



Facile Synthesis of Spinel CoCr_2O_4 and Its Nanocomposite with ZrO_2 : Employing in Photo-catalytic Decolorization of Fe (II)-(luminol-Tyrosine) Complex

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Abstract

In this project, the deep green power from spinel cobalt chromite (CoCr_2O_4) nano-crystals carried out using the co-precipitation method and then calcinated at 600 °C for 4 hours. This produced nano-crystal (spinel CoCr_2O_4) fabricated using the ultrasonic technique to link it with zirconium dioxide (ZrO_2) in ratios 1:2 and 1:3, respectively. The X-ray diffraction (XRD), scan electron microscopy (SEM), and energy-dispersive X-rays (EDX), as well as ultraviolet-visible spectrophotometry used to describe the characterizations of prepared materials. The XRD analysis demonstrated that the spinel CoCr_2O_4 synthesis and their composites were found to be nanoparticles. XRD spectra indicated that the spinel CoCr_2O_4 is successfully loaded on ZrO_2 , because, the 2θ of ZrO_2 is shifted toward a high 2θ value after spinel CoCr_2O_4 loaded. This case is attributed to the tiny Co^{2+} and Cr^{3+} ions combined with Zr^{4+} in crystal lattice. The SEM images and EDX spectra of these obtained nanomaterials were found to be spherical agglomerations with an enhanced degree of surface roughness after surface fabrication. On the other side, the bandgap of spinel CoCr_2O_4 nanocrystals elevated from 3.2 to 4.8 eV with increasing the ZrO_2 dose. Under UV-A light, the photocatalytic decolorization efficiency of Fe (II)-(luminol-Tyrosine) complex utilizing spinel CoCr_2O_4 nanocrystals was tested, and it increases from 17.57 % to 30.67% and 41.97% when its nanocomposite was used in 1:2 and 1:3 ratios, respectively. The elevated efficiency after modified the spinel CoCr_2O_4 surface with ZrO_2 as nanocomposite, due to increasing the acidity of the spinel CoCr_2O_4 surface that enhances the adsorption of hydroxyl on its surface then generality of the hydroxyl radical, and reducing the recombination. The photoreaction using spinel CoCr_2O_4 nanocrystals, ZrO_2 , and their composites were followed pseudo-first-order kinetics depended on the complex concentration.

Keywords: Spinel CoCr_2O_4 ; Spinel CoCr_2O_4 / ZrO_2 nanocomposite; Co-precipitation; Facile Synthesis; Photo-catalytic decolorization; and Fe(II)-(luminol-Tyrosine) complex.

1.Introduction

Many researchers who worked in the nanoscience and nanotechnology field, and found the basic science and technical breakthroughs abound in this field. In the last several decades, many novel materials with dimensions in the nanoscale were synthesized and characterized, which including nanoparticles, nanobelts, like-flower nanostructure, nanowires, Quasi-spherical nanoparticle, and nanotubes, were prepared[1-6]. Though the design and synthesis of nanoscale materials with controllable qualities is a continuous difficulty in the area of nanoscience and nanotechnology, however, it remains important materials, that have good electrical, optical, and physical characteristics[7]. The use of nanotechnology in wastewater treatment that is produced by scientific labs or industry can make the wastewater treatment is better[8-12]. Spinel CoCr_2O_4

nanomaterial is a distinctive material that has a low bandgap, used as a pigment to colorant of ceramic, porcelain, plastic, and solar absorber coatings. Moreover, the conventional spinel cubic structure shows up with two kinds of cation sublattice. In the A sub-lattice, there are Co^{2+} ions that occupy the tetrahedral (A) sites, and in the B sub-lattice, Cr^{3+} ions are occupying the octahedral (B) sites[13-15]. Magnetic characteristics of the spinel CoCr_2O_4 greatly rely on the number of cations that are grouped at sites A and B in the aAaAAaAssscxxx spinel lattice. NP-influenced magnetic characteristics also differ between single NPs and their counter bulk material[16], which is consistent with their lattice distortion, surface imperfections, and the existence of interactions between NPs. When it comes to the family of chromites, cobalt chromite nanoparticles (CoCr_2O_4 NPs) have become popular because of their

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multiferroic characteristics. The spinel CoCr_2O_4 has a cubic spinel structure with multiferroicity, and a conical spin ordering has been discovered in this material. [17]. Due to the conflicting Co-Co, Cr-Cr, and Co-Cr interactions, cobalt chromate nanoparticles undergo three sequential magnetic transitions: At temperature collinear (T_C) 95 K, the magnetic transition from paramagnetic to ferromagnetic (FIM) phase happens; at temperature non-collinear spiral (T_S) 26 K, the magnetic transition from FIM to an incommensurate conical-spiral phase happens; and at temperature long-range collinear (T_L) 14 K, the magnetic transition from ferromagnetic (FIM) to an incommensurate conical-spiral phase happens [18]. Kind-II multiferroic materials, such as pristine spinel CoCr_2O_4 nanoceramics, are a type of material that manifests magnetoelectric coupling as well as two or more ferroic features. Storing charges in electronic memory devices are made much more efficient using these nanoceramics [19].

The goal of this work project is to focus on the facile synthesis of spinel CoCr_2O_4 nanocrystals using co-precipitation and then modified with ZrO_2 in 1:2 and 1:3 ratios using ultrasonic waves, to reduce the recombination and increase the surface acidity. The structural, morphological, and optical characteristics are determined to conform to this synthesis, as well as its photocatalytic characteristics, which have also been examined on a colored solution from Fe (II)-(luminol-Tyrosine) Complex.

2. Experimental

A. Materials

The powdered ore of zirconium dioxide was obtained from Riedel-De-Haen AG, Seelze, Hanover, Germany. Using cobalt nitrate hexahydrate ($\text{Co}(\text{NO}_3)_2 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$), chromium nitrate nonahydrate ($\text{Cr}(\text{NO}_3)_3 \cdot 9\text{H}_2\text{O}$), and ammonia solution (25 percent) were supplied from Merck. Cetyltrimethylammonium bromide (CTAB) was supplied by Interchimiques SA. Ferrous chloride trihydrate $\text{FeCl}_2 \cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$, absolute ethanol ($\text{C}_2\text{H}_5\text{OH}$), iron (III) sulfate hydrate ($\text{Fe}_2(\text{SO}_4)_3 \cdot \text{H}_2\text{O}$), hydrochloric acid (HCl), and sodium hydroxide (NaOH) were supplied from BDH.

The organic chemistry lab teams at the University of Babylon, college of science, department of chemistry, provided the Fe (II)-(luminol-Tyrosine) complex.

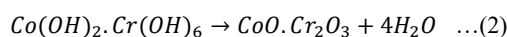
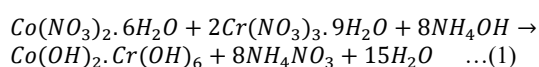
B. Synthesis of Spinel CoCr_2O_4 nanocrystals

Spinel CoCr_2O_4 nanocrystals were synthesized via the co-precipitation method. At the outset, cobalt nitrate (0.5 M) and chromium nitrate (1M) was prepared and transferred to an ultrasonic bath at 75 °C for 1 hour. In the second step, the chromium nitrate solution was put in a beaker with size 500 mL, and then cobalt nitrate solution was slowly added to chromium nitrate solution using an ultrasonic bath at 75 °C, and thrown for 1 hour. In the third step, the

generated mixture was stirred and heated at the same temperature for a further two hours using a magnetic stirrer. Following that, 1% CTAB is added to the mixture as a capping agent to prevent metal hydroxide formed. 25% aqueous ammonia solution was dropwise added to the last solution until a pH makes it 9.

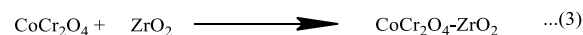
The produced deep green precipitate was filtered and washed with distilled water many times until the filtrate reached to pH of around 7 to ensure all contaminants are removed, and then washed with ethanol to remove the water humidity. The deep green precipitate was dried overnight in a desiccator, then calcinated for 4 hours at 600 °C.

Equations 1 and 2 were suggested the chemical reaction of spinel CoCr_2O_4 formed.



2.2 Synthesis of spinel $\text{CoCr}_2\text{O}_4/\text{ZrO}_2$ nanocomposite

The preceding procedures were carried out with the used ultrasonic technique to like two photocatalysts as a nanocomposite[2,3]. The 1:2 and 1:3 ratios from spinel CoCr_2O_4 : ZrO_2 were created as nanocomposites employing an ultrasonic wave at 75 °C for 1 h. As a result, it is acceptable to provide sufficient energy to combine ZrO_2 and spinel CoCr_2O_4 into the crystal lattice. The spinel CoCr_2O_4 solution was added step by step to incorporate with ZrO_2 solution in two ratios 1:2 and 1:3 via ultrasonic bath (60 kHz) for 2 hours at 75 °C. The generated mixture was stirred with heated at the same temperature for a further two hours using a magnetic stirrer, and then dried at a temperature of 75 °C to produce a deep green suspension from the spinel $\text{CoCr}_2\text{O}_4/\text{ZrO}_2$ nanocomposite that filtered and stored overnight in a desiccator using silica gel. The chemical equation for spinel $\text{CoCr}_2\text{O}_4/\text{ZrO}_2$ nanoparticles synthesis in different ratios was suggested using equation 3.



2.3 Application of the Spinel CoCr_2O_4 and spinel $\text{CoCr}_2\text{O}_4/\text{ZrO}_2$ nanocomposites are used to decolorize Fe (II)-(luminol-Tyrosine) dye solution.

In figure 1, the photoreaction was carried out using a handmade photoreactor. This photoreactor includes 400 watts of UV-lamp power. The reactor's body is constructed from a wooden box to prevent hazardous light, which contains a magnetic stirrer, a Pyrex glass beaker (500 mL), a Teflon bar, and two various fans[20-22].

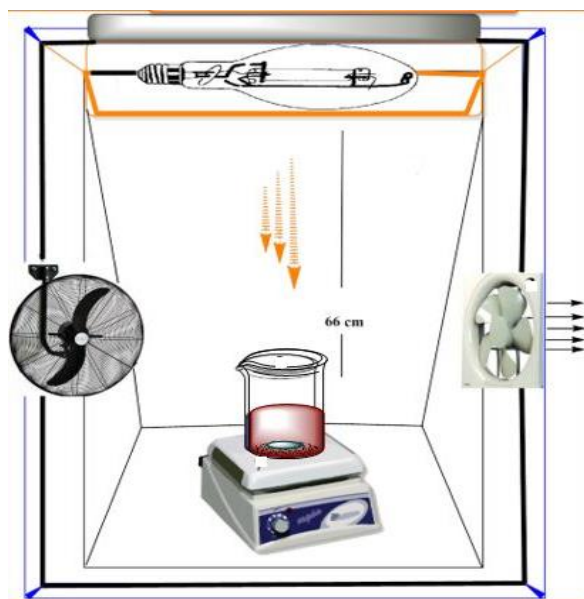


Figure 1. Diagrammatic representation of a Homemade Photocatalytic Reactor Unit.

At a temperature of 20 °C, exact 0.01g of spinel CoCr_2O_4 or ZrO_2 or spinel $\text{CoCr}_2\text{O}_4/\text{ZrO}_2$ nanocomposites were added to 100 ppm from Fe (II)- (luminol-Tyrosine) complex solution as a chocolate colored solution with pH 7.3 that dissolved in DMSO. Without irradiation, the suspension solution was magnetically agitated for 30 minutes to allow for the establishment of an equilibrium adsorption condition [23-27]. Following the adsorption stage, the suspension was exposed to UV light, and about 3 mL of aliquots were collected at 10-minute intervals until 40 minutes. The collected suspensions were centrifuged twice at 4000 rpm for 30 minutes, and the absorbance of the resulting filters was measured at 475 nm using a UV-Vis spectrophotometer (AA-1800, Shimadzu). Equations 4 and 5 were used to get the rate constant of this photoreaction and the efficiency of decolorization [28- 34].

$$\ln\left(\frac{C_0}{C_t}\right) = k_{app}t \quad \dots (4)$$

$$PDE \% = \frac{(C_0 - C_t)}{C_0} \times 100 \quad \dots (5)$$

3. Results and Discussion

A. Structural Properties

According to figure 2, XRD analysis was used to determine the structure of all photocatalyst samples utilizing two angles ranging from 20° to 80° on a Lab X XRD 6000-Shimadzu. In Figure 2, XRD analysis was utilized to detect the structure and phase of spinel CoCr_2O_4 powder and a produced spinel CoCr_2O_4 - ZrO_2 nanocomposite. The CoCr_2O_4 's key diffraction peaks are located at 30.3779°, 35.8022°, 43.3839°, 57.5052°, and 63.1014° with miller indexes (220),

(311), (400), (511), and (440) planes, respectively (JCPDS Card No. 00-022-1084), and are in strong agreement with findings from references [35,36]. On the other hand, the ZrO_2 peaks exist at diffraction angles (111), (200), (220), and (311) with four locations of 2θ that equal to 30.2973°, 35.0778°, 50.4580°, and 59.9693°, respectively (JCPDS card No.00-049-1642) [36,37].

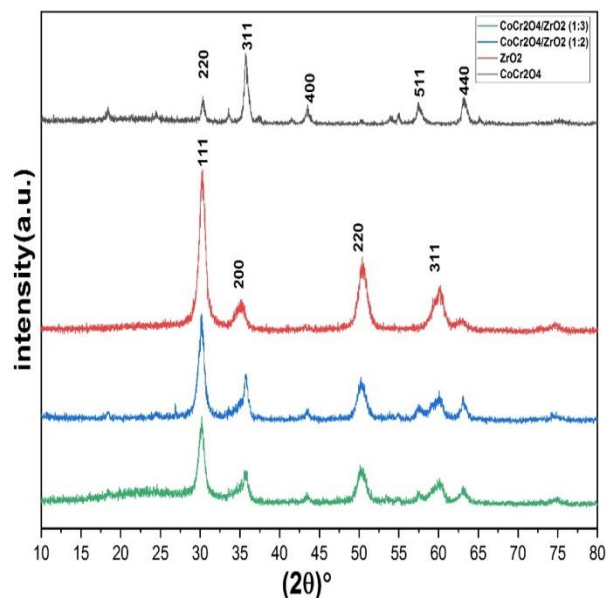


Figure 2: XRD pattern of spinel CoCr_2O_4 , ZrO_2 , spinel CoCr_2O_4 - ZrO_2 (1:2) nanocomposite, and spinel CoCr_2O_4 - ZrO_2 (1:3) nanocomposite.

The XRD analysis for the prepared composites confirms these findings match with the standard diffraction data for CoCr_2O_4 and ZrO_2 [2,38]. The essential peaks of m- ZrO_2 shift toward high diffraction angle (2θ) after incorporating the crystal lattice, which indicates the formation of a metallic connection between Zr and Co in the spinel structure because both have a coordination number of six [38]. This case is an attitude to Co^{2+} and Cr^{3+} in spinel have less ionic radii compared with Zr^{4+} and equal to 0.709 Å, 0.615 Å, and 0.747 Å respectively [2,39]. On the other hand, the mean crystal sizes (L) for all samples were found using Scherer's equation [40-45]. Where k , denotes the shape constant, λ is Cu's wavelength using as a source of x-ray, 2θ is a Bragg diffraction angle, and (FWHM) is meaning a full width at half maximum intensity.

$$L = \frac{k\lambda}{\beta \cos \theta} \quad \dots (6)$$

The mean crystalline diameters of the spinel CoCr_2O_4 , ZrO_2 , and the 1:2, and 1:3 ratios spinel $\text{CoCr}_2\text{O}_4/\text{ZrO}_2$ composites were found equal to 15.5823 nm, 8.1785 nm, 9.6355 nm, and 9.0929 nm respectively. The addition of ZrO_2 in varied ratios to spinel CoCr_2O_4 leads to reduce the mean crystal size

by elevating the ratio of ZrO_2 that will enhance the surface and optical characteristics.

B. Morphology of studied photocatalyst surfaces

1. **SEM analysis** was used to determine the morphology of the sample's surface using (FESEM FEI Nova Nano SEM 450). The SEM images of spinel $CoCr_2O_4$, ZrO_2 , and their nanocomposites surfaces in Figure 3 demonstrate that the shape of the synthesized spinel $CoCr_2O_4$ is nanocrystals, which is consistent with the XRD and literature results [46]. The spinel $CoCr_2O_4$ - ZrO_2 composites and ZrO_2 appear quasi-spherical shapes, that due to the high proportion of ZrO_2 in comparison to spinel $CoCr_2O_4$, which is used to increase the lightness of spinel $CoCr_2O_4$ during prepared composites, this vital step to improve their optical properties when used as a photocatalyst. ZrO_2 is a commercially available substance having a micron-scale structure because it is having a high ability to agglomerate with fine powder.

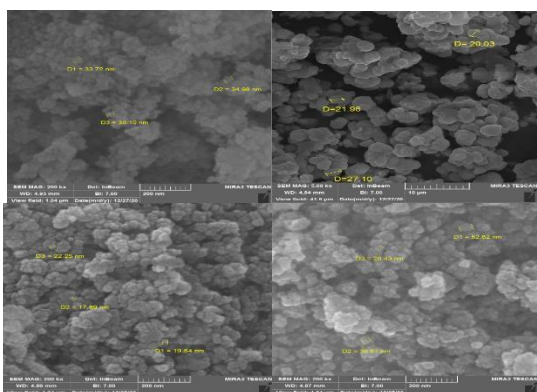


Figure 3: SEM images of spinel $CoCr_2O_4$ (a), ZrO_2 (b), a composite of spinel $CoCr_2O_4$ and ZrO_2 (1:2) (c), and a combination of spinel $CoCr_2O_4$ and ZrO_2 (1:3) (d).

EDX analysis was used to validate the sample's components. As seen in Figure 4, the spinel $CoCr_2O_4$ contains Co, Cr, and O, ZrO_2 contain Zr and O, and its composites spinel $CoCr_2O_4$ - ZrO_2 also contain Co, Zr, Cr, and O, without any impurities, this is a good agreement with reported in references [19, 47].

C. Optical property of studied photocatalyst

The optical energy bandgaps (E_g in eV) were determined for all photocatalyst samples using the Tauc equation [20,48], as seen in equations 7 and 8.

$$\alpha h\nu = k(h\nu - E_g)^m \quad \dots (7)$$

$$\alpha = \frac{(2.303 A)}{t} \quad \dots (8)$$

Where, absorption coefficient(α), Plank's constant(h), light, frequency(ν), optical constant(k), thickness(t), absorbance(A), and constant value (m) is

maybe equal to 1/2 or 2 for direct (allowed) transitions and indirect (forbidden) transitions, respectively.

According to the plotted Tauc equations in Figures 5, 6, 7, and 8, the bandgap of spinel $CoCr_2O_4$ elevates with elevated the dose of ZrO_2 in spinel $CoCr_2O_4/ZrO_2$ (1:2), spinel $CoCr_2O_4/ZrO_2$ (1:3), due to ZrO_2 has a maximum bandgap (5 eV) with the direct transition. The bandgap of spinel $CoCr_2O_4$ and its composite 1:2 and 1:3 found to be direct transition also with magnitudes equal to 3.2 eV, 4.7 eV, 4.8 eV, respectively.

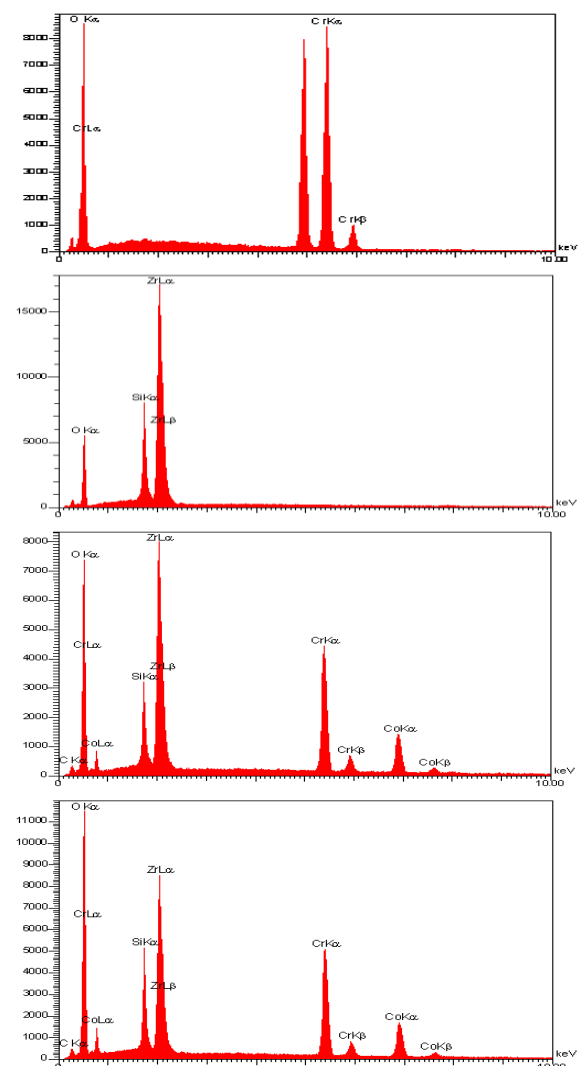


Figure 4: EDX spectra of spinel $CoCr_2O_4$ (a), ZrO_2 (b), spinel $CoCr_2O_4$ - ZrO_2 (1:2) composite(c) and spinel $CoCr_2O_4$ - ZrO_2 (1:3) composite(D)

D. Photo-decolorization of Fe(II)-(luminol-Tyrosine) dye

After determining the effectiveness of the obtained spinel $CoCr_2O_4$ nanocrystals and their nanocomposite as a spinel $CoCr_2O_4$ - ZrO_2 , they were applied in decolorization of Fe (II)-(luminol-Tyrosine) complex as a chocolate-colored solution

that disappearance its color after irradiation for 1 h. After used composite, the apparent rate constant has elevated, and the photo-decolorization efficiency increases also from 17.57% using spinel to 30.67% and 41.97% using 1:2 and 1:3 composite ratios, respectively.

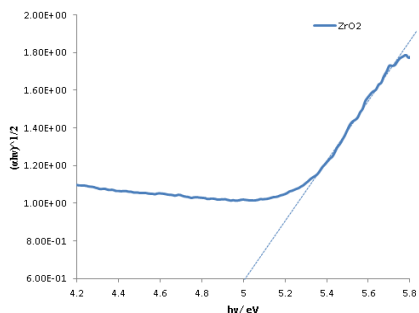


Figure 5: Tauc plot for ZrO_2 as a direct bandgap

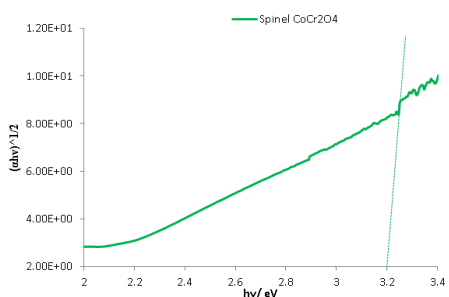


Figure 6: Tauc plot for spinel CoCr_2O_4 as a direct bandgap

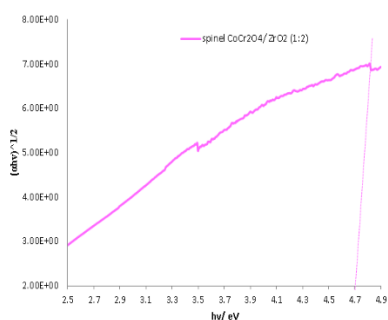


Figure 7: Tauc plot for spinel $\text{CoCr}_2\text{O}_4/\text{ZrO}_2$ (1:2) nanocomposites as a direct bandgap

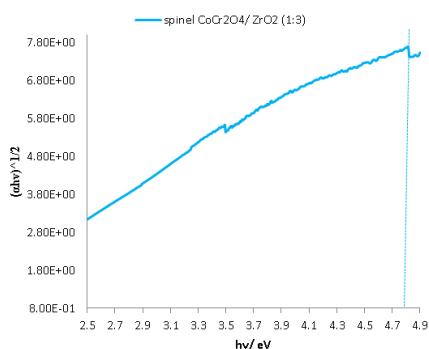


Figure 8: Tauc plot for spinel $\text{CoCr}_2\text{O}_4/\text{ZrO}_2$ (1:3) nanocomposites as a direct bandgap

This attitude increases the lightness and acidity of spinel CoCr_2O_4 nanocrystals' surface through the manufacture of their composites that leads to an increase in the adsorption of hydroxyl ions [2,5]. Hence, the hydroxyl radicals will generate when the solution is exposed to UV or visible light [49-51]. Additionally, this modification surface increase the spacing of changes on the photocatalyst and the electron-hole recombination time will reduce [3,48].

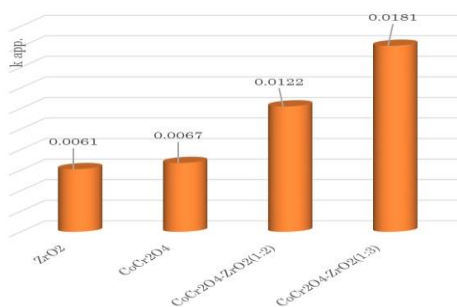


Figure 9: The relation between the apparent rate constant for Fe(II)-(luminol-Tyrosine) complex decolorization in studied photocatalyst solution

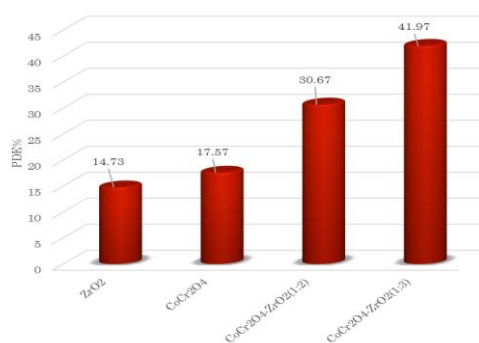


Figure 10: The relation between PDE% for Fe(II)-(luminol-Tyrosine) complex decolorization in studied photocatalyst solution

4. Conclusion

Spinel CoCr_2O_4 nanocrystals created using a one-step co-precipitation method. The 1:2 and 1:3 ratios of spinel $\text{CoCr}_2\text{O}_4:\text{ZrO}_2$ were successfully synthesized as nanocomposites that were accomplished using ultrasonic waves as an environmentally friendly approach. The produced photocatalysts were confirmed using XRD, SEM, and EDX measurements. Additionally, there is an optical bandgap. The XRD data suggest the production of spinel CoCr_2O_4 as a nanocrystalline orthorhombic phase, which agrees with miller's XRD study. SEM images and EDX spectra acquired show that the synthesis spinel CoCr_2O_4 is nanocrystals. Spinel CoCr_2O_4 's optical band gap was increased after integrating with ZrO_2 to form nano-composites. Spinel CoCr_2O_4 's photoreaction activity rose as well after the modification to produce the nanocomposites

5. Conflicts of interest

“There are no conflicts to declare”.

7. Acknowledgments:

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