + n + ^{12}\text{C}$, with a prompt γ energy of 4.44 MeV from ^{12}C de-excitation and the delayed neutron capture. However, given that the background from the inverse beta decay interactions of reactor antineutrinos are overwhelming, where the signal to background ratio is at the level of 10^{-4} , and thus the event rate of this channel is unobservable. In this work we focus on the NC channels with the signature of single γ deexcitation, among which the NC interaction with the ^{13}C de-excited energy of 3.685 MeV:

$$\nu_x + ^{13}\text{C} \rightarrow \nu_x + ^{13}\text{C} \left(\frac{3^-}{2} ; 3.685 \text{ MeV} \right), \quad (2)$$

is the dominant interaction channel and will be used to determine the ^8B solar neutrino flux via the NC interaction.

Finally, we also consider the ES interaction channel on the electron,

$$\nu_x + e \rightarrow \nu_x + e, \quad (3)$$

where the signature is a single recoiled electron [27]. Using all the three channels of CC, NC, ES interactions, we are able to make a model independent measurement of the ^8B solar neutrino flux, $\sin^2 \theta_{12}$ and Δm_{21}^2 with JUNO, which is useful to disentangle the solar dynamics and the neutrino oscillation effects. This measurement is expected to be the only model independent study after the SNO experiment [9–12].

To summarize, in this work we are going to employ the following three interaction channels for a model independent approach of the JUNO ^8B solar neutrino program: i) the CC detection channel is sensitive to the ν_e component of solar neutrinos, ii) the NC channel is sensitive to all active neutrino flavors (ν_e, ν_μ, ν_τ) with identical cross sections, iii) the ES channel is also sensitive to all active flavors, but with a preferred cross section for the ν_e flux [i.e., $\sigma(\nu_\mu/\tau) \simeq 0.17 \sigma(\nu_e)$].

2.1 $\nu_e + ^{13}\text{C}$ Charged Current Channel

For the typical coincidence signature of the CC channel, $\nu_e + ^{13}\text{C} \rightarrow e^- + ^{13}\text{N}$ ($1/2^-; \text{gnd}$), the energy of the prompt signal is the kinetic energy of the outgoing electron with the reaction threshold of 2.2 MeV. Therefore, there is a one-to-one correspondence between the electron kinetic energy and the initial neutrino energy $T_e \simeq E_\nu - 2.2$ MeV, because of the negligible recoil energy of the daughter ^{13}N . Meanwhile, the delayed signal is the deposited energy of the positron from the ^{13}N β^+ decay ($Q = 2.2$ MeV), with a decay lifetime of $\tau = 863$ s. The time and spatial correlation between the prompt and delayed signals provides the distinct feature of the coincidence signature.

In the following, we consider two significant backgrounds for this coincidence signature of the CC channel in this work.

- The first background is the accidental coincidence of two single events. For the visible energy between 2 and 5 MeV, natural radioactivity composes the most significant part of the prompt

Table 2: The efficiencies of optimized event selection cuts for the signal and backgrounds of the ν_e CC channel [$\nu_e + {}^{13}\text{C} \rightarrow e^- + {}^{13}\text{N} (1/2^-; \text{gnd})$] analysis. The expected event numbers of the signal and backgrounds for 10 years of data taking after each cut are also listed. The fiducial volume used in this work corresponds to the effective mass of 16.2 kt. For the energy cuts, E_p and E_d represent the visible energy of prompt and delayed signals. The same muon and three-fold-coincidence veto strategies as in Ref. [27] are used for the reduction of muon-induced isotopes.

	Cuts	CC signal efficiency	CC signal	Background for CC channel		
				Solar ES	Muon-induced isotopes	
				Accidental	Accidental	Correlated
–	–	–	3929	–	–	–
Time cut	$\Delta T < 900$ s	65%	2554	10^{10}	10^{13}	10^{12}
Energy cut	$5 \text{ MeV} < E_p < 14 \text{ MeV}$	79%	1836	10^9	10^{10}	10^9
	$1 \text{ MeV} < E_d < 2 \text{ MeV}$	91%				
Fiducial volume Cut	$R < 16.5$ m [27]	81%	1487	10^7	10^7	10^8
Vertex cut	$\Delta d < 0.47$ m	87%	1293	328	10^5	10^6
Muon veto	Muon and TFC veto [27]	50%	647	164	53	58
Combined	–	17%	647	275		

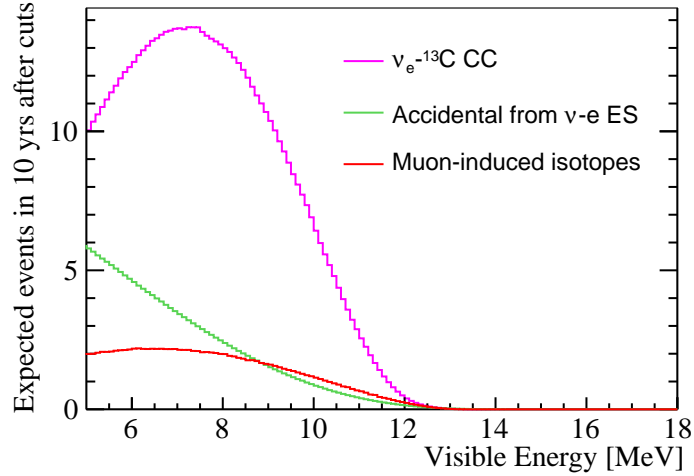


Figure 1: Expected prompt visible energy spectra of the CC signal and backgrounds after the optimized cuts. The accidental background with the recoiled electron from solar neutrino ES interaction as the prompt signal is illustrated as the green line. The background from muon-induced isotopes is illustrated as the red line, which is the summation of the accidental and correlated backgrounds originated from the initial muons.

component of the coincidence candidate, while the prompt signals above 5 MeV come from the muon-induced unstable isotopes and the recoiled electrons of solar neutrino ES interactions. Due to the expected natural radioactivity level in the LS (10^{-17} g/g ^{238}U and ^{232}Th in the secular equilibrium, 10^{-18} g/g ^{40}K and 10^{-24} g/g ^{210}Pb), a requirement on the selection of the prompt energy is to minimize the contribution from these radioactivity events. The delayed component of the accidental background is mainly from the cosmogenic ^{11}C decay ($Q = 1.98$ MeV) in the energy range of [1, 2] MeV, while the internal LS radioactivity contributes less than 2% compared to that from ^{11}C . If the internal radioactivity is 1-2 orders of magnitude higher than expected, the contribution to the delayed component from the radioactivity would be at the same level as the cosmogenic ^{11}C decay. Note that all the single events in the energy range between 1 and 2 MeV can be accurately measured in-situ with the future data, and the accidental background can be deduced with the off-time coincidence method. Note that we have neglected the external radioactivity which can be effectively removed by the proper fiducial volume cut.

- The second background is produced by the correlated prompt and delayed decays of unstable isotopes from the same parent muon. These correlated decays are not considered in the above accidental background. Therefore, the cosmic muon and the corresponding isotope simulations have been performed, and the muon veto strategies of the three-fold-coincidence are the same as those in Ref. [27]. It shows that the prompt signal is mainly from the beta decays of ^{12}B , ^8Li , ^6He , and ^{10}C (below 4 MeV), and as expected the delayed signal is from ^{11}C . The muon detection efficiency of the outer water veto can reach as high as 99.5% [27]. Since the remaining untagged muons are usually located at the edge of the central detector, these muon-induced correlated background can be removed using the fiducial volume cut and is neglected in this work. Note that we have assumed a perfect detector uniformity for these isotopes and used the whole detector region to estimate the background inside the fiducial volume.

We have simulated the signal and backgrounds using the official JUNO simulation software [35, 36]. According to the signal characteristics of the CC channel, the accidental background can be calculated with different selection cuts. The final event selection criteria is obtained by optimizing the figure of merit, $S/\sqrt{S+B}$, where S and B stand for the rates of the signal and background, respectively. The optimized event selection cuts of the fiducial volume, the prompt and delayed energies, the time and spatial correlation cuts and muon vetos are provided step by step in Tab. 2, where the efficiencies of the signal and backgrounds are also calculated. In order to avoid possible large contamination from the internal radioactivity and muon-induced ^{10}C , we select the threshold of the prompt visible energy to 5 MeV for the CC channel, i.e., $5 \text{ MeV} < E_p < 14 \text{ MeV}$. Meanwhile, the fiducial volume is chosen to be $R < 16.5 \text{ m}$ to reject the external radioactivity and isotopes, with R being the distance to the detector center.

We illustrate in Fig. 1 the expected prompt visible energy spectra of the selected signal and residual backgrounds in the CC channel after the optimized cuts. The expected number of selected signals is 647 for 10 years of data taking, which is shown as the purple line. The fiducial volume used in this work corresponds to the effective mass of 16.2 kt. The accidental background with solar neutrino ES interactions as the prompt signal is illustrated as the green line and contributes 164 background events, which will be fully correlated with the solar neutrino ES signal in the following global analysis. In contrast, the muon-induced isotopes contribute 111 background events (depicted as the red line of Fig. 1), which are from both the accidental coincidence (53 events) and correlated background (58 events). Therefore, we can achieve an excellent $S/\sqrt{S+B} \simeq 21$.

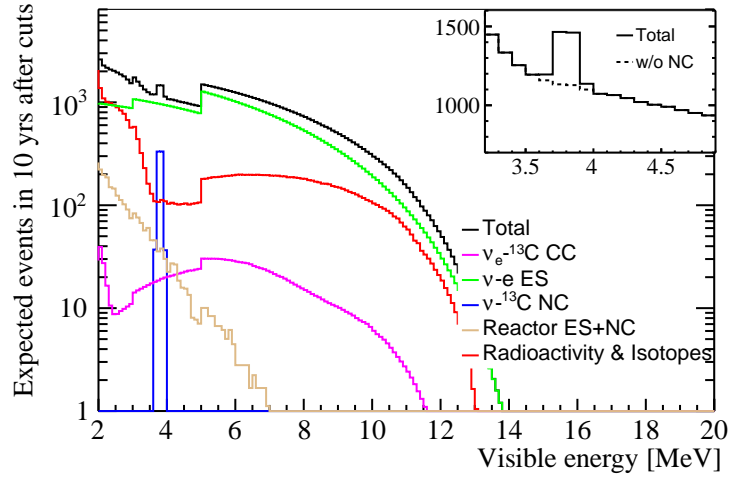


Figure 2: Expected visible energy spectra of all single event sources for 10 years of data taking with the same energy-dependent fiducial volume cuts as in Ref. [27] are illustrated. The blue and green curves are singles from the $\nu_x + {}^{13}\text{C}$ NC and $\nu_x + e$ ES channels, respectively. The purple curve includes the $\nu_e + {}^{13}\text{C} \rightarrow e^- + {}^{13}\text{N}(\frac{3}{2}^-)$ channel and the residual singles of the $\nu_e + {}^{13}\text{C} \rightarrow e^- + {}^{13}\text{N}(\frac{1}{2}^-)$ channel after the coincidence cut. The red curve represents the single events from natural radioactivity and muon-induced unstable isotopes. The brown curve includes the $\bar{\nu}_e + e$ ES and $\bar{\nu}_x + {}^{13}\text{C}$ NC channels from reactor antineutrinos. The black curve is the summation of all the components. The upper right insert plot is illustrated for the energy range between 3 and 5 MeV in the linear scale. Note that the discontinuities at 3 MeV and 5 MeV are due to the changes in the fiducial volume size.

Finally, the expected event number of *hep* solar neutrinos in the CC channel is about 15 for ten years of data taking, but only 3 events are beyond the spectral tail of ${}^8\text{B}$ solar neutrinos. Thus it would be difficult to detect the *hep* solar neutrinos with the CC interaction on ${}^{13}\text{C}$, and the signal from the *hep* solar neutrinos will be neglected in this work.

2.2 $\nu_x + {}^{13}\text{C}$ Neutral Current Channel

The typical signature for the NC event, $\nu_x + {}^{13}\text{C} \rightarrow \nu_x + {}^{13}\text{C}(3/2^-; 3.685 \text{ MeV})$ is a mono-energetic γ with the energy of 3.685 MeV, convoluted with the detector energy resolution of $3\%/\sqrt{E}$. The expected visible energy spectra of all single event sources for 10 years of data taking with the same energy-dependent fiducial volume cuts as in Ref. [27] are shown in Fig. 2. The blue and green curves are singles from the $\nu_x + {}^{13}\text{C}$ NC and $\nu_x + e$ ES channels, respectively. The purple curve includes the $\nu_e + {}^{13}\text{C} \rightarrow e^- + {}^{13}\text{N}(\frac{3}{2}^-)$ channel and the residual singles of the $\nu_e + {}^{13}\text{C} \rightarrow e^- + {}^{13}\text{N}(\frac{1}{2}^-)$ channel after the coincidence cut. The red curve represents the single events from natural radioactivity and muon-induced unstable isotopes [27]. The brown curve includes the $\bar{\nu}_e + e$ ES and $\bar{\nu}_x + {}^{13}\text{C}$ NC channels from reactor antineutrinos. The NC events rate from reactor antineutrinos is less than 0.2% of that from solar neutrinos. The black curve is the summation of all the components. Note that the discontinuities at 3 MeV and 5 MeV are caused by the energy-dependent fiducial volume cuts which are, from low to high energies, $R < 13 \text{ m}$ for [2, 3] MeV, $R < 15 \text{ m}$ for [3, 5] MeV, and $R < 16.5 \text{ m}$ for the energies large than 5 MeV. The upper right insert plot is illustrated for the energy range between 3 to 5 MeV in the linear scale, where a clear peak from the solar neutrino NC channel can be seen above the continuous spectra from solar neutrino ES interactions and the other backgrounds, demonstrating the promising prospect for the observation of the NC channel at

JUNO. After all the cuts the number of signal events in the NC channel is 738 for 10 years of data taking.

2.3 $\nu_x + e$ Elastic Scattering Channel

In this work, we follow exactly the same strategy as in Ref. [27] for the analysis of the $\nu_x + e$ ES channel, where energy spectra for the recoiled electrons as well as all the backgrounds have been shown in Fig. 2. One should note that the upturn feature of the energy dependence of the solar neutrino survival probability is clearly visible in the electron energy spectrum.

2.4 Day-Night Asymmetry

The MSW effect can cause solar neutrino event rate variations as a function of the solar zenith angle when the neutrinos propagate through the Earth [37–45], and result in the day-night asymmetry of the solar neutrino observation, in which the signal rate in the night is higher than that in the day due to ν_e regeneration inside the Earth.

In this work, in addition to the visible energy spectra of the CC, NC and ES channels, we also consider the day-night asymmetry to constrain the neutrino oscillation parameters. The location of JUNO (i.e., $112^\circ 31' 05''$ E and $22^\circ 07' 05''$ N [46]) is used in the day-night asymmetry calculations, and the two dimensional visible energy and zenith angle spectra are employed. For illustration, we show in Fig. 3 the ratios of solar neutrino signal event rates with and without considering the terrestrial matter effects as the function of the zenith angle θ_z . The red and blue solid lines are for the ES and CC channels, respectively. In comparison, the dashed lines are shown for the respective averages over the whole zenith angle range. The ratios of the day-night average (R_A), the daytime (R_D), and the nighttime (R_N) are also illustrated with the first three bins. The error bars are quoted as the statistical uncertainties of the signal and backgrounds. The blue shaded regions with different colors from the left to right are used to denote the zenith angle ranges passing through the crust, mantle and core of the Earth respectively. The day-night asymmetry, defined as $(R_D - R_N)/R_A$, is predicted to be -3.1% and -1.6% for the CC and ES channels respectively. The energy ranges of the CC and ES channels are [5, 14] MeV and [2, 16] MeV respectively. Given that all the neutrino flavors can be detected through the NC channel, no day-night asymmetry exists in the NC detection. Note that the magnitude of the day-night asymmetry strongly depends on the value of Δm_{21}^2 . If Δm_{21}^2 is decreased from the KamLAND measurement $7.5 \times 10^{-5} \text{ eV}^2$ [17] to $6.1 \times 10^{-5} \text{ eV}^2$ of the global solar neutrino data [25], the absolute values of the day-night asymmetry are also increased to -4.2% and -2.2% for the CC and ES channels, respectively.

3 Sensitivity Study

In this section, we study the physical potential for the model independent measurement of ^8B solar neutrinos using CC, NC, and ES channels. Based on the typical event signatures, the full solar neutrino data can be separated into the correlated and single event data sets. As discussed in the previous section, all the three interaction channels from ^8B solar neutrinos would contribute to the single event data set, while the correlated data set includes events from both the CC channel and the accidental coincidence of the ES channel.

In this analysis, we consider the following systematic uncertainties. First, the uncertainty of detection efficiency is estimated to be 2% [27], which is fully correlated for the the signal and background components of each data set, but uncorrelated between the coincidence and single event

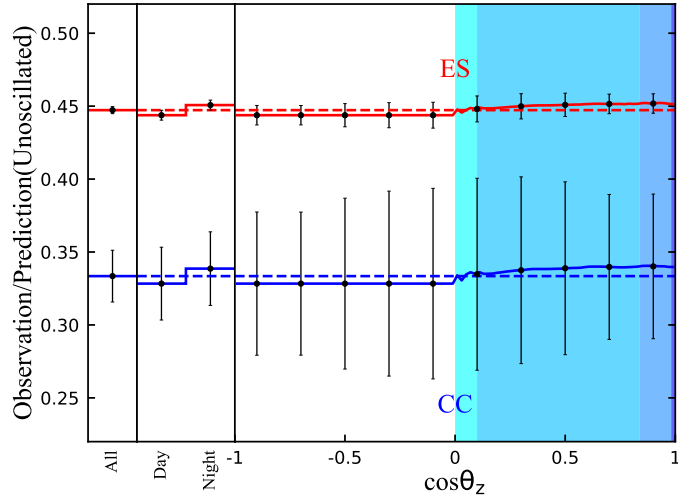


Figure 3: Ratios of the solar neutrino signal event rates with and without considering terrestrial matter effects as the function of the zenith angle for the ES (red solid line) and CC (blue solid line) channels. The dashed lines are shown for the average over the whole zenith angle range. The ratios for the daytime, nighttime and the day-night average are also shown for comparison. The blue shaded regions with different colors from the left to right are used to denote the zenith angle ranges passing through the crust, mantle and core of the Earth. Note that the signal rate in the night is higher than that in the day due to the ν_e regeneration through the Earth.

data samples. Second, the current uncertainty of the ^{13}C cross sections from the model calculation is at the level of several percents [32–34], but the precision could be reduced to 1% or better with large-scale modern shell-model calculations [47]. Therefore the uncertainties for the ^{13}C CC and NC interaction are taken as 1% for the current study. A 0.5% cross section uncertainty is used for the ES channel [48]. Third, the shape uncertainty of ^8B solar neutrinos is taken from Refs. [30, 31], and the uncertainties for the radioactive and muon-induced backgrounds are the same as those in Ref. [27], namely, 1% for ^{238}U , ^{232}Th and ^{12}B decays, 3% for ^8Li and ^6He decays, and 10% for ^{10}C and ^{11}Be decays. A 2% uncertainty is used for the single event from the reactor antineutrino ES interaction. In this work we treat the ^8B solar neutrino flux as a free parameter since we are performing the model independent measurement. Only in the scenario of combining with the SNO flux measurement, an uncertainty of 3.8% is used as an informative prior.

The standard Poisson-type χ^2 method using the Asimov data set [17] is employed to estimate the sensitivity to measure the ^8B solar neutrino flux and the oscillation parameters $\sin^2\theta_{12}$ and Δm_{21}^2 , where different pull parameters are included in the χ^2 function to account for the systematic uncertainties described in this section. More technical details on the construction of the χ^2 function are provided in the Appendix. In order to identify the contribution of each interaction channel, we divide the whole data sets into the correlated events, the single events within [3.5, 4.1] MeV, and the single events outside [3.5, 4.1] MeV, which correspond to the CC, NC, and ES measurements respectively.

We illustrate in Figs 4-6 the two dimensional allowed ranges and the marginalized one dimensional curves on the sensitivity of the ^8B neutrino flux, $\sin^2\theta_{12}$ and Δm_{21}^2 , of which Fig. 4 is for the comparison of the ES and ES+NC measurements, Fig. 5 for the comparison the ES+NC and ES+NC+CC measurements, and Fig. 6 for the comparison of the JUNO and JUNO + SNO flux

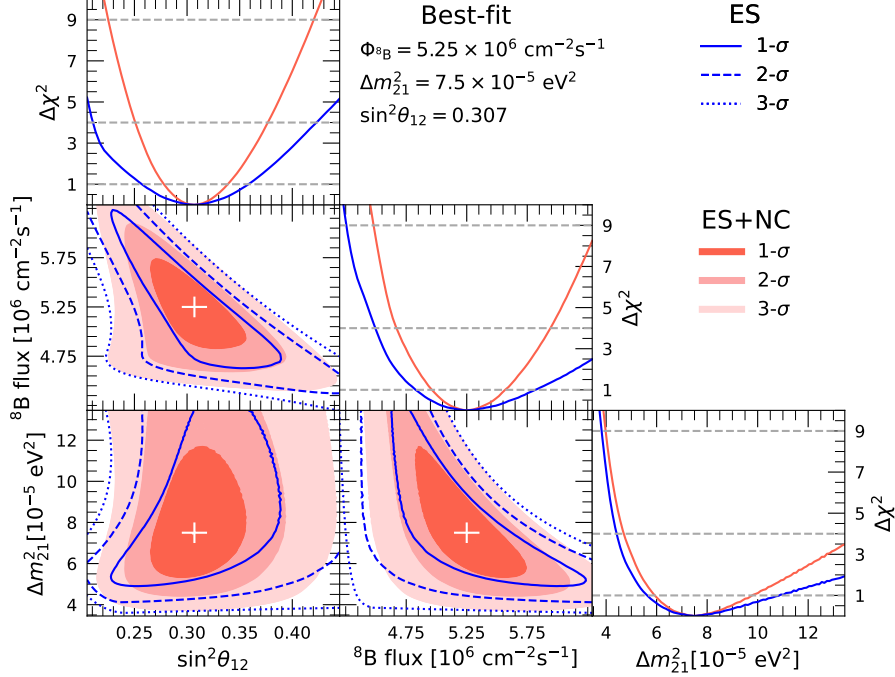


Figure 4: Comparison of the sensitivity on the ${}^8\text{B}$ solar neutrino flux, $\sin^2\theta_{12}$ and Δm_{21}^2 between the ES measurement (single events outside [3.5, 4.1] MeV) and the ES+NC measurement (all singles events). The 1σ (68.3%), 2σ (95.5%), and 3σ (99.7%) allowed regions are illustrated with blue lines and red shaded regions, respectively. The marginalized projections of these parameters are also shown.

measurements. In addition, a summary of relative uncertainties on the ${}^8\text{B}$ neutrino flux, $\sin^2\theta_{12}$ and Δm_{21}^2 from the model independent approach is provided in Fig. 7. Several important observations and comments are presented as follows.

- The NC measurement is accomplished based on the single events within [3.5, 4.1] MeV, where the background events are from the singles of ES and CC interactions of ${}^8\text{B}$ solar neutrinos, together with the natural radioactivity and muon-induced unstable isotopes. The standard MSW effect of solar neutrino oscillations is used in the calculation of ES and CC interactions and the oscillation parameters $\sin^2\theta_{12}$ and Δm_{21}^2 are marginalized. The ${}^8\text{B}$ solar neutrino flux can be obtained with an accuracy of 10.6% with the NC measurement, which is comparable to the level of 8.6% from the NC measurement of the SNO Phase-III data [13].
- The ES measurement is based on the single events outside the energy range of [3.5, 4.1] MeV, in which the dominant background is from the natural radioactivity and muon-induced unstable isotopes, which are summarized in Fig. 2 and more details can be found in Ref. [27]. In the model independent approach of the ES measurement, the ${}^8\text{B}$ neutrino flux and two oscillation parameters $\sin^2\theta_{12}$ and Δm_{21}^2 are simultaneously constrained, where the relative uncertainties are derived as ${}^{+11\%}_{-8\%}$, ${}^{+17\%}_{-17\%}$, and ${}^{+45\%}_{-25\%}$, respectively. The uncertainties of $\sin^2\theta_{12}$ and Δm_{21}^2 are larger than those obtained in Ref. [27] by including the 3.8% SNO flux measurement because of the strong correlation between the flux and oscillation parameters in the model independent

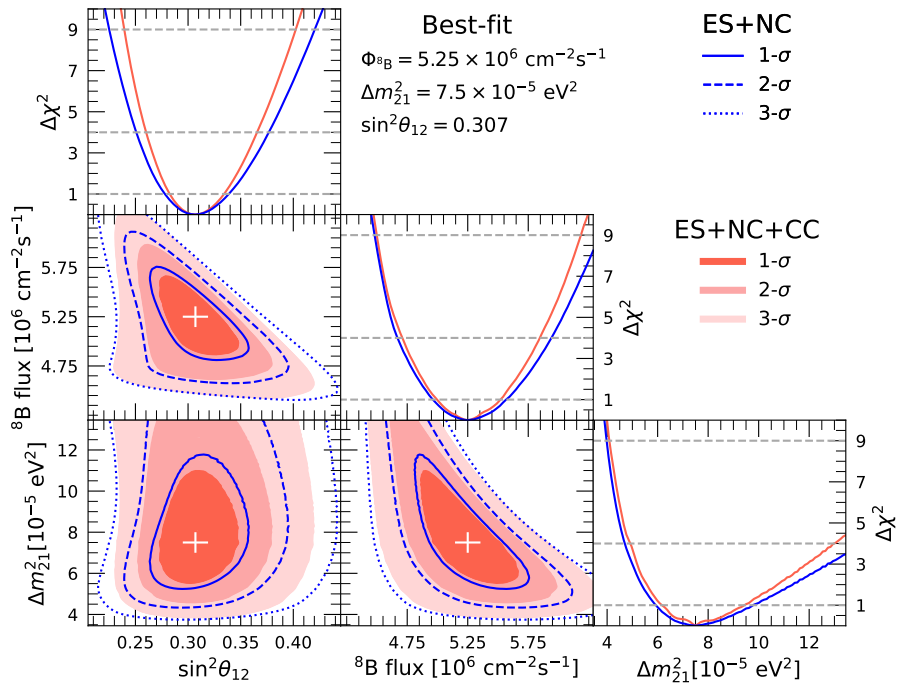


Figure 5: Same as Fig. 4, but for the comparison between the ES+NC measurement (all single events) and the ES+NC+CC measurement (both the single events and correlated events).

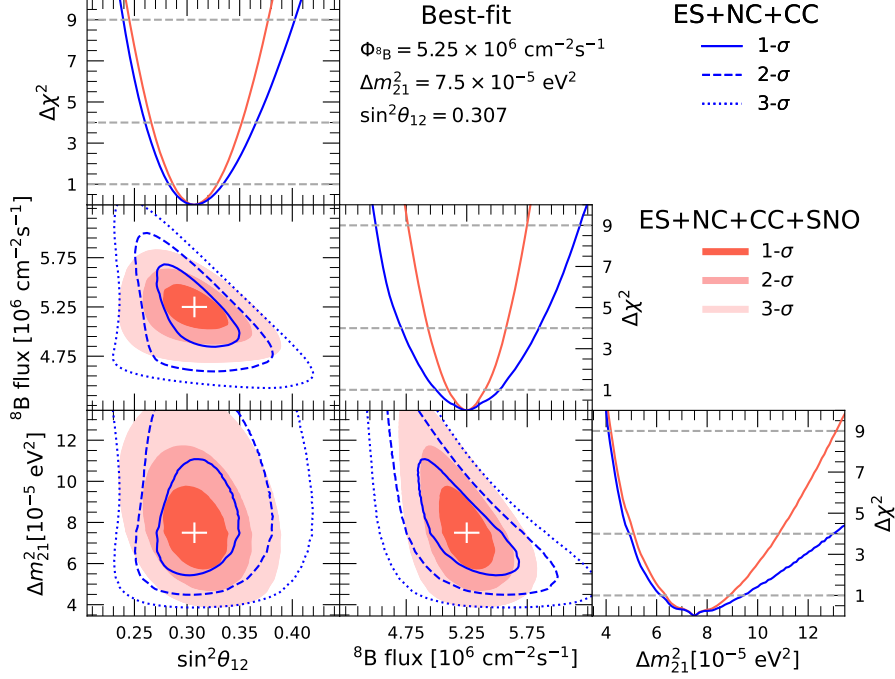


Figure 6: Same as Fig. 4, but for the comparison between the ES+NC+CC measurement of JUNO and the combined JUNO+SNO flux measurement.

approach. When adding the JUNO NC measurement, the accuracy of the ${}^8\text{B}$ neutrino flux can be improved to the level of ${}^{+6.0\%}_{-5.5\%}$, and the uncertainties of $\sin^2\theta_{12}$ and Δm_{21}^2 are also improved to ${}^{+10\%}_{-10\%}$, and ${}^{+31\%}_{-21\%}$ respectively.

- The CC measurement with the correlated events itself cannot simultaneously determine the ${}^8\text{B}$ neutrino flux and oscillation parameters because of the high visible energy threshold. However, by combining the CC measurement with the single events of the NC+ES channels, it will help to break the correlation and possible degeneracy among different parameters, where the accuracy of the ${}^8\text{B}$ neutrino flux can be further improved to 5%, while those of $\sin^2\theta_{12}$ and Δm_{21}^2 are ${}^{+9\%}_{-8\%}$, and ${}^{+25\%}_{-17\%}$ respectively.
- The expected 5% precision of the ${}^8\text{B}$ neutrino flux obtained with all three detection channels is much better than that of 11.6% from the latest prediction of the SSM [24]. This will be the only model independent measurement after SNO [14]. In addition, the uncertainties of $\sin^2\theta_{12}$ and Δm_{21}^2 from the ${}^8\text{B}$ neutrino measurement at JUNO are at the levels of ${}^{+9\%}_{-8\%}$ and ${}^{+25\%}_{-17\%}$ respectively, which is comparable to the levels of ${}^{+5\%}_{-5\%}$, and ${}^{+20\%}_{-11\%}$ from the latest results of combined SK and SNO solar neutrino data [49]. Considering that the reactor antineutrino measurement of JUNO will obtain sub-percent levels of $\sin^2\theta_{12}$ and Δm_{21}^2 in the near future [50], measurements of these parameters from future solar neutrino data would be important to test the CPT symmetry of fundamental physics and resolve the possible discrepancy between the neutrino and antineutrino oscillation channels.
- Within the spirit of the model independent approach, one can also include the 3.8% ${}^8\text{B}$ neutrino

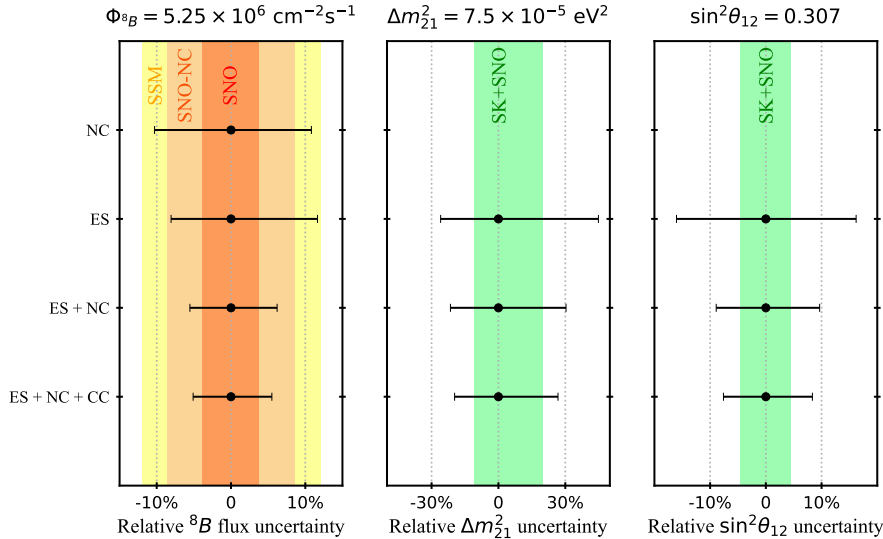


Figure 7: Relative uncertainties of the ^8B solar neutrino flux (left panel), Δm_{21}^2 (middle panel), and $\sin^2 \theta_{12}$ (right panel) from the model independent approach with different combinations of the data sets. The colored bands in the left panel are for the flux uncertainty from the SSM [24], the NC measurement of the SNO Phase-III data (SNO-NC) [13], and the combined SNO CC, NC and ES data (SNO) [14]. The green bands in the middle and right panels are the uncertainty of oscillation parameters from the combined SK and SNO solar neutrino data [49].

flux measurement of SNO as an informative prior, where even better precision levels of the flux and oscillation parameters can be achieved. In this scenario, the expected accuracy of the ^8B solar neutrino flux would reach the level of 3%, and $\sin^2 \theta_{12}$ and Δm_{21}^2 can be constrained with the precision of ${}^{+7.5\%}_{-6.5\%}$, and ${}^{+19\%}_{-15\%}$ respectively. These measurements are comparable to those from the current global solar neutrino data and would provide unique information to the future solar neutrino program.

- In addition to the discussion above, it is also noteworthy that the signal event rates and cross section uncertainties are the most crucial factors that affect the detection potential of the CC and NC detection channels. If the cross section uncertainties are 10%, instead of 1% assumed in this work, the uncertainty of the ^8B neutrino flux will become ${}^{+6\%}_{-6\%}$.

4 Concluding Remarks

In this work we have studied the physics potential of detecting ^8B solar neutrinos at JUNO, in a model independent manner by using the CC, NC and ES detection channels. Because of its largest-ever mass of ^{13}C and the expected low background level, excellent signal-to-background ratios can be achieved. Thus ^8B solar neutrinos will be observable in all three interaction channels.

We have performed detailed evaluations on the background budgets and signal efficiencies of the CC, NC and ES channels at JUNO. With optimized selection strategies, we find that the expected ^8B neutrino rates of the CC and NC channels are $\mathcal{O}(100)$ interactions per year after the event selection. It turns out that the signal event rates and cross section uncertainties are the most crucial factors that affect the detection potential of these two channels. We have carried out a combined analysis of both the coincidence and single events from all three detection channels, and shown that the ^8B

solar neutrino flux, $\sin^2 \theta_{12}$, and Δm_{21}^2 can be measured to $\pm 5\%$, $^{+9\%}_{-8\%}$, and $^{+25\%}_{-17\%}$, respectively. When combined with the SNO flux measurement, the world-best precision of 3% can be achieved for the ^8B neutrino flux.

In the history of solar neutrino experiments, the NC measurement is unique in decoupling the neutrino flux and oscillation parameters, and enabling the model independent approach of the solar neutrino program. SNO has been the only solar neutrino experiment in the past to achieve this goal, and JUNO would be the second one. In this work, we have demonstrated the feasibility of ^8B solar neutrino measurements at JUNO, which, together with other large solar neutrino detectors [26,28,29], will open a new era of solar neutrino observation and may uncover new directions on neutrino physics and solar physics.

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Appendix

In this appendix, we present technical details of the sensitivity study used in this work. The Poisson-type least squares function χ^2 is defined as follows,

$$\begin{aligned}
\chi^2 &= \chi_{\text{stat}}^2(\text{CC}) + \chi_{\text{stat}}^2(\text{NC}) + \chi_{\text{stat}}^2(\text{ES}) + \chi_{\text{sys}}^2 \\
&= 2 \times \sum_{i=1}^{10} \left[\sum_{j_{\text{C}}=1}^{90} \left(N_{\text{pre}}^{\text{C}}(\theta_z^i, E_{\text{vis}}^{j_{\text{C}}}) - N_{\text{obs}}^{\text{C}}(\theta_z^i, E_{\text{vis}}^{j_{\text{C}}}) + N_{\text{obs}}^{\text{C}}(\theta_z^i, E_{\text{vis}}^{j_{\text{C}}}) \cdot \log \frac{N_{\text{obs}}^{\text{C}}(\theta_z^i, E_{\text{vis}}^{j_{\text{C}}})}{N_{\text{pre}}^{\text{C}}(\theta_z^i, E_{\text{vis}}^{j_{\text{C}}})} \right) \right. \\
&\quad \left. + \sum_{j_{\text{S}}=1}^{140} \left(N_{\text{pre}}^{\text{S}}(\theta_z^i, E_{\text{vis}}^{j_{\text{S}}}) - N_{\text{obs}}^{\text{S}}(\theta_z^i, E_{\text{vis}}^{j_{\text{S}}}) + N_{\text{obs}}^{\text{S}}(\theta_z^i, E_{\text{vis}}^{j_{\text{S}}}) \cdot \log \frac{N_{\text{obs}}^{\text{S}}(\theta_z^i, E_{\text{vis}}^{j_{\text{S}}})}{N_{\text{pre}}^{\text{S}}(\theta_z^i, E_{\text{vis}}^{j_{\text{S}}})} \right) \right] \\
&\quad + \left(\frac{\varepsilon_X^{\text{ES}}}{\sigma_X^{\text{ES}}} \right)^2 + \left(\frac{\varepsilon_X^{\text{NC}}}{\sigma_X^{\text{NC}}} \right)^2 + \left(\frac{\varepsilon_X^{\text{CC}}}{\sigma_X^{\text{CC}}} \right)^2 + \sum_{k_{\text{C}}} \left(\frac{\varepsilon_{\text{B}}^{k_{\text{C}}}}{\sigma_{\text{B}}^{k_{\text{C}}}} \right)^2 + \sum_{k_{\text{S}}} \left(\frac{\varepsilon_{\text{B}}^{k_{\text{S}}}}{\sigma_{\text{B}}^{k_{\text{S}}}} \right)^2 \\
&\quad + \left(\frac{\varepsilon_{\text{eff}}^{\text{C}}}{\sigma_{\text{eff}}^{\text{C}}} \right)^2 + \left(\frac{\varepsilon_{\text{eff}}^{\text{S}}}{\sigma_{\text{eff}}^{\text{S}}} \right)^2 + (\varepsilon_{\text{s}})^2, \tag{4}
\end{aligned}$$

where $\chi_{\text{stat}}^2(\text{CC})$, $\chi_{\text{stat}}^2(\text{NC})$, and $\chi_{\text{stat}}^2(\text{ES})$ are the statistical parts of the CC, NC and ES channels in the χ^2 function, respectively, which are shown in the second row and third row Eq. (4), with j_C from 1 to 90 for the CC measurement, j_S from 16 to 21 for the NC measurement, and j_S from 1 to 15 and from 22 to 140 for the ES measurement. $N_{\text{pre}}^C(\theta_z^i, E_{\text{vis}}^{j_C})$ and $N_{\text{pre}}^S(\theta_z^i, E_{\text{vis}}^{j_S})$ are the predicted numbers of the signal and background events in the i -th zenith angle bin, and the j_C -th or j_S -th visible energy bin of the correlated and single event samples, respectively, which can be calculated as

$$N_{\text{pre}}^C(\theta_z^i, E_{\text{vis}}^{j_C}) = (1 + \varepsilon_{\text{eff}}^C) S_{\text{pre}}^{\text{CC}}(\theta_z^i, E_{\text{vis}}^{j_C}) + \sum_{k_C} (1 + \varepsilon_B^{k_C}) B_{\text{pre}}^{k_C}(\theta_z^i, E_{\text{vis}}^{j_C}), \quad (5)$$

$$N_{\text{pre}}^S(\theta_z^i, E_{\text{vis}}^{j_S}) = (1 + \varepsilon_{\text{eff}}^S) [S_{\text{pre}}^{\text{NC}}(\theta_z^i, E_{\text{vis}}^{j_C}) + S_{\text{pre}}^{\text{ES}}(\theta_z^i, E_{\text{vis}}^{j_C})] + \sum_{k_S} (1 + \varepsilon_B^{k_S}) B_{\text{pre}}^{k_S}(\theta_z^i, E_{\text{vis}}^{j_S}), \quad (6)$$

where $S_{\text{pre}}^{\text{CC}}$, $S_{\text{pre}}^{\text{NC}}$, and $S_{\text{pre}}^{\text{ES}}$ are the two dimensional spectra of the ^8B neutrino signals in the CC, NC, and ES channels with the fiducial volume and signal efficiencies taken into account, whose projection in the axis of the visible energy can be found in Fig. 1 and Fig. 2 respectively. Meanwhile, $B_{\text{pre}}^{k_C}$ and $B_{\text{pre}}^{k_S}$ are components of the respective backgrounds in the correlated and single event samples, respectively, whose visible energy spectra are also illustrated in Fig. 1 and Fig. 2.

The calculations of the ^8B neutrino signal spectra in the CC, NC, and ES channels are given by

$$S_{\text{pre}}^{\text{CC}}(\theta_z^i, E_{\text{vis}}^{j_C}) = \Phi_{^8\text{B}} \times \left[(1 + \varepsilon_s \delta_{E_\nu}^S) S_{^8\text{B}}(E_\nu) \otimes P_{ee}(\theta_{12}, \Delta m_{21}^2, E_\nu, \theta_z^i) \otimes (1 + \varepsilon_X^{\text{CC}}) \sigma_{\text{CC}}(E_\nu, E_e) \otimes M(E_e, E_{\text{vis}}^{j_C}) \right], \quad (7)$$

$$S_{\text{pre}}^{\text{NC}}(\theta_z^i, E_{\text{vis}}^{j_C}) = \Phi_{^8\text{B}} \times \left[(1 + \varepsilon_s \delta_{E_\nu}^S) S_{^8\text{B}}(E_\nu) \otimes (1 + \varepsilon_X^{\text{NC}}) \sigma_{\text{NC}}(E_\nu, E_\gamma) \otimes M(E_\gamma, E_{\text{vis}}^{j_S}) \right], \quad (8)$$

$$S_{\text{pre}}^{\text{ES}}(\theta_z^i, E_{\text{vis}}^{j_C}) = \Phi_{^8\text{B}} \times \left\{ (1 + \varepsilon_s \delta_{E_\nu}^S) S_{^8\text{B}}(E_\nu) \otimes \Sigma_\alpha \left[P_{e\alpha}(\theta_{12}, \Delta m_{21}^2, E_\nu, \theta_z^i) \otimes (1 + \varepsilon_X^{\text{ES}}) \sigma_{\text{ES}}^{\nu\alpha}(E_\nu, E_e) \right] \otimes M(E_e, E_{\text{vis}}^{j_C}) \right\}, \quad (9)$$

which are the convolution of the ^8B neutrino spectrum $\Phi_{^8\text{B}}$, the neutrino oscillation probability $P_{e\alpha}$ with $\alpha = e$ or $\mu + \tau$, the interaction cross section (i.e., σ_{CC} , σ_{NC} , and $\sigma_{\text{ES}}^{\nu\alpha}$) and the detector response matrix M . $P_{e\alpha}$ with both the standard MSW favor conversion and the terrestrial matter effect as the function of neutrino energy E_ν and the zenith angle θ_z is calculated in the three neutrino oscillation framework. The detector response matrix M includes the effects of both the energy resolution and energy non-linearity, which we directly follow the description in Ref. [27]. Finally, the observed spectra $N_{\text{obs}}^C(\theta_z^i, E_{\text{vis}}^{j_C})$ and $N_{\text{obs}}^S(\theta_z^i, E_{\text{vis}}^{j_S})$ can be obtained from the corresponding predicted spectra by taking the true values of the ^8B neutrino flux $\Phi_{^8\text{B}}$ and oscillation parameters $\sin^2 \theta_{12}$ and Δm_{21}^2 , as well as the vanishing values of nuisance parameters. Note that, as discussed in Sec. 2, the ^8B solar neutrino interactions may also contribute to some of the background components $B_{\text{pre}}^{k_C}$ (e.g., the green line in Fig. 1, the purple line in Fig. 2), in this case, all possible correlation between the respective signal and background components will be taken into account in the χ^2 function.

The nuisance parameters ε_X^m ($m=\text{CC}, \text{NC}, \text{ES}$), ε_B^k , $\varepsilon_{\text{eff}}^n$ ($n=\text{C}, \text{S}$) correspond to the systematical uncertainties from the cross section, the backgrounds, and the detection efficiency that discussed in the manuscript. $\delta_{E_\nu}^S$ is the 1σ fractional variation of the ^8B neutrino energy spectrum [30,31], and ε_s

Table 3: Description the nuisance parameters and the associated uncertainties in the χ^2 function.

Sys.	Description for the pull term	Uncertainty
$\varepsilon_X^{\text{ES}}, \varepsilon_X^{\text{NC}}, \varepsilon_X^{\text{CC}}$	Cross section for the CC, NC, ES channels	1%, 1%, 0.5%
$\varepsilon_{\text{eff}}^{\text{C}}, \varepsilon_{\text{eff}}^{\text{S}}$	Detector efficiency	2% [27]
$\varepsilon_{\text{B}}^{k_{\text{C}}}, \varepsilon_{\text{B}}^{k_{\text{S}}}$	Rate for the k_{C} -th or k_{S} -th background component	1%-10%, same as Ref. [27]
ε_{s}	^8B neutrino energy spectrum	Refs. [30,31]

denotes the magnitude of the ^8B neutrino spectral uncertainty. Description the nuisance parameters and the associated uncertainties in the χ^2 function is summarized in Table 3. In the sensitivity study of obtaining the results of Figs. 4-7, we first choose the data sets from one of the CC, NC and ES measurements or their combinations, and turn on the relevant nuisance parameters of the systematical uncertainties to formulate the respective χ^2 function. When the allowed regions of each analysis of are calculated, the displayed parameters (one or two of the fitting parameters $\Phi_{\text{sB}}, \theta_{12}$, and Δm_{21}^2) will be fitted and all the other physical and nuisance will be marginalized. The critical values of $\Delta\chi^2$ for different confidence levels are taken from Ref. [17].

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