

CO₂ adsorption and CO₂/CH₄ separation using fibrous amine-containing adsorbents: isothermal, kinetic and thermodynamic behaviours

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Abstract

A series of fibrous aminated adsorbents for CO₂ adsorption were prepared by covalent incorporation of poly (glycidyl methacrylate) (PGMA) by graft copolymerization of GMA onto electron beam (EB) irradiated polyethylene/polypropylene (PE/PP) fibrous sheets and subsequent amination with ethylenediamine (EDA), diethylenetriamine (DETA) or tetraethylenepentamine (TEPA). The physico-chemical properties of the adsorbents were evaluated using Fourier transform infrared spectroscopy (FTIR), scanning electron microscopy (SEM), X-ray diffraction (XRD), thermogravimetric (TGA) and Brunauer-Emmett-Teller (BET) analysis. Of all adsorbents, TEPA-containing fibres showed the highest CO₂ adsorption capacity and thus was further investigated for CO₂ capture from CO₂/CH₄ mixtures of different gas ratios under various pressures and temperatures. The selectivity of CO₂ over CH₄ and equilibrium isotherms, kinetics, and thermodynamics of the adsorption on the fibrous aminated adsorbent were all investigated. The Sips model was found to best fit the isotherm of CO₂ adsorption suggesting the presence of a combination of monolayer and multilayer adsorptions. The adsorption kinetic data was found to best fit Elovich model reflecting chemisorption. The ΔG° , ΔS° , and ΔH° showed positive values suggesting that the adsorption of CO₂ on the present fibrous adsorbent was non-spontaneous with an increase in randomness implying that the process was endothermic. Overall, it can be suggested that PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/TEPA adsorbent has a strong potential for separation of CO₂ from NG.

Introduction

Natural gas (NG) is the one of cleanest, safest, and most efficient fossil fuel, which emits roughly 26–41% less CO₂ than oil and coal (Adewole et al. 2013). Hence, the demands on NG keep growing with an expected 64% more consumption in the coming few decades. To meet the expanding global demand for NG, offshore NG fields offers an alternative reserves to onshore counterparts and the ocean provides about one-third of global NG (Chen et al. 2017). For offshore NG production, a complete production process is carried out on-site of the floating liquefied NG production storage and off-loading (LNG-FPSO) structures, including pre-treatment, liquefaction, storage, transportation, and off-loading (Chen et al. 2020). The pre-treatment is the most crucial section of the offshore NG development to remove impurities from raw NG before commercializing it. Raw NG comes with high compositions of methane while CO₂ and H₂S are the major impurities (Adewole et al. 2013). Raw NG contains up to 70% of CO₂ depending on the geographical location, and the removal procedure is typically performed at a pressure range of 30–60 bar (Han and Ho 2021). Such high amounts of CO₂ in the NG stream reduce its energy content (calorific values) and create corrosion problems during transportation in pipelines and cylinders. Thus, CO₂ content should be minimized to 2–3% by volume (Lee et al. 2018).

To date, the leading technologies for CO₂ removal from NG are solvent scrubbing, adsorption, membranes separation, and cryogenic distillation. Among all, amine-scrubbing in a gas-liquid contactor is the most mature and commercially used method for CO₂ removal, that offers higher capture efficiency (Mukhtar et al. 2020c). However, this process is high energy demanding, high operational cost, and operates in central

plants making it not suitable for offshore NG treatment (Adewole et al. 2013; Chen et al. 2020). Adsorption technology offers alternative simplified operation, low energy demand, ease of control, and high efficiency in addition to wide range of adsorbent materials (Chen et al. 2020). Broadly, different types of solid adsorbents have been explored for CO₂ capture from NG, including carbon-based materials (Attia et al. 2020), zeolites (Wang et al. 2019), mesoporous silica (Ullah et al. 2015), microporous organic polymer (MOPs) (Xu et al. 2020) and metal-organic framework (MOFs) (Furukawa et al. 2010). All of such adsorbents are packed in fixed bed column for practical applications and this is accompanied by pressure loss, channelling, and inhomogeneous gas flow when fitted for working in the adsorption columns processes such as pressure or temperature swing adsorption (Mallick et al. 2018). Moreover, MOFs bearing extraordinary CO₂ adsorption capacity have high cost, low hydrothermal stability and are not practical for column system at a large scale of LNG-FPSO (Abid et al. 2012; Danaci et al. 2015).

Solid basic polymer adsorbents containing groups such as hydroxy, nitro, amine, imidazole, triazine, and imine provide alternative materials for CO₂ capture (Petrovic et al. 2021). Particularly, the development of new adsorbents with amine-containing fibrous structures provides advantages in terms of rapid gas diffusion and enhanced gas-solid interaction while reducing pressure loss during gas treatment. Graft copolymerization is one of the most appealing methods to impart permanent functional groups to polymer substrates (non-woven fabrics, films, and porous particles) to prepare CO₂ polymer adsorbents with various morphologies (Zhao et al. 2020). Graft copolymerization can be initiated on polymer substrates using high energy radiation including gamma rays, electron beam, low energy radiation such as ultraviolet (UV), and plasma treatment in addition to conventional chemical initiators in the presence of vinyl monomers that can host different amine groups (Shoushtari et al. 2012).

Fibrous amine containing adsorbents is a class of solid polymer adsorbents that have potential to overcome the pressure drop and gas channelling problems when packed in adsorption columns and thus they are worthy further development. Moreover, most of these aminated fibrous adsorbents were tested for CO₂ capture from air and post-combustion effluent despite the presence of other major applications involving NG purification. Fibrous adsorbents were mainly prepared by radiation induced graft copolymerization (RIGC) of vinyl monomers onto polymer non-woven sheets made of polypropylene and polyethylene/polypropylene (PE/PP) (Nasef et al. 2014; Kavaklı et al. 2016; Rojek et al. 2017; Abbasi et al. 2018). Monomers such as glycidyl methacrylate (GMA) (Imanian et al. 2022), N-vinylformamide (Zubair et al. 2020), and acrylamide (Nasef and Güven 2012) were used to endow variety of amine groups after post-grafting treatments and demonstrated an appealing affinity to CO₂ (Nasef and Güven 2012). Applying RIGC for immobilization of functional groups offers advantages in terms of ability to control the level, location, and distribution of graft chains on the substrate by optimization of reaction parameters without leaving detrimental waste. This allows the adsorbent to be easily scaled and makes the preparation process rather environmentally friendly (Abou Taleb et al. 2008).

Several studies have reported the preparation of fibrous adsorbents by RIGC of GMA, which have an epoxy group allowing the amination of the grafted substrate with various amine groups (Abbasi et al.

2018, 2019b; Mohamad et al. 2021). However, the investigated fibrous CO₂ adsorbent have been mainly tested for adsorption of CO₂ from its mixtures with N₂ whereas their application in CO₂ capture from its mixtures with CH₄ have not been reported in the literature. Moreover, the adsorption isotherms, kinetics, and thermodynamics of adsorption on such aminated fibrous adsorbents have not been established. The objective of the present study is to investigate the CO₂ adsorption behaviour from CO₂/CH₄ mixtures on fibrous adsorbent immobilized with various amine groups hosted by poly (GMA) incorporated in PE/PP fibrous sheet by RIGC. The various properties of the adsorbents were evaluated. The performance was evaluated under various temperatures and pressures with different CO₂/CH₄ mixtures resembling the conditions of industrial removal of CO₂ from NG. Moreover, the adsorption isothermal, kinetic, and thermodynamic behaviours were studied by fitting the data to common models. The obtained fundamental properties such as adsorption capacity, kinetics, thermodynamics, and selectivity are essential for laying the foundation for process design parameters for CO₂ capture from NG with such fibrous adsorbents.

Experimental

Materials

The PE/PP fibrous sheet was obtained from Kurashiki Textile Manufacturing Co. Ltd. (Osaka, Japan). GMA monomer with 97% purity and polyoxyethylene sorbitol ester (Tween-20) were supplied by Sigma-Aldrich (Darmstadt, Germany). Ethylenediamine (EDA) (99% purity) and diethylenetriamine (DETA) (98% purity) were purchased from Merck Millipore (Darmstadt, Germany) and used without further treatment. Tetraethylenepentamine (TEPA) with purity of 95% was purchased from Acros Organics (California, United States). The isopropanol was purchased from Merck Millipore (Darmstadt, Germany). In all experiments, deionized water (DI) was obtained from a water purifier (Barnstead Nanopure Diamond Lab., ThermoFisher, Waltham, USA). The gases such as CO₂ (99.8% purity), helium (99.999% purity), and CH₄ (99.995% purity) were supplied by Alpha Gas Solution (Sdn Bhd, Malaysia).

Preparation of amine-functionalized fibrous adsorbent

The adsorbent was prepared in a two-step procedure started by RIGC of GMA onto pre-irradiated PE/PP fibrous sheet. The irradiation was performed by an electron beam (EB) accelerator (NHV-Nissin High Voltage, EPS3000) operated at an acceleration energy of 2 MeV and a beam current of 10 mA with a total dose of 50 kGy at 25 kGy/pass to create the free radicals. The irradiated PE/PP fibrous sheet was placed inside an ampoule containing an emulsion mixture comprising of 10% GMA in DI and containing 0.5% Tween 20 (surfactant) and bubbled with N₂ to remove O₂. The reaction was carried out at 50 °C for 35 minutes and yielded samples denoted as PE/PP-*g*-PGMA with 200% degree of grafting (DOG) which is calculated according to Eq. 1 (Zubair et al. 2020).

$$\text{Degree of grafting (DG\%)} = \frac{W_f - W_i}{W_i} \times 100 \quad (1)$$

where, W_i and W_f are the weights of the samples before and after grafting reaction, respectively. More details on preparation procedure can be found elsewhere (Nasef et al. 2014).

The grafted samples (PE/PP-*g*-PGMA) were functionalized by treatment with pure EDA or DETA. The reaction was conducted in a round bottom flask at 90 °C under reflux and continuous stirring for 6 h. After reaction completion, the aminated sample was removed and repeatedly washed with DI water few times, then dried in a vacuum oven at 60 °C for 5 h. On the other hand, the amination with TEPA amine was carried out by using 3:1 TEPA/isopropanol ratio and conducted at 83 °C under reflux and continuous stirring for 4 h as previously reported (Mohamad et al. 2021). The weight changes of PE/PP-*g*-PGMA before and after the amination reaction were determined and used to calculate the percent of amination (A%) as Eq. 2.

$$A (\%) = \frac{(W_a - W_g) / MW}{(W_g - W_p) / 142.15} \times 100 \quad (2)$$

where, W_p , W_g , and W_a are the weights of pristine, grafted, and aminated PE/PP substrates, respectively. MW is the molecular weight of amine group and 142.15 is the molecular weight of GMA. The final adsorbents are denoted as PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/EDA, PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/DETA, and PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/TEPA. All experiments were repeated 3 times, and the reported data for the A% is an average of 3 readings.

Properties of adsorbent

The changes in the chemical structure, morphology, thermal stability, crystallinity, and textural of the aminated fibrous adsorbent were evaluated and compared with both the pristine PE/PP and the grafted fibrous substrates. The changes in chemical composition were analysed using a Nicolet iS50 FT-IR spectrometer. The spectra were obtained with 32 scans and a resolution of 4 cm⁻¹ across a frequency range of 500–4000 cm⁻¹. The morphological changes of the samples with respect to fibre diameter were examined using a GEMINISEM 500 microscope. The thermal stability of the samples was tested using a Q50 thermogravimetric analyser (TA Instruments) at a heating rate of 10 °C/min in a temperature range of 30–700 °C. The crystalline structure of the samples was examined by X-ray diffraction (XRD) using a PANalytical Empyrean analyser at Bragg's angle in the range of 5–70°. BET test was performed with Quantachrome Instrument (Novatouch) to measure surface area and pore analysis. The samples were degassed at 80 °C for 4 h before analysis.

Gas adsorption measurements

The CO₂ adsorption capacity measurements were carried out using the magnetic suspension balance (MSB) known as isoSORP® gravimetric analyser manufactured by RUBOTHERM (Bochum, Germany). Details of MSB's basic principles, components, and operational procedure were described elsewhere (Fujii et al. 2010; Schell et al. 2012). One cycle of adsorption measurement consists of three steps comprising pre-treatment, buoyancy, and adsorption measurement. All the data were recorded by RUBOTHERM control system software (RSCS-2016). The adsorbent sample was subjected to a pre-treatment started by heating the samples at 80 °C for 4.5 h under vacuum until the recorded weight loss reached a constant to

eliminate any retained moisture. Subsequently, the buoyancy measurement was carried out to precisely determine the weight and volume of adsorbent sample using purified helium gas at the required sorption temperature under varying pressure from vacuum condition to 30 bar. Finally, the adsorption measurements of pure gases (CO₂ and CH₄) and their gas mixture at different ratios (20–80% CO₂/CH₄) and different operating conditions, including different pressures up to 30 bar were carried out at. The equilibrium sorption was achieved in about 50 minutes for each pressure reading.

CO₂/CH₄ selectivity

The ideal selectivity (S) of CO₂ over CH₄ was estimated using adsorption capacity data of pure gases using the following equation (Mukhtar et al. 2020a):

$$S_{CO_2/CH_4} = \left(\frac{q_{CO_2}}{q_{CH_4}} \right) \times \left(\frac{P_{CH_4}}{P_{CO_2}} \right)$$

3

where, q is the adsorption capacity (mmol/g), and P is the operating pressure (bar), respectively.

kinetics adsorption on fibrous adsorbent

Few kinetic models were proposed to describe the kinetic behaviour of adsorption on solid adsorbents. The kinetic models that were tested in this work include the following (Rahafza et al. 2018):

i. Pseudo-first-order kinetic model

The non-linear form of this model is expressed in the following equation:

$$q_t = q_e(1 - e^{-k_1 t})$$

4

where, q_t and q_e are the amounts (mmol/g) of the adsorbate adsorbed at time " t " (min), and at an equilibrium, respectively. k_1 is the pseudo first order rate constant (1/min).

ii. Pseudo-second-order kinetic model

The non-linear form of pseudo second order equation is given by Eq. 5:

$$q_t = \frac{q_e^2 k_2 t}{1 + q_e k_2 t}$$

5

where, k_2 is the rate constant of pseudo second order model (mol/g.min)

iii. Elovich kinetic model

The Elovich kinetic model is expressed as follows:

$$q_t = \frac{1}{\beta} \ln(\alpha\beta t + 1)$$

6

where, α is the initial adsorption rate and β is the desorption constant during each experiment.

Adsorption isotherms for CO₂ adsorption on fibrous adsorbent

Adsorption isotherms at equilibrium are used to describe the interaction between the adsorbent and targeted adsorbate. The equilibrium isotherm data provides significant explanations and information on the surface properties and mechanisms of the adsorption process. The fitting of adsorption isotherm data to an adsorption isotherm model is crucial in determining the model representing the experimental data for design purposes (Raganati et al. 2018). The adsorption isotherm models are described as follows:

Langmuir isotherm

According to the Langmuir theory, only one adsorbate (CO₂) molecule can bind to each active site on the adsorbent surface, explaining the monolayer adsorption process. The non-linear form of the Langmuir isotherm model equation is as follow

$$q_e = \frac{K_L P q_m}{1 + K_L P}$$

7

where, q_e (mmol/g) is the adsorbed amount of CO₂, P is the pressure (bar), q_m (mmol/g) is the maximum monolayer adsorption capacity and K_L is the Langmuir equilibrium constant related to adsorption capacity and adsorption intensity.

Freundlich isotherm

Freundlich isotherm model accounts for a heterogenous adsorption system. This isotherm can be used to define the multilayer uptake of CO₂ molecules adsorbed onto the adsorbent surface. The non-linear form of Freundlich isotherm model equation is expressed as follows

$$q_e = K_f P^{1/n} \tag{8}$$

where, K_f is the Freundlich constant, while n is the factor of heterogeneity, which related to the adsorbate affinity to the adsorbent.

Sips isotherm

Sips isotherm model indicates that the adsorption process of CO₂ molecules onto the adsorbent surface follows a combination of Langmuir and Freundlich isotherm models. The non-linear equation of Sips isotherm model is expressed as follows

$$q_e = \frac{q_s K_s P^s}{1 + K_s P^s}$$

9

where, q_s is the Sips isotherm maximum adsorption capacity, K_s is the Sips isotherm constant, and s is the Sips exponent. If s equals to 1, it represents a homogeneous system.

Thermodynamics of adsorption on fibrous adsorbent

Thermodynamic properties are crucial in the adsorption process to determine the spontaneity of the reaction between the adsorbent and adsorbate. Besides, the nature of adsorption including physisorption or chemisorption can be determine through the evaluation of the thermodynamic properties such as standard Gibbs free energy change (ΔG°), the enthalpy change (ΔH°), and the entropy change (ΔS°) by using Eq. 10 (Raganati et al. 2018). For instance, physisorption arises from relatively weak interactions such as van der Waals force, while chemisorption involves a stronger chemical interaction (covalent bonding). The ΔG° can be directly calculated from Eq. 11 once the thermodynamic constant is obtained. The thermodynamic constant can be derived from various isothermal model types, including Langmuir, Freundlich, Sips, and others (Tran et al. 2016). The enthalpy change (ΔH°), also known as heat of adsorption and the entropy change ΔS° corresponds to the slope and intercept from van't Hoff plot correlating $\ln K_s$ with $1/T$ and calculated using Eq. 12.

$$\Delta G^\circ = \Delta H^\circ - T\Delta S^\circ \quad (10)$$

$$\Delta G^\circ = -RT \ln K_s \quad (11)$$

$$\ln K_s = \left(\frac{\Delta S^\circ}{R}\right) - \left(\frac{\Delta H^\circ}{RT}\right) \quad (12)$$

where, T is the temperature (K), R is the universal gas constant (J/mol.K) and K_s is the thermodynamic constant.

Results And Discussions

Amine-containing adsorbents

Preparation of the adsorbents was carried out in a 2-step procedure (grafting of GMA and immobilization of amine). Both grafting and amination parameters were selected based on our previous investigation (Mohamad et al. 2021) and yielded samples with DG of 200% and amination percent (A%) in the range of 70–80% (A%) was obtained in all aminated samples. The preparation of the adsorbent by grafting of GMA and amination with TEPA is illustrated in the schematic diagram shown in Fig. 1.

Properties of adsorbent with different amines

Chemical composition properties

Figure 2 shows the FTIR spectra of pristine PE/PP sheet, PGMA grafted PE/PP sheet, and PE/PP-*g*-PGMA sheets aminated with EDA, DETA, and TEPA. It can be observed that the representative diagnostic peaks at 2917 and 2847 cm^{-1} corresponding to the antisymmetric and asymmetric stretching vibration of C-H coming from PE/PP backbone, respectively. The peaks appeared at 1740 and 1255 cm^{-1} are attributed to group (-COC) originated from epoxide ring of PGMA formed after grafting, and remained in a weakened form after amination (Abbasi et al. 2019a). In addition, the incorporation of PGMA to the PE/PP structure was also proved by the emergence of two bands at 905 and 840 cm^{-1} , which are assigned for -CO of the epoxy group (Nasef et al. 2014). The evidence of -NH absorptions originating from the primary amine and secondary amine functionalization appeared in the peaks at around 1527 and 1658 cm^{-1} , respectively (Ullah et al. 2015). The peak at 1156 cm^{-1} represents the -CN stretching vibration in TEPA. It can be concluded that the obtained adsorbent composed of PE/PP sheets containing PGMA side chain graft immobilized with amines.

Morphological Properties

The SEM images of pristine PE/PP, PE/PP-*g*-PGMA, PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/EDA, PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/DETA, and PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/TEPA sheets are presented in Fig. 3. The images revealed that there are changes in the average fibre diameter (AFD) in the sheets after grafting and amine functionalization. For instance, the AFD of the pristine PE/PP was $15.3 \pm 3.18 \mu\text{m}$, which increased after grafting with PGMA to $20.0 \pm 5.70 \mu\text{m}$. Such an increase in AFD is coming from the covalent incorporation of PGMA around the fibres and similar trend was reported for grafting of vinyl monomers on fibrous substrates (Othman et al. 2019). On the other hand, amination with EDA and DETA led to a reduction in the average fibre diameter by $\sim 7.4\%$ to reach values of 18.50 ± 5.6 . This is likely due to minor degradation of tiny amount of unbound PGMA side chains caused by using of concentrated amine agents. However, the AFD was increased to $24.18 \pm 6.20 \mu\text{m}$ after amination with TEPA diluted in isopropanol. These results provide further evidence for grafting of GMA and subsequent amination with EDA, DETA and TEPA of PE/PP fibrous sheet.

Thermal Properties

Figure 4 shows TGA thermograms of pristine PE/PP, PE/PP-*g*-PGMA, and PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/EDA (-DETA and -TEPA) sheets. A single step degradation was observed in the thermogram of the pristine PE/PP sample at temperature 350°C due to the principal polymeric backbone thermal decomposition (Abbasi et al. 2019a). The PE/PP-*g*-PGMA sample shows a two-step degradation pattern 200°C and 350°C coming from the decomposition of PGMA and PE/PP backbone (Xu et al. 2015). The aminated samples showed multiple degradation pattern represented by weight loss at 4 different temperature regions. The first weight loss started below 100°C and continued to 150°C is due to the removal of moisture bound to the amine groups bound by hydrogen bonds (Choi et al. 2001). The continuous of weight loss at $\sim 200^\circ\text{C}$ is due to the decomposition of amine (Mohamad et al. 2021). The weight loss coming from the

deterioration of the grafted PGMA appeared at 250°C and that due decomposition of PE/PP backbone was at 350°C.

Crystalline structure properties

Figure 5 shows X-ray diffractograms of pristine PE/PP, grafted PE/PP-*g*-PGMA, and all three different types of amine-functionalized PE/PP-*g*-PGMA. The crystalline peaks in all diffractograms showed no changes in Bragg's angles regardless the of the type of immobilized amine suggesting that the backbone structure of PE/PP is well preserved and remain intact even after grafting and subsequent amination. It is confirmed that PGMA and all three types of amine have no contribution to the diffraction pattern (Nasef et al. 1998). However, the degree of crystallinity decreased after grafting and even more after the amination. For instance, the intensity of the crystalline peaks decreased in a sequence of pristine PE/PP > PE/PP-*g*-PGMA > PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/EDA > PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/TEPA > PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/DETA. This reduction in the peak intensity is due to the dilution of the inherent crystallinity by incorporating amorphous PGMA, and such effect became more profound after immobilization of amines with PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/DETA showing the lowest degree of crystallinity (Sharif et al. 2013). These results suggest that the aminated adsorbents retained reasonable physical integrity suitable for adsorption applications.

Surface area and pore analysis

The nitrogen adsorption-desorption isotherm was evaluated using BET analysis to determine the surface area, pore volume and pore width of PGMA grafted and amine functionalized substrate which tabulated in Table 1. It can be seen that the surface area was obtained for PE/PP-*g*-PGMA, PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/EDA, PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/DETA, and PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/TEPA fibrous sheets, where surface areas of 7.50, 5.46, 5.38, and 3.47 m² g⁻¹ were observed, respectively. After functionalization with amine, the surface area decreased, and such a decrease was higher with longer aliphatic chain of the amine. The immobilization of amines to the grafted fibrous sheet not only makes the amine dominate the pore and reduces the surface area but also lowers the pore volume value. These results emphasize that surface area which is small in these adsorbents is not the crucial factor in the adsorption mechanism and it is the number of amine sites and their accessibility that will dominate the performance of these fibrous adsorbents.

Table 1
Surface area and pore properties of PE/PP-*g*-PGMA, PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/EDA, PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/DETA and PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/TEPA fibrous sheets

Samples	Surface area (m ² g ⁻¹)	Pore width (nm)	Pore volume x10 ⁻³ (cm ³ g ⁻¹)
PE/PP- <i>g</i> -PGMA	7.50	5.89	7.97
PE/PP- <i>g</i> -PGMA/EDA	5.46	2.44	4.66
PE/PP- <i>g</i> -PGMA/DETA	5.38	1.91	4.61
PE/PP- <i>g</i> -PGMA/TEPA	3.47	2.30	4.11

Effect of amine types on the CO₂ adsorption

The adsorption capacity of pure CO₂ was measured at different pressures (up to 30 bar) for PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/EDA, PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/DETA, and PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/TEPA at room temperature and the obtained adsorption data is presented in Fig. 6. The CO₂ adsorption capacity increased gradually with the increase in the pressure for all adsorbents without reaching saturation suggesting a trend close to type II adsorption isotherms (nonporous adsorbent) and the presence of a combination monolayer and multilayer adsorptions on the present adsorbent. The continuous increasing trend in CO₂ adsorption capacity can be attributed to the early interaction with energetic amine at the surface followed by the successive diffusion of CO₂ to the inner layers reaching deeper amine sites under the influence of the pressure increase (Ahmed et al. 2017).

The CO₂ adsorption capacity was in the following order: PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/TEPA > PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/DETA > PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/EDA, with the values of 2.12 mmol/g > 1.49 mmol/g > 1.21 mmol/g. This trend could be because the secondary amine is more efficient than the primary amine at interacting with CO₂ molecules (Liu et al. 2017). Therefore, the superior CO₂ adsorption of PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/TEPA adsorbent is attributable to larger number secondary amine groups in TEPA compared to DETA and EDA. Thus, PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/TEPA is selected to further investigate the adsorption behavior of CO₂ under various temperatures.

Effect of temperature on CO₂ adsorption on TEPA-containing adsorbent

Figure 7 shows the variation of pure CO₂ gas adsorption with the temperature in the range of 30–70°C at 30 bar. It can be observed that the rise in the temperature leads to an increase in the adsorption capacity until 60°C beyond which it declines. For instance, the CO₂ adsorption capacity reached a maximum value of 2.66 mmol/g at 60°C and slipped to 2.62 mmol/g at 70°C. The increased CO₂ adsorption capacity with the temperature rise is not only due to enhancement of CO₂ diffusion rate and the increase in the CO₂ molecules kinetic energy but also to the acceleration in CO₂ accessibility to the inner layers containing more TEPA sites (Zhao et al. 2022). Thus, the increase in adsorption capacity with temperature up to 60°C indicates that the CO₂ capture process is controlled by kinetic rather than thermodynamic factors (Zhao et al. 2017). The observation of increasing adsorption with temperature suggests that the CO₂ adsorption on the present fibrous adsorbent does not follow the Clausius-Clapeyron equation (Yano et al. 2020). Similar deviation from adsorption thermodynamics was also report in literature for TEPA modified carbon nanotubes [48] and mesoporous carbon [49]. It can be concluded that 60°C is the best temperature for the maximum adsorption capacity which makes this adsorbent favourable for CO₂ capture from NG as the commercial technology of amine absorption typically operate at 50 to 60°C.

Adsorption of pure CO₂ and CH₄ on PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/TEPA adsorbent

Figure 8a shows the adsorption behaviour of pure CO₂ and CH₄ gases on PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/TEPA adsorbent at different pressures and temperatures. It can be seen that the higher pressures and

temperatures (30–60°C) led to higher CO₂ adsorption performance unlike CH₄ which showed very tiny adsorption (0.02–0.04 mmol/g), which seems to be insignificant at all temperatures and pressures. This observation suggests that PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/TEPA adsorbent has high CO₂ selectivity over CH₄.

The CO₂/CH₄ ideal selectivity for PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/TEPA was evaluated and presented in correlation with pressures at different temperatures in Fig. 8b. As the pressure increases, the CO₂/CH₄ selectivity decreased for all temperatures, which can be attributed to the pressure-driven mechanism through amine containing sites in different layers irrespective to those bound to the surface of the adsorbent (Mukhtar et al. 2020a, b). Overall, the CO₂/CH₄ selectivity for all pressure readings is considered high where all of them are above value of 50, showing superior CO₂ adsorption compared to CH₄, which is far better than those reported in the previous studies (Vosoughi et al. 2021) (Zohdi et al. 2019). Therefore, it can be suggested that TEPA-aminated adsorbent has a strong potential for separating CO₂ from its mixtures with CH₄ (Dao et al. 2020). This information is crucial for the development of NG treatment technologies since CO₂ capture from NG demands designing highly CO₂ selective adsorbent material (Mukhtar et al. 2020a).

Adsorption of CO₂ from CO₂/CH₄ mixtures

The effect of variation of CO₂/CH₄ gas mixture composition and pressure on the adsorption capacity of CO₂ on PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/TEPA adsorbent is presented in Fig. 9. Pure CO₂ and CH₄ adsorption variation with the same pressure range were used as references. The CO₂ adsorption capacity increased with the rise in the pressure and CO₂ composition. The adsorption capacity was found to be in the following sequence at 30 bar: 100% CH₄ < 20%CO₂ < 40%CO₂ < 60%CO₂ < 80%CO₂ < 100% CO₂ with their adsorption capacity were 0.02, 1.50, 2.00, 2.30, 2.57, and 2.66 mmol/g, respectively. The decrease of the adsorption capacity with the CO₂ lessening in the feed mixture is most likely caused by accumulation of the CH₄ around TEPA aminated sites reducing their accessibility by CO₂. This is going along with the fact that, CH₄ has lighter molecular weight (16.04 g/mol) than CO₂ (44.01 g/mol), leading to higher rate of diffusion, which is inversely proportional to the square root of its molecular mass as per Graham's law of diffusion (Rani et al. 2018). Thus, the CO₂ access to TEPA groups in the adsorbent is hindered. This observation suggests that the present adsorbent works best at high CO₂ concentrations in the feed and is likely to be useful for purification of NG with high CO₂ concentration.

Adsorption/desorption cyclic stability

The effect of number of adsorption/desorption cycles on the adsorption capacity of pure CO₂ on PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/TEPA adsorbent is evaluated in ten cycles, and the obtained data is presented in Fig. 10. As can be clearly seen, the CO₂ adsorption capacity remained almost unvaried at the value of 2.66 mmol/g (the adsorption capacity of the first cycle is 2.65 mmol/g). The absence of any significant adsorption capacity loss confirms the high stability of the present adsorbent and its suitability for prolonged cyclic operation.

Comparison of kinetic models

Three models including pseudo-first-order, pseudo-second-order, and Elovich kinetic models were used to fit the experimental CO₂ adsorption results. The data are presented in Table 2 and plotted in Fig. 11. The experimental data was found to best fit the Elovich kinetic model with the coefficient of determination (R^2) values are the highest associated with lowest standard error (SE) values at all temperatures (30, 40, 50, and 60°C) compared to pseudo second-order and pseudo-first-order kinetic models both which indicate that the CO₂ adsorption rate of the adsorbent for capture is controlled by surface diffusion and chemical reactions at the gas-solid interface. The results best fitting of data to Elovich kinetic models suggests that the CO₂ adsorption process in the present system occurs as a group of reactions including surface diffusion, bulk phase diffusion, and active ionic surfaces. It also describes the chemisorption process in relation to the amount of surface coverage and decrease in the adsorption rate (Najafi et al. 2021). The reaction rate of CO₂ adsorption was enhanced as the β value was found to increase with the rise in the adsorption temperature from 30 to 60°C (Rahafza et al. 2018).

Table 2
Comparison of parameters of the kinetic models at 30, 40, 50, and 60°C

Temperature (°C)		30	40	50	60
Pseudo-first-order	q (mmol/g)	2.41	2.40	2.68	2.53
	k_1	0.0068	0.0073	0.0079	0.0125
	R ²	0.9448	0.9269	0.8677	0.8613
	SE	0.014	0.019	0.044	0.044
Pseudo-second-order	q (mmol/g)	3.42	3.37	3.51	3.13
	k_2	0.0016	0.0018	0.0021	0.0044
	R ²	0.9532	0.9377	0.8914	0.9044
	SE	0.012	0.016	0.0360	0.031
Elovich	α	0.0220	0.0244	0.0371	0.0733
	β	0.9185	0.9529	1.0430	1.3165
	k_E	0.0240	0.0256	0.0356	0.0557
	R ²	0.9616	0.9493	0.9173	0.9440
	SE	0.010	0.0130	0.0270	0.0180

Adsorption isotherms for CO₂ adsorption on PE/PP-g-PGMA/TEPA

Figure 12 shows the adsorption isotherms and curve fitting for CO₂ adsorption on PE/PP-g-PGMA/TEPA at different temperatures using various isothermal models such as Langmuir, Freundlich, and Sips whereas, the relevant parametric data is presented in Table 3. To avoid inaccuracy from linearization, the magnitude of adsorption isotherm parameters in this study were obtained using the non-linear regression analysis. It can be seen that the highest value of R² with more than 0.99 and the lowest value of SE for Sips isotherm model among others for all operating temperatures indicating that the adsorption process of CO₂ molecules on the PE/PP-g-PGMA/TEPA adsorbent surface follows Sips isotherm model. This suggests the presence of monolayer and multilayer adsorption. Lastly, the value of Sips constant, K_s , was increased with the temperature increase. This demonstrated that the binding affinity of CO₂

molecules with the fibrous surface of PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/TEPA becomes more vital with the rise of temperature up to 60°C.

Table 3
Data of isothermal models for CO₂ adsorption on PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/TEPA at different temperatures

Models	Parameters	Temperature (°C)			
		30	40	50	60
Langmuir	K_L	0.0446	0.1124	0.1602	0.2208
	q_m	3.6465	2.6790	3.0758	2.9949
	R ²	0.9948	0.9960	0.9952	0.9974
	SE	0.338	0.252	0.463	0.258
Freundlich	K_f	0.2869	0.5536	0.6899	0.8350
	n	1.6943	2.5227	3.0628	3.7313
	1/n	0.5902	0.3964	0.3265	0.2680
	R ²	0.9933	0.9988	0.9989	0.9968
	SE	0.225	0.023	0.024	0.058
Sips	K_s	0.0187	0.0690	0.0734	0.2273
	q_s	14.2585	7.7370	11.9479	4.9532
	s	0.6574	0.4996	0.3943	0.4787
	R ²	0.9973	0.9998	0.9998	0.9999
	SE	0.217	0.009	0.016	0.003

Figure 13 shows Van't Hoff plot for adsorption CO₂ on PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/TEPA adsorbent in which $\ln K_S$ was plotted versus $1/T$. The K_S in Eq. 12, which is the thermodynamic constant was obtained from the Sips isotherm model fitting parameters reported in Table 3. To further investigate the effect of thermodynamics on the CO₂ adsorption on PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/TEPA adsorbent and understand the mechanism of adsorption. The thermodynamic parameters for the CO₂ adsorption onto PE/PP-*g*-

PGMA/TEPA adsorbent were studied and the obtained data are presented in Table 4. The intercept and slope from Van't Hoff plot were used in equations 10–12 to calculate ΔG° , ΔH° and ΔS° , respectively. The value of ΔG° is positive at each temperature. This indicates that the adsorption process is not thermodynamically favourable, non-spontaneous and needs energy to initiate the reaction between the adsorbent and adsorbate. Moreover, there is a decreasing value of ΔG° with temperature rise as depicted in Table 4 and this suggests that the adsorption process is decreasing in the non-spontaneity and it becomes more favourable at higher temperatures (up to 60°C) as the energy needed to promote the adsorption reaction (Mukhtar et al. 2020a). A positive value of ΔH° was obtained in this study shows an endothermic nature of the adsorption process, which reflects the increasing temperature that caused an increased adsorption capacity as presented in Fig. 7. The endothermic adsorption process ($\Delta H^\circ > 0$) suggests that adsorption of CO₂ is associated with energy adsorption in the form of heat from the surrounding. This endothermic phenomenon is mostly because the total energy absorbed in bond breaking is higher than that released in the bond making between CO₂ and adsorbent (Tran et al. 2016). Furthermore, ΔH° value also provides a clear understanding of the adsorption mechanism. Theoretically, $\Delta H^\circ < 20$ kJ/mol is for the physisorption process and $\Delta H^\circ > 80$ kJ/mol is for the chemisorption process (Raganati et al. 2018). Hence, 63.44 kJ/mol of ΔH° obtained in this study confirmed the presence of chemisorption interaction between the CO₂ molecules and PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/TEPA adsorbent. These results are in a complete agreement with the study from Qi *et al* (Qi et al. 2021) who obtained a positive value of ΔH° for all samples that were functionalized with TEPA. Yang *et al* and Shi *et al* (Shi et al. 2021; HaiyanYang et al. 2022) reported similar adsorption behaviour and claimed the reaction between TEPA and CO₂ is an endothermic chemical reaction. In the meantime, the entropy (ΔS°) was used to determine the randomness of the adsorption process. A positive ΔS° value of 0.18 kJ/mol was obtained prevailing a typical chemisorption and suggesting not only an increase in the randomness at the solid-gas interface during the adsorption process but also the presence of a good affinity between the CO₂ molecules and PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/TEPA adsorbent surface (Ebelegi et al. 2020; Edet and Ifelebuegu 2020).

Table 4
Thermodynamic properties for CO₂ adsorption on PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/TEPA adsorbent

ΔH° (KJ/mol)	ΔS° (KJ/mol)	ΔG° (KJ/mol)			
63.44	0.18	30°C	40°C	50°C	60°C
		10.02	6.74	6.58	3.73

Conclusion

Amine-containing adsorbents with fibrous structures were prepared, characterized, and tested for adsorption of CO₂ and separation of mixtures of CO₂/CH₄. The adsorbent was prepared by grafting of GMA onto EB irradiated PP/PE fibrous sheets followed by immobilization of desired amine group under controlled conditions. The covalent grafting of aminated side chains was verified and the morphology as

well as the structure and thermal stability were proven. The PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/TEPA adsorbent with highest number of secondary amine groups demonstrated a maximum CO₂ adsorption capacity (2.12 mmol/g) compared to those loaded with DETA and EDA. The increase in the pressure up to 30 bar led to an increase in the adsorption capacity, which was also increased with the rise in the temperature up to 60°C to a value of 2.66 mmol/g beyond which it declined. This suggested that the CO₂ capture process is controlled by kinetics rather than thermodynamic factors. The adsorbent demonstrated a high stability during ten adsorption-desorption cycles at relatively low regeneration temperature of 80°C. The CO₂ adsorption isotherm was best represented by Sips model suggesting the presence of monolayer and multilayer adsorption in the TEPA containing adsorbent. The adsorption kinetics data was found to best fit Elovich model indicating that adsorption mainly proceeds by chemisorption mechanism involving steps such as surface diffusion, bulk phase diffusion, and active ionic interaction. The thermodynamic properties revealed that the adsorption process is non-spontaneous and endothermic in nature. Finally, the high CO₂ selectivity shown by the adsorbent towards CO₂ signify its potential for separating CO₂ from its mixtures with CH₄ especially at high CO₂ concentrations in the feed. Thus, this adsorbent is likely to be promising for purification of NG with high CO₂ concentrations.

Declarations

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Data availability All data used to support the findings of this study are included in the article.

Ethics approval and consent to participate Not applicable.

Consent for publication Not applicable.

Competing interests The authors declare no competing interests.

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Figures

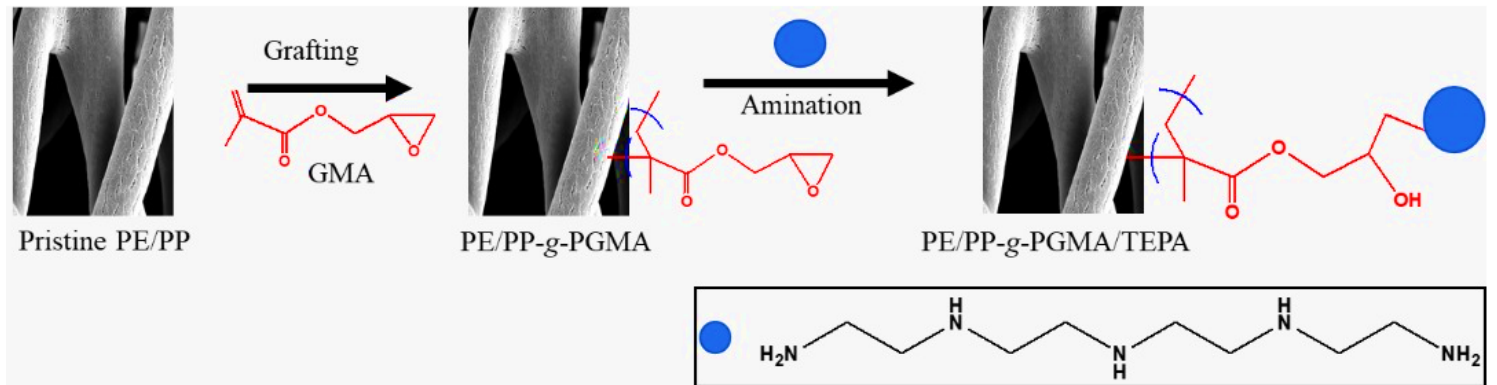


Figure 1

Schematic representation for preparation of fibrous adsorbent (PE/PP-g-PGMA/TEPA) by RIGC of GMA on PE/PP sheet and subsequent immobilization of TEPA.

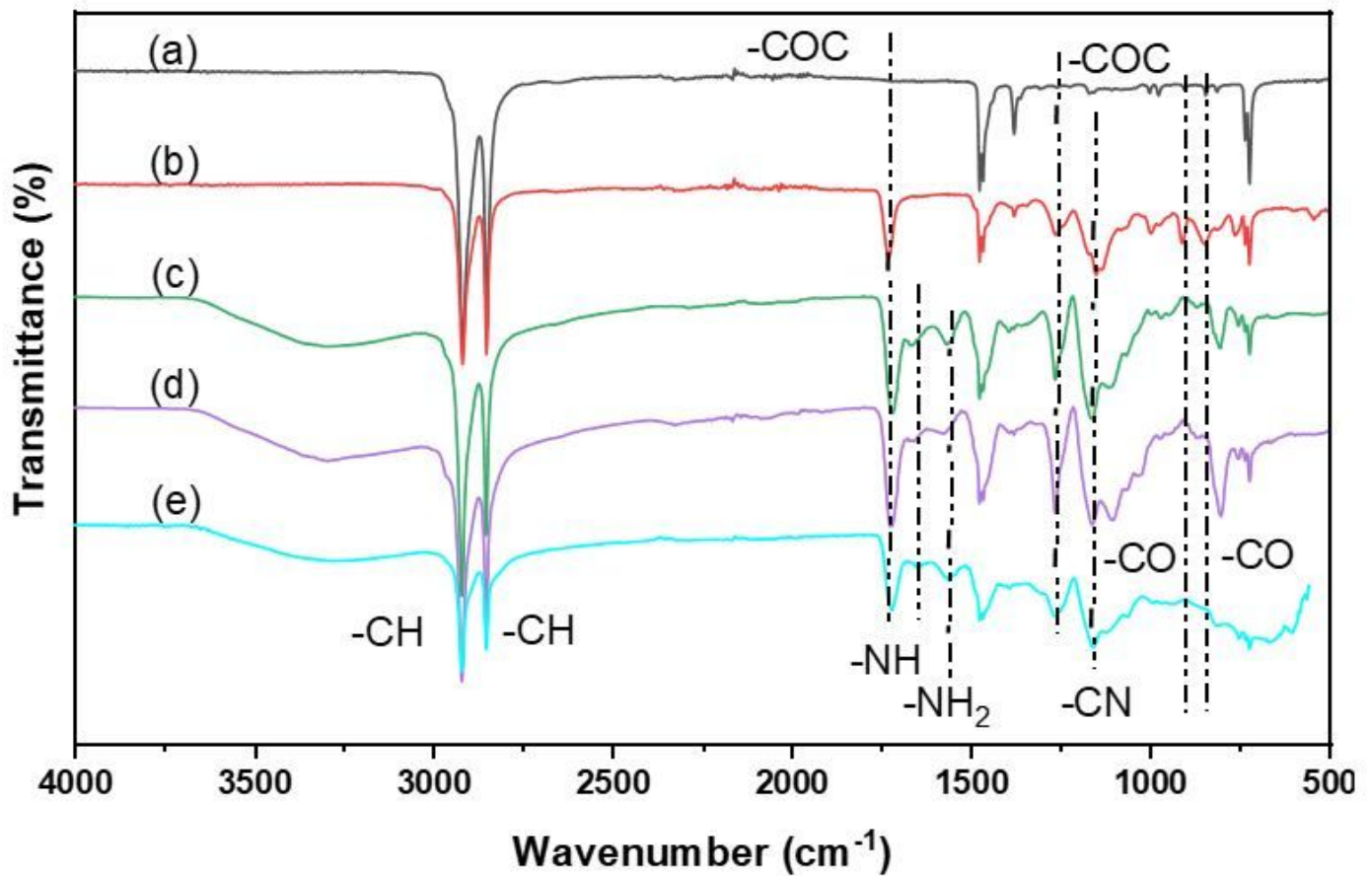


Figure 2

FTIR spectra of: a) pristine PE/PP, b) PE/PP-g-PGMA, c) PE/PP-g-PGMA/EDA, d) PE/PP-g-PGMA/DETA, and e) PE/PP-g-PGMA/TEPA fibrous sheets.

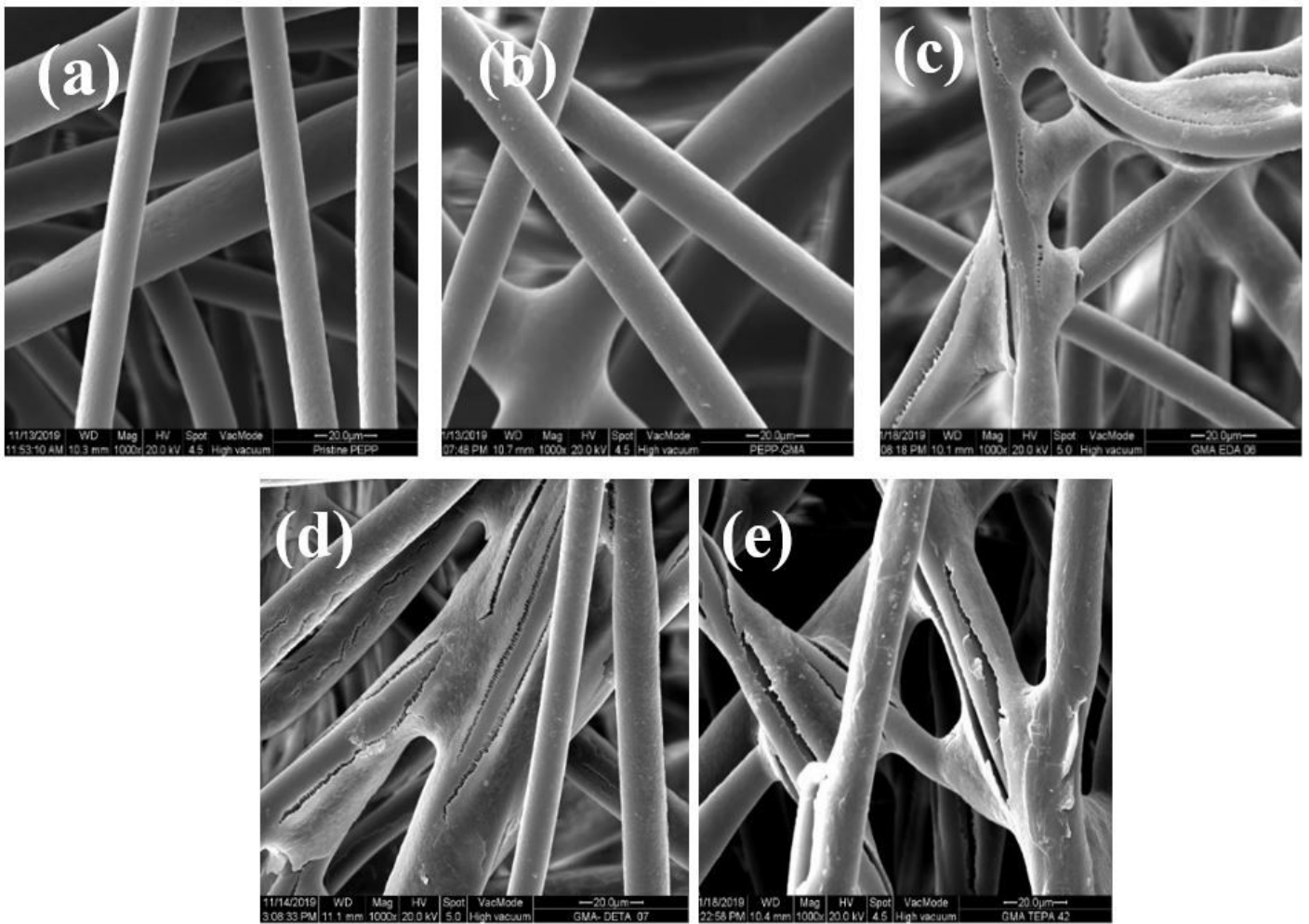


Figure 3

SEM images of: a) pristine PE/PP, b) PE/PP-*g*-PGMA, c) PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/EDA, d) PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/DETA, and e) PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/TEPA fibrous sheets.

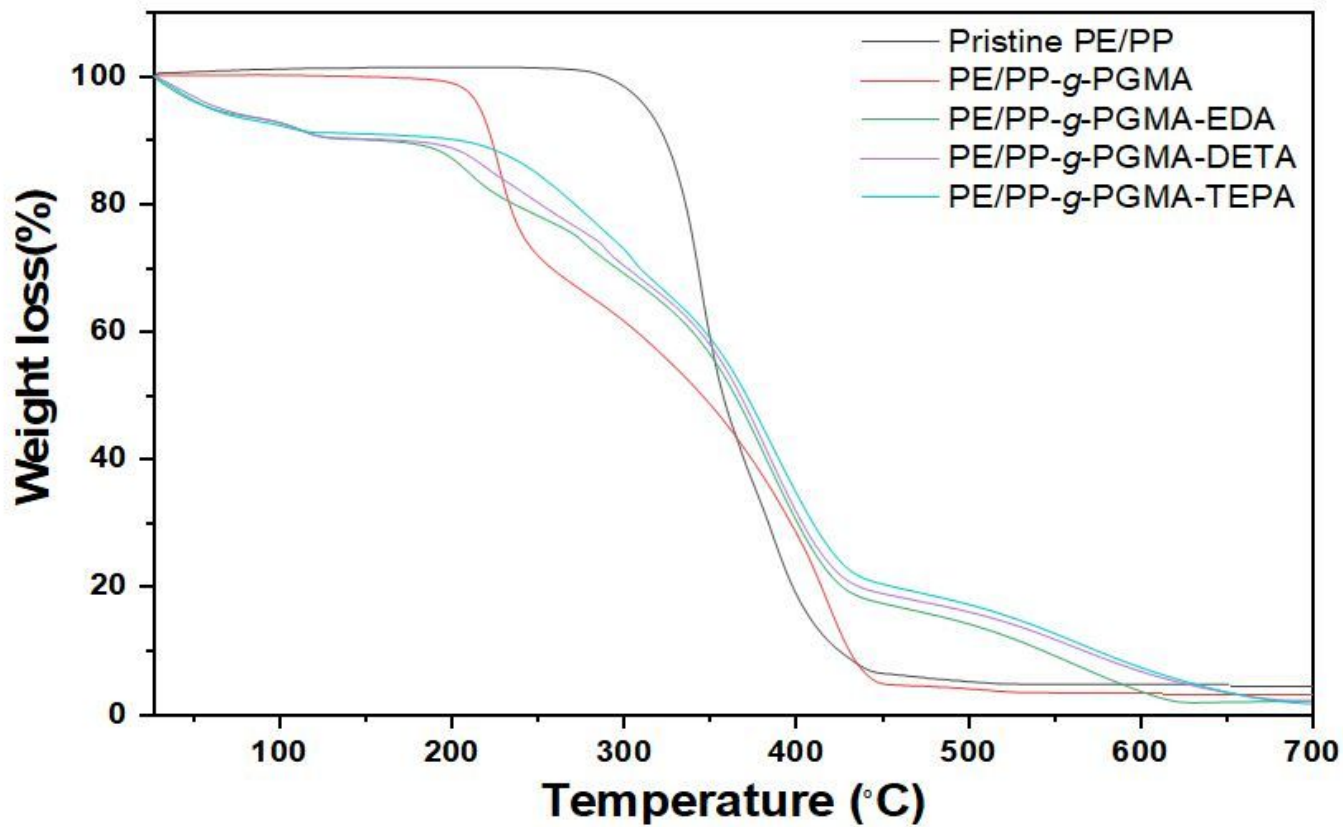


Figure 4

TGA thermograms of pristine PE/PP (black), PE/PP-*g*-PGMA (red), PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/EDA (green), PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/DETA (purple), and PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/TEPA (blue) fibrous sheets.

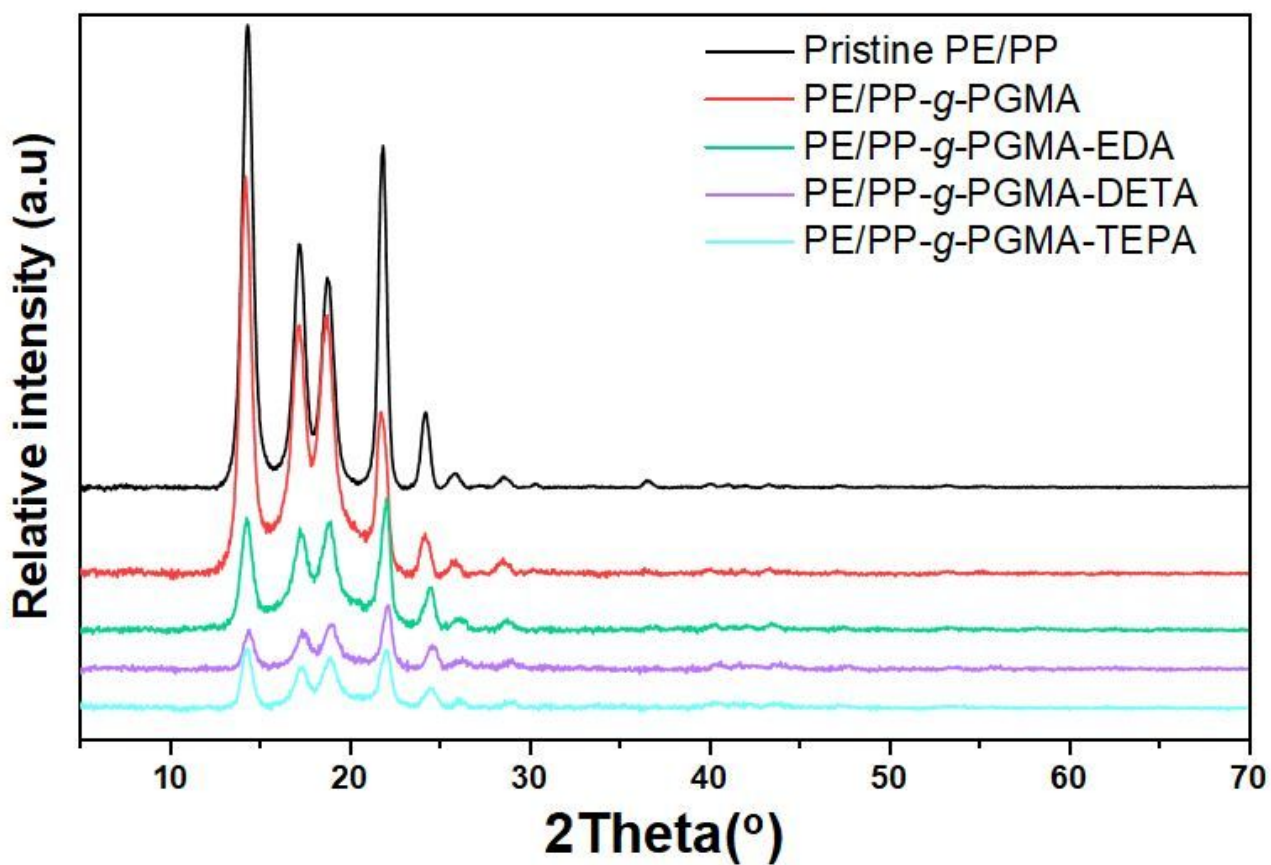


Figure 5

XRD diffractograms of pristine PE/PP (black), PE/PP-*g*-PGMA (red), PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/EDA (green), PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/DETA (purple), and PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/TEPA (blue) fibrous sheets.

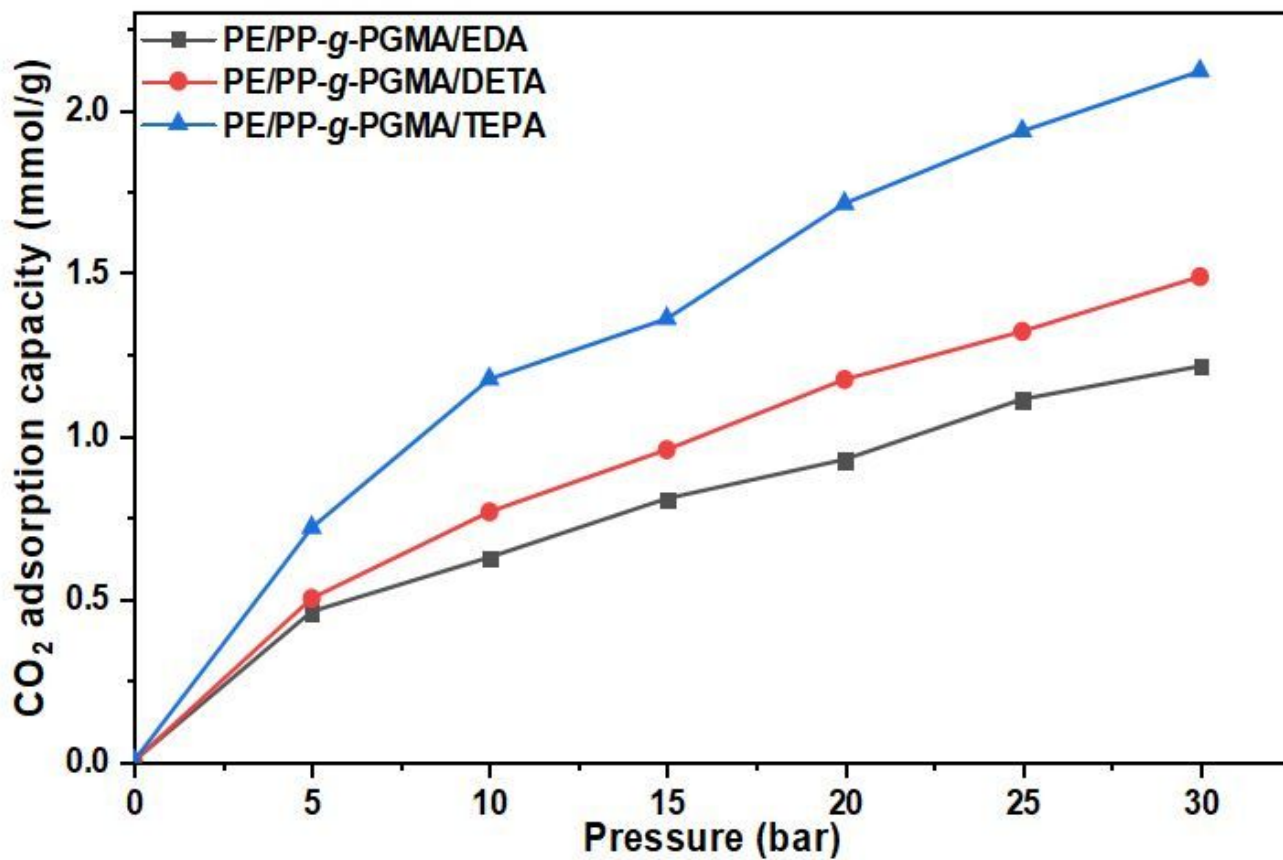


Figure 6

Variation of CO₂ adsorption capacity with pressure on adsorbents containing different amine types (EDA, DETA, and TEPA).

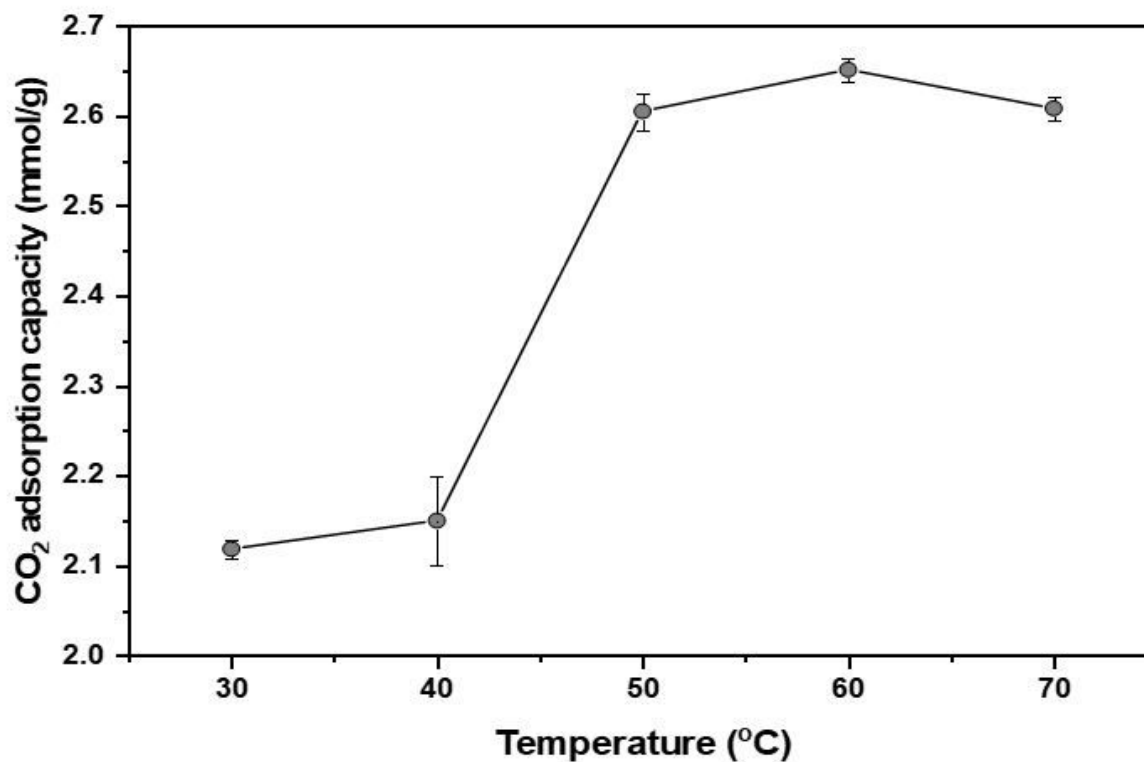


Figure 7

Variation of adsorption capacity of pure CO₂ on PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/TEPA with temperature at 30 bar.

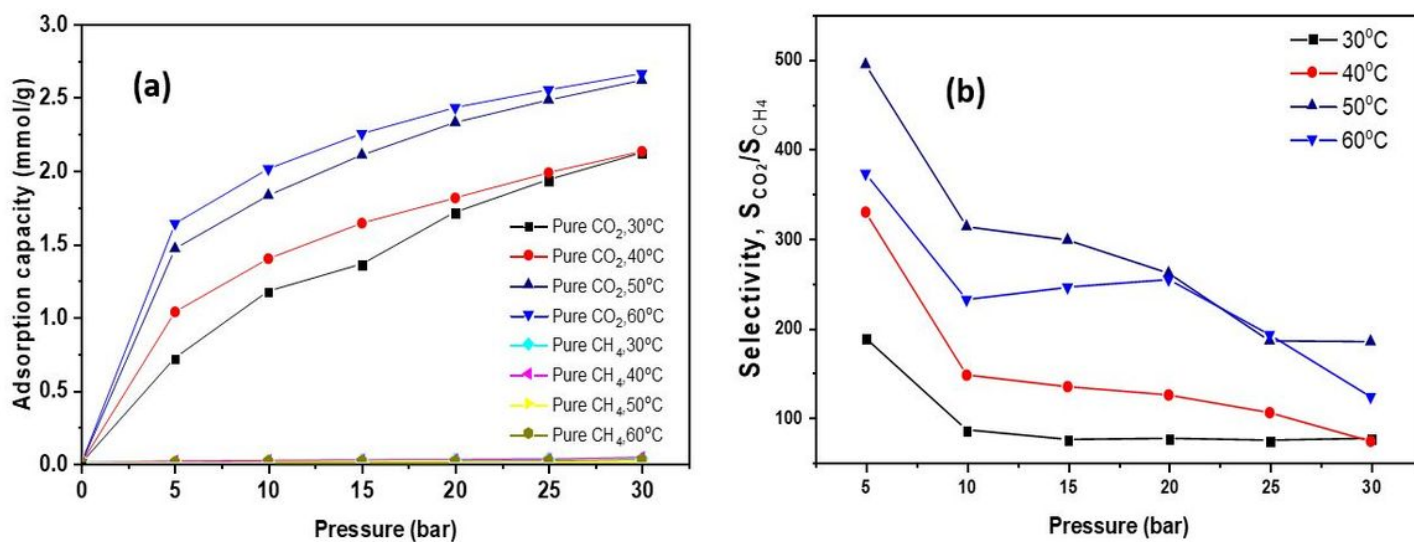


Figure 8

Effect of pressure on: a) adsorption capacity of pure CO₂ and CH₄ gases and b) selectivity of CO₂ over CH₄ at different temperatures.

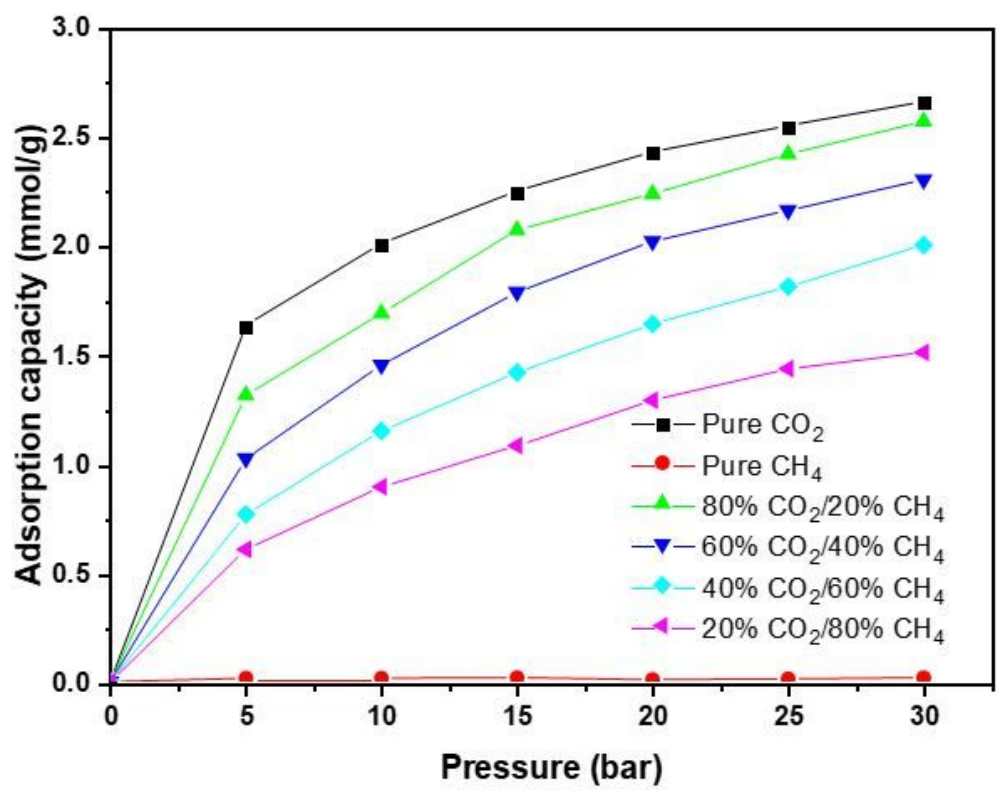


Figure 9

Variation of CO₂ adsorption capacity with pressure for at different CO₂/CH₄ gas compositions on PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/TEPA adsorbent.

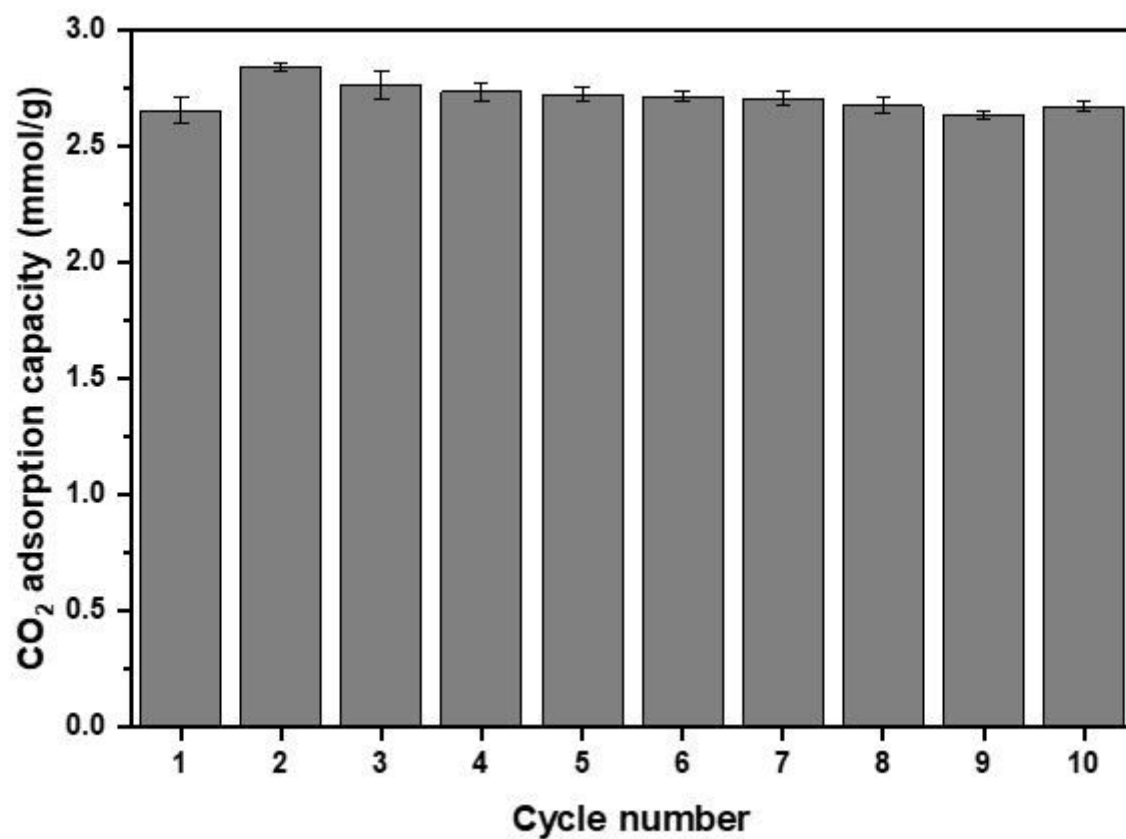


Figure 10

The effect of number of adsorption/desorption cycles on the adsorption capacity of pure CO₂ on PE/PP-g-PGMA/TEPA adsorbent.

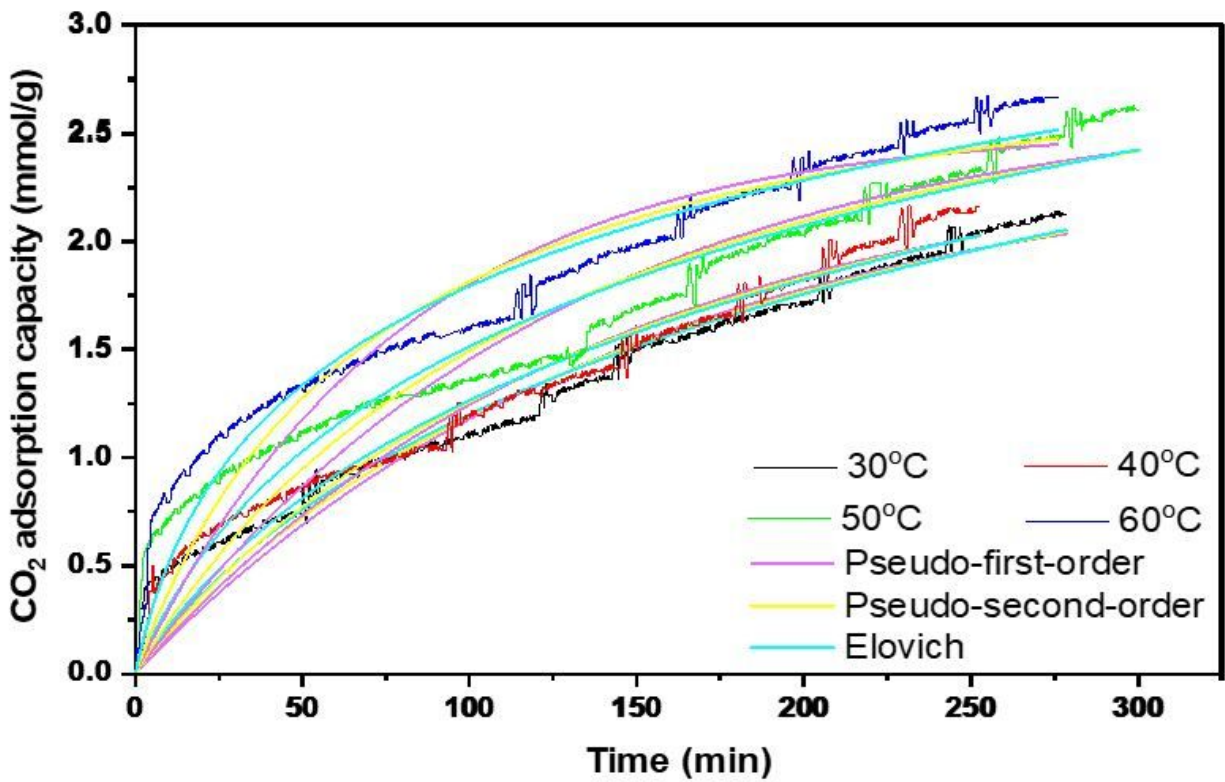


Figure 11

Fitting of CO₂ adsorption experimental data to three different kinetic models at 30, 40, 50, and 60 °C.

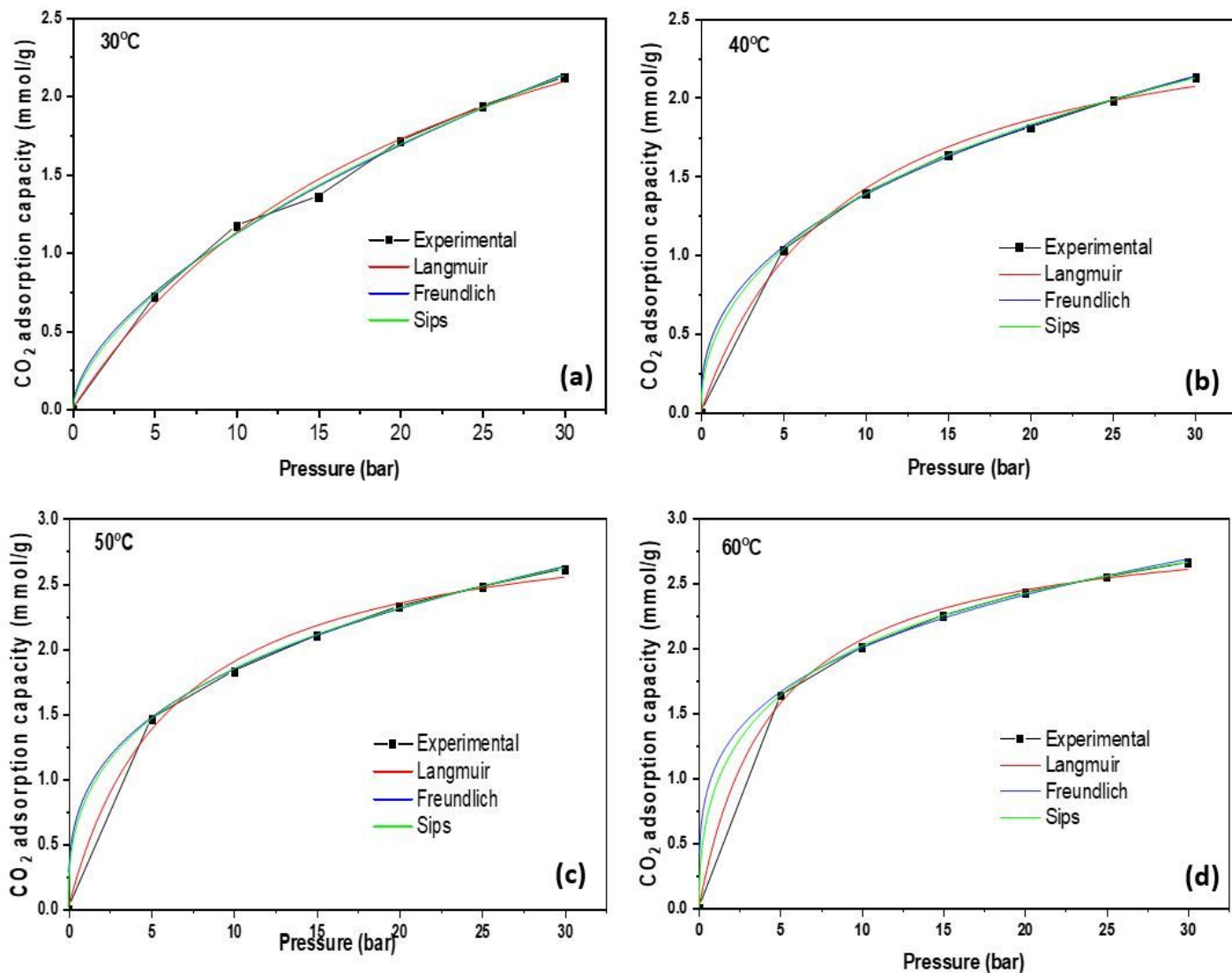


Figure 12

Adsorption isotherms and fitting curve for the two and three parameters isotherm model at different temperatures for PE/PP-*g*-PGMA/TEPA.

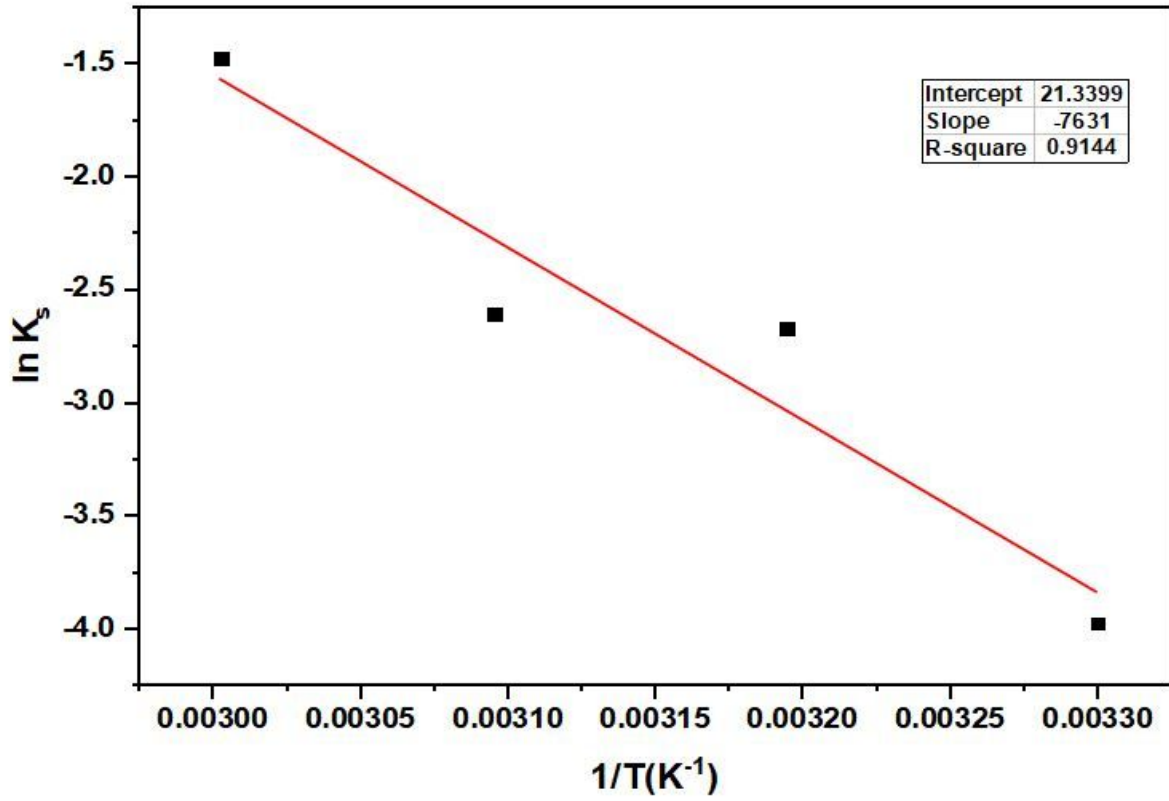


Figure 13

Van't Hoff plot for adsorption CO_2 on PE/PP-g-PGMA/TEPA adsorbent