

BETA-CYCLODEXTRIN FUNCTIONALIZED CELLULOSE NANOFIBER FOR
THE REMOVAL OF PALMITIC ACID

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In the name of Allah, the most Beneficent, the most Merciful. Peace and blessing be upon the Prophet Muhammad SAW.

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ABSTRACT

Functionalization of cellulose nanofibers with beta-cyclodextrin (CNF/ β -CD) were performed. β -CD functionalization onto CNF was achieved by polymerization between β -CD and citric acid as crosslinker. β -CD coating was permanently adhered onto the surface of CNF. Fabrication of CNF with 15% concentration of cellulose acetate had produced average fiber diameter of 312 nm and 177 nm for CNF and CNF/ β -CD, respectively when characterized by using SEM analysis and revealed that functionalization of CNF with β -CD did not deform the original nanofibrous structure of CNF mats. The Fourier Transfer Infrared (FTIR) spectrum that showed adsorption band of carbonyl group due to high intensity peak at 1740 cm^{-1} of CNF/ β -CD confirmed the chemical linkages between CNF and citric acid via ester bonds. Thermal decomposition of CNF/ β -CD was higher than CNF when characterized by using thermogravimetric analyser (TGA) and onset degradation temperature of CNF/ β -CD was 20 oC higher than CNF which suggested the successful functionalization of the CNF/ β -CD. The highest removal of palmitic acid by 33% at 60 minutes of contact time was recorded by CNF/ β -CD that were functionalized with 7% of β -CD concentration and 8% of citric acid concentration during crosslinking process. It was recorded that rate of absorption of CNF/ β -CD was 17% higher compared to CNF. Reusability of CNF and CNF/ β -CD were also investigated and CNF/ β -CD was found to have similar removal percentage ($\pm 30\%$) even after four attempts compared to CNF which can only reused for two times. The adsorption process of the modified CNF on the removal of palmitic acid concentration was best-explained by Langmuir isotherm model and the adsorption kinetics for the palmitic acid was found to follow pseudo second order kinetic model. These findings suggested that β -CD-functionalized CNF can be a very good candidate as an adsorbent for removal of palmitic acid from wastewater or for wastewater treatment owing to their very large surface area as well as inclusion complexation capability of surface associated β -CD.

ABSTRAK

Selulosa nanofibers (CNF) yang telah difungsikan dengan beta-cyclodextrin (CNF/ β -CD) telah dihasilkan. Pembentukan β -CD ke CNF dicapai melalui pempolimeran antara β -CD dan asid sitrik sebagai agen penghubung silang. Analisis menggunakan pengimbasan mikroskop elektron (SEM), fabrikasi CNF dengan 15% konsentrasi selulosa asetat telah menghasilkan CNF yang mempunyai 177 nm purata diameter serat manakala CNF/ β -CD yang terhasil selepas proses hubung silang mempunyai purata diameter serat yang lebih besar iaitu 312 nm. Seterusnya, analisis spektrum menggunakan transformasi fourier inframerah (FTIR) membuktikan bahawa wujud hubungan kimia antara CNF dan asid sitrik melalui ikatan ester kerana terdapat puncak intensiti yang tinggi pada 1740 cm^{-1} yang mewakili penjerapan ikatan kumpulan karboksil. Penguraian termal CNF / β -CD adalah lebih tinggi daripada CNF yang tidak diubah suai apabila dicirikan dengan menggunakan penganalisis termogravimetrik (TGA) dan suhu kerosotan permulaan CNF / β -CD sebanyak 20 $^{\circ}\text{C}$ lebih tinggi daripada CNF mencadangkan CNF/ β -CD berjaya dihasilkan. Penyingkiran asid palmitik yang paling tinggi sebanyak 33% pada kadar masa 60 minit tindak balas telah direkodkan bagi CNF/ β -CD yang diubahsuai dengan kepekatan optimum β -CD sebanyak 7% dan kepekatan optimum asid sitrik sebanyak 8%. Proses penjerapan bagi CNF/ β -CD untuk mengurangkan kepekatan asid palmitik dapat dijelaskan oleh Langmuir isotherm model dan penjerapan kinetik untuk asid palmitik didapati mengikuti model kinetik urutan pseudo kedua. Penemuan dalam kajian ini turut mencadangkan bahawa CNF/ β -CD boleh menjadi calon yang sangat baik sebagai merawat asid palmitik dari air kumbahan atau untuk rawatan air buangan berikutan kawasan permukaannya yang sangat besar serta keupayaan β -CD yang mampu membentuk kompleks inklusif di permukaan CNF/ β -CD.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFD	-	Average fiber diameter
CTR	-	Citric acid
CD	-	Cyclodextrin
CNF	-	Cellulose nanofiber
DMAc	-	Dimethylacetamide
HPLC	-	High performance liquid chromatography
SEM	-	Scanning electron microscope
SHPI	-	Sodium hydrophosphite hydrate
TGA	-	Thermogravimetric analyser
β - CD	-	Beta- cyclodetxrin

LIST OF SYMBOLS

C_o	-	Initial concentration
C_e	-	Concentration at equilibrium
L	-	Litre
mg	-	miligram
nm	-	nanometer
q_e	-	Amount of adsorbate adsorbed

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

Excessive releases of pollutants from industrial activities have created a global major concern. As the world now are undergoing rapid industrialization and development eras, it caught the attention of scientist, researchers and engineers all around the world to design an effective wastewater treatment technology in order to keep the environment healthy and to ensure all humankind are continuously feed with safe water. There are a lot of components contain in wastewater including chemical, biological and physical pollutants resulted from various sources such as from communities and industrial activities (Silva-Bedoya *et al*, 2016). A lot of studies are conducted today to ensure that the water pollution is still under control and researchers are intended to help the world to face this challenge by designing new technologies that can be implemented in treating the wastewater effluent before it is released to the natural water sources.

An efficient and low-cost materials for the removal of highly toxic organic compounds from wastewater had given a highlight to the effort of all the scientist in finding the best wastewater treatment. Cost of raw materials in developing the method of new invention will always become a debatable issue and it is one of the critical factors need to be considered. Nowadays, the utilization of all such potential materials as low-cost adsorbents for the treatment of wastewater make the study toward this issue more interesting (Gupta *et al.*, 2009). Besides of searching for the potential low-cost method that can be implemented in designing a better wastewater treatment, effective techniques for removal of the pollutants have also drawn significant interest. There are a lot of techniques can be used for wastewater treatment including coagulation, filtration, precipitation, ozonation, adsorption, ion

exchange, reverse osmosis and advanced oxidation processes. However, adsorption technique by solid adsorbents draws possible potential as one of the most efficient method due to its advantages over the other methods as it has simple design and involves low investment in term of both initial cost and land required (Nageeb, 2013). In Malaysia, a strong development of oleochemical industry was supported by a continuous supply of palm oil as the feedstock. However, it has had contributed to the effluent discharged that may contain high amount of fatty acids and glycerol. Recently, as the number of oleochemical industry keep increasing, finding the best method to treat the contaminants from wastewater always become a global challenge.

Cellulose is inexpensive and comes as the most abundant natural bio polymer could be considered in developing a cost-effective wastewater treatment technology. Cellulose offers a lot of promising advantages to be used as wastetwater treatment agent due to its biodegradability, renewability, recyclability, high stiffness with low density, safe (non-toxic) and cheaper (Kabsch *et al.*, 2010). In adition to the expanding of nanotechnology for fabricating polymer-based materials, cellulose nanofiber (CNF) manufactured by electrospinning technique seem to have promising method to be used in wastewater treatment. As reported by Wang *et al.*, (2016) nanofibrous materials hold excellent potential for various environmental applications including in the treatment of wastewater such as the separation of oily wastewater due to it has high porosity, bigger surface area, better connectivity and various types of materials can be used like polymer, ceramic and carbon thus make the scalable synthesis of it much easier. The key success of nanofibrous materials was due to it voids among fibers which led to a better selectivity. Nanofibrous materials were said to have higher sorption capacity compared to non-nanofibrous or non-porous materials. Zhu *et al.*, (2011) had proved that the sorption capacities of electrospun polyvinyl chloride (PVC)/ polystyrene (PS) fibers worked 5- 9 times greater compared to commercial polypropylene (PP) sorbent (non- nanofibrous) for oil spill cleanup. Other than that, Lin *et al.*, (2012) had synthesized the nanofibrous sorbents for oily substances by using nanoporous polystyrene (PS) fibers and it showed that the sorbent exhibit a relatively high sorption capacity for edible oils (bean and sunflower seed oil) approximately 3- 4 times greater than nonporous materials.

On the other hand, CNF usually have a main drawback where it have high hydrophilicity in nature due to a high concentration of hydroxyl group which may lead to unsatisfactory performance. In order to enhance or expand its properties, it is essential to modified CNF by increasing its surface roughness (Ravi *et al.*, 2018). Beta-cyclodextrin (β -CD) functionalized electrospun polyacrylic acid (PAA) nanofiber had been synthesized by Zhao *et al.*, (2015) and it had drawn a positive result in improving the adsorption and separation of contaminated methylene blue dye in wastewater. Besides that, surface modification of cellulose acetate (CA) nanofiber with β -CD as reported by Celebioglu *et al.*, (2014) had recorded that 64% of removal efficiency was achieved in treating phenanthrene from aqueous solution. Another remarkable example of surface modification with β -CD was also proved by Kayaci *et al.*, (2013) where cyclodextrins functionalized electropsun polyethylene terephthalate (PET) could successfully removed 83% of penanthrene from aqueous solution. However, study on β -CD functionalized CNF for removal of fatty acids has not been performed before.

Therefore in this study, CNF from cellulose acetate fabricated by electrospinning process was functionalized with β -CD to enhance its adsorption properties. The effect of functionalization of CNF were studied by analyzing its morphological characteristics and investigating the removal efficiency of the CNF on the uptake of palmitic acid that act as a model of fatty acids from the industrial oleochemical wastewater that were using palm oil as their feedstock.

1.2 Problem Statement

Safe and healthy water is very essential to mankind. Therefore, water sources must be free from any form of environmental pollutions including the contaminated wastewater discharged from industries. Oleochemicals industry is one of the largest sector in Malaysia due to constant supply of palm oil and palm kernel oil. Wastewater from oleochemical effluent which may contained fatty acids and glycerol can be considered as a current challenge for environmentally acceptable disposal because improper treatment could eventually contributes serious and

long lasting consequences to human and life. The treatment for oleochemicals wastewater are including physical, chemical and biological treatment which reported to consume high hydraulic retention time and requires huge space. Furthermore, activated sludge and activated carbon system are the conventional oleochemical wastewater treatment methods for oleochemicals wastewater. However, activated sludge system in conventional oleochemical wastewater treatment plant has higher operating costs while the activated carbon method method seem to be time consuming as it cannot attract contaminant particles efficiently and it was also said to require high intensity heat treatment to reactivate its water cleaning properties. Among the other possible treatment process, adsorption by solid adsorbents shows as one of the most efficient methods for the treatment and removal of organic contaminants in wastewater treatment. An improvement towards adsorption method in treating the wastewater discharged from the oleochemical industry had become an interesting topic to be discovered and explored.

Due to the expanding usage of nanotechnology-based material such as electrospun nanofiber, it seem to have a better and promising adsorption performance as its porous or fibrous structure may offers large surface area for adsorption process. Moreover, combining the nanotechnology technique with low-cost adsorbent material such as cellulose-based polymer could definitely makes this approach more interesting. Cellulose nanofibers has been used for wastewater treatment including removal of dyes, heavy metals, organic compounds and others but there was still no study performed for its application on removal of fatty acid from oily wastewater. However, CNF was reported to have high hydrophilicity that contributes to low adsorption performance for oily pollutants. Thus, to improve its adsorption, CNF needs to undergo surface modification. In response to this concern, this study was carried out to synthesize β -CD functionalized cellulose CNF for treatment of palmitic acid as model of fatty acids wastewater. The effectiveness of using β -CD functionalized CNF in reducing the concentration of palmitic acid was the problem considered in this study.

1.3 Research Objectives

- a) To synthesize and characterize the synthesized CNF with and without functionalization with β -CD.
- b) To optimize the factors affecting functionalization of β - cyclodextrin (β -CD) with cellulose nanofiber (CNF) for treatment of fatty acids.
- c) To evaluate the adsorption performance of β -CD functionalized CNF for removal of fatty acids compounds from industrial oleochemical wastewater.

1.4 Research Scopes

- a) Synthesis of CNF by using cellulose acetate as polymer via electrospinning technique. Citric acid act as the crosslinking agent and sodium hydrophosphite hydrate as catalyst to produce β -CD functionalized CNF (CNF/ β -CD).
- b) Optimize on the functionalization of β -CD with CNF by manipulating the concentration of β -CD and citric acid during crosslinking process.
- c) Characterization of the CNF and CNF/ β -CD by using scanning electron microscope (SEM) and thermogravimetric analysis (TGA). Fourier-transform infrared spectroscopy (FTIR) is also used to analyse the functional group of CNF and CNF/ β -CD.
- d) Adsorption of palmitic acid as the model of fatty acids by using CNF and CNF/ β -CD were carried out at different contact time. The reduction of palmitic acid content in the aqueous solution was measured by using high performance liquid chromatography (HPLC) at 210 nm. The reusability of the modified and unmodified CNF were also investigated.

1.5 Significance of Study

This study offers an alternative treatment for removal of fatty acids from industrial oleochemical wastewater especially in Malaysia. By tailoring the cellulose nanofiber via electrospinning process and functionalized with β -CD, it is believed that the modified adsorbent could suit to the target adsorbate. Hence, the study would provide a low-cost and environmental friendly solution as well as high adsorption performance of fatty acids for the treatment of oleochemical wastewater. In addition, the adsorption isotherms and kinetics deduced from this study will provide an important knowledge on nature of the adsorption reaction phenomenon. Last but not least, the analysis of this study will serve as future reference for researchers on using β -cyclodextrin to take up fatty acids compounds.

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