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Comparative FTIR Study of Treated Hemp Hurds before and after Their Application in Bio-Aggregate-Based Composites

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Abstract: The incorporation of bio-aggregates in composites with inorganic matrix has become popular nowadays. This paper aims to investigate the effect of alternative binder (MgO-cement) on the degradation of reference and treated hemp hurds bio-aggregates during their long-term incorporation in the composites. Changes in the molecular structures and associated chemical bonds of the chemically (sodium hydroxide NaOH, calcium hydroxide Ca(OH)₂, and ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid (EDTA)) and physicochemical (ultrasound in water and NaOH solution) modified and long-term embedded hemp hurds bio-aggregates in composite compared to reference hemp slices using Fourier-transform infrared (FTIR) spectroscopy as one of the most popular methods for testing lignocellulosic materials were studied. The spectra of reference and ultrasound treated bio-aggregates, used for Portland cement matrix reinforcing, were also reported for comparison. The degree of cellulose crystallinity was used to assess the degradation of hemp hurds samples after treatment and their application in the composite. FTIR spectra have shown some similarity in bands positions representing the main hemp hurds components and binder hydrated phases (magnesium silicate hydrate M-S-H and calcium silicate hydrate C-S-H, respectively). However, the spectra revealed changes in cellulose crystallinity depending on the behavior of the surface-modified hemp hurds structure during their long-term interaction with binder particles in the composite. The evaluation of bio-aggregate samples' performance due to their long-term incorporation in composite matrix confirmed an effect of the alkaline environment of binders on cellulose crystallinity.

Keywords: hemp hurd, treatment, bio-aggregate-based composite, Fourier-transform infrared spectroscopy, degree of cellulose crystallinity.

處理過的大麻塊在生物集料基複合材料中應用前後的傅里葉變換紅外比較研究

摘要：將生物聚集體摻入具有無機基質的複合材料中已成為當今的流行趨勢。本文旨在研究替代粘合劑（氧化鎂-水泥）在長期摻入複合材料期間對參考和處理過的大麻纖維生物聚集體降解的影響。化學（氫氧化鈉、氫氧化鈣）

和乙二胺四乙酸）和物理化學（水和氫氧化鈉溶液中的超聲）改性和長期嵌入的大麻障礙生物聚集體的分子結構和相關化學鍵的變化使用傅里葉變換紅外光譜作為測試木質纖維素材料的最流行方法之一，將複合材料與參考大麻切片進行比較。還報告了用於波特蘭水泥基體增強的參考和超聲處理生物集料的光譜以進行比較。纖維素結晶度用於評估處理後大麻障礙樣品的降解及其在複合材料中的應用。傅里葉變換紅外光譜在代表主要大麻障礙組分和粘合劑的水合相（分別是水合矽酸鎂和水合矽酸鈣）的波段位置顯示出一些相似性。然而，光譜顯示纖維素結晶度的變化取決於表面改性的大麻障礙結構在與複合材料中的粘合劑顆粒長期相互作用期間的行為。由於生物聚集體樣品長期摻入複合基質中而對其性能的評估證實了粘合劑的鹼性環境對纖維素結晶度的影響。

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关键词：大麻赫德，處理，基於生物聚集體的複合材料，傅里叶变换红外光谱，纖維素結晶度。

1. Introduction

The increasing global energy consumption, economic crisis, and environmental risks have encouraged research to exploit renewable raw materials to produce environmentally friendly materials. Recently, the hotspot interest in rapidly renewable raw materials resources such as plant fibers with high tensile strength as a good reinforcing component and/or organic filler into lightweight bio-composite materials is recorded. The automobile and construction industries [1-3] are the key sectors employing bio-composites. The potential of bio-composites to be used as eco-friendly, renewable, and sustainable is the main driving force for research, development, and commercialization. They are promising materials providing an overcoming of high environmental impacts of the construction and building sectors that are mainly related to the high consumption of raw materials, energy demand (40% of all energy), and significant contribution to greenhouse emissions (36% of all CO₂ emissions). Therefore the development of bio-composites for the construction sector could play a key role in transitioning an oil-based economy towards a bio-based economy [4]. Many investigations aimed to utilize biomass lignocellulosic materials in the form of natural fibers and /or waste fibrous bio-aggregates into sustainable bio-composite products [5, 6]. The increasing use of plant lignocellulosic resources into composites with the inorganic matrix is due to their good mechanical properties, biodegradability, non-toxicity, and low carbon footprint [7, 8]. These specific properties make lignocellulosic material an attractive alternative filler component in bio-aggregate-based concretes [9].

Many studies focused on developing new building bio-based materials have a character linking interdisciplinary and sustainability in research to increase the sustainability level of the building industry [10, 11]. At present, hemp as a source of plant raw material is considered industrially and economically important not only for the production of building materials but also for paper, textiles, food, medicine, paints, detergents, varnishes, oils, and fuels too [12]. Industrial hemp (*Cannabis sativa L.*) is one of the world's oldest cultivated and fastest-growing annual fiber plants delivering fibers, hurds, and seeds. This crop is one the most available, has a very high yield of biomass with high cellulose content and unique properties (thermal, mechanical, acoustic, and aseptic). Due to these properties, environmental benefits, and low tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) content, hemp is

considered a valuable vegetable plant for the bio-based economy [13]. Hemp hurds – waste from bast fibers processing, are used as lightweight bio-aggregate in the cementitious binder-bonded composite. However, the heterogeneity of bio-aggregates, presence of surface impurities, and a large number of hydroxyl groups lead to their high moisture sorption sensitivity, cause the chemical degradation of the structure, dimensional variations, which result in the development of a lower quality phase interface between lignocellulosic bio-aggregates and particles of the inorganic matrix in composite [14]. As known, the components of bio-aggregates embedded in composites undergo degradation leading to their decomposition in an alkaline environment justified by the low compatibility between hemp hurds and cementitious binder particles [15]. Dissolving the components of lignocellulosic materials (lignin and hemicellulose) in a cement pore solution and alkaline hydrolysis of cellulose molecules due to ongoing chemical reactions during the setting and hardening of composite significantly affect these processes at aggregate-binder interfacial zones, and it results in a weaker mechanical performance of the hardened bio-based composite. The mechanisms influencing the kinetics of binder hydration depend on the nature and quantity of the plant molecules extracted [16]. In order to eliminate the disadvantages of natural bio-aggregates and optimize their adhesive power with the matrix particles in composite, new approaches related to the substitution of conventional cement binder [17] and identifying a new way to treat hemp hurds have been applied [18]. Research of bio-based concrete with the most commonly used lime-based binders (e.g., hempcrete) has also been confirmed low compressive strength [19]. Better adhesive compatibility binder particles with hemp bio-aggregates compared to the lime-based binder were observed in bio-based composites with magnesia binders [20]. However, only a few studies were devoted to using magnesia cement in bio-based composites and evaluating their performance [21, 22]. The application of the surface-modified hemp hurds aggregates into composites enhanced mechanical properties in dependence on the binder nature. The long-term interactions between hemp bio-aggregate and MgO-cement involving complex processes are yet not fully understood. To the author's knowledge from the literature, no specific investigations of long-term incorporation of hemp hurds in composite with MgO-cement have been made.

However, the stability and durability of the produced bio-based composites after their long-term hardening are commonly verified from the point of view of the future use of the hemp hurds in commercial products but without studying changes in bio-aggregates.

Therefore, the scientific hypothesis of this work was focused on the elucidation of the causes of poorer compatibility hemp aggregates with particles MgO-cement in the interfacial zones of composite. The findings from our extensive research into the properties of original and modified hemp hurds [23, 24] and the technically important characteristics of the hardened bio-aggregate-based composites with MgO-cement [22, 25] supported it. The novelty of this paper is to give an insight explanation to the effect of MgO-cement matrix on the surface of chemically and physically modified hemp aggregates incorporated in the matrix and to understand the relationships between the qualitative changes of these composite components. This study was conducted on hemp hurds excluded from long-hardened composites with MgO-cement (calcined waste magnesite, silica sand, and alkaline compound, unlike the traditional composition of magnesia-based cement) highlights its significance and originality.

Following the conclusions of our published results, the aim of this work was focused on a comparative study of changes in the surface of the modified and long-term embedded hemp hurds aggregates in bio-based composite compared to reference bio-aggregate before and after its integration into a composite using FTIR spectroscopy. Also, the changes in cellulose crystallinity of hemp hurds samples affected by their long-term storage in composites with Portland cement and MgO-cement (observed by FTIR technique) were compared and discussed.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Original Hemp Hurds

This experimental study used bio-based aggregates of hemp hurds from the Netherlands Company Hempflax (Oude, Pekela) with a wide particle size distribution of particles (8-0.063 mm). Hemp hurds slices as a lightweight waste material (with the density of 117.5 kg/m³) consisted of most hemp hurds over hemp bast fibers. It also contained fine dust particles as a residue from the processing of hemp stems, in particular from milling. Chemical analysis of a milled and oven-dried hemp hurds sample showed that the content of the cellulosic components was 77.28 wt% and non-cellulosic substances – 27.64 wt%, respectively.

2.2. Modified Hemp Hurds

Chemical treatment of hemp hurds was carried out in NaOH, Ca(OH)₂, and EDTA solution. Physico-

chemical modification of hemp hurds was also made by its ultrasonication in water and 0.2 M NaOH solution. A more detailed characterization of the properties of modified hemp hurds has been described in [23, 24].

2.3. Modified Hemp Hurds

The long-term incorporated reference and modified hemp hurds slices (6 years) were excluded from the composite samples prepared from 40 vol. % of bio-aggregates, 29 vol. % of MgO-cement (consisting of the same portion of MgO, SiO₂, and NaHCO₃ components) and 31 vol. % of water. To better understand the impact of mineral binder on the bio-aggregate, two hemp hurds samples (reference and ultrasound treated) included in the Portland cement composites were used. The samples were subsequently dried at 60°C for 24 hours. The designation of the studied hemp hurd samples is given in Table 1.

Table 1 Nomenclature of the hemp hurd samples

Sample number	Hemp hurds sample	Designation
1	Reference (original)	H _{REF}
2	Reference (original) from AB matrix	H _{REF+AB}
3	Reference (original) from PC matrix	H _{ref+PC}
4	NaOH treated	H _{NaOH}
5	NaOH treated from AB matrix	H _{NaOH+AB}
6	Ca(OH) ₂ treated	H _{Ca(OH)2}
7	Ca(OH) ₂ treated from AB matrix	H _{Ca(OH)2+AB}
8	EDTA treated	H _{EDTA}
9	EDTA treated from AB matrix	H _{EDTA+AB}
10	Ultrasound treated in water	H _{USG}
11	Ultrasound treated in NaOH	H _{USG+NaOH}
12	Ultrasound treated from AB matrix	H _{USG+AB}
13	Ultrasound treated from PC matrix	H _{USG+PC}

2.4. Modified Hemp Hurds

After its treatment and subsequent long-term incorporation in the composite, the FTIR spectra of the original hemp hurds were obtained to characterize changes in the molecular structure and functional groups responsible for elements binding. The IR measurements were carried out on a Bruker Alpha Platinum-ATR spectrometer (BRUKER OPTICS, Ettlingen, Germany). A total of 24 scans were performed on each sample, and the spectra were recorded in the range of 4,000-400 cm⁻¹.

In order to determine qualitative changes in cellulose crystallinity, ratios of two absorbance peaks at specific wave numbers were used [26]. The TCI value (the total crystallinity index) is based on the ratio of band intensities (1375/2900 cm⁻¹), and for lateral order index (LOI), this ratio was 1420/893 cm⁻¹. The band at around 1420-1430 cm⁻¹ (assigned to asymmetric CH₂ bending vibration) is associated with the portion of the crystalline cellulose, while the band at around 890-898 cm⁻¹ (assigned to a C-O-C stretching vibration at β-(1→4)-glycosidic linkages) is attributed

were attributed to the intermolecular hydrogen bonds in triclinic and monoclinic cellulose (I_α and I_β) [34]. The strong broad of $-\text{OH}$ stretching in the range mentioned above is also caused by adsorbed moisture.

Another two bands in the regions around 2,945-2,912 cm^{-1} and at about 2,850 cm^{-1} assigned to asymmetric and symmetric stretching modes of aliphatic C-H bonds in the form of methyl and methylene groups are visible in the spectra of all samples [35]. These bands at 2,920, 2912, and 2,849 cm^{-1} are most visible in the hemp hurds modified in $\text{Ca}(\text{OH})_2$ and EDTA spectra. A broad peak observed in this region of FTIR spectrum for the reference sample (Fig. 1) probably comprises the CH stretching and bending vibrations of CH_2 and CH_3 in polysaccharides. The CO stretching at 2,900 cm^{-1} and the peak characteristic for waxes and oils at around 2,850 cm^{-1} present in all samples except hemp hurds sample ultrasound treated in NaOH solution (Fig. 5).

As shown in Fig. 2, the intensity of this peak is lower for NaOH treated sample than a reference sample. In the wave numbers range of 1,800 to 900 cm^{-1} with many absorption bands corresponding to the vibration of various functional groups present in hemp components, only the most visible differences in the spectra are presented and discussed.

The typical band demonstrates the presence of hemicelluloses in hemp hurds samples at 1,733 cm^{-1} attributed to the stretching vibration of an unconjugated C=O group in the acetyl groups [32]. This peak was only observed in spectra of reference hemp hurds (Fig. 1) and ultrasound-treated samples (Fig. 5). Chemical attack of alkaline solutions (NaOH and $\text{Ca}(\text{OH})_2$) degrades hemicelluloses contained in hemp hurds. As shown in [23], the bio-aggregate surface is roughened after NaOH and $\text{Ca}(\text{OH})_2$ treatment.

In the spectra of all samples, the absorption bands observed at 1,155 cm^{-1} correspond to oxygen stretching vibration in C-O-C bonds present in β -glycosidic linkages in hemicellulose and cellulose. The band at 1,103 cm^{-1} belongs to stretching vibrations of C-O and C-C bonds in both components of holocellulose. The peak in the range of 1,032-1,019 cm^{-1} is attributed to C-C, C-OH, C-H ring, and side group vibrations in hemicelluloses.

Typical bands assigned to cellulose were observed at 896 cm^{-1} and in the region of 1,630-1,160 cm^{-1} (Figs 1-5). The absorption band at 896 cm^{-1} is assigned as C-O-C stretching vibration of glycosidic bonds in polysaccharides. The absorption bands assigned to cellulose are observed in all spectra at 1,424 and 1,373 cm^{-1} ($-\text{CH}_2-$ and $-\text{CH}$ bending vibrations), 1,337 and 896 cm^{-1} (O-H bending vibrations), 1,333-1,316 cm^{-1} ($-\text{CH}_2-$ wagging vibration) [36]. In accordance with data in [48], wave numbers at 1,630, 1,369, 1,060 and 896 cm^{-1} are attributed to functional groups in native cellulose.

A significant effect of the alkaline treatment (Fig. 2) and ultrasound modification in NaOH solution (Fig. 5) on the intensity of peak at 1,630 cm^{-1} corresponding to water absorbed in cellulose was observed. According to [37], NaOH reacts with hydroxyl groups present in cellulose, forming the water molecules. Peak around 1,370 cm^{-1} corresponds to CH bending vibration in C- CH_3 . The band observed at 1,155 cm^{-1} belongs to C-O-C asymmetric bridge oxygen stretching in amorphous cellulose (cell walls) [38]. In the wave number about 1,150 cm^{-1} , ring vibrations (C-OH) can be overlapped with stretching vibrations of side groups and glycosidic bond vibrations (C-O-C) (hemicelluloses) [39].

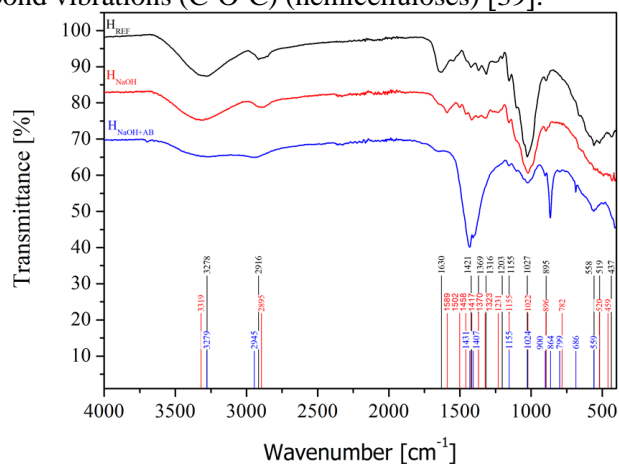


Fig. 2 FTIR spectra of NaOH treated hemp hurds (H_{NaOH}) and long-term embedded in composite based on alternative binder ($\text{H}_{\text{NaOH}} + \text{AB}$) in comparison to reference hemp hurds (H_{REF})

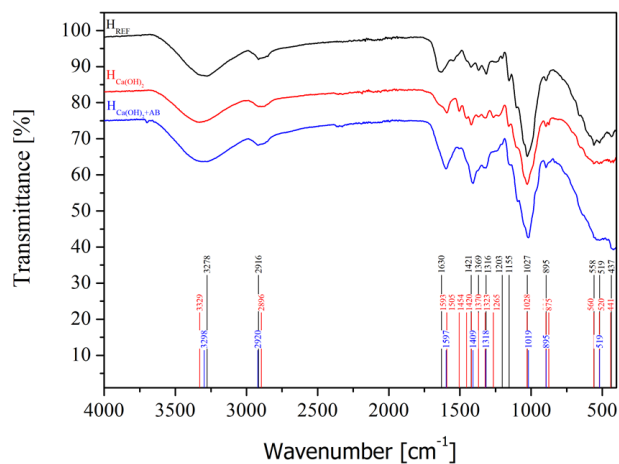


Fig. 3 FTIR spectra of $\text{Ca}(\text{OH})_2$ treated hemp hurds ($\text{H}_{\text{Ca}(\text{OH})_2}$) and after its application in composite based on alternative binder ($\text{H}_{\text{Ca}(\text{OH})_2} + \text{AB}$) compared to reference hemp hurds (H_{REF})

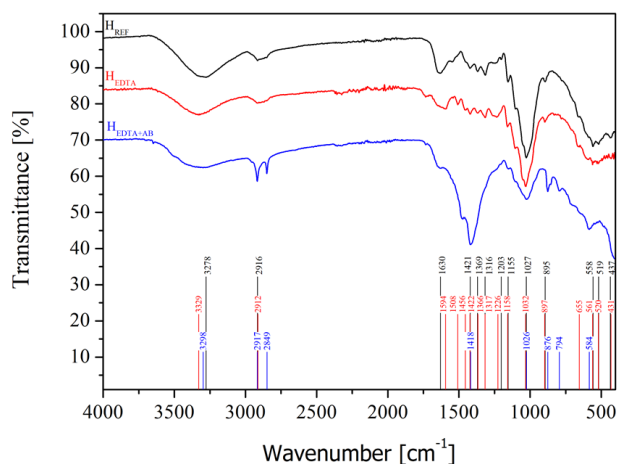


Fig. 4 FTIR spectra of EDTA treated hemp hurds (HEDTA) and long-term embedded in composite based on alternative binder (HEDTA + AB) in comparison to reference hemp hurds (HREF)

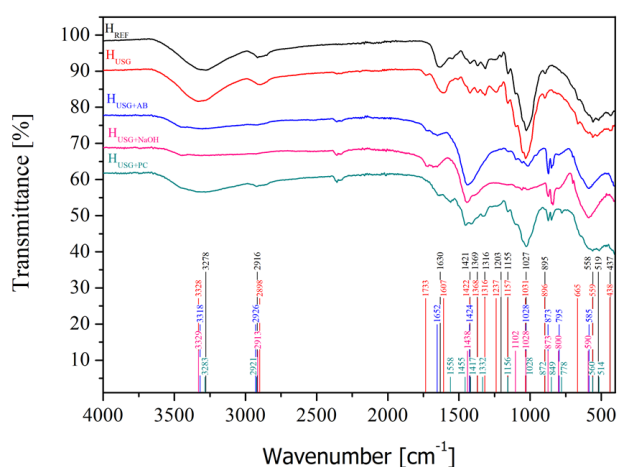


Fig. 4 FTIR spectra of ultrasound treated hemp hurds in water (HUSG) and in NaOH (HUSG + NaOH), long-term embedded samples in composite based on alternative binder (HUSG + AB) and Portland cement (HUSG + PC) in comparison to reference hemp hurds (HREF)

3.2.2. Lignin

Unsuccessful removing lignin from hemp fiber bundles in hurds was indicated by the presence of the sharp peaks located at 1,597-1,589 (aromatic ring vibrations and C=O stretching vibrations) and 1,508 – 1,502 cm^{-1} (C-C stretching from the aromatic ring) in FTIR spectra of $\text{Ca}(\text{OH})_2$ and EDTA treated hemp hurds samples. However, NaOH treatment led to partial removal of lignin. This fact confirms the complicated process of lignin degradation or fragmentation due to strong C-C linkages and other very resistant function groups such as aromatic groups [40]. As is evident from Figs 1-5, the other peaks typical for lignin were observed around 1,420 cm^{-1} and 1,320 cm^{-1} in all samples. Lignin is a complex polymer of aromatic alcohols that shows the bands typical for bond vibrations in guaiacyl (1,265 and 1,214 cm^{-1}) overlapping in a broad peak at about 1,230 cm^{-1} and in syringyl (1,320 cm^{-1}). In addition to these peaks typical of lignin, other bands for vibration of groups present in lignin were observed at wave numbers about 1,454, 1,265, and 1,103 cm^{-1} . Also, in-plane and bending

aromatic vibrations in syringyl (1,122 cm^{-1}) and guaiacyl units (around 1,027 cm^{-1}) were recorded [41].

3.2.3. Pectin

Analysis of spectra of original hemp hurds sample shows pectin characteristic bands of -OH (around 3,440 cm^{-1}), -CH (around 2,950 cm^{-1}), -COO (1,640 and 1,435 cm^{-1}), -CH (1,240 cm^{-1}), C-O-C (1,145 cm^{-1}) and C-C (1,100 cm^{-1}) vibrations. Absorption of the OH group is also well due to hydrogen bonding of the galacturonic acid in pectin. The -CH stretching and bending vibrations - CH_2 - and - CH_3 in pectin are included in a broad peak observed in the region of 2,945-2,850 cm^{-1} . Intense peaks in the region 1,000-1,150 cm^{-1} were due to the high homogalacturonan content in pectin [42]. The peak in the range of 1,032-1,019 cm^{-1} belongs to C-C, C-OH, C-H ring, and side group vibrations in pectin. From Figs 1-5, it is evident some similarity of all spectra, but it is difficult to determine the presence of lignin peaks due to their overlapping with vibrations of other bonds. However, typical lignin peaks are not visible in the spectrum of $\text{Ca}(\text{OH})_2$ modified sample (Fig. 3), probably due to its ability to trap calcium. Other treatment methods did not lead to pectin removal from hemp structure.

These facts obtained from FTIR spectra about a partial removal of the main non-cellulosic components (hemicelluloses and lignin) and impurities (waxes) from the surface of hemp hurds slices during treatments were confirmed by chemical analysis of modified bio-aggregates [23, 24]. The treatment effectiveness is determined by the used type of procedure and the chemical nature of the reagent. Alkaline treatment by NaOH solution under operating conditions seems to be the most intense degradation of non-cellulosic components in hemp hurds. The spectrum of the ultrasound-treated sample showed no significant changes in the main band's intensity.

3.2.4. Inorganic Compounds

The presence of M-S-H and C-S-H phases in the spectra of hemp hurds samples excluded from composite matrix based on the alternative binder and Portland cement was also studied. The broadness of the M-S-H band between 600 and 710 cm^{-1} indicates a low degree of structural ordering (Figs 1 and 5). The formation of M-S-H from MgO and SiO_2 is a slow and long-term process dependent on the crystallinity degree of starting oxides. The dissolution of MgO , the precipitation of $\text{Mg}(\text{OH})_2$, and its dissolution is the rate-limiting step for the formation of M-S-H. As indicated in literature [43], M-S-H phases contain hydroxyl groups bound directly to the silicon and magnesium. The absorption bands below 800 cm^{-1} (458, 585, and 686 cm^{-1}) in the spectra of hemp hurds samples embedded in composite based on AB matrix

(Figs 1-5) could be assigned to the bond formation between magnesium and oxygen.

Cement-based materials are complex multiphase materials with a dominant phase of calcium silicates hydrates (C-S-H). IR spectra of hemp hurds samples excluded from the cement composite show three bands characteristic for C-S-H located in the range between 1,100 and 900 cm^{-1} (broad), at 794, and 460 cm^{-1} assigned to longitudinal SiO_2 lattice vibration, symmetric Si-O-Si stretching and Si-O-Si bending, respectively (Fig. 1 – $H_{\text{REF+PC}}$; Fig. 5 – $H_{\text{USG+PC}}$).

In both hydrated phases, the intensity of peaks corresponding to M-S-H and C-S-H phases varied due to the calcium/silicon ratio and degree of silicate polymerization [44]. Trapping of calcium ions present in the cement by hemp hurds components leads to reduced formation of $\text{Ca}(\text{OH})_2$ and C-S-H nucleation centers. In the spectra, the presence of carbonate ions is also visible around 875 cm^{-1} and 1,418 cm^{-1} (Fig. 1 – $H_{\text{REF+AB}}$; Fig. 2 – $H_{\text{NaOH+PC}}$; Fig. 3 – $H_{\text{Ca}(\text{OH})_2}$ and $H_{\text{Ca}(\text{OH})_2+\text{PC}}$; Fig. 4 – $H_{\text{EDTA+PC}}$; Fig. 5 – $H_{\text{USG+AB}}$ and $H_{\text{USG+PC}}$) due to carbonation process occurring at composite hardening.

3.3. Changes in the Cellulose Crystallinity in Hurd Samples

Changes in composition and structure of the surface of modified lignocellulosic particles strongly influenced the mechanical properties of bio-aggregate-reinforced composites, as shown in [22]. Therefore, the long-termed incorporation behavior of suitably treated hemp hurds in the mineral matrix should be investigated to predict some undesired interactions affecting the durability of bio-aggregates and composite.

Based on published knowledge [23], the treatment process changes cellulose crystalline structures by disrupting cellulose chains' inter- and intra- hydrogen bonding. Also, hydrogen bonding and/or hydroxyl bridges between hydroxyl groups of mineral paste and those in cellulose and lignin are essential for hardening [19]. In order to evaluate the changes in infrared crystallinity of cellulose as the main constituent of hemp hurds, two ratios of IR bands intensities were selected for quantitative analysis as described in part 2.4. The calculated TCI and LOI values of cellulose in hemp hurds samples are given in Table 2 for the ratio of band intensities equal to 1375/2900 and 1423/897. TCI and LOI values were influenced by the treatment process of hemp hurds and their long-term embedding in the composite. According to the literature [45], this increase in cellulose crystallinity during NaOH treatment of hemp hurds can be connected with a loss of the less ordered cellulose. The ratio of TCI and LOI values of NaOH modified sample and reference hemp hurds shows an almost 30% and 40% increase in cellulose crystallinity and ordering.

Table 2 Calculated TCI and LOI in hemp hurds samples

Sample	Hemp Hurds Sample	TCI	LOI
1	Reference (original)	0.93	1.09
2	Reference (original) from AB matrix	0.87	0.94
3	Reference (original) from PC matrix	0.70	0.92
4	NaOH treated	1.20	2.11
5	NaOH treated from AB matrix	0.78	0.82
6	$\text{Ca}(\text{OH})_2$ treated	0.96	1.05
7	$\text{Ca}(\text{OH})_2$ treated from AB matrix	0.89	0.93
8	EDTA treated	0.93	0.98
9	EDTA treated from AB matrix	0.79	0.78
10	Ultrasound treated in water	0.98	1.14
11	Ultrasound treated in NaOH	0.84	0.89
12	Ultrasound treated from AB matrix	0.77	0.87
13	Ultrasound treated from PC matrix	0.86	0.98

This phenomenon could be attributed to the better ordering of cellulose units due to the destruction of cellulose macromolecular chains during their partial alkaline hydrolysis (NaOH treatment) and pulping the bundles (ultrasound treatment), leading to a decrease in the degree of polymerization [22]. The observed increase in the crystalline fraction of cellulose in hemp hurds agrees with data found for the wood and hemp samples after their alkaline treatment reported in [46, 47]. The increase in crystallinity of cellulose after alkaline treatment of hemp hurds was confirmed by methods of FTIR spectroscopy and XRD analysis. However, other values of the crystallinity index have been found [23].

Ultrasound treatment in water shows slightly higher TCI and LOI values than the reference sample. On the other hand, the TCI and LOI values for other treated samples ($\text{Ca}(\text{OH})_2$ and EDTA) were close to those for the reference sample. The combined NaOH and ultrasound treatment of hemp hurds led to a slightly lower crystallinity value indicating a more disordered cellulose structure than the reference sample. Differences in the TCI and LOI values of these modified samples can also be caused by the inhomogeneity of the samples, which was reflected in the measurement of the intensities of the corresponding peaks.

As shown in Table 2, the cellulose crystallinity of hemp hurds (TCI and LOI values) is affected not only by structural and compositional changes due to the treatment process but also by alkaline binder nature and interaction bio-aggregates with binder particles during their long-term embedding in the composite.

Based on comparing the TCI and LOI values of MgO-cement matrix embedded samples, no impact of this binder on $\text{Ca}(\text{OH})_2$ treated sample was appeared due to forming a protective layer on the surface of aggregates. In contrast, cellulose crystallinity of other hemp hurds samples was lower than those of the reference sample originating from composite with AB matrix. These results are probably related to continuing

destruction of cellulose macromolecular chains during their partial hydrolysis in alkaline medium of MgO-cement.

Other behavior of hemp hurds samples (reference and ultrasound modified) after its long-term incorporation in Portland cement composite was found. For ultrasound treated bio-aggregate reinforcing the composite of higher compressive strength than composite based on original hemp [40], the obtained TCI and LOI values were more favorable (0.86; 0.98) than those of comparing original hemp hurds sample (0.70; 0.92). As known, the alkaline environment of MgO-cement is represented by a higher pH value due to the presence of NaHCO₃ component in the alternative binder in comparison to the pH of Portland cement paste [48]. Therefore the explanation of this finding is related to a less impact of the alkaline medium of Portland cement on cellulose [49].

4. Conclusion

In this study, FTIR analyses have been carried out to characterize changes resulting from the long-term interaction between untreated and treated hemp hurds and alternative binder matrix of MgO-cement. To this purpose, six-year-old composite embedded plant waste bio-aggregate and its chemically and physicochemically surface-modified products have been used. To help identify changes in the behavior of hemp hurds embedded in the MgO-cement matrix, bio-aggregate samples from Portland cement composite were also used. Particular attention has been given to this long-term interaction; no data is reported in the scientific literature. The first part of the results obtained from the detailed spectrum analysis of all modified hemp hurds samples confirmed a partial degradation of hemp hurds constituents induced by different treatments. Based on the presented results, it can be suggested that only the NaOH treatment was effective in removing hemicellulose and lignin. The treatment performance of bio-aggregate samples has also been evaluated by cellulose crystallinity. The content of the crystalline phase of cellulose was affected by the extent of degradation. The higher TCI and LOI values observed after alkaline treatment by NaOH compared to untreated hemp hurds indicated an increase in crystallinity and a more ordered cellulose structure. This increase in cellulose crystallinity can be attributed to the reduction of amorphous fractions in the complex structure of hemp hurds.

Cellulose crystallinity of hemp hurds (TCI and LOI values) is influenced not only by structural and compositional changes due to the treatment process but also by interaction with binder particles during long-term embedding of bio-aggregates in the composite mineral matrix of MgO-cement and Portland cement. The evaluation of bio-aggregate samples' performance due to their long-term incorporation in composite

matrix confirmed an effect of the alkaline environment of binders on cellulose crystallinity. Due to the lower alkalinity of Portland cement paste, a higher degree of cellulose crystallinity in the studied embedded hemp hurds samples was found.

These results underline the need to investigate further specific treatments of hemp hurds in response to their behaviors exhibited by the binder matrix. Future research is planned using other more sensitive analytical techniques such as ATR-FTIR microscopic mapping and imaging, X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS), and nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) to characterize both organic and inorganic constituents present on the surface of embedded bio-aggregate in lower portions.

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