

CHEMISTRY AND CHEMICAL TECHNOLOGY Student Scientific Conference

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SOL-GEL SYNTHESIS: FROM BASICS TO PRACTICAL APPLICATION

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Many inorganic materials, such as oxides, carbides or nitrides, can be prepared by simply mixing starting materials and heating the mixture at elevated temperatures. While this method is relatively straightforward and feasible due to the availability of high temperature furnaces, it suffers from several drawbacks: it requires multiple heating and grinding steps and makes it difficult to achieve a homogeneous distribution of the starting materials due to limited mass transport. One of the synthesis methods that can overcome these difficulties is sol-gel synthesis [1]. This technique allows for atomic-level mixing of starting materials, which ensures possible formation of ternary, quaternary or even more complex structures containing more than four elements.

Sol-gel chemistry involves the creation of ceramics or inorganic polymers from solution by gradually converting liquid precursors into a sol and then into a network structure – gel. There are two types of precursors that can be used in this synthesis, namely metal alkoxides as well as hydrated metal species with small molecules, like citric acid. Many metal alkoxides are unstable in water and tend to form precipitates, which limits their practical application. For that reason, sol-gel synthesis is often conducted in aqueous solutions, using various chelating agents. Moreover, this synthesis is highly versatile, and different modifications, like sol-gel combustion or sol-gel synthesis using different monomers, can also be used.

This work focuses on the preparation of various classes of inorganic materials, including perovskites and spinel structure compounds. Three different sol-gel modifications were used to prepare these materials, namely sol-gel combustion [2], Pechini sol-gel [3, 4] and the sol-gel polyacrylamide-route. Structural, morphological and magnetic properties were characterized for all samples.

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