Measurement of the Absolute Branching Fraction and Decay Asymmetry of $\Lambda \rightarrow n\gamma$

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The radiative hyperon decay $\Lambda \to n\gamma$ is studied using $(10087 \pm 44) \times 10^6 \ J/\psi$ events collected with the BESIII detector operating at BEPCII. The absolute branching fraction of the decay $\Lambda \to n\gamma$ is determined to be $(0.832 \pm 0.038_{\rm stat} \pm 0.054_{\rm syst}) \times 10^{-3}$, which is a factor of 2.1 lower and 5.6 standard deviations different than the previous measurement. By analyzing the joint angular distribution of the decay products, the first determination of the decay asymmetry α_{γ} is reported with a value of $-0.16 \pm 0.10_{\rm stat} \pm 0.05_{\rm syst}$.

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Weak radiative transitions of hadrons are governed by the interplay of the electromagnetic, weak, and strong interactions [1] and involve parity violating (p.v.) and parity conserving (p.c.) amplitudes. According to Hara's theorem [2], the p.v. amplitude of radiative hyperon decays, $B_i \to B_f \gamma$, vanishes in the limit of SU(3) flavor symmetry. Taking into account the breaking of this symmetry in the quark model, the decay asymmetry α_{ν} , given by the interference between p.v. and p.c. amplitudes, is expected to be positive for decays such as $\Sigma^+ \to p\gamma$, where the s quark in the initial state baryon decays to a d quark. It was, therefore, a surprise when several experiments reported a large negative value of the decay asymmetry for this process [3–7]. For other radiative hyperon decays, measurements have found nonvanishing positive decay asymmetries [8,9]. The disagreement between theoretical expectation and experimental results provoked wide interest in these processes, and various solutions to the puzzle were proposed [10–22]. It was suggested that the validity of Hara's theorem could be confirmed by determining the sign of the $\Lambda \to n\gamma$ decay asymmetry [23], a positive value indicating the theorem's violation.

In the three previous measurements of decay $\Lambda \to n\gamma$ performed by two fixed target experiments [24–26], the branching fraction (BF) was obtained from the ratio $\mathcal{B}_{\Lambda \to n\gamma}/\mathcal{B}_{\Lambda \to n\pi^0}$. Only the result from Ref. [26] is considered by the Particle Data Group (PDG) [27]. Using the electron-positron collider data, BESIII is in an excellent position to perform an absolute branching fraction measurement. Benefitting from the excellent kinematic fit technique exploiting the known energy of the initial state, the dominant background $\Lambda \to n\pi^0$ decay can be better separated than in the previous measurements. The decay asymmetry of $\Lambda \to n\gamma$, however, which is essential for the test of Hara's theorem, has not been measured so far.

At BESIII, a measurement of the $\Lambda \to n\gamma$ decay utilizing the large yield of $\Lambda\bar{\Lambda}$ pairs from $J/\psi \to \Lambda\bar{\Lambda}$ [28] is accomplished using a double-tag (DT) technique [29]. The $J/\psi \to \Lambda\bar{\Lambda}$ events are identified by reconstructing the pionic decay $\bar{\Lambda} \to \bar{p}\pi^+$ ($\Lambda \to p\pi^-$), denoted as single tag (ST). Then a DT event consisting of an ST $\bar{\Lambda}$ (Λ) candidate accompanied with a $\Lambda \to n\gamma$ ($\bar{\Lambda} \to \bar{n}\gamma$) candidate is selected. The absolute BF of the decay $\Lambda \to n\gamma$ is given by

$$\mathcal{B}_{\Lambda \to n\gamma} = \frac{N_{\rm DT}/\varepsilon_{\rm DT}}{N_{\rm ST}/\varepsilon_{\rm ST}},\tag{1}$$

where $N_{\rm ST}$ ($N_{\rm DT}$) and $\varepsilon_{\rm ST}$ ($\varepsilon_{\rm DT}$) are the ST (DT) yield and the corresponding detection efficiency. Here and throughout this Letter, charge-conjugate channels are implied unless explicitly specified.

A previous BESIII study [30] showed that the Λ from $J/\psi \to \Lambda\bar{\Lambda}$ is transversely polarized with a magnitude reaching 25%. This polarization can be used to determine the decay asymmetry α_{γ} in the $\Lambda \to n\gamma$ decay from the

angular distribution of the daughter baryons from the $J/\psi \to \Lambda\bar{\Lambda}$ process [31]. Generally, the joint angular distribution \mathcal{W} of $J/\psi \to \bar{\Lambda}(\to \bar{p}\pi^+)\Lambda(\to n\gamma)$ can be expressed as

$$\begin{split} \mathcal{W}(\xi; \alpha_{\psi}, \Delta\Phi, \alpha_{\gamma}, \alpha_{+}) &= 1 + \alpha_{\psi} \cos^{2}\theta_{\Lambda} + \alpha_{\gamma}\alpha_{+} [\sin^{2}\theta_{\Lambda}(n_{1}^{x}n_{2}^{x} - \alpha_{\psi}n_{1}^{y}n_{2}^{y}) \\ &+ (\cos^{2}\theta_{\Lambda} + \alpha_{\psi})n_{1}^{z}n_{2}^{z}] \\ &+ \alpha_{\gamma}\alpha_{+}\sqrt{1 - \alpha_{\psi}^{2}} \cos(\Delta\Phi) \sin\theta_{\Lambda} \cos\theta_{\Lambda}(n_{1}^{x}n_{2}^{z} + n_{1}^{z}n_{2}^{x}) \\ &+ \sqrt{1 - \alpha_{\psi}^{2}} \sin(\Delta\Phi) \sin\theta_{\Lambda} \cos\theta_{\Lambda}(\alpha_{\gamma}n_{1}^{y} + \alpha_{+}n_{2}^{y}), \end{split}$$

$$(2)$$

where $\hat{\mathbf{n}}_1$ ($\hat{\mathbf{n}}_2$) is the unit vector in the direction of the neutron (antiproton) in the Λ ($\bar{\Lambda}$) rest frame. The components of $\hat{\bf n}_1$ and $\hat{\mathbf{n}}_2$ are (n_1^x, n_1^y, n_1^z) and (n_2^x, n_2^y, n_2^z) , in a coordinate system where the z axis of the Λ rest frame is oriented along the momentum \mathbf{p}_{Λ} at an angle θ_{Λ} with respect to the e^- beam direction. The y axis is perpendicular to the production plane and oriented along the vector $\mathbf{p}_{\Lambda} \times \mathbf{k}_{-}$, where \mathbf{k}_{-} is the e^{-} beam momentum in the J/ψ rest frame. More details of the J/ψ rest frame can be found in Sec. I of the Supplemental Material [32]. For each event, the full set of kinematic variables $(\theta_{\Lambda}, \hat{\mathbf{n}}_1, \hat{\mathbf{n}}_2)$ is denoted by ξ . Furthermore, α_{ψ} and $\Delta\Phi$ denote the absolute ratio of the two helicity amplitudes of $J/\psi \to \Lambda\bar{\Lambda}$ and their relative phase, respectively, and α_{ν} (α_{\perp}) is the decay asymmetry of $\Lambda \to n\gamma (\bar{\Lambda} \to \bar{p}\pi^+)$. For the charge-conjugate channel, the amplitude form is identical, where the decay asymmetry of $\bar{\Lambda} \to \bar{n}\gamma \ (\Lambda \to p\pi^-)$ is denoted as $\bar{\alpha}_{\nu}$ (α_{-}).

In this Letter, we report the absolute BF and the decay asymmetry of $\Lambda \rightarrow n\gamma$ from $(10087 \pm 44) \times 10^6 J/\psi$ events [35] collected at the BESIII detector [36,37] operating at the BEPCII collider [38]. Different selection techniques are used for the charge-conjugate channels with different detection efficiencies, but leading to compatible results. Simulated data samples produced with GEANT4based [39] Monte Carlo (MC) software, including a detailed geometric description of the BESIII detector and the detector response, are used to determine the detection efficiencies and estimate background contributions. A sample of simulated J/ψ decay events (the inclusive MC sample), corresponding to the luminosity of data, is used to study background events. Signal MC samples, including a sample of $5.6 \times 10^7 J/\psi \rightarrow \bar{\Lambda}(\rightarrow \bar{p}\pi^+)\Lambda(\rightarrow \text{anything})$ and a sample of $4 \times 10^5 J/\psi \rightarrow \bar{\Lambda}(\rightarrow \bar{p}\pi^+)\Lambda(\rightarrow n\gamma)$, are generated to estimate the ST and DT signal efficiencies, respectively. The joint angular distributions are generated according to Eq. (2), where α_{γ} is adopted from this analysis and $\alpha_w = 0.461 \pm 0.006 \pm 0.007$, $\Delta \Phi = 42.4 \pm 0.6 \pm 0.007$ 0.5° and $\alpha_{+} = -0.758 \pm 0.010 \pm 0.007$ from Ref. [30]. Moreover, a sample of $2 \times 10^7 J/\psi \rightarrow \bar{\Lambda}(\rightarrow \bar{p}\pi^+)\Lambda(\rightarrow$ $n\pi^0$) events is generated to study the dominant background.

The ST $\bar{\Lambda}$ candidate is reconstructed through the dominant decay mode $\bar{\Lambda} \to \bar{p}\pi^+$. Charged tracks are detected in the main drift chamber (MDC) as in Ref. [30]. The momentum ranges of pions and anti-protons from the Λ decays are well separated, thus the tracks with momenta less than 0.5 GeV/c are assigned to be pions, otherwise antiprotons. In addition, measurements of the specific ionization energy loss in the MDC and the flight time by the time-of-flight system are combined to perform particle identification for the (anti-)proton candidate. They are required to have the largest likelihood for the particle type selected among the pion, kaon, and proton hypotheses. Events with at least one anti-proton and one positively charged pion are selected. A vertex fit is performed to each $\bar{p}\pi^+$ pair, and the combination with the minimum $\chi^2_{\rm vtx}$ of the vertex fit is regarded as the $\bar{\Lambda}$ candidate for further analysis. The $\bar{\Lambda}$ candidate is required to have $\chi^2_{\rm vtx}$ less than 20, an invariant mass within 8 MeV/ c^2 of the nominal Λ mass [27] and a decay length relative to the interaction point larger than twice its resolution.

To identify events with $J/\psi \to \Lambda\bar{\Lambda}$ and reduce the background contributions from $J/\psi \to \bar{\Lambda} + {\rm anything}$ which are not due to $J/\psi \to \Lambda\bar{\Lambda}$, a recoil mass $M_{\bar{\Lambda}}^{\rm rec} = \sqrt{(E_{\rm c.m.} - E_{\bar{\Lambda}})^2 - P_{\bar{\Lambda}}^2}$ is defined, where $E_{\rm c.m.}$ is the center-of-mass (c.m.) energy, $E_{\bar{\Lambda}}$ is the energy and $P_{\bar{\Lambda}}$ is the momentum of the ST $\bar{\Lambda}$ candidate. $P_{\bar{\Lambda}}$ is determined through the vertex fit of \bar{p} and π^+ . The recoil mass is required to be within $1.03 < M_{\bar{\Lambda}}^{\rm rec} < 1.18~{\rm GeV}/c^2$. A maximum likelihood fit of the distribution of $M_{\bar{\Lambda}}^{\rm rec}$ is performed to determine the signal yield, which details of can be found in Sec. II of the Supplemental Material [32]. The yields of ST Λ and $\bar{\Lambda}$ candidates from the fits are summarized in Table I. The background contribution is less than 1%, which is validated by the inclusive MC sample.

On the signal side, we search for $\Lambda \to n\gamma$ decay from the residual neutral particles in the ST events. Good neutral showers in the electromagnetic calorimeter (EMC) are primarily selected as in Ref. [30]. To reject secondary showers originating from charged tracks, the shower

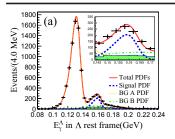
TABLE I. The results of fits for the decays $\Lambda \to n\gamma$ and $\bar{\Lambda} \to \bar{n}\gamma$ decays. The BF and α_{γ} values are given both for individual and simultaneous fits. The first (second) uncertainties are statistical (systematic).

Decay mode	$\Lambda \to n \gamma$	$\bar{\Lambda} \to \bar{n} \gamma$
$N_{\rm ST}~(\times 10^3)$	6853.2 ± 2.6	7036.2 ± 2.7
$\varepsilon_{\mathrm{ST}}$ (%)	51.13 ± 0.01	52.53 ± 0.01
$N_{ m DT}$	723 ± 40	498 ± 41
$\varepsilon_{\mathrm{DT}}$ (%)	6.58 ± 0.04	4.32 ± 0.03
BF ($\times 10^{-3}$)	$0.820 \pm 0.045 \pm 0.066$	$0.862 \pm 0.071 \pm 0.084$
	$0.832 \pm 0.038 \pm 0.054$	
α_{γ}	$-0.13 \pm 0.13 \pm 0.03$	$0.21 \pm 0.15 \pm 0.06$
<u>.</u>	$-0.16 \pm 0.10 \pm 0.05$	

candidates are required to be apart from antiproton tracks with an opening angle of 20°. There are two neutral particles in the final states of the signal process. The radiative photon produces a shower in the EMC with deposited energy less than 400 MeV. With a probability of 0.65, the \bar{n} annihilates in the EMC and produces several secondary particles. The most energetic shower with an energy deposition larger than 0.4 GeV is regarded as an \bar{n} candidate. The *n*, meanwhile, which is difficult to identify due to its low interaction efficiency and its small energy deposition, is treated as a missing particle. Therefore, only the γ and \bar{n} are selected in this analysis. At least one shower is required as a γ candidate in an event for $\Lambda \to n\gamma$ decay, and at least two showers as γ and \bar{n} in an event for $\bar{\Lambda} \to \bar{n}\gamma$ decay. For the reconstruction of $\Lambda \rightarrow n\gamma$ decay, a oneconstraint (1C) kinematic fit is applied by imposing energymomentum conservation of the candidate particles in the hypothetical $J/\psi \to \bar{\Lambda} n \gamma$ process, where the neutron is set as a missing particle. On the other hand, for the reconstruction of $\bar{\Lambda} \to \bar{n}\gamma$ decay, the multiplicity of noise showers generated from anti-neutron is higher than that in $\Lambda \to n\gamma$ decay, a 3C kinematic fit is imposed for the $J/\psi \to$ $\Lambda \bar{n} \gamma$ process, where the direction of the \bar{n} is measured and the energy is unmeasured. For events with multiple photon candidates, the combination giving the minimum χ^2_{1C} (χ^2_{3C}) is retained for the analysis. Furthermore, χ_{1C}^2 (χ_{3C}^2) is required to be less than 10 (15).

Detailed MC studies show that the dominant background contribution comes from the $\Lambda \to n\pi^0$ decay with its large BF of 35.8% [27], while other background processes are almost negligible. The background can be classified into two categories: first, events with the detected photon from the π^0 decay, denoted as BG A, and second, events with the detected photon not from the π^0 decay, denoted as BG B. In the latter case, the photons arise from noise or a shower from secondary products of other particles. In order to suppress BG A, a 1C (3C) kinematic fit under the hypothesis $J/\psi \to \bar{\Lambda}n\gamma\gamma$ $(J/\psi \to \Lambda\bar{n}\gamma\gamma)$ is performed, and events surviving the kinematic fit and with a $\gamma\gamma$ invariant mass $M_{\gamma\gamma}$ within 20 MeV/ c^2 of the π^0 nominal mass [27] are rejected. To suppress BG B, the detected photon is required to have an energy larger than 150 MeV and an opening angle larger than 20° from the (anti-) neutron candidate. Additionally, for BG A and BG B a boosted decision tree (BDT) is applied on the detected photon to discriminate signal photons from other showers, based on the measured variables, i.e., deposited energy and its second moment, number of hits, Zernike moment (A_{42}) , and deposition shape [40]. The response of the BDT output is required to be larger than 0.3, after which 86.8% (92.8%) of the BG A and 99.5% (99.7%) of the BG B events are rejected with 44.6% (48.4%) loss of the signal efficiency for the $\Lambda \to n\gamma(\bar{\Lambda} \to \bar{n}\gamma)$ decay.

The distribution of the photon energy in the Λ rest frame E_{γ}^{Λ} after all selection criteria is shown in Fig. 1 for the



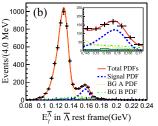


FIG. 1. Distributions of E_{γ}^{Λ} for (a) $\Lambda \to n\gamma$ and (b) $\bar{\Lambda} \to \bar{n}\gamma$ decays in the Λ and $\bar{\Lambda}$ rest frame, respectively. The black dots with error bars represent data. The red solid, blue dashed, orange dotted, and green dash-dotted lines denote the fit result, signal, BG A, and BG B contributions, respectively. The green histograms indicate the BG B from MC simulation after normalization. The insets show the details of the fit in the signal region.

decay $\Lambda \to n\gamma \ (\Lambda \to \bar{n}\gamma)$, where the predominant peak around 0.13 GeV is from BG A, and the second peak around 0.15 GeV corresponds to the signal. To determine the DT signal yields, an unbinned extended maximum likelihood fit is performed to the E_{ν}^{Λ} distributions. The signal and BG A are modeled by the MC simulated shape convolved with a Gaussian function. Since BG B involves a fake photon and is difficult to be modeled by the MC simulation, its lineshape is obtained by a data-driven approach with a control sample of $\Lambda \to n\pi^0 (\to \gamma\gamma)$ decay, and the photon candidates used in the kinematic fit are from noise photons in the EMC rather than the two signal photons from $\pi^0 \to \gamma \gamma$ decay. The DT yields obtained from fits are summarized in Table I. The BFs determined according to Eq. (1) are found to be consistent for the two charge-conjugate modes. Therefore, a simultaneous fit, assuming the same BF for the two modes, is performed, and the results are given in bold font in Table I. The total systematic uncertainty on the BF measurement is estimated to be 6.5%, including uncertainties from the photon and antineutron detection efficiency, kinematic fit, invariant $M_{\gamma\gamma}$ mass selection window, opening angle between photon and (anti-)neutron, BDT output for the photon, MC model due to the choice of α_{ν} , and fit procedure. It is worth noting that the dominant systematic uncertainty is from the BG B shape modeling in the fit, to be 4.8%, which is due to the limited statistics of the control sample for shape extraction. More details can be found in Sec. III of the Supplemental Material [32].

The decay asymmetry α_{γ} is determined using Eq. (2) with a maximum likelihood fit. A total of 1994 candidate events from charge-conjugate modes within a range of (0.145,0.17) GeV around E_{γ}^{Λ} are used in the fit, with an estimated fraction of background events of 43.3%. In the fit of α_{γ} , the likelihood function of the *i*th event is calculated through the probability density function (PDF):

$$\mathcal{P}(\xi^{i}; \alpha_{w}, \Delta\Phi, \alpha_{\gamma}, \alpha_{+}) = \mathcal{CW}(\xi^{i}; \alpha_{w}, \Delta\Phi, \alpha_{\gamma}, \alpha_{+}) \epsilon(\xi^{i}), \tag{3}$$

where $\mathcal{C}^{-1} = \int \mathcal{W}(\xi; \alpha_{\psi}, \Delta\Phi, \alpha_{\gamma}, \alpha_{+}) \varepsilon(\xi) d\xi$ is the normalization factor evaluated by a phase space (PHSP) MC sample, and α_{ψ} , $\Delta\Phi$, α_{+} are fixed to the values in Ref. [30]. The BG A and BG B contributions to the likelihood value are estimated with MC samples and subtracted in the calculation of the likelihood function. We fit the $\Lambda \to n\gamma$ and $\bar{\Lambda} \to \bar{n}\gamma$ decay modes individually, and the results agree within statistical uncertainties as summarized in Table I. A simultaneous fit, assuming the same magnitude of α_{γ} but with opposite signs for the charge-conjugate modes, is used to determine the decay asymmetry, yielding $\alpha_{\gamma}(\Lambda \to n\gamma) = -0.16 \pm 0.10$, where the uncertainty is statistical. The polarization is strongly dependent on the Λ direction $\cos\theta_{\Lambda}$ and indicates the amplitude of the decay asymmetry. The $n_{1}^{\gamma}(n_{2}^{\gamma})$ moment

$$\mu(\cos\theta_{\Lambda}) = \frac{m}{N} \sum_{i=1}^{N_k} n_{1(2)}^{y}, \tag{4}$$

is proportional to the product of the Λ polarization and its decay asymmetry. It is calculated for m=10 bins in $\cos\theta_{\Lambda}$. Here, N is the total number of events in the data sample, and N_k is the number of events in the kth $\cos\theta_{\Lambda}$ bin. Figure 2 shows the projection of the global fit together with data and PHSP MC results. The fit result for $\bar{\Lambda} \to \bar{p}\pi^+$ decay clearly deviates from the PHSP curve, while the one for $\Lambda \to n\gamma$ decay is consistent with PHSP. The difference in magnitude of the moments for $\bar{\Lambda} \to \bar{p}\pi^+$ and $\Lambda \to n\gamma$ decays implies different values of the decay asymmetries since the polarization is the same for $\bar{\Lambda}$ and Λ . The systematic

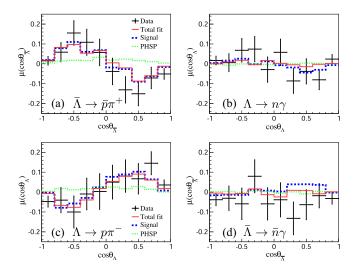


FIG. 2. Polarization moment $\mu(\cos\theta_{\bar{\Lambda}(\Lambda)})$ vs $\cos\theta_{\bar{\Lambda}(\Lambda)}$ for (a) $\bar{\Lambda} \to \bar{p}\pi^+$, (b) $\Lambda \to n\gamma$ decays in the process $J/\psi \to \bar{\Lambda}(\to \bar{p}\pi^+)\Lambda(\to n\gamma)$, and moment distribution $\mu(\cos\theta_{\Lambda(\bar{\Lambda})})$ vs $\cos\theta_{\Lambda(\bar{\Lambda})}$ for (c) $\Lambda \to p\pi^-$ and (d) $\bar{\Lambda} \to \bar{n}\gamma$ decays in the process $J/\psi \to \Lambda(\to p\pi^-)\bar{\Lambda}(\to \bar{n}\gamma)$. Dots with error bars indicate data and red solid lines show the fit result. The blue dashed and green dotted lines represent the moment for signal and PHSP MC, respectively.

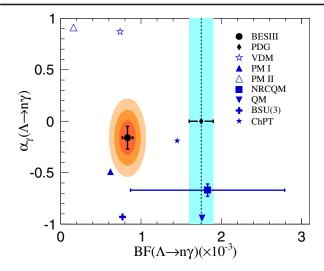


FIG. 3. Two dimensional distribution of the BF and decay asymmetry of $\Lambda \to n\gamma$ decay. The black dot and diamond with error bars denote the BESIII result and the PDG value, respectively. Other symbols in blue stand for the results predicted in the vector dominance model (VDM) [16], the pole models (PM I [17] and PM II [18]), the nonrelativistic constituent quark model (NRCQM) [19], the quark model (QM) [20], the broken SU(3) [BSU(3)] [21], and the chiral perturbation theory (ChPT) [22]. The contours in orange represent 68.2%, 95.4%, and 99.7% confidence level of the BF and α_{γ} .

uncertainty on α_{γ} is estimated to be 0.05, originating from similar sources as in the BF measurement. The main systematic uncertainty sources come from the kinematic fit, $M_{\gamma\gamma}$ mass window, opening angle between photon and (anti-)neutron, to be 0.024 or 0.022 (for 1C or 3C), 0.016, and 0.028, respectively. Detailed studies are summarized in Sec. IIII of the Supplemental Material [32].

In summary, we report the first absolute BF measurement result of $\Lambda \to n\gamma$ decay to be $(0.832 \pm 0.038_{\rm stat} \pm 0.054_{\rm syst}) \times 10^{-3}$ based on the double-tag method. As shown in Fig. 3, the measured value of the BF with improved precision, is a factor of two smaller, and 5.6 standard deviations different than the previous measurement of $(1.75 \pm 0.15) \times 10^{-3}$ [26]. By analyzing the joint angular distribution of the decay products, the decay asymmetry α_{γ} is determined for the first time, at a value of $-0.16 \pm 0.10_{\rm stat} \pm 0.05_{\rm syst}$. The BF and α_{γ} results of charge-conjugate modes are consistent within uncertainties, and there is no indication of any CP violation with the current dataset.

This analysis is the first measurement of radiative hyperon decays at an electron–positron collider experiment, making use of the huge number of polarized hyperons produced in J/ψ decays with clean background. The result of the decay asymmetry indicates there is no evidence that Hara's theorem does not hold for hyperon radiative decays. The decay asymmetry value does not agree well with predictions such as the Pole model [17], the broken SU(3) pole model [21] or the nonrelativistic constituent

quark model [19], which point to a large negative value. Our results are in good agreement with a recent prediction in covariant baryon ChPT [41], which can describe simultaneously the $\Xi^- \to \Sigma^- \gamma$, $\Xi^0 \to \Sigma^0 \gamma$, and $\Xi^0 \to \Lambda \gamma$ decays as well. Our BF value is consistent with the lower unitary bound obtained by considering contributions of $\Lambda \to p\pi^-$ and $\Lambda \to n\pi^0$ weak hadronic decays together with $p\pi^- \to n\gamma$ and $n\pi^0 \to n\gamma$ rescattering, respectively [42].

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