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Search for lepton flavour violation in Z decays

L3 Collaboration

O. Adriani^o, M. Aguilar-Benitez^x, S. Ahlenⁱ, J. Alcaraz^p, A. Aloisio^{aa}, G. Alverson^j,
M.G. Alviggi^{aa}, G. Ambrosi^{af}, Q. An^q, H. Anderhub^{at}, A.L. Andersonⁿ, V.P. Andreev^{aj},
T. Angelescu^k, L. Antonov^{an}, D. Antreasyan^g, P. Arce^x, A. Arefiev^z, A. Atamanchuk^{aj},
T. Azemoon^c, T. Aziz^h, P.V.K.S. Baba^q, P. Bagnaia^{ai}, J.A. Bakken^{ah}, R.C. Ball^c, S. Banerjee^h,
J. Bao^e, R. Barillere^p, L. Barone^{ai}, A. Baschirotto^y, R. Battiston^{af}, A. Bay^r, F. Becattini^o,
J. Bechtluft^a, R. Becker^a, U. Becker^{na,at}, F. Behner^{at}, J. Behrens^{at}, Gy.L. Bencze^l, J. Berdugo^x,
P. Bergesⁿ, B. Bertucci^{af}, B.L. Betev^{an,at}, M. Biasini^{af}, A. Biland^{at}, G.M. Bilei^{af}, R. Bizzarri^{ai},
J.J. Blaising^d, G.J. Bobbink^{p,b}, R. Bock^a, A. Böhm^a, B. Borgia^{ai}, M. Bosetti^y, D. Bourilkov^{ac},
M. Bourquin^r, D. Boutigny^p, B. Bouwens^b, E. Brambilla^{aa}, J.G. Branson^{ak}, I.C. Brock^{ag},
M. Brooks^v, A. Bujak^{aq}, J.D. Burgerⁿ, W.J. Burger^r, J. Busenitz^{ap}, A. Buytenhuijs^{ac}, X.D. Cai^q,
M. Capellⁿ, M. Caria^{af}, G. Carlino^{aa}, A.M. Cartacci^o, R. Castello^y, M. Cerrada^x, F. Cesaroni^{ai},
Y.H. Changⁿ, U.K. Chaturvedi^q, M. Chemarin^w, A. Chen^{av}, C. Chen^f, G. Chen^f, G.M. Chen^f,
H.F. Chen^s, H.S. Chen^f, M. Chenⁿ, W.Y. Chen^{av}, G. Chiefari^{aa}, C.Y. Chien^e, M.T. Choi^{ao},
S. Chungⁿ, C. Civinini^o, I. Clareⁿ, R. Clareⁿ, T.E. Coan^v, H.O. Cohn^{ad}, G. Coignet^d,
N. Colino^p, A. Contin^g, F. Cotorobai^k, X.T. Cui^q, X.Y. Cui^q, T.S. Daiⁿ, R. D'Alessandro^o,
R. de Asmundis^{aa}, A. Degré^d, K. Deiters^{ar}, E. Dénes^l, P. Denes^{ah}, F. DeNotaristefani^{ai},
M. Dhina^{at}, D. DiBitonto^{ap}, M. Diemoz^{ai}, H.R. Dimitrov^{an}, C. Dionisi^{ai}, M. Dittmar^{at},
L. Djambazov^{at}, M.T. Dova^q, E. Drago^{aa}, D. Duchesneau^r, P. Duinker^b, I. Duran^{al}, S. Easo^{af},
H. El Mamouni^w, A. Engler^{ag}, F.J. Epplingⁿ, F.C. Erné^b, P. Extermann^r, R. Fabbretti^{ar},
M. Fabre^{ar}, S. Falciano^{ai}, S.J. Fan^{am}, O. Fackler^u, J. Fay^w, M. Felcini^p, T. Ferguson^{ag},
D. Fernandez^x, G. Fernandez^x, F. Ferroni^{ai}, H. Fesefeldt^a, E. Fiandrini^{af}, J.H. Field^r,
F. Filthaut^{ac}, P.H. Fisher^e, G. Forconi^r, L. Fredj^r, K. Freudenreich^{at}, W. Friebel^{as},
M. Fukushimaⁿ, M. Gailloud^l, Yu. Galaktionov^{z,n}, E. Gallo^o, S.N. Ganguli^{p,h}, P. Garcia-Abia^x,
D. Gele^w, S. Gentile^{ai}, N. Gheordanescu^k, S. Giagu^{ai}, S. Goldfarb^j, Z.F. Gong^s, E. Gonzalez^x,
A. Gougas^e, D. Goujon^r, G. Gratta^{ae}, M. Gruenewald^p, C. Gu^q, M. Guanziroli^q, J.K. Guo^{am},
V.K. Gupta^{ah}, A. Gurtu^h, H.R. Gustafson^c, L.J. Gutay^{aq}, K. Hangarter^a, B. Hartmann^a,
A. Hasan^q, D. Hauschildt^b, C.F. He^{am}, J.T. He^f, T. Hebbeker^p, M. Hebert^{ak}, A. Hervé^p,
K. Hilgers^a, H. Hofer^{at}, H. Hoorani^r, G. Hu^q, G.Q. Hu^{am}, B. Ille^w, M.M. Ilyas^q, V. Innocente^p,
H. Janssen^p, S. Jezequel^d, B.N. Jin^f, L.W. Jones^c, I. Josa-Mutuberria^p, A. Kasser^l,
R.A. Khan^q, Yu. Kamyshkov^{ad}, P. Kapinos^{aj,as}, J.S. Kapustinsky^v, Y. Karyotakis^p, M. Kaur^q,
S. Khokhar^q, M.N. Kienzle-Focacci^r, J.K. Kim^{ao}, S.C. Kim^{ao}, Y.G. Kim^{ao}, W.W. Kinnison^v,
A. Kirkby^{ae}, D. Kirkby^{ae}, S. Kirsch^{as}, W. Kittel^{ac}, A. Klimentov^{n,z}, R. Klöckner^a,
A.C. König^{ac}, E. Koffeman^b, O. Kornadt^a, V. Koutsenko^{n,z}, A. Koulbardi^{aj}, R.W. Kraemer^{ag},
T. Kramerⁿ, V.R. Krastev^{an,af}, W. Krenz^a, A. Krivshich^{aj}, H. Kuijten^{ac}, K.S. Kumar^m,
A. Kunin^{n,z}, G. Landi^o, D. Lanske^a, S. Lanzano^{aa}, A. Lebedevⁿ, P. Lebrun^w, P. Lecomte^{at},
P. Lecoq^p, P. Le Coultre^{at}, D.M. Lee^v, J.S. Lee^{ao}, K.Y. Lee^{ao}, I. Leedom^j, C. Leggett^c,
J.M. Le Goff^p, R. Leiste^{as}, M. Lenti^o, E. Leonardi^{ai}, C. Li^{s,q}, H.T. Li^f, P.J. Li^{am}, J.Y. Liao^{am},
W.T. Lin^{av}, Z.Y. Lin^s, F.L. Linde^b, B. Lindemann^a, L. Lista^{aa}, Y. Liu^q, W. Lohmann^{as},
E. Longo^{ai}, Y.S. Lu^f, J.M. Lubbers^p, K. Lübelmeyer^a, C. Luci^{ai}, D. Luckey^{g,n}, L. Ludovici^{ai},

L. Luminari^{ai}, W. Lustermann^{as}, J.M. Ma^f, W.G. Ma^s, M. MacDermott^{at}, R. Malik^q,
 A. Malinin^z, C. Maña^x, M. Maolinbay^{at}, P. Marchesini^{at}, F. Marion^d, A. Marinⁱ, J.P. Martin^w,
 L. Martinez-Laso^x, F. Marzano^{ai}, G.G.G. Massaro^b, K. Mazumdar^r, P. McBride^m,
 T. McMahon^{aq}, D. McNally^{at}, M. Merk^{ag}, L. Merola^{aa}, M. Meschini^o, W.J. Metzger^{ac}, Y. Mi^t,
 A. Mihul^k, G.B. Mills^v, Y. Mir^q, G. Mirabelli^{ai}, J. Mnich^a, M. Möller^a, B. Monteleoni^o,
 R. Morand^d, S. Morganti^{ai}, N.E. Moulai^q, R. Mount^{ae}, S. Müller^a, A. Nadtochy^{aj}, E. Nagy^l,
 M. Napolitano^{aa}, F. Nessi-Tedaldi^{at}, H. Newman^{ae}, C. Neyer^{at}, M.A. Niaz^q, A. Nippe^a,
 H. Nowak^{as}, G. Organtini^{ai}, D. Pandoulas^a, S. Paoletti^{ai}, P. Paolucci^{aa}, G. Pascale^{ai},
 G. Passaleva^{o,af}, S. Patricelli^{aa}, T. Paul^e, M. Pauluzzi^{af}, C. Paus^a, F. Paus^{at}, Y.J. Pei^a,
 S. Pensotti^y, D. Perret-Gallix^d, J. Perrier^r, A. Pevsner^e, D. Piccolo^{aa}, M. Pieri^p, P.A. Piroué^{ah},
 F. Plasil^{ad}, V. Plyaskin^z, M. Pohl^{at}, V. Pojidaev^{z,o}, H. Postemaⁿ, Z.D. Qi^{am}, J.M. Qian^c,
 K.N. Qureshi^q, R. Raghavan^h, G. Rahal-Callot^{at}, P.G. Rancoita^y, M. Rattaggi^y, G. Raven^b,
 P. Razis^{ab}, K. Read^{ad}, D. Ren^{at}, Z. Ren^q, M. Rescigno^{ai}, S. Reucroft^j, A. Ricker^a, S. Riemann^{as},
 B.C. Riemers^{aq}, K. Riles^c, O. Rind^c, H.A. Rizvi^q, S. Ro^{ao}, F.J. Rodriguez^x, B.P. Roe^c,
 M. Röhner^a, L. Romero^x, S. Rosier-Lees^d, R. Rosmalen^{ac}, Ph. Rosselet^t, W. van Rossum^b,
 S. Roth^a, A. Rubbiaⁿ, J.A. Rubio^p, H. Rykaczewski^{at}, M. Sachwitz^{as}, J. Salicio^p, J.M. Salicio^x,
 G.S. Sanders^v, A. Santocchia^{af}, M.S. Sarakinosⁿ, G. Sartorelli^{g,q}, M. Sassowsky^a, G. Sauvage^d,
 V. Schegelsky^{aj}, D. Schmitz^a, P. Schmitz^a, M. Schneegans^d, H. Schopper^{au}, D.J. Schotanus^{ac},
 S. Shotkinⁿ, H.J. Schreiber^{as}, J. Shukla^{ag}, R. Schulte^a, S. Schulte^a, K. Schultze^a, J. Schwenke^a,
 G. Schwering^a, C. Sciacca^{aa}, I. Scott^m, R. Sehgal^q, P.G. Seiler^{ar}, J.C. Sens^{p,b}, L. Servoli^{af},
 I. Sheer^{ak}, D.Z. Shen^{am}, S. Shevchenko^{ae}, X.R. Shi^{ae}, E. Shumilov^z, V. Shoutko^z, D. Son^{ao},
 A. Sopczak^p, V. Soulimov^{aa}, C. Spartiotis^e, T. Spickermann^a, P. Spillantini^o, R. Starosta^a,
 M. Steuer^{g,n}, D.P. Stickland^{ah}, F. Sticozziⁿ, H. Stone^{ah}, K. Strauch^m, B.C. Stringfellow^{aq},
 K. Sudhakar^h, G. Sultanov^q, L.Z. Sun^{s,q}, G.F. Susinno^r, H. Suter^{at}, J.D. Swain^q, A.A. Syed^{ac},
 X.W. Tang^f, L. Taylor^j, G. Terzi^y, Samuel C.C. Tingⁿ, S.M. Tingⁿ, M. Tonutti^a, S.C. Tonwar^h,
 J. Tóth^l, A. Tsaregorodtsev^{aj}, G. Tsipolitis^{ag}, C. Tully^{ah}, K.L. Tung^f, J. Ulbricht^{at}, L. Urbán^l,
 U. Uwer^a, E. Valente^{ai}, R.T. Van de Walle^{ac}, I. Vetlitsky^z, G. Viertel^{at}, P. Vikas^q, U. Vikas^q,
 M. Vivargent^d, H. Vogel^{ag}, H. Vogt^{as}, I. Vorobiev^z, A.A. Vorobyov^{aj}, L. Vuilleumier^t,
 M. Wadhwa^d, W. Wallraff^a, C. Wangⁿ, C.R. Wang^s, X.L. Wang^s, Y.F. Wangⁿ, Z.M. Wang^{q,s},
 C. Warner^a, A. Weber^a, J. Weber^{at}, R. Weill^t, T.J. Wenaus^u, J. Wenninger^r, M. Whiteⁿ,
 C. Willmott^x, F. Wittgenstein^p, D. Wright^{ah}, S.X. Wu^q, S. Wynhoff^a, B. Wystouchⁿ,
 Y.Y. Xie^{am}, J.G. Xu^f, Z.Z. Xu^s, Z.L. Xue^{am}, D.S. Yan^{am}, B.Z. Yang^s, C.G. Yang^f, G. Yang^q,
 C.H. Ye^q, J.B. Ye^s, Q. Ye^q, S.C. Yeh^{av}, Z.W. Yin^{am}, J.M. You^q, N. Yunus^q, M. Yzerman^b,
 C. Zaccardelli^{ae}, N. Zaitsev^{aa}, P. Zemp^{at}, M. Zeng^q, Y. Zeng^a, D.H. Zhang^b, Z.P. Zhang^{s,q},
 B. Zhouⁱ, G.J. Zhou^f, J.F. Zhou^a, R.Y. Zhu^{ae}, A. Zichichi^{g,p,q} and B.C.C. van der Zwaan^b

^a I. Physikalisches Institut, RWTH, W-5100 Aachen, FRG¹

III. Physikalisches Institut, RWTH, W-5100 Aachen, FRG¹

^b National Institute for High Energy Physics, NIKHEF, NL-1009 DB Amsterdam, The Netherlands

^c University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48109, USA

^d Laboratoire d'Annecy-le-Vieux de Physique des Particules, LAPP, IN2P3-CNRS, B.P. 110, F-74941 Annecy-le-Vieux Cedex, France

^e Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD 21218, USA

^f Institute of High Energy Physics, IHEP, 100039 Beijing, China

^g INFN - Sezione di Bologna, I-40126 Bologna, Italy

^h Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Bombay 400 005, India

ⁱ Boston University, Boston, MA 02215, USA

^j Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115, USA

^k Institute of Atomic Physics and University of Bucharest, R-76900 Bucharest, Romania

^l Central Research Institute for Physics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, H-1525 Budapest 114, Hungary²

- ^m Harvard University, Cambridge, MA 02139, USA
ⁿ Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA 02139, USA
^o INFN - Sezione di Firenze and University of Florence, I-50125 Florence, Italy
^p European Laboratory for Particle Physics, CERN, CH-1211 Geneva 23, Switzerland
^q World Laboratory, FBLJA Project, CH-1211 Geneva 23, Switzerland
^r University of Geneva, CH-1211 Geneva 4, Switzerland
^s Chinese University of Science and Technology, USTC, Hefei, Anhui 230 029, China
^t University of Lausanne, CH-1015 Lausanne, Switzerland
^u Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, Livermore, CA 94550, USA
^v Los Alamos National Laboratory, Los Alamos, NM 87544, USA
^w Institut de Physique Nucléaire de Lyon, IN2P3-CNRS, Université Claude Bernard, F-69622 Villeurbanne Cedex, France
^x Centro de Investigaciones Energeticas, Medioambientales y Tecnológicas, CIEMAT, E-28040 Madrid, Spain
^y INFN - Sezione di Milano, I-20133 Milan, Italy
^z Institute of Theoretical and Experimental Physics, ITEP, Moscow, Russia
^{aa} INFN - Sezione di Napoli and University of Naples, I-80125 Naples, Italy
^{ab} Department of Natural Sciences, University of Cyprus, Nicosia, Cyprus
^{ac} University of Nymegen and NIKHEF, NL-6525 ED Nymegen, The Netherlands
^{ad} Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Oak Ridge, TN 37831, USA
^{ae} California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, CA 91125, USA
^{af} INFN - Sezione di Perugia and Università Degli Studi di Perugia, I-06100 Perugia, Italy
^{ag} Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA 15213, USA
^{ah} Princeton University, Princeton, NJ 08544, USA
^{ai} INFN - Sezione di Roma and University of Rome, "La Sapienza", I-00185 Rome, Italy
^{aj} Nuclear Physics Institute, St. Petersburg, Russia
^{ak} University of California, San Diego, CA 92093, USA
^{al} Dept. de Física de Partículas Elementales, Univ. de Santiago, E-15706 Santiago de Compostela, Spain
^{am} Shanghai Institute of Ceramics, SIC, Shanghai, China
^{an} Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Mechatronics, BU-1113 Sofia, Bulgaria
^{ao} Center for High Energy Physics, Korea Advanced Inst. of Sciences and Technology, 305-701 Taejon, Republic of Korea
^{ap} University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, AL 35486, USA
^{aq} Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 47907, USA
^{ar} Paul Scherrer Institut, PSI, CH-5232 Villigen, Switzerland
^{as} DESY - Institut für Hochenergiephysik, O-1615 Zeuthen, FRG
^{at} Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule, ETH Zürich, CH-8093 Zürich, Switzerland
^{au} University of Hamburg, W-2000 Hamburg, FRG
^{av} High Energy Physics Group, Taiwan, China

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We have searched for lepton flavour violation in Z boson decays into lepton pairs using all data collected with the L3 detector during the 1990, 1991 and 1992 runs on an event sample corresponding to 1 500 000 Z 's produced. At the 95% confidence level the upper limits on the branching ratio for $Z \rightarrow e\mu$ is 0.6×10^{-5} , for $Z \rightarrow e\tau$ this is 1.3×10^{-5} and for $Z \rightarrow \mu\tau$ this is 1.9×10^{-5} .

1. Introduction

In the Standard Model [1,2] lepton flavour is con-

served. However, there is no gauge principle requiring this conservation. Different models [3-9], beyond the Standard Model, allow processes which violate lepton flavour conservation. In theories where such violation arises through mixing with new particles [4,6], the branching ratios for such processes, e.g. $Z \rightarrow \mu\tau$, have been calculated to be as large as 10^{-4} in certain models. The observation of such decays

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would be a clear indication of physics beyond the Standard Model. Here a search for lepton flavour violation in Z decays into $e\mu$, $e\tau$ and $\mu\tau$ is reported using the data collected with the L3 detector during the 1990, 1991 and 1992 runs on an event sample corresponding to 1 500 000 Z 's produced. Direct searches for lepton flavour violation [10–17] have been performed previously by L3 and other experiments. Stringent constraints on violation of μ flavour exist from low- q^2 reactions, such as the absence of the decay $\mu \rightarrow eee$ [14], providing an upper limit [18] on $\text{Br}(Z \rightarrow e\mu)$ of 6.6×10^{-13} . Searches for neutrinoless τ decays $\tau \rightarrow eee$, $\tau \rightarrow \mu\mu\mu$ [12,13] lead to much less stringent limits on $\text{Br}(Z \rightarrow e\tau)$ and $\text{Br}(Z \rightarrow \mu\tau)$.

2. The L3 detector

The fiducial solid angle of the L3 detector [19] is 99% of 4π . The detector consists of a time expansion chamber (TEC) for tracking charged particles, a high resolution electromagnetic calorimeter of BGO crystals, a barrel of scintillation counters, a hadron calorimeter with uranium absorber and proportional wire chamber readout and a muon spectrometer. The luminosity is determined from small-angle Bhabha scattering using BGO electromagnetic calorimeters in the polar angle ranges θ and $\pi - \theta$ between 24.93 and 69.94 mrad. All subdetectors are installed inside a 12 m diameter solenoidal magnet which provides a uniform 0.5 T field along the beam direction. A detailed description of each detector subsystem, and its performance, is given in refs. [11,19].

3. Signature and background

The expected experimental signature of $Z \rightarrow e\mu$, $Z \rightarrow \mu\tau$ and $Z \rightarrow e\tau$ is an electron or muon with an energy close to the beam energy recoiling against a different type of lepton or hadrons from tau decay. The background arises from Standard Model leptonic final states and can be divided into two classes: (i) incorrectly reconstructed e^+e^- and $\mu^+\mu^-$ events; (ii) $\tau^+\tau^-$ events with one or both of the taus decaying into a muon or electron which carries almost all the energy of the tau. Good muon and electron energy resolution is essential to reduce the latter background

while retaining a high detection efficiency. The energy resolution for electrons determined from Bhabha events is 1.3% at 45 GeV, while the muon momentum resolution determined from dimuon events is 2.5%.

About 300 000 Monte Carlo events were generated to study Standard Model backgrounds from e^+e^- , $\mu^+\mu^-$, $\tau^+\tau^-$ and four-fermion channels using various Monte Carlo generators [20–23]. A modified version of the KORALZ [20] Monte Carlo program was used to generate signal events.

4. Preselection and lepton identification

The preselection cuts, used to select a data sample containing high energy dilepton events of all types, are the following:

- The total energy is greater than 30 GeV.
- The number of jets is 2.
- The number of tracks in the TEC is between 1 and 6, to remove hadron events.
- The number of calorimeter clusters is less than 15, to remove hadron events.
- The acolinearity angle between the two jets is smaller than 20° , to remove radiative events.

Jets are reconstructed using a two step algorithm [24] which groups the energy deposited in calorimeters into clusters before collecting the clusters into jets. The clustering algorithm normally reconstructs one cluster for each muon, electron or photon shower, and a few clusters for a hadronic decay of a single τ . Under the above definition of a jet, particles with only one cluster, like electrons, are also considered as jets.

An electron is defined as a geometrical cluster in the electromagnetic calorimeter with an energy larger than 2 GeV matched with a TEC track in the (R, ϕ) plane within 10 mrad. The cluster shower profile should be consistent with that of an electron, i.e. we require $0.97 < E_9/E_{25} < 1.025$, where $E_{9(25)}$ is the corrected sum of energies of 9(25) BGO crystals around the most energetic one, and $\chi^2 < 2$, where χ^2 is obtained by fitting the shape of the cluster to the mean electron shower profile. The electron candidate must be in the fiducial volume defined by $|\cos \theta| < 0.9$.

Muons are identified and their momenta measured in the muon chamber system surrounding the

calorimeters. To be accepted, a muon track must have one track segment in each of the three chamber layers. The accepted muon track must extrapolate back to within 100 mm of the nominal vertex position in the transverse plane and 200 mm in the longitudinal plane. The muon candidate energy must be greater than 3 GeV and it must be in the fiducial volume defined by $|\cos \theta| < 0.75$.

5. $Z \rightarrow e\mu$ channel

For the $Z \rightarrow e\mu$ channel we require one jet to be consistent with a beam energy electron and the other one to be consistent with a beam energy muon. This type of event is essentially free of background and allows a less restrictive selection cut on lepton energy than $Z \rightarrow e\tau$ and $Z \rightarrow \mu\tau$ channels. Fig. 1 shows the normalised electron energy versus the normalised muon momentum for the data events selected. Signal events will populate the region where both normalised energies are close to unity. We require that for the electron candidate the normalised energy should be greater than 0.96 ($\approx 3\sigma$) and for the muon candidate greater than 0.92 ($\approx 3\sigma$). No events lie within this region giving the 95% confidence level limit on the

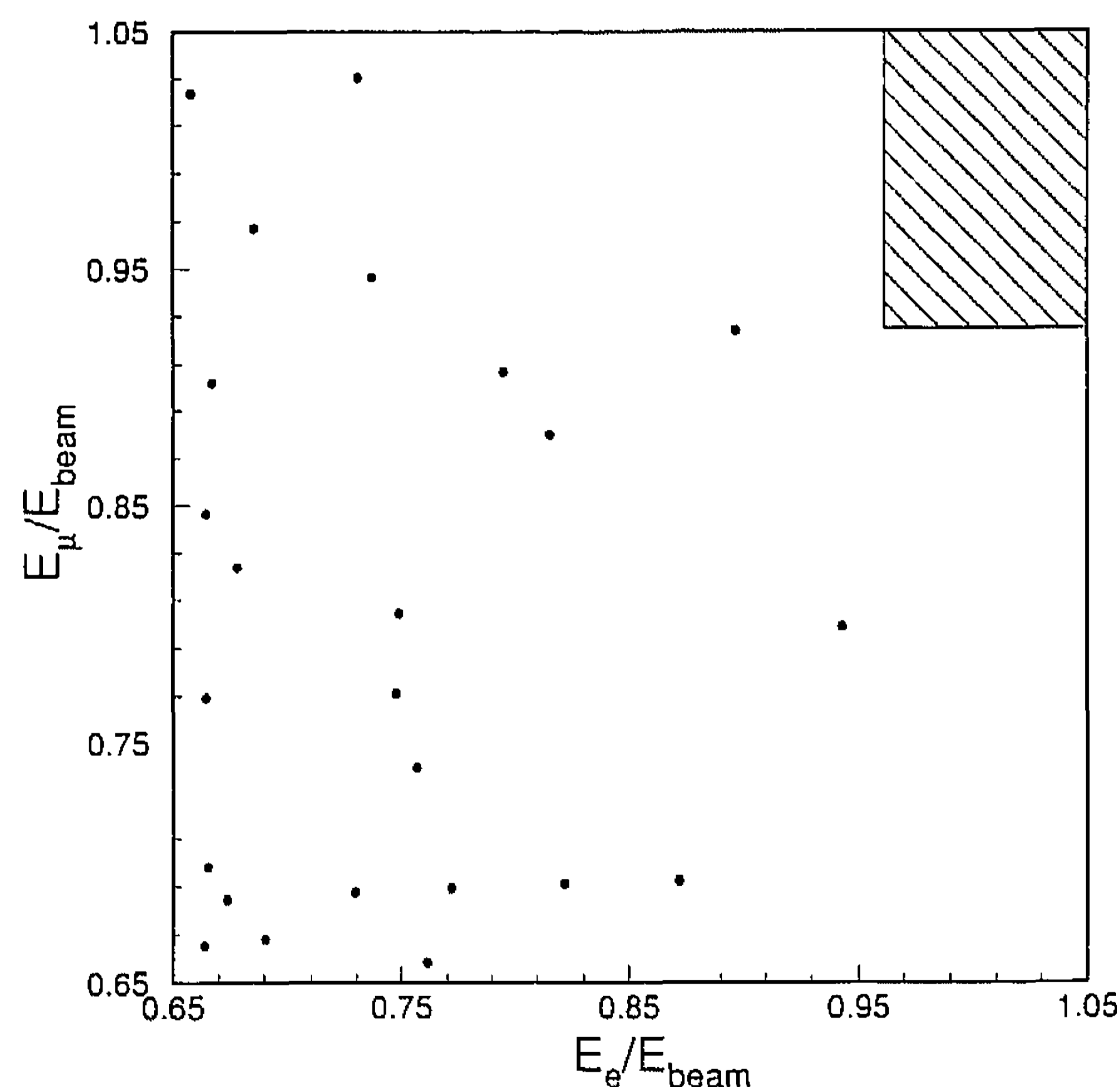


Fig. 1. Muon energy versus electron energy for selected $Z \rightarrow e\mu$ candidate events. The shaded area represents the region corresponding to the signal events.

signal of three events. We apply the above cuts to the sample of the signal and Standard Model background ($\tau^+\tau^-$, e^+e^- and $\mu^+\mu^-$) Monte Carlo events. We find no events in the Standard Model Monte Carlo sample. The efficiency of the analysis as determined by the signal Monte Carlo is $(32.0 \pm 1.0)\%$. This error includes the uncertainty due to the Monte Carlo statistics. The additional systematic error due to the corrected number of hadronic Z decays used for normalization and due to the uncertainties in the detector calibration constants is estimated to be 1.5% [25]. This yields a 95% confidence level limit on the branching ratio of

$$\text{Br}(Z \rightarrow e\mu) < 0.6 \times 10^{-5}.$$

6. $Z \rightarrow e\tau$ channel

For $Z \rightarrow e\tau$ we require one jet to be consistent with a beam energy electron and the other one to be consistent with a τ decay. We consider the following τ decays:

– $\tau \rightarrow \mu\nu\bar{\nu}$. We require that the τ -jet consists of one muon with an energy greater than 3 GeV.

– $\tau \rightarrow e\nu\bar{\nu}$. We require that the τ -jet consists of one electron with an energy less than 30 GeV. The hadronic energy, contained in the τ jet, should be less than 0.5 GeV. To reject the $Z \rightarrow ee(\gamma)$ background we require that the acoplanarity angle between TEC tracks associated with the electron and the τ be more than 3.2 mrad. Fig. 2 shows the distribution of this variable for $Z \rightarrow ee(\gamma)$ as well as $Z \rightarrow e\tau$ events.

– $\tau \rightarrow 1$ prong. We require that the τ -jet, containing only one TEC track, has a total energy larger than 3 GeV and electromagnetic energy less than 30 GeV. The hadronic energy contained in the τ jet should be greater than 0.5 GeV. To reject $Z \rightarrow ee(\gamma)$ events, where one electron passes close to the cracks in the electromagnetic calorimeter and therefore deposits some energy in the hadron calorimeter, we require that the energy in the hadron calorimeter beyond its first $25X_0$ be greater than 10% of the total jet energy. The above cut on the acoplanarity angle between two TEC tracks is also applied.

– $\tau \rightarrow 3$ or 5 prongs. We require that the τ -jet contains at least two TEC tracks, has a total energy larger than 3 GeV, has an electromagnetic energy less than

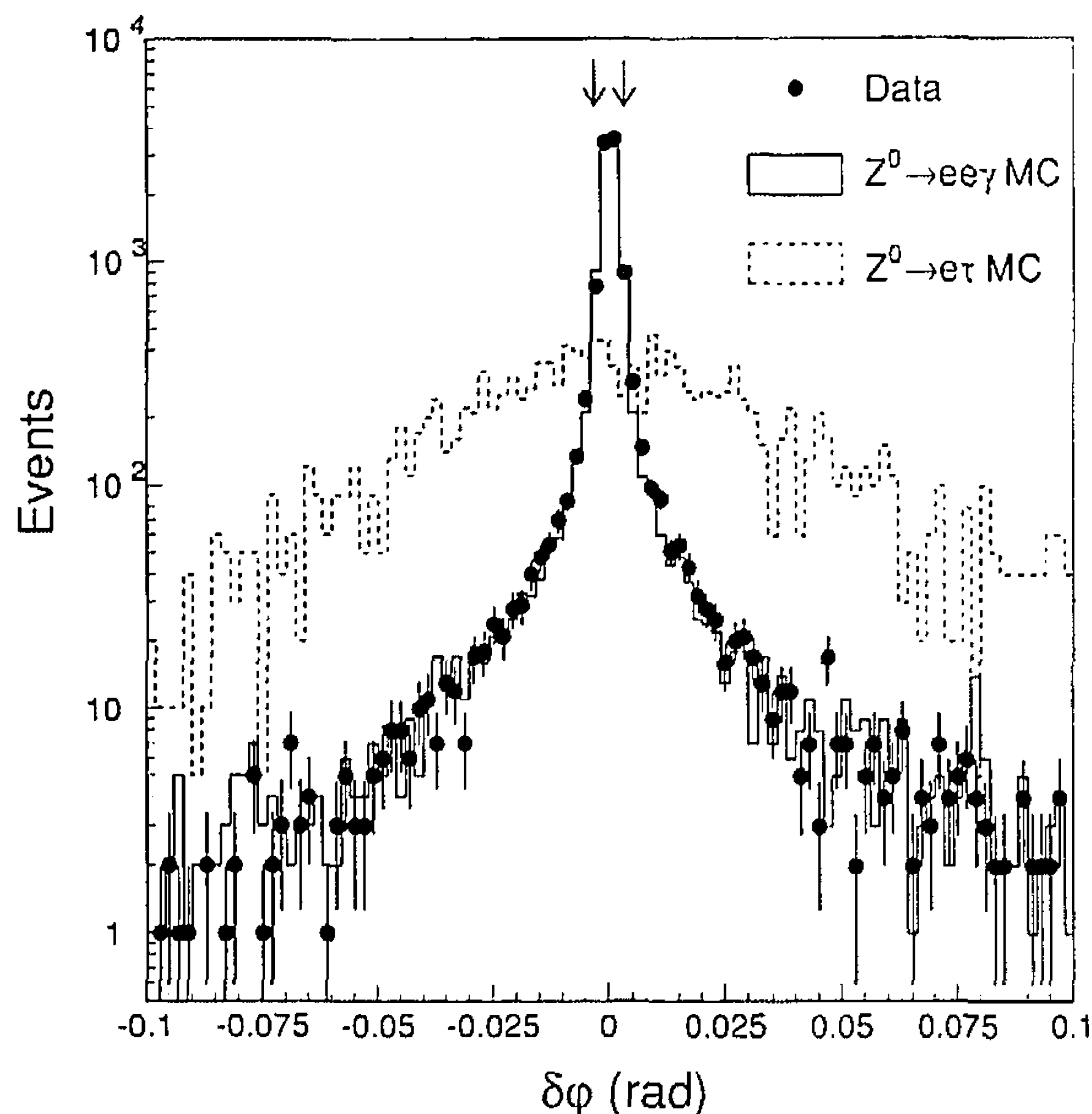


Fig. 2. The distribution of acoplanarity angle between two opposite TEC tracks in the dilepton events. The points are data, the histogram corresponds to the $Z \rightarrow ee(\gamma)$ Monte Carlo events and the dashed line shows the distribution for the signal $Z \rightarrow e\tau$ Monte Carlo events. The normalisation for the signal distribution is arbitrary. The arrows indicate the cuts.

30 GeV and an energy deposition in the hadron calorimeter larger than 1 GeV. To remove four-fermion events, which have no missing energy, we require that energy in the hadronic calorimeter be less than $0.85 (E_{\text{beam}} - E_{\text{ECAL}})$.

Fig. 3 shows the distribution of the electron energy after all cuts but the electron energy cut have been applied. To reject the remaining $Z \rightarrow \tau\tau$ background we require that the energy of the electron should be larger than $0.985 E_{\text{beam}}$. After all cuts this yields an efficiency for the $Z \rightarrow e\tau$ channel of $(23.8 \pm 0.9)\%$.

Table 1 shows the estimated acceptance for the $Z \rightarrow e\tau$ channel for the different τ decay modes together with the number of surviving events after all cuts.

We find two events in the data, while we expect 2.8 ± 0.7 events from $Z \rightarrow \tau\tau$ and $Z \rightarrow ffff$ Monte Carlo. We set a 95% CL upper limit of 4.7 events for the $Z \rightarrow e\tau$ channel, yielding a 95% CL limit on the branching ratio of

$$\text{Br}(Z \rightarrow e\tau) < 1.3 \times 10^{-5}.$$

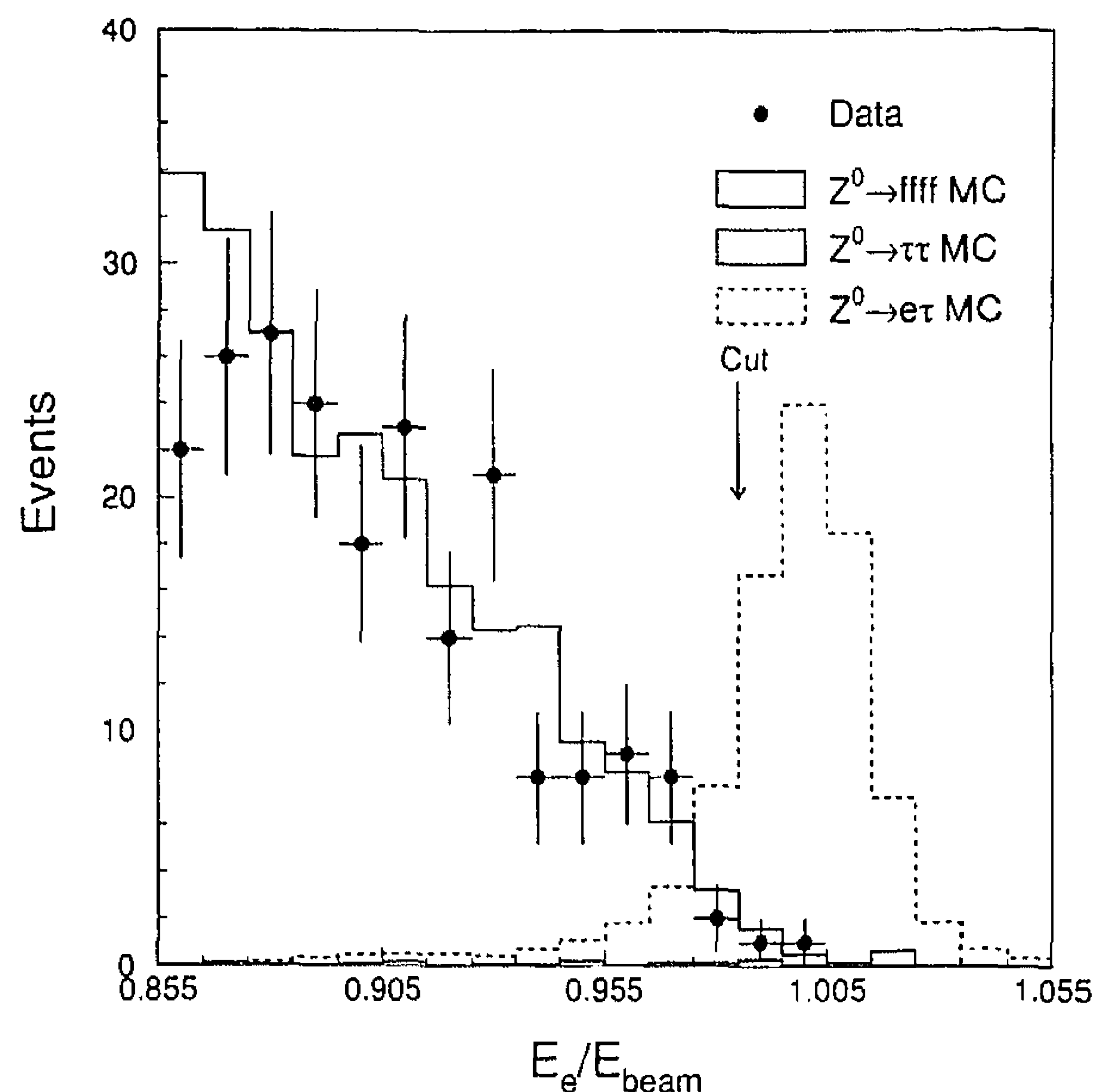


Fig. 3. The distribution of electron energy after all cuts but the electron energy cut have been applied in the $Z \rightarrow e\tau$ selection.

Table 1

Acceptance, expected background events and number of events seen in the data for the $Z \rightarrow e\tau$ channel for different τ decay modes.

Channel	Acceptance (%)	Expected	Seen
$\tau \rightarrow e\nu\bar{\nu}$	4.0 ± 0.4	0	0
$\tau \rightarrow \mu\nu\bar{\nu}$	7.1 ± 0.5	0.7 ± 0.4	0
$\tau \rightarrow 1$ prong	8.5 ± 0.5	1.1 ± 0.4	2
$\tau \rightarrow 3$ or 5 prongs	4.2 ± 0.4	1.0 ± 0.3	0

7. $Z \rightarrow \mu\tau$ channel

For $Z \rightarrow \mu\tau$ we require one jet to be consistent with a beam energy muon and the other one to be consistent with a τ decay. We consider the following τ decays:

- $\tau \rightarrow \mu\nu\bar{\nu}$. Due to the background from dimuon events, this decay channel is not considered.

- $\tau \rightarrow e\nu\bar{\nu}$. We require that the τ -jet consists of one electron with energy greater than 5 GeV. The hadronic energy, contained in the τ jet, should be less than 0.5 GeV. To reject the $Z \rightarrow \mu\mu(\gamma)$ background we require: (i) the acoplanarity between TEC tracks as-

sociated with the muon and the τ to be greater than 3.2 mrad; (ii) there are no track segments in the muon chambers in the hemisphere opposite to the μ candidate.

- $\tau \rightarrow 1$ prong. We require that the τ -jet contains only one TEC track, has a total energy larger than 5 GeV and an electromagnetic energy less than 35 GeV. The hadronic energy contained in the τ jet should be greater than 0.5 GeV. To reject the $Z \rightarrow \mu\mu(\gamma)$ background, the slower profile of the τ jet in the hadron calorimeter should be inconsistent with that of a muon [10]. Cuts (i) and (ii) from the previous decay channel are also applied.

- $\tau \rightarrow 3$ or 5 prongs. We require that the τ -jet contains at least two TEC tracks and has a total energy greater than 5 GeV. There must be no track segments in muon chambers in the hemisphere opposite to the μ candidate.

Fig. 4 shows the distribution of the muon energy after all cuts but the electron energy cut have been applied. To reject the remaining $Z \rightarrow \tau\tau$ background we require that the energy of the muon should be larger than $0.97E_{\text{beam}}$. After all cuts this yields an efficiency for the $Z \rightarrow \mu\tau$ channel of $(22.0 \pm 0.9)\%$.

Table 2 shows the estimated acceptance for the $Z \rightarrow \mu\tau$ channel for the different τ decay modes to-

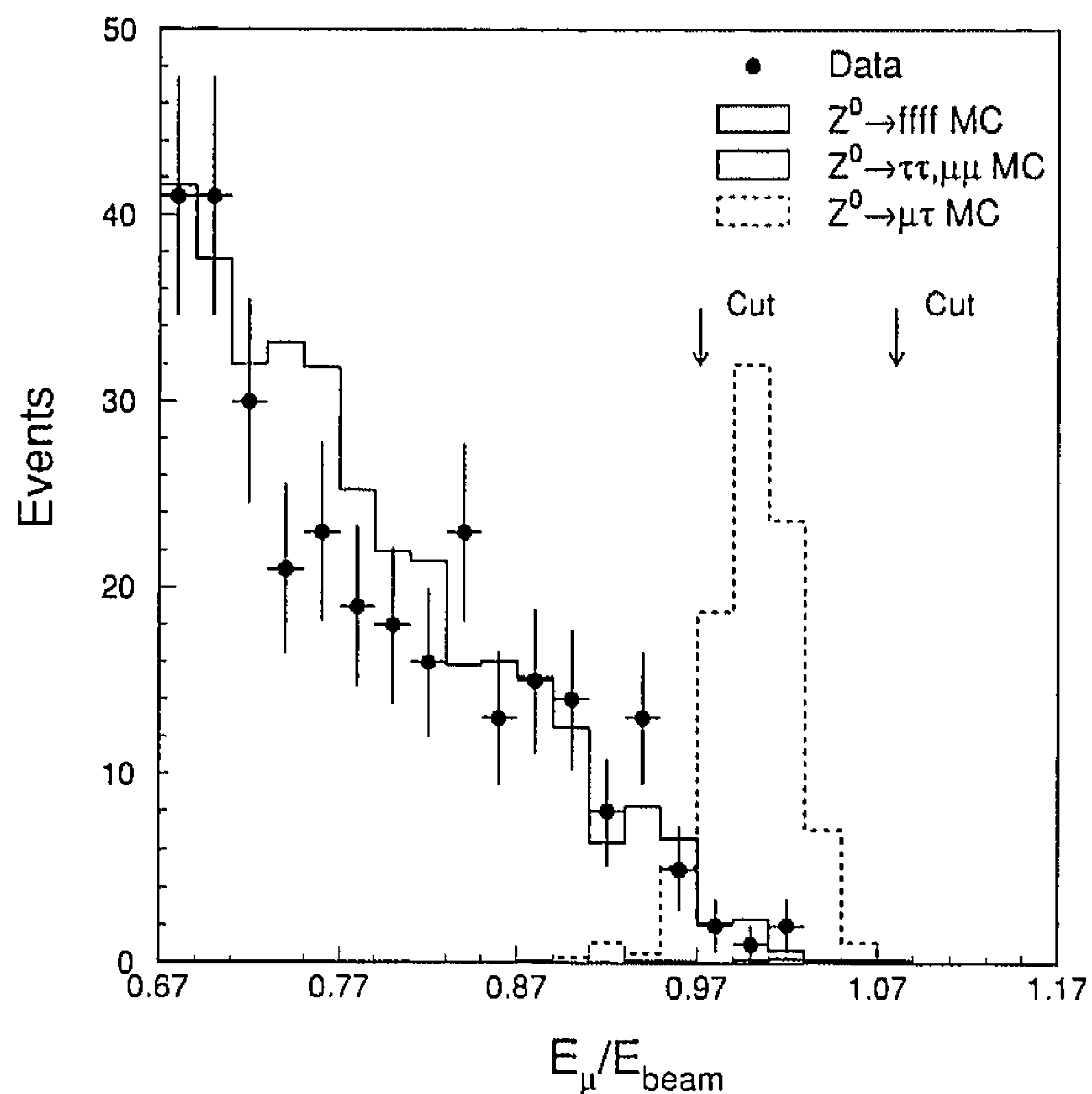


Fig. 4. The distribution of muon energy after all cuts but the muon energy cut have been applied in the $Z \rightarrow \mu\tau$ selection.

Table 2

Acceptance, expected background events and number of events seen in the data for the $Z \rightarrow \mu\tau$ channel for different τ decay modes.

Channel	Acceptance (%)	Expected	Seen
$\tau \rightarrow e\nu\bar{\nu}$	5.0 ± 0.4	1.8 ± 0.8	1
$\tau \rightarrow 1$ prong	11.8 ± 0.6	3.4 ± 0.8	3
$\tau \rightarrow 3$ or 5 prongs	5.2 ± 0.5	0.7 ± 0.3	1

gether with the number of surviving events after all cuts.

We find 5 events in data, while we expect 5.9 ± 1.2 events from $Z \rightarrow \tau\tau$, $Z \rightarrow \mu\mu$ and $Z \rightarrow ffff$ Monte Carlo. We set a 95% CL upper limit of 6.2 events for the $Z \rightarrow \mu\tau$ channel, yielding a 95% CL limit on the branching ratio of

$$\text{Br}(Z \rightarrow \mu\tau) < 1.9 \times 10^{-5}.$$

8. Conclusion

We have searched for lepton flavour violating decays of the Z boson, obtaining the limits

$$\text{Br}(Z \rightarrow e\mu) < 0.6 \times 10^{-5},$$

$$\text{Br}(Z \rightarrow e\tau) < 1.3 \times 10^{-5},$$

$$\text{Br}(Z \rightarrow \mu\tau) < 1.9 \times 10^{-5}.$$

These limits are approximately 5 times better than previously published LEP results [15–17].

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