

# The effect of the linker group between porphyrin dimers on the thermoelectric properties of molecular junctions

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The effect of the appearance of three different linkers between dimer porphyrins on the electronic and thermoelectric properties of three different dimer porphyrin families' molecular junctions was investigated theoretically using a combination of density functional theory (DFT) methods. Our results show that in the free-based porphyrin dimer family, all electronic and thermoelectric properties have been affected by using different linkers between porphyrin dimers. While in the presence of one zinc metal ion in the center of the porphyrin dimer and the two zinc metal ion in the center of porphyrin dimer families, the results demonstrate that the electronic and thermal conductance is highly affected by the presence of three different linkers between these dimers. On the other hand, the thermopower of all other structures shows noticeable change, especially around the Fermi energy. Thus, the gradual appearance of zinc ion in the center of porphyrin dimer units with three different linkers between these dimers plays an essential role in these structures' electric and thermal properties.

*Keywords:* Dimer porphyrin; zinc metal ion; (DFT) method; the thermoelectric figure of merit (ZT).

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## 1. Introduction

The study of charge transport in molecular junctions (MJs) is pivotal for advancing molecular electronics and thermoelectric [1, 2]. Over the past decade, the thermoelectric properties at the molecular scale have gained significant attention, focusing on the unique behaviors of molecular junctions and organic semiconductors [3]. Understanding thermoelectric effects at the molecular scale is crucial for advancing nanotechnology, particularly as electronic devices shrink to nanometer dimensions [4-6].

The thermoelectric effect creates a voltage across a temperature gradient, converting waste heat into electrical energy [7-12]. Initially proposed in the early nineteenth century, the Seebeck effect is the foundational idea of thermoelectricity [13, 14]. This phenomenon aims to increase the production of electrical current by using the excess heat generated by various industrial processes or the wasted heat in particular physical systems, such as automobile exhausts, by creating an electrical voltage gradient from a thermal gradient [15,16].

Aromatic organic molecules are pivotal in molecular electronics due to their structural versatility and inherent stability, which enable them to perform specific electrical functions. Their conjugated systems facilitate efficient charge transport, making them suitable for various electronic applications [17-20]. Porphyrins are distinguished by their highly conjugated structures, rigid planar geometry, and remarkable chemical stability, which facilitate the formation of metalloporphyrin through metal ion coordination. This unique ability is leveraged across various fields, including materials science, quantum information, and biological systems [21-25].

Among all the metalloporphyrin families, Zinc porphyrins are gaining significant attention due to their remarkable photochemical and photophysical properties, which

make them suitable for various applications. Recent studies have highlighted their synthesis, structural characteristics, and potential uses in advanced materials and devices [26-29].

Zinc porphyrin derivatives, in particular, are significant due to their unique structural properties and possible applications in various fields, including catalysis, thermoelectric materials, and spintronics [30]. They have been adjusted for future applications in molecular wires and other nanoelectronics circuits [31], quantum dots [32,33], biological systems[34,35], electrodes [36,37], and switches [38,39]. Research on the thermoelectric properties of zinc porphyrins coupled to gold electrodes produced encouraging findings [40-45].

Investigate the potential for high-efficiency thermoelectricity of porphyrin dimer structures in various configurations. This work examines how the electric and thermoelectric properties of three distinct groups of porphyrin dimers are affected using three different linkers between the dimer units. Each group has a directly linked [46,47], ethynyl-linked[48-52], and phenyl-linked porphyrin dimer [53].

To improve our understanding of how these linkers affect charge transport, electronic characteristics, and thermoelectric performance, it is essential to study zinc porphyrin dimers with free-based configurations, one zinc atom in the center of porphyrin dimer units, and then two zinc atoms in the center of porphyrin dimer units in three different types of linkers between dimer units. These elements are essential for furthering the creation of nanotechnology applications and devices at the molecular level.

## 2. Methodology

Using quantum physics and quantum chemistry, Density Functional Theory (DFT) is a quantum computational

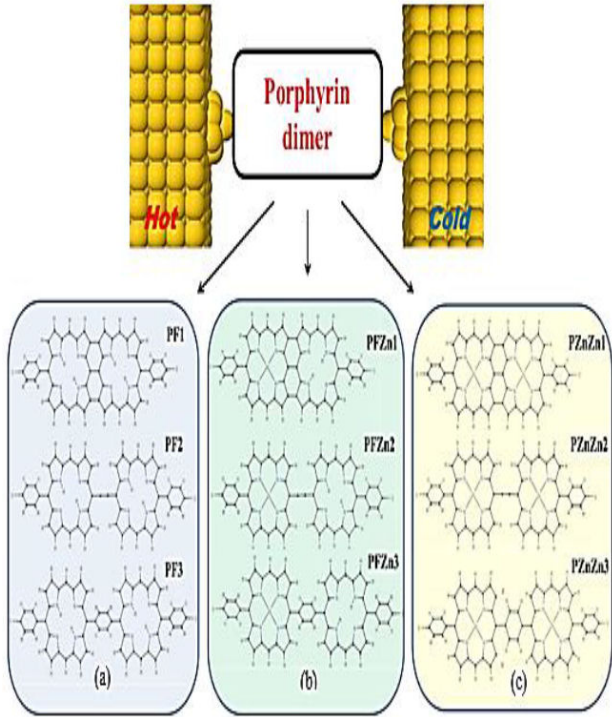


FIGURE 1. Schematic illustration of the molecular structure junctions investigated consists of three different families of zinc porphyrin dimers: a) directly fused free-based porphyrin dimer (PF1), ethynyl-linked free-based porphyrin dimer (PF2), the free-based phenyl-linked porphyrin dimer (PF3), b) directly fused porphyrin dimer with one zinc ion (PFZn1), ethynyl-linked porphyrin dimer with one zinc ion (PFZn2), the phenyl-linked porphyrin dimer with one zinc ion (PFZn3), c) directly fused porphyrin dimer with two zinc ion (PZnZn1), ethynyl-linked porphyrin dimer with two zinc ion (PZnZn2), the phenyl-linked porphyrin dimer with two zinc ion (PZnZn3).

method that employs intricate algorithms to produce geometrical structures across various molecular systems. DFT calculates the electronic properties of multimolecular systems, with the electron density determined by the wave function [54]. All of the molecular structures of the porphyrin trimers, as shown in Fig. 1, were optimized. A double-polarized basis set (DZP) for exchange and correlation [55,56], norm-conserving pseudopotentials, the DFT package SIESTA code [57], a real-space grid defined with an energy cutoff of 200 Rydberg, and the generalized gradient functional approximation (GGA-PBE) were employed for the optimization. We then combine the mean-field Hamiltonian  $H$  with the GOLLUM quantum transport code. The mean-field Hamiltonian  $H$  and the GOLLUM quantum transport code are integrated to determine the transmission coefficient,  $T_{el}(E)$  [58].

The Landauer formalism is used to express the Seebeck coefficient, which quantifies the crucial role of the transmission  $T(E)$  in meeting this requirement for ballistic devices [54].

$$S = -\frac{\Delta V}{\Delta T} = -\frac{1}{eT} \frac{L1}{L0}, \quad (1)$$

where  $\Delta T$  is established between them,  $\Delta V$  is the voltage difference generated between the two ends of the junction when temperature difference,  $e$  is the electron charge, and  $L_n$  can be calculated as

$$L_n = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} (E - E_F)^n T(E) \left( \frac{\partial f(E, T)}{\partial E} \right) dE, \quad (2)$$

where  $f(E, T)$  is the Fermi distribution function defined as

$$f(E, T) = \left( e^{(E-E_F)/K_B T} + 1 \right)^{-1},$$

where  $K_B$  is Boltzmann's constant, from Eq. (1), it can also be obtained that  $G$  and  $K$ :

$$G = G_0 L_0, \quad (3)$$

where ( $G_0 = 2e^2/h$ ) is the quantum of conductance,

$$K = \frac{1}{hT} \left( L_2 - \frac{L_1^2}{L_0} \right). \quad (4)$$

This leads to the final evaluation of the figure of merit values (ZT).

$$ZT = S^2 \frac{GT}{K}. \quad (5)$$

### 3. Results and discussion

To examine the electronic and thermoelectric characteristics of three distinct families of porphyrin dimers with different linkers and various central occupations, as shown in Fig. 1, we begin with the free-base porphyrin dimer featuring three different linkers connecting the porphyrin dimer units. For each structure presented in Fig. 1a), we start by calculating the electrical conductance ( $G$ ) as an energy function for all free-base porphyrin dimer molecule structures.

Figure 2 shows the essential change in transmission coefficient  $T(E)$  when moving from a directly fused freebased

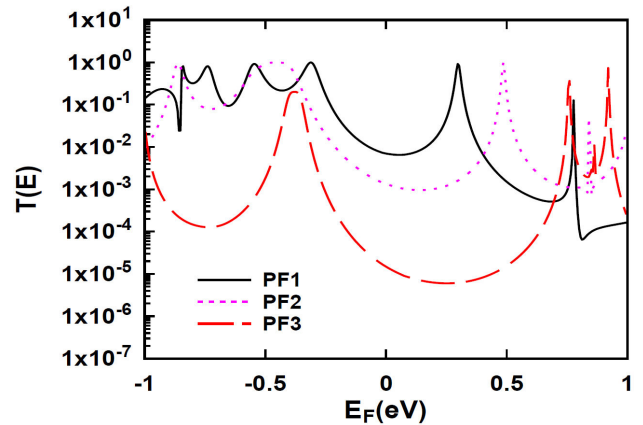


FIGURE 2. The electronic transmission coefficients as a function of energy for all free-based porphyrin dimer molecular structures are presented in Fig. 1a).

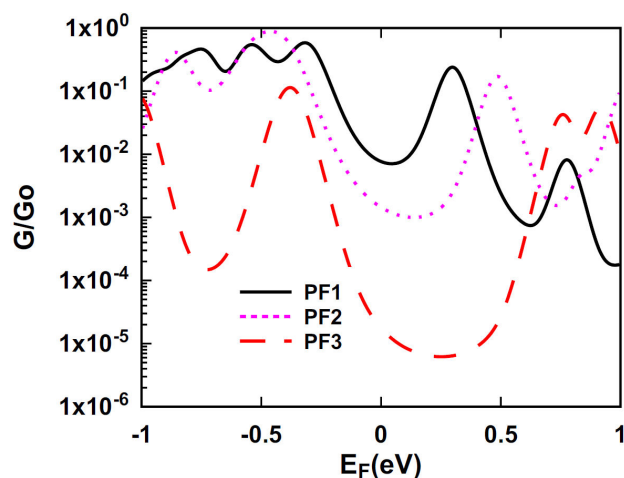


FIGURE 3. The electrical conductance  $G$  as a function of energy for all free-based porphyrin dimer molecular structures is presented in Fig. 1a).

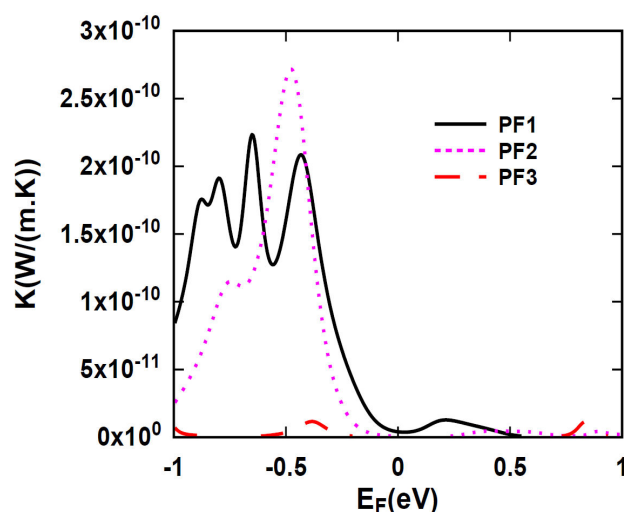


FIGURE 4. The electronic thermal conductivity  $\kappa$  as a function of energy for all free-based porphyrin dimer molecular structures is presented in Fig. 1a).

porphyrin dimer (PF1) (black line) to the freebased phenyl-linked porphyrin dimer (PF3) (red dashed line). This leads to a massive decrease in the transmission coefficient  $T(E)$ , which is strongly affected by three different linkers between porphyrin dimer units.

The room temperature electrical conductance versus energy is presented in Fig. 3. The electrical conductance decreased with the appearance of a linker of free-base porphyrin dimer units. Figure 3 shows that moving from a directly fused free-based porphyrin dimer (PF1) (black line) to the free-based phenyl-linked porphyrin dimer (PF3) (red dash line) leads to a huge decrease in electrical conductance around Fermi energy, where the electrical conductance follows the trend  $(PF1) > (PF2) > (PF3)$  around Fermi energy.

Figure 4 shows the electronic thermal conductivity of these junctions. This figure shows that the electronic thermal conductivity of directly fused free-base porphyrin dimer

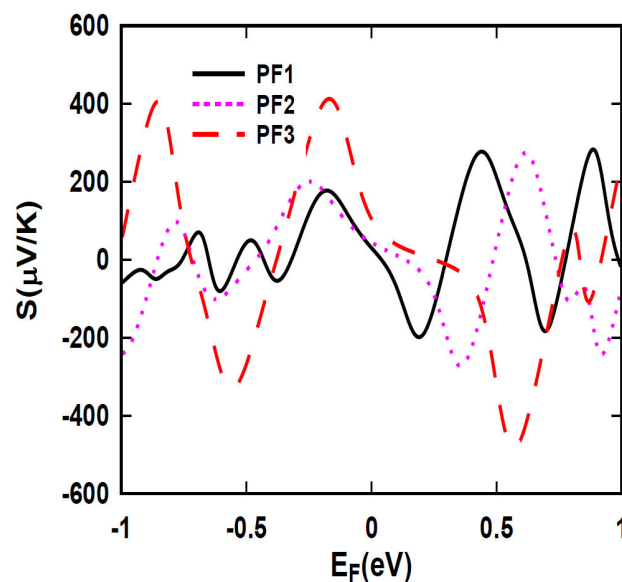


FIGURE 5. The Seebeck coefficient  $S$  (thermopower) for all free-based porphyrin dimer molecular structures is presented in Fig. 1a).

(PF1) is higher than that of other structures (PF2) and (PF3). This means that the electronic thermal conductance also decreased with the appearance of a linker between porphyrin dimer units [55,56]. The linkers may disrupt the conjugation or alter the alignment between the porphyrin units, weakening electronic interactions and lowering electron mobility [57,58].

Figure 5 shows the Seebeck coefficient  $S$  over a range of Fermi energies at room temperature for each freebased porphyrin dimer. The free-based porphyrin dimer (PF1) has the lowest values (black line), while the freebased phenyl-linked porphyrin dimer (PF3) has the highest values (red dashed line). The phenyl linkers in PF3 provide a favorable conformation that enhances electron mobility and reduces steric hindrance, further optimizing thermoelectric properties.

The essential quantity that determines the thermoelectric efficiency is  $ZT$ , which is proportional to the electric conductance  $G$  and the square of the Seebeck coefficient  $S$  and inversely proportional to the thermal conductance  $K$ . For all free-based porphyrin dimers, Fig. 6 shows the thermoelectric figure of merit  $ZT$  over a range of Fermi energies at room temperature for each. Due to the highest value of the Seebeck coefficient  $S$  and the low value of electronic thermal conductance  $\kappa$ , Fig. 6 shows that the highest thermoelectric figure of merit  $ZT$  value is achieved at free-based phenyl-linked porphyrin dimer (PF3).

In the second part of our work, we investigate the impact of the presence of one zinc ion in the center of one of the porphyrin dimer units on the electronic and thermoelectric properties of three different linker porphyrin dimers, as shown in Fig. 1b).

Figure 7 shows the transmission coefficient  $T(E)$  as an energy function. The appearance of a single zinc ion in the

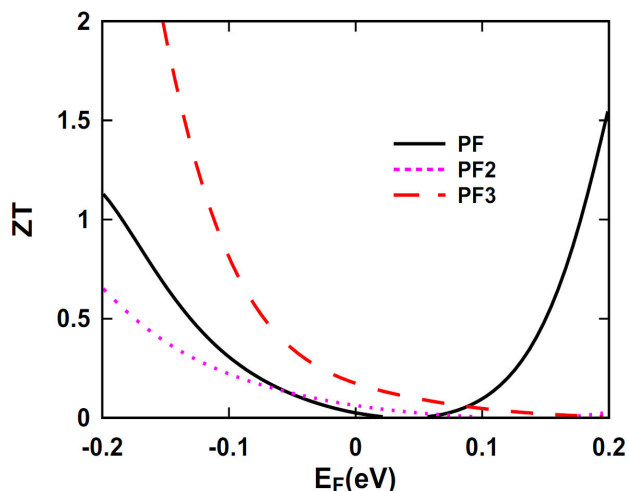


FIGURE 6. The electronic figure of merit  $ZT$  for all freebased porphyrin dimer molecular structures is presented in Fig. 1a).

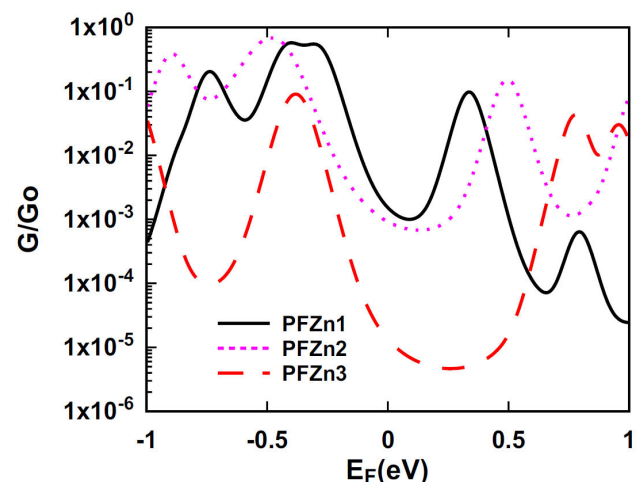


FIGURE 8. The electrical conductance coefficients as a function of energy for a single zinc ion in the center of the porphyrin dimer molecular structures are presented in Fig. 1b).

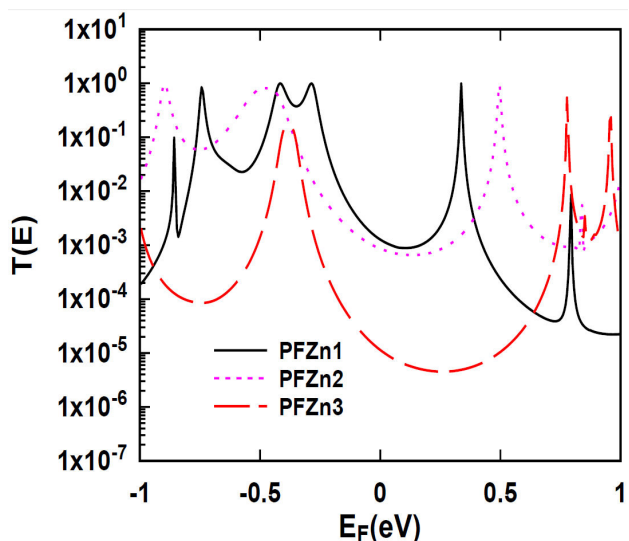


FIGURE 7. The electronic transmission coefficients as a function of energy for a single zinc ion in the centre of porphyrin dimer molecular structures are presented in Fig. 1b).

centre of three different linked porphyrin dimers has a remarkable effect on the transmission coefficient, particularly around the Fermi energy. The appearance of a single zinc ion in the center of porphyrin dimer units leads to shifting the peaks of the transmission coefficient away from the Fermi energy. (black, pink dotted, and red dashed line).

The electrical conductance versus energy is presented in Fig. 8. Figure 8 shows that the electrical conductance decreased with a change in the linker between the porphyrin dimer with one zinc ion unit. Figure 6 shows that moving from the directly fused porphyrin dimer with one zinc ion (PFZn1) (black line) to the phenyl-linked porphyrin dimer with one zinc ion (PFZn3) (red dashed line) leads to a huge decrease in electrical conductance around the Fermi energy. The electrical conductance follows the  $(PFZn1) > (PFZn2) > (PFZn3)$  trend around the Fermi energy.

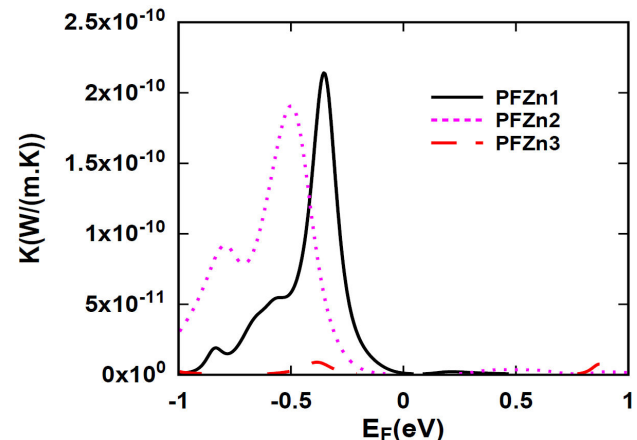


FIGURE 9. The electronic thermal conductivity as a function of energy for a single zinc ion in the center of the porphyrin dimer molecular structures is presented in Fig. 1b).

Figure 9 shows the electronic thermal conductivity of these junctions. Like electrical conductance  $G$ , Fig. 9 shows that the electronic thermal conductivity decreases with porphyrin dimer units as the linker changes. The electronic thermal conductivity of directly fused porphyrin dimers with one zinc ion (PFZn1) is higher than that of the others in (PFZn2) and (PFZn3).

Figure 10 shows the Seebeck coefficient  $S$  over a range of Fermi energies at room temperature for each porphyrin dimer. Where curves of the Seebeck coefficient  $S$  of structures directly fused porphyrin dimer with one zinc ion (PFZn1) and phenyl-linked porphyrin dimer with one zinc ion (PFZn3) are very close, particularly around Fermi energy in energy windows of  $-0.1$  to  $+0.1$  eV, the Seebeck coefficient  $S$  of structure ethynyl-linked porphyrin dimer with one zinc ion (PFZn2) is the lowest. The synergy between molecular design, zinc's electronic modulation, and optimized carrier dynamics enables both (PFZn1) and (PFZn3) to achieve high

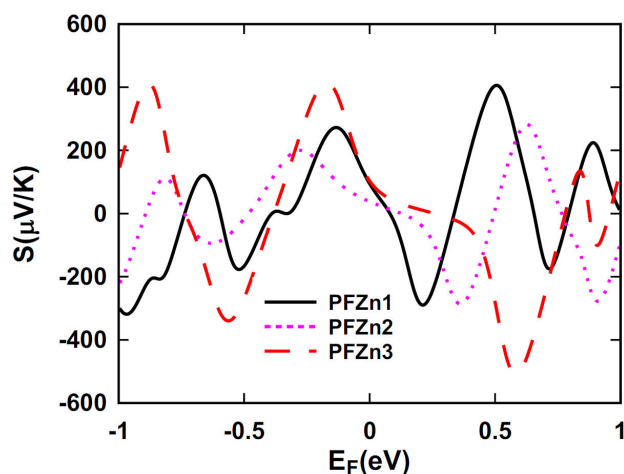


FIGURE 10. Figure 1b) presents the Seebeck coefficient  $S$  as a function of energy for a single zinc ion in the center of the porphyrin dimer molecular structures.

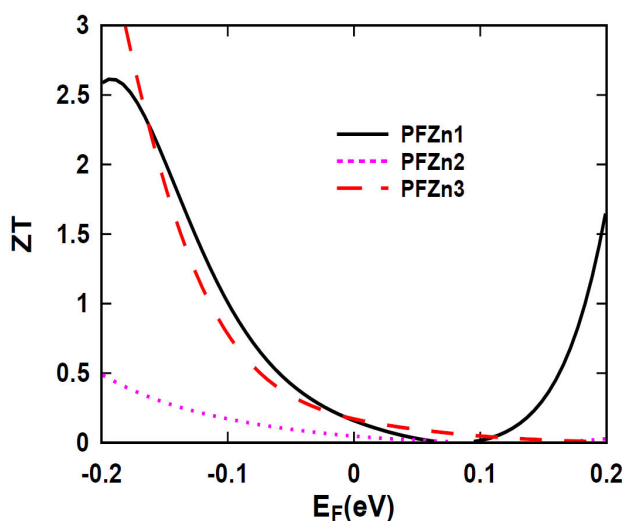


FIGURE 11. The electronic figure of merit  $ZT$  as a function of one zinc ion in the center of porphyrin dimer molecular structures is presented in Fig. 1b).

Seebeck coefficients, making them promising for thermoelectric applications.

For all one zinc ion in the center of the porphyrin dimer molecular structures in Fig. 1b). Figure 11 shows the electronic figure of merit  $ZT$  over a range of Fermi energies at room temperature for each one. Due to the fluctuating value of electrical conductance  $G$ , electronic thermal conductance  $K$ , and Seebeck coefficient  $S$  Fig. 11 shows very close values of the electronic figure of merit  $ZT$  of structures (PFZn1) and (PFZn3) are highest. The figure of merit  $ZT$  of structure ethynyl-linked porphyrin dimer with one zinc ion (PFZn2) is the lowest because  $S$  is the lowest.

In the third part of this work, using the same structures that were used in the previous section, we investigate the impact of changing the type of linker between porphyrin dimer units and the two zinc atoms in the center of porphyrin on

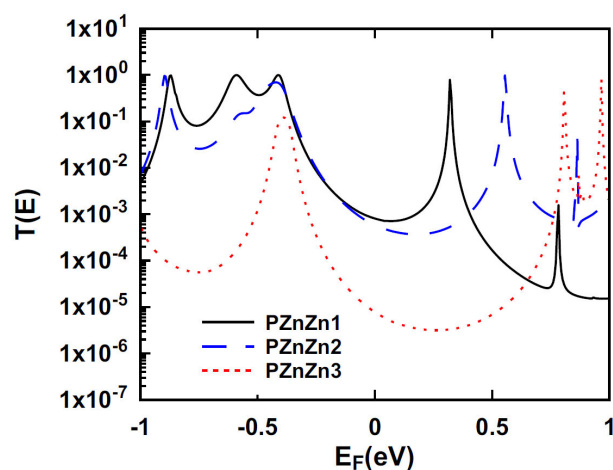


FIGURE 12. The electronic transmission coefficients as a function of energy for all two zinc ion in the centre of the porphyrin dimer molecular structures are presented in Fig. 1c).

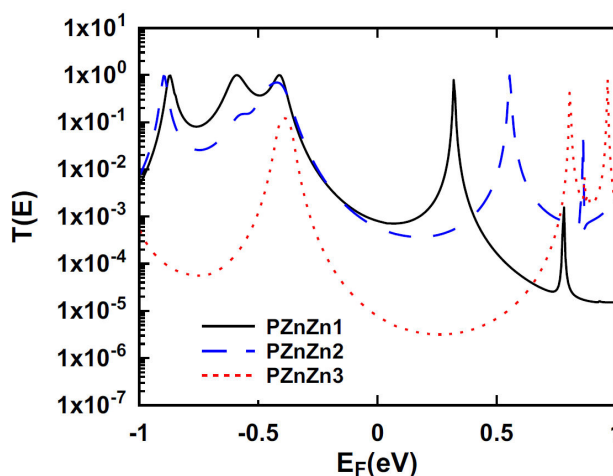


FIGURE 13. The electrical conductance as a function of energy for all two zinc ion in the center of the porphyrin dimer molecular structures is presented in Fig. 1c).

electronic and thermoelectric properties in the different three-linker porphyrin dimers, as shown in Fig. 1c).

Figure 12 shows the effect of the transmission coefficient  $T(E)$  as a function of energy for three different linked porphyrin dimers. The appearance of two zinc ion in the centre of porphyrin dimers has a remarkable effect on the transmission coefficient, particularly around Fermi energy. The gradual appearance of zinc ions in the center of porphyrin dimer units leads to shifting the peaks of the transmission coefficient away from the Fermi energy. (black, blue dashed, and red dotted line).

Figure 13 shows that the electrical conductance decreased with the appearance of two zinc atoms in the center of the porphyrin dimer units and three different linkers. Figure 13 shows that moving from a (PZnZn1) (black line) and (PZnZn3) (pink dotted line) to (PZnZn2) (red dashed line) leads to an apparent decrease in electrical conductance around the Fermi energy in a wide range of energies. The

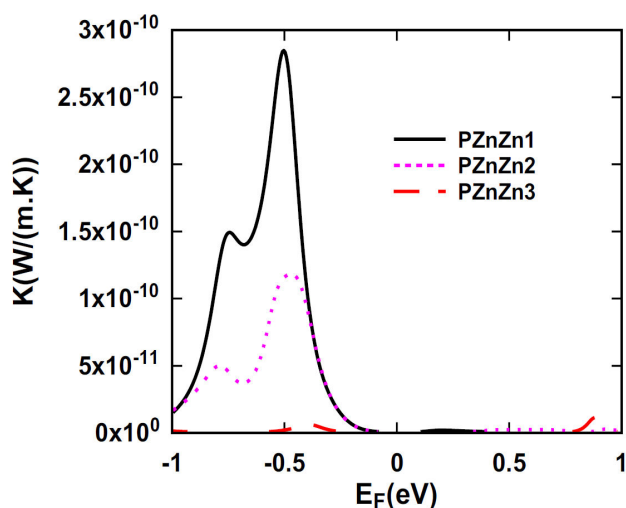


FIGURE 14. The electronic thermal conductivity as a function of energy for all two zinc ion in the center of the porphyrin dimer molecular structures is presented in Fig. 1c).

energy transfer rates in directly linked and phenyl-linked porphyrin dimers are notably rapid, facilitating efficient charge transport.

The electronic thermal conductivity for a range of Fermi energies at room temperature all two zinc ion in the center of porphyrin dimer molecular structures is presented in Fig. 1c). is shown in Fig. 14. The curves of the electronic thermal conductivity of all structures (PZnZn1), (PZnZn2), and (PZnZn3) are very close, particularly around Fermi energy, showing that the electronic thermal conductivity decreased with the appearance of different three-linker two zinc atoms in porphyrin dimer units. Different linkers, such as ethynyl and phenyl, affect the degree of electronic communication between porphyrin units due to changes in vibrational modes and reduced electronic pathways, leading to lower thermal conductance.

Figure 15 shows the Seebeck coefficient  $S$  over a range of Fermi energies at room temperature for each of the two zinc ion in the center of the porphyrin dimer molecular structures,

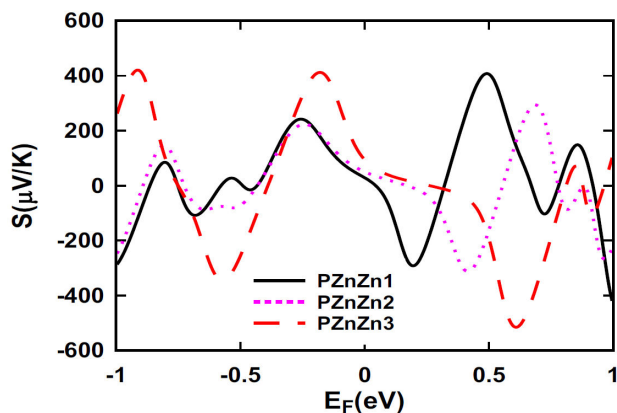


FIGURE 15. The Seebeck coefficient  $S$  as a function of energy for all two zinc ion in the center of the porphyrin dimer molecular structures is presented in Fig. 1c).

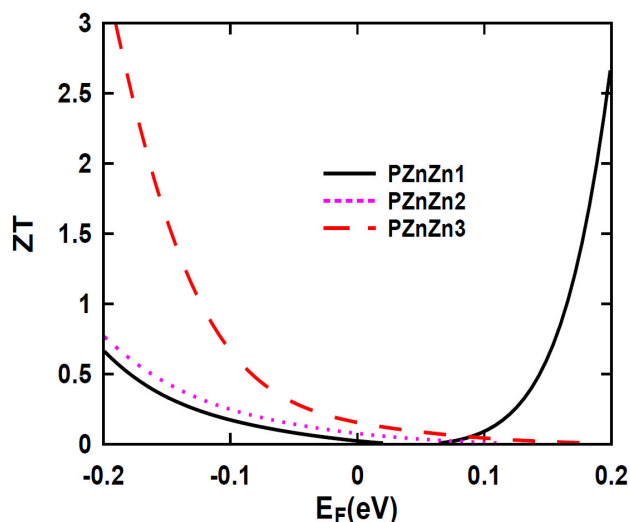


FIGURE 16. The electronic figure of merit  $ZT$  as a function of energy for all two zinc ion in the center of the porphyrin dimer molecular structures is presented in Fig. 1c).

as presented in Fig. 1c). Figure 15 demonstrates that the appearance of the two zinc ion at the center of the different three-linked porphyrin dimers affects the Seebeck coefficient  $S$ . Figure 15 shows that Seebeck coefficient curves of that moving from a (PZnZn3) (red dash line) to (PZnZn1) (black line) lead to clear different values in electrical conductance around Fermi energy in a wide range of energies, particularly around Fermi energy in energy windows of  $-0.5$  to  $+0.5$  eV.

The presence of organic radicals in (PZnZn3) leads to enhanced electronic conductance, and quantum interference exhibits high Seebeck coefficients due to its unique electronic properties and structural characteristics. The combination of radical effects and quantum interference significantly enhances its thermoelectric performance.

Figure 16 shows the electronic figure of merit  $ZT$  over a range of Fermi energies at room temperature for all different three-linked two zinc ion in the center of porphyrin dimers in Fig. 1c). Figure 16 shows that the  $ZT$  values of that moving from a (PZnZn3) (red dash line) to (PZnZn1) (black line) lead to clear different values in electrical conductance around Fermi energy in a wide range of energies, particularly around Fermi energy in energy windows of  $-0.2$  to  $+0.2$  eV.

## 4. Conclusion

This work has compared the electronic and thermoelectric properties of three different families of porphyrin dimers. Our calculations perfectly focused on the correlation center of these three zinc porphyrin dimer families and electronic and thermoelectric properties. The result demonstrates that in the free-based porphyrin dimer family, all electronic and thermoelectric properties—transmission coefficient, electrical conductance  $G$ , thermal conductivity  $K$ , thermopower  $S$ , and figure of merit  $ZT$  have been affected by the changing of three different linkers between porphyrin dimers. In the second

part of the one zinc ion in the center porphyrin dimer families and the third part of the two zinc ion in the center porphyrin dimer families, the result demonstrates that the electrical and thermal conductances are highly affected by the presence of a phenyl-linked of these dimers. The appearance of a zinc atom leads to a significant decrease in electronic and thermal conductance. On the other hand, the thermopower of all other structures shows no noticeable change, especially around the Fermi energy. Therefore, the gradual appearance of different linkers between porphyrin dimer units plays an essential role in electronic and thermal properties. Structures that show the highest figure of merit ZT are the free-based phenyl-linked porphyrin dimer (PF3), the phenyl-linked porphyrin dimer

with one zinc ion (PFZn3), and the phenyl-linked porphyrin dimer with two zinc ion (PZnZn3). This means the best results are the phenyl-linked porphyrin dimer. So, we believe such results will strongly help enhance thermoelectric materials' fast and trustworthy design.

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