**Optimization of morphology and geometry of encapsulated**

*Hypophthalmichthys molitrix* oil

Alavi Talab H.1*; Ardjmand M.2; Motallebi A. A.3 and Pourgholam R.4

Received: August 2009          Accepted: December 2009

**Abstract**

In the present study, the effect of stirring speed and the type of cross linking agent on the size and formation of microencapsulated Silver carp (*Hypophthalmichthys molitrix*) oil were investigated. The gelatin/gum Arabic was used for encapsulating and the capsules were prepared by complex coacervation. Microcapsules were analyzed by optical microscopy technique and particle size analyzer. Results suggested the use of glutaraldehyde as the cross-linking agent instead of formaldehyde can caused the Microcapsules become spherical shape, smooth surface with no obvious dents and narrower particle size distribution. The average particle sizes were 537.2±0.8 µm, 84.4±0.5 µm, 12.98±0.4 µm, 8.24±0.5 µm, and 4±0.7 µm at the homogenization stirring speed of 100, 300, 500, 750 and 1000 rpm respectively. The best conditions of experiment were with 25% glutaraldehyde at 1000 rpm of stirring speed.

**Keyword:** gelatin, gum Arabic, cross linking agent, microcapsules, stirring speed, complex coacervation

---

1-Chemical Engineering Department, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University (IAU), P.O.Box: 14515/775 and 14155/4933. Poonak, Ashrafi Esfahani St. Tehran, Iran.
2- Islamic Azad University, Tehran South Branch, Graduate Faculty, Chemical Engineering Department. Tehran, Iran.P.O.Box:11365-4435.
3- Iranian Fisheries Research Organization.No.297 P.O.Box:14155-6116.Tehran, Iran.
4- Caspian Sea Ecology Research Center. Sari, Iran P.O.Box:961

*Corresponding Author’s email: hedieh_alavi@yahoo.com*
Introduction

Microencapsulation offers the possibility to protect sensitive food ingredients like omega-3 fatty acids against adverse environmental conditions and to control their release (Kolanowski et al., 2004). The wall materials of the microcapsules protect the core substance against influence of oxygen light and humidity (Loksuwan, 2007). Stability and shelf life of fish oil can be improved by microencapsulation (Loksuwan, 2007). Encapsulating agents are for food and pharmaceuticals application. Gum Arabic hydrolyzed starches gelatin chitosan and alginate used as wall materials (Loksuwan, 2007). Autoxidation is particularly important when supplementing foods with omega-3 fatty acids especially the long chain polyunsaturated fatty acids such as docosahexanoeic and eicosapentanoeic acid were applied due to the high degree of unsaturated fatty acids (Drusch et al., 2008). Microencapsulation is defined as a technology of packaging solids, liquids or gaseous materials in capsules (Loksuwan, 2007). Coacervation is a colloidal phenomenon. Neutralization of the overall positive charges on one of the colloids (by the negative charges) is used to separate the polymer-rich complex coacervate phase (Kolanowski et al., 2004). Traditionally, gelatin is used in combination with gum Arabic in numerous studies (Drusch et al., 2008). Complex coacervation is a phase separation of one or many hydrocolloids from the initial solution and the subsequent deposition of the newly formed coacervate phase around the active ingredient suspended or emulsified in the same reaction media (Drusch et al., 2008). The coacervate can be hardened by cross-linking agents (Drusch et al., 2008). Complex coacervation is possible being run only at the pH values below the isoelectric point of gelatin. It is at these pH values that gelatin becomes positively charged, but gum Arabic continues to be negatively charged (Kolanowski et al., 2004). Microcapsulation can be accomplished by different techniques spray drying, spray chilling, spray cooling, extrusion coacervation and co-crystallization (Venskutonis & Bylaite, 2001). The process of complex coacervation microencapsulation comprises four basic steps: emulsification, coacervation, gelation and hardening (Dong et al., 2008). A cross-linking agent is used to harden the microcapsule walls and stabilizing the structure during this process (Dong et al., 2008). The changes in size and distribution of microcapsules produced by changing emulsification stirring speed appear as expected (Chang et al., 2006). In this study fish oil are encapsulated for several reasons: (1) to retain them in a food product during storage and increase their shelf life; (2) to protect the oil from undesirable interaction with the food; (3) to guard against light, heat, moisture or air induced reactions or oxidation; (4) to provide the controlled or delayed release of flavor and (5) to mask objectionable flavors.
Materials and methods

Gelatin solution (12.5 weight percent, wt) and gum Arabic (12.5% wt) were mixed at
40 °C for 30 min at 100 rpm (Dong et al., 2007). 4.2 g of purified Hypophthalmichthys molitrix oil was mixed
with 0.5 g of polyvinyl alcohol at 40 °C for 30 min at 100 rpm, during mixing, 200 ml
of distilled water, was added to mixture. At
40 °C the pH of the emulsion was adjusted
to 4.5-5 by adding 10% (w/w) aqueous
acetic acid solution at 100 rpm. Then 200
ml of distilled water added to the above
mixture at 0 ºC and mixed for 60 min at 100
rpm (Dong et al., 2008). After 60 min, the
pH was adjusted to 9.5-9.7 through the
addition of 10% (w/w) aqueous solution of
sodium hydroxide. The 10% aqueous
solution of formaldehyde was added to start
the cross linking in the microcapsules for
30 min at 3-5 ºC and the stirring rate of 100
rpm. The pH was adjusted to 9.5 once
more through addition of 10% (w/w)
aqueous solution of sodium hydroxide. The
solution under this condition agitated for 22
h. Finally the microcapsules were filtered,
washed and recovered (Drusch et al., 2008).
The same method was applied for glutaraldehyde at the stirring speed of 100,
300, 500, 750 and 1000 rpm, respectively. The morphology and particle size
distribution of microcapsules were analyzed
by optical microscopy (Carl Zeiss
Germany) connected to a digital video
camera (Canon PC 1089 Japan) and particle
size analyzer (LEICADMLB Germany). The
effect of glutaraldehyde and polyvinyl
alcohol were investigated in microcapsules
formation and their results were compared.

Results

The appearance of emulsions structure was
checked in optical microscopy under 3 and
10 × magnifications. The size of
microcapsules particle were from 537.2±0.8
µm (n: 20) to 4±0.7 µm (n: 20) at the
homogenization stirring speed range of 100
to 1000 rpm, respectively. Figures (1 to 17)
showed morphology and particle size
distribution of microcapsules after
reticulation versus stirring speed.

Figure 1: The microcapsules at 100 rpm

Figure 2: The microcapsules at 300 rpm
Figure 3: The microcapsules at 500 rpm
Figure 4: The microcapsules at 750 rpm
Figure 5: The microcapsules at 1000 rpm
Figure 6: The size distribution of the microcapsules at 100 rpm
Figure 7: The size distribution of the microcapsules at 300 rpm
Figure 8: The size distribution of the microcapsules at 500 rpm
Figure 9: The size distribution of the microcapsules at 750 rpm

Figure 10: The size distribution of the microcapsules at 1000 rpm

Figure 11: The microcapsules with formaldehyde

Figure 12: The microcapsules with glutaraldehyde

Figure 13: The size distribution of the microcapsules with formaldehyde at 300 rpm

Figure 14: The size distribution of the microcapsules with glutaraldehyde at 300 rpm
Figs 15: The morphology and the particle size distribution of the microcapsules with polyvinyl alcohol and without glutaraldehyde at the 1000 rpm.

Figure 16: The morphology and the particle size distribution of the microcapsules with glutaraldehyde and without polyvinyl alcohol at the 1000 rpm.

Figure 17: The morphology and the particle size distribution of the microcapsules without polyvinyl alcohol and glutaraldehyde at the 1000 rpm.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stirring speed (rpm)</th>
<th>Formaldehyde 10%</th>
<th>Glutaraldehyde 25%</th>
<th>Poly vinyl alcohol (0.5g)</th>
<th>Morphology</th>
<th>Size distribution (µm)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>Without</td>
<td>With</td>
<td>With</td>
<td>Irregular and big</td>
<td>537.2±0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300</td>
<td>With</td>
<td>Without</td>
<td>With</td>
<td>Irregular and big</td>
<td>90.12±0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300</td>
<td>Without</td>
<td>With</td>
<td>With</td>
<td>More regular</td>
<td>84.4±0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500</td>
<td>Without</td>
<td>With</td>
<td>With</td>
<td>Regular and small</td>
<td>12.98±0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>750</td>
<td>Without</td>
<td>With</td>
<td>With</td>
<td>More regular and smaller</td>
<td>8.24±0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000</td>
<td>Without</td>
<td>With</td>
<td>With</td>
<td>Spherical shape and very small</td>
<td>4 ± 0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000</td>
<td>Without</td>
<td>Without</td>
<td>With</td>
<td>Irregular</td>
<td>12.98±0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000</td>
<td>Without</td>
<td>With</td>
<td>Without</td>
<td>Irregular</td>
<td>9.89±0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000</td>
<td>Without</td>
<td>Without</td>
<td>Without</td>
<td>Irregular and big</td>
<td>22.72±0.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion

The emulsion used to form micro particles allowed the preparation of particles with a spherical shape in Figs 1 to 5 and size distribution as shown in Figs 6 to 10. When glutaraldehyde was used as the cross linking agent instead of formaldehyde, the morphology became spherical and the particle size distribution became narrower (Figs 11 to 14). Figure 1 demonstrates the effect of stirring speed on the morphology of microcapsules. When the stirring speed was 100 rpm, the difference of the oil content in different particle size microcapsules was very important. In comparison with the smaller particle size microcapsules (4±0.7, 8.24±0.5 and 12.98±0.4 µm), the bigger ones (84.4±0.5 and 537.2±0.8 µm) had higher oil content (Figs 6 to 10). This was due to the fact that, at lower stirring speed, lots of emulsion droplets floated upward and accumulated into microcapsules with bigger size and higher oil contents (Dong et al., 2007). Accordingly, the quantity of coacervates in the bulk was relatively increased which deposited around a small quantity of residual emulsion droplets and formed relatively smaller microcapsules with lower oil content. At the stirring speed of 300 rpm, the difference in microcapsules with different particle size was small (84.4±0.5 µm) (Fig 7). When the stirring speed was increased to 500 rpm, the morphology of microcapsules became irregular due to the violent stirring (Figs. 1 to 5). As the stirring speed decreased the mean particle size of the microcapsules increased and the particle size distribution became wider (Chang et al., 2006). When the stirring speed decreased from 500 rpm to 300 rpm, the mean particle size of microcapsules increased from 12.98±0.4 µm to 84.4±0.5 µm. Also when the stirring speed decreased from 300 rpm to 100 rpm, the mean particle size of microcapsules increased from 84.4±0.5 µm to 537.2±0.8 µm. When the stirring speed was below 100 rpm microcapsules could not be formed (Dong et al., 2007). Since the effect of the stirring speed on the particle size of spherical microcapsules was also very important, the spherical microcapsules with desired particle size could be made by modulating the stirring speed. By increasing the stirring speed, the loading of microcapsules was also increased, because the amount of coacervates deposited around emulsion droplets was reduced at the high stirring speed (Dong et al., 2007). The spherical microcapsules had narrower particle size distribution and uniform morphology at 1000 rpm which is the optimum stirring speed. When glutaraldehyde was used as a cross-linking agent instead of formaldehyde, the morphology and particle size distribution of microcapsules changed significantly and became narrower (Figs 11 to 14) suggesting that spherical microcapsules can be produced by the glutaraldehyde cross-linking agent instead of formaldehyde. This also has been showed by previous studies (Drusch et al., 2008). Using gelatin and gum Arabic as wall material and Fitofague oil as core material, the effect of various processing parameters, including the kind of cross-linking agent and stirring speed on the morphology and particle size distribution
were investigated. The Optimum conditions for preparing the spherical microcapsules obtained at wall material concentration 12.5% wt core/wall 1:1 pH 4.5-5 and the stirring speed of 1000 rpm by using glutaraldehyde as the cross linking agent instead of formaldehyde Where in such a condition, morphology and particle size distribution became spherical shape, more regular, with smooth surface and narrower size distribution.

**Acknowledgments**
The authors would like thank Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch and Iranian Fisheries Research Organization for their assistance and financial support.
References


