



## Research Article

# Synthesis and Characterization of Azo-based Compounds as Energy Storage Materials

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**Keywords:** Azo-compounds, metal-organic frameworks, rechargeable batteries, redox flow batteries, lithium-ion batteries, capacity, capability, high-energy-density

### Abstract

Two redox active azo-based materials have been synthesized and characterized by elemental analysis (C, H, N), IR, NMR ( $^1\text{H}$  &  $^{13}\text{C}$ ) and single crystal X-ray diffraction analysis. Both the azo-based materials, the ligand **1** and its MOF **2** exhibit good electrochemical performances but the capacity of MOF **2** is higher than the ligand **1**.

## Introduction

Recently, the attention of the scientific community has been focused on the high-performance energy storage systems such as rechargeable and redox flow batteries in the view of the ongoing development of electrical devices and increasing demand for sustainable energy. The high-energy-density rechargeable lithium-ion batteries are widely used in portable electronic devices (Hu *et al.*, 2013) and generate power by the redox reactions of electrode-active materials (Lyu *et al.*, 2021). On the other hand, the redox flow

batteries generate power by the redox reactions of their electrolytes (Yan & Wang, 2018).

Aromatic azo-compounds have been used as active materials with reversible redox activity because of the two electron redox reaction based on N=N/N-N and  $\pi$ -conjugation of N=N group to aromatic groups. Furthermore, they have been used as anode or cathode active materials of rechargeable batteries, and organic or aqueous anolyte of redox flow batteries because of their high capacity and high

capability due to electrochemical properties of the N=N group (Fu *et al.*, 2009).

Azo compounds exhibit poor cyclic performance because of their high solubility in organic electrolytes. This performance can be improved by introduction of carboxylate groups (Luo *et al.*, 2018).

Metal-organic frameworks (MOFs) are a class of compounds consisting of metal clusters coordinated to organic ligands to form crystalline porous materials with specific surface area. MOFs with redox activity are of current interest as electrode materials for Li-ion batteries (LIBs) to enhance the lithium storage performance. Redox active MOFs as electrode materials for LIBs are quite rare (Li *et al.*, 2017). It is of great importance to choose redox active metal sites and an appropriate ligand for synthesis of porous MOFs that could be used directly to prepare electrodes for LIBs. The ligand that has been used in this paper, azobenzene-4,4'-dicarboxylic acid (H<sub>2</sub>ABDA), is a novel azo-benzenedicarboxylic acid with open negatively charge O sites. It could undergo redox activity through the open negatively charged O sites, which might enhance the battery performances (Wu *et al.*, 2017).

Based on the above-mentioned facts, an azo-based MOF from Zn(1,10-phen). (NO<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>.H<sub>2</sub>O metal salt with the azobenzenedicarboxylic acid was synthesized. The ligand and the MOF were used to prepare electrodes for LIBs to study their electrochemical performances.

## Experimental section

All reagents and solvents were commercially available and used as received. The carbon, nitrogen, and hydrogen contents of the compounds were determined by Carbo-Erba elemental analyzer 1108. The infrared spectra of the compounds were recorded on a Varian 3100 FT-IR spectrometer (4000–400cm<sup>-1</sup>) using KBr disks.

<sup>1</sup>H and <sup>13</sup>C NMR spectra of compounds were recorded using JEOL AL 300 MHz spectrometer. The starting compound azobenzene-4, 4'-dicarboxylic acid **1** and azobenzene-4, 4'-dicarbonyl chloride **2** were synthesized following reported methods used (Ghosh *et al.*, 2008).

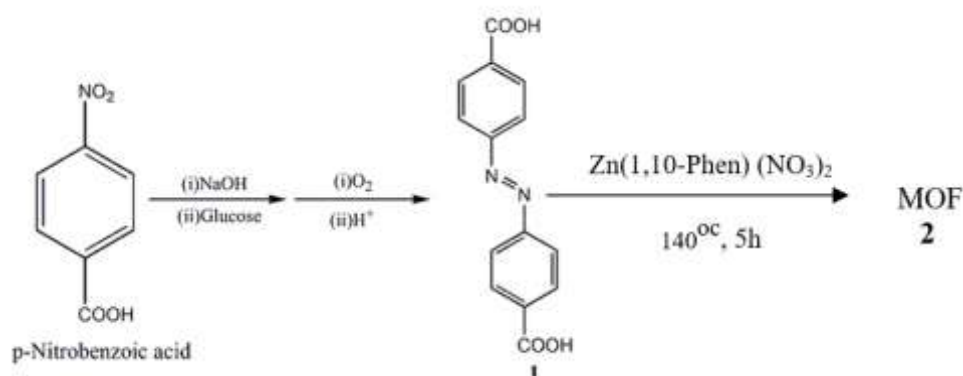
## Synthesis of H<sub>2</sub>ABDA **1**

The ligand azobenzene-4, 4'-dicarboxylic acid **1** was synthesized following reported method used (Ghosh *et al.*, 2008). For the synthesis of H<sub>2</sub>ABDA, *p*-Nitrobenzoic acid (15 g, 67.5 mmol) and NaOH (50 g, 1.25 mmol) were mixed in water (225 mL), and the solution was heated on a water bath until the solid dissolved; hot aqueous glucose (100 g in 150 mL of water) was then added slowly into the above mixture at 50 °C whereupon a yellow precipitate was obtained, which immediately changed to a brown solution upon further addition of glucose. This reaction was highly exothermic. Then, a stream of air was passed into the mixture for 3 h and a light brown precipitate was obtained. This was filtered, dissolved in water, and acidified with acetic acid (25 mL) whereupon a light pink precipitate was obtained. This was filtered, washed with plenty of water (300 mL), and dried in a desiccator to obtain H<sub>2</sub>ADA as a brownish orange powder. The analytical data of the compound **1** are as follows: Brownish orange solid, yield 80%, m.p. 335 °C, IR (KBr)  $\nu$  cm<sup>-1</sup>: 1683(C=O), 1600(N=N); <sup>1</sup>H NMR(CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$ : 13.3 (2H, s, COOH), 8.16 (4H, *J*= 8.4 Hz, d, Ar), 8.01 (4H, *J*= 8.1 Hz, d, Ar); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$ : 166(COOH), 154(Ar), 133(Ar), 130(Ar), 122(Ar); analysis for C<sub>14</sub>H<sub>10</sub>N<sub>2</sub>O<sub>4</sub>: 58.53 (58.34), 4.06 (4.53), 11.38 (11.04).

## Synthesis of MOF **2**

The MOF **2** was synthesized by a reported method (Guo *et al.*). In a typical synthetic procedure, Zn<sup>II</sup> (1,10-phen)(NO<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>.H<sub>2</sub>O (0.405 g, 1mmol) was added to the solution of azobenzene-4,4'-dicarboxylic acid (0.135g, 0.5mmol) dissolved in DMF/DMSO (6 ml). The mixture was heated at 140°C for 5h to give red crystals of **2**. The complex thus isolated was found to be insoluble in water and common organic solvents. Yield: ~75%. Anal. Calc. for C<sub>52</sub>H<sub>32</sub>N<sub>8</sub>O<sub>8</sub>Zn<sub>2</sub> **2**: C, 60.78; H, 3.14; N, 10.90%. Found: C,60.70; H,3.70; N,11.20%. IR (KBr, cm<sup>-1</sup>): 3418(w), 3062(m), 1680(s), 1601(s),1552(s), 1427(s), 1389(vs), 1220(m), 1101(m), 1009(m), 858(s), 794(s), 722(s), 641(m), 504(m), 420(m).

Scheme 1: Synthetic strategy of **1** & **2**



**Single crystal X-ray analysis of 2:** For X-ray Crystallographic Study, the X-ray diffraction data were collected by mounting a single crystal of the sample on glass fibers. Oxford diffraction XCALIBUR-EOS diffractometer was used for the determination of cell parameters and intensity data collection at room temperature. Monochromating Mo K $\alpha$  radiation ( $\lambda = 0.71073 \text{ \AA}$ ) was used for the measurements. The crystal structures were solved by direct methods using SHELXS-97 Program (Sheldrick, 1997) and were refined by full matrix least-squares SHELXL-97 (Sheldrick, 1990). Drawings were carried out using MERCURY (Bruno *et al.*, 2002) and special computations were carried out with PLATON (Spek, 2003).

### Electrochemical Measurements

measurements were carried out using coin-type half cells ( $d = 1.1 \text{ cm}$ ), which were assembled in a box filled with argon. The working electrode was prepared by grinding 60 wt% MOF, 30 wt% conductive material (carbon black, SP) and 10 wt% binder (polyvinylidene difluoride, PVDF) in N-methyl-2-pyrrolidone (NMP) solvent to form a homogeneous slurry, and then coating onto copper foil with a thickness of 200 nm and dried at 100 $^{\circ}\text{C}$  for 12 hours under vacuum. Lithium foil and a polypropylene film were used as the counter electrode and the separator, respectively. The electrolyte was 1 M LiPF $_6$  in a mixture of ethylene carbonate and dimethyl carbonate (Zhou *et al.*, 2019).

### Results and Discussions

The infrared spectra of **1** shows peak at 1683 $\text{cm}^{-1}$  due to C=O stretching vibration. The peak at 1600  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  correspond to N=N stretching vibrations of **1**.  $^1\text{H}$  NMR spectra exhibit peak at  $\delta = 13.3$  due to COOH proton of **1**.  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR spectra of **1** exhibit peaks at  $\delta = 166 \text{ ppm}$  due to C=O carbon. The characteristic band of carboxylic acid group observed at 1681 $\text{cm}^{-1}$  in the spectrum of free ligand **1**, was absent in the spectrum of its complex **2**. It supported that deprotonated ligand had coordinated with metal ion in the complex **2**.

The peaks observed at 1680  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  in the infrared spectra of complex **2** was assigned to  $\nu_{\text{asym}}(-\text{COO}^-)$  vibration, whereas  $\nu_{\text{sym}}(-\text{COO}^-)$  vibration was observed at 1601  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ .

Crystallographic data and refinement details for the structural analyses of **2** are summarized in Table 1. Selected bond lengths and bond angles with their estimated standard deviations are presented in Table 2, while selected parameters for weak interactions are listed in Table 3. Crystallographic data for the compound **2** has been deposited with the Cambridge data centre. The deposition number is CCDC 850421 (Yadav *et al.*, 2012).

**Table 1:** Crystal data and refinement detail for **2**

Parameters	<b>2</b>
formula	C $_{52}$ H $_{32}$ N $_8$ O $_8$ Zn $_2$
M	1027.60
Crystal system	Monoclinic
Temperature/K	293
Space group	C 2/c
a( $\text{\AA}$ )	29.2153(11)
b( $\text{\AA}$ )	18.7144(6)
c( $\text{\AA}$ )	20.3431(7)
$\alpha$ (deg)	90
$\beta$ (deg)	107.516(4)
$\gamma$ (deg)	90
V( $\text{\AA}^3$ )	107.516(4)
Z	8
D $_c$ ( $\text{mg m}^{-3}$ )	1.287
Absorption coefficient	0.962 $\text{mm}^{-1}$
F(000)	4192
Reflns collected/unique	37194/9332
R(int)	0.0312
Index ranges	-34 $\leq$ h $\leq$ 26, -22 $\leq$ k $\leq$ 22 -24 $\leq$ l $\leq$ 24
Refinement method	full-matrix, least-squares on F $^2$
FinalR indices	R1=0.0428, wR2=0.1472
[I $\geq$ 2 $\sigma$ (I)] $^a$	R1=0.0543, wR2=0.1627
R indices (all data)	0.690
GOF on F $^2$ (GOF) $^a$	

**Table 2.** Selected bond length ( $\text{\AA}$ ) and bond angles (deg) for **2**

Zn(1)-O(2)	2.049(3)	Zn(2)-O(011)	2.356(3)
Zn(1)-O(2)	2.049(3)	Zn(2)-O(011)	2.356(3)
Zn(1)-N(2)	2.105(3)	Zn(2)-O(5)	2.444(4)
Zn(1)-N(1)	2.107(3)	O(2)-Zn(1)-O(1)	59.59(10)
Zn(1)-O(1)	2.312(3)	O(4)-Zn(1)-O(3)	59.68(12)
Zn(1)-O(3)	2.324(3)	N(2)-Zn(1)-N(1)	79.64(11)
Zn(2)-O(6)	1.994(3)	O(6)-Zn(2)-O(5)	58.07(13)
Zn(2)-O(014)	2.010(3)	O(014)-Zn(2)-O(011)	59.05(11)
Zn(2)-N(5)	2.097(3)	N(5)-Zn(2)-N(6)	79.01(12)

**Table 3:** Selected parameters for weak interactions in complex **2**

C(36)-H(36) $\cdots$ O(3)	0.93	2.60	3.4620	155	-1/2+x, 1/2- y, -1/2+ z
C(37)-H(37) $\cdots$ O(1)	0.93	2.43	3.1440	134	-1/2+x, 1/2- y, -1/2+ z
C(42)-H(42) $\cdots$ O(3)	0.93	2.56	3.4090	152	1-x, y, 1/2- z

Fig. 1 shows the ORTEP diagram with atom numbering scheme of **2** while Fig. 2 shows  $\pi \rightarrow \pi$  stacking interactions. The complex **2** exists as a neutral one-dimensional infinite zig-zag coordination chain. Each Zn(II) center is surrounded by two N donors from the 1,10-phenanthroline ring and four oxygen atoms from two carboxylate groups of two different azobenzene-4,4'-dicarboxylic acid molecules together in a distorted hexacoordinated geometry, as depicted in Fig. 1. The neighboring Zn (II) centers are connected by a azobenzene-4, 4'-dicarboxylate dianionic

moiety. The two azobenzene-4, 4'-dicarboxylate units are at  $71.21^\circ$  to one another and the two Zn (II) centers are separated at a distance of  $17.35 \text{ \AA}$ . The 1, 10-phenanthroline molecule acts as terminal ligand which prevents the chain growth in a straight forward direction; hence a zigzag chain is formed. The independent chains are linked through  $\pi$ - $\pi$  interaction between the 1, 10-phenanthroline rings at a distance of  $3.93 \text{ \AA}$ . It results in the formation of channels (Fig. 2).

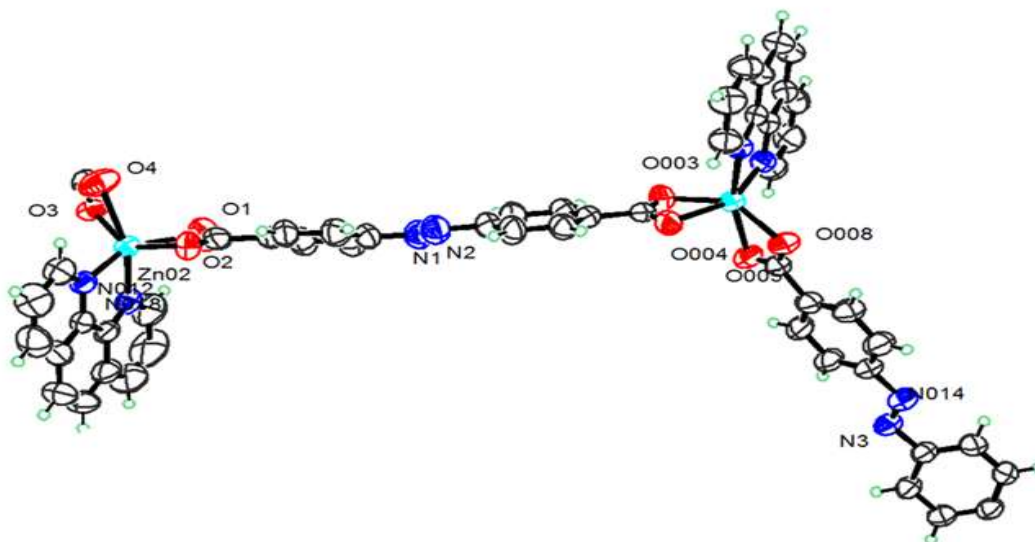


Fig. 2: Molecular structure (ORTEP) of compound **2**.

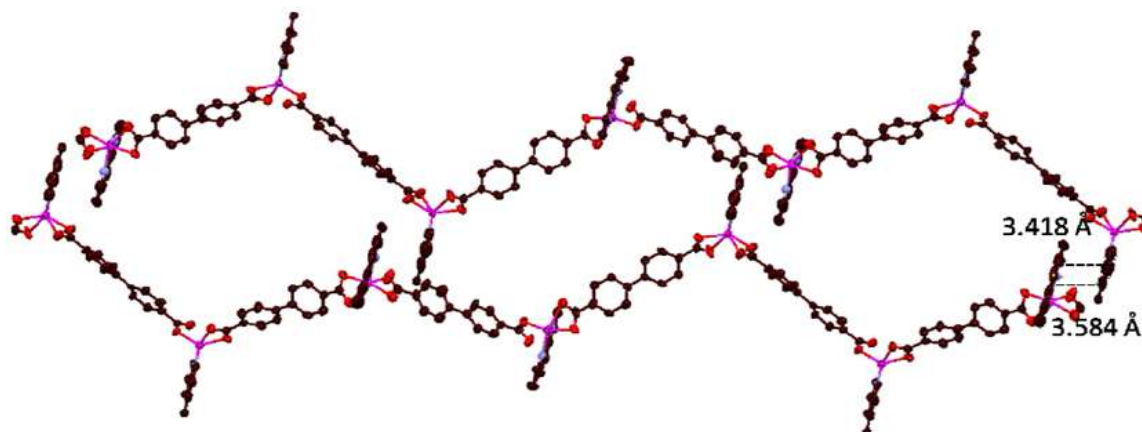


Fig. 3: Packing diagram of compound **2**. Dash lines indicate  $\pi \rightarrow \pi$  stacking interactions.

Table 4: Performances of azo compounds as anode active materials in lithium-ion batteries

Active materials	Cycle performance	
	Capacity [ $\text{mAhg}^{-1}$ ]	
	Discharge	Charge
Ligand <b>1</b>	1392.4	278
MOF <b>2</b>	1026.6	398.6



The electrochemical properties were evaluated by using the two azo-based materials **1** & **2** as anodes in Li-ion batteries. The MOF exhibited initial discharge and charge capacities of 1026.6 mA h g<sup>-1</sup> and 398.6 mA h g<sup>-1</sup> at a constant current density of 100 mA g<sup>-1</sup> respectively. For the pure ligand electrode, the discharge and charge capacities in the first cycle were 1392.4 mA h g<sup>-1</sup> and 278 mA h g<sup>-1</sup>, respectively. The enhanced capacity of the MOF is possibly due to the redox reactions of both metal clusters and the ligand associated with lithiation/delithiation processes.

## Conclusion

Both the azo compound **1** and MOF **2** electrodes exhibit good electrochemical performances with high specific capacities, good rate capabilities and cycling stabilities. The enhanced electrochemical performances of the MOF electrode may be mainly due to the fact that the large porosity of the two MOFs allows more lithium ion diffusion within their channels, the redox-active paddle-wheel metal clusters could provide multiple electrons, the  $\pi \rightarrow \pi$  stacking improves electron conductivity and the open negatively charged O sites of the azo ligand help lithium storage. Thus the collective effect of porosity and redox reaction of the metal nodes and the organic ligand will strongly influence the electrochemical performances of MOF electrode.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest with present publication.

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