



Research Article

Degradation and mineralization of tetracycline by Fenton process

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ABSTRACT

In this study, we aimed to systematically optimize the operating parameters in the degradation and mineralization of tetracycline by Fenton process. For this purpose; optimum values were found for Fe^{2+} concentration, H_2O_2 concentration and pH, reaction time, sedimentation times which are effective operating parameters in Fenton process. In this study where initial tetracycline concentration was used as 100 mg/L; optimum values were found as 4 for pH, 30 mg/L for Fe^{2+} concentration, 100 mg/L for H_2O_2 concentration and 10 min for reaction time and 90 min for sedimentation time. Under these conditions, the TC degradation was 100%, while the COD removal efficiency was approximately 94%. As a result of kinetic studies, BMG is the most suitable kinetic model in terms of tetracycline degradation, while it is seen that the most suitable kinetic model for tetracycline mineralization in terms of COD is the first-order kinetic model. The cost of removing 1 kg of tetracycline from the unit costs of chemicals and energy used in the Fenton process was found to be 1.527\$.

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INTRODUCTION

Tetracycline (TC) antibiotics are a group of broad-spectrum synthetic antibiotics against a wide range of Gram positive and Gram-negative bacteria, so they are widely used in human and veterinary medicine for controlling diseases and promoting growth [1]. Tetracyclines are the second largest group of antibiotics in terms of production and use [2]. A very small amount of tetracycline taken into human and animal bodies is metabolized or degraded, the remaining tetracycline being excreted into the environment in active form through humans and animals feces or urine [3]. The release of antibiotics to the environment promotes the proliferation of antibiotic-resistant bacteria and genes,

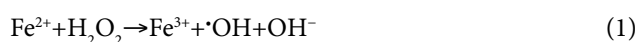
and consequently affects human health and ecosystem [4, 5]. Although conventional biological wastewater treatment has advantages such as low cost, high stability and easy operation; tetracyclines cannot be effectively removed because of its chemical stability and biological resistance [6, 7]. Therefore, effective and environmentally friendly alternative technologies are required to effectively degrade and remove these compounds [2]. Advanced oxidation processes are efficient alternative methods for treating organic wastewater pollutants with low biodegradable and high toxicity. Advanced oxidation methods such as Fenton, photo-Fenton, ozonation, electrochemical oxidation and photo catalysis are commonly used in the removal of recalcitrant and non-biodegradable organic contaminants in wastewa-

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ter [8]. Fenton process, which is one of the advanced oxidation processes, is one of the most widely used processes for removing of a wide variety of non-degradable organic contaminants because it has advantages such as high performance, technology simplicity, low cost and low toxicity of the chemicals used [8, 9]. The Fenton process involves the formation of hydroxyl radical formed by the catalytic reaction between hydrogen peroxide and iron ions (Eq. 1). The hydroxyl radical has an oxidation potential of 2.80 V and can degrade and mineralize a wide range of organic matter [10]. The Fenton process is influenced by H_2O_2 and Fe^{2+} and pollutant concentrations. In addition, other factors such as reaction time, pH, temperature are important operating parameters in the Fenton process.



There are many studies using the Fenton process for the removal of different drugs [11–16]. Also, different processes such as UV, UV/ H_2O_2 , UV/persulfate, photo-Fenton, solar photo-Fenton, sono-Fenton, ozonation have been tried in tetracycline removal [17–22]. In this study, it was aimed to systematically optimize the operating parameters such as pH, Fe^{2+} concentration, H_2O_2 concentration, reaction time and precipitation time in the degradation and mineralization of tetracycline by Fenton process. The kinetics of tetracycline degradation and mineralization by Fenton process were determined. The cost of tetracycline removal by Fenton process was calculated.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Experimental System

All experiments were performed in amber colored glass bottles with a total volume of 250 mL to minimize light effect (Fig. 1). Stirring was done with a magnetic stirrer. The pH was initially adjusted with the aid of the Thermo Scientec brand pH meter and no further pH adjustment was made during the reaction. The desired concentrations of Fe^{2+} and H_2O_2 were added to the tetracycline solution prepared at a specific concentration for each experiment. H_2SO_4 and NaOH were used for pH adjustment. At the end of the reaction, the pH was adjusted to 9–10 and the reactions were stopped and settled for 90 min. At the end of sedimentation time, clear liquid was removed from the top of the reactor and tetracycline and COD were analyzed.

Reagents

Tetracycline (TC) hydrochloride salt (CAS No. 64-755) was purchased from Sigma-Aldrich and 35% purity Hydrogen peroxide (H_2O_2) was purchased from Merck. Iron sulfate heptahydrate was obtained from Biochem. The pH of the solution was initially adjusted with dilute 98% sulfuric acid (0.2 and 0.02 N H_2SO_4) and sodium hydroxide (0.2 N NaOH).

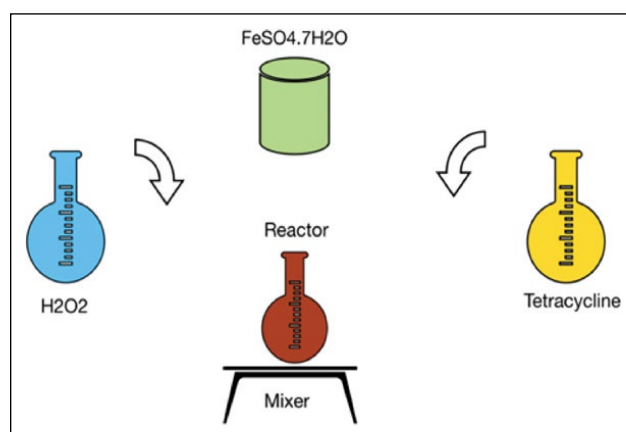


Figure 1. Experimental setup.

Analytical Methods

To determine the performance of Fenton process, tetracycline and COD analyzes were performed on the samples taken at the end of the sedimentation period. Determination of tetracycline was performed by Shimadzu brand High Performance Liquid Chromatography (HPLC). As the mobile phase, a mixture of 20 mM $(NH_4)_2HPO_4$ and HPLC grade acetonitrile with pH adjusted to 2.45–2.55 was used and the flow rate was adjusted to 1.2 mL/min and the injection volume to 100 μ L. The determination of COD was made with Merck code 114895.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Effect of pH

Tetracycline is an amphoteric compound containing two acidic (tricarboxyl amide and phenolic diketone) and one basic functional groups (dimethyl amine) in its structure. Therefore, different forms of TC will occur in the environment depending on the pH. At $pH < 3.30$ (pK_{a1}), TC molecules are available as TC^+ form; at $3.30 < pH < 7.68$ (pK_{a2}) TC molecules available as TC^0 ; at $7.68 < pH < 9.70$ (pK_{a3}) TC molecules are present as TCH^- , and at $pH > 9.70$, TC molecules are present as TC^{2-} [23]. In the Fenton process, the pH value has an important effect on the formation of hydroxyl radical and therefore on the oxidation efficiency [24]. Hence, pH is important in terms of both tetracycline and Fenton process. Experimental studies were carried out at pH 2, 3 and 4 to determine the effect of pH in Fenton process. Initial TC concentration, Fe^{2+} concentration and H_2O_2 concentration were selected as 100, 30 and 300 mg/L, respectively. At all pH values, the effluent TC concentration were found to be 0 mg/L and the corresponding TC removal efficiencies were 100% (Fig. 2). The COD removal efficiencies were 81%, 74% and 94% mg/L at pH 2, 3 and 4, respectively. Compared to pH 4, the efficiency of COD removal is lower at pH 2 and 3. Because it is stated that TC molecules have hydroxyl groups in ring 1 in undissolved

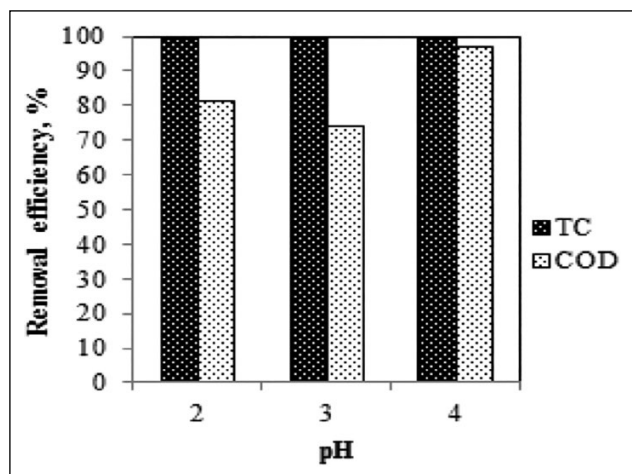


Figure 2. TC and COD removal efficiency at different pH values (TC: 100 mg/L, Fe²⁺: 30 mg/L, H₂O₂: 300 mg/L).

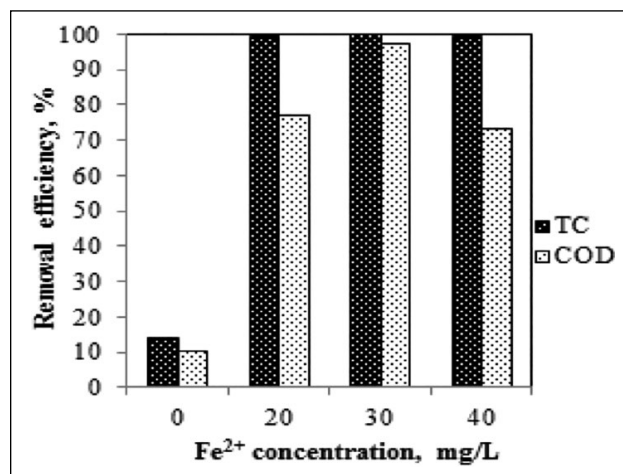


Figure 3. TC and COD removal efficiency at different Fe²⁺ values (TC: 100 mg/L, pH: 4, H₂O₂: 300 mg/L).

form at pH <3.3, while hydroxyl groups in ring 1 in the structure of TC molecules dissolve at pH > 3.3. These experimental results were evaluated and the optimum pH value was selected as 4 in terms of TC and COD removal and pH 4 value was used in the rest of the study. The results of this study were similar with the results of the study in which the degradation of tetracycline with ozonation was investigated [17]. In addition, in the literature, it is stated that the low removal rate in the Fenton process at pH 1 and 2 is due to hydroxyl radical reacting with H⁺ ions. Furthermore, H₂O₂ can be dissolved at a high H⁺ ion concentration to form an oxonium ion. An oxonium ion makes it electrophilic to increase the stability of hydrogen peroxide and reduces its reactivity with iron ion. On the other hand, it is stated that the oxidation efficiency decreases due to the precipitation of dissolved iron at pH > 4 and the decrease in the disintegration of H₂O₂ to hydroxyl radical [7]. The optimum pH value found in this study was consistent with the pH range in the literature [7, 25].

Effect of Fe²⁺ Concentration

Increased iron concentration leads to the formation of more hydroxyl radical and accelerates the redox reaction. Experimental studies were carried out at 0, 20, 30 and 40 mg/L concentrations in order to determine the effect of Fe²⁺ concentration on TC and COD removal efficiency. Figure 3 shows the TC and COD removal efficiency at different Fe²⁺ concentration. The highest TC and COD removal was achieved at a Fe²⁺ concentration of 30 mg/L, where the removal efficiencies were 100% and 97%, respectively. However, there was a decrease in COD removal in Fe²⁺ concentration of 40 mg/L. The use of a much higher Fe²⁺ concentration causes scavenging of •OH, resulting in a decrease in the rate of degradation and mineralization. Furthermore, the use of a lower iron concentration in the Fenton process will result in reduced sludge volume and

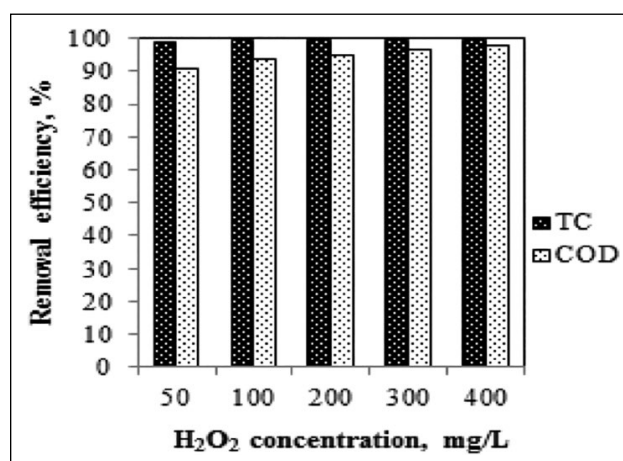


Figure 4. TC and COD removal efficiency at different H₂O₂ values (TC: 100 mg/L, pH: 4, Fe²⁺: 30 mg/L).

treatment costs [26]. Therefore, it was seen that Fe²⁺ concentration of 30 mg/L was the most appropriate value. Similarly, it was obtained complete degradation of amoxicillin (AMX) at a concentration of 30 mg/L Fe²⁺ for an initial concentration of AMX of 10 mg/L [16].

Effect of H₂O₂ Concentration

Figure 4 shows the TC and COD removal efficiency at different H₂O₂ concentrations. Based on TC and COD removal efficiencies, 100 mg/L H₂O₂ concentration could be considered as the optimum value. The TC and COD removal efficiencies at this H₂O₂ concentration were 100% and 94%, respectively. When the optimum H₂O₂ concentration was evaluated in terms of TC and COD removal efficiencies; higher H₂O₂ concentration was not necessary. In the literature, it is stated that the rate of degradation increases as H₂O₂ concentration increases until critical H₂O₂ concentration is obtained. The reduction in the rate of degradation at

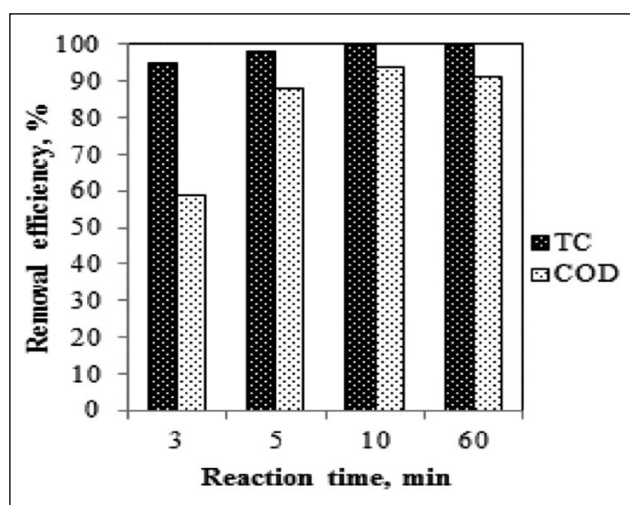


Figure 5. TC and COD removal efficiency at different reaction time (TC: 100 mg/L, pH: 4, Fe²⁺: 30 mg/L, H₂O₂: 100 mg/L).

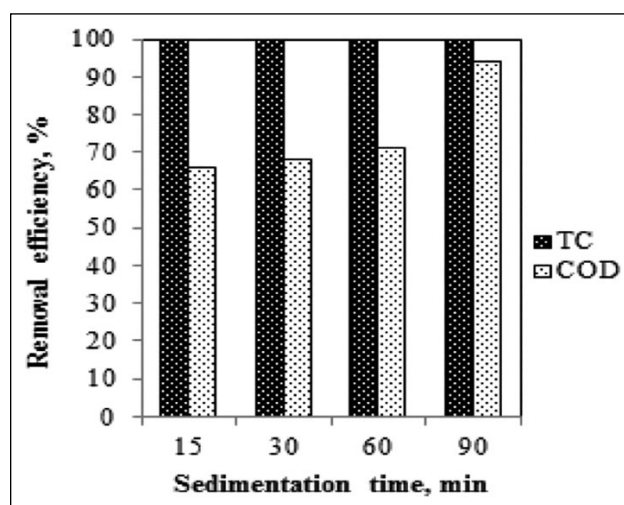


Figure 6. TC and COD removal efficiency at different sedimentation time (TC: 100 mg/L, pH: 4, Fe²⁺: 30 mg/L, H₂O₂: 100 mg/L, Reaction time: 10 min).

Table 1. The parameters of kinetic models and correlation coefficients (R²) for the degradation of tetracycline

	First-order kinetic model		Second-order kinetic model		BMG kinetic model		
	k ₁ (1/min)	R ²	k ₂ (L/mg.min)	R ²	1/m	1/b	R ²
R TC	0.6989	0.57	3.0014	0.88	Undefined	1.0	1.00
COD	0.422	0.99	0.0342	0.83	1.1	1.0395	0.95

higher concentrations results from both the recombination of hydroxyl radical and the scavenging effect of the $\cdot\text{OH}$ of H₂O₂ [27]. However, such a critical H₂O₂ concentration value was not found in this study. In another study, the optimum H₂O₂ concentration was found to be 375 mg/L in the degradation of amoxicillin (initial concentration: 10 mg/L) with Fenton process [16].

Effect of Reaction Time

As could be seen in Figure 5, the degradation of tetracycline was completed in 10 min. The tetracycline removal efficiency was increased until the reaction time of 10 min. In the Fenton process, it can be said that the effect of the reaction time on the process efficiency is important since the degradation efficiency increases with increasing reaction time [8]. However, the further increase in reaction time (>10 min) did not show a positive effect on the efficiency of the Fenton process. Besides, the increase in reaction time would increase the operating cost. So, the reaction time of 10 min was considered optimum. In a similar study, complete degradation of amoxicillin by the Fenton process took place at a reaction time of 12 min [16].

Effect of Sedimentation Time

The TC and COD removal efficiency depending on the sedimentation time is given in Figure 6. The TC removal effi-

ciencies were found to be 100% after 15, 30, 60 and 90 min of sedimentation time. The highest COD removal efficiency was obtained at the end of the 90 min of sedimentation time which has a value of 94%. Therefore, the sedimentation time of 90 min was found to be the optimum value when the COD removal efficiencies were considered. The reason why the COD removal efficiency is lower than the TC removal efficiency is due to the formation of intermediates and the incomplete mineralization of TC and intermediates to CO₂ and H₂O.

Kinetic Study

The kinetics of the degradation of tetracycline with Fenton process was evaluated using first-order, second-order and Behnajady-Modirshahla-Ghanbery (BMG) [28]. For this purpose, the change in tetracycline concentration and the value of tetracycline in terms of COD depending on the reaction time was investigated. Kinetic calculations were made according to the reaction time of 10 minutes. R² value is taken into account in determining the suitability of the kinetic model. For the tetracycline concentration, the R² value for the first-order was 0.57, the R² value for the second-order was 0.88, and the R² value for BMG was 1 (Fig. 7 and Table 1). In the degradation of tetracycline in terms of COD, R² value is 0.99 for first-order, R² value is 0.83 for second-order and 0.95 for BMG. When R² values

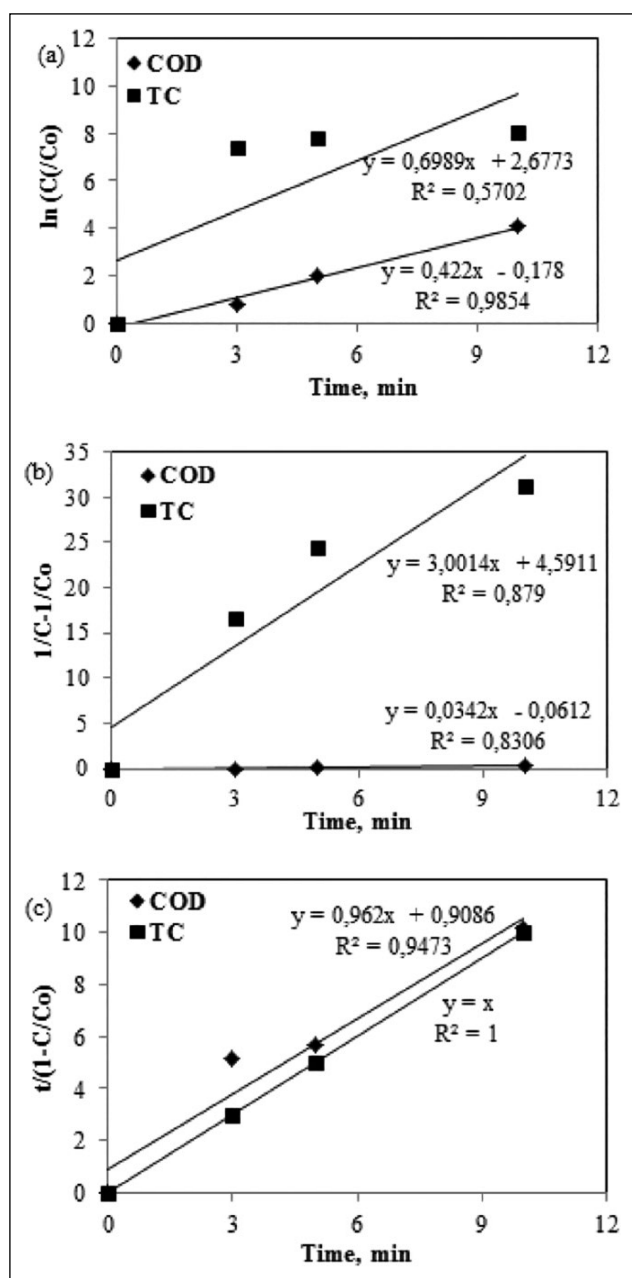


Figure 7. (a) First-order, (b) second-order, (c) BMG kinetics of the degradation of tetracycline with Fenton process.

are taken into consideration, when mineralization is evaluated in terms of COD concentration, it is seen that it fits the first-order kinetics. In terms of tetracycline concentration, it is seen that the BMG kinetic model is suitable. This is due to the fact that the tetracycline concentration decreases very quickly at the beginning and then slows down. The fact that the decrease in tetracycline in terms of COD concentration corresponds to first-order kinetics is due to the intermediate products originally formed during oxidation. It has been reported that the degradation of tetracycline in the schorl/H₂O₂ system fits first-order kinetics [1].

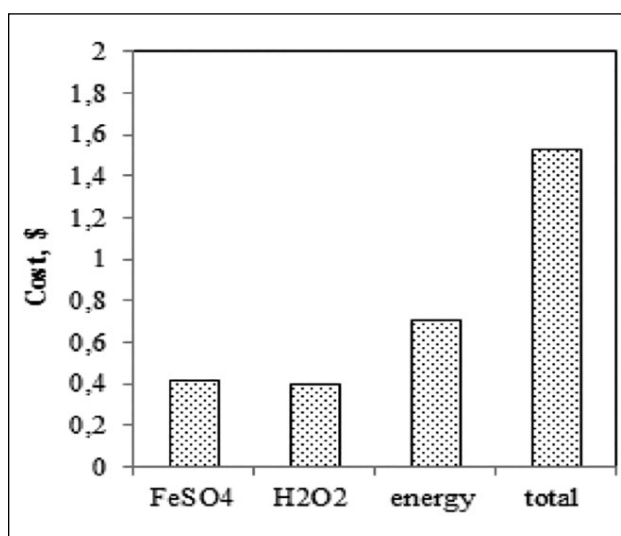


Figure 8. The operating cost in Fenton process (in \$ per kg tetracycline removal).

Operating Cost Analysis

The factors affecting the operating cost in Fenton process are chemicals and the energy cost spent for the mixer. The calculation was made by taking FeSO₄·7H₂O cost as 0.28\$/kg, H₂O₂ cost as 0.4\$/kg and mixer power as 3 W and unit energy cost as 0.071\$. For 1 kg tetracycline removal, FeSO₄ cost was calculated as 0.417\$, H₂O₂ cost was 0.4\$ and energy cost was 0.71\$. The total cost is 1.527\$ (Fig. 8). In the study in which phenol removal was done with the Fenton and electro-Fenton method, the calculation using the same numbers found that the removal cost of 1 kg phenol was 1.337\$ with the Fenton process [29]. It was stated that the operating cost for 1 kg of tetracycline removal was 330.06\$ for the ozone method, 405.59\$ for the ozone+ultrasound method, 193.63\$ for the ozone+Fenton method, and 229.71\$ for the ozone+ultrasound+Fenton method [30]. It was seen that the Fenton process had lower operating costs compared to other methods.

CONCLUSIONS

Experimental study results showed the optimum values for pH, Fe²⁺, H₂O₂, reaction time and sedimentation time in Fenton process were found to be 3, 30 mg/L, 100 mg/L, 10 min and 90 min, respectively. Under these conditions, TC degradation is 100%. The COD removal efficiency was about 94%. As a result of kinetic studies, it was the most appropriate kinetic model BMG in tetracycline degradation and first-order in tetracycline mineralization. The cost of tetracycline removal by Fenton process was calculated as 1.527\$ per 1 kg. The operating cost of the Fenton process for tetracycline removal was lower compared to other methods.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The authors confirm that the data that supports the findings of this study are available within the article. Raw data that support the finding of this study are available from the corresponding author, upon reasonable request.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ETHICS

There are no ethical issues with the publication of this manuscript.

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