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# **OPEN** CO<sub>2</sub> Capture in the Sustainable **Wheat-Derived Activated Microporous Carbon Compartments**

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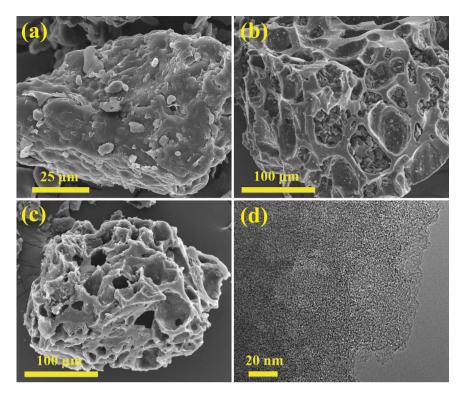
Microporous carbon compartments (MCCs) were developed via controlled carbonization of wheat flour producing large cavities that allow CO<sub>2</sub> gas molecules to access micropores and adsorb effectively. KOH activation of MCCs was conducted at 700 °C with varying mass ratios of KOH/C ranging from 1 to 5, and the effects of activation conditions on the prepared carbon materials in terms of the characteristics and behavior of CO<sub>2</sub> adsorption were investigated. Textural properties, such as specific surface area and total pore volume, linearly increased with the KOH/C ratio, attributed to the development of pores and enlargement of pores within carbon. The highest CO<sub>2</sub> adsorption capacities of 5.70 mol kg<sup>-1</sup> at 0 °C and 3.48 mol kg<sup>-1</sup> at 25 °C were obtained for MCC activated with a KOH/C ratio of 3 (MCC-K3). In addition, CO<sub>2</sub> adsorption uptake was significantly dependent on the volume of narrow micropores with a pore size of less than 0.8 nm rather than the volume of larger pores or surface area. MCC-K3 also exhibited excellent cyclic stability, facile regeneration, and rapid adsorption kinetics. As compared to the pseudofirst-order model, the pseudo-second-order kinetic model described the experimental adsorption data methodically.

With increasing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, global warming is accelerated, accompanied by abnormal climate changes<sup>1,2</sup>. According to the 2015 Paris Climate Conference, the global agreement for the reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions was strengthened<sup>3</sup>. Although most of the emitted  $CO_2$  has been produced from the combustion of fossil fuels, it is inevitable to use fossil fuels as major energy sources because of their availabilities and economic efficiencies, resulting in high demand<sup>4</sup>. For decreasing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, carbon dioxide capture and sequestration (CCS) is considered as one of the promising technologies. In the CCS technology,  $CO_2$  capture accounts for the largest portion of the total cost; thus, it is imperative to develop efficient methods for capturing CO2<sup>5</sup>. Various approaches have been applied for capturing CO<sub>2</sub>, such as absorption, adsorption, and membrane separation. Among these approaches, absorption by using liquid amines has been widely used for capturing CO<sub>2</sub> because of its large capacity and facile application. However, absorption requires enormous energy during regeneration as well as produces polluted products<sup>6</sup>. On the other hand, membrane separation is a simple, continuous operation; however, it suffers from a drawback of limited performance in case of low CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations<sup>7</sup>. Recently, adsorption is considered to be an efficient technology for capturing  $CO_2$  because of its low energy consumption and facile regeneration, without the production of pollution or by-products<sup>8</sup>.

Zeolites and metal-organic frameworks (MOFs) are widely used commercial CO<sub>2</sub> adsorbents, but they suffer from a drawback of degradation of the CO<sub>2</sub> adsorption ability under humid conditions<sup>9</sup>. However, porous carbons can be used for the adsorption of CO<sub>2</sub> even under humid conditions, attributed to their hydrophobic properties; they also exhibit advantages of large surface area with high porosity, rapid adsorption-desorption kinetics, thermal and chemical stability, as well as cost-effective preparation<sup>10</sup>.

Moreover, the characteristics of porous carbon adsorbents can be varied by the use of carbon precursors and activation methods. Activation by physical or chemical treatment is conducted for developing porosities in carbonaceous materials; in physical activation, carbon is partially gasified using oxidising gases, such as steam, CO<sub>2</sub>, and air<sup>11-13</sup>. On the other hand, chemical activation is conducted by chemical reaction between carbonaceous materials and chemical agents, such as KOH, NaOH, K<sub>2</sub>CO<sub>3</sub>, ZnCl<sub>2</sub>, and H<sub>3</sub>PO<sub>4</sub><sup>14-18</sup>. Generally, as compared to physical activation, chemical activation is favored because it creates a well-developed microporous structure

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**Figure 1.** SEM images of (**a**) pristine wheat flour, (**b**) MCC, and (**c**) MCC-K3. (**d**) TEM image of MCC-K3.

of carbon<sup>19</sup>. Also, several studies have attempted to correlate  $CO_2$  adsorption capacity and textural properties, such as surface area and pore volume, for activated porous carbon<sup>20–22</sup>. Recent studies have suggested that  $CO_2$  adsorption capacity at ambient temperature and pressure is closely related to the narrow micropore volume of the adsorbent<sup>23,24</sup>.

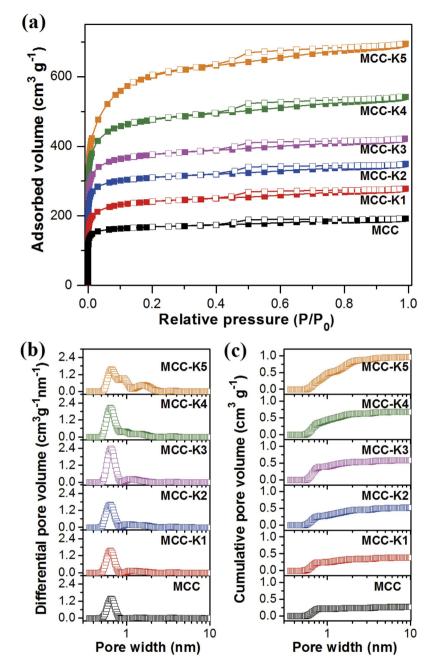
Carbonaceous materials are derived from various carbon precursors, such as polymer, biomass, coal, petroleum residues, and bones<sup>25–29</sup>. Unur *et al.* have prepared nanoporous carbon derived from hazelnut shells via carbonization and KOH activation<sup>30</sup>. The obtained porous carbon exhibited a high specific surface area of  $1700 \text{ m}^2 \text{ g}^{-1}$ and pore volume of  $0.79 \text{ cm}^3 \text{ g}^{-1}$ , the values of which are approximately five times greater than those of carbon without activation. Kante *et al.* have synthesized coffee-based activated carbon by ZnCl<sub>2</sub> activation, with a specific surface area and total pore volume of  $1121 \text{ m}^2 \text{ g}^{-1}$  and  $0.95 \text{ cm}^3 \text{ g}^{-1}$ , respectively<sup>31</sup>. The textural properties of the samples thus prepared significantly depend on the ZnCl<sub>2</sub>/C ratio.

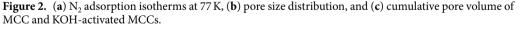
In this study, for preparing novel  $CO_2$  adsorbents, activated microporous carbon was prepared from the carbonization of wheat flour, followed by KOH activation. Wheat contains various polysaccharides, such as starch, cellulose, glucose, and xylose, which are released from carbonaceous structures when wheat is pyrolyzed at high temperature<sup>32–35</sup>. To the best of our knowledge, no studies have been reported about the application of wheat-based porous carbon for  $CO_2$  capture. In our study, varying KOH/C ratios were applied during activation, and the effects of the KOH/C ratio on the textural properties and  $CO_2$  adsorption abilities of the prepared porous carbon were investigated. In addition, the relationship between the textural properties of wheat-based porous carbon and its  $CO_2$  adsorption capacity was investigated, and various characteristics of  $CO_2$  adsorption, such as isosteric heat of adsorption, selectivity of  $CO_2$  over  $N_2$ , adsorption kinetics, and cyclic stability, were investigated.

### **Results and Discussion**

**Characteristics of KOH-activated MCCs.** Figure 1 shows the morphologies of pristine wheat flour, microporous carbon compartments (MCCs) and MCC activated with a KOH/C ratio of 3 (hereafter, referred to as MCC-K3). As shown in Fig. 1a, pristine wheat flour exhibited large irregular-shaped chunks. After carbonization, wheat flour changed to MCC, which is composed of flakes forming big compartments; these compartments contribute to high surface area and pore volume (Fig. 1b). After activation, MCC did not exhibit any significant change in morphology (Fig. 1c). As shown in the TEM image (Fig. 1d), MCC-K3 exhibited worm-like micropores distributed randomly through the carbon. Figure S1 (Supplementary Information) shows the XRD spectra of the porous carbon materials thus obtained, which are regarded as amorphous carbon.

Figure S2 (Supplementary Information) shows the thermogravimetric analysis (TGA) of pristine wheat flour. At or less than 100 °C, pristine wheat flour exhibited a weight loss of approximately 7.6 wt%, attributed to water vapour or steam. In addition, weight started to decrease at ~200 °C, and a substantial weight decrease was observed at around 317 °C. During carbonization, a significant amount of non-carbon elements are believed to be pyrolyzed, with the simultaneous development of pores. Figure S3 (Supplementary Information) shows the Fourier transform infrared (FTIR) spectra of pristine wheat flour, MCC, and MCC-K3, confirming the decomposition of these foreign components. Pristine wheat flour exhibited peaks related to various functional groups.



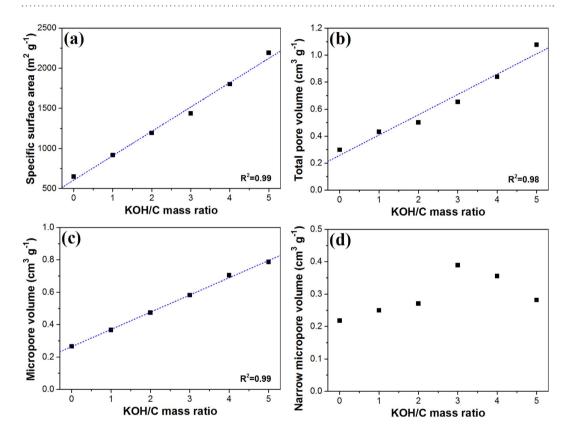


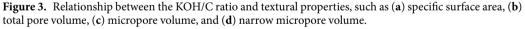
A broad band was observed at 3293 cm<sup>-1</sup>, attributed to hydroxyl O–H, while bands were observed at 2926 and 2857 cm<sup>-1</sup>, attributed to C–H stretching, and at 1742 cm<sup>-1</sup>, attributed to C=O stretching vibration<sup>36</sup>. Peaks were also observed at 1648 and 1536 cm<sup>-1</sup>, characteristic of stretching vibrations of C–O from amide I and C–N from amide II, respectively<sup>37</sup>, while peaks observed at 1149 and 1014 cm<sup>-1</sup>, attributed to C–O stretching vibration<sup>36,38</sup>. However, no noticeable peaks were observed in the spectra of MCC and MCC-K3, suggesting that the characteristic functional groups of non-carbon elements disappear during carbonization.

Figure 2a shows the  $N_2$  adsorption isotherms at 77 K for MCC and KOH-activated MCCs. According to the IUPAC classification, the samples exhibited type I isotherms, indicative of microporous structures<sup>39</sup>. With increasing KOH/C ratio, the amount of adsorbed  $N_2$  increased because of the development of pores. Pore size distribution was estimated using  $N_2$  adsorption data and non-local density functional theory (NLDFT), as shown in Fig. 2b. MCC mainly exhibited narrow micropores with a size of 0.5–0.8 nm; this size is known to be favorable for the adsorption of  $CO_2^{40}$ . More narrow micropores with a pore size of less than 0.8 nm were newly developed as more KOH was consumed during activation up to a KOH/C ratio of 3. However, additional larger pores with a size of 0.8–2.0 nm were simultaneously observed for KOH-activated MCCs, attributed to the further reaction of small-sized pores in carbon with KOH, resulting in enlarged pores. As can be clearly observed for highly

	Textural properties				CO <sub>2</sub> adsorption capacity <sup>d)</sup> (mol kg <sup>-1</sup> )			
Sample	$S_{BET} (m^2 g^{-1})$	$V_T^{\ a)} (cm^3  g^{-1})$	$V_m^{\ b)} (cm^3 g^{-1})$	$V_{nm}{}^{c)} (cm^3 g^{-1})$	0°C	25°C	50°C	75°C
MCC	648	0.299	0.266	0.218	3.44	2.28	1.32	0.48
MCC-K1	916	0.432	0.367	0.250	3.82	2.42	1.41	0.78
MCC-K2	1057	0.581	0.474	0.271	4.41	2.77	1.60	0.78
MCC-K3	1438	0.654	0.581	0.389	5.70	3.48	1.98	1.08
MCC-K4	1801	0.840	0.704	0.355	5.29	3.13	1.73	0.84
MCC-K5	2192	1.076	0.786	0.282	4.42	2.56	1.38	0.76

Table 1. Textural properties and CO<sub>2</sub> adsorption capacities at temperatures of 0, 25, 50, and 75 °C for MCC and KOH-activated MCCs. <sup>a)</sup>Total pore volume at  $P/P_0 \sim 0.99$ ; <sup>b)</sup>Micropore volume determined from the Dubinin–Radushkevich equation; <sup>c)</sup>Cumulative narrow micropore volume calculated in the range of pore sizes up to 0.8 nm; <sup>d)</sup>CO<sub>2</sub> adsorption capacity measured under a pressure of ~1 bar.

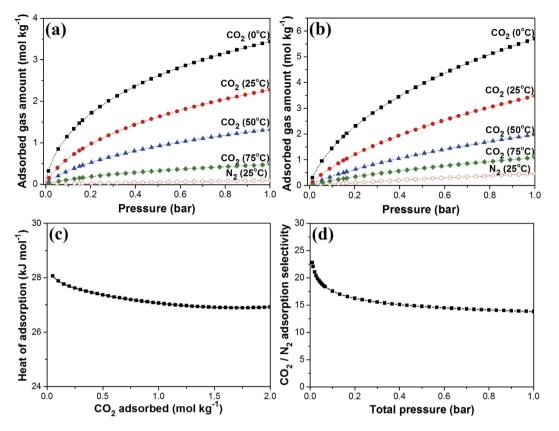




activated MCC (KOH/C = 4 or 5), when a large amount of KOH was used for activation, the number of enlarged pores became significantly greater than that of newly developed small-sized pores. Hence, the narrow micropore volumes of MCC-K4 and MCC-K5 are less than that of MCC-K3.

Table 1 summarizes the textural properties obtained from N<sub>2</sub> adsorption isotherms at 77 K. MCC exhibited a high specific surface area of 648 m<sup>2</sup> g<sup>-1</sup> and a total pore volume of 0.299 cm<sup>3</sup> g<sup>-1</sup>, indicating potential for applications as an adsorbent. The textural properties of MCC were further enhanced by KOH activation. With increasing KOH/C ratio during KOH activation, the textural properties gradually increased, and the highest specific surface area of 2192 m<sup>2</sup> g<sup>-1</sup> and total pore volume of 1.076 cm<sup>3</sup> g<sup>-1</sup> were obtained for MCC-K5. Also, the volume of narrow micropores having a size of less than 0.8 nm was estimated from the cumulative pore volume (Fig. 2c). The volume of the narrow micropores increased with increasing KOH/C ratio until 3, followed by the decrease in volume for MCC-K4 and MCC-K5, attributed to pore enlargement.

Figure 3 shows the relationship between the KOH/C ratio during activation and the textural properties of samples. With increasing KOH/C ratio, new micropores were developed, and the size of pores enlarged, resulting in increased specific surface area, total pore volume, and micropore volume. According to the calculated linearity (coefficient of determination,  $R^2 > 0.98$ ), the specific surface area, total pore volume, and micropore volume, and micropore volume of MCC were highly correlated with the amount of KOH used during activation. However, poor correlation was observed between the KOH/C ratio and volume of narrow micropores, with a pore size of less than 0.8 nm, because excess of KOH (KOH/C = 4 or 5) widened pores, eventually decreasing the narrow micropore volume.



**Figure 4.** CO<sub>2</sub> adsorption isotherms at 0, 25, 50, and 75 °C, and N<sub>2</sub> adsorption isotherm at 25 °C of (**a**) MCC and (**b**) MCC-K3. Symbols and dashed lines represent experimental data and fitted results, respectively. (**c**) Isosteric heat of adsorption and (**d**) IAST-predicted adsorption selectivity of CO<sub>2</sub> over N<sub>2</sub> at 25 °C for a CO<sub>2</sub>/N<sub>2</sub> binary gas mixture (CO<sub>2</sub>/N<sub>2</sub> = 15:85) for MCC-K3.

**CO**<sub>2</sub> adsorption on KOH-activated MCCs. Table 1 also summarizes the CO<sub>2</sub> adsorption capacities at 0, 25, 50, and 75 °C. MCC exhibited CO<sub>2</sub> adsorption capacities of 3.44 mol kg<sup>-1</sup> and 2.28 mol kg<sup>-1</sup> at 0 °C and 25 °C, respectively, and after KOH activation, the adsorption capacities gradually increased with increasing KOH/C ratio up to 3, with the highest CO<sub>2</sub> adsorption capacity of 5.70 mol kg<sup>-1</sup> and 3.48 mol kg<sup>-1</sup> at 0 °C and 25 °C, respectively, for MCC-K3. The CO<sub>2</sub> adsorption capacity of MCC-K3 was higher or comparable to those reported recently for porous carbons, such as N-doped carbon and porous carbon activated by KOH, CO<sub>2</sub>, or steam (Table S1, Supplementary Information)<sup>41-52</sup>. When excess of KOH was used for activation, the CO<sub>2</sub> adsorption capacity

rather decreased to 3.13 and 2.56 mol kg<sup>-1</sup> at 25 °C for MCC-K4 and MCC-K5, respectively. Figure 4a,b show the adsorption isotherms of CO<sub>2</sub> and N<sub>2</sub> for MCC and MCC-K3, respectively. Adsorption isotherms fitted well with the dual-site Langmuir–Freundlich model. High CO<sub>2</sub> adsorption capacities were obtained at low temperature, implying that the adsorption of CO<sub>2</sub> on MCC and MCC-K3 corresponds to exothermic physisorption. As shown in Figure S4 (Supplementary Information), other KOH-activated MCC samples also exhibited similar trends. In addition, notably, MCC and MCC-K3 exhibited higher adsorption capacities for CO<sub>2</sub> as compared to N<sub>2</sub>, attributed to the high quadrupole moment and polarizability of CO<sub>2</sub> molecules, which in turn induce stronger interaction between the carbon structure and CO<sub>2</sub> as compared to N<sub>2</sub><sup>53</sup>.

Figure 4c shows the isosteric heat of adsorption calculated from the Clausius–Clapeyron equation for MCC-K3 using CO<sub>2</sub> isotherms at 0, 25, and 50 °C<sup>54</sup>. Under low adsorption coverage, isosteric heat was as high as  $28.1 \text{ kJ} \text{ mol}^{-1}$ , attributed to the strong interaction between CO<sub>2</sub> molecules and the most favorable active sites on porous carbon. However, with increasing adsorption coverage, the favorable active sites were consecutively occupied by CO<sub>2</sub>, and the isosteric heat of adsorption decreased to  $26.9 \text{ kJ} \text{ mol}^{-1}$ , accompanied with weak interactions between adsorbent and adsorbate. The calculated isosteric heat of adsorption varied in the range of ordinary physisorption (<40 kJ mol<sup>-1</sup>); hence, facile desorption is expected during regeneration.

Typically, the gas emitted from the combustion of fossil fuels contains approximately 15% CO<sub>2</sub> with mostly balanced N<sub>2</sub>. Hence, it is imperative that the adsorbent exhibits high selectivity for CO<sub>2</sub> over N<sub>2</sub>. Selectivity can be calculated by the ideal adsorption solution theory (IAST) using isotherms of CO<sub>2</sub> and N<sub>2</sub> at 25 °C<sup>55</sup>. The IAST-predicted selectivity of MCC-K3 for a 15% CO<sub>2</sub> and 85% N<sub>2</sub> mixture was 15–23 (Fig. 4d). CO<sub>2</sub>/N<sub>2</sub> selectivity determined by applying an initial slope calculation method was ~16 (Figure S5, Supplementary Information); these selectivity values are comparable to those of porous carbon reported recently (Table S1, Supplementary Information). The selectivity of CO<sub>2</sub> over N<sub>2</sub> can be further enhanced by amine modification or heteroatom doping<sup>56–59</sup>.

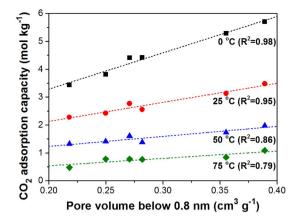


Figure 5. Correlation between  $\rm CO_2$  adsorption capacities and volume of narrow micropores with a pore size of less than 0.8 nm.

For better understanding the effect of textural properties on  $CO_2$  adsorption, the  $CO_2$  adsorption capacities measured at 0, 25, 50, and 75 °C were correlated with the specific surface area, total pore volume, micropore volume, and volume of narrow micropores with a pore size of less than 0.8 nm for KOH-activated MCCs. The specific surface area, total pore volume, and micropore volume were not related to  $CO_2$  adsorption capacities (Figure S6, Supplementary Information). However, the volume of the narrow micropores with a pore size of less than 0.8 nm exhibited very close correlation with  $CO_2$  adsorption capacities, having high R<sup>2</sup> values (Fig. 5). This result is in agreement with those reported in recent studies, suggesting that the narrow micropore volume plays a significant role in determining  $CO_2$  adsorption performance<sup>60–62</sup>. The  $CO_2$  adsorption capacity has been reported to be primarily affected by the number of narrow micropores because the van der Waals force from the surrounding walls of narrow micropores is thought to provide favorable interaction between the carbon structure and  $CO_2$ molecules<sup>63</sup>. Hence, for the efficient adsorption of  $CO_2$ , it is imperative to develop narrow micropores of less than 0.8 nm in porous carbon by controlling the KOH/C ratio.

As important characteristics for  $CO_2$  adsorbents, adsorption kinetics, cyclic stability, and ease of regeneration are as important as high  $CO_2$  adsorption capacity. For evaluating adsorption kinetics, the adsorption of  $CO_2$  on MCC-K3 was measured by TGA at 30, 40, and 50 °C under atmospheric pressure. After the start of  $CO_2$  gas flow,  $CO_2$  adsorption uptake reached 50% of the equilibrium capacity within 2 min and 70% within 5 min, indicating a rapid  $CO_2$  adsorption rate. In addition, for describing the  $CO_2$  adsorption rate of MCC-K3, the widely used pseudo-first-order and pseudo-second-order models were applied. The pseudo-first-order model is based on the adsorption rate, which is proportional to the number of possible adsorption sites, and it can be expressed as follows:

$$\frac{\partial q_t}{\partial t} = k_1 (q_e - q_t) \tag{1}$$

Here,  $q_e$  and  $q_t$  denote the adsorption uptake at equilibrium and at certain time *t*, respectively, and  $k_1$  is the pseudo-first-order adsorption rate constant. By applying the boundary conditions of  $q_t = 0$  at t = 0 and  $q_t = q_e$  at  $t = \infty$ , the integrated form of equation can be written as follows:

$$q_t = q_e (1 - e^{-\kappa_1 t}) \tag{2}$$

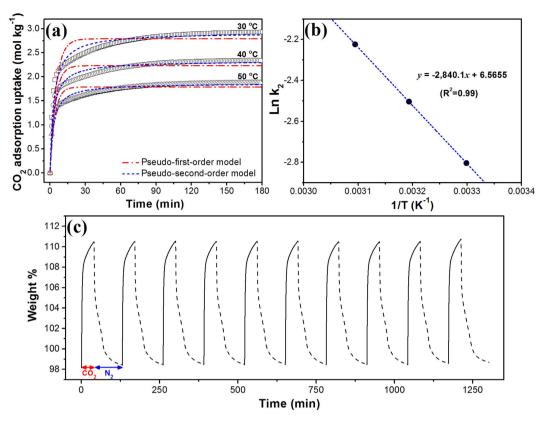
The pseudo-second-order model is based on the assumption that the adsorption rate is proportional to the square of the number of possible adsorption sites, and the adsorption rate can be expressed as follows:

$$\frac{\partial q_t}{\partial t} = k_2 (q_e - q_t)^2 \tag{3}$$

Here,  $k_2$  is the pseudo-second-order adsorption rate constant. By integrating the rate equation with the same boundary conditions of  $q_t = 0$  at t = 0 and  $q_t = q_e$  at  $t = \infty$ , equation (3) can be rearranged as follows:

$$q_t = \frac{1}{\frac{1}{k_2 q_e^{2t}} + \frac{1}{q_e}}$$
(4)

Figure 6a shows the fitted curves using the pseudo-first-order and pseudo-second-order kinetic models, and Table 2 summarizes the related parameters. As compared to the pseudo-first-order model ( $R^2 = 0.70-0.72$ ), the pseudo-second-order model well fitted the experimental data ( $R^2 = 0.92-0.96$ ) at various adsorption temperatures. The small normalized standard deviation ( $\Delta Err\%$ ) also confirms that the pseudo-second-order model is more suitable than the pseudo-first-order model for describing experimental data.



**Figure 6.** (a)  $CO_2$  adsorption kinetics for MCC-K3. Symbols and dashed lines denote experimental data and model fittings, respectively. (b) Arrhenius plot of pseudo-second-order adsorption rate constants for the estimation of activation energy of  $CO_2$  adsorption on MCC-K3. (c) Cyclic stability test for MCC-K3. Solid and dashed lines represent the adsorption and desorption steps, respectively.


	Pseud	o-first-or	der	Pseudo-second-order			
Temperature (°C)	$K_1 ({ m min}^{-1})$	R <sup>2</sup>	ΔErr%	$\frac{K_2 (\mathrm{mol}\mathrm{kg}^{-1}}{\mathrm{min}^{-1}})$	R <sup>2</sup>	ΔErr%	
30	0.198	0.72	8.37	0.061	0.96	4.27	
40	0.232	0.71	7.50	0.082	0.92	4.58	
50	0.254	0.70	7.41	0.108	0.92	4.08	

Table 2. CO<sub>2</sub> adsorption kinetic parameters for MCC-K3 using pseudo-first-order and pseudo-second-order models at temperatures of 30, 40, and 50 °C.

Basically, rate constants are dependent on temperature, and temperature dependency can be described by the Arrhenius equation as follows:

$$k_2 = A \ \exp\left(-\frac{E_a}{RT}\right) \tag{5}$$

Here, *A* is the Arrhenius pre-exponential factor,  $E_a$  is the apparent activation energy, *R* is the universal gas constant and *T* is the absolute temperature. Figure 6b shows the linear plot of the natural logarithm of  $k_2$  against reciprocal temperature, which exhibited reasonable linearity. From the slope and intercept of the linear plot, MCC-K3 exhibited an  $E_a$  of 23.61 kJ mol<sup>-1</sup> and *A* of 710.17 mol kg<sup>-1</sup> min<sup>-1</sup>. Activation energy ranged from 5 to 40 kJ mol<sup>-1</sup>, indicating that CO<sub>2</sub> adsorption is predominantly physisorption<sup>64</sup>. The obtained Arrhenius parameters can be used for predicting the adsorption rate constants at different operating temperatures.

For investigating the cyclic stability of MCC-K3, a repeated adsorption–desorption test was conducted by alternatingly switching the flowing gas between  $N_2$  and  $CO_2$  at a fixed temperature at 25 °C and ~1 bar, as shown in Fig. 6c. Adsorbed  $CO_2$  was easily desorbed simply by changing the gas flow from  $CO_2$  to  $N_2$ , which was expected from the low heat of adsorption of MCC-K3. During 10 cycles, MCC-K3 was successfully regenerated by gas purging, with cyclic stability, retaining ~99% of the initial  $CO_2$  adsorption capacity.

### Conclusions

In this study, microporous carbon compartments (MCCs) were prepared from wheat flour via carbonization and KOH activation for the capture of  $CO_2$  by adsorption. The carbonization of pristine wheat flour induced the pyrolysis of non-carbon elements, developing big rooms, which can permit gas molecules to access micropores, and the textural properties of MCCs were further improved by chemical activation with KOH. The KOH/C ratio was varied from 1 to 5, and the effects of KOH/C ratio on the textural properties and  $CO_2$  adsorption performance were investigated. With increasing KOH/C ratio up to 3, narrow micropores of less than 0.8 nm were primarily developed, while larger micropores were also produced from pore enlargement with excess KOH. An optimal KOH/C ratio was clearly identified for activation for attaining the maximum  $CO_2$  adsorption capacity of MCC: MCC-K3 exhibited the highest  $CO_2$  adsorption capacity of 5.70 and 3.48 mol kg<sup>-1</sup> at 0 and 25 °C, respectively. The  $CO_2$  adsorption capacity significantly depended on the volume of the narrow micropores with a pore size of less than 0.8 nm rather than the surface area or pore volume of larger pores. MCC-K3 also exhibited excellent cyclic stability with facile regeneration, high selectivity for  $CO_2$  over N<sub>2</sub>, and rapid adsorption rates. As compared to the pseudo-first-order model, the pseudo-second-order kinetic model described the experimental adsorption data methodically. The outstanding overall  $CO_2$  adsorption performance indicate that KOH-activated MCCs can be promising  $CO_2$  adsorbents.

### Methods

**Synthesis of MCC and KOH-activated MCCs.** For preparing microporous carbon compartments (MCCs), first, pristine wheat flour was placed in a horizontal cylindrical furnace with an inner diameter of 50 mm and then heated at a rate of 5 °C min<sup>-1</sup> up to 900 °C under N<sub>2</sub>. Heating was maintained for 2 h. The MCC thus obtained was ground with an agitator mortar.

For activation, MCC was mixed with the prepared KOH solution by continuous stirring at 60 °C for 2 h. The KOH to MCC weight ratio varied in the range from 1 to 5. The mixture was then dried at 110 °C overnight, and the dried material was activated at 700 °C for 1 h at a heating rate of 5 °C min<sup>-1</sup> under N<sub>2</sub>. The resulting material was thoroughly washed with a 10% HCl solution for removing any inorganic salt and then washed with distilled water. KOH-activated MCC is denoted as MCC-Kx, where x denotes the KOH/C ratio.

**Sample characterization.** The surface morphologies of KOH-activated MCCs were analyzed by scanning electron microscope (SEM, S-4300, Hitachi) and high-resolution transmission electron microscope (HRTEM, G2 F30ST, Tecnai). The specific surface area was estimated by the Brunauer, Emmett, and Teller (BET) equation based on the information obtained by N<sub>2</sub> adsorption at 77 K using a volumetric sorption analyzer (ASAP2020, Micromeritics). X-ray diffraction patterns were recorded with an X-ray diffractometer (XRD, X' Pert MPD, Philips) using Cu K $\alpha$  radiation in the 2 $\theta$  range of 5–50°. A thermogravimetric analyzer (TGA, Q50, TA instruments) was used for measuring the weight loss of the pristine wheat flour at a heating rate of 10 °C min<sup>-1</sup> under N<sub>2</sub>.

 $CO_2$  adsorption uptake was measured by the same volumetric sorption analyzer used for N<sub>2</sub> adsorption isotherms. Prior to adsorption tests, samples were degassed at 150 °C under a vacuum (10 µm-Hg) for 12 h, and  $CO_2$  adsorption isotherms were obtained at four different temperatures of 0, 25, 50, and 75 °C. Cyclic adsorption stability was tested by TGA with  $CO_2$  adsorption at 25 °C and atmospheric pressure and desorption under N<sub>2</sub> purge.  $CO_2$  adsorption was carried out for 40 min and the sample was regenerated using N<sub>2</sub> purge for 90 min after each  $CO_2$  adsorption step. Also,  $CO_2$  adsorption kinetic studies were conducted by TGA, recording the weight change under  $CO_2$  for 3 h at temperatures of 30, 40, and 50 °C.

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# **Author Contributions**

K.B.L. and V.G.P. planned and supervised the project. E.J. performed the experiments, and S.-M.H. analyzed data and wrote the manuscript. All authors reviewed the manuscript.

# **Additional Information**

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