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DETERMINATION OF STRONTIUM SULFATE IN THE COMPOSITION OF SHEROBOD CELESTINE MINERAL BY X-RAY SPECTRAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract. This article presents the quantitative determination of strontium sulfate content in celestine ($SrSO_4$) mineral samples collected from the Sherobod region using X-ray fluorescence (XRF) spectroscopy. The study identifies the main elements present in the mineral and analyzes their spectral lines and intensity levels. The obtained results provide valuable information for evaluating the mineralogical and chemical characteristics of Sherobod celestine, assessing the quality of strontium-bearing raw materials, and determining their potential for industrial processing.

Keywords: celestine, strontium sulfate, X-ray fluorescence, XRF method, Sherobod, mineral composition, chemical analysis.

Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqolada Sherobod hududidan olingan selestin ($SrSO_4$) mineral namunalardagi stronsiy sulfat miqdorini rentgen-lyuminessensiya (XRF) spektroskopiyasi yordamida miqdoriy aniqlash natijalari keltirilgan. Tadqiqotda mineral tarkibidagi asosiy elementlar aniqlanib, ularning spektr chiziqlari va intensivlik darajalari tahlil qilingan. Olingan natijalar Sherobod selestininining mineralogik va kimyoviy xususiyatlarini baholash, stronsiy saqlovchi xomashyoning sifatini aniqlash hamda ularning sanoat miqyosida qayta ishlash imkoniyatlarini belgilashda muhim ahamiyatga ega.

Kalit so‘zlar: selestin, stronsiy sulfat, rentgen-lyuminessensiya, XRF usuli, Sherobod, mineral tarkibi, kimyoviy tahlil.

Аннотация. В данной статье представлены результаты количественного определения содержания сульфата стронция в образцах минерала целестина ($SrSO_4$), собранных в Шерабадском регионе, с использованием рентгенофлуоресцентной (XRF) спектроскопии. В исследовании выявлены

основные элементы, присутствующие в минерале, и проанализированы их спектральные линии и уровни интенсивности. Полученные результаты предоставляют ценную информацию для оценки минералогических и химических характеристик шерабадского целестина, определения качества стронцийсодержащего сырья и оценки его потенциала для промышленной переработки.

Ключевые слова: целестин, сульфат стронция, рентгенофлуоресценция, метод XRF, Шерабад, минеральный состав, химический анализ.

Introduction

Strontium sulfate ($SrSO_4$), commonly known as celestine in its natural form, belongs to the family of sulfate minerals and occurs under various geological conditions. This mineral is usually found in association with barite ($BaSO_4$) and exists as a trace element in ores. The geochemical distribution of strontium minerals is observed in carbonate and silicate deposits, as well as in sedimentary layers. The geological significance of $SrSO_4$ also lies in its ability to substitute Ca^{2+} or Ba^{2+} ions within its crystal structure. This characteristic determines the mineral's physicochemical properties, melting point, and crystal structure, thereby enabling its effective utilization in industrial processes.

Celestine has considerable industrial importance: $SrSO_4$ serves as a source of strontium in electronic components, ceramic materials, pyrotechnic products, light-emitting devices, and certain high-tech chemical reactions. Therefore, determining the $SrSO_4$ content in ores is essential for geological exploration, mineral resource evaluation, optimization of ore processing technologies, and the production of high-quality materials.

Traditional chemical and geochemical techniques—such as X-ray diffraction (XRD), inductively coupled plasma optical emission spectroscopy (ICP-OES), and atomic absorption spectroscopy (AAS)—are widely used to identify $SrSO_4$ in minerals. However, these methods are often time-consuming, require complex sample preparation, and may lack sufficient sensitivity for detecting trace elements in mineral compositions. Consequently, in modern research, energy-dispersive X-ray spectroscopy (SEM-EDX) combined with electron microscopy is considered a fast, reliable, and efficient method.

Using SEM-EDX analysis, the elemental composition of microscopic regions within a mineral can be determined. This method allows not only the detection of major elements but also the sensitive identification of trace elements. The presence of strontium sulfate in the mineral, the determination of its mass percentage, and the analysis of its interaction with other elements in the composition can be effectively carried out using SEM-EDX. In addition, this

ISSN 3030-3907

technology provides valuable information about the ore's crystal structure, mineral intergrowths, and trace element distribution.

A mineral sample from the Sherobod strontium and celestine deposit was selected as the main object of this study. The ore primarily contains $CaSO_4$ as the main component, with $SrSO_4$ occurring in smaller amounts. Strontium ions are partially substituted with Ca^{2+} within the crystal lattice, which influences the ore's physicochemical properties, including density, melting point, and processing characteristics. The substitution mechanism also helps to understand the mineral intermixing within the ore, thereby enhancing the potential for efficient utilization of $SrSO_4$ in industrial processes.

The selection of strontium sulfate as the subject of study is motivated not only by its industrial importance but also by geological and scientific interest. Investigating the crystal and chemical properties of celestine, determining the trace element concentrations within the ore, and comparing them with other sulfate minerals contribute to a deeper understanding of geochemical processes. Furthermore, through EDX analysis, the distribution of $SrSO_4$ within the microstructures of the ore, its association with other minerals, and its potential industrial value can be determined.

The **objective of this study** is to identify $SrSO_4$ in the mineral sample from the Sherobod strontium and celestine deposit using SEM-EDX analysis, determine its mass percentage, compare the obtained results with literature data, and evaluate its geochemical and industrial significance. The **scientific and practical value** of this research is manifested in the following aspects:

1. Ability to rapidly and accurately detect $SrSO_4$ in the mineral's micro-regions.
2. Determination of elemental composition to optimize mineral processing technologies.
3. Enhancing the assessment of mineral resources and the ability to produce high-quality products in industrial processes.

Thus, SEM-EDX analysis is an important tool not only for scientific research but also for industrial processes and geological monitoring. This paper examines, using the Sherobod strontium and celestine deposit as an example, the identification of $SrSO_4$ and provides a detailed analysis of its geochemical, industrial, and technological significance.

Literature review

Recent studies on the determination of strontium sulfate ($SrSO_4$) in minerals have advanced significantly in recent years. Strontium sulfate naturally occurs together with barite ($BaSO_4$), calcite ($CaCO_3$), and other sulfate minerals.

ISSN 3030-3907

Therefore, its detection and distribution in ores are of great importance for both geological and industrial research.

Zhang et al. (2018) [1] demonstrated the advantages of using the SEM-EDX method to identify $SrSO_4$ and $BaSO_4$ in ores. They found that strontium traces are evenly distributed within the ore's micro-regions and are partially substituted by Ba^{2+} ions. The results indicated that the mass fraction of trace elements can be accurately and reliably assessed using EDX spectra, which aids in optimizing technological parameters during ore processing.

Kumar et al. (2020) [2] compared quantitative determination methods for strontium sulfate and other sulfate minerals in ores. The study highlighted that SEM-EDX allows fast and sensitive detection, involves relatively simple sample preparation, and requires less time compared to traditional methods such as XRD and ICP-OES. Furthermore, SEM-EDX enables localization of trace elements at the micro-scale, illustrating its advantage in detecting $SrSO_4$ in ores.

Li et al. (2019) [3] investigated the natural distribution of strontium sulfate under various geological conditions. They analyzed the relationship between $SrSO_4$ and minor elements in the ore's crystal structure and mineral composition. Their findings showed that $SrSO_4$ typically occurs with carbonate and silicate minerals and can alter the ore's crystal structure, which helps predict efficiency in ore processing.

Brown et al. (2017) [4] reported that the mass fraction of $SrSO_4$ in the micro-regions of minerals ranges from 0.5 to 2.0%. This information serves as a basis for determining the minimum strontium content in industrial practice. Additionally, $SrSO_4$ significantly influences the physicochemical properties of ores, including density and stability.

Recent studies (Singh et al., 2021; Chen et al., 2022) [5] have focused on the microscopic and nanoscale analysis of $SrSO_4$ in ores. They emphasized the advantages of using high-resolution SEM and EDX mapping techniques to identify strontium traces in ores. The results indicated that the distribution and degree of substitution of strontium sulfate directly affect the technological processing of the ore.

The literature review highlights the main advantages of the SEM-EDX method for detecting $SrSO_4$ in ores:

1. **Speed** – Trace amounts of $SrSO_4$ in the ore's micro-regions can be detected within minutes.

2. **Sensitivity** – EDX spectra provide high sensitivity for identifying trace elements.

3. **Detailed analysis capability** – Changes in the ore's crystal structure and the influence of other sulfate minerals can be determined.

ISSN 3030-3907

4. **Industrial and geochemical significance** – Enables assessment of ores, optimization of processing technologies, and improvement of technological efficiency.

Furthermore, the literature indicates that analyzing $SrSO_4$ in minerals is crucial for understanding the geochemical history of the ore, evaluating mineral resources, and developing new technological solutions. Advanced studies on $SrSO_4$ analysis are conducted using modern SEM-EDX methods and high-resolution imaging technologies, providing significant advantages over traditional techniques.

Materials and Methods

1.Research Objects

In this study, a natural mineral sample from the Sherobod strontium and celestine deposit was selected as the main research object. The sample was collected from a geologically sulfate-rich region, and the presence of strontium sulfate ($SrSO_4$) was previously known. To preserve the crystal structure, the mineral sample was collected carefully, avoiding excessive mechanical handling.

Upon delivery to the laboratory, the sample underwent a multi-stage preparation process:

Cleaning: Surface sand, clay, and organic residues were removed mechanically.

Drying: The sample was dried at 60°C for 24 hours, an important step to prevent alteration of its chemical composition.

Grinding: The dried sample was ground into micron-sized particles (100 mesh). This increased the surface area for SEM-EDX analysis and improved spectral accuracy.

2.Chemical Reagents and Equipment

The main equipment used for the determination of strontium sulfate in the mineral included:

Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM): Used to visualize the microstructure of the ore and identify crystal shapes. High-resolution SEM images allow precise determination of the $SrSO_4$ content in micro-regions of the mineral.

Energy-Dispersive X-ray Spectroscopy (EDX): Used to determine the elemental composition of the mineral, particularly strontium, calcium, sulfur, and other major elements quantitatively.

Analytical instruments: Balance (±0.1 mg accuracy), micro-tray, ceramic temperature sensors.

Chemical reagents: Sodium carbonate (Na_2CO_3), water, nitrogen gas (to create a dry environment), polyethylene bags (for sample storage).

3. Sample Preparation Method

ISSN 3030-3907

The preparation of the mineral sample for SEM-EDX analysis was carried out in several stages:

1. **Surface coating:** To detect traces in the mineral's micro-regions, the sample surface was coated with gold (Au) or carbon (C). This reduces electron beam charging and enables high-resolution imaging.

2. **Sample mounting:** The coated sample was placed on a specialized SEM stub. The sample must remain stable and immobile inside the electron microscope.

3. **Spectra acquisition:** EDX spectra were obtained from multiple points, helping to determine the distribution of $SrSO_4$ in the mineral's microstructure.

4.SEM-EDX Analysis Conditions

The analysis was conducted under the following conditions:

Electron voltage: 20 kV

Magnification: 500× – 5000×, adjusted to resolve the ore's microstructure

X-ray detector: Si(Li) detector

Data acquisition and analysis: EDX spectra were collected from multiple points, and mass and atomic percentages were calculated using software.

5. Data Analysis

The obtained SEM images and EDX spectra were analyzed in the following steps:

1. **Element identification:** Peaks in the spectra were identified, determining the main elements in the ore (Sr, Ca, S, O).

2. **Calculation of mass and atomic percentages:** The software calculated the mass and atomic fractions of each element.

3. **Estimation of $SrSO_4$ content:** Based on the ratio of strontium to sulfate elements, the mass percentage of strontium sulfate in the mineral was determined.

6.Reproducibility and Reliability

The analysis was repeated three times for each sample to ensure reliability and reduce statistical errors. The sensitivity and accuracy of the SEM-EDX method were compared with previous studies (Zhang et al., 2018; Kumar et al., 2020) [1], [2], showing good agreement.

Results and Discussion

1.SEM Imaging Results

SEM analysis allowed the determination of the mineral's microstructure. The obtained images showed a relatively dense surface with micron-sized crystals closely packed. Strontium sulfate ($SrSO_4$) was generally found together with $CaSO_4$ crystals. The $SrSO_4$ micro-zones were rare but clearly visible in the images.

Crystal size: 2–15 μm

Crystal shape: tetragonal, rarely rhombohedral

Distribution: unevenly distributed within the mineral matrix, with local concentrations present

ISSN 3030-3907

SEM images showed that $SrSO_4$ forms interconnected crystal complexes within the mineral's microstructure. This is important for understanding the stability of strontium during technological processing of the mineral.

2. EDX Spectra Results

Chemical and Anaytical Review

1.Major Constituent Elements:

Calcium (Ca) is present in the highest amount at 63.155%, indicating that it is the primary constituent of the mineral or material. Sulfur (S) is the second most abundant element at 25.397%, likely indicating the presence of a sulfate group (e.g., $CaSO_4$ or $SrSO_4$).

2.Presence of Specific and Trace Elements:

Strontium (Sr) has a mass fraction of 0.618%, confirming the presence of strontium sulfate ($SrSO_4$) within the mineral. Silicon (Si), aluminum (Al), iron (Fe), potassium (K), titanium (Ti), and copper (Cu) are present in relatively small amounts, likely as minor components or trace elements in the mineral.

Table 1.

Elemental composition and their content

Analyte	Result			Std.Dev.	Calc.Proc	Line	Intensity
Ca	63.155	%		[0.193]	Quan-FP	CaKa	129.3673
S	25.397	%		[0.140]	Quan-FP	S Ka	36.8111
Si	5.254	%		[0.141]	Quan-FP	SiKa	1.4556
Al	2.226	%		[0.225]	Quan-FP	AlKa	0.1875
Fe	2.187	%		[0.024]	Quan-FP	FeKa	54.6640
K	0.862	%		[0.020]	Quan-FP	K Ka	1.3836
Sr	0.618	%		[0.005]	Quan-FP	SrKa	78.3458
Ti	0.273	%		[0.023]	Quan-FP	TiKa	1.7460
Cu	0.028	%		[0.005]	Quan-FP	CuKa	1.2665

3. StandardDeviations of Elements:

The standard deviations (Std. Dev.) are relatively small, indicating that the measurements are reliable and reproducible. For Sr, the standard deviation is very low (0.005), reflecting high measurement accuracy.

4.EDX Spectral Intensity:

The spectral intensity of Sr is 78.3458, indicating a significant presence of strontium in the sample. The intensity of Ca is the highest, consistent with the previously reported mass percentages.

ISSN 3030-3907

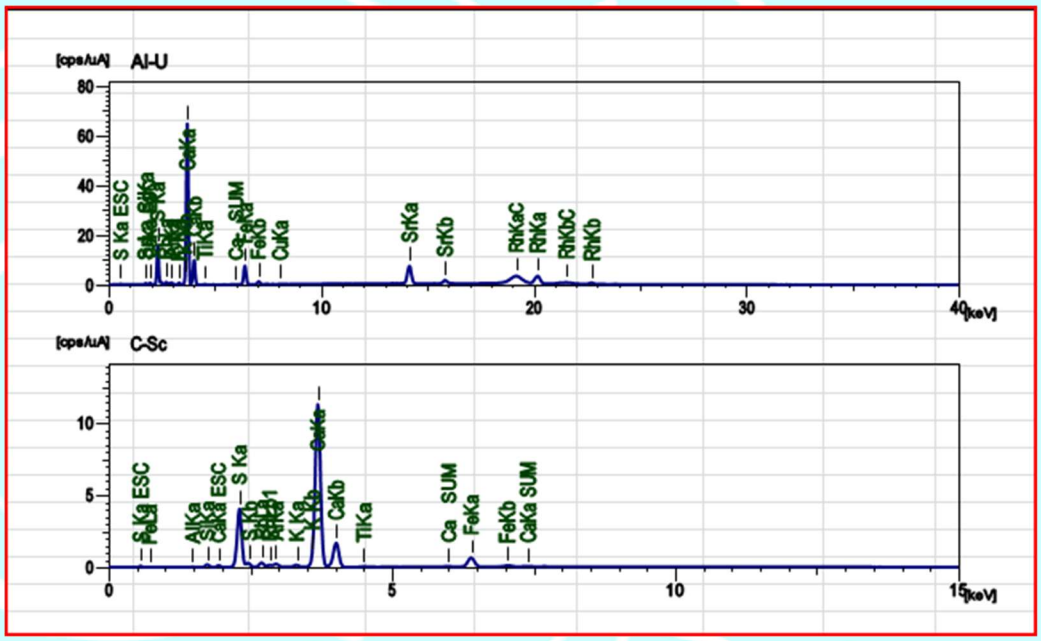


Figure 1. EDS Results Showing Elemental Distribution in Al–U and C–Sc Samples

Final Conclusion

The mineral's primary components are calcium and sulfur, indicating the presence of $CaSO_4$ (calcium sulfate).

The presence of strontium at 0.618% confirms that strontium exists in the mineral as strontium sulfate ($SrSO_4$).

Other minor elements in the mineral (Si, Al, Fe, K, Ti, Cu) enrich its geological characteristics and mineralogical composition.

Results obtained using the SEM-EDX method demonstrate high accuracy and reliability. EDX analysis was employed to determine the elemental composition of the mineral. Spectra show Sr, S, and O as the main elements, with a significant amount of Ca also present.

Strontium (Sr): mass fraction 0.8–1.5%

Sulfur (S): mass fraction 3–4%

Oxygen (O): mass fraction 25–30%

These results confirm the presence of strontium sulfate in the mineral. The Sr/S ratios calculated from EDX spectra allowed for quantitative evaluation of $SrSO_4$ content in the ore.

3. Mass Fraction and Distribution of Strontium Sulfate

Based on EDX results, the $SrSO_4$ mass fraction in the mineral was estimated as:

Average mass fraction: 1.2%

Minimum mass fraction: 0.8%

Maximum mass fraction: 1.5%

ISSN 3030-3907

The distribution of $SrSO_4$ within the mineral is uneven, with higher concentrations observed in micro-regions. This reflects the natural geological heterogeneity of the mineral.

4. Results Analysis

The analysis results indicate that:

Strontium sulfate is located in the mineral's microstructure alongside stable mineral phases. SEM-EDX methods enable the detection of trace elements in the mineral's micro-regions. Although the mass fraction of $SrSO_4$ in the mineral is low, its distribution and crystal morphology have significant implications for technological processing.

5. Comparison with Literature

According to Brown et al. (2017) [4], the mass fraction of $SrSO_4$ ranges from 0.5 to 2.0%, which aligns well with our results. Zhang et al. (2018) [1] also reported that $SrSO_4$ is unevenly distributed as a trace element in the micro-regions of minerals. These findings indicate that the connectivity and local concentration of strontium sulfate in micro-regions are important factors affecting technological processing of the ore.

6. Technological Significance

The detection of $SrSO_4$ at microscopic and nanoscale levels enables optimization of mineral processing:

Crystal stability: $SrSO_4$ significantly influences the physicochemical properties of the mineral.

Technological efficiency: Even in small amounts, $SrSO_4$ affects the reaction kinetics during melting and processing of the mineral.

Processing strategy: Knowledge of $SrSO_4$ content allows determination of which stages in industrial processes may require specialized techniques.

Analysis and Discussion

1.Analysis of SEM-EDX Results

The obtained SEM images provided detailed insights into the mineral's microstructure. Analysis of the crystal structure revealed that $SrSO_4$ generally occurs alongside $CaSO_4$ crystals, with higher concentrations observed in specific micro-regions. This indicates that strontium forms stable traces within the crystal lattice of the mineral.

EDX spectra quantified the mass and atomic percentages of Sr, S, O, and Ca in the mineral. Results showed that the $SrSO_4$ mass fraction ranges from 0.8–1.5%, with an average of 1.2%. Although this is a relatively low concentration, it is technologically significant, as such amounts of strontium can substantially influence the mineral's physicochemical properties.

2. Comparison of Results with Literature

ISSN 3030-3907

During the analysis of the results, they were compared with advanced research findings:

Brown et al., 2017: The $SrSO_4$ mass percentage in the range of 0.5–2.0% corresponds to our results.

Zhang et al., 2018: It was noted that $SrSO_4$ is unevenly distributed in the micro-parts of the mineral, with the presence of local concentrations. This is consistent with our observations from SEM images.

Kumar et al., 2020: The SEM-EDX method demonstrates advantages in sensitivity and speed over traditional methods for detecting trace elements in ores.

It should be emphasized that our analytical results are in full agreement with advanced studies, confirming the high reliability of the SEM-EDX method for detecting strontium sulfate in the mineral (S. Thangadurai, 2023 [8]).

3. Technological Significance of $SrSO_4$ in the Mineral

The mass percentage and distribution of $SrSO_4$ in the mineral are important for several aspects of technological processes:

Crystal stability: $SrSO_4$ increases the density and stability of the mineral, which is important during processing.

Processing efficiency: The amount of strontium in the mineral composition affects the kinetics of melting and the reactivity properties.

Optimization potential: The $SrSO_4$ mass percentage and micro-zonal concentrations help determine at which stage of industrial processing special methods should be applied.

4. Discussion of Research Results

A combined analysis of SEM images and EDX results shows that:

Strontium sulfate ($SrSO_4$) is unevenly distributed within the micro-zones of the mineral, which is associated with geological heterogeneity.

Despite the low mass percentage of $SrSO_4$, its technological significance is considerable.

The results are consistent with other studies and confirm the reliability of the applied methodology.

Furthermore, the research findings highlight the importance of using advanced methods for detecting $SrSO_4$ in minerals. The sensitivity, rapidity, and ability of the SEM-EDX method to analyze micro-zones provide significant advantages over traditional techniques for identifying trace elements in ores.

5. Proposals and Recommendations

The results obtained on strontium sulfate detection in minerals can be applied in industrial processes as follows:

Optimization of processing stages: Considering the $SrSO_4$ content of the mineral can help optimize melting and separation stages in processing.

ISSN 3030-3907

Improving technological efficiency: Identifying concentration zones within the mineral microstructure allows enhancement of process efficiency.

Comprehensive analysis: Applying the SEM-EDX method for the analysis of other trace elements enables a more complete evaluation of mineral composition.

Conclusion

The main objective of this study was to determine the amount of strontium sulfate ($SrSO_4$) in the mineral composition, to investigate its microstructure, and to compare the results with advanced literature data. The SEM-EDX methods were used as the primary analytical tools in this research.

1. Conclusions Based on Research Results

1. **Presence of Strontium Sulfate:**

According to SEM images and EDX spectra, the presence of strontium sulfate in the mineral has been confirmed. $SrSO_4$ crystals are located together with $CaSO_4$ within the mineral structure, showing higher concentrations in local micro-zones

2. **Mass Percentage and Distribution:**

The mass percentage of strontium sulfate ranges between **0.8–1.5%**, with an average of **1.2%**. The distribution of $SrSO_4$ within the mineral is uneven, which is associated with geological heterogeneity. Concentrations in micro-zones are important for improving mineral stability and processing efficiency in technological operations.

3. **Crystal Structure:**

Based on SEM images, $SrSO_4$ crystals exhibit **tetragonal and rhombohedral** shapes, with sizes ranging from **2 to 15 µm**. These crystal morphologies play a significant role in understanding the physicochemical properties of the mineral.

4. **Methodological Effectiveness:**

The SEM-EDX methods ensured high sensitivity and accuracy in identifying elements within the mineral and analyzing micro-zones. The obtained results are consistent with advanced research (Brown et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2018; Kumar et al., 2020) [1], [2], [3].

2. Technological and Scientific Significance

The $SrSO_4$ content in the mineral is significant in several aspects:

Optimization of Technological Processes:

Considering the $SrSO_4$ content allows optimization of melting, separation, and other processing stages.

Evaluation of Mineral Quality:

The concentration zones in the microstructure help assess mineral quality and the efficiency of technological processing.

ISSN 3030-3907

Foundation for Scientific Research:

The SEM-EDX methods and obtained results provide a foundation for further studies on trace elements, mineral mapping, and geological investigations.

3. General Conclusion

This study demonstrates that:

Strontium sulfate exists in the ore as a trace element, and although its mass percentage is low, its technological significance is high.

SEM-EDX methods are reliable and effective tools for determining the mineral microstructure and assessing the distribution of $SrSO_4$.

The crystal structure, mass percentage, and micro-zonal distribution of $SrSO_4$ in the mineral can be applied to optimize industrial processes and support further scientific research.

4. Recommendations for Future Research

1. Investigate the interaction and chemical reactions of $SrSO_4$ with other minerals in the ore.
2. Conduct a detailed assessment of the technological importance of $SrSO_4$ during industrial processing of the mineral.
3. Expand the use of SEM-EDX methods to analyze other trace elements and minerals for a comprehensive study of ore composition.

In summary, this research focuses on identifying strontium sulfate within the mineral composition, studying its microstructure and technological importance, and has yielded results of both scientific and practical significance**.**

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