



Activated Carbon for Electrochemical Supercapacitor and Water Filter

T. O. Ahmed^{1*}, B. A. Sulle², E. F. Egila² and A. Bello³

¹Department of Physics, Federal University Lokoja, Kogi State, Nigeria.

²Department of Physics, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria.

³Department of Materials Science and Engineering, African University of Science & Technology, FCT, Abuja, Nigeria.

Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. Authors TOA and AB designed the study. Author TOA wrote the protocol and wrote the first draft while, authors AB, BAS and EFE carried out the experimental work and analyses. Authors TOA, BAS and EFE managed the literature searches. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Palm kernel shell and coconut shell have been combined in equal proportion to produce activated carbons for supercapacitor electrode and water filter. Microwave-assisted activation technique was employed for the production at a much shorter time (ranging from 5-10 min) and reduced cost compared to the conventional activation methods. Co-activator (mixture of NaCl and CaCl₂) was used to activate the sample for water filter with no added fillers while the sample for supercapacitor electrode was activated with KOH and NiO nanoparticles as fillers. Physical properties (such as density, ash content and moisture content) and Thermo-Gravimetric Analysis (TGA) were carried out to ascertain the quality of the activated carbons. In addition to the microstructural and structural investigations, surface functionalities, adsorption capability and electrochemical properties of the samples were also investigated. The surface chemistry, microstructure, structure and

*Corresponding author: Email: tajahmol@yahoo.co.uk, tajudeenahmed24@gmail.com, tajudeen.ahmed@fulokoja.edu.ng;

electrochemical properties of the produced activation carbon were investigated employing Fourier Transform Infra-Red (FTIR) Spectroscopy, Scanning Electron Microscopy (SEM), X-Ray Diffraction (XRD), Cyclic Voltammetry (CV) and Electrochemical Impedance Spectroscopy (EIS). The effectiveness of the activated carbon sample for water filter was tested for the removal of organic dye (methylene blue) from water contaminated with the organic dye via adsorption studies using the Freundlich model. Finally, the results; obtained from electrochemical studies, show that the activated carbon for supercapacitor electrode possesses good current response with high value of specific capacitance and it is a promising component for electrochemical devices.

Keywords: *Agricultural wastes; activated carbons; water filters; supercapacitor electrodes; energy storage and clean water.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Palm kernel and coconut shells turned out to be a prominent nuisance to the environment and their disposal was a major challenge especially in the south-east, south-west, south-south and parts of the middle belt regions of Nigeria. Recently, they are now being processed and bagged for export outside the country. In view of this, their conversion to activated carbons for application in energy storage device, water purification and environmental remediation should be a welcome idea especially in this era of global energy crisis and quest for clean portable water in most rural areas of the developing countries. Activated carbon is a microcrystalline, non-graphitic form of carbon with much more disordered structure compared to that of graphite. X-ray analysis of the structure showed that the crystallites are only a few layers in thickness and are less than 10 nm in width [1]. The micro-porous structure; with a large internal surface area ranging from 250 - 2500 m²/g, occupying the spaces between the crystallites of activated carbon allow it to preferentially adsorb organic materials and other nonpolar compounds from gas or liquid streams. These unique structural characteristics have been exploited by researchers around the globe for water purification [2,3,4,5,6] and energy storage potentials [7,8,9,10,11,12].

The use of activated carbon to absorb microbes, organic matter and its likes has been established in many research efforts around the globe and its use could also prevent the problem of chlorine decay and formation of by-products; in the water distribution networks, claimed to be responsible for cardiovascular diseases, cancers, and birth defects [6,13,14,15,16]. The fear of these diseases coupled with the high cost of importing chlorine in developing countries calls for the use of activated carbon as a cheaper and eco-friendly point of use water filters. In recent times,

the quest for production of efficient, low-cost, scalable, locally available and renewable carbon materials for absorbent and energy storage applications has shifted the attention of most researchers to the use of agricultural or organic waste materials for the production of activated carbon [17]. In view of this, our choice of coconut and palm kernel shells is tied to the inherent possession of high carbon content, high density and hardness which are ideal for the manufacture of hard granular activated carbon with very low ash and sulphuric contents useful for a wide range of applications not limited to the removal of contaminants and adsorption of small molecular weight species [18,19,20], but includes energy storage capabilities.

Nevertheless, research efforts on the use of activated carbons derived from coconut shell and pine cone and others like expanded graphite, carbon nanotubes, graphene, conducting polymer etc. for supercapacitor electrode have been reported [7,8,9,10,11,12]. However, Several supercapacitor systems based on activated carbon, carbon nanotubes and graphene electrode have been developed to attain high performance energy storage devices namely; AC//Ni(OH)₂ [21], graphene//Ni(OH)₂ [22], carbon nanotubes//MnO₂ [23], AC//MoO₃ [24]. Though, these electrochemical supercapacitor systems exhibited high energy storage capabilities but these are still far from commercialization due to the poor capacitive performance of the positive electrode materials at high current loading and the corresponding carbon negative electrode materials in a low current utilization [22].

In this work, we have demonstrated that activated carbon could be produced via microwave-assisted activation at a much shorter time (ranging from 5-10 min) and reduced cost compared to the conventional activation method embraced by most researchers for the production

of activated carbons. We have also employed techniques such as thermo-gravimetric analysis, Fourier Transform Infra-red spectroscopy, surface adsorption measurement, scanning electron microscopy, X-ray diffraction analysis, cyclic voltammetry and electrochemical impedance spectroscopy to study the physical properties (such as density, moisture content and ash content), thermal property, structure, surface functionalities, adsorption capability and electrochemical characteristics. The choice of the co-activators in this work was informed by the fact that they are more eco-friendly compared to the $ZnCl_2$, H_3PO_4 and many more that are frequently used. Finally, the choice of microwave activation technique is also tied to the established fact that microwave irradiation induces a volumetric heating by direct coupling of microwave energy with the molecules that are present in the reaction chamber and thus increases the temperature of the whole liquid volume in the chamber simultaneously, leading to reduced reaction time and increased productivity yield of materials compared to the conventional heating system [25,26,27,28,29,30].

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The coconut shells were obtained from an open market in Sabon-Gari market, Zaria, Kaduna State, Nigeria where they were being dumped as a waste product while the palm kernel shells were obtained from a farm in Osolo area near Odo-Oba in Iwo LGA, Osun State, Nigeria. The coconut and palm kernel shells were washed with distilled water and dried for 24 hours in ambient air. These raw materials were subsequently crushed, pulverized and sieved through mesh of $125\mu m$ to obtain a fine particle size powder and remove unwanted particles. Two samples of the mixture of coconut and palm

kernel shells were prepared containing 5 g each of palm kernel and coconut shells.

The chemical activation of the sample for water filter was achieved via a two-stage microwave heating involving partial thermal decomposition of the raw material in 0.1M solution containing varying concentration of sodium chloride and glycine (amino acetic acid) and subsequent activation of the derivative in 0.1M solution containing varying concentration of calcium chloride and ethylene glycol. The volumetric concentration of calcium chloride was 90, which reflects that the initial volumetric concentration of sodium chloride was 10 and the sample was labeled (CS+PS). The complete activation process for the sample was achieved in 10 minutes with maximum microwave power of 2450W at a frequency of 50Hz.

Subsequently, the chemical activation of the sample for supercapacitor electrode was also achieved via a two-stage microwave heating involving partial thermal decomposition of the raw material in 0.1M solution containing varying concentration of potassium hydroxide and glycine (amino acetic acid) and subsequent incorporation of nanosized NiO filler and activation of the derivative in 3M KOH solution. The nano-sized nickel oxide was prepared from 1M solution containing $NiCl_2$ and Glycine in the presence of 3M KOH bath using microwave-assisted coprecipitation technique [28,31,32]. The precipitated gel was washed thoroughly with NH_4OH and subsequently heated for 2 minutes using microwave power (2450 W) to yield pure sample of nanosized NiO powder. In order to prepare the metal oxide filled activated carbon, the carbonized sample $(CS+PS)_F$ was mixed with nano-sized NiO powder in the ratio 9:1 by weight and subsequently impregnated with 3M KOH solution. The dissolved sample

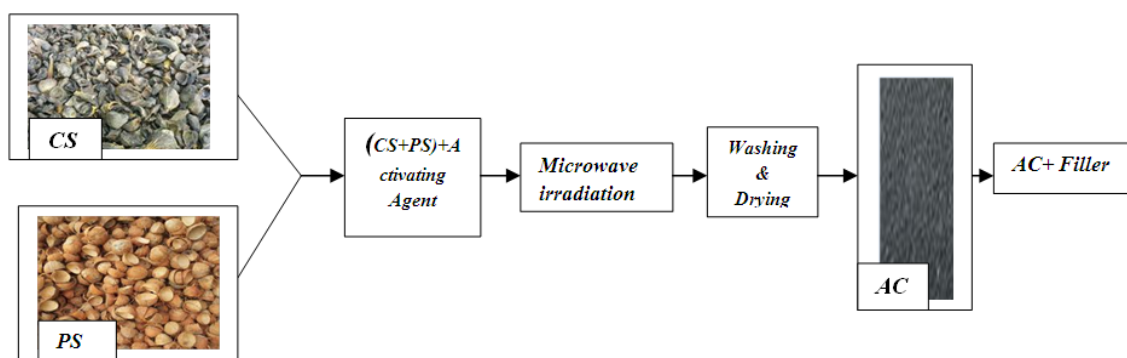


Fig. 1. Process flow diagram for the microwave activation

was carbonized for another 4 min using microwave power of 2450W at a frequency of 50Hz. After carbonization, the activated carbon samples were washed thoroughly with mixture of distilled water and ammonia solution to eliminate the residual activating agent that must have penetrated into the pore spaces and occupied substantial volume of the activated carbon samples. This was done to create large numbers of pore spaces. Subsequently, the activated carbon samples were ground to fine particle sizes and re-heated for a minute to further activate the carbon samples. Finally, the metal oxide filled activated carbon sample (CS+PS)_F and the activated carbon sample without filler (CS+PS) were ground again to fine particle sizes. The process flow diagram for the microwave activation described above is schematically given in Fig. 1.

The bulk density and thermo-gravimetric analysis of the activated carbon samples were measured using Micromeritics AccuPyc II 1340 (version 1.03). The structures and functional groups of the produced activated carbons were elucidated using X-ray Diffractometer (PANALYTICAL XPERT PRO), which was equipped with Cu-K_α radiation (40 kV, 30 mA) with a 0.02° step size and 2.5 second step time over the range 10° < 2θ < 70° and Fourier Transform Infrared Spectrophotometer (SHIMADZU FTIR-8400S). The morphology and elemental composition of the produced activated carbons were investigated using Scanning Electron microscope (FEIQUANTA 2020). The effectiveness of the activated carbon for removal of organic dye (methylene blue) from water contaminated with the organic dye was tested via adsorption studies using the Freundlich model. For the activated carbon sample with nano-filler, electrochemical measurements; such as Cyclic Voltammetry (CV), Galvanostatic Charge-Discharge (GCD) and electrochemical impedance spectroscopy (EIS) were carried out using a Bio-logic SP-300 Potentiostat. The three electrode method was employed; where the Activated Carbon (AC) sample with nano-filler serves as the working electrode, Glassy Carbon Plate (GCP) as the counter electrode and Ag/AgCl (3M KCl) serves as reference electrode in 6M KOH electrolyte. The AC electrode was prepared using Polyvinylidene Fluoride (PVDF) as a binder and N-methylpyrrolidine (NMP) solution as dispersant. The active material (AC) and Polyvinylidene Fluoride (PVDF) were mixed in ratio 9:1 by weight respectively, homogenized and dispersed in N-methylpyrrolidine (NMP) solution. The paste

was then uniformly attached on a nickel foam current collector and dried at 60°C in an oven for 8 hours to ensure evaporation of the NMP and then allowed to cool down to room temperature. Cyclic voltammetry (CV) was performed by scanning the potential from -0.3 to +0.2V and the rates were varied from 25 to 100 mVs⁻¹. The charge-discharge analysis was carried out at four different constant currents of 2.5, 5.0, 7.5 and 10.0 mA at potential range of 0 to 0.5V. Finally, the Electrochemical Impedance Spectroscopic (EIS) study of the three electrode assembly was performed in 6M KOH aqueous solution applying a sinusoidal signal of 10mV peak-to-peak amplitude at a frequency range of 100mHz to 100kHz. The impedance data were analyzed in terms of complex impedance using the imaginary and real part plots for the sample (CS+PS)_F.

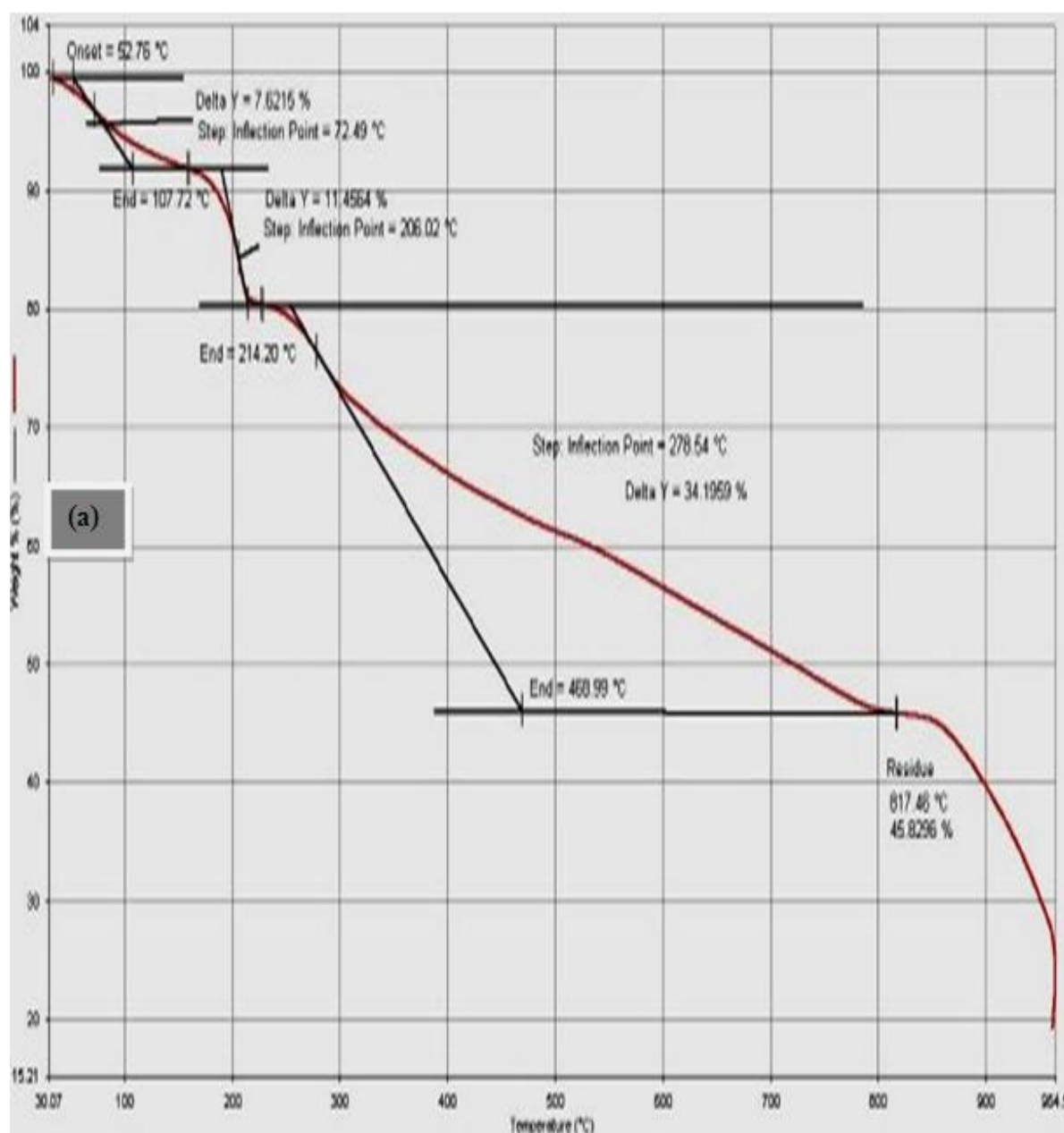
3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The measured density of the activated carbon for supercapacitor electrode (CS+PS)_F was obtained to be $(1.8862 \pm 0.0002) \text{ g cm}^{-3}$ while that for water filter was obtained to be $(2.185 \pm 0.0025) \text{ g cm}^{-3}$. The measured bulk density revealed that the activated carbon for water filter is denser than nano-sized nickel oxide filled activated carbon for supercapacitor electrode. This is attributed to the fact that there are more pores in the structure of the nano-sized nickel oxide filled activated carbon giving it better storage capability. The thermo gravimetric analysis (TGA) results also revealed that nano-sized nickel oxide filled activated carbon is more resistant to thermal shock at elevated temperature compared to activated carbon for water filter. The residual mass of nano-sized nickel oxide filled palm kernel shell after series of thermal cycles at 817.46°C was 45.83% which is higher than that for activated carbon for water filter as depicted in the TGA plots. It has been established that moisture and ash contents of activated carbon should be low if it must be used for adsorption and catalytic applications. Low content of ash and moisture in activated carbon is indicative of the quality and kind of activated carbon produced. The moisture content for the samples ranges from 6.50% to 7.21%. The moisture content is less than 10% for both nano-sized nickel oxide filled activated carbon sample and activated carbon sample for water filter which is in conformity with the results in the work [33] and also indicative of low moisture absorption by the samples. Similarly, the ash content in each case is less 5% about 4.22% for nano-sized nickel

oxide filled activated carbon sample and about 3.66% for the activated carbon sample for water filter.

The FTIR spectra for the raw powder sample (PCS+PPS) and the activated carbon mixture of coconut shell and palm kernel shell (CS+PS) and nano-sized nickel oxide filled activated carbon mixture of coconut shell and palm kernel shell (CS+PS)_F samples are presented in Fig. 3. Table 1 summarises the results obtained from FTIR spectroscopy for the raw powder sample (PCS+PPS), nano-sized nickel oxide filled activated carbon mixture of coconut shell and

palm kernel shell (CS+PS)_F and activated carbon mixture of coconut shell and palm kernel shell (CS+PS). The FTIR spectral were interpreted by assigning functional groups to their corresponding absorption bands and these are discernable by their corresponding peak values. The prominent functional groups in the samples are basically the hydroxyl groups, alcohols and carbonyl groups comprising of OH stretching vibrations, CH₂ stretching and bending vibrations, CH₃ bending vibrations, C-OH stretching and bending vibrations, CH bending and C=O stretching vibration.



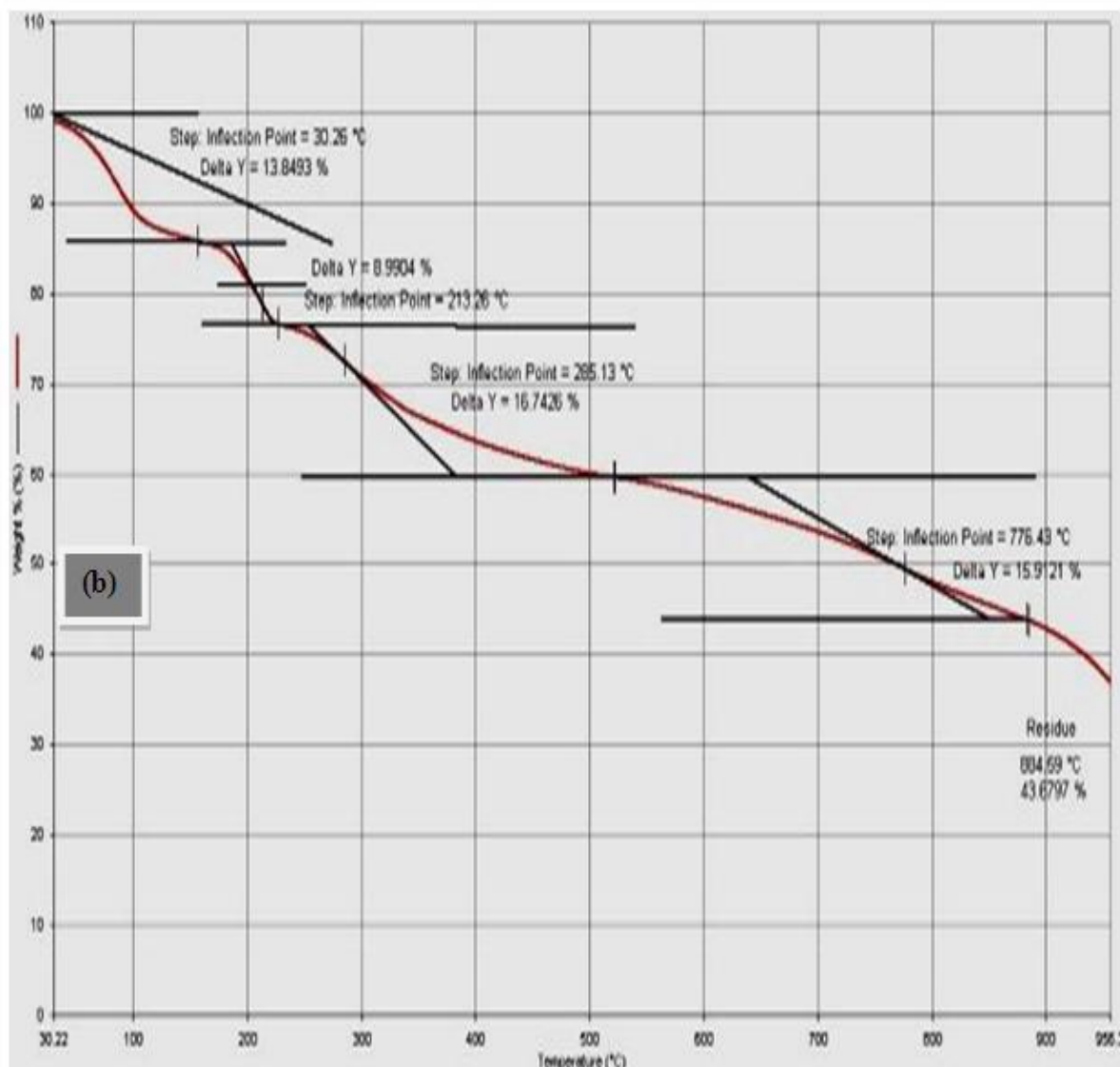


Fig. 2. TGA Plots for (a) Nano-sized nickel oxide filled activated carbon (CS+PS)_F and (b) Activated carbon for water filter (CS+PS)

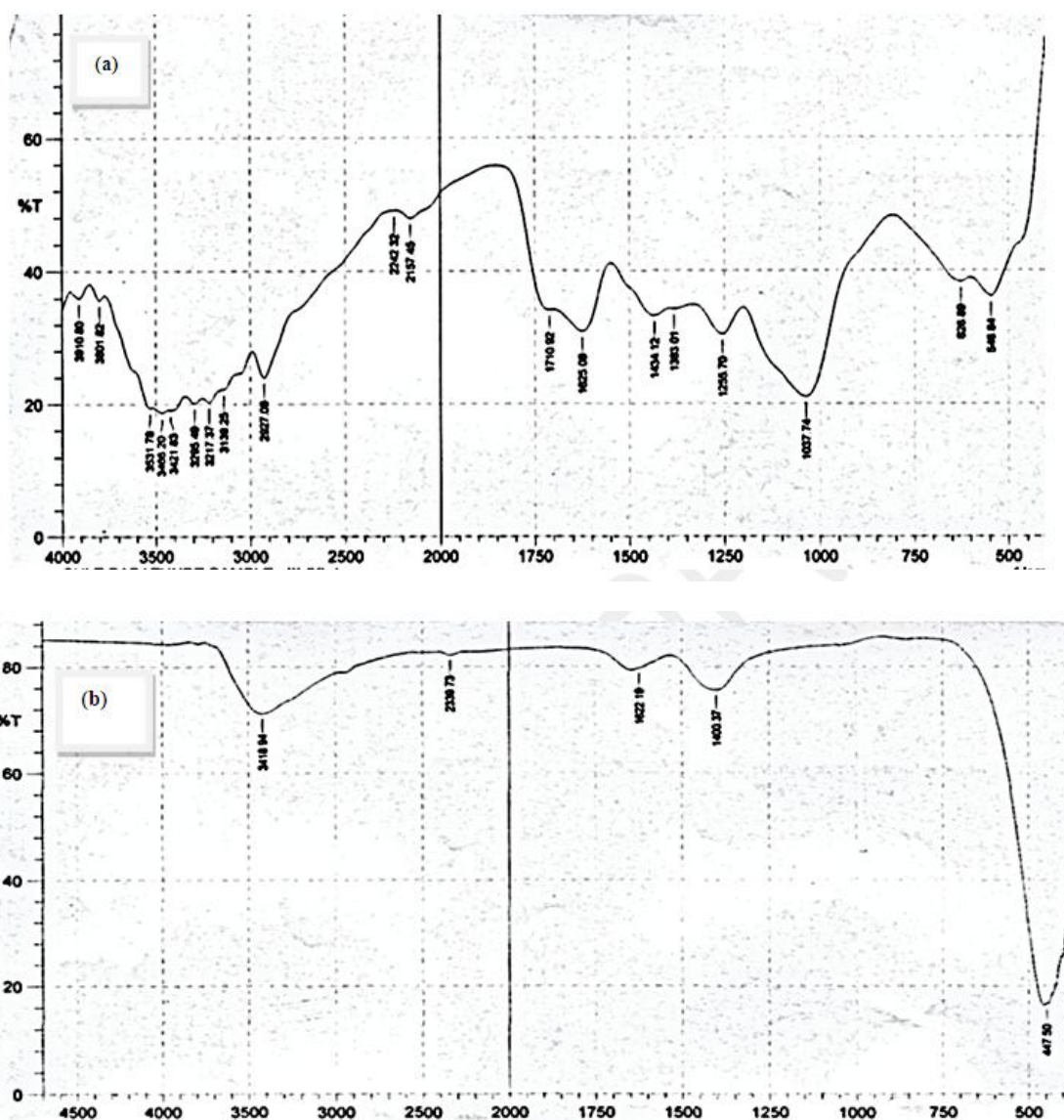
The FTIR spectra display broad bands at 3200 cm^{-1} - 3946.49 cm^{-1} , which are believed to be associated with the stretching vibrations of hydrogen bonded surface water molecules and hydroxyl groups. In addition to the broad band representing the stretching vibrations of hydrogen bonded surface water molecules and hydroxyl groups occurring at 3418.94 cm^{-1} , there exists a band spanning the range 1622.19 cm^{-1} - 1400.37 cm^{-1} associated with OH bending vibration implying the existence of lattice water. The band at 1612.54 cm^{-1} - 1710.92 cm^{-1} is associated with non-conjugated C=O stretching vibration implying the existence of carbonyl absorptions. The changes observed in the vibration frequency of $\nu\text{C=O}$ in the activated

carbon samples indicate that the incorporation of the co-activators and NiO has great influence on the vibration frequency of $\nu\text{C=O}$. In the case of nickel oxide filled activated carbon mixture of coconut shell and palm kernel shell, the disappearance of the functional group indicates that the addition of NiO has suppressing tendency on the vibration frequency of $\nu\text{C=O}$ because of conjugation with organic groups (νCH_2). The band in the range 1383.01 cm^{-1} associated with CH bending vibration implies the existence of secondary alcohols. In addition, the bands at 546.84 cm^{-1} - 1039.74 cm^{-1} are associated with C-OH bending and stretching vibrations of the secondary alcohols. The shift to higher frequencies may be attributed to

additional bonding of these groups with metallic compounds. Finally, the functional group appearing at 447.5cm^{-1} represents Ni-O stretching vibration and that appearing in the range 425.32 cm^{-1} represents Ca-O stretching vibration. Furthermore, the small absorptions observed for the organics indicates their presence in minute quantities on the surfaces of the metal oxide filled activated carbon.

Fig. 4(a & b) shows SEM micrographs of nickel oxide filled activated carbon mixture coconut shell and palm kernel shell (CS+PS)_F and activated carbon mixture of coconut shell and palm kernel shell (CS+PS). The figure depicts high magnification images revealing highly porous structures needed for fast ion transport in high performance supercapacitors and water

purification. The variation in contrast of the images revealed the (CS+PS)_F samples to be a two-phase system interspersed by nickel oxide. The dark phase associated with the host matrix (activated carbon) is overlaid by the light phase associated with the filler (nickel oxide). As for the (CS+PS), the host matrix which appear to be layered crystallites is overlaid by the light phase associated with the CaO (remnant of the activator). The resultant particle size analysis was obtained using imaging software (Image-J) and this revealed the average particle size for nickel oxide filled activated carbon mixture of coconut shell and palm kernel shell to be (108.24 ± 44.33) nm and the crystallite size for the activated carbon mixture of coconut shell and palm kernel shell to be $(72.78\pm 0.76)\text{ }\mu\text{m}$.



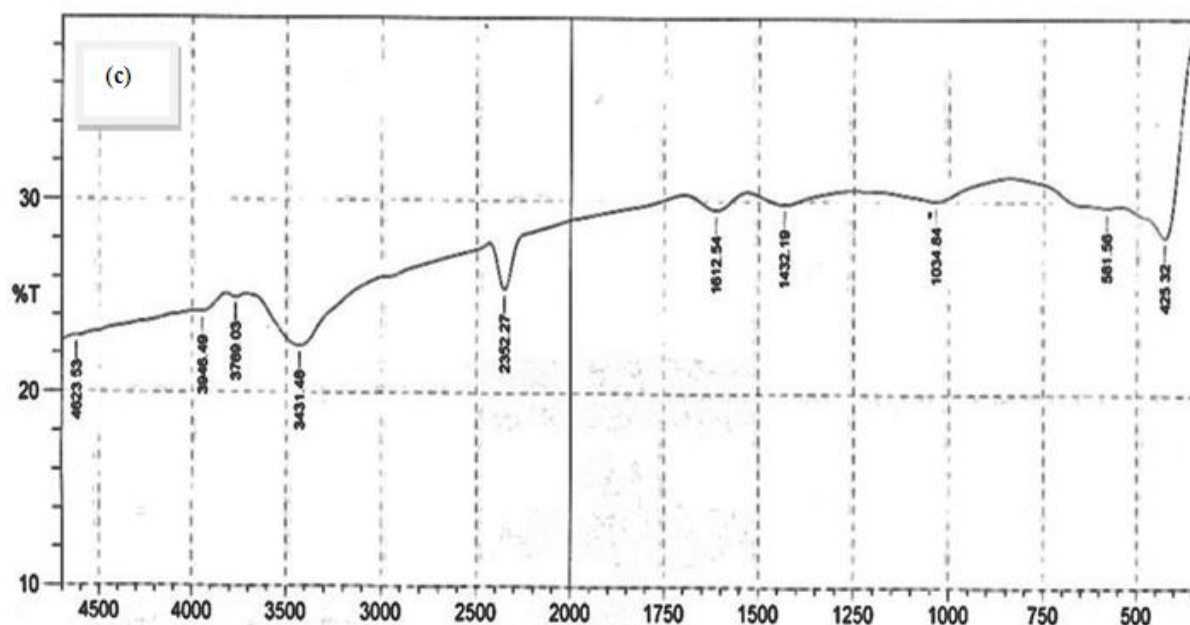


Fig. 3. FTIR spectra of (a) Powdered mixture of coconut shell and palm kernel shell (PCS+PPS), (b) Nano-sized nickel oxide filled activated carbon mixture of coconut shell and palm kernel shell (CS+PS)_F and (c) Activated carbon mixture of coconut shell and palm kernel shell (CS+PS)

Table 1. Band assignment of the peaks obtained from the FTIR spectra for the raw material samples and activated carbon samples

Band assignment	Absorption band (cm ⁻¹)		
	Raw sample	Activated samples	
	PCS+PPS	(CS+PS) _F	(CS+PS)
Intermolecular Hydrogen Bonding (OH stretching vibration)	3200-3512.49	3418.94	3431.48-3946.49
Free NH stretching vibrations	3139.25	-	-
CH ₂ (CH stretching vibration)	2927.08	-	-
Non-Conjugated (C≡N stretching vibration)	2242.32	2338.73	2352.20
Non-Conjugated (C=O stretching vibration)	1710.92	-	1612.54
OH (bending vibration)	1625.08	1622.19	-
CH ₂ (CH bending vibration)	1434.12	1400.37	1432.19
CH ₃ (CH bending vibration)	1383.01	-	-
C-OH stretching vibration	1039.74	-	1034.84
C-OH (OH bending vibration)	546.84	-	581.56
Ni-O (stretching vibration)	-	447.5	-
Ca-O (stretching vibration)	-	-	425.32

The XRD pattern (black) shown in Fig. 5 for the activated carbon mixture of coconut shell and palm kernel shell is characterized by reduced number of peaks compared to the XRD pattern (red) for the nickel oxide filled activated carbon mixture of coconut shell and palm kernel shell. This could be attributed to the high content of amorphous activated carbon phase identified to be disordered synthetic graphite structure.

Whereas the degree of crystallinity in the nickel oxide filled activated carbon mixture of coconut shell and palm kernel shell is high. This could be attributed to the presence of ordered graphite structure and nickel oxide and the XRD peaks are identified to graphite and nickel oxide peaks. In the XRD patterns depicted in Fig. 4, the most prominent peak used to identify graphite structure occurs at $2\theta = 25^\circ$, but in the XRD

pattern (black) for the (CS+PS), a broad peak at $2\theta = 23^\circ$ and 43° revealed amorphous graphitic carbon phase. The crystalline peaks occurring at 26° , 29° and 32° (PDF 1-0338) in the XRD pattern (black) for (CS+PS) represent synthetic CaCl_2 . In the XRD pattern (red) for the $(\text{CS+PS})_F$, the peak positions described by $2\theta = 28^\circ$, 32° ,

45° , 55° and 76° (JCPDS: 00-008-0415) are associated with ordered graphitic carbon phase. While the most prominent crystalline phases associated with nickel oxide occur at the following $2\theta = 36^\circ$, 44° , 63° , 79° (JCPDS: 22-1189) and nickel hydroxide at the following $2\theta = 10^\circ$, 23° , 34° , 59° , (JCPDS: 38-0715).

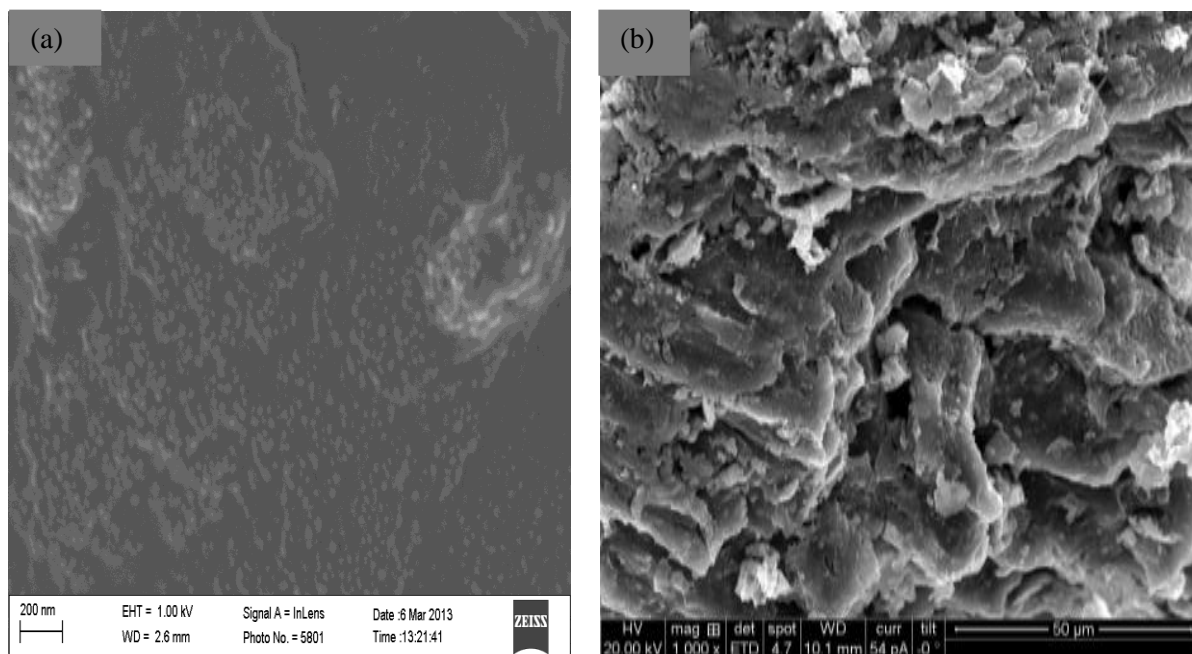


Fig. 4. SEM micrograph for (a) Nickel oxide filled activated mixture of coconut shell and palm kernel shell and (b) activated mixture of coconut shell and palm kernel shell without filler

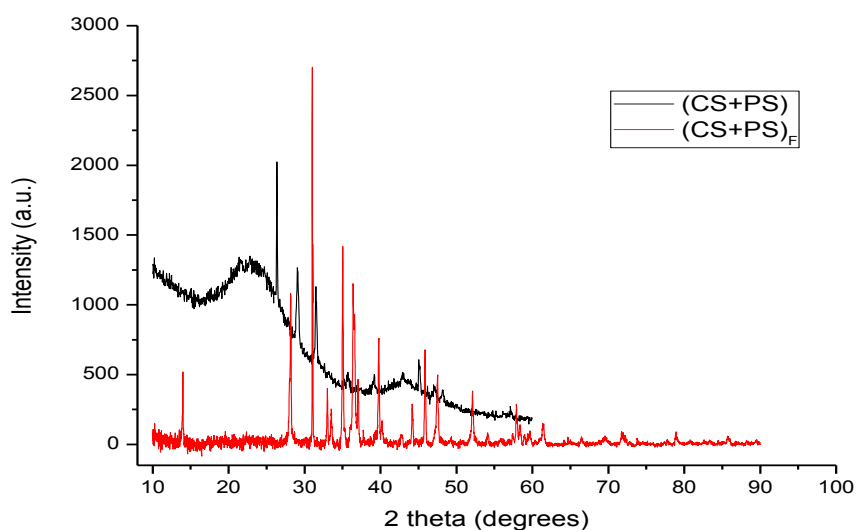


Fig. 5. XRD pattern for (a) activated mixture of coconut shell and palm kernel shell without filler (black line) and (b) Nickel oxide filled activated mixture of coconut shell and palm kernel shell (red line)

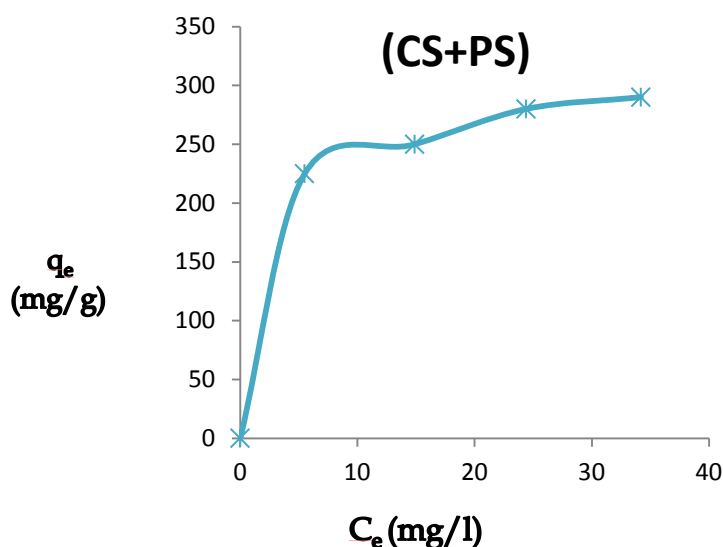


Fig. 6. Adsorption capacity of (CS+PS) activated carbon for methylene blue

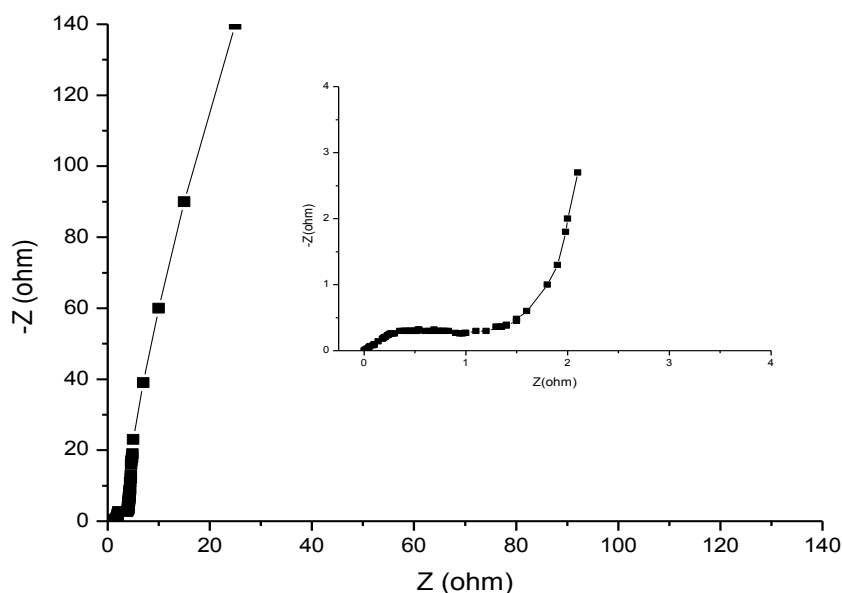


Fig. 7. Electrochemical impedance spectroscopy for nickel oxide filled activated mixture of coconut shell and palm kernel shell

Fig. 6 depicts the adsorption capacities of the activated mixture of coconut shell and palm kernel shell (CS+PS) and the absorbed amount of Methylene blue (MB) by the sample. The equilibrium adsorption data were interpreted using Freundlich models. The applicability of this model was established from the obtained value of the correlation coefficient, $R^2=0.90$. The

obtained value of the correlation coefficient is in good agreement with the model because the isotherm for activated mixture of coconut shell and palm kernel shell (CS+PS) bear a resemblance to that of Freundlich isotherm. Thus, this shows that the activated mixture of coconut shell and palm kernel shell (CS+PS) exhibited distinctive multilayer adsorption

capability as against monolayer coverage. The obtained results reflect that the activated mixture of coconut shell and palm kernel shell (CS+PS) favourably adsorbed MB dyes. The overall assessment of the activated mixture of coconut shell and palm kernel shell (CS+PS) reveals Freundlich model to be more suitable for the interpretation of the experimental adsorption data as the correlation coefficient value for the

activated mixture of coconut shell and palm kernel shell (CS+PS) was not more than 0.90. The overall absorption capacity was found to be $290\text{mg}\cdot\text{g}^{-1}$. These values are in good agreement with literature [34]. As such, the activated mixture of coconut shell and palm kernel shell (CS+PS) exhibited a very good adsorption capacity for MB and is paraded with better micro porous structure suitable for filtration.

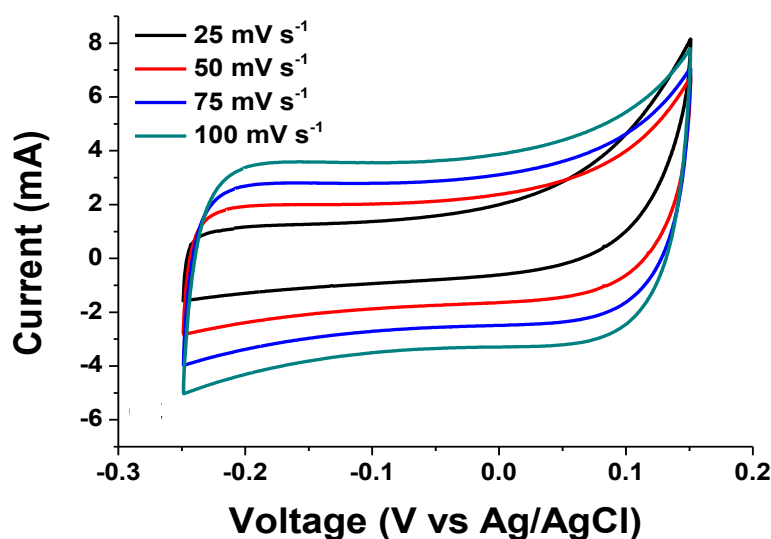


Fig. 8. Cyclic voltammetry curves for nickel oxide filled activated carbon mixture of coconut shell and palm kernel shell (CS +PS)_F at different scan rates

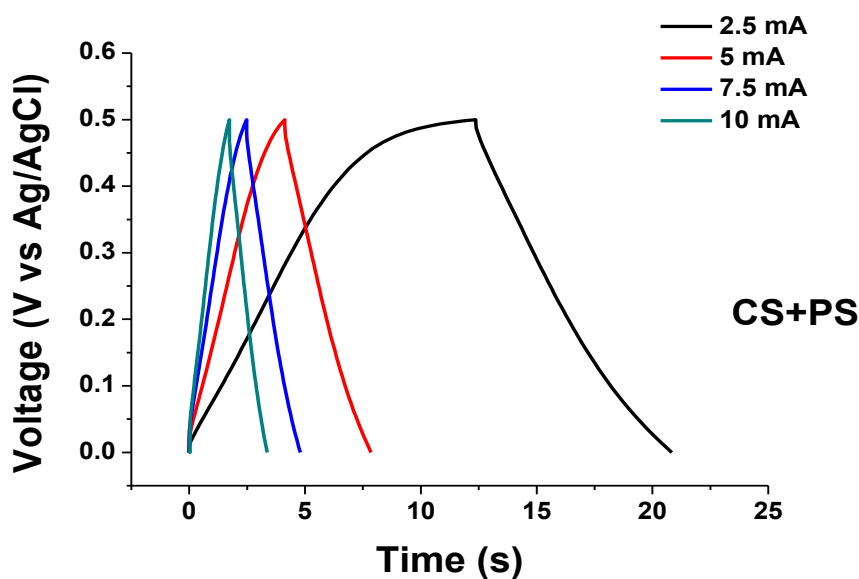


Fig. 9. Galvanostatic charge-discharge curves for nickel oxide filled activated mixture of coconut shell and palm kernel shell (CS + PS)_F

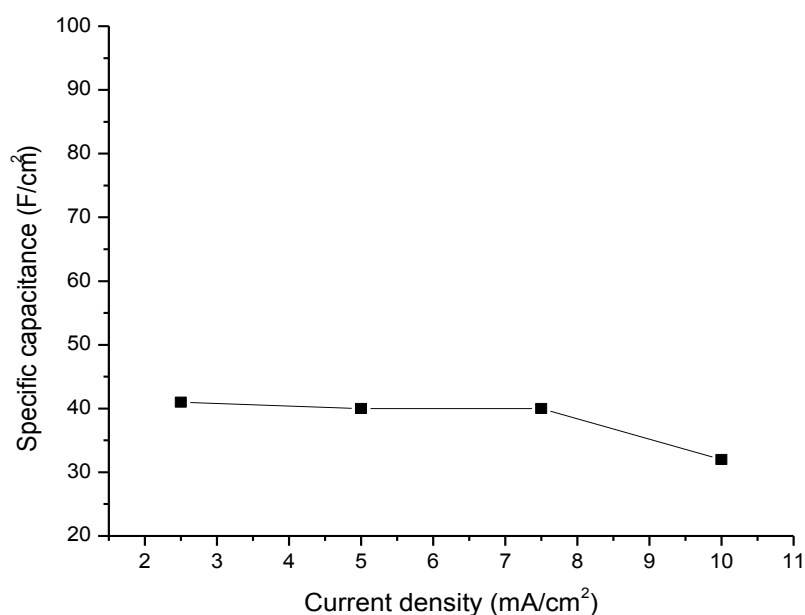


Fig. 10. Specific capacitance for nickel oxide filled mixture of coconut shell and palm kernel shell (CS + PS)_F

Nyquist plot for the supercapacitor cell assembly based on nickel oxide filled activated carbon mixture of coconut shell and palm kernel shell (CS+PS)_F in 6M KOH aqueous solution is presented in Fig. 7 with an inset showing the expanded high frequency region of the same plot. It can be seen from Fig. 6 and the inset, that the cell shows a pronounced semicircle at high frequency implying the charge transfer controlled regime and a straight line at low frequency indicating the capacitive regime. The impedance plot obtained for the supercapacitor cell assembly is in line with that of transmission line model (TLM) for the porous electrodes described in the literature [35].

Fig. 8 shows the cyclic voltammogram of the supercapacitor cell assembly based on nickel oxide filled activated carbon mixture of coconut shell and palm kernel shell (CS+PS)_F in 6M KOH aqueous solution as the electrolyte. The figure depicts a rectangular shaped voltammogram with a large current separation and symmetric in both cathodic and anodic directions obtained for the cell assembly. The potential scan was varied from 25 to 100 mV/s. A clear capacitive behaviour can be seen from the voltammograms; an established fact arising from the large current separation between the forward and reverse

scans with no visible redox peak formation. It can also be seen that the voltammograms are symmetrical about the current zero axis. The fact that all the CVs show rectangular features at the selected scan rates with high current values indicates a good electrochemical activity and high power density.

The galvanostatic charge-discharge analysis of the supercapacitor cell assembly was performed at four different current densities namely 2.5 mA to 10 mA and from this analysis, the charge storage capacity and durability of the cycle lifetime were obtained. Fig. 9 shows the typical charge-discharge profiles of the supercapacitor cell assembly based on nickel oxide filled activated carbon mixture of coconut shell and palm kernel shell in 6M KOH aqueous solution. We have used voltage range of 0 to 0.5V in order to evaluate the performance of the supercapacitors at different voltages. It can be seen that the charge – discharge profiles deviate from the typical linear variation of voltage with time normally exhibited by a purely electrochemical double layer capacitor (EDLC) for lower current values of 2.5 mA and 5.0 mA, which conforms to the proposed model described in the literature [35]. While the linear behaviour emanating at higher current values of 7.5 mA and 10 mA, is an indication of the formation of a good

electrode/electrolyte interface with a well-defined conductivity.

Fig. 10 depicts the specific capacitance for the nickel oxide filled activated mixture of coconut shell and palm kernel shell supercapacitor assembly. A specific capacitance of 41 F/cm^2 was obtained at a constant current density of 2.5 mA/cm^2 for the supercapacitor cell assembly. In fact, the specific capacitance decreases to a large extent with the number of cycles for higher current densities to 40 F/cm^2 at 5 mA/cm^2 and 7.5 mA/cm^2 and 32 F/cm^2 at 10 mA/cm^2 for supercapacitor assembly. Thus, the supercapacitor cell assembly based on NOFAC palm kernel shell shows better electrochemical properties.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The microwave-assisted activation technique has been successfully adopted for the production of nickel oxide filled activated carbon mixture of coconut shell and palm kernel shell (CS+PS)_F and activated carbon mixture of coconut shell and palm kernel shell (CS+PS) for supercapacitor electrode and water purification. The FTIR spectroscopy results for (CS+PS)_F confirmed the existence of strong interfacial interaction between NiO and the host matrices showing creation and annihilation of absorption bands in the IR spectra. This interaction revealed the existence of NiO oxide as an inclusion in the (CS+PS)_F with significant absorptions observed below 500 cm^{-1} . In addition to the functional groups associated with organics for (CS+PS), the significant absorptions observed below 500 cm^{-1} revealed the existence of CaO as remnant in the (CS+PS). The high magnification SEM images revealed highly porous structures required for fast ion transport in high performance supercapacitors and water purification. The XRD analysis confirmed the activated carbon mixture to be polymorphic systems with all the XRD peaks identified to be graphite, nickel oxide, nickel hydroxide and calcium chloride structures. The adsorption studies on (CS+PS) revealed that Freundlich model is most suitable for the interpretation of the adsorption data. As such, the activated mixture of coconut shell and palm kernel shell (CS+PS) exhibited a very good adsorption capacity for MB and is paraded with better micro porous structure suitable for filtration. The cell assembly tested in this study attained very good electrochemical performance based on common techniques for testing electrodes such as cyclic

voltammetry (CV), Galvanostatic charge/discharge (GCD), and electrochemical impedance spectroscopy (EIS). A rectangular shaped voltammogram with a large current separation and symmetric in both cathodic and anodic directions for the cell assembly indicate a clear capacitive behaviour, a 10d electrochemical activity and high power density. The specific capacitance values of 44 F/cm^2 , 40 F/cm^2 , 40 F/cm^2 and 32 F/cm^2 were obtained at 2.5 mA/cm^2 , 5 mA/cm^2 , 7.5 mA/cm^2 and 10 mA/cm^2 respectively for the supercapacitor assembly based on nickel oxide filled activated coconut shell and palm kernel shell (CS+PS)_F. In this study, (CS+PS)_F is paraded with better current response, higher value of specific capacitance and better electrochemical behaviour can be used for production of supercapacitor electrodes.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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