Multiplicity and Rapidity Dependent Study of (Multi-)strange Hadrons in Small Collision System using the STAR Detector

Ishu Aggarwal (for the STAR Collaboration)

Department of Physics, Panjab University, Chandigarh 160014, India

Abstract

Strangeness enhancement has long been considered as a signature of the quark-gluon plasma formation in heavy-ion collisions. Strangeness enhancement has also been observed in small systems at the Large Hadron Collider (LHC), but the underlying physics still needs to be fully understood. This motivates us to study the strange hadron production in small systems at RHIC. We present new measurements of (multi-)strange hadrons (K^0_S, Λ, Ξ and Ω) in d+Au collisions at $\sqrt{s_{NN}}$ = 200 GeV, collected by STAR in 2016. We report the multiplicity and rapidity dependence of strange hadron transverse momentum (p_T) spectra, p_T-integrated yields dN/dy, average transverse momentum ($\langle p_T \rangle$), yield ratios of these strange hadrons to pions, nuclear modification factors and rapidity asymmetry in d+Au collisions.

Keywords:
Heavy-ion collisions, Quark Gluon Plasma, RHIC, STAR, Strangeness

1. Introduction

The production of strange hadrons in high-energy hadronic interactions provides a way to investigate the properties of quantum chromodynamics (QCD), the theory of strongly interacting matter. Strangeness enhancement in heavy-ion collisions with respect to p+p collisions has been suggested as a signature of quark-gluon plasma (QGP) formation [1]. However, the creation of QGP in small systems is still under intense debate.

Small collision systems like proton-nucleus (p–A) and deuteron-nucleus (d–A) are usually considered as control experiments where the formation of an extended

QGP phase is not expected. These collision systems are used for baseline measurements to study the possible effects of cold nuclear matter. The process of generating hadrons can be affected by various factors that include modifications in parton distribution functions within nuclei, the possibility of parton saturation, multiple scatterings of the partons traversing the nucleus, and the radial flow [2, 3]. It is anticipated that the magnitude of these effects may vary with the rapidity of the produced particles. Nuclear effects can be quantified using variables such as nuclear modification factor and rapidity asymmetry.

2 Analysis Details

A successful run of d+Au collisions at $\sqrt{s_{NN}}$ = 200 GeV was carried out in 2016 at RHIC. In this analysis utilizing the d+Au dataset, we focus on K^0_s, $\Lambda(\bar{\Lambda})$, $\Xi(\bar{\Xi})$, $\Omega(\bar{\Omega})$ that are weakly decaying particles that travel a certain distance before decaying into daughter particles ($K^0_S \rightarrow \pi^+ + \pi^-$, $\Lambda(\bar{\Lambda}) \rightarrow p(\bar{p}) + \pi^-(\pi^+)$, $\Xi^-(\bar{\Xi}^+) \rightarrow \Lambda(\bar{\Lambda}) + \pi^-(\pi^+)$, $\Omega^-(\bar{\Omega}^+) \rightarrow \Lambda(\bar{\Lambda}) + K^-(K^+)$).

The K^0_s, $\Lambda(\bar{\Lambda})$, $\Xi(\bar{\Xi})$, $\Omega(\bar{\Omega})$ signals are extracted using the invariant mass method. We have used double Gaussian and second order polynomial functions to describe the signal and background invariant mass distributions, respectively. The signal mean and the width are extracted from the functional fit. Raw yield is determined within the mass window of $M_0 \pm 3\sigma$, where M_0 and σ is the fitted mean and fitted width of K^0_S (or $\Lambda/\Xi/\Omega$) respectively. The raw yield for each p_T interval is corrected for the branching ratio, acceptance and efficiency to obtain corrected p_T spectra. Weak decay contributions from Ξ are subtracted from the yields.

3 Results and Discussions

Figure 1 (left) shows the ratio of integrated K^0_S, Λ, Ξ and Ω yields to pion yields as a function of mid-rapidity multiplicity for d+Au collisions at $\sqrt{s_{NN}}$ = 200 GeV. A smooth transition of these ratios from p+p to heavy-ion collisions is observed. Data from different collision systems are consistent with each other at similar multiplicities and yields of particles with more strangeness content decrease faster as we move from high to low multiplicities. Similar trends have been observed at the LHC.

In Fig. 1 (right), nuclear modification factors for K^0_S, Λ and Ξ at mid-rapidity ($|y| < 0.5$) for d+Au collision is presented. Cronin-like enhancement [8] is observed at intermediate p_T, which is stronger for baryons (Ξ, Λ, p) as compared to mesons (K^0_S, π).

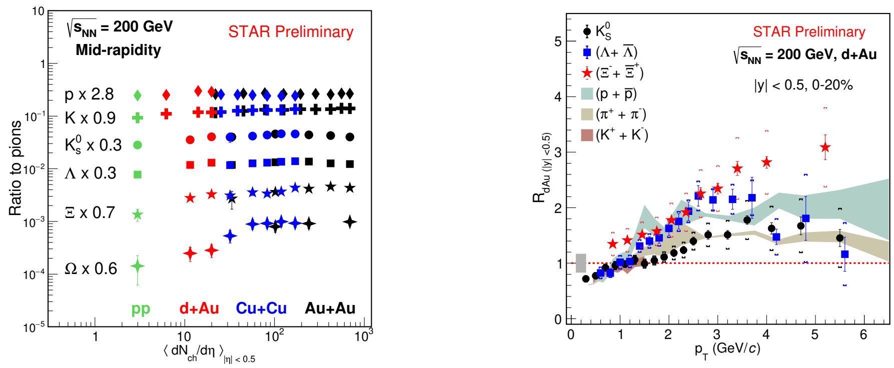

Figure 1: Left: Integrated yield particle-to-pion ratio for strange particles (K^0_S, Λ, Ξ and Ω) as a function of multiplicity for *p*+*p*, *d*+Au, Cu+Cu and Au+Au collisions. Right: Nuclear modification factors (R_{dAu}) for strange particles (K^0_S, Λ and Ξ) in *d*+Au collisions at $\sqrt{s_{NN}}$ = 200 GeV.

In Fig. 2 (left), integrated yield and $\langle p_T \rangle$ for $\pi^+(\pi^-)$, $K^+(K^-)$, $p(\bar{p})$, K^0_s, $\Lambda(\bar{\Lambda})$, $\Xi^-(\bar{\Xi}^+)$ and $\Omega^- + \bar{\Omega}^+$ is shown as function of multiplicity [5-7] . We observed increase of dN/dy and a hint of increase of $\langle p_T \rangle$ as a function of multiplicity. $\langle p_T \rangle$ is larger for heavier mass particles which strongly supports the picture of collective evolution, specially radial flow. We observed a smooth transition of particle production from *p*+*p* to A+A collisions.

We have also measured the transverse momentum dependence of Y_{Asym} for K^0_s, Λ and Ξ for different rapidity intervals (backward rapidity intervals: -0.8 < y < -0.4, -0.4 < y < 0 and forward rapidity intervals: 0 < y < 0.4, 0.4 < y < 0.8) in 0-20% *d*+Au collision at $\sqrt{s_{NN}}$ = 200 GeV. Y_{Asym} values deviate from unity at low p_T (< 3 GeV/c), as shown in Fig. 2 (right), suggesting the presence of a rapidity dependence in the nuclear effects. Y_{Asym} is consistent with unity at high p_T, hinting that nuclear effects become weaker at high p_T. The asymmetry is more prominent for larger rapidity interval and heavier particles.

4 Summary

In these proceedings, we present measurements of multiplicity and rapidity dependence of (multi-)strange hadron (K^0_s, $\Lambda(\bar{\Lambda})$, $\Xi(\bar{\Xi})$ and $\Omega(\bar{\Omega})$) production in *d*+Au collisions at $\sqrt{s_{NN}}$ = 200 GeV with the STAR experiment. Results suggest that strange particle production at 200 GeV is mainly driven by multiplicity. The observed enhancement of integrated yield ratio to pion increases with increasing strangeness content. Hint of Cronin-like enhancement is observed for 0-20% cen-

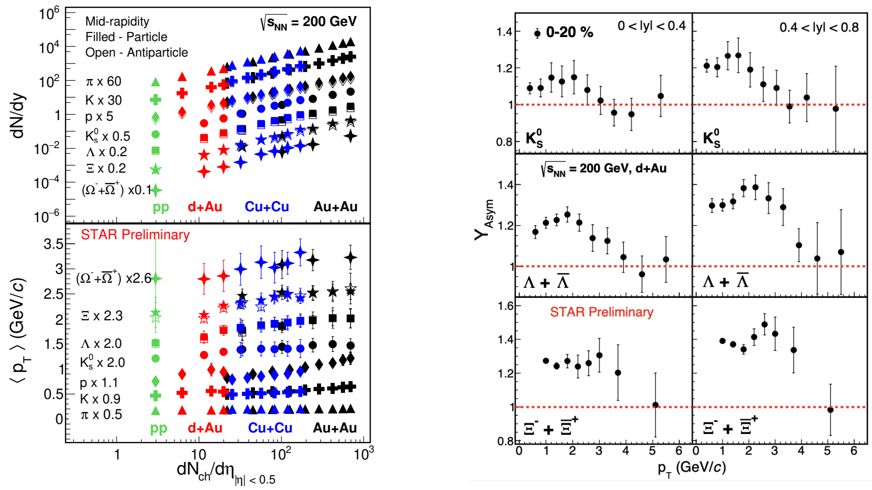

Figure 2: Left: Integrated yield (dN/dy) and mean transverse momentum $\langle p_T \rangle$ for $\pi^+(\pi^-)$, $K^+(K^-)$, p($\bar{p}$) strange particles (K^0_S, Λ, Ξ and Ω) as a function of multiplicity for p+p, d+Au, Cu+Cu and Au+Au collisions. Right: Rapidity asymmetry (Y_{Asym}) as a function of p_T (right) for strange particles (K^0_S, Λ and Ξ) in d+Au collisions at $\sqrt{s_{NN}}$ = 200 GeV.

trality for K^0_S, Λ and Ξ. Y_{Asym} larger than one at low p_T indicates the presence of the nuclear effects. The Y_{Asym} is more prominent for larger-mass particles and higher rapidity interval.

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