



Measurement of the $\psi(2S)$ to J/ψ cross-section ratio as a function of centrality in PbPb collisions at $\sqrt{s_{NN}} = 5.02$ TeV

LHCb collaboration[†]

Abstract

The dissociation of quarkonium states with different binding energies produced in heavy-ion collisions is a powerful probe for investigating the formation and properties of the quark-gluon plasma. The ratio of production cross-sections of $\psi(2S)$ and J/ψ mesons times the ratio of their branching fractions into the dimuon final state is measured as a function of centrality using data collected by the LHCb detector in PbPb collisions at $\sqrt{s_{NN}} = 5.02$ TeV. The measured ratio shows no dependence on the collision centrality, and is compared to the latest theory predictions and to the recent measurements in literature.

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1 Introduction

The production of charmonia, in particular of the J/ψ and $\psi(2S)$ states, has long been considered a key probe for understanding the properties of the quark-gluon plasma (QGP). The idea that quarkonium suppression is an indicator of QGP formation was introduced by T. Matsui and H. Satz, who proposed that in deconfined nuclear matter, $c\bar{c}$ pairs become unbound under the effect of colour screening [1]. Following their theory, quarkonium states, and in particular those that are loosely bound (Fig. 1), dissociate in the hot and dense medium produced in heavy-ion collisions. Experimentally, the relative yields between different quarkonium states are thus expected to change with the centrality of the collision, the latter being closely related to the temperature of the medium.

Early results from the NA50 collaboration at the SPS showed J/ψ suppression in PbPb collisions [2, 3]. These results were extensively debated but were not a conclusive signature of QGP formation as other competing mechanisms can also contribute to quarkonium suppression, including cold nuclear matter (CNM) effects such as shadowing and nuclear absorption, and final-state interactions with comoving particles. Further studies by the E866 [4], PHENIX [5], ALICE [6], CMS [7] and LHCb [8, 9] experiments showed that the suppression is observed even in smaller collision systems like proton-nucleus (pA), known to be less prone to colour-screening effects. In particular, the suppression of $\psi(2S)$ production relative to that of J/ψ states in pA collisions suggests that comovers, rather than QGP effects alone, are important in understanding quarkonium behaviour in high-energy collisions. Theoretical models accounting for these effects have been developed to provide a more comprehensive interpretation of the data [10].

In addition, J/ψ production in heavy-ion collisions was extensively studied by RHIC and LHC experiments which played a crucial role in understanding quarkonium suppression in a hot and dense medium. Results from the PHENIX [11] and STAR [12] experiments demonstrated significant suppression of J/ψ yields in AuAu collisions, while also providing insight into the competing effects of QGP formation and CNM contributions. These findings were then complemented by the ALICE [13] and CMS [14] experiments which studied charmonium production in a variety of collision systems including PbPb, and also by the LHCb collaboration, which focused on the different production mechanisms [15]. Together, these studies have advanced the understanding of the interplay between cold and hot nuclear matter effects, motivating new investigations of the properties of the medium through the relative suppression of quarkonium states.

In this paper, the relative production of $\psi(2S)$ to J/ψ states, both decaying to two muons, is studied as a function of centrality using the 2018 PbPb collision data collected at a nucleon-nucleon centre-of-mass energy of $\sqrt{s_{\text{NN}}} = 5.02$ TeV by the LHCb experiment, corresponding to an integrated luminosity of around $230 \mu\text{b}^{-1}$ [18]. The ratio of cross-sections (σ) of the two charmonium states multiplied by their branching fractions (\mathcal{B}) in the dimuon channel is measured as

$$\frac{\mathcal{B}(\psi(2S) \rightarrow \mu^+\mu^-)}{\mathcal{B}(J/\psi \rightarrow \mu^+\mu^-)} \cdot \frac{\sigma(\psi(2S))}{\sigma(J/\psi)} = \frac{N(\psi(2S))}{N(J/\psi)} \cdot \frac{\varepsilon_{\text{tot}}(J/\psi)}{\varepsilon_{\text{tot}}(\psi(2S))}, \quad (1)$$

where N and ε_{tot} are the signal yields and efficiencies, respectively.

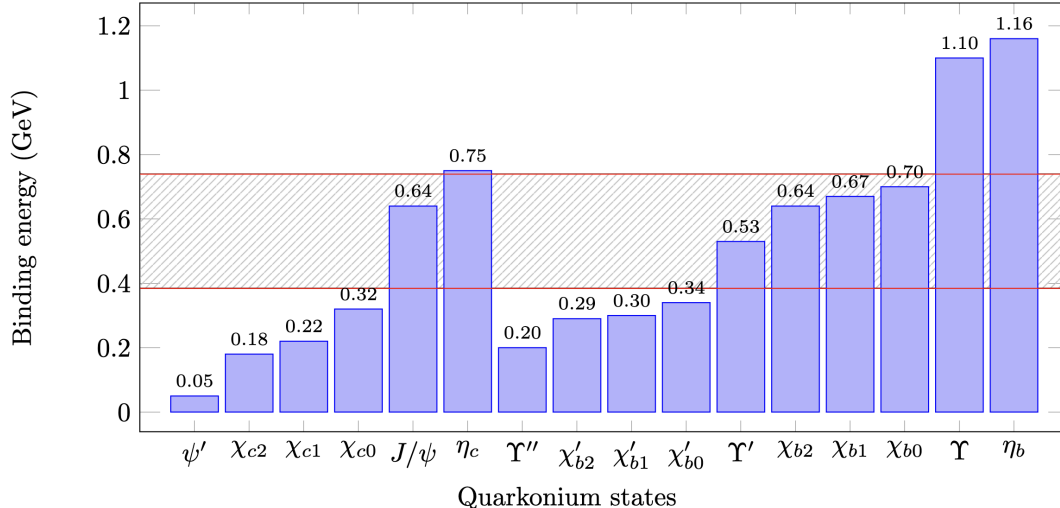


Figure 1: Binding energies of different quarkonium states taken from Ref. [16]. The hatched band indicates the QGP temperature estimated from thermal photon yields [17] in PbPb collisions at $\sqrt{s_{\text{NN}}} = 2.76$ TeV. The symbol ψ' stands for the $\psi(2S)$ state.

2 The LHCb detector and data selection

The LHCb detector [19,20] is a single-arm forward spectrometer covering the pseudorapidity range $2 < \eta < 5$, designed for the study of particles containing b or c quarks. The detector includes a high-precision tracking system consisting of a silicon-strip vertex detector (VELO) surrounding the interaction region [21], a large-area silicon-strip detector located upstream of a dipole magnet with a bending power of about 4 T m, and three stations of silicon-strip detectors and straw drift tubes [22] placed downstream of the magnet. The tracking system provides a measurement of the momentum, p , of charged particles with a relative uncertainty that varies from 0.5% at low momentum to 1.0% at 200 GeV/ c . The minimum distance of a track to a primary vertex (PV), the impact parameter, is measured with a resolution of $(15 + 29/p_T)$ μm , where p_T is the component of the momentum transverse to the beam, in GeV/ c . Different types of charged hadrons are distinguished using information from two ring-imaging Cherenkov detectors (RICH) [23]. Photons, electrons and hadrons are identified by a calorimeter system consisting of scintillating-pad and preshower detectors, an electromagnetic and a hadronic calorimeter (ECAL and HCAL). Muons are identified by a system composed of alternating layers of iron and multiwire proportional chambers [24].

The online event selection is performed by a trigger [25], which consists of a hardware stage, based on information from the calorimeter and muon systems, followed by a software stage, which applies a full event reconstruction. At the hardware level, events are required to have a muon with high p_T . Events are selected at software level if the number of clusters in the VELO, N_c , satisfies $6000 < N_c < 10000$ or if $N_c < 6000$ and two muons with $p_T > 400$ MeV/ c are identified. Moreover, to suppress contamination from Pb-gas interactions,¹ a minimum of 15 VELO tracks in the backward direction, $\eta < 0$, is required, along with the condition that the PV must be close to the beam collision point. The

¹Neon gas was injected in the beam pipe near the interaction point, using the LHCb fixed-target SMOG system [18], concurrently with PbPb collisions.

J/ψ and $\psi(2S)$ candidates are reconstructed in the dimuon final state, satisfying selection requirements on transverse momentum, $0.3 < p_T < 10 \text{ GeV}/c$, and rapidity, $2.0 < y < 4.5$. The two muons are both required to have p_T greater than $900 \text{ MeV}/c$ and to satisfy particle identification (PID) requirements based on information from the RICH, calorimeter and muon systems.

3 Yields in centrality intervals

The charmonium yields are determined in intervals of the collision centrality. Centrality intervals are defined as percentiles of the total inelastic hadronic PbPb cross-section and are associated with the impact parameter of the colliding particles and the mean number of participating nucleons, $\langle N_{\text{part}} \rangle$ [26]. A higher centrality percentile corresponds to more peripheral collisions with a larger impact parameter, while a lower centrality percentile corresponds to more central collisions with a smaller impact parameter. To estimate these geometric quantities, the Glauber Monte Carlo (GMC) model adapted to LHCb conditions is used [26, 27]. The impact parameter cannot be measured directly and is instead estimated using the total energy deposited in the ECAL, with which it scales linearly. The method is based on a binned fit of the total ECAL energy in simulated minimum-bias PbPb interactions where the GMC model is used and the experimental conditions of the signal sample are reproduced. This fit establishes a per-event dependence of $\langle N_{\text{part}} \rangle$ and the collision centrality in terms of the energy deposited in the ECAL. The centrality intervals used are defined in Table 1. The data used to determine the ratio are limited to centrality values down to about 65% due to the inability of the detector to cope with the increasing occupancy.

The charmonium yields, $N(\psi(2S))$ and $N(J/\psi)$, are extracted by an unbinned maximum-likelihood fit to the dimuon invariant-mass distribution in each centrality interval where the J/ψ signal is modelled by a Crystal Ball function [28] with tail parameters fixed from simulation. A Gaussian function is used to describe the $\psi(2S)$ signal; the difference between the peak positions of the J/ψ and $\psi(2S)$ signals is fixed to the difference of the known masses of the two states [29]. The background is described by an exponential function. Figure 2 shows the dimuon invariant-mass distribution in each centrality interval compared to the fit results. The J/ψ and $\psi(2S)$ yields extracted by the fit are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Range for the number of participating nucleons $\langle N_{\text{part}} \rangle$ and signal yields in each centrality interval.

Centrality (%)	90–100	80–90	70–80	60–70
$\langle N_{\text{part}} \rangle$	2.4–5.5	5.5–13.0	13.0–26.5	26.5–48.0
$N(J/\psi)$	596 ± 28	2099 ± 52	3320 ± 74	2221 ± 77
$N(\psi(2S))$	13 ± 5	53 ± 14	68 ± 26	85 ± 36

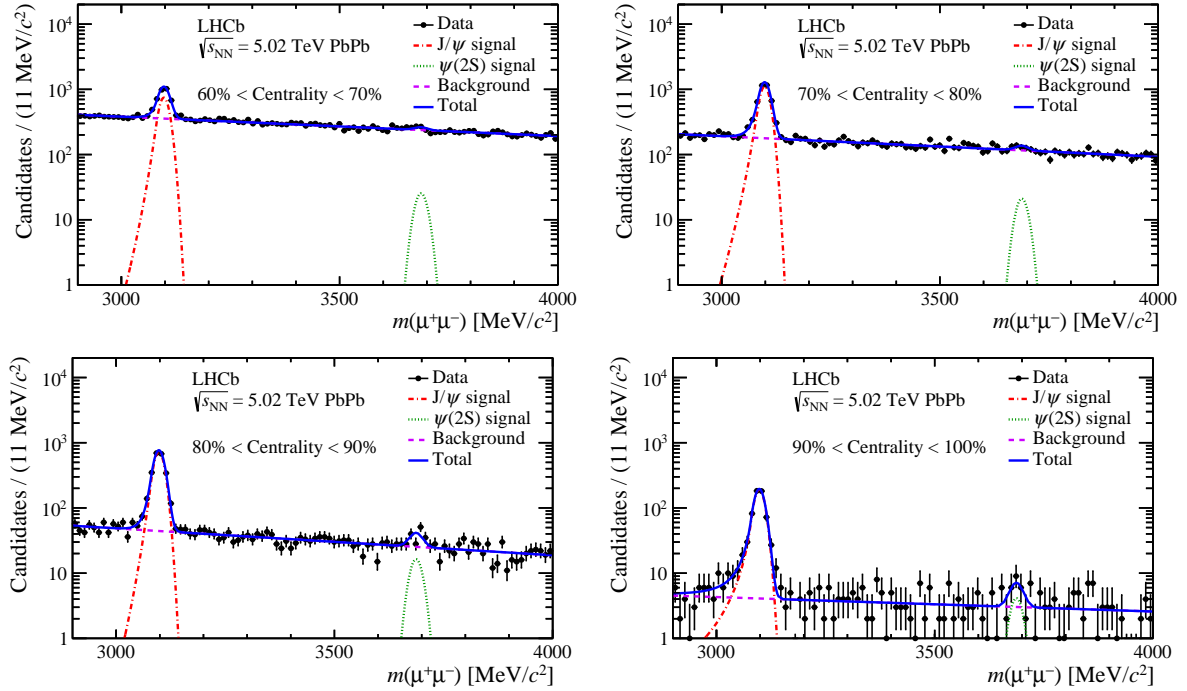


Figure 2: Dimuon invariant-mass distributions in each centrality interval after all selection requirements are applied, compared to the fit results.

4 Simulation and efficiencies

The total signal selection efficiencies ε_{tot} in Eq. 1 are determined using simulation. The simulated decays are reconstructed and analysed using the same software tools as those used to process the data. In the simulation, J/ψ and $\psi(2S)$ particles are generated using PYTHIA [30] and embedded into minimum-bias PbPb collisions from the EPOS event generator [31]. The decays of unstable particles are described by EVTGEN [32], in which final-state radiation is generated using PHOTOS [33]. The interaction of the generated particles with the detector and its response are implemented using the GEANT4 toolkit [34, 35] adapted to LHCb [36]. After reconstruction, the simulated events are weighted to improve agreement with data. The correction weights are obtained as a function of p_T and N_c from the background-subtracted data and simulation sample of J/ψ candidates. The total efficiencies include the geometric acceptance of the detector, the candidate reconstruction and selection, the particle identification and the effect of the trigger, which are estimated in each centrality interval, using the weighted simulation.

The acceptance efficiency, defined as the fraction of $J/\psi \rightarrow \mu^+\mu^-$ decays with both muons entering the acceptance of the LHCb spectrometer, is determined using a simulation sample produced without any requirement on the kinematics of the decay products. This efficiency is found to be independent of centrality. The combined reconstruction and selection efficiency is calculated as the fraction of generated events in the acceptance that pass the selection requirements other than those related to PID and the trigger. The PID efficiency for the two muons is estimated from dedicated pp calibration data samples, and computed as a function of the muon kinematics. Specifically, the muon PID efficiency is determined in intervals of muon p_T and N_c , showing a smooth dependence up to the

Table 2: Range of the relative systematic uncertainty contributions for the ratio measurement across the four centrality intervals.

Source	Uncertainty (%)
Signal fit model	0.5–2.2
Background fit model	0.5–6.3
Weighting procedure	0.1–0.2
PID efficiency extrapolation	0.1–2.8
Simulation sample size	0.5–1.0
Trigger efficiency estimation	< 0.1

edge of the multiplicity region at $N_c = 5000$. In each muon p_T bin, it is then extrapolated via a quadratic fit function to N_c values up to 10000, to cover the multiplicity region of the measurement reported here using PbPb collisions. Finally, the trigger efficiency is computed as the fraction of simulated signal particles that pass the trigger requirement.

5 Systematic uncertainties

Several sources of systematic uncertainty associated with the determination of the signal and background yields and with the evaluation of the efficiencies are considered.

The systematic uncertainty arising from the signal parametrisation consists of two contributions. The first is associated with the choice of the fixed parameters of the J/ψ signal fit function. It is estimated by varying the parameters within their uncertainties obtained in simulation. The second contribution is estimated by repeating the signal yield extraction with an alternative parametrisation of the J/ψ signal using the convolution of a Crystal Ball and a Gaussian function where both widths are free to vary. Compared to the large statistical uncertainty affecting the $\psi(2S)$ yield, the systematic uncertainty arising from the $\psi(2S)$ fit model is negligibly small and ignored. The uncertainty in background modelling is assessed by comparing the results from the baseline fit to those obtained using a second-order polynomial instead of the exponential function.

The systematic uncertainty arising from the evaluation of the efficiencies consists of different contributions. The first contribution is related to the weighting procedure applied to the simulation, and is taken into consideration by randomly varying each weight within its uncertainty and estimating the total efficiencies again. Using 50 different sets of generated weights, the uncertainty considered is the relative variation of the obtained efficiencies. Another contribution pertains to the estimation of the PID efficiency. An alternative approach is used, where the extrapolation to the high-multiplicity region that is not covered by the pp calibration sample is performed with a linear function instead of a second-order polynomial. The limited size of the simulation sample used to determine the efficiencies is also a source of systematic uncertainty, and is taken into account using the statistical uncertainties of the efficiencies determined from simulation. Finally, a systematic uncertainty due to the trigger efficiency is assigned by using a data-driven method where the efficiency is determined from events triggered independently of the signal muons [37]. The total systematic uncertainty is computed as the sum in quadrature of each contribution shown in Table 2.

6 Results

The results in different centrality intervals are listed in Table 3 and are presented as a function of the number of participating nucleons $\langle N_{\text{part}} \rangle$ in Figs. 3 and 4, where they are compared with some of the recently published measurements and with theory predictions, respectively. In particular, Fig. 3 compares these results to the ALICE measurement [38], performed in PbPb collisions at the same centre-of-mass energy and at similar rapidities and transverse momenta but covering different centrality region. The two measurements are in agreement within uncertainties in the overlapping region, showing no dependency on $\langle N_{\text{part}} \rangle$. The LHCb pp [39] and $p\text{Pb}$ [40] measurements are reported in the same figure showing also agreement with the results reported here. The ratio measured in these studies is integrated over the kinematic range, and is associated with a number of participating nucleons of $\langle N_{\text{part}} \rangle = 2$ (8) for the pp ($p\text{Pb}$) measurement, as estimated using the GMC model [27].

Figure 4 shows a comparison of these results with two recent theoretical calculations. In the statistical hadronization model (SHMc) [41, 42], it is assumed that, near the phase boundary between the QGP at high temperatures and the confined hadronic matter at lower temperatures, a fireball is formed during collisions, which is near thermal equilibrium. The TAMU model [43, 44] is a transport model developed in a nonperturbative hydro-Langevin-RRM framework that includes collisional energy loss and heavy-quark diffusion in the medium. When compared to the data reported in this article, the SHMc model, although showing no dependency of the ratio on the centrality, generally underestimates its value. On the other hand, the TAMU model predictions are in better agreement with the experimental result, especially in the lower multiplicity intervals. A slight disagreement is observed in the highest multiplicity interval, where the data differ from the two theoretical predictions and the ALICE measurement by approximately 1.5 standard deviations.

Table 3: Cross-section times branching fraction ratio between $\psi(2S)$ and J/ψ states in intervals of centrality and corresponding number of participating nucleons $\langle N_{\text{part}} \rangle$. The first uncertainties are statistical and the second are systematic.

Centrality (%)	$\langle N_{\text{part}} \rangle$	$\frac{\mathcal{B}(\psi(2S) \rightarrow \mu^+ \mu^-)}{\mathcal{B}(J/\psi \rightarrow \mu^+ \mu^-)} \cdot \frac{\sigma(\psi(2S))}{\sigma(J/\psi)}$
90–100	2.40–5.50	$0.018 \pm 0.007 \pm 0.001$
80–90	5.50–13.0	$0.020 \pm 0.005 \pm 0.001$
70–80	13.0–26.5	$0.016 \pm 0.006 \pm 0.001$
60–70	26.5–48.0	$0.027 \pm 0.011 \pm 0.001$

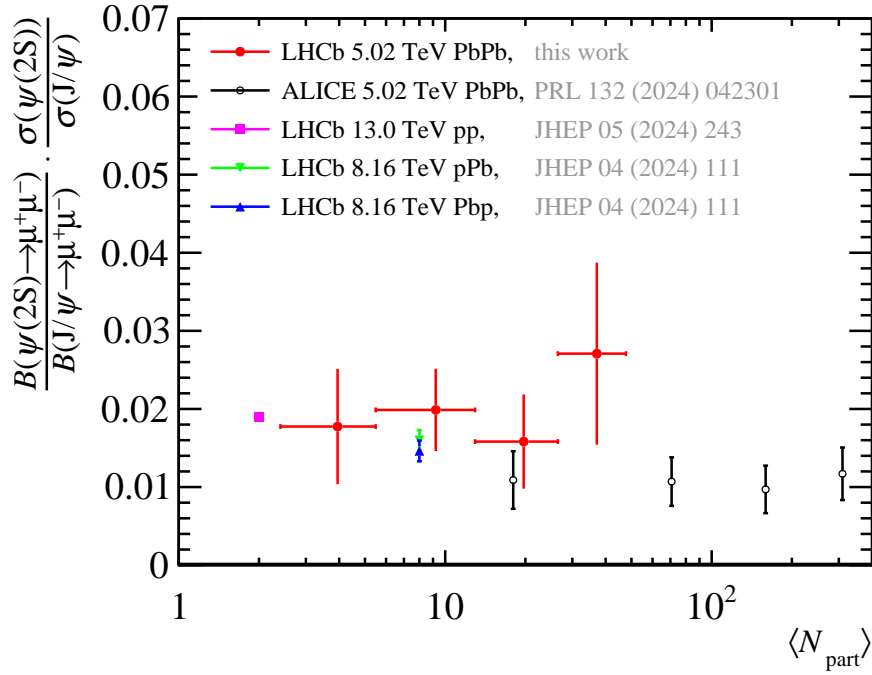


Figure 3: Cross-section times branching fraction ratio between $\psi(2S)$ and J/ψ states as a function of the number of participating nucleons $\langle N_{\text{part}} \rangle$ compared with ALICE PbPb [38] and LHCb pp [39] and pPb [40] results.

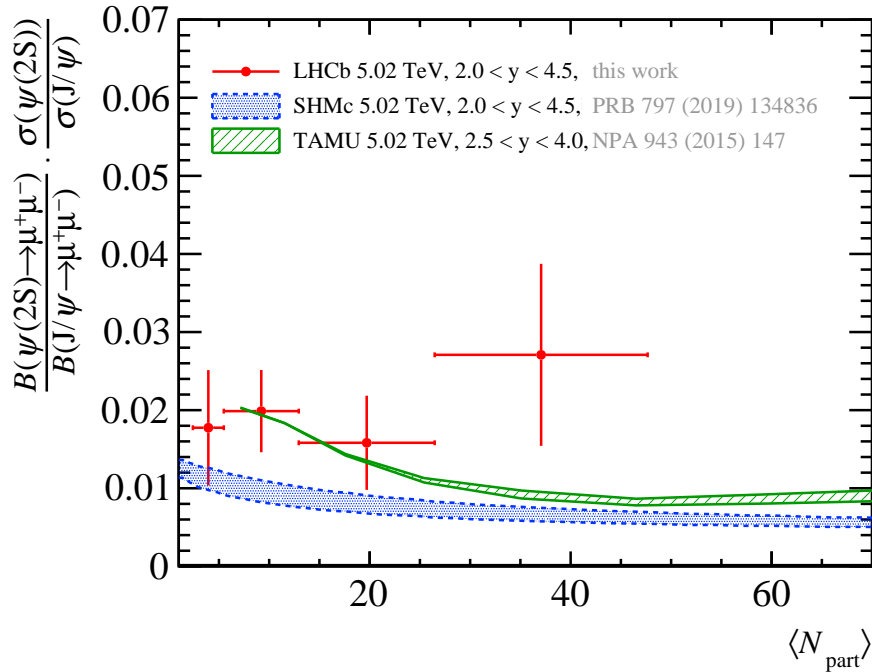


Figure 4: Cross-section times branching fraction ratio between $\psi(2S)$ and J/ψ states as a function of the number of participating nucleons $\langle N_{\text{part}} \rangle$ compared with the SHMc [41, 42] and TAMU models [43, 44] predictions shown by the coloured bands representing the uncertainties.

7 Conclusions

The $\psi(2S)$ to J/ψ production cross-section ratio in PbPb collisions at a centre-of-mass energy of 5.02 TeV corresponding to an integrated luminosity of around $230 \mu\text{b}^{-1}$ is measured as a function of event centrality. No significant dependence on the centrality is found. The results are also compared to the latest theory predictions, with which they agree within 1.5 standard deviations or better, with a slight tension in the lowest centrality interval. The SHMc calculations tend to underestimate the data over the whole range; the TAMU model achieves a better description. However, the current experimental precision precludes any firm conclusion. This study is a first step towards a deeper understanding of quarkonium production in PbPb collisions at midcentrality that can be achieved by additional measurements with the upgraded LHCb detector in Run 3 [45].

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