

New Copper Complex on Fe₃O₄ Nanoparticles as a Highly Efficient Reusable Nanocatalyst for Synthesis of Polyhydroquinolines in Water

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Abstract

In this work, we present a simple, environmentally friendly and economical route for the preparation of a novel copper-Schiffbase organometallic complex on Fe_3O_4 nanoparticles ($Fe_3O_4@$ Schiff-base-Cu) using an inexpensive and simple method and available materials. This magnetic nanocatalyst was comprehensively characterized using Fourier transform infrared spectroscopy (FT-IR), X-Ray Diffractometer (XRD), inductively coupled plasma atomic emission spectroscopy (ICP), energydispersive X-ray spectroscopy (EDS), scanning electron microscopy (SEM), X-ray mapping, thermogravimetric analysis (TGA) and vibrating sample magnetometer (VSM) analysis. In the second stage, the catalytic activity of this catalyst was studied in the synthesis of polyhydroquinoline derivatives via Hantzsch reaction in water as a green solvent. In this sense, simple preparation of the catalyst from the commercially available materials, high catalytic activity, simple operation, short reaction times, high yields and use of green solvent can be regarded as some advantages of this protocol. In addition, it is worth mentioning that this nanocatalyst was easily recovered using external magnet and reused for several times without significant loss of its catalytic efficiency. Finally, the leaching, heterogeneity and stability of $Fe_3O_4@$ Schiff-base-Cu were studied by hot filtration test and ICP technique.

Graphic Abstract

A green and novel Fe_3O_4 @Schiff-base-Cu catalyst sucssesfully was prepared and characterized. This catalyst can be used for the Synthesis of polyhydroquinolines in water as the green solvent. This catalyst could be recovered easily and reused many times without important decrease in efficiency.



Keywords $Fe_3O_4@$ Schiff-base-Cu \cdot Polyhydroquinolines \cdot Hantzsch reaction \cdot Reusable catalyst

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1 Introduction

polyhydroquinoline derivatives have a wide range of biological activities such as bronchodilator, antiatherosclerotic, antitumor and antidiabetic and vasodilator properties [1-6] i.e. polyhydroquinoline derivatives which can be considered as a significant class of the well-known Ca²⁺ channel blockers establish the skeletons of drug molecules utilized in the treatment of hypertension and cardiovascular diseases [7, 8]. Therefore, the synthesis of polyhydroquinoline derivatives can be viewed as an area of remarkable attention in organic chemistry. The use of copper catalysts for this transformation is still interesting from an industrial perspective because of the fact that copper is less toxic and inexpensive than other transition metals [9-16]. Homogenous Cu complexes which are among the most representative Cu catalysts are coordinated with different organic ligands and provide excellent yields [17-21]. However, the homogenous Cu complexes suffer from significant drawbacks; including, the difficulty of separation and recovery of Cu complexes from the reaction system, high costs and the potential environmental pollution [20, 22-24]. In order to circumvent these issues and regarding the rapid advancement of nanotechnology, heterogeneous copper catalysts have been proposed by supporting Cu nanoparticles on the surface of the insoluble hosts [25-29]. Recently, the nanomaterials have widely attracted much attention due to the fact that they are applied as a precursor of inorganic–organic hybrid materials [24, 30–35]. Moreover, they have excellent applications in catalytic reactions, adsorption materials, optical and environmental problems, food processing, medical industry, energy production and they have also been used in various fields of chemistry, physics, engineering and science [36–41]. Besides, magnetic Fe₃O₄ nanoparticle has attracted great attention due to its intrinsic magnetic property, facile synthesis and being environment-friendly with high surface area, low cost and good chemical stability [42–45]. Among the various methods for the synthesis of Fe₃O₄ MNPs, the coprecipitation method has several advantages such as production in a one-pot process, green conditions, and low time of synthesis [46–49]. The Schiff bases are essential class of organic ligands, and their metal complexes have been extensively exploited in a wide variety of organic reactions especially in the multicomponent reactions [50, 51]. In this sense, they can become possible alternatives to other ligands [41] owing to the advantages such as their cost-effectiveness, availability, ease of synthesis, and chemical and thermal stability [50-56]. Researchers have developed these ligands and their metal complexes, which afforded more effective and easier oxidative addition. Schiff bases are common ligands in coordination

chemistry, due to their unique properties of forming stable complexes [57, 58]. During the last two decades, schiff base ligands have been leading the world of catalysis in an unprecedented manner [59–62]. Schiff base-transition metal complexes have been extensively used as catalysts for various organic reactions such as cross- coupling reactions, multicomponent reactions, degradations, substitution reaction, elimination reaction, addition reaction, radical reactions and oxidation-reduction reactions [50, 55, 63-70]. Thus, for the researchers, schiff base ligands have become of vital interest to understand the fundamental reasons behind their catalytic behavior [71–78]. Rational catalysts design, by proper functionalization of schiff base ligands to explore their utility in a host of catalytically relevant syntheses of interest to contemporary organic transformations, is thus central to industrial and academic research [77, 79]. Various synthetic methodologies have been developed using heterogenized organometallic schiff base catalysis [80–91]. However, in this report, copper complex supported on surface-modified Fe₃O₄ nanoparticles (Fe₃O₄@Schiff-base-Cu) is introduced as a new and efficient reusable catalyst for the synthesis of polyhydroquinoline derivatives.

The results of this study differ from the previously reported literatures due to the less number of catalyst synthesis steps. Also, the final complex can be synthesized using a stable interaction between the amine and ether groups of the prepared Schiff base ligand and the Cu atom. In addition, the presence of both of these electron-donor functional groups in the prepared Schiff base structure, which can form a stable complex with Cu, can also reduce the leaching of Cu into the reaction media. Moreover, water was used as a green solvent under aerobic reaction conditions. Besides, the catalyst could be easily separated by applying a simple magnet and could also be reused in several consecutive runs without appreciable change in its catalytic activity. Noteworthy, features of this catalyst are high conversion yields (less reactive substrates) and good selectivity.

2 Experimental

2.1 Preparation of Fe₃O₄@Schiff-Base-Cu Catalyst

The Fe₃O₄ magnetic nanoparticles were prepared by the coprecipitation technique as it was previously reported [92]. For the synthesis of the supported Fe₃O₄@Schiff-Base-Cu complex, 1 g of the prepared Fe₃O₄ nanoparticles was dispersed in 50 mL ethanol/water (1:1) by sonication for 15 min. and, then, 1.5 mL 3-aminopropyltrimethoxysilane (APTMS) was added to the reaction mixture. The reaction mixture was stirred under the N₂ atmosphere at 40 °C for 24 h. Then, the obtained Fe₃O₄@APTMS MNPs product

was separated by magnetic decantation, washed with ethanol and, then, dried at 90 °C in an oven for 4 h. Afterwards, the Schiff-Base ligand supported on heterogeneous Fe₃O₄ was obtained by the reaction of O-bisMe-furaldehyde (5,5'-Oxybis(5-methylene-2-furaldehyde)) (2.5 mmol) with the amine groups on the surface of Fe_3O_4 @APTMS (1 g) in ethanol (20 mL) overnight and under nitrogen atmosphere and reflux conditions. The target Fe₃O₄@Schiff-base was obtained by magnetic separation, washed with ethanol, and dried at 80 °C in an oven for 4 h. Finally, In order to prepare Fe₃O₄@Schiff-Base-Cu organometallic complex, the obtained Fe_3O_4 @Schiff-base (0.1 g) was dispersed in 30 mL ethanol by sonication for 30 min and, then, $Cu(NO_3)_2 \cdot 3H_2O$ (0.5 g) was added to the reaction mixture. The reaction mixture was stirred at 80 °C for 24 h. Then, the final product (Fe₃O₄@Schiff-Base-Cu) was separated using an external magnet, washed with water and ethanol and dried at 80 °C in an oven for 4 h.

2.2 General Procedure for the Synthesis of Polyhydroquinolines

A mixture of aldehyde (1 mmol), dimedon (1 mmol), ethylacetoacetate (1 mmol) and ammonium acetate (1.3 mmol) was dissolved in 3 mL water in the presence of $Fe_3O_4@$ Schiff-Base-Cu catalyst (0.25 mol% of Cu) and stirred at reflux conditions. The progress of the reaction was monitored by TLC. After the completion of the reaction, the catalyst was separated by a magnet and washed with ethanol. Then, the solvent was evaporated and, finally, all the products were recrystallized in ethanol.

2.3 Selected Spectral Data

2.3.1 Ethyl 4-(4-chlorophenyl)-2,7,7-trimethyl-5-oxo-1,4,5 ,6,7,8-hexahydroquinoline-3-carboxylate (Table 2 Entry 1)

¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-d6) δ = 9.12 (s, 1H, NH) 7.25 (d, J = 8.0 Hz, 2H), 7.16 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 2H), 4.83 (s, 1H), 3.99 (q, J = 7.2 Hz, 2H), 2.43 (d, J = 17.2 Hz, 1H), 2.25–2.28 (m, 4H), 2.19 (d, J = 16.0 Hz, 1H), 1.99 (d, J = 16.0 Hz, 1H), 1.13 (t, J = 7.2 Hz, 3H), 1.00 (s, 3H), 0.83 (s, 3H). ¹³C NMR (50 MHz, DMSO-d6) δ = 194.1, 166.5, 149.5, 146.5, 145.3, 130.2, 129.2, 127.6, 109.6, 103.0, 59.0, 50.1, 35.6, 32.1, 29.0, 26.4, 18.3, 4.1.

2.3.2 Ethyl 4-(4-methoxyphenyl)-2,7,7-trimethyl-5-oxo-1,4, 5,6,7,8-hexahydroquinoline-3-carboxylate (Table 2 Entry 3)

¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-d6) δ =9.00 (s, 1H, NH), 7.05 (d, J=8.4 Hz, 2H), 6.74 (d, J=8.4 Hz, 2H), 4.78 (s, 1H), 3.99 (q,

 $\begin{array}{l} J=7.2 \ Hz, \ 2H), \ 3.67 \ (s, \ 3H, \ OCH_3), \ 2.43 \ (d, \ J=16.8 \ Hz, \ 1H), \\ 2.29 \ (m, \ 4H), \ 2.17 \ (d, \ J=16.0 \ Hz, \ 1H), \ 1.98 \ (d, \ J=16.0 \ Hz, \\ 1H), \ 1.15 \ (t, \ J=7.2 \ Hz, \ 3H), \ 1.00 \ (s, \ 3H), \ 0.85 \ (s, \ 3H). \ ^{13}C \\ NMR \ (100 \ MHz, \ DMSO-d_6) \ \delta=194.2, \ 166.9, \ 157.3, \ 149.2, \\ 144.6, \ 140.0, \ 128.4, \ 113.1, \ 110.1, \ 103.9, \ 59.0, \ 54.8, \ 50.3, \ 34.9, \\ 32.1, \ 29.1, \ 26.5, \ 18.2, \ 14.2. \end{array}$

2.3.3 Ethyl 4-(3,4-dimethoxyphenyl)-2,7,7-trimethyl-5oxo-1,4,5,6,7,8-hexahydroquinoline-3-carboxylate (Table 2 Entry 4)

¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-d6) $\delta = 9.02$ (s, 1H, NH), 6.77–6.74 (m, 2H), 6.63 (dd, J=2.0 & 8.4 Hz 1H), 4.79 (s, 1H), 4.02 (q, J=7.2 Hz, 2H), 3.66 (s, 3H, OCH₃), 3.65 (s, 3H, OCH₃), 2.44 (d, J=17.2 Hz, 1H), 2.30–2.26 (m, 4H), 2.19 (d, J=16.4 Hz, 1H), 2.00 (d, J=16.4 Hz, 1H), 1.17 (t, J=7.2 Hz, 3H), 1.01 (s, 3H), 0.88 (s, 3H). ¹³C NMR (50 MHz, DMSO-d6) $\delta = 194.2$, 166.8, 149.3, 147.9, 146.9, 144.5, 140.4, 119.2, 111.7, 111.4, 110.0, 103.8, 59.0, 55.4, 55.3, 50.3, 35.1, 32.1, 29.2, 26.4, 18.2, 14.2.

2.3.4 Ethyl 2,7,7-trimethyl-5-oxo-4-(4-(trifluoromethyl) phenyl)-1,4,5,6,7,8-hexahydroquinoline-3-carboxylate (Table 2 Entry 5)

¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-d₆) δ = 9.17 (s, 1H, NH), 7.57 (d, J = 7.6 Hz, 2H), 7.37 (d, J = 8.0 Hz, 2H), 4.93 (s, 1H), 3.99 (q, J = 7.2 Hz, 2H), 2.45 (d, J = 16.4 Hz, 1H), 2.32 (m, 4H), 2.19 (d, J = 16.4 Hz, 1H), 2.00 (d, J = 16.0 Hz, 1H), 1.13 (t, J = 7.2 Hz, 3H), 1.00 (s, 3H), 0.83 (s, 3H). ¹³C NMR (50 MHz, DMSO-d₆) δ = 194.1, 166.6, 151.8, 149.8, 145.7, 128.2, 124.7, 124.6, 109.3, 102.8, 59.1, 50.1, 36.3, 32.1, 29.0, 26.5, 18.3, 14.1.

2.3.5 Ethyl 4-(4-cyanophenyl)-2,7,7-trimethyl-5-oxo-1,4, 5,6,7,8-hexahydroquinoline-3-carboxylate (Table 2 Entry 6)

¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-d6) δ = 9.19 (s, 1H, NH), 7.68 (d, J = 8.0 Hz, 2H), 7.34 (d, J = 8.0 Hz, 2H), 4.90 (s, 1H), 3.98 (q, J = 7.2 Hz, 2H), 2.44 (d, J = 17.2 Hz, 1H), 2.30–2.26 (m, 4H), 2.19 (d, J = 16.4 Hz, 1H), 1.99 (d, J = 16.4 Hz, 1H), 1.12 (t, J = 7.2 Hz, 3H), 1.00 (s, 3H), 0.81 (s, 3H).¹³C NMR (50 MHz, DMSO-d6) δ = 194.1, 166.3, 152.8, 149.9, 146.0, 131.8, 128.5, 119.0, 109.1, 108.5, 102.4, 59.1, 50.1, 36.7, 32.1, 29.0, 26.4, 18.3, 14.1.

2.3.6 Ethyl 4-(3,4-dihydroxyphenyl)-2,7,7-trimethyl-5-oxo-1,4,5,6,7,8-hexahydroquinoline-3-carboxylate (Table 2 Entry 10)

¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-d₆) $\delta = 8.94$ (s, 1H, NH), 8.56 (s, 1H, OH), 8.45 (s, 1H, OH), 6.57 (d, J=2.0 Hz, 1H), 6.51

(d, J=8.0 Hz, 1H), 6.39 (dd, J=2.0 and 8.4 Hz, 1H), 4.68 (s, 1H), 4.00 (q, J=7.2 Hz, 2H), 2.40 (d, J=17.2 Hz, 1H), 2.27 (m, 4H), 2.16 (d, J=16.0 Hz, 1H), 1.99 (d, J=16.0 Hz, 1H), 1.16 (t, J=7.2 Hz, 3H), 1.00 (s, 3H), 0.87 (s, 3H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-d₆) δ =194.3, 167.1, 149.0, 144.6, 144.1, 143.1, 138.6, 118.1, 115.2, 114.8, 110.3, 104.1, 59.0, 50.4, 34.9, 32.1, 29.2, 26.6, 18.0, 14.2.

2.3.7 Ethyl 2,7,7-trimethyl-4-(4-nitrophenyl)-5-oxo-1,4,5,6, 7,8-hexahydroquinoline-3-carboxylate (Table 2 Entry 14)

¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-d₆) δ = 9.23 (s, 1H, NH), 8.10 (d, J = 8.8 Hz, 2H), 7.42 (d, J = 8.8 Hz, 2H), 4.96 (s, 1H), 3.98 (q, J = 7.2 Hz, 2H), 2.45 (d, J = 16.4 Hz, 1H), 2.27–2.31 (m, 4H), 2.20 (d, J = 16.0 Hz, 1H), 1.99 (d, J = 16.0 Hz, 1H), 1.12 (t, J = 7.2 Hz, 3H), 1.00 (s, 3H), 0.82 (s, 3H), ¹³C NMR (50 MHz, DMSO-d6) δ = 194.1, 166.3, 154.9, 150.0, 146.0, 145.6, 128.7, 123.0, 109.0, 102.3, 59.2, 50.0, 36.6, 32.1, 29.0, 26.4, 18.3, 14.0.

2.3.8 Ethyl 2,7,7-trimethyl-4-(3-nitrophenyl)-5-oxo-1,4,5,6, 7,8-hexahydroquinoline-3-carboxylate (Table 2 Entry 15)

¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-d₆) $\delta = 9.24$ (s, 1H, NH), 7.98 (m, 2H), 7.62–7.50 (m, 2H), 4.96 (s, 1H), 3.98 (q, J=7.2 Hz, 2H), 2.48 (d, J=17.2 Hz, 1H), 2.38 (m, 4H), 2.21 (d, J=16.0 Hz, 1H), 2.00 (d, J=16.4 Hz, 1H), 1.13 (t, J = 7.2 Hz, 3H), 1.01 (s, 3H), 0.83 (s, 3H). 13 C NMR (50 MHz, DMSO-d6) δ = 194.2, 166.3, 150.3, 149.6, 147.3, 146.0, 134.2, 129.3, 121.9, 120.8, 109.2, 102.6, 59.2, 50.0, 36.4, 32.2, 29.0, 26.3, 18.3, 14.0,

2.3.9 Ethyl 4-(5-hydroxy-2-nitrophenyl)-2,7,7-trimethyl-5-oxo-1,4,5,6,7,8-hexahydroquinoline -3-carboxylate (Table 2 Entry 16)

¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-d₆) δ = 10.37 (s, 1H, OH), 9.06 (s, 1H, NH), 7.69 (d, J = 8.8 Hz, 1H), 6.75 (d, J = 2.4 Hz, 1H), 6.62 (dd, J = 2.4 & 8.8 Hz, 1H), 5.77 (s, 1H), 3.94 (q, J = 7.2 Hz, 2H), 2.42 (d, J = 16.8 Hz, 1H), 2.29 (s, 3H), 2.25 (d, J = 16.8 Hz, 1H), 2.13 (d, J = 15.6 Hz, 1H), 1.92 (d, J = 15.6 Hz, 1H), 1.00 (t, J = 7.2 Hz, 3H), 0.98 (s, 3H), 0.79 (s, 3H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-d6) δ = 193.9, 166.7, 161.5, 149.4, 145.8, 145.4, 140.1, 126.3, 166.5, 113.3, 100.3, 103.5, 59.0, 50.1, 32.0, 31.7, 28.8, 26.3, 18.2, 13.8.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Catalyst Preparation

The presented work tries to describe a novel Cu-Schiff-base immobilized on Fe_3O_4 as a reusable magnetic nanocatalyst. Initially, the modified Fe_3O_4 nanoparticles with 3-aminoropropyltriethoxysilane (Fe_3O_4 @APTMS MNPs) have been prepared according to the reported procedure [93]. Then, the



Schiff-base ligand was synthesized via the substitution reaction of NH₂ with O-bisMe-furaldehyde. Finally, the catalyst was synthesized by the reaction of Fe₃O₄@Schiff-Base with Cu(NO₃)₂·3H₂O (Scheme 1). This catalyst has been characterized by FT-IR, XRD, EDS, ICP, SEM, X-ray mapping TGA and VSM techniques.

3.2 Catalyst Characterizations

The as-prepared Fe_3O_4 @Schiff-base-Cu catalyst was also characterized by FT-IR, XRD, EDS, VSM, ICP, TGA, SEM, and X-ray mapping techniques.

The FT-IR spectra for the Fe_3O_4 MNPs (a), Fe_3O_4 @ AMPTMS MNPs (b), Fe₃O₄@Schiff-Base (c) and Fe₃O₄@ Schiff-base-Cu (d) are shown in Fig. 1. The strong absorption at 590 and 628 cm^{-1} in spectrums was attributed to the presence of Fe–O stretching vibration [94]. In addition, the peak appearing at 1624 cm⁻¹ was attributed to the bending vibration of OH band or the stretching vibrational mode of the adsorbed water layer [95]. Moreover, the broad band at around 3392 cm^{-1} is attributed to the asymmetric and symmetric stretching vibrations of -OH band of the Fe_3O_4 nanoparticles surface [96]. In the curve of Fe₃O₄@APTMS MNPs (b), two peaks at 2853 and 2925 cm⁻¹ can be attributed to the C-H stretching vibrations of NH₂-propyl group [93, 97, 98]. Besides, the peak at 892 cm⁻¹ can be attributed to the Fe–O–Si stretching vibration. Moreover, a strong IR peak which appeared at 1648 cm – 1 corresponded to the strong bending vibration of the amide I group and showed the successful immobilization of the anchored NH₂-propyl group on the Fe₃O₄ Support [93, 97]. Absorption peaks at 1012 and 1560 cm^{-1} (C–N stretching vibration) in Fe_3O_4 @Schiff-base provide evidences confirming the formation of the desired ligand [66, 99, 100]. The shift on the absorption peak at



Fig.1 FT-IR spectra for the Fe_3O_4 MNPs (a), Fe_3O_4 @APTMS MNPs (b), Fe_3O_4 @Schiff-Base (c) and Fe_3O_4 @Schiff-base-Cu (d)



Fig. 2 XRD pattern of the Fe₃O₄@Schiff-Base-Cu

approximately 1624 cm⁻¹ (C=N stretching vibration) in the $Fe_3O_4@$ Schiff-base-Cu spectra is due to the complexion of Cu ions with $Fe_3O_4@$ Schiff-base [101].

The X-ray diffraction analysis (XRD) pattern of Fe_3O_4 @ Schiff-base-Cu is shown in Fig. 2, in which the peak positions of 2 θ at 35.27, 41.52, 50.56, 63.24, 67.49, 74.47, correspond to the (2 2 0), (3 1 1), (4 0 0), (4 2 2), (5 1 1), and (4 4 0) reflections, respectively, as they are in agreement with the standard XRD pattern of Fe_3O_4 nanoparticles [102]. More importantly, the phase of Fe_3O_4 support is not destroyed during the immobilization of Schiff-base-Cu organometallic complex on iron oxide layers. In addition, the Crystalline size of Fe_3O_4 @Schiff-Base-Cu MNPs was estimated, using the Scherrer equation from XRD pattern data, to be 20.15 ± 1 nm.

The elemental composition of the Fe_3O_4 @Schiff-base-Cu organometallic complex was determined using EDX analysis (Fig. 3). The presence of Fe, O, Si, C, N, and Cu in EDX pattern provides evidences confirming the formation of the organometallic complex. In addition, the exact amount of



Fig. 3 EDS spectrum of the Fe₃O₄@Schiff-Base-Cu



Fig. 4 SEM images of the Fe_3O_4 MNPs (a), Fe_3O_4 @APTMS MNPs (b), Fe_3O_4 @Schiff-Base (c) and Fe_3O_4 @Schiff-base-Cu (d) and recovers Fe_3O_4 @Schiff-base-Cu complex (e)

Cu, which was immobilized on Fe₃O₄@Schiff-base, was obtained by ICP-OSE as 0.92×10^{-3} mol g⁻¹.

Figure 4 illustrates the morphology of Fe_3O_4 MNPs (a), Fe_3O_4 @APTMS MNPs (b) Fe_3O_4 @Schiff-base (c) and Fe_3O_4 @Schiff-base-Cu complex (d), and recovers Fe_3O_4 @ Schiff-base-Cu complex (e) as probed by the scanning electron microscopy (SEM) technique. As shown in Fig. 4, the SEM image of Fe_3O_4 @Schiff-Base-Cu complex shows spherical morphology for most particles.

The size and morphology of Fe_3O_4 @Schiff-base-Cu complex were investigated using TEM. As shown in Fig. 5, the magnetic cores of the nanoparticles were uniform in both size and shape. Moreover, the particle size was measured to be about 15–25 nm and, consequently, the spherical morphology was confirmed. The results of TEM is in agreement with SEM and XRD results.

The X-ray mapping of $Fe_3O_4@$ Schiff-base-Cu nanocatalyst is shown in Fig. 6. The good dispersion of Cu on the surface of the catalyst was confirmed using the elemental map images.

Deringer

Figure 7 illustrates the TGA diagram of $Fe_3O_4@$ Schiffbase-Cu complex. The small weight loss between 5% below 200 °C was exhibited and attributed to the evaporation of the physically adsorbed solvents and surface hydroxyl groups [94]. Besides, the next weight loss about 15% occurred between 200 and 600 °C which are related to the decomposition of the functional groups chemisorbed onto the surface of the catalyst support [103]. The obtained results confirmed the formation of the desired organometallic complex on the Fe₃O₄ Support.

Magnetic measurement of the catalyst was analysed by a vibrating sample magnetometer (VSM) at room temperature. Figure 8 exhibits the magnetization curves of Fe_3O_4 and $Fe_3O_4@Schiff-Base-Cu$. The value of the saturation magnetic moment of the $Fe_3O_4@Schiff-base-Cu$ complex (Blue diagram) is 51.3 emu/g as compared to the saturation magnetization of Fe_3O_4 which was found to be 78 emu/g. This decrease in the saturation magnetization of $Fe_3O_4@$ Schiff-Base-Cu complex is due to the successful grafting of



Fig. 5 TEM images of $Fe_3O_4@$ Schiff-base-Cu nanocatalyst



Fig. 6 X-ray mapping images of the $Fe_3O_4@Schiff-Base-Cu$





Fig. 7 TGA diagram of Fe₃O₄@Schiff-base-Cu complex



Fig. 8 VSM spectrum of Fe₃O₄(Red) and @Schiff-Base-Cu (Blue)

Schiff-Base-Cu complex on the surface of Fe_3O_4 nanoparticles (Red diagram).

All together, these analyses are indicative of the successful immobilization of Cu (0) complex onto the Fe_3O_4 @ Schiff-base.

3.3 Catalytic Studies

After the successful characterization of the prepared nanomaterial, the catalytic activities in the synthesis of polyhydroquinoline derivatives were evaluated.

Table 1 Optimization for the synthesis of polyhydro	quinolines
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Entry ^a	Cat. (mol%)	Solvent	Temp.(°C)	Time. (min)	Yield ^b (%)
1	_	H ₂ O	Reflux	2 day	NR
2	0.05	H ₂ O	Reflux	15	43
3	0.10	H ₂ O	Reflux	15	69
4	0.15	H_2O	Reflux	15	83
5	0.20	H_2O	Reflux	15	91
6	0.25	H_2O	Reflux	15	100
7	0.25	Ethanol	Reflux	15	65
8	0.25	PEG-400	100	15	83
9	0.25	DMSO	100	15	52
10	0.25	Dioxane	Reflux	15	70
11	0.25	DMF	100	15	81
12	0.25	Solvent free	100	15	73
13	0.25	H_2O	90	15	89
14	0.25	H_2O	80	15	83
15	0.25	H_2O	60	15	76
16	0.25	H_2O	40	15	64
17	0.25	H_2O	25	15	39

^aReaction conditions: 4-chlorobenzaldehyde (1.0 mmol), dimedone (1 mmol), ethyl acetoacetate (1 mmol), and ammonium acetate (1.2 mmol), Catalyst and solvent (2 mL) ^bIsolated yield

In order to optimize the reaction conditions, the combination of p-Clbenzaldehyde (1 mmol), ethyl acetoacetate (1 mmol), dimedone (1 mmol) and ammonium acetate (1.2 mmol) was chosen as the model reaction to evaluate the optimized catalytic activity. Moreover, the effect of various experimental parameters; including, the effect of diffrent amounts of catalyst, diffrent solvents and the effect of various temperatures on the selected model substrate were screened to achieve high catalytic efficiency and yield. The results are summarized in Table 1. The influence of the catalyst loading on the reaction efficiency was studied with different amounts of the catalyst. The comparison of the results related to the effect of various amounts of the catalyst revealed that the highest activity was observed in the presence of 0.25 mol % of the catalyst on the basis of Cu (Table 1, Entry 6). As can be seen from Table 1, entry 1, the reaction was not completed in the absence of the catalyst even after 2 days. Then, the effects of solvent and reaction temperature were evaluated on the model reaction.

Table 2	Synthesis of
polyhyd	roquinoline derivative

Entry ^a	Aldehyde	Time (min)	Yield (%) ^b	$TOF(s^{-1})$	M.P	
					Measured	Reported
1	CI	15	100	5,760,000	244–246	243–245 [104]
2	Me	25	96	3,318,290	192–194	252–255 [105]
3	MeO	20 H	98	4,234,023	256–258	251–252 [106]
4	MeO	35 H	92	2,271,215	216–218	216–218 [107]
5	OMe F ₃ C	25	91	3,145,463	188–190	188–190 [107]
6	NC OH	20	95	4,104,410	140–143	140–142 [107]
7	O H	20	99	4,320,000	202–204	203–205 [104]
8	OH OH	30	93	2,678,400	230–232	231–234 [108]

Table 2 (continued)

Entry ^a	Aldehyde	Time (min)	Yield (%) ^b	$TOF(s^{-1})$	M.P	
					Measured	Reported
9	HO	35	95	2,345,276	223–225	225–227 [104]
10	но ОН	20	92	3,974,797	216–218	216–218 [107]
11	Br	20	97	4,190,819	247–249	249–251 [104]
12	H Br	15	91	5,241,600	232–235	231–233 [104]
13	F H	20	95	4,104,410	178–180	180–182 [104]
14	O ₂ N H	35	94	2,320,589	241–243	241–243 [104]
15	H NO ₂	15	92	5,299,200	176–177	176–177 [107]





^aReaction conditions: aromatic aldehyde (1.0 mmol), dimedone (1 mmol), ethyl acetoacetate (1 mmol), and ammonium acetate (1.2 mmol), Catalyst (0.25 mol %) and H_2O (3 mL) ^bIsolated yield

Considering the reaction time and the product yield, H_2O at reflux conditions proved to be the best choice for the solvent and tempereature, respectively. After an extensive screening of the reaction parameters, as shown in Table 1, the best yield of polyhydroquinoline product was obtained specifically when the reaction was performed using 0.25 mol% of Fe₃O₄@Schiff-Base-Cu in H₂O at 100 °C (Table 1, Entry 6).

Then, the catalytic effectiveness of the prepared Fe_3O_4 @ Schiff-Base-Cu catalyst was investigated in the synthesis of polyhydroquinoline derivatives via the reaction of different aromatic aldehydes. The results are listed in (Table 2). As shown in Table 2, various aromatic aldehydes bearing different electron-withdrawing group or electron-donating groups, such as OCH₃, NO₂, NMe₂ CH₃, CF₃, SMe, CN, OH, F, Cl, and Br, produced excellent reaction yields in the presence of Fe₃O₄@ Schiff-Base-Cu catalyst (Scheme 2).

A plausible mechanism for the multicomponent synthesis of polyhydroquinolines on the basis of previous reports [109] has been depicted in Scheme 3. Based on this mechanism, the role of Fe₃O₄@Schiff-Base-Cu MNPS as a Lewis acid catalyst comes in the Knoevenagel condensation of aldehydes with active methylene compounds (dimedone or ethyl acetoacetate) to produce an α , β -unsaturated compound. In the next step, Fe₃O₄@Schiff-Base-Cu MNPS catalyzed the Michael addition of intermediates to obtain the polyhydroquinoline (Scheme 3).

3.4 Recyclability of the Catalyst

Reproducibility of catalysts provides an important advantage in industrial applications because it reduces production costs. Therefore, the recovery and reproducibility of Fe_3O_4 @Schiff-Base-Cu catalyst were explored in the model reaction. After the completion of the experiment, the reaction system was cooled to room temperature and the catalyst was magnetically separated from the solution, washed with acetone, air-dried and, finally, reused for the next round of the reactions. As shown in Fig. 9, the recycling process was repeated for five cycles with a slight decrease in the activity of the catalyst.

Also, in order to examine stability of the catalyst after recycling, the recycled catalyst has been characterized by XRD, SEM, VSM and FT-IR techniques. These characterizations confirmed that the recovered catalyst is in good agreement with the fresh catalyst. These characterizations are strong evidences for high stability of $Fe_3O_4@Schiffbase-Cu$ organometallic complex after recycling.

The SEM image of the recycled catalyst is shown in Fig. 4 (e) in which the morphology of the recovered catalyst is similar to the particle form of the fresh catalyst. Moreover, Fig. 10 shows the XRD pattern of the recovered catalyst and, also, the curve intensity which indicates the structural stability of the catalyst after 11 consecutive cycles.



Scheme 2 Fe₃O₄@Schiff-Base-Cu catalyzed the synthesis of polyhydroquinolines





Fig. 10 XRD pattern of the recycled Fe₃O₄@Schiff-Base-Cu

Scheme 3 Proposed mechanism for the synthesis of polyhydroquino-lines in the presence of Fe $_3O_4$ @Schiff-Base-Cu catalyst







Fig. 11 FT-IR spectra of the recycled Fe₃O₄@Schiff-Base-Cu



Fig. 12 VSM spectrum of recycled Fe₃O₄@SiO₂-Glycerol-Cu(II)

The Fig. 11 shows the FT-IR spectrum of the recycled Fe_3O_4 @Schiff-base-Cu that points out that the catalyst is stable during the organic reactions.

Figure 12 exhibits the magnetization curve of the recycled catalyst. The magnetization curves of the recycled $Fe_3O_4@SiO_2$ -Glycerol-Cu(II) points out that the catalyst is stable during the organic reactions after 11 cycles.

3.5 Leaching Study

In order to consider the leaching of Cu into the reaction media, ICP-AES analysis was performed. In this sense, the copper content in the reaction media and in the model reaction was found to be 0.18%. The results show that the leaching of Cu during the reaction process is negligible and the catalyst is heterogeneous.

3.6 Comparison

In order to investigate the efficiency of this new procedure in comparison to the reported procedures in the literature, the results for the synthesis of polyhydroquinolines using p-Clbenzaldehyde, as the representative example, were compared to the best of the well-known data from the literature outlined in the Table 3. As it is evident from Tables 3, the synthesized $Fe_3O_4@$ Schiff-Base-Cu nanocatalyst showed better results than other methods.

4 Conclusion

In conclusion, the Fe_3O_4 @Schiff-Base-Cu catalyst was synthesized and successfully applied for the synthesis of polyhydroquinoline derivatives in water as a green reaction media. The prepared magnetic nanocatalyst was characterized by FT-IR, XRD, EDS, ICP, SEM, X-ray mapping, TGA, and VSM analysis techniques. In addition, all reactions were carried out in green conditions. Additionally, the Fe_3O_4 @Schiff-Base-Cu is more economic and environmentally friendly because of its low Cu leaching. This method offers several advantages; including, price, higher catalytic efficiency with lower copper content, heterogeneous nature, wide substrate scope, green conditions, high yield, short reaction time, simple work-up procedure, ease of separation, and recyclability of the magnetic catalyst. Table 3 Comparison of the Synthesis of polyhydroquinolines in the presence of Fe₃O₄@Schiff-Base-Cu using p-Clbenzaldehyd with previously reported procedure

Entry	Catalyst	Time (min)	Yield (%) ^a	References
1	Fe ₃ O ₄	6	94	[110]
2	NiFe ₂ O ₄	3	90	[3]
3	BiFeO ₃	15	95	[111]
4	FeAl ₂ O ₄	180	90	[109]
5	Fe ₂ O ₃ @HAp@Melamine	15	93	[112]
6	Cu-SPATBA/Fe ₃ O ₄	65	98	[113]
7	Pd-SBTU@Fe ₃ O ₄	140	95	[114]
8	Fe ₃ O ₄ -Adenine-Ni	145	96	[115]
9	γ -Fe ₂ O ₃ /Cu@cellulose	15	98	[116]
10	Ru ^{III} @CMC/Fe ₃ O ₄	15	95	[117]
11	Fe ₃ O ₄ -SA-PPCA	120	95	[118]
12	Fe ₃ O ₄ /TiO ₂ -SO ₃ H	5	91	[119]
13	GSA@Fe ₃ O ₄	200	94	[120]
14	Fe ₃ O ₄ @TDI@TiO ₂ -SO ₃ H	10	93	[121]
15	Fe ₃ O ₄ /SiO ₂ -OSO ₃ H	50	89	[122]
16	Fe ₃ O ₄ @PEO-SO ₃ H	15	94	[123]
17	Fe ₃ O ₄ @FSM-16-SO ₃ H	25	86	[124]
18	Fe ₃ O ₄ @D-NH-(CH ₂) ₄ -SO ₃ H	90	86	[125]
19	Fe ₃ O ₄ -TEDETA-Br ₃	120	92	[126]
20	$\operatorname{Fe_3O_4}@\operatorname{SiO_2}@(\operatorname{CH_2})_3\operatorname{Im}C(\operatorname{NO_2})_3$	18	89	[108]
21	$Fe_3O_4@SiO_2@(CH_2)_3Im C(CN)_3$	20	92	[127]
22	NMSMSA	20	93	[128]
23	AIL-SCMNPs	15	80	[95]
24	BIL@MNP	20	89	[129]
25	Fe ₃ O ₄ @SiO ₂ -PEG/NH ₂	20	96	[130]
26	$\operatorname{Fe_3O_4@SiO_2@PPh_3@Cr_2O_7^{2-}}$	15	98	[131]
27	Fe ₃ O ₄ @GA@IG	45	89	[132]
28	MCM41@Serine@Cu(II)	170	96	[105]
29	SBA-15@Glycine- Ni	110	92	[133]
30	SBA-15@Glycine-Cu	100	94	[133]
31	SBA-15@AMPD-Co	35	97	[106]
32	Nicotinic acid	5	92	[134]
33	Fe ₃ O ₄ @Schiff-Base-Cu	15	100	This work

^aIsolated yield

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