

ID de Contribution: 87

Type: Talk

Investigating the nature of the $K_0^*(700)$ state with $\pi^\pm K_S^0$ correlations with ALICE at the LHC

mardi 4 juin 2024 09:10 (20 minutes)

The first measurements of femtoscopic correlations with the particle-pair combinations $\pi^\pm K_S^0$ in pp collisions at $\sqrt{s} = 13$ TeV are reported by ALICE. It is shown that it is possible to study the elusive $K_0^*(700)$ particle that has been considered a tetraquark candidate for over forty years. Boson source parameters and final-state interaction parameters are extracted by fitting a model assuming a Gaussian source to the experimentally measured two-particle correlation functions. The final-state interaction is modeled through a resonant scattering amplitude, defined in terms of a mass and a coupling parameter, decaying into a $\pi^\pm K_S^0$ pair. The extracted mass and Breit-Wigner width, derived from the coupling parameter of the final-state interaction are found to be consistent with previous measurements of the $K_0^*(700)$. The small value and increasing behavior of the correlation strength with increasing source size support the hypothesis that the $K_0^*(700)$ is a tetraquark state. This latter trend is also confirmed via a simple geometric model that assumes a tetraquark structure of the $K_0^*(700)$ resonance.

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Classification de Session: Track1-LF

Classification de thématique: Light-flavours and Strangeness