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# Dolomite catalyst for fast pyrolysis of waste cooking oil into hydrocarbon fuel

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# **1. Introduction**

The depletion of crude oil reserves and the fluctuation of oil prices prompted research on sustainable and renewable energy ([Raman et al.,](#page-12-0) [2018\)](#page-12-0). Biomass upgrading into fuel is a potential way to generate renewable energy from abundant carbon reserves ([Luo et al., 2022\)](#page-12-1). Biomass as a renewable energy source can supply two-thirds of the total global energy demand and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 ([Gielen et al., 2019\)](#page-11-0). Waste oil such as soap stock, engine oil waste, clay oil, and waste cooking oil (WCO) can be converted to renewable fuel. Waste oil has a higher volatile organic compound than cellulose-based biomass and generally produces a high bio-oil yield (Su et al., 2022). Waste cooking oil consists of at least 95% triglycerides with long-chain fatty acids such as stearic acid (C18) and palmitic acid (C16), and therefore it is in great demand for conversion to fuel ([Kassa et al., 2022;](#page-12-3) [Wu et al., 2022](#page-13-0)). Upgrading the waste oil via pyrolysis into fuel will have a big impact on the future energy industry. Advanced pyrolysis provides a solid platform for the environmentally responsible treatment of waste oil. The efforts to reduce the culmination of waste oil by upgrading to valuable products are aligned with the circular economy guideline ([Su](#page-12-2) [et al., 2022](#page-12-2)).

Pyrolysis is an endothermic decomposition process carried out in an oxygen-free environment at high temperatures producing liquid bio-oil, bio-char, and gasses ( $\mathbb{Z}$ hang et al., 2014). Pyrolysis of biomass provides a facile method for generating fuels and chemicals from renewable resources ([Norouzi et al., 2021;](#page-12-4) [Ben Hassen Trabelsi et al., 2018](#page-11-1)). Pyrolysis offers flexibility in operation throughout a wide temperature range and air pressure, converting waste oil into high-quality biofuels ([Melia et al.,](#page-12-5) [2021\)](#page-12-5). Biofuels are being marketed as low-carbon substitutes for fossil fuels to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and to minimize the associated impact of transportation on climate change (Su et al., 2022; [Jeswani et al., 2020\)](#page-12-6). On the other hand, the disposal techniques for waste oil such as gasification, transesterification, hydrotreating, solvent extraction, and membrane technology struggle to achieve satisfactory

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results due to high processing energy and times that contributed to higher operating costs, and also the generation of hazardous pollution from the processes ([Su et al., 2022](#page-12-2)).

Bio-oil containing olefin and aromatic compounds can be obtained through fast pyrolysis of biomass ([Valle et al., 2019](#page-12-7)). Pyrolysis can produce up to 70% of the liquid bio-oil yield from biomass feedstock ([Galadima and Muraza, 2015](#page-11-2)[; Ge et al., 2022\)](#page-11-3). However, the application of bio-oils as fuel is restricted by the low thermal stability, low volatility, high acidity and low calorific value (Dai et al., 2019). The properties of bio-oil were improved with the subsequent treatment through catalytic cracking ([Ibarra et al., 2019\)](#page-12-8), esterification ([Zhang et al., 2015\)](#page-13-2), pho-to-enzymatic ([Guo et al., 2022\)](#page-11-5) and hydro-conversion (Kang et al.,  $2021$ ). The relationships between the structure and functionality of the catalyst determine the conversion, product selectivity, and catalytic lifetime, hence propelling the advancements of heterogeneous catalysis ([Ruddy et al., 2014](#page-12-10); [Fadillah et al., 2021](#page-11-6)). It is necessary to develop a low-cost catalyst to ensure the economic viability of waste oil conversion into bio-oil ([Fadillah et al., 2021](#page-11-6)). Biocatalysts and inorganic catalysts have been widely employed to improve catalytic pyrolysis performance. However, biocatalyst performance is hampered by a slow reaction rate and poor stability due to enzyme deactivation ([Nayab](#page-12-11) [et al., 2022](#page-12-11)). Inorganic acid catalysts such as zeolite Y ([Kassa et al.,](#page-12-3) [2022\)](#page-12-3), ZSM-5 ([Long et al., 2020](#page-12-12)), MCM-41 ([Wang et al., 2021](#page-12-13)) and SBA-15 ([Miro De Medeiros et al., 2022\)](#page-12-14) improved the bio-oil quality. In addition, base catalysts, including CaO ([Wu et al., 2022](#page-13-0)), MgO ([Prasad](#page-12-15) [et al., 2022](#page-12-15)),  $Na<sub>2</sub>CO<sub>3</sub>$  ([Hatefirad and Tavasoli, 2021\)](#page-12-16), and  $K<sub>2</sub>CO<sub>3</sub>$  ([Wang](#page-13-3) [et al., 2021\)](#page-13-3) have been used in pyrolysis to reduce acids and increase hydrocarbon yield. In catalytic pyrolysis, acid catalyst displays significant activity in the aromatization and reduction of oxygenated molecules, while base catalysts facilitated the deacidification of bio-oil from biomass ([Melia et al., 2021](#page-12-5)). In recent years, the use of calcium-based minerals as a base catalyst has been actively developed mainly due to their high catalytic performance and low prices ([Li et al., 2021\)](#page-12-17).

Dolomite  $(CaMg(CO<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>)$  mineral was used as the catalyst for the pyrolysis of municipal solid waste and grass into syngas  $(H_2 + CO)$ ([Conesa and Domene, 2015\)](#page-11-7). [Gao et al., \(2019\) r](#page-11-8)eported that dolomite reduced sulfur content in coal pyrolysis, while others reported dolomite activity in reducing tar content during pyrolysis ([Berrueco et al., 2014;](#page-11-9) [Shien et al., 2019](#page-12-18); [Wang and Shen, 2022\)](#page-12-19). The use of calcined dolomite in the catalytic gasification of rice husks increased the gas yield from 1.23 to 1.42  $\mathrm{Nm}^3/\mathrm{kg}$  and reduced the tar yield from 15.2 to 1.8  $\mathrm{Nm}^3/\mathrm{kg}$ ( $Zhang$  et al.,  $2018$ )<sup>.</sup> Modification of calcined dolomite with Ni nanoparticles and  $MgCO<sub>3</sub>$  enhanced the pyrolysis of WCO (Hafriz et al., 2021; [Kanchanatip et al., 2022\)](#page-12-21). Calcination of dolomite produced CaO/MgO base catalysts that enhanced the deoxygenation and cracking of heavy compounds into lighter hydrocarbon fractions, and reduced char formation ([Ly et al., 2018](#page-12-22); [Valle et al., 2019\)](#page-12-23). CaO/MgO was reported to remove the acidity of pyrolytic oil and increase the concentration of methyl phenol and methyl cyclopentanone on rapid pyrolysis of beech wood ([Mysore Prabhakara et al., 2021](#page-12-24)). Moreover, dolomite is also reported to have high  $CO<sub>2</sub>$  adsorption potential that can be employed to simultaneously reduced  $CO<sub>2</sub>$  emission ([Tao et al., 2021](#page-12-25)).

In this study, fresh dolomite (FD) was investigated as the catalyst for the catalytic pyrolysis of WCO. Comparative studies were conducted on thermal pyrolysis in the absence of catalysts, and when using calcined dolomite to elucidate the superior role of dolomite to enhance liquid biooil formation and to increase hydrocarbon selectivity. The activity and stability of dolomite were investigated by varying reaction times and reaction cycles. Most of the reported studies revealed that calcined dolomite exhibited high activity for the pyrolysis of various types of biomasses. This study observed high catalytic activity of fresh dolomite than the calcined dolomite due to the partial separation of dolomite into  $d$ olomite/CaCO<sub>3</sub> phases. Monitoring the structural changes of fresh dolomite during the pyrolysis of WCO and its bio-oil composition will be beneficial in generating a high-quality bio-oil while employing a minimum step for catalyst activation.

#### **2. Experimental**

#### *2.1. Materials*

The waste cooking oil (WCO) was collected from households in Surabaya, Indonesia. The feedstock is filtered to separate the frying residue contained in the oil. Dolomite was collected from Madura, East Java, Indonesia. The dolomite was grounded and sieved to get the uniform particles at approximately 80 mesh. The sieved dolomite was dried in an oven at 105 °C for 24 h. In addition, calcined dolomite was obtained by annealing at 850 °C for 4 h under air to form CaO/MgO phase.

## *2.2. Characterization of feedstock*

The fatty acid composition of WCO was studied using gas chromatography-mass spectroscopy (HP 6890 GC) with capillary column HP-5MS (length: 30 mx inner diameter: 0.25 mm x film thickness: 0.25  $\mu$ m). The GCMS inlet temperature was kept at 250 °C, and the oven was programmed at 65 °C for 8 min. The temperature was slowly increased at 4 °C/min heating rate to reach 250 °C and maintained at 250 °C for 15 min. The ion source temperature was set at 200 °C. The weight loss of WCO was determined using Hitachi STA7200 thermogravimetric analyzer, at 30–600 °C under  $N_2$  conditions.

### *2.3. Characterization of catalyst*

Dolomite and calcined dolomite were characterized using Fourier Transform Infrared (FTIR), Shimadzu Instrument Spectrum one 8400S and X-ray Diffraction (XRD) PHILIPS-binary XPert with MPD diffractometer with Cu Ka radiation operated at 30 mA and 40 kV. The textural properties were analyzed using Quantachrome instruments version 11.0. The surface area was calculated using Brunauer Emmet Teller (BET), and the pore size distribution was calculated by Barett Joyner Halenda (BJH) methods. The morphology and the elemental analysis of dolomite were analyzed using Hitachi Scanning Electron Microscope Flex SEM 1000 combined with energy dispersive X-ray spectroscopy (EDX).

#### *2.4. Pyrolysis of WCO*

The homemade semi-batch reactor used for the pyrolysis of WCO and the bio-oil products is shown in [Fig. 1.](#page-2-0) The reactor consisted of a stainless-steel chamber (dimensions: 61 cm long and 59 cm wide) with 10 L of total volume capacity. The thermal pyrolysis temperature was varied at 350, 450 and 550 °C, while the catalytic pyrolysis was conducted at 450 $^{\circ}$ C. A total of 1500 g of WCO was poured into a stainless chamber reactor for thermal pyrolysis, and the reaction was carried out to achieve 100% conversion of WCO. The complete decomposition of WCO was achieved when no more liquid or gasses produced from the pyrolysis reactor. For catalytic pyrolysis, the amount of catalyst loading was varied at 1, 3 and 6% relative to the total WCO feedstock. Dolomite was dried in an oven at 105 °C for 24 h before being mixed with WCO. The mixture of WCO and dolomite is poured into the chamber through the feedstock inlet ([Fig. 1:](#page-2-0) part 1 and 2). The reaction was carried out at 450 ° C at atmospheric pressure. Liquid bio-oil yield collected from outlet 4 is labeled as L1, liquid yield from outlet 5 is labeled as L2 and liquid yield from outlet 6 is labeled as L3 ([Fig. 1\)](#page-2-0). The acquisition times for L1- L3 are different, in which L1 is collected first followed by L2 and L3. Nevertheless, the liquid yield collected from all outlets was mixed before GCMS and FTIR analysis. The pyrolytic oil produced from non-catalytic pyrolysis was labeled as 0%FD, while the oil from catalytic pyrolysis using 1%, 3% and 6% of fresh dolomite loading, were labeled as 1%FD, 3%FD and 6%FD, respectively. The non-condensable gas is removed from outlet 8. The pyrolysis temperature was monitored using a thermocouple installed in the reactor in part 9 and the heating stove in part 3 ([Fig. 1\)](#page-2-0). The bio-oil yield and solid residue were calculated after the

<span id="page-2-0"></span>

Fig. 1. The image of homemade semi batch reactor, WCO feedstock and the liquid vield from pyrolysis of WCO.

<span id="page-2-2"></span>pyrolysis achieved 100% conversion, which varied depending on the amount of dolomite loading. The effect of pyrolysis time was conducted using 1500 g of WCO and 6% fresh dolomite (FD) catalyst at 15, 30, 45, 60 and 75 min.

## <span id="page-2-1"></span>*2.5. Characterization of bio-oil and bio-char*

The bio-oil obtained from the pyrolysis of WCO is analyzed using GCMS HP 6890 GC with HP-5MS capillary column (length: 30 mm inner diameter: 0.25 mm x film thickness: 0.25  $\mu$ m). The GCMS inlet temperature was kept at 250 °C, and the oven was programmed at 65 °C for 8 min. The temperature was slowly increased at 4 ° C/min heating rate to reach 250 °C and maintained at 250 °C for 15 min. The ion source temperature was set at 200 °C. 1-bromohexane was used as an internal standard for the quantitative analysis. The bio-char obtained was characterized using a wide -angle X-ray Diffraction (XRD) PHILIPS-binary XPert with MPD diffractometer with Cu Ka radiation operated at 30 mA and 40 kV. The yield of each pyrolysis product and selectivity was calculated by Eqs.  $((1)-(4))$ :

$$
Liquid yield \ (\%) = \frac{weight \ of \ bio - oil}{weight \ feedback \}
$$
\n(1)

$$
Char yield (\%) = \frac{weight \ of \ char}{weight \ of \ feedback} \times 100 \tag{2}
$$

$$
Gas yield (\%) = 100 - (oil yield + char yield)
$$
 (3)

Selectivity = 
$$
\frac{\text{Weight of component Ha}}{\sum \text{weight of all component}} \times 100
$$
 (4)

Ha: specific compounds of hydrocarbons

# **3. Result and discussion**

# *3.1. Characterization of waste cooking oil (WCO)*

TG/DTG measures the mass loss as a function of temperature that offers information on the thermal stability and decomposition temper-ature of WCO ([Sharma et al., 2021\)](#page-12-26). The TG/DTG result in [Fig. 2 s](#page-2-2)howed



Fig. 2. TGA/DTG profiles of WCO.

a gradual weight loss of  $~5\%$  when the temperature was increased up to 320  $\degree$ C due to the evacuation of water and volatile compounds in WCO. The breakdown of monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fatty acids in WCO occurred at 320-472 °C resulted in 96.73% of weight loss ([Zhou](#page-13-5) [et al., 2022\)](#page-13-5)[. Table 1 s](#page-3-0)ummarized the fatty acid composition of the WCO used in this study which was determined using GCMS analysis. The WCO contains a series of C12:0 to C20:3 fatty acid compounds with oleic acid (C18:1) as the main compound at 40.02%, followed by palmitic acid  $(C16:0)$  at 34.72%. Considerable amounts of stearic acid, linoleic acid, and eicosatrienoic acid were also detected in which the composition of WCO was similar to the previous study ([Shen et al., 2019](#page-12-27)). The composition of fatty acid has a significant effect on the hydrocarbon structures. Waste cooking oil with long fatty acids such as oleic acid and palmitic acid will have the potential to produce hydrocarbon fuel. Identification of the main components in WCO and the pyrolytic oil composition will provide insight into the mechanism of the reaction.

#### <span id="page-3-0"></span>Table 1

#### Fatty acid in triglycerides of studied in WCO.



#### *3.2. Characterization of catalyst*

The XRD analysis of dolomite in [Fig. 3a](#page-3-1) shows all the peaks corresponding to the dolomite mineral supported by ICDD card # 10-036-0426. Calcined dolomite showed the formation of  $CaCO<sub>3</sub>$ , CaO and MgO. The high intense peaks of  $CaCO<sub>3</sub>$  (ICDD card # 00-047-1743) appeared at  $2\theta = 23.05$ , 29.39, 36.0, 39.36, 47.53 and 48.47° Meanwhile, weak diffraction peaks of CaO (ICDD card  $#$  00-003-1123) and MgO (ICDD card # 00-002-1207) were observed at  $2\theta = 32.27^{\circ}$  and 37.24 $\degree$  and 20= 36.97 $\degree$ , 42.91 $\degree$  and 62.28 $\degree$  Thermal decomposition of dolomite to CaO/MgO follows two-stage processes that involve the decomposition of dolomite into CaCO<sub>3</sub> and MgO (I) at 550–765 °C, and the decomposition of CaCO<sub>3</sub> into CaO (II) at >900 °C ([Olszak-Humienik](#page-12-28) [and Jablonski, 2014;](#page-12-28) [Maitra et al., 2005\)](#page-12-29). Calcium carbonate dissociation into the extremely reactive calcium oxide occurs during the second stage of the dolomite decomposition. The process is reversible, in which calcium oxide can be carbonated and hydroxylated with carbon dioxide and moisture from the air to form  $CaCO<sub>3</sub>$ , causing a weak peak of CaO in XRD analysis.

<span id="page-3-1"></span>
$$
CaMg(CO3)2 \leftrightarrow CaCO3 + MgO + CO2
$$
 (5)

$$
CaCO_3 \leftrightarrow CaO + CO_2 \tag{6}
$$

Powder XRD analysis was also conducted on the dolomite catalyst recovered after the reaction which revealed a mixture of dolomite and calcium carbonate ([Fig. 3b](#page-3-1)). The dolomite phase appeared at  $20: 24.00$ , 31.06, 33.46, 37.40, 41.35, 45.07. 50.55 and 51.20, while the calcium carbonate phase was observed at 20: 23.30, 29.43, 36.25, 39.60, 43.36, 47.53, and 48.65. The XRD analysis also showed evidence of carbon char formation. The XRD analysis of solid residue from thermal pyrolysis without dolomite showed a broad diffraction peak at  $2\theta = 20-30^{\circ}$  which corresponds to carbonaceous char ([Zhu et al., 2020](#page-13-6)). Char deposit was also observed when using 1% of fresh dolomite (1%FD). No discernible carbon char residue was observed on the recovered solid from 3%FD and 6%FD, which indicates dolomite inhibits char formation during catalytic pyrolysis of WCO. Despite all the dolomite peaks being preserved after pyrolysis, peaks corresponding to calcium carbonate were observed regardless of catalyst concentrations. Nevertheless, calcium carbonate concentration on the spent catalyst was lower with increasing the loading of the catalyst.

Calcined dolomite formed CaO/MgO mixtures that offer synergy towards pyrolysis reaction. MgO reduced the acid composition of bio-oil through ketonization and condensation aldol ([B. Valle et al., 2019\)](#page-12-23), while CaO catalyzed the decarboxylation reaction to form hydrocarbon  $(X.$  Chen et al., 2019). The deoxygenation of hydroxyl, carbonyl and carboxyl compounds occurred on CaO, which leads to the formation of aliphatic hydrocarbons ([Wu et al., 2022](#page-13-0)). MgO was reported to catalyze the decomposition of volatile macromolecular compounds and prevent the deactivation of CaO active sites caused by char formation ([Islam,](#page-12-30) [2020\)](#page-12-30). Charusiri, 2017 reported that CaO and MgO were very effective in removing carboxyl and carbonyl groups from bio-oil ( [Charusiri and](#page-11-11)  [Vitidsant, 2017\)](#page-11-11). However, the synergy between CaO and MgO reduced the formation of carbon from aliphatic hydrocarbons and produced more volatiles into non-condensable gasses ([Putun, 2010\)](#page-12-31). The basicity of CaO/MgO also tends to capture  $CO<sub>2</sub>$  which leads to the formation of  $CaCO<sub>3</sub>$  and bio-char ([Valle et al., 2020](#page-12-32)).

The FTIR analysis of dolomite in [Fig. 4 s](#page-4-0)hows the absorption bands at 722, 874, 1446 and 3471  $cm^{-1}$  (Susianti et al., 2022). In general, the strong bands at 722, 874 and 1446  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  exhibited the in-plane bending, out-of-plane bending, and asymmetric stretching of  $CO_3^{2-}$ , respectively ([Wang, 2019;](#page-12-34) [T. Chen et al., 2019\)](#page-11-12). The absorption band at 722  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  is a typical characteristic of dolomite ([Ji et al., 2009](#page-12-35)). The presence of water is indicated by the hydroxyl band at  $3471 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ . Similar absorption bands were observed on calcined dolomite at 874, 1067, 1425, 3467 and



Fig. 3. XRD analysis of (a) dolomite and calcined dolomite and (b) spent catalysts recovered from pyrolysis of WCO at different dolomite loading.

<span id="page-4-0"></span>

Fig. 4. FTIR analysis of dolomite and calcined dolomite.

3697 cm $^{-1}$ . However, the peak at 722 cm $^{-1}$  as the main characteristic of dolomite disappeared in calcined dolomite, which indicates the transformation of dolomite into CaO and MgO. The formation of new peaks at 1067  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  is ascribed to the asymmetric stretching of carbonate ([Wang,](#page-12-34) [2019\)](#page-12-34), and 3697 cm<sup>-1</sup> as the OH stretching vibration of Ca(OH)<sub>2</sub> formed by the hydration of CaO ([Carretti et al., 2013](#page-11-13)).

<span id="page-4-1"></span>The  $N<sub>2</sub>$  adsorption-desorption isotherm and pore size distribution of dolomite and calcined dolomite were presented in [Fig. 5](#page-4-1). Both dolomite and calcined dolomite were identified as type II isotherms of non-porous material. Calcined dolomite showed a low hysteresis loop at  $P/PO =$ 0.9-1.0 with increased  $N_2$  uptake. At higher P/P<sub>0</sub>, hysteresis for

capillary condensation is caused by the presence of mesopores between CaO-MgO particles. In calcined dolomite, high temperatures accelerate the thermal decomposition of dolomite which can modify the chemical and physical structure that might affect the catalytic reaction. [Table 2](#page-5-0)  summarized the textural properties of dolomite and calcined dolomite. Dolomite without calcination has a low surface area and pore volume compared to calcined dolomite. The surface area of dolomite is 3.984  $m^2g^{-1}$  and calcined dolomite is 9.708  $m^2g^{-1}$ .

[Fig. 6](#page-5-1) shows the SEM-EDX analysis of dolomite and calcined dolomite. Calcined dolomite has an irregular cube-like crystal structure with non-uniform sizes. However, calcined dolomite formed cube-like



Fig. 5.  $N_2$  adsorption-desorption isotherm and pore size distribution of dolomite and calcined dolomite.

## <span id="page-5-0"></span>Table 2

Physicochemical properties of dolomite and calcined dolomite.



<span id="page-5-2"></span> $S_{\text{BET}}$  (surface area) by BET method.

 $b$  BJH calculated by N<sub>2</sub> desorption.

 $c$  XRD analysis.

<span id="page-5-1"></span> $d$  Calculated using Rietica software.

 $e$  EDX analysis.



Fig. 6. SEM-EDX analysis of (a) dolomite and (b) calcined dolomite

<span id="page-5-3"></span>crystals with flat surfaces. The non-uniform small aggregates disappeared from calcined dolomite. [Table 2 s](#page-5-0)ummarized the elemental composition of dolomite and calcined dolomite obtained from EDX analysis. Dolomite has constituent elements of C: 7 wt%; Ca: 45 wt%; O: 28 wt% and Mg: 20 wt%. Following calcination at 850 ° C, carbon disappeared, thus changing the composition to Ca: 41 wt%, O: 39 wt%, and Mg: 20 wt%.

#### *3.3. Thermal and catalytic pyrolysis of WCO*

Pyrolysis of WCO was conducted in the absence of catalysts referred to as thermal pyrolysis, and catalytic pyrolysis using calcined dolomite and fresh dolomite. Pyrolysis parameters have significant effects on product distribution and liquid bio-oil composition. In this work, the effects of temperature, the amount of dolomite loading, and the pyrolysis time were examined on the composition of the liquid bio-oil product.

# *3.3.1. Effect of temperature on thermal pyrolysis*

The effect of temperature was conducted on thermal pyrolysis with the absence of catalysts at 350, 450, and 550 $\degree$ C. The temperature at 350 °C was chosen based on the TGA analysis of WCO that indicated the fatty acid decomposition begins at 320 °C. [Fig. 7 s](#page-5-3)hows the bio-oil yield



Fig. 7. Product yield of non-catalytic themal pyrolysis of WCO at different tem peratures.

increased from 33% at 350 °C to 79% at 450 °C, with a significant reduction of non-condensable gas from 57% to 19%. At 450  $^{\circ}$ C, the decomposition of heavy molecules in the feedstock increased the liquid yield production. Pyrolysis at high temperatures provides sufficient thermal energy to dissociate the strong organic bonds in fatty acids. When the pyrolysis was conducted at 550 °C, the bio-oil yield was slightly decreased to 75%. The bio-char product also decreased at 550 °C to give only 0.9%, but the non-condensed gas yield increased from 19% to 24.1%. High temperatures promoted the secondary cracking reaction which decreased the formation of bio-char but yielded non-condensable gas. The bio-char was produced from the polymerization of aromatic hydrocarbons and direct condensation reaction of WCO (Hafriz et al.,  $2021$ ). The high pyrolysis temperatures accelerated the kinetics of fatty acids decomposition through a secondary cracking reaction. Rapid endothermic decomposition of WCO caused the condensable gas to be further converted to the non-condensable gas (Dai et al., 2019; [Bartoli](#page-11-14) [et al., 2016](#page-11-14)). Therefore, high temperatures caused the formation of gasses as the dominant products, and hence reduced the liquid yield production ([Williams and Nugranad, 2000](#page-13-7)[; He et al., 2018](#page-12-36)[; Zhang et al.,](#page-13-8)  [2015\)](#page-13-8).

## *3.3.2. Catalytic pyrolysis*

<span id="page-6-0"></span>Since the optimum temperature for pyrolysis of WCO into liquid yield was obtained at 450  $^{\circ}$ C, all the catalytic pyrolysis using fresh dolomite, calcined dolomite, optimization of dolomite loading, and reaction time were conducted at 450  $^{\circ}$ C. [Fig. 8 s](#page-6-0)hows the product distribution and the time required to achieve 100% WCO conversion, when pyrolysis was conducted without dolomite (0%FD), using 1%, 3% and 6% of fresh dolomite (FD), and when using 6% calcined dolomite (CD). Liquid bio-oil yield was slightly decreased from 73.46% when using 1% of fresh dolomite (1%FD) to 68.37% as the amount of fresh dolomite increased to 6% (6%FD). The gas product was enhanced from 24.71% to 30.99% with the increase in dolomite concentration. The presence of high catalyst loading was suggested to lengthen the reactant residence time and initiate the subsequent thermal cracking into low molecular weights gasses ([Putun, 2010;](#page-12-31) [Mishra and Mohanty, 2018](#page-12-37)). The production of char dropped from 1.82 at 0%FD to 0.64% as the catalyst loading increased to 6%FD ([Fig. 8\)](#page-6-0). Increasing the loading of dolomite catalysts enhanced the breaking of the carbon chain to form lower carbon molecules and non-condensable gas ([Wang et al., 2019\)](#page-12-38). Furthermore, the formation of dolomite/CaCO<sub>3</sub> phases ([Fig 3b](#page-3-1)) may have a significant role in reducing char formation as reported on  $K_2CO_3$ promoter, in which the carbonate enhanced the gasification of carbon char into gas products in the steam reforming of biomass-derived tar ( [Kuchonthara et al., 2012\)](#page-12-39).

The use of fresh dolomite in pyrolysis significantly reduced the time required for complete WCO conversion into products. Controlling the reaction time is crucial in achieving a high yield of liquid bio-oil hydrocarbon by preventing secondary reactions such as carbonization, gasification and thermal cracking, which reduced bio-oil production ( [Bartoli et al., 2016;](#page-11-14) [Tsai et al., 2007](#page-12-40)). [Fig. 8 s](#page-6-0)hows that in the absence of dolomite (0%FD), the pyrolysis takes place within 141 min to completely decompose the WCO. The reaction time to achieve 100% WCO conversion was reduced when using a higher dolomite loading, requiring only 75 min at 6%FD. The pyrolysis time was reduced by 50% to complete the pyrolysis reaction compared to the 140 min required in the absence of dolomite.

Catalytic pyrolysis was also conducted using calcined dolomite in the form of CaO/MgO mixture at 6% (6%CD). The liquid yield was slightly reduced to 61.12%, while the bio-char and uncondensed gas increased to 6.36% and 32.52%, respectively. The pyrolysis required 98 min to complete when using calcined dolomite as the catalyst. The amount of liquid yield is lower than when using fresh dolomite and without catalyst, although the value is higher than the reported studies on CaO/MgO catalyst at 21.23 wt.% and 47.8 wt.% ([Valle et al., 2014;](#page-12-41) [Shahruzzaman](#page-12-42) [et al., 2018](#page-12-42)). In dolomite, stable basic sites allowed the pyrolysis of fatty acids in WCO into liquid product. However, calcination of dolomite formed CaO/MgO mixtures that changes the active sites and the basicity of catalyst. MgO reduced the acid composition of bio-oil through ketonization and condensation aldol ([Valle et al., 2019\)](#page-12-23), while CaO catalyzed the decarboxylation reaction to form hydrocarbon ([Chen et al.,](#page-11-10) [2019\)](#page-11-10). The deoxygenation of hydroxyl, carbonyl and carboxyl compounds occurred on CaO, which leads to the formation of aliphatic hydrocarbons ([Wu et al., 2022\)](#page-13-0). MgO was reported to catalyze the



Fig. 8. The bio-oil yield and the determined pyrolysis time at 450 °C from thermal pyrolysis (0%FD) and catalytic pyrolysis using dolomite (FD 1%, 3%, and 6%) and 6% calcined dolomite.

decomposition of volatile macromolecular compounds and prevent the deactivation of CaO active sites caused by char formation ([Islam, 2020\)](#page-12-30). Charusiri, 2017 reported that CaO and MgO were very effective in removing carboxyl and carbonyl groups from bio-oil ( [Charusiri and](#page-11-11) [Vitidsant, 2017\)](#page-11-11). However, the synergy between CaO and MgO reduced the formation of carbon from aliphatic hydrocarbons and produced more volatiles into non-condensable gasses ([Putun, 2010\)](#page-12-31). The basicity of CaO/MgO also tends to capture  $CO<sub>2</sub>$  which leads to the formation of  $CaCO<sub>3</sub>$  and bio-char ([Valle et al., 2020](#page-12-32)).

[Fig. 9](#page-7-0)a shows the distribution of chemical composition in liquid yield analyzed using GCMS. Although 0%FD produced a high amount of liquid product, the liquid yield predominantly contained carboxylic acids at 85.7 wt.%, followed by hydrocarbons at 12.81 wt.%, and ketones at 1.49 wt.%. The hydrocarbon composition increases when using a higher dolomite loading, to give 56.23 wt.% of hydrocarbon yield at 6%FD. Since the amount of carboxylic acid decreased with the increasing dolomite concentration, the result indicates the role of dolomite as the catalyst for removing the oxygenated fragment in the fatty acids. The basic sites on dolomite adsorbed fatty acid molecules through carbon carbonyl to initiate C—O bond dissociation, removing the -COOH fragment.

<span id="page-7-0"></span>[Fig. 9b](#page-7-0) shows the composition of saturated and unsaturated hydrocarbon in the liquid yield. The pyrolytic oil produced in the absence of dolomite mainly contained alkane at 90.11% selectivity. The use of 1% dolomite produced an approximately equal ratio of alkene and alkane, while 6% FD 64.44% alkane selectivity. Bio-oil riches with aliphatic hydrocarbon composition have the potential to be developed as a fuel source. [Fig. 9c](#page-7-0) illustrates the effect of catalyst loading on hydrocarbon distribution. Heavy oil is the dominant product from thermal pyrolysis

(0%FC) compared to diesel hydrocarbon from catalytic pyrolysis. The amount of catalyst loading directly correlates with the production of the gasoline and diesel fractions. The bio-oil obtained from the pyrolysis of WCO can be upgraded to produce transport grade diesel based on the analysis of the physical properties of biofuel in [Table 3.](#page-8-0)

## *3.3.3. Effect of pyrolysis time*

Monitoring the composition of liquid bio-oil obtained from catalytic pyrolysis of WCO at different reaction times provides insight into the mechanism of reaction. A total of  $1500 g$  of WCO feedstock and 6% dolomite were added into the reactor, and the liquid products were collected at different times up to 75 min. The pyrolysis time was counted starting from the first release of bio-oil into the collection outlets. Fig. 10 shows the transformation of WCO into liquid and gas products occurred at a similar rate 15 min into the reaction before liquid bio-oil gradually dominated the products at 75 min. The uncondensed gas yield reached 28% within 15 min of the reaction, with only a slight increase within 75 min to give 30% selectivity. Bio-char begins to form after 75 mins. Under a controlled reaction time, the secondary reaction involving the conversion of triglycerides into lighter hydrocarbons can be suppressed which evetually might lead to carbon char formation ([Muhammad et al.,](#page-12-43) [2021\)](#page-12-43).

Analysis of the liquid bio-oil indicates the conversion of WCO into hydrocarbon was increased from 38.99% to 57.27% as pyrolysis time increased to 75 min ([Fig. 10](#page-8-1)a). Carboxylic acid dominates the bio-oil composition at the early pyrolysis process, suggesting the WCO decomposed via a cracking reaction to form short chain carboxylic acid (Fig. 11a). Longer pyrolysis times are important to decrease the amount of acid in the liquid oil product, by allowing the decarboxylation/-



Fig. 9. The distribution of liquid product yield composition based on (a) functional group; (b) alkene/alkane aliphatic hydrocarbon; (c) hydrocarbon range in gasoline, diesel and heavy oil. Reaction was conducted at 450 °C.

## <span id="page-8-0"></span>Table 3

The physical properties of biofuel.

<span id="page-8-1"></span>



Fig. 10. Distribution of WCO reactant and product composition obtained using 6% dolomite catalyst at different pyrolysis times.

decarbonylation reaction of fatty acids into hydrocarbon ([Wan Mahari](#page-13-9) [et al., 2021\)](#page-13-9).

The selectivity of alkanes and alkenes was relatively similar with increasing the pyrolysis time, although alkanes are the dominant hydrocarbon (Fig. 11b). The liquid bio-oils are further divided into three fractions, namely gasoline ( $C_{6-12}$ ), diesel ( $C_{13-20}$ ), and heavy oil ( $>C_{20}$ ) ([Syamsiro et al., 2014\)](#page-12-44). Fig. 11c shows the heavy oil fraction reduced while the gasoline hydrocarbon enhanced with increasing pyrolysis time. The results indicate that extending the pyrolysis time efficiently transforms carboxylic acid into hydrocarbon via deoxygenation, then followed by catalytic cracking into short-chain hydrocarbon. Hydrocarbons in diesel composition were identified as the main product, with no significant changes in selectivity throughout the reaction.

Analysis of products obtained from thermal pyrolysis and catalytic pyrolysis of WCO showed the role of dolomite to accelerate the pyrolysis process while simultaneously increasing the formation of hydrocarbon fuel. XRD of the spent dolomite recovered after pyrolysis of WCO is shown in Fig. 12. Dolomite was transformed to calcium carbonate within 15 min of the reaction, and the intensity of XRD CaCO<sub>3</sub> peaks was enhanced at longer pyrolysis time. However, the peaks corresponding to dolomite were still observed up to 75 min suggesting dolomite transformed into dolomite/CaCO<sub>3</sub> phases via partial separation as will be described in the following section.

#### *3.4. Catalyst reusability and stability test*

Analysis of dolomite recovered after pyrolysis indicated the formation of dolomite and calcium carbonate. Therefore, a reusability study

was conducted to determine the stability of the dolomite catalyst under optimal pyrolysis reaction conditions. The recovered catalyst was washed with n-hexane until the color of the filtration was clear to remove char. The catalyst was reused without any further treatment for another two reaction cycles. Fig. 13 shows only slight changes on the liquid yield, uncondensed gas and char production. The liquid bio-oil products were determined at 68.37%, 60.08%, and 62.26%, respectively ( [Su et al., 2022\)](#page-12-45), while carbon char was slightly increased from 0.64 to 1.86%. Dolomite still maintained a high productivity that indicated its reusability and stability as a catalyst despite a clear transformation of dolomite to calcium carbonate. The XRD analysis of the spent catalysts showed the formation of biochar deposited on the cata-lyst together with the dolomite and CaCO<sub>3</sub> peaks ([Fig 14a](#page-11-15)). The results were supported by the FTIR results in [Fig. 14a](#page-11-15) indicating the increased intensity of 2851 and 2923  $cm^{-1}$  bands as the typical hydrocarbon molecules of carbon char deposition ([Wang et al., 2019](#page-12-46)).

Generally, calcium carbonate is produced at 700 ◦ C when dolomite is annealed at high temperatures ( [Conesa and Domene, 2015;](#page-11-7) [Charusiri](#page-11-11) [and Vitidsant, 2017](#page-11-11)[; Correia et al., 2015](#page-11-16)). However, XRD analysis on the recovered catalysts showed a mixture of dolomite and calcite  $(CaCO<sub>3</sub>)$ was formed within 15 min of pyrolysis although the pyrolysis reaction was conducted at 450 °C. The results indicate structural rearrangement of dolomite has occurred during pyrolysis of WCO. Dolomite can undergo partial separation into magnesite-calcite solid solution or primary separation into the two carbonates under  $CO<sub>2</sub>$  atmosphere. The presence of carbon dioxide controls the kinetic decomposition of dolomite ( $E.S.P.$ [B. et al., 1990;](#page-11-17) [Caceres and Attiogbe, 1997\)](#page-11-18). In  $CO<sub>2</sub>$  atmosphere, dolomite decomposition occurs at low temperatures than under air or



Fig. 12. XRD analysis of spent catalyst at different pyrolysis times.



Fig. 13. Reusability of dolomite catalysts in the pyrolysis of WCO

CO<sub>2</sub> flow was introduced during pyrolysis, the continuous generation ronment that initiates the separation of dolomite. CO<sub>2</sub> during the thermal decomposition of WCO creates CO<sub>2</sub> rich envinitrogen environment (Hashimoto and Uematsu, 1980). Although no

Partial Separation:

$$
Ca(CO_3)_2 \to CaCO_3.MgCO_3
$$
 (7)

Primary separation:

ξg

$$
MgCa(CO_3)_2 \to CaCO_3 + MgCO_3 \tag{8}
$$

In primary separation, magnesite is formed in a metastable state that In primary separation, magnesite is formed in a metastable state that

gasoline, diesel and heavy oil. Reaction was conducted at 450 °C while using 6% dolomite at different pyrolysis time. Fig. 11. The distribution of liquid product yield composition based on (a) functional group; (t)) alkene/alkane aliphatic hydrocarbon; (c) hydrocarbon range in



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Fig. 14. FTIR (a) and XRD analysis (b) of the spent catalyst recovered at different pyrolysis cycles.

<span id="page-11-15"></span>subsequently decomposes into MgO. However, XRD of the recovered catalyst only showed the formation of calcite (CaCO<sub>3</sub>), with no significant peaks assigned to  $MgCO<sub>3</sub>$  or  $MgO$ . There is a possibility that due to lower Mg concentration (20%) than Ca (40%) in dolomite, the XRD peaks of  $MgCO<sub>3</sub>$  are indistinguishable by XRD. Calcite formation may follow direct separation from dolomite or re-carbonation by reaction with carbon dioxide generated during pyrolysis of WCO. This provides an interesting aspect of the dolomite ability to catalyze WCO pyrolysis into diesel hydrocarbon while simultaneously acting as an adsorbent to reduce  $CO<sub>2</sub>$  emission to the atmosphere. If dolomite undergoes decomposition into its corresponding oxides, a high level of  $CO<sub>2</sub>$  was released, consequently disrupting the crystal structure of dolomite. Since no significant changes on the XRD peaks of dolomite, it suggested that calcite is formed via counter-migration of  $Ca^{2+}$  and  $Mg^{2+}$  ions (E.S.P.B. et al.,  $1990$ ) from the dolomite, preserving the crystal structure of dolomite ([Fig. 14b](#page-11-15)).

#### **4. Conclusion**

Pyrolysis of WCO into liquid bio-oil was successfully conducted using dolomite as the catalyst. In thermal pyrolysis, the optimum temperature was determined at 450 $^{\circ}$ C, which produced the maximum vield of bio-oil at 79%. However, the liquid bio-oil from thermal pyrolysis contained a high percentage of carboxylic acids. Dolomite is crucial to enhance the hydrocarbon yield via deoxygenation of carboxylic acid and reducing the pyrolysis time from 141 min to 75 min. The deoxygenation reaction during catalytic pyrolysis increased the production of diesel and gasoline hydrocarbons. Dolomite shows phase separation to form dolomite/  $CaCO<sub>3</sub>$  mixtures that occurred during the initial stage of the pyrolysis process. The stability of dolomite for three reaction cycles indicated the synergy of dolomite/CaCO<sub>3</sub> to achieve high selectivity to hydrocarbon while reducing the formation of biochar.

## **Declaration of competing interest**

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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