

# PREPARATION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF MIL-53 METAL-ORGANIC FRAMEWORK MATERIAL WITH Al/Fe-BIMETALLIC COMPONENT

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## Article history

Received: 20/04/2021; Received in revised form: 16/06/2021; Accepted: 12/07/2021

## Abstract

In this study, iron doped MIL-53(Al) metal-organic framework material (denoted as Fe/MIL-53(Al)) was prepared by hydrothermal method. The obtained materials were characterized using X-ray diffraction (XRD), Fourier-transform infrared spectroscopy (FT-IR), thermogravimetry analysis (TG), scanning electron microscopy (SEM), transmission electron microscopy (TEM), energy dispersive X-ray (EDX), and N<sub>2</sub> adsorption/desorption isotherms. The influence of iron content on the structure of MIL-53(Al) and treated temperature of Fe/MIL-53(Al) were investigated. The results showed that the obtained Fe/MIL-53(Al) synthesized at mole ratio of Fe/Al = 1/9, still maintains many structural properties of the MIL-53 material, and the iron element was evenly distributed over the entire area of the material. The treatment at 280°C had almost no effect on the metal-organic framework structure of the material. The pore of the material was cleared at the treated temperature of 350°C; therefore, the specific surface area of the material increased significantly.

**Keywords:** Fe/MIL-53(Al), Metal-organic framework, Bimetallic component, Hydrothermal method.

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## ĐIỀU CHẾ VÀ ĐẶC TRƯNG VẬT LIỆU KHUNG HỮU CƠ-KIM LOẠI MIL-53 VỚI THÀNH PHẦN LƯỖNG KIM LOẠI Al/Fe

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## Lịch sử bài báo

Ngày nhận: 20/04/2021; Ngày nhận chỉnh sửa: 16/06/2021; Ngày duyệt đăng: 12/07/2021

## Tóm tắt

Trong bài báo này, vật liệu khung hữu cơ-kim loại MIL-53(Al) pha tạp sắt (kí hiệu Fe/MIL-53(Al)) đã được điều chế bằng phương pháp thủy nhiệt. Vật liệu thu được đặc trưng bằng nhiễu xạ tia X (XRD), phổ hồng ngoại biến đổi Fourier (FT-IR), phân tích trọng lượng theo nhiệt độ (TG), hiển vi điện tử quét (SEM), hiển vi điện tử truyền qua (TEM), phổ tán xạ tia X (EDX) và đẳng nhiệt hấp phụ/khử hấp phụ N<sub>2</sub>. Ảnh hưởng của hàm lượng sắt pha tạp đến cấu trúc của MIL-53(Al) và nhiệt độ xử lý Fe/MIL-53(Al) đã được khảo sát. Kết quả cho thấy Fe/MIL-53(Al) thu được khi tổng hợp ở tỉ lệ mol Fe/Al = 1/9 vẫn còn duy trì nhiều đặc trưng cấu trúc của vật liệu MIL-53 và nguyên tố sắt được phân bố đều trên toàn bộ diện tích của vật liệu. Việc xử lý ở 280°C hầu như không ảnh hưởng đến cấu trúc khung hữu cơ-kim loại của vật liệu. Khi xử lý vật liệu ở 350°C, các mao quản của vật liệu được khai thông, do đó, diện tích bề mặt riêng của vật liệu tăng lên đáng kể.

**Từ khóa:** Fe/MIL-53(Al), khung hữu cơ-kim loại, thành phần lưỡng kim loại, phương pháp thủy nhiệt.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52714/dthu.10.5.2021.894>

Cite: Huynh Tuan Anh, Nguyen Huu Nghi, and Pham Dinh Du. (2021). Preparation and characteristics of MIL-53 metal-organic framework material with Al/Fe-bimetallic component. *Dong Thap University Journal of Science*, 10(5), 46-54.

## 1. Introduction

Metal-Organic Frameworks (MOFs) are porous solid nanomaterials created from metal ions (or inorganic hybrid centers) linked to organic bridges. The existence of organic and inorganic components in the framework can create a synergistic interaction for the adsorption and selection of desired molecules from foreign molecules such as gas separation, gas purification, gas storage, heterogeneous catalysts and drug delivery (Férey, 2008; He *et al.*, 2014; Barea *et al.*, 2014; Hu *et al.*, 2018; Stavila *et al.*, 2014; Khieu *et al.*, 2018; Horcajada *et al.*, 2012).

Among MOFs, MIL-53(M<sup>III</sup>) (MIL: Materials of Institute Lavoisier; M<sup>III</sup> = Fe, Al, Cr, Sc, Ga, In...) with the formula M<sup>III</sup>(OH)·(O<sub>2</sub>C-C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>4</sub>-CO<sub>2</sub>)·H<sub>2</sub>O has great chemical flexibility and high chemical stability (Naeimi and Faghihian, 2017; Devic *et al.*, 2010; Gordon *et al.*, 2012; Chen *et al.*, 2013). Among the MIL members, MIL-53(Al) is most interested in the "breathing" effect (Loiseau *et al.*, 2004; Trung *et al.*, 2008), and is widely explored in the field of gas storage (Trung *et al.*, 2008) and water treatment (Patil *et al.*, 2011). The characteristic MIL-53(Al) feature is its high thermal stability, reaching up to 500°C (Patil *et al.*, 2011; Qian *et al.*, 2013).

Most MOFs structures studied in recent years are based on single metal component. Therefore, the MOFs preparation contains a mixture of two or more metals will open up many opportunities for the application of new materials with unique properties (Podkovyrina *et al.*, 2018; Thanh *et al.*, 2018; Rahmani E. and Rahmani M., 2018). Rahmani E. and Rahmani M. (2018) used MIL-53(Al) and MIL-53(Al-Li) as catalysts for the Friedel-Crafts reaction of benzene alkylation. The results showed that both of these catalysts were capable of catalyzing the Friedel-Crafts reaction and were stable after 14 hours of catalysis at 200°C. In particular, MIL-53(Al-Li) had a higher catalytic efficiency than MIL-53(Al). The MIL-53(Fe) material has interested many scientists (Ai *et al.*, 2014; Vu *et al.*, 2015;

Liang *et al.*, 2015; Yilmaz *et al.*, 2016; Pu *et al.*, 2017; Naeimi and Faghihian, 2017; Nguyen *et al.*, 2019; Du *et al.*, 2020). Recently, MIL-53(Fe, Al) has also been successfully prepared by Huang *et al.* (2019) by solvothermal method with N,N-dimethylformamide (DMF) solvent, and applied as an adsorbent for glutathione adsorption from aqueous solution. In addition, these authors have demonstrated that MIL-53(Fe, Al) with bimetallic linkers is not a simple physical mixture of MIL-53(Fe) and MIL-53(Al). This method is synthesized in DMF solvent, so it can lead to secondary pollution. Therefore, environmentally friendly synthetic directions are still attracting a lot of attention of scientists.

In this study, iron doped MIL-53(Al) metal-organic framework material (denoted as Fe/MIL-53(Al)) was prepared by hydrothermal method. The effects of the Fe/Al mole ratio and the treated temperature of the obtained material were investigated.

## 2. Experiment

The preparation of MIL-53(Al) was carried out according to earlier reports with some modifications (Loiseau *et al.*, 2004; Du *et al.*, 2011). In a typical process, a mixture of 14.685 g aluminum (III) chloride (Merck), 9.13 g terephthalic acid (Acros, denoted as TPA) and 180 mL of distilled water was placed in a Teflon-lined steel autoclave (volume 200 mL) in an oven at 120°C for 3 days. Then, the mixture was cooled to ambient temperature, and filtered to obtain solid product. The solid was washed with distilled water, and dried to obtain MIL-53(Al).

The Fe/MIL-53(Al) material was also prepared according to the same process with the different mole ratio of Fe/Al, including 1/9, 2/8 and 3/7 (the source of iron was used from FeCl<sub>3</sub>·6H<sub>2</sub>O, Merck). The samples were denoted as Fe-Al(1/9), Fe-Al(2/8) and Fe-Al(3/7), respectively. To remove the non-reactive TPA forms, the as-prepared Fe/MIL-53(Al) was treated at different temperatures, including 280, 350 and 450°C, for 8 hours.

X-ray diffraction (XRD) patterns were recorded on a VNU-D8 Advance Instrument (Bruker, Germany) under Cu K $\alpha$  radiation ( $\lambda = 1.5406 \text{ \AA}$ ). The thermal behavior of the samples was investigated by using thermal analysis on Labsys TG/dTG SETARAM. The chemical analysis of the sample was examined using Energy-dispersive X-ray spectroscopy (EDX, JEOL JED-2300, Japan) at different sites of the material. Scanning electron microscopy (SEM) and transmission electron microscopy (TEM) images were obtained by using a SEM JMS-5300LV (Japan) and a JEM-2100, respectively. Fourier-transform infrared spectra (FT-IR) were recorded by a Jasco FT/IR-4600 spectrometer (Japan) in the range of 4000–400  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ . The N<sub>2</sub> adsorption/desorption isotherms measurement test was performed at 77 K in a Tristar 3000 analyzer, and before setting the dry mass, the samples were degassed at 200°C with N<sub>2</sub> for 5 h.

### 3. Results and discussion

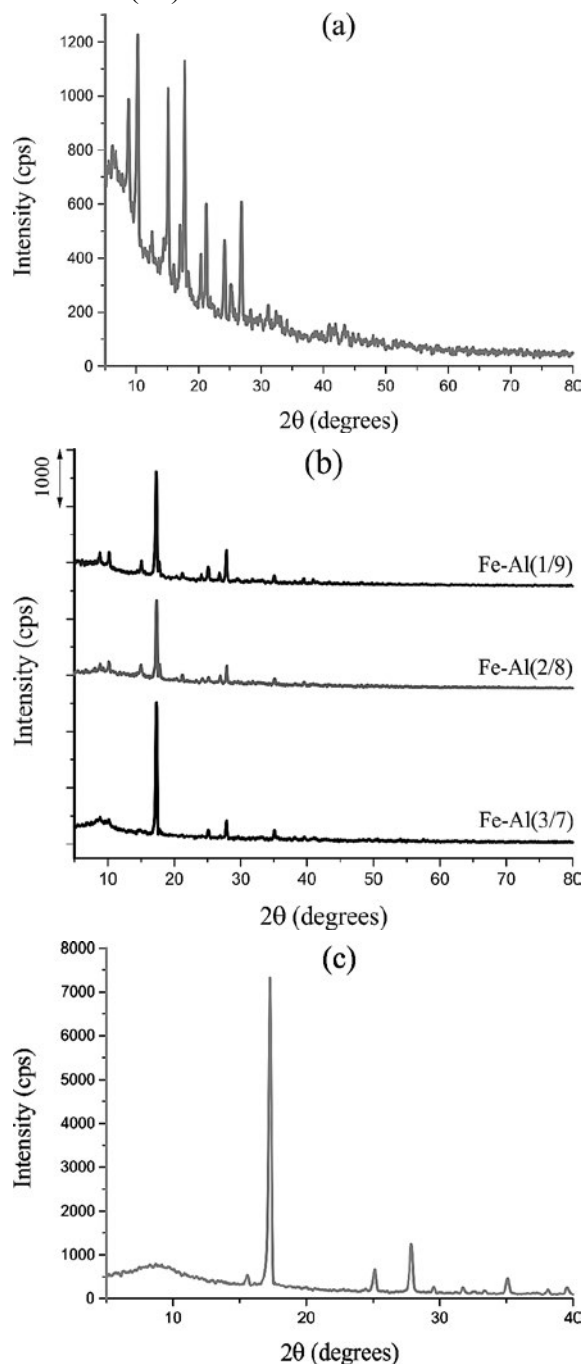
XRD patterns of MIL-53(Al) and the as-prepared Fe/MIL-53(Al) samples are shown in Figure 1. For MIL-53(Al), there were diffraction peaks at 8.7, 10.2, 15, 17.1, 17.7, 20.4, 21.2, 24.2 and 26.8° (Figure 1a). These peaks are specific to as-prepared MIL-53(Al) (Rallapalli *et al.*, 2010; Rahmani E. and Rahmani M., 2018; Moran *et al.*, 2018; Liu *et al.*, 2019). This proves that the structure of the MIL-53(Al) metal-organic framework material was formed. For as-prepared Fe/MIL-53(Al) samples, the XRD also had these diffraction peaks with low intensity and the intensity decreases gradually with increasing Fe/Al mole ratio from 1/9 to 3/7 (Figure 1b). In addition, The XRD patterns of the samples exhibit diffraction peaks at 17°, 25°, and 27.6° with high intensity. These are typical peaks of TPA (Figure 1c). This indicates that a large amount of TPA did not react or link weakly on the material surface.

The FT-IR spectra of TPA, MIL-53(Al) and the as-prepared Fe-Al(1/9) sample are shown in Figure 2. For TPA, the absorption peak at 1681

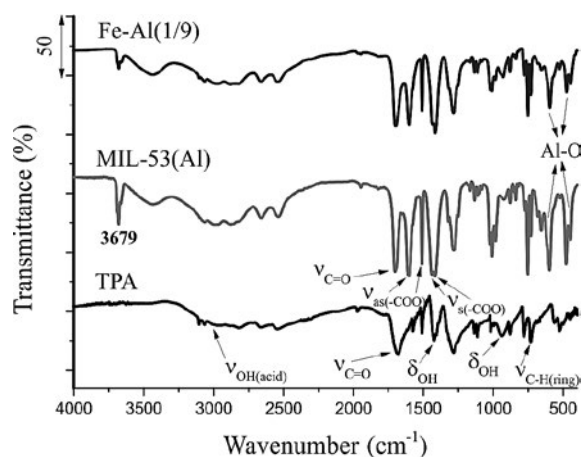
$\text{cm}^{-1}$  characterizes the stretching vibration of the C=O group, and the absorption peaks at 1423 and 937  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  are attributed to the bending vibration of the O–H of carboxyl groups (COOH), while the absorption peak at 784  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  represents the stretching vibration of the C–H bond in the aromatic ring (Liang *et al.*, 2015; Wang *et al.*, 2016). For MIL-53(Al), the absorption peaks at 1601 and 1510  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  correspond to the asymmetric stretching vibration of the–COO group, while the absorption peaks at 1438 and 1415  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  correspond to the symmetric stretching vibration of the–COO group (Patil *et al.*, 2011; Loiseau *et al.*, 2004; Liu *et al.*, 2019). The absorption peak observed at 1703  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  ( $\nu_{\text{C=O}}$ ) may be thought to be of free TPA molecules attached inside the pore structures in protonated form (–CO<sub>2</sub>H) (Loiseau *et al.*, 2004). The absorption peaks in the low wavenumber range of 470–580  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  are due to the presence of Al–O in MIL-53(Al) (Liu *et al.*, 2019). The absorption peaks in the 3600-2500  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  region are characteristic for free adsorbed water, as well as the stretching vibration of the OH groups in –COOH and the Al–OH fragments (Isaeva *et al.*, 2019). The absorption peak at 3679  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  could be assigned the stretching vibration of O–H in hydroxyl groups bridging with Al<sup>3+</sup> ions in the MIL-53(Al) framework (Isaeva *et al.*, 2019). These values confirm the existence of CO<sub>2</sub><sup>-</sup> group coordinated to aluminum inside the material. For Fe-Al(1/9), the characteristic vibration observed on the FT-IR spectra were not different from those of MIL-53(Al). This indicates that the metal-organic framework structure of the MIL-53(Al) material was still formed with iron metal doping.

The thermal behavior of TPA, MIL-53(Al), and the as-prepared Fe/MIL-53(Al) samples are shown in Figure 3a. For TPA, the TG curve displays two weight losses of 56 and 40% at 412°C and in the temperature range of 400–700°C, corresponding to the decomposition and combustion of TPA. Two weight losses are also observed with the MIL-53(Al) sample. The first one of about 33% in the temperature range

of 425–467°C is probably due to the removal of the formation of TPA bonds on the surface of the material. The second weight loss of about 48% at 607°C is attributed to the decomposition of TPA bridges in the metal-organic framework structure of MIL-53(Al).



**Figure 1.** XRD patterns: a) MIL-53(Al); b) as-prepared Fe/MIL-53(Al) samples with different Fe/Al mole ratios; c) TPA (for comparison)



**Figure 2.** FT-IR spectra of TPA, MIL-53(Al) and Fe-Al(1/9)

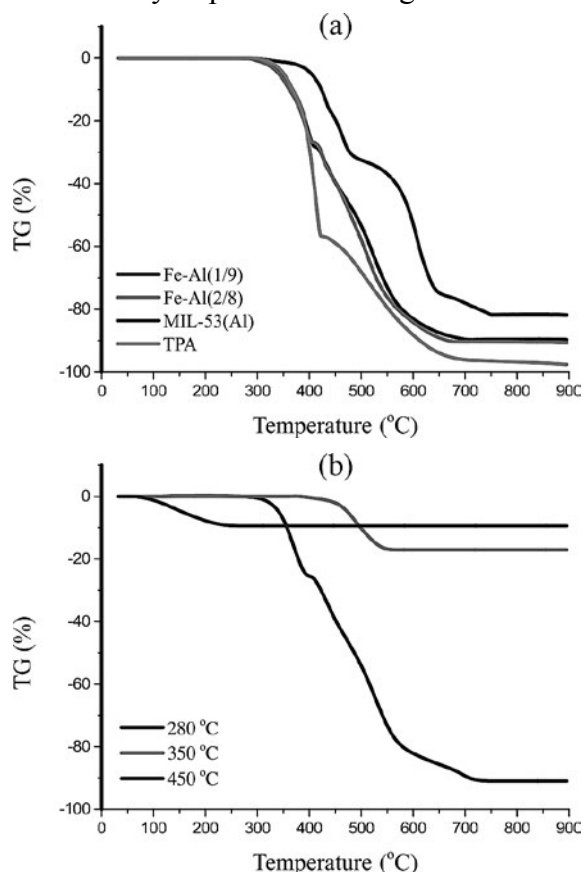
For the as-prepared Fe/MIL-53(Al) samples, there are also two weight losses. The first loss of weight occurred at a temperature of 391–430°C similar to that of TPA, probably due to the decomposition of non-reactive TPA forms (as demonstrated by XRD in Figure 1b). The second weight loss that occurred mainly at 513–522°C is attributed to the decomposition of bonded TPA forms on the surface and within the framework of the material. It is worth noting that the decomposition of organic components in Fe/MIL-53(Al) occurred at much lower temperatures than in MIL-53(Al). This difference is probably due to the presence of iron components in the framework which may contribute to easier decomposition/ or combustion.

The results of thermal analysis showed that Fe/MIL-53(Al) material is quite stable (only decomposes at temperature above 500°C). Therefore, to remove the components of non-reactive TPA, Fe-Al(1/9) sample was treated at different temperatures, including 280, 350 and 450°C, for 8 hours. TG profiles of the heat treated Fe-Al(1/9) samples are shown in Figure 3b.

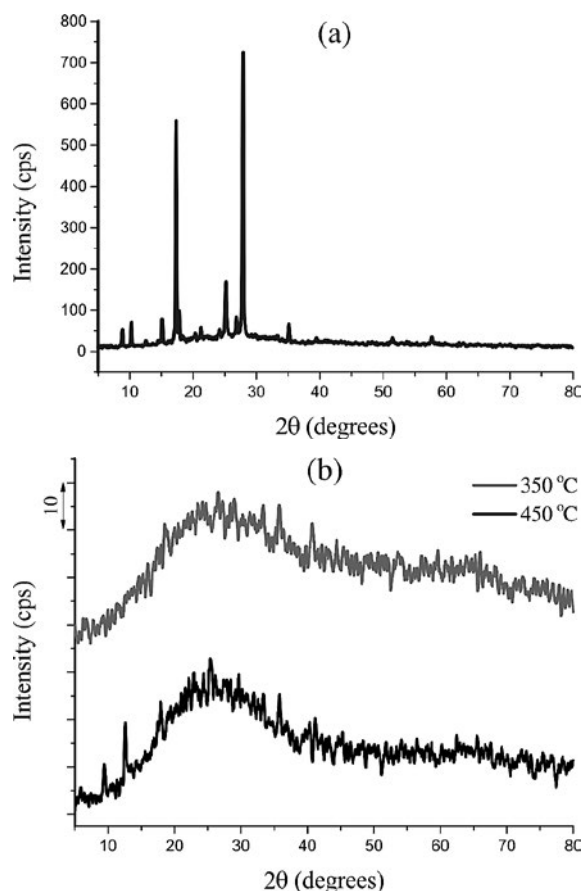
For the treated sample at 280°C, the TG curve shows the weight losses occurring in the temperature range of 300–750°C similar to the as-prepared Fe/MIL-53(Al) samples (Figure 3a). For the treated sample at 350°C, the TG curve shows that only one loss of weight occurred at 487°C, this weight loss (about 17%) is probably

due to the decomposition (or burning off) of the organic bridges in the material. For the treated sample at 450°C, the TG curve shows that only one weight loss occurred at 140°C, which is the desorption of free adsorbed water molecules. This also proves that the organic components were completely eliminated at 450°C.

XRD patterns of the Fe-Al(1/9) sample treated at different temperatures are shown in Figure 4. For the treated sample at 280°C (Figure 4a), the diffraction peaks are almost not different from the as-prepared Fe/MIL-53(Al) samples (Figure 1b), but the peaks are sharp and slightly higher intensity. At the treated temperature of 350°C, the intensity of these peaks decreased significantly and no longer observed when the treated temperature was 450°C (Figure 4b). These results are completely consistent with those of thermal analysis presented in Figure 3b.

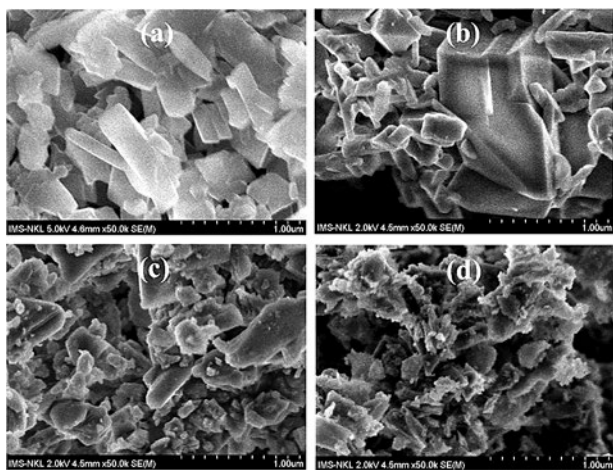


**Figure 3. TG profiles: a) TPA, MIL-53(Al), and as-prepared Fe/MIL-53(Al) samples with Fe/Al mole ratio of 1/9 and 2/8 ; b) Fe-Al(1/9) sample treated at different temperatures**



**Figure 4. XRD patterns of the Fe-Al(1/9) sample treated by heat at different temperatures: a) 280°C; b) 350°C and 450°C**

SEM images of MIL-53(Al) and the Fe-Al(1/9) sample treated at different temperatures are shown in Figure 5. The MIL-53(Al) material consists of plate blocks of varying sizes with a smooth surface (Figure 5a). At the treated temperature of 280°C (Figure 5b), the resulting material also had block form with smooth surfaces, but larger sizes than that of MIL-53(Al). At the treated temperature of 350°C and 450°C (Figures 5c and 5d), the resulting materials consist of smaller blocks and more rough surface than that of MIL-53(Al). The reason for the appearance of these morphologies is probably because the heat treatment fragmented the framework structure of the material and the incomplete decomposition of organic components in the framework, so their surface becomes so rough.

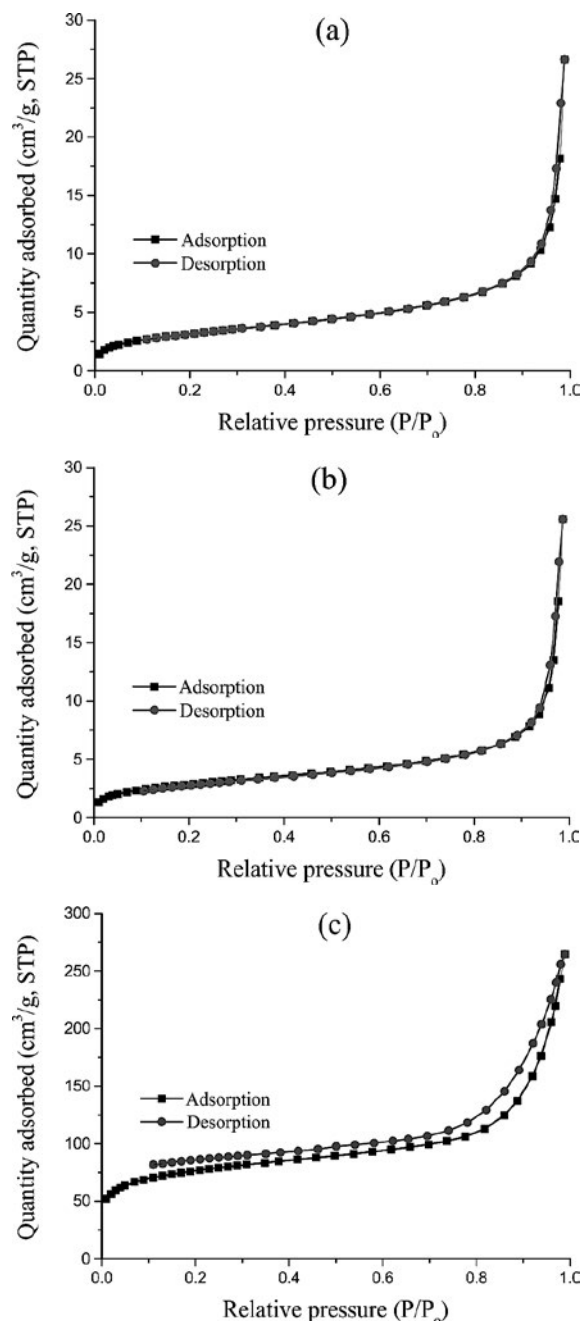


**Figure 5. SEM images of MIL-53(Al) (a) and the Fe-Al(1/9) sample treated by heat at different temperatures: b) 280°C; c) 350°C; and d) 450°C**

The porosity of the samples was also analyzed by the nitrogen adsorption-desorption method at 77 K and was presented in Figures 6 and Table 1. The results show that MIL-53(Al) and the Fe-Al(1/9) sample treated at 280°C (Figures 6a and 6b) have a relatively small specific surface area (11.4 and 10.4 m<sup>2</sup>/g, respectively). This can be explained by the fact that TPA molecules attached and blocked the pore structures of the material. At high treated temperature (350°C), the free or bonded TPA molecules on the surface of the material decomposed, the pores of the material were cleared, so the specific surface area of the material increased significantly. The specific surface area of the Fe-Al(1/9) sample treated at 350°C was 262.8 m<sup>2</sup>/g (Figure 6c).

TEM images of MIL-53(Al) and the Fe-Al(1/9) sample treated at 280°C are presented in Figures 7a and 7b. The results show that their morphology is almost not different, including plate-shaped blocks with different sizes. For the Fe-Al(1/9) sample that was treated at 350°C (Figure 7c), the TEM image showed the appearance of hollow structures inside the material. These are probably the pore cavities that have been opened up when the material is treated at this temperature. Figure 7c also shows that the metal-organic framework was maintained even though the blocks of the material were broken up under this condition. Many authors have also

demonstrated that the metal-organic framework of MIL-53(Al) or MIL-53(Fe, Al) remains stable when heating the material at 330°C for many hours (up to 3 days) (Loiseau *et al.*, 2004; Huang *et al.*, 2019). The fragmentation of the blocks is probably also the cause of its low intensity diffraction peaks on the XRD pattern (Figure 4b).

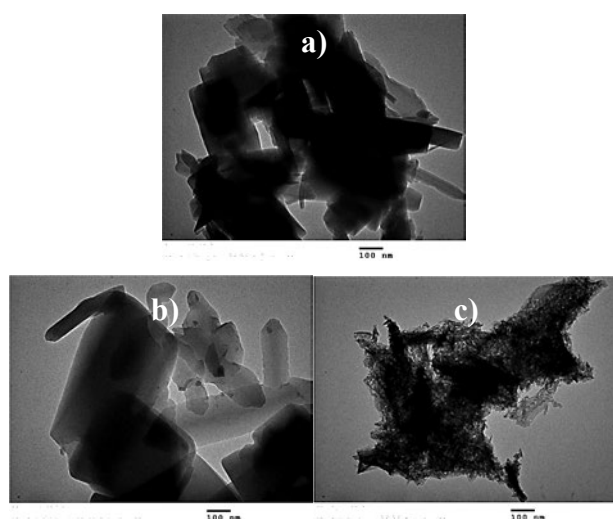


**Figure 6. Nitrogen adsorption-desorption isotherms of MIL-53(Al) (a) and the Fe-Al(1/9) sample treated by heat at 280°C (b) and 350°C (c)**

**Table 1. Porous properties of the MIL-53(Al) and Fe-Al(1/9) samples**

Sample (treated temperature)	BET surface area, $S_{\text{BET}}$ ( $\text{m}^2\cdot\text{g}^{-1}$ )	$t$ -Plot micropore area ( $\text{m}^2\cdot\text{g}^{-1}$ )	$t$ -Plot external surface area ( $\text{m}^2\cdot\text{g}^{-1}$ )	$t$ -Plot micropore volume ( $\text{cm}^3\cdot\text{g}^{-1}$ )
MIL-53(Al)	11.4	2.4	9.0	0.000991
Fe-Al(1/9) (280°C)	10.4	3.3	7.1	0.001450
Fe-Al(1/9) (350°C)	262.8	174.7	88.1	0.081475

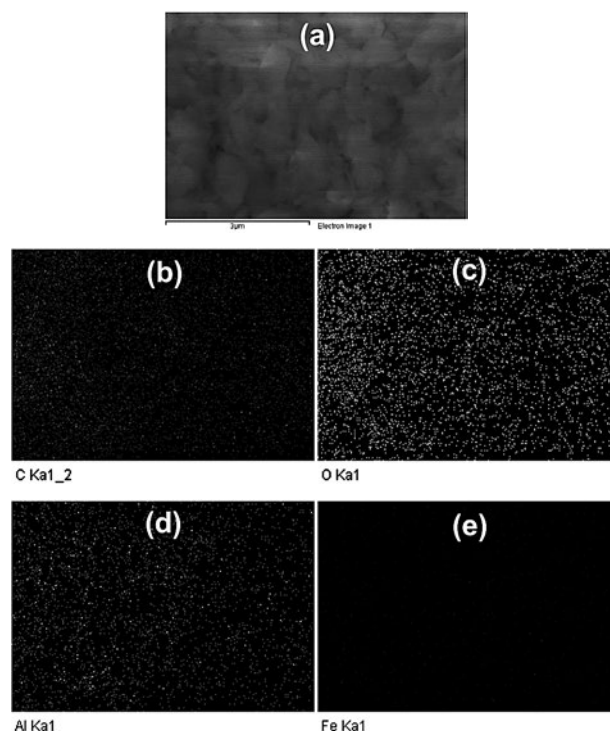
The distribution of the different elements on the Fe-Al(1/9) sample was also mapped by EDX (Figure 8). The results show that the characteristic elements (C, O, and Al) are evenly distributed over the material's area. Furthermore, the iron map also shows that the iron elements are evenly distributed over the entire area of the material. This indicated that the iron was regularly bonded in the framework of MIL-53(Al) material.



**Figure 7. TEM images of MIL-53(Al) (a) and the Fe-Al(1/9) sample treated by heat at 280°C (b) and 350°C (c)**

#### 4. Conclusions

Iron doped MIL-53(Al) metal-organic framework material was successfully prepared by hydrothermal method. The content of iron doped into the material was suitable at the mole ratio of Fe/Al = 1/9, and the treatment by heat at 280°C did not affect the structure of the material. The obtained Fe/MIL-53(Al) at treated temperature of 350°C has a rather large specific surface area ( $S_{\text{BET}} = 262.8 \text{ m}^2/\text{g}$ ) and still maintains a metal-organic framework structure.



**Figure 8. Elemental mapping of the Fe-Al(1/9) sample: a) Bright field image; b) Mapping of carbon; c) Mapping of oxygen; d) Mapping of aluminum; and e) Mapping of iron**

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