**SYNTHESIS, CHARACTERIZATION AND APPLICATION OF CE-DOPED Fe2O3 NANOPARTICLE FOR THE REMOVAL OF METHYLENE BLUE DYE FROM AQUEOUS SOLUTION**

BY

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**2019/241188**

A PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF B.SC DEGREE IN PURE AND INDUSTRIAL CHEMISTRY

**DEPARTMENT OF PURE AND INDUSTRIAL CHEMISTRY**

**FACULTY OF PHYSICAL SCIENCE**

**UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA**

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APRIL 2024

# **TITLE PAGE**

**SYNTHESIS, CHARACTERIZATION AND APPLICATION OF CE-DOPED** **FE2O3 NANOPARTICLE FOR THE REMOVAL OF METHYLENE BLUE DYE FROM AQUEOUS SOLUTION**

# **CERTIFICATION**

This is to certify that this researchwork titled: Synthesis, characterization and application of Ce-doped Fe2O3 nanoparticle for the removal of methylene blue dye from aqueous solution was originally done by Okoye Emmanuel Obiajulu with registration number 2019/241188, has been approved by the undersigned as having met the standard of the department of Pure and Industrial Chemistry, University of Nigeria, Nsukka and has not been submitted either for diploma, any other if this or in any other university.

**……………………………….. ………………………………..**

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**EXTERNAL EXAMINER DATE**

# **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to God Almighty, my parent, my siblings

# **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

# **ABSTRACT**

Methylene blue (MB) is a hazardous chemical that is widely found in wastewater, and its removal is critical. One of the most common methods to remove MB is adsorption.

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# **LIST OF ABBREVIATION**

MB

Graphene oxide (GO

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 BACKGROUND OF STUDY**

Dyes are considered one of the most problematic groups of pollutants because they can be easily identified by the human eyes once they are released to the water bodies but are not easily removed. However, most synthetic dyes are properly non-degradable even with sunlight (Mogharabi et al., 2012). Recently, there has been an increase in public awareness and concern regarding environmental pollution. Most organic chemicals and pathogens, which are present in aqueous waste effluents discharged from industrial or domestic sources, should essentially be treated or removed prior to the final discharge to the water courses. Hence, a promising treatment techniques is required to overcome such challenge for a safe disposal. Oxidation of such dyes from aqueous industrial discharges is considered a difficult technique since dyes show resistance to various oxidants, chemical, UV light and heat besides being non-biodegradable (Gupta et al., 2011; Kargi & Ozmıhc, 2004; Saleh & Gupta, 2012; Tony et al., 2011)

Conventionally, various techniques were applied for wastewater treatment such as coagulation, reverse osmosis, biological treatment techniques and adsorption methods (Ashour et al., 2014; Tony et al., 2018), waters, which include photodecomposition (Kapdan & Kargi, 2002; Mulugeta & Belisti, 2014), electrolysis (Qingdong et al., 2017), adsorption (Ahmadi, Rahdar, et al., 2019; Ahmadi & Kord Mostafapoor, 2017), oxidation (Ahmadi et al., 2018; Ahmadi, Igwegbe, et al., 2019) and other processes. However, those methods are not widely recommended as they are expensive, transferring the pollutants phase, or they are not effective with high organic loads (Rahman et al., 2009; Tony & Mansour, 2019). Amongst the different physical and chemical processes, adsorption is an effective technique, which is successfully used for the removal of colors from wastewaters (Elnasri et al., 2013; Rahdar, Samani, et al., 2018). The adsorption method is widely used due to its simplicity, low cost, and removal of color and other pollutants with great efficiency (Samadi et al., 2013). Adsorption can be either physisorption (which involves fairly weak intermolecular forces), or chemisorption (which involves basically the formation of a chemical bond between the sorbent molecule and the surface of the adsorbent (Karine, 2001). Activated carbons have been used successfully to remove organic and mineral pollutants (Han et al., 2006; Igwegbe et al., 2015) but they are hardly regenerated (Ahmadi & Kord Mostafapour, 2017). Nanoparticles are referred to as particles with a diameter of less than 100 nm (Igwegbe et al., 2018). Nanoparticles have been revealed to have a high potential in adsorbing organic compounds especially colors from wastewater and sewage tanks due to their high surface to volume ratio than other adsorbents (Rahdar, Igwegbe, et al., 2018).

#### **1.1.1 METHYLENE BLUE**

Methylene blue (MB) is a heterocyclic basic dye with a molecular weight of 373.9 g/mol and a maximum wavelength of 665 nm (Nyankson et al., 2019).



Figure 1. Chemical structure of methylene blue

MB is recognized as a popular cationic dye utilized in a variety of sectors, including the pharmaceutical, food processing, paper, paint, printing, dyeing, and medicine (i.e., diagnostic and therapeutic medicine for both humans and animals) industries (Khan et al., 2022). In the textile industry, MB adheres well to the interstitial gaps of cotton fibers and remains stable on fabric. Hence, MB is one of the most used apparel colors.

Methylene blue dye-containing effluent from various industries such as textile, rubber, plastic, paper-making are established to be carinogenic and also create toxic effects on living organisms (P. S. Kumar et al., 2014). Methylene blue is a cation color with a complex aromatic structure, which is used for colouring cotton and silk (Srivastava, 2008). This compound can cause impaired respiration. Further, direct exposure to it causes permanent damage to human and animal eyes; it also local burns, nausea and vomiting, mental disorders, and Methemoglobinemia (Mulugeta & Belisti, 2014; Rafatullah et al., 2010). These organic dyes are released into water streams by textile, food, printing industries etc. The dye polluted water is harmful for aquatic life and is carcinogenic to human beings (Phuruangrat et al., 2018).

However, because MB is poisonous, carcinogenic, and non-biodegradable, it may create a variety of environmental hazards in both aquatic and terrestrial life. The danger of MB can also damage human health in a variety of ways, including respiratory discomfort, metal poisoning, stomach pain, blindness, and digestive issues. Furthermore, MB poisoning causes nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, cyanosis, and other symptoms (Al-Tohamy et al., 2022)

In the present work Cerium-doped Fe2O3 nanoparticles with different concentration were prepared with co-precipitation method. Structural and adsorbing properties were studied for the prepared particles. Then Cerium-doped Fe2O3 nanoparticle were efficiently used to adsorbed organic dye Methylene blue.

#### **1.1.2 ADSORPTION**

Adsorption is a phenomenon that describes the interaction between two different phases that forms an interface layer by transfer of a molecule from a fluid bulk (liquid or gas) to a solid surface so, it is classified as a surface process (Alaqarbeh, 2021). The mechanisms of adsorption process occurred by adhesion of material either gaseous, liquid, or solid called substrate on the surface of solid, or liquid, called sorbent or adsorbent (Dąbrowski, 2001).There are different adsorption systems, liquid-gas or liquid-liquid. If a liquid material is an adsorbent, so the interfacial layer called film, micelle, or emulsion. The other system is solid-liquid or solid-gas; the adsorbent is a solid material, so the approved mechanism for adsorption process is interfacial layer model (Alaqarbeh, 2021).

### **1.2 AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

#### **1.2.1 AIM OF STUDY**

The aim and objective of this work is to investigate the effectiveness of Ce-doped ZnO Nanoparticle on the removal of Methylene from aqueous solution.

#### **1.2.2 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF STUDY**

The specific objective of this work includes:

* Synthesis of Ce-doped Fe2O3 nanoparticle by Co-precipitation method.
* Characterization of Ce-doped Fe2O3 nanoparticle by various technique such as X-ray diffraction (XRD), Ultra Violet Spectroscopy and Fourier Transform infrared Spectroscopy (FTIR).
* Evaluate the effectiveness of Ce-doped Fe2O3 nanoparticles in removing methylene blue dye through adsorption experiments.
* Investigate the influence of experimental parameters such as initial methylene blue concentration and contact time on the adsorption capacity of the Ce-doped Fe2O3 nanoparticles.

### **1.3 JUSTIFICATION AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This work is justified for several reasons:

* Environmental contamination is a huge global concern and industrial wastewater is a substantial contributor to this problem. Hence, the study has the potential to minimize this problem and increase the sustainability of industrial process (Estrada et al., 2022).
* Conventional techniques of waste water treatment are frequently costly, energy intensive, and generate enormous amounts of sludge hence necessitating Nanoparticles adsorbents like this created from combining Goethite (Fe3O4) doped with cerium nanoparticle offers a more sustainable, eco-friendly and cost effective option because of its simple reusability and regenerability (Bethi & Sonawane, 2018).
* The conclusion of this study has practical use in industries that create wastewater containing dyes, such as textile, paper and leather industries. The implementation of this efficient and effective nanoparticle adsorbent could allow these companies to comply environmental laws and lessen their environmental impact (Mbarek et al., 2022).
* Being an area of ongoing research, this study could also have larger impact for the development of novel material and technologies for environmental application (Kumari et al., 2019)

# **CHAPTER TWO**

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

A range of studies have explored the use of different types of Fe2O3 based nanoparticles for the removal of methylene blue from aqueous solutions. Thanh Huyen et al (2019) reported on the production and characterization of Fe3O4 reduced graphene oxide composite using the hydrothermal technique, focusing on its catalytic efficacy in eliminating methylene blue (MB) from aqueous solutions. The study highlighted the composite's significant qualities, including high removal efficiency and attractive catalytic properties, establishing it as a viable precursor for future graphene-based material fabrication. Graphene oxide (GO) was effectively generated from graphite using a modified Hummer's process, resulting in homogeneous particle sizes ranging from 1 to 4 μm. Additionally, the work studied the synthesis of rGO-PP and mGO-PP composites by a facile hydrothermal technique, followed by their application in MB removal from aqueous solutions. Notably, under optimum conditions, the mGO-PP composite displayed a considerable MB removal effectiveness of 65%, surpassing that of PP, GO-PP, and rGO-PP composite materials. This finding emphasises the potential of mGO-PP composite for effective color removal, hence contributing to the diversification of materials utilised in water treatment applications.

Malatji et al. (2021) reported on current work focused on the removal of methylene blue (MB) from aqueous solutions via biopolymer-based hydrogel nanocomposites. The adsorption method, renowned for its advantages such as low cost and ease of design, was identified as the most promising treatment option for MB dye removal. The article dug into the basic concepts of the adsorption process, reviewed popular adsorbent materials utilized, and explained the advantages connected with this strategy.

Lima et al. (2017) offered an overview of the fundamental features of Fe3O4@C core-shell nanoparticles, highlighting their manufacturing methods and prospective uses as adsorbents. These nanoparticles are utilized in environmental remediation to address water pollution concerns and protect human health from different dangerous compounds, including colours, medicines, oils, and heavy metals. Their prominent qualities include a high adsorption capacity and facile separation due to their magnetic properties, making them a viable material for wastewater treatment applications.

Wu et al., (2016) conducted a work where magnetic Fe3O4 C nanocomposites, having a well-defined core shell structure, were synthesized by a simple solvothermal procedure employing ferrocene as both the iron and carbon source in the presence of hydrogen peroxide (H2O2). These Fe3O4@C nanocomposites were then utilised as adsorbent materials for extracting methylene blue (MB) from aqueous solutions. Various experimental factors, including contact time, solution acidity, and beginning MB concentration, were rigorously studied. The data demonstrated that the equilibrium absorption of MB depends on both the initial MB concentration and the acidity of the solution. The adsorption kinetics of MB followed a pseudo-second-order reaction model, showing a major impact of chemical interactions throughout the adsorption process. Importantly, the produced Fe3O4 C nanocomposites demonstrated good reusability and could be easily removed from the adsorption system after trapping MB. Overall, the results revealed that the produced Fe3O4@C composites have remarkable potential as effective adsorbents for eliminating dye contaminants from wastewater, owing to their well-defined structure, magnetic properties aiding separation, and robust adsorption capabilities.

Tran et al., (2017) examined the potential of a chitosan/Fe3O4/graphene oxide (CS/Fe3O4/GO) nanocomposite for effectively eliminating methylene blue (MB), a cationic dye, from aqueous solutions. The procedure involved the initial preparation of graphene oxide (GO) from graphite derived from pencils using Hummer's method. Subsequently, the CS/Fe3O4/GO nanocomposite was made using a chemical co-precipitation approach utilizing a mixed solution containing GO, Fe3+, Fe2+, and chitosan. The produced CS/Fe3O4/GO nanocomposite underwent analysis using XRD, VSM, and SEM techniques to understand its structural and magnetic properties. Various parameters influencing dye removal were studied, and the equilibrium results for dye adsorption were well-fitted to the Langmuir isotherm, revealing monolayer adsorption behavior rather than multilayer adsorption predicted by the Freundlich isotherm. The maximal monolayer capacity (qmax) derived from the Langmuir isotherm was computed as 30.10 mg. The study found that the CS/Fe3O4/GO nanocomposite shows promise as a cost-effective and efficient adsorbent for removing cationic dyes from aqueous solutions, underlining its potential for practical applications in wastewater treatment.

Xiang et al. (2021) conducted research on the synthesis and application of Fe3O4@C nanoparticles for the decolorization of high concentrations of methylene blue (MB). The nanoparticles were produced using an in situ, solid-phase reaction utilizing FeSO4, FeS2, and PVP K30 without any precursor components. The study indicated that the Fe3O4@C nanoparticles had a maximum adsorption capacity of 18.52 mg/g for MB and that the adsorption process was exothermic. Furthermore, the research studied the use of H2O2 as an initiator for a Fenton-like reaction to boost MB removal efficiency. The results showed that the Fe3O4@C nanoparticles obtained roughly 99% removal efficiency for 100 mg/L MB, whereas pure Fe3O4 nanoparticles only achieved around 34% removal. The study also explored the mechanism of H2O2 activation on Fe3O4@C nanoparticles and proposed probable degradation pathways for MB. Importantly, the Fe3O4@C nanoparticles exhibited excellent catalytic activity even after five usage cycles, showing their potential for repeated use. Overall, the research shows an easy process for manufacturing Fe3O4@C nanoparticles with outstanding catalytic reactivity, providing a possible avenue for industrial-scale synthesis of these nanoparticles for treating high concentrations of dyes in wastewater.

Abdelrahman et al. (2019) conducted research on the synthesis and application of Fe3O4@C nanoparticles for the decolorization of high concentrations of methylene blue (MB). The nanoparticles were produced using an in situ, solid-phase reaction utilising FeSO4, FeS2, and PVP K30 without any precursor components. The study indicated that the Fe3O4@C nanoparticles had a maximum adsorption capacity of 18.52 mg/g for MB and that the adsorption process was exothermic. Furthermore, the research studied the use of H2O2 as an initiator for a Fenton-like reaction to boost MB removal efficiency. The results showed that the Fe3O4@C nanoparticles obtained roughly 99% removal efficiency for 100 mg/L MB, whereas pure Fe3O4 nanoparticles only achieved around 34% removal. The study also explored the mechanism of H2O2 activation on Fe3O4@C nanoparticles and proposed probable degradation pathways for MB. Importantly, the fabrication of Fe2O3 (hematite) nanoparticles with different crystallite sizes (40-59 nm) generated from Egyptian insecticide cans via the burning process. The organic fuels employed in the synthesis were urea, glycine, L-alanine, and L-valine. The Fe2O3 nanoparticles received detailed analysis utilising multiple techniques including BET, PL, FT-IR, XRD, HR-TEM, FE-SEM, UV-Vis, and DTG. The work focuses on the photocatalytic degradation of crystal violet (CV) and methylene blue (MB) dyes in aqueous solutions under UV irradiation, facilitated by Fe2O3 nanoparticles in the presence of H2O2. Remarkably, the % degradation of 50 mL of either crystal violet or methylene blue dye (20 mg/L) using 0.1 g Fe2O3 in conjunction with H2O2 reached 100% within 30 or 40 minutes, respectively. The degradation processes were efficiently represented by the first-order kinetics. Furthermore, the Fe2O3 nanoparticles demonstrated consistent photocatalytic activity even after being reused three times, emphasising their stability and potential for practical applicationsd strong catalytic activity even after five usage cycles, indicating their potential for repeated use. Overall, the research shows an easy process for manufacturing Fe3O4@C nanoparticles with outstanding catalytic reactivity, providing a possible avenue for industrial-scale synthesis of these nanoparticles for treating high concentrations of dyes in wastewater.

Osorio-Aguilar et al., (2023) study focuses on the adsorption and photodegradation of organic dyes, utilising methylene blue (MB) as a model. It traces past and contemporary developments in research, stressing the environmental impact, removal, and degradation using nanomaterials. The report reveals China's superiority in research on dye photodegradation utilising carbon nanotubes. While these materials show potential in efficiently eliminating MB, safety considerations related byproducts and CNT handling demand study for responsible application in environmental cleanup. The study underlines the need for extensive risk evaluations and safety measures in nanomaterial fabrication and usage for water treatment.

Modi et al., (2022) review focuses on the degradation of methylene blue (MB) dyes using both pure and modified ZnO as photocatalysts. The addition of dopants or composites to ZnO enhances its efficiency in degrading dyes and other pollutants. ZnO cost-effectiveness and availability make it a preferred photocatalyst compared to others. Factors like pH, illumination, temperature, dopant concentration, catalyst dose, and dye concentration significantly influence the degradation efficiency. ZnO shows higher dye breakdown efficiency under sunlight, making it a promising candidate for future research and applications in pollutant degradation.

# **CHAPTER THREE**

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

## **3.1 REAGENT USED**

1. Potassium hydroxide (KOH)

2. Ferric nitrate (Fe(NO3)₃)

3. Distilled water

4. Methylene blue dye

5. Hydrochloric acid (HCl)

6. Sodium Hydroxide (NaOH)

7. pH buffer

## **3.2 APPARATUS AND EQUIPMENT**

1. Magnetic stirrer
2. Magnetic bar
3. pH meter
4. Thermometer
5. Electric blender
6. Oven
7. Furnace
8. Glass rods
9. Crucibles
10. Plastic bottles
11. Beakers
12. Conical flasks
13. Volumetric flasks
14. Spatula
15. Dropper
16. Paper tape
17. Whatman no 42 filter papers
18. Hand gloves
19. Nose masks

## **3.3 SYNTHESIS OF CERIUM DOPED IRON (FE2O3) NANOPARTICLE USING CO-PRECIPITATION METHOD**

The synthesis procedure commenced with the preparation of a 1 M ferric nitrate (Fe(NO3)₃) solution (50 mL). Cerium precursor solution, which was cerium nitrate (Ce(NO3)₃), was then added in a pre-determined stoichiometric ratio to achieve the desired cerium doping level. The combined solution was then subjected to controlled addition of a 4 M potassium hydroxide (KOH) solution was introduced dropwise under constant and rapid stirring to ensure homogeneous mixing and prevent particle aggregation. The addition continued until the solution reached the targeted pH of 13-14, which remains crucial for goethite formation. To promote the formation of smaller nanoparticles, the stirring speed was concurrently increased while the KOH droplet size was minimized. This approach enhances the shear forces acting on the growing particles, ultimately leading to a refined particle size distribution.



Figure 3: (a) separation after 20mins (b) grinding process of the Ce-doped Fe2O3-NPs after drying and annealing (c) synthesized Ce-doped Fe2O3-NPs

After 10 minutes of continuous stirring, an additional 50 mL of the 4 M KOH solution was added to further elevate the solution's alkalinity and promote complete precipitation of the cerium-doped iron oxyhydroxides. This results in the formation of a well-defined red-brown precipitate. The subsequent steps mirrored the undoped synthesis. The precipitate was diluted tenfold with double-distilled water, followed by transfer to an oven for aging at 70-75 °C for 72 hours. This step facilitates the crystallization and maturation of the cerium-doped iron oxide nanoparticles. Following the aging period, the final product was obtained through a series of washing steps (five to six times) using double-distilled water to remove impurities and ensure the purity of the nanoparticles. Finally, the washed precipitate was oven-dried at a low temperature (50-55 °C) to remove any residual moisture. The resulting powder constitutes the cerium-doped iron oxide nanoparticles, ready for further characterization and application testing.

## **3.4 PREPARATION OF STOCK SOLUTION OF METHYLENE BLUE DYE**

100 ppm of methylene blue dye was prepared by adding 0.025g of methylene blue into 250 cm3 of water using the equation below.

Where;

Mass of MB = 0.025 g

Volume of solution = 0.25 L

Stock concentration (ppm) = 100 ppm

## **3.5 ADSORPTION STUDIES**

Batch adsorption was done to determine the effect of initial concentration and contact time. All adsorption experiment were carried out at room temperature. methylene blue dye stock solution was prepared by dissolving 0.025 g of powdered methylene dye in 250 cm3 to give a concentration of 100 ppm and the required concentration were obtained by dilution in distilled water (applying the relation: C1V1=C2V2). The effects of contact time (10-120 min), initial concentration on (5-50 mg/L) on methylene blue removal were investigated. The contents was placed on a magnetic stirrer and rotated at a speed of 180 rpm. After a specific time of contact, the samples were filtered using the Whatman filter paper. The residual MB concentration of the filtrate was measured to determine the adsorption capacity and removal efficiency.

### **3.5.1 DETERMINATION OF THE EFFECT OF INITIAL CONCENTRATION**

10ml of Methylene blue solution of concentrations 5 ppm, 10 ppm, 15 ppm, 20 ppm, 25 ppm and 50 ppm adjusted to pH 9 was prepared and taken into 100ml beakers. 0.04g of the adsorbent was added to each beaker and the mixture was stirred using a magnetic stirrer for 10min at a constant speed. It was filtered after few minutes of equilibration and the percentage absorbance was determined using a UV-Vis spectrophotometer at 664nm.

### **3.5.2 DETERMINATION OF THE EFFECT OF CONTACT TIME**

A solution of methylene blue having concentration of 10ppm, adjusted to pH 9 was taken into 100 ml beakers and 0.04 g of the adsorbent was added. The contact time for each of the experiment were taken at 10 min, 30 min, 60 min, 90 min, 120min. at the end of the contact time for each of the experiment, the mixture was filtered and the percentage absorbance of the filtrates were analyzed using UV-Vis spectrophotometer at λ = 664 nm.

### **3.5.3 CALCULATION OF PERCENTAGE REMOVAL AND ADSORPTION CAPACITY**

The methylene dye percentage, %R was measured by applying the equation below;

(1)

Where:

= initial concentration of the liquid phase of the dye in (mg/L)

= equilibrium concentration of the liquid phase of dye in (mg/L)

The adsorption capacity is given as:

(1)

Where:

(mg/g) = adsorption capacity

= initial concentration of the liquid phase of the dye in (mg/L)

= equilibrium concentration of the liquid phase of the dye in (mg/L)

V(L) = volume of the solution used for the adsorption

M (g) = the mass of the adsorbent used

**3.5.4 ADSORPTION ISOTHERM**

The detailed understanding of the adsorption mechanism of this study can be gotten from the nature of the process of adsorption of the methylene blue dye upon the surface of Ce doped Fe2O3 nanoparticles. In order to establish the nature and the strength of the adsorption process involved, data obtained from ultraviolent measurements was fitted to adsorption isotherms; The linearized form of Langmuir, and Freundlich isotherms are shown in equations 3.9-10 respectively.

The equilibrium constant values (Kads) was computed from the intercept of the plots

**3.5.5 ADSORPTION THERMODYNAMICS**

Thermodynamic parameters such as free energy (∆Go), enthalpy change (∆Ho) and entropy change (∆So) were estimated using the following equations:

∆ Go = - RT ln Kd (1)

ln Kd = (ΔS°/R) – (ΔH°/RT) (2)

Where R is the gas constant (8.3145 J.mol–1K–1), T is the temperature in Kelvin and Kd is the thermodynamic distribution coefficient, as in equation (3):

= (3)

The values of ∆Ho and ∆So are calculated from the slope and intercept of the linear variation of ln Kd with reciprocal temperature. The ln Kd was calculated from the intercept of ln (qe/Ce) vs qe (Boparai et al., 2011).

# **CHAPTER FOUR**

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **4.1 SYNTHESIS OF IRON NANOPARTICE**

### 4.2 **CHARACTERIZATIONS**

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