Thermal entanglement in one-dimensional Heisenberg quantum spin chains under magnetic fields

Shou-Shu Gong and Gang Su*
College of Physical Sciences, Graduate University of Chinese Academy of Sciences,
P. O. Box 4588, Beijing 100049, People’s Republic of China

The thermal pairwise entanglement (TE) of the $S=1/2$ XY chain in a transverse magnetic field is exactly resolved by means of the Jordan-Wigner transformation in the thermodynamic limit $N \to \infty$. It is found that the TE vanishes at a fixed point with temperature $T_c \approx 0.4843J$, which is independent of the magnetic field. A thermal quantity is proposed to witness the entangled state. Furthermore, the TE of the $S=1/2$ antiferromagnetic-ferromagnetic (AF-F) Heisenberg chain is studied by the transfer-matrix renormalization group method. The TEAs of the spins coupled by AF and F interactions are found to behave distinctively. The vanishing temperature of the field-induced TE of the spins coupled by F interactions is observed dependent on the magnetic field. The results are further confirmed and analyzed within a mean-field framework.

PACS numbers: 03.67.Mn, 03.65.Ud, 75.10.Jm

Quantum entanglement describes intrinsic correlations incurred in quantum mechanics. It plays the essential role in quantum information [1], quantum teleportation [2], and quantum cryptography [3]. In condensed matter physics, it provides a new perspective to understand the collective phenomena in many-body systems [4].

The spin entanglement in quantum spin chains is of particular interest. Many types of entanglement at both zero and finite temperatures have been extensively studied in various spin systems (see reviews in Ref. [4]). As the finite-temperature entanglement (thermal entanglement, TE) can be witnessed theoretically [5] and detected experimentally [6] by macroscopic variables, most effects have been made to quantify the TE. The critical temperature (CT) below which the TE survives can even be estimated in experiment [4]. Interestingly, the numerical calculations indicate that the CT of the nearest-neighbor TE is a fixed point which is independent of the magnetic field in the $S=1/2$ Heisenberg chain [7] and two-qubit XY spins [4]. However, the features at the fixed point are unclear and no explanation exists. It is also a question whether the magnetic field independence of the CT is a universal phenomenon in quantum spin chains or there are exceptions. For these questions, in the paper, the field dependence of the CT of TE in the $S=1/2$ XY and AF-F Heisenberg chains are exactly resolved and studied by means of the transfer-matrix renormalization group (TMRG) method in the thermodynamic limit $N \to \infty$, respectively. An analysis will also be made within the mean-field framework.

The pairwise entanglement of two $S=1/2$ spins at sites $i$ and $j$ in the ground state and at finite temperature can be achieved from the corresponding reduced density matrix $\hat{\rho}_{i,j}$, which, in the standard basis $\{|\uparrow\uparrow\rangle, |\downarrow\downarrow\rangle, |\downarrow\uparrow\rangle, |\uparrow\downarrow\rangle\}$, can be expressed as

$$\hat{\rho}_{i,j} = \begin{pmatrix} P_{i,j}^+ & P_{i,j}^- & P_{i,j}^x & P_{i,j}^y \\ P_{i,j}^- & P_{i,j}^+ & P_{i,j}^y & P_{i,j}^x \\ P_{i,j}^x & P_{i,j}^y & P_{i,j}^+ & P_{i,j}^- \\ P_{i,j}^y & P_{i,j}^x & P_{i,j}^- & P_{i,j}^+ \end{pmatrix},$$

(1)

where $P_{i,j}^\pm = \frac{1}{2}(1 \pm \sigma^z)$, $P_{i,j}^x = \frac{1}{2}(1 - \sigma^y)$, and $\sigma^\pm = \frac{1}{2}(\sigma^x \pm \sigma^y)$. The brackets denote the ground-state and thermodynamic average values at zero and finite temperatures, respectively, and $\sigma$ are Pauli matrices. As the phenomenon that is of interest mainly exists in the nearest-neighbor TE, we shall concentrate only on $\hat{\rho}_{i,i+1}$ in the following.

The spin operators can be transformed into spinless fermions by the Jordan-Wigner (JW) transformation

$$S_i^+ = c_i^\dagger e^{\pi \sum_{j<i} c_j^\dagger c_j}, \quad S_i^- = (c_i^\dagger c_i - \frac{1}{2}),$$

(2)

where $c_i^\dagger$ and $c_i$ are the creation and annihilation operators of the spinless fermion, respectively. $\hat{\rho}_{i,i+1}$ becomes

$$\hat{\rho}_{i,i+1} = \begin{pmatrix} X_i^+ & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & Y_i^+ & Z_i & 0 \\ 0 & Z_i & Y_i^- & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & X_i^- \end{pmatrix},$$

(3)

where $X_i^+ = \langle n_i n_{i+1} \rangle$ ($n_i \equiv c_i^\dagger c_i$), $Y_i^+ = \langle n_i (1 - n_i) \rangle$, $Y_i^- = \langle n_{i+1} (1 - n_i) \rangle$, $Z_i = \langle c_i^\dagger c_{i+1} \rangle$, and $X_i^- = 1 - \langle n_i \rangle - \langle n_{i+1} \rangle + \langle n_i n_{i+1} \rangle$. As defined, the concurrence of TE of the two nearest neighbors is given through

$$\tilde{C}_i = \mu_1 - \mu_2 - \mu_3 - \mu_4,$$

(4)

$$C_i = \max\{0, \tilde{C}_i\},$$

(5)

where $\mu_i$ are the square roots of the eigenvalues of $\rho_{i,i+1}$, $\rho_{i,i+1}$ is a transformed matrix of $\rho_{i,i+1}$, i.e., $\tilde{\rho} = \sigma^y \otimes \sigma^y \rho \sigma^y \otimes \sigma^y$. Thus, Eq. (4) is transformed into

$$\tilde{C}_i = 2(|Z_i| - \sqrt{X_i^+ X_i^-}).$$

(6)
The concurrence can be calculated from the local density, hopping term, and site correlations of the fermions. As the observed field independence of the CT of TE are obtained by either numerical calculations \( [8] \) or only for two qubits \( [9] \), a deep understanding is indeed necessary. Therefore, we shall exactly resolve the concurrence of the \( S=1/2 \) XY chain in a transverse magnetic field within the thermodynamic limit to investigate this phenomenon analytically. The Hamiltonian of the \( S=1/2 \) XY chain is given as

\[
H = \sum_{i=1}^{N} \frac{1}{2} J (S_i^+ S_{i+1}^- + h.c.) - \hbar \sum_{i=1}^{N} S_i^z,
\]

where \( J > 0 \) is the coupling, and \( \hbar \) is the magnetic field. As the XY chain with F couplings can be obtained by a unitary transformation, which rotates the odd-site spins by \( \pi \) angle around the \( z \)-axis, both the AF and F cases give the same results. Here we take \( J > 0 \) for simplicity.

By applying the JW and Fourier transformations, the Hamiltonian (7) can be diagonalized as

\[
H = \sum_{k} (J \cos k - \hbar) c_k^\dagger c_k = \sum_{k} [\varepsilon(k) - \hbar] c_k^\dagger c_k,
\]

and the elements in the reduced density matrix [Eq. (3)] can be explicitly expressed as

\[
Z_i = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{k} e^{ik} f(k), \quad \langle n_i \rangle = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{k} f(k),
\]

where \( f(k) = 1/(e^{\beta(\varepsilon(k) - \hbar)} + 1) \) \( (\beta \) is the inverse temperature and the Boltzmann constant is taken as \( k_B = 1 \) \) is the Fermi distribution function. By the solution of the retarded Green’s function \( G_r(t) = \langle c_{k_1} (t) c_{k_2} (t) \rangle c_{k_1}^\dagger c_{k_2} \gg (k_1 \neq k_2) \) \( [10] \), the expectation value \( \langle c_{k_1}^\dagger c_{k_2} c_{k_3} c_{k_4} \rangle \) in Eq. (10) is obtained as

\[
\langle c_{k_1}^\dagger c_{k_2} c_{k_3} c_{k_4} \rangle = -f(k_1) f(k_2) \quad (k_1 \neq k_2),
\]

and Eq. (10) is simplified as

\[
X_i^+ = \langle n_i \rangle^2 - Z_i^2.
\]

By substituting Eqs. (9) and (12) into Eq. (9), \( \tilde{C}_i \) can be obtained as

\[
\tilde{C}_i = \frac{2}{\pi} \int_{-1}^{1} \frac{x dx}{\sqrt{1 - x^2 (e^{\beta(x-h')} + 1)}} + \sqrt{(\int_{-1}^{1} \frac{1 + x}{1 - x e^{\beta(x-h')} + 1}) (\int_{-1}^{1} \frac{1 - x}{1 + x e^{\beta(x-h')} + 1})} - 1)
\]

where \( \beta' = \beta J \) and \( h' = h/J \). The result of Eq. (13) is shown in Fig. 1 where the TE in different fields vanish at a common CT \( (T_c) \), which is a fixed point. This common CT indicates that the magnetic field cannot retrieve the intrinsic TE once it is destroyed by thermal fluctuations, even though the field changes the TE below the CT.

\[
\Phi(\beta, h) = \frac{1}{\pi} \int_{-1}^{1} \frac{(1 + \sqrt{2}) dx}{\sqrt{1 - x^2 (e^{\beta (x-h')} + 1)}} + \frac{1}{\pi^2} \int_{-1}^{1} \int_{-1}^{1} \frac{(xy - 1) dx dy}{(1 - x^2)(1 - y^2) (e^{\beta(x-h')} + 1)(e^{\beta(y-h')} + 1)}.
\]

Thus, \( \Phi < 0 \) describes the entangled state, and \( \Phi \) must be zero at \( T_c \), i.e., \( \Phi(\beta_c, h) = 0 \), from which \( T_c \) can be determined. In the absence of magnetic field, \( \langle n_i \rangle = 1/2 \) at any temperatures, thus, \( Z_{i,h=0}^T = (1 - \sqrt{2})/2 \), and \( T_c \).
which can be improved to cover wider parameter region for the entangled state that is proposed for the spin chains with Heisenberg or XY interactions [5]. In a magnetic field, Eq. (20) also implies that the CT of the intrinsic TE which survives in the absence of field is a fixed point, but also reveals some features at the fixed point from the perspectives of the local spin competition and macroscopic thermodynamic behavior.

To investigate the possible exceptions of the field independence of the CT, we study the TE in an S=1/2 AF-F Heisenberg chain by means of the TMRG. The Hamiltonian of this alternating chain is given by

\[ H = \sum_j (J_a S_{2j-1} \cdot S_j + J_f (S_{2j} \cdot S_{2j+1}) - h \sum_j S_j^z) \]

where \( J_a > 0 \), \( J_f < 0 \) denote the AF and F couplings, respectively. \( J_a \) is taken as the energy scale and \( J_f / J_a = -1 \). This AF-F chain has a Haldane gap \( \Delta \approx 0.6 J_a \) in the ground state [11], and the saturation field \( h_s \approx 1.1 J_a \). In experiment, this model has been realized and studied extensively [12]. The TMRG [13] method is a powerful tool for studying the thermodynamics of one-dimensional quantum systems in the thermodynamic limit [14].

In our calculations, the width of the imaginary time slice \( \epsilon = 0.1 \), and the error caused by the Trotter-Suzuki decomposition is less than \( 10^{-3} \). During the TMRG iterations, 60 states are retained, and the truncation error is less than \( 10^{-6} \).

Owing to the alternation of the couplings, the TE of the spins coupled by \( J_a \) and \( J_f \), which are denoted as \( C_a \) and \( C_f \), respectively, are expected to be distinct. Figure 2(a) shows the temperature dependence of the TE which includes a wider parameter region than the sufficient condition \( |U|/N J > 1/4 \) for the entangled state that is proposed for the spin chains with Heisenberg or XY interactions [3]. In a magnetic field, Eq. (20) also implies that the witness \( |U + M h|/N J > 1/4 \) proposed in Ref. 8 can be improved to cover wider parameter region for the entangled state. The exact solution not only confirms that the CT of the intrinsic TE which survives in the absence of field is a fixed point, but also reveals some features at the fixed point from the perspectives of the local spin competition and macroscopic thermodynamic behavior.

In terms of the spin operators, the finite pairwise TE survives when

\[ \langle S_j^+ S_{j+1}^- \rangle + \frac{\sqrt{2}}{2} < \frac{1}{4} + \langle S_j^z \rangle^2, \]

which indicates that the concurrence of TE is determined by the competition between the spin fluctuations and local magnetic moment at finite temperature. As the quantities in Eq. (19) can be expressed as thermodynamic observables as

\[ Z_i = \frac{U + M h}{N J} + \frac{h}{2 J} \langle n_i \rangle = \frac{M}{N} + \frac{1}{2}, \]

where \( U = \langle H \rangle \) is the internal energy, and \( M = \sum_i \langle S_i^z \rangle \) is the total magnetization, the TE can be witnessed by the negative thermal quantity

\[ \Phi(U, M, h) = (\frac{U + M h}{N J} + \frac{h}{2 J} + \frac{\sqrt{2}}{2})^2 - (\frac{M}{N})^2 - \frac{1}{4}, \]

The entanglements vanish at a common temperature \( T_c \), which is larger than the CT \( T_c = 2(1 + \frac{\alpha}{2})/\sqrt{2} \), which includes a wider parameter region than the sufficient condition \( |U|/N J > 1/4 \) for the entangled state that is proposed for the spin chains with Heisenberg or XY interactions [5]. In a magnetic field, Eq. (20) also implies that the witness \( |U + M h|/N J > 1/4 \) proposed in Ref. 8 can be improved to cover wider parameter region for the entangled state. The exact solution not only confirms that the CT of the intrinsic TE which survives in the absence of field is a fixed point, but also reveals some features at the fixed point from the perspectives of the local spin competition and macroscopic thermodynamic behavior.

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FIG. 2: (Color online) Temperature dependence of the thermal entanglement of (a) \( C_a \), and (b) \( C_f \) for the S=1/2 AF-F chain at various fields obtained by means of the TMRG.

\[ \frac{|U|}{N J} > \frac{\sqrt{2} - 1}{2}, \]

which includes a wider parameter region than the sufficient condition \( |U|/N J > 1/4 \) for the entangled state that is proposed for the spin chains with Heisenberg or XY interactions [5]. In a magnetic field, Eq. (20) also implies that the witness \( |U + M h|/N J > 1/4 \) proposed in Ref. 8 can be improved to cover wider parameter region for the entangled state. The exact solution not only confirms that the CT of the intrinsic TE which survives in the absence of field is a fixed point, but also reveals some features at the fixed point from the perspectives of the local spin competition and macroscopic thermodynamic behavior.

To investigate the possible exceptions of the field independence of the CT, we study the TE in an S=1/2 AF-F alternating Heisenberg chain by means of the TMRG. The Hamiltonian of this alternating chain is given by

\[ H = \sum_j (J_a S_{2j-1} \cdot S_j + J_f (S_{2j} \cdot S_{2j+1}) - h \sum_j S_j^z), \]
$C_a$ at different fields. It is shown that in the absence of the field, the intrinsic TE survives, and $C_a$ vanishes at $T_c \approx 0.85 J_\parallel$ due to thermal fluctuations. In the presence of the field, the CT keeps invariant. Although the alternation is involved, the CT of the intrinsic TE is still a fixed point.

However, the entanglement induced by the field does not comply such a rule. For the F couplings, the TE of the spins coupled by $J_f$ is absent without a field. When the applied field closes the gap and increases up to about $0.9 J_\parallel$, the TE is induced by the field, as shown in Fig. 2(b). With further increasing the field, the CT of the field-induced TE vanishes as the spins are fully polarized at zero temperature. It can be seen that, different from the intrinsic TE, the CT of the field-induced TE is dependent on the magnetic field.

Furthermore, the intrinsic TE of the $S=1/2$ AF-AF-AF-F tetrameric Heisenberg chain \cite{Ref.} is studied using the TMRG, which are not presented here. It is shown that the CT retains a fixed point, which is also observed in the trimerized F-F-AF chain \cite{Ref.}. The observations suggest that the CT of the intrinsic TE in one-dimensional Heisenberg antiferromagnets might be a fixed point.

Next, we treat the AF-F chain within the mean-field framework, which may extend the discussions to the general $S=1/2$ alternating Heisenberg antiferromagnetic chains with nearest-neighbor interactions. Following the steps in Ref. \cite{Ref.}, we make the Hartree-Fock approximation to the Hamiltonian (22) after the JW and Fourier transforms, and obtain the mean-field Hamiltonian after omitting a constant:

$$H_{HF} = \sum_k \left\{ (J_a + J_\parallel)(d_b - \frac{1}{2}) - h|a^\dagger_k a_k \right\}$$

$$+ \left\{ (J_a + J_\parallel)(d_a - \frac{1}{2}) - h|b^\dagger_k b_k \right\}$$

$$+ \sum_k J_a \left[ \frac{1}{2} - p_{ab}\right] e^{ik/2} a^\dagger_k b_k + h.c.$$}

$$+ J_f \left[ \frac{1}{2} - p_{ba}\right] e^{-ik/2} b^\dagger_k a_k + h.c.,$$

(23)

where $d_a=\langle a^\dagger_j a_j \rangle$, $d_b=\langle b^\dagger_j b_j \rangle$, $p_{ab}=\langle b^\dagger_j a_j \rangle$, and $p_{ba}=\langle a^\dagger_j +1 b_j \rangle$, which are obtained by self-consistent calculations. Then the Bogoliubov transformation is taken to diagonalize the above Hamiltonian. Thus, the TE can be calculated from the quasiparticle representation. Figure 3 shows the mean-field results of the TE $C_a$ and $C_f$. It is shown that although the values of the critical fields and CT are not accurate, the mean-field results still preserve the features of the CT. The intrinsic TE $C_a$ vanishes at a common CT, while the field-induced TE $C_f$ is dependent on the field. As shown in Fig. 3(b), the CT of $C_f$ enhances with increasing the field until to the maximum at the saturation field, which is analogous to the TMRG result.

In this fermion mapping, $Z_{ab}=p_{ab}$, and $X_{ab}^+=d_a d_b - Z_{ab}^2$, where $Z_{ab}$ and $X_{ab}^+$ are the values defined in Eq. 3 of the spins coupled by $J_\parallel$. Thus, the concurrence $C_a$ can be expressed by Eq. (4) using these quantities. At the CT ($T_c$), we have

$$[|p_{ab}|^2 - d_a(d_b - 1)][|p_{ab}|^2 - d_a(d_b - 1)] = 2|p_{ab}|^2. \tag{24}$$

The calculations show that $p_{ab}$ is real, and $d_a = d_b$. Thus, the above equation can be simplified as

$$d_a - d_a^2 = -\sqrt{2} p_{ab} - p_{ab}^2,$$

(25)

which has the same form as that of the XY chain \cite{Ref.}, yielding the following inequality

$$\langle (S_{2j-1} S_{2j}) + \sqrt{2} \rangle \frac{1}{2} \langle S_{2j} \rangle^2 < \frac{1}{4} + \langle S_{2j-1} \rangle^2 \tag{26}$$

for the entangled $C_a$. For the field-induced TE $C_f$, we have $d_a - d_a^2 = -\sqrt{2} p_{ba} - p_{ba}^2$ at the CT, which is satisfied at different CTs for different fields. The entangled $C_f$ is described by $\langle (S_{2j}^+ S_{2j+1}^z) + \frac{\sqrt{2}}{2} \rangle \langle S_{2j}^z \rangle^2 < \frac{1}{4} + \langle S_{2j}^z \rangle^2$. Note that the thermal quantity witness cannot be written in a form as simple as Eq. (20) within the present self-consistent calculations.

In summary, we have studied the field dependence of the CT of TE in the $S=1/2$ spin chains within the thermodynamic limit $N \to \infty$. The concurrence of the TE in the spin-1/2 XY chain is exactly resolved. It is found that the CT of the TE is a fixed point. An equation is given to determine the CT, which is found to be $T_c \approx 0.4843 J$ and smaller than that of the two-qubit system. The thermal witness for the entangled state is also proposed. Furthermore, the TE of an $S=1/2$ AF-F chain is studied by means of the TMRG method and mean-field treatment, which indicates that the TE of the intrinsic TE of the spins coupled by AF couplings is a fixed point, while that of the field-induced TE of the spins coupled by F couplings changes with the field. The exact solution of the XY chain as well as the mean-field result of the AF-F chain indicate that the disappearance of the TE is determined by the competition between the spin...
fluctuations and local magnetic moment at finite temperatures. The observations suggest that it may be a general phenomenon in one-dimensional Heisenberg antiferromagnets that the CT of the intrinsic TE is a fixed point independent of the magnetic field.

Acknowledgments

This work is supported in part by the National Science Fund for Distinguished Young Scholars of China (Grant No. 10625419), the National Science Foundation of China (Grants No. 90403036 and No. 20490210), the MOST of China (Grant No. 2006CB601102), and the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

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