



# World Scientific News

An International Scientific Journal

WSN 109 (2018) 195-210

EISSN 2392-2192

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## Plant extract as biodegradable inhibitor for zinc in dilute solution of sulphuric acid

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### ABSTRACT

The inhibitive action of the ethanol extract of oil from *Picralima nitida* leaf, towards acid corrosion of zinc, is tested using weight loss, and thermometry methods. It was found that the extract acted as a good corrosion inhibitor for zinc corrosion in 0.5 M H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> solution. The inhibitive action of the extract was discussed in view of Langmuir adsorption isotherm. It was revealed that the adsorption of the extract on zinc surface is governed by spontaneous process. The inhibition efficiency (IE) increases in line with corresponding increase in extract concentration. The temperature effect of the corrosion inhibition on the IE was studied. Revelation from the studies indicates that the presence of extract increases the activation energy of the corrosion reaction. Furthermore, from the calculated thermodynamic parameters, it was observed that *Picralima nitida* extract provides a good protection to zinc against pitting corrosion in chloride ion containing solutions.

**Keywords:** Zinc, corrosion, inhibition, *Picralima nitida* leaf, inhibitor

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Corrosion is an electrochemical process that gradually returns metals such as zinc to its natural state in the environment. In other words, corrosion can be said to be destruction of

material resulting from exposure and interaction with the environment. It is a major problem that requires immediate confrontation for safety, environment, and economic reasons [1]. Zinc consists of wide variety of alloys used since ancient times. Building industry frequently uses zinc alloys in roofing of house and other construction work because of its ductility and malleability. Therefore, zinc alloys are widely used in the production of many components and die-casting fittings in automobile and manufacturing and the mechanical industry, thanks to its super or super plasticity.

Zinc, in spite of the so called super plasticity is not spared by corrosion, especially after prolonged period of exposure in corrosive environment, such as  $H_2SO_4$ . For this reasons a lot of efforts have been made using corrosion preventive practices and the use of green corrosion inhibitors is one of them [2]. The use of green inhibitors for the control of corrosion of zinc and alloys which are in contact with aggressive environment is an accepted and growing practice [3-5]. Large numbers of organic compounds are being studied to investigate their corrosion inhibition potential. Revelation of these studies shows that organic compounds are not only expensive, but also toxic to living beings [6].

Plant extracts and organic species have therefore become important as an environmentally acceptable, readily available, and renewable source for a wide range of inhibitors [7]. They are the rich sources of ingredients which have very high inhibition efficiency and are hence termed “Green Inhibitors” [8]. Green corrosion inhibitors [9] are biodegradable and do not contain heavy metals or other toxic compounds. The successful use of naturally occurring substances to inhibit the corrosion of the metals in acidic and alkaline environment have been reported by some research groups [10] to mention but a few. Research efforts to find naturally organic substances or biodegradable organic materials to be used as effective corrosion inhibitors of a wide number of metals has been one of the key areas in this research work.

The aim of this study is to investigate the inhibitive properties of *Picralima nitida* leaves extract onto zinc in sulphuric acid media. Several studies have already been carried out and have remained focused on the *Picralima nitida* leaf extract for their various pharmacological activities. Firstly, *Picralima nitida* plant is a tree that can reach a height of 35 meters, but is usually less. It is a commonly used herbal remedy in West Africa. All parts of the plant are bitter throughout its distribution area.

The seeds, barks, roots and leaves have a reputation as a febrifuge and remedy for malaria as well as also being extensively used for pain relief and treatment of chest and stomach problems, pneumonia and intestinal worms [11]. A decoction of the leave is taken as a treatment for measles. The *Picralima nitida* leaf contains many organic compounds, such as phenolics, terpenoids, and tannins as their major phytochemicals and also saponins, flavonoids and alkaloids in moderate amount to scavenge free radicals induce detoxification.

Presently, to the best of our knowledge no reported work in area of environment has been carried out on the corrosion inhibitive properties of the *Picralima nitida* leaves extract. Therefore, the aim of this research is to undertake a thorough investigation towards that, in 0.5 M  $H_2SO_4$  using the leaf extract of *Picralima nitida*. The study was done using thermometric method, weight loss (Gravimetric) method and FTIR analysis. The effect of temperature and concentration on the rate of corrosion were also studied, and some thermodynamic and kinetic parameters were calculated, too.

## 2. EXPERIMENTAL METHODS

### 2. 1. Materials

Gravimetric and thermometric tests were performed on 99.988% Zn, other components (we%) were: Pb 0.003, Cd 0.003, Fe 0.002, Sn 0.001, Cu 0.00, Al 0.001. The sheet of zinc was cut into coupons (2.6 cm × 2.6 cm × 0.015 cm), cleaned and polished with emery paper to expose shining polished surface. The coupons were degreased with acetone in order to remove any trace of oil and impurities and finally washed with double distilled water, dried in air and then stored in desiccators prior to use. The aggressive solution of 0.5 M H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> was made from analytical grade, sulphuric acid and distilled water. *Picralima nitida* leave collected from Uke in Anambra, Nigeria, was sun-dried for three days. The dried leave were ground to increase the surface area and stored in a closed container. For every of the extraction process, 30 grams of each of the ground *Picralima nitida* leave were measured and soaked in 100 ml of ethanol for 48 hours. At the end of the 48hrs, each plant mixture was filtered. The filtrate is the mixture of the plant extract and the ethanol. The extract of *Picralima nitida* leave obtained in ethanol solvent was concentrated, distilled off the solvent and evaporated to dryness. The plant extract was weighed and stored for the corrosion inhibition study.

### 2. 2. Fourier transform infrared (FTIR) analysis of *Picralima nitida* extract and corrosion product

The zinc was immersed in the H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> medium in the presence of the *Picralima nitida* leave extract. At the end of the corrosion study, the corrosion products in the beakers were collected with aid of sample bottles Oguzie et al (2013). SHIMADZU FT-IR spectrophotometer, model: IR affinity – 1, 5/NA 2137470136 SI) was used for the determination of the functional groups of the PNL extract (pure) and corrosion product in the presence of the PNL extract. Comparative analysis of various FTIR produced peaks were carried out in order to determine the exact functional groups for the corrosion inhibition process.

### 2. 3. Thermometric Method of the Corrosion Inhibition Study

The measurements were carried out using a thermostat set at 30 °C for the zinc in free and inhibited H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>. The temperatures of the system containing the zinc and the test solution were recorded regularly until a steady temperature value was evaluated using eqn. (1) [12-14].

$$RN = \frac{T_m - T_i}{t} \quad (1)$$

where T<sub>m</sub> and T<sub>i</sub> are the maximum and initial temperatures (°C) respectively and t is the time in minutes elapsed to reach T<sub>m</sub>.

The inhibitor efficiency was determined using eqn. (2)

$$IE\% = 1 - \frac{RN_{add}}{RN_{free}} \times 100 \quad (2)$$

where  $RN_{free}$  and  $RN_{add}$  are the reaction numbers for the zinc dissolution in free and inhibited corrosive media respectively.

#### 2. 4. Weight loss (gravimetric) Method using one factor at a time

The weight loss methods were carried out applying one factor at a time. Considering the said method, the weight loss method was carried out at different temperatures and with various concentrations of the *Picralima nitida* extract. Weighed zinc coupons were separately immersed in 250 ml open beakers containing 200 ml of 0.5 M  $H_2SO_4$ . More so, zinc coupons were separately immersed in 150 ml open beakers containing 200 ml of 0.5 M  $H_2SO_4$  with various concentrations of the extract.

The variation of weight loss was monitored periodically at various temperatures in the absence and presence of various concentrations of the extracts. At the appropriate time, the coupons were taken out, immersed in acetone, scrubbed with a bristle brush under running water, dried and reweighed. The weight loss was calculated as the difference between the initial weight and the weight after the removal of the corrosion product. The experimental readings were recorded. The weight loss ( $\Delta w$ ), corrosion rate (CR) and inhibition efficiency (IE) were determined using the eq (3-5), respectively. The surface coverage was obtained using equation 5 [15].

$$\Delta w = w_i - w_f \quad (3)$$

$$CR = \frac{w_e - f_e}{At} \quad (4)$$

$$(IE\%) = 1 - \frac{w_0 - w_1}{w_0} \times 100 \quad (5)$$

$$\theta = \frac{w_0 - w_1}{w_0} \quad (6)$$

where  $w_i$  and  $w_f$  are the initial and final weight of zinc samples respectively,  $w_1$  and  $w_0$  are the weight loss values in presence and absence of inhibitor, respectively. A is the total area of the zinc sample and t is the immersion time.

##### 2. 4. 1. Effect of temperature on the corrosion rate

Effect of temperature on the corrosion rate was described using Arrhenius equation

$$CR = A e^{-E_a/RT} \quad (7)$$

where CR is the corrosion rate of the zinc, A is the pre-exponential factor,  $E_a$  is the activation energy, and R is the universal gas constant. Eq. (7) can be linearized to form eq. (8).

$$\ln (CR) = \ln A - (E_a/R) \left(\frac{1}{T}\right) \quad (8)$$

Considering the corrosion rate of the zinc at  $T_1$  and  $T_2$  as  $Cr_1$  and  $CR_2$ , then eq. (8) can be expressed by eq. (9).

$$\ln \left( \frac{CR_2}{CR_1} \right) = \left( \frac{Ea}{2.303R} \right) \left( \frac{1}{T_1} - \frac{1}{T_2} \right) \quad (9)$$

Thermodynamic parameter for the adsorption process. The heat of adsorption  $Q_{ads}$  ( $\text{kJmol}^{-1}$ ) was calculated using eq. (10) [16]

$$Q_{ads} = 2.303R \left[ \log \left( \frac{\theta_2}{1 - \theta_2} \right) - \log \left( \frac{\theta_1}{1 - \theta_1} \right) \times \frac{T_2 T_1}{T_2 - T_1} \right] \quad (10)$$

where  $R$  is the gas constant,  $\theta_1$  and  $\theta_2$  are the degree of surface coverage at temperature  $T_1$  and  $T_2$  respectively.

#### 2. 4. 2. Consideration of the Adsorption isotherm

The data obtained for the degree of surface coverage were used to test for the applicability of different adsorption isotherms (Langmuir, Frumkin, Temkin and Flory-Huggins isotherms).

##### Langmuir Isotherm

Langmuir isotherm can be expressed by eq (11) (22, 23)

$$\frac{C}{\theta} = \frac{1}{K} + C \quad (11)$$

where  $C$  is the concentration of the inhibitor,  $K$  is the adsorption equilibrium constant and  $\theta$  is the degree of surface coverage. In logarithmic form, eq. (11) can be expressed in eq. (12)

$$\log \frac{C}{\theta} = \log C - \log K \quad (12)$$

##### Frumkin isotherm

Frumkin adsorption isotherm can be expressed according to eq. (13)

$$\log \left( Cc * \left( \frac{\theta}{1 - \theta} \right) \right) = 2.303 \log K + 2 \alpha \theta \quad (13)$$

where  $K$  is the adsorption –desorption constant and  $\alpha$  is the lateral interaction term describing the interaction in adsorbed layer.

##### Temkin isotherm

Temkin isotherm can be expressed by eq. (14) (Zhang & Hua ,2009).

$$\theta = \frac{2.303 \log K}{2a} - \frac{2.303 \log C}{2a} \quad (14)$$

where k is the adsorption equilibrium constant, a is the attractive parameter,  $\theta$  is the degree of surface coverage, C is the concentration of the inhibitor

### Florry-Huggins Isotherm

The Florry-Huggins isotherm can be expressed by eq (15)

$$\log\left(\frac{\theta}{C}\right) = \log k + x \log(1 - \theta) \quad (15)$$

where x is the size parameter and is a measure of the number of adsorbed water molecules.

The free energy of adsorption ( $\Delta G_{\text{ads}}$ ) was calculated according to eq. (16) [18, 19]

$$\Delta G_{\text{ads}} = -2.303RT \log (55.5K) \quad (16)$$

where R is the gas constant, T is the temperature, K values obtain from the isotherms (Langmuir, Frumkin, Temkin and Florry-Huggins isotherm) were used to obtain the values of  $\Delta G_{\text{ads}}$  according to eq. (16).

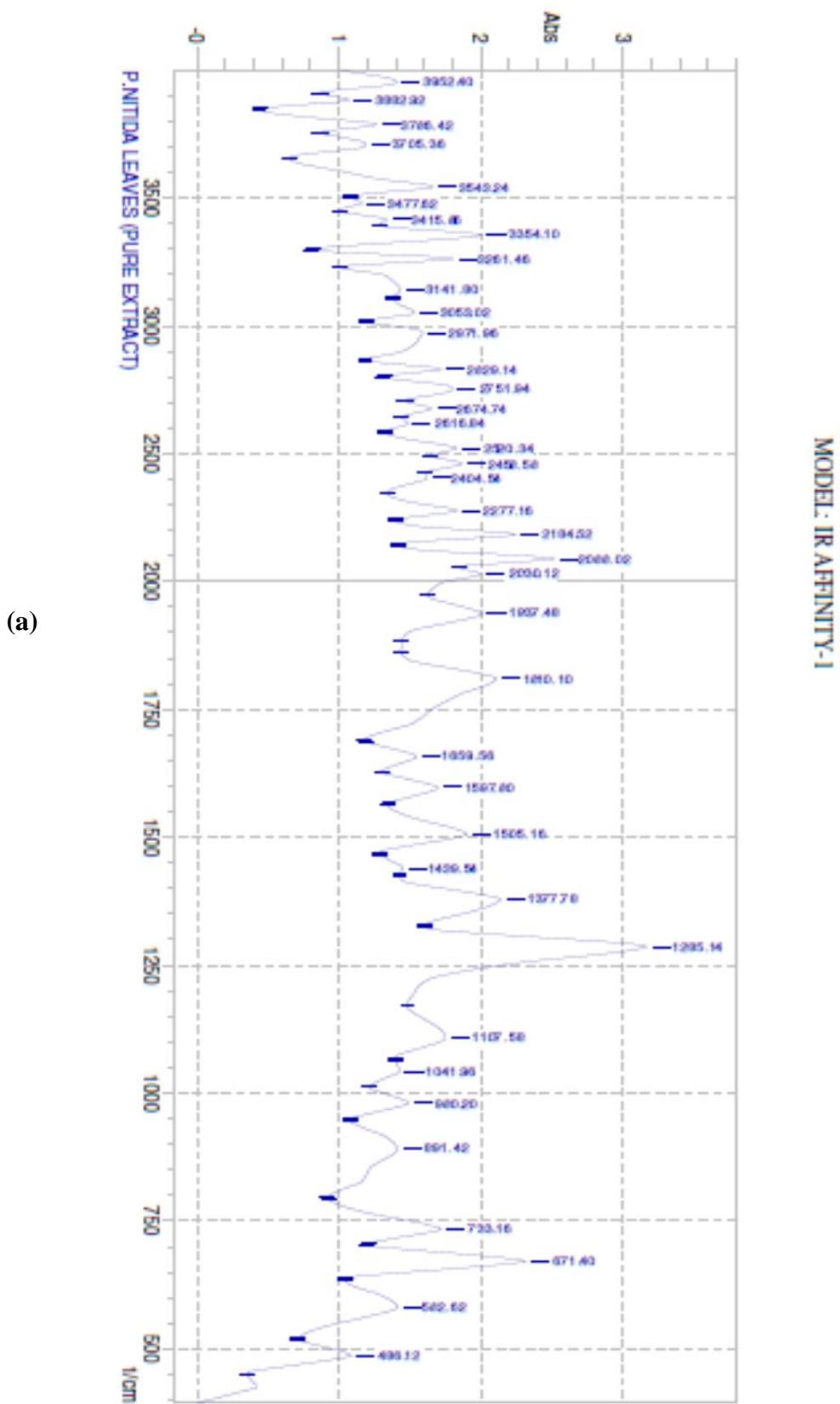
### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

FTIR Spectrophotometer is a strong instrument that can be used to identify the type of bonding, especially functional group (s) present in organic compounds. Fig. 1. shows the FTIR spectrum of the ethanol extract of *Picralima nitida* leaf extract. Initial absorption at 3952.4 to 3543.24  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  (associated hydroxyl) was overlapped by the strong stretching bond of O-H. The peak at 3477.62 to 3261.46  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  is attributed to medium and often broad stretch band of amines and amides, N-H.

Wave band 3141.8  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  and 3053.02  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  are variable stretch of alkyl and aldehyde bond group, C-H. The absorption band at 2971.96  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  stands for strong and very broad stretch of carboxylic acid (free bond of alcohol). Wave band of 2751.94  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ , 2829.14  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  are two-peaked medium stretch bond of aldehyde,  $C \equiv C$ .

The peak at 2404.54  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  to 2030.12  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  represent variable and sharp stretch bond of alkyne and nitrite, C=N. Wave band 1837.48  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ , 1658.65  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  are strong representative of stretch bond of acids, esters anhydrides and aldehydes, C=O.

The absorption bands 1597.8  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ , 1439.54  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  are multiple sharp, medium peaks stretch of aromatic bond, C=C. This shows that *Picralima nitida* leaves extract contains mixtures of compounds, that is, alkaloids, flavonoids, phenolics, phytates, terpenoids, tannins and steroids [20, 25-31].



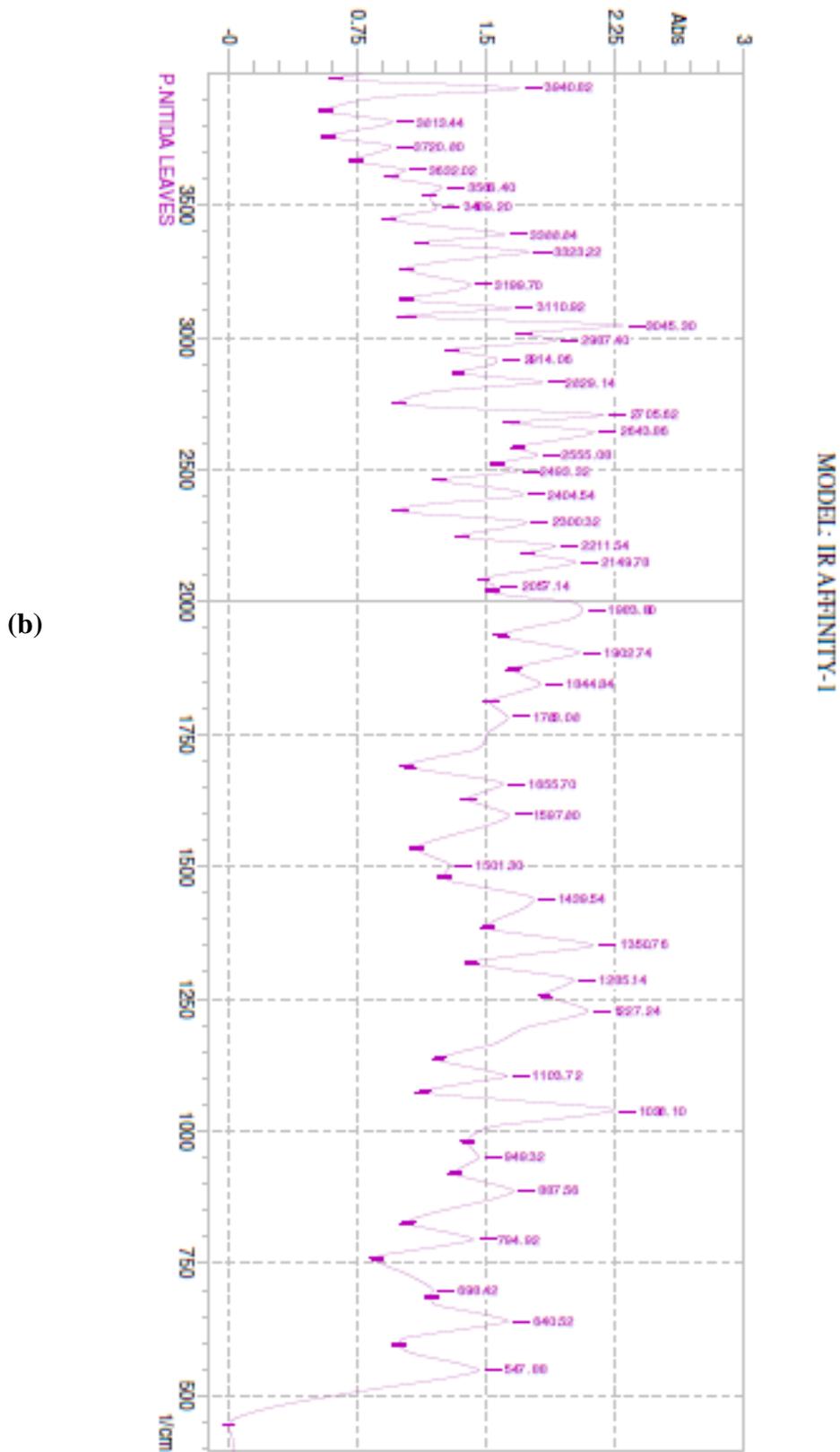


Figure 1. FTIR spectrum of (a) *Picralima nitida* (pure) leaf extract and (b) corrosion product.

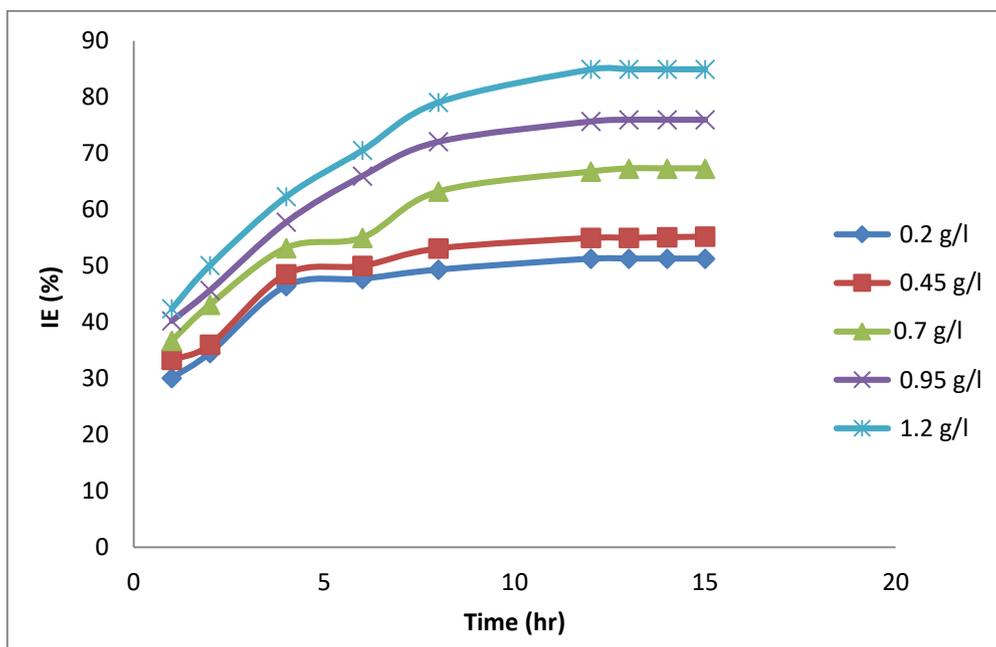
### 3. 1. Results of the corrosion inhibition as determined by thermometric studies

The effect of concentration of *Picralima nitida* leaves (inhibitor) extract on the reaction number (RN) and the inhibition efficiency (IE) of zinc in the 0.5 M H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> medium is presented in table 1. It was revealed that increase in concentration of the inhibitor lowers the reaction number. This is in agreement with previous observation [21]. More so, the inhibition efficiency increases with increasing concentration of the inhibitor.

**Table 1.** Effect of the *Picralima nitida* leaf extracts on the IE (%) of zinc in 0.5 M H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> medium

Inhibitor concentration (g L <sup>-1</sup> )	RN	IE (%)
0	0.1868	
0.2	0.0995	46.74
0.45	0.0801	57.13
0.7	0.0524	71.95
0.95	0.0364	80.5
1.2	0.0342	81.72

### 3. 2. Weight loss measurement



**Figure 2.** Represents the relation between time and inhibition efficiency of zinc in 0.5 M H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> at various concentration of *Picralima nitida* leaves extract.

Fig. 2 represents the relation between time and inhibition efficiency of zinc in 0.5 M H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> at various concentration of *Picralima nitida* leaves extract while Table 2 represent experimental results of weight loss and corrosion rate using one factor at a time. Inspection of Fig. 2 reveals that the loss of weight increases linearly with increasing time in all tested solutions. However, the slopes of the obtained lines which represent the rate of weight loss, are affected by addition of *Picralima nitida* extract. The presence of the extract causes a sharp decrease in the rate of weight loss. IEs at different concentrations of the extract were calculated using the equation (17).

$$IE(\%) = \frac{w_0 - w_1}{w_0} \times 100 \quad (17)$$

where W<sub>1</sub> and W<sub>0</sub> are the weight loss value in presence and absence of inhibitor, respectively.

### 3. 2. 1. Adsorption studies and inhibition mechanism.

The values of IEs and θs of different *Picralima nitida* extract concentrations are given in Table 2. The tabulated data revealed that, the *Picralima nitida* leaf extract acts as a good corrosion inhibitor for the acid corrosion of zinc. The corrosion inhibition increases with increasing extract concentration. The analysis of the *Picralima nitida* extract revealed that the ethanolic extract contains toluene, formular C<sub>7</sub>H<sub>8</sub>, molecular weight 92, cyclohexane having formula C<sub>8</sub>H<sub>16</sub>, molecular weight 112, hexane, 1,3-cyclopenta deine, molecular weight 156. It also contains at least ten non-volatile acids including eicosane and citric acids. The adsorption of the compounds on the electrode surface make a barrier for mass and charge transfers [22]. The outcome of this situation leads to a protection of the metal surface from the attack of the aggressive anions of the acid. The extent of protection increases with increasing of the surface fraction occupied by the adsorbed molecules. As the extract concentration is increased, the number of the adsorbed molecules on the surface increases. Table 2 represents also the values of adsorption isotherm parameter. From the table, a parameter (θ), which was estimated from the IE values, could be used to represent the fraction of the surface occupied by the adsorbed molecules. In-depth examination of Table 2 revealed that the values of θ increases with increasing inhibitor concentration. The dependence of the fraction of the surface occupied by the adsorbed molecules on the inhibitor.

**Table 2.** Corrosion inhibition of zinc in 0.5 M H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> with *picralima nitida* leave extract.

Time (hr)	Temperature (K)	Inhibitor conc. (gL <sup>-1</sup> )	Weight loss (g)	Corrosion rate (Mg/cm <sup>2</sup> hr)	Inhibition efficiency (%)	Degree of surf.cov.
12	303	0	0.671	6.213	-	-
		0.2	0.327	30.28	51.27	0.5127
		0.45	0.302	2.796	54.99	0.5499
		0.7	0.223	2.065	66.77	0.6677
		0.95	0.163	1.509	75.71	0.7571
		1.2	0.101	0.935	84.95	0.8495

12	313	0	0.68	6.296	-	-
		0.2	0.34	3.148	49.7	0.497
		0.45	0.277	2.565	59.02	0.5902
		0.7	0.199	1.843	70.56	0.7056
		0.95	0.142	1.615	78.99	0.7899
		1.2	0.141	1.306	79.14	0.7914
12	323	0	0.645	5.972	-	-
		0.2	0.411	3.806	39.56	0.3956
		0.45	0.319	2.954	53.09	0.5309
		0.7	0.233	2.157	65.74	0.6574
		0.95	0.183	1.694	73.09	0.7309
		1.2	0.175	1.62	74.26	0.7426

Concentration (C) is shown in Fig. 3. A plot of C/θ versus C gives a straight line with unit slope. The results indicated that the adsorption of inhibitor molecules on the zinc surface follow Langmuir isotherm. In other words, the result suggests that there are no interactions or repulsion forces between the adsorbed molecules. It is of interest to note here that, the θ values obtained from the other used techniques also obey the Langmuir adsorption isotherm. The standard adsorption free energy ( $\Delta G_{ads}$ ) was calculated using the following equation (18).

$$K = \frac{1}{999} \exp\left(-\frac{\Delta G_{ads}}{RT}\right) \quad (18)$$

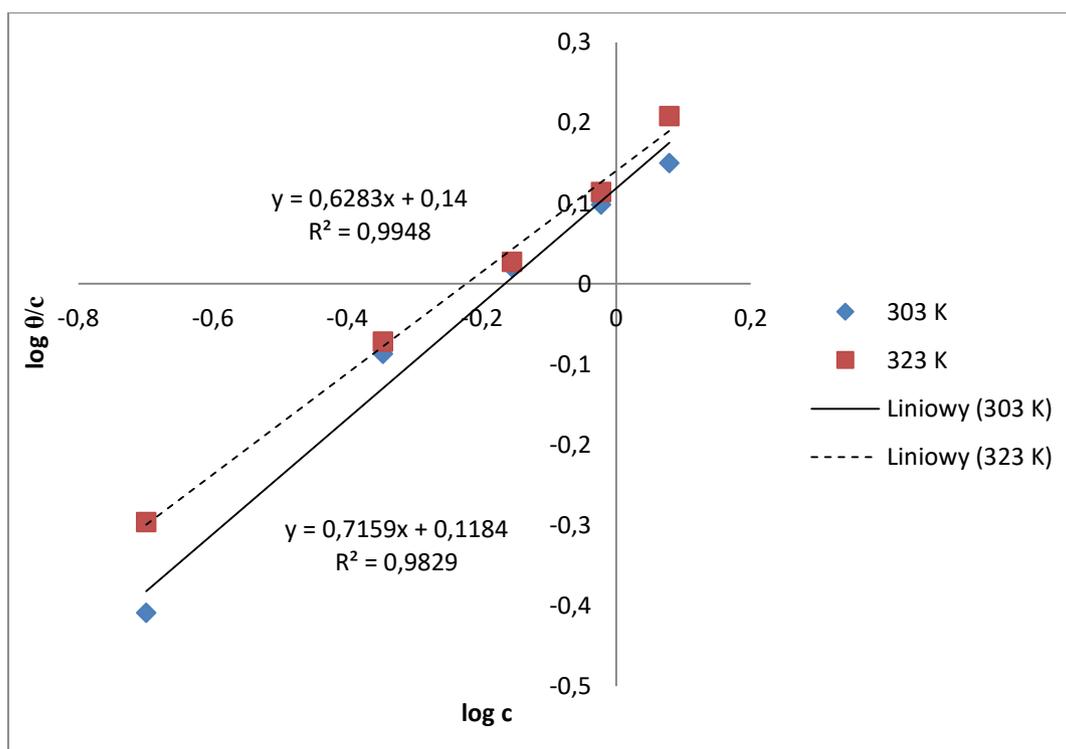
where 999 is the concentration of water in solution expressed in  $\text{gL}^{-1}$ . R is gas constant, and T absolute temperature. The mean value of standard adsorption free energy ( $\Delta G_{ads}$ ) was  $46.402 \text{ kJmol}^{-1}$ . The negative values of  $\Delta G_{ads}$  guarantee the spontaneity of the adsorption process and stability of the adsorbed layer on the metal surface. It is generally known that, values of  $\Delta G_{ads}$  up to  $-20 \text{ KJmol}^{-1}$  is consistent with electrostatic interaction between the charged molecules and the charged metal (physisorption). While those around  $-40 \text{ kJmol}^{-1}$  or higher are associated with chemisorptions as a result of sharing or transfer of electrons from the molecules to the metal surface to form a coordinate type of bond [23].

Other researchers however suggested that the range of  $\Delta G_{ads}$  of chemical adsorption processes for inhibitor in aqueous media lies between  $-21$  and  $-42 \text{ KJmol}^{-1}$  (28). From table 3 the values of  $\Delta G_{ads}$  as recorded in the present work has been considered within the range of physical adsorption. Limited increase in the absolute value of  $\Delta G_{ads}$  at 303 K temperature, then, heat of adsorption decreases again at 313 K initiating that the adsorption was somewhat favourable at the experimental temperature and *Picralima nitida* leaf extract adsorbed according to physical mechanisms, i.e. desorption of inhibitor molecules when temperature increased. Moreover, the major characteristic of Langmuir isotherm can be expressed in terms of linear regression coefficient. The value of the linear regression coefficient is close to unity, hence adsorption of the *Picralima nitida* leaf extract follows Langmuir isotherm and  $R^2$  value

is  $0.994 \geq 0.982$ . It is very important to note that the smaller values of  $R^2$  indicate a highly favourable adsorption.  $R^2 > 1$  unfavorable,  $R^2 = 1$  linear,  $0 < R^2 < 1$  favourable and if  $R^2 = 0$  irreversible. The table 3 shows that various values of  $R^2$  for the entire tested isotherms model. The values of  $k_{ads}$  are relatively small indicating that the interaction between the adsorbed extract molecules and metal surface is physically adsorbed.

**Table 3.** Adsorption parameters for the corrosion inhibition of Zinc in  $H_2SO_4$  by PNL extract

Adsorption isotherm	Temperature (k)	$R^2$	Log K	K	$\Delta G_{ads}$ (KJ/mol)	Isotherm property	
Langmuir isotherm	303	0.994	-0.14	0.7244	-9.307		
	323	0.982	-0.118	0.7621	-10.057		
Frumkin isotherm	303	0.973	-1.1624	0.0688	-3.375	$\alpha$	2.083
	323	0.995	-1.0499	0.0891	-4.293		1.962
Temkin isotherm	303	0.871	-1.7958	0.0160	0.299	A	-2.703
	323	0.983	-1.5190	0.0303	-1.396		-2.429
Flory-Huggins isotherm	303	0.675	0.494	3.1189	-12.985	X	0.871
	323	0.95	0.519	3.3037	-13.997		1.188



**Figure 3.** Plot of Langmuir isotherm for zinc in  $H_2SO_4$  with PNL extracts

A close look at Table 4 shows various inhibition concentrations ( $\text{gL}^{-1}$ ) and their respective activation energy ( $\text{kJ mol}^{-1}$ ). From the table, calculated  $E_a$  value for the inhibited solution with *Picralima nitida* extract is 52.404 and 82.985  $\text{kJmol}^{-1}$  in the presence of the inhibitor of 0.95 and 1.2  $\text{gL}^{-1}$  extract concentrations, while with 0.45 and 0.70  $\text{gL}^{-1}$  concentrations, activation energies are 33.418 and 19.434  $\text{kJmol}^{-1}$ . The higher values of  $E_a$  suggest that dissolution of zinc in the presence of inhibitors is slow, indicating a strong inhibitive action of phytochemicals of alkaloids, flavonoids and tannins presence in *Picralima nitida* leaf extracts, which leads to increasing the energy barrier for the corrosion process [24]. Actually, toluene molecules (the main compound of *Picralima nitida* leaf extracts) are easily protonated and exist in 0.5 M  $\text{H}_2\text{SO}_4$  medium in cationic form. Indeed, it is logical to assume that in this study, the electrostatic cat ion adsorption is responsible for the good protective properties of this compound.

**Table 4.** Activation Energy and Heat of Adsorption for the Corrosion Inhibitor of Zinc in 0.5 M  $\text{H}_2\text{SO}_4$  at various Inhibition Concentrations

Inhibitor concentration ( $\text{gL}^{-1}$ )	$E_a$ ( $\text{kJ mol}^{-1}$ )	$\Delta G_{\text{ads}}$ ( $\text{kJ mol}^{-1}$ )
0.2	21.425	-19.313
0.45	5.150	-3.113
0.70	4.084	-1.874
0.95	10.835	-5.601
1.20	51.498	-27.310

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

The *Picralima nitida* leaf extract acted as a good inhibitor for corrosion of zinc in 0.5 M  $\text{H}_2\text{SO}_4$  solution and the IE increases with increasing extract concentration. The adsorption process is physical as various studies technique point towards physisorption. More so, the increase in temperature decreases the IE of the extract while the presence of *Picralima nitida* extract increases the activation energy of the corrosion reaction. The *PNL* extract further provides strong protection against corrosion of zinc in presence of sulphate ions. The extent of protection increases with increasing extract concentration.

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