



Sulfonic Acid-Functionalized Silica-Coated Magnetic Nanoparticles as a Reusable Catalyst for the Preparation of Pyrrolidinone Derivatives Under Eco-Friendly Conditions

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Abstract

The surface of silica-coated CoFe_2O_4 magnetic nanoparticles ($\text{CoFe}_2\text{O}_4@\text{SiO}_2$), which is resistant to the oxidation due to silicone coating, was functionalized using chlorosulfonic acid and used as an efficient and recyclable catalyst for the preparation of 3-pyrrolin-2-ones from diethyl acetylenedicarboxylate, an aldehyde and aniline in ethanol solvent at 60 °C. In the presented study, some fascinating characteristics of such catalyst, such as magnetically separable, simple workup and obtaining a high purity of products by simple recrystallization, have been successfully obtained. The structural features of $\text{CoFe}_2\text{O}_4@\text{SiO}_2\text{-SO}_3\text{H}$ catalyst were elucidated by X-ray powder diffraction (XRPD), thermo-gravimetric studying (TGA), scanning electron microscopy (SEM) and FT-IR spectra.

Keywords Cobalt ferrite · Silica-coated · Sulfonic acid-functionalized · Reusable catalyst · Magnetic nanoparticles · 3-pyrrolin-2-ones

1 Introduction

In recent years, Fe_3O_4 magnetic nanoparticles (MNPs) have been extremely studied due to their significant characteristics such as unique size, high saturation magnetization, low-cost, non-toxicity, and biocompatibility. They are also green, environmentally-friendly and reusable. Although magnetic nanoparticles (MNPs) are easily separable by an external magnet, the naked MNPs are sensitive to air oxidation and tend to aggregate, so the surface coating of the iron oxide nanoparticles is essential. Silica is one of the most common coating layers because of its strange characteristics such as stability, non-toxicity, and inactivity. Also, the surface functionalization

of silica is easy [1–5]. In this work, we prepared CoFe_2O_4 , that is more stable than Fe_3O_4 , by the simple procedure without N_2 atmosphere usage and used as an efficient catalyst in the preparation of several derivatives of pyrrolidinone.

Multi-component reactions (MCRs) have been introduced as an efficient synthetic method to prepare various and complicated molecular structures. High yields of products, easy methods without any isolation of intermediates and the complexity of the resultant products are some advantages of these reactions [6–11].

Among the heterocyclic compounds, nitrogen-containing heterocyclic compounds have played a very significant role in drugs discovery. The heterocyclic compounds containing 2-pyrrolidinone core (Fig. 1) are one of the important classes of heterocyclic compounds owing to their existence in natural products and their biological activity [12, 13]. Many of natural products are 2-pyrrolidinone scaffold included such as Holomycin and Thiolutin [14], Thiomarinol A4 [15], Oteromycin [16], Pyrrocidine A, B [17], Quinolactacin C [18], Ypaoamide [19], Lactacystin [20], Salinosporamide A [21] and (–)-Azaspirene [22] (Fig. 2). In particular, 2-Pyrrolidinones are found to possess a wide range of pharmacological effects like antibacterial, antifungal [23], antitumor [24] and anticonvulsant [25].

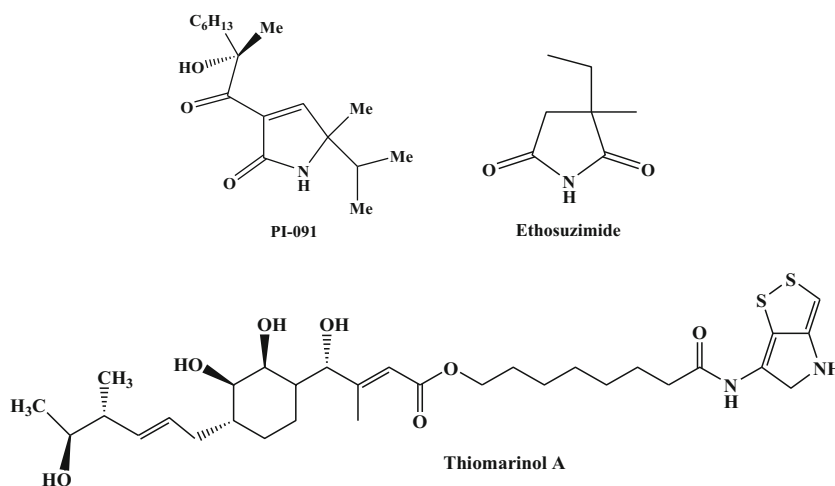
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Fig. 1 Selected drugs containing 2-pyrrolidinone core



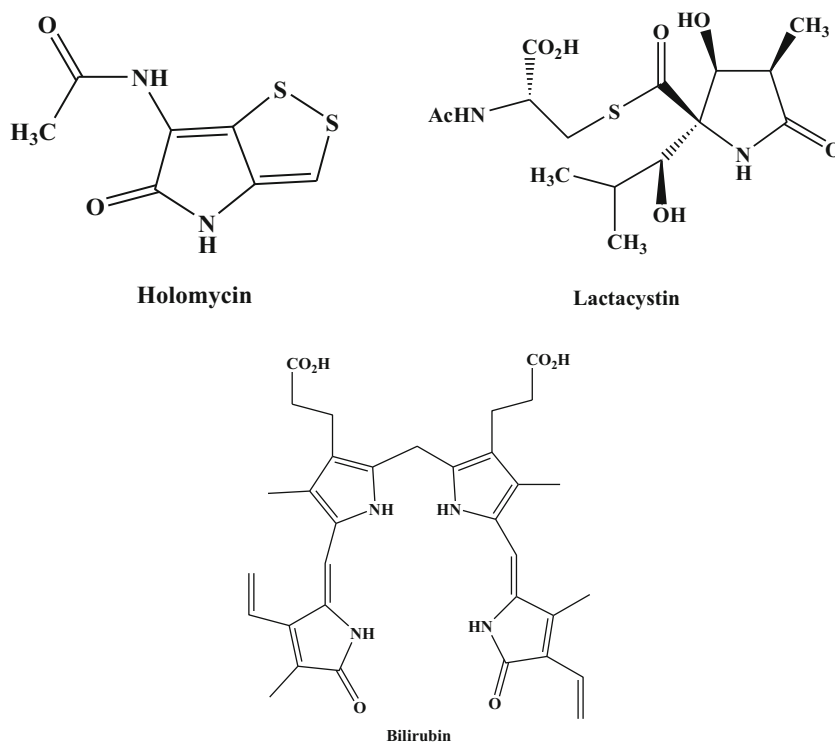
In this work, regarding green chemistry, we presented the synthesis of CoFe₂O₄@Silica sulfuric acid, as an effective and recyclable additive, for the preparation of pyrrolidinone analogs under eco-friendly conditions as demonstrated in Scheme 1. Two of the products which have not been reported previously were elucidated by FT-IR, ¹H-NMR, ¹³C-NMR spectra and melting point. Melting points of the known products were compared with reported values in the literature as shown in Table 4. The crystal structure of **4c** was also verified by X-ray studying.

2 Experimental

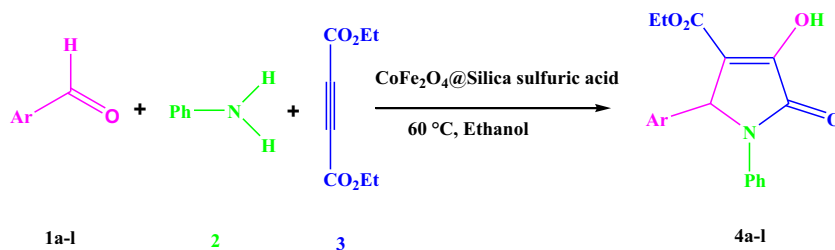
2.1 Materials and Methods

Chemical reagents were provided by Merck, Fluka, and Aldrich. TLC was utilized to follow the reactions. Fourier transform infrared spectra were measured with a Mattson (Unicam Ltd., Cambridge, UK). ¹H-NMR (CDCl₃) and ¹³C-NMR (CDCl₃) spectra were recorded on a Bruker DRX-250 Avance spectrometer at 250.13 and 62.90 MHz, respectively. X-ray powder diffraction

Fig. 2 Selected natural products containing 2-pyrrolidinone core



Scheme 1 Preparation of functionalized pyrrolidinone under eco-friendly conditions



(XRPD) information were gathered with an XD-3A diffractometer using Cu K α radiation. The particle size and morphology of the $\text{CoFe}_2\text{O}_4\text{@SiO}_2$ sulfonic acid were investigated by a scanning electron microscope (ZeissEVO18). The amount of sulfuric acid coated on the magnetic nanoparticles was studied by the thermogravimetric analyzer (TGA; STA 1500 tool).

2.2 Preparation of CoFe_2O_4 MNPs

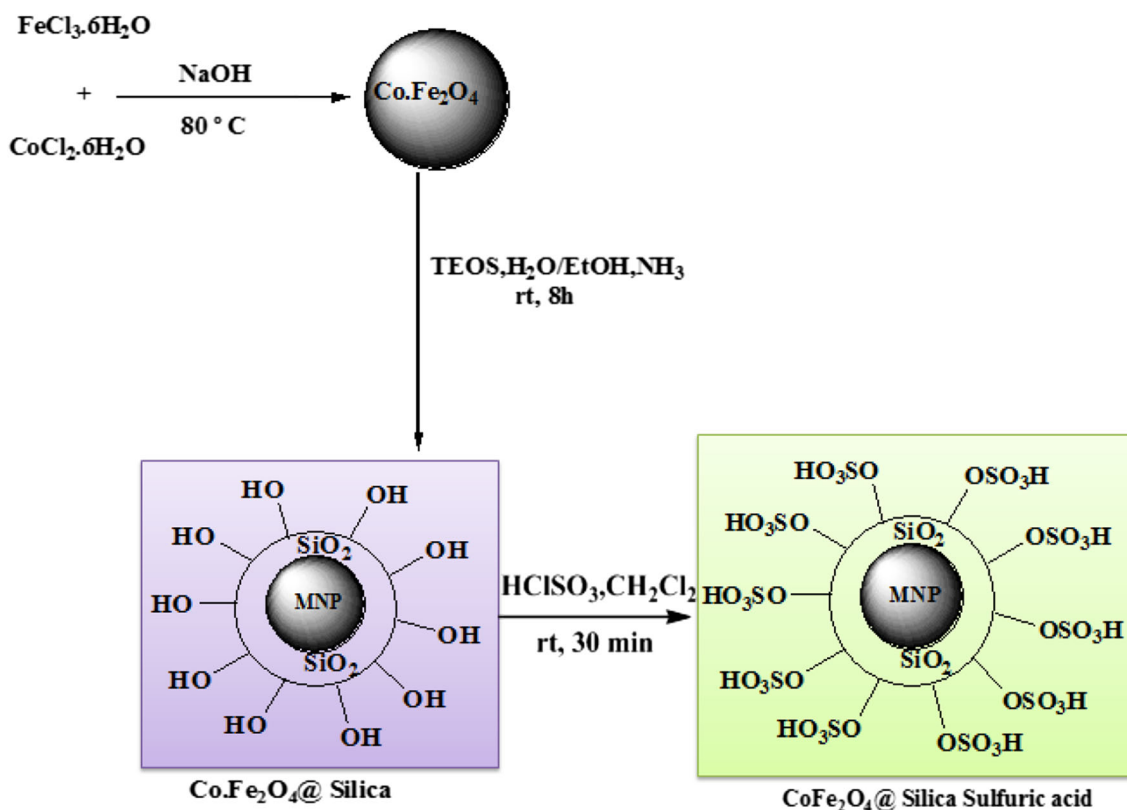
Initially, $\text{FeCl}_3\cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$ (0.54 g) and $\text{CoCl}_2\cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$ (0.238 g) were dissolved in a 10 ml deionized in a 1:2 M ratio. Next, to this solution dissolved NaOH (1.2 g) in 10 ml was added to this solution and stirred for 30 min at 80 °C. The nanomagnetic particles were gathered by an external magnetic and dried after washing with deionized water [2].

2.3 Preparation of $\text{CoFe}_2\text{O}_4\text{@Silica}$

$\text{CoFe}_2\text{O}_4\text{@SiO}_2$ were provided by the sol-gel method. In the other words, $\text{CoFe}_2\text{O}_4\text{@SiO}_2$ was provided by the ammonia-catalyzed reaction of tetraethyl orthosilicate (TEOS) in a water-ethanol solution. In this step, 20 ml of deionized water and 70 ml of ethanol were added to the mixtures of CoFe_2O_4 (1 g) and 4 ml of ammonia (25 wt%). 0.5 ml of TEOS was added after dispersing by ultrasonication for 10 min. After stirring eight hours, silica was then constituted on the surface of the CoFe_2O_4 , following which the MNPs was gathered by magnet and washed with water and ethanol to give $\text{CoFe}_2\text{O}_4\text{@SiO}_2$ [26].

2.4 Preparation of $\text{CoFe}_2\text{O}_4\text{@Silica-SO}_3\text{H}$

$\text{CoFe}_2\text{O}_4\text{@Silica}$ (2.5 g) MNPs were dispersed in dry CH_2Cl_2 (75 ml) by ultrasonics for 10 min. Afterwards, dissolved



Scheme 2 Synthesis of $\text{CoFe}_2\text{O}_4\text{@Silica}$ sulfonic acid

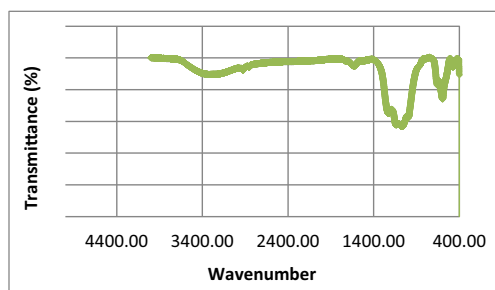
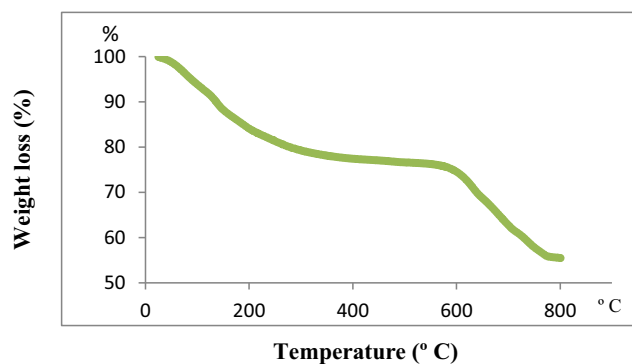
Table 1 Structure refinement and crystal data of **4c**

Chemical formula	C ₂₃ H ₁₉ NO ₄
<i>M_r</i>	373.39
Crystal system, space group	Monoclinic, <i>P</i> 2 ₁ / <i>n</i>
Temperature (K)	90(2)
<i>a</i> , <i>b</i> , <i>c</i> (Å)	13.319(4), 6.138(2), 22.702(7)
β (°)	92.42(3)
<i>V</i> (Å ³)	1854.3(10)
<i>Z</i>	4
Radiation type	Mo <i>K</i> α
μ (mm ⁻¹)	0.09
Crystal size (mm)	0.37 × 0.34 × 0.18
Absorption correction	Multi-scan
<i>T</i> _{min} , <i>T</i> _{max}	0.964, 1.000
No. of measured, independent and observed [<i>I</i> > 2 σ (<i>I</i>)] reflections	10,043, 5193, 4155
<i>R</i> _{int}	0.030
(<i>sin</i> θ / λ) _{max} (Å ⁻¹)	0.718
<i>R</i> [<i>F</i> ² > 2 σ (<i>F</i> ²)], <i>wR</i> (<i>F</i> ²), <i>S</i>	0.047, 0.121, 1.02
No. of reflections	5193
No. of parameters	258
No. of restraints	0
$\Delta\rho_{max}$, $\Delta\rho_{min}$ (e Å ⁻³)	0.40, -0.21

ClSO₃H (15 mmol, 1 ml, 1.75 g, ca.) in CH₂Cl₂ (20 ml) was increased in 30 min by dropping funnel and the remaining HCl was finally removed by suction. Eventually, CoFe₂O₄@Silica-SO₃H was dried at 60 °C [27] (Scheme 2).

2.5 General Experimental Approach for the Preparation of 3-Pyrrolin-2-Ones Derivatives

A mixture of aldehyde **1a-I** (1 mmol), aniline **2** (1 mmol), diethyl acetylenedicarboxylate **3** (1 mmol) and CoFe₂O₄@Silica sulfuric acid (0.01 g) was stirred in ethanol solvent at 60 °C. To follow the reaction, TLC was used (*n*-Hexane: EtOAc, 10:7), after which the desired products were heated in ethanol solvent until dissolved. The nanocatalyst was magnetically separated from the reaction mixture and washed three times by ethanol solvent for recovery. The pure products were provided by recrystallization from hot ethanol.

**Fig. 3** IR spectra of Cobalt ferrite sulfonic acid-functionalized MNPs**Fig. 4** TGA curves of CoFe₂O₄@Silica sulfuric acid MNPs

2.6 Spectral Data of Selected Products

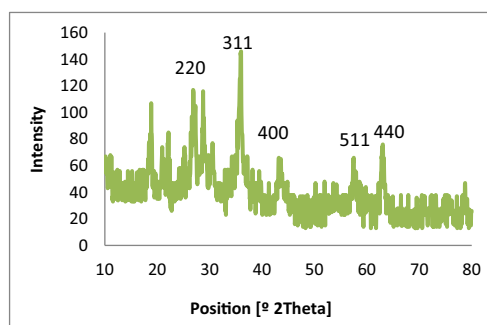
4h m.p. 185–188 °C, IR: ν_{max}/cm^{-1} 3296, 2926, 1718, 1690, 1443, 1138 cm^{-1} , ¹H-NMR (250.13 MHz, CDCl₃) δ_{H} 1.18 (t, 3H, *J* = 7.01 Hz), 4.17 (q, 2H, *J* = 7.01 Hz), 5.70 (1H, s), 6.68–7.45 (m, 9H), 9.08 (s, 1H); ¹³C NMR (62.90 MHz, CDCl₃) δ_{C} 13.93, 60.84, 61.30, 112.92, 115.47 (d, ²*J*_{CF} = 22.01 Hz), 122.37, 125.99, 129.04, 129.14 (d, ³*J*_{CF} = 08.80 Hz), 130.83, 136.00, 156.45, 160.57 (d, ¹*J*_{CF} = 247.82 Hz), 162.70, 164.93.

4i m.p. 203–206 °C. IR: ν_{max}/cm^{-1} 3298, 1726, 1494, 1024 cm^{-1} ; ¹H NMR (250.13 MHz, CDCl₃) δ_{H} 1.17 (t, 3H, *J* = 7.01 Hz), 4.15 (q, 2H, *J* = 7.01 Hz), 6.10 (1H, s), 6.16–7.81 (m, 9H), 9.10 (s, 1H) ¹³C NMR (62.90 MHz, CDCl₃) δ_{C} 13.71, 54.00, 61.25, 112.30, 115.49 (d, ²*J*_{CF} = 22.01 Hz), 121.69, 124.53, 125.86, 127.59, 129.05, 130.16 (d, ³*J*_{CF} = 8.17 Hz), 136.05, 157.01, 159.29 (d, ¹*J*_{CF} = 248.45 Hz), 164.96.

2.7 X-Ray Crystallography

White solid of **4c** was heated in ethanol solvent until it dissolved and crystals of **4c** were prepared by slow evaporation procedure in excellent yields.

The crystallographic measurement of **4c** was carried out on a κ -geometry Agilent Technologies Xcalibur R (ω scans) automated four-circle diffractometer supplied

**Fig. 5** XRPD pattern of CoFe₂O₄@Silica sulfuric acid MNPs

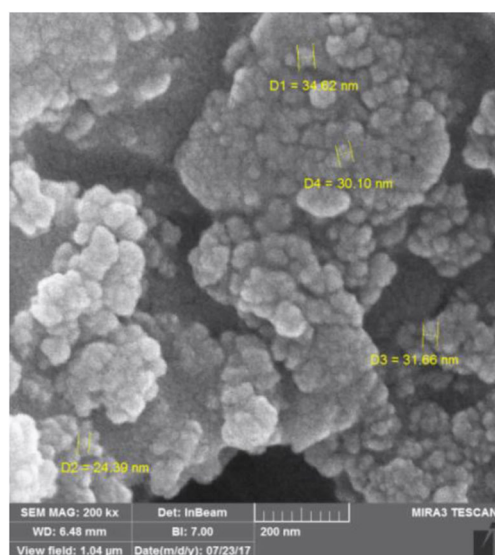


Fig. 6 SEM image of CoFe₂O₄@Silica sulfuric acid MNPs

by graphite monochromatized Mo K α radiation ($\lambda = 0.71073 \text{ \AA}$) and a CCD camera Ruby. The information were gathered at 90(2) K through utilizing the Oxford-Cryosystems cooler. Information accumulation, cell purification and information decrement were performed with Xcalibur software, *CrysAlisPRO* [28]. Empirical (multi-scan) absorption amendment was also used. Structure was solved with direct procedures utilizing SHELXT-2014 and then purified by a full-matrix least-squares method by the use of anisotropic thermal parameters for non-H atoms with an utilizing of SHELXL-2014 [29]. All of the H atoms were refined isotropically and found in difference Fourier maps. At the end purification cycles, the C-bonded H atoms were replaced in their computed locations with C–H = 0.95–1.00 \AA , and with $U_{\text{iso}}(\text{H}) = 1.2U_{\text{eq}}(\text{C})$ for CH and CH₂, and $1.5U_{\text{eq}}(\text{C})$ for CH₃. The hydroxyl H atom was freely purified. Diamond program was applied for the making Figures [30]. Structure refinement data are brought in Table 1.

Table 2 The impact of different quantity of catalyst in the formation of **4d**^a

Entry	Catalyst (g)	Time (h)	Yield (%) ^b
1	None	14	–
2	0.005	14	59
3	0.009	12	78
4	0.010	12	90
6	0.020	12	84

^a Reaction conditions: 4-chlorobenzaldehyde **1d** (1 mmol), aniline **2** (1 mmol) C₈H₁₀O₄ **3** (1 mmol) and CoFe₂O₄@Silica-SO₃H as a catalyst in ethanol at 60 °C

Table 3 Impact of solvents in the preparation of functionalized pyrrolidinones^a

Entry	Solvent	T (°C)	Catalyst (g)	Time (h)	Yield (%)
1	H ₂ O	Reflux	0.01	14	35
2	C ₂ H ₅ OH	Reflux	0.01	14	76
3	Acetonitrile	Reflux	0.01	14	68
4	Ethanol	60	0.01	12	90
5	Solvent-free	60	0.01	12	48

^a Reaction conditions: 4-chlorobenzaldehyde **1d** (1 mmol) aniline **2** (1 mmol) diethyl acetylenedicarboxylate

3 (1 Mmol) and CoFe₂O₄@SiO₂/SO₃H (0.01 g) as a Catalyst in Various Solvents

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Catalyst Characterization

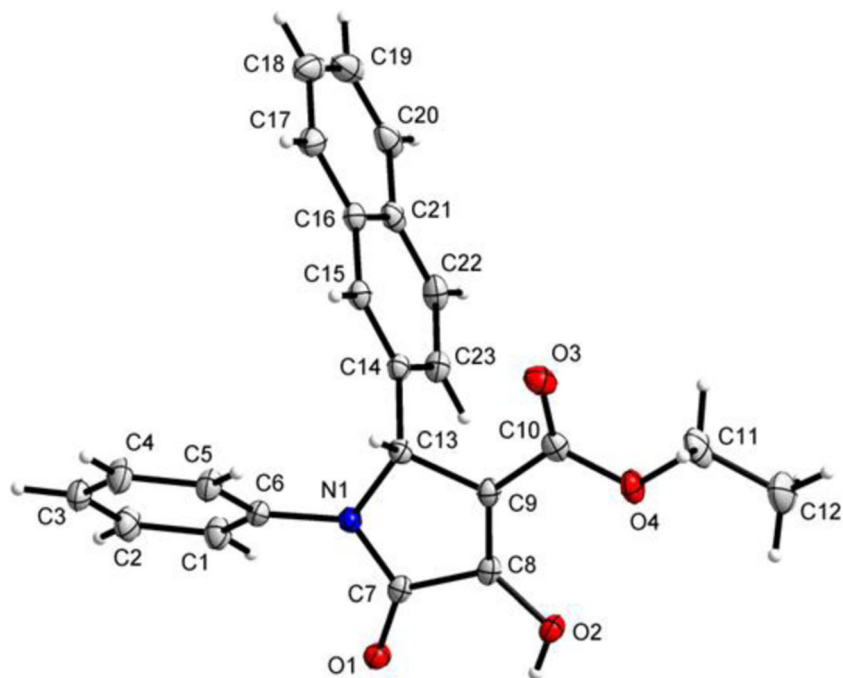
Magnetic cobalt ferrite nanoparticles, with sized between of 24 and 34 nm, were prepared by the co-precipitation and sol-gel procedure [2]. The hydrolysis and condensation of TEOS on surface iron hydroxyls are based on the sol-gel process. Therefore, the SiO₂ coating provides reaction sites for more modification and stability. Finally, CoFe₂O₄@SiO₂–SO₃H is formed via the mixing of the CoFe₂O₄@SiO₂ and chlorosulfuric acid in CH₂Cl₂ [27, 31].

The structural characteristics of the CoFe₂O₄@SiO₂-SO₃H catalyst were studied via scanning electron microscopy (SEM), TGA, IR spectra and X-ray powder diffraction (XRPD). The FT-IR spectra of CoFe₂O₄@Silica-SO₃H MNPs are illustrated in Fig. 3. The FT-IR analysis of the CoFe₂O₄@Silica sulfuric acid indicates two basic distinctive peaks at $\sim 3300 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ (O–H stretching) and 591 cm^{-1} (M–O vibration) [32]. The peaks at 1061 cm^{-1} , 1073 cm^{-1} , and 474 cm^{-1} belong to the Si–O–Si group. The bands at 1217 cm^{-1} and 1124 cm^{-1} also confirm the presence of sulfonyl group in CoFe₂O₄@Silica-SO₃H [33].

Figure 4 delineates the TGA curves of CoFe₂O₄@Silica sulfuric acid powder. The weight loss at temperatures below 150 °C is due to the elimination of surface hydroxyl groups and physically adsorbed solvent. A weight loss that is observed between 600 and 800 °C pertain to the loss of SO₃H groups [34].

XRPD was utilized to describe the crystallinity of NPs. In addition, it presents an average diameter of all the NPs. The XRPD pattern of the CoFe₂O₄@Silica-SO₃H magnetic nanoparticles sample is demonstrated in Fig. 5. Data demonstrate that the discernible peaks in Fig. 5 were indexed to (220), (311), (400), (511) and (440) planes of a cubic unit cell (card no. 00–001–1121). The diameter of the CoFe₂O₄ was

Fig. 7 The atom-numbering scheme was demonstrated by X-ray structure of **4c**



measured by the Debye-Scherrer equation with XRPD information ($D = 0.94 \lambda / B \cos \theta$) 33 nm.

The Scanning electron microscopy (SEM) analysis suggests that the CoFe_2O_4 @Silica sulfuric acid have nanocrystalline phase and their shape is spherically ranging from 24 to 34 nm (Fig. 6).

After the synthesis and characterization of CoFe_2O_4 @Silica sulfuric acid, catalytic role of this MNPs was investigated in the preparation of functionalized 3-pyrrolin-2-ones from the reaction of aniline, diethyl acetylenedicarboxylate, and 4-chlorobenzaldehyde in ethanol solvent at 60 °C as a template reaction.

Scheme 3 Plausible reaction mechanism

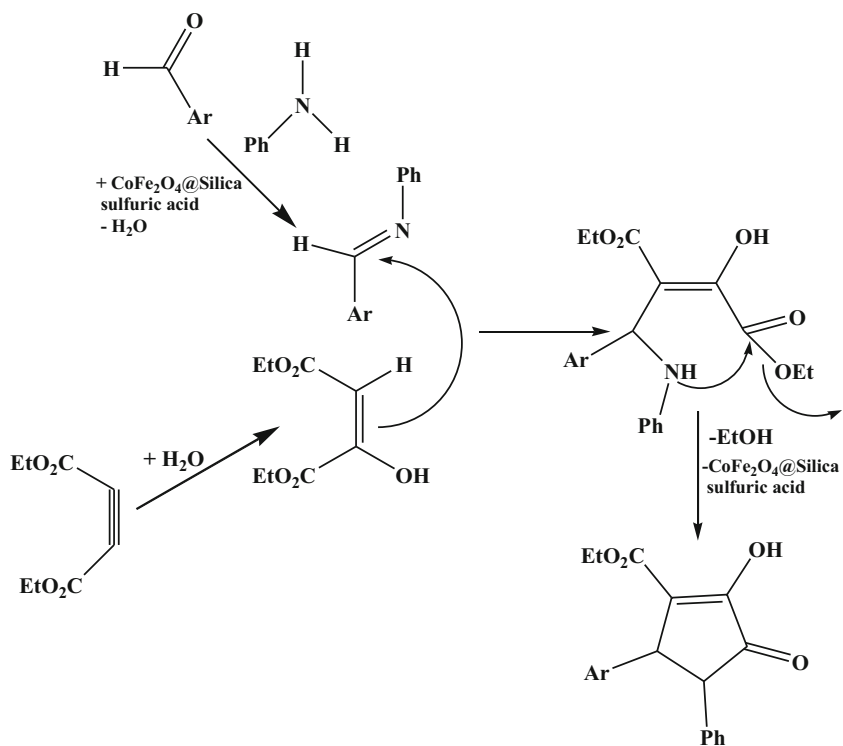


Table 4 Three-component condensation of aldehyde **1a-l**, aniline and diethyl acetylenedicarboxylate for the formation of 3-pyrrolin-2-ones

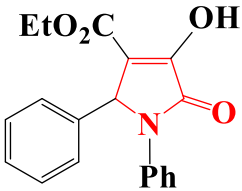
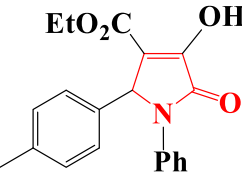
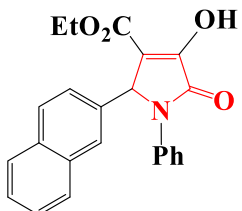
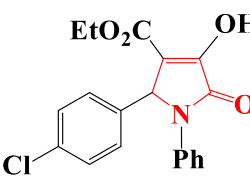
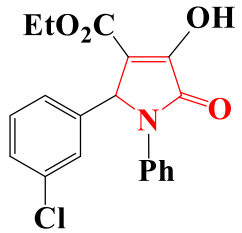
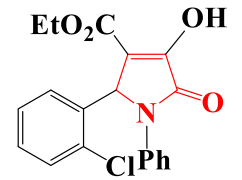
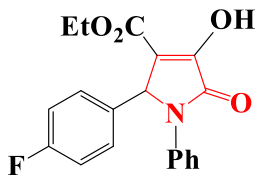
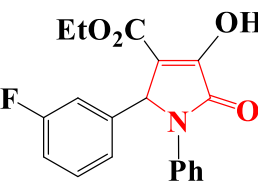
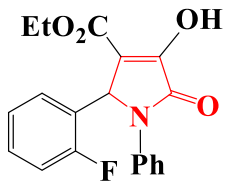
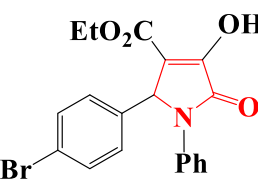
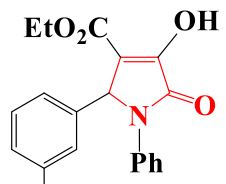
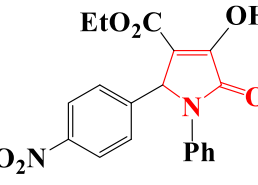
Entry	Ar	Time (h)	Product	Yield (%)	M.P (° C)	References
1	Ph	12	 4a	88	175-178	174-177 [35]
2	4-Me-C ₆ H ₄	12	 4b	88	201-204	202-205 [35]
3	2-Naphthal	12	 4c	86	226-229	225-228 [35]
4	4-Cl-C ₆ H ₄	12	 4d	90	194-197	195-198 [35]
5	3-Cl-C ₆ H ₄	12	 4e	92	184-186	184-187 [35]
6	2-Cl-C ₆ H ₄	12	 4f	90	203-206	204-207 [35]

Table 4 continued

7	4-F-C ₆ H ₄	12	 4g	88	192-195	193-196 [35]
8	3-F-C ₆ H ₄	12	 4h	92	184-187	-
9	2-F-C ₆ H ₄	12	 4i	87	202-205	-
10	4-Br-C ₆ H ₄	12	 4j	92	190-192	190-193 [35]
11	3-Br-C ₆ H ₄	12	 4k	86	191-194	192-194 [35]
12	4-NO ₂ -C ₆ H ₄	12	 4l	86	181-182	181-183 [35]

Reaction conditions: aldehyde **1a-l** (1 mmol), aniline **2** (1 mmol), diethyl acetylenedicarboxylate **3** (1 mmol) and CoFe₂O₄@Silica-SO₃H (0.01 g) as a catalyst in ethanol at 60 °C

To optimize the reaction situations, we investigated the effect of solvents, catalyst quantity and reaction time. At the beginning, the amount of the catalyst was studied in a template reaction of 4-chlorobenzaldehyde **1d** (1 mmol), diethyl

acetylenedicarboxylate **3** (1 mmol) and aniline **2** (1 mmol) in the formation of product **4d**. The greatest yield of products was acquired when 0.01 g of CoFe₂O₄@Silica sulfuric acid was used as a catalyst for the reaction (Table 2).

Table 5 Elected torsion angles (°) and bond lengths (Å) of **4c**

O1—C7	1.2320(16)	N1—C6	1.4288(16)
O2—C8	1.3263(15)	N1—C13	1.4797(16)
N1—C7	1.3585(16)		
C7—N1—C6—C1	−50.97(19)	C7—N1—C13—C14	118.66(11)
C11—O4—C10—C9	−174.62(11)	N1—C13—C14—C15	115.38(13)
C8—C9—C10—O4	8.7(2)	C9—C13—C14—C15	−130.38(12)
C10—O4—C11—C12	−172.12(13)		

Then, various solvents, like H₂O, C₂H₅OH and CH₃CN, were evaluated in the preparation of **4d** (Table 3) just for improving the products yields. Since the solvent-free reaction that provided low yields of desired products (48%), so the presence of solvent is fundamental for this reaction. According to Table 2, ethanol as a green solvent was found to be most efficient among all the tested solvents because it has a suitable dissolving ability of the starting material. It is also noteworthy saying that water was less likely to give the satisfactory result as the starting materials were not dissolved as well in water, so ethanol was selected as an efficient solvent (Table 3).

After finding suitable conditions, the three-component reaction of diethyl acetylenedicarboxylate, some aldehydes **1a-l** and aniline were performed in ethanol solvent at 60 °C. In this method, different aldehydes, with electron-donating substituents and electron-withdrawing on the aromatic ring, were tested. The structures of all the synthesized products **4a-l** were elucidated by their FT-IR, ¹H NMR and ¹³C NMR spectroscopic data. [35]. The crystal structure of **4c** was also verified by X-ray studying (Fig. 7).

In Scheme 3, a reasonable mechanism is brought for the preparation of functionalized pyrrolidinone (**4a-l**). One molecule of aniline was firstly condensed with an aromatic aldehyde, that activated by CoFe₂O₄@Silica sulfuric acid, to provide imine. Then, the nucleophilic addition of diethyl acetylenedicarboxylate to imine followed by cyclization which provides target product [35] Table 4.

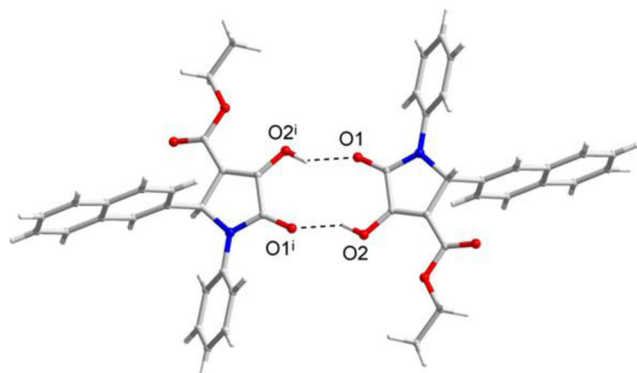


Fig. 8 Two molecules of **4c** joined by two O—H...O hydrogen links formed Centrosymmetric molecular dimers, giving raise to $[R_2^2(10)]$ ring motifs

Component crystallizes in the centrosymmetric space group, so it is racemic. The elected geometrical parameters are brought in Table 5. Interestingly, the Ph ring is significantly twisted relative to the pyrroline ring (see the C7—N1—C6—C1 torsion angle). Like it was previously observed in the analogous compounds [35, 36], in **4c** the C(O)OEt group is almost coplanar with the plane of the 3-pyrroline-2-one and also it is flat. The molecule adopts C=O_{ester}, C—OH anti-periplanar conformation, which is the same arrangement as in the N-(4-Cl-Ph)-4-C(O)OMe-5-Ph derivative [36], but different to conformation observed in N-Ph-4-C(O)OEt-5-(4-F-Ph) compound [35]. In the flint glass lattice as a result of different mutual orientation of C=O_{ester} and C—OH groups, different molecular dimers are observed (Fig. 8). Two molecules of various chirality in the crystal of **4c** are bounded to one another via two O—H...O hydrogen links giving raise to centrosymmetric dimers with $[R_2^2(10)]$ ring motifs (Table 6). These are further connected by the π ... π stacking and C—H... π interactions.

Finally, the recyclability of the catalyst was investigated. After magnetically separated via an external magnetic field, MNPs were washed by ethanol and used in the further reactions several times. As shown in Table 7, CoFe₂O₄@Silica sulfuric acid MNPs could be reused at least five times.

4 Conclusions

In summary, the given approach uses CoFe₂O₄@Silica sulfuric acid MNPs which not only is an efficient and facile but also is a single-step procedure for the preparation of 3-pyrrolin-2-ones analogues. Some significant superiorities of this method are no use of hazardous solvents, easy work-up, high yields,

Table 6 Hydrogen-link geometry (Å, °) for **4c**

D—H...A	D—H	H...A	D...A	D—H...A
O2—H2...O1 ⁱ	0.89(2)	1.92(2)	2.698(2)	146(2)
C13—H13...O1 ⁱⁱ	1.00	2.52	3.498(2)	167

Symmetry codes: (i) $-x + 1, -y + 2, -z + 1$; (ii) $x, y, -z$

Table 7 Recovery of the catalyst

Run ^a	Yield (%) ^b
Fresh	90
First	90
Second	89
Third	89
Fourth	88

^a Reaction conditions: aldehyde **1d** (1 mmol), aniline **2** (1 mmol), diethyl acetylenedicarboxylate **3** (1 mmol) and CoFe₂O₄@Silica-SO₃H (0.01 g) as a catalyst in ethanol at 60 °C. ^b Isolated yield

and high purity. Furthermore, the use of the recyclable, inexpensive, and efficient catalyst makes it a useful procedure in modern synthetic methodologies.

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