



Fabrication strategies and Cr(VI) elimination activities of the MOF-derivatives and their composites

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HIGHLIGHTS

- The fabrication strategies of MOF-derivatives and their composites were presented.
- The Cr(VI) removal behaviors of MOF-derivatives and their composites were reviewed.
- The possible mechanisms of Cr(VI) removal via different methods were highlighted.
- The involved challenges and prospects of Cr(VI) removal were proposed.

GRAPHICAL ABSTRACT



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ABSTRACT

Hexavalent chromium (Cr(VI)), as one of the hazardous heavy metals, has attracted increasing attention due to its toxicity, carcinogenicity along with the threat to the health and safety of aquatic organisms. The Cr(VI) removal methods mainly include adsorption and catalytic reduction. Metal-organic frameworks (MOFs) exhibit some merits like large surface area, inherent porous structure and adjustable topology. MOF-derivatives like porous carbon, metal oxides and metal sulfides can retain the merits of their MOFs precursors, which have been used in adsorption, catalysis, as well as energy storage and conversion. This review presented the state-of-the-art status of the MOF-derivatives and their composites for the purpose of Cr(VI) removal, in which the Cr(VI) removal mechanisms over the various MOF-derivatives and their composites were carefully introduced. Finally, the challenges and prospects of MOF derivatives and their composites in Cr(VI) removal from water were proposed.

1. Introduction

Heavy metals contained in industrial wastewater are one of the sources of water pollution [1]. The exposure of long-standing, hardly biodegradable and bioconcentrating heavy metals to the environment will exert negative effects on the ecosystem and human health [2]. As a

typical heavy metal in wastewater, chromium was discharged mainly from the electroplating, photographic material, leather and other industries [3]. Chromium generally presents in the oxidation states of Cr(III) and Cr(VI) [4,5], in which Cr(VI), in the main forms of HCrO_4^- or CrO_4^{2-} (Fig. 1a and 1b) [6], is more hazardous due to its high water solubility and strong carcinogenic effect on most organisms. It is worth

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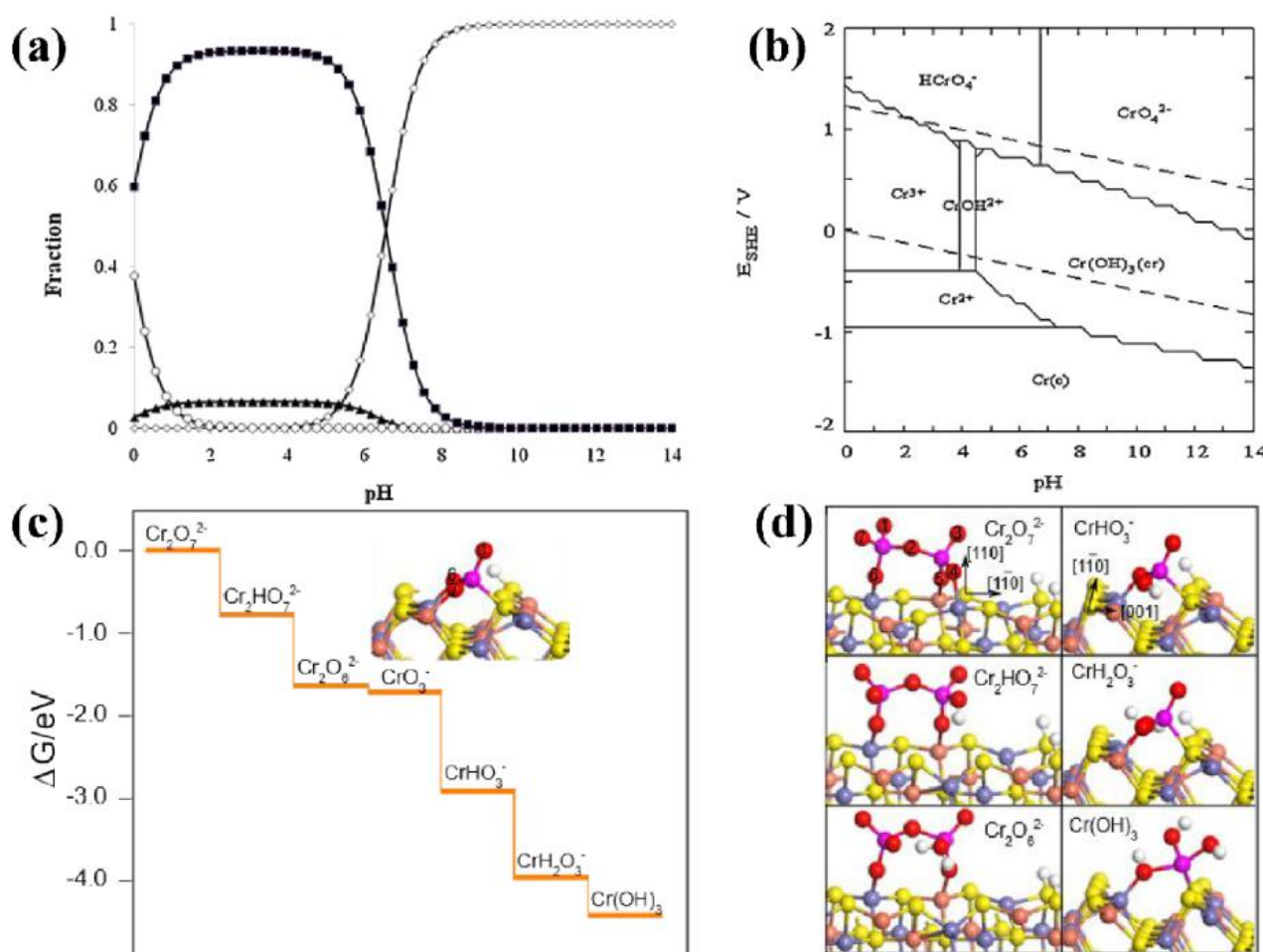


Fig. 1. (a) Dominant region of Cr(VI) chemicals in aqueous solution. (b) Pourbaix diagram for different chemical forms of Cr. [CrO_4^{2-}] = 2.00 mM, $I = 0.005$ M and $T = 25$ °C. [6]. (◇) CrO_4^{2-} , (▲) $\text{Cr}_2\text{O}_7^{2-}$, (○) H_2CrO_4 and (■) HCrO_4^- . (c) The free energy surface and (d) optimized intermediates structures by DFT modelling of the Cr(VI) reduction dynamics. [21]. (Yellow, red, white, purple, blue, and orange spheres represent S, O, H, Cr, Fe, and Cu atoms, respectively.) (For interpretation of the references to colour in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the web version of this article.)

noting that Cr(VI) can easily penetrate into the body through digestion, the respiratory tract, skin and mucous membranes [7,8]. The Cr(VI) concentrations generally ranged from 0.5 mg L⁻¹ in surface water to 270.0 mg L⁻¹ in wastewater [9,10]. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that the limited concentration of total chromium is 50 µg L⁻¹ in drinking water guidelines [11,12]. It was urgent to eliminate Cr(VI), even total Cr from water to guarantee the sustainable development and ecological environment. Up to now, the methods of Cr(VI) removal mainly include adsorption [13,14], reduction [15,16], chemical precipitation [17,18] and membrane filtration [19,20]. Among them, the most preferred and widely investigated methods for effectively treating Cr(VI)-containing wastewater are adsorption or reducing Cr(VI) to Cr(III). It was deemed that Cr(III) displayed lower toxicity and could be easily removed as Cr(OH)_3 precipitates under alkaline even neutral conditions, which was also confirmed the feasibility by density functional theory (DFT) modeling (Fig. 1c and 1d) [21]. Generally, the low-cost and easily available activated carbon and chitosan are used to accomplish adsorptive removal of Cr(VI) [22–24]. However, they suffered from limited adsorption capacities and adsorption efficiencies. As the common catalysts, precious metals (like Pd, Au) and ferrous metals (like Fe⁰) are often introduced for catalytic Cr(VI) reduction with the aid of formic acid [25–27], while the leakage of precious metals or ferrous ions may result in the potential risk of secondary pollution. In addition, photocatalytic Cr(VI) reduction achieved over semiconductor photocatalysts (like TiO_2 and MoS_2) [28,29] usually suffered from smaller specific surface area and lower

photocatalytic reduction efficiency.

Metal-organic frameworks (MOFs) are porous crystalline materials assembled from metal ions/clusters and organic linkers [30], which has aroused wide interests in catalysis [31,32], adsorption [33–35], gas separation [36–38] and so on [39–44] due to their characteristics like large surface area, thermal stability, polymetallic sites and inherent porous structure [45,46]. Over the years, besides the earliest and most popular solvothermal method, some green and economical synthesis methods have been developed to promote the development and application of MOFs. Researchers continually explore efficient, economical, and high-throughput synthesis techniques to shorten the reaction time, avoid or reduce the use of organic solvents and achieve quantitative yield [47–49], including mechanochemical synthesis [50], microwave-assisted synthesis [51], sonochemical synthesis [52] and electrochemical synthesis [53].

Although MOFs have exhibited some outstanding performances, there are still some disadvantages to be overcome. For example, most MOFs possess micropores instead of mesopores, which is not conducive to the access of target pollutants. In addition, many MOFs are unstable in water, in which the destroy of bonding between metal ions and organic linkers may result in secondary pollution. In order to further improve the properties of MOFs, the preparation of derivatives with MOFs as precursors have received increasing attentions [54–56]. Firstly, the large-scale production strategies provide enough low-cost and plentiful MOFs for the preparation of derivatives. Secondly, the unique morphologies of MOFs can be further maintained well in the

obtained MOF-derivatives under appropriate treatment conditions [57]. MOF-derived materials possess various advantages originated from their templates, such as high porosity, ultra-high surface area and adjustable pore size. As well, MOF-derived materials can overcome the instability of MOFs to accomplish long cycle life [58]. MOF-derived materials have demonstrated good performances in the fields of catalysis [59–61], gas storage/separation [62,63], adsorption [64–66], along with energy storage and conversion [67–69]. Different MOF-derivatives like porous carbon materials, metal oxides, metal sulfides, and their composites can be obtained via different fabrication strategies.

Some cases illustrated that MOF-derivatives and their composites could be adopted for water treatment, including adsorptive or catalytic removal of contaminants like organic pollutants and heavy metal ions from water [70]. For example, N-doped carbon with MOF-5 as a template was used to achieve high-performance adsorption toward methylene blue (MB) [71]. Dong and coworkers utilized Pd@NPC (NPC derived from Ni-BTC) to remove chlorophenols via catalytic hydrochlorination [72]. Luo and coworkers prepared ZnO/ZnFe₂O₄/C with Fe^{III}-modified MOF-5 as a precursor to accomplish efficient uptake toward Pb(II) [73]. At present, the researches concerning the Cr(VI) removal with MOF-derivatives and their composites are tapping a new door, which will arise increasing interests from the researchers in the fields of wastewater treatment and material science.

In this paper, the state-of-the-art of MOF-derivatives for adsorption, photoreduction and catalytic reduction toward Cr(VI) are summarized and listed in Table 1. MOFs-derived metal oxides and metal sulfides materials (like ZnS, In₂S₃, ZnO and Fe₂O₃), porous carbon materials (like Ni@carbon, Fe_{0.72}^(O)Fe_{2.28}^(III)C, Cu-carbon, nZVI@C), and some corresponding composite materials (like NZVI@ZD, PANI@NC-600) are discussed in detail. The involved reaction mechanisms and the influence factors toward Cr(VI) removal performances are demonstrated in Scheme 1. Finally, the challenges and prospects of MOF-derivatives for Cr(VI) removal are proposed and clarified.

2. Adsorptive removal

Adsorption has aroused wide attention due to the great availability of low-cost adsorbents, easy operation and high efficiency. In recent years, various adsorbents like activated carbon [87], lignocellulosic materials [88] and inorganic materials [89] are developed to achieve Cr(VI) adsorption. However, the relatively small specific surface area and large pores could inhibit the Cr(VI) removal efficiency. Some MOF-derived porous metal oxides and metal sulfides, porous carbon materials and layered materials with large specific surface area and adsorption active sites are favorable for Cr(VI) adsorption [90,91].

Table 1

The Cr(VI) removal performance of MOFs derivatives and their composites.

Derivatives	MOF precursors	Removal methods	Cr(VI) adsorption capacity (mg g ⁻¹)/reduction efficiency (%)	Initial concentration (mg L ⁻¹)	pH	Time (min)	Ref
P-Fe ₂ O ₃	MOFs(Fe)	Adsorption	175.5*	10–80	5	–	[74]
Ni/Co-LDH	ZIF-67	Adsorption	99.9*	10–80	–	–	[75]
PANI@NC-600	UiO-66	Adsorption	198.04*	40–160	1	480	[76]
nZVI@C	MIL-100(Fe)	Adsorption and reduction	206*	–	3	1440	[77]
Fe _{0.72} ^(O) Fe _{2.28} ^(III) C	Fe-MOFs	Adsorption and reduction	354.6*	30–80	2	120	[78]
NZVI@ZD	ZIF-67	Adsorption and reduction	226.5*	5–600	5	180	[79]
ZnS	ZIF-L	Photoreduction	100**	20	4	30	[80]
In ₂ S ₃	MIL-68	Photoreduction	100**	10	6	15	[81]
ZnO	HUT-11, HUT-12	Photoreduction	100**	10	–	120	[82]
Cu@C-550	HKUST-1	Catalytic reduction	100**	200	–	15	[83]
Ni@carbon 450	Ni-MOF	Catalytic reduction	100**	100	2	30	[84]
Ni@N-CNTs/N-G-800	Ni-MIL	Catalytic reduction	99.6**	50	–	50	[85]
PdCu/NCG	ZIF-8	Catalytic reduction	100**	130	2	7	[86]

Note: HUT-11, HUT-12: Zn-MOFs ([Zn₅(μ₃-OH)(BTC)₃(Phen)₄]·5H₂O: HUT-11 and [Zn₄(μ₄-O)(BTC)₂(phen)₂]·4H₂O·4H₂O: HUT-12)

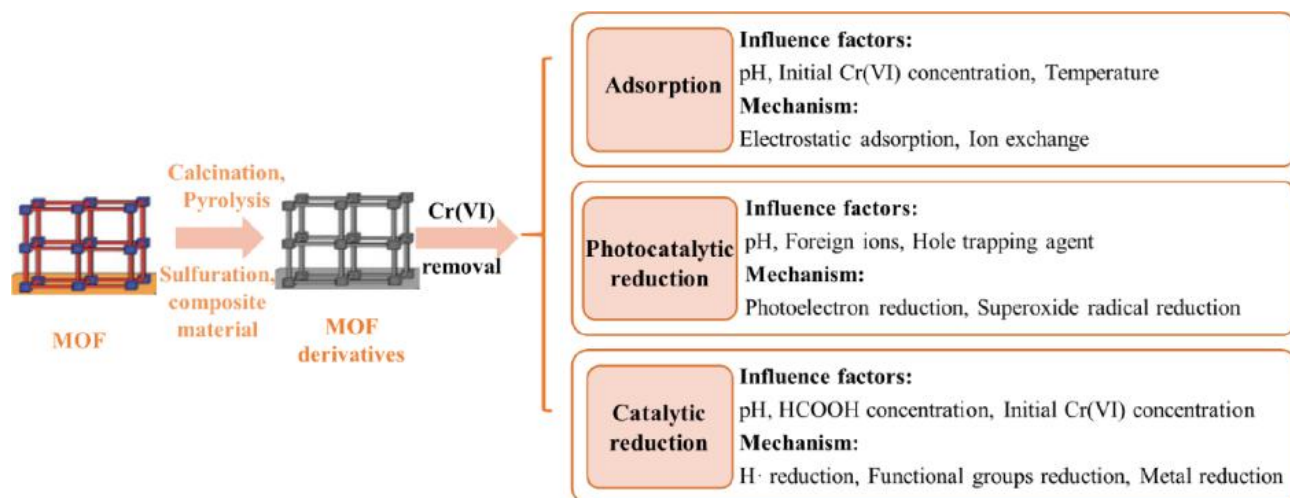
BTC = 1,3,5-benzenetricarboxylic acid, phen = 1,10-phenanthroline; HKUST-1(Cu): Cu₃BTC₂; NZVI@ZD: NZVI@derivative of ZIF-67 (ZD); Ni@N-CNTs/N-G-800: Ni@N-doped graphene-CNT frameworks pyrolyzed at 800 °C; Ni/Co-LDH: Ni/Co-layered double hydroxide; PdCu/NCG: PdCu/N-doped carbon/graphene

* Cr(VI) adsorption capacity (mg g⁻¹); ** Cr(VI) reduction efficiency (%)

2.1. Metal oxides and their composites

Maghemite (γ-Fe₂O₃), obtained from the oxidation of diagenetic magnetite, is one of the naturally existing iron oxides, which can be commonly found in tropical and subtropical soils [92,93]. γ-Fe₂O₃ demonstrates some excellent merits like low-cost production, environment-friendly properties, magnetic characteristic and difficult to corrosion [94]. Many γ-Fe₂O₃ nanostructures like nanorods and nanowires have been investigated [95,96], which have aroused wide interest in adsorption [97,98].

It was deemed that enhancing specific surface area and/or functional groups of the adsorbents can accomplish boosted adsorption performances. Wen and co-workers [74] facilely prepared porous Fe₂O₃ (P-Fe₂O₃) microcubes with large specific surface area (155 m² g⁻¹) and abundant Fe₂O₃ nanoparticles by annealing Prussian blue (PB) microcubes at 350 °C. According to PXRD and selected area electron diffraction (SEAD) results, the obtained P-Fe₂O₃ microcubes were built up of cubic spinel γ-Fe₂O₃ nanoparticles, which were further confirmed by SEM and TEM images (Fig. 2b and 2c). It is well-known that the surface charge exert great effect on the adsorption performance [99]. The pH value of the zero-charge point of P-Fe₂O₃ was 7.2 (Fig. 2d). At pH < 7.2, the surface charge of P-Fe₂O₃ was positive because of the protonation of the oxygen-containing groups under acidic environment. On the contrary, the functional groups on the surface of P-Fe₂O₃ were deprotonated at pH > 7.2, which enable the surface charge of P-Fe₂O₃ to be negative [100]. Specific surface area and pore volume are important parameters to assess the adsorption capacity of adsorbent [101]. The prepared P-Fe₂O₃ showed a larger specific surface area (155 m² g⁻¹) than those of both commercial α-Fe₂O₃ (17 m² g⁻¹) and Prussian blue (3.7 m² g⁻¹). The inherited porous framework and large surface area of the P-Fe₂O₃ will facilitate the transport of pollutants to the internal voids. The maximum Cr(VI) adsorption capacity over P-Fe₂O₃ was 175.5 mg g⁻¹ at pH = 5.0 (Fig. 2e). The adsorption process of P-Fe₂O₃ toward Cr(VI) was spontaneous (ΔG° (Gibbs free energy change) values (–3.55 kJ mol⁻¹ at 298 K, –3.82 kJ mol⁻¹ at 313 K, and –4.16 kJ mol⁻¹ at 328 K)), endothermic (ΔH° (standard enthalpy change) = 2.56 kJ mol⁻¹) and entropy increment (ΔS° (standard entropy change) = 22.4 J mol⁻¹ K⁻¹). When pH < 7.2, the existed HCrO₄⁻ and CrO₄²⁻ were inclined to bind with P-Fe₂O₃ because of the electrostatic interactions. The adsorption capacity of P-Fe₂O₃ toward Cr(VI) decreased with the increase of pH, which can be assigned to the declined electrostatic attractions. The ion exchange between hydroxyl groups on the surface of P-Fe₂O₃ and Cr(VI) ions was also accountable for Cr(VI) adsorption [102,103]. The adsorption mechanism was confirmed by EDX elemental mapping and XPS analysis. The EDX



Scheme 1. Cr(VI) removal with MOF-derivatives and their composites.

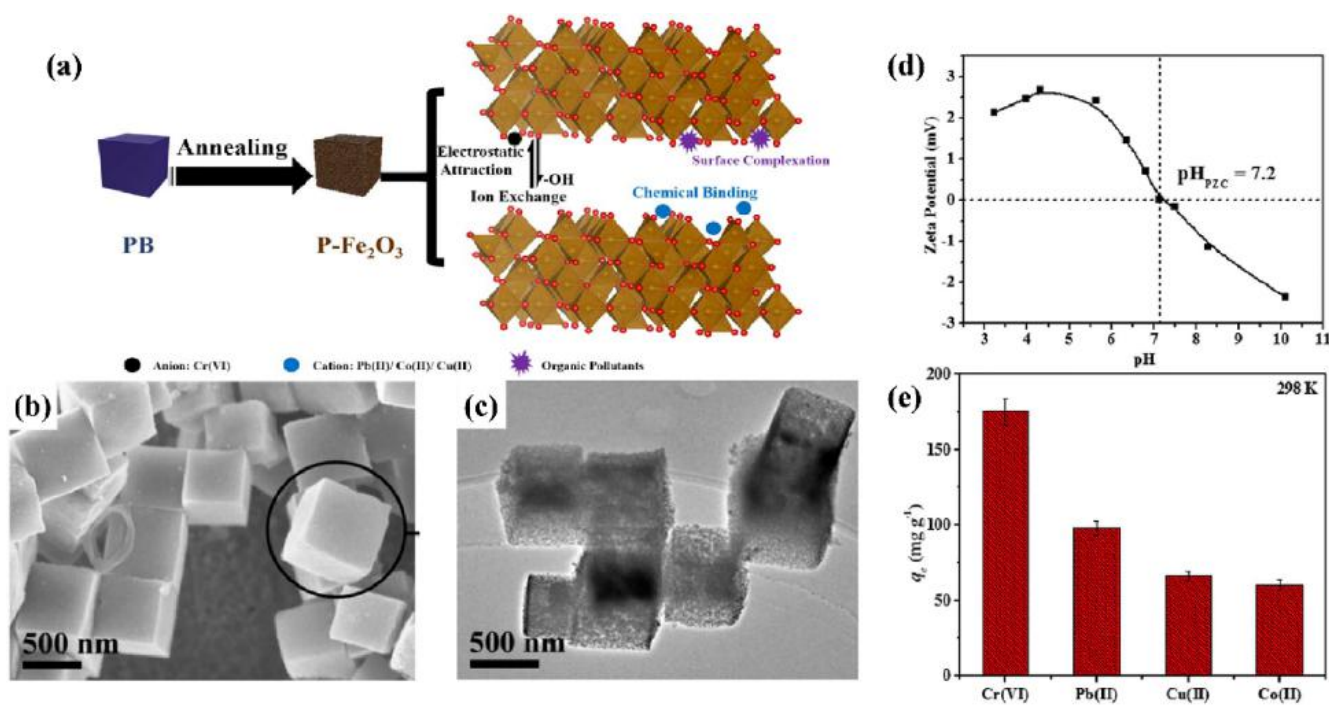


Fig. 2. Synthetic process and proposed reaction mechanism toward Cr(VI) adsorption (a); SEM (b) and TEM (c) image of P-Fe₂O₃. The zeta potential of P-Fe₂O₃ under different pH values (d); The adsorption capacities toward Cr(VI), Pb(II), Cu(II) and Co(II) over P-Fe₂O₃ [74].

elemental mappings demonstrated the distribution of Fe, O, Cr after adsorption and stability of P-Fe₂O₃ microcubes. In XPS analysis, the peaks of FeO₆ at 529.9 eV shifted to 530.1 eV as the result of the formation of Cr-O after adsorption. In addition, the reduction of Cr(VI) to Cr(III) did not occur during Cr(VI) adsorption on nano-maghemite [104,105]. Except for Cr(VI) adsorption, P-Fe₂O₃ also achieved elimination of metal cations (Pb(II), Cu(II) and Co(II)) and organic pollutants (MB, humic acid (HA), rhodamine B (RhB), and methyl orange (MO)) from aqueous solutions. This work facily fabricated low-cost and easily available P-Fe₂O₃ from PB microcubes for pollutants removal, which provided a significant strategy to obtain inexpensive MOF derivatives for water purification in natural environment.

Recently, layered double hydroxides (LDHs), with layered structure as well as large surface area and ion exchange capacity, have been developed as the potential adsorbents [106–108]. Cheng and co-workers [75] prepared dodecahedral Ni/Co-layered double hydroxide

(NiCo-LDH) by mixing Ni(NO₃)₂ with ZIF-67 and being ultrasonicated for 45 min (Fig. 3a). The formation mechanism of NiCo-LDH could be described as: Ni²⁺ ions can be hydrolyzed to produce protons when Ni(NO₃)₂ was mixed with the ethanol suspension of ZIF-67. The formed protons could corrode ZIF-67 and promote NO₃⁻ oxidation under acid condition. Then, the Co²⁺ in ZIF-67 was oxidized to Co³⁺ because of its lower reduction potential. Subsequently, the OH⁻ ions increased as the H⁺ ions were consumed, which enabled the coprecipitates of divalent and trivalent metal ions around ZIF-67 to form LDH layer on the surface of ZIF-67. The inner structure of ZIF-67 gradually collapsed as the reaction went on to yield hollow dodecahedral structure [109].

The results of adsorption kinetics experiments revealed higher removal efficiencies for adsorbing Cr(VI) than NiCo₂O₄-NiO (NiCo-LDH calculated at 350 °C), and the adsorption isotherms experiments demonstrated the Cr(VI) adsorption fitted with Langmuir model. The zeta potential values of NiCo₂O₄-NiO and NiCo-LDH were determined as

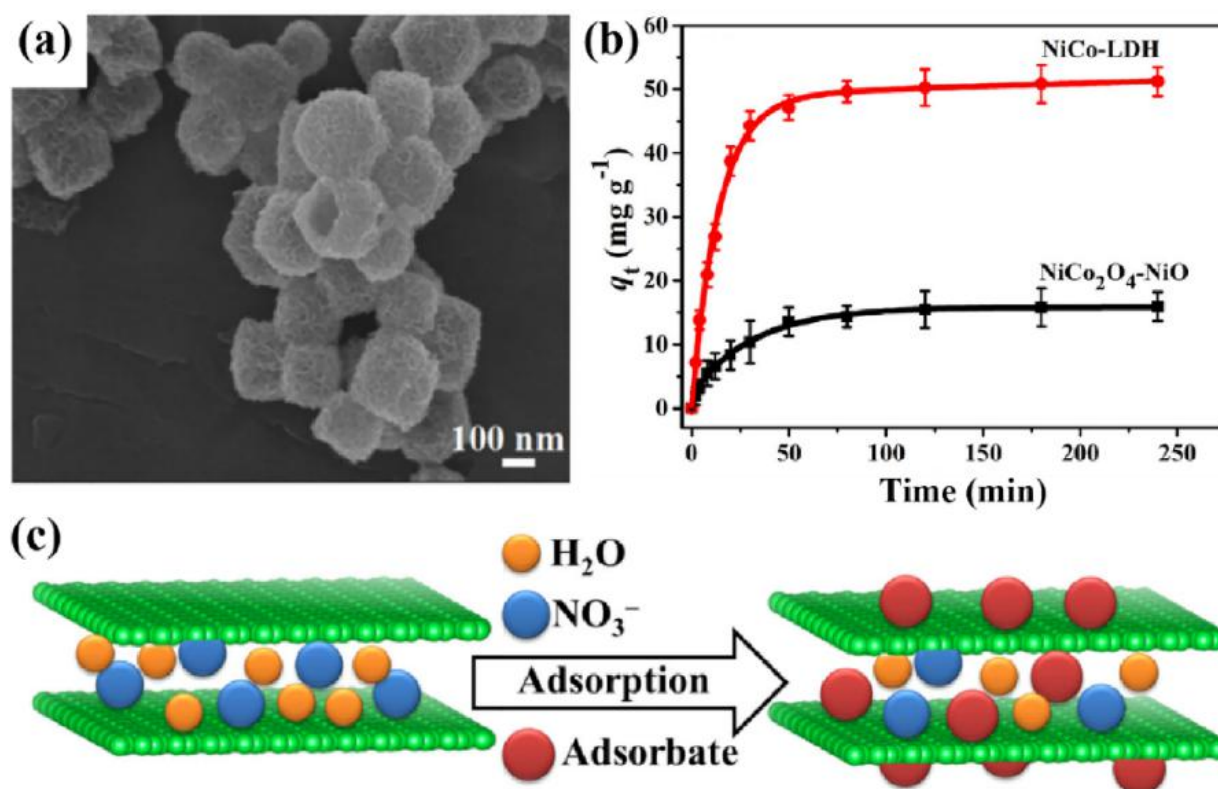


Fig. 3. SEM image of NiCo-LDH (a); Adsorption capacity of NiCo-LDH and NiCo₂O₄-NiO changes with different times (b); The adsorption mechanism of NiCo-LDH (c) [75].

23.6 and 16.8 mV at pH = 7, respectively, which indicated the electrostatic attraction between Cr(VI) and the prepared NiCo-LDH. Although the zeta potential showed that the surface charge of NiCo-LDH was slightly less positive than NiCo₂O₄-NiO, NiCo-LDH exhibited larger Cr(VI) adsorption capacity (99.9 mg g⁻¹) according to the calculation of Langmuir model, due to the larger SBET (267 m² g⁻¹) and layered porous nanostructures (Fig. 3b). After five cycles, adsorption efficiencies toward Cr(VI) declined from 91.6% to 67.5%. In the FTIR spectrum, NiCo-LDH has a strong band at 1385 cm⁻¹, which corresponded to the N-O vibrational peak of NO₃⁻. However, this typical peak decreased significantly after adsorption, indicating that some NO₃⁻ ions in the NiCo-LDH layers might be substituted by Cr(VI) ions. Therefore, the mechanism was speculated that Cr(VI) adsorption over NiCo-LDH was mainly ascribed to electrostatic interaction and ion exchange (Fig. 3c). Besides Cr(VI), NiCo-LDH can also accomplish efficient adsorption toward anionic organic pollutants like Congo red (CR), which can be potentially adopted to achieve effective removal toward pollutants with negative charge. The fabrication of NiCo-LDH provided a design methodology for adsorbents and enhanced removal efficiency for anionic organic pollutants as well as Cr(VI) ions.

2.2. PANI/N-doped carbon nanoparticles

As a conductive polymer, polyaniline (PANI) has been investigated for Cr(VI) reduction due to the rich reductive amine groups and oxidative imine groups [110,111]. In addition, PANI displays great stability under the acidic condition, which further benefits for Cr(VI) removal. Among different Zr-based MOFs, UiO-66 is a cubic porous MOF based on Zr₆O₄(OH)₄ nodes and 1,4-benzodicarboxylates [112]. Some merits like aqueous stability, low-cost production, and large specific surface area enable UiO-66 to be a promising precursor [113–115]. Zhang and co-workers [76] prepared N-doped carbon nanoparticles (NC) using UiO-66 as a template, and then polyaniline (PANI) was

introduced to modify NC by in-situ polymerization (Fig. 4a and 4b). The surface area of NC-600 (being treated at 600 °C) was 1609.1 m² g⁻¹, much larger than those of NC treated at 400 °C, 800 °C and 1000 °C, as well as commercially activated carbon (990.8 m² g⁻¹). NC-600 also demonstrated the largest *meso*-porosity, which may be conducive for pollutant adsorption. After modified by PANI, the specific surface area of PANI@NC-600 can still be 600.8 m² g⁻¹, which was higher than pristine UiO-66 and PANI. When pH = 1, the adsorption efficiency toward Cr(VI) was up to 99%, and the calculated maximum adsorption capacity reaches 198.04 mg g⁻¹ (Fig. 4c and 4d). After 5 cycles, the Cr(VI) removal efficiency was still maintained at about 84.52%, and the adsorption capacity can also reach 169.04 mg g⁻¹. The mechanisms of PANI@NC-600 to remove Cr(VI) were proposed as two steps: (i) Cr(VI) ions quickly diffused to the surface of PANI@NC-600 and then were adsorbed on the protonated sublayer; (ii) Cr(VI) ions could react with the amine groups of PANI and be reduced into less toxic Cr(III) ions, which were also adsorbed on the surface of PANI@NC-600 and chelated with the imino groups (Fig. 4e). The successful construction of PANI/N-doped carbon nanoparticles and the superior adsorption capacity afford novel insight into the composites of MOF derivatives and the benefits of modification.

2.3. Fe-based carbon materials and their composites

So far, various Fe-based materials like zero-valent iron, ferrites, and iron-based metallic glasses have been proven to be effective adsorbents and catalysts for pollutants removal [116–119]. Considering their merits like easy separation with the aid of magnetic field, facile preparation and abundant active sites, both Fe(II) and Fe(0) have been used as Cr(VI) reduction agents [120,121]. In recent years, direct calcination or pyrolysis of MOFs (without using any additional carbon source) have been used to prepare MOF derived metals or metal oxide/carbon composites. Fe-MOF derived porous carbon materials can

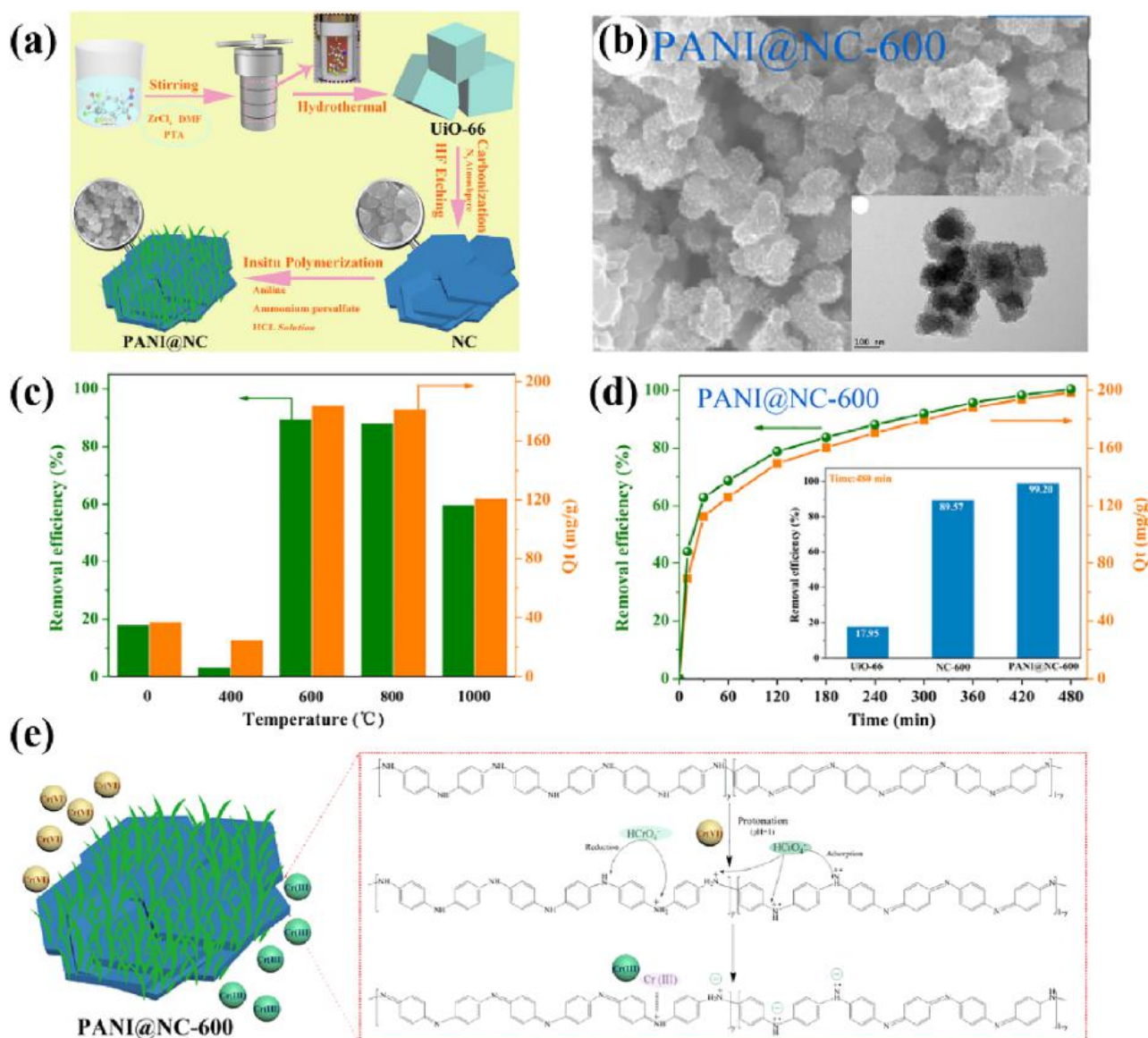


Fig. 4. SEM (a) and TEM (b) images of PANI@NC-600; The different Cr(VI) removal performances of various adsorbents (c); the performance of PANI@NC-600 toward Cr(VI) removal and removal rate by UiO-66, NC-600, and PANI@NC-600 at 480 min (d); The mechanism of Cr(VI) removal by PANI@NC-600 (e) [76].

combine the advantages of Fe-based materials with carbon materials, which can promote the Cr(VI) removal ability. The Cr(VI) ions with low concentration can be concentrated via the high adsorption capacity of carbon materials, which can be subsequently reduced to Cr(III) by the iron species in Fe-doped carbon material.

2.3.1. Pristine porous carbon derived from Fe-MOFs

To overcome the poor physicochemical properties like lower specific area and aggregation of conventional Fe_3O_4 and other Fe-based NPs, Yang and co-workers [78] synthesized Fe-MOF derived porous $Fe_{0.72}^{(0)}Fe_{2.28}^{(III)}C$ in vacuum or under N_2 atmosphere at 750 °C for 4 h, in which the formation of Fe with low valence like Fe(0) and Fe(II) could be conducive to achieve higher efficiencies [122]. A uniform spindle-like shape of $Fe_{0.72}^{(0)}Fe_{2.28}^{(III)}C$ was observed in SEM images (Fig. 5a), and HRTEM image also displayed nanoparticles coated with graphitized carbon [123]. The specific surface area of $Fe_{0.72}^{(0)}Fe_{2.28}^{(III)}C$ ($100.42 \text{ m}^2 \text{ g}^{-1}$) was higher than that of Fe-MOF ($62.70 \text{ m}^2 \text{ g}^{-1}$). The vibrating sample magnetometer (VSM) analysis confirmed ferromagnetic behavior of $Fe_{0.72}^{(0)}Fe_{2.28}^{(III)}C$ with a larger saturation magnetization of 90.7 emu g^{-1} .

When pH = 2, the maximum adsorption capacity of $Fe_{0.72}^{(0)}Fe_{2.28}^{(III)}C$ toward Cr(VI) was 354.6 mg g^{-1} . With the initial pH value increasing, the maximum adsorption amount of Cr(VI) gradually decreased (Fig. 5b). Under the acidic conditions, the surface of $Fe_{0.72}^{(0)}Fe_{2.28}^{(III)}C$ underwent a deprotonation reaction to be positively charged, which further enhanced the Cr(VI) adsorption via the electrostatic interactions. The kinetic and isotherm investigations on Cr(VI) removal illustrated that Cr(VI) adsorption process was ascribed to pseudo-second-order kinetic model and was well fitted with Langmuir model [124], with the calculated maximum adsorption amount being 354.6 mg g^{-1} . The Cr(VI) adsorption ability of $Fe_{0.72}^{(0)}Fe_{2.28}^{(III)}C$ decreased slightly in tap water and surface water due to the co-existence of low-content anions and organics. However, it is worth noting that Cr(VI) removal capacity in chemical oxygen demand sample wastewater produced by laboratory containing H_2SO_4 , Ag_2SO_4 , $HgSO_4$, and $K_2Cr_2O_7$ increased to 336.7 mg g^{-1} . According to XRD analysis, $HgCrO_4$ and $Ag_2Cr_2O_7$ formed by reaction between Hg^{2+} , Ag^+ and $Cr_2O_7^{2-}$, $HCrO_4^-$ were adsorbed onto $Fe_{0.72}^{(0)}Fe_{2.28}^{(III)}C$, which contributed to the efficient Cr(VI) removal.

In order to explore the reusability, $Fe_{0.72}^{(0)}Fe_{2.28}^{(III)}C$ was treated and recovered with 1 M NaOH and magnetic field. Considering that the

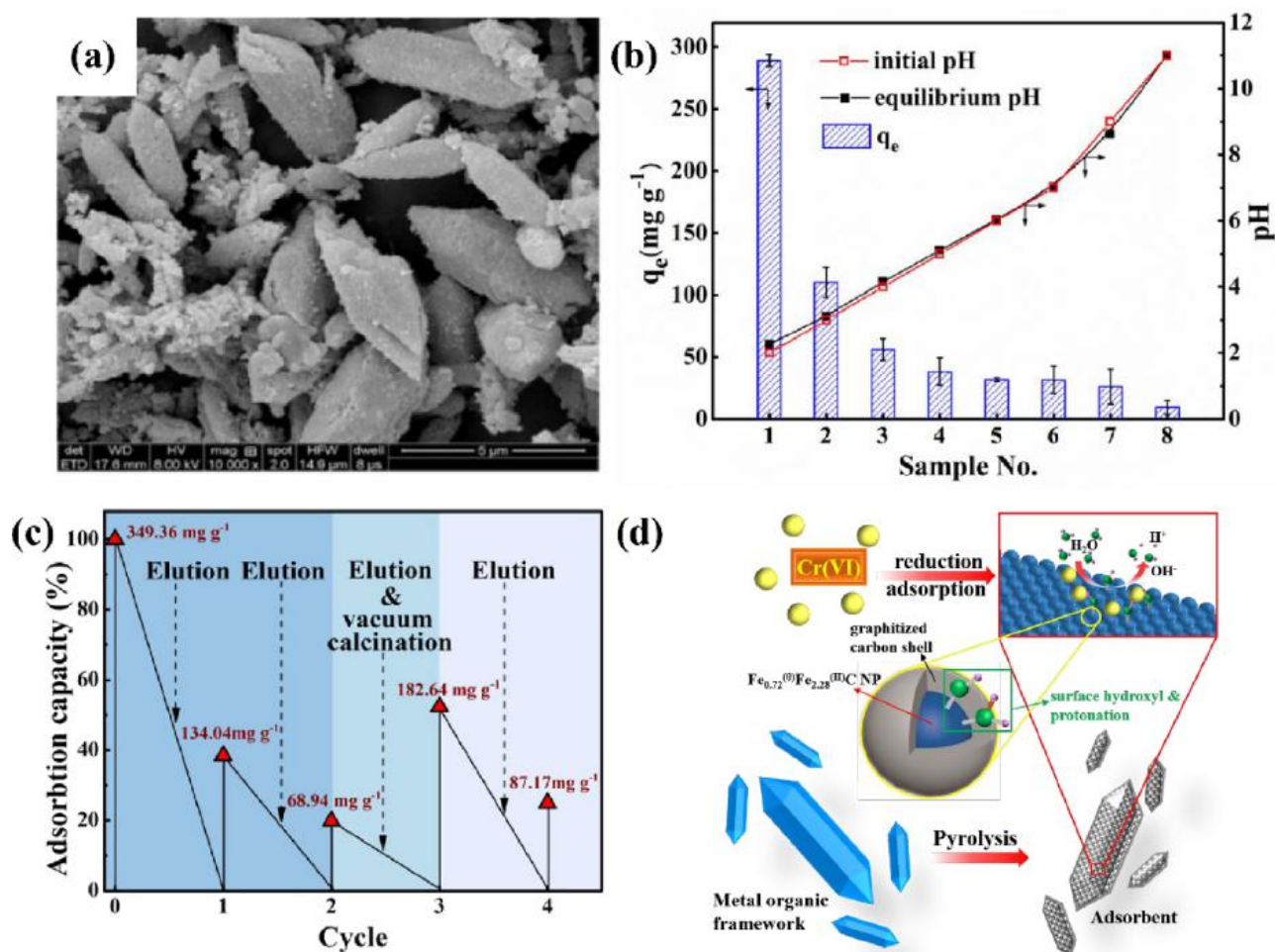
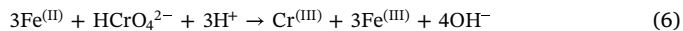
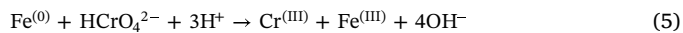
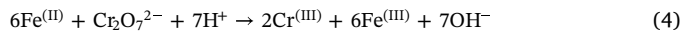
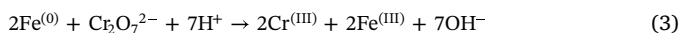


Fig. 5. SEM image of Fe_{0.72}(⁰)Fe_{2.28}(^{III})C (a); Effect of initial pH values on Cr(VI) removal (b); The cyclic performance of Fe_{0.72}(⁰)Fe_{2.28}(^{III})C (c); Cr(VI) removal mechanism over Fe_{0.72}(⁰)Fe_{2.28}(^{III})C [78].

Cr(VI) removal capacity decreased with each successive cycle (Fig. 5c), besides being treated with NaOH, calcination under vacuum at 750 °C was adopted to maintain the adsorption performance. In the third cycle, Fe_{0.72}(⁰)Fe_{2.28}(^{III})C was both eluted with NaOH and calcined under vacuum at 750 °C to resume the adsorption capacity, in which the adsorption capacity after third cycle still reached 182.64 mg g⁻¹, much higher than that only generated with NaOH. On the basis of XPS results, it was found that Cr(VI) and Cr(III) exist on the surface of Fe_{0.72}(⁰)Fe_{2.28}(^{III})C after adsorption, which demonstrated that part of the adsorbed Cr(VI) was reduced to lower toxic Cr(III) in the process of adsorption. Therefore, the possible mechanism for Cr(VI) removal from water could be proposed: Cr(VI) was firstly adsorbed on the Fe_{0.72}(⁰)Fe_{2.28}(^{III})C via electrostatic interaction (Fig. 5d). Partial Fe(0) and Fe(II) in the Fe_{0.72}(⁰)Fe_{2.28}(^{III})C can convert Cr(VI) to Cr(III) via reduction reaction, which were further oxidized to Fe(III). At the same time, OH⁻ was generated, causing an increase in pH and produced Cr(OH)₃ precipitates (Eqs. 1–7). This work affords a strategy for preparing Fe-containing carbon adsorbents with MOFs as precursor via calcination to achieve efficient Cr(VI) adsorption and chemical reduction by Fe(0) and Fe(II) inside the structure.



Considering that the traditional nZVI-encapsulated carbon (nZVI@carbon) adsorbents usually suffered from the drawbacks like low Fe content, being easily oxidized, easy aggregation and small specific surface area [125], Gu and co-workers [126] adopted MIL-100(Fe) as template to prepare nZVI@C by one-step carbothermal reduction. The abundant ordered Fe-O clusters in MIL-100(Fe) can achieve the high content and uniform distribution of nZVI in porous carbon skeleton with large specific surface area. The size of encapsulated nZVI can be regulated by different pyrolysis temperatures from 700 to 900 °C. Due to the well-controllable morphology of carbon framework and suitable size of magnetic particles, the as-prepared Fe@C-800 (carbonization temperature at 800 °C) displayed best adsorption capacity toward Cr(VI) (206 mg g⁻¹) (Fig. 6d). The surface charge of Fe@C-800 was positive due to the protonation reaction at pH < 5.12 (Fig. 6c), and the surface of Fe@C-800 changed from positively charged to negatively charged as the pH values increased. The mechanism of removing Cr(VI) from water over Fe@C-800 was comparable to that of Fe_{0.72}(⁰)Fe_{2.28}(^{III})C. The anionic Cr(VI) ions were adsorbed on the positive surface of Fe@C-800 with the aid of the electrostatic interactions, and

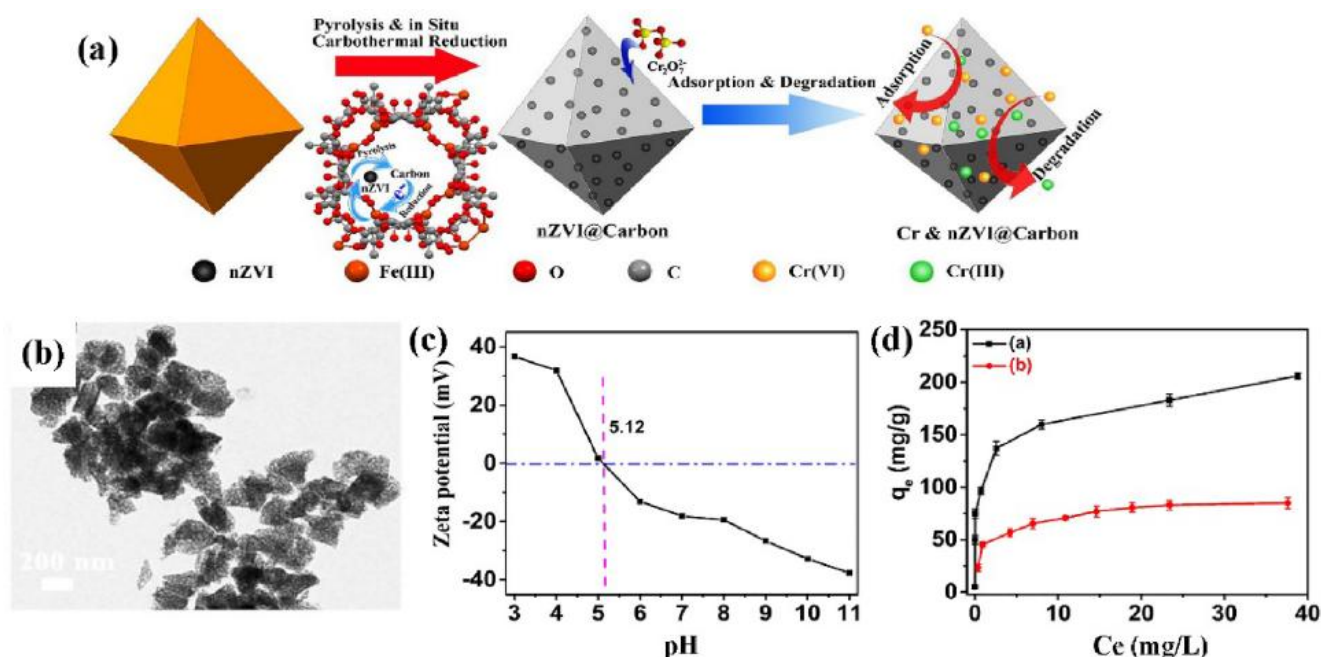


Fig. 6. Synthetic process and proposed reaction mechanism toward Cr(VI) removal (a); TEM image of Fe@C-800 (b); Zeta potentials of Fe@C-800 at different pH values (c); Adsorption isotherm of Fe@C-800 and C-800 for the Cr(VI) adsorption (d) [126].

some adsorbed Cr(VI) ions were reduced into Cr(III) to yield $\text{Cr}(\text{OH})_3$ precipitates. This work highlighted the Cr(VI) adsorption and in-situ reduction over Fe@C-800 by converting nZVI to Fe_2O_3 were achieved without the addition of the electron donor acid.

2.3.2. NZVI/MOFs derivatives

Nanoscale zero-valent iron (NZVI) was one of the promising materials for Cr(VI) removal [127]. As well, the carbonized derivatives of zeolitic imidazole framework-67 (ZIF-67) with zeolite-type pore structure could maintain the unique characteristics of MOFs and generate larger pore size. Wen and co-workers [79] prepared NZVI and porous core-shell carbon composite NZVI@ZD (the derivative of ZIF-67) through carbonization with core-shell structure NZVI@ZIF-67 as a precursor (Fig. 7a). In detail, the NZVI was mixed with the organic ligand 2-methylimidazole, then NZVI@ZIF-67 was obtained by in situ reaction at room temperature. NZVI@ZD was synthesized after carbonizing under a nitrogen flow at 800 °C for 2 h. NZVI@ZD exhibited highly porous structure and large specific surface area ($254.5 \text{ m}^2 \text{ g}^{-1}$). Both the formed Co nanoparticles in the composites and the encapsulated NZVI exhibited good dispersibility in the carbon substrate, in which the existence of NZVI made the NZVI@ZD display high magnetic properties. In addition, the transformation of the carbonized NZVI@ZD from micropores to mesopores was achieved through carbonization.

The maximum adsorption capacity of NZVI@ZD toward Cr(VI) was calculated as 226.5 mg g^{-1} via Langmuir isothermal model, which was larger than that of NZVI@ZIF-67 (36.53 mg g^{-1}). The pH values of the Cr(VI) solution exerted significant influence on the adsorption capacity of NZVI@ZD, in which the removal efficiency under acidic condition was higher than that in alkaline environment (Fig. 7b). Under acidic conditions, the positive zeta potential of NZVI@ZD enhanced the adsorptive interactions toward anionic Cr(VI). The Cr(VI) removal mechanism was proposed in Fig. 7d. It was known that the size of Cr(VI) ($\text{Cr}_2\text{O}_7^{2-}$) is ca. 7.5 \AA [128], which could be adsorbed into mesoporous ZD shell and gradually entered the interior structure through electrostatic interaction. The contact between NZVI core and Cr(VI) induced the Cr(VI) reduction into Cr(III) to form $\text{Cr}(\text{OH})_3$ (Fig. 7c). Additionally,

ZD-rich pores can also provide the abundant active sites, which corresponded to the increased both reduction rate and efficiency. In this study, the magnetic NZVI@ZD can encapsulate the adsorbed Cr(VI) and the formed Cr(III) to achieve the efficient total chromium removal in water and easy separation from solution.

3. Photocatalytic reduction

It was reported that the pH value, Cr(VI) concentration and the redox potential can exert significant impacts on the relative distribution of Cr(VI) species including $\text{Cr}_2\text{O}_7^{2-}$, CrO_4^{2-} , H_2CrO_4 , and HCrO_4^- [129]. Direct precipitation is not feasible to separate Cr(VI) species from solution due to their solubility [6]. However, Cr(III) could form insoluble $\text{Cr}(\text{OH})_3$ under high pH values. Therefore, changing the oxidation state and converting the high-toxic Cr(VI) to low-toxic Cr(III) are deemed as the effective decontamination processes. Among the various methods of Cr(VI) reduction like chemical, electrochemical and biological methods [6], photocatalytic reduction of Cr(VI) to Cr(III) is effective, low-cost and environmentally friendly and free producing additional hazardous materials [130–132]. Photocatalysis on semiconductors is accompanied by the generation of photo-induced electron (e^-) - hole (h^+) pairs and charge separation. Therefore, photocatalytic oxidation of organic matter could also be achieved simultaneously during the photoreduction reaction, due to that organic matter serves as electron donor and hole capture agent [133,134].

Up to now, some traditional semiconductor photocatalysts like TiO_2 [135,136], ZnS [137,138], ZnO [139,140], In_2S_3 [141], along with other metal oxides/sulfides [142,143] have achieved photocatalytic Cr(VI) reduction from wastewater. However, the photocatalysts prepared via traditional methods suffered from small specific surface area (SSA) and low photocatalytic efficiency, which exerted limit to their applications in water treatment processes. The above-stated semiconductor photocatalysts with large SSA and abundant porosity could be prepared with porous MOFs as precursors [144–146], which can facilitate the concentration and transfer of pollutants to the photocatalytic active sites for enhanced photocatalytic reactions [147].

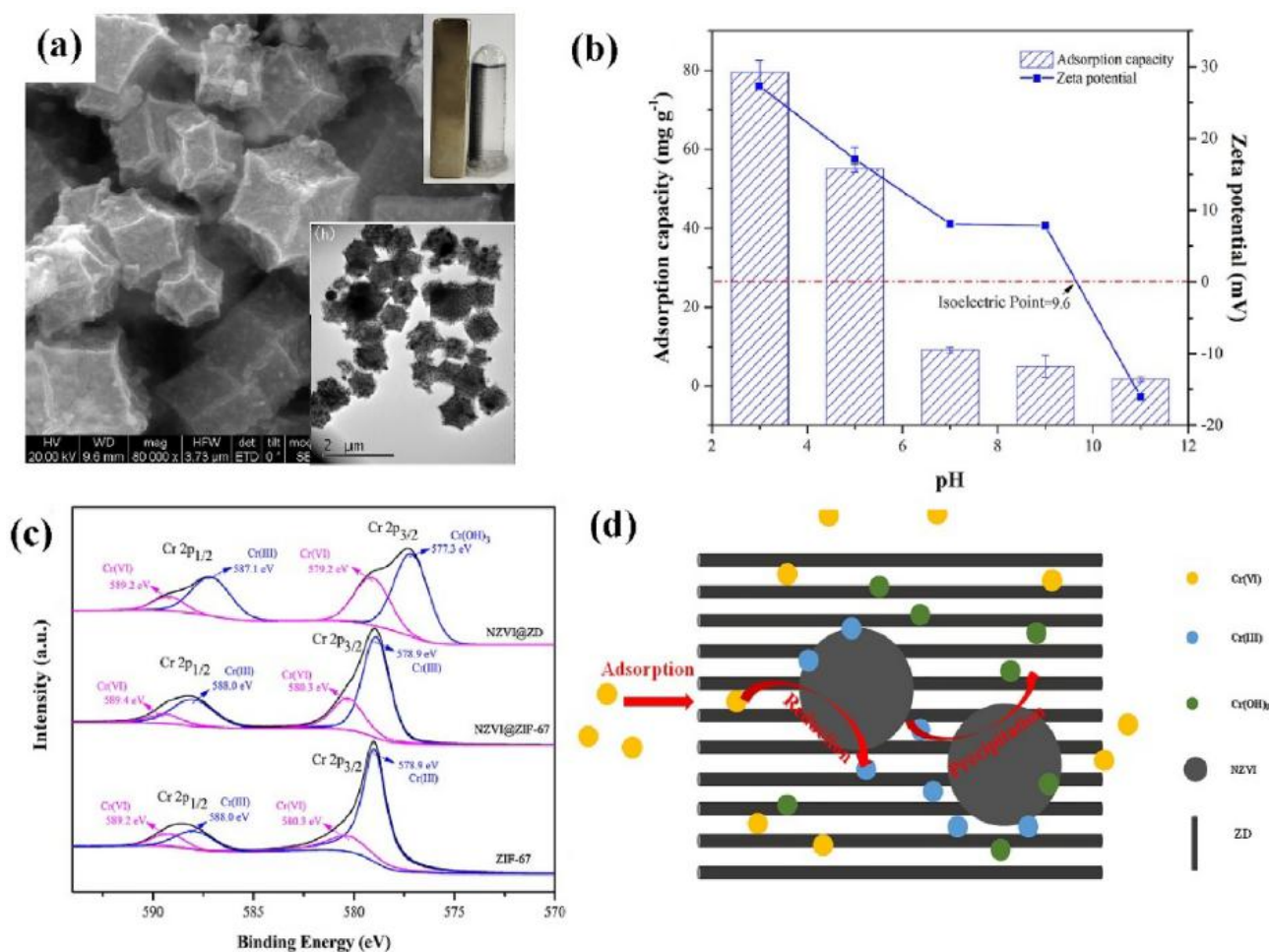


Fig. 7. SEM and TEM image of NZVI@ZD (a); The Cr(VI) adsorption capacity and zeta potential of NZVI@ZD under different pH values (b); Cr 2p XPS spectra of ZIF-67, NZVI@ZIF-67 and NZVI@ZD after adsorption (c); the proposed mechanisms of Cr(VI) removal over NZVI@ZD (d) [79].

3.1. Metal sulfides

As a major form of minerals, metal sulfides with variety of structural types provide wide field for exploration. Abundant and cheap metal sulfides like Ni₃S₂, Cu₂S and FeS₂ usually exist as minerals under natural conditions [148]. Many metal sulfides semiconductors have been obtained to develop light-sensitive photocatalysts, such as CdZnS [149], CuS [150], ZnS [151], and Bi₂S₃ [152].

ZnS, as a semiconductor photocatalyst with wide bandgap ($E_g = 3.7$ eV), has been adopted to carry out photocatalytic pollutant elimination from wastewater, considering that ZnS is stable, easily available, and nontoxic. ZnS with various morphologies like nanoparticles, nanowires, hollow nanosphere and nanotubes displayed outstanding photocatalytic Cr(VI) reduction activities [153]. Some strategies like thermal decomposition [154], solvothermal method [155], thermal evaporation method [156], and chemical precipitation method [157] were introduced to obtain the ZnS with different morphologies, which suffered from either high temperature or high pressure or both of them. It was essential to find a facile method to fabricate desired ZnS with both special structures and superior photocatalysis activity.

Our group synthesized rod-like ZIF-L (ZIF-R) from 2-methylimidazole (mim) and Zn²⁺ with the presence of polyvinylpyrrolidone (PVP) [158]. Subsequently, our group further prepared hollow ZnO nanotubes and used them to achieve efficient sensing detect toward acetone [159]. Encouraged by our previous work, we recently [80] produced porous tube-like ZnS by sulfurizing the as-prepared ZIF-R with thioacetamide (TAA) (Fig. 8a and 8b). The formation of porous ZnS tubes in this

process could be described as the following: (i) the S²⁻ ions released from the hydrolysis of TAA reacted competitively with Zn²⁺ in form of coordinative Zn-N bond over the surface of ZIF-R to yield ZnS with the help of PVP; (ii) the 2-mim inside ZIF-R was stepwise replaced by the released S²⁻ to form porous ZnS structure as the inside Zn²⁺ could be diffused to outside [160]. The formation mechanism of porous tube-like ZS-X (ZnS formed by being sulfurized for different time) structure was affirmed by powder X-ray diffraction (PXRD), Fourier transform infrared spectroscopy (FTIR), and solid-state nuclear magnetic resonance spectroscopy (SSNMR) spectra. The UV-vis DRS spectra showed the light absorption edge of porous tubular ZnS could be extended to 400 nm, indicating that it can be excited by ultraviolet light. The porous ZS-3 (ZnS formed by being sulfurized for 3 h) displayed best photocatalytic Cr(VI) reduction performances under ultraviolet light, which was superior to both commercial TiO₂ (P25) and commercial ZnS (Fig. 8c). The electrochemical impedance spectroscopy (EIS) measurements affirmed that both P25 and commercial ZnS displayed smaller arc radius than ZS-3, implying that ZS-3 demonstrated higher separation efficiency of photogenerated charge carriers [161]. To explore the optimal photocatalytic reaction conditions, the effects of pH and foreign ions on the photocatalytic activities were investigated. It was observed that better photocatalytic performances were accomplished under lower the pH value (Fig. 8d). In acidic solution, the main forms of Cr(VI) are HCrO₄⁻ and Cr₂O₇²⁻ [162]. The photocatalytic reactions are demonstrated in Eqs. (8) and (9) [163], in which the presence of abundant H⁺ can promote the Cr(VI) photoreduction. In alkaline circumstance, CrO₄²⁻ is the primary form in solution [164,165], which

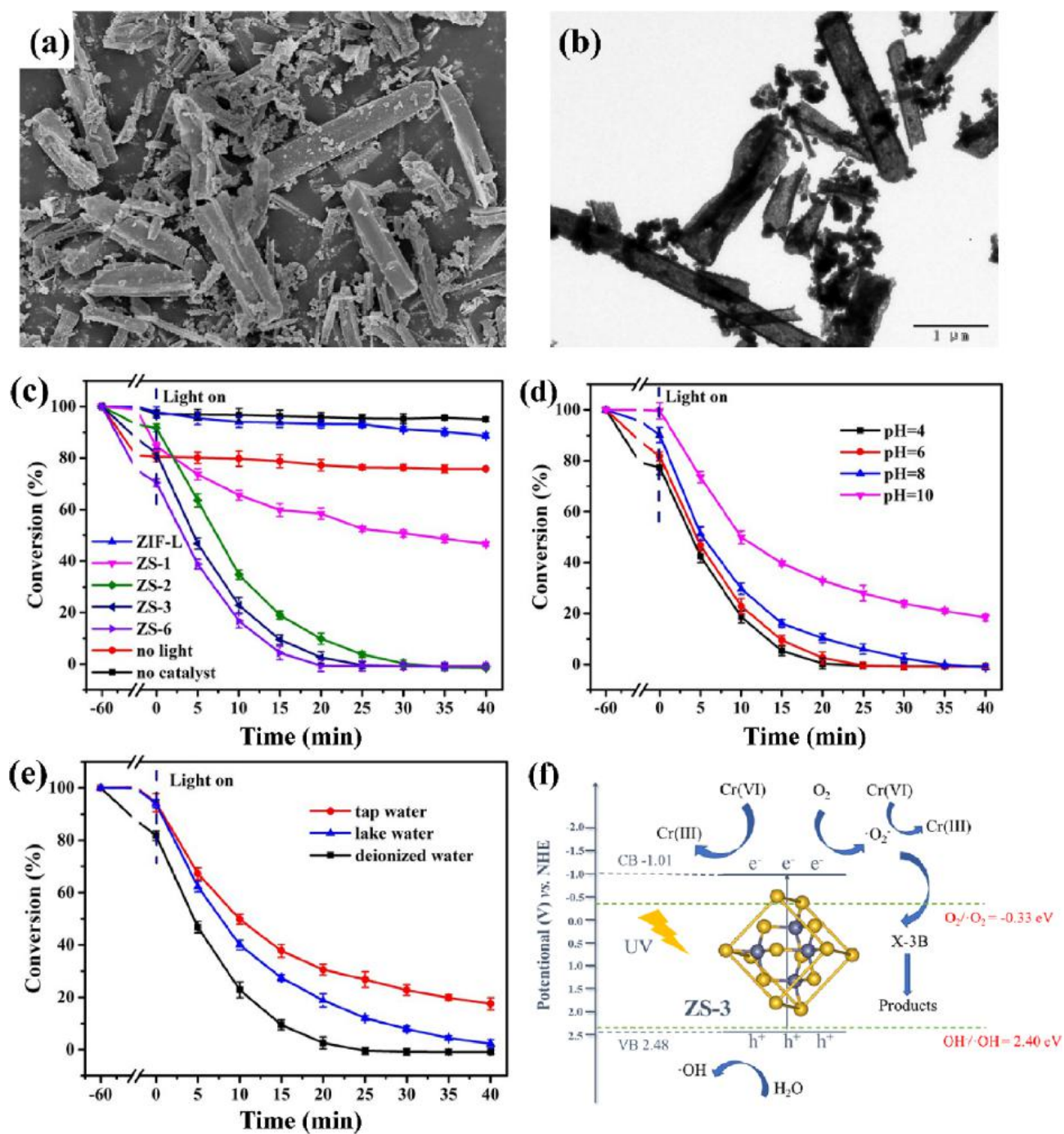
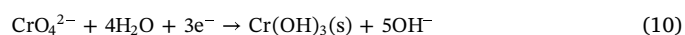
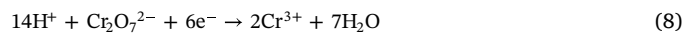


Fig. 8. SEM (a) and TEM (b) images of porous tube-like ZnS; The comparison of photocatalytic Cr(VI) reduction performances over ZIF-L and sulfurized products (c); Effect of pH values on Cr(VI) reduction performances (d); Effect of different water quality on Cr(VI) reduction (e); The proposed mechanism of photocatalytic Cr(VI) reduction over ZS-3 [80].

followed the chemical reactions of Eqs. (9) and (10) [163]. The formed Cr(OH)₃ at pH > 6 may cover the active sites of ZS-3 [134]. Furthermore, the decrease of zeta potential with the increased pH indicated the declined adsorption capacity toward Cr(VI) over ZS-3 at higher pH, which was not beneficial for the capture of photogenerated electrons to achieve photocatalytic Cr(VI) reduction. The photocatalytic Cr(VI) reduction efficiency was also influenced by foreign ions including inorganic salts and organic matter. The Cr(VI) solutions prepared from real lake water or tap water were treated by ZS-3. As shown in Fig. 8e, the Cr(VI) reduction efficiency for the simulated wastewater prepared from real tap water and lake water reached 82.5% and 97.8% within 40 min, respectively. The inorganic ions like K⁺, Na⁺, Ca²⁺, Mg²⁺,

SO₄²⁻, Cl⁻, NO₃⁻ and PO₄³⁻ in tap water can inhibit the photocatalytic Cr(VI) reduction [166], causing a significant decline of Cr(VI) photo-reduction efficiency. However, the presence of dissolved organic matter (DOM) will consume holes and facilitate the photocatalytic reaction [163]. Therefore, the higher Cr(VI) reduction efficiency in lake water was the result of the balanced effects of inorganic ions and organic matters.



It has been widely explored that photocatalytic reduction and oxidation can be achieved simultaneously in the photocatalytic processes, due to that the photo-induced electrons are accompanied by the photo-generated holes [167,168]. Therefore, photocatalytic Cr(VI) reduction and organic pollutant (Reactive Red X-3B, X-3B) oxidation were investigated in aqueous solution. In the Cr(VI) and organic pollutant (X-3B) matrix, the Cr(VI) reduction efficiency decreased slightly and the photocatalytic X-3B oxidation efficiency decreased from 97.7% to 25.0% over ZS-3, which could be attributed to the competition of photo-induced electrons between the Cr(VI) reduction and the formation of $\cdot\text{O}_2^-$ (being participated in the oxidation of X-3B) (Fig. 8f) [169]. The Cr(VI) photoreduction efficiency maintained at 100.0% after three runs, indicating that ZS-3 exhibited good reusability, which was affirmed by PXRD, SEM and TEM of the used ZS-3. The prepared porous tube-like ZnS enriched the morphology of ZnS semiconductors and enhanced the performances of Cr(VI) photocatalytic reduction. This work provided a feasible strategy to fabricate metal sulfides with high photocatalytic efficiencies.

As another typical semiconductor sulfide, In_2S_3 has received extensive attentions in the optics, photoconduction and photoelectricity with bandgap of 2.0–2.2 eV [170]. Nanostructured In_2S_3 like nanotubes, nanorods and nanosheets exhibited great potential applications in photocatalytic reaction due to its superior properties like photosensitivity, photoconductivity, chemical stability and other physical characteristics [141,171,172].

Recently, our group successfully prepared rod-shaped MIL-68 using water or sodium salt as a regulator at the room temperature [81], which was beneficial to its high throughput production. Then, porous In_2S_3 (Fig. 9a and 9b) derived from rod-shaped MIL-68 was obtained by solvothermal method with the aid of thioacetamide. It can be seen from the UV-vis spectrum that the light absorption range of porous hollow In_2S_3 was extended to the visible light region, indicating that the porous In_2S_3 can be excited by visible light. The porous hollow In_2S_3 exhibited high photocatalytic Cr(VI) reduction efficiency at pH = 6.0 under 350 mW LED visible light irradiation, in which 10 mg L^{-1} of Cr(VI) can be completely removed within 15 min. Combining active species capture experiments and electron spin resonance (ESR) (Fig. 9c and 9d), the

leading active species for reducing Cr(VI) were identified as e^- and $\cdot\text{O}_2^-$ (Fig. 9f) [173,174]. After five cycles, as shown in Fig. 9e, the photocatalytic reduction efficiency can still achieve 95% within 10 min, which demonstrated that the obtained In_2S_3 could be used for long-term operation. This work revealed that the metal sulfides with different morphologies can be regulated by the morphologies of the MOF precursors, which could exhibit higher photocatalytic Cr(VI) reduction performance.

3.2. Metal oxides

Metal oxide semiconductors display different characteristics from traditional inorganic semiconductors in charge transport mechanisms and optoelectronic properties, which capacitate them more functions [175]. Some metal oxides like TiO_2 with light absorption properties, capability of generating charge carriers, stability as well as biocompatibility can exhibit the photocatalytic activities once input the required amount of light energy [176]. Also, ZnO possesses a relatively wide band gap (3.3 eV), specific optoelectrical property, high electron mobility, as well as high chemical stability and thermal stability, which enables it to arise broad interest in photocatalysis [177]. However, some synthesizing techniques of ZnO including chemical and physical deposition usually generate products with low specific surface area and limited photocatalytic efficiency.

He and co-workers obtained nano-sized ZnO (ZnO-11 and ZnO-12) (Fig. 10b and 10c) by calcining two different Zn-MOFs ($[\text{Zn}_5(\mu_3\text{-OH})(\text{BTC})_3(\text{Phen})_4]\cdot 5\text{H}_2\text{O}$ (HUT-11) and $[\text{Zn}_4(\mu_4\text{-O})(\text{BTC})_2(\text{phen})_2]\cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}\cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$ (HUT-12) [82] in muffle furnace at 600 °C (Fig. 10a). PXRD, FTIR spectra and TGA analysis confirmed the successful fabrication of Zn-MOFs and the nano-sized ZnO. As depicted in Fig. 10b and 3c, the synthesized ZnO presents oval and circular or hexagonal morphology, which could contribute to the potential possibilities of morphology adjustment. It can be noted that the size of ZnO-11 nanoparticles was in a broad range of 100–400 nm, while the particle size of ZnO-12 was relatively small (50 nm). The photocatalytic experiments results indicated that HUT-12 exhibited better Cr(VI) reduction performances than HUT-11, which may be attributed to the differences in the coordination atoms, coordination

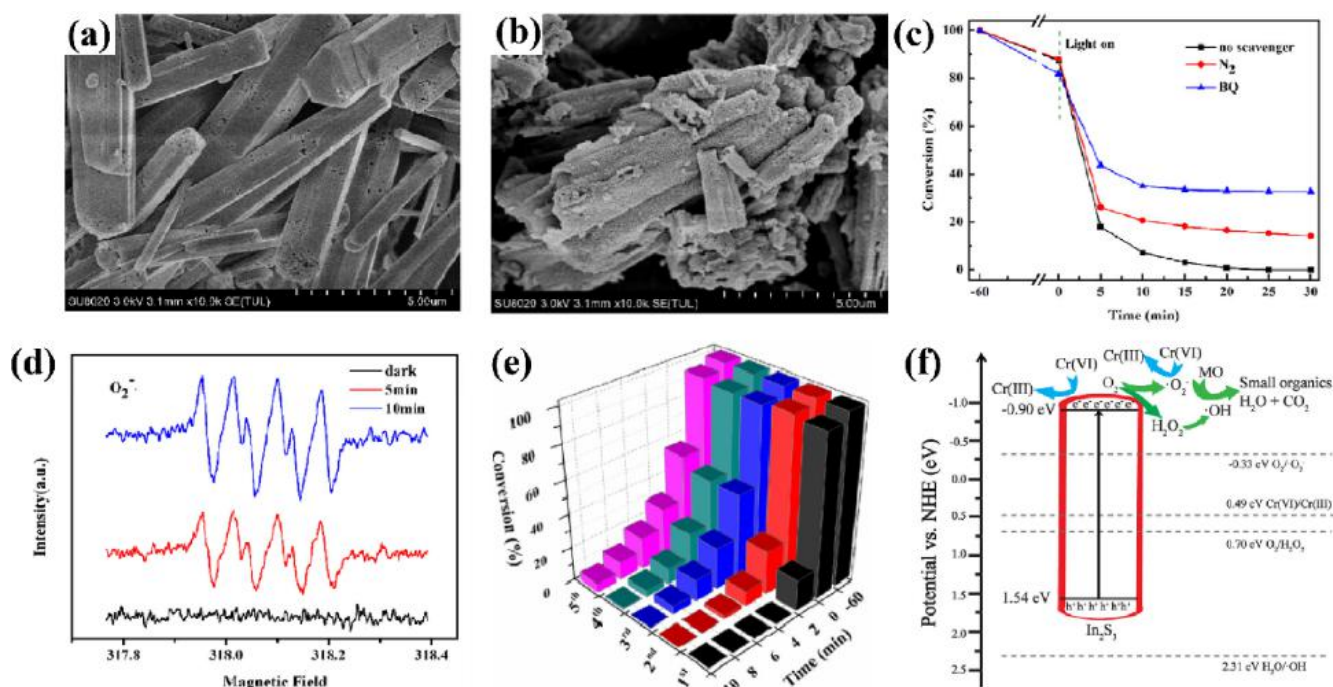


Fig. 9. SEM images of MIL-68 prepared with NaF (a) and In_2S_3 (b); Effects of different scavengers on Cr(VI) reduction (c); ESR spectra (d); Reusability for the Cr(VI) photoreduction (e); Proposed mechanism of Cr(VI) photoreduction (f) [81].

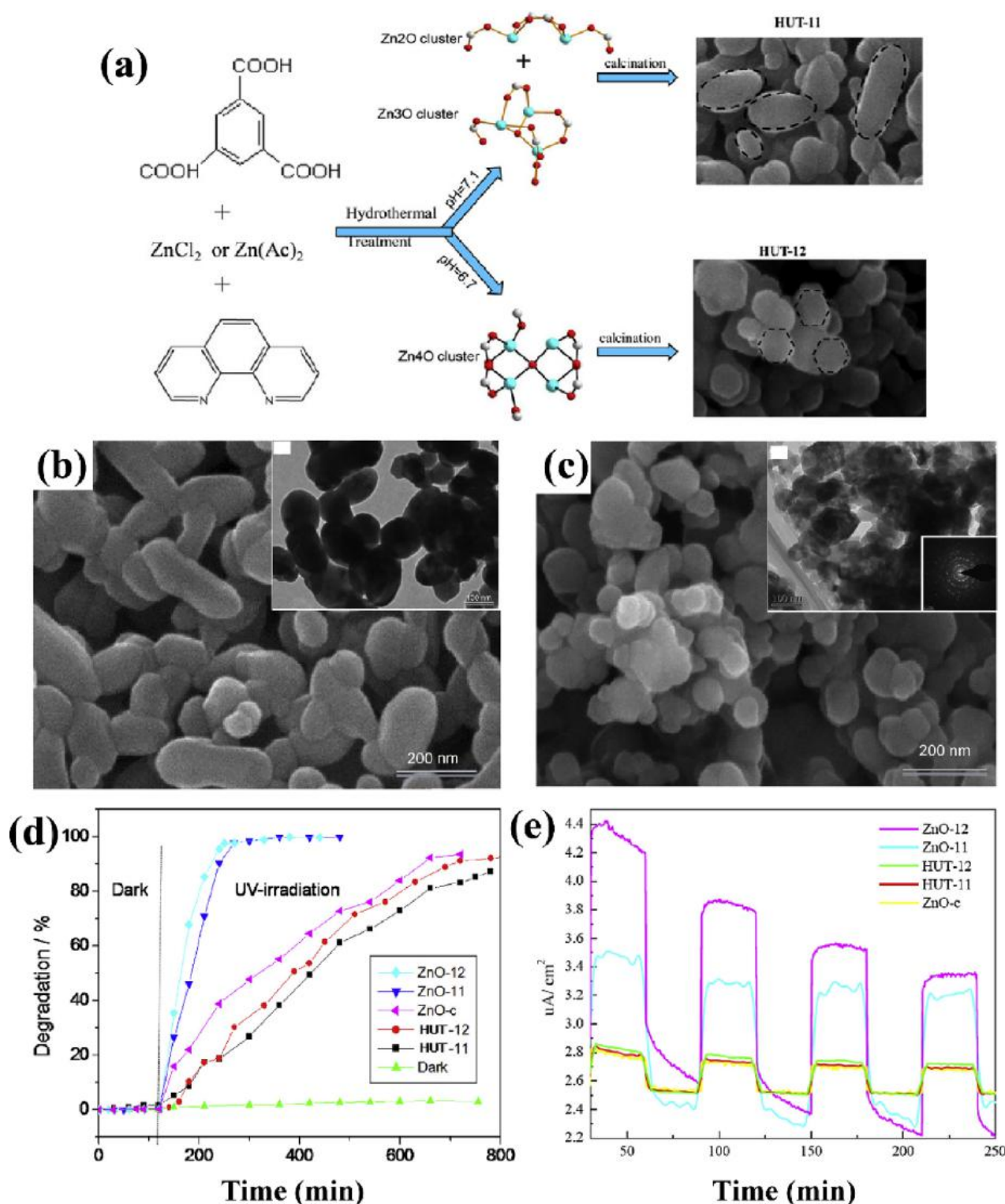


Fig. 10. Synthesis of ZnO nanoparticles from the HUT-11 and HUT-12 (a); SEM images of ZnO-11 (b) and ZnO-12 (c); Performances of Cr(VI) photoreduction over the prepared materials under UV irradiation (d); The transient photocurrent density responses of HUT-11, HUT-12, as well as ZnO-11, ZnO-12 and ZnO-c (e) [82].

environment as well as the metal–oxygen cluster of the two Zn-MOFs. Under the identical conditions, the Cr(VI) reduction rates of ZnO-11 and ZnO-12 were much higher than those of HUT-11, HUT-12, along with commercial ZnO and TiO_2 (P25) nanoparticles. Especially, ZnO-12 derived from HUT-12 with different morphology and particle size from ZnO-11 exhibited higher Cr(VI) removal efficiency (Fig. 10d). Furthermore, ZnO-11 and ZnO-12 showed stronger photocurrent response than those of HUT-

11 and HUT-12. In addition, the superior photocurrent density of ZnO-12 to those of commercial ZnO and Zn-MOFs (HUT-11 and HUT-12) indicated that the obtained ZnO nanoparticles were excellent photocatalysts with the advantage of efficient separation of photoinduced carriers (Fig. 10e) [178]. However, the as-prepared ZnO-12 still suffered from poor recyclability and reuse due to the unavoidable photo-corrosion of ZnO under UV irradiation [179], which can be overcome by introducing some other

semiconductors. In all, these two Zn-MOFs afforded unique ZnO with tunable morphologies as well as particle sizes, in which the ZnO nanoparticles with smaller particle size demonstrated superior performances. Therefore, it is practicable to prepare metal oxides semiconductors with adjustable size and properties via calcination.

4. Catalytic reduction

Catalytic hydrogenation is deemed as an effective and cost-competitive technique to eliminate reducible pollutants in water [180]. It has been reported that Cr(VI) can be reduced to Cr(III) by some catalysts with the aid of reducing agents like humic acid or formic acid [27,181,182]. Different from other monocarboxylic acids, formic acid (HCOOH) can be directly mineralized to CO₂ and H₂ (HCOOH → CO₂ + H₂) in the presence of metal catalysts, thereby acting as a desired sacrificial agent in Cr(VI) reduction [183]. At present, various MOF-derived metal containing catalyst including non-precious (like Ni, Fe) and precious metal catalyst (like Cu, Pd) are explored for catalytic hydrogenation.

4.1. Ni@carbon

Ni nanoparticles (NPs), a non-precious metal catalyst, have aroused wide attention because they have the characteristics of high catalytic activity as well as low toxicity and production. However, the low stability and efficiency of Ni NPs become the main challenge in the catalytic process [184]. It has been reported that embedding Ni NPs on a three-dimensional (3D) structure could be an effective way to improve

catalytic activity [185]. Lv et al. [84] prepared different Ni@carbon composites by high temperature pyrolysis toward yolk shell-like Ni-MOF. Synthetic process of Ni@carbon was depicted in Fig. 11a. PXRD patterns, TEM images and Raman spectra confirmed formation of Ni@carbon and its yolk shell-like structure (Fig. 11b and 11e). It was speculated that NiO was firstly formed from Ni(II) in MOF and then the metallic Ni was produced by NiO reduction with the increase of calcination temperature. The surface charge of Ni@carbon450 is positive at pH < 4.37 and negative at pH > 4.37. The obtained porous carbon materials have a large specific surface area and a layered structure similar to Ni-MOF, regular porous structure and rich Ni content, which are favorable for its catalytic activity.

In the presence of formic acid, as depicted in Fig. 11c and 11d, Ni@carbon450 with a pyrolysis temperature of 450 °C has a higher ability ($k = 1.442 \text{ min}^{-1}$) to catalytic Cr(VI) reduction compared to carbon550 ($k = 0.0837 \text{ min}^{-1}$), in which the Cr(VI) was completely reduced at 30 min. In addition, the effects of different pH, initial Cr(VI) concentration, temperature and formic acid concentration on Ni@carbon450 catalytic reduction of Cr(VI) indicated that lower pH, higher temperature and formic acid concentration favored improvement of catalytic reduction efficiency. The catalytic Cr(VI) removal rate decreased slightly with the increase of the number of cycles' operation, but the catalytic efficiency still remained at 87% after 10 cycles. The mechanism of catalytic reduction of Cr(VI) can be deduced from Raman spectrum, PXRD, magnetization curve, X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS) and H₂ production rate. All the characterizations of Ni@carbon450 after catalytic reaction indicated that a small fraction of Ni was oxidized to Ni(II). As shown in Fig. 11f, the Cr(VI) reduction

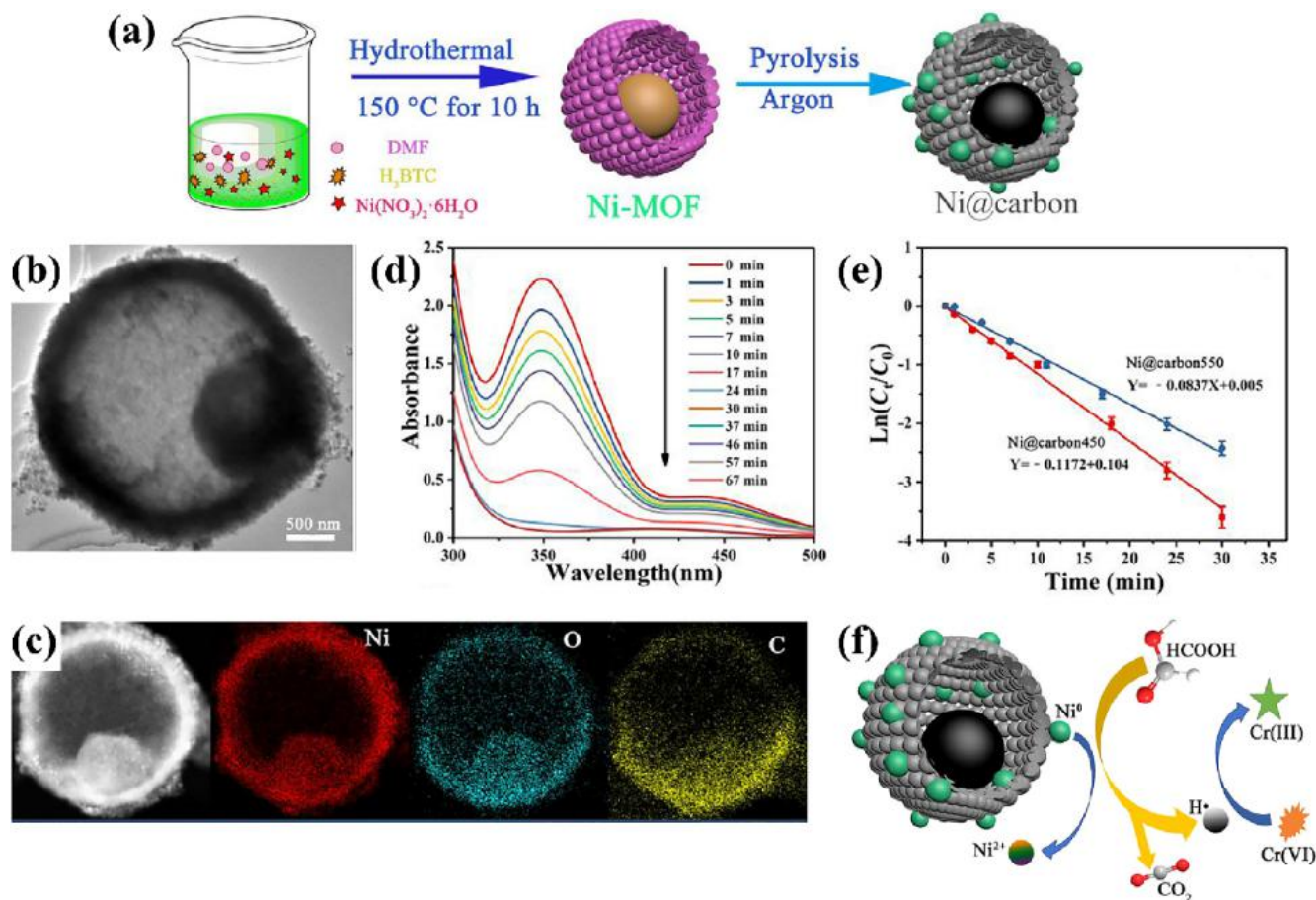


Fig. 11. Synthetic process of Ni@carbon (a); TEM image of Ni@carbon (b); The changes of UV-vis spectra over time during Cr(VI) reduction with the aid of HCOOH by Ni@carbon450 (c); The reduction rate of Cr(VI) by Ni@carbon450 and Ni@carbon550 (d); HAADF-STEM-EDS images (e) of Ni@carbon450; The mechanism of Cr(VI) reduction over Ni@carbon450 with the aid of HCOOH (f) [84].

mechanism could be described that formic acid and Cr(VI) were firstly enriched on the material due to the electrostatic interaction between the surface of the material and formic acid/Cr(VI). The large pores and regular structure made Cr(VI) easily enter the interior of the material, which promoted intimate contact between Cr(VI) and active sites. Formic acid was decomposed into CO₂ and hydrogen (H[•]) with the existence of Ni through dehydrogenation. The formed H[•] displayed the capacity of reducing Cr(VI) to Cr(III). The Ni(0) presented in Ni@carbon450 could be oxidized to Ni(II) in the catalytic process. Therefore, the catalytic Cr(VI) reduction of Ni@carbon450 with the aid of electron donor acid was achieved by H[•] transfer. This work provided a new strategy to fabricate noble catalyst by carbonization of MOFs self-sacrifice template, which could achieve excellent Cr(VI) reduction performances in the presence of electron donor acid.

4.2. PdCu/N-doped carbon/graphene nanosheets

Metal nanoparticles (like ZVI, Pt NPs, Pb NPs, etc.) have attracted wide attention due to their controllable size, fascinating properties and practical application [4,186]. The dispersibility of metal nanoparticles exerts a direct effect on the practical performance, so that suitable substrate should be explored to be a mechanical support of NPs to stabilize them [187]. It has found that metal NPs could be encapsulated or functionalized by MOF-derived materials. In addition, the metal nanoparticles and MOFs derivatives composites can benefit from the porosity of MOFs to prevent the aggregation of metal nanoparticles and improve the performance [188].

Liu and co-workers [86] immobilized PdCu nanoalloys in N-doped carbon/graphene nanosheets (NCG) from graphite oxide (GO)/ZIF-8 precursors to achieve Cr(VI) catalytic reduction. Firstly, NCG was prepared via the carbonization of GO/ZIF-8. The NCG was added into Na₂PdCl₄ and CuCl₂ solution to conduct hydrazine-involved hydrothermal reaction to obtain PdCu/NCG. TEM images demonstrated that PdCu alloy NPs were uniformly immersed in NCG nanosheets, indicating that stabilizing PdCu nanoalloys on NCG could lessen the interaction between particles to improve the dispersibility (Fig. 12a and 12c). In the presence of formic acid, PdCu/NCG exhibited higher catalytic rate than PdCu, NCG, Pd/NCG (0.380 min⁻¹) and Cu/NCG (0.031 min⁻¹), which confirmed the enhanced catalytic performances due to introduction of PdCu (Fig. 12b). PdCu/NCG exhibited highest Cr(VI) reduction efficiency at pH = 2.0, and the performance decreased with the increasing pH values. It is worth noting that the catalytic efficiency decreased as pH = 1.0, because the Cr(VI) catalytic reduction is the process of producing active H (HCOOH ↔ HCOO_{ads}⁻ + H[•]) by formic acid. Excessively low pH values will compel the formate intermediate to return to formic acid, which was not conducive the reduction. Generally speaking, the d-band center (ε_d) represents the affinity of the metal atom to the adsorbate [189]. Density Functional Theory (DFT) calculations demonstrated an increase in ε_d of PdCu nanoalloys which can facilitate strong chemisorption of formic acid compared with single metal Pd or Cu. The adsorbed formic acid will be activated to generate active H atoms on the PdCu alloy, which displayed strong reducing capacity and reduced Cr(VI) to Cr(III) immediately (Fig. 12e). Immobilizing PdCu nanoalloys into NCG induced electronic modification into PdCu/NCG, which accounted for boosted catalytic performances coupled with the porosity of NCG nanosheets. This work afforded a novel insight into the interaction between metal nanoalloys and MOF derivatives composites.

4.3. Ni@ N-doped GO-CNT

Up to now, the development of efficient novel catalysts has attracted wide attention. Among them, it has been reported that transition metals encapsulated in nitrogen-doped carbon materials (TMs@N-C) display particular merits of high catalytic property, avoiding TMs' corrosion as well as adequate active sites [190,191]. TMs@N-C with N-containing

MOFs as precursors exhibited series of issues such as low N-doping content, metal NPs aggregation and low surface area. In order to solve the problems, Chen and co-workers [85] prepared a 3D N-doped GO-CNT framework with well-packed nickel nanoparticles (Ni@N-CNTs/N-G) (Fig. 13a, 13b and 13c) by introducing melamine [192]. Specifically, Ni-MOF was firstly combined with melamine and then being pyrolyzed at 600 °C, and then the obtained Ni-C₃N₄ was further heated at higher temperature to prepare Ni@N-CNTs/N-G. It is worth noting that g-C₃N₄ provided a template and nitrogen source for the formation of GO and a carbon source for the formation of CNT. The successful fabrication of Ni@N-CNTs/N-G was characterized by XRD, SEM, TEM, Raman spectra and XPS analysis.

The performance of Ni@N-CNTs/N-G at different treated temperatures showed that N-CNTs/NG-800 (treated at 800 °C) exhibited superior Cr(VI) catalytic reduction efficiency with aid of HCOOH. N-CNTs/NG-800 achieved 99.6% Cr(VI) catalytic efficiency within 50 min (Fig. 13d). Considering the abundant N content and porous structure, the maximum adsorption capacity of N-CNTs/NG-800 was reported as 72.325 mg g⁻¹ (Fig. 13e), which was assigned to the larger specific surface area (254.62 m² g⁻¹) than N-CNTs/NG-700 and N-CNTs/NG-900. Therefore, the reasons for higher catalytic efficiency of N-CNTs/NG-800 could be also attributed to the enrichment of Cr(VI) on the surface of the three-dimensional structure and abundant catalytic active sites that could promote the adsorption and dehydrogenation of formic acid. The experiments of influence factors demonstrated that lower Cr(VI) concentration and pH values, increased catalysts dosage and temperature were benefit for Cr(VI) removal. The anions including SO₄²⁻ and PO₄³⁻ induced minor impact on catalytic efficiency, while Cl⁻, HCO₃⁻, and NO₃⁻ exerted obviously influence on the performances because of the monovalent ions and smaller sizes that could compete with Cr(VI) [193].

Recycle experiments revealed that the removal efficiency was still 82.7% after 10 cycles (Fig. 13f), and the cumulative Ni²⁺ concentration was only 95 μg L⁻¹ due to the protection of N-CNT/NG. The amount of Ni²⁺ dissolution was further reduced after several runs, which showed that the 3D Ni@N-CNTs/NG-800 catalyst was stable and reusable. According to XPS analysis and gas volume produced experiments, the catalytic mechanism could be attributed to the catalytic reduction assisted by HCOOH, the nitrogen-triggered reduction and functional groups on the material surface. To be exact, monoatomic hydrogen was produced by HCOOH in the presence of metal Ni, which can immediately achieve Cr(VI) reduction. In addition, Cr(VI) could be reduced to Cr(III) by nitrogen and functional groups inside the material. Therefore, it can be concluded that the main reason for Cr(VI) reduction over the Ni@N-CNTs/N-G in the presence of HCOOH was the generated ·H, while the groups including nitrogen and oxygen groups as well as N-induced reduction played a minor role (Fig. 13g). Encapsulating nickel nanoparticles into N-doped GO-CNT could avoided corrosion and leakage of the metal catalyst. This work provided a method of constructing novel nonnoble metal-based catalyst, which could effectively promote toxic heavy metals catalytic removal.

5. Conclusions and prospects

Considering that MOFs benefit from larger specific surface area, high porosity, as well as flexible structure and function, using MOFs as precursors or sacrificial templates is deemed as one of the effective methods to prepare novel materials with unique structures. MOF-derived materials maintained large specific surface areas, regular structures, and abundant porosity, which enable contaminants easily entering the material to contact with the active sites and promote the charge transfer rate. In addition, the porous metal composites derived from MOFs also provide a capsulation for the metal and prevent the leakage of metal ions and the collapse of the structure, which could be suitable for the practical application. At present, the preparation of MOF derivatives mainly includes solvothermal method and calcination

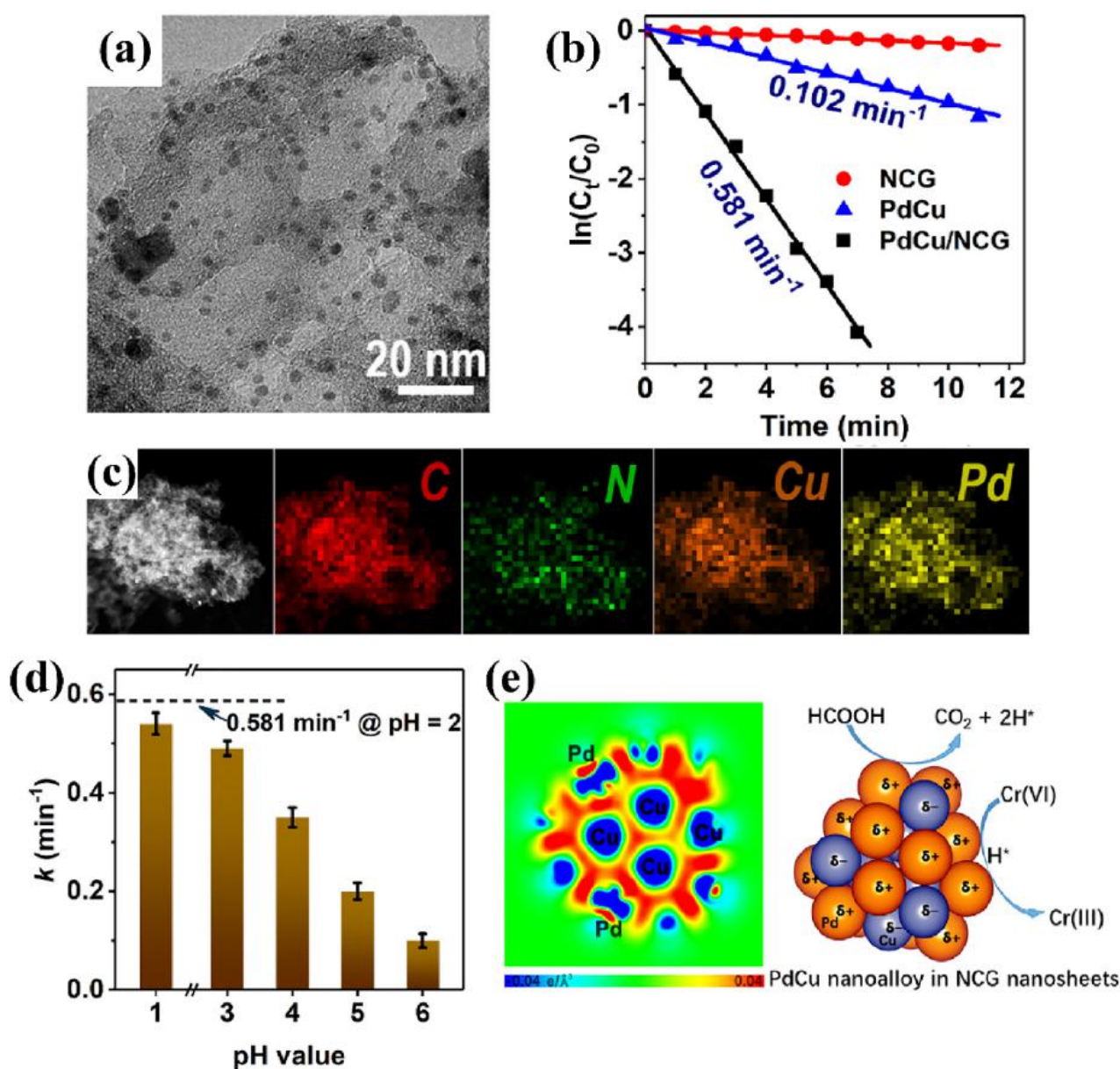


Fig. 12. TEM image of PdCu/NCG (a); Relation of $\ln(C_t/C_0)$ and reaction time for the Cr(VI) reduction over PdCu/NCG, PdCu nanoalloy and NCG (b); HAADF-STEM and the elemental mapping images of PdCu/NCG (c); Histogram of k at different pH values (d); the Cr(VI) removal mechanisms over PdCu/NCG (e) [86].

or pyrolysis method to obtain metal sulfides, oxides and porous carbon materials. These methods are often one-step synthesis and accessible to achieve. In addition, modification of MOFs derivatives is mainly achieved by two methods: (i) MOFs composited with modified materials are treated to prepared derivatives composites [194–198]; (ii) Direct derivatives of MOFs are first prepared, and then combined with specific materials [199–201]. At present, some modification methods for MOFs derivatives like integrating MOFs derivatives with conductors [147], semiconductors [202,203] and polymers [204] have also been investigated.

The Cr(VI) removal with the aid of MOF derivatives and their composites provides various materials and techniques for chrome-containing wastewater treatment. MOF derivatives for Cr(VI) removal are usually through adsorption, catalytic reduction and photocatalytic reduction, and even the combination of adsorption and reduction. The applications of MOF derivatives for the Cr(VI) removal have achieved significant advances, however, there are still emerging issues to be considered: (i) High throughput production of various MOFs with low

cost was urgently needed. The practical applications of MOFs are restricted by commercial availability and costs. Up to now, only a small number of MOF products are produced commercially by international companies [48]. As the most popular method for MOFs synthesis, solvent-thermal method (hydrothermal method) can precisely control the particle size, shape and crystallinity of the products. However, the solvothermal synthesis displays many disadvantages of long reaction time (hours or even days), low yield, large consumption of organic solvents and high cost [205]. Therefore, the methods of increasing the mass production of MOF and reducing its cost should be further explored. At present, many attempts have been adopted to improve the yield of MOF, such as electrochemical method and mechanochemical method. However, further exploration should be proceeded. (ii) Preparation methods of MOF derivatives and their composites should be enhanced. The preparation of materials directly derived from MOF via calcination and pyrolysis often requires higher energy. The preparation methods of composite materials of MOF derivatives is often time-consuming and complicated. Therefore, it is necessary to reduce the

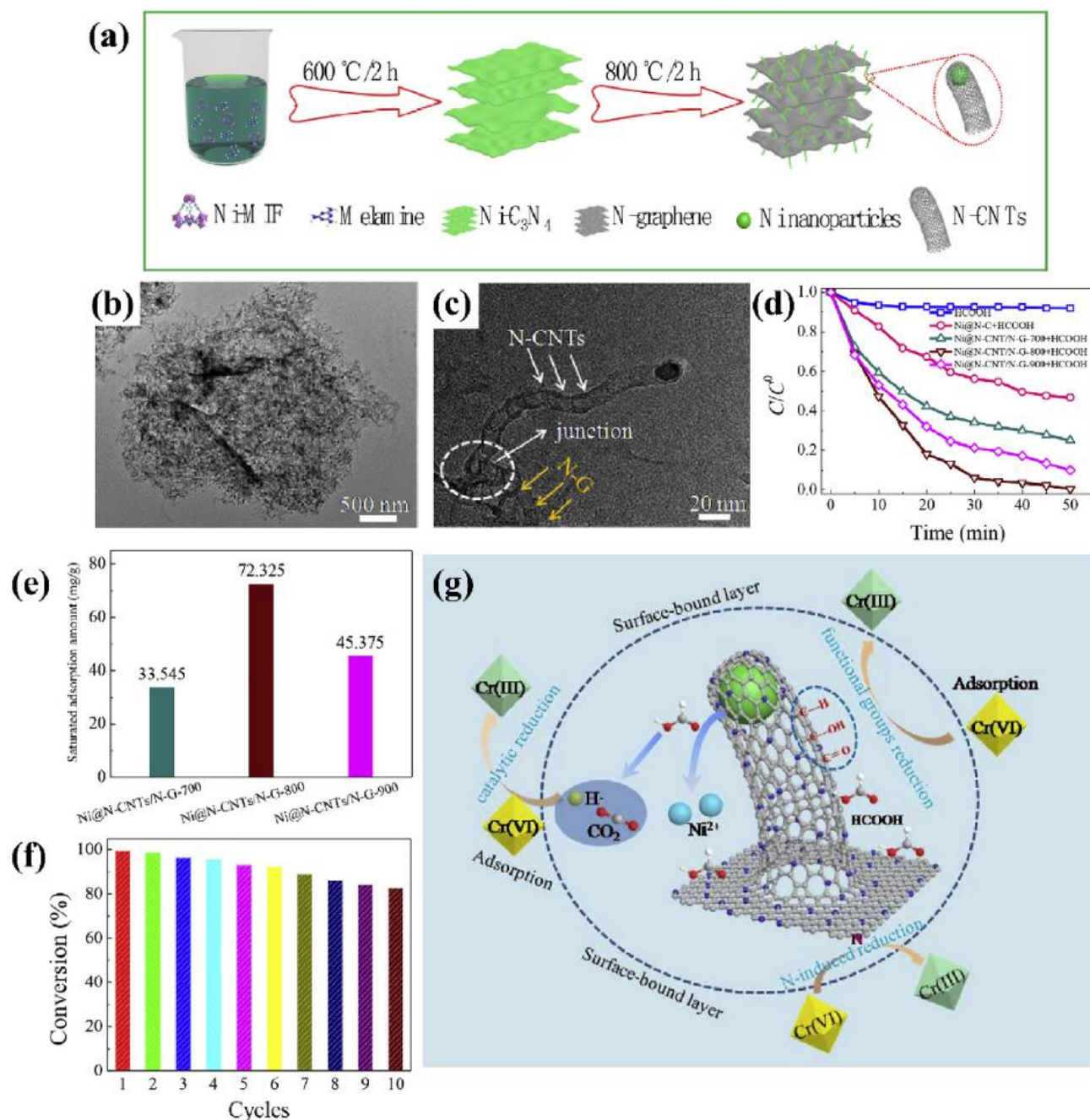


Fig. 13. The synthesis process of Ni@N-CNTs/N-G-x hybrids (a); TEM image of Ni@N-CNTs/N-G-800 (b) and (c); The Cr(VI) reduction in different systems (d); the Cr(VI) adsorption capacity of Ni@N-CNTs/N-G-x (e); Catalytic stability and reusability of 3D Ni@N-CNTs/N-G-800 (f); The proposed mechanism toward Cr(VI) reduction by Ni@N-CNTs/N-G with the aid of HCOOH (g) [85].

production cost of MOF-derived materials and develop green and environmental protection technology. (iii) Cr(VI) removal under different circumstances should be investigated. Cr(VI) concentrations and pH values in surface water and diverse wastewater are various so that the removal efficiencies of MOF derivatives are different. It has been found that Cr(VI) removal efficiency in the catalysis and adsorption processes could be dramatically promoted at low pH values. In addition, MOF derived materials exhibit different performances at varied concentrations with treated methods like adsorption, photocatalysis and catalysis. However, the stability of MOF derivatives under different pH values, impact of excessive acid on environment and subsequent treatment as well as treatment cost should be taken into full consideration. Therefore, it is of great importance to select appropriate MOF derivatives to achieve Cr(VI) removal under different

circumstances. (iv) Previous reports have proved that by adding some nontoxic hole trapping agents (small molecule organic acids, etc.), the photocatalytic Cr(VI) reduction efficiency can be greatly improved, in which the reduction and oxidation can also be achieved simultaneously [206–208]. Also, with the coexistence of multiple pollutants, there are also many studies that make full use of the role of photogenerated electrons and holes to achieve the simultaneous reduction of Cr(VI) and oxidation of organic pollutants [167,209]. Simultaneous reduction and oxidation can effectively improve the water treatment efficiency for multicomponent complex wastewater. (v) For photocatalytic Cr(VI) reduction, different light sources will affect the performance of photocatalysis [210]. According to different bandgap and light source conditions, the suitable light source (like visible light, ultraviolet light or solar light) is selected to achieve the balance between photocatalytic

efficiency and cost.

In all, the reported fabrication strategies, Cr(VI) removal performances and proposed mechanisms, along with the current challenges for MOF derivatives have been reviewed and highlighted in this article, which can provide intensive perception in further investigation and utilization of MOF derivatives and their composites for pollutants elimination in environmental remediation with the purpose of sustainable development.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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