

**Research Article** 

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### Synthesis of La<sub>2</sub>MnFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> and La<sub>2</sub>CuFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> magnetic nanocomposites (nano mixed metal oxides) as efficient photocatalyst for organic dye removal

Somaye Khammarnia<sup>1, \*</sup>, Jilla Saffari<sup>2</sup>, Mehri-Saddat Ekrami-Kakhki<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Chemistry Department, Payame Noor University, Tehran 19395-4697, Iran <sup>2</sup>Department of Chemistry, Zahedan Branch, Islamic AzadUniversity, P.O. Box 98135-978, Zahedan, Iran <sup>3</sup> Esfarayen University of Technology, Esfarayen, North Khorasan, Iran

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ABSTRACT

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#### 1. Introduction

Nanotechnology introduces new solutions towards the growth of present technologies and in these solutions, issues such as health, environmental, and economic problems are touched [1-3]. There are environmental concerns all over the world. One of the most important issues in life is water treatment. There are various pollutants in water, among which organic contaminants have serious dangers [4-6]. Adjustable size and new mechanisms are the characteristics of nanoparticles, and these properties indicate promising technology. Therefore, under ultraviolet radiation, they are used as photocatalysts to eliminate the organic contaminants such as dyes [7, 8]. Nanocomposites have at least one component in nanometer dimensions [9]. Nanocomposites are appropriate alternatives to reduce the limitations of microcomposites, whereas posing procurement for controlling the primary combination

In this work, La<sub>2</sub>MnFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> and La<sub>2</sub>CuFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> photocatalysts were synthesized using a co-precipitation method. The surface morphology, structure, crystalline phase and magnetic behavior of the catalysts were investigated by TEM, FT-IR, XRD, DRS, and VSM. The photocatalytic activity of the La<sub>2</sub>MnFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> and La<sub>2</sub>CuFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> nanocomposites were appraised using the optical decomposition of malachite green oxalate (MG), methyl violet (MV), and Eriochrome Black T (EBT) beneath ultraviolet (UV) beam irradiance at different factors like the solution pH, dyes' concentration, catalysts' amount, temperature and time of UV light radiation. This research presented the synthesis of new composite magnetic photocatalysts and their application in the photodegradation of dye pollutants.

> and stoichiometry within the nano cluster phase. They are posed to the preparation challenges due to their unique design and possession compositions that are not found in conventional materials. Nanocomposites have been introduced as materials from the twenty- first century. Although the first inference to them was reported in the beginning of 1992 [10], a popular conception of their properties has not still been obtained [11]. Organic dyes are colored and durable compounds and are extensively utilized in industrial manufacture of dving agents, textile, leather, paint, clothing, rubber, biological imaging, plastic paper making and food processes etc due to the utilizing a large volume of organic dyes are causing damage to human lungs, kidneys, organs and carcinogenic effects. The most common organic dyes are EBT, MO, MG, Congo red (CR), MB, and so on [12]. Many paper and waste industries as well as textile mills have discharged wastepolluted water containing hazardous contaminants into water bodies, which has resulted in serious

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<sup>\*</sup> Corresponding author.; e-mail: <u>somayekhammarnia@pnu.ac.ir</u> https://doi.org/<u>10.22034/crl.2024.434922.1277</u>

contamination of water [13]. The entry of these industries' wastewater to the environment affects living organisms in aquatic ecosystems and human health [14]. As a result, purification of dye-polluted wastewaters via decontamination process is essential before their evacuation. The depletion of large values of dyes into wastewater is a serious threat for environmental sustainability and human health [15]. As a result, in aquatic ecosystems, the process of photosynthesis is affected. Also, due to the association of organic dyes in water with jaundice, cancer, skin stimulation, sensitivity, heart defects, and mutation, they have dangerous and toxic effects on human health [16]. Thus, to eliminate these organic dyes and to expand robust, economic, and environmentally sociable procedures, it is necessary to use a variety of techniques such as physicochemical [17, 18], chemical [19], biological [20], electrochemical [14] and advanced oxidation process-based approaches such as photo-Fenton's oxidation and Fenton's reagent systems to remove dyes from water. The production of strong radical components causes rapid decomposition of dyes [21-23]. Researchers have done many studies in the direction of wastewater decolorization [5, 24, 25]. In this field, metal oxides have been employed to decompose organic pollutants in water to reduce hazardous materials [26].

In this study, La<sub>2</sub>MnFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> and La<sub>2</sub>CuFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> magnetic nanocomposites were synthesized for the first time. These nanocomposites were synthesized using coprecipitation method and characterized through FTIR, TEM, DRS, XRD and VSM analyses. The photocatalytic activity of the synthesized nanocomposites was studied using MV, MG and EBT dyes as organic pollutant for the first time.

# Experimental details Methods and materials

Fe(NO<sub>3</sub>)<sub>3</sub>.9H<sub>2</sub>O, NaOH, LaCl<sub>3</sub>.7H<sub>2</sub>O, CuCl<sub>2</sub>.6H<sub>2</sub>O, MnCl<sub>2</sub>.2H<sub>2</sub>O, Co(NO<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>.6H<sub>2</sub>O as well as octanoic acid were purchased from Merck corporation. FT-IR spectra were recorded using Rayleigh (WQF-510A) FTIR spectrophotometer. A Philips X-ray diffractometer with Ni-filtered CuKa radiation was used for performing the X-ray diffraction measurements. The magnetic susceptibility measurements were performed via VSM (made by Meghnatis Daghigh Kavir Company, Kashan, Iran) at the applied sweeping magnetic field of  $\pm$  10,000 Oe. Zeiss-EM10C-100 kV was used to take the TEM images. An ultrasonic irradiance was accomplished using a multi-purpose ultrasonic generatrix (BandLine MS 73), equipped with a transformer and titanium oscillator, operated at 20 kHz with an almost 150 W power output. The registration of absorption spectra was done by a Perkin-Elmer LAMBDA45 UV/Vis spectrophotometer.

# **2.2.** Synthesis of $La_2MnFe_2O_7$ and $La_2CuFe_2O_7$ nanocomposites

Three separate solutions were obtained by dissolving 0.01 mole of  $LaCl_3.7H_2O$ , MnCl<sub>2</sub>.2H<sub>2</sub>O (or CuCl<sub>2</sub>.6H<sub>2</sub>O) and Fe(NO<sub>3</sub>)<sub>3</sub>.9H<sub>2</sub>O in 10 ml of distilled water. The prepared solutions in the previous step were mixed together, and 2 mL of octanoic acid added gradually as surfactant. Afterwards, the solution was stirred vigorously and NaOH 5 M solution added dropwise until the solution pH reached 8-9. After the complete precipitation, the solution was sonicated. The crystalline phase of nano-particles was obtained after 30 min/30 °C in 150 W and 20 kHz sonication. The white precipitate from sonication was purified and calcinated for 2 hours at 800 °C for removing the organic residue. The nanoparticles obtained by sonication has the highest purity.

### **2.3.** Photocatalytic activity for degradation of dyes

To perform photocatalytic experiments, 10 mL of MV, MG and EBT aqueous solutions (0.001 M) were separately added to 20 mg of La<sub>2</sub>MnFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> and La<sub>2</sub>CuFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> nanocomposites. The suspension was magnetically stirred for 30 min in dark before irradiation. Afterward, the mixture was illuminated with UV light for one hour. These lamps were located around the outer level of the mixture. The effects of some factors such as temperature, solution pH, dyes' concentration, photocatalysts' amount as well as irradiation time were examined and optimized. At last, the reaction mixture was filtered, and the UV-Vis analysis performed to determine the residual concentration of MV. MG as well as EBT dyes. The residual adsorption of MV, MG and EBT by La<sub>2</sub>MnFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> nano-composite in several catalyst doses is shown in Fig. 1.



Wavelength (nm)

**Fig. 1.** UV-Vis absorption spectra of MV (up), MG (center) and EBT(down) with La<sub>2</sub>CuFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> nanoparticles after a 0.0, b 20, c 30 and d 60 min, UV light irradiation.

### 3. Result and discussion 3.1. Characterization

TEM, FT-IR, XRD, DRS and VSM techniques were utilized for the characterization of La<sub>2</sub>MnFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> and La<sub>2</sub>CuFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> nanocomposites. The phase and crystallinity of the synthesized catalysts were determined by XRD. The FT-IR spectra were recorded within the scan range of 4000-400 cm<sup>-1</sup>. The transmission electron microscopy images were used to determine the morphologies of the as-prepared nanomaterials. The magnetic properties of the synthesized catalysts were investigated using VSM. Band gap energy is determined using DRS.

The optical property of the prepared  $La_2MnFe_2O_7$ and  $La_2CuFe_2O_7$  nanocomposites was studied by a UV-Vis spectrophotometer. The absorbance spectra were obtained within the range of 200-600 nm.

# 3.1.1. FTIR analysis of $La_2MnFe_2O_7$ and $La_2CuFe_2O_7$ nanocomposites

Fig. 2 shows the FT-IR spectra of octanoic acid (a), La<sub>2</sub>MnFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> (b), as well as La<sub>2</sub>CuFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> (c) nanocomposites following calcination within the range of  $400-4000 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ . As shown, the broad band in 2650–3450 cm<sup>-1</sup> was associated with the O–H stretching vibration in the octanoic acid, whereas the band appeared in 1718 cm<sup>-1</sup> is associated with the carbonyl group. The bending vibrations of CH<sub>2</sub> and CH<sub>3</sub> groups are observed at 1461 and 1381 cm<sup>-1</sup>, respectively. The stretching band of C-O was observed at 1220–1330 cm<sup>-1</sup> and the out of plane bending of O-H group was observed at 941 cm<sup>-1</sup>. The two robust absorptive bands around 800 and 900 cm<sup>-1</sup>, respectively, were associated with the M-O stretching vibration (M: metal) of La<sub>2</sub>MnFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> (b) and La<sub>2</sub>CuFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> (c). However, those around 550 and 650 cm<sup>-1</sup>, respectively, were associated with the M-O bending vibration (M: metal) of La<sub>2</sub>MnFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> (b) and La<sub>2</sub>CuFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> (c). As a result, there was a similarity between the FT-IR spectra of the samples and they were consistent with those reported in the literature [27].

# 3.1.2. XRD analysis of $La_2MnFe_2O_7$ and $La_2CuFe_2O_7$ nanocomposites

XRD patterns of the prepared photocatalysts are exhibited in Figs. 3 and 4. The XRD analysis of  $La_2MnFe_2O_7$  shows that it was possible to index the diffraction peaks to the Cubic phase (a=8.499 Å, b=8.499 Å, and c= 8.499Å) of  $La_2O_3$  JCPDS card 22-0641N (Fig. 3) and monoclinic phase (a= 14.60000 Å,

b=3.71700 Å and c=9.27800 Å) of MeFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>4</sub> (JCPDS card No. 04-016-1572) with the main peak diffraction at d= 2.72 Å (311 plane). XRD analysis of La<sub>2</sub>CuFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> shows that the cubic phase (a=8.3490 Å, b=8.3490 Å, and c=8.3490 Å) is CuFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>4</sub>, JCPDS No 25-0283 (Fig. 4), and the monoclinic phase (a=14.60000 Å, b=3.7170 Å, and c=9.27800 Å) is La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> (22-064) with a main diffraction peak at d = 2.96 Å ((022) plane). The crystallite size was determined by Debye- Scherrer formula:

$$D = \frac{K\chi}{\beta COS\theta} \qquad (1)$$

Where K (=0.89) signifies the shape factor,  $\lambda$  is the wavelength,  $\beta$  signifies the full width at half maximum (FWHM), and  $\theta$  signifies the Bragg scattering angle [28]. The mean crystallite size was computed from the main characteristic peak of each phase, (011) located at 30.8° for La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>, (311) located at 35.5° for MnFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>4</sub> and (022) located at 30.18° for CuFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>4</sub>. The results show that for La<sub>2</sub>MnFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> nanocomposite, the crystallite size of La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> nanoparticles (8.7 nm) is significantly smaller than MnFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>4</sub> (15.77 nm). also for La<sub>2</sub>CuFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> nanocomposite, the crystallite size of La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> nanoparticles (8.7 nm) is significantly smaller than CuFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>4</sub> (13.03 nm).

It was found that the crystallite size did not change dramatically with the nature of transition metal, 8.7, 8.7, 15.77 and 13.03 nm for  $La_2O_3$  in  $La_2MnFe_2O_7$ ,  $La_2O_3$  in  $La_2CuFe_2O_7$ ,  $MnFe_2O_4$ , and  $CuFe_2O_4$  respectively.



**Fig. 2.** FT-IR spectra of octanoic acid (a), La<sub>2</sub>CuFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> (b) and LaMnFe<sub>2</sub>O (c) nanoparticles.



Fig. 3. XRD pattern of La<sub>2</sub>MnFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> nanoparticles.



Fig. 4. XRD pattern of La<sub>2</sub>CuFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> nanoparticles.

# 3.1.3. TEM analysis of $La_2MnFe_2O_7$ and $La_2CuFe_2O_7$

TEM images of La<sub>2</sub>MnFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> and La<sub>2</sub>CuFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> are shown in Fig. 5. According to the TEM images, La<sub>2</sub>MnFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> and La<sub>2</sub>CuFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> catalysts are nanosized with a grain size of 20 nm, respectively. Nanoparticles possess a porous structure with a high specific area. These nanoparticles form many active positions on the surfaces. This kind of morphology with high specific area may enable more possibility to give an excellent host material for inserting and abstracting guest ions for the sake of identifying area-dependent level reactivity, and for taking action as molecular sieves [29].



Fig. 5. TEM images of  $La_2CuFe_2O_7$  (a) and  $La_2MnFe_2O_7$  (b) nanocomposites.

# **3.1.4. DRS** spectrum analysis of La<sub>2</sub>MnFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> and La<sub>2</sub>CuFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> nanocomposites

Fig. 6 shows the graph of  $(\alpha hv)^2$  versus hv obtained from the UV-Vis DRS spectrum of La<sub>2</sub>MnFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> and La<sub>2</sub>CuFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> nanocomposites. The corresponding band gap energy can be determined from the following equation:

$$\alpha h v = A(hv - Eg)^{\frac{1}{2}}$$
<sup>(2)</sup>

For direct electron transfer, A is a constant number. Eg and hv are the energy of the direct band gap and the energy of the incident photon, respectively. The energy of the band gap is estimated to zero from the graph of  $(\alpha hv)^2$  versus hv by extrapolating the linear part  $(\alpha hv)^2$ . As shown in Fig. 6, the optical band gap of La<sub>2</sub>MnFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> and La<sub>2</sub>CuFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> is about 2.8 ev, which is consistent with those reported in the literature [30, 31].



Fig. 6. The  $(\alpha hv)^2$  versus hv plot derived from the UV–Vis DRS spectrum of pure La<sub>2</sub>CuFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> and LaMnFe<sub>2</sub>O composites.

# 3.1.5. Magnetic behavior of $La_2MnFe_2O_7$ and $La_2CuFe_2O_7$

Further elucidation on the room temperature magnetic hysteresis loops of  $La_2MnFe_2O_7$  and  $La_2CuFe_2O_7$  nanocomposites are presented in Fig. 7. The coercivity and saturation magnetization of  $La_2MnFe_2O_7$  were measured to be 1200 Oe and 14.8 emu/g, respectively (Fig. 7a). The saturation magnetization of  $La_2CuFe_2O_7$  was 0.79 emu and its coercion was almost 100 Oe (Fig. 7b) that was smaller, compared to that of  $La_2MnFe_2O_7$ . These two catalysts show ferromagnetic properties [32, 33].



Fig. 7. Room temperature hysteresis loop of  $La_2MnFe_2O_7$  (a) and  $La_2CuFe_2O_7$  (b) nanocomposites.

#### **3.2.** Photodegradation of MV, MG, and EBT dyes

The degradation of MV, MG, and EBT dyes was monitored to investigate photocatalytic activity of the nanocomposites. Some factors like the solution pH, temperature, dye concentration, catalyst amount, and irradiation time affect the optical decomposition of MG, MV, and EBT which are shown in Fig. 8a-e.

#### **3.2.1. Effect of temperature**

Fig. 8a reveals that temperature has a large effect on optical decomposition of MV, MG, and EBT. To improve the photocatalytic effect, the temperature is raised from 25 to 40 °C. With increase in temperature, the motion of dye ions increases. Thus, there was an increase in the penetration of MV, MG, and EBT ions and in the number of absorption sites after the inner structure was inflamed [34].

# **3.2.2.** Effect of MV, MG, and EBT dyes' concentrations

Fig. 8b shows the impact of the concentration of initial MV, MG, and EBT dyes upon their optical decomposition using La<sub>2</sub>MnFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> and La<sub>2</sub>CuFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> (2 mg/L) nanoparticles as absorbent. According to Fig. 8b, with an increase in the initial concentrations of MV, MG, and EBT from 1.32 to 5.28 M, the percentage of photodegradation using La<sub>2</sub>MnFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> MV and La<sub>2</sub>CuFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> reduced from 79% to 42% and 76% to 38%, respectively. For MG dye, photodegradation decreased from 72% to 36% and from 65% to 32% in the presence of  $La_2MnFe_2O_7$  and  $La_2CuFe_2O_7$ . respectively. This photodegradation decrease for EBT dye was from 68% to 32% and from 65% to 33% using La<sub>2</sub>MnFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> and La<sub>2</sub>CuFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> nanoparticles. respectively. As the number of color molecules increased, there was a reduction in the ratio of the number of vacant sites on the surface of the catalysts to the color molecules. Thus, the entire MG, MV and EBT molecules were available at low concentrations with accessible locations on the surface of nanoparticles. With increase in the initial concentrations of dyes, active regions of the absorbent surfaces are saturated and photodegradation percent reduces [35, 36].

#### **3.2.3.** Effect of the initial pH

As shown in Fig. 8c, when the pH of solution increased, there was an increase in the photodegradation percentage of MG and MV. With increasing pH, there was a dissociation of functional groups on the adsorption surface, and there was an electrostatic attraction between the positively charged functional groups of dyes and the negatively charged groups on the surface. As a result, the optical disintegration of the dye increases [36].

### 3.2.4. Effect of irradiation time

The irradiation time impact on the MG and MV photodegradation using  $La_2MnFe_2O_7$  and  $La_2CuFe_2O_7$  (2 mg/L) as absorbents is demonstrated in Fig. 8d. The rate of photodegradation on nanocomposites was increased with an increase in irradiation time up to 60 mins. The maximum value of adhesion occurred at 60 min. Moreover, the impact of increasing time on photodegradation was not considerable because in the early stage of sorption, there were many vacant surface areas for the dye molecules, but the occupied areas started excreting the absorbing molecules in the solvent phase and in the case of absorbing molecules, to achieve the empty surface areas, the existing stimulatory forces were weakened. Thus, the sorption was decreased [37].

### 3.2.5. Effect of catalyst amount

As demonstrated in Fig. 8e, the photodegradation percentages of MG and MV are enhanced with an increase in the amount of  $La_2MnFe_2O_7$  and  $La_2CuFe_2O_7$  nanocomposites from 2.0 to 8.0 mg/L. With an increase in the catalyst value, the upper area of nanocomposites increases and  $La_2MnFe_2O_7$  nanocomposites adsorb more photons on their surface, compared to  $La_2CuFe_2O_7$ . As a result, the absorption of dye molecules on the nanocatalyst surfaces increases and the photodegradation of MG and MV increases [38, 39].

# **3.2.6.** Mechanism of photocatalytic degradation of MG, MV and EBT dyes

The mechanism of photocatalytic degradation of dyes under UV radiations is illustrated in Fig. 9. When UV rays excite electrons in the valence band, they transfer to the conduction band, resulting in holes in valence band, and electrons conduction band. Then they produced oxygen anion free radicals (O2<sup>-</sup>) and hydroxyl free radicals (OH), respectively. Hydrogen peroxide increases the amount of free hydroxyl radicals. Therefore, this addition improves the catalytic efficiency of dye degradation [40].

### 4. Conclusions

In this work,  $La_2MnFe_2O_7$  and  $La_2CuFe_2O_7$ nanocomposites were successfully prepared using a coprecipitation method, and characterized on the basis of FT-IR, XRD, TEM, VSM and DRS analyses. The catalytic activity of the prepared nanocomposites in the degradation of industrial dyes (MG and MV) was investigated under the optimized conditions such as temperature (30 °C), catalyst amount (2.0 mg/L), irradiation time (60 min), dye concentration (1.59  $\times 10^{-3}$  M), pH (=7), and compared with each other. The present study can be a growth path for the development of photocatalytic technology, especially the recyclable magnetic photocatalysts for wastewater treatment.

Table 1 shows the performance of several synthesized photocatalysts with their experimental data [41-45]. As clarified in Table 1, the photocatalytic degradation of malachite green dye using the  $La_2CuFe_2O_7$  and  $LaMnFe_2O$  composites has been compared with that of other photocatalysts reported in the literature. The results showed that  $La_2CuFe_2O_7$  and  $LaMnFe_2O$  nanocomposites are superior to other catalysts for rapid and significant degradation of MG, MV and EBT dyes.

The results of photocatalytic activity of  $La_2MnFe_2O_7$ and  $La_2CuFe_2O_7$  nanocomposites approved the effects of both photocatalysts upon the decomposition of MV, MG and EBT dyes. However,  $La_2MnFe_2O_7$ nanoparticles showed significant degradation.





 $H_2 \mathrm{O} \to H^+ + O H^$  $h_{VB}^+ + OH^- \rightarrow OH^$  $e_{CB} + O_{2\rightarrow}O_2^{-}$ 

 $H_2O_2 + UV \rightarrow 20H$ 



Fig 8. The effects of a temperature, b dye concentration, c pH, **d** irradiation time, and **e** catalyst dose on photodegradation of MV, MG and EBT  $(1.59 \times 10^{-3} \text{ M})$  by of La<sub>2</sub>MnFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> and La<sub>2</sub>CuFe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub> nanocomposites (2 mg/L) at pH = 7, t = 30 °C and irradiation time = 60 min (The expressed constant values of the parameters are related to the curves that the parameter is not investigated in it).



Fig. 9. A possible mechanism for the degradation of dye on the nanoparticles under UV-light irradiation.

No.	Catalysts	Target	Degration (%)	Ref
1	Ce-B/TiO <sub>2</sub>	MG	90 (120 min)	[41]
2	Fe <sub>3</sub> O <sub>4</sub> / SiO <sub>2</sub> /TiO <sub>2</sub>	MG	100 (150 min)	[42]
3	CeO <sub>2</sub> nanoparticles	EBT	99.23 (120 min)	[43]
4	ZnO	MV	99.0 (75 min)	[44]
5	ZnS, ZnS:Fe	MV	91.4/98.8 (120 min)	[45]
6	$La_2MnFe_2O_7$	MV, MG, EBT	99 MV (60 min), 91 MG (60 min), EBT 90 (60 min)	This work
7	La <sub>2</sub> CuFe <sub>2</sub> O <sub>7</sub>	MV, MG, EBT	96 MV (60 min), 87 MG (60 min), 85 EBT (60 min)	This work

Table 1. Degradation performance comparison of MG, MV and EBT dyes by various photocatalysts under UV irradiation.

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