

Right-handed sneutrino as thermal dark matterDavid G. Cerdeño,^{1,2} Carlos Muñoz,^{1,2} and Osamu Seto²¹*Departamento de Física Teórica C-XI, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Cantoblanco, E-28049, Madrid, Spain*²*Instituto de Física Teórica UAM-CSIC, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Cantoblanco, E-28049, Madrid, Spain*

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We study an extension of the minimal supersymmetric standard model with a singlet supermultiplet S with coupling SH_1H_2 in order to solve the μ problem as in the next-to-minimal supersymmetric standard model, and right-handed neutrino supermultiplets N with couplings SNN in order to generate dynamically electroweak-scale Majorana masses. We show how in this model a purely right-handed sneutrino can be a viable candidate for cold dark matter in the Universe. Through the direct coupling to the singlet, the sneutrino cannot only be thermal relic dark matter but also have a large enough scattering cross section with nuclei to detect it directly in the near future, in contrast with most other right-handed sneutrino dark matter models.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Weakly interacting massive particles (WIMPs) are among the best motivated candidates for explaining the cold dark matter in the Universe. WIMPs appear in many interesting extensions of the standard model providing new physics at the TeV scale. Such is the case of supersymmetric models, in which imposing a discrete symmetry (R parity) to avoid rapid proton decay renders the lightest supersymmetric particle (LSP) stable and thus a good dark matter (DM) candidate.

The minimal supersymmetric extension of the standard model (MSSM) provides two natural candidates for WIMPs, the neutralino and the (left-handed) sneutrino. The neutralino is a popular and extensively studied possibility. On the contrary, the left-handed sneutrino in the MSSM [1] is not a viable dark matter candidate. Given its sizable coupling to the Z boson, they either annihilate too rapidly, resulting in a very small relic abundance, or give rise to a large scattering cross section off nucleons and are excluded by direct DM searches [2] (notice, however, that the inclusion of a lepton number violating operator can reduce the detection cross section [3]).

However, there is a strong motivation to consider an extension of the MSSM, the fact that neutrino oscillations imply tiny but nonvanishing neutrino masses. These can be obtained introducing right-handed neutrino superfields. Several models have been proposed to revive sneutrino DM by reducing its coupling with the Z boson. This can be achieved by introducing a mixture of left- and right-handed sneutrino [4–6], or by considering a purely right-handed sneutrino [7–10]. In the former, a significant left-right mixture is realized by adopting some particular supersymmetry breaking with a large trilinear term [4]. Such a mechanism is not available in the standard supergravity mediated supersymmetry breaking, where trilinear terms are proportional to the small neutrino Yukawa couplings. Recently, another realization of large mixing was pointed

out [6] by abandoning the canonical seesaw formula for neutrino masses. On the other hand, pure right-handed sneutrinos cannot be thermal relics, since their coupling to ordinary matter is extremely reduced by the neutrino Yukawa coupling [7–9]. Furthermore, these would be unobservable in direct detection experiments. Another possibility to obtain the correct thermal relic density would consist of coupling the right-handed sneutrino to the observable sector, e.g., via an extension of the gauge [10] or Higgs [11,12] sectors.

There is one more motivation to consider another extension of the MSSM, the so-called “ μ problem” [13]. The superpotential in the MSSM contains a bilinear term, μH_1H_2 . Successful radiative electroweak symmetry breaking requires μ of the order of the electroweak scale. The next-to-minimal supersymmetric standard model (NMSSM) offers a simple solution by introducing a singlet superfield S and promoting the bilinear term to a trilinear coupling λSH_1H_2 . After radiative electroweak symmetry breaking, S develops a vacuum expectation value (VEV) of order of the electroweak scale thereby providing an effective μ term, $\mu = \lambda\langle S \rangle$. Furthermore, the NMSSM also alleviates the “little hierarchy problem” of the Higgs sector in the MSSM [14] and has an attractive phenomenology, featuring light Higgs bosons and interesting consequences for neutralino DM [15]. Although the Z_3 symmetry of the NMSSM may give rise to a cosmological domain wall problem, this can be avoided with the inclusion of nonrenormalizable operators.

Motivated by the above two issues, we study an extension of the MSSM where singlet scalar superfields are included [11,16]. A singlet S in order to solve the μ problem as in the NMSSM (and which accounts for extra Higgs and neutralino states) and right-handed neutrinos N to obtain nonvanishing neutrino Majorana masses with the canonical, but low scale, seesaw mechanism. Terms of the type SNN in the superpotential can generate dynamically Majorana masses through the VEV of the singlet S . In

addition, the presence of right-handed sneutrinos, \tilde{N} , with a weak scale mass provides a new possible DM candidate within the WIMP category.

In this paper we analyze the properties of right-handed sneutrinos, showing that not only they can be thermally produced in sufficient amount to account for the DM in the Universe because of the direct coupling between S and N , but also that their elastic scattering cross section off nuclei is large enough to allow their detection in future experiments.

II. THE MODEL

The superpotential in our construction is an extension of that of the NMSSM, including new trilinear coupling among the singlets S and N and Yukawa terms to provide neutrino masses. It reads

$$W = W_{\text{NMSSM}} + \lambda_N SNN + y_N H_2 \cdot LN, \quad (1)$$

$$W_{\text{NMSSM}} = Y_u H_2 \cdot Qu + Y_d H_1 \cdot Qd + Y_e H_1 \cdot Le - \lambda S H_1 \cdot H_2 + \frac{1}{3} \kappa S^3, \quad (2)$$

where flavor indices are omitted and the dot denotes the $SU(2)_L$ antisymmetric product. As in the NMSSM, a global Z_3 symmetry is imposed, so that there are no supersymmetric mass terms in the superpotential. Note that the term NNN and SSN are gauge invariant but not consistent with R parity and thus are not included. We also assume no CP violation in the Higgs sector.

Once radiative electroweak symmetry breaking takes place and the Higgs fields take nonvanishing VEVs, $(v_{1,2}, v_s) = (\langle H_{1,2} \rangle, \langle S \rangle)$, an effective Majorana mass term in the neutrino sector is generated, $M_N = 2\lambda_N v_s$. Light masses for left-handed neutrinos are then obtained via a seesaw $m_{\nu_L} = y_N^2 v_2^2 / M_N$, which implies Yukawa couplings $y_N \lesssim \mathcal{O}(10^{-6})$ of the same order of the electron Yukawa.

The sneutrino mass matrix can be read from the quadratic terms in the scalar potential as

$$\begin{aligned} & \frac{1}{2} (\tilde{\nu}_{L1}, \tilde{N}_1) \begin{pmatrix} m_{LL}^2 & m_{LR}^2 + m_{LR}^2 \\ m_{LR}^2 + m_{LR}^2 & m_{RR}^2 + 2m_{RR}^2 \end{pmatrix} (\tilde{\nu}_{L1}) + \frac{1}{2} \\ & \times (\tilde{\nu}_{L2}, \tilde{N}_2) \begin{pmatrix} m_{LL}^2 & m_{LR}^2 - m_{LR}^2 \\ m_{LR}^2 - m_{LR}^2 & m_{RR}^2 - 2m_{RR}^2 \end{pmatrix} (\tilde{\nu}_{L2}). \end{aligned} \quad (3)$$

Here, sneutrinos are decomposed in real and imaginary components as $\tilde{\nu}_L \equiv (\tilde{\nu}_{L1} + i\tilde{\nu}_{L2})/\sqrt{2}$ and $\tilde{N} \equiv (\tilde{N}_1 + i\tilde{N}_2)/\sqrt{2}$, and all parameters are defined by

$$\begin{aligned} m_{LL}^2 & \equiv m_L^2 + |y_N v_2|^2 + D - \text{term}, \\ m_{LR}^2 & \equiv y_N (-\lambda_N v_s v_1)^\dagger + y_N A_N v_2, \\ m_{L\bar{R}}^2 & \equiv y_N v_2 (-\lambda_N v_s)^\dagger, \\ m_{RR}^2 & \equiv m_N^2 + |2\lambda_N v_s|^2 + |y_N v_2|^2, \\ m_{R\bar{R}}^2 & \equiv \lambda_N (A_{\lambda_N} v_s + (\kappa v_s^2 - \lambda v_1 v_2)^\dagger), \end{aligned} \quad (4)$$

where m_L^2 , m_N^2 , A_{λ_N} , and A_N are the new soft parameters. These are assumed to be real for simplicity, so that the real and imaginary parts of sneutrinos do not mix. The mixing between left- and right-handed sneutrinos, induced by m_{LR}^2 and $m_{L\bar{R}}^2$, is proportional to the small neutrino Yukawa coupling y_N , and therefore negligible. Note that $m_{R\bar{R}}^2$ splits the masses of \tilde{N}_1 and \tilde{N}_2 . \tilde{N}_2 is lighter than \tilde{N}_1 for $m_{R\bar{R}}^2 > 0$ and vice versa.

Although the right-handed sneutrino may have a non-vanishing VEV breaking R parity spontaneously [16], by solving the stationary condition we find that the origin $\tilde{N} = 0$ is the true minimum if $m_{R\bar{R}}^2 - 2|m_{R\bar{R}}^2| > 0$, which is precisely the condition for the lightest right-handed sneutrino mass squared (3) to be positive. Hereafter we only consider cases where this condition is satisfied. In such a case, the Higgs potential coincides with that in the NMSSM.

The coupling between a Higgs boson, H_i^0 , and two right-handed sneutrinos determines most of the sneutrino phenomenological properties. It can be calculated from the superpotential and Lagrangian and reads

$$\begin{aligned} C_{H_i^0 \tilde{N}_1 \tilde{N}_1} & = \frac{2\lambda \lambda_N M_W}{\sqrt{2}g} (\sin\beta S_{H_i^0}^1 + \cos\beta S_{H_i^0}^2) \\ & + \left[(4(\lambda_N)^2 + 2\kappa\lambda_N) v_s + \frac{\lambda_N A_{\lambda_N}}{\sqrt{2}} \right] S_{H_i^0}^3, \end{aligned} \quad (5)$$

where $S_{H_i^0}^j$ ($j = 1, 2, 3$) are the elements of the Higgs diagonalisation matrix.

III. THERMAL RELIC DENSITY

The right-handed sneutrino, having a mass of order of the electroweak scale, can be the lightest supersymmetric particle (LSP) in our construction for adequate choices of the input parameters (in particular, for small $m_{\tilde{N}}$). In such a case, it constitutes a good candidate for DM. In order to determine its viability, its thermal relic abundance, $\Omega_{\tilde{N}_1} h^2$, needs to be calculated and compared to the Wilkinson Microwave Anisotropy Probe result, $0.1037 \leq \Omega h^2 \leq 0.1161$ [17]. The possible products for $\tilde{N}_1 \tilde{N}_1$ annihilation include

- (i) $W^+ W^-$, ZZ , and $f\bar{f}$ via s -channel Higgs exchange;
- (ii) $H_i^0 H_j^0$, via s -channel Higgs exchange, t - and u -channel sneutrino exchange, and a scalar quartic coupling;

- (iii) $A_a^0 A_b^0$, and $H_i^+ H_j^-$, via s -channel Higgs exchange, and a scalar quartic coupling;
- (iv) ZA_a^0 and $W^\pm H^\mp$ via s -channel Higgs exchange;
- (v) NN , via s -channel Higgs exchange and via t - and u -channel neutralinos exchange.

The processes suppressed by the neutrino Yukawa y_N , e.g., those involving Z exchange along an s channel, are negligible and have not been taken into account. Notice that similar models where the Higgs sector is extended share some of these channels [12]. It is obvious that the annihilation cross section is very dependent on the structure of the Higgs sector. In particular, all the processes involve s -channel Higgs exchange, which implies the presence of rapid annihilation in the resonances, when $2m_{\tilde{N}_1} \approx m_{H_i^0}$. In addition, annihilations into a neutral Higgs pair turn out to be one of the dominant channels, implying a significant decrease in $\Omega_{\tilde{N}_1} h^2$ when $m_{\tilde{N}_1} > m_{H_i^0}$. This is interesting, since very light Higgs bosons are possible (as long as they have a significant singlet component) in the NMSSM. Another important contribution comes from the annihilation into a pair of right-handed neutrinos when $m_{\tilde{N}_1} > m_N$.

In our calculation we do not include coannihilation effects. For our choice of parameters and in wide regions of the NMSSM these are only important in the regions in which the LSP changes from sneutrino to neutralino and do not affect our conclusions.

Our input parameters are, on the one hand, the usual NMSSM degrees of freedom, λ , κ , $\tan\beta$, μ , A_λ , A_κ , which we define at low energy. Regarding the soft parameters, we assume that gaugino masses mimic, at low-energy, the values obtained from a hypothetical grand unified theory. Low-energy observables, such as the muon anomalous magnetic moment and $\text{BR}(b \rightarrow s\gamma)$, pose stringent constraints on the NMSSM parameter space. In order to avoid these, we consider an example with $m_{L,E} = 150$ GeV, $m_{Q,U,D} = 1000$ GeV, $M_1 = 160$ GeV, $A_E = -2500$ GeV, $A_{U,D} = 2500$ GeV, $A_\lambda = 400$ GeV, $A_\kappa = -200$, $\mu = 130$ GeV, and $\tan\beta = 5$, that was studied in [15] (see Fig. 7 there). The choice $\lambda = 0.2$ and $\kappa = 0.1$ corresponds to a very characteristic point of the NMSSM, featuring a very light Higgs mass, $m_{H_1^0} = 59.7$ GeV (compatible with CERN LEP bounds due to its large singlet component), and a lightest neutralino with $m_{\tilde{\chi}_1} = 88.5$ GeV (which sets the upper limit for \tilde{N}_1 as the LSP). The masses of the remaining two scalar Higgs bosons are $m_{H_2^0} = 125.6$ GeV and $m_{H_3^0} = 550.8$ GeV. The pseudo-scalar masses in this example are $m_{A_1^0} = 199.6$ GeV and $m_{A_2^0} = 548.9$ GeV, where the lightest pseudoscalar also has a significant singlet composition. Finally, the resulting mass of the charged Higgs is $m_{H^\pm} = 553.7$ GeV. The viability of this set of NMSSM parameters is checked with the NMHDECAY 2.0 code [18], based on which we have built a package which calculates the sneutrino relic density using the numerical procedure described in [19].

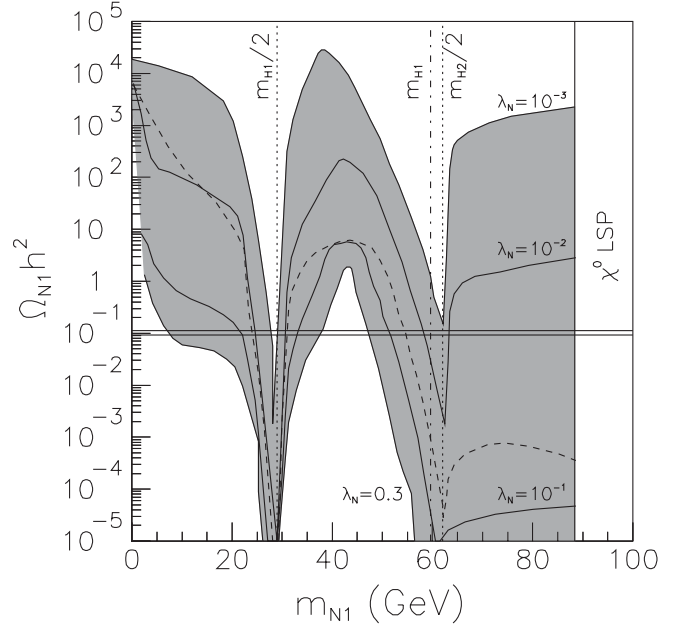


FIG. 1. $\Omega_{\tilde{N}_1} h^2$ as a function of $m_{\tilde{N}_1}$ for $\lambda_N \in [10^{-3}, 0.3]$ (gray area). The vertical dotted lines indicate the location of the Higgs resonances for $2m_{\tilde{N}_1} \approx m_{H_{1,2}^0}$, and the dot-dashed line indicates the opening of the annihilation channel into $H_1^0 H_1^0$. Points below the dashed line have $m_{\tilde{N}_1} < m_N$. The vertical solid line represents the value of the lightest neutralino mass.

Our model contains three new parameters to be fixed, λ_N , $m_{\tilde{N}}$, and A_{λ_N} . In order to illustrate the theoretical predictions for $\Omega_{\tilde{N}_1} h^2$ we set $A_{\lambda_N} = 250$ GeV and vary λ_N and $m_{\tilde{N}}$ in the ranges $[10^{-3}, 0.3]$ and $[0, 200]$ GeV, respectively, excluding those points in which \tilde{N}_1 is not the LSP or is tachyonic. The resulting $\Omega_{\tilde{N}_1} h^2$ is shown in Fig. 1, where the large suppression on the Higgs resonances for the two lightest Higgs bosons is clearly evidenced (the resonance corresponding to the heaviest scalar Higgs would be located at $m_{H_3^0}/2 \approx 275$ GeV and is therefore not accessible in the region where the sneutrino is the LSP in the present example). The relic abundance increases as λ_N decreases due to the reduction in $C_{H_1^0 \tilde{N}_1 \tilde{N}_1}$. Remarkably, the correct relic density can be obtained with natural values of λ_N . In particular, when annihilation into Higgs bosons is possible ($m_{\tilde{N}_1} > m_{H_1^0}$), one needs $10^{-2} \lesssim \lambda_N \lesssim 10^{-1}$. Notice also that very light \tilde{N}_1 are viable with $\lambda_N \gtrsim 10^{-1}$ through the annihilation into $b\bar{b}$. For our choice of parameters a lower bound $m_{\tilde{N}_1} \approx 10$ GeV is obtained.

IV. DIRECT DETECTION

The direct detection of sneutrinos would take place through their elastic scattering with nuclei inside a DM detector. At the microscopic level, the low-energy interaction of sneutrinos and quarks can be described by an

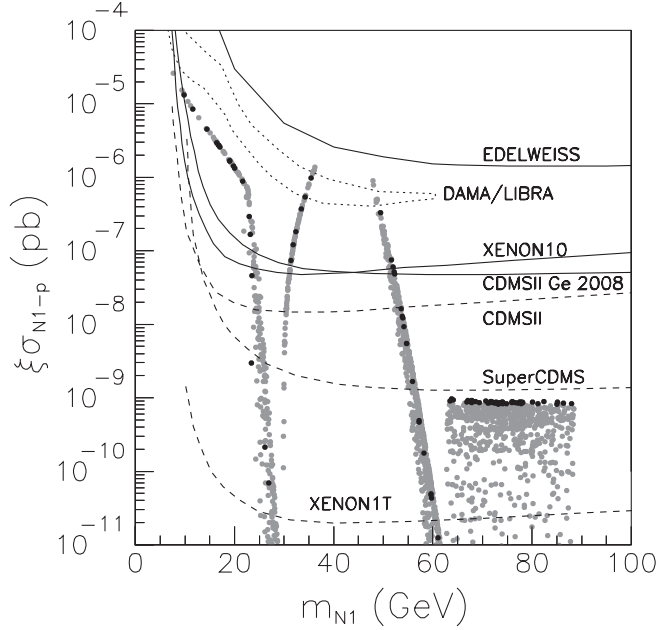


FIG. 2. Theoretical predictions for $\xi\sigma_{\tilde{N}_1-p}^{\text{SI}}$, as a function of $m_{\tilde{N}_1}$. The sensitivities of present and projected experiments are represented by means of solid and dashed lines, respectively, in the case of an isothermal spherical halo. The area bounded by dotted lines is consistent with the interpretation of the DAMA/LIBRA [22] experiment in terms of a WIMP.

effective Lagrangian. In our case, there is only one contribution (at tree level) to this process, the t -channel exchange of neutral Higgs bosons. In terms of the Higgs-sneutrino-sneutrino coupling, one can write

$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{eff}} \supset \sum_{j=1}^3 \frac{C_{H_j^0 \tilde{N}_1 \tilde{N}_1} Y_{q_i}}{m_{H_j^0}^2} \tilde{N} \tilde{N} \bar{q}_i q_i \equiv \alpha_{q_i} \tilde{N} \tilde{N} \bar{q}_i q_i, \quad (6)$$

where Y_{q_i} is the corresponding quark Yukawa coupling and i labels up-type quarks ($i = 1$) and down-type quarks ($i = 2$). The effective Lagrangian contains no axial-vector coupling since the sneutrino is a scalar field, thus implying a vanishing spin-dependent cross section.

The total spin-independent sneutrino-proton scattering cross section yields

$$\sigma_{\tilde{N}_1-p}^{\text{SI}} = \frac{1}{\pi} \frac{m_p^4}{(m_p + m_{\tilde{N}_1})^2} f_p^2, \quad (7)$$

where m_p is the proton mass and the expression for f_p in terms of the hadronic matrix elements parametrizing the quark content of the proton can be found, e.g., in [20].

The scattering cross section is also very dependent on the features of the Higgs sector. In particular, $\sigma_{\tilde{N}_1-p}^{\text{SI}}$ becomes larger when $C_{H_j^0 \tilde{N}_1 \tilde{N}_1}$ (5) increases (e.g., when λ , λ_N , or A_{λ_N} are enhanced) and/or the mass of the lightest CP -even Higgs decreases.

The theoretical predictions for $\xi\sigma_{\tilde{N}_1-p}^{\text{SI}}$ are represented as a function of the sneutrino mass in Fig. 2. The sneutrino fractional density ξ is defined to be $\xi = \min[1, \Omega_{\tilde{N}_1} h^2 / 0.1037]$ in order to have a rescaling of the signal for subdominant DM in the halo [21]. Black dots correspond to points with a relic density consistent with the WMAP results, whereas gray dots stand for those with $\Omega_{\tilde{N}_1} h^2 \leq 0.1$ in which \tilde{N}_1 is subdominant.

The right-handed sneutrino in our model is not yet excluded by direct searches for DM. Interestingly, the predicted $\sigma_{\tilde{N}_1-p}^{\text{SI}}$ lies within the reach of projected detectors, such as SuperCDMS and XENON1T (unlike a pure right-handed sneutrino with only Yukawa interactions).

Regarding the possible indirect detection of this WIMP candidate, notice that not being a Majorana fermion, contrary to the neutralino case, sneutrino annihilation into a $f\bar{f}$ pair would not be helicity suppressed. Thus it can potentially lead to larger signals (as in the case of Kaluza-Klein dark matter). A detailed analysis of the detectability of these signals will be presented elsewhere.

V. CONCLUSIONS

We propose the right-handed sneutrino as a viable thermal DM candidate in an extension of the MSSM where the singlet superfields, S and N , are included to solve the μ problem and account for neutrino masses. A direct coupling between S and N provides a sufficiently large annihilation cross section for the right-handed sneutrino, as well as a detection cross section in the range of future direct DM searches.

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