

Search for heavy neutrinos in a 3-lepton final-state

Applications using supervised machine learning

by

William Hirst

THESIS

for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE



Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences
University of Oslo

Autumn 2022

Search for heavy neutrinos in a 3-lepton final-state

Applications using supervised machine learning

William Hirst

© 2022 William Hirst

Search for heavy neutrinos in a 3-lepton final-state

<http://www.duo.uio.no/>

Printed: Reprosentralen, University of Oslo

Abstract

This will be the abstract.

Acknowledgments

Halla

Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Introduction | 1 |
| 1 The Standard model of elementary particles | 3 |
| 1.1 Phenomenology - What is it? | 3 |
| 1.1.1 The bulding blocks | 3 |
| 1.1.2 Quantum numbers | 4 |
| 1.2 The background channels | 4 |
| 2 Beyond the standard model - Heavy neutrinos | 7 |
| 2.1 Why look beyond? | 7 |
| 2.2 Neutrinos | 7 |
| 2.3 Dirac and Majorana | 7 |
| 2.3.1 How to distinguish the two? | 7 |
| 3 Statistical and multi-variabel analysis | 9 |
| 3.1 Discovery and significance | 9 |
| 3.2 Exclusion | 9 |
| 3.2.1 Likelihood | 9 |
| 4 Introduction to supervised and unsuperised machine learning | 11 |
| 4.1 Neural Networks in physics | 11 |
| 4.1.1 Deep vs Shallow networks | 11 |
| 4.2 Gradient Boosting and decision trees | 11 |
| 5 Implementation | 13 |
| 5.1 Features | 13 |
| 5.1.1 Cuts and triggers | 13 |
| 5.1.2 Lepton variables selection | 13 |
| 5.1.3 Jet variables selection | 14 |
| 5.1.4 Validation | 14 |
| Appendices | 21 |
| Appendix A | 23 |

Introduction

The Standard Model ([SM](#)) is perhaps one of the most successful scientific theories ever created. It accurately explains the interactions of leptons and quarks as well as the force carrying particles which mediate said interactions. In 2012 the [SM](#) achieved one of its crowning achievements when we discovered the Higgs boson. Much of the accolade was rightfully given to the theoretical work on the [SM](#), but another aspect of the discovery was equally important. Data analysis was and is a crucial part of any new discovery in physics. One of the most important and exiting tools is Machine Learning ([ML](#)).

Outline of the Thesis

Chapter 1

The Standard model of elementary particles

The [SM](#) is the most successful scientific theory ever created. It accurately explains the interactions of leptons and quarks as well as the force carrying particles which mediate said interactions. The model is a result of over a century of work demanding the contributions of great minds like Paul Dirac, Erwin Schrodinger and Richard Feynman. In 2012 the SM achieved one of its crowning achievements when we discovered the Higgs boson.

1.1 Phenomenology - What is it?

1.1.1 The building blocks

As early as ancient Greece, humans pondered the nature of the most elementary building blocks of the universe. They imagined a rope of a given length, with a pair of scissors of adjustable size. Then one could ask, how many times can you cut the rope in half? If the answer is less than infinite, what are you left with?

In 1897, Joseph John Thomson discovered the first elementary particle using the Cathode Ray Tube. This particle we later named the electron. Prior to the time of discovery, we believed atoms to be the smallest building blocks. After the discovery of the electron, the discovery of the proton and neutron quickly followed. It was not until more than 50 years after the discovery of the proton (by Ernest Rutherford) that we discovered that also protons and neutrons could be further dissected to smaller particles. We call these particles quarks. The "final-piece"¹ of the puzzle came in 1956 when we discovered the, at that time thought of as massless neutrino. Together with the electron, the neutrino is defined as a lepton.

Upon the evolution of the quantum mechanics and physics as a whole, we started to divert our focus from the what and over to the how. How can we explain all the complex interactions between these relatively simple particles? Through the creation of [SM](#) and countless experiments, we discovered that forces are nothing but interactions between particles through what we call, force mediating particles. The [SM](#) describes all forces as fields which are mediated through particles, we call bosons. The four forces responsible for all the forces in the universe are electro-magnetism (Quantum Electrodynamics ([QED](#))), the weak-force, the strong-force (Quantum Chromodynamics ([QCD](#))) and gravity. The boson most familiar to most is the photon. The photon is responsible for the mediation of [QED](#) and is responsible for all electro-magnetic effects, such as the ones allowing us to see objects using our eyes. Similarly the W and Z bosons are responsible for the weak-force which allows for radioactive decay. And the gluon is responsible for [QCD](#) which holds protons and neutrons together. Gravity is the only force not described in the SM, but would (if one day included) have its own force carrying particle, graviton.

The final building block in the universe introduced and described by [SM](#) is the Higgs boson. The Higgs boson was proposed by Peter Higgs in 1964 and discovered at CERN in 2012. The Higgs boson, also called the God particle is responsible for giving particles mass in a process called spontaneous symmetry breaking (more on this in later sections).

¹Given the nature of this thesis, the existence of further pieces is implied.

| Quantum number | Values |
|----------------|---------------------------------------|
| Charge | $0, \pm 1/3, \pm 1/2, \pm 2/3, \pm 1$ |
| Spin | $0, \pm 1/2, \pm 1$ |

Table 1.1: A list of relevant quantum numbers along with the respective possible values.

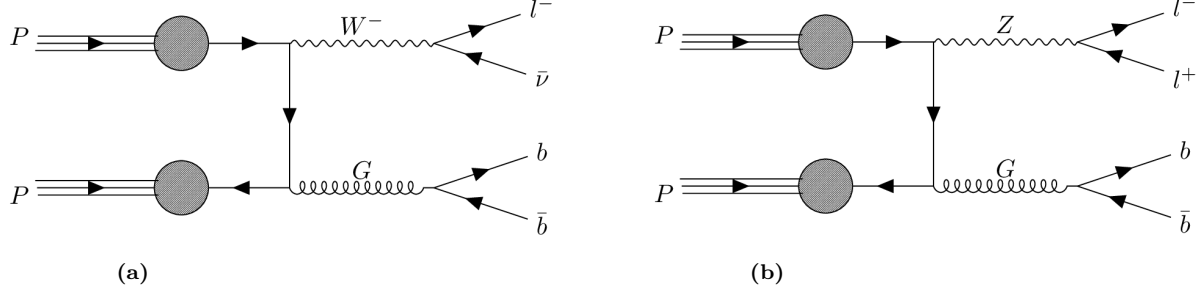


Figure 1.1: The Feynman diagram of both the W +jets 1.1a and the W +jets 1.1b.

1.1.2 Quantum numbers

Each particle plays its own important part in the tapestry of the universe. What makes the particle different and allows them to contribute in the way they do are the quantum numbers. The quantum numbers are used to explain the attributes of the elementary particles and range from spin to charge. A table of all quantum numbers along with allowed values are found in table

1.2 The background channels

The dominant SM backgrounds can be divided into two categories: (i) from leptonic τ decays and (ii) from fake leptons. In the first category, the dominant process is the pair production of WZ with W decaying leptonically and $Z \rightarrow \tau\tau$. The trilepton final states with no-OSSF pairs can arise from the subsequent leptonic decay of τ 's. We estimate this background process via Monte Carlo simulations.

The dominant processes of the second category are γ^*/Z + jets and $t\bar{t}$, where two leptons come from $\gamma^*/Z \rightarrow \tau\tau$ or the prompt decay of t and \bar{t} , and a third lepton is faked from jets containing heavy-flavor mesons.

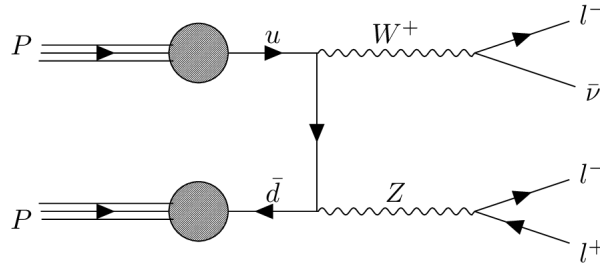


Figure 1.2: The Feynman diagram of the diboson WZ -channel.

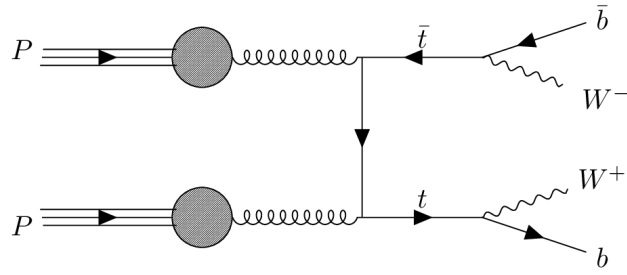


Figure 1.3: The Feynman diagram of the $t\bar{t}$ -channel.

Chapter 2

Beyond the standard model - Heavy neutrinos

2.1 Why look beyond?

2.2 Neutrinos

2.3 Dirac and Majorana

2.3.1 How to distinguish the two?

Chapter 3

Statistical and multi-variabel analysis

The main idea of the search is to define a region where we will compare the Monte Carlo ([MC](#))-background to the data and analyse any differences. Any analysis in the signal region hopes to either discovery or exclude certain Beyond Standard Model ([BSM](#)) physics. The standatd way of doing so is through statistics. In this rapport the statistical analysis will not be the focus and will therefore not be explained in heavy detail. Nonetheless a high-level understanding of the statistics is neccesarry when discussing the final results results. Therefore I will in this section discuss and define some basic statistical expressions and formulas.

3.1 Discovery and significance

3.2 Exclusion

3.2.1 Likelihood

Chapter 4

Introduction to supervised and unsuperised machine learning

This will give a brief intoruction to the concept of machine learning as well as the difference between supervised and unsuperised.

4.1 Neural Networks in physics

4.1.1 Deep vs Shallow networks

4.2 Gradient Boosting and decision trees

In this rapport I will use the XGBoost-classifier which uses gradient-boosted trees. Gradient-boosting is a machine learning algorithm which uses a collective of "weak" classifiers in order to create one strong classifier. In the case of gradient-boosted trees the weak classifiers are a collective of shallow trees, which combine to form a classifiers that allows for deeper learning. As is the case for most gradient-boosting techniques, the collecting of weak classifiers is an iterative process.

We define an imperfect model \mathcal{F}_m , which is a collective of m number of weak classifiers, estimators. A prediction for the model on a given data-points, x_i is defined as $\mathcal{F}_m(x_i)$, and the observed value for the aforementioned data is defined as y_i . The goal of the iterative process is to minimize some cost-function \mathcal{C} by introducing a new estimator h_m to compensate for any error, $\mathcal{C}(\mathcal{F}_m(x_i), y_i)$. In other words we define the new estimator as:

$$\tilde{\mathcal{C}}(\mathcal{F}_m(x_i), y_i) = h_m(x_i), \quad (4.1)$$

where we define $\tilde{\mathcal{C}}$ as some relation defined between the observed and predicted values such that when added to the initial prediction we minimize \mathcal{C} .

Using our new estimator h_m , we can now define a new model as

$$\mathcal{F}_{m+1}(x_i) = \mathcal{F}_m + h_m(x_i). \quad (4.2)$$

The XGBoost [?] framework used in this analysis enables a gradient-boosted algorithm, and was initially created for the Higgs ML challenge. Since the challenge, XGBoost has become a favorite for many in the ML community and has later won many other ML challenges. XGBoost often outperforms ordinary decision trees, but what is gains in results it looses in interpretability. A single tree can easily be analysed and dissected, but when the number of trees increases this becomes harder.

Chapter 5

Implementation

5.1 Features

The choice of which features to study and which to neglect are crucial in a search for new physics. This is particularly true in the case of applying machine learning. The general motivation for including a given feature can be based on several factors. The first being its ability to provide a trend which we as researches can exploit when creating our regions. By this I mean that it is a variable were there is divirsity in distribution between the different channels. The second motivation is grounded in physics. Often we as physicists tend to lean towards variables we know have some effect one the physics we are studying. For example the variable E_T^{miss} , can be directly used to either include or discard events were we do or do not expect final states with sufficent missing energy. The final motivation is grounded in the MC-simmulations ability to represent the variable. If there seems to be a clear deviation between the real and MC-data which does not stem from any new physics, we tend to discard them from the analysis.

5.1.1 Cuts and triggers

To allow for deep learning and a thorough analysis one must try and keep as much of the data as possible. At the same time, including large amounts of irrelevant data can be both redundant and destruvtive. Therefore simple cuts are necessary. The cuts applied in the analysis were grouped in two definitions, baseline and signal. The baseline requiremtns are written in table 5.1 and the signal requirments are written in table 5.3. Both sets of requirments were taken from tha ATLAS article from 2022 [1]. Then we demand that each event has exactly three signal and three baseline leptons, thereby removing any event with more or less.

In addition to the simple cuts, we must insure a good comparison between MC- and real data. Often one finds large deviation between the two in the case of either very large or very small P_t . The latter case can often be caused by poor reconstruction or missidentification. These are issues we aim to solve by checking different triggers. Given our data set is composed of different data sets spread over many years, different triggers are used.

5.1.2 Lepton variables selection

Now we will have a look at what variables from the leptons that were included in the analysis. All low level information on the momentum of the leptons were added into the dataset: i.e the transverse momentum P_t , the pseudo rapidity η and the azimuthal angle ϕ . All momentum features were represented individually for each lepton. For example P_t was added as three columns, $P_t(l_1)$, $P_t(l_2)$ and $P_t(l_3)$, where the ordering of the leptons were based on the momentum from highest (l_1) to lowest (l_3). Similarly I added information regarding

| Requirement | Baseline electrons | Baseline muons |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Identification | | Loose |
| η cut | $ \eta < 2.47$ | $ \eta < 2.7$ |
| $ z_0 \sin(\theta) $ cut | $ z_0 \sin(\theta) < 0.5$ mm | $ z_0 \sin(\theta) < 0.5$ mm |

Table 5.1: Requirments for baseline electrons and muons.

| Requirement | Signal electrons | Signal muons |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Baseline | yes | yes |
| $ d_0 /\sigma_{d_0}$ cut | $ d_0 /\sigma_{d_0} < 5.0$ | $ d_0 /\sigma_{d_0} < 3.0$ |

Table 5.2: Requirments for signal electrons and muons.

| 2015 | 2016 | 2017 + 2018 |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|--|
| HLT_2e12_lhloose_L12EM10VH | HLT_2e17_lhvloose_nod0 | HLT_2e17_lhvloose_nod0_L12EM15VHI or HLT_2e24_lhvloose_nod0 |
| HLT_e17_lhloose_mu14 | HLT_e17_lhloose_nod0_mu14 | HLT_e17_lhloose_nod0_mu14 |
| HLT_mu18_mu8noL1 | HLT_mu22_mu8noL1 | HLT_mu22_mu8noL1 |

Table 5.3: Trigger requirments for events produced in their respective years.

the charge (\pm) and flavor (electron, muon) of each lepton. Based on the momentum variables the transverse mass m_t of each lepton was calculated and included along with the energy E_t^{miss} and azimuthal angle ϕ^{miss} of the missing transverse momentum.

The variables described in the section above are often considered as low-level features. These are very useful in many (if not all) searches and contribute little to no bias to your analysis. But, in the case of final-state specific searches such as mine, one can allow one self of adding physics motivated higher-level physics. The higher level features calculated in this thesis were inspired by [1] (ATLAS 2022).

Firstly I added different mass variables, namely m_{ll} and $m_{ll}(OSSF)$. The first being the trilepton invariant mass and the latter being the dilepton invariant mass of the pair with Opposite Sign Same Flavour (**OSSF**). In the case of more than one possible OSSF-pair, the pair with the highest invariant mass was chosen. Secondly I added variables composed of the sum of different set of momentum. These variables are the sum of all three leptons $H_t(lll)$, of the pair with Same Sign (**SS**) $H_t(SS)$ and the sum of the momentum for all three leptons added with the missing transverse energy $H_t(lll) + E_t^{miss}$. Finally I added the significance of the E_t^{miss} , $S(E_t^{miss})$.

5.1.3 Jet variables selection

Now we can have a look at the jet-features. Given the final-state of interest should be independant of jets, there are not many features added with jet information. But, given the risk of missidentification and errors in reconstruction, some features were added. The first features were the number of jets, both all signal jets and number of b-jets. The latter information was divided in two columns based on the efficiency of a multivariant analysis used to separeata jet-flavors. The effeciencies used are 77% and %85. The last information added for the jets were the mass of the leading pair (based on p_t) di-jet mass.

5.1.4 Validation

As mentioned in previous sections, the comparison between **ML**- and real data is a crucial part of the analysis, and we must therefore insure an adequate reconstruction of the real data. This is not only true for the low-level features taken directly from the **ML** simulation, but also for the the higher-level features. Therefore we will in this section compare both sets of data for all features included in the anlysis.

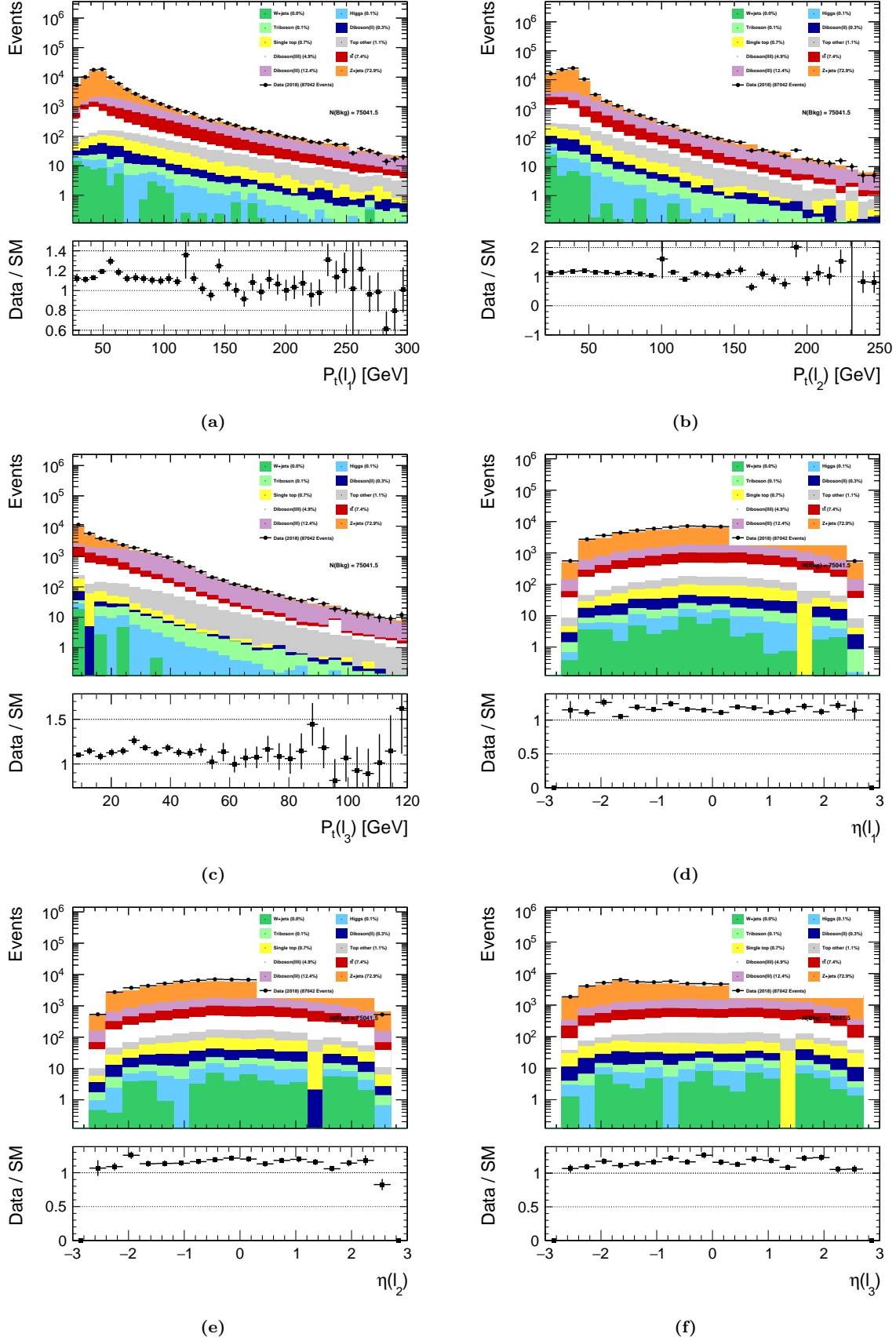


Figure 5.1: The event distribution for for each channel over P_t for the first 5.1a , second 5.1b and third 5.1c lepton. Similarly the distribution over η for the 5.1d, second 5.1e and third 5.1f lepton

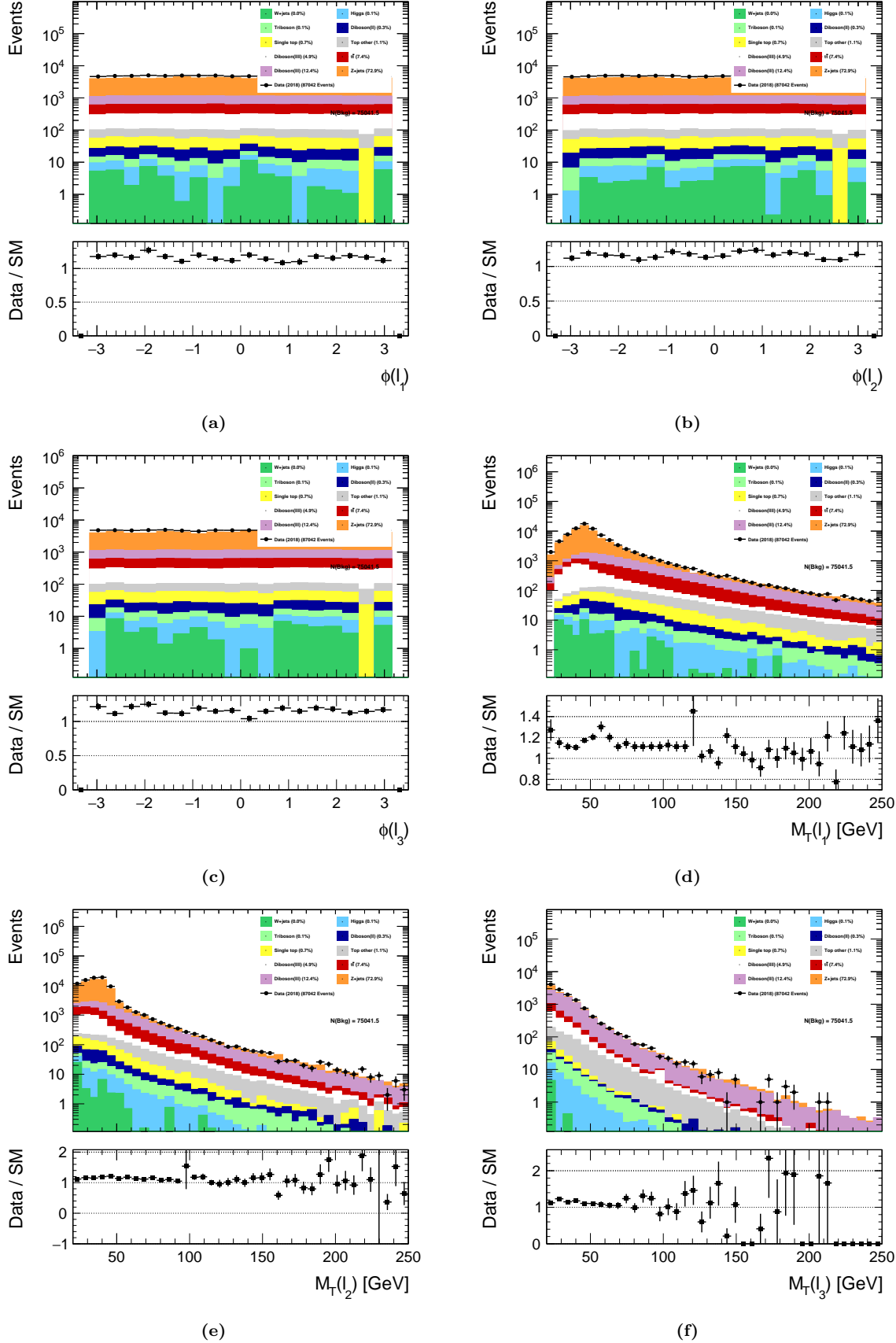
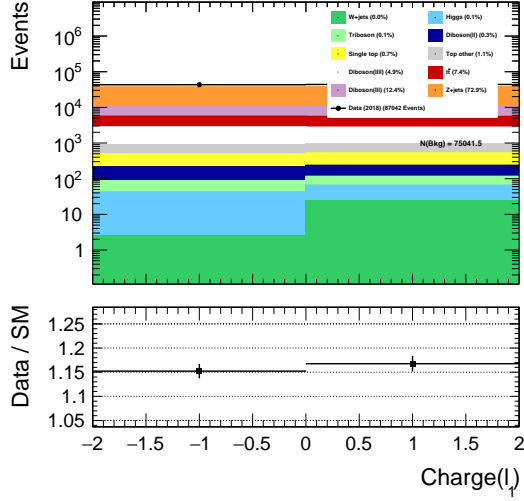
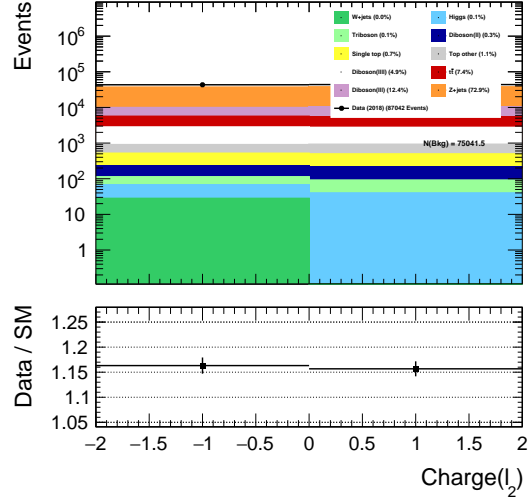


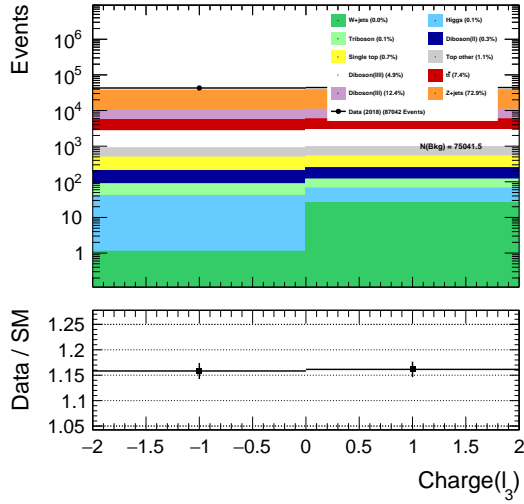
Figure 5.2: The event distribution for for each channel over ϕ for the first 5.2a, second 5.2b and third 5.2c lepton. Similarly the distribution over m_t for the first 5.2d, second 5.2e and third 5.2f lepton



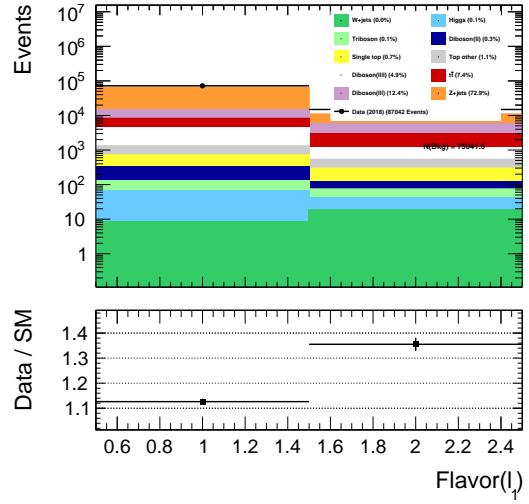
(a)



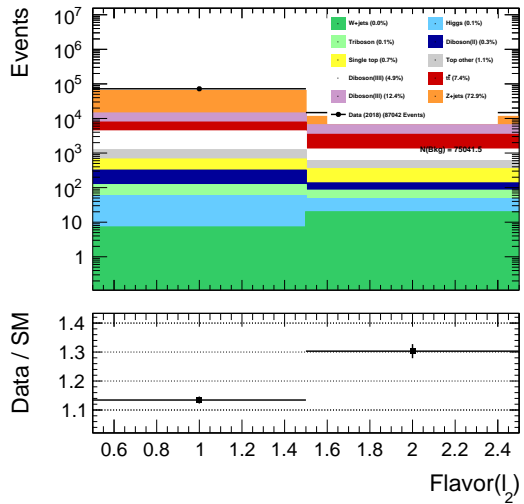
(b)



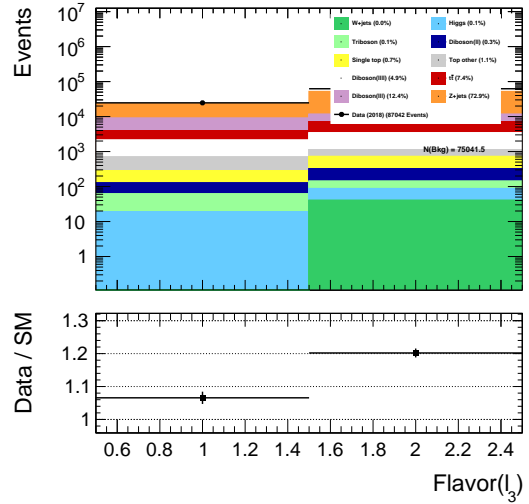
(c)



(d)



(e)



(f)

Figure 5.3: The event distribution for for each channel over the charge for the first 5.3a , second 5.3b and third 5.3c lepton. Similarly the distribution over the flavor for the first 5.3d, second 5.3e and third 5.3f lepton

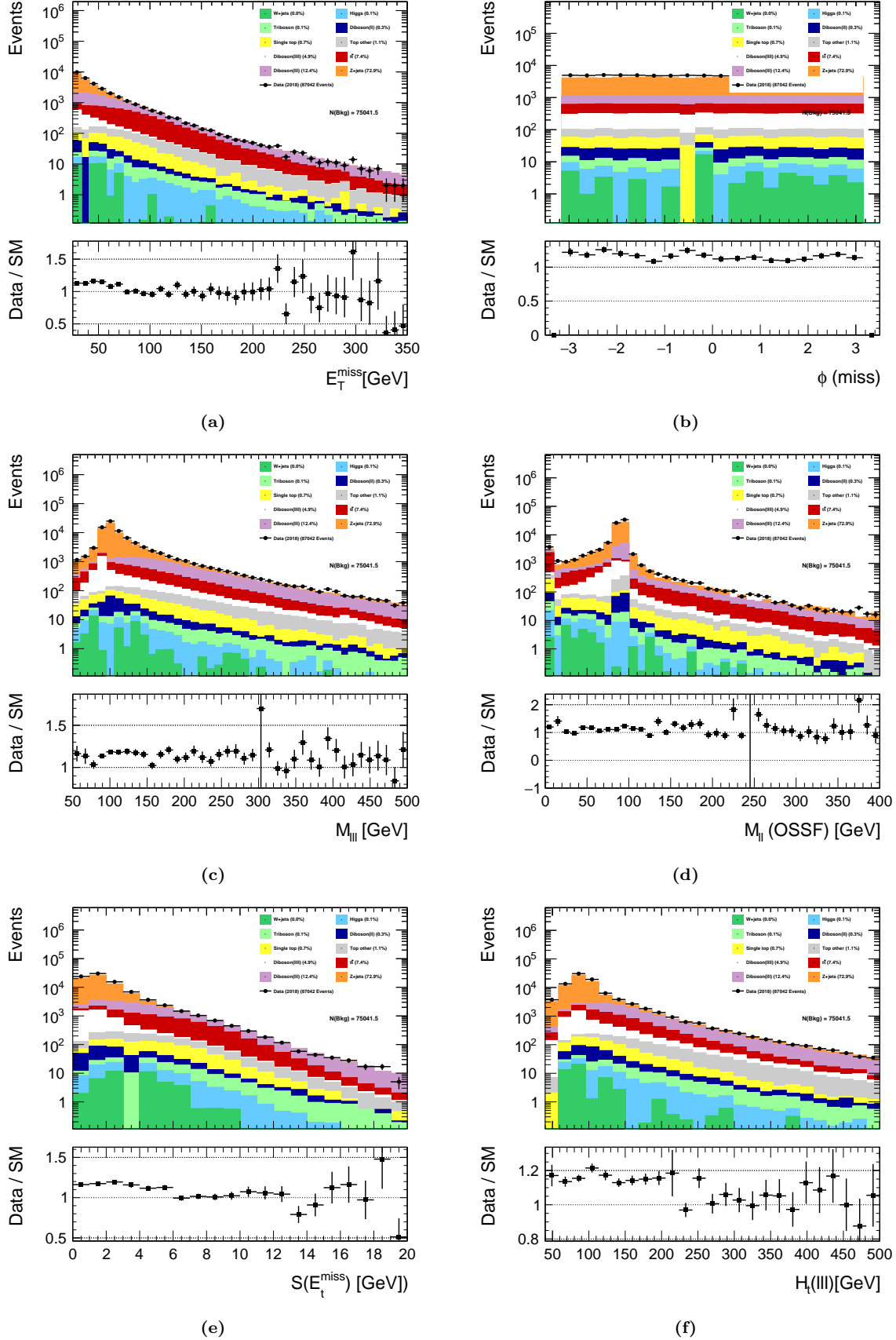


Figure 5.4: The event distribution for for each channel over the energy 5.4a and azimuthal angel 5.4b for the transverse momentum. The distribution of the invariant mass of the three leptons 5.4c and the OSSF pair 5.4d. The distribution over the significance of the missing transverse energy 5.4e and the sum of P_t 5.4f.

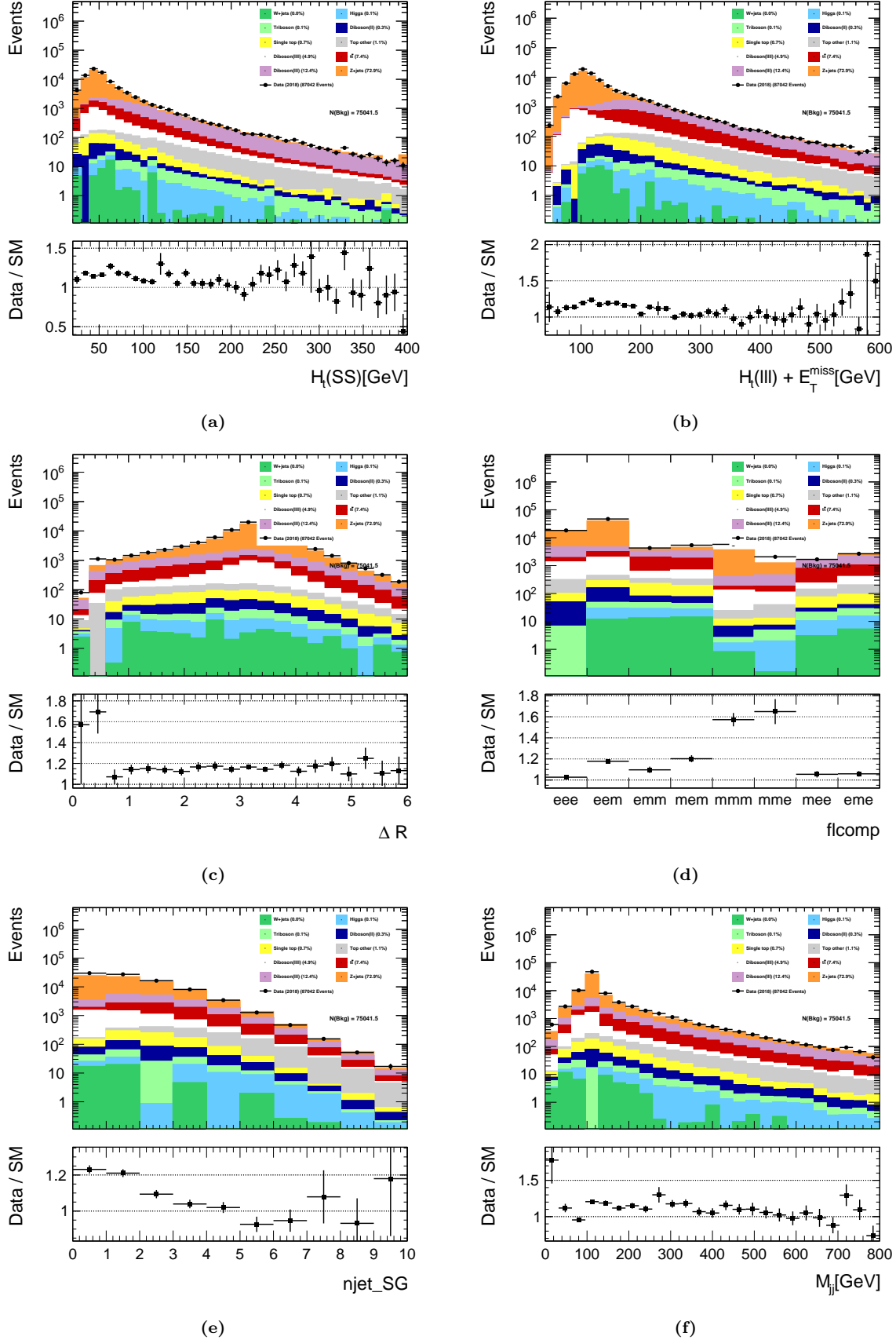
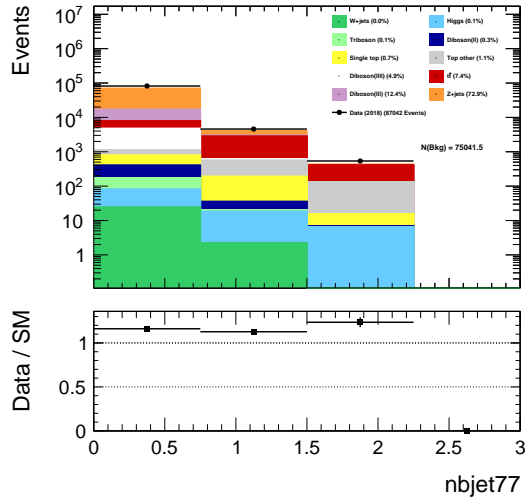
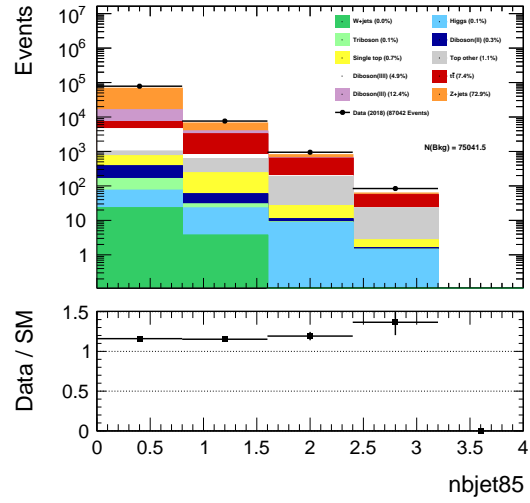


Figure 5.5: The event distribution for for each channel over the sum of P_t for the SS pair 5.5a and the sum over all three leptons added with E_t^{miss} 5.5b. The distribution over ΔR 5.5c and the flavor combination of the three leptons 5.5d. The distribution of number of jets 5.5e and the mass of the leading di-jet pair 5.5f.



(a)



(b)

Figure 5.6: The event distribution for for each channel over the number of b-jets with 77% 5.6a and 85% 5.6b efficiency.

Appendices

Appendix A

Acronyms

BSM Beyond Standard Model

MC Monte Carlo

ML Machine Learning

OSSF Opposite Sign Same Flavour

QED Quantum Chromo Dynamics

QED Quantum Electro Dynamics

SM Standard Model

SS Same Sign

Bibliography

- [1] M. Franchini, K. H. Mankinen, G. Carratta, F. Scutti, A. Gorisek, E. Lytken et al., *Search for type-III seesaw heavy leptons in dilepton final states in pp collisions at $\sqrt{s} = 13$ TeV with the ATLAS detector*, .