

Growth of Different Zinc Oxide Nanostructures under Hydrothermal pH Values

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Abstract

Flower- and rod-like nanostructures of zinc oxide were prepared by the hydrothermal method at 90°C for three hours. Three 0.028 molar solutions, with pH values of 9, 10, and 11, were deposited on glass substrate/ZnO seed layers. All the prepared samples had a polycrystalline diffraction pattern with dominant diffraction from the (002) plane. With increasing pH, the crystallite size increased to a maximum of 37.6 nm. The importance of the research lies in the growth of different nanostructures of zinc oxide by controlling the degree of pH, as the results showed the emergence of flower structures ZnO NFs at pH 11 with a particle size of 100-800 nm, and the development of nanostructures in the form of a bundle of rods at pH 10 with a particle size of 500-800 nm and the development of ZnO NRs in the form of solitary rods perpendicular to the surface at pH 9, with a grain size of 70-80 nm. The optical properties showed a decrease from 78.75% to 79.32% as the pH was increased from 9 to 11, and the value of the energy gap increased from 3.18 eV to 3.31 eV with the increase in the pH value from 9 to 11.

Keywords: Flowerlike, Nanostructure, Rodlike, Seed layer, ZnO hydrothermal.

Introduction

ZnO has a substantial exciton binding energy of 60 meV at ambient temperature and a direct band gap of 3.37 eV, and has potential applications in many areas^{1,2}. Combining blue-green optoelectronic and UV lasers devices³, conductive oxides, antistatic coatings, sensors, touch displays, panels and high band gap optoelectronic devices^{4,5}. Zinc oxide nanomaterials have been extensively investigated for use as luminescent materials, photocatalysts, surface acoustic wave filters, solar cells, and piezoelectric transducers and actuators⁶⁻⁸. ZnO has high chemical and thermal stability. It is also transparent to visible light^{7, 9, 10}, has high conductivity 2.7 (S.cm⁻¹)¹¹ at

25°C, and exhibits piezoelectric and pyroelectric properties. The properties of ZnO are highly dependent on the specific growth conditions^{9, 11}. Therefore, it can form different nanostructures to other metal oxides and is more versatile^{5, 12, 13}.

One-dimensional ZnO nanostructures, such as nanowires, nanobelts, and nanorods have attracted a lot of interest because of their huge potential in gas sensing applications, including but not limited to their high surface-to-volume ratio.¹⁴⁻¹⁶. Thermal evaporation, hydrothermal synthesis, sputtering, pulsed laser deposition, and molecular beam epitaxy

are a few of the methods used to create ZnO nanostructures that have been reported¹⁷. Due to its distinct benefits, the hydrothermal approach has received a lot of attention. It is a straightforward, low-temperature 60–100°C, high-yield, and readily controlled process.^{18–20} The synthesis of ZnO nanorods has received much attention in recent years. Cao P. et al.²¹, synthesized vertically aligned ZnO nanorods and used them to create C₂H₅OH sensors with good response repeatability. Manabeng M et al.²², studied an assembly of ZnO flowers and nanorods, fabricated using the hydrothermal method, focusing on morphology-dependent gas sensing properties. Abdulmunem et al.⁷, characterized the

Materials and Methods

In the first stage, a layer of zinc oxide was deposited on glass substrates with dimensions 7.00 × 2.5 cm² using the RF magnetron sputtering method. The deposition conditions were base pressure 2.15×10⁻⁵ torr, substrate temperature 25–27°C, sputtering pressure 1.72×10⁻² torr and deposition rate 2.42 nm/min. Next, the resulting sample was annealed at 100°C for one hour at atmospheric pressure in grade 304 stainless steel furnace. The structural and surface roughness were examined by field emission scanning electron microscopy (FESEM) and X-ray diffraction (using a JSM-7610F scanning electron microscope and a DJ-3500 X-ray diffractometer). A UV/visible scanning spectrophotometer (Shimadzu UV-1800) was used to record the absorbance spectra in the wavelength range of 300–900 nm. The growth solutions were prepared by adding 1, 1.5 and 1.8 ml of ammonia (Thomas Baker 29% NH₃) to 80 ml of deionized water (BI Supply Deionized Water) to obtain a PH of 9, 10 and 11 respectively, which was measured using an LCD digital pH meter (accuracy 0.01, operating temperature 0–60°C). Zinc nitrate (ZnO (NO₃)₂·6H₂O, PIOCHEM, molar mass 297.47 g/mol) of 99.99% purity was added to the growth solution at a concentration of 0.028 mol/l.

The solution was formed by using a magnetic stirrer at room temperature 25–30°C for 15 minutes, then added to a Teflon cell. The ZnO seed layer was fixed in a Teflon holder horizontally, as shown in Fig. 1,

Results and Discussion

In the Fig. 2 shows the X-ray diffraction pattern of the zinc oxide nanostructures deposited on

optical properties of ZnO when doped with Al. Sakata, K. et al.²³ evident that Further increase of pH leads to a growth of well-defined crystals arranged in flower-like arrangements. Rizwan Wahab, et al.²⁴ report that sheet/plate like structure when synthesized at the solution pH 6. Thick sheet like structure pH 7. Sheet-like structure to sort of aligned plate and rod like structure is evident at pH 8. Rounded individual sheet to micro flowers pH 9. Bunches of micro flowers were observed with two-dimensional flat surface shape to pH 10. In this work, we aimed to find a correlation between the structure and alignment of ZnO nanorods and the pH of the aqueous solution in which they were formed.

with the zinc oxide seed layer facing downwards, so that all the samples were immersed in the growth solution. Next, the Teflon cell was transferred to a stainless-steel autoclave 200 ml capacity, which was closed tightly and placed in an oven at a temperature of 90°C for three hours. Finally, the samples were removed and left to cool down gradually.

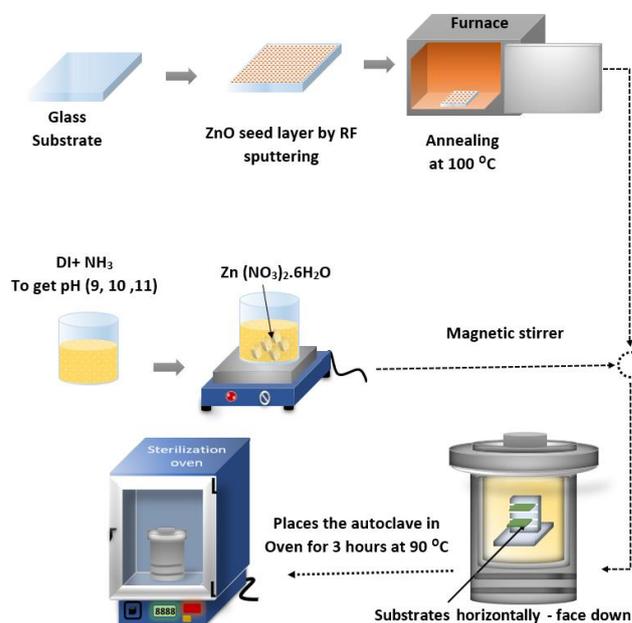


Figure 1. Illustration the steps of preparing ZnO nanorods by hydrothermal system with the stainless-steel autoclave.

glass/ZnO seed layer substrates by the hydrothermal method, for aqueous solutions of pH 9, 10 and 11. It

can be seen from Fig. 2 that the diffraction pattern for all models is polycrystalline with a wurtzite ZnO structure pattern and a dominant reflection of the plane (002) at angle $2\theta = 34.42^\circ$, in addition to several secondary reflections (100), (101), (102), (110), (103) and (200) at angles 31.86° , 36.37° , 47.84° , 56.67° , 62.95° and 66.28° , respectively. This result agrees with the JCPDS 36-1451 card and with Rajasekaran P et al.²³ It can also be seen that the X-ray diffraction pattern of the ZnO seed layer prepared by the RF magnetron sputtering method has a polycrystalline diffraction pattern with a dominant reflection (002). The crystallite size of the dominant reflection (002) can be calculated from the Scherrer formula¹²⁴. The crystallite size increased from 31.86 nm to 37.82 nm as the pH of the aqueous solution changed from 11 to 9 as shown in Table 1. This is due to the change of the nanostructures from flowers to rods and the uniform alignment by increasing the intensity of the prevailing reflection. The process of calculating the observed lattice constants and interplanar distances was carried out using Eq. 2²⁵ from Table 1.

$$D = \frac{k\lambda}{\beta \cos \theta} \quad 1$$

$$\frac{1}{d^2} = \frac{4}{3} \left(\frac{h^2 + hk + k^2}{a^2} \right) + \frac{l^2}{c^2} \quad 2$$

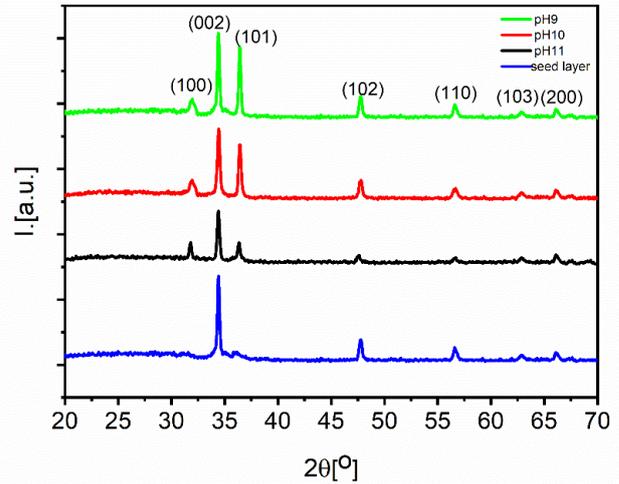


Figure 2. X-ray diffraction of ZnO nanostructure in different aqueous solutions of pH value 9, 10, 11 and ZnO seed layer deposited by RF sputtering.

Table 1. XRD result and structural parameters for ZnO films prepared thermal evaporation in a vacuum.

Sample pH	2θ [°]	(hkl)	Intensity [%]	d value [Å]		lattice constant [Å]				crystallite size [nm]
				Observed	JCPDS	Observed		JCPDS		
						a	c	a	c	
9	34.5	(002)	100	2.284	2.603	3.240	5.208	3.249	5.206	37.82
10	34.5	(002)	100	2.284	2.603	3.240	5.208	3.249	5.206	31.86
11	34.5	(002)	100	2.284	2.603	3.240	5.208	3.249	5.206	32.46
Seed layer	34.5	(002)	100	2.284	2.603	3.240	5.208	3.249	5.206	34.65

In Fig. 3, the FESEM images of ZnO samples that were prepared by hydrothermal method and deposited on a glass/ZnO seed layer substrate submerged in aqueous solutions, at pH (9, 10 and 11). In Fig. 3a–c, the ZnO observed at pH 11, a flower nanostructure formed, and a regular distribution on the surface of the sample. The size of the flower nanostructure ranged from 100 nm to 800 nm. As the pH of the aqueous solution was reduced to 10, as shown in Fig. 3d–f, the nanostructure changed from flowers to semi-rods with a length of 200–900 nm and a diameter ranging between 500–800 nm at the base and 100–200 nm at the top. This is because reducing the pH value reduced the Gibbs free energy, thus nucleation sites

become preferred for the occurrence of a regular ZnO growth process²⁶. With a decrease in pH to 9, as in Fig. 3h–i, The ZnO semi-rod structures were transformed into compact rods in packs, and it was observed that the diameter of these rods became identical at the base and top, ranging between 70 and 80 nm and the height of the rods reaching 200–300 nm, indicating the regularity of the ZnO nanorods. These results are similar to those of Abass NK.²⁷ Fig. 3j shows the ZnO seed layer deposited using the RF magnetron sputtering method on glass substrates. At pH 9 ZnONFs first it hydrolyses to produce the OH⁻ and ammonia. Then, the OH⁻ forms a complex with Zn²⁺, followed by thermal decomposition into ZnO. When the pH was increased to 10 (ZnONRs)

by adding NH_3 , the ammonia into OH^- and NH_4^+ and giving rise to flower-like structure. We believe that by increasing the OH^- ions as compared to Zn^{2+} concentrations immediately start to take place The

$[\text{Zn}(\text{OH})_4]^{2-}$ acts as the new growth precursor of the nuclei serves on the seed. Therefore, anisotropic growth of ZnO occurs at the active site of ZnO seed²⁸.

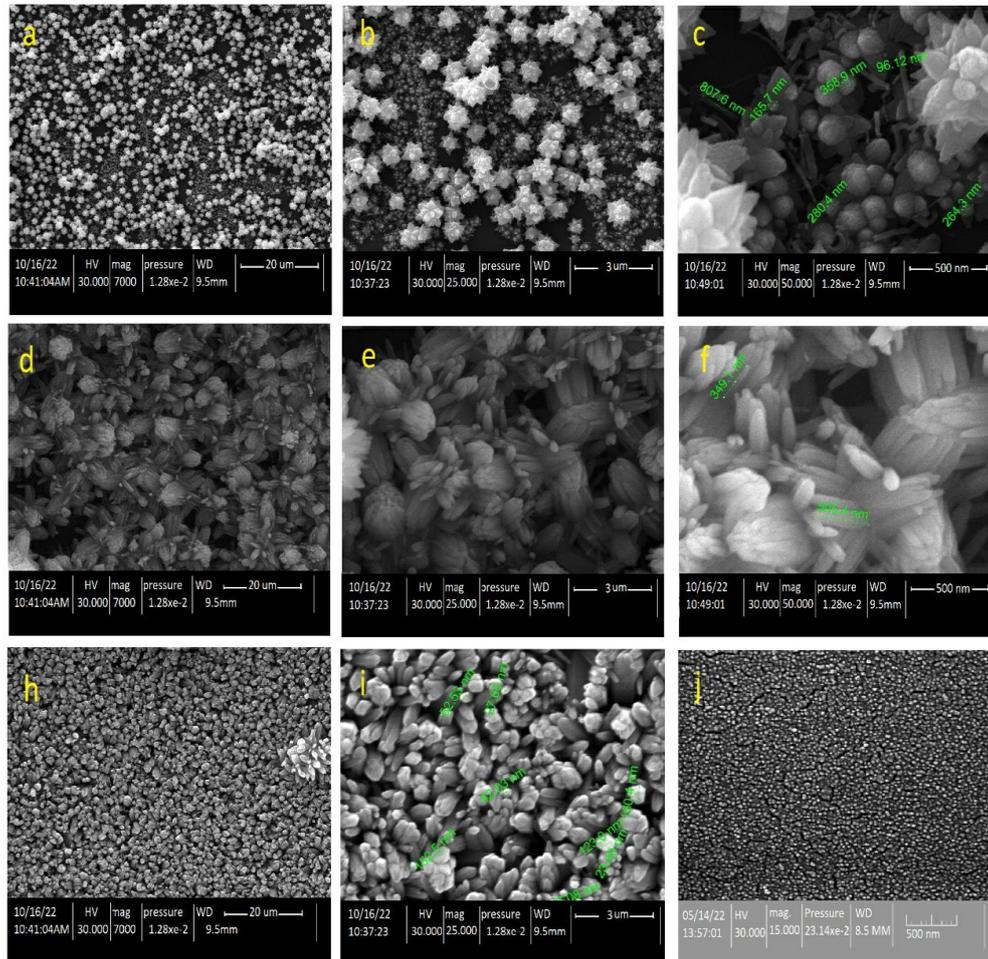


Figure 3. Shows the FESEM image of the ZnO nanoflowers and nanorods prepared by hydrothermal method, (a, b and c) with different aqueous solutions of pH value 11; (d, e and f) at pH value of 10; (h and i) at pH value of 9 and (j) seed layer of ZnO deposited by RF sputtering.

Shown in Fig. 4 is the transmittance spectrum as a function of the wavelength of the ZnO nanostructure samples prepared by the hydrothermal method, with aqueous solutions of pH 9, 10 and 11 and deposited on glass/ZnO seed layer substrates. It can be seen from Fig. 4 that the transmittance spectrum decreased from 89.67% to 79.32% as the pH increased from 9 to 10. This is due to the increase in crystallite size and crystallinity, as well as the change in the shape of the nanostructure from flower to rod. The transmittance spectrum is confined to the visible and near-infrared regions. Fig. 5 illustrates the connection between $(\alpha h\nu)^2$ and the photon energy $h\nu$,

where the value of the energy gap can be calculated by extrapolating the linear portion of the curve and setting the value of the magnitude of the energy gap value being derived by extrapolating the linear component of the curve and setting the magnitude $(\alpha h\nu)^2 = 0$ as in Eq. 3^{29,30}.

$$(\alpha h\nu)^2 = B(h\nu - E_g^{\text{opt}})^r \quad 3$$

Moreover, the value of the energy gap increased from 3.18 eV to 3.31 eV with the increase in the pH value from 9 to 11, which also agrees with Zainelabdin A. ^{31,32}. This effect is due to the change in nanostructure forms from the flower- to rod-

shaped, which reduces the transmittance while increasing the absorbance³³.

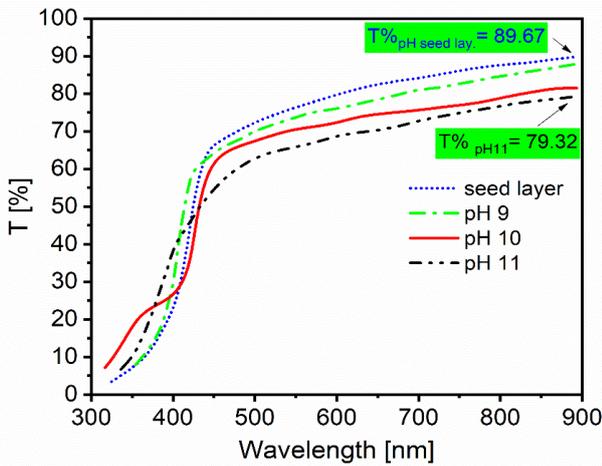


Figure 4. Shows the transmittance percentage of the ZnO nanoflowers and nanorods prepared by hydrothermal method with different aqueous solutions of pH value 9, 10 and 11.

Conclusion

It was found that the pH of the aqueous solution has a significant effect on the shape of ZnO nanostructures deposited on a glass/ZnO seed layer by the hydrothermal method. The nanostructures changed from flower-shaped structures with a diameter of 100–800 nm to rod structures non-

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Authors' Declaration

- Conflicts of Interest: None.
- We hereby confirm that all the Figures and Tables in the manuscript are ours. Furthermore, any Figures and images, that are not ours, have been

Authors' Contribution Statement

E.S., S.A., and O.M. contributed to the design and implementation of the research, to the analysis of the results and to the writing of the manuscript.

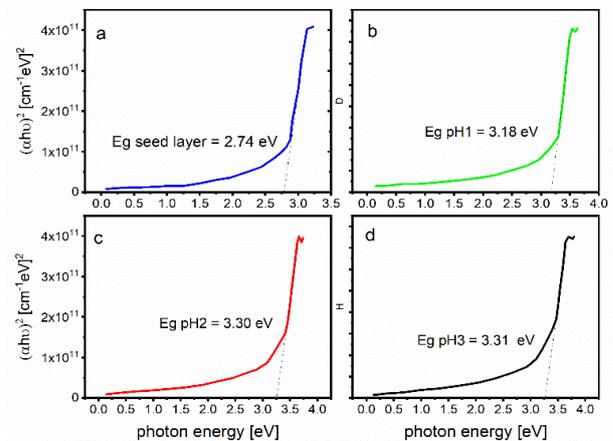


Figure 5. shows the $(\alpha h\nu)^2$ as function to photon energy [eV] of the ZnO nanoflowers and nanorods prepared by hydrothermal method with a variety of aqueous solutions of pH value (a) ZnO seed layer, (b) at pH value of 9, (c) at pH value of 10, (d) at pH value 11.

perpendicular to the surface of the substrate with a diameter of 500–800 nm and a height of 200–900 nm. At pH 9, the rod nanostructures turned perpendicular to the substrate, in an organized and homogeneous distribution, with a diameter of 200–300 nm and a height of 70–80 nm.

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- included with the necessary permission for republication, which is attached to the manuscript.
- Ethical Clearance: The project was approved by the local ethical committee at the University of Mustansiriyah.

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انماء تراكيب نانوية من أكسيد الزنك بطريقة التحلل المائي الحراري لقيم مختلفة من درجة الحمضية

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الخلاصة

تم تحضير تراكيب نانوية (زهريّة وعصي) الشكل من أكسيد الزنك بالطريقة الحرارية المائية عند 90 درجة مئوية لمدة ثلاث ساعات. تم تحضير ثلاثة محاليل بقيم درجة الحمضية 9 و 10 و 11 وبمولارية 0.028 مولاري، على قواعد زجاجية / بذور ZnO. كان لجميع العينات المحضرة نمط حيود متعدد التبلور مع حيود سائد من المستوى (002). مع زيادة درجة الحمضية، زاد حجم البلوري إلى حد أقصى قدره 37.6 نانومتر. أظهرت صور الانبعاث الحفلي لمجهر الماسح الإلكتروني تكمن أهمية البحث في انماء تراكيب مختلفة من أكسيد الزنك من خلال التحكم بدرجة الحمضية حيث أظهرت النتائج ظهور تراكيب زهرية عند الحمضية 11 وبحجم جسيمي 100-800 نانومتر، وانماء تراكيب نانوية بشكل حزمة من العصي عند الحمضية 10 وبحجم جسيمي 500-800 نانومتر وانماء أكسيد الزنك بشكل عصي منفردة عمودية على السطح عند الدرجة الحمضية 9 وبحجم حبيبي 70-80 نانومتر. أظهرت الخصائص البصرية انخفاضاً في النفاذية من 78.75 إلى 79.32 وزيادة في قيم فجوة الطاقة من 3.18 إلكترون فولط إلى 3.31 إلكترون فولط مع زيادة درجة الحمضية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأشكال الزهرية، البنية النانوية، أشكال العصي، طبقة حبيبية، ZnO الحرارية المائية.