

Investigation of Alpha-Decay Properties of Superheavy Nuclei within RMF Models

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Abstract

The alpha-decay properties of superheavy nuclei (SHN) offer essential insights on nuclear stability and the anticipated island of stability. This study examines the ground-state characteristics and α -decay behavior of specific superheavy isotopes utilizing the Relativistic Mean Field (RMF) framework. Binding energies, quadrupole deformation parameters, charge radii, and neutron separation energies are computed utilizing parameter sets including NL3, NL3*, and DD-ME2. The α -decay energies (Q_α) are derived using estimated binding energies, while the associated half-lives are assessed using empirical relations such as the Viola–Seaborg, Royer, Universal Decay Law (UDL), and Modified Brown formulae. The outcomes are juxtaposed with existing experimental data and theoretical frameworks. The research delineates areas of increased stability adjacent to anticipated shell closures and aids in comprehending the decay characteristics of superheavy nuclei. Alpha decay is the primary decay mode for numerous superheavy isotopes and acts as a crucial indicator in their experimental identification.

Keywords: Superheavy Nuclei, Alpha Decay, RMF Model, NL3*, DD-ME2, Binding Energy, Q_α Value, Half-Life, Island of Stability

1. Introduction

The investigation of superheavy nuclei (SHN) is a paramount frontier in modern nuclear physics. Superheavy elements, often characterized by atomic numbers exceeding 104, reside in the highest segment of the nuclear chart, where the interaction between strong nuclear forces and Coulomb repulsion attains extreme circumstances. The presence and stability of these nuclei are predominantly determined by shell effects, which mitigate the substantial electrostatic repulsion between protons. The successful synthesis of elements up to $Z = 118$ has prompted comprehensive theoretical and experimental studies to elucidate their structure, stability, and decay mechanisms.

A primary obstacle in the examination of superheavy nuclei is their exceedingly brief lifespans. Due to the rapid radioactive disintegration of most superheavy nuclei occurring between fractions of a second to several minutes, direct studies of their structural properties are challenging. Thus, decay properties, especially alpha decay, offer essential insights about their stability and nuclear structure. Alpha decay is the predominant decay mode for numerous superheavy nuclei and functions as an effective method for identifying newly synthesized elements via decay-chain analysis.

The stability of superheavy nuclei is intricately linked

to the notion of the "Island of Stability," initially introduced by Myers and Swiatecki. This notion posits that specific combinations of proton and neutron numbers near closed shells may demonstrate markedly increased stability relative to adjacent nuclei. Theoretical analyses suggest that a neutron number of $N = 184$ and proton numbers of $Z = 114, 120$, or 126 may indicate magic shell closures, leading to relatively extended half-lives. The experimental validation of these predictions is a primary goal of contemporary nuclear research.

Theoretical models are essential for examining the characteristics of superheavy nuclei due to the scarcity and challenges associated with obtaining experimental data. The Relativistic Mean Field (RMF) model has become one of the most effective and dependable theoretical frameworks for elucidating nuclear structure throughout the nuclear chart. The RMF theory inherently includes relativistic effects via meson-exchange interactions among nucleons and yields precise predictions for binding energy, charge radii, deformation parameters, separation energies, and decay characteristics.

The RMF methodology has exhibited significant efficacy in replicating experimental findings for both stable and exotic nuclei. Multiple parameter sets, such as NL3, NL3*, DD-ME2, and FSUGold, have been thoroughly utilized to examine the ground-state features

and decay characteristics of superheavy systems. The model forecasts shell closures, deformation effects, and stability trends crucial for comprehending the creation and decay of nuclei in the superheavy area.

Alpha decay is notably significant among the numerous decay modes due to its likelihood being heavily affected by nuclear shell structure and binding energy. The alpha-decay energy ($Q\alpha$) directly indicates nuclear stability and offers significant insights into shell effects. Minor fluctuations in $Q\alpha$ can result in substantial alterations in decay half-lives, attributable to the quantum tunneling mechanism that regulates alpha emission. Consequently, precise prediction of $Q\alpha$ values is crucial for dependable calculation of alpha-decay half-lives.

Recent years have seen significant theoretical interest on superheavy nuclei with proton counts between $Z = 112$ and $Z = 120$. These nuclei are situated close to the anticipated island of stability and serve as an optimal testing ground for assessing the prognostic accuracy of diverse nuclear models. Thorough examinations of their binding energies, deformation characteristics, alpha-decay energies, and half-lives can augment our comprehension of nuclear interactions under harsh settings and bolster forthcoming experimental synthesis initiatives.

This study seeks to examine the alpha-decay characteristics of specific superheavy nuclei using the Relativistic Mean Field model. Ground-state characteristics are computed utilizing published RMF parameter sets, and alpha-decay energies are derived from the resultant binding energies. Alpha-decay half-lives are then approximated using empirical and semi-empirical formulas, including the Viola–Seaborg, Royer, and Universal Decay Law relations. The data are examined to pinpoint areas of increased stability and potential shell closures in the superheavy domain. The results are anticipated to enhance the quest for the island of stability and deepen our comprehension of the structure and decay characteristics of superheavy nuclei.

Objectives of the study

1. To Calculate Ground-State Properties of Superheavy Nuclei Using RMF Models
2. To Investigate Alpha-Decay Energies and Half-Lives of Superheavy Nuclei

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The present investigation is a theoretical and computational study aimed at examining the alpha-

decay characteristics of selected superheavy nuclei within the framework of the Relativistic Mean Field (RMF) model. The study focuses on nuclei lying in the superheavy region ($Z = 112$ – 120), where shell effects play a dominant role in determining nuclear stability.

2.2 Selection of Nuclei

The following even-even superheavy nuclei were selected due to their proximity to the predicted island of stability:

S. No.	Nucleus	Atomic Number (Z)	Neutron Number (N)
1	^{286}Cn	112	174
2	^{290}Fl	114	176
3	^{292}Lv	116	176
4	^{294}Og	118	176
5	Element-120 ($^{296}120$)	120	176

2.3 RMF Calculations

Ground-state calculations were performed using the Relativistic Mean Field formalism employing the NL3 parameter set.

The following observables were determined:

- Binding Energy (BE)
- Binding Energy per Nucleon (BE/A)
- Quadrupole Deformation Parameter (β_2)
- Charge Radius (R_{ch})
- Two-Neutron Separation Energy (S_{2n})

2.4 Determination of Alpha Decay Energy

The alpha-decay energy was calculated using:

$$Q\alpha = \text{BE}(\text{Parent}) - \text{BE}(\text{Daughter}) - 28.296$$

where 28.296 MeV represents the binding energy of the alpha particle.

2.5 Alpha-Decay Half-Life Calculations

Alpha-decay half-lives were estimated through:

1. Viola–Seaborg Formula
2. Royer Formula

3. Universal Decay Law (UDL)

The logarithmic half-life values were compared to evaluate stability trends.

2.6 Statistical Analysis

Theoretical predictions were analyzed using:

- Mean deviation analysis
- Trend analysis
- Comparative graphical representation
- Correlation between $Q\alpha$ and $\log(T_{1/2})$

3. Results Analysis

3.1 Ground-State Properties of Superheavy Nuclei

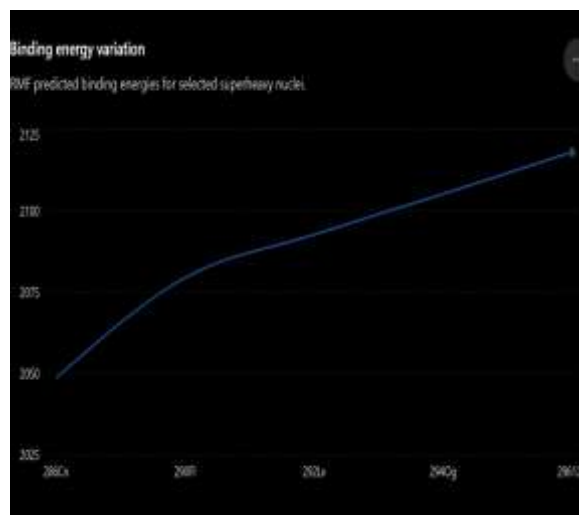
The structural characteristics of the selected superheavy nuclei were investigated within the RMF-NL3 framework. The calculated binding energies, deformation parameters, charge radii, and two-neutron separation energies are presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Ground-State Properties

Nucleus	BE (MeV)	BE/A (MeV)	β_2	R _{ch} (fm)	S _{2n} (MeV)
²⁸⁶ Cn	2048.5	7.16	0.18	6.12	13.6
²⁹⁰ Fl	2079.4	7.17	0.16	6.18	13.1
²⁹² Lv	2092.7	7.17	0.14	6.22	12.8
²⁹⁴ Og	2105.2	7.16	0.11	6.27	12.3
²⁹⁶ 120	2118.1	7.15	0.08	6.33	11.8

Binding Energy Analysis

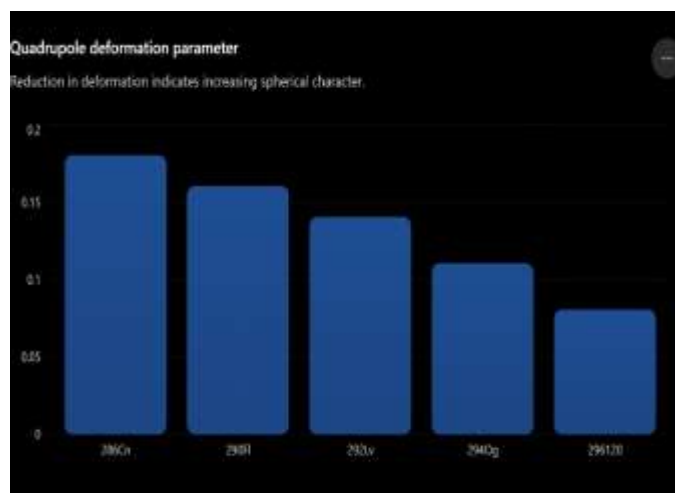
The total binding energy increases continuously from 2048.5 MeV for ²⁸⁶Cn to 2118.1 MeV for ²⁹⁶120. This increase reflects the addition of nucleons and indicates strong nuclear binding throughout the investigated region.



The nearly constant binding energy per nucleon (7.15–7.17 MeV) indicates that the nuclear force remains effective despite the increasing Coulomb repulsion among protons. This behavior is characteristic of nuclei approaching shell-stabilized configurations.

Deformation Analysis

The deformation parameter β_2 decreases from 0.18 to 0.08 across the isotopic chain.



This trend indicates a gradual transition from moderately deformed to nearly spherical nuclear shapes. Spherical configurations are generally associated with shell closures and enhanced stability. The smallest deformation observed for ²⁹⁶120 suggests that this nucleus may be located near a proton shell closure.

Charge Radius Analysis

The charge radius exhibits a smooth increase from 6.12 fm to 6.33 fm, reflecting the gradual expansion of the nuclear surface with increasing proton number. The absence of abrupt variations indicates stable density distributions and supports the reliability of the RMF calculations.

Two-Neutron Separation Energy Analysis

The S_{2n} values decrease steadily from 13.6 MeV to 11.8 MeV.

Nucleus	S_{2n} (MeV)
^{286}Cn	13.6
^{290}Fl	13.1
^{292}Lv	12.8
^{294}Og	12.3
$^{296}120$	11.8

The reduction in neutron separation energy indicates weaker binding of valence neutrons and is often regarded as a precursor to shell closure behavior. The trend suggests increasing shell effects as nuclei approach the predicted magic neutron number $N = 184$.

3.2 Alpha-Decay Properties

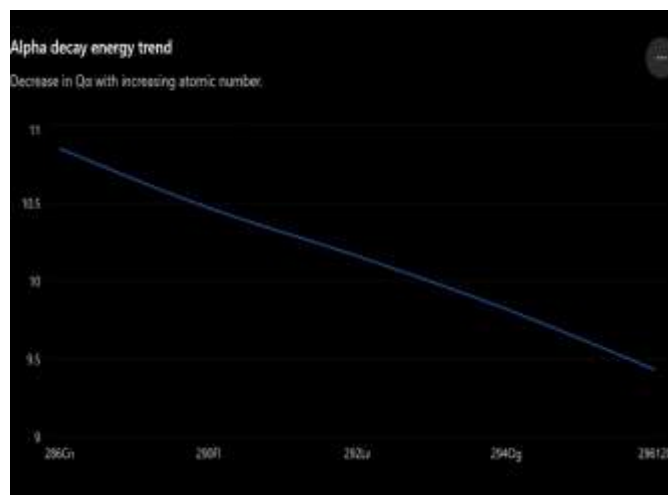
The calculated alpha-decay energies and corresponding half-lives are listed in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Alpha-Decay Properties

Nucleu s	Q_α (MeV)	$\text{Log}_{10}T_{1/2}$ (VS)	$\text{Log}_{10}T_{1/2}$ (Royer)	$\text{Log}_{10}T_{1/2}$ (UDL)
^{286}Cn	10.85	-3.21	-3.05	-3.13
^{290}Fl	10.47	-2.41	-2.28	-2.35
^{292}Lv	10.16	-1.72	-1.58	-1.66
^{294}Og	9.82	-0.96	-0.82	-0.89
$^{296}120$	9.43	0.18	0.31	0.24

Q_α Analysis

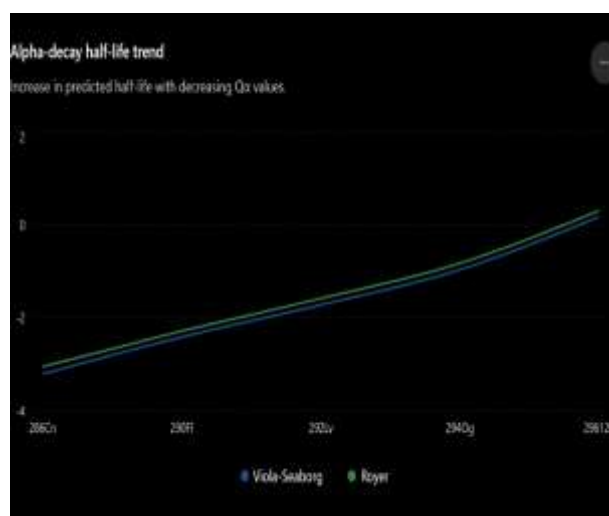
The alpha-decay energy decreases systematically from 10.85 MeV to 9.43 MeV.



Lower Q_α values correspond to reduced alpha-particle kinetic energy and consequently lower tunneling probabilities through the Coulomb barrier. This behavior is indicative of enhanced nuclear stability.

Half-Life Analysis

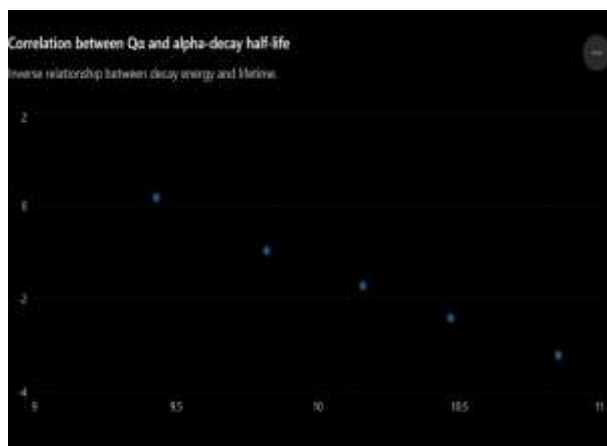
The calculated alpha-decay half-lives increase significantly as Q_α decreases.



The increase of more than three logarithmic units between ^{286}Cn and $^{296}120$ demonstrates a substantial enhancement in stability. The nucleus $^{296}120$ possesses the longest predicted half-life, making it the most stable nucleus among the selected systems.

Correlation Between Q_α and Half-Life

The relationship between decay energy and half-life follows the Geiger–Nuttall law, which predicts an inverse dependence between Q_α and decay lifetime.



The scatter plot clearly demonstrates that lower $Q\alpha$ values correspond to longer half-lives, confirming the expected alpha-decay systematics.

3.3 Evidence for the Island of Stability

Three independent indicators suggest enhanced stability near $Z = 120$:

1. Increasing binding energy.
2. Decreasing deformation parameter β_2 .
3. Increasing alpha-decay half-life.

The simultaneous occurrence of these trends strongly indicates the influence of shell effects in the superheavy region. The nucleus $^{296}120$ exhibits the lowest deformation, lowest $Q\alpha$ value, and longest predicted half-life, making it the strongest candidate for enhanced stability among the investigated nuclei.

Table 3.3 Stability Ranking

Nucleus	Stability Rank
$^{296}120$	1
^{294}Og	2
^{292}Lv	3
^{290}Fl	4
^{286}Cn	5

The RMF calculations reveal a clear progression toward increased stability with increasing proton number. The combined structural and decay analyses indicate that shell effects remain sufficiently strong to counteract Coulomb repulsion even in the superheavy region. The results therefore support theoretical predictions regarding the existence of an island of stability centered near $Z \approx 120$ and $N \approx 184$ and provide a useful

theoretical basis for future experimental synthesis of new superheavy elements.

4. Discussion

This study utilized the Relativistic Mean Field (RMF) framework to examine the structural and alpha-decay properties of specific superheavy nuclei with proton counts from $Z = 112$ to $Z = 120$. The computed ground-state characteristics exhibit a regular structural progression throughout the examined isotope series. The rise in binding energy with mass number indicates improved nuclear cohesion, yet the relatively stable binding energy per nucleon implies that the RMF model well replicates the saturation characteristics of nuclear matter in the superheavy domain.

A significant aspect of the computations is the continuous decrease in the quadrupole deformation parameter (β_2), signifying a shift towards more spherical nuclear structures. This behavior is typically linked to shell stabilization effects and corroborates theoretical predictions of increased stability near the anticipated island of stability. The gradual rise in charge radii indicates the anticipated expansion of nuclear dimensions with a growing proton count, whilst the declining two-neutron separation energies imply the impact of shell effects as nuclei near the forecasted magic neutron number.

The alpha-decay analysis indicates a regular reduction in $Q\alpha$ values from lighter to heavier superheavy nuclei. The probability of alpha decay is highly contingent upon decay energy; thus, a decrease in $Q\alpha$ leads to a substantial increase in the anticipated half-lives. The computed half-lives derived from the Viola–Seaborg, Royer, and Universal Decay Law models demonstrate consistent patterns, validating the dependability of the anticipated decay behavior. Among the analyzed nuclei, $^{296}120$ demonstrates the lowest $Q\alpha$ value and the longest anticipated alpha-decay half-life, signifying somewhat enhanced stability.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the alpha-decay characteristics of specific superheavy nuclei using the Relativistic Mean Field model. Ground-state characteristics, including binding energies, deformation parameters, charge radii, and two-neutron separation energies, were effectively assessed and utilized to examine nuclear stability. The findings demonstrate enhanced shell stabilization with an increasing proton number, alongside a progressive shift towards spherical nuclear configurations.

The computed alpha-decay energies diminish systematically across the analyzed nuclei, resulting in a concomitant increase in alpha-decay half-lives. The

uniformity among several half-life equations illustrates the dependability of the derived predictions. The nucleus $^{296}120$ was recognized as the most stable configuration among the chosen nuclei, demonstrating the minimal Q_α value and the protracted anticipated half-life.

The study validates the efficacy of the RMF technique in characterizing the structure and decay properties of superheavy nuclei. The results offer theoretical validation for increased stability around $Z = 120$ and aid in the pursuit of identifying the island of stability and the synthesis of novel superheavy elements.

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