



## Synthesis, Biological and Medicinal Evaluation of New Boric Acid Ester Derived from Antibiotic Drug with Some of its Metal Complexes

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### Abstract

Synthesis of new ligand, namely [bis(2-(2-methyl-5-nitro-1H-imidazol-1-yl)ethyl) hydrogen borate] (BIB), utilizing the reaction of metronidazole with boric acid in mole ratio (2:1), as well as the metal complexes with [Ni(II) and Cu(II)], were synthesized. All synthesized compounds were characterized by utilizing spectroscopic techniques such as FTIR, <sup>1</sup>H-NMR, thermal analysis (T.G., UV-Vis), and atomic absorption (A.A.S.), as well as micro elemental analysis (C.H.N.), melting point (m.p), magnetic susceptibility, molar conductivity, and chloride content measurements. All complexes were paramagnetic, and the electrolyte and the suggested geometries were tetrahedral for nickel and octahedral for copper. In addition, all the transition metal complexes produced were shown to be antibacterial and antifungal against the bacteria *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Escherichia coli*, and the fungus *Candida*. Also, metronidazole and the ligand were evaluated as anticancer agents against human breast cancer (MCF-7). The results showed that ligand was more active as an anticancer than metronidazole.

**Keywords:** Metronidazole, Boric acid, Spectroscopic techniques, Antibiotic, Anticancer.

### 1. Introduction

Nitroimidazole compounds have an imidazole ring with two or five active nitro groups. The pharmacokinetic properties of 5-nitroimidazoles are anti-parasitic, while the effects of 2-nitroimidazoles are anti-ischemic and anti-inflammatory [1]. The 5-nitroimidazole compound, namely [metronidazole (MTN)], is the prototype and most commonly utilized drug in this class. It's one of the most versatile antibiotics in clinical use, effective against a wide range of anaerobic microorganisms ranging from protozoa to bacteria. The World Health Organization has classified it as an essential medication [2]. Metronidazole (MTN) is a crystalline powder and is slightly soluble in water [3]; it exhibits a wide range of pharmacological actions, with a particular emphasis on its antiviral, antibacterial, anti-proliferative, and antifungal activities [4]. Metronidazole's initial clinical trials revealed that it could treat amoebic liver abscesses and invasive amoebic dysentery [5].



Boric acid  $B(OH)_3$  is a weak inorganic acid that is odorless and soluble in water. It is an efficient acid catalyst in organic synthesis for various selective transformations of simple and complex molecules [6]. It's an antiseptic in mouthwashes, talcum powder, protective ointments, and eye-washes. Also, boric acid is used in industrial applications such as optical and sealing glasses, textile fiberglass, heat-resistant borosilicate glass, porcelain enamels, and ceramic glazes [7].

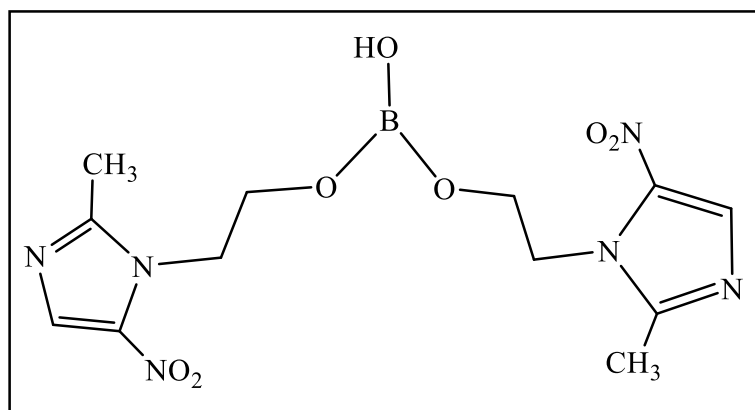
This study has synthesized a new metronidazole derivative using boric acid as a BIB ligand **Figure 1**. Additionally, we are synthesizing metal complexes of this (BIB) ligand with [Ni (II) and Cu (II)] metal ions. **Figure 2**. All synthesized compounds are characterized using physicochemical and spectral studies to prove the proposed structure. The medicinal uses and biological activities of the synthesized compounds were evaluated.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The elemental analyzer EuroEA 3000/Italy recorded elemental microanalyses (CHN) for carbon, hydrogen, and nitrogen. The melting points were determined using the Gallen Kamp melting point apparatus. The FT-IR (Fourier transform infrared) spectrophotometry for ligands in the  $400\text{--}4000\text{ cm}^{-1}$  (KBr) range and complexes in the  $(200 - 4000\text{ cm}^{-1})$  range UV-Vis spectrum was measured using a Shimadzu 1800-UV spectrophotometer and distilled water as a solvent. The  $^1H$ -NMR spectra in DMSO- $d_6$  were measured using an NMR Bruker 500MHz in Germany. Thermal analyses (TG) were recorded (TG sta. 300, Germany). The Auto Magnetic Susceptibility Balance Model by Sherwood Scientific was utilized to record magnetic susceptibility data at room temperature. Metal content was evaluated using atomic absorption spectroscopy on a Nova 350 spectrophotometer. The Mohr technique was utilized to determine the chloride content of complexes.

### 2.1 Synthesis of bis(2-(2-methyl-5-nitro-1H-imidazol-1-yl)ethyl) hydrogen borate (BIB)

The mixture of metronidazole (0.1 g, 0.5842 mmol) in 8 mL of distilled water and boric acid (0.0180 g, 0.2921 mmol) was heated under reflux for 8 hours with stirring. The TLC technique tested the solution, and the eluent was Toluene, chloroform, and methanol (3:2:0.6, v/v/v). A part of the solution was evaporated, and the white product was obtained by cooling in an ice bath, scratching, washing with cold distilled water, and drying in an oven at  $80\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ .



**Figure 1.** Structure of the ligand (BIB)

## 2.2 Synthesis of BIB complexes with (Ni (II) and Cu(II)) metal ions (C<sub>1</sub> and C<sub>2</sub>)

The warm solution of the BIB (0.1 gm, 0.2718 mmol) in 5 mL distilled water was added to a solution of metal salt (0.0323 gm, 0.0231 gm (0.1355 mmol)) of NiCl<sub>2</sub>.6H<sub>2</sub>O and CuCl<sub>2</sub>.2H<sub>2</sub>O, respectively, in 2 mL distilled water. The mixtures were heated under reflux for 5 hours with stirring. The solvent was evaporated, and the products were collected in an ice bath and crashing, washed with cold distilled water, and dried in an oven at 80<sup>0</sup>C.

## 2.3 Anti-microbial activity

Using the diffusion technique with 2×10<sup>-2</sup> M in H<sub>2</sub>O solutions, all synthesized compounds were tested for anti-bacterial and anti-fungal activity against (gram-positive *Staphylococcus aureus*, gram-negative *Escherichia coli* and *Candida*). The diameters of inhibition were examined to assess the anti-bacterial activity [8].

## 2.4 Anticancer activity

A 96-well plate was used for the MTT cell viability assay to evaluate the cytotoxic effect. The cell lines were seeded at (1×10<sup>4</sup> cells/ well). Cells were treated with the studied compounds after 24 hours. The effectiveness of the anticancer treatment was studied utilizing literature [9], and absorbance at 575 nm was evaluated.

## 3. Results and Discussion

The physical and analytical data are consistent with the proposed structures of the compounds in the study (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Data from the analysis as well as the physical properties of the (BIB) ligand and its metal complexes

Comp	The molecular formula	Color	Yield %	m.p (°C)	M.wt (g/mol)	(Found) Calc.			Metal content %	Chloride content %
						C%	H%	N%		
<b>BIB</b>	C <sub>12</sub> H <sub>17</sub> BN <sub>6</sub> O <sub>7</sub>	White	97%	(148-150)	367.8	39.15 (39.41)	4.65 (5.37)	22.83 (23.22)	—	—
<b>C<sub>1</sub></b>	[C <sub>24</sub> H <sub>36</sub> B <sub>2</sub> N <sub>12</sub> O <sub>15</sub>	light	76%	(158-160)	901.29	31.95 (32.71)	4.21 (4.74)	18.63 (19.39)	6.51 (7.33)	7.87 (8.76)
<b>Ni(II)</b>	NiCl]Cl.H <sub>2</sub> O	green								
<b>C<sub>2</sub></b>	[C <sub>24</sub> H <sub>40</sub> B <sub>2</sub> N <sub>12</sub> O <sub>17</sub>	green	82%	(156-158)	924.14	31.16 (32.08)	4.32 (5.18)	18.17 (17.21)	6.87 (7.41)	7.68 (6.75)
<b>Cu(II)</b>	CuCl].Cl									

**Table 2.** The name of BIB and proposed formula for its metal ion complexes

Comp	Formal	Name
<b>BIB</b>	C <sub>12</sub> H <sub>17</sub> BN <sub>6</sub> O <sub>7</sub>	bis(2-(2-methyl-5-nitro-1H-imidazol-1-yl)ethyl) hydrogen borate.
<b>C<sub>1</sub></b>	[(L <sub>1</sub> ) <sub>2</sub> Ni(H <sub>2</sub> O)Cl].Cl.H <sub>2</sub> O	[aqua chloro bis{ bis(2-(2-methyl-5-nitro-1H-imidazol-1-yl)ethyl) hydrogen borate } Nickel (II)] hydrate. Chloride.
<b>C<sub>2</sub></b>	[(L <sub>1</sub> ) <sub>2</sub> Cu(H <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>3</sub> Cl].Cl	[Tri aqua chloro bis{ bis(2-(2-methyl-5-nitro-1H- 344midazole-1-yl)ethyl) hydrogen borate } Copper(II)] Chloride.

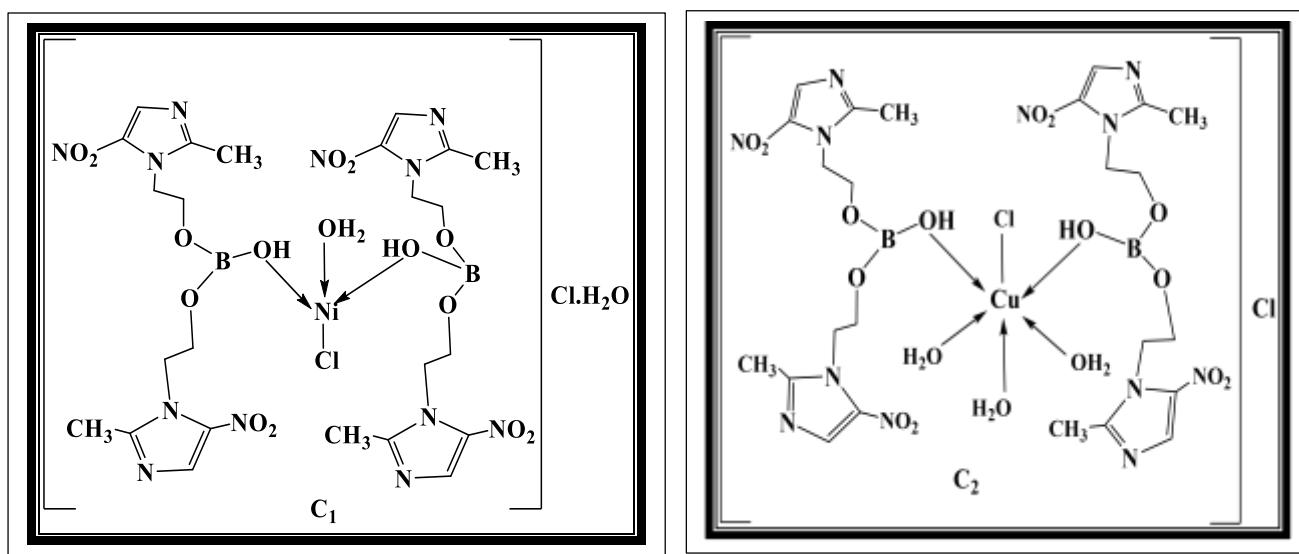
## 3.1 The FT-IR spectra

The infrared spectra of (Ni and Cu) complexes showed a shifting in the frequency and a change in the profile of (ν OH) Table 3 as a result of coordination with metal ions[10].

At (1483–1487) $\text{cm}^{-1}$ , a new band appears in the spectra of the ligand and its complexes; this band is attributed to the ( $\nu$  B-O) group [11]. The stretching of (C=N) the imidazole ring did not show any change in frequency or profile, and this was because of no coordination with metal ions through (C=N) [12]. The spectrum of the Ni (II) complex showed the lattice water at (3437)  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  and coordinated water at (3365)  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ , as well as the lower frequency bands [(991) and (678)]  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ . The coordinate  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$  of Cu (II) complex appeared at (3388)  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ , and in the lower frequency band [(767) and (680)]  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ , low-frequency bands appeared in complex spectra due to  $\nu$  M-O,  $\nu$  M-Cl [13, 14] as shown in **Figure 3** and **4**.

**Table 3.** Infrared absorption bands that are specific to the (BIB) ligand and its metal ion complexes

Compound	$\nu$ OH	$\text{H}_2\text{O}$ lattice (coordinate)	$\nu$ C=N	$\nu$ B-O	$\nu$ M-O	$\nu$ M-Cl
MTZ	3222	—	1535	—	—	—
BIB	3415	—	1535	1487	—	—
BIB (Ni)	3384	3437 (3365)	1535	1487	457	347
C <sub>1</sub>		(991) (678)				
BIB (Cu)	3406	(3388) (767)	1535	1483	424	333
C <sub>2</sub>		(680)				



**Figure 2.** The suggested structures of synthesized complexes

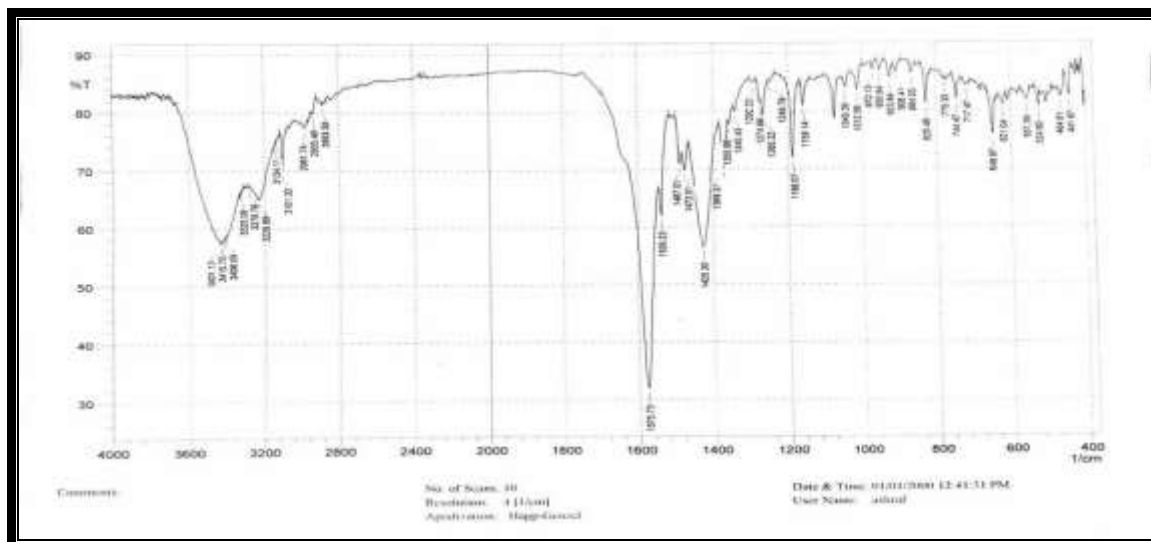


Figure 3. The FT-IR spectrum of the (BIB) ligand

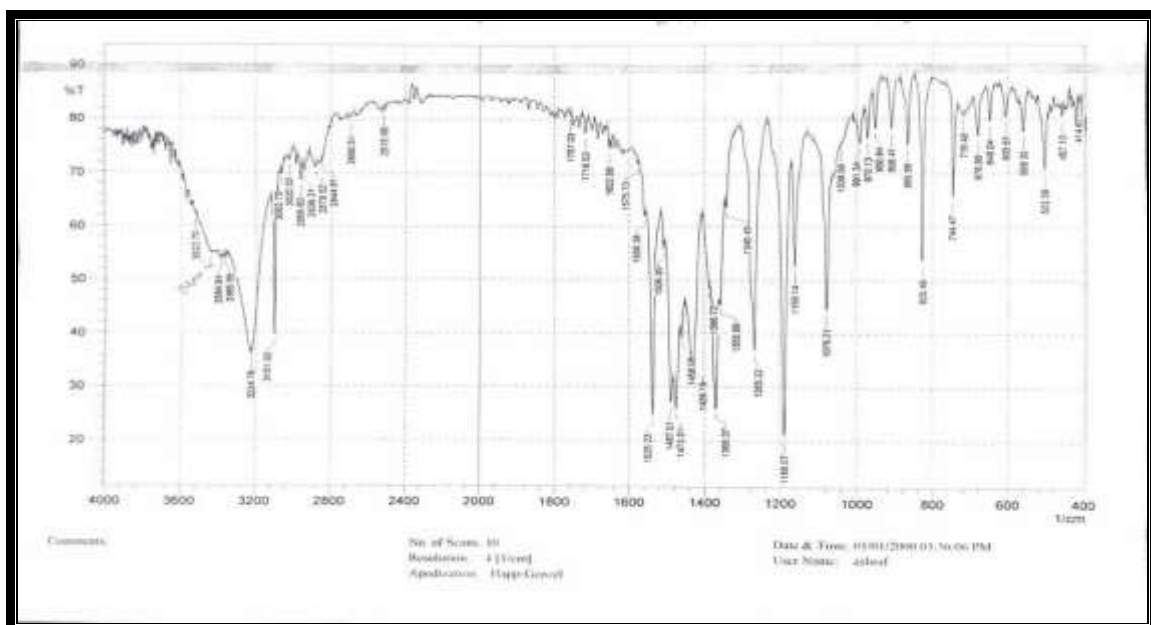


Figure 4. The FT-IR spectrum of the Ni(II) complex C<sub>1</sub>

### 3.2 The <sup>1</sup>H-NMR spectroscopy

Table 4 shows the <sup>1</sup>H-NMR data for the BIB ligand, which is backed up by **Figure 5**, **Figure 6** shows the NMR spectrum in DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>. The spectrum of the ligand observed a chemical shift at  $\delta(3.99)$ , which is due to the B-OH proton [15, 16]. The multiple peaks observed in the ranges  $\delta(4.35\text{--}4.40)$  and  $\delta(3.66)$  referred to NCH<sub>2</sub> and O-CH<sub>2</sub>, respectively [17, 18]. Chemical shifts of the methyl group CH<sub>3</sub> and residual DMSO-d<sub>6</sub> at  $\delta(2.44)$  [17] The peak observed at  $\delta(8.04)$  is attributed to imidazole protons [19].

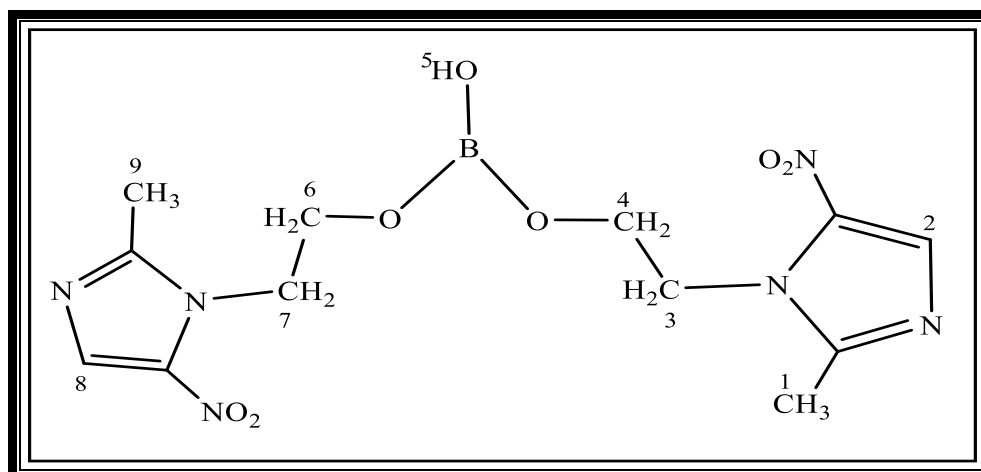


Figure 5. Proton positions in structure of the ligand BIB

Table 4. Chemical shifts for  $^1\text{H-NMR}$  of BIB

Assignments in DMSO- $d_6$	Mark	Chemical shifts $\delta$ (ppm)
$\text{CH}_3$	1, 9	(2.44),6H, s
CH(imidazole)	2, 8	(8.04),2H, s
N- $\text{CH}_2$	3, 7	(4.35-4.40),4H, m
O- $\text{CH}_2$	4, 6	(3.66),4H, m
B-OH proton	5	(3.99)1H, m

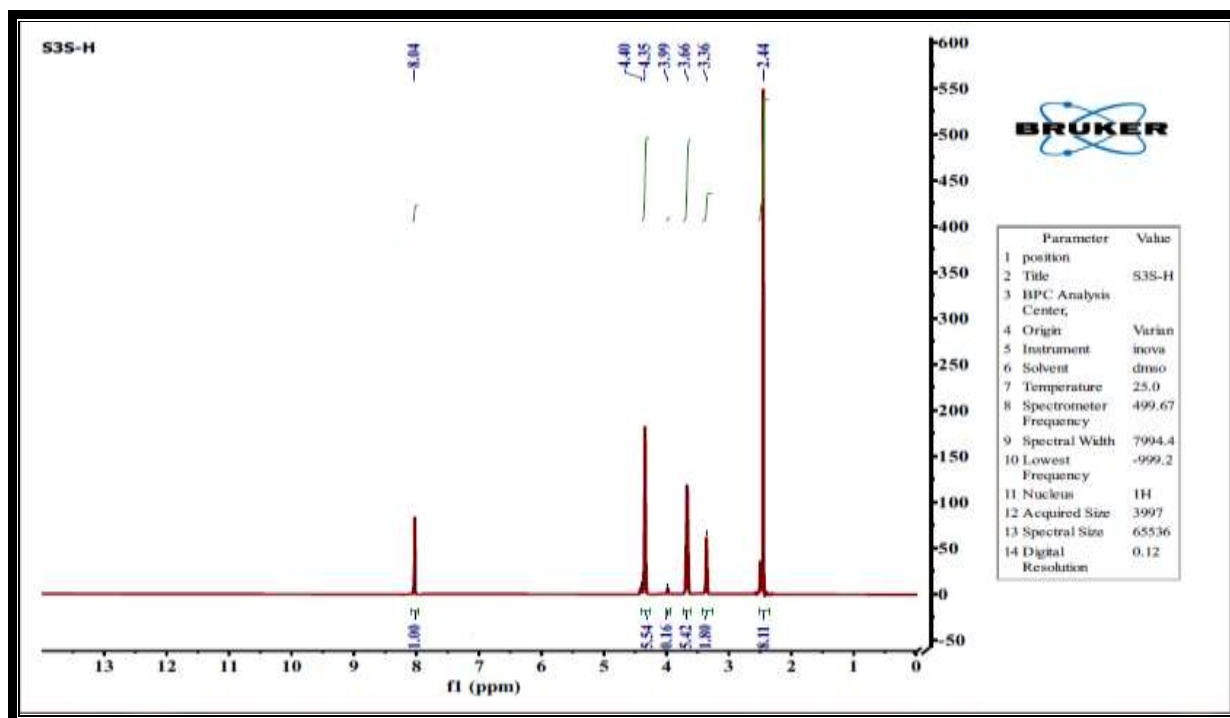
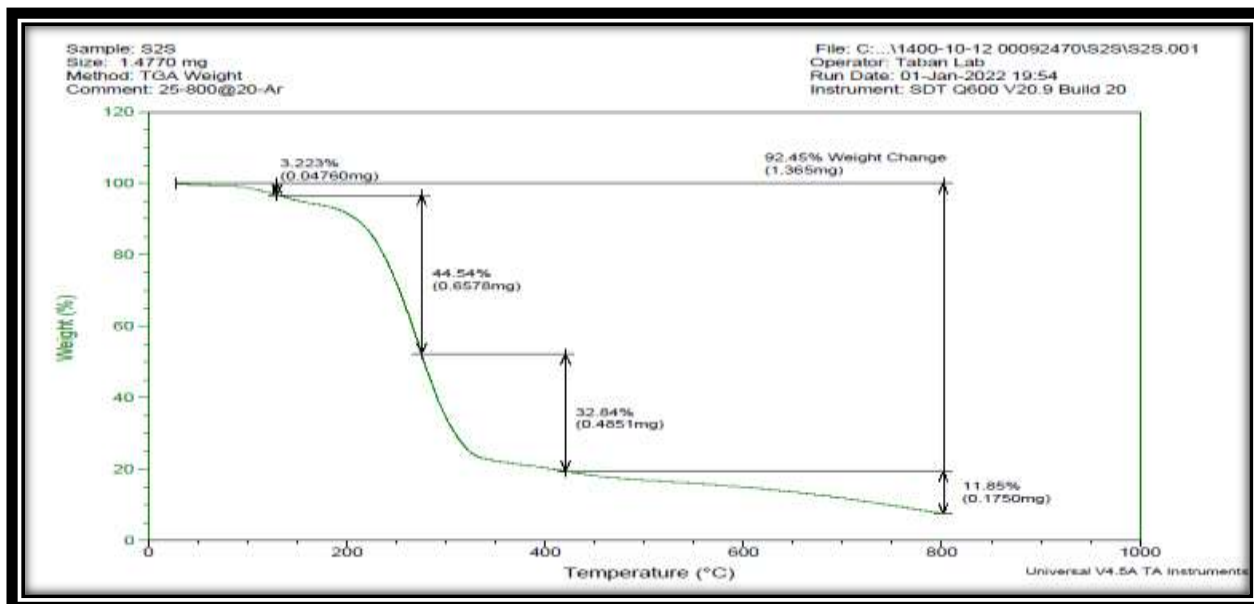


Figure 6. The  $^1\text{H-NMR}$  Spectrum of BIB

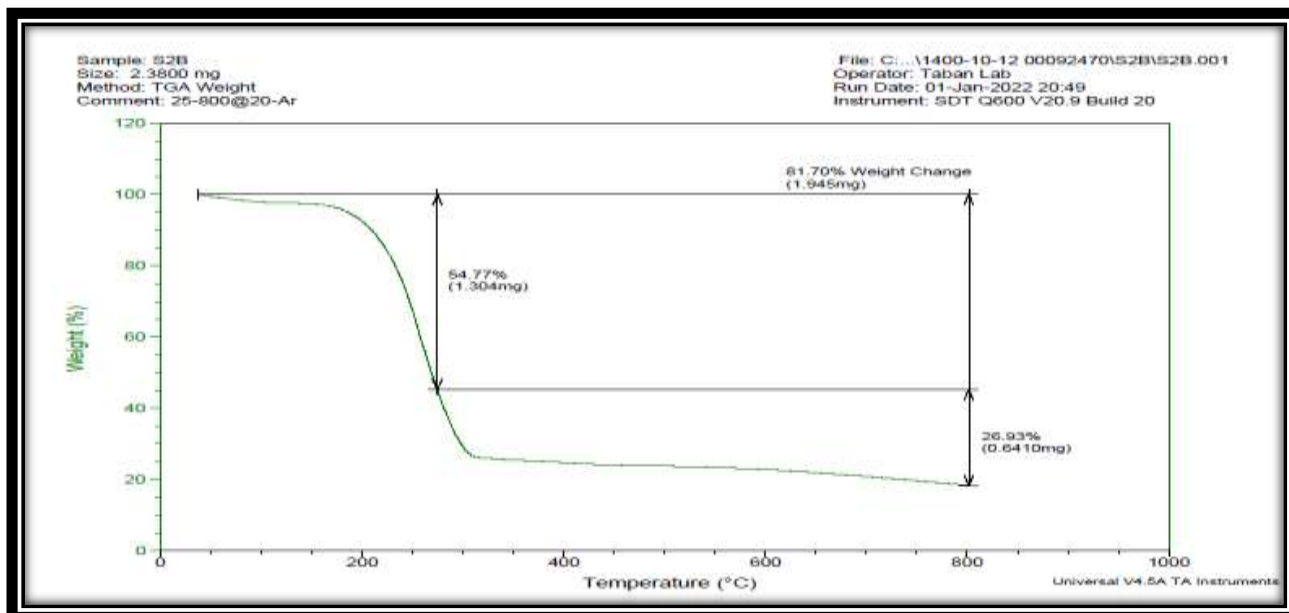
### 3.3 Thermogravimetric analysis (TGA)

The thermogravimetric analysis was conducted under argon gas at a heating rate of (10  $^{\circ}\text{C}/\text{min}$ ) and a temperature range of (25 – 800)  $^{\circ}\text{C}$ . This technique characterized the suggested structures and the studied thermal st and synthesized compounds. In the following order, the BIB ligand and

its complex's thermal stability were increased: (C1 > BIB > C2) **Table 5** [3]. The thermal decomposition was utilized to confirm the structures where the degradation results exhibit high agreement of found mass loss and calculation, confirming the proposed construction of the synthesized compounds. The ligand (BIB) and nickel complex C1 thermogram are shown in **Figures 7 and 8**.



**Figure 7.** The thermogram of the (BIB) ligand



**Figure 8.** The thermogram of nickel complex C<sub>1</sub>

Table 5. The TGA of ligand (MBIB) and their complexes

Comp	Compounds (M.wt) (gm/mol)	Step	Temp. rang of the Decomposition °C	Suggested Assignment	Mass loss%	
					Cal.	Found
BIB	C <sub>12</sub> H <sub>17</sub> BN <sub>6</sub> O <sub>7</sub> 367.8	1	25-135	CH <sub>3</sub>	4.078	3.223
		2	135-275	N <sub>3</sub> C <sub>7</sub> O <sub>2</sub> H <sub>9</sub>	45.40	44.54
		3	275-420	N <sub>3</sub> C <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub> H <sub>5</sub>	32.35	32.84
		4	420-800	2C+O	10.87	11.85
		Residue	>800	B+O	7.28	7.55
C <sub>1</sub>	[C <sub>24</sub> H <sub>36</sub> B <sub>2</sub> N <sub>12</sub> O <sub>15</sub> NiCl].Cl.H <sub>2</sub> O 901.29	1	25-278	2H <sub>2</sub> O+2Cl+N <sub>6</sub> O <sub>7</sub> C <sub>13</sub> H 20+B	54.34	54.77
		2	278-800	N <sub>6</sub> O <sub>4</sub> C <sub>8</sub> H <sub>7</sub>	27.84	26.93
		Residue	> 800	O <sub>3</sub> H <sub>7</sub> C <sub>3</sub> B Ni	17.80	18.30
C <sub>2</sub>	[C <sub>24</sub> H <sub>40</sub> B <sub>2</sub> N <sub>12</sub> O <sub>17</sub> CuCl].Cl 924.14	1	25-262	3H <sub>2</sub> O+2Cl+2(N <sub>3</sub> O <sub>2</sub> C <sub>6</sub> H <sub>8</sub> )+O	48.58	48.94
		2	262-800	N <sub>6</sub> O <sub>9</sub> C <sub>12</sub> H <sub>18</sub> B+Cu	50.24	50.26
		Residue	>800	B	1.16	0.81

### 3.4 The UV-Vis spectral studies:

The UV-Vis spectra of (BIB) and its metal complexes in distilled water are listed in **Table 6**. The spectrum of the ligand **Figure 9** showed an intense band at [313 nm (31948 cm<sup>-1</sup>)] due to the ( $\pi \rightarrow \pi^*$ ) transition [20]. The Ni(II) complex **Figure 10** exhibited a shift of the ligand band ( $\pi \rightarrow \pi^*$ ). Two bands showed at [962 nm (10395 cm<sup>-1</sup>) and 785 nm (12738 cm<sup>-1</sup>)] which were assigned to [<sup>3</sup>T<sub>1</sub>(F)  $\rightarrow$  <sup>3</sup>A<sub>2</sub> and <sup>3</sup>T<sub>1</sub>(F)  $\rightarrow$  <sup>3</sup>T<sub>1</sub>(P)] transitions of Tetrahedral Ni(II) complexes [21]. The  $M_{\text{eff}}$  of Ni(II) was 2.78 B.M. This value is in agreement with Tetrahedral geometry [20, 21]. **Table 6** shows a list of the data. Two absorption bands were observed in the spectrum of copper complex (C<sub>2</sub>) **Figure 11** at [960 nm (10416 cm<sup>-1</sup>) and 739 nm (13531 cm<sup>-1</sup>)] which were attributed to [<sup>2</sup>B<sub>1g</sub>  $\rightarrow$  <sup>2</sup>A<sub>1g</sub> and <sup>2</sup>B<sub>1g</sub>  $\rightarrow$  <sup>2</sup>B<sub>2g</sub>] transitions, respectively [20]. The magnetic moment of the copper complex was 2.23 B.M, and these values of  $M_{\text{eff}}$  agree with Octahedral geometry [22–24]. In distilled water, the molar conductance for each synthesized complex was measured using (10<sup>-3</sup> M). The complexes (C<sub>1</sub> and C<sub>2</sub>) have electrolyte behavior [25–27].

Table 6. Electronic transitions of the BIB and its complexes, proposed geometry, molar conductivity, and magnetic susceptibility

Comp	$\lambda$ nm (cm <sup>-1</sup> )	Assignment	Molar conductivity (S.cm <sup>2</sup> .mol <sup>-1</sup> ) in H <sub>2</sub> O	$M_{\text{eff}}$ (B.M)	Geometry
BIB	313(31948)	( $\pi - \pi^*$ )	—	—	—
C <sub>1</sub> (Ni)	315(31746)	( $\pi - \pi^*$ )	131	2.78	Tetrahedral
	785(12738)	<sup>3</sup> T <sub>1</sub> (F) $\rightarrow$ <sup>3</sup> T <sub>1</sub> (P) ( $\nu_2$ )			
	962(10395)	<sup>3</sup> T <sub>1</sub> (F) $\rightarrow$ <sup>3</sup> A <sub>2</sub> (F) ( $\nu_1$ )			
C <sub>2</sub> (Cu)	357(28011)	( $\pi - \pi^*$ )	139	2.23	Distorted octahedral
	739(13531)	<sup>2</sup> B <sub>1g</sub> $\rightarrow$ <sup>2</sup> B <sub>2g</sub> ( $\nu_2$ )			
	960(10416)	<sup>2</sup> B <sub>1g</sub> $\rightarrow$ <sup>2</sup> A <sub>1g</sub> ( $\nu_1$ )			



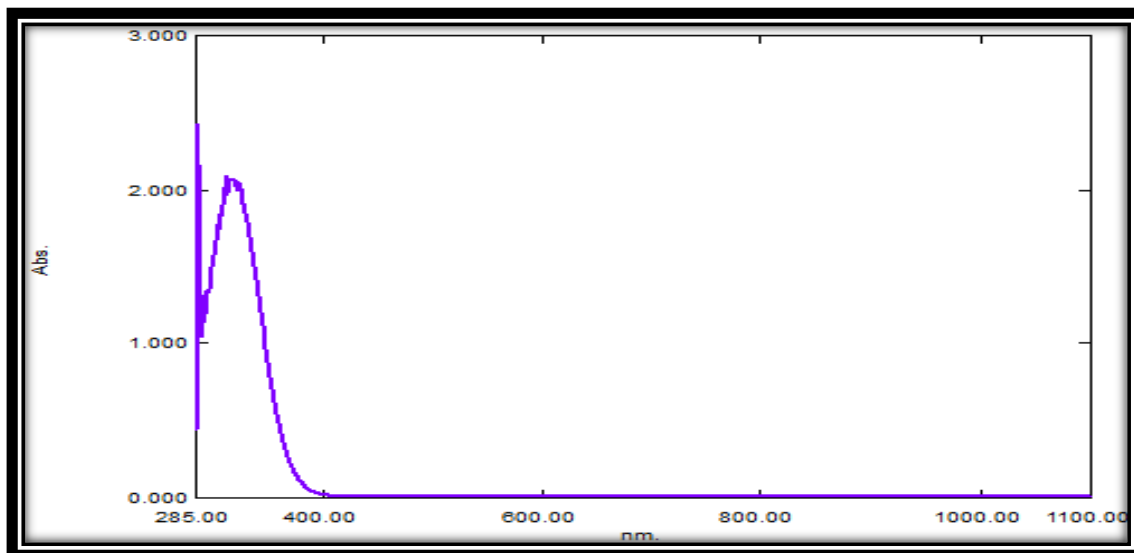


Figure 9. The UV-Vis spectrum of BIB

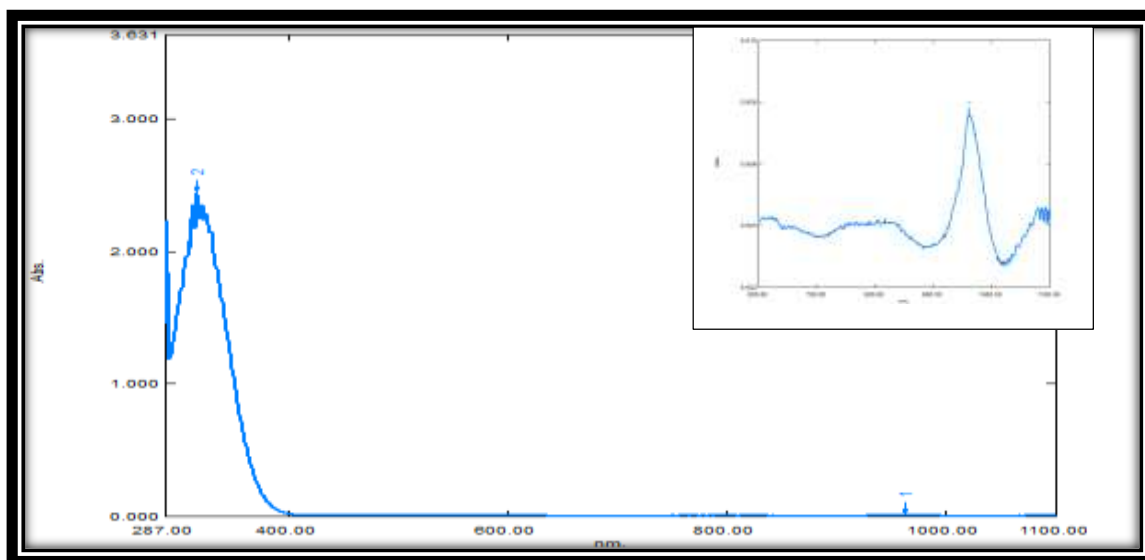


Figure 10. The UV-Vis spectrum of C<sub>1</sub> complex

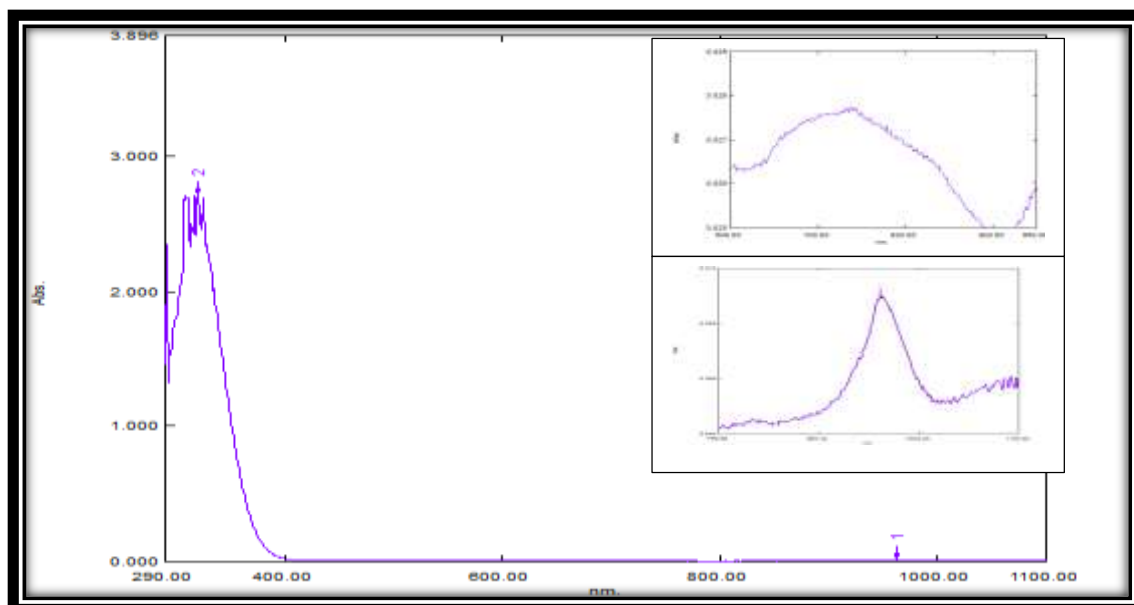


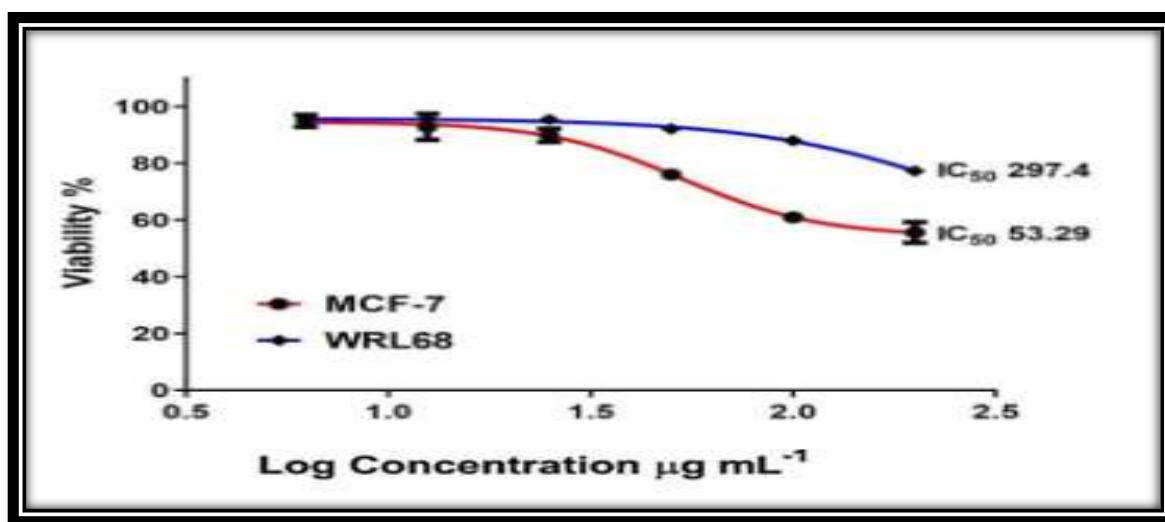
Figure 11: The UV-Vis spectrum of C<sub>2</sub> complex

### 3.5 Anti-cancer Activity

Metronidazole and (BIB) ligands were evaluated for their ability to inhibit human breast cancer (MCF-7) cells by the [3-(4,5-dimethylthiazol-2-yl)-2,5-diphenyltetrazolium bromide] (MTT) assay technique **Figures 12 and 13**. The results showed that (BIB) ligand was more active as an anticancer than the original material (metronidazole), and the killing capability of cancer cells for the BIB ligand was higher than that of metronidazole [28]. This is due to the presence of a boron atom in the ligand.

**Table 7.** Cytotoxicity effects of metronidazole on (MCF-7) and WRI-68 cells after 24 hours incubation at 37 °C

Cell line	Conc. µg/mL						IC <sub>50</sub> µg/mL	P-value
	200.00	100.00	50.00	25.00	12.50	6.25		
MCF-7	55.67± 3.64	61.00±1.48	76.08± 1.77	89.82±2.34	92.86±4.65	95.02±1.45	53.29	<0.0001
WRL	77.28±1.62	87.96±1.51	92.13± 1.56	95.41±0.37	95.79±0.71	94.91±2.20	297.4	



**Figure 12:** Cytotoxicity effect of Metronidazole on MCF-7 cells after 24 hours incubation period at 37 °C

**Table 8.** Cytotoxicity effects of (BIB) ligand on (MCF-7) and WRI-68 cells after 24 hours incubation at 37 °C

Cell line	Conc. µg/mL						IC <sub>50</sub> µg/mL	P-value
	200.00	100.00	50.00	25.00	12.50	6.25		
MCF-7	43.21±2.20	49.19±4.36	66.09±2.71	72.57± 2.91	86.19±3.92	94.41±0.55	37.42	<0.0001
WRL	74.38±4.21	85.57±2.34	92.94±0.81	95.72± 0.53	94.91±1.51	95.18±0.41	120.7	

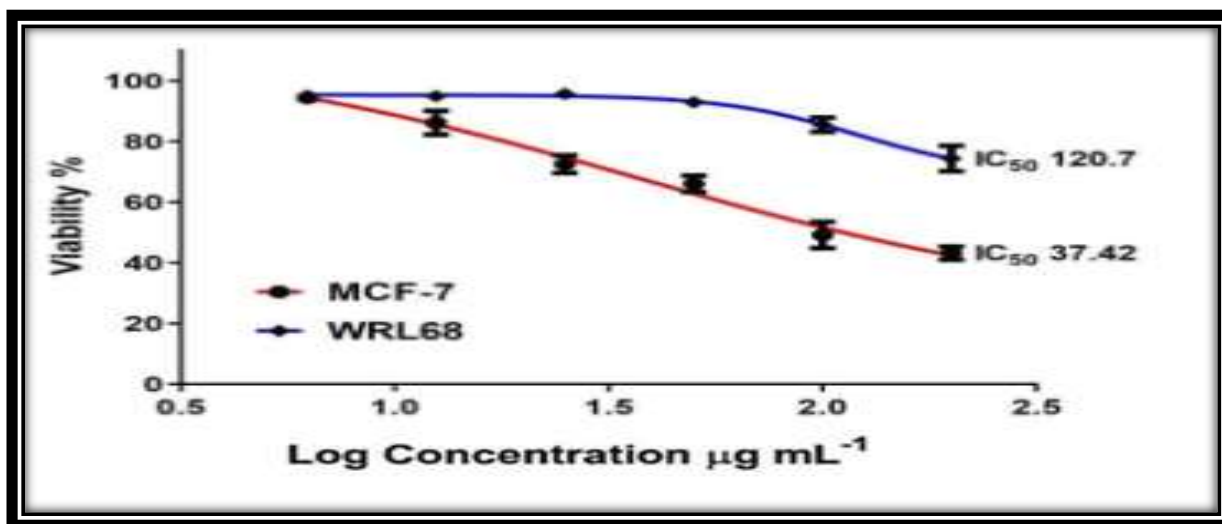


Figure 13. Cytotoxicity effect of (BIB) Ligand on MCF-7 cells after 24 hours incubation period at 37 °C

### 3.6 Antimicrobial activity:

The synthesized compounds' antibacterial and antifungal behavior was evaluated against gram-positive bacteria *Staphylococcus aureus*, gram-negative bacteria *Escherichia coli*, and *Candida* [29-31]. The results indicated that ligand (BIB) has more activity than metronidazole (MTZ) in *Staphylococcus aureus*, according to the following activity order (BIB > Boric acid > MTZ) depending on inhibition zone (23 > 22 > 20) mm, respectively. In *Escherichia coli*, according to the following order, boric acid has higher activity (boric acid > BIB > MTZ) depending on the inhibition zone (12 > 11 > 9) mm, respectively.

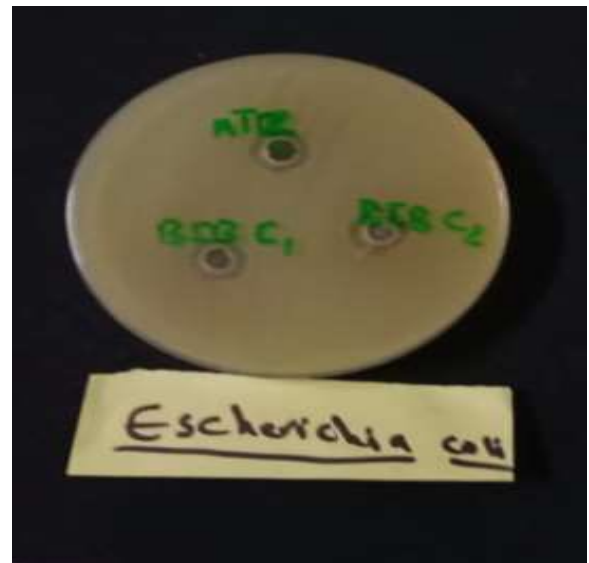
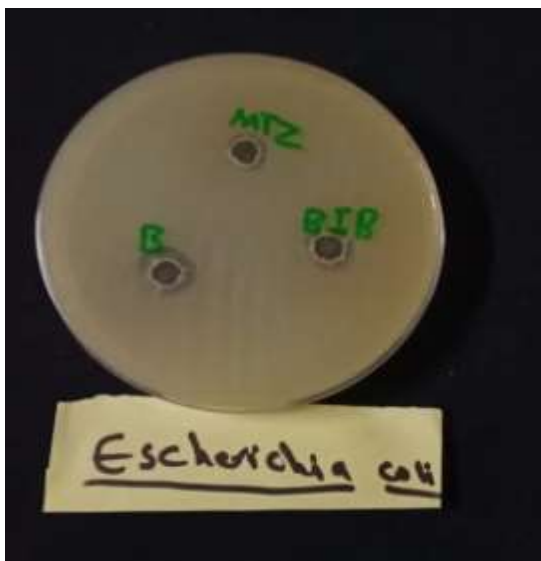
Comparison of the biological activities in *Staphylococcus aureus* of BIB and its metal complexes was in the following order (C1 > BIB > C2 = boric acid > MTZ) at the inhibition zone (24 > 23 > 22 > 20) mm. In *Escherichia coli*, the complexes were more energetic than BIB, and the order was as follows (Cu (C2) > Ni (C1) = boric acid > BIB > MTZ) depending on the inhibition zone (13 > 12 > 11 > 9) mm, respectively [32-34]. **Table 9** shows the antibacterial and antifungal data results, while **Figures 14, 15, and 16** show the inhibition zones.

Table 9. The biological activity of the substances under study in ( $2 \times 10^{-2}$  M)

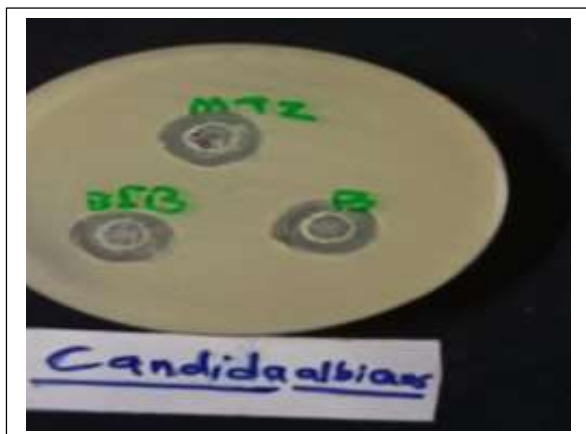
Compound	<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> (G+) inhibition zone diameter (mm)	<i>Escherichia coli</i> (G-) Inhibition zone diameter (mm)	<i>Candida</i> (nm)
H <sub>2</sub> O	--	--	--
MTZ	20	9	10
Boric acid	22	12	16
BIB	23	11	15
Ni(C <sub>1</sub> )	24	12	14
Cu(C <sub>2</sub> )	22	13	12



**Figure 14.** The zone of inhibition towards *Staphylococcus aureus* (G+) in the case of the ligand (BIB) and its metal complexes, boric acid, and metronidazole



**Figure 15.** The zone of inhibition towards *Escherichia coli* (G-) in the case of the ligand (BIB) and its metal complexes, boric acid, and metronidazole



**Figure 16.** The zone of inhibition towards *Candida* in the case of the ligand (BIB) and its metal complexes, boric acid, and metronidazole

#### 4. Conclusion

A new ligand (BIB) was synthesized from the reaction of metronidazole with boric acid, and its metal complexes with Ni(II) and Cu(II) were synthesized in a 2:1 (BIB: M) mole ratio—spectral and physicochemical methods characterized all synthesized compounds. The proposed structure of the Ni(II) complex was tetrahedral geometry and the octahedral geometry of the Cu(II) complex, and the results showed that the complexes have electrolytic behavior. All synthesized compounds were tested as anti-biofilm agents against (*Pseudomonas autogiros* (Gram-negative) bacteria (G-). The results showed that, compared to other compounds, copper complexes were more active. The medicinal application (anticancer) in human breast cancer cells (MCF-7) was studied of the ligand (BIB) and gave a good result in testing.

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#### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they do not have any competing interests.

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#### Ethical Clearance

This work has been approved by the Institutional Scientific Committee at the University of Baghdad/ College of Science.

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