



Synthesis and Characterization of Spinel Ferrite MFe_2O_4 (M = Co/Zn) Nanoparticles for Lead (II) Ions Removal from Aqueous Solution

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Abstract: Ferrite nanoparticles (NPs) with structure MFe_2O_4 (M = Co/Zn) were created flowing the sol-gel auto-combustion technique using lemon juice as surfactant and fuel agent. Nanomaterials were diagnosed using different physical and chemical techniques. The susceptibility of the produced nanomaterials as adsorbents of lead ions was examined. The nanoparticles synthesis in this study has structural and chemical characteristics that have been described using different technologies: Brunauer–Emmett–Teller (BET) analysis, Field emission-scanning electron microscopy (FE-SEM), Energy Dispersive X-ray Spectroscopy (EDX), Fourier-transform infrared spectroscopy (FTIR), transmission electron microscopy (TEM) and X-ray diffraction (XRD). Synthesized ferrite NPs were analyzed as removal agent for lead ions. The effects of adsorbent concentration, pH, temperature and time of contact on lead ion uptake behavior were measured. The results showed that adsorption has strong correlation with Freundlich model compared with the Langmuir model. The thermodynamic parameters revealed endothermic reaction for ΔH , ΔG was found as spontaneous process and ΔS were found positive value.

Keywords: Adsorption, Pb(II) ions, ferrite nanoparticles, Langmuir, Freundlich, Thermodynamic

Water shortage, both of quantity and quality, has been the main threat to humanity's well-being. With the speedy escalation of industrialization, the drinking water quality has become a worrisome topic. Contamination is primarily caused by waste products produced by the textile, chemical, mining, and metallurgical industries (Agustin et al 2011). Water usually polluted with different heavy metal ions like (As, Zn, Co, Ni, Hg, Cd, Pb, and Cr) in addition to other pollutants with organic origin (Shen et al 2009). One of the modern issues is contamination water by dangerous metal particles like Cd(II), Pb(II) and pollution by a microorganism. Many materials are used to remove heavy metals especially if they are able to absorb the ions but depend on the efficiency and performance of the process. The established many approaches to channel the waste water such precipitation, particle trade, buoyancy, oxidation electrochemical medications, adsorption, invert osmosis, dissipation, film filtration, and biosorption procedures are broadly utilized (Chen et al 2009, Ivanov et al 2004). Improvement of the novel and financially savvy nanomaterials for natural remediation, contamination discovery and different applications are in extensive consideration. Late advances propose that a number of problems including quality of water can be settled or it has been developed using different nanotechnologies such as nanoparticles and nanofiltration in

addition to the other tools resulting from the progress of this technology (Jurgen and Joydeep 2005, Salman et al 2017).

Spinel ferrites have recently identified as a new class of adsorbents that are preferably for water treatment (Kefeni et al 2017, Chinh et al 2020). It is suitable for removing impurities because it has large surface area and many effective sites. Spinel ferrites can be removed from reaction mixture effortlessly using an external magnetic field as they have superior superparamagnetic properties (SPM) (Baig and Varma 2013, Nasir et al 2015). Spinel ferrites have been studied for their ability to remove organic compounds, nutrient salts, and toxic metals from water (Roonasi and Nezhad 2016). Usually the universal formula of spinel ferrites is MFe_2O_4 (where M: Fe, Co, Ni, Zn, etc.) and cubic structure consists of 32 O- atoms which occupied by 8 Td (tetrahedral) and 16 Oh (octahedral) occupied sites. When magnetic spinel ferrites are prepared as nanoparticles, the smaller particle size and high surface area reinforce its capacity for as removal (Cafer et al 2006).

Many synthetic procedures were utilized to prepare the magnetic highly crystalline and uniformly sized nanoparticles of cobalt-ferrites and zinc-ferrites by precipitation method. the coprecipitation method (Mahboubeh et al 2014, Baykal et al 2012), the hydrothermal method (Zhao et al 2007), the sol-gel method (Sivakumar et al 2012) and the sol-gel auto-

combustion method (Ismat et al 2017). In current work, CoFe_2O_4 and ZnFe_2O_4 , ferrite sample was created by the sol-gel auto-combustion technique, using lemon juice as surfactant and fuel factor. This technology is considered environmentally friendly and cost effective as against the conventional synthesis of technologies.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Synthesis of MFe_2O_4 (M = Co/Zn) nanoparticles: The process for synthesis of CoFe_2O_4 and ZnFe_2O_4 was carried out as follow:

- 1- 14.54g of $\text{Fe}(\text{NO}_3)_3 \cdot 9\text{H}_2\text{O}$ (M.W 404) was mixed with 10.4g of $\text{Co}(\text{NO}_3)_2 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$ (M.W 290.93), 9.4g of $\text{Zn}(\text{NO}_3)_2 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$ (M.W 290.69) and dissolved in 45ml of lemon juice extract.
- 2- Ammonia solution (NH_4OH) was added in order to keep the pH of the solution to 7.0 with continuous stirring using a magnetic stirrer.
- 3- Continuous for stirring half an hour at 80°C , the clear sol. was completely turned to a gel.
- 4- Oven desiccates at 80°C to get a steady weighing and grinded to fine powder, then calcined at 600°C for 5 hours in furnace under air atmosphere.

Characterization techniques: For the purpose of diagnosis, many advanced and highly efficient technologies are used worldwide have been used. These are represented by X-ray diffraction (XRD), transmission electron microscopy (TEM), Brunauer–Emmett–Teller (BET) surface area study, scanning electron microscopy with energy dispersive X-ray spectroscopy (FESEM -EDX). For calculation of the Pb(II) the flame atomic absorption spectrophotometer (AAS) has been used.

Adsorption studies: The stock solution of lead was prepared by melting 1.59 g of lead nitrate $\text{Pb}(\text{NO}_3)_2$ in 1000 ml of distilled deionized water and from this concentration several other dilute solutions were prepared. To determine the ideal pH, both NaOH (0.1 M) and HCL (0.1 M) were used to obtain the pH range (3-9). Perfect contact time (5-180 min) for adsorption of Pb(II) was determined using batch method, where 0.05 g adsorbent was added to 25 ml solution with concentration (100 mg l^{-1}) putted in 100 ml flasks. Different temperature (10.0 , 25.0 , 37.5 and 50.0°C), was used for equilibration, with agitation rate 120 rpm using an orbital shaker. The amount of ions adsorbed and removal percent of adsorbent was calculated as differ between the concentration of the ion before and after adsorption from relation (Palak et al 2019).

$$Q_e = V(C_0 - C_e)/m \quad \dots\dots\dots(1)$$

$$\text{Removal}(\%) = [(C_0 - C_e)/C_0] \times 10 \dots\dots\dots(2)$$

Where; Q_e the capacity of adsorption at equilibrium (mg

g^{-1}), V represent the volume (l) of solution, m is the adsorbent weight (g), C_0 = the primary concentration of solution in mg l^{-1} , C_e = concentration of solution after adsorbent. Equation Langmuir and Freundlich used for data analysis.

Thermodynamic parameters: From stock solution of Pb(II) different concentration with range (60 - 120) mg l^{-1} was prepared, putted in the flask and subsequently add 0.05g CoFe_2O_4 and ZnFe_2O_4 to every concentration. The flask was exposed to shake at 120 rpm and in the right balance time at different temperatures (10.0 , 25.0 , 37.5 and 50.0°C). Centrifuge the mixture and determine the lead ion concentration. ΔG is the variations in free energy; enthalpy ΔH and entropy ΔS related to the adsorption process were calculation as follow:

$$\Delta G = -RT \ln K \dots\dots(3)$$

$$K = C_{\text{solid}} / C_{\text{liquid}} \dots\dots(4)$$

$$\ln K = \Delta S / R - \Delta H / RT \dots\dots(5)$$

Where ΔG is the change of Gibbs energy change (KJ mol^{-1}), K is the constant of equilibrium, C_{solid} is the concentration at equilibrium for the solid phase concentration (mg l^{-1}), C_{liquid} is the concentration at equilibrium for the liquid phase (mg l^{-1}), T is the temperature in Kelvin and R is constant of the gas ($0.0083 \text{ KJ K}^{-1} \text{ mol}^{-1}$). ΔH (KJ mol^{-1}) and ΔS ($\text{KJ mol}^{-1} \text{ K}^{-1}$) can be calculated from the slope and intercept of Eq.(5) (Huacai and Ziwei 2015).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

FT-IR spectroscopy: The FTIR spectra of the samples were calcified at 100°C (Fig. 1a,b). The infrared spectrum recorded many absorption peaks at the range 4000 cm^{-1} to 400 cm^{-1} . The peak observed at 3431.36 cm^{-1} for CoFe_2O_4 , 3437.15 cm^{-1} for ZnFe_2O_4 . It is attributed to the stretching vibrations of the of hydroxide(O-H) bond. The band at 1616.35 cm^{-1} is attributable to H–O–H bending vibration mod, which indicates the adsorption of water on ferrite (Anandan and Rajendran 2011). Furthermore, the nitrate group showed a stretching vibration in the wave 1388 cm^{-1} , in the prepared samples the nitrate ions were present (Ghasemi 2015). The position of spinel ferrite finds in the region of 400 – 600 cm^{-1} by (Co-O), (Zn-O) and (Fe-O) stretching vibration (Shaima'a and Ali 2018).

X-ray diffraction (XRD): The identification output for the prepared sample (CoFe_2O_4 and ZnFe_2O_4) by X-ray diffraction (XRD) given in Figure 2 (A and B). The output displays perfect crystallization properties and single phase. The standard data (JCPDS No. 22-1086 for CoFe_2O_4 and JCPDS No. 22-1012 (Paveena et al 2011, Jiang and Ai 2010) for ZnFe_2O_4 has been used for comparison with the present results, and the comparison results proved that both of the two study samples can be included within the spinel cubic

designated in the reflecting planes (111), (220), (311), (400), (422), (511), (440) and (533) in the patterns, The crystallite sizes were calculated using XRD peak broadening of the (311) peak using the Scherer's formula:

$$\tau_{hkl} = (K \cdot \lambda) / (\beta_{hkl} \cdot \cos(\theta_{hkl})) \dots \dots \dots (6)$$

Where τ is the particle size perpendicular to the normal line of (hkl) plane, β_{hkl} is the full width at half maximum, θ_{hkl} is the Bragg angle of (hkl) peak, K is constant equal 0.9 and λ is the wavelength of X-ray. The particle size of nanoparticles calculated at 600°C is about 56.68nm for CoFe_2O_4 and 21.22nm for ZnFe_2O_4 .

Surface morphology and elemental analysis: Field Emission Scanning Electron Microscopy (FESEM) analysis was used to investigate the morphology of as-prepared bare CoFe_2O_4 and ZnFe_2O_4 nanoparticles. Figure 3(A and B) shows

that the bare CoFe_2O_4 and ZnFe_2O_4 particles were quasi-spherical with small agglomeration. On the other hand, Figure 4 (A and B) presents the TEM images CoFe_2O_4 and ZnFe_2O_4 nanoparticles. The image showed the presence of pores and voids within a network formed as a result of the deposition of gases through the reaction of combustion. This is typical of combustion-synthesized powders. The samples the particles are roughly spherical. Compositional purity was confirmed by analysis (EDX) various regions of each sample can be examined. In addition the use of EDX technology offers many possibilities in terms of sample components and elements' mapping. The Figure 5 (A and B) shows the EDX spectra of the prepared CoFe_2O_4 and ZnFe_2O_4 . Through the results, it is clear that the elements Co, Zn, O, and Fe were present in different proportions without the presence of any impurities.

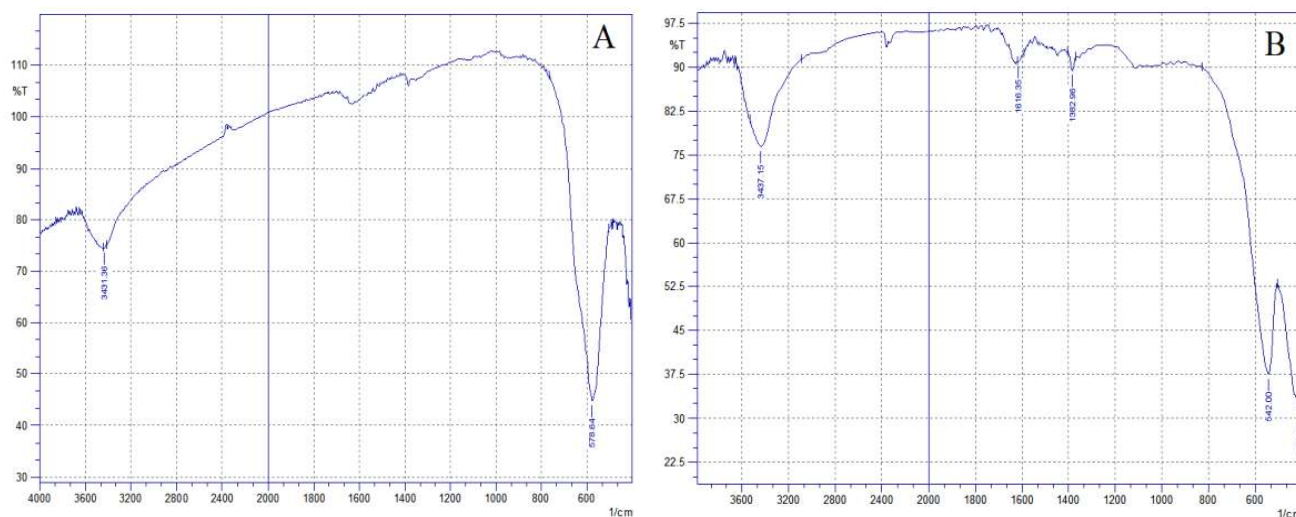


Fig. 1. FT-IR spectra (A) CoFe_2O_4 (B) ZnFe_2O_4

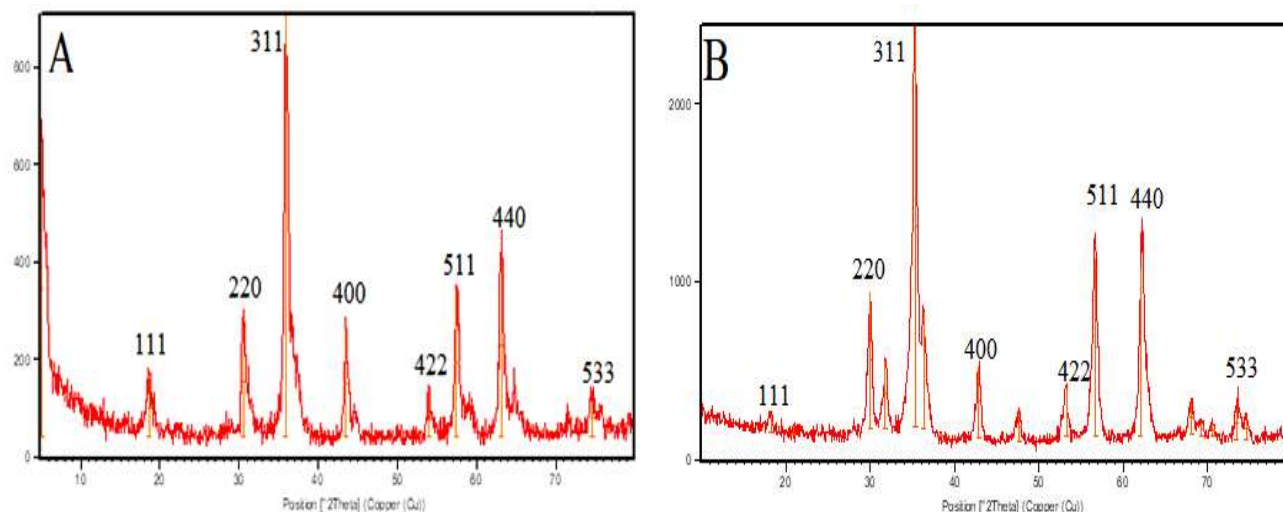


Fig. 2. Phase identification of a crystalline patterns synthesis nanoparticles of (A) CoFe_2O_4 (B) ZnFe_2O_4

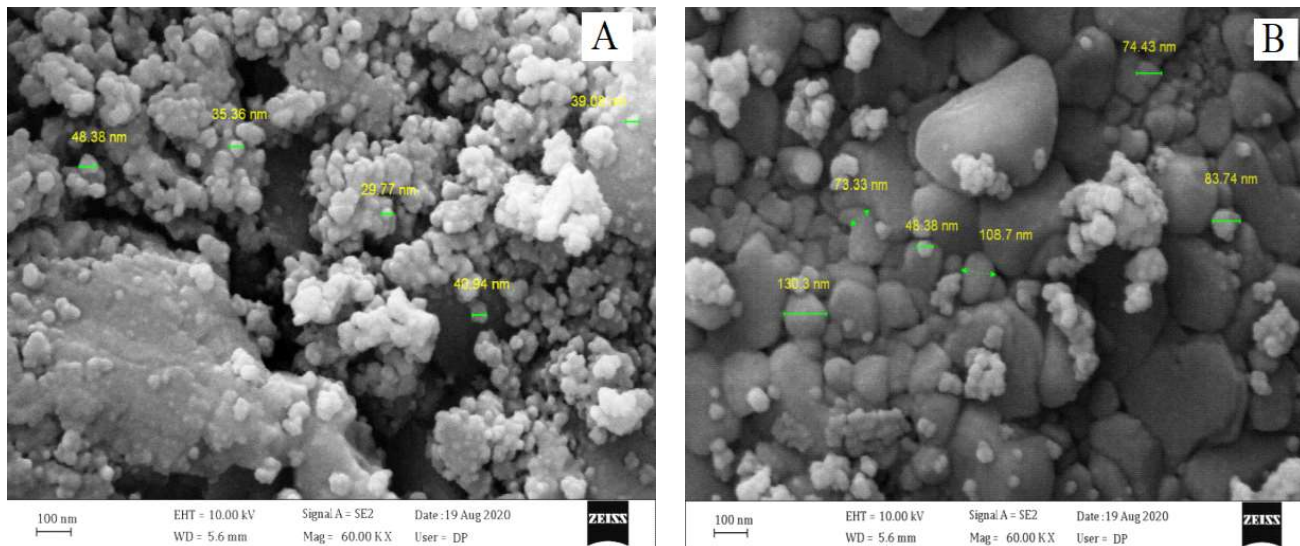


Fig. 3. FESEM photographs of (A) CoFe₂O₄ (B) ZnFe₂O₄

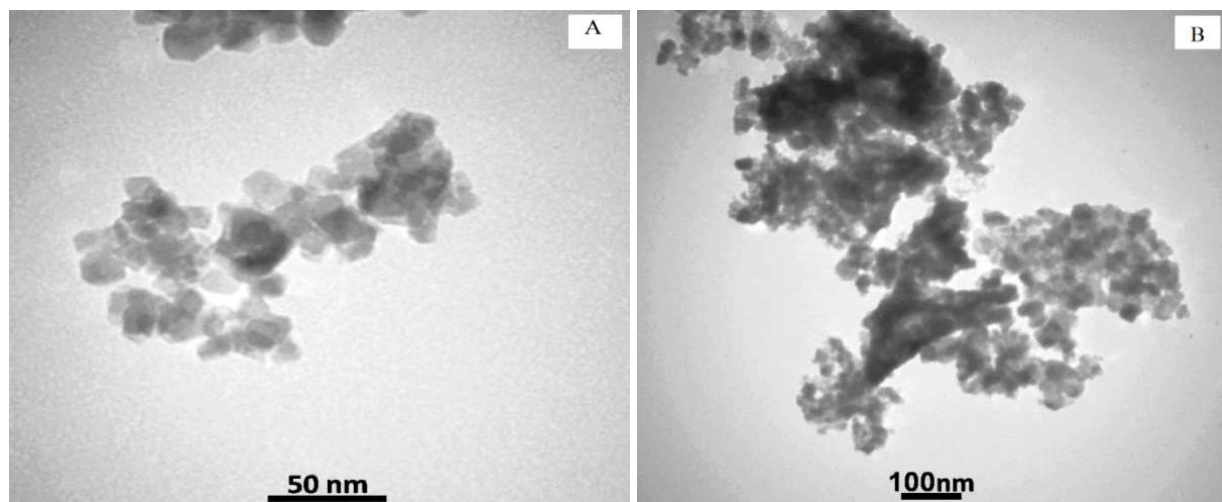


Fig. 4. Transmission electron micrograph of (A) CoFe₂O₄ (B) ZnFe₂O₄

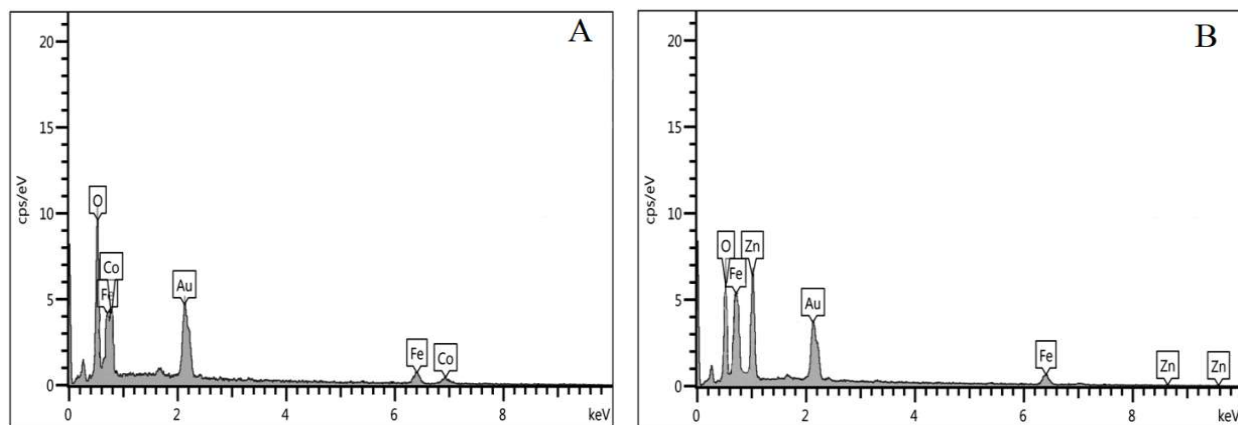


Fig. 5. EDX spectra of (A) CoFe₂O₄ (B) ZnFe₂O₄

Brunauer–Emmett–Teller (BET): The nitrogen adsorption–desorption isotherms of CoFe_2O_4 and ZnFe_2O_4 NPs was observed using Brunauer–Emmett–Teller (BET) analysis (Fig. 6 A and B). The BET surface area for CoFe_2O_4 and ZnFe_2O_4 NPs was 8.755 and 1115.3 $\text{m}^2 \text{g}^{-1}$, respectively. The higher surface area of ZnFe_2O_4 nanoparticles could credit to the reduction in the size of grain. Figure 6 (A and B) also shows the pore size allocation of the produced nanoparticles. The CoFe_2O_4 and ZnFe_2O_4 have average mean pore diameters 7.99 and 1.21 nm, respectively which is due to pores form between grains of metal oxides.

Adsorption Studies

Effect of contact time: Different period of time (5-180 min) at fixed temperature (25°C) was used to investigate the influence of contact time on the Pb (II) ion adsorption. Figure 7 (A and B) shows increase in the removal percentages of Pb (II) ions by increasing the period of contacting till reaching to the equilibrium. The adsorption amount was high in the

beginning because there is a large adsorption surface area suitable for the attaching the Pb (II) ions. At the end the adsorption rate is slower probably due to active sites become saturation and equilibrium is stabilized (El-Ashtoukhy et al 2008, Pehlivan et al 2009). The equilibrium time was 60min for CoFe_2O_4 and 15min for ZnFe_2O_4 . The percentage of Pb (II) ions removal in CoFe_2O_4 and ZnFe_2O_4 nanoparticles were 62.05 and 95.74% respectively.

Effect of pH on the adsorption: Acidity is a significant aspect that affects the metal adsorption in the aqueous solution during solid–water interfaces. The accessibility of metal ions in the solution and the binding sites of the adsorbent are affected by pH. The influence of the pH on the adsorption of Pb(II) ions on CoFe_2O_4 and ZnFe_2O_4 nanoparticles in various pH (pH=3, 5, 7 and 9) was studied by using affixed concentration 100 mg/l and time of (60, 15min) for CoFe_2O_4 and ZnFe_2O_4 respectively of 25°C . The Fig. 8A and B, prove the effect of pH on the adsorption.

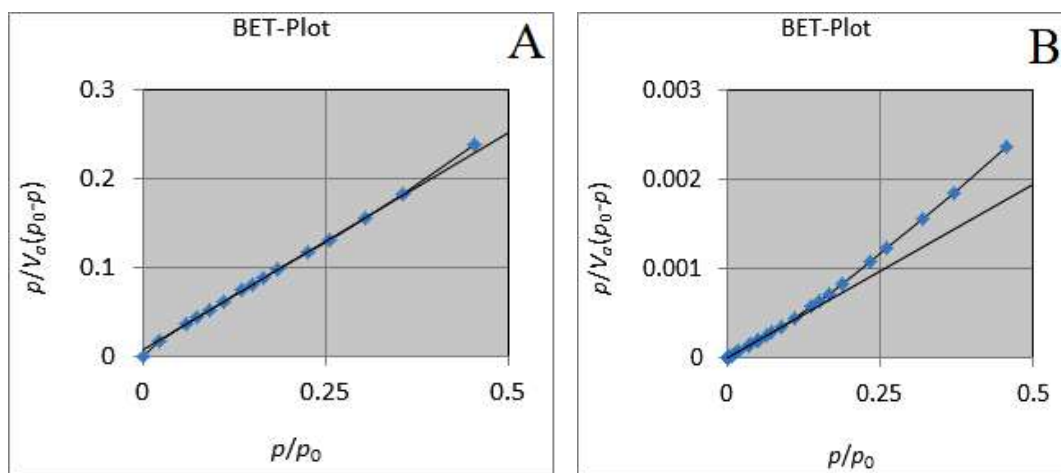


Fig. 6. BET of (A) CoFe_2O_4 and (B) ZnFe_2O_4

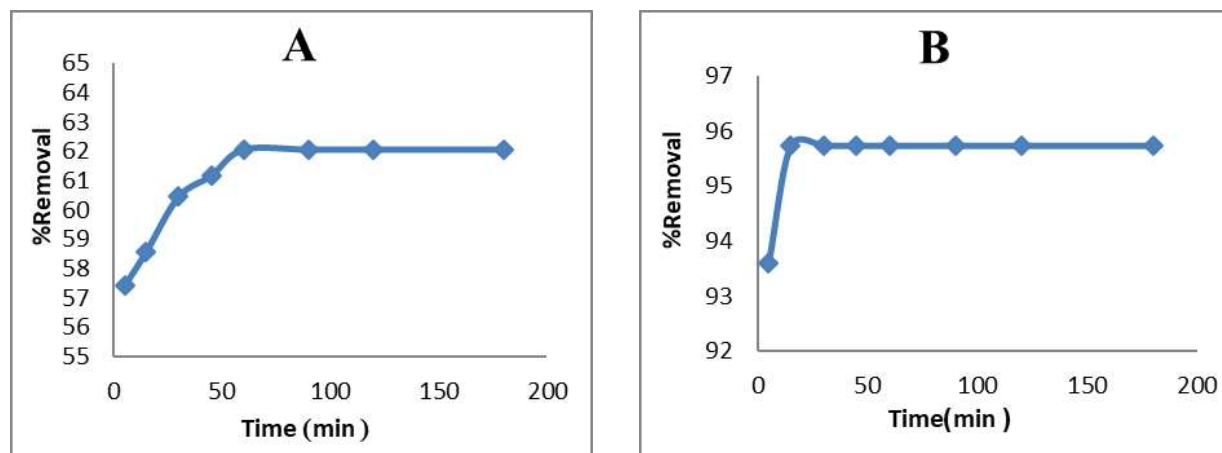


Fig. 7. Effect of contact time of (A) CoFe_2O_4 and (B) ZnFe_2O_4

The removal of Pb (II) percentage was toward the basal (Fig. 8). The active sites gain a positive charge in the presence of an acidic medium (low pH) with the presence of hydronium ions, leading to the repulsion between the positive charge metals and the adsorbent. Binding sites begin to deprotonate at higher pH values, making various functional groups accessible for binding the metal. In general, cation binding increases as pH rises; however, as pH rises, the solubility of Pb(II) ions decreases, resulting in an increase in the adsorption affinity towards the surfaces of CoFe₂O₄ and ZnFe₂O₄ (Esposito et al 2002). Accordingly, the pH of 5 was chosen to carry out the experiment to avoid uncertain results, as other mechanisms such as sedimentation play a role in removing the metals.

Adsorption isotherm: Various temperatures (10, 25, 37.5, 50°C), were chosen to exam the ability of CoFe₂O₄ and ZnFe₂O₄ nanoparticles to remove Pb (II) from aqueous solution. Figure 9 (A and B) shows the isotherm adsorption of Pb (II), where the amounts adsorbed on CoFe₂O₄ and ZnFe₂O₄ (Q_e) planned as a occupation of balance concentricity (C_e).

The Pb (II) ion adsorption isotherm form on the CoFe₂O₄ and ZnFe₂O₄ nanoparticles consistent with (S-type) in the classification of Giles. S-Curve , revealed vertical or flat alignment of adsorbate . There is a strong inter-molecular attraction within the adsorbed layer, the more solute is already adsorbed, and the easier it is for additional amounts to become fixed (Giles et al 1960). Both of Langmuir isotherm and Freundlich equation were used to apply the experimental adsorption results. The effects by using Freundlich's (eq. 7) and Langmuir's (eq. 8) equations (Veena and Robert 2002). Table 1 shows the adsorbents isotherm data .

$$\log Q_e = \log K_f + 1/n \log C_e \dots \dots \dots (7)$$

Where K_f is afanction of the adsorption capacity and n is the intensity of adsorption .

$$C_e/Q_e = 1/Q_m b + C_e/Q_m \dots \dots \dots (8)$$

Where Q_m is the maximum sorption capacities (mg g⁻¹) and b is related to the sorption energy.

The Freundlich and Langmuir isotherms are applied on the empirical data of the adsorption of Pb(II) ions on CoFe₂O₄ and ZnFe₂O₄ nanoparticles by plotting log Q_e versus log C_e and C_e/Q_e versus C_e respectively (Fig. 10 and

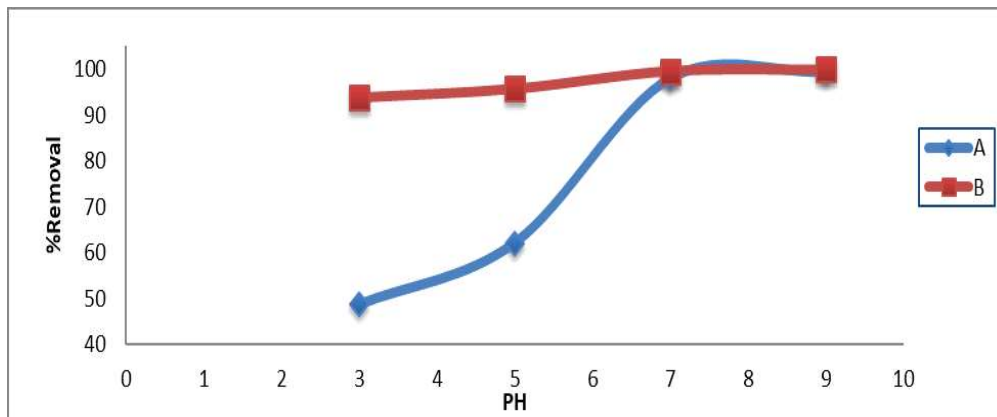


Fig. 8. Effect of pH on Pb(II) adsorption of (A) CoFe₂O₄ and (B) ZnFe₂O₄

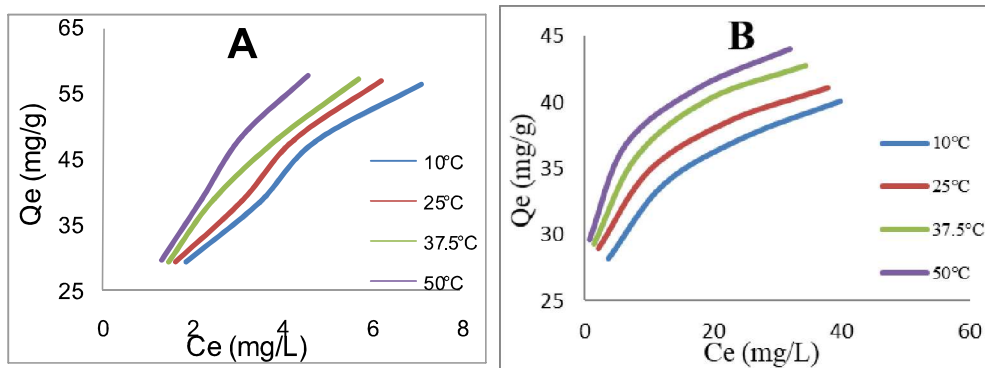


Fig. 9. Adsorption isotherm of Pb(II) on (A) CoFe₂O₄ and (B) ZnFe₂O₄ nanoparticles at various temperatures

11). The R^2 values for the Freundlich model are closer to unity than Langmuir for adsorption process onto CoFe_2O_4 and ZnFe_2O_4 (Table 1). This proves that the application of the Freundlich model was better in characterizing the Pb (II) ions adsorption on CoFe_2O_4 and ZnFe_2O_4 nanoparticles than the Langmuir models and it is the most accurate characterization of the multi-layer adsorption method on the surface of a heterogeneous adsorbent surface.

Thermodynamics: The effect of temperature on Pb(II) ion adsorption was investigated using different initial concentrations and temperatures ranging from (10 - 50°C). The parameters of thermodynamic are represented by (ΔG), (ΔH), and (ΔS) was used to assessment the feasibility the adsorption method (Table 2). The relationship was linear between $\ln K$ against $1/T$ with a correlation coefficient ($R^2 = 0.944 - 0.975$) and (0.916 - 0.996) for Pb (II) ion adsorption

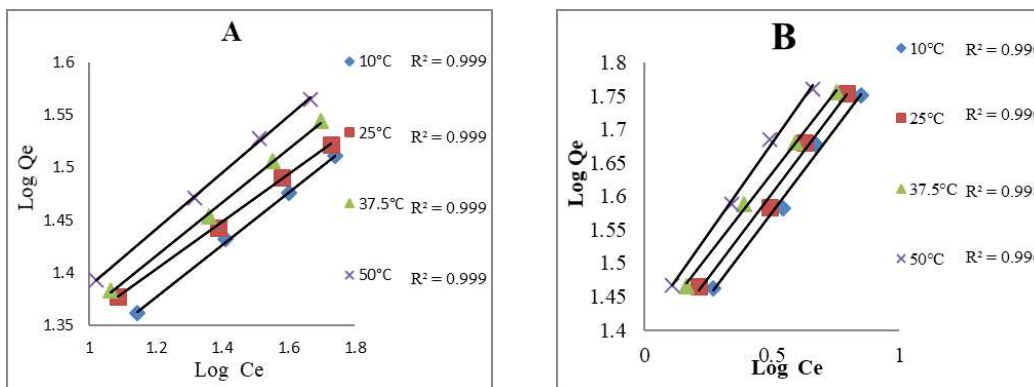


Fig. 10. The Freundlich isotherms linear form of Pb(II) on (A) CoFe_2O_4 and (B) ZnFe_2O_4 nanoparticles at various temperatures

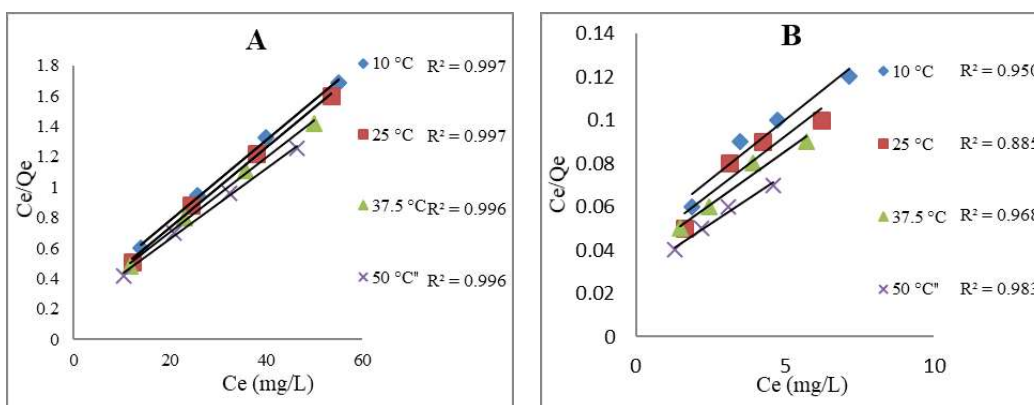


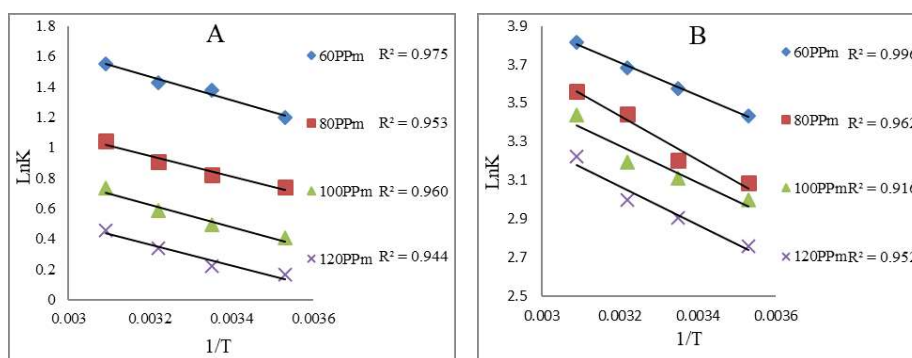
Fig. 11. Langmuir isotherms linear form of Pb(II) on (A) CoFe_2O_4 and (B) ZnFe_2O_4 nanoparticles at various temperatures

Table 1. Isotherm results of the studied system when applying both of Freundlich and Langmuir isotherms

Composition	Temp. (C)	Langmuir constants			Freundlich constants		
		Q_m (mg g ⁻¹)	b (L mg ⁻¹)	R^2	n	Kf	R^2
CoFe_2O_4	10.0	37.800	0.105	0.997	4.028	12.004	0.999
	25.0	38.093	0.123	0.997	4.410	13.512	0.999
	37.5	40.851	0.113	0.996	3.924	12.886	0.999
	50.0	43.224	0.117	0.996	3.722	13.148	0.999
ZnFe_2O_4	10.0	91.182	0.242	0.950	1.978	20.994	0.990
	25.0	95.410	0.261	0.885	1.979	22.482	0.990
	37.5	102.679	0.263	0.968	2.039	24.476	0.998
	50.0	110.144	0.307	0.983	1.846	25.575	0.996

Table 2. Thermodynamic function for absorption both of Pb(II) ions

Composition	Co (mg/L)	K				- ΔG				ΔH	ΔS
		Temperature									
		283	298	310.5	323	283	298	310.5	323		
CoFe ₂ O ₄	60	3.307	3.909	4.159	4.719	2.629	3.109	3.509	3.909	6.427	0.032
	80	2.099	2.267	2.476	2.849	1.419	1.794	2.106	2.419	5.656	0.025
	100	1.499	1.635	1.797	2.082	0.683	1.043	1.343	1.643	6.109	0.024
	120	1.178	1.244	1.405	1.580	0.303	0.618	0.880	1.143	5.640	0.021
ZnFe ₂ O ₄	60	31.085	35.809	39.816	45.511	7.868	8.663	9.325	9.988	7.131	0.053
	80	21.857	24.641	30.128	39.816	6.934	7.804	8.529	9.254	9.480	0.058
	100	20.052	22.474	24.445	31.154	6.812	7.592	8.242	8.892	7.904	0.052
	120	15.806	18.261	20.015	25.086	6.346	7.126	7.776	8.426	8.370	0.052

**Fig. 12.** Plot of LnK against 1/T for adsorption of Pb (II) on (A) CoFe₂O₄ and (B) ZnFe₂O₄ nanoparticles

on both of CoFe₂O₄ and ZnFe₂O₄ nanoparticles (Fig. 12 A and B).

The enthalpy values (ΔH) of adsorption of Pb (II) on (A) CoFe₂O₄ and (B) ZnFe₂O₄ nanoparticles, system possess positive values indicating endothermic adsorption process (Table 2). It is expressed positive value for ΔS through the adsorption process. There was an increase in the randomness of the interference between solid and liquid (Khulood and Sara 2010). The thermodynamic function ΔG value was negative for all temperatures and increased with increasing temperatures, indicating that the adsorption process occurred spontaneously (Hefne et al 2008).

CONCLUSION

In this study, CoFe₂O₄ and ZnFe₂O₄ nanoparticles ferrites prepared were synthesized by sol-gel auto-combustion process and lemon juice as surfactant and fuel agent. Spinel ferrite with a single-phase was obtained by sample calcination at 600°C, The BET surface area analysis revealed that the as-synthesized materials have a great surface area. The adsorption isotherms were also calculated, and both the Langmuir and Freundlich models accurately

represented them, with the Freundlich model fitting better than the Langmuir model. The adsorption reaction was spontaneous and endothermic, according to thermodynamic properties. As a result, the prepared composite may be used as a heavy metal ion adsorbent for environmental applications.

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