Vector meson cross sections at HERA*

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Inelastic and elastic (exclusive) cross section measurements of vector meson production at HERA are discussed.

1. Introduction

Vector meson production is an ideal tool for studying the structure of the proton and to investigate the transition from purely soft to hard pQCD processes.

Vector mesons can be produced in two different ways in lepton proton scattering, in so-called inelastic processes, where the proton breaks, or elastic (exclusive) processes, where the incoming proton stays intact. The different production mechanisms are shown schematically in Fig. 1. They suggest that the cross section for inelastic vector meson production behaves like \( \sigma_{\text{inel}} \sim xG(x, \mu^2) \) whereas for elastic production like \( \sigma_{\text{el}} \sim \left[ xG(x, \mu^2) \right]^2 \). Different regions of the available phase space ranging from photoproduction (\( Q^2 \sim 0 \)) to the DIS regime (\( Q^2 > 1 \text{ GeV}^2 \)) and various vector mesons, including photons can be investigated.

2. Inelastic Vector Meson Production

Inelastic \( J/\psi \) production (see Fig. 1(a)) has been measured by the H1 and ZEUS experiments both in the photoproduction [1, 2] and DIS [1, 3] regime. The cross section \( \frac{d\sigma}{dp_T^2} \) as measured by H1 [1] for photoproduction is shown in Fig. 2. In Fig. 3 the cross section \( \frac{d\sigma}{dp_T^2} \) in the DIS region [1] (3.6 < \( Q^2 < 100 \text{ GeV}^2 \)) for different values of the

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3. Elastic (exclusive) Vector Meson Production

The cross section for elastic vector meson production as a function of the $\gamma^* p$ center of mass energy $W$ is shown in fig. 4 [8]. One observes a steep rise of the cross section with $W$ for heavy vector mesons. A similar behavior is observed for light vector meson production at large $Q^2$. As suggested in Fig. 1 elastic vector meson production at large scales should behave like $[xg(x,\mu^2)]^2 \sim x^{-2\lambda}$, whereas inelastic processes, like inelastic vector meson production or the inclusive cross section $F_2$ at small $x \sim 1/W^2$, behave like $xg(x,\mu^2) \sim x^{\lambda_0}$. Fig. 5 [9] shows a measurement of $\lambda$ for $\rho^0$ production at large $Q^2$ and compared with the one from $F_2$ showing a similar energy
Fig. 4. Cross section for $\gamma^* p \rightarrow V p$ as a function of $W$. The total $\gamma p$ cross section is also shown. The lines are results of a fit of the form $W^\delta$.

Fig. 5. $\lambda$ for $\rho^0$ production at large $Q^2$ compared with the one from inclusive $F_2$.

dependence $\lambda$, in contrast to the naive expectation coming from 2-gluon exchange. Note, a similar behavior is seen in the energy dependence of diffractive and inclusive cross sections at large $Q^2$.

Fig. 6. $b$-slope as a function of $Q^2 + M^2$ for different vector mesons.

Fig. 7. $\alpha_P(t)$ measured in elastic $\rho^0$ photoproduction.

The dependence of the elastic vector meson production cross section on $t = (p - p')^2$, the momentum transfer at the proton vertex, is often parameterized as $\sigma \sim \exp(-b|t|)$. The measured $b$-slope obtained from different measurements of vector meson production is shown in Fig. 6 as a function of $Q^2 + M^2$, with $M$ being the mass of the produced vector meson. At large $Q^2 + M^2 \simeq 10$ GeV$^2$ the $b$-slope becomes constant at $b \sim 5$ GeV$^{-2}$.

The energy dependence of the cross section as a function of $t$ can be parameterized with $\frac{d\sigma_{\gamma p}(W)}{dt} = \frac{d\sigma_{\gamma p}(W_0)}{dt} \left(\frac{W}{W_0}\right)^{4(\alpha_P(t) - 1)}$. The measurement of $\alpha_P(t)$ within a one experiment is shown in Fig. 7 and compared with results of [13]. Even in the photoproduction region the value of $\alpha_P(t)$ is smaller than expected from soft hadron-hadron interactions.
4. Conclusion

Measurements of inelastic vector meson production in the photoproduction and DIS region can be reasonably well described with higher order QCD calculations. Measurements of elastic $\rho^0$ vector meson production show an energy dependence, which is similar to the one obtained from inclusive measurements. Even in photoproduction of elastic $\rho^0$ mesons, the measured $\alpha_F$ is smaller than expected from soft hadron-hadron interactions. Thus understanding of elastic vector meson production is still a challenge.

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