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ANALYSIS OF HYDROXYBENZENE-METHANAL OLIGOMERS USING ^1H NMR SPECTROSCOPY METHODS

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Abstract: The chemical structure of oligomers synthesized based on hydroxybenzene-methanal and 2,5-furandione at different ratios and temperature ranges was studied using quantitative NMR spectroscopy methods. In addition to methylene bridges and simple ether bonds between hydroxybenzene rings in hydroxybenzene-methanal resins, the formation of structural groups based on 2,5-furandione, as well as macromolecular transformations and the presence of fragmentary bonds, were observed. The mechanism of the polycondensation process of hydroxybenzene and methanal in an alkaline medium was investigated. Structural and functional differences in the composition of oligomers synthesized from hydroxybenzene-methanal and 2,5-furandione were identified.

Keywords: hydroxybenzene-methanal, 2,5-furandione, synthesis, oligomer, resin, spectroscopy, polycondensation, ether, methylene, proton.

Introduction. Phenol-formaldehyde resins are polycondensation products of phenolic compounds with formaldehyde and hold a significant position in the overall production of synthetic resins. As one of the first synthetic polymer materials, they remain valuable across numerous industries today. The development of production in many countries is driven by the continuously increasing demand from consumer sectors. On the other hand, phenol-formaldehyde resins are cost-effective, derived from abundant natural raw material sources, technologically simple to manufacture, and can be modified to control specific properties for a wide range of operational applications [1-5].

According to SRI Consulting, global production of phenol-formaldehyde resins reached approximately 5 million tons in 2014. The primary consumer sector—accounting for up to 35% of manufactured products—is the wood processing industry, including plywood, fiberboard, particleboard, oriented strand board, and other wood-based materials. Nearly equivalent demand exists in the foundry industry, thermal insulation materials, and laminated plastics production, which collectively account for 14%, 13%, and 12% of phenol-formaldehyde resin manufacturing, respectively [6-10]. Additionally, these resins are highly valuable for the production of paints, varnishes, abrasives, friction materials, adhesive compositions, foam plastics, coatings for various applications, sealants, and more.

The authors investigated and characterized the condensation mechanisms of formaldehyde with phenol in resole-type phenol-formaldehyde oligomers (PFOs) under well-controlled conditions, including temperature, stoichiometry, catalyst, and pH, using

high-performance liquid chromatography (HPLC) and ^{13}C nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) spectroscopy. Their study described a two-step process for the formation of PFOs. In the first step, they examined the substitution of formaldehyde at the free ortho and para positions of the phenol ring. In the second step, they analyzed the self-condensation reaction between two molecules. Initially, under neutral or acidic conditions at 130°C , the formaldehyde molecule forms ether bonds and methylene bridges. In the final stage, the hydroxymethyl group undergoes an electrophilic attack on the aromatic ring proton [11].

Similarly, in another study, it was observed that ortho-substitution occurs in the early stages of PFO formation, along with the formation of a hemiacetal intermediate in the methylol derivative. These methylol-substituted intermediates are highly unstable, and the relative rate of structural formation can be better assessed by analyzing the methylene bridge region. According to ^{13}C NMR results, para-para bridges are formed first, followed by ortho-para and finally ortho-ortho linkages. The relative intensity analysis of ortho and para bridge carbon atoms provides insight into the isomeric composition of the final oligomer. The ratio of each isomer depends on the catalyst used in resin synthesis [12-13].

Hydroxybenzene-methanal oligomers were synthesized based on 2,5-furandione, and their kinetic and physicochemical analyses were conducted [14-18]. This research paper focuses on the structural characteristics of hydroxybenzene-methanal oligomers synthesized using 2,5-furandione. The structural investigation was performed using ^1H NMR spectroscopy to analyze the resin composition. The synthesis of hydroxybenzene-methanal oligomers was carried out at different molar ratios and temperatures, and the obtained products were examined. NMR spectral analysis confirmed the presence of aromatic protons (6.5–7.5 ppm) and methylene ($-\text{CH}_2-$) linkages (0.9–3.5 ppm) in the hydroxybenzene-methanal resins.

Materials and Methods. Nuclear Magnetic Resonance (NMR) spectroscopy is one of the analytical techniques that utilizes the nuclei of isotopes to obtain structural information about a substance. For NMR analysis, the sample is placed in a thin-walled glass tube (ampoule). When subjected to a magnetic field, NMR-active nuclei (such as ^1H or ^{13}C) absorb electromagnetic energy. The emitted signal's resonance frequency, energy absorption, and intensity were measured. The ^1H NMR spectra were recorded at a 900 MHz frequency in a 21 Tesla magnetic field.

Results and Discussion. Hydroxybenzene-methanal oligomers synthesized under different molar ratios and temperature conditions were analyzed using ^1H NMR spectroscopy. The chemical shifts and proton signals observed in the spectra provided insights into the structural changes of the oligomers. Significant differences were noted among the samples synthesized at different temperatures. In the ^1H NMR spectrum of the oligomer synthesized at 95°C , the presence of aromatic protons (6.5–7.5 ppm) and methylene ($-\text{CH}_2-$) groups (0.9–3.5 ppm) was clearly observed. Under this synthesis condition, strong bonding occurred between hydroxybenzene and methanal, forming a highly cross-linked structure. The sample synthesized at 80°C also showed well-defined aromatic proton and methylene group signals; however, the degree of cross-linking

appeared slightly lower than that of the high-temperature sample. Although the cross-linking remained relatively strong, the polymer chains exhibited reduced self-condensation. In the sample synthesized at 70°C, the degree of cross-linking was further reduced, but the presence of aromatic and methylene protons indicated that the aromatic structure of hydroxybenzene was preserved during synthesis. The lower synthesis temperature resulted in oligomers with less reactive but structurally stable polymer chains. These findings suggest that higher temperatures favor stronger cross-linking and polymerization, while lower temperatures lead to a more flexible and less cross-linked oligomer structure.

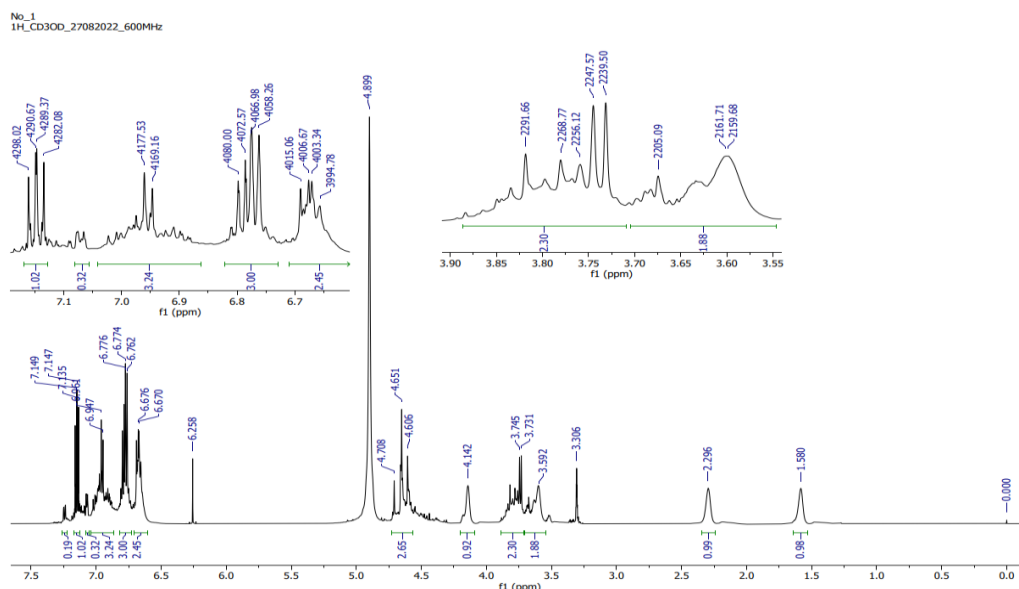


Figure 1. APEP:HMHB = 1:100 mole/mole, T = 95 °C

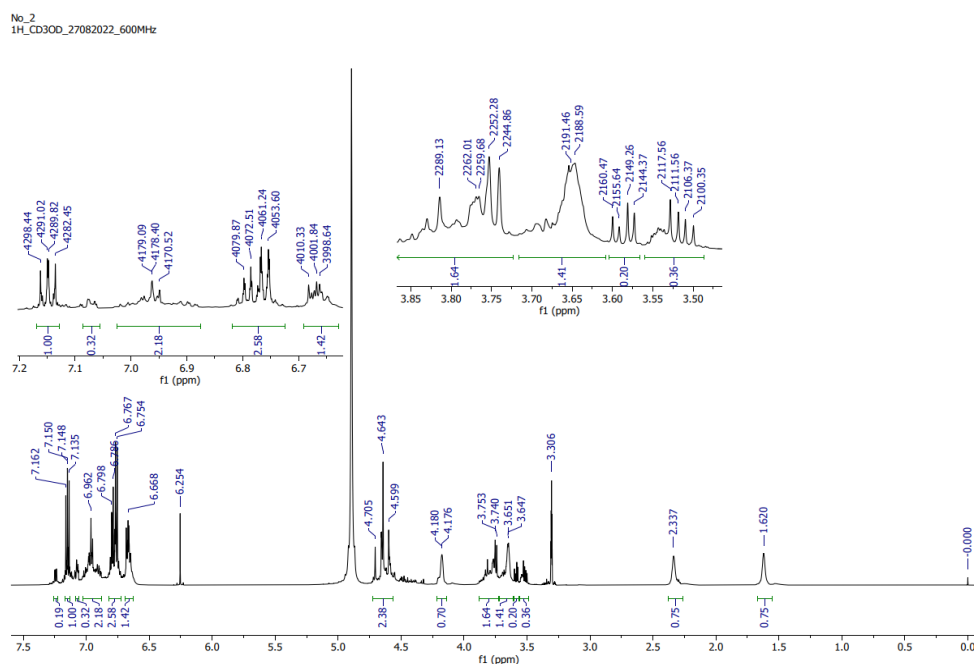


Figure 2. APEP:HMHB = 1:100 mole/mole, T = 80 °C

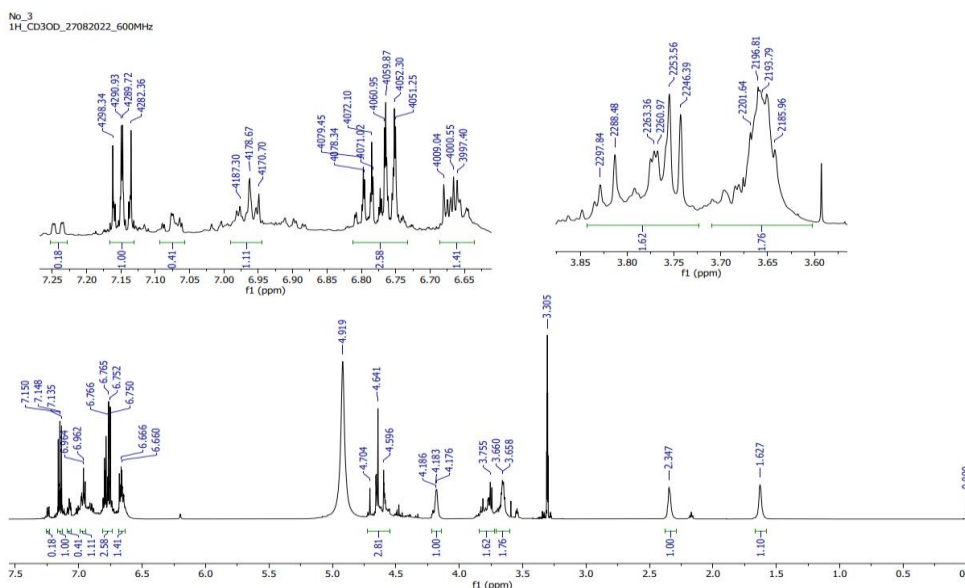


Figure 3. APEP:HMHB = 1:100 mole/mole, T = 70 °C

Samples synthesized at a 1:80 mol/mol ratio were analyzed at high (95°C, Figure 4), medium (80°C, Figure 5), and low (70°C, Figure 6) temperatures. In the sample synthesized at high temperature, strong bonding between aromatic protons and methylene groups was observed, indicating well-connected polymer chains. Under this synthesis condition, the reactions between phenol and formaldehyde proceeded to their maximum extent.

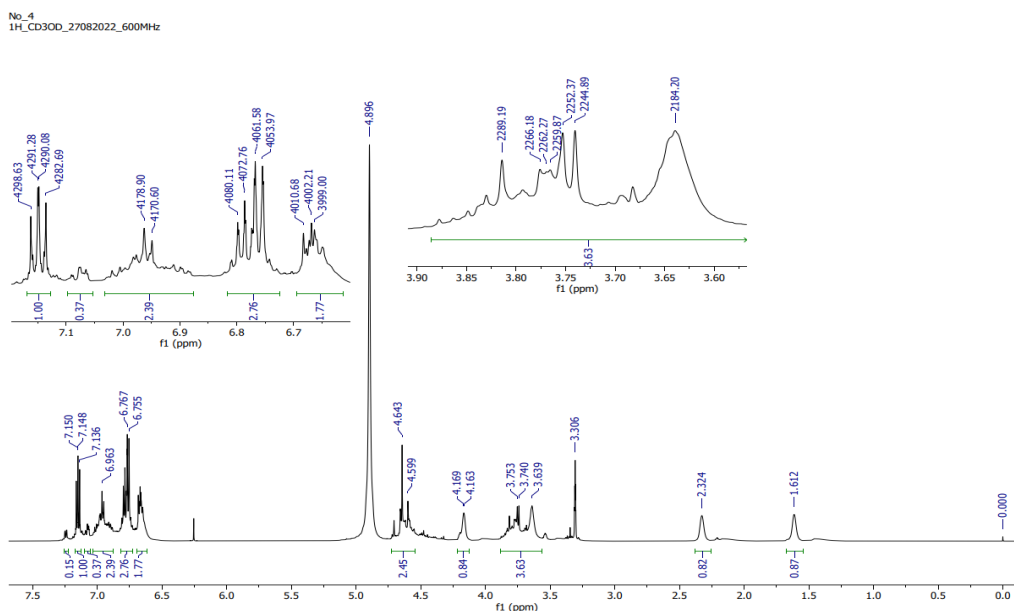


Figure 4. APEP:HMHB = 1:80 mole/mole, T = 95 °C

In the sample synthesized at 80°C, the aromatic structure of phenol and the degree of polymer chain cross-linking remained high, although the cross-linking was slightly

lower compared to the high-temperature samples. The polymers formed under this synthesis condition exhibited a well-structured and stable architecture.

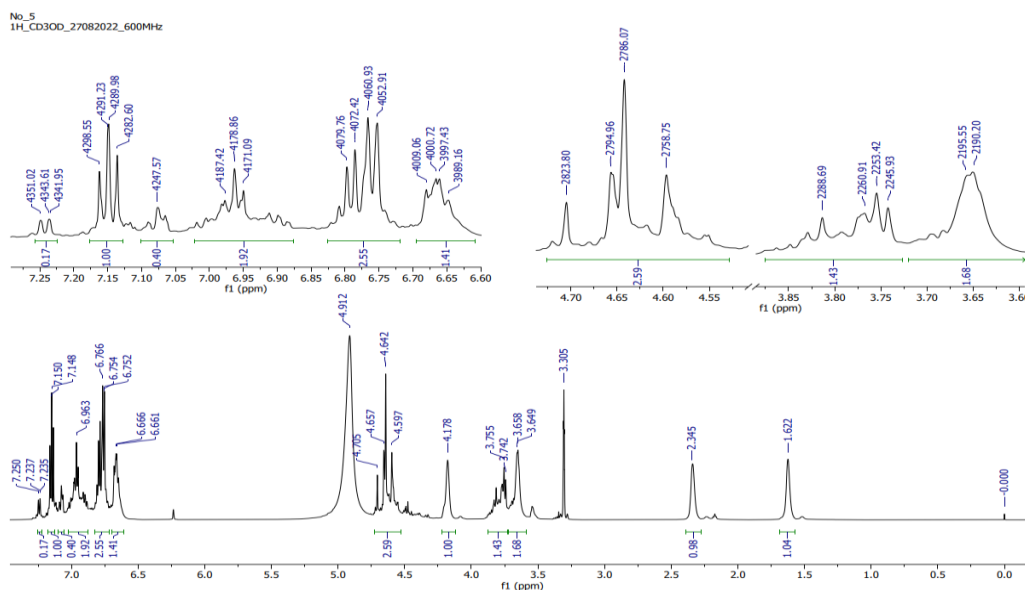


Figure 5. APEP:HMHB = 1:80 mole/mole, T = 80 °C

In the sample synthesized at 80°C, the aromatic structure of phenol and the degree of polymer chain cross-linking remained high, although the cross-linking was slightly lower compared to the high-temperature samples. The polymers formed under this synthesis condition exhibited a well-structured and stable architecture.

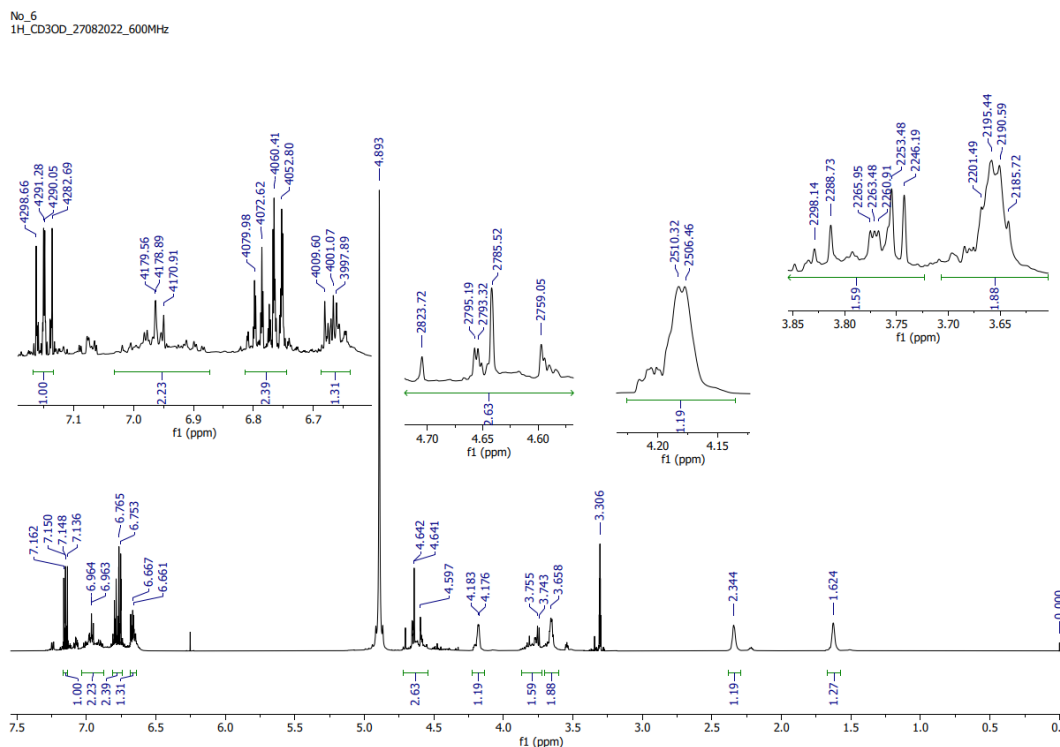


Figure 6. APEP:HMHB = 1:80 mole/mole, T = 70 °C

In the sample synthesized at 70°C, a lower degree of cross-linking was observed. Nevertheless, the presence of the aromatic structure of hydroxybenzene and methylene groups ensured the stability of the polymers formed under these conditions.

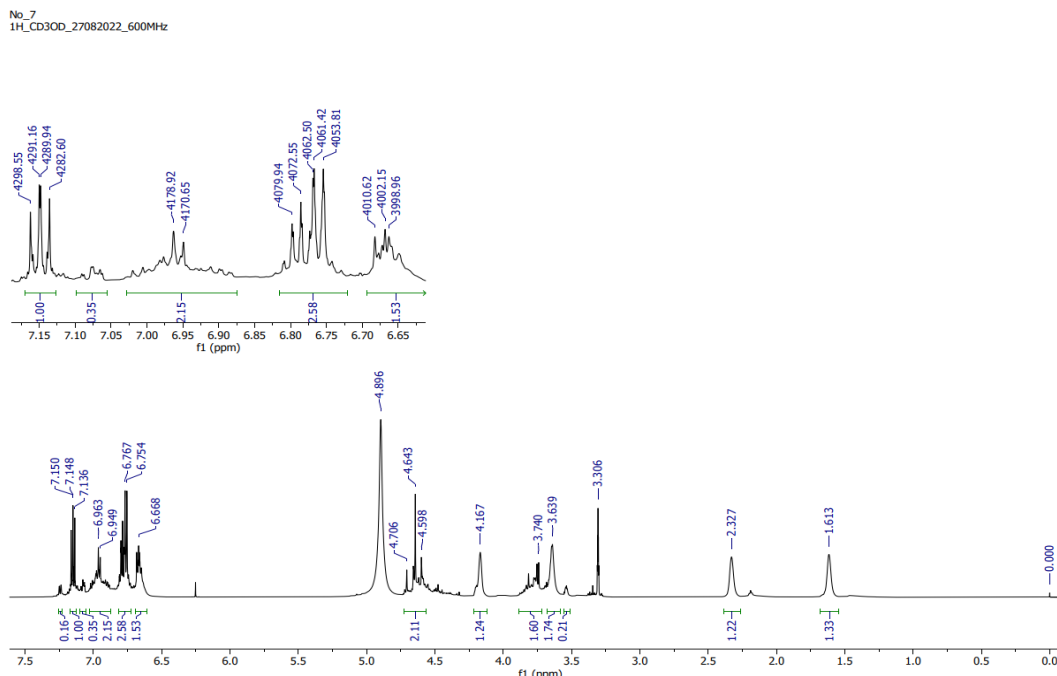


Figure 7. APEP:HMHB = 1:60 mole/mole, T = 95 °C

Oligomers synthesized at a 1:60 mol/mol ratio were analyzed at high (95 °C, Figure 7), medium (80 °C, Figure 8), and low (70 °C, Figure 9) temperatures. In the 95 °C formulation, the bonding between aromatic protons and methylene groups was strong, indicating highly cross-linked polymer chains. The oligomers formed under high-temperature conditions exhibited high stability and a well-structured architecture.

In the 80 °C formulation, the aromatic protons of hydroxybenzene and methylene groups remained intact, demonstrating well-formed polymer chains. Despite being synthesized at a lower temperature, the oligomer retained a high degree of cross-linking.

In the 70 °C formulation, a lower degree of cross-linking was observed. However, the presence of aromatic structures of hydroxybenzene and methylene groups ensured the stability of the polymers formed under these conditions.

The ¹H NMR results of hydroxybenzene-methanal oligomers synthesized under different ratios and temperature conditions reveal the chemical transformations occurring during the synthesis process. Overall, the analysis indicates that oligomers synthesized at higher temperatures (95°C) formed a highly cross-linked structure, ensuring greater stability and well-structured polymer chains. In contrast, those synthesized at moderate (80°C) and lower (70°C) temperatures exhibited a lower degree of cross-linking, characterized by reduced reactivity but maintained structural stability.

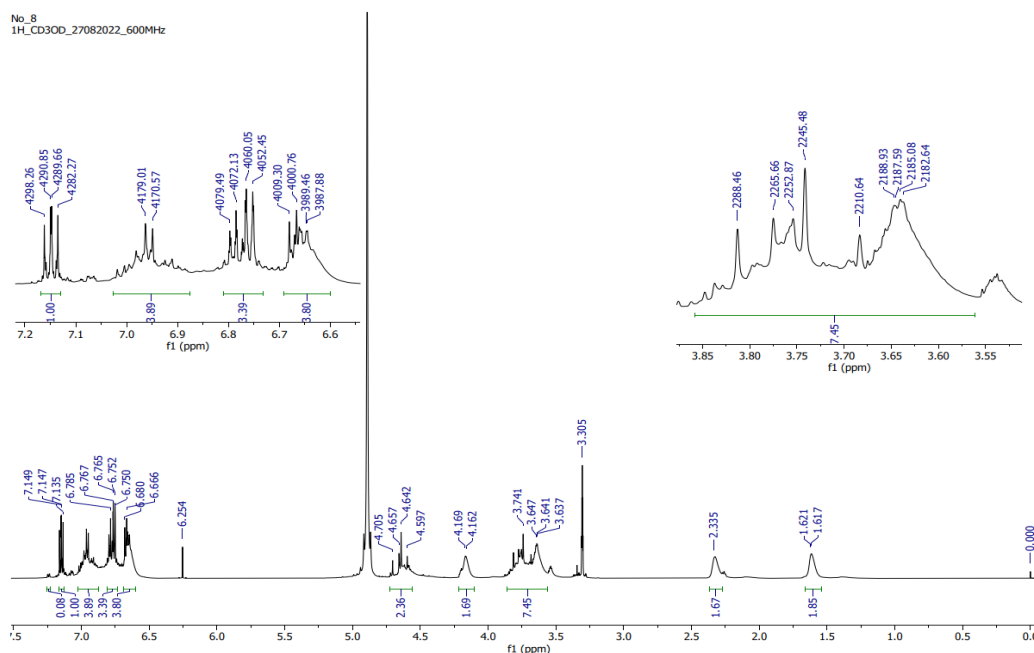


Figure 8. APEP:HMHB = 1:60 mole/mole, T = 80 °C

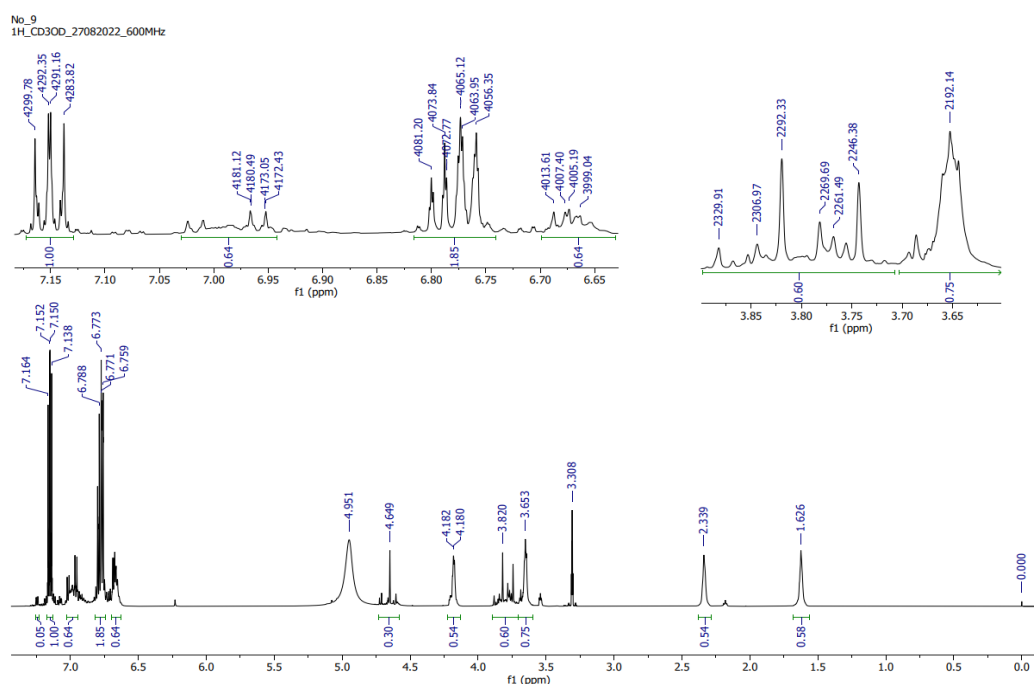


Figure 9. APEP:HMHB = 1:60 mole/mole, T = 70 °C

Conclusion. The results demonstrate that the chemical properties of the synthesized oligomers significantly vary with temperature and reactant ratio. At higher temperatures, the reaction between hydroxybenzene and methanal proceeded more efficiently, yielding highly cross-linked polymers. In contrast, at lower temperatures, the degree of cross-linking was reduced, but the structural integrity of the resulting polymers was preserved.

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CONTENTS

TECHNICAL SCIENCES: COTTON, TEXTILE AND LIGHT INDUSTRY

Rakhimov R., Sultonov M.	3
Inspection of the strength of the column lattice of the improved fiber cleaner	
Turdiyev B., Rosulov R.	10
The influence of technological parameters of the elevator on cotton seed damage	
Khuramova Kh.	15
Graphic analysis of the obtained results on cotton regeneration	
Sharifbayev R.	20
Optimizing feature extraction in Ai-based cocoon classification: a hybrid approach for enhanced silk quality	
Akramov A., Khodzhiev M.	24
The current state and challenges of the global textile industry: key directions for the development of Uzbekistan's textile sector	

TECHNICAL SCIENCES: AGRICULTURE AND FOOD TECHNOLOGIES

Sattarov K., Jankurazov A., Tukhtamyshova G.	30
Study of food additives on bread quality	
Madaminova Z., Khamdamov A., Xudayberdiyev A.	37
Determination of amygdalin content in peach oil obtained by pressing method	
Kobilov N., Dodayev K.	43
Food safety and industrial importance of corn starch. the impact of the hydration process on the starch content in the grain	
Mustafaev O., Ravshanov S., Dzhakhangirova G., Kanoatov X.	50
The effect of storing wheat grain in open warehouses on the "aging" process of bread products	
Erkayeva N., Ahmedov A.	58
Industrial trials of the refining technology for long-term stored sunflower oil	
Boynazarova Y., Farmonov J.	64
Microscopic investigations on the effect of temperature on onion seed cell degradation	
Rasulova M., Xamdamov A.	79
Theoretical analysis of distillators used in the distillation of vegetable oil miscella	

CHEMICAL SCIENCES

Ergashev O., Bazarbaev M., Juraeva Z., Bakhronov H., Kokharov M., Mamadaliyev U.	84
Isotherm of ammonia adsorption on zeolite CaA (MSS-622)	
Ergashev O., Bakhronov H., Sobirjonova S., Kokharov M., Mamadaliyev U.	93
Differential heat of ammonia adsorption and adsorption mechanism in Ca ₄ Na ₄ A zeolite	
Boymirzaev A., Erniyazova I.	101
Recent advances in the synthesis and characterisation of methylated chitosan derivatives	
Kalbaev A., Mamataliyev N., Abdikamalova A., Ochilov A., Masharipova M.	106
Adsorption and kinetics of methylene blue on modified laponite	
Ibragimov T., Tolipov F., Talipova X.	114
Studies of adsorption, kinetics and thermodynamics of heavy metall ions on clay adsorbents	
Muratova M.	123
Method for producing a fire retardant agent with nitric acid solutions of various concentrations	
Shavkatova D.	132
Preparation of sulphur concrete using modified sulphur and melamine	
Umarov Sh., Ismailov R.	139
Analysis of hydroxybenzene-methanal oligomers using ¹ H nmr spectroscopy methods	
Vokkosov Z.	148
Studying the role and mechanism of microorganisms in the production of microbiological fertilizers	
Mukhammadjonov M., Rakhmatkarieva F., Oydinov M.	153
The physical-chemical analysis of KA zeolite obtained from local kaolin	
Shermatov A., Sherkuziev D.	160
Study of the decomposition process of local phosphorites using industrial waste sulfuric acid	
Khudayberdiev N., Ergashev O.	168
Study of the main characteristics of polystyrene and phenol-formaldehyde resin waste	

TECHNICAL SCIENCES: MECHANICS AND MECHANICAL ENGINEERING

Kudratov Sh.	
UZTE16M locomotive oil system and requirements for diesel locomotive reliability and operating conditions	174
Dadakhanov N.	
Device studying the wear process of different materials	181
Dadakhanov N., Karimov R.	
Investigation of irregularity of yarn produced in an improved drawn tool	189
Mirzaumidov A., Azizov J., Siddiqov A.	
Static analysis of the spindle shaft with a split cylinder	196
Mirjalolzoda B., Umarov A., Akbaraliyev A., Abduvakhidov M.	
Static calculation of the saw blade of the saw gin	203
Obidov A., Mirzaumidov A., Abdurasulov A.	
A study of critical speed of linter shaft rotation and resonance phenomenon	208
Khakimov B., Abdurakhmanov O.	
Monitoring the effectiveness of the quality management system in manufacturing enterprises	217
Bayboboev N., Muminov A.	
Analysis of the indicators of the average speed of units for the process of loading into a potato harvesting machine	232
Kayumov U., Kakhkharov O., Pardaeva Sh.	
Analysis of factors influencing the increased consumption of diesel fuel by belaz dump trucks in a quarry	237
Abdurahmonov J.	
Theoretical study of the effect of a brushed drum shaft on the efficiency of flush separation	244
Ishnazarov O., Otabayev B., Kurvonboyev B.	
Modern methods of smooth starting of asynchronous motors: their technologies and industrial applications	250
Kadirov K., Toxtashev A.	
The influence of the cost of electricity production on the formation of tariffs	263
Azambayev M.	
An innovative approach to cleaning cotton linters	271
Abdullayev R.	
Theoretical substantiation of the pneumomechanics of the Czech gin for the separation of fiber from seeds	277
Siddikov I., A'zamov S.	
Study of power balance of small power asynchronous motor	282

Obidov A., Mirzaakhmedova D., Ibrohimov I.	288
Theoretical research of a heavy pollutant cleaning device	
Xudayberdiyeva D., Obidov A.	294
Reactive power compensation and energy waste reduction during start-up of the electric motor of uxk cotton cleaning device	
Jumaniyazov K., Sarbarov X.	302
Analysis of the movement of cotton seeds under the influence of a screw conveyor	
Abdusalomova N., Muradov R.	310
Analysis of the device design for discharging heavy mixtures from the sedimentation chamber	
Ikromov M., Shomurodov S., Boborajabov B., Mamayev Sh., Nigmatova D.	318
Study of obtaining an organomineral modifier from local raw materials to improve the operational properties of bitumen	
Ikromov M., Shomurodov S., Boborajabov B., Mamayev Sh., Nigmatova D.	324
Development of composition and production technology for polymer-bitumen mixtures for automobile roads	
Muradov R., Mirzaakbarov A.	332
Effective ways to separate fibers suitable for spinning from waste material	

ADVANCED PEDAGOGICAL TECHNOLOGIES IN EDUCATION

Xoliddinov I., Begmatova M.	336
A method of load balancing based on fuzzy logic in low-voltage networks with solar panel integration	
Murodov R., Kuchqarov A., Boynazarov B., Uzbekov M.	345
Research on the efficiency of using hydro turbines in pumping mode and for electricity generation	
Abdurakhimova M., Romanov J., Masharipov Sh.	353
A literature review of settlement land trends (past, present, and future) based on english-language articles indexed in the web of science database from 2014 to 2023	
Muhammedova M.	360
Development and scientific justification of the design of orthopedical footwear for patients with injuries to the soul-foot joint	
Akbaraliyev M., Egamberdiyev A.	367
Methods of effective organization of fire and rescue operations	

A'zamxonov O., Egamberdiyev A.

Principles of organizing material and technical support in emergency situations **373**

Tuychibayeva G., Kukibayeva M.

The module of developing communicative competence of seventh and eighth-grade students in uzbekistan secondary schools **379**

Ismoilova Z.

Methods for enhancing the competence of future english teachers **383**

ECONOMICAL SCIENCES

Yuldashev K., Makhamadaliev B.

The role of small business entities in the program "From poverty to well-being" **389**

Mirzakhlikov B.

Organizational mechanism for the development of state programs for poverty reduction **397**

Rustamova S.

Specific characteristics of administration in developed countries **402**
