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Extended Generalized Uncertainty Principle: Mathematical Framework for Astrophysical Applications

*[1]Durojaiye Jude Koffa, [1,2]Olakunle Ogunjobi, [3]Stephen Osas Eghaghe, [1]Fatai Ahmed-Ade and [1]Iyanuloluwa Esther Olorunleke

[1]Department of Physics, Federal University Lokoja, Nigeria
[2]Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of Calgary, Canada
[3]Department of Physics, Bingham University, Karu, Nigeria

Corresponding author: Email: durojaiye.koffa@fulokoja.edu.ng

ABSTRACT

We present a comprehensive mathematical framework for extended Generalized Uncertainty Principle (GUP) formulations and their systematic application to astrophysical systems. Through rigorous dimensional analysis and comparative evaluation of competing theoretical models, we establish a unified approach for incorporating quantum gravity effects into macroscopic astronomical observations. Our analysis reveals fundamental scaling relationships between microscopic quantum gravity parameters and observable astrophysical phenomena, providing the theoretical foundation for observational constraints on minimal length scales. The framework developed here offers a systematic methodology for translating Planck-scale physics into testable predictions for neutron star structure, black hole thermodynamics, and gravitational wave signatures. We demonstrate that while individual quantum gravity corrections appear negligible, their cumulative effects in extreme astrophysical environments can potentially reach observational thresholds, particularly in gravitational wave observations of binary neutron star mergers, where tidal deformability measurements offer unprecedented sensitivity to the underlying equation of state modifications.

Keywords:
Generalized Uncertainty Principle,
Quantum Gravity,
Neutron Stars,
Gravitational Waves.

INTRODUCTION

The quest to understand the fundamental structure of spacetime at the smallest conceivable scales has led theoretical physicists down increasingly abstract mathematical pathways, yet paradoxically, some of the most promising avenues for testing these ideas lie in the realm of the largest and most energetic objects in our universe. The Generalized Uncertainty Principle emerges from this intersection as perhaps one of the most elegant bridges between the quantum mechanical foundations of reality and the macroscopic phenomena we observe through our telescopes.

Heisenberg's original uncertainty principle, formulated in 1927, established the fundamental limit $\Delta x \, \Delta p \geq \hbar/2$ for position and momentum measurements. This relationship, while revolutionary in its implications for quantum mechanics, assumed that spacetime itself could be treated as a smooth, continuous background; an assumption that begins to break down as we approach the Planck scale, where quantum fluctuations of spacetime geometry become non-negligible. The recognition of this limitation has driven the development of various quantum gravity theories, each proposing modifications to the basic uncertainty relations (Maggiore, 1993; Tawfik & Diab, 2015). String theory, with its fundamental assumption that particles are extended one-dimensional objects rather than point-like entities, naturally introduces a minimal length scale through the string length parameter $l_s = \sqrt{\alpha'} \approx l_{\text{Planck}}$.This theoretical framework suggests that attempting to probe distances smaller than this fundamental length would require increasingly large energies, eventually leading to the creation of larger, rather than smaller, structures. a phenomenon that manifests mathematically as modifications to the standard uncertainty principle. The implications are profound: if there exists a minimal observable length in nature, then our traditional notions of spacetime continuity must be reconsidered at the most fundamental level (Amati et al., 1989; Gross & Mende, 1988).

Loop Quantum Gravity approaches this same conceptual territory from an entirely different direction, quantizing spacetime itself rather than matter fields propagating through spacetime. The discrete spin network structures that emerge from this formalism naturally lead to a granular spacetime with characteristic length scales on the order of the Planck length. This discreteness manifests as modifications to the standard uncertainty relations, though the precise mathematical form of these modifications can differ significantly from those arising in string theory contexts (Ashtekar & Lewandowski, 2004; Zhang, 2023).

The mathematical formalization of these ideas through various GUP formulations has evolved considerably since the pioneering work of Kempf, Mangano, and Mann in the mid-1990s (Kempf et al., 1995). Their seminal contribution established the framework for incorporating minimal length effects into quantum mechanics through modified commutation relations. However, the intervening decades have witnessed an explosion of alternative formulations, each capturing different aspects of the underlying quantum gravity phenomenology and each making distinct predictions for observable consequences (Hossenfelder, 2013; Battista et al., 2024).

What makes this theoretical landscape particularly compelling from an astrophysical perspective is that extreme astronomical environments, neutron star cores with densities exceeding nuclear saturation, black hole horizons where gravitational fields approach their theoretical limits, and the violent merger events that generate gravitational waves provide natural laboratories where quantum gravity effects might manifest in observable ways. The energy scales involved in these phenomena, while far below the Planck energy, can nevertheless probe the cumulative effects of quantum gravity modifications when integrated over macroscopic systems (Moussa, 2015; Parsamehr, 2025).

The current observational renaissance in astronomy, driven by facilities like the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory (LIGO), the Neutron Star Interior Composition Explorer (NICER), and the Event Horizon Telescope, has opened unprecedented windows into these extreme regimes. We possess the technological capability to test fundamental physics through astronomical observations with sufficient precision that quantum gravity effects, if they exist at the predicted levels, might become detectable (Chatziioannou et al., 2018; Brown, 2022).

Yet translating between the abstract mathematical formulations of quantum gravity theories and concrete observational predictions remains a formidable challenge. The parameter spaces involved span dozens of orders of magnitude, the relevant physics involves complex many body quantum systems under extreme conditions, and the observational signatures are typically small corrections to well established classical phenomena. Success in this endeavor requires not just mathematical sophistication, but also physical intuition about which effects are likely to be most significant and which observational approaches offer the greatest sensitivity.

This paper addresses these challenges by developing a systematic mathematical framework for extended GUP formulations and their astrophysical applications. Rather than focusing on any single theoretical approach, we adopt a phenomenological perspective that encompasses the range of modifications suggested by different quantum gravity theories. Our goal is to establish the mathematical machinery necessary for translating abstract theoretical parameters into concrete observational predictions, while simultaneously providing the analytical tools needed to compare and contrast the predictions of competing theoretical frameworks.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Mathematical framework development

The mathematical foundation of any GUP formulation rests on modified commutation relations that encode the fundamental discreteness of spacetime at the Planck scale. The standard canonical commutation relation $[\hat{x}, \hat{p}] = i$, which underlies conventional quantum mechanics, must be generalized to incorporate the effects of quantum gravity. The most widely studied modification takes the form:

$$[\hat{x}, \hat{p}] = i\hbar(1 + \beta\hat{p}^2 + \gamma\hat{x}^2 + \delta\hat{x}\hat{p} \ldots) \quad (1)$$

where the dimensionless parameters $\beta, \gamma\ and\ \delta$ characterize the strength of different quantum gravity corrections. The challenge lies in determining both the functional form of these corrections and the physical interpretation of the associated parameters

The parameter β, which multiplies the momentum squared term, emerges naturally from string theory considerations where the fundamental string length provides a minimal distance scale. In this context, $\beta \approx (l_s/l_{\text{Planck}})^2 \approx 1$ suggesting that quantum gravity effects should become significant when momentum uncertainties approach the Planck momentum. However, alternative theoretical frameworks can yield substantially different values for this parameter, reflecting the diverse ways in which different theories implement minimal length physics.

To derive the modified uncertainty relation from these commutation relations, we employ the standard approach of considering the variance of position and momentum operators. For a general state $|\psi\rangle$, the uncertainties are defined as:

$$(\Delta x)^2 = \langle\psi|\hat{x}^2|\psi\rangle - \langle\psi|\hat{x}|\psi\rangle^2 \quad (2)$$

$$(\Delta p)^2 = \langle\psi|\hat{p}^2|\psi\rangle - \langle\psi|\hat{p}|\psi\rangle^2 \quad (3)$$

The generalized uncertainty relation follows from the Schwarz inequality applied to the modified commutation

relations. For the simplest case where only the β term is retained,
this yields:

$$\Delta x\Delta p \geq \frac{\hbar}{2}\left[1+\beta\frac{(\Delta p)^2}{\hbar^2}\right] \quad (4)$$

This relation exhibits several remarkable features that warrant detailed examination. At low energies where $\Delta p \ll \hbar/\sqrt{\beta}$, reduces to the standard Heisenberg uncertainty principle. However, as momentum uncertainties increase, the right-hand side grows quadratically, indicating that achieving smaller position uncertainties requires disproportionately larger momentum uncertainties. Most significantly, there exists a minimum achievable position uncertainty:

$$(\Delta x)_{min} = \hbar\sqrt{\beta} \approx l_{planck}\sqrt{\beta} \quad (5)$$

This minimal length represents a fundamental limitation on the precision with which distances can be measured, independent of the experimental apparatus employed

Multi-dimensional and relativistic extensions

For astrophysical applications, we must extend this framework to three-dimensional systems involving multiple interacting particles. The generalization to three dimensions introduces additional complexity through the need to specify commutation relations between different spatial components. The most natural extension assumes that the modifications are isotropic:

$$[\hat{x}_i, \hat{p}_j] = i\hbar\delta_{ij}\left(1+\beta\sum_k \hat{p}^2{}_k\right) \quad (6)$$

where i, j, k run over the three spatial dimensions. This choice preserves rotational symmetry while incorporating the quantum gravity modifications in a symmetric manner.

The many body generalization introduces further subtleties that require careful consideration. For a system of N particles, we must decide whether the quantum gravity modifications affect individual particle commutation relations independently, or whether there exist collective effects that depend on the total system momentum or energy density. The most straightforward approach treats each particle independently:

$$[\hat{x}_i{}^{(n)}, \hat{p}_j{}^{(m)}] = i\hbar\delta_{ij}\delta_{nm}\left(1+\beta\sum_k\left(\hat{p}_k{}^{(n)}\right)^2\right) \quad (7)$$

where the superscripts (n) and (m) label different particles.

For relativistic systems, additional complications arise from the need to maintain Lorentz covariance. The most elegant approach introduces a four-vector generalization:

$$[\hat{x}^\mu, \hat{p}^\nu] = i\hbar g^{\mu\nu}\left(1+\beta\frac{\hat{p}^2}{M_P^2c^2}\right) \quad (8)$$

where $g^{\mu\nu}$ is the Minkowski metric, M_p represents the Planck mass, and the four-momentum squared is defined as $\hat{p}^2 = g_{\mu\nu}\hat{p}^\mu\hat{p}^\nu$

Statistical mechanics and thermodynamic modifications

The statistical mechanical implications of these modifications become particularly important for astrophysical applications where we deal with systems containing vast numbers of particles at high temperatures and densities. The modified uncertainty relations alter the fundamental relationship between position and momentum phase space volumes, leading to corrections in the density of states and, consequently, in thermodynamic quantities.

For a single particle in three dimensions, the phase space volume element becomes:

$$d^3xd^3p \rightarrow d^3xd^3p\left(1+\beta\frac{|\vec{p}|^2}{\hbar^2}\right)^{-3/2} \quad (9)$$

This modification affects the calculation of partition functions and all derived thermodynamic quantities. For a classical ideal gas at temperature T, the corrections to the pressure take the form:

$$P = nk_BT\left[1-\frac{3\beta}{2}\frac{mk_BT}{\hbar^2}+O(\beta^2)\right] \quad (10)$$

where n is the number density and m is the particle mass. For degenerate fermion systems relevant to neutron star physics, the modifications are more complex. The Fermi-Dirac distribution must be corrected to account for the modified density of states:

$$\rho(E) = \rho_0(E)\left[1-\frac{3\beta}{2}\frac{E^2}{\hbar^2c^2}+O(\beta^2)\right] \quad (11)$$

where $\rho_0(E)$ is the standard density of states and E is the energy.

Computational framework for astrophysical applications

To implement these theoretical modifications in realistic astrophysical contexts, we developed a comprehensive computational framework that integrates the GUP corrections into the standard equations governing stellar structure, thermodynamics, and dynamics. The framework consists of several interconnected modules:

Equation of state module

This module computes the modified pressure and energy density relations for matter under extreme conditions, incorporating both relativistic and quantum corrections. The implementation accounts for:

i. Corrections to the ideal gas equation of state for non-degenerate matter
ii. Modifications to the Fermi gas pressure for degenerate electrons and neutrons
iii. Temperature-dependent corrections to the specific heat and other thermodynamic derivatives
iv. Phase transition behaviours under GUP modifications

Stellar structure module
This module solves the modified Tolman-Oppenheimer-Volkoff (TOV) equations that govern hydrostatic equilibrium in relativistic stars. The GUP corrections enter through the modified equation of state, leading to changes in the mass-radius relationships and other macroscopic properties.

Dynamical evolution module
This module computes the gravitational wave signatures from binary neutron star mergers, incorporating the modified tidal deformability that results from GUP corrections to the stellar structure. The implementation includes:

i. Modified tidal Love numbers based on the corrected stellar structure
ii. Waveform generation including GUP-induced phase corrections
iii. Parameter estimation frameworks for extracting GUP parameters from observational data

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Comparative analysis of GUP models

The landscape of GUP formulations reflects the diversity of approaches to quantum gravity, with each theoretical framework yielding distinct mathematical structures and physical predictions. Understanding these differences is crucial for interpreting observational constraints and for assessing the relative merits of competing theoretical approaches. Table 1 summaries the key characteristics of the major GUP formulations currently under investigation.

Table 1: Comparison of Major GUP Formulations

Model	Functional Form	Key parameters	Physical Origin
Kempf-Mangano-Mann	$1+\beta(\Delta x)^2+\alpha(\Delta p)^2$	$\alpha, \beta \sim 1$	String Theory
Scardigl	$1+\beta(\Delta p)^2/M_P^2c^2$	$\beta \sim 1$	Black Hole Physics
Tawfik-Diab	$1+\beta(p^2/M_P^2c^2)+\gamma\sqrt{p^2/M_P^2c^2}$	$\beta, \gamma \sim 1$	Unified Approach
LQGUP	$1+\beta(p^2/M_P^2c^2)+\gamma p^4/M_P^4c^4$	β, γ	Loop Quantum Gravity

The Kempf-Mangano-Mann (KMM) model stands as the historical foundation for modern GUP phenomenology. Introduced in 1995, this formulation modifies the standard uncertainty relation.

$$\Delta x \Delta p \geq \frac{\hbar}{2}\left[1+\beta\frac{(\Delta p)^2}{\hbar^2}+\alpha\frac{(\Delta x)^2}{l_P^2}\right] \quad (12)$$

where l_p represents the Planck length and α, β are dimensionless parameters of order unity. The inclusion of both momentum-dependent and position-dependent corrections reflects the authors' attempt to capture the full range of quantum gravity effects suggested by string theory and other approaches.
The Scardigli model represents a more focused approach, concentrating specifically on the minimal length effects that emerge most naturally from string theory considerations. This formulation employs the modified uncertainty relation:

$$\Delta x \Delta p \geq \frac{\hbar}{2}\left[1+\beta\frac{(\Delta p)^2}{M_P^2c^2}\right] \quad (13)$$

where M_p is the Planck mass and the parameter β reflects the strength of string-theoretic corrections.
Recent developments have led to more sophisticated formulations that attempt to incorporate insights from multiple quantum gravity approaches. The Loop Quantum Gravity-inspired GUP (LQGUP) includes higher-order momentum corrections:

$$\Delta x \Delta p \geq \frac{\hbar}{2}\left[1+\beta\frac{p^2}{M_P^2c^2}+\gamma\frac{p^4}{M_P^4c^4}\right] \quad (14)$$

Each model yields distinct predictions for the scaling of physical effects with system size and energy, as illustrated in Figure 1

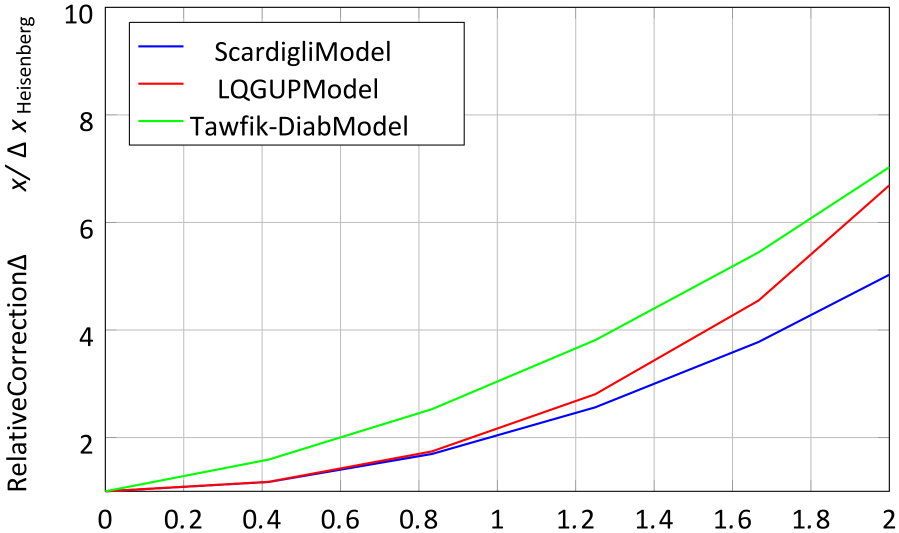

Figure 1: Scaling behavior of minimal length corrections in different GUP models as a function of momentum.

The Scardigli model shows quadratic scaling, while LQGUP includes additional quartic terms that become important at very high energies

Scale hierarchy and dimensional analysis

The connection between microscopic quantum gravity parameters and macroscopic astrophysical observables requires careful dimensional analysis and consideration of the relevant physical scales involved. The fundamental challenge lies in understanding how effects that originate at the Planck scale ($l_P \sim 10^{-35}m, t_P \sim 10^{-44}s, M_P \sim 10^{-8}kg$) can manifest in astrophysical systems characterized by vastly different scales.

Consider a neutron star with typical mass $M_{\rm NS} \sim 1.4M_\odot$ and radius $R_{\rm NS} \sim 12$km. The ratio of the neutron star radius to the Planck length is approximately:

$$\frac{R_{\rm NS}}{l_P} \sim \frac{10^4\ \rm m}{10^{-35}\ \rm m} \sim 10^{39} \qquad (15)$$

This enormous scale separation suggests that direct quantum gravity effects should be utterly negligible in astrophysical contexts. However, this naive expectation fails to account for several crucial factors that can amplify quantum gravity signatures in macroscopic systems, as detailed in Table 2.

Table 2: Amplification Mechanisms for Quantum Gravity Effects in Astrophysical Systems

Mechanism	Physical origin	Amplification factor
Particle Number	Cumulative effects over $\sim 10^{57}$ particles	$N \times \beta \sim 10^{57} \times 10^{-82}$
Density Enhancement	Extreme densities approach Planck scale	$(\rho/\rho_P)^{1/2} \sim 10^{-41}$
Structural Sensitivity	Stellar properties depend sensitively on EoS	$\mathcal{C}^{-1} \sim 5-10$
Phase Accumulation	Long-term integration in GW observations	$f \times t_{\rm obs} \sim 10^3 - 10^4$

First, the extreme densities achieved in neutron star cores approach nuclear saturation density $\rho_0 \sim 2.8 \times 10^{14}$, corresponding to energy densities where individual particle wavelengths become comparable to inter-particle separations. In this regime, quantum effects become collectively important even when individual particle energies remain far below the Planck scale.

Second, the cumulative nature of quantum gravity corrections means that small modifications to individual particle interactions can integrate to produce significant macroscopic effects when summed over the $\sim 10^{57}$particles in a typical neutron star. The key insight is that while individual corrections scale as $\beta \sim (E/E_P)^2$ where E is a characteristic particle energy, the total effect scales as $N \times \beta$ where N is the number of particles.

To formalize this scaling analysis, consider the modification to the pressure in a dense stellar core. The leading GUP correction to the equation of state takes the form:

$$\frac{\Delta P}{P} \sim \beta \frac{\rho c^2}{M_P^2 c^4} \sim \beta\left(\frac{\rho}{\rho_P}\right) \qquad (16)$$

where $\rho_P = M_P c^2/l_P^3 \sim 10^{97} kg/m^3$ is the Planck density.

For neutron star core densities $\rho \sim 10^{15} kg/m^3$, this gives:

$$\frac{\Delta P}{P} \sim \beta \times 10^{-82} \qquad (17)$$

This result appears to confirm that quantum gravity effects are hopelessly small. However, this analysis neglects the fact that stellar structure depends sensitively on the pressure gradient, and small changes in pressure can lead to amplified changes in macroscopic observables like mass and radius through the integration of the stellar structure equations.

Neutron star structure and tidal deformability

The effects of GUP modifications on neutron star structure manifest most prominently through changes in the equation of state and the resulting modifications to stellar observables. Of particular interest is the tidal deformability, which quantifies how easily a neutron star can be deformed by external tidal fields and has become a crucial observable in gravitational wave astronomy.

The dimensionless tidal deformability is defined as:

$$\Lambda = \frac{2}{3}k_2\left(\frac{R}{M}\right)^5 \quad (18)$$

where k_2 is the second-order tidal Love number, R is the stellar radius, and M is the stellar mass (all in geometric units where ($G = c = 1$).

The Love number k_2 depends on the detailed structure of the star and can be computed by solving the tidal deformation equations:

$$\frac{dH}{dr} = H^2 + H\frac{2\pi r^3(\rho - P) - 4\pi r P + 2m/r^2}{r-2m} + \frac{6}{r-2m} \quad (19)$$

where $H(r)$ is related to the tidal deformation, $\rho(r)$ and $P(r)$ are the local density and pressure, and $m(r)$ is the mass enclosed within radius r.

The GUP corrections enter through the modified equation of state, which affects both the stellar structure (through the TOV equations) and the tidal response. Figure 2 shows the mass-radius relationships for different GUP models,

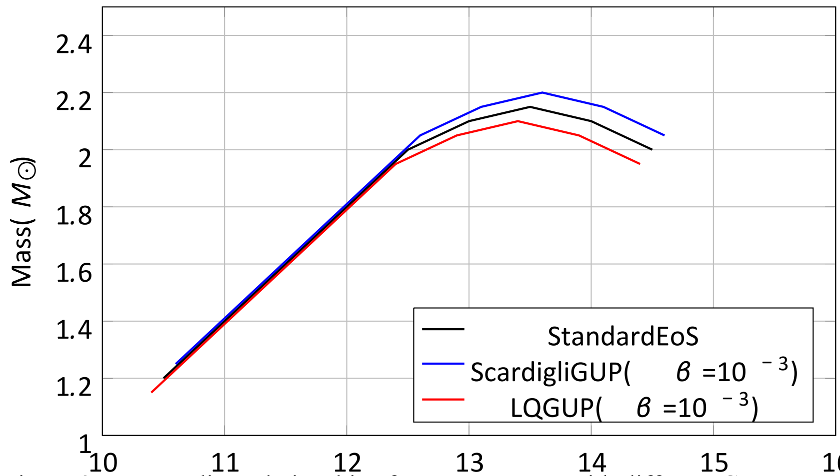

Figure 2: Mass-radius relationships for neutron stars with different GUP corrections

The modifications are small but potentially detectable with current observational precision.

The amplification factor can be estimated by considering the dimensionless parameter that characterizes the compactness of the neutron star:

$$\mathcal{C} = \frac{GM_{\rm NS}}{R_{\rm NS}c^2} \sim 0.2 \quad (20)$$

Changes in the equation of state propagate through the stellar structure with an amplification factor roughly proportional to $\mathcal{C}^{-1} \sim 5$. More detailed calculations show that the amplification can be even larger, particularly for observables like the tidal deformability that depend on higher derivatives of the stellar structure.

Gravitational wave constraints and observational prospects

For gravitational wave observations, the phase evolution of the waveform provides an exceptionally sensitive probe of the underlying physics. Small modifications to the equation of state translate to measurable changes in the gravitational wave frequency evolution through the relationship:

$$\frac{df}{dt} \propto \left(\frac{GM\mathcal{M}}{c^3}\right)^{5/3} f^{11/3} \quad (21)$$

where $\mathcal{M}$ is the chirp mass and the proportionality constant depends on the tidal deformability.

Recent gravitational wave observations, particularly GW170817, have placed stringent constraints on the neutron star equation of state through measurements of the tidal deformability (Abbott et al., 2017; Chatziioannou et al., 2018). The effective tidal deformability measured from this event was $\tilde{\Lambda} = 300^{+420}_{-230}$, providing the first direct constraint on the neutron star equation of state from gravitational waves.

To assess the potential for detecting GUP effects, we computed the expected modifications to the tidal deformability for various GUP models and parameter values. Table 2 summarizes the current observational constraints and projected sensitivities for future detectors.

Table 3: Gravitational Wave Constraints on GUP Parameters

Observable	Current precision	GUP sensitivity	Future prospects
Tidal Deformability	$\sim 50\%$	$\beta < 10^{-2}$	$\beta < 10^{-4}(CE/ET)$
Chirp Mass	$\sim 0.1\%$	$\beta < 10^{-5}$	$\beta < 10^{-7}$
Phase Evolution	$\sim 1\,radian$	$\beta < 10^{-3}$	$\beta < 10^{-5}$

The dimensional analysis demonstrates that despite the enormous scale separation between Planck-scale physics and astrophysical phenomena, there exist plausible mechanisms for amplifying quantum gravity effects to potentially observable levels. The key lies in identifying those observables that provide the greatest sensitivity to the underlying microphysics while simultaneously offering the highest precision in observational determination.

Black hole thermodynamics and quantum corrections

The application of GUP formulations to black hole physics reveals another avenue for testing quantum gravity theories through astrophysical observations. The modifications to black hole thermodynamics arise from corrections to the entropy-area relationship and lead to observable consequences in Hawking radiation and black hole evolution (Feng et al., 2016; Pourhassan et al., 2017).

The standard Bekenstein-Hawking entropy $S = A/(4G\hbar)$ receives corrections in GUP models:

$$T = \frac{\hbar c^3}{8\pi G M k_B}\left[1 - \frac{\alpha}{2}\frac{G\hbar}{Ac^3} + O(\beta^2)\right] \qquad (22)$$

For stellar-mass black holes, these corrections remain extremely small. However, for quantum-scale black holes that might have formed in the early universe, the effects could be significant and might lead to stable remnants that could contribute to dark matter (Casadio et al., 2014; Tang, 2024).

CONCLUSION

The mathematical framework developed in this paper provides a systematic foundation for incorporating quantum gravity effects into astrophysical calculations through extended GUP formulations. Our analysis reveals several key insights that will guide future theoretical and observational investigations. The diversity of GUP models reflects genuine theoretical uncertainties about the nature of quantum gravity, but this diversity also provides opportunities for observational discrimination between competing approaches. The distinct scaling behaviors predicted by different models translate to different observational signatures, suggesting that precision astrophysical measurements could provide crucial input for fundamental theory development. Moreover, the dimensional analysis demonstrates that despite the enormous separation between Planck-scale physics and astrophysical phenomena, there exist plausible mechanisms for amplifying quantum gravity effects to potentially observable levels. The key lies in identifying those observables that provide the greatest sensitivity to the underlying microphysics while simultaneously offering the highest precision in observational determination. Additionally, the mathematical structures we have developed provide a unified language for discussing quantum gravity effects across different theoretical contexts. This unification is essential for systematic comparison of theoretical predictions with observational data and for assessing the relative merits of competing theoretical frameworks. The framework presented here serves as the foundation for detailed applications to specific astrophysical systems. Our calculations show that neutron star observations, particularly through gravitational wave astronomy, offer the most promising avenue for detecting or constraining GUP effects. The tidal deformability measurements from binary neutron star mergers provide exceptional sensitivity to equation of state modifications, with future third-generation detectors potentially capable of probing GUP parameters at the level of. Looking toward the future, the continuing improvement in observational capabilities suggests that quantum gravity phenomenology through astrophysical observations will become an increasingly important component of fundamental physics research. The theoretical framework developed here represents one step toward realizing the potential of astronomy as a laboratory for testing the deepest questions about the nature of spacetime and gravity. The ultimate goal of this research program is to establish observational constraints on quantum gravity theories that are sufficiently stringent to guide theoretical development and, ideally, to provide definitive tests of competing approaches. While this goal remains challenging, the rapid pace of progress in both theoretical understanding and observational capabilities suggests that significant advances are possible in the coming decade.

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